

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 14-36
Proposed Acquisition and Lease in Northwest Charlotte for Long Creek Park and Greenway

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County proposes to acquire tax parcel 033-231-10 (±21.388 acres) along Long Creek in Charlotte's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. The property proposed for acquisition is off Simpson Road and is currently vacant and zoned R-3 (Single Family Residential) according to the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance.

In addition, it is proposed that the County lease from the NC Department of Transportation an additional 14 parcels totaling 144.358 acres nearby and to assemble the acquired and leased properties in the area to eventually create a park and Long Creek Greenway. This property (detailed in the table below) was acquired for the Interstate 485 right-of-way and is no longer needed for that completed project.

Parcel #	Acreage	Zoning	Area Plan and Land Use Recommendation
033-221-12	17.518	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-221-13	10.525	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-221-14	2.58	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Parks & Open Space
033-221-15	1.49	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Parks & Open Space
033-221-16	19.70	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-221-17	13.665	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Single-Family Residential (<4DUA) and Greenway
033-221-20	17.88	R-3 single family residential	Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002); Single-Family Residential (<4DUA) and Greenway
033-221-21	17.92	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-064-08	3.67	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-231-20	10.85	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-231-21	5.80	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-231-22	5.60	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-231-23	4.87	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
033-231-25	12.29	R-3 single family residential	West Side Strategic Plan (2000); Parks & Open Space and Greenway
TOTAL	144.358		

All the property is vacant although it is traversed by overhead electrical transmission lines. It is surrounded by vacant property and a few single-family residences. The northern boundary is formed by I-485, the western boundary by Brookshire Boulevard (NC 16), and the southern boundary by Long Creek.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation sees an opportunity to use expand its recreational presence in this area by using both the property proposed for acquisition and to be leased for park purposes, including running trails, passive open space and possibly mountain bike trails with support facilities such as parking and restrooms located on the Shuffletown Community Park property, immediately to the west of the State property. The park could potentially host activities and events that would be a regional draw. Long Creek Greenway trail would also be extended through this property along the creek to connect to Shuffletown Community Park, creating another amenity for the community. Long Creek is an identified greenway corridor in the *2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan*.

The property identified for acquisition is considered to be a significant parcel, in that it is home to a Piedmont Alluvial Forest (see attached information sheet) and upland forest and has high quality natural areas that have only been minimally impacted by invasive species. This area is contiguous to similar habitat on adjacent County-owned property and is helping to project the water quality of the Long Creek watershed. The area is also providing important habitat for a

variety of resident and migratory wildlife. Broad-winged Hawk, an uncommon nesting species within the County, was documented as breeding on the property during Park and Recreation's site visit.

County Park and Recreation is also proposing a long term lease with NCDOT for over 144 acres of residual properties originally purchased for the construction of I-485. The NCDOT property stretches along Long Creek from Brookshire Boulevard to just short of Oakdale Road, and would be a good means of completing this segment of Long Creek greenway while connecting with the Shuffletown Community Park property immediately to the west.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

The *Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation 10 Year Master Plan* (2008) supports creating and expanding parks that have the capacity to support regional events and encourages the expansion of the County's greenway system. The acquisition of this parcel also meets the goals of the County's Surface Water Improvement and Management policy (1996) by taking the parcel out of play for future development ensuring the protection of the creek and tributaries.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The property proposed for acquisition (tax parcel 033-231-10) lies within the *Northwest District Plan* (adopted 1990), which recommends the location of single-family land uses (up to 4 DUA) and greenway.

The land proposed to be leased from the NC Department of Transportation includes several parcels, seven of which are included in the Brookshire/I-485 Interchange Study (2002), and seven that are in the *West Side Strategic Plan* (2000). The adopted land uses are listed in the table above and are generally consistent with the proposed use for park space and a greenway. Portions of two parcels are recommended for single-family land uses (up to 4 DUA).

Adopted land use policy plans do not identify all areas that are appropriate for planned or future parks and/or greenways. Typically, parks and greenways are compatible with the surrounding single-family land uses. The use of the property for a greenway meets the plan's intent to foster a livable and attractive quality community and will reduce the impact on environmentally sensitive land.

