



LINCOLN COUNTY

Land Use Plan



Adopted by Lincoln County
August 20, 2007

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Plan Background

(NOTE: Portions of this section include excerpts from the “History” section of the City of Lincolnton’s Website)

This document describes where and how the County sees itself growing over the next ten years. The recommendations contained in the Land Use Plan (i.e., the “Plan”) have been shaped by community residents and leadership, both in terms of valued treasures that should not be lost, and in terms of life-style choices that should be available to ensure that Lincoln County remains both economically healthy and a desirable place to live and work. Their direction, expressed in terms of guiding principles, provides a foundation for retaining treasures, wisely using land and infrastructure resources, and providing for both a healthy economy and environment. Given the rapid rise of the County’s population, a trend that will likely continue in the future, the County has many possible answers when asked the question “What do we want to look like in 2017?” The Plan, when implemented, will help decision makers and advisory groups help answer that question in the years to come.

This document serves as an update to the 2001 Comprehensive Land Use Plan and is being adopted pursuant to NCGS 153A-341. The Centralina Council of Governments in

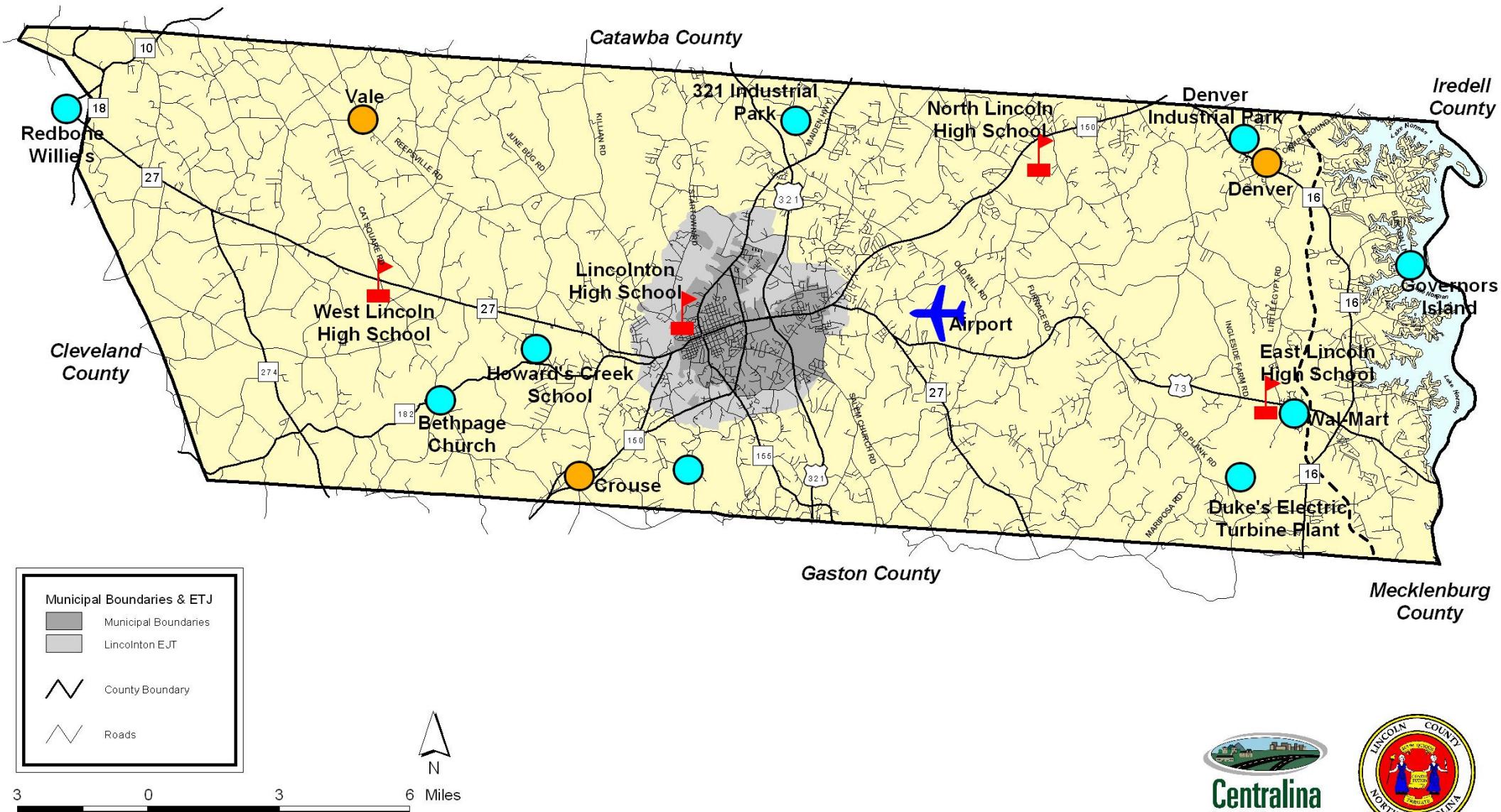
Charlotte, NC, worked with County Building and Land Development staff as well as a Steering Committee appointed by the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners in writing the Plan.

Lincoln County Background and History

Lincoln County is located in the Piedmont section of North Carolina and is surrounded by Catawba County to the north, Iredell and Mecklenburg Counties to the east, Gaston County to the south, and Cleveland County to the west (refer to the Map 1-1). The County has only one municipality, Lincolnton, which is located in the central portion of the County and serves as the County seat. The County currently consists of 308 square miles and had a 2005 population of 69,381 persons. (NOTE: A border revision with Gaston County is underway as of this writing, and may change both the County’s total population and land area).

Although many of the County’s residents today are “newcomers”, a quick look around the County will give testament of the County’s rich historic roots. The City of Lincolnton was established as the county seat in 1785. By 1840 Lincoln County was one of the largest and most populous counties in North Carolina. Political developments in the 1840s, however, had a sobering effect on Lincolnton’s future. In 1841 Cleveland County was formed out of part of Lincoln County, followed by the creation of Catawba County in 1842 and Gaston County in 1846. As a result Lincoln County was reduced from over 1800 square miles to today’s 308 square miles.

Map 1-1 Lincoln County Location



Centralina
Council of Governments



Although Lincoln County's population has increased over the years, the County remained largely rural in nature through the 1960's. But with the creation of Lake Norman in 1969 and with growth from Charlotte spilling out, the County's population has increased significantly. The County's population has more than doubled since 1970. Specific demographic and economic characteristics are discussed in Chapter 2 of the Plan.

Lincoln County Today

The County is in transition today. For many years, Lincoln County was fairly rural, and not really a part of the urbanization taking place in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. By all accounts, however, Lincoln County has been "discovered." Many factors are drawing people and businesses to the County. They include:

- Convenient location and easy access to Charlotte, Gastonia and Hickory via NC 16 and US 321 and to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.
- Lincolnton's distinct "small-town" atmosphere.
- An active economic development program with, among other things, a highly visible and successful industrial park along US 321 near the Catawba County line.
- Proximity to the NC Mountains; scenic vistas of the South Mountains and Crowders Mountain ridgelines.
- Access to Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake.

Lincoln County is in the enviable position of not only providing an attractive residential location for commuters who need downtown Charlotte or airport access, but also of being an excellent location for business development. That notwithstanding, the County has also retained a strong rural character with large areas of open space and farmland still to be found. These characteristics tend to give the County three distinct personalities. The eastern part of the County is becoming increasingly suburban in nature. With the anticipated widening of NC 16 (with work well underway) and public water and sewer available in much of the area, and with Lake Norman nearby, development in the east continues to be very strong. The central portion of the County is dominated by the City of Lincolnton. Lincolnton is arguably one of the most historic and attractive smaller cities in the region. Lincolnton has two national historic districts and at least six churches in the downtown area that are on the National Register of Historic Places. Western Lincoln County is decidedly rural and has the largest concentration of active farmland in the County.

Continuing to grow, yet retaining its distinct charm and character will be a challenge to the County in the future. This is true across a range of issues from rural character, to development patterns that fit with the context of the community, to maximizing the efficiency of existing and planned infrastructure. Traffic congestion is a distinct problem on "Old NC 16" (i.e., the existing NC 16 roadway) with severe traffic back-ups commonplace during rush hours. Public water and sewer

Lincoln County Land Use Plan

Chapter 1	Introduction ...this gives a brief history of Lincoln County, what is in the Plan, the Plan's geographic scope, and an overview of how the Plan was put together.
Chapter 2	Demographics/Infrastructure ...this section highlights demographics (population, employment), natural features, and the County's transportation and utility infrastructure
Chapter 3	Community Involvement ...this section highlights how the general public was engaged in putting the Plan together.
Chapter 4	The 2017 Land Use Plan identifies projected land use patterns in the County over the next ten years.
Chapter 5	Goals, Objectives and Strategies that identify specific goals and policies intended to guide future growth and development decisions. In addition, this section will compare goals and strategies that were contained in the County's last two Plans (1990 and 2001).

sewer infrastructure is limited both in geographic coverage and capacity. At the same time, making sure that County residents have secure, well-paying jobs must continue to be a priority.

Providing for growth in an orderly manner and in coordination with both existing and planned transportation and infrastructural capacities is the basis of the 2007 Lincoln County Land Use Plan. What this Plan does is to present a series of goals and implementation strategies that, if implemented, will minimize "sprawl", allow growth to take place in harmony with its surroundings, minimize additional traffic congestion, and facilitate growth to occur in those portions of the County where infrastructure is or will be available.

WHAT IS IN THE LAND USE PLAN?

The above listing of sections outlines the major areas covered by the Land Use Plan.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

The Plan covers all unincorporated areas of the County that lie outside the extraterritorial jurisdiction (i.e., ETJ) of the City of Lincolnton (refer to Map 1-2). In addition, there are three small areas for which future land use maps have been prepared (and which are found in Chapter 4). The three areas (Refer to Maps 1-3, 1-4 and 1-5) are each located in the eastern portion of the County and lie near the three interchanges planned along new NC 16. They are as follows:

- Area 1 - In the vicinity of NC 150 interchange immediately south of the Catawba County line
- Area 2 - In the vicinity of St. James Church Road interchange
- Area 3 - In the vicinity of Optimist Club Road interchange

INTRODUCTION

While the focus of the small area plans is in the eastern portion of the County, the Steering Committee realized that a “one-size-fits-all” approach towards land use would not work in Lincoln County. Thus, the Steering Committee agreed in the early stages of discussion, for purposes of the Plan, to divide the County into four separate geographic areas: East Lincoln, East Central, Lincolnton and West Lincoln. The geographies of these areas are depicted on Map 1-2.

Although the Plan was put together with input from the City of Lincolnton, none of the recommendations contained in the Plan have standing within Lincolnton or its ETJ. These areas are covered under the 2003 Lincolnton Land Use Plan.

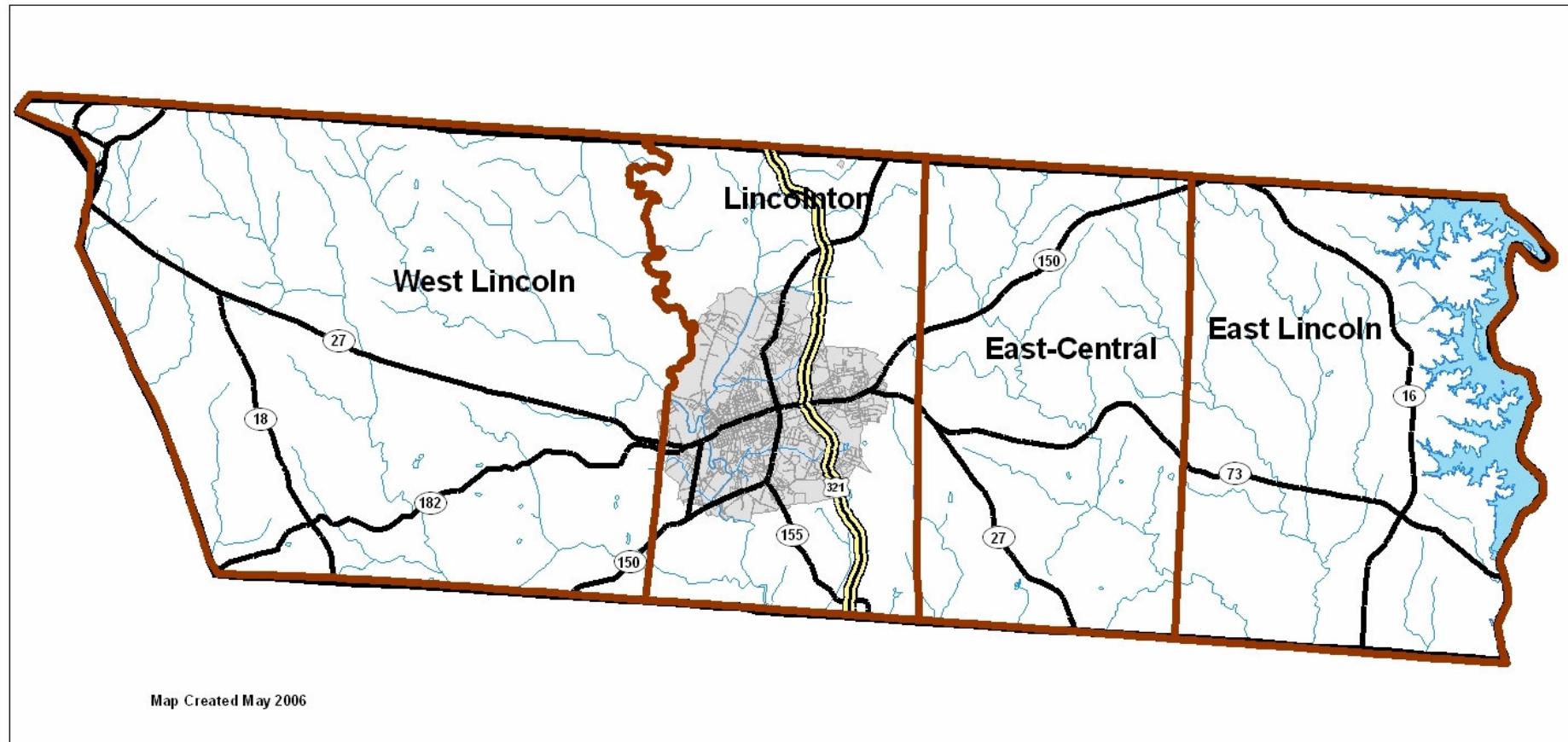
HOW WAS THE PLAN PUT TOGETHER?

The Plan was put together under the guidance of a County-appointed Steering Committee along with significant input from Lincoln County citizens. The planning process started with four well-advertised public forums that were held in various parts of the County in Spring 2006. Citizens were invited to these forums to express their thoughts on growth and development, specific issues the Plan should address, and specific outcomes (relative to growth) that should result from the Plan’s implementation. Attendance at these meetings ranged from 20-75 persons (refer to Chapter 3 for more information on community involvement.)

After the forums were conducted, a series of meetings was held with the Steering Committee (i.e., the “Committee”) where the same questions were asked. A composite list of “issues of concern” was put together. From that list, a series of preliminary guiding principles known as “The Top Ten” was developed. The Steering Committee then looked at the County’s existing and proposed utility and transportation infrastructure systems (refer to Maps 2-1 to 2-3 and 2-6 to 2-8 in Chapter 2) as well as areas that had environmental features that could affect development (Map 2-9). Also shown on Map 2-9 are the locations of all properties on the national local Historic Properties Register.

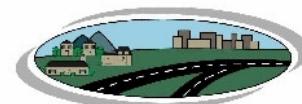
Using 2030 regional transportation planning projections, the Committee was then challenged to decide how the County’s future population would best be allocated across the County. Following this exercise, the Committee revised their “Top Ten” to better reflect the reality of the situations they faced.

Map 1-2 Lincoln County Land Use Plan Sectors

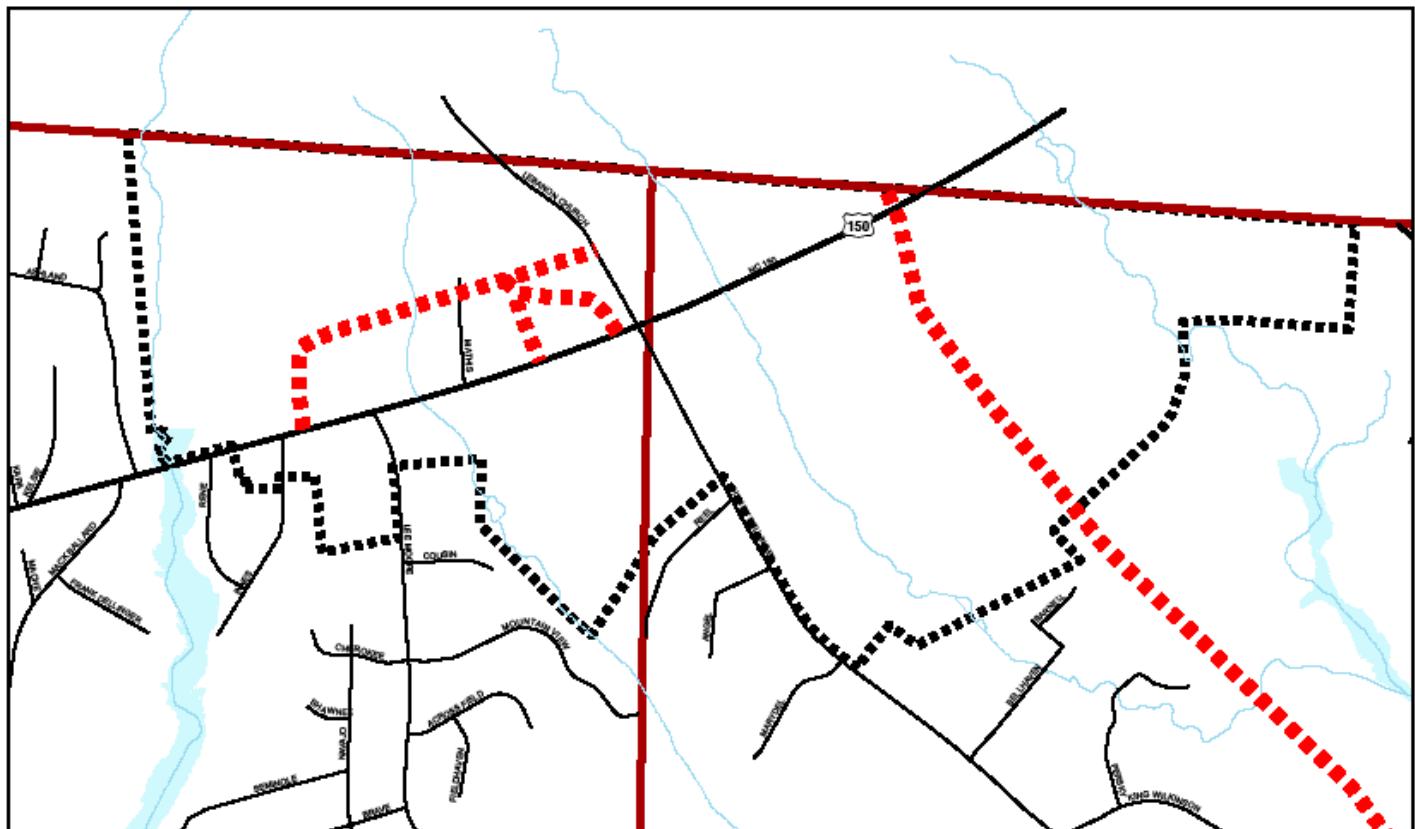


Legend

- US Highway
- NC Highway
- Lake Norman
- Stream or River
- Lincolnton
- Plan Sectors



Map 1-3 Area 1: NC 150 and New NC 16



Note: Lake Norman Bike Route not shown



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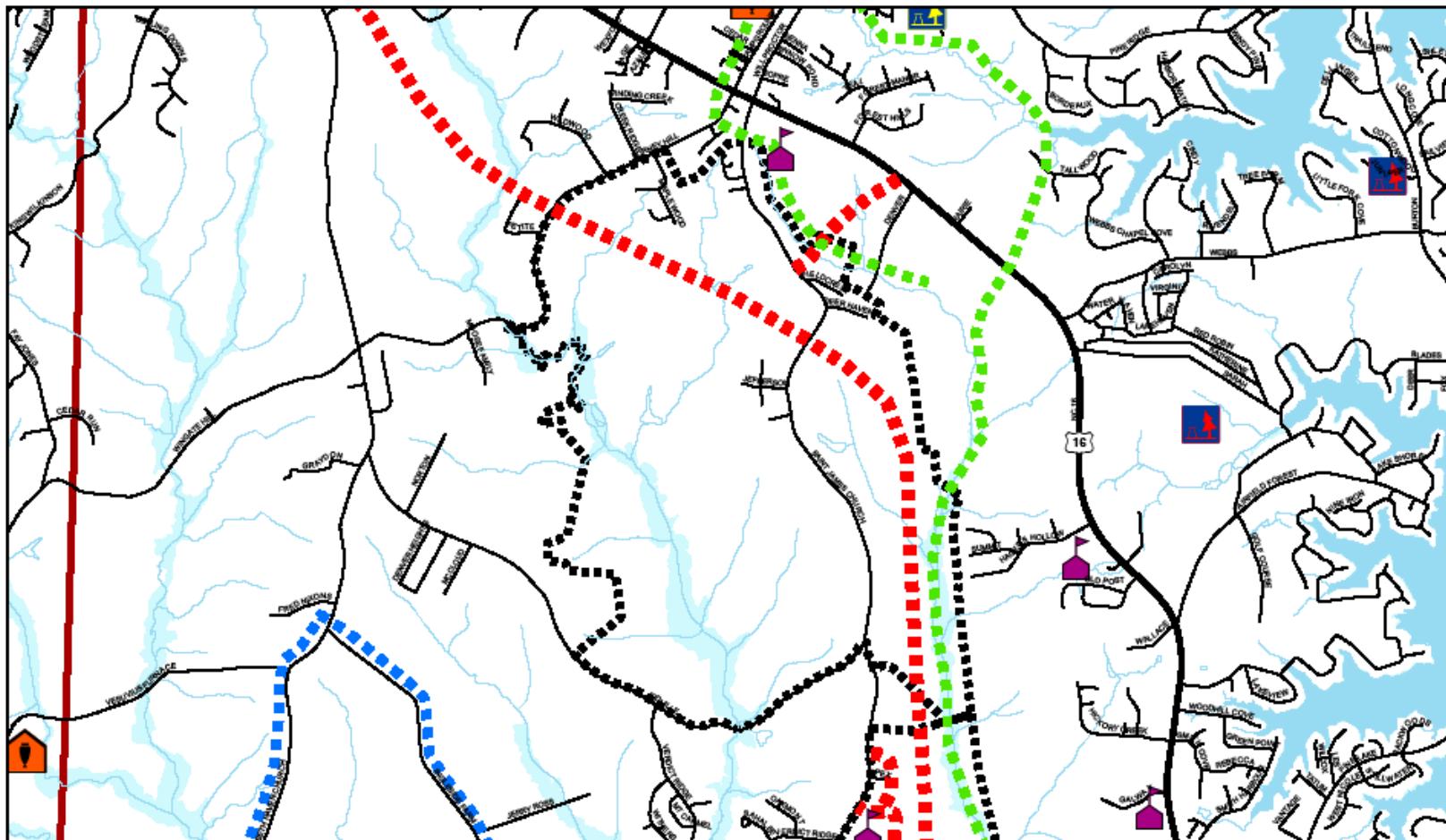
0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 2.8 Miles



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Map 1-4

Area 2: St. James Church Road and NC 16



August 20, 2007

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 2.8 Miles



Map 1-5 Area 3: Optimist Club Road and NC 16



August 20, 2007

0 0.35 0.7

Note: Lake Norman Bike Route not shown

1.4 2.1 2.8 Miles



Centralina Council of Governments

Lincoln County Land Use Plan

The Top Ten become the backbone of the Plan, from which all recommendations were based upon, include the following:

1. Infrastructure shall direct growth in Lincoln County.
2. Provide for an adequate transportation infrastructure to serve current and future populations.
3. Community facilities (including schools, libraries and parks) shall be considered when making land use decisions.
4. Economic Development opportunities shall be encouraged in targeted areas of the county.
5. The county's natural beauty and resources shall be preserved.
6. Provide for well-designed and well-integrated developments throughout Lincoln County.
7. Develop appropriate regulations that guide density for both single- and multi-family development.
8. Allow of mixed-use development to occur in order to promote the integration of land uses, pedestrian accessibility and to reduce vehicle usage in the county.
9. Ensure that Lincoln County remains an "affordable" place in which to build and live.
10. The Land Use Plan shall be kept current and guide and direct zoning.

With the exception of the tenth statement (Land Use Plan Shall be Kept Current...), each of these statements (referred to "guiding principles") is explored and discussed in

great length in Chapter 5, the "Goals, Objectives and Strategies" section of the Plan. Goals, objectives and implementation strategies as well as the future land use plan map were developed to support one or more of these core statements. The 10th guiding principle "The Land Use Plan Shall be Kept Current and Guide and Direct Zoning and Growth Decisions" is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

HOW SHOULD THE PLAN BE USED?

The Plan is a guide to action. It is not, in itself, an implementation tool. In the form of goals, objectives, and strategies, the Plan gives a list of "action items" that the County should consider implementing or working towards once the Plan is adopted. The Plan also serves as a guide to elected officials, the Planning Board, and staff on how development in Lincoln County should occur in the future. Per NCGS 153A-341, both the Planning Board and the Board of Commissioners must assess the consistency of any proposed zoning change (including zoning map and text changes) with the Plan. If a rezoning request is not substantially in harmony with the Plan---either with the text contained herein or the Future Land Use Map---the Plan should either be altered to accommodate the request or the request should be denied or otherwise be altered to comply with the Plan.

The Plan also plays a significant role with respect to conditional use permit requests. There are four separate findings that the Board of

INTRODUCTION

Commissioners must find in the affirmative before a conditional use permit can be approved. One of those findings makes a direct correlation to the Plan. This verbiage of that finding [Section 6.3.3(D) of the Zoning Ordinance] reads:

The location and character of the use, if developed according to the plan as submitted and approved, will be in harmony with the area in which it is to be located and will be in general conformity with the approved Land Development Plan for the area in question.

Thus, there is little doubt that the Plan will play an important role to the County in the years ahead. That said, the Plan is not one that is “etched in stone” and should remain unaltered until the next Plan is adopted (the last Plan was adopted in 2001). The Plan should be a dynamic document, subject to periodic amendment when conditions within the County change. This Plan has a ten-year lifespan (although population projections and initial development of the “Top Ten” list were made using population projections through 2030.). Given the uncertainty associated with development of any kind, it would be impossible to predict all that can and will occur in the County over the next ten years. Certain unforeseen events may occur that warrant changes to the Plan. Thus, periodic updates and assessment of the Plan will be needed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs and desires of the County and its residents.

The Plan, however, is not an ordinance. As mentioned, it is designed to serve as a guide for future growth and development within Lincoln County. The Plan therefore does not have the weight or the mandate of enforcement of an ordinance. The Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and Board of Commissioners should therefore use this Plan as a benchmark when considering land use decisions. Staff recommendations should reference the Plan and whether or not the proposed request is in harmony with it. The Plan, in short, outlines the context and nature of how development should occur in Lincoln County; the County’s ordinances specify how the development will actually take place.

