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LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

LAND USE TRENDS

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Land Use & Development

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Land Use & Development Goal

Continue the development, growth and vitality of Gastonia, while providing for a sustainable, well balanced, economically viable, environmentally sound land use mix that preserves the City's unique character and a high quality of life for Gastonia residents.

Overview

This Chapter provides the land use framework for future City growth through 2025. This framework illustrates the desired pattern of development in the city. The Land Use Chapter is the culmination and primary implementation tool of the Gastonia 2025 Plan. This plan will guide public improvements and public decisions about how and where to build roads, schools, parks, and other public facilities. However, the Map is not intended to be a fixed predetermination of land use for the next decade. The Map and the policies are fluid and will be amended at regular intervals to accommodate unforeseen circumstances and changing trends, just like other policies in this plan.

The Land Use Plan will be implemented through the careful and strategic use of various urban planning tools such as the City's Unified Development Ordinance, official zoning map, annexation policy, and the capital improvements program. This Chapter should be used as an essential daily decision making guide for all land use related decisions made over the next decade. Successful implementation of the Land Use chapter will require a sustained effort by the public and private sectors. Therefore, it is through the incremental, daily decisions of the Planning Commission, City Council, major state and regional institutions, neighboring jurisdictions, private property owners, developers and other interest groups that will help to ensure that the City's vision for its future will be realized.

Practically every development related decision that a community makes will have some impact upon the way the land is used. When a community makes a decision related to zoning or infrastructure development, it is establishing land use policy. Therefore, it is most important that there be an overall plan for coordinated land use development in order to make optimum use of this limited resource.

Development Patterns

Current land use in Gastonia reflects the City's development from its historic roots in the Southern Reconstruction Era. Population and demographic trends reveal that Gastonia, like most medium size cities in North Carolina, followed growth and development patterns that center on the birth of the textile industry. Gastonia was born of a railroad junction established when the Charlotte and Atlanta railroad by passed Dallas and was routed along an east-west ridge line in Gaston County, which is now the Norfolk Southern railroad running east-west through the County. At the time of incorporation, the City boasted a population of approximately 200 people; however within the next thirteen years, by 1890 the city was home to the County's largest bank (First National), three mills, a newspaper, two hotels, a variety of stores, a YMCA, and a population of 1,033. The textile industry was the County's largest employer and residents within Gaston County moved to housing closer to the mills, which, in some cases were right outside of the City limits. Elected officials quickly moved to annex these areas and by 1911 Gastonia more than doubled in size through population



growth as most of Gastonia's textile industry and the City's older neighborhoods formed.

The catalyst for Gastonia's growth over the next 40 years was fueled by the building of many textile mills, and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Textile mills, freed from the necessity of locating near a river, began to locate along the two rail lines, which allowed them to bring in raw materials and ship finished products to distant markets. Surrounding each mill was a cluster of small villages, which are still present throughout present-day Gastonia. These mills employed thousands of workers, who, along with their families and need for goods and services, created the urban areas in the Center City. The pattern of mills and mill housing was heavily influenced by the railroads, resulting in a linear development pattern concentrated on the ridgelines of the City.

With the beginning of streetcar service in 1911, Franklin Avenue, which was eventually renamed Franklin Boulevard, began to develop as a commercial strip, stretching beyond downtown to approximately Church Street on the east and Webb Street on the west. Evidence of this early transit-influenced commercial development can still be seen with many of the buildings having a uniform setback (adjacent to the sidewalk now because Franklin has been widened), no side yards and traditional storefront architecture (large display windows, recessed doors). Gastonia has been driven by those early economic and transportation advancements.

Due to the influence of the railroad on the City's development, the oldest parts of the City are generally located on some of the highest elevations, with later infill development occurring between the ridges. The opposite situation was prevalent in many communities developing prior to the advent of the railroad, where settlements concentrated along waterways.

Closer to downtown, Gastonia's business leaders and emerging professional class built their housing chiefly south of the central business district, the area now known as the York-Chester neighborhood. East of York-Chester and north of the (C.D.A.) mill village is a neighborhood consisting of more modest middle-class houses, but were individually built and owned. Further east along Franklin Boulevard are two other neighborhoods built in this same time period, Fairmount Park and Franklin-Craig. North of downtown, an African-American community was formed as the Highland neighborhood, between Chester and Oakland Streets. Highland, in addition to the usual churches and schools, has a portion of its neighborhood business and cultural center remaining along North York Street. The Highland neighborhood was largely working class but economically mixed and home to professionals as well. Many physicians lived in Highland near the hospital. The neighborhood was developed along a north-south grid pattern and consisted of typical Carolina worker cottage-type houses, some civic uses, and commercial uses along York and Chester Streets.

From 1950–1970 the City's growth and development patterns followed state and national patterns. Automobiles and trucks replaced rail and water as the travel mode of choice for Gastonia's people and goods. Historic reversal of out migration from the Center City to the suburbs was made available by improvements in regional transportation networks. During this period downtown was no longer the primary commercial center for the City. Changes in land development patterns followed the changes in transportation mode of choice. Later commercial development occurred in both commercial strip and shopping center form. Commerce continued to flow outward along Franklin Boulevard, past New Hope



The streetcar system in the early 1900s (as seen above) influenced commercial development nearby. The evidence is seen on Franklin Boulevard, today with many of the buildings having a uniform setback, no side yards and traditional storefront architecture.



Suburban Development & Wildlife

Suburban development can cause dramatic changes to the landscape, the alteration of ecological functions, and a reduction in biodiversity. With the spread of suburbia, however, comes opportunities for some species to exploit new resources. While many wild creatures can enrich the lives of suburban dwellers, large increases in the population of species such as deer, beaver, and coyotes can lead to a change in status from resources to pests. Today, management of suburban areas challenges wildlife agencies on two fronts: the threat to human habitat and biodiversity; and, the problem of "overabundant" wildlife. This is not only a tremendous management challenge, but also an educational opportunity to help people understand the natural world and their place in it.

from Exploring the Ecology of Suburban Wildlife by Stephen DeStefano and Richard M. DeGraaf.

and Cox roads on the east and past Myrtle School Road on the west. Additional commercial areas developed on sections of most of Gastonia's major thoroughfares. The expanding urban highways improved automobile access to urban fringe areas, thus encouraging a more dispersed, automobile-oriented development. Franklin Boulevard still has the most commercial land use of any thoroughfare in the City, as significant portions of Gastonia's other thoroughfares remain residential.

Between 1970 and the mid 1980s, the growth was modest, due to the City's cautious annexation policy, and slow economic growth. However, when the economy improved in the late 1980s Gastonia became more aggressive with annexation, boosting Gastonia's population by 7,000 and annexing the airport in the southeast and the industrial area of the northwest. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the City annexed large residential areas, primarily in the southeast. Annexation remains a significant tool for growth today.

Beginning in the early 1990s and continuing to the present, most of the City's growth and development took place as sprawling residential subdivisions with curvilinear streets and irregular spacing. These development patterns within the Planning Area have been driven by regional conditions related to changing demographic and economic expansion. Specifically, node to node development patterns occurred in the eastern parts of the City. These patterns were established early, well before mid-century, but have continued to the present. Also, regional population increases have pushed the demand for housing, which is followed by commercial development, shown in Figure 13-1 on the following page. Figure 13-2, on page 13-5, indicates a large proportion of the City's recent new residential development has occurred in the east where the following conditions are present.

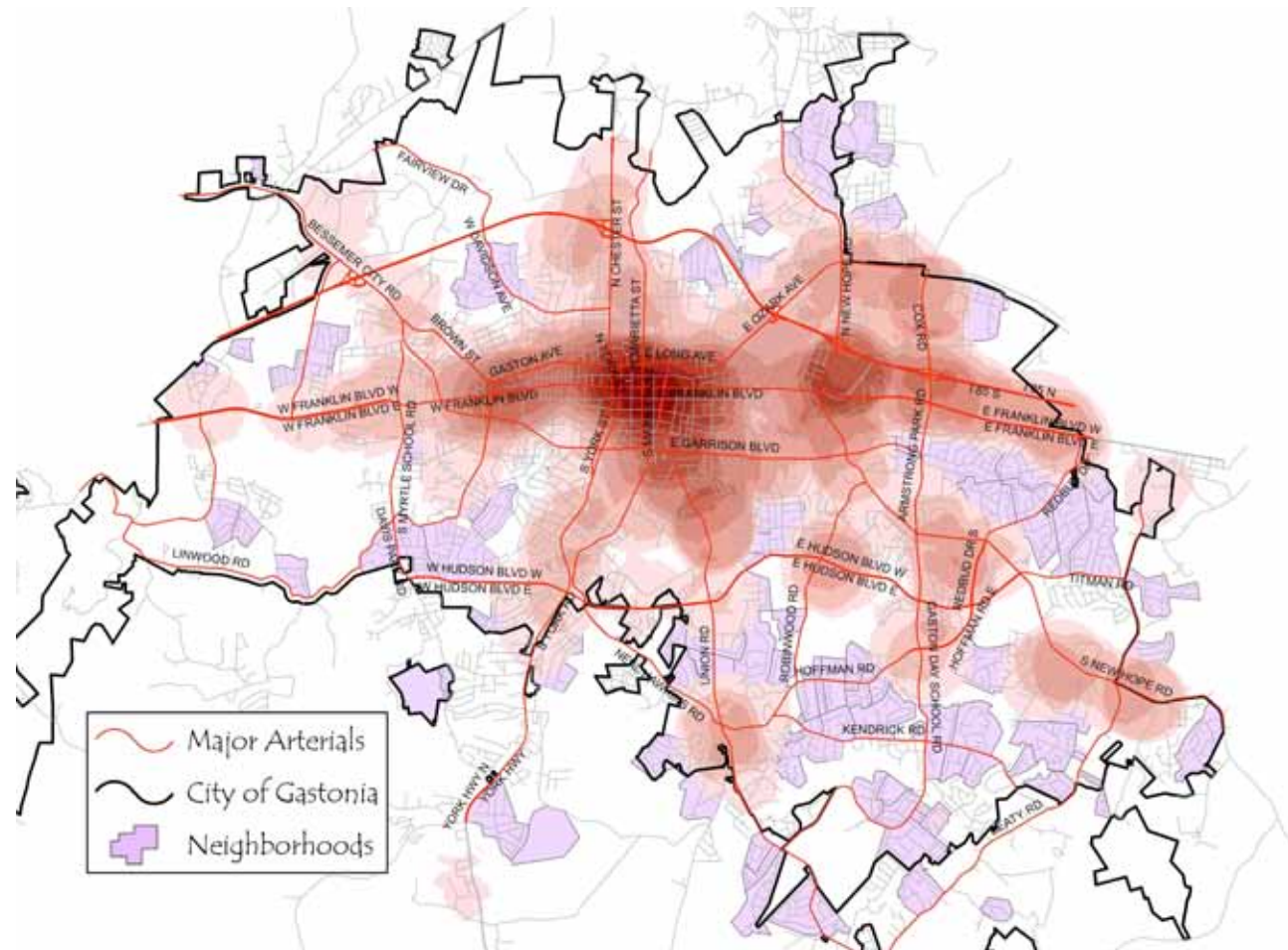
- ◆ Large lots and low density discourages walking and bicycling.
- ◆ Street networks tend to consist of two-lane roads handling far more vehicles than they were designed for funneling traffic onto major arterials, causing and congestion on major streets.
- ◆ Roads are designed for mobility of cars as opposed to accessibility for all modes of transportation.
- ◆ Streets with multiple lanes of traffic; often lack sidewalks.

Recent land use and development trends have presented a challenge for the City. Besides radically transforming the City's landscape, the ongoing decentralization of urban land uses and associated social and economic impacts have dramatically affected how people live, work, recreate, and use energy, as well as overall quality of life. These development patterns have also had significant impacts on the environment and, at times, conflict with wildlife habitats, scenic views, and open spaces. If continued, this development pattern will alter the way services and facilities are offered to residents, since historic and current services and facilities may not be compatible with future demands. This pattern could also impose considerable economic, emotional, aesthetic, and physical costs on residents. Unfavorable economic costs could include higher taxes, higher costs of providing infrastructure, adverse fiscal impacts on the City government, ill-health from air pollution generated by traffic, and a negative business climate. Emotional costs may include loss of community spirit and values and loss of a sense of place. Aesthetic costs can include less leisure time and more suburban landscapes, which lack aesthetic appeal. Physical costs include overcrowded schools, increased traffic congestion, longer commuting times, and more aggressive driving patterns. Therefore, it is essential that the City encourage smart growth



Figure 13-1: Commercial Density Map

and sustainable development principles, which will build from the City's source of strength—structured around a historic and vibrant downtown, diverse residential neighborhoods, infill development within the Center City, and nodal development along the commercial and institutional spines of the City's major corridors like Franklin Boulevard and US 321.



This density map indicates commercial density in red along Franklin Blvd, with pockets along other major thoroughfares. Neighborhoods are in purple. In the southeast, the neighborhoods are not connected to each other via an interconnected street network. This kind of development forces one out to a major arterial to drive to ones destination, instead of offering opportunities for short trips and/or non auto transportation.



Land Use Trends

Many factors influence development and land use patterns in Gastonia. Among them are the physical characteristics of the environment, proximity to regional resources and markets, the economy, employment opportunities, transportation and other infrastructure systems, government regulations, and community attitudes. Over the past 10 years, Gastonia has positioned itself as not only a player within the commercial market via regional shopping centers, but as an increasing player in the medical and residential market. Business parks have developed along US 321, neighborhood service centers follow rooftops, and the medical district is vastly expanding. The following is a list of local, national and regional trends that are guiding land use trends in Gastonia. While there are numerous trends related to land use in Gastonia that could be discussed, this chapter will present the *major* trends as they relate to development patterns.

Population Increase

Over the past ten years, North Carolina has become one of the fastest growing states in the country. Recent statistics indicate that, if regional trends continue, the Charlotte MSA population will likely reach 3.3 million by 2025. This regional trend has had huge impacts on the City's population in terms of number of new residents added as well as the location of those new residents. Trends show that Gastonia's population gains were realized several miles from the City's core, particularly in the southeastern part of Gastonia and areas outside Gastonia's southern City limits. Population projections indicate that Gastonia's greatest rate of growth will continue in a suburban manner in the southeastern part of the Planning Area. A rapidly growing populations will mean that there will be a higher

demand for housing, schools, public services, recreation and commerce. The challenge for the City lies in managing this growth in a manner that not only maintains but improves the quality of life for residents.

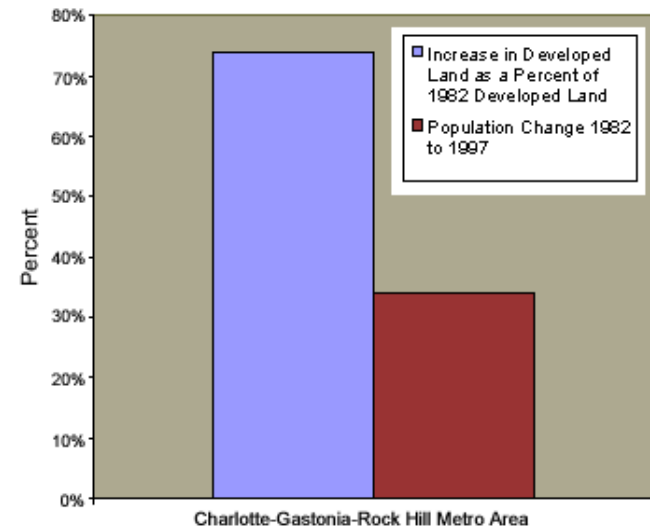
Regional Demographic Shifts

Recent statistics indicate that a rise in population has increased the diversity of the region. The region is attracting a large number of Baby Boomers with higher incomes, young professionals, and a large increase in immigrant population. Latino population growth is the fastest-growing population segment in the Charlotte region. These regional demographic shifts will significantly increase the need to develop land use policies, which help create communities that are more livable, walkable, senior-friendly, and accessible to recreational and healthcare facilities. Our challenge will be to manage growth to enjoy the benefits it can bring and limit its potential negative consequences.

Regional Influences

Regional growth patterns in the past forty years have changed the face of our community. New development in the form of low density, single-family subdivisions spread across the landscape and commercial activities strung out along major roads has prevailed. The hidden costs of this type of development pattern are now becoming evident in escalating costs to maintain roads and utilities, massive impacts on the health of the environment, and erosion of the vitality of downtown. Development and its effects often extend beyond municipal and county boundaries in a dense metropolitan area. Most municipalities in the region,

Figure 13-3: Increase in Developed Land Vs. Population Increase



Source: Quality of Natural Resources Commission (QNRC) Gaston County & North Carolina State University (NCSU) Cooperative Extension, Environmental Report, 2003



“IDEAL,” a downtown incentive program, is designed to attract new businesses to downtown and help upfit their buildings and ease their monthly lease burdens

and especially Gastonia, have been challenged with trying to work to develop regional solutions to address the negative impacts of these growth and development patterns.

Residential Development Patterns

Over the past ten years, population growth, regional job markets, and proximity to area amenities have fueled residential development patterns in Gastonia. While the majority of single-family residential developments have continued in the southeast sector, within the past five years, residential development has spread in the northeast, northwest, and southwest sectors taking a more multi-directional approach (see Figure 9-2 on page 9-5). Also, market changes indicate that the pattern of low-density, large lot, single-use, and scattered development is changing as population shifts have increased the demand for single-family attached and townhome developments. This is directly related to lifestyle changes, the decrease in the household size, and the increase in the number of older adults retiring within the region.

Recent regional housing sales indicate that homes close to urban centers, or those that have convenient access to transit, are holding their value better than houses in suburban communities. This trend is partly due to the changes in the economy and rising fuel and energy costs. The sub-prime crisis has accelerated an underlying trend. That trend demonstrates that a lifestyle predicated on cheap gas, subsidized infrastructure and long commutes will not last. The case for investing in more public transportation and walkable communities that afford people the option of traveling by other modes is fast becoming one of economic competitiveness. Accommodating a growing population in the era of high gas prices will mean increasing density and mixing land uses to enhance walkability and public transit.

Shifting Economy

Gaston County is in the midst of a dramatic shift: the textile industry, its long-standing economic engine, has largely been shuttered. There has been a shift in local economies from a traditional manufacturing and industrial based economy to a service and knowledge based system. Gaston Memorial Hospital has positioned itself in the region as a distinct institution, and it is located on a site that has excellent potential for growth and expansion. Associated medical services have also grown at a fast rate.

Downtown Revitalization

Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, both public and private stakeholders worked tirelessly to increase investments and activities in the downtown area. The downtown plan calls for urban intensity and diversity, public investments and redevelopment, all of which require a long-term political commitment for success. The benefits of revitalization can be profound in terms of the economy and sense of place for the downtown area. The costs of allowing downtown to decline can be even greater. In recent years, however, the City has been proactive in helping downtown, and the return has been significant. For example, economic incentive programs such as IDEAL, Investment in Downtown Economic Assistance and Livability, have helped to stimulate retail investment in downtown. Albeit slow, the fruits of past public and private efforts have appeared with the opening of storefronts on Main Avenue and the increase in entertainment activities. This resurgence can be attributed to numerous factors, but the economy and the City's recent focus on reinvestment in downtown are the primary reasons. Increasing the vitality of the downtown area is essential to the success of the City and dependent on continued reinvestment by public and private partners.



