

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 02-03
TRANSFER OF FIREMAN'S HALL PROPERTY TO HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
MECKLENBURG COUNTY REAL ESTATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION: This is a proposal by Mecklenburg County to transfer a portion of the Fireman's Hall Property (tax parcel 127-091-01) to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. The subject parcel is located at 2601 East 7th Street.

The County is proposing to subdivide the existing 4.1 acre parcel into two parcels. (see attached map) The newly created parcel that fronts along 7th Street and Briar Creek would remain the property of Mecklenburg County and will be preserved for open space. The remaining rear parcel which contains two structures, an assembly building and a tower, will be transferred to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission for renovation and reuse.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION: This property known as the Palmer Fire School possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg history. The Palmer Fire School, which opened in 1940, served as a training center and social center for the Charlotte Fire Department until 1976. The School was named for Charlotte Fire Chief William Hendrix Palmer, who was a forty-four-year member of the Charlotte Fire Department and served as chief from 1927 to 1948. At the time of its opening this facility was one of the finest of its type in the United States.

The Palmer Fire School, often known also as Fireman's Hall, enjoyed statewide and national prominence for many years. Located on East Seventh and Fifth Streets, the facility was designed by the City of Charlotte's Engineering Department, built in 1938-40 at the edge of the city limits, and was the best fire training facility in the state.

Additionally, the rubble stone education building possesses architectural significance. Chief Palmer involved the firefighters themselves in assisting with the construction. Some of the building materials for the assembly building and tower came from an old incinerator on the site, but most of the stone for the hall came from an old tannery on Burton Street. Stone by stone, the firefighters hauled the material from the abandoned tannery to the school site.

Firefighters landscaped the grounds with trees, shrubs, posts and other improvements. In those days the fire department operated its own maintenance shops providing many of the interior improvements including millwork and furniture.

PROJECT IMPACT: The transfer of this property to the Historic Landmarks Commission will allow the preservation and adaptive reuse of an historical facility. The Historic Landmarks Commission proposes to preserve the Palmer Fire School Complex by seeking a viable adaptive reuse for the assembly building, the fire tower, and a sufficient portion of the property for parking.

The economic incentives provided by Historic Registry will assist the Historic Landmarks Commission or a private investor in restoration of the property in accordance with the design guidelines instituted by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Deed covenants will assure the preservation of the property in perpetuity. The assembly building, although dilapidated, retains the essential elements of its architectural integrity. Its preservation will enhance the neighborhood and make the general public more aware of the historic significance of the site.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS: This project is part of the Historic Landmarks Commission's on-going historic preservation bond fund program. Additionally, City Council has designated the Palmer Fire School a local Historic Landmark, and the property is most likely eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

This site is currently zoned O-2 and the Central District Plan, the publicly adopted land use plan for this area, supports open space for the entire 4.1 acre site. However, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation has agreed that the newly created parcel that fronts along 7th Street and Briar Creek can potentially be used for park space.

