

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT #01-12
CHARLOTTE -MECKLENBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
Assemblage for West Park Land Exchange in Center City

Project Location:

The property is located in the area bordered by the Norfolk-Southern Railroad, S. Graham St., the Duke Power Substation, and Third St. It includes eight tax parcel: these include: 073-162-01, 073-162-02, 073-161-01, 073-161-03, 073-161-06, 073-161-07, 073-172-07 and 073-172-08. The area within the assemblage is approximately five acres not including street right of way that would be abandoned. (See Map.)

Project Proposal:

Subject property is to be assembled and exchanged for property designated in the Center City 2010 Vision Plan as the “West Park” site, one of several parks proposed for the area within the I-277 loop. The County then envisions the arena complex being developed on the subject property.

Project Justification:

The County envisions that the site currently recommended by the City for a new arena would be best used for a major Center City park. Citing the recommendations of the Center City 2010 Vision Plan, the County would like to implement the vision as stated in the plan.

Relationship to Other Public and Private Projects:

This project is one of multiple redevelopment/new projects described in the Center City 2010 vision Plan which are intended to transform the Center City into a more vibrant, livable and memorable area that is comfortable in scale and interest for residents, employees and visitors. Parks are the vital and critical piece of this transformation.

This parcel is the same land the City is intending to develop into parking/staging for the arena.

Project Impact:

The City would like to see the staging area for a new arena located on this site. Staffs from the City and County are working together to find a win – win solution for both projects.

If the land cannot be exchanged for other park related property, this acquisition would not be beneficial. If the swap does not occur and the arena is built across Graham Street, this location would have “edges” (the Duke Substation, railroad tracks, Graham Street, and the multi-model station) that would render it undesirable as a park location.

Project Cost:

The County has stated the property will be procured using market appraisals as the basis for negotiations and in determining land costs for the project.

Staff Recommendation:

Planning Staff does not recommend that this property be purchased with the expectation that it will become the future site for a new arena. The close proximity to the railroad tracks and a potential multi—model station would dictate that this is not a desirable arena location. The multi-model station, railroad bridge

crossings and an arena would present a significant barrier to the connection of Gateway Village (Third Ward) and the Center City Core.

City Engineering has indicated that moving the arena would not permit the City to meet the required October 1, 2003 completion date. The current arena financial model does not allow for added costs, which would be required to move the arena.

Staff recommends locating a park in the area bound by S. Church Street, Mint Street, W. Second Street, and Fourth Street. If the County pursues purchasing the subject property it should do so with the expectations that the money from its resale/trade be used toward securing the properties identified for a park by Planning Staff.

This project was presented to the joint use committee. They did not have any comments.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Planning Committee recommends (4-3) approval, subject to the city and the county staffs working cooperatively to maximize park opportunities in the uptown area in the vicinity of the arena and to work toward placement of the arena on the "county site" (as described in MR01-12)

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