

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 15-48
Proposed Acquisition of Land for Expansion of Reedy Creek Nature Preserve

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

The County proposes acquisition of Tax Parcels 105-111-07, 105-154-01, and 105-154-10 (+/- 97.185 acres) for the expansion of Reedy Creek Nature Preserve in eastern Mecklenburg County. The parcels are vacant and located in the City of Charlotte's extra-territorial jurisdiction. Under the City's Zoning Ordinance the property is zoned R-3 (Single family residential), according to the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance. If acquired, the property will add to the existing 737 acres of property for Reedy Creek Nature Preserve. The property is home to a high quality natural area and is bisected by three creeks.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Acquisition of this property will increase the County's landholding at Reedy Creek Nature Preserve and will extend the eastern boundary of the preserve. The headwaters of Reedy Creek, including streams flowing into the Preserve, have among the highest water quality of surface waters in Mecklenburg County. Significant environmental features include a regionally significant basic oak-hickory forest which contain umbrella magnolia (*Magnolia tripetala*), a rare sand ridge habitat along the boundary of the preserve, scattered patches of native wildflowers and broad beech ferns, lush floodplain wetlands along Reedy Creek, and a relict population of Georgia aster, a federal candidate species. The addition of this property would provide additional habitat and help buffer both the Outstanding and Critical Natural Zones found in the existing preserve as well as enhance water quality protection for the headwaters of Reedy Creek.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

This acquisition is consistent Mecklenburg County's adopted *2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan* in which citizens encouraged the expansion of nature preserves and the protection of the area's natural habitat and wildlife. As the County continues to develop, opportunities to protect high quality nature areas will become increasingly rare and the County's adopted *Master Plan* set forward a plan to protect as many of these existing areas as possible.

The property may be impacted by the future Eastern Circumferential roadway (ECR), a portion of whose preliminary alignment (see accompanying map) crosses the subject property and runs through the existing nature preserve. The ECR appears on the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) adopted *Thoroughfare Plan*; the entire ECR when completed will run between University City Blvd. and Independence Blvd. This proposed roadway started out as a portion of the Outer Loop that was first officially proposed on the 1977 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Thoroughfare Plan. The current ECR alignment was one considered for the East Charlotte Outer Loop. It was later decided that a thoroughfare connection was still needed so the current official corridor of the Eastern Circumferential Road was adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in 1983. In 1989, an alignment study completed by the MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee and resulted in a recommended alignment. Currently, CRTPO staff is working with County staff from Asset Management, Stormwater, and Park & Recreation to integrate a refined ECR alignment with planned stormwater improvements.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Rocky River Road Area Plan* (adopted 2006) recommends single family land uses up to 4 dwelling units per acre for PID 10515401 and 10515410. The plan recommends open space for PID 10511107. Open space uses are not always identified for a specific location in an area plan and are considered compatible with single family land uses and consistent with adopted policy. Additionally, the plan recognizes the proposed alignment for the ECR extension through this area. Therefore, the proposed use of the subject property for open space (coupled with eventual ECR construction) is considered consistent with the *Rocky River Road Area Plan*.

PROJECT IMPACT:

Acquisition of this parcel increases protected natural habitat for plant and wildlife in the County. It also offers County residents additional opportunities for open space and recreational amenities. It also provides an opportunity for various public agencies (notably County Stormwater, Park & Recreation, and CRTPO) to collaboratively design their improvements all of which will likely impact the subject property.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

A storm water restoration project is to occur on this property after the land is purchased by the County. County staff have worked collaboratively to ensure that this property becomes publicly owned.

Additionally, the preliminary alignment of the future extension of the ECR passes across this property (see accompanying map). Work is currently underway among staff from Stormwater, CRTPO, Charlotte Department of Transportation, and County Park & Recreation to maximize coordination of planning and design of roadway and storm water improvements while minimizing compromises to the goals of each agency in investing in this geographic area. More information about the stormwater project is available at the project web site (www.reedycreekrestoration.com).

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

This project is land acquisition only and closing is anticipated to be completed by January 2016.

Design for the stormwater improvements is scheduled to continue through 2016 with no specific timeline for construction at this time. While not a funded project, right-of-way alignment planning for the ECR is on-going and its coordination with stormwater planning is imperative.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

