4.0 LAND USE

4.1 OVERVIEW

For decades Greensboro's pattern of land use has evolved based on a myriad of zoning, development, and annexation actions. These actions have often been triggered by individual private development initiatives, which in turn are often triggered by new roads and highways and other factors that influence development marketability and property values. Typically, actions on annexations and extensions of water and sewer service have been in reaction to individual private development requests. This response has led to the present pattern of highly fragmented sprawl at the urban fringe, a pattern which is fiscally and environmentally unsustainable and which compromises the economic viability of city's long-term growth. It is vital to the City's future that this reactive posture be reversed. Thus a major initiative in this Land Use Element is for the City of Greensboro to become more proactive in purposefully guiding growth patterns, through its regulatory powers and through its decisions on infrastructure investments and annexations, so as to ensure sustainable, long-term growth opportunities.

Sprawl is a broad term used to define low density, dispersed, and inefficient development patterns, which also may:

- Extend beyond centers of population, employment, and public services
- Consume excessive amounts of land, often at rates faster than population or economic growth
- Separate land uses and produce excessive reliance on automobile travel
- Produce revenues insufficient to cover public service and facility costs
- Displace important features of the natural or cultural landscape

At present, the land area within the city limits is largely, but not entirely, developed and "built-out." Most developed areas of the City can be expected to remain stable over time, with little change in land use. In other areas of the City, particularly in Downtown, older neighborhoods, and along highway corridors, land use change can be expected to occur through economic obsolescence of outdated industrial and commercial areas, and through opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization. At the same time that these older urban areas will undergo change, the substantial undeveloped land area at the City's fringe, within the City's water and sewer boundary, will experience increasing pressures for new suburban "greenfield" development. Projected to accommodate several decades of "growing room," this area represents an essential resource to sustain

the City's long-term expansion.[1] Vulnerable as it is to the many adverse impacts of sprawl and fragmentation, growth in this area should be carefully planned, managed and staged over time.

Photo courtesy of Environment Colorado

The City's Development Ordinance continues to provide a starting point for the rational organization of land uses suitable for urban and suburban development of various types. As the City continues to grow and change, new challenges are emerging which necessitate a comprehensive review of land use and development policy. Arising initially in the Vision Statement, and later confirmed in the evaluation of the Trend Growth Scenario conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process, the City of Greensboro is facing at least two substantial challenges in managing its land use and development patterns. The first of these is to **become more flexible and innovative** in protecting natural resources and community character while encouraging and promoting economic diversification through sound investment and development. The second challenge is one of **balance**: to ensure **wise stewardship of land along the fringe** while **promoting reinvestment** in Downtown and other older urban areas of the City. While such changes in the City's regulatory policies will provide greater flexibility and opportunities for innovative development, zoning remains a tool with greater usefulness in preventing poor development than in mandating creative, high quality development. For this reason, it is essential that the City move toward a new era of cooperative engagement with private sector development interests, encouraging and supporting innovation and wise development decisions through positive incentives, rather than through regulatory prohibitions and rigid codes.

Vision Statement

The following excerpts from the Vision Statement form the basis and the starting point for the development of the land use goals and policies contained herein.

1 Documentation of the methodology used to develop the growth/capacity estimates is provided in *Working Paper: Results of 9/4-6/01Comprehensive Plan Charette*, Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, November 2001.

Community Character

- Our **safe, well-maintained, livable neighborhoods** meet the basic needs of residents for a clean environment; decent, affordable housing; and convenient access to quality services such as shopping, parks, schools, and community facilities.
- Our **standards for development quality** reflect the special character we choose to maintain.

Sustainable Growth

Throughout Greensboro we see…

- **Balanced investment** and reinvestment across the City, creating quality urban, suburban and rural places that offer a choice of setting and lifestyle.

- **Compact development patterns** that incorporate mixed land uses and densities and which encourage transit, biking and walking...

- **Recycled vacant sites and buildings** that have been encouraged by supportive development policies.

At Greensboro's edges we see...

- Effective use of growth management tools to promote **wise, balanced and equitable growth**, while protecting rural lands from premature development and inefficient sprawl.
- **Coordination of development and infrastructure investment policies** by the City, Guilford County, area municipalities and other regional entities.

At Greensboro's center we see…

- A **vibrant Center City**, active day and night, that serves as the heart of our economic, cultural, and civic life and respects our historic heritage.
- Reclaimed buildings and revitalized neighborhoods and commercial areas
- A **balanced mix of uses and activities,** including employment, close-in urban housing, pedestrian-oriented shopping, and lively districts and activity centers...

In **other areas** of the city where needs had not been met we see…

- **Rejuvenated areas that have attracted new investment** and are vital and prosperous parts of our community, and which address past inequities and deficiencies.
- **A more balanced approach to capital investment** in these historically under-served parts of our community.
- Actions and resources committed to the task.

Economic Prosperity

- Through effective incentives and investment policies, we have achieved a more **balanced development pattern** serving all neighborhoods and quadrants of the City, particularly in areas such as East Greensboro, which had been under-served by certain desired types of development.
- We have carefully monitored, identified, and promoted **sites and districts** for appropriate types of economic development, including…urban area infill and redevelopment…

Comparison of Trend Growth to the Vision

By comparing the Vision Statement with present trends and likely future conditions based on these trends, attention is focused on needed changes in policy and strategy. Failure to put in place effective strategic "course corrections" could lead to some or all of the highly undesirable consequences. Section 3.2 of the Comprehensive Plan identifies areas of divergence between the components of the Vision Statement and the Trend Growth Scenario. The following are some key conclusions pertaining to land use:

- The potential under trend growth for decline and disinvestment in older commercial corridors and neighborhoods such as East Greensboro conflicts with the vision of "balanced investment and reinvestment across the City" and "revitalized neighborhoods and commercial areas." In addition, the Trend Growth Scenario indicates no relief for the eastern side of the community, which has seen little new development in past years and which is under served with retail uses.
- A continuation of current development practices and patterns will result in erosion of visual character, loss of open space and natural resources, and increasing auto dependency (rather than compact, pedestrian-friendly communities).
- Continuation of uncoordinated, piecemeal development at the edge between the City and County will result in inefficient, fragmented development patterns, costly demands to expand city services and facilities, and premature and accelerated loss of agriculture and rural, scenic character.

4.2 EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use in the study area (inside the city limits and in the fringe area from the city limits to the water/sewer boundary) is depicted in Figure 4-1 and tabulated by land use category in Table 4-1. Immediately apparent from this depiction is a clearly defined center of the City, with major highways radiating in all directions. Identified as its own unique land use category, Downtown is surrounded by older, mixed-use neighborhoods, as well as university and college campuses and other institutions and some of the City's oldest industrial areas.

