HS14 in Elkridge. A white paper by Pravin Ponnuri & Drew Roth

Evaluating the pros and cons of building a new High School in the Elkridge Civic District vs spending $140M to renovate and expand the current Oakland Mills High School.

Question: Do we need a High School in Elkridge?

More students travel farther to their assigned high school in Elkridge than in any other part of Howard County. The typical distance to the nearest high schools to the north end of the Route 1 corridor in Elkridge are Guilford Park High School (7.5 miles away), Howard High School (6.5 miles away), and Long Reach High School (6 miles away). The average commute time from Elkridge to any of these schools is approximately 20 minutes each way, and Elkridge does not have access to public transportation to any high school.

The typical distance to a high school for the remainder of the county, excluding the rural western Howard County, is approximately 3 miles, and public transportation is available to many students, especially in Columbia.

The Columbia area, with a population about twice that of Elkridge, is home to seven nearby high schools (Wilde Lake, Atholton, Oakland Mills, Howard, Hammond, River Hill, and Long Reach), unlike Elkridge which has none in proximity.
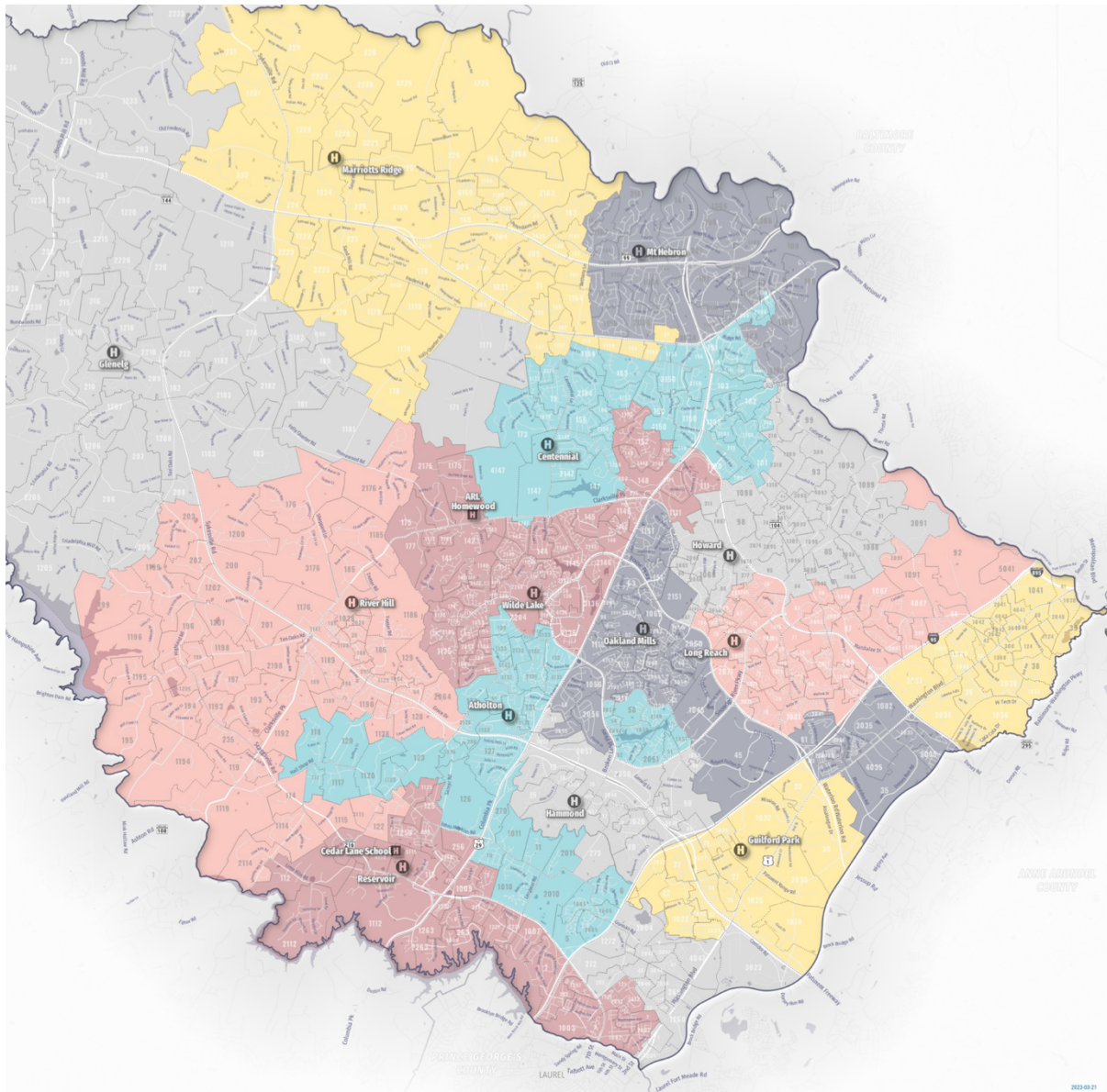
As per the FY2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan, $121 million has been designated to refurbish and expand Oakland Mills High School to accommodate an additional 400 students by 2031 for a five-year duration from FY2025 to FY2030, with a total allocation of $142 million over a ten-year span from FY2025 to FY2034. This upgrade will raise the capacity of Oakland Mills High School from 1,400 to 1,800 students.

The current construction cost of a new high school is approximately $140 million.

Outlined in HoCo By Design, the Howard County General Plan identifies a South Elkridge Civic District, with a focus on bolstering and preserving the area's industrial and manufacturing sectors, as well as identifying key locations for new commercial, light industrial, and residential developments. This civic district would be well-suited for the location of Elkridge High School 14.

- Presently, 1100 Elkridge students attend Guilford Park School and 400 Elkridge students attend Oakland Mills HS. These students live in the Route 1 corridor north of MD 175. This rapidly growing area would constitute the attendance area for HS14.
- Thirty percent of the OMHS enrollment would attend HS14.
- The remaining Oakland Mills High School students can be transferred to Howard, Wilde Lake, Long Reach, Hammond, or Atholton.
- The Guilford Park HS attendance area would be extended south to encompass the Route 1 corridor to the county line. This would alleviate overcrowding at Reservoir HS.

Policy changes recommendations:
- When a school reaches the end of its lifespan or if the cost of renovations is comparable to that of constructing a new school, HCPSS should follow a site selection process as if a new school is being built to ensure that schools are constructed or renovated in necessary locations.
- Annually refresh and publish the attendance polygon data for community review.

References:
SY 2023-24 High School Attendance Areas Map:
https://www.hcpss.org/f/schoolplanning/maps/2023-2024-hs-attendance-area-map.pdf

FY204 Board of Education Proposed Capital Budget FY 2025:
https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/hcpssmd/Board.nsf/files/CXNNTU612889/$file/FINAL%20BOE%20PROP%20FY25%20Cap%20Budget%20Pages%20approved%2016NOV2023.pdf

FY2025 Superintendent's Proposed Capital Budget
https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/hcpssmd/Board.nsf/files/CV8MDU5ABF50/$file/09%2007%2023%20Superintendents%20Proposed%20FY%202025%20Capital%20Budget%20BR.pdf

HoCo By Design, Howard County's General Plan
https://www.howardcountymd.gov/News101923