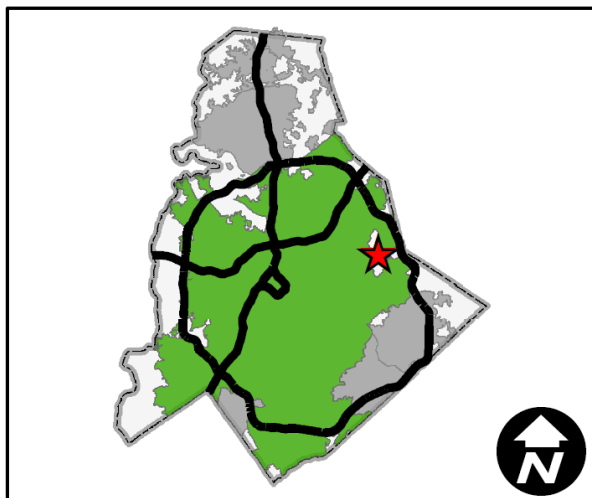
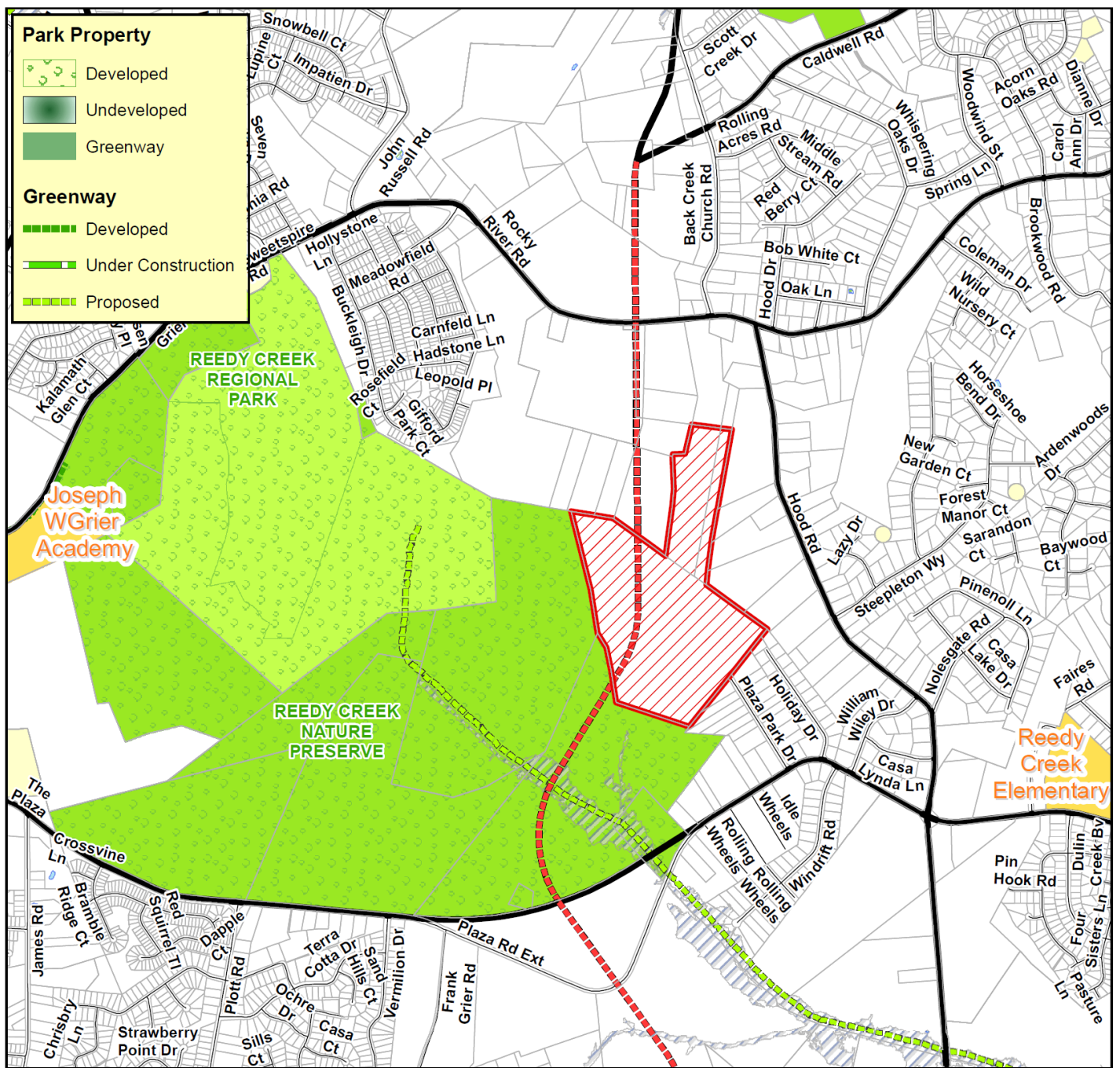
The Joint Use Task Force discussed the matter at their October 7, 2015 meeting and there were no joint use comments.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the land acquisition to expand the nature preserve, conditioned upon continued collaboration with CRTPO staff in finalizing the ECR alignment in concert with planning for the stormwater improvements.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their October 20, 2015 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 15-48

Initiated by: Park & Recreation

Submitted by: County Asset & Facility Management

- Mandatory Referral
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain
- Schools
- County Property
- City Property
- Existing Thoroughfare
- Proposed Thoroughfare

Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

