



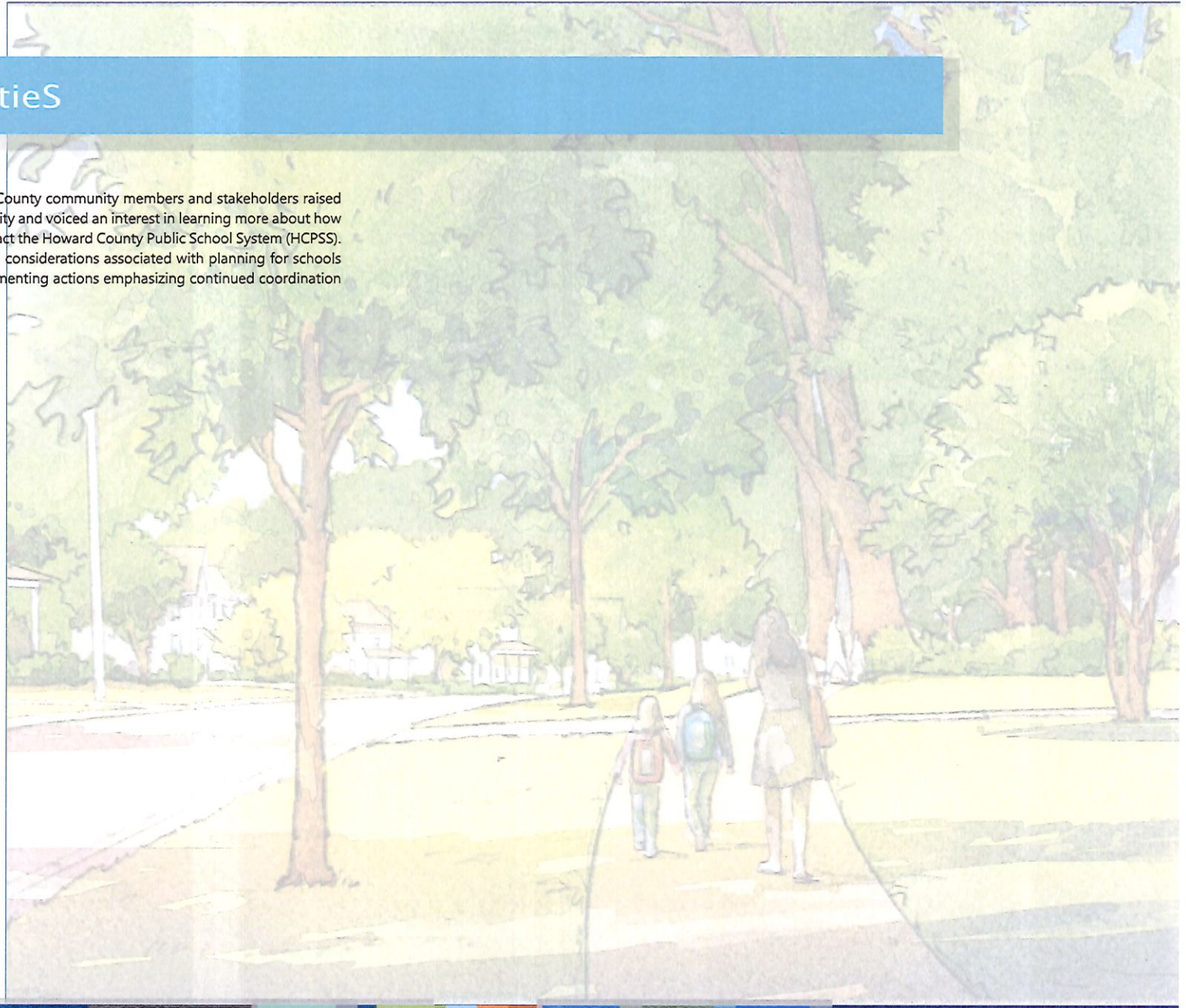
chapter 8

Public School Facilities



Public School Facilities

During the HoCo By Design planning process, Howard County community members and stakeholders raised concerns about the County's public school system capacity and voiced an interest in learning more about how the County's future growth and development could impact the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). This chapter provides an overview of the processes and considerations associated with planning for schools in Howard County. It concludes with policies and implementing actions emphasizing continued coordination and collaboration between the County and HCPSS.



What We heard

Community members repeatedly mentioned the County's high-performing public schools as a major draw to Howard County. At the same time, concerns about continued population growth and student generation were commonly cited. The attractiveness of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) has contributed to rising housing demand and high home values. Many parents say that the growing student population creates overcrowded school facilities and budgetary challenges at a time when many facilities are aging and in need of renovation. There is concern that school overcrowding detracts from the quality of the educational experience for current and future students. Some community members have indicated that new residential development exacerbates school crowding and that developers have not done enough to address available school capacity. Others have suggested that capacity exists within the entire school system and that overcrowding can be addressed by better aligning students with available resources.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Focus Groups Findings

- School overcrowding and redistricting are top concerns when thinking about growth.
- Create more opportunities for career development and vocational/technical training for youth and adults.



Strategic Advisory Group Findings

As part of the HoCo By Design planning process, the Strategic Advisory Group for School Capacity and Growth (SAG) considered a range of factors impacting planning for school facilities and population growth. The SAG explored roles and responsibilities of county government, HCPSS, and the Board of Education relative to school planning. They also discussed processes and procedures around school site identification, facilities design, and funding models.

The SAG also discussed the rigidity and long planning horizons associated with state and local capital funding mechanisms. Members suggested that innovative approaches to financing, such as public-private partnerships, might offer opportunities to build new or upgrade existing facilities. To explore this topic, the group heard a presentation from the Prince George's County Public School System about its public-private partnership model which has provided opportunities to construct and maintain several school facilities.

In conversation about HCPSS resource limitations, some SAG members raised concerns about the deferred costs of system maintenance, which must compete with the demands of new school capacity for budget priority. The SAG seemed to agree that capital planning must balance the need for both new school construction and long-term maintenance of existing HCPSS facilities. Some SAG members favored policies that would require developers to bear a greater share of the fiscal burden when new housing adds students to the system.

The SAG recognized that land scarcity in eastern portions of the County creates many challenges to situating new schools close to the populations they serve. As such, members recommended that future school facilities planning considers flexibility in school size and configuration criteria as one solution for meeting evolving needs. HCPSS staff, who contributed significantly to the work of the SAG, also noted that to maximize limited acreage, school facilities often require variances from land use regulations for access, site design, or building construction. Members also encouraged decisionmakers to consider commercial real estate redevelopment opportunities resulting from pandemic-related shifts in economic patterns—like reduced demand for offices and brick-and-mortar retail. Other voices suggested shared amenities like parks and athletic fields, housing, or other public resources could leverage new funding streams and maximize utilization of limited available land area.

