



Government of the District of Columbia
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5C
Arboretum | Brentwood | Fort Lincoln | Gateway | Langdon | Woodridge

November 13, 2023

Re: central Ward 5 swing space next steps

Chairperson Costello, Commissioner Piekara, Commissioner Sen, and Mr. Haskell-Hoehl:

I am writing on behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5C and the approximately 14,000 Ward 5 residents in Commission Area 5C¹. Over the last 30 years, present-day Commission Areas 5B and 5C have witnessed an erosion in school resources devoted to our children, and we now once again find ourselves at a critical juncture in this fight as we attempt to push DCPS into provisioning our community a suitable elementary school swing space.

I want to thank you for the Community Forum held by the John Burroughs ES and Bunker Hill ES PTOs this past Wednesday. I was in attendance along with members of the Langdon ES PTO, and am grateful to Mr. Haskell-Hoehl, Councilmembers Parker and Henderson, and the administrations and PTO leadership of both schools for such a high-participation and consistently on-topic event. While I appreciate the attendance and updates of Deputy Chancellor Maisterra and Ms. Halbstein, I do also join everyone involved in these advocacy efforts in being dismayed that there has not been more proactive or collaborative communication from DCPS up until this point, and I hope this improves as critical decisions are nearing yet-unspecified deadlines.

I do not need to stress the importance of these efforts; we are all aware of the burden on our neighborhood elementaries, and their students, caregivers, and educators, if the existing plans to send John Burroughs ES to the Meyer ES facility and/or send Bunker Hill ES to the Emery ES facility were to come to pass. I will, however, reiterate the downstream importance of these advocacy efforts to the other three amazing Ward 5 neighborhood elementaries with heavy attendance from within 5C: Langdon ES (in 5C), Noyes ES (in 5B), and Langley ES (in 5F). While all are on different timelines and affected in different ways, all three are also impacted by the decisions that must be made in time for the Burroughs ES modernization.

¹ ANC 5C passed a resolution (*Attachment 1*) in October which states, in part, that ANC 5C “joins ANC 5B in requesting that DCPS immediately investigate provisioning a new temporary elementary school facility within central Ward 5, engage in active outreach on the topic with the Elementary School communities in Commission Areas 5B and 5C, and, if there are no nearby alternatives, release an RFP with sufficient time for construction of a new modular campus of the highest quality to be substantially complete in time for use during SY25-26” and “authorizes 5C07 Commissioner VJ Kapur to speak on behalf of the Commission in advocating for matters relating to this resolution, in cooperation with the sitting Langdon ES PTO Advocacy Committee Chair”

With all of that context, I would like to formally reflect on where things stand after the Community Forum. Our most urgent concern appears to be the need for DGS to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for design-build of a new modular campus, to join the other three modular complexes DCPS plans to operate in the subject timeframe². I reiterate the need for DCPS to clarify the specific deadline for this, as covered by Mr. Haskell-Hoehl's November 10th email (*Attachment 2*). Absent further clarity, it appears we must do all that we can to preserve this path forward as long as possible.

On hurdles for issuing this RFP, we continue to see in iteratively more detail the three buckets of concern we've consistently had: matters of cost, space, and community sentiment.

On cost, I thank CM Parker for his remarks on this matter, affirming that he expects allocation of funding to be possible during the FY25 budgeting process. DCPS reiterated a cost of \$16-18M and a need for utilization beyond four years to justify that cost; 5C's formal request of DCPS remains that Langdon ES be considered the third school to use a new central Ward 5 swing space, and, though not ranked among the 34 schools for which a PACE ranking was listed in the most recent report, I would expect Noyes ES to be a potential fourth school to use any such swing space. This is acknowledged by both the ANC 5B and ANC 5C resolutions on this matter.

On space, it appears that each of the two discussed modular complex sites presents feasibility concerns that DCPS is still assessing. Each of those feasibility concerns prompts more questions. I will not cover those questions here, as I think Mr. Haskell-Hoehl comprehensively addressed them directly with DCPS in his November 10th email. I will say I worry more about the possible wetlands and mature trees on the Howard University Divinity School land than I do about the ramifications of co-locating Burroughs ES near construction and/or a second neighborhood elementary school near Burroughs ES. I presume DCPS feels similarly, given they are pursuing the exact scenario for Nalle ES in Ward 7, which will occupy a modular complex on its field as the second of three schools to use it. On the newly revealed plans for geothermal wells on the Burroughs ES field, I hold no opinion and await more information.

