

## Alert

### School Moratorium Lifted

**March 8, 2010**

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Seneca Valley school moratoriums have been lifted. On Thursday, January 14th, the Montgomery County Planning Board voted (4-0) to make a mid-cycle finding on school adequacy - thereby lifting the residential subdivision moratorium that had been in place in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase school cluster since July 1, 2009 when the Planning Board's previously adopted school test results became effective. In addition, the Planning Board's action had the effect of lifting the moratorium from the Seneca Valley school cluster and preventing the Northwest cluster from entering a moratorium. This will allow residential development to obtain subdivision approvals in these clusters; however, they will still be subject to the school facilities payment at the elementary school level. In June 2010, the Planning Board will review the school test again and make projections for the FY2011 school test.

Some of the history on the moratorium is that when the Planning Board adopted the FY2010 school test results in June 2009, effective on July 1, 2009, school capacity at the elementary school level was found to exceed 120% program capacity in both the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster and the Seneca Valley cluster. Concern arose that such a moratorium, particularly in the down-county Bethesda-Chevy Chase area, was antithetical to smart growth principles which generally encourage residential development in transit-proximate locations. The effect of the moratorium would be to severely hinder growth in the part of the County where growth is targeted, exacerbating the effects of the already difficult economy.

Accordingly, on December 1, 2009, the County Council amended the FY2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program to increase programmed funding for three school clusters at the elementary school level - the Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Seneca Valley, and Northwest clusters. These additional funds provided sufficient capacity within the next 5 years to allow the Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Seneca Valley clusters to be brought out of the subdivision moratorium (and to prevent the Northwest cluster from entering a moratorium).

To view Planning Staff's memorandum to the Planning Board on this issue and to view the complete summary charts explaining the status of each of the County's school clusters, please visit the Montgomery Planning Board Web site.