Beyond this urban core area, the widening gaps between radiating highway corridors are less "mixed" in nature with low-density, single-family residential (yellow) emerging as the predominant pattern throughout the City. On close inspection, it is possible to perceive the pre-war and post-war "growth rings," as the urban grid pattern transitions to a more curvilinear suburban pattern of local streets. The influence of highway access can be readily seen with commercial uses (red) lining older highway corridors such as Battleground Avenue and High Point Road, or clustered in major concentrations such as the I-40 interchanges at West Wendover Avenue and High Point Road. A similar pattern can be seen with industrial uses. Older industrial areas can be seen lining the rail/highway corridors as they approach downtown along W. Lee/Spring Garden, Patton Avenue, and E. Market Street. However, reflecting changes in industrial transportation modes, newer larger industrial areas can be seen emerging near the airport and key I-40 and I-85 interchanges, which offer easy on-off truck access.

Overall the City's distribution of land use can be thought of in three broad categories: **where people live** (residential uses), **where people work and shop** (nonresidential uses), and land which is **undeveloped**. Single-family residential is the largest single land use category by a wide margin, covering nearly 31% of the City's land area. Another 6% is devoted to multi-family housing, bringing the proportion of the City's overall land area in residential use to 37%. While this proportion is not unreasonable, the fact that single-family residential areas exceed areas devoted to multi-family by a factor of 6 to 1 raises questions about the need for more diverse, affordable and compact housing choices.

“Employment” type land uses within the city limits, including Downtown, commercial, office, industrial, and institutional categories (where virtually all of Greensboro’s jobs are located), total some 22% of the land area, a proportion that tends to decrease with distance from the City's center. Although it may appear that the City of Greensboro is almost fully developed or "built-out," nearly 30% of the land area is presently undeveloped, comprising the following categories shown on Figure 4-1 and in Table 4-1: public park land, private golf courses, private (owner association) open space, woods, open (undeveloped), and water. Approximately one-third of this category is permanently reserved as parkland, private (owner association) open space, or water. The remaining lands (approximately one-quarter of Greensboro’s total land area) reflect the City's substantial infill development capacity and the presence of natural areas throughout much of the City.

Table 4-1. Existing Land Use Within Study Area (July 2002)

	City Land Use		Water/Sewer Boundary		Study Area Total	
Land Use Code	**Acres**	**Percent**	**Acres**	**Percent**	**Acres**	**Percent**
Agriculture	98	0.13%	15,051	25.59%	15,149	11.44%
Single Family	22,583	30.68%	14,126	24.02%	36,709	27.72%
Multi-Family	4,371	5.94%	700	1.19%	5,071	3.83%
Commercial	3,463	4.71%	617	1.05%	4,080	3.08%
Downtown	358	0.49%	n/a	n/a	358	0.27%
Office	1,133	1.54%	347	0.59%	1,480	1.12%
Institutional	3,498	4.75%	1,270	2.16%	4,768	3.60%
Light Industrial	3,957	5.38%	1,066	1.81%	5,023	3.79%
Heavy Industrial	3,828	5.20%	1,757	2.99%	5,585	4.22%
Airport Property	n/a	n/a	3,238	5.51%	3,238	2.45%
Open	2,498	3.39%	1,711	2.91%	4,209	3.18%
Woods	11,536	15.67%	13,187	22.42%	24,723	18.67%
Park Land	3,172	4.31%	1,278	2.17%	4,450	3.36%
Golf Courses (Private)	1,189	1.62%	117	0.20%	1,306	0.99%
Water	3,341	4.54%	142	0.24%	3,483	2.63%
Owner Association Open Space	249	0.34%	45	0.08%	294	0.22%
Right-of-Way	8,324	11.31%	4,155	7.07%	12,479	9.42%
Total	**73,597**	**100.00%**	**58,807**	**100.00%**	**132,405**	**100.00%**

Notes:

1. The study area includes the City of Greensboro plus the area outside of the current city limits within the water/sewer boundary.
2. The figures in this Table should not be compared with Table 4-2 and 4-3 (see notes on these tables).

At the City limits, particularly along the eastern fringe, the land use pattern changes abruptly, as the City's urban and suburban development directly abuts the County's largely rural/agricultural pattern. Although the fringe land area located outside the city limits and inside the water/sewer boundary comprises 24% single-family (mostly large lot) use, comparable to the percentage of single-family in the City, this is where the similarities end. Although there are a few sizeable areas of industrial use, the fringe area lacks significant proportions of commercial use, owing to the absence of major concentrations of population. Most striking about present land use in the fringe area is that it is largely (54%) undeveloped. Roughly similar proportions of land are in agricultural use and in the combined "woods" and "open" categories, with much smaller percentages in the other undeveloped categories. Table 4-2 tabulates existing land uses within the fringe area broken down according to the three growth tiers that are described in Section 4.4 and illustrated on the Growth Strategy Map (Figure 4-3).

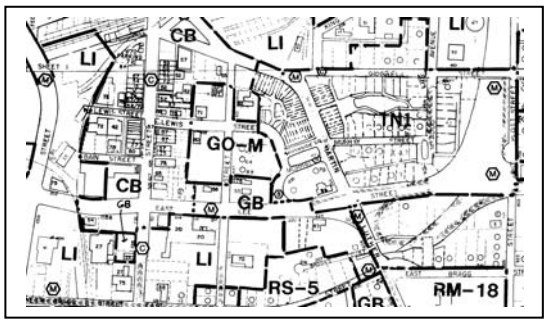
Table 4-2. Existing Land Use Within Growth Tiers (July 2002)

	Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 3	
Land Use Code	**Acres**	**Percent**	**Acres**	**Percent**	**Acres**	**Percent**
Agriculture	8,372	22.54%	4,079	32.75%	2,059	33.91%
Single Family	7,451	20.06%	2,957	23.74%	1,649	27.16%
Multi-Family	372	1.00%	65	0.52%	81	1.34%
Commercial	614	1.65%	20	0.16%	79	1.31%
Downtown	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Office	531	1.43%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Institutional	753	2.03%	188	1.51%	209	3.45%
Light Industrial	1,733	4.67%	207	1.66%	1	0.01%
Heavy Industrial	1,390	3.74%	1,140	9.15%	31	0.52%
Airport	328	0.88%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Open	2,303	6.20%	266	2.14%	92	1.52%
Woods	9,416	25.36%	3,360	26.98%	1,761	28.99%
Park Land	271	0.73%	n/a	n/a	41	0.67%
Golf Courses (Private)	507	1.37%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Water	135	0.36%	74	0.59%	14	0.23%
Owners Association Open Space	37	0.10%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Right-of-Way	2,923	7.87%	99	0.79%	55	0.90%
Total	**37,136**	**100.00%**	**12,455**	**100.00%**	**6,072**	**100.00%**

Notes:

1. See Figure 4-3 for Growth Tier boundaries.
2. The figures in this Table should not be compared with Table 4-1. Some areas within the water/sewer boundary are not included in a Growth Tier because of local conditions such as existing development.

