

**2015 Plan**

**Planning  
for  
OUR  
Future**

Adopted by the  
Charlotte City Council and the  
Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners  
November, 1997

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**2015 Plan Participants**

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# Introduction

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is undergoing an exciting, yet often times stressful urban transformation. A snapshot of the community today reveals a much different environment from the one in 1980 or 1985. Changes will continue to be dramatic as the community faces the challenges of urban growth and development.

Learning from the experiences of older metropolitan areas, we can see that Charlotte is at a critical juncture on its path to becoming a major metropolitan area. At some point in time in a city's evolution, the development pattern and associated urban dynamics become so firmly entrenched that the community has few options for changing its course. We are reaching that point.

Low density, suburban sprawl characterizes the current development pattern in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Annexation has historically accounted for much of the population growth, and corresponding growth in tax base, in Charlotte and the other cities within Mecklenburg County. By the year 2015, however, most available land within the County boundaries will likely have been annexed. The cities will be unable to grow through annexation. Therefore, growth must come in other ways, or it will be lost to surrounding counties. Infill development, reurbanization and regeneration are examples of how growth might be accommodated within the existing geographical boundaries. Planned and managed well, these types of growth can ensure that Mecklenburg County and its cities have the tax base and resources they need to remain healthy and strong.

Within the last decade, a considerable amount of planning has been done in our community. The *2005 Plan* was adopted in 1985, providing vision and direction for managing our growth. More specific district plans were later completed for the entire county. And numerous efforts are currently underway dealing with such complex topics as regionalism, transportation planning, uptown and inner city economic development, and environmental quality (see *Current Projects Analysis*, Planning Commission, June, 1996).

Since 1985, however, we have not paused as a community to assess how all the pieces of our planning efforts are fitting together within the context of recent physical, social and economic changes and new growth projections. The *2005 Plan* recommended that a comprehensive assessment occur periodically to test the validity of our planning assumptions in light of any changes and to extend the time period for planning with regard to new population, housing, and employment forecasts. This *2015 Plan* document, along with the *2015 View* document, provides that assessment.

The *2015 Plan* builds on the important planning work that has been done in the last decade to



determine where the community's planning efforts should be directed in the next five to ten years. It attempts to bring the community to consensus on a "bottom line" planning agenda and begins to develop a clearer picture of how all the pieces fit together.

This *2015 Plan* document organizes identified community issues into the following seven issue areas:

- Land Use and Design
- Neighborhoods
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Transportation
- Regionalism
- Education
- Economic Development

Community Safety was also identified as a key issue early in the plan development process. However, focus group participants felt that community safety was best addressed by resolving issues in the other identified areas. Thus, rather than focusing on adding more police officers or jail space, the plan would focus on such concerns as: ensuring that residents are empowered to make their communities safer; that children are provided with educational opportunities that allow them to succeed; that jobs and training are available for all skill levels; and that people can get to jobs and services. The emphasis is

on preventing crime by addressing root causes and providing an environment which is less conducive to criminal activity.

In addition to community safety, several other issues were identified as important to the future of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community. However, based on focus group input, such issues were either addressed in one of the seven identified issue areas, or were determined to be outside the scope of this current plan.

*The two sections following this introduction, **Plan Development** and **Growth Trends**, provide information on how the 2015 Plan was developed, and information regarding future growth expectations.*

**Community Issues** provides an analysis of each of the seven issue areas, along with goals, objectives and key action plan components.

*The **Implementation** section outlines a strategy to ensure that plan goals are achieved, provides information on costs of implementing the plan, and discusses the development of a communications strategy to assist citizens in making informed choices about the future of this community.*

*A **Glossary** of terms used in this document is provided. Finally the participants in developing this plan are recognized.*

# 2015 Plan Development

**T**he foundation for good planning is a prior determination of goals and objectives. It is essential to know “where we want to go” before attempting to decide “how to get there.” Goals are statements of long range continuing purposes, or ends to be achieved. Objectives are more specific targets leading to the attainment of goals. After these have been established, plans can be developed to identify a course of action specifying methods and resources required to achieve the goals and objectives.

The *2015 Plan* process was designed to develop goals and objectives and, ultimately, action steps to achieve those goals. The process began during the Fall of 1995, when the Planning Staff introduced the *2015 View* document. That document updates growth projections to the year 2015, assesses Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s growth and development over the last decade and raises some key issues in continuing our current course of development. The document was used to stimulate community dialogue regarding the future of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Following public presentations of the *2015 View* document, 14 citizen focus groups met to identify key community issues. Approximately 150 citizens, from a

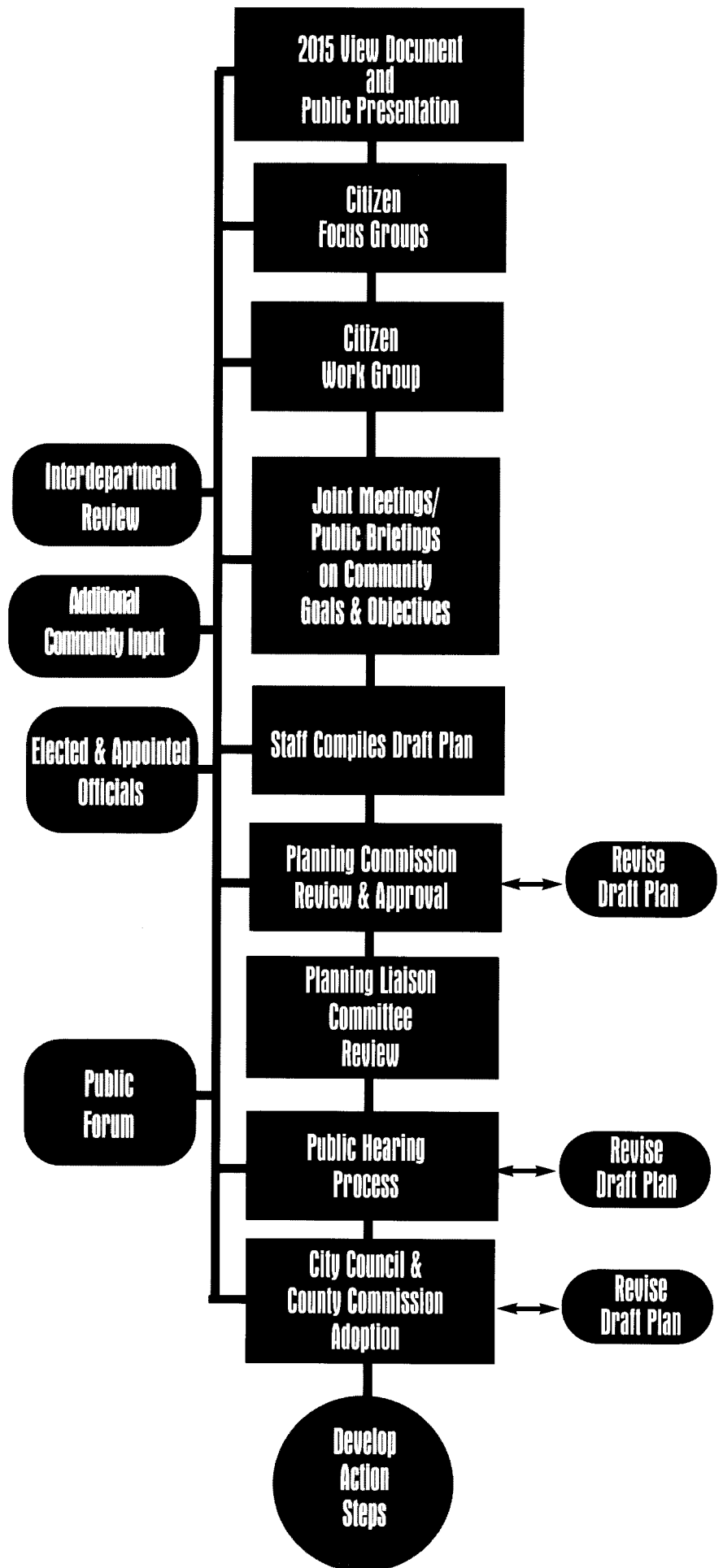
cross-section of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, participated in the focus group issue identification process. After focus groups identified key community issues, citizens were then invited to participate in work groups to further refine the issues, and to develop goals and objectives to address the issues.

The work group participants first studied what we are doing today, as a community, to address the key issues. Then, after much discussion, they reached the point of deciding “where we want to go.” Their decisions are reflected in the draft goals and objectives document completed on April 23, 1996, and presented to the public at a series of meetings in April and May, 1996.

The goals and objectives have been reorganized and added to, based on input at the public meetings, interdepartmental staff discussions, and Planning Commission review. Some “key action plan components” have also been added to provide implementors further direction as they develop specific action steps to achieve plan goals and objectives.

The Planning Commission approved the *2015 Plan* in December, 1996. City Council and County Commission adopted the Plan in November, 1997.

City and County adoption of the *2015 Plan* really represents just the beginning of our work as a community. It is now critical that strategies, or “plans of action” are developed to ensure that we carry out the identified objectives and reach the goals set out for our future development. Therefore, an implementation strategy has been proposed, as part of this document which requires that implementors be identified and held accountable for developing and carrying out “plans of action” with the continued input and support of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.



# Growth Trends

**C**harlotte-Mecklenburg is in the midst of a tremendous growth cycle. Between 1990 and 1995, the County grew by an estimated 66,585 people, or an average of 2.6 percent per year. Housing starts soared, with over 37,000 permits issued for new housing, and job growth continued to be strong.

More people, more homes, more jobs and more cars. If past trends continue, the community we know today will differ dramatically twenty years from now, as will the region that surrounds us. Making the transition to an even larger and more complex urban environment while sustaining economic growth and a high quality of life will be a challenge for Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The challenge is heightened because the community and its planning needs are so diverse, particularly as they correspond to four distinct but very inter-related and inter-dependent planning geographies: Center City; City-Within-A-City (CWAC); Suburban 5-10 Mile Ring; and, Metropolitan 10-20 Mile Ring. Each of these areas faces common issues; however, they also are encountering unique dynamics that must be taken into account as highlighted in the following paragraphs.

## **Center City**

The Center City has experienced tremendous change in the last decade. While its corporate image continues to thrive, it is becoming a more dynamic and diverse "place," particularly with the addition of the Convention Center and Ericsson Stadium, and with new urban housing and retail on the way. Our geographic concept of "Center City" is also changing, broadening to include areas outside of the I-277 Freeway Loop. Midtown and South End, as well as adjacent neighborhoods like Dilworth and Elizabeth, are becoming more a part of the Center City identity.

