

## REVIEW OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S FY23 CAPITAL BUDGET AND FY23-28 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM – SCHOOLS



### Description

Planning staff annually reviews the County Executive's Recommended Capital Budget and schools Capital Improvements Program and prepares recommendations for Planning Board consideration. Approved Planning Board comments are then transmitted to the County Council.

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Planning Board  
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## SUMMARY

- The County Executive's Recommended FY23-28 CIP for school projects is higher than the Board of Education's request in total. However, the distribution across each fiscal year calls for a large reduction from the Board of Education's request in the first three years of the CIP. This would require significant cuts and deferrals of school capital projects.
- Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) will provide the Council a list of 'non-recommended reductions' that would align the Board of Education's Request with the County Executive's Recommendation, which will be discussed with the Council's Education and Culture (E&C) Committee before being brought to the full Council for final reconciliation.
- Planning staff provided preliminary comments on site design considerations for individual school projects included in the Board of Education's request that are subject to the Planning Board's mandatory referral process, or would be, if approved. These should be considered by MCPS and the Council's E&C Committee during their discussions as they may have potential budgetary implications.

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## INTRODUCTION

The County Executive published his Recommended FY23 Capital Budget and the FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) on January 17, 2022.

The County Executive’s Recommended CIP may be found at:

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy23/ciprec/FY23\\_Recommended\\_Capital\\_Budget.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy23/ciprec/FY23_Recommended_Capital_Budget.pdf)

Previous to that, the Board of Education released their Requested FY 2023 Capital Budget and the FY 2023-2028 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

The Board of Education’s Requested CIP may be found at:

[https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP23\\_BOERequested.pdf](https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP23_BOERequested.pdf)

Staff has analyzed the County Executive’s recommendation in comparison to the Board of Education (BOE) request and provides an overview of the discrepancies between the two in this report. A summary of individual school capital projects included in the Board of Education’s request is also included, followed by comments on site design considerations for individual schools that may have budgetary implications.

The Planning Board is asked to endorse the comments (included as Attachment) to be transmitted to the County Council for review by the Education and Culture Committee (E&C) during the school CIP discussions.

## OVERVIEW OF MCPS FY23-28 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

### COUNTY EXECUTIVE’S RECOMMENDATION VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION’S REQUEST

The following table presents the annual and six-year total for the Amended FY21-26 CIP (the amended FY21 and FY22 budgets are not shown, but included in the 6-yr total), the Board of Education’s Requested FY23-28 CIP, and the County Executive’s Recommendation for MCPS.

Table 1 MCPS FY23-28 CIP Comparison Table (in millions)

	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	6-yr Total
FY21-26 Amended	\$ 319.0	\$ 302.5	\$ 250.6	\$ 210.2	-	-	\$ 1,618.9
FY23-28, BOE Request	\$ 376.5	\$ 439.6	\$ 376.1	\$ 275.4	\$ 199.2	\$ 100.4	\$ 1,767.2
% diff. from FY21-26	18.0%	45.3%	50.1%	31.0%			9.2%
FY23-28, CE Rec	\$ 317.7	\$ 348.9	\$ 339.2	\$ 313.6	\$ 282.2	\$ 220.9	\$ 1,822.5
% diff. from BOE Req.	-15.6%	-20.6%	-9.8%	13.8%	41.6%	120.0%	3.1%

