

## 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 the two study areas and visions for its future. The following section includes the analysis and drawings assembled from hard data, in the form of UDA X-Rays® (see description below and images on page 10, 11), followed by a summary of the soft data from interviews, focus group meetings, and the public meeting.

The portrait, shown on page 9, describes the existing conditions of the study area.

The Study Area is located on the north edge of Huntersville, outside of Charlotte at Exit 25 of I-77. The area contains a mix of uses, however, the uses are generally separated by either the freeway or wide arterial. The Study Area is situated between I-77 and NC-115, along NC-73, a key east-west regional connector. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) has a commuter line planned between the study area and downtown Charlotte.



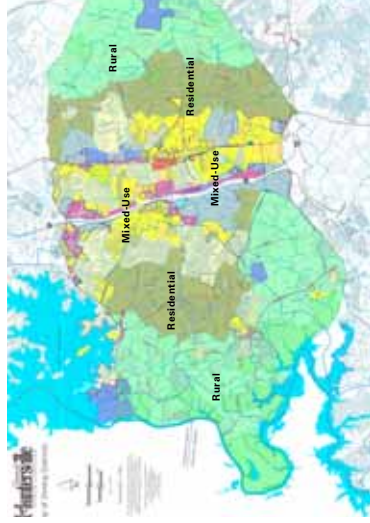
REGIONAL LOCATOR Huntersville is located on the northern band of Charlotte, one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. Sam Furr Road is a key east-west regional connection between I-77 and I-85.

#### Previous Studies

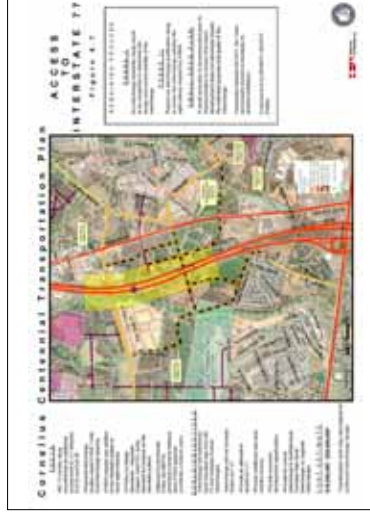
This Plan is firmly rooted in several plans and efforts that preceded it and builds upon many of the ideas and initiatives that emerged from these previous planning efforts.

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 utilizing the Transect Concept which organizes growth and development from higher-density urban development in the Town core to lower-density development radiating out to the rural edge of the Town. These policies follow a vision of a community containing mixed use nodes where transportation corridors converge and the rural character of the Town is preserved.

It is noted previously that this study is a direct recommendation from the NC-73 Transportation/Land Use Corridor Plan completed in 2004. This study was undertaken by a consortium of communities spanning multiple counties. The NC-73 Transportation/Land Use Corridor Plan is significant because it is the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) first study that combined land use and transportation, recognizing the essential link between the two. It is also significant because it adopted a "not one size fits all" approach to corridor design. The Plan is specific at places along the corridor, however, in other areas where issues are so complex, such as at Sam Furr Road, it recommends that the community prepare a Small Area Plan to refine the recommendations and strategies contained in the corridor 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.



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 intersection.