## **City-Within-A-City**

Some of Charlotte's most attractive and viable neighborhoods, as well as some of the most fragile and unstable neighborhoods lie within CWAC, an area roughly defined by Route 4 (within approximately a 4 mile ring from the center of uptown). CWAC is an area of contrasts, with the numerous social, economic and physical issues sometimes masking the vitality and possibilities that exist here. Socioeconomic data indicate that one third of Charlotte's population resides in this area, and they are plagued by higher than average unemployment, poverty and crime rates. Physical conditions (i.e., housing, infrastructure, parks) in some

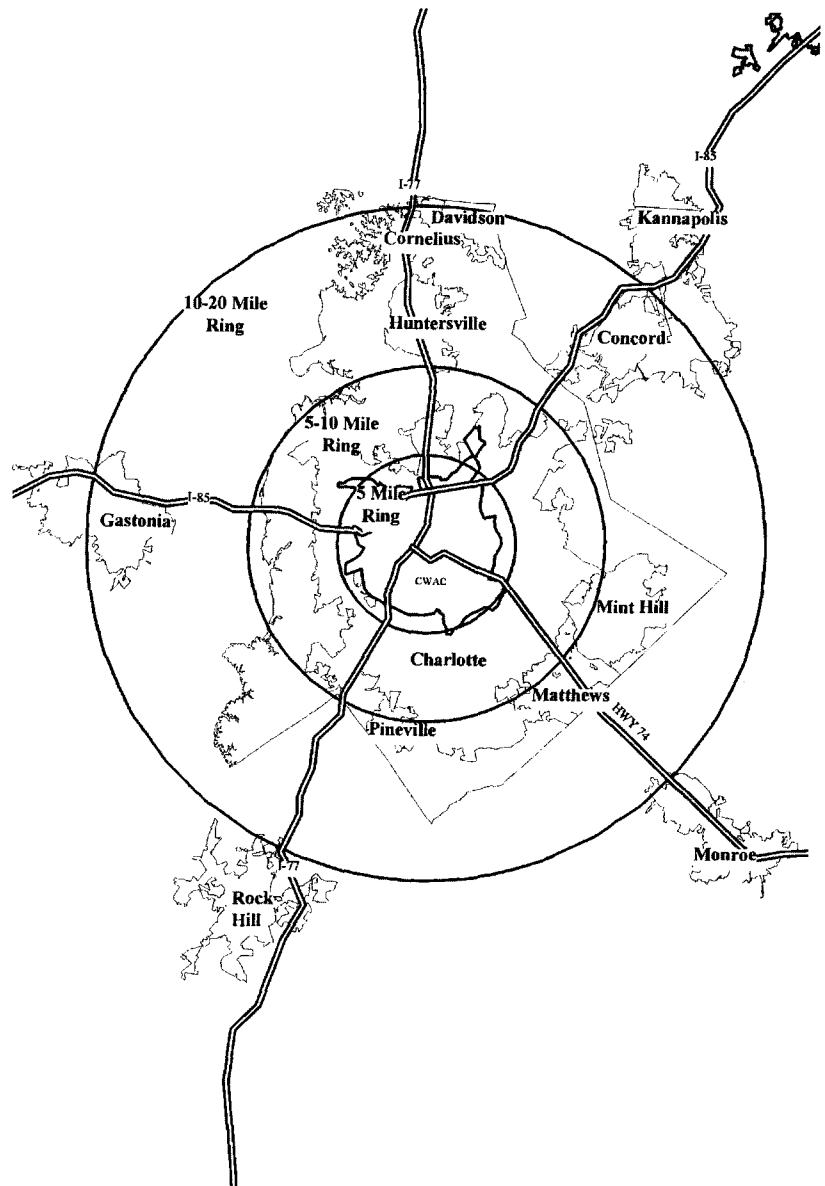
neighborhoods have deteriorated and services such as grocery stores and other basic conveniences are lacking. Revitalizing deteriorating areas, as well as maintaining and enhancing the stable areas, is critical to the viability of CWAC and the entire metropolitan area.

### **5-10 Mile Suburban Ring**

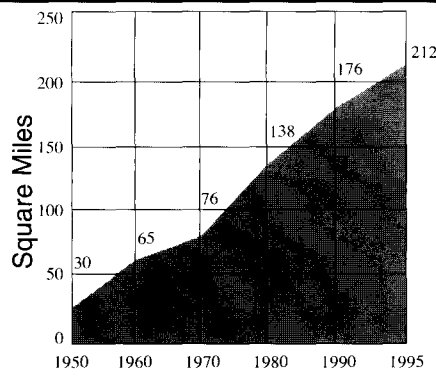
On one hand this area thrives and continues to fill in with new quality development. On the other, it is experiencing problems associated with growth and showing signs of decline in certain locations. Urban sprawl with its associated problems such as lack of connectivity and resulting traffic congestion, is the number one planning issue for this area. Loss of retail and employment to newly developing areas and neighborhood decline are emerging problems as well for this suburban ring, particularly for some of those areas closest to CWAC.

### **10-20 Mile Metropolitan Ring**

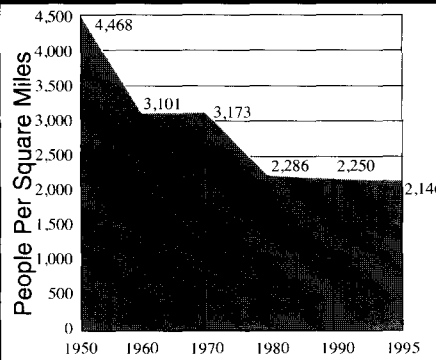
Throughout the County, this entire suburban ring is experiencing rapid growth. Major developments have been approved or are under development in the University City area; along the Interstate 77 corridor in North Mecklenburg and in the three northern towns; in the







**Increase in Charlotte's Square Miles**



**Population Density**

Mt. Holly Road/NC 16 area in the northwest; in the NC 160/NC 49 and Westinghouse Boulevard areas in the southwest; in the Six-Mile Basin off NC 51 and Pineville areas in South Mecklenburg; and in the east, along the US 74 corridor in Matthews. Much of the development is spurred by construction of the I-485 Outer Loop.

As with the 5-10 mile ring, problems associated with urban sprawl are the primary focus in

the Metropolitan Ring. Some of these problems include perpetuation of a single mode of transportation (automobile), loss of open space, and lack of distinct community identity. If we continue to grow by developing land further and further out from the central core, this area will also be faced with loss of retail and employment to newly developing areas, outside of the County.

## A Lot Can Happen In Twenty Years

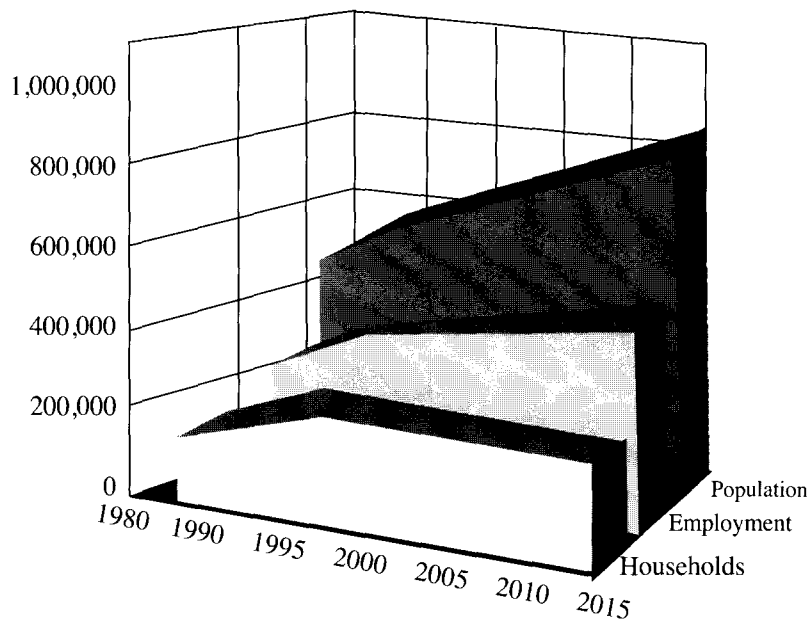
### In 1975 . . .

- Slightly less than 400,000 people lived in Mecklenburg County.
- Douglas Municipal Airport had 1.2 million passengers arriving and departing.
- Highway 51 was a narrow, two-lane country road surrounded by farmland.
- The concept of University City was just being formed with University Park just breaking ground; IBM had not yet located there; and Harris Boulevard did not even exist on paper.
- The towns within Mecklenburg County remained detached from much of Charlotte's influence.
- Professional sports teams were in cities like Atlanta and Chicago, not Charlotte.

### In 1995 . . .

- Approximately 578,000 people live in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- Charlotte-Douglas is one of the busiest airports in the country, with over 10.3 million passengers arriving and departing annually.
- Highway 51 is 4 - 6 lanes, lined with commercial and residential areas, and is one of our busiest roads.
- University City is one of the "hottest" development spots; The Research Park occupies approximately 6 million square feet; and Harris Boulevard is a major thoroughfare.
- Towns within Mecklenburg County struggle to maintain an identity separate from Charlotte.
- Residential development is experiencing a resurgence in the Center City area.

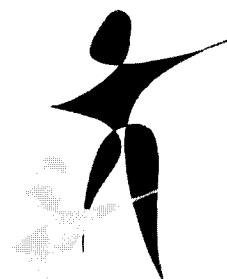
- Charlotte has its own professional basketball team, and the Carolina Panthers professional football team is looking forward to the completion of its home stadium in Uptown.
- A portion of the I-485 Outer Loop is open to traffic, with construction continuing on additional segments.
- Ballantyne, envisioned as Charlotte's first perimeter city, is under construction in south Mecklenburg County.



## By 2015 ???

- Approximately 815,000 people will live within the County.
- Most of the Outer Loop will be open.
- 250,000 more cars will be registered in the County.
- Approximately 114,000 more housing units are projected throughout the County.
- Over 200,000 more jobs are projected for Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- Development in surrounding areas will touch development in Mecklenburg County, forming a continuous urban area.
- Cities and towns within Mecklenburg County have unique identities?
- The next Highway 51?
- Open Space?
- Transit?
- Outer-Outer Loop? Edge Cities?
- Healthier inner-city?
- More Uptown housing?
- New arena Uptown?

**Population, Employment and Household Projections**



**Between 1990 and 1995, Mecklenburg County grew by more than 66,000 people, or an average of 2.6% per year.**

# Community Issues

## Vision For A Successful Community

- ✓ strong, attractive, and safe neighborhoods
- ✓ clean environment
- ✓ excellent education system
- ✓ good business climate
- ✓ plentiful, attractive and well-maintained parks and open spaces
- ✓ diverse and plentiful housing, shopping, and employment choices
- ✓ ease in getting around (transportation options)
- ✓ thriving Center City
- ✓ an involved community
- ✓ responsive and efficient government
- ✓ reasonable taxes
- ✓ regional cooperation and coordination

Source: 2015 View document, 1995

In many different forums and many different ways through the years, a common desire for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's future has been voiced: that we sustain economic growth and an excellent quality of life over the course of time. The citizens involved in the 2015 planning process reaffirmed this desire, emphasizing that to grow and prosper as a community we must not forget the people that make up our community. For our community to succeed, we must carefully consider, and plan for the diverse needs of all segments of our population.

