Downtown Master Plan
Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank the Town of Huntersville and the numerous citizens who participated in this exciting downtown planning process. This effort is a reflection of the community’s vision and serves as the foundation for a revitalized downtown. It is intended to guide the leaders of today and the visionaries of tomorrow.

Craig Lewis
Principal in Charge
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Executive Summary

The Town of Huntersville, North Carolina is located in northern Mecklenburg County. Incorporated in 1873, the Town’s early history was distinguished by its agricultural base and its rail corridor connecting Statesville to Charlotte. Huntersville’s first 80 years were marked by very slow growth and development, with a 1990 US Census population of approximately 3,000. Fueled by improved accessibility to Charlotte (via new Interstate interchanges) and the draw of Lake Norman, development in the 1990’s rapidly increased its population to 29,387 in 2003 (Source: NC State Data Center, 2003 Certified Municipal Population Estimates).

From September 27th-October 1st, 2004, planners and designers with The Lawrence Group, Rose & Associates, Southeast, Inc., Henson-Harrington, Inc., Arnett Muldrow, Inc. and Kimley-Horn & Associates, Inc. collaborated with the Town of Huntersville to develop a vision for the Downtown area and its surroundings. The Huntersville Downtown Master Plan is the culmination of this intensive community input process. It is designed to provide a foundation for revitalization/redevelopment efforts for the historic downtown core, as well as the future development of surrounding areas.

The Downtown Huntersville Planning Area encompasses approximately 710 acres within and surrounding the downtown. The area is generally bound by Statesville Road (US 21) to the west, Mount Holly-Huntersville Road and Delwood Street to the south, the Anchor Mill site to the north and the Vermillion Neighborhood to the east. The downtown includes a mixture of retail, service, office, governmental, and residential uses. A variety of undeveloped properties and vacant lots are also scattered throughout the planning area.

The purpose of the Downtown Plan is threefold. First, the plan seeks to provide policy, programmatic, and capital investment recommendations for public buildings and infrastructure in the historic downtown. Second, it proposes a number of realistic private development opportunities specifically targeted throughout the heart of the Huntersville community which are aimed at creating a more vibrant community to engage all who visit, work, and live in this special place. Third, the Plan recommends a series of marketing and branding strategies for the promotion of the Town of Huntersville and the Downtown area.

Specific development strategies for this area include:

**Transportation, Circulation & Parking**
- Implement a two-way pair street system using Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and Main Street for north-south traffic movement.
- In cooperation with CATS, construct the commuter transit platform on the north side of Huntersville-Concord Road.
- Adopt an Access Management Policy for the Downtown area thoroughfares.
- Construct a greenway with a trail head and park entrance to Holbrook Park from Old Statesville Road (NC 115).
- Provide on-street parallel parking where feasible.
- Strategically manage the parking lots in the southeast quadrant.
- Construct a shared-use parking deck with a minimum of 400 spaces between Maxwell Street and NC 115.

**Civic Infrastructure**
- Construct a Civic Plaza adjacent to Town Hall.
- Investigate expansion options for the Town Hall and the Police Station.
- Develop Arts and Cultural Center building as an integral part of the Civic Plaza.
- Redevelop the existing Farmer’s Market into the Grower’s Market at Garden Hall.
- Encourage the improvement of the American Legion building and construct a Veteran’s Memorial between it and the Garden Hall.
- Install new streetscape elements along Gilead Road including decorative lighting (with banner arms), street trees, bike lanes, and wider sidewalks.

**Private Development/Redevelopment**
- Encourage the expansion of the Garden Gate Bed and Breakfast Inn.
- Encourage the exterior renovation of Cashion’s Convenience Store.
- Encourage sensitive redevelopment/infill through design guidelines that maintain the urbanism of the Downtown while permitting new/modern architectural styles.
- Encourage the construction of Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) on the Anchor mill site
- Rezone the old mill village to encourage high quality urban infill
- Permit and encourage infill development consistent with this Master Plan

**Marketing & Branding Strategies**
- Adopt a “popular” logo for marketing and branding.
- Form a Huntersville Downtown Business Association.
- Implement a Comprehensive Wayfinding System.
Executive Summary

The Downtown Master Plan is intended to establish a clear framework for the revitalization of Downtown Huntersville through a series of incremental private and public development decisions. Future development decisions must be carefully guided by the Town of Huntersville’s staff, Planning Board, and Town Board to ensure that this vision is implemented.

Most importantly, it must be stressed that the Downtown Master Plan represents the conceptual build-out of the planning area. The recommendations set forth in this document are suggestions intended to guide the Town of Huntersville in realizing the potential for development throughout this area. Patience will be necessary as components of this plan may exceed fifteen to twenty (15-20) years before their realization.
Previous Planning Efforts

In an attempt to lead development efforts in the historic downtown area, the Town of Huntersville has been the key developer over the past decade. The Town Hall (1997), Police Station (1997) and the Farmer’s Market (1999) demonstrate the Town’s resolve in maintaining downtown’s important role in the area. In addition to those public improvements, a number of studies have been completed by the Town, private developers, and related public agencies in attempts to guide future growth and redevelopment. The following is a summary of those planning efforts.

DPZ-Vermillion Master Plan (1996)

As part of the master planning process for the Vermillion neighborhood, its designers, Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company extended their study area to encompass the core. The purpose of the study was to demonstrate the potential replatting of the mill neighborhood in relation to the new neighborhood; the creation of a public square where Cashion’s convenience store resides, and to reconcile the inefficient parking arrangement.

This design exercise was the first to suggest significant redevelopment potential in the Downtown area along with a significant public space.

NCDDA (1997)

The North Carolina Downtown Development Association (NCDDA) study focused on implementing the “Main Street Approach” as defined by the National Main Street Center and Main Street North Carolina programs. The four point approach for downtown revitalization includes Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring.

The study identified Town Hall, Police Station, Huntersville Elementary School and Holbrook Park as obvious major assets to the Downtown. Another recommendation included keeping the new car dealer and the library in downtown, both of which have since moved out to the interstate area.

Additional major recommendations include:

- Building consensus;
- Determine some immediate project for positive impact;
- Define the image of downtown for marketing; create a sense of place;
- Increase parking;
- Improve building appearance;
- Retain and diversify the business mix;
- The redevelopment of the Anchor Mill site;
- Expand supply of affordable housing;
- Expand the supply of commercial space.

Cole Jenest and Stone-Gilead Road Streetscape Plan (1999)

In 1999, Cole Jenest and Stone was hired by the Town to study the Gilead Road corridor and made recommendations for streetscape improvements. The study recognized that Gilead Road plays a significant role in the impression of the town as its “entranceway.” The key recommendations focused on softening the visual impact of the overhead power lines with enhanced landscaping and a coordinated streetscape.

The streetscape improvements included:

- An entry feature at Gilead Road and Statesville Road (US 21);
- Adding a landscaped median on Gilead Road from the Post Office to Huntersville Elementary School;
Previous Planning Efforts

- Enhanced streetscape from the Police Station to Main Street.

Roadway improvement recommendations included:
- Left turn signals at Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and Statesville Road (US 21);
- Reduction of the speed limit to 25 miles per hour;
- Improved access to the shopping center on US 21.

In addition, the study also recommended bringing oversized signs in compliance with the current sign ordinance. The scope of this particular study was for the Gilead Road corridor only and did not expand to the entire Downtown area.

