

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the City of Greensboro approaches its 200th anniversary in 2008, its citizens can take pride in their past while looking forward to a future filled with challenges and opportunities. The past several decades have been a period of transition and change for the City, characterized by changing economic conditions, growth in population and land area, and increasing concerns regarding social equity, the health of the urban core, and the nature of growth at the fringe. It can be stated with assurance that change will continue in the future, likely at an accelerated pace, but the nature of that change and how it will affect Greensboro 10, 20, and more years from now is uncertain. Thus a fundamental challenge for the future is: how do we positively engage and manage change in a manner that best promotes the well being of the City and its residents?

Connections 2025 – the first comprehensive plan in the City’s history – provides a guide for the citizens and leaders of Greensboro to respond to that challenge by setting a positive course for the future. It articulates an overall **vision** for the place citizens wish Greensboro to be in 2025, establishes **goals and policies** in support of the vision, and lays out a specific **action plan** defining the steps the City will take to achieve the desired future. At the core of the Plan is the idea of building social, physical, business, and economic **connections**: among people, organizations, and government; within Greensboro; and to the larger Piedmont Triad region, State of North Carolina, and the nation as a whole.

The Plan sets significant new directions for the City of Greensboro in a number of areas. Examples include:

- A commitment to **inclusiveness** and **social equity** for all residents of Greensboro
- An emphasis on promoting **reinvestment** in Greensboro’s urban areas and **sustainable development** at the city/county fringe
- Higher expectations for **development quality** and **resource protection**, coupled with more **flexibility** for forms of developments that meet plan objectives (compact, mixed-use, mixed housing types, etc.)
- An increased focus on **economic development** at all levels of city government, with special attention to **empowering** those who have not previously participated fully in Greensboro’s economy

One particular challenge – the need for racial reconciliation and equity – is beyond the normal scope of a Comprehensive Plan but is critical to the City’s future. To address this challenge, Section 1.4 of the Plan recommends a Community Goal and the appointment of a

Citizens Committee to study racial inequities and associated social problems in Greensboro and to identify strategies for their solution.

The Comprehensive Plan was developed through a two-year planning process that included extensive citizen involvement. Development of the plan was guided by a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee comprised of 18 members appointed by City Council to represent community interests. Public input was received through interviews with numerous stakeholders representing key civic, neighborhood, and business interests; numerous community meetings and workshops held throughout the City at key points in the planning process; email responses; and a “postcard” survey of the City’s residents. The result is a plan that reflects citizen **values and aspirations** for the future and which provides a “game plan” for translating those values and aspirations into reality.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is comprised of the following sections:

- **Chapter 1.0 (Introduction)** begins with a brief summary of Greensboro’s history and where the City is today. It then describes the purpose of and process used to develop the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Chapter 2.0 (Vision Statement)** sets forth a positive vision of what Greensboro will be in the year 2025 based upon input from citizens. It defines the role of the Vision Statement as the ultimate outcome that the Plan’s goals, policies, and actions are intended to achieve.
- **Chapter 3.0 (Plan Development)** summarizes the work done during the comprehensive planning process to move from the Vision Statement presented in Chapter 2.0 to the detailed goals, policies, and actions identified in Chapters 4.0 to 10.0.
- **Chapters 4.0 to 9.0 (Plan Elements)** are the heart of the plan, containing recommended goals and policies for the following subject areas:
 - Land Use
 - Community Character
 - Housing and Neighborhoods
 - Economic Development
 - Transportation
 - Community Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure

- **Chapter 10.0 (Implementation)** describes in detail how the City will implement the Comprehensive Plan.

VISION STATEMENT

In the **Vision of Greensboro in the Year 2025**, the City is known for its **exceptional livability** defined by three essential factors:

- The quality of our relationships with each other
- The quality of the place
- The quality and vitality of the economy

This exceptional livability has been achieved over time by strategically targeting actions towards four fundamental elements of the Vision:

- **Community Character:** addressing important community assets such as natural and scenic resources, neighborhoods, parks and open space, and history and heritage.
- **Sustainable Growth:** speaking to balanced investment and reinvestment across the City, including an active Center City, rejuvenation of historically underserved areas, and effective growth management at Greensboro's edges.
- **Economic Prosperity:** based upon a diverse new economy built on the community's strengths, with business and employment opportunities for all.
- **Our People, Organizations, and Government:** emphasizing strong leadership, a commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, citizen involvement and volunteerism, and effective intergovernmental coordination.

