

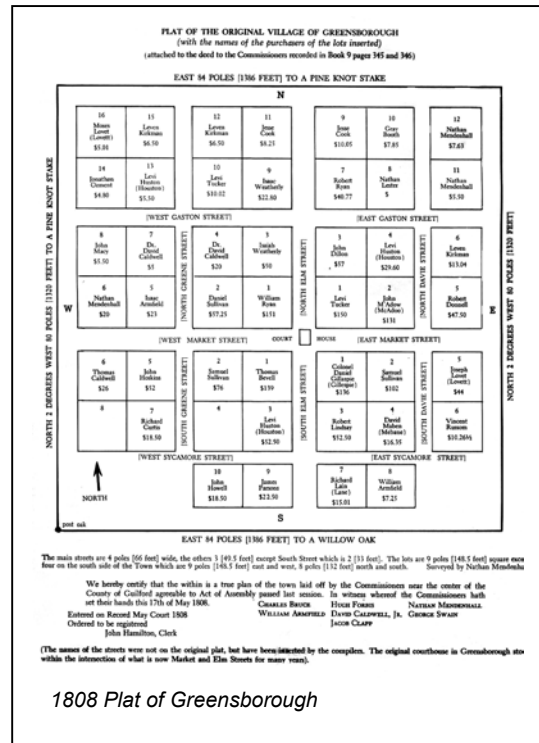
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GREENSBORO: PAST AND PRESENT¹

The City of Greensboro is located in the central Piedmont region of North Carolina, approximately midway between Washington, DC and Atlanta, GA (see Figures 1-1 and 1-2). It is the seat of government for Guilford County, which was established by the North Carolina colonial assembly in 1771. Named in honor of Nathanael Greene, the commanding general during the 1781 Revolutionary War Battle of Guilford Courthouse, “Greensborough” was created as Guilford County’s third seat by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1808. Located at the geographic center of the County, Greensboro lacked the natural advantage of a river, but as it emerged over time as a major rail and highway hub it became known as the “Gate City.” These conditions continue to influence its development today.

Greensboro grew steadily in the first half of the nineteenth century, reaching a population of about 1,500 in 1850. Events prior to the Civil War that helped shape its future development included:

- The advent of textile manufacturing, which would become a mainstay of Greensboro’s economy.
- The founding of the Quakers’ New Garden Boarding School (now Guilford College) in 1834 and the Methodists’ Greensborough Female College (now Greensboro College) in 1838, setting the stage for Greensboro’s emergence as a center of higher learning.²



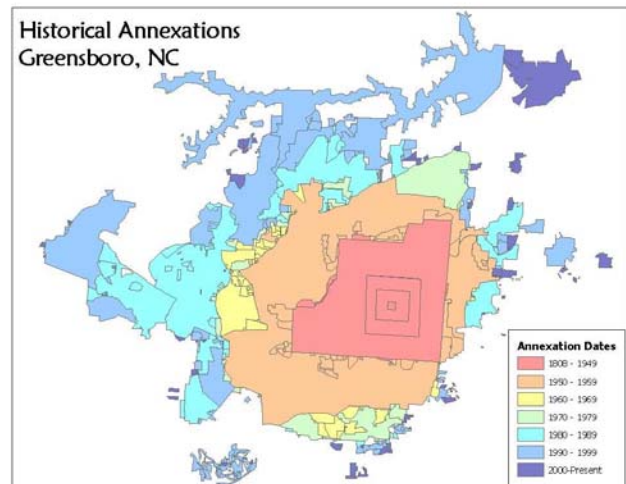
¹ Information on Greensboro’s history derived from two works by Gayle Hicks Fripp: *Images of America: Greensboro* and *Greensboro: A Chosen Center*.

² Other institutions of higher education founded in the nineteenth century included Bennett College in 1873, and UNCG and NCA&TSU in 1891.

- The establishment of the community as a stop on the North Carolina Railroad, the beginning of its development as a major transportation and distribution hub.
- The operation of the Underground Railroad, a system to help African Americans escape from slavery and an early example of racial cooperation, an important theme in Greensboro’s history.

Greensboro’s growth slowed during the Civil War and Reconstruction era. In 1870 a new charter made Greensboro a city, and the population grew to 2,105 in 1880. The subsequent decades were a boom period in Greensboro’s history. Manufacturing of textiles, tobacco products, furniture, and metal implements increased dramatically. Sixty trains a day arrived and departed on rail lines extending in seven directions, giving Greensboro its nickname “the Gate City.” Spurred by the development of streets and electric streetcars, residential subdivisions grew in an outward circle from the central business district. In 1923, when the municipal limits were extended for the third time, Greensboro’s land area grew from four to nearly 18 square miles. In 1920 its population was 19,861, making Greensboro North Carolina’s third largest city, a ranking it maintains today.

