

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 01- 47
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS
ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY FOR EXPANSION OF HIGHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAMPUS

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) proposes to purchase five parcels (083-121-01, 02, 03, 04 & 11) to expand the Highland Elementary School campus, in conjunction with the redevelopment of the campus. The subject parcels are located on Charles Avenue, in the Historic North Charlotte neighborhood and are adjacent to the existing campus. This project involves a replacement of the current school building with a new 300 student school facility. The relatively small size of the new school is a reflection of the limited size of the site of 8.64 acres (which would include the five lots proposed for acquisition).

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION: The campus re-development project is already underway with the demolition of the old school building. The purchase of these properties will provide sufficient land for the development of a play field for the students. If these parcels are not acquired, the school will not have a play field. The school is scheduled to open in the 2002 school year.

PROJECT IMPACT: The proposed project will serve to relieve anticipated crowding at elementary schools in this area as it will add elementary school seats. Additionally, it will allow for future enrollment growth in grades K-5 in this area of the school district.

Currently there are mill houses on the five subject properties. This project would require the removal of the mill houses. The houses are listed in the North Charlotte National Historic District, and four are considered to be "contributing" structures to the District. Although such designation does not prevent or preclude demolitions of these structures, if federal funding, approval or licensing is involved, the project would have to go through a review process by the State Historic Preservation Office. No such Federal involvement is identified by the applicant. However, given the historic nature of the structures and the area, coupled with the fact that this neighborhood is considered as "threatened" by City Within a City (CWAC) Quality of Life Indicators report, the applicant has expressed willingness to attempt to have the "contributing" structures moved to lots elsewhere in the vicinity as a pre-condition of approval.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS: The proposed project is part of a process to create equitable school facilities throughout the County. The baseline used establishes standards for all facilities. As part of the effort to establish an equitable facility at Highland, it was necessary to demolish and replace the pre-existing school building.

The North Charlotte Plan (1995), the adopted land use plan for the area, identified the proposed land use for the five parcels proposed for acquisition as single family residential. These properties are in an area undergoing preliminary stages of urban revitalization, caused at least in part by the historic character of the area. Public projects such as reconstruction of schools should serve to complement such efforts. The investment of a new school, and the applicant's willingness to work toward preserving the structures by moving them elsewhere in the area, will contribute to this revitalization effort.

Although there are two public playspaces nearby (Charles Avenue Park and Clemson Avenue Park), the applicant reports that in practical terms it would be impossible to use either of these facilities for a school playground, as to do so would involve students having to cross streets, which is considered to be unsafe and an unacceptable practice.

PROJECT COST: Market appraisals will be used to form the basis for acquisition costs for these properties. The overall site re-development cost is reported to be in excess of \$8 million, funded through a combination of the 1996 state school bonds and the 2000 local school bonds.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: While the construction of the school and ancillary site features such as playspace can be viewed as supportive of the revitalization of the community, the loss of five vintage structures (four of which are "contributing" structures to the historic district), are considered to be unnecessary to the successful redevelopment of the school site. Staff commends the applicant for their willingness to work

