

Economic Overview 12

This section provides a strategy for economic development pertaining to the NC73 site and its relationship to three jurisdictions: Davidson, Huntersville, and northwest Cabarrus County. This strategy forms a basis for key recommendations in the conceptual land use plan prepared for the NC73 site; and relates back to the goal as established at the beginning of this document of creating a "competitive economic development approach" in order to attract jobs and diversify the area's fiscal base. That approach is oriented to new-economy businesses attracted by the exceptional quality of life and rural character of north Mecklenburg County, along with access to business amenities and the natural environment.

Economic Overview

The NC73 site is located within the Lake Norman area of northern Mecklenburg County. The economic driver for the county and the region is Charlotte, a city of over 600,000 people. Charlotte is the center of a large and growing metropolitan area with a population exceeding 1.6 million and an employment base of more than 800,000 workers. The Charlotte area's economic base is highly diversified, with 10 major sectors each contributing between 4% and 13% of employment and all other sectors sharing 18% of remaining jobs.

Employment & Labor Force

Charlotte Region

Manufacturing is the Charlotte region's largest employer, with 13% of all jobs. However, the region is not dependent on this sector. Retail, finance, and health each generates more than 10% of jobs in the region. Other important sectors include accommodations, wholesale trade, business services, construction, professional services, and transportation.

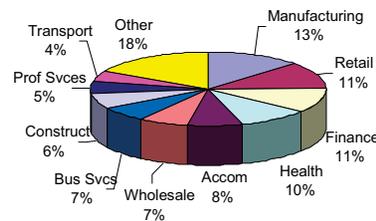
Overall, the region added more than 60,000 jobs between 1998 and 2002, a period that coincided with both national economic expansion and recession. Education saw the fastest growth in the Charlotte region, increasing by 133% (10,000 jobs) during this period. The financial sector expanded by 108%, and added the most jobs (45,700) of any sector in the Charlotte region. Other fast-growing sectors included information services, arts & recreation, and health care.

While Charlotte has seen exceptional growth, the region also suffered job losses in manufacturing, mining, and business/administrative services. The manufacturing sector lost 30,800 jobs in metropolitan Charlotte, or almost 23%, during this period. Charlotte is not

alone in seeing a shift out of manufacturing. Nationwide, a dramatic decrease in production employment resulted from a variety of factors, not the least of which was the drop in orders during the recession. However, continuing losses in this sector are largely attributable to foreign competition and lower wages, particularly in China and southeast Asia.

Metro Charlotte Economic

Sources: U.S. Dept of Commerce and Randall Gross / Development Economic



Mecklenburg County

Mecklenburg has an employment base approaching 400,000, accounting for roughly 50% of the metropolitan Charlotte economy. Unemployment has remained low, even during recession, thanks to Charlotte's diversified economy that generates new jobs in many industries to supplant those lost in manufacturing. In 2000, median household incomes exceeded \$50,000, slightly higher than the national average. Mecklenburg workers commute an average of 26 minutes, and almost 80% drive alone to their jobs.

The largest share (40%) of Mecklenburg County workers are in management and professional positions. Another 29% are in sales or other office jobs, while 12% work in service professions and only 11% as laborers. Thus, Mecklenburg County's economy is oriented to white-collar jobs. Key sectors for county residents include education & health (16%), finance & insurance (15%), professional & technical services (12%), retail (11%), and manufacturing (11%).

Cabarrus County

By comparison, Cabarrus County's economy is more oriented to manufacturing, with almost 20% of the county's 70,000 resident workers employed in manufacturing. NC73 is important to the county as a transportation corridor providing access to markets. The County suffered a blow with the closure of Pillowtex, a major manufacturer with 4,000 employees. Other key sectors for Cabarrus County residents include education & health (17%), retail trade (13%), and construction (9%). While 40% of Mecklenburg County residents are employed in management and professional occupations, only 29% of Cabarrus County residents hold those jobs. Almost 30% are in sales and 20% are laborers. Median incomes are lower than in Mecklenburg County, at \$46,000 (2000).

Cabarrus residents share similar commuting patterns to those in Mecklenburg, with 83% driving alone to work for an average commute of 27 minutes. However, Cabarrus County residents have somewhat different priorities and outlook on economic development, given their dependence on blue-collar jobs in the manufacturing sector. With the loss of Pillowtex, Cabarrus County's economic development objectives are shifting away from capital investment and towards growing and diversifying the local job base. Key targets include motor sports, automotive industries, tourism, and spin-off from Concord Mills' 15 million visitors. The county would like to see flex industrial and infill office uses in the NC73 corridor.

