

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 16-07
Proposed Acquisition in Huntersville for Gar Creek Nature Preserve

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

This transaction is the proposed acquisition of two parcels, Tax Parcel 015-461-10 (±14.45 acres) and Tax Parcel 015-252-27 (±32.14 acres) located on McCoy Road in the Town of Huntersville for the expansion of Gar Creek Nature Preserve. The properties are vacant and bisected by McCoy Road. They are zoned "R" (Rural District) under the Town of Huntersville's Zoning Ordinance. Tax parcel 015-461-10 is located on the west side of McCoy Road and is wooded and undeveloped. Tax parcel 015-252-27, located on the east side of McCoy Road, is contiguous to existing Gar Creek Nature Preserve. This parcel is wooded but contains some open pasture. To the west of this tax parcel are single family homes also zoned R (Rural District). Latta Plantation Nature Preserve is in close proximity to these parcels.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

As the County continues to develop, the opportunity to preserve the area's natural habitat and vegetation will become increasingly rare. Acquisition of these properties will allow the County to continue to preserve large, contiguous tracts of land for open space. County Park and Recreation has found that nature preserves function better with large contiguous stretches of property so that plant and animal life can be maintained and protected. Park and Rec's investigation of these properties determined that both parcels would enhance the existing Gar Creek Nature Preserve, which is important for its watershed protection as well as its habitat. The parcels are largely wooded, maturing forest with mixed pine and hardwood composition. The properties have evidence of wildlife including deer, turkeys, raccoons, an unknown species of owl as well as breeding habitats for amphibians.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

This acquisition is consistent with several Mecklenburg County adopted policies and plans such as the *Park and Recreation Master Plan* which seeks to link together Nature Preserve and other natural areas.

McCoy Road (which bisects these two parcels) is classified as a "minor thoroughfare" in the *Thoroughfare Plan* last amended by the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) in 2012. It is classified in the CRTPO *Comprehensive Transportation Plan (draft)* as a "minor thoroughfare – needs improvement". Minor thoroughfares are prescribed as requiring at least a 70-foot wide right-of-way in order to accommodate a cross-section that should contain either 2 or 4 lanes, median, curb and sidewalk, and bicycle lanes. The segment of McCoy Road adjoining the subject parcels appears to consist of 2 lanes (20-foot wide pavement) in a 60 foot wide right-of-way.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

These properties fall within the Town of Huntersville's planning jurisdiction. According to Town staff, this area is covered by a couple of small area plans, *Beatties Ford Road Corridor SAP* (2007) and *Beatties Ford Road/Mt Holly-Huntersville Rd SAP* (2005). Given the rural zoning district and proximity to the existing single family neighborhood to the south and Farm Cluster to the west, the subject parcels were recommended to remain low-density residential in the SAP; therefore converting these parcels to nature preserve doesn't pose any concerns. The SAP also recommends greenway trails along McCoy Rd through the Nature Preserve.

PROJECT IMPACT:

This property is to be utilized as nature preserve land. It does not affect any other known public projects in this area.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

There are no other public or private projects being impacted by this park project.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

This project is for land acquisition only and is expected to be completed by the spring 2016.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