Strengthening Existing Neighborhoods

Older residential areas within the Center City that have been characterized by blight and disinvestment such as Highland, Oakland, and Loray Mills, are now experiencing growth and reinvestment. Private developers have shown interest in developing infill housing. Residents are showing an increased pride in their neighborhoods. The City, along with public and private partners, are collaborating on several neighborhood revitalization and stabilization efforts. The City has focused on place-based public investments, including infill housing, infrastructure improvement strategies, updates to the Planned Residential Development (PRD) standards which incorporate sidewalks and open space requirements, storm water ordinance, targeted code enforcement efforts, and infill development.

The City invested in quality-of-life interventions such as the street sign topper project along York and Chester. In recent years, several active community based organizations have worked with the City of Gastonia's Police and Code Enforcement officials on beautification projects and on efforts to improve neighborhood safety. Hope for Gaston, a partnership between the City and the faith-based community, has received national recognition impacting over 50 homes and bringing food to families in need. Regional population shifts will continue to increase the demand for the traditional neighborhood models focused on walkability, proximity to jobs, shopping, and recreational activities. Therefore, in order to meet the need of current and future residents, it is essential that we continue to develop creative strategies to strengthen existing neighborhoods across the City.

Recognition of Historical & Cultural Significance

Preservation is a very essential function of creating a sustainable development strategy. Farmland, open space, and historic preservation are all on the rise with legislation

providing the tools to regulate manage and control growth. Gastonia's residents are realizing the historical and cultural significance of older buildings and landmarks in the community and the fact that Gastonia has a unique identity that is worth preserving. Since the adoption of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the City designated the Brookwood neighborhood as the City's second local historic district and established the Oakland Design District, the Downtown National Register District, and the Loray Mill National Register District.

Transportation Challenges

Not surprisingly, most communities throughout the state tackle issues related to traffic congestion and the lack of road improvements. A continuing trend of an increase in the daily vehicle miles traveled has contributed to road congestion on local roads and along I-85—a problem that is likely to worsen with increases in population and sprawling development patterns. The Charlotte MSA is heavily dependent on private mobility and this dependency is increasing over time. Approximately 80% of Gastonia's commuters drives alone to work and another 12.5% carpool to work. In addition, travel times for Gastonia workers follow regional and national patterns. The average travel time for all commuters is about 23 minutes, up from 19.1 minutes in 1990. We will not meet all future travel demands merely through construction of new or wider roads. Therefore, Gastonia must develop strategies that promote and provide multi-modal transportation options. The North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA) is proposing to construct a toll road, known as the Gaston East-West Connector, from I-85 west of Gastonia in Gaston County to I-485/NC 160 in Mecklenburg County. The purpose of the connector is to improve east-west transportation mobility in the area around the City of Gastonia, between Gastonia and the Charlotte MSA and to establish direct access between the rapidly growing area of southeast Gaston County and west Mecklenburg County.



Investment today in public transportation will give a current and growing population alternative transportation choices. Residential development around transportation hubs cut down on pollution, commuter travel time and congestion.





A new trend: Coworking

Coworking is a style of work which involves a shared working environment, sometimes an office, yet with independent activity. Unlike in a typical office environment, those coworking are usually not employed by the same organization. Typically it is attractive to work-at-home professionals, independent contractors, or people who travel frequently and work in relative isolation. Typically customers can pay a monthly or per use fee for the space.

Source: www.wikipedia.com

New Communication Technologies

Personal computers connected to the Internet and other new communication technologies such as cellular phones and video conferencing devices are important because of the instantaneous access they give people to other people and to information. Some experts feel this new ease of communication is probably the most important trend shaping communities today. The commercial real estate market will be affected by the new communication technologies, which reduce the value of location. These technologies reduce the need for people to physically come together to do their job and conduct business—the reason cities originally came into being. Employers looking for ways to cut costs and improve the bottom line have a big incentive to embrace the new communication technologies to reduce office space needs. One study estimated that the demand for office space could be reduced 10% by these technologies. In the future, new communication technologies will provide people more options in choosing where they live, alter travel patterns and affect the need for and location of new office, retail and industrial space. The City must prepare to plan for the impacts of these technologies on our community.

Greenways in the Growth Area

Greenways and trails not only encourage friends, families and communities to interact with each other and nature, but they also provide a venue for physical activities such as walking, jogging, running, in-line skating and biking. Hence, the reason for their popularity. In fact, the Avon and Catawba Creeks Greenway, Gastonia's first greenway, has weekly visits totaling around 2000 in good weather. Overall, the community has embraced the greenway trail program. They also value water quality and access to nature. Linear parks provide these benefits and can serve as safe walking and cycling routes to a variety of destinations. Acquiring linear patterns of land

for greenways requires a long-term strategy to acquire property through purchase and dedication during platting.

Development Fees

Development fees, also referred to as impact fees, are one-time charges generally imposed at the time of connection to the infrastructure system or when development permits are issued. These charges are designed to recover all, or a portion of, the capital investment made by a local government to provide sufficient capacity in a utility system to serve new users. In June, 2009, Council adopted a system expansion fee policy. As of July 1, 2009 anyone who obtains a building permit now owes the City of Gastonia \$1,800 as a system expansion fee for water and sewer service. The rate increases to \$3,600 in 2011, for every permit.

Conclusions

As we plan for the kind of community we would like to become in the new century, we must seize opportunities presented by some of these trends and limit the potential negative impacts of others. Most importantly, we must continue to track land development and the conditions that have led to sprawl, and adopt policies that will create a desirable, economically viable, and sustainable City for existing and future residents. The policies must embody smart growth principles of land development to manage and direct growth in a way that minimizes damage to the environment, builds livable communities, supports economic development and jobs, and reduces sprawl. To achieve these goals, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. Smart growth emphasizes the concept of developing a livable City. Livability suggests, among other things, that the quality of our built environment and how well we preserve the natural environment directly affects our quality of life.



Land Use Principles

Smart Growth

Gastonia seeks to develop, with an appreciation for sensitive environments, long-term quality of life, economic efficiency, and community character. Therefore, the application of smart growth principles is indispensable for Gastonia, both in implementing the Comprehensive Plan and preparing for its eventual success. This Plan recognizes and supports the principles and goals of smart growth. The following core principles serve as the foundation of the land use policies of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan:

Integrate Action

Land use policy should be integrated with and supported by all other City policies and programs, including facility planning and construction for services such as wastewater and transportation. This ensures that the community objectives identified through this plan are attained efficiently.

Think Sustainability

Providing for the needs of today's residents and visitors should be done in a manner that does not jeopardize the quality of life, including the natural environment, of future residents. Careful community design and thoughtful development can serve the community well, both now and in the future.

Invest in Existing Neighborhoods

The neighborhood unit is the building block of the community. There is strong public support for the preservation of existing neighborhoods and the development of new neighborhoods which are mixed-use, safe, and walkable. This idea includes the strengthening

and support of existing neighborhoods through adequate infrastructure maintenance, infill development strategies, beautification, and other actions. To foster walkability, we must mix land uses and build compactly, and ensure safe and inviting pedestrian corridors.

Develop a Sense of Place

Gastonia is unique and not simply a bedroom community for the City of Charlotte. Gastonia's character includes the sense of place created by our historic downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, historic mills, cultural icons like Tony's Ice Cream, and regional attractions such as the Schiele Museum and the The Gastonia Grizzlies. Preserving Gastonia as a unique place, rather than just a bedroom community of Charlotte, is important. This concept was strongly supported throughout the public outreach process. The existing downtown business core was the overwhelming choice for the location which best represented the "heart" of Gastonia.

Expand the Range and Choice of Housing

One of the central goals of smart growth is to expand the range and choice of housing, both in location and style. As detailed in Chapter 2, Gastonians are getting older, and fewer households have children. Both of these demographic trends contribute to growing demand for more varied neighborhood and housing styles. There is growing evidence that demand is strong for the types of neighborhoods that were common before World War II—compact, walkable neighborhoods with access to shopping and services. Established Center City neighborhoods, such as Belvedere, York-Chester, and Brookwood, are evidence of neighborhoods meeting demand. Many young professionals and empty nesters have relocated to these neighborhoods because of their livability. However, these types of development still account for only a tiny fraction of all residential



Champion Good Urban Design



Expand the Range and Choice of Housing



Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices



The North Carolina 21st Century Communities Task Force was created to study growth around the state. From that emerged a Smart Growth Network, which gained broad support among planners, developers, real estate interests, builders, business leaders, environmentalists, historic preservationists, professional organizations, academicians, and local and state government entities who share the following goals:

- Create integrated transportation choices
- Protect community character and identity
- Build walkable communities
- Preserve our rural heritage and economy
- Protect a network of green space
- Enhance the civic realm
- Invest in existing neighborhoods
- Ensure affordable living
- Promote regional cooperation
- Build disaster-resistant communities
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective

development and often times are not affordable for lower and middle class families. While recent changes to the zoning code have allowed developers to build more innovative development with unique design elements, there are deficiencies in terms of affordability in both new residential development as well as rental units. The City supports the construction and rehabilitation of homes to meet the needs of people of all abilities, income levels, and household types, and encourages the building of homes near jobs, transit, and services. The opening of Gateway Village in 2008, a 40-unit apartment complex for seniors, is an example of the City's commitment to partner with others to expand the availability of affordable housing. The City recognizes the need for more affordable rental, and smaller single-family homes. These housing types should be constructed in a way that is compatible with the character of the neighborhood and provide new housing choices for people of all means.

Promote Community and Stakeholder Collaboration

Citizen participation can be time-consuming, but encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration can lead to the creative, speedy resolution of development issues and greater community understanding of the importance of good planning and investment. The City will work to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders and the programs to address them are best defined by the people who live and work there.

Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices

The City recognizes that transportation and land use are undoubtedly linked. Transportation investments and policies influence development patterns as well as travel patterns. For example, a connected system of streets with higher residential densities and a mix of land uses can facilitate travel by foot, bicycle, and public transportation,

in addition to automobile. In order to meet the needs of all users and properly accommodate all modes of travel, the City should adopt a Complete Streets Policy that implements new approaches to transportation planning, such as better coordinated land use and transportation; increased availability of high quality transit service; creating redundancy, resiliency and connectivity within road networks; and ensuring connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit, and road facilities. The transportation network must accommodate various modes, and users of all abilities.

Preserve and Protect Green Spaces

We are consuming land at a pace that far exceeds the rate of population growth. A study, Urban Growth Mapping and Forecasting, conducted by the Renaissance Computing Institute (RENCI) at UNCC, projected that after 2010 nearly 50% of the land in Gaston County would be developed, compared to 6.7% in 1976. Development is responsive to the natural amenities to help keep Gastonia beautiful and vibrant for future generations. We must continue to reduce pressure to develop open spaces and farmland by reinvesting in the City's existing neighborhoods and downtown where infrastructure exists and making them better places to live.

Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective

In order to be successful in implementing smart growth, the City must work with the private sector by collaborating and implementing incentives and policies which help support successful ventures. If the City makes the right infrastructure and regulatory decisions we will create fair, predictable and cost effective smart growth.

Champion Good Urban Design

Urban design takes into consideration density, street



layout, transportation and employment areas and urban design issues. Growth management issues such as urban sprawl, growth patterns and phasing of developments also heavily influence urban form. It is important that we understand the elements that comprise the City's urban form so that development policies can be drafted to preserve, nurture, and capitalize upon the strengths of the community. This plan supports compact building design as an alternative to conventional land consumptive development. Furthermore, we will find creative means to preserve open space and construct buildings in a way that make more efficient use of land and resources.

Encourage Center Based Development

Strengthen a pattern of community development oriented on centers, which includes a series of centers, cores, and nodes. The center-based development pattern is supported in this plan by locating centers at the intersection of arterial and collector streets. Such locations allow not only immediately adjacent residents, but also passing travelers, to support the commercial activities. These centers will vary in size depending on location.

Plan Regionally

The City recognizes that the activities within its corporate boundaries impact other jurisdictions within the region and vice versa. Therefore, the City is committed to further our work on regional planning issues for the Greater Charlotte Region by participating in planning forums and through intergovernmental communication. The City supports the development and implementation of local, regional, state and interstate plans that have broad public support and are consistent with smart growth principles. Through the activities of the City's elected and appointed officials, Gastonia will continue to foster development projects, land and water conservation, transportation and housing that have a regional or multi-community benefit.



REGIONAL PLANNING SPOTLIGHT

During several meetings spanning the entire year of 2008, the City of Gastonia along with other representatives from Gaston County, York County and Lincoln County participated in planning local segments of the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT). The CTT offers a network of greenways and trails that ultimately will link 15 counties in North and South Carolina.

See www.carolinathreadtrail.org.



Existing Land Use

The 2025 Planning Area's existing land use patterns are illustrated on Figure 13-4, on page 13-15. Each parcel within the Planning Area was classified into one of eleven land use categories, which describe the primary use of the parcel as it was in 2008. The generalized classifications, as listed below, are similar to the descriptions in the previous comprehensive plan:

- Industrial
- Commercial
- Office Centers and Health Services
- Public and Institutional
- Residential
- Mixed-Use Areas
- Open Space, Parks and Recreation Areas
- Vacant and Undeveloped Land
- Transportation, Communication, Utilities

A generalized map is one that does not show minute detail, but rather combines, or eliminates, some elements to increase the readability and clarity of the map. Thus the existing land use map does not show individual lots, except where a single lot and land use would be large enough to be readable at the map scale. The existing and future land use maps presented in this chapter use the minimum land use categories as described in Figure 13-3 on page 13-14. Figure 13-3 provides a description and profile for existing land use categories within the plan area.

In addition, in some areas, which have a single prevailing land use, small exceptions to that land use are ignored. An example

of this would be a single-family neighborhood, which contains a small church or some vacant lots. Those individual vacant lots (or church) are not shown because first, they are too small or scattered to contribute to our understanding of Gastonia's land use pattern, and second they are sized and situated so that it can be reasonably assumed that any future development will be consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

Using the same reasoning, the office land use category is confined to large office developments only. Individual offices, permitted in all of the City's business zones, are shown as part of either commercial or mixed-use. Public and institutional uses are grouped together because they share several common characteristics. Mixed-use, a land use largely confined to downtown Gastonia, is a functional category. That is, downtown has several different functions, none of which are confined to a single part of downtown. The uses are mixed, and it is this circumstance that characterizes downtown Gastonia as a mixed-use area.

The only roads shown on the Existing Land Use Map are the major and minor thoroughfares, both existing and proposed. These are shown mostly to help the user orient himself or herself. The actual acreage taken up by the roads, although a significant percentage of the total land use, is not shown on this map. Again this has been done in the interest of clarity. Showing all the roads at their actual scale would have created an unreadable map.

The purpose of the Existing Land Use Map is therefore to show the patterns of land use in Gastonia and the 2025 Planning Area. The map is used in this plan as a baseline tool for constructing a future land use map. The Future Land Use Map is shown and described in the Objectives and Tools section of this chapter.



Figure 13-4: Current Land Uses

	Description	Acres	Percentage of the Planning Area
Residential	This category is comprised of residential uses such as single-family attached and detached, and multi-family units or planned developments where a majority of the land area, or floor area, is devoted to residential uses.	23,392	30%
Residential, Low Density	Density—One to four units per acre. Mixture of single-family detached and attached units such as duplexes and townhomes.	19,799	30%
Residential, Medium Density	Density—Five to eight units per acre. Predominantly townhome or condominiums; can include smaller lot detached, and attached, single-family developments.	1,732	2%
Residential, High Density	Density—Eight or more units per acre—multi-unit and multi-building developments; higher density townhome developments and apartment complexes.	1,861	2%
Commercial	This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together as in a shopping center.	1,805	2%
Mixed-Use	Area that contains two or more different uses such as, but not limited to, residential, office, manufacturing, retail, public or entertainment.	1,203	2%
Office Centers and Health Services	Employment intensive uses that contain low-rise office parks, single freestanding office buildings, depository facilities such as banks and residential structures converted for office uses. Also includes hospitals, dental services, medical services or clinics, nursing homes, convalescent homes, rest homes and sanitariums.	357	0.5%
Industrial	This category contains lands used for manufacturing, processing plants, offices, showrooms, warehousing, distribution, wholesale trade facilities, auto salvage yards and other similar uses.	2,634	3%
Public and Institutional	This category includes government, education, non-profit, religious, arts and cultural uses.	3,242	4%
Parks and Open Space	This category is for land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, golf courses, recreation centers, natural areas, such as flood plains, wetlands, utility easements, ditches and similar uses.	5,687	7%
Vacant, Undeveloped and Underdeveloped Land	This category is for land not developed for a specific use, or land that was developed for a particular use, but that was subsequently abandoned. This category includes woodlands or pastureland and undeveloped portions of residential subdivisions and industrial parks.	76,200	47.5%
Transportation, Communications and Utilities	This category includes power substations, railroad facilities, radio towers, public transit stations, telephone switching stations, airports, water towers, water treatment plants, offices and storage areas of utilities, landfills, and other similar uses.	1,429	2%



Existing Development

Existing land use was calculated using the Gaston County Tax Parcel database inventory of land. The results, indicating the amount of land by use category, is shown in Figure 13-3 on page 13-14.

The total Planning Area contains approximately 140,000 acres, of which approximately 63,000 or 50.5% is developed. Developed land is grouped into eight separate land use categories, as indicated in Figure 13-5 on this page and described in detailed in the following section.

