

Primer re: Outdoor Lunch at Maury

Prepared in advance of the Sept 14th LSAT meeting. This is meant to be helpful in collecting information from various sources into a single place. It is not meant to be considered complete or comprehensive. Kenyon Weaver gathered this information and is responsible for any errors, mistakes, etc. A *Washington Post* article on this subject was just published and is available [here](#) and will be attached in PDF.

1 Q: Is there a reason to have lunch outdoors?

1 A: The idea is that outdoor lunches reduce exposures and so lower the overall potential rate of transmission for Maury ES students. Some resources supporting outdoor lunch are attached as first appendix; a clip of Dr. Fauci's Q&A last week where he recommended outdoor lunch for students is [here](#). Another video on how aerosols collect indoors, but not outdoors, is [here](#) (the section on COVID and indoor schools is from 40:43-60 minutes).

2 Q: Are there Maury classes already doing lunch outdoors?

2 A: Apparently yes! But to be further answered.

3 Q: Are other DCPS schools doing lunch outdoors?

3 A: Yes. See Washington Post article. In addition, at a recent virtual gathering, we learned that some of the following schools are doing outdoor lunches:

- Murch ES. All classes are eating outdoors, on school grounds. (It has been claimed that all / nearly all ESEs in Ward 3 are eating outdoors).
- Bancroft ES. Grades 1-5 are eating outdoors, starting last week, on picnic tables purchased by PTO and put on school grounds. (All classes ate indoors at first.)
- Powell ES. Grades 2-5 are eating outdoors, on picnic tables purchased by PTO / individual parents and put on school grounds including parking lot. See second appendix for photos.
- SWW at Francis-Stevens. They have plans to eat outdoors with the arrival of picnic tables and other materials from the \$30K grant, and will focus on getting older grades outdoors.

Interestingly, then, many of these schools are focusing on getting the later grades outdoors, and keeping younger grades indoors, which still reduces the overall exposure because far fewer students are in one space.

Re: Capitol Hill schools: Participants from Brent, the Cluster school, and Van Ness were also on the virtual gathering, and all of them indicated that they were all eating indoors, not outdoors. Not known are the other Capitol Hill elementary schools such as Tyler, Logan Montessori, SWS, L-T, who did not attend the virtual gathering.

4 Q: What were the challenges these other schools faced and how were they overcome?

4 A: Some of the challenges that these other schools faced were:

- **Staffing.** Bancroft ES was not able to do outdoor lunches unless they had parent volunteers to do lunch shifts. As a result, the LSAT and PTA organized volunteers for approx. 75 shifts in a week (5 lunch periods, 3 per period, 5 days). Volunteer clearance process is “a doozy” and lots of clearances are still waiting. Priya Cook discussed these challenges in the WaPo article as well.
- **Space.** Powell ES was not able to do outdoor lunches with the space they had, so they used their parking lot. Relatedly, Powell ES’s space is somewhat protected (because it is on school grounds and is in the school parking lot) but it does not have concrete barriers around it – if a car decided to come into the parking lot the students would be exposed. Other schools like Cluster/Watkins similarly: the issue is points of exit/egress, especially for younger kids.
- **Tables/Furniture.** One ES would not allow kids to eat on the ground (picnic blanket or no), and so required the purchase of picnic tables. Many elementary schools are waiting for the arrival of their \$30K worth of outdoor lunch furniture (tents, tables, etc.) and these have not yet arrived.
- **Permissions.** Cluster/Watkins noted that the large outdoor park next to its elementary school is DPR and is not controlled by DCPS. Powell tried to use nearby DPR space but was rejected (so they used parking lot). SWW similarly abuts NPS and DPR space. These are sources of delay.

Although weather was not mentioned among the challenges in setting up outdoor lunches at this virtual gathering (nor in the WaPo article), it will presumably be an issue in colder months.

If there is a theme among all the schools, it is that each school has slightly different experiences *within* these common challenges. At Cluster/Watkins for example, one of the

features is that that the DPR field is astroturf, and so limits the ability to install tents, for example.

5 Q: Has there been any interest among the Maury community for outdoor lunch?

5 A: No formal survey or anything has been taken, but there appears to be anecdotal support for outdoor lunch.

6 Q: What about supplies? Can or will Maury rely on HQ for supplies for outdoor lunches? Can we get our own?

6 A: One of the participants on the virtual gathering was Sharona Robinson – Central HQ. DCPS, Community Action Team Specialist. Also a Ward 8 parent. She mentioned that “Supply issues are very real” for the \$30K per school in supplies. It’s not a funding issue but a pipeline issue. Many elementary schools are only now receiving tents or tables and some have bottoms but not tops and vice versa. One ES received a tent that is too difficult to put up without professional help. Another ES, SWW, is receiving nice metal picnic tables that they are worried are going to be too light and could easily be stolen/taken.

