

**MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 99-40**  
**CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Purchase of Property by the  
Public Library  
December 1999**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION**

The Public Library proposes to purchase approximately 2.8 acres of vacant land on a site bound by 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Brevard Street to the east, 6<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and the trolley tracks to the west. This site is in the heart of the Uptown area.

The project is proposed to be a joint facility that houses a new children's library in combination with a new Children's Theatre. To provide parking for these two uses, a new 400 car parking deck is proposed.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION**

The project will provide an expansion of the library services to children in addition to providing educational, cultural and programmatic services by the Children's Theatre. Both institutions want to have the new facility located in the Cultural District, close to Discovery Place, Spirit Square, the Main Library and the Museum of the New South. Both current facilities are overcrowded and need expanded space to meet the demand for programs and services by the public. Both facilities desire to enhance their programs by developing and expanding their facilities.

**PROJECT IMPACT**

The purchase of this property will enable both agencies to begin procuring a design firm to design a building to house the facilities. The new facilities will ease the overcrowding in the current children's section of the main library. The facility will add another theatre to the cultural district. There is already an abundance of theatres within several blocks of this proposed project.

The massing model that was created as a tool to understand the elements of the project illustrates several potential concerns. The project proposes to house a 400 car parking structure. Its position on the site and relationship to the street has the potential to become a negative feature if it is not carefully designed. The close proximity to two other existing large parking structures suggests that additional study be undertaken to see if shared parking could be arranged. The building program shows a building massing which covers the entire city block site. The design of this facility will be a major urban design challenge.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROJECTS**

The project is located within close proximity to similar cultural facilities. It could potentially complement these cultural facilities. The consultants preparing the Center City 2010 plan have identified this location as a potential site for this type of facility. It envisions the Children's Learning Center as a component of a larger academic quad complex.

The project will be sited along the trolley corridor. It is imperative the design of the Children's Learning Center complement the trolley functions as a trolley stop is planned for the edge of the site.

The library has been in conversation with Co. Parks and Recreation to provide open space in the form of a small urban park on the site.

The site is located in the First Ward Community. The First Ward Plan would embrace the concept of locating this type of facility in this location. The designing of the building would dictate the compatibility with the rest of the First Ward area.

The project proposes to include a 400 car parking structure. The close proximity to two other existing large parking structures suggests that additional study be undertaken to see if some type of shared parking could be made.

### **PROJECT COST**

The County G.O. Bond and a separate \$3.5 million appropriation for land acquisition will fund land acquisition.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Planning Staff supports purchase of this property with the stipulation that the following design measures be addressed:

1. Library staff should form a committee consisting of representatives from CCCP, Planning Commission staff, CDOT, and County Parks and Recreation to address joint use and urban design issues,
2. If a parking structure is included in the program, it should have the building wrap around the deck so the parking structure will front the street. The parking then becomes an integral component of the building.
3. The building mass must be broken down so it is not perceived as a big box next to the street.
4. The design of the facility must contain an interactive connection along the trolley corridor. The building must have windows, entrances, and program activities that front the corridor.
5. The building design must be done in a manner that uses inside the building are reflected in the character of the exterior. In other words the building architecture must be animated, be made of materials that invoke the spirit of the activities within, and have elements and scale of interest to children.
6. The project must relate to the street and trolley corridor with strong pedestrian edges.

7. The building and site design must have patron safety as a component, but these measures should not overburden the building's architectural character and uniqueness.

**PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

This request was approved by the Planning Committee with a 6-1 vote.

Brookshire Fy

W 11th St

E 11th St

10

23

11

W 10th St

W 9th St

9

12

E 9th St

14

E 8th St

8

P  
13

SITE

15

P  
7

P

P

18

E 5th St

P

P

22

19

23

W 3rd St

E 3rd St

20

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### **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

Planning Committee voted unanimously (7-0) for approval with the stipulation that staff's comments be addressed and that planning committee is particularly concerned about adding additional parking structures in Uptown. They understood that the library will pursue investigating the possibilities for shared parking in the design phase.