



1 November 2020

Dear Members of the School Board and Superintendent Durán,

I am writing on behalf of the Highland Parks Overlee Knolls (HPOK) civic association regarding your boundary process for the new elementary school at the Reed site. The school is located within the boundaries of HPOK.

HPOK and the greater Westover community have faced a couple disappointments over Reed school. We lost our walkable school when it closed in 1984, and APS began bussing all the children to other schools. The community was again disappointed when APS built a childcare center at the site a decade ago rather than a school, while elementary school overcrowding was clearly on the rise. Several years ago, when the Reed site was again in play, the four civic associations surrounding Westover joined to advocate for it to open as a neighborhood elementary school.

Reed is unique because it is adjacent to Westover Village, a civic and commercial hub that includes a library, post office, bank, small park, many independently-owned businesses, a thriving farmers market, and--two blocks away--Swanson Middle School. Westover is a walking destination for thousands of people every day.

The community was thrilled when APS committed to making the planned new building a neighborhood school, but many were concerned about the potential negative effects on Westover from increased bussing and car traffic. The fact that Reed is walkable for almost an entire school population helped mitigate concerns.

HPOK rated walkability as the most valued aspect of the community, according to a survey of the greater Westover civic associations. HPOK members assisted APS in gathering information for the Reed School walk zone maps, and last year HPOK invited the APS Safe Routes to School coordinator to a meeting to help brainstorm ways to promote and ensure a walking culture for the school.

Neighbors have been watching the construction progress of their new school with great anticipation. We urge APS to look for ways to make Reed the walkable school it is suited to be, and to decrease unnecessary bussing both in and out of the community surrounding Reed.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Trainor

President Highland Park Overlee Knolls Civic Association