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Cherry

Small Area Plan

Approved by Charlotte City Council

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CHERRY SMALL AREA PLAN

PREFACE

The Cherry Small Area Plan is to be used as a general policy guide for land use decisions in the Cherry Community. Acceptance of this plan is not intended to imply approval of any type of zoning amendment before it has been fully considered through a public hearing and review process. Nor does acceptance of this plan mean automatic inclusion of any recommended capital improvement project in the next budget cycle. These improvements will only be funded through the existing capital improvement program and are recommended for inclusion on a priority basis weighed against all capital needs identified for the community.

The plan was developed with input from a study group consisting of residents, business owners, and other interest groups in the area. The study group met twice a month for four months to review and provide input on all aspects of the plan. In addition, two community meetings were held in the neighborhood. The Planning Commission staff acknowledges the valuable contributions made by the study group, residents, and business owners.

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I. Introduction

Cherry is located in the Midtown area between Kings Drive, a busy commercial corridor, and Myers Park, one of the City's most prestigious residential communities. Cherry is one of the oldest black residential neighborhoods in Charlotte. It was the first neighborhood in the City established primarily to provide homeownership opportunities for laborers and working class blacks.

Since the early 1970s, the Midtown area has been experiencing fairly rapid growth. This growth is putting tremendous development pressure on Cherry. Land in and around Cherry is being incrementally developed and/or rezoned for more intense uses. These rezonings have allowed business, office, and high density housing to encroach into the neighborhood. Edge relationships between the neighborhood and the business uses are poor. In some parts of Cherry, it is difficult to determine where the business uses end and the residential area begins.

In addition to land use and zoning problems, housing and other physical conditions in Cherry are poor. The uncertainty regarding the future of the neighborhood has discouraged owners from reinvesting in and maintaining their properties and has caused the neighborhood to decline.

If current trends continue in Cherry, the City will lose an important resource. This one hundred and one year old neighborhood is important not only because of its early 1900's turn of the century style bungalow homes, mature canopy trees, and picturesque view of Uptown, but also, because of the role it has had and should continue to have in providing affordable housing opportunities for low and moderate income families. Cherry is a valuable resource the City cannot afford to lose.

II. Goals and Objectives

The goals of the plan are twofold. First, the plan seeks to upgrade and maintain Cherry as an affordable residential community. The second goal is to support the business area that surrounds Cherry in a manner that does not conflict with or adversely affect the neighborhood. Key objectives established to accomplish these goals are as follows:

- Establish a zoning pattern that reflects existing residential uses and compatible zoning at the neighborhood's edge;
- Stabilize the neighborhood by upgrading the existing housing stock and promoting new housing development and homeownership opportunities;
- Identify physical improvements needed to enhance the quality of life of the neighborhood;
- Address transportation related problems to allow for better traffic circulation;

- Identify urban design needs to improve the area's overall visual appearance; and
- Identify economic development strategies to help support and maintain existing businesses and revitalize declining ones.

III. Boundaries

The Cherry Small Area Plan includes the area bound by Independence Boulevard and Fourth Street on the north, Henley Place and Morehead Street on the south, Sugar Creek on the west and Queens Road on the east. (See Map 1). The boundaries of the plan include an area larger than what is traditionally considered as the Cherry community. The study area boundaries were extended beyond the neighborhood to include property along Kings Drive, Queens Road, Third and Fourth Streets. Development along these corridors has significantly influenced changes in Cherry. Therefore, Cherry's future is viewed from the broader perspective and in context with changes that are occurring both within and outside the neighborhood.

IV. History

Cherry was first platted as a residential community in 1891 by John and Mary Myers. The neighborhood was developed from the Myer's family thousand acre cotton farm which was located just outside Charlotte's city limits. For several decades, the neighborhood functioned as a village distinct from Charlotte following the pattern of such black settlements as Biddleville and Greenville.

Cherry's development, however, is unique in that it was the first neighborhood in Charlotte built especially to provide homeownership opportunities for laborers and working class blacks. The first homes in the neighborhood were built on Cherry, Main, and Luther Streets. By 1925, a total of 305 families lived in Cherry. It is estimated that as many as 65% were homeowners.

Morgan Park and Morgan School were also built in the mid 1920s on Baxter Street. In addition to a park and a school, the neighborhood also offered other amenities such as several churches and tree lined streets. These amenities also made Cherry's development unique from other black neighborhoods. The neighborhood park and the trees were often singled out as the most striking and attractive attributes of the neighborhood. The trees were so prominent that the name of the neighborhood and street are said to have been inspired by the cherry trees that grew on the hillsides.

Cherry prospered as a residential community until the late 1940s when Independence Boulevard and Kings Drive were constructed. Independence Boulevard cut through Cherry's northern edge while Kings Drive came through on its western border. Shortly thereafter, Charlottetown Mall (now Midtown Square) was built at the intersection of Kings and Independence. The mall then attracted a strip of smaller commercial businesses that also located along Kings Drive.

The thoroughfares that surrounded the neighborhood and the accompanying development positioned Cherry in a strategic location. Cherry was no longer an isolated village on the fringe of uptown but was thrust into the midst of an urbanizing Midtown area.

Changes were also occurring inside Cherry that further destabilized the neighborhood. Many of the owner occupied homes were being sold to investors. Once purchased, these homes were converted to rental properties. What had begun as a strong community of homeowners was evolving into a neighborhood of renters.

By the late 1960s, housing and other physical conditions in the neighborhood had deteriorated. Conditions were not bad enough, however, to warrant a full scale urban renewal effort. Instead, in the mid 1970s, Cherry was designated as a Community Development Neighborhood Target Area. This designation made the neighborhood eligible to receive funds for certain physical improvements.

In 1976, a public improvements plan was approved by Council for the neighborhood. This plan outlined short term strategies to increase housing code enforcement efforts and address other physical improvement needs in the neighborhood.

To participate more fully in the City's efforts to upgrade the neighborhood, the residents formed a nonprofit community development corporation -- the Cherry Community Organization (CCO). The residents and CCO petitioned Council to provide funding to purchase and rehabilitate homes in the neighborhood rather than for such capital items as sidewalks, curbs, gutters and storm drains as recommended in the original adopted plan.

As a result, a modified plan was adopted by Council in 1979 for Cherry. The revised plan essentially outlined an agreement between the CCO and the City whereby the City would loan funds to the CCO to help it implement a comprehensive housing and neighborhood improvement program.

The CCO has acquired numerous properties from absentee landlords and continues to own and manage many of the units. The group also provides social services such as free meals and transportation for elderly residents for medical care and shopping. The City, residents and CCO have made progress towards upgrading the neighborhood, but there remains a tremendous amount of work to be done.

V. Existing Conditions

A. Population Characteristics

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission's preliminary population estimates indicate that in 1989, 920 people lived in census tract 26 or the Cherry area. This total represents a decrease of 11% over the number of people who lived in the area in 1980.

Although the neighborhood is losing population, most residents tend to live in Cherry a long time before leaving. A survey conducted several years ago by the CCO reported that over 70% of residents surveyed have lived in the neighborhood over 10 years. This indicates a certain willingness and desire of people to live in Cherry. The neighborhood's stability is unusual considering that fewer than 25% of the residents own their homes.

Cherry has a fairly significant number of elderly residents. The mature age of the residents is one factor that may account for their lengthy tenure in the neighborhood. Middle age and older people are more stable and do not tend to move around as much.

Cherry began as a working class neighborhood and its make-up has not changed. The incomes of Cherry residents are low. The low incomes of residents in large part, contribute to the housing and other social problems that exist in the neighborhood.

B. Land Use

Over 48% of the land in Cherry is in residential use. Residential development in the study area consists of a variety of different types of housing. Within Cherry proper, the housing consists mostly of small, wood framed single family homes, duplexes, triplexes and quadruplexes. Apartment complexes and condominiums are located primarily on the eastern edge of the neighborhood along Queens Road. On the southern border of the neighborhood along Henley Place are large single family homes.

Retail trade (17%), open land (14%), and office (8%) are the other major land uses in the area. Almost all of the property along Kings Drive is in commercial use. There are two neighborhood commercial uses within Cherry. Office development is concentrated along Fourth, Third, Lillington, Baxter, and Ranlo Streets. The majority of the office development in the area is medical related uses. Most of the vacant property in the neighborhood is located south of Baxter Street between Baldwin and Eli Street. (See Table 1 in the appendix for a detailed list).

C. Zoning

The zoning in Cherry consists of a hodgepodge of different districts that, in most cases, does not reflect the existing or desired land use. Fifty-eight percent of the land in the neighborhood is zoned for residential use. Of this total the majority is zoned R-22MF and R-43MF for apartments and high-rise multi-family development respectively. The remaining 42% is zoned for nonresidential uses. The nonresidential zoning in the neighborhood is a combination of B-2, B-1, and O-2 which allows for a variety of general commercial, neighborhood commercial and office uses. (See Table 2 in the appendix for a detailed list).

