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GROWTH OF A REGION

POPULATION GROWTH & DISTRIBUTION

POPULATION TRENDS

POPULATION PROJECTIONS



Growth Patterns & Direction

Growth, Population & Demographic Trends

When Gaston County was formed from the southern portion of Lincoln County in 1846, it had a population of 9,000 with growth centers developing naturally along the waters of the Catawba and the South Fork Rivers. Gastonia, located in the middle of Gaston County, began as a railroad junction settlement between the Charlotte and Atlanta Airline Railroad (now the Southern Railway) and the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge line. By 1876, a population of a little more than 200 people had settled in the junction crossroad known as Gastonia Station. Between 1880 and 1910, Gastonia had a relatively modest growth rate, transitioning from a crossroads community into a town. Increases in population, employment, and social opportunities prompted the community to petition the North Carolina General Assembly to grant a charter of incorporation. On January 26, 1877, Gastonia incorporated with its limits extending 1/2 mile from the railroad junction.

Gastonia's growth through the years is evidenced by Figures 2-1 and 2-2, which show Gastonia's growth through annexation and historical population growth. By 1910, Gastonia was home to 11 cotton mills, a public school system, electricity, and paved roads. Gastonia grew rapidly and it eventually became the central hub of political and social activity in Gaston County, replacing Dallas as the county seat in 1911. The period between 1910 and 1950 saw significant population

increases as most of Gastonia's textile industry and the City's older neighborhoods were formed during this period. Growth also occurred by using annexation as a tool to incorporate surrounding land into the City. In 1911, Gastonia doubled its size when it annexed the huge Loray Mill and its surrounding settlements. The mill petitioned the legislature to incorporate as an independent town, although Gastonia, in its new position as the county seat, quickly acted to defeat the move and annexed the area itself. By 1930, the population had increased to 17,093 with about 22% of that population employed in the textile mills.

The next 20 years, 1950-1970, were boom times for Gastonia. The City had the fastest population growth in its history during this time. Not coincidentally, these were also years of growth and prosperity for the Charlotte region, North Carolina and the United States as well. In addition, there was a historic reversal of out-migration throughout the South from the post-Civil War period to the 1950s and the regional housing market was made possible by improvements to the regional transportation network,

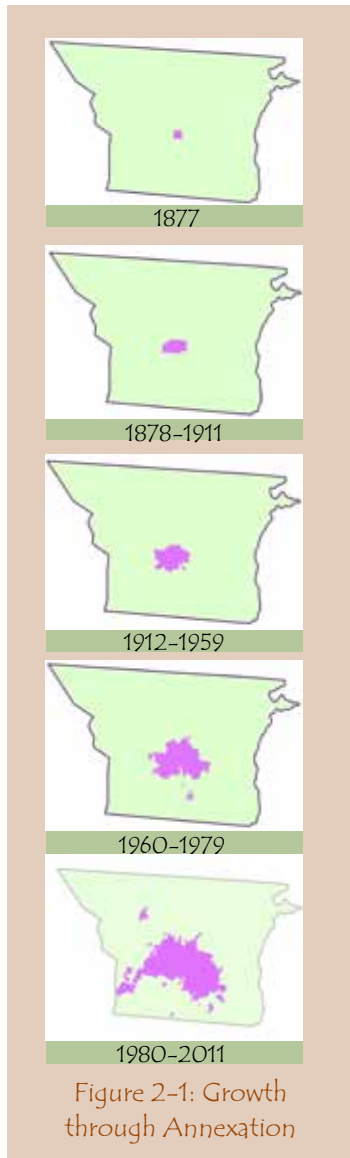
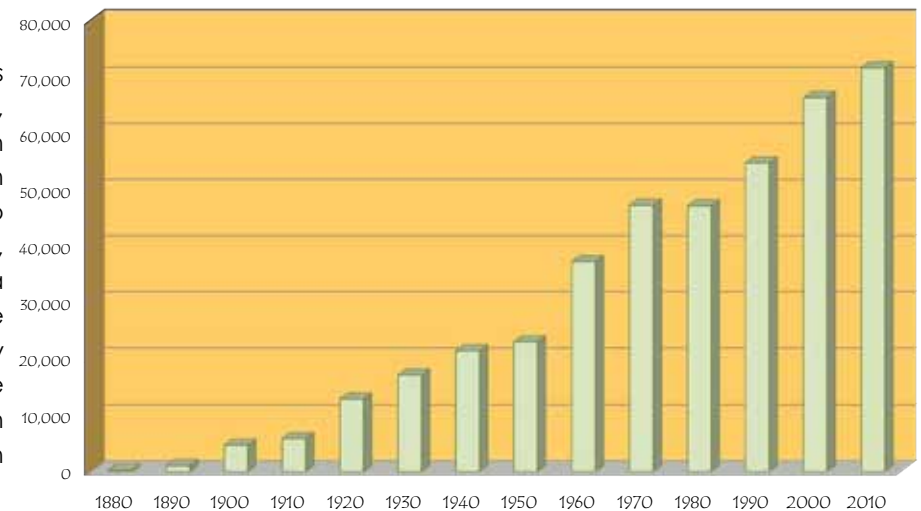


Figure 2-1: Growth through Annexation

Figure 2-2: City of Gastonia Population 1880-2010



fueling suburban housing growth in Gastonia. A significant annexation occurred in 1964 when the city annexed a large tract of land to the east and increased its size by about one-half. This area includes what is now the retail center for the County.

Between 1970 and the mid 1980s, population growth was more modest than in the previous period, due to the City's cautious annexation policy, job losses, and a generally poor economy during parts of the 1970s and 1980s. Gastonia became more aggressive with annexation in the late eighties, boosting Gastonia's population by 7,000 and annexing the airport in the southeast and the industrial area of the northwest. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the City annexed large residential areas, primarily in the southeast. Major annexations included the Southwoods and the South New Hope Road annexation. Annexation remains a significant tool for growth, allowing the City to expand its tax base, extend utilities and gain customers, provide input on development standards, and increase demand for new retail and industry.

From 2000 to 2007, residential growth rivaled that of the post war era. Population also increased by some 7% during this time. Between 1998 and 2007, roughly 7,570 dwelling units were approved through the rezoning process, with 5,815 of those units being approved since 2002. A new courthouse, police station, four fire stations, an industrial park and many transportation and utility improvements were constructed in response to the increasing demands caused by growth. During this time, Gaston County and Gastonia became popular for large residential developments, the City annexed residential subdivisions on the outskirts of the

planning area, prior to construction. These developments sought annexation to gain the urban utilities provided by the City, including water, sewer, and electricity. It was expected that the City's population would continue to grow at level experienced during the 1990s and earlier parts of 2000, primarily through in-migration as a result of the new households. But then the housing market bubble burst and the financial market collapsed when many homebuyers who had purchased homes they could not afford, particularly with subprime mortgages, went into foreclosure, thus halting construction and slowing population growth. While the City issued 522 residential building permits in 2007, by 2010 the number of permits issued had decreased to 101, a decline of over 400%. A high unemployment rate and continuing wave of foreclosures will continue to hamper the housing market, thus slowing population growth. 2010 Census data indicates that the City's population grew by approximately 8% since 2000. This indicates that the growth trend has continued, but the pace has slowed somewhat.

