

Initiated by: Jeff Stovall, Innovation & Technology
Submitted by: Angela Hagerman, Engineering & Property Management
Planning staff resource: Mandy Rosen, Planning

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 17-32
Proposed City Acquisition of 5516 Central Avenue in Charlotte

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

The City of Charlotte proposes to purchase a 3.89-acre parcel located at 5516 Central Avenue (parcel identification number 103-021-02). The property includes an approximately 36,865 square foot building. The City's Innovation & Technology (I&T) Department proposes to occupy the property and consolidate 120 staff in the facility after a full renovation of the existing building.

The property, zoned O-1 (Office), according to the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance, is located on Central Avenue across from the former Eastland Mall site. The building has been vacant for two years and has been listed for sale since July 2016. Fire Station 42 is adjacent to the property on Central Avenue. Other adjoining uses include a CSL Plasma Donation Center, AAA Insurance, retail space, and a church.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

I&T has advocated for consolidation for many years because staff are currently located on five floors in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center and in three different facilities throughout the city. The separation of work groups has negatively impacted the operational efficiency within the department as well as the level of service delivered to the rest of the City. Consolidation will improve employee morale, overall Departmental performance, and result in a single operational culture in I&T.

The property is a good option to facilitate the consolidation because the building is large enough to accommodate current I&T staff as well as growth projections, includes 150 surface parking spaces, and will have access to the proposed CityLYNX Gold Line streetcar. The presence of a City facility will also promote community safety through increased activity and demonstrate the City's commitment to economic development in East Charlotte.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

In June 2017, City Council adopted the *City-Owned Real Estate and Facilities Policy* (the Policy), which aims to ensure that the acquisition, use, management and disposition of City-owned property and facilities are responsible, responsive, transparent, and consistent with City Council policies. This transaction is consistent with the Policy because renovating the existing building is more cost-effective than building a new facility or a long-term lease with the City as the lessee. The building's interior will also utilize a new and innovative space planning design consistent with workspace utilization principles contained in the Policy.

The adopted City FY2018-2022 Community Investment Plan includes \$5,400,000 for I&T Consolidation and specifically calls for the purchase of the property.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Eastland Area Plan* (2003) identifies this area as a future Town Center and recommends a mix of single family, multi-family, office, and retail uses. If residential uses are included a density of up to 10 units per acre is considered appropriate based on adopted policy.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The increase in city staff will increase traffic on Central Avenue, but will also promote communicate safety through increased activity.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

The property is across Central Avenue from the former Eastland Mall site and the City's purchase of the property will demonstrate a commitment to revitalizing the area and economic development. The property is also along the route for the proposed CityLYNX Gold Line Streetcar project. However, no projects related to transit or transportation are proposed in addition to the renovations of the existing building.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Closing will occur in February or March 2018. Design and construction will begin immediately with delivery of the facility in late 2019 to early 2020.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force reviewed this matter at their October 4, 2017 meeting and discussed the following items:

- Only two-thirds of the 36,000 +/- sq. ft. needed for I&T function; 12,000 sq. ft. will be available for other public use(s). However, 138-150 IT employees programmed for the building will likely leave little parking for remaining 12,000 sq. ft.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library has a future library facility programmed for this general vicinity. Library staff has concern with site access and lack of parking for remaining 12,000 sq. ft., which make it less desirable for their use.
- If site upfit includes bicycle accommodations (bike parking, showers, etc.), these amenities could incentivize bike commuting and decrease reliance upon existing parking.
- The Fire Station located next door could provide opportunities for public amenities (e.g. fitness room, meeting space) for I&T employees to be housed at the proposed facility.
- East strategy team and Eastland Redevelopment Team should be consulted regarding potential joint venturing and/or off-site improvements that could leverage investment (e.g. public art).

The following agencies were represented at the October 4, 2017 Joint Use Task Force meeting: Park & Recreation, City Real Estate, Planning, Charlotte Water, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police, Town of Davidson.

PLANNING STAFF REVIEW:

Planning staff has reviewed the proposed purchase of the property and below are the key findings:

Conclusions:

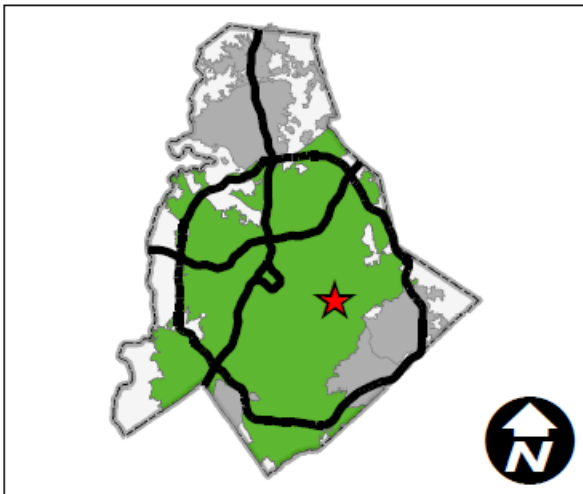
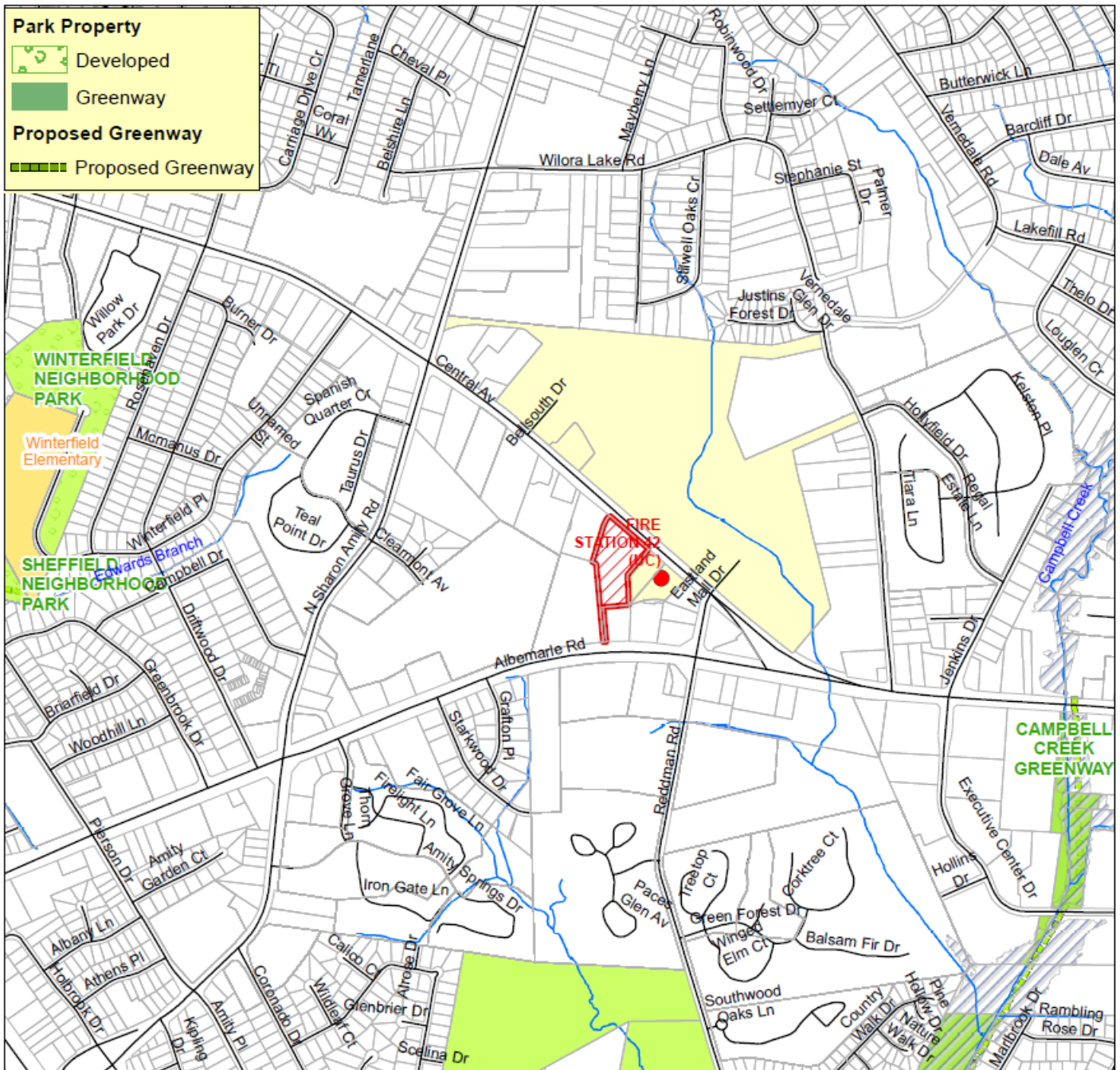
- The proposed use as an office is consistent with the vision in the *Eastland Area Plan* which recommends this site to be part of a future Town Center area with a range of uses.
- Acquiring this property provides the opportunity to activate and appropriately utilize an existing vacant non-residential structure within the Eastland area, a priority area for reinvestment.

Adopted Goals and Policies:

- The *Eastland Area Plan* (2003) identifies this area as a future Town Center and recommends a mix of single family, multi-family, office, and retail uses. If residential uses are included a density of up to 10 units per acre is considered appropriate based on adopted policy.
- The site is located along the adopted alignment in the *CATS 2030 Transit System Plan* as a future phase of the Gold Line Streetcar project.
- Council's *Economic Development FY 2018-2019 Focus Area Plan* identifies the objective, "Promote the holistic development of targeted business districts and neighborhoods" by "Stimulat[ing] private investment in targeted areas and within areas identified in the Community Investment Plan and Business Corridor Revitalization Plan." Examples include Eastland/Central Avenue Area.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE REVIEW:

At their October 17, 2017 meeting the Planning Committee reviewed the Mandatory Referral and voted 6-0 that it had no additional comments to offer to the submitting agencies.



Mandatory Referral 17-32

Initiated by: Innovation & Technology

Submitted by: Engineering & Property Management

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