DPZ-Anchor Mill Master Plan (1999)

Following the purchase of the Anchor Mill site by the Town, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued for development proposals. They chose to proceed with a development plan with the development team consisting of Nate Bowman, David Rodgers and Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company.

DPZ held a charrette in late 1999 and focused completely on the Anchor Mill site and its redevelopment as a transit oriented development. This plan proposed a fully integrated mixed-use development with a combination of recreational amenities, multi-family housing types, civic spaces, office and retail services.

The plan called for the preservation and renovation of the mill building as offices and loft apartments. The remainder of the site would then be developed using an urban block pattern with courtyards, interior parking and buildings fronting the street.

- Convert homes along Old Statesville Road to office use;
- Anchor Mill site redevelopment;
- Establish a course of action to include business retention and recruitment, real estate development, public improvements, traffic & parking improvements and marketing.

Narmour Wright (2004)

Narmour-Wright was commissioned by the Town to complete a space needs analysis of all Town buildings. The study identified the need for the significant expansion of both the Town Hall and the Police Station. As of the date of the charrette for the Downtown Master Plan, this study was being finalized by the Town staff.

Ultimately, the development proposal was rejected by the Town Board. (Note: Since that time, the original Mill burned beyond salvage and is scheduled for demolition. The Town has proceeded with environmental remediation and site clearing with the anticipation of releasing another development proposal RFP)

NLC / Hyett Palma (2000)

The National League of Cities (NLC), in conjunction with Hyett Palma performed the “America Downtown. New Thinking. New Life.” pilot study program in 2000. Huntersville was one of eleven communities nationwide participating in this study. Within the context of this study came four major recommendations:

- Enhance the office, retail and housing market opportunities;
Existing Conditions

The Downtown Huntersville Study Area encompasses approximately 710 acres within 1/2 mile of the intersection of Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and Huntersville-Concord Road. The area is generally bounded by Statesville Road (US 21) to the west, Mount Holly-Huntersville Road and Delwood Street to the south, the Anchor Mill site to the north and the Vermillion Neighborhood to the east.

The Town of Huntersville is bisected by Interstate 77 and has two interchanges - one at Gilead Road (Exit 23) and one at Sam Furr Road/NC 73 (Exit 25). The study area lies in the southeastern quadrant of the Town of Huntersville with Gilead Road serving as its east-west spine.

While the area to the north, south, and west of the study area has become urbanized, the area to the east has remained largely rural. This was historically due to the absence of public sewer. However, a new sewer outfall line along the Rocky River basin has extended sewer into this area from the Rocky River water treatment plant in Concord.

Zoning

The majority of the Downtown Huntersville Planning Area is within the Town Center (TC) and Neighborhood Residential (NR) zoning districts. Additional zoning classifications include Highway Commercial (HC) in the area of the Post Office / US 21 and Neighborhood Commercial (NC) at the intersection of Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road and Old Statesville Road (NC 115).

The Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Overlay is on the eastern edge of the study area incorporating the Vermillion neighborhood. The Manufactured Home (MHO) Overlay is placed over the former mill village area. Lastly, a group home facility off Church Street is subject to an approved Conditional District (CD) Overlay.

Rail Corridor

The study area includes the Norfolk & Southern 'O' line rail corridor which parallels Old Statesville Road (NC 115) along its route through the Town. Current operations along this single-track corridor are limited to one freight train per day. This underutilized corridor is being...
Existing Conditions

considered for commuter rail operations by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS).

A Major Investment Study (MIS) was completed in 2003 identifying this corridor for commuter rail service along with Enhanced Bus or Bus Rapid Transit in the I-77 corridor. The MIS identified one station location for the Downtown area, but did not specify an exact location. Preliminary Engineering (PE) for the corridor commenced in Fall, 2004 and is expected to take approximately 2 years to complete. Once this phase is complete, CATS can then begin to negotiate with the Federal Transit Administration for full-funding agreements. Revenue service for the commuter rail service is expected to begin no earlier than 2008.

Environmental Features

Two stream corridors enter the study area. To the northwest is the Torrence Creek Tributary #2. This creek heads southwest into Torrence Creek, eventually merging with the Catawba River at Mountain Island Lake. Portions of this stream corridor have constructed or planned stream greenway paths. The South Prong of Clark Creek meanders through the Vermillion neighborhood and eventually ties into the Rocky River further east.

Though neither of the creeks in the study area is located within a 100 year floodplain they are both subject to the stream buffer requirements of the Town of Huntersville. These requirements, at a minimum, preclude most land disturbing activities within 50 feet of their stream banks.

Historic Resources

While there are no historic landmarks located within the study area, there are a number of properties with potentially eligible structures. The map to the far right on this page shows those properties that contain structures that are at least 50 years old. These range from historic homes such as the Holbrook House to the old "College" building located on the Elementary School property.

Recreational Areas

There is no central gathering space for residents and visitors to enjoy within the study area. The Farmer's Market area, with the pavilion and caboose has loosely served this purpose, though it is visually and physically removed from the traffic and retail area.

Across Old Statesville Road (NC 115) from Town Hall and behind the Police Station lies Holbrook Park, a seven (7) acre park complete with picnic tables, gazebo, playground, six (6) tennis courts and benches. A small creek traverses the park, which is proposed to connect to the Town’s greenway system in the future.

Civic Buildings

The following municipal buildings are located in the Downtown area:

- Town Hall (~8,000 sf)
- Police Station (~8,000 sf)
- Fire Department (~10,000 sf)
- Arts and Cultural Center (~2,200 sf)

The Parks and Recreation Department have two storage buildings located between the caboose and the American Legion building, in addition to their present use of the "Old Jail" on Huntersville-Concord Road, just east of Church Street.
Existing Conditions

Parking

Throughout the Downtown and adjacent areas, public parking is available, although scattered and difficult to find. The Town Hall parking lot is undersized and fills quickly. The Arts and Cultural Center (former Library) lot is somewhat hidden and the public is not encouraged to park there. On-street parallel parking currently exists along Main Street adjacent to the Farmer’s Market, with diagonal parking along Main Street at the block of buildings between Huntersville-Concord Road and Greenway Street. Individual businesses maintain private parking lots.

The current private lots in the southeast corner of the Old Statesville Road (NC 115)/Gilead Road intersection are fragmented. The current owners are burdened with public activities such as Town Board meetings that overflow parking directly across the street. Few of the parking lots are connected or lit.

Built Environment

The study area is very typical of small, rail stop communities. Corridors of large single-family homes form gateways into a small historic core of shopfront buildings.

The approach into the Downtown from the Interstate along Gilead Road presents historic housing with generous setbacks. On the north side is the recently expanded Huntersville Elementary School. Many of the current residential structures have already been converted to non-residential uses including office, retail, and civic functions.

As you approach the core the Police Station and the Town Hall emerge as significant architectural features in this area. Between the two buildings is a Cashion’s gas station and convenience store. This metal building serves an essential community need and remains quite busy throughout the day. The downtown core includes a mixture of retail, service, office, governmental, and residential uses.

Across from Town Hall are a number of single-story buildings, one of which houses Lupie’s, a favorite family restaurant. To the east of Town Hall is the historic Holbrook House, home to Mama Mia’s Too, a well-regarded Italian restaurant.

Proceeding east on Gilead Road at the railroad tracks there is one block of historic buildings along Main Street to the south which has several businesses including Grayson’s Tavern and a Hispanic store. To the north is the location of the Farmer’s Market shelter and caboose.