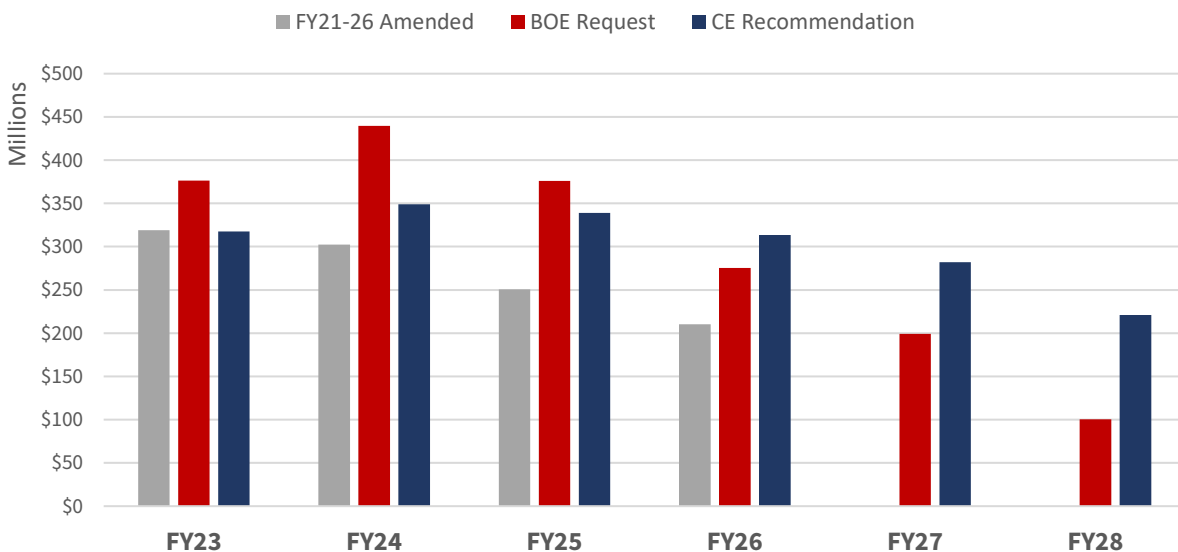


Figure 1 Comparison of MCPS FY23-28 CIP – Previous Amendment vs. BOE Request vs. CE Recommendation

The Board of Education’s Requested FY23-28 CIP totals \$1.77 billion. This is a \$148.3 million, or 9.2%, increase from the previous FY21-26 CIP, as amended last year. The 6-year total of the County Executive’s Recommended FY23-28 CIP is higher than the Board of Education’s request by \$55.3 million (3.1%). However, the distribution across each fiscal year calls for a large reduction from the BOE’s request in the first three years of the CIP. This would hence require significant cuts and deferrals of MCPS capital projects.

As has been done in previous years, the County Executive does not provide a breakdown of which project expenditures he recommends reducing, deferring, or moving. Instead, at the E&C Committee’s request, MCPS provides a list of ‘non-recommended reductions’ that would align the Board of Education’s Request with the County Executive’s Recommendation. The Council’s E&C Committee will

discuss these non-recommended reductions to consider how to best prioritize spending to meet the BOE's original request if additional funding beyond what the Executive allocated becomes available for the schools CIP. The Council will then reconcile the entire CIP by mid-May based on all expenditure and funding changes recommended by the various committees, final revisions to local revenue sources (such as impact taxes and recordation taxes), and final decisions regarding the availability of state aid.

## SUMMARY OF BOARD OF EDUCATION'S MCPS FY23-28 CIP REQUEST

### INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PROJECTS

The Board of Education's request includes maintaining the completion dates of all capital projects included in the previously adopted and amended CIP, as well as additional funding for seven previously approved capital projects to reflect escalated construction costs and prevailing wage rate premiums, four new projects introduced in the CIP for the first time, and other countywide projects.

There are 29 individual school projects, including the several categorized under Major Capital Projects in the Board of Education's Requested FY23-28 CIP. Of those, 12 are already under construction, 13 are approved projects that have not started construction yet, and 4 are new projects that have been added this year.

The projects already under construction are:

- New or Reopening Schools – Clarksburg Cluster ES #9, Gaithersburg cluster ES #8, Woodward HS
- Major Capital Projects – Burnt Mills ES, South Lake ES, Stonegate ES, Woodlin ES
- Additions – Ronald McNair ES, William T. Page ES, Odessa Shannon MS, Parkland MS, Kennedy HS

Projects that are approved but haven't started construction are:

- New Schools – BCC/Walter Johnson Cluster ES, JoAnn Leleck ES for Grades 3-5, Crown HS
- Major Capital Projects – Neelsville MS, Damascus HS, Magruder HS, Poolesville HS, Wootton HS
- Additions – Dufief ES (no expenditures are scheduled during the FY23-28 CIP), Highland View ES, Westbrook ES, Silver Spring International MS, Northwood HS

New projects that are added to the request this year are:

- Additions – Burtonsville ES, Greencastle ES
- Major Capital Projects – Piney Branch ES, Eastern MS

The graph below (Figure 2) breaks down the BOE’s requested CIP by the construction and approval status of the project and compares it to the CE’s recommendation per fiscal year to highlight the challenge in reconciling the discrepancy between the two in the earlier years of the CIP.

