

**PARK ROAD CORRIDOR PLAN**

**prepared by**

**The Freedom Park Neighborhood Association**

**Task Force**

**February 7, 1992**



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## **Contents**

### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 Policy Objectives**
- 1.2 Plan Objectives**

### **2.0 Land Use Plan**

- 2.1 Mixed-Use Anchors**
- 2.2 Institutional Uses**
- 2.3 Residential Uses**
- 2.4 Single Family Residential**

### **3.0 Streetscape**

- 3.1 Trees**
- 3.2 Sidewalks**
- 3.3 Visual Quality**

### **4.0 Urban Design**

- 4.1 Kenilworth - Park Road Mixed-Use Anchor**

## 1.0 Purpose

In September, 1991, the Freedom Park Neighborhood Association appointed a task force to carry out a study of the land use, streetscape and urban design along the corridor where Park Road passes through the neighborhood. This is the area of Park Road from the intersection with Kenilworth Avenue to the intersection with Woodlawn Road, at Park Road Shopping Center.

The purpose of the study is to consider land use related issues affecting the vitality and livability of the neighborhood and to develop a plan that would eventually be incorporated into the Central District Plan adopted by the City Council. A proposal suggesting this approach was presented to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and accepted.

This report is a summary of the task force's plan findings and recommendations.

## 1.1 Policy Objectives

The following are the six major policy objectives which should guide development along the Park Roads corridor for the future.

- 1) Encourage community-wide input and cooperation.  
It is to everyone's advantage that all planning and development be acceptable to all diverse elements having an interest in the community. Toward that end, opinions and cooperation should be sought from not only those who live in the community, but those outside who have a vested interest in how the community develops. This should include, but not be limited to planners, developers, traffic and drainage engineers, and adjoining neighborhood organizations.
- 2) Encourage home ownership.  
Where possible, the development of residential housing that would be owned as opposed to leased is desirable. This is mainly due to the fact that the rest of the neighborhood reflects this type of development pattern, and home ownership promotes involvement by the individual in the community as a whole. In addition, homeowners tend to be more responsible in maintaining their properties and in respecting their neighbors.
- 3) Retain housing diversity and character, and preserve established single family neighborhoods.  
In areas that have historically developed as single family, single family developments should be maintained and encouraged. However, in areas that have developed as multifamily, that type of housing should be allowed to continue.

- 4) Establish guidelines for orderly infill development.  
Because the neighborhood presents several infill development possibilities because of large lot sizes, guidelines need to be developed to guide the development of these tracts.
- 5) Provide opportunities and guidelines for higher density development to be compatible with existing residential development.  
Where sites present opportunities for higher density development, a set of guidelines should be developed to promote the construction of high quality properties that blend well with the existing single family development. In addition, guidelines should be developed for the buffers and transition areas between single family and multifamily.
- 6) Establish open space and lot coverage guidelines.  
In order to promote the "park like" personality of the neighborhood, open space requirements need to be emphasized on any new developments. Also in order to head off any storm drainage problems, lot coverage guidelines need to be developed to prevent problems with run-off.

## 1.2 Plan Objectives

The following are specific plan objectives which should be considered relative to the Park Road Corridor plan.

- 1) Maintain width of Park Road.  
At all cost, Park Road should remain at its current width. Any widening of the road would mean the destruction of many of the large Oak trees along Park Road which would have a disastrous effect relative to the Park Road corridor personality as well as having a significant impact on those houses that are currently very close to the road.
- 2) Limit and coordinate drive-way cuts.  
In order to promote good traffic flow, any new drive-way cuts proposed for new development should be carefully studied so as to prevent traffic congestion and the potential for accidents.
- 3) Maintain tree canopy through corridor.  
Any new developments of the property along Park Road should be carried out in a manner which would preserve as many of the existing trees as possible. These trees should also be preserved by the City when conducting any road or sidewalk improvements and by the utility companies in regard to the overhead power lines.
- 4) Provide continuity of sidewalks.  
Because the neighborhood thinks of itself as a "pedestrian

neighborhood", sidewalks should be provided along the entire distance of Park Road. Toward that end, the plan needs to be developed to work with the neighborhoods along the corridor to provide for the easements for these sidewalks, as many of them would have to meander through personal property as opposed to being directly within the Park Road R.O.W.

5) Preserve lower density residential links to Park Road.

Because the neighborhood sees itself as being basically single family, the corners of Park Road and the roads leading into the neighborhood should be maintained as single family. This will provide a visual statement of the nature of the neighborhood to passersby on Park Road, and will also prohibit the eroding of these interior streets into higher density or commercial uses.

