

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 02-16
UPPER STEELE CREEK DISTRICT PARK LAND ACQUISITION

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION: Acquire vacant tract north of Dixie River Road/west of I-485 to include up to +/- 213 acres. The property is included in a 1000-acre plus mixed-use rezoning approved in 2001 and was designated "district park or residential" on the approved site plan. The site is shown as "Parcel D of Berewick" on the zoning plan and encompasses portions of several tax parcels including #141-171-11, 141-171-12 and 141-291-06.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION: The *Charlotte Mecklenburg Parks Master Plan* (1989) recommends a "Steele Creek District Park" in this geographic area. The *CMPMP* district park criteria includes: (1) a size range from 40 to 200 acres, (2) development of 50% of the site with 50% left natural, (3) multiple active recreation facilities (fields and courts) and (4) passive areas such as picnic sites, trails and playgrounds. District parks work well as joint use sites with elementary and/or middle schools. Build-out projections for this portion of the County support the need for a large district park with active recreation facilities (per park master plan criteria).

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE AND PUBLIC POLICY: This project is recommended in the current (above) park-planning document. Population projections clearly support securing land for this project as the County develops west of I-485.

The *Westside Strategic Plan* (1999) recommends securing space for active recreation facilities to complement the two large nature preserves (Latta Plantation and McDowell) located in the western portion of the County.

Along with Winget Park in the lower Steele Creek area and the proposed district park site at I-485/Shuffletown at Long Creek, the subject district park site would help meet the anticipated active recreation needs as this area develops.

The draft *Dixie-Berryhill Plan* (2002) recommends the following locations for district parks or open space:

Gateway Park" is a site of approximately 140 acres, located on the Catawba River, immediately south of Wilkinson Boulevard. This proposed park site is **already owned by Mecklenburg County**, but no plans have been adopted, and no funding has been authorized to date.

A district park on the 100-acre **County-owned parcel** on the south shore of Paw Creek Cove near the Berryhill Elementary School.

A proposed site located south of Berryhill Elementary School of approximately 130 acres.

A lake-access park south of the future West Blvd. extension, located on **property the County acquired** for public water intake, which will probably not be used for that purpose (approximately 200 acres).

A proposed golf course of approximately 150 acres, located along the southern leg of Dixie River Road.

The draft *Dixie-Berryhill Plan* is being revised to reflect the approved rezoning for the Berewick mixed use development, which includes reserves for a district park the area referred to in this referral.

The proposed park land is located within the the Lower Lake Wylie Watershed area and the County's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) area and subject to the development regulations for these areas.

PROJECT IMPACT: This project will provide space for active and passive recreation facilities adjoining a large-scale mixed-use development. With current land holdings, this area is not served adequately.

A park at this location would be widely accessible by vehicle to patrons on the Westside because of proximity to future thoroughfares and I-485.

In addition to being in a protected watershed and SWIM area, the land in this acquisition proposal is particularly environmentally sensitive due to steep slopes and streams and wetlands within or adjacent to the site. Grading such a site to make level areas for playing fields may have negative environmental impacts.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

Rezoning: The proposed park site was included in 1000+ ac Berewick mixed-use rezoning approved in '01, designated "district park or residential" on the approved site plan.

CMS facilities master plan specifies a need for up to 3 new elementary schools in the SW region; this site is locationally appropriate.

Dixie-Berryhill Thoroughfare alignment: Transportation planning staff worked with Park & Recreation staff in the development of a future thoroughfare alignment in the area that would minimize impacts to the proposed park.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE: Only land acquisition is funded at this time.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

Park & Recreation and CMS are investigating the possibility of a joint-use opportunity for an elementary school at this location.

CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

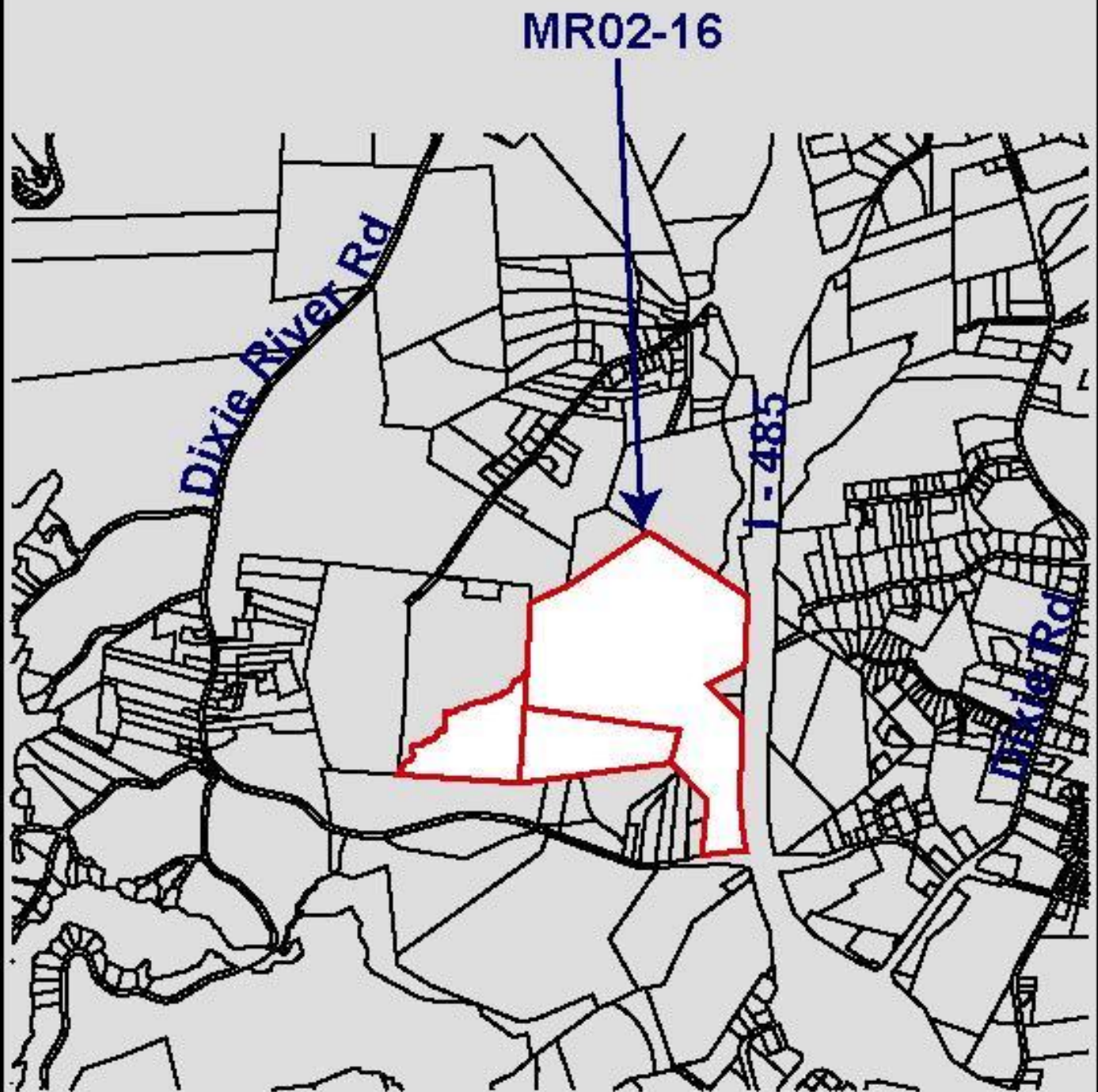
CMPC staff recommends approval of this proposed land acquisition.

Staff strongly recommends that Park & Recreation work with CMPC, CDOT, and City/County Storm Water Services to refine the park design to mitigate environmental impacts of park development, protect sensitive environmental features (slopes, natural areas, trees), protect water quality, and enhance pedestrian connectivity and access to surrounding development.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Committee voted to approve the staff recommendation by a vote of 6-0 at their June 18, 2002 meeting.

Mandatory Referral: MR02-16



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