

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 16-30
Proposed Sale of Morgan School/Torrence Property in Cherry Neighborhood

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education proposes to pursue the sale of the Morgan School/Torrence located at 510 S. Torrence Street in the Cherry neighborhood of Charlotte (parcel # 125-225-02), which is subject to lease to the current tenant (Community Charter School, and presently being used as a school) through June 30, 2017. The site is zoned R-22MF (Multi-family residential up to 22 dwelling units per acre) according to the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance. The building contains about 18,000 square feet of heated space on two stories, and was constructed as a school building in 1925. The site is approximately 1.18 acres.

The property is a designated Local Landmark, having received that designation by way of City Council action taken on June 21, 1993. In so making that designation numerous factors were considered, among them that the Morgan School:

- is an important institutional landmark in the African American community, one of few such landmarks to remain;
- is associated with the history of education for African Americans;
- is the work of important regional architect Louis H. Asbury, Sr.;
- is architecturally significant for the many interior and exterior features (molded stone cornice, decorative concrete panels, hardwood floors, etc.) intact, visible and in good condition;
- is a significant example of early 20th Century school design reflecting Beaux Arts classicism and Revival detailing; and
- possesses special historical, architectural, and/or cultural significance.

It is the goal of CMS to offer this property through the upset bid process, without placing any conditions on the sale with respect to the buyer preserving or re-using the building (as opposed to demolishing the building). Landmark status of the Morgan School would require the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (a department of Mecklenburg County) prior to commencement of material alteration or demolition of the building. Issuance of such Certificate may be delayed for up to 365 days from the date of application.

The property to the north of the school is institutional (Myers Tabernacle AME Zion Church) and residential; to the west is residential; and to the east are a series of vacant lots owned by a private developer and approved for affordable single family and duplex residential use. South of the property is the Cherry Neighborhood Park.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

CMS has determined that there isn't a current or anticipated need for this property and it is unlikely to be used by CMS in the future. The property will be offered by way of the upset bid process.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The North Carolina General Statutes allow for local Boards of Education to dispose of real estate when it determines that the real estate is unnecessary or undesirable for public school purposes.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Midtown Morehead Cherry Area Plan* (2012) recognizes the Morgan School Building (along with the adjoining Cherry Neighborhood Park and Myers Tabernacle AME Zion Church) as an institutional core located at the center of the Cherry neighborhood, and each is considered a major element of the community's identity. The Plan recommends an institutional land use for the Morgan School Building site and specifically recommends the school, built in 1925 and designated as a local historic landmark, remain in use as a school facility in the future.

Since the property is zoned R-22 MF (Multi-family residential – up to 22 dwelling units per acre), redevelopment of the site would allow all land uses permitted by-right in the R-22 MF zoning district without a rezoning. The current zoning does not reflect the goals of the *Midtown Morehead Cherry Area Plan*.

PROJECT IMPACT:

Sale of this property may provide potential tax revenue to the City and County and bring sales revenue to CMS.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

There are no known public or private projects that will be impacted by this sale. CMS will present this to the Board of County Commissioners to determine if it is interested in declining its statutory right of first refusal.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Timeline is unknown at this time.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their July 6, 2016 and September 7, 2016 meetings. No joint use comments were offered, although City Neighborhood & Business Services staff remarked as to the potential for affordable housing given the gentrification occurring nearby, but there were no expressions of interest in acquisition of the property for public use.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff supports the sale of this property for appropriate reuse and development that is consistent with Council adopted goals and policies for this property and the area.

Rationale:

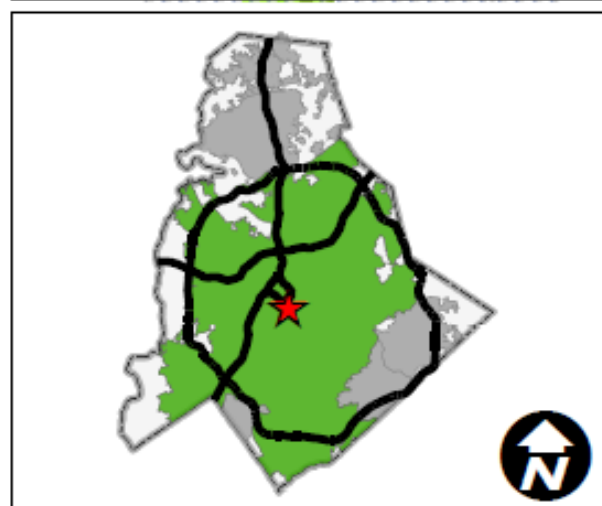
- The school which was opened in 1929 has been closed since June, 2000 and CMS no longer has a need for the property.

Adopted Goals and Policies:

- The adopted future land use for the property is institutional based upon the *Midtown Morehead Cherry Area Plan* (2012). The area plan also recognized the significance of the building in the community and identified it as a major element of the community's identity.
- The property is zoned R22-MF (multi-family residential up to 22 dwelling units per acre) allowing a number of uses, including various types of residential and/or institutional uses.
- Charlotte City Council declared the school building a Local Landmark in 1993. Given its Local Landmark status, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission has review jurisdiction over proposed alterations or demolition of the building.
- City Council has a goal to build and preserve vibrant and diverse neighborhoods by expanding the supply of affordable and workforce housing through new construction and preservation of the existing housing stock as stated in the Housing & Neighborhood Development Focus Area Plan. Specific Council efforts to achieve this goal include:
 - Council has approved the sale of land and the investment of Housing Trust Fund dollars to develop and redevelop affordable housing units in the surrounding Cherry neighborhood.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their October 18, 2016 meeting the Planning Committee recommended by a 4-3 vote that the building not be sold.



Mandatory Referral 16-30

Initiated & Submitted by: CMS

- Mandatory Referral
- City Property
- County Property
- Schools
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain
- Local Historic Landmark

Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

