

## LRSCA CMP SURVEY RESULTS



The Laurel Ridge Shamrock Civic Association (LRSCA) serves to enhance the livability of the neighborhood by working with governing bodies to influence decision making that affects the welfare of residents. Our representation boundary begins on the north side of Willivee Drive at North Druid Hills Rd through the neighborhoods of North Druid Woods, North Druid Walk, Gavinwood, Pine Glen, and Country Squire up to and including Pangborn Road. We represent more than 800 households. Laurel Ridge Elementary School (LRES) and Druid Hills Middle School (DHMS) both fall within our neighborhood boundaries. Our community is also served by Druid Hills High School (DHHS).

In early May 2021, LRSCA distributed a CMP survey to our constituents via our newsletter, website, and social media. Unlike the DCSD CMP survey, ours specifically looked at community / school interactions and maintenance needs at the schools that serve our community (Laurel Ridge Elementary, Druid Hills Middle, and Druid Hills High). The survey included both multiple answer and free response fields. We received 86 responses to our survey, which is an 11% response rate based on the ~800 homes we represent. Those who responded to our survey were:

- Community Members (no DCSD affiliation) (54.7%)
- Also a LRES parent (20.9%)
- Also a DHMS parent (15.1%)
- Also a DHHS parent (8.1%)
- Parent affiliated with another DCSD school (14.0%)

### SURVEY SECTIONS

Section One – Multiple Choice	Section Two – Narrative Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LRES Community Assets and Liabilities..... p2</li> <li>▪ DHMS Community Assets and Liabilities .. p2</li> <li>▪ Magnet Programs Support..... p2</li> <li>▪ Support for PAC Requests..... p3</li> <li>▪ General CMP Considerations ..... p3</li> <li>▪ School Specific Concerns..... p4</li> <li>▪ Data Section Summary..... p5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LRES Requested Improvements .....p6</li> <li>▪ LRES Strongest Assets .....p8</li> <li>▪ DHMS Requested Improvements .....p9</li> <li>▪ DHMS Strongest Assets.....p11</li> <li>▪ DHHS Improvements and Assets .....p12</li> <li>▪ Final CMP Feedback .....p13</li> </ul>

Our survey, including available answer choices, can be reviewed here:

- [Part 1](#) ▪ [Part 2](#) ▪ [Part 3](#) ▪ [Part 4](#) ▪ [Part 5](#)

## SECTION ONE – MULTIPLE CHOICE / QUANTIFIABLE ANSWERS

### **In What Ways Does Laurel Ridge Elementary Enhance Our Neighborhood? (Top 4 responses)**

- Adds to Our Sense of Community (82.6%)
- Encourages Families to Move into the Neighborhood (80.2%)
- Provides Greenspace/Park Space (69.8%)
- Provides Options to Walk and Bike to School (69.8%)

### **In What Ways Does Druid Hills Middle Enhance Our Neighborhood? (Top 3 responses)**

- Provides Options to Walk and Bike to School (70.9%)
- Adds to Our Sense of Community (69.8%)
- Provides Greenspace/Park Space (66.2%)

### **In What Ways Does Laurel Ridge Elementary Detract From Our Neighborhood?**

- Contributes to Neighborhood Traffic (48.8%)
- Building Has Become an Eyesore (26.7%)
- *(No other responses above 20%)*

### **In What Ways Does Druid Hills Middle Detract From Our Neighborhood?**

- Contributes to Neighborhood Traffic (64.5%)
- *(No other responses above 20%)*

### **Which of the following maintenance / facility issues do you believe have hurt community / school relations? (Top 3 responses)**

- Following the COVID-19 school closures, DCSD restricted community access to the DHMS track and field (65.1%)
- Inadequate parking and pick-up/drop-off facilities at both schools lead to parents parking or idling in street, blocking traffic, driveways, and mailboxes (47.7%)
- Painting contractors at LRES sprayed lead paint chips into a storm drain, contaminating Burnt Fork Creek (47.7%)

### **Support for International Baccalaureate (IB) magnet at DHMS and DHHS:**

- At Druid Hills Middle (97.3%)
- At Druid Hills High (97.1%)

### **Are there any magnet/school choice programs that you believe DCSD should add or expand?**

#### **(Free response field, left unanswered by most respondents)**

- Arts (music, art, theater, film) (8.1%)
- STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) (7.0%)
- Language (2.3%)
- Vocational (2.3%)