On community sentiment, concerns were raised about both sites. As Commissioners, we know that adjustments to a change in land use are frequently hot-button issues. We also know that more intensive land use is crucial to progress in our communities as we meet our housing, transportation, and climate goals. In this case, it's also crucial to meeting our educational goals.

I want to touch on a topic not directly discussed at the community forum, but just beyond many of the comments expressed, especially among long-term residents and staff at the school. The

² The Browne EC modular complex in southern Ward 5 (already in use by Browne EC, and slated for use by Ward 6 elementaries JO Wilson ES, and Tyler ES), the Nalle ES modular complex in Ward 7 (design-build RFP issued, slated for use by Drew ES, Nalle ES, and Beers ES beginning in the same timeframe as the central Ward 5 need), and the Oxon Run modular complex in Ward 8 (part of the same RFP as Nalle, slated for use by MLK ES, Hart MS, and Excel EC beginning in the same timeframe as the central Ward 5 need); Nalle/Oxon Run RFP available here: <https://dgs.dc.gov/event/dcam-23-cs-rfp-0018-design-build-services-modular-campuses-oxon-run-and-nalle-martin-luther>

Burroughs ES community has hosted historical political fights that took place very similarly to this one, such as in 2007 when DCPS considered shutting the school down³. Burroughs ES survived that round of closures, but many of our neighborhood schools have not been so lucky. Because of these decisions, our community lacks DCPS building space to accommodate the needs of our growing neighborhood school population.

In 1997, DCPS shuttered Woodridge Elementary School about half a mile from Burroughs ES. The school was thriving; as contemporaneous reporting in the Washington Post⁴ put it, *“Woodridge has nearly doubled in size in the last 10 years and now has just six empty seats. Parents say full classrooms are proof of its success.”* After children were distributed across Rhode Island and South Dakota Aves to Burroughs Elementary and Langdon Elementary, which had fewer facility needs but were critically under-enrolled, the Woodridge ES building at 2959 Carlton Ave NE was subsequently sold in 2000 for \$784k to Friendship Public Charter School, which operates within it today.

In 2009, DCPS shuttered Lucy Diggs Slowe ES⁵ about half a mile from Burroughs ES. The school had an important role in history: Congress created it for black residents in response to a lawsuit, and it later radicalized one of DC’s first Home Rule Councilmembers, Julius Hobson, to fight for school desegregation⁶. The building at 1325 Jackson St NE was leased out⁷ for 20 years beginning in 2013; Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy Public Charter School operates within it today.

In 2014, DCPS shuttered Marshall ES about a mile from Burroughs ES, just as the Fort Lincoln community surrounding it was booming in population. The building at 3100 Fort Lincoln Dr NE was demolished in 2020 as part of a number of capital projects that appear to have stalled.

Back to 1997, when DCPS also shuttered Taft Junior High School⁸, located in a 194k SF building just two blocks from Burroughs ES. At the time, Taft was at only 23% enrollment capacity, and students were sent up South Dakota Ave to Backus Middle or down South Dakota Ave to Marshall (which was K-8 at the time). The Taft building is the Burroughs ES PTO’s stated first choice for a swing space⁹, but the building at 1800 Perry St NE was leased in whole to Perry Street Prep for 25 years starting in 2010. Perry Street Prep now subleases to an

³ <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/d-c-schools-chief-faces-ire-on-closings/2007/12>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/03/27/school-closings-the-list/b029eb50-ab59-4859-a98a-7b3e51da0d85/>

⁵ <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1123>

⁶ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/03/24/julius-hobson-sr-dies/8c1edc81-9586-487a-a78b-5b6ffedab48a/>

⁷ <https://dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCR/Issues/IssueCategoryList.aspx?DownloadFile=2003445F-0000-C5E0-B47A-7BD995939840>

⁸ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/03/27/school-closings-the-list/b029eb50-ab59-4859-a98a-7b3e51da0d85/>

⁹ https://medium.com/@JBES_PTO_Advocacy/our-outstanding-neighborhood-school-must-remain-in-the-community-923ee4bf8dd2

additional set of at least four other schools, likely at a profit¹⁰, and does not have capacity to sublease space in DCPS's own building back to DCPS for use by our neighborhood schools.

