fort mill comprehensive plan

volume 2

fort mill tomorrow

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fort mill tomorrow

July 19, 2012

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FORT MILL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

VOLUME 2

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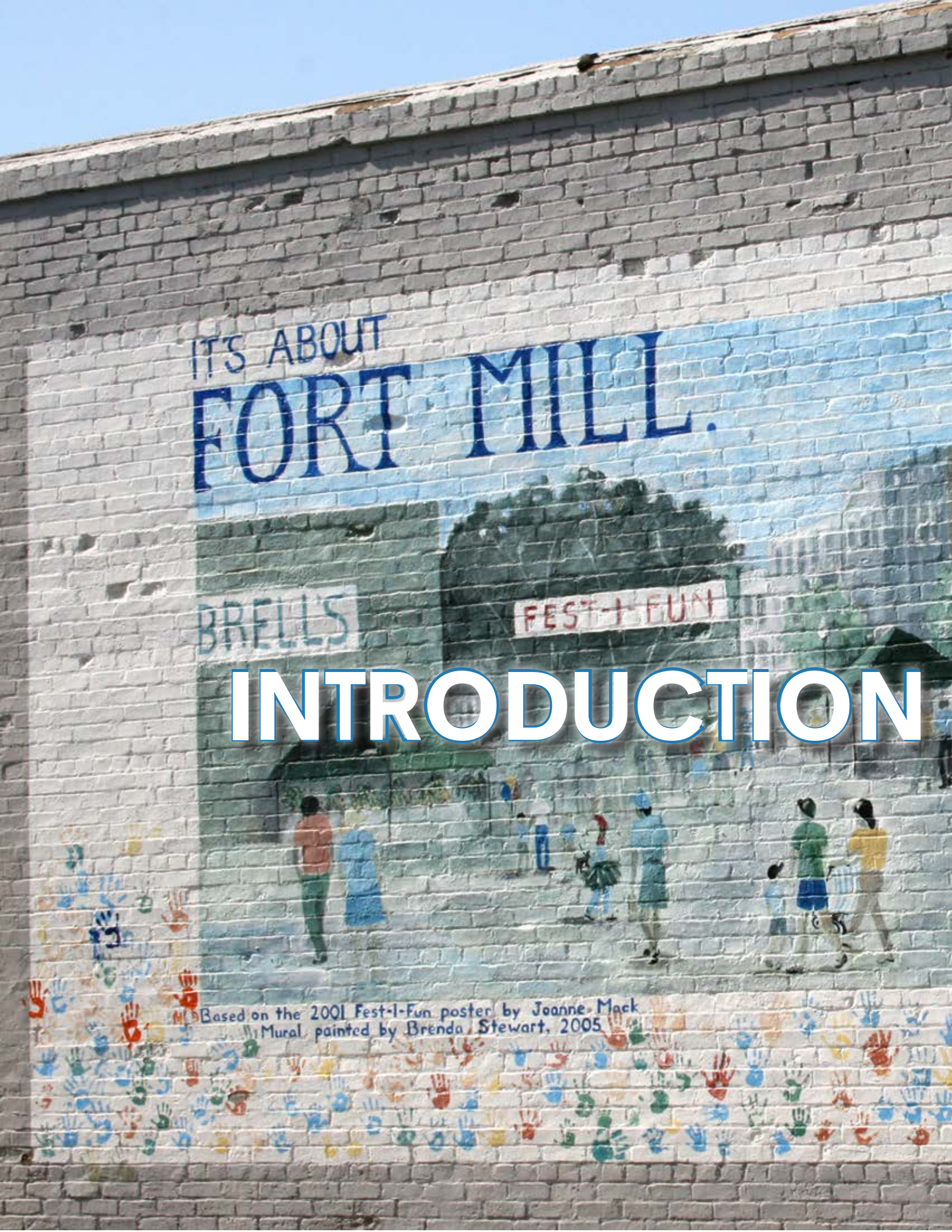


INTRODUCTION

FORT MILL TIMES
Your Life, Your Times

INTRODUCTION

Organization of this Report

The development of this update to the Town of Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan is divided into two volumes. Volume 1: Fort Mill Today, includes an updated inventory and analysis of information, a review of data, regulations, plans and studies published since 2008, GIS mapping, a community meeting and a round of in-depth stakeholder interviews.

Volume 2: Fort Mill Tomorrow, describes the final Comprehensive Plan and the Plan Map. It includes all of the supporting illustrations and design scenarios, which are accompanied by a detailed description of each area, or node. The latter portion of Fort Mill Tomorrow is devoted to recommendations and implementation strategies that are tied to specific goals. Finally, at the conclusion of each report are appendices of supporting information, such as the lists of Advisory Committee members and stakeholders, as well as references.

Context

The Town of Fort Mill continues to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in the upstate of South Carolina. Located in northeastern York County approximately 70 miles north of Columbia and 15 miles south of Charlotte, NC, Fort Mill's proximity to Charlotte's large employment base, its highly regarded school system, low taxes, rich history and overall quality of life make Fort Mill an attractive area to live.

Purpose of the Plan

Like many communities around the nation, the Town of Fort Mill experienced a period of economic slowdown. The Great Recession—the term coined to define the current period of economic stagnation—resulted in declining home values, foreclosures, limited consumption and unemployment. Locally, reduced mobility and limited access to capital slowed the progression of residential and commercial developments, including those at Massey and Kingsley. In addition to the deceleration of land development, there have been other events with significant influence on the development of Fort Mill, including major land annexations, the siting of a 64-bed hospital within town limits, transfer of ownership of the Leroy Springs Complex recreational lands and Banks Street Facility and numerous improvements to the local transportation network.

The last full update to the Town of Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2008. Concerned about the impacts of the recession, major land annexations and the other previously mentioned factors, town leaders decided to revisit the conditions affecting growth and development and update the Plan.

This plan addresses the Town of Fort Mill's corporate limits and the greater Fort Mill planning area. The planning area encompasses all of Fort Mill Township except Tega Cay. (See Figure 1.1 - Context Map.)

Process to Develop the Plan

The development of this update to the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Fort Mill took approximately 9 months. The steps involved included inventory, analysis, and synthesis of information pertaining to a variety of planning elements; meeting with Fort Mill representatives and others involved in the planning process; facilitation of a series of public meetings; and, based on this collective information and input, preparing and finalizing the Plan. The recommendations and implementation strategies identified are the tools necessary for implementation of this Plan.

The project began with visits to the study area and a kick-off meeting and collection of geographic, demographic and economic data. The team reviewed existing local plans, studies and regulations and used GIS data from York County and the Catawba Regional Council of Governments.

Main Street Fort Mill

Research and analysis of these plans, studies and data include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Town of Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan 2008
- Town of Fort Mill Future Land Use Map
- Town of Fort Mill Zoning Code
- Fort Mill Schools Ten Year Facility Needs Plan 2010 Update
- Wastewater System Master Plan Update for the Town of Fort Mill (2007)
- Water System Master Plan Update for the Town of Fort Mill (2007)
- York County Pennies for Progress Program
- South Carolina Department of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Rock Hill/York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study (2007)
- Rock Hill / Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS)
- 2025 York County Comprehensive Plan
- York County Zoning Ordinance
- York County Exit 90/Carowinds Boulevard Master Plan (2010)

Public involvement was critical to the successful process of developing this plan. The Fort Mill Advisory Committee guided the effort and provide valuable input at critical points during the process. The members of the Advisory Committee are acknowledged in Appendix A at the end of this report.

In addition, the process was aided by 50 stakeholders who were interviewed over two days in October 2011. This group of individuals was selected because they are involved on a day-to-day basis with the issues affecting Fort Mill and could give insight into the issues and opportunities affecting the town. The stakeholders are identified in Appendix B at the end of this report. From these sources, a memo was prepared that updated the findings in Volume 1: Fort Mill Today.

In January 2012, members of the consultant team, the Advisory Committee, town staff and other citizens gathered for a one-day workshop to discuss the conceptual plan to that point. Information gathered during the workshop was then further refined and presented to the community at a public meeting in March.

Figure 1.1 - Context Map: The planning area, outlined in pink, encompasses all of Fort Mill Township except Tega Cay.

All of this feedback was used to update the land use map and develop key recommendation and implementation strategies to move Fort Mill forward.

The following section provides a glossary of terms commonly used in planning processes.

Key Terminology

- **Advisory Committee:** A group consisting of Planning Commission members and representatives from other Town departments tasked with the responsibility of guiding the comprehensive plan process.
- **Big-Box Retail:** Freestanding one-story buildings with floor areas typically exceeding 100,000 square feet usually occupied by national retailing companies.
- **Comprehensive Plan:** A long-range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community or region for a set period of time and which typically includes inventory and analytic sections leading to recommendations for the community's land use, future economic development, housing, recreation and open space, transportation, community facilities and community design, all related to the community's goals and objectives for these elements.*
- **Cultural Resources:** The beliefs, art and institutions that help shape and define the character of an area's population. Historic buildings and structures, unique commercial and residential areas, natural and scenic resources, archeological sites, as well as educational, religious and entertainment areas shape the community and its people.
- **Density:** The number of families, individuals, dwelling units, households or housing structures per unit of land. Typically, density is expressed as dwelling units per acre (DUA).*
- **Gateway:** A major entrance or point of access into a neighborhood, district, community or region.*
- **Greenway:** (1) A linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley or ridgeline, or over land along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, a scenic road or other route; (2) any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage; (3) an open space connector linking parks, natural reserves, cultural features or historic sites with each other and with populated areas; (4) locally, certain strip or linear parks designated as a parkway or greenbelt.*
- **Growth:** The rate, amount, location, timing and type of development.
- **Land Use:** A description of how land is occupied or used.*
  - **Commercial:** Land where activity involving the sale of goods (retail) or services is carried out for profit.
  - **Industrial:** Any parcel of land containing an industrial use as defined by ordinance or any building containing such uses.
  - **Mixed-Use:** The development of a neighborhood, tract of land, building or structure with a variety of complementary and integrated uses, such as, but not limited to, residential, office, manufacturing, retail, public and recreation, in a compact urban form.*
  - **Multi-family:** A dwelling designed for or occupied by three or more persons or families with separate housekeeping, sanitation, cooking and eating facilities for each.
  - **Open Space:** Any parcel or area of land or water, essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment or for the use and enjoyment of owners, occupants and their guests.*
  - **Single-Family:** A building containing one dwelling unit that is not attached to any other dwelling by any means and is surrounded by open space or yard.*
  - **Node:** An area of activity, a residential, shopping, employment or services destination.
  - **Planning Area:** For the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan, the planning area is defined as the entirety of Fort Mill Township with the exception of the municipality of Tega Cay.
- **RFATS:** The Rock Hill – Fort Mill Area Transportation Study is a commission created in the early 1960s to administer federal transportation funds in York County. The board is comprised of locally elected officials representing Rock Hill, Fort Mill, Tega Cay and York County; a member of the South Carolina General Assembly; a representative of the South Carolina Department of Transportation; and a representative of the Catawba Indian Nation. The Pennies for Progress road improvement program is administered by RFATS.

- **Stakeholders:** Individuals or groups having a stake in the process or changes that are the result of the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Stakeholder Interviewee:** Individuals such as land owners, long-time residents, developers, town staff, agency representatives and others who have a working knowledge and general understanding of issues and opportunities facing Fort Mill.
- **Transportation:** A system of moving people, goods and services throughout an area.
  - **Road Network:** The overall framework for transportation mobility as it specifically relates to roads and their hierarchy of principal arterial, minor arterial, collector streets and local streets. The road network provides access and allows for the movement of people, goods and services through an area. It also includes opportunities for alternative modes of transportation such as bicycle lanes and pedestrian pathways.
  - **Transit:** An alternative mode of transportation other than vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian that has the ability to move people along a fixed route at fixed times. Modes of transit include bus, light rail, commuter rail, streetcars, trolleys and shuttle services.

* Denotes definitions taken from: Moskowitz, Harvey S. and Carl G. Lindbloom, *The Latest Illustrated Book of Development Definitions,* The Center for Urban Policy Research, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2004.

Veteran's Park in downtown Fort Mill was completed in 2011.

FORT MILL TOMORROW

OWN OF
ORT MILL
BALL
STRIKE
OUT
GUEST
HOME
TIME
INNING
Coca-Cola
DOBY BRIDGE
PARK

Introduction

While the pace of growth in the planning area slowed during the recent economic recession Fort Mill continues to be a place individuals and families want to call home. The population of the planning area grew by 103% from about 19,970 in 2000 to 40,627 in 2010. The population is forecasted to reach 67,270 residents by 2027 (25,800 fewer residents than initially forecasted in the 2008 plan).

Over this same time period, the amount of housing stock nearly doubled increasing by over 7,800 units. Based on the population forecast, over 10,000 new housing units could be added by 2027. Many of these units will be absorbed in subdivisions that are already approved at Massey, Kanawha and Clear Springs sites.

Employment projections for the area predict up to 9,400 new jobs by 2027 (2008 estimates suggested the planning area would grow by 14,980 jobs by 2027). Broken down this employment figure translates to roughly 4.2 million square feet of employment land use.

These revised demographic and employment forecasts inform the type and intensity of development proposed in the Plan. A memo providing further information on demographic and economic indicators is located in Appendix C of this report.

Description of the Comprehensive Plan Map

In updating the Comprehensive Plan, the consultant team first critiqued the existing map within the context of updated population, employment and housing data. Next, the team reconsidered areas where growth is likely to happen, the areas identified as nodes, and the areas outside of the identified nodes where growth may still occur but in a less intensive manner. Changes to the plan reflect these findings. As with the first Comprehensive Plan, environmentally sensitive areas and parks were identified and reserved as preserved and protected lands.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

When determining the land supply available for development and/or redevelopment, environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, river bottom forests and other permanently protected areas were determined unsuitable for development and therefore not considered in the available land supply. These areas include the Anne Springs Close Greenway, floodplains and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Development Areas

The Plan further identifies areas where growth is most likely to occur. These nodes are the activity areas where there is current or proposed infrastructure including roads, sewer and water. These areas are also unique for their proximity to existing or future major economic drivers, such as the proposed hospital or a collection of schools, such as the area along the Fort Mill Southern Bypass. In some instances, when the larger activity area is transacted by I-77 the area is divided into two smaller subareas. While the degree and scale of development may differ in the two areas, the uses are complimentary and connections between the two are critical.

NODES

The Plan identifies and describes ten nodes where development is scheduled and/or likely to occur. As mentioned, nodes are areas of activity where office, retail, commercial and residential uses can occur. Every node has something unique to offer or is a unique destination within the town and planning area. The land in and around the identified nodes is suitable for development due to its proximity to a major activity center, soil conditions, topography and the availability of infrastructure. The center of the nodes are the locations of the most intense uses, and intensity diminishes the further one goes from the node's core. Nodes 3b, 4b, 7b, are complimentary to the activity occurring in the neighboring node but located near smaller interchanges, where growth is likely to happen in support of development and higher intensity uses in the accompanying node. All nodes are identified on the Comprehensive Plan Map pictured in Figure 2.1.

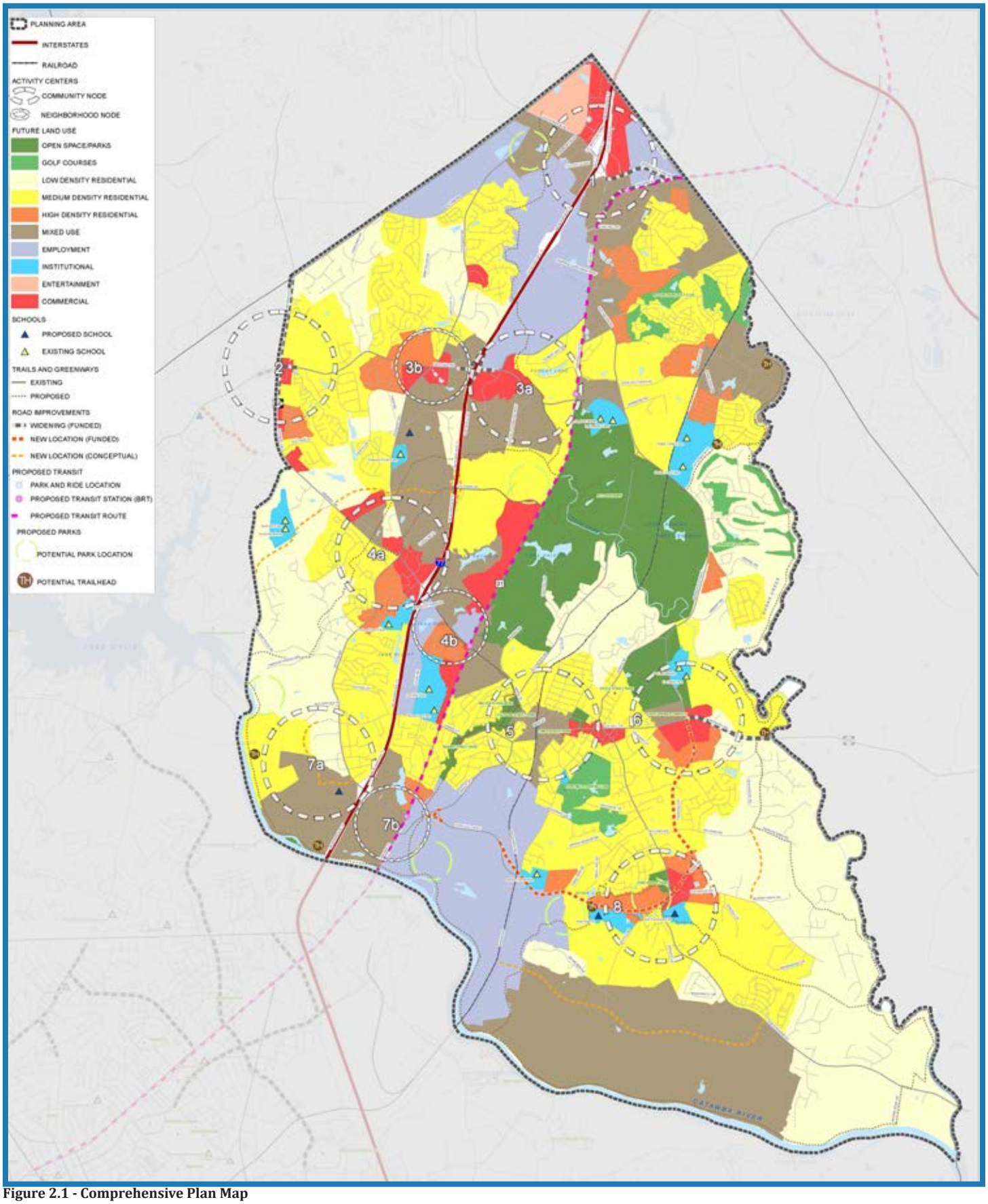


Figure 2.1 - Comprehensive Plan Map

NODES

Node 1

Context and Opportunities

The Carowinds Boulevard area, centered around exit 90 on I-77, is identified as Node 1. This entertainment-related, employment and commercial-oriented area serves as a gateway into South Carolina from North Carolina. The Carowinds Amusement Park dominates the northwest quadrant of Node 1 and draws over a million visitors annually. The remainder of the area consists of large warehouses, scattered retail and vacant parcels. One of the main issues in Node 1 is that there is little to no sense of arrival or departure. As a main gateway into South Carolina, the area would benefit from streetscape and urban design improvements.

York County realized the need to address improvements in Node 1 and recently completed a plan for this area. The plan entitled, Exit 90/Carowinds Boulevard Master Plan, includes specific land use, transportation and urban design recommendations. This plan supports those findings.

In addition, the Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study (hereunto referred to as the Rapid Transit Study) cited a potential future spur alignment of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along SC 51 and US 21 through Node 1. As noted on the map, a possible station is located in this area. Station area plans are also provided in the York County Exit 90/Carowinds Boulevard Master Plan.

Carowinds, the 112 acre amusement park, is the main land owner in Node 1.

Recommendations

Straddling I-77 and Located only 3 miles away from I-485, this area offers great potential. It is ideally suited to accommodate major employers and regionally-oriented retailers wanting to be located in close proximity to I-77. In addition, the proximity to major employment centers in Charlotte may increase demand for multi-family development in the vicinity.

Connectivity and streetscape problems could be remedied with the addition of short segments of roadway and sidewalks. The York County plan makes specific recommendations for streetscape improvements that would make the area more attractive for new investment. In addition, a proposed greenway along Steele Creek would provide recreational opportunity for residents of existing medium density residential subdivisions along Pleasant Road as well as pedestrian connectivity through current employment and proposed mixed use areas.

Mixed use development, including commercial, office, retail, restaurants and multi-family should be encouraged along Carowinds Boulevard and south of Spring Hill Farm Road near the intersection of Highway 51 and US 21. Employment uses including light industrial and warehousing dominate the remainder of the Node area. Particular attention to the aesthetics and scale of development is critical to creating a sense of place in Node 1. All new development should consider the urban design recommendations proposed in the County's plan.

The goal in Node 1 is to promote a mixture of land uses, adding higher density residential development to current employment and commercial uses. Warehouse-type structures with larger building footprints are present in this node and are expected to be a continued part of the mix in the future. Infill of multi-family residential will provide additional customers for retailers in the area and promote a bustling gateway to South Carolina.

NODE 2

Context and Opportunities

Node 2 is identified on the Plan as the intersection of Gold Hill Road and SC-160 near Tega Cay along the western edge of the planning area. Node 2 takes advantage of a need for retail and service businesses in the western part of the Planning Area and in Tega Cay. Future development in the node should build on activity currently in place—mostly commercial and retail uses.

There are opportunities for new development and infill to occur in and around this Node. Currently there is a Pennies for Progress project in the design phase to improve the intersection of SC 160 and Gold Hill Road and improve SC 160 from a two lane to five lane road between Gold Hill Road and the North Carolina state line. This will reduce congestion and improve access to this area. Development in the Steele Creek area will continue to advance down SC 160.

Recommendations

Existing commercial areas should be complimented with additional commercial infill and should be integrated with compact form residential development. Where possible, retail and services should front the street with pedestrian linkages connecting commercial developments.

In Node 2, residential uses should include small lot single-family homes and/or town homes. Open space in the form of public plazas and pedestrian promenades could serve residents and complement retail and residential uses.

Currently there is a lack of a secondary road network in this area, which has led to traffic at the intersection of SC 160 and Gold Hill Road. As additional areas are developed within Node 2, it is essential for new developments to provide road connections that complement and enhance existing roadway infrastructure. For example internal roadways accessing future development near Gold Hill Road should be planned to align with existing Coralstone Drive, Crossroads Plaza or Vandora Springs to the south, Allspice Road to the east, and Stockbridge Drive to the west. Wherever possible, pedestrian connectivity should be enhanced in order to provide ample opportunity for residents to walk to commercial areas.

In addition, the SC 160 and Gold Hill corridors could benefit from a streetscape program. These places lack identity. As one of the main gateways in to Tega Cay additional attention is needed to the urban design and aesthetics of the corridors.

NODE 3A/3B

Context and Opportunities

On the Plan, Node 3a is identified as the area east of the interchange at Gold Hill Road and I-77 at Exit 88. Contributing the unique nature of this node is its proximity to other roadways, especially I-77 and US-21, and its proximity to open space and school facilities. Presently, Node 3a is home to the Charlotte Knights minor league baseball stadium. The Springfield Parkway also cuts through this node connecting it to Downtown Fort Mill.

Surrounding the Knights Stadium is a growing commercial and office employment area. Most recently the Fort Mill School District located their Bus and Maintenance facility here. Given the amount of available land, access to the interstate and available infrastructure this general area could support a major retail site or a large employer. In addition, when the Knights move to Uptown Charlotte, there will be additional land available for future employment uses. This will be one of a few large sites in the Planning Area that is 'shovel-ready' for redevelopment.

