



Arlington
Public
Schools

Swing Space Project Report

Planning & Evaluation | June 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the adoption of the 2023-32 CIP, the School Board directed the Superintendent to prioritize the renovations of existing APS school facilities, identify and develop swing space if needed, and begin construction on the first renovation project by Fall 2026 if feasible.

The following tasks were followed by the cross-departmental team to identify the recommended elementary swing space and possible alternatives. The four steps outlined in this report are:

- the identification of a comprehensive list of 61 sites/options;
- provision of educational specifications;
- establishment of criteria; and
- evaluation of each site.
 - 45 sites were eliminated from further review because they did not meet the minimum requirements for square footage, green space, parking and/or ground floor egress.
 - 8 additional sites/options were removed after further evaluation due to wrong location, earlier studies showing major concerns, county owned properties that would likely take too long to develop and school programing adjustments.

Eight sites were found viable, with varying degrees of cost and complexity. **APS recommends repurposing a neighborhood elementary school with existing available capacity for swing space.**

Repurposing an existing elementary school:

- Meets the requirements defined in the educational specifications.
- Depending upon the school should have the lowest potential costs for repurposing a facility, leaving CIP funds available for renovations of other school facilities.
- Eleven neighborhood elementary schools are projected to have 90% capacity utilization or lower in 2026-27 and a separate study will determine where APS can reassign students via a boundary process.

Information about the seven remaining sites is provided in this study for comparison; the potential steps and costs for each site were less practical than repurposing an elementary school.

- Building a new school was suggested for Virginia Highlands or next to an existing school, with an estimated cost of \$70 million.
- Repurposing the Washington-Liberty Annex, the Fairlington Community Center, Sypfax, or another commercial space would require an investment likely in the \$40-50 million dollar range.
- Commercial spaces would also require adding an annual leasing cost to APS' budget.
- Fairlington Community Center and Virginia Highlands are both county owned properties, and both would require siting processes that would likely delay the availability of swing space by years.
- Per the FY 2023-32 CIP, the ACC building will be repurposed for MPSA.

A separate study in the Pre-CIP Report recommends the neighborhood school to repurpose for swing space. The Pre-CIP report proposes that the School Board's CIP direction specify that the Department of

Facilities and Operations conduct an in-depth study of the of the cost of repurposing an elementary school for use as swing space.

Swing Space is defined as a facility that can be used by a school while its building is undergoing extensive renovations. The space must consider the needs of elementary-aged students and ensure they have access to all the resources necessary for teaching and learning.

This swing space study focuses on elementary school capacity between 500-600 students. If a middle or high school is identified for renovations, a plan to support their communities during construction will likely require an additional approach as these populations are larger and have different requirements of swing space.

To identify the recommended elementary swing space and possible alternatives, APS outlined a work plan with four tasks reviewed by the school board and cabinet. This report outlines each of the four steps followed by the cross-departmental team for this process, specifically: the identification of a comprehensive list of options; provision of educational specifications; establishment of criteria; and evaluation of each site. The evaluation consisted of a thorough review process with a cross-departmental team including Facilities and Operations, Finance & Management Systems, Academics, School Support, and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. The team began with 61 recommended sites to consider and found 16 sites eligible for further evaluation based on minimum requirements established, which are explained in the [Project Plan Process](#) section. Eight of the sites were eliminated at this stage ([Swing Space Sites Evaluated in Task 4](#)).

All eight options are shown in Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages.

Table 1. Overview of Recommended and Alternative Sites for Swing Space

	Recommended	Alternatives		
	Repurpose neighborhood Elementary School	Repurpose Fairlington Community Center	Repurpose Washington-Liberty Annex	Build New Elementary School next to an existing school
Facility/ Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already owned by APS and meets educational specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owned and used by Arlington County Former school with playgrounds and field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owned by APS and in use by Washington-Liberty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would be owned by APS May need to share outdoor space with existing ES
Timing, Availability, and Processes	Fall 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan. to Feb. 2025 ES Boundary Process New boundaries in place for Fall 2026 	Fall 2028 at the earliest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires collaboration between APS and the County regarding availability and timing May add multiple years depending on availability 	Fall 2027 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If included in June 2024 FY2025-32 CIP Reducing W-L enrollment via Enrollment Management Plan beginning Feb. 2025 	Fall 2028 at the earliest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the minimum time it takes to build a new school May require additional time for a site identification process
Location	North Arlington	South Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quaker Lane near I395 	North-Central Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington Blvd/N Quincy St. 	South Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
Approximate Cost¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <\$5 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$40-50 million Includes relocatable classrooms, upgrades for kitchen, IT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD Renovation required for use by ES including cafeteria/kitchen, outdoor playground, relocatable classrooms for P.E. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$70+ million
Complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closes a neighborhood elementary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closes an active community center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces capacity at W-L Designed for elementary or secondary use; built for high school Will likely require internal modification; addition of Gym, common space, playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A site will have two schools and twice the traffic, etc.