Chapter 2

Demographics, Infrastructure, Natural and Historic Features

OVERVIEW

The Lincoln County Land Use Plan update process used a significant amount of information regarding existing conditions, as well as trends likely to affect Lincoln County through 2030. Centralina gathered data on the following topics that follow:

- Population and Housing
- Employment
- Public Utilities
- Parks and Open Space
- Transportation
- Watersheds and Natural Areas
- Historic Resources

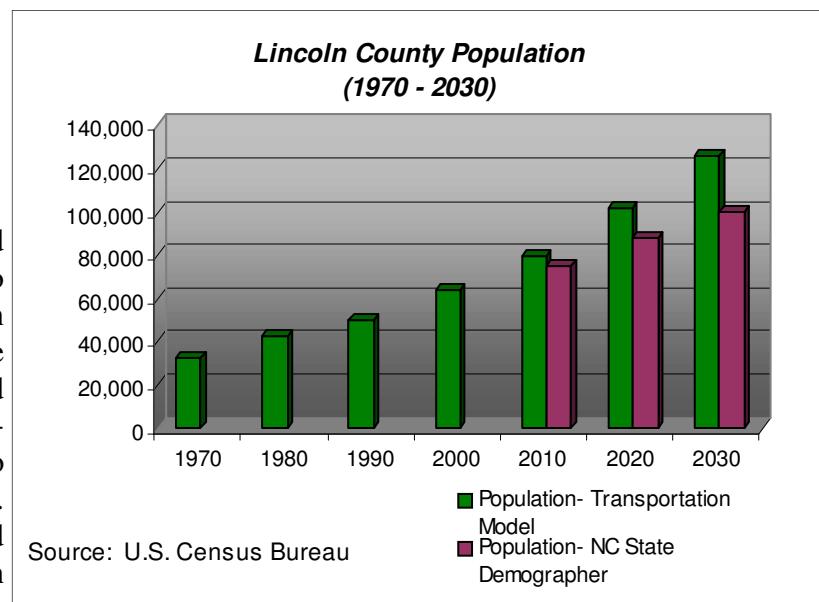
POPULATION AND HOUSING

Lincoln County commissioned this plan update primarily due to accelerating growth pressures in the eastern portions of the County, as well as anticipated growth that will occur once public facilities are extended to serve other areas of the County. The County had an estimated 2005 population of 69, which

the Metrolina Model anticipated an accelerating rate of population growth. Centralina staff and the Steering Committee each agreed that the Metrolina model represented a more realistic projection of the County's future growth. Thus, the Metrolina projections were used.

Figures 2-1, 2-2 and 2-3 show existing and projected population and housing units in Lincoln County, as well as historic and projected populations for each of the five Lincoln County townships (NOTE: The township information shown below is for illustrative purposes only. For purposes of this document, the Steering Committee opted to break the County into four geographies (East Lincoln, East Central, Lincolnton and West Lincoln) as opposed to using Township boundaries. The Metrolina model projects a population of 125,932 by 2030. This represents a near doubling of the County's 2000 population through 2030.

Figure 2-1: Population of Lincoln County from 1970—2030.



DEMOGRAPHICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Figure 2-2: New Housing Units Projected from the Year 2000 to 2030

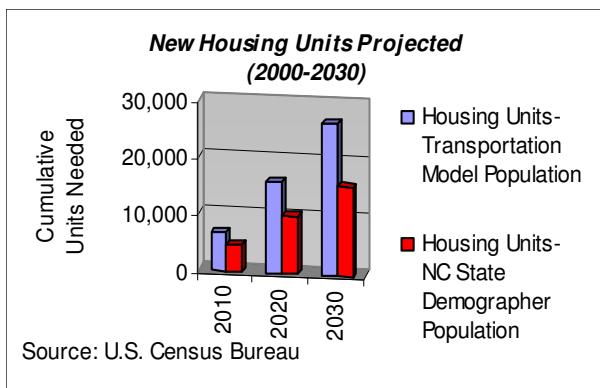
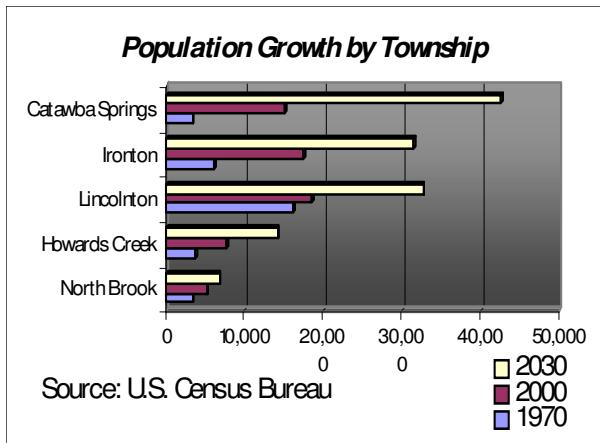


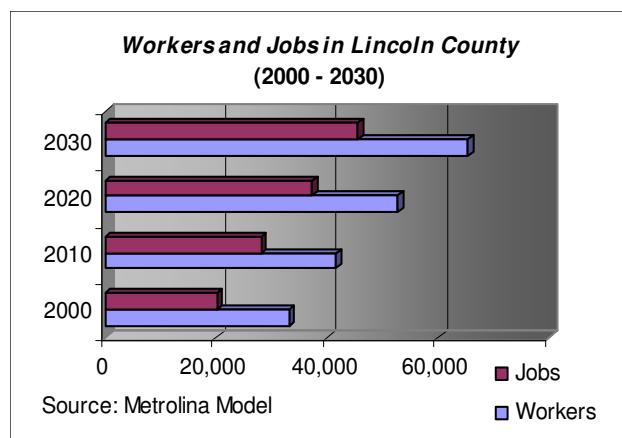
Figure 2-3: Population Growth by Township from 1970—2030.



EMPLOYMENT

Lincoln County has been quite successful at attracting employers and new job opportunities. Figure 2-4 shows that despite a projected 125 percent increase in jobs in Lincoln County by 2030 there will still be 20,000 more workers than jobs. Lincoln County will not create enough jobs to meet the needs of the growing workforce, and the commuting patterns to Mecklenburg and Catawba Counties will likely intensify in the future. These current patterns are demonstrated in the 2000 commuting map shown later in this Chapter as Map 2.10.

Figure 2-4: Workers and Jobs in Lincoln County from 2000—2030.



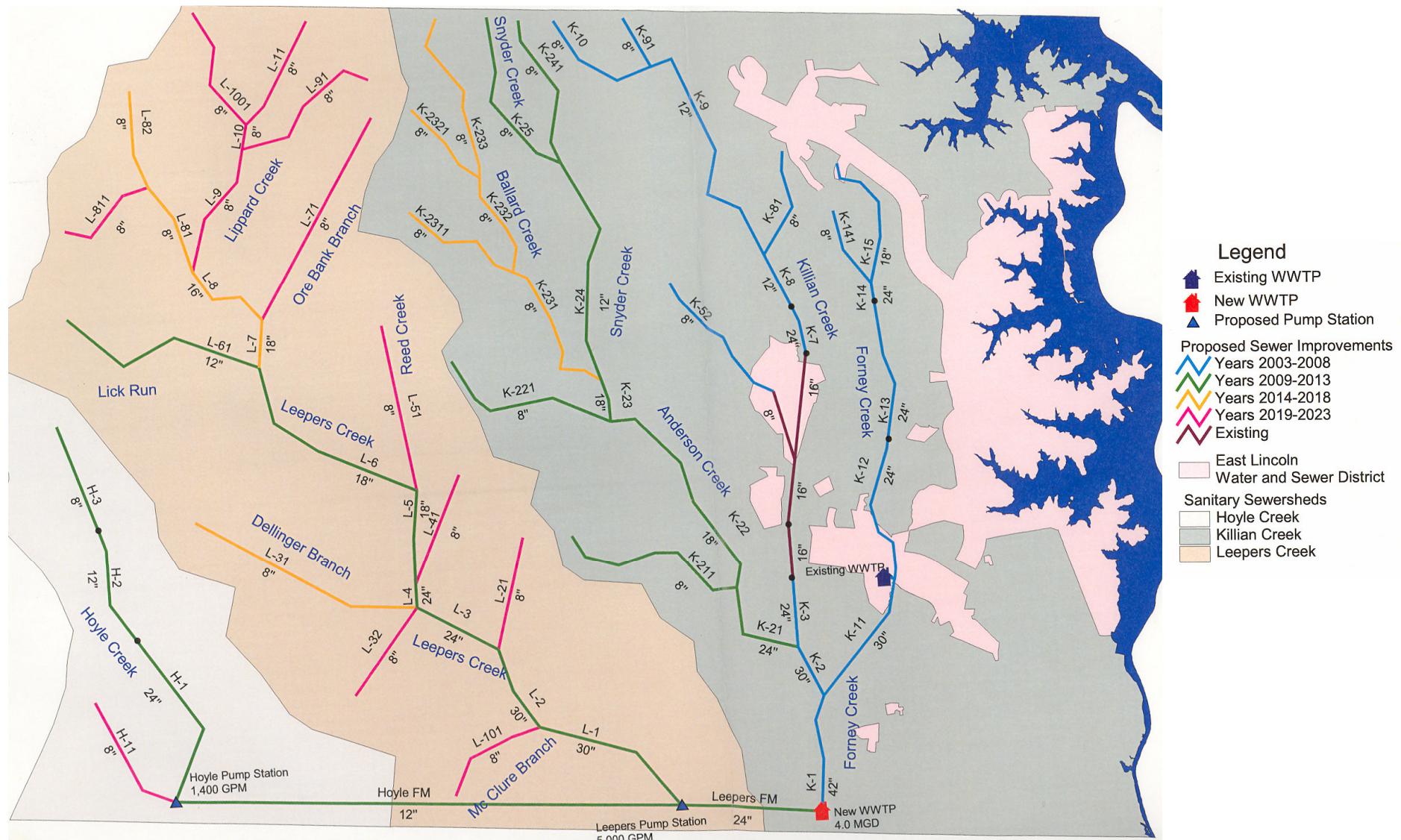
PUBLIC UTILITIES

The availability of public water and sanitary sewer is often cited as a key determinant in spurring new growth in an otherwise undeveloped area. Lincoln County currently provides both public water and sanitary sewer service to limited parts of the County as indicated in Maps 2.1 and 2.2. Both water and sewer service is available along much of the current NC 16, while public water is available along US 321 and in a loop west of Lincolnton along NC 27, Cat Square and Reepsville Roads. The Lincoln County Public Works Department (LCPW) has a 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2003-2023 that anticipates significant water and sewer expansions in eastern Lincoln County over that time. The CIP also expects a new four-million gallons per day wastewater treatment plant to begin operations later in the decade. Based on information provided by LCPW, Map 2.3 shows areas of the County that are presently served or expected to be served with public water and/or sewer by 2023.

Map 2-1

Lincoln County, NC

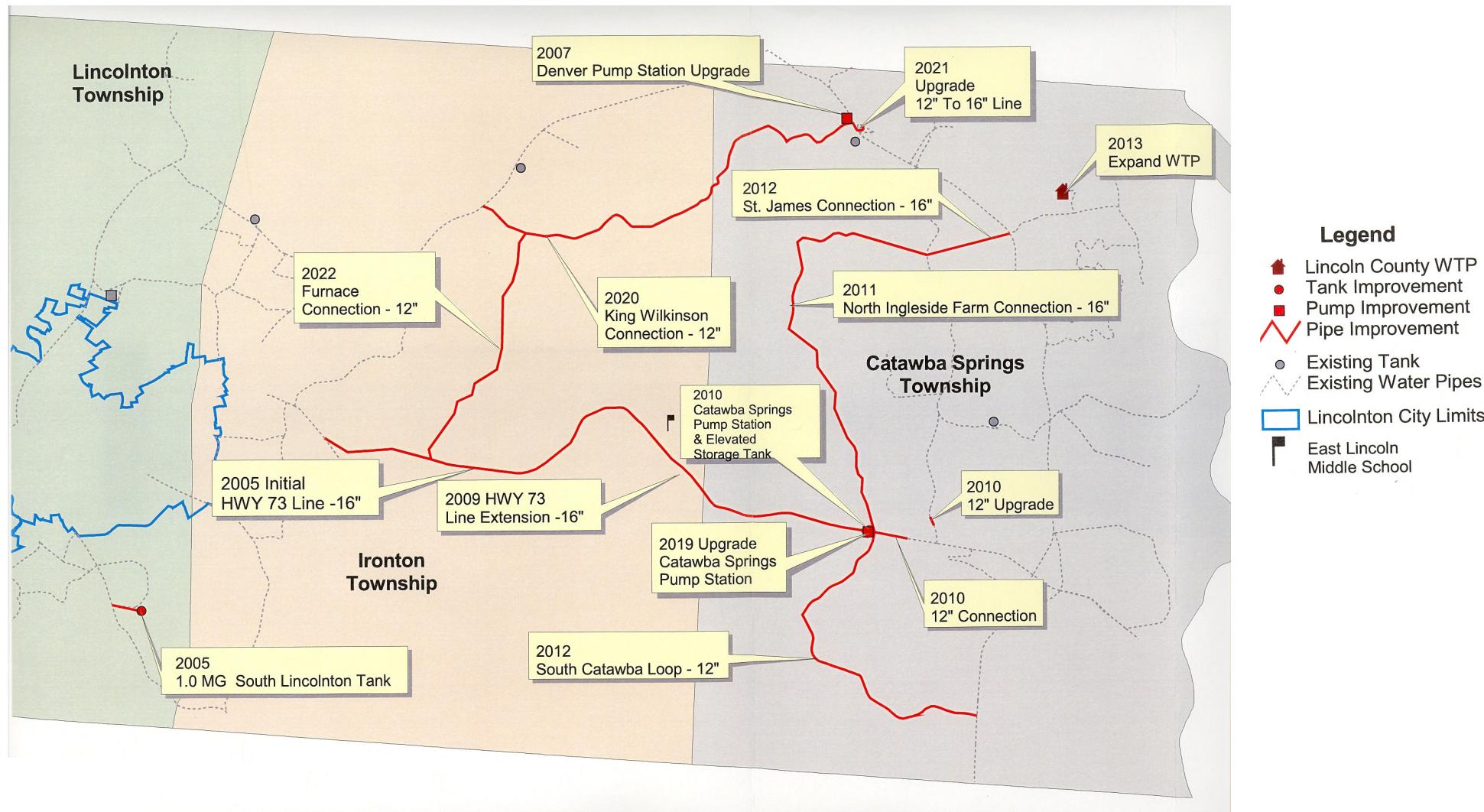
2003-2023 Sewer Infrastructure Improvements



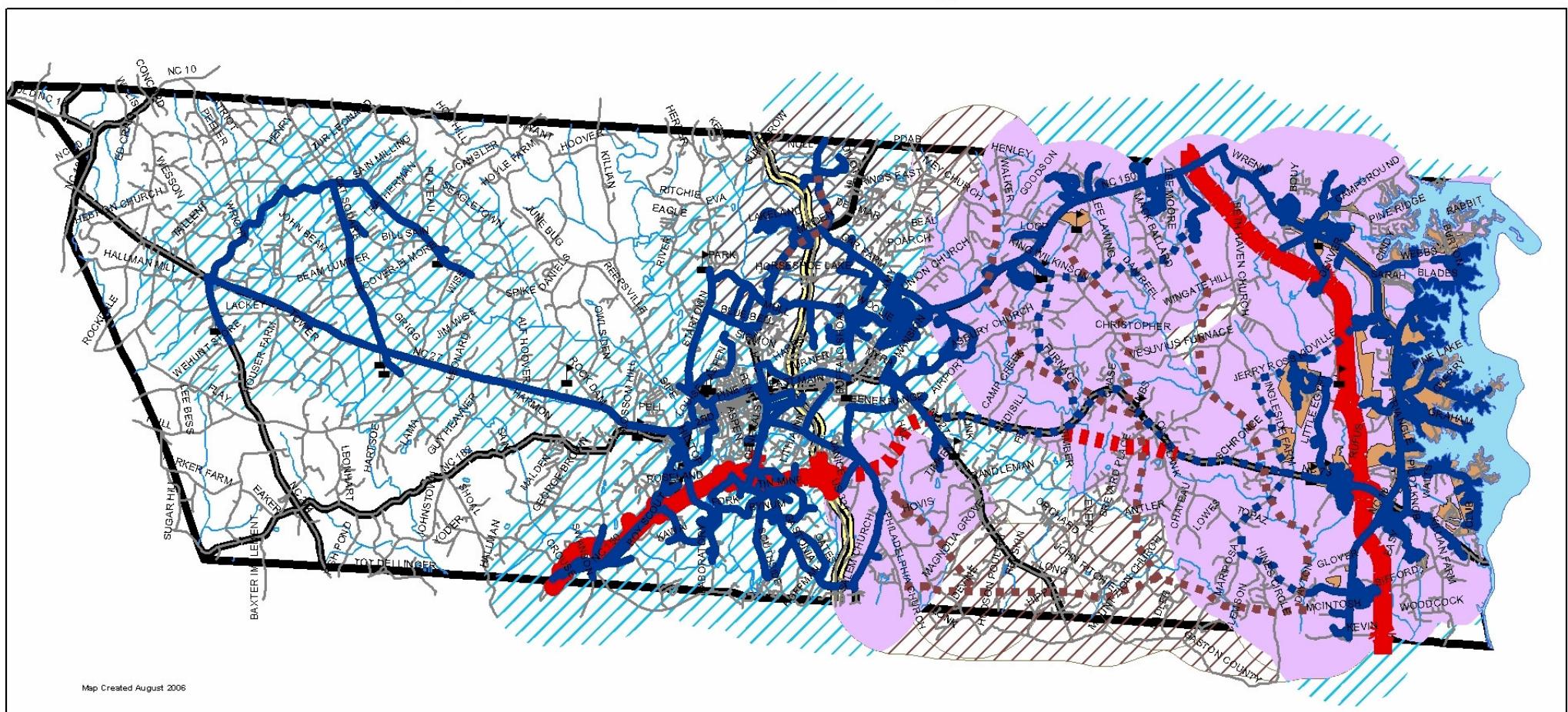
Map 2-2

Lincoln County, NC

2003-2023 Water Infrastructure Improvements



Map 2-3 Lincoln County Utility Service



Legend

- Lincoln County Sewer Lines by 2023 New Road Corridors
- Lincoln County Water Lines by 2023
- Existing Water Lines
- Public Schools
- Likelihood of Service
- Likely Sewer Service by 2023
- Likely Water Service by 2023
- Possible New Corridor by 2030
- Funded New Corridor
- US Highway
- NC Highway
- Current Sewer District
- Likely County Water + Sewer Service by 2023



Areas shown on Map 2.3 as “likely to be served” by either public water and/or sewer included all land located within a one-mile buffer of each proposed water or sewer line. When added to existing service areas, the result is that much of Lincoln County East and East Central Lincoln County can be expected to be served by both water and sewer. Accordingly, development pressures will likely increase in these areas. This future service area, in addition to future road improvements, played a significant role in identifying likely future development areas depicted in Chapters 4 and 5, and the types of housing and commercial recommended for the eastern part of Lincoln County.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

A Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan was prepared for the City of Lincolnton and Lincoln County and completed in February 2006. This plan assessed existing conditions and future recreational needs for both the City of Lincolnton and Lincoln County. There are a total of 12 designated park and recreation areas in the present parks and recreation system, five indoor recreation areas, and one rail-trail (located in the City of Lincolnton) and contain a total of 209 acres. The Plan made recommendations for new community and neighborhood parks, as well as greenways throughout Lincolnton and Lincoln County. The 10 additional community and neighborhood parks total 282 additional acres. The existing and recommended parks would be connected by the system of greenways.

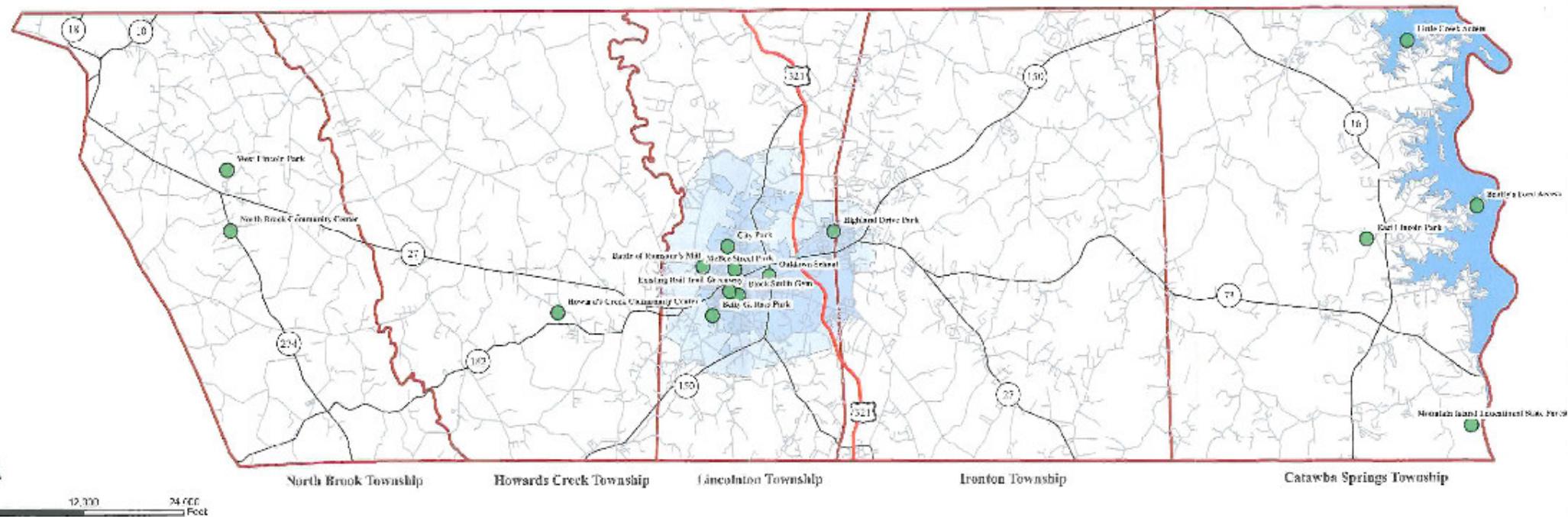
Maps 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 show existing facilities, proposed recreational facilities and proposed greenway facilities. Plans are currently underway to develop West Lincoln

Park (refer to Map 2.4) into a 54-acre regional park complete with walking trail, multi-purpose fields and amphitheater. Once completed, the park will serve as a major focal point for West Lincoln County. Care should therefore be exercised by the County in new development that takes place in close proximity to the site to make sure that it integrates well with the Park.

Also on Map 2.4, Beattys Ford Park in East Lincoln County on Lake Norman will serve in much the same capacity and will provide public access onto Lake Norman for County residents. The site is currently undeveloped.

Map 2.6 depicts an extensive network of greenways throughout much of Lincoln County. At the present time, the only public greenway in the County is along a former rail line in Lincolnton. Map 2.6 shows three “high priority” greenways for the future- one each in the western, central and eastern portions of the County (with the one in the central portion of the County being an extension of the existing greenway in Lincolnton.). The County (and the City of Lincolnton) is strongly encouraged to consider these greenway sites when reviewing development plans in affected areas to make sure that the necessary right-of-way is obtained.

Map 2-4



Legend:

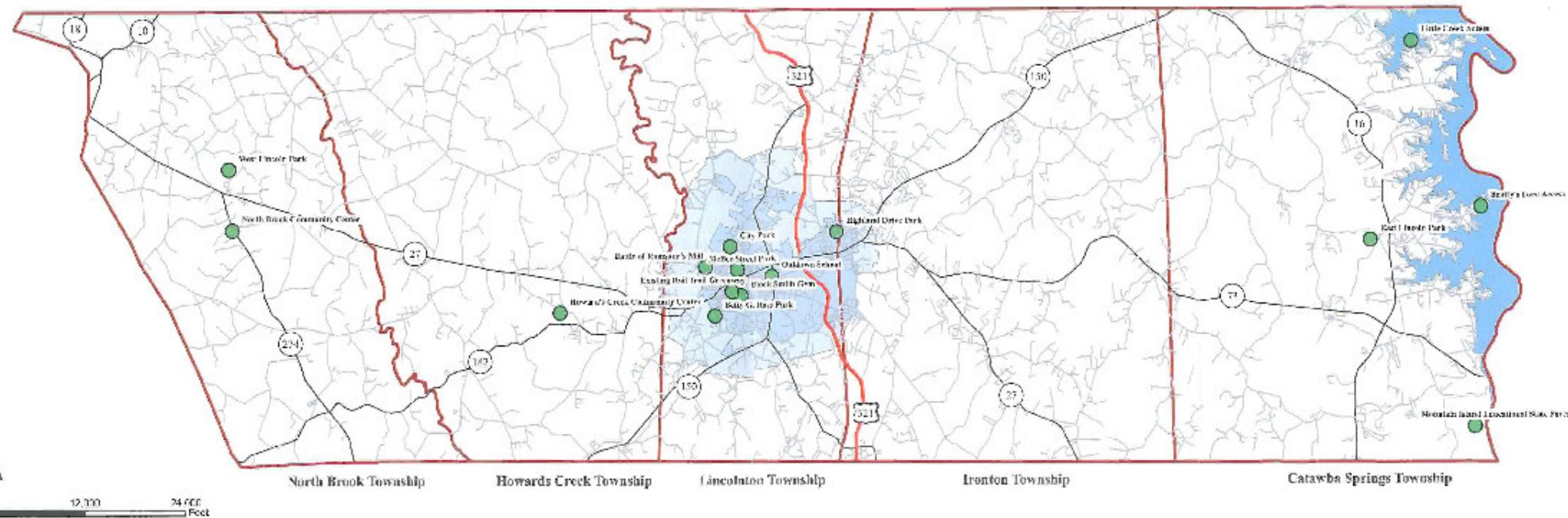
● Parks & Recreation Sites	Lincolnton City Limits
— Federal Highway	Lincolnton Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Boundary
— State Route	Lake Norman
— Local Road	Lincoln County
— Township Boundary	

**Existing
Park and Recreation
Sites**

Figure 2.2



Map 2-5



Legend:

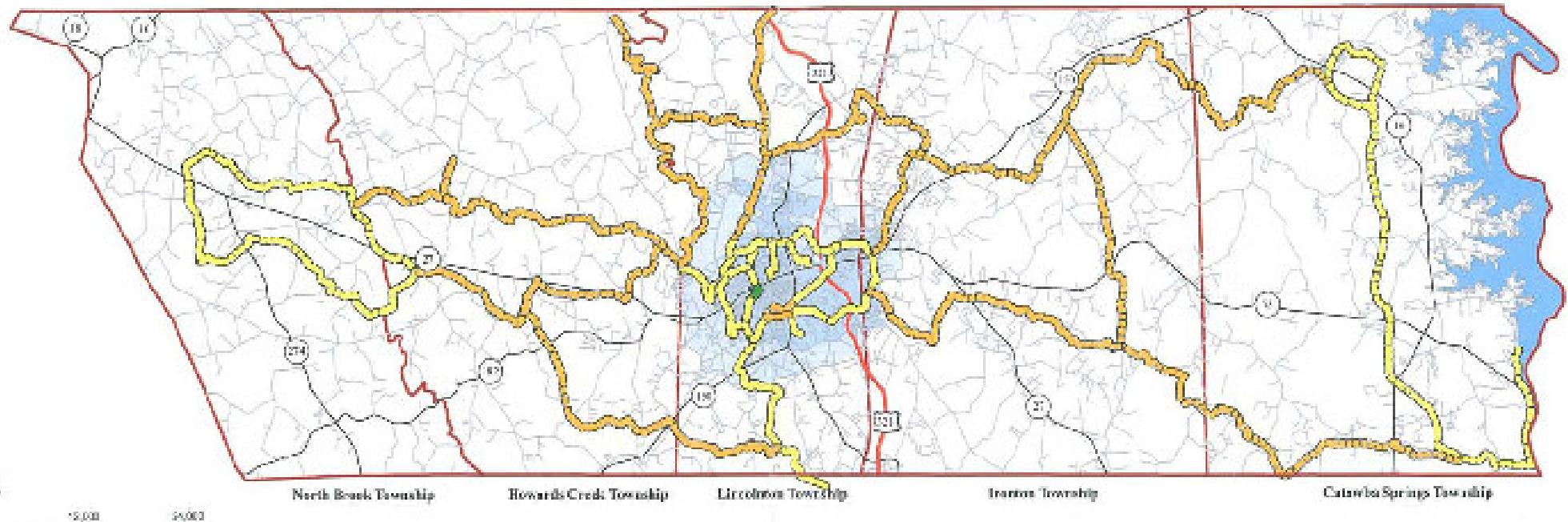
● Parks & Recreation Sites	■ Lincolnton City Limits
— Federal Highway	■ Lincolnton Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Boundary
— State Route	■ Lake Norman
— Local Road	■ Lincoln County
— Township Boundary	

**Existing
Park and Recreation
Sites**

Figure 2.2



Map 2-6



Legend:

Existing Greenway	Township Boundary
High Priority Greenway Recommendation	Lincolnton City Limits
Low Priority Greenway Recommendation	Lincolnton Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Boundary
Federal Highway	Lake Norman
State Route	Lincoln County
Local Road	

Note:
Proposed greenway routes shown represent general location for rail alignment, particularly outside the city of Lincolnton. The city has greenway master plans with specific routes.
Proposed county routes are generally located along county roads, streams, and along former rail lines and park and recreation areas.