Figure 2-3 shows the growth in land area (in square miles) and percentage change between 1980 and 2011. In 2011, Gastonia's City limits encompassed 51.69 square miles. The planning area can be expanded up to three miles from the City limits, an effective measure that helps to ensure comparable development standards in areas that might be annexed in the future. Careful integration of new development with existing uses and a thoughtful and informed approach to long and short range goals will provide a future of opportunities for Gastonia's residents.

Figure 2-3: Land Area in Square Miles				
1980	1990	2000	2005	2011
21.1	30.62	46.06	48.79	51.69
Percentage Change				
1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2005	2005-2011	1980-2011
45.12%	50.42%	5.93%	5.94%	144.98%



New Residential Development



The recently renovated courthouse for City offices



Gastonia is an employment and retailing center as well as a transportation hub.



Growth of a Region



Gastonia is part of the Charlotte region or the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The Charlotte MSA is a metropolitan area/region of North and South Carolina within and surrounding the city of Charlotte. The two cities, Charlotte and Gastonia are only twenty miles apart, and they have a strong economic and social relationship. Charlotte is the primary city in the region, with three second-tier cities: Gastonia, Rock Hill and Concord-Kannapolis. Each of these second tier cities is the center of its own smaller area-of-influence within the Charlotte region. Gastonia is the center of a sub-region, comprised of Gaston, Lincoln, Cleveland and northern York Counties. It is an employment and retailing center as well as a transportation hub. The trend, however, is toward greater integration with the Charlotte region. Housing, employment, shopping, and transportation are issues which must be viewed in a regional context. In addition, the various cities of the Charlotte region are expanding geographically and by 2030 the region is expected to become a single urban mass, with annexation opportunities curtailed as the unincorporated areas between the cities dwindle. A sustainable, functional urban environment can be achieved in this urban mass through planning, good site design, and regional cooperation.

When looking at historical and future regional growth, the provides the best source of information and most statistical reports are based on Census defined geography. The basic component of the Census definition is the metropolitan statistical area (MSA). A MSA includes a county with a population of at least 50,000 residents and other counties surrounding the urban core are added if the level of commuting between them and the core represent at least 25% of the labor force. The concept of a cohesive Charlotte urban region has evolved over time, as the population has grown and Census defined regions were adjusted.

In 1960, the Census definition of the Charlotte MSA included only Mecklenburg and Union Counties. In 1970, Gaston County was added to the Charlotte MSA. In 1972, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, in the *Metrolina Atlas*, endorsed a broad definition of the Charlotte region, which included all of the Census counties as well as Cleveland, Catawba, Iredell, Lancaster, Stanly and Anson Counties. This is generally considered the most inclusive definition of the region. The greatest change in Census defined boundaries came in 1980, when the MSA definition was expanded to include Cabarrus, Gaston, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Union counties in NC and York County in SC. Before 1980, Cabarrus and Rowan Counties were treated by the Census as a separate metro area, even though their economic and social ties to Charlotte had been identified since the late 1960s.

After the 2000 Census, the Federal government developed a two-tier system. The first tier includes more narrowly defined MSAs and micropolitan statistical areas, which include non-MSA counties with at least one urban cluster with a population of 10,000-50,000 and adjacent counties with a high degree of social and economic integration with the core county. All other counties not within one of these



two definitions are considered rural. In the new definition, the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC MSA lost Rowan and Lincoln counties and gained Anson County. **Regional demographic information included in the plan represents the 2000 and 2010 Census defined MSA boundaries of the region** (Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Union, and York counties) as shown on Figure 2-4, as well as 2007 and 2009 US Census American Community Survey estimates.

Figure 2-4: Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC MSA



The second Census defined tier includes combined statistical areas, which include MSAs and adjacent micropolitan statistical areas. Gastonia is within the Charlotte-Gastonia-Salisbury combined statistical area. This is a larger view of the region that provides another level of analysis for regional studies, especially in the fields of transportation and economic development. As the region grows, other now suburban counties, will become important factors in the growth of the region's population and economy.

The Charlotte region is a region of rapid growth. Figure 2-5 shows the growth of the Charlotte MSA over the past forty years. Since 1970, the population of the region has grown by 116%, increasing from 1,330,439 to 1,751,423 people. The region increased by almost 32% between 2000 and 2010, adding 420,984 people in just a decade. Figure 2-6 indicates each county's share of the regional population during each decade. Only Mecklenburg and Union counties have increased their share of the regional population since 1970. Gaston County has grown over the time, but the growth has not been as explosive as in some

Figure 2-5: Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC MSA, Population, 1970-2010

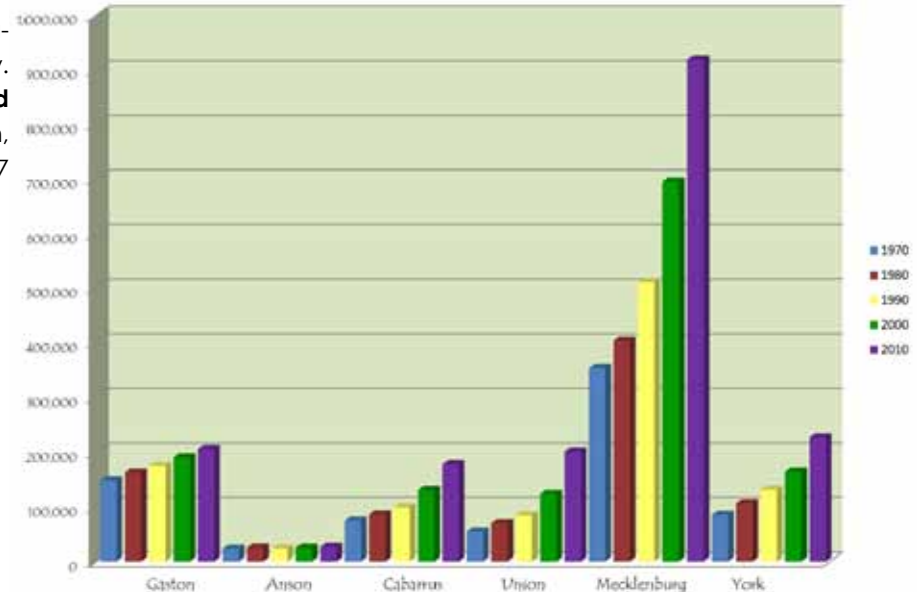
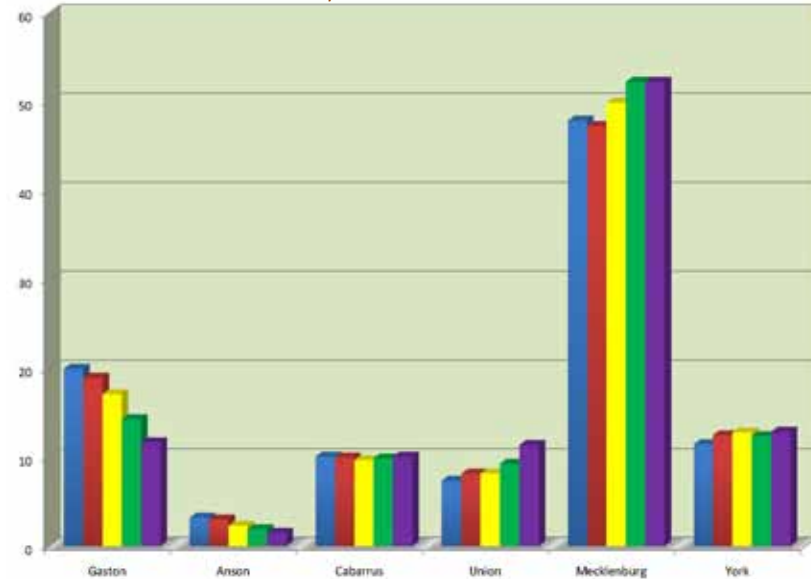


Figure 2-6: Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC MSA, Share of Population, 1970-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 2-7: City & County Population Growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

of the other counties surrounding Charlotte. Between 2000 and 2010, Gaston County's population increased by 8.7%. In comparison, within the same period York County grew by 25%, Cabarrus County by 32.5%, Iredell County by 32%, and Union County by a whopping 46.9%. This pattern reflects the City of Charlotte's directional growth over that same period with the bulk of growth occurring toward the south (York) and southeast (Union) counties as well as counties to the north (Cabarrus and Iredell), with relatively little growth in counties to the west (Gaston). As Figure 2-7 indicates, Gastonia and Gaston County have grown at a more sustainable pace allowing more effective implementation of long range plans that protect our resources and quality of life.

