AGENDA

Meeting Type:	S
Date	02-07-1990
SUBJECT	Special Joint Meeting City & County

City of Charlotte, City Clerk's Office

ADD'L BACK-UP 22 DRAFT

MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

February 7, 1990 5:30 P.M.

N O R T H C A R O L I N A
MECKLENBURG COUNTY

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Special Scheduled Session in the Meeting Chamber Conference Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center on Wednesday, February 7, 1990, at 5:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Vice-Chairman T. Rodney Autrey and Commissioners Kenneth L. Andrews, John G. Blackmon, Peter Keber, Barbara Lockwood, and Robert L. Walton.
Assistant County Manager Edwin Chapin
County Attorney Marvin A. Bethune
Clerk to the Board Janice S. Paige

Absent: Chairman Carla E. DuPuy.

The Board met with members of the City Council for the purpose of holding a Public Hearing to receive public comment on the District Plan General Policies.

Vice-Chairman Autrey called the meeting to order following dinner and asked Dave Howard of the Planning Commission to review the procedure for tonight's hearing.

Frank Emory, Chairman of the Planning Commission, also spoke during this time.

The Board recessed at 6:25 p.m. and reconvened in the Meeting Chamber at 6·30 p.m.

Commissioner Lockwood was absent when the meeting was reconvened and until noted in the minutes.

Mayor Myrick called this portion of the meeting to order and announced each speaker would be allowed 3 minutes.

A) 0110-1111
B) Pub Hear
C) General Policies District Plan

Frank Emory, Chairman of the Planning Commission, appeared before the bodies prior to the start of the Public Hearing. Mr. Emory stated that the District Plan General Policies has the unanimous support of the Planning Commission with the exception of a split vote on the Base Density Recommendation.

Commissioner Lockwood returned to the meeting during Mr. Emory's comments and was present for the remainder of the meeting.

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The speakers were as follows:

Dorothy Coplon, representing the Southeast Coalition of Neighborhoods, spoke in opposition to the Base Density recommendation of 4 units per acre.

Bob Lilien, representing the Myers Park Homeowners Association, spoke in opposition to the Base Density recommendation of 4 units per acre, Page 19 was referenced. Page 21 - Multi-family and the density requirement. The chart on page 23 is felt to be flawed because there is no negative number for adverse affects for Multi-family density in areas where it should not be.

Sylvia Cannon spoke as a citizen in opposition to the Base Density recommendation of 4 units per acre. Page 19 was referenced.

Mary McDaniel spoke on environmental issues - air and water quality, also the preservation of natural areas. Page 40 was referenced.

James Patterson, representing the Home Builders Association of Charlotte, complimented Staff for its work on the District Plan General Polices; however, concern was expressed concerning infrastructure and offsite improvement. Page 2 of the Executive Summary was referenced. He requested a delay in approving this section to allow for more input.

Doug Boone, Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee, expressed support for the District Plan General Policies, including the density. Concern was expressed for. the provision of infrastructure prior to the development as a precondition; access provision, private water and sewer systems to be built to CMUD standards; dedication of land for public facilities; and cost of streetscapes, bikeways and street trees. He stated that this document will make the Planning process very rigid instead of evolutionary as it currently is. He recommended that the document be set aside because there are common areas which will probably be addressed through the zoning rewrite process.

Paul Pawlowski, representing Steele Creek Homeowners Association, spoke in opposition to the Base Density recommendation of 4 units per acre and expressed concern for environmental issues. Pages 23, 26, & 34 were referenced.

Fred Bryant, representing the Chamber of Commerce Land Use Committee, expressed support for the idea and purpose of the District Plan General Policies. However, concern was expressed in four areas. 1) the wording of the document, the standards appear to be regulatory and not policy, example page 10 50/50 split between office and retail in a development center. This is an unrealistic standard; also detail design standards throughout the document the 50/50 buffer requirement, page 13 referenced, 2) no clear distinction on how this document affects or applies to existing zoned areas; 3) adequate facilities requirement; 4) in the plan amendment process there appears to be no guarantee of a right to be heard if someone petitions a change. Also recommended those policies being debated in other forums be taken out. Speaking on behalf of the Chamber Manufacturing Committee there is no reference in the document to industrial development. This needs to be addressed. Secondly, no protective language to indicate that residential development will not be permitted to come right up adjacent to industrial.

Landon Wyatt, representing Chamber of Commerce Land Use Committee, supports concept of the document; however, concerns were expressed regarding mixed use centers, page 10, the lack of industrial being addressed, page 14 referenced in regards to transportation, sidewalk requirements in industrial areas, page

29 extraction process for building permits, and page 26 adequate public facilities.

Jud Little of Crosland Properties spoke concerning multi-family housing in general. Page 23 was referenced. Page 24 was referenced out of concern for the design criteria, page ii infrastructure #3 dedication of land to public domain "this may be a public taking without compensation to the developer", and page iii affordable housing no mention of the importance of multi-family housing.

Jim Patterson, Executive Director of the Charlotte Apartment Association, spoke concerning multi-family housing and its importance recommended the sections on infrastructure finance, Infill Development, and Multi-family Housing be pulled until they can be discussed by a cross section of interests in the community within the next 60 days. Plan amendment process is cumbersome.

W. B. Young, resident of Steele Creek Community and member of the Southwest District Planning Committee, spoke concerning plan amendments "seems to be pretty good"; however, there is concern for the environment and with small waste disposal plants in area along the Catawba River and Lake Wylie. Pages 3 and 4 were referenced. Recommended a representative of a viable entity be allowed to participate in the Plan Amendment process and serve in an advisory capacity to the Planning and/or Zoning Committees.

Rob Frazer who has been involved with the Zoning rewrite spoke concerning adoption of a new zoning ordinance, page iiii Reservations were expressed for passage of this document when there are other related documents that have not been finalized. Page 13 referenced questions raised concerning radius numbers versus square footage.

Christine Parks, representing Long Creek, spoke in opposition to the Base Density recommendation of 4 units per acre.

Mahlon Adams spoke in opposition to the Base Density recommendation of 4 units per acre.

Price Zimmermann, representing the North Mecklenburg Concerned Citizens Association, spoke in support of the provisions of the Plan for having low density areas on the periphery of the County.

Henry Mitchell, President of Steele Creek Residents Association, gave results of a community survey. 73% of residents who responded on the Zoning questions desire that it remain as is, mainly R-15. 8% wanted a mixture of R-15, R-9, R-12 and Multi-family. 15% wanted a mixture of business commercial and residential. Opposition expressed to Base Density of 4 units per acre pages 19 & 26. Water and sewer services, 4% wanted regional facility operated by private industry. 8% wanted septic tanks. 2% wanted small package treatment plants. 30% wanted regional systems involving North Carolina and South Carolina, Gaston and York Counties. Pages 33 and 34 were referenced Roads and highways. 82% wanted to widen Highway 49. Other statistics were given Mr. Mitchell stated that he would provide Board members with a copy of the survey. In closing he asked that concern be given for the lifestyles of the current residents of the County more so than in 10-15 years.

Bob Young urged the Board and Council to hold joint public hearings on individual district plans prior to its approval and to allow for citizen input.

Sara McAuley spoke referencing pages 19 and 20, single-family development. She supports 3 units per acre but not 4 units or 1 unit per acre.

Warren Drye, Vice-President of Steele Creek Residents Association, addressed the wastewater area of the plan. Referenced page 33, water and sewer services - policies 2nd paragraph Concern expressed for package treatment plants as an option for developers if CMUD services are not available.

William Bird, resident of Northern Mecklenburg County, opposed to blanket zoning. He stated there are areas of the County that need individual attention. He addressed the County's water supply, specifically, Mountain Island Lake Watershed. Policy as presented will have a significant negative impact on watershed if density is not restricted in the watershed basins.

William Trotter, a Home Builder, spoke on residential density - referenced pages ii and 20. Concerned that existing allowable density could be decreased especially as it relates to the one unit per acre provision. Feels status quo should remain.

Sen. T. L. "Fountain" Odom spoke as a citizen and expressed concern for water quality of all lakes - referenced page 34. He stated the policy that says the extension of water and sewer lines into the far reaches of the County must pay for itself must be abandoned. It's felt that public funds have to be contributed, thus, insuring quality water and quality development along the three lakes. He encouraged working with landowners such as Crescent Resources and other large and small landowners up and down the Catawba River Basin to extend those water and sewer lines. He referenced page 35 livability. He is disappointed that there is no mention of Farmland Preservation.

Commissioner Keber left the meeting at this time and was absent for the remainder of the meeting.

Del Ratcliffe, a resident of the Northeast, opposed down zoning as a tool for implementation under the guidance of corrective zoning. The Northeast District Plan does not take into account existing land uses but only future uses.

Commissioner Andrews left the meeting at this time and was absent until noted in the minutes.

Thomas G. Derham, former President of Foxcroft East Homeowners Association, supports the intention of policies, however, it needs finetuning; seek more input.

Commissioner Andrews returned to the meeting at this time and was present for the remainder of the meeting.

Jim Cook stated he is opposed to 4 units per acre Base Density.

Mike Smith of Sandoz Chemical Company spoke as a citizen concerning light and heavy industry. He asked that the policy on industrial be deferred because it lacks adequate support for industry.

Lee McLaren spoke in favor of higher density. He stated that low density does not equal quality life but urban sprawls. He referenced page 23 stating there was no mention of individual site constraints.

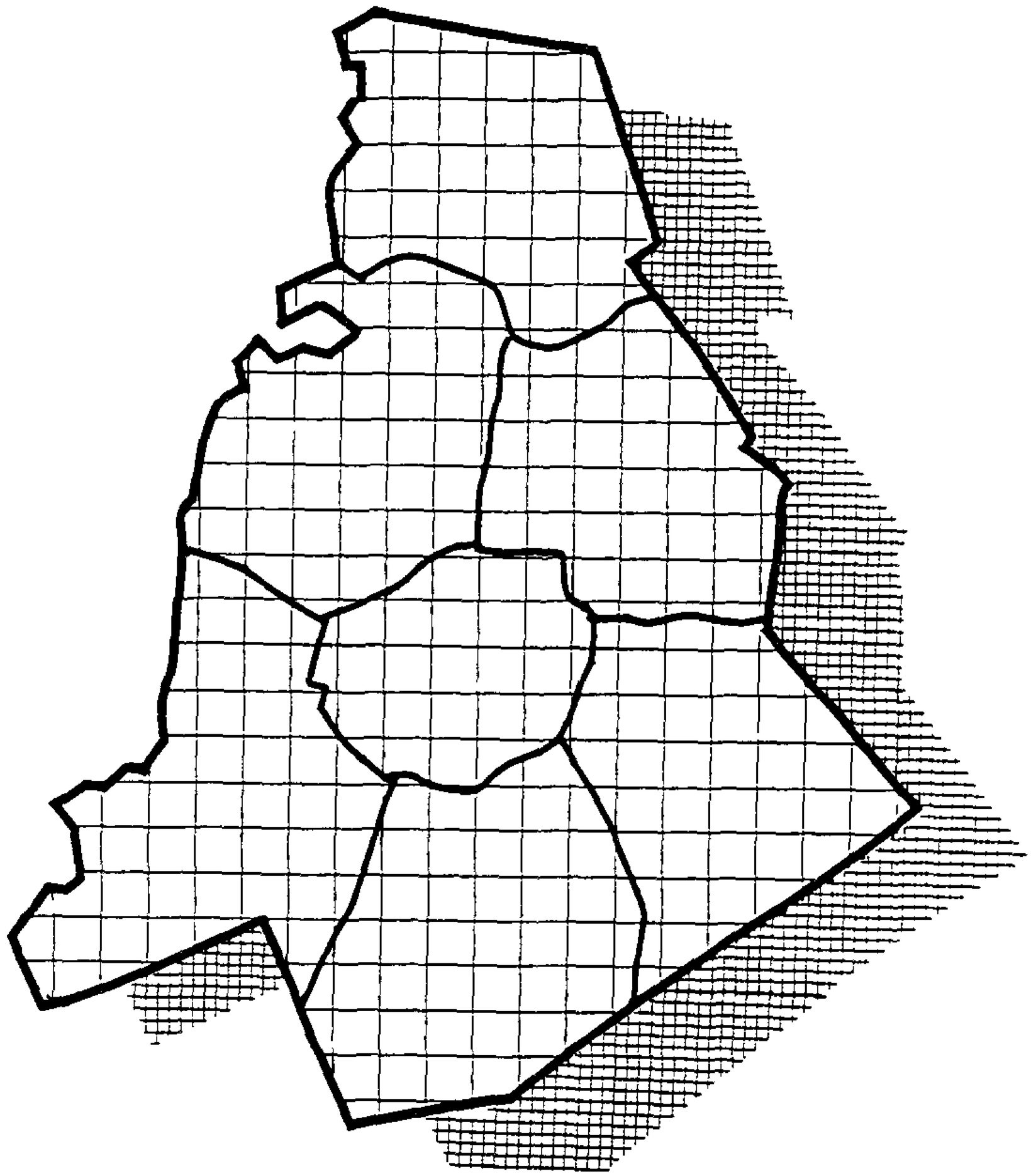
Allen Amery opposes 4 units per acre Base Density but supports the way the document sets up zoning areas.

Motion was made by Commissioner Blackmon, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and carried 5-0, with Commissioners Andrews, Autrey, Blackmon, Lockwood, and Walton voting yes, that there being no further business to come before the Board, that the meeting be adjourned at 8 05 P.M.

Janice S Paige, Clerk

T Rodney Autrey,
Vice-Chairman

DISTRICT PLAN GENERAL POLICIES



Approved by
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission
January 11. 1990

DISTRICT PLANS GENERAL POLICIES

Preface

Each of the seven planning districts in Mecklenburg County is unique and has separate issues to address, however, many issues apply generally throughout the county. This general policy document highlights the community-wide issues, goals, objectives, policies, and strategies for all the planning districts. The specific application of the general planning principles is included in a separate document for each planning area.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Charlotte-Mecklenburg will undergo many changes in the years ahead. District plans provide policies and recommendations that can lead the community in a positive direction. Because of the tremendous growth pressures, the opportunity to make a difference in how the community develops is at hand. There must be consistency in applying the policies and setting priorities for action; otherwise, the community will lose its focus and opportunity to manage growth.