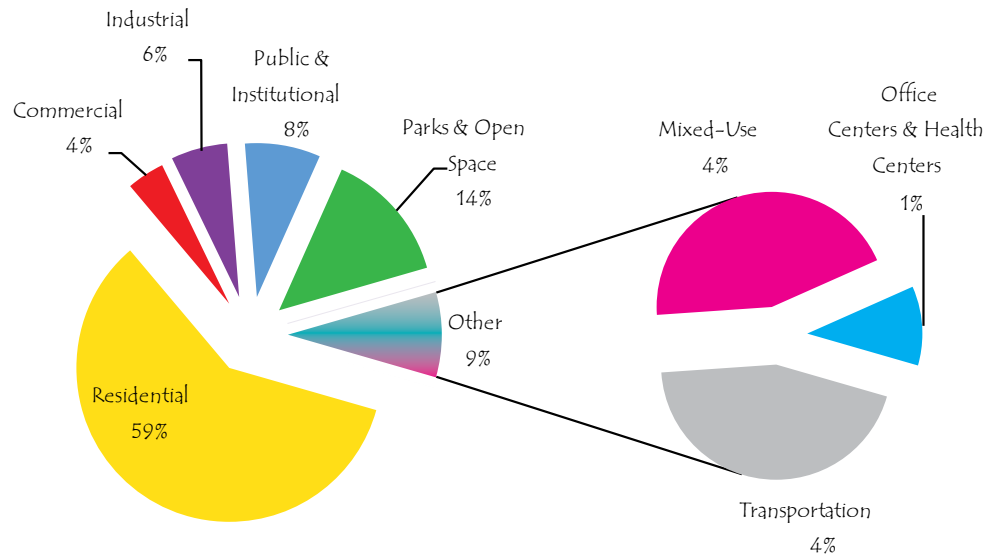
RESIDENTIAL USES

Residential land use represents the largest category of developed land within the Planning Area. The residential land use category consists of various types of dwelling units, including single-family detached units, single-family semi-detached units, single-family attached dwellings, apartment buildings and complexes, and mobile homes. Single-family detached dwelling units represent, by far, the largest single type of land use within the residential category. Low density, single-family development is the dominant land use consuming 19,799 acres or 26% of the total land area, while 4% is being used for medium and high-density residential development. This residential development follows a suburban development pattern. The mean parcel size for a single-family home is .64 acres. This use, more than any other, drives land consumption patterns and requires continued investment in road capacity and water and sewer infrastructure.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

The third largest land use is parks and open space at 7% of the land area; however, nearly half of this amount is located within Crowders Mountain State Park. Open space

Figure 13-6: Total Developed Land



associated with schools and churches are not included in this acreage; however, existing City parks, greenways, the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, and recent conservancy acquisitions are included. A number of demographic trends, with respect to Gastonia's parks and open spaces, have influenced the City's policy direction. These include a greater interest in outdoor recreational activities that allow appreciation and interaction with the natural environment in Gastonia, ranging from walking trails, bicycle paths, parks for both active and passive uses, and boating facilities. The provision of adequate parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities is an important indicator of quality of life and will be instrumental in attracting a diversified economy.

INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL

It is important that industrial and commercial needs are supported by appropriate land use designations. The commercial and industrial categories include all businesses that are non-agricultural in nature. Together they are the fourth largest land use category and account for



Some of the land uses found in the city



approximately 4,440 acres or 5% of the existing developed land. Specifically, the commercial land use category includes uses such as retail stores, personal services, gas stations, banks, offices, and other similar facilities. These facilities typically require good vehicle access and high visibility. Because of their needs, these types of uses tend to be located along heavily traveled roadways that they are easily accessible to customers, employees, and deliveries. Commercial uses are found at nodes and along major thoroughfares; however, heavy concentrations are found along Franklin Boulevard in the Center City and at the Franklin Square development. This development is a regional shopping destination. Industrial uses are lands used for manufacturing, processing plants, offices, showrooms, warehousing, distribution, wholesale trade facilities, auto salvage yards and other uses. These uses are concentrated along US 321 and Bessemer City Road, an area that has some of Gastonia's largest employers.

PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL

Public and Institutional uses include government facilities, schools, arts and cultural facilities, and semi-public uses such as hospitals and other similar uses. This land use category shows no concentration in any particular section of the City and accounts for approximately 8% of the developed land within the City.

MIXED-USE

Mixed-use areas are characterized by a range of residential, commercial, institutional, and public uses. They emphasize pedestrian-oriented activity centers, which may contain a mix of retail, office, multifamily residential, cultural, educational, open space, and other public and private. A mix of uses can occur in a single structure, in a group of structures on a parcel, or on a group of parcels. Approximately 1,200 acres or 2% of land in the Planning Area is categorized as mixed-use. Mixed-uses are typically

found in the Center City and at nodes along major thoroughfares.

OFFICE CENTERS AND HEALTH SERVICES

These employment intensive uses contain low-rise office parks, single freestanding office buildings, depository facilities such as banks, and residential structures converted for office uses. This category also includes uses concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and care of human beings, including hospitals, dental services, medical services or clinics, nursing, convalescent homes, rest homes, and assisted living centers.

TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATION, & UTILITIES

These land uses make up approximately 1,429 acres or 2% of land in the Planning Area. Typically, transportation uses can include land used for railroad transportation, automobile transportation, right-of-way (private and public), and parking. Roadways and right-of-ways account for the majority of transportation land uses, especially since Gaston County has portions of I-85, US 321, and US 74 running through it. This category also includes support services for communication land uses such as telephone communication facilities, radio broadcasting towers, and television broadcasting facilities. Utility land uses include electric, gas, water, sewage disposal, and solid waste disposal.

VACANT AND UNDEVELOPED/UNDERDEVELOPED LAND

The largest land use category within the Planning Area is vacant and undeveloped / underdeveloped land, which accounts for 76,200 acres or 47.5% of the area's total land area. Vacant and undeveloped/ underdeveloped land includes parcels with no active use, or land that is occupied by a use but contains enough land to be subdivided for future development. For example, parcels



within platted subdivisions that are not yet built on are considered vacant and undeveloped, while a single house on a 10 acre parcel, where the parcel could be subdivided, is considered vacant and underdeveloped. Vacant land is defined as undeveloped, even though there may be residences located on a large parcel currently used for agricultural purposes. Underdeveloped land includes larger tracts of land near the limits of the City as well as what could be considered as infill lots in developed industrial, commercial, and residential areas.

Urban Design Standards

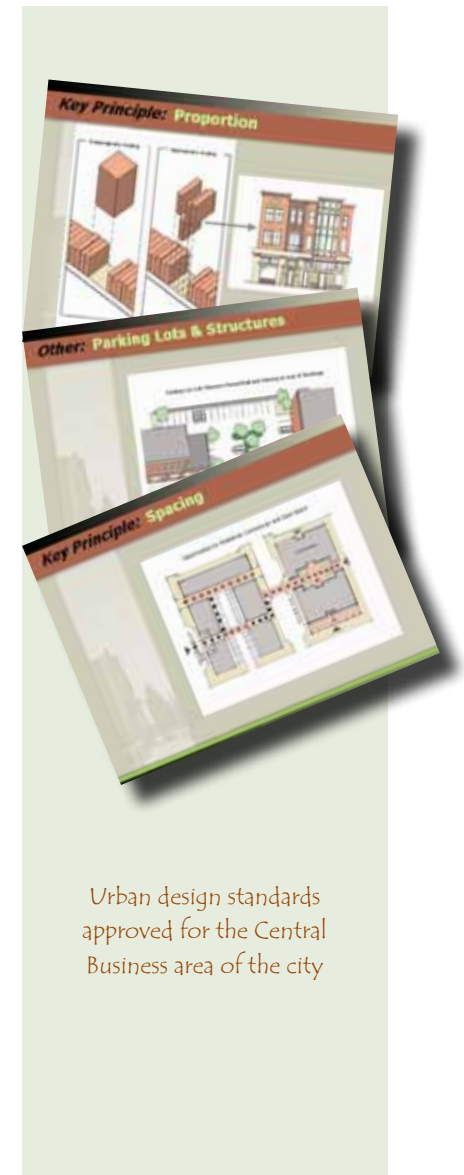
Increasingly, communities are developing urban design standards to help better define a sense of place and enhance the quality of the built environment. Typically, zoning codes define districts wherein certain uses are permitted and defined development standards that apply both city-wide and uniquely to specific districts (setbacks, parking requirements, signage limitations, etc.). More and more, however, land use regulations are becoming more flexible in terms of permitted uses and more oriented toward development standards and design issues such as landscape treatments, construction materials, building form, design of vehicular parking and pedestrian movement.

The City has adopted overlay districts such as the Historic Districts and the Center City Design District, which have design standards that are applied to new development or changes to existing development. Within these areas or districts, the City uses design review as a tool for maintaining the special character and the historic character of the area, and to ensure that new development, or changes to existing development, are compatible with the defined design standard. Design standards not only provide architectural guidance, but define elements

which contribute to a successful urban environment, such as how streets and buildings relate to each other, to the neighborhood, to open areas, to the streetscape and to the automobile. Design standards encourage development to be “pedestrian-friendly” and to include landscaping, art, and spaces for people to socialize.

This plan points out the overall inefficiencies of maintaining existing development patterns dependent upon the urbanization of farmland and rural areas, and stresses the importance of infill development. In addition, the image, feel, and mobility of our community is important because it shapes the perceptions of those who live, work, and visit here. The elements that make our downtown, neighborhoods, and commercial centers special should be incorporated throughout the City, helping to set us apart from surrounding communities. Therefore, we must continue to promote design elements which will increase the quality of life in our community and, if necessary, strengthen the urban design components of the City’s Unified Development code and establish design standards for public spaces.

The City has successfully created incentive programs which encourage infill development in the Center City. We must continue to promote these programs and develop similar opportunities within other areas of the City. A renewed emphasis on infill development can reverse growing problems fueled by sprawl development. These new infill projects should be sympathetic to the adjacent residences in terms of scale, design, setbacks, and building materials in order to preserve the existing character of the neighborhood.



Urban design standards approved for the Central Business area of the city



Development Constraints

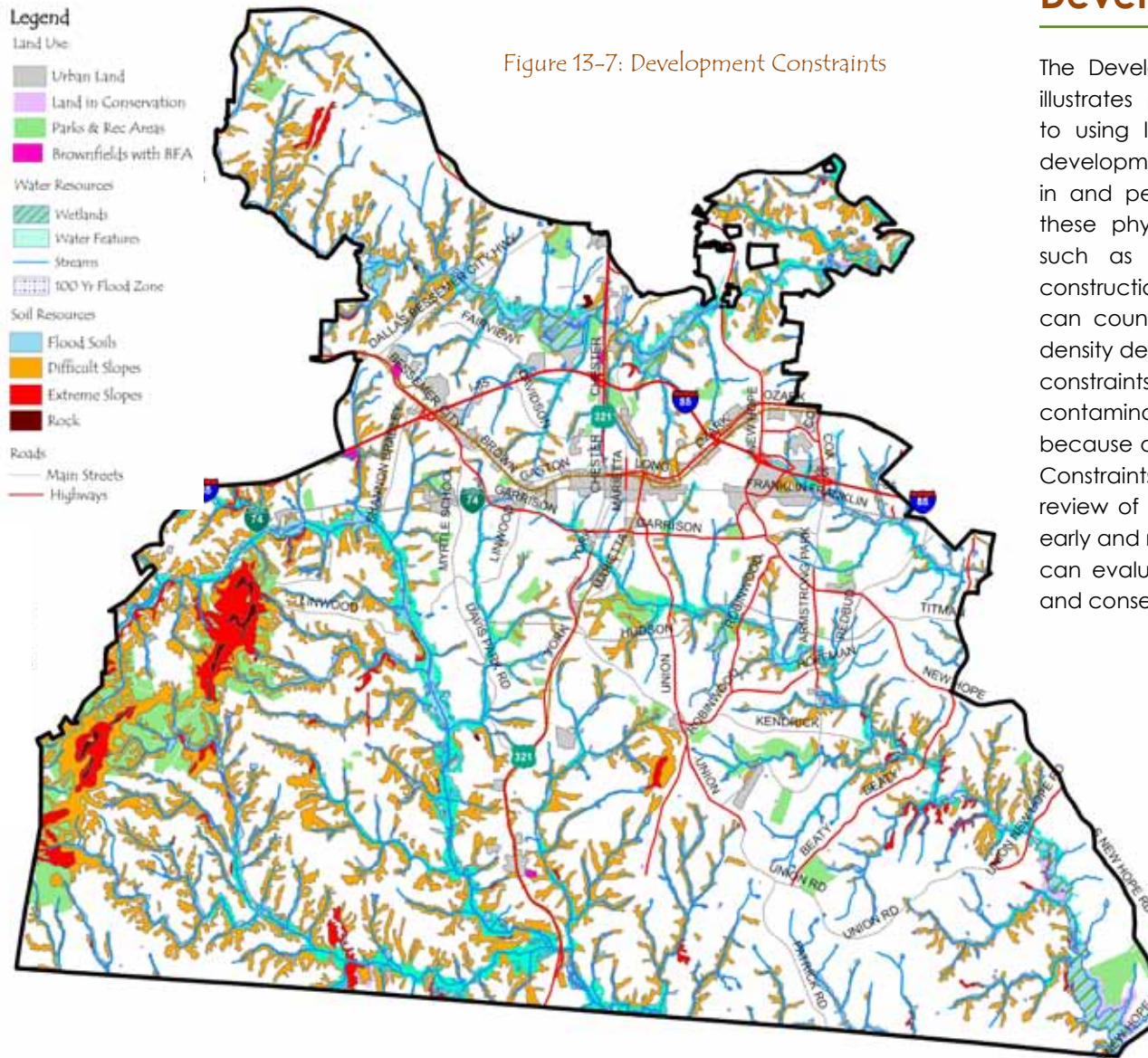


Figure 13-7: Development Constraints

The Development Constraints Overlay Map, Figure 13-6, illustrates physical conditions that may pose a barrier to using land for residential, commercial, or industrial development. Figure 13-7 illustrates the number of acres in and percentages of the total Planning Area where these physical conditions occur. A natural constraint, such as steep gradients, can be problematic for construction, impacting the viability of development, and can counteract planning objectives of delivering high-density development and affordable housing. Man-made constraints, such as brownfields, are perceived to be contaminated and are often not appealing to businesses because of concern for future liability. The Development Constraints Overlay Map should be an integral part of the review of all development proposals. By using this map early and routinely in the development process, all parties can evaluate and mitigate potential negative impacts, and conserve valuable resources more effectively.

Figure 13-8: Development Constraints in the Planning Area

	Acres	Percent
Difficult Slopes	12,576	15.1%
Extreme Slopes	1,604	1.9%
Urban Land	2,706	3.2%
Rock	132	.16%
Flood Soils	12,235	14.7%
Parks & Rec	5,698	6.8%
Land in Conservation	565	.68%
Brownfields	40	.05%
Wetlands	2000	2.4%
Flood Zone	4352	5.2%

Data sources: Land Conserved by Land Trust: Catawba Lands Conservancy, 2011; Wetlands: National Wetlands Inventory, 2007; Brownfields: North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2010; Soil Resources: Gastonia Planning Department, 2002; Flood Zone: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2008; Streams and Water Features: North Carolina Center for Geographic Information and Analysis, 2001; Streets and Highways: Gaston County GIS, 2008.



Future Land Use

The desired land development patterns for Gastonia and the 2025 Planning Area are shown in Figure 13-8 on page 13-21, the Future Land Use Map. Gastonia's Future Land Use Map builds upon the City's existing land use patterns and provides a generalized guide for development and conservation decisions. The Future Land Use Map is an integral part of the 2025 Plan and both a physical vision of Gastonia in 2025 and a policy guide for future decision making. The Future Land Use Map shows the recommended general land uses in the following categories:

- ◆ Residential: Includes both high and low density single and multi-family neighborhoods.
- ◆ Commercial: Includes retailing, light wholesaling and individual office and institutional uses. Typical commercial uses include supermarkets, larger drug stores, department stores and price point retail store, clothing stores, banks, offices, restaurants, movie theaters, hotels, and similar uses.
- ◆ Industrial: Includes manufacturing and heavier trucking, wholesaling and distribution operations.
- ◆ Office: Includes business and professional offices and "light" services such as medical services.
- ◆ Mixed-use: Includes areas that contains two or more different uses such as, but not limited to, residential, office, manufacturing, retail, public or entertainment.
- ◆ Public/Quasi-Public/Institutional: Includes publicly-owned land and non-government, community land uses. These lands include: government-owned administration buildings, churches, fire stations, hospitals, utilities, service clubs, schools, colleges and educational research lands, YMCAs, and others.
- ◆ Parks, Open Space: Includes public parks, public and private golf

courses, natural areas, cemeteries and other such uses. Possible greenway corridors are shown on the Gastonia's Greenway Plan Map in the Open Space, Parks and Recreation Chapter.

The Future Land Use Map will be amended from time to time, keeping up with changing trends and local needs. It will not prescribe land use, as a zoning ordinance does, but rather serve as a guide to rational planning and decision making. By necessity, the map is drawn in fairly broad strokes, leaving out some of the fine-grained detail found in some areas of Gastonia. Detailed, parcel by parcel, land use is more a function of zoning than the Future Land Use Map.

The Future Land Use Map and strategies will have their greatest impact on vacant land and undeveloped areas, as this is where the majority of Gastonia's new development is taking place. For some areas that are already developed or built out, the future land use designation is the same as the existing land use; in other cases it is different. As a rule, land with contrasting existing and future land use is envisioned for new uses. The strategy maps in the sector plans will also show priority areas for re-use, development and new investment.

The Future Land Use Map is but one of the guidelines provided in this plan for land use. The objectives and tools in this chapter give criteria for evaluating the suitability of an area for various types of development, such as business, office or multi-family development. These criteria should be regarded as equally important to decision making as the future land use designation.