Across the tracks is the former mill village. East of Church Street is a seven block area that currently has single family homes, manufactured homes, a small church and an electric substation. Based on the tax records, there is a high percentage of rental housing in this area.

The former Anchor Mill site is just north of the mill village. This 30.5 acre site has several dilapidated buildings due largely to a recent fire. They are scheduled for demolition in Winter, 2004.
Development Evaluation

Prior to the completion of any design work, a “ripe and firm” analysis was completed for all of the properties in the Downtown Planning Area. “Firm” properties are those that are generally in their final building/use pattern, and are also reflected as the “highest and best use” by the real estate and appraisal community. Once determined, little change is recommended to them.

Properties that are determined to be “ripe” for development/redevelopment include those that are currently undeveloped, under-developed (additional development opportunities exist on the property including expansion of existing buildings and new construction), or can be redeveloped (such as an old, vacant shopping center).

This type of analysis is necessary to identify both “sacred cows,” those properties that should be left alone, and development opportunities. While most development possibilities were identified through a combination of a windshield survey and a walking survey, some properties were classified after interviews with the property owner.

The adjacent map (along with an example) shown on this page indicates a significant number of properties that are ripe for development/redevelopment within the downtown.

Additionally, charrette participation by those who owned or leased property within the planning area is important and was tracked as part of the planning and design process.
Public Design Charrette

A 5 day planning and design charrette was used to guide the Downtown Planning Process. This effort began with a kickoff meeting on August 31st consisting of an opening presentation and an interactive workshop.

Following the kickoff meeting, a publicly driven design charrette was held from September 27-October 1, 2004 at the Huntersville Town Hall. A temporary design studio was set up in Town Hall complete with design tables, meeting areas, computer equipment, and a presentation area. Numerous citizens and public officials attended this comprehensive workshop during the five day period. Throughout the week, meetings were held to discuss various topics related to the area’s future including downtown retailing, signage, transportation, and parking.

The charrette concluded on Tuesday evening, October 5th with a full digital presentation of the plan’s recommendations. This vision, intended to guide the area’s future growth, is based on the consensus gained by the area’s interested citizens, the Town of Huntersville, and The Lawrence Group.

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<td>9:00 Area Developers</td>
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Public input was an integral part of the planning process in developing a realistic revitalization plan for Downtown Huntersville. Throughout the 5 day charrette, residents, business owners, property owners, developers, economic development officials, government agencies, and community groups shared their thoughts and visions about the revitalization of this area. Numerous opportunities for public participation were available through small group meetings, individual conferences, and a questionnaire prepared by The Lawrence Group.

Charrette participants identified a number of very important issues relevant to the planning process. These topics were carefully reviewed by the planning team, as they served as a foundation for the Huntersville Downtown Master Plan. The following is a summary of the issues and concerns identified throughout the charrette by the area’s citizens, government agencies, and stakeholder groups (not listed in any particular order):

- No activity / lack of synergy
- Lack of image / aesthetics
- Overhead power lines
- Greater variety of tenants throughout downtown
- Parking and traffic
- Lack of central gathering space
- Competition of Interstate area retail
- Not pedestrian friendly

The following is a summary of the positive aspects identified throughout the charrette by the area’s citizens, government agencies, and stakeholder groups (not listed in any particular order):

- Good proximity and access to thoroughfares
- Public / Civic buildings and parks
- Local restaurants

Participants were encouraged to respond to a design charrette questionnaire. The information below summarizes the charrette participants’ responses to what was needed or added to Downtown.

- Numerous participants lived, worked, or owned property throughout the study area.
- Respondents described the business district needing a direct connection to open space / parks and a cultural facility or gathering place, such as an amphitheatre or green. Many commented that the business district lacks basic services such as a grocery store and entertainment / restaurants, as well as a night life.
- Downtown Huntersville was also described as being void of both an identity and a significant attraction.
- Downtown business patrons commented that they are attracted by the “local” stores and restaurants. Participants mentioned specific uses that Downtown needs, such as coffee shops or a book store. A variety of respondents noted they do not patronize the downtown as much as they would like due to the limited parking and traffic circulation.

- Participants commented they would like to see more mixed-use development integrated into Downtown.
- Many envisioned Downtown becoming the center of many centers and becoming a destination. Additionally, participants desired to see a variety of housing choices for a range of income levels.

Charrette participants identified the North Carolina communities of Cornelius, SouthEnd Charlotte, Davidson, as well as Alexandria, Virginia as existing developments which should be examined as models for development.

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Table Questions

1. Where do you live? Do you own property or a business in the study area? (Note: Don’t forget to color in your property at the front table.)

2. Please try to describe the negative aspects of the downtown area in short phrase (2-5 words).

3. Please try to describe the positive aspects of the downtown area in short phrase (2-5 words).

4. What is missing that could be added to the downtown area?

5. If you could send a postcard of Huntersville to a friend who hasn’t been here, what would it say? What picture would be on it?

6. What other place(s) might serve as a good model for the Town the Town?

Questionnaire distributed during the charrette
Market Analysis

A detailed market analysis was performed by Rose & Associates, Southeast, Inc. to evaluate the physical, legal, and economic feasibility for future development activities throughout downtown Huntersville. Over the past few years, the Town has enjoyed sustained prosperity and growth. Located in Mecklenburg County, Huntersville benefits from its proximity to the Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which has also experienced both population and income growth.

Throughout Huntersville and the surrounding area, population and job growth in the non-manufacturing sectors has increased substantially, demonstrating its position as a diverse non-manufacturing (service) oriented economy. As a result, white collar job growth, population growth, and increased household income have occurred. These factors, coupled with a quality of life that has attracted young families and professionals, directly relates to real estate demand which includes residential housing (a variety of types/styles) and commercial (office, service, and retail).

Like many small towns and cities, the Huntersville central business district has evolved over time and is somewhat concentrated, but still scattered along the primary corridor of Old Statesville Road. Local neighborhood shopping is available, while regional shopping centers remains at the interstate interchanges and/or the major arteries.

Market Competition

In examining the market opportunities for the Town of Huntersville, an economic scan of the region was performed. The primary economic sectors providing employment in the Charlotte / Mecklenburg region include financial institutions, healthcare, energy, and retail. The market opportunities for Huntersville should be viewed from a macro to micro view. Of the largest employers in the region, most are located in the City of Charlotte and include, Wachovia, Bank of America, Carolinas Health Care, Duke Energy, Dhelalize America/Food Lion, Ruddick Corp/ Harris Teeter, Wal-Mart stores and USAirways Group.

According to the Annual Market Forecast compiled by the North Carolina CCIM Chapter and Carolinas Real Data, the various market segments performed as follows in 2004:

Office

The Charlotte North office submarket experienced a 18.6% vacancy rate in the second quarter of 2004, which is trending higher over prior years. Office rents averaged $18.00 per square foot, which is on par with market averages.

Warehouse

The warehouse market experienced an 12% vacancy rate in 2004 with rents averaging $3.50 per square foot. This rate is a reflection of the submarket, with an overall market vacancy rate of over 20%.

Retail

There was below 5% retail vacancy rate in 2004. This is consistent with the overall market, with rents averaging $21.00 per square foot.

Clearly, the healthiest sector is in retail, which is a result of the low interest rates and mounting consumer debt. However, rising unemployment rates account for the climbing vacancies in the office and industrial sectors, largely attributable to the economic cycle. Lastly, the apartment submarket enjoys fairly stable vacancy and rental rates compared to the remainder of the market.

