

School Capacity and Land Development

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Briefing Document

Region 6



Introduction

This briefing paper provides an overview of the processes for planning for school capacity and requirements for residential development related to school capacity. It was prepared by the Anne Arundel County Office of Planning and Zoning to support the Region Plan process.

Planning for Schools in Anne Arundel County

Programs and policies of Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) are established by an eight-member Board of Education that includes seven members who are elected and one high school senior who serves as the student representative. Every year, AACPS analyzes current actual enrollment and forecasted student enrollment compared to the State Rated Capacity and condition of all of the public schools in the [Educational Facilities Master Plan](#). State Rated Capacity is defined as the maximum number of students that can be accommodated in a facility without significantly hampering delivery of the educational program. Over the past decade, Anne Arundel County has experienced several school feeder systems that were above 100 percent of the State Rated Capacity, while in other parts of the County there schools are significantly below capacity.

Region 6 is home to three public schools, and is served by the Annapolis High School and the new Severn Run High School feeder districts (See Figure 1). AACPS tracks population growth in feeder districts to anticipate growth in student enrollment and plan for capacity improvements and other renovations at the schools. Based on the 2024 Education Facilities Master Plan, schools serving Region 6 are within their State Rated Capacity currently and projected to stay at or below 100 percent of capacity over the next ten years, except for Annapolis High School (See Tables 1 and 2). Annapolis High School was near 100 percent of capacity in the 2023-24 school year and is forecasted to reach 106 percent of capacity by 2033. It is important to note that enrollment in Annapolis High School includes the Apex Arts and International Baccalaureate magnet programs that include students from outside of the geographic feeder district. Those programs provide AACPS with greater flexibility to adjust enrollment than schools that solely serve students in the feeder district. While Millersville Elementary was at 89.5 percent of capacity in the 2023-24 school year, it is forecasted to reach 100 percent of capacity by 2033.

AAPCS is undertaking a [redistricting process](#) for the entire County to address the discrepancy in school seat vacancies and school capacity issues. According to AAPCS, from 2002 to 2022 there was an average of 11,616 vacant seats in Anne Arundel schools throughout the County, indicating significant untapped capacity within the overall school system. The redistricting process is addressing the entire County in two phases. Phase 1, now complete, addressed North County and created districts for the new Severn Run High School and Two Rivers Elementary School both of which opened for the 2024-2025 school year. The Phase 1 redistricting plan was adopted by the Board of Education on November 15, 2023. It brings all of the public schools in that area below 100 percent of State Rated Capacity and goes into effect for the 2024-2025 school year.

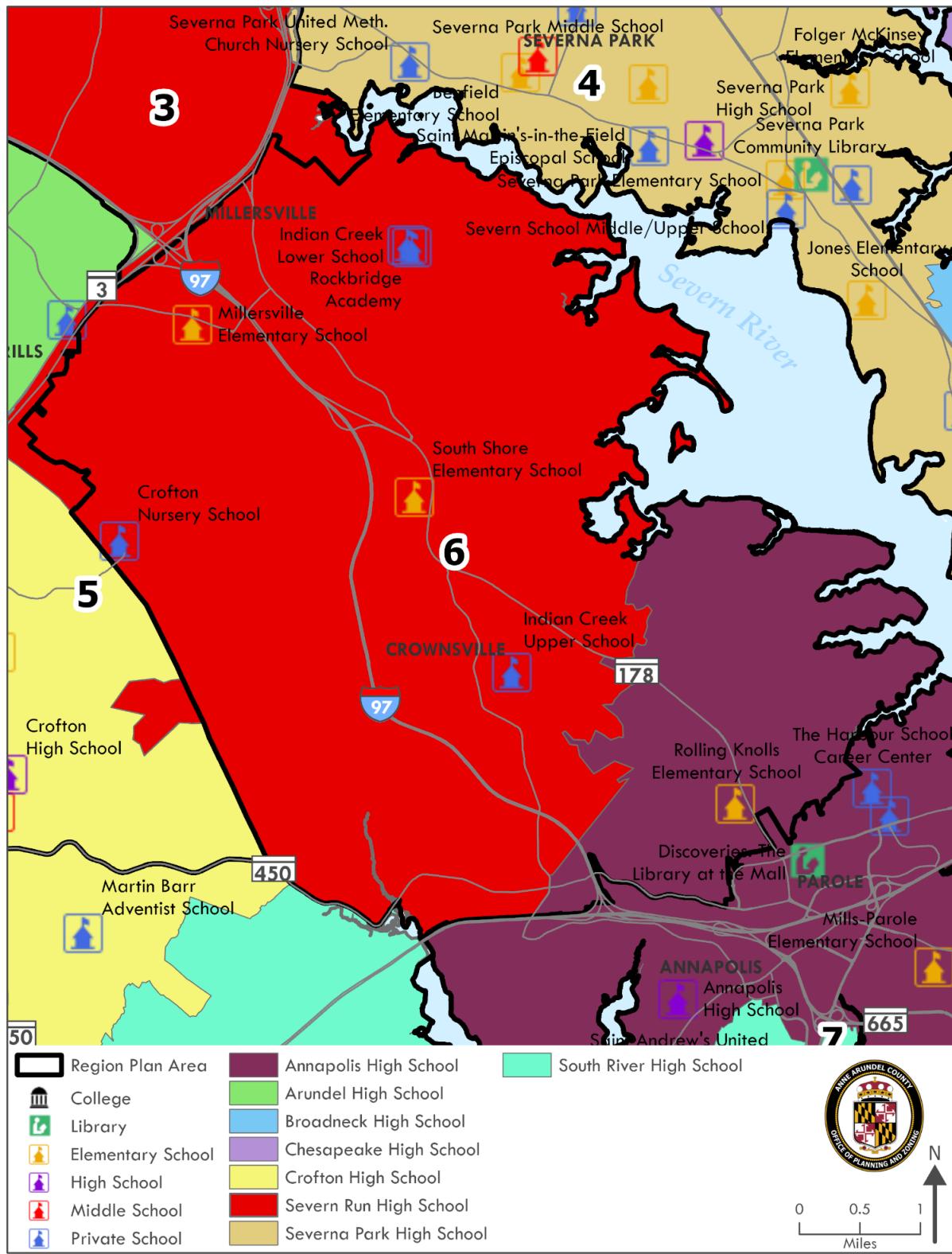
The Phase 2 redistricting options focusing on Annapolis, Arundel, Broadneck, Crofton, Severna Park, South River, and Southern feeder districts were made available for public review in February 2025.

