

# EASTLAND AREA PLAN



## VOLUME 1: CONCEPT PLAN

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission

Adopted by City Council June 23, 2003

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*The Eastland Area Plan* refines the *Eastside Strategy Plan*, which was adopted in 2001, by providing further guidance for the Eastland area, shown on Map 1. The *Eastland Area Plan* provides recommendations for land use, community design, the transportation system, parks and greenways, community safety, and a community organization. It was initiated in response to issues that arose during the *Eastside Strategy Plan* process. That plan recognized changes occurring in the Eastland area and recommended further planning designed to direct and support positive change.

This plan is intended to provide guidance to the real estate community and area residents, as well as local government officials. It established a vision for the transformation of the Eastland Mall and surrounding properties into a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented town center. It outlines the creation of an international district along Central Avenue and a mixed-use corridor along Albemarle Road.

A group of stakeholders worked with City staff to develop this plan. In addition, four public workshops and an open house were held to gather citizen input.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key issues and opportunities identified during the Eastland Area planning process are highlighted below.

### ISSUES

- Outdated strip malls and inadequate transportation system
- Loss of retailers and commercial disinvestment
- Not located on Interstate or outerbelt highway
- New competition in outlying areas
- Weak office market
- Abundance of disconnected multi-family projects
- Poor aesthetic quality on major corridors
- Changing demographics
- Low owner/renter ratio
- Area's image
- Perception that area has high level of crime
- Citizen concerns about schools

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Central location
- Density of population
- Attractive and affordable neighborhoods
- Availability of affordable retail and office space
- Reuse and redevelopment opportunities
- Potential park and greenway system
- Transit hub proposed
- International merchants
- Community commitment

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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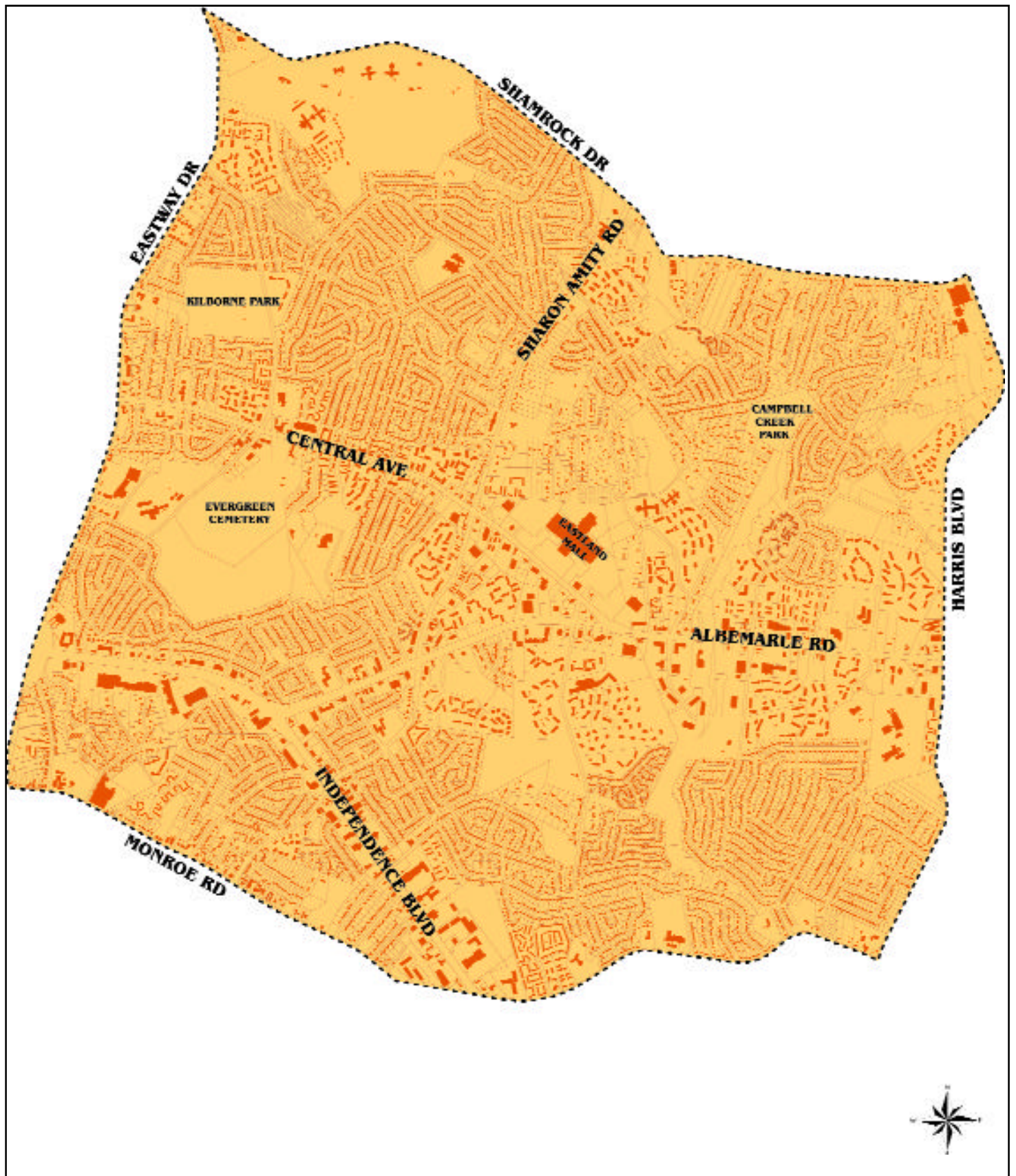
## VISION AND GOALS

The vision for the Eastland area is of a **vibrant community defined by a unique town center, attractive mixed-use corridors, and distinct gateways**. It is a community consisting of quiet neighborhoods with a **variety and balance of housing types** connected to quality schools, sufficient shopping and dining options, attractive parks and greenways, centers of recreation and social activities, and preserved open space. The Eastland area vision places an emphasis on **transportation choices** that include easy pedestrian and bike circulation, transit services, and automobile travel as part of a well planned internal transportation network. Most importantly, the vision for the Eastland area is that of a **unified community** known for the celebration of its diverse population.

Specific goals of the *Eastland Area Plan* are to:

- **Increase the Economic Viability of the Eastland Area:** A primary objective of the *Eastland Area Plan* is to provide support for new investment in the area and to demonstrate viable economic opportunities. An aggressive reinvestment strategy is needed for the Eastland area to make it a healthy community that can retain and attract residents and businesses. If the area declines, it is likely to suffer from economic stagnation, deferred maintenance, limited access to new capital and a shortage of shopping, recreational and work opportunities.
- **Create a Balanced Mixture of Land Uses with a Community Center:** The long-term health of the study area will require a well-balanced mixture of land uses consisting of a full range of housing types, recreational and open space opportunities, services, shopping, entertainment and places of work. These will be designed and organized around a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented center that serves as the "downtown" for the Eastside.
- **Support Strong Neighborhoods:** A major component of this plan is to support the strong neighborhoods with the study area and to encourage their long-term sustainability, while recognizing that neighborhoods change over time. To create positive change, area neighborhoods will require on-going investment, an influx of new residents with a higher proportion of owners to renters, and vigilance to avoid unanticipated and negative changes.
- **Improve Aesthetic Quality:** The appearance of properties impacts the area's desirability. One goal of this plan is to improve the aesthetic quality of the study area's built environment, including commercial properties, office parks, multi-family properties, and single family neighborhoods.
- **Provide a Multi-Modal and Connected Transportation System:** An objective of this plan is to encourage a multi-modal transportation system that accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles and public transit. A primary component of this objective is to develop a well-connected system of streets, bikeways and sidewalks between different portions of the study area.
- **Ensure a Safe Community:** Ensuring a safe community is one of the most vital elements of this plan. For people to be attracted to live, work, shop and play in the Eastland area, it will be necessary for the area to be safe, both in perception and in reality.

# MAP 1: STUDY AREA



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- **Change the Perception of the Eastland Area:** Negative community perceptions create a shadow of undesirability, which contributes to a decline in property values, disinvestment, and vacancies. Therefore, an objective of this plan is to change the public perception of the Eastland area and to nurture a strong and positive image of the Eastland community.
- **Embrace/Reflect Area Diversity:** Diversity of people is a defining and valued characteristic of the neighborhoods surrounding Eastland Mall. A primary objective of this plan is to embrace and to build upon this unique quality with a range and balance of shopping choices, housing types, and places of entertainment and recreation.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations contained in the plan are summarized below.

- **Town Center:** A town center with Eastland Mall as its anchor is envisioned as the heart of the future Eastland community. The long-term vision for the Eastland Mall site, adjacent commercial and multi-family properties, and the land across Central Avenue is a compact, pedestrian-oriented town center. This town center will become the gathering place for the Eastside, as well as the symbolic center.
- **International District:** Central Avenue will reflect Charlotte's growing international community and will provide international shopping opportunities for all citizens. This plan recommends expanding upon the naturally emerging international district on Central Avenue. This area should be marketed to the entire Charlotte community as "the" international district of Charlotte and should be designed to meet the needs of those using the area frequently while providing a unique experience for those occasionally visiting the area.
- **Albemarle Road Mixed-Use Corridor:** Albemarle Road will be revitalized into an attractive, pedestrian-friendly corridor with a mix of retail, office, residential, and civic uses. Short-term strategies should be focused on marketing and reuse of existing space. However, in the long-term this plan recommends redevelopment of retail sites into multi-use/mixed-use development.
- **Existing Neighborhoods:** The existing neighborhoods will continue to be the greatest strength of the Eastland area. Emphasis will be placed on insuring that the neighborhoods remain strong. Specific neighborhood strategies include connecting neighborhoods, monitoring the health of area neighborhoods, and proactively marketing these neighborhoods to potential buyers.
- **Multi-Family Communities:** Multi-family communities will be a vital component of the Eastland area, providing a viable alternative to single family detached housing. However, in order to maintain the stability of the area, it is strongly recommended that new multi-family properties be owner-occupied rather than rental property. Maintenance and marketing of these multi-family communities is a top priority. Involving renters in community activities so that they will feel a sense of ownership and accountability for the Eastland area will also be important.

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- **Community Design:** Increased attention to community design elements will improve the appearance and function of the Eastland area. Streetscape improvements to public property, to improve both the appearance and pedestrian-friendliness of streets, will be vital. In addition, changes to private property, such as improved signage, enhanced landscaping, and façade improvements are recommended. Future development should meet guidelines for compact, pedestrian-friendly development that is connected to surrounding properties.
  - **Transportation and Circulation:** The area's transportation system will allow people to circulate safely and conveniently on foot, by bike, on transits, or by automobile. Pedestrian-oriented improvements to streets, as well as the addition of a new transit hub to the proposed town center, will give people more transportation choices.
  - **Parks and Greenways:** The Eastland area will have a fully developed and extensive park and greenway system that provides recreational and open space amenities for all area residents. The addition of a town square as part of the town center, improvements to existing parks and acquisition of new park and greenway land, and increased programming in area parks are recommended.
  - **Community Safety:** The Eastland area will provide a safe location for people to live, shop, work and recreate. Recommendations include focusing on crime "hot spots", a concerted effort to work with the international community to address crime, and formation of an Eastland Area crime watch program.
  - **Community Organization:** A focused Eastland Association will be a key ingredient in the implementation of the recommendations in this plan and the long-term success of the Eastland area. This organization might take on the following activities: marketing the area; recruiting businesses; providing a communications network for area residents, business owners, and property owners; serving as support for area merchants; sponsoring special events; and coordinating with local government.



# INTRODUCTION

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## WHY THE NEED FOR THIS PLAN?

Eastland Mall opened in the fall of 1974 to serve the rapidly developing single family neighborhoods located in East Charlotte. These neighborhoods continued to develop after the mall opened. By the early 1980's, the focus of development had shifted from single family neighborhoods to multi-family housing and commercial strip development along the area's primary corridors such as Albemarle Road and Independence Boulevard. Today, the Eastland area is again

experiencing change with a large influx of international residents, aging homeowners, a declining public perception and areas of economic disinvestment.

A community in a rapid state of change, such as the Eastland area, affects not only the residents and the businesses of the immediate area, but it also impacts the adjacent neighborhoods, public schools and commercial centers. This plan has been undertaken to direct change in the Eastland area, ensuring that the change in the area is positive and supports the area's long-term viability. Directing change requires a strong, cohesive, and compelling community vision. The primary purpose of this plan is to provide that vision and to identify the specific strategies that will be utilized to achieve the vision.



## STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

The Eastland study area is 16 square miles and is located four to six miles east of Uptown Charlotte. The area is located well intown from the I-485 freeway loop, which is partially completed. The Eastland study area

boundaries, as shown on Map 1, are Eastway Drive on the west, W.T. Harris Boulevard on the East, Monroe and Idlewild Roads on the South, and Shamrock Drive and Hickory Grove Road on the North. Development within the study area includes quiet single family neighborhoods, large concentrations of multi-family housing, a regional shopping center, auto-oriented commercial corridors, small concentrations of office development and a number of schools, parks and religious institutions.

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

In January of 2001, the City of Charlotte and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission engaged Village Solutions Company to collect market research for the Eastland study area and to develop recommendations designed to enhance and revitalize the community.

A stakeholder group of leaders from the surrounding area was established to monitor the plan. During the planning process, a number of stakeholder meetings, four public workshops and a final open house were conducted to obtain community input. Based on the resulting community input, additional background research, sound planning and development principles, and initial recommendations from Village Solutions, City of Charlotte staff has developed the recommendations found in *Volume 1 - The Concept Plan*. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and the Charlotte City Council for review and adoption. Additional public input opportunities with the Planning Commission and City Council will be provided prior to final adoption of a plan for the Eastland area.

*The Plan Implementation Program - Volume 2* identifies strategies to implement the Concept Plan. This is not intended to be an adopted document. Instead, it will provide directions on how to carry out the plan recommendations.

## ROLE OF THE PLAN

When adopted, the *Eastland Area Plan* will serve a range of purposes. This plan will:

- **Create a Vision:** Create a positive, community-wide vision for the Eastland Study Area.
- **Provide Research:** Provide background research to support the plan recommendations and to support future public and private investment within the study area.
- **Outline Appropriate Land Use and Community Design Recommendations:** Provide a basis for public policy decisions concerning land use and development, including new regulatory measures, if required.
- **Create Value:** Create value by highlighting the area's economic development potential, identifying new development opportunities for underutilized properties, and presenting means of enhancing existing businesses and properties.
- **Define Catalyst Sites:** Define development scenarios for various catalyst locations within the study area to serve as a models for future development and redevelopment.
- **Identify a Potential Program for Public Improvements:** Recommend potential public facilities, infrastructure, services, and other improvements designed to enhance the appearance and function of the area.
- **Outline a Plan for Implementation:** Identify a range of both public and private sector actions that will help to implement the vision described in this plan.
- **Encourage the Development of a Unique Marketplace:** Encourage the creation of a unique and varied marketplace by building upon the current assets of the community, its affordable real estate values and reasonable costs of conducting business.



# PLAN GOALS

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The goals listed below reflect the interests expressed by Eastland area residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders. The specific recommendations contained later in this plan are designed to address these goals.

- **Increase the Economic Viability of the Eastland Area:** A primary objective of the *Eastland Area Plan* is to provide support for new investment in the area and to demonstrate viable economic opportunities. An aggressive reinvestment strategy is needed for the Eastland area to make it a healthy community that can retain and attract residents and businesses. If the area declines, it is likely to suffer from economic stagnation, deferred maintenance, limited access to new capital and a shortage of shopping, recreational and work opportunities.
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# EXISTING CONDITIONS

Thorough study of existing conditions is an important means of identifying issues and opportunities for the Eastland study area. In addition, existing conditions provide a benchmark from which to measure future progress. For this study, existing conditions have been examined for:

- Land use and zoning
- Community design
- Transportation system
- Open space and greenways
- Community safety
- Area demographics
- Economic conditions
- Market trends



## LAND USE AND ZONING

Tax records indicate that about 70% of the land within the study area is currently occupied by neighborhoods, which consist of single-family homes, parks and greenways, schools, and religious institutions (see Map 2: Existing Land Use). These quiet neighborhoods are bisected and surrounded by commercial uses and multi-family housing. In total, the study area contains approximately 6,000 single-family homes, 10,000 multi-family units, and over 600 retail businesses. Retail space in the Eastland study area totals approximately 2.8 million square feet, and office space totals about 1.3 million square feet. The majority of the area's commercial space is located along three corridors: Central Avenue, Independence Boulevard and Albemarle Road.