VI. Issues and Recommendations

Cherry is a low income neighborhood that has a number of problems that need to be addressed. Although the encroachment problem is the major concern of residents and the study group, other issues have also been identified. The issues and proposed recommendations are discussed in the following sections on: 1) land use and zoning, 2) transportation, 3) housing, 4) infrastructure, 5) park and greenway, 6) historic resources, 7) community appearance, and 8) crime.

A. Land Use/Zoning

Maps 8 and 9 show the land use and zoning concept plans recommended for future development of the Cherry study area. Generally, the land use and zoning pattern being proposed for the area is designed to protect and preserve the residential character of Cherry by preventing further encroachment of business uses into the neighborhood and by providing for compatible growth and development along the neighborhood's edge.

For purposes of discussion, the study area has been divided into eight geographical areas (see map 2). The following section details land use and zoning issues and recommendations for each of the eight areas.

Area 1:

(Bound by Fox and Cherry Streets, rear lot lines of property fronting on Queens Road, Luther Street and Third Street).

Issues:

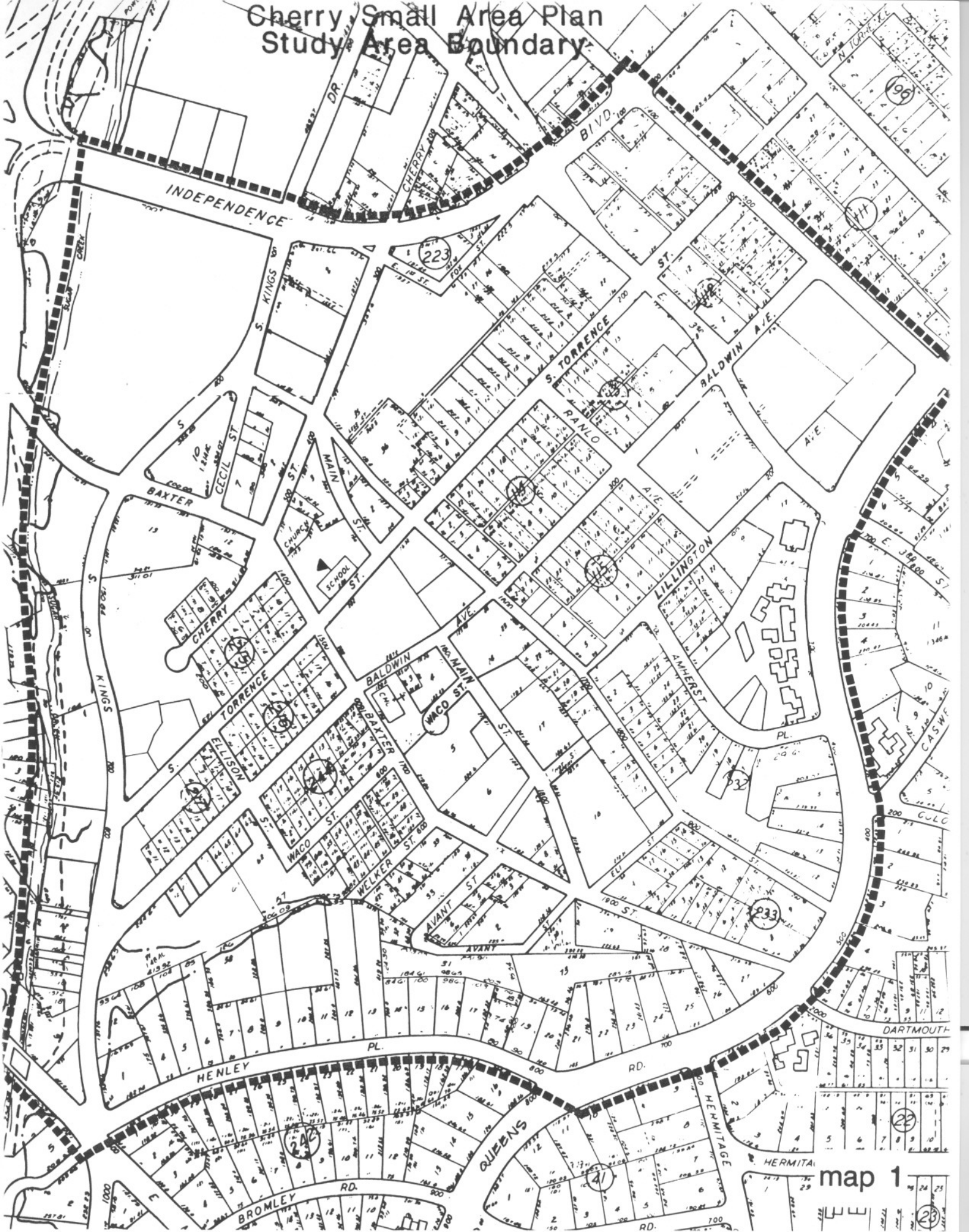
There are a variety of uses and zoning classifications in this part of the neighborhood. Presbyterian Specialty Hospital, and other medical related offices and support services are the major nonresidential uses. These uses have encroached deeply into the neighborhood. Several residential lots have been rezoned to office or business to accommodate parking lots. However, some of the neighborhood's best maintained single family homes are also located in this area.

Recommendations: (See Map 3)

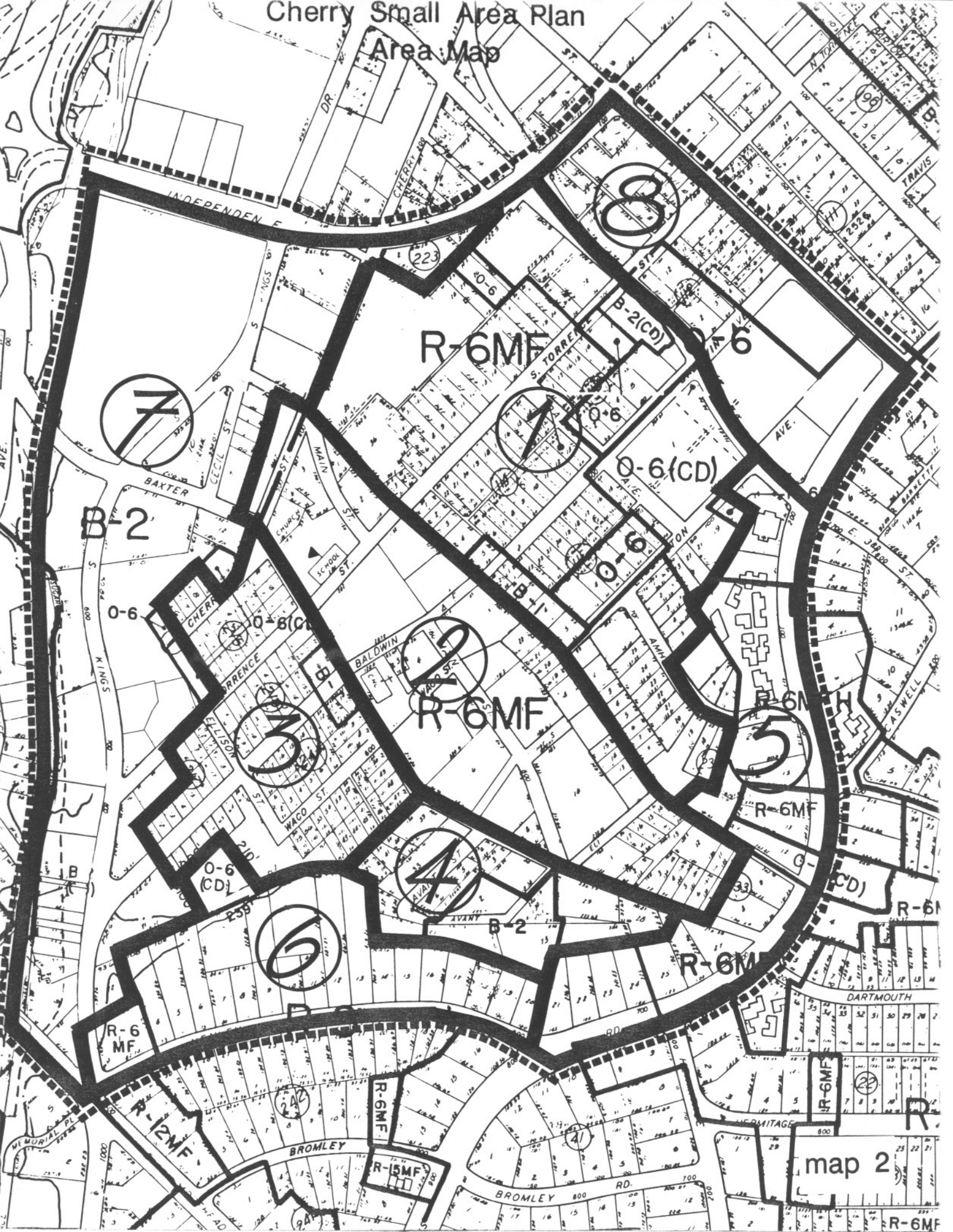
Staff Recommendation:

- Maintain existing single family homes along Torrence and Baldwin Streets and rezone the property from R-22MF to R-6 to reflect current land uses and to prevent further expansion of nonresidential and other intense uses into this part of the neighborhood.

