



4. Evaluation of School Facilities

FCPS EVALUATION OF FACILITIES AND NEEDS

FCPS has robust systems in place to evaluate school facilities. The Maintenance and Operations Department and Capital Programs Department each have responsibilities for evaluating the facilities. The Chief Operating Officer conducts biweekly project coordination meetings to allow for collaboration between these two departments and others.

The Maintenance and Operations Department provides ongoing evaluation of FCPS facilities with the goal of keeping FCPS facilities clean, safe, and fully functioning as effective learning environments. The department uses a computerized maintenance management system to track the condition of all building systems and equipment, and log work orders. This system provides the basis for the department's preventative maintenance program to keep building assets functioning optimally. The Maintenance and Operations Department's [Comprehensive Maintenance Plan](#), updated and approved by the BOE annually, describes the FCPS strategy for maintaining public school facilities.

The Capital Programs Department prepares the annual 10-year EFMP which includes enrollment projections, 10-year plan for capital projects and the capital budget for the following fiscal year. In addition, the department is responsible for educational specifications, site-specific evaluations as well as feasibility and limited renovation studies. When a new school opens or enrollments become unbalanced, the department conducts redistricting studies to adjust attendance area boundaries. The department is also responsible for the acquisition of school sites, school adequacy testing under the County and municipal Adequate Public Facility Ordinances, construction management of capital projects, the review of residential development and other coordination with local planning departments and developers.

Facility Condition Index

One important measure for evaluating the current condition of schools is the Facility Condition Index (FCI). The FCI is the ratio of deferred maintenance costs to the current replacement value. FCI values help Capital Programs Department staff identify buildings for modernization and replacement. Please refer to the [Comprehensive Maintenance Plan for Educational Facilities](#) on the FCPS website for additional information on FCI scores.

Enrollment Projections

Each year, Capital Programs staff prepares 10-year systemwide enrollment projections as well as 10-year projections for each school. The systemwide projections are submitted to the Maryland Department of Planning for approval in April. The 10-year projections for each school are included in the EFMP. These projections are the basis for determining capacity needs. Once actual enrollments are calculated each September, the next year's projections are revised. The revised projections are used to identify schools that are closed to out of district transfers, determine the next year's staffing needs and prepare the operating budget. See [Chapter 5](#) for the 10-year enrollment projections by school.

Feasibility and Limited Renovation Studies

When schools are identified as needing improvements based on building condition or capacity issues, FCPS completes a feasibility study or limited renovation study. These studies consider all building systems (e.g. plumbing, roofing, windows, flooring, heating and air conditioning, etc.) and existing spaces are compared to the current programs outlined in FCPS' Educational Specifications. A feasibility study considers a complete renovation, renovation/addition and replacement of the school. The feasibility study is prepared in accordance with IAC guidelines. The result of a feasibility study is the scope of work for a major construction project that will become part of FCPS' long range Capital Improvement Program. A limited renovation study seeks to improve at least five building systems in order to extend the life of the building but does not include additions to or demolition of portions of the building. Limited renovation studies result in a package of projects that can be completed over one or more summer breaks using both County and state capital funds. State regulations require a feasibility study whenever 50 percent or more of the building will be demolished.

Residential Plan Review

FCPS participates in the review of residential and mixed-use developments submitted to the County and municipalities for approval. Capital Programs Department staff submit official comments on preliminary plans, site plans, and improvement plans. Comments typically focus on safe walking routes to schools and adequate access for school bus service. When a development occurs near an existing or future school site, FCPS works to ensure that development impacts are minimized. In addition, Capital Programs Department staff evaluates school adequacy in accordance with County and municipal Adequate Public Facility Ordinances. Finally, where future schools are needed and required for development approval, FCPS works with the developer and county or municipal planners to identify an appropriate school site and the conditions by which the site will be transferred to FCPS.

Residential Development Monitoring

In order to stay abreast of Frederick County's fast paced residential development and its impact on changing enrollment patterns, Capital Programs staff monitors progress of residential developments. Staff closely monitors the County's quarterly residential pipeline reports and analyzes the data spatially. Staff also contacts developers and builders directly to understand their quarterly goals for the number and type of dwelling unit construction and their ability to meet or exceed those goals. Capital Programs staff records the data for all active residential developments and maintains the data in an electronic dashboard.

Managing Development's Impact on Schools

School sites are often located in residential areas, some of which are still developing. Capital Programs staff coordinates with developers to manage the impacts of residential development activities on existing schools and future school sites, including improvements to existing school sites by developers that were negotiated through the residential development approval process. These activities include obtaining easements for utility or road work that encroach on school sites, acting as a liaison between the developer and school staff to coordinate timing of disruptive activities, upholding the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) and BOE policies and regulations, and inspecting improvements completed by developers on BOE property.