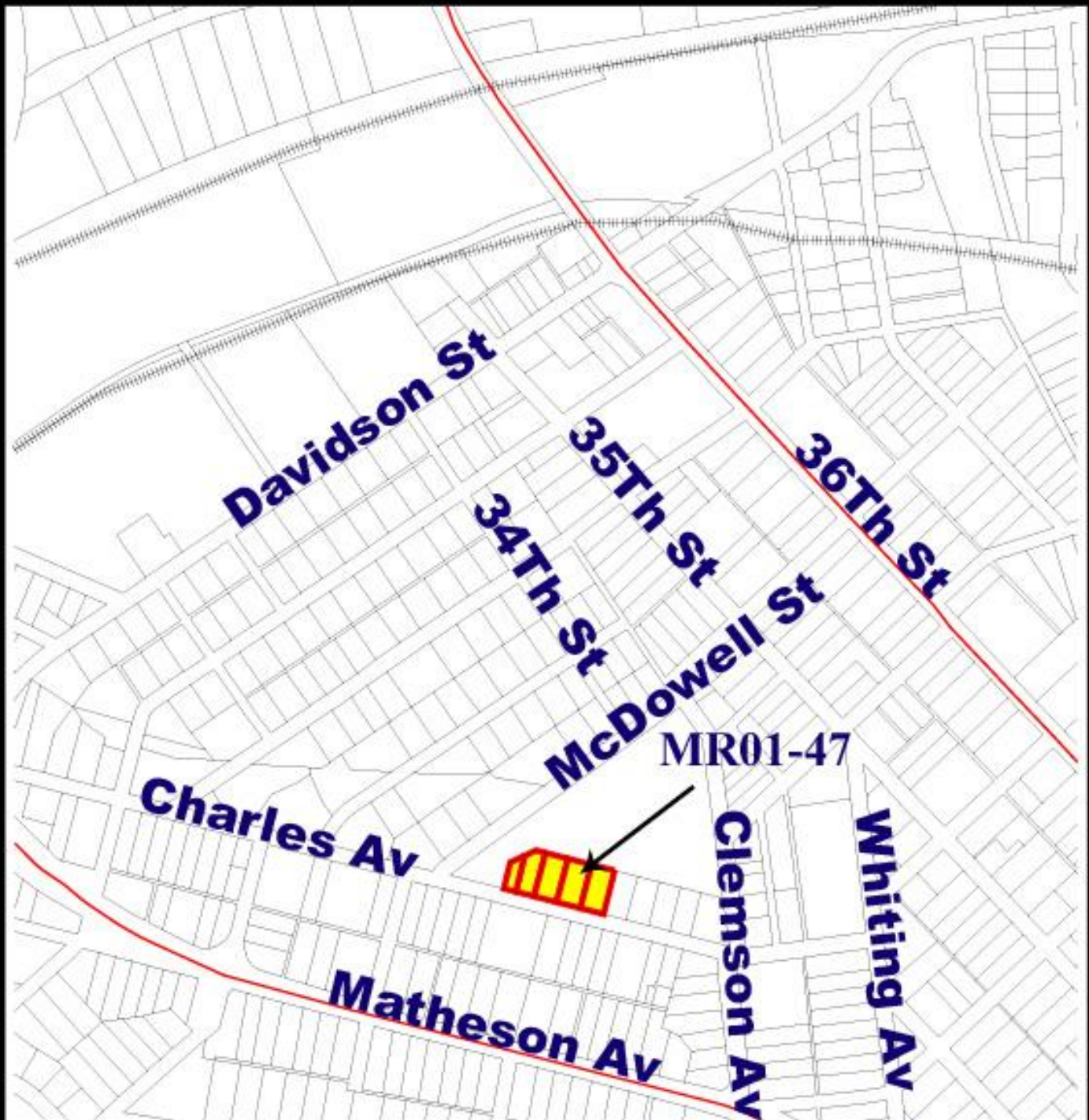
diligently toward attempting to have the "contributing" structures moved.

It is staff's recommendation that this request be approved, conditioned upon the applicant making every reasonable effort to preserve, through relocation, of the four structures which have been identified as "contributing" to the National Historic District. Staff further recommends that in the event that it becomes impractical or impossible to complete the moves, that the circumstances be reported to the Planning Commission.

This request was presented at the October 3, 2001 meeting of the Joint Use Task Force, whose members provided no comments.

PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The Planning Committee voted 7-0 to approve the request, on condition the the school district make the best effort possible to relocate the houses (with no report back requirement, as recommended by staff).

Mandatory Referral: MR01-47



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, October 2001.



Instructions:

This form is provided to capital project initiating agencies for reporting proposed projects to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission in accordance with the requirements of North Carolina House Bill 855.

Proposed capital projects are to be submitted to the Planning Commission using this form, at least 30 days prior to presenting the project to the governmental unit having authority to authorize it.

In order to constructively review a project proposal, a full description of the project and its objectives is necessary. Please provide all of the information requested and all available graphic information.

I.	Initiating	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education	Date	10/1/01
	Department	Planning Services	Prepare	
		and Building Services Departments	d	
		701 E. Second Street		
		Charlotte, NC 28202		
Submitted By		Harold Jenkins (Building Services) 704-343-6888		

II. Project Name Highland Elementary

Location and Description of Project

The proposed properties are located on Charles Avenue adjacent to the school. (See attached location and site maps). There are five parcels: 083-121-01,11,02,03,04. This project involves a total replacement of the current school campus with a brand new 300-student school. The size of the school is a reflection of the limited space of the site, which is 8.64 acres.

III. Project Justification/Need (Provide information about why the project is being proposed at this location, i.e. response to growth, relieve overcrowding, correct racial imbalance, etc.)

