

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 01-08
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
PURCHASE OF EASTWAY DRIVE DISTRICT PARK SITE
March 13, 2001

PROJECT LOCATION

The subject property is located to the rear of the former Eastway Plaza shopping center at the southeast quadrant of the Eastway Drive/Plaza intersection. The site includes all of tax parcels 097-131-11, 097-131-12, 097-131-13 and 097-131-14 for a total of approximately 89.81 acres. The site is located within the Northeast Transit Corridor.

The 1996 Northeast District Plan recommends retail, multi-family and industrial land uses for these sites. Similarly, the parcels are currently zoned B-1, B-1 SCD, R-17MF and I-1. The parcels are currently vacant, with one containing the remnants of an outdated racetrack.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The proposal is to purchase land to develop a district park site that could potentially accommodate fields for two adjoining schools and other public uses including a school or library.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

The subject property will provide urban open space as well as a district park site that will accommodate active recreation facilities, particularly courts and fields, to serve this portion of the Northeast Park District. The need for this park is addressed in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Parks Master Plan (1989). The need for an active recreation facility at this location is reinforced by the potential for approximately 78 acres of Evergreen Cemetery, off Central Avenue, to become a nature preserve with limited/reduced opportunity for fields at two adjoining schools, relative to demand in this area. The shopping center property is to be acquired by a developer and access, adjacent land uses, etc. will be planned jointly.

As described in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Parks Master Plan, district parks typically include fields (soccer, softball), courts (tennis, basketball), playgrounds, picnic areas (shelters, sites), walking trails and other amenities. District parks should range in size from 40 to 200 acres based on the park master plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS

This project is part of the effort to identify, acquire and preserve land for park/open space and other public needs within the urban core where most larger tracts have been developed.

The property is also part of the Northeast Transit Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS). Alternative NE-4 consists of light rail transit that would begin along the NCCR alignment and would cross over the NS main line, in the vicinity of Sugar Creek Road or Eastway Drive, and proceed north on an exclusive alignment along North Tryon Street. In this scenario, the closest station to the site would most likely occur at Eastway Drive and North Tryon Street. The Northeast Corridor extends northeast about 14 miles from Center City Charlotte to the

Mecklenburg/Cabarrus county line, about a mile on either side of I-85. The MIS process is a 15-18 month process that results in the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) – what form the transit will be and the route it will take. The MIS process is projected to be complete in the late Fall of 2001.

This line of the NCRR was part of the Charlotte Northeast (NS/NCRR) Traffic Separation Study released in November 2000. There are no recommendations for the Eastway Drive crossing.

PROJECT IMPACT

Acquisition of this property should have positive impacts for the City and County by providing much needed district park space and open space. Cooperation with the development of the adjacent shopping center site provides an opportunity for coordinated land uses and access as well.

PROJECT COST

Market appraisals will be the basis for negotiations and land costs for this project.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the purchase of the property to provide much needed park space in this vicinity. Cooperation with the future development of the adjacent shopping center site is strongly encouraged. In addition, during the site planning phase, specific attention should be paid to access and to the treatment of the rail line.

PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Committee recommends approval (7-0).