6) Develop guidelines for diversity of set-backs.

Because there is no consistency in the set-backs from Park Road currently, a plan needs to be developed to make this diversity appear orderly and planned. Therefore, a plan needs to be developed to provide for some orderly transition of setbacks along the corridor.



## **2.0 Land Use Plan**

The central concept for the Park Road corridor is to maintain and reinforce the two commercial nodes anchoring each end and, between these locations, to reinforce the existing land use pattern which is largely residential and institutional. In addition, a key idea of the plan is to insure that the Park Road corridor continues to project the character of the surrounding neighborhood, as opposed to merely passing through. This is accomplished by establishing "neighborhood links" which preserve single-family residential uses on parcels located at important intersections, and provide continuity with the single family residential areas adjoining the corridor.

### **2.1 Mixed-Use Anchors**

Presently, Park Road Shopping Center and the other retail businesses, offices, and multi-family residential which adjoin it comprise a very good commercial node for the neighborhood while also serving the greater community. At the other end of the corridor, at the intersection with Kenilworth Avenue and Scott Avenue, commercial development has also occurred but on a much smaller scale.

This plan seeks to maintain these two locations as commercial nodes and to create opportunities for mixed use including higher density residential development in these areas. Especially at the Scott-Kenilworth area, which should be a neighborhood scale commercial center, new infill development should support design for pedestrian use including an emphasis on sidewalks, streetscape, pedestrian crossing, and residential development.

It is critical that these commercial areas be contained and limited to the areas shown on the plan. Should the commercial or higher density residential uses be allowed to creep up Park Road, the integrity of the corridor will be damaged.

### **2.1 Institutional Uses**

Currently institutions comprise approximately 20% of the land area and frontage along the corridor. There are five churches - Holy Comforter Episcopal, Avondale Presbyterian, St. Marks Lutheran, St. Annes Catholic, and Park Road Baptist Church. In addition, Charlotte Catholic High School is centrally located on the corridor along with the YWCA. Also Park Road Elementary School is in the corridor, removed one block from Park Road.

All of these institutions are very positive contributors to the quality of the neighborhood by the services they provide, and the stabilizing force they invoke. The plan seeks to maintain the institutions largely status-quo, with some additional property between Avondale Church and Holy Comforter Church (which is presently residential) potentially being acquired by the churches and/or converted to institutional, or institutionally-related uses.

The plan also aspires to maintaining the correct balance of institutional use to residential though this is sometimes difficult to do since churches and other institutions are often actively seeking to increase their membership. The main concern here is that the growth and size of the institution may become so great as to overwhelm the residential areas, causing problems such as excessive parking areas, traffic congestion, and noise. At present, the fit of the institutions with the neighborhood is very good and it is merely hoped that this can continue.

## 2.3 Residential Uses

### Multi-family Residential

There exist a number of multi-family developments in the corridor, both rental and condominium. The earliest among these is Arbor Terrace apartments, built in 1956, and most recently, Merrywood apartments, completed in 1991. These developments range in size and density from six units, less than seven dwelling units per acre (Arbor Terrace) to 174 units, 22 d.u.a (Merrywood).

Multi-family residential development brings mixed blessings to the corridor. It provides the benefit of diversity, enabling a variety of age and income groups to live along the corridor not to mention a variety of built environment. The costs of higher density in this context mostly relate to its impact on the adjoining single family areas; the poor physical relationships that often occur with higher density infill in existing neighborhoods, increased traffic, and environmental impact.

This plan supports new, infill multi-family development provided it occurs in the right location, meets certain urban design and streetscape initiatives sought for the corridor, does not exceed the recommended density, and does not require widening of Park Road.

Two general areas for new multi-family development have been created by the plan. Near the geographic center of the corridor, adjoining the YMCA on one side of Park Road and the existing Parkhill condominiums on the other, a total of approximately 14.5 acres are comprised in four parcels which are either vacant or are currently single family residences. The size of these tracts and their proximity to existing institutional or multi-family uses makes them suitable for future multi-family infill. The plan recommends a density not to exceed 12 d.u.a. for all of these tracts. In addition the plans strongly recommends a variety of residential development occur on these tracts in order to avoid the eventual occurrence of a massive, uniform "project".

The other location for multi-family infill is at the intersection of Park Road and Cambridge Road. The land identified is on two tracts together comprising approximately three acres. One of these tracts is currently vacant, and one is presently a single family residence. The reason for identifying this land for infill is because it adjoins Catholic High School and due to its nodal quality located at a key intersection. On this land density should not exceed 8 d.u.a. Since this location has been identified

on the plan as a focal point on the corridor, the site plan/architecture for any proposed infill should recognize the nodal quality of this site (see Urban Design guidelines). Equally acceptable at this location would be institutional use provided it also met the urban design criteria.