By 1940 Greensboro had a population of approximately 60,000 and was known as a major textile center, including Cone Mills, Burlington Mills, and Blue Bell. During World War II, the City was the site of a major training camp and overseas departure point (ORD) for the U.S. Army Air Corps. The postwar period was a time of continued growth and large-scale expansion of the City’s boundaries through annexation. Shopping centers outside the traditional downtown were developed to cater to residents’ increasing use of automobiles. The 1960s were marked by civil rights demonstrations, with the sit-ins started by NCA&TSU students at the F.W. Woolworth Store making national news. In 1970 the City’s population was 144,076.



Historical Annexations Map

During the 1970s urban redevelopment changed the face of the downtown as aging neighborhoods and buildings were replaced and the continued development of suburban shopping centers weakened retail sales. This was a period of less vigorous expansion and population growth than the years following World War II; the City’s population was 155,642 in 1980, a modest eight percent increase from 1970. The city’s population growth accelerated

somewhat during the 1980s as annexation and suburban development continued. Spurred by a strong national economy, development continued at the city/county edge in the 1990s, creating concerns about loss of open space, impacts on natural resources, and the viability of older neighborhoods and commercial districts within Greensboro. Economic trends included the continuing decline of the City's industrial base and growth of services, which have displaced manufacturing as the leading employment sector.

According to the U.S. Census, Greensboro's population in 2000 was 223,891. Greensboro is located at the center of Guilford County (population 421,048) and a 12-county region with a population of approximately 1.5 million, many of whom work in and around the City. Augmented by the recent annexation of Reedy Fork Ranch in Northeast Greensboro, the City's land area has spread to just over 114 square miles. While the City's population growth has slowed over the last two decades to an average increase of approximately 2% per year, its landmass has grown approximately 4% per year. The combination of the rapid urbanization of land at the city/county fringe and the trend toward incorporation of small and primarily residential surrounding communities make it imperative that the City plan now for its future. As Greensboro approaches the 200th anniversary of its founding, this Comprehensive Plan provides a unique opportunity for the community to consider its rich heritage, take stock of where it is now, reflect on what it is becoming, and look forward to the future.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: SETTING A COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

Greensboro has embarked on a bold mission to create its first comprehensive plan. It is doing so at a pivotal point in its history – a time of transition and accelerating change, new challenges and opportunities, and rising citizen expectations. Over the past decade Greensboro, as well as the entire Triad region, has experienced growth, contributing to certain "growing pains." While continued growth and change is a virtual certainty, considerable uncertainty exists about how the future may unfold for Greensboro and what the City may be like in 5, 10 and 20 years. One key motivation in creating a comprehensive plan is to positively influence the direction and momentum of change and to promote economic vitality to ensure that Greensboro continues to be the kind of livable, welcoming place in which citizens want to live and work. The Comprehensive Plan provides a guide for the citizens of Greensboro to retain the community's character, define its identity, improve its quality of life, and strengthen its economy.

In addition to addressing the opportunities and challenges of the future, the Comprehensive Plan also must address present shortcomings. While Greensboro will continue to be a community that cares, much work remains to be done in fully embracing diversity and ensuring equal opportunity for all. While the City has strong leaders in government,

business, and local institutions, the community has not always agreed on priorities, nor has it been unified by a shared vision or a common sense of direction. The Comprehensive Plan provides such a shared vision and direction, one that will allow citizens to face the future with confidence and optimism.

Greensboro's future and that of all its citizens will be profoundly influenced by the degree to which this mission is successful. To more fully appreciate the significance of the challenge, it is appropriate to begin by considering what a comprehensive plan is and how it will be used to achieve a better future.

Greensboro's Comprehensive Plan is:

A reflection of citizens' values, aspirations, and shared vision. Just as one would not begin a journey without first identifying a destination, the Plan must begin by defining the kind of place citizens want Greensboro to be. During the comprehensive planning process, hundreds of citizens expressed candid views about Greensboro – its present strengths and



Public Meeting

weaknesses, as well as future opportunities and threats. In listening to what citizens said, broad areas of consensus emerged concerning the kind of community they want to become. These expressed community values and aspirations provide the basis for a shared vision of Greensboro's future. Presented in Chapter 2.0, this **Vision Statement** defines citizens' expectations and directions for the future, frames the mandate for the Comprehensive Plan, and provides the benchmark to measure progress.

