

## Urban Design Analysis

After the data gathering from the initial trip to Huntersville in June 2005 was completed, the consultant team prepared an analysis of the physical conditions of the study area, as well as a summary of citizen input on the current strengths and weaknesses of Huntersville and visions for its future. The following section includes the analysis drawings assembled from hard data, in the form of UDA X-Rays®, followed by a summary of the soft data from interviews, focus group meetings, and the public meeting.

The portrait, shown on the following page, describes the existing conditions of the study area. The Study Area is the primary entrance to downtown Huntersville, and is located in the central part of Huntersville at Exit 23 off of I-77. The study area contains a diverse mix of uses including retail, healthcare, and office. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) has a commuter rail service planned along the existing Norfolk Southern rail line, located east of the study area.



REGIONAL LOCATOR Huntersville is located on the northern band of Charlotte, one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. Gilead Road is a local east/west connector which provides access into the historic Huntersville Downtown.

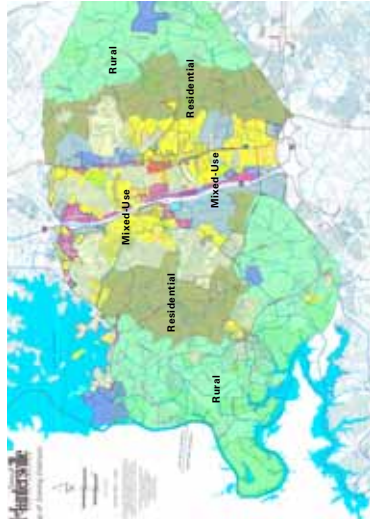
#### Previous Studies

This Plan is firmly rooted in several Plans and efforts that preceded it and builds upon many of the ideas and initiatives that emerged in these previous efforts.

In 1996 the Town of Huntersville adopted aggressive development codes and policies that fundamentally changed the way the Town would develop. The codes embraced a Smart Growth policy of focusing development in specific areas of the Town. These policies follow a vision of a community containing mixed use nodes where transportation corridors converge and preserving the rural character of the town in other areas.

Another important study which laid the groundwork for this plan is the NC 73 Transportation/ Land Use Corridor Plan. This Plan is significant because it is the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) first study that combined land use and transportation and recognizes the essential link between the two. It is also significant because it adopted a "not one size fits all" approach to corridor design.

In December 2004, the Town completed a new Downtown Master Plan. Several of the recommendations in the Downtown Plan are reinforced in the Gilead Road Small Area Plan.



HUNTERSVILLE ZONING MAP The Town's Zoning Ordinance is a model of smart growth policies. Growth is directed to transportation corridors and nodes, and transportation connections are proposed across undeveloped land.



