

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

CURRENT LAND USE

Residential uses and open space occupy the vast majority of land in the Plan boundaries. Manufacturing/industrial uses in the Plan are located west of US 321. Commercial, office-institutional, and public services are dispersed throughout the Plan area. *See Map 3: Current Land Uses.*

Forty-eight percent (48%) of the land is used for residential purposes, while 45% remains vacant (open space). Industrial and manufacturing uses occupy 6% of the land area and office-institutional, commercial, and public service utilities occupy less than 1% each. *See Table 2: Acreage by Use.*

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Table 2: Acreage by Use		
LAND USE	Acreage	% of Total
Open Space	6,208	45%
Residential	6,563	48%
Office-Institutional	74	< 1%
Commercial	32	< 1%
Industrial/Manufacturing	882	6%
Utility	4	< 1%
Total Acreage	13,763	100%

Source: Catawba County GIS, 2010

CURRENT ZONING

There are 13,763 acres within the Plan boundary. Residential zoning occupies 12,543 acres and non-residential (industrial and commercial) zoning encompasses the remaining 1,220 acres. *See Table 3: Acreage by Zoning District.*

Table 3: Acreage by Zoning District					
ZONING DISTRICT	Acreage	Occupied Acreage	Vacant Acreage	% Occupied	% Vacant
Residential (R-40, R-20)	12,543	8,720	3,823	70%	30%
Industrial (321-ED(I))	983	746	237	76%	24%
Commercial (321-ED(MX), HC, RC)	237	72	165	30%	70%
Office-Institutional (O-I)	0	0	0	0	N/A
Total	13,763	9,538	4,225		

Source: Catawba County GIS, 2010

Residential properties located south of NC 10 are predominately classified as R-40 which is intended to accommodate low-density (one house per acre) single-family development and agricultural uses. The R-40 zoning applies to most of the large undeveloped tracts of land throughout the Plan area. Residential properties located north of NC 10 are predominately classified as R-20 which is intended to accommodate higher-density (two houses per acre) single-family development and agricultural uses.

When the US 321 Corridor District Plan was adopted in 1996 a new zoning category, 321-Economic Development (ED), was created for properties within the corridor. As a general rule, in order to develop property for commercial or industrial uses the land must be zoned 321-ED(MX) or 321-ED(I). At that time approximately 2,000 acres were proactively rezoned to either 321-ED (MX) or 321-ED(I) to encourage economic development within the corridor.

Property zoned for industrial development (321-ED(I)) is bounded by NC 10 to the north, Rocky Ford Road to the south, the South Fork River to the east, and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway to the west. The 321-ED(I) district allows for primarily industrial, warehousing, and distribution uses with accessory office uses permitted.

Property zoned for mixed-use development (321-ED (MX)) exists at the US 321 and River Road interchange and US 321 and NC 10 interchange. The 321-ED(MX) zoning district allows for any combination of retail, commercial, office-institutional and residential components but never exclusively large-lot, single-family homes.

The only Rural Commercial RC property in the Plan boundary is located at the intersection of Hickory-Lincolnton Highway and NC 10. Highway Commercial HC is designated for two properties at the southern most point of the Plan boundary on Startown Road. There are no properties within the Plan boundary zoned Office-Institutional. *See Map 4: Current Zoning.*

EXISTING ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICTS

The Watershed Protection-Overlay establishes watersheds designed to protect sources of water supply for

public water systems by regulating density. The WS-III Watershed Critical Area north of NC 10 on the Jacob Fork River just north of the Jacob Fork, Henry Fork, and South Fork confluence surrounds the Newton water intake. Development is limited in the WS-III Critical Area surrounding the intake as required by the NC Water Supply Watershed legislation. The Critical Area requires 40,000 square feet (slightly less than one acre) for each single-family residential lot. All other residential and non-residential development in the Critical Area is limited to 12% lot coverage. The WS-III Protected Area which exists to the north and west of NC 10 and Zion Church Road allows more development, requiring approximately one-half acre (20,000 square feet) for each single-family residential lot. All other residential and non-residential development in the Protected Area is limited to 24% lot coverage.

