

**MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 06-22**  
**Proposed 50-Year Lease of City-Owned Land at South End to Charlotte Trolley, Inc.**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:**

Charlotte Trolley Inc. (CTI) is nearing the end of its lease on its existing "Trolley Barn" at Atherton Mill. The Trolley Barn serves as a museum and education center. Several City KBU's have been working with CTI to relocate the facility on a parcel of land, adjacent to the South Corridor Light Rail corridor, thus keeping it in the general vicinity of its current location.

The proposal is to re-locate the trolley barn to a portion of a parcel of land previously purchased by CATS for a pedestrian corridor connecting Camden and South Tryon Street to the Bland Street Rail Station (the Rensselaer Station) in the South Transit Corridor. The property is located at 1507 Camden Road (PID #123-041-10), and is situated between the Charlotte Art League and the former Fowler's Office Supply property. The proposal is to have the southern portion of this vacant 0.26-acre parcel developed as the new trolley barn, with the northern portion developed as a public pedestrian plaza linking the station area with Camden Road and the Wilmore community. The location is very near the "Y" intersection of Camden Road and South Tryon Street. The property is roughly 65 feet wide and is zoned I-2 General Industrial. The City and CTI propose to change the property zoning to TOD-M to accommodate the proposed development.

CATS and CTI are proposing a 50-year land lease, subject to the approval of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and City Council. CTI will construct and operate the new facility from revenues obtained by Mecklenburg County and by private donations and fund raisers.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:**

The Trolley Barn is losing its lease at Atherton Mill, and must find a new home. There are very few sites available along the rail corridor, most of which will require substantial funds for purchase. Subject to the final approval of the FTA and City Council, CATS is proposing to execute a lease with CTI which allows CTI to occupy the site "rent free", but will require CTI to be responsible for construction of their facilities and for maintenance of the overall parcel. It benefits the entire station area to partner with the nonprofit organization since their service complements the rail system and benefits the City of Charlotte's tourism industry.

The only other City-owned property along the rail corridor is located north of the trolley line, just inside I-277 on the City's former Bus Garage property. This portion of the rail corridor is beyond reasonable accessibility to the public and is under design for light rail use.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:**

Assisting CTI to house their new facility on City-owned property supports CATS transit efforts and Charlotte's tourism initiatives.

**CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:**

The *South End Transit Station Area Plan* (2005) calls for mixed use development at density supportive of transit for the subject site and surrounding properties. The subject property is a relatively narrow strip of land purchased by the City as a pedestrian access way from Camden Road through the site to a light rail station immediately beyond. The proposed use of a portion of the property as a public museum and education facility is consistent with the plan, and serves to enhance the primary transit access purpose with improved pedestrian interest and safety.

**PROJECT IMPACT:**

The CATS parcel was originally purchased as a pedestrian walkway to connect the Wilmore Community with the trolley and light rail. The property is approx. 65 feet in width. Carving off approximately half of the lot width for CTI purposes significantly reduces the openness of the pedestrian plaza. However, with careful design and lighting, both improvements can be compatible with one another. The museum will enliven the pathway from Camden Road to the station, and provide eyes on the pathway for enhanced safety.

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

CTI is a non profit organization with an express purpose to educate the public on several facets of Charlotte's history. CTI will sell tokens for those individuals wanting to ride on the City's trolley. CTI is also a key component to bolstering tourism in Charlotte.

The goal is to coordinate and integrate the proposed facility into the South Corridor light rail project and related amenities and land uses.

**ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:**

CTI is planning to open their new facility in the Fall of 2007, concurrent with the start of rail service.

**JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:**

Staff reviewed this matter at their September 6, 2006 meeting, and although no joint use opportunities were raised, it was noted that FTA approval will be required for this use of the site because the land was initially purchased with federal funds.

