

9

INTRODUCTION

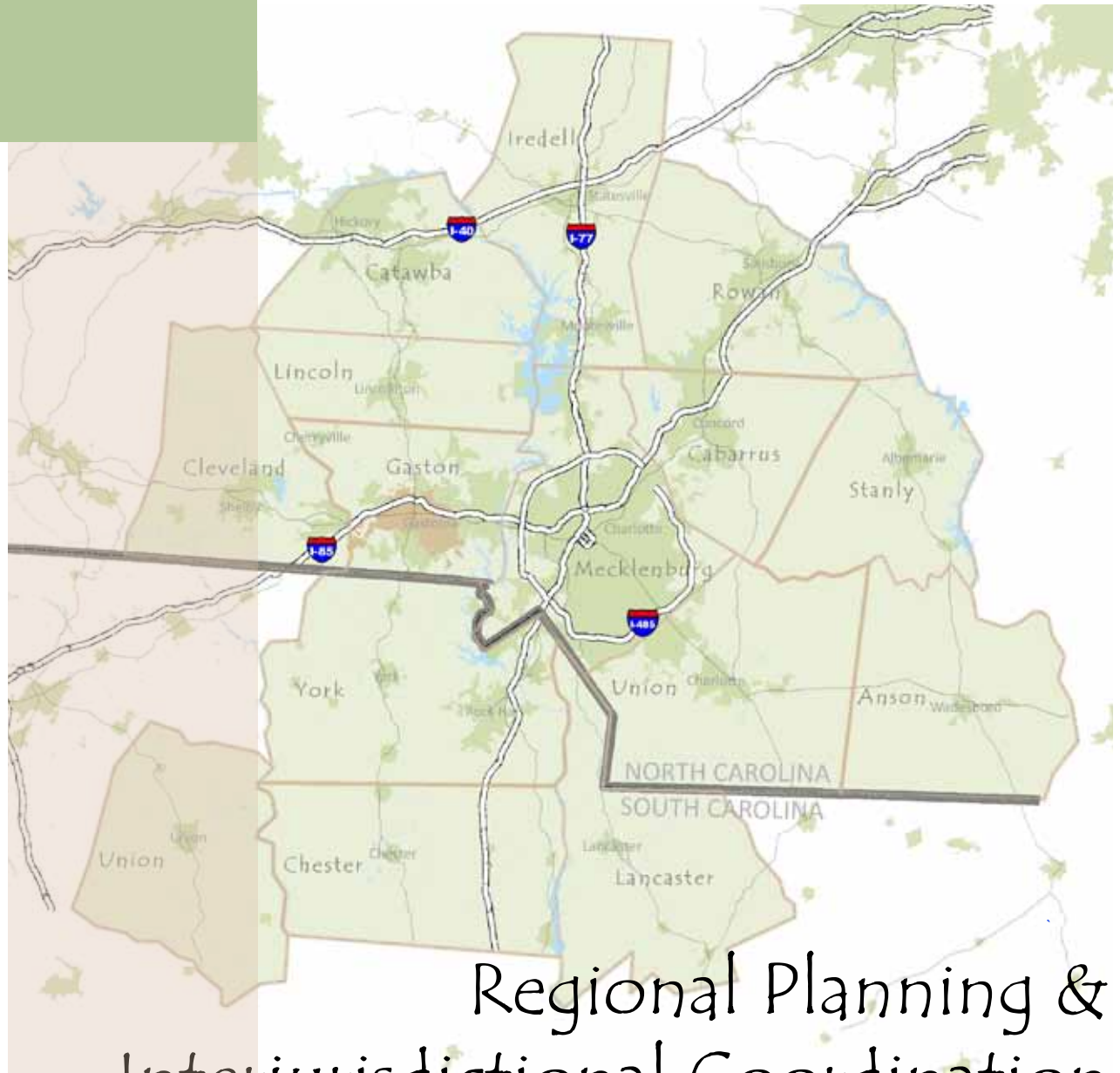
REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS

EMERGING REGIONAL ISSUES

LOOKING AHEAD

ISSUES

OBJECTIVES & TOOLS



Regional Planning & Interjurisdictional Coordination



REGIONAL PLANNING

9

Regional Planning Goal

To improve the quality of life for residents in Gastonia and throughout the region by promoting increased multi-jurisdictional communication and cooperation in order to recognize and solve problems that transcend the corporate boundaries.

