

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 06-17
Proposed Acquisition of Land in Mint Hill for a Future High School Site

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to acquire land to provide a site for a new high school in southeastern Mecklenburg County in the Town of Mint Hill. The property (parcel numbers #137-311-02, 137-311-10 & 137-311-55 and portions of 137-152-01, 137-311-56, 137-141-14, 137-141-11 & 137-141-13) is located east of I-485 between Albemarle Road and Truelight Church Road and comprises approximately 63.53 acres. The property is currently vacant and has an IG-CUD (General Industrial – General Use District) and R (Residential) zoning designation.

A proposed road is to be constructed to connect Albemarle Road and Truelight Church Road, upon which the proposed school site will have frontage.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

The opening of a new high school in this area would relieve overcrowding at nearby Butler and Independence High Schools. The proposed high school site lies within the Butler High School attendance boundaries. Butler is approximately 7.4 miles southwest of the site and is currently at 176% utilization without mobile classrooms. Independence High School - also in proximity to the site (approximately 3.1 miles southwest) - is currently at 146% utilization without mobile classrooms.

Preference for the proposed site is based on its location in proximity to nearby businesses. The area could provide opportunities for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Career and Technical Education Department to build partnerships that would benefit their curriculum and provide student internships. The area could also provide nearby after-school part-time job opportunities for high school students.

The property is located near existing densities of CMS students, as well as future growth areas, thus providing for long-term population of the high school.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The proposed acquisition is consistent with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools *Long Range School Facilities Master Plan* (Interim Report-2005) which includes new school site locations based on current and projected student enrollments. The Plan identifies the need to build a new high school in this approximate location by 2009-2010.

The property's +/- 63.53 acres meets both Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and State of North Carolina guidelines of at least 60 developable acres for a high school site.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Land Use Plan for the Town of Mint Hill* was adopted in 2000. The future land use has been amended since 2000 affecting the future land use for the subject area. The amended land use recommends Light Industrial/Business Park for the subject parcels and their immediate vicinity, and proposes for the area to be filled with quality light industrial/business park uses in a setting similar to Huntersville Business Park in Huntersville. Such a development would encompass wide, tree-lined boulevards along major routes, walking trails, pedestrian amenities, street lighting, and architecturally interesting buildings, primarily of brick. The plan also recommends that industrial uses should be kept light or research and design oriented. This proposal is therefore considered to be inconsistent with the Town of Mint Hill's adopted land use plan.

The current zoning designations on the subject parcels are Residential (R) and General Industrial-Conditional Use District (IG – CUD). These zoning districts do not permit the construction of high school facilities. A school is required to be in an Institutional zoning district with a special use permit. Therefore, a rezoning to Institutional would be required.

PROJECT IMPACT:

School development at this location will serve to decrease overcrowding at other nearby high schools.

Increased traffic around the school campus is expected for two 30-minute periods in the morning and evening. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools will work closely with the Town of Mint Hill, the NC Department of Transportation and the site designers to minimize this impact.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

A site plan has been provided of the area that depicts a future road connecting Albemarle and Truelight Church Roads, proposed to be developed in conjunction with the proposed business park within which the subject site is located. The proposed road would involve an at-grade crossing of the railroad tracks that parallel Albemarle Road. The proposed school site would have frontage on this road.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Hospital Authority proposes to construct a medical center close to the proposed school site. This use would be a good neighbor in that it could provide students opportunities to benefit their curriculum, provide internships and after-school part-time job opportunities.

A shopping center is being constructed north of Albemarle Road which is proposed to include a grocery store and other retail uses. This use may also provide employment opportunities to students.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

The projected move-in date – as articulated in the *School Facilities Master Plan* – is the 2009-2010 academic year (August, 2009).

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force met on March, 7, 2007 and had no comments relative to this proposal and joint use.