Key concerns that must be addressed as we plan for the next decade were identified by citizen focus groups and organized into seven "issue areas." These seven issue areas are:

- Land Use and Design
- Neighborhoods
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Transportation
- Regionalism
- Education
- Economic Development

A section discussing each of these seven issue areas follows these introductory remarks. Each section includes a discussion of the key concepts regarding the particular issue area, as well as a listing of the goals and objectives which have been developed to guide the community in establishing specific action steps to address the identified issues.

Because the issue areas are interrelated, goals and objectives addressing a particular issue may sometimes be found in more than one section of this document. Cross-references are provided to highlight some areas of overlap. The intent of the document can best be understood, however, by looking at it in its entirety, and seeing how the sections work together to form a plan for the future.

The issues, goals and objectives presented in the following pages are based on the work of citizen work groups detailed in the document, *Issues, Goals and Objectives*, April 23, 1996.

# ■ Land Use and Design

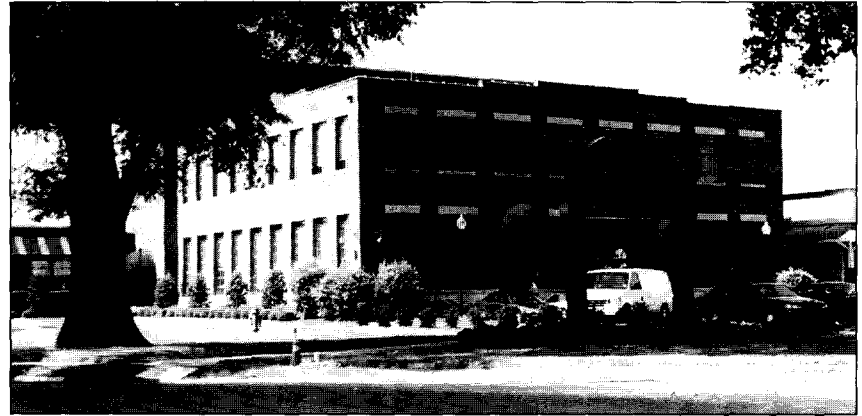
## Issue Analysis

Land use and design issues generally involve consideration of four major development components:

- 1) location
- 2) timing or phasing
- 3) relationship between different types of development, and
- 4) the form or design of the development

Consideration of each of these four components, and their interrelationships, are key parts of the land use decision process.

While most new investments in roads, infrastructure, and buildings, are focused on suburban locations, reinvestment in the Center City is becoming increasingly important in maintaining the viability of the entire community. Our policies and practices, however, have often been based on suburban development locations and may not always effectively address issues we face as an increasingly urban community. Zoning and land use practices which segregate different types of land uses, and encourage “automobile-oriented” development are being challenged.



Landscaping, lighting and site design help make this mixed-use development attractive and pedestrian friendly.

To remain economically competitive and retain a high quality of life into the 21st Century, it will become increasingly important to enable a development pattern which: 1) efficiently and effectively utilizes community services and facilities, especially the transportation system; 2) creates attractive, desirable, and diverse communities; 3) supports economic development; and, 4) is able to serve the community's needs over the long term. Also critical to the community's continued viability is that development successfully integrates the natural and the built environments and that growth is geographically balanced.



## Future Direction

Charlotte has a very suburban development pattern, and will likely produce mainly suburban development over the next decade. However, given our fixed geographic limits, our ability to accommodate future growth within Mecklenburg County will increasingly depend on our ability to enable more urban development within this suburban framework. Infill development, reurbanization and regeneration are some examples of how competitive housing and employment opportunities might be provided within Mecklenburg County.

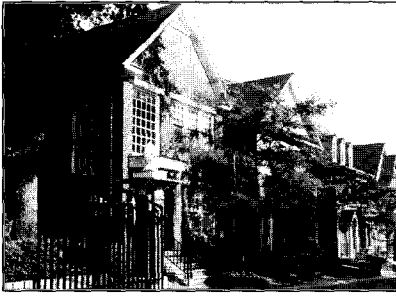
To enable more urban development, it is critical that we also identify our future transit strategy and address the associated land use implications. This will be necessary to successfully implement the “corridors and centers” land use concept.

The corridors and centers concept involves providing for high density multi-use development along major transit corridors and at key nodes or “centers” connected by these corridors.

Concentrating development along corridors and within centers will maximize the use of existing transportation and infrastructure, and will expand future development value and tax base by ensuring long term accessibility to housing, employment and public facilities.

Development design will play a significant role in successfully integrating the higher density development, needed to support the corridors and centers pattern, into the natural, built and human environment. Greater attention to scale, design quality, architectural detail, and sustainability will be required.

Also essential for long-term viability, will be a continued emphasis on balancing growth throughout the County. This will require implementing strategies to stimulate development and re-development in our weaker sub-markets, such as City-Within-A-City (CWAC), as well as ensuring that existing stable areas are maintained and enhanced.



Infill development must be sensitive to its surroundings.

## Goal 1: Urban Future

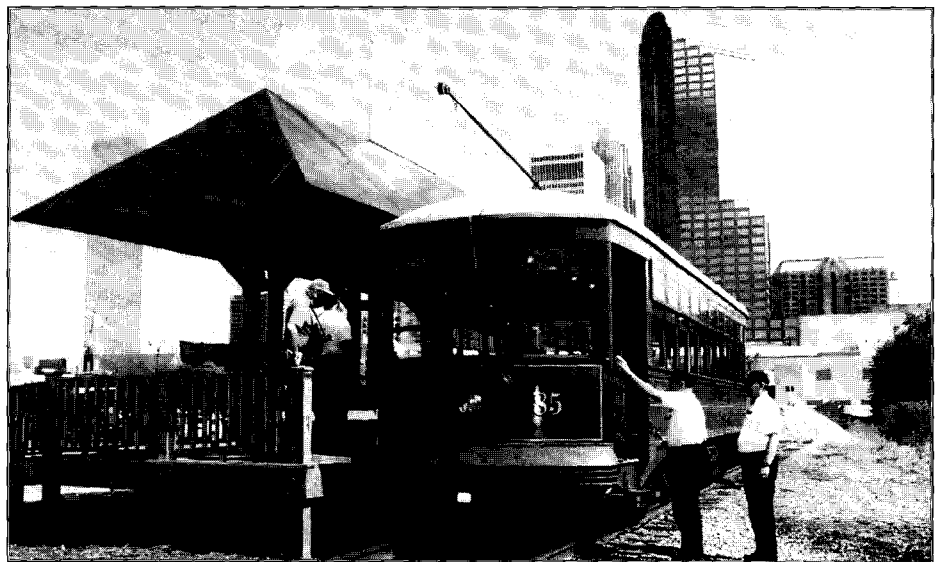
*(Refer also to Neighborhood Section)*

### Develop Charlotte as a unique and attractive urban center of a suburban region.

#### Objectives:

1. Create unique urban, pedestrian-oriented mixed use centers at key locations throughout the County.
2. Develop a balance of appropriate land uses and higher densities in key transit corridors and major activity centers to form an integrated land use and transportation system that will support multi-modal (i.e., roads, mass transit, aviation, bicycles, pedestrians) circulation.
3. Enable new development and infill development (residential and non-residential) that allows for a mixture of uses, enhances existing neighborhood character, preserves older buildings and landmarks, is sensitive to its surroundings, is pedestrian-oriented, supports transit use, and helps to revitalize deteriorating areas.
4. Recognize the critical importance of the entire Center City, and particularly the Uptown area, in the growth and development of the entire metropolitan area and continually seek to enhance its strength, vitality and livability.

A vibrant Center City is key to establishing Charlotte-Mecklenburg as a unique and attractive urban center.



*Kris Solow*

## Goal II: Balanced Growth

*(Refer also to Economic Development Section)*

**Provide for a more geographically balanced growth pattern within Charlotte-Mecklenburg.**

### Objectives:

1. Increase development / revitalization within CWAC.
2. Stimulate quality growth on the northwest and west sides of the City and County.
3. Ensure that existing stable neighborhoods are maintained and enhanced.



Building new homes in established urban neighborhoods is one way to accommodate growth within Mecklenburg County.

## Goal III: Quality Design

*(Refer also to Parks, Recreation and Open Space Section)*

**Promote higher design quality in development, recognizing the importance of scale, attention to detail, and the relationship between land use and structures.**

### Objectives:

1. Design development which is environmentally sustainable and which integrates the built environment with the natural environment.
2. Use design elements such as lighting, landscaping, scale and innovative site plans to improve the safety of both residential and commercial areas.

3. Develop a holistic approach when designing streets and transportation systems so that streets function well for both vehicles and pedestrians; and, they become public places with detailed streetscapes and a variety of attractions.
4. Make streets more pedestrian friendly by providing ample sidewalks, locating entrances off sidewalks, encouraging storefront windows, providing public spaces along the street (i.e., fountains, pocket parks), providing bus shelters, using traffic calming devices when appropriate, providing pedestrian traffic signals and crosswalks, and allowing on-street parking.
5. Develop and implement streetscape plans on major roadways.
6. Support development which compliments adjacent land uses and helps to create an identity for Charlotte, built upon the community's history and culture.
7. Integrate greenspace into new development and infill development.
8. Include neighborhoods in the design process.

As part of the *2015 Plan* implementation process, specific action steps will be developed to ensure that the community attains each of the land use and design goals. The Planning Commission has identified the following as key components in establishing those action steps:

## Key Action Plan Components

- Identify key transit corridors and major activity centers and develop land use and density criteria.
- Update the *General Development Policies* handbook to reflect *2015 Plan* goals and objectives.
- Address *2015 Plan* goals and objectives in district plan updates.
- Establish and promote the use of design criteria for new development and infill development.
- Develop a comprehensive open space plan for Charlotte-Mecklenburg identifying existing and future green space, waterways, open lands, and interconnections, including greenways, parks, nature preserves, water resources, open land, etc.

In addition to the above goals, objectives and key action plan components, *2015 Plan* citizen work groups also identified the following as possible action steps:

- Encourage developers to set aside land for public spaces.
- Bury utility lines underground.
- Protect natural drainage ways.
- Effectively utilize buffers and screening to enhance community appearance.
- Promote the "village" design scheme for new neighborhoods where appropriate, being careful not to utilize any one such design scheme to the exclusion of others.
- Promote the use/reuse of underutilized industrial land.
- Increase urban residential development within the I-277 freeway loop.
- Connect mixed use centers with an effective transit system.
- Involve the community early in design process by sponsoring design charrettes.