Node 3A is currently home to the Charlotte Knights Class AAA baseball club. Plans are to move the team to Uptown Charlotte. Given the proximity to the interstate and existing infrastructure the site could redevelop to accommodate a large employer.

In addition, to commercial and employment uses. Node 3a could accommodate higher density residential. The proximity of the Anne Close Springs Greenway, a proposed BRT station and existing residential development suggest that the eastern and southern portion of the node is appropriate for higher density residential, such as apartments or attached single-family units mixed in to the employment and commercial areas.

Node 3b is comprised of the area west of interchange at Exit 88. It is an area that transitions from commercial, warehouse, and flex space near the interchange, to large residential subdivisions with some highway facing retail. To the south, along Pleasant Road the area quickly transitions to rural and residential use.

Similar to Node 2, the corridors through Node 3b lack a sense of place. The strip development currently in the area contributes to a feeling of "Anywhere USA."

Recommendations

Node 3a is anticipated as a mixed use center with a large concentration of commercial, office and industrial uses and medium to high density residential uses to the east and south of commercial areas. The goal is a vibrant destination that accommodates a variety of uses.

Light industrial and office uses should concentrate closest to the interstate interchange. Retail and commercial should be integrated with frontage along the Springfield Parkway. An internal network of streets should accommodate mixed-use structures of two to three stories with ground level retail and residential above. Additional residential development should happen at a variety of scales, and include both attached and detached housing products. Townhomes, apartments, condominiums and single-family homes should face the street and parking should be located in the rear. An internal network of greenspace and trails, including a greenway along Steele Creek and Jackson Branch would provide both a buffer between uses and critical bike and pedestrian linkages.

Anne Close Springs Greenway, located on the eastern edge of Node 3a, provides a great recreational amenity for residents in the area.

In order to open up the southern portion of the node to development a road connection should be considered between Deerfield Drive and Coltharp Road. In addition as shown in the RFATS Rapid Transit Study, a BRT station could be located in the vicinity of the intersection of US 21 and the Springfield Parkway. Higher density housing and supporting retail and commercial services could develop around the transit station.

Node 3b should have a continuation of a mix of uses near the interchange. The form and type of development in this node could include commercial structures of one to two stories concentrated around the major intersections oriented towards the streets. Attached apartment, condominium and townhome housing products of up to eight DUA; and two to three-story mixed-use buildings where ground level retail has residential uses above it on the second and third floors. Single family lots of lower densities of .5 to two gross DUA will occur on the west side of Pleasant Road as one travels to the south. A mix of housing types, including single family homes, townhomes and apartments, could be accommodated on the east side of Pleasant Road, providing housing opportunities in close proximity to Pleasant Knoll Elementary and the proposed school.

Similar to the recommendations in Node 2, the intersection of Pleasant Road and Gold Hill Road and connecting corridors would benefit from a streetscape program. Uses along these corridors include neighborhood commercial retail and services. In addition, the northern and western portions of the node could accommodate higher density residential.

NODE 4A/4B

Context and Opportunities

Node 4a has grown rapidly since completion of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The centerpiece of Node 4a is Baxter Village, a master-planned community with a mix of residential, commercial, institutional, parks and open space. Much of the new commercial development in Node 4a centers around the main entrance to Baxter. North of SC-160 is a mixture of big box retailers and fast food chains. Notably, Fort Mill's first hotel is anticipated to be located in this area. Across the street is the Baxter Town Center which is small store front ground retail with offices located on second and third floors.

Neighborhood Node 4b is located east of the SC-160/I-77 interchange, anchored to the south with the Kingsley Park, retail and apartments. This section of SC-160 serves as a gateway to downtown Fort Mill. A multi-use path is located on the south side of the roadway and continues east to Walter Elisha Park.

Recommendations

This highly traveled area has intense commercial uses, especially along its western edge, and attracts higher volumes of vehicular traffic than other nodes. Pedestrian connectivity is limited. Future commercial and residential development should complement existing uses and provide safe pedestrian linkages wherever possible. A safe pedestrian and bike connection across I-77 along SC-160 is needed.

Node 4a is currently served by a CATS bus route. In the future, this route could function as a local feeder route to the proposed BRT route.

In Node 4b, existing development south of SC-160 could complement a future BRT station. The undeveloped area north of SC-160 is envisioned as a mixed use area with a mix of residential densities including allowance for apartments, townhomes and single family detached homes, with employment bearing uses fronting US 21 and SC -160.

NODE 5

Context and Opportunities

Downtown Fort Mill is shown on the Comprehensive Plan as Node 5. Node 5 is the location of a concentration of institutional uses, including the town hall, police department and churches. Many significant historic commercial structures and homes that contribute to the character of Fort Mill are found in and adjacent to Node 5.

The area surrounding Node 5 has the highest residential density in the town or planning area, and there is good overall access to greenways and parks. Confederate Park is located along Main Street near the center of the node and Walter Y. Elisha Park is nearby on SC-160. These are among the factors that make Node 5 an opportunity for redevelopment.

Downtown Fort Mill's historic main street is home to a growing number of businesses, restaurants and shops.

Recommendations
The main goal in Node 5 is to attract residents to downtown. Higher density residential development should be promoted in this node, especially near the center of town. Apartments and condominiums should be allowed to develop in the downtown district.

In addition, rehabilitation of existing mill housing stock and infill similar in scale and character along Walter Elisha Park will provide a unique living opportunity for existing and future Fort Mill residents.

Densities could range from small lot single family homes to apartment and condominium communities exceeding 20 dwelling units/acre.

Any commercial redevelopment should be consistent with the existing structures along Main Street, built two or three stories and oriented toward the street. The architecture should complement existing buildings and not detract from the existing character of the district. Parking should continue to be behind any commercial or residential structure.

Retail, restaurants, cafes and outdoor dining, small book stores or antique shops would create a commercial destination on Main Street and draw residents and attract visitors. Furthermore, civic and institutional uses will continue to attract residents. Over time the LeRoy Springs Complex may transition to another use. There will be a need for a community facility that replaces the recreation and wellness activities once provided at the facility. Node 5 is an ideal location for this type of facility.

There are two key pieces of property to consider in the redevelopment of downtown Fort Mill. The first is the lot at the corner of Tom Hall Street and Main Street. This site anchors downtown and is appropriate for higher density residential development. The vacant lot adjacent to Confederate's Park, across from the Knife Shop should also be considered a key piece of property in downtown. This property could serve as Fort Mill's welcome mat. Concepts for this parcel include an area for temporary and changing art exhibits, an outdoor cafe space and/or an outdoor stage.

Node 6 is home to the LeRoy Springs Recreational Complex.

NODE 6

Context and Opportunities
The area designated as Node 6 is located along SC-160 east of downtown en route to the Lancaster County line. Node 6 is home to Fort Mill Elementary and Fort Mill Middle School, the LeRoy Springs Complex, existing strip retail and scattered residential development. The Fort Mill Southern Bypass will intersect SC-160 and the Springfield Parkway. A Pennies for Progress project will widen SC-160 between Springfield Parkway and the county line.

Recommendations
It is expected that the intersection of Springfield Parkway and Tom Hall Road will continue to serve as a retail and commercial center. New roadway capacity will reduce traffic in the area. Improved streetscape and pedestrian connectivity is needed to create a safer and more walkable environment for patrons. In addition, this Node is the main gateway into Fort Mill from the east. Attention to the scale and design of future development is important in creating a welcome point for individuals entering town.

Over time the Leroy Springs Complex recreational facility may transition to some other use.
The site is ideal for future higher density residential development due to its proximity to the Anne Springs Close Greenway, two schools and the strong connectivity between existing residential and commercial areas. Apartments, townhomes and condominiums are appropriate.

** The connection between Node 5 and Node 6 is a critical corridor in Fort Mill's redevelopment. This area, known as the Tom Hall Corridor is one of the most frequently traveled east/west routes in the planning area. As such, the area requires attention. Currently the corridor lacks an identity and the main commercial anchor at the intersection of Doby's Bridge and Tom Hall Street is mostly vacant. This site is prime for redevelopment. A mixed-use center, complete with ground-floor retail, and higher density residential would catalyze redevelopment in the area. In addition, improvisators to the streetscape and pedestrian crossings are needed to make this area safe for existing and future residents.*

NODE 7A/7B

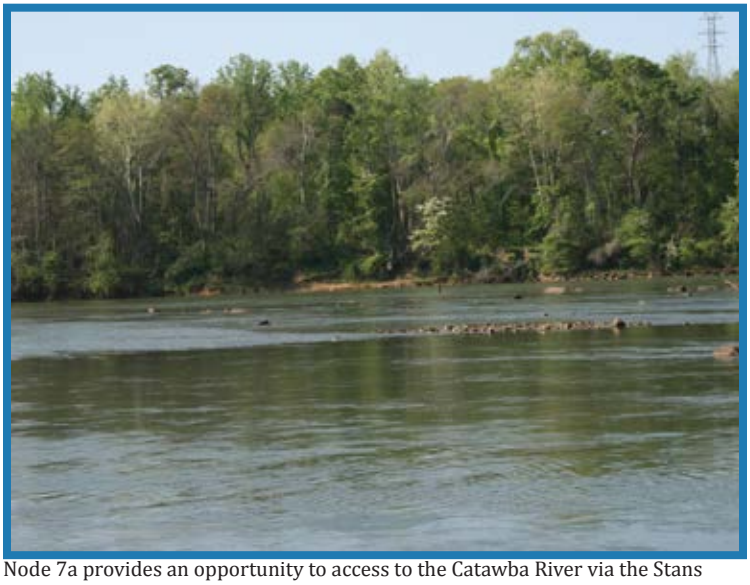
Context and Opportunities

In the southwestern portion of the planning area, the intersection of I-77 and Sutton Road is identified on the Plan as Node 7a (west of the interchange) and Node 7b (east of the interchange). The node borders the Catawba River and there area several natural and archaeologically sensitive sites that will needed to be preserved in tandem with future development.

There are two major amenities in Node 7a. First, the future Carolina HealthCare Fort Mill hospital site is located within the node. This area is also unique in that the Stans Museum of Life and the Environment is planned along the river. Development in this area will build on these two catalysts. Complimentary uses such as medical office buildings and retail spaces will develop near the hospital site, while there is an opportunity for sustainable mixed use development integrated with the unique riparian forest near the museum site and Catawba River.

Node 7b, east of the interchange, provides an opportunity for a southern gateway to Fort Mill. Highway 21 bisects this node and provides an alternative north/south route from points south to Charlotte. Currently this area is a mix of industrial and scattered rural residential.

Node 7b will change significantly over time. Just across the river in Rock Hill is the new Riverwalk development and the Giordano Velodrome. These are two place changing projects that could have an effect on the growth and development of Node 7b. In addition, the completion of the Fort Mill Southern Bypass will open up the area for further redevelopment.



Node 7a provides an opportunity to access to the Catawba River via the Stans Museum of Life and the Environment.

Recommendations

Node 7a features an opportunity for a context sensitive master-planned development with commercial services supportive of the proposed hospital. Building off the energy of the new hospital this node could accommodate two to three-story commercial developments that supports a variety of tenants. Complementary uses such as an aging-in-place community that has both independent and facilitated living options, a hotel facility and medical office buildings are appropriate.

The Fort Mill School District has also proposed a future elementary school within node 7a. Ball fields, which could be used by both the school and the greater Fort Mill community could be built near the school site and in the utility easements that transect the node.

Housing development should include both single and multi-family options including traditional apartments, attached townhomes, patio homes, and detached single-family dwellings. Residential densities range from low, up to two DUA, to high, eight plus DUA.

In addition, this site is also the planned point of access to the planned Kanawha development with the Stans Museum of Life and the Environment. From this node, residents and visitors would have access to sections of greenway and both vehicular and pedestrian access to the Catawba River.

Additional details for Node 7a are provided in Design Scenarios section of this report starting on page 20.

Node 7b is envisioned to have commercial along Sutton Road and US 21. In addition, light industrial and other employment uses will be drawn to the I-77 intersection. Future residential development will be limited to the northern portions of the node. A future greenway along to the river's edge would preserve both the floodplain and comply with Catawba River buffer rules.

Node 7b could also include a transit stop on its eastern flank along US 21. To the east of US 21 the land use will change to a mix of office and light industrial accommodating municipal services such as the wastewater treatment facility. In addition, there are opportunities for a community park and a pedestrian river crossing at Node 7b.

NODE 8

Context and Opportunities

The Plan identifies Node 8 near the intersection of the Fort Mill Southern Bypass and Doby's Bridge Road. This node is special given its location along the Bypass, the proximity of two planned schools, and the large amount of undeveloped land.

The two planned schools in this area are a new High School that will border the Fort Mill Southern Bypass on the western side of the node and a new elementary school that will be located on the east side of Doby's Bridge Road in the Massey subdivision. In addition, Doby's Bridge Park is located in this node, just west of the intersection of Holbrook Road and Doby's Bridge Road.

Recommendations

Development in Node 8 will primarily be higher density residential near the center of the node and along the Fort Mill Southern Bypass, with neighborhood commercial near the intersection of Doby's Bridge Road and the Bypass, and medium density residential near the periphery including townhomes and apartments, transitions to single family detached homes to the east and south near the river.

Pedestrian connections from residential areas to Doby's Bridge Park, between the proposed schools, and the river will be critical to enhancing the walkability of this activity center. There is a potential for a greenway or multi-use trail connection between the Catawba River to the proposed High School, along Whites Road, then continuing to Doby's Bridge Park in the North and to the new elementary school to the east and continuing to a greenway along Sugar Creek. In addition, there is an opportunity for Doby's Bridge Park to expand its current footprint.

Street connectivity could be improved in Node 8. For example, Banks Road, Whites Road, and Doby's Bridge Road could be connected with a two lane facility to serve the large tracts of land bordering the Catawba River. Also roadway, bicycle and pedestrian connections parallel to the Fort Mill Southern Bypass should be encouraged in order to improve connectivity and accessibility.

In addition, as High School #3 and planned elementary school at Massey are built there may be opportunities for joint use agreements with shared field spaces.
Additional details for Node 8 are provided in Design Scenarios section of this report starting on page 20.

The area directly south of Node 8 is a mixed use area that will grow over time primarily as a residential destination with limited neighborhood commercial and retail. This area is unique due to its frontage on the Catawba River, proximity to Fort Mill and downtown Rock Hill. In order to prepare this area for future development, further study is needed on the environmental restraints limiting development and the type and scale of infrastructure needed to accommodate future growth. Due to the development potential in this area the town should consider creating an overlay district for the Node and the Bypass corridor to ensure that the type, intensity and aesthetic of future development is consistent.

Transportation

ROADS

The planning area's growth pattern is supported by a variety of transportation choices, including key roadway connections as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map. They include the Fort Mill Southern Bypass and several conceptual connections that would increase roadway connectivity and potentially alleviate congestion.

The Fort Mill Southern Bypass is a Pennies for Progress project, estimated to cost $53 million, that includes the construction of a new two lane road between SC 160, east of Downtown Fort Mill and the Fort Mill Parkway, south of Downtown. Portions of the project will use existing roads, most of the mileage will be on new location. This project, is scheduled to be complete in 2013. The eventual cross-section of the Fort Mill Southern Bypass is planned to be a four land road with center turning lane.

There are also three new conceptual road connections shown in the Comprehensive Plan. These represent potential collector streets that could be accommodated as land develops. The exact alignment of these connections is subject to change based on the intentions and scale of proposed development. Ideally proposed developments would make the connections via internal street networks or accommodate their construction at a later date.

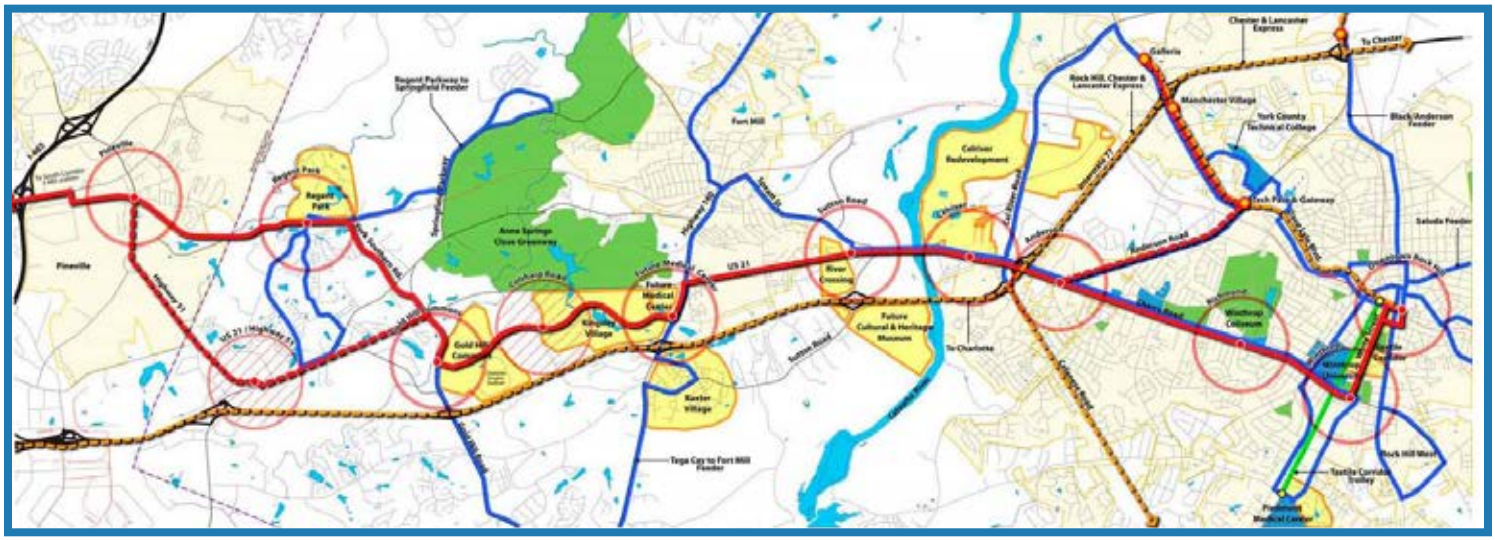
The connector extending from Gardendale Road to Highway 160 and then eastward to Coltharp Road, if completed, would provide an alternative route for residents along Gardendale to access I-77 and relieve traffic on Highway 160. There is also a connection shown between Williams Road and Holbrook Road on the east side of the planning area. This short connection represents a need to provide a north and south outlet to future residents.

The connection parallel to the Catawba River on the south side of the Planning Area represents a need to provide additional connectivity in the southeastern portion of the study area. Currently a number of subdivisions are located along Doby's Bridge Road. Although additional capacity is available, as more development occurs, the intersection of Doby's Bridge Road and the Southern Bypass will become more congested. A connection between Doby's Bridge Road, Whites Road and Banks Road will allow current and future residents will have multiple routes to access the Southern Bypass, Downtown and I-77. In addition, this road will increase opportunities for redevelopment in the employment area between Highway 21 and Banks Road.

TRANSIT

There is currently limited transit serving the Fort Mill Area. The CATS Express Bus Route 82X runs weekdays during peak hours and stops at the Carowinds Area Fiesta Market park and ride lot, Baxter Village, and continues to Rock Hill. CATS Bus Route 42 serves Carowinds Blvd. and travels east to the I-485/South Blvd. Light Rail station.

In addition, there is no demand response service for the elderly or disabled to utilize for trips originating in the Town limits. Stakeholders suggest that because Fort Mill lies in the Charlotte urbanized area but within



Findings from the RFATS Transit study suggest a Bus Rapid Transit Route along US-21 through the planning area. The alignment proposed in the RFATS Master Plan is depicted above. The route proposed in this plan is slightly different due to the changes in land use along the corridor.
Source: RFATS Locally Preferred Alternative Summary Document, 2007

South Carolina, neither state will provide money to fund the service. York County Access does provide public transportation for essential trips, like medical appointments and ride-to-work services for residents outside the town limits but because Fort Mill falls under the Charlotte Area Transit System jurisdiction residents are not eligible for York County Access.

The Rock Hill – Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS) completed the Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study in 2007. This study evaluated ways to connect the planning area to the employment centers of Charlotte and the Charlotte Area Transit System's (CATS) South Corridor rail line.

Based on ridership projections and the anticipated cost of the project, RFATS recommended that a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) be constructed. The proposed route BRT could take through the planning area, as well as locations suitable for potential transit stations, are located on the Comprehensive Plan Map. The proposed alignment is parallel to I-77 on US-21 for the considerable distance that is in the planning area. This is slightly different than the preferred alternative shown in the RFATS study due to changes in land use along the corridor.

The RFATS study recommended local feeder bus routes in the planning area. In addition to the continuation of the Carowinds Blvd. Route it is recommended that there be an internal feeder route serving the major activity centers in Fort Mill. A conceptual route would begin in Baxter Village, travel east to Downtown Fort Mill, east on Tom Hall Road, then south on the Fort Mill Southern Bypass, serving Node 7b, then west to Nodes 6a and 6b, then north on Sutton Road back to Baxter Village. This would serve the majority of the Nodes in the southern half of the planning area.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

To increase bicycle and pedestrian trips and encourage alternative modes of transportation, the Plan recommends the incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities along roadways. Specifically the Plan suggests that bike lanes be required on future roadways to connect bicyclists to major activity centers. In addition, it is recommended that bicycle facilities, such as wide outside lanes, wide shoulders, bike lanes and shared land markings, should be evaluated during the planning of major roadway improvements including resurfacing and widening projects.

The Giordano Velodrome in nearby Rock Hill draw bike enthusiasts from around the region.

In addition, with the opening of the Giordano Velodrome in nearby Rock Hill, the Fort Mill area will increasingly become a destination for cyclists looking for both on and off-road facilities. Striping of existing right-of-ways and making key linkages of bike facilities will enhance cycling opportunities for both residents and visitors.

The Plan also suggests that the town assess and determine where sidewalk improvements are needed throughout the planning area to increase connectivity. For example, with the construction of Kanawha, Massey and Regent Park, existing and proposed sidewalks need to be extended and connected to provide pedestrian access along Sutton Road, Doby's Bridge Road, US-21, the Fort Mill Northern Bypass and the Fort Mill Southern Bypass.

Sidewalk connections to existing and future Catawba River crossings, as well as to sidewalk networks in Mecklenburg County could provide alternative means to connect to adjacent jurisdictions. A sidewalk connection, for example, between Regent Park and Carolina Place Mall in Pineville could reduce traffic congestion in that area.

Currently Fort Mill has a few existing greenways. A multi-use path runs along the south side of Highway 160 (North White Street), beginning just east of I-77 and ending at Walter Elisha Park. A greenway also extends from Walter Elisha Park to Harris Park. In addition there are numerous trails and greenways throughout the Anne Close Springs Greenway that are used for recreation. The Plan recognizes

the need for additional greenways and recommends the completion of the Carolina Thread Trail through the planning area, including a critical link from just below the Lake Wylie dam to US 21, as well as additional greenways as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map. The greenways shown represent conceptual connections and could be accomplished a number of different ways using a combination of multi-use paths beside roads, paved greenways and unpaved trails. It is recommended that the feasibility and exact alignment of these trails needs to be determined through further study and consultation with property owners.

Park & Recreation Facilities

One of the catalysts for the plan update was the need to evaluate existing and future levels of park and recreation service in the township. As noted in the Volume 1 Update, the Town of Fort Mill is currently working with a deficit of park and recreation facilities given its current population. As the population continues to grow Fort Mill will need to significantly invest in park and recreation facilities in order to meet current and future demand.

