

Attachment A
Montgomery Planning Staff Comments on MCPS Capital Projects

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Comments for New Projects in the Board of Education’s Request

Burning Tree ES, Major Capital Project (2031):

7900 Beech Tree Rd, Bethesda, MD 20817

Comments are based on site plan options presented by MCPS in May 2025 labeled ‘4C(A) – Courtyard Scheme’ and ‘4C(B) – Open Court Scheme’ (see Figure 1 and Figure 2)

- Possibly allow front elevations facing the street to be roughly parallel with the streets to provide a clear, civic presence to the neighborhood.
- Possibly create a civic plaza/square in front.
- Improve pedestrian access to the park from the school and neighborhood.
 - The school uses the fields a lot so the design should accommodate children moving between the school and the park.
 - Fields are permitted for public use, which should be a consideration in the design.
- Explore opportunities to rearrange the parking area by aligning it more to the east. The goal is to strengthen the connection between the school, the park, and the adjoining community.
 - Any improvements to the parking area on parkland should maintain the general location and number of parking spaces, and serve as parking for public park users.
 - The parking lot on parkland should not be utilized to improve the flow of school traffic during pick-up/drop-off.
- Provide adequate landscape buffers between surrounding homes and surface parking.

- If proceeding with 'Approach 4C(A) – Courtyard Scheme', possibly allow bus loop to cross the front with entry or exit at each end. Car drop off can be towards the parking area.
- If proceeding with 'Approach 4C(B) – Open Court Scheme', possibly allow buses to drop students off along the street edge. This could be neighborhood on-street parking at off-bus drop-off hours. If possible, this option is preferred for buses to minimize impervious surfaces on site and to maximize the existing infrastructure of the streets.
- Consider including a gym with a larger, full-sized basketball court that can accommodate multiple classes and can be made available to the greater community after school hours.
- Stormwater management should be limited to MCPS property.
- Any concepts that are advanced that include new amenities or impacts on parkland will need to go through Parks' Concept Review before they would be approved at Mandatory Referral. Ultimately, any work approved on parkland would require a Park Construction Permit prior to construction.

