

**MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 03-26**

**Proposal to acquire property on Steele Creek Road to serve as a future Elementary School site**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has requested to purchase a future elementary school site consisting of approximately 18 usable acres on Steele Creek Road in Southwest Mecklenburg County using 1999 Land Bonds. The site consists of a portion of parcel 219-061-03, and is primarily vacant land. The zoning designation is the Commercial Center District (CC). The land use immediately surrounding the subject is residential with subdivisions to the south and southeast.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:**

The site is located in the West Search Zone as identified in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools *Long-Range School Facilities Master Plan 2001/02—2010/11*, that identifies the need to acquire up to four new elementary school sites in the West Search Zone by 2011.

The site is approximately 1.6 miles southwest of Lake Wylie Elementary School and lies within the 2003/04 Lake Wylie home school boundary. Lake Wylie elementary school is currently 139% utilized without mobile classrooms.

The significantly high utilization numbers at Lake Wylie Elementary School are partially a result of the population growth that has occurred in the southwest portion of Mecklenburg County. As a specific example, the construction of The Palisades subdivision could potentially add 4500 homes (2380 single family and 2120 multi-family) to the area, creating approximately 367 new elementary school students, according to CMS.

The construction of a new elementary school in southwest Mecklenburg County would have the potential to relieve overcrowding at Lake Wylie Elementary School. The proposed property is near existing densities of CMS elementary school students, as well as near areas of anticipated growth, thus providing for the long-term populating of a school at this site.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:**

The proposed school site has CC zoning, and will require rezoning in order to accommodate a school. The site is currently part of a zoning petition for re-zoning to accommodate a mixed use development on the entire 161-acre parcel.

The size of the proposed site meets both CMS and state guidelines of 18 developable acres for an 800-student elementary school.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:**

The Southwest District Plan calls for commercial uses at this location. The proposed school site is adjacent to existing or proposed residential development. As part of a well-integrated and connected mixed-use plan, a school could be an appropriate land use at this location.

**PROJECT IMPACT:**

This site could potentially create a safe walk zone for the neighborhood students as well some of the surrounding neighborhoods. Increased traffic around the school site is expected for two 30-minute periods in the morning and afternoon. The school district has pledged to work closely with permitting agencies the site designers to minimize this impact.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:**

The reconstruction of York Road currently underway will include the re-alignment of the York Road/Steele Creek Road intersection, that will extend and shift the future right-of-way to the edge of the site, thus providing roadway frontage on Steele Creek Road.

**ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:**

This project is a proposed land banking site. Since no funding is available for construction, no projected build out date is available at this time. Estimated cost, developed in conjunction with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Capital Needs Assessment process is approximately \$13.3 million (2003 dollars) including construction, furnishings and equipment, design and project management.

**JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:**

Joint Use Task Force discussed the matter at its October 1, 2003 meeting. The adjoining floodway is part of the County's Greenway Masterplan. No other joint use opportunities were identified.

**CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

The proposed school site is part of a proposed mixed-use development that will include retail, office, and multi-family residential development. Staff recommends approval of the acquisition of this site for a future elementary school with the

expectation that the school district will undertake site design that will provide connectivity opportunities to the adjoining communities.

**CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

At their October 16, 2003 meeting, the Planning Commission recommended approval of this transaction by a 6-0 vote.

# MR 03-26