The updated Comprehensive Plan Map denotes potential locations for new parks. These locations were determined by first looking at existing park service areas. Gaps in services areas indicate a need for a new facility to serve a neighboring population. In addition, proximity to greenways (existing and proposed), schools (existing and proposed) and future residential development areas were also considered in placement of the proposed parks.

Additional details supporting park and recreation facilities are found in the recommendation section of this report.

One potential design scenario for Node 7a includes a hospital, mixed use retail, commercial and office buildings, a new elementary school with community recreation fields, assisted living facility and variety of housing options.

Design Scenarios

In order to provide examples of how some areas could develop, a design scenario was created for Node 7a and for Node 8. Each scenario is conceptual and represents simply one way in which development might occur in these areas in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

NODE 7A

In the southwestern portion of the planning area, the intersection of I-77 and Sutton Road is identified on the Plan as Node 7a. This node is unique because of its location on the Catawba River and the proposed civic and medical facilities in the area. The Stans Museum of Life and the Environment and the Carolina HealthCare Fort Mill hospital campus are both located in Node 7a. These facilities will draw a variety of supporting uses to the node.

The hospital campus anchors the eastern portion of the site. With improvements to the existing intersection at Sutton Road, visitors to the facility will have easy access on and off I-77. In addition, an internal network of streets could be configured to provide emergency access priority through controlled entry/exit points.

Building off the energy of the new hospital this node could accommodate two to three-story commercial developments that support a variety of tenants including medical office and complimentary uses such as an aging-in-place community that has both independent and facilitated living options and an extended stay hotel facility. A neighborhood serving commercial center could be located at the intersection of the Sutton Road extension and a proposed north/south local street.

The Fort Mill School District has also proposed a future elementary school within node 7a. Ball fields, which could be used by both the school and the greater Fort Mill community could be built near the school site and in the utility easements that transect the node.

There are a variety of residential development options available in Node 7a. Higher density residential including attached single-family and apartments is suggested for the areas closest to the commercial center and proposed elementary school. Larger lot single family closer to the river provides another living option in the Node.

In addition, the site could one day be the point of access to the planned the Stans Museum of Life and the Environment. From this node, residents and visitors would have access to sections of greenway and both vehicular and pedestrian access to the Catawba River.

NODE 8

As described earlier, Node 8 is unique for its access to schools and parks, as well as more planned residential growth in the Doby's Bridge Road vicinity. The focal point of Node 8 is the intersection of Doby's Bridge Road and the Southern Bypass.

Commercial development in Node 8 will center on this intersection. Neighborhood serving commercial, which could include a grocery store, drug store, restaurants and limited office. All commercial development should be oriented towards streets and roadways with parking built behind the buildings. This design scenario also calls for medium density residential near the periphery of the commercial center, including townhomes and apartments, transitions to single family detached homes to the east and south.

Numerous civic facilities including the proposed high school site and accompanying field facilities, proposed elementary school site and planned expansion to Doby's Bridge Park will drive much of the aforementioned residential growth in this area.

Safe pedestrian and bicycle linkages connecting the civic uses, neighborhoods and commercial center could be addressed by both on and off-road facilities. In addition, there is a potential for a greenway or multi-use trail connection between the Catawba River to the proposed High School, along Whites Road, then continuing to Doby's Bridge Park in the North and to the new elementary school to the east and eventually connecting to a greenway along Sugar Creek.

Street connectivity could be emphasized in Node 8. For example, Banks Road, Whites Road, and Doby's Bridge Road could be connected with a two lane facility to serve the large tracts of land bordering the Catawba River. Also roadway, bicycle and pedestrian connections parallel to the Fort Mill Southern Bypass should be encouraged in order to improve connectivity and accessibility.

Node 8 could develop over time with a retail and commercial center at the intersection of Doby's Bridge Road and the Southern Bypass. The planned Fort Mill High School anchors the western portion of the site.

Recommendations & Implementation Strategies

Introduction

To realize the vision for Fort Mill and to achieve the town's stated goals, this section outlines recommendations for each element covered in the Comprehensive Plan and specific implementation strategies for each recommendation to put this plan into action.

Implementation of the plan in accordance with the recommendations and strategies is key to realizing the vision. The existing Advisory Committee could act as the implementation committee along with necessary expansion of town staff to implement this plan. Some of these implementation strategies are within the control of the town. Others are subject to the desires and expectations of individual property owners and community institutions. Yet, others are the prerogative of the South Carolina General Assembly to allow. Recommendations and implementation strategies outlined in this section need to be reviewed and prioritized to achieve the short-, mid-, and long-term needs of the community.

The following sections give an overview of each element, restate the issues and opportunities identified in the update to Volume 1: Fort Mill Today, and identify the goals, recommendations and strategies related to each piece of the Comprehensive Plan.

Housing Element

Overview

Housing is a key ingredient for the town, serving as both object and source of investment, as economic driver and employer, and as an essential part of the fabric of neighborhoods and the community.

Summary of Housing Issues & Opportunities

- Housing stock in the Fort Mill Planning Area nearly doubled between 2000 and 2010, increasing by over 7,800 units.
- Owner-occupied units make up nearly 74% of the total housing inventory in the Planning Area; followed by 20% renter-occupied and 6% vacant.
- Residential development slowed significantly in the Fort Mill Planning Area due to the recession and housing downturn between 2007 and 2008. A slow recovery from the recession has continued to limit new growth.
- During the recession, household mobility was at its lowest since the 1940s, reducing relocations and further decreasing the demand for residential development.
- Between 2007 and 2011, a total of 3,194 single-family closings were recorded in Fort Mill, equating to an annual average of 639 closings. New home closings have been limited by the number of construction starts over the last five years.
- In 2011, the average closing price for a new single-family house in Fort Mill was $265,275. Consistent with national trends, closing prices declined following the recession and housing downturn.
- Nearly 850 new apartment units have been completed in the Fort Mill Planning Area since 2007.
- Over 3,200 new residential units are approved as part of active developments underway in the Planning Area. Another 4,300 units are approved as part of development agreements for planned neighborhoods.

Housing Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Create greater diversity in housing options.

Recommendation 1: Provide for high-density, attached housing where infrastructure is adequate (areas served by water/sewer, along major highways, within mixed-use nodes, near major employment).

Strategy 1: Designate areas identified as nodes on the Comprehensive Plan Map that are suitable for higher density residential.

Strategy 2: Ensure zoning policies support a diversity of housing types.

Recommendation 2: Support the production of more housing affordable to a mix of incomes in the study area.

Strategy 1: Facilitate the reuse of abandoned, vacant and tax-delinquent properties to increase the supply of housing affordable to a mix of incomes.

Strategy 2: Partner with the Housing Authority of Fort Mill to measurably increase the supply of housing affordable to a mix of incomes.

Strategy 3: Collaborate with York County and its municipalities to make publicly-owned land available for affordable housing and to establish a Housing Trust Fund to invest in workforce housing.

Strategy 4: Work with the churches in Fort Mill to participate in faith-based housing initiatives.

Strategy 5: Expedite permitting and review of developments with a mixed-income and/or affordable component.

Recommendation 3: Attract housing in downtown Fort Mill.

Strategy 1: Create a downtown Municipal Services District (MSD) and offer density and/or parking variances for projects within the district.

Strategy 2: Provide property tax incentives for developers that build stand-alone residential or mixed-use projects with residential within the downtown MSD. These incentives would apply to the incremental increase in tax value over a specified period of time, typically at a declining rate.

Strategy 3: Work with downtown churches and other institutional landowners to integrate residential units into expansion facilities.

Strategy 4: Purchase strategic property within or around the MSD and require as a contingency within a sales contract that residential uses be developed or integrated as part of a (re) development.

Strategy 5: Pursue shared parking opportunities for residential and commercial uses within Town-owned lots.

Recommendation 4: Limit residential densities in close proximity to sensitive environmental conditions such as floodplains, conservation areas, hydric soils.

Strategy 1: Consider alternative development models such as conservation subdivisions and resources protection subdivisions to protect environmentally sensitive areas from residential development encroachment.

Recommendation 5: Prepare to meet the housing needs of older adults.

Strategy 1: Create appropriate zoning districts that allow for accessory dwelling units or 'granny flats.' Consider zoning to allow for alternative models for housing, including, co-housing communities.

Strategy 2: Work with downtown churches and other institutional landowners to integrate residential units into expansion facilities. For example, age-restricted housing units could be accommodated, with minimal parking requirements. A church could either sell a portion of its land at a reduced price or provide an affordable land lease to developers to build housing on its land. In exchange, the developer could construct needed facilities for the church, including shared amenities with the housing residents.

Strategy 3: Promote universal design and visitability standards in new home production.

Strategy 4: Improve access to social services and transportation options.

Economic Development Element

Overview

Economic development is critical to a sustainable future for the Fort Mill Planning Area. Development of non-residential uses can help to provide a diversified and sustainable tax base, and limits the distance that residents need to travel for goods, services, and employment opportunities.

Summary of Economic Development Issues & Opportunities

- At-place employment totaled nearly 15,000 jobs in the Fort Mill Planning Area in 2010, with 32% in the services sector. The Services, Retail and Wholesale Trade, and Manufacturing sectors accounted for approximately 85% of Planning Area employment.
- Over 19,000 residents of the Fort Mill Planning Area were employed in 2010. Approximately 40% of residents had jobs in the Services sector, which includes health care and education.
- In 2010, the Planning Area experienced a net outflow of 4,499 workers, indicating a large share of the population that commutes to other areas for employment.
- There are nine business parks in the Fort Mill Planning Area that have approximately 760 acres available for future construction.
- Nine retail centers totaling nearly 492,000 square feet currently exist in Fort Mill Township.
- There are ten commercial projects, including retail, office, and industrial uses, approved for the Fort Mill Planning Area, totaling seven million square feet of space.

Economic Development Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Create a vibrant downtown through public/private investment.

Recommendation 1: Fund infrastructure improvements such as streets/streetscapes, parks, and public utilities within a new Municipal Services District (MSD).

Strategy 1: Designate the MSD boundaries and obtain York County approval.

Strategy 2: Create a board of directors for the MSD and hire an executive director to coordinate public investments, market downtown, and negotiate with developers.

Strategy 3: Designate major public infrastructure projects that would be funded through municipal bonds, and prepare construction cost forecasts. Debt service would be partially covered by property taxes collected within the MSD.

Recommendation 2: Attract the right mix of commercial tenants that would be successful in a downtown environment.

Strategy 1: Work with the Fort Mill Economic Council and downtown building and land owners to create a credible inventory of available properties and marketing materials. Engage the local and regional commercial real estate brokerage community to market the properties.

Strategy 2: Work with the Fort Mill Economic Council to identify and contact operators of existing restaurants, family-oriented businesses, and specialty shops in the Charlotte region to investigate relocating or opening an additional store in downtown Fort Mill. Use planned public investments as leverage to attract new businesses.

Strategy 3: Encourage the Fort Mill Downtown Association and private business owners to consider a mural project on existing building facades and an art garden on open greenspace in the Downtown area to attract additional tenants.

Goal 2: Create a sustainable economy with less reliance on surrounding communities for employment and shopping opportunities.

Recommendation 1: Create a more balanced tax base by designating areas near I-77 for future employment.

Strategy 1: Collaborate with the York County EDC to identify property that would be most competitive for employment centers.

Strategy 2: Work with the State of South Carolina to promote tax incentives offered to manufacturing and distribution companies, including:

- Low corporate tax rates
- No local or state taxes on inventories or intangibles
- Exemption of sales tax for purchases integral to the manufacturing process
- Five-year tax abatement for manufacturing companies that invest $50,000 or more in land, facilities, machinery, and equipment
- Five-year tax abatement for distribution companies that create 75 or more new jobs

Strategy 3: Pursue annexation of and rezone key property to accelerate the availability of land and building product for prospective employers.

Strategy 4: Invest in marketing materials for Fort Mill and specific properties to supplement information provided by the EDC to prospective developers or employers. Describe local incentives such as property tax credits and public investments in amenities to improve quality of life.

Recommendation 2: Allocate land for neighborhood and convenience retail within or near new residential neighborhoods to reduce the number and length of shopping trips.

Strategy 1: Provide density bonuses or parking variances for smaller neighborhood retail centers in strategic locations.

Strategy 2: Encourage residential units and/or offices above the retail space.

Strategy 3: Consider partial public funding for streets that allow for on-street parking and pedestrian connections to nearby residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation 3: Take advantage of the economic benefits associated with planned and potential transportation projects.

Strategy 1: Support development of the Bus Rapid Transit Corridor along US-21. Ensure future land uses along the corridor do not preclude transit as an option.

Natural Resources Element

(Note: Per the scope of the contract, the Natural Resources element was revised to reflect significant changes in the planning area per the Update to the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan memo.)

Overview

Natural resources play a tremendous part in the quality of life for the residents of any given area. The same is true in Fort Mill and its planning area. The natural resources element covers those things which make up the physical environment, such as soils, forest lands and agricultural lands; creeks, streams, rivers and wetlands; the habitats of plants and animals; park and recreation areas; greenways; unique scenic views and sites; and air quality.

Summary of Natural Resources Issues & Opportunities

There is an opportunity to preserve open space throughout the town and its planning area, provide Fort Mill residents with additional access to the Catawba River and institute programs to protect water quality.

- As Fort Mill continues to grow, the need for active recreation facilities such as ball fields, playgrounds and other amenities will increase. If the LeRoy Springs Complex transitions over time to some other use, this need will become critical.
- There is an opportunity for Fort Mill to work with the Anne Close Springs Greenway to expand non-motorized connections to their internal greenway system.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the transportation network with an interconnected system of greenway trails.
- Poor air quality adversely affects the health and wellness of the residents of Fort Mill.
- Walter Elisha Park is not owned by the town but is centrally located.
- Fort Mill has the opportunity to build public / private partnerships to create recreational programs.

- Catawba River buffer rules require 50 ft buffers on all streams draining into the Catawba River and a 100ft buffer on the river. This presents unique challenges to development and an opportunity to co-locate a greenway and linear park along the Catawba River, offering recreational opportunities and protecting water quality.

Natural Resources Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: An interconnected system of parks, open space, greenways, trails and pedestrian walkways.

Recommendation 1: Plan for greenway, pedestrian and bicycle paths linking neighborhoods through interconnected network of riparian corridors, utility easement corridors and within road rights of ways.

Strategy 1: Develop a town-wide greenway, trails and bikeway master plan, including connections to regional trail networks including the Carolina Thread Trail, and execute strategic steps to accomplish its objectives in order to develop capital improvement strategies for greenway, pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Strategy 2: Meet both short and long term biking interests through solid striping of bikes lanes on all major arterials where road width allows, including Springfield Parkway, Doby's Bridge Road, Sutton Road, Gold Hill Road, etc. Require bicycle facilities on all new facilities, such as the Fort Mill Southern By-Pass. Link key paths and destinations, including the Giordano Velodrome in Rock Hill.

Strategy 3: Assist and support the development of the Nations Ford Greenway.

Strategy 4: Create policies to encourage developers to provide open space, pay a fee in lieu, or provide connections to the public open space system of greenway, trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

Recommendation 2: Develop a town-wide equitable public park system that provides adequate space and facilities to meet the future demand based on projected population growth in the Town of Fort Mill and the planning area.

Strategy 1: Develop a park and recreation master plan and execute strategic steps to accomplish its objectives in order to develop capital improvement strategies for future park improvements and criteria for park land acquisitions.

Strategy 2: Create a Park and Recreation Advisory Board to help guide future park and recreation expansion efforts in Fort Mill and the planning area.

Strategy 3: Develop programming for community parks that addresses the active recreational needs of the community by assessing the need of active facilities within the planning area and by collaborating with the county and other adjacent communities.

Strategy 4: Adopt a Fort Mill level of service standard policy for recreational facilities.

Strategy 5: Complete current park and recreation improvements.

Strategy 6: Evaluate the feasibility of fee in lieu and/or land dedication efforts for the acquisition and development of future public park land or greenway sections.

Strategy 7: Guarantee the preservation of large privately-held open spaces or parks through voluntary land donation, buy-out, easement, deed restriction, etc.

Strategy 8: Encourage developers to build neighborhood parks within planned communities with park and recreation amenities.

Goal 2: Efficient and effective public recreation offerings based on public/private partnerships.

Recommendation 1: Strategically work with private and public recreation providers to create high quality recreation opportunities to all residents while reducing fiscal impacts.

Strategy 1: Develop joint use agreements with public and private entities within the planning area to reduce the costs to build and operate recreational facilities.

Strategy 2: Engage Fort Mill School District so the town and the school district may collaborate on a school facility concept plan for sport fields development at various local school sites that could reduce the impact of park development and land acquisition costs.

Strategy 3: Establish an annual parks and recreation summit with the school district and various private recreation providers to coordinate plans for potential resource sharing efforts.

Strategy 4: Develop partnerships with private recreation service providers, such as the YMCA, so that the town or the private service provider can provide land, infrastructure and/or maintenance while the other entity manages programming.

Strategy 5: Develop a strategic partnership plan to raise local visibility of the services and facilities managed by the park and recreation department.

Strategy 6: Seek sport fields sponsorship and co-branding opportunities with local private corporations for various recreation facilities and programs to help offset the cost for future recreation infrastructure needs.

Strategy 7: Partner on grant applications with local non-profit and government agencies. Explore all grant and funding opportunities in detail with a comprehensive Park & Recreation Master Plan.

Recommendation 2: Evaluate all potential sources of funding for park development and recreation planning projects.

Strategy 1: Explore opportunities to secure funding from state and federal park, recreation and trail, Division of Water Quality and SC Department of Transportation grants.

Strategy 2: Attract regional sport tournaments to existing facilities.

Strategy 3: Seek additional recreation funds from the local hospitality tax.

Goal 3: Protect the planning area's natural resources to improve water and air quality.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the impacts of all development activities are mitigated or prevented to protect water quality in all streams and rivers in the planning area.

Strategy 1: Enforce specific standards that limit construction within the identified floodplains.
Note: These standards are to be more stringent than South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control's Division of Water Quality.

Strategy 2: Encourage stream restoration and enhancement projects in degraded river and stream areas within the planning area.

Recommendation 2: Require new development to minimize impermeable surfaces and provide vegetation planting buffering on stream and river banks.

Strategy 1: Develop land development standards which require developments to protect impacted riparian areas.

Strategy 2: Modify zoning ordinance to encourage the incorporation of innovate storm water design techniques including pervious pavements, rain gardens, headwater streets and green roof where appropriate.

Recommendation 3: Ensure adequate supply of natural open space.

Strategy 1: Develop specific standards that address open space allocations with all new proposed developments. (See Land Use: (Open Space/ Greenway Area)

Strategy 2: Work with local land trusts to help identify and preserve ecologically sensitive land.

Recommendation 4: Define and identify and preserve the planning area's most ecologically sensitive lands.

Strategy 1: Work jointly with local community groups and land conservation groups to conduct an environmental and ecological study within the planning area to identify to most ecologically valuable undeveloped tracts of land.

Strategy 2 : Define zones for lands already protected from development such as parks, floodplains, wetlands and river land bottoms and otherwise conserved areas.

Recommendation 5: Improve the planning area's air quality by reducing potential pollution sources.

Strategy 1: Improve roadway connectivity to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Strategy 2: Encourage the use of non-motorized transportation to reduce the impacts of vehicle emissions to improve air quality.

Strategy 3: Coordinate with RFATS to improve walk and bike access and bike facilities to existing and proposed bus stops locations and park and ride lots.

Strategy 4: Support RFATS in the development of a Bus Rapid Transit corridor along US 21.

Strategy 5: Develop key trail segments that can function as bicycle commute routes to and from bus stop locations, nodes and local neighborhoods.

Strategy 6: Request that DHEC consider Fort Mill for a second air quality monitoring site in addition to the one site in York County.

Cultural Resources Element

(Note: Per the scope of the contract, the Cultural Resources element was revised to reflect significant changes in the planning area per the Update to the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan memo.)

Overview

Every community develops beliefs, art and institutions that help shape and define its character. Historic buildings and structures, unique commercial and residential areas, natural and scenic resources, archeological sites, as well as educational, religious and entertainment areas shape the Fort Mill community and its people.

Summary of Cultural Resources Issues & Opportunities

- There is a need to enhance the existing Fort Mill Historic Preservation Ordinance by providing improved guidelines.
- The town lacks a current and complete inventory of historic structures and may need to update/expand its historic district.
- There is an identified need to provide funding for historic sites to improve/preserve the structural integrity and maintain the property.
- There is a need to promote Fort Mill's history and culture to increase the awareness of its assets.
- There is an opportunity to celebrate Fort Mill's history through signage, historical markers and a comprehensive marketing program.
- There is an opportunity to improve programming to encourage visitation of historical and cultural sites.
- There is an opportunity to improve Fort Mill's current festival program by adding events and promoting activities downtown.
- Fort Mill lacks an arts facility that embraces visual, literary, and performing arts to showcase Fort Mill's rich history and culture
- There is a need for additional community meeting facilities for educational and congregational purposes.

Cultural Resources Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Preservation of historically significant properties.

Recommendation 1: Improve the language of the Fort Mill Historic Preservation Ordinance to provide better guidelines for historic properties.

Strategy 1: Require the Fort Mill Historic Landmark Commission to update the language of the Historic Preservation Ordinance by establishing more detailed guidelines.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the need for changes in the existing zoning ordinances to improve the effectiveness of the Fort Mill Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Recommendation 2: Assess and update the existing boundaries of the Historic District.

Strategy 1: Retain a consultant to conduct a comprehensive study of all buildings, structures, sites, objects, with potential historical significance in the District.

Strategy 2: Require the Fort Mill Historic Landmark Commission to work with and follow up with the said consultant's findings and recommendations.

Recommendation 3: Consider funding for improvement of designated historic properties to enhance the historic image quality of Fort Mill.

Strategy 1: Strengthen the effectiveness of the Fort Mill Historic Landmark Commission by utilizing Fort Mill's Certified Local Government (CLG) status to apply for eligible federal grant funding.

Note: Certified Local Government status enables Fort Mill to apply for certain types of federal grant funding.

Strategy 2: Educate the owners of homes listed on the National Register as to the availability of grants and supplemental property improvement funds.

Note: Sources of funding include utilizing financial tools such as Community Development Block Grant-CDBG (urban areas), Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG), National Preservation Revolving Fund, Endangered Properties Fund, Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), Local Tax Incentives, Federal Tax Incentives, and Urban Enterprise Zones.

Goal 2: Enhance the awareness of Fort Mill's Cultural Resources among its citizens and visitors.

Recommendation 1: Improve promotional efforts of Fort Mill's rich culture and history.

Strategy 1: Utilize education and communication techniques, such as school curriculums, county museum(s), highway markers, tourism industry, and the media.

Strategy 2: Develop partnerships with local municipalities within the Planning Area, York County, as well as other regional, state, and national preservation organizations.

Recommendation 2: Retain a consultant to create a marketing package to promote historically and culturally significant sites.

Strategy 1: Hire a consultant to create a wayfinding system that identifies and markets Fort Mill's historic, natural, cultural and economic assets.

Strategy 2: Utilize signage to identify Fort Mill's Downtown and its boundaries.

Strategy 3: Encourage the Fort Mill Historic Landmark Commission to utilize signage and way-finding signage to identify Fort Mill's Historic District's boundaries.

Recommendation 3: Evaluate the need for a Natural Heritage Trail and a Cultural Heritage Trail to promote historically, culturally, and naturally significant sites throughout Fort Mill's Planning Area.

Strategy 1: Identify significant sites and structures within and around Fort Mill's planning area to be included along each trail.