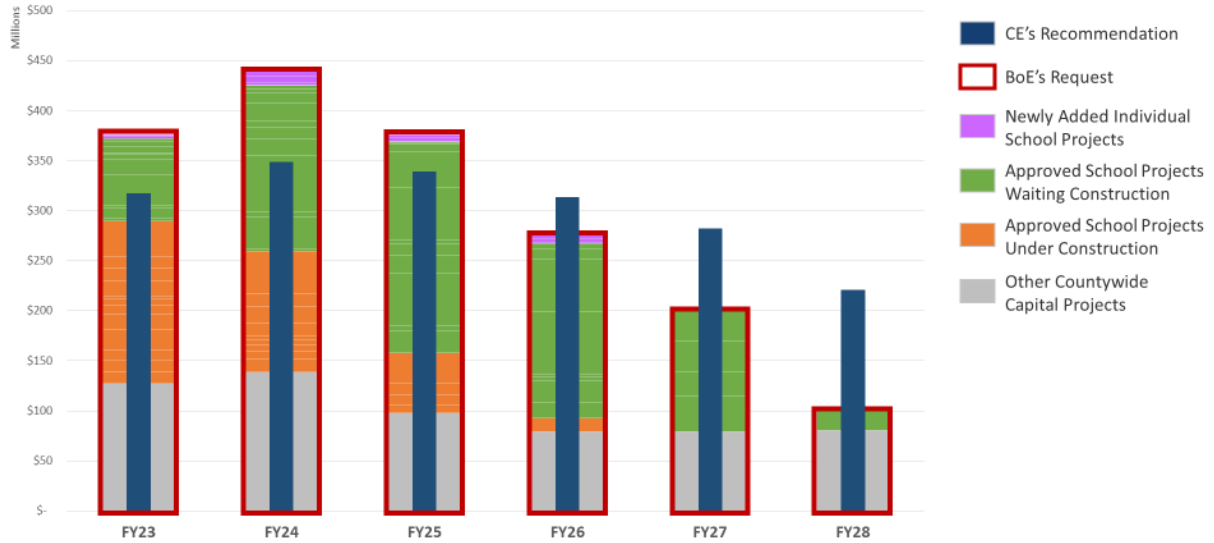


Figure 2 Proposed MCPS Capital Budget Expenditures by Project Status and Fiscal Year

Table 2 shows the six-year expenditure schedule of individual school projects as presented in the Board of Education’s request, categorized by construction and approval status.

