

October 9, 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Jeffrey Bronow, Chief of Research, Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)

From: Joel Gallihue, Manager of School Planning 

Subject: Columbia School Study – Preliminary Update

In light of a pending application by Howard Hughes Company for adjustments to increase the units in Downtown Columbia and a recent council work session discussing the same, the HCPSS Office of School Planning is collaborating with the Department of Planning and Zoning in updating the Columbia School Study (an attachment to the [June 2014 Feasibility Study](#)) to determine the school accommodations that would be required based on the projected additional growth.

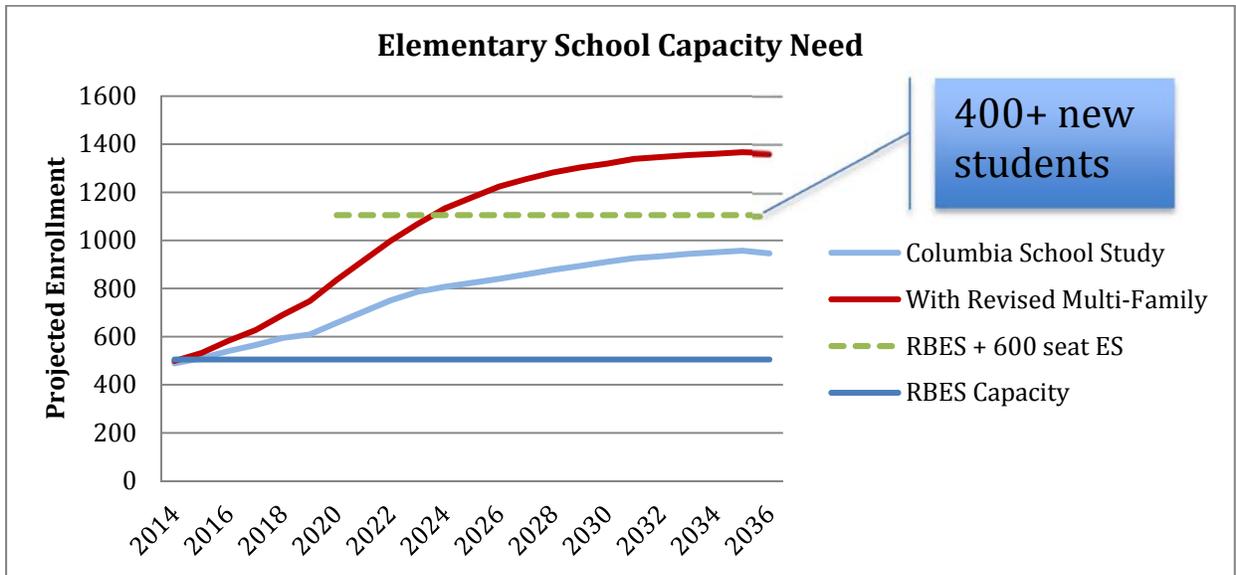
The Town Center attendance area is presently assigned to Running Brook Elementary, Wilde Lake Middle, and Wilde Lake High schools. The proposed addition consists of a range of affordable and market rate housing and represents an increase of approximately 23 percent over the originally approved 5,500 new units in this area. Our currently projected school capacity levels would be insufficient to accommodate the additional student enrollment that would result from the total 6,750 new housing units, prompting a reevaluation of recommendations from the Columbia School Study.

Analysis

The increases to anticipated enrollment are based on the average enrollment yield of current rental apartment units in Downtown Columbia from 2007-2011. The Town Center attendance area is presently assigned to Running Brook Elementary School and Wilde Lake Middle and High schools. One additional 600-seat elementary school is included in the approved FY 2016-2025 Long Range Master Plan, and will accommodate the 5,500 new units already approved for Downtown Columbia development. Staff will continue to study relevant pupil yields as additional information becomes available.

Elementary School Impact

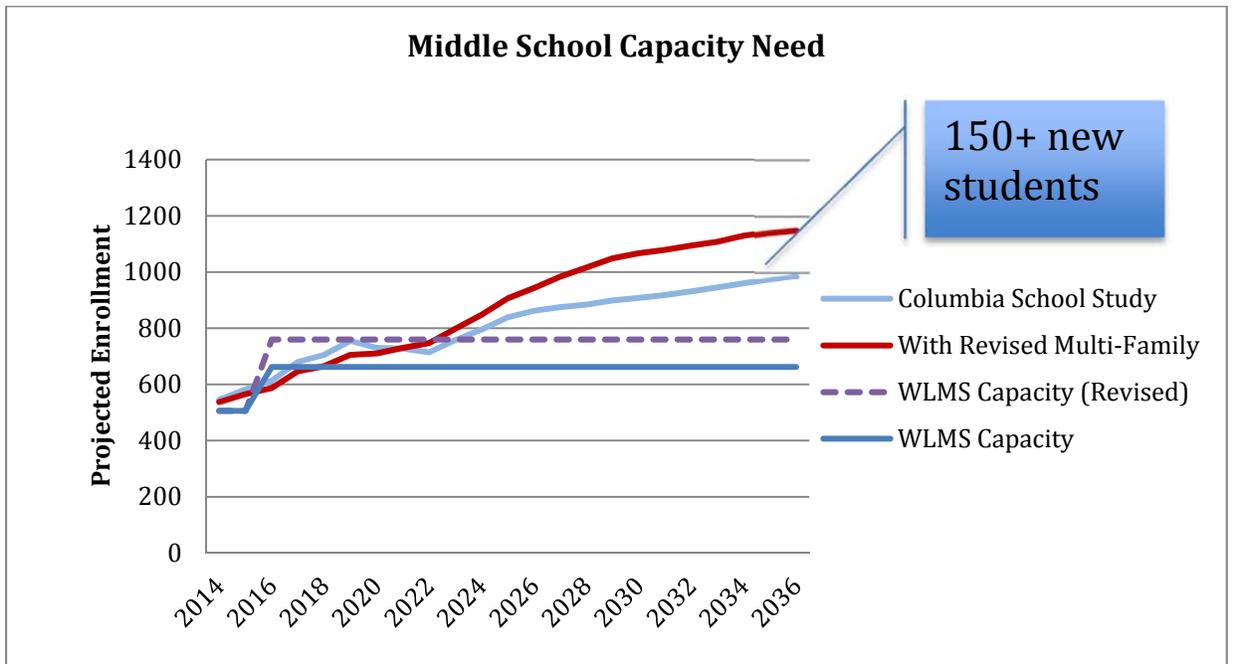
The following graph is an update to Figure 30 in the Columbia School Study. The light blue line shows growth as anticipated in the original study. The dashed lines represent the additional enrollment provided by the one new 600-seat school currently planned. The red line represents expected total enrollment levels including the 6,750 new residential units. The increased enrollment exceeds the capacity of the one school included the long range plan. The navy blue line represents current school capacity as a reference.



