

**Arlington Community Facilities Study
Study Committee Meeting #10 – June 24, 2015
Prepared by Sarah McKinley, Columbia Heights Civic Association**

Major conclusions:

- **ConnectArlington is a telecommunications network being developed by the County for voice, data and video to connect county and school buildings in a 59-mile system costing \$1 million per mile. The main grid will hold about 12 fibers, while a “souped-up” grid of 182 cable fibers (with almost limitless capacity potential) will pass 10 miles through the commercial corridors of Rosslyn, Ballston, Columbia Pike and Crystal City. Another 20 miles will create a loop through Arlington, making this an “Intelligent City.” The advantages are the avoidance of phone and internet costs for County and School facilities, and the ability to “lease” space commercially on the network to businesses, educational organizations and other agencies. It is already bringing new business opportunities to Arlington.**
- **The Public Open House and Online Forum for the Facilities Study resulted in the public supporting many of the preliminary recommendations of the Committee, but disagreement or confusion about some issues, including siting light industrial facilities in neighborhoods.**
- **The siting subcommittee submitted a Siting Process Framework outlining four phases in siting, with steps and outcomes for each phase. The framework is based on six principles, including transparency, information sharing, an emphasis on balancing multiple-use and adaptable designs, county-wide and local needs, conformance with the many elements of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, and equitable distribution across the County.**

The tenth meeting of the Arlington Community Facilities Study included the presence of Arlington Board Chairman Jay Fisette and Arlington Public School Board Chairman James Lander. Study Committee Chairman John Milliken announced that the group was more than halfway through the process. July would focus on combined discussions between various subcommittees. There will be no official meetings in August, but the committee members will continue to work on creating the draft report. September would include meetings with the School and County Boards to present siting principles and processes.

