

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 08-43
Proposed Land Acquisition and Exchange for New First Ward Park Site

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

The County's objective is to locate a new urban park in the First Ward of Uptown Charlotte via a series of described acquisitions and exchange. The new park will replace a park that was formerly located between the Carol Hoeffner Center, 7th, McDowell and 6th Streets, and was traded to the City in 2001 in exchange for most of the block bounded by Brevard, 9th, Caldwell and 8th Streets. The original First Ward Park property was subsequently marketed and sold by the City and has been redeveloped as a mixed-use complex.

The County now proposes to complete acquisition of the Brevard, E. 9th, Caldwell, and E. 8th Street block by acquiring portions of Tax Parcels 08006312 and 08006311 from the City as well as Tax Parcels 08006310 and 08006309 from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. The County-owned Tax Parcels within this block consist of 08006301, 08006304 and 08006308. The total area within this block is +/- 3 acres. The block is vacant except for a 2,000 square-foot one-storey building at the southwest corner of E. 9th and Brevard Streets, and surface parking for First Ward School located across E. 9th Street from the site.

This entire block will be exchanged for privately-owned land within the block bounded by the light rail line, E. 8th, Brevard and E. 7th Streets, which will be the location of the new park and consists of Tax Parcels 08002105, 08002115, 08002114, 08002113, 08002112, 08002111, 08002110, 08002108 and a portion of 08002107. The area is +/- 2.7 acres and does not include the Dixie Tavern building and a small amount of land surrounding that building (part of 08002107). Other than the restaurant building, this block is used for surface parking. All of the properties involved in the land exchange are zoned UMUD.

The new park site is across E. 7th Street from Imaginon and will extend to the new University of North Carolina Charlotte building to be constructed at the northwest corner of E. 9th and Brevard Streets. The park will extend across E. 8th Street to the edges of the UNCC building and another building to be constructed adjacent to the UNCC site. The undeveloped portion of the UNCC block will be leased by the County for park use, and an underground parking garage will be constructed beneath 2/3's of this block. (See diagram.) The section of E. 8th Street between the light rail line and Brevard Street will have a special surface treatment and will be designed to be closed during certain park events; although it will remain an operational street.

The property to be exchanged and to be acquired by a private development interest will be developed in accordance with the current (UMUD) zoning requirements.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

A park adjoining the light rail line in this vicinity has long been envisioned. This park project is part of the ongoing effort to create park/open space within the City's central core for the use and enjoyment of workers, residents and tourists, and to replace the former First Ward Park. The subject park site is within the context of redevelopment of an area which has been vacant and/or used for surface parking for several years. The new park will have educational "bookends" provided by Imaginon and UNCC's new building.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The new park site is part of ongoing redevelopment of various sections of the central core area within the I-277 loop. This new park is consistent with the objectives of the 2008 *Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation 10-Year Master Plan* and will be included in the more specific park master plan focused on the area within the I-277 loop.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The properties under consideration for the park were identified in the *First Ward Master Plan* adopted by City Council July 28, 1997 as having future residential, business and mixed use land uses. The plan did not identify these parcels as future open space locations. In May 2000, the Charlotte City Council and Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners adopted the *Center City 2010 Vision Plan*. The recommendations for these sites were for an Educational Quad and Multi-family Housing. The new UNCC building is consistent with the educational component; however, open space on this site is not a plan recommendation.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The project will provide a convenient green space for residents, students, workers and tourists. The property traded to the developer will be developed in some fashion consistent with its zoning as part of ongoing redevelopment in First Ward. The approximately 300 surface parking spaces on the Levine Property will have to be relocated. CMS will have to find a new location for parking currently on its site on Caldwell. This will be a hardship for the workers needing affordable uptown parking.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

Development of a new park in First Ward will complement existing and planned projects here such as First Ward School, Imaginon, UNCC, new residential and office space, etc. The park will adjoin and be visible from the light rail line. A section of E. 8th Street will become “dressed” for special events while maintaining its function as a transportation corridor.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

This part of the project (land exchange) requires no funding.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their November 5, 2008 meeting and no comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Due to the unique opportunity to locate a park between the new UNCC building and Imaginon, staff supports the land swap. The new park will provide open space opportunities that were not considered in earlier planning efforts. The park will also create a new address location for future development.