The largest segment of the market is in retail, with a number of shopping venues along the primary the Interstate 77 interchanges exits 23 and 25, which hosts an array of local, regional, and national retailers and restaurants. Combined, these centers total approximately 1,284,000 square feet.

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, Report/Geographic Solutions, STATA online, and CCIM based on current year estimates. Race figures may not total WDS based on race and ethnicity reporting.

* Numbers based on 2000 Census.
Market Analysis

Area retail centers include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huntersville Shopping Center</td>
<td>Statesville Road (US21) at I-77 Exit 23</td>
<td>98,000 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosedale Commons</td>
<td>Gilead Road at I-77 Exit 23</td>
<td>150,000 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Cross Shopping Center</td>
<td>Sam Furr Road at I-77 Exit 25</td>
<td>750,000 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birkdale Village</td>
<td>Highway 73 at I-77 Exit 25</td>
<td>286,000 sf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Socio-Economic Considerations

Feedback from civic leaders, government representatives, and residents suggest that the community embraces its historical roots, quality of life, and small town/rural character, typically found in suburban towns. The challenge is to establish the town’s identity as the community grows and to create a “sense of place” within the downtown of the Town that has developed in a sprawling fashion along its commercial corridors over time.

Market Use Analysis

Based upon preliminary findings, we determined that the Huntersville market will continue to evolve from a suburban “bedroom” community, with the primary job base residing in the greater Mecklenburg County (Charlotte) area, to establishing its own economic base in the Professional Service Sector. This will be largely due to the Huntersville Business Park and Hospital on the west side of Gilead Road (Exit 23) across Interstate 77 from the Downtown study area.

Employment within the community will continue to be primarily “non-basic” or service related jobs such as retail, professional, etc. However, job growth in basic employment, together with transportation planning issues will provide future opportunities for economic development and job growth in basic categories that will create demand for office space. As a result of the multiplier effect of this growth, additional residential housing, retail and other support uses would follow. As such, the following are uses that should be considered during the charrette process:

Office/Retail

A mix of office & retail, with massing to include larger buildings and density near I-77, transitioning to smaller, residential/pedestrian scale buildings along the corridor, then again transitioning into a core (higher density) downtown historic district. This space should be between 3,000 – 15,000 square feet, in buildings from 1-4 stories.

Multifamily Residential

Consider two areas with a density in a range between 10-16 units per acre. The first area could be around the I-77 interchange at exit 23, and the other in the Downtown Core (near transportation centers). A mix of residential, in all market segments (affordable to luxury, in both rental and for-sale housing) should be considered. Attractive apartments and/or townhomes would provide harmony with the adjacent single family neighborhoods and an appropriate transition from the commercial uses and interstate. Careful attention should be given to creating pedestrian and vehicular connections to the adjacent commercial uses, and downtown.

Public Space

There is an opportunity to create an attractive public space in the downtown core for social gatherings which residents, and the adjacent neighborhoods, might also enjoy. This would include an outdoor venue to accommodate larger events and the Farmers Market.

Careful attention should be given to creating an attractive streetscape leading from the Interstate to the downtown area, including sidewalks, street trees and lighting as a critical design element, as well as landscaping and signage guidelines, so as to create an identity for the Historic Downtown area. Integration with the transportation corridor along the railroad stops (if any) should be considered.

The goal would be to provide a destination for a more unique, intimate experience – an inviting and interesting place for patients, families, workers, and others who might be drawn to the regional “centers of influence” that exist west of the I-77 interchange at Exit 23.

Potential Development Constraints

During the charrette, two underlying areas became part of the discussion – Structural and Nonstructural.

Structural deficiencies include those areas requiring attention such as signage, streetscapes and parking – all tangible items which are addressed in the final reports from the planning and transportation team members (The Lawrence Group & Kimley Horn). Nonstructural deficiencies include marketing, and non-tangible areas that make up the “culture” of a community, in other words, how the community leaders, business owners and residents perceive and communicate who/what Huntersville is about.

As part of this process, two areas may require additional effort – things to come downtown to “buy” or goods/retail missing; and things to come downtown to “do” or public gatherings/events. With Structural changes, and the continued renovation and/or new construction, additional space can provide opportunities for added business operations.

The underlying zoning and regulatory structure must also support these concepts, along with a mix of uses. While the community leaders perceive there to be a pro-business environment to encourage downtown growth and development, the supporting processes (ie; planning, zoning, inspection) should be streamlined to support that goal.

Non-structural changes include recruitment and retention efforts to bring both retailers and people (via events) together. This would include cooperative marketing plans with downtown businesses and civic leaders, with the assistance of an advertising/marketing professional.

This will allow the downtown to “brand” itself with an identity and purpose, which then can be communicated effectively to Huntersville residents, nonresidents and visitors. When structure is created/improved with streetscapes, signage and parking, combined with a mix of public and/or cultural events, the result brings people to the community to enjoy both. This “destination” for such places to “go buy” and “go do” has evolved into what industry analysts call Lifestyle Communities. In creating new mixed-use communities and the redevelopment of older
downtowns and cities, this combination creates a sense of place where people will be drawn to visit.

Huntersville is included in the service area for the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce, an organization with approximately 500 members; the Visitors Bureau, and the recently formed Economic Development initiative. A unique opportunity presents itself to bring these stakeholders together in a cooperative effort for marketing and promoting the downtown.

**Previous Economic Study Review**

Review of the “Huntersville Downtown Action Agenda 2000” prepared by Hyett Palma offers some insight as to the wishes of the community to support small business uses. However, with any community, its responsibility lies not in business counseling, but providing the infrastructure for small business to succeed. A fair amount of data was provided in the report, in which the town might engage the assistance of a consultant in interpreting that data. Data without understanding or a plan will not result in action. There were a number of ideas for both goods and services – largely in the food & beverage categories (restaurants, specialty goods/services).

**Market Niches / Development Opportunities**

**Public and Civic**

Limited gathering places currently exist in downtown for large groups involving live music, arts, and other events. The community should commit to the creation of a central downtown park/public space to accommodate 200+ people. The Downtown Plan considers the addition of such civic spaces such as Grower’s Market and new Town Plaza between Town Hall and the Holbrook House. Streetscape improvements, sidewalks, and public benches are recommended to encourage visitors to stroll and linger throughout the downtown.

The commuter rail line between Charlotte and Mooresville is being planned, which includes a proposed station in Downtown Huntersville. This excellent opportunity will provide an important catalyst for development in the Downtown area close to the proposed platform on Main Street and Huntersville Concord Road. The combination of these civic improvements within a close proximity to each other transforms Downtown Huntersville into an active town center.

**Residential**

All vibrant downtown locations include a resident population to patronize local shopping and events. An increase in residential population is recommended together with an opportunity for affordable/moderate income housing to bring additional people and diversity to the downtown area. The Downtown Plan considers an additional 638 attached housing units (apartments, lofts, condominiums, and townhomes) for lease and/or sale and 166 detached housing (duplex and single family) units. Higher density residential development near the proposed commuter rail platform is preferred and indeed supportive of such a use.

**Entertainment and Recreation**

Incorporation of additional retail into the heart of the community includes restaurants and other civic/public venues for events/cultural activities. Consider the design of new Town Plaza doubling as public parking areas and alternative uses such as fairs, seasonal concerts, or other events.