PROJECT IMPACT:

There is no known impact to other public projects.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

There are no known other projects in the vicinity.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

This project is for land acquisition and lease only and is expected to be completed by late fall/early winter 2014

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

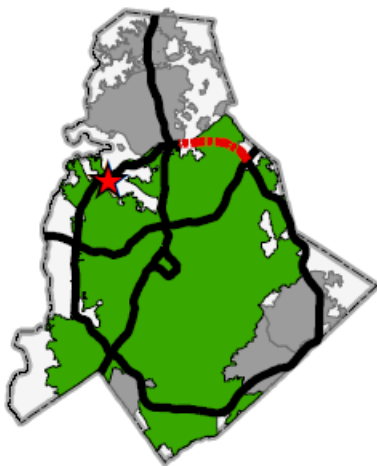
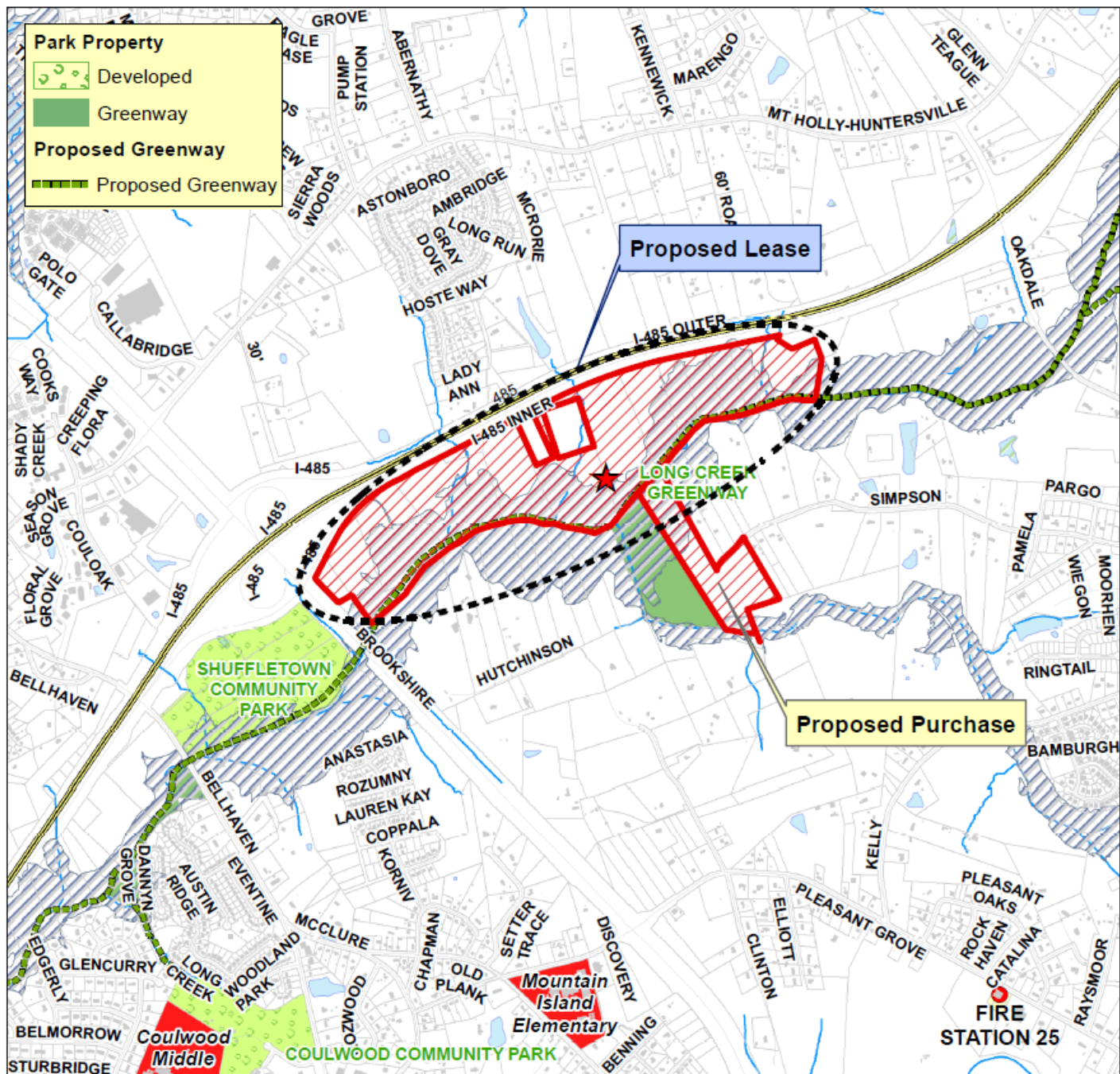
No joint use comments were offered. However, in response to a question about the length of the lease, County staff replied that they're looking at a 50-year lease with the NCDOT.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed use of the property as a greenway meets the plan's intent to foster a livable and attractive quality community and will reduce the impact on environmentally sensitive land. Staff recommends approval of the land acquisition and land lease to be used for a park space and a greenway.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their September 16, 2014 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 14-36

