

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 08-13
Proposed Hickory Grove Branch Library Replacement

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

The Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) proposes to purchase 1.564 acres, vacant, out-parcel within the Hickory Grove Market Center (PID #09931116), The segment of the parcel border Hickory Grove Road at 7006 East WT Harris Boulevard on the south side of the shopping center and is currently zoned B1SC. The proposed facility will replace the current Hickory Grove branch library and will be approximately 16,500 square feet.

The existing library branch, operating in its current location since 1986, is approximately 5,100 square feet of leased space at 7209 East WT Harris Blvd (Delta Center).

In 2002, an agreement was reached among Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), PLCMC, and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation to redevelop the site occupied by the old Hickory Grove Elementary School when a new elementary school was completed on adjoining property originally purchased by the County for a neighborhood park. Under the agreement, a portion of the old Hickory Grove building would be made available for redevelopment into the new library building, effectively creating a school/park/library joint use complex. Since that date, due to increased student population and classroom demand, CMS has determined that it needs to continue to occupy the old school building for a pre-kindergarten center and as classroom space ancillary to the new Hickory Grove school. CMS cannot determine with certainty when the old building would be available for alternate use as it is dependent upon funding availability for new schools to relieve crowding at the new Hickory Grove school, but a recent estimate is June 30, 2014.

CMS recently presented a proposal to purchase a tract of land on Sharon Amity Road and Shamrock Drive, approximately one mile west of the subject property (Mandatory Referral MR08-08), with the intention of building a new elementary school as partial relief for Hickory Grove school. Given that the size of the CMS parcel, at 47 acres, exceeds the needed 18 acres for an elementary school, it offered a portion of the property to PLCMC for the replacement Hickory Grove library. This site does not meet PLCMC requirements for a library for the Hickory Grove community; primarily due to its location (see site requirements discussed below).

PLCMC has identified this site after completing an exhaustive search within the current Hickory Grove area to find a suitable and affordable site that would meet the requirements to locate a facility to replace the existing branch library. The requirements consist of:

- § Excellent visibility
- § Located on a well-traveled road
- § Allows for easy pedestrian and vehicular access
- § A center point of the community

Residents of this community have continually and forcefully informed PLCMC that the intersection of Harris Boulevard and Hickory Grove Road is considered the center of their community.

PLCMC recently opened the new Mountain Island Branch in northwest Charlotte near Brookshire Boulevard within a shopping center. This facility has proven to be a successful model for future branch library locations that attract patrons due to high visibility, easy access, and convenience.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

The existing facility is inadequate because the size (5,100 square feet) limits all significant program elements such as collections, reader seats, public access computers, meeting room space, adequate parking, and staff workstations. A contemporary branch library requires 16,500 square feet.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The development of a library at the proposed location will need to go through the rezoning process. The rezoning is necessitated due to the fact that the property is conditionally zoned to B1S (CD). This zoning classification no longer exists and an out-parcel is proposed to be created that is not reflected on the approval plan.

This project is consistent with the Library's Ten Year Facilities Master Plan. It was identified as the highest priority project out of the five PLCMC submitted for FY07. The project was recommended for funding by the County Capital Budget Advisory Committee in Spring, 2007.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *East District Plan*, adopted in 1990, recommends retail land uses at this location and recognizes the existing shopping center. Libraries are considered to be compatible with commercial area land uses and are encouraged to integrate with existing and proposed businesses.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The project will be a highly visible and easily accessible via all existing shopping center access roads. The location is across Hickory Grove Road from the Hickory Grove Baptist Church with main access road directly across from Dogwood Place.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

The site is adjacent to recently widened Hickory Grove Road which includes a bike lane and pedestrian sidewalks.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

A formal project timeline has not been developed. The preliminary schedule calls for the completion of design in the second quarter of calendar year 2008 and the completion of construction and opening in the second quarter of 2009.

This project is funded by County FY07 COPS for development cost only – no land acquisition – based on original CMS Agreement.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their March 5, 2008 meeting and two comments were offered:

- § the proposed library location puts it directly across Hickory Grove Road from the Hickory Grove Baptist Church school, making visits by school children convenient
- § given that the joint use arrangement with CMS at the Hickory Grove school site could not be realized, CMS is providing financial assistance to the Libraries in their purchase of the proposed site.