SAG members emphasized that continued coordination between the County and HCPSS will ensure efficient and high-quality public education delivery into the future. Specifically, future strategic planning and capital improvement planning by HCPSS must be coordinated with the location, timing, and magnitude of development identified in HoCo By Design.

Overview of Howard County Public School System Planning

Introduction

School-age children in Howard County attend public schools in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). HCPSS is governed by an independently-elected Board of Education (BOE), which consists of eight members and works collaboratively with the County Executive and County Council to develop and adopt HCPSS' operating and capital budgets. Decisions concerning school capacity and utilization, class size, attendance areas, new school construction, and facility maintenance and design are the purview of HCPSS and the BOE.

~~In As of September~~ 2023, there were 78 schools in Howard County, including 42 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, 13 high schools, and three education centers. There were 57,676 students ~~(including pre-k students)~~ enrolled in HCPSS schools for the 2022-2023 school year. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a decrease in student enrollment in recent years, but student population growth is expected to rise annually and is stressing many Howard County schools.

Capital Budget and Long-Range Planning

Tied to the County's capital budget cycle, school planning in Howard County is an annual process that begins with the HCPSS Feasibility Study. This document provides a comprehensive review of school boundary options focused on capacity utilization targets, presents student enrollment projections and trends, and state and local capacities for each school, and develops capital improvement program strategies. This study is prepared by HCPSS' Office of School Planning and presented to the BOE each June. The Feasibility Study informs the HCPSS capital budget for the following fiscal year by providing detailed information on how many students are projected to attend each school in the system and recent attendance area changes. The ~~student enrollment~~ projection horizon is over a 10 ~~-to-12~~ -year period. The Feasibility Study is also used as the basis for the following year's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) school capacity chart that is presented to the BOE and adopted by the County Council each July.



adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (aPFO)

Howard County has had an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) in place for decades. APFO was ~~most-recently~~ amended in 2018 to impose stricter controls for pacing growth from new development in response to school utilization concerns. The adjusted APFO standards postpone new development in a particular school region if the local elementary schools surpass 105% utilization, ~~the elementary regions surpass 105% utilization~~, the middle schools surpass 110% utilization, or the high schools surpass 115% utilization. New residential development is generally "on hold" in many areas of the County due to the APFO schools test, a point discussed further in the Managing Growth chapter. Development projects are retested each year after the County Council adopts a new school capacity chart, as provided by the BOE, and may be "on hold" or delayed for a maximum of four years. ~~This delay provides HCPSS time to plan for and increase capacity through new additions, new schools facilities, and/or redistricting.~~



School Capacity Utilization

HCPSS measures school capacity utilization by weighing student populations against a specific school's available space. The goal is to maintain a utilization rate between 90% and 100%. As per BOE policy, redistricting is considered if capacity utilizations are less than 90% or more than 110%. Capacity determinations for each school are revised periodically to reflect the realities of HCPSS' changing use of buildings, priorities, and educational norms. The annual FO school capacity chart adopted by the County Council is based on the capacity utilization calculations.

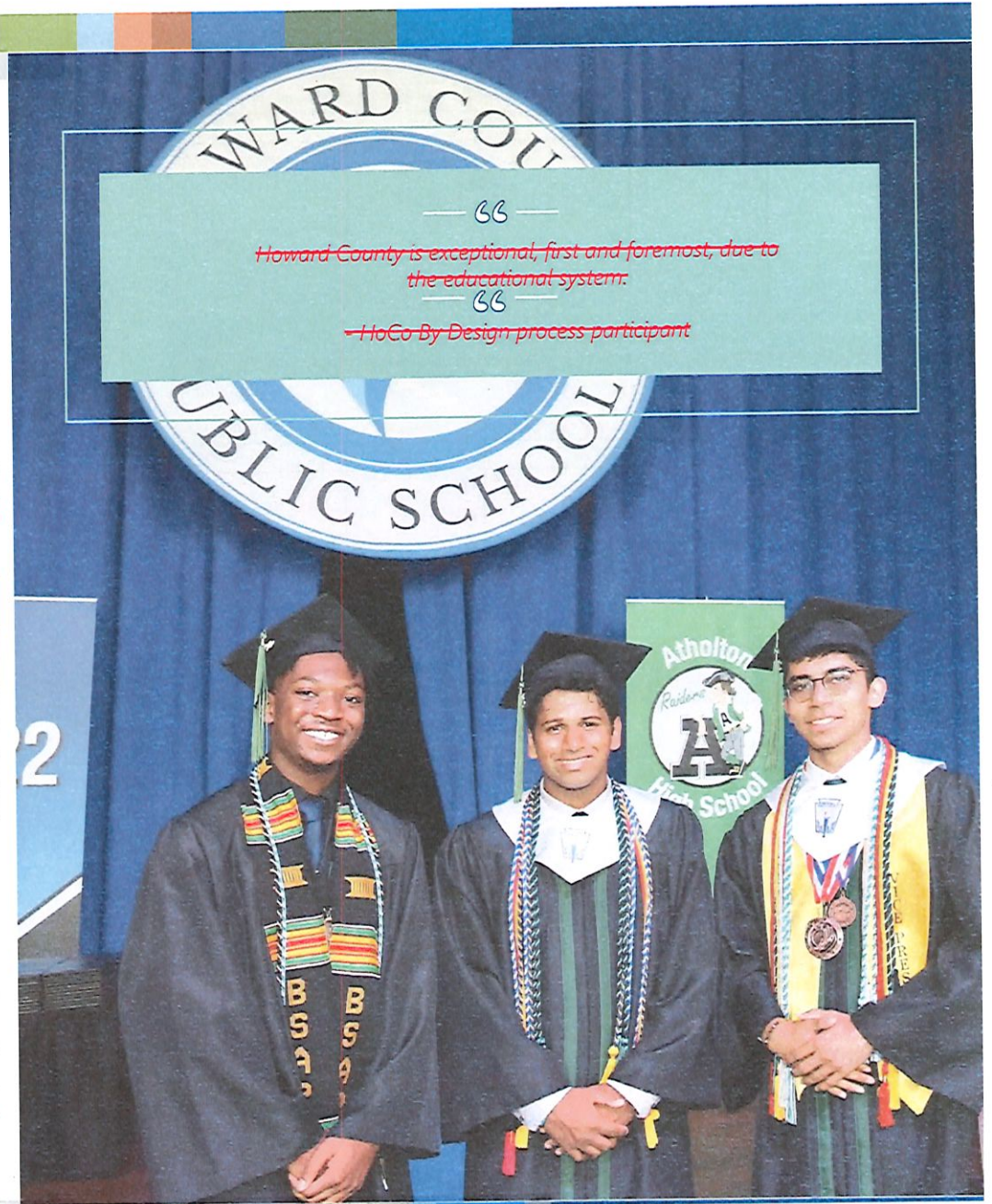
In 2019, the BOE took proactive steps to address HCPSS' capacity issues by initiating a systemwide school boundary review, which revised the County's school attendance areas. The goals of the attendance area revisions were to balance school capacity utilization, provide relief to schools most impacted by overcrowding, and address inequities in the distribution of students participating in the Free and Reduced Meal Program. ~~More recently, in In November 2022 the BOE adopted new school boundaries to accommodate the County's newly built Guilford Park High School. As a result of the added capacity of the new high school and the recent boundary line adjustments, According to the 2023 Feasibility Study, 12 of the 13 all high schools are projected to be under 110% capacity through 2030, with most of the high schools projected to be around or below 100% capacity for the next 10 years.~~

