

3.0 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

A necessary step in achieving the Vision Statement is to understand where the City of Greensboro has been, where it is now, and where it is likely headed if present trends continue. A considerable amount of information was compiled and analyzed concurrently with development of the Vision Statement to characterize Greensboro’s **Existing and Evolving Framework** (see Section 1.3, The Planning Process). Statistics and facts regarding existing conditions and trends in Greensboro are documented in the *City Data Book*. In addition to this factual base of information, additional work was done to conceptualize in broader terms where the City is now and what it is becoming, thus setting the stage for identifying the “course corrections” needed to influence change in the direction of the Vision.

This chapter summarizes the work that was done as a “bridge” between the Vision Statement (Chapter 2.0) and the detailed policies and actions contained in the plan elements (Chapters 4.0 through 9.0) and the implementation program (Chapter 10.0). Section 3.1 characterizes **current trends** in Greensboro in terms of the following:

- **Community Structure – Area Types:** Areas within the City that are distinguished by their broad development patterns and the amount of change they are expected to experience in the future.
- **Factors for Change:** Conditions or influences that will affect the likely capacity, direction, rate, and location of change (e.g., construction of the Urban Loop).
- **Trend Growth Scenario:** A conceptual depiction of future conditions and development patterns that are likely to occur in the City if present trends and policies continue.

Section 3.2 compares **trend growth** to the elements of the **Vision Statement** as a basis for identifying needed changes in policy and strategy. It concludes by summarizing the major **areas of divergence** between trend

AREA	2000	2020	INCREASE	
			POP.	% *
PRESENT CITY LIMITS	223,891	278,293	54,402	24%
URBAN FRINGE	43,843	62,381	18,538	42%
TOTAL	267,734	340,674	72,940	27%
*1.4 AVERAGE ANNUAL				

Projected trend growth population increase

and vision, which were used to organize the Draft Goals and Policies formulated in the next phase of work (Policy and Concept Development).

The information presented in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 largely reflects work accomplished during the “Comprehensive Plan Charette” conducted in September 2001. Section 3.3 describes the Draft Concept map that was prepared concurrently with the Draft Goals and Policies for review and comment by the public in the summer of 2002 prior to preparation of the full Comprehensive Plan.

3.1 CURRENT TRENDS

3.1.1 COMMUNITY STRUCTURE – AREA TYPES

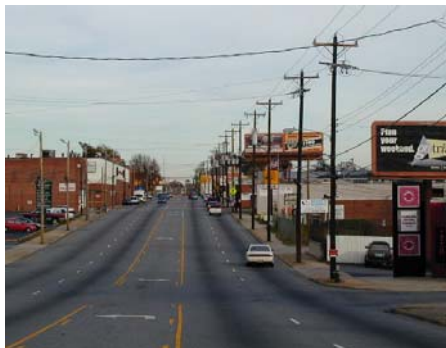
In a community such as Greensboro, which is characterized by well-developed patterns of land use, transportation and infrastructure, land use change will occur incrementally in response to fairly predictable influences. By identifying areas within the City where certain types of change are being experienced or are anticipated, attention can be directed to how and where land use policy may be adjusted to positively influence such change. Figure 3-1 depicts **Community Structure** by categorizing the City into four **Area Types** that are expected to experience varying levels and types of change:

- Developed Areas
- Developed and Changing Areas
- Developing Areas
- Undeveloped Areas

Developed Areas

Developed Areas comprise the largest portion of the City's land area, including much of the suburban portion of Greensboro: its large expanses of maturing, single-family neighborhoods and newer commercial areas serving the residential population. Such areas are expected to remain relatively stable through the plan horizon, with limited pressure for land use change or need for redevelopment or revitalization. Key challenges in these established areas are to maintain stability by avoiding adverse influences and to encourage appropriate forms of complementary infill development as opportunities arise.





Developed and Changing Areas

Developed and Changing Areas comprise much of the land area within the more urban sections of Greensboro, such as Downtown, older neighborhoods, highway corridors, and industrial areas. Changing land use patterns or pressures to change are already in evidence in these areas and will continue well into the future. Building types and land uses established decades ago gradually become obsolete, due in part to market and economic changes. Examples of these changes

include the current trend away from manufacturing and heavy industrial to services and shifts in retail uses away from older highway strips to larger, more competitive suburban centers. Likewise, because of the age of commercial and residential structures, physical deterioration often accompanies land use change, resulting in buildings and sites that are poorly suited to more modern uses and are costly or impractical to retrofit. Such areas are often characterized by smaller, fragmented site configurations that are difficult to redevelop and which may not meet current zoning requirements. These factors combine to create powerful disincentives for new investment and redevelopment. Development in such areas is often more costly, more risky, and more constrained by regulatory compliance and fees when compared with opportunities in outlying "greenfield" areas.