Another way to look at regional growth is through the number of households in each county. Over the past 20 years, the number of households has increased in every county, with the majority of the growth occurring between 2000 and 2009, during which time the region saw a tremendous influx of residential development. Figure 2-9 shows the City of Gastonia's population change.

Figure 2-8: Gastonia Racial Profile, 2010

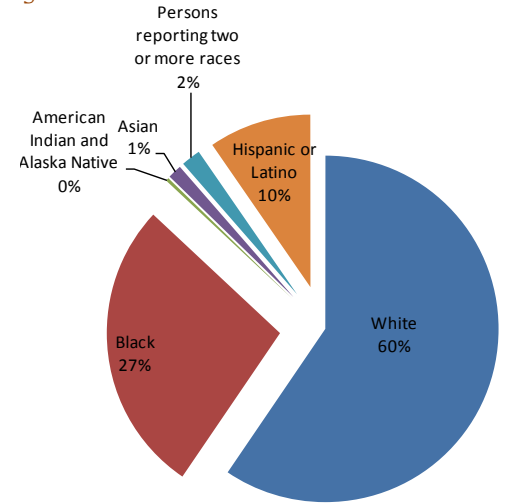
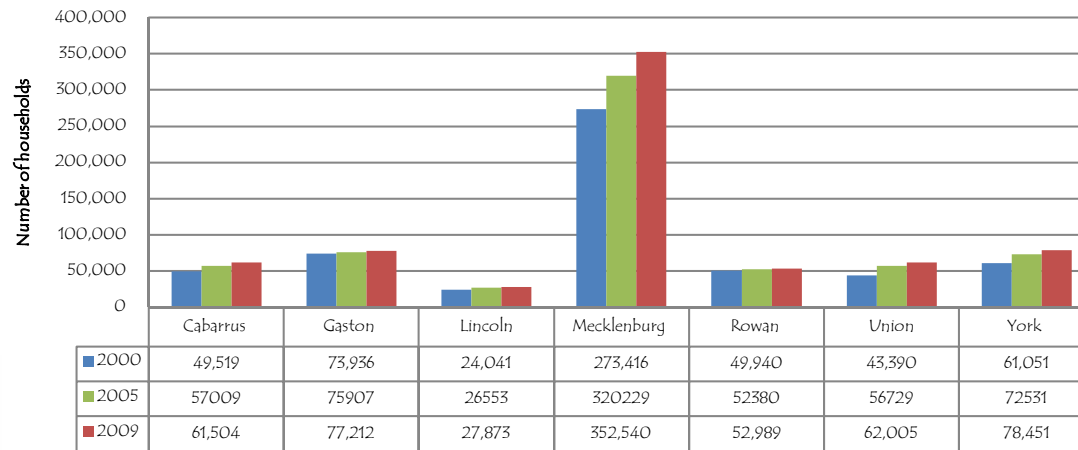


Figure 2-9: City of Gastonia, Population Change

1980 Population	47,218
1990 Population	54,725
2000 Population	66,355
2010 Population	71,741
% Change 1980-1990	15.90%
% Change 1990-2000	21.25%
% Change 2000-2010	8.12%
% Change 1980-2010	51.94%

Source: US Census Bureau
*Based on preliminary 2010 data

Figure 2-10: Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC MSA, Households 2000 - 2009



Population Growth and Distribution

An historic analysis of Gastonia's population growth indicates that population has grown through natural increase, net migration, and annexation. Natural increase is the difference between the number of births and deaths within the population. Net migration is the most dynamic element of the population change, being the difference between the number of people moving into the area and the number moving out. Annexation is the extension of municipal boundaries to encompass more area (and people).

