

Education, Equity, and Regionalism in a Post-Desegregation Context: 21st Century Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

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**PolicyLink's Regional Equity: The Third National Summit on
Equitable Development, Social Justice, and Smart Growth.
New Orleans, LA March 6, 2008**

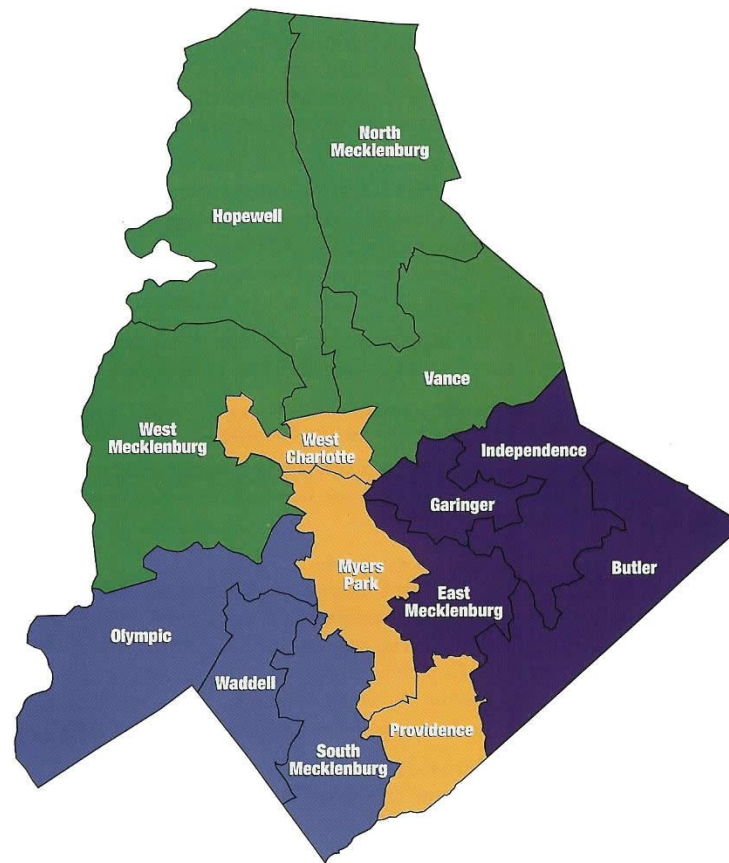
Supreme Court's decision in Seattle and Louisville

- **achieving diverse schools and avoiding racial isolation are compelling interests**
- **race-conscious measures are acceptable if individual student's race is not sole criterion**
- **Justice Kennedy endorses—invites— a number of race-conscious approaches**

Metropolitan area-wide approaches to school policy

- **multidistrict consolidations**
- **interdistrict voluntary desegregation plans**
- **interdistrict transfers**
- **pairing of urban/suburban districts**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools



2007 Snapshot of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Demographics: 132,000 students

42% Black

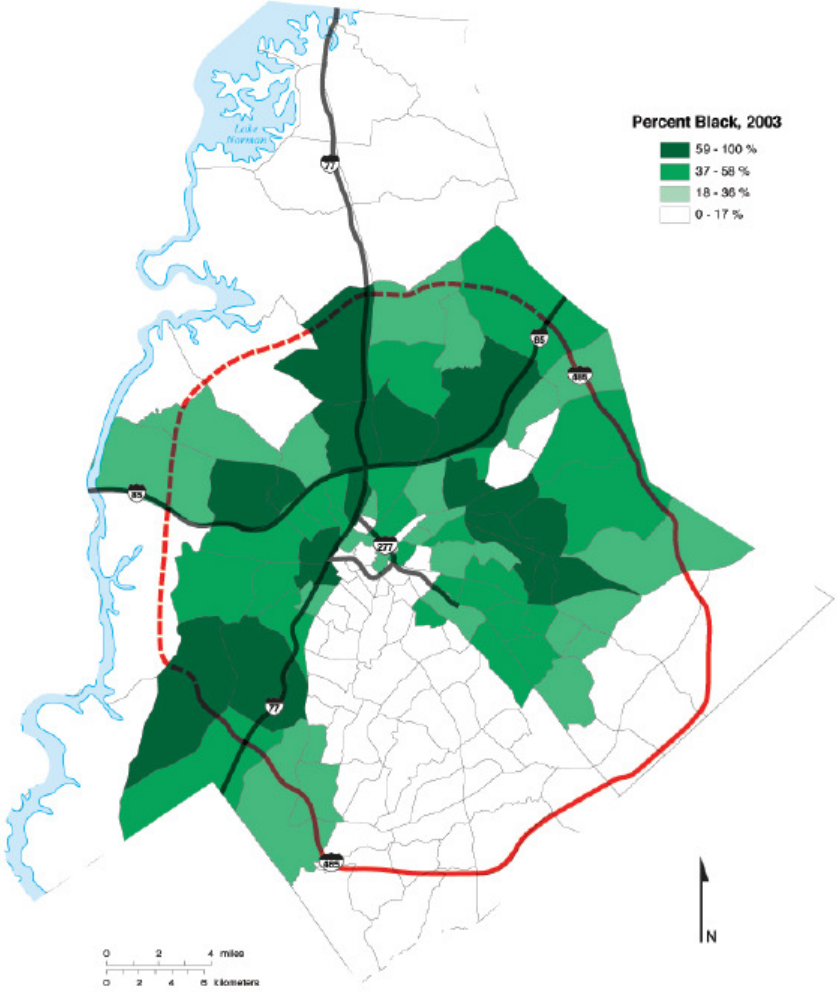
35% White (majority until 2002)

