



Adaptive Reuse Study

December 2019

 THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Prince George's County Planning Department

Abstract

Date	December 2019
Title	Historic Fairmont Heights High School Adaptive Reuse Study
Author	The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Subject	Historic Fairmont Heights High School, 1401 Nye Street, Capitol Heights, Planning Area 72 in Prince George’s County, Maryland
Source of copies	The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Series number	443192306
Number of pages	62

The 15-acre historic Fairmont Heights High School (FHHS) Property at 1401 Nye Street in Capitol Heights, Maryland, consists of an approximately 170,000-square-foot building, football field, baseball diamond, and parking. In 2017, Fairmont Heights High School moved to the new \$80 million, 193,000 square-foot building at 6501 Columbia Park Road in Landover and left the Nye Street location vacant. The Historic FHHS property offers a quiet, pleasant development site proximate to several major transportation routes and Metro stations, as well as access to shopping, recreation, and medical care.

The adaptive reuse study describes the existing conditions of the school and site, including the historic and physical context in which it was built; the current and future approved zoning and land uses, and provides extensive details on its construction, evolution, and current physical condition. The study explores the historic aspects of the site, including its current County designation, and touches on the major findings of the December 2018 *Historic Fairmont Heights High School Adaptive Reuse Economic Study*. It describes the public participation process for the study, details the stakeholder concerns and interests explored in meetings and community gatherings, and provides an analysis of reuse options suggested by stakeholders. Three potential scenarios for reusing the site and building are described. An analysis of available funding tools is provided at the end of the study.

Disclaimer

The conjectural architectural plans and renderings in this report are a representation of potential adaptive reuse options.

Note

Throughout this study, the terms “historic Fairmont Heights High School” and “historic FHHS” are used in reference to the campus at 1401 Nye Street to differentiate it from the campus at 6501 Columbia Park Road—also called “Fairmont Heights High School.” The term 1950 Fairmont Heights High School refers to the original building before alterations and renovations.



Adaptive Reuse Study

December 2019

 THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Prince George's County Planning Department

December 2019

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Prince George's County Planning Department

14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive

Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

www.pgplanning.org

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Chairman
Casey Anderson, Vice Chairman

Officers

Asuntha Chiang-Smith, Executive Director
Joseph Zimmerman, Secretary-Treasurer
Adrian R. Gardner, General Counsel

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is a bicounty agency, created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties: the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District.
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system.
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the County government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Planning Department:

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect and manage the County's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decision makers, citizens, and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD



Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Esq., chairman

Dorothy F. Bailey, vice chair

Manuel R. Geraldo

William Doerner

A. Shuanise Washington

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD



Casey Anderson, chairman

Natali Fani-Gonzalez, vice chair

Gerald R. Cichy

Tina Patterson

Partap Verma

Prince George's County



Angela Alsobrooks,
County Executive

County Council

The County Council has three main responsibilities in the planning process: (1) setting policy, (2) plan approval, and (3) plan implementation. Applicable policies are incorporated into area plans, functional plans, and the general plan. The Council, after holding a hearing on the plan adopted by the Planning Board, may approve the plan as adopted, approve the plan with amendments based on the public record, or disapprove the plan and return it to the Planning Board for revision. Implementation is primarily through adoption of the annual Capital Improvement Program, the annual Budget, the water and sewer plan, and adoption of zoning map amendments.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Thomas E. Dernoga, 1st District

Deni Taveras, 2nd District

Dannielle Glaros, 3rd District

Todd M. Turner, 4th District, Council Chair

Jolene Ivey, 5th District

Derrick L. Davis, 6th District

Rodney Streeter, 7th District, Council Vice Chair

Monique Anderson-Walker, 8th District

Sydney J. Harrison, 9th District

Mel Franklin, At-large

Calvin Hawkins, At-large

Clerk of the Council: Donna J. Brown

Table of Contents

8

Introduction

Sector Plan Guidance 12

14

Existing Conditions

Context 14

Zoning and Land Use 16

Site 22

Structure 23

Environmental 24

2006 Bignell Watkins Hasser
Architects, Feasibility Study 25

September 2012 PGCPs Updated
Facility Condition Assessment Final Report 28

30

Assets and Challenges

Assets 30

Challenges 33

34

Physical Evolution

38

Historic Designation

County 38

Federal 38

39

Adaptive Reuse Economic Study

42

Public Participation Process

43

Stakeholder Concerns and Interests

Board of Education and Prince George's
County Public Schools 43

Prince George's County 43

Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association 44

Fairmont Park-North Englewood Civic Association 44

M-NCPPC's Department of Parks and Recreation 44

46

**Analysis of Reuse Options
Suggested by Stakeholders**

48

Adaptive Reuse

Commemoration 48

Scenario One 51

Scenario Two 52

Scenario Three 54

56

Conclusion

57

Appendix

Federal Incentives 58

State Incentives 59

County Incentives 60



Introduction



Originally known as Fairmont Heights Junior-Senior High School, when it opened in September 1950 Fairmont Heights was “the larger of two high schools for African American students in Prince George’s County.”¹ Paul H. Kea, FAIA (1886-1968) and his firm designed the school and are “credited with designing more than 50 public schools in Prince George’s County.”²

The opening of “Fairmont Heights was the culmination of many years of struggle for the area’s African American citizens seeking a modern school facility equal to those attended by white students.”³ Fairmont Heights was the first “separate-but-equal” County school that included twelfth grade.⁴ When Fairmont Heights was desegregated in the early 1970s, the zoning was redrawn to create a demographically balanced population.⁵



Current aerial view of the high school, looking northwest.

1 EHT Traceries, Inc. (Jeanne Barnes, Maria Dayton and Paul Weishar) for M-NCPPC, *Fairmont Heights High School, 72-64, Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form* (Crownsville: The Maryland Historical Trust, 2010), 8-1.
2 *Ibid.*, 3.
3 *Ibid.*, 1.
4 *Ibid.*
5 *Ibid.*, 6.

NAME

There are various stories about the use of “Fairmont” versus “Fairmount,” generally involving a dropped “u” from a school sign—a contractor mistake that was soon embraced as a unique name and a tradition. A proposed name change in 1983 following the renovation was met with opposition from students, faculty, alumni, and community members.

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form (EHT Tracerics, Inc., Fairmont Heights High School, PG:72-64 Section 8, Page 7) states that the name was taken from a misspelling in the town’s elementary school sign. Leon Wynter’s November 10, 1983 article in The Washington Post relates that it was the high school’s sign.



East façade of the school facing the football field, looking southwest.

By 1976 the school appears to have had a majority white student body;⁶ and in 1981 *The Washington Post* noted, “With shifting residential patterns, the student population at Fairmont has risen from 46 percent to 71 percent black since 1973.”⁷ By the early twenty-first century, reflecting Prince George’s County’s African American majority population, the school’s student body was predominantly black.

Although physical alterations made following a fire in 1980 virtually erased the building’s midcentury architectural character, Fairmont Heights High School was recognized for its cultural importance and was designated a Prince George’s County Historic Site (72-064) as part of the 2010 *Approved Historic Sites and Districts Plan*.

The 1950 campus was vacated after the 2016-17 school year, following the completion of the new \$80 million⁸ state-of-the-art Fairmont Heights High School at 6501 Columbia Park Road, Hyattsville, just 1.5 miles northeast of the original school. Classes started at the new school in fall 2017. The original campus continues to be owned by the Prince George’s County Board of Education and its fate has yet to be determined. Many area residents are graduates and members of the Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association; they have expressed great interest in preserving the legacy of the school and the potential retention of the building and campus.



STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to propose reuse options supported by the market that incorporate stakeholder suggestions. These reuse options could allow the adaptively reused historic Fairmont Heights High School to remain a valuable community asset honoring deep community legacies while accommodating an economically viable use or uses.



STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Identify strategies/approaches to preserve the site’s historic and cultural legacy, thereby strengthening community identity
- Identify reuse options for the site that would create a healthy, safe, and pleasant environment, thereby strengthening neighborhood safety
- Identify financially sustainable potential programmatic reuse options that reflect community character
- Identify existing or potential multimodal transportation options that would provide safe access to the site
- Identify funding options for financial leverage to make a reuse project economically feasible

6 Fairmont Heights High School, Reflector (Fairmont Park, Maryland: 1976) <https://www.classmates.com/yearbooks/Fairmont-Heights-High-School/126443?page=150>

7 Leon Wynter. “Rebuilding a Legacy at Fairmont Heights.” *The Washington Post*. February 19, 1981, MD1.

8 Grunley Construction Company, Inc., “Education/Campus: Fairmont Heights High School Replacement.” <https://www.grunley.com/market-sectors/education-campus/project-details/fairmont-heights-high-school-replacement>

ABOUT HISTORIC FAIRMONT HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL

LOCATION

1401 Nye Street,
Capitol Heights, MD
20743

OWNER

Prince George's
County Board of
Education



NEIGHBORHOOD

Nye and Englewood
Streets were
developed with
houses in the 1950s
after the school was
built.



ZONING

Zoned R-55
(One-Family
Detached
Residential)



RENOVATION

Renovation destroyed character-defining features including limestone entrance portal in south elevation; the rhythm, size, and fabric of windows; and reoriented the main entrance so the school is entered at the corner on a diagonal.

Little to no original fabric or features remain on the interior or exterior.



SIGNIFICANCE

Fairmont Heights High School was the first modern school in the County for black students designed to be equal in all respects to schools built for white students

DESIGNER

Designed by Paul H. Kea Associates, prolific Hyattsville-based midcentury architects of note

SOURCES: FY2020 Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation; EHT Tracerics, Inc. 2010 Fairmont Heights High School; Bignell Watkins Hasser Architects' 2006 Fairmont Heights High School Feasibility Study; Parsons Corporation's 2012 Updated Facility Condition Assessment Final Report

Sector Plan Guidance



2018 *Approved Greater Cheverly Sector Plan*

This study implements Land Use Strategy 3.2, and Community Heritage and Culture Strategies 4.1, 4.2, and a portion of 4.3 of the 2018 *Approved Greater Cheverly Sector Plan*. Relevant references to the property in the plan include:



VISION AND GOALS

page 10

The adaptive reuse of the historic Fairmont Heights High School has created a valuable community asset that honors deep community legacies while providing spaces to accommodate a diverse array of community services, programs, and amenities.



HISTORIC SITES AND RESOURCES

page 23

Defining realistic and sustainable adaptive reuse opportunities for the historic Fairmont Heights High school should be a priority to ensure community security and the protection of the school's cultural legacy. The school's future as a community asset will require effective collaboration between government agencies, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood advocacy groups, and alumni.



LAND USE POLICY LU3

page 46

Defining realistic and sustainable adaptive reuse opportunities for the historic Fairmont Heights High school should be a priority to ensure community security and the protection of the school's cultural legacy. The school's future as a community asset will require effective collaboration between government agencies, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood advocacy groups, and alumni.

STRATEGY LU3.1

page 46

Rezone the historic Fairmont Heights High School property (currently R-55) to allow for small-scale, low-intensity, and mixed-use development, including commercial development that provides goods and services serving the needs of neighborhood residents such as retail sales and services, personal services, educational and institutional uses, arts and entertainment uses, and multifamily residential.

STRATEGY LU3.2; CH4.2

page 46; 96

Conduct a feasibility study that examines financially sustainable adaptive reuse and rehabilitation opportunities of the site, including analysis of potential uses such as affordable housing, senior housing, housing for special-needs populations, community education and recreation, and performing arts and cultural uses.

STRATEGY LU6.2

page 48

Encourage development that provides for residential housing choice, affordability, and diversity with varying housing types, densities, and designs including multifamily, two-family, three-family, and townhouse dwellings; small-lot, single-family detached dwellings; live/work units; and accessory apartments. Potential locations include ... historic Fairmont Heights High School.

STRATEGY HNI.1

page 76

Encourage development that provides dedicated senior housing and units that offer age-in-place opportunities to residents throughout the sector plan area. Potential development opportunity sites include ... historic Fairmont Heights High School.



COMMUNITY HERITAGE POLICY CH4

page 94

Promote stewardship and adaptive reuse of the historic Fairmont Heights High School.

STRATEGY CH4.1

page 96

Initiate a task force—comprising members from the Board of Education, the Prince George’s County Economic Development Corporation, Fairmont Heights High School alumni, residents, nonprofit partners, the Prince George’s County Historic Preservation Commission, and M-NCPPC to develop an adaptive reuse plan for the high school site.

STRATEGY CH4.3

page 96

Identify and pursue economically viable opportunities to reuse the school structure to avoid potential blight and vandalism resulting from its potential vacancy.

STRATEGY CH4.4

page 96

Support educational, programmatic, and wayfinding connections (from the school site) to the nearby Fairmount Heights National Register Historic District.

STRATEGY CH 5.3

page 98

Establish partnerships to identify and create performance spaces, exhibit areas, and entertainment venues. Key locations may include the historic Fairmont Heights High School site ...

FAIRMONT HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL

BY THE NUMBERS

19 years under principal G. James Gholson (1950-1969), known for his humanities-based curriculum. Gholson went on to work for the County Board of Education and designed and implemented desegregation for the County’s schools. He also consulted schools in Kentucky, Indiana, Delaware, Mississippi, and Seattle.

1950 year built

15 acre campus at 1401 Nye Street, in Capitol Heights

168,841 square-foot building with 4 levels

\$6.1 million dollar tax value in FY 2020

Prince George’s County Historic Site No. **72-064**

\$8.4 million renovation announced in 1981; school closed and reopened fall 1983

1970 The year mandatory desegregation began. Brown v. Board of Education did not immediately desegregate County schools.

Existing Conditions

Context



Fairmount Heights High School has always been associated with the Town of Fairmount Heights, a residential suburb just east of Washington, D.C.⁹ “The community of Fairmount Heights has been continuously occupied by African Americans since the time of its initial subdivision in 1900 and incorporation in 1935.”¹⁰ Developers “Robinson White and Allen Clark encouraged African Americans to settle in the area and the subdivision became one of the first planned communities for black families in the Washington, D.C. area. White and Clark sold the affordable lots making home ownership attainable for many black families.”¹¹ The town was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011. In 1984, Fairmount Heights High School was separated from Fairmount Heights per se when the United States Postal Service assigned the Capitol Heights ZIP code to the school. The property is located within the bounds of the Greater Cheverly Sector Plan area, which comprises the Town of Cheverly and the unincorporated residential communities of Englewood, Landover Knolls, Newton Village, Oaklyn, and Radiant Valley. This area is predominantly populated by African Americans, representing approximately 85 percent of the population. According to 2010 census data, more than 70 percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 60 years, with a median age of 36 years. A median income of approximately \$60,000 indicates a middle-class socio-economic status for the community.

