

Northwood Cluster Testimony
Presented by Mary Abe, Northwood Cluster Coordinator
November 10, 2010

The Northwood community thanks MCPS and the board for authorizing the assessment of schools for modernization in the 2012 Capitol Budget. We have been requesting FACT scores for Northwood High School and Silver Spring International Middle School which were reopened without modernization in 2004 and 1999 respectively. We have been before the board annually sharing difficulties faced by our community in developing a strong school culture while battling facilities that have serious deficiencies compared to modern MCPS buildings. In your testimony packet, you will find a copy of comments that we submitted in May regarding the FACT process. We are still waiting for the opportunity to comment on the point values to be assigned to each criteria and the resulting methodology for assessment, but we appreciate the collegial approach that MCPS has taken in developing these criteria.

The FACT process is just the first step in the long wait for modernization, we appreciate that these two schools will finally be placed on the modernization list and we hope that families having babies in the next five years will see these facilities modernized for their children to use. Of course, this is not a given, even with an assessment happening next year. Our cluster is still waiting for a modernization date for Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School which is the oldest unimproved middle school in the county. We also await a schedule which includes the addition to Highland View Elementary School which was funded for a feasibility study last year. We expect that this addition will allow work to remedy the serious dampness and mold caused by the so called "dirt" room, where staff open a door to an unfinished room full of dirt (referred to by facilities as a crawl space) in the lower level of the school. We first shared with you the problems resulting from this unfinished space in the school in 2005. Luckily, there was a drought this year, so the school did not have to deal with as much dampness, but the problem remains unaddressed.

Although there has been significant progress at Silver Spring International and Northwood, there are still programmatic facilities deficiencies which should be addressed before modernization happens in 15 or 20 years. Silver Spring International continues to operate without a performance space with a stage and does not have easy handicapped access to the front entrance. The proposed renovation to the Old Blair Auditorium with planned funding from the County Council will provide a solution to these problems as well as providing an exciting new space for community use. The condition of the Northwood athletic facilities continues to deteriorate and cause problems for our student athletes. The team rooms have their original lockers, many of which do not lock. Theft has become an increasing problem as the school has grown and we have more athletes who need lockers. Earlier this evening, the Athletic Boosters at Northwood met to discuss how they might work to fund new lockers. This is a horrible strain on our boosters who are already fundraising to pay for the lights installed on the Northwood field. Our community resents once again having to find our own way to remedy a problem that we feel should have been taken care of when the school reopened.

As many of you know, the saving grace for our decaying schools has been county-wide programs that have been used to replace HVAC systems, roofs, renovate restrooms, make building modifications to support new program needs (BMPI) and planned life-cycle asset replacements (PLAR). We applaud the Board's attempt in Policy FKB to plan for upgrades to schools outside of the modernization cycle which keeps schools in service for over 50 years. We have concerns that this policy lacks criteria for developing a process to decide when systems need to be replaced or a school needs to be modernized. More detailed comments are in our submitted materials. For your information, I have also attached the list of deficiencies that our schools submitted this year as input to the capitol budget. Many of these

items will be addressed in the coming years, but it gives you a sample of the types of issues that our schools deal with as they await modernization.

The Northwood Cluster continues to strongly support the MCCPTA position that modernizations and additions throughout the county should proceed on schedule. Of particular interest to us are all of the projects within the Downcounty Consortium which will relieve crowding in the elementary schools in the Einstein, Wheaton and Kennedy clusters. The modernization of Wheaton High School is critical to the DCC so that Wheaton can be more competitive in the high school choice process.

Thank you for your attention to the needs of our schools.

**Comments on Draft
Facilities Assessment with Criteria and Testing (FACT)
Committee Report
May 28, 2010**

To: Bruce Crispell, MCPS Division of Long Range Planning

The Northwood Cluster of schools appreciates the opportunity to review the draft FACT score criteria. We have asked for a number of years for assessment of our two schools which were reopened without full modernization, Silver Spring International Middle School and Northwood High School. Our experience with the “coat of paint and a promise” reopening of Silver Spring International (in the old Blair High School building) helped us to advocate for several items during the extended reopening renovations to Northwood. As a cluster, we have continuing concerns about how decisions are made involving what is required when an old building is being converted to modern school facility. We hope that the FACT process will help to clarify MCPS standards for building requirements and are pleased that both Silver Spring International and Northwood will be assessed in this round of assessments.

Although the list of assessment criteria include much of what we would wish to have evaluated, we are concerned that the Assessment of School Spaces Against Current Educational Specifications appears to focus solely on square footage. We know from our experience at SSI that square footage does not tell the whole story. We would guess that this school's square footage is adequate, but the configuration and lack of certain program areas have made the building a huge challenge for staff and administrators and an inferior educational environment for our children. For example, the lack of a stage in the all-purpose room/cafeteria eliminates the ability of staff to do many things that are a standard part of life at other middle schools (assemblies, performances, etc.). Using SSI as an example again, the gym (an old high school gym) undoubtedly exceeds the square footage of a gym in a modern middle school. However, its position away from the building and the lack of teaching stations which are required at the middle school level where every student takes PE every year has created safety hazards for our staff and students. Is there a place in the assessment criteria for evaluating how appropriate the space is to school functionality as well as the square footage?