Davidson & Huntersville

Davidson represents a very small portion of the regional economy. With a labor force of 3,570, Davidson represents only 0.9% of Mecklenburg County's total workforce. Davidson's workers differ from those of the county and region in dramatic ways. More than one-third of Davidson's residents hold jobs in education and healthcare, largely because of the influence of Davidson College as a major employer.

About 12% of residents work in professional and technical services and 11% in the financial sector. Almost 10% of Davidson's residents work in manufacturing, but they tend to hold management and professional positions at those companies. In fact, more than 60% of Davidson's residents hold management and professional jobs, while 22% are in sales/office occupations, and 10% in service jobs. Few work as laborers.

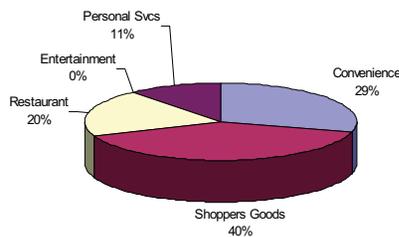
Partly as a result of the occupational mix, median household incomes in Davidson far exceed the regional average, at \$80,000 per year. Davidson's residents tend to be highly-educated, white-collar professionals. Despite their unique demographic characteristics, Davidson residents' commuting behavior still mirrors that of the county and region as a whole, with 75% driving alone for an average commute of 26 minutes.

Huntersville's residents share some similarities to those in Davidson, with median incomes high above the regional average at \$72,000 per year. Huntersville's labor force is larger than Davidson's, representing 3.6% of the county total. Almost 50% are employed in management and professional occupations, which is lower than in Davidson but higher than the county average. About 30% are in sales and other office occupations. The jobs held by Huntersville's residents are somewhat more diverse than Davidson's, with 15% in education & health care, 14% in finance, 12% in professional & scientific occupations, and 11% in manufacturing. Higher percentages (84%) of Huntersville's residents drive alone to work, and their commute averages almost 30 minutes. So, there is an incentive to reduce commuting time and bring jobs closer to Huntersville residents.

Existing Business Base

Planning for the future land use and development of the NC73 site must recognize the site's potential impact on existing businesses, particularly on those within the small downtowns of Davidson and Huntersville. Ideally, new development should compliment and support existing businesses rather than distracting from them.

Downtown Davidson Retail Business Mix
Sources: Davidson Business Association and Randall Gross / Development Economics



Davidson

An inventory of existing businesses was assembled based on site analysis and data provided by the local downtown association. Davidson's businesses are clustered in the Village Center, the Warehouse, and along South Main. The Village Center is recognized throughout the region as an attractive symbol of Davidson's small-town way of life. While not a "business" per se, Davidson College is an important anchor and employer prominently located near the center of town. In addition to the major corporate presence of Ingersoll Rand, Davidson has approximately 66 businesses occupying a total of 181,000 square feet. About 64% of this space is occupied for office use, while 36% is in retail use. While not located in Davidson, Lowe's has recently constructed its corporate headquarters in nearby Iredell County.

Davidson's retail business mix is oriented to shopper goods (40%) and convenience goods (29%). About 20% of space is occupied by eating & drinking establishments and 11% by personal services. However, there is no entertainment venue in the downtown area. The downtown retail inventory is summarized in the Appendix.

Davidson's office uses are dominated by business and professional services (25%), followed by legal services (16%). There is a small cadre of office tenants in other professional sectors, including financial and medical services. Almost 50% of office uses are corporate or business services, some of which supply services to Ingersoll, Lowe's, and other major corporations in the area. Only about 2% of Davidson's office space is vacant.

Davidson College has enrollment of 1,700 students, plus 700 faculty and staff. As a major employer, the college helps drive demand for housing, retail, and services within the Davidson area. The fact that 60% of Davidson College employees live in Davidson is testament to the high quality of life offered by the community, especially given the variety of housing choices available in the Lake Norman area. The college has 450 acres, but only 175 (39%) are built out, so there is plenty of open space on the campus. The community also benefits from use of the college's auditoria and facilities for meetings and functions. However, utilization of these facilities now exceeds 80%, according to college officials.