Of course, it's the very charter schools operating in these DCPS buildings that now threaten to draw families away and decimate enrollment at our neighborhood schools should they be pulled out of our neighborhoods for two years each during modernization.

Which brings us back to the Burroughs ES field. I know well and first-hand that this field is used for many purposes by the surrounding community. Prior to redistricting at the beginning of this year, Single-Member District 5C07 and the ANC 5C boundary extended north to the corner of 20th and Monroe abutting the field. I personally live four blocks from the field. All of that known, acknowledged, and appreciated, I also know that the Burroughs ES field, which remains part and parcel with the school itself, is unique among the few central Ward 5 real estate holdings remaining in DCPS control at this time.

I know this field has been the subject of fights in the past. I know community concern will persist about the adjustment of having to pivot to the nearby parks within our parks system. I know that co-locating one school with construction and two schools on the double-wide block will induce some new traffic and parking pressures. But I also know we can't allow current Ward 5 families, especially the ones steadfastly dedicated to our neighborhood elementary schools, to bear the burden imposed by DCPS's past mistakes.

There was political difficulty in those decisions, as there likely will be in the decisions that face us here today. I, for one, am firmly resolved to not let that difficulty burden neighborhood elementary school families for another generation. I sincerely hope we all will be.

To be clear, I am open to any site within Commission Areas 5B and 5C and am happy to explore alternatives including a modular complex on the Howard University Divinity School site. DCPS is not elaborating on their myriad checkboxes, so I will not venture any guesses now on what else might work. I just don't want one of our lowest-barrier prospects to be dismissed; we can't afford it. DCPS has not left us much choice.

I thank you all for your time.

Very respectfully,



Vijay "VJ" Kapur
Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner
Single-Member District 5C07
On behalf of ANC 5C

¹⁰ <https://educationdc.net/2020/05/17/the-education-mysteries-tale-3-tafts-money/>

Attachment 1: ANC 5C Resolution



Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5C

Arboretum | Brentwood | Fort Lincoln | Gateway | Langdon | Woodridge

Resolution on Langdon Elementary Facilities Improvement

Sponsor: Commissioner Kapur (5C07)

Co-Sponsors: Commissioners Thomas (5C06) and Dale (5C01)

Whereas:

- Langdon Elementary School, operating under District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), is located at 1900 Evarts St NE within Single-Member District 5C07 in Neighborhood Commission Area 5C
- After the 1997 closure and subsequent sale of Woodridge Elementary School¹ and the 2014 closure and subsequent demolition of Thurgood Marshall Elementary School², Langdon ES is now Commission Area 5C's only traditional public elementary school facility, serving as the sole in-boundary Elementary for the vast majority of 5C households
- From 2014-2016, Langdon ES underwent a "Phase 1" modernization³ focused on the building's "west wing" and subject to a limited scope of work meant for later supplementation in another phase
- In 2016, the DC Council passed the Planning Actively for Education (PACE) Facilities Amendment Act of 2016⁴, which prescribes a scoring formula considering multiple factors related to Facility Condition, Demand, Community Need, and Equity, to determine prioritization for *full* modernization
- Langdon ES's recent Phase 1 modernization left it deprioritized for further modernization by this scoring method
- The score rankings and other information related to near-term school modernizations are transmitted by the Mayor to the Council annually as part of the DC budget process, in the form of the PACE Annual Supplement
- The latest version of this document was issued on July 29, 2023⁵ and lists Langdon ES with PACE Prioritization Rank 30, with a Modernization Start Year of TBD

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/03/27/school-closings-the-list/b029eb50-ab59-4859-a98a-7b3e51da0d85/>

² <https://wjla.com/news/local/d-c-schools-closing-list-to-be-released-tuesday-report-says-82024>

³ <https://dgs.dc.gov/node/846132>

⁴ <https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/21-219>

⁵ <https://lms.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/53392/Introduction/RC25-0065-Introduction.pdf?Id=164952>