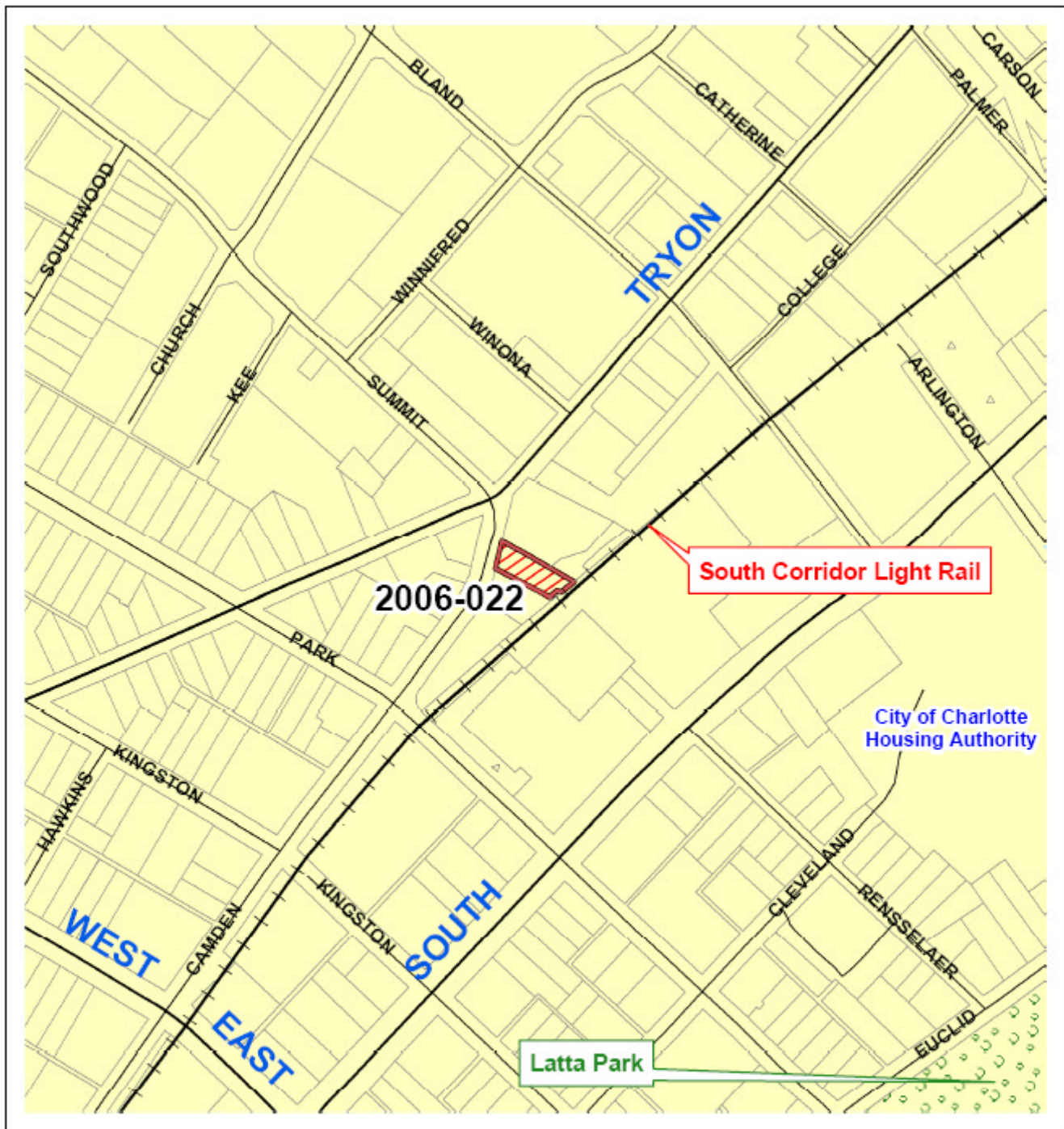
**CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the proposed lease because the project will support the land use recommendations of the *South End Transit Station Area Plan*, and provides for improved pedestrian interest and safety.

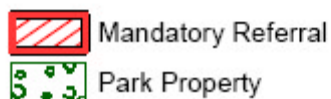
**CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

At its September 19, 2006 meeting, the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.

# Mandatory Referral 2006-22



**Department: City of Charlotte Real Estate**



Map Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission for illustrative purposes only.