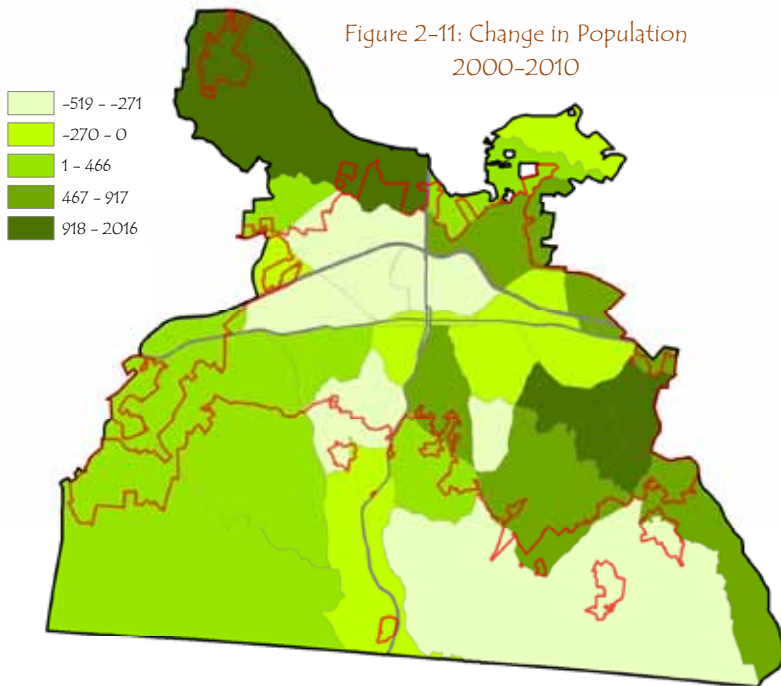


Figure 2-11: Change in Population 2000-2010

Source: US Census Bureau

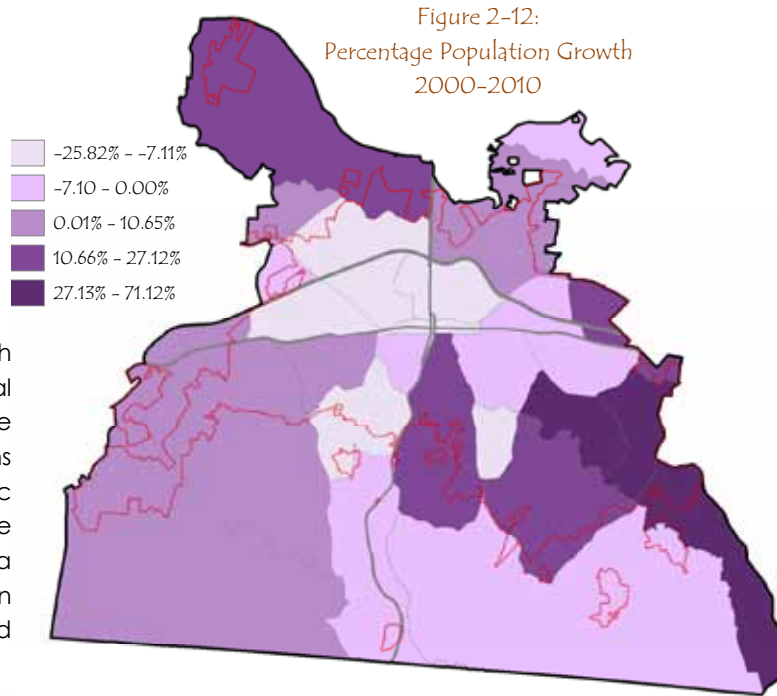


Figure 2-12: Percentage Population Growth 2000-2010

Source: US Census Bureau

These maps show that population growth during the ten year period from 2000 to 2010 followed a suburbanization model, whereby most of the population gains are occurring several miles from the City's core, particularly in the southeastern part of Gastonia and areas outside of Gastonia's southern city limits. Both net and percentage population losses have occurred in the older neighborhoods closer to the City's core. Many areas that show a loss are the textile mill neighborhoods that have lost jobs.

Population Trends

By looking at Census information, we can determine certain trends that are occurring in the region, state, and nation. Examining trends in as age of population, racial composition, educational attainment, housing, and income can help us plan for a changing population.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Population growth has not been equal throughout all areas of the planning area. Figures 2-11 and 2-12 show the population change for Gastonia and adjacent Census tracts between 2000 and 2010 using the most recent available data at the Census block group level. Figure 2-11 shows a net gain or loss of population and Figure 2-12 shows the gain or loss of population from 2000 to 2010 as a percentage of the population residing there in 2000.

These maps show that population growth during the ten year period from 2000 to 2010 followed a



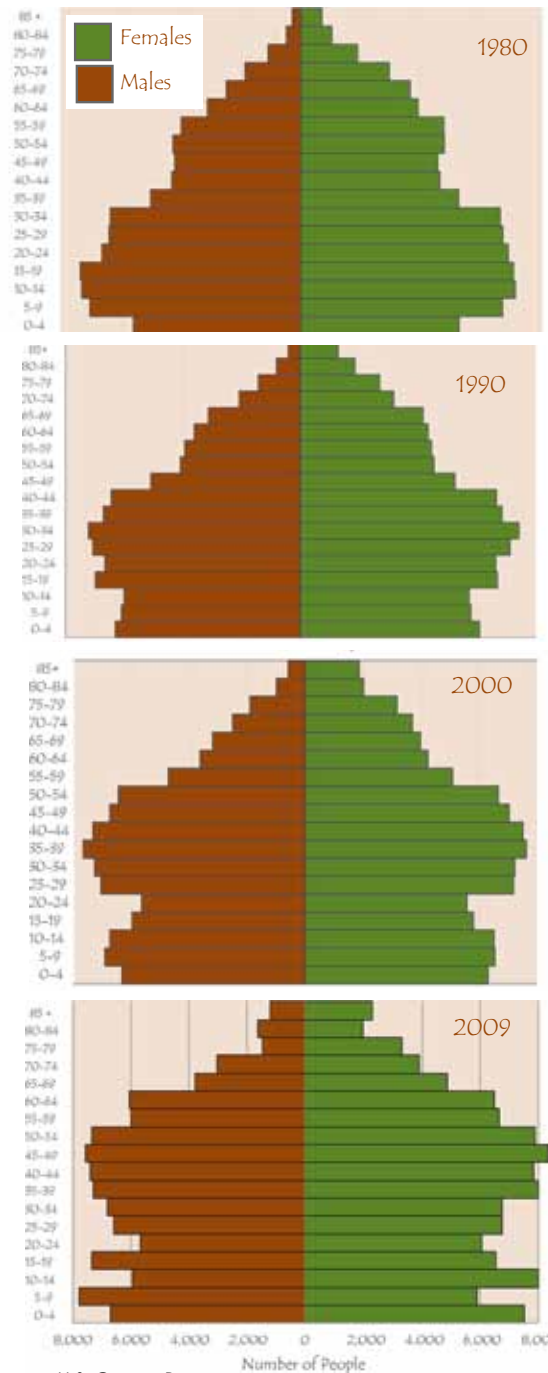
Figure 2-13: Population by Age & Sex, Gaston County 1980-2009

AGE AND GENDER

In 2009, the Census Bureau estimated the median age in Gaston County to be 38.8 years old, which was higher than the median age in North Carolina, which was 36.9. It is interesting to note that between 1980 and 2009 the Gaston County population between ages 0-15 decreased 9.4% from 46,473 to 42,051, while the 55+ population during the same time period increased 69.9% from 24,544 to 41,719. This reflects the general "graying" of the US and state population, which is usually attributed to advances in health care. On the state level, the number of persons 65 and older is projected to rise from just over 10% of the total North Carolina population in 1980 to about 18% by 2030.



In consequence, all other age cohorts are expected to decline in their proportions of the state total. In addition, a large number of baby boomers, the first of whom reached 60 years old in 2006, are now retiring and will possibly be attracted to the warmer climates and lower cost of housing in the South. Thus, southern cities, specifically Gastonia and those in the Charlotte region, should plan for the special needs of the



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

increasing numbers of senior citizens, such as the need for increased healthcare facilities, recreational facilities, housing and transportation, and social services.

A large number of baby boomers, the first of whom reached 60 years old in 2006, are now retiring and will possibly be attracted to the warmer climates and lower cost of housing in the South.

Conversely, metro areas, such as the Charlotte region, tend to attract younger cohorts in search of education, jobs, entertainment, recreation, and culture. Currently Mecklenburg County has one of the lowest median ages in the State (less than 34 years old). Gastonia will need an influx of younger generations for long-term community survival and we could capture some in-migration of this younger adult cohort from Mecklenburg County, given our recreational amenities such as Crowders Mountain State Park and our greenway system. Expanding opportunities for this cohort will become crucial in the next twenty years.

The age and sex population pyramid is a graphical technique for showing the distribution of the population in specified increments, divided by male and female. The pyramids use five year age ranges.

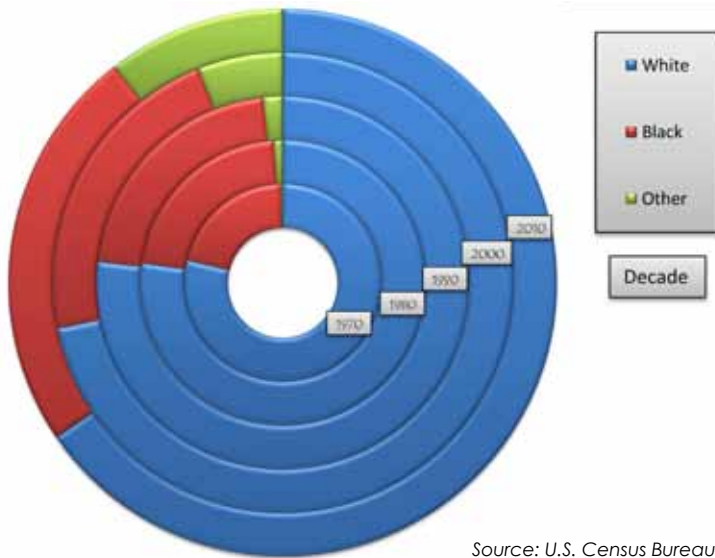
The most striking historic trend is the aging of the baby-boom generation, shown in Figure 2-13 as a bulge in the pyramid rising steadily in age from 1980-2009 and the relatively small number of younger cohorts to fill the gap. These factors will have implications on many aspects of our community, society, and culture in years to come.