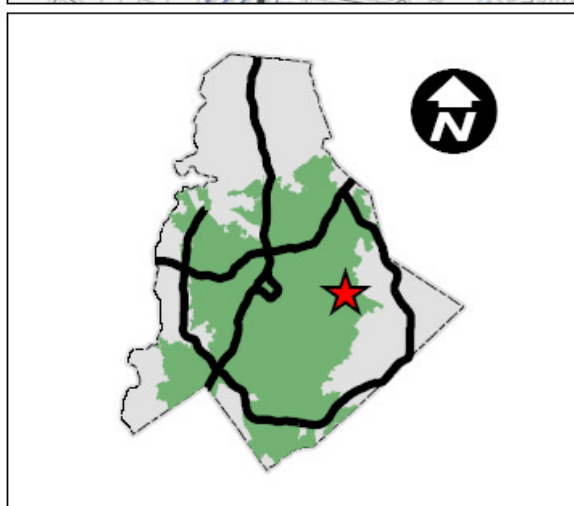
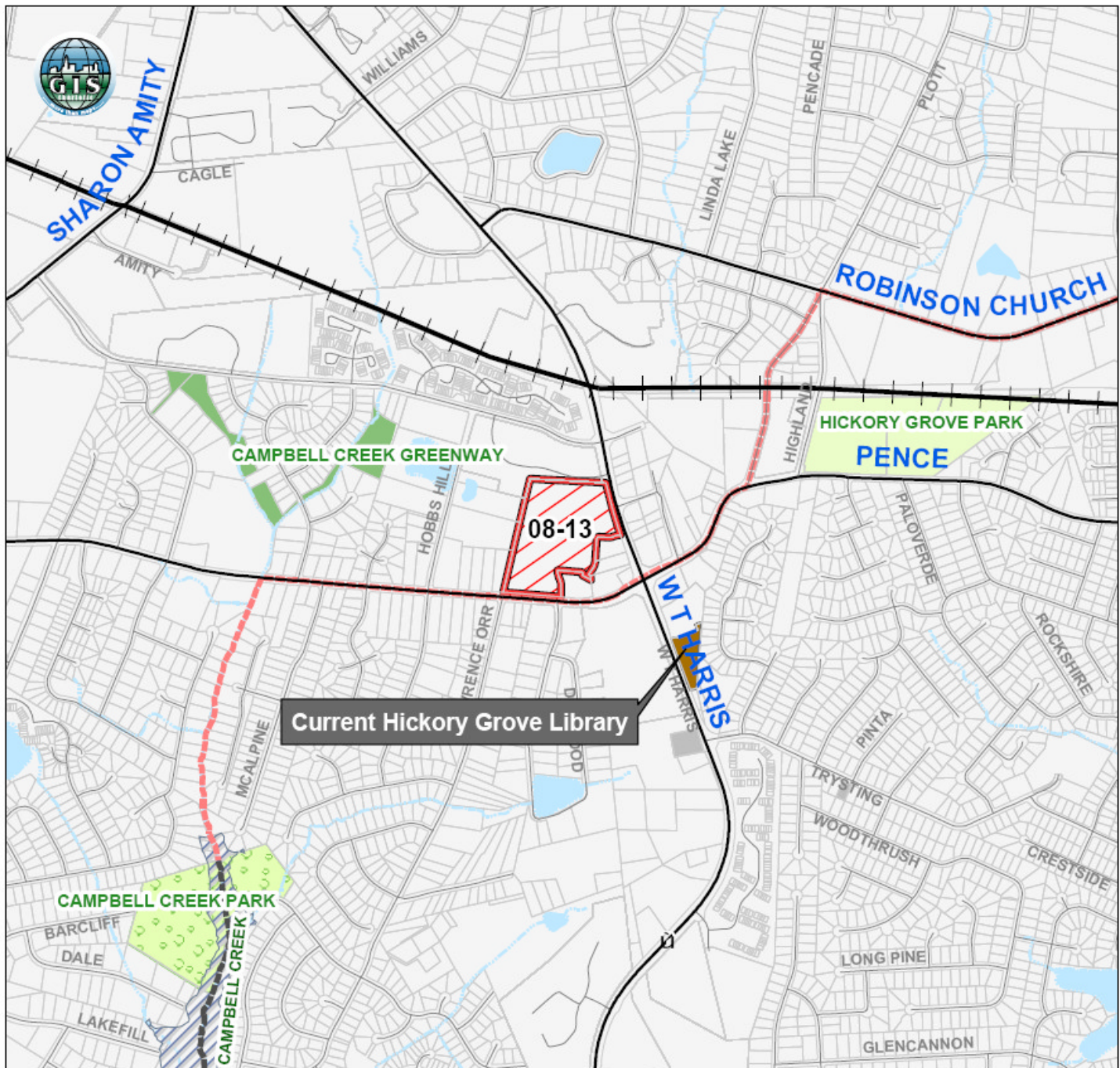
PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff supports the proposed transaction to acquire the vacant parcel to develop a public library.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their March 18, 2008 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.





Mandatory Referral 08-13

Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County

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| Developed Greenway | Mandatory Referral |
| Owned Greenway | Existing Park |
| Proposed Greenway | Proposed Park |
| Greenway Construction | Greenway |
| FEMA 100 Year Floodplain | Preserve |
| | Library Property |