School Site Evaluations

Although renovation or replacement of school buildings is sometimes able to increase enrollment capacity, population growth also forces the need for new school sites. Sites may be dedicated or donated by developers or purchased by FCPS as discussed in [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#). Before acquisition, FCPS evaluates proposed school sites using the following criteria:

1. Consistency with land use master plans adopted by Frederick County, Frederick City, and other municipalities and an analysis of population trends and projected enrollments
2. Adequate size of the site to meet site development and building code requirements adopted by Frederick County, Frederick City or other municipalities
3. Location of existing and future residential neighborhoods
4. Location of existing and future industrial, commercial or employment areas
5. Reasonable vehicular ingress/egress and an adequate public road system
6. Suitability for economical construction of a school building (appropriate topography, soils, and the absence of floodplain, whenever possible)
7. Ready or attainable pedestrian access
8. Reasonable access to public fire, safety, and law enforcement resources
9. Available public water and sewer service
10. Other criteria as required by the particular level, size, or scope of the project

In all cases, County and municipal guidelines and procedures must be followed. After a future school site is selected, FCPS Capital Programs Department staff submit a required site evaluation report to the Maryland Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) for review and approval.

School Redistricting Planning

The BOE has established policies and procedures that govern changes to attendance areas. BOE Policy 200.2 lists factors that the BOE considers when establishing new attendance area boundaries. FCPS policies and procedures for redistricting can be found in [Appendix O](#). Many redistricting studies are associated with the opening of new schools or additions. Studies can also be conducted to balance enrollments throughout the district. BOE Policy 200.2 allows the Superintendent to make corrections to attendance area maps based on unforeseen factors. One such correction was made in January 2023 to adjust the boundary line between North Frederick ES and Spring Ridge ES.

Sabillasville ES was closed and converted to the Sabillasville Environmental Public Charter School in the fall of 2022. The Sabillasville charter school is open to all students in the county through a lottery system. The former Sabillasville attendance area was incorporated into the Thurmont Primary and Elementary schools' attendance area.

FCPS began a redistricting study in October 2022 to balance middle school enrollments in the Crestwood MS area by adjusting attendance boundaries of Ballenger Creek, Crestwood, Governor Thomas Johnson, Monocacy and West Frederick middle schools. Elementary schools that feed to these five middle schools as well as the high schools that the middle schools feed to, are also included in the Crestwood Area Redistricting Study. The Superintendent's recommendation for attendance boundary changes was presented to the Board of Education in May 2023. Following the Board presentation, four community meetings were held to collect comments and answer questions regarding the proposed changes. Staff will review the comments received during the public meetings as well as by email and develop additional options that will be presented to the community in the fall of 2023 for additional comments. The Board of Education will hold their public hearing on the proposed options in the fall and are expected to adopt attendance boundary changes by the end of 2023 to allow adequate time to plan for the implementation of approved attendance boundary changes for the 2024-25 school year.

Redistricting studies will continue to occur primarily in connection with the opening of new schools but may also occur in locations where adjoining schools have unbalanced enrollments based on current or projected enrollment growth and school overcrowding. Candidate projects will be recommended on an annual basis (see [Chapter 7](#) for planned projects). The next anticipated redistricting is expected to occur prior to the opening of the new Valley ES school. Adjustments to the Valley and Brunswick elementary school attendance boundaries will allow enrollments to be balanced between the two elementary schools when the new Valley ES opens with available capacity. We do not anticipate any changes to the middle

or high school attendance boundaries at this time since both elementary schools feed to Brunswick middle and high schools.

STATE ANALYSIS OF FACILITIES

2022 SRC Recalculation

Periodically, FCPS completes a system wide review of the SRC for each school. In the fall of 2021 FCPS completed an evaluation of space usage and recalculation of the SRCs for all elementary, middle, and high schools. These capacities were approved by the Maryland Department of Planning in November 2022 and have been utilized throughout this plan. Reviews of buildings with program changes are planned for summer 2023.

State Sufficiency Standards

In May 2018, The Interagency Commission on School Construction established educational sufficiency standards. As noted in IAC documents, “The purpose of Maryland Public School Facilities Educational Sufficiency Standards (COMAR 13A.01.02.04) is to establish acceptable minimum levels for the physical attributes, capacity, and educational suitability of existing public K–12 school facilities.² The application of these standards shall be limited to space and attributes needed to support educational programs and curricula—defined by the Maryland State Board of Education—that are sustainable within the operational budgets of the school systems for staffing, maintenance, and full utilization of the facilities.” The educational facility standards in the form of Gross Area Baseline (GAB) are dynamic and are evaluated and revised as necessary. The current GAB calculator can be found on the IAC website. The GAB is used in calculating the state’s share of local capital construction projects.

State School Assessment Study

The state sufficiency standards are also used in the elevation of existing public school facilities. In 2020, the IAC contracted with Bureau Veritas North America (BVNA) to perform an assessment of the condition and educational sufficiency of all public school facilities in Maryland. BVNA performed an assessment of FCPS schools in spring 2021. A final assessment report of all state public school facilities was published in 2022. The assessment of all schools by IAC staff will continue with one-third of the school assessment updated each year.

2. “Maryland Public School Facilities Educational Sufficiency Standards”, Interagency Commission on School Construction, May 31, 2018 https://iac.mdschoolconstruction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Md.-Educ.-Sufficiency-Standards_Adopted_180531-1.pdf