Holbrook Park, which lies between Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and Sherwood Drive includes six (6) tennis courts, playground, swings, restrooms, covered picnic shelter and a stream. However there is no access or visible sign from Old Statesville Road that a park even exists. The town should open access to the park from Old Statesville Road with a marked entrance and path, potentially using an historic stone wall on the adjacent property as a feature and incorporate the stream basin as part of an overall greenway system.

**Retail**

The Town of Huntersville should encourage retail and service oriented development to support the ridership of the commuter transit and the residents. The continued improvement and expansion of small, locally owned boutique shops and restaurants along the Main Street and Gilead Road / Huntersville Concord Road corridors. A key site is the corner of Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road (NC 115). This site is ideal for a small specialty grocer or full service drug store in an identifiable building across from Town Hall (a landmark building). This combined with a new roof and canopy at Cashiers’ Store and the existing Lupic’s Restaurant anchors the corner as one of importance in the community.

At build-out, the Downtown Plan envisions approximately 180,950 square feet of new retail opportunities within downtown. While retailers look at a variety of factors, including demographics, when siting a new location, the density of development and the volume of the number of existing and/or proposed retail tenants are considered to be most significant.

**Office/Industrial**

No industrial space is recommended, however, a flexible mix of office space is suggested for small, locally owned service businesses throughout Downtown. This would include Class A professional office space in a two-story building and the conversion of homes primarily along Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and Gilead Road into offices, with new buildings maintaining a similar scale, setback and massing for a more cohesive mixture. The demand for this use will grow with economic expansion. Therefore, upon build-out of The Downtown Plan, approximately 208,400 square feet of office space is recommended.
The Conceptual Plan

New Main Street/NC 115 Connection
The Civic Core
Infill Residential Development
Gilead Road Mixed-Use Corridor
Green Grocer/Drug Store
Infill Residential Development
Senior Housing Neighborhood
Old Statesville Road (NC 115) Mixed-Use Corridor
Mill Neighborhood with Infill Development
Vermillion Neighborhood Center
Garden Hall & Transit Platform
Mixed-Use Redevelopment
Infill Residential Development
New Main Street/NC 115 Connection

Scale 1"=800'
Transportation & Circulation

Note: This Section was adapted from a report by Kimley-Horn and Associates as a supplement to this Plan.

A key component of the Huntersville Downtown Master Plan included an analysis of existing transportation conditions, as well as a series of circulation and parking recommendations specifically targeted for Downtown Huntersville. The following is an overview and recommendations for improvements:

Existing Conditions

Gilead Road is the primary entrance to Downtown Huntersville from the west. This major east-west corridor has a direction connection to Interstate 77 interchange via Exit 23. Present traffic volume is 6,500 vehicles per day (vpd) per the North Carolina Department of Transportation, for the portion within the study area.

Old Statesville Road (NC 115) is the major north-south corridor through the study area and is a major route for commuters working in Charlotte. Today’s traffic volumes are 13,000 vpd within the study area for this route.

Recognizing the central prominence of the NC 115 and Gilead Road intersection within the study area, the design team focused the transportation analysis at that location as well as the Ramah Church Road at NC 115 intersection to the north, the Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road at NC 115 intersection to the south, and the Gilead Road at US 21 intersection to the west.

With regard to the Norfolk-Southern railroad, one (1) freight train travels through the Town of Huntersville daily. As noted earlier, commuter transit rail service is being studied for implementation between Charlotte and Mooresville, with a stop to be located in Huntersville. The likelihood of commuter transit rail along this corridor is recognized of becoming a reality within the next 7 to 10 years.

Based on capacity analysis, the intersections of Gilead Road / NC 115 and Gilead Road / US 21 are currently operating at an unacceptable level of service during peak periods in the morning and evening.

Although the westbound approach at Ramah Church Road / NC 115 exhibits a high delay during both peak periods, it is typical for the minor street at unsignalized intersections to operate with long delays due to the left-turning movements. The eastbound approach at Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road / NC 115 also experiences delay. The design team looked at the existing conditions and how any changes in roadway design, growth and development would perform in the year 2015.

Roadway Improvements Studied

Gilead Road / NC 115

In an effort to improve operations at this intersection while minimizing the impact to existing infrastructure, left turn lanes were analyzed on all approaches. An interim solution would add dedicated left turn lanes on the westbound and northbound approaches. Currently, only the southbound and eastbound approaches have dedicated left-turn lanes. Study shows that the addition of these dedicated turn lanes, the intersections operates at an acceptable level, albeit barely.

While the installation of the left-turn lanes can be achieved, an operational hazard will be created with this recommendation. The installation of a left-turn lane on the northbound approach, in combination with a shallow radius in the southeast corner prohibits trucks from having an acceptable turn radius to make a northbound turn. Similar deficiencies are experienced for the westbound left-turn. Other conflicts, such as signal and utility poles, impact the turn radius as well. The close proximity of buildings to the curb prohibits widening the street.

One Way Pair Alternative

With the limited right-of-way on NC 115 through downtown, in combination with the desire to preserve the downtown atmosphere and increase walkability throughout the study area, the widening to a four lane street is not feasible. Therefore, while needing to move traffic through downtown, an idea of implementing a one-way pair system using NC 115 for southbound traffic and Main Street for northbound traffic was analyzed, which also included revised turning movements.

In this scenario, NC 115 does not need to be widened, but Main Street is widened to twenty-four feet (24 ft) and the level of service becomes acceptable. Peak hour traffic within downtown can be improved with the one-way pair system, however other non-operational impacts will be realized. One-way pairs will effectively move through traffic, but it leads to a decrease in people stopping in downtown to shop or other business. This alternative solves one problem; traffic. It then creates many negative impacts to walkability, success of retail and driveways safety, it is hostile to pedestrians and encourages speeding.

Main Street for Major Traffic

Another alternative was changing the designations, or traffic roles, of NC 115 and Main Street. Essentially, NC 115 becomes a local street and Main Street becomes the major through traffic movement roadway. All turning movements at the intersection of Gilead

Morning traffic on Gilead Road
Road and NC 115 would have more time since the competition with through traffic movements would be reduced.

Traffic analysis indicates this alternative improves the level of service to acceptable levels. It separates turning movements and disperses them to two intersections, thereby creating additional capacity. Implementation of this scenario will require extensive infrastructure improvements to Main Street, as well as the intersections at the north and south ends of Main Street at NC 115.

Enhanced Main Street

A variation of the last scenario, traffic is encouraged to use Main Street through signage, but it does not become the priority movement. Improvements consist of dedicated left-turn lanes and synchronized traffic signals with increased timing. As with the previous two alternatives, Main Street is widened to twenty-four feet (24 ft). Implementation brings the level of service to acceptable levels.

Two Way Directional Pair

This alternative actually combines the previous two. It recognizes the operational and performance gains provided by using Main Street as the major traffic carrier, but not wanting the extensive roadway improvements necessary to adequately move traffic. This directional pair shifts the northbound traffic from NC 115 to Main Street at the southern intersection of Main Street and NC 115. At the northern intersection of these two streets, through movements would make a right turn onto NC 115. The inverse would occur for the southbound through movements.

The operational gain results from a directional dispersion of the through traffic movements and allows existing capacity to be used in an efficient manner and improves the distribution of turning traffic. At implementation, the level of service is equal to the previous alternatives. Main Street is required to be widened to twenty-four feet (24 ft) and intersection improvements would also need to be made.