Note: This could include, but not limited to previously Nationally Registered historic sites such as the: Confederate Park, Springfield Plantation, White Homestead, Wilson House, Banks Mack House, John M. White House, Thornwell-Elliot House, Mack-Belk House, Mills House, National Guard Armory, Unity Presbyterian Church Complex (inclusive of the church, manse, Unity Cemetery and Old Unity Cemetery). However, this may also include sites of historical interest, but not currently formally recognized: various cemeteries, areas along the Catawba River, Catawba Indian archeological sites, Peach Orchards, Stewart-Kimbrell House, Frederick Nims House, and Jones-Smyth House.

Strategy 2: Establish two trails: 1) a Natural Heritage Trail 2) a Cultural Heritage Trail that will effectively link identified sites and connect their importance.

Note: Create a variation of the trails that would interconnect the Natural Heritage Trail as well as the Cultural Heritage Trail.

Strategy 3: Implement interactive kiosks or markers along trails for better education of Fort Mill's history & culture.

Recommendation 4: Retain a consultant to evaluate the need for a historically and culturally-oriented programming to promote Fort Mill's history and culture.

Strategy 1: Identify potential uses and programming for a community facility.

Note: Among the potential uses, this could include: museum space, a gift shop, and ample space for merchandise and marketing material (informational brochures about destinations).

Note: This could include the central location for activities such as the Heritage and Natural Trail, headquarters for the marketing program, exhibits of artifacts and memorabilia.

Strategy 2: Identify potential development sites for the facility within the downtown node to support its revitalization effort(s).

Goal 3: Expanded cultural opportunities for all age groups.

Recommendation 1: Improve existing festival programming to include a variety of events that would create social, cultural, and economic benefit to the community.

Strategy 1: Encourage the Fort Mill Downtown Association to develop methods to utilize festivals to attract more visitors, increase interest in the Downtown area, and increase revenues for downtown businesses.

Note: The South Carolina Strawberry Festival attracts thousands of visitors to Fort Mill. The Town should work to build on the momentum of the festival by encouraging festival attendees to encourage folks to visit other parts of the community. Working with local business owners, Anne Springs Close Greenway and other area leaders the Town could consider a shuttle service to/from other significant Fort Mill attractions.

Strategy 2: Encourage the Fort Mill Downtown Association to create additional festivals or events that may be lacking in the regional festival marketplace or create festivals that are solely unique to Fort Mill.

Strategy 3: Encourage the Fort Mill Downtown Association and private business owners to consider a mural project on existing building facades and an art garden on open greenspace in the Downtown area.

Recommendation 2: Promote arts and arts-related activities throughout the planning area.

Strategy 1: Appoint a committee to spearhead arts

related activity.

Note: The duties of the committee should include, but will not be limited to, the following: 1) evaluate need for an arts program 2) rally interest 3) develop a comprehensive program 4) promote and retain the public's interest.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the need for arts and arts-related activities such as: visual, literary, and performing arts classes.

Strategy 3: Create awareness of regional and local benefits through a variety of media sources (e.g. local newspapers, town's Web site and innovative outlets).

Recommendation 3: Create opportunities for public/private investment(s) for creation of a local Arts and Cultural Center.

Strategy 1: Identify potential uses and program possibilities of a regional Arts and Cultural Center.

Note: Potential uses may include, but not limited to, a performance theater, dance/art studios, exhibit halls, etc.

Strategy 2: Identify potential sites for the Arts and Cultural Center within the downtown node to aid its revitalization efforts.

Note: There may be a possibility to integrate the Arts and Cultural Center and the Community Facility into a single, consolidated, structure.

Strategy 3: Encourage and facilitate dialogue among local/regional business leaders, developers, and fund raisers in regards to the establishment of a Cultural Center.

Strategy 4: Explore opportunities for public/private partnership and/or incentives for private investment.

Community Facilities Element

(Note: Per the scope of the contract, the Community Facilities section was revised to reflect significant changes in the planning area per the Update to the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan memo.)

Overview

The Community Facilities element includes a detailed look at Fort Mill's services and systems that the public uses on a daily basis: the water supply, treatment and distribution systems; the sewage system and wastewater treatment; the solid waste collection and disposal systems; fire protection; emergency medical services; public safety and emergency preparedness; any expansion of the town's government facilities; school and other educational facilities; as well as the library system and other cultural facilities.

Summary of Community Facilities Issues & Opportunities

- The wholesale water purchase agreement with Rock Hill was set to expire in 2014.
- The town has secured a new 30 year agreement with Rock Hill.
- The use of multiple pump stations causes increased maintenance costs for the town, county and potential developers.
- Fort Mill has a limited ability to treat wastewater and annexation reduces that capacity further as it requires the town to dedicate treatment capacity for any area that it may annex.
- Projected growth will require additional fire department substations to maintain adequate fire protection.
- An increase in development pressure will put more burdens on community facilities, such as schools, and limitations for new school sites due to the lack of land availability, land prices and the limited availability of contiguous land.
- Fort Mill's existing Town Hall lacks adequate space for an increase in staff.
- It is necessary to continually update Fort Mill's role in the York County Emergency Operations Plan since town facilities and assets may be called upon to assist personnel from the county or adjacent jurisdictions in times of emergency.

Community Facilities Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Secure additional water and improve sewer systems in the Fort Mill Planning Area to ensure service for future development.

Recommendation 1: Continue to support service agreements with Rock Hill to provide low cost water and sewer service to Fort Mill residents and businesses.

Strategy 1: Periodically evaluate cost and levels of service for water and sewer service.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the potential of eliminating some of the water towers in the planning area due to new or improved service.

Recommendation 2: Refer to the 2007 Water System Master Plan Update and the Wastewater System Master Plan Update prepared by Wiedeman & Singleton to identify and prioritize service area improvements.

Strategy 1: Based on the drainage areas within the planning area, identify the most cost effective locations for pump stations that may be used when consolidating smaller pump stations in those areas. In conjunction with this study of potential locations, all pump stations and force main lines that could potentially be eliminated should be identified, as well as additional main line gravity sewer lines that would be required to transport flow to these new locations.

Strategy 2: Study the creation of a regional pump station in the area of Doby's Bridge Road / Catawba River / Little Sugar Creek that would serve the majority of the planning area, particularly east of I-77. This could be done as a joint venture with Lancaster County to accept additional flow from its jurisdiction. This pump station would include a force main across the river to direct flow to the Manchester Wastewater Treatment Plant (MWWTP).

Recommendation 3: Seek funding through state, county, developers or local government programs similar to the existing transportation ("Pennies for Progress") program to expand water and sewer capabilities.

Strategy 1: With the success of South Carolina's "Pennies for Progress" transportation improvement program, a request for a similar state program for water and sewer could fund and fast-track water and sewer improvements in York County, including the Fort Mill planning area, as well as other South Carolina counties. Future development in York, Lancaster and Chester counties alone over the next 10 to 20 years could justify this type of program.

Strategy 2: Research and lobby for the creation of a county-wide or town program to fund the water and sewer improvements in the planning area.

Strategy 3: Require that developers participate in the funding for main line repair or improvements to transfer water and sewer to their development sites.

Recommendation 4: Study the potential for expansion to the sewer treatment facility in Fort Mill as an alternative to flows to the Manchester Wastewater Treatment Plant (MWWTP) in Rock Hill.

Strategy 1: Research the expansion options for the Spratt Road facility as a destination for some of the existing and newer sewer flows. A potential force main along the Fort Mill Southern Bypass could direct flows to this facility if there is adequate capacity.

Goal 2: Create a long-range Capital Improvements Program for facilities.

Recommendation 1: Provide additional fire and police services to areas of current and future expansion as needed in accordance with a facilities plan.

Strategy 1: Develop service level criteria to evaluate if there is sufficient service coverage and if additional fire and police staff and stations are necessary.

Note: When evaluating the need for an additional fire station, it is necessary to maintain Fort Mill's ISO rating for the entire planning area.

Strategy 2: Evaluate areas in need of additional police and fire services throughout the entire planning area.

Strategy 3: If additional fire and police station(s) are required, collaborate with other jurisdictions and parties to provide better services in growth areas that may influence or be impacted by any future site.

Note: Collaboration with other jurisdictions should include York County, Lancaster County, Tega Cay, developers with ongoing of future projects in the area and other parties.

Strategy 4: Develop a time frame for development and construction of new fire and police stations to maintain Fort Mill's Level of Service (LOS) as its population continues to grow.

Recommendation 2: Evaluate the need for additional schools within the planning area.

Strategy 1: Frequently refer to Cumming/SMG's "Ten Year Facility Needs Plan 2010 update" and compare its goals with current progress and future plans.

Strategy 2: Continue communication with Fort Mill School District and the South Carolina Department of Education in regards to reducing the required size of school sites for more efficient use of land and cost-effective programming.

Note: A reduction in the size of school sites will decrease the cost of school development projects and improve integration of schools into urban areas.

Recommendation 3: Expand the Fort Mill Town Hall.

Strategy 1: Conduct a personnel / staffing study to evaluate the need for additional administration and staff that will be located in the Town Hall.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the amount of additional space required to adequately serve additional staff.

Strategy 3: Determine specific facilities (e.g. the courtroom where weekly court proceedings are held, the jail, etc.) that require immediate expansion and create a short-term solution until a long-term solution is determined.

Strategy 4: Evaluate the possibility of expanding the current Town Hall or relocating some services to another structure.

Recommendation 4: Evaluate the need for expansion of / an additional library branch in Fort Mill and the planning area.

Strategy 1: Review the York County Library's 2003 Long Range Facilities Plan and align Fort Mill's objectives with those previously determined by York County.

Strategy 2: Communicate with York County and the Baxter branch library in regards to the demand for an additional library branch and coordinate programming to improve regional services.

Strategy 3: Locate potential sites in downtown Fort Mill for a 20,000-square-foot library facility, as identified as a need in the York County Library's 2003 Long Range Facilities Plan.

Strategy 4: In accordance with the York County Library's 2003 Long Range Facilities Plan, coordinate programming between all library branches to make sure the library system is meeting the needs of the community.

Recommendation 5: Continually update Fort Mill's role in York County's Emergency Operations Plan since town facilities and assets may be called upon to assist personnel from the county or adjacent jurisdictions in times of emergency.

Strategy 1: Maintain communications with York County in regards to the York County Emergency Operations Plan.

Recommendation 6: Continually look for opportunities to improve services in Fort Mill.

Strategy 1: Evaluate the potential for town-wide Wi-Fi service.

Transportation Element

Overview

The Transportation element includes a detailed look at Fort Mill's circulation system including strategies to enhance the road network, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and public transit.

Summary of Transportation Issues & Opportunities

- Roadway improvements and expansions are not keeping pace with growth.
- Fort Mill roadways are congested, especially during peak travel periods (e.g. I-77, SC-160, Doby's Bridge Road, Gold Hill Road, US-21).
- A lack of alternative routes results in circuitous routes and congestion at stoplights.
- The completion of the Fort Mill Southern Bypass will relieve congestion on Doby's Bridge and potentially increase development pressure in the southeastern portion of the planning area.
- Fort Mill residents have limited transit options.
- There is an opportunity to expand mass rapid transit service southward from Charlotte into York County through Pineville.
- Currently there is a lack of connected bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the planning area.

Transportation Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Improve the efficiency of the Fort Mill transportation system by improving and augmenting the existing roadway network to provide capacity for future development, provide better interconnectivity between adjacent counties and communities.

Recommendation 1: Fort Mill could continue the promotion of connectivity between communities and neighborhoods in an approach that utilizes the concepts for new roads developed through this process.

Strategy 1: Create new roadways or roadway extensions to provide alternative routes and increase connectivity.

Note / Example 1: The Gardendale-Coltharp connection is a conceptual connection that would provide an alternative route for residents along Gardendale to access I-77 at a proposed interchange on Coltharp Road. This would relieve traffic on Highway 160 which is congested during peak hours. This connection could be fulfilled by a two lane road with sidewalk, curb and gutter.

Note / Example 2: The Williams Road-Holbrook Road connection is a conceptual connection that could be accommodated as part of the internal street network of development that may occur in the area. Mainly this would provide current residents of Williams Road a vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connection to Holbrook Road, potentially reducing the length of trips.

Note / Example 3: The Doby's Bridge-Banks Road connector shown south of Node 8 connects Doby's Bridge Road, Whites Road and Banks Road. The exact alignment of this connection needs to be studied further. It could utilize a portion of JW Wilson and continue east to Doby's Bridge Road or it could be a new location roadway parallel to JW Wilson, set well above the floodway. This road is important to the future growth of this area of Fort Mill, as it will improve access to I-77, the Fort Mill Southern Bypass and Downtown. Ideally the road would have a "Parkway" feel and provide internal connectivity to parcels which develop with the majority of development clustered on the north side of the roadway and lower density residential on south.

Note / Example 4: Improve connectivity around Node 1 by adding connections recommended in the York County Carowinds Blvd.. Master Plan.

Note / Example 5: Align future internal streets to meet existing streets in the vicinity of Node 2.

Note/Example 6: Connect Deerfield to Coltharp south of Knight's Stadium.

Recommendation 3: Reduce traffic congestion on major arterials and collector roads through road improvements and development of alternative routes.

Strategy 1: Improve the effectiveness of existing major collector roadways through widening and the addition of curb and gutter, sidewalks and bike lanes.

Note: These roads include Sutton Road (where improvements have been made in the section near SC-160 and Baxter), Pleasant Road and Doby's Bridge Road. Pleasant Road, which is listed for potential improvements by York County, runs from Carowinds Boulevard to SC-160 where it crosses and becomes Sutton Road. Sutton Road then runs from SC-160 to I-77 at Exit 83. Improving both of these roads as a five-lane, 35 miles per hour corridor with curb and gutter and sidewalk would form the "Westside of the Fort Mill Bypass." Areas such as the Carowinds / I-77 Exit 90 (Node 1); the Gold Hill Road / SC-160 intersection (Node 2); the Baxter area (Node 4); and the Kanawha area (Node 6) would all benefit from the improvements, while congestion on Gold Hill Road, SC-160 and Harris Road would be reduced as these roads are heavily traveled by commuters. In similar ways, the widening of Doby's Bridge Road from downtown Fort Mill at SC-160 to the Lancaster County line with a third lane, 35 to 45 miles per hour speed limit, curb and gutter, sidewalk and bike lanes would provide a more safe and efficient route for the increasing development along the roadway. Further, it would alleviate some of the congestion from SC-160, the Fort Mill Southern Bypass, Banks Road and Kimbrell Road.

Strategy 2: Promote the use of the Northern and Southern bypasses of Fort Mill to alleviate congestion in the downtown area and along SC-160.

Note: By using the Northern Bypass, which runs from I-77 at Exit 88 (Gold Hill Road) to US-21 and ties in to the existing Springfield Parkway which runs to SC-160, potential traffic, particularly trucks from I-77 and US-21 which normally take the SC-160 route through Fort Mill, would bypass downtown completely by using this new route. The same would occur with return trips from Lancaster County to I-77. The Northern Bypass is a two-lane, divided roadway that was part of the RFATS program. The existing Springfield Parkway is a two-to three-lane roadway that was developed during the 1997 Pennies for Progress program. The Southern Bypass, which would extend from its existing ending at Brickyard Road and Banks Road to a route through the southern portion of the planning area to end at the same intersection as the Northern Bypass, Springfield Parkway and SC-160. This would allow for traffic from I-77 at Exit 83 (Sutton Road area, Node 6) and commuters from Lancaster County to use this route to completely bypass downtown Fort Mill in the southern part of the planning area. The Southern Bypass is proposed to be a two-lane, 45 miles per hour roadway. It is funded under the 2003 Pennies for Progress program.

Strategy 3: Perform an intersection study at locations throughout the planning area to determine the optimum locations for the placement of additional turn lanes, suicide lanes or sign and signal improvements to enhance the effectiveness and safety and create a more productive flow of traffic at these intersections.

Note: Intersections of concern that were noted during the public meetings were crossroads along SC-160 eastward from downtown and crossing into Lancaster County, particularly Barberville Road, the intersections along SC-160 at Gold Hill Road and US-21 and Gold Hill Road at Pleasant Road.

Recommendation 4: Continue participation in programs such as RFATS and Pennies for Progress to fund new roadways and road improvements.

Strategy 1: The involvement that Fort Mill has had with the state during the Pennies for Progress programs has greatly enhanced some of the roadways throughout the planning area as illustrated in this study. Continued support and desire to be involved in these types of programs with the state is imperative to continue roadway improvements in Fort Mill and its planning area.

Strategy 2: Town to maintain a five-year schedule to update RFATS to keep traffic analysis numbers in line with current conditions.

Strategy 3: Town should require developers

to conduct a traffic impact analysis with each development proposal that generates a 100 or more new inbound or outbound trips during the peak hours, or over 75- trips in an average day.

Note: According to the Institute Engineers General Threshold Recommendations, these additional trips equate into developments containing 150 single family homes, 220 multi-family units, 55,000 square feet of general office space or 15,500 square feet of shopping center.

Goal 2: Incorporate alternative forms of transportation to establish an efficient transportation system.

Recommendation 1: Town should study and communicate the present RFATS' BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) plan and CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) plans for the South Corridor in order to develop an action plan with town, developers, and residents in support of the BRT plan.

Strategy 1: Town should support the BRT route from Pineville to Rock Hill and communicate the preferred alignment along US 21.

Strategy 2: Town should encourage owners and developers of parcels close to potential station locations (See the Comprehensive Plan Map) to incorporate the station into their plans.

Strategy 3: In a joint effort with other regional agencies, develop a communications plan for residents to encourage transit usage and increase ridership. This could be accomplished through advertising, word of mouth and "trial runs" for the public.

Strategy 4: Develop "feeder" systems to work in conjunction with the rapid bus transit system to allow for "satellite" stations with bus or van pool connections to the main line stations. Tega Cay, Carowinds, Kanawha, Baxter, downtown Fort Mill, and the Fort Mill Southern Bypass / Doby's Bridge Road area could be potential locations for these smaller stations. The development of a "feeder" system could also include sidewalks and bike lanes to increase the accessibility to the stations and decrease congestion on roads leading to the stations.

Recommendation 2: Encourage the incorporation of bicycle facilities in the design of roadways and developments.

Strategy 1: Require bike lanes on future roadways that connect to major activity centers and study the addition of bicycle facilities (bike lanes, wide outside lanes, wide shoulders, or shared lane markings) with improvements to existing roadways to create a continuous network of bicycle-accessible areas.

Strategy 2: Develop standards for bicycle facilities for various types of town roads and incorporate into the town standards. These standards can also be shared with York County to promote consistency between the town and county's requirements.

Strategy 3: With any future roadway improvements, require bike lanes or other appropriate bicycle facilities designed and constructed in accordance with the town's standards. Require design features to promote safety and usage of these facilities.

Strategy 4: Initiate a safety and awareness educational program to identify roads with or in need of bicycle facilities, the benefits of having bicycle facilities and other safety factors commuters should know when traveling in these areas.

Recommendation 3: Assess and determine needed sidewalk improvements throughout the planning area to increase connectivity with sidewalks and walkways that promote pedestrian movement as an alternative mode of transportation.

Strategy 1: Study the existing sidewalk network in the planning area and develop an overall sidewalk improvement plan based on gaps in the network and areas where sidewalks need to be extended/ constructed.

Note: For example, with construction in Kanawha, Massey and Regent Park, existing

and proposed sidewalks need to be extended and connected to provide pedestrian access along Sutton Road, Doby's Bridge Road, US-21, the Fort Mill Northern Bypass and the Fort Mill Southern Bypass.

Strategy 2: Study and develop innovative options for pedestrian access. One possibility is the addition of sidewalks to existing Catawba River crossings to provide means to access the Rock Hill area. Another possibility is to connect to sidewalk networks in Lancaster County and Mecklenburg County. This would provide access to developments such as Steelecroft (NC-49 and NC-160) in Mecklenburg County and the developments along SC-160 in Lancaster County. A sidewalk connection between Regent Park and Pineville / Carolina Place Mall area would help reduce traffic congestion in this area.

Strategy 3: Incorporation and connectivity of the sidewalks with existing and future greenways is also an advantage. Town should incorporate standards that require the coordination of proposed sidewalks with proposed and existing greenways.

Strategy 4: Along with the study of the existing network, check for existing sections of sidewalks at intersections, for example, which do not meet the current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other safety requirements. Ramps, handrails and design limitations are three key areas.

Strategy 5: Require the installation of sidewalks in tandem with the construction of schools, community facilities and major developments near activity centers.

Recommendation 4: Research funding options for the integration of alternative forms of transportation (transit, sidewalk, bicycle, etc.) from national, state and local sources.

Strategy 1: Review the requirements of existing programs from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the South Carolina Department of Transportation, and the Rock Hill - Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS) that focus directly on constructing facilities that encourage alternative forms of transportation. Pursue grants from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program that promote alternative transportation and projects that improve safety and the environment.

Strategy 2: As a result of the suggested sidewalk and bike lane existing network studies, promote programs on a local (town, county or developer) basis to fund these improvements. Future Pennies for Progress-type programs could be broadened to include the sidewalk and bike lane improvements.

**During the development of this plan, RFATS initiated a study for a third crossing of the Catawba River. Numerous alignments were considered. The bridge would connect Mt. Gallant Road in Rock Hill to Sutton Road in Fort Mill. After an extensive public process and strong opposition from many in the Fort Mill community the project has been tabled. Development in and around Node 7a would be effected by a new bridge across the Catawba. However, nothing proposed in this plan precludes a future crossing.*

Land Use Element

Overview

This Land Use section deals with Fort Mill's overall growth as suggested in the population, housing and economic development sections; its urban form; a variety of future land uses and urban design.

Summary of Land Use Issues & Opportunities

- Growth continues to change Fort Mill's character from its traditional rural nature to one of a more suburban nature.
- Fort Mill lacks a balance in the variety of its land uses.
- Fort Mill lacks employment center and office uses to balance residential development.
- There is a lack of housing choices in Fort Mill.
- There is a need to attract more residential uses in the downtown area to create a more vibrant mix of land uses, especially close to Main Street.
- There is an opportunity to build on the existing fabric and its central location to revitalize the downtown core.
- There is a need to direct future growth in a manner that can be supported by environmental and infrastructure conditions.
- There is a need to ensure that GIS data maintained by the County is current and readily available for the Town.

Land Use Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Land Use Goal 1: Ensure that there is adequate availability and convenient location of services and employment.

LAND USE: FUTURE GROWTH

Recommendation 1: Proactively manage future growth based on the projections from the Population, Housing and Economic Development elements of the comprehensive plan.

Strategy 1: Adopt policies that will promote growth in areas identified on the comprehensive plan map. These areas, called "nodes," are identified on the comprehensive plan map as "Community" and "Neighborhood" nodes.

Note: Refer to the description of plan in the Fort Mill Tomorrow section for descriptions and definitions of Community and Neighborhood nodes.

Recommendation 2: Continually engage surrounding municipalities in discussions of growth and development.

Strategy 1: Create a cross-jurisdictional task force that will meet regularly to discuss issues (e.g. housing, natural resources, open space preservation, economic development, etc.) of importance related to existing and future growth and development patterns.

Recommendation 3: Promote a pattern of development that is consistent with the overall vision of the comprehensive plan.

Strategy 1: Evaluate the possibility of major overhaul of town's existing zoning ordinance that will accommodate recommendations and implementation strategies outlined in this plan to reflect the desired development pattern.

Strategy 2: Restrict development in environmentally sensitive areas by utilizing legal tools such as easements, restrictions and covenants to protect designated areas. (See also the Natural Resources section.)

Recommendation 4: Promote preservation of open space and important environmental features permanently in the planning area.

Strategy 1: Create a public awareness campaign about the importance of open space.

