

# Blanchard sets sights on Oakland for prison

**By Teri Banas**  
staff writer

The Blanchard Administration won't push development of a state prison on the former Eliseo site in Westland this year. The governor has turned down Wayne County Executive William Lucas' offer to take the land at no cost.

In a letter to Lucas, the governor said the "excessive" cost of converting "N" Building in the complex at Michigan and Merriman would prohibit its use as a prison, according to Blanchard's press secretary, Rick Cole.

"It's just too expensive, and considerably cheaper to build new," Cole said in Livonia Monday. "And we still don't have a prison in Oakland County."

Cole indicated that Blanchard is setting his sights north of Detroit for the next prison project. New development sites likely would be based in Oakland County, where "they're providing 10 percent of the criminals and none of the space," Cole said.

"OAKLAND County is the real priority for the administration," Cole said during a news conference.

"Where to place an Oakland site is a question that has sharply split county officials. County Executive Daniel T. Murphy and the board of commissioners majority favors a Pontiac site adjacent to a state mental hospital. Pontiac officials, the mental health constituency and the Corrections Commission fa-

vor a Department of Natural Resources site in rural Orion Township.

The state Department of Corrections recently announced it had reached its goal of adding 3,000 more prison cells to handle state prison overcrowding. Two additional state prison facilities are being added.

LUCAS, an undeclared candidate for governor this year, offered the "N" Building site in county-owned land on three occasions since last summer, most recently in a letter to Blanchard last month.

The executive encouraged Blanchard to take the building, saying the state had a "serious need" to "get criminals off the streets."

But Cole said pressure from area legislators, who protested the consideration of the Westland site, virtually put the issue to rest.

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