

## District 99 agrees to sell Woodridge property

The Community High School District 99 Board of Education agreed Monday to offer its 45-acre Woodridge property for sale.

The sale of the property, at Woodridge and Center drives, will assist with capital improvement projects at Downers Grove North and South high schools. The decision was based on a need to address facility maintenance and improvement projects and the opinions of community residents, according to a press release from the district.

The property was purchased in 1966 with the intent to serve as a site for a third high school as the district's population expanded. But a 2004 enrollment study projected that a third high school was unnecessary. In 1973, 1974 and 1997, district residents also voted against referendums for an additional high school.

In 1998, a referendum for additions and renovations was proposed to the two high schools. However, the referendum did not address all of the school district's capital improvement needs, leaving the district without funding for such projects as major site improvements at both schools, according to the press release.

In a community survey in June 2004, the majority of respondents said the land should be sold.

"A one-time event such as this should not be used to fund ongoing operations; however, it is appropriate to use these proceeds for long-term investment purposes or for major capital improvement projects," said Mark Staehlin, district controller. "Property tax caps have caused all Illinois schools to consider alternative funding sources to meet organizational objectives. District 99 is fortunate to have an asset that can provide such substantial benefit to us."

The proceeds will be placed in restricted funds primarily to be used for long-term capital projects.

Before the decision to sell, District 99 had extended the use of the property to entities such as the village of Woodridge, the Woodridge Park District and the village's fire department for community activities. The village of Woodridge and the park district have both expressed interest in acquiring the property.

"District 99 serves multiple villages within its district boundaries, and the board must consider the needs of the entire school district rather than the interest of a single village as decisions are made about financial resources," said David R. Eblen, school district superintendent. "In an era of limited resources, District 99 must make a decision that maximizes its revenue stream in order to provide the best educational programs for all the students it serves."

Assisting Community High School District 99 in the potential disposition of the property sale is Newcastle Advisors LLC, a Chicago-based commercial real estate advisory and development firm. Contributed by Community High School District 99.