The major land development policies generally applying to all the districts are summarized below, and a two year action plan on various key recommendations is given. It's important to remember that planning is a dynamic process and should remain somewhat flexible. Changes in the economy, in the environment, or in societal trends over time may cause adjustment of the plan's position on certain issues. As the 2005 Plan will be monitored every five years to assess the realities of the changing times, so will the district plans; however, the proposals set forth in this plan represent solid land planning principles that should endure through the course of time.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

To ensure that the vision of district plans becomes a reality in the future, the following development policies should be closely observed through the rezoning process. These policies, in addition to others, are explained more fully in the general policies document. Greater direction with regard to the specific application of the policies are included within each district plan. Important to note, some of the statements below reflect the desired rather than existing policies.

LAND USE

- Unified mixed use centers should develop throughout each district as focal points of development. These centers should be integrated through design, with an emphasis on pedestrian connections.

- Employment uses should concentrate only in the areas defined on each district plan map.

- New residential development should occur at varying densities throughout the district to provide diversity in housing types and affordability. An urban residential pattern should evolve considering the following:

  - protection of existing neighbor character and zoning pattern in stable neighborhoods, being especially sensitive to infill development.

- establishing a base by-right single family density of 4 d.u.a. throughout the majority of developing urban areas of the county with the following exceptions·

    - o In limited locations and with strong justification, a maximum density of 1 d.u.a. should be maintained in environmentally sensitive areas, in locations desired for a more rural future, where access is particularly poor, or where historic qualities of an area should be preserved.

    - o A base density of 3 d.u.a. should be applied in some outlying areas that relate more to small towns in and around the county rather than relate to Charlotte's urban core.

    - Allowing opportunities for and encouraging higher density residential contingent upon rezonings that are based upon objective design and locational criteria.

- o Encourage higher density residential development along proposed transit rail lines.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- o All transportation improvements indicated on the newly adopted Thoroughfare Plan which cross or are located on the development site should be constructed prior to or in conjunction with development. If constructed by the developer, all State or local standards should be met. Any off site transportation improvements necessary to support a development should be provided whether privately or through public financing.

- o Developments other than single family lots with septic tanks and wells should be served by public water, and sewer systems or, in the interim by private community wells and/or package treatment plants with lines sized to CMUD standards. Eventually, all private community systems should be dedicated to the public system.

- o Any land identified for on-site public facilities (such as parks, greenways, schools, thoroughfares, etc) should be dedicated to the public domain through the development process.

- o Pursue and coordinate intergovernmental cooperation and planning for a regional transportation network and regional water and sewer services.

- o Continue to have sidewalks built through the development process and place a high priority on building and completing sidewalks on major and minor thoroughfares.

LIVABILITY

- Parks of different sizes and functions should be developed in accordance with the priorities established in the Park Master Plan.

- Stormwater should be managed on a system-wide rather than isolated basis considering off-site influences and impacts.

- Joint development of elementary and some junior high schools with park sites should be pursued where possible.

- Historic properties should be preserved either through public intervention or through the development process.

- Open space amenities other than parks and greenways should be woven into the land development plan with an emphasis upon

  - buffers and screening between dissimilar land uses

  - usable common open space within large scale developments

  - linking open spaces

  - streetscape treatment along major gateway corridors

  - pedestrian and biking accessibility

  - preservation of natural features

- The environmental quality of streams, the watershed, and other significant natural areas should be preserved within the City and County.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Preservation of the existing housing stock should remain a top priority.

- Housing and neighborhood improvement programs should be coordinated throughout the county.

- Neighborhood groups should be encouraged to take active roles in neighborhood and housing improvement programs

- Public funds should continue to be used to leverage private sector involvement in providing affordable housing.

- Programs that promote home ownership opportunities should be more widely used.

- Higher density development should be encouraged to help control housing costs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The City's and County's role in economic development for the community should continue and be strengthened.

TWO YEAR (1989-1991) ACTION PLAN

Numerous recommendations are included in the District Plan General Policies. The capital projects will be included in the 10 YEAR CAPITAL NEEDS INVENTORY and the 5 YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM. Priorities will be established based upon the overall City/County needs. Because of limited public resources, the capital projects will be funded over an extended period of time. Alternative revenue sources are currently being explored by the City and County to relieve some of the public financial pressures. A reduction in Federal spending and local cut backs will require additional resources to meet the growing needs.

Other, non-capital projects however, should be completed or at least started within a two-year time frame. Many of the projects are on-going, but closure within the next two years will have a significant impact on the future of the community. These actions are:

- Adopt a new zoning ordinance for the City and County that includes the districts needed to implement the proposed land use policies of this plan and also improved development standards to ensure an attractive and livable environment.

- Begin the process of assessing and updating the 2005 Generalized Land Plan.

- Complete a design manual that provides guidance for designing multi-family housing in developing areas and on infill sites.

- Complete a study on land use and rail corridor design to determine needs, priorities and implications of a transit rail system.

- Establish a regional transportation task force or authority to assess transportation needs on a regional basis.

- Complete an interagency task force effort to develop an action plan for dealing with private package treatment plants, and initiate action. The use of septic tanks should also be evaluated in the study. (During the district planning process, such a group was formed.)

- Convene an inter-county task force consisting of agency representatives and elected officials to address the need for a regional sewage treatment system.

- Address issues related to the Catawba River watershed through a watershed management plan for the county. Regional cooperation should be pursued.

- Adopt the 2005 Transportation Plan, Parks Master Plan, and Greenway Master Plan Update to give direction and establish priorities for public facilities.

- The County should pursue legislation that would enable it to fund and build roads.

- Complete an inventory of sidewalks along major and minor thoroughfares in the city and establish priorities and a program for completing a sidewalk system along the roads.

- Explore means of having sidewalks built along major and minor thoroughfares in the county.

- The County should adopt a master plan for new schools including desired locations, estimated costs, and priorities. Every attempt should be made to combine elementary and some junior highs schools with public parks.

- The County Board of Education should pursue changes in State requirements that would allow schools to develop on smaller sites in urban areas, and would increase acreages for high schools in developing areas.

- Complete an historic preservation plan that sets priorities for preservation and recommends strategies to implement the plan

- Prepare streetscape plans and/or design guidelines for the streets identified within the district plans.

- Initiate a master tree planting plan for all major and minor thoroughfares in the City and County.

- Establish a tree commission and tree ordinance for the County, or consolidate the function with the City.

- Evaluate and recommend strategies for:

  - use of overhead utilities
  - curb cut standards
  - public sign program

- Initiate a master bikeways plan to create a linked network of bikeways in the City and County.

- Adopt a stormwater management plan and ordinance that supports strong environmental and aesthetic measures for maintaining streams and lakes as well as flood control.

- Complete an analysis and establish policy direction for alternative means of supplementing public funding of public services and facilities.

- Continue to implement and enhance a variety of existing and proposed programs dealing with affordable housing. (Numerous programs are discussed in the Affordable Housing section of the plan.)

- Undertake a strategic economic development plan for the City and County that outlines issues and recommends strategies, priorities, and funding opportunities for continued economic development of the community.

INTRODUCTION

In November, 1985 the 2005 Generalized Land Plan was jointly adopted by Charlotte City Council and Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners. It became the official policy guide for managing and redirecting growth. Community leaders supported the plan's underlying vision of Charlotte-Mecklenburg as the urban center of a growing region. The basic premise of the plan is that to create a healthy and livable urban community, the community will depend upon its economic vitality and its ability to identify, plan for, support, and market

- a more balanced growth pattern
- an increasingly urban land use pattern, and
- a stronger public urban design consciousness

In the plan the county was divided into seven geographic districts South, Southwest, Northwest, North, Northeast, East and Central. Broad land use concepts and implementation strategies designed for a twenty year period were recommended for each. The expectation drawn from the 2005 Plan was that once the overall generalized plan was approved, plans would subsequently be completed for the seven districts, the purpose of which would be to further refine the broad policies established in the 2005 Plan. This was a top priority for continued planning efforts.

Establishing a citizen involvement forum to assist staff on developing district plans was also an early action recommended in the 2005 Plan. Consequently, in 1987 the official district planning process began, and the citizen involvement approach was determined. Study groups of from 14 to 16 citizens each were selected by the Planning Committee to represent the seven districts. A good cross section of citizens and interests was the key criterion for appointing the study group members.

SCOPE OF DISTRICT PLANS

As mentioned above, the purpose of the district plans is to refine the broad 2005 Plan policies and recommendations. The 2005 Plan provided a conceptual vision of how each district in the county should develop. The district plans are more specific in nature. For example, locations and sizes of future commercial centers are identified in the plans. Boundaries and descriptions of future employment centers and residential development policies are as well. Where the 2005 Plan is a 20 year plan, the district plans depict a built-out land use future, one which may not evolve for twenty, fifty, or even a hundred years. The plans will provide policy direction to the elected officials for making land use decisions well into the future.

In addition to the future land use plan, a twenty year capital improvements program is recommended that will support the land use

proposals. Included are provisions for water and sewer, road improvements, parks, street trees, and other public projects. These will be included in the City's and County's Ten Year Needs Assessments and the yearly Capital Improvements Program (C.I.P.). Projects scheduled beyond the 20 year period will eventually be included in the capital funding plans.

Finally, the district plans identify where the even more detailed small area plans should be pursued. Even though specific in nature, the district plans generally do not address the community on a lot by lot basis as do small area plans. In some situations, particularly in the Central District, small area plans will be needed to further refine the district plan policies in specific areas.

THE PROCESS*

The Planning Commission staff working with the study groups for each district:

- o assessed existing characteristics and trends for each district
- o identified key issues
- o refined the 2005 Plan long range vision, goals, and objectives
- o reviewed adopted plans within the district to assess if and where changes should be made
- o determined development policies, criteria, and strategies
- o identified tools for implementation

Generally, it took from ten to fifteen months to accomplish the above and to prepare a draft plan. Once the early background work was completed by staff, the process evolved as follows:

- o The study group had an orientation meeting to become acquainted and to identify issues that should be addressed in the plan.
- o A community meeting was held for staff to explain the plan's purpose, to introduce study group members to the public, and to have the community at large identify issues for planning.
- o The study group then met with staff generally every three weeks to address the focused issues of the plan. Staff presented background and educational information to the group on each topic

* The Northeast District Plan process began prior to the study groups being formed. Therefore, a slightly different process was followed. Public workshops were held as the plan was being developed, and the study group, consisting of many who participated in the workshops, met for an abbreviated time period to review, discuss the staff's draft plan and to recommend changes or additions.

and then presented its recommendations for actions. The study group members were in the position of reviewing staff's recommendations and either agreeing with them or recommending changes. The optimum situation was that the decisions would reflect a full consensus of the study group and staff. However, in cases where consensus was not reached, the differences of opinion were noted.

- A draft plan was prepared by staff and forwarded to the study group.

- A second community meeting was conducted for staff to present the plan's recommendations and to obtain feedback from the citizens at large.

- The study group reconvened to review the staff draft and discuss public meeting comments. The group concurred with the staff, recommended changes, or where consensus was not reached, voiced differences of opinion. Differing opinions were noted in a study group minority report.

- A third community meeting was conducted by the Planning Committee to give the Committee members an opportunity to hear comments.

- The plan and study group and citizen comments were then reviewed by the Planning Committee for its recommendation.

- The elected officials reviewed and adopted a final plan.

CONTINUED MONITORING OF PLANS

Planning is a dynamic process that necessitates being flexible and adapting to changes. As with the 2005 Plan, the district plans will be reviewed every five years to address changes that are occurring in the districts. It will be an opportunity to assess the plan recommendations and policies to determine if the recommendations should continue to apply.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

Adopted plans set policy direction for the future. Considerable analysis and community involvement have influenced policies and strategies of plans. A variety of factors such as access, availability of transit, and good spatial distribution and separation of land uses have been considered. Therefore, any actions taken that conflict with plans or their intent should be carefully weighed before proceeding with a change. Changing land use at one location may necessitate changes to the plan elsewhere or have implications on infrastructure.

In the past there has been no formal process for evaluating proposals that deviate from adopted plans. As part of the staff analysis prepared for zoning cases, the consistency of petitions with adopted

plans have been evaluated, but there has been no comprehensive review of the effects of the petition on the overall plan strategy; the staff analysis has only addressed whether a petition is or is not consistent with plans.

To maintain the integrity of adopted plans, a formal plan amendment process may be initiated as follows:

1. Staff, Planning Commission, or elected officials may initiate a plan amendment as a result of a periodic five year review of the entire plan. Planning Committee would review the proposed amendment and forward its recommendation to elected officials.

2. Staff, Planning Commission, or elected officials may initiate a plan amendment as a result of some government action that has changed conditions in a particular area. For example, if an alignment of a new road has been decided upon, the impact may cause staff to adjust the plan to accommodate the change. As with the first option, Planning Committee would review the proposal and forward its recommendation to elected officials for a final decision.

3. A private citizen or developer may initiate a plan amendment. He/she must provide staff with written information elaborating on the amendment request and the justification for making any changes to the plan. Staff would evaluate the request and recommend approval or denial to the Planning Committee which in turn would make a recommendation to elected officials for a decision. If a zoning petition has been filed for a piece of property, a plan amendment can not be filed for the same property. A plan amendment could occur through the rezoning process as described in number 4 below.

4. As part of the rezoning process for petitions that clearly conflict with adopted plans, an automatic plan amendment review would be built into the process. A developer would file a petition and a public hearing would be held. After the public hearing, the Zoning Committee would either recommend an automatic deferral to allow time for Planning Committee to assess the effects on the adopted plan or make a recommendation on the petition. Staff would recommend deferral in all cases. If the Zoning Committee makes a recommendation prior to deferring a plan, the elected officials may decide to defer a decision and refer the issue of plan consistency back to the Planning Committee.

   If a deferral is recommended by Zoning Committee or the elected officials, Planning Committee would take the necessary time to evaluate the merits of the plan amendment and make a recommendation back to the Zoning Committee and/or the elected officials as to whether a land use change in general should be provided. The Planning Committee would not

judge the merits of a site plan, this would be the responsibility of the Zoning Committee. Planning Committee would only assess the land use implications as they relate to adopted plans.

There may be situations where the Planning Committee recommends against a plan amendment and Zoning Committee recommends for a petition that conflicts with the plan. The elected officials would consider both recommendations and make the final decision. A final affirmative decision on any zoning case by the elected officials would result in an automatic plan amendment to reflect the zone change.