- In October 2022, reporting by WUSA Channel 9 news widely publicized issues plaguing the Langdon ES facilities, including inconsistently functioning security cameras, HVAC systems, and lights⁶
- On June 28, 2023, DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services (Facilities Committee) organized a well-attended Langdon ES site visit⁷ where attendees experienced firsthand the inconsistent functionality of Langdon ES's six HVAC systems of varying components, brands, and controllers, earning the school a specific callout in Chairperson Lewis George's subsequent report⁸
- Langdon ES's enrollment has grown considerably in the last year to accommodate approximately 100 children (including an estimated 20 new enrollees in just the past month) from families receiving temporary shelter accommodations nearby, straining, among other resources, facility space and repair bandwidth
- The Department of General Services (DGS), tasked with facilities maintenance in service to DCPS as a client agency, is plagued by inconsistent performance in the management of Work Orders and other tracking artifacts, leading to further frustration as school administration and staff seek to achieve timely repairs
- The Facilities Committee is currently considering the Work Order Integrity Amendment Act of 2023, which would require that the DGS Facilities Management division receive affirmative approval from a school-level staff member before closing a request in the Department's internal work order system
- On September 20, 2023, ANC 5B passed a *Resolution Urging DCPS to Establish a 5B Modular Site*⁹, advocating for the provisioning of a new modular complex in Commission Area 5B to serve as the temporary facility ("swing space") to John Burroughs ES and Bunker Hill ES, DCPS elementaries (PACE rank 8 and 18, respectively) already scheduled for construction in sequence from SY25-26 through SY28-29
- Through the resolution, ANC 5B "encourages DCPS to consider assigning the neighborhood swing space to displaced students, staff, and administrators during Langdon ES and/or Noyes ES modernizations, in the interest of being good stewards of public funds and applying the significant cost associated with a modular complex to at least six years of utilization"
- The 2023 PACE Annual Supplement lists Langdon with a Prioritization Rank of 30, while Noyes ES is not listed among the 34 highest-priority schools with a listed Prioritization Rank, making Langdon ES the more likely candidate for this scheduling

⁶ <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/education/dcps-teacher-pleads-fixes-broken-hvac-systems-lights/65-4b76e189-541a-400d-8908-cb7fd277fe73>

⁷ <https://x.com/vj5c07/status/1674253113169936385>

⁸ <https://x.com/CMLewisGeorgeW4/status/1681757672008187906>

⁹ https://resolutions.anc.dc.gov/AttachmentsFiles/22/230920_Resolution_re_5B_modular_campus_FINAL_TM_20230928101754AM.pdf

- The Langdon ES Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has extensively discussed the need to advocate for near-term modernization, and scheduling this process to align construction commencement with SY29-30, indicating planning work beginning in FY29, would allow the Langdon ES community to capitalize on a nearby swing space facility to make sure the neighborhood school remains in the neighborhood

Therefore, be it resolved that ANC 5C:

- **requests the Council expediently consider and pass the Work Order Integrity Amendment Act of 2023** to strengthen the process of performing and adjudicating completion of school facility repairs, with consideration to improve the bill by requiring DGS to close work orders upon affirmative approval by the school and that the public-facing DGS work order dashboard mirror the data in DGS's internal system
- **requests the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), DCPS, and Council prioritize Langdon ES's capital improvement needs in near-term budget cycles**, to include: replacing the outdated and degraded marquee board in front of the school, comprehensively sealing the school to curb rodent ingress and aid in custodial rodent abatement, removal of the unsafe concrete stadium seating at the Early Child Education playground, modernizing the cafeteria and auditorium spaces, setting up modular classrooms on the Langdon ES campus and/or building out unused parts of the structure to add classrooms to accommodate the surge in enrollment, and phased replacement of the HVAC systems with a priority on component brand and controller uniformity
- **requests the Mayor, DME, DCPS, and Council schedule Langdon ES's full modernization to begin planning in FY29**, so commencement of construction occurs during SY29-30, shortly after the anticipated completion of Bunker Hill ES, and that any improvements listed above not yet completed by that time be budgeted and planned for in full during that modernization cycle
- **joins ANC 5B in requesting that DCPS immediately investigate provisioning a new temporary elementary school facility within central Ward 5**, engage in active outreach on the topic with the Elementary School communities in Commission Areas 5B and 5C, and, if there are no nearby alternatives, release an RFP with sufficient time for construction of a new modular campus of the highest quality to be substantially complete in time for use during SY25-26
- **authorizes 5C07 Commissioner VJ Kapur to speak on behalf of the Commission** in advocating for matters relating to this resolution, in cooperation with the sitting Langdon ES PTO Advocacy Committee Chair

Certification: Adopted on **10/18/2023** by a vote of **5-0**, with four commissioners required for quorum, at a regularly scheduled and duly noticed public meeting with a quorum present.