15% Latino

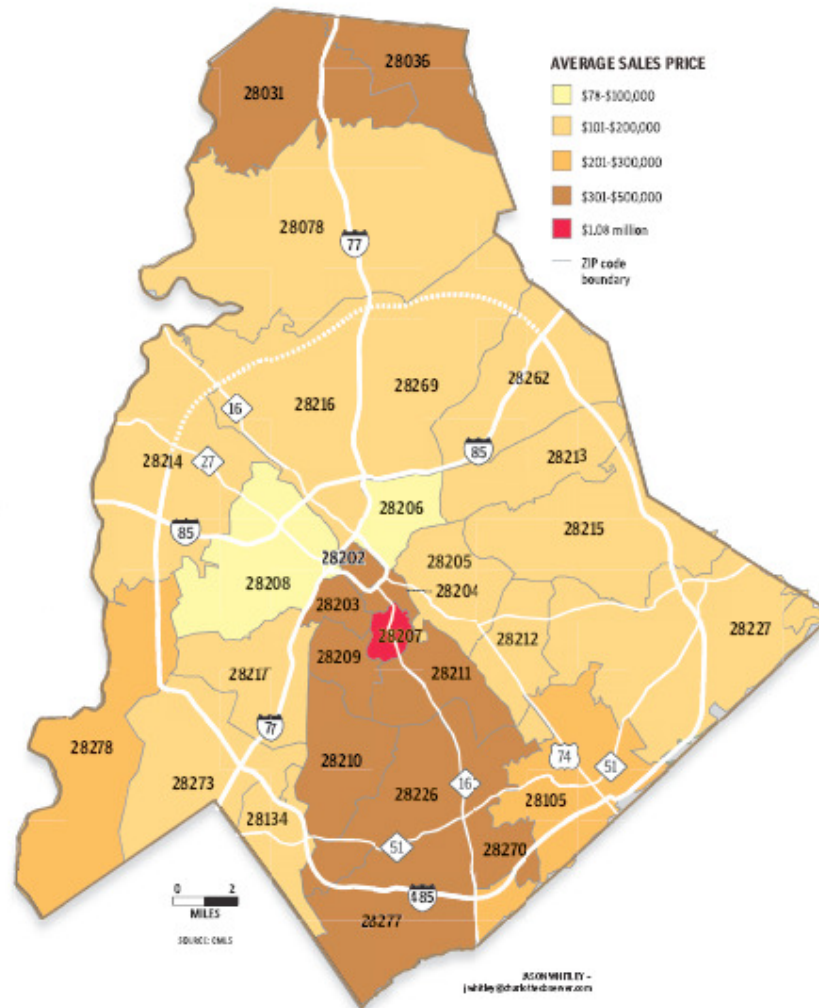
4% Asian

4% American Indian, other ethnicities

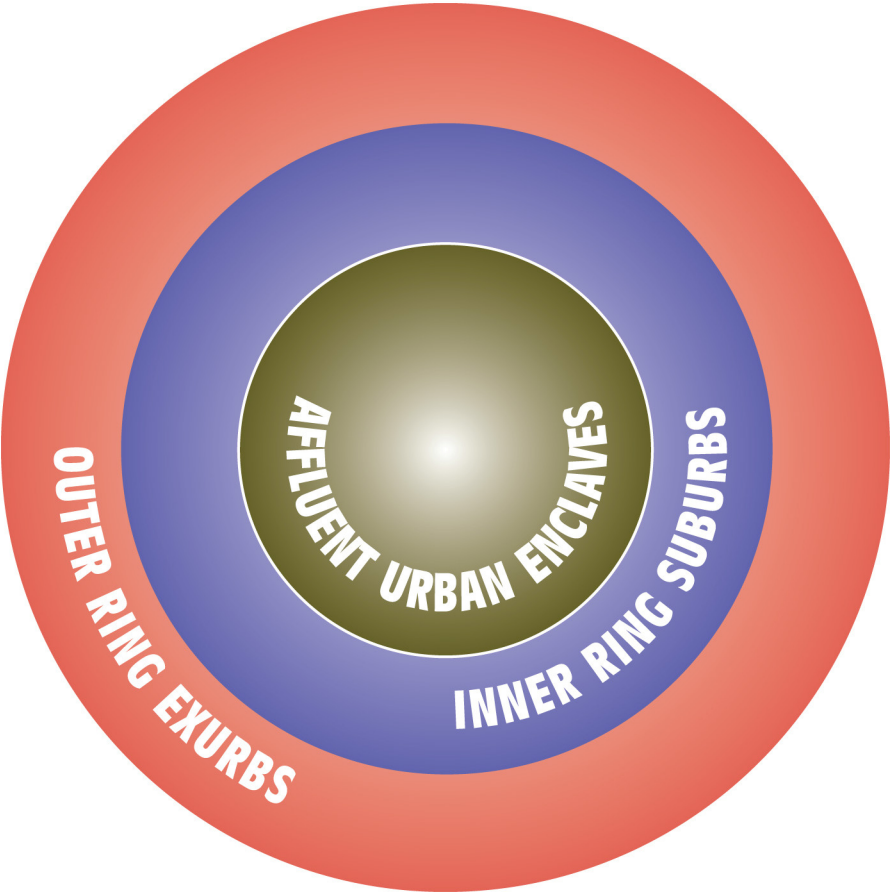
Percent Black Population by Census Track, Mecklenburg County 2003



Mecklenburg County Average Home Price by Zip Code, 2006 (Alan Norwood, *Charlotte-Observer*)



Spatial Segregation—The Donut Effect



A Brief Legal History of CMS

1971 until 2002 desegregating under Swann

1991 voluntary desegregation replaces most mandatory busing

1999 CMS declared unitary

Spring, 2002 US Supreme Court upholds “unitary” status.