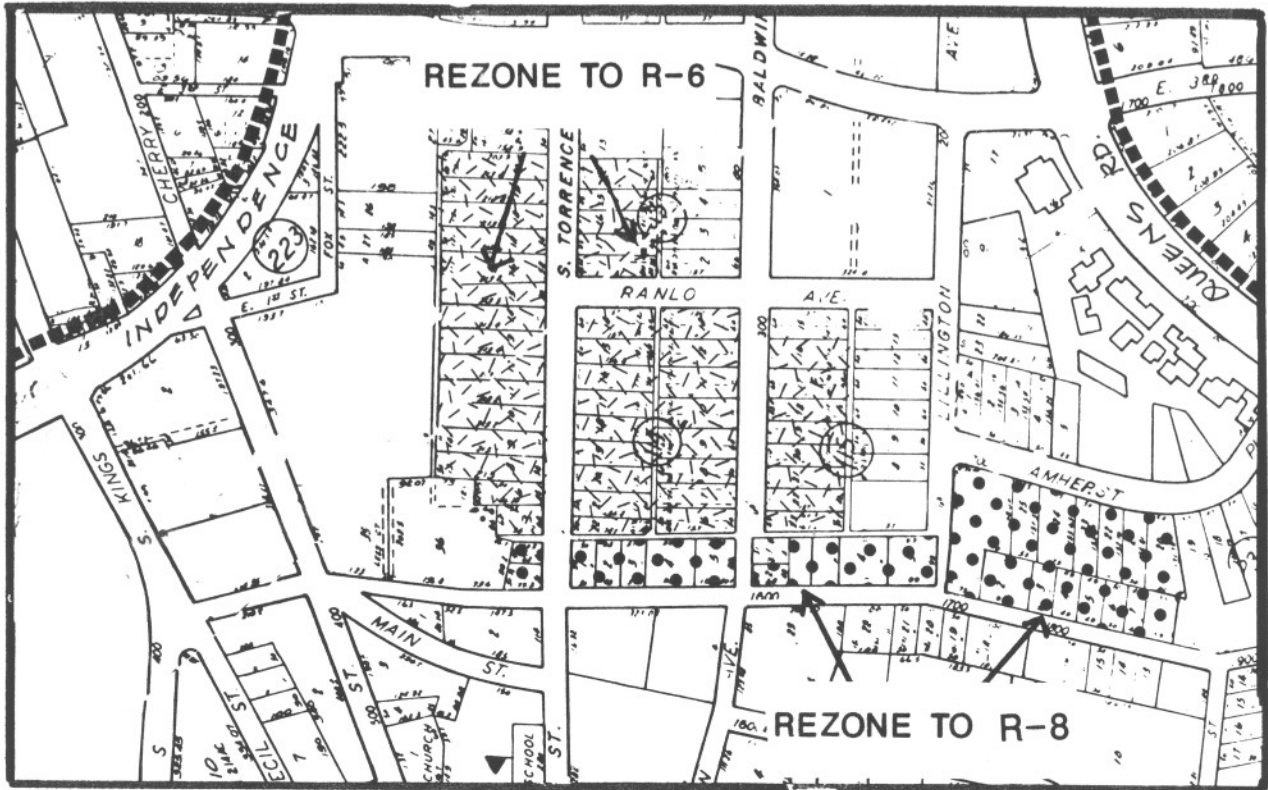
Cherry Small Area Plan Study Area Boundary



Cherry Small Area Plan Area Map



- Encourage the development of affordable single family homes on available infill lots in the area. The architectural design and type of new single family homes should be compatible with the existing development.
- Rezone property fronting along Luther Street and south of Amherst Place from R-22MF and B-1 to R-8. The R-8 zone will allow for attached and detached housing up to four units within a structure at a maximum density of eight units per acre.
- Maintain the existing neighborhood convenience store near the intersection of Luther and Baldwin Streets, and provide financial assistance to the property owner to help improve the appearance of the property.



Area 1 map 3



Area 2:

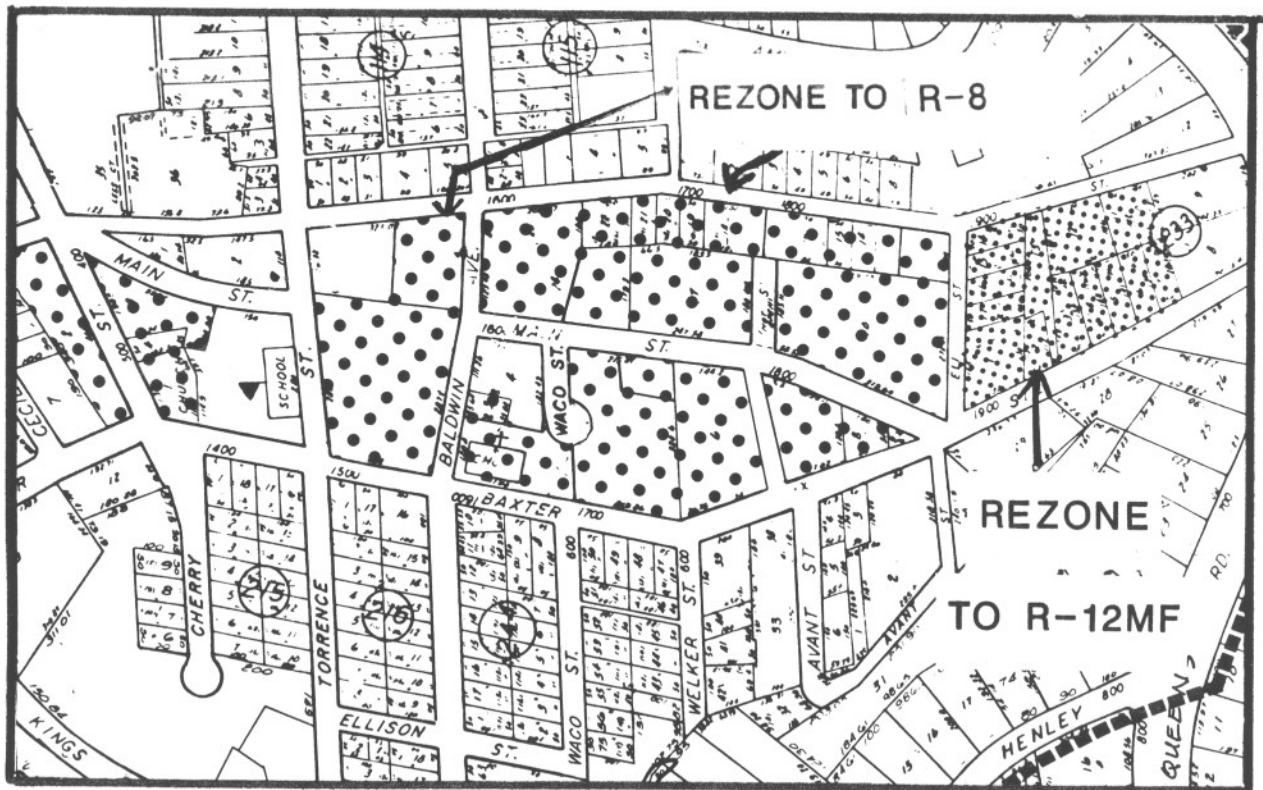
(Bound by Cherry Street, rear lot lines of property fronting on Queens Road, Luther Street and Baxter Street)

Issues:

The type of development in the area consists of a combination of duplexes, triplexes and quadruplexes and the zoning is R-22MF. The R-22MF zoning does not reflect existing land uses and densities being proposed for the area.

Recommendations: (See Map 4)

- Rezone this area from R-22MF, B-2 to R-8 to reflect current mixture of housing types. Allow higher density multi-family development in the triangle bound by Avant Street, Main Street and Baxter Street. The CCO has selected this area as a potential site to build elderly housing. The property should be rezoned to R-8 until an appropriate site plan is submitted and approved to ensure that the density and scale of multi-family development will be compatible with the adjacent uses.
- Maintain R-22MF zoning on Morgan school property. The Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board should consider reusing the site for a magnet or neighborhood school. The school could serve as a focal point of activity and as a catalyst to attract potential residents into the neighborhood.
- Limit any further expansion of institutions/churches that will result in a rezoning to a more intense zone, that will require homes to be removed, or that will displace residents.
- Encourage a mixture of single family and multi-family development up to 12 units per acre west of Eli Street and south of Luther Street. The housing stock is somewhat marginal and there is vacant land that could be developed for housing.



