

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 09-06

Proposed Lease and Joint Use of City-Owned Property at Alexander Street (and Other Related Improvements)

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

The City of Charlotte proposes joint use between the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) and Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation (P&R), of a City-owned parcel for CATS expansion (maintenance) and park expansion of a soccer field and construction of a walking path. The property, the site of the former Alexander Street Recreation Center, is located at 910 N. Alexander Street (PID 081-086-07), across the street from the existing CATS facility at 12th Street and N. Alexander Street, and north of (and adjacent to) Mecklenburg County's Alexander Park. The total area of the property is approximately 3.65 acres and is zoned O-2 (Office). The City of Charlotte proposes to retain ownership of the property.

A third partner in this transaction is Trinity Episcopal School (TES), located at 750 E. 9th St., few blocks away from the subject property, who desires expanded outdoor recreational opportunities for its students.

The CATS proposal calls for the construction of a 31,000 square foot maintenance shop to accommodate CATS Special Transportation Services (STS) personnel at the northwest portion of the site, and development of the remaining northern half of the property into a 122 fleet vehicle parking structure. P&R proposes to expand an existing soccer field and add a perimeter walking trail on its adjacent property (to the south) and the southeastern corner (approx. 0.46 acres) of this City parcel. The field and track will be used by Trinity Episcopal School (TES) during school hours and by the public at other times. The portion of the property to be developed by P&R will be leased to them by the City. P&R will be responsible for operation, management, and maintenance of the recreational portion of the property.

In order to accommodate the parking needs of the CATS facility across Alexander Street, CATS also proposes the construction of a parking deck on its property adjacent to the subject property (replacing a current surface lot). The current proposal includes a 2 ½ level deck with approximately 325 parking spaces for CATS staff and CATS visitors. (There are no plans to incorporate spaces for public parking.) CATS also plans to park STS buses on its existing paved lot on McGill Garden Way (formerly Linden Lane).

P&R has also been working with the Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) and TES to expand the nearby Alexander Street Park that will include a segment of Little Sugar Creek greenway, six lighted tennis courts, and expansion of the existing soccer field. As part of this plan, P&R intends to relocate the existing playground equipment, shelter, and basketball court to the Seigle Point (redeveloped Piedmont Court property) side of Little Sugar Creek to make room for the soccer field. (P&R is leasing a portion of Seigle Point from CHA for this change, with CHA constructing two half-court basketball courts between the proposed tennis courts and the new playground location.) TES is also providing capital contributions to fund a portion of the construction.

Better than half the site lies within a FEMA-designated flood zone, and the redevelopment scheme represents an opportunity to utilize property that would otherwise have limited uses. Specifically, the CATS facility is proposed to be developed outside of the floodplain portion of the site, while the recreational facilities are proposed to be developed within the floodplain.

In order to accommodate the proposed development on the subject parcel, it has been proposed to rezone the entire property from O-2 to B-2 (CD) to allow development of the CATS facility on a portion of the property (petition 2009-039).

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

This scheme will accommodate the future needs of CATS (STS division) while expanding park and recreation opportunities in this under-served segment of the community, while supporting the Seigle Point redevelopment initiative. It will also enable a future pedestrian connection by P&R between the Little Sugar Creek greenway and the McGill Rose Garden.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

This proposal is consistent with City Council's Housing and Neighborhood Development focus area whose emphasis is on "Creating great neighborhoods in which to live, work and play." This proposal also supports the focus on the environment as creating playing fields on this property rather than surface parking preserves green open space in what could be considered an environmentally sensitive area as it is near Little Sugar Creek and because it will be a point along the County's Greenway system.

The proposed expansion of Alexander Street Park is consistent with the Mecklenburg County *Park and Recreation Master Plan* (2008). The expanded park will provide much needed active athletic amenities, constructed to applicable standards for league and competition play, in the Uptown area.

Additionally, it is likely that dimensional variances will be needed to minimize setbacks of the proposed parking structure along N. Alexander Street.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Belmont Revitalization Plan* (2003) recommends Recreational Open Space as the land use for the entire subject parcel, and recommends Industrial for the adjoining CATS facility, upon which the parking structure is proposed..

PROJECT IMPACT:

These plans will enable CATS to expand its maintenance operations while also supporting recreational use for TES students and the public.

Recreational impacts include enhancing opportunities for future residents of Seigle Point, supporting expansion of the Little Sugar Creek Greenway, and supporting the athletic program at TES.

The proposal will increase pedestrian traffic between the site and TES during school hours, and from neighboring residential areas using the park. When the site hosts team sports, increased vehicular traffic could be expected.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

Other City projects planned for this area that would tie nicely to this proposal include the Belmont Gateways and Seigle Avenue Streetscape projects. P&R is also working with Charlotte Department of Transportation and Charlotte Engineering & Property Management for pedestrian improvements at the intersection of 10th and 12th Streets to bring additional aesthetic appeal to the area.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Construction of the soccer field and track is expected to begin in early summer, 2009 with construction completion in late 2009 or January 2010.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