For school year 2022-23, HCPSS elementary schools were utilized at close to 97% of capacity, with underutilized schools in the west balancing some of the high utilization rates at schools in the Central and Eastern areas. Middle schools were utilized at 98% and high school capacity utilization rates were over 105% countywide. This rate will be reduced with the opening of Guilford Park High School in 2023. The highest utilization for both middle and high school levels were in the Eastern and northern schools. Table 8-1 shows these capacity utilization rates at each grade level. The capacities are from the June 2022 Feasibility Study. ~~As discussed on page 17 of the Feasibility Study, the target capacity utilization range for schools is between 90 and 110%.~~ Rates for each school are included in the study.

Level	Capacity	9/30/2022 Enrollments	Capacity Utilization
Elementary	25,457	24,575	96.5%
Middle	13,496	13,167	97.6%
High	17,206	18,362	106.7%
Total	56,159	56,104	99.9%

Source: Howard County Public School System, Office of School Planning

A number of projects have been approved for funding or ~~are were~~ planned in the BOE's latest proposed FY24 capital budget that will add seats to increase capacity in the areas of high capacity utilization. ~~When it opens in the fall of 2023, Guilford Park High School will add added 1,658 high school seats in an area of the County with three high schools utilized at over 110%. An addition of approximately 200 seats to Hammond High School added additional capacity in this area of the County.~~ The Oakland Mills Middle and Dunloggin Middle School renovation and addition projects ~~will add are expected to add 428 approximately 400~~ middle school seats. A renovation and addition is planned for Oakland Mills High School to add ~~approximately 400~~ seats, with an expected completion date of 2029. ~~Further, a 289-seat addition at Hammond High School will be opening in the fall of 2023.~~ Additional renovation and addition projects are planned with 2030 through 2032 completion dates. All of these projects will help to alleviate school crowding in certain areas of the County, based on projected enrollment growth.



— 66 —
Howard County is exceptional, first and foremost, due to the educational system.
 — 66 —
HoCo By Design process participant

Enrollment trends

Sources of Student Growth

To project future enrollment, the HCPSS Office of School Planning estimates enrollment growth based on the following factors: 1) the prior year official enrollment; 2) pre-K move ins; 3) the number of births in Howard County; 4) the five-year history of cohort survival (the ratio of students moving from one grade to the next in the same school); 5) first-time sales of newly-constructed homes; 6) resales of existing homes; 7) apartment turnover; and 8) out-of-district enrollment at regional programs. Each data point is analyzed for each school attendance area based on specific methodologies for each factor.

DPZ provides new housing unit projections to the Office of School Planning each December for use in their enrollment projections and Feasibility Study. The housing unit projections are one of the six eight components outlined above used by the Office of School Planning for their student enrollment projection estimates. The housing unit projections include all recently approved plans not yet constructed, plans currently under review, and future development potential based on zoning capacity for each parcel. The housing unit projections provide a detailed account of when and how much housing may be built in a particular school district up to 20 years in advance. The immediate year projections, based on subdivision and site plans, are more precise indicators of near-term housing unit growth, whereas the out years provide an indication of new unit potential based on zoning capacity. The targeted activity center locations in HoCo By Design will strengthen the outer year projections by providing HCPSS a clear indication of where to expect future growth once zoning consistent with HoCo By Design is in place. Continued coordination between the County and HCPSS is essential to ensure that school capacity projects are planned in activity center areas identified for transformation on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

It is important to note that while new development may impact a crowded school, a significant impact to enrollment each year also comes from turnover of existing housing. This is housing that adds new students to the system upon resale of owner-occupied homes or apartment turnover. For example, an older home occupied by "empty nesters" may not have had school children living there for many years. Upon resale, however, a younger family with school children may move in.

Additionally, as mentioned above, the County provides HCPSS data on new development in the pipeline annually. On average, it takes three years for a project to reach occupancy stage and generate students. Therefore, HCPSS knows the impacts on a particular school or region at least three years in advance or more, if the schools are closed and the project is postponed due to APFO. Although HCPSS may be able to project the future demand for school capacity, only the County and State have the authority to raise revenues for future construction. While APFO can manage enrollment growth from new development by delaying the construction of new units, it does not control student generation from housing turnover that occurs naturally over time.

Tables 8-2 and 8-3 show projected enrollment growth due to new construction, apartment turnover, and resales by school level for the last two years. When comparing these three factors, new construction was projected to account for 17.0% of new student growth in 2021 and 17.5% in 2022. There is also turnover in apartment units, often with younger families moving into larger townhomes or single-family homes as the children age. New students from resales and apartment turnover were projected to account for 83.0% and 82.5% of student growth in 2021 and 2022, respectively, when compared against growth from new home construction. Historical student yield rates from these three housing factors are used to project the future enrollment impact of these factors for each school.

Other factors that impact changes in enrollments include birth rates, cohort survival, and enrollment at regional programs. The HCPSS enrollment projection model includes these additional factors when determining future enrollment estimates.

Table 8-2: HCPSS Student Growth: New Construction vs. Resales of Existing Units & Apartment Turnover (2021)

Level	Apartment Turnover	Resales	New Construction	Total
Elementary	617	689	188	
Middle	(30)	175	81	
High	(10)	97	46	
Total	577	961	315	1,853
Percent	31.1%	51.9%	17.0%	

Source: Howard County Public School System, Office of School Planning

Table 8-3: HCPSS Student Growth: New Construction vs. Resales of Existing Units & Apartment Turnover (2022)

Level	Apartment Turnover	Resales	New Construction	Total
Elementary	587	759	212	
Middle	(70)	193	83	
High	40	144	56	
Total	557	1,096	351	2,004
Percent	27.8%	54.7%	17.5%	