Figure 13-9: Future Land Use Map

Comprehensive
Plan
2025
City of Gastonia,
North Carolina

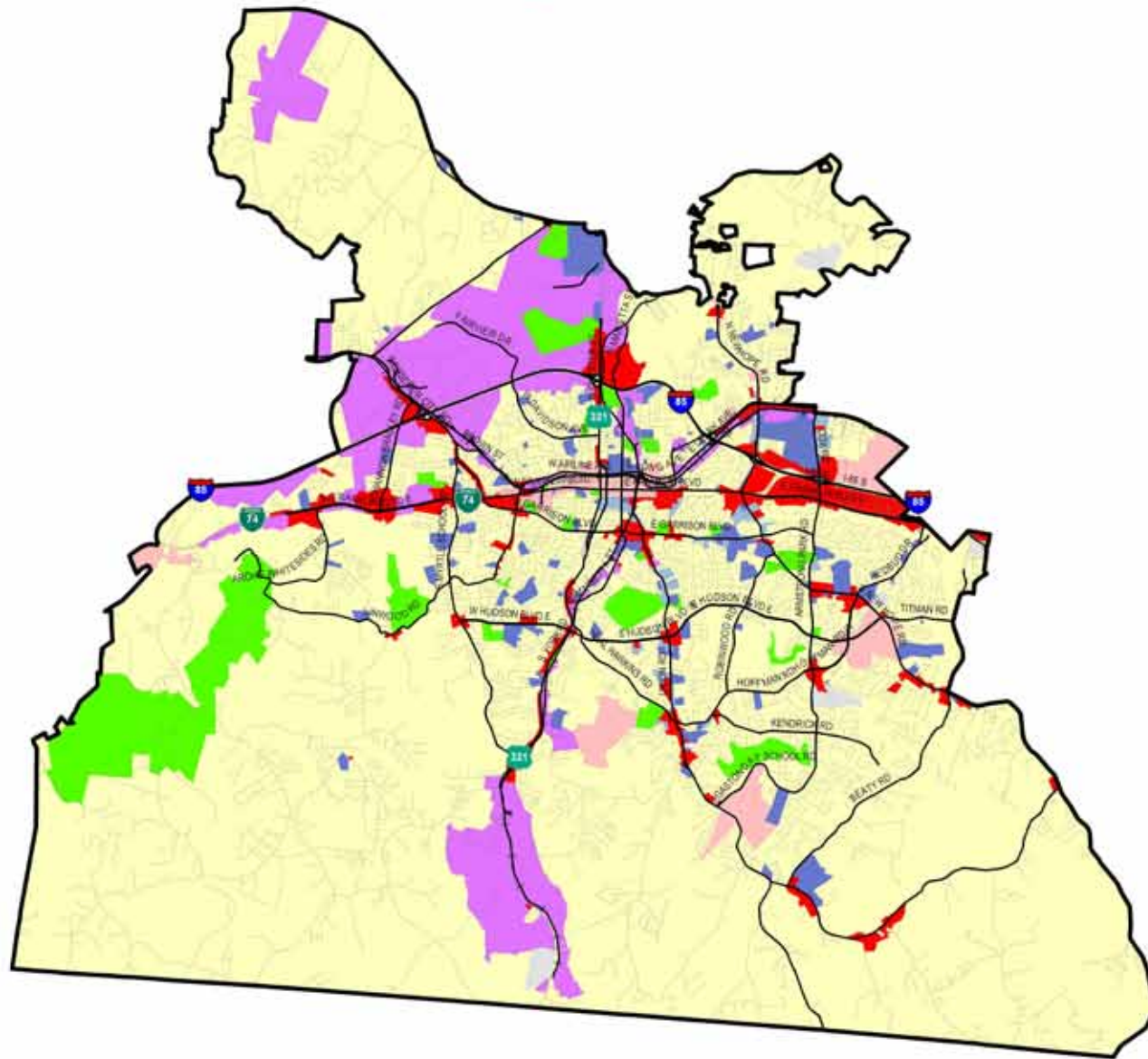
Legend

- 2025 Planning Area
- Railroads
- Main Streets
- Roads
- 2025 Land Use**
- Residential
- Commercial
- Office Centers
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Parks and Open Space
- Public and Institutional
- Utilities



1 inch = 11,333 feet

REVISED: March 01, 2012
 A:\2011\GIS\2011\2025\2025 Land Use Map\2025 Land Use Map.dwg
 Author: City of Gastonia Planning Department



Issues

- There are a number of regional growth and development issues, such as transportation and air quality management, that transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Coordination of land development patterns and cooperation in service provision is vital to the sustainability of the region.
- An efficient and sustainable multi-modal transportation system is only achievable by coordinating land use and transportation. Land use patterns can either aid or impede the movement of people and goods. Conversely, a healthy, convenient and comprehensive transportation system can improve and sustain the quality-of-life in Gastonia.
- Past development patterns have placed pressures on regional local governments and planning agencies to keep transportation needs in alignment with sprawling growth patterns. Effective long-range transportation planning requires a significant amount of time and dedicated financial resources. Locating sources of funding for transportation options in the future will present long-term challenges given the current economic and spatial realities.
- Demographic trends indicate that the traditional family is shrinking in size. This, in combination with the increased number of households comprised of singles, working parents, and elderly, will prompt a demand for higher density, infill housing located near services, jobs and transit. Yet much of the housing being built in Gastonia is designed for the traditional family—detached two-story homes on big lots in the suburbs. Gastonia's zoning and subdivision regulations must be responsive to changes in the demand for housing. Shifts in the housing market should not be hindered by land use regulations that were devised in an earlier era.
- Gastonia continues to grow disproportionately to the east and southeast. The unbalanced growth undermines the Center City and requires additional investments in infrastructure, schools and police protection. The projected population growth in the east and southeast, coupled with the projected improvements of transportation linkages with the rest of Gaston County, will increase the demand for additional commercial facilities in the future. A large portion of this demand, however, could be met through the redevelopment of existing commercial areas. Our Center City is a vital component of the City and its health and viability is critical to the success of the City as a whole.
- Increased population and shifting demographics has also increased the need to plan for additional open space and other institutional uses. Thus, the consideration of adding parks, open space and schools must be balanced between the needs, opportunities, and the cost to the City and county. However, while there is a growing need for new recreational facilities and schools, finding good locations for them is becoming difficult as the amount of developable land dwindles.
- Energy and related issues continue to dominate the headlines, from concerns about greenhouse gas emissions and climate change to the impacts of growth and consumption on our planet to the cost and availability of energy. Increasing demand around the world is affecting both the cost and availability

ISSUES



ISSUES

of energy. Energy is necessary for human progress, economic productivity, transportation, safety, communication, and every facet of contemporary life. Providing a sustainable future is critical for future generations, as is demonstrating environmental leadership, especially as it relates to sustainability.

- Historically, Gastonia's economy was centered around manufacturing of products and goods. New economic realities will result in a need for shifting land use priorities. New markets will call for more emphasis on technology and less on location. The future attraction of industries such as healthcare, research and development activities, and communications should create a demand for land and facilities to support such activities, and therefore decrease the need to continue to preserve vast amounts of land for large scale industrial use.
- Retail activities, particularly within downtown and along the west side, have struggled as recent trends in retail shopping have been dominated by the expansion of big box retailers. The number of specialty stores and stores selling appliances, furniture, electronics, lawnmowers and other durable goods are limited or nonexistent. The present situation requires travel across the City, from the west to the east side, for many goods and services.
- Gastonia's downtown, its surrounding neighborhoods, and nearby mill villages have suffered from disinvestment and blight over the past 15 years. Ironically, these are the areas that are key to Gastonia's character and identity. While redevelopment work is underway, there is much more to do to create a vibrant Center City that is an energetic, economic, civic, cultural, and entertainment destination for our

growing population. Continued revitalization and reinvigoration of these areas will keep Gastonia from becoming "just another suburb" of Charlotte.

- Gastonia's low-density single-family zoning in much of the suburban area is contributing to urban sprawl. Sprawl requires more infrastructure per household than well-designed, high quality compact development.
- There are a number of design-related issues, such as pedestrian access, child-safe bicycle routes, roadway landscaping and medians, shopping centers, and parking lots that should be addressed to sustain community pride and encourage investment in Gastonia.
- School assignment zones influence the housing market in Gastonia. Differences in the perceived desirability of the schools can either inflate or depress the price of housing in a neighborhood, directing investment away from neighborhoods where schools are perceived to be a problem.

While the City has made progress towards addressing some of these issues, there is more work to be done. Growth has brought significant benefits and serious challenges to the City. However, there are abundant opportunities for better ways to grow, and we must capture the benefits of economic growth without incurring the mounting costs of poorly planned development and heavy fossil fuel consumption. How our City grows will have a direct impact on community services and facilities, such as police, fire and emergency services, recreation, and building inspection as well as water and sewer. We must act, and act wisely, at this critical time.



Objectives & Tools

Objective 1

Incorporate sustainability principles and goals into the City's land use regulatory scheme.

Tools

- a. Proximity, association, and accessibility between home, work, and leisure activities are essential factors in building places with a strong sense of community. Therefore, the City will continue to work with the development community to achieve a development pattern that reflects this belief.
- b. Identify locations for infill, which present opportunities for developments consisting of a variety of land uses adjacent to existing development, that take advantage of the existing infrastructure network.
- c. Promote Traditional Neighborhood Development as a method for integrating various housing types with small-scale neighborhood services.
- d. Identify locations throughout the City for neighborhood or village centers where growth is clustered in dense concentrations to produce compact population centers, preserve open space, minimize the negative impacts of low intensity and non-contiguous development, and improve the performance of transportation networks, where the cost of providing public services is minimized.
- e. As part of Plan implementation—including development review, capital improvement programming, and preparation of detailed area plans—foster close land use and transportation relationships to promote use of alternative transportation modes.

- f. Ensure that land proposed for annexation have adequate services available or is capable of being adequately serviced.
- g. Encourage community & stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
- h. Encourage high-density development adjacent to the proposed multi-modal center.

Objective 2

Establish land uses that encourage cost-effective development.

Tools

- a. Maintain adequate subdivision and zoning regulations designed to prevent fragmented, inharmonious, and disorderly development.
- b. Pursue public and private partnership opportunities for redevelopment of vacant structures and construction of infrastructure and public facilities generated by new development.
- c. Encourage new development, consisting of a variety of land uses adjacent to existing development, that takes advantage of the existing infrastructure network.
- d. Leverage public investment throughout the City to encourage private development.
- e. Condition development approvals to ensure adequate public services at the time of occupancy.
- f. Emphasize the importance of the Center City, and specifically the downtown area in the growth and development of the City and continue to work with investors and developers to continue development/revitalization while strengthening the vitality and livability.
- g. Work with neighborhood groups within Oakland, Highland and other Center City neighborhoods, to analyze and identify land use needs and to create, update and implement neighborhood plans.

OBJECTIVES & TOOLS



OBJECTIVES & TOOLS

Objective 3

Promote reinvestment, and diversification in downtown and the Center City, to reinforce its importance as the economic, cultural and civic center of the City.

Tools

- a. Maintain a proactive program of City initiatives to promote downtown development.
- b. Aggressively maintain and expand public realm improvements in downtown including, but not limited to, sidewalks, street trees, street lights, street furniture, public parking, and landscaping.
- c. Continue to use existing authority (land assembly, bonding, etc.) to complete designated reinvestment projects.
- d. Develop integrated "way finding" signage for downtown and other areas of the Center City.

Objective 4

Encourage new investment in areas that have undergone residential and retail disinvestments.

Tools

- a. Continue to provide incentives through the City's Economic Development Incentive Program to promote economic investment throughout the City.
- b. Encourage the revitalization of downtown through redevelopment of exiting buildings, new streetscaping, increased residential density, and increased economic activity.
- c. Support ongoing and future catalytic projects such as the Conference Center, Gaston Mall redevelopment, and the Gateway Village Senior Center, and educate the public as to how these projects benefit all City residents by stimulating additional development and creation of tax revenue for the City.

- d. Continue to expand the services of the Economic Development arm of the City to include technical and financial assistance for small business.
- e. Develop partnerships and strategies aimed at recruiting targeted uses that fill niches in the Center City, in abandoned strip malls, and in vacant shopping centers.
- f. Continue the implementation of the Loray Mill Village Redevelopment Project.
- g. Reserve and acquire key properties that can serve as catalysts or anchors for redevelopment and use public-private partnerships and deed restrictions to ensure they develop as planned.
- h. Develop a strategic small area plan for the Oakland Neighborhood.
- i. Continue to use promotional and public relations materials specifically aimed at attracting uses that are desired for specific areas.
- j. Identify missing or under served areas on the north and west sides of the City and actively pursue the creation of new incentives and other economic development tools crafted for residential and commercial investments.
- k. Encourage neighborhood commercial uses to locate in areas convenient to existing residential development. Provide exceptions to parking and site design requirements, as appropriate, to encourage pedestrian activity.
- l. Encourage residential development within the downtown area.
- m. Use the natural beauty of Crowders Mountain and the surrounding area as a marketing tool for the whole west side of Gastonia.
- n. Improve the visual appearance of City gateways and corridors by improving landscaping, signage and providing other streetscape enhancements.
- o. Establish appropriate transitional uses adjacent to



industrial areas.

- p. In cooperation with Gaston County, study the need and feasibility of opening a full-service branch of the public library on the west side of Gastonia.
- q. Encourage the establishment of additional primary health care services on the west side of Gastonia, such as dentistry, family, and pediatric medical offices.
- r. Encourage the establishment of businesses and services that are lacking such as home improvement stores and dining restaurants.

Objective 5

Make zoning decisions based upon the long-range impact to adjoining areas and the City as a whole.

Tools

- a. Zoning decisions should be guided by and consistent with the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map should be amended as appropriate from time-to-time to reflect changing trends and community objectives.
- b. Zoning decisions should also be consistent with Sector and Small Area plans.
- c. Evaluate the impacts of major developments on the transportation system, infrastructure capacity, natural environment and built environment.
- d. Make sure that the zoning designation for developed and built-out areas generally reflects the actual use of the land.
- e. Ensure that zoning decisions support the city's reinvestment strategies, where applicable

Objective 6

Ensure that local ordinances reflect a high priority for environmental concerns and that policies promote efficient use of public infrastructure.

Tools

- a. Establish and maintain zoning districts consistent with availability of public infrastructure and services.
- b. Acquire land through fee simple purchases, easements or other feasible methods for possible multiple uses such as stormwater management, greenway, walking, biking, hiking, and utility areas.
- c. Ensure that private developers provide adequate open space in residential developments.
- d. Develop incentives in the UDO to encourage developers to provide open space amenities beyond the minimum requirements.
- e. Work towards maximizing tree coverage in the City.
- f. Assess the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) process and incorporate appropriate levels into the development process.

Objective 7

Promote convenient and concentrated commercial development that serves residents and strengthens both the local and regional market.

Tools

- a. The City will accommodate commercial land uses that are compatible with the surrounding area and provide a needed service for the area including light industrial, agricultural, retail, wholesale sales and services, and professional services.
- b. The City will continue to develop an attractive Central Business District, and to revitalize declining commercial areas outside the City's core, through building code compliance, incentives, and quality development standards.
- c. Encourage expansion of commercial opportunities in existing commercial corridors and nodes, as appropriate, where infrastructure can support growth.
- d. Ensure that development and redevelopment of

OBJECTIVES & TOOLS



OBJECTIVES & TOOLS

commercial property located along major thoroughfares takes place in accordance with the principles of access management.

- e. Provide opportunities for neighborhood commercial nodes by rezoning appropriate areas accommodate the development of convenience goods and other neighborhood business services.

Objective 8

Maintain and strengthen the character of the City's various residential areas.

Tools

- a. Preserving the character of residential neighborhoods through compatible design.
- b. Encourage the rehabilitation of older and historic housing stock over demolition.
- c. Ensure that City grants and programs are targeted to housing development and rehabilitation that reflects the traditional architectural character of residential areas.
- d. Infill development standards must reflect the setbacks, orientation, patterns, materials, height and scale of surrounding one and two family dwellings.
- e. Create traditional setbacks, orientations, pattern, heights and scale of dwellings in areas where no clear architectural pattern exists.
- f. Establish appropriate transition uses adjacent to residential areas.
- g. Establish a philosophy or strategy for buffering residential areas from impacts associated with incompatible uses.

Objective 9

Promote planning as a positive, cooperative community function.

Tools

- a. Promote and participate in cooperative planning efforts with Gaston County and its cities, especially related to countywide and sub-regional issues such as transportation, economic development, and affordable housing.
- b. Continue to support coordinated planning initiatives with Gaston County, local jurisdiction staff and Planning Commissions to coordinate land use issues of mutual concern.
- c. Ensure that Development Services staff has adequate capacity to meet the needs of the community.
- d. Review the Comprehensive Plan and assess the relevance of its goals and policies every year. Conduct a full review every five years.

Objective 10

Promote the highest and best use of land with special attention to use options in transition areas.

Tools

- a. Consider the site characteristics, market realities, and local development pattern when determining what use would develop the highest value.
- b. Ensure that new development is sensitive to and compatible with existing land uses, and, where necessary, require developers to mitigate nuisances associated with new developments that conflict with adjacent uses. Mitigation can include physical barriers, such as vegetative berms, hedges or other landscape cover, and walls or fences aesthetically designed for screening and noise reduction purposes.
- c. Develop a set of criteria to determine the circumstances in which it would be appropriate for residential property owners to mitigate nuisances associated with conflicting uses in transitional areas



and amend the zoning ordinance to allow for it.

Objective 11

Develop objective and rational criteria for subdivision and rezoning requests. Apply the following guidelines when reviewing applications for subdivision or rezoning anywhere in the City.

Tools

- a. Official Map: Ensure that the development proposal is consistent with the City's Official Map of roads, utilities, drainage and parks.
- b. Land Use Plan: The proposed land use should be in conformance with the City's Land Use Plan.
- c. Residential Density: Should be in conformance with the City's land use plan.
- d. Design Standards: Encourage design standards that promote appropriate scale, height, mass, and design of the structure that is compatible with both neighborhood and community character.
- e. Public Utilities: Public sewer and water shall be when necessary economically and efficiently retrofitted.
- f. Access Management: The spacing of driveways and public street intersections shall conform with the City's access management guidelines.
- g. Future Public Roads: Public road access shall be easily provided in the future to the portions of the tract not adjacent to the county roads.
- h. Environmental Protection: Conform to the City's regulations for the protection of wetlands, floodplains, slopes, trees and water quality.
- i. Affect on Surrounding Properties: Determine whether the use and density is consistent with surrounding properties and work to mitigate and inconsistencies through addressing design.
- j. Conflicts in Commercial Zones: Certain uses that have a potential for adverse effects should

not be located in excessive concentration. Examples include: convenience stores, and fast food establishments and consider performance standards to reduce potential conflicts.

Objective 12

Continue efforts to achieve a more balanced residential and retail growth pattern.

Tools

- a. Foster the development of housing, particularly multi-family and smaller single-family homes, in a way that is compatible with a community's character and vision and by providing new housing choices for people of all economic means.
- b. Continue the investment in new sewer and water infrastructure on the west side of Gastonia.
- c. Support the redrawing of school attendance zones and other measures to ensure a continued socio-economic and racial balance in the Gaston County public schools.
- d. Include recruitment of retailers to under used sites as part of our economic development efforts.
- e. Include the objective of a balanced growth pattern in the decision making process when deciding on the location of major public buildings and investments.
- f. Support neighborhood efforts to reduce crime, litter, juvenile delinquency and other blighting influences.
- g. Use targeted, concentrated code enforcement to improve and ensure the maintenance of housing.
- h. Use concentrated investment, such as the CDBG-funded investment on Vance Street, to turn around threatened neighborhoods and to spark private investment.
- i. Continue to support other catalytic projects, such as the adaptive re-use of the Firestone Mill, to draw attention and investment to West Gastonia.

OBJECTIVES & TOOLS



OBJECTIVES & TOOLS

- j. Encourage the redevelopment of the Dixie Shopping center and assist the Economic Development Commission in the recruitment of a discount home goods store in West Gastonia to better serve area residents.
- k. Secure private sector cooperation, such as banks, realtors and developers, in the encouragement of balanced growth in Gastonia.
- l. Use a targeted, site-specific enhancement strategy to create high-potential nodes of growth on the west side of Gastonia.

Objective 13

Promote preservation as a tool for economic development and community revitalization.

Tools

- a. Use historic preservation goals to encourage development and reinvestment in the City.
- b. Promote and support the redevelopment of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods by promoting development that is compact, conserves land, protects historic resources, and integrates uses.
- c. Promote the historic qualities of Center City neighborhoods as high quality, architecturally interesting, readily available and affordable housing stock.
- d. Continue to identify, designate and protect sites, buildings and districts in the City that have historic or architectural significance.
- e. Protect designated structures, sites and districts from demolition, neglect and inappropriate modifications.

Objective 14

Ensure that transportation and land use planning decisions are complementary rather than contradictory.

