

School Construction Proceeds on Schedule; Boundaries Established

With the rumble of trucks and heavy machinery filling the air near McKenney Hills Park, many MH-CK neighbors have watched a new elementary school take shape in our neighborhood. The new school, temporarily named Downcounty Consortium (DCC) School #29, will be situated on the site of the former McKenney Hills Learning Center at the end of Hayden Drive, near the south end of the park. Slated to open for the 2012-13 academic year, the school will help alleviate overcrowding in Oakland Terrace Elementary School and handle projected growth in the school-age population of the MH-CK neighborhood.

According to James Tokar, the project manager at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) responsible for overseeing construction, several important structural elements are complete. While some trees were removed as part of site preparation, Tokar noted that several trees designated for removal were saved. Over the summer, work crews created the storm water management system and built the foundation, retaining walls, and the geothermal system that will heat and cool the school.

With the underground components completed, the aboveground phase is moving forward. During the autumn, work crews began the construction of the structural steel superstructure, masonry walls, and slabs on grade and elevated concrete floors.

Over the next few months, the outside work will continue as interior work begins. Expected construction includes completion of the superstructure, mechanical, electrical and plumbing system rough-in work, and building the exterior “envelope” consisting of the roof, brick and block, and curtain wall systems.

Tokar emphasized that the project is “absolutely” expected to meet the completion deadline of August 1, 2012.

Brunswick is Boundary for Schools

While the building has taken shape, MCPS spent several months working with school and community liaisons to create recommendations for school boundaries. Approved by the county school board on Nov. 17, the new school will include students within “the area south of Dennis Avenue, west of Georgia Avenue, north of I-495, and east of Brunswick Avenue, McKenney Hills Local Park, and the [DCC #29] site.” Students on the east side of Georgia Avenue will attend DCC #29 as well. The school board also approved assigning students within the new school’s boundaries to attend Sligo Middle School.

The boundaries will keep both Oakland Terrace and DCC #29 at the targeted enrollment of 80-100% over the next six years. The school board prioritized keeping DCC #29 at a comfortable enrollment—about 86%—over the next six years; the surrounding forest and limited outdoor play space would make it “problematic” to place relocatable classrooms to alleviate overcrowding. With the opening of DCC #29, Oakland Terrace’s projected enrollment will drop from over 200% to a more manageable 97% by 2015-16. Assigning the DCC #29 students to Sligo will prevent Newport Mill Middle School from going over capacity in the next six years while bolstering Sligo’s rolls, which now are at only 50% of capacity.

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