There may also be situations in which the Planning Committee may recommend in favor of a plan amendment, but for site plan or other reasons Zoning Committee recommends denial of a petition. If elected officials deny the petition, the plan amendment would not be approved unless from the overall plan perspective a change significantly improves the original adopted plan concept.

With any of the four options, the level of citizen involvement would be dependent upon the complexity and magnitude of a plan change. The time frame for completing the plan amendment process would also vary dependent upon the complexity of the plan review.

In cases where the plan review associated with zoning petitions deals with a very localized amendment, one that does not result in changes elsewhere to the plan, the time frame would be relatively short because the decision should be relatively easy to make. Generally this would involve an additional month added to the zoning process. Conversely, if a plan amendment is complex and results in having to consider changes to the overall adopted plan, the time frame would be lengthened dependent upon staff resources available to do a thorough analysis of the situation.

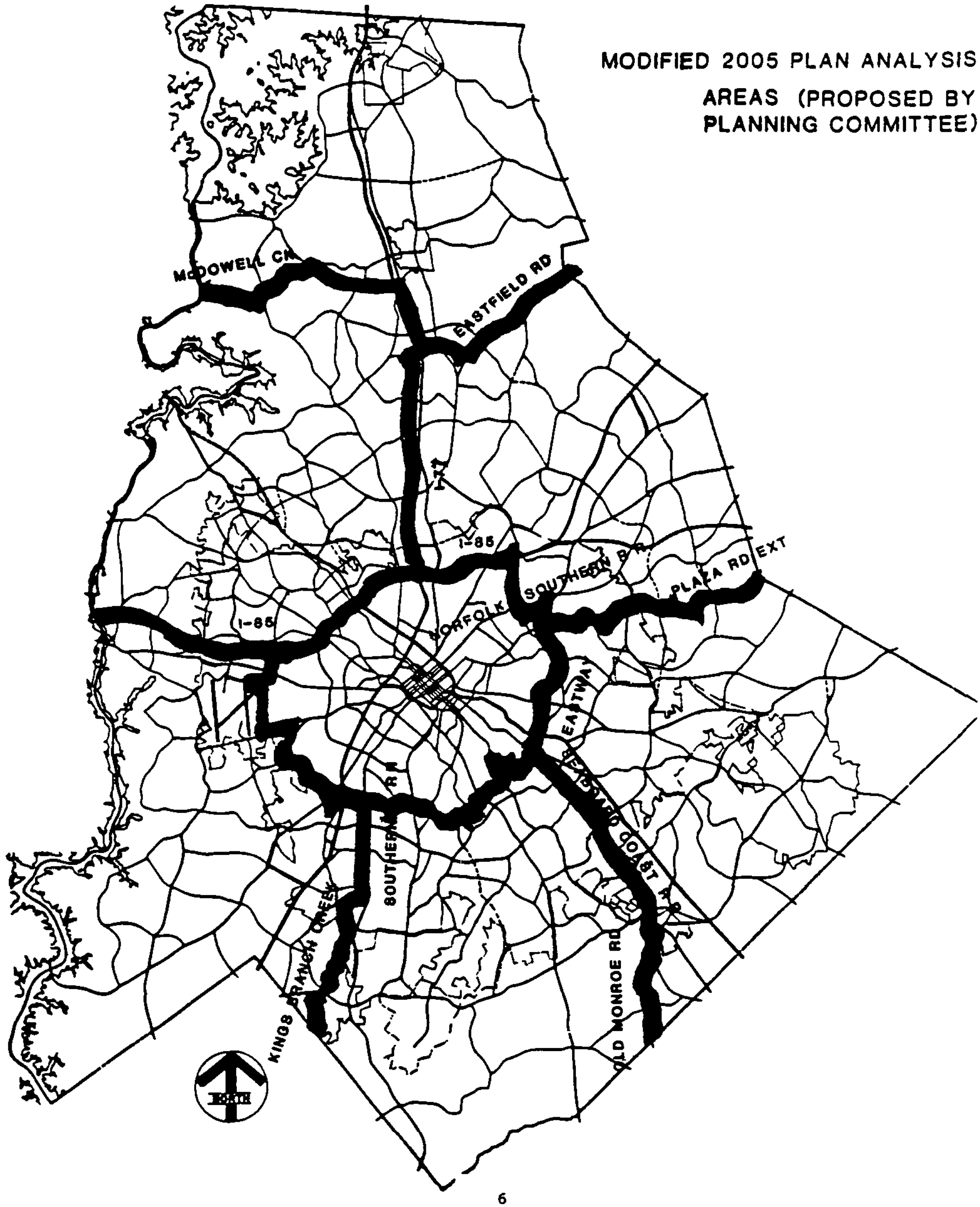
Where a plan amendment is complex and would involve considerable staff time, a potential zoning petitioner should pursue the option of proceeding directly to the Planning Committee for a plan amendment before filing a petition. In the long run, the time, expense, and uncertainty to the petitioner would generally be less with a direct plan amendment than with filing a petition and being delayed. It would also be a much less complicated route to take for particularly controversial zoning cases.

Details of the specific step by step plan amendment process including application and information needs and review time considerations should be defined following adoption of the General Policies.

7 DISTRICT PROPOSAL

MODIFIED 2005 PLAN ANALYSIS

AREAS (PROPOSED BY PLANNING COMMITTEE)



A POSITIVE DIRECTION

ISSUES FOR PLANNING

One of the first important steps for developing a land use plan is to identify and focus upon the key issues that will confront the community in the years to come. Narrowing the issues establishes a framework for action. The most pressing issues that affect each district in one way or another fall under the following categories:

- economic prosperity
- variety and affordability of housing
- neighborhood conservation & integrity
- livability and the environment
- public services, facilities, and infrastructure
- regional influences

Issues specific to each district are identified and addressed in the individual plans.

VISION AND GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

Communities that maintain a clear vision of the future are the most successful in achieving their long term goals. The 2005 Plan was based upon the broad vision of Mecklenburg County as a fully developed, urbanized community at some point in time in the future. Building upon the 2005 Vision are the vision development goals common to each district as described below:

Each district should be:

- **ECONOMICALLY STRONG** to provide jobs, business and shopping opportunities, and a reliable tax base for supporting the growing needs of the community.
- **PHYSICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE** to provide a broad range of housing, employment, leisure, health, and educational opportunities in each area.
- **SENSITIVELY DESIGNED** to create a sense of unique identity and to foster aesthetic values.
- **ADEQUATELY SERVICED** with the necessary infrastructure to lead and accommodate growth.

- **ENVIRONMENTALLY BALANCED** to protect the districts natural and historical resources and to provide healthy surroundings for people.

- **SUPPORTIVE OF NEIGHBORHOOD VALUES** to preserve and enhance the valuable housing stock and sense of community already established and yet to be built.

- **HOLISTICALLY DEVELOPED** to create a total, interrelated environment in which the pieces fit together as part of the bigger Charlotte-Mecklenburg and regional picture.

The objectives, policies, and implementation strategies proposed to accomplish the plan's vision or goals on the community-wide scale are included within each of the following sections:

- Future Land Use Pattern
- Infrastructure
- Livability
- Affordable Housing
- Economic Development

REGIONALISM

As the central city of a growing region, Charlotte-Mecklenburg must focus on a broader scope of planning extending across county lines to a region that contains over 1.3 million people. Regional cooperation and coordination with various facets of growth management such as roads, transit, utilities, and environmental protection should be actively pursued by planners and elected officials in the future. Although there have been steps taken in bridging activities of surrounding counties, considerable work is yet to be accomplished to establish stronger regional ties.

In 1990-91, the process for updating the 2005 Generalized Land Plan will begin. This update will provide the opportunity for the community to focus on strategies for greater regional involvement. The seeds of some aspects of regional planning are included within this general policies document for district plans.

FUTURE LAND USE

OBJECTIVES:

- TO ESTABLISH IDENTIFIABLE AND INTEGRATED CENTERS OF INTENSE AND FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT EACH DISTRICT AS A MEANS OF ORGANIZING THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN AND PREVENTING CHARACTERLESS SPRAWL AND STRIP DEVELOPMENT.
- TO ENCOURAGE AND PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR A FULL RANGE OF INDUSTRIES AND EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL.
- TO PROVIDE RETAIL AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND REGIONAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.
- TO PRESERVE AND WHERE NEEDED, ENHANCE THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK AND CHARACTER WITHIN ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS.
- TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF CHOICES IN HOUSING DENSITIES, TYPES, AND COSTS TO MEET THE DEMAND OF AN EXPANDING AND DIVERSE POPULATION.
- TO LOCATE AND DETERMINE APPROPRIATENESS OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYMENT AREAS, COMMERCIAL CENTERS, PARKS, UTILITIES, ACCESS, TRANSIT, DESIGN, AND THE ENVIRONMENT.
- TO ENCOURAGE A MIX OF COMPATIBLE HOUSING TYPES AND DESIGNS WITHIN LARGE SCALE RESIDENTIAL AND/OR NONRESIDENTIAL MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS.
- TO ENCOURAGE HIGHER DENSITIES ALONG EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRANSIT CORRIDORS.
- TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES IN AND AROUND NEIGHBORHOODS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A MIX OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORIENTED RETAIL AND SERVICE USES THAT ARE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
- TO MINIMIZE CONFLICTS BETWEEN INCOMPATIBLE LAND USES.

A balanced land use pattern provides opportunities for a mix of commercial, employment, residential, and open space uses. With the exception of open space, each of these categories is discussed, and policies and recommendations that apply to all the districts are included in this section. Parks and open spaces are discussed later in the Livability section. Specific application of the general policies occurs in the individual district plans.

MIXED USE AND COMMERCIAL CENTERS

As envisioned in the 2005 Plan, clearly identifiable and integrated centers of activity and intensity should occur throughout the developing areas of the county to organize or give structure to the overall land use pattern. Instead of perpetrating characterless sprawl and strip development as seen in the past, promoting urban centers will focus a mix of land uses at appropriate locations throughout each district.

There are four basic classifications of mixed use and commercial centers, each having a different function and size. The mixed use centers should consist of an equal square footage mix of office and retail development; a plan submitted for rezoning should maintain this office/retail mix to be considered for approval. Multi-family or high density single family units should also be incorporated into the development design. To focus development and discourage strip development, the centers should generally be located on one quadrant of an intersection. Larger developments, however, may extend beyond a single quadrant using design as a means of visually linking center components.

A variety of mixed use and commercial centers either exists or is planned in the districts. A description of each type and general development and design criteria for each follow and are summarized on Table 2.

Regional Mixed Use Center (2,000,000 sq. ft. retail/office)

A regional mixed use center generally has a mix of retail, office, service, and high density residential development. Typically the square footage of nonresidential uses is approximately 2,000,000 square feet. The retail component consists of a mall or complexes of stores that have major department stores as anchor tenants. The type of office development ranges from high-rise corporate to the lower rise incubator or condominium type offices. Examples of existing centers in Mecklenburg County are the Eastland and Southpark Mall areas.

Because of the large market areas for regional mixed use centers, relatively few centers will develop throughout the county. So long as needs are met, a regional center can negate the need for centers of lesser intensity. Spacing centers at appropriate distances from one another and access are key factors in locating regional center sites. Good access via major thoroughfares is essential. Ready access to an interstate is most desirable to provide the regional transportation link to outlying counties.

To the greatest extent possible, regional centers should also have an integrated design scheme. In the past regional sized centers have evolved over time, each component designed as a separate entity with little integration between the different uses. This piece meal development approach is partly attributed to the fact that one developer rarely maintains control over the entire center because of the magnitude of properties involved. Even with separate developers, a

center can create an overall identity or image through the use of various design features such as consistent streetscape plantings, open spaces that connect one development to another, similar sign designs and dimensions, interconnecting pedestrian paths, or shared access and parking.

Design quality and environmental impacts should be heavily weighed in the decisions for approving regional centers. In the relatively undeveloped areas of the county, the opportunity exists to create truly unique centers versus an agglomeration of separate uses located in proximity to one other. Because of its size, the regional center will have a most significant impact on the overall image of the districts; it will set the tone for development that will follow.

Finally, a regional center may exceed the 2,000,000 square foot nonresidential maximum if:

- Unique locational features related to the market area or regional accessibility are present.

- Special provisions for transit options are included.

Community Mixed Use Centers (1,000,000 sq. ft. retail/office)

As with the regional center, a community mixed use center consists of a mix of retail, service, office, and higher density residential development. However, it is half the size of a regional center - 1,000,000 square feet of nonresidential development. Typically a shopping center is the focal point of the development. Large general merchandise stores and large scale supermarkets are the likely principal tenants. Medical complexes, low to mid-rise corporate offices, banks, or insurance companies are examples of the office types attracted to such locations. The Freedom Mall or Park Road Shopping Center areas typify community-sized centers in existence in the county.

Because of their scaled down market area in relationship to regional centers, several community mixed use centers should develop within each district. Access again is extremely important in locating these centers. They must be located on major thoroughfares, generally at the intersection of two. An integrated design theme is also desirable for the centers, and may be more easily achieved than with a regional center, because fewer land holders will likely be involved.

Neighborhood Mixed Use Centers (250,000 sq. ft. retail/office)

Neighborhood mixed use centers contain up to 250,000 square feet of nonresidential development. A shopping center with a supermarket, small shops, and a restaurant generally comprises the retail component, while the office uses typically are low rise medical and other service-oriented offices such as a bank. In some instances where the office market cannot be supported at a location, up to 20% of the office space may be substituted with multi-family units. (This is true only for a neighborhood center.) Town Center Shopping Center at

the intersection of Hwy. 49 and Harris Boulevard is an example of such a center.

Access onto a major thoroughfare is required for a neighborhood center, and the center should be located on only one quadrant of an intersection of two major thoroughfares. Also, unified development design is very achievable at this scale and should be pursued.

Neighborhood Convenience Centers (50,000 sq. ft. retail)

The smallest type of center proposed is the neighborhood convenience center. The purpose of these centers is for the sale of convenience goods to meet the daily needs of the immediate neighborhood. Goods may include food, drugs, sundries and/or personal services such as cleaners, barber and beauty shops, or shoe repair. A neighborhood convenience center should provide services for residents within a one to two mile radius and contain a maximum of 50,000 square feet of retail space. Each center should be located on one corner of a major intersection and should be an integrated development having a common design theme. Preferably, it should be designed in conjunction with an adjacent multi-family project.