Tools

- a. The City recognizes that land use patterns affect travel behaviors, which sometimes have unintended consequences that negatively affect overall community quality of life.
- b. Encourage pedestrian-oriented “nodes” of commercial development at strategic locations along major corridors, and discourage auto-oriented commercial development.
- c. Promote residential and commercial development that is located and designed for reduced automobile ownership and use.
- d. Implement a citywide traffic-calming program to reduce traffic volumes and speeds.
- e. Develop community planning processes to establish standards and priorities for parking, streetscape and pedestrian circulation, bikeways, transit amenities, greenways, and public amenities throughout the City.



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Addendum

◇ EAST

- Issues
- Vision
- Future Land Use
- Development Strategies

◇ GARDEN

- Issues
- Vision
- Future Land Use
- Development Strategies

◇ NORTHEAST

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◇ CROWDERS

- Issues
- Vision
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◇ SOUTHEAST

- Issues
- Vision
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◇ SOUTHWEST

- Issues
- Vision
- Future Land Use
- Development Strategies

◇ NORTHWEST

- Issues
- Vision
- Future Land Use
- Development Strategies

The 2025 planning area was divided into eight smaller geographic sectors. The Sectors were culled from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. While the overall goals and strategies as defined in the previous chapters apply to the entire 2025 planning area, these small planning areas provide a list of issues specific to the geographical area, the vision for the sector, and specific policy recommendations to serve as a guide for future growth and development. The Sectors are complimentary to the future land use plan are intended to guide applicants, staff and City decision makers to site development projects and to guide the City in addressing future development.

These policy recommendations were developed from input gathered during the community workshops that were held in each Sector during the visioning phase of the planning process. These workshops provided insight into public opinions, interest, concerns, and aspirations. The most commonly expressed concerns for each of the sectors include the following:

- ◆ Rapid growth and traffic congestion.
- ◆ Lack of accessible community commercial amenities such as grocery stores and retail shopping centers.
- ◆ Schools are overcrowded and in disrepair.
- ◆ Lack of pedestrian connectivity (sidewalks are not contentious).
- ◆ Lack of accessibility to alternative modes of transportation.
- ◆ Lack of a cohesive community identity and image (i.e. community gateways are in poor condition).

Sector Profiles



EAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- A strong housing market, available land and public investments give the East Sector a strong potential for continued population growth. Over the past 10 years, this sector has seen an increase in the number of families with children.
- The land use patterns for the majority of the northern portion of this sector have already been established and should be maintained.
- Increasing traffic on New Hope Road, and other major thoroughfares, creates pressure for converting land use from residential to commercial.
- Commercial encroachment into established neighborhoods is a concern, especially for neighborhoods adjacent to Franklin Boulevard, Garrison Boulevard, and New Hope Road.
- Franklin Square, a regional shopping destination, lacks access from the north.
- The major thoroughfares Franklin Boulevard, Garrison Boulevard, and South New Hope Road serve as prominent gateways into the City or as gateways to cultural attractions. These gateways give tourists, visitors, and businesses their first impression of Gastonia. Issues to be addressed along these prominent gateways include landscaping, lighting, signage, access, outside storage, and other aesthetic elements.
- The East Sector's older retail areas such as Westfield-Eastridge Shopping Mall, although healthy, remain vulnerable as they face direct competition with new and emerging regional retail shopping centers, such as Franklin Square .
- Two of Gastonia's most frequently used public facilities, the Schiele Museum and the Gaston County Library, are located in the East Sector.
- The East Sector has no public parks or recreation centers, although recreational opportunities are available through the schools and the Schiele Museum.
- A lack of southwest-to-northeast thoroughfares has created a traffic bottleneck on New Hope Road, requiring a compromise road solution.

Sector Vision

- ◆ Improve connectivity to commercial retail development and integrate transit and pedestrian options throughout the sector.
- ◆ Construct pocket parks on undeveloped publicly-owned land adjacent to Ashbrook High School.
- ◆ More compact, higher density development (traditional neighborhoods, Transit-Oriented Development, mixed-use, and walkable neighborhoods) within appropriate infill locations.
- ◆ Promote the redevelopment of Aker's Center into a mixed use neighborhood retail center.
- ◆ Encourage the development of walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.
- ◆ Improve internal circulation in commercial development to prevent traffic problems common in "strip" commercial development.
- ◆ Context-sensitive street design giving equal value to various modes of travel including pedestrian and cyclist.
- ◆ Streets should not sacrifice the safety of neighborhood residents for additional traffic and higher speeds.
- ◆ Preserve and enhance visual character through a variety of design requirements.
- ◆ Support the revitalization of declining neighborhoods.
- ◆ Encourage the development of neighborhood restaurants in commercial centers.
- ◆ Promote mixed use type development such as high density residential, office, and neighborhood commercial on the large tracts of land located in the southern part of the sector.
- ◆ Construct safe, well connected bicycling routes on all major streets.
- ◆ Use traffic calming measures other than speed humps to reduce cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets.



EAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Develop strategic gateway improvement plans for entranceways to Gastonia, which include attractive signage and beautification strategies to direct and promote the Schiele Museum and the Stowe Botanical Garden.
- Promote more compact, higher density development (traditional neighborhoods, transit-oriented development, mixed-use, and walkable neighborhoods) within appropriate infill locations.
- Maintain residential land use in the Owens-Kendrick neighborhood and along Armstrong Park Drive, especially at the intersection of Armstrong Park Drive and Gardner Park Drive.
- Use appropriate design, transition, or buffering elements to mitigate adverse visual, audible, aesthetic and traffic impacts to residential neighborhoods when considering commercial or mixed use development proposals.
- Encourage neighborhood centers, and walkable neighborhoods, with development patterns replicating the scale and character of the Sector's more traditional neighborhoods (compact development, interconnected streets, and sidewalks).
- Develop a corridor overlay zoning district for both New Hope Road and Franklin Boulevard.
- Identify area for transit oriented development along Franklin Blvd.
- Use buffering and transportation enhancements to minimize the negative impact of new thoroughfares on the Bradford Heights area.
- Identify nodes for transit-oriented development along major thoroughfares such as Franklin Boulevard and South New Hope Road.
- Mature neighborhoods shall be preserved, sustained and improved through appropriate and selective high-quality redevelopment.
- Consider historical designation for Fairmont Park neighborhood.
- Continue to cluster neighborhood, and community level business development, at major intersections along New Hope Road.
- Support innovative residential developments for medium to higher density infill.
- Support the redevelopment of declining commercial centers and vacant land into mixed-use office and residential development along the eastern part of Hudson Boulevard, near New Hope Road.
- New commercial development should be designed in a pedestrian-friendly manner, with outdoor seating and other amenities.
- Support the development of greenway connections to parks, and schools.
- Consider the development of pocket parks on undeveloped publicly-owned land.
- Develop greenways according to a future adopted greenway plan. Possible greenway locations in the East Sector are shown on the East Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-10.

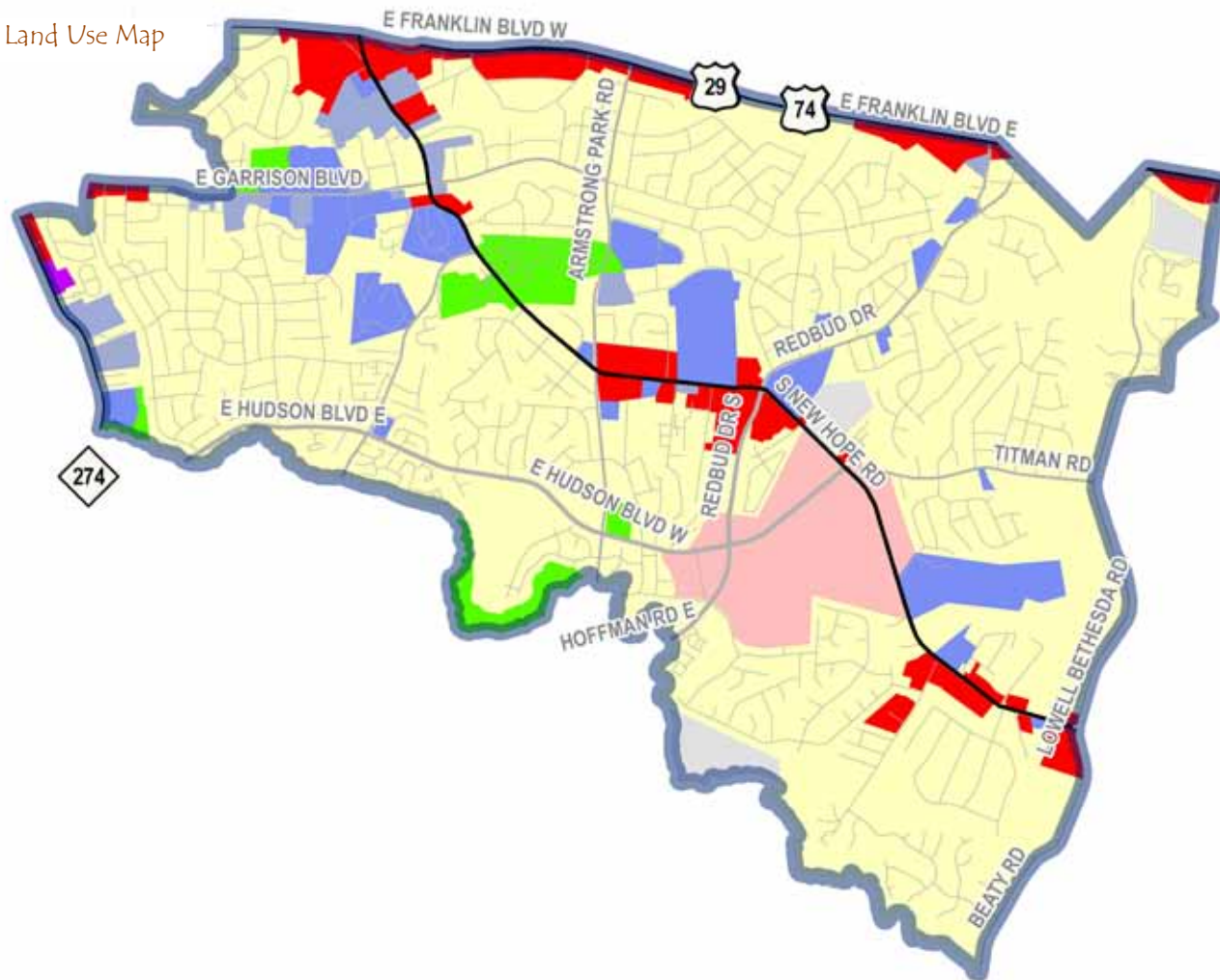
The East Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-10, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



EAST

SECTOR PROFILES

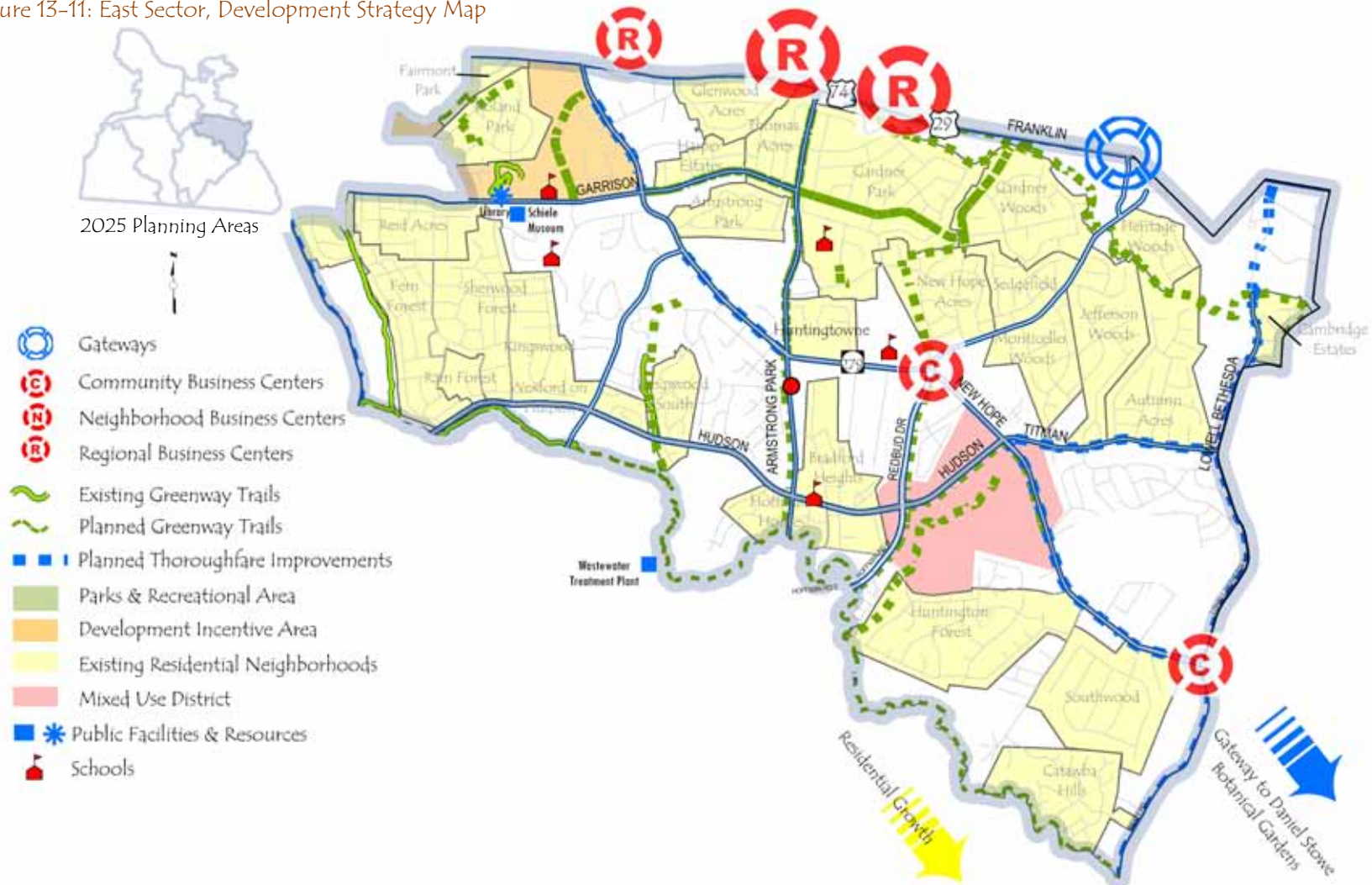
Figure 13-10: East Sector, Future Land Use Map



EAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-11: East Sector, Development Strategy Map



NORTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- The Northeast Sector has emerged as a regional retail and medical service center, drawing from Gaston County, and the surrounding counties.
- The diverse land use patterns within the sector lack a sense of cohesiveness and in some areas are conflicting.
- Schools and public facilities have struggled to accommodate the rapid population growth.
- The location and accessibility of The Medical District, on New Hope Road and Ozark Avenue from I-85, is advantageous for new development.
- While a balanced jobs to housing ratio is generally considered a positive factor, the higher number of jobs in the Northeast Sector compared to residents results in increased daytime traffic congestion, particularly at critical intersections of Cox Road, New Hope Road, Franklin Boulevard and I-85.
- Growing retail development and traffic has begun to encroach on residential neighborhoods, particularly along North New Hope Road.
- A large amount of land within the Sector is vacant, which presents opportunities for further land development to accommodate projected population and economic growth. The main issue is to ensure redevelopment provides sufficient choice in the types and locations of development that people and businesses are seeking and maintains balance.
- The major shopping centers in the Northeast Sector are served by limited public transportation and have few pedestrian linkages among them.
- The strong commercial and service market in the Northeast has created an opportunity for a mixed-use business development north of I-85. Specifically, land uses along the Southern Railroad and US 321

North have gradually evolved into smaller, non-textile industries.

- Housing deterioration and blight is present in some of the older Northeast Sector neighborhoods.
- While this sector has several major gateways into the City, they lack visual appeal and provide no distinctive sense of arrival to Gastonia. Franklin Boulevard presents an opportunity for a first-class entrance to Gastonia. To serve as a gateway to the community, US 321 should be upgraded through the addition of mixed-use development and light industrial and manufacturing uses.
- Commercial encroachment into established neighborhoods is a concern, especially for neighborhoods adjacent to the medical district and the mall area.
- Access to shopping, greenspace, and recreational destinations from employment and residential locations within the sector continues to be important to residents and business. New and infill development plans should focus on creating a mixed-use, walkable urban environment with improved access to desired destinations.
- A lack of southwest-to-northeast thoroughfares has created a traffic bottleneck on New Hope Road, requiring a compromise road solution.



NORTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Sector Vision

- ◆ Make improvements to pedestrian paths and create walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.
- ◆ Context-sensitive street design giving equal value to various modes of travel including pedestrian and cyclist.
- ◆ Support the revitalization of declining neighborhoods.
- ◆ Increased opportunities for homeownership for various housing types.
- ◆ Mixed-use Transit Oriented Development centers that combine retail, services, and offices with medium-scale residences that can fill the transition from commercial uses to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◆ Safe, well connected bicycling routes on all major streets.
- ◆ Promote regional cooperation to ensure development is complementary.
- ◆ Use traffic calming measures other than speed humps to reduce cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets.
- ◆ Opportunities for retirement and senior facilities and activities, as well as senior housing.



NORTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Develop greenways according to a future adopted greenway plan. Possible greenway locations in the Northeast Sector are shown on the Development Strategy Map.
- Continue to implement the strategies of the North New Hope Road Small area plan to prevent strip development along North New Hope Road.
- Continue expansion of medical uses in the vicinity of Gaston Memorial Hospital. The Court Drive mixed-use area, as shown on the Future Land Use Map, should be limited to hospital related uses, including medical offices, medical research and laboratories, and similar uses supportive of the medical center.
- Attracts new high revenue mixed use development along 321 North Chester Street.
- Support redevelopment plans for the use of the Piedmont and Northern, otherwise known as the P & N corridor.
- Improve pedestrian linkages among major developments (shopping centers, community facilities, hospital).
- Develop a master plan in cooperation with Gaston Memorial for the medical and health services area, specifically around the Court Drive mixed use area.
- Transit-oriented and pedestrian-oriented development: Within targeted development areas, cluster development along major transportation corridors thereby creating transit oriented development "nodes" and encouraging pedestrian access.
- Focus larger development projects to Austen Road Intersection.
- Use appropriate design, transition, or buffering elements to mitigate adverse visual, audible, aesthetic and traffic impacts to residential neighborhoods when considering commercial or mixed use development proposals.
- Focus Community Development housing rehabilitation efforts on the older mill villages of the Northeast Sector.
- Develop a revitalization plan for the Smyre neighborhood to plan for and encourage appropriate and selective high quality residential redevelopment, which preserves the character of the neighborhood.
- Encourage new large scale subdivisions south of Robinson Clemmer Road and North of I-85.
- Support the preservation and adaptive reuse of Hancock School for institutional, office and residential use.
- Continue to cluster neighborhood and community level business development at major intersections along New Hope Road.
- Promote innovative residential development for seniors.