Area 2 map 4



Area 3:

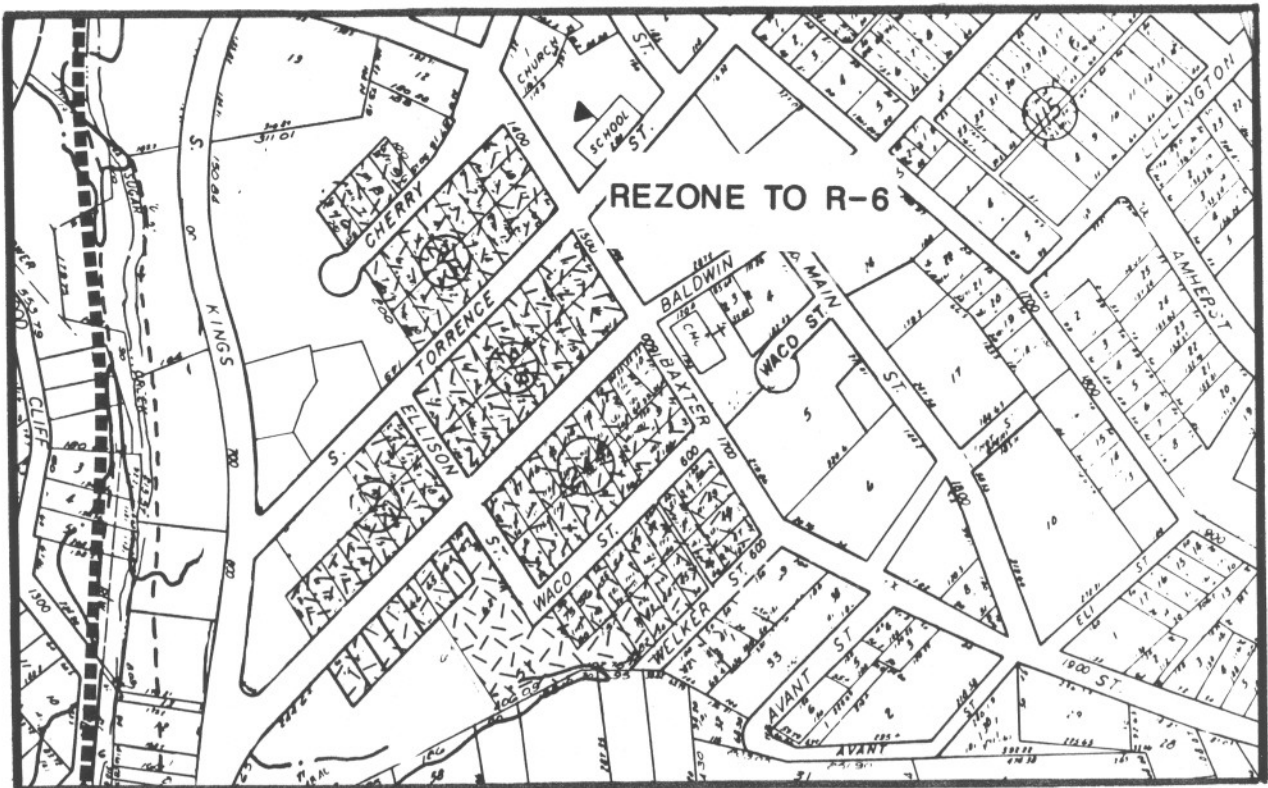
(Bound by Cherry Street, Welker Street, Baxter Street, the Creek and Kings Drive)

Issue:

Within this part of the neighborhood are some of the best maintained single family homes in the neighborhood. However, the homes closest to Kings Drive are being seriously threatened by the expansion of Kings Pointe and Kings Court retail centers. In some cases, only a wall or a fence separates the commercial uses from the residential homes making it difficult to determine where the business uses end and the residential area begins. In addition, the single family properties are zoned for multi-family or business use.

Recommendations: (See Map 5)

- **Maintain existing single family development, and rezone the property in this area from R-22MF and B-1 to R-6.**
- **Encourage the development of affordable single family homes on vacant property on Waco, Ellison, and Welker Streets.**
- **Maintain the neighborhood commercial area at the intersection of Baxter and Baldwin Streets, and provide financial assistance to property owners to help improve the appearance of the property.**



Area 3 map 5



Area 4:

(Bound by Welker Street, Queens Road, Baxter Street, and the Creek)

Issue:

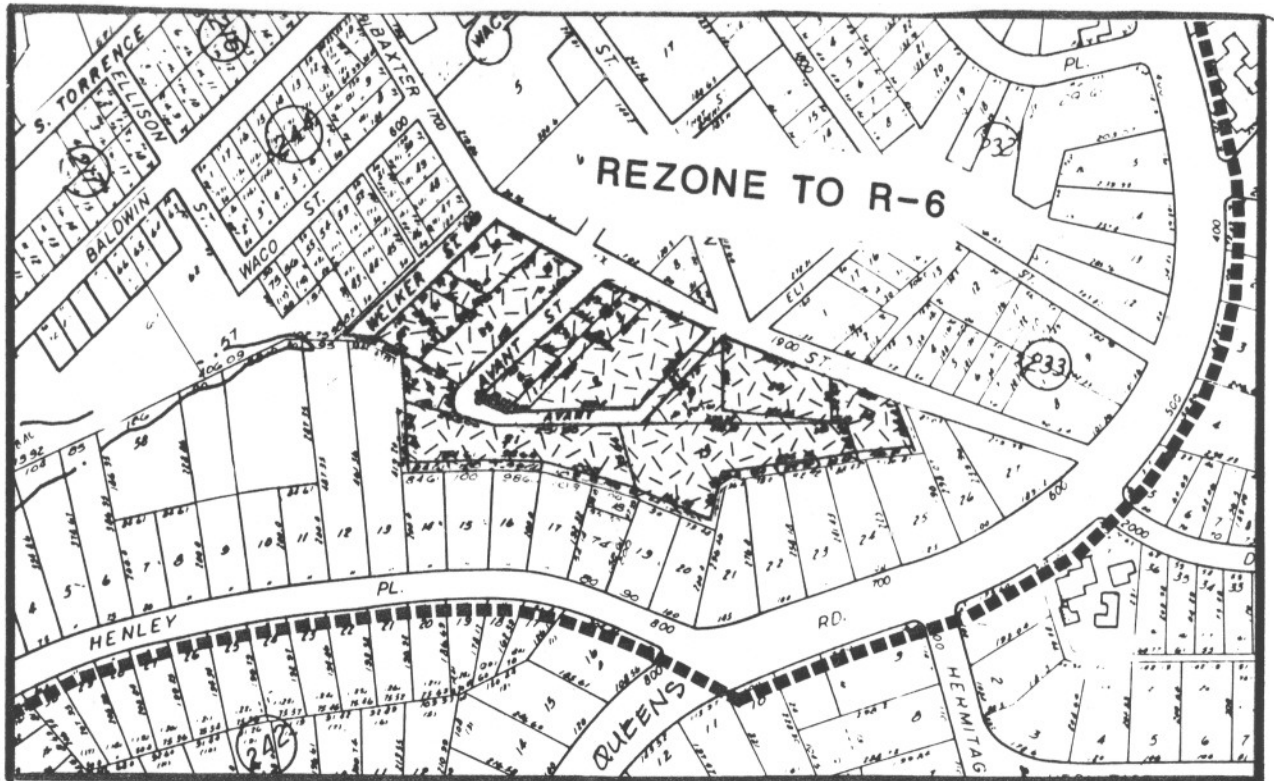
The major landmark in this part of the neighborhood is Nesbit Oil Company, an oil distributing company situated in the middle of the neighborhood. The company is currently a nonconforming industrial use operating in a B-2 zone. Surrounding Nesbit Oil is some of the most deteriorated housing in the neighborhood. Proximity to the oil company and uncertainty regarding the future of the neighborhood discourages property owners from reinvesting and maintaining their properties and has caused this area to decline more rapidly than other parts of the neighborhood.

Recommendations: (See Map 6)

- Rezone the Nesbit Oil site from B-2 to R-6 but consider rezoning requests for R-8 case by case to prevent any further expansion or intensification of commercial uses in the interior of the neighborhood. The City should also consider purchasing Nesbit Oil's property. This may not be economically feasible considering the cost to purchase and relocate the company and attend to any environmental concerns or clean-up that will likely be needed before the property can be redeveloped. Since a buyout may not be feasible an alternate proposal would be to landscape screen and buffer the site as much as possible.

Nesbit Oil has already begun to implement this recommendation. The company has begun an extensive landscaping and improvement effort to upgrade the property. These efforts should continue.

- Redevelop the remaining residential property to build new affordable housing. Considering the condition of the housing stock in this part of the neighborhood, the likelihood of it remaining is not good. This property is currently zoned R-22MF and should be rezoned to R-6 to reflect a more consistent and compatible scale of development. Rezonings up to 8 units to the acre or R-8 should be considered on a case by case basis.



