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the last word

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Mayor Adrian Fenty and DC Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee talk to Walker Jones students at a ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the new school.  
 Photo by Vikrum D. Aiyer for the Executive Office of the Mayor

Mayor Fenty leads a tour of the new school.  
 Photo by Vikrum D. Aiyer for the Executive Office of the Mayor



## Dropping the Anchor

### New School in Northwest One Opens to Students

BY KYLE JOHNSON

Standing on the steps of the new \$50 million Walker Jones Education Campus at a mid-August ribbon-cutting ceremony, Mayor Adrian Fenty noted how close the school was to the Capitol building. The Capitol dome, about a mile away, could be seen when looking down New Jersey Avenue NW.

Walker Jones is even closer to one of the two schools the building replaced — just around the corner, actually — and signals the completion of phase one of a \$700 million project to rebuild the Northwest One neighborhood. The neighborhood, bordered by North Capitol Street and New Jersey Avenue on the east and west and New York Avenue and K Street on the north and south, is also near the rapidly changing NoMA (North of Massachusetts Avenue) and Mount Vernon Triangle communities.

Walker Jones opened for class in August and can accommodate up to 850 students.

The school will be used for students in grades kindergarten through eight, and replaces the old Walker Jones Elementary School and Terrell Junior High School.

The building is also the first new school construction project completed during Fenty's tenure as mayor and is the city's first combined school, library and recreation facility. When fully completed, the facility will include a 20,000-square-foot community recreation center with outdoor athletic fields and playgrounds, and a 5,000-square-foot library. The library and recreation center will open in November.

"The Walker Jones campus brings together all the public facilities you need to build a strong community," Fenty said.

#### New Tools for the Schools

District officials who spoke at the ribbon cutting ceremony said that Walker Jones is

a school heading in the right direction. DC Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee noted that the percentage of students proficient in reading and math increased by double digits over just the past year.

The school will partner with the George Washington University School of Education to open a new parent academy focused on providing education opportunities to the parents of Walker Jones students, Principal Jeffrey Grant said. A new after-school program focusing on the arts, namely music, will also start up this year.

After the ribbon cutting, the large group of parents, students and school staff toured the new building to see what all of the buzz was about. The 100,000-square-foot building has the state-of-the-art tools expected in a new school today – a plethora of computers and SMART boards, interactive whiteboards, for example – and the building features some unique educational opportunities.

The school is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified. One of the factors that led to that certification is the building's "green roof." The roof has plants growing on it with gravel bedding and walkway paths around the planted areas. The roof will be a part of the students' curriculum, as it will be used to help teach lessons in ecology.

Partnering with the District Department of Parks and Recreation and DC Public Library facilities in the same building will also provide more learning opportunities to students and community members, District officials said at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The 17-month Walker Jones construction project is a small part of the \$2 billion plan to rebuild and modernize all the city's schools. Fenty said Walker Jones was completed earlier than expected and on budget.

"So many great schools in our

area are finally seeing the upgrade that they deserve," he said, adding that DC schools are on "everybody's top-three list" of school districts headed in the right direction.

### First but Not Least

Walker Jones is the anchor of the Northwest One New Community project, which ultimately will include 40,000 square feet of new retail, 220,000 square feet of office space, a new clinic and other community services, and more than 1,600 new units of housing – apartments, condominiums and townhouses. The project is an attempt to redevelop an area long affected by high crime and poverty rates without pricing the current residents out of the community.

Each subsidized housing unit torn down to build the project will be replaced on site, and the new housing buildings are expected to provide about double the number of "new market rate and workforce units," according to the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development's website.

Nakeisha Neal in that office told the Bates Area Civic Association blog that developers will begin construction on the \$86 million planned building at North Capitol and M streets NW by next May. The building, scheduled to be completed 18-22 months after construction begins, will include 313 housing units, including 54 for former Temple Court residents.

The council approved a land deal for that project in late July. The comprehensive Northwest One plan was initially adopted by the council in 2005 and is the city's first New Community project.

*To learn more about Northwest One, visit the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development's website at [dcbiz.dc.gov](http://dcbiz.dc.gov). ★*



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