We are pleased to see areas that have caused concern at our schools and which seemed to have low priorities during reopening:

- ADA compliance regardless of “grandfathering”
- Site furnishings such as fences and athletic furnishings (backstops, pads for field events)
- School maintenance costs and extent of deferred maintenance
- On-site traffic conditions

We would like to see pedestrian safety conditions specifically included in the evaluation of on-site traffic conditions, since safe access for our walkers is often overlooked or put second after access for vehicles.

We agree that schools on the modernization list should maintain their position on the list and that the new assessments should form a new set of priorities which will be scheduled after the current modernization schedules are completed. We are concerned that the assessment of facilities does not include special education centers. It is important that MCPS work to maintain and modernize all of our school facilities.

Finally, we are concerned that there are currently no point values associated with the FACT assessment parameters. It is very important that our communities understand the FACT methodology so that there is a sense of fairness when modernizations are scheduled. There has been a sense in our community that communities which are better able to advocate for facilities have had more success in getting better facilities. The public should be given the opportunity to comment on the point values to be assigned to each criteria and the resulting methodology for assessment. Until the point values are assigned and methodology is established, it is impossible to determine whether the revised FACT criteria adequately evaluate the relative conditions of the schools.

Sincerely:

Mary Abe, Stephanie Helsing
Northwood Cluster Coordinators

Northwood Cluster Comments on Policy FKB, Sustaining and Modernizing Montgomery County
Public Schools Facilities

The Northwood Cluster strongly supports the concepts presented in Policy FKB, Sustaining and Modernizing Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Facilities. Having suffered through the difficulties of opening two schools (Silver Spring International Middle School and Northwood High School) without having them fully modernized, we are painfully aware of the impact that deteriorating systems and out of date program spaces can have on the education of our students and our community. We applaud the Board's attempt in this policy to plan for upgrades to schools besides the additions and full modernizations of buildings which have dominated the CIP process for many years.

Our greatest concern about the proposed policy is that the policy contains no guidance criteria for the Board to use in determining priorities for system replacement and upgrade of program spaces or to determine when school facilities need to be moved from the systemic maintenance and system replacement category to modernization status. This vagueness has been part of the problem of maintenance throughout the county in the past. The perception continues to be that those who complain the most get the facilities maintenance and improvements. We would like to see more objective criteria for prioritization of projects than the relationship of the facilities manager with the maintenance department or the amount of noise that the community makes. The policy should identify the specific targets for maintaining schools in good working condition. Further, the policy should establish criteria for determining when modernization, as opposed to systemic maintenance, would be appropriate.

With the implementation of this policy, we also feel that the current CIP priorities should be revised to be consistent with the provisions of the policy. Thank you for looking for common sense ways to save money while providing our students and communities with excellent facilities.

Submitted by: Mary Abe, Northwood Cluster Coordinator

Northwood Cluster Projects
Submitted June 2010

These submitted projects reflect the kind of issues that school principals and PTA members identified as needing attention in June 2010. Each year we submit a list as input to Capitol Budget preparation. Some of these deficiencies will be addressed through maintenance and some will eventually be addressed in the Capitol Budget. Note that our un-modernized schools have the most needs.

- **Northwood HS** requests improvements to the auditorium to support the Musical Theater Academy. Required improvements include: upgrade the pit to new standards.
- **Northwood HS** requests comparable facilities for girls sports including spectator seating for the softball field and expansion of the girls locker and team rooms to comparable size with boys facilities. Title IX compliance for a school renovated in 2004 in question.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests replacement of the entrance lobby to allow accessibility and appropriate interaction with the Old Blair Auditorium Project renovation.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests a performing arts space with a stage to accommodate program requirements for students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests computer lab space and 32 additional computers to accommodate technology education requirements in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme.
- **Sligo MS requests** renovation of science labs; current labs are not conducive to an effective learning environment for the following reasons;
 - Teacher vision is obscured by columns within the classroom
 - Current mix of lab benches, stools and desks are ineffective for classroom instruction.
 - Stools, desks and benches are beyond their life cycle.

Request for County-wide Projects – Northwood Cluster

1. ADA Compliance

- **Northwood HS** requests a handicap ramp to the auditorium stage
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests a handicap ramp at the front entrance that gives direct access to the building instead of gaining access to the school using a locked door to a condemned part of the building, the auditorium.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests handicap access from the main building to the gym. A set of stairs outside lead from the main building to the gym.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests handicap access from the main floor of the building to the cafeteria on the lower level.
- **Glen Haven ES** requests improved handicapped accessibility from the bus loop to the building including an automatic door to be installed at the right side door located at the side bus loop and a more accessible concrete ramp to provide a more direct pathway for handicapped students from the buses to this door.

