

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 08-25
Proposed Acquisition of Property in Davidson for a Nature Preserve

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County, in cooperation with the Town of Davidson and the Davidson Lands Conservancy, proposes to purchase approximately 90 acres comprised of three tax parcels (PID #s 007-471-99, 007-471-10, 007-471-11) located off Summers Walk Boulevard in the Town of Davidson. This undeveloped site is currently part of Phases III and IV of the Summers Walk subdivision. A site sketch plan has been approved by the Town, however, no engineering plans have been developed. The property is bordered by the West Branch Rocky River and the confluence with the Rocky River to the north, Cabarrus County to the east, Summers Walk subdivision – Phase I and II to the southeast, undeveloped land to the south and southwest, and River Run subdivision – Phase V to the west. Approximately 35 acres is comprised of floodplain and SWIM Buffer, including a biologically significant 23-acre wetland. The remainder of the tract is an upland mixed hardwood-pine forest. The property is zoned RPA (Rural Planning Area) by the Town of Davidson.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

The +/- 23-acre wetland located along the northern property boundary is one of the largest and most biologically diverse wetlands in Mecklenburg County. The site is designated as a Natural Heritage Site of County Significance by the NC Natural Heritage Program in 2007, and has been the subject of herpetological research by Davidson College for approximately five years. Through this research, every species of reptile and amphibian indigenous to wetlands in this area of the Piedmont has been documented at this site, making this wetland uniquely rich in comparison to most local wetlands. A botanical inventory has also been in progress for the past year. Since preservation of surrounding upland areas is critical to the viability of the wetland ecosystem and its wildlife, Mecklenburg County proposes to designate the entire +/- 90 acres as a nature preserve. By definition, nature preserves are designated to protect natural areas for their ecological value and native biodiversity, and as such, facility and associated infrastructure improvements are minimized to the greatest extent possible. Nature preserve improvements often include a nature center, parking lot, and trails.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

This property was identified as a priority natural area acquisition through the Greenprinting process employed in the development of the 2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan. "Greenprinting" is a GIS-based program which identifies properties based upon specific criteria, and the criteria used to identify and prioritize natural areas for acquisition included parcel size, amount of impervious cover, presence of various habitat types, location within a critical watershed, proximity to protected areas, and Natural Heritage Site designation. Development of the site as a nature preserve with a nature center and trails is the highest ranking natural resource project identified in the Park and Recreation 10-Year Capital Needs Assessment. The Greenprinting process also identified a nature center "service gap" in the Davidson area. A nature center at this location will fill that "service gap".

Additionally, the Town of Davidson is in full support of the proposed action.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

"The proposed use of the area as a nature center reinforces our planning principles of preserving substantial amounts of open space and offering residents and visitors an educational outdoor experience", according to the Davidson Town Planning Director.

PROJECT IMPACT:

This project will have a positive impact on the community. In addition to preserving a unique natural area of ecological significance, designation as a nature preserve will conserve open space and provide County residents with another passive recreational amenity for hiking and environmental education. Preservation of the upland acreage and floodplain will also contribute to water quality protection in the Rocky River basin.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

This property is situated between the River Run and Summers Walk subdivisions. The Town of Davidson is planning an east-west street connection between Shearer Road and Summers Walk Boulevard which may impact the property. Mecklenburg County and the Town will work cooperatively to appropriately site the future street along the property boundary to minimize its impact on the nature preserve and the wetland species.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Mecklenburg County anticipates acquiring the property by December 2008. The development of nature preserve amenities (nature center and trails) will be dependent on future funding.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