Such areas also represent tremendous opportunities for the introduction of more compact, mixed-use development, for higher density, mixed-income housing located near employment and transit, and for the adaptive reuse of the City's inventory of historic structures. The focus of the Comprehensive Plan is to encourage positive forms of investment by "leveling the playing field" with more suburban locations. As described in more detail in the policies for Reinvestment/Infill in Section 4.5.1 of the Land Use Element, this will be done through a combination of incentives, removal of regulatory constraints, and direct city actions to encourage private investment.

Developing Areas

Developing Areas are those sections of the City and its fringe within the water/sewer boundary that are currently experiencing substantial growth pressures, stimulated in part by new roads and highway improvements. Most of these areas will be built out over the plan horizon. Key challenges in such areas are to ensure rational, compatible land use patterns, upgrade development standards, and plan for the introduction of public facilities, parks, greenways, and other community "form-givers."





Undeveloped Areas

Undeveloped Areas are those areas within the City's water and sewer boundary where substantial development pressure is not yet occurring or imminent. Such areas are mostly rural and agricultural in character, with fragmented large lot and estate development and few public services or facilities. Key challenges in these areas are to avoid premature or inefficient patterns such as sprawl, or leapfrog development.

Attracted by relatively inexpensive land combined with accommodating policies for water/sewer extensions and resulting annexations, inefficient patterns are likely to proliferate in these areas. Consequences include an accelerating rate of loss of farmland, public facility and service delivery costs which exceed tax revenues generated, and an inefficient land use pattern that may preclude longer-range, more economically viable development options.

3.1.2 FACTORS FOR CHANGE

Depicted graphically in Figure 3-2, **Factors for Change** are conditions that can be expected to influence where and when development pressures will occur. As such, they indicate where attention should be focused to manage future growth and change. These factors fall generally into several categories, as follows:

- Transportation Enhancements
- Major Activity Centers
- Growth “Barriers”
- Intangible and External Factors

Transportation Enhancements

Transportation Enhancements improve accessibility to certain locations, often leading to greater marketability and development pressure for higher economic uses. These development pressures can be expected at many of the major interchanges along the Urban Loop, as well as in the vicinity of the future I-73 corridor near the airport. Development pressures can also be expected along the US 29 corridor, the West Market Street corridor west to Kernersville, the Wendover/Guilford



Urban Loop under construction

College Road area, and the High Point Road corridor.



Piedmont Triad International Airport



Downtown

Major Activity Centers

Major Activity Centers influence growth through their ability to attract investment to regional centers of activity. Regional airports nationwide that have both airline passenger and cargo service typically attract major industrial and corporate office development, along with supporting services in surrounding areas. In Greensboro the large tracts of developable land surrounding the Piedmont Triad International Airport, coupled with the Urban Loop to the east and I-73 to the west, will continue to fuel such growth and will make this area one of the region's largest centers of employment. Although the airport area will begin to rival Downtown Greensboro as an employment center, Downtown will continue to attract investment as it becomes more diversified with entertainment, center city housing, and other complements to its traditional function as the City's business hub. Landmark private developments, such as Reedy Fork, will also exert considerable influence on

the City's growth dynamics. Not only will this development likely absorb a significant amount of the growth pressure at the fringe, but future developments may be influenced to emulate the high standard it has set for development quality.

Growth Barriers

Growth Barriers are factors that tend to limit or constrain growth. These factors among others include environmental barriers such as the watershed critical area in the vicinity of the northern lakes, which are susceptible to water quality degradation and which are difficult to serve with sewer system extensions. Other "barrier" conditions include rural settlements such as McLeansville and Colfax, which may resist or be incompatible with certain types of more intensive urban or industrial development. The City of High Point and smaller incorporated towns such as Jamestown, Summerfield, and Oak Ridge are also barriers to the future expansion of the City. While the water/sewer boundary does represent a defined growth limit based on the City's infrastructure capacity, the amount of growth it can absorb is sufficient to sustain the City's projected population growth for several decades.

Intangible and External Factors

Intangible and External Factors that will influence growth patterns are many and complex. A good example is demographic change, such as the aging of the baby-boom generation which will impact the housing and consumer market. Likewise, the influence of information technology on education, industry, and employment patterns is readily apparent. More tangible and direct in their effects on the City's growth are the growth dynamics of neighboring Winston-Salem, Kernersville, High Point and Burlington, as the region's larger communities begin to merge into a more integrated urban metropolitan pattern.