Introduction

The Greater Charlotte region consists of 14 counties in North and South Carolina. The counties are Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union in North Carolina, and Chester, Lancaster and York in South Carolina. In 2007, the region had a population of approximately 2.2 million people. The region is characterized by rapid population growth that has continued since 1960. Since the 1960s, the population has grown by nearly 200,000 people every decade, with the figure increasing to 400,000 in the 1990s. This trend has continued into the current decade, with the region adding approximately 200,000 people from 2000 to 2007. Projections to the year 2030 indicate that growth is expected to remain robust.

While rapid growth has brought the region an array of remarkable opportunities, it has also presented difficult challenges. It has forced the jurisdictions within the Greater Charlotte region to recognize that they can no longer act in isolation. The effects and impacts of urbanization, concerns about climate change, shifting economies, global economic competition, and new transportation realities are issues that are far-reaching in scope. Regional partners are beginning to address these issues within a coordinated framework. Partnerships are being formed within private and public entities to reach a common understanding of how to better protect the region's natural, cultural, economic, and historic resources, and

how best to move forward with building a region that meets the needs of every citizen.

Understanding that the benefits and challenges of growth affect the entire bi-state region, Centralina and Catawba Regional Councils of Government, and the Charlotte Regional Partnership, decided to address these issues in a proactive, collaborative fashion. They began the CONNECT regional vision process and created a prioritized Action Agenda, based on regional collaboration and policy-driven consensus on regional interests and issues. The project involved two regional planning councils of government, and a 37-member task force representing the interest of local, county, and sub-regional governmental entities as well as civic and non-governmental organizations. The process involved two phases. Phase 1: Taking Stock, a comprehensive review of 75 plans, including transportation studies, land use plans, and comprehensive plans to identify shared values and policies, was concluded in November 2006. The review revealed that the region has a strong foundation upon which to build a vision, and that each jurisdiction share six core values. These core values express the desire that the regional vision must be responsive to the ecological, economic, historic, cultural, and political realities of the bi-state region. These are:

- Sustainable, well-managed growth that maintains a high quality of life, protects open space and environmental quality, retains the natural character of the region, and maximizes the efficiency of infrastructure investments.



- Increased collaboration among jurisdictions on issues that transcend boundaries including growth management, transportation, and environmental concerns, in a manner that recognizes both regional and local needs.
- A strong diverse economy that supports a wide variety of businesses.
- A safe and healthy environment with good air and water quality.
- High quality educational opportunities available to all residents.
- Enhanced social equity through community leadership and cooperative volunteerism.

The City of Gastonia is committed to working in collaboration with regional partners to develop a regional framework for planning on all levels. The City further recognizes it does not operate in isolation and activities within its corporate boundaries impact other jurisdictions within the region, and it is committed to further examining regional planning issues for the Greater Charlotte region. The specific policies and actions described in this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan fall under the broader goal of working within a regional framework to demonstrate the City's commitment towards promoting and creating policies which fall within the realm of shared values.

GASTONIA'S PLACE IN THE REGION

Understanding Gastonia's place in a regional context is fundamental to the development of the Comprehensive Plan. When planning for Gastonia's future, the location of the City and the interdependence of the City with other geographic and economic regions is of prime importance.

Gastonia is the largest of 15 municipalities within Gaston County. Historically, Gastonia was known as the preeminent manufacturing area of the Charlotte region, a textile manufacturing center with an emphasis on yarn

and thread mills. Over the years, the manufacturing base within Gastonia diversified to include machinery, transportation equipment, precision equipment and other industries. Within the last 10 years many of the remaining textile manufacturers and some of the smaller transportation and equipment-related manufacturers closed their doors, leaving vacant industrial sites. Gastonia has seen tremendous growth in retailing, drawing shoppers from Cleveland, Lincoln, York and Mecklenburg Counties. Mecklenburg County is the core county and Charlotte is the core city. There are three counties in North Carolina: Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, and two counties in South Carolina: Union and York. Both public and private entities use the Charlotte MSA data to measure the social and economic growth rates for the region and to track trends.

Regional Collaborations

The Comprehensive Plan's vision of creating "Our Place in the Future" cannot be realized without proper coordination with Gaston County and other jurisdictions within the Greater Charlotte region. Each individual jurisdiction's ability to achieve its planning goals and create visible, lasting change depends on the success of other jurisdictions within the region. The list below details regional collaborations for education, economic development, environmental protection, transportation, land use and development.

