

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 14-17

Proposed Expansion of Clarks Creek Nature Preserve off Hucks Road in Charlotte

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

This project is the proposed acquisition of ±8.17 acres (Tax Parcel 027-161-02) located at 5532 Hucks Road in the City of Charlotte for the expansion of Clarks Creek Nature Preserve. The property is improved with a single family dwelling, several outbuildings and a barn. It is zoned R-4 (single family residential) according to the City of Charlotte's Zoning Ordinance.

A number of years ago the Davis Family donated the property for Clarks Creek Nature Preserve to Mecklenburg County. The patriarch of the Davis Family has recently passed away and the family now wishes to sell this piece of the property to "complete" the nature preserve.

There are several subdivisions of single family homes to the south and west of the property. Clarks Creek Nature Preserve occupies the majority of the land to the east of the parcel. South of the property across Hucks Road is Hucks Road Community Park. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Croft Community School (kindergarten through grade 5) is also located across Hucks Road to the southeast of the property.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

This parcel is adjacent to the existing Clarks Creek Nature Preserve and would allow for the expansion and installation of a parking lot, picnic shelter, playground, and restrooms for nature preserve patrons. The acquisition of this property is supported by the surrounding residents, Croft Community School, and Park & Recreation property. Croft Community School currently uses the property for outdoor education and the school Parent Teachers Association and the Homeowners Association surrounding the Nature Preserve have raised money to support the installation of the amenities in this Nature Preserve. Additionally, Park & Recreation has been offered a donation of a nature themed playground for placement in the Nature Preserve. The new playground would be best suited to the parcel for this proposed land acquisition.

Constructing the picnic shelter, restrooms and playground on this parcel would require Park & Recreation to install a buffer on the only western edge of the property. Also, this parcel has electricity, a water source, and a partial tree buffer on the western edge of the property.

The Clarks Creek Nature Preserve is comprised of woody vegetation as well as small trees and open fields. Clarks Creek is home to several imperiled bird species and several other plant species native to the North Carolina. Acquiring this land would assist in protecting these species and providing cover for bird species of field and edge habitats.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

This acquisition is consistent with the County's *2008 Nature Preserves Master Plan* which encourages the expansion of existing nature preserves and the preservation of natural habitats.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Northeast District Plan* (1996) predates the creation of the Nature Preserve, and shows the subject, as well as the Nature Preserve, as residential. The *Prosperity Hucks Area Plan* is now in development, but not yet adopted. The plan reflects the Clarks Creek Nature Preserve as an open space element, but still shows the subject for residential use. Area plans generally do not designate privately owned property for public or open space use. The plan did not anticipate that this particular site might be available for expansion of the Nature Preserve. However the plan articulates support for continued extension of parks, greenways, and open spaces as valuable assets to the community. The plan's public input process elicited strong support for the Nature Preserve, and for expansion of open space.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The project will allow Park & Recreation to meet its goals of increasing the amount of open space and add additional amenities available to County residents. The project will meet community goals and support outdoor recreation for neighboring schools.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

This property is to be utilized for recreational use ancillary to the nature preserve land. It does not affect any other known public projects in this area.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

This project is land acquisition only. The transaction is expected to be complete by late June 2014.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