Proposed Greenway Routes

Figure 4.2



TRANSPORTATION

Seven NC and US highways connect Lincoln County to adjacent counties and the rest of the region. These highways are a combination of modern multi-lane controlled access facilities (e.g., US 321); rural two-lane facilities that provide inter- and intra-County access (e.g., NC 73, NC 150); a large network of former farm-to-market roads (e.g., Reepsville Road); and a host of local roads built in recent years in subdivisions and similar developments.

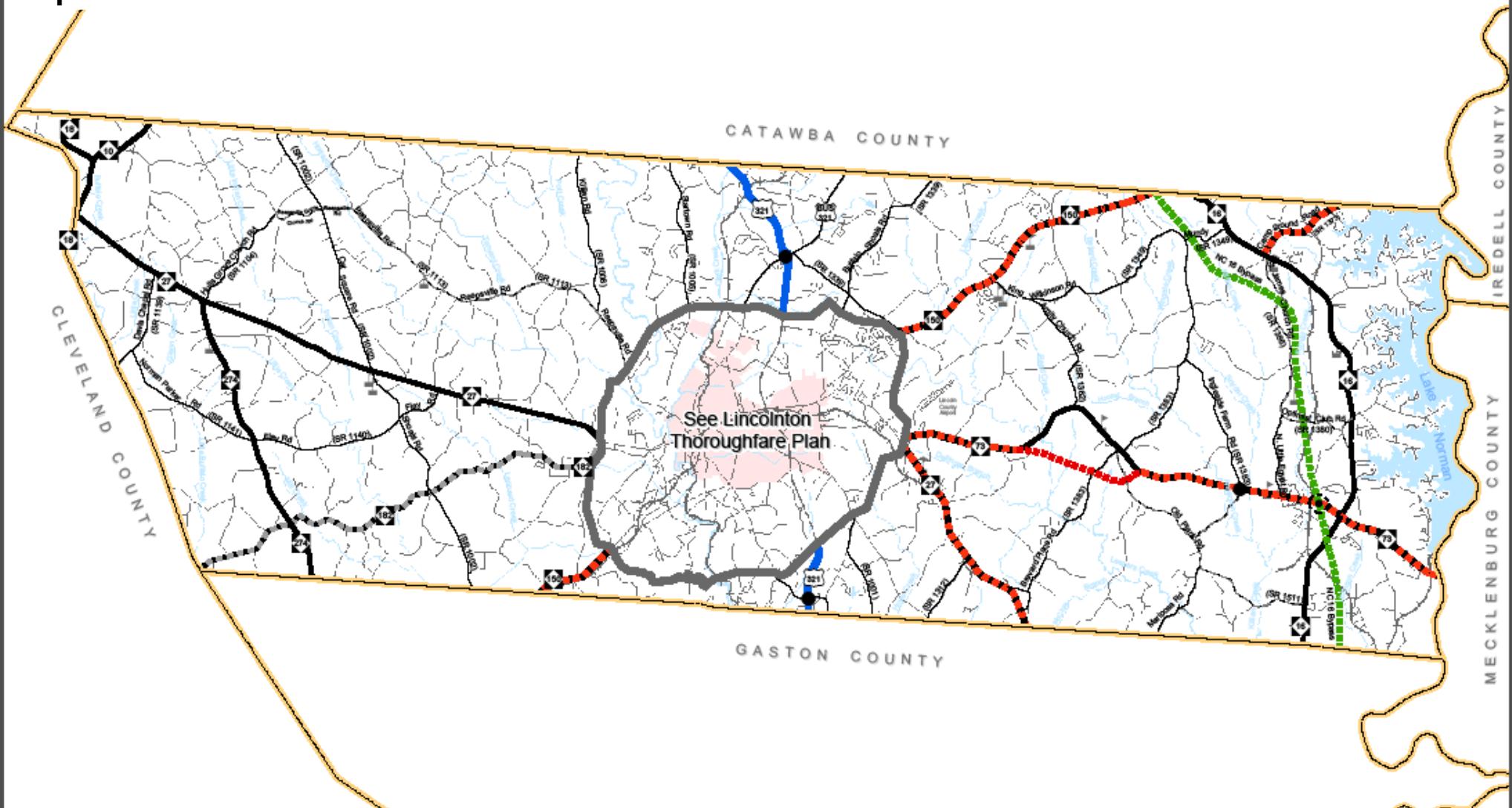
Most sections of these highways are under-capacity, but some sections, especially those in eastern Lincoln County, experience significant congestion. A new NC 16 is currently being built, and will traverse the entire county from Gaston to Catawba Counties, and will be completed by the early portion of the next decade. The development pressures expected from this new facility, and the existing delays and disruptions caused by congestion on adjacent roads, played a major role in Lincoln County deciding to update its land use plan.

Counties in North Carolina do not have the authority to own or maintain roads. All public roads in Lincoln County, outside of Lincolnton, are owned and maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Lincoln County is a member of the Lake Norman Rural Planning Organization and the NC 73 Council of Planning. Both organizations act to provide a forum for discussing transportation issues with adjacent communities as well as with the NCDOT.

NCDOT, in conjunction with Lincoln County, recently completed a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) for Lincoln County, exclusive of Lincolnton and its immediate environs. A map of the recommended transportation improvements is shown included as Map 2.7. The routes with recommendations for significant capacity improvements include NC 150, NC 73, NC 27, and Campground Road.

The Lake Norman Bike Route is included as part of the CTP (refer to Map 2.8). The Bike Route calls for a planned regional bicycle circuit around Lake Norman in Lincoln, Catawba, Iredell and Mecklenburg Counties. Proposed bike routes are found along major roads (NC 73, St. James Church Road, Optimist Club Road and Campground Road) in Lincoln County as well as along a large network of feeder routes (referred to in the Plan as “excursion routes” in all four counties. The Bike Route calls for needed improvements along major roads to accommodate bicyclists to be made by NCDOT and along the excursion routes (either via NCDOT or through improvements made as developments occur) to provide access to the major routes. Some of the public facilities that would be accessed along the Bike Route include Beattys Ford Park, Little Creek Access Center, the Lincoln County Library on NC 16 and the East Lincoln Community Center along Optimist Club Road.

Map 2-7



Plan date: October 20, 2005

Sheet 2 of 5

Base map date: June 2004



0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles
Refer to CTP document for more details

Freeways
Existing
Needs Improvement
Recommended

Expressways
Existing
Needs Improvement
Recommended

Boulevards
Existing
Needs Improvement
Recommended

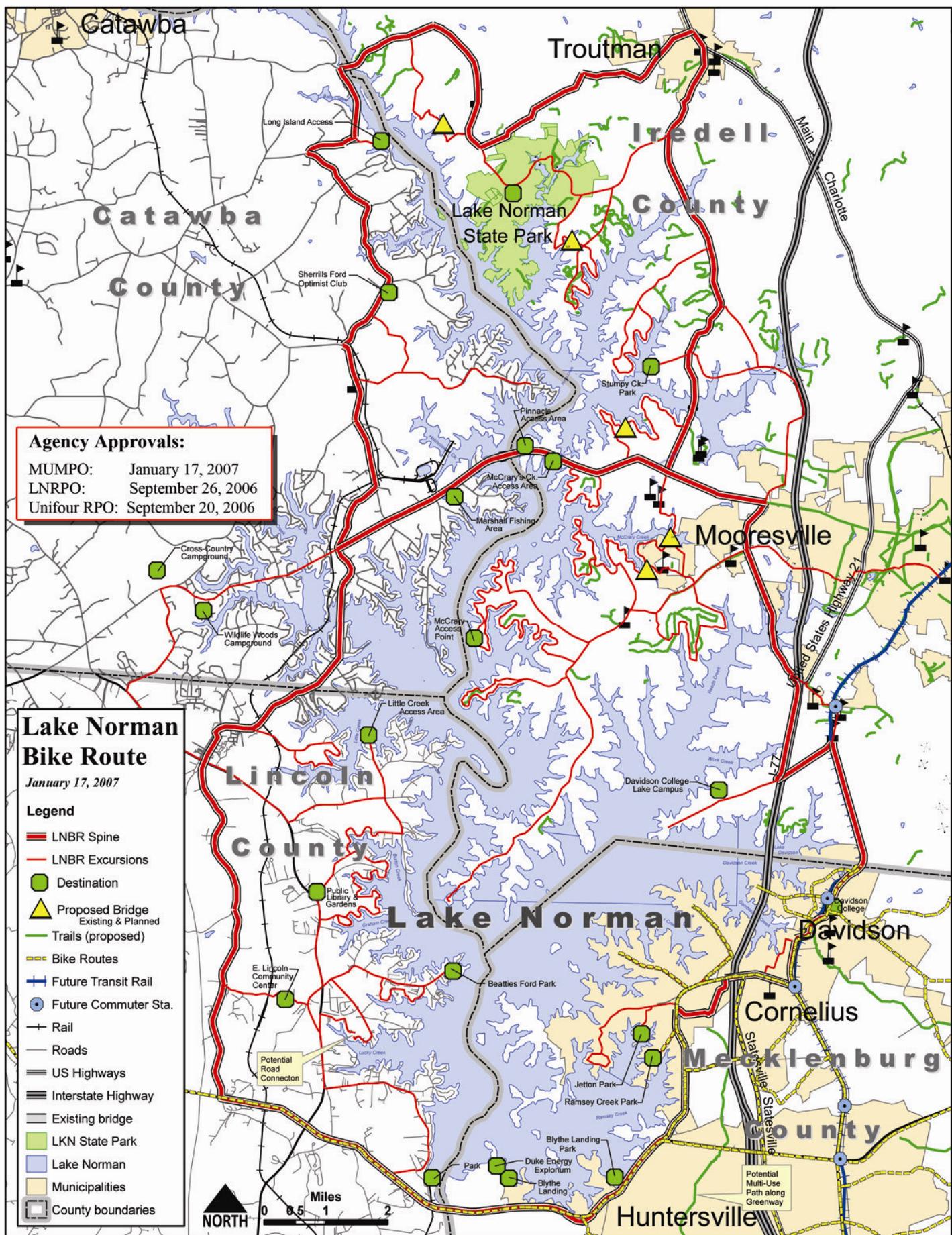
Other Major Thoroughfares
Existing
Needs Improvement
Recommended

Minor Thoroughfares
Existing
Needs Improvement
Recommended

● Existing Interchange
◆ Proposed Interchange
○ Existing Grade Separation
◆ Proposed Grade Separation

Highway Map
Lincoln County
North Carolina
Comprehensive
Transportation Plan

Map 2-8



Major Roads

NC 27	NC 150	US 321	NC 73
NC 274	NC 155	US 321 Business	NC 16

Minor Roads

Cat Square Road.	Little Egypt Road	King Wilkinson Road	Ivey Church Road
Reepsville Road	Flay Road	Amity Church Road	Little Egypt/ St. James Church Road
Killian Road	Long Shoals Road	Beth Haven Church Road	Optimist Club Road
Ingleside Farm Road	Buffalo Shoals Road	Old Plank Road	NC 182
Campground Road	Car Farm/ Shuford Road	Salem Church Road	

The Steering Committee classified the roads in Lincoln County on their connectivity and ability to handle traffic, and used this classification to guide land use recommendations throughout the County. These roads were classified as *Major* or *Minor* roads. The list of Major and Minor Roads is above.

The Steering Committee also paid significant attention to road intersections, with those intersections of significance identified as being of the Class 1 or 2 varieties. These classifications determined the types and intensities of uses within a short distance of the intersections. Definitions of each intersection are as follows:

Class I Intersection- A NC or US route intersecting with another NC or US route; or an NC or US route intersecting with a minor road (as herein identified). An example of a Class 1 intersection is the intersection of NC 16 and NC 73 or the intersection of NC 27 with Cat Square Road.

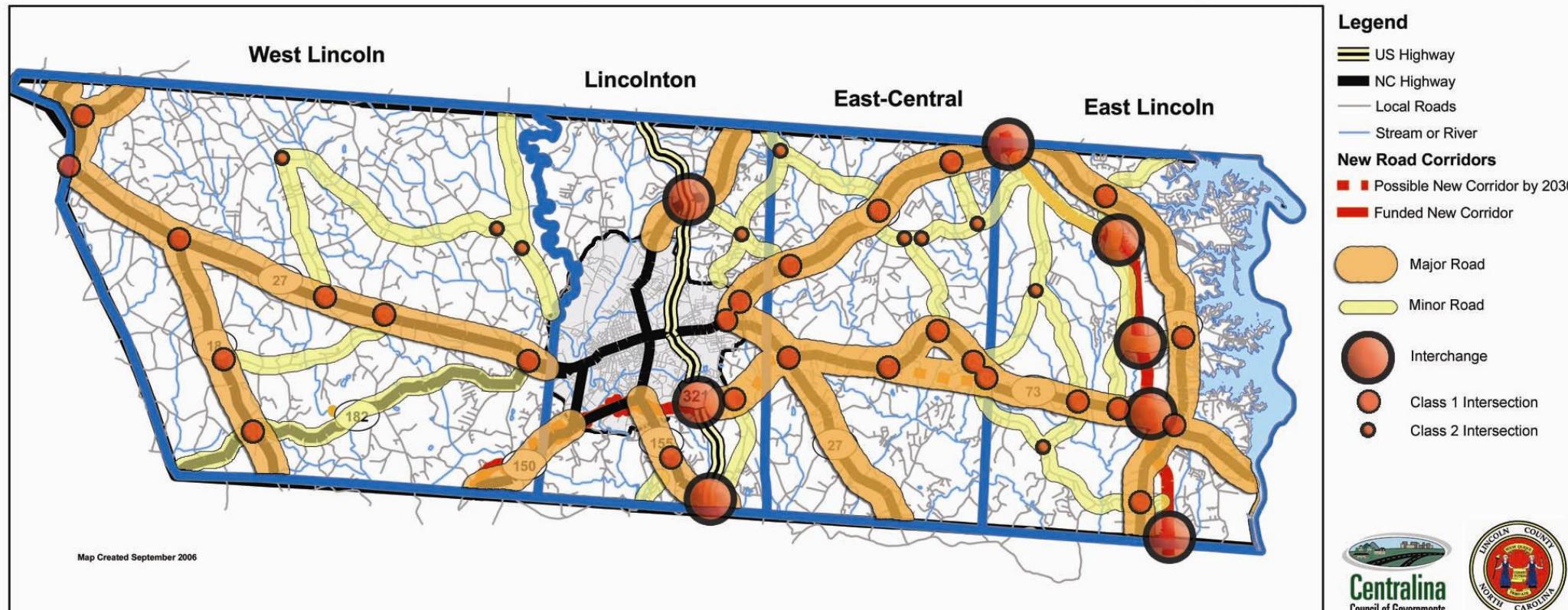
Class II Intersection- Where two minor roads (as herein identified) intersect. An example would be the intersection of Reepsville and Cat Square Roads.

Interchanges with limited access highways (i.e., US 321 and New NC 16) were also noted. Those interchanges are as follows:

- US 321/NC 155 (grade separated)
- US 321/NC 27 (grade separated)
- US 321/US 321 Business (grade separated)
- NC 16/NC 73 (grade separated)
- NC 16/Optimist Club Road (at grade intersection)
- NC 16/St. James Church Road (at grade intersection)
- NC 16/NC 150 (grade separated)

Map 2.9 shows the locations of *Major* and *Minor* roads, as well as interchanges, and Class 1 and 2 intersections.

Map 2-9 Lincoln County Roads, Intersections & Interchanges

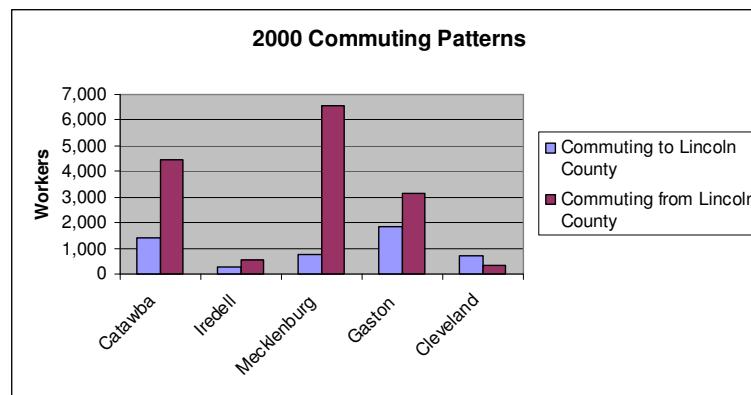


Lincoln County Land Use Plan

The three interchanges on US 321 were constructed when US 321 was built as a limited-access divided highway in the early 1990s. The interchanges along NC 16 will come once the new highway opens early next decade. The interchanges will likely spur a significant amount of development and also result in some business relocation from existing NC 16. Accordingly, this Plan includes three small area plans that address development issues in the vicinity of the Optimist Club Road, St James Church Road and NC 150 intersections and interchanges. (NOTE: A small area plan was not developed for the NC 73 interchange as most of this property has already been developed or has site plans approved for development. In contrast, relatively little development has occurred to date near the other three planned intersections thus affording the County more input into how future development occurs there.)

Centralina examined year 2000 commuting information for Lincoln County and identified strong commuting patterns from the central and eastern portions of the County into Mecklenburg County, and a strong commuting pattern from central Lincoln County north into Catawba County and, to a lesser degree, into Gaston County. There was relatively little commuting into/out of Iredell or Gaston Counties. Figure 2.5 and Map 2.10

Figure 2.5: 2000 Commuting Patterns



provide additional detail on commuting behavior both in and out of Lincoln County.

NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

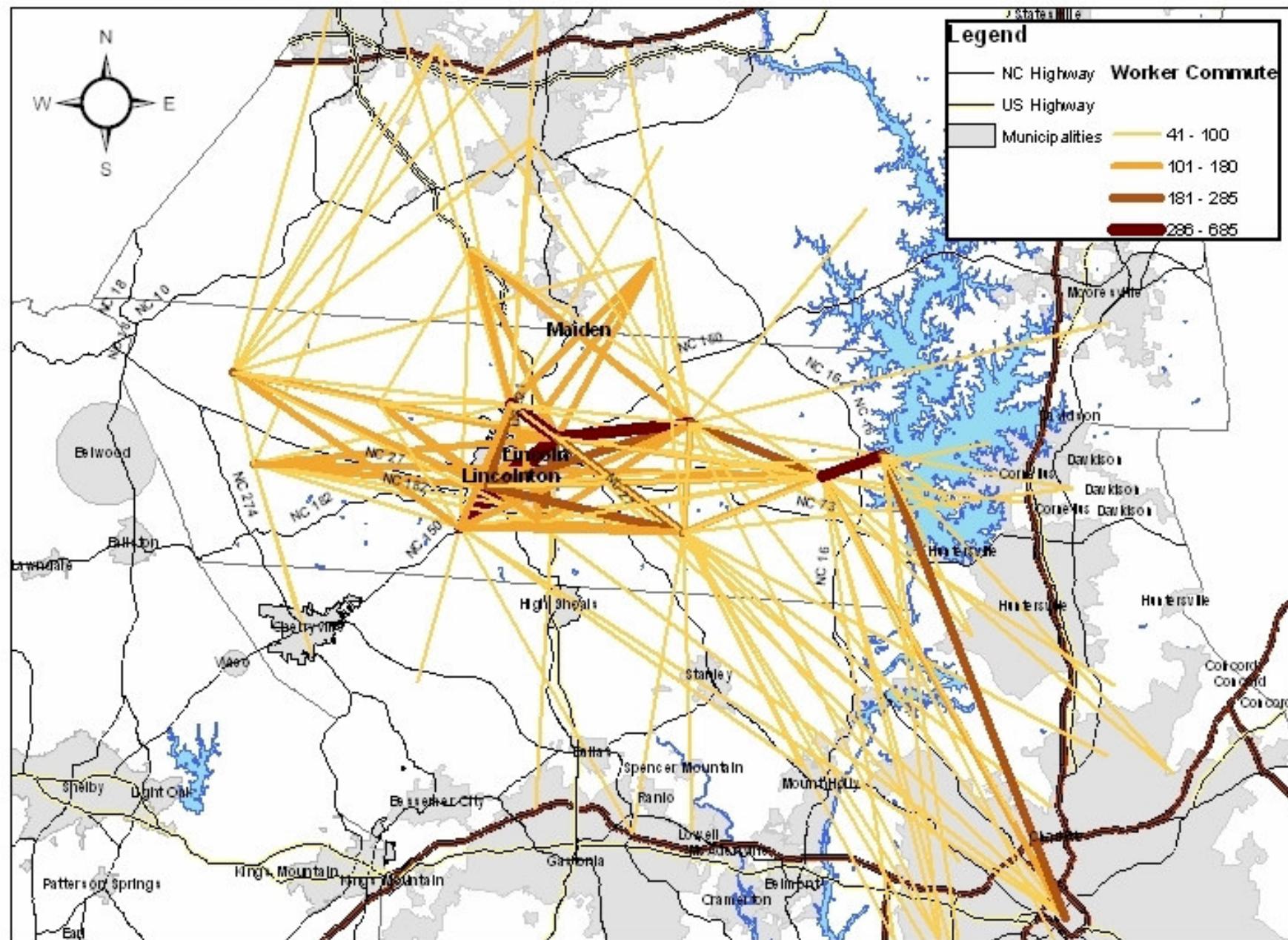
Much of Lincoln County is located in the Catawba River watershed. In the western part of the County, a ridge roughly parallel to NC 274 forms the eastern edge of the basin for Buffalo Creek. Approximately 7,220 acres of the County's total land area, or approximately 3.7 percent, is surface water. More than two-thirds of the land area in the County falls within the protected or critical watershed (WS-II, WS-III, and WS-IV), which are areas that have more restrictive development regulations than those in the remainder of the County. The land west of NC 274 is almost completely within a WS-II watershed, which limits residential development to lots with a minimum of two acres.

Wetlands and other natural habitats are located throughout Lincoln County. The wetlands are found within the 100-year floodplains along the South Fork of the Catawba River, Indian Creek, and Killian Creek. Natural habitats containing rare or endangered plant and animal species have been found in scattered areas throughout the County, and do not form contiguous tracts of endangered lands. Due to concerns over illegal poaching or harvesting, the locations of these habitats are not available to be presented in this report.

There are a total of 9 such properties scattered throughout the County. They are located on lots that range from a few acres to near 200 acres and include historic homes, a former textile mill and former campground buildings.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Map 2-10 Lincoln County Commuting Patterns



Chapter 3

Community Involvement and Plan Development

In developing a plan, the most important item is assuring that the community has ownership in the end product. A public participation process can identify a community's preferences and can serve as a means to refine goals and objectives and ensure that Plan implementation measures address these issues. This Land Use Plan was assembled with significant involvement and input from the general public, a Steering Committee that was appointed by the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners, the Lincoln County Planning Board and the Lincoln County Planning and Building Development staff. What follows is a chronological synopsis of the planning process used in developing this report:

DATE		EVENT
2006	February	<i>Lincoln County Town Board awards Land Use Plan contract to Centralina (COG)</i>
2006	March	<i>First Steering Committee meeting held to go over Land Use Plan process and to brainstorm issues that the Plan should address. Steering Committee expresses their likes and dislikes re: land use and growth matters in Lincoln County.</i>
2006	May	<i>A series of four public forums held throughout the County to solicit public input on land use and development issues. Attendance ranged from 10-60 persons at the Forums.</i>
2006	June	<i>Steering Committee reviews Forum results and selects ten guiding principles "The Top 10" that the Plan should address.</i>
2006	July-December	<i>Steering Committee reviews desired growth patterns and development options.</i>
2007	February	<i>Steering Committee endorses objectives of the "Top 10"</i>
2007	April-May	<i>A series of forums held in East Lincoln County on Small Area Plan content and recommendations</i>
2007	June-July	<i>Steering Committee and Planning Board review and make recommendations</i>
2007	August	<i>Land Use Plan adopted by Board of Commissioners</i>

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

STEERING COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

This Plan was developed with significant input from the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee selected the issues of major concern that should be addressed in the Plan. The Committee initially developed a target list of issues that the Plan should address in March 2006. That list was as follows:

Land Use Plan (LUP) Considerations

- Need to develop village center in east Lincoln County
- Need to take EMS resources and demands into consideration
- County has mainly followed the existing LUP, but a new plan needs to have identified density recommendations in the text and map II
- LUP should show where multi-family uses should go
- Needs goals, objectives, and strategies
- Current zoning allows higher density in Western Lincoln County
- Identify new solid waste landfill, convenience centers. How big and where?

Land Use Plan Coordination with Existing Plans

- Water and sewer have a 20-year Capital Improvement Plan that should be referenced
- City/County Parks and Recreation Department has a new plan that should be referenced.

Reference Lincolnton greenway plan; extend greenways into the County.

- School long-range plans should be taken into consideration

Integrated Transportation and Land Use

- Transportation and land use must be considered together
- NC 73, NC 150, US 321 need corridor protection, access management, and ROW preservation
- New NC 16 corridor should be referenced in the Plan.
- Mixed-use should be designed to be pedestrian-accessible

Environmental Considerations

- Address environmental concerns
- NC is considering making changes to Water Supply Watershed regulations
- Identification/ promotion of historic sites

Economic Development

- Where should employment, business centers to be? These areas should be well-defined. Current Plan does not define them well.
- Should the Airport area be planned as an employment center?

PUBLIC FORUMS

Once this initial list of items was produced, a series of four public forums was held at various locations in the County in May 2006 to elicit public comment. Forums were held at East Lincoln, North Lincoln, Lincolnton and West Lincoln High Schools. Attendance ranged from 10-75 persons at each forum.