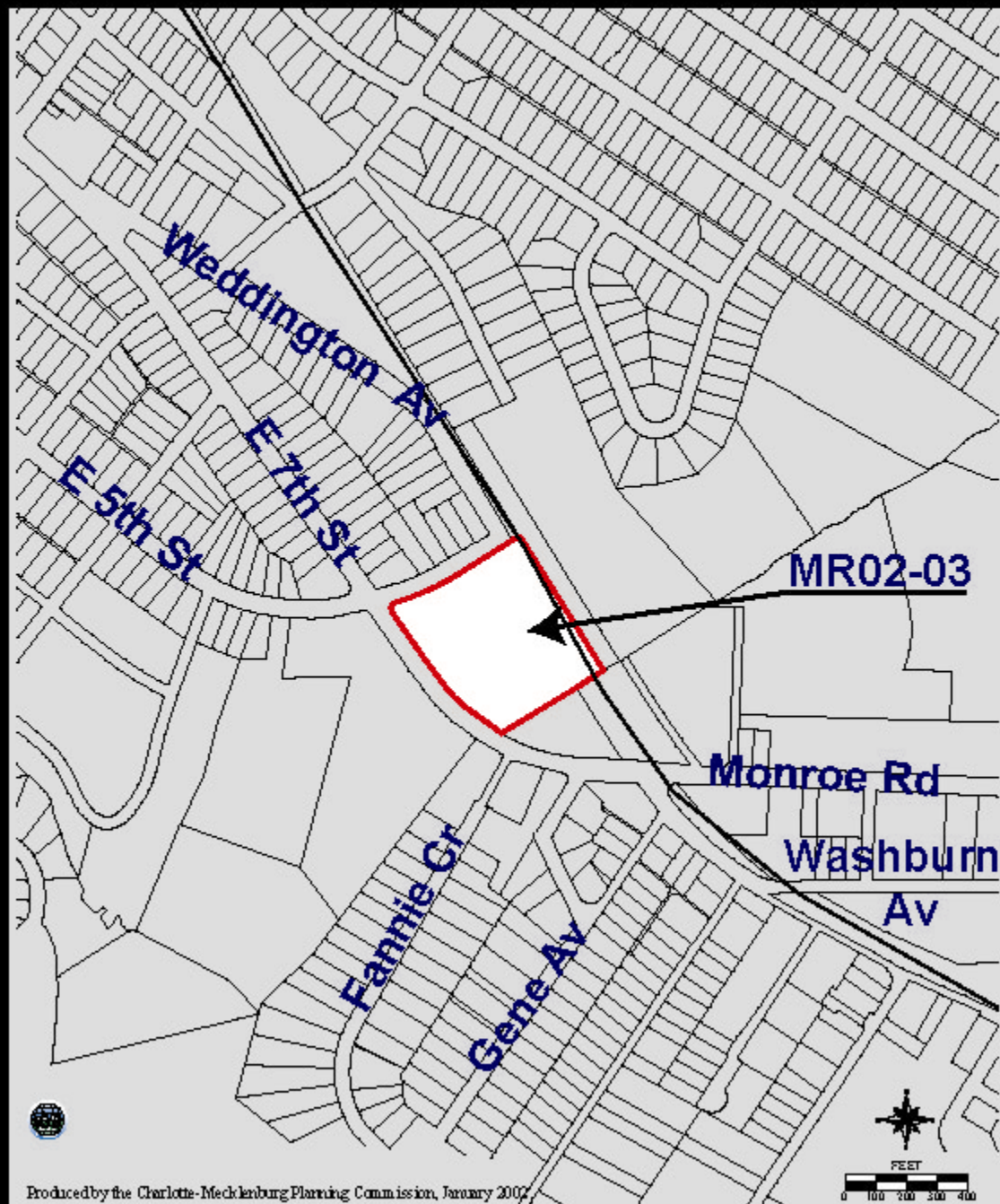
PROJECT COST: No costs are associated with the transfer of the property to the Historic Landmarks Commission.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The Joint Use Task Force reviewed this proposal and three points were made: (1) the Charlotte Fire Department has gone on record as supporting this proposed action, (2) it was suggested that any Fire Department artifacts found on the premises should be preserved and displayed on-site as a pre-requisite to preservation efforts (a point fully supported by the Historic Landmarks Commission), and (3) the only potential public use of the property identified was a “fire and police museum”, although an alternate location for a fire museum has been identified in the 4th Ward, and funding doesn’t exist for a police museum. The feeling among JUTF members was that since there is an absence of public sector need for these structures and public funding for their preservation, that a slight decrease in the amount of parkland is a reasonable compromise to ensure the preservation of these historically-significant buildings.

Staff supports the transfer of the property to the Historic Landmarks Commission for the preservation and adaptive reuse of this historical facility.

PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The Planning Committee approved the request by a 7-0 vote at its January 15, 2002 meeting.

Mandatory Referral: MR02-03





APPENDIX B

CAPITAL PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM

Instructions:

This form is provided to capital project initiating agencies and departments for reporting proposed projects to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission in accordance with the requirements of North Carolina House Bill 855.