In general, it is recommended that no new initiatives for multi-family development along the corridor be considered for zoning until after a design manual providing guidelines for in-fill development has been completed and adopted by City Council. Such a manual has been proposed and is slated to be undertaken by the Planning Commission following adoption of the new zoning ordinance.

#### **2.4 Single-family Residential**

The plan recognizes single-family residential development, principally the existing stock, along with the institutions to be the dominant land use along the corridor. It is very much desired that the benefits derived from a strong presence of the single-family residential character remain and be strengthened. Over a third of the total frontage along the corridor is recommended to remain in single family use. As mentioned previously, one of the key concepts of the plan is to insure the continuity and integrity of single family residential character along the corridor by establishing "residential links" which maintain parcels adjoining important intersections of Park Road with residential streets in single family residential use.

There do exist, however, opportunities for infill single family residential development along the corridor. On tracts identified as single family, up to 4 d.u.a. is recommended. For certain situations, a maximum of 6 d.u.a. may be considered for development proposals which indicate significant quality and/or innovative concepts which benefit the corridor. For interior single family properties (those not having frontage along Park Road), densities should not exceed 4 d.u.a. Furthermore, development proposals should be discouraged which seek to assemble property having frontage on Park Road for the purpose of increasing density through the balance of the property. Developments similar to Wyndcroft, which is conventional R-9 single family development completed in 1991, are encouraged.

Two important precepts of the plan which align closely with the desire to maintain a strong single family influence in the corridor are (1) not to widen Park Road, for doing so will greatly erode its quality, and (2) to provide continuous sidewalks along the corridor, and maintain and supplement the existing tree canopy. See the sections of this document relating to Urban Design and Streetscape.

### **3.0 Streetscape**

#### **3.1 Trees**

In addition a tree planting program should be established to replenish tree canopy where existing trees are sparse or damaged. The tree planting program should utilize species which are consistent with existing trees along the corridor (predominately oak).

#### **3.2 Sidewalks**

In many instances because of topographical and physical constraints new sidewalks may not fit within the existing Park Road right-of-way. In those instances sidewalks should be constructed within easements where they cross private property rather than condemning the private property for additional right-of-way. Most importantly and of the highest priority, a continuous sidewalk link needs to be established along the west side of Park Road between the YWCA and Catholic High School. This section of sidewalk roughly twelve hundred feet in length, would provide a safe link between two uses which generate considerable pedestrian traffic.

#### **3.3 Visual Quality**

The visual character of the Park Road Corridor can be divided into three distinct zones. The northern most zone extends from Kenilworth Avenue to Charlotte Catholic High School, and is dominated by single family residential uses on both sides. These homes, which were built in the pre WWII era, are in good condition on small, well-maintained lots. A mature canopy of oak trees align each side fairly close to the edge of the street. This area has the finer texture and scale of an older neighborhood. Because the building setbacks are shallow there is a visual sense of confinement and constricted views. Vehicular traffic has a tendency to slow down because it feels like a neighborhood.

The second zone extends south from Charlotte Catholic High School to Hillside Avenue. This zone is characterized by larger tracts of land which are either undeveloped or developed with larger, institutional uses. The predominant building setback averages more than one hundred feet off of Park Road. This zone has the visual quality of being more open and suburban. Vehicular traffic tends to speed up along this portion of the corridor.

The third zone extends from Hillside Avenue to Park Road Shopping Center and is characterized by an assortment of land uses including institutional, business, office, single family and multi-family. All the buildings, including the single family residential, have shallow setbacks from Park Road. There is very little tree canopy along this section and a considerable amount of visual clutter due to signs, utility poles, parking lots, etc.

**Setbacks and building massing for new developments along the corridor should reflect and reinforce the character of the zone in which it falls.**

## **4.0 Urban Design**

The area surrounding the intersection of Park Road and Kenilworth Avenue, which is one terminus to the corridor being studied in this report, has considerable potential as focal point on the corridor, namely as a neighborhood-scale anchor for mixed use. Much of its potential success depends on the ability to incorporate urban design principles into the ultimate development plan.

