

2021 Frederick County Public Schools Educational Facilities Master Plan Board of Education Approved

Executive Summary

OUR MISSION

Public education is at the heart of our community. It shapes who we are. In Frederick County, our promise is to empower our young people no matter who they are, no matter their backgrounds or circumstances. We want them to be prepared to succeed in college and careers. Therefore, our mission is to:

- **Reach** our students with exceptional teaching and caring support,
- **Challenge** them to achieve their potential, and
- **Prepare** them for success in a global society.

Our schools belong to all of us and are used by the entire community. Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) is committed to excellence at every level of our organization—it is our goal that the community will see that commitment when they walk in the front door of any of our facilities.

OUR PLAN

To guide us as we work to meet that goal, FCPS maintains a 10-year Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP). The EFMP is our blueprint to ensure that our schools meet our high standards for excellence. We update it every year to keep it current and to keep our focus squarely on the conditions of our buildings.

FCPS uses the EFMP regularly; it guides our thinking about our facilities. Among other things, it includes the enrollment projections for each of our 68 schools (including charter schools), coordinates facility needs with the county and municipal plans for residential growth, establishes our facility and funding priorities with state and local officials, and helps us keep our construction, modernization, and repair projects running smoothly and on schedule. However, the EFMP must also be accessible and useful to our many partners: elected officials, other state and local agencies, parents, and the taxpayers of Frederick County. The EFMP includes information that is helpful to all of us—long-range enrollment projections and trends, school-by-school capacity data, and other up-to-date information about all our county schools.

The 2021 EFMP has been reorganized for clarity and formatted with digital use in mind. Links throughout the document allow the reader to click between chapters or visit other reference documents and webpages. Many of the maps are now interactive maps online where users can search locations of interest and view layers of information. A [“story map”](#) of this executive summary is highlighted on page 4.

OUR PROCESS

In early June, FCPS staff presents the Superintendent’s draft recommended EFMP to the Board of Education and also obtains a finding of consistency with the County Comprehensive Plan. The Board of Education (BOE) holds a public hearing during their regular BOE meeting in late June and adopts a final plan.

Maryland leads the nation in public education—and Frederick County is a leader in our state. In Frederick County, we want all of our facilities to showcase the excellence that we strive for as a system while also demonstrating efficient stewardship of taxpayer dollars. FCPS seeks to maximize the lifespan of our facilities and keep pace with our students' changing educational requirements. The EFMP will help us do that in an efficient and effective manner. Excellence everywhere isn't just a goal for FCPS; it's what we do every day in every one of our buildings.

KEY ELEMENTS

Frederick County and our state and world as a whole are experiencing a moment of great change. More than ever, FCPS must rise to the challenge to continue to serve our students and prepare them for the future. In this 2021 update, FCPS addresses the following topics.

Changes to the delivery of education due to the COVID-19 pandemic

In the summer of 2020, COVID-19 infection and death rates continued to rise. Maryland and Frederick County governments had policies in place to reduce the rate of infection including, among other directions, the requirement to follow CDC guidelines (wear masks in public and maintain 6-foot separation from each other), limitation on the number of non-related persons who could gather together, and closure of schools until CDC guidelines could be met. FCPS began the 2020-21 school year with an all-virtual model of teaching. As maintenance staff were able to complete the accommodations in school buildings to meet CDC guidance, small groups with special needs were able to attend in the fall of 2020 and a hybrid schedule for in-person instruction was instituted in February 2021.

FCPS saw a 1.4 percent decline in total enrollment in September 2020 as families chose home instruction or private school options in response to the restrictions caused by the pandemic. For the fall of 2021, FCPS plans to return to full-time in-person instruction, with a virtual option available. We anticipate that most of the students who chose home instruction or private school as a response to the pandemic restrictions will enroll at FCPS again for the 2021-22 school year. However, many students excelled with virtual education and may choose to continue. In the future, FCPS may be able to expand educational programs through virtual programming. With regard to facility planning, virtual programming may provide opportunities to relieve enrollment pressure, particularly at the secondary level. See [Chapter 5](#) for additional analysis of COVID-19 enrollment impacts.

Housing construction and enrollment growth

Frederick County has been experiencing significant residential growth in several areas including Frederick City, the I-70 and I-270 corridors and Brunswick. The residential housing market has remained robust during the last year, with many builders exceeding their expectations on new dwelling unit construction. A total of 2,590 housing permits were issued in 2020 in Frederick County and the municipalities, which set a new record for housing construction. FCPS is closely monitoring areas of growth and continues to evaluate where and when the next new capacity project will be required. In particular, the pace and pattern of housing growth is accelerating on the east side of Frederick City in the Spring Ridge ES and Oakdale ES attendance areas. A new project has been included in this EFMP to address this high growth area. [Chapter 5](#) highlights the enrollment projections and [Chapter 7](#) outlines the 10-year plan. See the EFMP "[story map](#)" for growth area information.