Attractive and functional design is critical in higher density development.





# ■ Neighborhoods

## Issue Analysis

Charlotte is a city of neighborhoods. In fact, the Planning Commission has identified over 900 neighborhoods/communities within Mecklenburg County. An assessment of the physical, social and economic conditions of these areas suggests that few are free of problems, and in fact, most areas are in need of some level of services to preserve and maintain them. This is true of neighborhoods within the inner city, as well as those in more suburban areas.

Failing and inadequate infrastructure, inadequately distributed community facilities, crime, unkempt yards and streets, and substandard housing devalue neighborhoods and inhibit reinvestments. The ultimate goal is to make Charlotte a city where residents of all neighborhoods enjoy personal safety, decent and affordable housing, good jobs, adequate infrastructure, ready access to shopping, educational and recreational amenities, and effective representation through community-based organizations.

## Future Direction

Neighborhoods — as the building blocks of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community — represent significant physical, social

and economic investments. It is critical that we provide the support and resources needed to make all our neighborhoods successful. Whether it be making infrastructure improvements, working to eliminate substandard housing, or providing training for neighborhood leaders, we must focus on the unique needs of neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods which provide access to a compatible balance of employment, retail, housing and educational and recreational opportunities will invite investment and reinvestment. However, we must ensure that development enhances the existing neighborhood fabric. Neighborhood residents often feel strongly about preserving the character of their neighborhoods and prefer stability to change. The challenge is to find a balance between the need for change and the need for stability.

Preserving existing neighborhood property values, while accommodating the necessary and inevitable forces of change will ensure that our neighborhoods are healthy and economically viable, and that they contribute positively to the community's tax base and to the overall quality of life in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

We must also address the need to provide for housing choices to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. When providing housing choices, we must take into account the need to provide housing opportunities for all income levels and lifestyles. Demographic trends, particularly the overall aging of the population, will likely create a demand for different housing styles, including condominiums and townhouses.

## **Goal I: Neighborhood Reinvestment**

**Enhance the character, viability and integrity; and, meet the changing needs, of neighborhoods throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg.**

### **Objectives:**

- 1.** Increase County-wide attention and involvement in addressing the needs of neighborhoods and areas showing signs of distress throughout Mecklenburg County and provide the needed infrastructure for the health, safety and welfare of neighborhood residents.
- 2.** Develop coordinated public-private partnerships to support neighborhood reinvestment and improvement efforts.
- 3.** Focus efforts on revitalizing deteriorated business areas.
- 4.** Aggressively seek ways to create jobs and job training opportunities to help families become self sufficient.
- 5.** Make neighborhoods the focus of how some public and private sector services are delivered, including the continuation of problem-oriented policing throughout Mecklenburg County.



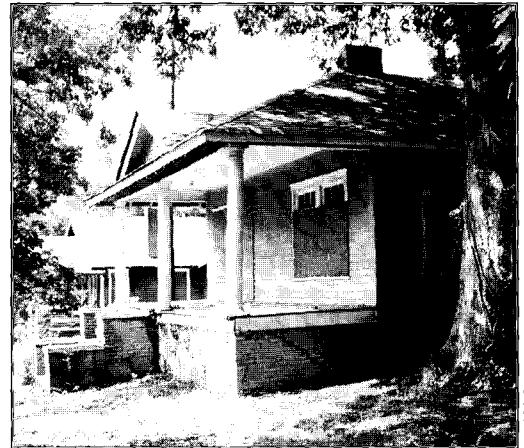
Re-investing in neighborhoods renews residents' sense of pride and ownership.

## Goal II: Housing Preservation, Affordability and Choices

Address the changing demands for housing by building a variety of types of housing at varying densities and by maintaining and rehabilitating the existing housing stock.

### Objectives:

1. Upgrade substandard housing throughout the County.
2. Protect and enhance the existing neighborhood fabric to realize the potential for utilizing the existing housing to provide middle-income home ownership opportunities.
3. Encourage development of a variety of housing types to meet the needs of an increasingly urban population.



Kris Solow

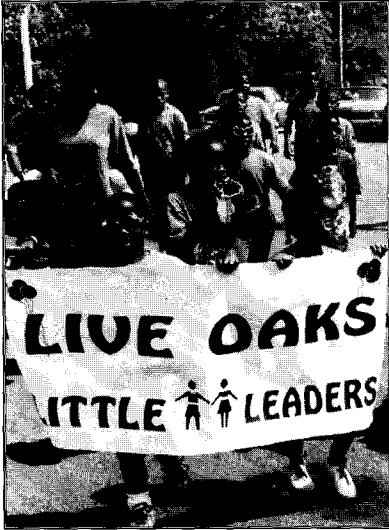
Rehabilitating existing homes provides affordable home-ownership opportunities.



A variety of housing types are needed to meet the needs of an urban population.

## **Goal III: Neighborhood Organizing/Empowerment**

**Encourage, train and educate residents to become effective neighborhood advocates who participate actively in advancing neighborhoods for the betterment of the entire community.**



Neighborhood residents take an active part in bettering their community.

### **Objectives:**

1. Encourage the development of effective and responsible organizations and/or community development corporations that represent the interests and needs of residents, businesses and property owners in the neighborhood.
2. Increase local government's efforts to respond to and address neighborhood issues in a coordinated and timely manner.
3. Train, educate and provide technical assistance to neighborhood leaders, advocates and residents to address neighborhood needs.
4. Maintain open communication and keep residents, neighborhood leaders, and business and property owners informed about projects and regulatory changes with possible impacts on neighborhoods.

## **Goal IV: Neighborhood Design**

**Encourage innovation in the design and development of neighborhoods to meet the needs of our population.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Encourage various land uses within neighborhoods to provide residents with such services as religious, educational, shopping, and recreational/green space.
2. Encourage development which fosters a sense of community (knowing your neighbors) by integrating design elements which create opportunities to bring residents closer together such as orienting residential buildings toward the street and providing pedestrian amenities.
3. Provide good access and circulation. (Discourage use of cul-de-sacs in design of new neighborhoods.)



Porches and sidewalks encourage neighbors to interact.

## Goal V: Community Safety

**Decrease the rate of crime and increase the perception of community safety through provision of neighborhood-based services.**

### Objectives:

1. Strengthen partnerships between residents, business owners and the police to reduce crime and increase the perception of public safety.
2. Include prevention, intervention and enforcement strategies in addressing crime.
3. Improve conditions in distressed neighborhoods and business areas and protect and maintain stable areas.
4. Ensure that public resources are most efficiently utilized in combating crime.



Ron Chapelle

Partnerships are a key part of community safety.

Action steps will be developed to address the identified neighborhood goals. The following represent key components to include in the development of the action steps:

### Key Action Plan Components

- Enable City/County staff to successfully implement neighborhood based problem solving.
- Focus on implementation of neighborhood action plans and the *Community Safety Plan*.
- Develop strategies to provide more housing choices in Charlotte-Mecklenburg to better reflect the demographic and economic make-up of our population.
- Facilitate appropriate infill development opportunities.
- Help individuals become self sufficient and less dependent on illegal activity for income.
- Decrease the rate of violent crime, substance abuse-related crime, repeat offender crime, and crime committed by and to youth in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community.

# Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces

## Issue Analysis

Parks, recreation and open space are essential to a community's quality of life. Aggressively working to maintain and expand Charlotte-Mecklenburg's parks, recreation and open space system will enrich people's lives and will help to attract new residents and businesses by positively impacting tourism, real estate values and land development patterns.

Park land provides areas where people can relax, socialize, participate in sports or educate themselves through programs or cultural events. Open space (i.e., greenways, natural areas, land buffers and waterways) provides a variety of recreational opportunities, protects natural resources and improves the aesthetic quality of the entire community.

## Future Direction

Given our development trend, it is critical that we reserve and acquire land now to meet current and future needs for parks, recreation and open space. Available and affordable land is becoming scarce and efforts should concentrate on acquisition to ensure that future generations will have a good park and open space system.

To do so, we need to look to partnerships and creative funding opportunities. We may also need

to begin thinking more creatively about how we can incorporate green/open space, into new and existing development, including roadway designs. Providing "traditional" parks may not always be feasible, or the best way to meet our community's needs.

The updated Parks Master Plan should provide the planning and prioritization for parks and open space. However, we must establish effective methods of coordinating public and private resources to meet public demands for parks, recreation and open space. Such measures include pursuing appropriate joint public and private ventures to obtain land and/or financing, providing incentives and controls to encourage owners of private property to preserve open space, and exploring ways to make temporary public recreational use of privately owned land.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's population is diverse in socio-economic characteristics and lifestyles. Recognizing that recreation choices are equally diverse, we must strive to provide an expanded public and private open space system of parks, greenways, and natural preserves that includes a diversity of facilities and programs to effectively serve a population with varied characteristics, needs and interests.

## Goal I: Availability

**Significantly increase the per capita availability of parks, open space resources, greenways, nature preserves and recreation facilities and programs throughout Mecklenburg County to meet the needs of its citizens.**

### Objectives:

1. Acquire more land for parks and open space.
2. Protect and preserve significant natural areas throughout Mecklenburg County.
3. Build and expand partnerships within and among neighborhoods, schools, communities, the private sector, governmental agencies and charitable organizations to provide, and optimize the use of all classifications of parks, open space, greenways, nature preserves and recreation facilities and programs throughout the County.
4. Communicate the need for parks, open space, greenways and recreation facilities and programs to gain support from the citizens of Mecklenburg and surrounding counties.
5. Ensure that all opportunities, including donations, conservation easements, inheritance trusts, and developer incentives are actively pursued to acquire, preserve and maintain park land/open space.
6. Create continuous sections of greenway, while pursuing completion of the greenway system, and design the greenways as key assets which link neighborhoods, parks, schools, shopping, etc.
7. Provide for special use needs, such as festivals and other community events.
8. Consider the potential to develop roadways as linear parks and greenways as non-motorized transportation facilities.
9. Consider input from the crime prevention authorities as a formal part of the Parks Department design review process.



Land must be set aside now to meet future needs for parks and open spaces.

## Goal II: Planning and Prioritizing

**Update the 1989 Parks Master Plan to provide planning, prioritization and funding for parks, open space, greenways, nature preserves and recreation facilities and programs and aggressively pursue coordination and cooperation with surrounding counties and the State of South Carolina.**

### Objectives:

1. Establish a prioritized schedule for developing parks, greenways and recreation facilities.
2. Develop a plan for a variety of creative funding options.
3. Aggressively pursue mechanisms with adjacent counties and the State of South Carolina to address joint concerns of open space and environmental needs.
4. Pursue development of a state/federal park in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.



Parks contribute to the community's overall quality of life.