Proposed capital projects are to be submitted to the Planning Commission using this form, at least 30 days prior to presenting the project to the governmental unit having authority to authorize it.

In order to constructively review a project proposal a full description of the project and its objectives is necessary. Please provide all of the information requested and all available graphic information.

I. Initiating Department Mecklenburg County Real Estate Dept.

Date: December 28, 2001

Submitted By: Mark P. Hahn, AIA Director

Prepared By Bryan Turner AIA

II. Project Name Subdivision of and Transfer of Property known as the Fireman's Hall Property (Palmer Fire School).

III. Location and Description of Project Mecklenburg County Real Estate Services Department proposes the subdivision of Tax parcel No. 127-091-01 (4.1 acres) into two parcels as indicated on the attached plan. The front parcel, along 7th Street would remain the property of Mecklenburg County for preservation of open space. The rear parcel, containing the two structures, would be transferred to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

IV. Project Justification/Need:

The property known as the Palmer Fire School possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg history. The Palmer Fire School, a WPA project that opened on May 13, 1940, served as a training center and social center for the Charlotte Fire Department until 1976. The Palmer Fire School, named for Charlotte Fire Chief Hendrix Palmer, was at the time of its opening one of the finest facilities of its type in the United States; and the Palmer Fire School, especially the rubble stone education building possesses architectural significance.

The Palmer Fire School, often known also as Fireman's Hall, enjoyed statewide and national prominence for many years. Located on East Seventh and Fifth Streets, the facility was designed by the City of Charlotte Engineering Department and built in 1938-40 at the edge of the city limits of the day. In addition to being the best fire training facility in the state, it was also one of the finest in the country.

It was named for the man most responsible for its construction, William Hendrix Palmer (1884-1955), who was a forty-four-year member of the Charlotte Fire Department and its chief from 1927 to 1948. Chief Palmer began his fire service with the city on October 1, 1904

Chief Palmer involved the firefighters themselves in assisting with the construction. Some of the building materials for the assembly building and tower came from an old incinerator on the site, but most of the stone for the hall came from an old tannery on Burton Street. Stone by stone, the firefighters hauled the material from the abandoned tannery to the school site according to predetermined work schedules.

Firefighters landscaped the four-acre grounds with trees, shrubs, posts and other improvements. In those days the fire department operated its own maintenance shops providing many of the interior improvements including

millwork and furniture.

The Historic Landmarks Commission proposes to preserve the Palmer Fire School Complex by seeking a viable adaptive reuse for the assembly building, the fire tower, and a sufficient portion of the property for parking. The Charlotte City Council has designated the Palmer Fire School a local Historic Landmark, and the property is most likely eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The economic incentives provided by Historic Registry will assist the Historic Landmarks Commission or a private investor in restoration of the property in accordance with the design guidelines instituted by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Deed covenants will assure the preservation of the property in perpetuity. The assembly building, although dilapidated, retains the essential elements of its architectural integrity. Its preservation will enhance the neighborhood and make the general public more aware of the historic significance of the site.

V. Project Status

Nothing done but this report		Land not yet acquired	
Preliminary plans completed	X	Land acquisition underway	
Detailed plans completed		Land Acquired	
No land Acquisition required		Project under contract	

VI. Proposed Development Schedule

<u>Task</u>	<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Complete</u>
Planning	October 2001	April 2002
Land	Nov. .2001	Feb. 2002
Construction	Apr. 2002	Feb. 2003

(Identify any known external factors which are critical to the timing of this project. For example, the opening of a major shopping center, or construction of a new school).

VII. Relation of this proposal to Other Public Projects. (Is this project part of a series of interrelated capital projects? Is the project affected by or does it affect other public projects in the area? **This project is part of the Historic Landmarks Commission's on-going historic preservation bond fund program.**

V. Project Cost Estimate - (indicate the estimated total project cost and describe how this estimation has been made). N/A

VI. Assistance Funds - (If State or Federal assistance funds are proposed indicate the specific assistance program) and the status of any application for project funding assistance). **No State or Federal funds will be involved in this project.**