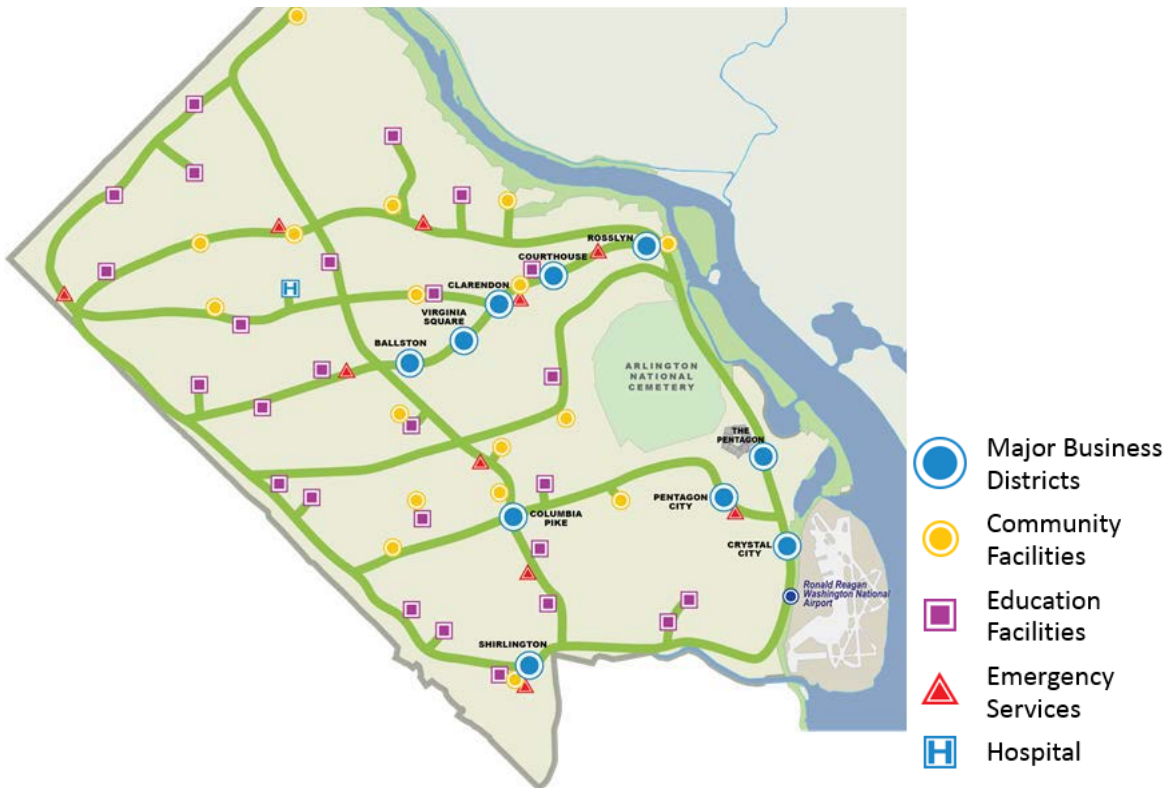
ConnectArlington

Jack Belcher, Director of Arlington’s Department of Technology Services, gave a presentation about ConnectArlington, the program to build a county-owned

telecommunications network for voice, data and video for government and school facilities, and which has morphed into opportunities for the business community.

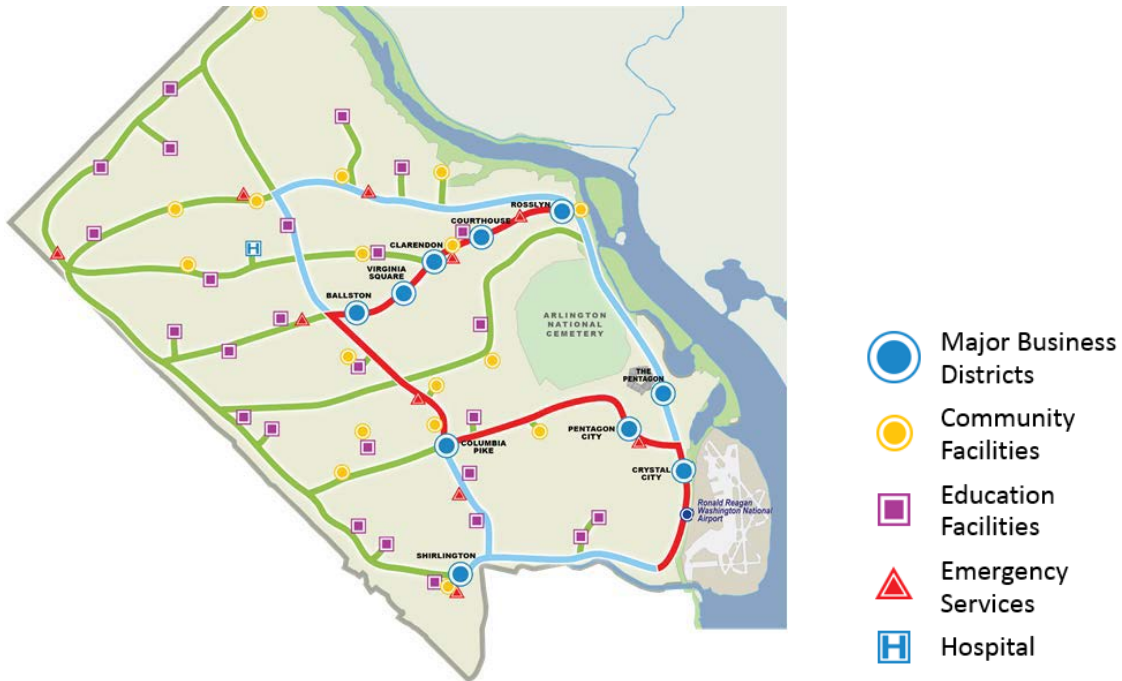
For about 15 years, the county received free unlimited service from Comcast, but that franchise expired, which left the County with a choice, either to purchase the service from an entity like Comcast (and pay perpetual fees) or build its own network. The benefits of a County-owned system include security, resiliency, scalability and cost avoidance. About 92% of the system will be underground. Other networks that may be susceptible to damage from electromagnetic storms, predicted to occur this year, would be shielded by this system.