A small area at the southern part of the Plan boundary around Herter Road is within the WS-IV Watershed Protected Area which requires at least 20,000 square feet for each single-family residential lot. All other residential and non-residential development is limited to 24% or 36% lot coverage depending on the use of curb and gutter systems being installed.

The Rural Preservation-Overlay exists along Hickory-Lincolnton Highway south of NC 10 to the intersection of Blackburn Bridge Road. It runs along the full extent of Blackburn Bridge Road; and along Startown Road from Wyoming Street area ending just north of West Maiden Road. This overlay establishes a 100-foot front setback or buffering option depending on the proposed development. It establishes a balance between development and the rural character of the corridor.

Approximately 1,134 acres around the South Fork River and Herter Road south of Blackburn Bridge Road are within the Double-wide Manufactured Home-Overlay. Double-wide manufactured homes are permitted by right within this overlay. Other opportunities for single-wide and double-wide placement exist throughout the Plan boundary, but are limited.

All of the area within the Plan boundary as well as some additional areas east of Startown Road, Robinson Road, and River Road and northwest of Zion Church Road are within the Economic Development-Overlay. Some of the purposes behind this overlay are to allow conversion of

farmland and vacant land to more urban uses, avoid uncoordinated strip development patterns, provide more usable and suitably located recreation facilities, encourage cooperation between local governments concerning municipal growth and service extensions and support mixed-use projects. This strategy serves to enhance the economic, tax, and employment base for the County. See *Map 5: Current Zoning Overlay*.

SITE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND LAND DESIGN TRENDS

Historically, rural and agricultural uses were the most dominant land use in the Plan boundary. In recent decades, scattered housing developments have been built throughout the area. The majority of residential developments have occurred north of NC 10, near the intersection of Startown Road and Rocky Ford Road, and along the eastern and western portions of Blackburn Bridge Road. The densest residential growth has occurred along River Road. More growth is expected in areas where public water and sewer lines are extended. Generally, residential activity has consisted of a mixture of site-built subdivisions.

Greater non-residential activity is also expected along US 321 where the highway provides the infrastructure necessary to support industrial uses. The *US 321 Corridor District Plan* anticipates this growth by requiring more stringent development standards than in other parts of the County. Within the past three years, a data center and distribution center have been constructed along the corridor; and momentum for green technologies has increased at the Catawba County EcoComplex and Resource Recovery Facility. Mixed commercial/office/residential uses may increase along US 321; however, large strip centers and big box retailers are unlikely to emerge in the Startown area. Hickory, Newton and Conover offer large shopping alternatives for residents of the Plan area.

FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

In order to guide development in the Plan area, future land use classifications have been depicted on *Map 6: Future Land Use Recommendations*. The map is sepa-

rated by classifications of differing land uses based upon an analysis of existing land uses, economic potential, future utilities, road projects, and environmental conditions. Following is a description of the land use classifications:

OPEN SPACE

The open space classification is applied to land that is currently (or can in the future) be permanently protected through a conservation-based organization. This land cannot be developed for residential or non-residential uses but it is conserved land which may also serve a public recreation purpose, such as a greenway system.

RESIDENTIAL—LOW DENSITY

The low density residential classification applies to the land area in the southern portion of the Plan area. This area is very rural in character and should remain rural based upon its current development pattern, rural viewshed and limited infrastructure availability. The low density residential area would allow single-family residential uses on one-acre lots or larger. Non-residential uses (excluding churches, schools and public facilities) should not be permitted.

RESIDENTIAL— MEDIUM DENSITY

The medium density residential classification applies to the land area north of Hwy. 10 and extends to the northern Plan area boundary. Most of this land area has access to public water and/or sewer; therefore, more dense residential development is allowed on lots less than one-acre. Non-residential uses (excluding churches, schools and public facilities) should not be permitted.