Sam Furr Road east of Rich Hatchett Road



Sam Furr Road at freeway bridge



Northcross Shopping Center



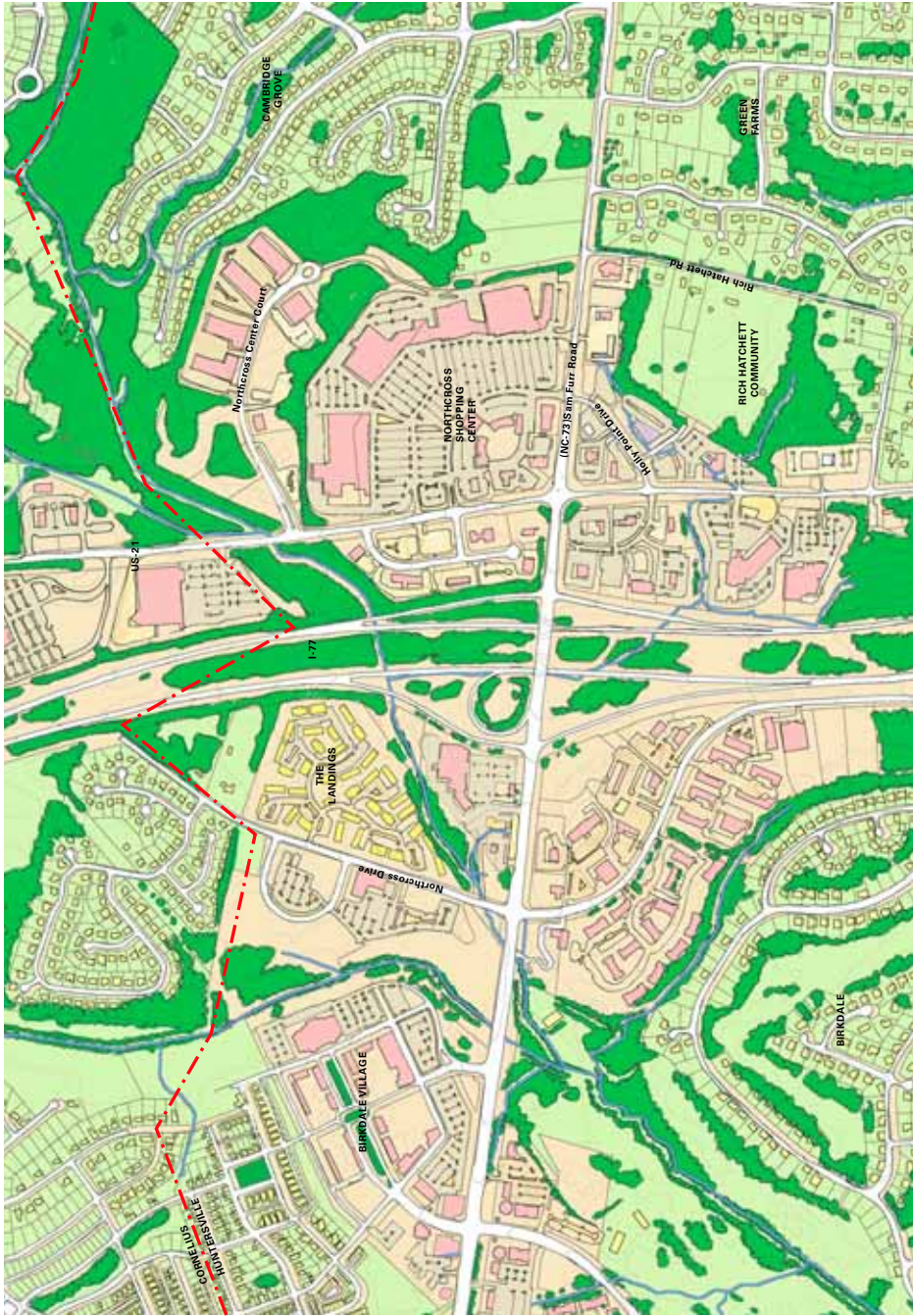
Sam Furr Road south of Rich Hatchett Road



Birkdale Village



Northcross Shopping Center



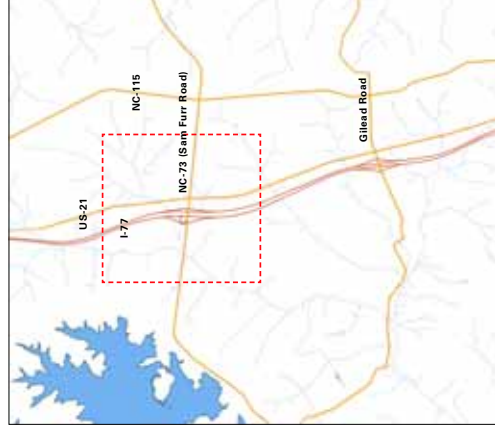
EXISTING CONDITIONS The Study Area consists of residential neighborhoods and suburban shopping areas. Birkdale Village is a prime example of a commercial area that is well connected to adjacent neighborhoods.