Source: Howard County Public School System, Office of School Planning

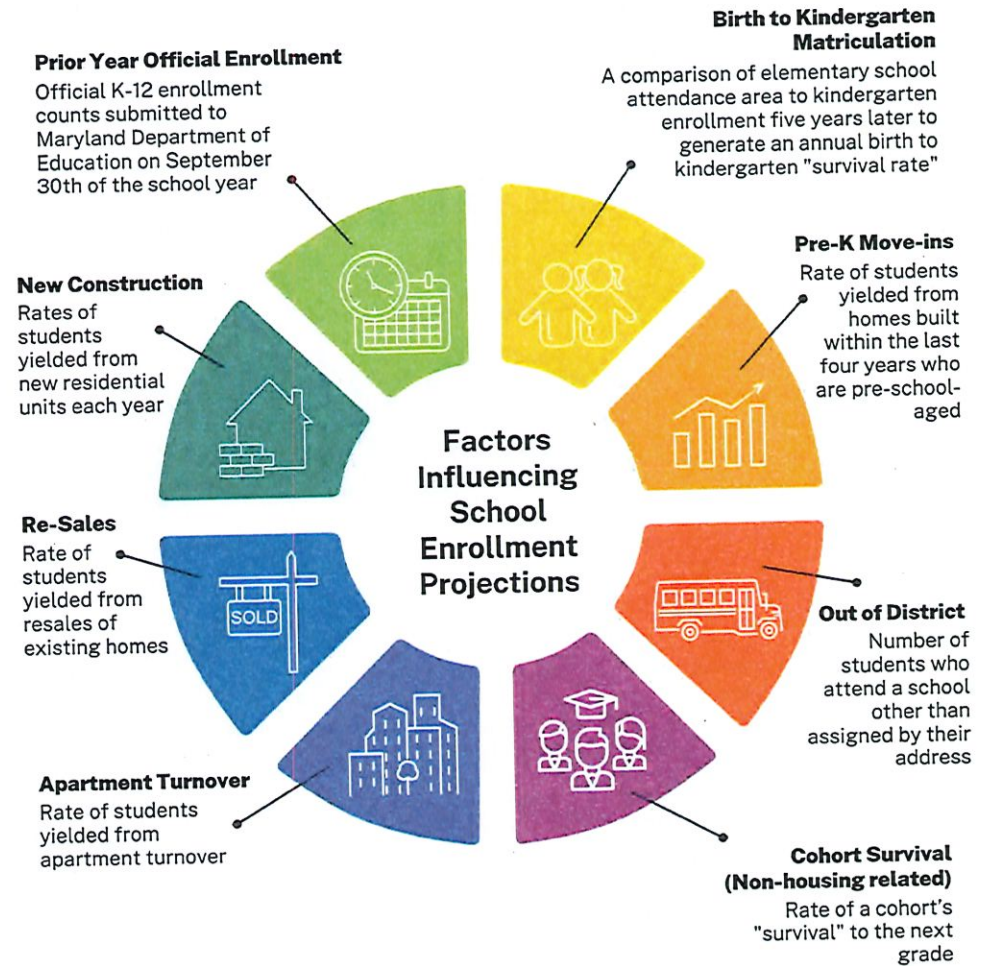
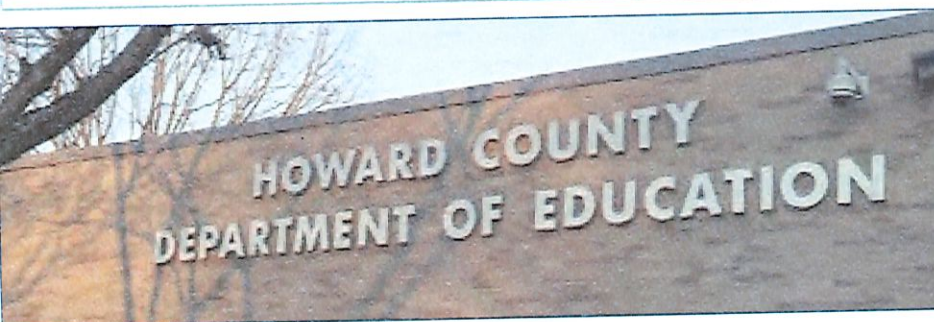


Factors Influencing School Enrollment Projections

It is important to note that a variety of factors influence the methodology used to project school enrollment. The student counts presented are net counts by level. Many schools add new students and lose existing students each year due to these factors. The timing of permit issuance and sale of new homes can impact the year in which new students are counted.

The points below further detail the assumptions and source data used to estimate enrollment and highlight the complexity of the methodology:

- These are students new to their school, not necessarily new to the school system. They may have transferred from another HCPSS school.
- Resales are from the Maryland Department of Planning sales database, as of November each year. The annual dataset for each year is recorded with a transaction date between October 1 of the prior calendar year and Sept 30 of the current year.
- New construction is based on use and occupancy permit data and is organized in the same annual breakdown as housing sales: 10/1 – 9/30.
- Countywide new construction yield rates can vary widely from year to year due to the type of units built and location of construction. New single-family detached units in some western areas generate several times the students (per unit) as apartments built in some parts of Columbia and the Southeast.
- This data is used to inform an enrollment projection for one point in time—September 30th. Students may withdraw and/or enroll throughout a school year, and those transactions will be part of each annual update to inform the next September 30th projection.



Source: HCPSS Feasibility Study, 2022

Future trends

Decreases Changes in Enrollment and Birth Rates

Other noteworthy trends impacting future school capacity include changing decreasing enrollment post the Covid-19 pandemic and decreases in the national birth rates.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the number of births nationwide has been declining since 2008, which is now impacting kindergarten enrollment and will impact future enrollment growth in Howard County. Annual live birth counts from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have been declining since 2016, with an 11% overall decrease since 2016. The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) recalculates birth projections for each county in five-year increments. The 2022 MDP birth projection included this recent historical data, leading to a declining birth projection for the County.

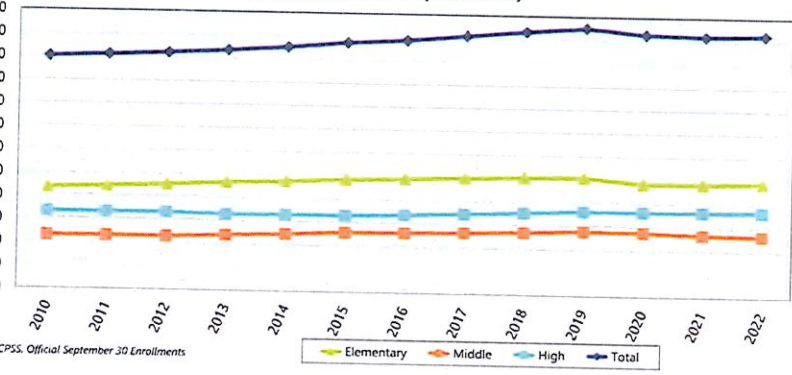
Enrollment has initially declined during since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, as some parents shifted their children to private school or homeschool, while some delayed kindergarten enrollment. However, in 2022, enrollment saw an uptick of 215 students. Table 8-4 from the HCPSS 2022 Feasibility Study illustrates these changes in enrollment counts those decreases between 2019 and 2021.