The school is situated on a 14.90-acre campus in Capitol Heights in the Fairmount Park neighborhood north of the neighborhood of Chapel Oaks and south of North Englewood, south of Sheriff Road and northwest of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Highway. It is one mile southeast of MD 295 (Baltimore-Washington Parkway) and one-half-mile south of US 50 (John Hanson Highway). Two Metro stations, Cheverly and Deanwood, are within a mile of the school.

9 Susan Pearl, Fairmount Heights, Maryland, A History: From its Beginnings (1900) to Incorporation (1935) (Upper Marlboro: The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1991), iii.
10 A. D. Marble & Company for M-NCPPC (Barbara Frederick), Fairmount Heights Historic District, PG: 72-9, Maryland Historic Properties Form, Ethnic Heritage.
11 EHT Traceries, Fairmount Heights High School, 72-64.

Figure 1.
DEMOGRAPHICS OF
FAIRMOUNT HEIGHTS
NEIGHBORHOOD



85%
of the population
is African American

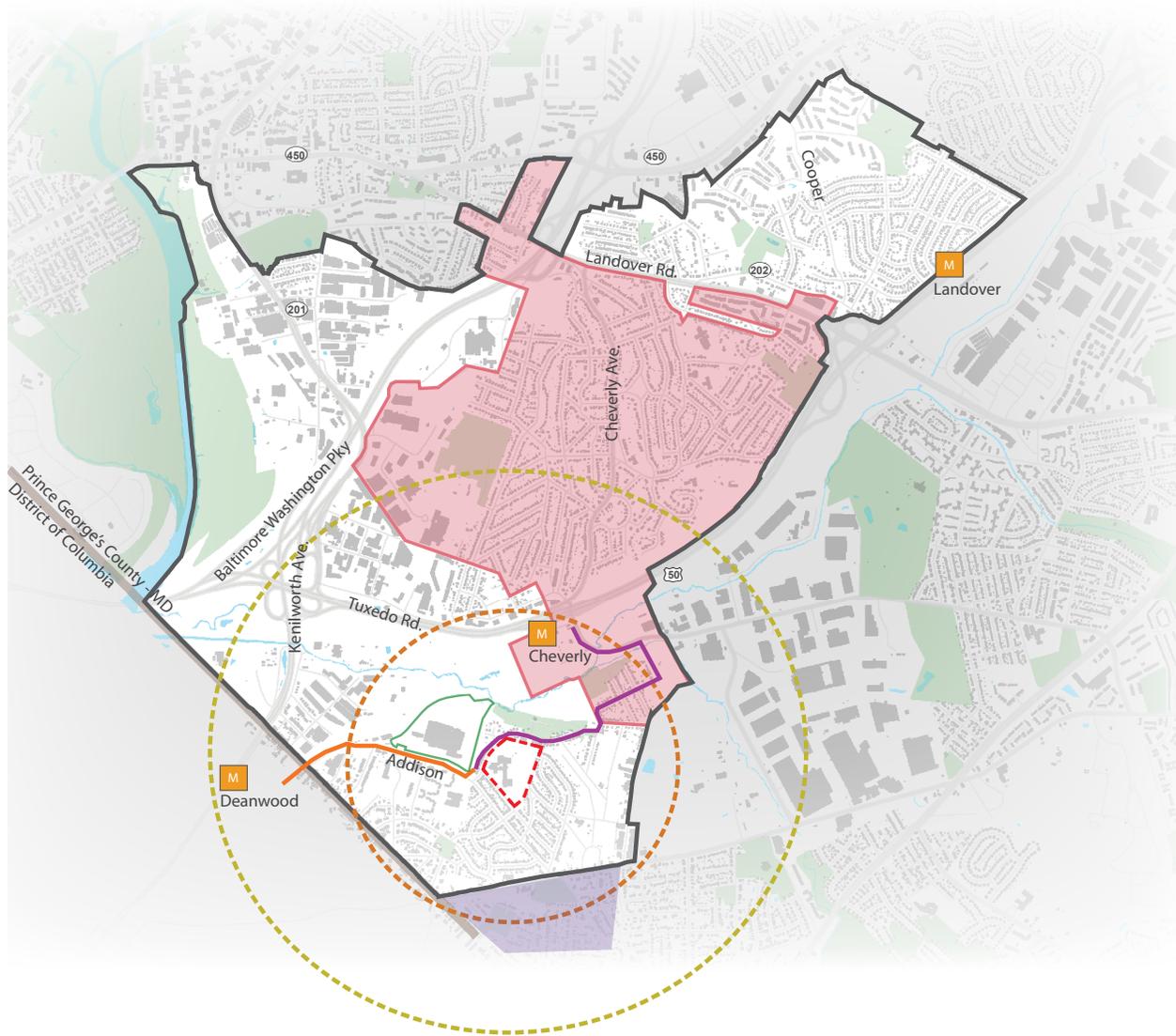


75%
of the population
is between
20 and 60 years old



median household
income is \$60,000

Map 1. Neighborhood



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019



Zoning and Land Use

The school property and the single-family dwelling-occupied parcels surrounding it are zoned R-55 (One-Family Detached Residential). The existing land use is Institutional. The future land use is Mixed-Use.¹²

On October 23, 2018, the Prince George's County Council adopted a new Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. The new code is aligned with *Plan Prince George's 2035* (Plan 2035), the County's General Plan. Updating the County's development codes was necessary to create regulations that support the County's vision for smart growth, economic development, and improved quality of life. The Council has initiated a Countywide Sectional Map Amendment (CMA) to reclassify properties in the County to the new zones included in the new Zoning Ordinance.

COUNTYWIDE MAP AMENDMENT

The Countywide Sectional Map Amendment (CMA) is the second phase of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project that will apply the new zones to properties in the County. The CMA covers all of Prince George's County except for the City of Laurel. The CMA will apply the new zoning regulations to land in the County and transition the existing zone to the most similar zone contained in the new Zoning Ordinance.

You can contact the project team at 301-952-4944 or by email at zoningpgc@ppd.mncppc.org.

“[T]he comprehensive rezoning of properties within the boundaries of [the 2018 *Approved Greater Cheverly Sector Plan*] will happen through the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite's Countywide Map Amendment (CMA) process. This CMA will implement the new land use and policy guidance of these two sector plans by assigning appropriate new zones within the sector plan boundaries ... Where these result in a recommended zone for a property that conflicts with the approved future land use maps of these two sector plans, the zone that meets the intent of the approved sector plan recommendations for those properties shall be used.”¹³

¹² *Approved Greater Cheverly Sector Plan* (Upper Marlboro: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2018), 42.

¹³ Prince George's County Countywide Sectional Map Amendment (CMA) Approved Guide to New Zones (Upper Marlboro: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2019), 24.



The historic Fairmont Heights High School is currently zoned R-55. The proposed future zoning under the new Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations for the property is RMF-12.

Pursuant to policies and strategies from the Greater Cheverly Sector Plan,¹⁴ Map 9 for Land Use Element Overview designates the historic Fairmont Heights High School property for the Mixed Use Future Land Use category.

The proposed zoning as of this publication's date is RMF-12 (Residential Multifamily). There will be a joint public hearing (Planning Board and District Council) on the CMA in Spring 2020 and the District Council will ultimately determine which zone will be applied. RMF-12 is the only zone that permits the mix of uses recommended by the sector plan at a "small-scale" and "low-intensity." Other zones that allow a mix of uses permit densities far in excess of the current approximately six-units-per-acre density of the surrounding single-family detached residential neighborhood, as well as uses that may be incompatible with such a neighborhood.

In addition, given the unique features of the site — its location entirely within a single-family detached residential neighborhood, and the opportunities for adaptive reuse and creative placemaking — this site may be appropriate for a future Planned Development (PD) Zone.

¹⁴ Specifically, Policy LU3; Strategies LU 3.1, LU 6.2, and HN 1.1. These are listed under the Sector Plan Guidance section of this publication.

Map 2. Existing Land use



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019

Map 3. Future Land Use



District of Columbia/Maryland Border	Residential Medium	Mixed-Use
Buildings	Residential Medium-High	Parks and Open Space
Water	Institutional	
Metro	Industrial	
Site: Fairmont Heights High School	Mixed-Use Commercial	
Metrorail Orange Line	Commercial	
MARC Rail		

N

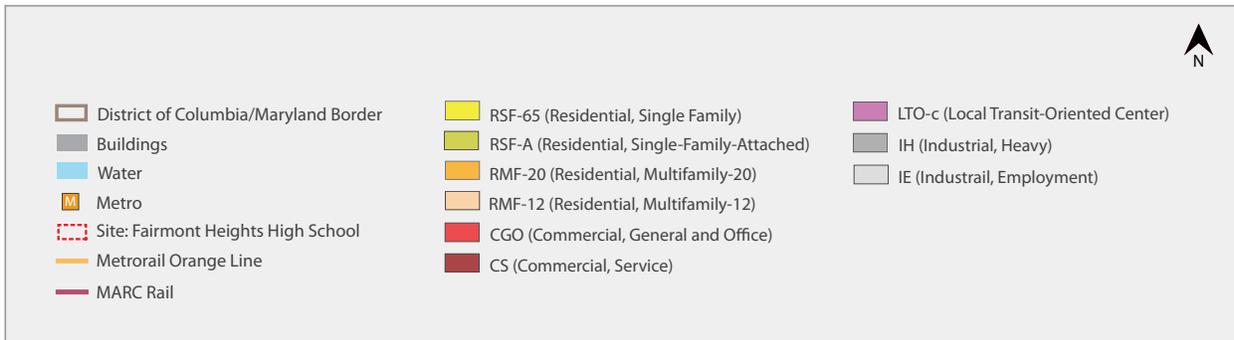
Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
 Data Source: 2018 *Approved Greater Cheverly Sector Plan*
 Date: December 2019

Map 4. Existing Zoning



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019

Map 5. New Zoning



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019

Site



The site is bounded by Nye Street to the southwest, North Englewood Drive to the northwest, and a dense line of trees and shrubs to the north and the east; it has a steep slope on an irregular, triangular parcel.

Map 6. Existing site



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019



IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

More than half of the site is covered with impervious surfaces (building, parking lots, concrete walkways, tennis courts).

Approximately 15 percent of the site is occupied by the school and 22 percent is used for parking. A total of 142 parking spaces are available on the site, including four handicapped-accessible spaces.



Structure

Fairmont Heights High School features four levels built on a sloped hill, which allows for entrances to the building on each level. The building presents a one-story facade when viewed from Nye Street, where the main entrance is accessible to the top floor — Level 4. The sloping terrain to the north and east exposes the remaining three levels of the building. More than half of levels one, two, and three are built in the hillside, resulting in many windowless classrooms. There is no basement and “the building is constructed on a series of grade beams supported by piles, piers and caissons.”¹⁵ These transfer the load through compressible soils to more stable soils.

The main parking area is along Nye Street adjacent to the fourth level of the school. The secondary parking and the bus loop are at the northwest elevation of the building (Level 1). The athletic fields are to the northeast of the ground floor (Level 1). The tennis courts at the southeast corner of the building are on a terrace approximately at the third level. A circular drive located in front of the main entry (Level 4) is complemented by a small landscaped courtyard and flagpole. A small softball field is to the north part of the campus¹⁶ and on the east side of the building are track and football fields.

¹⁵ PGCPs, Fairmont Heights High School Feasibility Study, n.p., Introduction: Overview.

¹⁶ EHT Traceries, Fairmont Heights High School, 72-64.



Environmental

The property is not located in an Environmental Strategy Area (ESA), and is located in FEMA Flood Zone X (an area of minimal flood hazard). The property comprises Russett-Christiana-Urban land complex (RuB) soils on the lower portion of the land and Christiana-Downer-Urban land complex (CdD) where the original portion of the school is located.¹⁷

Generally, with Christiana complexes (which can be unstable), a geotechnical analysis may be required during any development review process. Basements are generally not recommended. Examples of soil subsidence/erosion can be observed in the courtyard near the bus pick-up area.

¹⁷ Source: PGAtlas.com. Feature class name: Soil_NRCS_Py. SSURGO (Soil Survey Geographic database) depicts information about the kinds and distribution of soils on the landscape. The soil map and data used in the SSURGO product were prepared by soil scientists as part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey. Last Updated: 2009-01-01.

Map 7. Soil Composition



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019



A current view of the school from the Nye Street parking lot, looking northeast. The gym can be seen at the rear.

2006 Bignell Watkins Hasser Architects, Feasibility Study



In 2006, Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) commissioned a feasibility study of the historic Fairmont Heights High School. “The goal of this study was to determine how best to provide a facility for the students and faculty of Fairmont Heights High School that meets the school’s educational, environmental and instructional needs and today’s building health and safety requirements. The Feasibility Team studied the existing building and site to develop options for the replacement, expansion and/or modernization of this facility. The team prepared several schemes that would be necessary in order to meet the programmatic needs of the school.”¹⁸

Salient options were identified, each with cost estimates:

- 1A. Replacement Building on Site
- 1B. Replacement Building on New Site
2. Modernization and Addition
3. Renovation and Addition
4. Reuse Current Building

Although stating “it can also be argued that because this was the first high school for black students in Prince George’s County, the building’s image should not be altered, but restored to its original appearance and the building preserved as

¹⁸ Prince George’s County Public Schools, Fairmont Heights High School Feasibility Study. (Annapolis: Bignell Watkins Hasser Architects, P.A., 2006).Executive Summary.

a symbol of the community's history,"¹⁹ the study ultimately recommended Option 1B, noting "none of the [on-site] options provide equality for Fairmont Heights to other similar facilities currently being constructed in Prince George's County."²⁰

The major drawbacks with options 1A and 2-4 were that:

- The constrained 15-acre site does not permit playing fields that meet the educational needs of the students or community, nor do they comply with Title IX²¹
- The steeply graded site with poor and wet soil conditions presents expensive design, engineering and operational challenges—and requires programmatic compromises.

Review of the Bignell Watkins Hasser study is helpful in understanding why the Board of Education ultimately chose to build a new Fairmont Heights High School on a different, 30-acre site, and why the building is not under consideration for use as a middle school.

Because of this study's focus on the potential adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of the building, it is helpful to review certain 2006 findings about the site constraints and building systems.

Most of the following detailed information is excerpted from the 2006 study. (Note that deterioration will have occurred over the past 14 years, systems will have continued to obsolete, codes may have been strengthened. The building was not maintained as it would be if it was not planned for replacement. Components or systems (for example, the roof) that were described as being in "good" condition in 2006 would need to be reevaluated.