Recommendation

With the implementation of any of the alternatives, there will be impacts to the existing streets. If the NC 115 and Gilead Road intersection is modified to install dedicated left-turn lanes, on-street parking along northbound and westbound would not be allowed. Existing streets widths of thirty-two feet (32 ft) to thirty-six feet (36 ft) are adequate for travel and turn lanes. Downtown businesses are better served with on-street parking and excess land for individual off-street parking is not required.

The other alternatives will require extensive infrastructure improvements to the existing streets. Main Street is presently eighteen feet (18") wide with open ditch drainage. Adjacent to Main Street is the railroad track which will be used for the commuter transit service. In any case, upgrades to Main Street will be necessary.

Improvements to the roadway will include signalization of the intersections of Main Street and Huntersville Concord Road, upgrading Main Street to appropriate width and roadway cross-section, as well as intersecting street improvements. The largest expense will be the realign-
Transportation & Circulation

The first location was identified on the north side of the intersection of Huntersville-Concord Road and Main Street. This is an excellent opportunity two blocks from the Town Hall and the core of Downtown. Slight realignment of Church Street will be necessary and limited on-street parking would be available adjacent to the station and a shared structured parking facility (a minimum of 250 spaces is required for the transit platform) would be constructed within a block, an easy walking distance at the Civic Plaza.

The second location was identified on the south side of the intersection of Huntersville-Concord Road and Main Street. Like the first location it has good proximity to the Downtown core. Parking and circulation is less available than the first location, however a deck location could be accommodated within the block behind the Main Street buildings (off of Maxwell Street).

The third location evaluated was at the Anchor Mill site on Church Street. This location would have good proximity to the Vermillion neighborhood, Mill Village redevelopment area and existing homes to the north of Downtown. Though it would have good access, there is minimal opportunity for any significant connection to the Downtown core and the proposed destinations of the Grower's Market, Civic Plaza and the Arts and Cultural facility due to the half mile distance between them.

All locations are acceptable and would add value to the Downtown Area. However, it is acknowledged that the proposed site at the Grower’s Market at Garden Hall offers the most benefit and additional catalyst to the overall redevelopment of Downtown Huntersville.

Rail Crossings

As part of this planning process, the current rail corridor grade crossings were evaluated. The Plan recommends three at-grade rail crossings at Gibson Park, Huntersville-Concord Road, and the Anchor Mill site and one below-grade crossing at Second Street.

Commuter Transit Rail

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) has plans to extend commuter rail service to Mooresville from Charlotte within the next 7 to 10 years. While specific commuter transit stops have not been identified, general locations have, with a stop in or near Downtown Huntersville. As a component of the Downtown Huntersville Plan, three locations were evaluated for a potential commuter transit station within Downtown.

One such opportunity lies with the additional streets between Maxwell Street and NC 115. These additional east-west connections breaks up large blocks and provides better connections for both vehicular and pedestrian movement. Other connections are provided within the study area as well.

Downtown Huntersville has a good street grid; and, excellent possibilities exist to further enhance this pedestrian-friendly street network within the Downtown Study Area. Strategically placed new street connections are designed to improve vehicular traffic options and pedestrian connections.

The existing level of service is unacceptable based on the current conditions of capacity and movement. Impacts in the near future will result in a reduced level of service resulting in longer delays. The present conditions warrant improvements to the existing infrastructure.

The movement of Main Street to intersect with NC 115 at both the north and south connections.

Upon complete review of the alternatives, it is recommended that the two-way pair be implemented. As discussed, this provides the best traffic movement during peak hours and does not impact the Downtown businesses by emphasizing only through traffic. Motorists are given an option for unimpeded movement or local access. The impacts to the pedestrian improvements are minimized by keeping vehicle speeds low and minimum pavement widths. The improvements to Main Street are also compatible with the designs of the commuter transit platform and Grower’s Market at Garden Hall.
Transportation & Circulation

The below-grade crossing at Second Street is a residual recommendation from previous studies on the Anchor Mill. In order to provide a higher degree of pedestrian connectivity throughout the area after commuter rail service begins, it would be desirable to have an addition connection. This location is the best location for a below-grade crossing based on the existing topography. However, its trajectory once it crosses Main Street is highly contingent on addition right-of-way acquisition. In addition, the downward slope necessary to provide clearance under the track bed may have a negative impact on Church Street. Further study of this crossing is warranted in the future.

The proposed at-grade crossings are existing and should remain open and enhanced. They provide the minimum level of circulation and connectivity, while protecting the integrity of the corridor.

Access Management

The Town of Huntersville, like most small communities in North Carolina, has historically relied on North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to manage access point (driveway) location and spacing throughout major urban corridors. The result of this practice is a deferment of decision-making to standards outlined in the 2003 NCDOT Driveway Ordinance. This ordinance entitled, Policy on Street and Driveway Access to North Carolina Highways, is not designed to preserve capacity but rather to balance the access rights of private property owners against accepted safety measures. Also, in the absence of strong local government preference, cross-sections for road improvements have typically been selected based on the expected (rather than planned) land use.

The result has been an abundance of thoroughfares constructed without center medians, similar to the Gilead Road corridor. This practice has contributed to a continued strip development pattern that occurs in response to the ease of access afforded by the lack of a median. Interestingly, this pattern of development is counter productive to the goal of providing a seamless, integrated transportation system, as it tends to preclude viable pedestrian and transit elements. Safety, aesthetics, streetscape, and capacity have often been compromised as well.

The development occurring along the Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road corridors is anticipated to continue, with properties expanding and redeveloping. Both of these corridors facilitate a significant amount of commuter traffic; they are likewise burdened with the task of providing access to adjoining property. Therefore, it is recommended that a policy of both general and specific access management guidelines be developed for both of these corridors.

Consideration should be given to a variety of resources during the development of these criteria, including the Town of Huntersville Development Code, NCDOT Driveway Manual, as well as Transportation Research Board and Center for Urban Transportation Research (University of South Florida), Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) publications that describe and compare policies across the nation. The following represent preliminary recommendations that also should be considered during the development of a corridor access management policy.

General Recommendations:

- New non-residential developments located adjacent to each other should be encouraged to provide cross-access or utilize a shared rear alley so that parking lots and driveways are connected and shared. Encouraged cross-access between adjacent developments reduces the number of vehicles that are required to re-enter the major roadway. Keeping additional turning traffic off the major roadway enhances efficient and safe operation.

- Minimum lot frontages should be considered for non-residential developments. Typical access management standards for similar corridors would ideally recommend a minimum of 300 foot spacing between non-residential driveways. In order to feasibly enforce this spacing, adjacent commercial properties would need to have well over 200 feet of frontage. Encouraging minimum frontage prevents driveways from being too closely spaced.

- Right-in/right-out only driveways should be encouraged as secondary access on major roadways for non-residential developments. If appropriate, when a new development requests more than one driveway, the feasibility of a right-in/right-out driveway as a secondary access should be evaluated and encouraged. R/I/O driveways should be designed and located appropriately based on the size and type of development and should be responsive to existing street conditions.

For new developments that front both a major and a side street, primary access via the side street should be required. Restricting major road access to service entrances or right-in/right-out driveways (where side street access is available) reduces the impact of turning movements on the major road. It also may reduce or eliminate the cost to a developer when associated with constructing a deceleration lane on the major road.

