

January 14, 2019

Some of you may recall that I was here a couple of years ago to speak about saving Marshall Park, so here we are again. This reminds me that a few years ago, as an architect, a developer asked me to design several successive projects. After we got those built, I found out, that around their office, because I was stubborn about what I believed in, they called me "Mule". My Mother would say, I just had convictions".

As a Charlotte, native, I've noticed that our city longs to be thought of as "extraordinary", but of late we seem to be embracing "ordinary". Cities we remember all have what I call, "a thing", we can't forget. In nineteenth century Paris, a bridge engineer had a crazy idea about building an abstract 1,000 foot iron tower. His name of course was Eiffel.

In Sydney Australia, there was a proposal to build an opera house that looked like a sailing ship. It cost fourteen times its budget and didn't work well as an opera house, but it put Sydney "on the map" and they thought it was the best thing they had ever done.

Recently in Manhattan a couple of "nobodies", had an idea about building a park on top of abandoned railway tracks. You may know it as "The High Line", New York City's biggest tourist attraction.

Charlotte needs a "Thing", a place or thing, we all remember. Unfortunately, what we need is something we tend to reject, because it is just a little too "out there", or "a crazy idea". The redevelopment of Second Ward presents us with an opportunity to remake both Martin Luther King Boulevard and Marshall Park into memorable expressions, or Charlotte's "new thing".

Marshall Park has deficiencies, but ironically, the development of this block will correct those problems while the park will enhance the new structures, a "win-win".

I like to quote Larry Page, the Co-Founder of Google, who said....."Good ideas are always crazy.....until they're not".

If this park, we've already paid for, is destroyed, it will come to be known as a colossal blunder, a lost opportunity.

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CHARLOTTE'S TROJAN HORSE

Football fans watching the matchup between the Carolina Panthers and the Baltimore Ravens saw the same Charlotte image that our city always selects when we wish to show our most glamorous self to the world: Marshall Park. With Charlotte already ranked 97 out of a 100 in "Park Score" by the Trust For Public Land, this is the Center-City park that is clearly our "Public Square", the place we gather to celebrate, or protest current issues. It is also the park local government plans to destroy. When the early Romans began a new community, one of the first things they built was a civic square, a forum where they all came together. We built our forum in Marshall Park, almost a half century ago. Since then, nature has worked 24/7 creating tree cover for the "City of Trees". Cities we remember all have a "thing" we remember: Paris - Eiffel Tower, New York - Statue of Liberty, Sydney, Australia - Opera House, St. Louis - The Arch. Lacking a "thing", and with the coming 2020 National Republican Convention, we need a good story to tell a country focussed on Charlotte, we have two we've expressed; "Charlotte The City of Trees", and "Charlotte the Energy Hub". First, let's focus on "Charlotte The Energy Hub". Imagine the city says let's re-imagine center-city as an "Urban Solar Farm". Of course this wouldn't be a 100 acre "farm", but it would be symbolically powerful. It could start with taking another look at the Second Ward redevelopment project. All, new structures in this area could be built with solar-panel roof-tops. Potential inhabitants of this area would be attracted by the idea of being part of something "special" that will contribute to solving our energy needs. Developers could be attracted to being part of the solution, as well as profiting from it. Investing in the laws of nature, is not a shaky proposition. Developers and architects will profit from being part of something "special". Now, let's look at the Second Ward block bounded by East Third Street, and to the south, by M.L.K. Boulevard. Imagine along Third Street, on this block, we plant a row of "Charlotte's Solar Trees". These are sculptural - solar panel- topped aluminum "tree's" generating power to light themselves and the existing "nature-trees". The current trees would be infused with tiny (downward facing) LED "star-lights." A walk, or a meeting in this park would become a magical experience, like stepping into Vincent Van Gogh's "Starry Night". On the mundane level, after 6 PM, one lane of Third Street, on event nights, could be reserved for food trucks, and Porta-Johns. Martin Luther King Boulevard was created by simply changing sheet metal street signs. Imagine allowing our imaginations to soar, and this 800 foot stretch of pavement becomes a lofty, heavily landscaped Arch, powered by the sun. A silver-arched structure including Charlotte's Solar Trees. A sculpture, glittering in the sunlight and spectacularly lit by the sun's stored energy at night. This monumental-scaled structure could be Charlotte's "Thing", our Eiffel Tower. If the City demonstrates it is seriously committed to the concept, entrepreneurial funds will likely follow. Think of the lift you'd feel driving beneath this lofty, lacy, productive, Charlotte Arch.