Specific action steps will be developed to ensure that the community attains the goals established for Parks, Recreation and Open Space. The following are key components in establishing those action steps:

### Key Action Plan Components

- Include funding/implementation strategies as part of the updated Parks Master Plan.
- Implement a plan for acquiring and developing a comprehensive system of parks and greenways throughout Mecklenburg County.
- Develop new/creative partnerships to meet the community's needs for parks, recreation, and open space.
- Include crime prevention as part of the Parks Department design review process.

In addition to the above goals, objectives and key action plan components, the following have also been identified as possible action steps.

- Seek opportunities for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to share their facilities with Parks and Recreation.
- Provide more recreational opportunities within CWAC.





# ■ Transportation

## Issue Analysis

Transportation is essential to the economic, social and environmental well being of a community. It allows citizens access to jobs, shopping and services, and allows businesses access to the employees, goods and services which they need to flourish.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has traditionally pursued a "roads-first" transportation strategy and has developed, correspondingly, in a low density suburban pattern. The result is that the more spread out development becomes, the more people depend upon their automobiles. The more people depend on their automobiles, the greater the need for more roads.

As Charlotte-Mecklenburg plans for the 21st century, it is critical that we look at the long-term viability of this "roads-first" approach to transportation. Even now, the negative impacts of continued emphasis on road building (i.e., financial, social, environmental, economical) are becoming increasingly evident. Even with this "roads-first" approach, our transportation demands continually outpace our ability to build more roads.

In contrast, an approach that emphasizes a broad range of transportation choices can help to position our community for long term viability. A transportation

system that includes roads, mass transit, aviation, bicycle facilities and pedestrian ways will be a catalyst to economic growth and prosperity. Such a "multi-modal" system will contribute to the quality of life as it increases mobility for all segments of the population. It will also decrease traffic congestion and improve travel time.

Environmental impacts, including air pollution, will be decreased. The cost of providing and maintaining public services will also be lessened. Positive impacts on neighborhoods, open space and options for walking and cycling will result from a comprehensive, coordinated transportation system.

## Future Direction

Within the next 20 years, the number of automobile trips made each day within Mecklenburg County is expected to grow to over 3.5 million, compared to the 2.0 million trips made today.

The challenge before us is to identify and plan for a transportation system which can accommodate current transportation demands, can be implemented at reasonable costs (i.e., capital, environmental, neighborhood impact) and which can accommodate future needs, recognizing there is a practical limit to expansion of our road system.

The overall transportation goal for Charlotte-Mecklenburg is to develop an efficient, effective, safe and interrelated transportation system that includes roads, mass transit, aviation, rail, bicycle and pedestrian ways and related facilities needed for mobility in a rapidly growing urban region. Five goals have been developed to address various transportation modes.

Although a specific goal has not been developed to address rail transportation, Charlotte's freight connections provide the opportunity to develop an inland port. Daily passenger service to the Triad and Triangle is already underway. Rail transport should be considered as an important component of our overall transportation system.

## Goal I: Transit

**Expand the local bus system to support the incremental development of a fixed guideway system in key corridors to meet the transportation needs of our diverse population and provide greater mobility throughout the community and the region.**

### Objectives:

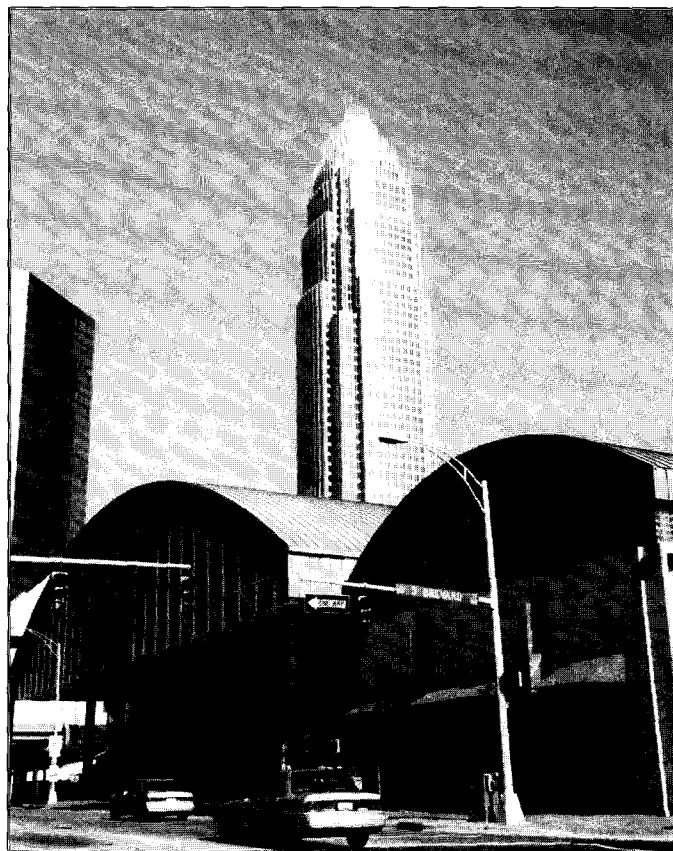
1. Protect and acquire existing rail corridors as they become available for future fixed guideway transit and complete a major investment study for transitways in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, including consideration of busways, light rail, and high occupancy vehicle (H.O.V.) lanes.



Kris Solow

An H.O.V. lane will be an incentive to carpool or use transit to avoid traffic congestion on Independence Boulevard.

2. Increase transit ridership by improving the image of Charlotte Transit; educating the public on how to use the system; increasing the frequency of service; providing satellite facilities and connecting major activity centers (Airport, SouthPark, Uptown, University area, etc.); decreasing the perception/incidence of criminal activity, and, providing bus shelters and park and ride lots.
3. Secure an adequate financing source for existing and future transit operations.
4. Coordinate and provide for interconnection between transportation modes including Charlotte Transit, intercity buses, taxi service, train service and the airport.
5. Evaluate the impact that a Transit/Transportation Authority would have in meeting our transportation goals, and determine the structure of the authority.
6. Develop a pilot transit project in one of the main corridors that offers a high frequency of service in an effort to grow ridership in that corridor. (The fare box/operating expense ratio should be relaxed for this experimental service for an adequate time to test its results. Include targeted marketing efforts for this project.)
7. Continue and expand the car pool/vanpool matching program and other programs which encourage alternative transportation.



Charlotte's new Uptown transit center provides a variety of services for transit riders.

## Goal II: Roads

**Improve and expand the existing roadway network to most efficiently and effectively move people and goods within the local communities and throughout the region. The roadway system should focus on serving the mobility needs of all segments of the population and all modes of travel and provide for the community's economic development needs.**

### Objectives:

1. Design and implement a roadway system that balances the need for economic development and mobility with the need for a livable, pedestrian and transit friendly environment.
2. Road improvements should be designed to minimize impacts on adjacent neighborhoods and to serve as public spaces.
3. Augment the thoroughfare system by providing more local street and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods which increase mobility for local residents but do not encourage "cut-through" traffic.
4. Continue to review and update the *Thoroughfare Plan*.
5. Plan and protect rights-of-way for future thoroughfares in the developing areas of the County.
6. Increase cooperation and communication between local authorities and the North Carolina State Department of Transportation.



Roads should serve the needs of a variety of travel modes — driving, walking, cycling and transit.



A sound barrier wall minimizes the impact of Independence Blvd. on adjacent neighborhoods.

## Goal III: Bicycling

**Thoroughly integrate bicycling into the planning, design and construction of all new transportation facilities and retrofit existing facilities to better accommodate the needs of bicycle transportation.**

### Objectives:

1. Complete a comprehensive plan and strategy for funding and implementation of a bicycle network and related facilities for both on and off road systems, and dedicate staff resources to monitor plan implementation.



Staff works with volunteers to identify roads best suited for bicycle travel.

## Goal IV: Walking

**Provide sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and other facilities to make it easier, safer and more enjoyable for people to walk.**

### Objectives:

1. Accelerate the sidewalk construction program and provide pedestrian signals and crosswalks at major intersections, especially areas with high levels of pedestrian traffic such as Uptown, Midtown and SouthEnd.
2. Design sidewalks so that they are wide enough and, whenever possible, set back from the roadway to increase pedestrian safety.
3. Lobby the State Department of Transportation to include sidewalk construction in their roadway projects.



Well-designed streets and sidewalks make walking a pleasant experience.

# Goal V: Aviation

(Refer also to Economic Development Section)

**Improve, expand and integrate existing airport facilities to meet the mobility needs of all of its users (local, national and international) and strengthen our region's competitive economic edge.**

## Objectives:

1. Maximize the number of non-stop domestic air markets served from Charlotte/Douglas International Airport and expand the airport's role in international air transport.
2. Support appropriate expansion and improvement of airport facilities to keep our region's competitive economic edge.
3. Maximize the use of airport owned and airport adjacent property to support compatible industrial, manufacturing and distribution uses, while recognizing the need to protect existing neighborhoods.
4. Maintain the Airport's ongoing long range planning function.
5. Provide direct connections between the airport terminal and other transportation systems in our region.
6. Improve the terminal's ground transportation services signage.

Specific action steps will be developed to ensure that the community attains each of the transportation goals. The Planning Commission has identified the following as key components in establishing those action steps:



The airport is vital to the region's competitive economic edge.

## Key Action Plan Components

- Prepare and implement an improved transit program.
- Reserve designated rail and transit corridors for future needs.
- Refine the transportation component of the centers and corridors development concept.
- Expand the sidewalk program.
- Devote more resources to alternative transportation measures, including bicycling and van/carpooling.

In addition to the above goals, objectives and key action plan components, the following has also been identified as possible action steps:

- Improve the quality of taxi service provided at the airport.

# ■ Regionalism

## Issue Analysis

During the 1980's growth began to transform the area within 20 miles of Charlotte into one large metropolitan area. Greater social and economic interaction between the cities and counties increased the need to establish cooperative strategies for long-term growth.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg metropolitan region includes seven counties in two states, comprised of thirty cities. This area had a 1990 population exceeding 1.2 million people.

If the cities, towns and counties in this region are all going in different directions and pursuing different goals, development will be helter skelter, and will have a negative impact on all the communities in the long run. For example, industrial development in one jurisdiction could be built next to residential in another, or a road widening could stop at the county line, creating traffic congestion where the road hasn't been widened.

Most of the towns, cities and counties within 20 miles of Center City Charlotte reached some consensus on a transportation and land use vision for the region during the Committee of 100 process. Other limited cooperative efforts have been reached in the areas of water and sewer infra-

structure, watershed protection and landfills. These efforts are the beginning of true cooperation in the region, but much remains to be done to carry these efforts and others to fruition.

## Future Direction

Within the next 25 years the area within 20 miles of Charlotte's Center City will be almost entirely developed. The cost of government, economic strength, environmental quality, accessibility, and viability will be determined by the decisions we make in the next few years.