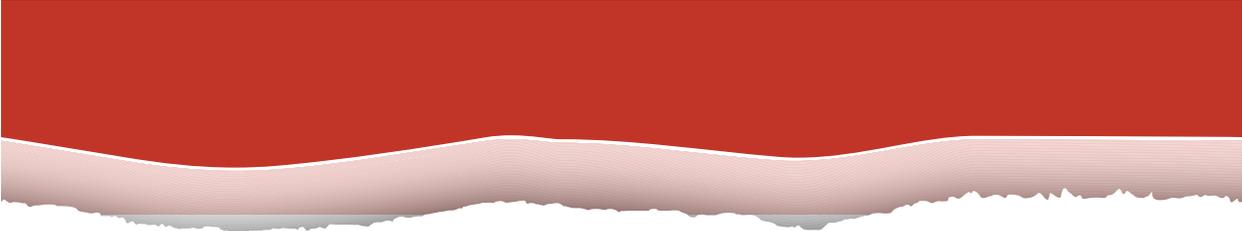
19 PGCP, Fairmont Feasibility Study, n.p., Conclusions.

20 PGCP, Fairmont Feasibility Study, n.p., Conclusions.

21 "Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 is a federal law that states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Source: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/title-ix-frequently-asked-questions>.



Inside the historic Fairmont Heights High School.



➤ Excerpts from the 2006 Bignell Watkins
Hasser Architects, Feasibility Study

SITE AND STRUCTURE

The site has a 60-foot elevation change from the front of the building to the rear. Site topography is a major issue. The steep grade change from the front to the rear of the site will require the building, including any new construction, to act as a retaining wall. Due to poor soil conditions and a high water table, the building is constructed on a series of grade beams supported by piles, piers and caissons, and has experienced moisture infiltration problems throughout the years. [It] will require waterproofing the below-grade walls as well as installing sub-soil drainage piping.

EXTERIOR

Above-grade exterior walls are in good condition, aside from the need for some limited repointing and repair. Existing single-pane glazed windows should be replaced with insulated windows in order to improve energy efficiency, watertightness [sic], and building appearance. The roofing, flashing and coping are in good condition. The roofing was installed in 2004.

INTERIOR

[T]he existing facility does not meet all current building, mechanical or electrical codes, and fails to meet many of the ... ADA [(Americans With Disabilities Act) Standards]. There is poor visual control over stairs and corridors, many areas for concealment, and a great distance from security offices to remote areas of the [building]. The building has experienced significant ground water infiltration over the years, which ha[s] caused failure of interior finishes and mold growth.

SYSTEMS

The building has been periodically maintained, but the overall electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems are aging and in need of repair and replacement. The present electrical system is old, inadequate, and difficult to maintain and expand for the following reasons: [t]he age of the equipment makes it difficult to procure spare parts, and [t]here is no physical room for expansion within the present switchboard. Most of the HVAC equipment is 30 to 50 years old and beyond the estimated service life for this type of equipment. Mechanical units do not provide the fresh air requirements of today's codes. The chiller failed in 2014; PGPCS rented a chiller until 2017 at a cost of \$160,000 per cooling season. The rental chiller has been removed. Most of the plumbing fixtures and piping are 30 to 50 years old and will not provide reliable service for an addition[al] 20 to 30 years.



September 2012 PGCPS Updated Facility Condition Assessment Final Report

By 2012, the decision had already been made to construct a new 193,000-square-foot facility, the now-operational, \$80 million Fairmont Heights High School at Columbia Park Road, completed in 2017.²² The Nye Street campus was evaluated for repurposing as a middle school.

In June 2012, PGCPS engaged the Parsons Corporation to update a General Facility Condition Assessment for 184 schools, including the historic Fairmont Heights High School. “The purpose of this assessment was to help PGCPS define capital renewal and deferred maintenance funding requirements.”²³ The assessment evaluated the various building systems and components that make up school facilities; for example, foundations, structural integrity, roofing, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The 2006 Bignell Watkins Hasser study was used for Fairmont Heights.

A Facility Condition Index (FCI) was calculated as an indicator to suggest whether it is more economical to replace a facility or repair it. Fairmont Heights High School’s FCI was 62.71 percent, or fair; an FCI greater than 75 percent is considered poor. However, its Extended Facility Condition Index (EFCI), was 80.71 percent.²⁴

The 2012 cost of repair was estimated to be \$30,628,751 (\$34,225,856 in 2019 dollars). PGCPS has indicated to staff that since 2012, when the assessment was completed, the cost of repair has become greater than the cost of replacement (\$48,841,039 in 2012 dollars).²⁵ These dollar amounts are provided to give a general range for what it would cost to rehabilitate the school for use. HVAC, interior finishes and electrical systems are by far the most expensive items, together representing 67 percent of the total estimated cost (or 34, 19, and 14 percent, respectively).²⁶ In 2018, PGCPS’s senior mechanical engineer estimated replacing the HVAC system, plumbing system, ceiling and lighting, roof, windows and doors (abatement included) would cost at least \$41,000,000.²⁷

22 Grunley Construction, Fairmont Heights High School Replacement.

23 Prince George’s County Public Schools, Updated Facility Condition Assessment Final Report (Centreville: Parsons Corporation, 2012), 1.

24 Ibid, 10.

25 Ibid, 10.

26 Ibid, 13.

27 Walter Ware. “Re: Senior Mechanical Engineer’s Assessment of the Former Fairmont Heights High School.” Message to Maha Tariq. August 1, 2018. E-mail.



CALCULATING THE COST OF REPAIRING VERSUS REPLACING

PGCPS uses two indexes to evaluate the cost of repairing versus replacing a school.

FACILITY CONDITION INDEX (FCI)

$$\frac{\text{cost of needed repairs}}{\text{replacement value}}$$

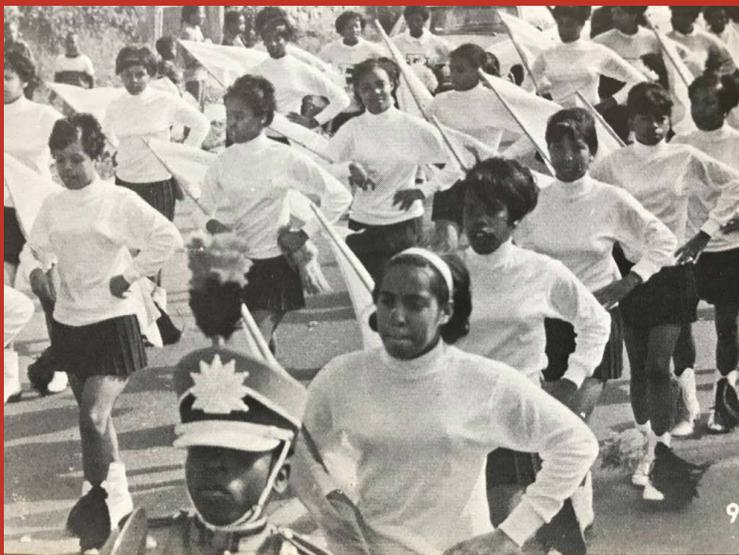
EXTENDED FACILITY CONDITION INDEX (EFCI)

$$\frac{\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Current} \\ \text{cost of} \\ \text{repairs} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{Projected} \\ \text{capital} \\ \text{renewal} \end{array} \right)}{\text{Replacement Value}}$$

The 1967 Championship Football Team



(Top Row, L - R) Larry Hicks, Stephen Missouri, Warren Watkins, John Allen, Alfonzo Adair; (Second Row) Edward Coates, Ricardo Thompson, Anthony Carter, Lawrence Dickerson, Cornell Jones, Samuel Jordan; (Third Row) Roderic Missouri (manager), Anthony Ford, Eugene Oliver, Garcia Graves, Fred Tabron, John Brooks, Derrick Wooten, Joseph Walker, Donald Richardson (manager); (Fourth Row) Kieth Cook (trainer), Jeryl Stewart, Irbor Durant, Donald Caldwell, Tillman Sease, Reginald Bryant, JaRome Banks, Francis Thomas (scorer); (Front Row) Gary Clark, (scorer), Robert Gilkeson, Jerome Tolson, Reginald Wilson, Raymond Williams, Anthony Floyd, Elmer Goldsmith, and Gill Tyree



Photos from 1968 Fairmont Heights High School yearbook show students at the historic school. Mandatory desegregation did not happen until 1970. The yearbook featured the 1967 championship football team and refers to the field at the school as “the pit” — where other teams “fell victim” to the Hornets.

Assets and Challenges

Assets



- A 15.06-acre parcel (Addison Row) to the west of the school property is zoned M-X-T (Mixed-Use Transportation Oriented) and has been approved for 321 multifamily residential units. Ultimately there will be 648 multifamily dwelling units as well as 40,000 square feet of commercial and retail uses at the site.²⁸ Redevelopment and additional residents could potentially create demand for a variety of uses at the 1950 Fairmont Heights High School site.
- The Town of Cheverly is a state-designated sustainable community a quarter mile to the northeast; its boundary could be amended to include the school property. The Sustainable Communities Program is a place-based designation offering a comprehensive package of resources that support holistic strategies for community development, revitalization, and sustainability.

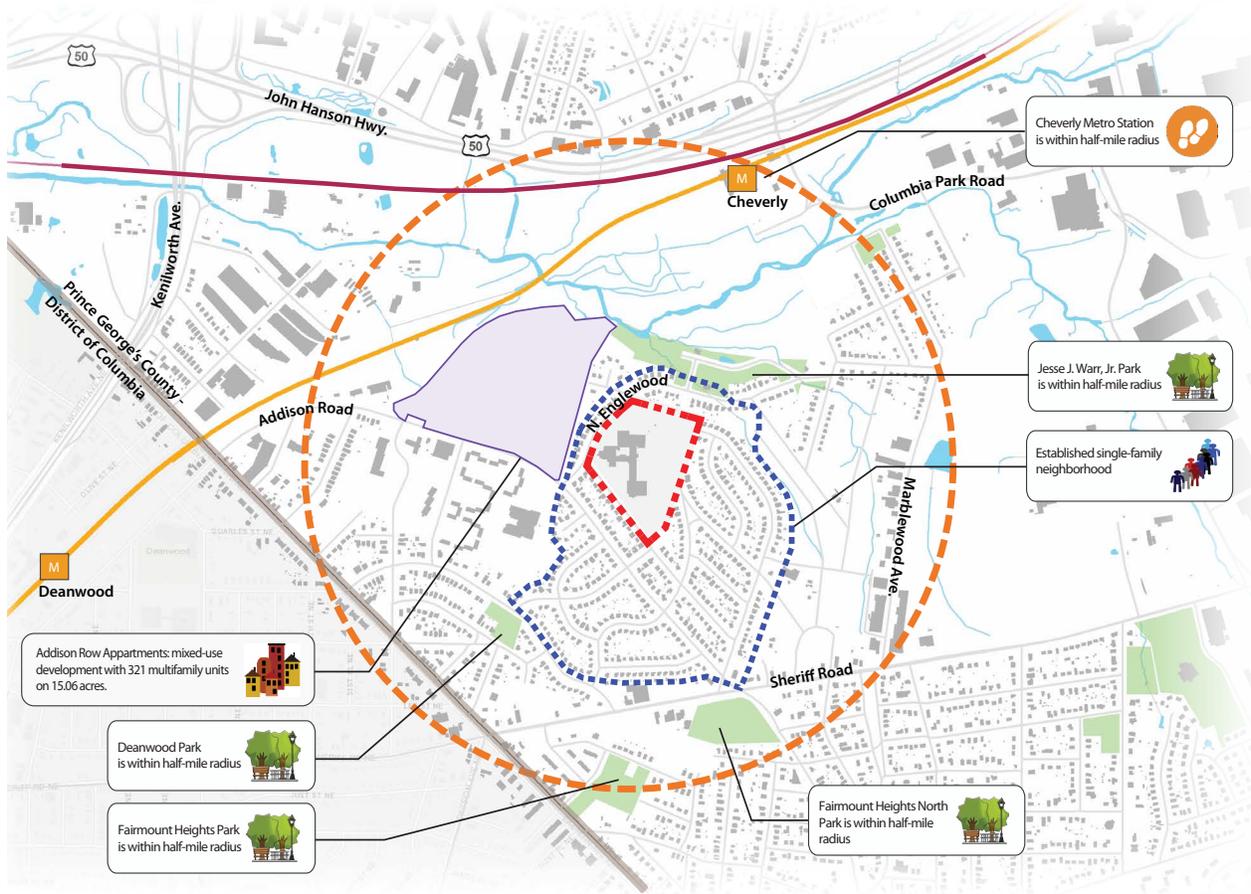


The Cheverly Metro station is 1.1 miles from the historic Fairmont Heights High School.

- Two Metro Stations, Deanwood and Cheverly, are within a one-mile radius of the site. Existing infrastructure could be used to walk or bike to either station. The distance to Deanwood Metro Station from the site is a 0.9 mile, 17-minutewalk. The path to access Cheverly Metro Station is 1.1 miles long and would take 22 minutes to walk from the site.
- The community comprises civic-minded, engaged residents who are actively involved and interested in seeing the property redeveloped.
- The US 50/MD 295 (Baltimore-Washington Parkway)/MD 201 (Kenilworth Avenue) interchange is a gateway into the industrial area and Prince George's County.

²⁸ See Conceptual Site Plan amendment CSP-06003 and Detailed Site Plan DSP-17023.