Ingersoll-Rand (1,100 employees) and Lowe's (1,400, increasing to 1,750 employees) are clearly the major corporate employers in the Davidson area. These two companies share many characteristics that relate to their decision to locate in this area, including the fact that both companies have historical connections to Winston-Salem. Neither company is interested in "marquee" visibility and prefers their somewhat hidden locations away from major highways and corporate nodes. Both companies are attracted by executive housing in the Lake Norman area, and both have generated spin off in the local economy for professional services and soft goods.

Huntersville

Huntersville is the primary economic hub of north Mecklenburg County and the Lake Norman region. The community has grown from 3,000 to 35,000 people in only 15 years. Retail development has exploded in the area, with the addition of NorthCross Shopping Center, Birkdale Village, and Northlake Mall, among other retail hubs. Despite its rapid residential and retail expansion, Huntersville is also well-located for attracting manufacturing and distribution businesses, thanks to its access to the I-77 and NC115 corridors linking the Lake Norman area with Charlotte.

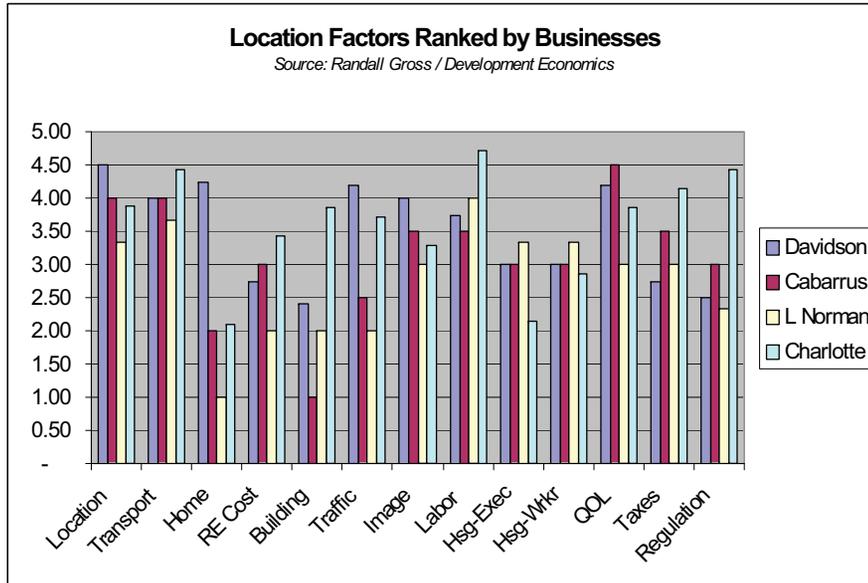
The Brookwood site on NC115 in Huntersville was appropriately selected as the home of the new Brookwood Industrial Park, a joint venture between the three Lake Norman communities (Huntersville, Cornelius, and Davidson) to attract jobs, enhance the fiscal base, and diversify the "North Meck" economy beyond its bedroom communities. This 350-acre park on Highway 115 provides many opportunities to attract light manufacturing of plastics and other clean industrial uses. It is critical that efforts to develop the NC73 corridor consider the competitive impacts on the marketability of other, better-located sites like Brookwood for attracting industrial development.

Huntersville and Cornelius share Davidson's small-town downtown image. While Huntersville is the fast-growing retail mecca and home to burgeoning new business parks, it also retains its small town feel. Old Statesville Road offers small specialty shops and during season, downtown Huntersville still hosts a farmer's market on Main and Maxwell streets near Town Hall. The Carolina Renaissance Festival is held in the rural setting of the Huntersville portion of the NC73 site.

Business Survey

The NC73 site is part of a larger, Charlotte regional market. Most of the economic development interest at this site will be generated from businesses within the Charlotte region and as such, it is important to understand how Davidson and surrounding areas are perceived in the region as a business location. In particular, it is critical to determine what the area's strategic competitive advantages are for attracting business, and what types of businesses the site is best suited.