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums				
May 9-16, 2007				
SITE DEVELOPMENT	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
Like coordinated development				
Like good architecture				
Don't like sign clutter				
Don't like high density				
Don't like metal commercial buildings				
Require 10:1 ratio between building square ft and site size				
Provide range of housing types and styles				
Vinyl does not look attractive				
Too many parking spaces at commercial/ industrial sites				

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums

May 9-16, 2007

LAND USE PLANNING	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Don't like all the mini-storage</i>				
<i>Ensure affordable housing</i>				
<i>Land Use Plan should guide growth</i>				
<i>Emphasize buffer to retain natural beauty and views between competing land uses</i>				
<i>Too much strip commercial</i>				
<i>Require adequate setbacks for future road widening</i>				
<i>Want better commercial development along NC 16 and 73</i>				
<i>Concern over uneven development levels between townships</i>				
<i>Provide commercial in areas convenient to residential areas</i>				
<i>Are we looking far enough in the future?</i>				
<i>Emphasize regional differences in county</i>				
<i>Require 1/2 acre minimum lot sizes</i>				
<i>Regulate transition from residential to commercial (spot zoning and development requirements)</i>				

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums

May 9-16, 2007

TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Allow appropriate mixed-use development</i>				
<i>Scattered commercial can impact residential areas</i>				
<i>Encourage redevelopment of vacant commercial</i>				
<i>Low density housing, with sufficient open space for the environment</i>				
<i>Preserve agricultural districts</i>				
<i>Treasure downtown Lincolnton</i>				
<i>Some employment and commercial in western Lincoln County needed</i>				
<i>Road maintenance and construction distribution should be fair</i>				
<i>Traffic congestion on NC 16</i>				
<i>Infrastructure needs to catch up to development</i>				
<i>Co-locate schools, libraries, and parks together</i>				
<i>Developers should contribute to infrastructure costs</i>				
<i>Modify NC 16 so pedestrians can safely cross</i>				

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums

May 9-16, 2007

TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Growth should not lead infrastructure capacity</i>				
<i>Alleviate traffic congestion</i>				
<i>Consider Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (via e-mail)</i>				
<i>Underground utilities preferred</i>				
<i>Bicycle paths needed</i>				
<i>Better communication with NCDOT</i>				
<i>Greenways and sidewalks needed</i>				
<i>Develop roads in an environmentally sensitive manner</i>				
<i>Coordinate road capacity w/growth</i>				
<i>Bike lanes impact vehicular movement</i>				
<i>Consider evacuation routes when adding road capacity</i>				
<i>Require road connectivity</i>				
<i>Explore potential for light rail to Charlotte</i>				

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums

May 9-16, 2007

TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Preserve Good school system</i>				
<i>Coordinate utility planning with adjacent areas</i>				
<i>Water and sewer line extension can spur unwanted development</i>				
<i>Reepsville Road, among others, not appropriate for truck traffic</i>				
<i>Complete water line loops in western part of Lincoln County for fire protection (well water also not good quality)</i>				
REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Biased Planning Commission, needs to be diverse</i>				
<i>Land Use Plan process needs to engage developers/ Chambers of Commerce</i>				
<i>Bring all land uses into compliance with zoning</i>				
<i>Protect small businesses in the County</i>				
<i>Limit real estate signs on roads</i>				

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums				
May 9-16, 2007				
TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Allow speed-sensitive signage regulations so people can read the signs</i>				
<i>Don't make Lincoln County too expensive to live in or develop in</i>				
<i>Treasure current law enforcement</i>				
<i>Enhance social support network to reduce demands on law enforcement</i>				
<i>Industrial-scale agriculture is a nuisance for nearby residents (chicken operations)</i>				
<i>Prefer septic to sewer lines due to spills from treatment plants</i>				
<i>Prefer sewer with one-acre minimum lot sizes</i>				
<i>Currently too much impervious surface near lake</i>				
<i>Reward developers who preserve trees</i>				
<i>Currently inadequate recreation</i>				

Specific Comments Made at Lincoln County Community Forums				
May 9-16, 2007				
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	East Lincoln HS	North Lincoln HS	Lincolnton HS	West Lincoln HS
<i>Protect trees with penalties for those who unnecessarily destroy them</i>				
<i>Preserve lake</i>				
<i>Protect Viewsheds of lake and mountains</i>				
<i>Protect open space</i>				
<i>Preserve natural beauty/ topography</i>				
<i>Preserve historic buildings and sites</i>				
<i>Protect trees</i>				
<i>Develop neighborhoods parks</i>				
<i>Protect heritage of area</i>				
<i>Concern over water quality</i>				

Guiding Principles

Once the four public forums were completed, the Steering Committee discussed the major points upon which there was general consensus not only with what was said in the forums, but also with the initial areas of concern that were previously developed by the Steering Committee. What emerged was the Plan's "Top Ten" list of guiding principles and action item statements that would go on to serve as the basis for the Plan. Implementation strategies written in the Plan (and found in Chapter 5) address one or more of the guiding principles and action item statements contained herein. (*NOTE: Guiding Principle #10 deals with keeping the Plan current and making the Plan an integral part of the County's planning process. Those issues are specifically dealt with in Chapter 6.*) In addition, the Future Land Use Plan Map (Map 5-1) was developed that fully takes into account these principles and action item statements.

The following is a listing of the guiding principles and action item statements that the Steering Committee endorsed:

Principle 1. Infrastructure Directs Growth

- Identify areas where public utilities and transportation infrastructure will be provided in the County
- Review the County's standards for mandated connections to public utility systems.
- Focus infrastructure improvements in the near future in areas where the demand is the greatest in accordance with the County's Capital Improvement Plan.

- Do not place or promote denser development (i.e., residential development greater than 2 units per acre, employment centers, regional shopping facilities, etc.) in areas where infrastructure, either transportation or public utilities, are not projected or do not have capacity.

Principle 2. Adequate Transportation I Infrastructure

- Strengthen access management standards in the County's subdivision and zoning ordinances
- Plan for bikeways, as referenced in Lincoln County CTP, and ensure connectivity for new developments into any proposed bikeway or trail systems
- Connectivity and subdivision road standards should be codified to facilitate collector road networks as a part of new development and to facilitate the movement of emergency vehicles
- Take steps to ensure that rights-of-way are provided and protected to facilitate logical transportation connections
- Include pedestrian and bicycle amenities in subdivisions

Principle 3. Community Facilities (including schools, libraries and parks) Shall be Considered When Making Land Use Decisions

- Identify all proposed locations of public facilities
- Allow for higher residential densities in areas in close proximity to these facilities to encourage usage, and require pedestrian accessibility to such uses

Lincoln County Land Use Plan

- Encourage dedication or preservation of land for such sites, should the development impact potential sites for community facilities
- Mandate and/or provide incentives for direct transportation linkages from adjacent developments to such facilities
- Determine one or more appropriate sites for the location a new sanitary landfill and for a construction and demolition (i.e., c and d) landfill

Principle 4. Prime Employment and Industrial Sites Are to be Preserved; Appropriate Economic Development is to be Encouraged

- Identify and protect (from competing land uses) prime employment centers
- Review land use regulations to ensure that desired (and undesired) industrial-type uses are addressed in the County's land use regulations
- Promote the inclusion of appropriate job-creating uses both in mixed-use areas and adjacent to larger residential areas to provide the potential of shorter commute times/reduced VMT
- Make provisions for stand-alone industrial type uses to develop in designated areas in the County without being subject to "spot zoning" considerations

Principle 5. The County's Natural Beauty and Resources are Preserved

- Preserve Viewsheds along the County's road network, especially in those portions of the County that are most likely to retain a rural character
- Work in concert with Lincolnton to expand current greenways and recreational facilities in greater Lincolnton and beyond
- Provide options in subdivision development (e.g., traditional, cluster-conservation, rural) with "bonuses" given for open space and land preservation.
- Utilize the County's master recreation plan when making future land use decisions
- Ensure that the integrity of the County's historic buildings is maintained as growth and development occur.
- Take necessary steps to preserve the County's tree canopy
- Ensure that the County's water resources, including Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake, are not negatively impacted due to the growth in the County

Principle 6. Well-designed and Integrated Developments Shall be Located Throughout the County

- Identify nodes/corridors where more intense developments can and should occur in the future
- Develop design criteria to ensure that new multi-family, mixed-use and non-residential developments are integrated well with their surroundings

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- Provide incentives/mandates for developments to access and integrate with each other
- Limit strip development; plan for more intensive developments (residential and non-residential) at identified nodes and development growth areas
- Identify development strategies and guidelines for the placement of isolated developments that are away from identified nodes and development growth areas
- Provide land use guideline incentives and possible relaxation of regulations for the redevelopment of older properties in those areas of the County that may be prone to disinvestment.
- Encourage the use of conservation subdivisions, buffering, and other tools in areas where rural character and/or Viewsheds are considered particularly important.
- Maintain viability of “old” NC 16 once “new” NC 16 opens
- Identify roads that are candidates for “Scenic Byway” designation...take appropriate steps to encourage well-designed and integrated developments along such roads.
- Provide alternatives to suburban-type commercial development at targeted locations (i.e., developments designed primarily for the automobile, rather than the pedestrian, in mind)
- Allow for a variety of residential type developments, consistent with the preferences and recommendations of the Steering Committee
- Allow for density variations within individual zoning districts based on a variety of factors including: availability of utilities; location along major or minor corridors; distance from identified nodes or corridors, mix of uses, etc.
- Apply urban design and development standards to those areas that currently are or are anticipated to be urban in nature.

Principle 8. Mixed-use Development is Encouraged

- Amend zoning regulations to allow for appropriate and well-integrated residential and non-residential developments in designated portions of the County. Such developments could include both vertical and horizontal mixing of uses and take into considering transportation and infrastructure capacities and networks.
- Identify criteria for the placement of mixed-use developments in urban/urbanizing areas and elsewhere in the County.
- Provide preferences/incentives in the County’s land use regulations for mixed-use development where targeted in the County.

Principle 7. Appropriate Regulations Guide Density for Both Single- and Multi-family Development

Principle 9. Lincoln County Shall Be an “Affordable” Place in Which to Live and Build

- De-emphasize the segregation of residential land uses
- Allow for smaller lot sizes in urbanized/urbanizing areas of the County that have public utilities with appropriate capacity.
- Establish criteria for the placement of multi-family and higher-density developments to eliminate spot zoning concerns
- Allow for mixed-residential types of development (i.e., single-, two-, and multi-family) development in designated areas of the County. Address design and development standards to allow multi-family and higher density developments to better “fit in” with adjoining single-family development
- Provide incentives for the placement of affordable housing units...i.e., units designed for families having incomes of 50-80% of the County’s median income. Do not require affordable housing mandates in the County’s land use regulations.

- Develop a scorecard to compare the appropriateness of a proposed development or rezoning with the recommendations contained in the LUP.
- Conduct periodic audits of the LUP to determine appropriateness of recommendations contained in the LUP.
- Create incentives to promote development that is in keeping with the LUP guidelines.

Principle 10. The Land Use Plan Shall Be Kept Current and Shall Guide and Directs Zoning and Growth Decisions

- Develop an implementation schedule for recommendations contained in the LUP and follow through with implementation.

Chapter 4

Future Land Use Plan

The County's Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) map is indicated on Map 4-1, with the three small area plans shown on Map 4-2 (NC 150), Map 4-3 (St. James Church Road) and Map 4-4 (Optimist Club Road). The maps project future land use patterns throughout the County's planning jurisdiction (i.e., outside of Lincolnton and its ETJ) over the next 10-15 years. When reviewing the FLUP map, consideration should be given to the following:

Ø Future land uses patterns shown are not zoning designations -- they are intended to guide local decisions on zoning, subdivision, conditional use and other land use matters.

Ø Future land use patterns may reflect a future condition and may be appropriate at some point in the future, and not at present (i.e., once a new road is built or public utilities extended.)

Ø The FLUP Map is dynamic -- when justified by changing conditions in the community, the map can and should be amended by the Board of Commissioners. While map amendments should not be made frequently, periodic adjustments may be in order to help achieve the County's long-term planning goals.

Ø The FLUP on Map 4-1 is generalized in nature and is intended to give the reader an understanding of projected generalized land use patterns in the County. Greater specificity of future land use preferences is shown

within each of the Small Area Plan maps. These maps were drawn based on lot line boundaries rather than broad geographic areas.

Ø The FLUP map and the goals, objectives and implementation strategies contained in Chapter 5 are to be used together

The FLUP maps contain a number of land use categories, each of which is described below. Other features contained on the maps are:

- Existing school sites
- Sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Proposed bicycle and Scenic Byway routes
- Generalized locations for future County park sites
- Floodplain areas
- Proposed future roads

Each of these features was used in developing the land use patterns depicted on the FLUP. The FLUP, however, cannot be viewed as a "stand-alone" document that, by itself, portrays how Lincoln County should develop in the future. It MUST be read in context with the goals, objectives and implementation strategies contained in Chapter 5. Most importantly, new developments, especially those that are located directly on or which feed substantial amount of traffic on the County's Strategic Corridors (NC 150, NC 73, NC 16 and US 321) or other major highways, must be designed so as not significantly impact or impede the flow of traffic. This is clearly spelled out in Strategies 1.2.2 and 1.3.1, and Guiding Principle No. 2, which read as follows:

Strategy 1.2.2: "The County cannot widen or improve these roads if they become clogged with local traffic (all public roads in unincorporated areas in North Carolina are owned and maintained by NCDOT); and if this happens, they will cease to perform their functions as

Lincoln County Land Use Plan

Strategic Highway Corridors. Consequently, development considerations must protect the corridors for their strategic functions, ensuring that as areas develop, they are served by a network of connecting roads that can accommodate local traffic, and/or to develop in ways that support transit, vanpooling, biking, or walking. It is also recommended that transportation infrastructure be considered a secondary factor in directing development.”

Strategy 1.3.1: “Locate denser and more intense development in areas where it will be supported by existing public utility and transportation infrastructure with adequate capacity (or where the local transportation infrastructure can be provided through the development process), or where such adequate infrastructure will be developed concurrently.”

Guiding Principle 2: Provide for an Adequate Transportation Infrastructure to Serve Current and Future Populations

Thus, the water and sewer utility and transportation infrastructures jointly play a part in how, where, and to what degree future development occurs in Lincoln County.

What follows are summaries of (1) a more detailed overview of how the future land use map together; (2) summaries of what each future land use category is intended to accomplish along with descriptions of where these areas are shown on the FLUP; (3) proposed greenway locations; (4) proposed bike routes; and, (5) proposed Scenic Byway locations.

A synopsis of the three Small Area Plans follows these summaries.

HOW THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP WAS DEVELOPED

The future land use map (along with the goals, objectives and implementation strategies) was put together with a number of different resources. They included:

1. **Community Forums**...a series of four community forums was held in 2006 in different parts of the County where residents were asked, “how and where do you want to see the County growing in the future”. The results of these forums were shared with and analyzed by the Steering Committee.
2. **Preference Surveys**...the Steering Committee was asked not only where development should occur, but also what type of development is preferred, and under what conditions should that development take place. It was from these meetings that the Steering Committee created its “Top Ten” Guiding Principles that are outlined in Chapter 5.
3. **Population projections**...although this Plan has a lifespan of 10-15 years, the Steering Committee examined County population projections through 2030.
4. **County’s Capital Improvement Plan and Transportation Improvement Plans**...the County’s Capital Improvement Plan shows where public water and sewer utilities are expected to be in place by 2023. The Steering Committee also looked at what road improvements were scheduled by NCDOT as contained in the TIP.
5. **Population expansion preferences**...The Steering Committee determined where it envisioned the County’s 2030 population to be located based on both the transportation and utility infrastructures, existing growth patterns, etc. Not surprisingly, the majority of the future population growth was

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

forecast by the Steering Committee to be located in the east and east central portions of the County.

6. Transportation and recreation plans...

The Lincoln County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Lake Norman Bike Route, and the Lincolnton-Lincoln County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan played roles in citing future development. School locations played especially large roles. For instance, Strategy 3.1.2 states “Allow for higher residential densities and encourage connectivity in areas in close proximity to appropriate current and future community facilities to encourage usage.” Thus, allowing for higher densities in the vicinity of schools, parks, libraries etc. was encouraged.

7. Existing zoning and land use patterns...

existing zoning and land use patterns were largely left unchanged on the FLUP. In certain instances, especially along major highways and in portions of the small area planning districts, changes were made in light of anticipated growth and development.

8. Natural features...topography, flood-plains, water supply watersheds were all used to shape the future land use map. To the greatest degree feasible, the FLUP was developed so as to have minimal impact on the natural environment.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The following are summaries of each of the land use categories shown on the future land use map.

Rural Preservation

These are rural areas that are characterized by two or more of the following features:

- No plans for public water and sewer extension
- Areas that are located in the WS-II or III Water Supply Watersheds
- A large concentration of active farmland that has been registered under the County’s farmland preservation programs (authorized per NC General Statutes 106-735 through 106-745).
- Roads that offer scenic vistas of the County

Low-density residential uses and limited small-scale commercial and/or industrial uses that are suited for and blend in well with rural environments are encouraged in these areas.

These areas are primarily located in western and west central portions of Lincoln County. Much of western Lincoln County is in the WS II or WS III watersheds (i.e., areas west of Cat Square and Shoal Roads.) This area is primarily rural and contains the majority of the County’s actively farmed acreage, much of which is under the County’s farmland preservation program. The northwestern portion of the County is particularly scenic, with the nearby South Mountains visible from many roads in the area.

A second Rural Preservation area is found northwest of Lincolnton and is roughly bordered by Killian, Reepsville and June Bug Roads. While not in a WS II or III Watershed, this area is largely undeveloped and also contains significant amount of active farmland.

To further enhance and promote the areas’ aesthetics, the County is urged to seek “Scenic Byway” status for two road networks that are in these Rural Preservation areas:

1. Reepsville and Killian Roads (i.e., Reepsville Road as it extends out from the City of Lincolnton to Killian Road; Killian Road to the Catawba County line.)

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2. NC 182 west from the City of Lincolnton to the Cleveland County line.

Rural Residential

These areas are characterized by the following:

- They are located in scenic areas of the County that have not witnessed significant amount of development in the past
- They are located in proximity to one or more historic sites
- They contain one or more proposed Scenic Byway roads
- They may be served by public utilities in the future

Low-density residential development (i.e., overall densities of not greater than one unit per acre) is encouraged for these areas so that they retain their rural characteristics. Significant amounts of suburban residential development are not encouraged.

One such area of the County is designated on the FLUP. This area, located in East and East Central Lincoln County, is roughly bounded by Old Plank Road, Ingleside Farm Road, and Beth Haven Church Road. Although the area is in close proximity to rapidly growing portions of the County, it has largely remained undeveloped due to the lack of public water and sewer and due to its topography.

The area does, however, contain four National Historic sites: Graham Farm, Ingleside, Tucker Grove Meeting Grounds and the Vesuvius Furnace. Though not a listed historic site, the Machpelah Church and Cemetery are also located in the area off Old Plank Road. These sites, together with the rolling topography, give the area a decidedly bucolic and “away from it all” feeling. While future residential development will undoubtedly

occur, especially once public water and sewer are extended, density levels that are much lower than in designated “Suburban Residential” Areas are called for. Clustering is strongly encouraged to further maximize the preservation of open space.

Future developments that lie in close proximity to any of these historic sites (as well as other historic sites in the County) should take place in a manner that does not detract, from their historic character. In lieu, new developments should respect and, to the greatest degree feasible, enhance the area’s historic flavor.

Suburban Residential

These planning areas are primarily single-family in character, with options for a limited amount of town home or patio home development. Such areas largely do not have public water or sewer utilities at present but are projected to have one such utility by 2023. Projected densities, accordingly, will vary to upwards of 1-2 units per acre, depending on the provision of utilities. Future residential development in such areas is likely and encouraged, especially once public utilities are extended.

Four such areas are found on the FLUP. Three of the areas immediately adjoin Lincolnton’s planning jurisdiction to the north, south, and southwest. A fourth area lies southeast of the City along the NC 27 corridor southeast of Iron Station. All four areas largely do not have public water and sewer (some areas closest to Lincolnton may have public water and/or sewer provided by the City). The County’s Capital Improvement Plan indicates that only one utility will be provided in these areas in the future, thereby limiting densities to no greater than 1-2 units per acre.

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Mixed Residential

Mixed-residential (e.g., single-family, multi-family, town home, patio home) developments shall be a development option where public water and sewer utilities are available and where located either near schools, highway interchanges, along major road corridors and in other designated locations. Densities can range from 2-8 units per acre, with density being proportional to the amount of open space preserved. These areas represent the densest residential developments called for in Lincoln County. Accordingly, they shall be developed in such a manner so as not to adversely impact traffic mobility. Building heights can range from 1-3 stories. New developments shall be designed to blend in and transition well with the neighborhoods in which they are located.

A number of mixed-residential areas are shown on the FLUP. They include:

1. Much of Southeast Lincoln east of Killian Creek. Once utilities are extended, this area has the greatest potential for development, as it lies closest to Charlotte. This area will also have access to new NC 16 through a grade-separated interchange that is planned in Gaston County immediately south of the Lincoln County line. Higher densities in this area will also give more persons the opportunity to use express bus transit service that will serve the NC 16 corridor. Areas closest to Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake and existing low-density residential areas are not included in this classification.
2. Along portions of NC 27/73 east of Lincolnton. This area lies between two higher intensity mixed residential/commercial nodes.
3. Along portions of NC 27 south of the NC 27/73 intersection between NC 73 and

Iron Station. This area lies near the Timken manufacturing plant and also in relative close proximity to areas of proposed expanded industrial development near the Lincolnton/Lincoln County Regional Airport on NC 73.

4. Along NC 27 in the Iron Station community
5. In the vicinity of the following schools: East Lincoln Middle and High Schools; North Lincoln High School; Pumpkin Center Middle and High Schools. The Steering Committee felt it important to give students an opportunity to "walk to school." Thus, areas that are projected to be served by public water and sewer that lie in close proximity to public schools are encouraged to have higher density residential developments.
6. In the vicinity of Henry Dellinger/Lebanon Church Road and NC 150 (Small Area Plan 1- refer to Map 4-2)
7. In the vicinity of St. James Church Road and Little Egypt Road, both to the north and south of Optimist Club Road (Small Area Plan 3- refer to Map 4-4.)

Mixed Residential/Commercial

These areas are intended to become true mixed-use villages consisting of higher-density residential uses (both single- and multi-family) and associated small-scale and pedestrian-oriented office and retail uses. These areas are created to allow persons to live, work, walk, recreate, and shop in one area. Height and locational criteria shall be the same as for "mixed residential" uses cited above.

Areas shown on the FLUP include:

1. Along portions of the NC 27/73 Corridor east of the City of Lincolnton's planning jurisdiction. These areas are so designated given the amount of non-residential zoning that currently exists along the Corridor and

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and the County's desire (as well as that of the City of Lincolnton) to limit strip commercial development along this and other major highways.

2. At the NC 150/New NC 16 interchange at the Lincoln/Catawba County line (Small Area Plan 1- refer to Map 4-2). This area will serve as a gateway into Lincoln County for motorists traveling from Catawba County. A smaller-sized, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use village is encouraged for the northwest quadrant of this interchange. Retail uses that serve northern Lincoln County (as opposed to serving the greater region) are encouraged at this location.
3. At the New NC 16 interchange at the Gaston County line. This area is similar in nature (though larger in geography) than the comparable area located at NC 150 and New NC 16. Given its proximity to Charlotte and population centers in Gaston County, larger size stores that serve the regional market (and which could be accommodated in the "Regional Business" district as later described) would also be suitable for this area.
4. The Denver area along Old NC 16. This area represents one of the best examples of mixed-use development in the County outside of Lincolnton. Denver, in many respects, has the look and feel of a small town, where persons can work, shop and live in close proximity to each other and where persons can readily walk from "Point A to Point B."
5. In areas both north and south of Optimist Club Road on the west side of New NC 16 (Small Area Plan 3)

Recreation/Open Space

These include existing public and private recreational facilities and conservation areas, and areas that have potential for being turned

into open space areas. They may include park sites that are owned and operated by Lincoln County or private recreational groups, lands held (either through fee simple ownership or through conservation easements) by a land conservancy, private golf courses, public boating access sites, etc.

Generalized locations of ten future park sites are also shown on the Future Land Use Map based on information contained in the Lincolnton-Lincoln County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. These sites are located throughout the County, although only one site, West Lincoln Park, is located west of Lincolnton. Of the ten sites, the West Lincoln site is the only one that has been purchased by Lincoln County and planned for development.

Four parks are of the "neighborhood" variety and are designed to serve more urban-oriented portions of the County (i.e., persons who live in a 5-10 minute walking distance.)

The other parks are of the "community" variety and are intended to serve larger geographical areas of the County.

Given that sites for nine of the ten parks have NOT been secured to date, the County should be cognizant of proposed new developments that arise in the general vicinity of the park sites. If common open space requirements are added to the County's land use regulations, and/or if a use is subject to a conditional use permit, the County should ask itself (and the developer) whether land should be set aside for public recreation purposes.

NC 16 Corridor

Much of the existing NC 16 Corridor between NC 73 and Denver has been zoned for non-residential purposes. Over the years a significant amount of strip commercial development has occurred along the Corridor. While some well-planned individual and group

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developments are found, much of the development consists of conversions of residential dwellings into commercial retail and service establishments, and newer single-entity developments, each with one or more of its own curb cuts. Access management standards along NC 16 have historically been weak. Thus, traffic congestion and commercial sprawl are present. A redevelopment of the corridor, especially in light of the pending opening of new NC 16 is in order to limit disinvestment and to improve mobility along the Corridor.

Mixed-use, *per se*, along NC 16 is very evident with industrial, commercial and residential uses all in close proximity to each other throughout the area. But as uses were developed and planned individually, there are virtually no linkages (either for the pedestrian or the motorist) between developments. Thus, virtually all traffic that accesses uses along NC 16 must ingress and egress onto NC 16. This further exacerbates traffic congestion along the corridor, especially during rush hour periods.

To remedy this situation, a redevelopment plan for the Old NC 16 Corridor is strongly encouraged. Such a plan should promote the further mixing of land uses, but in a more orderly and planned manner. To accommodate this, creation of a new overlay zoning district is called for. The district should be approximately 100-200 feet in depth on either side of NC 16. While allowing for a wide variety of residential and non-residential uses, the district should also address each of the following:

1. Eliminating certain “heavy” or “unsightly” uses from locating along the Corridor;
2. Limiting future strip commercial development by giving incentives for the de-

velopment larger, planned developments as opposed to individual developments

3. Establishing Architectural Appearance Standards
4. Establishing Landscape and Tree Preservation Standards
5. Establishing sidewalk and greenstrip standards
6. Establishing new sign standards that put less emphasis on taller pole signs
7. Establishing new parking standards that prohibit or limit deep lots that foster the “sea of asphalt” look with all off-street parking being placed in the front yard
8. Establishing access management standards that (1) limit the number of future curb cuts along NC 16, (2) promote connectivity between adjacent land uses, and (3) promote the provision of access points to lots along the Corridor from adjacent roads.

Office/Employment Center

A planned employment center that contains a variety of office, light (i.e., typically non-manufacturing) industry, higher education and supporting uses. Unlike Industrial areas (described below), the external appearance of buildings and signage, along with modes of ingress and egress, are planned to provide consistency throughout the development. There may be some truck traffic delivering and transporting goods to and from the individual uses within the center. Hospitality uses (e.g., hotels, restaurants, etc.) as well as necessary support uses (e.g., banks) may also be allowed. Attributes of such areas include:

- They be developed in an architecturally pleasing, “campus” or “village” style setting.
- Pedestrian and bicycle accessibility shall be provided throughout the development
- Buildings shall be contextually harmonious with nearby established neighborhoods and

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- The development shall occur in such a manner so as to minimize impacts on traffic mobility on the existing road network and have good internal road connectivity.
- Building height shall be limited to four (4) stories

Three such areas are called for in the FLUP, each of them located within one of the Small Area Plan geographies:

1. St. James Church Road and NC 16 (Small Area Plan 2) - This area is envisioned to become a major employment center for the County with office, educational and research support facilities recommended.
2. On the east side of St. James Church Road south of Old NC 16 (Small Area Plan 2). This area currently is zoned primarily for residential purposes (and contains a number of single-family residences), is expected to transition once new NC 16 is constructed and the NC 16/St. James Church Road intersection completed. Strip retail or service commercial development is NOT recommended here, as it will only exacerbate traffic problems along St. James Church Road. An alternative strategy would be to allow these residences to transition to office-type uses (with strict access management guidelines in place.) This will promote reinvestment in the area, yet minimize further traffic congestion.
3. New NC 16 and Optimist Club Road (Small Area Plan 3) - This area is being planned for an outpatient medical facility complex and a branch of the YMCA.