Further description of key land use elements is provided below.

- **Regional Mall:** Eastland Mall is located at the center of the study area. It consists of four department store spaces, specialty in-line shops, a food court, a movie theatre, and an indoor ice skating rink. The mall has about 1,062,000 square feet and over 6,000 parking spaces. There is potential to recapture some parking areas and convert these areas to other uses and amenities. The mall is zoned B-1SCD and CC (see Map 3: Existing Zoning).

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

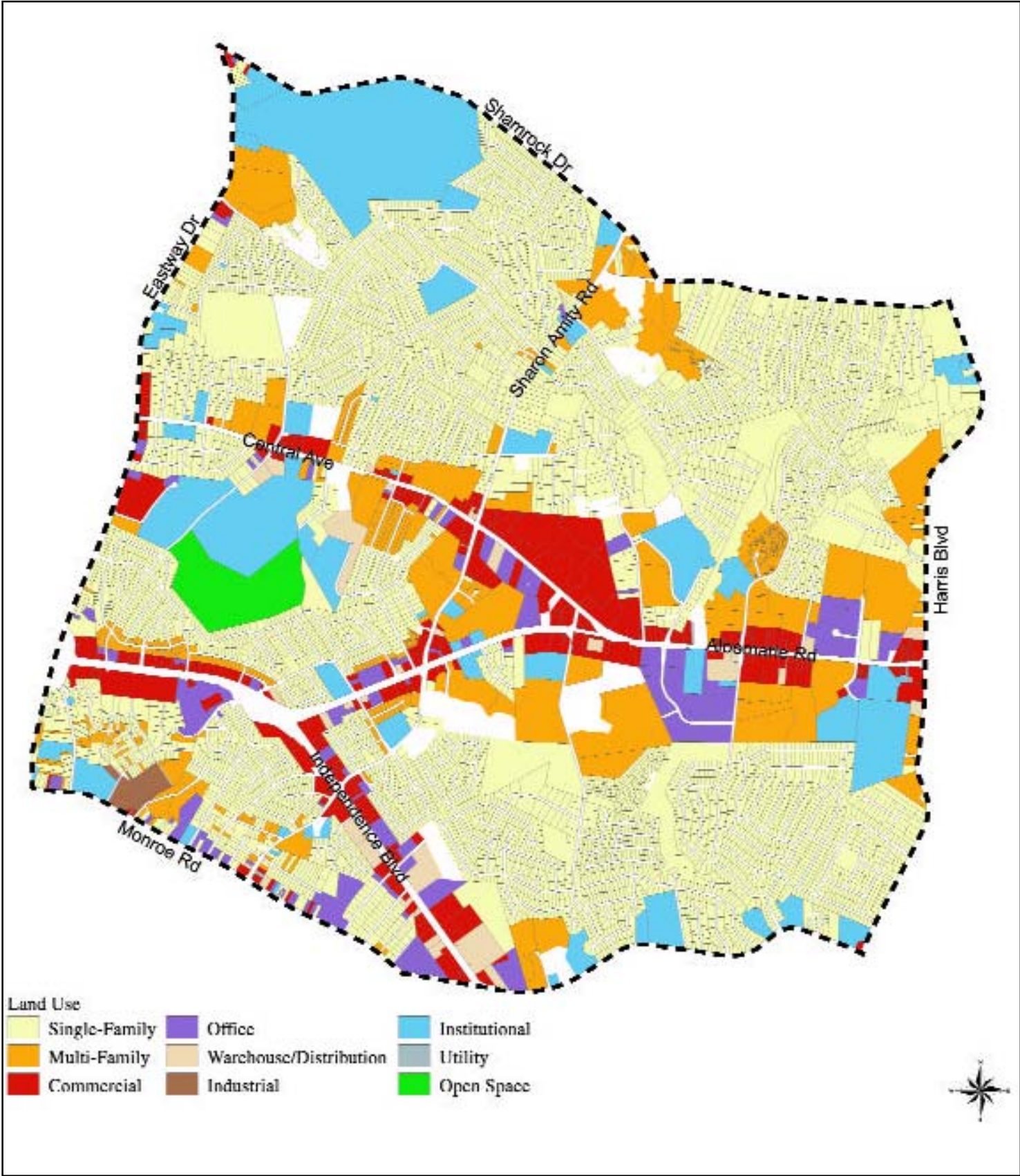
- **Retail Development:** With the exception of Eastland Mall, the area's retail uses are typically zoned B-1 or B-2 and consist primarily of numerous small strip centers, such as Reddman Square, Four Seasons Plaza, Farm Pond Shops, and Darby Acres, and auto dependent businesses such as fast food restaurants, convenience stores and gas stations. These uses are primarily located along the area's major corridors - Independence Boulevard, Monroe Road, Central Avenue, Albemarle Road, and Sharon Amity Road. The corridors are also fronted with multi-family housing, religious institutions, and some office development. There are two vacant big box stores as a result of national or regional circumstances: Upton's through bankruptcy and Hannafords through consolidation with the Food Lion chain. The proliferation of free standing, auto-oriented retail uses within the study area results in numerous driveway cuts, limited landscaping, and large parking areas separating most buildings.
- **Office Uses:** Office development in the study area is limited, and concentrated in four locations: Independence Boulevard between Albemarle Road and Sharon Amity Road; Albemarle Road near Independence Boulevard; Albemarle Road between Reddman Road and Farm Pond Lane; and Central Avenue between Sharon Amity Road and Albemarle Road. The area's largest office complex is the Charlotte East Center, a suburban style facility of 450,000 square feet located on Albemarle Road at Executive Center Drive. These office sites in the study area are typically zoned O-1 or O-2.
- **Residential Neighborhoods:** The residential neighborhoods within the study area were developed primarily in the 1950's, 60's and 70's. Some area neighborhoods have schools, parks and/or churches located within the neighborhood. These neighborhoods were primarily designed to house families in a suburban environment. Lot sizes are typically 1/4 to 1/2 acre and most neighborhoods are zoned R-3 or R-4.



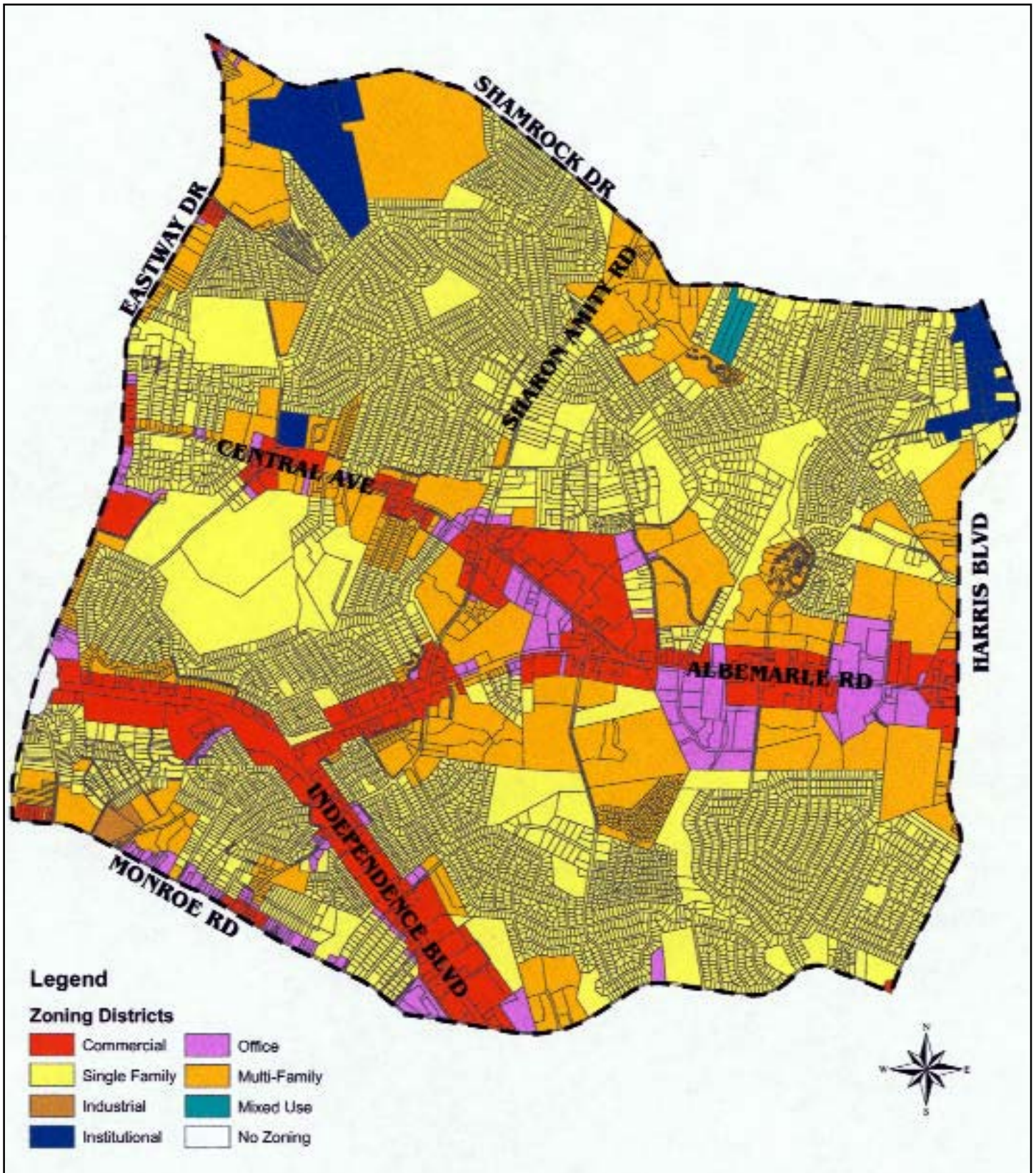


- **Multi-Family Developments:** Numerous independent multi-family developments are located on or near the study area's major corridors. Major cross-streets that also have concentrations of multi-family development along them include Kilborne Drive, Reddman Road, Wilora Lake Drive, Farm Pond Lane and Regal Oaks Drive. The study area's multi-family developments are typically built at densities of between 8 and 12 units per acre and under a range of multi-family zoning districts. There are also some elderly housing complexes within the study area such as the Methodist Home on Shamrock Drive.
- **Civic Uses:** There are a number of religious institutions, schools, and parks located within the study area. The Hickory Grove Branch Library and Fire Station #23 are located on Harris Boulevard in the northeast part of the study area, and a U.S. Post Office is located on Albemarle Road at Winterhaven Drive. The Charlie 2 police district office is located just outside of the study area on Central Avenue at Eastway Drive. Civic institutions that are unique assets to the community include the Charlotte Museum of History and the Hezekiah Alexander House located on Shamrock Drive, east of Eastway Drive.

# MAP 2: EXISTING LAND USE



# MAP 3: EXISTING ZONING





# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## COMMUNITY DESIGN

Community design impacts the way an area functions, the area's aesthetic quality, and its image. Most important are the main travel corridors because these are the areas that are most frequently experienced by both area residents and non-residents.

The major commercial corridors within the Eastland study area were developed incrementally, mostly during a twenty-year period between 1965 and 1985. There is a mixture of uses along these corridors - retail, office, both multi-family and single family housing, and civic uses such as churches. These uses are arranged in a pattern of linear commercial strips and office developments frequently backing up to multi-family communities, which often front single-family neighborhoods. Most of the non-residential uses were designed solely for persons traveling by car.

Most developments along the study area's major corridors possess a number of common community design elements that reflect the prevailing planning and development philosophy of the time at which these properties were developed. These elements are described below:

- Commercial developments have large parking lots in front of the buildings, extensive signage, numerous driveways, and limited landscaping.
- Developments are separated with few or no vehicular or pedestrian connections between them.
- Public rights-of-way are unimproved, with little landscaping, sidewalks at the back of curb and no amenities.

Improving the quality of the area's community design is a major component of the recommendations in this plan.



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The Eastland area's transportation system is composed of four primary elements: streets, transit, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities. Each of these is discussed below and shown on Map 4: Existing Transportation Facilities.

- **Streets:** There are three major thoroughfares that travel through the study area: Central Avenue, Albemarle Road, Independence Boulevard and Sharon Amity Road. Independence Boulevard, which is being converted to an expressway, is also located in the study area. Other thoroughfares serve as boundaries for the study area. These are Monroe Road, Idlewild Road, Harris Boulevard, Shamrock Drive, and Eastway Drive.

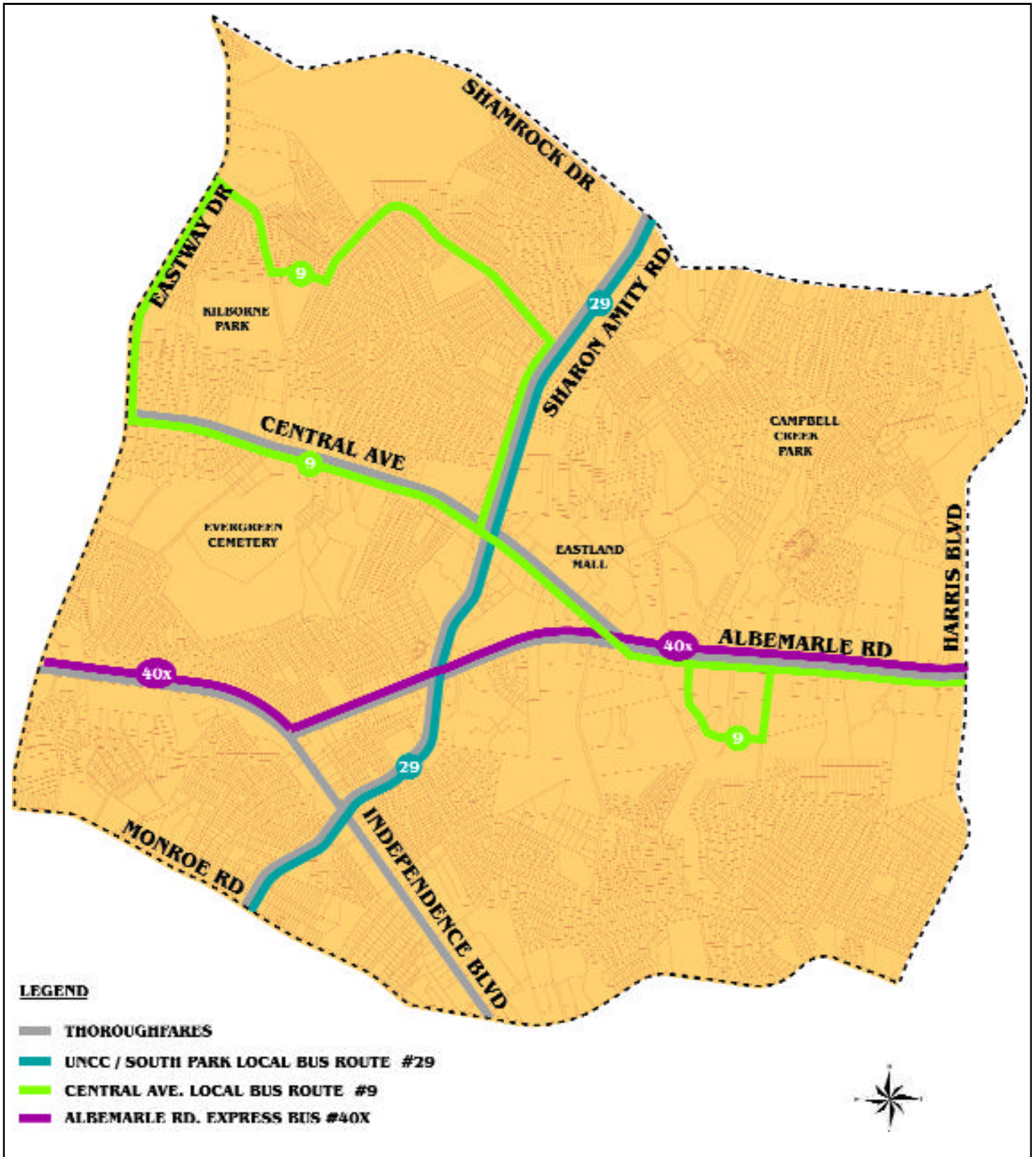
Central Avenue and Albemarle Road are major thoroughfares that run in an east/west direction. These two roads converge just beyond the Eastland Mall site, with Albemarle Road continuing past that point. Central Avenue carries traffic from the center city to Albemarle Road while Albemarle Road travels from Independence Boulevard out to the eastern most portion of Charlotte. Streetscape improvements that will add sidewalks and landscaping are currently under construction for both of these roads. The improvements to Central Avenue will also include a landscaped median with intermittent turn lanes. Plans are also underway for improvements to the Albemarle Road/Harris Boulevard/Lawyers Road intersection. The likely solution for this congested area will include grade separation of Albemarle and Harris, with additional road relocations to facilitate a suitable land use pattern.