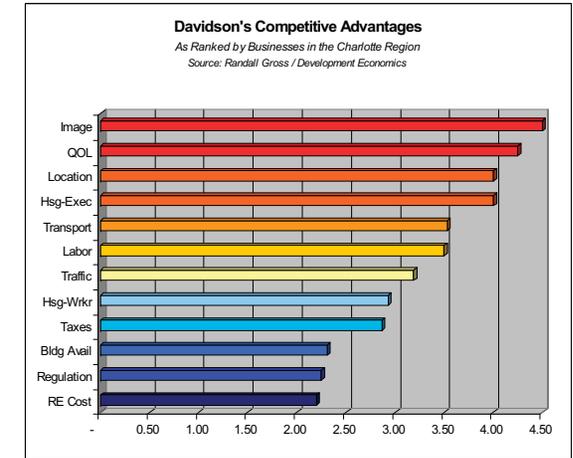
In order to assess perceptions of Davidson/Huntersville and the NC73 site area, a survey was conducted of businesses throughout the region. The survey aimed to identify key strengths and weaknesses impacting on the marketing of the NC73 site and its development as a center for business. A total of 750 surveys were distributed, including different versions sent to 100 local businesses in Davidson, 150 to businesses in Huntersville/Lake Norman, 250 to other major Charlotte-area businesses, and 250 to businesses in Cabarrus County.



Demographics. Local Davidson-area businesses responding to the survey include primarily professional services firms (as opposed to a much broader mix from the other areas). They have been in business for an average of 13 years and have an average 14 employees (excluding the major corporation in town). These businesses occupy an average of 7,380 square feet of space, with about 43% in office use. Approximately one-third of local businesses are renting their space, while the rest own. Rents are averaging \$15.25 per square foot.

Local Davidson and Huntersville-area businesses have been growing at a relatively healthy rate, seeing average growth of about 10% per year over each of the past five years. Local businesses are planning expansions at a rate of about 10% in the near future, equivalent to the growth rate of the last few years. On average, Davidson-area businesses plan to add 10 employees and/or 18,000 square feet of space. As local businesses expand, they become an important target market for new development in the NC73 corridor.

Key Input/Output Markets. Primary markets for Davidson/Huntersville businesses are local (30%), with about 23% national and 15% Charlotte metropolitan area. By contrast, Cabarrus County businesses have the Carolina's/Seaboard as their primary market (34%), followed by Metro Charlotte (33%), and local markets (17%). Soft inputs like office supplies are supplied from the Lake Norman area. However, area businesses source their major components nationwide.



Site Location Factors. Businesses throughout the area ranked the factors that most influenced their site location decisions. For Charlotte businesses, labor force and transportation, along with an amenable regulatory environment, were among the highest ranked factors for selecting their location. For Cabarrus County businesses, key factors were location, transport, low taxes, labor force, and quality of life. Among Huntersville and Cornelius businesses, the key factors were labor force, transportation, and access to executive housing. Davidson businesses chose their location based on image, quality of life, proximity to the executive's home, location, and relatively good traffic conditions.

Perceptions of Davidson/NC73 Site. Many business representatives associate the NC73 Site with Davidson. They perceive Davidson as a small college town (31%), a nice place to live (29%), and as a bedroom community (24%) that is too expensive (10%). In terms of their perceptions of northwest Cabarrus County, the area is currently viewed as rural and undeveloped (32%), a nice place to live (30%), and a bedroom community (22%).

INTERNAL DRAFT 08.11.05

Competitive Advantages

Survey respondents perceive Davidson's and the NC73 site's greatest strength for attracting business to be the positive image that it generates. That image relates back to their perceptions of the area as a small college town, a rural and undeveloped natural area, and a nice place to live.

Other competitive advantages noted for this area include the high quality of life, good location, and access to executive housing.

Disadvantages are the area's high real estate costs, strict regulatory environment, and lack of available building space for purchase or rent.

Key competitive advantages for Cabarrus County include its location, transportation access, quality of life, and available worker housing.

Key Issues & Development Concerns. While traffic is seen as mild in Davidson/Huntersville compared with the rest of the region, it is a growing issue (mentioned by 40% of respondents) and concern that respondents want the towns to address. Other important issues to be addressed include the capacity and quality of the education system (23%), overall planning issues (14%), tax & fiscal issues (9%), and available sites & buildings (5%).

When asked how they would like to see available land in Davidson, Huntersville, and northwest Cabarrus County developed, almost one-third responded that development should occur in character with the village center of Davidson. About 20% of responses were geared toward encouraging a more diverse business environment, while a similar number would like a small business "urban village" environment. About 16% of responses favor a new mixed-use community. The business respondents were clear on which uses they do not want to see at the NC73 site, namely manufacturing or industrial uses or high-density residential.

Key Findings

Based on the economic overview, business inventory, and survey of regional and local business executives, several considerations emerged as an input to planning and economic development for the NC73 site.