¹ Approximated costs provide ballpark figures based on similar recent projects to illustrate magnitude. Facilities, Finance, and Planning staff developed these numbers based on cost and feasibility studies conducted in 2019 and recent experience with refreshes, renovations, and observed escalation. Any actual project plans will have costs outlined following a design study at a specific site. The approximate new building cost was based on escalation of 2019 study “New ES Estimated Cost.” Hybrid modular building may reduce cost and/or timeline. The School Board’s Oct. 2023 Direction for the FY 2025-34 CIP will identify which swing space option will be studied by F&O, with A&E estimated costs.

	Recommended	Alternatives		
	Repurpose neighborhood Elementary School	Repurpose Fairlington Community Center	Repurpose Washington-Liberty Annex	Build New Elementary School next to an existing school
Additional Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose among adjacent schools with excess capacity that can manage enrollment through a boundary change ² Possible need for a limited number of relocatable classrooms at swing space or neighboring schools 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repurposes a building within five years of opening High School boundaries would be proposed to reduce enrollment over time at W-L 	

Notes: 1) Test fit study required to determine capacity for elementary use.
2) May move PreK class(es) separately from current schools to other schools.

² The June 2023 Pre-CIP Report Appendix includes a report that evaluates and recommends a school to be repurposed for swing space.

Table 2. Overview of Recommended and Alternative Sites for Swing Space, Continued

	Recommended:	Additional Alternatives:			
	Repurpose neighborhood Elementary School	Repurpose Syphax Education Center	Repurpose Current ACC Building on Career Center Site	Repurpose Commercial Building	Build a New Elementary School at Virginia Highlands Community Center and Park
Facility/ Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already owned by APS and meets educational specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APS Leased • Privately Owned • Shared use building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APS Owned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privately Owned • Shared use building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owned by Arlington County (Site adjacent to parkland) • Shared use property
Timing, Availability, and Processes	<p>Fall 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan. to Feb. 2025 ES Boundary Process • New boundaries in place for Fall 2026 	<p>Fall 2028</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require County approval for change in use • Will require plan for alternative work setting • Will require plan for learning setting for adult classes 	<p>Fall 2027</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current ACC building will be renovated after the completion of the new building in December 2025 • All construction is scheduled to be complete by April 2027 	<p>Fall 2028 at the earliest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If SB includes this option in the FY 2025-34 CIP direction, the study of available commercial spaces would need to be updated to determine what properties are available. • Based on County approval for change in use and other associated county processes. 	<p>Arlington County master planning for the site will begin 2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires collaboration between APS and the County regarding availability and timing • The Pentagon City Sector Plan³ requires the development of a master plan of the Virginia Highlands Park (VHP)
Location	North Arlington	South Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route 50/ Washington Blvd 	South Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S Walter Reed Dr/ Columbia Pike 	South Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portions of South Arlington which overlap Crystal City and Pentagon City are areas that at this time are expected to experience future enrollment growth beyond the permanent capacity of schools. 	South Arlington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Hayes St/ S. 15th Street

³ Pentagon City Planning Study. <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Plans-Studies/Land-Use/Pentagon-City-Planning-Study>

	Recommended:	Additional Alternatives:			
	Repurpose neighborhood Elementary School	Repurpose Syphax Education Center	Repurpose Current ACC Building on Career Center Site	Repurpose Commercial Building	Build a New Elementary School at Virginia Highlands Community Center and Park
Approximate Cost⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <\$5 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated renovation cost to be determined • Investment is in a facility not owned by APS or the County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$25+ million • Based on study to renovate for MPSA which has more PreK classes than typical ES; PreK requirements add cost • Expenses would include interior renovation, kitchen upgrades and exterior playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$40 million in addition to ongoing leasing costs (operational budget) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$70+ million
Complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closes a neighborhood elementary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Owner must allow renovations and change of use • County must grant change to building use permit and park property use. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APS has not repurposed commercial space for an elementary school and there may be many hurdles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County permission and site master planning required
Additional Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose among adjacent schools with excess capacity that can manage enrollment through a boundary change⁵ • Possible need for a limited number of relocatable classrooms at swing space or neighboring schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Central Office Staff and Department of Human Services (DHS) may need alternative work setting (e.g., telework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Board would change its motion from June 23, 2022, changing MPSA’s plan to move into the current ACC building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If selected, F&O will need to update available commercial properties to study further • Explore possibility to close adjacent side-street to thru-traffic during the school day to permit safe access to outdoor spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site might be shared with the County and other site uses will be defined during the master planning process • This is an area of high growth with schools that intersect the Richmond Highway corridor and where the number of students is forecasted to

⁴ Approximated costs provide ballpark figures based on similar recent projects to illustrate magnitude. Facilities, Finance, and Planning staff developed these numbers based on cost and feasibility studies conducted in 2019 and recent experience with refreshes, renovations, and observed escalation. Any actual project plans will have costs outlined following a design study at a specific site. The approximate new building cost was based on escalation of 2019 study “New ES Estimated Cost.” Hybrid modular building may reduce cost and/or timeline. The School Board’s Oct. 2023 Direction for the FY 2025-34 CIP will identify which swing space option will be studied by F&O, with A&E estimated costs.

