

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 08-40
Proposed Expansion of Auten Nature Preserve In Huntersville ETJ

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County proposes to purchase approximately 7.7 acres consisting of six (6) tax parcels (PID #s: 023-221-13, -14, -15, -16, -17, -18) to expand the 268-acre County-owned Auten Nature Preserve. The property, located on Neck Road in Huntersville's ETJ, is primarily forested and undeveloped. Two mobile homes on the property will either be retained for use by the Park & Recreation department or removed from the property. The intent of this proposed acquisition is to preserve the land in its natural state as open space and to designate it as a nature preserve, thus protecting wildlife habitat and preserving a portion of the Mountain Island Lake watershed. No improvements are planned for the property.

The property is zoned R (Rural district) with MIL-O (Watershed Overlay) by the Town of Huntersville. The Town Zoning Ordinance contains the Mountain Island Lake Watershed Overlay District (MIL-O) to provide for the protection of public water supplies as required by the NC Water Supply Watershed Classification and Protection Act, within that geography that contributes surface drainage into Mountain Island Lake. The intent of these watershed regulations is to require more stringent development standards in the critical areas of the watershed due to the relatively greater risk of water quality degradation associated with physical development. For instance, the subject property lies within Critical Area 2 (CA-2), which allows a maximum of 12 percent impervious surface development.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Acquisition and preservation of open space in the Critical Area of the Mountain Island Lake Watershed continues to be a priority for Mecklenburg County. Preservation of land adjacent to Neck Road will further protect the rural character of this area, in accordance with Huntersville's Zoning Ordinance.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

Expansion of existing park/nature preserve facilities is supported by the 2008 *Park and Recreation Master Plan*. Additionally, the proposed preservation of the property in an undeveloped state supports both the Huntersville Zoning Ordinance as well as the requirements under the NC Water Supply Watershed Classification and Protection Act.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The proposed land acquisition is consistent with the objectives and recommendations of the Town of Huntersville's *Beatties Ford Road Corridor Small Area Plan*, which endorses preservation of land areas in the western part of Huntersville's ETJ. Specifically, the plan says "...lands west of Beatties Ford Road should be to retain preservation goals and to limit recreational use to those areas where preservation interests can support them. An emphasis must be placed on passive and low-impact uses, such as hiking trails, observation decks, boardwalks and similar uses, that minimally impact the environment and allow users to safely enjoy the area's natural environment".

PROJECT IMPACT:

This project will preserve additional open space and contribute to the protection of water quality in the region's most critical watershed. No negative impacts are anticipated.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

This project has no relationship with, nor will it impact, other public or private projects in the vicinity. The sole purpose of this acquisition is the preservation of open space for the protection of water quality and wildlife habitat.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Mecklenburg County anticipates acquiring the property by December 31, 2008.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

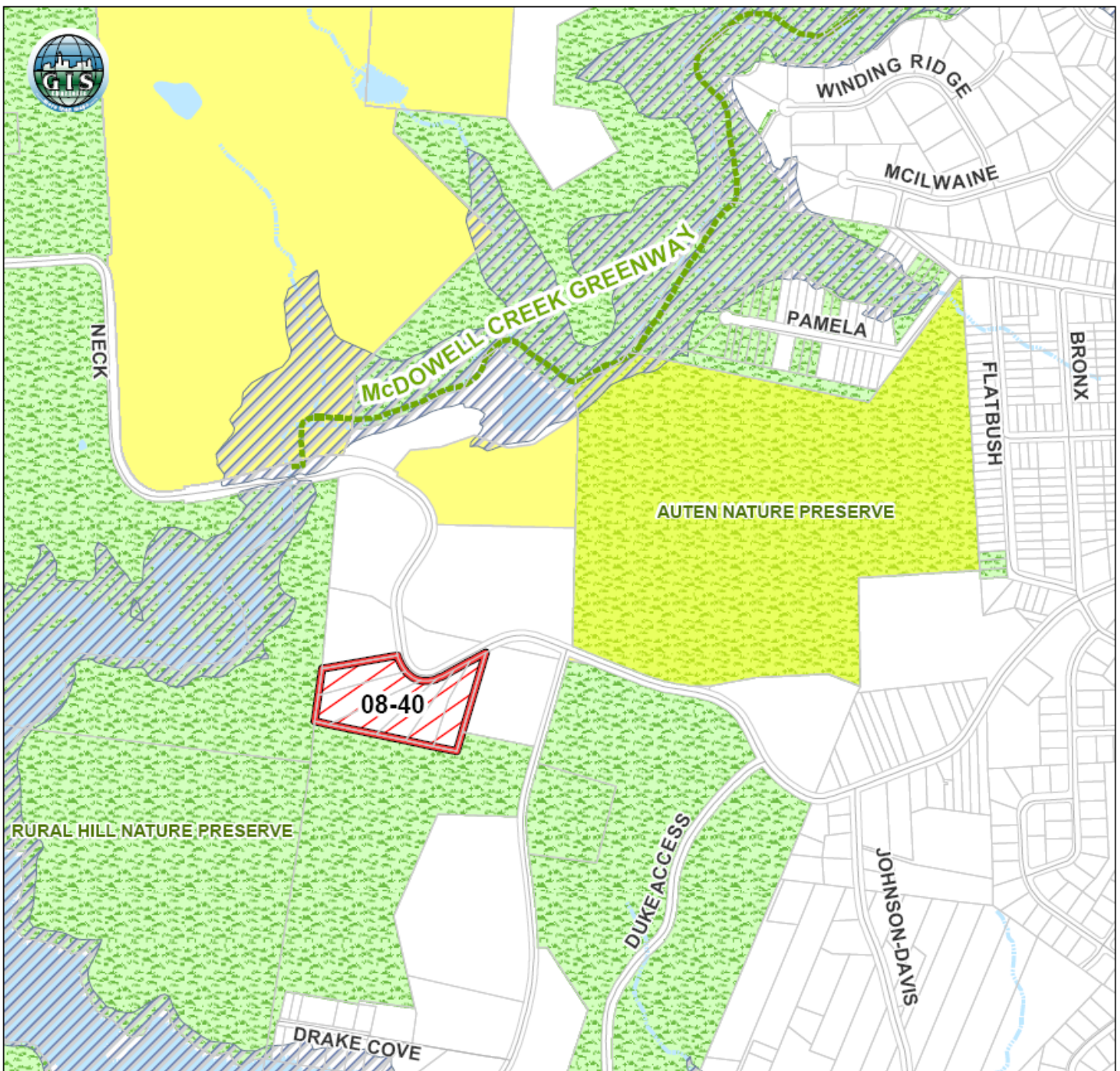
The Joint Use Task Force reviewed this matter at their November 5 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