Independence Boulevard is a major thoroughfare located in the southwest corner of the study area. This road carries a high volume of commuter traffic from southeast Charlotte, Matthews, and Union County to Charlotte's center city. It is presently being reconstructed (as a limited access expressway with a center HOV lane.)

Sharon Amity Road is one of Charlotte's primary circumferential roads and connects the Eastland area with Independence Boulevard, as well as neighborhoods across Independence Boulevard, such as Cotswold. Sharon Amity Road also links the Eastland Mall site with residential neighborhoods located northeast of the mall.



# MAP 4: EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are a number of minor thoroughfares and collector streets that feed into these major thoroughfares. While the innermost portion of the study area has a relatively well connected street network, the street system becomes more disconnected in the outer portions of the study area. In some cases, street connections have even been barricaded in order to prevent cut-through traffic.

Like many areas of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the Eastland area has experienced growing traffic volumes as outlying areas have developed. This problem has been exacerbated by disconnected streets and the need for drivers to use major streets, even when making short trips within the Eastland area. Over the years, roadway widening and intersection improvements have helped to alleviate the increase in peak hour congestion. However, there is little or no opportunity to make additional street improvements to mitigate congestion without having severe negative impacts on the livability of the Eastland area. The most recent traffic counts for roads within the area are in Table 1.



**Transit:** Three Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) bus routes serve the study area, converging generally near the Eastland Mall. Route 9 runs from Uptown along Central Avenue and Albemarle Road, looping near Harris Boulevard. It runs about 4 times per hour in each direction, more frequently during rush hour. Route 9 is by far the most heavily traveled route in the system, with average daily ridership of 4,223, or roughly 9.5% of the system total. The Eastland Mall bus stop is the system's busiest, with 296 boardings per weekday. Express Route 40x connects the area to Uptown using Independence Boulevard and also extends to sites further out Albemarle and Lawyers Roads. It runs one way only toward Uptown during morning rush hour, and out of town in the afternoon. Route 29 is a circumferential transit route that runs along Sharon Amity Road, extending to South Park and to the University City area. It runs about once per hour in each direction.

**TABLE 1:** Adjusted Average Daily Traffic Counts

Street	Location	Count	Year
<b>EAST-WEST</b>			
Central Avenue	west of Kilborne Dr	37,600	2000
Central Avenue	west of Sharon Amity Rd	38,500	2000
Central Avenue	east of Sharon Amity Rd	27,300	2000
Albemarle Road	west of Sharon Amity Rd	34,000	2000
Albemarle Road	east of Starkwood Dr	45,300	2000
Albemarle Road	east of Farm Pond Ln	42,900	2000
Independence Blvd	east of Albemarle Rd	97,000	2001
<b>NORTH-SOUTH</b>			
Kilborne Drive	north of Central Av	12,500	2000
Norland Drive	south of Central Av	5,400	2001
Sharon Amity Road	north of Central Av	55,300	2000
Sharon Amity Road	north of Albemarle Rd	35,200	2000
Sharon Amity Road	north of Independence Bl	33,300	2000
Farm Pond Lane	south of Riding Trail Rd	5,000	2001
Harris Blvd	south of Trysting Rd	40,900	2001
Harris Blvd	north of Idlewild Rd	36,600	2001

Source: Charlotte Department of Transportation

# EXISTING CONDITIONS



CATS has proposed a bus rapid transit system along Independence Boulevard for the southeast transit corridor. An Eastland Area Community Transit Center will provide connections to the southeast transit route. Plans also include a traditional streetcar line on Central Avenue, connecting Eastland Mall to downtown Charlotte. This streetcar line is not a part of the planning for station areas along the City's five principal transit corridors.

- **Sidewalks/Pedestrian Facilities:** Although sidewalks exist along most of the area's thoroughfares, these sidewalks are frequently only 4 to 5 feet wide and are located adjacent to the curb, placing pedestrians close to high volumes of traffic traveling at high speeds. New wider sidewalks placed away from the street curb are planned for Central Avenue and Albemarle Road.

It is notable that a continuous sidewalk does not exist along the frontage of Eastland Mall where considerable foot traffic occurs, and the mall site does not have sidewalks that connect the mall's entrances to the surrounding thoroughfares. Instead, pedestrians must cut through the parking lots and walk on the edge of the entrance driveways to get to the road. This is typical of most commercial development within the study area.

Sidewalks are also lacking on many of the area's neighborhood streets. Where they do exist, they are frequently only on one side of the road and/or are located at the back of curb.

- **Bicycle Facilities:** There are no bicycle facilities within the study area at this time. The Bicycle Suitability Map, recently completed for the county, rated all of the area's thoroughfares as requiring extreme caution. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bicycle Transportation Plan, adopted in 1999, recommends that bicycle facilities be added to all existing thoroughfares as they are widened or improved and to any new thoroughfares that are constructed. In addition, the plans for Central Avenue include addition of a dedicated bike lane between Eastway Drive and Sharon Amity Road.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## PARKS AND GREENWAYS

The study area has six public parks. These facilities are described below and shown on Map 5: Existing Parks and Greenways.

- **Evergreen Forest:** Located between Central Avenue and Independence Boulevard near Eastway Drive, this park facility has been created on approximately 120 acres of surplus Evergreen Cemetery property. It is planned to be used primarily as a nature preserve. It will also be linked to the playground areas of the two adjacent schools, which will be upgraded to serve the active recreational needs of the community.
- **Kilborne Park:** This park is located on Kilborne Drive. It consists of 48 acres, including athletic fields, tennis courts, playground facilities, and a walking trail.
- **Methodist Home Park:** This park is located on Eastway Drive and Shamrock Road. It consists of 29 acres that include athletic fields, basketball courts, playground facilities, and a recreation center with a gymnasium, stage, locker rooms, and game and craft rooms. There are plans to connect the park to the future Briar Creek Greenway which to link to the Chantilly and Plaza Midwood neighborhoods. Hezekiah Alexander homestead and Charlotte Museum of History are located on nearby parcels.
- **Campbell Creek Park:** Located north of Idlewild Creek/Campbell Creek between Hickory Grove Road and Albemarle Road, this neighborhood park of 20 acres has trails, playground facilities, volleyball facilities, and a multi-purpose field. The park is planned to tie into the future Idlewild Creek/Campbell Creek Greenway.
- **Albemarle Road Park:** Located south of Albemarle Road and along W.T. Harris Boulevard, this is a 17-acre park that includes a playground and a recreation center with a gymnasium, stage, locker rooms, and game and craft rooms.
- **Cedarwood Park:** Located on Reddman Road south of Albemarle Road, this 8-acre neighborhood park includes a playground and a picnic shelter.





# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Because of the unique combination of land uses that come together within the study area, analysis of public safety statistics is complex. The largest mass of land consists of single-family neighborhoods. Typical offenses occurring at Eastland Mall are generally not directly related to the surrounding population but tend to distort neighborhood statistics slightly. The large concentration of multi-family properties also is a factor in the overall statistics.

Below is a tabulation of reported offenses in the study area for the past three years, categorized by type. Violent crimes include homicide, rape and sex offenses, robberies, and aggravated assaults. Property related crimes include burglary, larceny, and auto theft. Non-aggregated assault, vandalism, and traffic offenses were tracked separately because of relatively large occurrences but lesser degree of seriousness. The "all other" category includes a wide range of infrequent events, non-violent crimes, and non-offenses, such as forgery, embezzlement, suicide, and missing persons.

To account for the impact of the mall on the statistics, the offenses were separated further between those occurring at Eastland Mall and those in the remaining area. The resulting crime statistics are shown in Table 2.



**TABLE 2:** Crime Statistics, 1999 - 2001

	Overall Area			Mall			Non-mall		
	1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
Number of offenses:									
Violent Crime	531	510	640	32	26	28	499	484	612
Non-aggravated Assault	686	671	645	24	32	27	662	639	618
Property Crime	3,601	3,231	3,267	452	381	504	3,149	2,850	2,763
Vandalism/ Damage to Property	655	625	579	42	26	32	613	599	547
Traffic related	928	886	834	70	67	56	858	819	778
All others	810	768	780	131	120	118	679	648	662
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,211</b>	<b>6,691</b>	<b>6,745</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>6,460</b>	<b>6,039</b>	<b>5,980</b>
Percent change from prior year:									
Violent Crime		-4%	25%		-19%	8%		-3%	26%
Non-aggravated Assault		-2%	-4%		33%	-16%		-3%	-3%
Property Crime		-10%	1%		-16%	32%		-9%	-3%
Vandalism/ Damage to Property		-5%	-7%		-38%	23%		-2%	-9%
Traffic related		-5%	-6%		-4%	-16%		-5%	-5%
All others		-5%	2%		-8%	-2%		-5%	2%



# EXISTING CONDITIONS



In the overall study area, the year-to-year trend shows decreases in offenses, across the board, from 1999 to 2000. In 2001, there was a marked increase of 25% in violent crime (compared to a citywide increase of 9%), and a minor 1% increase in property crimes. The rates at Eastland Mall showed reductions in most categories for 2000. There were increases in property crime and vandalism for 2001. After subtracting mall-related offenses, the overall neighborhood rates show steadily decreasing rates in all categories except for violent crime in 2001.

The police department mapped "hot spots" for violent crime (see Map 6) and property-related crimes in the "non-mall" study area for 2001. These maps show areas of concentration or relative density of offenses. The hot spots concentrate along the major roadways in the study area. The most common violent crimes were armed robbery and aggravated assault. Hot spots for violent crimes correspond mostly to a few multi-family concentrations, and to a lesser extent to the neighborhood commercial centers along Central Avenue. Much of the crime is a result of the victimization of the area's immigrant population. On a positive note, the single-family residential areas spread through the study area were not concentrations for these crimes.

The study area is located within portions of three different police districts. The largest portion, which includes Eastland Mall, is with the Charlie 2 District. The district office for Charlie 2 is located just outside of the study area on Eastway Drive at Central Avenue.

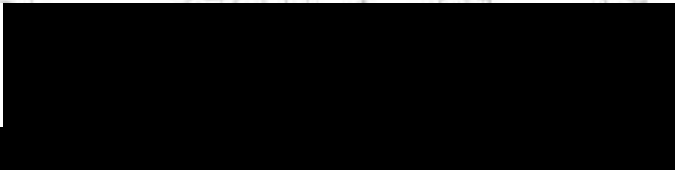
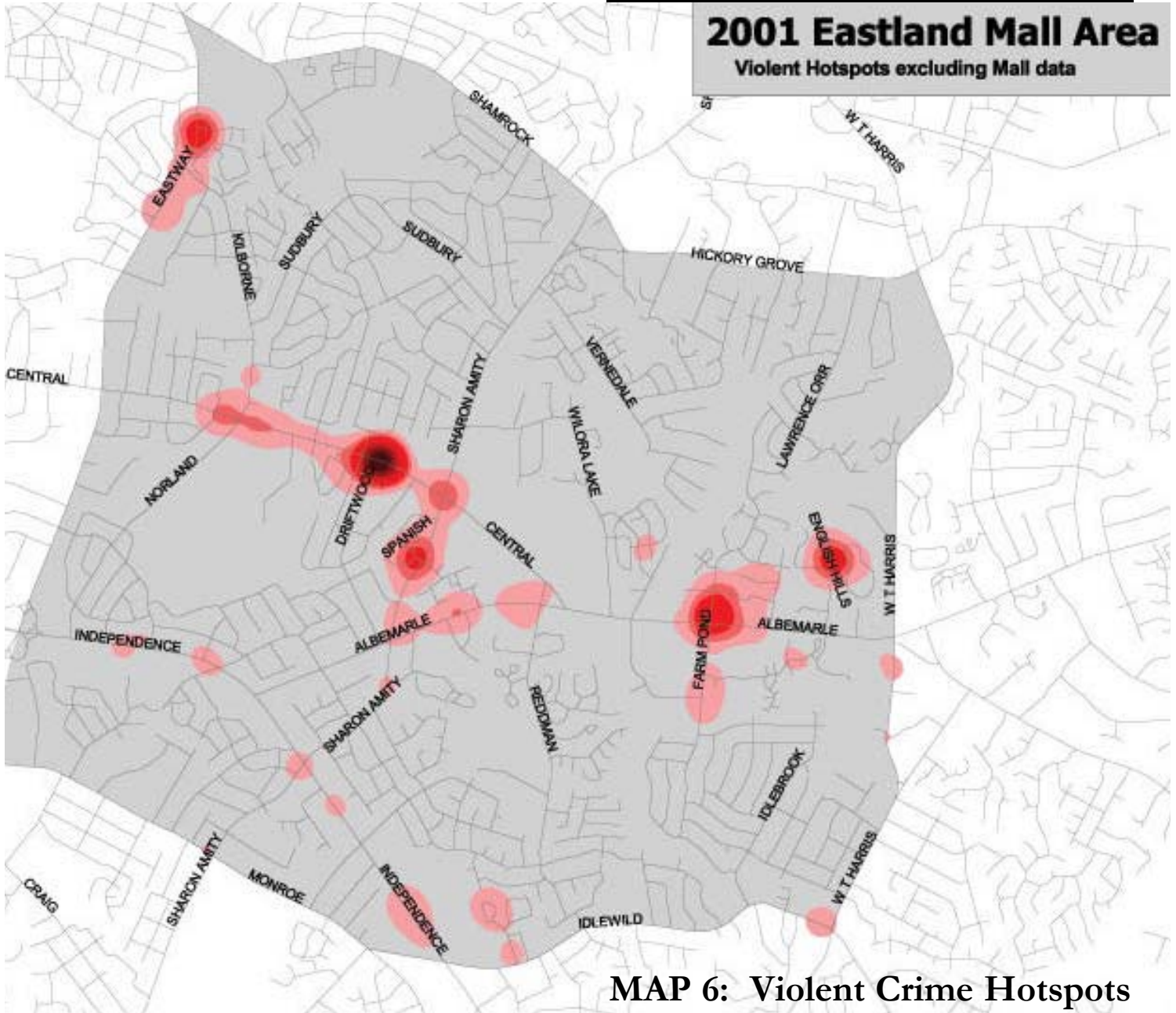
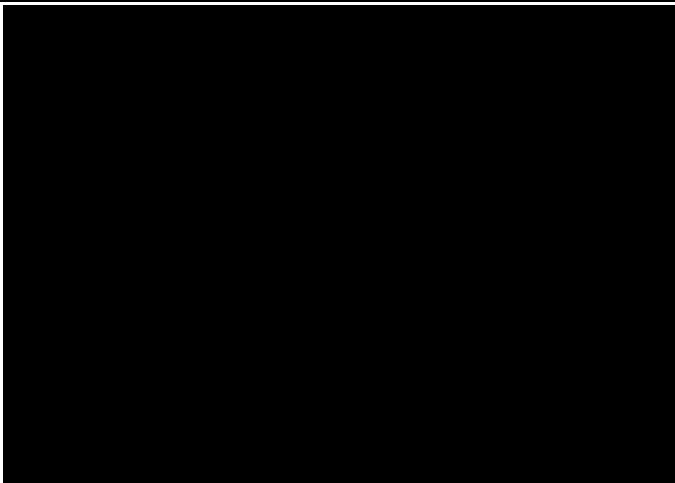
The Charlie 2 police district has developed a strong partnership with mall managers and security employees. The mall donates office space for police officers including the bike team. The mall collaborated with police on installation of a new camera system. Police and mall security work closely on surveillance and other operations. There has been a dramatic improvement in the immediate mall area over the last several years, and it is no longer considered a "durable hotspot".

