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MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 17-35
Proposed Acquisition of Site for Community Resource Center and Other Uses to be Determined

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County proposes to acquire property to support the "Bringing Mecklenburg County to You" Initiative. The Parcel Identification Number(s) are 097-111-20 (12.618 AC), 097-111-22 (8.09 AC) and 097-111-99 (.272 AC) near the corner of Eastway Drive and North Tryon Street in east Charlotte, at a site formerly referred to as "Northpark Mall" (101 and 103 Eastway Drive). The site is currently zoned B-2 according to the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance and features one operating retailer and several vacant retail structures which may be demolished or renovated. The parcels are located near a CATS Blue Line Extension stop and directly adjacent to a Carolinas Healthcare Systems family clinic. To the southeast of the parcel, and across the rail corridor, is the Eastway Regional Park, which will be home to a new Mecklenburg County recreation facility.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Mecklenburg County developed the "*Bringing Mecklenburg County to You*" Plan to transform the way County services are delivered to our residents. A key feature of this plan was the siting and development of "Community Resource Centers," ("CRCs") which are to be single-stop to access the range of County services. (The first Community Resource Center is under construction at the Valerie C. Woodard Center on Freedom Drive; additional CRCs are planned in southwest Charlotte, the West Boulevard corridor, Beatties Ford Road, and the Albemarle Road corridor. The North Tryon corridor was also identified as a location for a CRC.)

Additionally, the redevelopment of the Main Library has caused the County to seek a permanent site for the "back-office" functions of that facility; it is believed that this site can accommodate that use, as well. This function requires a location that is as centrally-located as possible, with good access to the major road network (including interstates).

This site is ideal for these uses because of the light rail and robust bus service offered by CATS on Eastway. This location, in "the crescent," is well-positioned for residents in the northeast quadrant. Acquiring commercial property rather than residential also ensures that the residents being served are not displaced by the project. And finally, this site remains relatively affordable for the taxpayers given its rail adjacency. Funding for these items was included in Mecklenburg County's adopted CIP.

Other sites along the corridor were evaluated for the CRC use; none were comparable at per-acre asking prices. Several other locations throughout Mecklenburg County were evaluated for the Library Services Center, but none offered the mix of access, location, and potential for adding to a campus-type environment with other County uses.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

"*Bringing Mecklenburg County to You*" Master Plan outlines the County's goals and objectives related to CRC's; the Mecklenburg County CIP supports this plan (and the Main Library redevelopment) through funding commitments.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The *Blue Line Extension Transit Station Area Plans (2013)* identify this site as being within the Old Concord Transit Station Area and located approximately ½ mile walk distance from the station. All three properties are recommended for Transit Supportive Uses and have a recommended maximum height of 50 feet. The land use policies encourage a mix of transit supportive land uses (residential, retail, civic/institutional, park and open space) within the Transit Station Area. The policies seek to ensure that scale and massing of new development/redevelopment is sensitive to the existing neighborhood-scale retail and established neighborhoods. Connections to Eastway Park should be provided where possible. Eastway Drive is recommended to be improved with a 6' sidewalk, 8' planting strip, and accommodate a bike lane and two 11' travel lanes in each direction. A 24' setback is recommended along Eastway Drive. Additionally, a future street is proposed to connect through the site to Old Concord Road as part of the Philemon Avenue extension.

PROJECT IMPACT:

This project may bring as many as 500 employees to a neglected site in northeast Charlotte. The CRC, being customer-facing, will serve 1/6th (or more) of the County population. With the exception of a Public Health clinical operation, every other health and human service will be available to any County resident. These include Veteran's Services, Child Support Enforcement, and the Department of Social Services; all will be provided in a customer-focused environment. Potential exists for the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, total redevelopment of the site, or any combination. Increased traffic along North Tryon, Eastway, and especially on CATS buses and trains which serve this site, is to be expected. Opportunities for additional partners who support the County's goals are available. It is hoped that this will transform the way services are delivered, and received, by the residents through what goes on inside the facility; it is hoped to transform this center through the construction and operation of the facility.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