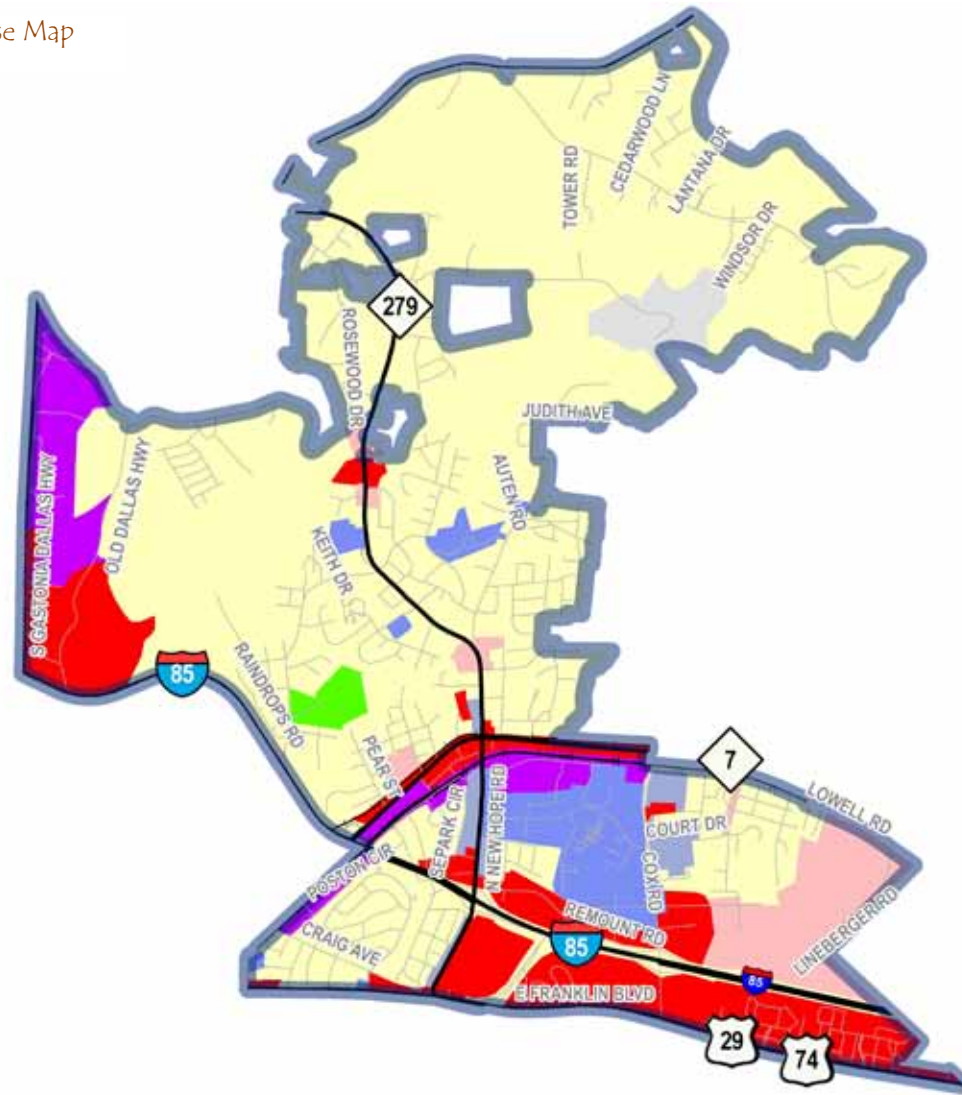
The Northeast Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-12, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



NORTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

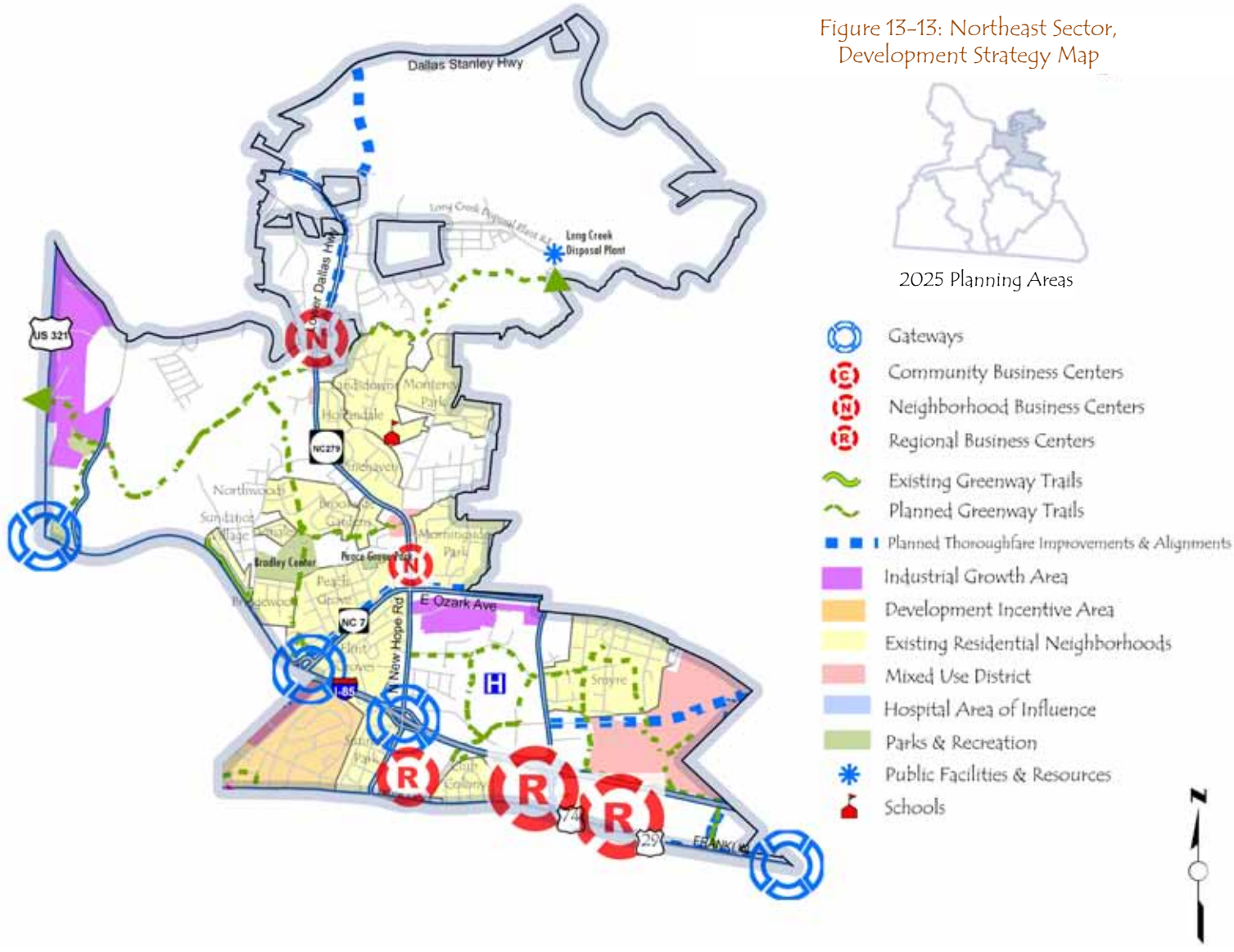
Figure 13-12: Northeast Sector, Future Land Use Map



NORTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-13: Northeast Sector, Development Strategy Map



SOUTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- Strong population growth in the Southeast Sector will create a demand for additional roads, utilities, parks and schools.
- The rapid increase in the Sector's school-age population has resulted in overcrowding of schools.
- An increasing number of Southeast Sector neighborhoods are self-contained units, with little or no connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Traffic is growing as fast as population in the Sector.
- Population growth, along with an increase in the number of regional commuters and constraints on existing roads, all contribute to a need for the US 74 Bypass.
- The current southeast recreation center is only a part-time facility shared with the National Guard and residents have expressed the desire for a full time facility.
- Regional shifts of population will, a strong housing market, and available land and rapid commercial investments present the potential for give this sector a strong potential for continued population growth. Schools and public facilities have struggled to accommodate the rapid population growth.

Sector Vision

- ◆ A community that opens its doors to new residents and visitors without effecting the values and lifestyles of its current residents.
- ◆ A sustainable development pattern which creates, and enhances,

- ◆ the development of communities with increased quality of life.
- ◆ A multi-purpose recreational facility within close proximity to area neighborhoods.
- ◆ Diversity of housing types, and price ranges, to meet the needs of the population.
- ◆ Attractive mixed-use development centers integrating retail, services, and offices with medium-scale residences to fill the transition from commercial uses to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◆ Greenways throughout the sector with linkages to local destinations such as Stowe Botanical Gardens, schools, and local recreation centers.
- ◆ Safe, well connected pedestrian and bicycle linkages to schools, residential neighborhoods, recreational areas, and retail and commercial centers.
- ◆ Use traffic calming measures other than speed humps to reduce cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets.
- ◆ Neighborhoods of the highest standards in terms of attractiveness, stability and viability.
- ◆ Residential developers are encouraged to provide traffic calming measures in new residential neighborhoods, and emphasize pedestrian parks.



SOUTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Cluster neighborhood and community level business development at selected intersections of thoroughfares creating transit oriented development “nodes” and encouraging pedestrian access.
- Use appropriate design, transition, and buffering elements to mitigate adverse visual, audible, aesthetic and traffic impacts to residential neighborhoods when considering commercial or mixed use development proposals.
- Support innovative residential developments for small-tract infill development.
- Develop a new community recreation center.
- Use design features and planning strategies to improve the safety of new developments.
- Enhance safety and perception of safety by prioritizing CPTED on residential, commercial, and industrial projects.
- Introduce sidewalks and paths between buildings and through parking lots to provide opportunities for pedestrian use. Direct linkages to existing bus routes will be made.
- Conduct a land use study to insure high-quality development and a parkway atmosphere on the Proposed US 74 Bypass.
- Support the renovation and redevelopment of existing housing.

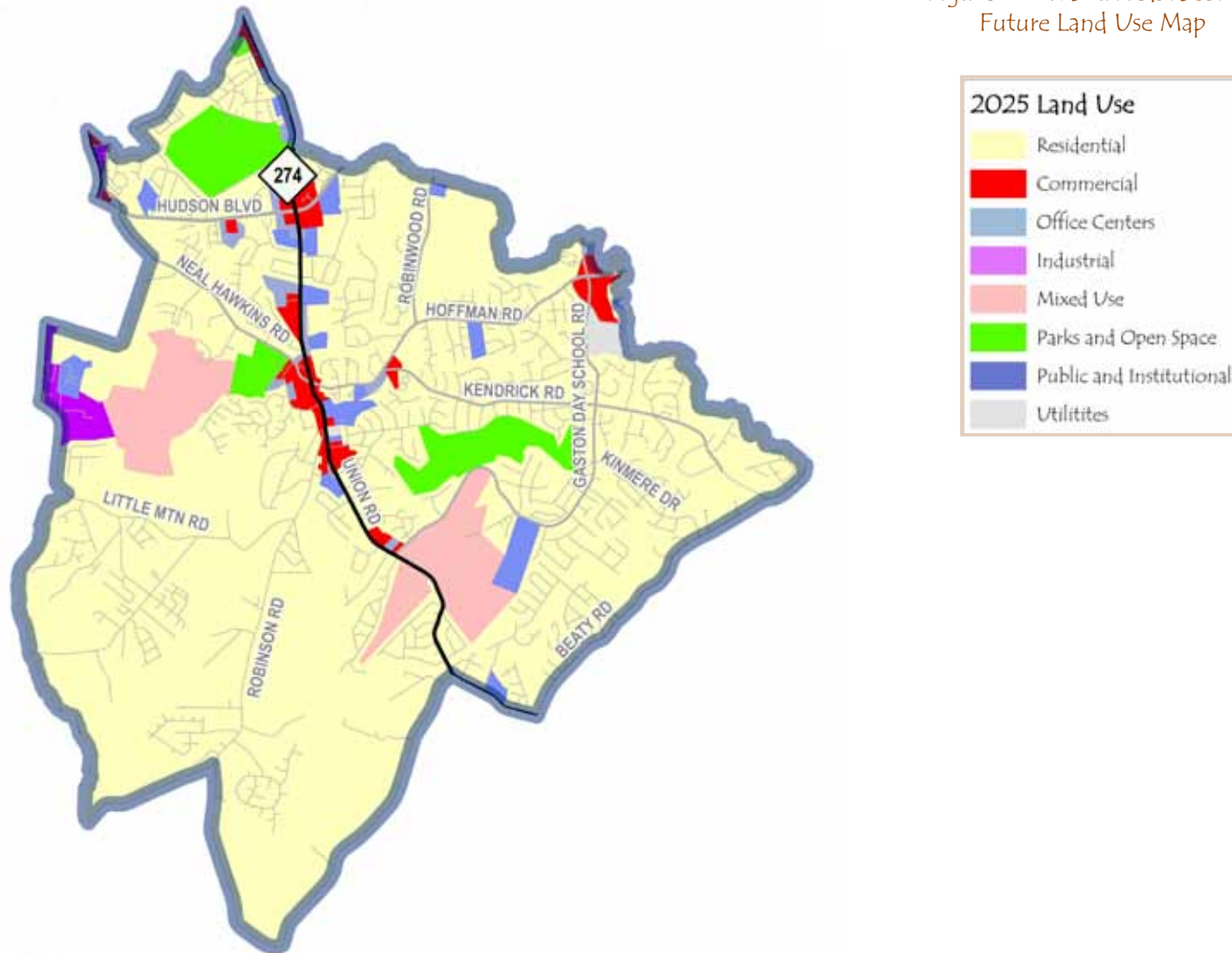
Figure 13-14, the Development Strategy Map, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



SOUTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-14: Southeast Sector, Future Land Use Map

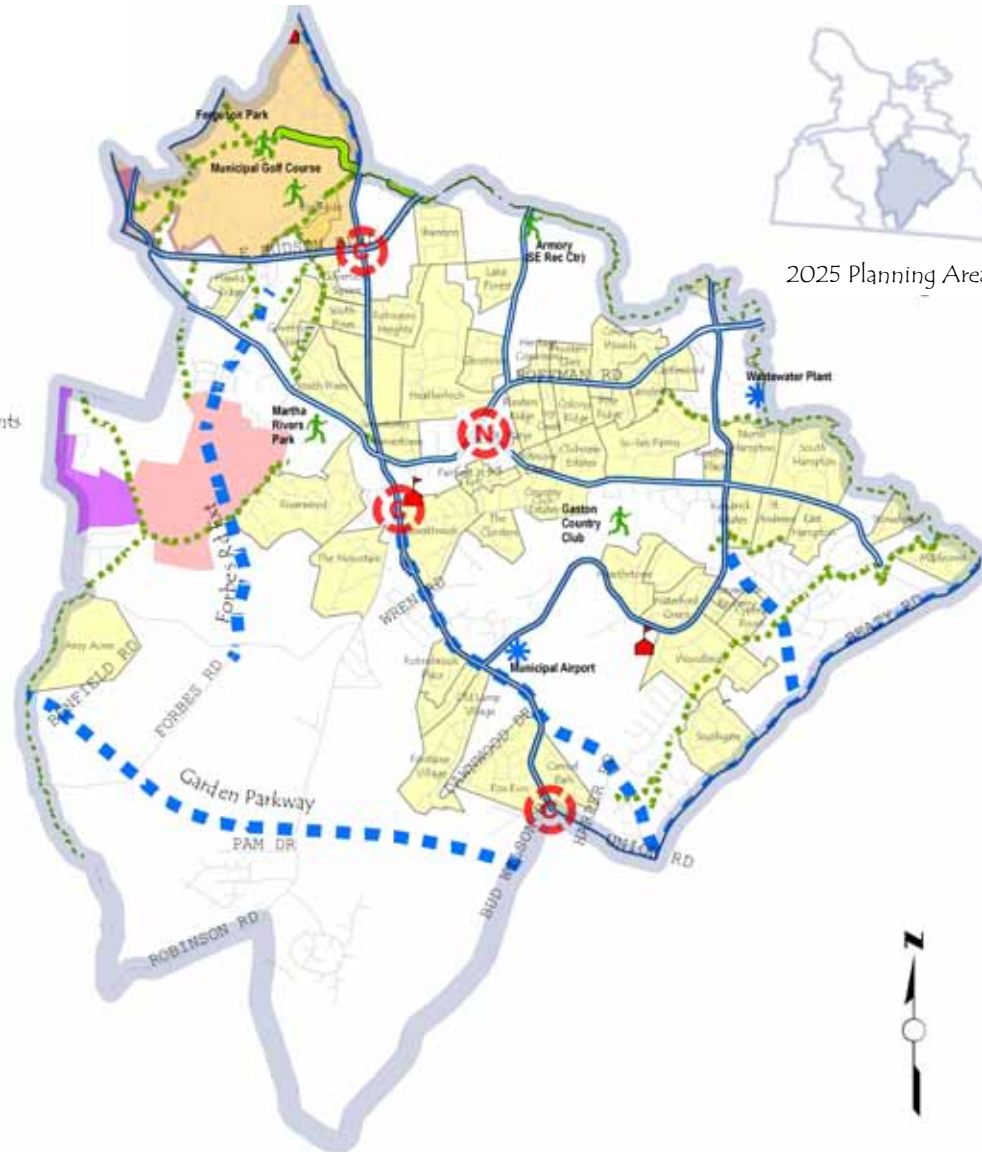


SOUTHEAST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-15: Southeast Sector, Development Strategy Map

-  Gateways
-  Community Business Centers
-  Neighborhood Business Centers
-  Regional Business Centers
-  Existing Greenway Trails
-  Planned Greenway Trails
-  Planned Thoroughfare Improvements & Alignments
-  Industrial Growth Area
-  Development Incentive Area
-  Existing Residential Neighborhoods
-  Mixed Use District
-  Hospital Area of Influence
-  Public Buildings
-  Schools
-  Parks & Recreation



2025 Planning Areas



NORTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- The diverse land use patterns within this sector lack a sense of cohesiveness, and in some areas, are conflicting.
- Housing deterioration is a concern in the older neighborhoods and many dwelling units are at risk of demolition due to failure of meeting the minimum housing code.
- The Franklin Boulevard commercial corridor is suffering from commercial vacancies, under-use of buildings, general urban clutter and a lack of buffering between pedestrians and traffic.
- The Northwest Sector has had a decline in shopping and retail outlets, requiring a trip to the east side for all but groceries and the most basic goods and services.
- Rankin Lake Park developed a negative image, and general feeling of insecurity, resulting in fewer visitors and illicit activities.
- The Northwest Sector has a lack of primary care health services, such as family physicians and dentists.
- A large amount of land within the Sector is vacant, which presents opportunities for further land development to accommodate projected population and economic growth. The main issue is to ensure that redevelopment provides sufficient choice in the types and locations of development people and businesses are seeking.
- The northern and western gateways into the City lack visual appeal and provide no distinctive sense of arrival to Gastonia. Dallas Bessemer City Highway and Franklin Boulevard present an opportunity for a first-class entrance to Gastonia.
- Commercial encroachment into established neighborhoods is a concern, especially for neighborhoods adjacent to Dallas Bessemer City Highway.