TABLE 2 MIXED USE AND COMMERCIAL CENTERS

CENTER TYPE	SQUARE FOOTAGE	SERVICE AREA	TYPICAL RETAIL/ SERVICE FUNCTION	TYPICAL OFFICE FUNCTION	EXISTING EXAMPLES
Regional Mixed Use Center	Up to 2 000 000 sq ft retail/ office	25 Miles	Large shopping malls and/or complexes restaurants hotels banks etc	Corporate headquarters, incubator offices medical centers	SouthPark Area Eastland Area University Place Area
Community Mixed Use Center	Up to 1 000 000 sq ft retail/ office	10 Miles	Shopping centers or complexes containing general merchandise stores, full service supermarkets banks restaurants	Medical complexes, corporate offices	Park Road Shopping Cente Area Freedom Mall Area
Neighborhood Mixed Use Center	Up to 250,000 sq ft retail/ office	5 Miles	Shopping center with convenience goods supermarket, restaurant, bank	Small medical real estate, or insurance offices	Costwald Mall Area
Neighborhood Convenience Center	Up to 50,000 sq ft	1 Mile	Small supermarket dry cleaners and other personal services gas station	None	Quail Corners Shopping Center

MIXED USE AND COMMERCIAL CENTER DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- The site should be located at the intersection of two major thoroughfares Neighborhood convenience centers can be located at the intersection of a minor and major thoroughfare
- Driveway cuts should be limited in number If out parcels are included, interior access to them should be designed within the development
- Clearly defined circulation drives which connect parking and service areas should be designed Parking should generally not be permitted on these drives
- Parking and service areas should be screened, and interior site and parking lot landscaping provided Plant material should be a mixture of evergreens and deciduous trees shrubs and it should be of a size when planted that will create an immediate effect
- Parking should not be located within the setback
- A minimum 50 foot buffer should be provided between adjacent residential development This can be reduced on infill sites with the use of a solid wall or fence and landscaping on the exterior of the wall or fence
- A minimum landscaped buffer of 20 feet should be developed across from a residential zone
- Building design should reflect a compatible relationship to adjacent residential development
- Pedestrian access should be provided to link the center with adjacent neighborhoods
- A uniform sign plan should be designed for the overall development including signs for outparcels

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Having employment opportunities within each planning district is essential for balanced growth in Mecklenburg County. Employment will be a catalyst for residential growth in developing areas of the county. This has been the case in the northeast area, for example. When the University Research Park first opened, housing opportunities in the immediate area were limited. Employees consequently travelled on congested roads to other parts of the community to live. Within a few short years, however, neighborhoods have been developing in the northeast. The district is becoming a fairly self contained community where people can live, work, shop, and recreate in relatively close proximity. In an increasingly time conscious society, convenience becomes a driving force for shortening home to work driving distances. Also, reduced travel distances contribute significantly to a more efficient traffic situation.

The success of the northeast should be duplicated in other areas of the county. It's important, though, to ensure a variety of employment opportunities. In otherwords, light and heavy industrial, offices and business parks should be encouraged to locate within each district providing employment for people having varying skill levels and education. This will also broaden the economic base of the community.

Future employment cores are identified specifically for each planning district. Existing employment areas are assessed as well, and in some instances redevelopment strategies are proposed. General policies and development criteria related to employment growth are:

- Employment areas should have good accessibility via major thoroughfares. Access to the interstates or the proposed outerbelt should also be important in locating an employment center. Proximity to rail lines is another factor in locating manufacturing and distribution industries.

- Public transit should be accessible or have a future potential in the area.

- The location and intensity of employment areas should not adversely impact environmental quality or traffic volumes in residential neighborhoods.

- Public water and sewer should be provided in the area.

- Good edge relationships between the nonresidential development and neighborhoods should be the responsibility of the nonresidential developer. A landscaped buffer should be provided, and berms and walls are encouraged.

- Employment areas should be located within easy commuting distance to residential areas where the potential labor force exists.

RESIDENTIAL FUTURE

Changes on the Horizon

As new residential development and consequently new neighborhoods take shape in the future, it will be vital to the stability and livability of the community to broaden the range of housing options within each planning district. Providing opportunities for a range of densities and housing types and designs will accommodate the great variety of preferences and income levels of consumers in the local housing market.

The 2005 Plan projects that between 1985 and 2005 the population of Mecklenburg County will increase by 128,387 people, and the number of new households, a key indicator of housing demand, will increase by 52,317 households. A January, 1989 economic analysis (Economic Assessment and Projects for Uptown Charlotte "by Alfred Stewart, and James Clay and Associates") indicates that economic growth has been occurring at a faster rate than projected in the 2005 Plan (2.5% vs. 2.1%).

With faster economic growth than earlier projected, the housing demand will likely increase over the 2005 projections as well. The driving forces of change associated with an expanding population and employment base will directly affect the residential development pattern in the future. These forces are

- **Economics/Land Values**: As the demand for housing increases and land purchases become more competitive in the future, the outcome will be higher land and housing costs. Consequently, density will play an increasingly important role in providing housing for residents. It will be much more costly in the future to build homes on large lots. Higher density development will become more attractive for an increasingly larger number of residents. This however, does not imply that larger lot development will not remain a desirable option for a sector of the population.

- **Social Trends**: Recent and predicted societal changes will affect the future housing market and development pattern. Demographers point to several assumptions about society in general:

  - The "over-60" population is increasing and will be at its peak in the early 21st century.

  - An increasing proportion of the "under-35" age group is choosing not to marry and/or not to have children.

  - The average household size continues to decline. The traditional family is no longer the single predominant lifestyle. For example, the number of single parents with children is rising.

Considering these changing societal trends, the community must respond to the various housing needs of such a diverse population. The typical single family home with yard space to maintain will continue as a leading housing choice; however, higher density developments, both single family and multi-family, will become more popular and will provide greater opportunities for affordable housing.

- **Public Interest Values**: Large lot single family development is attractive in and of itself and is certainly appropriate to provide as an option for consumers in the housing market. However, an overall low density development pattern creates problems. A range of densities and housing types within a defined area is important to pursue as an objective for more efficient and cost effective public services. The advantages of a balanced residential mix related to the public interest are that it:

  - Creates an opportunity for neighborhoods to have a mix of income levels and in turn, greater availability of workers for close-by employment.

  - Fosters a more efficient transportation network and supports public transit options.

  - Provides a broader patronage for shopping centers and community services.

  - Creates an economy of scale for paying for utilities and other public services.

  - Offers visual variety for the community.

Considering the forces of change, the district plans provide the framework for diverse residential growth in the future. The objectives of the plans are first to preserve established single family neighborhood character and densities, and second, to guide new housing of appropriate densities and design to appropriate locations throughout each planning district.

NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION

Charlotte's image is very much tied to its neighborhoods. Whether in the inner city or on its periphery, attractive, stable neighborhoods prevail. As growth occurs in all the districts in the county, planning efforts must remain sensitive to balancing the need to intensify as the community becomes more urban with the need to protect existing neighborhood character.

Each district plan identifies stable neighborhoods that should not experience zoning intensification in the future. In some instances, rezonings are recommended in the plans to ensure that the zoning is consistent with the land use. Boundaries that delineate neighborhood protection areas are shown on the land use maps for the districts. The

use of neighborhood protection boundaries does not imply, however, that all neighborhoods will be delineated on the maps. Generally, the boundaries apply only to single family neighborhoods that have little vacant land for infill development and where the long term viability of the area as developed is good considering urban pressures.

Establishing historic or conservation districts should continue to be pursued as a mechanism for reinforcing the design considerations in certain neighborhoods. The use of a design review overlay district (as opposed to a standard district) should also be pursued as a tool for protecting neighborhood character.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

With rising land costs and increasing demand for quality housing closer into the central city, infill housing has become and will continue to be an attractive alternative to developing farther out in the county. For the purposes of this discussion, infill refers to the construction of high density single family or multi-family housing on land, typically two or more acres in size, which is principally surrounded by existing structures. Not only does infill development benefit the community by providing new urban housing opportunities, it also lessens the public burden of providing new infrastructure and services because the roads, utilities, sidewalks, transit routes, police and fire service, etc. are already in place and may be under capacity

Each district plan identifies general areas where infill development may occur. Most locations exist in the Central District, but there are some opportunities in developed portions of other districts as well. Typically appropriate infill sites are on the edges of neighborhoods or along interior major arterials where transitional development has occurred or is likely to occur because the viability of maintaining the established single family character has been significantly reduced. This situation exists, for example, in several locations where increasing traffic volumes or road widenings on major arterials have dramatically changed the character of the street, where older large homes have been converted to apartments or other uses, and where zoning and land uses conflict exist. The potential for infill development also exists in older commercial areas on the fringes of the uptown.

As stated earlier, infill housing of greater densities than existing zoning permits should not occur within established, stable neighborhoods identified for preservation. The neighborhood fabric and housing stock is too valuable of a community asset to lose to redevelopment. The construction of single family homes on vacant lots in stable neighborhoods should continue.

In areas that aren't designated for neighborhood preservation and where higher density infill development is appropriate, design compatibility with adjacent properties and the streetscape in general is key. This does not imply that infill housing should be the same as surrounding development, but rather it should blend with it. Design elements that should be considered when developing infill housing are:

- setbacks and side and rear yard relationships
- building scale, height, bulk, and orientation in relationships to the established streetscape and to adjoining properties
- parking area and entrance drive locations, particularly onto residential streets
- open space distribution
- landscaping and screening
- architectural details
- dumpsters and service area
- lighting

Currently there are no policy guidelines or standards established for infill development besides the basic regulations in the zoning ordinance that apply to all development. Specific guidelines and graphic illustrations should be provided to those involved in infill projects. As will be discussed in the following section on new multi-family housing in developing areas, a design manual should be completed by the planning staff to address design criteria for higher density development including a separate and distinct section on design of infill projects.

Adopting guidelines for infill development will be an important step towards encouraging quality infill projects in the future. As the community grows and changes, there must be opportunities welcomed for sensitively designed infill projects to provide the diversity of housing choices needed for a truly urban environment. As experienced in other urban areas throughout the country, single family neighborhoods can coexist harmoniously adjacent to more dense infill development. In fact, the dynamics created by intensification in some areas can be very positive in terms of establishing a pedestrian character and a community focus that did not previously exist.

In summary, infill development should be encouraged at appropriate locations more so than in the past, and design quality and compatibility should play a major role in its acceptance and support by the community. Typically infill should be allowed through the conditional zoning process with the design guidelines used as a consideration for approval.

NEW RESIDENTIAL GROWTH IN DEVELOPING AREAS

The underlying premises for new residential development are that a variety of densities and housing types should be provided throughout the community, and that the quality, compatibility, and general appropriateness of new development are a collective function of density, housing type, location and design. These elements are explained below:

- **Density**: Density is often used as the determining factor for residential land use planning. It is a measure of the designed development capacity of an area and is represented by dwelling units per acre (d.u.a.). Traditionally, single family housing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has developed at relatively low densities.

The predominant density range for existing neighborhoods in the newer, developing areas of the community has been between 2.5 to 3.5 units per acre. Neighborhoods closer into the Uptown typically were built at slightly higher densities. Multi-family development has occurred at various densities throughout the community.

- **Housing Type**: The type of housing built should be considered along with density as land use decisions are made. For example, the impact of a three-story complex is typically greater than that of a town house development, particularly as it relates to existing neighborhoods. There are several housing types existing today, and others may arise in the future to respond to changing markets.

- **Location**: The appropriate density and housing type of a development depend, to a great extent, on the location. Relationships to roads, parks, schools, commercial and employment centers, and public transit lines have a significant bearing on the desired project intensity. For example, higher density multi-family development is encouraged at intersections of major thoroughfares, adjacent to commercial or employment centers, and/or close to parks. In contrast, single family homes are most appropriate where accessibility and services are more limited.

- **Design**: The final, but equally important element for determining appropriateness of development is design. Two developments of equal size and density can have two totally different effects; one can be very attractive, and the other unsightly. It's the site and project design - the building/open space relationships, circulation and parking design, use of natural site features, landscaping and buffers, etc. - that translate into quality of development.

Considering the elements described and the changes on the horizon for housing demand in an urban economy, the policies for new residential growth in the developing areas of the county are as follows:

SINGLE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

- **Base Density: 4 d.u.a.**

Because Charlotte-Mecklenburg will become more urban, and to provide greater flexibility for affordable housing as land costs rise, a base, by-right density of 4 d.u.a. should be applied to the majority of the county within the urban core. (The urban core is defined as the portion of the county that directly relates to the Central City). This policy does not preclude development from occurring at lower densities. It simply provides the opportunity for moderate density housing to be built. Higher densities should be permitted within the areas designated for 4 d.u.a. development subject to rezonings. (Higher density policies and guidelines will be explained shortly.)

Although a 4 d.u.a. by right density is recommended as the norm for the county, there are some exceptions as described below:

- **Maximum Density: 1 D.U.A.**:

  In areas where environmental protection is necessary, access is very poor, or where historic or significant rural qualities prevail, the maximum density should be 1 dwelling unit per acre. For environmental reasons, the density could even be lower. Because of the desired overall urban pattern for the county, this maximum density should be applied very selectively and with strong justification. It would not be appropriate within the urban core. Clustering units or using engineering devices to mitigate environmental problems should be given consideration to provide some flexibility within areas designated for the 1 d.u.a. density.

- **Base Density: 3 D.U.A.**:

  In limited locations in the outlying areas of the county, a base density of 3 d.u.a. should be applied. Lower and higher densities may occur; however, higher densities would require a rezoning. This base density is appropriate in areas not directly in Charlotte's perceived sphere of influence. Some areas relate more to the smaller towns in and around the county; they are not in locations where urban growth would be a natural outward progression from Charlotte, but rather are under a regional suburban influence. Again, the 3 d.u.a. density will have limited application.

- **Single Family Densities Greater than 4 D.U.A.**·

In areas designated with base densities of 3 and 4 d.u.a., higher density single family developments should not be precluded. To build higher density single-family housing, however, a rezoning would be required. Considerations for rezoning are as follows:

- **Water and Sewer**: Water and sewer services should be provided on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utility Department (CMUD) system. If a private system is used, the service lines should be sized to CMUD standards to allow for a future connection with CMUD's lines.

