

**MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 03-27**  
**Proposed acquisition of an Elementary School site on Westmoreland Road in Cornelius**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to purchase an elementary school site consisting of approximately 22 acres on Westmoreland Road in Cornelius using 1999 Land Bonds. The properties involved are parcels 005-142-01, 09, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21 & 24.

The site is principally vacant, but contains three single family residences. The zoning designation is Neighborhood Residential (NR) which is intended, according to the Cornelius ordinance, "to preserve the traditional building pattern of mixed residential development which, historically, has been integrated to form a vibrant, active and cohesive neighborhood unit." The land use immediately surrounding the subject is residential along the road frontages with subdivisions to the north and southeast. Several new subdivisions are under construction within a mile or so of the site. To the west of the site can be found business uses along Statesville Road (US21).

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:**

The site is approximately 1.0 mile south of Cornelius Elementary School and lies within the 2003/04 Cornelius home school boundary. Cornelius is currently 141% utilized without mobile classrooms. Additionally, Davidson Elementary School is also in general vicinity of the site, lying 2.0 miles north of the Westmoreland Road site. Davidson is currently 112% utilized without mobile classrooms.

The significantly high utilization numbers at Cornelius and Davidson elementary schools are partially a result of the population growth that has occurred in northern Mecklenburg County in the 1990's. The towns of Davidson, Cornelius and Huntersville have all grown significantly since 1990. Collectively the three towns (including the adjoining unincorporated areas of the county) increased in population from 22,220 to 49,447 (an increase of 122.5%) during the 1990's. Comparatively, Mecklenburg County grew by 36% during this same time period.

The construction of a new elementary school in this location would have the potential to relieve overcrowding at Cornelius and/or Davidson elementary schools. The property is near existing densities of CMS elementary school students, as well as near areas of anticipated student growth, thus providing for the long-term populating of a school at this site.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:**

The site is located in the Northern Search Zone as identified in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools *Long-Range School Facilities Master Plan 2001/02—2010/11*. The plan projected a need for ten elementary schools in the Northern Search Zone by the year 2011. Furthermore, the CMS *Long Range School Facilities Master Plan 2003/04 – 2012/13* (currently being reviewed by the Board of Education) calls for up to six elementary schools to be located in the northern towns by 2013.

The proposed school site has NR zoning which permits schools as long as certain conditions are met with respect to site design, parking, and setbacks. The site size meets both CMS and state guidelines of developable acres for an 800-student elementary school.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:**

The Cornelius land use plan designates the area within which the school site is located for single family residential use. Schools are permitted in this location, subject to conditions relating to setbacks, parking, and other site planning considerations.

**PROJECT IMPACT:**

Increased traffic around the school site is expected for two 30-minute periods in the morning and afternoon. CMS will reportedly work closely with site designers and approval agencies to minimize this impact.

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

There are no public projects that are relevant to this project; however several new residential subdivisions are under construction in the vicinity of the school site.

**ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:**

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

**JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:**

The Joint Use Task Force considered this matter at their October 1, 2003 meeting and some preliminary discussions with the Town of Cornelius Park & Recreation Department with regard to joint use of recreation fields was discussed. No other joint use opportunities were identified.

**CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of this site to serve as a future elementary school site. It is further recommended that as part of site design, that care should be taken to connect the school site and its facilities to the adjoining residential neighborhoods.

**CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

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

MR 03-27

