

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 16-13
Proposed Acquisition to Serve as Expansion of Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County proposes to purchase approximately 10 acres of the 17.5-acre Tax Parcel 013-041-02 to expand the adjoining 887-acre County-owned Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge. The property, located on Neck Road in Huntersville's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, is vacant and primarily forested (a house is located on the portion of the parcel not proposed for acquisition). The property is zoned R (Rural district) with MIL-O (Watershed Overlay) by the Town of Huntersville. The Town Zoning Ordinance contains the Mountain Island Lake Watershed Overlay District (MIL-O), CL-4 Lake Front sub-area. This zoning classification is intended to provide for the protection of public water supplies as required by the NC Water Supply Watershed Classification and Protection Act, within that geography that contributes surface drainage into Mountain Island Lake. The intent of these watershed regulations is to require more stringent development standards in the critical areas of the watershed due to the relatively greater risk of water quality degradation associated with physical development.

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 this property allows the County to preserve open space, increase wildlife habitat protection and water quality protection.

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 expand open space and habitat protection. The acquisition is also consistent with the County's goal of protecting the watershed.

The Town of Huntersville *Greenway Master Plan* recommends a wide paved shoulder on Neck Road (adjacent to the proposed parcel to be acquired) to provide bike access to the Wildlife Refuge, and acquisition of this parcel for addition to the Wildlife Refuge will complement this goal.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The property falls within the boundaries of the Town of Huntersville's *Beatties Ford Corridor Small Area Plan*, which recommends maintaining the rural character of the area and encourages preservation of existing open space by adding more land to the open space inventory where possible. The proposed acquisition of parcel to expand the Cowan's Ford Wildlife refuge aligns with the intent of the *Beatties Ford Corridor Small Area Plan*. The expansion will also provide seamless transition onto the adjacent Rural Hill Nature Preserve across Allison Ferry Road.

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:

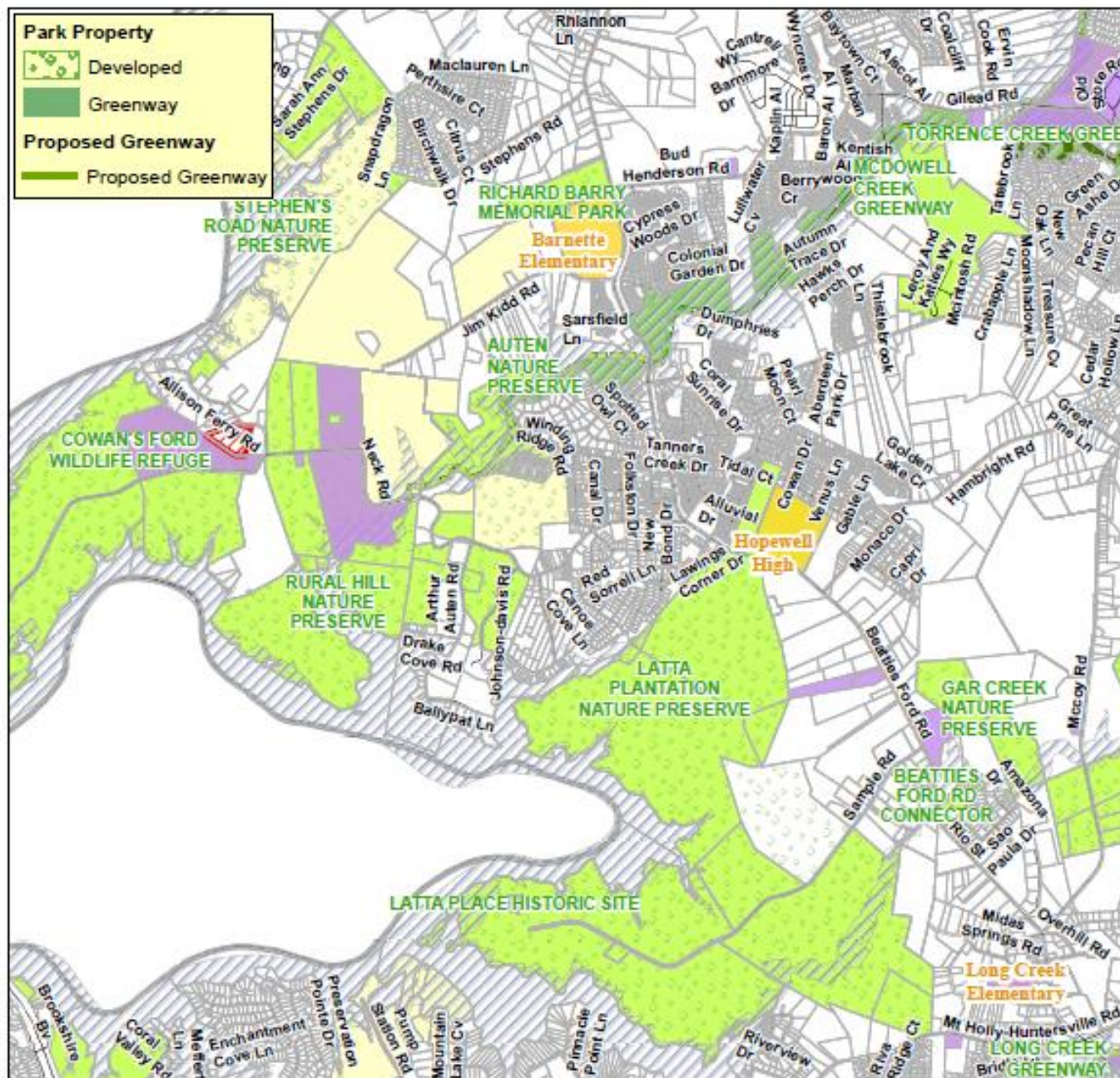
The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their March 2, 2016 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This property is located within the Town of Huntersville's planning jurisdiction. As part of the staff analysis, Huntersville planning staff was consulted, who issued a statement that "We do not see any issues or conflict with town policies and are in favor of the proposed acquisition." Therefore, Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed transaction for the intended land use.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their March 15, 2016 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 7-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 16-13

Initiated by: Park & Recreation

Submitted by: Asset & Facility Management

- Mandatory Referral
- Schools
- County Property
- City Property
- National Historic Properties
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge Expansion