⁵ The June 2023 Pre-CIP Report Appendix includes a report that evaluates and recommends a school to be repurposed for swing space.

	Recommended:	Additional Alternatives:			
	Repurpose neighborhood Elementary School	Repurpose Syphax Education Center	Repurpose Current ACC Building on Career Center Site	Repurpose Commercial Building	Build a New Elementary School at Virginia Highlands Community Center and Park
					outnumber current permanent seats

- Notes: 1) Test fit study required to determine capacity for elementary use.
2) May move PreK class(es) separately from current schools to other schools.

PROJECT PLAN PROCESS

To determine a recommended swing space site, APS developed a project plan that subdivided the work into four tasks to be addressed by experts and members of the public. The plan was approved by the Cabinet, which consisted of representatives from different departments.

The project began with input from multiple APS departments and citizen advisory groups to identify options for evaluation as an elementary swing space (Task 1). The initial list of spaces totaled 38, one of which was to “search for available commercial spaces.” The list of available commercial spaces counted 31 buildings, two of which potentially met minimum requirements and were added to the final list for evaluation.

After establishing the educational specifications requirements (Task 2) and a refined list of evaluation criteria (Task 3), 16 sites were eligible for further evaluation. The team carefully considered the evaluation process along with the pros and cons to determine the recommended site for further study and the alternative sites to consider (Task 4).

Next Steps:

1. Members of the community and advisory committees (JFAC and FAC) are invited to provide feedback to the school board before September 22, 2023.
2. The School Board’s October 2023 Direction for the FY 2025-34 CIP will identify which options should be studied further by Facilities & Operations so that approximate project costs are included in the Superintendent’s Proposed FY 2025-34 CIP⁶. In 2019, F&O completed 14 studies at the School Board’s request at an average estimated cost of \$30,000. They ranged from \$12,000 to \$72,000.
3. Planning & Evaluation will outline required enrollment management processes to implement setting up swing space (e.g., boundaries)
 - [See Appendix: Swing Space Methodology & Results](#)

Tasks from Project Plan

Task 1: Identify a comprehensive list of swing space options by Dec. 1, 2022

Department Staff Participants:

Facilities and Operations, Finance & Management Systems School Support, Cabinet, ES Principals

Summary of Task:

This task requires the identification of a comprehensive list of swing space options. APS staff and advisory committees, Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC), and Joint Facilities Advisory Committee (JFAC)

⁶ Note: The 2023 Pre-CIP reports is aiming to conduct studies so that more funds remain available for projects in the CIP.

were asked identify all possible options. County owned sites were limited to County Manager's "Public School Siting Options" list from 2019⁷. The initial list included 61 sites.

Appendix: [List of Swing Space Options](#)

Task 2: Provide educational specifications for elementary swing space by Dec. 1, 2022

Department Staff Participants:

Facilities & Operations, Finance & Management Systems, Academics, School Support, Diversity Equity & Inclusion

Summary of Task:

This task requires the development of educational specifications for swing space, ensuring its suitability for use as a temporary school. The specifications were based on the Elementary School Educational Specifications for the Jefferson Site School (Fleet) provided by APS.

Appendix: [Educational Specifications](#)

Task 3: Establish the criteria that will be used to evaluate swing space options by Feb. 1, 2023

Department Staff Participants:

Facilities & Operations, Academics, School Support, Diversity Equity & Inclusion

Summary of Task:

This task aims to establish minimum requirements for swing space, reduce the number of swing spaces to evaluate, and determine criteria that will be used to evaluate remaining swing space options.

- Removed 45 recommended sites from further consideration that do not meet minimum requirements.
- 16 sites left to evaluate that meet minimum requirements.

The minimum requirements established for Elementary Swing Space are:

- Property is located within Arlington
- Property is available, not under development for another use
- County owned properties must be identified in the County Manager's 2019 list of "Public School Siting Options"
- Suggested site (including commercial sites in CoStar and vacant lots in MLS) is available in a real estate search of properties⁸
- Previous APS study did not identify significant barriers for school use

⁷ https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/12/County_Manager_APS_Letter_2019-11-18.pdf

⁸ If SB's direction includes commercial property, APS will need to update the list of available commercial spaces to determine what properties are available.

- Capacity for 500-600 students
- Onsite parking or available parking nearby
- Adjacent or available recreation space adequate for 120 students
- Property not a military base
- Emergency Vehicles must be able to safely enter and exit the property

The criteria determined to evaluate (Task 4) swing space options are:

- Timeline
- Costs
- Location
- Transportation
- Complexity of using the site
- Security
- Considerations for conversions of commercial space

Appendices: [List of Eliminated Sites](#)

Task 4: Evaluate each eligible swing space option using the agreed upon evaluation criteria and include the results for all options in 2023 Pre-CIP Report

Department Staff Participants:

Facilities & Operations, Finance & Management Systems, Academics, School Support, Planning & Evaluation

Summary of Task:

This task involves the evaluation of each eligible swing space option. After considering the pros and cons of each option, APS recommends one swing space option and seven alternative sites for further study.

Appendix: [Swing Space Evaluation Spreadsheet](#)