Decisions concerning land use, transportation, utility and environmental planning and public service delivery should be coordinated throughout the metropolitan region to increase efficiencies and ensure long-term viability. Such cooperative efforts, however, must also be coordinated at the local level to ensure that initiatives are not at cross-purposes and that they do not conflict with our overall vision for Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Such local coordination can also ensure that while we heartily endorse regional cooperation, we keep the best interests of Charlotte-Mecklenburg at the forefront of our decision making.

# Goal I: Regional Coordination

(Refer also to the Economic Development and Transportation Sections)

## Build regional and local concurrence to coordinate land use, transportation, utility and environmental planning and public service delivery in the Charlotte metropolitan region.



Towns within Mecklenburg have unique identities.

### Objectives:

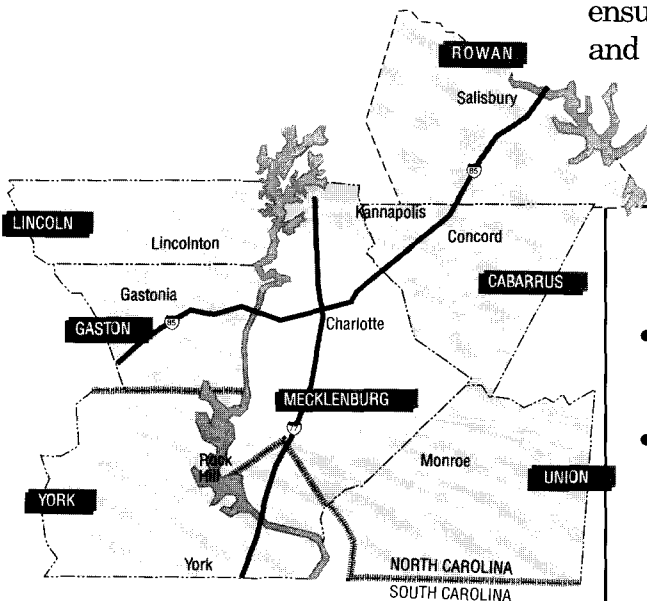
1. Promote the region not only as a global financial and prosperous business center and professional sports location, but also as a region with a high environmental and personal quality of life.
2. Implement the transportation and land development recommendations of the Committee of 100 following the “Centers and Corridors Pattern” in Mecklenburg County and encourage surrounding counties to do likewise.
3. Build on the work of the Committee of 100 through additional intergovernmental planning initiatives in the major corridors in the region; ensure coordination of rail and air distribution; and, seek
4. Consider the impact of development on the individual character/identity of the towns as the region becomes more urbanized.
5. Emphasize cooperation and coordination of economic development efforts and business recruiting for the region as a whole, rather than competition within the region.

new areas of regional cooperation, including working with adjoining counties to address joint concerns of open space and environmental needs.

4. Consider the impact of development on the individual character/identity of the towns as the region becomes more urbanized.
5. Emphasize cooperation and coordination of economic development efforts and business recruiting for the region as a whole, rather than competition within the region.

As part of the *2015 Plan* implementation process, specific action steps will be developed to address regionalism. The following are some of the key components of those action steps:

Mecklenburg County  
Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill MSA



### Key Action Plan Components

- Implement the transportation and land development recommendations of the Committee of 100.
- Identify a local coordination strategy for regional initiatives to ensure that regional initiatives do not endanger the preservation of Mecklenburg County’s residential and employment tax base.





# Education

## Issue Analysis

A quality education system is a vital part of a healthy community. Conversely, a healthy, economically stable community is essential to developing a quality education system. This symbiotic relationship is evident in issues related to crime and law enforcement, individual and community economic well-being, welfare and other social programs, and neighborhood stability.

To effectively prepare our citizens for productive, satisfying and meaningful lives; to meet the lifestyle needs of an urban population; and, to function effectively in the emerging global economy, Charlotte-Mecklenburg must strive to provide the highest quality education system. The education system must be a life-long system from the early education of preschool children to the continuing education and retraining of adults, including a strong emphasis on adult literacy. Such a system must be committed to excellence in its facilities, faculty and programs; and, must be an active participant in planning for the future of the community.

## Future Direction

Meeting the growing education and training needs of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community will involve forging new partnerships, making education a central focus of the community, and committing to better planning and coordination of capital expenditures. It will also require that the education system become an active player in preparing for the future of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. From sharing facilities with other agencies and organizations, to involving the community in mapping its educational future, to working hand-in-hand with City and County agencies to plan for the challenges of growth and development, the education system must be an integral part of the solution.

We must ensure that all of our schools provide the highest quality education, are used to their maximum potential, and respond to long-term needs. A public school facilities master plan is needed which is innovative in approach and which is based on changing demographic and economic trends. Part of this plan must include policies for locating schools and criteria for developing schools in urban areas.

## Goal I: Participation and Partnerships

**Make the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System (CMS), and all of our public learning institutions, integral participants in planning for the future of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community and in implementing plans developed to enhance this community's livability and viability, including the *2015 Plan*.**

### Objectives:

1. Build inter-agency partnerships between CMS, other learning institutions, and City/County departments and agencies.
2. Enjoin CMS and other learning institutions to take an active role in the development of neighborhood plans and other City/County initiatives addressing the long-term viability of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.
3. Build partnerships among schools, students, parents and other caring adults, places of worship, human service agencies, employers, private businesses, government agencies, charitable organizations, and a variety of other community institutions to maximize available resources and involve the total community in the education process.
4. Create a partnership between the educational and the business communities to increase job preparedness and employment skills; to refine career curriculum based on local businesses' needs; and, to encourage internships which open career choices and increase employability.
5. Encourage the cooperative efforts of all education institutions in sharing instructors, facilities, technology and learning programs.
6. Utilize the whole community to identify at risk children as early as possible and to establish a system that ensures that these children succeed.



Building partnerships between schools, students and the community is essential in providing quality education.

Kris Solow

## **Goal II: Public School Facilities/Resources**

**Develop a comprehensive plan for the provision, use and distribution of educational facilities and other capital resources in the public school system.**

### **Objectives:**

- 1.** Develop a comprehensive school facilities master plan to determine the number, location, and use of new facilities, identify expansion needs of existing schools, and establish criteria for building schools in urban areas.
- 2.** Ensure that the necessary resources (personnel, facilities, classroom space, equipment and materials) are available, and equitably distributed so that all citizens have the opportunity to meet their educational goals and equip themselves with essential tools to effectively compete for higher education and employment opportunities.
- 3.** As part of the facilities master plan, determine how public schools can make more efficient use of their facilities, including sharing facilities with parks, police and other partners; and, design these facilities to accommodate maximum community use.
- 4.** Attract and maintain the best faculty and staff at all levels of education.



Planning is an essential part of making sure our children have the schools, books and other resources they need.

## Goal III: Public School Curriculum

**Develop a comprehensive plan for providing educational services within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System (CMS), which determines what services will be provided and how they will be delivered.**

### Objectives:

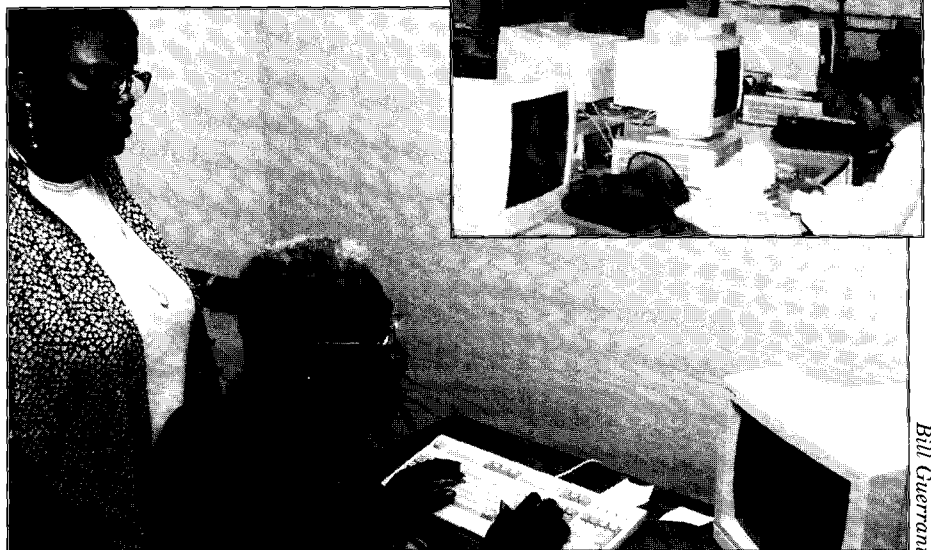
1. Ensure that the educational curriculum provides a variety of courses, consistent with high national and international standards, to meet the demands of a modern global society.
2. Ensure that all residents of Mecklenburg County have the opportunity to learn to read, compute, communicate and reason at a level which will enable them to succeed in the work force or post-secondary education.
3. CMS school curricula should: incorporate job preparedness, employment skills and work competencies including training in trades and professional and technical skills; stress community service, school service, citizenship, values and ethics; include vocational, fine arts, foreign language and comprehensive health education; and, promote entrepreneurship.
4. Emphasize optimum competence in reading, writing and math in the early grades (K-5).
5. Expand drug awareness programs in the schools, possibly by making the D.A.R.E. program mandatory in K-12.
6. Support alternative schools/programs for disruptive students.
7. Determine how to: 1) use technology to improve instruction; 2) retrofit facilities for technology; and, 3) prioritize the introduction of technology into the classroom.
8. Provide programs to extensively diminish adult illiteracy.

## Goal IV: Post Secondary School Curriculum

**Ensure that secondary education, training, and re-training opportunities are provided in Mecklenburg County which prepare citizens to compete in a global marketplace.**

### Objectives:

1. Support development of programs (avocation, associate, bachelors, masters and doctorate) in response to the current and future needs of our citizens, community and economy.
2. Expand opportunities for continuing education and employee re-training that include preparation for the professional and technical jobs of the future.
3. Offer more higher education courses and degrees in Charlotte.



Continuing education and re-training opportunities must prepare citizens for the jobs of the future.



The Planning Liaison Committee brings together School Board, City Council and County Commission representatives.



Our education system must be a “cradle to the grave” system.

Specific action steps will be developed to ensure that the community attains each of the education goals. The following represent some of the key components to include in establishing those action steps:

### **Key Action Plan Components**

- Form an interagency team with CMS to develop action steps in response to *2015 Plan* goals and objectives.
- Develop a communication and information sharing strategy to more thoroughly involve CMS, CPCC and UNCC in planning initiatives, including development of neighborhood, corridor and district plans.
- Develop a public school facilities master plan which is innovative in approach and presents a comprehensive strategy for addressing the long-term needs of this community for educational facilities and resources.
- Develop public school location criteria/policies.

