

## Better Buildings: Better Schools, Issue 49 September/October 2008

Monthly news and commentary on DC Public School facilities from the 21st Century School Fund (21CSF), a Washington DC based, nonprofit - **working to build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities**. To subscribe/unsubscribe, please email: [newsletter@21csf.org](mailto:newsletter@21csf.org)

### Schools and Housing: Is Washington DC Family Friendly?

21st Century School Fund, Brookings Institution, and the Urban Institute hosted a public discussion at the Oyster Bilingual School of the findings and recommendations of their just-completed research and policy study, **Quality Schools and Healthy Neighborhoods**. The 18-month study, sponsored by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, examines the supply and demand of quality public schools in the District of Columbia and the relationship between public schools and neighborhood attributes, and explores how the District can become a more family-friendly city. A panel of national experts addressed how the District can become a model for the nation by focusing on the interconnections among quality schools, affordable housing, and healthy neighborhoods. Read the panels comments and leave your own at the [Quality Schools Blog](#).

The **Quality Schools and Healthy Neighborhoods** study is comprised of three publications and can be downloaded at [www.21csf.org](http://www.21csf.org):

- **Policy Report:** Draws on the extensive analysis of the research report, as well as meetings with city stakeholders and officials in both the education and housing sectors, to present recommendations on education and housing to make DC a more family-friendly city.
- **Research Report:** Provides detailed quantitative analysis of student, school, and neighborhood-level data, to better understand enrollment patterns and neighborhood change.
- **Appendices:** Provides backup data on all factors and indicators analyzed in the research report. The appendices in Excel format are available at [www.21CSF.org](http://www.21CSF.org) for use in analysis by others.

If you're interested in the study group presenting the findings from the **Quality Schools and Healthy Neighborhoods** study to your organization please contact Marni Allen at [mallen@21csf.org](mailto:mallen@21csf.org).

### Stimulating the Economy through School Facility Construction

Leading economic advisors and policy makers are currently working to develop another federal economic stimulus plan. Our nation's infrastructure, including public school facilities are being considered for at least \$50 billion of federal economic stimulus funding—with at least \$10 billion for public school buildings.

21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund and its [Building Educational Success Together](#) partners are working with national economic advisors and policy makers to document the level of need and readiness of school districts to utilize federal funds to invest in school building improvements and construction during the 2009 calendar year.

In an Economic Policy Institute paper, [Good Buildings, Better Schools: an economic stimulus opportunity with long-term benefits](#), written by Mary Filardo executive director of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund, reports that a \$20 billion, one-time federal contribution to school districts to eliminate deferred maintenance could generate close to 250,000 skilled maintenance jobs with nearly \$6 billion for materials and supplies. \$10-20 billion would not only stimulate the economy but maintenance and repair at schools would improve health, help retain students and teachers, and make the school environment more conducive to high-quality teaching and learning.

## **Discussion about Public Education in DC: Valuing Both Sectors**

Join traditional public education and public charter school advocates to discuss ways that DC public schools and public charter schools can work together to advance education quality in DC.

When: Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 – 8:30 PM

Where: Thurgood Marshall Center; 1816 12<sup>th</sup> street, NW

For more information and to RSVP please contact Nancy at [nhuvendick@21csf.org](mailto:nhuvendick@21csf.org) (202-745-3745 x 15)

Light refreshments will be served.

## **Concerns with the New Master Facilities Plan**

The DCPS Master Facilities Plan (MFP) was released September 10<sup>th</sup> by the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM). The MFP is the major planning framework for billions in spending on school buildings and grounds over the next six years and beyond. The Council has already provided three extensions for this document which has to be formally accepted before funding can be released for new construction projects.

- **Redefinition of “Modernization”**

This MFP redefines “modernization”. For most elementary, PK-8 and middle schools the “modernization” plan is for a 3-phased renewal of building surfaces and systems to be taking place during the summers spread out over more than a decade. The plan anticipates some selected additions and wing demolitions and a handful of buildings razed and replaced. High schools would be fast-tracked with more comprehensive “modernizations” occurring over a ten year period all starting within five years.

- **Schedule**

The effort is to immediately renew classroom environments in all schools in the next six years with paint, better light and air conditioning (phase 1), then starting in 2014, do the same for support spaces such as bathrooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, gymnasiums (phase 2), and finally in phase 3 to renovate and replace major systems including heating and cooling plants, plumbing and wiring.

Except for the half-dozen projects already in construction, this means that the previous approach of new construction (Oyster, Randle Highlands, Miner, Barnard, Kelly Miller, Patterson, and Bell-Lincoln) or complete modernization (Key, Cleveland, McKinley, Noyes, Brightwood, Thomson, Luke Moore, Sousa, and Hardy) is being abandoned. While it may be too early to judge pilot implementations that have started with phase I and II work being completed simultaneously at several of the newly consolidated schools (including for instance, Francis/Stevens and Browne/Young), the contrast with previous whole-school modernizations is stark .

- **Individual School Project Budgets Lack Specific Detail**

The MFP is based on generalized budget totals without school-specific project budgets. This follows a complete absence of detail in the 2009-2014 Capital Improvement Plan accepted this spring by the Council. Rather than the usual detailed description of school-by-school expenditures over the six-year schedule, there was no indication in the CIP of how the 1 and ½ billion dollars allocated to OPEFM for school facilities would be spent.

- **Lack of Criteria for Priorities**

Because of this singular approach to planning and because an MFP requires clear criteria for prioritization, critical community input, complete and accurate building and demographic analysis, citizens should study the document which is available at [http://opefm.dc.gov/pdf/DC\\_Master\\_Plan\\_2008.pdf](http://opefm.dc.gov/pdf/DC_Master_Plan_2008.pdf) . An evaluation checklist can be found at [21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund's Data Shop](http://www.21csf.org/csf%2Dhome/datashop.asp).

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund has developed a more complete analysis of the MFP “Raising the Bar for DCPS School Facilities: Best Practice in PK-12 Public Educational Facility and Capital Planning”, power-point testimony outlining how the MFP draft could be reformulated to better serve the District’s students:

<http://www.21csf.org/csf%2Dhome/datashop.asp>.