Map 8. Assets

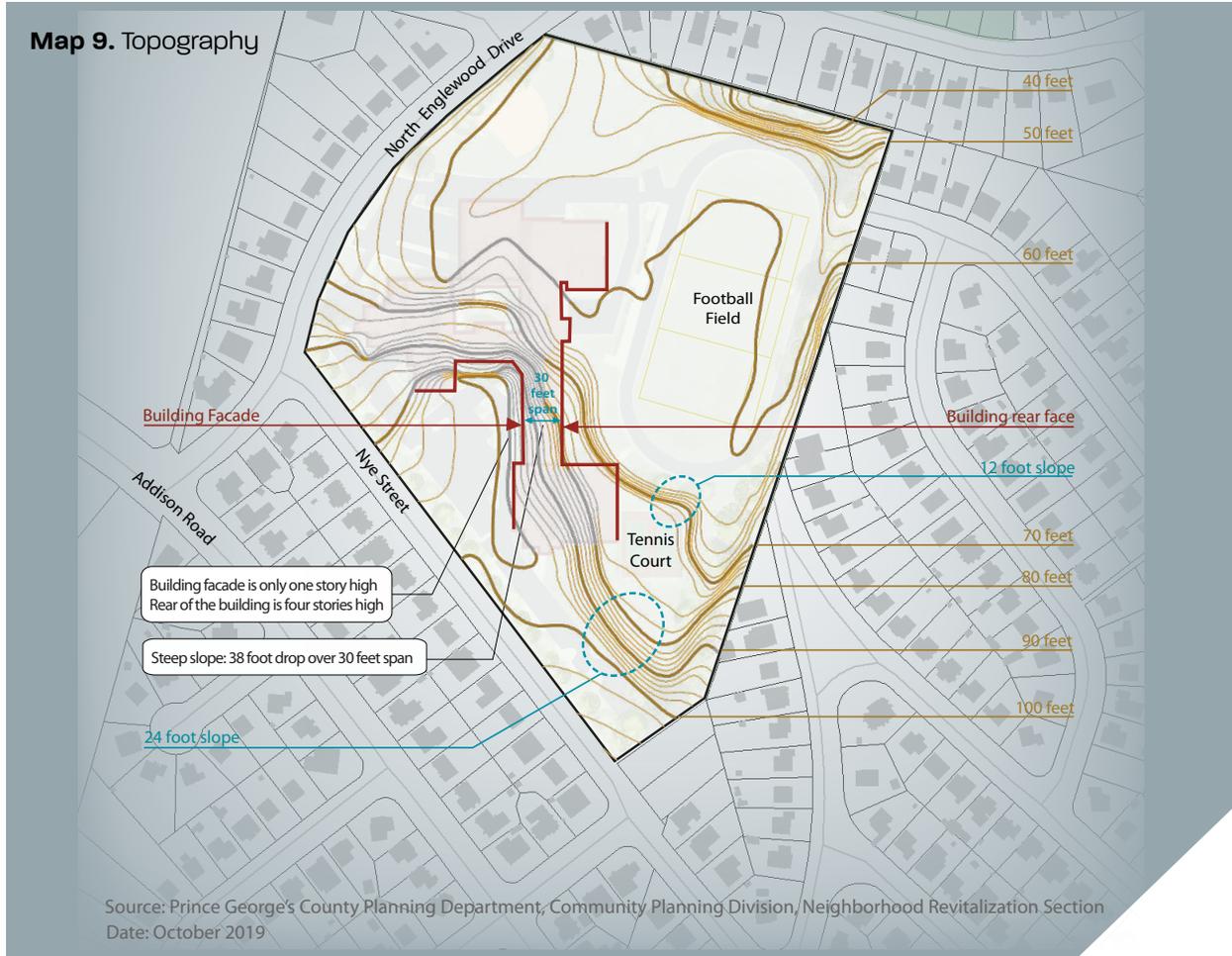


Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date: October 2019



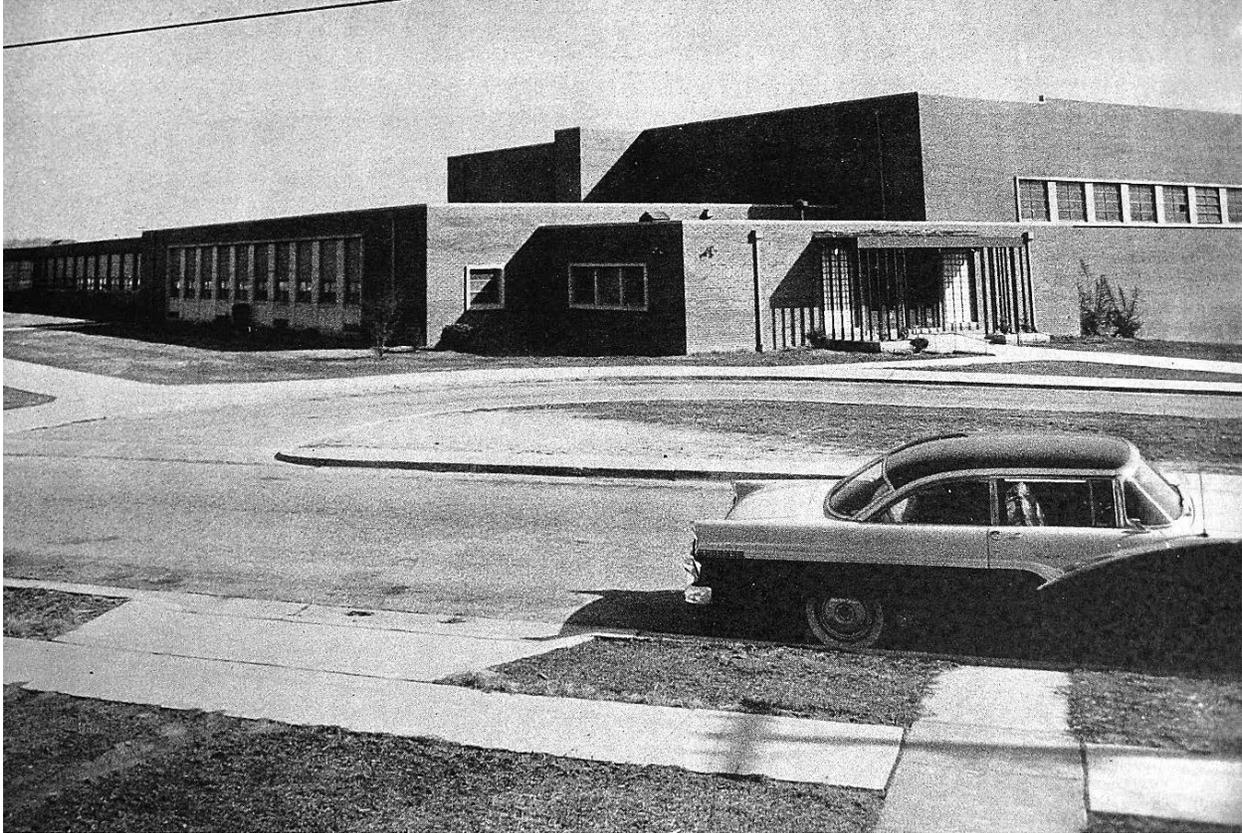
A view of the gym looking southeast from the football field.

Map 9. Topography



Challenges

- Long-term disuse of the building/campus may trigger increased rates of crime, including arson and vandalism of the property; decreased quality of life for surrounding residents; blight; decreased property values and a negative neighborhood perception; physical degradation of the facility, structure, systems, and finishes; and higher future cost for potential rehabilitation.
- At approximately 170,000 square feet, the building is enormous; its sprawling character makes it expensive to heat, cool, and secure. The lack of any appealing architectural character makes it difficult to imagine adaptive reuse without substantial reworking. The sloping site, poor soils, and water infiltration mean any rehabilitation would have to start with extensive, expensive stabilization measures.
- Existing stormwater management facilities are inadequate and there is a lack of easy and affordable solutions to manage heavy rainfall, leading to regular flooding, especially in the bus bays.
- Absence of sidewalks in some areas and lack of pedestrian safety features limit access to both Metro stations. Numerous physical barriers hinder access to the Cheverly Metro Station (for example, US 50, industrial uses, and environmentally sensitive lands).
- Both Metro stations are outside the natural half-mile radius that most commuters are willing to walk, limiting the value of Metro proximity without creating direct paths.
- Location in a single-family residential neighborhood precludes many uses.



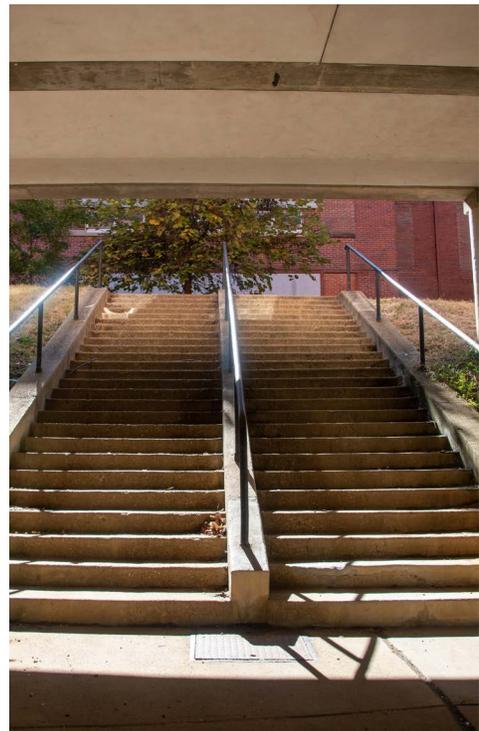
The high school in the 1950s, looking northeast, with the gym in the background right. The car is a 1956 Ford Fairlane.

Physical Evolution



There is no known complete documentation of the school's original or early appearance. Photographs from vintage yearbooks (the *Reflector*, 1954 and 1976) show a handsome, low-slung building, Midcentury Modern in overall character and composition, punctuated by ordered groups of windows in stone surrounds. Its focus was the Art Moderne stone recessed entrance centered in the south-facing Nye Street wing. "Fairmont Heights High School" was spelled out above the door in applied aluminum sans-serif letters, their crossbars stylishly lowered.

The high school has undergone several additions since first constructed in 1950. The first two additions made in 1951 and 1956 were to accommodate increasing student enrollment. The last addition, in 1983, followed a 1980 fire that caused significant damage to the building.



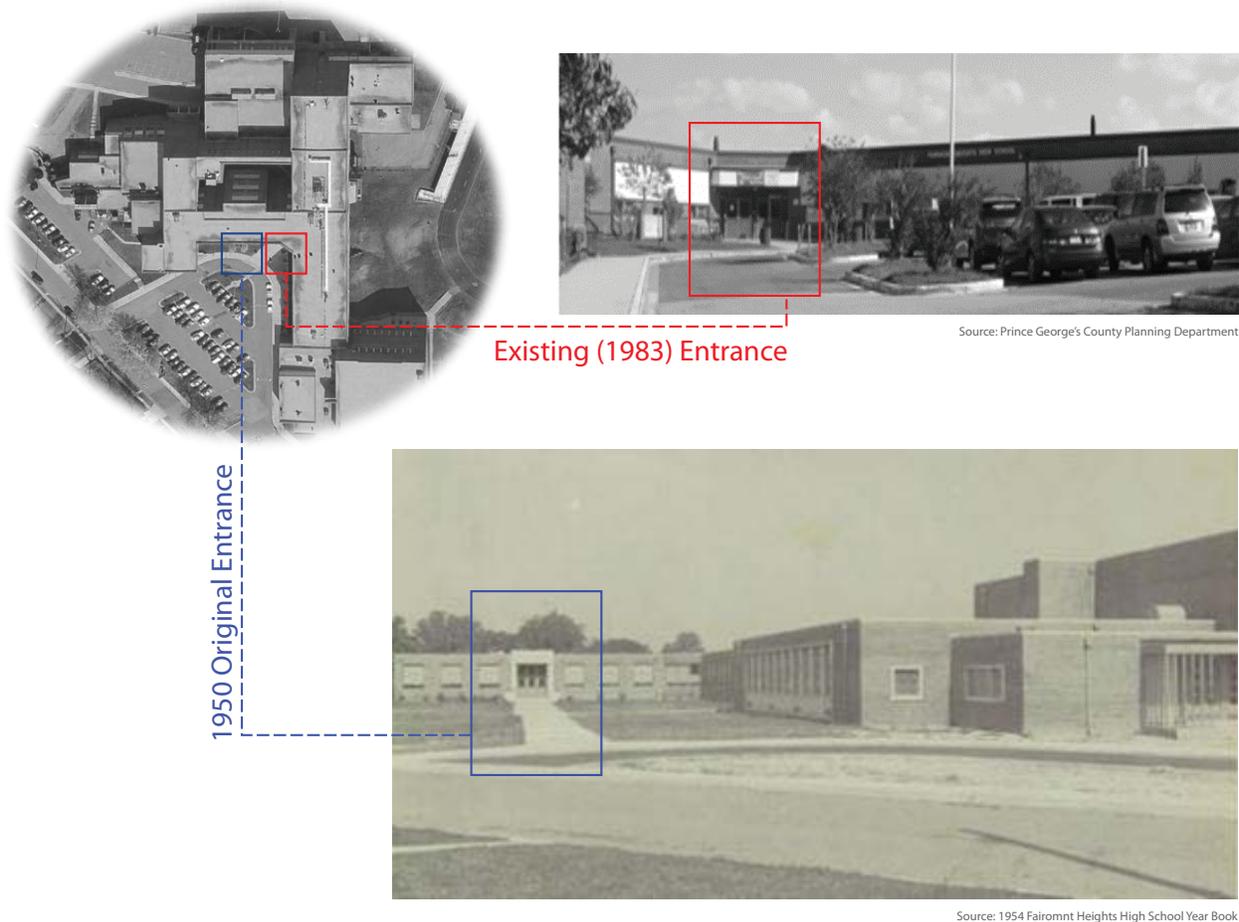


Figure 2. The main entrance to the building was moved in 1983.

Alterations made in 1983 eliminated Kea Associates' character-defining Art Moderne features, including the front entry, windows, and decorative treatments. The current nondescript entrance is located at the southwest juncture of the wings facing Nye Street. All the windows have had their upper two-thirds covered by prominent exterior shades, possibly for energy efficiency. The 1983 addition "features a thin, three-story block that extends east-to-west and connects to the north elevation of the school. This three-story block forms an interior courtyard on the northern end of school. Instead of being a large, three-story

addition, the northern end of the addition was only one-story and supported by concrete columns. This unusual circumstance permits vehicular access below the structure and provides for pedestrian access to the interior courtyard. Constructed of concrete block, the addition is faced with stretcher-bond brick. Prominent concrete [string] courses extend along the base of the structure as well as forming a wide cornice. Set between these bands are vertical openings that hold single-light, fixed metal windows over one-light metal casements."²⁹

29 EHT Traceries, Fairmont Heights High School, 72-64.

Figure 3. Construction phases

 1950  1951  1956  1983



SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION



NORTH-EAST ELEVATION



NORTH-WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION

Historic Designation



County

As County Historic Site 72-064, the historic Fairmont Heights High School is subject to Subtitle 29 of the Prince George's County Code, Preservation of Historic Resources. The Historic Preservation Commission is authorized to review any application to alter the exterior of the school building or other features within the school property, which constitutes the environmental setting of the historic site. The Historic Preservation Commission would also review any application to subdivide the school property to accommodate future development or demolish all or portions of it. The building's designation as a County historic site provides a level of protection and qualifies the property for the County's preservation tax credit (20 percent of the cost of qualified rehabilitation expenditures) if purchased by an entity with tax liability.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

HPC Policy 1-98, "Historic Area Work Permit Demolition Applications," outlines a series of submittals that must accompany an application to demolish a historic site, not all of which are applicable in each case. These submittals include: a cost estimate for the proposed demolition; a cost estimate for relocating the structure; a report by a licensed structural engineer describing the structural soundness of the building; the potential for the building's relocation, rehabilitation, or restoration, and any dangerous conditions presented by the property; a statement regarding the economic feasibility of rehabilitating or reusing the existing structure; evidence of attempts to sell the property; and information on the property's potential archaeological significance.



NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

(Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service). The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and: A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past.



Federal

The historic Fairmont Heights High School was determined not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places through an assessment by Peter Kurtze, Administrator, Evaluation & Registration, Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Department of Planning, on December 6, 2016. Kurtze stated that the alterations and additions render it ineligible, and that the school building would need to be unaltered (or at least not overwhelmed by later work) from the pre-Brown v. Board of Education era to be eligible under National Register Criteria A and B.



» Excerpts from the Adaptive Reuse Economic Study

The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) hired a multi-disciplinary consultant team to provide economic, traffic, and infrastructure data to be incorporated into this study for the potential adaptive reuse/re-purposing of the historic FHHS site.¹ A potential rehabilitation is likely to draw many of its residents and customers from nearby areas, referred to as the primary market area (PMA).² A larger, secondary market area (SMA) extends from the Anacostia River and MD 295 (Baltimore-Washington Parkway) east to the Capital Beltway, with the MD 295 and Capital Beltway interchange to the north and Pennsylvania Avenue to the south. A redeveloped property could draw potential residents, retail customers, and other users from the SMA, but at a lower rate than would be drawn from the PMA.

The review of local and regional market factors considered the demand for a variety of uses, including both residential and commercial. Adaptive reuse of the site and current structures was considered, as well as options for partial or full demolition of the building. The initial review of demographic data analyzed population and household characteristics as well as growth patterns and the investment climate.”

HOUSING POTENTIAL

The site is surrounded by single-family residential neighborhoods set in a larger area dominated by large tracts of industrial land, with only a few of the amenities that support residential

neighborhoods. The projected growth rates for the area and increased demand for housing near transit could make the site a viable location for new market-rate apartments, townhouses, and/or senior housing. By the year 2022, the site could support up to 57 apartments and 60 for-sale townhouses; by 2026, the site could support up to 114 apartments and 110 for-sale townhouses. Affordable housing could be developed as part of the project if funding was available to subsidize development costs.

OFFICE POTENTIAL

Overall, the Washington, D.C., regional office market, within inner-ring suburbs and aside from mixed-use, amenity-rich locations, is stagnant. Only a few key suburban submarkets with a mixture of uses and activity generators are attracting new development. Two distinctive types of office space have potential at the historic FHHS site—neighborhood-serving offices, such as those that exist along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and offices tied directly to the presence of institutional anchors. Office tenants tend to require prominent locations, excellent access to transit and transportation corridors, proximity to high-quality retail and supportive services, state-of-the-art building systems and high-quality finishes. The historic FHHS property’s residential neighborhood lacks visibility, high-quality retail, and supportive services. The property does not meet the basic site selection criteria for office development and would be unable to support newly constructed or rehabilitated office space.”³

1 STV and Partners for Economic Solutions, [Historic Fairmont Heights High School Adaptive Reuse Economic Study](#), (Upper Marlboro: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2018), 1.

2 The PMA is generally defined by five nearby U.S. Census Tracts: 8030.01, 8031.00, 78.06, 78.07, and 78.09.

3 STV and Partners, Adaptive Reuse Economic Study, 1-2.



» Excerpts from the Adaptive Reuse Economic Study

RETAIL POTENTIAL

“Retail development requires access to customers, visibility from major thoroughfares, and sufficient daytime population to support consistent sales. Retailers have specific population density and household income spending-level requirements and consider nearby competition when selecting sites. As the entire brick-and-mortar retail market continues to shrink in response to consumers’ ability to access products and services online, these site selection criteria continue to filter out less-competitive locations. The historic FHHS property does not meet any of the baseline retail site selection requirements.”

COMMUNITY-PREFERRED USES

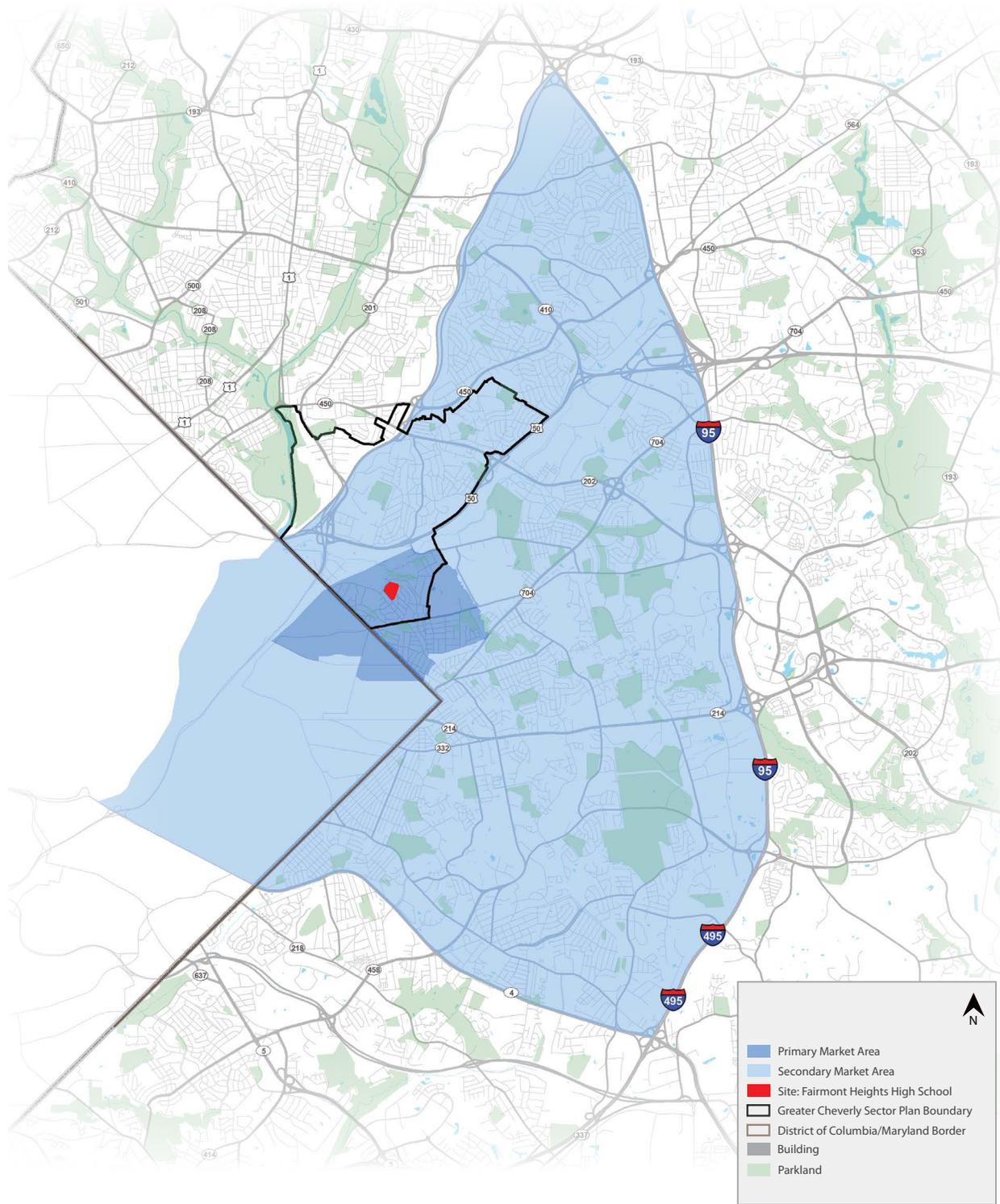
The preferred uses suggested by the community are considered as non-market uses. “A series of non-market uses, such as community recreation facilities, playing fields, parks, open space and day care facilities, might be viable reuse alternatives for the historic FHHS property with public/private financial support. The amount of revenue that could be generated by such uses themselves would not financially support redevelopment of the site or reuse of the existing structures. Although these options might be highly desirable and improve the quality of life of area residents, they do not respond to market-generated demand.”⁴

CONCLUSION

In the near future, rehabilitation of the property for housing may be the only economically viable option.

4 STV and Partners for Economic Solutions, Historic Fairmont Heights High School Adaptive Reuse Economic Study,

Map 10. Primary Market Area and Secondary Market Area



Source: Prince George's County Planning Department, Community Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization Section
Date Source: 2018 Historic Fairmont Heights High School Adaptive Reuse Economic Study
Date: October 2019

Public Participation Process



Agencies, community groups, and individuals have been involved in the project since its inception in September 2017; potential adaptive reuse scenarios for the historic Fairmont Heights High School were formed by ideas and opinions expressed by these stakeholders. Their contributions provided essential insights into site conditions and helped staff understand the reasoning behind their specific interests and preferred reuse options.

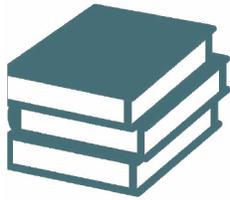
In August 2018, Community Planning staff formed a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) comprising key community stakeholders to review and comment on recommendations included in the draft study. Two public meetings were held. The first community meeting was held in September 2018 to present staff recommendations to CAC. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct an in-depth discussion and refine adaptive reuse options. This CAC meeting was open to, and attended by, members of the general public. The second meeting was held in November 2018 to obtain feedback on draft study, which incorporated the comments from the September 18, 2018, community meeting.

Participating stakeholders included District Councilmembers, the Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association, the Englewood Park Civic Association, the Town of Fairmont Heights, Prince George's County Public Schools, and M-NCPPC's Department of Parks and Recreation staff. Members of the community voiced strong commitment to preserve the legacy of the historic Fairmont Heights High School. Throughout the process, several stakeholders expressed their belief that the school building and campus embody significant heritage and should remain in use, ideally hosting a diverse array of services, programs, and amenities for the community.

Figure 4. OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Stakeholder Concerns and Interests



Board of Education and Prince George's County Public Schools

Historic FHHS is owned by the Board of Education (BOE) and maintained by Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). According to PGCPS, reuse of the historic FHHS for a middle school is neither an economically viable nor realistic option. It is obsolete, and the building cannot be made to meet the standards required by today's middle schools (See pages 11-12 for a detailed assessment of the building condition).

PGCPS is considering M-NCPPC's Glenridge Community Park at 5211 Flintridge Drive, Hyattsville, operated by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and adjacent to PGCPS's Glenridge Elementary School, as a potential location for a new middle school. PGCPS and M-NCPPC DPR may consider a land swap that includes the athletic fields and the associated parking on the old Fairmont Heights High School site, if alternative locations are deemed not appropriate. The site will remain under consideration for future transactions.¹ If a viable land swap could be agreed upon, PGCPS would consider demolishing the historic FHHS building and constructing a new middle school facility.²



Prince George's County

PGCPS Administrative Procedure 2571.II., dated July 1, 2013, states in part, "When buildings are closed by the Board of Education, Board of Education use of that facility will assume a first priority. If the building is not needed for Board of Education purposes, the community will be notified and the building will be turned over to the County." Procedure 2571.VI.I states, "Immediately upon final approvals, required under law, having been obtained, the Board shall cause to prepare and deliver a Deed to Prince George's County, after which occurrence the Board shall no longer be responsible for the maintenance or payment of utility bills for same. Once the building has been turned over to the County, all negotiations for the use of the building will be with the County office." The potential land swap with M-NCPPC DPR, if undertaken, would be in accordance with these procedures.³

If the property is transferred to the County, planning for its future use could be delegated to the Prince Georges' County Redevelopment Authority. The Redevelopment Authority has indicated that the property could be developed as multifamily housing, senior housing or a combination of uses. Any reuse of the site by the Development Authority would require a detailed analysis of how much of the existing building could be reused and other site development requirements, such as parking.⁴

¹ Source: email communication with M-NCPPC's Department of Parks and Recreation staff, August 26, 2019.

² M-NCPPC staff conversation with PGCPS/BOE staff, March 7, 2019

³ M-NCPPC staff conversation with PGCPS/BOE staff, March 7, 2019.

⁴ Staff meeting with Steve Paul, Associate Director of the Prince George's County Redevelopment Authority, September 10, 2019.



Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association

The Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association (FHHSAA) is “a 501(c)3 organization whose primary goals are: providing students with scholarship assistance, supporting Fairmont Heights High School students with their morale and welfare activities, recommending ideas for improving the quality of education at the ‘NEW’ Fairmont Heights High School and maintaining the legacy of ‘Historic’ Fairmont Heights High School located in Capitol Heights, Maryland.”⁵ The association is interested in retaining the existing historic FHHS site, perhaps establishing a museum and a legacy center to preserve and promote the heritage of the school. Other suggested reuse options include a meeting space for the FHHSAA, a library, a vocational school, small retail, and/or a grocery store. A concern was raised that the nearby Addison Row approved mixed-use development (4800 Addison Road) with 648 multifamily dwelling units⁶ may necessitate construction of a new middle school; perhaps the building could be adapted for that use.⁷ A vocational school was suggested as there are only three currently operating in the County. A police substation was suggested as it could contribute to the security of the neighborhood.



Fairmont Park-North Englewood Civic Association

The Fairmont Park-North Englewood Civic Association (FPNECA) includes the area between Nye Street, North Englewood drive and the southern border of the Town of Cheverly and represents approximately 150 single-family dwellings. FPNECA supports most of the uses suggested by FHHSAA with the additional suggestions of a multi-use community center, YMCA/ YWCA, small theater for performances, and/or athletic fields for sports and other community uses. FPNECA acknowledges the greatest challenge would be to find a developer or developers who have the financial means to renovate and reuse the building as a vocational school. FPNECA strongly discourages reuse of the building as a middle school because the organization believes that would diminish its legacy as a high school.



M-NCPPC's Department of Parks and Recreation

If the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) were to assume ownership of the historic FHHS campus, its interest would be limited to the playing fields as there is a shortage of open fields in the part of the County where the school is located. DPR would primarily like to use the fields for recreational purposes, possibly one that would complement the building’s potential adaptive reuse(s). No specific use of the fields has been determined/identified by DPR as of this writing. The fields are currently being used by local informally organized “clubs” for pick-up games.⁸ The fields are maintained by Prince George’s County Public Schools.⁹

⁵ Source: <http://www.fhhsaa.com/>

⁶ The residential development of the site is limited to a maximum of 2,000 dwelling units. See CSP-06003 and Zoning Map Amendment A-9981-C, Condition 17.

⁷ The Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-16040 was reviewed for impact on school facilities in accordance with Section 24-122.02 of the Subdivision Regulations and County Council Resolution CR-23-2003 and concluded that Middle School Cluster 3 would be at 92% capacity with the addition of the 648 dwelling units. Source: PGCPB Resolution No. 18-18.

⁸ M-NCPPC conversation with people using the fields, July 19, 2018.