4.3 GENERALIZED FUTURE LAND USE



Example of zoning classifications from Greensboro Zoning Map

The desired future pattern of land use is generally depicted on Figure 4-2 and broken down by land use category in Table 4-3 for the entire study area and for Growth Tier 1 (see Section 4.4). This Generalized Future Land Use Map should not be interpreted as a zoning map, nor is it appropriate for application at a parcel-by-parcel scale. Rather, it depicts broad policies for the future distribution of land uses and activity centers throughout the City to be achieved over a 10 to 20-year period. While significant revisions to zoning regulations will be required to implement these land use policies, future land use categories will often be applied with two or more zoning district designations. Such designations will be made based on detailed, site-specific considerations, which are beyond the broad scope and intent of a

comprehensive plan. As Connections 2025 is implemented, small area plans, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, etc. will be developed. These plans will be created at and depict a greater level of detail than the Generalized Future Land Use map (Figure 4-2). Therefore, any such plans adopted subsequent to adoption of Connections 2025 are incorporated into the Plan and referenced on Figure 4-2. All such plans shall be considered when making land development decisions. Greater emphasis should be placed on detailed policies, plans, studies and other documents over those setting forth generalized comprehensive planning objectives. (CP-04-12, Ord. No. 05-34, 2-15-05)

Table 4-3. Generalized Future Land Use

	Future Land Use		Tier 1	
Land Use Code	**Acres**	**Percent**	**Acres**	**Percent**
Low Residential	42,494	32.09%	7,723	20.80%
Moderate Residential	9,246	6.98%	4,021	10.83%
High Residential	2,524	1.91%	195	0.53%
Mixed Use Residential	4,464	3.37%	2,223	5.99%
Mixed Use Planned Community	4,203	3.17%	4,191	11.29%
Mixed Use CBD	494	0.37%	n/a	n/a
Mixed Use Commercial	6,969	5.26%	1,454	3.92%
Mixed Use Corporate Park	8,636	6.52%	7,884	21.23%
Commercial	2,975	2.25%	240	0.65%
Institutional	2,685	2.03%	174	0.47%
Industrial/Corporate Park	15,692	11.85%	8,330	22.43%
Airport Property	3,401	2.57%	437	1.18%
Major Parks/Open Space	9,285	7.01%	264	0.71%
Other	19,337	14.60%	n/a	n/a
Total	**132,405**	**100.00%**	**37,136**	**100.00%**

Notes:

1. The "other" category contains the acreage within Tiers 2 and 3 for which land uses have not been determined.
2. See Figure 4-3 for Tier line boundaries.
3. The figures in this Table should not be compared with Table 4-1 because of the differences in use categories and the generalized nature of future land use.

When compared to the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 4-1) it is evident that planned future land uses (except in areas outside the City and within the water/sewer boundary) reflect patterns that are already well established throughout much of Greensboro. However, the policies and strategies identified below are designed to accommodate growth and change in new creative ways: by promoting greater flexibility within zoning districts, encouraging compact mixed uses, providing incentives for urban area development, and by raising standards for quality and protection of natural resources. Outside of the current city limits, future land uses are generally depicted only in Growth Tier One (see Section 4.4, Growth Strategy), where development is expected to be concentrated over the next ten years.

The main categories of future land use as shown on Figure 4-2 are:

- Residential
- Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial/Corporate Park
- Major Parks and Open Space
- Airport Property

Each of these categories is discussed in more detail below.

Residential

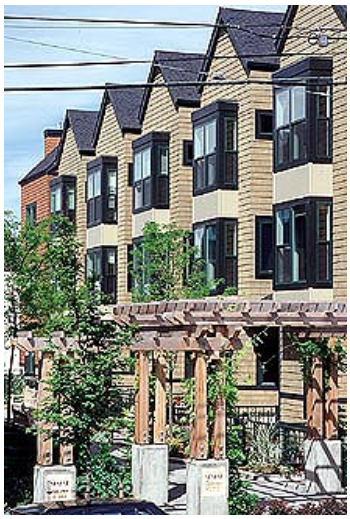
Low Residential (3 to 5 dwelling units per gross acre)

This category includes the City's predominantly single-family neighborhoods as well as other compatible housing types that can be accommodated within this density range. Although there are some existing residential areas in the City developed on lots greater than 1/3 acre, future residential developments and "conventional" subdivisions should generally maintain a gross density of no less than three dwellings per acre, except where environmental constraints (e.g., the Watershed Critical Area) prevent such densities from being achieved. Compact developments that include clustered, small lots with substantial retained open space are encouraged.

Moderate Residential (over 5 to 12 dwelling units per gross acre) (CP-04-12, Ord. No. 05-34, 2-15-05)

This category accommodates housing types ranging from small-lot, single-family detached and attached single-family dwellings such as townhomes to moderate density, low-rise apartment dwellings.

Southern Village - Chapel Hill, NC



High Residential (over 12 dwelling units per gross acre)

This category provides for high-density apartment dwellings, condominiums, life care, and similar housing types. Creating opportunities for this type of housing will become increasingly important to respond to demographic shifts and demand for affordable housing, and it is ideally suited near major activity

and employment centers and in areas suitable for future transit service.

As noted, all of the above designations may accommodate a range of compatible housing types, including single-family detached, attached dwellings such as duplexes and townhomes, and various other forms of multi-family housing. In addition, all three categories may support small supportive uses such as grade schools, churches, and neighborhood-serving commercial areas that are not always depicted on the Generalized Future Land Use Map. While these categories should not be interpreted as proposed future zoning districts, the policies presented in Section 4.5 below do indicate revisions to present zoning to simplify district designations and to accommodate greater flexibility in accommodating a variety of housing types. Within this district, office buildings may also be accommodated. (CP-04-12, Ord. No. 05-34, 2-15-05)

Mixed Use

In Greensboro and throughout the nation, an unfortunate legacy of the zoning practice in the post-war period has been to promote a segregation of land uses into discrete and uniform residential, commercial, and industrial categories. The initial intent, to protect public health and welfare by removing noxious influences from residential areas, was valid. However, the result has been to segregate uses in suburban areas to such an extent as to create a total reliance on automobile travel for activities which formerly were located within convenient walking distance in older, more mixed-use urban settings. Such settings remain in Downtown and in Greensboro's historic in-town neighborhoods. Such patterns should be encouraged in suburban areas as well, by promoting varied mixed-use forms. In general, four forms of mixed-use development are recognized and encouraged, as follows:

Illustration by Robert Crawford

- The first type includes **single buildings**, or clusters of connected buildings, **which incorporate two or more complementary uses**, as in the placement of offices or apartments above ground-floor retail businesses, a pattern common in downtown locations.
- The second type comprises areas **where one well-established use predominates**, but where **well placed complementary uses are appropriate**. Examples include residential areas within which neighborhood churches, schools, and "corner stores" can all be accommodated.

- The third type consists of **centers** with mixes of uses and activities that act as multi-purpose "destinations." These centers are characterized by shared parking and strong pedestrian linkages, where a variety of activities such as shopping, dining, entertainment, and dropping off children at school or day care can be accommodated by a single trip. This type is particularly useful in promoting use of public transportation. Likewise the introduction of higher density housing into such mixed-use centers can serve the needs of those who choose not to or are unable to rely on the automobile.
- The fourth type comprises large-scale **"planned developments"** designed to integrate a variety of complementary uses. Examples include traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs) which simulate urban settings with a compact, walkable mix of varied housing types, as well as neighborhood shops, services, schools, and recreation activities. Likewise, major corporate office parks incorporating complementary activities such as hotels, restaurants, recreation, health clubs, day care, and other services to meet the daily needs of workers and visitors are included in the category of planned, mixed-use developments.