Area 4 map 6



Area 5:

(Queens Road corridor between Third Street and Henley Place)

Issue:

This part of the study area contains a number of upscale apartments and condominiums. Although most of the units front on Queens Road, some of the developments extend back into Cherry. This higher density development is incompatible with the small bungalow homes that are found in Cherry.

Recommendations:

- Maintain existing high density development and confine any further expansion into the neighborhood to areas currently zoned for more intense multi-family use.

Area 6:

(Bound by Kings Drive, Queens Road, the Creek and Henley Place)

Issue:

There is a vacant unpaved lot at the intersection of Henley Place and Kings Drive that is primarily being used as an open market. The market attracts a considerable amount of traffic and congestion when it is operating. This property is located at the entrance to a single family area along Henley Place.

Recommendations:

- Maintain existing single family zoning in the area and prevent any further expansion of multi-family development and other intense uses.
- Maintain farmers market lot at the corner of Henley Place and Kings Drive. The current use of the lot is an acceptable interim use that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to neighborhood residents. The long term use of the property, however, should be residential.

Area 7:

(Kings Drive corridor and Independence Boulevard between Kings drive and Third Street)

Issues:

This area contains a strip of small retail stores and commercial centers anchored by Midtown Square. A number of the retail uses along this corridor are marginal, and many have gone out of business including some tenants at Kings Pointe, one of the newer developments. Many of the businesses in the area are failing due to increased competition and from not having the appropriate mix of tenants to provide needed goods and services to nearby residents. Another reason is that residents of Cherry do not have the disposable income needed to support the numerous retail establishments in the area. Also, there are no consistent development features or design continuity among the uses, which makes the corridor visually unattractive.

Recommendations: (See Map 7)

Prepare and adopt a plan for the Midtown/CPCC area to address land use and urban design issues. Although the plan will encompass a broader area, issues relating to development along Kings Drive that should be addressed include:

- intensification of the Midtown Square site;
- redevelopment along Kings Drive;
- development of Sugar Creek greenway as an open space amenity; and
- streetscape improvements for Independence Boulevard and Kings Drive.

- Rezone the office complex near the corner of Torrence and Kings Drive from B-2 to O-2 to reflect the current land use and to maintain a transitional area between the commercial development and the residential area.
- Rezone the properties that front along Kings Drive, Cecil Street, and those properties that extend back into the neighborhood between Independence Boulevard, Morehead Street and Henley Place, Sugar Creek, and Cherry Street from B-2 to B-1. Midtown Square site should remain zoned B-2. Most of the commercial and office uses in this area do not need the general business zoning. B-1 zoning will promote more compatible development near the neighborhood and adjacent to Uptown.
- Rezone property bound by Fox Street, Independence Boulevard and First Street from B-2, O-2 to R-22MF to encourage moderate density multi-family housing and prevent any further expansion of nonresidential uses.

Area 8:

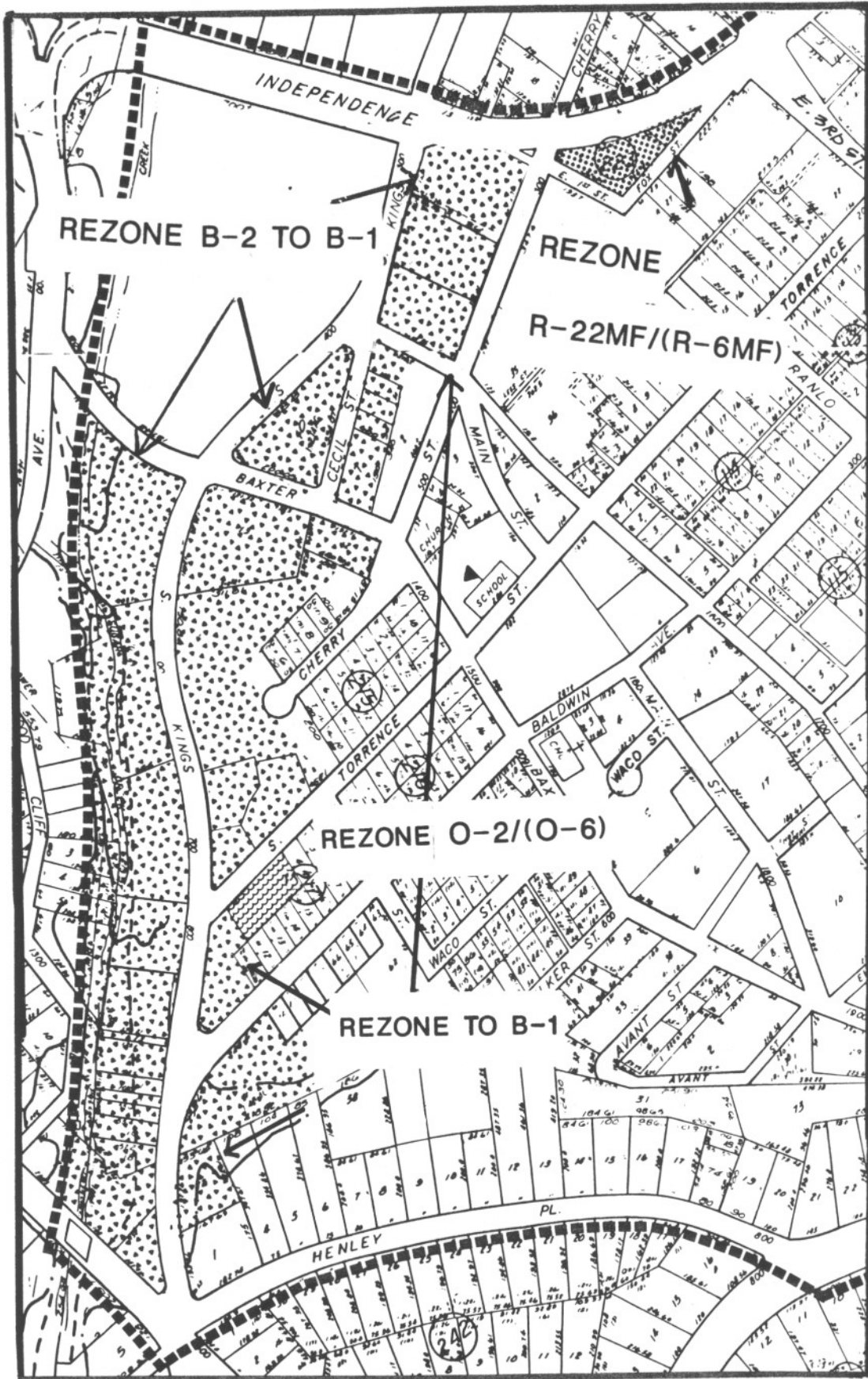
(Bound by Independence Boulevard, Queens Road, Third Street, and Fourth Street)

Issues/Opportunities:

This area contains a variety of different types of uses ranging from a furniture store, paint store, and frame shop to law offices and medical clinics. Considering the area's proximity to Uptown and Central Piedmont Community College, the opportunity exists to further intensify this area and attract quality development that will complement uses near Uptown and around CPCC.

Recommendations:

- Maintain existing office, medical and neighborhood commercial uses.
- Include this area as a part of the proposed Midtown/CPCC urban design and land use plan.



Area 7 map 7



B. Transportation

The Cherry community is bound by four major thoroughfares, Independence Boulevard, Kings Drive, Fourth Street, and Queens Road. Due to this location, numerous problems exist and center on: the need for streetscape improvements, poorly designed intersections, and traffic safety.

A. Streetscape Improvements

1. Independence Boulevard between I-277 and Fourth Street

Due to the construction of the I-277 loop around the southern portion of the city, this stretch of Independence Boulevard no longer functions as a major east/west thoroughfare; it principally carries local traffic. However, this road continues to be one of the main entrances into the Cherry Community. Because of decreased traffic volumes, there is excess pavement and also a very unattractive and nonessential paved median.

Recommendation:

- Design and implement a streetscape plan for the area that would include a planted median, street trees and installation of decorative street lights. This plan should be a part of the proposed Midtown/CPCC Plan.

2. Kings Drive Corridor

This corridor is a highly congested commercial corridor. Congestion is due, in part, to the amount of left turning traffic entering and exiting the adjacent commercial land uses. Also, development along this corridor has no design continuity and the streetscape consists of unsightly signage, overhead utility lines and a lack of street trees.

Recommendation:

- Congestion could be lessened by adding extra turn lanes however this is infeasible due to development that is built close to the street's edge. As redevelopment occurs, specific roadway improvements, such as the addition of a left turn lane at Baxter and Independence Streets, should be evaluated.
- The Planning Commission staff should prepare a unified streetscape plan for Kings Drive between Independence Boulevard and East Morehead Street that will coordinate the visual and physical aspects of the existing development. This should be a part of the proposed Midtown plan. Streetscape elements that should be taken into consideration include:
 - sidewalks
 - plant materials
 - utility lines

- street lights
- signage
- street furniture

B. Intersection Improvements

1. Lillington Avenue and Luther Street

Lillington Avenue currently narrows near the intersection of Luther Street, creating an obstruction that requires a warning sign that is posted along this portion of Lillington.