- **Open Space**: As densities rise, common open space should be provided in the development. Clustering units to create open space amenities is encouraged. Close proximity to public open spaces may mitigate the need for private common open spaces.

- **Amenities**: Sidewalks, street trees, curb and gutter, and ample right-of-way for on-street parking should generally be provided as they would be for less dense developments.

- **Compatibility**· The development should blend with adjacent, lower density developments. This may necessitate increasing yards at the development boundaries or having a transition of densities

moving from lower densities on a project edge to higher densities further away from the existing development. This should only be a concern where there is a considerable difference between two developments relative to density. For example, if a development is proposed at 8 d.u.a. and is located adjacent to a 3 d.u.a. subdivision, compatibility at the projects edges should be addressed.

MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

It is important to continue to allow opportunities for multi-family development throughout the county. An increasing number of people either choose not to or are not able to afford to live in single family homes.

Often there is considerable neighborhood opposition to higher density housing. The success and compatibility of higher densities depend upon the interrelationships between density, housing type, location, and design. Appropriate design standards should be developed to ensure compatibility between single family and multi-family development.

Locations of future multi-family developments are generally not identified in the district plans. The plans only identify existing development, areas appropriately zoned for multi-family but vacant, or potential sites that are obvious and most desirable for multi-family housing rather than a nonresidential use. For example, a triangle of land formed between three major thoroughfares may be an obviously good location for multi-family, as might land adjacent to a large park; therefore, these obvious sites are designated on the land use maps.

A premise of the district plans is that the private market should be given the flexibility to determine specific locations of multi-family housing in developing areas subject to rezonings that are based upon objective development principles. To guide developers in choosing appropriate project locations and to facilitate consistent and objective assessment of multi-family projects by staff, Planning Commission, and elected officials, the following criteria related to density, housing type, and location of multi-family housing should be considered during the rezoning process.

Desirable density ranges for various housing types are indicated on Table 3. The densities are based upon an analysis of existing developments considering average-sized units, parking requirements, and adequate open space and buffers. Generally when a development of a certain housing type exceeds the desirable density maximum, there is a trade off with open space and good site design. This is not always the case, however. Most developments should fall within the desirable ranges, but there must be flexibility allowed to accommodate the unique circumstances and design of each development. Therefore, higher or lower densities than reflected on the table should not be ruled out.

TABLE 3: HOUSING TYPES/DESIRED DENSITIES

HOUSING TYPE	DESIRED DENSITY RANGE
Attached Single Family	8-12 d.u.a.
Two Story Flat	12-17 d.u.a.
Three Story Flat	17-25 d.u.a. with surface parking
	25+ d.u.a. with parking structure
Mid Rise (4-7 stories)	25+
High Rise (over 7 stories)	25+

In addition to Table 3 a matrix of locational criteria is provided in an attempt to quantify the appropriateness of various densities and locations of multi-family proposals. The matrix (Table 4) will essentially serve as a checklist for projects in the developing areas of the community.

Density categories are listed horizontally on the table, and the criteria are listed vertically. A column is provided under each category to rate projects. The maximum potential points (from 0-6) that a project of a certain density can achieve are listed in each column.

The potential points are weighted values based upon degree of importance in meeting the objectives of the district plans. For example, a project having 16 units per acre will obtain six (6) points for being located at the intersection of two major thoroughfares, while one (1) point if located on a collector street. Implied with this is that higher density developments are better located where access is good. In contrast, a project having only 8 units per acre can function well on a minor thoroughfare and is consequently given a value of five (5) points. That same development located at the intersection of two major thoroughfares would obtain only three (3) points because higher densities are desired at major intersections.

TABLE 4
LOCATIONAL & SERVICE LEVEL
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING
REZONING CASES FOR
HIGHER DENSITIES IN
DEVELOPING AREAS
OF THE COUNTY

MPP = Maximum Possible Points

LOCATIONAL AND SERVICE LEVEL CRITERIA CATEGORY / CRITERIA FOR REVIEW OF PROJECT	DENSITY UP TO 8 d u MPP	UP TO 12 d u MPP	UP TO 17 d u MPP	UP TO 25 d u MPP	OVER 25 d u MPP
ACCESS					
Primary access from					
- Major thoroughfare	4	5	6	6	6
- Minor thoroughfare	6	6	5	4	3
- Two major thoroughfares or a major and minor thoroughfare (intersection)	4	5	6	6	6
- Collector street	6	3	2	1	0
PROXIMITY TO EXISTING OR PROPOSED COMMERCIAL CENTER					
- Adjacent to center	3	5	6	6	6
- Within approximately 1/4 mile of neighborhood convenience center or larger	3	4	5	5	4
- Within approximately 1/2 mile of neighborhood convenience center or larger	2	2	2	1	1
PROXIMITY TO EXISTING OR PROPOSED LARGE EMPLOYMENT CONCENTRATION					
- Adjacent to concentration	3	5	6	6	6
- Within approximately 1/4 mile of concentration	3	4	5	5	4
- Within approximately 1/2 mile of concentration	2	2	2	1	1
TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES					
- Within approximately 1/4 mile of a proposed light rail line and/or existing or potential future bus line	2	2	3	4	4
UTILITIES AVAILABLE					
CMUD service	3	3	3	3	3
Private system with lines sized to CMUD standards	2	2	2		
Private system not sized to CMUD line standards	0	0	0	0	0
PROXIMITY TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS					
Adjacent to or across from park	1	2	2	3	3
- Within 1/4 mile of park	1	2	2	2	2
- Adjacent to greenway	1	1	1	1	
Project Point Total					
Recommended Minimum Points for Approval*	10	12	14	16	17

*At least one point of the total must be from the access category

A recommended minimum number of points for each density category is listed at the bottom of each column. Space is provided next the minimum number to total the number of points accumulated for a particular development proposal. The degree to which a project meets, exceeds, or falls short of the desired minimum will help guide decisions on whether a development should be approved. There may be factors such as road capacity that may be so affected by a project otherwise viewed as appropriate by the location criteria, that the project may not be desirable. This will be determined on a case by case basis.

After a development proposal is determined to be at a good location for multi-family housing, the next step is to assess the design quality of the project. A design manual for multi-family housing should be produced which would include absolute criteria relating to specific zoning requirements and performance criteria such as the following·

- open space distribution and use
- relationships to adjacent properties and streetscape
- building orientation
- pedestrian and vehicular circulation
- landscaping and tree preservation
- parking lot and service area design
- use of existing topography and other natural features of the site

Currently staff works with developers to address performance criteria, but there is no reference guide for developers or planners to use in designing and reviewing plans. A design manual similar in nature to the one for the area zoned UMUD, would be used as a checklist for assessing projects. A rating system similar to the one for locational criteria could be incorporated into the manual. The manual would also graphically illustrate the various design objectives. Completing this design manual should be a top priority for the planning staff.

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS

Integrated, planned developments are encouraged in Mecklenburg County. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of commercial centers, residential development should be included as a component of the mixed use projects. Typically higher density development should occur to take advantage of the proximity of services and good access.

There should also be residential mixed use developments in which a variety of housing types and densities would be integrated within a single development plan. Developers of large scale projects (500+ units) should pursue a mixed use concept, and the project should be reviewed considering the following in addition to the criteria already discussed for higher density single and multi-family development

- Some units should be clustered to create meaningful open spaces.

- A variety of housing types should be included.

- Open spaces should be linked throughout the development.
- Design relationships and continuity should be emphasized between housing types.
- Pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems between the various components of the development should be interconnected.

DENSITY ALONG RAIL CORRIDORS

For a light or heavy rail transit system to be feasible in the future, residential development on vacant or redeveloped land within a quarter mile of a proposed corridor should be built at a density from 8-10 dwelling units per acre. (A quarter mile is considered acceptable walking distance). Development surrounding proposed light rail stations should exceed 10 d.u.a. to support the transit system.

Basing land use decisions such as increased density upon the possibility of a light rail system may have implications in the future if the transit system is never built. Consequently, the decision to seriously pursue or not pursue a rail system should be made in the near future. The update of the 2005 plan, scheduled to begin in 1990-91, will focus on the transit rail issue. (A more in depth discussion of a transit rail potential occurs in the transportation section of this plan on page 30.)

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS FOR THE LAND USE PLAN

- **ADHERENCE TO PLAN POLICIES**

Consistent application and support of the policies of this plan by the elected officials will be the most significant means of ensuring that the desired land use pattern will evolve. Although some deviations may be necessary at time, they should be kept to a minimum. Changes made in one area may necessitate changes elsewhere, thus affecting the overall development pattern.

- **DEVELOPMENT ENTERPRISE AREAS (DEA's)**

The success of the land use recommendations in each plan will, to an extent, depend upon actual market interest in some of the areas described. The Development Enterprise Area (DEA) concept evolved from the 2005 Plan as a means of redirecting growth to certain locations throughout the county, locations where market interest is low. The DEA's would essentially be areas where public investment and/or planning would be focused as a catalyst for activity. The DEA's could range from 500 acres or more in size and could be predominantly employment, residentially, or mixed use based in nature. The task for each district plan is to define the specific boundaries of the DEA's proposed in the 2005 Plan.

o **USE INTENSIFICATION:**

In considering any rezoning petition to reclassify property, the following should be considered:

- Whether the proposed reclassification is consistent with the purposes, goals, objectives, and policies of the adopted Generalized Land Plan and any adopted district or area plans covering the subject property;

- Whether the proposed reclassification blends with the overall character of existing development in the immediate vicinity of the subject property;

- Whether the proposed reclassification will have an adverse effect on the value of adjacent properties;

- Whether adequate public facilities and services intended to serve the subject property, including but not limited to roadways, parks and recreational facilities, police and fire protection, hospitals and medical services, schools, stormwater drainage systems, water supplies, and wastewater and refuse disposal are provided; and

- Whether the proposed reclassification will adversely affect a known archaeological, historical, or cultural resource.

o **ESTABLISHING A BASE BY-RIGHT DENSITY OF 4 D.U.A.**

To establish a base by-right single family density of 4 d.u.a. in areas designated for such density on the district plan land use maps, undeveloped property in designated areas should be rezoned to allow development to occur by-right at 4 d.u.a. The current zoning ordinance does not have a zoning district that has a maximum density of exactly 4 d.u.a. The proposed zoning ordinances does. Until the new ordinance is adopted, the private sector is encouraged to request for upzoning property in designated areas on a case by case basis. The district plans would be used to strongly support increased single family densities.

If the new zoning ordinance is adopted with an R-4 category, the Planning Commission will then initiate rezoning undeveloped areas designated for a 4 d.u.a. base density to the R-4 category. If the ordinance is not adopted with new districts as recommended, Planning Commission will initiate rezonings to a zoning district that will most closely implement the land use policy of establishing 4 d.u.a. as the base by-right density.

o **CORRECTIVE REZONINGS:**

In some instances the existing zoning and the proposed or existing land use on a site conflict. For example, an area may be developed with single family homes, but commercial or multi-family zoning may be in place. Consequently, the neighborhood is subject to demise if the single family homes begin to turn over. For the past ten years the

Planning Commission has pursued corrective rezonings as part of the area planning process to rectify the land use/zoning conflicts.

As part of the district planning process, some corrective rezonings are recommended. In areas of a district where considerable analysis of a zoning pattern is needed, a small area plan has been proposed to address the potential zoning conflicts. These area plans will be a follow up to the district plans. In other areas where a full plan is not needed to address the zoning, but where some land use/zoning conflicts exist, the district plans recommend the specific rezoning. The Planning Commission will then initiate the rezonings following adoption of the plans.

o **ZONING ORDINANCE CHANGES**

The 2005 Plan recommended that the City and County Zoning Ordinances be revised to create a series of new zoning districts and to revise the rezoning process as a means of implementing the goals and objectives of the plan. For the last several years staff, in conjunction with a consultant, has been preparing a draft ordinance. Considerable citizen input has been included in the rewrite process.

In addition to providing improved design standards, the new ordinance converts the existing zoning district categories to new categories based upon maximum density rather than maximum lot size permitted. New classifications for mixed use and commercial centers are also proposed. Following adoption of the new zoning ordinance, each district plan will be reviewed, and all zoning conversions based upon comparable reclassification will be proposed. A 1990 adoption date is expected.

Adopting a new ordinance with new zoning districts will be one of the most important steps the community can take towards implementing the policies of the district plans.

o **MULTI-FAMILY AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN GUIDELINES**

As discussed in the residential section, the planning staff should produce a design manual that includes specific design guidelines and regulations for multi-family and infill development.

INFRASTRUCTURE

OBJECTIVES:

- **TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT TO OCCUR IN A LOGICAL, CONTIGUOUS MANNER IN WHICH PUBLIC SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME PERIOD.**
- **TO DEVELOP A NETWORK OF ROADS THAT PROVIDES CONVENIENT, EFFICIENT, AND SAFE ACCESS THROUGHOUT MECKLENBURG COUNTY.**
- **TO ESTABLISH A MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM FROM UPTOWN CHARLOTTE TO LOCATIONS WITHIN EACH DISTRICT.**
- **TO PROVIDE AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM OF SIDEWALKS THROUGHOUT THE CITY AND COUNTY TO ACCOMMODATE AND ENCOURAGE PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL.**
- **TO HAVE ULTIMATELY ONE UNIFIED PUBLIC SYSTEM OF WATER AND SEWER SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY, THEREFORE ELIMINATING PACKAGE TREATMENT PLANTS.**
- **TO PROVIDE PUBLIC WATER AND SEWER SERVICE IN ALL BASINS, COORDINATING WITH OTHER COUNTIES FOR SEWAGE TREATMENT IN DRAINAGE BASINS THAT FLOW INTO THOSE COUNTIES.**

Providing the public infrastructure to accommodate growth is a crucial goal for the district plans. Unfortunately, the great expense of providing public improvements coupled with the reality of limited resources necessitates scheduling construction of projects over an extended period of time. Consequently, the problem continually surfaces of how to deal with development in advance of scheduled improvements. This is one of the most difficult challenges facing the community.

Identified within each district plan are recommendations for road improvements, mass transit, sidewalks, and sewer and water extensions and facilities needed to accommodate the envisioned land use future. Proposed time schedules are also included. The generic policies that apply to all infrastructure planning begin on the following page; some of these policy statements reflect desired rather than current policy. Additional public processes such as the alternative revenue study and package treatment plant study will develop specific recommendations for desired policy. Until new policies are approved many of the policies in this plan can only be used as guidelines not enforceable as a condition of approval for rezonings or subdivision. Adherence to the policies, however, will greatly enhance chances for approval.

ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Establishing a good transportation network in Mecklenburg County has been one of the top priorities of the community in recent years. In 1989 the 2005 Transportation Plan was adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The plan identifies new roads and improvements to existing ones based upon projected population and land use changes in the future. The district plans support the transportation plan recommendations and also identify additional road needs for a built-out land use pattern.

The policies and implementation strategies proposed in this plan to support transportation planning are:

Policies:

- Thoroughfares identified on the official thoroughfare map should be protected from development by reservation, dedication, or transitional setback at the time a subdivision plat is viewed and approved. Other transportation improvements requiring additional right-of-way should be provided for in the same manner.

- In the case of a conditional rezoning petition, transportation improvements necessitated by the proposed development and abutting the site should be at least partially provided by the petitioner Generally, if the improvement solely benefits the proposed development it should be provided by the developer. If the improvement has off-site benefits, it may be jointly provided by the City/County and the petitioner.

- When only a building permit is necessary for development to proceed, such a permit should be conditional upon the provision of adequate access to and within the project, excluding the provision of off-site improvements not immediately adjacent to the project.

- Pursue a regional transportation system that extends to adjacent counties.

Implementation Strategies:

- Require phasing of developments to coincide with the completion of road improvements affecting the development.

- The County should continue to pursue legislation that would enable it to take a direct role in funding and building roads.

- Consider the use of a variety of alternative means to supplement public funding of road improvements.

- Establish a regional intergovernmental task force or authority to coordinate and plan for a regional transportation network. The various transportation - related City and County Departments should be involved and closely coordinated with efforts in regional planning

PUBLIC TRANSIT

As Charlotte-Mecklenburg's and the region's populations expand in the 21st century, a stronger public transportation system will be needed to alleviate traffic and air quality problems. If not, the private auto with its typical single occupant commuter will eventually overload the highway system, as already evidenced in some areas of the community. Roads can never be widened enough to accommodate the traffic projections of the future. An alternative must be pursued.

The 2005 Generalized Land Plan recommends that a rail transit system be established in Mecklenburg County. In June, 1989 the Charlotte Transit Corridors Study was released by the Charlotte Department of Transportation. The purpose of the study was to determine the feasibility of light rail transit, the transit lines that should be considered, a rough cost estimate for constructing and operating a system, and bus system expansion. In the plan, a light rail transit and bus system is analyzed for eight rail corridors. One or more proposed corridors extends into each planning district, in total extending 77 miles throughout the city and county.

A significant conclusion of the study is that regional densities and distribution of future population as proposed in the 2005 Plan do not support the concept of a transit rail line. If the community is serious about establishing a system, higher density development will be needed, particularly along the proposed rail corridors. Decision makers must recognize the density/transit relationship and base land use decisions upon it.

The land use policy of district plan is to encourage higher densities along potential rail corridors, generally within ¼ mile of the corridor. Proposed vicinities of transit stations are identified in each of the district plans. Typically stations are proposed in commercial mixed use centers or employment nodes. Until more advanced planning and design on a system is pursued, though, it is premature to plan for specific sites. The policy and implementation strategies of this plan relative to establishing a transit rail and related bus system are as follows:

Policy:

- Actively pursue a transit rail and expanded bus system for the community and support the rail concept by encouraging higher density development.

Implementation Strategies:

- Planning staff should complete a study of transit rail stations and the land use relationships that should occur around them. One or two corridors should be focused upon as prototypes for transit development. In conjunction with the study, vacant land along the corridor should be assessed to determine the feasibility of increasing densities along the line.

- The Charlotte Department of Transportation should review the feasibility of a light rail system based upon higher employment projections in uptown as a result of the Central Area Design Plan. This will help determine the densities needed in each of the planning districts.

- Update the individual district land use plans when more specific corridor planning has been completed.

- Consider the density/transit relationship when making rezoning decisions. A density from 8-10 d.u.a. within ¼ mile of transit corridors will be needed to support a light rail system.

- Continue to pursue expansions to the existing bus system and the use of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes.

SIDEWALKS

The land use pattern that has evolved in recent years has principally been oriented to the automobile. The pedestrian has been marginally if at all accommodated, only increasing reliance on the auto.

An important policy promoted in the land use section of the general policies is to establish mixed use developments in which housing, employment, and retail opportunities would coexist and be integrated through design. Pedestrian connectivity is envisioned as a significant design element to link the different land uses within the center. However, expanding the pedestrian system beyond the mixed use centers should be actively pursued.

As new roads are built or existing roads widened, sidewalks are often built, but only within the city limits and with City funding. The State nor the county funds and builds walks. Consequently, unless developers constrict walks on major or minor thoroughfares associated with their developments in the county, sidewalks will not be built. Achieving the objective of an interconnecting pedestrian system will be difficult in the county.

There have been steps taken, however, that will provide greater opportunities for more sidewalk construction in the future in the city. In 1988 a revised subdivision ordinance was adopted by elected officials. Included in the revisions was a requirement for developers to construct sidewalks on all residential streets having a width of 40 feet or greater. As a result new neighborhoods will have better pedestrian access than those more recent neighborhoods built prior to the subdivision revisions.

Also new sidewalks are being built in established neighborhoods within city limits. The City of Charlotte Engineering Department has a program underway in which residents of older established neighborhoods can petition for sidewalks along neighborhood streets. Priorities are then set for the sidewalks requested, and a portion of the budget

allocated for sidewalk construction is used to build walks in neighborhoods.

Throughout the city and county, many major and minor thoroughfares lack sidewalks or gaps exist between sidewalk segments. In 1990, the Engineering Department will inventory existing sidewalks along major and minor thoroughfares for the purpose of identifying locations where new walks are needed. Priorities will then be set.

In summary, much of the desire and livability of older neighborhoods closer into uptown stem from the ability of residents to walk to various destinations. People have a safe alternative to the automobile. Greater attention must be given to the pedestrian in the future to provide opportunities for people in newer areas of the community to walk safely along public streets.

Policies:

- Continue to have sidewalks built through the development process.
- Place greater emphasis on sidewalk contruction along major and minor thoroughfares, in particular completing walks where gaps exist.

Implementation Strategies:

- Explore the need to strengthen the subdivision ordinance to require developers to build sidewalks as subdivisions are being developed verses posting bonds for future construction.
- Complete an inventory of sidewalks along all major and minor thoroughfares in the city, set priorities for sidewalk construction that will ultimately result in a system of sidewalks along all major and minor thoroughfares, and provide the funds necessary to complete the system.
- The City of Charlotte should continue to supplement State funds when new roads are built or existing ones widened to build walks in conjunction with road projects.
- Pursue means for the County to fund and construct sidewalks along major and minor thoroughfares when roads are widened or built and/or consider including sidewalk construction along major roads as a requirement for annexation. (Pedestrian paths along greenways may supplant the need for walks in some areas.)

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES:

The intensity and location of development greatly depends upon the availability of water and sewer services. An important objective of this plan is that eventually one unified public utility system should serve the entire county. In the last several years, bonds totaling $57,095,000 have been approved by the citizenry. Consequently, new

drainage basins have been and will continue to be opened for development.

As growth moves further out into the county, the demand for additional services will increase. Specific water and sewer projects needed to implement the land use plans for each district are included in the individual plans. As with the transportation improvements, approximate costs and priorities (timing) of each project are listed.

In recent years, the issue of private utility service has come to the forefront in the community. When public lines have not been extended into areas where developers want to build, the alternatives for the developers are to pay the cost of extending services, often prohibitive because of distances, or to build a private system. Larger lot single family subdivisions often use septic tanks, where soils are adequate, and individual wells. Increasingly, package treatment plants and community wells are used to provide service to developments. The use of private treatment plants in particular is under a considerable amount of public scrutiny.

Currently the State of North Carolina regulates the design and construction of package plants. The State's minimum requirements are less than those that would be required by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utility Department (CMUD). Local authorities have little or no influence on the location and use of the systems. The likely result, which the community is beginning to experience, is a proliferation of private systems being built throughout the county, systems not interconnected or not sized adequately to hook onto the public system when it is eventually constructed. The private plants are operated and monitored by independent contractors.

From environmental and efficiency perspectives, having numerous small systems, each designed, owned, and monitored by separate entities is not in the best interest of the public. On a per gallon basis, the individual plants are more likely to have violations than public plants; this threatens the water quality of the community's streams. Having individual plants is a short-sighted approach to what should be a "big picture" approach to land development.

Considering the objective for a unified public system, the district plans promote the following policies·

Policies:

- Developments other than single-family with septic tanks and wells should be served by public water and sewer systems or in the interim by private community wells and/or package treatment plants in accordance with the following:

  - If developers desire to build before the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utility Department is scheduled to extend services to the area, the developer has the option of extending the lines to service the development or to negotiate with CMUD, under CMUD's reimbursement program.

- In those areas where the cost of extending lines is prohibitive because of the length of the extension or because public treatment plants are not built to serve a basin, a community well and/or package treatment system may be used. However, where a private treatment system is used for any development, sewer lines should meet CMUD standards and should be dedicated to the public system when CMUD is ready to accommodate them. Water transmission lines should also be sized to meet CMUD standards, and the system should be publicly dedicated.

Implementation Strategies:

- To extend public water and sewer services into new areas of the county based upon priorities for leading and redirecting growth.

- Complete and adopt an action plan for addressing issues related to package treatment plants.

  A inter-agency task force has been established to address the issue of package plants and to recommend actions to the elected officials. Some of the alternatives being discussed are:

  - Special State legislation for greater local authority and restrictions.

  - Subdivision and/or Zoning ordinance amendments requiring higher standards for package treatment plants.

  - Public funding of the oversizing of private lines to meet the public system standards.

  - Change in CMUD policy to maintain and consolidate package treatment plants.

  - Staffing needs to increase treatment plant inspection.

- Establish a formal inter-county task force to evaluate opportunities and options for a regional utility system that will serve the needs of the various jurisdictions.

LIVABILITY

OBJECTIVES:

- TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF PARKS AND GREENWAYS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY THAT PROVIDES OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE COUNTY AND THE REGION.
- TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR BICYCLISTS TO RIDE SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY FROM ONE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY TO ANOTHER.
- TO PROVIDE A FULL RANGE OF SCHOOLS AT APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS WITHIN EACH PLANNING DISTRICT.
- TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES INCLUDING CLEAN AIR, WATER QUALITY, STREAMS AND FLOODPLAIN, AND SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS AND VEGETATION.
- TO RECOGNIZE IRREPLACEABLE HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITHIN EACH DISTRICT AND PRESERVE THEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO APPRECIATE.
- TO CREATE ATTRACTIVE AND IDENTIFIABLE STREETSCAPES ALONG CORRIDORS AND AT GATEWAYS THROUGHOUT EACH DISTRICT.
- TO ENSURE THAT QUALITY DEVELOPMENT IS INCORPORATED CONSISTENTLY INTO ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CITY AND COUNTY.

A balanced land use pattern and adequate public services are paramount for a livable community. But to foster a truly appealing environment that will continue to be desirable to inhabit, additional quality of life services and amenities must be included in the overall development scheme of each district.

General policies and implementation strategies related to the objectives for livability are included in this section of the plan, and specific recommendations are included in the individual plans for the districts. Additional livability elements that are unique to a district are also included in those plans.

PARKS

Mecklenburg County will eventually be fully developed. Having ample active and passive recreational spaces woven into the development pattern is a basic public service or amenity that must be planned for before all suitable land is consumed. A Parks Master Plan for the City and County was adopted by the elected officials in November, 1989. Types of parks or recreational facilities programmed in the plan are nature preserves, community, district, and neighborhood parks, as well as recreation centers.

Descriptions of the various park types are as follows:

- **Nature Preserves**: A nature preserve is the largest park facility having a minimum desired size of 1,000 acres. An area for passive outdoor recreation, nature preserves serve the entire community.

- **Community Parks**: Community parks should range from 300-500 acres and have a service area radius of five miles. Both passive and active recreation should be provided, with no less than 50% of the land devoted to undeveloped green space.

- **District Parks**: Ranging from 40 to 200 acres in size and having a 1 to 2-½ mile service radius, district parks are designed with active and passive recreational uses. Examples of the types of active uses that should be located in these parks are: tennis and basketball courts, lighted baseball/softball fields, and soccer fields.

- **Neighborhood Parks**: Neighborhood parks serve the population within a 3/4 to 1 mile radius of them. With safe pedestrian and bike access and intense recreational activities such as field and court games, playground apparatus, and picnicking, neighborhood parks should be a minimum size of 15 acres. In developed areas where land is scarce, these parks may be smaller and classified only as playgrounds.

  The Park Master Plan is not identifying locations for neighborhood parks or playgrounds; this will be done within the individual district plans and small area plans.

GREENWAYS

An interconnecting greenway system along major creeks has been pursued in this county during the last decade. Greenways form a network of naturalized linear parks having pedestrian walks and bike paths and should be accessible through neighborhoods, parks, and school properties.

In 1980, a Greenways Master Plan was adopted by the County that identified creeks for greenway development. An update of this policy plan will be completed in the near future. Land has already been acquired for some greenways throughout the county, and some development has taken place.

The policies and strategies for park and greenway development are

Policies:

- Any land identified for parks or greenways should be publicly dedicated as part of the rezoning process.

- An emphasis should be placed upon establishing a linked system of greenways.

Implementation Strategies:

- o Purchase land for parks and greenways early to offset increasing land costs in accordance with priorities established in the master plan for parks and greenways. (Financial strategies will be discussed as part of the master plans.)

BIKEWAYS

Little attention has been devoted to creating a bikeways network in this community. Because of the favorable climate in the Charlotte area, year-around bicycling is possible, but the opportunities are limited. When fully developed, the County's greenways will provide bike paths, but will not provide a complete bikeways system. Consequently, bicyclists in many areas will continue to be forced to use busy roads that have narrow shoulders. This obviously deters rather than encourages bicycle riding. The policy of this plan addressing this issue is:

Policy:

- o The City and County should jointly pursue developing an interconnecting network of bikeways paths throughout the community.

Implementation Strategy:

- o Prepare and adopt a bikeways master plan for the entire city and county that addresses:
  - creating a network of greenway, on-street, and off-street paths.
  - connecting residential areas with parks, schools, and employment and/or retail centers.
  - expanding sidewalk widths in certain locations to serve a dual pedestrian/bicyclist purpose.
  - establishing tools for financing or implementing the bikeways plan through the CIP and the development process.

