The Virgin Islands Consortium

FEMA Approves Replacement of Arthur A. Richards School; Facility to be Built on Site of Evelyn Williams Elementary

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The Evelyn Williams Elementary School site **By. VI CONSORTIUM**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Public Assistance Program officially approved the replacement of the Arthur A. Richards Junior High School due to the extent of damages caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Office of Disaster Recovery announced late Monday.

The O.D.R. said the approval allows the Virgin Islands Department of Education to begin negotiating costs for the construction of a new school.

The New Schools Construction Advisory Board, comprised of Virgin Islands Department of Education professionals and other V.I. residents, began working on a Facilities Master Plan in January 2020, O.D.R. said. The board, led by Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, chief operating officer for the V.I. Department of Education is moving forward on plans to repair and reconstruct the territory's schools. D.O.E. has selected the Evelyn Williams School site as the location for the construction of the first school in the Facility Master Plan.

Requests for Proposals were issued for the demolition of both the Arthur A. Richards and the Evelyn Williams campuses in April. Demolition work is scheduled to begin over the summer and be completed by the end of the year, O.D.R. said.

The Arthur Richards replacement creates the first of several new PreK-8 projects being developed by the Dept. of Education. Conceived as a campus of five buildings, the Arthur Richards PreK-8 School incorporates guiding principles crafted by a broad swath of stakeholders in 2018, O.D.R. said.

“the new design will address criteria integrally linked to successful student and teacher engagement as well as, 24/7 security, sustainable and resilient building systems, thermal, visual and acoustical comfort, natural light, technology-enhanced learning and furniture and finishes that celebrate the vernacular of the Virgin Islands," said Mrs. Wells-Hedrington said.

When construction funding is finalized, the concept diagram developed by DLR Group during the Master Planning process will serve as a starting point for the design of Arthur Richards.

“AARJHS is the first official determination for replacement,” O.D.R. Director Recovery Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien said. “Five additional sites are currently under consideration for replacement by FEMA to include the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School, Charlotte Amalie High School, Julius Sprauve Elementary School, and the Curriculum Center on St. Thomas. We have submitted 19 more schools for consideration.”

The federally mandated Facilities Master Plan will establish the use of building standards and scope of work for all Department of Education facilities to be constructed. The plan is scheduled to be completed on June 30, 2020. The Dept. of Education will host a virtual public hearing on June 3, 2020, from 6-8 p.m.

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