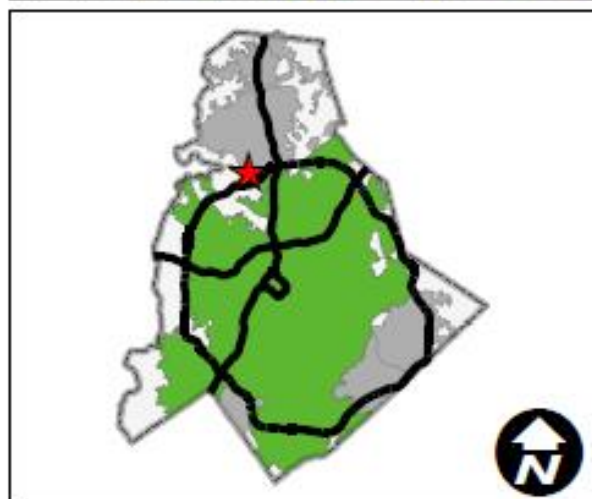
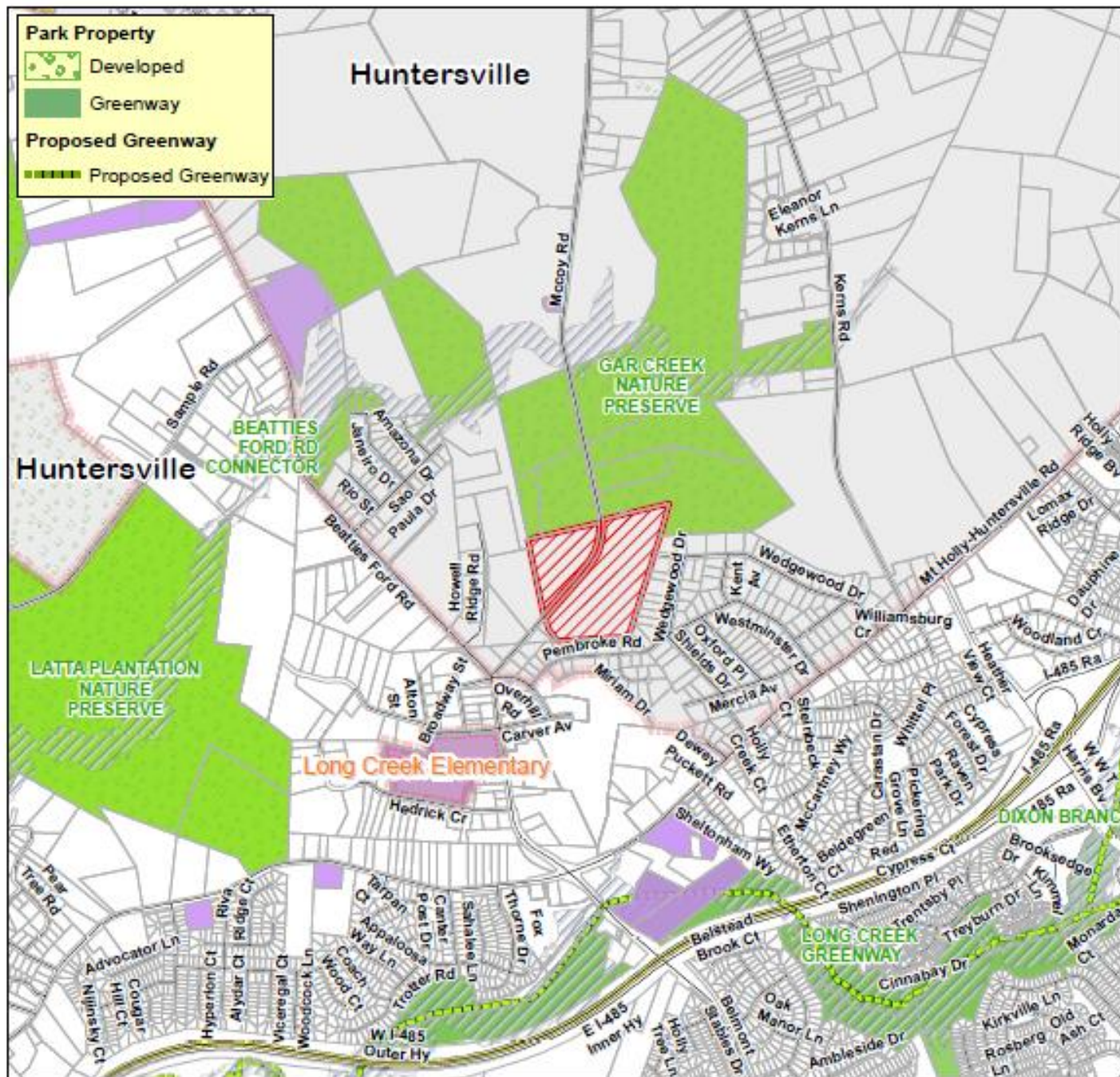
The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their February 3, 2016 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This property is located within the Town of Huntersville's planning jurisdiction. Huntersville planning staff report being in support of the proposed transaction for the intended land use. Planning staff recommends approval, conditioned upon future availability of at least 10 feet of right-of-way widening in order to improve McCoy Road to minor thoroughfare cross-section (including the greenway trail prescribed in the town's Small Area Plan).

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their February 16, 2016 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 7-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 16-07

Initiated by: County Park and Recreation

Submitted by: Asset & Facility Management

- Mandatory Referral
- County Property
- Schools
- Local Historic Landmark
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain

Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

