

Fairfax Approves Fine Arts Academy in Culturally Sensitive Location

On June 6, 2017, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve a rezoning and special exception request submitted by Scimores Academy, LLC, to allow construction of the Floris Conservatory for the Fine Arts at the intersection of Centreville Road and West Ox Road south of the Town of Herndon. The approval comes after more than two years of negotiations with landowners and fine arts, educational, and historic preservation organizations.

Situated on five parcels immediately adjacent to Frying Pan Farm Park in an area replete with cultural, recreational, and historic assets, the academy will offer classes in the fields of music, dance and movement, and creative and visual arts to students ages 4–18. The environmentally friendly building, designed by the architectural firm of Perkins+Will, will include specialized dedicated classrooms and studios of varying sizes for both individual instruction and larger groups.

While the site is not located within a Fairfax County Historic Overlay District, it is included within the nationally listed Floris Historic District, and contains numerous contributing and non-contributing structures. During the review process, the applicant's consultants worked with County staff and the Department of Historic Resources to ensure the project would not result in a de listing of the site's National Register status. The applicant appeared several times before Fairfax County's History Commission and Architectural Review Board, and committed to interpretive signage and preservation of the site's three historic farm buildings.

Cognizant of the site's location adjacent to a heavily used agricultural park, the project team coordinated with the Fairfax County Park Authority on a number of issues to enhance the visitor experience at Frying Pan Farm Park. These included special event access, landscaping, setbacks, viewsheds, pedestrian and vehicular access, and more. The ultimate layout will provide 58% open space, preserve approximately 32,000 square feet of existing vegetation, and scale changes between the park, surrounding roadways, and the academy building that will allow the property's rural character to be better understood by visitors.

Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh attorney Andrew Painter represented the applicant in the case before the Board of Supervisors, while attorney Antonia Miller assisted with transactional matters in assembling the properties for the project. By providing a community-builder educational use and cultural facility linking surrounding communities and civic uses, this unique project will help address the need for additional arts education facilities in western Fairfax County, and will help meet the County's comprehensive planning goals for visual and performing arts.