

# Neighborhood schools best, parents say

By Susan Duck  
staff writer

"Give children neighborhood schools and short bus rides" was the cry of some of the 40 parents who attended last week's community meeting at Powers Middle School to discuss elementary school boundary redistricting.

The Farmington Public School District plans a new elementary school, Hillside, next school year, and school officials and parent groups are meeting to discuss available attendance boundary options.

It's hoped these options, which will determine attendance areas, will ease student overcrowding at 11 other elementary schools Hillside, which will accommodate up to 600 students, is under construction on 11 Mile, east of Halsted, its northwest Farmington Hills.

Marilyn Scapowski, a Larkshire parent, had a strong opinion about the length of bus rides.

"I used to be a driver and I know what those kids go through," she told the elementary attendance area study committee. "It's the pits. It's tough on the little kids to stay on the bus that long."

The 19-member study committee includes a building representative from each elementary school and early childhood center who is individually selected by the parent group and principal.

Also represented are three principals, appointed by Michael Flanagan, acting superintendent, Jim Miner, a Farmington Education Association representative not present at this meeting, and Pamela O'Malley, the district's school/community relations director.

THE STUDY committee generated five proposals ranging from populating Hillside, to adjusting affected school boundaries, evaluating all elementary boundaries and a neighborhood school concept. The com-

mittee's first community meeting was held Sept. 14.

"We do not come to you with a final plan or proposal," said O'Malley. Final proposals will be made at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Farmington school board meeting in the Warner Middle School Cafeteria, 30303 W. 14 Mile, Farmington Hills.

The 11,000 student district is specifically targeting the elementary school "hotspots" with the following 1989-90 enrollments as of Nov. 2:

- Longacre, 14850 Arundel, Farmington (525)
- Gill, 21195 Gilt, Farmington (412)
- Forest, 34545 Old Timber, Farmington Hills (401)
- Flanders, 32600 Flanders, Farmington (321)
- Larkshire, 23800 Tuck, Farmington Hills (476)
- Beechview, 26851 Westmeath Farmington Hills (455)
- Wood Creek, 28400 Harwich Drive, Farmington (460)

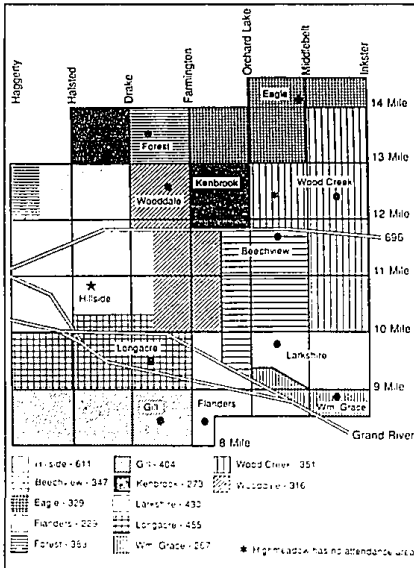
NUMBERS USED for planning 1989-91 enrollments assume that Highmeadow Common Campus students will opt to remain at the school.

Almost 30 parents spoke at last Thursday's meeting. The committee was not charged with study of middle school boundaries.

According to O'Malley, children will continue to be assigned to middle schools by their neighborhood and not by the elementary school they attend. She suggested parents contact the school board if they want middle school boundaries addressed also.

Middle school-age children enjoy and value attending school with existing friends, stressed Sue Leonard, a Longacre parent.

Richard DeVries, a Highmeadow Hillside parent, felt that the plans provided class-size equity district-wide. "I predicate much of my judgment on how well we allocate the re-



Working Plan A of a map of a proposed change that would populate Hillside, adjust affected school boundaries and evaluate all elementary attendance boundaries.

sources and facilities in this district for this redistricting plan."

DeVries said the plans do not plan well enough for future growth and construction and that Hillside should not be a "dumping ground" for old problems.

"WE DON'T want our children bounced around every couple of years," said Sara Samper, a parent who has children at three schools.