Note: Utilize the town's Web site and other forms of media to campaign for preservation efforts.

Strategy 2: Explore the use of density bonuses, conservation subdivisions, transfer of development rights (TDRs) and other forms of environmental preservation methods.

Strategy 3: Investigate the idea of allowing a streamlined approval process for developers willing to use tools to preserve important environmental features.

Recommendation 5: Enhance the Town of Fort Mill's ability to expand its municipal boundaries.

Strategy 1: Assess the existing capacity of municipal services such as fire, police, and sewer and water services. Especially in areas where growth is targeted, and enhance municipal services there.

Note: Refer to the Community Facilities element for more information on public services.

Strategy 2: Avoid development that is inconsistent with Fort Mill's vision by annexing qualifying land, providing the town can adequately serve it, that is currently in York County's jurisdiction.

Recommendation 6: Improve the Town of Fort Mill's GIS database.

Strategy 1: Provide regular updates and feedback to York County and the Catawba Regional Council of Governments to improve the accuracy of GIS data.

LAND USE: URBAN FORM

Recommendation 1: Promote a compact form of development in key areas, described as "Nodes," and shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map.

Strategy 1: Create standards for compact development forms.

Recommendation 2: Encourage urban infill, redevelopment and higher development densities in areas designated as nodes in the Comprehensive Plan where infrastructure is or will be easily accessible.

Strategy 1: Utilize the identified nodes to maximize use of densities surrounding key infrastructure areas.

Recommendation 3: Promote a less intense development pattern, including open space, in areas outside of Nodes.

Strategy 1: Determine the amount of open space that the community finds acceptable and require developers to dedicate that percentage of land for open space and / or connectivity to the larger regional greenway initiative.

Note: Currently, Fort Mill requires that Planned Neighborhoods have 35% open space in that single zoning district. By requiring open space be set aside by the developer the town will further the effort of open space preservation.

Strategy 2: Change the zoning map to reflect a less intense development pattern in the areas outside the nodes as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map.

Recommendation 4: Promote community-oriented services and development patterns in the nodes identified as a Community Node.

Strategy 1: Create small area plans for certain Community Nodes that could be affected by recent and/or future growth.

Note: Prioritization of such small area plans could include identifying areas that need immediate attention. For example, downtown's small area plan could be the first node the town investigates by commissioning a detailed study.

Strategy 2: Determine the types of preferable services within a Community Node such as, but not limited to, restaurants, hotels/motels, service stations, etc.

Note: A mixed-use area accommodates a wide range of commercial and residential uses. Unlike the specialty commercial area, the mixture of uses in this area will be more horizontal (uses separated into different buildings), and the commercial uses will tend to be more service-oriented and accommodate tenants with greater floor area requirements (i.e., greater than 10,000 square feet). Open space and connections between uses will be emphasized, but the configurations of each will differ from the specialty commercial. The exact mixture (amount and location of specific uses) will be determined by market demand. (Source: Urban Land Use Planning)

Strategy 3: Communicate with developers in regards to the purpose of the Community Node.

Strategy 4: Work with developers, real estate agents, tenants and local business leaders to aid the

market for the desired types of businesses.

Recommendation 5: Promote neighborhood-oriented services and development patterns in the nodes identified as a Neighborhood Node.

Strategy 1: Create small area plans for certain neighborhood nodes that could be affected by recent or, future growth.

Strategy 2: Determine the types of preferable services within a Neighborhood Node such as, but not limited to, small restaurants, cafes, boutique shops, dry cleaning services, salons, service stations, etc.

Note: Typically, this type of node would accommodate up to 25,000 square feet of commercial space and serve an area that lies within a 1 mile to 1.5 mile radius. Services are typically clustered in such a location. (Source: Urban Land Use Planning)

Strategy 3: Communicate with developers in regards to the purpose of the Neighborhood Node.

Strategy 4: Work with developers, real estate agents, tenants and local business leaders to search for the desired types of businesses wanted in Fort Mill and the planning area.

Land Use Goal 2: Sufficient allocation and mixture of land uses and employment.

LAND USE OPEN SPACE / PRESERVE AREAS

Recommendation 1: Permanently preserve environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, hydric soils, and river bottom forests in the planning area.

Strategy 1: Identify the areas that are environmentally sensitive and need protection by doing an inventory. (See Natural Resources)

Strategy 2: Determine the percentage of open space that should be required for future development based on a sliding scale rule that requires different amounts of open space for different types and scale of uses.

Note: Currently there is an open space requirement for Planned Neighborhood developments but not for developments in other zoning designations. By creating regulations based on a sliding scale, the town can suggest its expectations about open space requirements to the development community based on the size of specific developments.

Strategy 4: Determine residential districts by their bases of density rather than by lot size.

Note: For example, instead of 10,000-square-foot lots in R-10, allow up to four DUA where flexible lot sizes provide opportunities for open space preservation. Refer to the Conservation Subdivision section for more detail.

Strategy 5: Establish a vegetative buffer of 400 feet along the Catawba River within the planning area through partnership with the Nation Ford Land Trust and private property owners.

Note: Identify opportunities for obtaining easements along the Catawba River from private property owners. Such areas under the easements could then be kept in their natural states or designed in environmentally sensitive ways, such as low impact trails, as greenways and to provide public access to the river at various strategic points.

Strategy 6: Partner with neighboring municipalities, jurisdictions and regional agencies for joint preservation of open spaces that furthers goal of a connected network of greenspace for the region.

Note: A regional effort is currently underway to address the regional trail connection. Some of these trails will go through environmental corridors such as floodplains. The Town of Fort Mill should be a partner in that effort to enhance the overall connectivity of the region.

Recommendation 2: Permanently preserve open space that is currently under private ownership.

Strategy 1: Investigate the possibility of permanently preserving Anne Spring Close Greenway via a conservation easement.

Strategy 2: Investigate the possibility of purchasing parks in private ownership, such as Walter Elisha Park, into public ownership.

LAND USE: OPEN SPACE / PARKS

Recommendation 1: Strategically locate community parks to maximize service.

Strategy 1: Identify suitable community park sites that are based on the Plan.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the suitability of the land for park use

Recommendation 2: Locate parks within or adjacent to the neighborhood nodes so that these facilities are conveniently located to serve neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: At the beginning of the development process, collaborate with the development community to evaluate and identify potential locations for Parks.

Note: Require private development to provide for the neighborhood parks as part of the development within neighborhood nodes.

Strategy 2: Partner with the development community to do programming of such facilities that responds to the need to community.

Recommendation 3: Locate all park facilities close to greenways to provide efficient non-vehicular access.

Strategy 1: Ensure that park facilities are within a reasonable walking distance from the greenways.

Recommendation 4: Promote the creation of small open spaces such as plazas, gardens, pocket parks and squares as gathering spaces, as well as to meet open space requirements.

Strategy 1: Require the development community to integrate outdoor gathering spaces, such as plazas, squares, gardens and pocket parks as part of mixed-use, commercial and office development in such a way that takes advantage of such spaces.

Note: Such spaces will also provide pedestrian and bike refuge for users of such modes of transportation.

LAND USE: OPEN SPACE / GREENWAYS AREA

Recommendation 1: Provide an interconnected system of greenways.

Strategy 1: Encourage the construction of trails and preservation of greenway corridors as show on the Plan map.

Note: See strategies in the Natural Resource section Goal #1: "Create policy to encourage developers to provide connections to the public open space system of greenway, trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes in order to connect new developments to the town core." Requirements for open space for greenways will be part of the open space requirements identified previously.

Strategy 2: Preserve opportunities for potential connections to and extensions of existing and planned greenways.

Strategy 3: Utilize electric, utility and other easements to tie together segments of greenways for connectivity.

Note: Various greenway segments could tie together sections of the regional Nation Ford Greenway.

Recommendation 2: Provide safe and attractive greenway facilities that connect neighborhoods to various destinations, such as other parks, commercial and institutional uses.

Strategy 1: Locate greenway facilities within a convenient walking distance (1/2 mile) to nearby parks, commercial and institutional uses.

Recommendation 3: Identify opportunities to connect the downtown and other node areas to the surrounding residential neighborhoods via greenways and sidewalks for bike and pedestrians.

LAND USE: RESIDENTIAL

Recommendation 1: Promote safe neighborhoods through better design, sound planning and community programs that project a good image of Fort Mill to the outside world.

Strategy 1: Create community programs such as "eyes on the street" by encouraging neighborhood watch groups to involve other residents.

Recommendation 2: Encourage higher density residential development in the downtown area, Node 5.

Strategy 1: Allow "by right" high density residential types such as town homes, condominiums and residential within the down, or above the retail space on Main Street, to create a vibrant downtown that will be active during evening and weekends.

Recommendation 3: Develop strategies to encourage owner-occupied housing in downtown.

Strategy 1: Investigate ways to provide or encourage owner-occupied housing in downtown.

Recommendation 4: Promote a variety of residential types, sizes, and prices in a neighborhood and integrate mixed income housing as a part of all new residential development.

Strategy 1: Investigate incentives in the form of tax breaks, density bonuses and an expedited approval processes to promote a mix of residential uses.

Strategy 2: Devise an inclusionary zoning rule within the zoning ordinance to allow for mixed income housing within new residential development.

Note: Inclusionary zoning regulations increase housing choices by establishing requirements and providing incentives to construct housing to meet the needs work-force housing. Inclusionary techniques include specific requirements for a minimum percentage of low- and moderate-income housing as part of any development and density bonuses for building low- and moderate-income units. (Source: Moskowitz, Harvey S. and Carl G. Lindbloom, The Latest Illustrated Book of Development Definitions, The Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2004.)

Recommendation 5: Encourage higher residential densities at key locations, such as Community and Neighborhood nodes, where access to commercial services and infrastructure is either already there or will most likely be there.

Strategy 1: Create variety of residential districts in the zoning ordinance that will accommodate low density residential, medium density residential and high density residential.

Strategy 2: Modify and approve the zoning ordinance with the new set of residential densities that will support the Comprehensive Plan. The densities shown on the Comprehensive Plan map are gross densities. These densities are:

- Low Density Residential is up to 2 DUA
- Medium Density Residential is between 3 and 5 DUA
- High Density Residential is over 6 DUA

Note: The town should investigate the range of net densities that will respond to the range of gross densities identified above. Gross residential density is the number of residential units per total project acreage. Net residential density is the number of residential units per the developable area, less the area necessary for roads, sidewalks, open space, etc.

Recommendation 6: Encourage alternative forms of housing types in existing residential neighborhoods to cater to the changing demographics.

Strategy 1: Without penalizing for density, allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), or "granny flats," within the existing neighborhoods to accommodate the needs of senior citizens and younger demographics who want to live close to their families.

Recommendation 7: Encourage a mix of residential uses at various locations within the same residential development instead of concentrating residential of a single type in one location.

Strategy 1: Conduct public outreach programs in the form of seminars, information on the town's Web site and make information readily available in the library and town hall. This will increase awareness about mixed-income housing and issues of work-force housing.

Recommendation 8: Create a framework of design that integrates different housing types and does not differentiate various housing types based on price.

Strategy 1: Require development of a variety of housing types (especially different priced residential units) to be compatible in design by incorporating similar choices of materials and design styles.

Note: This will help in the overall integration of different price units within the same neighborhood.

Recommendation 9: Promote a strong sense of community for new developments through design guidelines that reinforce the character of Fort Mill.

Strategy 1: Create and adopt Traditional Neighborhood Design guidelines and use them as an educational tool to convey the town's expectations regarding the quality of development.

Strategy 2: Allow "by right" a development pattern for new neighborhoods that is based on the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design, such as an interconnected system of tree-lined streets, houses in the front and garages at the back with alley access.

Strategy 3: During the development process, especially at the beginning, identify and preserve predominant views and visual elements that reinforce the identity and character of the area.

Note: For example, work with developers to identify the unique characteristics, especially visual, of the land and surrounding area such as prevailing vistas, visual termini and key reference points.

Recommendation 10: Create incentives for developers to design and construct Conservation Neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: Offer density bonuses to developers for additional open space dedication.

Strategy 2: Expedite the process for plan approval for additional open space dedication.

Note: Although the locations of such developments are not identified at this time in the Comprehensive Plan, they could be later incorporated as market conditions and physical characteristics of the land allow.

Recommendation 11: Preserve existing established neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: Create neighborhood plans for preservation and have strategies to redevelop the existing neighborhood that respects the character and identity of the place.

LAND USE: COMMERCIAL

Recommendation 1: Discourage the conventional form of strip commercial development with its separation of uses and provision of excess parking.

Strategy 1: Evaluate existing language in the local commercial district to reflect the desired type of development in the planning area.

Strategy 2: Encourage, through regulations and standards the development of pedestrian-scale mixed use centers (including big box retailers) with shared parking facilities.

Strategy 3: Encourage the integration of commercial development as part residential and other non-residential development instead of separating the uses.

Recommendation 2: Promote commercial development in a compact form in the community node as identified in the comprehensive plan map.

Strategy 1: Alter the zoning map to reflect the location of such commercial districts at the community nodes. Such uses could include big

hardware stores, grocery stores, furniture stores, etc.

Strategy 2: Coordinate with York County to promote similar patterns of commercial development in areas outside the town's jurisdiction.

Recommendation 3: Promote less intensive commercial development in a compact form in the Neighborhood Nodes as identified in the Comprehensive Plan Map.

Strategy 1: Alter the zoning map to reflect the location of such commercial districts at the neighborhood nodes. Such uses could include a drug store, small restaurants, convenience stores, dry cleaners and other supporting uses that are visited more frequently than three to four times a week.

Strategy 2: Promote entertainment-related commercial uses such as cafés, restaurants, a theatre, boutique shops etc.

Recommendation 4: Promote a lively downtown by encouraging outdoor activities, including the display of merchandise and dining opportunities on the sidewalks and plazas.

Strategy 1: Investigate the possibility of allowing signs, planters, etc. and seating provided they do not obstruct vehicular and/or pedestrian movement.

Strategy 2: Provide guidelines in the ordinance about displaying and/or seating options through "by right" options.

LAND USE: EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation 1: Continue to promote existing employment-related uses and identify additional key areas for employment-related uses that provide a balanced economic base and lessen Fort Mill's employment reliance on Charlotte.

Strategy 1: Locate employment opportunities in areas that have great access to transportation networks and other infrastructure.

Strategy 2: Provide excellent connections to employment centers by various modes of transportation.

LAND USE: MIXED-USE

Recommendation 1: Promote compact, mixed-use nodes as identified on the Comprehensive Plan Map. Encourage vertical mix of uses, with retail at the ground floor and residential and office at the upper floors.

Strategy 1: Coordinate with York County to implement desired mixed-use zoning districts in areas outside the town limits to achieve the overall goals of both jurisdictions.

Recommendation 2: Create mixed-use neighborhoods that promote walkable communities.

Strategy 1: Consider urban design guidelines that promote walkable communities. Shared parking strategies, sidewalks, pedestrian-scale architecture, short blocks and shallow setbacks all promote this type of development.

LAND USE: INSTITUTIONAL AND CIVIC USES

Recommendation 1: Entice some of the key civic uses in downtown as an anchor of activities.

Strategy 1: Explore the possibilities to recruit a branch of the public library to downtown Fort Mill to create a destination that is open during evenings and weekends.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the potential to have an elementary school close to downtown and continue dialog with the school district to explore downtown as a location for a school site.

LAND USE: URBAN DESIGN

Recommendation 1: New development, especially infill development, should be compatible with the existing development.

Strategy 1: New infill development in existing established neighborhoods, especially older mill housing neighborhoods, should build on the design elements and positives of existing neighborhoods.

Note: Such development should respect the scale,

architectural elements and design features of the existing neighborhood.

Recommendations 2: Promote distinct urban design elements (e.g. street furniture, luminaries, street signage, benches, etc.) in the Community and Neighborhood nodes to create an identity for each neighborhood.

Strategy 1: Collaborate with the development community to identify opportunities for urban design improvements through the use of distinct design details including street furniture that will enhance the character and identity of each Node.

Strategy 2: Create and adopt urban design guideline for areas within and outside nodes that will be used to convey town's expectations regarding streetscapes, signage, street furniture etc. These guidelines should include various development types, such as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), Mixed-Use, and Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) etc.

Recommendation 3: Establish development guidelines for future infill development in the existing mill neighborhood to preserve the character of the community.

Strategy 1: Establish a setback requirement.

Note: The setback should equal the average of the two nearest adjacent structures.

Strategy 2: Establish requirements for the scale of future development.

Recommendation 4: Provide an appropriate transition between established neighborhoods and new development.

Strategy 1: Allow for similar uses with similar scale, intensity and character at the edge of established neighborhoods to provide for a smoother transition.

Strategy 2: Use landscape features and buffers to separate uses that are different in intensity, use, scale and character.

Recommendation 5: Promote an interconnected system of streets in a grid form that incorporates pedestrian and bicycle amenities to allow users to easily connect to other neighborhoods, major destinations and corridors.

Strategy 1: Promote a street network grid pattern that allows for the spacing of streets in such a manner that the block sizes resulting from this pattern makes for a more walkable streetscape.

Note: These block sizes will be different for different areas. For example, the block sizes for various nodes will be different than the block sizes in the residential areas outside nodes.

Recommendation 6: Promote a safe, interconnected network of neighborhood streets that manages the cut-through traffic better.

Strategy 1: Create guidelines to slow traffic speed through neighborhoods by using various traffic calming tools such as curvilinear streets, speed tables and on-street parking.

Community Character Element

(Note: Per the scope of the contract, the Community Character Element was revised to reflect significant changes in the planning area per the Update to the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan memo.)

Overview

Character, or the special physical characteristics that make an area unique, plays a major role in the vitality of a community. While the appearance of a community may attract development and boost economic growth, character, especially Fort Mill's small-town character, defines the town's scenic beauty. Its emphasis on greenways and open space maintains the positive relationship between the natural environment and the man-made environment. Any discussion of community character must also include Fort Mill's heritage and historic legacy, its historic buildings, neighborhoods and districts. They are unique aspects of the city's character and identity that need to be respected, reflected, and added to by new growth.

Summary of Community Character Issues & Opportunities

- Fort Mill has an opportunity to create a "sense of place" in the historic downtown area reinforced by gateways, lighting, landscaping and identification signage.
- There is an opportunity to create distinctive areas throughout the town that are tied together with a common thread to maintain continuity of the overall visual flavor of Fort Mill.

Community Character Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Community Character Goal 1: Improve the overall appearance of Fort Mill.

Recommendation 1: Maintain and enhance the appearance of the public spaces, roadways, commercial areas and neighborhoods through tree plantings, landscaping and signage.

Strategy 1: Create a beautification committee of residents, local civic groups and businesses to obtain public and private contributions for landscaping improvements and maintenance.

Strategy 2: Develop a comprehensive list of scenic areas, natural sites, historic homes and other sites, as well as cultural resources that could be capitalized on and preserved.

Strategy 3: Consult with an agency or a design firm to create streetscape and signage design guidelines and design recommendations.

Strategy 4: The town, local businesses and other interested groups should secure funding for gateway signs and plantings at key entrances to Fort Mill to define the planning area and create a positive image of the community.

Note: Research possible funding sources for the beautification projects, such as Community Development Block Grants, TE-21 grants, etc.

Strategy 5: Create a phased implementation strategy or hierarchy for making streetscape and signage improvements.

Recommendation 2: Enhance inspection and maintenance programs to identify and improve signage and streetscape needs.

Strategy 1: Ensure that sufficient resources are allocated in operating and capital budgets to maintain the beautification initiatives.

Strategy 2: Enforce ordinance and code requirements to ensure compliance and maintenance of buildings, parking lots, signage, streetscapes and other site features.

Note: Enforcement should be done on a regular basis to retain, if not enhance, the visual appearance of roadways and developed properties throughout Fort Mill.

Community Character Goal 2: Create a "sense of place" in Fort Mill.

Recommendation 1: Foster the character of individual areas and elements within the community.

Strategy 1: Create an inventory of marketable attractions and character attributes of Fort Mill to identify for marketing and signage improvements.

Strategy 2: Consult with an agency of design firm to help define and foster the unique character, image and

identity of individual areas and elements within the community.

Strategy 3: Develop a committee, or delegate the task to an existing committee, to spearhead a marketing program.

Note: This committee should be comprised of a wide spectrum of professionals: historians, business people, residents, town staff and elected officials.

Recommendation 2: Promote the key character attributes of Fort Mill.

Strategy 1: Promote downtown, Node 5, as the historic core of the community and the center for commerce and cultural activities.
Strategy 2: Implement a targeted marketing program based on economic and market factors to attract new businesses, residents and visitors.

Strategy 3: Supplement the core marketing program with promotions and special events to shape the town's image and strengthen its identity.

Priority Investment

(Note: Per the scope of the contract, the section on Priority Investments was revised to reflect significant changes in the planning area per the Update to the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan memo.)

Overview

Priority Investment, a new requirement for South Carolina comprehensive plans, analyzes funds for public infrastructure to build water and sewer systems, roads and schools and recommends projects for expenditure of available funds. It also provides for coordination between local governments. Coordination is defined as notice by the planning commission to other local governments who then have an opportunity to provide comments.

Priority Investment Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Priority Investment Goal 1: Recommendation 1: Continue to support service agreements with Rock Hill to provide low cost water and sewer service to Fort Mill residents and businesses.

Strategy 1: Periodically evaluate cost and levels of service for water and sewer service.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the potential of eliminating some of the water towers in the planning area due to new or improved service.

Recommendation 2: Refer to the 2007 Water System Master Plan Update and the Wastewater System Master Plan Update prepared by Wiedeman & Singleton to identify and prioritize service area improvements.

Strategy 1: Based on the drainage areas within the planning area, identify the most cost effective locations for pump stations that may be used when consolidating smaller pump stations in those areas. In conjunction with this study of potential locations, all pump stations and force main lines that could potentially be eliminated should be identified, as well as additional main line gravity sewer lines that would be required to transport flow to these new locations.

Strategy 2: Study the creation of a regional pump station in the area of Doby's Bridge Road / Catawba River / Little Sugar Creek that would serve the majority of the planning area, particularly east of I-77. This could be done as a joint venture with Lancaster County to accept additional flow from its jurisdiction. This pump station would include a force main across the river to direct flow to the Manchester Wastewater Treatment Plant (MWWTP).

Recommendation 3: Seek funding through state, county, developers or local government programs similar to the existing transportation ("Pennies for Progress") program to expand water and sewer capabilities.

Strategy 1: With the success of South Carolina's "Pennies for Progress" transportation improvement program, a request for a similar state program for water and sewer could fund and fast-track water

and sewer improvements in York County, including the Fort Mill planning area, as well as other South Carolina counties. Future development in York, Lancaster and Chester counties alone over the next 10 to 20 years could justify this type of program.

Strategy 2: Research and lobby for the creation of a county-wide or town program to fund the water and sewer improvements in the planning area.

Strategy 3: Require that developers participate in the funding for main line repair or improvements to transfer water and sewer to their development sites.

Recommendation 4: Study the potential for expansion to the sewer treatment facility in Fort Mill as an alternative to flows to the Manchester Wastewater Treatment Plant (MWWTP) in Rock Hill.

Strategy 1: Research the expansion options for the Spratt Road facility as a destination for some of the existing and newer sewer flows. A potential force main along the Fort Mill Southern Bypass could direct flows to this facility if there is adequate capacity.

Priority Investment Goal 2: Improve the efficiency of the Fort Mill transportation system by improving and augmenting the existing roadway network to provide capacity for future development, provide better interconnectivity between adjacent counties and communities.

Recommendation 1: Fort Mill could continue the promotion of connectivity between communities and neighborhoods in an approach that utilizes the concepts for new roads developed through this process.

