

# Swing Space Study

## Frequently Asked Questions

MARCH 2019



### What has been decided about the old Patrick Henry building?

Over the past few weeks, ACPS Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., and City Manager, Mark Jinks, have been exploring the feasibility of using the old Patrick Henry Elementary School as swing space to accelerate the modernization of Douglas MacArthur, which will save the city up to \$60 million. ACPS is currently studying the pros and cons of this option to assess whether it makes sense to use the site as temporary swing space to relocate students. At this stage, we are still exploring the feasibility of this option and would like to emphasize no decision has been made. This study will be conducted by Keller Construction, Cole and Denny Architects, and Brailsford and Dunlavey.

### When will a decision be made?

ACPS will need to make a decision on the old facility in early April. If ACPS decides to move ahead with the option of using the old facility as temporary swing space, we will need to go before the Planning Commission and City Council to amend the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP).

### How would the old Patrick Henry building be used and for how long?

ACPS is conducting a feasibility study to determine if it makes financial and logistical sense to use the old Patrick Henry building as temporary swing space. If this option is determined feasible, it will result in delay of the completion of the fields and parking lot in front of the Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center for up to four years.

### Why is this option being explored?

- It allows us to accelerate the modernization of Douglas MacArthur Elementary School by two years as we already have a school building we can use as swing space.
- It has the potential to save taxpayers up to \$60 million, or the equivalent of nearly \$900 in taxes per homeowner to be used for other City needs.

### How much would this really save?

ACPS is funded through taxpayers dollars and needs to be fiscally responsible. This could potentially save up to \$60 million, which would have to be raised through the city and repaid by taxpayers. While we are still exploring the feasibility of this option, early indicators suggest this could be a fiscally responsible option and enable funds to be re-purposed for other needs.

### Is the City in support of this idea?

The City Manager has expressed support for exploring this option because of its potential to save up to \$60 million in taxpayer dollars. If deemed feasible, the option would align with the recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force.

### Patrick Henry didn't need temporary swing space when it was being built, so why do other schools need this?

There is not enough space on the MacArthur site to build a new school adjacent to the old building, as was the case with Patrick Henry. At MacArthur, the old building will need to be torn down prior to starting a new building. This means the entire school population

(approximately 700 students and 80 faculty and staff) will need to relocate while the new school is being built.

### Why use the site at Patrick Henry? Aren't there other sites in Alexandria that could be used instead?

ACPS has been looking for temporary swing space for MacArthur for several years. Finding alternative space for up to 750 students and associated faculty in Alexandria is proving difficult and costly.

### Can ACPS buy land and build a school to be used as temporary swing space for all schools during its modernization process?

Building a new school from the ground up is a protracted process. Douglas MacArthur is already at 126 percent of capacity and is expected to continue to grow over the next five years. If we push back MacArthur, we are also pushing back George Mason and Cora Kelly, which together have an impact on our ability to address our capacity needs at the elementary level.

### Do you really need all of these new schools?

The capacity for Douglas MacArthur is approximately 550. It has sustained a total enrollment of approximately 700 students for many years. It has a small gym, seven classrooms without windows and insufficient cafeteria space. Its boundary also expanded in the redistricting process implemented this year in anticipation of a new building with additional capacity. The new larger boundary as well as approved residential development expected in the Douglas MacArthur zone means it will be essential to complete this project as soon as possible. Our 18 school facilities average almost 60 years old, with some of our elementary schools as old as 90 years old. Our facilities are aging, deteriorating and no longer meet our standards or the state's guidelines for space. In addition, two thirds of our schools are over 100 percent utilization with large cohorts in younger grades. We expect this growth to remain.

### Is this a new idea?

This is not a new option and has been discussed publicly in the past, including by the Ad-Hoc Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force when they advocated for advancing elementary modernizations if swing space could be identified. The Task Force concluded in January 2018 that: "As fellow residents, we understand the importance of parks and open space for Alexandria, but as a city we must balance the short-term and temporary uses of space against our long-term goals" (Task Force Final Report p. 35).

