

Northwood Cluster Testimony to County Council
CIP Issues
February 8, 2011
presented by Mary Abe, Northwood Cluster Coordinator

The Northwood Cluster of schools would like to thank the council for their support of capital school improvements and we urge you to continue to support the CIP budget advanced by the Board of Education. We are pleased to see our elected officials support taking maximum advantage of the current construction environment which continues to allow our construction dollars to impact more facilities than ever. We also appreciate the Board of Education's plans to better maintain our school buildings outside of the modernization cycle recognizing that most of our schools will not be modernized for over 50 years. As you struggle to maintain a balance between capital needs and debt service in the county during these difficult economic times, we need to remind you that our school facilities do need significant continuing capital investment to meet the expectations of your constituents. Like many others, I moved to the county and continue to live here because of the excellent quality of our public schools. It is incumbent on all of us to maintain the high level of educational program and facilities for which Montgomery County, Maryland is known.

Within the Northwood cluster, we are excited that Northwood High School and Silver Spring International Middle School will be assessed for renovation in the coming year. We have been before the board and council annually sharing difficulties faced by our community in developing a strong school culture while struggling with these facilities which were reopened without modernization in 1999 and 2004 respectively. We hope that families having babies in the next five years will see these facilities modernized for their children to use.

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 in the lower level of the school. The Old Blair Auditorium remains a threat to the health and safety of students housed in the two schools that are physically connected to the condemned auditorium and we look forward to its eventual transformation into a community resource for education and the arts.

The Northwood Cluster continues to strongly support the MCCPTA position that modernizations and additions throughout the county should proceed on schedule and that there should be increased emphasis on capital maintenance for our aging facilities. Of particular interest to us are all of the projects in 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 continued support for the capital needs of our schools.