Neighborhood Business

These planning areas are for small-sized, low-intensity, low-traffic generating business clusters that cater to the needs of relatively

small trading areas. They are appropriate for small-scale retail and service establishments. Such areas are not designed to become regional or sub-regional commercial destination spots. They are most often located at Class I and II intersections and at other key locations along major roads in Lincoln County. Such areas may or may not be served by public water or sewer utilities. Total square footage of any such areas shall be 25,000 square feet gross floor area or less. Unless otherwise indicated, such areas have radii of approximately three-hundred (300) feet from their designated intersections as shown on Maps 4-1 through 4-4.

A number of neighborhood business areas are shown on these maps. They are shown at the following intersections or locations:

1. Reepsville and Cat Square Roads
2. NC 274 and Flay Road
3. NC 274 and NC 182
4. Car Farm Road and Buffalo Shoals Road
5. NC 27 and Long Road
6. Ivey Church Road and Buffalo Shoals Road
7. NC 150 and Ivey Church Road
8. King Wilkinson Road and Amity Church Road
9. King Wilkinson Road and Mark Ballard Road
10. NC 73 and Amity Church Road
11. NC 27 between Houser Farm and Lackey Roads (**NOTE:** This is not a node, but rather connects parcels along NC 27 that were previously zoned for business purposes)
12. Reepsville and Alf Hoover Roads
13. Reepsville and Killian Roads
14. NC 27 and Randleman Road
15. NC 10 at the Catawba County Line
16. NC 16 and Old Plank Road
17. NC 16 between Sterling Court and Oregon Trail (**NOTE:** This is not a node, but rather connects parcels along NC 16 that

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were previously zoned for business purposes)

18. North side of Optimist Club Road immediately east of the railroad tracks (Small Area Plan 3)
19. Camp Ground Road in the vicinity of Pine Ridge Drive

Community Business

Such areas are primarily found at key intersections along major (i.e., US or NC numbered) highways and serve larger trading areas than neighborhood business areas. Total retail/commercial square footage per area shall be 75,000-150,000 square feet gross floor area, with no individual use having a square footage of greater than 60,000 square feet (i.e., the size of a typical supermarket.) “Big-box” type stores are not encouraged at such locations. In certain instances elongated community business areas are shown. These largely represent the connection of existing areas of commercial development along those highways. The creation of additional linear commercial development along highways in Lincoln County is NOT encouraged (i.e., strip commercial development). Thus, community business areas typically have radii of not greater than five-hundred (500) feet.

A number of community business areas are shown on the FLUP. They are shown at the following intersections or locations:

1. NC 10 and NC 18
2. NC 27 and NC 18
3. NC 27 and NC 274
4. NC 27 and Cat Square Road
5. NC 27 near Rock Dam Road
6. NC 150 in the vicinity of Crouse (**NOTE:** This is not a node, but takes in much of the area along NC 150 within Crouse that has been zoned for commercial purposes.)
7. NC 27 and Orchard Road

8. NC 73 and Reinhardt Circle
9. NC 155 east of US 321 to the Gaston County line (**NOTE:** This is not a node, but takes in a strip of land, portions of which have previously been zoned for commercial purposes.)
10. NC 27 and NC 73
11. NC 150 and Car Farm Road
12. South side of Optimist Club Road west of new NC 16 (Small Area Plan 3)
13. On the south side of the NC 150 and Lebanon Church Road intersection.

Regional Business

Regional business nodes represent the most intense commercial/retail areas in Lincoln County. They are exclusively located at or near major highway interchanges or intersections. Their customer base will be from Lincoln County and beyond. Thus, larger sized stores (e.g., grocery stores, “big-box” stores, movie theaters) and other businesses that depend on large customer bases are encouraged to locate there. Such areas can include a wide array of retail, business, and support services, as well as denser residential developments (i.e., with residential densities of up to eight (8) units per acre). Two such areas are shown on the FLUP: (1) Near the intersections of NC 73 and NC 16 (existing and new) in eastern Lincoln County; and, (2) Near the intersection of Old and New US 321 north of Lincolnton.

A “mixed residential/commercial” area that is located in the vicinity of New NC 16 and the Gaston County line is also forecast to have regional business type uses. What separates this area from other regional business areas is its proximity to residential areas. Regional businesses in this area will be welcomed, so long as they are planned and integrated with surrounding residential areas and, thus, provide pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. “Power centers”, “strip commercial” “big box” stores

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designed specifically for the automobile are NOT encouraged at this location.

Industrial

These are areas that either contain existing concentrations of industrial uses in Lincoln County or areas designated for future industrial/manufacturing and warehousing uses. Unlike “office/employment centers”, the large majority of land contained in such areas is for industrial and/or manufacturing uses. Such new or expanded developments that are located along or in close proximity to the County’s major thoroughfares should be developed in a manner so as to protect and enhance the viewsheds from these thoroughfares and minimize traffic congestion along such roads. Such areas that are located in close proximity to existing residential concentrations shall be undertaken in a manner so as to not negatively impact these areas.

A number of new and/or expanded industrial areas are shown on the FLUP. They include:

1. NC 155 and US 321- This area has a limited amount of industrial activity and zoning at present. Future industrial development is recommended between US 321 and Salem Church Road.
2. Expansion of the Lincoln County Industrial Park to include properties on the west side of US 321
3. Expansion of industrial activity in the vicinity of the Lincolnton-Lincoln County Regional Airport on the north side of NC 73
4. Expansion of industrial areas on and in the vicinity of Old NC 16 north of Denver to the Catawba County line
5. Expansion of industrial areas off Old Plank Road west of NC 16
6. Expansion of industrial areas west of Old NC 16 and north of NC 73 (some of which is included in Small Area Plan 3).

(NOTE: Increased industrial activity in this area will require additional connectivity between Optimist Club Road and Old NC 16 so as to not overburden the Old NC 16 intersections with either Triangle Road or Unity Church Road.)

7. Expansion of industrial areas south of Rock Springs Elementary School off of Old NC 16.
8. Expansion of the Clark’s Creek Industrial Park north of Lincolnton.
9. The southwest and southeast quadrants of NC 150 and New NC 16 (Small Area Plan 1). As this serves as a gateway into Lincoln County from the north, care must be exercised to not only not cause undue traffic congestion along NC 150, but to make sure that an attractive landscape for motorists is maintained along NC 16.
10. Areas west of Henry Dellinger Road along NC 150 (Small Area Plan 1). A number of the lots contained in this area are either zoned for business or industrial purposes, and a limited amount of expansion along NC 150 is encouraged. Strict access management controls are needed in this area in order to maintain mobility along NC 150.

PROPOSED GREENWAYS

Three proposed greenways are shown on the FLUP. They include:

1. A greenway starting at Cowan’s Ford Dam and which extends south along the Catawba River, and then hooks up with Forney Creek and extends north to the Denver area along Campground Road.
2. A greenway along the South Fork River south of Lincolnton
3. A greenway which connects West Lincoln Park, North Brook Elementary and West Lincoln Middle and High Schools in the western part of the County.

All three greenway were listed as “high

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priority greenways" in the Lincolnton-Lincoln County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan.

Lincoln County should take proactive steps to preserve rights-of-way for these greenways in conjunction with new development proposals. This is especially true for the Catawba River/Forney's Creek greenway in Eastern Lincoln County where development pressures are the greatest.

PROPOSED BIKE ROUTES

Bike routes shown on the FLUP include:

1. Reepsville Road and NC 18 in western Lincoln County.
2. NC 182 in western Lincoln County
3. NC 73 in eastern and central Lincoln County
4. The Lake Norman Bike Route which extends along NC 73, Little Egypt, St. James Church and Camp Ground Roads in Eastern Lincoln County

Bike routes shown were taken from the Lake Norman Bike Route Study completed in November 2006 and the March 2006 Lincoln County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Due to space limitations, the location of the Lake Norman Bike Route is NOT shown on Map 4-1.

PROPOSED SCENIC BYWAYS

Three scenic byways are proposed on the FLUP. They include:

1. Portions of Reepsville and Killian Road in western Lincoln County
2. NC 182 in western Lincoln County
3. A triangle formed by Ingleside Farm, Old Plank and Beth Haven Church Roads in Eastern Lincoln County

All three roads offer motorists scenic vistas of largely undeveloped and rural portions of

the County. As previously mentioned, "Scenic Byway" designation comes from NCDOT and is given to roads where significant concentrations of development (be it residential, commercial or industrial) are not found. In order to be a candidate for "Scenic Byway" status, future development along all of these roads should be limited. What development does occur should be in harmony with its surroundings (NOTE: The Ingleside Farm, Old Plank and Beth Haven Church Road byway links four separate historic sites.) To help prevent development that would deter from the unique characters of these corridors, the areas in which they are located are shown on the FLUP as either being in the Rural Preservation or Rural Residential categories.

SMALL AREA PLANS

Small area plans for three separate areas were developed in conjunction with the County's Future Land Use Plan. The areas studied were as follows:

Area 1- New NC 16 and NC 150 interchange (Map 4-2)

Area 2- New NC 16 and St. James Church Road intersection (Map 4-3)

Area 3- New NC 16 and Optimist Club Road intersection (Map 4-4)

The three areas were chosen due to their location in the eastern part of Lincoln County and also for the anticipated demands for development once the intersections/interchange open. The NC 16 interchange likely to witness the greatest amount of traffic is that at NC 73. However, given that most of the land at the interchange is developed or has been approved for development, the County could realize greater benefit by conducting in-depth land use studies in these area where development activity to date has been substantially less. Land use categories shown on the small area plans

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were the same as those shown on the FLUP (Map 4-1).

Each of the small area plans was put together with significant input from local residents. Two public meetings were held for each small planning district. At the first meeting attendees were broken up into small groups and asked, “How would you like to see this area develop in the future?” Based on this, directions on growth previously made by the Steering Committee and all the other information used in developing the Countywide FLUP, small area plans for each of the three study areas were developed. The Plans were each shown to the public at the second set of meetings for comment and change.

Area 1- New NC 16 and NC 150 Interchange

Area 1 contains the smallest amount of land of all three small area districts, but will play a very vital role in the County’s future: Area 1 lies at the Catawba County line and will serve as a portal into Lincoln County for motorists traveling south on NC 16. In addition, a full grade-separated interchange is called for here. In contrast, at-grade intersections (with stoplights) are called for at St. James Church Road and at Optimist Club Road. One other important element of the Area 1 Plan is that Lincoln County only has jurisdiction on one complete quadrant of the interchange...all of the northeast quadrant and portions of the northwest and southeast quadrants lie in Catawba County. Only the southwest quadrant lies entirely in Lincoln County.

Public water and sewer utilities are currently not found in Area 1. Given this area’s proximity to Catawba County and Catawba County’s plans to accommodate significant amounts of development along NC 150 east to Old NC 16, public utilities may be ex-

tended in the future from Catawba County.

Highlights of the Area 1 Plan include:

A mixed residential/commercial development at the northwest quadrant of NC 150 and New NC 16.

Industrial development at the southeast and southwest quadrants of New NC 16, with limited industrial uses elsewhere along NC 150

A community business node on the south side of NC 150 at Lebanon Church

Mixed residential uses along portions of Lebanon Church/Henry Dellinger Road.

Both residents of the area and the Steering Committee felt that a certain amount of commercial development was likely, and needed here. Regional commercial type uses (i.e., big box type stores and other stores that serve regional population centers) are not appropriate at this location. Rather, a mixed residential-commercial urban village that accommodates a wide variety of commercial uses, along with residential uses, was deemed appropriate. This literally would be the first thing motorists would see as they travel south from Catawba County. Thus, a unique development with “eye appeal”...as opposed to more conventional shopping centers is called for at the northwest quadrant of this interchange.

Industrial development on the south side of NC 150 is envisioned, in part due to a quarry that lies immediately south of the Study Area. Industrial type uses such as warehouses and distribution facilities, and similar type uses that do not necessarily need connections to public water and sewer, are preferred. Here too, the aesthetics of buildings, and how they appear from the NC 150 viewshed, were felt to be important attributes of any new building in the study area.

A community business node...with uses such as hotels, restaurants, convenience stores, and

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similar uses geared to the traveling public... is slated for a portion of the Lebanon Church Road intersection with NC 150. Mixed residential uses are also called for in the northwest and southeast quadrants of this intersection. Lower density residential uses...with a road network that ties back into Lebanon Church Road...are also called for. This internal road network will be helpful in alleviating traffic congestion along NC 150.

A small area of industrial development is also called for along the south side of NC 150 west of Henry Dellinger Road. A number of industrial-type uses are located there with some industrial zoning also present. Thus, filling in this area (directly along NC 150) with additional light industrial type uses was seen as a means of maintaining the viability of the area. Access management needs to be addressed here, as these uses will all have ingress/egress directly onto NC 150.

Area 2- New NC 16 and St. James Church Road

An at-grade intersection is called for at St. James Church Road. Highlights of the Area 2 Plan include:

- Mixed residential and mixed residential-commercial uses at the New NC 16 and St. James Church Road intersection.
- A large office employment center along St. James Church Road west (and north) of New NC 16.
- Office type uses along the east side of St. James Church Road east of new NC 16.
- Some industrial development between St. James Church Road and Old NC 16.

The most outstanding feature of this Small Area Plan is the possibility of creating a rather large office-type employment center

along St. James Church Road west side of New NC 16. Office parks, educational facilities (possibly a campus of Gaston College), and support retail uses were all seen by local residents and the Steering Committee as being the best use of these properties. Residents and Steering Committee members felt that this area had a number of attributes that made this scenario feasible:

- Great visibility from and easy access to New NC 16
- Relatively few land owners, thus facilitating the assembling of land
- The lack of major office centers elsewhere in Eastern Lincoln County

Like in Area 1, large-scale retail businesses are not envisioned for the area. Rather, a combination of mixed residential (east side) and mixed residential-commercial (west side) of the NC 150 intersection is called for. Access management issues are extremely important here as this will be an at-grade intersection. This is another reason why commercial development with numerous curb cuts along St. James Church Road is NOT called for in this area.

Office type uses are also called for on St. James Church Road north of New NC 16. This area is zoned for residential purposes, and contains a number of smaller sized residential lots, especially on the east side of the road. Conversion of these lots for more intensive uses will be likely once the intersection is built, as it is a short distance to Old NC 16. Here too, however, strip commercial development is neither called for nor prescribed. Conversion to office-type uses is seen as a better way of controlling traffic yet allowing redevelopment and reinvestment to occur.

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A limited amount of industrial development is called for between Old NC 16 and St. James Church Road on the north side of the intersection. A linkage road that connects both of these highways is called for in order to promote traffic mobility in the area.

Area 3- New NC 16 and Optimist Club Road

Area 3 is the southernmost of the three Small Area Plans, and the one most prone to development pressures. Like Area 2, an at grade intersection is called for here. Thus, access management issues play a major role in future land use decisions. Unlike the other small areas, a significant amount of development has already occurred here or is called for. An elementary school is located off St. James Church Road while a YMCA and an outpatient medical complex are planned along Optimist Club Road on the east side of the NC 16 intersection. Two parks (with numerous ball fields) are also found on the south side of Optimist Club Road.

Highlights of the Area 3 Plan include:

- Mixed residential, mixed residential-commercial, and community business type uses on the west side of the Optimist Club Road intersection.
- Industrial uses at the southeast quadrant of the intersection
- Lower-density residential uses along those portions of Little Egypt and St. James Church Road in the study area.

The focal point of the Small Area is along the west side of the intersection. A mixture of residential and commercial type uses is planned here. Mid-sized stores and shopping centers (as opposed to larger “big-box” stores and power centers) are preferred for this

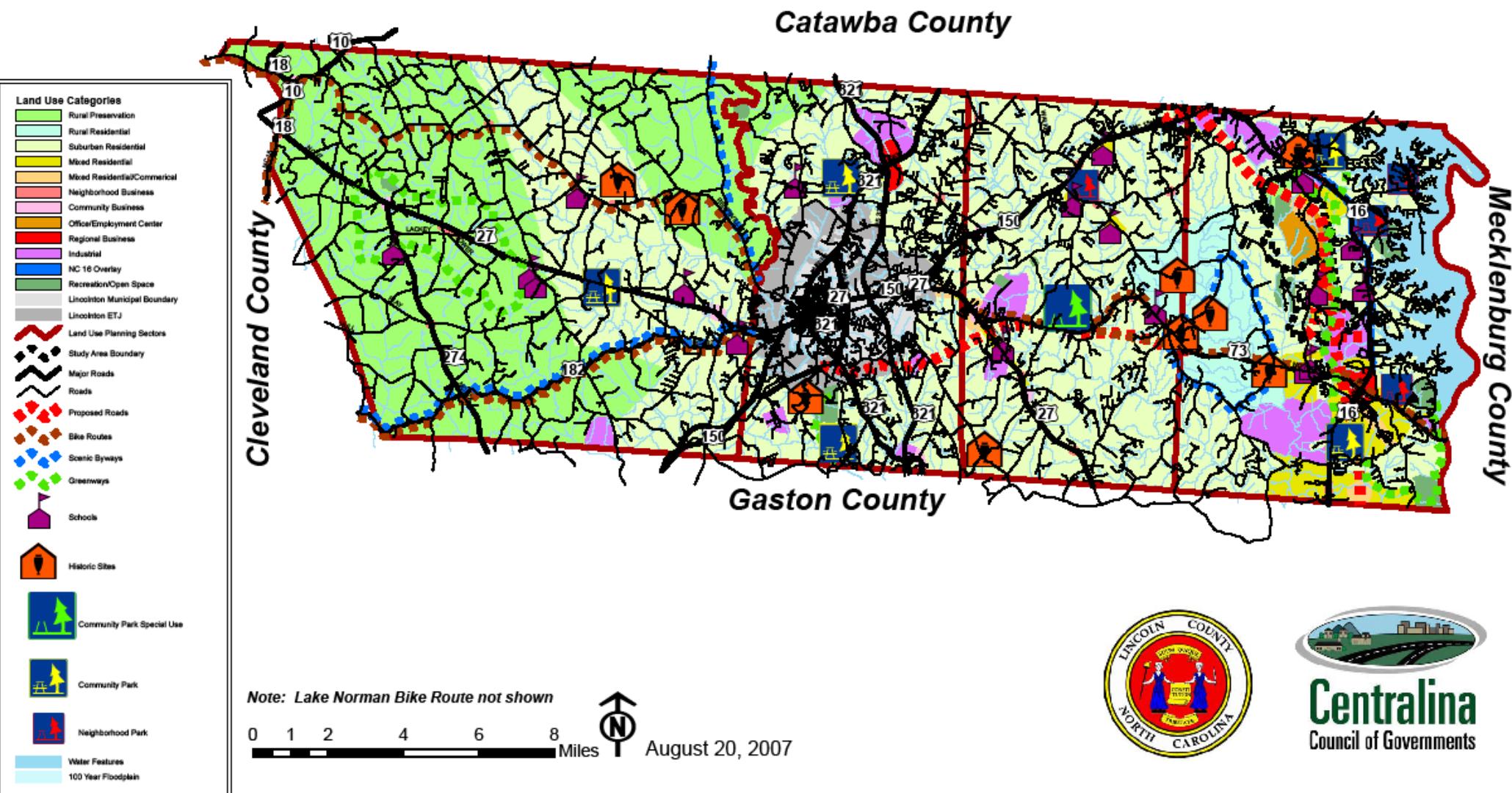
location. Integrating residential uses with the commercial uses and making the area truly “pedestrian-friendly” is a key element of this plan. Optimist Club Road dead-ends into St. James Church Road less than one-half mile from the New NC 16 intersection. Maintaining adequate traffic flow along Optimist Club Road is paramount. To ensure this, an internal road network linking these higher-intensity uses with both St. James Church and Optimist Club Roads is called for. New road linkages with St. James Church Road are called for in the north; an extension of Oakbrook Lane to Little Egypt Road is called for to the south.

Industrial development is called for in the southeast quadrant of the intersection, with access provided by both Optimist Club Road and Rufus Road. Part of this area (i.e., along Rufus Road) is zoned for industrial purposes. This is part of a much larger planned industrial area that is shown on Map 4-1 (i.e., the future land use plan of the entire County.) Given the amount of industrial development anticipated, road access is important. Thus, if additional industrial development occurs here, a road connection that links Optimist Club Road with Rufus Road and Old NC 16 is needed. Significant truck traffic along Optimist Club Road east of the NC 16 intersection is NOT recommended.

Significant residential growth is called for in the eastern part of the Study Area, with the highest densities being in the intersection of Optimist Club Road with Little Egypt and St. James Church Road.

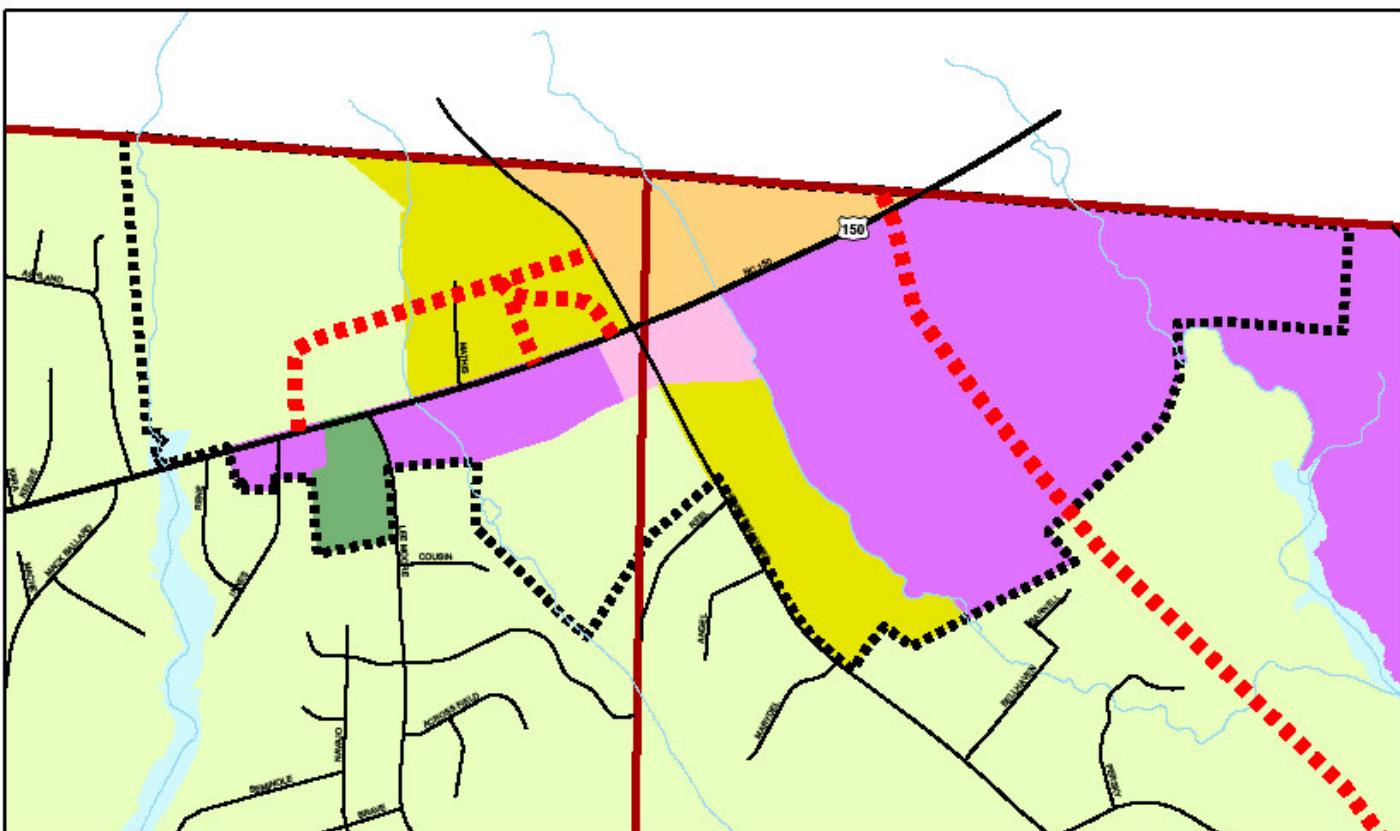
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Map 4-1 Lincoln County Future Land Use Plan



Map 4-2

Future Land Use Plan NC 150 and New NC 16



Note: Lake Norman Bike Route not shown

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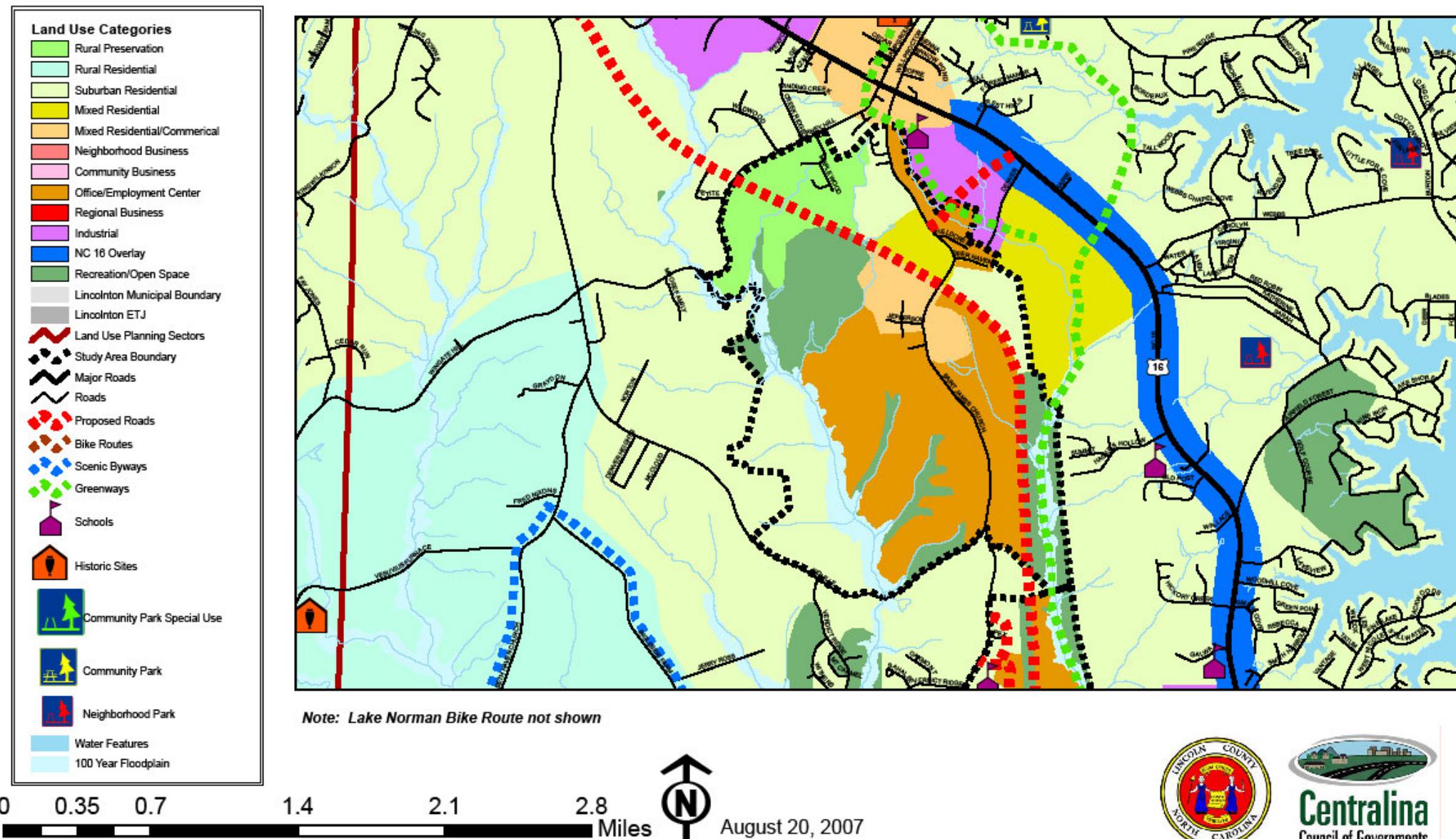