The police district has been involved with several of the apartment communities including Glen Hollow, Teal Point, and Granville. Each has had crime problems that have created durable hotspots. To address these, police have partnered with the apartment complexes, provided crime prevention materials, and helped to organize community

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

meetings. Efforts with Teal Point continue to find solutions to reoccurring problems such as drug sales.

Charlie 2 also has strong relationships with neighborhood organizations, including the two largest in Windsor Park, and Winterfield. The district attempts to identify and quickly address concerns and has involved neighborhood residents in the solutions.





## DEMOGRAPHICS

The study area has changed substantially since the area started to develop in the 1950's. While almost fully built-out, the study area continues to change, as shown in the demographic information provided below.

- **Population Growth:** The 2000 population of the study area was approximately 37,300 people. Between 1980 and 1990, the study area population grew 37.5%, much faster than the citywide growth rate of 19.1%. From 1990 to 2000, as the area began to build out, the growth rate slowed to 12% compared to 22.7% citywide.
- **Wider market area:** Within a wider five-mile radius of Eastland Mall, the population is about 223,000 people.
- **Income:** The average household income of the study area in year 2000 was estimated to be \$52,300 as compared to a city average of about \$71,400 and a state average income of about \$74,700.
- **Single-Family Homes:** There are over 6,000 single-family homes in the area, representing 40% of the market's total estimated 16,700 housing units. This ratio of single-family homes (largely owner-occupied) to apartments (largely rental) is almost reverse of the overall city ratio, in which 60% own and 40% rent. The single-family homes in the study area were built largely between 1950 and 1980.
- **Multi-family Homes:** There are approximately 10,000 multi-family units in the area representing 60% of the market's housing units. Apartment occupancy is 93% and is increasing while the occupancy rate is decreasing in other areas of the city. Of the total number of apartments, 45 large complexes account for over 8,000 units. The area's multi-family developments were built largely between 1975 and 1990.
- **Diversity:** African Americans make up about 19% of the area population. Hispanics and Asians constitute just over 10% of the market. The buying power of African American, Hispanic and Asian consumers is projected to grow faster than their growth in population. Despite this growing diversity, the population was estimated to be 70% white in year 2000.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

- **Aging Homeowners:** The area has approximately 8,800 residents over the age of 50, representing 24% of the population. Because most of these mature residents live in single-family homes, this indicates that about 70% of the single-family housing stock is occupied by people at or near retirement. The aging of these residents will result in an increase in the turnover of homes and changing patterns of spending as these residents reach retirement. Active aging adults continue to have disposable income for needed or desired purchases, but prefer shopping opportunities closer to home.
- **Young Adults:** Nearly 50% of the area population consists of young singles, under the age of 40, residing in multi-family developments. These young apartment residents are moving into their peak purchasing years, and represent a large market of future area homeowners. However, it appears that when many of these residents choose to move into single family housing, they choose to move out of the study area.



## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The study area has numerous retail properties including fast food establishments, gas stations, convenience stores, and retail strip centers, in addition to Eastland Mall. In total, the area has 2.8 million square feet of retail space.

Further discussion of the area's economic conditions and trends is provided below.

- **Changing Retail Mix:** There is a notable change underway in the retail composition of centers in the study area, especially those centers along Albemarle between Central and W.T. Harris Boulevard. Some stores, even those of a discount nature, have been replaced by check cashing services, pawn shops, "rent to own", and payday loan businesses. These changes are especially visible on Central Avenue and Albemarle Road. Many retail spaces on Central Avenue between Kilborne Drive and Sharon Amity Road have new uses, which largely serve the Hispanic, Asian and Middle Eastern consumers.
- **Changing Rents:** Retail sales and rents in the area have not kept pace with other market areas of the city. Rents at strip centers around Eastland Mall are in the \$10-13 per square foot range, compared to rents of approximately \$25 per square foot in





Southeast Charlotte and between \$21 and \$23 per square foot at Cotswold. The rental rate is an indicator of lower sales in the study area. The low rents do not support major property improvements or retailer reinvestment. Consequently, the appearance of many retail properties is declining.

- **International Retail Concentration:** International retailers are clustering together within the study area to form a mass of uses serving the needs of Hispanic, Asian, and Middle Eastern consumers. Currently, there are approximately 50 international retailers within the study area, occupying a total of 122,000 square feet. As these international concentrations continue to develop, they will attract more international consumers to the area.
- **Store Relocations:** There has been a significant increase in store relocations from the study area as new shopping opportunities and new retail formats have concentrated in higher growth, suburban locations. Store location strategies follow a formula in which they seek areas of growth, family formation and proximity to a regional transportation network. The newer outlying locations also allow stores to capture sales from both the older areas and new areas of the region. Store relocations are especially prominent on Independence Boulevard and Albemarle Road.
- **Big Box and Power Center Formats:** The most pronounced change in retail format since the development of the Eastland area has been the dramatic growth of off-price and discount retail in the form of warehouse stores (Costco, B.J.'s and Sam's), discounters (Wal-Mart and Target), and power formats (Bed Bath & Beyond, Sports Authority, and Office Depot). None of these retail concepts were operating in Charlotte when Eastland Mall opened and much of the area was developing. Of all shopping center sales, regional malls typically capture 27%, community and neighborhood centers capture 65% and power centers capture 8%.
- **Regional Mall Trends:** As a result of a competitive retail market, some regional malls have initiated strategies to increase market shares to former levels. They are adding dramatic architecture and new amenities. Some are adding discount and power retail formats to their offerings, while others are adding a

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

mix of uses including hotels and offices. Most developers are trying to make shopping fun with the addition of entertainment venues including cinemas, interactive games establishments and restaurants. Some mall developers are also offering retail previously reserved for specialty centers. Recently some malls have explored the addition of certain aspects of main street retail. However, one constant in the regional mall business is the need to physically upgrade and offer new stores and experiences.

In the Charlotte area, Carolina Place Mall opened in July 1991 with over 1 million square feet. Concord Mills opened in September 1999 with a combination of entertainment, outlet, and power retail formats and attracts shoppers from a large region. SouthPark Mall is undergoing a redevelopment to reposition the property as the premiere upscale regional mall between Washington and Atlanta. Eastland Mall has remained relatively unchanged, with alterations limited to interior and exterior remodeling.

- **Overlapping Market Areas:** While regional malls have lost significant market share to the newer power and big box formats, there also are competitive factors at work that impact the economic viability of Eastland Mall. Eastland Mall has a significant challenge with its neighborhood location and regional mall format. Eastland Mall's trade area overlaps with SouthPark, Concord Mills, a new mall planned for Stallings, and large concentrations of power retail formats. SouthPark, in particular, is less than five miles away, and is centered in the heart of several highly affluent neighborhoods. It attracts shoppers from a large region, including the Eastland Mall study area.

A typical regional mall must draw 20-30% of its sales from outside of its primary market. To achieve this inflow of sales, there must be a compelling reason for shoppers residing outside of the immediate market to drive to a mall. Data indicates that the present mix of stores draws few from outside the area.



- **Office Market:** The larger East Charlotte area has a total of 1.25 million square feet of office space, representing one of the smaller office markets in the city. Office developments within the study area are concentrated on Independence Boulevard, Central Avenue, and Albemarle Road. Most of the present office inventory was constructed in the 1970's and 1980's. Office vacancies in the East Charlotte market are among the highest in the city, with a vacancy rate of 19.0% in July 2001. Rents are typically about \$14 per square foot, resulting in the most affordable office market in the city.

## MARKET TRENDS

In producing this plan the consumer needs of the residents of the study area were carefully studied. Below is a brief review of consumer clusters most relevant to the Eastland study area. Understanding the needs of these consumers will help retailers and property owners determine what types of retail tenants are most likely to be successful. In addition, an understanding of these consumers will also help to assess housing needs for the area.

- **Young Adults:** With the area's concentration of apartments, young singles are one of the largest groups in the study area. About 12.3% of the population of the existing market is 25 to 29 years old. The ages of 20 to 29 are prime acquisition years for many products including casual business apparel, music, fitness apparel, health food, and travel related products. Young adults approaching childbearing years are an ideal market to purchase the homes of the original single-family residents of the study area.
- **Hispanic Market:** Approximately 3.5% of the market is Hispanic. The market is projected to grow by at least 30% over the next five years. Hispanics shopping within the area seek specialized groceries, financial services, music, books and videos in Spanish, and are consumers of religious gifts and special occasion apparel.



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

- **Asian Market:** Like the Hispanic market, the Asian market is growing rapidly within the study area and is projected to grow by 30% over the next five years. Asian households typically are well educated and frugal. They are very brand loyal and spend a higher percentage of their income than typical consumers on cell phones, computers and telecommunications. As a group they are good consumers of educational offerings, real estate and state of the art technology.

- **African American Market:** As the number of African Americans grows within the study area, more retailers will adjust to their needs. African-American households spend more on apparel, telephone services and in-home dining than all other consumer groups. As a whole, African American buying power grew by a 72.9% rate in the 1990's, compared to the 56.7% increase in total buying power within the overall Charlotte area. This rapid growth rate is an indicator of new marketing opportunities for retailers.

- **Gray Market:** The Eastland study area has a large population of retirees. Most of these were the original homebuyers in the study area. This group typically puts stock in meaningful possessions, social status and physical health. However, it must be remembered that consumers reach their peak buying power by their mid 50's, with buying power usually decreasing after that point

As consumers and retailing trends change, the retail stores in the study area must adjust as well. The key is to balance and encourage retail in a manner that answers the needs of the existing market and anticipate the needs of the emerging market. The following section summarizes the major shifts in consumer shopping and buying characteristics. Many of these changes will impact the retailers within the study area.

- **Shopping Frequency:** On average, consumers are shopping less frequently for apparel and other products. Consumers spend two-thirds less time in malls today than they did in 1980. This trend supports non-traditional store groupings to allow time-conscious consumers to combine shopping trips, such as placing a fashion store next to a grocery store.







- Destination Trips:** Consumers are making more purposeful visits to retail stores, shopping at fewer stores, and focusing on destination and one-stop shopping experiences like superstores and department stores. In recent years, the specialty chain store category, which represents a large part of regional malls, experienced reduced traffic, while discount and department stores have seen increases. This desire for shopping destinations that answer a variety of needs is a specific challenge and opportunity for the Eastland Study Area.

- Shopping Formats:** Consumers most regularly purchase clothing at department stores (e.g. Belk, Dillard's), discount stores (e.g. Target, Wal-Mart), self-service shoe stores (e.g. Rack Room), and athletic stores (Sports Authority). They are gravitating toward self-service formats. In 2000, it was estimated that discounters' overall market share of women's apparel reached 24%, compared to 17% in 1990. However, there still remains a substantial market that seeks service, convenience, style, higher price points, and shopping areas that provide opportunities for socialization.

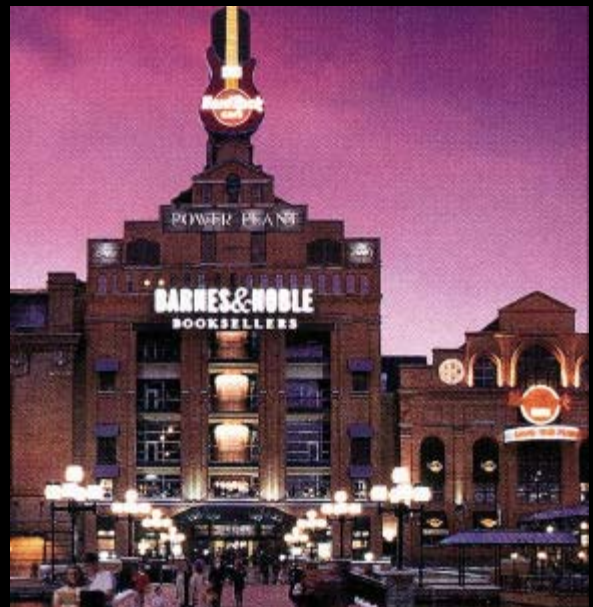
- Convenience/Safety:** Consumers want safe, easy and convenient shopping. Shoppers nationwide continue to complain of parking problems and security issues associated with regional malls

- Proximity:** Proximity or travel time from the point of origin has been shown consistently to be the most important factor in choice of shopping location. Other important factors in choice of shopping location include store size, number of stores, and the amount of inventory.

- Value:** Consumers have come to equate value with price. Department stores are driving down prices by reducing their costs. General and administrative expenses for the department store industry are below 27%, compared to 30% just a few years ago. They also have reduced costs by expanding private label offerings, using overseas sources, and relying more on information technology. Many of these options are not available to smaller entrepreneurial merchants.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

- **Lifestyle Shopping:** Consumers shop establishments that define their self-identity. The Eastland area has a mix of retirees living in the established single-family neighborhoods, young singles living in the many apartment units, and a growing international community. This represents wide variation in lifestyles, and offers a number of market niches.
- **Department Store Economics:** Recently, department stores on a nationwide basis have also begun to better meet the needs of the new consumer. Department stores have been reclaiming market share largely from specialty and off-price retailers. They have been accomplishing this through promotion of moderately priced apparel and through a targeted approach to capture sales from over-40 women's apparel buyers, a growing age cohort which has been largely ignored by fashion leadership. Occupancy costs of department stores in older malls are considerably lower than other department and specialty stores in new properties, providing a competitive advantage.
- **Addition of Small Anchors:** Some large retailers have the ability to take into account the needs and preferences of local consumers with sophisticated marketing and still offer a broad assortment. They are becoming highly successful in today's market place. These include Target, Old Navy and Harry's Market of Atlanta. They generate traffic for the retail district and effectively compete with other large format stores. They also provide necessary credit for property owners seeking financing because financial institutions can rely on the stability and obligation of these "credit tenants" to pay rent.



# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The following issues and opportunities are based upon existing conditions, market research, public input, and planning analysis of the study area. These are the basis for the plan recommendations found in this report.

## ISSUES

- **Outdated strip centers and transportation system:** The land use pattern and transportation system within the Eastland study area are oriented toward automobile travel. Adjacent uses are disconnected and hard to access by automobile or by walking. There is a large amount of traffic traveling through the study area, and most street improvements in the past have been designed to facilitate the through traffic traveling to suburban locations, making travel within the area difficult, especially for pedestrians.
- **Loss of retailers and commercial disinvestment:** While the Eastland area was once a lively commercial and restaurant district, the area has lost numerous retail establishments over the last 10 years. Many retailers who have remained in the area have made relatively little new investment in their establishments.
- **Limited highway access:** Eastland Mall is not located on an interstate or outerbelt highway, as most new regional malls are.
- **New competition in outlying areas:** Areas to the north and east of the study area are experiencing heavy growth. These areas are providing new competition for the stores in the Eastland area.
- **Weak office market:** At this time, there is no market for additional office development, a use that many have identified as having the potential to help revitalize the area.
- **Abundance of disconnected multi-family projects:** There are numerous multi-family developments within the study area that are disconnected from adjacent developments. Most of these projects are rental and many are perceived to be detrimental to the stability of the area. Approximately 60% of the housing units in the study area are multi-family.
- **Poor aesthetic quality on major corridors:** Many properties along the area's major corridors, especially retail properties, appear dated, with large signs, big parking lots, deteriorating buildings, and minimal landscaping.
- **Changing demographics:** The demographics of the study area are changing, requiring changes by the retailers and others serving the area. As many as 70% of the single-family homeowners are at or near retirement age. The area is becoming more diverse, with the Hispanic and Asian populations projected to grow approximately 5% per year.
- **Low owner/renter ratio for neighborhood stability:** The City's Neighborhood Quality of Life Study uses the percentage of homeowners in a neighborhood as one component in its measure of neighborhood stability. The area's housing is 60% multi-family, which is generally rental, compared to 45% rental citywide.
- **Area's image:** Many perceive that the Eastland area is in a state of decline and the area's image is suffering from that perception.
- **Perception that area has high level of crime:** There is also a perception, even among residents, that there is a high level of crime within the study area.
- **Citizen concerns about schools:** Citizens have expressed concerns about the stability and quality of the schools within the study area.