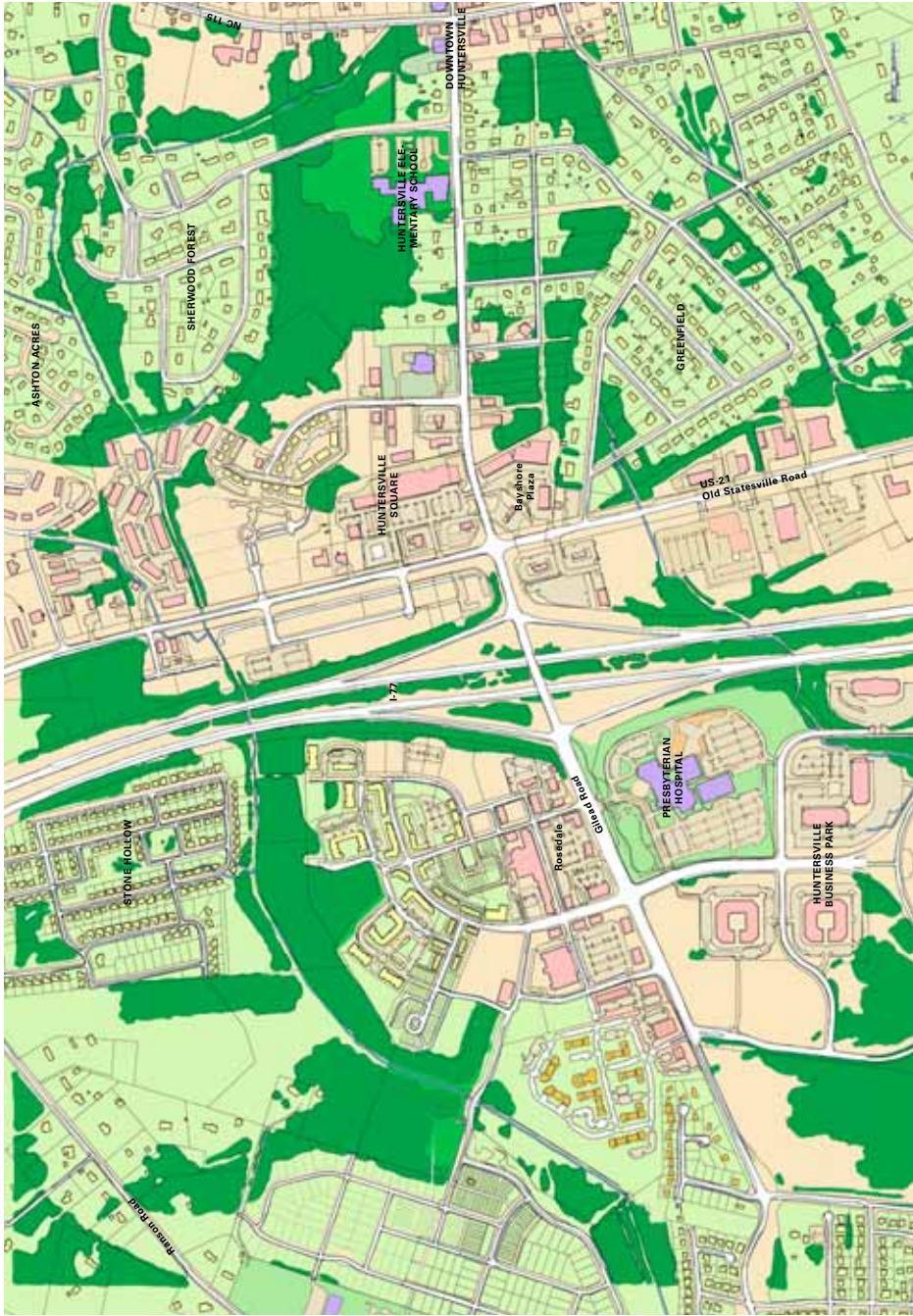
HUNTERSVILLE DOWNTOWN PLAN The Town's Downtown Plan forges a new vision for a vibrant transit oriented downtown.



CORNELIUS CENTENNIAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN Cornelius has adopted many of the same growth policies as Huntersville. The Cornelius Centennial Transportation Plan endorses the principles of connectivity and walkability, and proposes an additional crossing over I-77.



NC 73 TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE PLAN This multi-jurisdictional study proposes small area plans be undertaken for a number of critical areas including the NC 73 (Sam Furr Road) / US 21 intersections.



EXISTING CONDITIONS The Study Area consists of residential neighborhoods and suburban shopping areas. Rosedale is the only commercial area that is well connected to adjacent neighborhoods.



New neighborhoods on Gilead Road



Huntersville's Town Hall



Historic character along Gilead Road



Rural character of Gilead Road to the west of the Huntersville Business Park



Gilead Road towards Historic Downtown



New neighborhoods on Gilead Road



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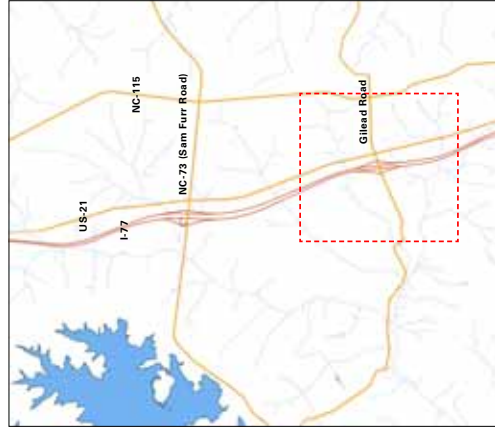
### Connectivity

Continued improvements to the transportation networks and overall connectivity of the study area is critical. Fast growth areas typically ignore issues of connectivity as land gets subdivided. Typically, regional arterial are the only complete network and they provide the only connectivity. Huntersville is an exception to this rule as all development since 1996 is required to connect not just to the arterial but to adjacent developments (existing or future). Furthermore, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Union Planning Organization (MUMPO) has mapped new city wide connections (i.e. thoroughfares) that are to be built as adjacent development comes on line.