Jacqueline Manning
Chair, ANC 5C

Attachment 2: November 10 email

URGENT follow-up from Wed PTO Community Forum

micah haskell-hoehl <mahaskellh@gmail.com>

Fri 11/10/2023 4:59 PM

To: Kihn, Paul (EOM) <Paul.Kihn@dc.gov>; Lewis.Ferebee@k12.dc.gov <Lewis.Ferebee@k12.dc.gov>;
Maisterra, Amy (DCPS) <amy.maisterra@k12.dc.gov>; Diana.Halbstein@k12.dc.gov
<Diana.Halbstein@k12.dc.gov>

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Dear Deputy Mayor Kihn, Chancellor Ferebee, Deputy Chancellor Maisterra, and Diana,

Thank you, Deputy Chancellor and Diana, for joining our community forum Wednesday night. I know that you have many commitments and appreciate your time.

As a follow-up, we are asking for the following firm commitments from the executive branch:

- To work with our schools' PTOs and communities to find a neighborhood swing space for Burroughs and Bunker Hill.
- To hold a follow-up conversation no later than Friday, November 17, among this group about the issues under consideration, including the questions and comments that follow, stemming from Wednesday's community forum.
- To use this email chain for regular, ongoing, consistent communication among all parties involved.
- At least weekly updates by DCPS on the process, provided to all copied on this email.

Please acknowledge receipt and confirm whether DCPS and DME can honor each of these requests no later than COB Tuesday, November 14.

Questions and comments from our community coming out of Wednesday's community forum:

- By when should we expect a final decision about the swing space for Burroughs?
- When is the deadline for the release of a design-build RFP for modular classrooms for Burroughs's use that would allow modernization to remain on-schedule?
- Regarding modular classrooms on the Burroughs field:

- Why can the geothermal units not be placed under the field in advance of construction and commissioning of the modular complex?
- We are confused about the hesitation regarding modular classrooms being in proximity to construction at Burroughs construction. Buildings downtown are under construction constantly, with adjacent properties operating at normal capacity.
- Is there not adequate space on the field to have outdoor activities on the 20th Street side of a modular complex?
- Regarding modular classrooms on the Howard Divinity property:
 - Would you please share full details of the site visit, including which part of the property is designated as a wetlands and the location of heritage trees?
 - What are potential options for modular placement on the property? For example, we understand that the parking lot surfaces might provide more than enough usable space for modulares. Are you also reviewing the field to the east of the Howard Divinity building, the parking lot and surrounding field space, and other locations on the property?
- For months, our community has struggled to receive ongoing communication with your agencies, which leaves us with the feeling that we are working against, rather than WITH, your agencies. This can be solved with regular dialogue.

Please address these questions and concerns as soon as possible and no later than when we meet this coming week.

We appreciate your continued attention to these issues and look forward to working with you to reach a resolution that is agreeable to and equitable for our community and feasible for the city.

Many thanks,
micah

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Micah Haskell-Hoehl [he/him/his]

Chair, Advocacy Committee

[John Burroughs Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization](#)

3109 17th Street NE

Washington, DC 20018

812 320 4300

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Cc: Ward 5 Councilmember Zachary Parker

At-Large Councilmember Christina Henderson

Ward 5 SBOE Member Robert Henderson

ANC 5B05 Commissioner Colleen Costello, ANC 5B Chair

ANC 5B02 Commissioner Nandini Sen, ANC 5B Secretary

ANC 5B06 Commissioner Prita Piekara

Anthony Black + Chris Ingram, Mayor Muriel Bowser Ward 5 Liaisons

Conor Shaw, Deputy Chief of Staff, Councilmember Parker

Heather Edelman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Councilmember Henderson

Michelle Yan, Chief of Staff, Deputy Mayor of Education

Nico Pcholkin, Legislative Assistant, Councilmember Henderson

Oliver Stoute, Constituent Services Coordinator, Councilmember Parker

Will Perkins, Director, Committee on Facilities and Family Services

Bunker Hill Elementary School PTO Leaders:

Ariana Carella, Treasurer

Chelsey Christensen, Secretary

Emily Magenheimer, President

John Burroughs Elementary School PTO Advocacy Committee Members:

Audrey Reese, PTO President

Chris Fisher

Daniella Gibbs Leger

VJ Kapur, Commissioner, ANC 5C07 Commissioner