- Speeding, traffic flow and signalization issues at several intersections including Sharon Bradley and northbound Myrtle School Road at Franklin Boulevard.
- Creating safe, and well maintained neighborhoods continues to be important to residents.
- There is an increase in various crimes, including burglary and vandalism.

Sector Vision

- ◆ Make improvements to pedestrian paths and create safe, walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.
- ◆ Support the revitalization of declining neighborhoods.
- ◆ New and improved lifestyle shopping center at Dixie Village location.
- ◆ Increased opportunities for homeownership for various housing types.
- ◆ Vibrant recreational centers, including walking trails, and connections to area greenways.
- ◆ Mixed-use transit oriented development centers combine retail, services, and offices with medium-scale residences to fill the transition from commercial uses to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◆ Promote regional cooperation to ensure development outside the City's municipal boundary is complementary.
- ◆ Increased opportunities for mixed used high density residential development with commercial business and health service centers.
- ◆ Redevelopment of abandoned commercial and industrial sites.



NORTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Encourage mixed use neighborhood business development along with community business centers within the following nodes: Shannon Bradley Road/West Franklin Boulevard, Airline Ave/I-85, Bessemer City Road/Dallas Bessemer City Highway, and Cosner School Road/Dallas Cherryville Highway.
- Currently undeveloped property, particularly in areas outside of the municipal boundary, should not be developed in the absence of necessary infrastructure. To manage the ultimate use of this land it should primarily be identified for residential development.
- Use traffic calming measures to reduce speed and cut through traffic on neighborhood streets.
- Revitalize Rankin Lake Park according to the adopted Master Plan.
- Develop greenways according to a future adopted greenway plan. Possible greenway locations in the Northwest Sector are shown on the strategy map.
- Expand police enforcement to reduce traffic speeds on neighborhood streets.
- Attract new high revenue mixed use development along US 321 (North Chester Street).
- Avoid the placement of additional group homes, or assisted family housing projects, in the Northwest Sector.
- Commercial and industrial properties that have become surrounded by less intense uses will be permitted to remain commercial and industrial uses; however, in the event that these

properties are made available for sale or transfer, less intense uses compatible with surrounding parcels are preferred.

- Vacant commercial or industrial sites available for redevelopment and reuse should be redeveloped to complement surrounding uses.
- The land use on major arterial streets such as West Franklin Boulevard, Bessemer City Road, and Dallas Bessemer City Highway that are primary gateways into the city should be highlighted with appropriate landscaping, attractive lighting and gateway signage.
- Encourage redevelopment of Dixie Village Shopping Center and work with Gaston Economic Development Commission to identify and attract businesses.
- The City should organize and initiate a major public-private effort to implement the Franklin Boulevard Corridor Study to establish a vibrant neighborhood business environment along West Franklin Boulevard.
- Support the establishment of primary health care practices on the west side.
- Develop a systematic, rotating code and zoning enforcement strategy for endangered neighborhoods.

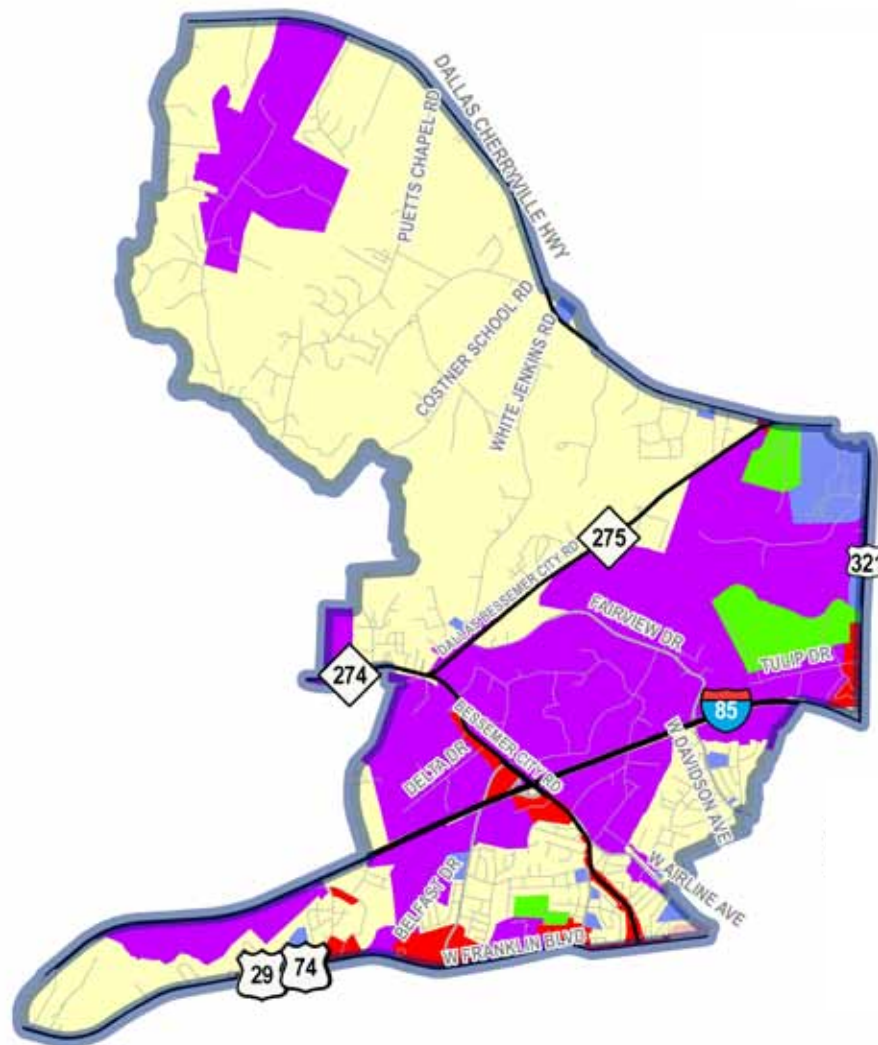
The Northwest Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-16, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



NORTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-16: Northwest Sector, Future Land Use Map



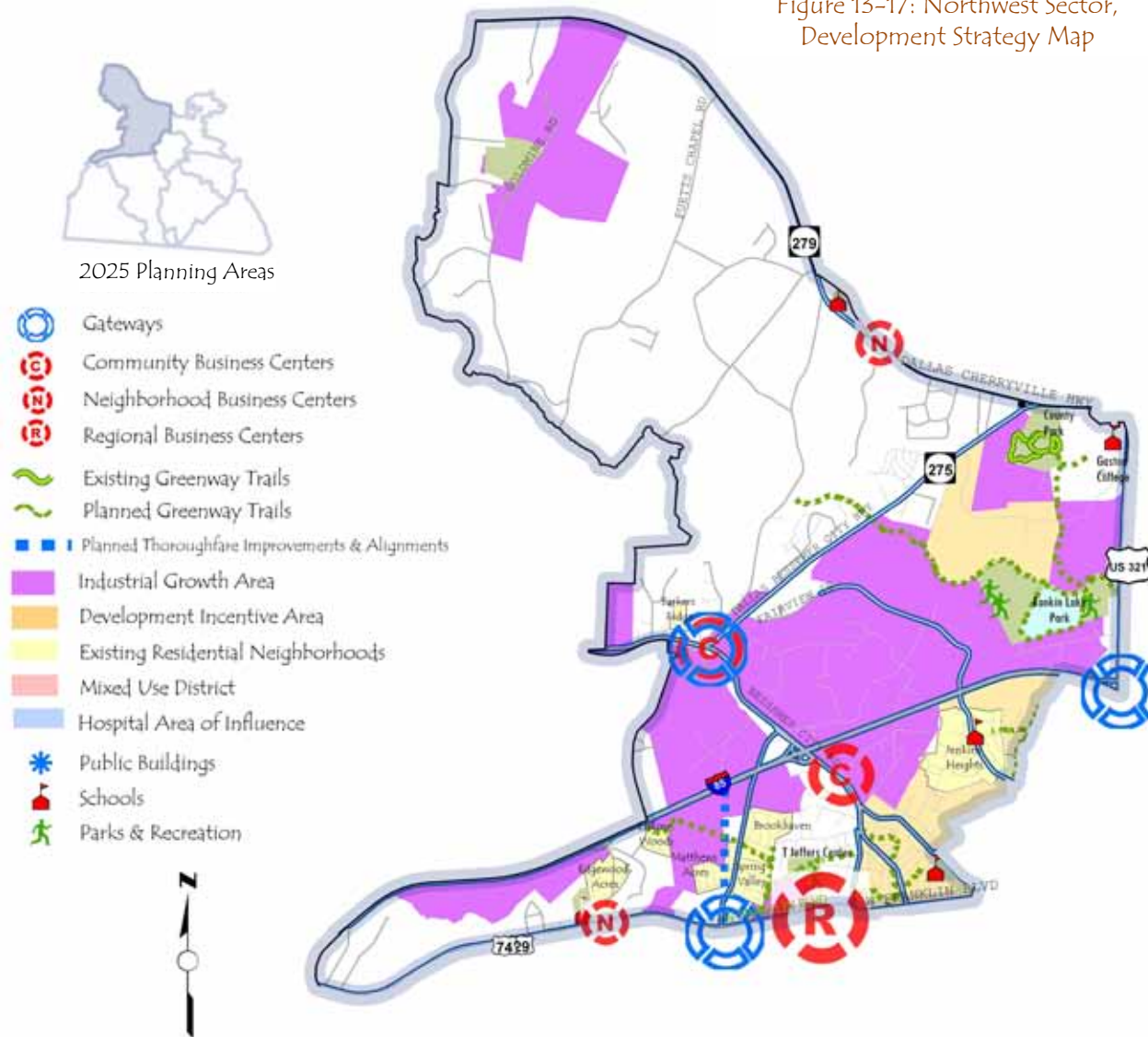
2025 Land Use	
	Residential
	Commercial
	Office Centers
	Industrial
	Mixed Use
	Parks and Open Space
	Public and Institutional
	Utilities



NORTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-17: Northwest Sector, Development Strategy Map



GARDEN

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- Strong population growth in the Garden Sector will create a demand for additional roads, utilities, parks and schools.
- The current transportation network does not sufficiently support efficient movement using various modes of transportation.
- Lack of neighborhood commercial services such pharmacy, medical, and grocery.
- Lack of adequate recreational facilities.
- An increasing number of Garden Sector neighborhoods are self-contained units, with little or no connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Regional commuters, coupled with increased population growth, has placed constraints on existing roads.
- Negative impacts of agricultural uses along Union New Hope Road on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Sector Vision

- ◆ A balanced land use pattern providing for an adequate inventory of land for employment as well for a diverse choice of housing, recreational opportunities and commercial services.
- ◆ Continue to protect and preserve natural resources.
- ◆ Promote the diversity of housing types, and price ranges, to meet the needs of the all sectors of the population
- ◆ Future development shall exhibit design quality and sustainability in both the public and private realms.
- ◆



GARDEN

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Work in cooperation with Gaston County to conduct a land use study in the area of the Proposed US 74 Bypass to insure high-quality development and a parkway atmosphere.
- Consider the compatibility between agricultural activities and non-farm development in reviewing development proposals.
- Require planned, staged growth that builds upon existing infrastructure, avoiding "leap-frog" development patterns.
- Continue to preserve the natural environment.
- Connect internal street networks between adjacent developments wherever possible to avoid concentrating traffic on major roads
- Create concentrations, or nodes, of development at strategic locations.
- Minimize conflicts between residential-agricultural and exclusive industrial. Widen Gaston Day School Road to a divided four-lane to accommodate increased traffic.
- Identify and highlight gateways into the City and to cultural resources throughout the Sector.
- Support the establishment of primary health practices.
- Coordinate with Gaston County and the Town of Belmont on their future growth areas and the character of development in these areas.
- Provide adequate, attractive infrastructure and community facilities to serve the area including schools, transit, sidewalks and

trails, parks, cultural amenities, police, fire and emergency services, health care, libraries, and basic services such as roads, water and sewer, telecommunications, and solid waste are a few of the services and facilities that need to be upgraded.

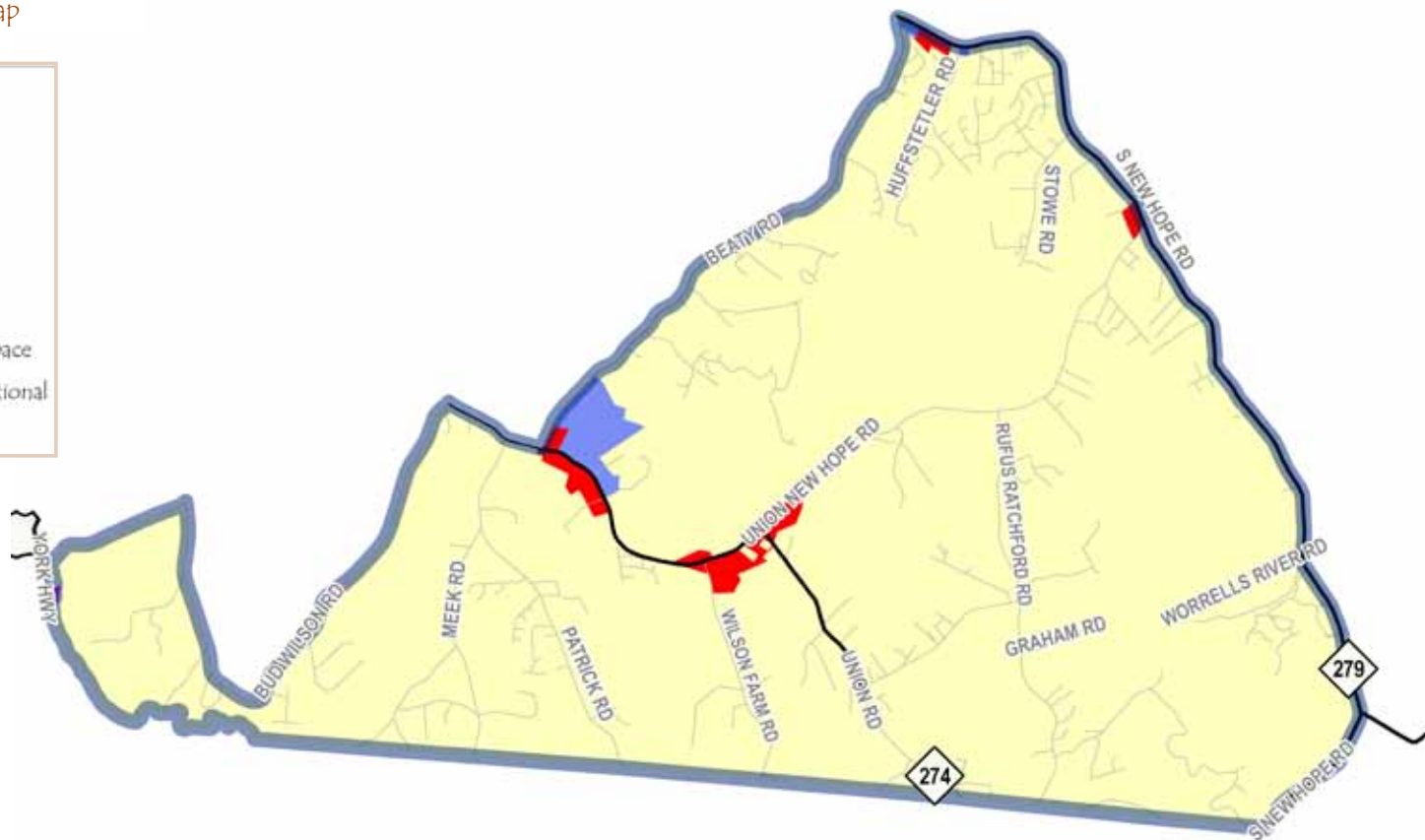
The Garden Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-18, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



GARDEN

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-18: Garden Sector, Future Land Use Map



CROWDERS

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- Threats to natural scenic assets in the face of development pressures. Crowders Mountain State Park is an outstanding natural asset and tourist attraction, and it should have compatible development in its vicinity.
- A large majority of the sectors is located outside of the City limits.
- Residents are concerned about the effects of growth on quality of life and community character.
- Parks and recreation contribute to neighborhood stability and are an important amenity. While Crowders Mountain State Park is a great community asset, there is a lack of a recreation facility for youth and families.
- Future development is not likely to expand very quickly in the Crowders Sector due to the difficulty in providing adequate connections to public utilities. Many of the homes in this area are located outside the city limits in Gaston County. These residences have private wells and their own septic systems.
- Lack of primary care health services and neighborhood-serving retail services causes residents to commute outside of the sector. Need for basic services: hardware store, pharmacy, grocery stores, etc.
- Future trail connections within the sector may help to provide connections to important destinations such as Crowders Mountain.
- A number of neighborhoods within the Crowders Sector are self-contained units, with little or no connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.

Sector Vision

- ◆ High quality infrastructure (roads, water and sewer lines, fire and police facilities, and schools) adequate for current development and anticipated growth with facilities in place as development occurs.
- ◆ A sustainable development pattern that creates and enhances the development of communities with increased quality of life.
- ◆ A multipurpose recreational facility within close proximity to area neighborhoods.
- ◆ Attractive mixed use development centers that integrate retail, services, and offices with medium-scale residences that can fill the transition from commercial uses to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◆ Increased medical service locations throughout the sector.
- ◆ Quality residential development that protects housing values and promotes pride of ownership.
- ◆ Quality development of retail and services including medical facilities convenient to residential areas.
- ◆ Quality industrial development to provide high paying jobs which does not encroach on nearby residential and commercial areas.
- ◆ Green paths throughout the sector with linkages to local destinations such as Crowders Mountain State Park, schools, and local recreation centers.



CROWDERS

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Allow commercial development within the urban growth area that is appropriate to an urban context, enhances community appearance, is limited to uses providing neighborhood services, and is scaled to serve the needs of residents in adjacent areas. Discourage strip commercial development.
 - Use appropriate design, transition, or buffering elements to mitigate adverse visual, audible, aesthetic and traffic impacts to residential neighborhoods when considering commercial or mixed use development proposals.
 - Promote industrial development that is compatible with surrounding properties. Minimize adverse impacts including traffic volumes, noise, dust, fumes, proliferation in the number and size of signs, and unsightly appearance on surrounding properties.
 - Use development incentives to encourage neighborhood retail and service activities to new or under-used sites as part of our economic development efforts.
 - Use design features and planning strategies to make new developments safer.
 - Conduct a land use study to insure high-quality development and a parkway atmosphere on the Proposed US 74 bypass.
- Support the establishment of primary health care practices.
 - Continue to update annexation strategy focused on the Crowdres Sector to bring City services to some of the unincorporated parts of the Sector.
 - Continue to develop a plan for trails and greenways.