Recommendation:

- Widen Lillington Avenue at its intersection with Luther Street to provide a consistent width of pavement the entire length of the street.

2. Baldwin Avenue and Kings Drive

The location of the traffic island at the intersection of Kings Drive and Baldwin Avenue creates a wide angle and makes turning left onto Kings Drive difficult.

Recommendation:

- The Charlotte Department of Transportation should modify the traffic island to improve the sight distance and provide a more clearly defined 90° intersection.

3. Kenilworth Avenue and Baxter Street

The segment of Baxter Street between Kings Drive and Kenilworth Avenue experiences congestion due to the short distance between intersections and the proximity of driveways to the intersections. The left turn lane from Kenilworth Avenue to Baxter Street sometimes backs up and blocks thru-traffic on Kenilworth Avenue. The driveway entrance to Midtown Square also contributes to congestion because turning movements into and out of the site occur very near the intersection.

Recommendation:

- Lengthen the left turn lane from Kenilworth Avenue to Baxter Street and restrict the driveway from Midtown Square on Kenilworth Avenue to right in/right out turns only.

4. Baxter Street/Main Street/Eli Street Intersection

The intersection of these three streets creates an odd "K" shaped, three-way intersection. There is an existing sight distance problem for motorists exiting Eli Street due to several large trees and the angle of the other intersecting streets.

Recommendation:

- Close Eli Street at this location to reduce the number of intersecting streets.

C. Safety

1. Baxter Street

Baxter Street serves a collector street function by connecting the Cherry neighborhood to both Kings Drive and Queens Road. As such, it has become a heavily traveled cut-thru route with excessive speeding. Also, the street narrows east of Baldwin Avenue out to Queens Road.

Recommendations:

- Widen Baxter Street between Waco and Queens Road. The widening should be done in a manner that does not adversely impact the adjacent homes and trees along Baxter Street. The widening may not be a viable option until the residential properties are redeveloped. Improvements such as sidewalks and street lights should also be installed to improve pedestrian safety.
- There are few options to minimize cut thru traffic on Baxter Street other than closing it at Kings Drive or Queens Road. If neighborhood residents want to have the street closed, they should pursue the idea with the City's Department of Transportation. Until a decision is reached, traffic should be slowed down on Baxter Street. The speed limit on Baxter Street and some of the other streets in the neighborhood (Luther, Amherst, Cherry) should be changed from 35 mph to 25 mph.
- The Charlotte Police Department should increase its monitoring for speeding along Baxter Street.

C. Housing

In 1976 when Cherry was designated as a Community Development Target Area, the condition of the housing was the primary concern of the residents and the Cherry Community Organization. Although a substantial amount of money has been spent to upgrade housing in Cherry, it continues to be the community's primary concern.

The housing in Cherry remains in poor structural condition. Although the extent of the housing problem has not been quantified, the numerous structures that are boarded up and abandoned indicate the severity of the problem. Another indicator is the ages of the structures. Almost all the structures in the neighborhood are fifty years or older, except the Tall Oaks units and the newer units on Queens Road.

The housing problem in Cherry, however, is symptomatic of other social and economic problems. The low incomes of tenants and homeowners prevent residents from being able to afford better housing and/or to

reinvest in their properties. Incomes and wages are low because some residents are unemployed, lack marketable skills, are employed in low paying jobs, or are retired with fixed incomes. In addition to low incomes, drug abuse and other domestic problems are prevalent in the neighborhood.

To adequately address Cherry's housing problem, a focused, holistic approach is recommended. A holistic effort would entail combining the resources of housing agencies and developers along with social service and law enforcement agencies to comprehensively address the community's housing and social/economic needs. A focused approach would quickly bring about visible results considering that the neighborhood has well defined boundaries and contains only approximately 400 housing units. A similar targeted approach is currently being implemented in the Belmont Community.

Housing improvement efforts in Cherry should focus on the following objectives:

- upgrading and improving the existing housing stock
- increasing homeownership
- creating new housing opportunities
- enhancing home maintenance, financial and budgeting skills; and
- providing job training and placement opportunities to enable residents to transition out of poverty, improve their standard of living and become self sufficient.

To accomplish these objectives the following strategies are recommended:

Recommendations:

- In addition to existing efforts initiated by the City and the Cherry Community Organization to improve the neighborhood, Cherry should be targeted for a Belmont-type program. The program would utilize existing housing programs and resources to provide financial assistance to property owners and developers to renovate and build new housing in the neighborhood. Social service providers such as Employment and Training, Family and Housing Services, Mecklenburg Ministries, Department of Social Services, Charlotte Neighborhood Centers, Charlotte Housing Authority and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee should join in a coordinated effort to provide financial counselling and referral services to residents.
- The CCO owns several properties that should be renovated and sold to qualified buyers. These properties could be sold outright or structured on a lease-purchase basis. Sweat equity is another option that should be considered to provide tenants an opportunity to purchase CCO owned homes in the neighborhood.
- The CCO should also train and hire residents from the neighborhood to be rehabilitation specialists and maintenance workers. The workers could be trained to do minor repairs (i.e. painting,

caulking, and minor plumbing) on CCO owned properties, but also be available for hire to assist other property owners in the neighborhood. This work program would not only provide residents with employment opportunities, but also teach them skills that could be used in the private job market.

Improving housing conditions within Cherry will help pave the way for new moderate and middle income housing to be built in appropriate locations around the fringe of the neighborhood. The neighborhood's proximity to Uptown, picturesque view of the Uptown skyline, access to shopping, transit and employment make certain locations around Cherry ideal for high density infill housing.

Recommendations:

- Local banks should be encouraged to invest in the area to build new infill housing in appropriate locations.

D. Infrastructure

Infrastructure includes those physical amenities in a neighborhood that help it operate and make it a desirable place to live. A community's infrastructure include such things as sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and storm drains. Although some improvements have been made, generally, the condition of Cherry's infrastructure is poor. When funds were available to address these problems, the community elected to spend most of the money on other needs.

Due to the extensive improvements needed in Cherry, the neighborhood should be included in the Neighborhood Reinvestment Program. The Neighborhood Reinvestment Program provides funds to address infrastructure needs in older inner city neighborhoods. Cherry is ideal for this program. This type of focused approach would help complement public and private investments made in the neighborhood for housing improvements. Participation in the program will enable City officials to comprehensively address the infrastructure needs of the neighborhood. The following discusses specific problem areas and recommendations.

1. Drainage

Cherry has a fairly significant drainage problem. In the 1970s a drainage study was done by the Engineering Department. The study identified approximately five problem areas. These areas include:

- Baxter Street between Cherry Street and Torrence Street
- Corner of Avant Street between Main and Baxter Streets
- Luther Street between Queens Road and Eli Street
- Main Street between Avant and Eli Streets
- Waco Street southeast of Ellison Street

Recommendations:

- Each of the above identified projects should be prioritized and ranked according to the severity of the problem and funded through the Storm Drainage Utility Program as funds become available.
- The area should be surveyed and curbs and gutters installed in appropriate locations.

2. Sidewalks

There are only a few areas in the neighborhood where sidewalks do not exist. In some parts of the neighborhood there are sidewalks on both sides of the street. The existing sidewalks, however, need repairing.

Recommendations:

- The neighborhood should be surveyed to determine repair needs as well as where new sidewalks are needed.
- The following areas should be considered for placement of new sidewalks:
 - Baxter Street-between Baldwin Avenue and Queens Road
 - Ellison Street
 - Avant Street-south of Main Street
 - Third Street between Lillington Avenue and Torrence Street
 - Kings Drive between Baxter and Independence Boulevard

E. Park/Greenway

1. Neighborhood Park

Located in the middle of the neighborhood, Morgan Park is another important amenity. The park consists of a basketball court, a baseball field, a neighborhood playground and a picnic shelter.

Although the park is in fairly good condition, the benches and other picnic furniture is old and needs replacing. A serious problem in the park is crime. In the past two years, Morgan Park has become a major location for drug trafficking. Residents complain that they feel unsafe and are fearful of leaving their children unsupervised. The criminal element is beginning to push youngsters and adults out of the park. Drugs and other crimes are serious problems that must be addressed.

Recommendations:

- Replace outdated picnic benches and furniture.
- Install more street lights to increase visibility and help reduce drug trafficking.
- Increase police surveillance and drug enforcement in the park and adjacent areas.

2. Greenway

Sugar Creek runs through and along the rear of properties located on the westside of Kings Drive between Independence Boulevard and Morehead Street. This portion of the creek is a proposed greenway path. Development of the greenway will link the Midtown area to Uptown, Myers Park, Dilworth, and other surrounding neighborhoods. The greenway will provide walking and biking trails that should attract more people and help boost economic activity in the area.

Recommendation:

- Develop a detailed plan to develop this portion of the Sugar Creek Greenway. The design plan for the greenway should be included in the proposed Midtown Plan.