SCHOOLS

Planning in advance for new schools is important, particularly for fast growing areas such as the south and northeast. Appropriate land for schools will become harder to find, the cost of land will inevitably climb in the future, and the increasing suburbanization of the community and consequential effects upon pupil distribution and demographics will make student transportation difficult. It will also become increasingly more important for the County to make the optimum use of existing open and closed facilities. During the District Plan process, school planners and land use planners have been working

closely together to determine location and need for schools based upon a built-out land use pattern. Potential locations and needs within each district are described in each district plan.

Table 6. reflects a breakdown of school types and the desired acreage needed to develop schools according to State standards.

Table: 6. School Needs

School Type	Approximate Acreage Required by the State
elementary	17 acres
junior high	32 acres
high school	62 acres

The acreage and design requirements of the State have created some problems for Mecklenburg County school development. Requiring a minimum size of 17 acres for elementary schools negates the concept of an urban school in the inner city. Smaller sites with a multi-level school should be considered as an option in urban areas to lower land acreage needs. (Generally only one story schools are built by the school system.)

On the other hand, the minimum size for high schools is not large enough to accommodate a school and all the associated play fields and parking areas. When large schools are built, such as the new Providence High School in South Mecklenburg, very little if any expansion space is left over, and the site is essentially over built. Changes are needed to the State standards for high school development.

Locational criteria that should be considered when locating schools are listed below.

- High Schools should have good access onto at least one major thoroughfare and another major or minor thoroughfare. Junior highs and elementary schools should have good access onto a minor or major thoroughfare.

- Every attempt should be made to combine elementary and some junior high schools with park development.

- The topography on the site, particularly for high schools, should be relatively flat for parking and associated play fields.

- Public sewer and water should be available to the site.

- The site should not be located in an area of the community where potential hazards are more likely to occur, thus jeopardizing the students' health and safety. For example, a school should not be built adjacent to an industrial area where hazardous materials are stored in large volumes. Noise levels associated with the airport and certain industrial uses should also be a consideration.

- Sites location should facilitate school attendance areas so that benefits and burdens related to student transportation will be equitably shared by all racial groups within the community.

Public policies related to the physical land development of schools in Mecklenburg County are as follows.

Policies:

- Any land identified for schools should be obtained as part of the development process considering dedication, reservation, or condemnation of land, writing down the cost of land, or purchase.

- The most efficient use of land for quality school developments should be pursued, specifically considering the sizes, designs, and acreage needs of schools and the pupil and demographic distribution of the community.

- The optimum use of closed and open schools should be pursued considering ideas such as the creation of midpoint schools and/or adaptive reuse of obsolete schools.

The Board of Education has adopted additional policies relating to population mix and educational needs.

Implementation Strategies.

- Adopt a physical facilities plan for new schools that addresses desired locations relative to the factors of pupil and demographic distribution, attendance impacts with pupil transportation, and physical site features. The plan should include cost estimates and definition of priorities. Priorities will be implemented through the 10 year Capital Needs Program and 5 year Capital Improvements Program.

- Obtain land for future schools as early as possible to offset increasing land costs and to acquire the most desirable sites for locating schools.

- The County should work with the State to address the concerns of school size and design considering the following:

  - smaller sites for urban schools.

  - larger sites for high schools if one story schools continue to be built.

  - the use of multi-leveled schools to reduce acreage need.

  - building a central stadium(s) for sporting events that can be used by several schools rather than by only one to minimize acreage requirements for each school.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Population growth and accompanying industrial, commercial, and residential development affect our environment in ways that may threaten the loss or pollution of our land, air, and water. Public policy makers should address the interrelated factors of the amount of population growth and increased human demands on the area's air, land, and water resources. The issues related to various aspects of environmental quality and policies and strategies are as follows:

- **Air Quality**:

  With an expanding road system and continued increase in the number of automobiles, Mecklenburg County will likely experience some of the same air pollution problems as have other urban areas in the country. Low traffic speeds associated with congestion produce pollutants, in particular carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. The public policies related to this important issue are:

Policies:

- Promote mass transit and encourage higher densities along proposed transit corridors.

- Support an efficient land use pattern that reduces trip distances between work, shopping, and home.

- Continue to improve existing roads, particularly at intersections, to alleviate traffic congestion; however, sensitivity to land use impacts of road improvements should be a significant consideration for road widening decisions.

- **WATER QUALITY/STORM WATER MANAGEMENT**

  - **Watershed**:

    The water quality of streams and lakes in the county is an issue that has come to the forefront of public concern and debate in recent years. Drinking water for the county is obtained from Mt. Island Lake on the Catawba River. The quality of the water today is good; however, with increased runoff and discharges into the lake due to development, the quality is threatened.

    County officials are conducting a study of the watershed which will direct officials in land use and environmental decisions. The results of the eighteen month study are expected to be released in 1990. In the interim, a temporary ordinance limiting development in the Mt. Island Lake watershed has been enacted.

    At some point in time in the future Lake Wylie may be another source of drinking water for the county, and attention should be placed on it as well.

- **Streams and Floodplain**:

  In its natural state the land limits the amount of surface runoff from rainfall and snowmelt. When flooding does occur, it is confined to the natural floodplain of a stream.

  However, when man replaces the natural forest with lawns and impervious surfaces and fills in the natural floodplain, the amount of runoff is increased and flooding is intensified. To drain the additional water the stream increases in velocity. This accelerates erosion of the channel. As a result, man must intervene again and "armor" the channel against the higher water velocities. This usually takes shape in rip rap or concrete which clearly modifies the naturally appearance of the stream channel.

  Also, as discussed earlier, the effects of package treatment plants on streams are of concern and are being studied by the County.

The policies and implementation strategies of this plan addressing the water quality and storm management issues follows.

Policies:

- Protect the quality of existing and potential drinking water sources for the community through land use and/or mechanical means.

- Promote the concept of a single, unified CMUD utility system to minimize the use of package treatment plants.

- Manage stormwater on a system-wide rather than isolated basis, considering off-site influences and impacts.

- Continue to preserve the natural flood plain by preventing or limiting the amount of building on it and by maintaining the flood plain in its near natural state.

- Increase control of soil erosion and sedimentation from land disturbing activities (construction) within a stream's drainage basin.

- Increase control of stormwater runoff and decrease the amount of non-point pollutants that enter the streams from areas of concentrated impervious cover (e.g., streets, parking lots, roofs), or in residential areas where considerable amounts of chemicals are used in yard maintenance.

Implementation Strategies:

- Adopt a watershed management plan for the county.

- Adopt a stormwater management plan that supports strong environmental and aesthetic measures for maintaining streams in addition to functional ones. It should also include the potential for building detention or retention ponds systematically. (The County is currently evaluating several drainage basins and means of controlling flooding. Also, the EPA will be imposing more stringent requirements for storm management in 1990 which will apply to all development.)

- Strengthen regional cooperation with counties and municipalities in the surrounding Catawba River and Pee Dee River Basins, working towards a regional watershed plan.

- Evaluate the Erosion Control Ordinance to identify ways it can be strengthened.

- Increase enforcement of the Erosion Control Ordinance. This may require hiring additional field staff.

- Protect surface and ground water supplies through devices such as stream buffering requirements and strict compliance with ground absorption wastewater treatment system regulations.

- **NATURAL AREAS**

Although Charlotte-Mecklenburg is envisioned as a fully urbanized community in the future, this fact does not imply that natural areas should not be preserved; they should be integrated within the development pattern. There are numerous natural areas in the city and county that have been identified. The Parks Master Plan, as previously discussed, emphasizes preserving large acreages of land to be used as nature preserves. McDowell Park and Reedy Creek Park are designated as such, and the County is pursuing land around Lake Norman as a wildlife preserve. A State Park is also proposed in the northern end of the county.

Establishing greenways along the significant streams in the county is also a means of preserving natural areas. Creating these public open spaces is the most practical means of preserving natural areas in a community where development and growth pressures are so inevitably great.

Other means of preserving some of the natural qualities of the land are through tree preservation, public methods of enhancing stream flow and controlling erosion along streams, and greater open space requirements for developments. Farmland and historic preservations can also help in the efforts; however, farmland preservation has not gained public decision makers support and therefore, is not currently a viable option in this community.

The policies and strategies that follow address the preservation of natural areas:

Policies.

- Support the proposals in the Parks Master Plan and the County's Greenway Plan.
- Preserve the natural integrity of stream banks when improving channel flow.
- Protect existing large trees and natural areas to the greatest reasonable extent within private developments.
- Increase open space requirements for development.

Implementation Strategies:

- Continue to actively acquire land for parks and greenways through purchase or dedication.
- Adopt a stormwater management plan that supports strong environment and aesthetic measures for maintaining streams in addition to functional ones.
- Control the erosion of stream banks through the use of environmentally sensitive design methods to stabilize banks. To maintain the natural environmental quality of streams, the use of man-made materials such as rip rap should be minimized. Creating concrete-like channels destroys the natural aesthetic value of streams and natural habitat that exists. Meandering streams should not become straight channels, and vegetation should be used in place of man-made materials to the greatest extent possible, which may increase costs.
- Continue enforcing the City of Charlotte's Tree Ordinance and establish a tree ordinance and the tree commission for the County similar to the City's, or consolidate the function.
- Adopt more stringent open space requirements in the new zoning ordinance including buffers.
- Consider transfer of development rights to preserve significant open spaces.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Numerous historic properties are located throughout Mecklenburg County. As more development occurs, the future of many of the historic buildings or grounds will be threatened. In 1988, the Historic Properties Commission inventoried the entire county to identify historic resources. The significant structures and land from that list are identified within each district plan.

The general historic preservation policy of this plan is:

Policies:

- o Continue to pursue historic designation and public use of significant properties and land and provide incentives for developers to preserve historic structures or grounds within development projects.

Implementation Strategies:

- o Prepare an historic preservation master plan for the city and county that:
  - Establishes priorities for preserving historic structures and/or grounds, and pursues national and/or local historic designation for those with the highest priority.
  - Considers the transfer of development rights concepts as an incentive for maintaining historic structures and land.
- o Incorporate historic structures/land into park and school developments where possible. Also, in situations where structures can not be saved on the land upon which they were originally built, consideration should be given to relocating the structure to a public park or school site.

VISUAL QUALITY

One of Charlotte's most recognized attributes is its visual quality. This quality should not be lost amidst the hurry to develop. The visual quality of older areas should be maintained or improved, and in developing areas, good design should be the rule.

Throughout this document are numerous policies that will affect visual quality in the future. The land use pattern, parks and open space, and preservation of natural areas will all have an impact on the community's appearance as will the development standards proposed in the new zoning ordinance. One visual element that has not been discussed yet is streetscapes.

o STREETSCAPES

The appearance of the main corridors throughout the community can do much to create either positive or negative images. Substantial public dollars are currently being spent to rehabilitate the appearance and image of several declining corridors in the city, corridors developed with little or no sensitivity to design. This hard lesson has taught that planning in advance for attractive corridors is sensible; it is far more cost effective and easier to design streetscape improvements before development occurs rather than after.

Considerable opportunity exists for creating positive, appealing streetscapes. Where development is well established in the older areas of the county, the task of improving corridors will not be easy; but it

should be pursued to strengthen neighborhoods and the general economic stability of the retail and employment uses along the corridors. In the developing areas where no definite land use pattern has been established, the task will be much easier. Unfortunately, the window of opportunity for actively pursuing policies and standards that will result in attractive corridors is upon us. Ten years from now may be too late.

The general strategy of the district plans is to focus on the key gateway corridors in the developed areas and to define across-the-board policies for streetscape design along major and minor thoroughfares in the newly developing areas of the county, placing special emphasis on the major gateways.

General policies that should be applied to both the established and developing corridors are:

Policies:

- New four or more lane roads should be built with landscaped medians where space permits. Where four-lane roads are planned, and only two lanes built initially, the two lanes should be constructed off center within the right-of-way so that a median can be more easily built when the final two lanes are constructed. Access, cost, and safety should be considered.

- Provide at a minimum a four foot planting strip between the edge of pavement or curbs and the sidewalk along new streets or where possible, along existing streets in conjunction with new subdivision development. Preferably, more space should be provided allowing for meandering sidewalks and/or bikeways. Sidewalks should generally not be constructed adjacent to the curb when existing roads are widened and/or sidewalks built along existing roads. Because of narrow rights-of-way or tree preservation, walks may only be feasible closer to the street edge. Every attempt should be made to maintain at least an 18 inch strip between the sidewalk and curb in developed areas.

- Maintain as many existing canopy trees as possible along the edge of a roadway.

- Accent key intersections as focal points of interest through the use of distinctive landscaping such as flowering trees and shrubs, lighting, signing, and/or sculpture.

- Protect unusual or attractive vistas and historic, natural, or architectural features adjacent to roadways to preserve and enhance the natural and historic character of the streets for future generations.

- Limit the number of curb cuts permitted onto a major or minor thoroughfare. Driveways should be combined where possible.

- Public signing and graphics should be consistently designed, and the number of signs should be minimized. Consolidating signs on special frames should be considered.

- Bury utilities underground, or at least place them at the rear of property lines to enhance the visual image along roadways.

- Continue and enhance the maintenance program for streets and streetscapes.

Implementation Strategies:

To implement the streetscape policies for both the established and developing areas, the following strategies are recommended:

- Establish a master plan for tree planting for all major and minor thoroughfares in the City and County that would be a guide ensuring consistency in tree type and form along roads.

- Establish a tree ordinance and tree commission in the County similar to that of the City, or consolidate the function.

- Provide additional funding for tree planting.

- Form a task force of City and County elected appointed, and agency officials to evaluate and recommend strategies through discussions of a franchise agreement for minimizing the use of overhead utilities.

- Pursue changes in North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) policies or approvals for more innovative approaches to streetscapes in an urban area.

- Obtain an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) that automatically transfers maintenance responsibility of landscaped medians on local roads to the local authorities.

- Evaluate City and County and State standards for issuing permits for curb cuts and strengthen where necessary to reduce the number and to increase distances apart.

- Evaluate the public program for signs within the right-of-way. Specifically the following should be addressed:

  - the number of signs; can we eliminate or consolidate some?
  - design
  - cost

- Consider increasing developers' responsibility for funding and maintaining streetscape amenities adjacent to their properties.