### Connectivity

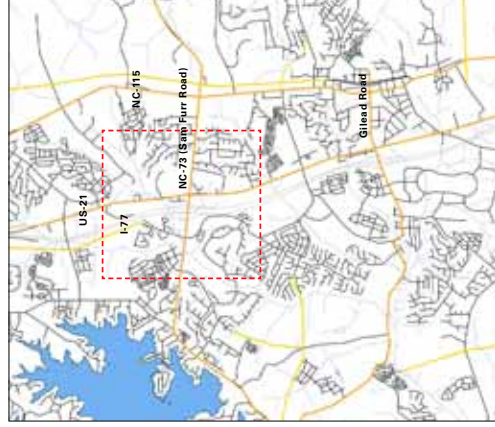
Continued improvements to the transportation networks and overall connectivity of the study area is critical. Fast growth areas typically ignore issues of connectivity as land gets subdivided. Typically, the regional arterials are the only complete network and they provide the only connectivity. Huntersville 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's (MUMPO) Thoroughfare Plan 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, and for the most part multiple transportation options exist between any two points in the Town. However there is room for improvement, particularly with development which occurred prior to 1996.

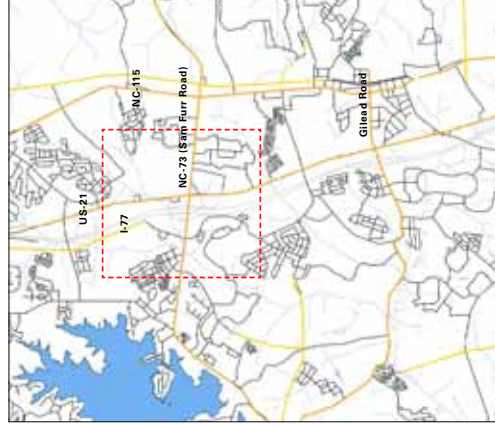
- Neighborhoods are not connected to daily activities of life. While many neighborhoods and commercial centers are connected to each other, they are not uniformly connected to retail areas, institutions, employment areas or recreation. A subdivision may be adjacent to a retail area, but sometimes there 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.



**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**  
Rapid development has erected many streets, but minimal connectivity. 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 pedestrian and recreational network is weak. As Huntersville develops, equal attention should be given to these alternate modes of travel. A comprehensive recreational and pedestrian network will contribute greatly to the quality of life in the community while also contributing to a great reduction in the number of overall vehicle trips.

The consultant team collected and analyzed hard data to better understand the study area, as well as to illustrate to Town residents the myriad assets and natural patterns of the community. A UDA X-Ray drawing isolates a natural element such as streams or tree cover or a man-made element, such as streets and buildings, 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.



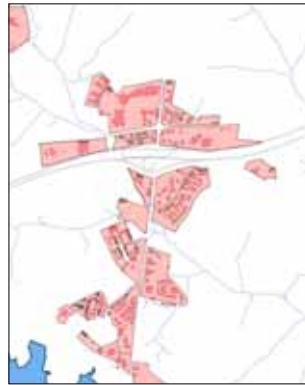
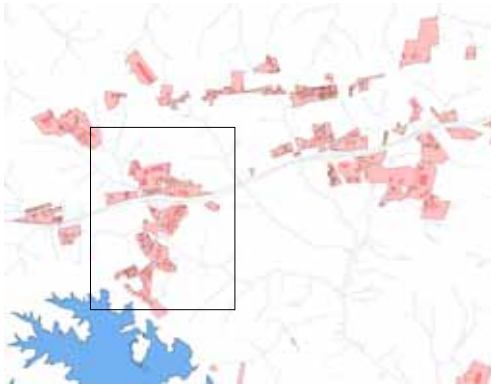
**PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND INSTITUTION X-RAY**  
Most of Huntersville's parks and schools are located along the streams and valleys.



**BUILDING FOOTPRINT 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.