Initiated by: Park & Recreation

Submitted by: County Real Estate



Mandatory Referral



FEMA 100 Year Floodplain



Schools



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

Piedmont Alluvial Forest

Sites: Occurs along river and stream floodplains in which separate fluvial landforms and associated vegetation zones are too small to distinguish.

Soils: Various alluvial soils, mostly Monacan series.

Hydrology: Seasonally or intermittently flooded.

Vegetation:

Canopy: The canopy is a mixture of bottomland and mesophytic trees including *Betula nigra* (**River birch**), *Platanus occidentalis* (**Sycamore**), *Liquidambar styraciflua* (Sweetgum), *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Yellow poplar), *Ulmus americana* (American elm), *Celtis laevigata* (**Southern hackberry**), *Juglans nigra* (Black walnut), *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* (Green ash), *Carya cordiformis* (Bitternut hickory), *C. ovata* (Shagbark hickory) and *Acer rubrum* (Red maple).



Understory: Understory trees include *Acer negundo* (**Box elder**), *A. floridanum* (Southern sugar maple), *A. rubrum* (Red maple), *Halesia carolina* (Silverbell)(confined to the NW part of the County), *Asimina triloba* (**Pawpaw**), *Ilex opaca* (American holly) and *Carpinus caroliniana* (**Ironwood**). Shrubs may include *Lindera benzoin* (Spicebush), *Euonymus americanus* (Strawberry bush), *Aesculus sylvatica* (Painted buckeye), *Corylus cornuta* (Beaked hazelnut) and *Cornus amomum* (Silky dogwood). Vines are frequently prominent, including *Toxicodendron radicans* (Poison ivy), *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper), *Bignonia capreolata* (Cross vine), *Vitis* spp. (Grape), *Menispermum canadense* (Moonseed), and *Smilax* spp (Greenbrier).

Groundcover: The herb layer is generally lush and diverse. Species include *Erythronium americanum* (Trout lily), *Claytonia virginica* (Spring beauty), *Stellaria pubera* (Chickweed), *Solidago pubera* (Goldenrod), *Eurybia divaricata* (Common white heart-leaved aster), *Elymus virginicus* (Wild rye grass), *Polystichum acrostichoides* (Christmas fern), *Botrypus virginianus* (Rattlesnake fern), *Uvularia sessilifolia* (Bellflower), *Boehmeria cylindrica* (False nettle), *Elymus hystrix* (Bottlebrush grass), *Chasmanthium latifolium* (River oats), *C. laxa* (Slender spikegrass), *Sedum ternatum* (Stonecrop), *Geum canadense* (Avens), *Tovara* [*Polygonum*] *virginianum* (Jumpseed), *Verbesina alternifolia* (Common wingstem), *Impatiens capensis* (Touch-me-not), *Cryptotaenia canadensis* (Honewort), *Viola* spp. (Violet) and *Arisaema triphyllum* (Jack-in-the-pulpit).

Rare Plants: Rare plants in this community may include *Eurybia mirabilis* (Piedmont aster), *Carex projecta* (Sedge), *Dirca palustris* (Leatherwood), *Quercus bicolor* (Swamp white oak), *Q. muehlenbergii* (Yellow chinquapin oak), and *Silphium perfoliatum* (Cup-plant).

Dynamics: Flood-carried sediment provides nutrient input, but also serves as a natural disturbance factor. Beavers occasionally create impoundments (see Piedmont Semipermanent Impoundment).

Associations: Grades into various mesic, dry-mesic, or dry upland forests.

Comments: Distinguished from communities of larger floodplains by the absence or poor development of the depositional fluvial landforms which determine vegetation.