



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3E

TENLEYTOWN
CHEVY CHASE

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PARK
WAKEFIELD

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS
FORT GAINES

c/o Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home 5425 Western Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20015
<https://anc3e.org>

Resolution Regarding Overcrowding in the Wilson HS Feeder Pattern and Solutions to Address the Overcrowding

Whereas:

The District of Columbia Public Schools (“DCPS”) (1) is constructing a new school at Hardy Park (“Foxhall”), and (2) has purchased the former GDS lower school at 4530 MacArthur Boulevard (“MacArthur”);

DCPS states that the goal of these investments is to help address overcrowding in the Woodrow (soon to be August) Wilson High School (“Wilson”) feeder pattern;

DCPS projects that the Wilson feeder pattern will add approximately 3,000 new students by 2028-29, consisting of 1,300 new elementary students, 600+ new middle school students, and 1,000 new high school students, not accounting for demand at the PK-3 and PK-4 levels [<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jUDT9rbqaIeIUIWTnb6ivjcVII9EMzkb/view>];

It is anticipated that the new Foxhall school can accommodate 450-550 elementary students, while the MacArthur site can accommodate approximately 575 secondary students;

DCPS acknowledges that the new school sites at Foxhall and MacArthur will not resolve entirely the projected shortfall of seats in the Wilson pattern;

DCPS is currently conducting a community engagement process in and around Ward 3 to support planning for these sites, including the formation of a Community Working Group (“CWG”) that began meeting in February 2021, along with additional school-based meetings and a community survey in April-May 2021;

Janney Elementary School (“Janney”), Alice Deal Middle School (“Deal”), and Wilson are located ANC 3E’s boundaries (and Murch Elementary School is located across the street from ANC 3E’s boundaries but some residents here attend Murch). Janney, Murch and Deal are part of the Wilson feeder pattern;

DCPS, through its School Planning Director, has invited ANC3E to participate in the CWG;

Concurrently, the DC Office of Planning (“OP”) has recently initiated discussions regarding the future redevelopment in the Friendship Heights neighborhood, also part of ANC3E, including the construction of significant additional housing;

These processes are fragmented. Conducting planning exercises for schools and neighborhoods separately, with separate agencies conducting the exercises, will predictably lead to suboptimal results for both schools and neighborhoods;

We are particularly aware of possible missed opportunities within our ANC's boundaries;

In particular, Friendship Heights has dramatically declined since the pandemic's onset, with multiple large buildings and lots vacant. Landlords cannot afford to leave these assets unused for long as the recovery ensues. This presents DC with several time-sensitive opportunities to create a public-private partnership to expand school capacity within walking distance of Deal and Wilson. Such opportunities could be pursued in addition to and at the same time as the opportunities at the Foxhall and MacArthur sites.

The Tenleytown Library presents another opportunity for expanding school capacity. Former Mayor Fenty ensured that structural supports were built along with the library so that additional stories can be built above it. Space for Deal and/or Wilson built here would be within sight of the existing buildings for those schools.

We note also that as the city's population grows, it is critical that policymakers keep a close eye on how new development, including new schools, will impact the environment. The city has set transportation goals of increasing the share of public transit, biking, and walking to 75% of all trips within the District and reducing commuter trips by car to 25% by 2032. It makes little sense to promote these two new DCPS school buildings without consideration of the MoveDC goals. Depending on the role they ultimately play, the Foxhall/MacArthur sites may generate many unnecessary car trips.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That ANC3E:

Applauds DCPS, Councilwoman Mary Cheh, State Board of Education Member Ruth Wattenberg, Mayor Bowser, and other District Leaders for their efforts to address overcrowding in the Wilson feeder pattern, including finding Capital Improvement Plan funding beginning in FY 2021 to construct the Foxhall site and purchase the MacArthur site;

Emphasizes that ANC3E, as the Advisory Neighborhood Commission that is home to Janney, Deal, and Wilson, has a strong and vested interest in (1) a transparent process by which DCPS decides how best to use these sites and (2) how DCPS proposes to alleviate overcrowding in the Wilson feeder pattern;