Small Town Image & NC73

Clearly an important consideration is the impact of NC73 development on the health and vitality of the downtowns of Davidson, Huntersville, and Cornelius. Downtown Davidson has emerged as a strong "brand" relating to the quality of life and positive business image for the area. Thus, any new development at NC73 should help solidify this image and strengthen the brand by complimenting rather than competing with the traditional village. NC73 development can create spin-off activity that might be accommodated downtown, along with new residential, office, arts, cultural, and civic functions. If certain retail and civic amenities are driven to NC73, then the question of whether there should be "two Davidsons" will arise, along with issues of competition and impact on the brand.

Rural Character

A key strength and part of the positive image expressed by business executives is the rural character and natural environment of this area, unencumbered as yet by high-density development, industrial uses, and traffic congestion. Thus the rural character is also part of the branding of the site and one of its competitive advantages, relating directly to perceptions of the high quality of life in Davidson, Huntersville, and northwest Cabarrus County. With access to Lake Norman and its large supply of executive housing, the NC73 site is idyllic as perceived by the region's business executives.

Professional & Business Services. The competitive strengths of the site, based on the area's existing clean business mix and white-collar labor force, its existing amenities and location, and perceptions of its small town and rural character among business executives, would tend to favor this site as a location for the following professional and business services:

- Knowledge industries
- Computer technologies/consulting
- Product development
- R/D opportunities with UNC-Charlotte
- Corporate suppliers
- Arts, culture, design services

Economic Development Vision

The communities and area stakeholders have expressed a clear vision for the economic development of the area and of the NC73 site. This vision is buttressed by findings from the economic analysis and the business survey on the inherent strengths and economic opportunities for the area.

Employment-Generating Uses

Local officials in Davidson, Huntersville, and Cabarrus County have determined the need to attract businesses to the area in order to diversify and balance their fiscal base. By attracting employment to the area, local residents can also reduce their commute times and enhance their quality of life. Regional traffic issues can be ameliorated somewhat if people work, shop, and play closer to home. Thus, the vision for development of the NC73 site focuses on employment-generating uses.

Small Town / Rural Character as a Competitive Strength

The economic overview and business survey suggest that the area's competitive strengths relate to its positive image and high quality of life, which are driven in part by the small town and rural character of the area. Residents and business people alike agree that a priority for any development should be to maintain and enhance the area's high quality of life, its unique character, and its natural amenities. The types of businesses that are attracted by such factors are generally "clean," white-collar professional, technology, and business service companies.

Sensitive Development

The combination of economic development objectives and potential opportunities leads directly to a framework for the physical characteristics of development at the NC73 site. This framework suggests the need to pro-actively reserve land for employment-generating uses, but to ensure that development conforms to the area's unique small-town image and rural character. Wherever possible, the natural contours and amenities of the NC73 site should be preserved while accommodating a sustainable form of development. By doing so, the NC73 site will capture its natural amenity value as a marketing tool for attracting the types of businesses most likely to locate there.

Complementary Versus Competitive

Uses should complement, rather than compete with, the existing small town business base. Development without sensitivity to the existing business base and small town / rural image will only serve to re-arrange jobs within the area, rather than create net new employment. The economic development vision for the NC73 site also calls for cooperation rather than competition between jurisdictions and between private property owners. Without such cooperation, development on one portion of the site can have a deleterious impact on the opportunities for development on other portions of the site. The actions of one property owner or jurisdiction can impact positively or negatively on the use and value of another's land. Cooperative efforts will help guarantee results that are beneficial to all.

Economic Development Strategies

The economic analysis, business surveys, and community vision help inform the types of economic development strategies that are appropriate for the NC73 site and surrounding areas. To further inform these strategies, a survey was conducted of comparable communities nationwide. This survey gleaned information on how other, similar communities have attracted businesses by building on their inherent strengths without compromising their high quality of life. Based on the output of this survey and the other analyses, a set of "target" industries are identified that are consistent with the economic development vision for the area. Several standards for physical development of the NC73 site are then recommended based on the requirements for attracting these particular targeted businesses.

Comparable Communities Survey

The conditions surrounding development of the NC73 site are not unique. It is important to understand how comparable communities have achieved their economic development objectives in a context of rapid residential growth and suburbanization. In order to provide context to help guide strategic economic development planning for the NC73 site, a survey was conducted of comparable communities.