3.1.3 TREND GROWTH SCENARIO

Figure 3-3, Trend Growth Scenario, conceptually depicts future conditions and development patterns that are likely to occur, given a continuation of present trends and policies. It is a composite diagram of major trends identified by participants in the Comprehensive Plan Charette conducted in September 2001. At the charette, Greensboro's overall development pattern was conceptualized as consisting of three basic components:

- Urban Greensboro
- Suburban Greensboro
- Fringe Growth Areas

Issues and challenges vary considerably for these three components.

Urban Greensboro

Urban Greensboro consists of the urbanized center of the City, including the Downtown and the surrounding older highway corridors and neighborhoods, including much of East Greensboro. This area encompasses much of the City's history and its urban grid pattern that predate the period of post-war growth of the 1950s and after. Challenges in this section of the City include:

- Avoiding or reversing decline, disinvestment, and obsolescence in some of Greensboro's older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas
- Encouraging employment and shopping areas in the underserved east side of the urban area

While Urban Greensboro contains significant impediments to reinvestment, such as "brownfield" sites, it also contains significant opportunities for compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented development that could strengthen and diversify the Downtown and adjoining older neighborhoods and highway corridors.

Suburban Greensboro

Suburban Greensboro covers the large swath of the City, comprised primarily of "built-out" lower density residential neighborhoods and newer commercial developments, which almost entirely surrounds Urban Greensboro. Market forces over the short term will likely produce little dramatic change in this land use pattern through the plan horizon. Although the present suburban pattern is likely to remain stable and economically viable for some time, problems such as mounting traffic congestion and loss of open space and environmental resources can be directly attributed to conventional suburban development practices, such as highway commercial strips and low density subdivisions isolated from employment or commercial centers.

Fringe Growth Areas

Fringe Growth Areas are areas beyond the City's presently developed edges where new development is already occurring, or where growth pressures may be expected to occur in the future. Three types of fringe growth areas are depicted. **Current Fringe Growth Areas** are already "committed" to growth by virtue of existing and committed developments, annexations, and programmed roads and infrastructure extensions. These areas include the vicinity of I-85/Grandover Parkway and along the planned northern section of the Urban Loop in the area of United Health Care, North Elm Street, and Lake Jeanette. **Emerging Fringe Growth Areas** comprise a sizeable land area to the east, extending from just west of US Highway 29 to just west of US Highway 421. In this area voluntary annexation activity has begun with sizable developments such as Reedy Fork, and will accelerate with the staged completion of the Urban Loop. The third category, **Anticipated Growth Areas**, consists of locations where development pressures may be expected but where it may not be feasible for the City to provide services. The area above the City's northern lakes will likely see growth pressure, but is difficult and very expensive to provide with sewer service. The area in the vicinity of Colfax, west of the airport, will see pressure due to the airport expansion, but some major infrastructure will need to be installed. The area south of the airport is and will continue to be subject to growth pressure but will be served by the City of High Point.

As part of the assessment of trend growth, projections of population growth through the year 2020 were prepared and compared to the estimated capacity of the area within the water/sewer service boundary to accommodate the associated demand in new residential units. These estimates revealed that the City has considerable "growing room" – mostly in fringe growth areas – to accommodate projected demand. Stated in broad terms, it is estimated that sufficient capacity exists to accommodate approximately 40 to 50 years of residential growth at current rates of increase.¹

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

3.2 COMPARISON OF VISION TO TREND

By comparing the Vision Statement to what the City is actually becoming as represented in the Trend Growth Scenario, attention is focused on needed changes in policy and strategy. During the Comprehensive Plan Charette, participants identified key areas of divergence between components of the Vision Statement and trend growth. These differences are noted in Table 3-1.

The areas of divergence between vision and trend were further synthesized and categorized into the following five key **areas of concern** related to the Vision Statement:

- **Urban Core**, including Reinvestment/Infill, Downtown, and Housing and Neighborhoods
- **Growth at the Fringe**
- **Economic Development**
- **Natural and Man-Made Environment**, including Open Space, Parks, and Natural Resources and the Man-Made (Built) Environment
- **Supporting Infrastructure and Services**, including Transportation and Community Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure

These areas of concern were used to organize the Draft Goals and Policies developed by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The Draft Goals and Policies, in turn, were developed following public review and comment into the Comprehensive Plan Elements presented in Chapters 4.0 through 9.0.