Table 2 Individual School Projects in Board of Education's FY23-28 CIP Request

Individual School Projects		FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	6 Yr Total
Under Construction	Odessa Shannon MS Addition/Upgrade	\$ 12,000						\$ 12,000
	Gaithersburg Cluster ES #8	\$ 10,920						\$ 10,920
	Kennedy HS Addition	\$ 10,773						\$ 10,773
	Clarksburg Cluster ES #9	\$ 20,213	\$ 13,219					\$ 33,432
	South Lake ES - MCP	\$ 15,354	\$ 7,374					\$ 22,728
	William T. Page ES Addition	\$ 9,182	\$ 6,560					\$ 15,742
	Parkland MS Addition	\$ 6,323	\$ 4,787					\$ 11,110
	Ronald McNair ES Addition	\$ 2,252	\$ 3,791					\$ 6,043
	Stonegate ES - MCP	\$ 15,314	\$ 13,357	\$ 7,707				\$ 36,378
	Burnt Mills ES - MCP	\$ 12,824	\$ 16,262	\$ 10,621				\$ 39,707
	Woodlin ES - MCP	\$ 12,375	\$ 12,738	\$ 11,175				\$ 36,288
	Woodward HS	\$ 35,043	\$ 43,017	\$ 30,390	\$ 13,396			\$ 121,846
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 162,573</b>	<b>\$ 121,105</b>	<b>\$ 59,893</b>	<b>\$ 13,396</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 356,967</b>
	Approved But Not Under Construction	Westbrook ES Addition	\$ 2,569	\$ 1,446				
Neelsville MS - MCP		\$ 10,348	\$ 32,248	\$ 21,944				\$ 64,540
Silver Spring Int'l MS Addition		\$ 3,346	\$ 5,654	\$ 5,000				\$ 14,000
Northwood HS Addition/Upgrade		\$ 30,119	\$ 55,804	\$ 52,891	\$ 15,254			\$ 154,068
Poolesville HS - MCP		\$ 14,863	\$ 17,263	\$ 18,500	\$ 22,500			\$ 73,126
JoAnn Leleck ES		\$ 4,979	\$ 11,239	\$ 10,444	\$ 3,255			\$ 29,917
Highland View ES Addition		\$ 2,000	\$ 6,495	\$ 4,305	\$ 3,200			\$ 16,000
Crown HS		\$ 5,939	\$ 18,245	\$ 52,719	\$ 61,935	\$ 35,000		\$ 173,838
Damascus HS - MCP		\$ 5,000	\$ 9,063	\$ 35,594	\$ 53,254	\$ 25,000		\$ 127,911
Wootton HS - MCP		\$ 3,000	\$ 5,063	\$ 7,197	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 75,260
Magruder HS - MCP			\$ 3,063	\$ 2,197	\$ 5,000	\$ 30,000		\$ 40,260
BCC/Walter Johnson ES				\$ 650	\$ 545			\$ 1,195
Dufief ES Addition/Upgrade								\$ -
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 82,163</b>	<b>\$ 165,583</b>	<b>\$ 211,441</b>	<b>\$ 174,943</b>	<b>\$ 120,000</b>	<b>\$ 20,000</b>	<b>\$ 770,115</b>
New	Piney Branch ES - MCP (Planning)	\$ 1,924	\$ 750	\$ 210				\$ 2,884
	Eastern MS - MCP (Planning)	\$ 1,625	\$ 1,750	\$ 560				\$ 3,935
	Burtonsville ES Addition	\$ 550	\$ 6,610	\$ 3,852	\$ 3,891			\$ 14,903
	Greencastle ES Addition	\$ 550	\$ 5,110	\$ 2,445	\$ 3,890			\$ 11,995
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,649</b>	<b>\$ 14,220</b>	<b>\$ 7,067</b>	<b>\$ 7,781</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 1,238,296</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 249,385</b>	<b>\$ 300,908</b>	<b>\$ 278,401</b>	<b>\$ 196,120</b>	<b>\$ 120,000</b>	<b>\$ 20,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,365,378</b>	

**RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS**

Planning staff conducted a high-level review of the individual school sites included in the BOE’s Requested FY23-28 CIP and provided preliminary comments on site design issues that may have budgetary implications. While these are not official comments to be documented for the mandatory referral process, the intent is to provide constructive input early in the process to ensure adequate funding is being considered for allocation.

In general, the comments touch on promoting schools as safe, accessible public spaces by:

- Emphasizing street presence by moving buildings forward to the street edge.
- Deemphasizing vehicular circulation by narrowing drive aisles and placing bus circulation away from school fronts.
- Improving neighborhood bike and pedestrian accessibility and promoting Safe Routes to School goals.
- Attempting to make net zero energy schools.

More detailed comments for each individual school project can be found in the Attachment, which staff recommends be transmitted to the County Council.

In addition, staff recommends that the following comment be transmitted to the Council:

- Create a CIP project to expand and upgrade bicycle parking availability at all public schools over a ten-year period. The total cost of this effort (including upgrades to deficient bike racks at all public libraries and recreation centers) is approximately \$3.6 million, as identified in the [2019-2020 Bicycle Master Plan Biennial Monitoring Report](#).