RACE AND ETHNICITY

One of the most dramatic changes in Gaston County's demographic history is the rapid change in ethnic composition. For decades the County has been characterized by a population dominated by whites and a smaller, but substantial, proportion of Blacks, and a very small concentration of other races (Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, etc.). Figure 2-14 shows the racial composition of the region between 1970 and 2010. Between 1990 and 2000, the white (non-Hispanic) population in Gaston County grew by 4.5%, while the black (non-Hispanic) population grew by 17.3%, and those of other races grew by 297%. Recently released 2010 Census racial demographic data suggest that the City is following both a regional and state trend and becoming more diverse. Non-white persons represent 40% of the City population, as compared to 33% in 2000. Most of this increase is due to the tremendous growth in the Hispanic population (those white, black, or other races that also identified themselves as Hispanic).

Figure 2-14: Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC, MSA
Race by Region, 1970-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

To address the nation's growing diversity, the 2000 Census allowed respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race and indicate their ethnicity: 1) Hispanic or Latino and 2) Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics are a cultural group, not a race, and in fact many Hispanics are white or black. However, they are distinctive because of their Latino culture, including surnames, language and diet. The migration of Hispanics into the region began in the 1990s and continues today. In 2000, Gastonia's Hispanic population represented 5.5% of the population. In one decade this percentage has grown to 9.6% persons. In fact, 65% of the County's Hispanic population lives in Gastonia. This dramatic 561% increase in Hispanic population between 1990 to 2000 was primarily the result of net migration and not natural growth. Over the past decade, increases in the Hispanic population can be attributed to immigration coupled with high fertility rates. North Carolina's Hispanic population has doubled in the last decade. Of the 33 states with 2010 Census data reported so far, only Alabama experienced an Hispanic increase larger than North Carolina's 111% Hispanic growth. Attracted by the robust economy, the Charlotte MSA ranked second nationally with a 49.8% growth rate in its Hispanic population. Despite this tremendous amount of growth, Hispanics still only make up 5.1% of the region's population.

This trend is very important in determining resources that will be required to meet the special needs (language barriers, cultural differences, etc.) and issues facing the growing Hispanic population within Gastonia, Gaston County, and the Charlotte region, including housing and housing related services, bilingual services, school curriculum and programs, and cultural, social, and employment services.



Attracted by the robust economy, Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC MSA ranked second nationally with a 49.8% growth rate in its Hispanic population. Despite this tremendous amount of growth, Hispanics still only make up 5.1% of the region's population





The growth in the number of minorities living in Gaston County is expected to mirror the growth rate of the state over the next decade as the region urbanizes more.

Also, following the regional trend, Gastonia will continue to become more diverse, with increases in the black, Asian, and Hispanic populations providing the most noticeable growth.

In North Carolina, Hispanics are growing eight times faster than the non-Hispanic population. The Hispanic population rose 111.1 percent from 2000 to 2010, and the ethnic group now accounts for 8.4 percent of the state's population, compared with 4.7 percent in 2000, according to the census data

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is an important factor to consider as the City attempts to diversify its economy and develop programs that will educate the community's workforce. Figure 2-15 indicates the 2009 educational attainment in the Gaston County. Recent estimates show that 26% of the City's population 25 years and older have obtained a high school diploma, which is 2% higher than 1990 figures. Figure 2-16 shows that the entire planning area has seen gains in the percentage of high graduates, with the southeast quarter of the 2025 area showing the highest percentages.

Over the past 30 years, the number of people with both high school degrees and college degrees increased steadily, reflecting the greater demands of the workplace as well as the increasing change from a blue-collar manufacturing and agricultural region to a white-collar service and knowledge-based economy. In Gastonia, the percentage of the population with a high school diploma or higher level of education increased from 72% to 77% between 2000 and 2009 (see Figure 2-17). During the same time period, there was a corresponding increase in the percentage of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher degree, which went from 20% to 21%. Although these numbers continue to increase, they are still somewhat lagging behind the national averages.

Figure 2-15: High School Graduates in the Region, 1970-2009

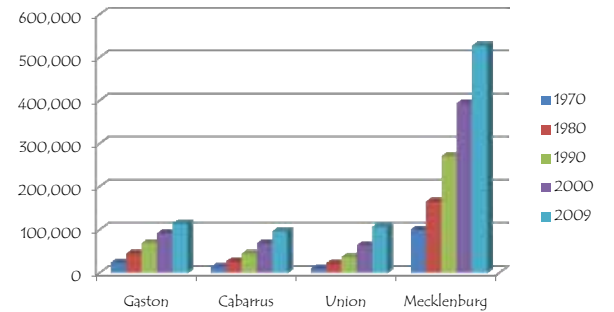


Figure 2-16: High School Graduates, 2000 & 2009

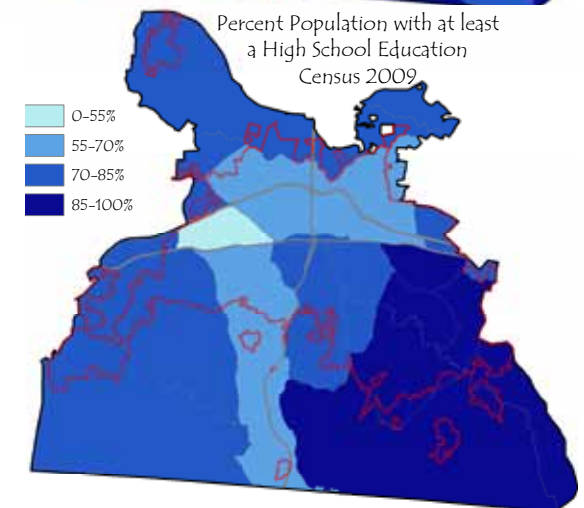
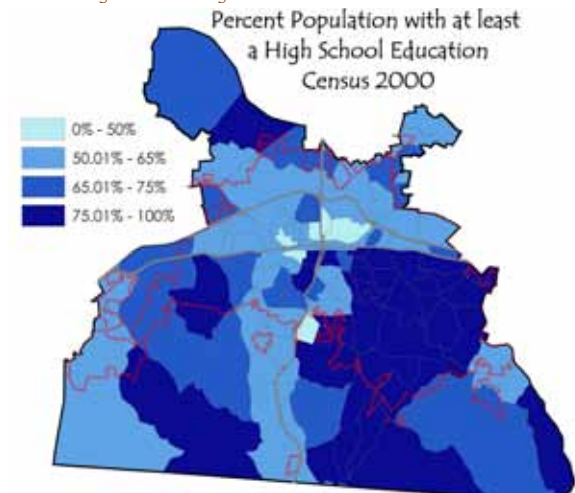


Figure 2-17: Percentage of Population with a High School Diploma or Greater

1990 - 2009

Year	1990	2000	2009*
H.S. or greater	62%	72%	77%
B.A. or greater	16%	20%	21%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