PLAN ELEMENTS

Each plan element provides a brief overview of background information and issues related to its subject area¹, identifies key areas of divergence between present trends and the Vision of Greensboro in 2025, and presents goals and policies designed to move the City towards the Vision.

¹ More detailed background information is provided in the *City Data Book*, which contains statistics and facts regarding existing conditions and trends in Greensboro.

LAND USE ELEMENT

The goals and policies for land use address three major topics:

- Reinvestment/Infill
- Downtown
- Growth at the Fringe

The **Reinvestment/Infill** and **Downtown** goals and policies are designed to promote sound investment in Greensboro’s urban areas, including Center City, commercial and industrial areas, and neighborhoods. Included are strategies to promote compatible infill and reuse; target capital improvements to leverage private investment; and encourage a more active and diverse downtown.

The **Growth at the Fringe** goal and policies address the direction set by the Vision Statement to effectively use growth management tools and to coordinate with Guilford County in promoting sustainable growth at the city/county edge. Key strategies include:

- Developing a fringe area growth management framework and Land Use Plan in cooperation with Guilford County
- Using water/sewer extension and annexation policies to encourage phased development in growth areas (tiers) identified by the Plan
- Enacting incentives and guidelines to improve the pattern and quality of development occurring at the fringe

The Land Use Element also includes:

- A **Generalized Future Land Use Map** that broadly depicts the desired future pattern of land use
- A **Growth Strategy Map** that shows the conceptual locations of 1) priority reinvestment areas and corridors within the City and 2) growth tiers located at the city/county fringe, where development, annexation, and extension of public facilities are to be staged over a 20+ year period

COMMUNITY CHARACTER ELEMENT

The Community Character Element addresses two major topics:

- Parks, Open Space, and Natural Resources
- Man-Made Environment

The goal and policies for **Parks, Open Space, and Natural Resources** focus on protecting and enhancing Greensboro’s natural and scenic resources (stream corridors, tree canopy, floodplains, etc.), expanding the City’s network of parks and greenways, and initiating a community-wide tree planting/re-vegetation program (Greening Greensboro). The goal and policies for the **Man-Made Environment** address the character and visual quality of Greensboro’s built environment, including historic resources, scenic corridors, private developments, and public landscapes.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS ELEMENT

The goal of the **Housing and Neighborhoods** Element is to provide all Greensboro citizens with decent, affordable housing in safe, livable neighborhoods. It includes policies to implement a comprehensive neighborhood conservation and improvement program; maintain, improve, and increase the diversity of the City’s housing stock; and meet affordable housing needs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The draft goal and policies for **Economic Development** support the Economic Prosperity element of the Vision Statement, which foresees a healthy, diverse economy with business and employment opportunities for all segments of the community. Increasing economic opportunities in under-served parts of Greensboro (e.g., East Greensboro) and the number of minority-owned businesses (e.g., by establishing a Minority Business Development Council) are important objectives. Key strategies are to create a more responsive, business-friendly environment in city government and to target city investments, regulatory policies, and incentives to promote desirable types of economic development.

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

The goal of the **Transportation** Element is to integrate roadway, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities in a well-balanced network that provides connections and choices for citizens to move about Greensboro and the region. To accomplish this goal, roadway improvement projects are to be strategically targeted to maintain a safe and efficient roadway network while supporting other community objectives defined in the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Plan emphasizes development of alternative transportation modes, including comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle networks and improved transit service at the local and regional levels.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT

This element addresses several types of **infrastructure systems** (water, sewer, stormwater, and solid waste) and **public facilities and services** (police, fire, and libraries) provided by the City of Greensboro. The infrastructure policies address the need to plan for increased capacity and reduced consumption of finite resources while targeting water/sewer extensions to support desired land use patterns. Policies for community facilities and services emphasize

planning for the allocation of resources to ensure that high standards of service are maintained equitably throughout the City. Included are strategies to make Greensboro the **safest city in the United States**.

IMPLEMENTATION

Comprehensive plans are turned into reality by concerted, consistent attention to implementation. Chapter 10.0 lays out in detail how the Plan is to be used to make incremental progress towards achieving the Vision Statement. It contains:

- Principles for **revising zoning and development regulations** and reviewing development applications so as to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
- Processes for **adopting, amending, monitoring, and updating** the Plan
- An **action plan** for implementing plan initiatives according to relative priority. Short-term (one year), mid-term (two to three years), and long-term (four to ten years) actions are identified.