

Testimony before the DC City Council Committee of the Whole
Hearing on the Master Facilities Plan

March 26, 2009

By the Senior High Alliance of Parents Principals and Educators (SHAPPE)

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After years of advocating that attention and priority be given to our high school students they are indeed prioritized in this master plan. The following 10 schools are allocated \$574,000,000 for modernization and they are the first schools to be scheduled. The schools are Banneker, Cardozo, Ellington, Wilson, Coolidge, Roosevelt, Spingarn, Eastern, Anacostia and Ballou. Dunbar is also on the list but will be funded as new construction from a different allocation group. High schools all ready modernized include McKinley, Luke Moore, Phelps, Bell. School Without Walls and Woodson are in progress. This commitment to the DC Public High Schools of the city is impressive and certainly appreciated.

As you look to voting on the Master Facilities Plan and ensuring that this investment is one we will all be proud of, we hope you will give priority to making sure the plan:

- Allocates the funds in an equitable and efficient manner
- Modernizes space for the right enrollment
- Ensures that the scope of work for each high school will support a quality program in line with that community's needs and desires, this includes the site not just the building.
- Includes provision for the planning of the potential unused space in many of the secondary schools.
- Provides for quality control on design and implementation
- Plans and designs for joint use of the large schools with the Department of Recreation, the Department of Health and other agencies as well as with public charter schools.

Allocates the funds in an equitable and efficient manner

Section 5.2.3 the MFP states that "The budgets for the high schools with the combined Phase I, II, and III approach were established less conceptually than that of the elementary and middle schools. For each high school, professional estimators were engaged to review each facility, evaluate the existing conditions, and address specific programming needs. Ultimately, the project budgets ranged from between \$210 and \$255 / square foot with detailed budgets broken down by major improvement category. "

These specific proposed budgets have not been shared with the schools or with the public. The communities do not know the specific programming needs referenced. **We ask that the Council request these reviews prior to approving the CIP.** The attached chart on the budget, square footage, enrollment and schedule appears only to align roughly with gross square footage. Wilson has a proposed budget of \$64,141, Coolidge of \$72,384 and Anacostia of \$50,527.

Unless the Council requires the CIP to include project specific budgets with a scope of work, you will not be able to ensure that every high school student will have equal access to certain basic opportunities in their buildings. A formula for the allocation of the \$574 million among the 10 schools addressing equity might include the planned number of students (with rationale), planned square footage (including planned use for excess space), and funds invested in 2007-08; 14 million at Eastern,

16 million at Coolidge, 5 million at Anacostia. With a project specific capital budget proposal the council has the chance to ensure that the first projects do not get a lion's share of the funds and that the funds are fairly allocated.

There is always tension between quality, schedule and cost. What do we give up in quality for the fast time line suggested? Are there ways to secure high quality modernizations at the same cost and not sacrifice too much time? I believe the community could have wrestled with these trade offs in a way that would better inform the choices had they been given the chance.

The school improvement teams (SIT) have become the sole avenue of community input. Who is staffing them, who takes the notes and follows up? Who guarantees that the team is representative and inclusive? At one meeting it appeared to be the architect, an expensive and confusing option. These teams should be meeting often and have the benefit of a skilled and informed facilitator who stands nothing to gain from different decisions.

Modernizes space for the right enrollment

The 2009 MFP has kept the overall planned enrollment for the high schools the same as it was in the 2006 master plan, However there are some significant changes in the planned enrollment at particular schools including Dunbar, Ballou, Coolidge and Ellington. A brand new Dunbar is proposed to be built for 1600. It was previously projected at 1100. Dunbar currently has 894 students. Ballou currently has 1252 students. It was planned for 1400 in 2006 and has now been reduced to 1200. Coolidge was projected for 800 in the 2006 master plan, has 652 students and is now being planned for 1100. We currently invest more than \$11,000 for a student at Ellington, compared with 6,868 for a student at Anacostia, yet we have increased the planned enrollment for Ellington from 500 to 700. The current enrollment there is 470. This was not at the request of Ellington. There is no rationale or supporting documentation given for these changes and the ramifications are significant. Implementing these school capacities will mean there will be significant overcrowding at Ballou; under-enrollment at Dunbar; and a building and site at Ellington unable to support the population and program. All the planned enrollments of the high schools need to be re-evaluated.

Ensures that the scope of work for each high school will support a quality program and community use

One way of ensuring that the city will be proud of this investment is to have a standard that each high school will meet. While the plan refers to operational and efficient building systems; clean and maintainable interior finishes; bright and healthy classrooms and public spaces as well as flexible functionality; it does not give us a way to assess how well these goals are met, nor does it give us a basic program that will be guaranteed at each high school including exterior spaces (site).

With the fast timeline, it would be important to involve all high school communities and their neighbors immediately. Each school should have some idea of the career tech opportunities their school might be offering and of how the facility will support the restructuring going on at 8 of these 10 schools.