HISTORIC HOUSING TRENDS

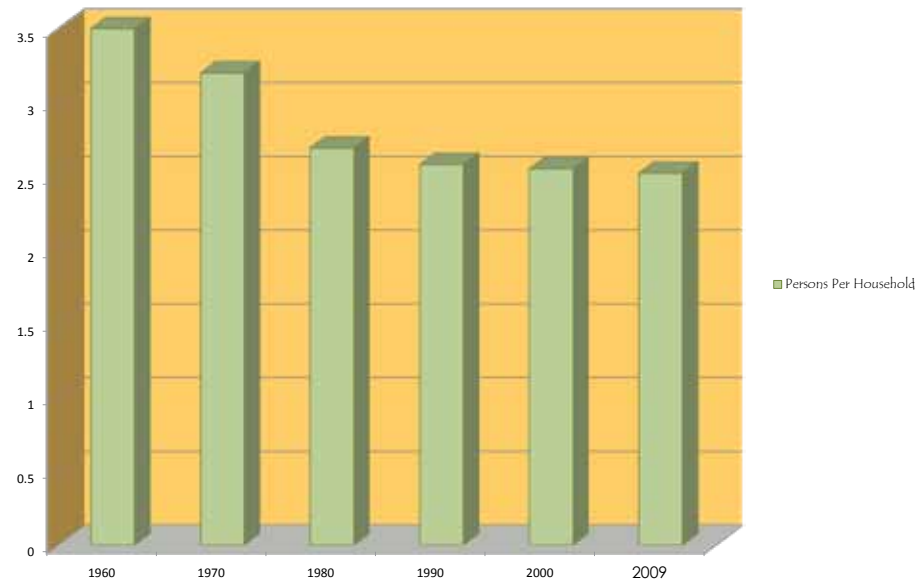
Following national trends, household size has fallen in the region since the 1960s. Figure 2-18 indicates that average household size decreased from 3.49 persons in 1960 to 2.5 persons in 2010 reflecting a dramatic change in the composition of the average household.

The housing market has also been affected, with an increase in new housing suitable for smaller families, such as apartments, condominiums and townhouses.

Housing ownership has increased in the Charlotte region over the last thirty years. The percentage of owner-occupied housing, as apposed to rental housing, has a spatial trend within the region, with greater owner occupancy rates in counties outside of Mecklenburg.

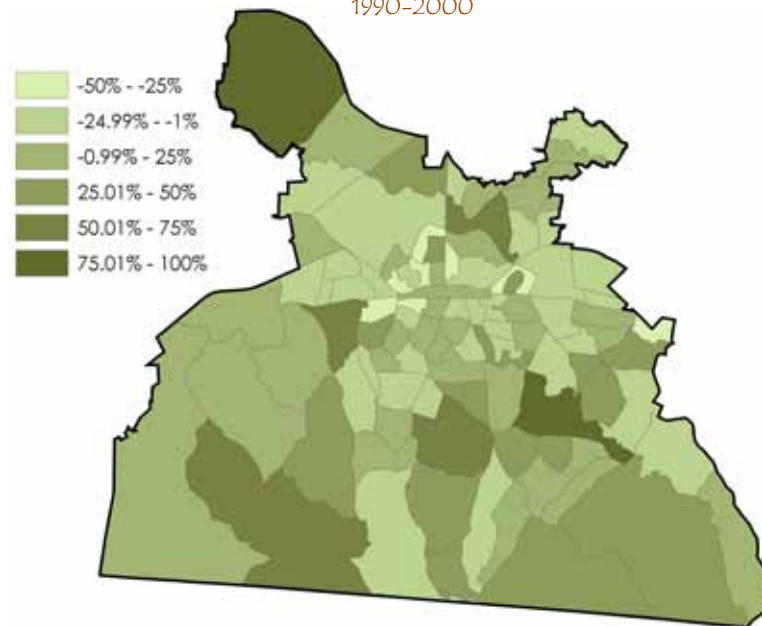
During this time Mecklenburg County's owner occupancy rate has held steady at 60%, but the outlying counties have a somewhat higher owner-occupancy rate, which has increased over time. One reason for the greater owner-occupancy rate outside of Mecklenburg is the more suburban nature of the surrounding counties. Indeed, much of the growth in counties such as Union and Cabarrus has been due to the strong growth outward from the City of Charlotte. This suburban growth has favored

Figure 2-18: Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NC-SC MSA, Average Household Size, 1960-2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

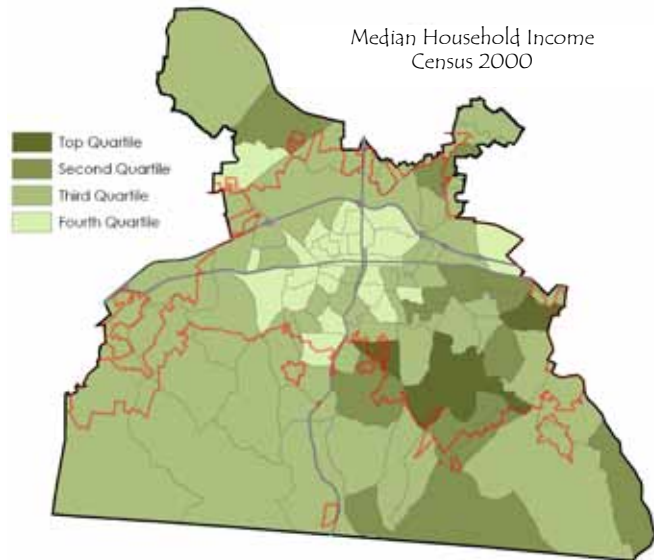
Figure 2-19: Percent Increase in Owner Occupied Housing, 1990-2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



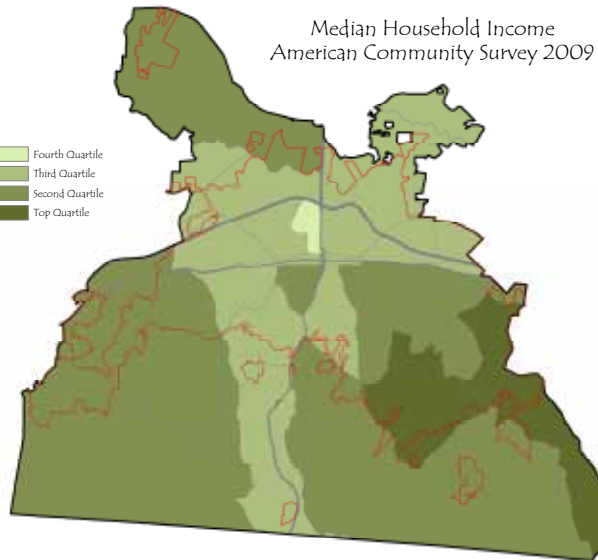
Figure 2-20: Median Household Income, 2000 & 2009



single-family housing, which is typically owner-occupied (see Figure 2-19). In Gastonia, the regional demand for housing has contributed to the growth of new housing developments.

INCOME

In 2009, the estimated median household income in Gastonia was \$38,826, a 5% increase from 2000. Increases in Gastonia median household income were most likely due to the increased growth of affluence in the Southeast sector of the City, steady increases in educational attainment and a greater number of Gastonia residents employed in management positions. While Gastonia's median household income fell below the State and the Charlotte MSA median household incomes, the percentage change from 1990 to 2000 is relatively consistent.



Rather than show the actual income, Figure 2-20 indicates the distribution of the 2000 to 2009 median by income quartiles (25%), by showing the position of each block group relative to the remainder of the County. Those block groups in the top quartile indicate a median household income in the highest 25% for Gaston County for each year.