Figure 9-1: The 15-County Bi-State Region



Source: Centralina Council of Governments

"Today's business of being mayor is not just the business of a city, but more so now an entire region."
 – Jennifer Stultz, Mayor of Gastonia



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Charlotte Regional Partnership, a nonprofit, public/private economic development organization is the leading association within the Greater Charlotte region working to attract new employers to the region and build regional collaboration to maximize competitiveness. Founded in 1991, the group works to bring together local governments, civic groups and the business community to market and promote "regionalism" as a necessary tool to foster planned growth and prosperity for the Charlotte region. There are also a variety of organizations working within Gaston County on economic development issues and initiatives. The two largest organizations are the Gaston County Economic Development Commission, and the Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce. The City of Gastonia coordinates with the Gastonia Downtown Development Corporation for economic development projects located with Gastonia's Downtown. Continued coordination with these groups as well as ongoing communication with adjoining jurisdictions will ensure better management and future successes in economic development and job creation within Gaston County and the greater Charlotte region.



It is important for the City to encourage sustainable growth and development while maintaining and improving quality of life standards for existing and future populations.

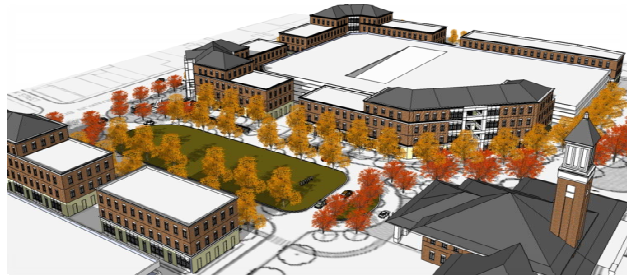
GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

The Centralina Council of Governments facilitates planning processes with regional partners to address regional growth and development issues. The Charlotte Bi-State Regional Visioning Project, called CONNECT, is the most recent localized planning effort. Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life (SEQL) was also a regional collaborative effort which addresses shared environmental and quality of life values related to water and air quality and sustainable growth. In many regards, SEQL activities laid the groundwork for ongoing collaboration in the region. Within Gaston County, many agencies collaborate to address growth and development related issues such

as land use and housing. They are: City of Gastonia Community and Neighborhood Resources Division, Gaston County Planning Department, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services, North Carolina Housing Finance Agency, Preservation North Carolina, various public utility entities, and other civic and nongovernmental organizations. The City will continue to seek ways to preserve what is valued and create a sustainable, well-managed land development pattern that maintains a high quality of life for existing and future populations.

TRANSPORTATION

The City of Gastonia coordinates with the Gaston Urban Area MPO and NCDOT for transportation planning. Our goal is to develop a multi-modal transportation system. NCDOT has primary responsibility for the maintenance of interstates, state highways and bridges. However, The Gaston Urban Area MPO is a multi-jurisdictional planning agency consisting of twelve local governments, NCDOT, USDOT, and other providers of transportation services. The MPO maintains the region's 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, which includes plans for not only automobiles, but also freight, rail, transit, bicycles, greenways, and pedestrians.



Conceptual multi-modal center in downtown Gastonia



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

In 2000, elected officials from across the Charlotte MSA region, along with the states of North Carolina and South Carolina and EPA, developed an initiative called Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life (SEQL) through a \$275,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. The initiative's objective was to promote a healthy environment, a strong economy, and a high quality of life for citizens of the 15-county Charlotte, NC - Rock Hill, SC region. The SEQL Grant has provided an integrated strategy that is used to address quality of life and environmental issues and further supports the region's efforts to develop integrated, long-range plans to ensure economic development and a positive quality of life for its future planning. SEQL is not just for local governments; it is a partnership with the business community, civic and environmental groups as well as individuals. A number of programs have been implemented, such as the partnership with the Carolinas Clean Air Coalition to develop a program for schools on health issues related to school bus emissions throughout the region.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Gastonia is served by the Gaston County Public School System, which is the seventh largest school district in the state. In 2008 it had an enrollment of 32,444 students in its 53 schools: 30 elementary schools, one intermediate school, 11 middle schools, nine high schools, one special needs school, and one alternative school. The district has approximately 6,500 teachers and staff, and thousands of volunteers working together to educate the children of Gaston County.