Specific Recommendations:

The application of the aforementioned access management strategies in Downtown Huntersville can play an important role in balancing mobility and the need for land access. The opportunity to reinforce a regular block structure along both Gilead and Old Statesville Road should provide ample access and circulation opportunities as investments in these areas occur. An important part of this process will be to insure that the following happens in conjunction with new development:

- Non-residential developments located adjacent to each other should be encouraged to provide cross-access or utilize a shared rear alley so that parking lots and driveways are connected and shared.

- Minimum lot frontages should be considered for non-residential developments. Typically, access management standards for similar corridors would ideally recommend a minimum of 300 feet spacing between non-residential driveways. In order to feasibly enforce this spacing, adjacent commercial properties would need to have well over 200 feet of frontage. Encouraging minimum frontage prevents driveways from being too closely spaced.

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- For new developments that front both a major and a side street, primary access via the side street should be required. Restricting major road access to service entrances or right-in/right-out driveways (where side street access is available) reduces the impact of turning movements on the major road. It also may reduce or eliminate the cost to a developer when associated with constructing a deceleration lane on the major road.
Transportation & Circulation

Gilead Road Corridor

- Primary access to Gilead Road for properties on the south side should be taken from the existing side streets (Marguerite, Pinewood, and Hillcrest) using a public alley as shown on the Plan. (See page 42 for drawing)
- The unimproved right-of-way between Pinewood and Hillcrest should be constructed as a public street connection to Holbrook (with ultimate connection to Hillcrest) when adjacent development occurs. (See page 42 for drawing)
- Development on the north side of Gilead Road should take access at locations in alignment with opposing street access south of Gilead Road.
- Selective use of right-in/right-out access to Gilead Road may be appropriate.

Old Statesville Road (NC 115)

- Primary access to Old Statesville Road should be taken from the existing side streets where reasonably feasible (Dellwood, Gibson Park, First, Second, Third, and Fourth).
- Street connections represented in the master plan (between Old Statesville Road and Main Street) should be implemented as development occurs with the intent of providing primary access.
- Development on the west side of Old Statesville Road should take access at locations in alignment with opposing street access south of Gilead Road.
- Selective use of right-in/right-out access to Statesville Road may be appropriate.
- Consider installation of left-turn lanes as deemed necessary through the TIA process.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

- Implement a two-way pair street system using Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and Main Street for north-south traffic movement.
- In cooperation with CATS, construct the commuter transit platform on the north side of Huntersville-Concord Road between Main Street and Church Street.
- Construct the commuter transit station as a part of the Garden Hall.
- Realign Church Street to accommodate the commuter transit platform.
- Maintain rail crossings at the Anchor Mill site, Huntersville-Concord Road, and Gibson Park.
- Adopt an Access Management Policy for Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road (NC 115) to limit driveways.
Parking

Parking throughout Downtown Huntersville was analyzed as a part of the planning and design process. Regarding parking, there are three guiding philosophies that are applied to this Plan:

1. Parking in downtowns should be viewed as a public utility, like streets, water, sewer, and parks.
2. On-street parking not only provides convenient parking areas, but it also serves to buffer the pedestrian realm from the travel lanes.
3. Parking areas should be convenient, easy to find, and safe but need not dominate the visual landscape.
4. The most successful parking arrangements are ones which encourage patrons to 'park once and walk'.

On-Street Parking

Presently, on-street parking is only offered along Main Street between Greenway Drive and the American Legion Building. To have this limited amount of on-street parking in a downtown area is a detriment to encouraging residents to come and shop in Downtown Huntersville. Although this parking serves the existing Farmer's Market and the retail shops on Main Street, it is too distant and lacking proper pedestrian connections to the downtown core to be viewed as viable for any other part of the downtown.

This Plan recommends the expansion of on-street parking on the following street segments (as shown on the map on this page):

- Main Street from Huntersville-Concord Road to Church Street
- Old Statesville Road (NC 115) along most of its length within the study area. (Note: There is currently sufficient right-of-way and pavement width to accommodate on-street parking except within 400 feet of the Gilead Road intersection that is needed to accommodate turn lanes)
- Gilead Road / Huntersville-Concord Road from Sherwood Drive to Main Street (Note: Post-redevelopment)

- Church Street (both sides)
- First, Second, Third, and Walker Streets (one side only)

Off-Street Parking

Surface Lots

The Town currently owns parking lots next to Town Hall, behind the Police Station, behind the Arts and Cultural Center (former library) and at Holbrook Park. All of these lots, except Holbrook Park are perceived as restricted for those individual uses and given the growth in programming and employment at those respective facilities, are undersized.

There are a number of private parking areas scattered throughout town. These lots are designated for use by the patrons of the adjacent buildings only. However, given their proximity, the collective parking behind Lupie's Restaurant and Smilin' Jim's are often used for overflow parking for other nearby businesses and Town functions. Mama Mia's Too (in the historic Holbrook House) also has a parking lot close to Town Hall, but does not appear to have the same overflow issues as those directly across the street from Town Hall. The current uncoordinated approach is likely causing a net loss in 10-20 potential spaces.

Existing on-street parking along Main Street

Proposed on-street parking in Downtown

[Map showing proposed parking locations]
Parking

As mentioned in Parking Principle #1 above, the Plan proposes to make parking a public utility for common use in the Downtown. Therefore, the Town is encouraged to negotiate with the owners of the private lots and enter into a management agreement. This management agreement should focus on providing areas of both 2 hour and all day parking. In addition, the Town should actively work to improve the organization of the lots through improved wayfinding and signage, restriping, coordinated lighting, and cross access easements between lots.

As a precursor to any significant redevelopment, the Town should develop a coordinated strategy to remove all existing barriers and scattered vegetation between lots to open up their visibility as well as improve the efficiency of the parking spaces.

In addition, the Town should actively negotiate with the owner of Mama Mia’s Too and jointly develop a parking facility around the Holbrook House. This parking area should be designed as hardscaped plaza to provide for dual use as a parking lot during business hours and a usable public space on evenings and weekends. More on this is discussed in the “Civic Core” section.

Rail Station Parking Deck

Lastly, the Town should investigate the purchase of the land behind the Town Hall for a future parking deck structure. As the commuter transit rail platform and the proposed arts and cultural facility come closer to reality, the need to provide a structured parking deck is feasible.

The structure should have a minimum of five levels and can be co-developed with with 3 story liner buildings along the road frontages. As planned, the deck could accommodate a minimum of 400 cars. This type of parking structure will appear less obtrusive and integrated into the Downtown area.

Understandably, market conditions, the commuter rail construction schedule, and future anchor buildings (arts and cultural facility) will dictate the financing, timing and the creation of such a structure. The Town of Huntersville is encouraged to begin discussions with existing property owners to purchase the property in this excellent location within the core of downtown. In the interim, if the Town purchased the property, a unrestricted surface lot could be installed.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARKING

- Re-stripe Gilead Road to place on-street parallel parking between Sherwood Drive and NC 115 where pavement width is available.
- Provide on-street parallel parking along Old Statesville Road (NC 115) where feasible within the study area.
- Extend on-street parking along Main Street and establish on-street parallel parking on Church Street to serve the commuter transit platform and commercial and civic buildings on Main Street.
- Strategically manage the lots in the southeast quadrant for common use.
- Construct a shared use parking deck a minimum of 400 spaces between Maxwell Street and Old Statesville Road (NC 115).
- As an interim measure, work with the property owners to promote Town Hall employee parking in the Mama Mia’s Too lot.
This plan identifies targeted areas of open space and greenway preservation enabling the Town of Huntersville to supplement the existing parks system. This green infrastructure is an important element in the quality of life for the Downtown area. Because much of this trail network is more urban than in other parts of the community with a combination of off-road paths and “greened” street sidewalks, the Plan denotes this system as the “Green Trail.”