## Support for LRES, DHMS, and DHHS PAC repair and renovation requests

### Laurel Ridge Elementary

- Repair and/or replacement of HVAC system (87.2%)
- Update bathrooms to conform with ADA requirements and have warm water for handwashing (86.0%)
- Replace exterior windows (current windows have tested positive for lead) (81.4%)
- Upgrade Wi-Fi and internet connectivity in building (76.7%)

### Druid Hills Middle

- HVAC upgrades to improve performance, address leaks, and reduce noise (83.7%)
- Update and repair bathrooms (ADA compliance, leaking skylights, broken sinks) (83.7%)
- Small (3,600sqft) addition to front of school in order to improve security, add parent conference space, counseling offices, and upgrade the school clinic (61.6%)

### Druid Hills High

- Mold Remediation (77.9%)
- Roof and HVAC repairs to address leaks and inadequate ventilation throughout building (76.7%)
- ADA compliant entrance and other accessibility improvements (70.9%)
- Improve outside drainage to address erosion and water penetration into basement level rooms (67.4%)

## What do you believe should be DCSD's \*number one\* priority for the CMP? (Answer choices borrowed from your town hall priorities list.)

- Replace or renovate schools with low facilities scores (53.0%)
- *(No other responses above 20%; however ELCs and redistributing magnet programs were #2 and #3 responses)*

## Generally speaking, what do you see as being the biggest facilities related challenges facing DeKalb County School District? (Top 6 responses)

- Age of School Buildings - Poorly maintained (72.1%)
- Age of School Buildings - Not modernized (55.8%)
- Inequity in Who Gets Updated Facilities (36.0%)
- Not Enough Money - For Renovations (33.7%)
- Not Enough Money - For Repairs (32.6%)
- Lack of Trust / Transparency (31.4%)

## School Specific Concerns

**The LRES school building has scored poorly on recent DCSD facilities assessments. As part of the CMP, DCSD may want to renovate or close our school. Which of the following do you support? (Top 3 responses)**

- Comprehensive renovation of the current LRES school building (80.2%)
- Building a new LRES school building at the same Balsam Dr location (54.7%)
- Continued "as needed" repair of the current LRES school building (status quo) (25.6%)

**What do you believe is the ideal size for an elementary school?**

**(Free response field, percentages based on respondents who provided any answer)**

### Facility size

- 400 students (26.1%)
- 350-500 students (45.6%, not including 26.1% for 400 above)
- Less than 350 students (23.9%)
- More than 500 students (4.3%)

### Class size

- 15-20 students (52.6%)
- 10-14 students (42.1%)
- More than 20 students (5.3%)

**DHHS has the smallest physical campus of any DCSD high school. As a result, many DHHS athletic programs must use facilities at other schools (including DHMS). How do you think DCSD should resolve this issue? (Top 4 responses)**

- Purchase land adjacent to DHHS to expand athletic facilities (49.2%)
- The current arrangement is fine (status quo) (31.7%)
- Turn DHHS into a specialty theme/magnet HS and deemphasize athletics (27.0%)
- Sell DHHS property and rebuild at a larger alternative HS site (19.0%)

## **Narrative Summary of Data Section**

On balance, our community views our neighborhood schools as assets, with benefits far outweighing the costs. Major benefits are that the schools add to our sense of community, provide neighborhood greenspace, as well as options to walk/bike to school. LRES is also seen as drawing new families into our neighborhood. Traffic congestion is by far the biggest drawback for both schools. Community members also believe the LRES school building has become an eyesore.

Over the last two years, there have been two major events that tested our community's relationship with our schools. The first, in 2019, was when painting contractors at LRES sprayed lead paint chips into a storm drain, contaminating Burnt Fork Creek. The second, in 2021, was when DCSD restricted community access to the DHMS track and field.

Our community strongly supports the international Baccalaureate (IB) program at DHMS and DHHS. We also support all of the repair and renovation requests put forth by the LRES, DHMS, and DHHS PACs. Similarly, a majority in our community feel that replacing or renovating schools with low facilities scores should be the top priority of the CMP and that older buildings, which are poorly maintained and/or not modernized, are the biggest challenge facing DCSD.

With regard to the future of the LRES school building, most people in our community prefer a major renovation over rebuilding or continuing with ad hoc repairs. If a new LRES is built, the community would like to see the school stay at its current location on Balsam Dr and have a size of 350-500 students.

