

Candlewood Elementary School PTA New Boundary Position Paper

We welcome the Shady Grove Sector students to Candlewood, per Option 1. We also note a few serious caveats below.

Thank you for allowing the Candlewood Elementary School PTA to provide input for the boundary study process. This Option 1 border plan seems reasonable to us, with a few serious caveats that will be described in this paper. Overall, though, we thank MCPS and Joel Gallihue for offering an Option 1 plan that provides a net benefit to all affected students and communities, despite a few significant tradeoffs. Also, we appreciate the choice of Options, but the alternatives to Option 1 seem much less beneficial, given the established criteria.

There are three main points we wish to convey to the Superintendent, which we will also testify to the Board of Education:

- 1) Candlewood ES PTA sees the benefit in filling our excess capacity specifically with the students from the defined Shady Grove Sector, per Option 1**
- 2) Magruder HS should be modernized to accommodate the new utilization projections**
- 3) Candlewood's neighborhood needs alleviation of pre-existing traffic woes that otherwise could be exacerbated to potentially dangerous levels when more students commute to the area**

Benefits: Most of all, our representatives were pleased that the specifics offered from MCPS in this Border Study stage identified only students from the nearby Shady Grove sector as defined around the Metro station. If MCPS's projections at the elementary school level are correct, this proposal would satisfy two main criteria for Candlewood: 1) A reasonable number of students that does not simply shift overcrowding from the Gaithersburg Cluster to the Magruder Cluster; 2) Students from a reasonably nearby distance that would not make Candlewood a "commuter school," as it had been when we bussed to the Emory Grove holding school. Therefore, we see the benefit that the students from the specifically-defined area would offer to Candlewood, including the increased staffing that would elastically occur at Candlewood to accommodate these new students.

Given that Candlewood ES has excess capacity, we are pleased to fill the capacity with the students from the defined nearby neighborhood, per Option 1.

Action Items: There are drawbacks to the plan that we would please like addressed, though, so that the Magruder Cluster can better accommodate these new students.

First, we would like Magruder HS modernized. While the MCPS utilization projections have changed, it is clear that the current high school building will at least fill capacity. Moreover, redistricted students should be provided facilities as nice as their original Gaithersburg HS, which is more than 40 years newer than Magruder HS. We hope that MCPS will invest in these redistricted students by committing resources to Magruder HS's modernization. If so, please

announce that Magruder HS can move up in the CIP queue so that the high school is prepared for the influx of new students.

Second, when the new building for Candlewood was originally proposed, neighbors were apparently assured that a direct traffic outlet to Redland Rd would be created. This would have ensured that additional traffic would not need to travel our narrow roadways and numerous turns, all of which are required to be traversed deep into a residential neighborhood to finally reach the school. In fact, the current route forces large school busses to lurch through a minimum of five sharp turns on narrow roads against both pedestrians and oncoming traffic. We acknowledge that these are pre-existing conditions, but we also request that they be alleviated before additional traffic joins our dangerous roads. We offer the following specific steps, though we would certainly welcome any additional ideas from actual traffic experts:

- 1) Please revisit the direct outlet to Redland. Please try to overcome whatever environmental and/or gradation issues that were raised subsequent to our new school's buildout.
- 2) Please put traffic lights on Redland Road at Grande Vista and Panorama that would operate during school hours to ensure safety and alleviate traffic backups in the neighborhood. The turn is not safe during peak hours, as cars on Redland hurtle at high speeds towards school busses and cars turning out of our neighborhood. Further, it often takes long periods before breaks in the Redland traffic allow for left turns out of our neighborhood, so HUGE backups throughout the neighborhood can occur. Please remember that this was a major reason why the summer school at Candlewood did not work.
- 3) Please install more sidewalks and some speed bumps. It is simply not safe in our neighborhood for kids who walk to school.
- 4) Please post No Parking signs on our bus route streets, in effect during peak commute hours

Conclusion: Thank you again for offering a reasonable plan that allows for the gradual incorporation to Candlewood of new students from the Shady Grove Sector as their new development is inhabited. We welcome these students. And we hope that MCPS will continue to look out for their well-being by modernizing Magruder HS and by addressing the serious, pre-existing traffic issues in the Candlewood neighborhood.

APPENDIX: TRAFFIC MAP