The County is in the process of laying 59 miles of cable to network every county and school facility, and traverse the major economic corridors. The entire system is expected to be completed by fall of 2017. The cost is roughly \$1 million per mile.



The entire plan includes another 22 miles of high-density fiber running through commercial corridors. Stage 1 includes 10 miles through Rosslyn, Ballston, the eastern half of Columbia Pike into Crystal City. Stage II envisions another 12 miles to complete an entire loop around Arlington. The basic system for the County will be available November 2015. For starters, the system will allow free telephone and internet service within the County's system. The basic system has a dozen or so cables, and the souped-

up version through the commercial corridors will contain 182 cable fibers, with almost unlimited expansion capability.



Note: Red lines represent the first 10 miles of the “souped-up system” and the blue lines represent 22 miles to be built later on, to complete the loop.

The vision is that of an “Intelligent City,” one of only a handful in the world. ConnectArlington has already had an impact on attracting and retaining businesses and institutions. Businesses that would have passed on Arlington have moved us up the list of their preferred sites because of this system. It may also help retain government leases. Eventually the County will “lease” service on the lines to businesses and institutions. The cost of maintaining the system will probably be \$500,000 a year, but those costs would be offset by the avoidance of Comcast bills for telephone and internet service for the County, as well as business fees from commercial companies, educational institutions and other agencies. The program has received consecutive Intelligent Community Foundation Top 7 Awards.

Feedback from Public Open House and Online Forum

Jennifer Smith, Columbia Pike Revitalization Coordinator with the Department of Community Planning, Housing & Development, described the many tools the County had used in its outreach efforts for the Facilities Study. These included over 11,000 hits on the County’s web site, updates to 33,000 School Talk subscribers and 7,650 Arlington Insider subscribers, coverage in over 15 newsletters as well as major local media (Sun Gazette, Washington Post, ArlNOW, The Citizen and Arlington TV), over 21,000 twitter

followers and over 13,000 Facebook followers, blog entries, live chats, open houses and online surveys. Over 40 civic associations were represented in survey results.

The Open House in June included opportunities for the public to weigh in on the major results compiled by the Study Committee. Individuals were able to place green dots on those areas indicating agreement, red dots for disagreement and yellow dots for undecided. The 100+ attendees also posted sticky notes with their individual comments.

Those areas in which the public showed agreement included:

- More community outreach is needed around capital improvement planning and not all stakeholders are participating; and a desire to link CIP planning with the Comprehensive Plan (under Communication and Comprehensive Planning)
- Strong agreement that APS will need additional facilities and that reliable projections are essential to understanding community facilities needs
- There is a need for more assisted services for 85+ and that there is need for childcare and pre-school options for Millennials starting families
- Agreement that more coordination should occur between Schools and County to address needs for after-school activities and transportation
- Recognition that low income students are concentrated in a few schools but no consensus on whether APS is effectively meeting their needs.
- The County is in transition – differences and preferences are increasing within and between neighborhoods
- Access to info & input into decision-making is not equitable
- Desire to maintain neighborhood identity while meeting the demands of a changing population
- No clear process for reconciling competing objectives between the Comprehensive Plan elements, including community facilities
- Facility needs are prioritized primarily through the CIP process, which failed to adequately engage the public and commissions
- Improve APS and County collaboration and information sharing
- Monitor age cohorts as a means of improving projections and planning
- Develop a County-wide communication strategy
- Reconcile and consolidate current Comp Plan elements into one unified and comprehensive vision
- Consider including a new public facilities Comp Plan element to ensure that all facility needs and priorities – including schools – are transparent and determined with ample community engagement
- Bring together APS, County and non-profits to develop a vision and principles for wrap-around services in support of students and families

- General agreement that sustaining housing and affordability, particularly for families with incomes between 60% and 120% of AMI, looking for “starter” homes, is important
- Some agreement that the County’s economic model should be sustainable
- Some agreement that ease of doing business is a challenge, although some expressed uncertainty

Some areas showed ambiguity. Personal comments ranged from “high property taxes challenge lower/mid-income people” to “raise taxes to meet needs!” Other comments focused on specific geographic areas and considerations, including: “adding rapid transit corridors for Lee Highway, Washington Boulevard and Columbia Pike,” “Look at edges of Arlington Boulevard and consider zoning overlay,” and “Focus on diverse ways to bring businesses to the Orange Line corridor.”