Regarding the athletic facilities at DHHS, most in our community believe that purchasing land adjacent to DHHS to expand athletic facilities is the best option, although a sizable number also believe that the current arrangement of DHHS using facilities at other schools does not need to be changed.

## SECTION TWO – FREE RESPONSE / QUALITATIVE ANSWERS

**Please Describe the Improvements You Would Like to See at Laurel Ridge Elementary:**

### **Building**

Many of the building related improvements desired by the community echoed those already requested by PAC. Many residents mentioned long standing issues with the HVAC system, roof leaks, bathroom/plumbing related concerns, and the need for new windows and paint:

- *“[A] Safer environment [is needed] for our kids- no lead paint, functioning windows and AC, technology enhancements, updated bathrooms with adequate soap and hot water.”*
- *“The LRES [building] looks better than it has in years with the recent improvements made to the building exterior. The building will be vastly improved with the addition of new windows and paint. There is also a significant need for HVAC replacement and bathroom renovation.”*
- *“New windows and upgrades to school [are needed] - it is a very old building. The PTA and building and grounds do a great job but the School should be taken care of by the county and it is not. It took 5 years for a gutter to be fixed.”*

Our community also has mixed feelings about whether to continue investing in the current LRES school building or to embrace the possibility of a new building, as expressed by these two comments:

- *“What does NOT need to happen: the building does NOT need to be torn down and rebuilt! Simply renovate, add-on as necessary. Let's preserve our history.”*
- *“The building needs to be torn down and replaced. It can't meet the needs of the community until it first meets the needs of the students.”*

### **Grounds**

Not surprisingly, community members were more knowledgeable regarding grounds related issues. Many mentioned a variety of basic landscaping and groundskeeping concerns, including the need to trim back trees and bushes, remove ivy and other invasive weeds, regularly lay mulch to prevent erosion and soil loss, and picking up trash, fallen branches, and other debris. Additionally, they illustrated the costs of deferred grounds maintenance, such as ivy strangling and killing trees (which are costly to remove) and untrimmed vegetation creating opportunities for crime:

- *“Basic grounds keeping [is needed] - regular mulch, weed control, pruning, etc. Bare dirt near playground leads to erosion. Many undesirable plants growing behind school. Neighbors concerned about condition of trees covered in Ivy. Etc.”*
- *“Maintain the forested areas around the parking lot. During the summer, the vegetation is overgrown, creating a secluded parking lot. Young [people] who are not residents hang out and “party” in the parking lot, leaving litter which includes alcohol containers, marijuana baggies (some with remnants of marijuana), cigar wrappers, and other trash.”*
- *“More attractive landscaping [would be nice], improving the track and basketball court in general outdoor improvements on the building to make it more attractive. The playground could*

*also use improvements. We don't have a neighborhood park so the playground is the closest thing we have to one."*

They also mentioned specific improvements, including:

- Cleaning up the outside amphitheater area
- Adding more/bigger trash receptacles, including recycling bins
- Adding swings to the playground
- Replacing the nets on the basketball hoops and adding smaller goals for young children
- Resurfacing the track
- Increasing athletic field space (for Lacrosse, soccer, baseball)
- Replacing / adding new picnic tables
- Added landscaping to focus on pollinator and rain gardens and native species
- Better management of / on-site facilities to support student pick-up and drop-off

Finally, many community members expressed concern about recent DCSD activities that have been undertaken to improve security and protect school property (with the unintended consequence of restricting neighborhood access and alienating community members):

- *"Access between LRES and DHMS has recently been cut off by padlocked fences, creating a barrier that separates the neighborhood and prevents everyone from enjoying the green spaces that we bought into this area to enjoy."*
- *"[I am] Highly opposed to fencing off [the] entire property as is listed in the current eSPLOST."*
- *"I would hate to see the grounds be closed off to [the] neighborhood as it is a wonderful meeting place for families."*

### **Enrollment**

Regarding the LRES enrollment zone, community members expressed concerns about splitting up neighborhoods and communities, specifically Medlock Park and Country Squire:

- *"[C]onsider adding back Medlock Park or part of it (but ask those parents first)"*
- *"Country Squire neighborhood is currently split in two school zones because it crosses Pangborn [Rd]"*

### **General / Additional**

Community members also expressed a desire for increased cooperation between school and community:

- *"[H]ost some community meetings so people are more familiar with the school"*
- *"The grounds are beautiful and could be more welcoming to neighborhood use (maybe a reservation system for birthday parties/community events)."*
- *"[We need] Clear agreement with community about usage and pass-through opportunities to access the forest between LRES and DHMS."*

**Please Describe What You Feel Are Laurel Ridge Elementary’s Strongest Assets:**

As mentioned in our data section, community members most appreciate LRES’s grounds and greenspace, walking and biking options, and how it adds to our sense of community. They also value the diversity of the student body. Finally, they appreciate LRES’s small size and feel that its size is critical to retaining its most valued features:

- *“[I like] The size of the school and the sense of community that the school brings. My kids walk to school. That is amazing. the teachers and staff are amazing. It really is a community school.”*
- *“I love all of the outdoor, shaded play space. I love that our enrollment zone brings a lot of diversity to the school population.”*
- *“Having a small neighborhood school is LRES' strongest asset along with its socioeconomic diversity, inclusion of children with disabilities and open campus.”*
- *“I love how [the building] surrounds a garden and pond. I also like that it’s a small school in walking distance to my house.”*
- *“I think having a school within walking distance for so many families create a strong community. I’d like to keep the green spaces and trails.”*

Finally, although not directly relevant to the CMP, the community also had praise for the teachers, staff, and PTA of the school:

- *“It has a very strong PTA [and] generally excellent teachers.”*
- *“The faculty and staff are very good.”*
- *“[T]he assets are the wonderful people who staff the school.”*



## **Please Describe the Improvements You Would Like to See at Druid Hills Middle:**

### **Building**

Similar to LRES, community members identified many of the same building issues as PAC, including outdated bathrooms, HVAC problems, and ADA access concerns. Community members also pointed to the need for cafeteria renovations, repainting, and general updates/modernization.

Although DHMS scores much better on facility assessments than LRES, a number of community members felt that the DHMS building has reached the end of its service life. However, this sentiment was not universal:

- *“The building is not fully handicapped accessible. The building needs to be replaced.”*
- *“The property like most DeKalb facilities is in shambles.”*  
Vs
- *“[DHMS has] Well kept building and grounds.”*
- *“Great facilities, but should be accessible to the community.”*

### **Grounds**

The majority of the responses we received regarding the DHMS grounds had to do with the recent decision to close off the track and athletic fields to community use. (A secondary consequence of this decision was that it became more difficult to access the “Shamrock Forest” trails that run between DHMS and LRES):

- *“Work with community to provide a walking route across the field (or immediately on the other side of the fence) that allows access to the woods. Important both for students traveling to or from LRES and DHMS but also to create a circular walking route for residents.”*
- *“Please let us back on the track and field area and make it possible to access the creek. The track and the creek are my Zen places. Plus, as a 65 yr old cancer survivor, I need safe places to walk many miles a day.”*
- *“Allow community to use the track and please don't lock the gate - it blocks many of the students from easily and safely walking to school.”*
- *“Find a solution to protect the new field but have space for community to use green space.”*
- *“We should be allowed to use the track and access to Shamrock Forest.”*

Along with these requests for restored access were multiple suggestions to improve signage at the school:

- *“Let the community use grounds and post any necessary rules/regulations.”*
- *“The track needs signage to let people know what the rules are.”*
- *“Open track for walking, outside school hours & events. Have large, clear signage for usage - including signs near the woods.”*

Community members also had a few other suggestions for grounds related improvements at DHMS:

- More trash and recycling receptacles
- Repair damaged fencing
- Repair broken sidewalks and resurface parking lot
- Add more community garden space
- Adjust exterior lighting to minimize nighttime light pollution
- Address pollution coming from DHMS storm drain into Burnt Fork Creek
- Trim trees, bushes, and remove invasive species
- Better management of / on-site facilities to support student pick-up and drop-off

### **Enrollment**

Regarding the DHMS enrollment zone, community members expressed concerns about splitting up the Country Squire neighborhood and DHMS's placement within its enrollment boundary:

- *"Extend the attendance zone from Pangborn on the north to Frazier Rd. to avoid splitting neighborhoods."*
- *"DHMS borders the [railroad] tracks and yet the neighborhood just on the other side of those tracks is not zoned DHMS. Geographically...DHMS should feed into Lakeside, not DHHS."*