Strategy 1: Create new roadways or roadway extensions to provide alternative routes and increase connectivity.

Note / Example 1: The Gardendale-Coltharp connection is a conceptual connection that would provide an alternative route for residents along Gardendale to access I-77 at a proposed interchange on Coltharp Road. This would relieve traffic on Highway 160 which is congested during peak hours. This connection could be fulfilled by a two lane road with sidewalk, curb and gutter.

Note / Example 2: The Williams Road-Holbrook Road connection is a conceptual connection that could be accommodated as part of the internal street network of development that may occur in the area. Mainly this would provide current residents of Williams Road a vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connection to Holbrook Road, potentially reducing the length of trips.

Note / Example 3: The Doby's Bridge-Banks Road connector shown south of Node 8 connects Doby's Bridge Road, Whites Road and Banks Road. The exact alignment of this connection needs to be studied further. It could utilize a portion of JW Wilson and continue east to Doby's Bridge Road or it could be a new location roadway parallel to JW Wilson, set well above the floodway. This road is important to the future growth of this area of Fort Mill, as it will allow for multiple routes for future residents to access I-77, the Fort Mill Southern Bypass and Downtown. Ideally the road would have a "Parkway" feel and provide internal connectivity to parcels which develop with the majority of development clustered on the north side of the roadway and lower density residential on south.

Note / Example 4: Improve connectivity around Node 1 by adding connections recommended in the York County Carowinds Blvd.. Master Plan.

Note / Example 5: Align future internal streets to meet existing streets in the vicinity of Node 2.

Recommendation 3: Reduce traffic congestion on major arterials and collector roads through road improvements and development of alternative routes.

Strategy 1: Improve the effectiveness of existing major collector roadways through widening and the addition of curb and gutter, sidewalks and bike lanes.

Note: These roads include Sutton Road (where improvements have been made in the section near SC-160 and Baxter), Pleasant Road and Doby's

Bridge Road. Pleasant Road, which is listed for potential improvements by York County, runs from Carowinds Boulevard to SC-160 where it crosses and becomes Sutton Road. Sutton Road then runs from SC-160 to I-77 at Exit 83. Improving both of these roads as a five-lane, 35 miles per hour corridor with curb and gutter and sidewalk would form the "Westside of the Fort Mill Bypass." Areas such as the Carowinds / I-77 Exit 90 (Node 1); the Gold Hill Road / SC-160 intersection (Node 2); the Baxter area (Node 4); and the Kanawha area (Node 6) would all benefit from the improvements, while congestion on Gold Hill Road, SC-160 and Harris Road would be reduced as these roads are heavily traveled by commuters. In similar ways, the widening of Doby's Bridge Road from downtown Fort Mill at SC-160 to the Lancaster County line with a third lane, 35 to 45 miles per hour speed limit, curb and gutter, sidewalk and bike lanes would provide a more safe and efficient route for the increasing development along the roadway. Further, it would alleviate some of the congestion from SC-160, the Fort Mill Southern Bypass, Banks Road and Kimbrell Road.

Strategy 2: Promote the use of the Northern and Southern bypasses of Fort Mill to alleviate congestion in the downtown area and along SC-160.

Note: By using the Northern Bypass, which runs from I-77 at Exit 88 (Gold Hill Road) to US-21 and ties in to the existing Springfield Parkway which runs to SC-160, potential traffic, particularly trucks from I-77 and US-21 which normally take the SC-160 route through Fort Mill, would bypass downtown completely by using this new route. The same would occur with return trips from Lancaster County to I-77. The Northern Bypass is a two-lane, divided roadway that was part of the RFATS program. The existing Springfield Parkway is a two-to three-lane roadway that was developed during the 1997 Pennies for Progress program. The Southern Bypass, which would extend from its existing ending at Brickyard Road and Banks Road to a route through the southern portion of the planning area to end at the same intersection as the Northern Bypass, Springfield Parkway and SC-160. This would allow for traffic from I-77 at Exit 83 (Sutton Road area, Node 6) and commuters from Lancaster County to use this route to completely bypass downtown Fort Mill in the southern part of the planning area. The Southern Bypass is proposed to be a two-lane, 45 miles per hour roadway. It is funded under the 2003 Pennies for Progress program.

Strategy 3: Perform an intersection study at locations throughout the planning area to determine the optimum locations for the placement of additional turn lanes, suicide lanes or sign and signal improvements to enhance the effectiveness and safety and create a more productive flow of traffic at these intersections.

Note: Intersections of concern that were noted during the public meetings were crossroads along SC-160 eastward from downtown and crossing into Lancaster County, particularly Barberville Road, the intersections along SC-160 at Gold Hill Road and US-21 and Gold Hill Road at Pleasant Road.

Recommendation 4: Continue participation in programs such as RFATS and Pennies for Progress to fund new roadways and road improvements.

Strategy 1: The involvement that Fort Mill has had with the state during the Pennies for Progress programs has greatly enhanced some of the roadways throughout the planning area as illustrated in this study. Continued support and desire to be involved in these types of programs with the state is imperative to continue roadway improvements in Fort Mill and its planning area.

Strategy 2: Town to maintain a five-year schedule to update RFATS to keep traffic analysis numbers in line with current conditions.

Strategy 3: Town should require developers to conduct a traffic impact analysis with each development proposal that generates a 100 or more new inbound or outbound trips during the peak hours, or over 75- trips in an average day.

Note: According to the Institute Engineers General Threshold Recommendations, these additional trips equate into developments

containing 150 single family homes, 220 multi-family units, 55,000 square feet of general office space or 15,500 square feet of shopping center.

Priority Investment Goal 3: Continue a dialogue with the Fort Mill School District.

Recommendation 1: Evaluate the need for additional schools within the planning area.

Strategy 1: Frequently refer to Cumming/SMG's "Ten Year Facility Needs Plan 2010 update" and compare its goals with current progress and future plans.

Strategy 2: Establish communication with Fort Mill School District and the South Carolina Department of Education in regards to reducing the required size of school sites for more efficient use of land and cost-effective programming.

Note: A reduction in the size of school sites will decrease the cost of school development projects and improve integration of schools into urban areas.

appendix a: advisory committee

a special thanks to members of the advisory committee

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appendix b: stakeholder interview list

a special thanks to all of those who participated in stakeholder interviews

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appendix c: market analysis memo

Town of Fort Mill
Comprehensive Plan Update
Market Analysis

Fort Mill, SC

April 2012

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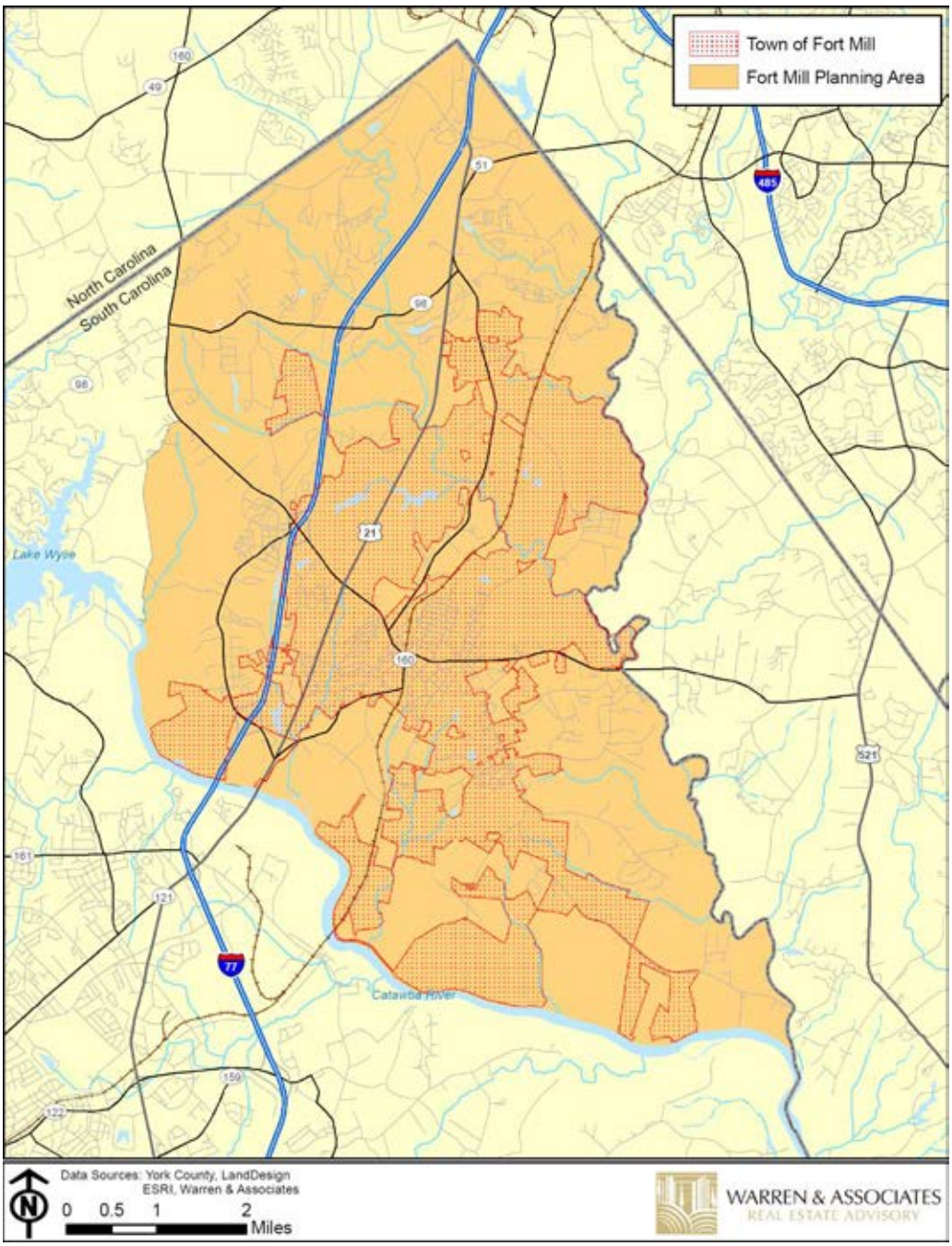
1. Introduction

Warren & Associates was retained by LandDesign, Inc. to conduct a demographic and economic development analysis in response to an update of the Town of Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan, initially completed in 2007. A Planning Area was delineated that encompasses all of Fort Mill Township, except for Tega Cay and the immediate surrounding area. As indicated on Map 1, the Planning Area is bounded by the York/Mecklenburg county line to the north, SC-160, Dam Road and Gardendale Road to the west, the Catawba River to the south, and the York/Lancaster county line to the east.



Map 1: Fort Mill Planning Area, 2012

As available, the data presented in this report is based on the Planning Area. However, in cases of inadequate or inconsistent data reporting, some of the information is based on Fort Mill Township, local zip codes, or the corporate limits of the Town of Fort Mill.

This analysis documents updated existing conditions from a demographic and real estate market perspective. The scope includes updated:

- Demographic and employment trends
- Residential, retail, and employment inventories
- Residential and commercial under construction and entitled developments
- Forecasts of supportable residential units through 2027
- Forecasts of supportable retail and employment square footage through 2027
- Recommendations for housing and economic development

The Fort Mill Planning area is located in northeastern York County, adjacent to Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte, which is the economic hub of the region. The Planning Area is bisected by I-77 and US-21 running north-south, and SC-160 traveling east-west. The fast-growing Indian Land community lies to the east in Lancaster County, and Rock Hill is to the south, across the Catawba River.

2. Demographic Trends

This section provides an overview of population and household trends in the Fort Mill Planning Area. Data regarding overall population and households, age, income, race, and educational attainment for 2000 and 2010 is analyzed.

2.1 Population

Based on ESRI's interpretation of 2010 U.S. Census data, the Fort Mill Planning Area grew from 19,970 residents in 2000 to 40,627 residents in 2010, representing a growth rate of 103.4% (Table 1). This growth rate far exceeded those of the Town of Fort Mill, York County, and the six-county Charlotte MSA.

Table 1: Population Trends, 2000-2010

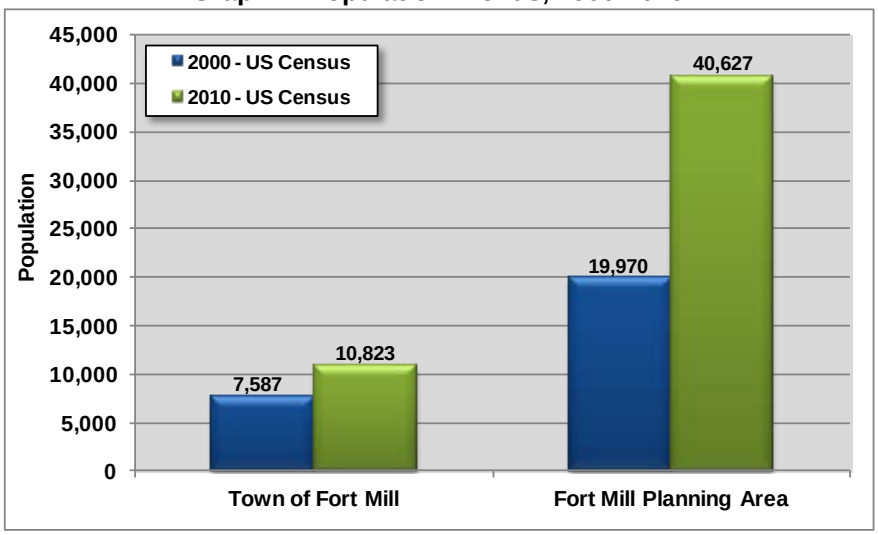
			2000-2010 Change		
Location	**2000**	**2010**	**#**	**%**	**CAGR**
Town of Fort Mill	7,587	10,823	3,236	42.7%	3.6%
Fort Mill Planning Area	19,970	40,627	20,657	103.4%	7.4%
York County	164,614	226,073	61,459	37.3%	3.2%
Charlotte MSA	1,330,448	1,758,038	427,590	32.1%	2.8%

Source: ESRI

The Planning Area contained 18.0% of the 226,073 people in York County in 2010, more than 12.1% in 2000. This increase resulted from the Planning Area capturing 33.6% of the 61,459 residents added to the County between 2000 and 2010. These statistics indicate accelerated growth in the Planning Area over the last decade. The 2000 to 2010 Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for the Planning Area was 7.4%, compared to 3.6% for the Town of Fort Mill.

Graph 1 demonstrates population in the Town of Fort Mill and the Fort Mill Planning Area for the years 2000 and 2010. The Town of Fort Mill grew by 42.7%, from 7,587 residents in 2000 to 10,823 in 2010. The larger Fort Mill Planning Area increased at a faster 103.4% rate to reach 40,627 residents by 2010.

Graph 1: Population Trends, 2000-2010



As shown in Table 2, all age cohorts experienced strong growth between 2000 and 2010. While residents aged 35 to 44 made up the largest cohort in 2010, the 55 to 64 and 65 to 74 groups each increased by over 130% in ten years. These baby boomer cohorts represent individuals in the prime earning years, with few dependent children at home. School-aged cohorts also experienced strong growth over the past decade, indicating continued pressure on the Fort Mill-area school system.

Table 2: Population by Age Cohort, Planning Area, 2000-2010

			2000-2010 Change	
Cohort	**2000**	**2010**	**#**	**%**
0 - 9	3,115	6,829	3,714	119.2%
10 - 19	3,095	6,291	3,195	103.2%
20 - 34	3,355	6,539	3,184	94.9%
35 - 44	3,674	7,201	3,527	96.0%
45 - 54	2,936	6,415	3,479	118.5%
55 - 64	1,817	4,180	2,363	130.0%
65 - 74	1,078	2,483	1,405	130.3%
75 - 84	719	1,117	399	55.4%
85+	180	331	151	84.2%
Total	**19,970**	**41,387**	**21,417**	**107.2%**

Source: ESRI

The Fort Mill Planning Area remains mostly white, but it is becoming slightly more ethnically diverse. The white share of population decreased from 88.7% in 2000 to 83.5% in 2010 (Table 3). The shares for other racial categories slightly increased over the ten-year period.

Table 3: Population by Race, Planning Area, 2000-2010

Race	**2000**	**2006**	**2010**	**'00-'10 Change**
White Alone	88.7%	87.2%	83.5%	-5.2%
Black Alone	8.6%	9.1%	9.6%	1.0%
American Indian Alone	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander Alone	1.0%	1.4%	2.7%	1.7%
Some Other Race Alone	0.7%	1.0%	1.9%	1.2%
Two or More Races	0.7%	0.9%	1.9%	1.2%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	

Source: ESRI

Educational attainment in the Forth Mill Planning Area compares favorably to York County and the Charlotte MSA (Table 4). More than 58% of the residents over age 25 in the Planning Area have at least a high school diploma, higher than 54.7% for York County and 57.1% for the Charlotte MSA. Furthermore, 32.9% of Planning Area residents have a Bachelor's degree or more, higher than 25.5% for York County and 31.7% for the Charlotte MSA.

Table 4: Educational Attainment Population Over Age 25, 2010

Education Level	Planning Area	York County	Charlotte MSA
High School (H.S.) Graduate	25.4%	29.2%	25.4%
Bachelor's Degree	23.3%	17.3%	21.9%
Master's/Prof/Doctorate Degree	9.6%	8.2%	9.8%
% H.S. Graduate or Higher	**58.3%**	**54.7%**	**57.1%**

Source: ESRI

2.2 Households

Households in the Fort Mill Planning Area grew 101.6% between 2000 and 2010, far exceeding the rates of increase for the Town of Fort Mill, York County, and the Charlotte MSA (Table 5). The 7,602 new households in the Planning Area accounted for 30.6% of York County's growth over the ten-year period.

Table 5: Household Trends, 2000-2010

			2000-2010 Change		
Location	2000	2010	#	%	CAGR
Town of Fort Mill	2,914	4,203	1,289	44.2%	3.7%
Fort Mill Planning Area	7,480	15,082	7,602	101.6%	7.3%
York County	61,051	85,864	24,813	40.6%	3.5%
Charlotte MSA	510,516	671,229	160,713	31.5%	2.8%

Source: ESRI

The median household income in the Fort Mill Planning Area was $66,328 in 2010, an increase of 29.7% from 2000 (Table 6). This income was 18.8% higher than $55,826 for York County and 6.6% greater than $62,215 for the Charlotte MSA.

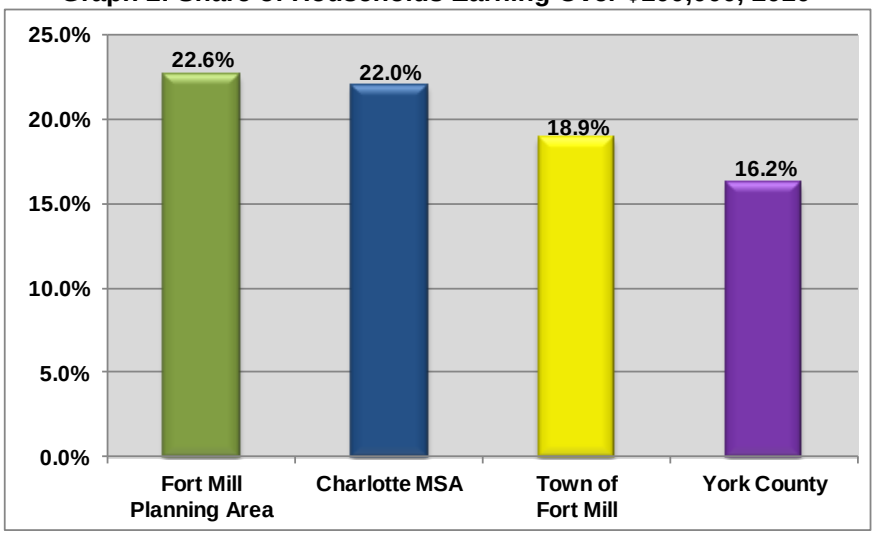
Table 6: Median Household Income Comparison, 2000-2010

	Median Income	
Location	2000	2010
Town of Fort Mill	$44,680	$60,952
Fort Mill Planning Area	$51,139	$66,328
York County	$44,564	$55,826
Charlotte MSA	$47,081	$62,215

Source: ESRI

In addition to having the highest median household income among the four geographies, the Fort Mill Planning Area also had the highest share of households earning over $100,000 in 2010, at 22.6% (Graph 2). York County had the lowest share of 16.2%.

Graph 2: Share of Households Earning Over $100,000, 2010



The Fort Mill Planning Area experienced a strong increase in all household income cohorts over $75,000 between 2000 and 2010 (Table 7). Although the income cohorts earning over $75,000 annually increased the quickest over the ten-year period, households earning less than $35,000 continue to make up the largest share of the Planning Area, at 23.6%. This trend is likely to change, with households earning over $100,000 annually poised to become the largest cohort.

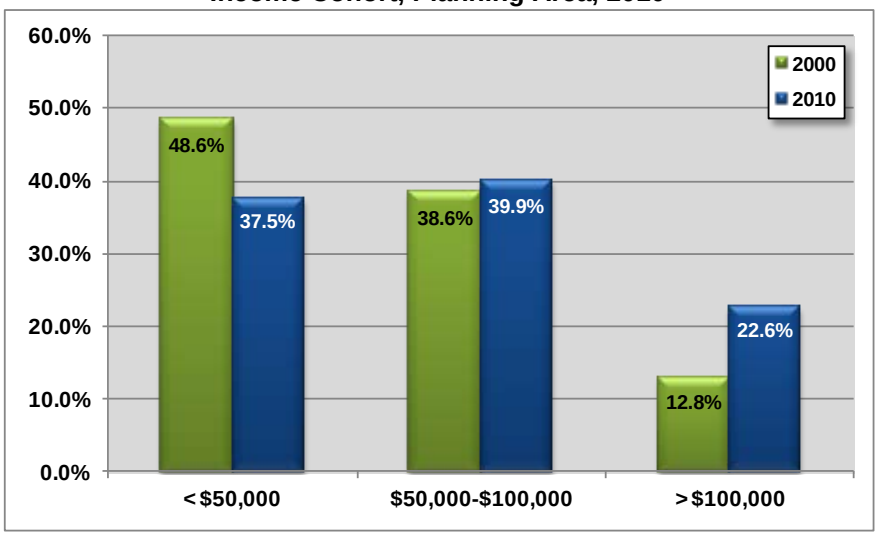
Table 7: Households by Income Cohort, Planning Area, 2000-2010

Income			2000-2010 Change	
Cohort	2000	2010	#	%
$0-$34,999	2,566	3,616	1,050	40.9%
$35,000-$49,999	1,070	2,130	1,060	99.1%
$50,000-$74,999	1,743	2,911	1,168	67.0%
$75,000-$99,999	1,144	3,202	2,058	179.8%
$100,000+	957	3,463	2,505	261.6%
Total	**7,480**	**15,321**	**7,841**	**104.8%**

Source: ESRI

To further illustrate the escalating purchasing power of Planning Area households, Graph 3 depicts the changing shares for three income cohorts between 2000 and 2010. During the ten-year period, the share of households earning more than $100,000 nearly doubled, increasing from 12.8% in 2000 to 22.6% in 2010. The most significant decline in share was attributable to households earning less than $50,000. Mimicking national trends, this is due in large part to nominal wage inflation.

Graph 3: Shares of Households by Income Cohort, Planning Area, 2010



3. Housing Trends

This section provides an overview of housing trends in the Planning Area. Data regarding housing units by tenure, historical completions, and single-family closing trends and prices was collected and analyzed.

3.1 Housing Unit Trends

Based on ESRI interpretation of 2010 U.S. Census data, the Fort Mill Planning Area had an estimated 16,125 housing units in 2010. Housing inventory in the Fort Mill Planning Area increased by 95.4%, between 2000 and 2010, more than double the growth rates for the Town of Fort Mill, York County, and the Charlotte MSA (Table 8).