**Attachment** – Montgomery Planning Staff Comments on Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Capital Projects in Board of Education’s Requested FY23-28 CIP



## **Montgomery Planning Staff Comments on Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Capital Projects in Board of Education's Requested FY23-28 CIP**

### **General Comments**

- Site design should promote schools as safe, accessible public spaces by:
  - Emphasizing street presence by moving buildings forward to the street edge.
    - All schools should be designed to support both the school and neighborhood equally, with a strong civic presence along the public realm of the street, and to support safe bicycle and pedestrian access.
  - Deemphasizing vehicular circulation by narrowing drive aisles and placing bus circulation away from school fronts.
    - Consider options to reappropriate road right-of-way (ROW) for bus drop off locations, similar to what is done for high quality transit (bus lanes, bus shelters). This would negate or reduce the need for on-site bus circulation.
    - Look into using the parallel parking area on street frontages for bus drop off and pick up. This is being done throughout the country and would save a significant amount of impervious paving (typically asphalt) on the school sites. There should be agreements between the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and MCPS to use this parallel parking area for this bus use.
- Improve neighborhood bike and pedestrian accessibility and promote Safe Routes to School goals by:
  - Designing and constructing bikeways and walkways recommended in master plans and the Complete Streets Design Guide that are along the building frontage, and dedicating right-of-way to do so where required.
    - The cost required to design and construct facilities should be integrated into the budget.
  - Improving existing sidewalks and bike paths along school frontage and extending beyond school property into neighborhoods.
  - Providing additional bike and pedestrian access points to school grounds to provide cross-connectivity.
  - Minimizing the number of curb cuts on roads.
- All new schools and school additions should be designed to help the county achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 – a current Council and Executive goal for the county.
  - Attempt to make net zero energy schools through the addition of solar panels, geothermal heating and cooling, gray water reuse, engineered mass wood construction, EnergyStar plumbing and electrical fixture, natural daylighting, etc.

### **Site Specific Comments**

Silver Spring International MS, Addition (2024): 313 Wayne Ave, Silver Spring

- Comments on this renovation and addition have been previously provided by Planning staff. In general, staff thinks a stronger entrance design could be provided at the new arcade at the primary school entrance from the parking lot. Also, staff would like to see significantly more trees, street trees and landscape in the parking lot area to the west of the main school entry at median islands and along Dale Drive and Schuyler Road.

Poolesville HS, Major Capital Project (2024): 17501 W Willard Rd, Poolesville

*This school site is located in the Town of Poolesville, which maintains its own independent zoning authority. As such, the Poolesville HS project will not come before the Planning Board for mandatory referral review. Comments below are what staff would likely recommend if the Planning Department had authority over this project.*

- There should be a sidewalk or shared use path along West Willard Road, separated from the street with a heavy row of tall native species street trees. This should extend to Wootton Avenue to the north and to Spurrier Avenue to the south.
- There should be at least one crosswalk across West Willard Road to allow area residents to cross from the west.
- There should not be angled front-in parking along the fronting bus loop. Parallel parking would be fine.
- The green area between the front entrance plaza and bus loop and West Willard Road could be a focused, civic green with a plaza designed within the space that can be used for civic gatherings, seating for students, and possibly an outdoor classroom area. The storm water areas could be consolidated at the northern and southern ends of this space.
- Consider facilitating fields of solar panels at the vast roof locations.

Highland View ES, Addition (2025): 9010 Providence Ave, Silver Spring

- The Providence Avenue driveway should be a prominent entry to the school.
- The current location for portables would be the preferred site for an addition.
- The existing pathways that link the school to adjacent neighborhoods should be maintained, or even expanded to more areas of the neighborhood.
- The two street entrances that are currently separated by a median should be connected to each other to create a clear auto, bike, and pedestrian roadway through the site. Expanded parking could be located in front of the school behind a line of street trees adjacent to this newly connected driveway. This would help dissipate traffic to several neighborhood streets and reduce congestion along single streets.