Current plans for the Second Ward redevelopment have dubbed this area "Brooklyn Village" which feels like an apologetic nod to the black community for Urban renewal's bushwhacking of the City's largest concentration of black citizens. In the 1960's this displaced thousands of people and demolished 1,480 structures. "Brooklyn Village" is good marketing, but the concept could use more teeth.

At this time, in Marshall Park, near East Third Street, stands a sculpture of Dr. Martin Luther King that is largely unnoticed. It's the artistic creation of Selma Burke, the same black woman

November 27, 2018

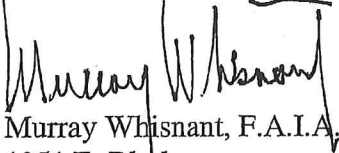
whose FDR profile decorates the obverse side of our 10-cent coin. Nationally known, she was born in nearby Mooresville, the seventh of ten children of an AME minister, and his wife. The King sculpture could be moved to a special location as part of MLK Boulevard. Also consider putting amenities, refreshment kiosks, benches, and tables in this area to create an inviting social oasis.

The Second Ward redevelopment also affords an opportunity to strengthen Charlotte's City of Trees monicker, by careful attention to landscape design including strategically placed Solar Trees and landscaped arbors. Arbors so uniquely designed that they qualify for funds paid for "naming rights", corporate or individual.

The coming 2020 National Republican Convention presents us with a timeframe to get busy and give concrete expression toward telling our story about this "Energy Hub" and the "City of Trees". A perfect time to use Parkinson's Law. That's the law we all use, consciously or unconsciously, that says the job expands, or contracts, to fit the time allotted to it. Let's do it!

"Good ideas are always crazy..... until they're not"

