

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 10-21
Proposed Land Exchange of County Owned Property in Rockwell Park
for Habitat for Humanity Owned Property in Reid Park

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

This project is a proposed land exchange between Mecklenburg County and Habitat for Humanity of Charlotte, Inc.. The County acquired Tax Parcel #043-011-23 (+/- 0.344 acres) in 2003 through a tax auction. The nearby Theresa Elder Park does not contain any indoor facilities and the intent of the above acquisition was (1) to provide residential access to the nearby Rockwell A.M.E. Zion Church Family Life Center (that was to be constructed on West Sugar Creek Road) where public activities could take place (including the option of Park and Recreation sponsored activities) and (2) to function as a pedestrian corridor for residents of the Rockwell Park neighborhood to access the proposed Family Life Center.

Habitat for Humanity would like to acquire Tax Parcel #043-011-23 in exchange for seven parcels it owns in the Reid Park neighborhood (totaling +/- 13.456 acres) that could cumulatively serve as a stand-alone linear neighborhood park or an expansion of the Amay James Community Park at a later date. Habitat for Humanity would plan on erecting a house on the Rockwell Park property following transfer. To fulfill the County's intent to provide pedestrian access to the Rockwell A.M.E. Zion Church Family Life Center (if and when it is constructed), the County will retain a 15-foot wide easement on the property. The parcels that Mecklenburg County will gain through this exchange consist of:

Tax Parcel #145-172-04, +/- 0.30 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential
Tax Parcel #145-172-10, +/- 8.163 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential
Tax Parcel #145-173-08, +/- 0.233 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential
Tax Parcel #145-173-11, +/- 0.79 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential
Tax Parcel #145-174-08, +/- 1.97 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential
Tax Parcel #145-186-04, +/- 1.2 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential
Tax Parcel #145-186-06, +/- 0.80 acres, R-5 zoned single family residential

Habitat for Humanity originally acquired the surplus property that it deemed unbuildable in Reid Park (due to difficult topography) in a purchase that also included multiple other lots that were suitable for development. They never had any intention of building on this surplus property. The hope all along has been that a deal with the County could be reached wherein the property could be conveyed to the County so that the County could ultimately develop a lateral park in the area. Both the County and Habitat for Humanity feel that this will ultimately benefit the existing neighborhood as well as the new neighbors who will be moving in as a result of Habitat's efforts to construct affordable houses on the aforementioned buildable lots.

All the subject properties are vacant.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Acquisition of the above parcels will allow the County to either expand Amay James Community Park or develop a linear neighborhood park in the area at a future date. Development of small parks within easy walking distance of residential neighborhoods was identified as a top priority in the community needs assessment and is, therefore, reflected as a high priority in the 2008 *10-Year Park and Recreation Master Plan*. Additionally, the 2008 *10-Year Park and Recreation Master Plan* also identified a need for additional community parks that are no more than a 15 minute drive of residents.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The 2008 *10-Year Park and Recreation Master Plan* identified the need for additional neighborhood parks (2 – 20 acres in size) and community parks (20-100 acres in size) based on a community needs assessment and "best practices" of similar-sized cities and counties across the nation. Acquisition of properties for future park development is based on specific criteria including: property size (acres), proximity to existing park facilities, schools and libraries, population served within a certain radius, and opportunity of available property.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Central District Plan* (1993) recommends single family development up to 5 dwelling units per acre on the Reid Park properties. Park development in areas prescribed for residential development in area plans is generally considered consistent with plan recommendations, so that the recommended use is considered to be consistent with the *Central District Plan*.

The *Northeast District Plan* (1996) recommends single family development of up to 8 dwelling units per acre on the Rockwell Park property; the proposed development of a single family structure on this parcel is therefore consistent with the *Northeast District Plan*. Additionally, the Rockwell Park property lies within ½ mile of the proposed Derita Station of the North Corridor commuter rail line. Consequently, development activity is to be guided by the *Transit Station Area Principles*, adopted by City Council in 2001. The *Principles* address development character in proximity to proposed transit stations, and include mixture of land uses, intensity, pedestrian, bicycle, and street networks, and building/site design. Inclusion of a pedestrian easement on the Rockwell park site following development will help recognize the enhancement of bicycle and pedestrian mobility.

PROJECT IMPACT:

This project will have a positive impact on the community. Upon future funding for park development, this project will provide additional open space/recreational opportunities for residents in this area of the City.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

This project has no relationship with, nor is it anticipated to impact, other public or private development projects in the vicinity, with the following exceptions:

- The Reid Park properties are in proximity to Amay James elementary school, scheduled to close in May, 2011.
- As noted elsewhere, the Rockwell Park property is located within ½ mile of the proposed Derita transit station. Financial uncertainties make it impossible to estimate the development timeline.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

The County has not estimated the project completion timeline.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force reviewed this matter at their December 1, 2010 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that Mecklenburg County convey the Rockwell park property to Habitat for Humanity for the purpose of developing a single family home. Given its location in a transit station area, it is recommended that community design elements be taken into account in the design of the structure and its site, such as:

- Locate parking to the rear of the building
- Front porch – if provided – should be 6 to 8 feet in depth
- Home should be constructed on raised foundations as opposed to slab-on-grade

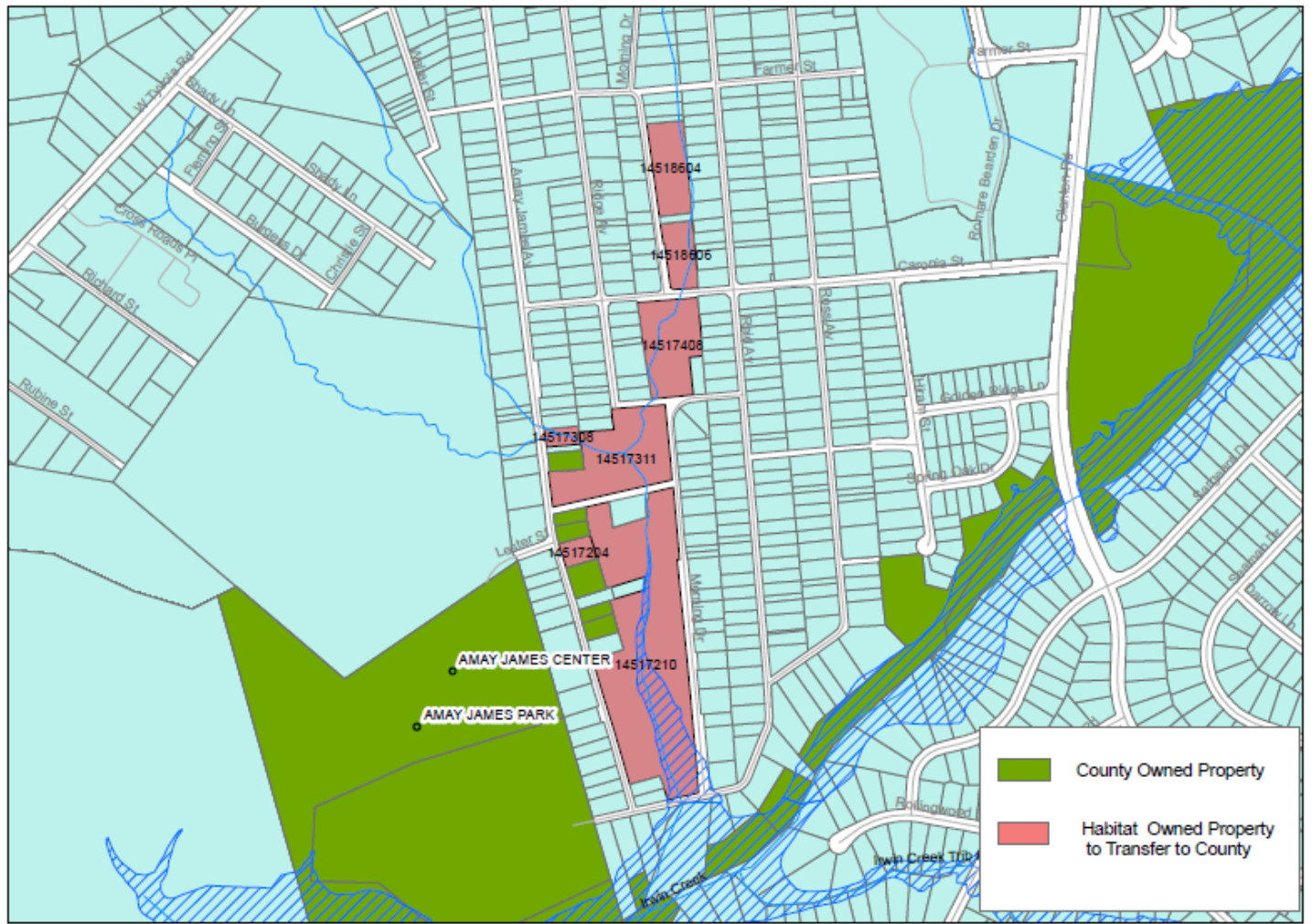
It is further recommended that the Reid Park properties (except for one parcel) should be conveyed to Mecklenburg County for the purpose of developing a future neighborhood linear park, given the topographical challenges rendering major portions of these properties impossible to develop. Staff recognizes that it might be possible to subdivide a limited number of relatively level portions of the Habitat holdings and designate them for residential development, but by doing so it would negatively impact the ability of the County to create (along with property already owned by the County) a linear park. Staff also suggests that design of this future linear park NOT include severing of Reid Avenue and Caronia Street that both bisect the Habitat properties. In this fashion, neighborhood connectivity may be maintained.

Finally, it is recommended that Mecklenburg County and Habitat for Humanity re-think the proposed use for parcel 145-173-08. This property appears to be relatively level and therefore potentially capable of supporting new residential development, while (unlike other level areas on the Habitat holdings), its location - relative to the other Habitat and County properties - would not preclude development of the linear park concept were it to be excluded from the park plan.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their December 14, 2010 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval (with staff stated conditions) by a 6-0 vote.

Habitat for Humanity Property to Transfer to Mecklenburg County



Mecklenburg County Property to Transfer to Habitat for Humanity