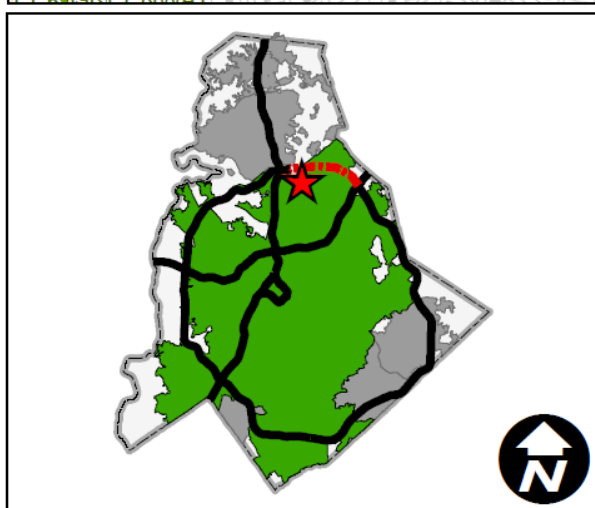
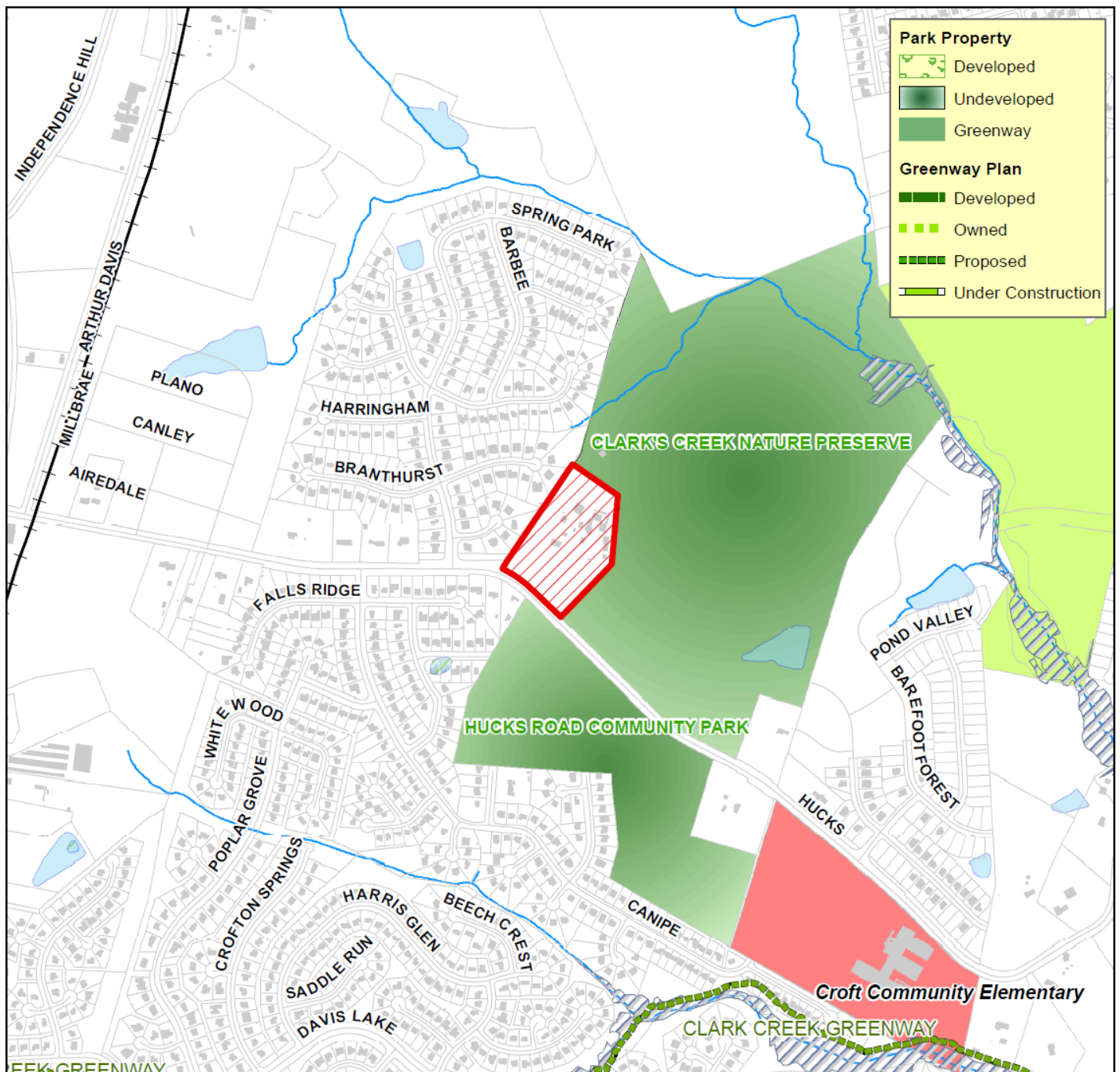
The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their April 2, 2014 meeting and it was suggested that the playground equipment described as a possible improvement to the subject property might better serve the community if it was placed on the school property. County Real Estate and CMS staffs offered to mutually explore this possibility.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The proposal is consistent with the *Prosperity Hucks Area Plan's* recommendation for continued extension of parks, greenways, and open spaces. While not yet adopted by council, the public input process elicited strong support for the Nature Preserve and for expansion of open space. As such, staff recommends approval of the proposal.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their April 15, 2014 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 6-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 14-17

Initiated by: Park & Recreation
Submitted by: County Real Estate

- Mandatory Referral
- City Property
- County Property
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department