The project will provide adequate land to facilitate a site development plan to facilitate play field for the students. If the parcels are not acquired, the school will not have a play field for the students.

IV. Project Impact (Explain the impact of the proposed project on nearby schools, i.e. abandonment, closure, re-use, etc.)

The proposed project will serve to relieve anticipated crowding at elementary schools in this area and allow for future enrollment growth in grades K-5 in this region of the school district.

V. Relationship to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Future School Planning Task Force (Committee of 33) Guidelines.

The proposed project is part of a long range planning process of creating equitable facilities

throughout the county.

VI. Project Status (Check those that apply)

Nothing done but this report		Land not yet acquired	
Preliminary plans completed	X	Land acquisition underway	X
Detailed plans completed	X	Land acquired	
No land acquisition involved		Project under contract	X

(Please send site plans if available.)

VII. Proposed Development (Identify any known external factors which are critical to the Schedule timing of this project. For example, the opening of a major shopping center, or construction of a new school.

The project has started with the demolition of the old campus. The school will in open the 2002 school year.

VIII. Relationship of this proposal to other public (Is this project part of a series of projects. interrelated capital projects? Is the project affected by or does it affect other public projects in the area?)

This project is part of a Facility Equity initiative to establish a minimum facility baseline for current CMS schools. The baseline is intended to specify the threshold for all existing facilities. It is the minimum facility required to offer the full CMS program at elementary, middle or high schools based upon the best available data and the professional opinions of the CMS Building Services staff.

IX. Project Cost (Indicate the estimated total project cost and describe how this Estimate estimation has been made.)

Estimated cost, developed in conjunction with the CMS Capital Needs Assessment process, is an anticipated cost at \$8,145,685 million, exclusive of land purchase,, construction, design, furnishing/equipment, and project management.

X. Assistance (If State or Federal assistance funds are proposed, indicate the specific Funds assistance program, and the status of any application for project funding assistance.)

The project is funded through 1996 state bonds, 2000 local bonds

**ROBERT M. HOPKINS
3315 LAZY BRANCH RD.
CHARLOTTE, NC 28270**

October 19, 2001

Mr. Harold Jenkins
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
701 East Second St.
Charlotte, NC 28202

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

Please accept this letter as an expression of intent to purchase the house improvements only of the following properties:

1. 1009 Charles Avenue Tax Parcel number -083-121-04
2. 1001 Charles Avenue Tax Parcel number -083-121-03
3. 923 Charles Avenue Tax Parcel number -083-121-11
4. 921 Charles Avenue Tax Parcel number -083-121-02
5. 915 Charles Avenue Tax Parcel number -083-121-01

The purchase price of the five structures shall be Seven Thousand Five Hundred and no/100 Dollars (\$7,500.00). Possession shall occur within sixty days after the closing with the individual owners.

5123 Mr. Jenkins, it is our intent to move the above houses to lots in the immediate neighborhood. This will save the school system approximately \$50,000.00 to \$75,000.00 in demolition cost. Also, it will achieve the neighborhood association's goal to save the houses and maintain the character of the area.

If these terms are acceptable, please indicate by signing in the space provided below. This is a letter of intent, not a binding contract.

Cordially,



Robert M. Hopkins

Accept: _____ Date _____

MRDL-47

NewsLibrary

FAQ

More About Us

Help

Search

Passport Signup

Billing Options

Thank you for using NewsLibrary

The Charlotte Observer

Found on Charlotte.com

Charlotte Observer, The (NC)

March 15, 1993

Section: METRO

Edition: ONE-FOUR

Page: 1C

Memo: Danyne Romine Powell

MYSTERIOUS TINY COFFINS INTRIGUE HER

DANNYE ROMINE POWELL, Staff Writer

If you can help **Lois Yandle** solve a mystery, I hope you'll come forward.

Last month, **Lois** was reading in The Observer's Mecklenburg Neighbors a story about abandoned **cemeteries**.

The story stirred a memory.

In the early 1930s, when **Lois** was 7 or 8, she came home from school one day to see men digging in a vacant field in her **Highland Park** neighborhood in North Charlotte.

Neighbors told her the men were digging up remains of human bodies.

Highland Park Elementary School, built in 1954, is now on the site of that old field.

Lois has a dozen questions. Among them: Whose bodies? Why were they buried in the field? Did they work for **Highland Park Manufacturing Co.**, which once owned the property? Why were they dug up in the 1930s? Where are the remains now?

