

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 14-42
Proposed Acquisition of Land in Pineville for Little Sugar Creek Greenway Expansion

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County proposes to acquire tax parcels 207-093-49 (\pm 16.361 acres) and 207-093-46 (\pm 9.465 acres) in the Town of Pineville along Little Sugar Creek. The property will eventually be assembled with other properties along the creek for the construction of Little Sugar Creek Greenway trail to the South Carolina line.

The property is currently vacant and is zoned O-C (Office Commercial), according to the Town of Pineville Zoning Ordinance. The property is surrounded by commercial to the east and southeast (Pineville Centrum and Carolina Place Mall respectively), vacant property to the south, a small golf course to the west and some vacant land, mini-storage units and Cadillac Golf Driving Range to the north. These parcels in their entirety are located within the FEMA 100-year floodplain.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Little Sugar Creek Greenway is the major north/south greenway corridor in the County. At build out, this greenway trail will connect South Carolina, Pineville, Uptown Charlotte and eventually Toby Creek Greenway in the University City area. It will also provide a connection to various neighborhood, community and regional parks as well as residential communities. Little Sugar Creek Greenway is also on the Carolina Thread Trail and Cross Charlotte Trail routes. It will also serve to complement the Cross Charlotte Trail contained within the City of Charlotte's Community Investment Plan.

Park and Recreation would like to acquire this property for the future construction of Little Sugar Creek Greenway trail. Little Sugar Creek is an identified greenway corridor in the *2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan*. Greenway trails are by far the most requested form of recreation by Mecklenburg County residents. Acquisition of the property will also help to preserve land for habitat and water quality purposes.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

This project is consistent with the *2008 Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Master Plan* objectives which identified the need for expanding 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:

According to the Town of Pineville *Overlay* and *Land Use Plans* (updated 2008) the subject properties' prescribed future land use is parkland inasmuch as it is located within the floodplain. Whatever insignificant portion of the property is outside of the floodplain is prescribed for commercial land use. The proposed use is therefore considered to be consistent with the Town of Pineville adopted land use plan.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The construction of Little Sugar Creek Greenway trail will allow pedestrians and cyclists to reach major destinations such as healthcare facilities, parks, other greenways, shopping destinations, restaurants and educational institutions. This is a significant infrastructure project that will provide an important form of recreation and alternate form of transportation for many County residents.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department has plans to upgrade the sewer system along this portion of Little Sugar Creek, although a timeframe for that has not been determined. Cross Charlotte Trail is a proposed City-funded greenway project that follows the corridor of Little Sugar Creek Greenway. A bond referendum has been set for this project, but has yet to be voted on by the public. Although this section is not on their plans, it will connect to the Cross Charlotte Trail once those sections are constructed.

The property was acquired by the NC Department of Transportation in the early 1990's to serve as an environmental mitigation site for construction of the Interstate 485 project. The property was subsequently not needed for mitigation purposes.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

This project is for land acquisition only and is expected to be completed by early 2015.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their September 3 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The subject properties are located in the Town of Pineville's planning jurisdiction so staff worked with town staff in formulating a recommendation. Inasmuch as town staff reports that the town is in favor of the proposed transaction and land use, and since the proposed land use is consistent with adopted land use plans, staff recommends approval of the proposed transaction to serve the stated land use.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

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