Burtonsville ES, Addition (2025): 15516 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville

- The addition should be located in a way such that the view to the school building as you enter the site is improved. Parking should be set to the side or behind the front of the school.
- The current sidewalk to the school from Old Columbia Pike is placed at the street curb without any buffer for pedestrians from moving cars. The sidewalk should be set back from the street curb with large native street trees along the edge in a planting strip.
- Having a primary or secondary entrance to the school from the Burtonsville Town Square entry road off Old Columbia Pike would be preferable than the current one between buildings facing Old Columbia Pike. A tree-lined sidewalk along this new entrance could link the school to the Town Square mall.

Greencastle ES, Addition (2025): 13611 Robey Rd, Silver Spring

- This site is included in the Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan, which is currently in progress.
- The addition would ideally have a front that is parallel to the street so the overall building's relationship to the street is improved. It could be located between the two central driveways off Robey Road, for example.
- There are currently 4 curb cuts onto Robey Road. That should be consolidated as much as possible to minimize curb cuts and improve safety for all through access management best practices.
- The fronting sidewalk along Robey Road should be at least 6 feet in width for stronger, safer pedestrian connections.
- The parking lot should be screened from the front sidewalk and street with more landscape and many trees to help mitigate storm water runoff and to reduce heat island effects from the asphalt.
- The chain link fence at the front of the school, if really necessary, should be replaced with a more permanent fence or low wall that is well designed, permanent looking and gives a stronger civic presence to the school.
- Creating some type of pathway connection to the East County Community Center to promote shared uses between the county facilities would be desirable.

Damascus HS, Major Capital Project (2026): 25921 Ridge Rd, Damascus

- The new building, or addition, should be built towards the corner of Ridge Road and Bethesda Church Road so that the school defines the corner and is an integral part of the adjacent neighborhoods and mixed-use development.
  - Buildings facing streets should have windows that help activate the street, create a relationship between pedestrians and building inhabitants and help to foster safety through eyes on the street.
  - The parking lot could be placed to the south of the building, allowing the school to front onto Ridge Road with a drop off aisle and direct relationship to the street and sidewalk.
  - If the school is not rebuilt/expanded towards the northern end of the site along Bethesda Church Road, then the hill adjacent to the playfields should feature trees rather than just manicured grass. This would help reduce storm water runoff, reduce heat island effects, and help expand portions of the forested area associated with Magruder Branch.
- The sidewalk on the school side of Ridge Road should be created as a shared use path 10 feet wide with a minimum 6 ft buffer from traffic - dense spacing of street trees can protect pedestrians and bicyclists from traveling cars.
- It seems there is very little outdoor space/plazas/courtyards for students. Some exterior space should be created for student and faculty use.
- Consider facilitating fields of solar panels on the roof.

Magruder HS, Major Capital Project (2027): 5939 Muncaster Mill Rd, Derwood

- The main entrance of the school should face the street, not the parking lot. This front should have a primary entry and possibly a plaza for civic gatherings, hang out for students and public art or memorials.
  - Consider removing the front drop-off lane to create a front civic plaza with access to a wide sidewalk along Muncaster Mill Road.
  - If the front drop-off lane were to remain, it should be parallel parking only – angled front-in parking facing the street diminishes the civic character of the school and creates a ‘retail strip’ type character.
- Consider creating a driveway or narrow street from the traffic circle on Heartwood Drive directly east of the school to the west along the edge of the school site to Muncaster Mill Road. This new drive/road could link the adjacent residential neighborhood to the school, reduce curb cuts along Muncaster Mill Road and help focus parking and bus loading along the school’s southern side, allowing expansion of the school to the north.
  - Consider having car pick-up at one side of the school and bus drop off and pick-up along the eastern curb of Muncaster Mill Road. Buses could park to wait for students in a toe to tail parking configuration to maintain safety.
- The building currently fronts onto Muncaster Mill Road with sidewalks extending north and south of the school, but there is no sidewalk in front of the school. There should be a shared use path along the edge of Muncaster Mill Road 10 feet wide with a minimum 6 feet buffer from traffic, with a planting strip that is lined with street trees. Street trees should also be planted adjacent to the curbs at the existing sidewalks north and south of the school.
  - The County Executive is recommending funds in the 6-year CIP for a bikeway on Bowie Mill Road and part of Muncaster Mill Road, so adding a path in front of the school would leverage the investments in those bikeways.
- It seems there is very little outdoor space/plazas/courtyards for students. Some exterior space should be created for student and faculty use.
- Consider facilitating fields of solar panels on the roof.