The 2022-2023 school year official K-12 enrollment count (September 30, 2022 official enrollment) showed an increase to 57,676 56,219 students, the first increase over 2019 enrollment levels. While annual enrollment is projected to increase in the future, the percent of increase may continue to be below recent historical trends given declining birth rates and until pandemic-related behaviors normalize. Graph 8-1 shows historical enrollment trends and the recent decline in enrollment.

Student Groups	Counts
2019 Total Enrollment	57,518
2020 New Students	6,891
2020 Exiting Students	-8,130
2020 Total Enrollment	56,279
2021 New Students	8,368
2021 Exiting Students	-8,643
2021 Total Enrollment	56,004
2022 New Students	8,207
2022 Exiting Students	-7,992
2022 Total Enrollment	56,219

Source: Howard County Public School System, Office of School Planning. K-12 enrollment, not including Pre-K and special programs.

Graph 8-1: Howard County Public School System Enrollments 2010 to 2022 (official Sept. 30 count)



Smaller Housing Typologies

To meet the growing demand for housing within our limited remaining land area, housing types will need to shift. HoCo By Design emphasizes accommodating future growth within mixed-use activity centers, missing middle housing, and accessory dwelling units—all of which consist of smaller housing typologies than traditional single-family detached homes. For example, new apartment units in Downtown Columbia, many of which are studio and 1-bedroom units, are expected to account for close to 20% of all new housing units built in the County between 2023 and 2040. Based on the official September 30, 2022 enrollment data, there are only 41 students living in the 1,199 new housing units from the Downtown Plan that are built and fully occupied. This is a standing yield rate of 0.034 students per unit, which is less than 5% of the yield rate for a typical new single-family detached home built in the County and less than 9% of a new townhome yield rate. Countywide, new apartment yields are about 14% of new single-family detached yields and 26% of new townhome yields.

The HoCo By Design Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is based on a housing projection model that estimates about 57% will be rental and condominium apartments, 24% townhomes, and 19% single-family detached units. This projection compares to 38% rental and condominium apartments, 29% townhomes, and 33% single-family detached units built in the last 20 years. It is expected that this change in unit type mix into the future will yield relatively fewer new students compared to the last 20 years.

Table 8-5: Student Yields from New Units Built 2015-2019: All Grade Levels Combined

Planning Areas	Students per Single-Family Detached Unit	Students per Single-Family Attached Unit	Students per Apartment Unit
Columbia	0.7048	0.3417	0.0448
Elkridge	0.6331	0.3633	0.1549
Ellicott City	0.8380	0.6440	0.1867
Rural West	0.7888	NA	NA
Southeast	0.5822	0.2533	0.1062
Countywide Average	0.7135	0.3928	0.1020

Source: Howard County Public School System, Office of School Planning, October 2022

Implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

Another future trend to consider is the implementation of the statewide Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint)—a set of policies and dedicated funding that is intended to transform Maryland's early childhood, elementary, and secondary school system to the level of high-performing school systems around the world. The Blueprint is based on the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. The Commission made policy recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) and thereafter the MGA passed legislation annually from 2018 through 2021.

The General Assembly established priorities and funding provisions, including dedicated funding to support the Blueprint's implementation. Overall, the State of Maryland will invest an additional \$3.9 billion (45% increase) in Maryland's public schools by FY 2034 to assist local governments with implementing Blueprint. Additionally, local governments will also need to increase their investments to meet Blueprint goals. However, investment levels will vary by jurisdiction depending on historical spending levels.

Blueprint policies are grouped in five pillars: 1) Early Childhood Education; 2) High-Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders; 3) College and Career Readiness; 4) More Resources for Students to be Successful; and 5) Governance and Accountability. Policies advancing each pillar are phased in over time, with the goal of strengthening the entire educational system through improved student performance. Additional resources will be directed to students who need them the most to close achievement gaps and expand student opportunities.

Implementation of the Blueprint will occur over 10 years and will have both operating and capital budget impacts. Operationally, it is not intended to create an unfunded state mandate but rather to help local school systems refocus and reprioritize programs. Future cost estimates indicate that funding for Blueprint implementation will not exceed net local costs or typical annual growth rates. According to the State Department of Legislative Services, Howard County is one of nine counties that has consistently funded local schools above the required annual Maintenance of Effort (MOE) levels and is not expected to incur any additional local costs beyond historical trends to meet Blueprint mandates since "projected appropriations under current practices exceed the amount required under the Blueprint legislation."



The State's legislative analysis also indicates that Blueprint implementation, when coupled with the significant increases of nearly \$4 billion in state aid to school systems over the next 10 years, is intended to help local school systems enhance and reprioritize programs to enrich student experiences and accelerate improved student outcomes.

Given the County's historic high levels of spending, which are significantly above the MOE, and given additional state funding available, local fiscal impacts are not expected to exceed annual budgetary growth rates. The FY 24 Spending Affordability Advisory Committee reviewed these assumptions as part of their thorough review of the HoCo By Design fiscal analysis and found that "the final fiscal impact analysis is sound in methodology and presents reasonable conclusions."

Implementation of the prekindergarten requirement under Pillar 1 (Early Childhood Education) will require additional capacity beyond what can be accommodated in existing school buildings. However, the Blueprint allows for private academic institutions that meet prescribed quality standards to receive state funding for prekindergarten programs. This will help defray capital and programming costs and reduce the public share of capacity needed to provide voluntary full-day prekindergarten services. HCPSS is in early planning stages and has been exploring a variety of strategies, including converting half-day classrooms to full-day, construction of regional early childhood centers, additions to existing elementary schools, and/or leasing commercial space. Guidance regarding implementation is still evolving, and further study and planning will be necessary. Alternative strategies could include additions to elementary schools, renting or leasing commercial space, or other space solutions.

The Schools SAG discussions emphasized the need for school facilities, particularly to support regional early childhood programs required by the Blueprint. They acknowledged that the availability of large parcels suitable to school site requirements is extremely limited and recommended a more proactive approach to property identification, evaluation, and acquisition of sites for public use. Strategies they discussed included, a right of first refusal to purchase properties in certain geographies and partnering with the private sector to acquire and amass small parcels into sites large enough for school use.

PS-1 Policy Statement

The County, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), and private sector should work collaboratively to identify school sites that meet the needs of the student population and anticipate future growth patterns.

Implementing Actions

- ~~1. Examine alternatives to the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance waiting periods whereby a development proposal offsets the potential impact to zoned schools through an additional voluntary mitigation payment.~~
1. Ensure coordination of HoCo By Design and the HCPSS capital planning so that school capacity projects are planned in activity center areas, especially in the Gateway Regional Activity Center, identified for transformation on the Future Land Use Map.