The analysis indicates an increase of more than 400 elementary students resulting from the proposed expansion of the Downtown Columbia development, as displayed in the graph above.

Middle School Impact

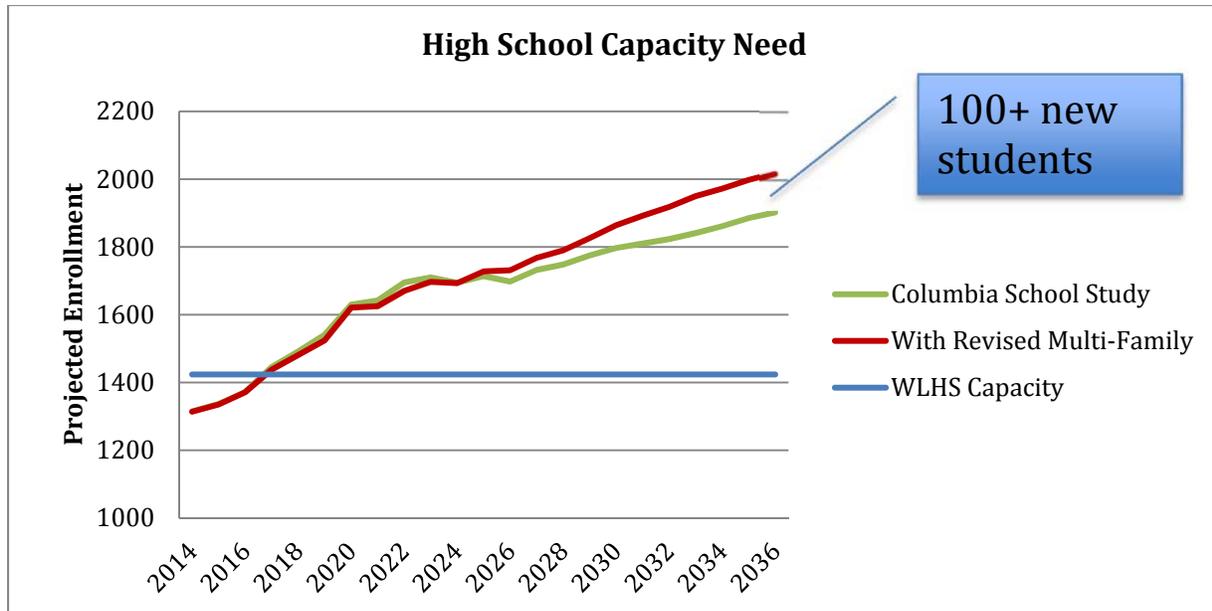
The following graph is an update to Figure 31 in the Columbia School Study. The light blue line shows growth as anticipated in the original study. The red line shows the enrollment projections at Wilde Lake MS given the proposed increase in housing units. For reference, both existing capacity (navy blue line) and replacement capacity (dashed line) of Wilde Lake MS are shown.



The analysis indicates an increase of more than 150 middle school students resulting from the proposed expansion of the Downtown Columbia development, as displayed in the graph above.

High School Impact

The following graph, an update to Figure 32 from the Columbia Schools Study, shows the enrollment projections at Wilde Lake HS, with the increased expected enrollment represented by the red line. For reference, the blue line shows the existing capacity of Wilde Lake HS.



The analysis indicates an increase of more than 100 high school students resulting from the proposed expansion of the Downtown Columbia development, as displayed in the graph above.

Summary

Our preliminary analysis indicates that the proposal would result in more than 650 additional students in the downtown Columbia area over the development period. Our current capital improvement program and long-range master plan do not include capacity for these students. This growth could not feasibly be contained by further expansion of existing elementary schools. An additional elementary school would be required at a total cost of up to \$50 million. Expansion of an existing middle school would be required as well, at a cost of more than \$10 million, and a proportional impact would affect existing high schools. In addition, the operational costs associated with the necessary capacity expansion would be significant. We look forward to collaborating further on this matter.

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