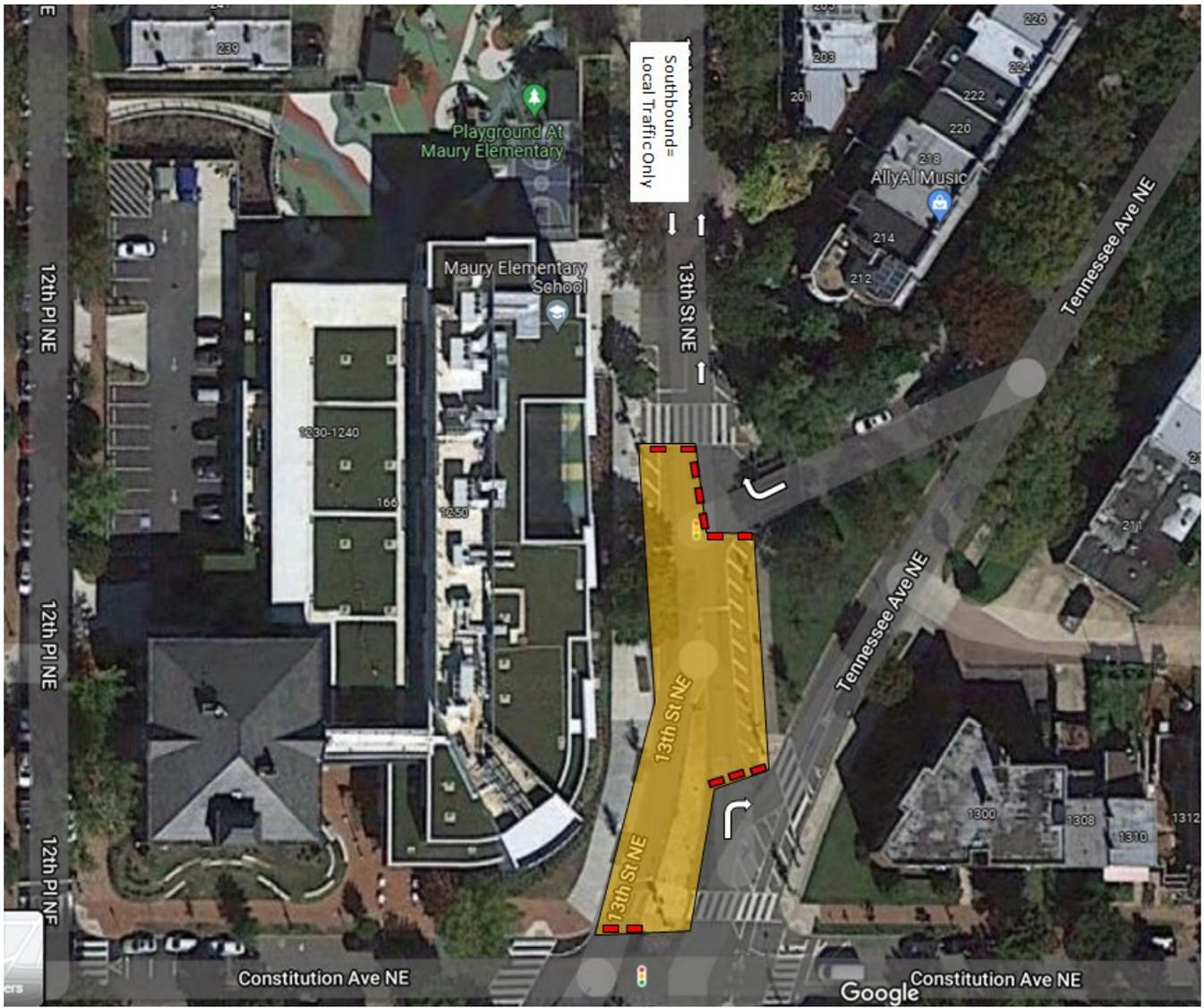
From the WaPo article referenced above:

“We have invested over \$4 million in outdoor furniture to support learning and other outdoor activities,” Ferebee said at an event unveiling the new Capitol Hill Montessori building. “In the next week or two we should have all the equipment in schools.”

Many schools already purchased their own supplies, but now one of the challenges has been raising funds to “repay” some parents who bought outright.

7 Q: Assuming Maury could organize volunteers to meet the staffing and supplies challenges listed above, what about the space and permissions?

7 Q: One idea could be to block off the 13th street area in front of Maury ES like so:



This would be done with 2500 lb concrete barriers like the ones you see in Streeteries (the red rectangles show where the barriers would go).

8 Q: What are the main advantages or disadvantages?

8 Q: Some of these might include (these are not meant to be comprehensive, nor reflective of a multiplicity of stakeholder views, nor put in order of value/importance - simply a starting point):

Advantages

- Connects to the triangle park to create a “peninsula” of space, so is more than a rectangle of space that, say, a streetery would have.
- Does not affect any on-street parking
- Barriers will protect from any car impact - is not exposed in the way that Powell ES is.
- (Others)

Disadvantages

- Most obviously, partially blocks off 13th street. Is not a weekday midday only “temporary” space that can be done and undone during the day - once the barriers are put down, they are down.
- Multiple exit/egress spots, is not “on” school grounds, cannot be fully enclosed.
- (Others)

9 Q: Are there other ideas that expand space?

9 Q: Yes, of course, and they all have trade-offs. Some may not be possible given safety mandates such as any midday/temporary closures that do not use the 2500 lb barriers. A partial (of course!) list which is offered without any regard to whether these are possible / desired:

- Temporary midday closures of 13th street
- Partial closure of 12th place
- Conversion of staff parking space similar to Powell ES
- Full closure of 13th street

10 Q: What about our existing space(s), including the expanded playspace?

10 A: Yes! Maybe? Some ideas include (but again, offered without regard to possible / desired):

- Portable (or not) smaller picnic tables along frontage space. See attached example of Sonia + her cousin setting one up.
- Permanent / portable tables on the triangle space with statue (but not blocked off 13th street), for use by older grades and teachers?
- Permanent / portable tables on triangle space across Constitution Ave (which seems like it belongs to those houses, but actually does not - it’s DC land!).
- “Streetery” style on 12th place or other areas?

- And others...

11 Q: What about support from our local elected officials?

11 Q: For Ward 6, both CM Allen and SBOE Rep Sutter have promoted outdoor eating; e.g. [here](#). Other elected representatives have as well - SBOE Rep 1 Emily Gasoi was on the virtual gathering, CM Cheh has come out in favor, and of course Chancellor Ferebee has touted it (see WaPo article quote above).