### How can I make my opinion known?

- **Leave a comment online** at [www.acps.k12.va.us/swingspacesurvey](http://www.acps.k12.va.us/swingspacesurvey)
- **Send an email** to [phproject@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:phproject@acps.k12.va.us)
- **Patrick Henry Families:** Attend Patrick Henry's parent session on Tuesday, March 19 at 6:30 p.m. in the cafetorium at the new Patrick Henry School
- **MacArthur Families:** Attend a parent meeting on Wednesday, March 20 at 5:30 p.m. in the library at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School
- **Community:** Attend a community meeting at James K. Polk Elementary School on Wednesday, March 20 at 6:30 p.m.

### How long would it be before the Patrick Henry building is torn down and the construction is complete?

It could be up to four years from the original project timeline before the construction is complete. The delay would not change the final intended design of Patrick Henry.

### How many years would it be before the new turf field can be used?

It could be up to four years from the original project timeline before the new turf field is installed and open to the public.

### How would this impact my child's outdoor recess? Where would Patrick Henry and MacArthur children play?

Students from both schools will have access to playgrounds and play facilities during school hours, in the same way they have now.

### Would the Recreation Center still be open?

The new Patrick Henry Recreation Center would be open throughout the four years. However, the new playing fields would no longer be installed immediately.

### Would any part of the outdoor space be available for use during this time?

Students from both schools will have access to playgrounds and play facilities during school hours, in the same way they have now. However, outside of school hours use of the outdoor recreation space would be limited.

### How can you accommodate students from two schools on this site?

The school facilities are sufficient to hold all students from both MacArthur and Patrick Henry. There would need to be an adjusted bell schedule to make sure drop off and dismissal do not overlap as well as additional parking for staff.

### Would a traffic study be done?

The design will likely include a traffic study. We understand that any revised use of the space would have a significant impact on the school, recreation center, neighbors and community. ACPS will work as hard as possible to minimize the impact.

### How would bus drop off work?

Bus schedules would be adjusted to ensure students from the two schools are dropped off at staggered times. The same process would be in place for dismissal. The two schools would have two separate parking lots and separate bus loops.

### How would student drop off work?

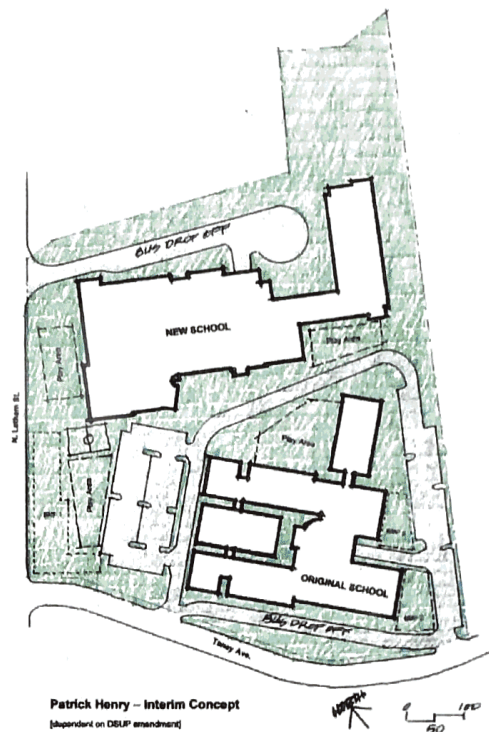
ACPS anticipates that all students from Douglas MacArthur will be provided transportation which should limit the amount of students dropped off by car. For families who still wish to drive their students to school, drop-off will be coordinated at separate times to avoid traffic and promote safety.

### How would parking work?

If pursued, ACPS would aim to provide parking for both schools on the Patrick Henry site through the addition of a parking lot to the west of the existing Patrick Henry. If sufficient parking is still not achieved, alternate measures will be proposed in alignment with the City's Transportation Management Plan to incentivize alternate modes of transportation.

### How would you ensure sure that traffic in this neighborhood doesn't get worse?

The two schools will have different bell schedules to ensure traffic



levels remain constant during drop-off and dismissal.