Even though the NC73 site includes rural portions of Huntersville and Cabarrus County, the Village of Davidson is the closest business and economic node to the site. The surveys and interviews with Charlotte-area businesspeople identified the site most closely with the Village of Davidson and its small-town image. Given the NC73 site's location near and association with the Village of Davidson, communities were selected that are comparable to Davidson but are also adjacent to suburban communities like Huntersville.

As such, the selection criteria for comparable communities focused on small college towns located in the path of rapid suburbanization in a growing metropolitan area. These towns must have small, liberal arts colleges with enrollment of less than 2,000 and with high academic standards (combined SAT scores of at least 1000 to 1200). The college is often the primary existing employer or economic driver and the town's "branding" is directly related to the college and the small-town, "main street" image. These towns must be experiencing the same kinds of development pressures seen in the area surrounding the NC73 site, and share similar demographics, housing types, and incomes. The communities were selected from a diverse geographic mix (southeast, midwest, northeast, far west).



Granville, Ohio. Granville is home to Denison University (enrollment 2,000) and is 28 miles from downtown Columbus, a metropolitan area of exactly the same population as Charlotte. Granville has a population of 4,800, with a quaint Main Street and historic housing surrounded by rolling farmland. The community also has a small but growing medical center. There are growing residential and retail development pressures on Granville as Columbus' suburban sprawl reaches close to the town's borders.



INNOVATIONS FOR LIVING™

Granville has attracted several large employers to help diversify its economic base. Among these is Owens Corning, which operates the Granville Science & Technology Research Center on the edge of town. Owens Corning aims to be a "Built Green Industry Leader" in the production of its fiberglass insulation. The R&D facility in Granville is oriented to testing the environmental performance of new insulation and "green" building products.

Granville has also attracted the 95,000 square-foot corporate headquarters of Paramount Financial Group. This real estate investment company was attracted by the small-town character of the area, its central location in Ohio, and its relative proximity to Columbus and the Port Columbus International Airport. Granville has marketed itself as "A Celebration of Seasons," focusing on the rural area's natural beauty and small town lifestyle. Marketing materials for the town state that the Granville area is "experiencing a building boom as Columbus expands into Licking County, but has maintained its ties to the past and preserved its heritage and way of life..."

INTERNAL DRAFT 08.11.05



Claremont, California. While somewhat larger than Davidson (with a population of 33,000), Claremont is still a relatively small college town on the outskirts of the sprawling Los Angeles metropolitan area. Pomona College has enrollment of 1,500 and like Davidson College, has a strong academic reputation. Like the town of Davidson, 60%

of Pomona's residents are in management and professional jobs. The town's business district has a mix of specialty shops, restaurants, and ice cream parlors. Claremont is seeing strong development pressure from within the Ontario, California area.



Claremont has been an attractive location for certain types of environmental and engineering companies, such as Technip Coflex and Hi-Rel Connectors, Inc. The community also has a strong nursing, retirement, and medical rehabilitation sector. Claremont has marketed itself as a "vital, balanced community" with "tree-lined streets, historic buildings, and college campuses" that "respects traditional values while embracing new ideas." Most relevant to the NC73 site, Claremont markets the fact that it "protects the environment while encouraging appropriate development."

Claremont experienced a somewhat similar, pro-active planning process for extending the town into former citrus groves on its outskirts. Local officials wanted to ensure that the area was developed in "an orderly, thoughtful manner that reflected the community's standards and not just the whims of developers." The Village Expansion Specific Plan was designed to "expand the Village in a way that preserves the character, ambiance, and economic vitality of what currently exists downtown." Expansion of the Village also allowed for the creation of a transit-oriented neighborhood with proximity to commuter rail service, expansion space for existing businesses that wanted to stay in the Village, and increased sales tax revenue yields.



Northfield, Minnesota. Northfield is home to Carlton College (1,750 students) and St. Olaf's College (2,800). The town is 25 miles south of downtown Minneapolis and is experiencing residential development pressures from nearby Lawnsdale and Northfield in Rice

County. These pressures have resulted in the town being torn by pro-growth and anti-growth factions.

Northfield is the headquarters of the Malt-O-Meal Company, a family-owned cereal manufacturer, and the city has also attracted technology companies like Multek Flexible Circuits, Inc. Other major private employers include a hospital and medical clinic, skilled nursing facilities, publishing, retail and food distribution companies.