There is also a small drainage channel that runs along the rear of properties that front along Henley Place in the interior of the neighborhood. The channel is not well maintained and is unsightly.

Recommendation:

- The drainage channel is too small to be considered for greenway treatment. Therefore, the City's Engineering Department should increase and/or intensify maintenance efforts to regularly remove overgrown plants, debris and other trash that has been dumped into the channel.

F. Historic Resources

In 1993, Cherry will celebrate an important milestone in the history of its existence. The neighborhood will be one hundred and two years old. Cherry's ability to exist to be over one hundred years old is admirable considering the pressure it has endured.

Cherry is one of the few black neighborhoods in Charlotte to escape a full scale urban renewal effort; this prevented many of the properties from being destroyed. The City and CCO have been able to purchase several properties from absentee landlords which has also prevented properties from being destroyed.

As such, much of the architectural character and integrity that was prevalent when Cherry was first built is still somewhat intact. Many of the quaint bungalow homes and one of the original churches, Mount Zion Church of God Holiness, can still be found in Cherry.

In 1989, the Historic District Commission conducted a study of several older neighborhoods in Charlotte to possibly qualify them for national register nomination. Cherry was among the neighborhoods surveyed. In May of 1990, Cherry was selected by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources as potentially eligible for historic district designation. This designation makes the neighborhood eligible for placement on the State's Study List for the National Register of

Historic Places. Placement on the Study List is the first step towards National Register designation.

Generally, it is a great honor to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The national register designation is an official recognition that a neighborhood or individual properties have architectural, historical or cultural features worth preserving. Another benefit of this designation is that properties are protected from being adversely affected by any federally or state funded projects. Also with this designation, certain financial bonuses (tax credits) are available for qualified commercial properties.

Although tremendous benefits can be derived from historic preservation programs, low income neighborhoods can also be adversely affected. Design guidelines associated with historic preservation programs may increase the cost of a project. Another potential effect could be that the tax credits and other financial incentives that could be derived from income producing historic properties, may discourage owners from selling their property to tenants, thereby diminishing opportunities to increase homeownership in the neighborhood.

The architectural character and history of Cherry should be preserved, however, this must be done in a manner that supports the redevelopment effort.

Recommendations:

- The Historic District Commission should work with neighborhood residents and property owners to help educate them on the importance of preserving the history and character of the neighborhood and determine the most effective preservation tool(s) (Historic District, Conservation District, Design Review Team) to maintain the architectural character of the properties in the neighborhood in a manner that supports the redevelopment effort.
- Provide financial incentives to low and moderate income property owners and/or investor owners who rent to low and moderate income residents that agree to rehabilitate their properties in a manner that preserves the architectural design and character of the units.

G. Community Appearance

The appearance of a neighborhood is a critical element in determining its overall appeal and marketability as a place to live and do business. Clean yards and streets present a positive image of a neighborhood and the residents that live there.

Cherry has a fairly significant litter problem. The most serious problems appear to be with vacant lots. Property owners are not regularly maintaining their lots and are allowing them to become overgrown with weeds and littered with debris.

The businesses in the area also contribute to the area's negative appearance. Many of the businesses are old and not well maintained. Also, customers who frequent the neighborhood stores within Cherry often "hang out" or loiter and leave trash and debris around the businesses as well as on adjacent lots.

Recommendations:

- The CCO and the City's Community Improvement Department should organize an intensive neighborhood clean-up and beautification effort in and around the neighborhood. Businesses should also be encouraged to participate.
- The CCO should sponsor such beautification projects as yard of the month, best flower or vegetable garden of the month and other greening projects.
- Nurseries and garden shops should be approached by the CCO for donations of flowers, shrubs, trees, and other items to plant in yards in the neighborhoods.
- The CCO should approach local garden clubs, churches and other non-profit groups to "adopt a yard" or "adopt a block" in the neighborhood.
- The CCO and residents should select a strategic location in the neighborhood to designate as a gateway or main entry point into the neighborhood. This area should be well landscaped and a neighborhood sign or a well designed monument should be placed there.
- The Charlotte Housing Authority should regularly maintain its property and ensure that yards and trash receptacle areas are free of debris. As funds become available, the units in Tall Oaks should be appropriately landscaped.
- Business owners in the area should form a merchants association to address the overall appearance of the business area. The group could undertake such things as identifying specific problem properties and then working on the owners to improve the property or pooling resources to place trash containers in strategic locations to minimize littering. The group could also work with

the Planning Commission staff in preparing a streetscape plan for Kings Drive.

Street Trees

The large canopy trees that line the streets of Cherry are among the neighborhoods most attractive attributes. The trees contribute to the neighborhoods overall appeal and to its identity. Street trees are important fixtures in the neighborhood. Several of the trees, however, were damaged or lost due to Hurricane Hugo.

Recommendations:

- Continue to maintain the existing tree stock in the neighborhood.
- Build on the history of the neighborhood by planting Cherry trees in high visibility areas such as Morgan Park or around the neighborhood sign if one is built.
- Survey the neighborhood to determine where trees should be replaced or replanted.

H. Crime

The Charlotte Police Department describes Cherry as a high crime area. Crime statistics on the neighborhood indicate that since 1985, crime has increased in the neighborhood by 39%.

The perception of Cherry as unsafe has cast a very negative image upon the neighborhood that will be difficult to reverse. Residents' confidence in the area will determine, in large part, if they want to continue to live in the neighborhood and whether new residents will move there. Similarly, the amount of crime in the area will determine whether customers will come and shop and if businesses will stay or relocate.

Crime is an important issue that cannot be addressed directly through a land use plan. Yet, the potential success of the plan is partially dependent upon steps being taken to reduce crime in order to improve the neighborhood's overall image. Cherry must be made safe if the land use objectives and physical improvements as established in this plan are to be fully achieved and if the neighborhood is to be revitalized.

Recommendations:

- The CCO should take a lead role in organizing a resident neighborhood crime watch.
- Residents should participate in the Community Dialogue Program sponsored by the City's Community Relations Committee and the Charlotte Police Department. This program was developed to improve relations between the police and the general public. The

dialogue will give the police department an opportunity to discuss problems and educate residents on crime prevention strategies.

- The police department should increase its visibility in the neighborhood to help cut down and eventually eliminate drug trafficking in Morgan Park.
- The merchants should work together to develop crime watch strategies such as eliminating loitering outside of stores.

VII. Conclusion

The recommendations outlined in this plan are designed to make Cherry a more desirable place to live and do business. Implementation of the plan needs to start as soon as possible because the neighborhood is under tremendous development pressure. The rezoning recommendations, the neighborhood clean-up, and crime watch are important elements of the plan that can be implemented almost immediately. Upgrading the housing is another important component of the plan that should be a priority project for implementation.

Another integral part of the plan and key to its success is the role of the residents and CCO. With diminishing City funds to address neighborhood improvement projects coupled with increasing competition for these limited dollars, the CCO and residents of Cherry will need to become actively involved in the neighborhood improvement effort. Partnerships must be developed between the residents, CCO, City officials, developers, business owners, and other public and private organizations to help fund projects and implement the plan.

The CCO and residents have a big responsibility. Therefore, they should make a concerted effort to work together to address neighborhood issues and problems. The problems and disagreements between the two groups must be resolved and mutually agreed upon strategies should be developed to help improve the neighborhood. The combined spirit, commitment, and drive of the residents and CCO will be the primary catalyst and stimulus needed to help upgrade and make positive changes in Cherry.

Appendix

Table 1

EXISTING LAND USE

<u>Type</u>	<u>Approximate Acreage</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Residential	78.76	48.12
Retail Trade	29.13	17.91
Open Land	23.73	14.59
Office	14.48	8.90
Institutional	9.71	5.97
Services	3.87	2.38
Trans/Comm/UTIL	2.23	1.37
Wholesale Trade	1.21	.76
Total Acreage	163.12	100.0

Source: Mecklenburg County Tax Files 1989

Table 2

Existing Zoning

<u>Type</u>	<u>Approximate Acreage</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
R-9	29.98	16.53
R-12	2.05	1.25
R-6MF	62.26	38.16
R-6MFH	3.91	2.39
B-1	1.47	.95
B-2	50.88	31.19
B-2(CD)	1.13	.69
O-6	9.77	5.98
O-6(CD)	4.67	2.86
Total	163.12	100.00

