

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 02-46
PROPOSED MIDDLE OR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON RAMAH CHURCH ROAD IN HUNTERSVILLE

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to purchase approximately 36 acres for a middle school or elementary school in North Mecklenburg County in the Town of Huntersville. The site consists of the northeastern 36 acres of a 65-acre tract on the corner of Ramah Church Road and Fred Brown Road (pid # 019-261-01). The parcel is located in an Open Space zoning district. The intent is to construct a 1,200-student middle school or an 800-student elementary school on this site. (This site is a second alternative to a middle school site in the northern portion of the county. The preferred site is on South Street in Cornelius, and the first alternative is a site on Bailey Road in Cornelius. Mandatory referrals have also been submitted for these other two sites: MR02-42 for South Street and MR02-45 for Bailey Road) If this particular site is not needed for a middle school, it 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 which has been partially funded by the 2002 bonds. (Should the site not be needed for a middle school, it will alternatively be used as 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. The 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.

Cornelius Elementary School is 133% utilized without mobiles, Davidson Elementary is 116% utilized without mobiles and Huntersville Elementary is 114% without mobiles. The high utilization numbers at these schools indicate a need for a new elementary school in this area.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS 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 site is located within the Town of Huntersville Planning Jurisdiction and has an Open Space (OPS) District Zoning classification, which permits schools subject to town administrative approval of site plan issues. A new school at this location would be in concert with the Town of Huntersville's plans for this area.

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 or Davidson, Cornelius and Huntersville Elementary Schools.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

The site is adjacent to an approved subdivision plan for 300 homes. CMS has expressed willingness to work with the developer to incorporate pedestrian & vehicular access between the school and the neighborhood.

The availability of sanitary sewer may be problematic at this site, but development in conjunction with development of adjoining residential tracts could make sewer access to the school site more feasible. Additionally, if the decision is made to construct an elementary school at this location, it would likely not be constructed for several years, enabling development on adjoining tracts to bring sewer closer to the school site.

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 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 site at their December 4, 2002 meeting, and no joint use comments were offered.

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 siting opportunity, 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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