Piney Branch ES, Major Capital Project (TBD): 7510 Maple Ave, Silver Spring

*This school site is included in the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment, which is currently underway and expected to be completed in 2023. As with any master plan, this plan amendment could identify a potential new school site. The following comments pertain to Piney Branch ES remaining at the current site.*

- The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* recommends one-way separated bike lanes along the Maple Avenue frontage.
- Maintain the building proximity to Maple Avenue and create a more pleasant and inviting park/plaza character along the street. Grant Avenue should be reconfigured to provide a building elevation that frames the street across from the Takoma Park Town Hall, Library and Community Center rather than just providing service docks and garbage cans.
  - Consider removing the parking lot in front of the school. Parking could be located to the east side of the site and accessed near Lee Avenue.
  - If a new building or addition were to be built, it should be positioned at the west of the current building’s location to frame the corner of Grant and Maple Avenues. It could

move closer to Maple Avenue to allow for additional outdoor space to the north of the building.

- Enhance pedestrian access from the sidewalk network to the school entrance. Planning staff's understanding is that most students arrive at this school by walking or biking.
  - The sidewalk should be either separated from the street curb with a planting strip, or tree wells can be provided within the wide sidewalk. Street trees should be planted along the street curb in front of the school to buffer pedestrians and school bikers.
- Enhance the building's relationship with the park behind the school, including potentially rooftop recreation, and continue to take advantage of the grade change between Maple Avenue and the park.
- Consider allowing buses to use the parallel parking area along Maple Avenue for pick-up and drop-off. It could be used by area residents in non-school hours. If a new school is built, consider locating car drop off along Grant Avenue or within the parking lot to the east of the school.
- Consider sharing use of facilities with the adjacent community center.
  - Explore opportunities to keep a pool as an amenity to the students and community.
  - If the school building were to be moved closer to Maple Street, play courts could be located to the north of the building and shared by the community center in off-school hours.
  - Consider working with Takoma Park/Montgomery Parks & Recreation Department to create a larger junior high sized gym.

#### Eastern MS, Major Capital Project (TBD): 300 University Blvd E, Silver Spring

- The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* recommends a side path along the East University frontage. Minimum 10ft wide, with a 8 ft landscaped buffer from traffic, given that University Blvd is a six-lane road.
- If the building were to be replaced, it should be reconstructed orthogonally to the East Franklin Avenue and University Boulevard frontages and located closer to the corner, providing a main entrance along Franklin that can be seen and easily accessed from the adjacent sidewalk network.
  - Parking can be located to the eastern side of the building between the school and playfields. Additional playfields could be expanded towards the southern side of the school.
- The relationship between the school and pedestrian/bike network needs to be improved.
  - Prominent tree-lined sidewalks should be in front of the school along both University Boulevard and Franklin Avenue, which are highly used streets, to provide buffer to pedestrians and bikers.
- Planning staff supports the separation between buses and car drop-off, but not at the detriment of pushing the building footprint farther into the site. If the building were to be replaced, the vehicular access drive that currently connects the two separate driveways should be removed to allow the new building footprint to occupy that space.
- There are three curb cuts on Franklin Avenue. In compliance with the Vision Zero and access management best practices, staff recommends consolidating to a maximum of one curb cut on each frontage, especially since this is a median-divided boulevard.

- Consider adding a curbside parking lane along East Franklin Avenue that allows for bus drop off and loading during school days and provides car parking at other times. Buses could then turn around the central median to return to University.
- Consider saving some of the interior or fronting court trees for a new courtyard or open space locations within a new school.