A guide for the management of change. If the vision for Greensboro's future is to be realized, the Comprehensive Plan must positively and deliberately influence growth and change. To accomplish this objective, the Plan must be actively applied as a framework through which decisions are made, priorities established, and actions taken that advance the City towards the vision. While Greensboro's government will take a leadership role in this effort, the Comprehensive Plan calls on citizens, civic organizations, institutions, and businesses to coordinate their efforts with a shared sense of direction and a renewed spirit of partnership.

The foundation for policies, strategies and actions. The goals and policies laid out in the plan elements (Chapters 4.0 through 9.0) are based upon a thorough evaluation of present city policies, strategies, and regulations. Areas addressed include, among others, land use, economic development, and the protection of open space and natural resources; investments in utilities, roadways, and other public services and facilities; and coordination with the State, Guilford County, and neighboring communities. While the goals and policies are presented in separate elements, many of them are closely related and they are designed to work together to achieve the future vision. Integration of these goals and policies into the day-to-day decision-making and long-range planning activities of city government will result in significant adjustments to present policies, regulations, and investment priorities.

Greensboro's "To Do" list. The Comprehensive Plan's influence on Greensboro's future will be a product of the motivating power of its shared vision, and the effectiveness of actions taken to realize the vision. The vision will not be achieved simply because citizens agree with the sentiments it expresses. Rather, it will be realized by steady progress in adhering to a well-defined "game plan" that sets priorities for effective short and long-term actions. Such a game plan is presented in the concluding chapter of the Comprehensive Plan (10.0, Implementation).

The study area for the Comprehensive Plan is defined as the land within the present Greensboro city limits and the area in unincorporated Guilford County that falls inside of the Water and Sewer Service Area Boundary adopted by City Council in 2001. The Comprehensive Plan contains a number of maps depicting the spatial occurrence within the study area of concepts described in the text. It should be noted that the maps are not regulatory in nature, but rather are intended as guides for use in future planning and decision-making.

1.3 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The City of Greensboro mobilized a significant effort to involve the entire community in the creation of the Comprehensive Plan. The work to prepare the Comprehensive Plan was carried out as a collaborative effort with specific responsibilities assigned as follows:

- A **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee**, composed of Greensboro citizens, guided policy-making throughout the planning process.

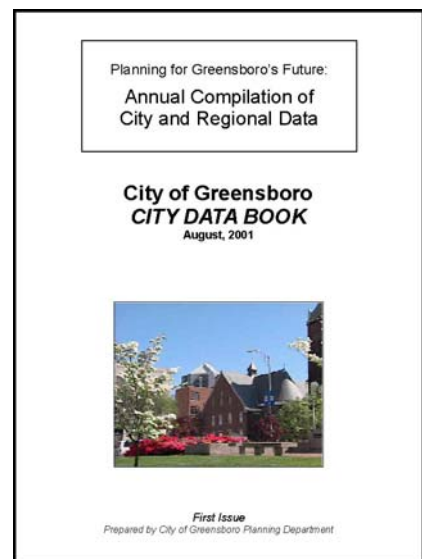


Steering Committee Meeting

- A **Technical Advisory Team**, composed of representatives of business, civic organizations, and local institutions, provided guidance on key technical challenges and strategic choices and assisted in compiling the *City Data Book*.
- A **Staff Resource and Mapping Team**, composed of senior city staff, compiled and interpreted the necessary data, studies, and mapping and participated in developing and reviewing Comprehensive Plan products.
- A **Consultant Team**, led by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, facilitated the planning process and drafted the Comprehensive Plan document with extensive input from the Steering Committee and city staff.
- The City of Greensboro **Planning Department** managed and coordinated the effort.
- Finally, the **Greensboro City Council** will adopt the Comprehensive Plan and direct the **City Administration** to implement it.