All of these forms represent substantial opportunities to promote a more diversified, sustainable pattern of land uses and activities. They are suitable both in urban areas in need of reinvestment and in suburban or fringe areas, where they provide a sustainable alternative and antidote to sprawl. Mixed-use development forms support numerous Comprehensive Plan policies, including reducing auto trips, promoting a more walkable environment, and expanding the supply of higher density, affordable housing near employment and activity centers.

All of the forms of mixed-use development described above are beneficial and should be permitted and encouraged through incentives. However, certain types of use mixes offer little or no benefit and may exacerbate land use conflicts and traffic congestion. Examples include non local-serving activities within neighborhoods that create excessive traffic, noise, security risks, or other conditions which detract from neighborhood quality of life and stability. Likewise, larger planned developments that incorporate unrelated or conflicting uses are to be discouraged. Examples include "conventional" suburban shopping centers which include disconnected "out parcels" for gas stations, fast food, or other forms of strip commercial which capitalize on the visibility and property values of highway frontages. By virtue of their separate vehicular access and absence of meaningful pedestrian linkages or use relationships, such development forms further increase vehicular trips and inhibit safe and efficient traffic flow. These forms are not legitimate mixed-use developments, offer no public benefit, and should be discouraged.

Five distinct mixed-use designations are shown on the Generalized Future Land Use Map, as follows:

Mixed Use Central Business District

This designation applies only in and around Downtown Greensboro. It emphasizes the urban character and the mix and intensity of activities uniquely suited to the central city. This designation is intended to permit a true mix of all uses, except heavy industrial, at the highest levels of scale and density within the City and with unique development standards tailored to the urban character of Downtown. It is particularly important to move the Downtown towards becoming a center of activity not only in the day, but also at night and during weekends, by promoting a mix of commercial, entertainment, residential, and other uses (see policies and narrative in Section 4.5.2). To help achieve this goal, creative forms of housing, such as lofts within restored historic structures and residential units in the often unoccupied second stories above ground-level retail, should be encouraged.

Mixed Use Residential

This designation applies to neighborhoods or districts where the predominant use is residential and where substantial, compatible local-serving nonresidential uses may be introduced. Such use mixes are typically found in older, in-town neighborhoods that accommodate "corner stores" and other local services, as well as in newly developed traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs). This district is also applied in areas suited to a diverse mix of housing types and densities. Ensuring that buildings are of the appropriate scale and intensity is critical.

Mixed Use Commercial

This designation is intended to promote a mix of uses, of which various commercial uses remain predominant, but where residential, service, and other uses are complementary. Where applied to older highway corridors characterized by "strip" commercial uses, the intent is to encourage infill and redevelopment for a more diverse and attractive mix of uses over time. Examples include residential units over commercial uses or a wider array of economically viable uses to replace obsolete uses. Such areas also may represent opportunities for the introduction of substantial higher density and/or mixed-income housing, with negligible impacts on, or resistance from, nearby single-family neighborhoods. Ensuring that buildings are of the appropriate scale and intensity is critical, as is ensuring that sites are designed in a coordinated, as opposed to a

Obsolete building redeveloped – before and after

lot-by-lot, manner. New "strip" commercial development is discouraged. (CP-04-12, Ord. No. 05-34, 2-15-05)

Mixed Use Planned Community

Vermillion – Huntersville, NC
Photo courtesy of Bowman Development Group

This designation is intended for large tracts of undeveloped land near the City's fringe that are appropriate for larger scale, creatively planned residential, mixed with other uses such as supporting retail and small to medium scale office development. Compatibility among these uses and with the area's scenic character will be maintained through generous open space reservations and design standards that address the locations, character of, and relationships between uses, while affording greater development flexibility than provided by standard zoning district classifications. A traditional neighborhood development organized as a series of "neighborhood units" that have access to a "village center" with higher density residential, retail, and office uses is one example of an appropriate development form.

Mixed Use Corporate Park

This designation is intended for large tracts of undeveloped land near the City's fringe that are appropriate for well planned, larger scale business/employment parks with supporting uses such as retail, hotels, and residential. Primary uses such as office, flex office, technology research and development, light manufacturing, distribution, and assembly are strongly encouraged to be developed prior to or in conjunction with any supportive uses. The primary uses should be developed in a campus-like or "corporate park" setting with generous, linked open space to maximize value and to promote visual quality and compatibility with the surrounding area. Pedestrian-friendly features such as buildings placed near the street, sidewalks, and trails leading to nearby uses such as retail and housing should be encouraged. (CP-04-12, Ord. No. 05-34, 2-15-05)

Commercial

This designation applies to large concentrations of commercial uses, such as recently constructed major shopping centers and "big box" retail. Such properties may not be expected to undergo redevelopment or a change in use over the plan horizon, and the

immediate areas in which they are located may not be suitable for the introduction of mixed uses. While some new commercial centers are anticipated, in general new retail and commercial service uses will be encouraged within more diversified mixed-use centers rather than as stand-alone shopping centers or expanding highway commercial "strips."

Institutional

This designation applies to university and college campuses, major medical/health care concentrations, and similar large-scale institutional activity centers.

Industrial/Corporate Park

This designation applies to areas where present or anticipated uses include both light and heavy industrial uses, such as manufacturing, assembly, and fabrication; wholesaling and distribution; and corporate office and technology parks, which may be introduced to replace older heavy industrial uses. Although new residential development is discouraged in areas designated for this land use category, pre-existing residential uses may be present in or adjacent to these areas. As established industrial areas redevelop, such residential, institutional, or similar uses should be protected from adverse impacts (heavy truck traffic, significant outside storage, factors such as noise, dust, and glare, etc.) through performance-based standards, buffers, and proper separation from noxious uses.

Major Parks and Open Space

This designation applies to existing large scale parks and protected open spaces of citywide significance which are expected to remain as open space in perpetuity. Potential future large-scale park acquisitions, as well as smaller neighborhood parks and recreational uses, are shown on the Parks, Open Space, and Natural Resources map (Figure 5-1).

Airport Property

Airport property shown on the Generalized Future Land Use Map represents land owned by the Piedmont Triad International Airport Authority. The predominant land uses are aviation-related activities, along with supporting uses such as a hotel.

In addition to the above land use categories, the Generalized Future Land Use Map displays some other information related to land use. This information includes major activity centers, the watershed critical area, and the noise impact area associated with the airport.

