

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 02-45
PROPOSED MIDDLE OR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON BAILEY ROAD IN CORNELIUS

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to purchase approximately 36 acres for a middle or elementary school in North Mecklenburg County in the Town of Cornelius. The site is located east of NC 115 at the end of Bailey Road and includes tax parcels 007-121-01 and 007-122-02,03,04,10 and 11. These parcels are located in the Rural Preservation District. The intent is to construct a 1200-student middle school or an 800-student elementary school on this site. This site has been identified as the first alternative for MR02-42 for South Street. If a middle school is not constructed on South Street, this particular site will be used for a middle school. If a middle school is constructed on South Street, this site will be land-banked to serve as a future elementary school site.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION: The site will be used as an alternate building site for a new middle school funded by the 2002 bonds. (Should the site not be needed for a middle school, it will alternatively be used as a site for a new elementary school to be requested as part of a future bond referendum.) Bradley Middle School which serves northern Mecklenburg County is 149% utilized without mobile classrooms, and Alexander Middle School is 135% utilized without mobiles. The high utilization numbers at Bradley and Alexander Middle Schools are partially a result of the population growth that has occurred in northern Mecklenburg County. Construction of a new middle school in the northern portion of the district would have the potential to relieve overcrowding at Bradley and/or Alexander Middle Schools.

Three elementary schools located in the northern portion of the County are also highly utilized. Cornelius Elementary School is 133% utilized without mobiles, Davidson Elementary is 116% utilized without mobiles and Huntersville Elementary is 114% utilized without mobiles. The high utilization numbers at these schools indicate a need for a new elementary in northern Mecklenburg County.

The north search zone historically has created a challenge in finding suitable school sites. The lack of public infrastructure (water, sewer, and roads) significantly reduces the number of feasible sites.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE AND PUBLIC POLICY:

The site is strategically located to address future enrollment growth in this region of the district in grades K through 5 (for elementary) and grades 6 through 8 (for middle) and to relieve present and/or anticipated crowding in nearby middle and elementary schools, most notably Bradley and Alexander Middle Schools; and Cornelius, Davidson and Huntersville Elementary Schools.

The proposed school site is located within the Town of Cornelius planning jurisdiction and has a Rural Preservation District designation, which currently encourages low-density development. However, this site is located approximately 1¾ mile from the proposed Caldwell Transit Station and the Towns of Cornelius and Davidson have indicated support of higher density development in this area and construction of a school at this location. Additionally, the Town of Cornelius is doing a small area plan for this area and anticipating completion of the plan by July of 2003.

The school district's *Long Range School Facilities Master Plan 2001/02 – 2010/11* calls for the construction of up to ten elementary schools in the northern portion of the county by 2011, but does not identify the need for any additional middle schools in the north by 2011. Therefore, development of an elementary school at this location is consistent with the school district's Facilities Plan, but a middle school at this location would be inconsistent with the Facilities Plan.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The proposed middle school at this location is strategically located to address future growth in this region of the district in grades K through 5, (for elementary) or grades 6 through 8 (for middle) and relieve present and/or anticipated crowding in nearby middle and elementary schools, most notably Bradley and Alexander Middle Schools and Davidson, Cornelius and Huntersville Elementary Schools.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

The Towns of Cornelius and Davidson have agreed to cooperate with CMS to either provide the necessary infrastructure (road, sewer and water) or to encourage developers to provide the services needed to enhance the site. Per review of the Project Strategy Report produced by the County's Engineering and Property Management Department, there are not any projects that affect this site directly.

Bailey Road will be connected to Davidson-Concord Road to provide connectivity to the proposed rail station at Caldwell Station. Additionally, Bailey Road will be upgraded to accommodate dedicated bike paths outside of the travel lanes.

This site is also located near the new Park Complex at Bailey Road and NC 115.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

The site would be purchased with 1999 Land Banking funds, and will be used as an alternate building site for a new \$13.3 million middle school funded by the newly approved 2002 Bonds. Should the site not be needed for a middle school, it will alternatively be used as a future 13.3 million elementary school to be requested as part of a future bond referendum.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task force reviewed this request at their December 4, 2002 meeting. The following comments were made. The Town of Cornelius is doing a small-area plan for the area where this site is located, which should be finished in July 2003. This site is alongside a new Cornelius park.

CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that this property be acquired and land-banked to serve as a future elementary school site. It is felt that the South Street site in Cornelius represents a better middle school site, therefore it is recommended that this site not be acquired for a middle school.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: At their December 17, 2002 meeting, the Planning Committee voted 7-0 to approve acquisition of the land, conditioned upon the school district being cognizant of staff's recommendation about the amount of land to be acquired.

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