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## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Central location:** The study area is relatively centrally located within the Charlotte region. Many parts of Charlotte can be easily and quickly accessed from the Eastland area, an increasingly important asset as the region grows and becomes more congested.
- **Density of population:** The study area and surrounding market have the necessary population, infrastructure, and buying power currently in place to support a large number of commercial uses throughout the study area. This creates a competitive advantage over new planned commercial areas that often may not have sufficient residential population or adequate infrastructure.
- **Attractive and affordable neighborhoods:** The Eastland area has many neighborhoods with attractive and affordable housing opportunities. The large number of renters within the area provide a natural market of potential buyers.
- **Availability of affordable retail and office space:** The Eastland area has an abundance of retail and office space. Approximately 200,000 square feet of small shop space is available to lease within the study area as well as two big box retail stores.
- **Reuse and redevelopment opportunities:** The number of available properties, as well as the underutilization of many other properties, provides many reuse and redevelopment options.
- **Potential park and greenway system:** Planning has been performed for an extensive park and greenway system in the study area. Many components are already in place.
- **Community Transit Center:** Funding has been allocated for a Community Transit Center in the town center area. This transit center will provide additional transportation choices for Eastland area residents and visitors.
- **International merchants:** There is a growing concentration of unique international merchants within the study area. These retailers attract residents from throughout the Charlotte area.
- **Community commitment:** There has been, and continues to be, a strong commitment from both the public and private sectors to strengthen the Eastland area, as evidenced by the large attendance at the Eastland workshops. Numerous groups are already working to improve the area.

# VISION AND CONCEPT PLAN

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## VISION STATEMENT

The vision for the Eastland area is a vibrant community defined by a unique town center, attractive mixed-use corridors, and distinct gateways. It is a community consisting of quiet neighborhoods with a variety and balance of housing types connected to quality schools, sufficient shopping and dining options, attractive parks and greenways, centers of recreation and social activities, and preserved open space. The Eastland area vision places an emphasis on transportation choices that include easy pedestrian and bike circulation, transit services, and automobile travel as part of a well planned internal transportation system. Most importantly, the vision for the Eastland area is that of a unified community known for the celebration of its diverse population.

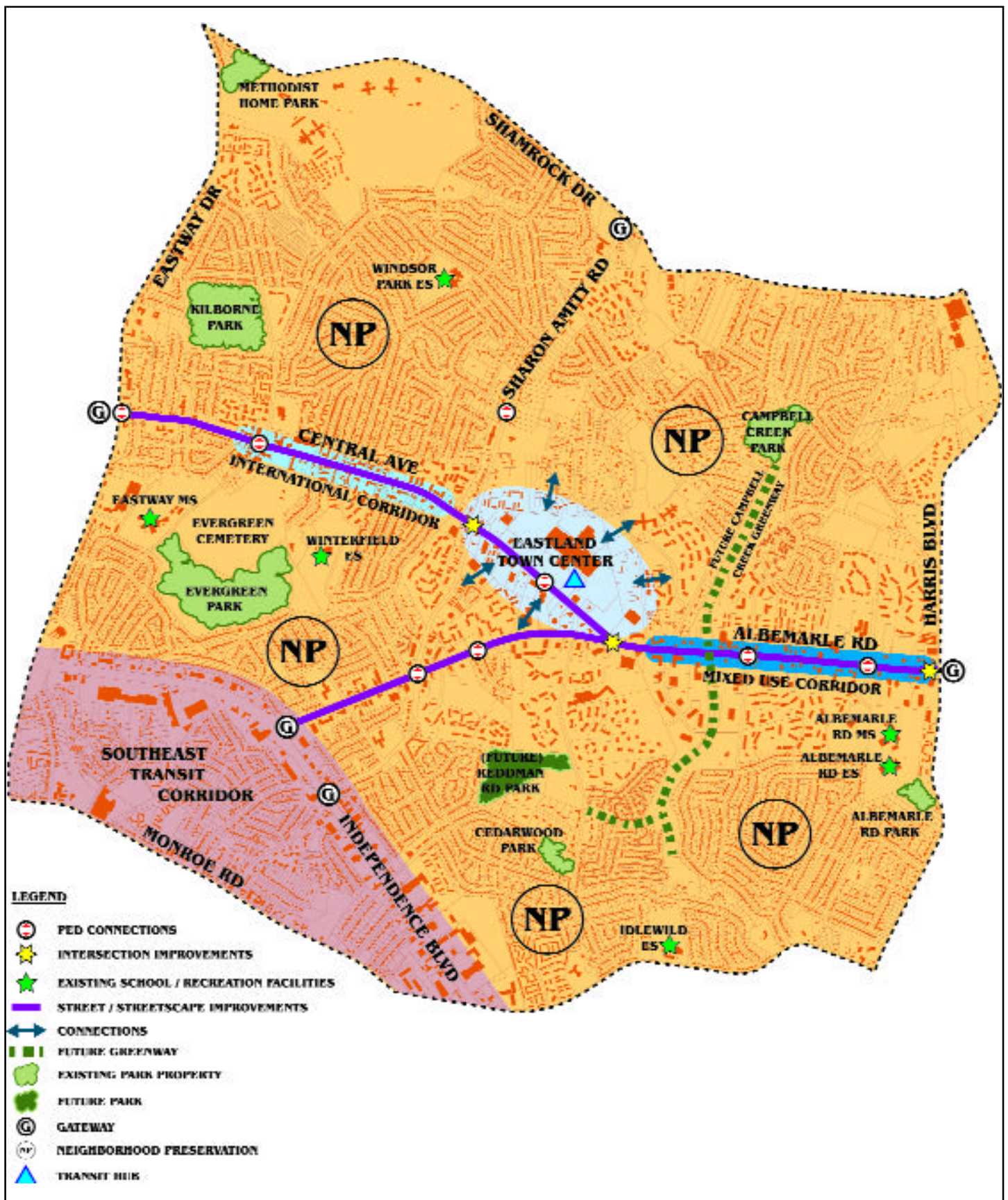
## Development Concept

The attached Concept Map (Map 7) highlights the key land uses and physical improvements for the Eastland study area. The concept plan identifies the physical components that will be the framework for the positive transformation of the Eastland area. These elements are designed to ensure that this area remains a community of choice. The development concept illustrates the following recommendations:

- Create a **mixed-use town center** that will be the heart of the Eastland area. The center will include retail and civic uses designed to serve the entire community, as well as new housing opportunities. This center will also have a strong pedestrian-orientation and will include a **transit hub** for the Eastside.
- Refocus retail from a linear strip pattern along corridors into **unique mixed-use centers of activity** that are compatible with the character of surrounding neighborhoods.
- Recognize and **protect existing neighborhoods**, focusing on creating a balance of single-family homes and multi-family developments, increasing the ratio of owners to renters, and protecting these neighborhoods from non-residential encroachment.
- Identify transportation system enhancements that will provide area residents and workers with **additional transportation choices**, will **calm existing traffic**, and will **connect existing and future developments**
- Outline **streetscape improvements** designed to unify and provide identity to the area, while helping to improve the aesthetic quality.
- Create **public gathering spaces, cultural facilities**, parks, and green space.

The elements illustrated on the Concept Map are discussed in greater detail in the following sections of the plan. The Proposed Land Use Map (Map 13, p. 75) provides more parcel-specific information on land use recommendations. Map 13 shows the cumulative recommendations of this plan as overlaid on the East District Plan and the Eastside Strategy Plan. Where this plan differs from these previously adopted plans, this plan will take precedence.

# MAP 7: CONCEPT MAP



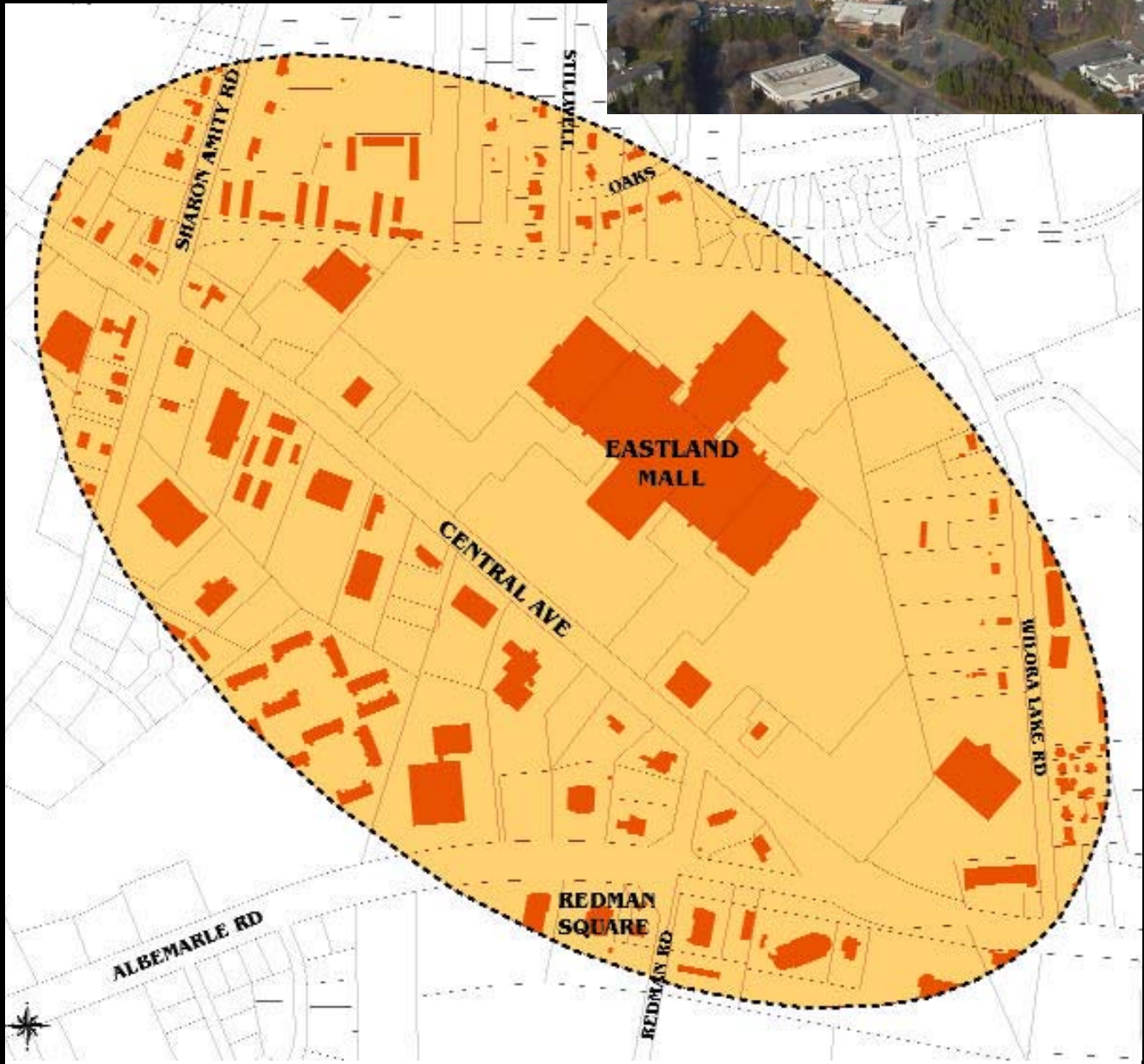
**THIS PLAN PROVIDES LAND USE AND DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

- **TOWN CENTER,**
- **INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT,**
- **ALBEMARLE ROAD MIXED-USE**
- **CORRIDORS,**
- **EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS, AND**
- **MULTI-FAMILY COMMUNITIES.**

**THE CONCEPT MAP ALSO IDENTIFIES THE SOUTHEAST TRANSIT CORRIDOR, WHICH IS BEING ADDRESSED THROUGH A SEPARATE STUDY.**

# TOWN CENTER

*A town center is envisioned as the heart of the future Eastland community.*



**MAP 8: TOWN CENTER**



# TOWN CENTER

For a number of decades, Eastland Mall and the surrounding properties have been the "center" of the Eastside of Charlotte. However, this **area is in the midst of a transition**. Recent development at the fringes of the City is providing new competition for the mall area. Real estate trends are changing, making some of the principles under which the mall was developed outdated. New residents with different needs are moving into the area. For Eastland Mall and the surrounding properties to continue to serve as the "center" of the east side, change will be necessary. This change, or repositioning:

- should be based on a long-term **comprehensive strategy** that meets the needs of both the existing consumer and the new consumer
- should be consistent with the community vision
- should be financially feasible

The long-term vision for the Eastland Mall site, adjacent commercial and multi-family properties, and the land across Central Avenue is a **compact, pedestrian-oriented town center**. This town center will become the gathering place for the Eastside, as well as the symbolic center. To be successful, the town center should include a range of uses, consisting of the following:

- **Retail** -The retail market for the Eastland area is changing as the area and its population change and as new commercial development is introduced at suburban fringe locations. The town center should be designed and positioned to serve the retail needs of Eastside residents while also providing a unique shopping experience that will draw from a larger area. Types of retail that might be added to the town center include a home improvement store, value retailers (such as Target, Old Navy, and TJ Max), a farmers market, an international market, and an updated grocery store. Retail uses should be focused on the Eastland Mall site.
- **Entertainment** - Restaurants (with the exception of fast food) and entertainment venues, such as a cinema or small theatre for live performances, are lacking in the Eastland area. These uses are recommended for inclusion in the town center and will be key elements in the success of a town center.





They should be concentrated around the town square described below and along the Central Avenue frontage. Additionally, the existing skating rink inside the mall should be retained and promoted.

- **Office Uses** - Currently, there is not a strong market for additional office development, especially corporate office space, in the Eastland area. However, smaller office space such as small professional offices, medical office space, and banks could, in the long term, provide an added dimension to the town center. In addition, major tenants that will utilize large floor plates, such as a call center, should be considered for some of the vacant large boxes. Office uses would be appropriate throughout the town center.

- **Urban Housing** - Housing will provide a built in market for the retail uses in the town center. However, new housing concepts should be used, instead of the traditional multi-family complex. Additionally, the viability of housing for the elderly should be considered in light of the aging population in the area. Urban housing as part of a larger retail/mixed use development would be appropriate throughout the town center. In particular, it should be targeted for the excess parking lots on the rear and sides of the mall site, and should focus on for-sale units.

- **Town Square** - A town square or village green will serve as an outdoor community gathering place and can be used for community events such as holiday celebrations or concerts. The town square should be located on the Eastland Mall site, ideally between the mall and Central Avenue.