Reinvigoration of older facilities

As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), FCPS has many older facilities that have been well-maintained but are nearing or exceeding their useful life and need renewal. The top five priority projects in the 10-year plan are replacement schools for buildings that have reached the end of their useful life. FCPS will conduct feasibility studies for five other schools to determine whether to renovate (with or without additions) or

replace them. Two other schools have been identified for limited renovations which will extend the life of existing buildings with upgrades to building systems and finishes carried out during summer breaks. FCPS will also consider the consolidation of small older schools to better align our facilities with educational needs.

Completion of new projects improves learning for students

Three projects will open in the summer and fall of 2021. The new Rock Creek building will open on the Walkersville Middle School campus, providing a major upgrade for students aged 3-21 with significant cognitive disabilities and diverse functional academic, medical and behavioral needs. The new Blue Heron Elementary School will open on Gas House Pike in the Lake Linganore area, reducing enrollment pressure at five adjacent schools through the implementation of the second phase of the Linganore Oakdale Urbana redistricting study. An addition at Oakdale Middle School adds much needed capacity to a school located in a high growth area. See [Chapters 3](#) and [7](#) for additional details.

New state funding opportunities

The Built to Learn Act passed in March 2020 and provides up to \$2.2 billion in additional funding for school construction projects throughout the state. The implementation details are still under development but FCPS expects to receive approximately \$91 million in funding over several years. [Chapter 1](#) provides more information on state and local funding.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2021 ANNUAL UPDATE

The 10-year capital improvement plan includes the following:

- 3 new schools
- 4 replacement schools with additions
- 1 addition
- 3 modernizations
- 4 limited renovations

See the EFMP [“story map”](#) for more details on the proposed projects.

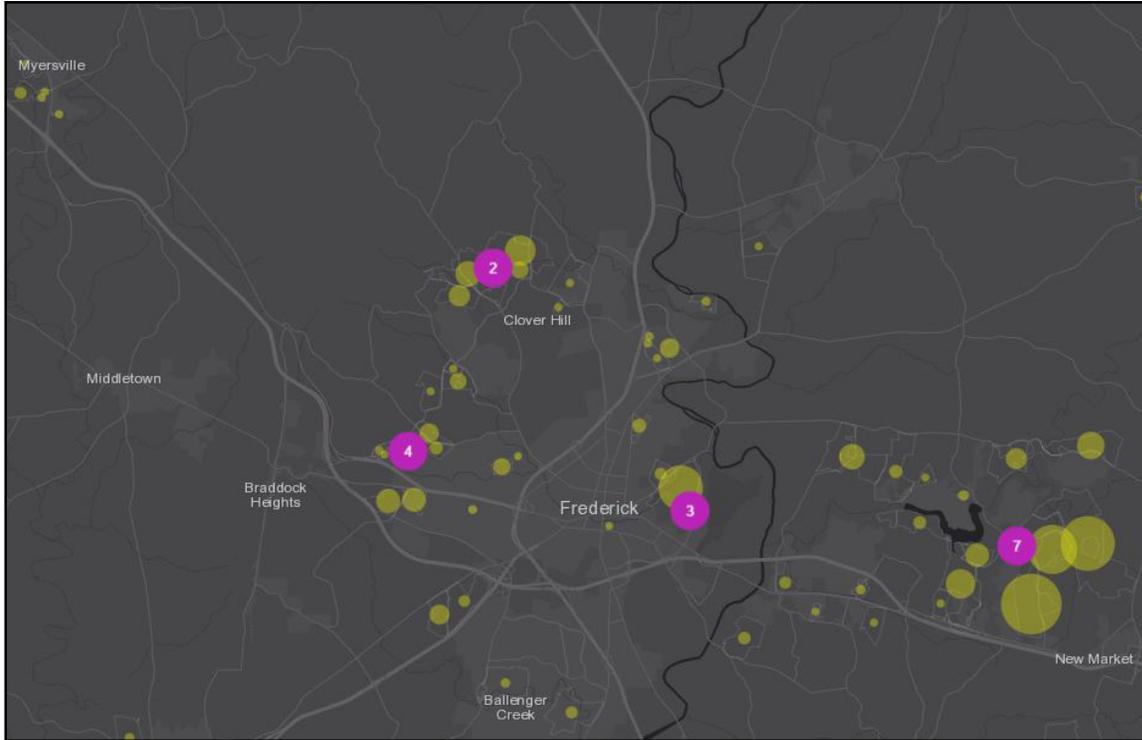
FAST FACTS

- Total enrollment of over 43,000 students
- Approximately 6.5 million square feet and 1,500 acres in our school portfolio
- FCPS operates 67 school buildings
- 39 school buildings are currently older than 30 years, with 12 older than 60 years
- 53 schools are projected to be operating within their state rated capacity in fall 2021
- 8 new or replacement schools built in the last 10 years
- 5 schools currently in design or under construction

EFMP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY STORY MAP

The interactive “story map” online features a tour of growth areas in Frederick County and the projects that FCPS is proposing in the 10-year capital plan. [Visit the story map.](#)

Growth Areas



Capital Projects