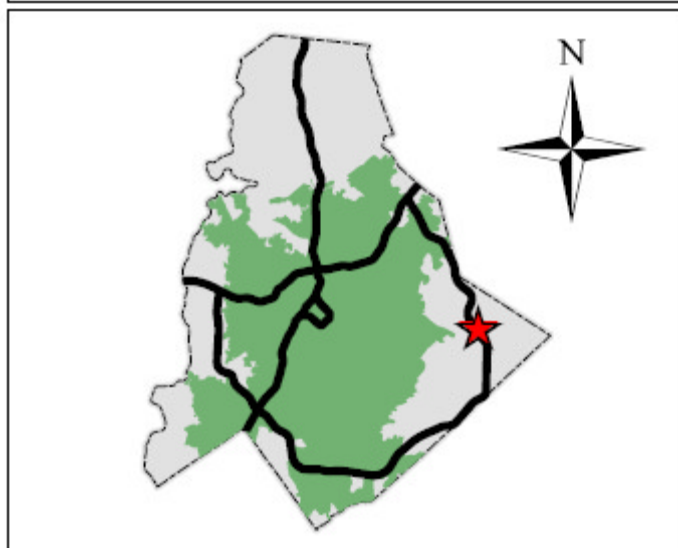
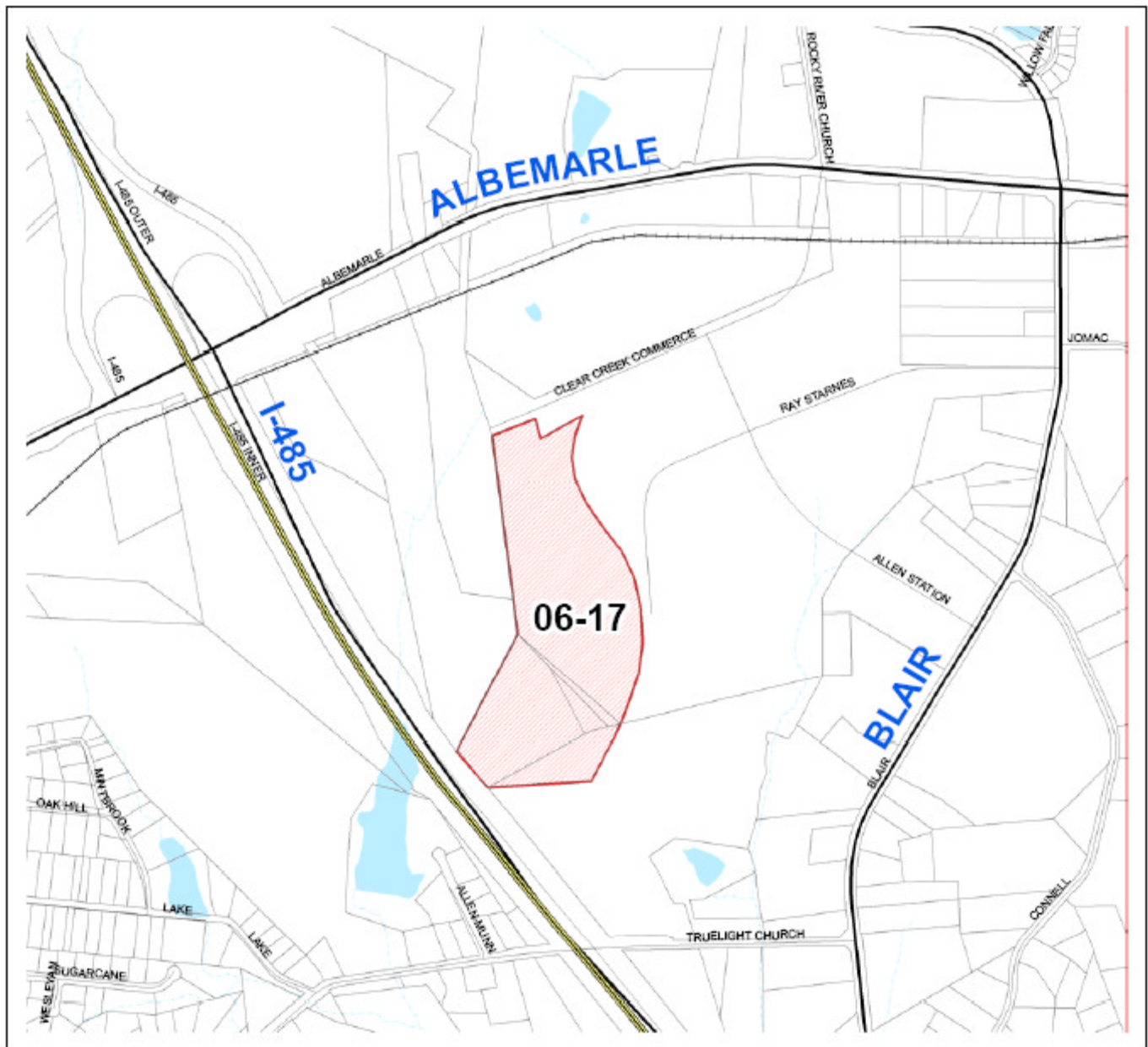
PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is concerned with the inconsistency between the town's Land Use Plan and the location of a school within the proposed business park. Nonetheless, a school does not seem to be inconsistent with the type of business park environment envisioned by Mint Hill, as articulated in the amended land use recommendations (and referenced under "Consistency with Adopted Land Use Plans" above), so long as certain site conditions are met (that can likely be addressed as part of re-zoning and special permit).