- **Civic Uses** - Community serving public facilities for the study area should be centralized and located within the town center so that they will be easily accessible for all residents. Potential civic uses include a post office, library, police substation, elderly center, community/recreation center with an auditorium for community functions, and a privately owned day care facility. A multi-cultural center that serves the international community would add a unique element to the town center. This facility

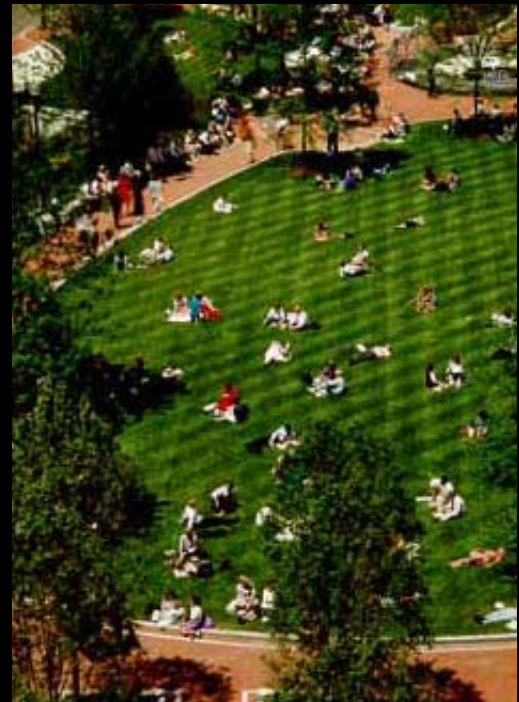
# TOWN CENTER

could provide education and training, community services, and space for cultural organizations and events. Civic uses should be located near Central Avenue, on either side of the street. One ideal location for civic uses would be surrounding the town square.

- **Community Transit Center** - A transit center designed to serve the east side should be included in the town center. Feeder buses serving the surrounding area will travel to the town center, which will then be connected by bus to the Southeast Transit Corridor and other regional centers. Local bus routes will also feed into this facility that will provide a waiting area and shelter for transit users. The transit center should be located near Central Avenue on a site that will allow efficient transit service and easy access by pedestrians. Ideally, the transit center would be adjacent to the town square.

The town center will not be successful without careful attention to design elements. In fact, the character of the town center will be largely dependent upon the design of the center, even more so than the uses that are included in it. The following design principles are recommended for the town center:

- **Preservation of existing structures** - The existing mall and other large structures, such as the former Hartford insurance facility, should be retained in the near term. Retail tenants, especially the department stores at the mall, should continue to have adequate access, visibility, and convenience parking. Preserving the existing structures will allow property owners to continue to utilize these assets through their remaining life. Over time, the large scale uses may be converted into new uses or replaced with new development.
- **Expanded street system** - New streets should be added to break up the large, monolithic blocks of land. Street block lengths should be 400 - 600'. New buildings should front on these streets. The new street network will be an organizing framework for the town center.
- **Pedestrian network in the town center** - An extensive pedestrian network should be provided. Both internal and external streets should be designed





with pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks and pedestrian level lighting. Pedestrian connections should be provided between the front doors of buildings and the sidewalks running along streets. The pedestrian system should be designed so that those who travel to the town center by car can park once and circulate comfortably throughout the entire town center on foot.

• **Improved pedestrian connections between uses -**

Additional pedestrian connections from the town center to the surrounding properties will also be vital. Improved street crossings for pedestrians should be provided across Central Avenue and Albemarle Road. In particular, the mall site should be connected to the former Upton's store on Albemarle and across Central Avenue. A pedestrian crossing along Albemarle in front of Reddman Square should also be provided. Pedestrian connections to existing residential areas adjacent to the mall should also be constructed.

• **Extensive Streetscape -** The streetscape should, at a minimum, include wide sidewalks, street trees, and pedestrian scale lighting.

• **Mixture of Uses -** A mixture of uses should be provided throughout the town center. There should be extensive integration of uses, instead of each use placed in isolated pods. Excess parking should be converted into building sites.

• **Town Square/Village Green -** A town square or village green of a sufficient size to host small public gatherings should be centrally located within the town center. Civic uses should be around or near the village green.

• **Community Transit Center -** The transit center should be centrally located. It should be designed to address transit objectives without compromising the pedestrian character of the town center. The transit center, which will accommodate up to ten buses at one time, should be designed to be fully integrated into the town center. Active retail and restaurant uses should be part of the transit center or located adjacent to it.

# TOWN CENTER

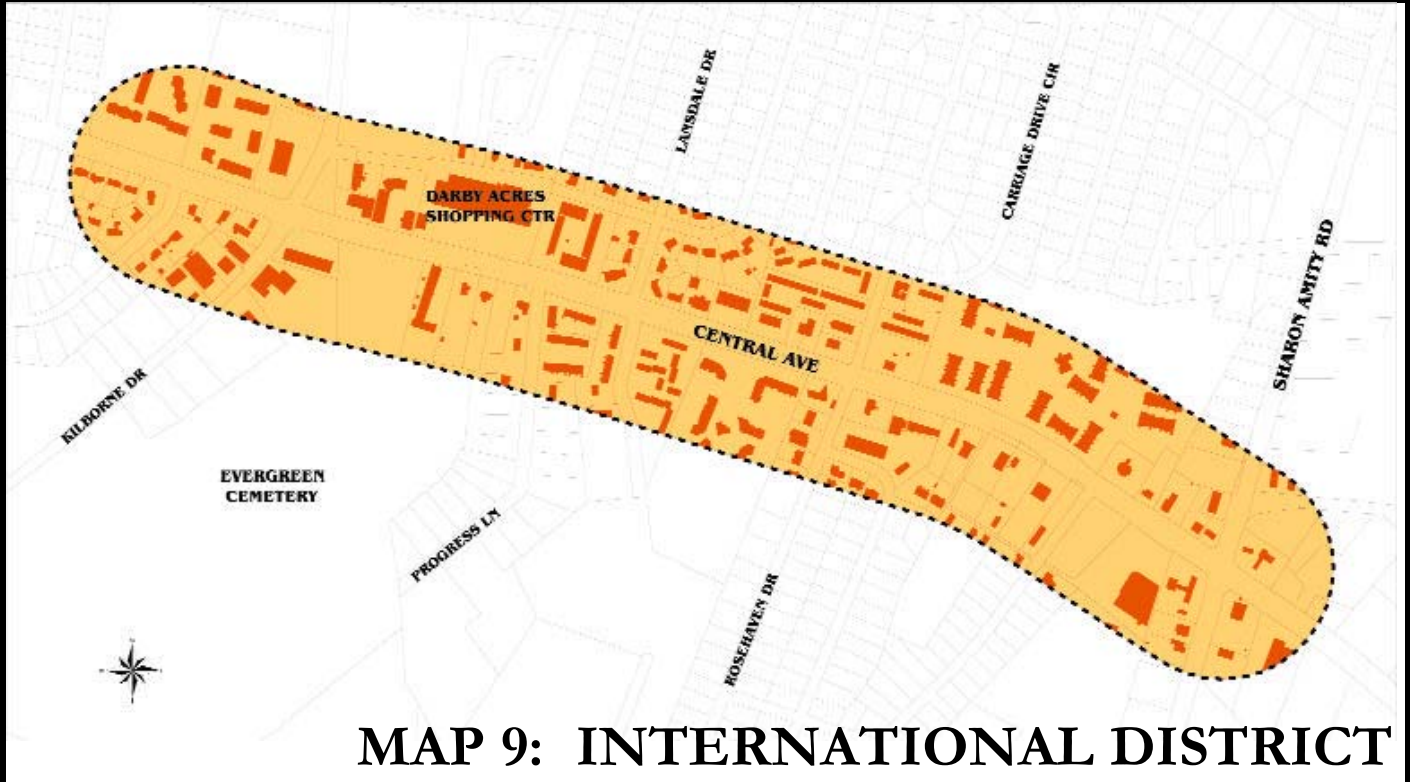
- **Compact Development** - The town center should be a compact and interconnected form of development, instead of large buildings with large parking lots in front of them.
- **Building Orientation** - Buildings should be oriented toward streets with windows and doors along the street.
- **Building Scale** - Development with the town center should be limited to four stories. Building size should be limited to what can be fit onto a typical town center block.
- **Parking** - Off-street parking lots should be provided to the side or rear of buildings. Structured parking is also appropriate, but should have usable building space along street frontages. Large surface parking lots should be broken down into smaller "pods" with extensive landscaping. Parallel or diagonal parking can also be provided along the town center streets.
- **Civic amenities** - Items such as fountains, clocks, and monuments should be placed at strategic locations.

The Proposed Land Use Map (Map 13, p. 75) provides more parcel-specific information on the area recommended for incorporation within the Town Center.



# INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

*Central Avenue will reflect Charlotte's growing international community and will provide international shopping opportunities for all citizens.*



# INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

During the last decade, Charlotte's international community has increased substantially. Many international residents live within or near the Eastland study area. Numerous international businesses have been formed, especially along Central Avenue between Kilborne Drive and Sharon Amity Road, to serve these residents. There are especially large concentrations of Asian and Hispanic businesses.

This plan recommends expanding upon this naturally emerging international district. This area should be marketed to the entire Charlotte community as **"the" international district of Charlotte** and should be designed to meet the needs of those using the area frequently while providing a unique experience for those occasionally visiting the area. Ideal uses for commercial properties include ethnic restaurants, music and book stores, international grocery stores, and special occasion and party stores.

Physical improvements, beyond the streetscape improvements currently in design, should be made to the public right-of-way to **brand the area** and indicate the numerous different cultures found in the area. Improvements might include signage or public art that reflects the international character of the area.

Improvements to private properties should also be made to reflect the diversity of the area. These improvements could include changes to building facades to help create a lively and festive atmosphere. Pedestrian connections between the sidewalk and building entrances could also be added to make circulation through the area easier. Clustering of businesses by nationality into distinct districts might also be considered to make the area more user friendly. Possible concentrations include Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern and African clusters.

The International District is expected to function within the confines of existing commercial land uses along Central Avenue. The Proposed Land Use Map (Map 13, p. 75) provides more parcel-specific information.







# ALBEMARLE ROAD MIXED USE CORRIDOR

*Albemarle Road will be revitalized into an attractive, pedestrian-friendly corridor with a mix of retail, office, residential, and civic uses.*



**MAP 10: ALBEMARLE ROAD MIXED-USE CORRIDOR**





The Albemarle Road Corridor is an auto-dominated corridor that includes a wide range of uses. Constructed in the 1960's through 1980's, development along the corridor includes retail, office, multi-family, single family, and civic uses. The corridor is a main commuting route for the east-side of Charlotte and most uses along the corridor were designed to cater to the automobile driver. In recent years, Albemarle Road has begun to show signs of disinvestment. A number of retail businesses have closed, with vacant buildings left behind. Retail vacancies are especially concentrated in the segment of Albemarle Road between Eastland Mall and Winterhaven Drive.

Revitalization efforts for the Albemarle Road corridor should be focused on **improving the appearance and pedestrian-friendliness** of Albemarle Road and on **better utilization of the underutilized retail** properties along the corridor. The City has completed design of **streetscape improvements** for the public right-of-way along Albemarle Road and construction is underway. For private properties, **short-term strategies should be focused on marketing and reuse of existing space.**

However, it is unlikely that the retail uses on Albemarle Road will be successful in the long-term unless new shoppers are added to the area. This will be especially true as properties outside of the study area develop with retail uses. Instead of simply reusing properties, this plan recommends **long-term redevelopment of retail sites into mixed-use or multi-use development.** This could occur either through demolition and reconstruction or through the addition of new development to the currently developed site. New construction on Albemarle Road should be **consistent with the following principles, as well as the guidelines in the Community Design section:**

- Developments should, when sites are of adequate size, include a **mixture of uses such as residential, retail, office, and civic.** The developments should be compact, pedestrian-oriented, and architecturally integrated. Ideally uses will be mixed within the same building.
- **Retail square footage should be limited to the current retail square footage** on the site and additional development rights allowed should be allowed for office, residential, or civic uses that are consistent with the guidelines in this plan.
- **Owner occupied housing is preferred and a townhouse form is recommended.**

# ALBEMARLE ROAD MIXED USE CORRIDOR

- If a property is developed only with residential uses, **densities should be limited to 12 units per acre.** Higher densities (up to 15 units per acre) may be considered if a combination of the following is accomplished: 30% of the site is dedicated for usable open space and significant "tree save" areas are provided as part of that open space; and
- Development should be of an urban form, with **buildings fronting along the street** and parking located to the side or rear.

One area along Albemarle Road of special significance is the Albemarle Road/Harris Boulevard/Lawyers Road intersection. The City is considering improvements to this intersection. The recommended intersection design should allow **redevelopment of the land around the Albemarle Road/Harris Boulevard intersection.** Where there is available land, **small village type developments should be constructed in the quadrants of the new intersection.** A secondary street system that breaks up the large properties along Albemarle Road and Harris Boulevard should be included as part of the developments. This secondary street system should be designed to favor the pedestrian and bicyclist, and development on these streets should meet the design guidelines found in the Community Design Section of this plan. The more auto-oriented uses should face onto Albemarle Road. This area should be predominantly residential with a limited local serving retail and office component.

The proposed Land Use Map (Map 13, p. 75) provides more parcel-specific information on the area recommended for inclusion in the Albemarle Road Mixed Use Corridor.



## EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS

*The existing neighborhoods will continue to be the greatest strength of the Eastland area. Emphasis will be placed on insuring that the neighborhoods remain strong.*



# EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS

There are numerous established neighborhoods in the Eastland area and the majority of the study area consists of housing. Most of the Eastland neighborhoods are predominantly single family and are located off of the major commercial corridors. Some have a multi-family component. However, most multi-family is isolated from the single family residential areas in large rental apartment complexes located along the major thoroughfares.

Most of the Eastland neighborhoods were built in the decades after World War II. Many individual neighborhoods have amenities such as schools and parks, but frequently these are easily accessible only to those in the neighborhood since many neighborhoods are disconnected from each other. One recommendation is to **connect these neighborhoods and make neighborhood amenities more accessible**. It will also be necessary to **make sure that the schools are accessible** during non-school hours. (These recommendations are further described in the Transportation and Parks and Greenway sections of the plan.)

Many of the residents of the Eastland area neighborhoods are elderly and will shortly be seeking other housing options. Re-population of these neighborhoods with committed homeowners will be crucial and **proactively marketing the strengths of these neighborhoods** and the Eastland area will be needed.

The continuing strength of these neighborhoods will be, at least partially, dependent upon the ability of these neighborhoods to address problems and capitalize on opportunities. The most effective means of addressing problems and building on opportunities is through **strong neighborhood associations**, of which there are many in the Eastland area. The City should continue to **monitor the health of neighborhoods** and intervene if problems become evident. Improving the overall owner to renter ratio of the area to enhance area stability is a particular concern.

Finally, protection of these neighborhoods will also be important as the adjacent commercial corridors continue to change. New commercial development should not be allowed to encroach into existing neighborhoods. Any infill development within existing single-family neighborhoods should be single-family dwellings. Additional multi-family should be limited to properties located on mixed-use corridors, and should focus on for-sale types of dwellings.

The Proposed Land Use Map (Map 13, p. 75) provides more parcel specific information on land use recommendations. All the areas shown as single-family residential are recommended for preservation, and should be protected from commercial and multi-family encroachment. Map 13 shows an “Area of Transit Influence” along Independence Blvd. where changes in land use are likely. As planning for the Independence Blvd. transit corridor proceeds, the adjoining single-family neighborhoods should likewise be preserved and protected.



# MULTI-FAMILY COMMUNITIES

*Multi-family communities will be a vital component of the Eastland area, providing a viable alternative to single family detached housing.*



# MULTI-FAMILY COMMUNITIES

Multi-family housing can provide an important option for those who do not want to live in single family housing. However, an abundance of rental, multi-family housing can have a destabilizing effect on an area if the renters are not vested in the future of that area. This is an issue in the Eastland study area where there are an estimated 10,000 multi-family units. About 8,000 of these units are in 45 complexes, most of which are rental properties.

**Maintenance and management of these apartment complexes** is a top priority of this plan. The following specific strategies are recommended:

- Meetings with owners and property managers of existing multi-family communities to discuss community concerns;
- Encouraging property managers to upgrade tenant screening standards;
- Utilizing targeted code enforcement for "problem" multi-family communities: and
- Strengthening partnerships between the police and multi-family managers.