2. Asbestos Abatement

- **Northwood HS** requests that all asbestos tile in classrooms be removed and replaced.
- **Col. E. Brook Lee MS** requests the removal of asbestos on the second floor hallways and replaced with none asbestos tiles

3. Building Modifications and Program Improvements (BMPI)

- **Northwood HS** requests updated signage for the entire building as promised during reopening renovation.
- **Northwood HS** requests that netting be installed along the third base side of the baseball field to protect nearby neighbors from foul balls. There was an incident in 2010 of a ball through a neighbor's window.
- **Northwood HS** requests that Tech Ed classrooms on the first floor be fitted with safety shut off switches and proper ventilation Tech Ed program requirements.
- **Col. E. Brooke Lee MS** requests that a bigger tractor shed be provided. The current shed too small for current equipment leaving it vulnerable to weather and vandalism.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests that a partition be installed in its gym to improve the use of this facility. The SSIMS gym was built for a high school and during inclement weather the gym cannot accommodate as many teaching stations as required for a middle school program. This is a major safety issue.
- **Highland View ES** requests that dirt be removed from the dirt room (unfinished room in the first floor of the wing of the building) and that the room be finished to provide desperately needed storage space.
- **Sligo Creek ES** requests modification of computer lab, addition of a wall to provide an additional small room for storage or much needed office space.
- **Sligo Creek ES** modifications in front of school to provide adequate drainage. Water is causing structural damage to entrance way.
- **Sligo Creek ES** requests new curtains for the gymnasium and new mats on the wall for protection during P.E. classes.
- **Sligo Creek ES** requests modifications to the conference room to remove cubbie area and

convert to book storage area.

- **Sligo Creek ES** requests modifications to stage area in gym to provide much needed storage.

5. HVAC Replacements

- **Northwood HS** requests that on-going HVAC problems including leaking pipes and balancing the system be addressed.
- **Col. E. Brook Lee MS** requests AC for the teachers' office in the locker rooms.
- **Sligo MS** requests installation of air handler units capable of balancing heat and AC distribution throughout the building. Current inadequate system results in unacceptable temperature fluctuation from zone to zone within the building. Extremes of hot and cold are not conducive to an effective learning environment

6. Improved (Safe) Access to Schools

- **Glen Haven ES** requests that a ramp be built from the bus loop to the handicapped accessible door.
- **Highland View ES** requests that additional parking spaces be made at the school.
- **Sligo MS** requests replacement of stairwell steps.

7. Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR)

- **Northwood HS** requests that the water pump room be soundproofed.
- **Northwood HS** requests the installation of a sink and counter top in the staff lounge.
- **Northwood HS** requests repair to roof drain leak damage on the north wall of the cafeteria near the booth seating.
- **Northwood HS** requests that the electrical service throughout the building be updated including the removal of abandoned circuit boxes and conduit throughout throughout the building.
- **Northwood HS** requests dugouts for the baseball and softball fields.
- **Northwood HS** requests the replacement of drinking fountains throughout the building.
- **Northwood HS** requests that the broken whirlpool in the girl's locker room be replaced or removed.
- **Col. E. Brooke Lee MS** requests replacement of all of the exhaust fans on the roof.
- **Col. E. Brooke Lee MD** requests that all the exterior doors be painted.
- **Col. E. Brooke Lee MS** requests new warmers in the kitchen and new hot line dome lids for the food.
- **Col. E. Brooke Lee MS** requests replacement of ceiling tiles on the second floor.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests that paper towel dispensers be removed in all bathrooms and be replaced with electric hand dryers.
- **Silver Spring International MS** requests that all stairwell tread be replaced due to worn or torn areas.
- **Sligo MS** requests installation of electronic marquee/sign for enhanced communication with the community.
- **Forest Knolls ES** requests that markings on the parking lot be repainted.
- **Kemp Mill ES** requests replacement of inadequate lighting in the media center.

9. Restroom Renovations

- **Silver Spring International MS** requests that all bathrooms be modernized.
- **Sligo MS** requests improvements for staff rest rooms to improve health related sanitation, including automatic hand dryers, air freshener and improved delivery of hot water for hand washing.
- **Sligo MS** requests that all bathroom stalls be replaced.

10. Roof Replacement

- **Silver Spring International MS** requests a roof replacement at the front entrance of Old Blair High School (now boarded up entrance). This roof has persistent leaks.
- **Sligo MS** requests a roof replacement to eliminate leaks.

11. School Security Systems

- **Silver Spring International MS** requests that the new security system be modified to allow control of two existing outside cameras which are an integral part of school security.
- **Sligo MS** requests installation of security cameras.
- **Highland View ES** requests security cameras be placed on the exterior of the building due to vandalism and trespassing after school hours.

12. Technology Modernization

- **Silver Spring International MS** requests 32 additional computers to accommodate the technology education needs in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. Although the school was scheduled for tech mod last year, this upgrade has been delayed.

14. Water and Indoor Air Quality

- **Highland View ES** requests that dirt be removed from the dirt room and be weather proof to prevent rain and moisture seepage that has been causing mold in the bottom floor of the wing of the building.