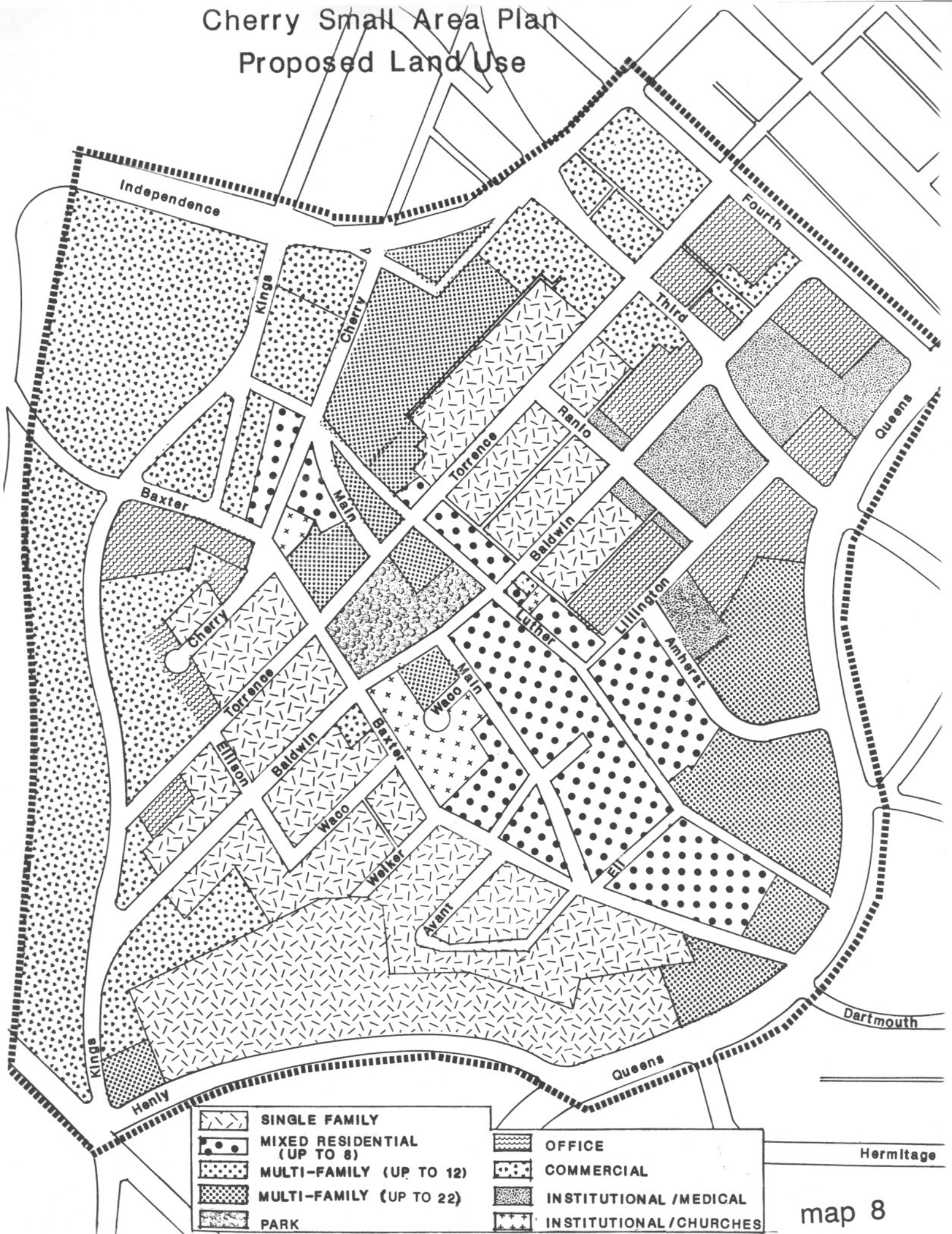
Source: Mecklenburg County Tax Files 1989

Table 3

Proposed Rezonings

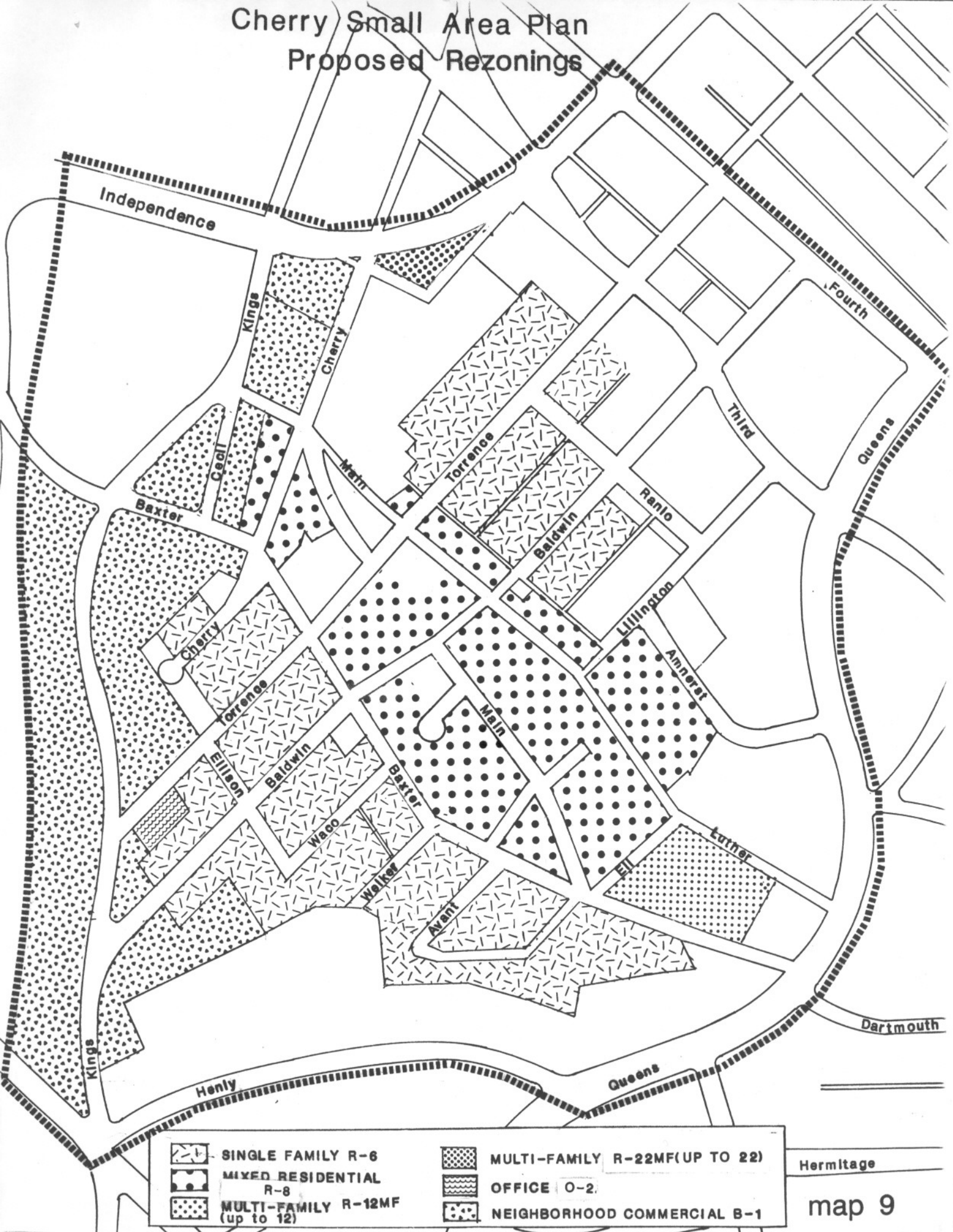
<u>Rezoning Recommendation</u>	<u>Parcel #'s</u>
1. Rezone R-22MF, B-1, B-2 to R-6	12511301, 12511314-17, 12511406-22, 12511516-23, 12521406-09, 12521501-18, 12521601-17, 12521701-04, 12521711-18, 12522405-19, 12524343-70, 12524375-76, 12524382-84, 12524401-09, 12524412-17, 12524328-33, 1254501-06, 12524373, 12524339-42
2. Rezone R-22MF, B-1, B-2 to R-8	12511401-05, 12511502-05, 12511524, 12522403-04, 12522501, 12522503-04, 12523201-08, 12523220-26, 12523401-03, 12523405-27, 12522102 (part of)
3. Rezone B-2 to B-1	12521307-20, 12521321, 12509201, 12521326-27, 12521329, 12521412-30, 12521709, 12522201-03, 12524372, 12524381, 12522102-07
4. Rezone B-2 to O-2	12521705
5. Rezone R-22MF to R-12MF	12523301-06, 12523310-17
6. Rezone B-2, O-2 to R-22MF	12522426, 12522301-03







Cherry Small Area Plan Proposed Land Use



	SINGLE FAMILY		OFFICE
	MIXED RESIDENTIAL (UP TO 8)		COMMERCIAL
	MULTI-FAMILY (UP TO 12)		INSTITUTIONAL / MEDICAL
	MULTI-FAMILY (UP TO 22)		INSTITUTIONAL / CHURCHES
	PARK		

Cherry Small Area Plan Proposed Rezoning



	SINGLE FAMILY R-6		MULTI-FAMILY R-22MF (UP TO 22)
	MIXED RESIDENTIAL R-8		OFFICE O-2
	MULTI-FAMILY R-12MF (up to 12)		NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL B-1

Hermitage

map 9