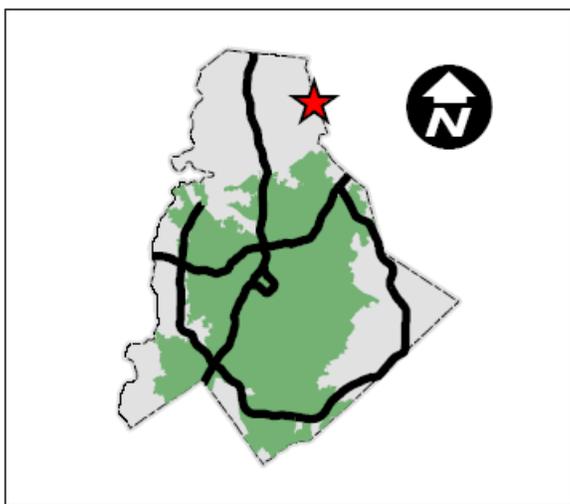
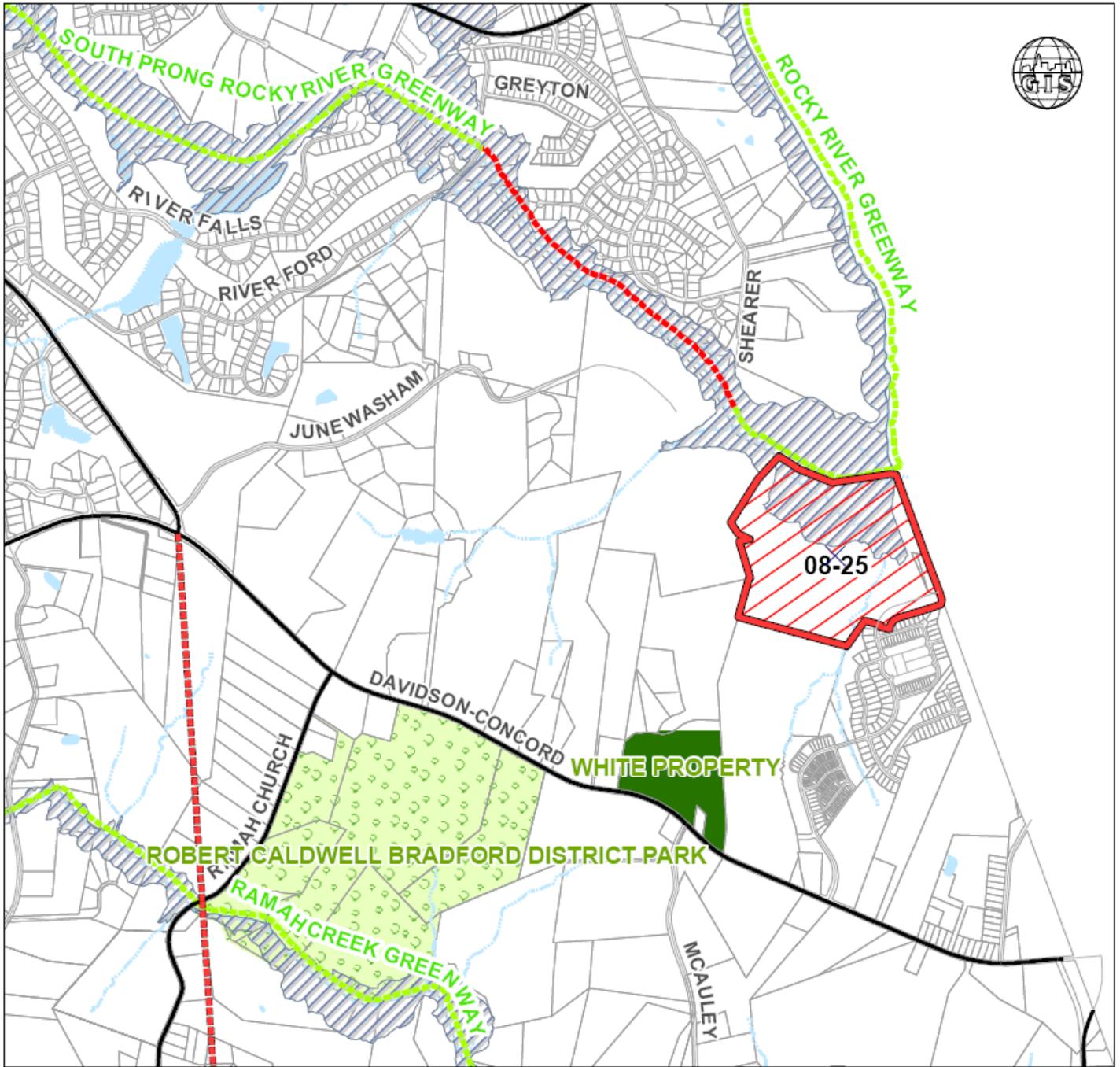
The Joint Use Task Force discussed the matter at their July 2, 2008 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed transaction for the stated use.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

