

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 04-21
Acquisition Land for an Elementary School on Hamilton Road

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education proposes to purchase approximately 19 acres (a portion of parcel #219-071-14) located on Hamilton Road (northwest corner of Hamilton and Smith Roads) in southwest Mecklenburg County upon which to construct an elementary school. It should be noted this site replaces the Steele Creek Elementary School site previously submitted as Mandatory Referral 03-26. Negotiations on the Steele Creek site were unsuccessful because the property owner felt that a school was not an appropriate use for the remaining property, desiring a higher price than CMS could justify for the site. Therefore, it became necessary to pursue this alternate location on Hamilton Road.

The property is zoned R-3 (Residential) and is currently used for agricultural purposes. The surrounding land uses consist of several residential subdivisions and vacant land.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

The subject site is located in the Southwestern Search Zone as identified in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Long-Range School Facilities Master Plan 2003/04—2012/13. The plan projects a need for five elementary schools in the Southwestern Search Zone. The proposed Hamilton Road elementary school site is approximately 2.0 miles south of Lake Wylie Elementary School and lies within the 2004/05 Lake Wylie home school area. Lake Wylie is projected to be 154% utilized without mobile classrooms by the 20th day of the current (2004-05) school year.

Steele Creek Elementary School is also located in the southwestern area of the county, lying 5.0 miles north of the Hamilton Road site. Steele Creek Elementary School is projected to be 153% utilized without mobile classrooms in 2004/05. The significantly high utilization numbers at Lake Wylie and Steele Creek Elementary Schools are partially a result of the population growth that has occurred in southwest Mecklenburg County. For example, construction of The Palisades subdivision has the potential to place an additional 4,500 homes in the area in the next five years, creating approximately 400 new elementary school students.

Thus, the construction of a new elementary school in southwest Mecklenburg County would have the potential to relieve overcrowding at Lake Wylie and/or Steele Creek Elementary Schools. The proposed property is near existing residential areas containing CMS elementary school students, and in close proximity to areas of future growth. In short, this site will accommodate the needs of existing and future students in the area.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The proposed school site is zoned R-3 (Residential at 3 dwelling units per acre), which permits schools subject to conditions. Its size meets both CMS and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction guidelines of 18 developable acres for an 800-student elementary school.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The Southwest District Plan (1991) identifies this parcel as Residential (up to 3 dwelling units per acre). The Plan acknowledges the need for educational facilities in this area of residential growth, and notes increasing difficulty in finding appropriate land to accommodate school sites. Schools are an appropriate land use in residential areas.

PROJECT IMPACT:

This site has the potential for connectivity by creating a safe walk zone for the neighborhood students and some of the surrounding neighborhoods. An increase in traffic around the school site is expected for two 30-minute periods in the morning and afternoon. CMS typically works closely with City DOT, NCDOT and other agencies and the site designers to minimize any impacts associated with such activity.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

There are no known current or anticipated public or private projects in the area of this property.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

The parcels will be purchased with 1999 Land Banking funds, and construction will be funded with a future Bond request. The estimated cost is approximately 15 million dollars including construction, furnishings and equipment, design and project management.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their September 1, 2004 meeting and had no comments.

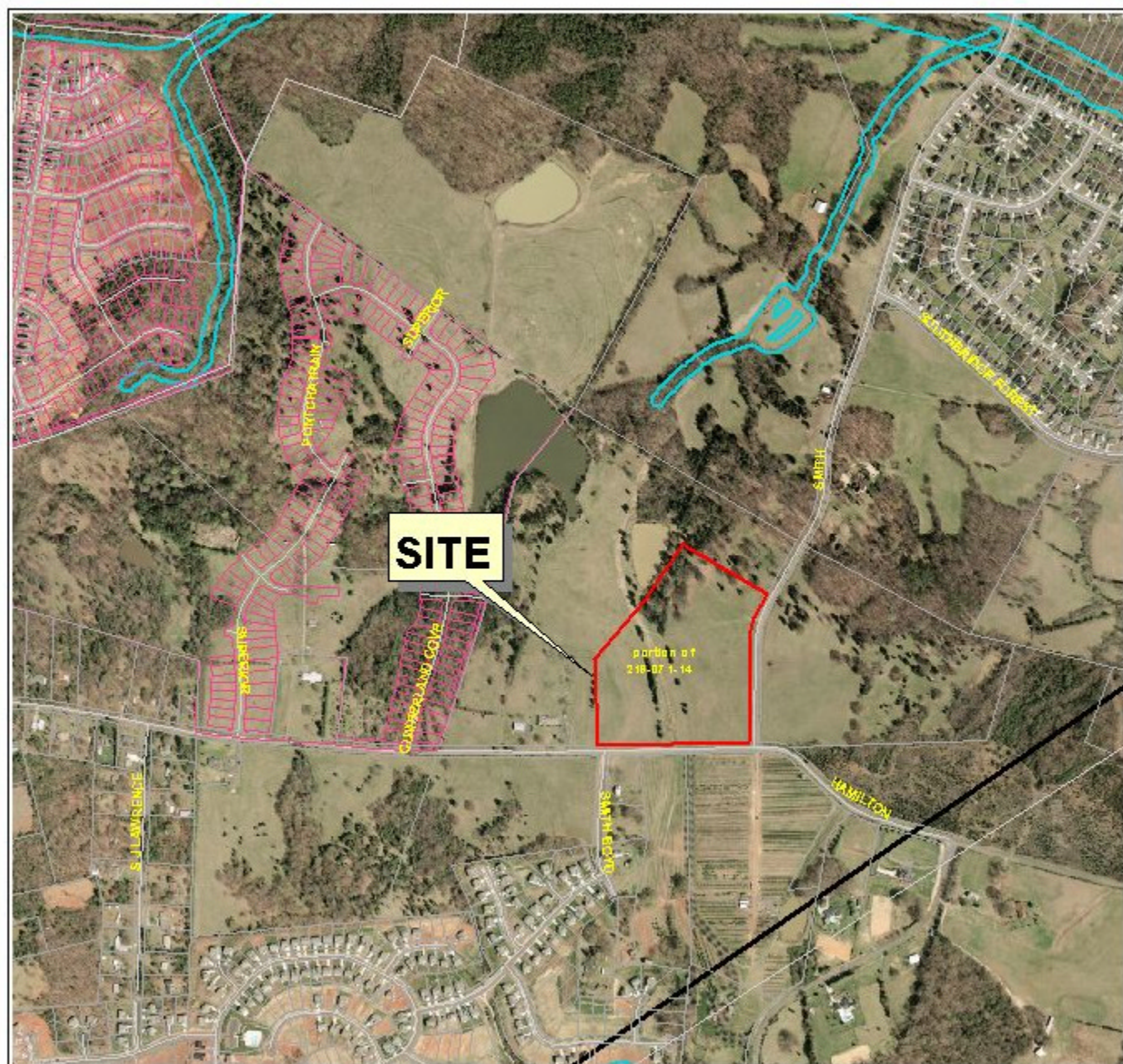
CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the acquisition of this site for a future elementary school with the expectation that the school district will address all issues pertaining to traffic, connectivity opportunities, compatibility and safety through thoughtful site design.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their September 21, 2004 meeting, the Planning Committee recommended approval of this purchase by a 7-0 vote.

Staff resource: Claire Lyte-Graham



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