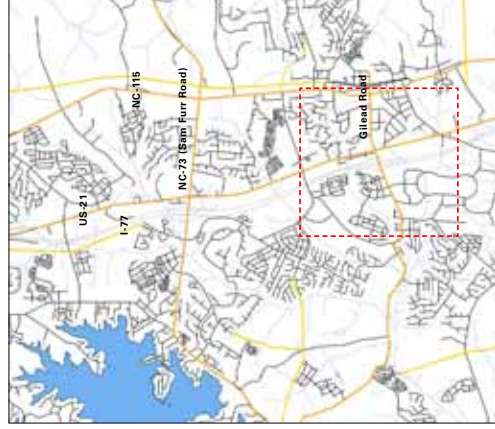
Huntersville's policy of connectivity has served it well. Neighborhoods and commercial centers built after 1996 are connected to each other; for the most part multiple transportation options exist between any two points in the Town. However there is room for improvement; particularly for developments pre-1996.

- Neighborhoods are not connected to daily activities of life. While many neighborhoods are connected to each other they are not connected to retail areas, institutions, employment areas or recreation. A subdivision may be adjacent to a retail area, but sometimes there is no direct connection between the two.
- The freeway is a divider. With the exception of the primary arterial that cross I-77, there are very few roads that traverse the freeway. As a result, the few existing crossings are heavily burdened not only with interchange traffic but also with local intra-town traffic.

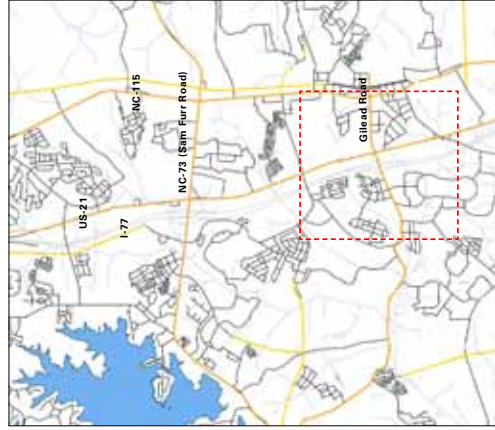
- The pedestrian and greenway network is weak. As Huntersville develops, equal attention should be given to these alternate modes of travel. A comprehensive recreational/ greenway and pedestrian network will contribute greatly to the quality of life in the community while reducing the number of overall vehicle trips.



**HIGHWAYS AND ARTERIALS X-RAY**  
The confluence of transportation corridors has transformed the study area from a suburban fringe to a vibrant center of commerce.



**STREET PATTERN X-RAY**  
The City's Comprehensive Plan proposes an improved network of streets with new connections through currently undeveloped land (shown in yellow).

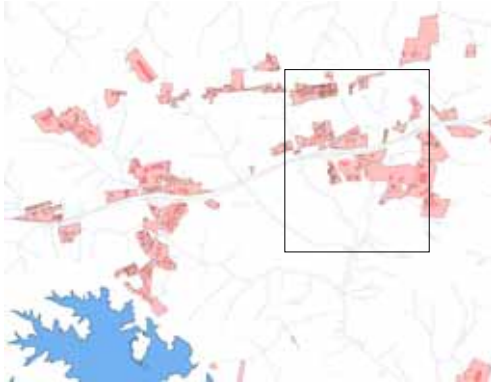


**EFFECTIVE STREET NETWORK X-RAY**  
Streets that do not connect to more than one road or cul de sac streets do not contribute to town-wide connectivity. This X-Ray demonstrates the presence of a very sparse network of streets.

### X-Ray Drawings

The consultant team collected and analyzed hard data to better understand the study area, as well as to illustrate to borough residents the myriad assets and natural patterns of the community. A UDA X-Ray drawing isolates a physical element, such as streets, to illustrate patterns and opportunities difficult to perceive when combined

with other uses in a single drawing. By studying natural and man-made systems, the underlying patterns, problems and opportunities of a project area are unveiled. Often from these patterns, the beginnings of strategies and solutions emerge.



**PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND INSTITUTION X-RAY**  
 Most of Huntersville's parks and schools are located along the streams and valleys.

**FIGURE GROUND X-RAY**  
 Houses in residential neighborhoods reinforce their street patterns. Most commercial buildings do not reinforce the street pattern.

**RESIDENTIAL X-RAY**  
 The town's population has grown from 3,000 in 1980 to over 30,000 today. Neighborhoods in Huntersville are either rural, suburban, or new suburban/urban. Neighborhoods have been developed in bands parallel to the freeway with the most diverse and dense neighborhoods located in the two study areas.

**COMMERCIAL X-RAY**  
 Commercial uses are clustered at high access points such as the freeway interchanges. Commercial development prior to 1996 typifies suburban sprawl, while development post-1996 is built up to the street with parking behind.