

NORTHWOOD CLUSTER CIP TESTIMONY

presented by Mary Abe, Cluster Coordinator

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The Northwood Cluster thanks the Board for their continued support as we navigate our challenges as the newcomer cluster in the evolving Downcounty Consortium. We strongly support the MCCPTA position that modernizations and additions throughout the county should proceed on schedule or be accelerated to take maximum advantage of the favorable construction market. Of particular interest to us are all of the projects within the Downcounty Consortium which will relieve widespread crowding in the elementary schools in the Wheaton and Kennedy clusters and which address pockets of crowding in the rest of the DCC. The modernization of Wheaton High School is critical to the DCC so that Wheaton can be more competitive in the high school choice process.

Northwood High School is at the end of an extended re-opening process which has significantly improved core facilities of the school. However, since this work was done without a FACT assessment or a comprehensive modernization plan, there are still areas that have been neglected and continue to function as a 1950's era high school rather than as a modern Montgomery County High School. The most notable shortfalls that will remain after the 2009-2010 CIP projects are completed are in the inequities between boys and girls locker room facilities and in overburdened conduits for providing modern connectivity throughout the building.

We are pleased to see the expansion of such countywide projects as HVAC, restroom renovations and roof repairs. Schools in our cluster have benefitted greatly from these projects and Highland View Elementary School is particularly grateful for a new ADA compliant walkway to their portables. The improved access and elimination of a muddy pathway is much appreciated.

We are also gratified to see funds dedicated to FACT assessments of schools such as Northwood and Silver Spring International Middle School which were reopened without being modernized. As the modernization cycle within MCPS stretches to 50 year lifetimes for many of our schools – notably Lee Middle School in the Northwood and Kennedy clusters which was built in 1966 and is scheduled for modernization at a date to be determined after 2019 – it is vital that schools be assessed and for targeted facilities improvements to be implemented in a timely manner to address facilities shortfalls that are adversely affecting our students' education.

We see our middle schools implementing exciting programs through the middle school reform initiative that are not supported by the buildings which house them. Silver Spring International Middle School has implemented the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program which requires coursework in technology and in the arts without adequate computer labs and without a stage anywhere in the school. Sligo Middle School is implementing advanced science work in classrooms that do not support the laboratory work that students need to do. We understand that the demand for capital improvement funds exceeds their availability, so our highest priority is for adequate assessment of facilities so that the school system can take maximum advantage of these funds for high payoff, cost-effective projects.

We are pleased that all but one of our elementary schools are modern and in generally good repair and have limited crowding issues. The notable exception is Highland View Elementary School which has fought dampness and mold issues for years. We urge that the addition that is being planned for this school be used to address this chronic problem.

At this time, I would like to turn the Northwood cluster testimony over to Jennifer Lage, president of the Sligo Creek Elementary School PTA who will speak about the boundary study recommendations which, in part, address overcrowding at Sligo Creek.