August 20, 2007



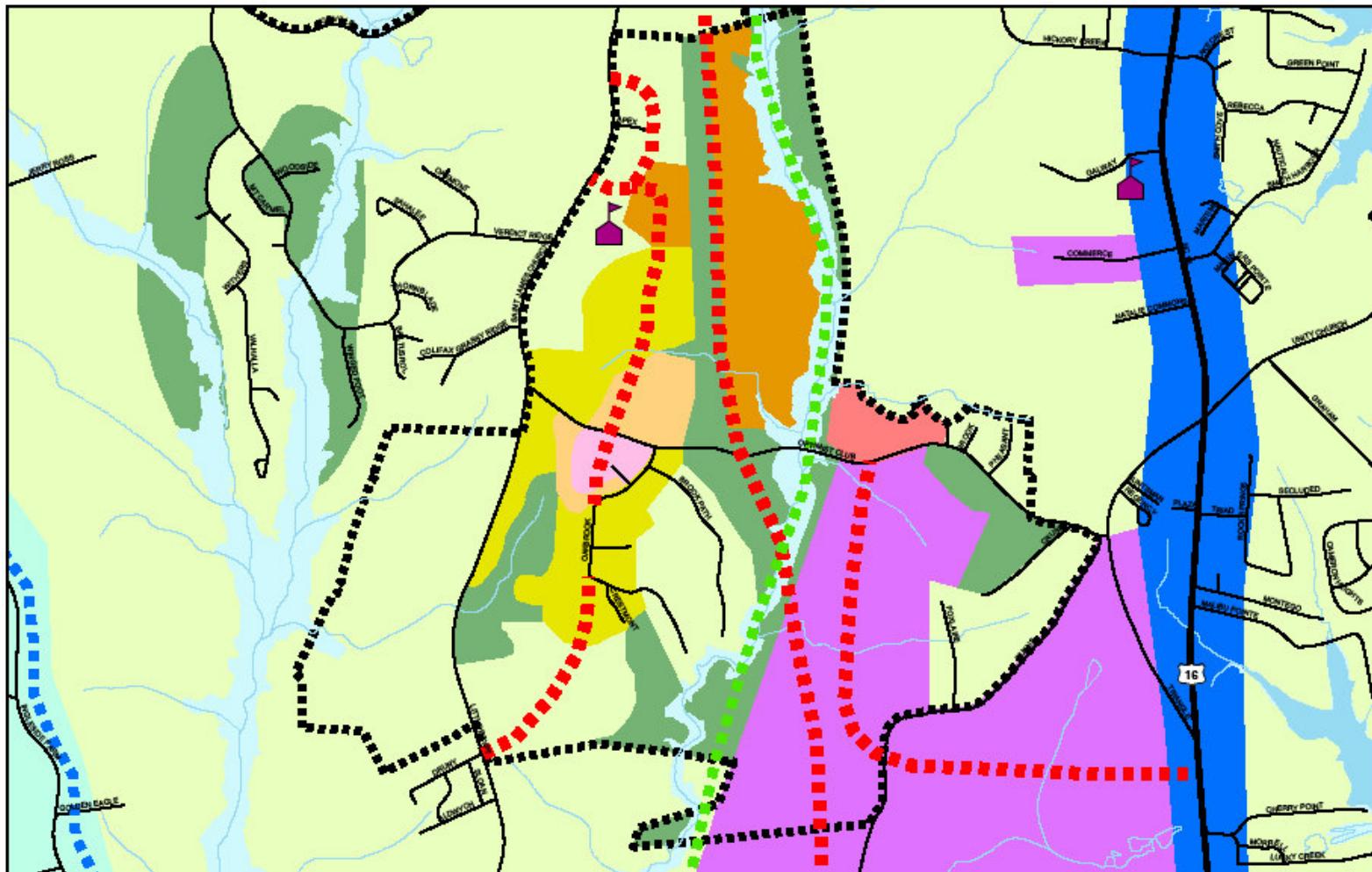
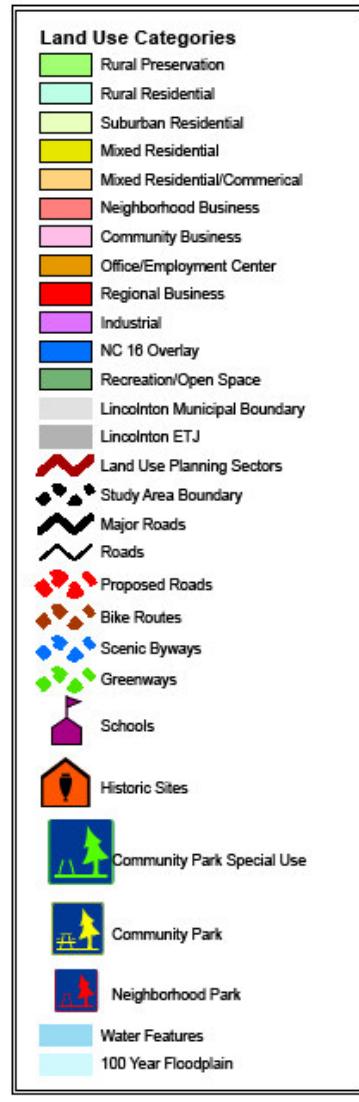
Map 4-3

Future Land Use Plan St. James Church Road and NC 16



Map 4-4

Future Land Use Plan Optimist Club Road and NC 16



Note: Lake Norman Bike Route not shown



August 20, 2007



Chapter 5

Guiding Principles, Objectives, and Strategies

Guiding Principle 1

Infrastructure Shall Direct Growth in Lincoln County

OVERVIEW- Lincoln County is largely responsible for providing public water and sanitary sewer services in unincorporated portions of the County. The County has adopted a plan for expansion of these services based upon efficient use of public investment and projected need, as well as the provision of supporting major transportation infrastructure. Additionally, in partnership with the Lincoln County Board of Education and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the County cooperates in the provision of adequate public schools and major transportation infrastructure. These facilities—public water, sanitary sewer, schools, and major transportation infrastructure—are the facilities that both direct and support growth.

In keeping with the County's interest for maximizing the return on public investment, growth is encouraged where the infrastructure is planned or in place to support it. Further, it is in keeping with the County's interest to support strategic expansions of both public utilities and transportation infrastructure in the most efficient manner possible, which would tend to support land use regulations that call for orderly, more compact development patterns in such areas. Such an

approach is deemed to be in the County's long-term best interest, as it will maximize the efficiency of public expenditures necessary to support a growing population and will ensure that growth does not outstrip the County's ability to provide needed facilities in a timely manner.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Ensure that the County's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is used as the primary guide for both future utility and other public infrastructure improvements and future development.

STRATEGY 1.1.1: Identify existing, planned and “expansion” areas where public utilities and public infrastructure is or will be provided by the County or other responsible partnership agency.

COMMENTARY: One of the most important aspects of guiding future growth lies with the availability of public water and public sewer. Only those areas with both public water and sewer typically can accommodate more intensive growth and higher densities (because neither wells drawing from groundwater or large septic fields are needed). Furthermore, areas with both public water and sewer need a user base to pay for them, so “utilities directing growth” are a mutually supportive principle. Lincoln County should encourage growth in those areas where infrastructure (and capacity) currently exist and/or where new infrastructure is proposed or can easily be accommodated.

The Lincoln County Public Works Department was asked to identify those areas of the County targeted for water and sewer service expansion through 2023. Those areas are identified on Map 2-3. With this information, along with current commuting patterns and the County's Transportation Improvement Plan (refer to Maps 2-7 and 2-10) information in hand, the Steering Committee recommended that much

Lincoln County Land Use Plan

of the County's additional residential development be accommodated in the East and East Central portions of the County. The pattern of both water/sewer expansion and major transportation infrastructure support the trend of growth emanating from Charlotte-Mecklenburg, with the rate of growth likely to accelerate in the future. (NOTE: The County's population is estimated to rise from 63,780 in 2000 to 125,932 by 2030...a rise of 97.5 percent.) The Steering Committee recommends that the eastern portion of the County be equipped to accommodate this growth, and that such an approach is in keeping with the CIP. Carolinas Medical Center is currently searching several locations from the City of Lincolnton to Ironton for a new hospital to be constructed. No date has been projected at this time.

Currently, Lincoln County has a fairly extensive water network, primarily in the eastern and central portions of the County. In addition, public sewer is available in eastern Lincoln County under the auspices of the Lincoln County Water and Sewer System. Lincoln County historically has and will continue to coordinate its planning activities with the Lincoln County Board of Education. The ability to provide adequate schools within a reasonable distance of the home is necessary to achieve this land use plan objective and is central to the quality of life for existing and future residents.

STRATEGY 1.1.2: Review (with an eye toward strengthening) the County's standards for mandated connections to public utility systems.

COMMENTARY: Mandated connections to public water and sewer lines are addressed in Section 406 of the Lincoln County Subdivision Ordinance. Those provisions require a

hook-on if the subdivision lies within 200-1500 feet (depending on the number of lots in the subdivision) of an existing utility and it is "legally possible and practical" for a subdivision to connect to an existing line. In order to encourage more compact, planned and orderly growth in the targeted growth (and utility expansion) areas of the County, strengthening the County's water and sewer tie-in mandate should be considered. The regulations that the County currently has refer only to subdivisions and not to individual developments not associated with the subdivision of land. Tie-in mandates should be applied to all developments in the targeted growth areas, so long as capacity exists.

STRATEGY 1.1.3: Coordinate with the Lincoln County Board of Education, the East Lincoln County Water and Sewer District, and other partner agencies in the development of capital improvement programs sufficient to address projected growth in the County.

STRATEGY 1.1.4: Consider adoption of an "Adequate Public Facilities Program" (APFP) that formally ties development to the ability to serve that development through existing and planned infrastructure.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Include consideration of major transportation infrastructure in development planning decisions and ensure that provisions are in place that both support the continued functionality of the backbone transportation network, and the addition of population to the County.

STRATEGY 1.2.1: Consider NCDOT's Strategic Highway Corridors as major people-and-freight movers and use them as a secondary factor in directing development.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1.2.2: Ensure the development of a local transportation network that facilitates local traffic flow and thereby supports the maintenance of the Strategic Highway Corridors (SHC's) for their primary functions.

COMMENTARY: Lincoln County currently has four existing or planned Strategic Highway Corridors (as defined by the NC Department of Transportation): US 321, NC 73, NC 150, and NC 16. These SHC's represent the County's backbone network of roads designed to move traffic over longer distances. With the exception of NC 150 between Lincolnton and the Gaston County line, all are located in the eastern or central portions of the County. The County cannot widen or improve these roads if they become clogged with local traffic (all public roads in unincorporated areas in North Carolina are owned and maintained by NCDOT); and if this happens, they will cease to perform their functions as Strategic Highway Corridors. Consequently, development considerations must protect the corridors for their strategic functions, ensuring that as areas develop, they are served by a network of connecting roads that can accommodate local traffic, and/or to develop in ways that support transit, vanpooling, biking, or walking (see Guiding Principle 2).

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Promote denser development (i.e., residential development greater than 2 units per acre, employment centers, regional shopping facilities, etc.) in areas and in forms that support existing or planned transportation and public utility infrastructure, with adequate capacity.

STRATEGY 1.3.1: Locate denser development in areas where it will be sup-

ported by existing public utility and transportation infrastructure with adequate capacity (or where the local transportation infrastructure can be provided through the development process), or where such adequate infrastructure will be developed concurrently.

COMMENTARY: In most cases, adequate transportation infrastructure will not be in place anywhere that new development is locating—so it will be important to provide it through the development process. Public utility infrastructure also may not be in place at the time the development is approved but should be sufficiently underway to be in place at the time of completion.

STRATEGY 1.3.2: Reserved

STRATEGY 1.3.3: Where infrastructure is expanded to support new development (public utilities and local road networks), require that such expansion be done in a manner that will support the later redevelopment of the area in a denser manner without requiring major infrastructure changes.

COMMENTARY: Experience has shown that the neighborhoods that are most able to adapt to change over time without significant public expense are those that are served with adequate public water/sewer on the front end and those that have shorter block lengths and a well-connected street network. These neighborhoods can begin as larger single-family lots, and morph over time to townhomes and even denser development—with virtually no public expenditure, and with little developer expenditure. Furthermore, they tend to keep their value over time, because they always have redevelopment potential. This need not mean a strictly grid like street pattern or a

major utility collector system—but it does mean requiring street connectivity, shorter block lengths, and not running 2" water pipes everywhere and expecting them to serve long-term needs.

Guiding Principle 2

Provide for an Adequate Transportation Infrastructure to Serve Current and Future Populations

OVERVIEW- Lincoln County has recognized that an adequate transportation system is a critical part of the infrastructure needed to support growth. However, since counties in North Carolina do not build or maintain roads, Lincoln County must either request projects from NCDOT, or ensure that adequate facilities are provided as a part of the development process. Furthermore, the County recognizes that a transportation system is inclusive of more than just roads—it may also include transit, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities. All transportation facilities must be matched appropriately with land uses and development patterns to ensure that the transportation facilities maintain their functionality, and that the land uses and development patterns make it easy for people and goods to use the various facilities to get where they need to go. Lincoln County has identified a number of tools and strategies that will work toward the adequacy of the transportation infrastructure, even in the absence of road-building ability.

OBJECTIVE 2.1- Ensure that transportation facilities are adequately provided for in the development of new projects, both in terms of planning and construction, and that the facilities are appropriately matched to the proposed development patterns.

STRATEGY 2.1.1: Develop a land use and transportation policy based on best practices that can be used to guide and help evaluate the appropriateness of particular land development/transportation pairings in new developments and developments undergoing significant renewal.

STRATEGY 2.1.2: Strengthen access management standards in the County's subdivision and zoning ordinances.

COMMENTARY: Section 405.4 of the County's Subdivision Ordinance gives the County the ability to require reverse frontage for subdivisions on a handful of roads in Lincoln County. This mandate does not exist elsewhere in the County nor does it apply to developments that do not involve a subdivision. There are no regulations either in the County's zoning or subdivision ordinances that deal with other access management issues such as number of curb cuts per lot/development, distances between curb cuts, or distance of curb cuts from corners. Moreover, there are no differences in minimum lot width regulations on lots on major highways in the County as opposed to local streets. Thus, an overhaul to the County's access management standards is needed. Between now and the time these regulations are put in place, the County should use caution when reviewing conditional use permit applications that will create a significant number of new curb cuts on heavily traveled roads. Caution should be exercised in ensuring that new curb cuts are not excessive in number and their location (s) will not serve to impede the flow of traffic in the future.

STRATEGY 2.1.3: Coordinate with the NCDOT and other local and regional partner agencies (e.g., Lake Norman RPO) in the development of capital improvement programs and road plans sufficient to address projected growth in the County.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Maintain Strategic Highway Corridors and other major numbered highways (e.g., NC 10) as fully functional “distance” movers of people and goods, so that those facilities maintain their functionality for longer trips, thus maximizing the benefit of the public investment in their improvement.

STRATEGY 2.2.1: Apply access management standards referenced in Strategy 2.1.2 more stringently to these facilities (for example, requiring a second access/egress point on a side road).

STRATEGY 2.2.2: Ensure that an adequate, hierarchical and connective road network for local traffic is established through the development process to remove excessive local traffic from these major numbered highways and Strategic Highway Corridors (see Strategy 1.2.2).

COMMENTARY: As major new developments go in, they are designed with a couple of roads to serve as collector streets that have certain characteristics (e.g., they are wider, contain fewer homes and may have landscaped medians). Such streets can even have a stub out to connect to other streets in future subdivisions. The benefit of this is that there are streets designed with the capacity to carry traffic from the subdivision to major roadways, and that not everyone who wants to go from one subdivision to the next has to go out on to the major road to do so. This is the concept that some of the most beautiful streets in the region, including Queens Road West in Charlotte, follow.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Plan for pedestrian facilities, and bikeways, as referenced in the Lincoln County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) and other offi-

cially adopted transportation plans. Where such bikeways are adjacent to or traverse a proposed development, require implementation as a part of new development.

STRATEGY 2.3.1: Plan for pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, trails, and greenways) in new residential developments in a manner that will attract walkers for transportation and recreation purposes, and ensure connection with compatible land uses.

STRATEGY 2.3.2: Ensure that commercial and mixed-use nodes are connected by and well served with safe and attractive pedestrian facilities.

COMMENTARY: Pedestrian facilities are nice for recreation, but to serve all of the County’s purposes, they must also be usable for transportation. This means that the facilities must be designed in a way that encourages pedestrian use, links destinations, and that the supporting land uses are dense enough, compatible enough, and safe enough that people feel comfortable using walking as a means of transportation.

STRATEGY 2.3.3: Create a comprehensive bicycle path network in the County. Require improvements to include bicycle lanes along those roads as subdivisions and development occur.

COMMENTARY: The Lake Norman Bike Route (LNBR) was prepared in 2006 and adopted by the Lake Norman RPO, the regional transportation planning agency that services Lincoln County. The Plan calls for a network of bicycle routes in Eastern Lincoln County primarily along NC 73, Little Egypt, St. James Church and Campground Roads, as well as along a series of nearby intersecting local roads. A copy of the Plan is shown in

Map 2-8. Future developments along such roads should take the bicycle improvements shown in the Plan into consideration and incorporate them into development proposals so that developments in this area have a linkage to these routes.

The LNBR only addresses the County's bicycle needs in the eastern portion of the County. A comprehensive bicycle route improvement strategy throughout the remaining portions of the County is needed. Locations for additional bicycle routes are recommended along:

- NC 182
- Reepsville Road
- NC 73

It is recommended that the County work with NCDOT and the Lake Norman RPO to more formally study the County's future bicycle needs.

STRATEGY 2.3.4: Provide bicycle amenities in subdivisions and other proposed developments, as well as along frontage of existing roads, consistent with NCDOT policies and approved bicycle plans. Provide for connectivity among compatible land uses as identified in Strategy 2.1.1 and with the bicycle routes identified on the LNBR, where they exist.

COMMENTARY: The County's development regulations are silent with respect to bicycle amenities and improvements. The regulations need to be improved to address (1) provision of bicycle amenities such as bicycle racks in larger developments located along proposed bicycle routes (i.e., requiring larger shopping facilities, libraries, and other developments likely to receive bicycle traffic) to provide onsite bicycle racks) and (2) needed bicycle improvements within subdivisions and other large planned developments.

OBJECTIVE 2.4: Take steps to ensure that rights-of-way are provided and protected to facilitate logical transportation connections.

STRATEGY 2.4.1: Connectivity and subdivision road standards should be codified to facilitate collector road networks as a part of new development and to facilitate the movement of emergency vehicles.

COMMENTARY: The Lincoln County Subdivision Ordinance should be strengthened regarding connectivity (i.e., require streets to extend to the property's external boundary to allow for connection to future developments.) Connectivity is not mandated and can be required only on a case-by-case basis. To date, connectivity has been the exception, rather than the rule in Lincoln County. Updating connectivity standards, for both subdivisions and between individual uses along major roads, would help ease congestion on the County's existing road network and would provide County residents with increased transportation options.

STRATEGY 2.4.2: Site development standards should preserve rights-of-way for roads proposed in the current Lincoln County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP).

COMMENTARY: Front yard setback areas are normally established and measured from the edge of the right-of-way line. The County CTP calls for many roads to eventually be widened. In most cases, rights-of-way will have to be purchased to accommodate the wider roads. Right-of-way purchase costs rise drastically if buildings are located within or very close to the right-of-way area to be purchased. To ensure that no new buildings encroach proposed right-of-way areas, an overlay-zoning district

can be established which would require buildings to be set back from the proposed, rather than the current, right-of-way line. Such overlay districts are in effect in many nearby jurisdictions including Gastonia and Gaston County.

Guiding Principle 3

Community Facilities (Including Schools, Libraries, and Parks) Shall be Considered When Making Land Use Decisions

OVERVIEW- Community facilities represent a form of public investment to provide necessary services or quality of life amenities to the larger community. Key facilities must be provided as new growth occurs, including law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, parks and recreation facilities, schools, libraries, and other general government services. As public investments, it is intended that they receive full use so that they can be of maximum benefit. Their location is often a stimulant to development (for example, when a school is built and water and sewer are extended to it, other development will follow). Consequently, no community facility functions effectively in a vacuum, or without due consideration having been given to its impact on the surrounding area. In order to gain maximum benefit and minimum negative consequences from the location of community facilities, Lincoln County's best interests are served by ensuring that community facilities locations are considered in the land use planning and development process.

OBJECTIVE 3.1- Integrate community facilities into the planning process for new and expanded residential, commercial, and industrial developments in Lincoln County

STRATEGY 3.1.1: Regularly update the identified proposed locations of public facilities.

COMMENTARY: Map 4-1, the Future Land Use Plan, shows the known location of all public facilities (existing and proposed) that will likely be magnets for future development or serve as significant destination points for County residents. These include water and sewer facilities, schools, libraries, hospitals, parks, etc. Consideration should be taken by the County to ensure that nearby development is in harmony with, contextually appropriate with, and appropriately linked to these facilities. However, as community facilities' planning is an ongoing process, it will be important to regularly update the mapping of proposed locations.

STRATEGY 3.1.2: Allow for higher residential densities and encourage connectivity in areas in close proximity to appropriate current and future community facilities to encourage usage.

COMMENTARY: Certain public facilities (i.e., schools and parks) benefit by having residential development in close proximity. Not only are public and private transportation costs lowered, but also enabling children to walk to and attend a "neighborhood school," garners not only transportation but also health benefits. Land use regulations could be altered in the future to allow for greater densities in close proximity to such sites so long as the utility and transportation infrastructures are in place (or provided as a part of the development process) to be able to support the increased density.

STRATEGY 3.1.3: Require pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and accessibility to appropriate community uses.

COMMENTARY: Public facilities such as schools, libraries and parks will have large number of children as users. Providing for a sidewalk, bicycle path, or walking trail network from nearby developments will increase both safety and facility usage, and will promote public health through increased activity. Subdivision and site plan standards should be changed to mandate such connectivity and accessibility for uses for which such connectivity is desirable.

STRATEGY 3.1.4: Encourage dedication or preservation of land for such sites, should the development impact potential sites for community facilities.

COMMENTARY: NCGS 153A-331 states that a County subdivision ordinance “may provide that a developer provide funds to the county whereby the county may acquire recreational land or areas to serve the development.” Such language is not currently contained within the Lincoln County Subdivision Ordinance; developers are instead required in larger subdivisions to set aside some open area. The General Statute, however, permits “fees in lieu” as an additional tool and allows the creation of a fund to purchase lands for passive or active recreation. Given the amount of residential development forecast for Lincoln County and with land prices steadily on the rise, having such a requirement in the County’s subdivision ordinance would help achieve the goals contained in the Lincolnton-Lincoln County Comprehensive Parks and Master Recreation Plan (refer to Map 2-4). This Plan calls for the development of ten (10) new park sites

throughout the County. To date, the County has not purchased land for all of these sites. Thus, development fees could be used to help offset purchase and/or site development costs.

STRATEGY 3.1.5: Consider inclusion of public schools in a formal Adequate Public Facilities Program (APFP).

COMMENTARY: Public school capacity is critical to the quality of life for existing and future residents of Lincoln County and for the development of a strong economic base in the community. Lincoln County should continue its coordination with the Lincoln County Board of Education to ensure that as new residential developments occur, adequate school capacity – at all levels – is, or will be available within a reasonable period of time, to serve that development. New residential development potential should not be approved until it is verified that sufficient school capacity will be available to serve additional students. This type of program will be best administered through a formal APFP and through the continued coordination for funding and schools planning between the County and the Lincoln County Board of Education.

STRATEGY 3.1.6: Coordinate with the other partner agencies in the development of capital improvement programs sufficient to address projected growth in the County.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Determine one or more appropriate sites for the location a new sanitary landfill and for a construction and demolition (i.e., C and D) landfill.

STRATEGY 3.2.1: Given the extraordinary amount of growth taking place in Lincoln County, the County will need to begin looking at a new site for a landfill. The

County's current landfill, located on Crouse Road in Western Lincoln County) is anticipated to reach capacity within the next 20-25 years. Criteria that the County should use in locating a new facility are as follows:

- **Size** – 300 to 400 acres or more
(NOTE: The County's current landfill is approximately 300 acres in area.)
- **Accessibility** – The site should have good accessibility for heavy truck traffic, which would likely also give the public good accessibility.
- **Topography**- Low-lying land that could be filled without building a mountain is preferred.
- **Waterways** - The site should not be near or adjacent to any sensitive waterways, creeks or rivers.
- **Soils** - There should be plenty of cover dirt on site or at least nearby. The site should have suitable soils (i.e., soils with low permeability) for permitting of landfill. Groundwater at the site should at a level such that it would not be a permitting issue.
- **Existing Development** - The site should not be near existing neighborhoods. Site considerations should define compatible adjacent land uses for a landfill. The site should also be centrally located to the County's population, as this will cut down on travel time, vehicle miles traveled and the cost of bringing the majority of the waste generated in the County to the site.

Guiding Principle 4

Economic Development Opportunities Shall be Encouraged In Targeted Areas of the County

OVERVIEW- It is in Lincoln County's best interest to retain a healthy mix of residential and economic (job-creating) development. No county can financially afford to simply be a "bedroom community," and the vitality of the County in the longer term requires planning now for sustaining a strong economic base. A part of that planning involves how and where job-creating land uses should be located, and how they should relate to adjacent uses. Furthermore, it is in the County's interest to seek to locate and provide those locations for industry that are most environmentally appropriate and that mesh with the other Guiding Principles listed in this Plan.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Designate areas of the County for future industrial/ distribution economic development Sites.

STRATEGY 4.1.1: Identify the location of future prime Industrial / manufacturing/distribution employment centers.

COMMENTARY: A number of areas on Map 4-1) are designated for prime industrial employment centers (i.e., concentrated areas of significant industrial and manufacturing uses.) Such uses provide significant benefit to the County in the form of employment opportunities and tax revenues. A number of existing industrial areas are found in the County and are currently zoned for industrial purposes (i.e., Lincoln County Industrial Park off US 321; the Duke Energy facility and nearby sites off Old

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Plank Road, etc.) As the County grows, additional areas for industrial development will be needed. In some cases, these areas are located in areas targeted for population growth, and may be competing with residential uses for highway access. While potential areas for new residential development are relatively plentiful, future industrial areas are limited in both number and size. Given their overall positive impact on the County, rezoning of these areas to an industrial type zoning classification may be needed to remove the opportunity for these areas to be converted to residential uses and other uses not necessarily compatible for industrial-type development.

STRATEGY 4.1.2: Promote the inclusion of appropriate job-creating uses both in mixed-use areas and adjacent to larger residential areas to provide the potential of shorter commute times/reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

COMMENTARY: The nature of industrial uses has changed significantly in recent years with high-tech, low-impact industrial uses becoming more and more common. Current land use regulations in the County do not make such distinctions and virtually all industrial uses are required to be located in either the I-G (General Industrial) or L-I (Light Industrial) zoning districts. Allowing for “low-impact” industrial uses (i.e., industrial uses that are indistinguishable from other non-residential uses in both appearance and external impact) in the County’s commercial and mixed-use zoning districts is recommended and would provide the County with beneficial long-term impacts. For example, light-industrial uses frequently can share business parks with office and retail uses, with no external hint of the industrial use.