- Consider a special sign district overlay for certain developing and revitalized corridors to limit the height and sizes of signs, more so than would the standard regulations.

- Provide funding and staff to maintain streets, including street cleaning, tree pruning, line painting, resurfacing, etc.

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

The 2005 Plan recommended that the City and County Zoning Ordinance be revised to emphasize the value of improved design controls. In the past, the public has relied heavily upon the conditional rezoning process as a means of leveraging good design on projects. With the exception of multi-family and business park zoning, the existing zoning ordinance has marginal performance standards for site planning and design. Very few standards exist for commercial uses, for example. This lack of basic design criteria or requirements has resulted in ugly strip development in the past and poor edge relationships between land uses.

The policy and implementation strategy related to development design are:

Policy:

- Continue to support the 2005 recommendation for stronger development regulations.

Implementation Strategy:

- Adopt strong design and development standards in the new zoning ordinance. This will be the most important step the community can take towards creating a quality, livable environment for the future.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

OBJECTIVES:

- **TO PRESERVE THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK IN ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS.**
- **TO INCREASE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND PLANNING FOR HOUSING FOR LOW AND MODERATE INCOME FAMILIES.**
- **TO ENCOURAGE PUBLIC/PRIVATE JOINT VENTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROVIDING HOUSING.**
- **TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANUFACTURED HOUSING TO BE BUILT IN DEVELOPING AREAS OF THE COUNTY.**
- **TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTROL THE PER UNIT COST OF LAND THROUGH HIGHER DENSITY DEVELOPMENT.**
- **TO ENCOURAGE A MIX OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROUPS WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS.**

Sharply rising housing prices are causing an increasing number of families in Mecklenburg County to live in substandard conditions and/or to pay an inordinate amount of their income for rent and mortgages. A 1985 study of housing costs in Charlotte reported that in 1980, owners and renters making less than $10,000 a year paid as much as 45 to 49 percent of their incomes for housing. The acceptable standard for housing expenses is between 25 and 30 percent of monthly income. The report further projects that by 1990, 17,800 households in Charlotte will be unable to find affordable housing.

The housing affordability problem is most significant for low income families. However, considering that over the past four years, housing prices in the county have increased by 34 percent, and that the average sales price of a home in the county is four times the average salary, the affordability problem is affecting higher income residents as well.

In the past, most low and moderate income housing programs were developed and funded by the federal government. Recent cutbacks in federal funds have caused both City and County governments to become more involved in creating and funding housing programs. In 1987, the City adopted a Housing Policy Plan that outlines strategies to reduce the number of households living in substandard, overcrowded or unaffordable housing conditions. The plan is geared toward addressing the housing needs of families with incomes below 50 percent of the City's median income.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing Partnership was formed as a result of the policy plan. The CMHP is a nonprofit housing corporation organized

to work independently and with existing agencies to promote low income housing in Mecklenburg County. The recently constructed homeless shelter is another example of the City's efforts to deal with this problem.

The County's efforts have been channeled through its Community Development Department. Several neighborhoods in the County have been targeted for housing improvement programs.

Although local officials are making a concerted effort to address this problem, it is of such a magnitude that it cannot be solved by local government alone. The Housing Policy Plan calls for a community wide effort to address this problem.

One of the most significant steps the community at large can take is to overcome stigmas associated with affordable housing. The most dynamic neighborhoods are those having good demographic mixes. The diversity renders vitality. A good demographic mix invariably results from having diversity in housing types and costs.

The following policies and strategies are recommended to reinforce policy directions and strategies that have been established in the housing policy plan and to introduce other strategies to help in Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte increase the supply of affordable housing.

POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

EXISTING HOUSING STOCK.

Policy:

Community Development, Housing Partnership, and other groups involved in housing should continue to make the preservation of the existing housing stock a priority.

Implementation Strategies:

- Accomplish the housing preservation goals as established in the Housing Policy Plan.

- Continue work now underway to develop a more systematic and effective housing code enforcement program and provide necessary funding to implement the program.

- Implement existing programs that address boarded up structures such as Boarded Up Structures Acquisition/Rehab/Resale, Rehabilitation of Boarded Up Residential Properties via Nonprofit Agencies and proposed programs, i.e. Local Urban Homesteading.

- Continue to provide low interest property rehabilitation loans and grants to qualified low and moderate income homeowners and investor owners. (Streamline existing procedures to shorten the length of time it takes to process a loan application.)

- Require tenants living in subsidized units and homeowners receiving rehab loans to participate in housing counseling programs that would provide instructions on budgeting and home maintenance skills.

- Implement a proposed Relocation of Homes Program that would salvage relocatable structures that must be moved to accommodate road, airport, and similar right of way needs.

Policy:

City departments involved in housing and neighborhood improvement programs should coordinate their efforts to address the needs of residents of low and moderate income neighborhoods in a holisitic manner.

Implementation Strategies

- Coordinate with other nonprofit groups involved in shelter programs to make job training, placement and permanent housing available to qualified individuals and families that are homeless. (Single room occupancy units should be investigated as a housing option.)

- Continue implementation of programs such as Transitional Housing that seek to provide needed social and economic support to help residents of public housing transition out into the private housing market.

Policy:

Neighborhood groups should be organized and encouraged to take an active role in housing and neighborhood improvement efforts.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Mecklenburg County Agriculture Extension Service should continue its efforts to promote and organize neighborhood groups.

- Existing neighborhood groups should initiate self help projects such as paint and minor repair programs, neighborhood clean-ups, and greening projects.

NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES:

Policy:

The Community Development Department, Housing Authority, and Housing Partnership should continue to leverage public funds by attracting private sector involvement to renovate and develop low and moderate income housing.

Implementation Strategies:

- Encourage City Council and County Commission to adopt a policy to use city-owned surplus property as an incentive and or subsidy to offer developers for their participation.

- Encourage local banks to direct additional investments into the 21 census tracts with significant housing problems. Special programs should be developed and emphasis given to residents, investors and developers applying for assistance in targeted neighborhood(s).

- Continue to promote existing programs such as Tax Exempt Bond Financed Multi-family via FHA, and Innovative Housing Program to involve the private sector and nonprofit groups.

- Create public incentives to encourage developers to reserve property or units for affordable housing within large scale projects.

- Continue to encourage the use of federal tax credits by the private sector.

Policy:

- Programs that promote homeownership opportunities should be more widely used to help stabilize neighborhoods.

Implementation Strategies:

- Continue to implement existing programs, i.e. Single Family Second Mortgage Subsidy Program and proposed programs such as Local Urban Homesteading, Relocation of Homes and Infill Modular Housing that are designed to create affordable homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income families.

- Continue to work with and to provide increased funding to nonprofit groups such as Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Housing Services, and Housing Partnership to develop affordable homeownership opportunities.

- Support the adoption of the proposed zoning ordinance which would permit certain types of manufactured housing compatible with single family development in all single family residential zoning districts.

- Continue to allow development of mobile home parks and subdivisions throughout the city and county. More stringent yet inexpensive design controls should be followed to ensure that good quality developments are built.

Policy:

Higher density development should be encouraged to control land costs. (This was discussed in the land use section of the plan as well.)

Implementation Strategies:

- Support the adoption of the proposed zoning ordinance which would create higher density single family zoning districts.

- Continue to allow multi-family development in appropriate areas and at densities compatible with surrounding development.

Policies:

- Community Development, Housing Partnership, and Housing Authority should make every effort to develop housing densities that will be compatible with surrounding development.

- The City's Housing Authority should more aggressively use the power of eminent domain to acquire and assemble property to be used to develop low and moderate income housing.

- Every effort should be made to decentralize low income housing in order to prevent any particular part of the community from being saturated with one type of housing.

- Residents of low income housing should have greater input in design and location of housing units.

- Every attempt should be made to diminish stigmas associated with affordable housing, particularly multi-family housing.

Implementation Strategies:

- Maintain the half mile distance policy for locating 100% publicly assisted housing projects.

- Develop more public housing units in rural and developing areas that meet location criteria (for example, near bus lines, shopping, employment and medical facilities, and in particular within ½ mile of a proposed transit rail station or line.)

- Involve County government in housing construction programs. Special legislation should be pursued to accomplish this.

- Adopt greater performance standards in the new zoning ordinance to ensure that housing developments of different scale ad type will be compatible.

Policies:

- Encourage joint purchase of property among different departments of government to accommodate housing and other community needs such as schools and parks.

- The City should investigate the possibility of using tax increment financing as an option to finance housing programs. Special legislation will be needed to accomplish this.

- Community Development, Housing Partnership, and Housing Authority should periodically conduct public information campaigns to inform the public of various housing programs available.

Implementation Strategies:

- Work with neighborhood groups to publish information in their newsletters.

- Utilize local media, i.e. television, radio and newspaper more effectively to inform the public.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES:

- **TO CONTINUE THE CITY AND COUNTY'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS A FACILITATOR AND GUIDE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.**
- **TO DEVELOP A PUBLIC/PRIVATE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG.**

The Charlotte Metropolitan Area is one of the brightest and most promising metropolitan areas in the county. An outstanding housing stock, employment opportunities and a rising standard of living have added to the metropolitan area's healthy business environment.

The Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill MSA is comprised of Cabarrus, Gaston, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Union Counties in North Carolina and York County, South Carolina. The MSA ranks 35th nationally relative to population size. Charlotte-Mecklenburg serves as a finance, distribution and trade center of for the MSA, and ranks sixth among financial centers.

Charlotte is the largest city within the nation's fifth largest urban region (Charlotte/Greensboro/Greenville) as well as the center of the nation's fifth fastest growing trading area. Charlotte/Douglas International Airport is the 24th largest airport in the nation and is a major asset in the area's strong economic base.

Recent economic studies have predicted that the Charlotte Metropolitan Area will continue to grow and be a major economic force nationally. The questions are not if it will grow, but how will it grow, and what are the key economic issues the area faces?

This section explains existing economic development programs, lists key economic development issues, and makes key economic development recommendations that should be applied in all the districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

The community carries out its economic development functions primarily through three agencies: the Community Development Department, the Charlotte Certified Development Corporation and the Economic Development Department.

The Community Development Department is responsible for the administration of the City's housing programs, code enforcement and the economic loan programs. The following loan programs are available;

- Develop and Revitalization Fund (DARF). The purpose of this fund is to make loans available for new construction, rehabilitation, or expansion of industrial and commercial projects

within the City's defined "Pockets of Poverty" and redevelopment areas. The program creates jobs for low and moderate income citizens.

- Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (EDRLF). This program provides loans to individuals and businesses located primarily in the City's "Pocket of Poverty". The loans are at a 6% interest rate and should create private/public partnerships with investments from the private sector. The loans are used for the development or expansion of businesses which will create jobs for low and moderate income citizens.

The Charlotte Certified Development Corporation (CCDC) is a non-profit corporation. The corporation was formed to help small businesses secure long - term financing by working with local banks and lending institutions. The loans may be used for new construction, modernization, expansion and renovations. This a county wide program.

The third agency - the City's Economic Development Department coordinates the city-wide mission for economic development. The mission is to attract and support private sector investments by building on the strengths of Charlotte through strategic actions that affect the city's:

- Capacity to develop;
- Attractiveness to existing and potential business investor and,
- Economic and business environment

This City department has been involved with such projects as City Fair, the Trade Center, and the Performing Arts Center.

The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce also plays an important role in the economic development of the area. The Chamber promotes business retention and expansion and is the force behind the Greater Charlotte Economic Development Corporation (GCEDC), an organization that promotes the area's economic health. GCEDC is funded in part by the City and County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS AND ISSUES

To maintain and foster the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area's economic strength and prominence, several policy, locational and social economic development concerns should be addressed. These concerns are described as follows:

- As the area continues to grow, such issues as transportation, solid waste, water, sewer, environmental quality and economic development will have to be handled in a regional context. Elected officials from the eight counties in the MSA have formed a group called the Carolina Coalition to begin a dialogue on regional problems. Creating a regional dialogue is essential to the future health of the region's economy.

- The current City and County economic development loan programs have made funds available for business development and expansion. However, there is still a need to enhance, coordinate and target existing programs.

- Currently there is not an Economic Development Plan for the community that gives focus to strategic economic development programs and establishes an action plan.

- As the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area grows, there will be a need to coordinate and monitor City and County public economic development efforts.

- The underdevelopment of commercial and industrial property in particular in the Central District is a problem. The South Boulevard corridor is an example of this.

- The need to strengthen the economic link between the Uptown Area and the Central District.

- The visual quality and economic decline of businesses along the major corridors such as North Tryon, South Tryon, Wilkinson Boulevard and Statesville Road is a problem.

- The 18 neighborhoods with the highest poverty rates had an average unemployment rate that was more than 2.5 times higher than the city-wide average. (1980 Census)

- Ten percent of the City's labor is estimated to be comprised of the "working poor", those whose total family income falls below the poverty level.

- Charlotte's rate of job generation, significant business start-ups, and percentage of young companies with growth ranks 32nd below Atlanta (5), Raleigh-Durham (6), Nashville (11), Charleston (10), and Greensboro (28) when measured over the last four years. (Inc. Magazine, 1988)

- City sponsored job training programs can only reach less than 5% of the economically disadvantage residents over age 16.

- The growth imbalance between the education and skills possessed by residents and the education and skills required by employers.

POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- **Policy**:

  To continue to work towards a City/County common vision and agenda for economic growth.

Implementation Strategies:

- The City and County should work with the Greater Economic Development Corporation to develop a Strategic Economic Development Plan. The plan should focus on the following:

- The economic strengths and weakness of the area;

- The regional economic picture as it relates to Charlotte-Mecklenburg;

- Reaching a consensus among community interests on the vision or policy direction for economic growth;

- Current programs;

- Key economic issues;

- Goals & objectives;

- New economic development funding strategies and programs;

- Priorities for economic development efforts;

- Strategies that would link housing reinvestment, neighborhood revitalization and economic development efforts;

- A framework, by which the City, County, business leaders, local colleges, universities and public schools can work together to address the imbalance between education and skills possessed by residents and the education and skills required by employers;

- A mechanism to plan and coordinate public/private economic efforts;

- A mechanism to address regional economic issues; and

- An action plan that outlines the steps necessary to implement the plan.

The plan will be the starting point for addressing other economic development issues, as it will set the framework for economic development programs.