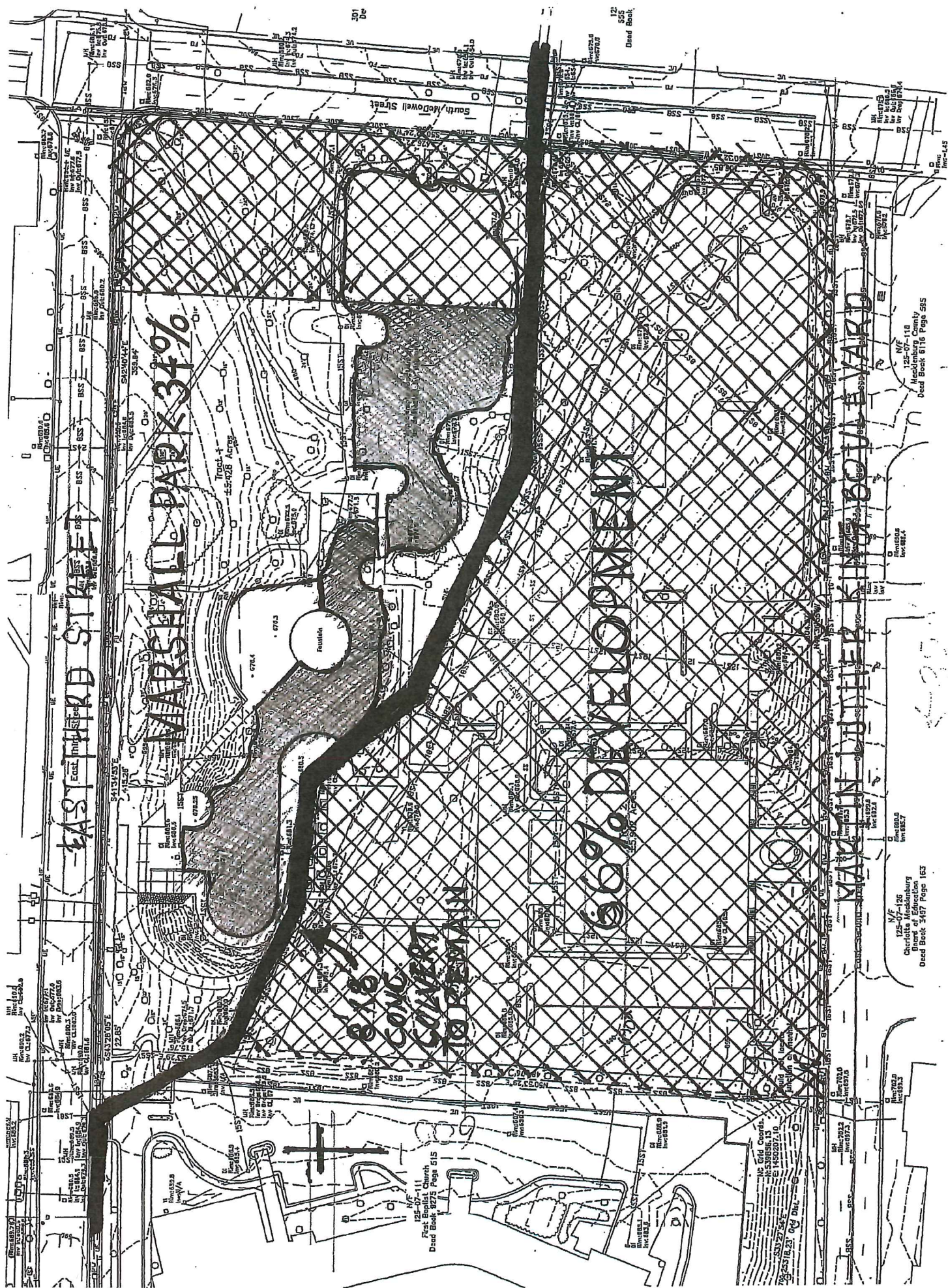
Larry Page, Co-Founder of Google



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Charlotte City Council
Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners
Mecklenburg Republican Party
Mecklenburg Democratic Party
Charlotte Observer
Business Journal
Charlotte Post
Urban League
Foundation for the Carolinas
Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
Center City Partners
Conformity Developers
Interested Citizens



EAST THIRD STREET

MARSHALL PARK 34%

66% DEVELOPMENT

MARSHALL BOULEVARD

81% CONCRETE COVER
TO REMAIN

N/E
125-07-136
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Bureau of Education
Dead Book 2107 Page 163

N/E
125-07-118
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Bureau of Education
Dead Book 2119 Page 555

125-07-111
First Baptist Church
Dead Book 2273 Page 615

125-07-125
No Grid County
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
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CharlotteEAST's Transportation Advocacy

CharlotteEAST is a voluntary advocacy board made up of representatives from East community businesses, neighborhoods, non-profits and civic organizations working together to develop and strengthen economic and social capital in the East Charlotte community.

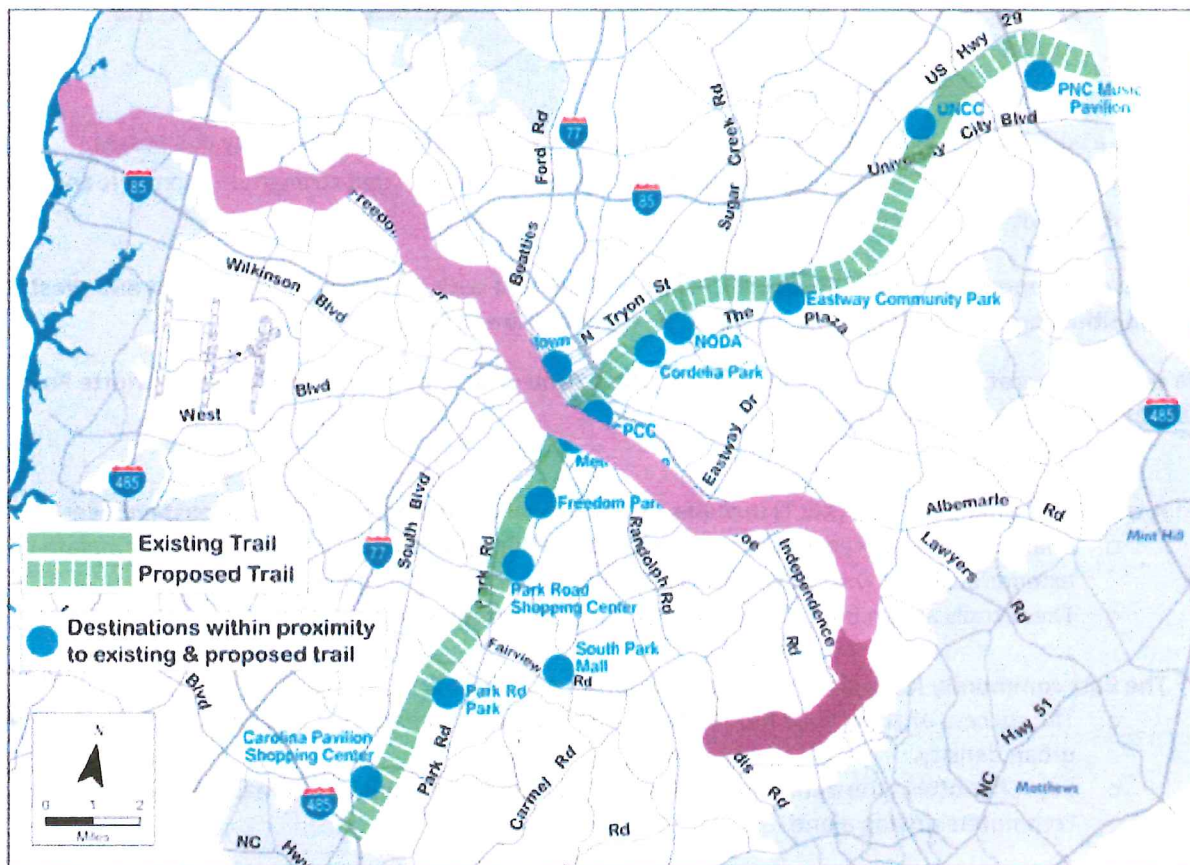
We actively support greenways and public transportation and seek connectivity for the East and West communities through the Lynx Gold Line and the Carolina Thread Trail.