Agreement on solutions on economic sustainability identified included:

- Tools to incentivize development of affordable housing (with one dissent)
- Gather more information on the relationship between stable housing and student performance
- Providing additional outreach/education to the community about the economic model
- Strengthen the role of the EDC and modernize County processes
- Slow growth until the County can work out a way to pay for services
- Growth in high rises should finance growth in infrastructure
- Realistically plan for future costs – do not leave it to the developers
- Mixed opinions about allowing more flexibility in certain corridors

A majority of comments recommended “out of the box” thinking. Many recommended “up, not out” planning, public-private partnerships and underground parking. They also acknowledged that there would probably be trade-offs in priorities and a tension between growth and services.

In some areas there was disagreement and/or uncertainty, although it was unclear what that meant to the citizen. These included:

- Land is our key constraint, or that we lack space to “do it all”
- Some light industrial services could be integrated in single family neighborhoods creatively
- Additional time is required when co-location of uses is contemplated in a building
- There is a lack of space to park our fleet vehicles and service them.

However, there was some agreement that expectations for service delivery should evolve, along with an explanation of agencies' roles in delivering services. There was major agreement that parks are over-booked and schools over-enrolled; and that we need to better utilize County facilities, we should build up, over and out, and underground surface parking. Solutions included expanding/improving services (i.e. like Arlington Mill Community Center) in different parts of the County; improve outreach and communication, critical to reach groups/individuals who don't/can't attend meetings; and integrate affordable housing into every building type being considered, excluding parks/green space.

There was general agreement with siting principles:

- Information identified by committee as part of siting principles & process
- Communicate early and frequently with community, including immediate neighbors/neighborhoods; important to bring community and other vested parties through the entire process
- Current processes are linear and time consuming; bring decision makers together earlier & frame the problem at a County level, not schools or parks or econ development alone
- Show how individual sites/facilities fit into the whole picture
- Develop a range of mitigation alternatives for consideration
- Co-location of uses is appropriate, but not for parks and recreation facilities
- Preserve park space, woodland, natural areas, tree canopy, prioritize other options before selecting green, open spaces
- Land can be used for multi-purposes and can be multi-sectional; plan it for flexibility over short- and long-term
- Transportation Demand Management should be considered when selecting sites, not later
- Rethink school design during siting; discourage pavement loops at expense of green space; encourage mass transit, safe cycling networks
- Consider siting choice schools together so resources (i.e. transportation) can be shared
- Look at R-5 through R-20 zoned areas and identify places where increasing density makes sense, including Arlington Boulevard, where public transit could be improved
- Repurposing or sharing underutilized facilities or property, joint use between County and APS

Proposed Siting Process Framework

Co-chair Ginger Brown led the discussion of the proposed siting process framework, with help from other members of that subcommittee. First, the group

identified a foundation step in the process that involved identifying and community facility needs. The group named this “Phase 0” since it occurs prior to the actual process for siting. This preliminary phase would determine need and priorities, but they tabled the development of “Phase 0” until the siting subcommittee could meet with other subcommittees.

The principles that will guide the siting process include the following:

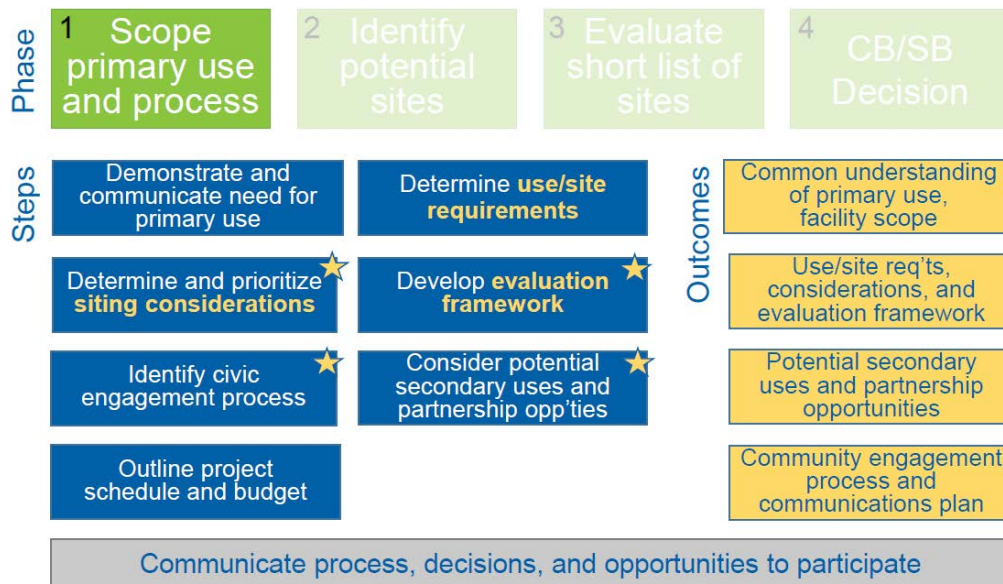
- Be as transparent as possible: share information broadly and communicate regularly
- Time and funding are limited: undertake siting processes in a timely and cost-conscious manner
- Use resources efficiently: explore multiple-use facilities and designs that could be adaptable over time
- Balance County-wide and local needs
- Guide discussions and decisions with established plans, policies and goals
- Distribute facilities equitably across the County

It is anticipated that the County Board or the School Board would initiate a siting process for a specific project. The siting process would be built around situations in which a given “primary use” requires a siting decision, although the process could be adapted for other situations, like co-locating uses when rebuilding or adding onto a facility, adding new uses to an existing facility, or determining the best use(s) for a known site. Phases are intended to be sequential; steps within phases may be concurrent or iterative. Some phases/steps may not be applicable to all situations. The group took advantage of the Public Participation Spectrum created by IAP2. The following is a table of the four phases for the siting process:

Phases	1 Scope primary use and process	2 Identify potential sites	3 Evaluate short list of sites	4 CB/SB Decision
	Determine critical use/site requirements, additional siting considerations, and evaluation framework for Phases 2 and 3. Identify and communicate civic engagement process.	Develop a list of potential sites that meet use/site requirements. Evaluate sites at a high level with considerations developed in Phase 1. Refine list to 2-3 sites for further evaluation in Phase 3.	Develop design studies/analyses for 2-3 sites selected in Phase 2. Evaluate sites at a greater level of detail with the considerations developed in Phase 1. Recommend preferred site and any secondary uses.	County Board and/or School Board consider recommendations from Phase 3 and confirm a final approach for a site and use(s).

The siting subcommittee developed steps and outcomes for each phase. For each step, the process for each phase is expected to be completed before the group moves on to the next phase. In addition, the group should check in with the County Board and/or School board before proceeding. The following are outlines of all four phases.