Staff therefore recommends approval of the CMS proposal to acquire the subject parcels for a high school, subject to CMS obtaining the required Institutional zoning as well as a special permit for the subject parcels from the Town of Mint Hill. Thoughtful design can allow the school to integrate into the business park, and will help address issues regarding traffic and safety (including the Hospital Authority's proposed medical center and traffic and safety associated with the at-grade railroad crossing to the north of the subject parcels).

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their March 27, 2007 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 6-0 vote, subject to the conditions articulated by staff.



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CMS Real Estate Department

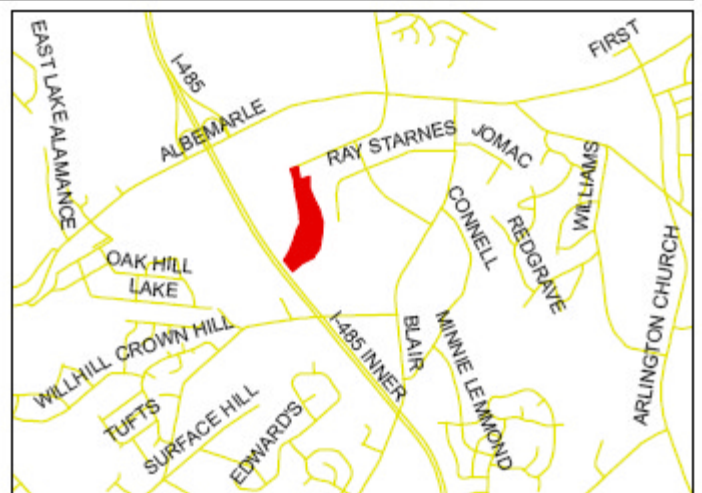


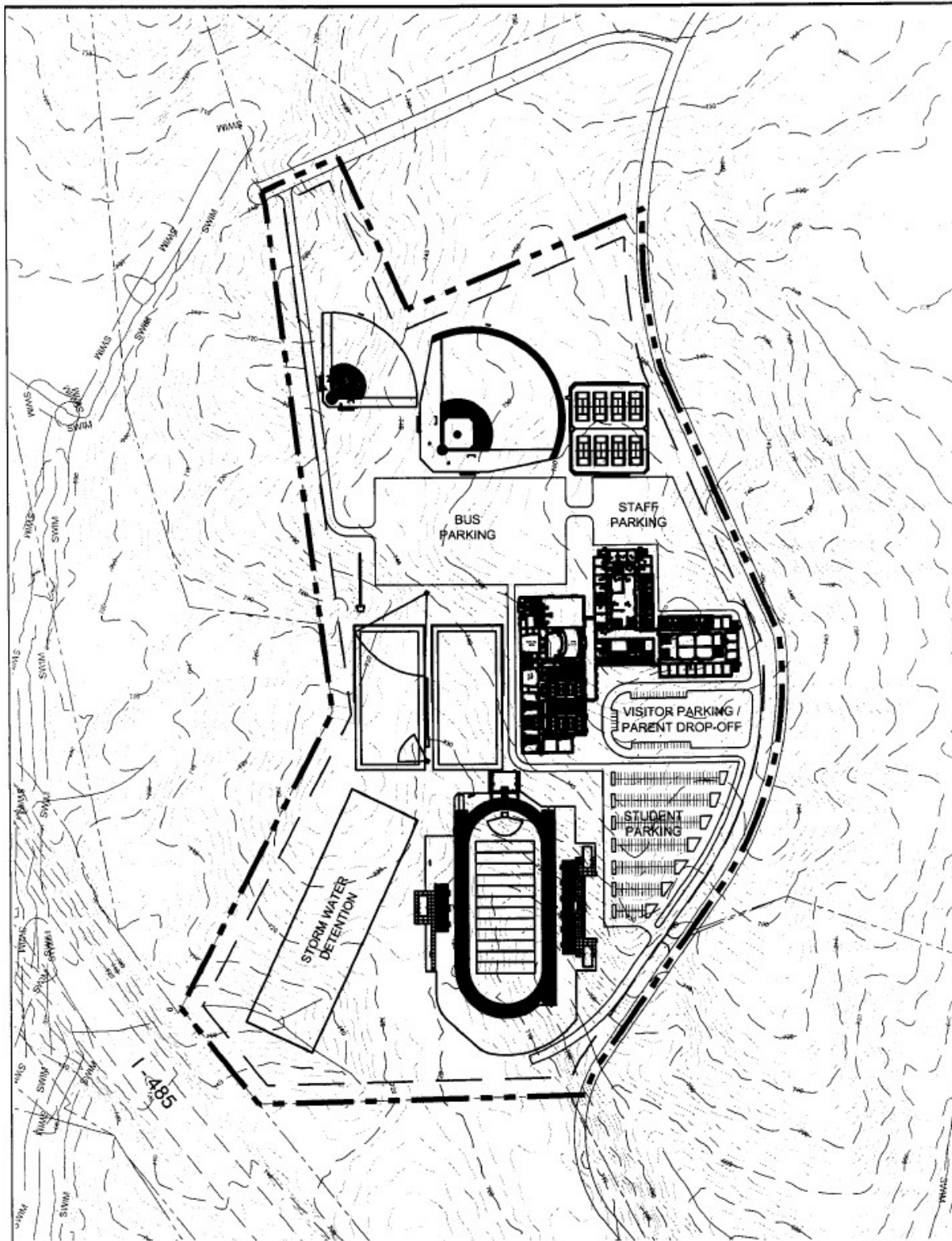
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Map Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department for illustrative purposes only.



Mint Hill High School Site Acquisition





SCHEME D

SITE PERIMETER = $\pm 7,617$ LF
 SITE AREA = ± 63.53 AC
 ROAD FRONTAGE = $\pm 2,875$ LF

PROS

1. ACCESS
2. SECURITY
3. AVOIDS WETLANDS
4. MEETS CMS CRITERIA

CONS

1. EXTENDED ROAD FRONTAGE
2. BUSINESS PARK ACREAGE

SCALE : 1" = 250'-0"