As noted, this site is intended to be a multi-use campus. Adjacency to Eastway Regional Park and the CHS clinic provide opportunities for families and individuals to leverage their visits. Potential exists for the relocation of the Sugar Creek Library Branch on North Tryon Street to this site, should Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department (with whom the Library shares the building) wishes to acquire the library's portion of that mixed-use facility. Other joint use opportunity discussions would be welcomed.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Land acquisition for CRC and Library Services Center funded; construction of Library Services Center and CRCs included in current adopted CIP.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their December 6, 2017 meeting and the following comments were offered:

- County will likely retain the two "big box" structures on the site but demolish the ancillary mall structure.
- County also plans on looking to extend proposed Northpark Mall Drive through the site.
- County wants to establish pedestrian connections to the Blue Line Extension station to the east and to the planned recreation center to the south across the railroad tracks.
- County needs to set "best practices" example of a TOD redevelopment at a station area as it is proposed to be a major public project.
- Charlotte Water reported that this is a low pressure area, and they need to get a clearer idea of the planned development on the site in order to determine what infrastructure will be needed in order to serve the development.

Agencies Represented: City Housing & Neighborhood Services, County Park & Recreation, City Real Estate, Centralina COG, City Engineering & Property Management, City Stormwater, County Manager's office, Town of Matthews, County Asset Management, Central Piedmont Community College, C-M Planning, County Public Health, C-M Police, Carolina Health Systems, CATS, City Attorney's office, Charlotte Fire.

PLANNING STAFF REVIEW:

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

Conclusions:

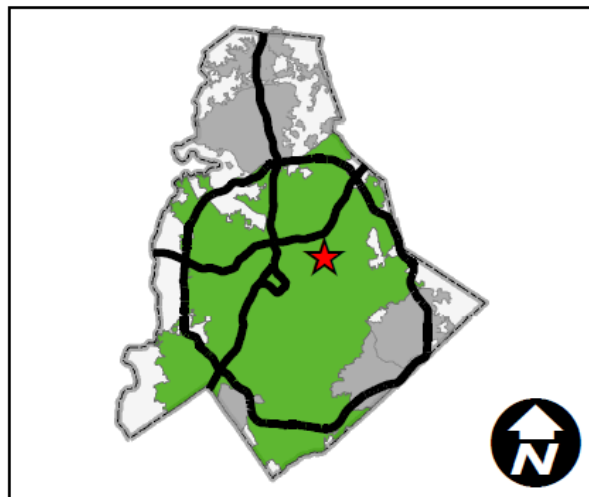
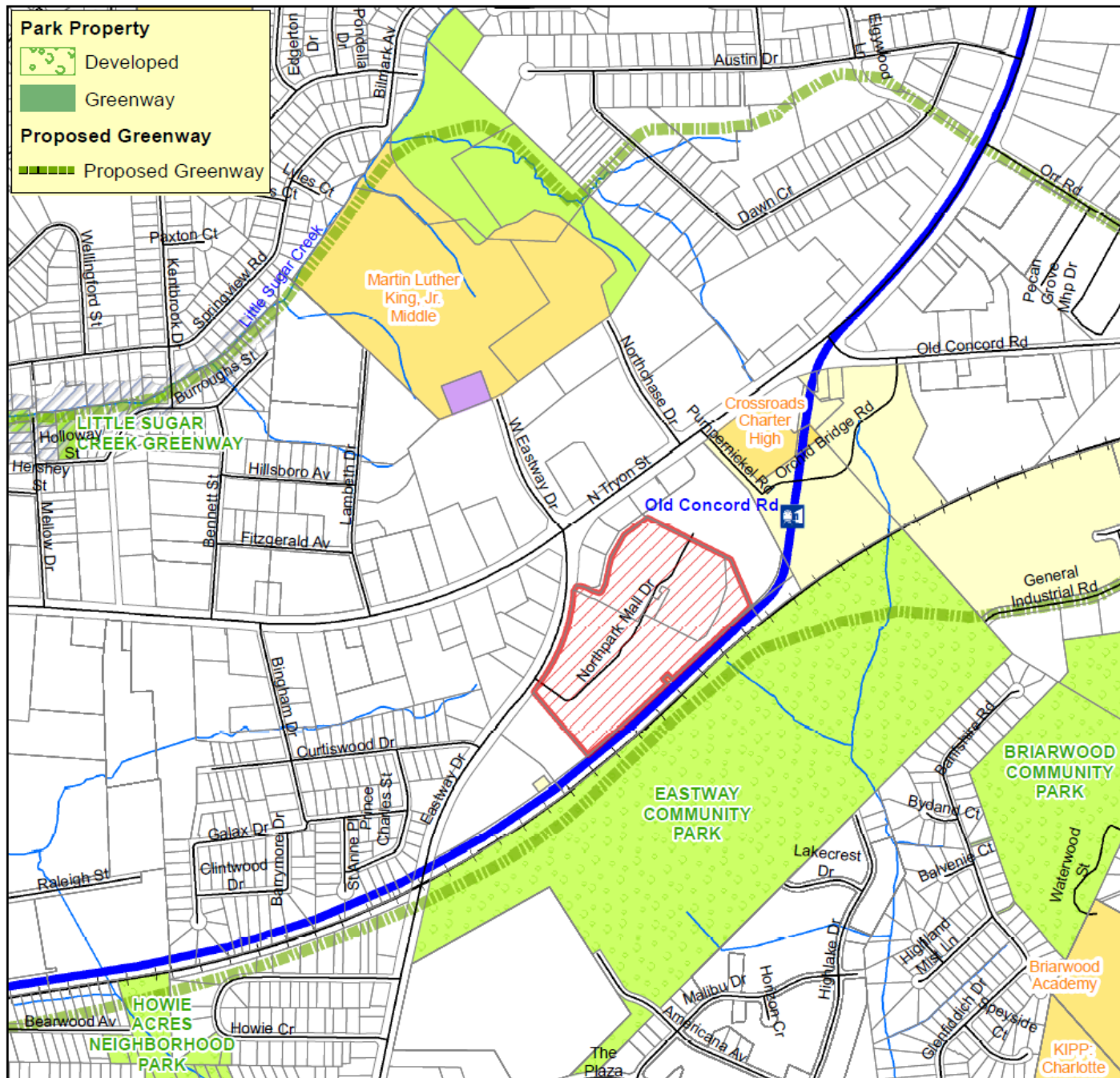
- The services the County intends to locate here would benefit from transit access this site offers.
- If redeveloped, the site should be rezoned to a transit supportive zoning district to align new development with the adopted policies in the Transit Station Area Plan.
- New development under existing B-2 zoning would likely be incompatible with the vision for the area.
- City Council at the request of Mecklenburg County recently approved a rezoning (2017-086, approved 9/18/17) for the Eastway Community Park property immediately to the south of this property to enable development of a regional recreation center (and related improvements) in Eastway Community Park. These uses will be complementary to the proposed County facilities on the subject site, and would particularly benefit in the event a pedestrian link can be established across the railroad tracks that separate the two sites.
- The site has fairly good light rail access to the Old Concord Blue Line Extension Transit Station, which could be improved over time with additional street connectivity.

Adopted Goals and Policies:

- The *Blue Line Extension Transit Station Area Plans (2013)* identify civic and institutional uses as appropriate types of uses within a transit station area. The site is recommended for Transit Oriented Development.
- Mecklenburg County's "*Bringing Mecklenburg County to You*" Plan identified a goal of siting and development of Community Resource Centers as a single-stop to access a range of community services.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE REVIEW:

At their December 19, 2017 meeting the Planning Committee reviewed the Mandatory Referral and voted 5-0 that it had no additional comments to offer to the submitting agencies.



Mandatory Referral 17-35

Initiated & Submitted by:
Mecklenburg County Government

- Mandatory Referral
- City Property
- County Property
- Local Historic Landmark
- Blue Line Extension Station
- Blue Line Extension

Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