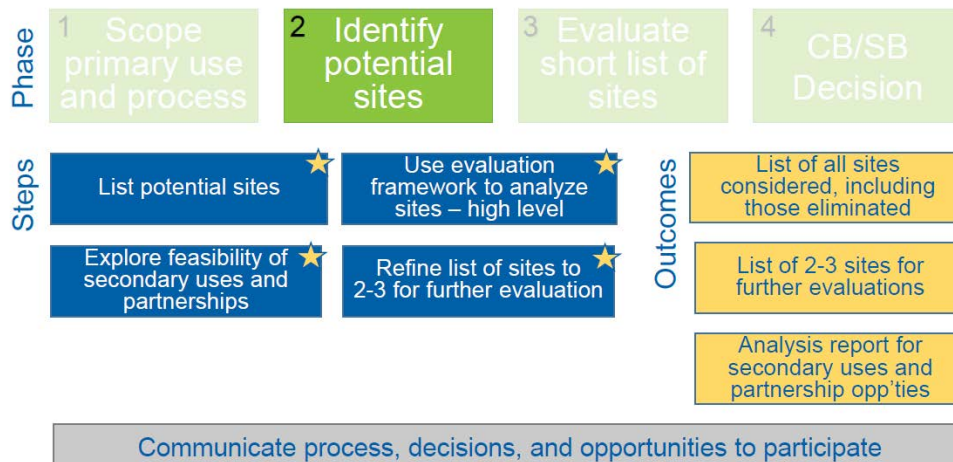
Phase 1: Steps and Outcomes



★ - indicates opportunities for increased public participation

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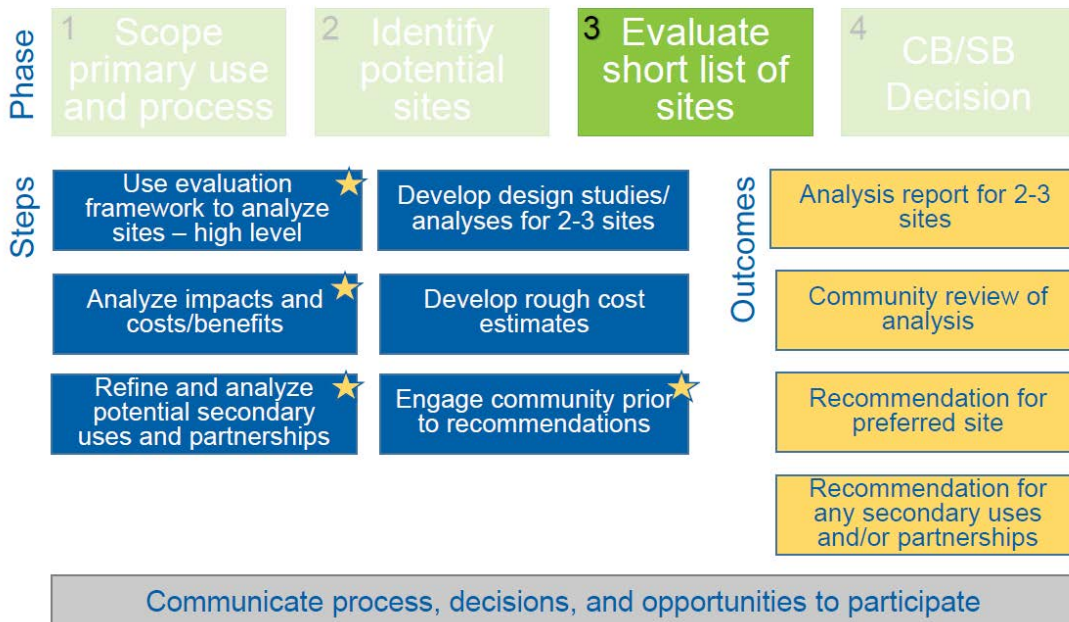
Phase 2: Steps and Outcomes



★ - indicates opportunities for increased public participation

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Phase 3: Steps and Outcomes



★ - indicates opportunities for increased public participation

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Phase 4: Steps and Outcomes



Questions raised by the subcommittee included: could this siting framework be adapted for most or all facility siting processes? And what should the community's role be during Phases 1 – 4 of the siting process framework, considering the spectrum of public participation.

Materials:

Agenda:

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_SC10_Agenda.pdf

Opening Remarks:

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_SC10_Opening.pdf

Presentation: ConnectArlington

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_SC10_ConnectArlington.pdf

Presentation: Proposed Siting Process Framework

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_SC10_SitingProcess.pdf

Resource: Community Feedback from Open House & Virtual Forum

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_OpenHouseVirtualForum-Feedback.pdf

Resource: Combined County and APS CIP Programs & Funding (2015-2024)

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_SC8_CIP-ProgramsFunding.pdf

Handout: Study Communications & Outreach Update

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/06/CFS_CommunicationsHandout_06242015.pdf