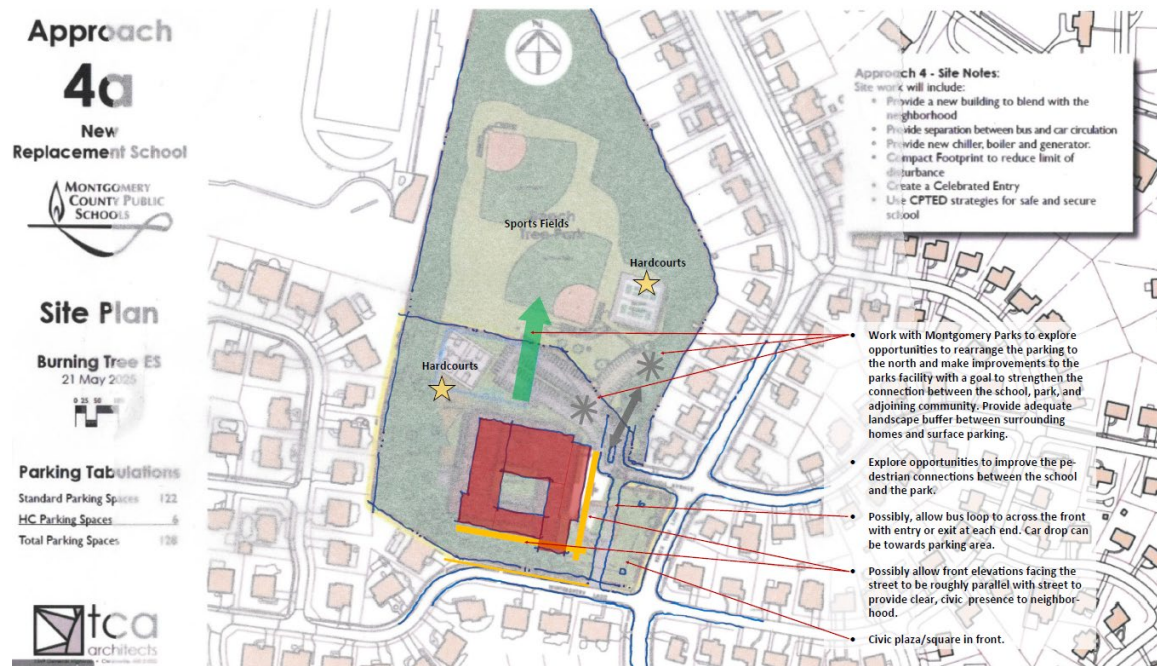


Figure 1. MCPS Site Plan Approach 4C (A) - Courtyard Scheme

Approach

4c

New Replacement School



Site Plan

Burning Tree ES
21 May 2025



Parking Tabulations

Standard Parking Spaces	135
HC Parking Spaces	6
Total Parking Spaces	141

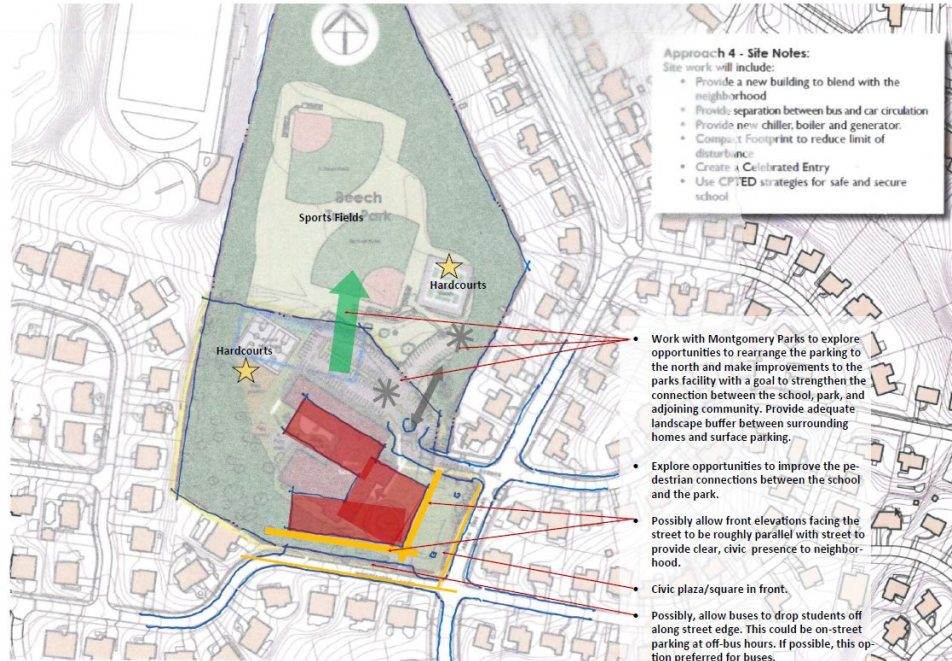


Figure 2. MCPS Site Plan Approach 4C (B) – Open Court Scheme

Highland View ES, Major Capital Project (2031):

9010 Providence Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20901

- The Providence Avenue entrance should be a prominent entry to the school.
- Where possible, place new buildings or additions and parking away from environmentally sensitive areas. Minimize impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Explore using structured parking solutions to maximize land available for non-vehicular use. If necessary, expanded parking could be located in front of the school adjacent to the entryway, behind a line of street trees.
- Improve existing sidewalks and bike paths along school frontage so it can be extended beyond school property, connecting into neighborhoods.
- The existing pathways that link the school to adjacent neighborhoods should be maintained or even expanded to more areas of the neighborhood.
- Conserve as much of the forest on site as possible. Maximize preservation of on-site planting and trees.
- If expanding, consider including a gym with a full-sized basketball court that can accommodate multiple classes and can be made available to the greater community after school hours.
- Consider the addition of solar panels on roofs.

Eastern MS, Major Capital Project (2030):

300 University Blvd E, Silver Spring, MD 20901

- Construct new school buildings orthogonally to the East Franklin Avenue frontage. Provide a prominent entrance along East Franklin Avenue that can be seen and easily accessed from the adjacent sidewalk.

- Place the building close to the street edge. Minimize vehicular queuing, circulation, and parking between the school building and the street, concentrating it to the southeast and eastern portions of the site instead.
- Remove curb cuts onto University Boulevard and minimize curb cuts onto East Franklin Avenue to a maximum of two.
 - Consider an efficient circulation loop instead of separate entry/exit layouts for buses and cars.
- Improve the relationship between the school and the surrounding pedestrian/bike network. Deliver frontage improvements, including tree-lined sidewalks and adequate buffers from traffic for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - Per the Bicycle Master Plan, there is a breezeway side path along the University Boulevard frontage. The development of this frontage improvement will require an 8-foot-wide side path and 6-foot-wide sidewalk separated by a 2-foot-wide bike/ped buffer with an 8-foot-wide street buffer and a 2-foot-wide maintenance buffer within the ROW.
- Provide a pronounced connection between the school and playfields. Minimize queuing, circulation, and parking between the school and playfields.
- Design playfields to be accessible to the community outside of school use. Provide a welcoming entrance to the fields from East Franklin Avenue.
- Provide adequate landscape buffer with trees between:
 - the fields and University Boulevard to provide a safe and protected area between people and balls on the fields and drivers on the boulevard.
 - the surrounding homes and the field for aesthetic relief.
 - surrounding homes and surface parking/bus loop for aesthetic relief.
- Preserve existing trees and maximize plantings on site within open spaces and parking lots to the greatest extent feasible.
- Consider the addition of solar panels on roofs.
- Explore using structured parking solutions to maximize available land for buildings, open space and recreational facilities.
- When exploring longer term site enhancements, consider co-location strategies, including but not limited to workforce housing for teachers and staff, MCPS office space, community facilities, resiliency hubs etc.

