

10 May 2017

**MEETING NOTES**

**RE: STRATFORD HISTORIC COMMITTEE MEETING #4**  
**STRATFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA**  
**31406600**



2121 WARD PLACE, NW, 4TH FLOOR  
WASHINGTON, DC 20037  
202 298 6700

**Meeting Date & Time:** 18 April 2017, 7:00-9:00 PM  
**Location:** H-B Woodlawn Teacher's Lounge

**Attendees:**

**Historic Committee**

Susan Cunningham  
Saundra Green  
Michael Jones  
Joan Lawrence  
Craig Syphax  
Avis Robinson  
Sharon Monde

**Staff**

Ben Burgin – APS Assistant Director, Design & Construction  
Bill Herring – APS Project Manager, Design & Construction (Project Point of Contact)  
Theresa Flynn – APS Library Supervisor  
Rebecca Ballo – Historic Preservation

**Design Team**

Carl Elefante – Quinn Evans Architects  
Devon Hogan – Quinn Evans Architects  
Penny Perez – Main Street Design  
Lito Karatsoli-Chanikian – Main Street Design

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This was the fourth meeting of the Stratford Historic Committee. The Committee has been constituted by Arlington Public Schools to assist in the interpretation of the historic events that took place at Stratford.

Discussion points are summarized below. This summary presents Quinn Evans Architects' understanding of discussions, decisions, and recommended actions. We request that all attendees review these Meeting Notes and notify Quinn Evans with recommended revisions or questions within seven days of issuance.



## 1. INTRODUCTION OF INTERPRETIVE DESIGN CONCEPTS

- a. Main Street Design (MSD) introduces the interpretive design concepts for six zones located on the site.
  - i. Exterior exhibits include the Interpretive Gateways, Interpretive Path, Time and Place, and Story Sharing.
  - ii. Interior exhibits include the Heart of School, Voice of Freedom, and Story Sharing.

## 2. EXTERIOR

- a. Interpretive Gateways
  - i. Three locations at the boundaries of the site were introduced: the corner of Old Dominion, Vacation Lane near north entrance to the school and at the corner of the Theatre entry, where a future driving route will enter the property.
  - ii. The committee finds the three locations acceptable, and requested a fourth location; at the northwest side of the property near the existing tennis courts and baseball field.
  - iii. The committee responds positively to the Interpretive Gateways being a vertical marker, visible from a distance while driving in a car and walking to the site.
  - iv. The committee questions whether the marker should represent the underlying story of integration in a more visceral interpretation. When there is a one to one experience for the visitor, additional information, text and photos would be appropriate.
  - v. The committee questions whether the marker could be too large. MSD notes that further study regarding the scale and location for the marker will be necessary.
  - vi. Physical characteristics of the Interpretive Gateway "monument" or marker presented were not as well received. The committee voiced a desire for a "monument" that would elicit more of a reaction to the emotional aspects of the day of February 2, 1959: the nervousness and peril that the four students experienced. Humanizing the "monuments" is a goal.
  - vii. The committee would be open to the markers being designed by an artist who would be able to tell the story with fewer words and more emotion. The committee believes that the graphics presented on the marker currently would not be sufficient to convey the emotions desired.
  - viii. The committee comments that the proposed markers feel similar to what has been done before in public places in Arlington, but in a different "container."
  - ix. The committee cites the freedmen's cemetery in Alexandria, VA as an example of a place that would elicit an emotion, with a "monument" containing a sculpture of a man, baby and child.
  - x. The committee feels that the city of Arlington needs to have statues and busts honoring their residents, as other communities have.



- xi. The committee is also open to incorporating bas-relief sculpture versus a three dimensional sculpture.
- xii. The committee notes the Monument to the 54th Regiment as an example of a bas-relief sculpture that incorporates movement.
- xiii. The committee notes that text is important in conveying the history and that “words” do need to be incorporated when telling the story, but would like all of the visitor’s senses to be incorporated.
- xiv. The committee comments that the gateway is jarring and an interruption in the landscape. The committee expresses an interest in more movement and possibly using water or mirrors.
- xv. The committee agrees that at the Vacation Lane and Theatre gateways, that orientation to the rest of the offerings of the site would be necessary, possibly in the form of a map.

b. Interpretive Path

- i. The committee likes the idea of the Interpretive Path on the “historic path” from Old Dominion leading to the school’s new entrance and intersecting the accessible path. The interpretive path elements embedded in the pavement leading visitors from other entrances were also well received.
- ii. The committee agrees that content for the Interpretive Path should tell the story in a timeline that would include information beginning with the construction of Stratford Junior High School in 1959; the events leading to February 2, 1959; the events of that day honoring the four students; and subsequent events at the school.

c. Time and Place

- i. The committee agrees that there should be a vertical marker placed with a clear view to the historic building façade, with a tactile element of the site and building as it was in 1959.

**3. INTERIOR**

a. Heart of School

- i. The committee responds favorably to the idea of a large mobile spanning three floors in the heart of school. The piece could be the richest, multi-layered, monument piece, visible from the exterior of the building at times and always visible inside.
- ii. The design team notes that it is possible for a portion of the mobile to be visible in the exterior portion at the windows over the entrance and windows as the focal point from the historic path.
- iii. The committee notes that this space could be where visitors come full circle to the four kids and recognize what they and others accomplished. It would highlight those kids and the power of youth and what kids can do.
- iv. The committee agrees that the use of the east wall of the first floor at the heart of school as a place to experience content in more depth was accepted. Walls on the second floor around the commons area were also accepted as places for larger imagery.



- b. Voices of Freedom
  - i. The committee responds favorably to the use of images and quotes of human and civil rights advocates and pioneers through time.
  - ii. The committee notes that greater emphasis should be placed on the students than famous civil rights figures.
  - iii. The committee notes that having students directed by an instructor to create pieces for these spaces over the course of the year would be a great way to get students invested in the space.
  - iv. The committee notes that there is an existing set of banners (6 or 7) created by Social Studies Students about Civil Rights. The collection visits libraries within Arlington on rotation, and the committee would be interested in seeing the banners at Stratford.
- c. Story Sharing
  - i. The committee believes that the idea of using prompts to stimulate open, candid personal dialogue among students would not be well received.
  - ii. The committee notes that stimulating conversation might be better left up to an instructor to navigate students. Students also might not necessarily react favorably to the prompts; particularly if it interrupts their conversation belongs to them.
  - iii. The committee notes that at Thomas Jefferson Middle School, students like sitting in comfortable spaces and making the space their own by rearranging it. Adults aren't included in this.
  - iv. The committee finds the muted color palette presented acceptable, and finds tactile surfaces to be a positive addition to spaces.
  - v. The committee reacts favorably to the idea of benches being at the new entry to the school, as if the inlay pieces in the historic interpretive path had pushed up from the ground.
  - vi. The design team notes that the media wall across from the library is an area where the idea of using sound would be appropriate. This would be in conjunction with video and images.

#### 4. NEXT STEPS

- a. MSD will proceed with refinement and further development of the basic overall scheme presented at the April 18th Historic Committee meeting, taking into account the input received that evening, leading to the presentation and discussion of revised concepts at the next scheduled meeting on May 23rd.
  - i. This presentation will represent MSD's preliminary final concept submittal, subject to revision based on that evening's review prior to final documentation.
- b. At the May 23rd meeting MSD will identify potential opportunities for incorporating a significant public art commission as part of the Stratford project.

END OF MEETING NOTES