Figure 2-21: Median Household Income, 2000 and 2009

	2000	2009
Gastonia	\$36,924	\$38,826
Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC MSA	\$46,119	\$53,452
North Carolina	\$39,184	\$45,069

Source: US Census 2000, American Factfinder 2005-2009



Another way to gauge income is to look at poverty, which is the condition of people whose annual family income is less than the poverty line. The poverty line is set at approximately three times the annual cost of a nutritionally adequate diet, varies by family size, and is updated yearly to reflect changes in the consumer price index.

Figure 2-22 indicates the percentage of individuals and families below the poverty level in 2009 for Gastonia and other selected jurisdictions within the region. Gastonia has a comparatively high percentage of people and families living below the poverty level, possibly due to a combination of factors including the loss of textile employment, high to moderate unemployment rates within the last ten years, trends in low educational attainment, and a lower than average median household income. Also, as shown in Figure 2-23 the overall percent of Hispanics living below the poverty level steadily increased from 2000 to 2010.

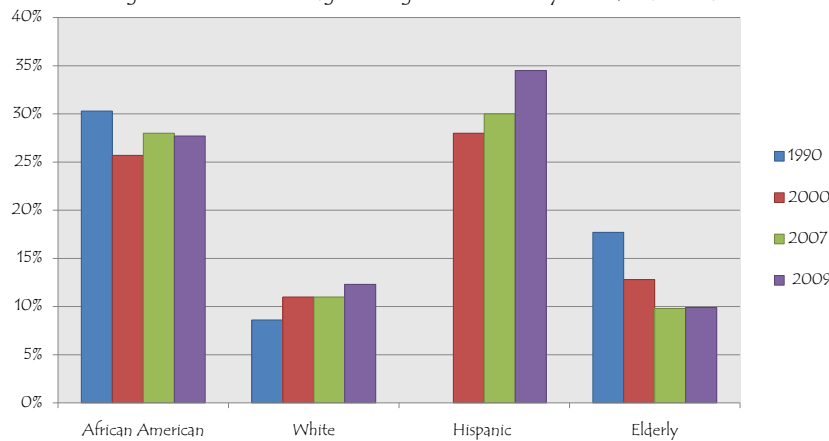
These figures suggest that the City should continue to advance the need for increased secondary education and workforce training as well as promote child-care friendly land use policies.

Figure 2-22: Regional Poverty Status: Percent Below Poverty Level, 2009

Place	Individuals	Families	Female-headed households w/ no husband present	Female-headed households (w/no husband present) with related children under 5 years
Gastonia	18.4%	14.8%	32.3%	55%
Gaston County	15%	11.3%	29.4%	47.3%
Charlotte	12.8%	9.4%	24.8%	34.5%
Concord	11.2%	8.1%	20.2%	23.4%
Monroe	24.9%	20.1%	48.5%	65.1%
Hickory	16.9%	12.1%	28.2%	35.7%
Shelby	22.2%	17.4%	51.3%	86.5%
Rock Hill, SC	18%	13.3%	32.2%	56.4%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2005-2009

Figure 2-23: Percentage Living Below Poverty Level, Gastonia



Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 2-24: Individuals Below Poverty Level

Gastonia	18.4%
Gaston County	15.6%
Charlotte	12.8%
Concord	11.2%
Monroe	24.9%
Hickory	16.9%
Shelby	22.2%
Rock Hill, SC	18.0%

Source: American Community Survey, 2009



POPULATION PROJECTIONS: HOW ARE THEY CALCULATED?

Population projections for Gastonia and the 2025 planning area were obtained using a "step-down/step up" method. This included taking population information for a larger geographic area and allocating that population to smaller geographic areas, and taking known population data at the smallest geographic levels and working upward to settle on realistic population projections.

The projections were created as a first step in developing a regional travel demand model, which became necessary to combat regional air quality issues. The Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation (CRAFT) is an entity consisting of regional transportation agencies (metropolitan planning organizations) serving the Cabarrus-Rowan Urban Area, Gaston Urban Area, Mecklenburg-Union Urban Area, Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area, and the Lake Norman and Rocky River rural planning organizations. The Planning Department, in conjunction with CRAFT, prepared the projections based on the geography known as traffic analysis zones (TAZ). TAZs are primarily used to project future traffic levels and flows (vehicle miles traveled) to determine both future transportation needs (roads, transit, etc.) and future air pollution from motor vehicles.

Because these projections will be subject to scrutiny by governmental agencies, environmental groups, the development community, and the public, considerable effort went into making sure the projections are as accurate as possible. CRAFT hired a consultant demographer to develop an updated population for the region using national and sub-national demographic and economic trends. The regional total was "stepped down" to provide county totals. Simultaneously, each MPO generated new traffic analysis zones and created their own county totals by "stepping up" the future population of each TAZ, based on historic projections, trends, and current development and building permit information, founded on their local knowledge. As part of this process, each MPO brought in experts from the public and private sectors, such as real estate brokers, builders, developers, and local permitting officers, to provide input on the projections, as land availability and real estate trends were important considerations. Through careful examination, critique, and additional research, reconciliation was eventually reached between the county totals produced by the MPOs and the county totals produced by the consultant demographer. The TAZ totals were adjusted accordingly to match the reconciled county total.