Within the Mill Neighborhood, a stream between 3rd Street and 2nd Street flows in an easterly direction and becomes the greenway within Vermillion along the South Prong of Clark Creek. The extension of that greenway along the stream is recommended to Church Street. The Trail then connects along Church Street and crosses the rail and follows Huntersville-Concord Road in front of Garden Hall, the Civic Plaza, and Town Hall.

From that point, the Green Trail then crosses Old Statesville Road (NC 115) and enters Holbrook Park with a new entrance and connects with the existing trail in the park. The Trail should then run through the Huntersville Elementary School property, through the Parkview Apartments expansion, then to the stream near Nottingham Drive and then ties into the Torrence Creek Tributary #2 that crosses under I-77. When I-77 is widened, a pedestrian tunnel should be installed to permit the extension of this trail to Rosedale and the other greenways on the west side of the Interstate.

In addition, the Town is encouraged to work with the First Baptist Church to promote the dedication of the undevelopable portions at the rear of their property as future passive open space and greenway tying Holbrook Park into the Sherwood Drive as an additional greenway connection along northern portion of the plan area using 4th Street back to the Anchor Mill site.

### Key Recommendations for Green Infrastructure

- Establish final path and secure right-of-way for trail system from Vermillion to Rosedale.
- Begin to construct portions of the Green Trail focusing on those areas between Vermillion and the Holbrook Park as the highest priority.
Environmental Protection

By their nature, Downtowns are inherently urban. That is, the coverage of building footprints, parking areas, and hardscape approach 100%. The diagram to the right illustrates how the level of urbanism grows as it approaches village centers or downtowns. It is important that a distinction be made about the nature of urbanism as it relates to downtowns because of the impact on impervious surfaces.

Downtown Huntersville, if it is to thrive as a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use center, must have wide sidewalks, small lots, and buildings built close to the street and to each other. This present little, if any, opportunity to manage stormwater on a site-by-site basis. If it is provided, stormwater retention will likely be handled underground.

Unfortunately, because most of Downtown is located on the west side of the railroad tracks (the ridgeline), it is located in a protected watershed of Mountain Island Lake. With this location comes a set of rules that limits the amount of impervious surface to 70% of a site.

In order to permit the full build-out of the Conceptual Plan, this Plan recommends relieving the Downtown Area from the requirements of the Watershed Protection Standards. This action should be taken by balancing the urbanism of the Downtown with a more rural area in the same watershed, specifically the North Mecklenburg Park. Through deed restrictions or other similar legal mechanisms, the pervious area required for the Downtown can be offset by permanently protected land in the park. Thus, development in the Downtown Area would simply need to manage the quantity and rate of water runoff and would be exempt from water quality standards.

The Town should also encourage the use of “green” roofs for all new construction. In particular, the Town should install “green” roofs such as a planted roof system or a white roof on all new civic buildings. Such roofing systems not only reduced energy costs on the buildings, but they can also be designed to capture and filter all stormwater during a rain event. This type of technology reduces the environmental footprint of a building and promotes sustainable development practices that epitomize the Town of Huntersville.

Developed by the USGBC membership, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System is a national consensus-based, market-driven building rating system designed to accelerate the development and implementation of green building practices. In short, it is a leading-edge system for designing, constructing and certifying the world’s greenest and best buildings. This plan encourages the use of the LEED guidelines for certifying all new public buildings.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

- Establish an impervious surface “bank” from area within the North Mecklenburg Park to be used to offset requirements in the Downtown Area.
- Encourage the application of LEED building standards for all new civic buildings.
- Install “green” roof systems on all new civic buildings.
The Civic Core

There are 7 essential elements to the Civic Core. They are:

- The Civic Plaza
- Town Hall Expansion
- The Holbrook House
- New Arts and Cultural Facility
- Garden Hall (13,000 sf)
- Commuter Transit Platform
- 400+ Space Parking Deck

The Civic Plaza

Throughout the planning and design process, charrette participants repeatedly noted that the Town of Huntersville lacks a central gathering space. One of the most exciting components of The Downtown Plan involves the proposed creation of a Civic Plaza anchored by the construction or expansion of other civic buildings.

This Civic Plaza is proposed to be located adjacent to Town Hall, including the existing Town Hall parking lot and vacant land behind the Holbrook House. Like many great European plazas, this location permits the space to be co-utilized for parking during business hours and then cleared for special activities on during the evenings and on weekends.

In order to differentiate this space as a public space rather than a parking lot, a decorative hard surface such as unit pavers or Romanite™ would need to be installed. When parking is restricted from this area it becomes a large gathering place for festivals, concerts, and other public gatherings. The plan also recommends a small green space for seating and play space during these events.

A final note about the design of the plaza. It is imperative that it not be overdesigned. That it, the space must be as flexible and open as possible to permit the widest variety of uses. Trees within the space should be strategically placed so as not to be a visual impediment to the use of the space for small concerts, for example.
“The placement of an active public gathering space as the Civic Plaza, the Grower’s Market at Garden Hall, and the CATS Transit Platform affords the Town of Huntersville the possibility of spotlighting a magnificent civic place in the heart of the community.”
The Civic Core

Town Hall Expansion

Town Hall was identified in previous studies as in need of immediate expansion. Presently 8,000 square feet, the building is no longer sufficient to accommodate all of the administrative and planning staff that the Town now employs to manage this growing community. In addition, there is a clear need for meeting space, both small and large, including an expansion to the main Town Board room. During the charrette, planners and designers with The Lawrence Group met with Town officials and reviewed the Space Needs Analysis compiled by Narmour Wright regarding an expansion to Town Hall.

The most feasible solution is to expand the existing building up to 20,000 square feet with a two-story addition to the north. Using the topography of the adjacent site, the addition would extend to the rear with a main floor and a basement level. This expansion maintains Town Hall’s prominence as a true civic building and landmark.

This expansion will require the purchase of the lot that is presently occupied by the CarQuest Auto Parts store.

The Holbrook House

The Holbrook House is recommended to remain in place thereby preserving an icon of local history in the heart of Downtown. The Plan encourages its continued use as a restaurant. Should that use discontinue, the building would also make an excellent history museum.

New Arts and Cultural Center

The Plan recommends the construction of building facing the Huntersville-Concord Road side of the Plaza. This building should visually engage the Plaza and help to activate it with uses that are pedestrian-friendly. The conceptual rendering in this Plan suggests that this building be both dignified as a civic building as well as contemporary. For example, if

The Plan suggests a 20,000 square foot, two-story building that includes civic uses as well as some retail opportunities. The civic portion of the
building could be used for a variety of community events including exhibitions and performances, easily coordinated with regional theatres and museums, and contain interactive classrooms. In addition, the Plan recommends the insertion of one or two storefronts for retail operations such as an ice cream store or a sandwich shop. The combination of these civic and retail uses will help to keep the Plaza active and energized.

The design of this building should set a precedent for environmental sustainability. This is a consistent theme throughout this Plan and is the 21st century aspect to the “green” theme for the Downtown area. This building specifically, given its prominence and potential as a learning laboratory for arts and culture, should set the standard. Designers should incorporate sustainable design elements that are visible such as a planted roof system and passive solar shading on the facade.