The process of preparing the Greensboro Comprehensive Plan began with articulation of a **Vision Statement**, an expression of the values, priorities, and aspirations of Greensboro’s citizens (see Chapter 2.0). Concurrently with development of the Vision Statement, considerable work was done to document key conditions as they exist now in Greensboro, and how such conditions are likely to change in the future. The major components of this **Existing and Evolving Framework** included:

- **City Data Book:** Statistics and facts regarding existing conditions and trends in Greensboro.
- **Community Structure:** The present pattern of development, neighborhoods, support facilities, and environmental resources in the City, and their susceptibility to change.
- **Factors for Change:** Conditions or influences that will affect the likely capacity, direction, rate, and location of future change (e.g., the Urban Loop).
- **Regulatory/Jurisdictional Context:** Policy, legal, and other governmental influences or limits on future growth and change.
- **Trend Analysis:** A depiction of what Greensboro may be like in 20 years, if present development trends, market forces, public policies, and similar influences were to continue.



This phase of the planning process culminated in a work session (referred to as the “Comprehensive Plan Charette”) conducted in September 2001 with city staff, consultants, the Technical Advisory Team, and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee as participants. The purpose of the charette was to brainstorm the “big picture” of the planning challenge Greensboro faces (i.e., the type and magnitude of the “course corrections” that are needed if the Vision Statement is to be realized), based on a synthesis of the existing conditions and trends information. The charette results were used to frame the scope of the challenge and the issues addressed in the next phase of work, **Policy and Concept Development**.

Over the course of many meetings, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee worked with the consultants to explore available choices in development concepts, policies, and actions that may be taken to redirect conditions and trends to more effectively realize the Greensboro described in the Vision Statement. This work culminated in the selection of a draft set of Goals and Policies, accompanied by a Preliminary Concept Plan for the future growth of the City. A series of public meetings to present and receive comments on the Draft Goals, Policies, and Concept Plan were held in June of 2002.

Following the public meetings, the Draft Goals, Policies, and Concept Plan were refined and detailed in this full Comprehensive Plan document. In the final step of the process, **Plan Review and Adoption**, the Plan will be circulated for public review, leading to adoption by City Council.

1.4 FUTURE CHALLENGES: ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION AND EQUITY

Greensboro's Comprehensive Plan has been structured to focus attention and direct City policy and actions to address a broad array of challenges associated with its future development – from managing growth and promoting reinvestment to protecting the environment and improving quality of life. These are issues over which the City can exert considerable influence and for which we can expect significant results over the Plan's 20-year horizon. There is however, a particular challenge that lies beyond the scope of a comprehensive plan and beyond the purview of local government to mandate results or solutions. This issue pertains to the wide gap between the "haves and have-nots" in Greensboro, a gap which exists largely along racial lines.

The lunch counter sit-ins of the 1960s vividly brought attention to the City's racial divisions. Although progress can be noted, our values and our vision for racial reconciliation and equity are not yet matched by reality. The reality is that Greensboro remains a city largely divided along racial lines. African-Americans and other minorities are vastly under-

represented among business owners and community leaders and over-represented among the poor, under-employed, under-educated and incarcerated. These facts are not acceptable and must become a matter of conscience and commitment to fundamental change. If Greensboro is to achieve its Vision of a better future, it must be a better future enjoyed by everyone. No one must be left out.

A number of the policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan are designed to promote inclusiveness and opportunity for African-Americans and other minorities. Economic development policies to encourage minority small business development and investment in historically under-served areas such as East Greensboro are examples. However, broader action that involves the entire Greensboro community will be necessary to address the core issue of racial disparity.

While city government cannot mandate cures for deep-seated racial attitudes, it can state the nature of the problem and suggest several broad fronts of community action that can begin to eliminate these deep-rooted problems. Towards this end, the Greensboro Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee encourages local government, institutions and citizens to make a fundamental commitment to reconciling the racial divisions and inequities in our community in accordance with the following goal:

Community Goal: Achieve racial reconciliation and equity, and empower minorities and the under-privileged to become full and equal participants in the economic and civic life of the community.

Potential areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- ***Educational Achievement:*** Encourage and support the efforts of local schools, colleges and institutions to promote academic success and achievement for minority and under-privileged students, including: a reduction in the academic achievement gap; retraining for the underemployed; preschool opportunities for all; and a reduction in the minority dropout rate.
- ***Social Problems:*** Develop and apply effective approaches to significantly reduce social problems disproportionately affecting African-Americans and other minorities, including unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, and crime.



Photo courtesy of Guilford County Schools

- ***Communications and Participation:*** Improve communications among all segments of the Greensboro community, and promote increased participation and inclusiveness by minority cultures in community activities.

To begin this effort, the Steering Committee proposes that a citizens committee be appointed to study racial inequities and associated social problems in Greensboro and to identify strategies for their elimination.