

**MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 07-25**  
**Proposed Transfer of Torrence Lytle School Property from Mecklenburg County to**  
**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:**

It is proposed that Mecklenburg County transfer a portion of the Old Torrence Lytle School Property (tax parcel 019-093-04) to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC). The subject parcel is located at 302 Holbrooks Road, in Huntersville. Zoning of land parcels to the immediate east and west are NR Neighborhood Residential District. Adjacent zoning to the north is HC Highway Commercial District. Zoning adjacent to the south is CB Corporate Business District.

The County is proposing to subdivide the existing 4.94 acre parcel into two parcels (see attached map). The newly created smaller parcel that fronts along Holbrooks Rd. would remain the property of Mecklenburg County, with the remaining parcel which contains two large structures transferred to the HLC for stabilization, renovation and adaptive reuse.

There are currently three large building located on the parcel. The two buildings that are proposed to be conveyed have previously been utilized for various county operations (including a school) that have since either been relocated to other facilities or privatized. The third building (to be retained by the County) and corresponding land is currently being used by the Huntersville Park and Recreation Department as a recreation center, and is proposed to continue for recreation center operation.

The HLC proposes to preserve the Torrence Lytle School complex by seeking a viable adaptive reuse of the buildings and parking areas, consistent with Town of Huntersville land use and development goals. If economic factors are favorable, this could include an auditorium or other facility for public assemblies.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:**

The HLC has determined the property known as the Torrence-Lytle School does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment based on the following considerations:

The Torrence-Lytle School:

- § represented the first opportunity for African-American residents of North Mecklenburg County to attend a public high school in the region where they lived.
- § is one of the older remaining African-American school buildings in Mecklenburg County and is, therefore, important in understanding the broad patterns of the county's history.
- § is representative of a movement in the 1930's to bring high school education to rural blacks in Mecklenburg County.
- § is significant as an important example of early 20th-century school building architecture

The Huntersville Town Board has designated the Torrence Lytle School as an local Historic Landmark, and the property has been judged eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:**

In 1996 the Town of Huntersville discarded its old zoning ordinance and replaced it with a new ordinance modeled upon the principles of traditional town planning. The following section is one of the nine that give an overview of the ordinance, Huntersville's regional context, and the factors which will shape the Town's growth into the next century.

**THE CHALLENGE OF PRESERVING RURAL HERITAGE**

To reach a sustainable future, the majority of new development in and around Huntersville must be steered to those areas targeted for urban development, where pedestrian access to jobs and goods is practical, where service and infrastructure provision is economical, and where population concentrations can be efficiently served by the proposed commuter rail line and its feeder buses. So hand in hand with flexible density standards in the urban districts, the Strategic Land Plan sought to preserve some semblance of the town's rural heritage and create an "edge" which marks the line between "town" and "country". Thus the still rural areas are seen as appropriate for the compact village or hamlet, nestled in the landscape.

Toward that goal, the new development code promotes open space preservation in outlying areas with incentives for compact development sited to maintain rural vistas.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:**

This proposed transfer is consistent with the land use and redevelopment scenario for this site under the adopted 2007 *East Huntersville Area Development Plan*, that suggests a mixed-use adaptive reuse scenario, including retail, residential, and public assembly functions. The proposed transfer is supported by the Town of Huntersville Planning staff.

**PROJECT IMPACT:**

The economic incentives provided by inclusion on the Historic Registry will assist the HLC or a private investor in restoration of the property in accordance with the design guidelines instituted by the HLC. Deed covenants will assure the preservation of the property in perpetuity. The buildings, although in poor condition, retain the essential elements of their architectural integrity. Its preservation will enhance the neighborhood and make the general public more aware of the historic significance of the site.

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

The redevelopment of this property will serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of this area, similar to the commercial business redevelopment occurring just south of this site.

**ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:**

Funding for this project is available through the HLC revolving fund. Upon completion of the transfer, the HLC will begin stabilization efforts to reduce or eliminate any further deterioration of the property and to facilitate its adaptive reuse.

**JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:**

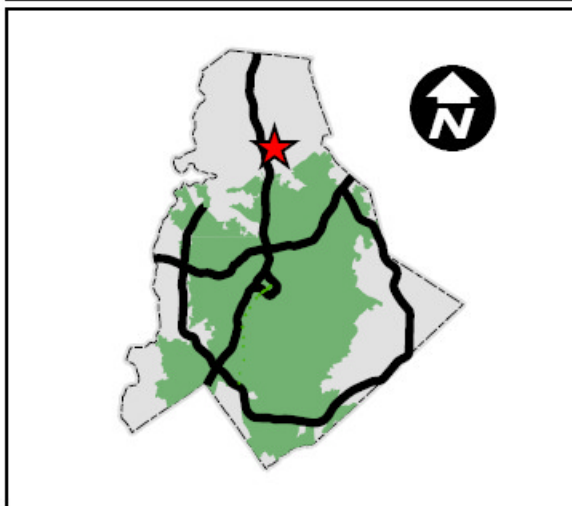
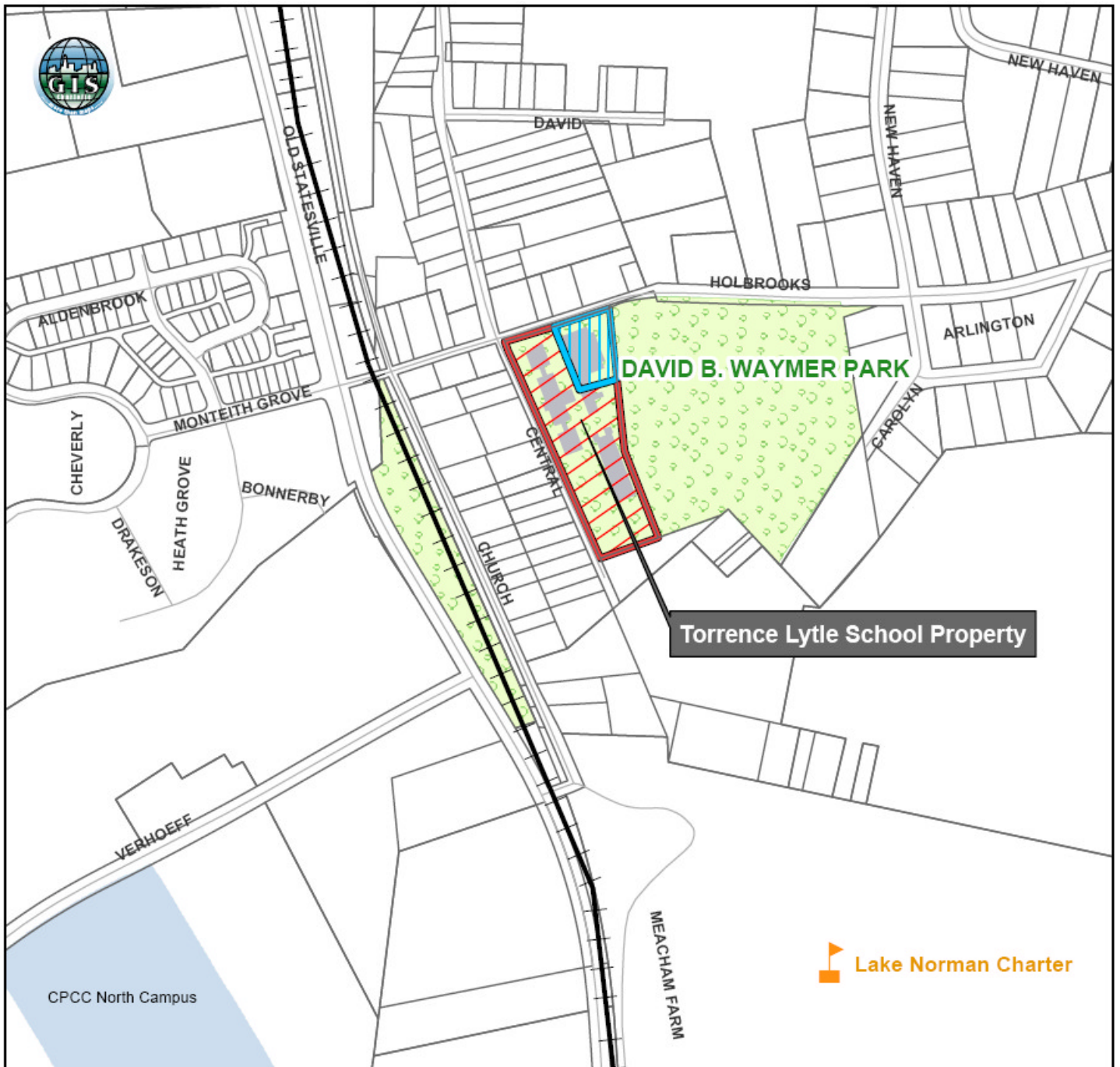
The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their November 7, 2007 meeting. Points raised included the fact that the Town of Huntersville intended to continue to operate the adjoining gymnasium and athletic fields for public recreational purposes, and that re-use as a public school by CMS is not feasible because (1)the building isn't located in a primary search area within its long range plan, and (2)landfill traffic on Holbrooks Road represents a potential pedestrian hazard for students walking from adjoining neighborhoods to the north.

**CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the transfer of the Torrence-Lytle School from Mecklenburg County to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission for the stated purpose.

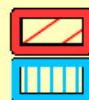
**CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

At their November 13, 2007 meeting, the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 7-0 vote.



## Mandatory Referral 07-25

*County Real Estate Services*



Proposed Transfer to Historic Landmarks Commission

County Retained Property