STRATEGY 4.1.3: Create criteria for stand-alone industrial type uses to develop in designated areas in the County without being subject to “spot zoning” considerations

COMMENTARY: While a number of planned industrial districts are identified on Map 4-1 (FLUP), other areas that may be suitable for industrial development exist in the County and requests for rezoning to an industrial-type zoning district will occur. In order to assist the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners in reviewing these requests and to overcome a “spot zoning” challenge, it is recommended that the County develop a checklist of attributes to consider when these requests arise. Issues that should be taken into consideration include (but are not limited to):

- Acreage of Tract...requiring that any such rezoning request contain a minimum amount of acreage.
- Location of Tract...requiring that the tract be located on a major or minor arterial (or specifically designated highways) as opposed to having industries potentially located anywhere in the County. Location of such industries along potential “scenic byways” (refer to Strategy 5.1.1) should be discouraged.
- Types of Industries...limiting industries to “light industrial” types and other industrial uses commonly found in rural and semi-rural areas.
- Proximity of Neighboring Uses...requiring that new industries be located a certain distance from existing residential concentrations. Landscaped buffering also may be appropriate in some situations

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Update the County’s land use regulations to help foster desired economic growth.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 4.2.1: Review land use regulations to ensure that desired (and undesired) industrial-type uses are properly addressed in the County's land use regulations

COMMENTARY: The County's land use regulations regarding industrial uses remain largely unchanged since when they were first written in 1992. As mentioned, there are two main zoning districts (I-G, the General Industrial District that allows for both "light" and "heavy" industrial uses, and the L-I Light Industrial district that allows for "light" industries only.) As the County has grown in recent years, and with significant future residential development forecast, the County may want to take a different approach towards industrial zoning regulations that allows for economic and industrial development, yet allays residents' fears of having industrial uses nearby (e.g., reduction in property values, environmental degradation; increased noise; traffic, etc.) Steps that the County could take include:

- Removing the most noxious industrial uses from potentially locating in the County.
- Establishing performance criteria for new industries to meet...especially those located in close proximity to existing residential uses

[NOTE: As indicated in Strategy 4.1.1, future industrial sites will be targeted in areas away from (or at least buffered from) residential concentrations. Moreover, it is recommended that some of these areas be zoned to prevent competing uses (e.g., residential subdivisions) from taking hold. Given growth pressures that exist in the County, however, there will be instances where new industrial and residential development will

abut each other. Thus, having criteria in place to ensure that both can be "good neighbors" will be in the County's long-term best interest.]

STRATEGY 4.2.2: Consider the "conditional zoning" technique as a tool for rezoning for land uses that may have significant impact on neighboring land uses.

COMMENTARY: Certain uses such as big box stores, larger shopping centers, industrial uses, etc. may have far reaching impacts both at the local level (i.e., adjoining and nearby properties and transportation networks) and for the County as a whole. Oftentimes, such uses will be subject to a rezoning. To properly address the pros and cons of these uses and the impacts that they will have on the County, a full discussion and evaluation will need to occur. The "conditional zoning" technique may be a good way to address such concerns. Conditional zoning (which currently is NOT available in Lincoln County) is a legislative tool and allows for input and dialogue by decision makers and the general public prior to a public hearing being held. Given that it is a legislative rather than a quasi-judicial process, discussions between the applicant and County officials and decision makers can be held. Furthermore, the conditional zoning technique usually mandates the holding of one or more public informational meetings that engage all stakeholders (including neighboring property owners) in discussions with the applicant. Thus, issues of concern are given an opportunity to be fully addressed and discussed by all stakeholders other than at the public hearing (which is normally the case with "parallel conditional use zoning" which currently is allowed in Lincoln County.)
the growing population.

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Make adequate provision for additional major retail development to support the growing population.

STRATEGY 4.3.1: Identify locations where major retail development is appropriate and/or desired.

STRATEGY 4.3.2: Create guidelines for major retail development that ensure:

- Appropriate connectivity and access management
- Reuse potential
- Contextual appropriateness

COMMENTARY: Major retail development is a good source of tax revenues and employment, but generates much more traffic than industrial development because it is used more hours of the day (typically) and also because it has a larger clientele. Consequently, major retail development can have as much or greater impact than industrial development on surrounding uses and on the transportation infrastructure, and must be sited and planned for with as much or even more care.

STRATEGY 4.3.3: Modify parking standards to reduce the amount of off-street parking, prohibit or discourage large expanses of parking lots, particularly between buildings and the road, and increase aesthetics within parking lots.

Commentary: Lincoln County's zoning regulations require that most retail uses provide one parking space per two-hundred square feet of gross floor area. This standard should be re-evaluated, as there has been a

trend in many other jurisdictions to reduce the required number of parking spaces that uses are required to provide. The norm in most other communities is either 1/250 or 1/300. Reducing the amount of required parking spaces reduces development costs, makes sites more feasible for development, and can help preserve existing vegetation.

The County's current land use regulations also do not address where parking should be located on the lot. Most developments have their parking lots located in the front yard (i.e., between the building and the adjoining street.) Thus, in more heavily developed areas (e.g., along Old NC 16) the "sea of asphalt" look prevails. A number of neighboring jurisdictions have modified their land use regulations to limit the amount of parking in the front yard and/or require significant landscaping in off-street parking areas. Modifying Lincoln County's land use regulations in both of these areas would be in the County's best interest. Other things that the County could do are to require the placement of trees, shrubs, and/or rain gardens in off-street parking areas as a means of breaking up the "sea of asphalt" and to increase aesthetics (as well as to limit run-off.)

STRATEGY 4.3.4: Apply urban design and development standards to those areas that currently are or are anticipated to be urban (i.e., served by both public water and sewer) in nature.

Commentary: Lincoln County's land use regulations are largely silent with respect to non-residential building design. There are no standards for design elements such as building orientation, external building materials, fenestration (i.e., placement of windows), building articulation, location of dumpsters and HVAC equipment, yard landscaping, etc. Significant growth IS coming to Lincoln County. Many in

jurisdictions that abut the County have regulations in place that address these criteria. It is recommended that Lincoln County take necessary steps to promote quality design in future development. One means of addressing these issues would be to enhance and/or expand the current highway overlay zoning district where such design criteria would be in place. (NOTE: This was recommended along the existing NC 16 Corridor in Strategy 6.5.1. Expanding the geography of this zoning district to areas where urban-type growth and development is forecast is also recommended.)

Guiding Principle 5

The County's Natural Beauty and Resources Shall be Preserved

OVERVIEW: Lincoln County's rolling countryside stretches from Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake in the east to the foot-hills of the South Mountains in the west. Within the County are greenways, protected species, historic buildings and locations, as well as a population with a strong appreciation of the County's natural resources and heritage. Preserving and enhancing the County's natural features was a common theme mentioned by residents who spoke at public forums held in association with the development of this Plan. As the County grows, development should occur in a manner that not only protects the County's natural and historic assets, but also wherever possible, enhances them.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Preserve viewsheds along the County's road network, especially in those portions of the County that are most likely to retain a rural character.

STRATEGY 5.1.1: Establish a "Scenic Byways" road network in Lincoln County as a means of promoting both tourism and the County's rural character. Roads that should be considered by NCDOT for Scenic Byway status include:

- Portions of Killian and Reepsville Roads
- NC 182
- Portions of Old Plank, Beth Haven Church and Ingleside Farm Roads

COMMENTARY: Scenic byways are designated by NCDOT to give motorists, bicyclists, and tourists an opportunity to see and enjoy scenic rural areas of the State. NCDOT has designated 45 such byways in the State to date...although none are currently located in Lincoln County. In order to promote tourism in Lincoln County, designation of roads to "scenic byway" status is encouraged. Once designation occurs, the road gets clearly marked with highway signs and the official Scenic Byways logo. One of the factors used to determine whether a road is classified as a "scenic byway" is that it is rural and scenic in nature and contains "little or no development along the route which detracts from the natural character and quality of the byway." Thus, land use regulations along potential byway routes should be examined NOW to help ensure that scenic byway designation is granted in the future. Some examples include:

- Adoption of view shed protection regulations along lots that front the potential byway route
- Adoption of tree preservation regulations
- Reviewing regulations to ensure that potentially "incompatible" land uses are prohibited from locating along these routes

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- Working with developers to help foster the development of bicycle routes or potential greenways along these roads

STRATEGY 5.1.2: Require subdivisions on rural roads that are not designated as “scenic byways” to have a conservation buffer along the road to preserve the viewshed.

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Expand the network of parks, greenways and trails in the County.

STRATEGY 5.2.1: Work towards implementation of the City-County’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

COMMENTARY: The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in 2006 and calls for the creation of:

- 5 New Community Parks
- 1 New Community Special Use Park
- 4 New Neighborhood Parks
- A greenway network extending almost along the entire width of the County from Lake Norman to beyond the West Lincoln High School
- Master Plan for the Beattys Ford Park along Lake Norman and the West Lincoln Park of NC 27

The Plan, as an officially adopted policy statement from the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners, should be considered by the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners when considering zoning changes per NCGS 153A-341. The location of all existing and proposed recreation sites is shown on Map 2-5 and Map 4-1). Future land use decisions need to be made with these recreation sites in mind, especially when considering zoning changes and conditional use per-

mit requests on adjacent or nearby sites that could have a potential impact on the viability of those sites. As stated in Strategy 3.1.4, it is also recommended that a “fee-in-lieu” option be placed in the County’s subdivision regulations to help generate funds that could be used to help purchase or develop one or more of these sites.

STRATEGY 5.2.2: Work in concert with Lincolnton and the adjoining local governments to expand current greenways and recreational facilities in greater Lincolnton and beyond.

COMMENTARY: The Parks and Recreation Master Plan addressed long-term recreation needs both in the City of Lincolnton and Lincoln County. It is important that both communities be mutually aware of the nature and content of these plans when making future land use decisions. Thus, correspondence and notification with each other on land use decisions that are near jurisdictional boundaries of the City and County (as well as with the Cities of Maiden and High Shoals, Catawba County, Gaston County and Cleveland County) is encouraged to ensure coordination and preservation of recreational opportunities for all Lincoln County residents.

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Preserve open space areas in the County.

STRATEGY 5.3.1: Provide options in subdivision development (e.g., traditional, cluster-conservation, rural.)

COMMENTARY: Current land use regulations specify minimum lot sizes in the various zoning districts. When a tract is to be subdivided, allowed deviations from these minimum lot sizes are limited. Except in the P-R and P-MU districts and in zoning districts

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designed for properties on or in the immediate vicinity of Lake Norman, minimum lot sizes must either be 22,500, 32,500 or 43,560 square feet in area. Furthermore, there are no requirements for any common open space in any subdivision. This latter requirement holds true in all zoning districts. Given the rapid growth of the Charlotte region, many jurisdictions have begun to look at alternative ways of subdividing land and preserving open space. Examples include conservation and open space subdivisions where areas of open space are preserved in exchange for smaller lot sizes. Examples of open space preservation in nearby communities that have these regulations range from 20-50 percent. These regulations work best where public water and sewer are available but can work in other areas where septic tank drain fields are located in common open areas. Most communities provide these alternative subdivision methods as options; some give density bonuses to encourage developers to use them and preserve open space. Application of these alternative subdivision methods is strongly encouraged in Lincoln County.

STRATEGY 5.3.2: Amend land use regulations in a manner that promotes the preservation of the County's tree canopy.

COMMENTARY: With development occurring at a rapid pace in the County, tree preservation is becoming an increasingly important issue. The County does not have any specific standards regarding tree preservation in any of its ordinances at this time. Options that the County may consider include, but are not limited to:

- Mandating that tree canopy studies be undertaken for larger-sized developments and that pro-active steps be

taken to preserve older and larger-sized trees.

- Prohibiting clear-cutting of land for development (**NOTE:** This will require that Lincoln County receive special legislation that authorizes this to occur.)
- Requiring the placement of street trees in urbanizing portions of the County
- Adopting impervious surface ratio requirements (which limit the amount of impervious surface that can be placed on a lot.)

OBJECTIVE 5.4: Ensure that the County's water resources, including Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake, are not negatively impacted as a result of development occurring in the County.

STRATEGY 5.4.1: Review buffer yard and setback standards for effectiveness in maintaining water quality.

STRATEGY 5.4.2: Monitor the effectiveness of the County's sedimentation and erosion control ordinance and Streamside Buffer Regulations.

STRATEGY 5.4.3: Consider the implementation of riparian-forested buffers and maintain updated flood mapping to discourage development in areas likely to flood and/or where development may negatively impact streams.

COMMENTARY: While Lincoln County does not fall under NPDES Phase II regulations at this time, the County does face a number of issues related to stormwater management because of its urbanization.

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Among the water quality issues that urbanizing areas face are loss of riparian buffers that filter pollutants before they enter the streams, and expansion of the FEMA flood zone due to upstream development. It would be in the County's best interests to carefully monitor stormwater issues to ensure that any necessary controls can be put in place before a problem arises.

OBJECTIVE 5.5: Ensure that the Integrity of the County's Historic Buildings is Maintained as Growth and Development Occur.

STRATEGY 5.5.1: Ensure that new development in proximity to sites on the local and national Historic Registers does not deter from the viability and aesthetics of such sites.

COMMENTARY: Map 2.11 identifies the list of buildings and properties on the local and national Historic Registers. A total of seventeen sites (outside the City of Lincolnton) are located on either Register. The County has one of the largest inventories in the region of sites that date back to the 18th and 19th centuries and, accordingly, helps distinguish Lincoln County from its neighbors. With the County's population expected to nearly double by 2030, pressure to develop near one or more of these sites will undoubtedly occur. While standards are in place to protect the sites that are on the Historic Register, none are in place to ensure compatibility of new development on nearby sites. One suggested way to address this situation is by placing a finding in the County's land use regulations that any new use that (1) is subject to a conditional use permit, and (2) lies within a certain distance (e.g., within 1,000 feet) of a site on the Historic Register, be developed in such a manner

to be harmony so as not to denigrate its historic character.

Guiding Principle 6

Provide for Well-Designed and Well-Integrated Developments Throughout Lincoln County

OVERVIEW- With Lincoln County's population projected to double by 2030, and its interest in maintaining a balance between residential and commercial development, considerable commercial growth is likely. If this growth were to be "spread out" along corridors in a single-depth "strip," as has often been the case in the past in Lincoln County and elsewhere, it would consume an estimated 50 miles of road frontage, and would result in a "repeat" of the traffic problems on existing NC 16 on many more roads. For this reason, Lincoln County considers it to be in its best interest to focus such development at a limited number of intersections and along a limited number of roads, in a form that fosters internal and external connectivity and that is integrated with surrounding land uses.

OBJECTIVE 6.1: Identify nodes and road corridors where more intense development should occur.

STRATEGY 6.1.1: Reexamine the County's zoning policies and focus future commercial development in nodes and development areas so designated on the Future Land Use Plan Map (Map 4.1.1).

COMMENTARY: The future land use plan (Map 4-1) calls for the establishment of a series of nodes at strategically located areas of the County. The nodes shown on the map are generally located along major highways and

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either currently contain commercial development, had in the past supported commercial development, or otherwise are deemed suitable for future commercial or mixed-use development, based on their location, proximity to population concentrations, and the availability of utilities (both immediate or future). Most, but not all are located in the East and East Central portions of the County. Most are located at the intersection of two collector and/or arterial roads. One of the objectives of the Land Use Plan was to balance growth and provide economic development opportunities throughout the County. Clearly, however, it is the intention of the Plan that the more intensive areas for development be east of Lincolnton where population growth (and the demand for services) is the greatest.

Mixed-use development is also encouraged at many of these locations. The idea of incorporating mixed residential and commercial uses at strategic locations in the County was well received by both the public at the public forums and also by the Steering Committee. The key towards insuring a quality end product that will serve both residents, neighbors and the entire County well is that residential and commercial uses be well-integrated with each other and be aesthetically pleasing. Accordingly, strong design standards that ensure such an end-product are recommended.

Many of the nodes are circular in size...with radii of between 300-500 feet each (i.e., 300 feet for neighborhood business nodes and 500 feet for community business nodes). In cases where commercial development has occurred in more of a "strip" manner along a highway, an actual strip is depicted rather than a node. This is not to be interpreted as encouraging additional strip development in

the County, but rather acknowledges that strip development has occurred in the past. Future commercial development should, to the greatest degree feasible, be concentrated in nodes, because such a form promotes connectivity and workability among businesses and reduces the need to return to the main road to go from one use to another. Expanded strip commercial development in the County is NOT encouraged.

The shape and size of these nodes or strips is for illustrative purposes only. Actual zoning of properties located in any of the nodes to a commercial or mixed-use district should be handled on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, the rezoning to a commercial district is best based on property line locations rather than radii distances.

As growth and development takes place in the County, there may be requests to add additional nodes or areas for commercial development in the County. The Plan as a whole, and the location of land uses on the future land use plan, in particular, should be viewed as being "fluid" and subject to future change. Thus, the Board of Commissioners can and should consider future additional nodes (or, where deemed appropriate, the elimination of nodes) or commercial areas. What is important is that future land use decisions be made in accordance with the Plan. Changes to the Plan are inevitable and should not be considered as being violations of the Plan; however, departure from a nodal approach in favor of strip centers would be a major departure from the philosophy and goals of the Plan and is strongly discouraged.

STRATEGY 6.1.2: Consider incentives to promote the "transect" concept radiating from the larger nodal developments to include multi-family, denser single-family,

and then less-dense single-family developments, to create a small community center concept surrounded by connected neighborhoods.

COMMENTARY: A “transect” is a planning term that exemplifies how many communities have historically developed (i.e., denser development in the community’s core, which transitions into less dense areas, and eventually into rural areas.) As nodes develop, as called for in this Plan, they too can develop in the same way. This effectively creates new “village centers” or “community centers” that can become the focal points of future residential development, and that can promote a good system of local roads, make pedestrian and bicycle access easier, and create bona fide “communities” and “neighborhoods.” This approach also may work in the County’s favor in maximizing return on investment in public water and sewer, and help to preserve open space between “community centers.”

Examples of where such transect type developments are encouraged include:

- In the vicinity of Optimist Club Road and New NC 16
- In the vicinity of the intersection of NC 27 and NC 73
- Along NC 27 in the Iron Station community

OBJECTIVE 6.2: Develop design criteria to ensure that new multi-family, mixed-use and non-residential developments are well-integrated with their surroundings.

STRATEGY 6.2.1: Provide incentives/mandates for developments to access and integrate

with each other, both between adjoining tracts and within master planned developments.

COMMENTARY: The County is in need of regulations that mandate or provide incentives for connectivity between adjacent uses and developments. Strategy 2.3.1 called for stronger connection standards between residential subdivisions. Not only is this needed throughout the County, but also between non-residential uses along heavily traveled roads. There as well, regulations should be in place to address connections between abutting land uses. The lack of connectivity between adjacent non-residential land uses is clearly evident on Old NC 16 at present. Over the years, many properties have been rezoned from residential to commercial zones (especially in areas north of NC 73). As a piece of property was then developed for a non-residential use, it most often had its own individual access point(s) onto NC 16. Lincoln County has never mandated connections between individual land uses on NC 16, nor elsewhere in the County. Because Old NC 16 is a heavily traveled two-lane road, traffic often gets backed up (especially during rush hour periods) due to cars attempting taking right- and left-hand turns into businesses that line the highway. If the number of driveways along the road were reduced, traffic flow would greatly increase. Requiring connections between adjoining land uses (or putting limits on the number of curb-cuts per use or requiring shared parking) will serve to greatly reduce congestion elsewhere in the County in the future.

STRATEGY 6.2.2: Provide alternatives to suburban-type commercial development (i.e., developments designed primarily for the automobile, rather than the pedestrian, in mind) at targeted

locations. Identify those areas of the County where mixed-use type development is encouraged and establish an appropriate set of guidelines in the County's land use regulations.

COMMENTARY: Lincoln County's land use regulations do not readily accommodate mixed-use type developments. The only zoning districts where mixed residential and non-residential development is allowed are in the P-R (Planned Residential) and P-MU (Planned Mixed Use) zoning districts. Mixed-use developments within the P-R zone are only allowed on tracts of 100+ acres. While the P-MU zone's minimum tract size threshold is lower, 15 acres, development standards within the zone are minimal. Moreover, there is little guidance on the zoning map or in the current land use plan as to where and under what circumstances mixed-use development should occur.

Three approaches to remedy the situation are suggested:

1. Create standards in the County's land use regulations regarding mixed-use. The current P-MU zoning classification sets no limit on density, building height, mixture of uses, external building materials, design standards, vertical versus horizontal mixed use, etc. While this provides a lot of flexibility, it also provides an "anything is possible for approval" fear to those who live nearby and who may oppose potential developments. Setting standards will ensure that the County (and its citizens) gets the kind of mixed-use development they want, that is appropriate in scale, form, and context, but will also provide the development community with advance guidance.

2. Preferred areas for mixed-use development are identified on Map 4-1. These areas are in those portions of the County where the utility infrastructure can accommodate (and where the transportation infrastructure can be configured to accommodate) more intensive forms of development.
3. Establish criteria for the placement of mixed-use developments (e.g., town homes in a golf course development) for areas not identified on Map 4-1 but which may still be viable and which will be in the County's long-term best interest.

STRATEGY 6.2.3: Establish criteria for the placement of multi-family and higher-density developments to eliminate spot zoning concerns.

COMMENTARY: Map 4-1 identifies preferred areas of concentrated growth and development based largely on the existing and proposed utility and transportation infrastructure networks. Most of these areas would be suitable for the placement of small retail-type developments serving immediate and close-by neighborhoods. Other areas may be able to support higher intensity developments including mixed-use (i.e., mixed residential and commercial uses) as well as higher-density residential developments. Although mixed-use developments are strongly advocated in this Plan, not all proposals for development will include non-residential components. There will likely be an increased demand for higher-density residential complexes that are not mixed use (e.g., apartment, town home and condominium complexes). Map 4-1 also identifies those preferred locations where more intense development (including mixed-use and higher-density residential development) is preferred and can be accommodated.

OBJECTIVE 6.3- Identify development strategies and guidelines for the placement of isolated developments that are away from identified nodes and development growth areas.

STRATEGY 6.3.1: Develop criteria for the placement of new isolated, small-scale non-residential uses that would otherwise require rezoning to a non-residential zoning district. A scorecard could be developed containing criteria that would be used to evaluate these requests. Such criteria include:

- **Size of Tract:** A minimum size tract size should be established for rezoning. The larger the tract size, the less of a “spot” that is potentially created. One neighboring jurisdiction, for example, has a minimum tract area of two (2) acres. Once this threshold is established, any tract smaller than that cannot be considered for rezoning.
- **Road Location:** Is the tract in question along a heavily traveled road as opposed to a local road that receives less traffic volumes?
- **Proximity to Other Non-Residential Zones:** Strategy 6.1.1 calls for the establishment of commercial zoning nodes in all areas of the County to address the future growth and development. Is the site being considered in close proximity to an existing node? Would the proposed site be creating a “strip” along the highways?
- **Type of Zoning Needed/ Uses Required:** It is recommended that any such rezoning be through the Conditional Use District or Conditional Zoning (if available in Lincoln

County) methods. In either case, the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners would be able to see the types of uses being requested and determine if they are appropriate for the area in question.

- **Proximity/Accessibility to Neighboring Residential Uses:** How close to an existing residential development is the proposed site? Would the site be readily accessible to those residents? Are the site and its proposed uses of a nature that nearby residents would benefit from?

COMMENTARY: While the creation of development nodes for commercial and mixed-use developments will go a long way in providing guidance to the Planning Board, Board of Commissioners, staff and Lincoln county residents as to where future growth is intended, it is very likely that there will be a call for some more isolated commercial development outside identified nodes. In order to make future modifications to the Map and grant a rezoning to accommodate the proposed development, County officials should have a set of standards from which to judge the appropriateness of such rezoning. What is called for in this strategy is the creation of a scorecard using a variety of criteria that can be assessed with each rezoning application. While there may be instances where unique circumstances associated with a site might warrant rezoning in spite of what the site’s actual “score” is, such a scorecard would be useful in judging the merits of a rezoning and would help legitimize the final result should the rezoning decision be litigated.

OBJECTIVE 6.4: Provide land-use regulations that promote the redevelopment and/or re-use of older/ abandoned properties.

STRATEGY 6.4.1: Proactively enforce State Building Code regulations on substandard buildings in the County.

COMMENTARY: NCGS 153A-366 through 153A-374 enables North Carolina counties to take corrective measures to address health and safety concerns that may arise from “unsafe buildings.” A building may be considered unsafe if it is “dangerous to life because of its liability to fire, bad conditions of walls, overloaded floors, defective construction, decay, unsafe wiring...or other causes.” The building inspector has the authority, following a public hearing, to issue and order to repair, close, vacate or demolish the building.” While the vast majority of buildings in Lincoln County are sound, a small but significant number may fall into the “dangerous” category and warrant action being taken by the County. Dilapidated buildings not only pose safety problems, but they also serve as a catalyst for blight and disinvestment to take hold in nearby areas. Proactive action by the County is needed to ensure that such negative consequences are avoided.

OBJECTIVE 6.5: Maintain the economic viability of “Old” NC 16 once “New” NC 16 opens.

STRATEGY 6.5.1: Study the need for a specific set of regulations and incentives tailored to the corridor via a special corridor overlay district specifically geared to Old NC 16.

COMMENTARY: Once New NC 16 opens, there will likely be a push for retail development to locate at one of the intersections along the new highway. Disinvestment along Old NC 16 thereby becomes a distinct

possibility. Amend the current overlay zoning district along the existing highway may be a solution towards increasing the viability and aesthetics along the highway. The overlay district should generally have a width of 100-200 feet on either side of the road between its intersection with New NC 16 to the south and the Denver area to the north. Areas that the overlay district should address include:

- **Signage:** The corridor is cluttered with freestanding signs. Sign regulations for the B-N and B-G (the two primary zoning districts along the corridor) are the same. Pole signs with a maximum height of 25” and maximum area of 110 square feet are allowed in each zone. Reducing the area and height of signs in the district would improve aesthetics.
- **Access Management:** Limiting new curb cuts and reducing the number of existing curb cuts would greatly ease congestion along existing NC 16.
- **Landscaping:** Front yard landscaping requirements in the County are limited and given the prevalence of non-residential zoning along Old NC 16, “green areas” (i.e., areas of grass and natural plantings) are largely missing on those lots that have been developed for non-residential purposes.
- **Mixed-Use/Multi-family Uses:** With a push for retail re-location along “new” NC 16 likely, accommodating higher-density residential development or mixed residential-commercial development may be of benefit. Currently, both the B-N (Neighborhood Business) and B-G (General Business) zoning districts do not allow for residential development of any kind.
- **Sidewalks:** Simply put, sidewalks are rarely found along existing NC 16 making the Corridor largely pedestrian

“unfriendly.” Requiring sidewalks (together with other improvements sited above) will go a long ways towards giving existing NC 16 a much-improved pedestrian-friendly environment.

STRATEGY 6.5.2: Limit commercial development along New NC 16 and preserve mobility along feeder roads that emanate from existing NC 16 to preserve ready access to businesses located there.

COMMENTARY: Because “new” NC 16 will be limited access except at certain intersections (i.e., St. James Church Road and Optimist Club Road), a limited amount of commercial development can occur along the highway. However, each of the roads that has a planned intersection with new NC 16 also includes an intersection with existing NC 16. Taking measures to ensure that each of these roads provides good access back to existing NC 16 may help to preserve viable businesses on existing NC 16 and help preserve traffic mobility.

Guiding Principle 7

Develop Appropriate Regulations That Guide Density for Both Single- and Multi-family Development

OVERVIEW- Over the next ten to fifteen years, Lincoln County will experience the demand for a variety of housing types and lot sizes: estate-size homes and lots, traditional suburban developments, smaller-lot single-family, and varying degrees of density for both town homes and apartments. How the County accommodates these varying housing types and lot sizes, both in pattern and densities, will have a huge influence on a number

of factors that will affect the County far into the future. Lincoln County’s goals include the development of housing stock that does provide this range of choices, that supports the functionality of the transportation system, and that will accommodate change yet retain value in the long term.

OBJECTIVE 7.1: Allow for a variety of residential type developments that are consistent with the preferences and recommendations of the Steering Committee.

STRATEGY 7.1.1: Allow for density variations within individual zoning districts based on a variety of factors including: availability of utilities; location along major or minor corridors; distance from identified nodes or corridors, mix of uses, etc.

