

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. MR02-31
ACQUISITION OF SEVERAL PARCELS TO ACCOMMODATE EXPANSION
AT NORTHWEST SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to purchase approximately 0.342 acres (parcels # 069-096-33, 34, 35 & 36) located at 2224, 2218, 2214 & 2212 Celia Avenue in the City of Charlotte to provide additional parking for the Northwest School of the Arts. Three of the parcels currently contain single family residences which will either be relocated or demolished. The remaining parcel is vacant. All four parcels are located on the southern boundary of the school site, west of Beatties Ford Road.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION: Northwest School of the Arts is located on 10.96 acres, more than 21 acres smaller than state acreage guidelines for a middle school site. The addition of .342 acres of parking space to the site will benefit campus traffic circulation and safety and will relieve traffic congestion along Beatties Ford Road. Acquisition of adjacent properties at Northwest School of the Arts, a countywide magnet, is required to improve vehicular circulation and access to the various sections of the existing campus. The current site configuration permits only a few cars at a time for on-site student pick-up and drop-off. The purchase of the adjoining land will reduce vehicular traffic on Beatties Ford Road by increasing the length of available on-site stacking space as well as developing a circulation pattern that improves safety for students as well as the neighborhood. If this land is not acquired and the improved circulation plan is not implemented, increased congestion on Beatties Ford Road and the surrounding neighborhood streets can be expected.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS AND PUBLIC POLICY: The parcels are zoned R-5 which permits secondary schools under prescribed conditions. Both the Central District Plan and the recently-completed Washington Heights Small Area Plan calls for these properties to remain in residential use. The request to remove existing housing for campus expansion is inconsistent with the aforementioned plans which seek to preserve housing in this fragile community. The Washington Heights Small Area Plan also recommends a gateway feature into the community to be erected at the intersection of Celia and Beatties Ford Road.

PROJECT IMPACT: The parking expansion at this site will positively affect the surrounding neighborhood. Existing access points will be used and the increased off-street parking will minimize on-street parking on Celia Avenue.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS: The parking can be utilized by patrons of the adjoining L.C. Coleman Park, upon which the county is making improvements.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE: December 2004 (including other school improvements).

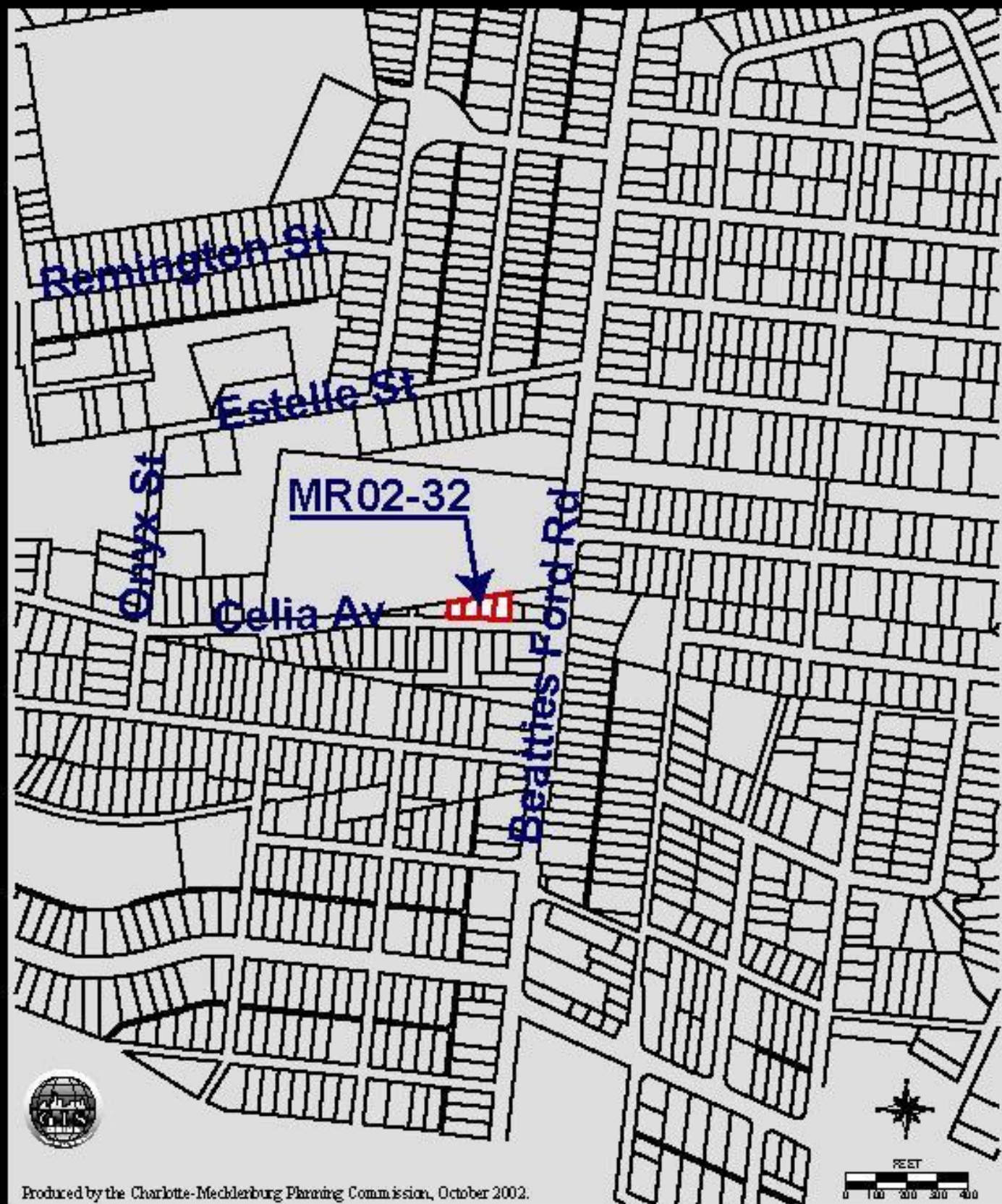
JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS: The Joint Use Task Force reviewed this matter at its October 2, 2002 meeting and no joint use opportunities were identified.

CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Planning staff recommends approval, conditioned upon the following:

1. CMS should work toward relocation of the houses on these parcels to vacant parcels within or nearby the Washington Heights Community (City Neighborhood Development has offered its assistance in identification of suitable sites where the homes may be located)
2. The parking lot to be developed should be screened from the remaining properties along Celia Avenue to meet or exceed Charlotte Mecklenburg Land Development standards. If fencing is to be used it should be decorative and complementary to the adjoining residential area, and chain link should not be used.
3. Parking lot lighting should not be directed toward the adjacent residences.
4. CMS should take into account the Washington Heights Small Area Plan's recommendation to construct a gateway feature at the intersection of Celia and Beatties Ford Road. Neighborhood Development, CMS and the Washington Heights community should coordinate their efforts in the planning, design and implementation of the gateway feature.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: At its October 15, 2002 meeting, the Planning Committee voted 6-0 to recommend approval of the transaction, conditioned upon no use of chain link fencing along Celia Avenue frontage.

Mandatory Referral: MR02-31



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, October 2002.