Table 8: Housing Unit Trends, 2000-2010

			2000-2010 Change		
Location	**2000**	**2010**	**#**	**%**	**CAGR**
Town of Fort Mill	3,110	4,484	1,374	44.2%	3.7%
Fort Mill Planning Area	8,254	16,125	7,871	95.4%	6.9%
York County	66,061	94,196	28,135	42.6%	3.6%
Charlotte MSA	546,499	737,775	191,276	35.0%	3.0%

Source: ESRI

As shown in Table 9, the Planning Area added an estimated 7,871 new housing units between 2000 and 2010, representing a 95.4% increase. The 11,966 owner-occupied units in the Planning Area made up 74.2% of the inventory added over the ten-year period.

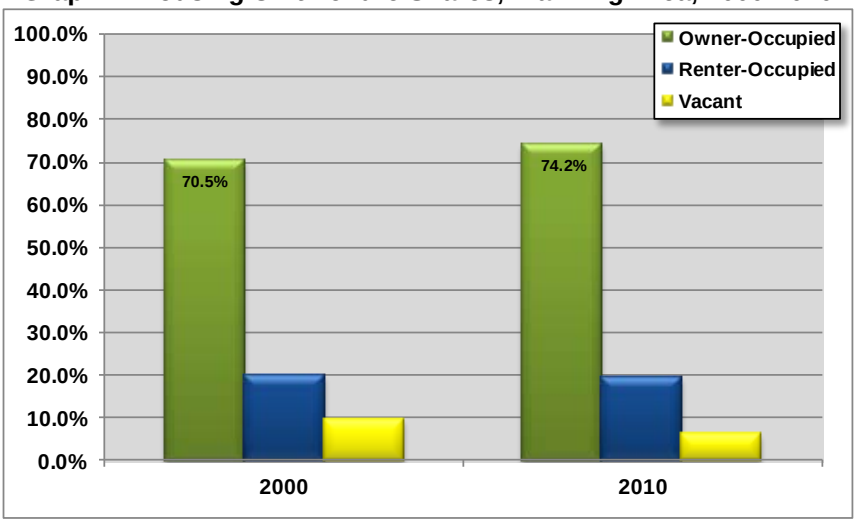
Table 9: Housing Unit Tenure Trends, 2000-2010

			2000-2010 Change	
Tenure	**2000**	**2010**	**#**	**%**
Owner-Occupied	5,821	11,966	6,145	105.6%
Renter-Occupied	1,650	3,166	1,516	91.9%
Vacant	783	993	210	26.8%
Total	**8,254**	**16,125**	**7,871**	**95.4%**

Source: ESRI

Approximately 74.2% of the 16,125 Fort Mill Planning Area housing units were owner-occupied in 2010, up from 70.5% in 2000 (Graph 5). Renter-occupied units represented another 19.6% of the inventory. The 993 vacant units made up 6.2% of the total housing inventory, a decline from nearly 10% in 2000.

Graph 4: Housing Unit Tenure Shares, Planning Area, 2000-2010



3.2 For-Sale Residential Market Trends

For-sale residential data was compiled based on Carolina Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data. Carolina MLS covers the seven-county region surrounding Charlotte, including York County. Residential data was provided for the two Fort Mill Zip Codes: 29708 and 29715. The geography, identified as Zip Codes 29708 and 29715, has been shown in Map 2. New unit closing data is limited to transactions that occurred through the MLS system. Units sold directly by builders outside of the MLS system are not included.

Between 2007 and 2011, a total of 3,194 single-family closings took place in Zip Codes 29708 and 29715. As shown in Table 10, closings averaged 639 units annually, ranging from 891 units in 2007 to 543 units in 2010. It should be noted that while new closings have declined every year since 2007, resales rebounded in 2011. New residential closings have been limited by the number of new starts over the last five years.

Table 10: Single-Family Closings, Zip Codes 29708/29715, 2007-2011

	Closings			New %
Year	New	Resale	Total	of Total
2007	350	541	891	39.3%
2008	200	417	617	32.4%
2009	174	382	556	31.3%
2010	154	389	543	28.4%
2011	151	436	587	25.7%
Total	**1,029**	**2,165**	**3,194**	**32.2%**
Ann. Avg.	**206**	**433**	**639**	**32.2%**

Source: ReMax Realty; Carolina MLS

As shown in Table 11, the average closing price for a new single-family house in Zip Codes 29708 and 29715 was $395,240 in 2007. By 2011, the price had decreased 24.4% to $317,781. The average closing price for resale houses in Zip Codes 29708 and 29715 decreased from $277,980 in 2007 to $265,275 in 2011, or 4.8%.

Map 2: Zip Codes 29708 & 29715, 2012

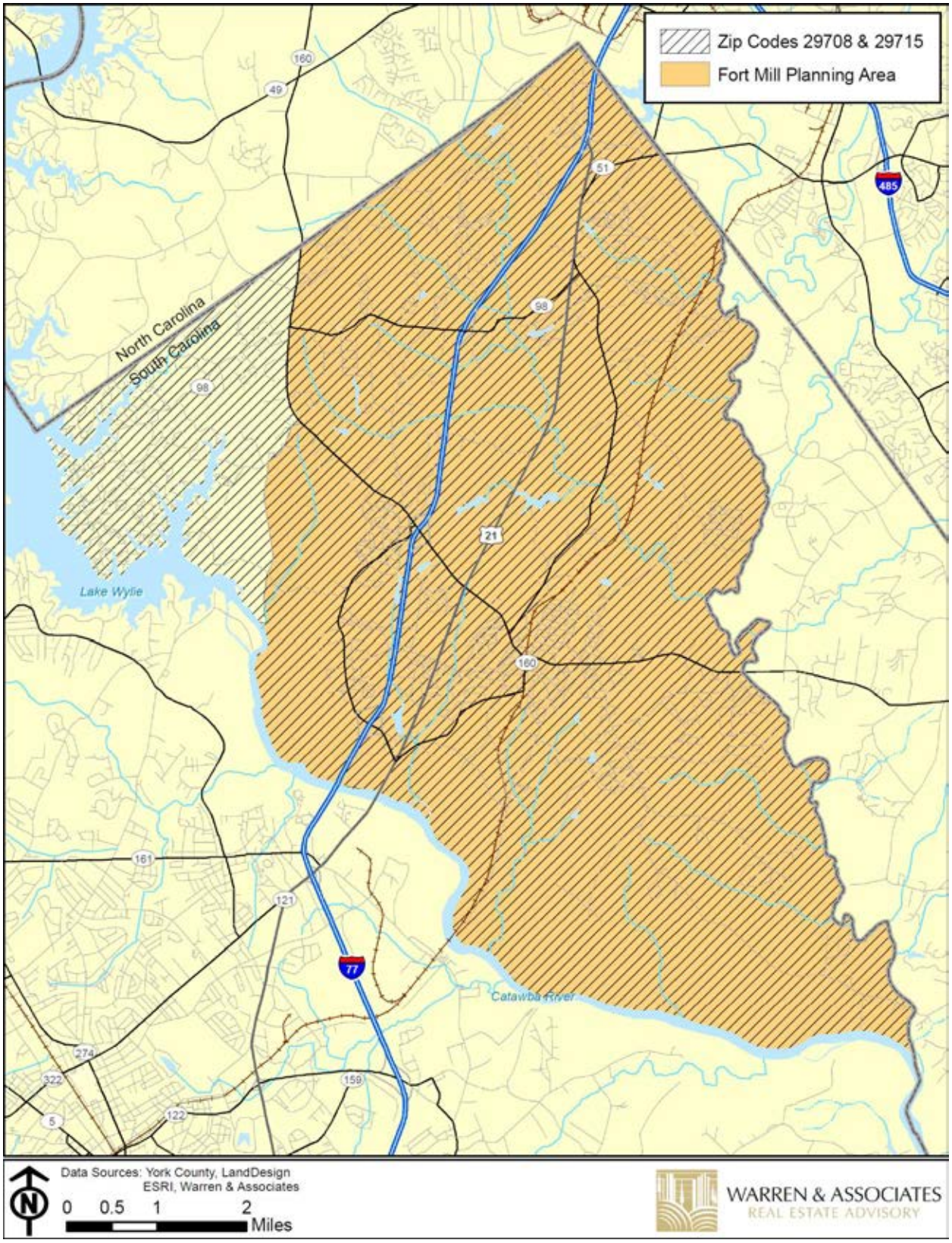


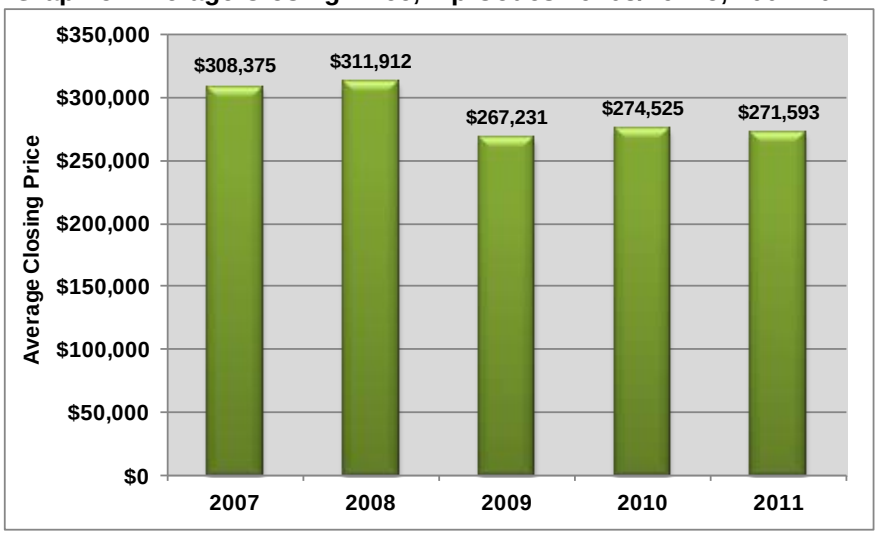
Table 11: Single-Family Closings, 29708 & 29715, 2007-2011

	Avg. Closing Price	
Year	New	Resale
2007	$395,240	$277,980
2008	$392,860	$288,223
2009	$307,034	$258,864
2010	$327,078	$263,584
2011	$317,781	$265,275

Source: ReMax Realty; Carolina MLS

The average closing price in Zip Codes 29708 and 29715 declined from a peak of $311,912 in 2008 to $271,593 in 2011 (Graph 5). The average closing price in the Fort Mill area increased in every year between 2000 and 2007. Consistent with national trends, closing prices declined following the recession and housing downturn over the last four years.

Graph 5: Average Closing Price, Zip Codes 29708/29715, 2007-2011



3.3 Apartments

As shown in Table 12, there are six apartment communities containing over 1,300 units in the Fort Mill Planning Area. Four of the communities have been completed since 2007; the most recent, Paddock at Springfield, was finished in 2011.

Table 12: Apartment Communities, Planning Area, 2012

Project	Address	Year Built	Total Units
Bromley Village	104 Bromley Park Drive	2007	340
Paddock at Springfield	1555 Paddock Club Lane	2011	300
Peachtree Place	1 Peach Lane	1984	248
Forest Ridge	2300 Forest Ridge Drive	1996	237
Commons at Fort Mill	221 Embassy Drive	2009	136
Millcrest Park	208 Sedgewick Drive	2007	72
Total			**1,333**

Sources: Real Data; Warren & Associates

The existing apartment communities have an estimated current vacancy rate of approximately 7%. Fast lease-up at the most recently completed communities indicates continued demand for rental product in the Fort Mill Planning Area.

3.4 Residential Development

3.4.1 Active Subdivisions

There are 11 residential subdivisions with at least 150 planned lots within the Fort Mill Planning Area. These subdivisions contain a total of 8,074 planned lots, defined as having zoning and/or site plan approval by the local governing jurisdiction (Table 13). Of the total planned lots, an estimated 3,240 lots, or 40.1%, remain undeveloped.

Table 13: Active Residential Subdivisions, Planning Area, 2011

Subdivision Name	Location	Planned Lots	Remaining Lots	Remaining % of Total
Regent Park	US-21	2,779	203	7.3%
Baxter	SC-160	1,400	75	5.4%
Massey	Dobys Bridge Rd.	1,008	960	95.2%
Lake Ridge	Gardendale Rd.	830	751	90.5%
Springfield	Springfield Pkwy.	557	304	54.6%
Regent Park	Dorman Rd.	332	292	88.0%
Orchards at Springfield	Springfield Pkwy.	274	274	100.0%
Catawba Village	Pleasant Rd.	272	129	47.4%
Whitley Mills	Whitley Rd.	264	24	9.1%
Preserve at Riverchase	Dobys Bridge Rd.	186	186	100.0%
Avery Lake	Steele Rd.	172	42	24.4%
Total		**8,074**	**3,240**	**40.1%**

Source: Land Matters, Town of Fort Mill, York County

While Regent Park is the largest planned subdivision with 2,779 planned lots, only an estimated 203 lots remain to be developed. Massey, located on Dobys Bridge Road, has the largest remaining inventory of 960 lots, followed by Lake Ridge with 751 buildable lots. It should be noted that residential construction has recently resumed at Massey after a bank foreclosure and sale to a new developer.

3.4.2 Planned Subdivisions

Subdivisions listed as planned have been approved by development agreements. All agreements are flexible and may allow different types of residential uses, including single-family detached, single-family attached (townhouses), and multi-family.

There are seven agreements in three major developments in the Fort Mill Planning Area. These development agreements allow a total of 4,581 lots, ranging from 325 in Tract 1A in Leroy Springs to 1,025 lots in the Kingsley Tract in Clear Springs (Table 14).

Table 14: Planned Residential Subdivisions, Planning Area, 2011

Tract	Develompent Agreement	Planned Lots
Kanawha	Cherokee-Sustainable Development Group	715
Kingsley Tract	Clear Springs	1,025
Springfield Tract	Clear Springs	680
Avery Tract	Clear Springs	526
McAlhaney Tract	Clear Springs	845
US-21/SC-160	Clear Springs (Tract 3A)	465
Tract 1A	Leroy Springs	325
Total		**4,581**

Source: Land Matters, Town of Fort Mill, York County

4. Population and Residential Unit Forecast

4.1 2010-2027 Population Forecast

Three different residential growth scenarios were evaluated to forecast population, households, and housing units for the Planning Area through 2027. These include:

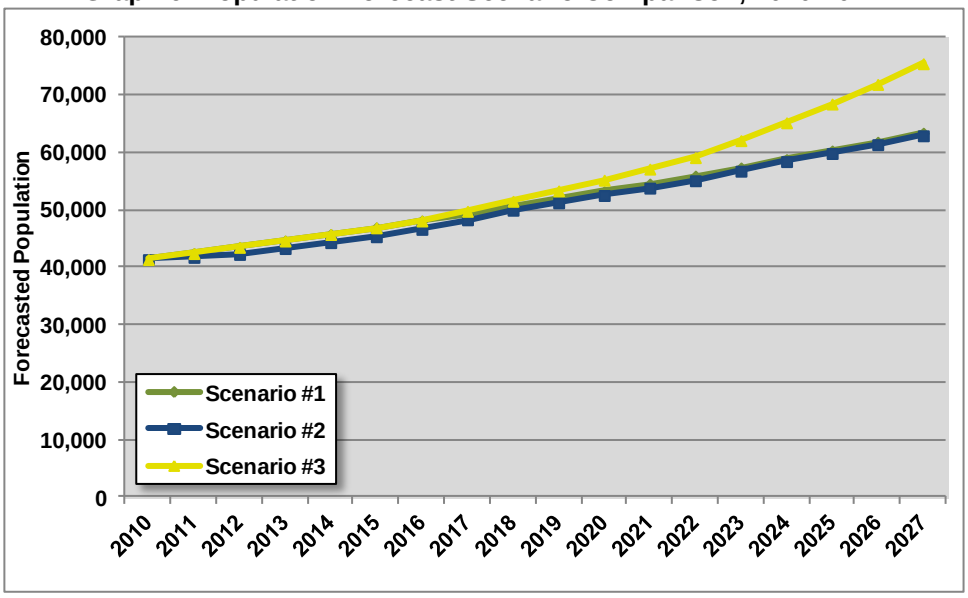
1. **2000-2010 Baseline** – Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) forecasted a compound annual growth rate of 2.54% between 2010 and 2015. This straight-line growth rate was used to forecast new population through 2027.

2. **2008-2010 Absorption Trends** – Average for-sale residential absorption trend data between 2007 and 2011 was used to forecast housing unit growth through 2027. Acceleration was shown post-2015 to indicate continued improvements to the economy following the recession.

3. **2000-2010 Accelerated Growth** – The 2000-2010 Baseline forecast was accelerated post-2015 to indicate improvements to the economy following the recession. This model also assumes continued positive job formation and transportation improvements in the Planning Area.

Graph 6 demonstrates the population forecasts between 2010 and 2027 using the three methods described above. The final forecast was derived from taking a straight average of the three methods. The Accelerated Growth scenario produced the highest population forecast. Growth rates were increased to 3.5% between 2015 and 2020 and 5.0% post-2020. It should be noted that the average annual growth rate between 2000 and 2010 in the Planning Area was 7.4%.

Graph 6: Population Forecast Scenario Comparison, 2010-2027



As shown in Table 15, the 2010-2027 population growth forecasted by the three scenarios ranges from 22,000 for Scenario 1 (Baseline) to 34,090 new residents for Scenario 3 (Accelerated

Growth). Averaging the three scenarios equates to 25,880 new residents between 2010 and 2027. The resulting 2.9% compound annual growth rate forecasted between 2010 and 2027 would be more than the ESRI forecasted 2010 to 2015 CAGR of 2.5%, but less than the reported CAGR over the last decade.

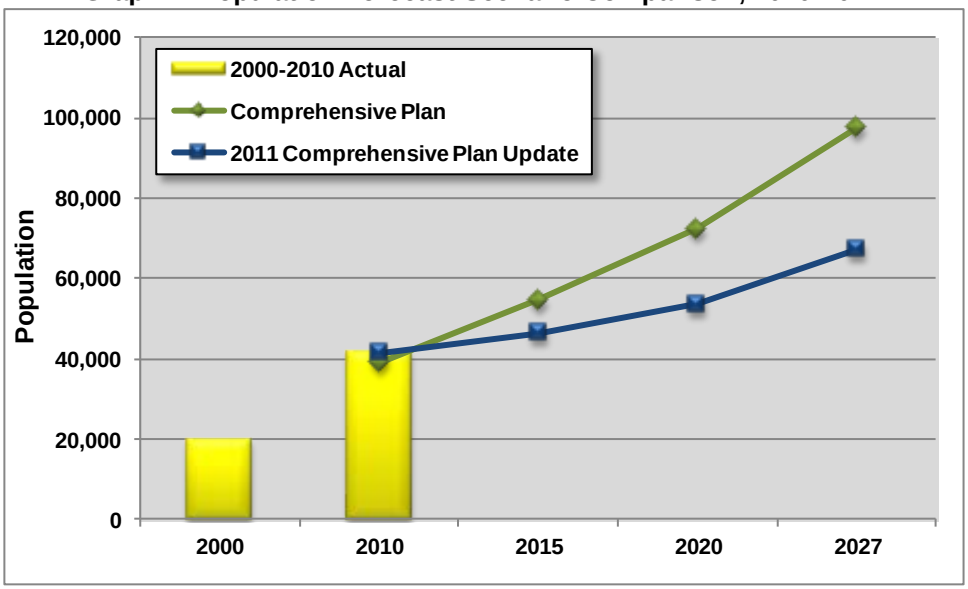
Table 15: Population Forecast Comparison, Planning Area, 2010-2027

			'10-'27 Change	
Scenario	**2010**	**2027**	**#**	**%**
Scenario 1	41,390	63,390	22,000	53.2%
Scenario 2	41,390	62,940	21,550	52.1%
Scenario 3	41,390	75,480	34,090	82.4%
Average	**41,390**	**67,270**	**25,880**	**62.5%**

Source: ESRI, Warren & Associates

As shown in Graph 7, the population in the Fort Mill planning area increased by 103.4%, from approximately 20,000 residents in 2000 to over 40,000 residents in 2010. The Comprehensive Plan, completed in 2007, forecasted a 2027 population of nearly 100,000 residents. Taking updated economic information into consideration, this Comprehensive Plan update forecasts a 2027 population of over 67,000, more than 25,000 residents fewer than the initial assessment.

Graph 7: Population Forecast Scenario Comparison, 2010-2027



4.2 Housing Unit Forecast

Table 16 demonstrates the results of taking a straight average of the population forecasts based on the three scenarios. Housing unit forecasts are based on average household sizes and an 8% vacancy rate. Housing units in the Planning Area could increase by 62.7%, or 10,090 new units, between 2010 and 2027. Housing unit delivery is expected to increase after 2015, as the economy continues to recover from the economic recession.

Table 16: Residential Forecast, Planning Area, 2010-2027

				2010-2027 Change	
	2010	2020	2027	#	%
Housing Units	16,090	20,880	26,180	10,090	62.7%
Households	15,320	19,870	24,910	9,590	62.6%
Population	41,390	53,650	67,270	25,880	62.5%

Source: ESRI, Warren & Associates

4.3 Housing Density and Land Demand

The amount of acreage consumed by future housing units depends on the densities at which they are built. Table 17 indicates how much land would be needed by forecast period at varying net densities. Net densities only include the size of the lot upon which the unit is built, excluding open space, floodplain, roadway networks, and other common area amenities. Therefore, the gross acreage needed to accommodate the new housing units would be higher than what is represented in the table below.

Table 17: Forecasted Land Demand, Planning Area, 2010-2027

		Land Demand (Net Acres)		
Period	Additional Housing Units	Two Units per Acre	Four Units per Acre	Six Units per Acre
2010-2015	1,970	985	493	328
2015-2020	2,820	1,410	705	470
2020-2025	3,590	1,795	898	598
2025-2027	1,710	855	428	285
Total	**10,090**	**5,045**	**2,523**	**1,682**

Source: ESRI, Warren & Associates

At an overall net density of two units per acre, a total of 5,045 acres would be needed to accommodate the forecasted housing units. At four and six units per acre, a total of 2,523 and 1,682 acres would be needed, respectively.

4.4 Mixed-Use Opportunities

As the Fort Mill Planning Area urbanizes, there will be opportunities to mix residential units with other uses in the same development. This pattern would reduce the amount and length of vehicular trips to access jobs, retail services, and community amenities, and minimize the total amount of land needed to accommodate development.

Locations where a mix of residential and other uses is appropriate would ideally be focused in areas with existing water and sewer service, convenient access to major thoroughfares, close proximity to schools and other public facilities, and already developed nodes of activity, including downtown Fort Mill, Baxter Village, Regent Park, and Kingsley.

5. Economic Development Trends

This section provides an overview of economic development trends in the Planning Area. Data regarding employment, business parks, and retail centers is analyzed. When available, data has been collected for the Fort Mill Planning Area. However, the geography analyzed in this section of the report varies based on the availability of data.