**Involving renters in community activities** so that renters will feel a sense of ownership and accountability for the Eastland area will also be important. Inviting renters to participate in the Eastland Organization discussed later in this plan is one strategy. Holding special meetings for Eastland area renters or tenant events in apartment communities is another.

It is likely that some new multi-family housing will be built in the Eastland area in the future. The addition of quality housing will benefit the area by providing additional shoppers for struggling retail businesses. Any **new multi-family should be designed to complement and connect with surrounding properties. Owner occupied multi-family housing**, instead of rental, is strongly recommended to provide stability. Conversion of existing rental properties to condominium ownership also is recommended. In addition, a **townhouse form** of development consistent with the Community Design section recommendations is recommended. Unless otherwise specified in this plan, future Eastland area multi-family housing should be consistent with the City of Charlotte's General Development Policies.



*Increased attention to community design elements will improve the appearance and function of the Eastland area.*





# COMMUNITY DESIGN

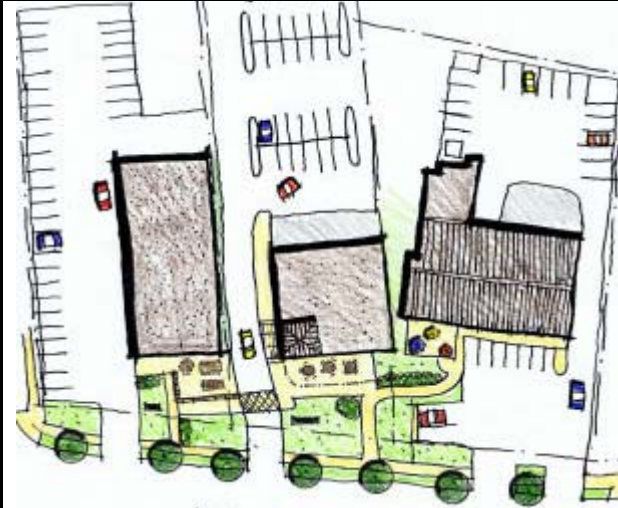
The corridors running through the Eastland area and those uses along the corridors were designed primarily for automobile drivers. Streets are wide with few amenities for pedestrians, such as expansive sidewalks, street trees, benches, and pedestrian-scale lighting. Business signage is large so that it can easily be read by drivers. Commercial buildings are set back from the street, typically with large expanses of asphalt parking in front, little green space, and no accommodations for pedestrians. Different types of uses are separated from each other, typically each with their own entrances and no connection between the uses. Little distinguishes these corridors from other streets developed during the same time period. The relationship of land uses along Central Avenue, Albemarle Road and Independence Boulevard is accidental in form. However, an opportunity exists to create unified districts, yet districts with variety and spontaneity.

To help improve the design quality of the public street system, **the City has funded and designed improvements for Albemarle Road and the portion of Central Avenue between Eastway Drive and Sharon Amity Road.** New sidewalks, planting strips, and landscaping will be installed in these sections. Pedestrian-scale lighting will also be installed in selected locations. On Central Avenue, a median with turn lanes and bike lanes will be added as part of the project. **Additional streetscape improvements that should be considered include district signage** for the Eastland area and **gateway monuments or signage** at the entry points to the district. **Extension of the Central Avenue streetscape improvements** in the segment between Sharon Amity Road and Albemarle Road is also recommended.

While improvements to the public street will help improve the aesthetic quality as well as the function of these streets, **additional improvements to private properties along Albemarle and Central Avenue will further improve the area.** The following guidelines for design improvements to existing Eastland area properties are recommended:

- **Pedestrian Connections between Buildings and Public Streets** - Dedicated pedestrian pathways that run through existing parking lots and that connect buildings and the public sidewalk system should be provided. Ideally, these pathways will be at least 6' wide and will include landscaping along the path.





- **Connections between Adjacent Properties** - The internal sidewalk systems of adjacent properties should be connected with landscaped meandering pathways so that pedestrians can move easily from one business or retail center to the next, eventually creating a publicly accessible pedestrian promenade that supplements the public sidewalk system. These should be wide pathways with pedestrian amenities located in the unused spaces between the existing buildings and along the pathways. These amenities could include small plazas, gardens, benches, artwork, fountains, or seating. At some locations the promenade may coincide with the public sidewalk. It should also be connected to other pathway systems such as area greenways.
- **Signage** - Outdated signage should be replaced with new signs that meet the current sign ordinance. Signs should be ground mounted or placed on the building facades. The use of pole signs is discouraged. For storefront windows, professional quality merchant signage is recommended.
- **Landscaping** - Landscaping consistent with the Charlotte Tree Ordinance and the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance should be installed where there is adequate space.
- **Building Facades** - Building facades should be updated to make them more attractive for potential shoppers and tenants.

In the long-term, this plan envisions substantial new development within the study area. Such development should meet guidelines for compact, pedestrian-friendly development that is connected to surrounding properties. General guidelines are provided below with greater specificity given in other sections for focused geographies:

- **Building frontage** - Buildings should front on internal and external streets and parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings.
- **Building heights** - Heights should be limited to four stories where properties abut existing residential development.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

- **Landscaping and open space** - New developments should include substantial landscaping and should reserve 15% of the site for usable open space.
- **Vehicular access** - Curb cuts on thoroughfares should be limited and access from side streets is encouraged.
- **Connections between Adjacent Properties** - The internal sidewalk systems of adjacent properties should be connected. Along thoroughfares, these connections should form a promenade as discussed above. Connections between commercial properties and established residential development could be street or pedestrian/bicycle connections, depending upon the circumstances.
- **Site design** - Developments should accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, as well automobile drivers.



# TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

*The area's transportation system will allow people to circulate safely and conveniently on foot, by bike, on transit, or by automobile.*



# TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The ability for area residents, employees, and visitors to move easily throughout the Eastland area will be vital for the area's success. People should also have choices about the mode of transportation they will use. Instead of needing an automobile for all trips, people should be able to access and move through the area on foot, by bicycle, and by transit. Specific transportation recommendations address the following categories: Streets, Transit, Sidewalks/Pedestrian Facilities, and Bicycle Facilities. (See Map 11: Transportation Recommendations.)

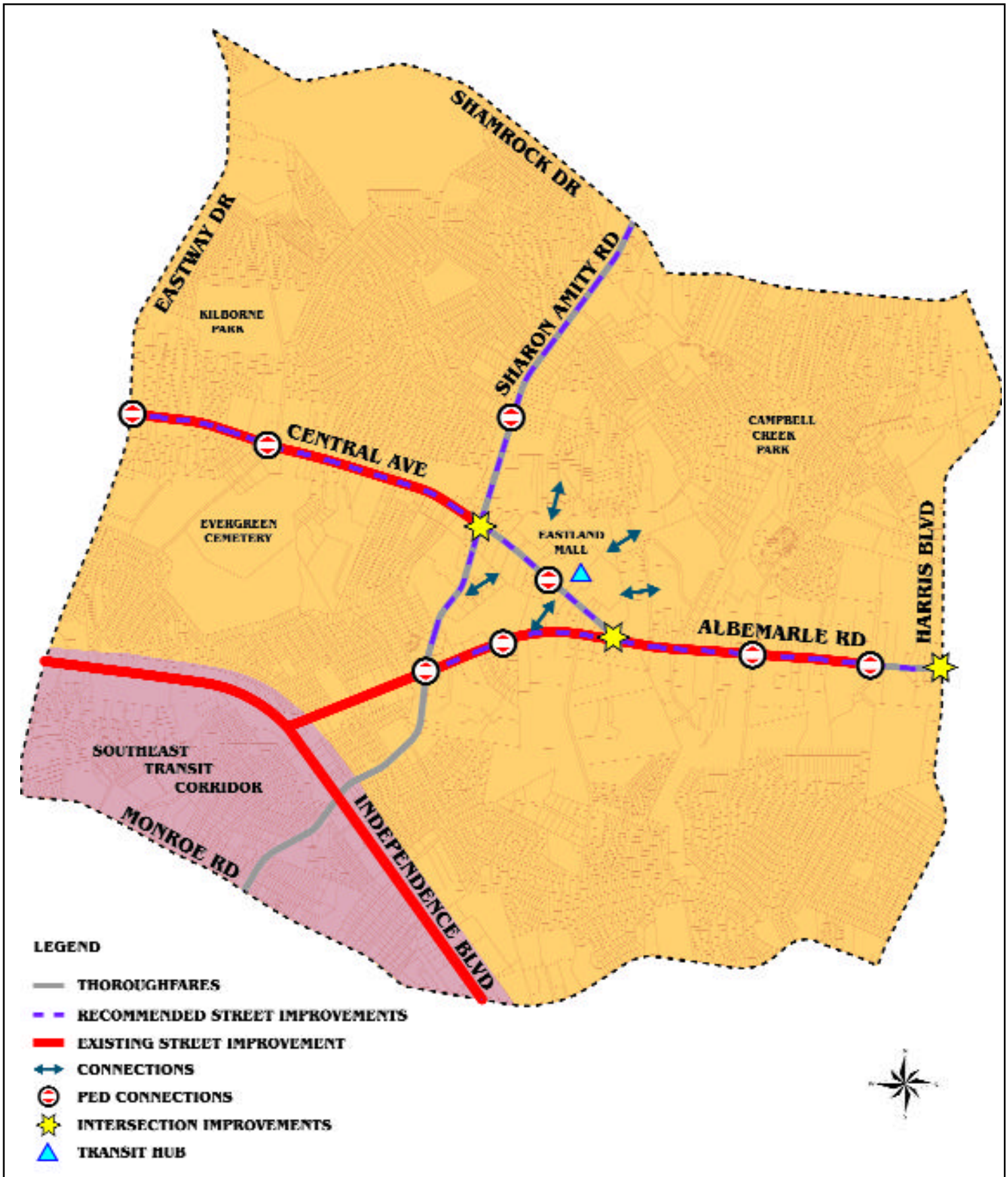
- **Town Center Street System** - A new street system that support all modes of travel should be created as part of the new town center. (See the land use section for further discussion.)
- **Central Avenue Cross-Section** - The existing design of Central Avenue adjacent to Eastland Mall, between Sharon Amity and Albemarle Road, should be re-examined. The street should be redesigned to support better pedestrian travel through the area. Sidewalks along Central Avenue should be provided. Pedestrian amenities, such as well defined crosswalks, pedestrian signals and refuge islands, should be explored. The extension of the proposed bicycle lane to be constructed on Central Avenue between Eastway Drive and Sharon Amity Road should be considered.
- **Pedestrian Improvements at Intersections** - Pedestrian improvements should be identified for all signalized intersections within the study area. Improvements considered should include well defined crosswalks, pedestrian, signals, refuge islands, restricted "right on red" and other measures that would facilitate pedestrian circulation if implemented. Priority should be given to intersections located along Central Avenue and Albemarle Road. These include Central Avenue at Sharon Amity Road and Central Avenue at Albemarle Road.





- **Pedestrian Improvements and Traffic Calming along Thoroughfares** - Means of calming traffic and making pedestrian travel more comfortable should be explored for thoroughfares within the area, with priority given to Central Avenue and Albemarle Road. The City should consider elements such as pedestrian crosswalks, refuge islands, and traffic calming measures.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections between Neighborhoods and Developments** - Connections that will accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists should be provided between disconnected neighborhoods and between adjacent neighborhoods and the town center. Connections between neighborhoods and parks should also be explored.
- **Albemarle/Harris Intersection** - Plans for the Harris Boulevard and Albemarle Road intersection should be reviewed to ensure that they will support future economic development in that area.
- **Community Transit Center** - A multi-modal transportation center should be developed in the town center. Transit service from the planned Southeast Transit Corridor, as well as from local routes, should connect to this transit center. Feeder bus service connecting adjacent neighborhoods should also connect to the transit center, which is recommended to be located in the town center. This transit center is intended to serve the needs of the neighborhood, and is not a “transit station area” as defined in the plans for the City’s five major transit corridors.
- **Bus Stop Upgrades** - Existing bus stops along Central Avenue and Albemarle Road, as the most heavily used in the system, should be upgraded through sign replacement, improved shelters, and additional benches.

# MAP 11 - TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM



*The Eastland area will have a fully developed and extensive park and greenway system that provides recreational and open space amenities for all area residents.*





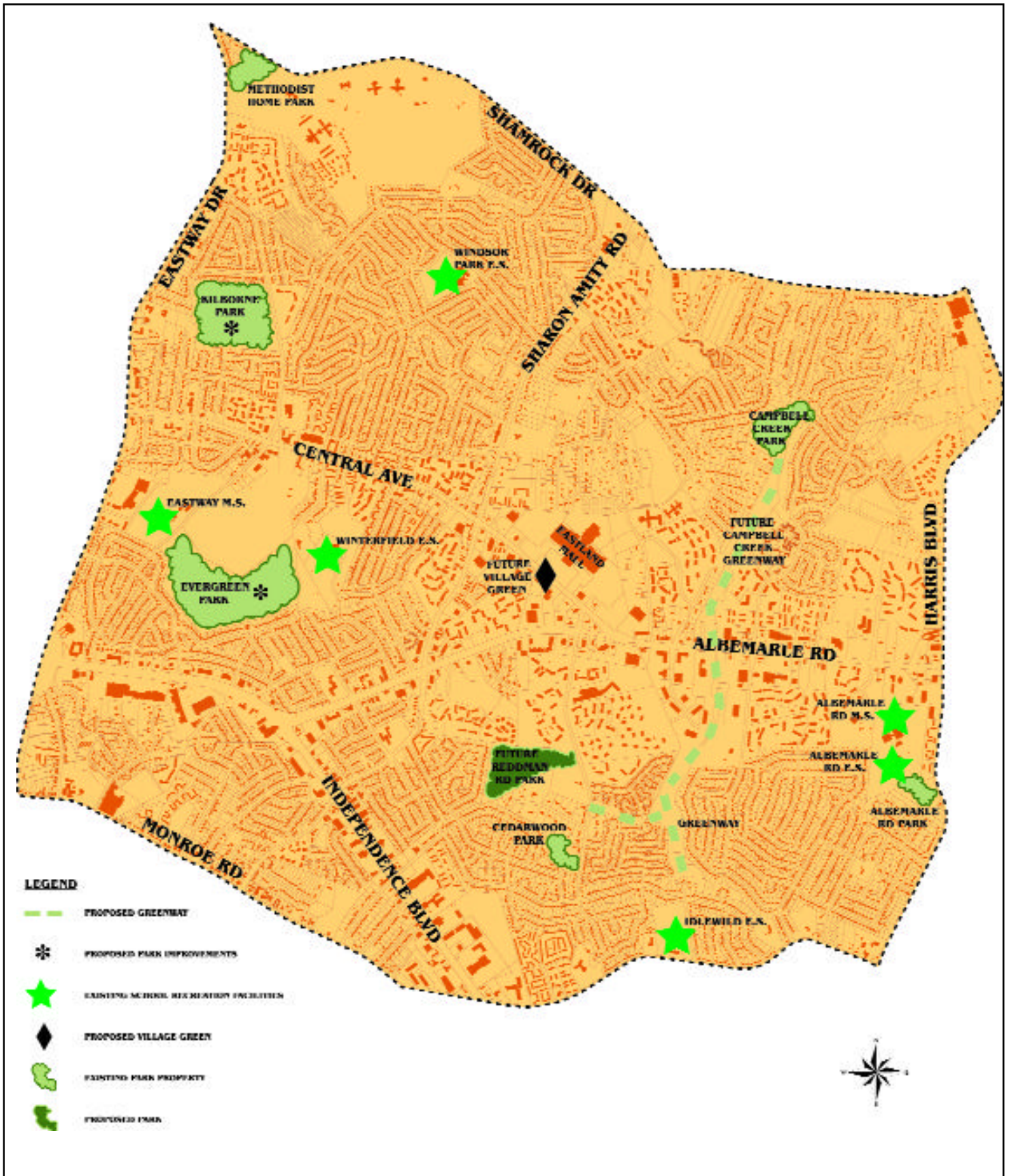
# PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Parks and greenways will be vital elements of a vibrant and sustainable Eastland community. Specific park and greenway recommendations for the study area are discussed below, and shown on Map 12.