Requests DC expand this process to include consideration of vacant real estate in Friendship Heights as possible locations for additional school sites to relieve capacity issues, and in particular as well as and outdoor/recreational space used by those schools as well as the greater public;

Requests that the Council enact emergency legislation creating funding for a short-term study of such opportunities; other opportunities nearby, such as the Tenleytown Library; other city owned land at the Jeleff and Chevy Chase Rec Centers, and privately owned Wesley Theological Seminary which is immediately across Massachusetts Avenue from ANC 3E;

Requests that the Mayor, in addition or in the alternative, enter into discussions with appropriate Friendship Heights property owners to explore possibilities for a public-private partnership that would provide for mixed use development including school facilities and outdoor/recreational space used to be used by those schools as well as the greater public on the properties they own;

Friendship Heights is directly served by Metro and several bus lines, and siting school facilities and necessary outdoor and recreational facilities for the school here would make it easy for students to get to school from beyond the immediate neighborhood, thus comporting with MoveDC goals;

Possible sites for such development include the Lord & Taylor site [square 1580], Mazza Galleria (recently purchased by a developer intent on razing the structure), the “Home Plate Lot,” a large parking lot (shaped like a baseball home plate) between the Mazza and Lord & Taylor lots, and the Chevy Chase Pavilion, a mixed-use property with mall, hotel and office space, much of which is vacant;

We believe one of the best opportunities exists on the Lord & Taylor site [square 1580], and that it could support a development reserving at least half of its 6.2 acres for new field space for school athletics (and community use during non-school use) and infrastructure that would include retail, residential, and possibly a community center along with new DCPS facilities, whether a Wilson 9th Grade academy or other expansion site for Wilson HS;

Requests the Mayor engage other relevant agencies in the planning process for the Foxhall/MacArthur site to ensure robust consideration of transportation issues endemic in both locations. The Mayor should ensure protected bike lanes and sidewalks are available for students and staff to safely access these sites and must also include bussing as an option. Bussing students from their neighborhood elementary school makes logical sense, benefits the environment and is consistent with DC sustainability goals;

Requests the Mayor include more robust inclusionary zoning requirements in development projects. While this will not address the issue of diversity in its entirety, it will help ensure not only that the overall neighborhood is inclusive, but that neighborhood schools are inclusive;

Requests that the Mayor’s office and DCPS confirm their commitment to “neighborhood schools” in the District of Columbia and thus work to minimize distance traveled to and from school and ensure safe passage that does not rely on individual automobile transportation;

Requests that the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia ensure that OP and DCPS communicate and coordinate regarding capacity of local Ward 3 schools and, in particular, consider what new capacity will be needed in light of planned development of new housing units;

Requests that DCPS make clear exactly what the new boundaries will be as well as any improvements in public transportation and bike and pedestrian infrastructure before committing

to constructing or opening either of the proposed new public schools or any future public schools;

Requests that DCPS also offer options to relieve overcrowding at Deal and Wilson by re-locating feeder schools, including schools west of Rock Creek Park, to Wells MS and Coolidge HS;

Calls on OP to direct any entities tasked with analyzing or studying proposed Friendship Heights redevelopment in ANC3E, to address public school capacity issues as part of their analysis, specifically, the number of additional student seats that new housing units will generate, and how that need will be met; and finally,

Strongly recommends development of a Master Facilities Plan that goes beyond presentation of data to comprehensive analysis of options for addressing overcrowding and recommendations regarding same.

ANC 3E approved this resolution at its meeting on June 10, 2021, which was properly noticed and at which a quorum was present. The resolution was approved by a vote of 5-0-0. Commissioners Jonathan Bender, Matthew Cohen, Amy Hall, Jonathan McHugh and Tom Quinn were present.

ANC 3E
By Jonathan Bender, Chairperson