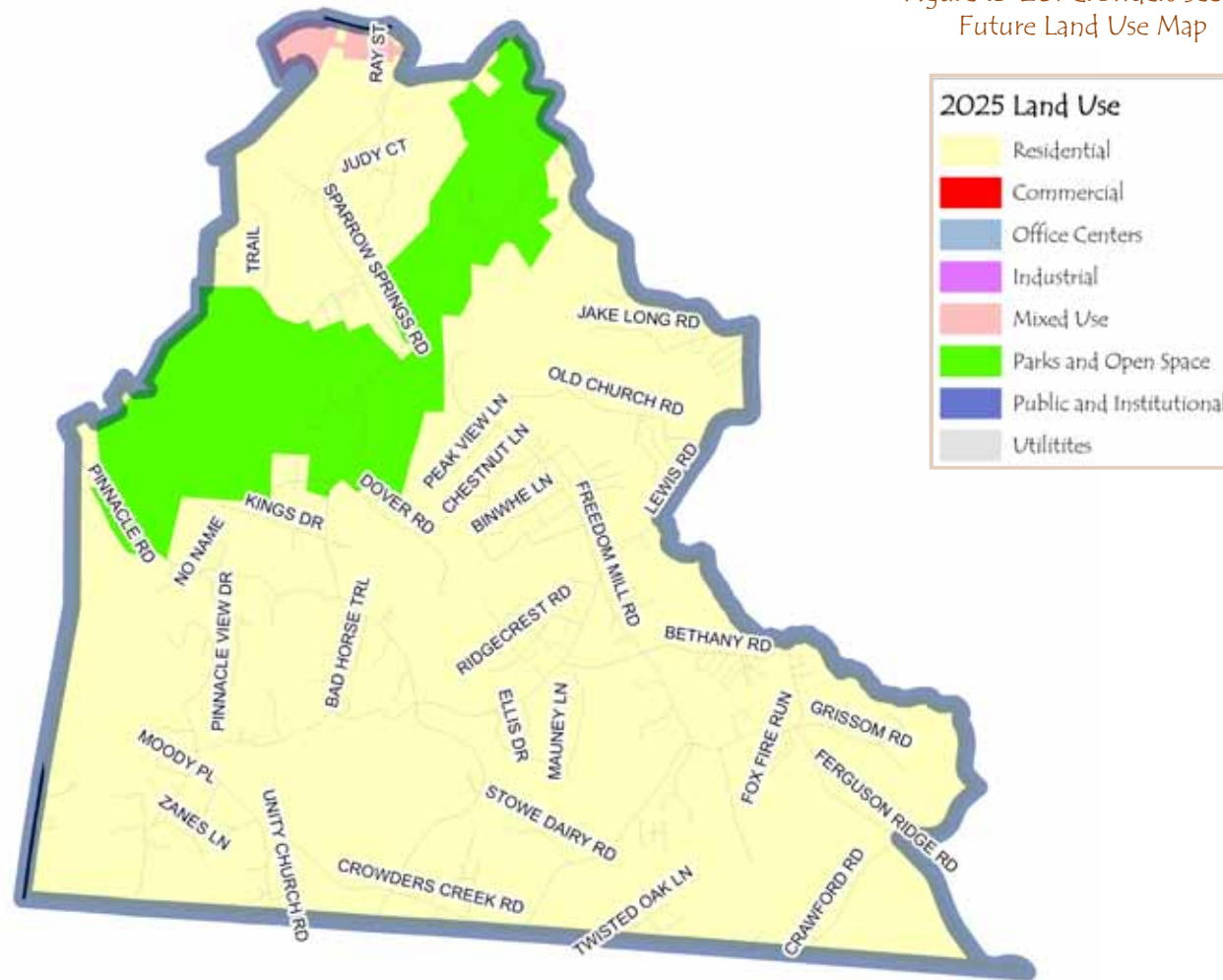
The Crowdres Sector Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-20, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



CROWDERS

SECTOR PROFILES

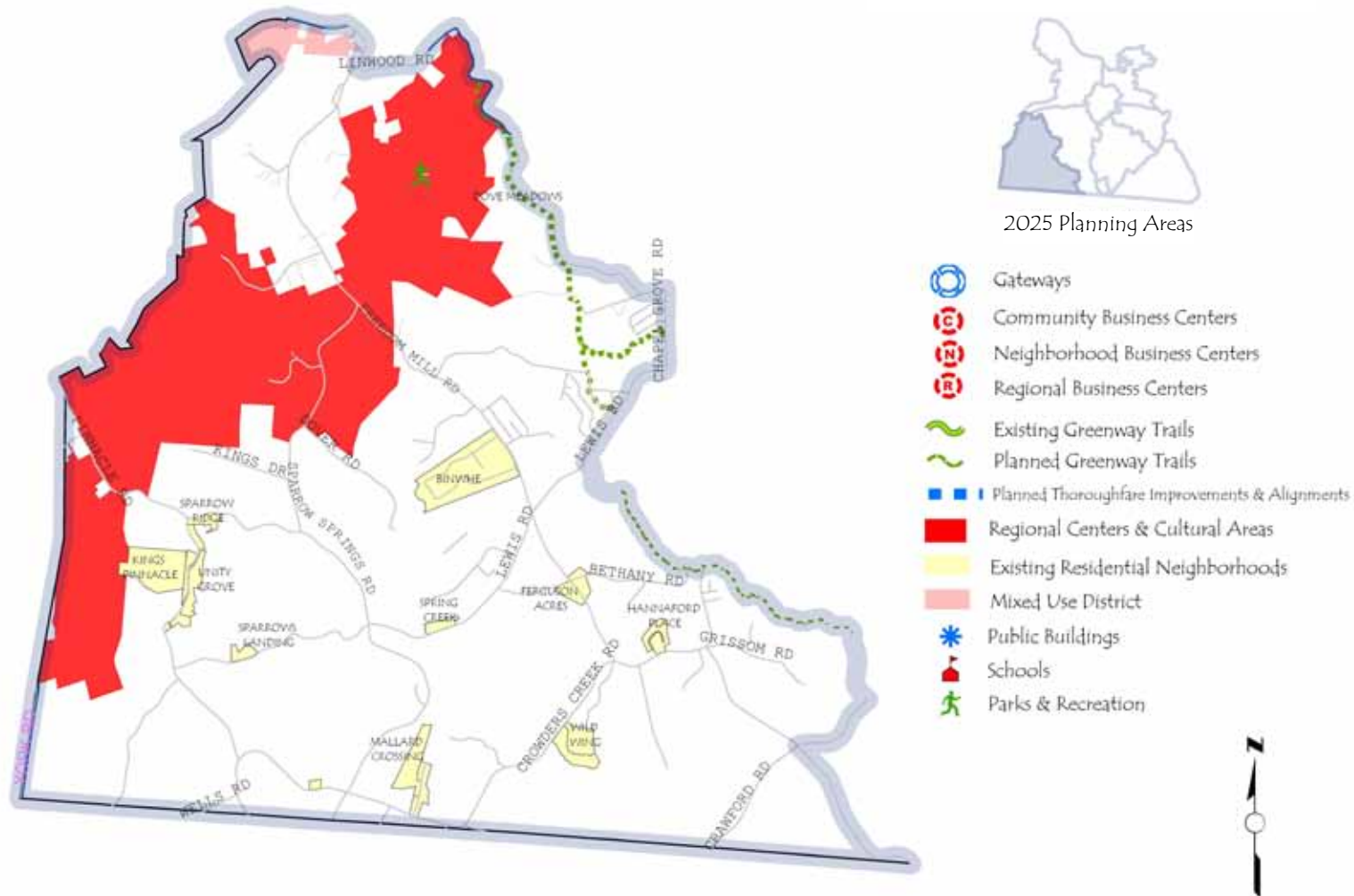
Figure 13-20: Crowders Sector, Future Land Use Map



CROWDERS

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-21: Crowders Sector, Development Strategy Map



2025 Planning Areas

- Gateways
- Community Business Centers
- Neighborhood Business Centers
- Regional Business Centers
- Existing Greenway Trails
- Planned Greenway Trails
- Planned Thoroughfare Improvements & Alignments
- Regional Centers & Cultural Areas
- Existing Residential Neighborhoods
- Mixed Use District
- Public Buildings
- Schools
- Parks & Recreation



SOUTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Issues

- The Southwest Sector has some attractive and viable neighborhoods, but housing values in these neighborhoods have not kept up with similar neighborhoods in the East and Southeast Sectors.
- Housing deterioration is a concern in the older neighborhoods of the Southwest Sector.
- The West Franklin Boulevard commercial corridor is suffering from commercial vacancies, under-use of buildings, general urban clutter and a lack of buffering between pedestrians and traffic.
- The Southwest Sector has had a decline in shopping and retail outlets, requiring a trip to the east side for all but groceries and the most basic goods and services.
- The Southwest Sector has a lack of primary care health services, such as family physicians and dentists.
- Many of the older Southwest Sector neighborhoods are “aging out,” with fewer families and children, and a stable or declining population.
- The housing stock in the Southwest Sector is aging, but it is also an important source of quality affordable housing, and it should be conserved.
- Real estate markets apparently reflect a perception of Southwest Sector schools as less desirable than schools in the East and Southeast Sectors.
- Many area neighborhoods lack access to high-frequency public transit.
- There is a need to plan for future senior housing needs.
- The rapid increase in the Sector's school-age population has resulted in overcrowding of schools.
- An increasing number of Southeast Sector neighborhoods are self-contained units, with little or no connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.

Sector Vision

- ◆ A community that opens its doors to new residents and visitors without affecting the values and lifestyles of its current residents.
- ◆ Maintained high quality public schools.
- ◆ Stable neighborhoods with affordable housing.
- ◆ A sustainable development pattern that creates and enhances the development of communities with increased quality of life.
- ◆ Promoted shared use of community resources such as schools, recreational and cultural centers, libraries, parks, and churches.
- ◆ A multipurpose recreational park within close proximity to area neighborhoods.
- ◆ Diversity of housing types and price ranges to meet the needs of the population.
- ◆ Attractive mixed-use development centers that integrate retail, services, and offices with medium-scale residences that can fill the transition from commercial uses to surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◆ Increased medical service locations throughout the Sector.
- ◆ Transit service frequency is increased and routes are expanded.
- ◆ Green paths throughout the sector with linkages to local destinations such as Crowders Mountain State Park, schools, and local recreation centers.
- ◆ Safe, well connected pedestrian and bicycle linkages to schools, within residential neighborhoods, recreational areas, and retail and commercial centers.



SOUTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Future Development Strategies

- Cluster neighborhood and community level business development at selected intersections of thoroughfares thereby creating transit oriented development “nodes” and encouraging pedestrian access.
- Use appropriate design, transition, or buffering elements to mitigate adverse visual, audible, aesthetic and traffic impacts to residential neighborhoods when considering commercial or mixed-use development proposals.
- Support innovative residential developments for small-tract infill development.
- New Community recreation center.
- Use design features and planning strategies to make new developments safer.
- Enhance safety and sense of safety by prioritizing CPTED on residential, commercial, and industrial projects.
- Introduce sidewalks and paths between buildings and through parking lots to provide opportunities for pedestrian use. Direct linkages to existing bus routes will be made.
- Conduct a land use study to insure high-quality development and a parkway atmosphere on the Proposed US 74 bypass.
- Include recruitment of retailers to new or under-used sites as part of our economic development efforts.
- Develop a retail and office marketing package, providing

information necessary for promoting new retail and office development.

- Establish neighborhood conservation strategies for stable Southwest Sector neighborhoods which may become threatened in the future.
- Develop a plan for trails and greenways.
- Support the establishment of primary health care practices on the west side.
- Use a targeted, site-specific enhancement strategy to create high-potential nodes of growth in the Southwest Sector.

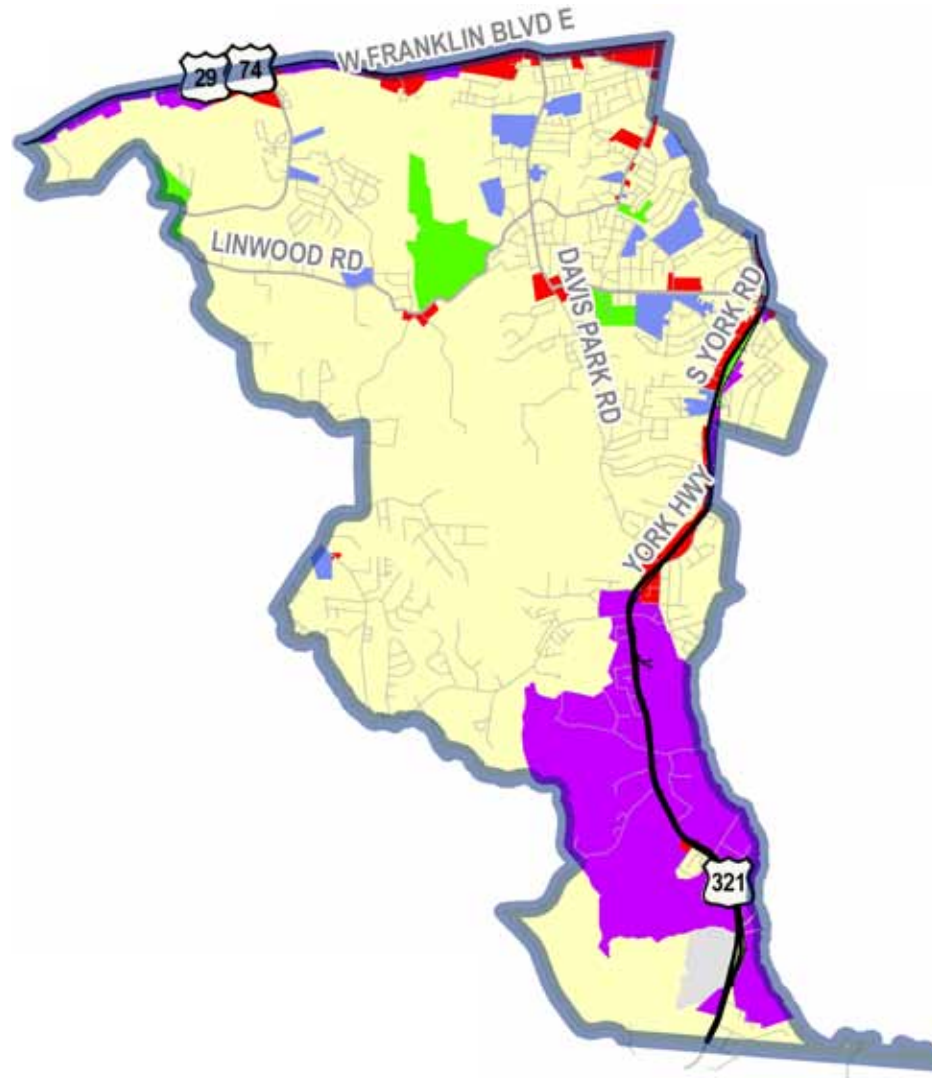
The Southwest Development Strategy Map, Figure 13-22, is a graphic representation of some of the future development strategies. The map is generalized, showing approximate locations for the various strategies.



SOUTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

Figure 13-22: Southwest Sector, Future Land Use Map



SOUTHWEST

SECTOR PROFILES

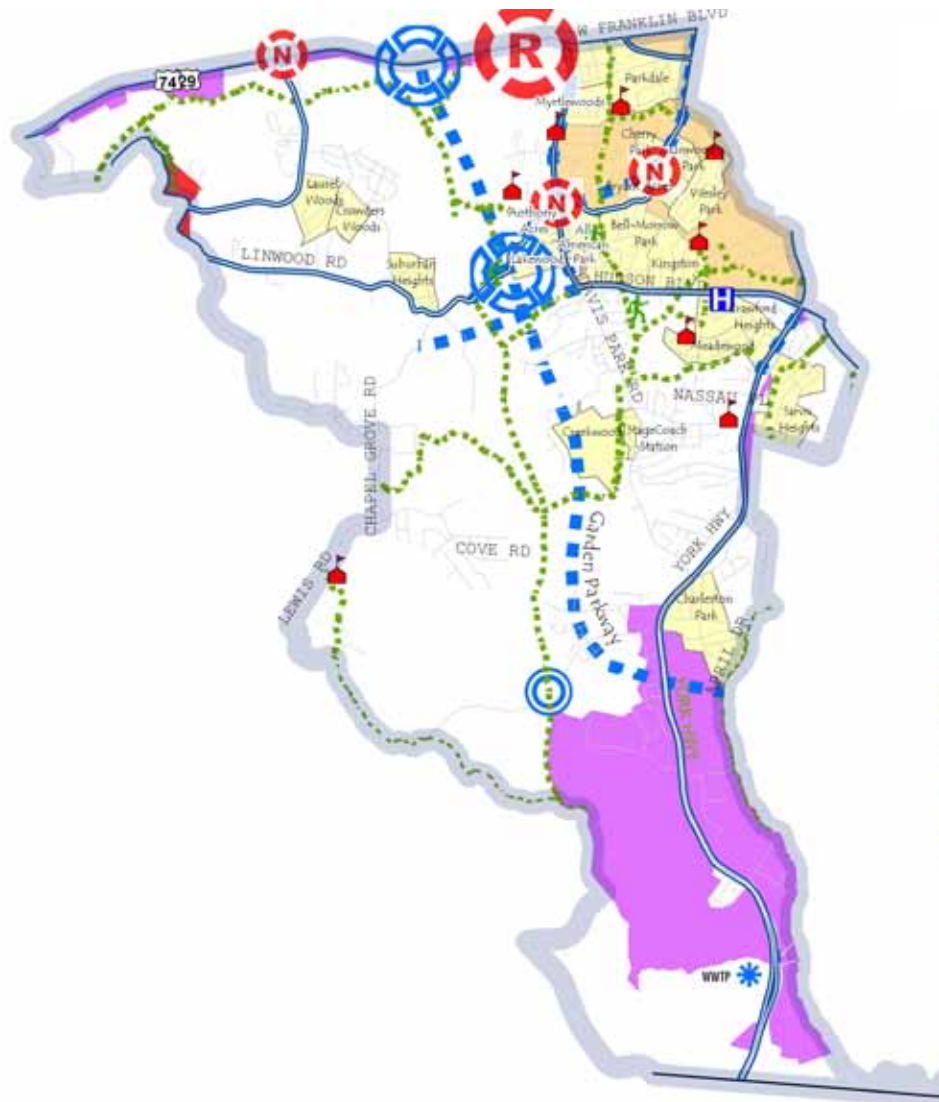


Figure 13-23: Southwest Sector, Development Strategy Map



2025 Planning Areas

- Gateways
- Community Business Centers
- Neighborhood Business Centers
- Regional Business Centers
- Existing Greenway Trails
- Planned Greenway Trails
- Planned Thoroughfare Improvements & Alignments
- Industrial Growth Area
- Development Incentive Area
- Existing Residential Neighborhoods
- Mixed Use District
- Hospital Area of Influence
- Public Buildings
- Schools
- Parks & Recreation

