

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (LREFP) outlines options for providing educational facilities to meet its new educational specifications. The plan was developed in a joint effort between Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and the City of Alexandria to forecast changes in student enrollment, to identify the types of facilities that can best meet educational needs over the next 25 years, and to identify options to make those facilities available when they are needed as enrollment changes over time.

RAPID ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Since 2007, ACPS has faced rapid increases in enrollment, averaging nearly 4% per year from 2007 through 2014. This is a 35% growth in K-12 enrollment from a low of 10,246 in 2006 to the 2014 fall enrollment of 13,847, a level not previously exceeded since 1975. (Figure 1.1)

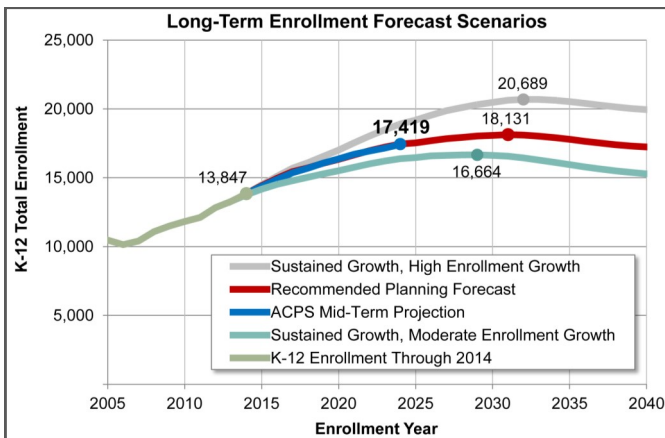


Figure 1.1

The engine of this enrollment growth was not new development. Nearly all recent growth in enrollment came from an increase in the number of students living in housing that had been built prior to the enrollment spurt. While much of this enrollment growth seems to have resulted from temporary economic conditions, many of the families whose children now attend Alexandria public schools because of those conditions are expected to keep them there through graduation.

Over the longer term, the increase in senior citizens as a share of population, and a nationwide trend to lower birth rates among those ethnic and racial groups that currently have the highest birth rates, are expected to bring the city's enrollment growth rate down to 1% per year or less by 2030, and ultimately to a slow decline in enrollment

each year. While the first wave of this growth was absorbed by growing into space that had been underutilized during the enrollment decline from 2000 to 2006, the increase has required construction of additional classrooms at some schools. Class size targets were also increased by two students per classroom, which added to the nominal capacity of the system for students.



INADEQUATE EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES

Most of the City's public schools were constructed prior to 1960 and currently require a relatively high level of maintenance and repair expenses just to keep basic systems operating and structures safe and sound.

In order to identify the scale of the problem, an analysis of the ability of existing school facilities to meet newly defined educational specifications was conducted. Based on the anticipated 2020 enrollment forecast for each school, the analysis determined that meeting those standards would require substantial additional investment at many of these schools even without increases in enrollment beyond 2020. Mini-Master Plans were prepared for each school to illustrate a means of meeting these standards and accommodating the mid-range increase in enrollment anticipated on the current school sites.

ACPS is pursuing a modernization plan in order to address capacity and building conditions. In some cases, replacement may be a better long-term option than expanding or reconstructing existing buildings. Because space is tight in a nearly fully built-out city such as Alexandria, reconstruction on some school sites is likely to require temporarily housing students at other locations while buildings are rebuilt.

While some schools can be enlarged to provide more capacity, some of the City's schools have already grown well beyond the size considered optimal for the grade levels they serve, and more are expected to have enrollment above that number by 2020. **New sites, or construction of additional schools on existing or**

expanded school sites, will be needed if recommended school size is to be maintained.

SITES FOR NEW FACILITIES

Other than two small sites set aside in North Potomac Yard and near Simpson Stadium Park, there are no designated sites for new schools in Alexandria. A combination of new school sites, enlargement of existing schools, and construction of additional schools on some existing school sites is likely to be required. The plan includes recommendations for the best locations to pursue each of these options and provides guidelines for adapting schools to the smaller sites likely to be available for urban schools.



RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan provides a range of options for providing educational facilities that meet the needs of future enrollment in 21st century learning environments. This document is fiscally unconstrained and is intended to be used for both long range planning and for making short term decisions as part of the annual Capital Improvement Program process. It is also intended that the plan be updated with new enrollment data and revised enrollment forecasts on a yearly basis.

ACPS and the City of Alexandria have determined the following eleven items as overall recommendations:

1. Set maximum school size
 - a. Elementary schools - 850 students for new schools with School Board flexibility for expanding an existing facility beyond 850 students
 - b. Middle Schools - 1200 students for new schools with School Board flexibility for expanding an existing facility beyond 1200 students
2. Locate a new elementary school on the west side of the City as four of the elementary schools on the west side are expected to exceed 850 by 2020. A second new elementary school should be considered if growth continues to increase and in absence of pursuing other options to address capacity.
3. Locate a new middle school in the city as Francis C. Hammond is expected to exceed 1,500 students in 2020 and George Washington will be over 1,400 students in 2020.
4. Consider options for new school sites:
 - a. On the east side of city –
 - Retain two existing elementary sites for future determination – one near Simpson Stadium Park and one in North Potomac Yard.

This plan does not call for a school on either site in the near-term. This Plan supports the continued use of the Simpson Stadium Park site as open space utilized for active recreation purposes.
 - b. On the west side of city –
 - Reserve a site in the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan
 - Consider the Lower Hammond site
 - c. Consider retrofitting an existing commercial building and continue to consider a K-8 model as a facility solution when the programmatic instruction is appropriate
 - d. New schools should consider an urban school model
5. Renovate and/or replace Douglas MacArthur Elementary School to alleviate failing infrastructure and capacity issues, allowing the new building to house up to 850 students as the zoning, site and educational program allows. Additional information can be found in Chapter 4.
6. Renovate interior East side schools to meet the Educational Specifications (Ed Specs) and allow Cora Kelly and Jefferson-Houston Schools to absorb overages from Matthew Maury and Mount Vernon schools. Short and mid-term recommendations are shown, by site, in Chapter 5.
7. Continue to renovate all schools to meet the Ed Specs through the Capital Improvement Plan. Short and mid-term recommendations are shown, by site, in Chapter 5.
8. Recalculation of enrollment projections and capacity utilization annually. Schools that are projected to be at or above 120% utilization within three years should be considered for portable classrooms, a capacity project

and/or a boundary study or other policy considerations.

9. Consider schools in future small area planning efforts as outlined in Chapter 2.
10. Consider schools in the development review process as outlined in Chapter 2.
11. Implement a joint City/Schools Transportation Demand Management Program to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation as outlined in Chapter 2.

NEXT STEPS

This report does not include an analysis of high school capacity. Given the current and projected growth at the high school level, additional analysis should be undertaken to develop recommendations for addressing future high school enrollment.

Discussions between the City and ACPS should continue regarding the delivery of Pre-K instruction. Programs housed in neighborhood schools and centralized locations impact future educational facilities and capacity.