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Figure 1. School Locations



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Table 1. Severn Run Feeder System School Enrollment (only including elementary schools in Region 6)

School	2023			2033		
	State Rated Capacity	Actual Enrollment	Utilization Rate	State Rated Capacity	Projected Enrollment	Utilization Rate
Severn Run High	1,909	N/A	N/A	1,909	1,817	95%
Old Mill Middle North	1,060	924	87.2%	1,060	1,124	106%
Millersville Elementary	430	385	89.5%	430	428	100%
South Shore Elementary	374	281	75.1%	374	330	88%

Table 2. Annapolis Feeder System School Enrollment (only including elementary schools in Region 6)

School	2023			2033		
	State Rated Capacity	Actual Enrollment	Utilization Rate	State Rated Capacity	Projected Enrollment	Utilization Rate
Annapolis High	2,083	2,089	100.3%	2,083	2,199	106%
Bates Middle	1,077	657	61.0%	1,077	789	73%
Rolling Knolls Elementary	529	385	72.8%	529	441	83%

School Adequate Public Facilities

Adequate Public Facilities (APF) regulations in the County Code (Article 17, Title 5) provide a growth management process that enables the County to provide adequate infrastructure facilities in a timely manner and achieve the growth management objective of the General Development Plan. As a condition of subdivision or site development approval, certain developments must pass APF tests to ensure adequate capacity will be available with regard to school capacity, fire suppression, road, school, sewerage, storm drain and water supply facilities.

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The APF test for school capacity sets a threshold related to State Rated Capacity. If the school is above the threshold, the school district is considered closed to new residential development. Applications for new residential development in the district are held until the threshold is met or for six years, whichever is shorter. The ongoing pattern of multiple school closures in the County is a constraining factor in the supply of new housing units, which in turn impacts housing costs. The closure of schools to new development can also conflict with the General Development Plan's growth management policy that encourages development and redevelopment in targeted areas. Over the past ten years, the number of schools closed to new development annually has ranged from 18 to 42 schools. Nine schools were closed for at least 8 of the past 10 years, and 8 additional schools were closed for 7 of the past 10 years.

A School APF Workgroup was formed in 2020 to thoroughly examine the issue, gather and assess data, and formulate recommendations toward achieving adequate school capacity throughout the public school system. One key finding of the APF Workgroup is that new construction permits account for far less student generation than sales of existing homes. For example, in 2020 the Countywide existing home sales (12,855 sales), which are not tested for APF, far outpaced new residential development permits (1,969 permits) (see Figure 2). These statistics contradict the commonly held belief that new housing construction is the main driver of school capacity concerns. The findings and recommendations of the School APF Workgroup are documented in a [final report](#).

The recommendations of the School APF Workgroup led to legislation that was adopted unanimously by the County Council in July 2023. Under the reformed school APF requirements:

- A school district is closed if the projected State-Rated capacity of a school reaches 100%.
- If a school is "closed", development in the school district is put on hold for six years to align with developments in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- If a school in a geographically contiguous district has enough capacity to move a school below 100%, then it can remain open to development.
- APF school standards are not applicable for deed restricted affordable housing, workforce housing, age restricted subdivisions, housing for elderly of moderate means, agricultural preservation subdivisions, town centers, and low income tax credit developments.

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Figure 2. Residential Building Permits and New Home Sales