Fiscal Considerations

Bond Financing for School Construction

Construction for new schools and additions and renovations of existing schools is mostly paid for by General Obligation bonds and the School Surcharge. General Obligation bonds are the main financing mechanism for almost all capital spending in the County and are backed by the full faith and credit of the County. Table 8-6 summarizes the total debt payments in the approved FY23 operating budget. Servicing debt accounts for about 10% of the total operating budget. About 36% of this total debt spending in the County is for the Howard County Public School System.

Supporting the capital needs of the public school system will remain an important component of future budgets. Capital funding will be needed to meet enrollment demands, as well as for systemic renovation or replacement of aging infrastructure. Additionally, local spending leverages state funding, so as local levels rise, so do state contributions. This funding challenge is commonly faced by communities across Maryland and the United States. While Howard County has relied on public funding for school capital needs, other counties such as Prince George's, have pursued public-private partnerships to help meet near-term needs for school facilities. However, applicability of this model would need to be further studied in Howard County given slowing enrollment growth.



**Table 8-6: FY23 Debt Service By Category
Howard County Operating Budget**

Education		
School Construction Bonds (HCPSS)	\$43,226,150	32.3%
School Surcharge Bonds (HCPSS)	\$4,931,534	3.7%
School Transfer Tax Bonds (HCPSS)	\$589,904	0.4%
Community College (General Bonds)	\$12,431,993	9.3%
Library	\$3,560,451	2.7%
Total Education	\$64,740,032	48.3%
General County Bonds		
General County	\$39,502,354	29.5%
Storm Drain	\$4,368,628	3.3%
Highway Bonds	\$3,796,396	2.8%
Fire Fund Bonds	\$3,047,588	2.3%
Community Renewal	\$145,834	0.1%
Police Department	\$507,805	0.4%
Recreation and Parks	\$7,116,506	5.3%
Environmental Services	\$1,152,317	0.9%
Economic Development	\$189,947	0.1%
Fire Fund Capital Lease	\$162,248	0.1%
Bond Anticipation Notes	\$115,188	0.1%
Total General County Bonds	\$60,104,811	44.9%
Road Excise Bonds		
Road Excise Bonds	\$9,063,965	6.8%
Total Debt Service Payments	\$133,908,808	100%
Total FY23 Operating Budget (1)	\$1,290,983,724	
Debt Service as Percent of Total Budget	10.4%	

36%

(1) Does not include Use of Prior Year Funds (one-time revenues)
Source: Howard County, MD, FY23 Approved Operating Budget

Other Revenue Sources

Although General Obligation bonds make up most of the debt for HCPSS, the School Surcharge has been used to supplement these bonds. The School Surcharge is collected at the time of building permit application for all residential construction. The School Surcharge rate was significantly increased in November 2019 (effective January 2020), raising the rate from \$1.32 per square foot of new residential construction to \$7.50 per square foot, with the increase phased in over three years. This increase is expected to bring in needed additional revenues for school construction. As indicated in the fiscal analysis conducted for HoCo By Design, it is estimated that School Surcharge revenues will be \$30 million on an annual average basis through 2040. The School Surcharge is paid by anyone who builds a new home (or addition), whether an individual homeowner or developer. Additionally, 25% of the transfer tax, which was increased from 1.0% to 1.25% under Council Resolution 84-2020, effective May 27, 2020, is also dedicated to school land acquisition and construction costs. This currently amounts to about \$2.5 million per year, which has been used to pay for existing and new school surcharge-supported bonds, as well as cash payments. The fiscal analysis conducted for HoCo By Design indicates that the proposed growth could help sustain transfer tax revenues for school construction.

The County also receives state funds for new school construction. The approved FY23 Capital Budget indicated that the County will would receive state funding for approximately 40% of the total cost of construction for two new schools, the new Guilford Park High School and the Talbott Springs Elementary School replacement, totaling more than \$69 million. The FY24 Capital Budget indicated that the County would receive state aid of approximately \$21 million for capital projects. To be eligible for state funding, capacity needs due to enrollment growth must generally be demonstrated for each project at the systemwide level, inclusive of seats at adjacent schools. The County also receives state revenues for school operations. In FY23 the County received more than \$320 million from the State, about 31% of the total HCPSS operating budget. In FY24, the County anticipates receiving more than \$347 million from the State, about 31% of the total HCPSS operating budget.

Further funding solutions will be necessary in the years ahead, including working with our state and federal partners.

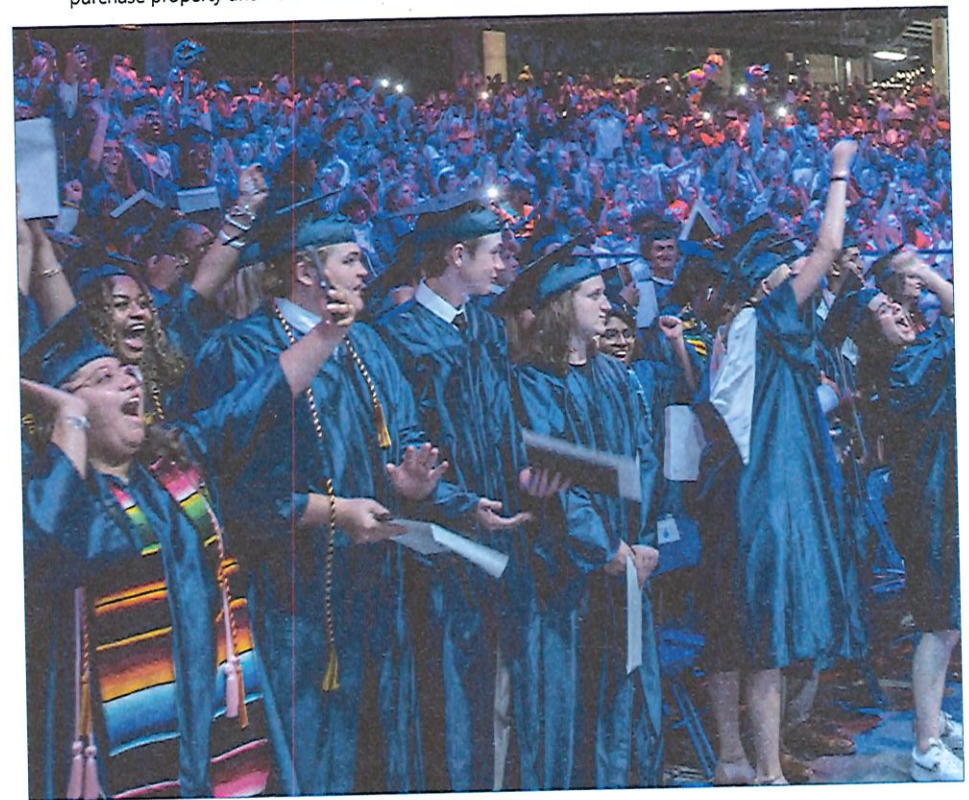


PS-2 Policy Statement

The County and Howard County Public School System should partner to leverage additional public and private resources to meet school facility needs and timing.