COMMENTARY: Map 2-3 identifies areas of the County where public water and sewer are projected to be in place by 2023. Most of this area is currently zoned R-SF, R-S and R-T by the County with minimum lot sizes of between 22,500-43,560 square feet. Lots with access to either public water and/or sewer can readily be developed with much lower lot sizes (i.e., with public water and sewer, lot size is not an issue), the County’s land use regulations should be altered to take the availability of utilities into consideration. Provision of such mixed residential developments also allows residents to move from an apartment to a single-family home, and later downsize, in the same neighborhood if they choose to do so.

STRATEGY 7.1.2: Encourage residential development that incorporates features of the most “durable” neighborhoods in terms of economic value and adaptability to change.

COMMENTARY: Some of the oldest neighborhoods in our region's communities are also some of the most desirable, and function better and are more livable than many newer neighborhoods. In general, these neighborhoods feature lot sizes of less than 1/3 acre (i.e., less than 15,000 square feet), streets that connect with each other (although not necessarily in a formal grid network), streets with relatively short block lengths, sidewalks, and significant number of large street trees. They may also feature wider streets that allow on-street parking on at least one side, and some are grouped around neighborhood parks that serve as neighborhood and community focal points. These neighborhoods accommodate a variety of housing types, from mansions to multi-family multi-story condos, and design considerations provide a wide range of "look and feel" to these neighborhoods. Such a trend in Lincoln County would be very supportive of the County's goals of providing a range of housing stock that holds its value, is adaptable to change, and supports the transportation system.

STRATEGY 7.1.3: Allow for more "urban" forms of residential development in areas that currently are or are anticipated to be urban in nature. These forms would include Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs), town homes, etc.

COMMENTARY: Lincoln County's land use regulations are largely silent on alternatives to conventional subdivision development. Examples of such types developments include (1) traditional neighborhood developments, or TNDs, which are planned mixed-use developments that are designed for the pedestrian and automobile in mind, and which have open space elements; (2) infill residential developments, normally located

on smaller-size tracts in more dense areas in vicinity of existing or planned transit stops (both bus and/or rail), where lot sizes are reduced; and, (3) planned residential developments which contain mixtures of single- and multi-family developments. With land prices continuing to escalate in the County and with the demand for housing likely to continue to be strong, alternative forms of residential development (which the County has not seen much demand for, to date) will likely rise. Developing regulations that would allow such developments to occur, in conformity with the County's expectations and with the principles contained in this Plan, would be a prudent measure for the County to take.

STRATEGY 7.1.4: Consider using "conditional zoning" for larger and/or more intense residential developments.

COMMENTARY: Conditional zoning (which was also referenced in Strategy 4.2.2) is a means of maximizing stakeholder public input in the rezoning process. This may be an especially useful practice in Lincoln County for larger and more intense residential developments. Small, low-density single family subdivisions have been the "norm" in Lincoln County over the past 10-20 years. As the County urbanizes and public utility coverage expanded, there will be a demand for alternative land uses. Calls for larger subdivisions (e.g., 50+ lots), multi-family developments, mixed-use developments will become more and more frequent. The conditional zoning process (unlike the parallel conditional use zoning process currently in place in Lincoln County) allows for significant stakeholder and public input in the rezoning process. This zoning technique may therefore be especially beneficial to the County for rezonings involving larger or more intensive residential uses as it maximizes opportunities for dialogue and

discussion on land use proposals prior to a public hearing being held. The County's land use regulations should therefore be amended to allow for conditional zoning.

Guiding Principle 8

Allow for Mixed-use Development to Occur In Order to Promote the Integration of Land Uses, Pedestrian Accessibility and to Reduce Vehicle Usage in the County

OVERVIEW - Lincoln County has some areas, chiefly in the eastern part of the County, where mixed-use development is a viable alternative. It is the County's goal to establish standards to foster mixed use development that is aesthetically pleasing, in keeping with residents' ideas of "what Lincoln County is all about," and remains fully functional in the long term.

OBJECTIVE 8.1: Develop appropriate standards and guidelines for mixed-use developments.

STRATEGY 8.1.1: Identify criteria for the placement of mixed-use developments in urban/urbanizing areas and elsewhere in the County. Such criteria include:

- **Compatibility of Development With Adjoining Land Uses-** Current Lincoln County land use regulations put the maximum building height at thirty-five (35) feet in most zoning districts. While vertical mixed use (i.e., placing residential uses on top of ground floor office or retail) was ranked high by both the Steering Committee and the general public at preference tests given at the public forums,

vertical buildings need not overwhelm the landscape. Placing caps on buildings to allow for preferred types of mid-rise developments may be in order. If higher-story developments can be built, regulations will be needed to ensure compatibility and adequate transition with existing nearby uses.

- **Internal Integration of Residential and Non-residential Development:** In order for a mixed-use development to be successful, its uses must be internally integrated giving residents an opportunity to have easy access to non-residential uses within the development.
- **Treatment of Viewsheds Along External Roads-** A mixed-use development, if visible from an external public road, must have "eye appeal." Thus, viewshed treatment is an important element for both residents of the development, adjoining and nearby property owners, and the County as a whole.
- **Internal Connectivity-** One of the benefits of having a mixed-use development is that it gives its residents the ability to live, work and shop without having to get into a car and commute to one or more other locations. Thus, the development should be laid out so that residents (and outside visitors) can EASILY get from Point "A" to Point "B" within the development. Moreover, the development should be pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly to maximize transportation options for residents and visitors.
- **External Connectivity-** A mixed-use area should also be connected with other compatible adjacent uses, particularly in urban/urbanizing areas, so that both internal and external uses are accessible by pedestrian means and not solely via the automobile.
- **Adequate green infrastructure-** As evidenced by preference surveys conducted in association with the development of this

Plan, Lincoln County residents appreciate their green space and tree canopy. It is therefore important that mixed-use developments include sufficient “green space” and trees to support the citizens’ preferences.

STRATEGY 8.1.2: Provide preferences/incentives in the County’s land use regulations for mixed-use development where targeted in the County.

COMMENTARY: The County’s current land use regulations should be amended to make it more appealing for mixed-use developments to occur. Any mixed-use development now requires a rezoning (as they are only allowed in the P-R and P-MU zoning districts and these zoning classifications are only applied to properties who request rezonings for specified projects.) As future mixed-use developments are being encouraged, an alternative would be to allow smaller sized developments as a conditional use in the more prevalent residential zoning districts, and larger-sized developments subject to a rezoning or conditional use permit. In either case, the land use regulations should clearly identify standards and objectives that the mixed-use development should meet.

STRATEGY 8.1.3: Encourage the integration of residential land uses by allowing more variety of land uses in the different residentially-oriented zoning districts.

COMMENTARY: In the more predominant residential zoning districts (R-R, R-S, R-T and R-SF), the only zoning district that accommodates residential uses other than single-family residences/manufactured homes and duplexes is the R-S district. Multi-family developments are allowed in the R-S

subject to a conditional use permit and with a maximum density of 6-10 units per acre. In East and East Central portions of Lincoln County (where urban-type uses and densities could be accommodated once utilities are extended), the only significant portion of R-S zoning that currently exists is along the NC 150 corridor north of Lincolnton. Changes to the County Zoning Map will therefore be in order if more dense-type development is to be accommodated. As previously mentioned, it is recommended that alternatives to conventional single-family subdivisions are encouraged as a means of preserving open space and natural areas. Such subdivisions could feasibly include (assuming that the road and utility infrastructure were in place and could support the development) alternatives such as patio homes, town homes, apartments etc. Zoning changes should be made to support such type of development.

Guiding Principle 9

Ensure that Lincoln County Remains an “Affordable” Place in Which to Build and Live

OVERVIEW- Lincoln County wants to be a place where all its citizens—schoolteachers, firefighters, utility workers, as well as higher-paid executives—can find a quality home. A number of the strategies already included in this Plan provide openings that can be used to promote affordable housing. These include ensuring a mix of housing types, lot sizes, and densities and promoting mixed use development (so that persons can live, shop and work in the same neighborhood). This section will address additional strategies and tools that can promote affordable housing.

OBJECTIVE 9.1: Ensure that viable housing choices exist in the County for persons from a broad range of income groups.

STRATEGY 9.1.1: Encourage the development of affordable housing units (i.e., units designed for families having incomes of 50-80% of the County's median income) WITHIN developments of market-priced housing through incentives for builders/developers.

COMMENTARY: Affordable housing does not have to mean "housing projects or housing specifically geared towards low-income persons or families." Tools exist to include affordable housing in otherwise market-priced developments, such as allowing meaningful density bonuses, promoting location-efficient financing, etc. Affordable units can have exteriors that look no different than other market-rate units within the same development, but may have less-expensive materials and finishes on the inside (for example, pre-form counters rather than site-built or solid-surface). By allowing developers to build more densely (perhaps 8 units/acre rather than 6, with 2 units being "affordable"), the County can increase its affordable housing stock and retain its desired external form.

STRATEGY 9.1.2: Encourage denser development and the inclusion of affordable housing within walking distance of express bus service or locations otherwise convenient to employment or easily served by vanpools or carpools.

COMMENTARY: Many people who are affordable housing clients cannot afford mul-

iple vehicles, and providing some affordable housing in close proximity to express bus or employment locations is a real benefit both to the consumer and the employer. The consumer gets access to transportation/ employment, and the employer gets an employee who can arrive on time even without a vehicle.

STRATEGY 9.1.3: Maintain the County's policies regarding the placement of manufactured homes (i.e., dwelling units that are built to HUD standards, as opposed to modular homes that are built to conventional single-family regulations) in most, but not all, portions of the County.

COMMENTARY: Lincoln County, like all other North Carolina jurisdictions with land use regulations, has made provisions for the placement of manufactured homes. Currently, manufactured homes (be they of the single- or double-wide variety) are allowed either as a use by right or a conditional use in the R-R, R-S, and R-T zoning districts. These three zoning classifications cover well over one-half of the County's zoning coverage area. Although the Plan calls for significant changes to the County's land use regulations to accommodate anticipated growth and development, allowing persons who choose to own a manufactured home (for economic reasons or otherwise) large latitude in where they can place the home will continue to ensure Lincoln County that households with a wide variety of incomes will have a place where they can afford to live in the County.

Guiding Principle 10

The Land Use Plan Shall be Kept Current and Guide and Direct Zoning and Growth Decisions

STRATEGY 10.1.1: Use the Future Land Use Plan (text and map) and other officially adopted planning documents when making all zoning and conditional use permit decisions.

COMMENTARY: All too often in the past, adopted land use plans have had the dubious distinction of, once having been adopted, to “sitting on the shelf” and never being used by staff, planning boards or elected officials. Those policies came to end in 2005 when the North Carolina General Assembly amended NCGS 153A-341. The statute now mandates that prior to adopting any zoning map or text amendment, a statement needs to be made (both by the Planning Board and the Board of Commissioners) that addresses to what degree the proposed change is in harmony with an adopted comprehensive plan. The legislation did not mandate conformity with the plan. Thus, a local government could enact a change that was contrary to the plan. What is important is the status that the plan is given. The Plan simply cannot be forgotten as a document and must be made an integral part of the planning process.

Section 6.3.3(D) of the Lincoln County’s Zoning Ordinance also gives significant relevance to the Plan when the Board of Commissioners makes a decision on a conditional use permit. A conditional use permit cannot be approved unless the applicant demonstrates that the proposal is “...in general conformity with the Land Development Plan...”

Thus, most legislative and quasi-judicial decisions made by the Board of Commissioners will need to either address or conform to the Plan. Few other policy documents adopted by the Board of Commissioners have as much potential impact and impact upon the growth and development of the County as the Land Use Plan.

STRATEGY 10.1.2: Monitor the Plan’s usefulness after six months and one year.

COMMENTARY: The Land Use Plan calls for some major changes to the County. It embraces types of development that have not often been seen in the County; it promotes non-residential development at certain locations throughout the County; and it very much calls for the end of commercial sprawl along the County’s major thoroughfares. Planning is not an exact science and while some of these ideals may seem good when initially thought of and when adopted, they may be of limited practicality when put to the “reality test.” Thus, after six months or a year, County staff should assess the Plan and see how it is faring. Are the major principles embodied in the Plan working? Is the future land use map being realistic? Is the public still in favor of what the Plan overall calls for? Given that the Plan will be used both by the staff, Planning Board and elected officials, the Plan must be realistic and practical. Areas that are contained in the Plan that do not meet these criteria need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

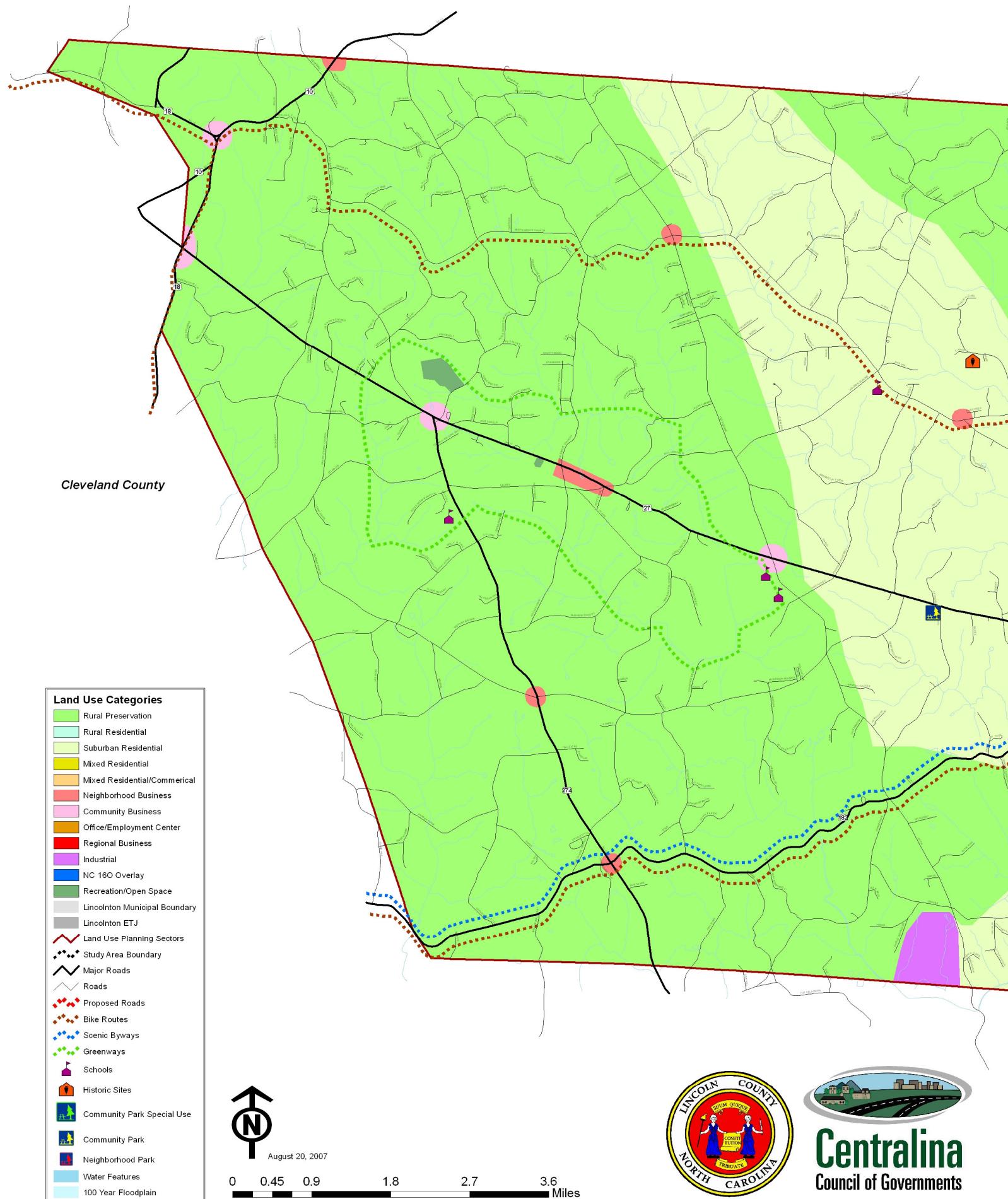
STRATEGY 10.1.3: Make incremental changes to the Plan, as needed.

COMMENTARY: Any plan, no matter how well-written, can’t envisage all that can or will take place in a fast-growing community. With

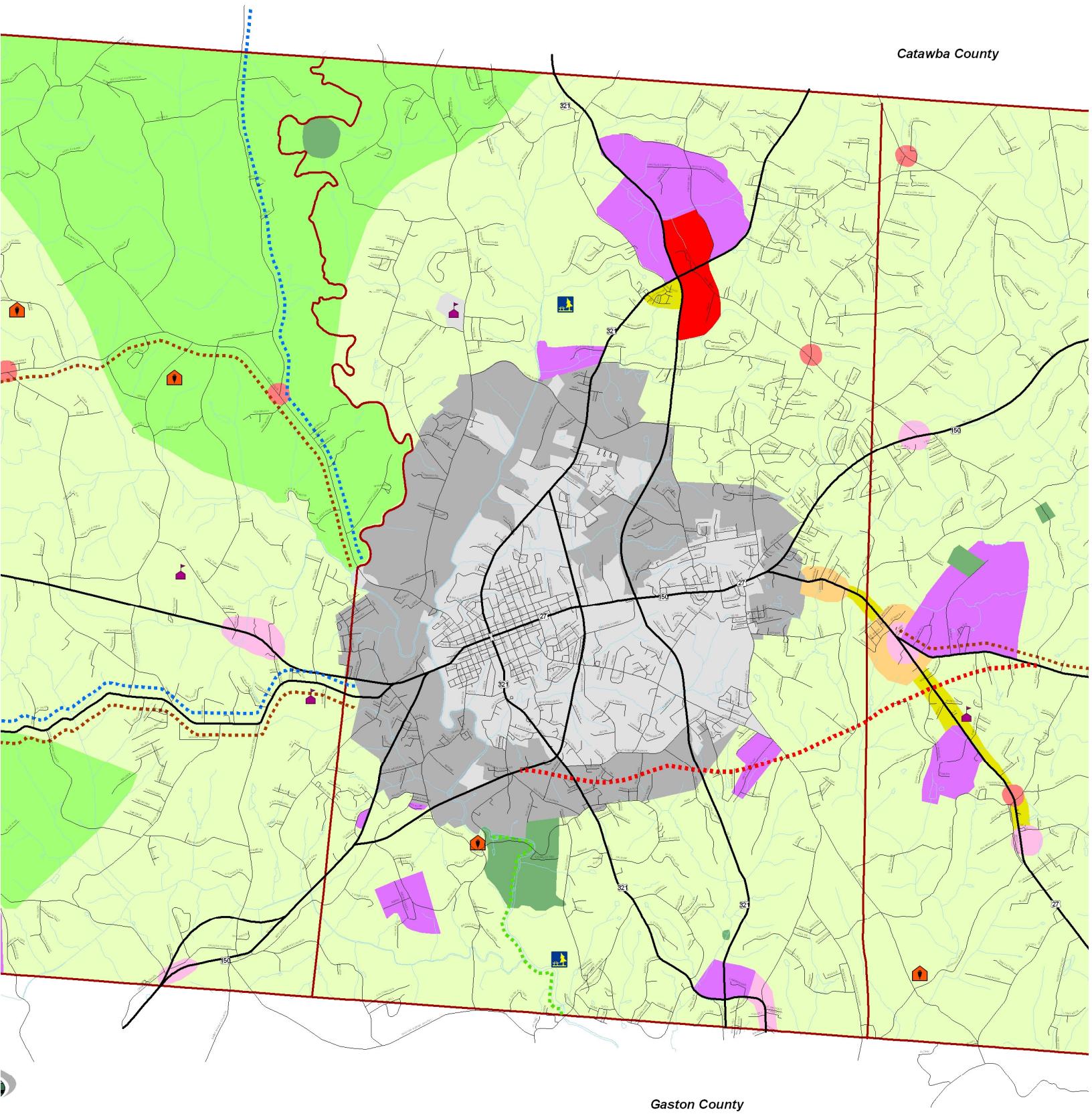
Lincoln County Land Use Plan

development being as dynamic as it is in Lincoln County, there will invariably be a proposal that comes along that makes perfectly good sense, yet runs counter to the Plan. If that occurs, minor amendments to the Plan should be made to keep the Plan relevant. The one thing that the County should not do is leave the plan totally unaltered and resign itself that future developments may run counter to the Plan. If that course is chosen, the Plan will no doubt lose its sense of relevance and importance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

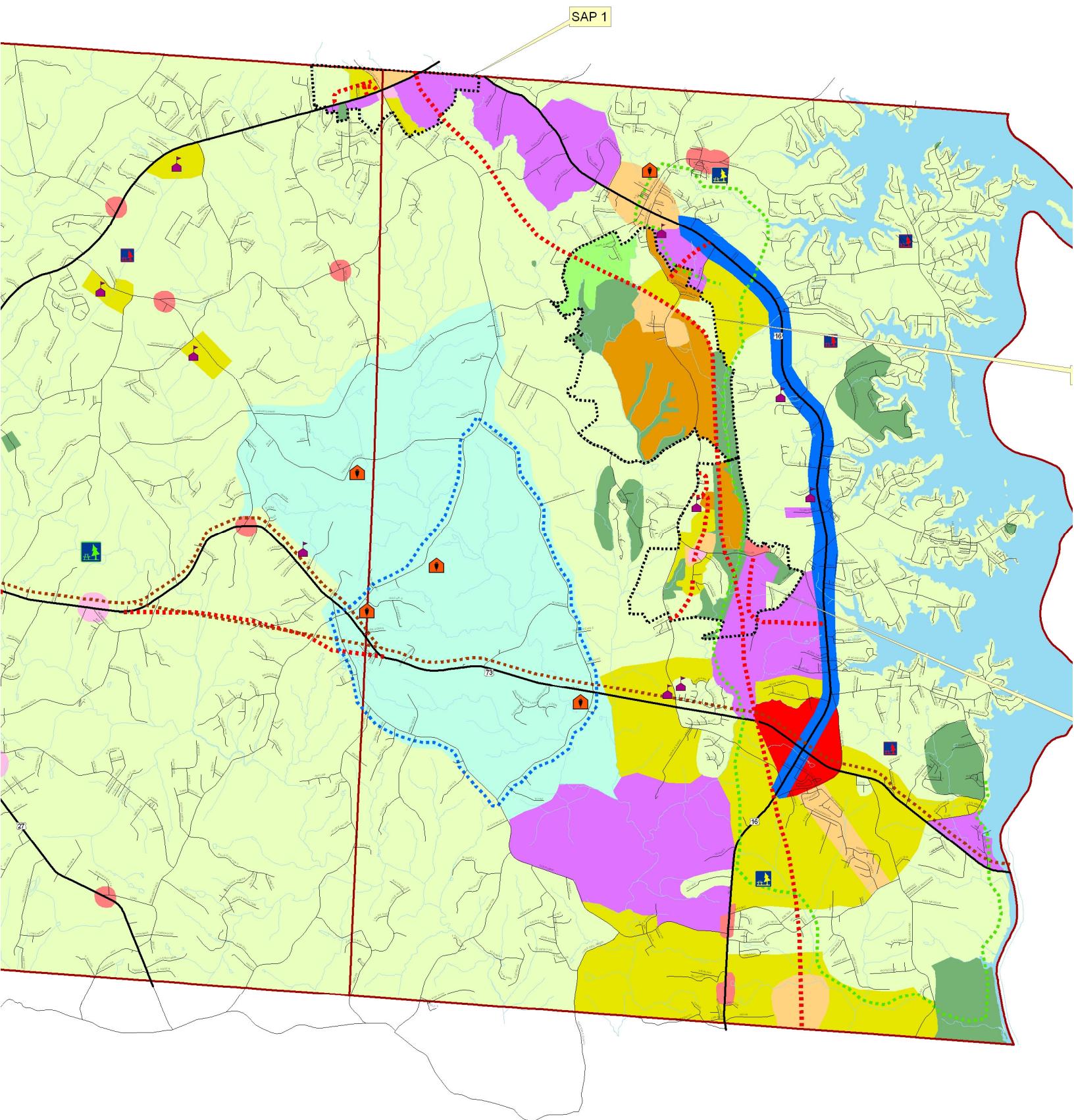


Lincoln County Future Land

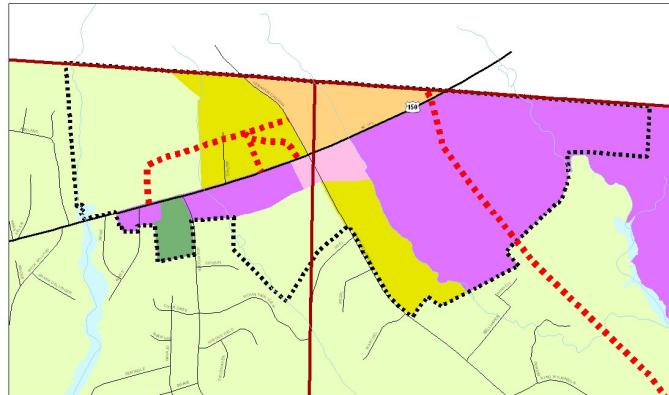


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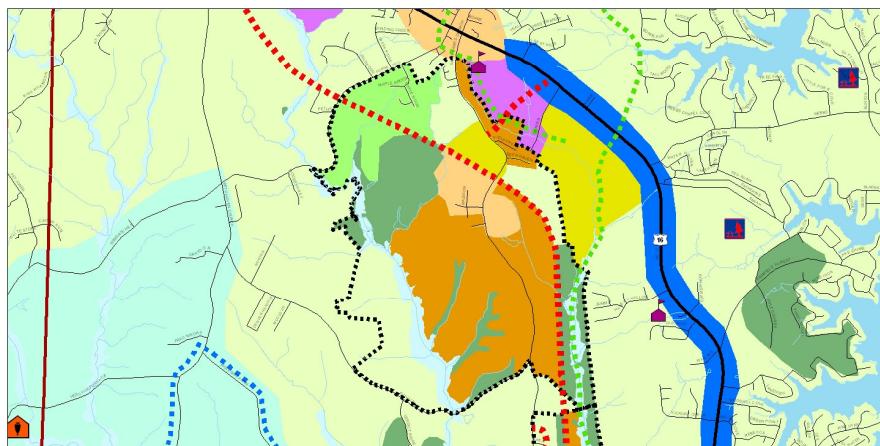
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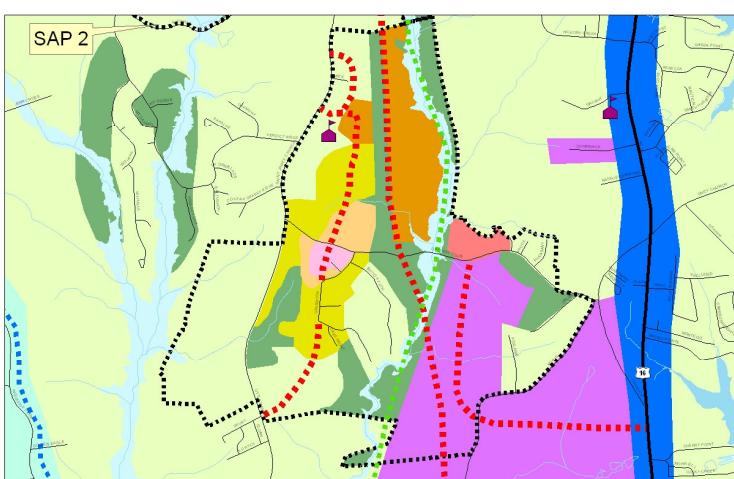
Small Area Plan 1
NC 150 and New NC 16



Small Area Plan 2
St James Church and NC 16



Small Area Plan 3
Optimist Club Road and NC 16



Mecklenburg County

SAP 3

SAP 2