Activity Centers

Activity Centers are existing or anticipated future concentrations of uses that function as destinations or hubs of activity for the surrounding area. Typically located in areas of mixed use shown on the Generalized Future Land Use Map, such centers are intended to include features such as a mix of higher intensity uses (housing, retail, office, etc.), compact development patterns, and pedestrian and transit linkages. A one-half mile radius (considered the limit of a comfortable walk) is shown around each activity center except for the Downtown, which functions as an activity center for the entire City. It should be noted that the locations shown on the Generalized Future Land Use Map are conceptual and do not preclude the development of Activity Centers in other locations where they would support the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Portland's Pioneer Place

Watershed Critical Area

Established pursuant to State of North Carolina environmental mandates, Watershed Critical Areas are overlays adjacent to a water supply intake or reservoir where the risk associated with pollution is greater than from the remaining portions of a water supply watershed. The Generalized Future Land Use Map shows the portion of the Watershed Critical Area for the Greensboro Water Supply Watershed that is located within the water/sewer boundary. This Watershed Critical Area drains to Lake Brandt, Lake Higgins, and Lake Townsend, which form the northern boundary of the Comprehensive Plan study area. The predominant land use designation in this area is low residential because of the environmental constraints associated with the Watershed Critical Area.

Airport Noise Impact Area

Derived from the Airport Area Plan adopted by Guilford County and endorsed by the City of Greensboro in 2002, the Airport Noise Impact Area is defined by the 60 DNL noise contour associated with airplane traffic.[2] Residential land uses are discouraged within this area due to noise impacts.

[2] See the Airport Area Plan for complete information on different types of noise impact areas in the vicinity of the Airport.

4.4 GROWTH STRATEGY

The strategy for the future growth of Greensboro is based upon two fundamental principles:

1. Promote infill and reinvestments in urban areas in need of revitalization.
2. Manage growth at the City's fringe in a sustainable manner through the proper staging of annexation, development, and infrastructure extensions.

This growth strategy is depicted on Figure 4-3. This map delineates two separate concepts, each relating to one of the above principles:

- Reinvestment Areas and Corridors
- Growth Tiers

As described below, these concepts represent priority areas for application of the Reinvestment/Infill and Growth at the Fringe policies described in Section 4.5 below. However, a number of the policies listed under one of these categories have possible application to both (e.g., compact development patterns).

4.4.1 REINVESTMENT AREAS AND CORRIDORS

Reinvestment areas and corridors shown on Figure 4-3 represent priority opportunities for combined public and private sector reinvestment and the application of policies described in Section 4.5.1 (Reinvestment/Infill).

Reinvestment Areas

Reinvestment areas are neighborhoods and districts within Greensboro's urban areas that would most benefit from actions to promote compatible infill development and other forms of investment and reinvestment.

Reinvestment Corridors

Reinvestment corridors are older commercial corridors that would benefit from significant public and private investment to enhance their economic viability and strengthen adjacent neighborhoods.

4.4.2 GROWTH TIERS

Located primarily outside of the current city limits and inside the water and sewer boundary, Growth Tiers are areas where development, annexation, and extension of public facilities are to be staged over a 20+ year period. Policies applicable to the Growth Tiers are presented in Section 4.5.3.

The Growth Tiers depicted on the Growth Strategy Map are a refinement of the Future Growth Tiers initially developed in the Preliminary Concept (see Section 3.4). It should be emphasized that the growth tiers lie predominantly outside the present City limits and remain under the regulatory authority of Guilford County until annexations occur. However, such designations articulate the City's policies governing the locations, patterns, and types of uses for which requests for water and sewer extensions and annexations are likely to be approved. Land uses shown on the Generalized Future Land Use Map (Figure 4-2) are depicted only in Growth Tier One, where development is expected to be concentrated over the next ten years.

In Growth Tiers Two and Three, where growth, utility extensions and annexations will be discouraged over the next 10 to 20 years, specific land use types are not depicted. Land use designations in all of the tiers will be subject to further refinement in a Fringe Area Land Use Concept that may be jointly adopted by the City and County, following adoption of the Greensboro Comprehensive Plan.

4.5 GOALS AND POLICIES

A number of policies for land use and development apply throughout the planning area (i.e., the area within the City's water/sewer boundary), such as increased flexibility, encouragement of mixed uses, and higher development standards. However, most policies are applicable to specific parts of the planning area where land use and growth challenges vary. Consequently, the Land Use Goals and Policies are organized in the following three subsections:

- Reinvestment/Infill
- Downtown
- Growth at the Fringe

4.5.1 REINVESTMENT/INFILL

A broad goal establishes the policy intent to promote infill and other forms of investment to maintain viable, equitable development throughout

Greensboro's urban areas. Broad themes running through many of these suggested policies are to:

- Identify and remove present impediments or disincentives to development
- "Level the playing field" with development in fringe and suburban areas

- Position the City of Greensboro to more proactively target and carry out certain types of redevelopment in specific locations, such as East Greensboro and Downtown, to achieve the quantity and quality of investment needed to maintain the viability of urban areas.

GOAL

Promote sound investment in Greensboro's urban areas, including Center City, commercial and industrial areas, and neighborhoods

POLICIES

4A. Remove present impediments to infill and investment in urban areas

4A.1 Establish criteria that define the characteristics of **desirable infill development** (e.g., compatibility with adjoining uses).

4A.2 Revise zoning/development codes, the permitting process, and other applicable city policies by **identifying and removing impediments** to infill, adaptive reuse, historic preservation and reinvestment, including:

- Application of creative code provisions to remove impediments in building/zoning codes to reusing older buildings and retaining their historic character
- Overlay districts (within which specific requirements would be modified to allow established character to be maintained; e.g., buildings pulled up to the street, credit for on-street/shared parking, etc.)
- Coordinated city departmental policies regarding infill (e.g., adjusting requirements for stormwater, water/sewer, and other policies/regulations when they affect the ability to develop infill sites)

- Such measures shall not endanger public health, safety, and welfare.

4A.3 Adjust the City's schedule of development fees (e.g., development review fees and costs to upgrade infrastructure) to **lessen financial burdens on investments in designated urban areas** and more accurately reflect the different costs of providing services in urban/infill areas (where infrastructure is available), suburban areas, and fringe areas (where costly infrastructure extensions are necessary).

Narrative:

Many of the City's code requirements were developed and applied well after much of older urban portions of Greensboro were originally developed. Due to constrained site and building conditions, many potential infill sites cannot, without great expense, meet current regulatory requirements (e.g., parking, setbacks, and stormwater standards), which are suited to more flexible suburban conditions. Policies 4A.1 to 3 aim to minimize all present **disincentives for investment in infill** and other forms of development throughout Greensboro's urban areas. This necessitates first identifying specific types of infill development that are compatible and desired. Once accomplished, City zoning regulations and codes must then be revised to remove unnecessary or inadvertent impediments, or to waive such requirements in designated urban areas.

4B. Target capital investments to leverage private investment in urban areas

4B.1 Conduct **community-wide public facility assessments** to identify and prioritize corrections to deficiencies in infrastructure, local streets and sidewalks, and other public facilities, including parks and recreation facilities.

4B.2 Through the City's Capital Improvement Program, **prioritize short and long-range capital investments** in designated urban areas, including but not limited to utility replacements, capacity improvements, area-wide stormwater systems, street improvements, etc.

4B.3 Identify **reinvestment corridors** for capital improvements (e.g., streetscape improvements, infrastructure upgrades, etc.).