General Comments Regarding School Site Design

- Site design should promote schools as safe, accessible, civic public buildings by:
 - Emphasizing street presence by moving buildings forward to the street edge.
 - All schools should be designed to service students, staff, and the surrounding communities, 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 and parking, freeing space for buildings, programming, and open space.
- Explore agreements with Montgomery County Department of Transportation to use parallel parking areas along street frontages for bus drop off and pick up, thereby reducing impervious pavement on school sites.
- 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.
 - Providing county-approved bike racks in line with recommendations in the Bicycle Master Plan Biennial Monitoring Report, 2021-2022, pages 76-81. Bike racks should be provided at a rate of 1 per 20 programmed capacity, using inverted-U style racks.
 - Minimizing the number of curb cuts on frontage 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 fixtures, and/or natural daylighting, etc.

Previously Transmitted Comments Applicable to Projects in the Early Pre-Construction Stage

[Cold Spring ES, Major Capital Project \(2031\):](#)

9201 Falls Chapel Way, Potomac 20854

- If a new building is built, place it close to Falls Chapel Way and provide the main entrance and front of the building towards the street.
 - The bus drop off may be brought to the front of the building, but the parking lot should be tucked away to the side or back of the building.
 - Providing on-street parking on Falls Chapel Way can help slow traffic.
- Make the site safer and more accessible for pedestrians and bikes.
 - Provide wide sidewalks in front of the building, and plant street trees for shade and buffer from vehicular traffic.

- When a sidewalk crosses a driveway entrance, bring the driveway up to the sidewalk elevation rather than ramping the sidewalk down to the street elevation.
- Construct a separated bikeway (side path) along Falls Chapel Way as identified in the *Bicycle Master Plan*.
- Connect a pedestrian path to the existing Copenhaver Park trail and consider extending the trail to a loop around the site or field.
- Preserve and improve the pedestrian link from Copenhaver Dr. to the school site, and consider providing a similar connection to Orchard Brook Dr.
- Existing bike racks do not meet county standards. Replace the existing racks with at least 12 inverted u style racks near the main entrance to the school.
- Plant large canopy trees along pedestrian paths and try to preserve existing trees.
- Any proposed impact on Montgomery Park’s property will require review through the Concept Review process.
- Provide drainage improvements and stormwater runoff reductions on MCPS property to protect downstream aquatic resources.
- Consider including a gym with a full-sized basketball court (without locker rooms) in the program that can accommodate students in a larger elementary school and be made available to the community after school hours.
- Consider the addition of solar panels on roofs to support the county to achieve its *Climate Action Plan* goals through a net zero energy school design.

[Piney Branch ES, Major Capital Project \(2031\):](#)

7510 Maple Ave, Silver Spring

- The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* recommends one-way separated bike lanes along the Maple Avenue frontage.
- Maintain the building's 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 on 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 the City of Takoma Park, Montgomery County Parks, and Montgomery County Department of Recreation to create a larger junior high sized gym.

[Damascus HS, Major Capital Project \(2031\):](#)

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 stormwater 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.

Priority List for Installing Bicycle Parking Spaces at Schools

- The Bicycle Master Plan Biennial Monitoring Report, 2021-2022 recommends prioritizing the installation of bicycle parking at the schools identified in the table below:

Table 1: Highest Priority Schools for Bicycle Parking Upgrades with Estimated Costs

School Name	School Type	Title I/Focus or High FARMS Rate	Shortage of Adequate Bicycle Parking Spaces	Estimated Cost
Dr. Ronald A. McNair	ES	N	32	\$3,000
Glenallen	ES	Y	38	\$18,000
Bells Mills	ES	N	32	\$11,000
Poolesville	ES	N	28	\$12,000
Sligo Creek	ES	N	34	\$20,000
Olney	ES	N	32	\$8,000
Thomas W. Pyle	MS	N	76	\$24,000
Silver Spring Int'l	MS	Y	54	\$28,000
North Bethesda	MS	N	62	\$23,000
Rosa M. Parks	MS	N	48	\$17,000
Westland	MS	N	54	\$13,000
Bethesda-Chevy Chase	HS	N	124	\$54,000
Quince Orchard	HS	N	90	\$49,000
Walt Whitman	HS	N	112	\$26,000
Walter Johnson	HS	N	114	\$40,000
Total			930	\$346,000

- Ten Title I/Focus or schools with high FARMS rates should be considered for priority funding over the next six years, including the schools identified in Table 2:

Table 2: Priority Title I/Focus or Schools with High FARMS Rates

School Name	School Type	Title I/Focus or High FARMS Rate	Shortage of Adequate Bicycle Parking Spaces	Estimated Cost
Rolling Terrace	ES	Y	36	\$16,000
Stedwick	ES	Y	36	\$22,000
South Lake	ES	Y	34	\$20,000
Arcola	ES	Y	32	\$17,000
Roberto W. Clemente	MS	Y	60	\$26,000
Forest Oak	MS	Y	48	\$23,000
Eastern	MS	Y	50	\$21,000
White Oak	MS	Y	50	\$21,000
Sligo	MS	Y	48	\$5,000
Gaithersburg	HS	Y	124	\$60,000
Total			518	\$231,000