In addition to the above goals, objectives and key action plan components, *2015 Plan* citizen work groups also identified the following as possible action steps:

- Encourage public schools to be more flexible concerning the educational certification requirements in order that students may benefit from the expertise of qualified professionals.
- Increase public awareness of the importance of all our educational institutions and of their unique contributions, strengths and opportunities.
- Seek out successful examples from environments that enhance learning and foster self discipline and incorporate them, where appropriate, into the public school classroom.
- Provide the necessary child care options so that students may continue their education at all levels.



# ■ Economic Development

## Issue Analysis

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a strong record of economic vitality, of new jobs and an expanding tax base. However, not all our citizens share in that prosperity, and we may not be positioned to compete for new long term job growth with areas outside of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region.

While our per capita income is gaining on the national average, income growth is not keeping pace with the rest of the seven-county metropolitan area and the state. (*Focus '95*) Growth by employment sector is the key. Our employment boom is led by sales and services — where earnings and wages tend to lag behind categories like finance, transportation and communications. In the last few years, other southeastern cities have overtaken Charlotte in getting the better paying jobs.

In terms of our competitiveness with other cities, we are also losing our historical edge on housing affordability. Charlotte has become one of the most expensive southern cities on affordability. (*Focus '95*)

In addition, an inner city-suburban gap is also being created by flat growth in the inner city and rapid growth in the remainder of the metro area. In the past, annexation masked the inner city

problems. Charlotte's inner city continues to have higher crime rates, more poverty and higher unemployment than outlying areas. (*Focus '95*)

## Future Direction

For continued vitality, we need to be sure that the platform for economic development is in place. We must create an environment where businesses thrive in all geographies of our community; where there is economic opportunity for everyone; and where the economy is sufficiently diverse to withstand economic cycles and adapt to a changing global economy.

To ensure our long-term economic viability, economic development efforts should be focused throughout the community on business formation, retention and recruitment.

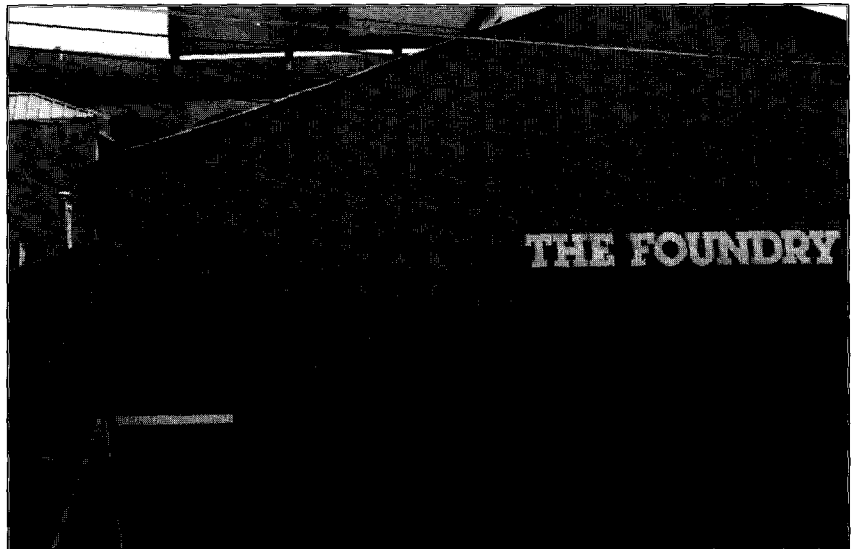
We must balance our economic development focus with attention to quality of life issues. We must ensure that Charlotte-Mecklenburg remains a place where people want to live. Resources must be devoted to initiatives related to appearance, air and water quality, public safety, health and social services, parks, schools, recreation and transportation facilities for this community to maintain a high quality of life.

## Goal I: Diversity and Adaptability

**Pursue a diverse economy that is adaptable to the changing global environment and produces quality jobs and career opportunities to meet the needs of our increasingly urban population.**

### Objectives:

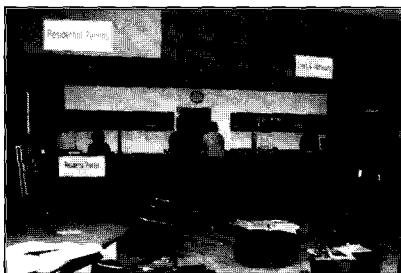
1. Seek employment opportunities that are stable, offer above average wages, and provide career opportunities to meet a wide variation of skill and educational levels.
2. Continue existing recruitment efforts, including film, sports and hospitality industries and seek and encourage new and emerging industries.
3. Continue to recruit international business and expand exporting opportunities for our region's industries.
4. Retain, support and expand existing businesses, including banking, distribution, and manufacturing.
5. Continue Minority and Women Business Development (MWBD) efforts.



Industry and sports are two segments of our diverse economy.

## Goal II: Government

**Make Government the model of best business practices by implementing governmental policies and processes that sustain, strengthen and expand economic development.**



Mecklenburg County's one-stop permitting shop simplifies the permitting process for customers.

### Objectives:

1. Strive to keep taxes affordable while maintaining high quality service.
2. Lower the cost of doing business while maintaining the health, safety and general welfare of the community.
3. Streamline governmental regulatory and developmental processes and eliminate unnecessary regulations.
4. Support policies that maintain a high quality of life and a clean environment.



## Goal III: Infrastructure

**Provide the infrastructure and the governmental facilities that support economic growth in uptown, City-Within-A-City (CWAC) and suburban economic centers.**

### Objectives:

1. Continue the growth of the airport and its related industries.
2. Provide transportation systems (i.e., transit and roads) that enable people to reach their jobs by connecting major employment centers to residential neighborhoods.
3. Provide the water, sewer, electric and gas infrastructure, and support a telecommunications system that meets the needs of our community.
4. Support efforts to revitalize deteriorating business corridors and residential areas.
5. Actively seek regional infrastructure solutions as recommended in the Regionalism Section of this document.



Roads, sidewalks, water and sewer lines are all part of the basic infrastructure necessary to support economic growth.

## Goal IV: Education and Training

**Provide superior educational opportunities that meet both the needs of industry and the aspirations of the emerging, existing, transitional and entrepreneurial workforce.**

*(This goal is addressed in more detail in the Education Section of this document)*



Education and training opportunities must meet the needs of industry and the aspirations of our citizens.

## Goal V: Recruitment

**Establish incentives that enable Charlotte-Mecklenburg to compete for relocating business.**

### Objectives:

1. Ensure that there is a sufficient amount of well located, affordable industrial sites throughout the County.
2. Support City-Within-A-City (CWAC) initiatives to create healthy urban industrial districts.
3. Stay competitive with the region and the nation on economic development incentives, and provide regulatory incentives for industries/businesses that meet our community's goals.
4. Support transportation projects that leverage business expansion and attraction.
5. Maintain the attractiveness of Charlotte to the workforce, especially relating to housing costs and overall quality of life.



Quality of life factors contribute to the economic vitality of the community.



The airport plays a pivotal role in maintaining our region's economic strength.

## Goal VI: Community Safety

**Reduce crime and use government resources effectively to make Charlotte-Mecklenburg a safer community.**

### Objectives:

1. Maintain neighborhood business stability to support public safety initiatives.
2. Review ordinances and enforcement practices regarding vagrancy, building codes, community appearance, zoning, etc., to ensure that they effectively support community safety initiatives.

## Key Action Plan Components

- Streamline government regulatory processes.
- Develop a strategy and action plan to keep and expand existing businesses in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- Develop the Center City, particularly the Uptown area, as an important economic asset for the entire City and metropolitan area.
- Develop partnerships and investment strategies to support economic development and support fragile areas, including implementation of the *Community Safety Plan*.
- Utilize the Capital Improvements Plan as a platform for economic development.
- Focus on closing undesirable businesses and recruiting desirable ones.

# Implementation

**I**mplementation and communication are two vitally important and highly interconnected components of the *2015 Plan*. For this Plan to be successful, it is imperative that the wider community understand and accept the major concepts and recommendations it sets forth, including the vision it holds for a successful community. It is also essential that the various City and County departments and agencies, as well as the private sector, understand the Plan and are committed to working together to develop and implement the action steps needed to achieve the identified community goals. The Planning Commission must take the lead role in making sure that this happens.

To ensure that the major concepts and recommendations of this plan are widely communicated and successfully implemented, an implementation strategy and a communication strategy are included as part of the *2015 Plan*. Each of these strategies along with expected financial impacts of implementation are discussed below.

## **Implementation Strategy**

The implementation of the *2015 Plan* will help link City and County initiatives to community issues and priorities. In part, the *2015 Plan* serves as a framework and organization tool to ensure that priority

issues are addressed and that resources are used most effectively.

Goals and objectives have been put forward in this document to address the key issues identified by citizens in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community. Now, specific action steps must be developed to realize those goals and objectives. Some key components of those action steps have also been identified.

Because of the diversity of key issues, a number of City and County departments will be important players in the implementation of the *2015 Plan*. Staff in these various departments have the expertise that will be necessary to develop specific action strategies. Therefore, these departments will be given the lead role in establishing the specific action steps needed to carry out plan objectives, and will be responsible for incorporating the action steps into their work programs. Planning Commission staff will be responsible for compiling the action steps developed by each of the departments and for providing status reports on plan implementation.

The following list identifies the lead departments in developing action strategies for each goal, and provides some of the key components that should be included in those action strategies. Although a department may not be listed as the lead on a particular goal, that department may still be a key player in addressing some of the

specific objectives and may need to add specific action steps to their work program. Therefore, *2015 Plan* staff liaisons from each City and County department have been involved throughout the plan development and review process.

## **I. Land Use & Design**

- Goal 1: Planning Commission
- Goal 2: Planning Commission, Neighborhood Development
- Goal 3: Planning Commission, Charlotte Department of Transportation, City Engineering

### **Key Action Plan Components for Land Use and Design**

- Identify key transit corridors and major activity centers and develop land use and density criteria.
- Update the General Development Policies handbook to reflect *2015 Plan* goals and objectives.
- Address *2015 Plan* goals and objectives in district plan updates.
- Establish and promote the use of design criteria for new development and infill development.
- Develop a comprehensive Open Space Plan for Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Land Use and Design**

Development and implementation of specific action steps to address Land Use and Design goals and objectives are expected to be accomplished principally within existing departmental budgets. Plan recommendations will, in particular, assist in directing existing resources of the Planning Commission, Neighborhood Development,

Charlotte Department of Transportation and City Engineering.

Some projects are expected to require additional public expenditures to implement. As an example, the *Westside Strategy Plan* will likely recommend infrastructure improvements beyond those currently programmed. In such instances, funding will be brought forward to elected officials for consideration.

