



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD

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August 4, 2015

Dr. Patrick K. Murphy  
Superintendent  
Arlington County Public Schools  
1426 N. Quincy Street  
Arlington, VA 22207

Re: Local Historic Designation of Stratford Junior High School

Dear Dr. Murphy:

In accordance with the 2004 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Arlington Public Schools (APS) and Arlington County, I am informing APS that the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) considered a request for local historic designation of Stratford Middle School at its June 17, 2015 regular meeting. This was done in response to the request received in March 2015 from four former students of Stratford School, including one who was among the first group of students who integrated Arlington Public Schools in 1959. The HALRB heard presentations from Arlington County Historic Preservation and APS staff, received public testimony, and after careful consideration voted unanimously to recommend local historic district designation of Stratford Middle School. The HALRB found that Stratford meets at least 8 of 11 designation criteria set forth in the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance. The proposed draft Design Guidelines also were discussed and unanimously approved by the HALRB, recognizing that the Guidelines likely will continue to evolve up until the County Board takes formal action on the designation proposal.

Not only is the architecture of Stratford Middle School a historically significant example of the International Style, but Stratford Middle School also occupies a unique and important place in the social and cultural history of Arlington County, Virginia, and the United States. Stratford has the distinction of being the first public school in the Commonwealth to integrate during a period of massive resistance when other Virginia public schools closed rather than integrated. At the recent HALRB hearing, a majority of the public speakers supported local historic district designation of Stratford Middle School, and a significant majority addressed the importance of this school to Arlington's African American community. This particular building and site represents the County's important struggle to desegregate its schools, and played a pivotal role in changing the lives of the first African American students who ended state-sponsored segregation by attending Stratford.

Local historic district designation of Stratford Middle School provides an unparalleled opportunity both to preserve a historically important public school building while still allowing APS to meet its educational and programming needs. The local historic designation of Stratford should be used as a teaching tool so that all our citizens can understand, reflect upon, and respect what those four brave students experienced and viewed on that monumental day in February 1959 as they entered Stratford for the first time and made local, state, and national

history. The Stratford Middle School building is currently listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Local historic district designation of Stratford Middle School means that changes to the building's exterior must be managed so that they are respectful of and compatible with the historic building and its campus. The associated costs and time needed to construct a respectful and compatible new additions to this historic building do not have to be greater than the costs and time for other new construction. Over the course of this summer, the HALRB has had two productive work sessions with APS staff and their design team. The HALRB reviewed a range of options for an addition to Stratford Middle School, one or more of which are or may be compatible with and respectful of the cultural and architectural history of the site. The HALRB is very willing to continue its efforts to work collaboratively with APS staff and the School Board to arrive at an option that both preserves the importance of this exceptional building and that also meets school needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joan K. Lawrence", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joan K. Lawrence  
Chairman, Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

cc: Members, Arlington County Board  
Mark Schwartz, Acting County Manager  
Steve Cover, Director CPHD  
Members, HALRB  
Cynthia Liccese-Torres, Preservation Program Coordinator