⁹ M-NCPPC staff conversation with PGCPB/BOE staff, March 7, 2019.

Figure 6. Laurance Winston of the Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association submitted this letter in December 2016 regarding the Preliminary Greater Cheverly Sector Plan.



Greater Cheverly Sector Plan Comments submission

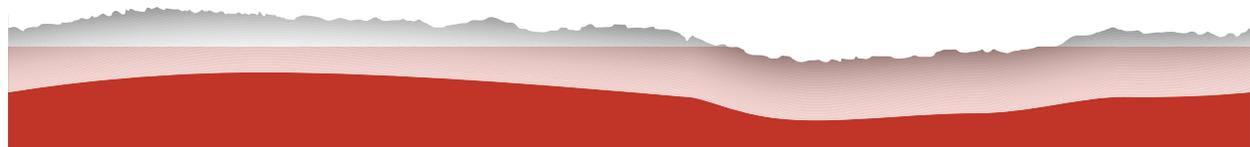
We are pleased that FHHS, another of our historic treasures have / will dodge the wrecking ball and joined Highland Park for its usefulness. FHHS has been recognized for its historic significance and will be preserved. This building represents an important period in the history of public education in Prince George's County and is the County's only surviving high school built for African American students before Brown vs. Board of Education that is still in use as a high school.

There are many of us FHHS alumni who appreciate where we came from and how we achieved in spite of our circumstances. There are many of us from Laurel to Accokeek and Bowie to North Brentwood who have and are achieving because of our circumstances from which were raised. It must not be forgotten that the determined struggle of its AA citizens fought for quality education for all exemplified by the innovations and excellence of FHHS from its pioneering years, merits the recognition and respect of twenty-first century Prince Georgians. The renovation and preservation of this historic school building for continued instructional excellence would constitute a worthy tribute to the County's African American educational pioneers. It was suggested that this 1950 structure be improved for optimal academic use, while maintaining the building's physical integrity, thus preserving a visible reminder of the important role of Negro educational institutions in African American historic quest for equality and progress. This was the suggestion by the PGCHS to the Board of Education. The Board superintendent Dr. Deasy agreed to make this surviving HS built for Blacks a historic jewel – they referred to it as “the jewel known as FHHS.”

As I have stated for the Public Hearing to the School Board with Dr. Deasy, reminding you of the preservationist's testimony of the Prince George's County Historical Society supporting the historical significance of FHHS and the concurrence of the Historic Preservation Commission we still support and expect the recommendations of Dr. Deasy to come to fruition. We feel it is just appropriate for the building to be renovated, modernized, preserved and prepared for its adaptive re-use as a facility for learning, community use, alumni use, athletics, and a museum celebrating Black achievement in Prince George's County, instructional programs; small learning initiative, career and technology, middle school programs, the museum history program; African American History & Prince George's County history, the community use program; Library, athletics and Park facilities, the Alumni; Gym use.

Dr. Deasy realized that there is an African American history void in Prince George's County that should appropriately be filled within the FHHS structure. It was recommended that community residents and visitors be aware of and support the community's character. Also that it have a greater sense of place, collaborate with local organizations, promote cultural programs and activities, include FHHS as a historic resource in the County's trails system, and heritage area tourism.

Submitted by Laurence Winston
FHHS Alumni, Advisory Committee Member



Analysis of Reuse Options Suggested by Stakeholders



Any commercial use such as a **grocery store** or **retail** will not be a viable reuse for the property as the site does not meet any of the baseline retail selection requirements. The site lacks visibility from major thoroughfares, access to customers, sufficient daytime population, and specific population density and household income spending level requirements to support consistent sales (see Historic Fairmont Heights High School Adaptive Reuse Economic Study). The rise of internet commerce has proven that retail outlets cannot be relied upon to fill buildings even in very dense and/or higher-end markets.

A **police substation** is a very small police station, sometimes little more than a kiosk with limited services, often located in shopping centers or strip malls. The small footprint of this use would not help sustain the building physically or financially. (Re-use of a former school for another County operation has occurred. For example, the District 3 Police Station at 7600 Barlowe Road in Landover Hills is the former renovated Kent Junior High School built in 1958. It was transferred from the BOE to the County in 1986. However, this building is only 52,380 square feet—less than one-third the size that of historic FHHS. In addition, it was rehabilitated only 28 years after its original construction.)¹⁰

¹⁰ Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.



The new front entrance, looking northeast from the Nye Street parking lot.

Table 1. SUMMARY OF REUSE OPTIONS SUGGESTED BY STAKEHOLDERS

	Alumni Association	Civic Association	Prince George's County Public Schools	M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation
Grocery Store	✓			
Retail	✓			
Police Substation	✓	✓		
Middle School	✓		✓	
Playing Fields	✓	✓		✓
Legacy Center	✓	✓		
Community Center	✓	✓		
Library	✓			
Museum	✓	✓		
Vocational School	✓	✓		
Meeting Space	✓			
Performing Arts Theater		✓		
YMCA/YWCA	✓	✓		

A **middle school** is not an adaptive reuse option *per se* as it would require demolition of the building.

Although desired by the community, non-revenue generating uses, including a **community center, playing fields, legacy center, or library** would not be able to financially support or sustain the redevelopment or reuse of the building. The viability of such uses would depend on significant public subsidy and/or nonprofit investment.

In considering nonprofit uses that could generate some income, but still require substantial financial backing in the tens of millions of dollars such as a **performing arts theater, museum, or vocational school**,¹¹ the question remains: to what extent can the existing building successfully serve these uses? There no existing auditorium; a theatre or auditorium is the main reason to convert a school for use as a performing arts venue. The building is

too small for a world-class museum, and too large for a small one, and would have to be substantially or entirely reworked. PGCPSS does have Career Educational and Technical Programs, but these are located in operational high schools.¹² Any organization using the building for a vocational or technical school would face the same substantial challenges PGCPSS faces when considering using an obsolete building for demands of modern elementary or intermediate education.

YMCA of Metropolitan Washington D.C. currently runs one very small location in Trinity Lutheran Church in Bowie. It is focused on childcare for children ages 5–15. The robust offerings from the M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation preclude the need for expansion in the County. The deteriorated condition of the school building, its vast size and estimated rehabilitation costs make it an unlikely project for an organization with only \$46,586,513 in net assets.¹³

11 This suggestion might also be said to include the definitions for a trade school or technical school.

12 Source: <https://www.pgcpss.org/career-technical-education>

13 <https://www.ymcadc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/YMCA2017Annual.pdf>



This is an artist's rendering of the reconstruction of the historic Fairmont Heights High School facade.

Adaptive Reuse



Commemoration

The Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association and other civic organizations expressed great concern and interest in maintaining the legacy of the school by preserving the existing building. The L-shaped Nye Street façade of the original building would be the best candidate for preservation, even though its most significant feature, the main entrance, was altered as part of the 1983 post-fire renovations. Photographic documentation would permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture. Reconstruction of the façade could be employed to depict the non-surviving original limestone entrance and vanished and altered window openings.¹⁴

In addition to reconstruction of the façade, landscaping and landscape features can be conceptualized to celebrate the past. These landscaping features may include a commemorative plaque at the entrance of the commemorative garden placed on a brick wall. Names of important people and dates of important events inlaid in masonry on the pathway could illuminate the struggle of African Americans for education. The pathway could widen to encircle a flagpole in the middle and four benches around it, one at each corner of the square, a place to pause and commemorate the achievements of those who are associated with the historic Fairmont Heights High School. A statue of G. James Gholson, the school's first principal, standing just before the main entrance could be fabricated and installed to welcome visitors and direct them to the Legacy Center.

¹⁴ This part of the building is only one story high on Nye Street, but is supported by the three stories below it. A structural analysis would be required to determine what portions could be retained.

SCENARIOS

Staff have developed the following three potential reuse scenarios based on stakeholder input. All scenarios incorporate the commemorative program described above. Scenario One has the lowest budget and smallest footprint; Scenario Two has a moderate budget and a larger footprint; and Scenario Three has the largest budget and footprint. Table 2 shows which uses could be accommodated in each scenario.



Figure 7. Legacy center sketch

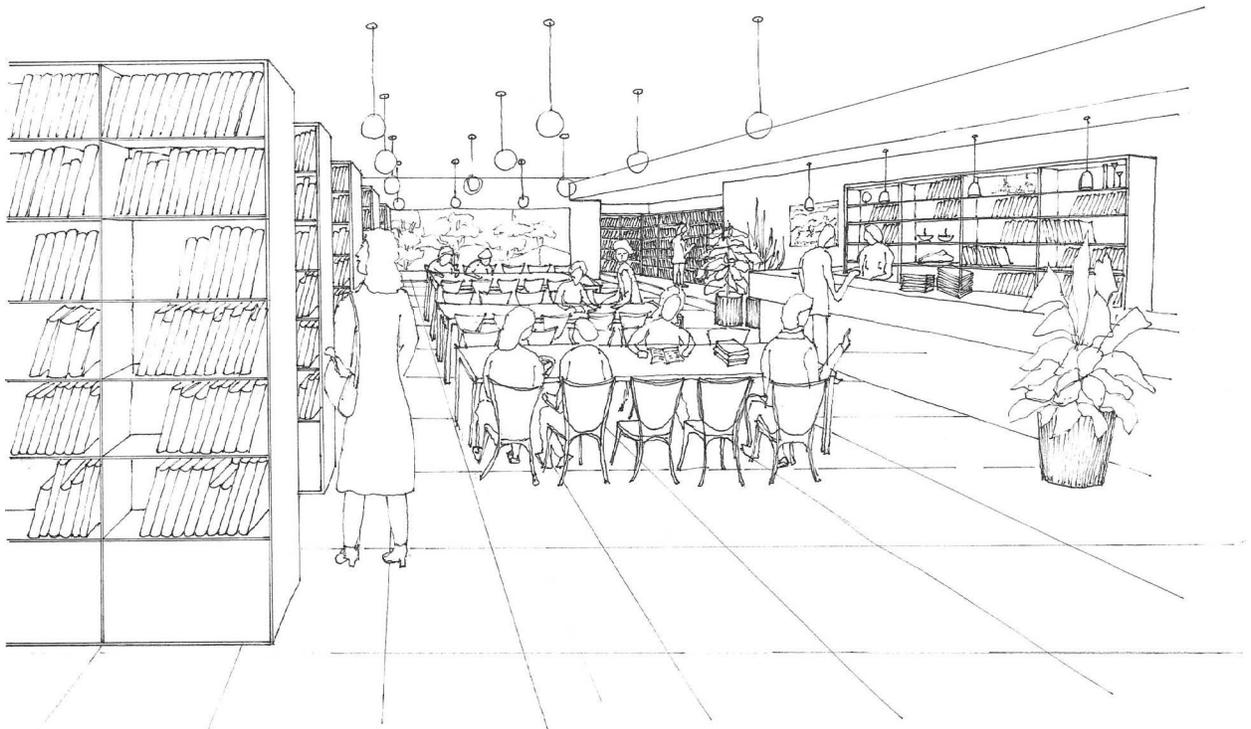


Figure 8. Library sketch

Figure 9. Facade reconstruction and landscaping

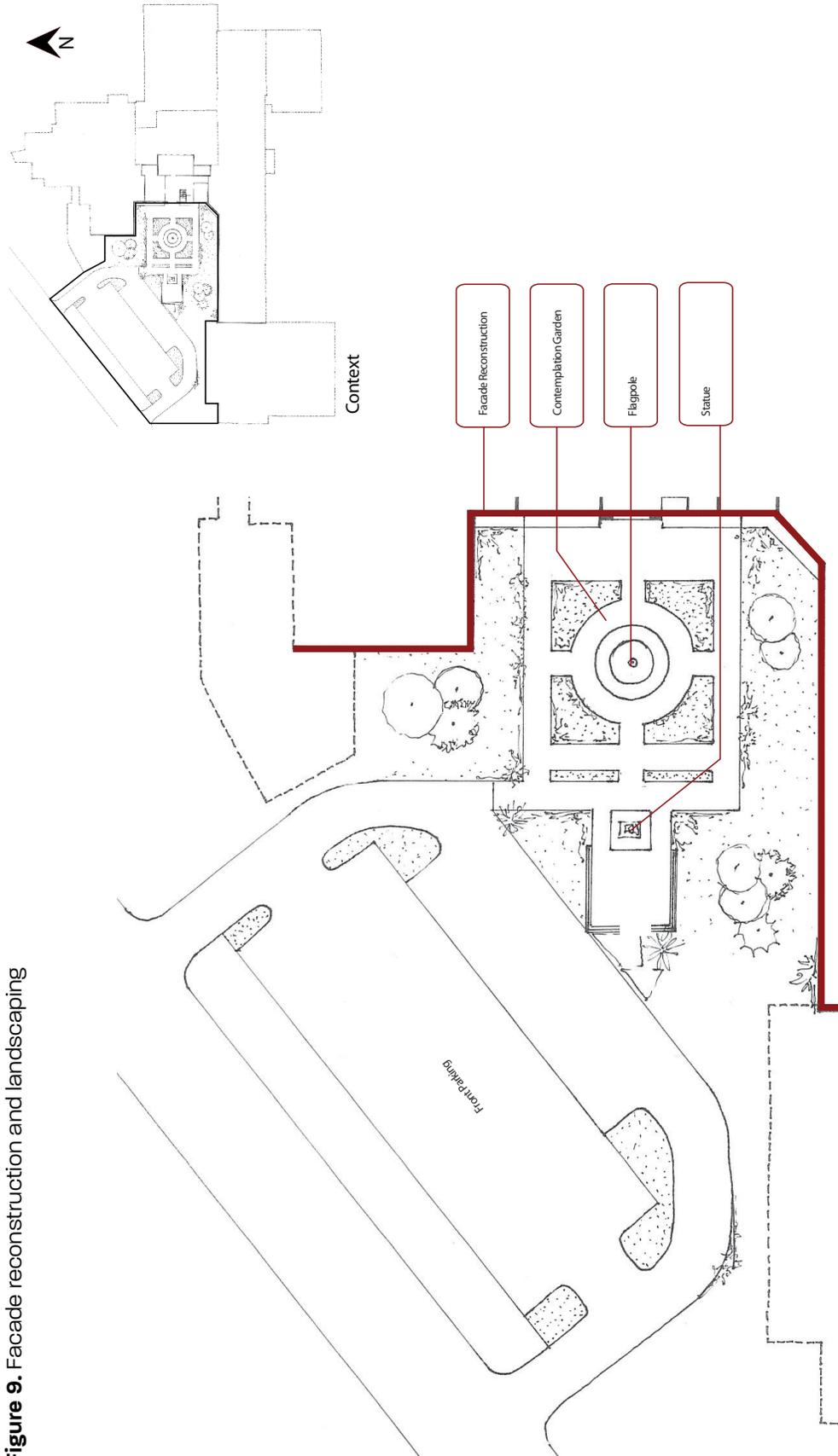
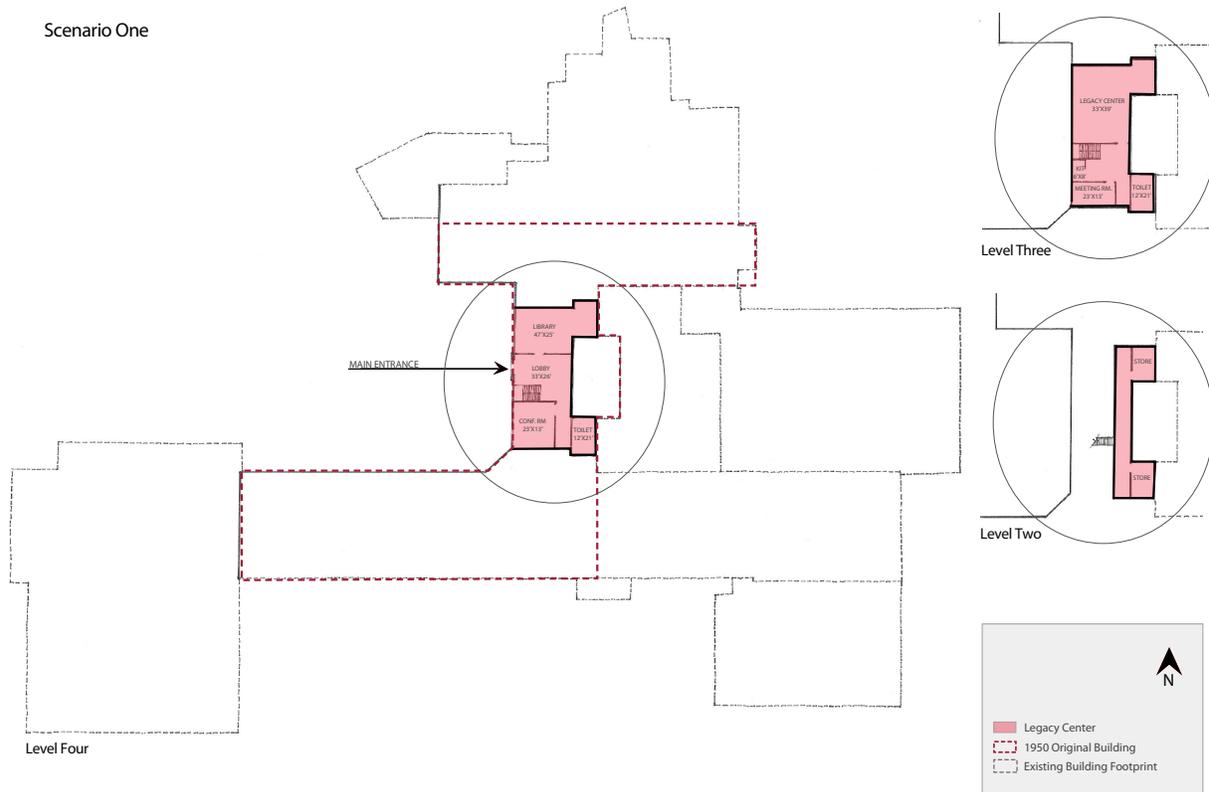