Fall, 2002 CMS implements **Family Choice Plan**

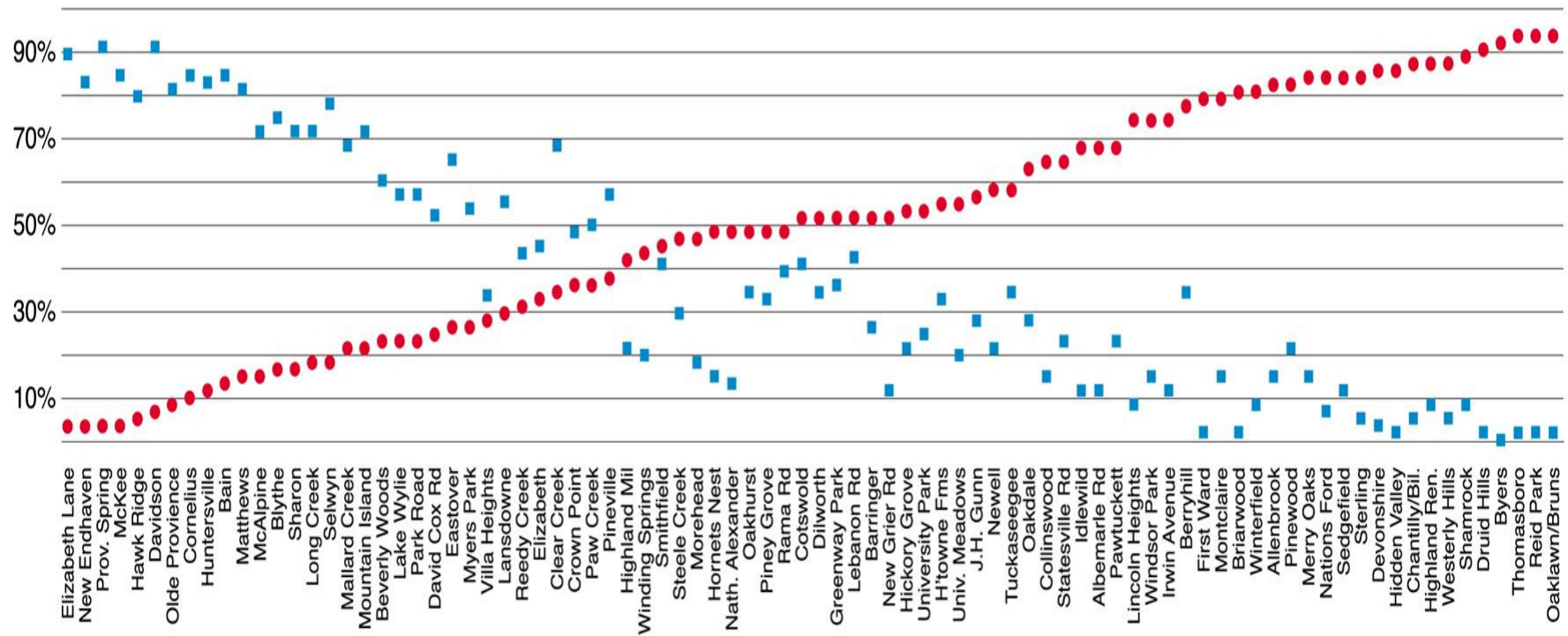
- Neighborhood school-based pupil assignment plan
- Resegregation rapidly accelerates

Family Choice Plan Results:

- Resegregation by SES
- Resegregation by race/ethnicity
- Overutilization of suburban schools and underutilization of central city schools
- CMS drops the word “Choice” from the name of its pupil assignment plan by 2005

CMS Elementary Schools by Race and SES Concentration 2003 – 2004

Parents' choices for fall 2003, by elementary school: ● = percent white; ■ = percent on subsidized lunch



Source : CMS "2003-04 Lottery Results Compared to 2002-03 20th Day Enrollment," February 24, 2003.
Reprinted by permission, Swann Fellowship, Educate!, March 6, 2003.

Redefining the Education Debate in CMS

- Race and SES diverse schools and the common good:
 - Better school outcomes for all students
 - Greater interracial understanding
 - Preparation for work and life in global society
 - Citizenship in a democratic society
- Metropolitan solutions hold the key...

Why a Metropolitan Area-Wide Approach?

- **Consistent with spatially interconnected realities of regions**
- **Harnesses school choice reforms for diversity goals and undermines their segregative effects**
- **Addresses design flaws in NCLB's choice options**
- **Consistent with Justice Kennedy's opinion**

**Interdistrict plans gained acceptance
across race and SES barriers
(Holme & Wells 2007)**

St. Louis

Hartford

Boston

Milwaukee

Rochester

Indianapolis

Bay Area/East Palo Alto

Minneapolis



Thank you