TRANSITIONAL

The transitional classification serves several purposes. It identifies land that has the potential for mixed use development, with multi-family and/or commercial uses, or industrial uses compatible with the economic goals of this Plan in the future. These transitional areas should be within a local government's intended service delivery area.

MIXED-USE

The mixed-use classification is limited to property adjacent to or within a relatively short distance of the US 321 interchanges. Within the mixed used classification,

higher density residential, commercial and office-institutional uses are allowed but never exclusively single-family homes. The mixed-use classification supports the economic development goals of this Plan.

INDUSTRIAL

The industrial classification, like the mixed-use classification, is located within proximity to the US 321 interchanges. Large-scale, campus style (preferred) industrial, distribution, warehousing, and high-tech developments are the types of uses allowed in the industrial classification. The industrial classification supports the economic development goals of this Plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following were taken from a more complete list of principles found in the Startown and Mountain View Small Area Plans.

RESIDENTIAL

- LP-1 Balance growth with the community's rural character.
- LP-2 Organize and plan residential development.
- LP-3 Encourage residential design qualities that do not negatively impact air quality, including pedestrian options such as sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths.

COMMERCIAL

- LP-4 Focus commercial growth in Mixed Use Commercial Development Nodes, rather than strip development along highways.
- LP-5 Buffer commercial uses from residential areas.

INDUSTRIAL

- LP-6 Target industrial growth within the Plan area to specific, appropriate sites.
- LP-7 Direct industrial uses to planned park developments.
- LP-8 Separate industrial areas from residential areas.

PLAN GOALS

The following goals make recommendations for future land uses which aid in the rezoning process of individual properties upon request, but do not proactively rezone those privately-owned properties.

*“Success
always comes
when
preparation
meets
opportunity”.*

-Henry Hartman

COMMERCIAL

- LG-1 Expand the land area for mixed use development at the following interchanges. *See Map 6: Future Land Use Recommendations.*
- River Road and US 321
 - NC 10 and US 321 (Southeast)
 - Rocky Ford Road and US 321
- LG-2 Provide for transitional areas which are consistent with the US 321 Corridor District Plan not impacted by LG-1. *See Map 6: Future Land Use Recommendations*
- LG-3 Reduce the ED-O Economic Development-Overlay to match the Plan boundary. *See Map 7: Recommended Zoning and Overlay Map Amendments.*

INDUSTRIAL

As described in the introductory section, the Eco-Complex, Target Distribution Center, and Apple Data Center serve as a foundation to expand industrial land use opportunities within the Plan boundary. The following industrial goals are proposed as an outgrowth of these three distinct facilities.



High-Tech Industrial Park

- LG-4 Amend zoning map to include the existing Eco-Complex in the 321-ED(I) district. *See Map 7: Recommended Zoning and Overlay Map Amendments.*
- LG-5 Provide for a High-Tech Industrial Park along Startown Road near the intersection of US 321. *See Map 6: Future Land Use Recommendations.*
- LG-6 Provide for a Transportation/Distribution Park to the west of US 321 on properties adjacent to or in close proximity of NC 10 on the north and south side. *See Map 6: Future Land Use Recommendations.*

- LG-7 Relax façade treatment regulations in 321-ED(I) districts.
- LG-8 Reduce the principal building setbacks from non-residential property lines.
- LG-9 Allow a perimeter buffer waiver option.
- LG-10 Expand permitted uses within the 321-ED(I) and ED(MX) districts.

CORRIDOR

- LG-11 Encourage the installation of monument signage along both sides of the right-of-way adjacent to the EcoComplex, using a consistent design.



Monument Sign



Street trees along Rocky Ford Road corridor

- LG-12 Encourage the use of a variety of colors for exterior building facades and the installation and application of “green” concepts.
- LG-13 Encourage the planting of street trees of similar characteristics along both sides of the right-of-way adjacent to the EcoComplex, to provide uniformity and a sense of place.