Like Granville and Claremont, Northfield is trying to project a balance in its marketing between its traditional rural character and cutting-edge new ideas. "Northfield has succeeded in wedding the life and values of earlier years to the needs of modern America, forming a community that is a pleasant place to live, work, and visit...a Unique Blend of historic, progressive, and creative..."



Oberlin, Ohio. Oberlin's name, like Davidson, is synonymous with the college located there. Oberlin College and the renowned Oberlin Conservatory of Music project a national and even international reputation for the community. Oberlin, with a population of 8,300, is located in one of the fastest growing counties in Ohio. Located only 32 miles southwest of downtown Cleveland, Oberlin is experiencing residential and "big box" retail development pressures. The community recently updated its comprehensive plan to ensure appropriate future growth and encourage green / environmental building practices.



Oberlin has been successful in attracting bio-medical and other research spin-off from Case Western University. Like Davidson College, Oberlin College is not a generator of R&D activity oriented to commercial enterprises. But also like Davidson, Oberlin is

located in a metropolitan area with major institutions like Case Western that do capture research funding and spin off.

One example of the spin-off captured by Oberlin is Synapse Biomedical, Inc. Synapse is a start-up company that develops "minimally invasive neurostimulation devices used in diagnosis and treatment of people with neurological impairment." The company is affiliated with Case Western Reserve and the University Hospitals Health System, and its goal is to expand employment to 140 by 2008. Synapse located in Oberlin "because the president of the company lives there." The leadership of the company appreciated Oberlin's small-town character and high quality of life.

Oberlin is also home to the National Association of College Stores, a major distributor of books and technical supplies to college stores nationwide, as well as to the FAA Air Route Traffic Control Center's technical offices, medical center, and retirement facilities. The community has marketed itself by emphasizing that "carefully-controlled development has made Oberlin a model of self-sufficiency, and businesses of virtually every size have located there." Oberlin's businesses have found "the best of both worlds: an attractive core community offering a gracious lifestyle in a quiet, natural setting and a commercial/industrial center poised to meet the future head-on."

Common Characteristics. The communities included in the survey share several common characteristics that have defined their success. Paramount among these is a sense of "balance." Most are marketing themselves as "two towns in one," the village of the past and the business center of the future. They offer a lifestyle-driven "village" environment where there is a definitive physical connection between work and home. They also control and regulate development to ensure growth while preserving and enhancing the very natural environment that has attracted the businesses there in the first place.

Key “Target” Industries

These communities also share an attraction to similar types of businesses due to their lifestyle and competitive advantages similar to the NC73 corridor:

- Research, technology, & “brain trusts”
 - No local college spin-off, but college-oriented
 - Spin off from larger, regional university drivers
- Relating to regional industrial research strengths
- Medical & retirement uses
- Corporate headquarters & management services
- Professional & technical services (design, engineering, etc)

These businesses tend to locate near the homes of their highly-educated executives, technicians, and professional staff. Their location decisions are therefore driven by quality-of-life issues. Many are drawn to a natural setting and small-town way-of-life without all of the traffic and poor design typical of suburbia. Because small college towns are attractive for retirement, many of these communities support impressive medical and retirement facilities to complement their higher-education and cultural centers.

Davidson, Huntersville, northwest Cabarrus County and the NC73 site hold particular appeal for these businesses but also more specifically those services that have emerged from within the Charlotte regional economic base. Key targets for the NC73 site are therefore refined to include the following businesses:

- “Green” businesses and environmental services
 - Consistent with rural character, labor force, policy direction
 - Provides the area with a “cutting edge” development strategy with a unique role among Charlotte region communities
- Start-up & business headquarters
 - Especially banking, investment, and other financial services
 - Resident-related relocations
- Research & technology
 - Research, design, testing, development, & production of new technologies
 - Spin-off from UNC-Charlotte, or from manufacturers in region
- Resident-related relocations
- Medical center
 - Due to central location in north Mecklenburg / Cabarrus and access to growing population base and executive housing for doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals
- Professional services
 - Engineers, architects, & other building services
 - Environmental consultants
 - Graphic and other design firms

Key Marketing Strategies

These business opportunities are best captured through a “Dual Communities” marketing approach. This approach would:

Build on the area’s “Traditional Downtown Villages” while enhancing opportunities for “Green Cutting Edge Businesses” at NC73 sites.