Reinvestment corridors are older commercial corridors within Greensboro's urban areas that would benefit from significant **public and private investment** to enhance their economic viability and strengthen adjacent neighborhoods. They differ from ***visual enhancement corridors*** (described in Section 5.2.1 of the Community Character Element), which are roadways within the City that carry large amounts of traffic and would benefit from **public physical improvements** to address visual character. Although the concepts are different, certain roadways may be classified as both reinvestment and visual enhancement corridors.

Narrative:

Although the removal of regulatory and other constraints and disincentives is necessary to promote infill and urban area redevelopment, it may be insufficient to achieve the desired levels of investment. Policies 4B.1 to 3 move the City's posture beyond a "regulatory" mode and into a proactive posture by **targeting direct investments in capital improvements** as catalysts for private investment. While the City's older urban areas have the benefit of a full complement of infrastructure and other public services and facilities, some of these facilities are deficient and may, therefore, reduce potentials for development. This policy series calls for a comprehensive reassessment of the City's facilities and infrastructure and a reassignment of priorities for capital improvements based in part on opportunities to leverage private investment.

4C. Promote new patterns and intensities of use to increase economic competitiveness and enhance quality of life in urban areas

4C.1 Establish **standards for** and actively promote new forms of **compact development** to include Transit-Oriented Development, as well as TND, Pedestrian Scale Development, and Mixed-Use.

Vermillion – Huntersville, NC
Photo courtesy of Bowman Development Group

4C.2 Establish **performance-based guidelines and incentives** for infill locations, including:

- Mixed residential uses/mixed uses where appropriate
- Connected, pedestrian-oriented streets
- Conditions for edge treatment (buffers, connectivity, compatibility)
- Flexible requirements such as dimensional criteria and parking to address local contexts
- Protection of adjacent uses and site-specific approvals shall be required.

4C.3 Provide **density and intensity bonuses** for the provision of housing and commercial components of **mixed-use developments** with specific reference to dwelling types (student housing, elderly, etc.), with additional bonus provisions for affordable housing.

Narrative:

As noted in the review of existing land use patterns, single-family residential is the City's largest category of use. Single- family neighborhoods are a valuable resource, which should be protected from harmful influences. Nevertheless, the City should take every opportunity to encourage the introduction of new, more compact forms of development. Such opportunities include the introduction of higher density, smaller unit housing types to meet the needs of a diversifying population for appropriate affordable housing. Policy 4C.1 addresses this need by establishing standards for creative development types. Policy 4C.2 introduces the concept of performance-based guidelines. These guidelines will expand opportunities for infill development beyond what is possible under conventional zoning, which tends to separate uses and limit flexibility in development siting. In addition, the "bonus" provisions proposed by Policy 4C.3 provide a tangible economic motivation to introduce mixed-use, affordable housing and other needed development types.

While these guidelines and provisions for flexibility are necessary, they are not sufficient to fulfill the promise of greater infill investment and the introduction of higher densities. Many existing neighborhoods will tend to fear or resist the introduction of such new uses and perceive them as threats to neighborhood stability. While some of these concerns may be misplaced, they must be addressed by carefully examining how and where such uses can be introduced compatibly within neighborhoods and in transitional areas, areas of blight, and along roadway corridors. Because compatibility must be evaluated based on site specific investigation, more detailed neighborhood, corridor and sector plans will be needed to identify specific infill opportunities and create design criteria such as buffers which will ensure compatibility in particular circumstances. Neighborhood plans developed per the Neighborhood Planning Initiative (Housing and Neighborhoods Policy 6A.1) can be used to discuss and develop consensus for potential infill development on appropriate sites.

4D. Identify potential opportunities and selectively target, plan and promote development/reuse initiatives

4D.1 Conduct a citywide inventory of **potential infill/reuse sites**, including historic sites/buildings suitable for adaptive reuse.

4D.2 Based upon the citywide inventory and neighborhood, corridors, and downtown planning

initiatives, identify site-specific **development target areas and sites**.

4D.3 Provide direct action to initiate and support **private investment**, including land assembly and clearance, developer solicitation and selection, and construction of capital improvements.

4D.4 Encourage use of financial incentives for reinvestment in **historic and/or abandoned properties**.

4D.5 Provide incentives for the reintroduction of **neighborhood businesses and services into under-served older neighborhoods** (e.g., assistance with market studies, site assembly, environmental clearances, business capital investment, employee training, etc.).

4D.6 In coordination with other local governments, pursue **state legislative initiatives** to make additional financial tools available for investment (e.g., tax increment financing, tax abatements, differential development fee schedules, etc.).

Narrative:

While the preceding policies address removing impediments and creating incentives for private infill initiatives, Policies 4D.1 to 6 place the City in a **proactive posture** in actually targeting and carrying out revitalization projects through partnerships with the private sector. Reinvestment corridors and areas shown on the Growth Strategy Map (Figure 4-3) are priority locations for such actions. Opportunities for direct City action fall into three broad categories. The first category includes sizeable areas of the City where widespread deterioration and obsolescence, coupled with fragmented property ownership and expensive brownfield contamination (see Economic Development Policy 7C.3), may present too many obstacles for the private sector to address without city assistance. Such areas will include older industrial areas, as well as obsolescent commercial "strips." A second type may include a major civic facility (ballpark, arena, or performing arts center) for which no suitable site exists. This would necessitate action by the City in assembling and preparing such a site in partnership with a private or non-profit development entity. A third category pertains to the emergence of new patterns of obsolescence that may emerge in suburban locations. Many predict that a number of present low margin, poorly designed, and inexpensively built "big box" shopping centers will present future opportunities for redevelopment as they succumb to ever-changing consumer patterns and preferences. In

these circumstances the City should be prepared to intervene by preparing small area or "focal" plans and various implementing actions to rebuild and reuse these sites for higher value uses.

4.5.2 DOWNTOWN

While parts of Downtown and nearby older neighborhoods have seen progress in recent years, Greensboro's center city remains an under-used asset. The area has the potential for significant additional investment and diversification if the necessary public-private initiatives move forward. However, without such initiatives, Downtown could be vulnerable to stagnation or even decline, given its present reliance on relatively few major employers. There have been several plans for Downtown, most recently the *Greensboro Center City Plan* sponsored by "Action Greensboro." This plan makes a series of recommendations to create a more vibrant, attractive Downtown with a mix of commercial, cultural, educational, entertainment, residential, and recreational uses. Included is an "Urban Design Framework" that proposes establishing guidelines for the design of new development in the Downtown.

Center City Plan Concept

The *Greensboro Center City Plan* indicates a substantial level of public investment in new streets, parks, water features, and other amenities. However, the City of Greensboro has not taken a leading role in such planning and has yet to indicate what investments it is prepared to make, in partnership with business and development interests, to ensure that Downtown continues to grow, diversify, and prosper. The following policies are intended to increase the City's leadership role in promoting and providing the public investments and catalysts for change that will carry out the vision of a thriving, exciting Downtown Greensboro.