- **Town Square/Village Green:** As discussed in the Land Use Section, a town square that functions as an outdoor community-gathering place at the proposed town center should be created to accommodate community events such as Christmas tree lightings and concerts.
- **Evergreen Park:** Visibility and accessibility to Evergreen Park, especially from Central Avenue, should be enhanced. Also, a "green" corridor of trails, sidewalks, and bikeways that will provide connections through Evergreen Park to adjacent school recreational facilities and schools should be provided as planned.
- **Farm Pond/Reddman Area Park:** Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation should acquire the 29-acre undeveloped site along Farm Pond Lane and Reddman Road and consult with neighborhood residents to determine the appropriate park design and facilities.
- **Kilborne Park:** Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation should upgrade the existing facilities at Kilborne Park in such a way as to minimize impact on adjoining properties.
- **School Facilities:** Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation should work with the Board of Education to ensure that recreational facilities at schools are available to the community during non-school hours.
- **Campbell Creek Greenway:** Land should be acquired to develop the greenway along Campbell Creek. Connections to the creek should be provided from adjacent parks, schools, and neighborhoods, and commercial uses.
- **Park Programming:** Additional programs in parks designed for families, children and youth should be provided as funding permits.



# MAP 12 - PARKS AND GREENWAYS



# COMMUNITY SAFETY

*The Eastland area will provide a safe location for people to live, shop, work and recreate.*

Community safety will be one of the primary determinants in the success of the Eastland area. For people to want to live, work, and shop in the area, they must feel safe. While there have been some troubling increases in crime in the area, these are focused mainly in "hot spot" areas. The police department will need to continue to **focus on "hot spots"** and redeploy resources as "hot spots" move.

The Police Department also has a unique challenge in the Eastland area because of the large number of international residents in the area. It will be necessary for the police department to **continue to reach out to the international community** to educate them about safety issues and to build trusting relationships. It also will be necessary to ensure that an adequate number of bilingual officers are assigned to the area.

The Police Department is the primary player in addressing crime; however, this agency will be more effective if the **local community partners with the department** to address community safety issues. The community can work with the police to initiate a **crime watch program**. Individual property owners can ask the Police Department to perform a security assessment. Expansion of the **Security Grant** program to the Eastland area should be considered.



# COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

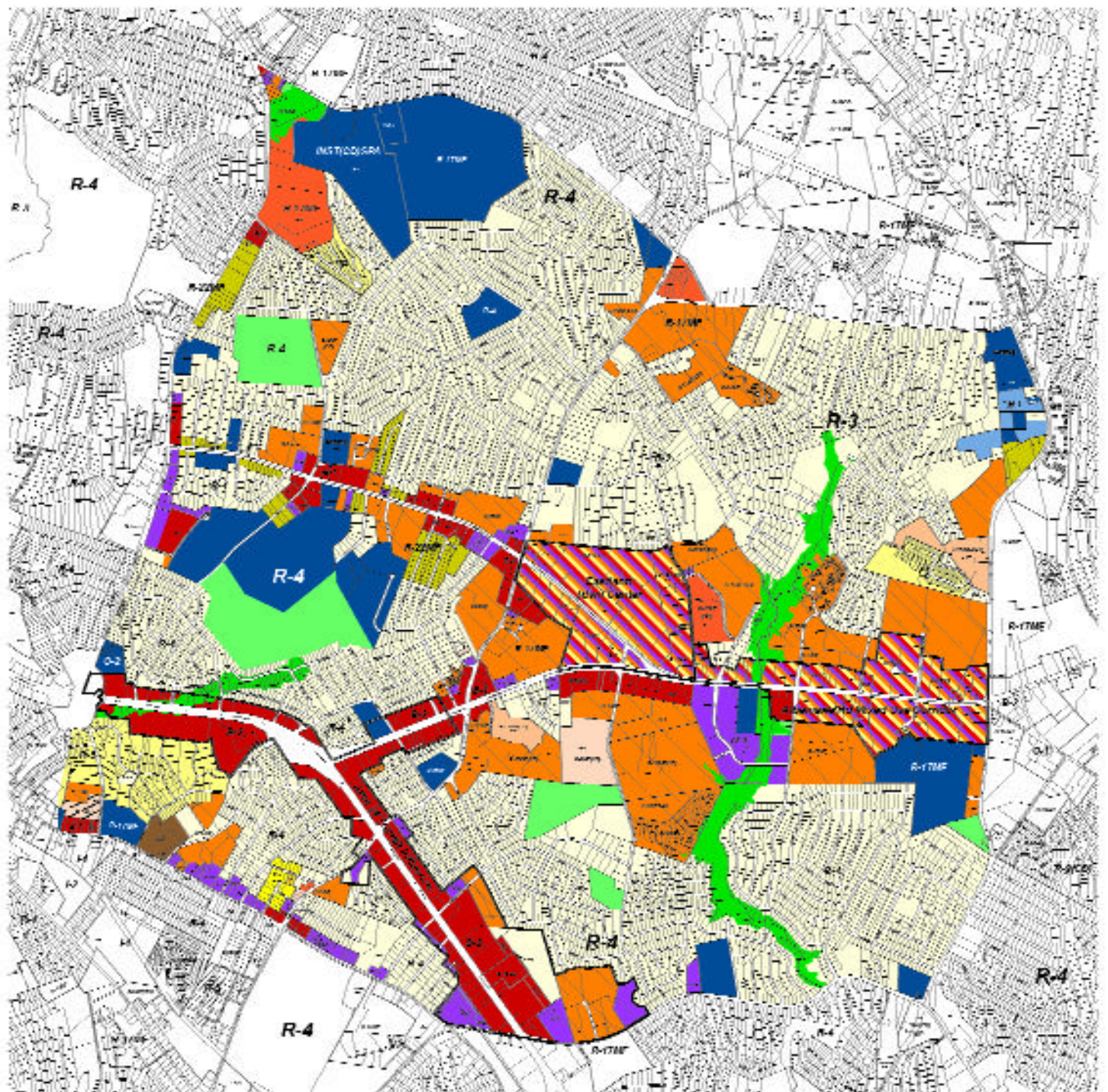
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*A focused Eastland Association will be a key ingredient in the implementation of the recommendations in this plan and the long-term success of the Eastland area.*

Currently, there are a number of organizations addressing Eastside issues. However, there is not one organization focused on the Eastland area. This plan recommends **formation of an organization focused on the revitalization of the Eastland area**. This organization could be a new organization or a subgroup of an existing organization dealing with Eastside issues. Participants should represent a broad range of interests. Potential participants might include neighborhood representatives, businesses owners, property owners, representatives from civic facilities, representatives of the international community, developers, and real estate agents. The primary objective of the organization would be to promote implementation of this plan. Specific activities might include:

- **Marketing:** Marketing the assets of the Eastland area will help to improve the area's image. Marketing activities might include development of an Eastland area web page, creation of a logo or "brand" for the area, working with the local press to cover positive area activities such as special events or new business openings, or taking residential real estate agents on a tour of the area.
- **Recruiting:** The organization could develop a marketing brochure or video, maintain a database of available properties, identify potential business, and actively recruit those businesses. Other activities might include open houses for developers and commercial leasing agents, creation of a standard "Eastland Ready for Business" sign to be placed in windows of vacant storefronts, or development of a "grand opening" assistance program to help new businesses attract customers.
- **Networking/Communications:** The organization could help to connect Eastland area residents, business owners, and property owners, as well as other interested parties, by developing a newsletter (print and/or on-line), sponsoring networking events, holding member meetings, or developing a fax and/or e-mail information distribution system.
- **Merchant Support:** Potential merchant support activities might include a coordinated advertising program, development of a directory or map of area businesses, maintenance of a merchant's resource library, and merchant seminars on topics such as store and window displays, consumer needs of the market, affordable ways to improve storefronts, effective and attractive window signage, and security measures.
- **Special Events:** The organization might consider sponsoring special events. There are numerous types of events that might be considered. Possibilities include international festivals, holiday events, a concert series, a seasonal farmers market, art shows, and street parties.
- **Advocacy/Coordination with Governmental Agencies:** Implementation of this plan will require that the Eastland organization work closely with local government. In some cases, the organization will play an advocacy role, typically working with elected bodies. At other times, the organization will work with local government staff to communicate issues, provide input on public projects, or respond to private development proposals.

# MAP 13 – PROPOSED LAND USE



**Proposed Land Use**

- |                         |                       |                      |                                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Single Family <= 1 DUA* | Multi Family          | Institutional        | Park/Open Space                |
| Single Family 5-6 DUA*  | Multi Family <= 8 DUA | Institutional Church | Greenway                       |
| Single Family < 8 DUA*  | Multi-Family < 12 DUA | Office               | Commercial                     |
| Residential < 8 DUA*    | Multi-Family < 17 DUA | Industrial           | Residential/Offices/Commercial |

\*Note: Preserve all single family neighborhood areas.



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission.



Date: May 05, 2003

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# **VOLUME 2: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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This document outlines the steps needed to implement the recommendations in the accompanying document, the *Eastland Area Plan, Volume 1: Concept Plan*. This implementation document will not be adopted by City Council, but many of the actions identified will require future Council approval and will be brought before them on a case by case basis.

## Town Center Implementation

- **Public Private Partnership** - Formation of an informal partnership between the City and area property owners is recommended. This partnership should come up with agreed upon goals and should undertake a town center development plan and detailed market study as described below. The City should provide support for the formation of this partnership.
- **Civic Uses Coordination** - The City should work with public facility providers through the City's Joint Use Task Force to determine the civic uses or public facilities that can ultimately be provided in the town center and to obtain commitments to place these uses in the town center. Once the potential uses are determined, opportunities for funding and joint use should be explored.
- **Development Plan** - While it may appear easier to create the envisioned Eastland town center by demolishing the existing buildings and redeveloping the entire area at one time, this scenario is probably not feasible because of the investment that property owners have in the existing structures. Instead, incremental retrofitting of Eastland Mall and the surrounding properties is recommended. This should occur based on a development plan and supporting market study which identifies the specific users that should be considered for the town center. The development plan should allow the site to evolve gradually and should be consistent with the vision outlined previously in this section. The development plan should also be flexible enough to allow inevitable changes in market conditions. Financial considerations should also be recognized in the creation of the development plan. In addition to identifying the physical layout of the town center, the development plan should include a strategy for implementing the town center concept. This strategy should identify possible ways that the City can participate, if needed, in the creation of the Eastland town center.
- **Development Catalysts** - Civic uses and infrastructure improvements by the public sector should serve as development catalysts to leverage private investment in the town center concept. Civic uses should be offered by the public as an anchor for the town center.
- **Development Agreement** - Once the development plan and its elements are agreed upon, a formalized agreement between all parties, both public and private sector, should be drawn up. This agreement will outline commitments by each party.
- **Property Rezoning** - The town center properties should be rezoned to a more intensive pedestrian-oriented zoning district that allows less parking and promotes mixed-use development. This rezoning should insure conformance with the Eastland development plan.

## International District Implementation

- **Marketing Program** - The proposed Eastland Association should include the International District in its marketing plans and should work with the international merchants to implement this effort.

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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- **Public Improvements** - The City, through a public process, should identify improvements that will brand the international district.
- **Façade Improvements and Pedestrian Connections** - The façade improvement program, or a similar new program, should be used to encourage owners to make façade that help to build on the international theme and to make pedestrian improvements that will make the district more pedestrian friendly.
- **International Events** - Each year, a series of international events should be held in the area to bring people to the International District. The Eastland Association should coordinate this effort.

## Albemarle Road Mixed-Use Corridor Implementation

- **Marketing Plan** - The Eastland Association should include this district in its marketing plans. Efforts should focus on re-tenanting existing retail space.
- **Public Improvements** - The City should implement the planned streetscape and pedestrian improvements for Albemarle Road. Plans for improvements to the Albemarle Road/Harris Boulevard/Lawyers Road intersection should be completed and implemented.
- **Zoning** - The properties along Albemarle Road should be rezoned to ensure that development is consistent with the plan recommendations.

## Existing Neighborhoods Implementation

- **Neighborhood Connections** - The Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department should implement the greenway recommendations found in the Park and Greenway section. The Charlotte Department of Transportation should perform a Connectivity Study to identify and implement better connections between neighborhoods.
- **Schools as Gathering Places** - Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation should work with the Board of Education to ensure that school facilities are available during off-hours to the community to use as gathering places and for recreation.
- **Neighborhood Organizations** - The Neighborhood Development Department should work with existing neighborhoods that do not have active neighborhood organizations to establish organizations.
- **Neighborhood Promotions** - The Eastland Association should develop a marketing program for Eastland Area neighborhoods. Improvements to neighborhood schools should be highlighted.
- **Monitor Health of Neighborhoods** - The health of Eastland area neighborhoods should continue to be monitored through the Neighborhood City's Quality of Life Neighborhood Assessment Program and through feedback from neighborhood organizations. If neighborhood problems become evident, these problems should be proactively addressed through a partnership between the neighborhood and the appropriate City departments.



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## Multi-Family Communities Implementation

- **Apartment Communities Partnership:** The City of Charlotte, the proposed Eastland Association, and Eastland area apartment property managers should form a working group to address issues with area multi-family housing.
- **Tenant Events:** The Eastland Association, with support from the City, should sponsor events for Eastland area tenants to help renters feel ownership of the area.

## Community Design Implementation

- **Streetscape Improvements** - The City should design and implement streetscape improvements that will help improve the appearance of and unify the area, increase pedestrian friendliness, and provide a unique identity for the area.
- **Revised Zoning** - New zoning districts that will implement the urban design guidelines for specific subareas of the Eastland study area should be considered.
- **Property Enhancements** - The Eastland Association should actively work with individual property owners of strategically located sites to improve the appearance of those properties.
- **Façade Improvement Program** - Extension of the City's façade improvement program to the Albemarle Road and Central Avenue corridors should be explored.
- **Promenade** - The Eastland Association and the City should develop a detailed plan for the public promenade and pursue implementation.

## Transportation Implementation

- **Town Center Streets and Transit Hub Design** - The preliminary concept for the town center street system and transit hub should be designed as part of the development plan for the town center.
- **Concept Plan for Street Improvements** - The City should undertake concept planning for specific improvements to the streets identified above. After the concept planning is completed and funding has been identified, preliminary engineering and final design should be initiated. A priority should be given to improvements on Central Avenue and Albemarle Road.
- **Connectivity Study** - The City should undertake a connectivity study to determine where it is feasible and reasonable to connect adjacent land uses. This study should include extensive public input.

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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## Parks and Greenways Implementation

- **Town Square Design** - Preliminary design plans for the town square should be developed as part of the development planning for the town center.
- **Park Land Acquisition** - City staff should work with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department to ensure that park and greenway land is acquired prior to development.
- **New Parks and Park Improvements**- Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation should implement planned improvements discussed in the Park and Recreation Section.

## Community Safety Implementation

- **Partnership between Police and Community** - The proposed Eastland Association should form a partnership with the Police Department, involving local officers in the organization. The officers should provide the organization with crime statistics and update members on policing activities.
- **Crime Watch** - The Eastland Association should initiate a crime watch program for the Eastland area.
- **Security Grant Program Expansion** - The City should consider expanding the Security Grant Program to the Eastland area.

## Community Organization Implementation

- **Eastland Association Formation** - The City should assist with the initial formation of the Eastland organization by:
  - Gathering potential participants;
  - Helping to identify and secure funding for initial activities;
  - Assisting the organization to develop a mission statement, establish goals, set priorities, and incorporate; and
  - Providing a city staff person to serve as a liaison with the organization.

Once established, the organization should select a board that will be responsible for hiring staff (if needed), directing the operations of the organization, and funding activities. A number of fundraising approaches might be considered including pursuit of grants, special fund raising events, creation of an Eastland Business Improvement District (BID) - a special taxing district, or creation of a Community Management Association (CMA) - an organization to which members voluntarily pay dues.