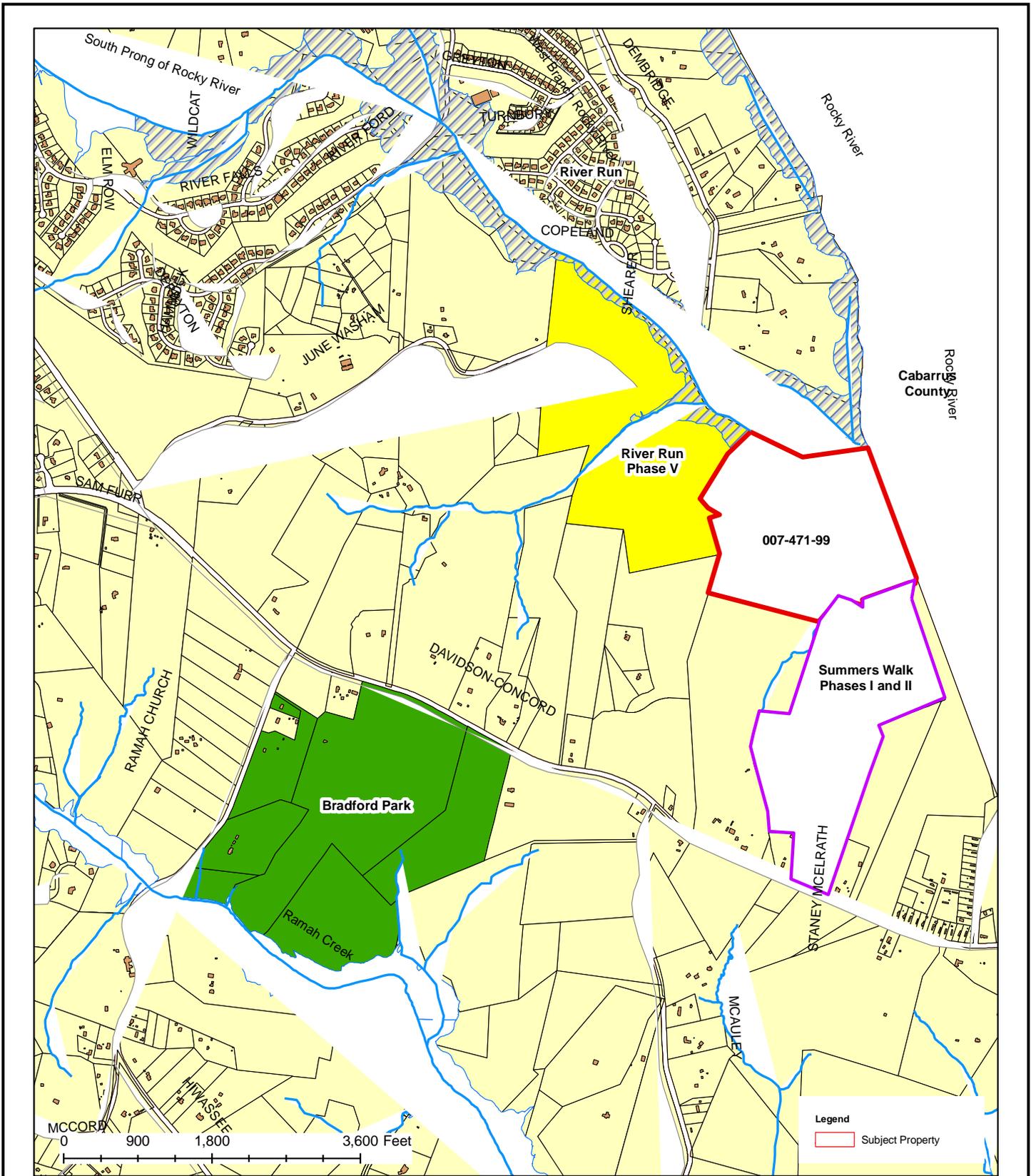
At their July 15, 2008 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 08-25

County Real Estate Services

-  Mandatory Referral
-  Existing Thoroughfare
-  Proposed Thoroughfare
-  Existing Greenway
-  Greenway Construction
-  Proposed Greenway
-  Existing Park
-  Proposed Park
-  Greenway Property
-  Nature Preserve



Nature Preserve Expansion - Davidson
 (Tax Parcels 007-471-99, 007-471-10, 007-471-11)

Real Estate Services Department

