

# REVIEW OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE’S RECOMMENDED FY26 CAPITAL BUDGET AND AMENDMENTS TO THE FY25-30 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM FOR MCPS

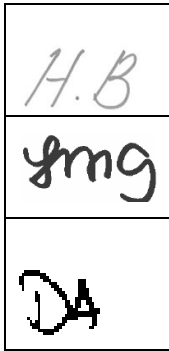
## Description

Montgomery Planning staff annually reviews the County Executive’s Recommended Capital Budget and Capital Improvements Program for MCPS. The following report provides an overview of the County Executive’s Recommendation, a summary of individual school capital projects included in the Board of Education’s Request, and an analysis of MCPS’s six-year projections accompanying the FY26 CIP Request.

Completed:  
02/05/2025

MCPB  
Item No. 7  
02/13/2025

2425 Reddie Drive  
Floor 14  
Wheaton, MD 20902



Hye-Soo Baek, Adequate Public Facilities Planner III, Countywide Planning & Policy Division

[Hye-Soo.Baek@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Hye-Soo.Baek@montgomeryplanning.org), (301) 495-2192

Lisa Govoni, Planning Supervisor, Countywide Planning & Policy Division,

[Lisa.Govoni@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Lisa.Govoni@montgomeryplanning.org), (301) 650-5624

David Anspacher, Chief, Countywide Planning & Policy Division,

[David.Anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:David.Anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org), (301) 495-2191

## SUMMARY

- The Board of Education’s Requested Amendment to the FY25-30 CIP is \$1.85 billion, the same amount as the adopted FY 2025-2030 CIP. The County Executive’s Recommended CIP provides \$1.74 billion for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) capital projects but holds capacity to fully fund the BoE’s Request.
- If all projects within the FY25-30 CIP are completed at their approved scope and schedules, MCPS is projected to have a surplus of approximately 10,100 elementary school seats, 3,800 middle school seats, and 2,200 high school seats in the 2030-2031 school year.
- The six-year projections for elementary schools show a vast range of utilization rates among elementary schools, ranging from 57% to 148%. Of the 137 elementary schools, 40 are expected to be underutilized at less than 80% utilization rate in 2030. On the other hand, only five schools are projected to be overutilized with at least a 92-seat deficit in the sixth year of the CIP period, which is MCPS’s threshold for considering a classroom addition.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
REVIEW OF AMENDMENTS TO THE FY25-30 CIP FOR MCPS.....	1
County Executive’s Recommendation vs. Board of Education’s Request .....	1
School Capital projects Included in BoE’s Requested Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP.....	2
REVIEW OF MCPS’S FY26 CIP PROJECTIONS .....	2
Analysis of Elementary School Projections .....	3

## INTRODUCTION

The County Executive's FY26 Recommended Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) was published on January 15, 2025. Before that, the Board of Education (BoE) released their Requested FY26 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in November 2024.

The County Executive's Recommended CIP can be found at:

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy26/ciprec/FY26\\_Recommended\\_Capital\\_Budget.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy26/ciprec/FY26_Recommended_Capital_Budget.pdf)

The Board of Education's Requested CIP can be found at:

[https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP26\\_BOERequestedCIP.pdf](https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP26_BOERequestedCIP.pdf)

The following report provides an overview of the County Executive's Recommendation, a summary of individual school capital projects included in the Board of Education's Request, and an analysis of MCPS's six-year projections accompanying the FY26 CIP Request.

## REVIEW OF AMENDMENTS TO THE FY25-30 CIP FOR MCPS

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

The Board of Education's Requested Amendment to the FY25-30 CIP is \$1.85 billion, the same amount as the adopted FY 2025-2030 CIP. While the total expenditure level remains the same, the Request includes \$21.6 million in additional local funding to address a gap in State aid that the Charles W. Woodward High School reopening project was found to be ineligible for.

The County Executive's Recommendation would provide a total of \$1.74 billion but holds the capacity to fully fund the Board of Education's Request. The final State aid allocation is unlikely to be known until after final Council action is taken on the FY26 capital budget in May, but the County Executive estimates MCPS's net State aid shortfall to be \$15.5 million after considering anticipated increases of State aid in other projects within MCPS's CIP. The County Executive's recommendation therefore holds \$15.5 million aside to cover the net shortfall until the final shortfall is known. It also reflects more than \$98 million in spending on MCPS projects that occurred ahead of schedule and will no longer occur in the FY25-30 period.