GOAL

Promote reinvestment, preservation, diversification, and selective intensification of activity in Downtown Greensboro, to reinforce its importance as the economic, cultural and civic center of the City while protecting its heritage and historic resources and enhancing its urban character

POLICIES

4E. Promote diversification and intensification of Downtown Greensboro

4E.1 Maintain a **proactive program of city initiatives** to promote downtown development through:

- Capital investments to streets, streetscapes, infrastructure and parking
- Establishment of site-specific downtown redevelopment and reinvestment areas
- Use of existing City powers (eminent domain, land assembly, bonding, etc.) to execute designated reinvestment projects

4E.2 Actively **support private initiatives** consistent with the City's policies to promote downtown investment by:

- Creating incentives for mixed use, downtown housing, and the creation of new centers of activity in Downtown (employment, retail, entertainment, sports, etc.)
- Adjusting capital improvement programs to target streets, infrastructure, and parking as necessary to promote and support desired private investment

4E.3 Ensure that public and private initiatives preserve and enhance **historic downtown resources.**

Narrative:

Comparable to Policies 4D.1 to 6, this policy series places the City in a more proactive posture in promoting its vision of Downtown, one in which new development and investment are actively pursued to strengthen and diversify the land use and activity mix of center city. The City will continue to be supportive of, and responsive to private initiatives through incentives, public parking, and capital improvements. In addition, these policies call for the City to develop its own **action agenda** for Downtown, including the identification of reinvestment areas and plans for area-wide improvements to streets, parking, and urban design amenities. As recommended in the *Greensboro Center City Plan*, guidelines should be established to ensure that new development complements the established character of the Downtown's neighborhoods and corridors, including the preservation of significant historic resources.

4.5.3 Growth at the Fringe

Analyses of the Trend Growth Scenario and related issues indicate that, contrary to the Vision Statement, the area within the water and sewer boundary could well experience fragmented development patterns (sprawl) with associated negative fiscal impacts and loss of rural character. This scenario is supported by the following:

- Growth "capacity" within the water and sewer boundary is likely more than double the land area that is projected to be absorbed over the 20-year plan horizon.[3]
- The City and County lack major "form-givers," substantial incentives, or annexation criteria that would lead to compact or contiguous development.
- The City's lowest density (AG) zoning district provides for 1 dwelling/acre, a density which is not conducive to protecting rural lands, discouraging sprawl, or encouraging optimum economic use.
- The City does not presently apply specific, consistent criteria for the review of annexation requests. Such requests are considered on an ad hoc basis, without benefit of a defined plan or concept for desired future development patterns.

Each discrete annexation and approved development in the fringe area entails a City obligation to extend infrastructure and provide a full array of police, fire, and other facilities and services, at the taxpayer's expense. Documentation nationwide demonstrates that low-density, "sprawl" forms of urban fringe development rarely provide the tax revenues sufficient to offset the public costs incurred. Consequently, a reversal of this trend is needed to avoid negative fiscal consequences.

Likewise, the consumption of fringe area land by isolated, fragmented, low intensity development in the short term reduces the supply of land which will be needed for employment, commercial centers, and other uses necessary for sustainable, long-term growth. The following Goal and Policies provide the necessary long-range perspective and a framework for guiding sound growth along the City's fringe.

[3] Documentation of the methodology used to develop the growth/capacity estimates is provided in Working Paper: Results of 9/4-6/01Comprehensive Plan Charette, Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, November 2001.

GOAL

Provide a development framework for the fringe that guides sound, sustainable patterns of land use, limits sprawl, protects rural character, evidences sound stewardship of the environment, and provides for efficient provision of public services and facilities as the City expands. Development will increase density and mix land uses at a pedestrian scale with sidewalks, bikeways, and where possible, public transit.

POLICIES

4F. Initiate a fringe area growth management framework comprising the following elements [see also Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Policy 9A.1]

4F.1 Create a **Fringe Area Land Use Plan** in coordination with Guilford County (conceptually designating staged utility extensions and future land use patterns consistent with the growth tiers, including mixed use centers, commercial areas, rural preservation areas, land use interchange analysis for all interchanges on the urban loop, etc.).

4F.2 Establish a **"tiered" approach** that designates **growth areas** for staged development, annexation, and extension of public facilities within the water and sewer service boundary:

- ***Tier One (Current Growth Area):*** Where infrastructure systems are in place, can be economically provided and/or will be proactively extended and where continued annexation and consolidation of the City's development pattern shall be encouraged over the next ten years

- ***Tier Two (Intermediate Growth Area):*** Where growth, annexation, and the extension of public facilities is anticipated in 10 to 20 years, and where premature, fragmented, leapfrog, or inefficient development shall be discouraged by the City and County

- ***Tier Three (Long-Term Growth Area):*** Where growth, annexation, and the extension of public facilities is anticipated beyond 20 years, and where premature, fragmented, leapfrog, or inefficient development shall be discouraged by the City and County.

Narrative:

Discussed extensively in the Sections 4.2 and 4.3, the purpose of the **tiered growth concept** for the fringe area is threefold:

- To promote contiguous and compact expansion of the City's edge
- To avoid excessive public expenditures on new facilities and services associated with fragmented, leapfrog development patterns
- To protect land which the City will need to sustain its long-term growth from premature development

The intent is to consider annexations and focus capital investments in Tier One only for approximately the next ten years. However, the City should develop a process for evaluating significant development initiatives in Tiers Two and Three. Factors to be taken into consideration in reviewing such development proposals include:

- The extent to which they pay the costs of or otherwise justify public facility and service extensions
- Significant economic development benefits provided
- Consistency with adopted growth and development policies, such as compact, mixed-use, sustainable development

While the Generalized Future Land Use Map indicates general concepts for land use in Tier One, additional planning will be needed to add greater specificity to the desired future land use patterns. As indicated in Policy 4F.1, the City and County should collaborate in the creation of a **Fringe Area Land Use Plan** that both jurisdictions will adopt, along with consistent development standards. This task will require more detailed, small area planning that will likely involve breaking the fringe area down into smaller pieces and prioritizing where to begin. Areas within Tier One, particularly the mixed-use corporate park area inside the urban loop between US70 and I-40, should be considered priorities. One such planning challenge will be to study in detail the development opportunities and suitabilities surrounding each interchange of the Urban Loop. Such planning should be completed and the resulting land use measures put into effect well before development pressures occur as each interchange is opened. Without careful planning and fine-tuned development guidelines, these key development opportunity sites may become missed opportunities for optimum economic development, efficient traffic management, and the protection of nearby residential and corporate office development from the types of visually blighting, disjointed land use patterns which are already evident at several I-40 and I-85 interchanges.

4F.3 Define specific **criteria for water and sewer extensions and annexations**, to include:

- Contiguity with development patterns and present City limits
- Location within appropriate growth tier
- Availability of infrastructure capacity
- Consistency with city development standards
- Fiscal impact assessment and mechanisms for the allocation of public facility costs through a capital recovery fee [see Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Policy 9A.3]

Narrative:

Although the tiered growth concept provides a rational framework for staging fringe area development and annexations, the City is under no obligation to accept any and all development in Tier One. This policy encourages the City to carefully examine each development application based on consistency with land use policies and a careful assessment of impacts, the full range of public costs to be incurred, and the revenues that will accrue to offset those costs. As noted previously, public costs incurred to support fringe area "greenfield" development is often an order of magnitude greater than for comparable infill development where all or most public facilities and services are already in place. Therefore, this policy suggests the creation of a **capital recovery fee** or similar mechanism, to more equitably assign costs and to reduce reliance on the citywide tax base to subsidize fringe area growth. These policies are not intended to suggest that fiscal assessment and a capital recovery fee should be applied so as to annex only those developments that fully "pay their own way." However, such tools will allow both citizens and elected officials to make decisions based on a thorough knowledge of their fiscal consequences.