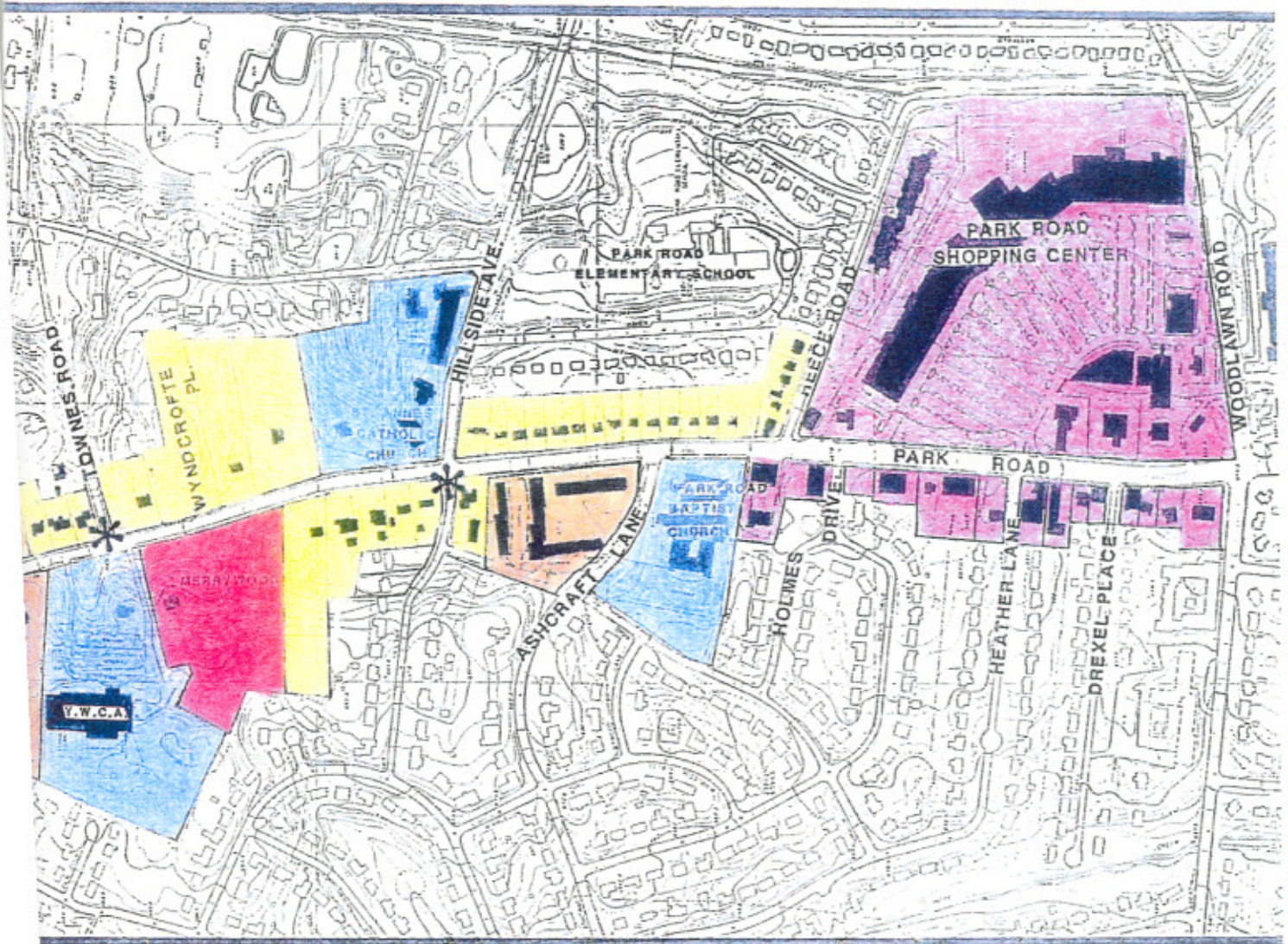
### **4.1 Kenilworth Avenue-Park Road Mixed-Use Anchor**

It is generally agreed that this location is suitable for development as a neighborhood focal point and to become an anchor for non-residential uses as well as greater residential densities. The area is clearly underdeveloped presently and due in part to its key location should support more intensive use. It is, however, important that the attitude for new development in this area be compatible with the location and character of the neighborhood and, in this regard, be designed as an urban neighborhood center, consistent with in-town neighborhoods. In addition to achieving a variety of uses including business and residential and potential densities that support more intensive development, emphasis should also be placed on urban design principles.

These include establishing:

- . pedestrian scale through the design of architectural and streetscape elements.
- . pedestrian linkages - along and across the main streets, between the uses, and to other destinations such as Freedom Park.
- . front-facing orientation (to the street) and ground floor entrances.
- . integration of open spaces and amenities.
- . deemphasis of the automobile; placing parking areas to the rear.
- . relocating overhead powerlines away from high visibility areas.
- . an architectural focal point at the visual terminus of Park Road.