### How would you ensure that children are safe with more cars in the area?

ACPS would work with the Alexandria Police Department to ensure student safety and enforce local traffic laws.

### If the old facility is still usable as a school, why did we build a new school?

The old Patrick Henry school does not meet the capacity needs for the K through 8 program and does not meet our current standards or the state's guidelines for an elementary school. Approximately \$5 million will be put into the old facility to bring it up to a standard suited for use by MacArthur students and staff. This will include leveling the auditorium floor to create a gym. While not ideal, use of the existing building would enable Douglas MacArthur to address its capacity issues and bring its spaces up to standard for 21st Century Learning environments.

### Will the whole of Douglas MacArthur be together on the site of the old Patrick Henry building?

Yes. The old facility at Patrick Henry is large enough to house all of MacArthur.

### What is the plan for the old recreation center?

The old recreation center would be demolished this spring to make room for appropriate circulation on the site and minimize traffic and safety concerns.

### Is this just swing space for Douglas MacArthur?

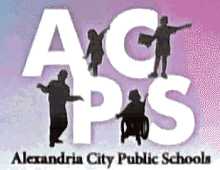
Yes. The ACPS team believes that the modernizations of George Mason Elementary School and Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology could either be completed through continuing to use their current buildings during the rebuild or through finding alternative swing space, which would be easier given they are both smaller schools. It is the size of MacArthur that makes swing space difficult.

### How long would MacArthur be in the temporary space?

Up to 2 years.

# Swing Space Study Timeline and Additional FAQs

APRIL 1, 2019



Thank you to all of you who took the time to come out in person to the swing space study meetings last week or who took the time to engage with us during the live sessions on Facebook or via the online survey.

During our listening sessions, several questions were asked and we want to make sure we address these with you prior to a decision being made on whether to move forward with using the old Patrick Henry as swing space (temporary space) to accelerate the modernization of Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. Our goal is to be as transparent as possible with you during this process and share with you any documentation or site studies as we receive them.

## Is ACPS really intending to limit use of the old Patrick Henry building to four years?

Yes, the old Patrick Henry building is only intended to be used for Douglas MacArthur, which would delay the completion of the Patrick Henry project by 4 years. The ACPS team believes that the modernizations of George Mason Elementary School and Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology could be completed through continuing to use their current buildings during the rebuild. A full feasibility study for George Mason and Cora Kelly is under way.

## How will playgrounds be impacted by this proposal?

- The Recreation Center playground, intermediate playground and basketball court will be completed by fall 2019
- The existing Patrick Henry playground will be upgraded for use by Douglas MacArthur students by fall 2020.
- The pre-K-K playground and turf field will be completed in 2023.

## What is the situation with parking and traffic?

- The City's Transportation and Environmental Services department is exploring the feasibility of placing more signs on Taney Avenue directing people where to park or drop off.
- There is a City study underway for the three-way stop at Polk Avenue and Latham Street.
- We are working with the City to secure an additional traffic officer on Taney Avenue between Latham and the old school.
- The Douglas MacArthur crossing guard will transfer to Patrick

Henry if Douglas MacArthur moves to the old Patrick Henry.

- We are working with the City on adjusting traffic signals at Jordan and Taney to assist students in crossing safely.
- Douglas MacArthur families will be encouraged to have students ride the bus rather than be driven to and from school.
- Specialty cones will be purchased to assist with safe traffic flow at drop-off.