4F.4 Initiate designation of the fringe as Greensboro's **extraterritorial jurisdiction** (to give Greensboro development control within the area likely to be annexed).

4F.5 Establish a **proactive plan to provide infrastructure** (water, sewer, and roads) in advance of development, consistent with the growth "tiers" and Fringe Area Land Use Concept Plan (to provide city infrastructure where development is desired, with the developer bearing the responsibility of providing adequate infrastructure outside of the growth tiers). [see also Community Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Policy 9A]

4G. Improve the quality and patterns of development through incentives and regulatory guidelines

4G.1 Promote **compact development** (Traditional Neighborhood, Planned, Mixed-Use, and Pedestrian Scale Development) by applying creative zoning/development standards. [See also Policy 4C.1]

- Designate conceptual locations for mixed use centers, commercial areas, etc. (per Fringe Area Land Use Concept Plan – 4F.1 above)
- Establish performance-based regulations and incentives for more locationally flexible (overlay) development
- Mixed-use development
- Rural "village center/hamlet" designation
- Traditional Neighborhood development (TND)
- Enact standards to promote walkable communities (e.g., reduced street widths for local streets, sidewalks, minimum building setbacks, etc.)
- Revise residential zoning districts to encourage mixed housing types within developments

4G.2 **Coordinate infrastructure policies** to ensure that they are consistent with compact development designations.

4G.3 Create a **"Conservation Development" Zoning District** (similar to Guilford County Rural Preservation District). [see also Community Character Policy 5A.3]

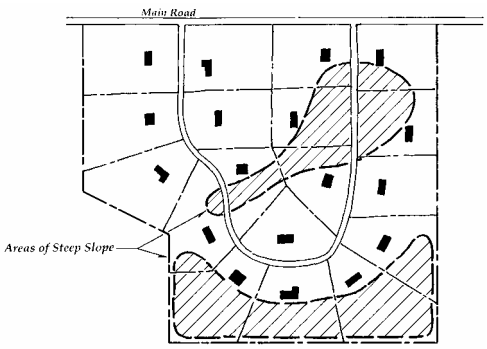
Narrative:

Innovative, compact development patterns such as mixed use districts and TNDs are described in detail elsewhere in the Land Use Element. In addition to these development types, two additional patterns are highly desirable in fringe areas: "village centers/hamlets" and "conservation developments." **Village centers or hamlets** are enclaves of clustered, small lot residential development along with compact arrangements of commercial and civic uses serving the surrounding population. These forms are highly

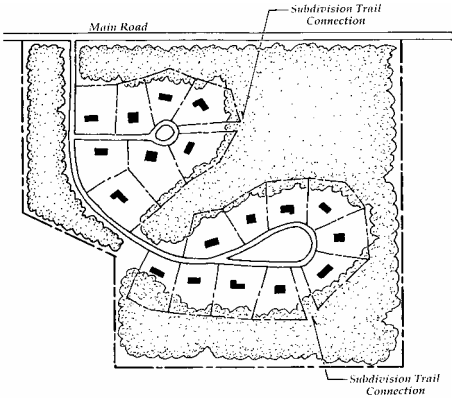
Home sites along rural road

preferable to the more typical pattern of lining home sites and randomly placing commercial uses along rural roads.

Conservation development is an approach to the design of residential subdivisions which is highly suited to rural, fringe areas where the retention of scenic, rural character is desired. Typically, the concept is applied by permitting smaller, clustered lots, in return for the preservation of generous amounts of open space. For example, in a district zoned for a gross density of two units per acre, this would mean permitting the same number of dwellings on quarter acre rather than half acre lots. Such an arrangement would provide the same number of salable homes while preserving roughly half of the site as permanent open space. This approach is highly advantageous both to the public and to private developers. It reduces the costs of public services and makes available generous open space with no public cost of acquisition. Conversely, advantages to developers include:



Example of conventional subdivision



Example of conservation development

Source: Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

- It improves development profitability by lowering development costs for roads and utilities.
- It provides tax advantages from open space easements or dedications.
- It raises the sales value of residential lots abutting permanently protected scenic open space.
- It provides additional wildlife habitat that otherwise would have been sacrificed.

Conservation developments are most often applied in rural and agricultural areas, to allow farmers and other large land owners to achieve an economic return from partial development, while continuing to farm or otherwise retain large sections of permanent open space. However, the concept also has great value in developing fringe areas that will inevitably become urbanized. In Greensboro's fringe areas this pattern will allow the

retention of much of the area's scenic rural character and open space, but at somewhat higher densities and without the retention of farming operations.

4G.4 Develop a **Fringe Area component** of a more detailed **Open Space and Greenways Plan**, in coordination with the County. [see also Community Character Policy 5A.1]

- Identify Priority Conservation Areas (high value woodlands, agricultural lands, and other natural/scenic resources to be subject to special protective measures, acquisition, etc.)
- Establish funding sources for acquisition (e.g., fee simple or "purchase of development rights" (PDR)
- Further utilize partnerships with land trusts (e.g., Piedmont Land Conservancy) to secure conservation easements within priority conservation areas designated in the plan

Purchase of development rights, or PDR, is a voluntary program used by governmental jurisdictions to maintain land in agricultural or conservation uses by compensating landowners for the value of the development rights on the property. PDRs allow properties to remain in private ownership without being developed in the future.

4G.5 Expand designation, definition, and protection of **scenic roadways** in coordination with Guilford County. [see Community Character Policies 5C.2 and 5F.1]

Narrative:

By virtue of its largely undeveloped character, Greensboro's fringe represents a significant opportunity to retain **open space** and protect the character of its many **scenic rural roads**. Opportunities abound for protection using a variety of mechanisms, including fee simple acquisition, the most appropriate tool for the acquisition of properties for public access and recreational use as parks and recreational trails. However, other tools can be used to preserve open space at little or no taxpayer cost. These include the application of conservation development (Policy 4G.3 above), through which lands within private developments are protected via conservation easements, land dedications, deed restrictions or other similar legal means to prevent future development. Although such lands may be conveyed to the City or County, such dedications are preferably made to appropriate land trusts such as Piedmont Land Conservancy. This effort should be a mutual, coordinated undertaking of the City and Guilford County, beginning with the identification of "priority conservation areas," or those lands and natural features of greatest value for preservation (key habitats, woodlands, viewsheds, stream corridors, etc.). Every

effort should be made to identify greenway connections to provide for wildlife habitat corridors as well as maximum public trail access. Likewise, priority conservation areas should be used by the City and County as guides in the designation of open space to be preserved in private developments, as well as in the purchase of land and development rights.

Likewise, the City and County should pursue the development of similar guidelines for scenic roadways, including priorities for designation and corridor development guidelines.