In concurrence with the Town of Huntersville, Planning staff recommends approval of this transaction because it helps preserve the Town's rural character and heritage as well as provide the public with enhanced opportunities for passive recreational use.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

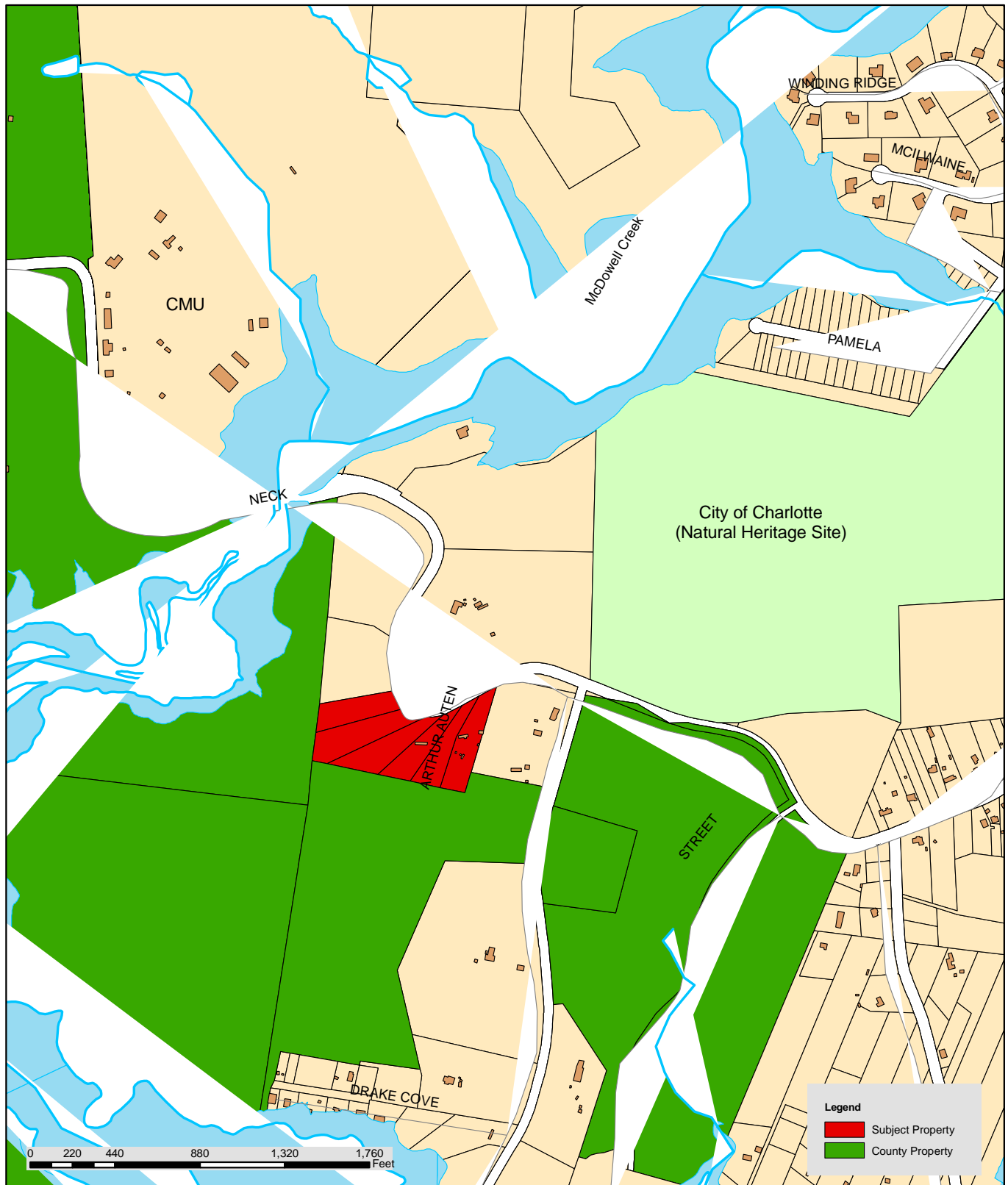
At their November 18, 2008 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 08-40

County Real Estate

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|--|--------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Mandatory Referral | | Existing Greenway |
| | FEMA 100 Year Floodplain | | Greenway Construction |
| | City Property | | Proposed Greenway |
| | Park Property | | |



Proposed Expansion of Auten Nature Preserve

(Tax Parcels 023-221-13 through -18)

Real Estate Services Department