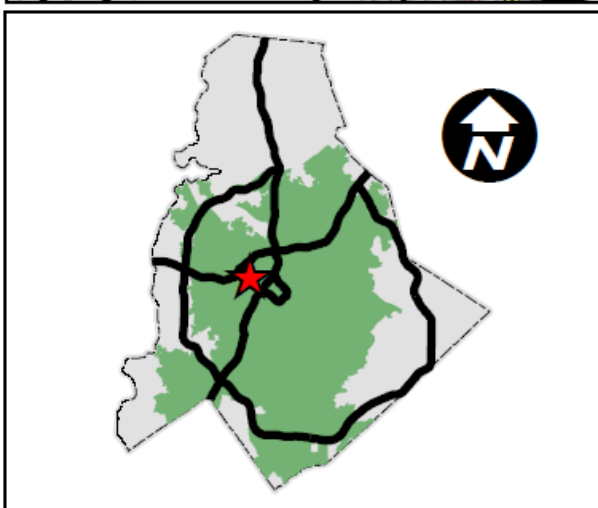
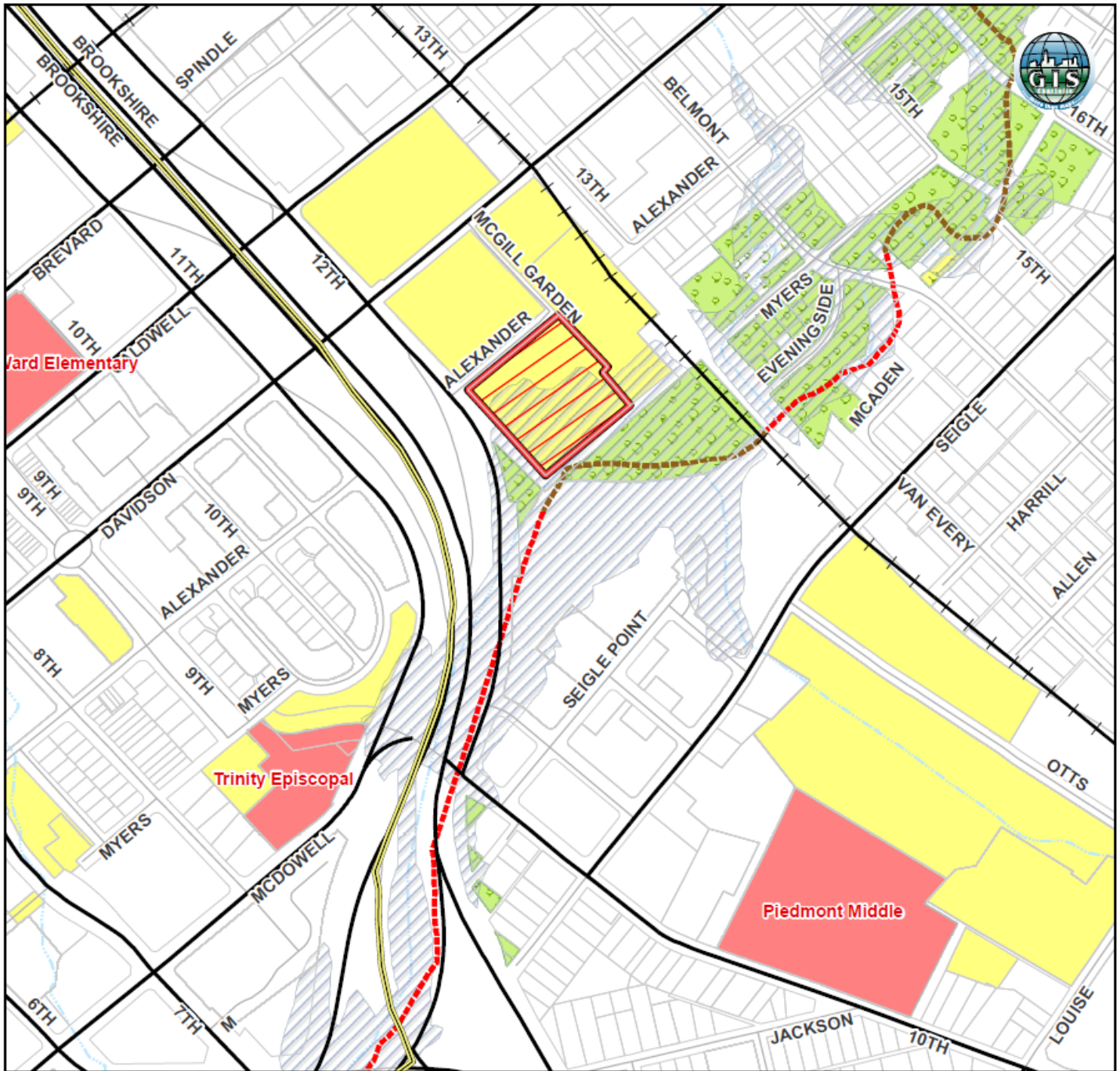
The Joint Use Task Force discussed the matter at its April 1, 2009 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Though the *Belmont Revitalization Plan* recommends open space for the entire subject parcel, staff supports the proposed uses on the parcel, given the unique opportunities and circumstances coupled with the fact that establishment of open space at this location is consistent with the vision of the Plan.








CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their April 21, 2009 meeting, the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 6-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 09-06

City Real Estate

-  Mandatory Referral
-  Park Property
-  County Property
-  City Property
-  Existing Greenway
-  Greenway Construction
-  Proposed Greenway

Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

CATS' Design