Table 3-1. Comparison of Vision Statement to Trend Growth

Vision Statement Component	Trend
Community Character	
Natural and Scenic Resources	Development will result in continued fragmentation and loss of resources such as tree canopy.
Livable Neighborhoods	Factors such as declining commercial corridors and the need for basic infrastructure in certain areas will affect neighborhood viability.
Visual Character	Visual character will erode if current development practices continue.
Parks and Open Spaces	Development will result in continued fragmentation and loss of open spaces.
Sustainable Growth	
Balanced Investment	Development at the city/county fringe could bypass East Greensboro and other areas in need of investment.
Compact Development Patterns	Conventional, land-consumptive subdivisions are the predominant development pattern; compact development may not occur without substantial incentives.
Recycled Vacant Sites and Buildings	The current bias towards “greenfield” development will continue to limit investment in redevelopment.
Transportation System	Future conditions will include increased auto dependency and congestion, lack of a fully connected road network, pedestrian “unfriendly” development, and lack of coordination between transit and land uses.
Infrastructure Systems (water, sewer, etc.)	Inefficient provision of facilities and services will result from serving dispersed growth.
Greensboro’s Edges	Conditions at the city/county edge will be characterized by fragmented development, lack of “form givers,” and impacts on fiscal health and community character.
Economic Prosperity	
Balanced Development	Development at the city/county fringe could bypass East Greensboro and other areas in need of investment.
Diverse Economy	The continued shift to a service-based economy with lower paying job opportunities will continue.
Strong Tax Base	Increased cost to serve development at the fringe will outstrip growth in tax base.
Our People, Organizations, and Government	
Intergovernmental Coordination	Lack of effective coordination on regional growth issues will continue.

3.3 PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

Concurrent with the preparation of Draft Goals and Policies, a Preliminary (Draft) Concept Map (Figure 3-4) was prepared to depict the geographic application of policies, particularly those related to future land use. This conceptual diagram indicates basic principles for the City's structure and functions, and the varied challenges of growth and change. It is included herein as a record of the plan development process and its content is superseded by the Generalized Future Land Use Map and other maps contained in the plan elements. Key elements of the city-wide concept are as follows.

Major Community Functions

Three broad categories of land use and function depict where most residents will continue to work, shop and reside:

- **Employment**, including major centers of office and industrial uses
- **Commercial**, including the City's several highway commercial corridors and regional centers such as Wendover/I-40
- **Residential**, comprising the bulk of the City's land area in residential use

Reinvestment Areas

Superimposed over the three basic community functions, **Reinvestment Areas** include Downtown, older neighborhoods, highway corridors, and industrial areas, as well as portions of East Greensboro. All such areas are suitable for the application of various incentives to promote reinvestment and revitalization, and to encourage new forms of mixed-use and other compact development types.



Growth Tiers

Land within the water/sewer boundary has a development capacity well beyond that which the City's projected growth could reasonably absorb for development over the next several decades. Without a rational, defined policy for where and how the City should expand, such expansion will continue to occur in random, leapfrog fashion leading to a highly fragmented City-County edge. This in turn will create demands for extension of services and facilities that will stretch the City's fiscal capacity. **Growth Tiers** are applied between the present City limits and the water/sewer boundary to properly stage annexation, development, and the extension of City infrastructure and public services. Three such growth tiers are conceptually identified:

- **Tier One (Current Targeted Growth)** is where growth can best be accommodated over the next ten years. Within these areas growth pressures are already emerging, infrastructure extensions are already being made or planned, and City costs to make such extension are lowest.
- **Tier Two (Intermediate Growth)** includes areas where substantial growth pressures are not yet in evidence, and where infrastructure costs are greater than in Tier One. It is expected that such areas will be needed to meet the City's growth needs beyond the next ten years. Until such time that Tier One approaches build-out, water and sewer extensions and annexations in Tier Two shall generally be discouraged.
- **Tier Three (Long Term Growth)** includes areas within the water/sewer boundary where costs to extend infrastructure and city services are highest and where development is less desirable or advantageous until development has consolidated within Tiers One and Two. It is expected that such areas will be needed to meet the City's growth needs beyond the next 20 years. Until such time that Tier Two approaches build-out, water and sewer extensions and annexations in Tier Three shall be discouraged.

Regardless of the above policies, **the City may choose to consider unique development opportunities in Tiers Two and Three** that are fiscally sound, promote long-term development, and otherwise reflect the broad public interest.

Activity Centers

By their nature, activity centers comprise a concentration of mixed commercial, industrial or institutional services, employment and higher density housing, as a preferred alternative to the consequences of fragmenting such activities along highway corridors or as stand-alone "big boxes." The Preliminary Concept map depicts a number of existing activity centers, most of which are community-serving retail centers, located at or near major highway crossroads or interchanges. At these existing centers, as well as future activity centers, a greater diversification and intensification of uses, and more compact, pedestrian friendly forms of development are to be encouraged.