We seek collaboration between the County, City, State and private developers for Cross Charlotte Phase II (XCLT2) as the area's next priority.

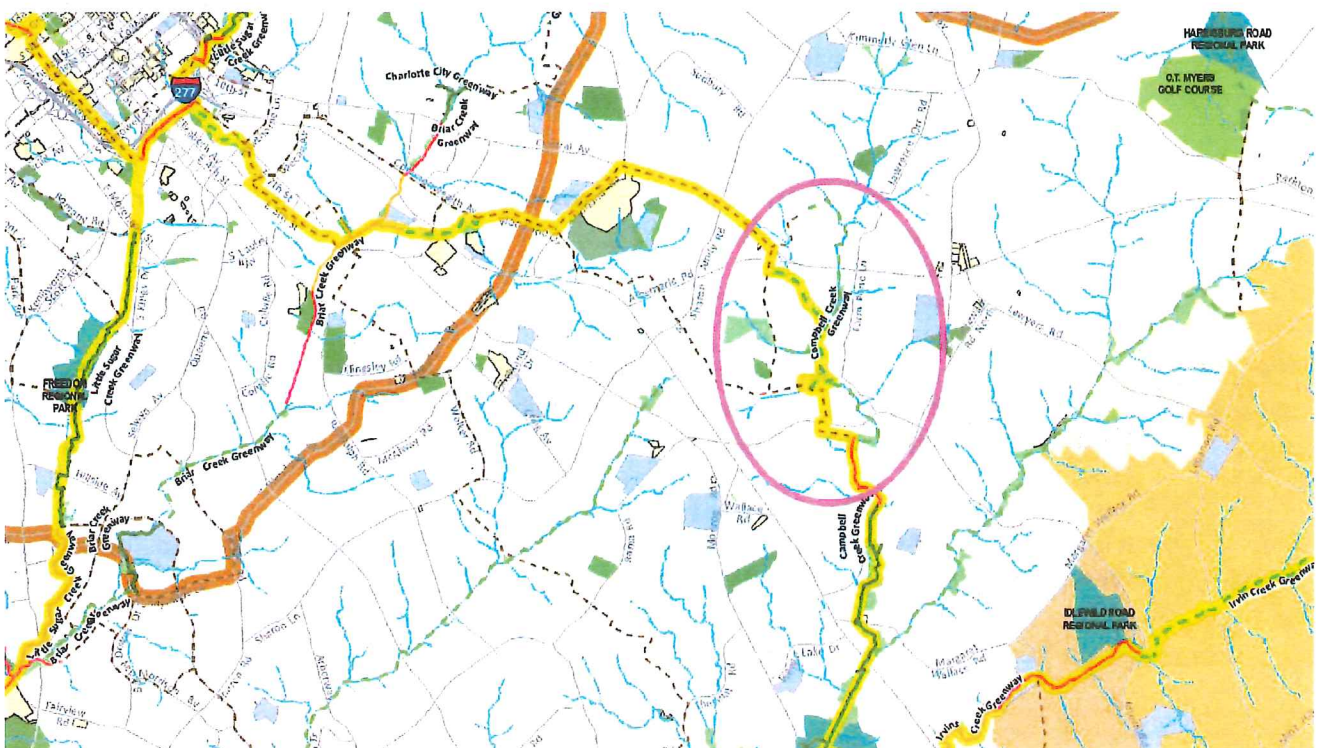
- **A true Cross Charlotte Trail (XCLT) includes the 4 cardinal directions: north, south, east and west.**
 - CharlotteEAST appreciates the development of XCLT Phase I but sees the XCLT as complete when it extends east and west as well as north and south, crossing through Center City.
 - These trails are an important means of integrated transportation.
- **The East community lacks alternative means of transportation.**
 - The success of alternative modes of transportation such as walking and biking is dependent upon urban density.
 - East Charlotte is the densest urban area in Charlotte Mecklenburg and has the lowest % of commuters driving alone.
- **What is CharlotteEAST asking the County to do?**
 - To approve the funds needed to extend the Campbell Creek Greenway, which is the missing link, to Albemarle Road.
 - To begin the planning phase of the Briar Creek Greenway; which is already funded.
- **What is CharlotteEAST asking the State to do?**
 - To plan with Parks & Recreation the passage of the Campbell Creek Greenway under Albemarle Road for completion during the Horizon 2035 Roadway Project.
- **What is CharlotteEAST asking the City to do?**
 - To plan with Parks & Recreation the overland connector between Campbell Creek Greenway and Briar Creek Greenway.
 - To build the overland connector.
 - To engage the private developers at the Eastland site.
- **Why is this connectivity so important to our East and West communities? It is about economic mobility.**
 - It is connectivity to schools of post secondary and higher education, i.e. CPCC, Carolinas College of Health Sciences, UNCC, Johnson & Wales, Wake Forest and Northeastern all within or near Center City.
 - It is connectivity to better paying jobs in Center City.
 - It is about equity. For every \$1 spent on trails, a \$1.72 in economic value is generated. The East and West communities need an economic boost.

