

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 06-21
Proposed Acquisition of an Elementary School Site on Salome Church Road

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to purchase approximately fourteen (14) acres located on Salome Church Road near its intersection with Mallard Creek Road to construct an elementary school. The subject property (parcel numbers 029-101-01 and part of 029-101-02) is located within Charlotte's extraterritorial jurisdiction.

The projected use of the site will be for an elementary school. Fourteen (14) acres is a little short of the eighteen (18) acres normally acquired for an elementary site. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools staff feels that the site will work for the elementary school.

The land is currently vacant and was rezoned to Commercial Center Development (CC) in 1999. The land surrounding the site consists of several residential subdivisions, some currently under construction.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools *Long Range School Facilities Master Plan* (Interim Report-2005) identifies the need to build a new elementary school in this approximate location by 2010-2011.

The proposed Salome Church Road elementary school site is approximately 2.5 miles north of University Meadows Elementary School and lies within the 2005/06 University Meadows attendance area boundary. As of the 20th day of school (2005-06), University Meadows Elementary was 138% utilized without mobile classrooms.

Mallard Creek Elementary School is also within close proximity to the proposed property, lying 2.9 miles west of the Salome Church Road site. In 2005-06 Mallard Creek was 127% utilized without mobile classrooms.

For the 2006-07 school year, CMS is opening Highland Creek elementary school, about three miles northwest of this proposed school site. With a capacity of 792 students, it is projected to open with an enrollment of approximately 900 students, with estimated growth in enrollment of about 100 per year for the next several years. While Highland Creek's anticipated crowding will not be directly relieved by the proposed school at Salome Church, its enrollment characteristics are typical of this region of the county.

The overcrowding of both University Meadows and Mallard Creek elementary schools is a result of the population growth that has occurred in the eastern portion of Mecklenburg County. The construction of a new elementary school in eastern Mecklenburg County would have the potential to relieve overcrowding at University Meadows and Mallard Creek elementary schools. The proposed property is near existing densities of CMS elementary school students, as well as near areas of future growth, thus providing for the long-term populating of a school at this site.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The subject property was part of a rezoning in 1999 that involved a total of 135 acres. The rezoning proposal included a proposed mix of residential, retail and office land uses. As noted in the City of Charlotte Zoning Ordinance the property's current Commercial Center Development (CC) zoning does not allow for elementary and secondary schools. CMS staff contacted Planning Commission staff concerning this matter, to learn that Planning recommended a rezoning of Institutional District (INST) for the elementary school. Elementary and secondary schools are listed under uses permitted by right in the Institutional District.

The property's size of fourteen (14) acres falls short of the guideline minimum eighteen (18) developable acres for 800-student elementary schools, as recommended by both Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and State of North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The fourteen acres should be able to house the school improvements (buildings, parking, outside areas, etc.).

The property is located near several planned and under construction subdivisions. Schools are generally considered to be compatible with residential land uses. The integration of schools and neighborhoods is encouraged.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Northeast Area Plan* (2000) recommends a mixture of uses, including single-family and multi-family residential up to 8 du (dwelling units per acre) and retail not to exceed 100,000 square feet. The subject property was rezoned Commercial Center (CC) in 1999, prior to adoption of the Northeast Area Plan. The Commercial Center zoning district does not permit the construction of elementary or secondary schools.

The *Northeast Area Plan* does not provide specific guidance for future educational facilities in this area; however, the plan recommends a well-balanced mixture of land uses that will both enhance and protect existing neighborhoods. School

uses are generally considered to be compatible with residential uses, and the integration of schools and neighborhoods is encouraged.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The property is strategically located to address future (longer term) elementary school enrollment growth in this region of Mecklenburg County. The opening of a new elementary school in this area would relieve overcrowding at the above referenced schools.

Increased traffic around the school campus is expected for two 30-minute periods in the morning and evening. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools works closely with NCDOT and the site designers to minimize this impact.

The site could potentially create a safe walk zone for the neighborhood students from the proposed and existing residential neighborhoods.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

The rezoning of 1999 was intended to create a mixed-use community composed of retail uses and mixed residential housing interconnected with open space and pedestrian and vehicular linkages. The subject property was the retail component of the mixed-use community. A rezoning to Institutional District (INST) and construction of an elementary school could be in keeping with the mixed-use community that was originally envisioned and approved.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Acquisition of the land is to be funded by Certificates of Participation (COPs), approved in July 2006 by the Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners.