Implementing Actions

1. Examine the costs and benefits of public-private partnership models to address near-term school facility acquisition, construction, and renovation needs, including long-term financial commitments and considerations.
2. Evaluate a trust fund for school site acquisition or partnerships with philanthropic organizations to purchase property and hold it for a short term until school facilities can be built.



Land Use Considerations

Site Design and Site Requirements

School locations have a direct impact on land use patterns and vice versa. Properly sited schools provide many benefits to local communities, such as reduced travel times and transportation costs, enhanced environmental quality, infrastructure efficiencies, and improved social equity. However, older siting practices, dating to the 1950s, have minimum acreage requirements that are no longer practical given the dwindling supply and high cost of land.

This challenge exists in Howard County, as reflected in HCPSS Policy 6000-Implementation Procedures, which outline the desirable acreages for school sites based on school type:

- Elementary Schools: 10 acres minimum, plus 1 acre for each 100 students
- Middle Schools: 20 acres minimum, plus 1 acre for each 100 students
- High Schools: 30 acres minimum, plus 1 acre for each 100 students

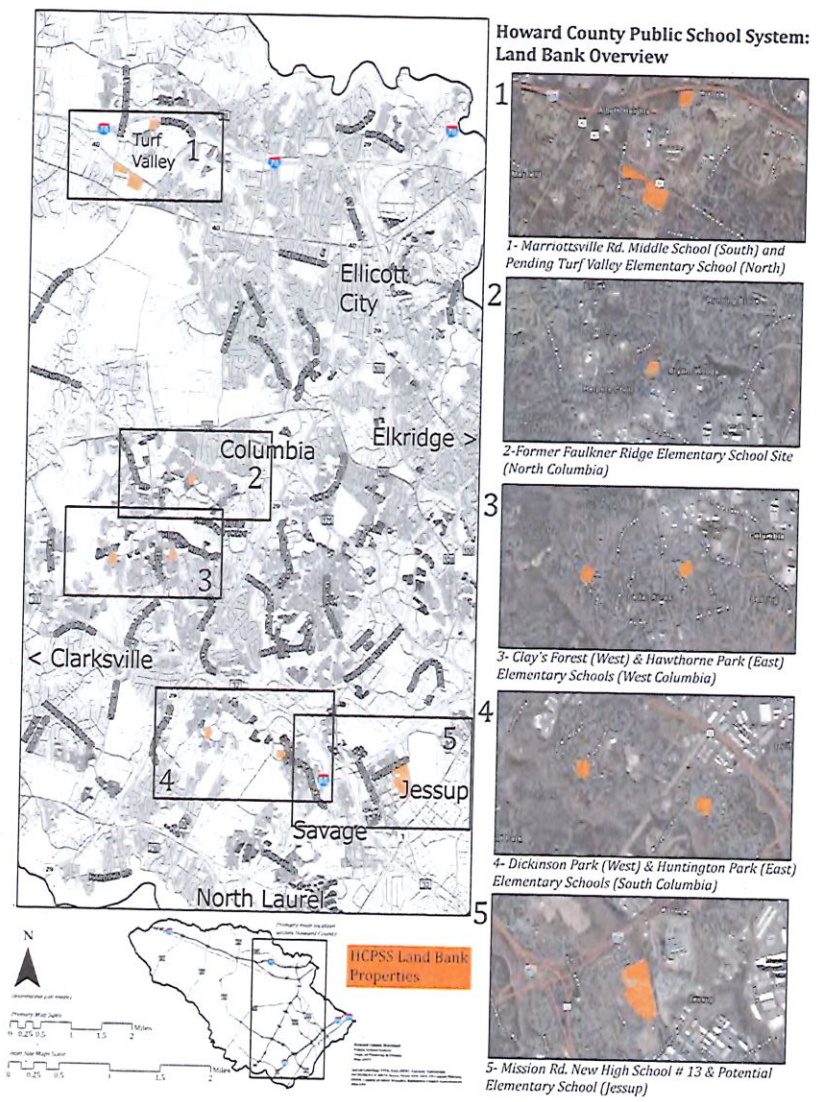
The School SAG found that Howard County's current school design and site size requirements limit flexibility in identifying land and building new school facilities. They recommended examining alternative school design models (prototypes) and national best practices that use smaller footprints, shared site amenities, modular design, and vertical development. The SAG also noted that should commercial real estate vacancies persist after the Covid-19 pandemic, adaptive reuse of those buildings could include school or HCPSS office space and could be leased for early childhood or other HCPSS programming.

HCPSS maintains sites for future school construction, commonly known as the "Land Bank". Many of the planned school sites resulted from agreements made during the planning and development of Columbia. Additionally, Howard County government has aided HCPSS in the past through exchanges of County land, where needed. Currently, the Land Bank includes four properties totaling 42 acres in Columbia, a future middle school site on Marriottsville Road, and the Mission Road property where Guilford Park High School is under construction. The Land Bank also includes the former Faulkner Ridge Elementary School property. This school was converted to offices in the early 1990s and has been closed altogether since 2011. The County also transferred a site in Turf Valley to HCPSS, which was recently added to the Land Bank.

These Land Bank sites provide options for the elementary schools in the Columbia area and the Southeast, based on need generated by the current development pattern. Changes to the location, timing, and/or amount of future development may necessitate acquisition of additional elementary school sites. The only Land Bank site suitable for a secondary school site is the Marriottsville Road middle school site. If a new middle or high school (beyond Guilford Park High School) is warranted anywhere else in the County, additional sites will be needed. Current projections show a capacity need at these levels beyond 2030. A capacity needs analysis is updated in the Feasibility Study annually.

The limited availability and increasing cost of land suitable for school construction means future facilities and sites may need to look different than existing schools. Taller buildings, shared athletic facilities and parking,

and even shared structure options, among other non-traditional solutions, will need to be explored. It will be important that County and HCPSS collaborate on future school siting, and develop land use and zoning plans and policies that provide the flexibility needed to allow for these solutions.



Regulatory Process

The County's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations allow for land in a subdivision or building development to be reserved for public facilities, such as schools, if it is not being used as open space. The SAG explored this process as a tool to increasing the Land Bank. The SAG's discussions revealed that the regulations are not aligned well to current development patterns, HCPSS facilities and budget planning timelines, and the County's development review process. The SAG concluded that the reservation process should be evaluated, and regulation changes recommended to increase use of this tool. Further, these regulations were recently expanded to allow for reservation of buildings. If properly timed, such building reservations could allow HCPSS to purchase available properties in the near term with leaseback options to tenants to hold land or buildings for future school needs. Activity center redevelopment and Route 1 redevelopment provide excellent opportunities to exercise building reservations, especially in areas where existing commercial is struggling.