Figure 10. Scenario One encompasses parts of levels two, three, and four.



SCENARIO ONE



The first scenario envisions an adaptive reuse of a small portion of the original building block built in 1950. This scenario refrains from complete demolition of the structure and retains commemorative aspects of the site. It includes stakeholder-preferred uses such as a museum, legacy center, library, and a meeting space for the Alumni Association. The legacy center would include a museum where archives could be showcased, and oral histories can be shared. An area for watching recorded visual presentations could also be provided. Members of the Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association could gather in the space for their monthly meeting. The legacy center and the library will be operated by the Alumni Association, but their maintenance and operational costs may require public funding or private philanthropic contributions.

These stakeholder-referred uses can be incorporated in the original part of the 1950 building. These uses are accommodated on level four, level three and level two of the building and will occupy less than 4 percent of the entire existing structure. In this scenario only the portion shown in red will be adapted for reuse, along with façade reconstruction.

SCENARIO THREE



The third scenario is an adaptive reuse of the original 1950 building and some portions of 1951 building. It includes Scenario One, Scenario Two, and considers maximum programming with an additional use that may occupy most of the building area. The projected growth rates for the area suggest increased demand for market-rate housing near the site, which could support up to 57 apartments by 2022 and 114 apartments by 2026. The gym would be rehabilitated for community use. Scenario Three repurposes the building to include 114 one-bedroom apartment units, each with a kitchen. Scenario Three would require a private developer interested in redeveloping the site for apartment units. This may be a challenge as developers typically require significant potential returns from higher density development at high rents and prices. Substantial public subsidies could be required.

In 2005, senior housing units in the County averaged 676 square feet in size. With new construction, the average size has grown to 727 square feet, a 7.5 percent increase over 13 years. The size of the repurposed apartment units at FHHS would range from 710 square feet to 750 square feet.

Multiple uses operated by different agencies or organizations within one building may require multiple leases which can be simplified by drawing lease lines (see: lease lines graphic) on each floor of the building. In this scenario each tenant in the building may operate a separate HVAC system.

Scenario Three will occupy less than 61 percent of the entire building structure. This scenario will repurpose about 98 percent of the original 1950 building and 72 percent of the original 1951 building.