School design and construction will be funded by a future bond referendum. The expected elementary school completion and move-in date is 2010 - 2011.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force reviewed this matter at their September 6, 2006 meeting and offered no specific joint use comments. However, it was noted that the location of the proposed site offers an excellent opportunity for direct site access from the Mallard Creek/Salome Church intersection immediately to the north of the site, as well as access (including pedestrian) from the residential communities to the south and the west, if the site is properly designed.

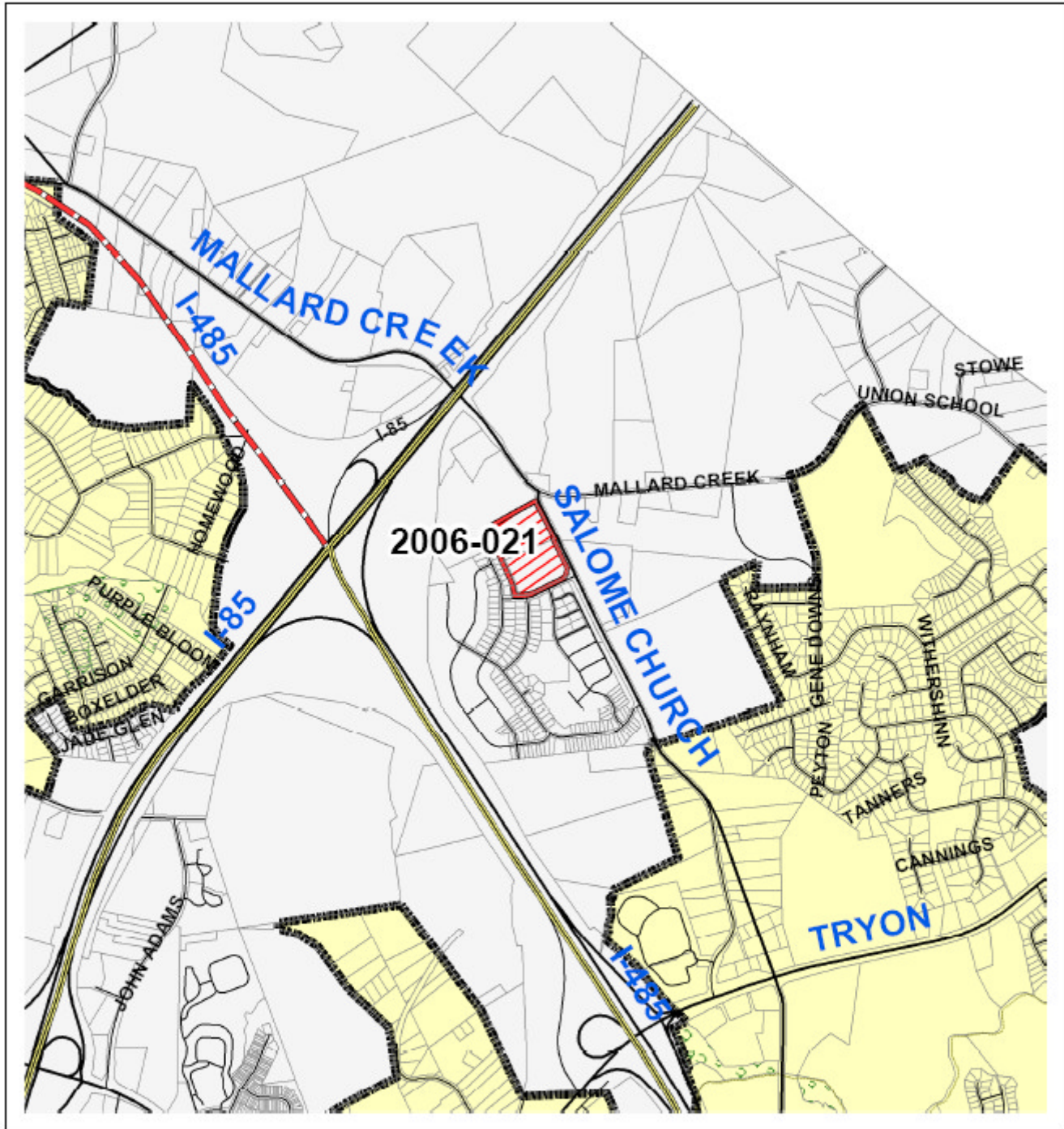
CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the CMS proposal to acquire the subject parcels for an elementary school, conditioned upon CMS obtaining the appropriate zoning for the subject parcels. Staff also feels that thoughtful site design can successfully address the issues pertaining to connectivity, access, and safety raised at the Joint Use Task Force meeting.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At its September 19, 2006 meeting, the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote, subject to the conditions articulated by staff (above).

Mandatory Referral 2006-21



Department: CMS Real Estate



Mandatory Referral



County Boundary

Municipal Boundary