In previous years, a discrepancy between the Board of Education's Request and the County Executive's Recommendation would typically lead to MCPS having to present a list of 'non-recommended reductions' and discussing spending priorities within the Requested CIP with the Council's Education & Culture Committee. The County Executive's Recommendation for the FY26 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP however indicates that all projects in the Board of Education's Request are expected to be able to proceed as scheduled.

**SCHOOL CAPITAL PROJECTS INCLUDED IN BOE’S REQUESTED AMENDMENTS TO THE FY25-30 CIP**

The Board of Education’s Requested Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP include the following individual school projects and scheduled completion dates:

**Table 1. Individual School Capital Projects Included in BoE’s Requested Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP**

School	Capital Project Type	Scheduled Completion
Silver Spring Int’l MS	Addition	2025
Greencastle ES	Addition	2025
Burtonsville ES	Replacement	2026
JoAnn Leleck ES	Replacement	2026
Crown HS	New School	2027
Northwood HS	Addition/Facility Upgrade	2027
Charles W. Woodward HS	Reopening	2027
Highland View ES	Addition	2027
B-CC/WJ Cluster ES	New School	TBD

While all projects with expected completion dates within the six-year CIP cycle will be able to remain on their approved schedules, the Board of Education’s Request entails reallocation of funds that were approved for other projects, mostly as placeholder funds, to cover increased expenditures at Charles W. Woodward High School, Crown High School, and Northwood High School. The increased expenditures include \$28 million to complete the interior of the auditorium and associated spaces at Woodward High School; \$20 million to complete the interior of the auditorium at Crown High School as well as build shelled classrooms and labs and construct the stadium; and \$5 million for stadium upgrades at Northwood High School. The Board of Education’s Request instead reallocates some of the CIP spending previously approved for the Early Childhood Centers Project and Major Capital projects at Cold Spring Elementary School, Damascus Elementary School, Twinbrook Elementary School, and Whetstone Elementary School to offset the increases.

**REVIEW OF MCPS’S FY26 CIP PROJECTIONS**

MCPS’s capital planning decisions regarding additional classroom space needs are typically made based on their six-year projections that accompany the CIP request. As part of the FY26 CIP review, Planning staff analyzed the six-year projections (projections for the 2030-2031 school year) to better understand the overall outlook of the County’s public school infrastructure adequacy and needs.

In the current 2024-2025 school year, the school system is operating with a combined surplus of 7,931 elementary school seats and 4,507 middle school seats, but a combined deficit of 864 high school seats. Through capital projects scheduled within the FY25-30 CIP period, the school system will be able to increase capacity by a net of 879 elementary school seats, 64 middle school seats, and 5,305 high school seats. If all projects are completed at their approved scope and schedules, MCPS will be

expected to operate with a surplus of approximately 10,100 elementary school seats, 3,800 middle school seats, and 2,200 high school seats in the 2030-2031 school year.

At the middle school and high school level, there is currently a boundary study in process to determine who will attend the new high schools scheduled to open in 2027. The Board of Education approved boundary study scopes include 14 middle schools and 8 high schools for the reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School and 17 middle schools and 11 high schools for the opening of Crown High School, which is more than three quarters of the County’s middle schools and high schools. This creates an opportunity for MCPS to balance the utilization rate between schools. At the elementary school level, however, there is no known plan within the FY25-30 CIP to address the utilization rate imbalance between individual schools.

### ANALYSIS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROJECTIONS

Countywide, the six-year utilization rate projection of all elementary schools collectively is 87%. The six-year projections for individual schools however show a vast range of utilization rates, from as low as 57% at S. Christa McAuliffe Elementary School, which had a classroom addition completed in 2019, to as high as 148% at Mill Creek Towne Elementary School. According to MCPS’s Educational Facilities Master Plan publications,

*“Unless otherwise specified by Board action, elementary, middle, and high schools should operate in an efficient facility utilization range of 80 to 100 percent of program capacity. If a school is projected to be underutilized (less than 80 percent) or overutilized (over 100 percent), a boundary study, non-capital action, or a capital project may be considered.”*

Of MCPS’s 137 elementary schools, 40 (29%) are expected to be underutilized at less than 80% in 2030. The surplus capacity projected to be available at these schools is 7,144 seats. In addition, of the 40 schools projected to be underutilized in 2030, 24 of them have or will have increased their capacity through a recent CIP project - two schools (see Table 2), Burtonsville and Highland View Elementary Schools, will have their capital projects completed during the FY25-30 CIP period; four schools had their capital projects completed in the past five years; and five other schools have had their capital projects completed between five to ten years ago.