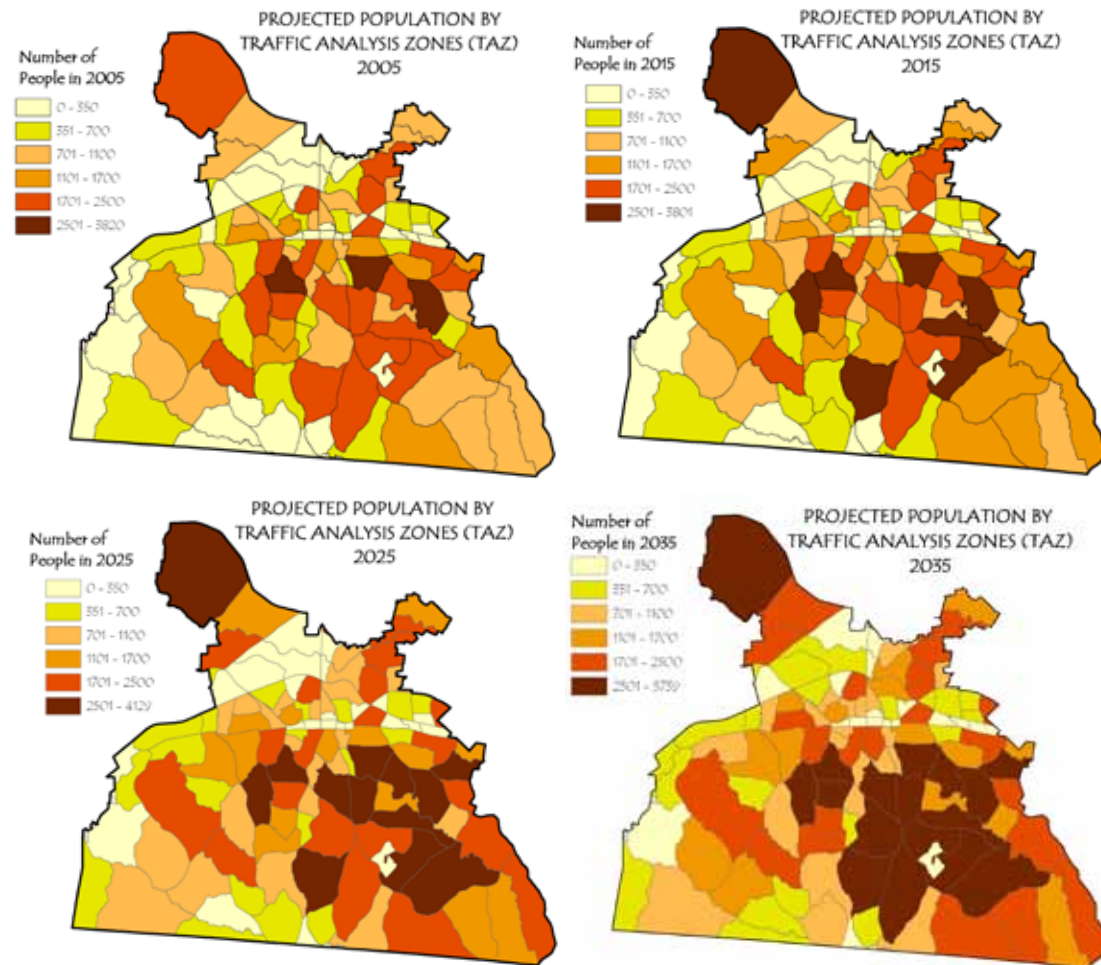


Population Projections

It should be noted that any population projection is a prediction of the future based upon what we know now. Projections are subject to a number of variables. Population growth can be enhanced through concentrated effort and investment, such as through the extension of water and sewer lines, road improvements, the location of major employers, and community marketing. Conversely, a major downturn in the economy or local decisions that create missed opportunities, can depress the rate of growth. The key to population projections is to make an educated prediction, based on trends in the city, region, and nation, while taking into account the possibility of a departure from those trends.

Figure 2-25 depicts the population in 2000 and population growth projections for years 2010, 2020, and 2030. The maps indicate several future growth trends. First, it is clear that we can expect that Gastonia's greatest rate of growth will continue in a suburban manner in the southeastern part of the Gastonia area, as has been the case for the last 30 or more years. Although City efforts to shift some growth to other sectors of the City will continue to be successful, it is doubtful that our inherent tendency to grow toward Charlotte will be reversed, barring the complete exhaustion of land and growth-supporting public facilities. Second, the area between Union Road and US 321 South will grow rapidly over the next ten years. Third, the area closer into the City between Garrison and Hudson Boulevards will increase dramatically in population, followed by the next outer ring, fanning out in an arc between Union Road and Lowell-Bethesda Road. Finally, areas between New Hope Road, Kendrick Road and Beaty/Union-New Hope Road will continue to grow and fill in. Other parts of the planning area that will receive moderate rates of growth include: areas near Crowders Mountain, areas between Gastonia and Bessemer City and west of NC 275, and areas northeast of the City along Long Creek.

Figure 2-25: Population Change by TAZ, 2005 to 2035



SECTOR POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The planning area is divided into eight sectors in order to focus on smaller areas for land use study and planning. These sectors, as seen in Figure 2-26, are: Central, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast, East, Northeast, Garden, and Crowders. The population projections for these areas are shown in Figures 2-26 and 2-27.

Figure 2-26: Planning Area Sectors

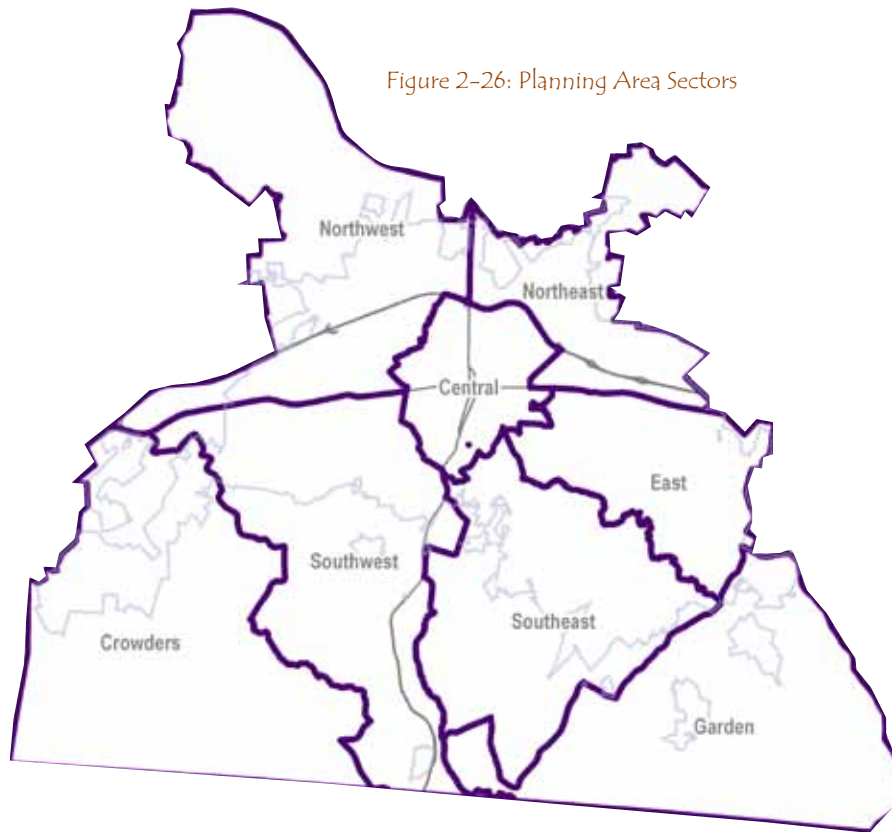


Figure 2-26: Sector Population Projections

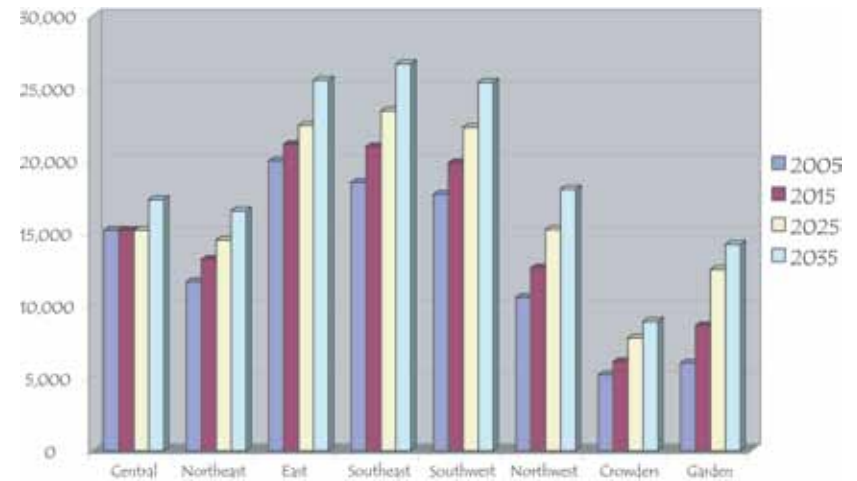


Figure 2-27: Sector Population Projections

	2005	2015	2025	2035	% Growth 2005-2035
Central	15,221	15,200	15,219	17,330	14%
Northeast	11,674	13,204	14,546	16,564	42%
East	20,013	21,151	22,459	25,575	28%
Southeast	18,514	20,978	23,454	26,708	44%
Southwest	17,691	19,870	22,327	25,424	44%
Northwest	10,578	12,612	15,264	18,048	71%
Crowders	5,224	6,136	7,789	8,927	71%
Garden	6,040	8,628	12,509	14,244	136%