5.1 York County Employment Trends

As shown in Table 18, York County had a total of 73,177 annualized full-time jobs in 2010, 20.9% more than in 2002. The largest industry in 2010 was Federal, State, and Local Government, which includes public sector education and healthcare employees, with 11,512 jobs. The following industries reported the largest absolute growth between 2002 and 2010:

- Finance and Insurance (+4,013)
- Retail Trade (+2,385)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (+2,217)
- Professional and Business Services (+1,890)
- Federal, State, and Local Government (+1,825)
- Accommodation and Food Services (+1,595)

Table 18: Employment by Industry, York County, 2002-2010

			2002-2010 Change	
Industry	**2002**	**2010**	**#**	**%**
Finance and Insurance	1,407	5,420	4,013	285%
Retail Trade	7,985	10,370	2,385	30%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,325	7,542	2,217	42%
Professional & Business Services	5,441	7,331	1,890	35%
Federal, State, and Local Government*	9,687	11,512	1,825	19%
Accommodation and Food Services	5,297	6,892	1,595	30%
Transportation & Warehousing & Utilities	2,433	2,817	384	16%
Natural Resources and Mining	274	528	254	93%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	589	837	248	42%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,568	1,728	160	10%
Educational Services	90	213	123	137%
Information	1,493	1,450	-43	-3%
Wholesale Trade	3,473	3,416	-57	-2%
Other Services	1,871	1,616	-255	-14%
Construction	3,324	2,507	-817	-25%
Manufacturing	10,191	8,998	-1,193	-12%
Unclassified	86	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**60,534**	**73,177**	**12,643**	**20.9%**

Note: Includes public sector education and health services.

Source: South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce

Employment declines in Manufacturing and Construction were consistent with both national and state economic trends. Overall, five industries experienced a decline in employment between 2002 and 2010, including:

- Manufacturing (-1,193)
- Construction (-817)
- Other Services (-255)
- Wholesale Trade (-57)
- Information (-43)

5.2 Fort Mill Planning Area Employment

Based on information provided by ESRI, it is estimated that in 2010, the Fort Mill Planning Area contained 14,884 jobs, or 20.3% of the total 73,177 jobs in York County (Table 19). Approximately 32.2% of the total Planning Area jobs were service-related. Retail Trade was the second largest sector with a 21.9% share, or 3,254 jobs.

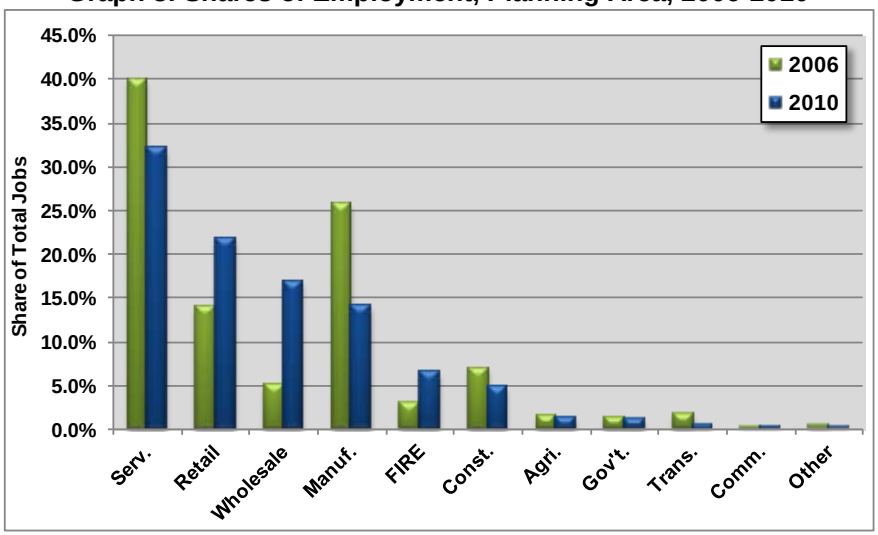
Table 19: Employment by Industry, Planning Area, 2010

Industry	Jobs	% of Total
Services	4,787	32.2%
Retail Trade	3,254	21.9%
Wholesale Trade	2,497	16.8%
Manufacturing	2,097	14.1%
F.I.R.E.	963	6.5%
Construction	735	4.9%
Agriculture & Mining	212	1.4%
Government	168	1.1%
Transportation & Utilities	85	0.6%
Communications	48	0.3%
Other/Unclassified	38	0.3%
Total	**14,884**	**100.0%**

Source: ESRI

Graph 8 demonstrates the increase in shares of Retail, Wholesale Trade, and Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate jobs in the Planning Area since the Fort Mill Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2007. Between 2006 and 2010, the Services, Manufacturing and Construction sectors all experienced a decline in share of the overall job inventory.

Graph 8: Shares of Employment, Planning Area, 2006-2010



The Fort Mill Planning Area has an estimated 19,345 employed residents and 14,846 full-time place-of-work jobs (this total excludes the unclassified/other sector). To determine the net inflow or outflow of workers, the Fort Mill Planning Area's place-of-work jobs were subtracted from the number of employed residents by industry. In 2010, the Planning Area experienced a net outflow of 4,499 employees (Table 20). Only three sectors experienced a net inflow in 2010: Retail Trade, Wholesale Trade, and Agriculture & Mining.

Table 20: Employee Inflow/Outflow by Industry, Planning Area, 2010

	Employment		Estimated
Industry	Place of Residence	Place of Work	Inflow/ (Outflow)
Services	7,978	4,787	(3,191)
Retail Trade	2,304	3,254	950
Wholesale Trade	1,046	2,497	1,451
Manufacturing	2,750	2,097	(653)
F.I.R.E.	1,452	963	(489)
Construction	1,472	735	(737)
Agriculture & Mining	97	212	115
Government	445	168	(277)
Transportation & Utilities	1,181	85	(1,096)
Communications	620	48	(572)
Total	**19,345**	**14,846**	**(4,499)**

Source: ESRI

5.3 Retail Inventory

There are nine multi-tenant retail centers totaling 621,305 square feet located in the Fort Mill Planning Area (Table 21). This inventory contains only centers that are larger than 25,000 square feet. All of the centers, except Baxter, Pendleton Village, and Gold Hill Commons, are anchored by a grocery store. Pendleton Village is located adjacent to a free-standing Lowe's Home Improvement.

Table 21: Existing Retail Centers, Fort Mill Planning Area, 2011

Project	Location	Square Feet
Baxter	I-77/SC-160	191,200
Tega Cay Village	SC-160/Gold Hill Rd.	84,500
Peachtree Plaza	SC-160/Munn Rd.	75,000
West Town Market	SC-160/Pleasant Rd.	68,000
Avery Plaza	SC-160/Gold Hill Rd.	60,000
Crown Plaza at Regent Park	US-21/Regent Pkwy.	45,000
Fort Mill Square	SC-160/Banks Rd.	44,500
Gold Hill Crossings	Godl Hill Rd./Wilson Business Pkwy.	28,800
Pendleton Village	I-77/SC-160	24,305
Total		**621,305**

Source: Karnes, Warren & Associates

It should be noted that Food Lion announced in late-2011 that it would close its store in Tega Cay Village, leaving a large vacancy in this shopping center. The Food Lion closed in mid-February 2012. Most of the shopping centers are located on SC-160, the primary east-west thoroughfare in the Fort Mill Planning Area.

Based on the 2010 Fort Mill Planning Area population of 40,627 residents and the 621,305 square feet of retail space, there are approximately 15.3 retail square feet per capita. A more typical standard is 25 square feet per capita, particularly in higher-income suburban areas. Thus, the Fort Mill Planning Area could be underserved by retail.

It should be noted, however, that there are retail centers located near the Planning Area boundaries that are not included in this inventory. Specifically, there is approximately 425,000 square feet of multi-tenant retail in three shopping centers on the west side of SC-160 in Tega Cay, just outside the defined Planning Area. It is likely that these centers serve portions of the Planning Area population as well. Adding this square footage would result in 25.7 square feet per capita.

5.4 Office and Industrial Inventory

There are ten business parks with land available for development in the Fort Mill Planning Area (Table 22). These parks total 1,957 acres with 39.4% still available for office or industrial buildings. Two of the parks, Lakemont Business Park and Bradley Industrial Park contain approximately 50% of the total 764 acres of remaining land.

Table 22: Active Business Parks, Fort Mill Planning Area, 2011

Business Park	Location	Total Acres	Remaining Acres	Remaining % of Total
Lakemont Business Park	Carowinds Blvd./I-77	600	269	44.8%
Bradley Industrial Park	Banks Rd./US-21	450	139	30.9%
Transpoint Business Park	US-21/Carolina Point Pkwy.	160	80	50.0%
Gold Hill Commons	I-77/Gold Hill Rd.	150	133	88.7%
River Crossing	I-77/Sutton Rd.	150	30	20.0%
Wilson Business Park	I-77/Gold Hill Rd.	130	16	12.3%
Lakemont East Business Park	US-21/Springhill Farm Rd.	104	27	26.0%
Carolina Commerce Center	I-77/SC-160	70	4	5.7%
Lakemont North Business Park	Carowinds Blvd./I-77	66	66	100.0%
Kingsley Park	I-77/SC-160	77	8	10.4%
Total		**1,957**	**772**	**39.4%**

Source: Charlotte Regional Partnership, York County Economic Development, Warren & Associates

5.5 Commercial Development

As shown in Table 23, there are 12 commercial projects that have been approved for the Fort Mill Planning Area. Ten of the projects were approved through a development agreement in 2008. It should be noted that the square footages listed below are the maximum allowed by the agreement. Additionally, the agreements allow for a mixture of non-residential uses including retail, office, and industrial. There is a combined 7.8 million square feet of commercial uses approved for the Planning Area.

Table 23: Approved Commercial, Fort Mill Planning Area, 2011

Development/ Tract	Development Agreement	Square Feet
Massey	n/a	280,000
Kanawha	Cherokee-Sustainable Development Group	600,000
Kingsley Tract	Clear Springs	1,552,200
US-21/SC-160	Clear Springs (Tract 2)	270,000
Springfield Tract	Clear Springs	290,000
McAlhaney Tract	Clear Springs	150,000
Bradley Park Tract	Clear Springs	2,810,000
US-21/SC-160	Clear Springs (Tract 3A)	400,000
US-21/SC-160	Clear Springs (Tract 3B)	280,000
Tract 3	Leroy Springs	520,000
Tract 5	Leroy Springs	150,000
Tract 1A	Leroy Springs	500,000
Total		**7,802,200**

Source: Town of Fort Mill, Karnes, Warren & Associates

Massey, located on Doby's Bridge Road, is approved for 280,000 square feet of retail. It should be noted that residential construction has recently resumed at Massy after a bank foreclosure on the property. Retail development is not likely to be completed at this location until a substantial amount of the residential is absorbed.

The Kanawha Tract, included in the Cherokee-Sustainable Development Group agreement, has been tentatively identified as the site of a planned hospital in Fort Mill. A credit union was recently completed as part of the Springfield Tract. Additionally, a Harris Teeter that is proposed for the site has been put on hold until 2014.

6. Economic Development Forecast

6.1 Retail Forecast and Land Demand

Future retail demand is a function of household and population forecasts, and is based on the same methodology utilized in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Market Analysis. Based on estimated annual retail spending of $24,928 per household in the Fort Mill Planning Area, the additional 9,590 households that could be added between 2010 and 2027 would equate to more than $239 million in additional retail expenditures (Table 24).

Table 24: Retail Square Feet and Land Demand, Planning Area, 2010-2027

Period	Household Growth	Additional Retail Expenditures	Capture Rate	Planning Area Capture	% Inflow	Total Sales Potential	Supportable Sq. Ft. (5% Vacant)	Planning Area Acres
2010-2015	1,860	$46,366,080	65%	$30,137,952	10%	$33,486,613	117,497	10.8
2016-2020	2,680	$66,807,040	70%	46,764,928	12%	53,141,964	186,463	17.1
2021-2027	5,050	$125,886,400	75%	94,414,800	12%	107,289,545	376,455	34.6
Total	**9,590**	**$239,059,520**		**$171,317,680**		**$193,918,122**	**680,414**	**62.5**

Note: Based on average Planning Area spending per household in 2010 dollars.
Source: ESRI; Warren & Associates

Over time, the Planning Area is positioned to capture a greater share of sales, as the quantity and quality of offerings increases and congestion to Charlotte retail centers worsens. The Planning Area capture rate is forecasted to increase from 65% in 2010 to 75% by 2027. This would produce sales of $171 million.

In addition to population driven demand, there will also be retail spending by employees, travelers, and visitors to the Planning Area. This supplemental demand is captured by applying an overall "inflow" factor, which will increase from an estimated 10% to 12% due to potential employment growth, as well as construction of a new hospital. The resulting supportable retail square footage in the Planning Area is 680,414 million square feet, or an additional 62.5 acres assuming a Floor Area Ratio of 0.25.

6.2 Office and Industrial Forecast and Land Demand

As described in Section 5.2, there were an estimated 14,884 jobs in the Fort Mill Planning Area in 2010, with 32.2% in the Services sector. While Manufacturing represented 14.1% of the 2010 jobs, this sector will likely account for less than 10% of new jobs through 2027.

The Fort Mill Planning Area will be competitive for future job growth, based on access to eight-lane I-77, close proximity to established office/industrial corridors in southwest Charlotte, and South Carolina's aggressive economic development incentive programs. The Planning Area's ability to maintain or increase its share of the Charlotte region's employment base will be determined largely by the availability of buildings and developable land.

As shown in Table 25, there are 772 acres in ten business parks remaining for development in the Fort Mill Planning Area. For the purposes of this assignment, two business/office park build-out scenarios have been calculated to forecast employment in 2027.

Table 25: Forecasted Employment Acres, Square Feet, and Jobs, Fort Mill Planning Area, 2010-2027

Business Park	Remaining Acres	30% of Acres Developed				50% of Acres Developed			
		Built-Upon Acres	Sq. Ft. Built	Occupied Sq.Ft.	Jobs Created	Built-Upon Acres	Sq. Ft. Built	Occupied Sq.Ft.	Jobs Created
Lakemont Business Park	269	81	878,823	790,941	1,977	135	1,464,705	1,318,235	3,296
Bradley Industrial Park	139	42	454,113	408,702	1,022	70	756,855	681,170	1,703
Transpoint Business Park	80	24	261,360	235,224	588	40	435,600	392,040	980
Gold Hill Commons	133	40	434,511	391,060	978	67	724,185	651,767	1,629
River Crossing	30	9	98,010	88,209	221	15	163,350	147,015	368
Wilson Business Park	16	5	52,272	47,045	118	8	87,120	78,408	196
Lakemont East Business Park	27	8	88,209	79,388	198	14	147,015	132,314	331
Carolina Commerce Center	4	1	13,068	11,761	29	2	21,780	19,602	49
Lakemont North Business Park	66	20	215,622	194,060	485	33	359,370	323,433	809
Kingsley Park	8	2	26,136	23,522	59	4	43,560	39,204	98
Total	**772**	**232**	**2,522,124**	**2,269,912**	**5,675**	**386**	**4,203,540**	**3,783,186**	**9,458**

Source: Charlotte Regional Partnership, York County/Rock Hill Economic Development, Warren & Associates.

If 30% of the remaining land is developed through 2027, it would result in an additional 232 acres of employment growth. Applying a 0.25 FAR to that acreage yields over 2.5 million square feet of office and industrial space that could be constructed in those parks through 2027. In order to determine the estimated occupied employment space in the Planning Area, nearly 2.3 million square feet, a 10% vacancy factor was used. The occupied square footage converts into 5,675 new jobs, using an average of 400 square feet per employee. This average is based on each employee occupying 225 square feet for office and 700 square feet for industrial. This employment figure excludes jobs created outside of business/office parks.

If 50% of the available business/office park land is developable, the total build-out yields 386 acres. Applying a 0.25 FAR to that acreage equates to more than 4.2 million square feet of office and industrial space that could be built in the parks over the next 20 years. Based on a 10% vacancy factor, 3.8 million occupied square feet could be completed. The occupied square footage converts to 9,458 new jobs, using an average of 400 square feet per employee.

Based on the 30% business/office park build-out scenario, the Planning Area could have 20,559 jobs by 2027 (Table 26). If the remaining park acreage is 50% built-out, the Planning Area could have 24,342 jobs by 2027. It is important to note that these forecasts exclude the potential to accommodate a “drop-in” large relocation. They also don’t recognize new employment centers that could emerge over the 20-year planning horizon.

Table 26: Employment Forecast Scenarios, Planning Area, 2010-2027

	Build-Out	
Period	**30%**	**50%**
2010 Existing	14,884	14,884
2010-2027	5,675	9,458
2027 Total	**20,559**	**24,342**

Source: Warren & Associates

7. Recommendations

7.1 Housing Element

7.1.1 Overview

Housing is a key ingredient for any town, serves as both object and source of investment, as economic driver and employer, and as an essential part of the fabric of neighborhoods and the community.

7.1.2 Summary of Housing Issues & Opportunities

- Housing stock in the Fort Mill Planning Area nearly doubled between 2000 and 2010, increasing by over 7,800 units.
- Owner-occupied units make up nearly 74% of the total housing inventory in the Planning Area; followed by 20% renter-occupied and 6% vacant.
- Residential development slowed significantly in the Fort Mill Planning Area due to the recession and housing downturn between 2007 and 2008. A slow recovery from the recession has continued to limit new growth.
- During the recession, household mobility was at its lowest since the 1940s, reducing relocations and further decreasing the demand for residential development.
- Between 2007 and 2011, a total of 3,194 single-family closings were recorded in Fort Mill, equating to an annual average of 639 closings. New home closings have been limited by the number of construction starts over the last five years.
- In 2011, the average closing price for a new single-family house in Fort Mill was $265,275. Consistent with national trends, closing prices declined following the recession and housing downturn.
- Nearly 850 new apartment units have been completed in the Fort Mill Planning Area since 2007.
- Over 3,200 new residential lots remain as part of approved, active developments underway in the Planning Area. Another 4,581 units are approved as part of development agreements for planned neighborhoods.

7.1.3 Housing Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Create greater diversity in housing options.

Recommendation 1: Provide for high-density, attached housing where infrastructure is adequate (areas served by water/sewer, along major highways, within mixed-use nodes, near major employment).

Strategy 1: Designate areas identified as nodes on the Comprehensive Plan Map that are suitable for higher density residential, and encourage developers to offer a variety of housing options at different price points.

Strategy 2: Investigate the various programs available through USDA Rural Development, HUD, FHA, South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development

Authority, and other government agencies to provide workforce housing. Examples include tax-credits and the HOME Program, which is funded by the State of South Carolina to create housing for households earning 80% of the county median income.

Strategy 3: Collaborate with York County and its municipalities to establish a Housing Trust Fund to invest in workforce housing.

Strategy 4: Work with the churches in Fort Mill to participate in faith-based housing initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Attract housing in downtown Fort Mill.

Strategy 1: Create a downtown Municipal Services District (MSD) and offer density and/or parking variances for projects within the district.

Strategy 2: Provide property tax incentives for developers that build stand-alone residential or mixed-use projects with residential within the downtown MSD. These incentives would apply to the incremental increase in tax value over a specified period of time, typically at a declining rate.

Strategy 3: Work with downtown churches and other institutional landowners to integrate residential units into expansion facilities. For example, age-restricted housing units could be accommodated, with minimal parking requirements. A church could either sell a portion of its land at a reduced price or provide an affordable land lease to developers to build housing on its land. In exchange, the developer could construct needed facilities for the church, including shared amenities with the housing residents.

Strategy 4: Purchase strategic property within or around the MSD and require as a contingency within a sales contract that residential uses be developed or integrated as part of a (re)development.

Strategy 5: Pursue shared parking opportunities for residential and commercial uses within Town-owned lots.

Recommendation 3: Limit residential densities in close proximity to sensitive environmental conditions such as floodplains, conservation areas, hydric soils.

Strategy 1: Create appropriate zoning districts and incorporate by-laws within the subdivision ordinance that protect environmentally sensitive areas from residential development encroachment.

7.2 Economic Development Element

7.2.1 Overview

Economic development is critical to a sustainable future for the Fort Mill Planning Area. Development of non-residential uses can help to provide a diversified and sustainable tax

base, and limits the distance that residents need to travel for goods, services, and employment opportunities.

7.2.2 Summary of Economic Development Issues & Opportunities

- At-place employment totaled nearly 15,000 jobs in the Fort Mill Planning Area in 2010, with 32% in the Services sector. The Services, Retail and Wholesale Trade, and Manufacturing sectors accounted for 85% of Planning Area employment.
- Over 19,000 residents of the Fort Mill Planning Area were employed in 2010. Approximately 40% of residents had jobs in the Services sector, which includes healthcare and education.
- In 2010, the Planning Area experienced a net outflow of 4,499 workers, indicating a large share of the population that commutes to other areas for employment.
- There are ten business parks in the Fort Mill Planning Area that have approximately 772 acres available for future construction.
- Nine retail centers totaling over 621,000 square feet currently exist in Fort Mill Township.
- There are 12 commercial projects, including retail, office, and industrial uses, approved for the Fort Mill Planning Area, totaling 7.8 million square feet of space.

7.2.3 Economic Development Goals, Recommendations & Strategies

Goal 1: Create a vibrant downtown through public/private investment.

Recommendation 1: Fund infrastructure improvements such as streets/streetscapes, parks, and public utilities within a new Municipal Services District (MSD).

Strategy 1: Designate the MSD boundaries and obtain York County approval.

Strategy 2: Create a board of directors for the MSD and hire an executive director to coordinate public investments, market downtown, and negotiate with developers.

Strategy 3: Designate major public infrastructure projects that would be funded through municipal bonds, and prepare construction cost forecasts. Debt service would be partially covered by property taxes collected within the MSD.

Recommendation 2: Attract the right mix of commercial tenants that would be successful in a downtown environment.

Strategy 1: Work with building and land owners to create a credible inventory of available properties and marketing materials. Engage the local and regional commercial real estate brokerage community to market the properties. Currently, downtown Fort Mill has no visibility in the Charlotte region.

Strategy 2: Contact operators of existing restaurants, family-oriented businesses, and specialty shops in the Charlotte region to investigate relocating or opening an additional store in downtown Fort Mill. Use planned public investments as leverage to attract new businesses.

Goal 2: Create a sustainable economy with less reliance on surrounding communities for employment and shopping opportunities.

Recommendation 1: Create a more balanced tax base by designating areas near I-77 for future employment.

Strategy 1: Collaborate with the York County EDC to identify property that would be most competitive for employment centers.

Strategy 2: Work with the State of South Carolina to promote tax incentives offered to manufacturing and distribution companies, including:

- Low corporate tax rates
- No local or state taxes on inventories or intangibles
- Exemption of sales tax for purchases integral to the manufacturing process
- Five-year tax abatement for manufacturing companies that invest $50,000 or more in land, facilities, machinery, and equipment
- Five-year tax abatement for distribution companies that create 75 or more new jobs

Strategy 3: Pursue annexation of and rezone key property to accelerate the availability of land and building product for prospective employers.

Strategy 4: Invest in marketing materials for Fort Mill and specific properties to supplement information provided by the EDC to prospective developers or employers. Describe local incentives such as property tax credits and public investments in amenities to improve quality of life.

Recommendation 2: Allocate land for neighborhood and convenience retail within or near new residential neighborhoods to reduce the number and length of shopping trips.

Strategy 1: Provide density bonuses or parking variances for smaller neighborhood retail centers in strategic locations.

Strategy 2: Encourage residential units and/or offices above the retail space.

Strategy 3: Consider partial public funding for streets that allow for on-street parking and pedestrian connections to nearby residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation 3: Take advantage of the economic benefits associated with planned and potential transportation projects.

Strategy 1: Rezone key intersections along the Fort Mill Northern and Southern bypasses for small office/flex parks to accommodate entrepreneurs and professional service firms.

Strategy 2: Plan a new east-west connection across Sugar Creek to Lancaster County and US-521 to increase the Planning Area's regional visibility and job growth potential.

Strategy 3: Pursue opportunities with Rock Hill and York County to fund and extend the Charlotte Area Transit System's South Corridor light rail line from its current terminus at I-485 to Fort Mill.