Figure 12. Scenario Three level four

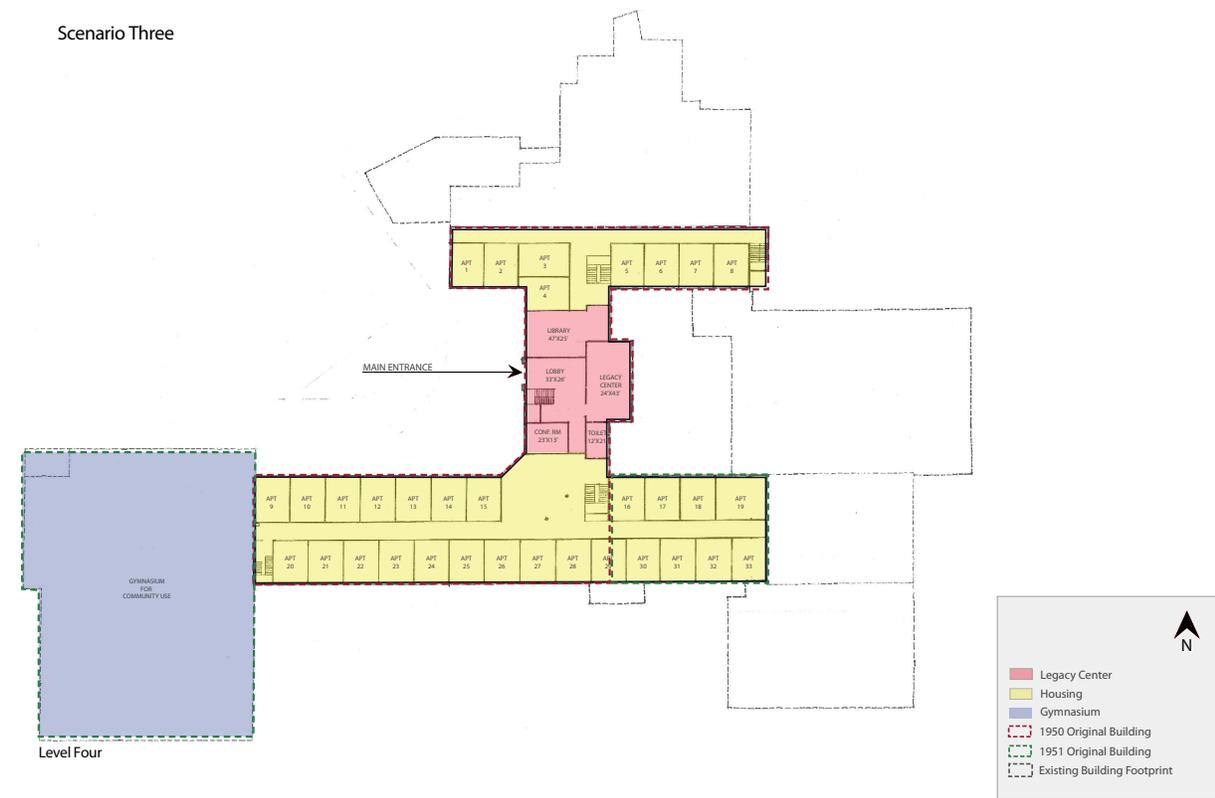


Figure 13. Scenario Three level three

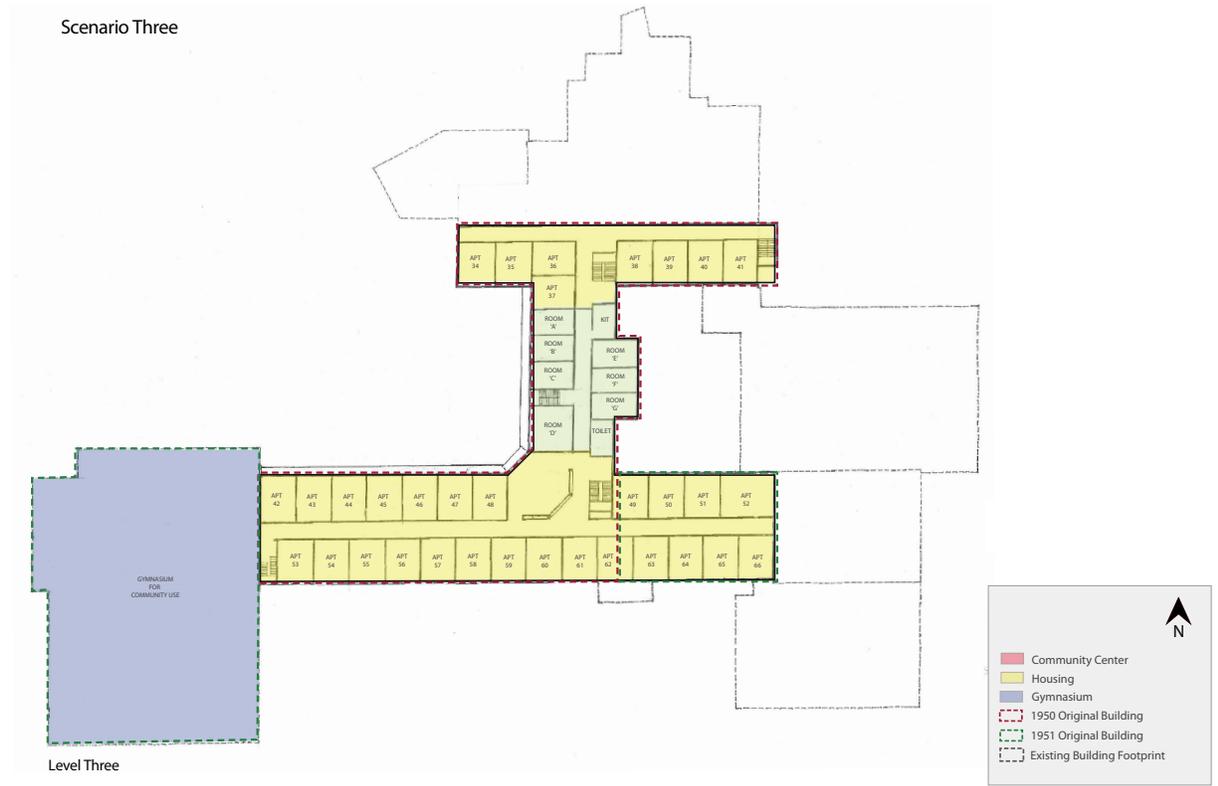


Figure 14. Scenario Three level two

Scenario Three

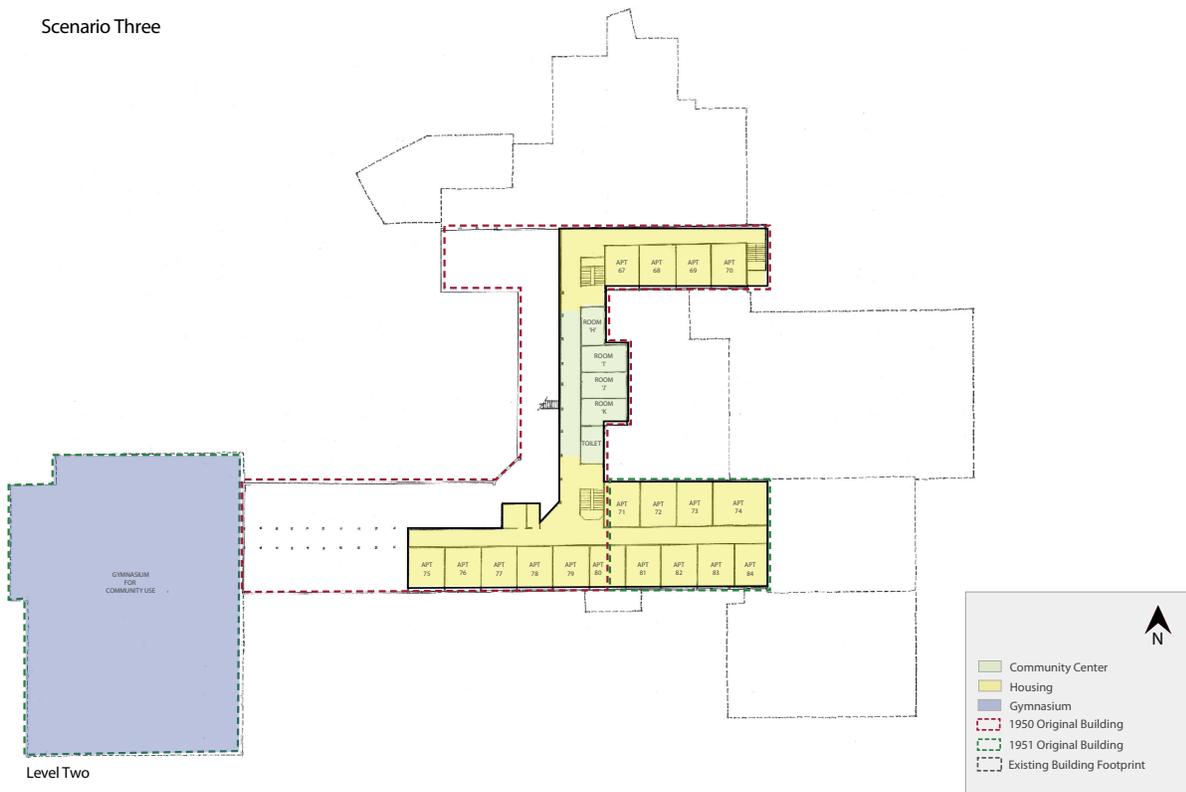
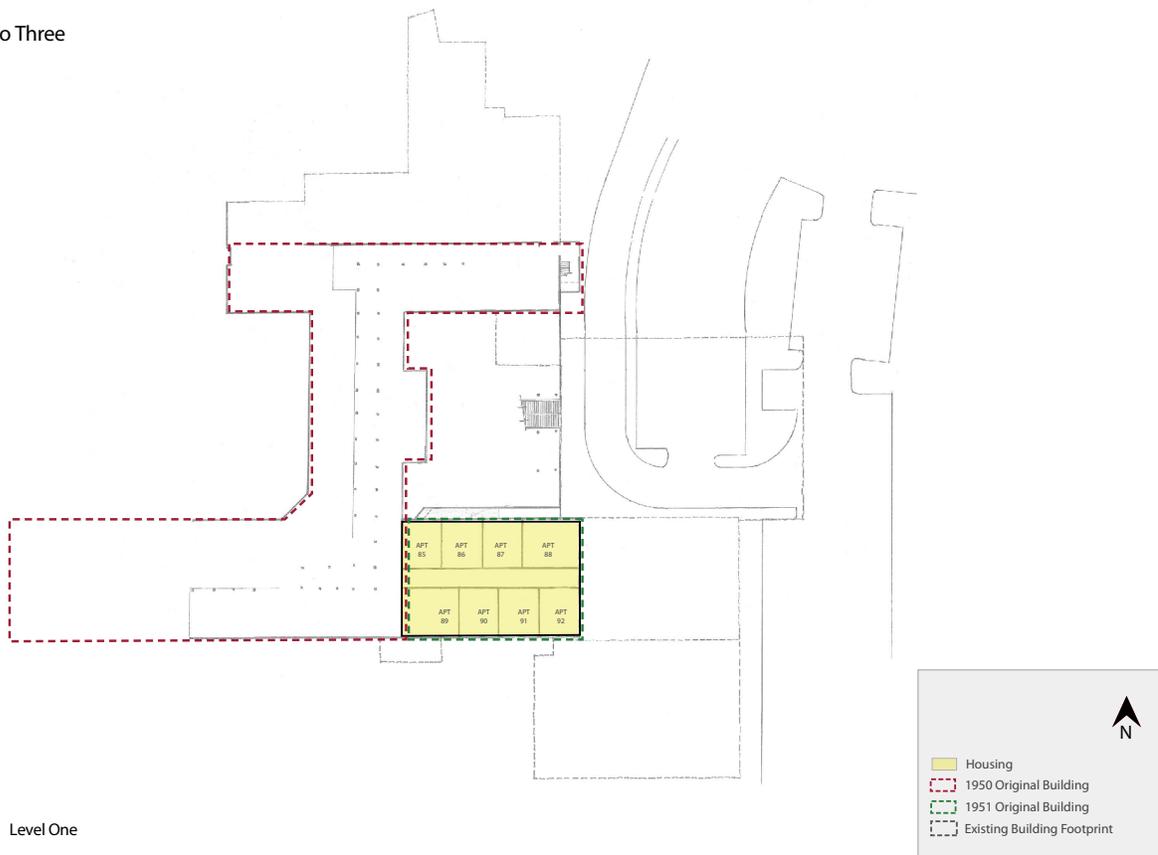


Figure 15. Scenario Three level one

Scenario Three



Conclusion



The market findings discussed in the Economic Study suggests that the reuse or redevelopment of the historic FHHS property would require a mix of uses completed in multiple phases. Therefore, repurposing of the building may incorporate multiple uses suggested by different stakeholders. These uses would be programed and operated by different organizations, agencies, or groups. Portions of the property could be leased to different tenants running individual programs. For example, the fields may be owned by M-NCPPC’s Department of Parks and Recreation and the building owned by the County or PGCPs. Similarly, a small portion of the building could be leased to the YMCA to run a Community Center and to a private developer who may be interested in operating apartments for senior living.¹⁵

Table 2. POTENTIAL SCENARIOS AND ACCOMMODATED USES

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Legacy Center/ Museum	✓	✓	✓
Playing Fields	✓	✓	✓
Library/Meeting Space	✓	✓	✓
Community Center		✓	✓
Gymnasium		✓	✓
Senior Living Apartments			✓

Substantial demolition of extensive portions of the building may be required (including the 1956 and 1983 additions) as those portions of the school cannot be repurposed for any financially sustainable use. The school’s future as a community asset will require effective collaboration between government agencies and citizen-led boards, nonprofit organizations and neighborhood advocacy groups.

¹⁵ According to the Economic Study the projected growth rates for the area will increase demand for market-rate housing on the site, including owner-occupied townhouses and rental apartments. This Adaptive Reuse Study is focused on the adaptive reuse of the existing building and retaining existing fields on the property; hence it does not examine in depth options such as complete demolition of the building or selling vacant land to offset demolition and/or renovation costs.

Appendix

Analysis of Available Funding Tools
for Rehabilitation/Redevelopment

PROGRAM	ANALYSIS
<p>Historic Preservation Tax Incentives</p> <p>A 20% income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to be “certified historic structures.”</p>	<p>Ineligible. A certified historic structure is defined as a building that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing building in a National Register historic district, or as a contributing building within a local historic district that has been certified by the Department of the Interior. The historic FHHS building is not eligible to be listed in the National Register because of the extensive changes made to the exterior; it is not located in a local historic district.</p>
<p>Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)</p> <p>To receive the credit, a project must dedicate at least 20% of its housing units to households earning 50% of the area median income (AMI), or 40% of its units to households earning 60% of AMI.¹ The building must remain in compliance and is subject to a covenant to enforce compliance for a minimum of 40 years.</p>	<p>Ineligible. LIHTC Tracts must have 50% of households with incomes below 60% of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or have a poverty rate of 25% or more. Difficult Development Areas (DDA) are areas with high land, construction and utility costs relative to the area median income and are based on Fair Market Rents, income limits, the 2010 Census counts, and 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) data. The historic FHHS School property is not located in either a DDA or a QCT (qualified census tract).</p>
<p>New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) is intended to promote private investment in low-income communities by providing investors a credit against their federal income tax in exchange for qualified equity investments in intermediaries known as Community Development Entities (CDEs). These organizations use the proceeds of these investments to fund business loans and other services that benefit residents and businesses in low-income communities. Qualified activities include the development or rehabilitation of commercial, industrial, retail, and mixed-use projects; community facilities, such as charter schools or health care centers; and for-sale housing units. The total credit amount equals 39% of the original amount invested in a CDE.²</p>	<p>Eligible. The historic FHHS property is located in a low-income community for the purposes of the NMTC (LIC Census Tract 24033803100).</p>

1 “Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program,” Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, last modified September 7, 2018, <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HousingDevelopment/Pages/lihtc/default.aspx>.

2 “Introduction to the New Markets Tax Credit Program,” Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, last modified May 1, 2018, <https://www.cdfifund.gov/Documents/2018%20Introduction%20to%20the%20NMTC%20Program%20-%20>

APPENDIX 2. STATE INCENTIVES

PROGRAM	ANALYSIS
<p>Neighborhood BusinessWorks loan program is available to Maryland-based small businesses, local development corporations, and nonprofit organizations, to assist with projects that promote investment in commercial districts or town centers. Eligible uses of funding include: mixed-use projects combining residential and commercial uses in the same building; new construction or rehabilitation, and real estate acquisition. Manufacturing, service, and retail projects are all eligible; ineligible uses include residential or transient living facilities (unless part of an eligible mixed-use project); community halls, fire stations, hospitals, colleges and universities.¹</p>	<p>Not a good fit for this property. The historic FHHS site is not located in a commercial district or town center, the site is too large to be rehabilitated or redeveloped by a small business entity, and housing, identified as the most feasible use for the site, is ineligible unless part of a mixed-use project.</p>
<p>The Multifamily Bond Program is available to for-profit and nonprofit developers to provide financing for residential projects that dedicate 20% of their units to households earning 50% or less of the area median income, or 40% of units to households earning 60% or less of AML.² These thresholds are the same as are used to determine eligibility for the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.</p>	<p>Ineligible. See LIHTC analysis.</p>
<p>The Rental Housing Program is available to for-profit, limited profit, or nonprofit developers, nonprofit organizations, county governments, municipalities, and local housing authorities to provide financing for newly constructed or rehabilitated rental housing, including congregate housing, single-room occupancy, emergency shelters and shared living facilities. Projects must be located in a Priority Funding Area (PFA). Projects may be restricted to elderly residents. Priority is given to projects which: restrict units to tenants with incomes below 60% of area median income; restrict units to low-income tenants for longer than 40 years; and use non-State funds in addition to State funds.³</p>	<p>Eligible. Historic FHHS is located in a PFA.</p>
<p>For businesses located in designated Enterprise Zones, a \$1,000 income tax credit can be claimed for each qualified new employee in a newly created position, with a larger credit for each new “economically disadvantaged” employee. Businesses must be certified by the local Enterprise Zone administrator to claim the credit.⁴ A similar incentive is the Job Creation Tax Credit (JCTC), which provides businesses with an income tax credit of up to \$5,000 for each newly created job in a designated revitalization area (this includes state Enterprise Zones).⁵</p>	<p>Although the entire County is an Enterprise Zone, housing has been identified as the most feasible use for the site. The number of jobs would be small, but if the site was repurposed for multifamily use, possibly the credit be claimed for leasing agents, maintenance staff, et al.</p>
<p>The Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority and Fund (MEDAAF) provides grants, loans, and investments to support projects within certain industries. Eligible uses of the Fund include business attraction and retention, infrastructure support, brownfield redevelopment, arts and entertainment districts, daycare, revolving loan funds and local strategic planning. Projects must be located in a Priority Funding Area (PFA).⁶</p>	<p>Eligible, but probably not a good fit for this property. Although historic FHHS is located in a PFA, housing has been identified as the most feasible use for the site.</p>

1 “Neighborhood BusinessWorks,” Maryland DHCD, last modified September 7, 2018, <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Business/Pages/NBW.aspx>.

2 “Multifamily Bond Program,” Maryland DHCD, last modified September 7, 2018, <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HousingDevelopment/Pages/mbp/default.aspx>

3 “Rental Housing Program,” Maryland DHCD, last modified September 7, 2018, <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HousingDevelopment/Pages/rhf/factsheet.aspx>

4 “Enterprise Zone Tax Credit (EZ),” Maryland Department of Commerce, last modified September 7, 2018, <http://commerce.maryland.gov/fund/programs-for-businesses/enterprise-zone-tax-credit>

5 “Job Creation Tax Credit,” Maryland Department of Commerce, last modified September 7, 2018, <http://commerce.maryland.gov/fund/programs-for-businesses/job-creation-tax-credit>

6 “Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority and Fund (MEDAAF),” Maryland Department of Commerce, last modified September 7, 2018, <http://commerce.maryland.gov/fund/programs-for-businesses/medaaf>.

APPENDIX 3. COUNTY INCENTIVES

PROGRAM	ANALYSIS
<p>The Economic Development Incentive (EDI) Fund is available for projects that contribute to job creation and promote local, minority, and small business development. Eligible uses of the Fund include: land and building acquisition; building construction and improvement; equipment acquisition; and working capital.</p>	<p>Not a good fit for this property. Housing has been identified as the most feasible use for the site</p>
<p>The Revitalization Tax Credit provides projects relief from taxes on any incremental value added as a result of real property improvements. Both residential and non-residential projects are eligible for the credit, although County Council approval is required for developments of 10 or more single-family homes or multifamily projects. The credit is phased out over three years for residential projects and five years for non-residential projects.</p>	<p>Eligible.</p>
<p>The New Jobs Tax Credit is offered to businesses that acquire at least 5,000 square feet of new or expanded premises in a Priority Funding Area and employ at least 25 persons in new permanent full-time positions (30% must be County residents).¹</p>	<p>Not a good fit for this property. Housing has been identified as the most feasible use for the site.</p>
<p>With its location near the Cheverly Metro station, the Fairmont Heights High School site may also benefit from County incentives for Transit Oriented Development (TOD). These include tax credits, grants, low-cost loans, bond financing, and fee reductions to help reduce private development costs, as well as fast-tracked regulatory approvals for TOD projects.²</p>	<p>Possibly eligible, if easier, shorter pedestrian routes were created to the two nearby Metro stations.</p>
<p>Historic Preservation Tax Credit and/or the Historic Property Grant Program. The tax credit can be claimed by an entity that pays County property taxes and is equal to 25% of approved rehabilitation expenses. The grant program, which is available to individuals, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and incorporated municipalities, reimburses approved project expenses up to a maximum award of \$50,000 and requires the property owner to convey a perpetual preservation easement to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.³</p>	<p>Eligible. The property's status as Prince George's County Historic Site 72-064 makes it eligible for these programs; however, they would be contingent on saving most or some of the building, which was designated for its cultural rather than physical attributes, and the resulting credit and/or grant would be a small fraction of what would be needed to rehabilitate the property.</p>

1 <https://www.pgcedc.com/additional-tax-incentives>

2 "Jump Starting Transit Oriented Development," Prince George's County, Office of the County Executive, last modified September 7, 2018, <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/2405/Jump-Starting-Transit-Oriented-Development>

3 "Historic Preservation," Prince George's County Planning Department, last modified September 7, 2018, <http://pgplanning.org/469/Historic-Preservation-Commission>



Because of the steep slope of the ground, shown here, at historic Fairmont Heights High School, each level of the four-story building has entry access.

Acknowledgments

Andree Green Checkley, Esq. Planning Director
Derick Berlage Deputy Director
Kipling Reynolds Division Chief, Community Planning Division

Project Team Core Members

Frederick Stachura Supervisor, Community Planning Division
Maha Tariq Project Manager, Community Planning Division
Daniel Sams Planner Coordinator, Community Planning Division
Thomas Gross Planner Coordinator, Countywide Planning Division

Project Team Resource Members

Jonanthan Greene Planner, Community Planning Division
Wendy Irminger Planner Coordinator, Community Planning Division
Sean Adkins GIS Specialist II, Community Planning Division

Technical and Administrative Assistance

Carly Brockinton Publications Specialist, Planning Director's Office

Special thanks to:

Councilwoman Jolene Ivey, District 5
Board of Education and Prince George's County Public Schools
Prince George's County Government
Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association
Fairmont Park-North Englewood Civic Association
M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation
Town of Fairmount Heights

 THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Prince George's County Planning Department
www.pgplanning.org