Table 2. Elementary Schools Projected to be Underutilized (less than 80% Utilization Rate) in 2030 that Received Capacity Increase through CIP Since 2005

School Name	Capital Project Type	Completion Year	# of Seats Increased at Completion	Surplus Seats Projected for 2030
Highland View ES	Addition	2027	197	184
Burtonsville ES	Replacement	2026	288	193
Dr. Ronald E. McNair ES	Addition	2023	147	162
Westbrook ES	Addition	2022	92	233
Westbrook ES	Addition	2013	276	

School Name	Capital Project Type	Completion Year	# of Seats Increased at Completion	Surplus Seats Projected for 2030
Montgomery Knolls ES	Addition	2020	144	217
Pine Crest ES	Addition	2020	147	174
S. Christa McAuliffe ES	Addition	2019	217	325
Snowden Farm ES	New School	2019	774	329
Kensington-Parkwood ES	Addition	2018	298	315
Rosemary Hills ES	Addition	2015	200	163
North Chevy Chase ES	Addition	2015	92	141
Candlewood ES	Rev/Ex	2014	116	181
Wilson Wims ES	New School	2014	759	259
Bradley Hills ES	Addition	2013	321	229
Wyngate ES	Addition	2013	321	189
Beverly Farms ES	Rev/Ex	2012	115	207
Somerset ES	Addition	2010	82	210
Somerset ES	Rev/Ex	2005	(no data)	
Takoma Park ES	Addition	2010	256	224
Stedwick ES	Addition	2008	228	215
Travilah ES	Addition	2008	228	215
Wayside ES	Addition	2008	185	149
College Gardens ES	Rev/Ex	2007	286	173
Great Seneca Creek ES	New School	2006	685	127
Gaithersburg ES	Addition	2005	(no data)	247

At the other end of the efficiency range, 25 elementary schools are expected to be at a utilization rate above 100%. According to MCPS’s capital planning guidelines however, for a classroom addition at an individual school to be considered for funding in the CIP, the enrollment needs to exceed its program capacity by a minimum of 92 seats or more in the sixth year of the CIP period for an elementary school. Of the 25 schools operating above the efficient range of utilization, only five are projected to have seat deficit levels that exceed the classroom addition threshold of 92 seats (see Table 3). Moreover, all five of those schools are adjacent to underutilized schools operating at less than 80%, and the total surplus seats projected to be available at the adjacent underutilized schools exceed the seat deficits projected at the overutilized schools.

Table 3 Surplus Seats Available in Schools Adjacent to Elementary Schools Projected to have Seat Deficit Above MCPS’s CIP Threshold for Classroom Additions (92 Seats)

School Name	Projected Seat Deficit	Surplus Seats Projected in Adjacent Schools Underutilized at Less than 80%	Total Seat Differential of All Adjacent Schools
Mill Creek Towne ES	171	181	272
Burning Tree ES	123	418	516
Farmland ES	115	473	596

School Name	Projected Seat Deficit	Surplus Seats Projected in Adjacent Schools Underutilized at Less than 80%	Total Seat Differential of All Adjacent Schools
Oak View ES	98	799	1,117
Lake Seneca ES	94	610	916

While there are still concerns about enrollment growth and overutilization at some schools, the broader context must be considered before additional capital investment is considered for any individual school. As it is, K-12 enrollment is declining nationwide<sup>1</sup>, and more school districts are facing decisions on whether to close buildings with lower enrollment as their overall enrollment declines. In Montgomery County too, elementary school enrollment already started plateauing before the pandemic, peaking in 2017, and has been on a decline since. MCPS projects the enrollment decline at the elementary school level to continue in the next six years. As the elementary school age group cohorts that are expected to be smaller than previous years progress through each grade level in the next six years, the middle schools and high schools are likely to see their enrollment trends start to decline in subsequent years as well. If the County wants to avoid repeating the history of school closures due to enrollment decline soon, school planning practices should start shifting focus from addressing each overutilized school in isolation to prioritizing a better balance of utilization between adjacent and nearby schools.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

In previous years, the Planning Board transmitted preliminary comments related to site design considerations for individual school projects included in the Board of Education’s Requested CIP. For the FY26 CIP review, there are no comments related to individual school capital projects to transmit as there are no new projects being considered in the Amended FY25-30 CIP for MCPS. Planning staff instead recommends transmitting a summary of the FY26 CIP projection analysis of elementary school utilization rates to the County Council and Board of Education to better inform future discussions about the county’s public school infrastructure adequacy.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). Public School Enrollment. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved Feb. 5, 2025, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cga>.