Finally, HCPSS staff have reported challenges with regulations, such as setback, height limits, and other bulk regulations, that limit the developable footprint for buildings, athletic fields, and other site amenities. The Zoning regulations should be updated to allow for administrative approval of variances to bulk regulations as they relate to school facility development.

Co-locating Facilities

In the face of dwindling land supply, opportunities to co-locate school facilities with other public amenities, like libraries, park and recreational facilities, community centers, affordable housing, police or fire stations, and athletic fields, allow for optimal use of limited greenfield space and leverage additional funding opportunities. As Blueprint implementation is evaluated, government and commercial centers should be considered to house mandatory prekindergarten programs that are conveniently located, accessible, and/or create opportunities to provide wrap-around services to families and students. These options should be considered during the capital planning process and coordinated with HCPSS to ensure educational programming standards are maintained.

Finally, educational facilities ~~can~~ may be integrated into mixed-use activity centers and can serve nearby residences through safe convenient pedestrian connections. ~~Specifically, redevelopment of Gateway into a Regional Activity Center must thoroughly evaluate impacts to school capacity and ensure that the requisite number of schools are integrated and appropriately phased into the redevelopment program. Future redevelopment of Gateway into a Regional Activity Center must include a thorough evaluation of school capacity, and any deficiencies created through its redevelopment must be mitigated by providing requisite school facilities.~~
A public-private partnership model may be considered as part of an innovation district design.



PS-3 Policy Statement

The County and Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) should collaborate on future school siting and develop tools that provide the flexibility needed to allow for alternative school designs, flexible site requirements, and adaptive reuse of underutilized properties.

Implementing Actions

1. Consider adaptive reuse of commercial real estate for ~~school buildings or~~ HCPSS office space.
2. Consider leasing space for early childhood or other HCPSS programming.
3. Evaluate integrating public prekindergarten into government and commercial centers that encourage convenience for working parents, increase access to communities, and/or create opportunities to provide wrap-around services to families and students.
4. Evaluate the efficacy of using smaller existing HCPSS-owned properties for regional programs and/or shared athletic facilities.
5. Examine alternative school design models that establish a variety of forms to maximize available land resources. This may include higher capacity buildings, smaller footprints, shared site amenities, modular design, and/or vertical construction.
6. Explore opportunities for co-location of school facilities with other public amenities, like libraries, parks, affordable housing, and athletic fields, to make use of limited greenfield space and leverage additional funding opportunities.
7. Ensure future redevelopment of Gateway into a Regional Activity Center includes a thorough evaluation of school capacity and that any deficiencies created through its redevelopment are mitigated by providing requisite school facilities.
8. Ensure development of activity centers includes a review of school capacity needs and opportunities to address those needs within the activity center.

PS-4 Policy Statement

Revisions to the County's Zoning Regulations and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations should provide more flexibility for school site development and remove barriers to efficient use of school site property.

Implementing Actions

1. The Zoning Regulations update should allow administrative approval of zoning variances as they relate to school facility development.
2. Evaluate the applicability of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations governing reservations of land for public facilities to determine appropriate changes that would increase utilization.

Accommodating Future School Needs

To effectively accommodate future school needs, three important “legs of the stool” must all work together: 1) effective land use planning and growth management; 2) adequate school funding and strategic acquisition and construction methods; and 3) attendance area redistricting to efficiently use systemwide capacity.



The General Plan and APFO establish the land use plan, policies, and growth management tools for the first component. HoCo By Design proposes updated policies to better integrate school planning needs, particularly given the limited land available for new schools. As required in the current APFO, a review committee is to be convened within one year of the enactment of HoCo By Design to recommend changes. Continuous review and updates to policies and regulatory tools should occur to adapt to changing demographics, market conditions, and land use patterns. Guidance for the APFO committee is described in the Managing Growth chapter.

Fulfilling the second component is a continuous challenge, particularly in light of increasing levels of service delivery. The issue is compounded by the growing capital needs to replace or renovate older schools that are near the end of their useful lives and that had been designed based on decades-old service level expectations. Furthermore, in recent years school construction costs have increased faster than the general rate of inflation. These challenges call for new and proactive approaches to property identification, evaluation, and acquisition for public school use. In response to these challenges, the SAG discussed various market based approaches that foster public-private partnerships including; establishing a right of first refusal to purchase properties in certain priority geographies for school sites, researching models for government and/or private sector partners to acquire and assemble small parcels to achieve desirable acreages for school sites, using real estate data to monitor leasing and sale opportunities for site or building acquisition, and considering leaseback options as a mechanism to hold land for future school needs.

Fulfilling the third leg is complex and challenging. HCPSS strives to achieve important policy goals including balancing socio-economic equity among schools, keeping neighborhoods together, having a logical feeder system from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school, implementing a fair and efficient pupil transportation system, and other important factors. With limited funding and land availability for new schools, redistricting is a necessary tool to use available systemwide capacity.

Over the last several years, actions have been taken to address each of these three items. APFO has been amended to reduce the amount of development allowed to proceed in a given year, and HoCo By Design recommends further changes to adapt to anticipated growth patterns. To address funding, recent increases in the Transfer Tax and the Public Schools Facility Surcharge will help to pay for school capital needs. However, further funding solutions will be necessary in the years ahead, including working with our state and federal partners.

Finally, the Howard County Board of Education completed a comprehensive redistricting for the 2020/21 school year and high school redistricting in November 2022 in anticipation of the opening of the new Guilford Park High School in the fall of 2023.

~~Recent amendments to APFO resulting in a stricter School Capacity Test have placed more new residential subdivisions and infill projects in a holding pattern. This may serve as an impediment to housing affordability and lead to reduced capital revenues for schools. Without increased funding from new development, new school construction will be limited. The challenge is to find a balance that works, where growth can generate revenue for the County, while occurring in a predictable and gradual manner. Cutting off one leg of the stool will not solve the problem and could lead to further imbalance. All three legs need to work together to ensure Howard County maintains the superior quality of public education for which it is known.~~

PS-5 Policy Statement

The need for school facilities—particularly to support regional early childhood programs in the near term—warrants a more proactive approach to property identification, evaluation, and acquisition for public use.

Implementing Actions

1. Continue to review and update policies and regulatory tools to better align school planning needs to changing demographics, market conditions, and land use patterns.
2. Consider a right of first refusal strategy to purchase properties proposed for sale in certain priority geographies.
3. Research models for government and private sector partners to acquire and amass small parcels into sites large enough for school use.
4. Use data/intelligence from the real estate industry to monitor leasing and sale opportunities for site acquisition.
5. Consider purchasing available properties in the near term with leaseback options to tenants as a means to hold land for future school needs.