Davidson’s and Huntersville’s traditional cores should be strengthened by capturing destination potentials through physical expansion of the downtown areas and a broader retail mix, retaining traditional heritage and character, adding to the community asset base (programmed parks, civic facilities, arts & cultural facilities), enhancing and diversifying the housing mix, addressing traffic issues, and identifying linkages to the NC73 site and other parts of the community.

To build on the cutting edge marketing component, every effort should be made to explore opportunities for UNC-related research & development spin off as well as medical and environmental-related businesses (R&D, consulting, design). The towns of Davidson and Huntersville should consider incentives for experimentation with green building practices, design and protection of the natural environment, and protection of the rural character. The communities should encourage development of mixed-age and senior housing, where such development does not place an undue-burden on the fiscal base.

Davidson and Huntersville should target resident-related corporate and business relocation. Since image and lifestyle are key drivers for economic development in this area, marketing should relate local housing and lifestyle factors to business development. Wherever local residents locate their businesses near their homes, regional traffic congestion can be ameliorated and quality of life improved.

While there may be a growing market over time for destination or specialty retail at the NC73 site, these types of uses should be discouraged in order to avoid competition with the traditional main streets. Similarly, civic and cultural facilities should be focused in those traditional downtowns. Finally, most manufacturing and distribution uses should be discouraged at the NC73 site in order to avoid competition with business parks at better accessed locations in Huntersville / Lake Norman and Cabarrus County.

Key Physical Development Concepts

The marketing strategies translate into several unique and different physical development concepts for the NC73 site. These concepts focus on the development of small, neighborhood centers, an office-oriented town center at Poplar Center, a research and corporate business campus, and a flex-industrial park component.

Neighborhood Centers. The marketing targets identified in this report suggest the need for small office and convenience retail nodes to accommodate small and resident-operated businesses emerging from this newly-developing area. These nodes would include service and neighborhood retail uses that serve the local community rather than destination automobile traffic, as well as small format offices and live-work space to accommodate resident businesses.

Retail uses within these nodes would include X, X, and X, [KATHLEEN], with square footage ranging from [KATHLEEN]. Examples of possible small office uses would include doctors and other medical professionals, real estate companies, design firms, and title or insurance firms with a total of up to 180,000 square feet. Based on this square footage, a total of up to 320 office jobs would be created over time through build-out.

Poplar Center. A larger town center would be appropriate at Poplar Tent and NC73. This center would serve the resident population between Davidson/ Huntersville and Concord/Kannapolis, and would include larger corporate offices such as regional headquarters buildings, as well as multi-tenant buildings [RANDY DOES NOT AGREE WITH THE MULTI-TENANT SPACE]. Assuming the development of up to 500,000 square feet of speculative office space, a total of up to 1,480 office jobs would be created. [TIMING AND ABSORPTION FROM KATHLEEN’S MARKET ANALYSIS FINDINGS]

Corporate / Research Campus. A research, technology, and corporate business area should be developed at the NC73 site to accommodate the types of target R&D and technology businesses identified in the previous sections. However, it is highly recommended that development conform to a rural “nesting” model rather than the traditional corporate park or campus setting. This model would be marketed as a “green, cutting edge” professional and technical business location unlike any other, preserving pristine lands for users seeking idyllic natural settings.

INTERNAL DRAFT 08.11.05

Covenants would restrict the density of development and encourage energy efficient / green building and environmentally-sound planning practices wherever possible. Grounds would ensure privacy and seclusion, offer hiking/biking trails, and blend with the natural setting. Existing topographical and natural features would be protected.

The types of target users may include UNC-Charlotte R&D and technology start-up companies, environmental consultants and engineers, water testing and related companies, architects and graphic designers, start-up premier financial services companies, and others. Assuming the development of up to 280,000 square feet of build-to-suit research, technology and corporate space in this area, a total of up to 600 jobs would be created through the corporate / research campus through build out.

Summary

The physical development concepts are driven by the community vision, market and economic analyses, marketing strategies, and overall economic development objectives. Commercial development would include a mix of small business nodes, commercial corporate center, and cutting edge green technology business area. All of this development would be encouraged in a way that is sensitive to the natural setting and rural character of the area, while avoiding competition with Davidson's traditional downtown and with other priority industrial & business nodes in Huntersville and Cabarrus County. By doing so, the area maximizes marketing opportunities for attracting well-paying jobs while maintaining a high quality of life. Finally, the commercial centers would be well-integrated with housing planned for the area in order to reduce commuting and congestion, also an effort to enhance residents' quality of life.