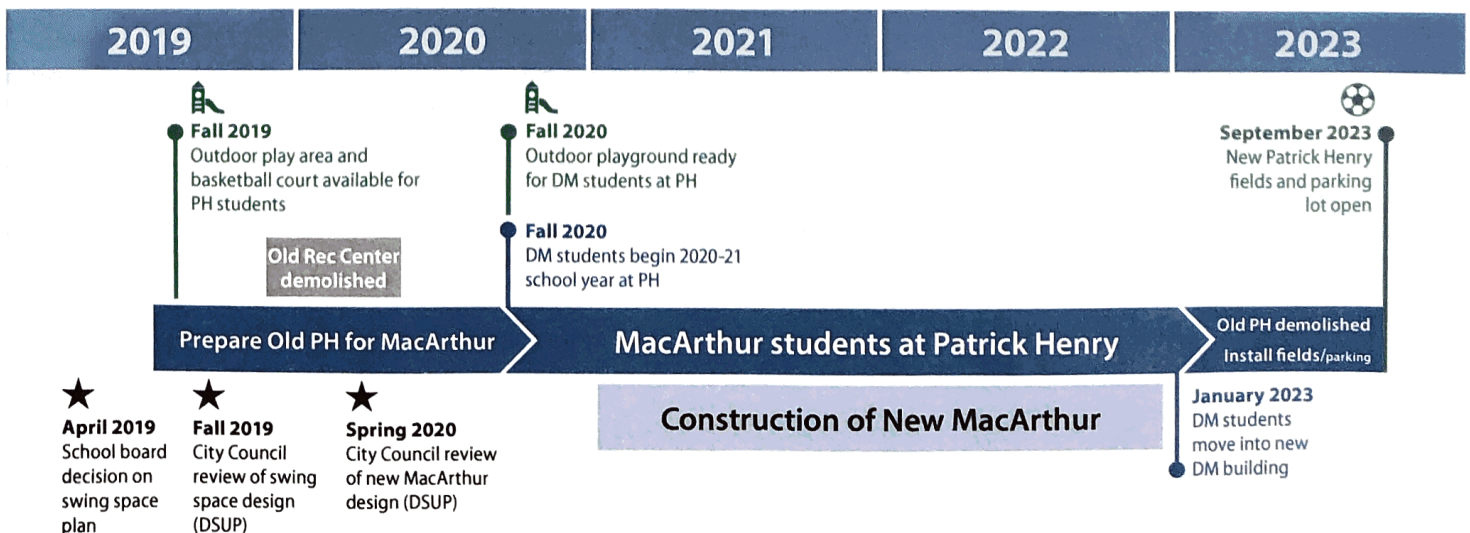
## Why can't the old facility at Douglas MacArthur be used as swing space while the new one is built next to it?

On March 21, 2019, we received the final report for the initial study conducted by Cole and Denny Architects around options for the Douglas MacArthur space. The initial study found that:

- As the current site stands at Douglas MacArthur, it would not be possible to build a new school on the site while continuing to occupy the old school facility.
- Site expansion into the public open space would not be a good option due to high development costs.
- The terrain immediately over the school's north property line drops into a 32-foot deep ravine which would be cost-prohibitive to fill to the elevation required to support development.
- In addition, this abutting area contains highly plastic Marine Clay soils which will require costly engineering to stabilize for construction.

You can find the full study at:  
[www.acps.k12.va.us/dmrevitalizationstudy](http://www.acps.k12.va.us/dmrevitalizationstudy) (PDF)

## Swing Space Possible Timeline, 2019-2023



## **What condition is the old Patrick Henry facility in? Is it really suitable to use as swing space?**

Cole and Denny Architects submitted a report on the condition of the old Patrick Henry to bring it up to a habitable level for this temporary use. Their study found:

- In general, the facility is in working condition, but needs repairs in a number of areas and more significant attention in the case of the fire alarm system and possibly the sprinkler system.
- Some of the areas that can be repaired and refreshed before Douglas MacArthur students would occupy the building include the roof, drainage and HVAC repairs, ceiling and lighting changes, pest control and water intrusion mitigation and other environmental and safety upgrades.
- The facility would be painted, undergo targeted flooring repairs and be thoroughly cleaned.
- The site would require extensive temporary re-surfacing to accommodate additional parking, changes to play areas.
- Rough cost estimates included modifying the auditorium for multi-purpose use during the temporary occupancy.

You can find the full study at:

[www.acps.k12.va.us/phesassessmentreport](http://www.acps.k12.va.us/phesassessmentreport) (PDF)