

**MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 02-41**  
**Proposed Arena in the Charlotte CBD**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:**

An arena with associated staging and parking area is being proposed for the uptown area, for a four block area bounded by East Trade Street and East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, between the East side of the City's rail corridor and North Caldwell Street. There are fifty tax parcels owned by approximately 15 private owners. (A list of the ownerships and tax parcels is attached.)

The four-block area is approximately 12.5 acres. The Arena footprint will cover approximately six acres. The remaining land will be needed to realign East 5<sup>th</sup> Street and provide staging areas for trucks and events as well as private parking associated with the Arena.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:**

Having an Arena is expected to spur economic growth in Charlotte's uptown area and reinstate Charlotte as a basketball city with an NBA team. Numerous potential sites in the uptown area have been identified and studied. The proposed site has been determined as the best option in terms of location, size and lack of impact on existing structures.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE AND PUBLIC POLICY:**

The Center City 2010 Vision Plan had identified this location as a potential academic quad. With the new Johnson and Wales campus being located in the Gateway Center area, the likelihood of this land being used for academic purposes is very slim. Brevard Street and Fifth Streets were recommended to be workhorse streets to deliver roadway capacity demands during peak hours. Careful design considerations need to be given to the reconfiguration of these roads so the traffic flows are not impeded by the presence of the Arena on the proposed site

The South End/Uptown Rail Corridor Plan adopted by City Council in June 1998, envisioned the rail corridor as a mechanism for getting economic development in the pedestrian areas adjacent to the tracks. This area of high pedestrian concentration created by the Arena will connect the arts and entertainment areas with the new convention center. Locating the Arena with its front door facing the corridor fits in with the concept for activating the rail corridor. The First Ward Plan identified this area for business, retail, and mixed use. While the Arena is a unique land use, it provides the potential to act as a catalyst for complementary spin off uses that will help achieve these goals.

**PROJECT IMPACT:**

Building an Arena at this location will be an excellent catalyst for further commercial and residential development in the First Ward area that currently has an abundance of surface parking lots. Property tax and sales tax revenues are expected to significantly increase as a result of having the Arena and associated growth of properties in the Central Business District. Charlotte will receive greater national attention by having a NBA team here again.

A study is currently underway as to the feasibility of saving the historic buildings on East Trade Street but there is no certainty that this can be accomplished.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:**

The size and shape of the Arena requires assembling land in four blocks and results in closing Brevard Street between East Trade Street and East 6<sup>th</sup> Street. East 5<sup>th</sup> Street will also need to be reconfigured to traverse around the new Arena. North Caldwell Street and a small portion of East Trade Street would be widened next to the area site for better traffic circulation.

This project is being sited on the future light rail/trolley line. The main entrance to the Arena is being oriented to front on the tracks. A planned stop has been identified over the Fourth Street bridge. Trade Street will become a central spine for the five transit corridors to enter the Center City.

The Arena is being planned directly across from the existing central bus station. Care needs to be taken in designing the facility with as little disruption to the transit operation as possible.

This new Arena site is conveniently located near three large parking decks that offer the possibility to service the Arena patrons. They potentially can be retro fitted at the ground floors for retail and other supplementary service operations. The new building needs to connect to the neighborhood through a well designed street and pedestrian system. In addition, the building façade and service areas need to be designed to integrate with the neighborhood.

**ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:**

The Arena is projected to be completed in time for the 2005-2006 basketball season (October, 2005).

**JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:**

The JUTF met on December 4, 2002 and had the following comments: The libraries are concerned about design of the new arena because the Children's Learning Center is being built a block away. There was an extensive discussion about properties the City proposes to convey in exchange for the arena property. Mandatory Referrals have not been submitted for these properties; upon receipt of those Mandatory Referrals, the comments on those properties will be considered.

**CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION :** Staff recommends approval of this petition, conditioned upon adherence to the design and operational goals and objectives outlined in the Third Ward Place document.

The design goals include the following: a sustainable public space with distinctive area identity which indicates a premier destination, facility which can sustain both event and non-event activity, reinforces connectivity, acts as a development catalyst and enhances the public realm.

The objectives defined included: operational sustainability, civic identity, neighborhood character, personal experience, urban connectivity, development catalyst, and public spaces. The building needs to be designed to allow the Trade Street Transit Corridor to develop into a "great street" with strong pedestrian orientation. Additionally, the building and associated uses need to integrate into the First Ward and rail corridor. It should also be noted that design and other issues are being addressed through a community input process for the development of the Arena.

**CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** At their December 17, 2002 meeting, the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 7-0 vote.

## PARCELS INVOLVED IN MR02-41

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