*

Ask enough people

You should know a few things about **Lois Yandle**. First, once her curiosity is piqued, it will be satisfied. She'll ask enough people enough questions until she's finally exhausted her sources. Then, she's only begun.

Second, she is the **Yandle** of the **Yandle** Preservation Fund, which helps to preserve the much-handled historical records in the State Archives in Raleigh. Third, she is a generous contributor of microfilm, books and other genealogical records to the Carolina Room of the Main Library.

http://nl13.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=0EB6CAA382A15... 10/5/01

Fourth, she is a charter member of the Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society.

*

100 child-sized coffins

Now back to that vacant field.

Soon after she remembered the **cemetery**, **Lois** started knocking on doors in **Highland Park**, hoping to find someone who could give her more details.

She talked with Pauline Childers, whose house backs up to the school property.

Pauline told **Lois** she clearly remembers the night in 1954 when she came home from work to see about 100 coffins stacked at the side of the field.

Pauline remembered the overwhelming stench coming from the open graves. She also remembered that the coffins were small - child-sized.

Something else. Inside the coffins, Pauline told **Lois**, were teaspoons, bed clothing, medicine bottles and rag dolls.

Aha! Smallpox. It was customary during epidemics, **Lois** learned, to bury with the victim anything he or she might've touched.

But when did these children die? Where are their bodies now?

*

1896 smallpox epidemic

Lois kept asking questions. Her 87-year-old cousin Mary Donaldson remembered playing in the **cemetery** and thought it had been established between 1895-1900.

Lois also talked with Virginia Moore, Frank Hand, Charlie Skidmore, Violet Nodine, Florence Roberts, Louise Howard, Phillip Porter, John Brady, Jim Bookout, Lula Faye Clegg and Baxter Wilson Jr. Baxter told **Lois** his father talked of a smallpox epidemic in the late 1890s.

Lois found in Dr. Charles Strong's book, "History of Mecklenburg County Medicine," a reference to an 1896 smallpox epidemic in Charlotte - "1,500 cases and 100 or more deaths."

Lois Yandle is one of those people who loves her childhood neighborhood and wants to do all she can to preserve its history.

These child-sized coffins with their macabre contents have fired her imagination.

Please help. I know she won't rest until she can place spring flowers on their relocated graves.

Illustration: PHOTO

Yandle

Burial Ground Found on School Site

During the early part of 1950 need for a larger school for the North Charlotte area became apparent. On July 22, 1953, Highland Park Manufacturing Company gave five acres of land to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board with the provision that the school system would pay for moving several mill houses located on the site where the school was to be built. Agreement was reached and work was begun. Luther Brackett, the superintendent for the mill at that time, recalled that when the houses were relocated on available lots in the community, workmen ran into a problem with the sewer lines and Highland Park paid \$900.00 to have the lines rerouted.

The site for this new school lay between Clemson Avenue, Charles Avenue, and North McDowell Streets. Included in the five-acre tract for the school was a one-acre plot that had belonged to the African congregation of The Center Grove African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church. This church, which had begun in 1884, later moved to a site off Craighead Road near the old Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church. The church's site in North Charlotte had been abandoned for at least fifty years, according to an article in *The Charlotte News* of August 21, 1954.

In digging footings for the school, coffins were discovered on the Center Grove Church site. There was no knowledge of an old burial ground on the property. (This was the same cemetery which began the search that led to the North Charlotte project.) Belief was

expressed that there had been no burials there in the previous fifty years, and that in recent years the ground had been cultivated. There was no way to know who was buried there because there were no markers and no means of identifying the next of kin. Nevertheless, the discovery sent Mr. Brock Barkley, the school board's attorney, scurrying to law books. He learned that a thirty day notice of intention of removing any bodies and interring them elsewhere had to be published, which he did.

When the required time of thirty days ended, the remains from twenty-eight graves were moved to a new resting place in Pinewood Cemetery, a part of Elmwood Cemetery in Charlotte. The work was done under the direction of Grier and Thompson Undertakers.

When the school was completed, Miss Mattie McNinch, who was the principal of the former North Charlotte Primary School, became the principal for the new school which was called North Charlotte Elementary School because the faculty and students came from the old North Charlotte School. Early in 1954, the name was officially changed to Plaza Hills School. This name was often confused with Plaza Road Elementary School, and in December 1954, the school was renamed Highland Elementary School. At the time it was opened, Highland Elementary served only the Highland community.

MRO1-47