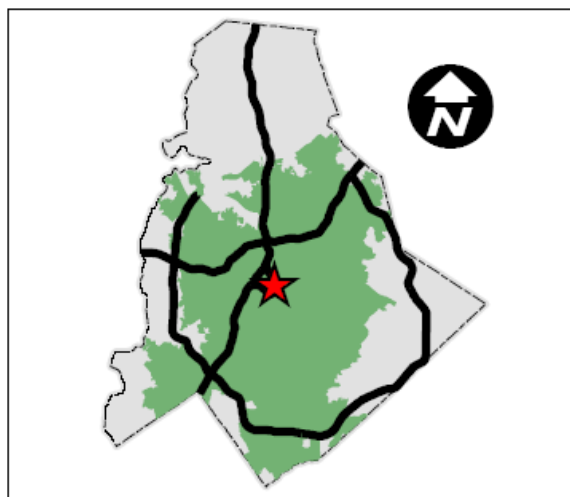
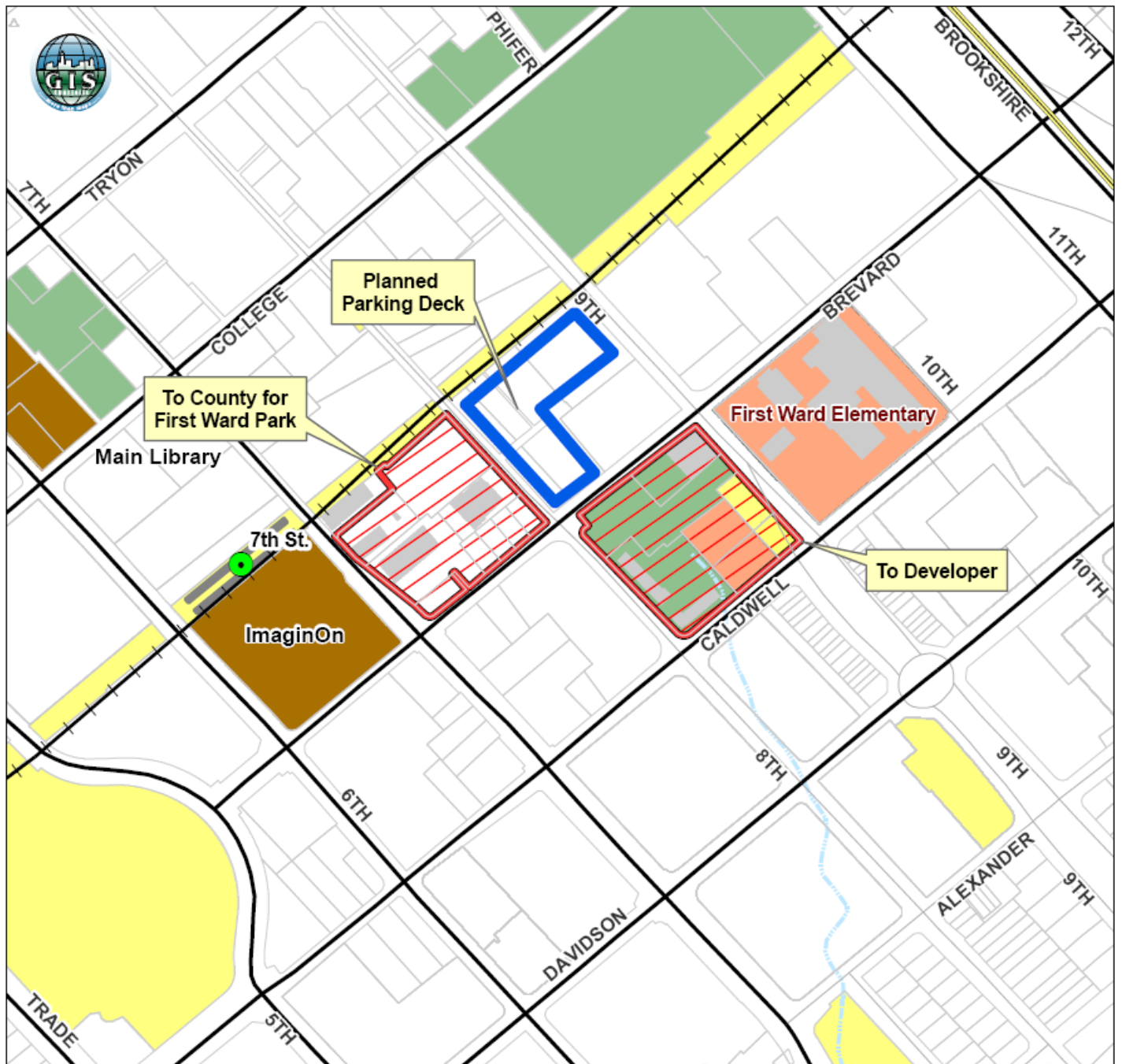
CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

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






LEVINE
PROPERTIES





Mandatory Referral 08-43

County Real Estate

-  Mandatory Referral 08-43
-  City Property
-  CMS Property
-  Park Property
-  County Property
-  South Corridor Transit Station