



City of Pensacola

*America's First Settlement
Established 1559*

ASHTON J. HAYWARD
Mayor

September 22, 2011

The Honorable Malcolm Thomas
Superintendent of Schools
75 North Pace Blvd
Pensacola, FL 32505

Dear Superintendent Thomas:

Thank you for meeting with me and members of my staff on September 15, 2011 to discuss abandoned school district properties citywide. I was delighted to hear your willingness to partner with the City of Pensacola to address re-use and maintenance of surplus school facilities.

As noted in my presentation to you, abandon surplus school properties have significant impacts within their respective neighborhoods. Not only do they contribute to the devaluation of surrounding properties, overtime these properties can fall below acceptable community maintenance standards and become safe havens for criminal elements.

In order to prevent the deterioration of our neighborhoods and for the safety of the community, I urge the school district to adopt an acceptable re-use policy for surplus school facilities. For your consideration, I recommend a maximum two year period in which such facilities are marketed for sale. If no sale is pending during this period, then I would urge the school district to transfer ownership of the facility to another government or not-for-profit entity.


Currently there is a community request to transfer the former Hallmark Elementary school for not-for-profit use. I wholeheartedly support this community initiative. The building has already been paid for by Escambia county taxpayers and is in move in condition. If you intend to sell the school, at least consider allowing these not-for-profits to use the facility until a buyer can be obtained.

If selling, leasing and/or transferring ownership is not an option, at the very least, I would urge the school district to demolish these structures and create green space in the interim. Further, until the aforementioned properties are sold, transferred or demolished, I thank you in advance for addressing the maintenance of these properties and ensuring that these properties are maintained at or above acceptable community standards. In the unlikely event code violations are noted at school facilities in the future, I will certainly keep you advised so that the proper care can readily be taken.

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Again, thank you for your willingness and cooperative effort to improve our community for our citizens. If I may be of assistance to you and/or the district, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Sincerely,


Ashton J. Hayward
Mayor

cc: Members, Pensacola City Council
Members, Escambia County School Board
The Honorable David Morgan, Sheriff Escambia County
John F. Asmar, Chief of Staff
William H. Reynolds, City Administrator
Steve Wienke, Administrative Officer V, Code Enforcement