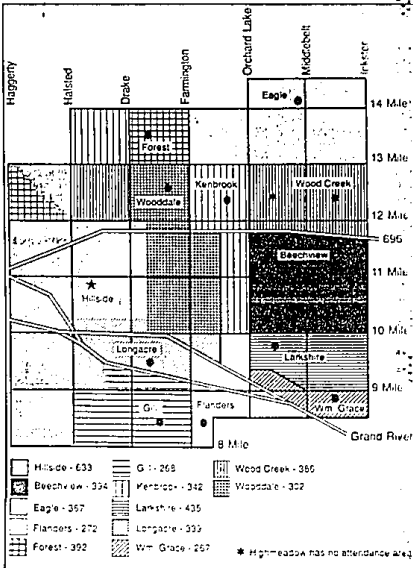
"I appreciate all that you (the committee) has done with this," said Susan Maas, a Longacre parent. "We did this in Nashville and everybody quit."

She complained of overcrowding at Longacre, which has some students eating lunch in hallways.

Albert Ludwig, a Kenbrook parent, said elementary-age children should be kept in their neighborhoods. "I used to walk to school as a kid," Ludwig said. "I see my kids get on the bus for 35-40 minutes. None of these plans have them any closer. The neighborhood concept is the only way to go. You now have the opportunity to get it right."

Just because something has been done in the past, doesn't mean it has to continue, said Keith DeVore, a Fairview parent. "Safety is foremost," he said.

Parents were, on the whole, pleased that the district took the time to take community input. "I re-



Working Plan B of a map of a proposed change that would populate Hillside, adjust affected school boundaries and evaluate all elementary attendance boundaries.

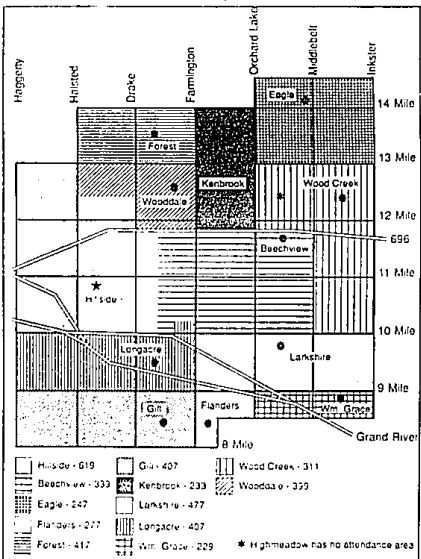
**"I see my kids get on the bus for 35-40 minutes. None of these plans have them any closer. The neighborhood concept is the only way to go. You now have the opportunity to get it right."**

— Albert Ludwig

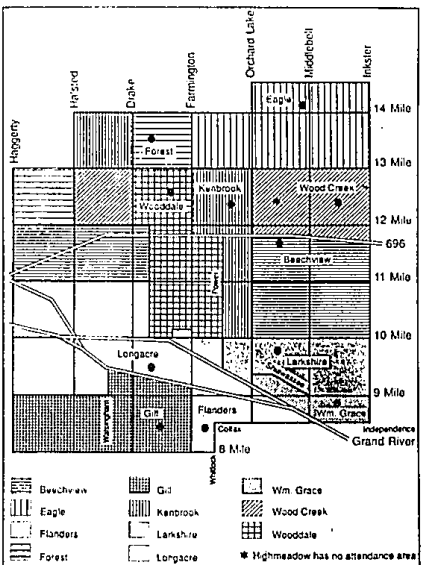
cently relocated from Missouri and they recently went through the same growth problems as this district is experiencing, only they (school officials) did it (redistricting) secretly. I think this community has a lot going for it that it would allow such input."

Call your elementary school office to contact your building representative on the study committee. Send written comments to: Attendance Area Study Committee, 32500 Shidwasse, Farmington 48024.

A map of a proposed change that would provide elementary attendance boundaries based on a neighborhood school concept.



Farmington Public Schools' current elementary attendance areas.



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