A schematic plan for potential development of this area was developed only to illustrate these ideas and to indicate how the area might look if developed as a neighborhood anchor.



# D USE PLAN

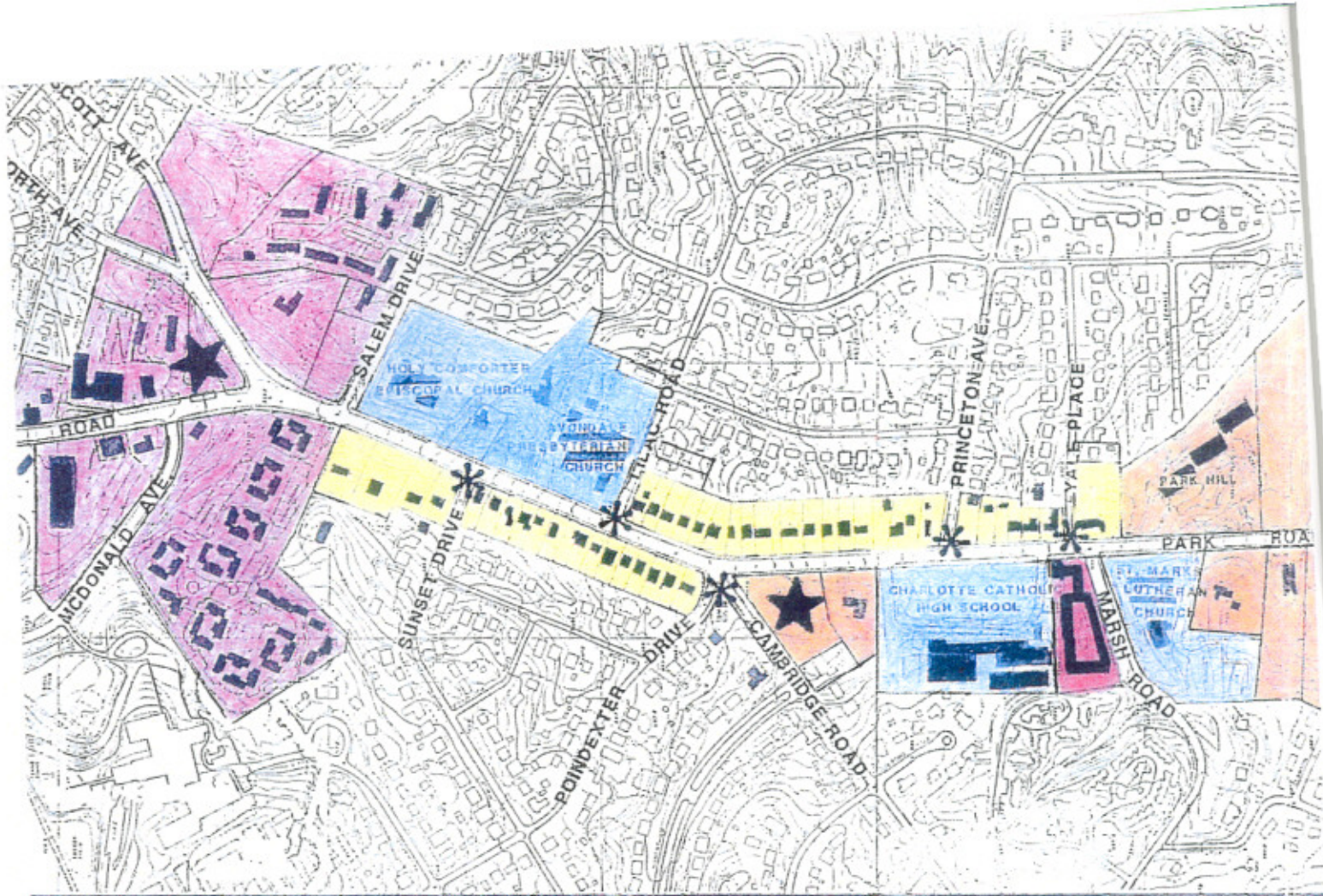
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★ FOCAL POINT







# PARK ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY

LA



COMPOSITE USE



INSTITUTIONAL



LOW DENSITY MULTIFAMILY (8-12 D.U.A.)



HIGH DENSITY MULTIFAMILY (12-16 D.U.A.)



SINGLEFAMILY (UP TO 6 D.U.A.)