You've probably heard of the Cross Charlotte Trail (XClt). Did you know it's part of the Carolina Thread Trail?

The east/west trail puts the "Cross" in the Cross Charlotte Trail. We're calling it "Cross Charlotte Phase 2" (XClt2)



A Key Component of XClt2 is the Extension of Campbell Creek Greenway in front of the Eastland Mall Property.



I am a native of Charlotte Mecklenburg and live in zip code 28211. I am very concerned about our City's poor standing related to parks and greenways. It should be clear that all other funding necessities you will be budgeting for directly depend on the health of our environment which is directly related to air and water quality. The Charlotte region can and will greatly benefit from increased access to the outdoors through parks and greenways. Among the benefits are improved health and personal fitness through active living, improved sense of community, improved property values, business development and economic activity, improved flood control, alternative transportation options, improved air quality, and providing a much needed connection to nature, while adding to the "destination" value visitors see and share. There are numerous national examples of how quality green space increases surrounding property values and the wellbeing of citizens.

Tallahassee, San Antonio, Pittsburgh and Dallas are just a few examples of cities that have all generated notable economic benefits from their investments in trails and greenways which also have an ultimately positive affect on sustainability. Over in Apex, North Carolina, the Shepard's Vineyard housing development added \$5,000 to the price of 40 homes that were adjacent to the regional greenway – and those homes were the first to sell.

Decades of polling by Charlotte Mecklenburg have consistently and clearly indicated that citizens want walking/biking trails, nature parks and greenways. They have always been the top leading responses to what citizens' want and need. This should be no surprise yet our budgets continue to ignore these statistics. It's about time we take real actions to reverse Charlotte's national (and embarrassing) ranking in parks and trails. A network of trails and parks is an essential investment that enables us to remain globally competitive by allowing us to attract the type of workers companies want while providing the amenities professional workers continue to demand when considering relocating. We have all these statistics supporting parks and greenways and yet Charlotte continues to lag behind. We are behind both Raleigh and Greensboro in the number of completed greenway miles. Raleigh listened to its citizens and will now achieve \$90 million in total benefits from just 70 miles of greenway.

Too many of our kids today spend 8 hours or more in front of some electronic device. This is due, in part, to lack of access to a park or nature trail. Access to nature improves cognitive skills, imagination, reasoning, balance and curiosity – all having positive education and social benefits.

My point is not to take away the importance of other budget items, but ask you to consider the enormous umbrella of lifestyle enhancements for everyone, that will take place with more parks and greenways. Please, revisit any statistic related to city parks and greenways, and budget for something that consistently yields positive results across the board.

Thank you,

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Charlotte Reconnecting Ourselves With Nature
Charlotte Chapter of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation

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"Knowing Our Roots"

Join us for this Community Black History Event!

To all of
new family members,
please come and meet with
it if you can. Come learn more
at this great historic black
community of Grier Heights.



Black History Q&A game & Prizes!

***When: Saturday, February 2nd
Saturday, February 23rd***

Where: Grier Heights Community Center

Time: 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

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