### **Please Describe What You Feel Are Druid Hills Middle's Strongest Assets:**

As mentioned in our data section, community members most appreciate DHMS's grounds and greenspace, walking and biking options, and how it adds to our sense of community. They also value the diversity of the student body:

- *"It has the potential to be a major factor in bringing and keeping this community together."*
- *"Both [DHMS and DHHS] have extremely diverse populations, including socioeconomic, ethnic, and international. This makes these schools ideal places for students to be exposed to classmates from various backgrounds, and adds to the community that makes these International Baccalaureate schools."*
- *"[DHMS's] location is accessible by foot/bike for big chunk of the student population."*
- *"[We like the] diversity [and] location- walking distance from our home."*

In particular, many community members commented on the Shamrock Forest trails that run behind DHMS (partially on DCSD property and partially on a DaKalb County owned flood plain):

- *"Wooded pathways around the building [are an asset]."*
- *"Track and field. Proximity to trails/nature."*
- *"Shamrock Forest benefits students and community."*

Community members also mentioned assets seen as unique to DHMS, including:

- The International Baccalaureate (IB) program
- Status as a former high school offers better facilities to students
- Adding to neighborhood property values

Finally, as with LRES, the community had praise for the teachers, staff, and administrators of the school. Several community members also praised the conduct of DHMS students:

- *"It has an excellent reputation, outstanding faculty, and nice kids."*
- *"[DHMS has] well behaved and courteous students, strong staff and administration including principal. Engaged security officers who relate well to students and neighbors."*
- *"Teaching excellence. Excellent faculty and staff."*

**Please Describe the Improvements You Would Like to See at Druid Hills High:**

Community members felt that DHHS could benefit from:

- More/better parking and traffic control
- Improved accessibility
- Larger school campus
- Renovated athletic fields
- General maintenance and facilities upgrades

**Please Describe What You Feel Are Druid Hills High's Strongest Assets:**

Community members felt that DHHS's assets are:

- Diversity of student body
- Location in a historic building
- International Baccalaureate (IB) program
- Proximity to Emory
- Excellent reputation, academics, and staff

## **Additional Comments for DCSD and the CMP:**

### **Save Our Neighborhood Schools**

- *"Please save our small neighborhood schools! (Especially LRE!) I think they are invaluable to the community."*
- *"We love our neighborhood schools! We want improvements and renovations, not rebuilds!"*
- *"Continue to have small neighborhood elementary schools, and start planning to accommodate the development in our area."*
- *"Please preserve our small school sizes. Kids build a sense of community in them."*
- *"Please support our neighborhood schools with the much needed updates. Do not close the schools permanently and redistrict to larger centralized schools."*

### **Systemic Underinvestment in Facilities**

- *"It's past time that this cluster was provided with new facilities and technology upgrades."*
- *"So many [DCSD school] buildings with roof leaks, inadequate AC, plumbing problems. [There is] No investment. It is shameful."*
- *"The property like most DeKalb facilities is in shambles."*
- *"[DHMS needs] Regular maintenance so it doesn't end up like LRES"*

### **Work With Communities**

- *"I request the DCSD consider the benefit that neighborhood schools add to the surrounding communities and recognize that these school are intricately linked to areas."*
- *"Access to at least the grass fields would be nice...At lease allow open dialogue to see if a shared space option is doable."*
- *"[DCSD] Could Provide exercise and sport areas for public use. [!] Observed numerous people using outdoor facilities before access was blocked."*
- *"Share the resources with the community! Our taxes pay for this!"*

### **Racial and Socioeconomic Inequities**

- *"We need to take an honest look at white entitlement combined with underfunding and under valuing of Black schools and Black students. White entitlement has permeated the DeKalb school system from the very first days of public education in DeKalb County."*
- *"Unless transportation is provided for magnet programs, these programs will only be available to students who already have privilege. For "school choice" to truly be a vehicle for inclusion and equity, transportation \*must\* be provided."*
- *"Facilities for wrap-around services should be added to accommodate the needs of students in underserved communities."*

### **Improve Communication / Trust / Transparency**

- *"Transparency and truthfulness to the community need to be improved"*
- *"Provide greater communication to the community (e.g. through website) on how members can volunteer to support the schools in their missions."*
- *"No matter what you do, don't take 5 years to respond to simple items. It erodes our trust in DCSD"*