## **II. Neighborhoods**

- Goal 1: Planning Commission, Neighborhood Development
- Goal 2: Neighborhood Development, Planning Commission
- Goal 3: Neighborhood Development, Planning Commission
- Goal 4: Planning Commission
- Goal 5: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, Neighborhood Development

### **Key Action Plan Components for Neighborhoods**

- Enable City/County staff to successfully implement neighborhood based problem solving.
- Focus on implementation of neighborhood action plans and the *Community Safety Plan*.
- Develop strategies to provide more housing choices in Charlotte-Mecklenburg to better reflect the demographic and economic make-up of our population.
- Facilitate appropriate infill development opportunities.
- Help individuals become self sufficient and less dependent on illegal activity for income.
- Decrease the rate of violent crime, substance abuse-related crime, repeat offender

crime, and crime committed by and to youth in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Neighborhoods**

Development and implementation of specific action steps to address goals and objectives for sustaining and enhancing neighborhoods, are expected to be accomplished principally within existing departmental budgets. Plan recommendations will, in particular, assist in directing existing resources of the Planning Commission, Neighborhood Development (especially the Neighborhood Empowerment Division), City Engineering and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

Several major initiatives are currently underway, or already planned, which will serve to implement the *2015 Plan* goals and objectives for neighborhoods. Much of the funding for these initiatives has been identified. As these efforts are expanded in coming years, departments may seek additional funding.

It is likely that additional projects and initiatives will be developed which will need funding outside of existing department's budgets. These will be brought forward to the elected officials for consideration.

## **III. Parks, Recreation & Open Space**

- Goal 1: Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission
- Goal 2: Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission

## **Key Action Plan Components for Parks, Recreation & Open Space**

- Include funding/implementation strategies as part of the updated *Parks Master Plan*.
- Implement a plan for acquiring and developing a comprehensive system of greenways throughout Mecklenburg County.
- Develop new/creative partnerships to meet the community needs for parks, recreation and open space.
- Include crime prevention as part of the Parks Department design review process.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces**

The Parks Master Plan, currently under development, will establish specific action steps to address many of the goals and objectives for parks, recreation and open space identified in the *2015 Plan*. The Parks Department did not request funding from the current (1997) County bond package. However, it is likely that they will seek such funding in future years to implement the recommendations from the Parks Master Plan, once it is completed and approved. The *2015 Plan* also encourages the development of creative funding opportunities (i.e., public/private initiatives, land swaps) to acquire and develop park resources and recommends that such opportunities be identified in the Parks Master Plan.

## **IV. Transportation**

- Goal 1: Charlotte Department of Transportation
- Goal 2: Charlotte Department of Transportation, Planning Commission

- Goal 3: Charlotte Department of Transportation
- Goal 4: Charlotte Department of Transportation
- Goal 5: Aviation, Planning Commission

### **Key Action Plan Components for Transportation**

- Prepare and implement an improved transit program.
- Reserve designated rail and transit corridors for future needs.
- Refine the transportation component of the centers and corridors development concept.
- Expand the sidewalk program.
- Devote more resources to alternative transportation measures, including bicycling and van/carpooling.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Transportation**

The Charlotte City Council has approved a five-year transportation plan to respond to traffic congestion and pollution while providing more options for buses, carpools, and other alternatives to cars. This five-year plan establishes action steps to address many of the goals and objectives for transportation identified in the *2015 Plan*. The estimated cost of implementing the five-year plan is \$503.1 million. Funding for the plan is still being determined.

Recent legislation has also enabled Charlotte-Mecklenburg to seek a 1/2 cent sales tax increase to fund transit initiatives. Future transit plans will be influenced by this recent legislation and the outcome of local efforts to endorse such an initiative.

As additional projects and initiatives are developed which need funding outside of existing department's budgets, these will be brought forward to the elected officials for consideration.

## **V. Regionalism**

Goal 1: Planning Commission

### **Key Action Plan Components for Regionalism**

- Implement the transportation and land development recommendations of the Committee of 100.
- Identify a local coordination strategy for regional initiatives to ensure that regional initiatives do not endanger the preservation of Mecklenburg County's residential and employment tax base.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Regionalism**

Development and implementation of specific action steps to address the Regionalism goal and objectives are expected to be accomplished principally within existing departmental budgets. Plan recommendations will, in particular, assist in directing existing Planning Commission resources.

As an example, in FY 98, the Planning Commission is scheduled to coordinate quarterly meetings with planners and elected officials from all cities and towns within Mecklenburg County. Planning staff will also be working with surrounding jurisdictions on the

development of the Centers and Corridors Sourcebook, transit planning initiatives, the completion of a plan for the US 29 Corridor and in implementing initiatives developed through the Carolinas Urban Choices work.

## **VI. Education**

- Goal 1: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, CPCC, UNCC, Planning Commission
- Goal 2: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Goal 3: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Goal 4: CPCC, UNCC

### **Key Action Plan Components For Education**

- Form an interagency team with CMS to develop action steps in response to *2015 Plan* goals and objectives.
- Develop a communication and information sharing strategy to more thoroughly involve CMS, CPCC and UNCC in planning initiatives, including development of neighborhood, corridor and district plans.
- Develop a public school facilities master plan which is innovative in approach and presents a comprehensive strategy for addressing the long-term needs of this community for educational facilities and resources.
- Develop public school location criteria/policies.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Education**

The *2015 Plan* Education goals and objectives focus on planning and on developing partnerships. The plan does not identify specific facility or resource needs. Rather, it emphasizes the need to identify, prioritize and creatively plan to meet future resource needs.

A critical part of addressing the *2015 Plan* Education goals and objectives will be to develop a school facilities master plan. The process for developing this plan is already underway. Approximately \$50,000 has been approved for consulting services to develop the master plan. An additional \$50,000 has been approved for staff resources for long-range school planning.

*2015 Plan* recommendations will also assist in directing existing resources for the Planning Commission and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. As additional projects and initiatives are developed, any funding needs outside of existing department's budgets will be brought forward to the elected officials for consideration.

## **VII. Economic Development**

- Goal 1: City Economic Development Division
- Goal 2: City and County Managers' Office
- Goal 3: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department, Charlotte Department of Transportation, Planning Commission
- Goal 4: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, CPCC, UNCC
- Goal 5: City Economic Development Division
- Goal 6: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

### **Key Action Plan Components for Economic Development**

- Streamline government regulatory processes.
- Develop a strategy and action plan to keep and expand existing businesses in Charlotte.
- Develop the Center City, particularly the Uptown, as an important economic asset for the City and the entire metropolitan area.

- Develop partnerships and investment strategies to support economic development and support fragile areas, including implementation of the *Community Safety Plan*.
- Utilize the Capital Improvements program as a platform for economic development.
- Focus on closing undesirable businesses and recruiting desirable ones.

### **Proposed Cost Estimate for Economic Development**

Development and implementation of specific action steps to address the Economic Development goals and objectives are expected to be accomplished principally within existing departmental budgets. Plan recommendations will, in particular, assist in directing existing resources of the Planning Commission, Neighborhood Development, Charlotte Department of Transportation, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utility Department and the City and County Managers' Offices. Some projects may require additional public expenditures to implement. In such instances, funding needs will be brought forward to elected officials.

### **Process for Developing Action Steps**

Each department is encouraged to include public involvement as a key part of their action step development process. The information provided in this document, including the discussion of issues, objectives, key action plan components and possible action steps should be thoroughly considered when developing the action steps.

Planning Commission staff is responsible for compiling the action

steps developed by the various departments and presenting them to the elected officials in preparation for incorporation into annual work programs.

Following the adoption of the annual work program, Planning Staff will provide a monitoring and update strategy to ensure that action steps are carried out and that longer-range objectives are also addressed.

### **Communication Strategy**

Throughout the 2015 planning process, citizens expressed concerns regarding the lack of understanding in the general public regarding major planning concepts and their implication on the future of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. An additional concern was the general lack of awareness of City and County initiatives which addressed many of the identified issues. A more aware, and better informed citizenry would help ensure that informed choices are made regarding the future of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

As part of the Planning Commission's current (FY 98) work program, staff will prepare a communications plan for the department that outlines both external and internal communication strategies and targets. As part of this plan, staff will make recommendations regarding ways to enhance our public involvement process in general, and how to better educate and inform citizens, as well as elected and appointed officials, in regards to important planning concepts and other key information, including the 2015 *Plan* and related initiatives.



# Glossary

**Center City:** Geographic area encompassing the entire area within the I-277 Freeway Loop, as well as the immediately adjacent areas such as South End, Midtown and neighborhood periphery.

**Corridors and Centers:** The adopted land use concept for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region. The concept involves providing for high density multi-use development along major transportation corridors and at key nodes or "activity centers" connected by these corridors.

**Edge City:** Major centers of development which contain all the functions (housing, shopping, jobs, etc.) of a city, but in a spread-out form, located on the suburban periphery, often outside of an outer beltway.

**Infill:** New residential construction, usually of a higher density than surrounding development, on vacant or under-utilized land located in an existing neighborhood.

**Metropolitan Area:** The seven county area, defined by the 1990 Census, which includes: Mecklenburg, Lincoln, Gaston, Cabarrus, Union and Rowan Counties in North Carolina, along with York County in South Carolina.

**Open Space:** Any land located in an urban area which has been reserved (or earmarked) for parks and recreation purposes; conservation of land or other natural resources; or historic, architectural, or scenic purposes. Open space is a vital ingredient in providing for recreation needs, in fostering a sense of natural environment in the midst of extensive urban development, and in creating a high quality of life.

**Regeneration:** The process of reconstructing or recreating a geographic area (i.e., neighborhood, corridor) that has experienced severe economic and social problems.

**Reurbanization:** The process of revitalizing urban areas that have experienced decline, typically because of suburban growth. Key to the process is maintaining and enhancing the urban character of the area, including an emphasis on alternative transportation (i.e., walking, transit, bicycles).

**Suburban:** Usually refers to the area of dispersed development on the periphery, or just outside of a more densely developed city. The term is also used in reference to the general characteristics that often define development in suburban areas such as: large lots; dominance of automobile-oriented site and building designs; commercial strip development; large nondescript retail facilities; extensive parking areas; and, spread out development.

**Sustainability:** The ability to remain economically, socially and environmentally viable over the long term.

**Traffic Calming:** Any of a number of techniques used to slow the speed of motor vehicle traffic, usually in areas of high pedestrian traffic. Such techniques include the use of speed bumps, stop signs, traffic circles, on-street parking, neck-downs, street tree plantings and other landscaping, raised pedestrian crosswalks, etc.

**Urban:** Usually defined in terms of population density (i.e., a large number of people living and working in a small area). There is no agreement, however, on how many persons per square mile make an area urban, and probably there can be none since a community's definition of "urban" seems to be relative to the existing development pattern, as well as the location and type of development. "Urban" also refers to the character of the area and involves the existence of certain design element, chief of which are pedestrian scale, building orientation, and attention to facade treatment.

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