In 2002 the District engaged in beginning a city wide ed. spec to determine where city wide spaces should be located. This might include an indoor track and a full size swimming pool in each ward or in coordination with DC Recreation. It might also strategically locate more space and expense intensive career tech programs so that many students would have convenient access.

While returning special education students to DCPS schools is one of the major initiatives there is no explicit mention of how the facility will support these students. It is not enough to say we will be using an inclusion model. The increased use of classroom aides and auxiliary staff and specialty spaces are part of the services required to support students with special needs. There has to be more planning.

Include provision for the planning of "excess" space in many of the secondary schools

The MFP identifies 377,500 square feet in surplus space in the 10 high schools. Most of our comprehensive high schools were designed for close to 2,000 students—but most of our high schools are planned for 1100 students. While we currently allocate more square feet per student than they did in the 1930's, there will still be spaces in these historic buildings that will not be needed in the modernized school. These spaces could be used for school based health centers, non profits working in the schools, or other government agencies. In some cases the space might even support another school. This planning needs to take place from the beginning of the project. The concept drawings in the Master Plan identify unassigned space. **But these "mini master plans" were not done in collaboration with anyone at the school and the excess space is often not clustered together.** There is no sense of how it might be used. This is the time to work with local schools and the larger community on identifying compatible building partners. Post occupancy interviews should be conducted at schools currently sharing space like Roosevelt and Hospitality High to learn what has worked and what could be changed. The MFP should include a process for partners to be identified and be part of the planning of the space that they will use. The mini master plans should not be included in the documents voted on by the Council.

The STAY programs at Ballou, Roosevelt and Spingarn constitute the adult education offered by DCPS. The students at these schools may have dropped out of high school, or may be new to this country. How will this population and those adults that cannot read be served by our city?

Provides for quality design and implementation

The two schools facing demolition are the most recently built high schools. While Woodson was often called the tower of power it also was referred to as a prison. Dunbar's open space, ramps, escalators and the absence of daylight have made it a challenging building. Pictures of the Dunbar that was demolished haunt the city; it was a building similar to Eastern. While a robust review process might not completely save us from these kinds of mistakes, the total absence of quality control measures surely will guarantee significant regrets. We strongly recommend a planning, design and review process based on best practice

In conclusion, this is an amazing opportunity. For our high schools, these buildings could welcome back many of our students who have left and do a much better job of serving those that are there. In the evenings the city could begin to offer more adult education. This investment could make our schools centers of neighborhoods and a source of tremendous pride. **The Council should ensure that the plan is amended to address the explicit problems.** It should also establish a working committee to revise the Education Reform Act to solve the structural governance problems so that there is greater quality control and a separate robust planning function.

School	Ward	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Asses sm't	Proposed MFP surplus or added GSF	Total ProposedB udget	Sq Ft	\$/Sq Ft	08-09 Enroll.	Prop Capacity	FRL	\$/Stu
High School																
Woodson, HD	7	\$37,010	\$37,010	\$ 26,327				1.7	2,306	100,347	251,100	\$ 399.63	553	1100	76%	\$ 181,459
SWW	C	\$32,287						1.8	37,902	32,287	32,000		418	440	11%	\$ 77,242
Spingarn	5					\$ 15,465	\$46,396	1.8	(20,000)	61,861	215,400	\$ 287.19	593	1100	74%	\$ 104,319
Ballou	8				\$ 14,111	\$ 42,334		2.1	(43,000)	56,445	271,300	\$ 208.05	1252	1200	79%	\$ 45,084
Anacostia	8	\$ 500	\$12,632	\$ 37,395				2.2	(71,000)	50,527	247,900	\$ 203.82	953	1100	58%	\$ 53,019
Cardozo	1			\$ 14,898	\$ 44,695			2.3	(65,000)	59,593	355,400	\$ 167.68	816	1100	66%	\$ 73,031
Wilson	3	\$ 500	\$15,668	\$ 47,973				2.4	25,000	64,141	271,300	\$ 236.42	1461	1600	38%	\$ 43,902
Banneker	C					\$ 8,742	\$26,227	2.7	(24,500)	34,969	180,000	\$ 194.27	404	500	31%	\$ 86,557
Coolidge	4				\$ 18,096	\$ 54,288		2.7	(45,000)	72,384	271,300	\$ 266.80	652	1100	53%	\$ 111,018
Roosevelt	4			\$ 16,142	\$ 48,425			2.7	(87,000)	64,567	331,900	\$ 194.54	795	1100	64%	\$ 81,216
Eastern	6	\$14,315	\$42,944					3.0	(47,000)	57,259	288,800	\$ 198.27	565	1100	70%	\$ 101,343
Ellington	C			\$ 11,736	\$ 35,207			3.1	0	46,943	167,500	\$ 280.26	470	700	28%	\$ 99,879
Dunbar	5				\$ 5,788	\$ 23,153	\$86,822		(71,000)	115,763			894	1600	67%	\$ 129,489