While there are over 36 institutions of higher learning, within the region, many City and county residents attend Gaston College, a state and locally controlled, coeducational

institution offering occupational and two-year, principally bachelor's-creditable degrees and a co-educational liberal arts college offering bachelor's and master's degrees. The North Carolina Community College System New and Expanding Industry (NEIT) Program provides customized training assistance in support of new, full-time production positions created in the State of North Carolina, thereby enhancing the growth potential of companies located in the state while simultaneously preparing North Carolina's workforce with the skills essential to successful employment in emerging industries.

OTHER REGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS

In addition to other regional activities, planning professionals representing almost every jurisdiction within Gaston County meet on a monthly basis to discuss countywide planning issues and activities within the region on a number of regional planning activities. Several public services are operated on a countywide basis—such as the public school system, public libraries, storm water,

Gaston County Schools is the first school district in the state to produce its own biodiesel fuel for use in its buses. School officials are recycling used vegetable oil from school cafeterias, recycling centers, restaurants and large manufacturers that produce waste oil. When the program is fully up and running, it will produce 120,000 gallons a year and save the county \$250,000 annually, following a nationwide trend of using alternative fuel to save money and cut toxic emissions.



North Carolina offers a free New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT) Program in Gaston County

- ◊ Companies creating 12 or more new production jobs are eligible.
- ◊ Gaston College, a leading community college, will create custom training programs for qualified employers.
- ◊ Courses are taught by qualified instructors, at the work site or on campus.



Gaston College Bio-Tech concentration





Gaston County G-CAMP meeting, a monthly forum for planners across Gaston County



Regional planning efforts must address both rural and urban issues.

hazardous waste collection, and EMS services—and require local input for facility planning. Undoubtedly, continued regional planning forums will be needed to meet the challenge of creating, implementing and funding a shared vision. The time frame for completing such work extends into the implementation period of this Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, as regional partners come together to address these issues and, as strategies become available, they should be considered for incorporation into this Plan.

Cooperation provides a forum to integrate common goals and establish a responsible regional community. The results of working collaboratively, and sharing experiences to common regional challenges, allow all concerned to benefit. The lack of a range of employment and housing opportunities, public facility sizing, and scheduling of transportation improvements, concurrent with development are issues that could be better managed through a coordinated approach.

Emerging Regional Planning Issues

Like many of the country's most successful urban regions, the Greater Charlotte bi-state region is in a critical time of transition. Many regional issues arose over the past 20 years as a result of rapid population growth; most issues have been identified, but not properly addressed. This section will discuss some of the most prevailing regional issues and policy implications we face now and into the future.

The region is connected and united by cultural identity, economic interests, geographic features, and common developmental and environmental concerns. Since the 1950s, the need for regional planning has grown from changing social and economic phenomena

affecting local communities and regions throughout the United States. In particular, population growth, housing development, and other state and national social and economic trends are subjecting the Greater Charlotte bi-state region and its communities to internal migration and travel patterns never experienced before. Over the past 20 years, the Charlotte bi-state region has been a popular destination and growth has occurred at extraordinary rates. The resulting growth is creating a single, large, mixed rural and urban complex stretching from Iredell County on the North across the state line to York County, South Carolina. Dispersed development and diffusion, in turn, is creating complex developmental problems, inefficient accessibility to public transit and other community services. Careless depletion of valuable, irreplaceable agricultural and natural resources, and many environmental problems, also cause concern. Local governments of the region are faced with challenges of growing with nearby neighbors, weaving together the fabric of community. Local governments across the region are also learning that coordination of land development patterns and cooperation in service provision can offer mutual benefits.

While such growth and demographic changes will bring challenges, the Charlotte MSA, through its system of regional and local planning, understands the need for a shared responsibility for maintaining regional quality of life standards to meet these challenges. A number of significant issues in the region are likely to become more prominent as growth continues. While these issues will not dictate a particular city's, or county's, given destiny, they are harbingers of planning trends and development forces that will impact the collective future of the region.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS & GROWTH MANAGEMENT

As explained in the Growth Patterns & Directions Chapter,



the region is projected to add 400,000 people in each of the next two decades. With this growth has come increased prosperity – new jobs, rising incomes, added tax revenue, and higher property values. However, local governments within the region have discovered that accommodating growth is not always easy. Beginning in 1998, land development patterns quickly consumed land at a faster rate than overall population growth. Planners soon discovered that land use and development patterns throughout the region discouraged economic development within the urban core and downtown areas. Increased population also meant traffic congestion and commuting times had increased. Also, sewer and water systems spread throughout watersheds and across local jurisdictional boundaries, and jurisdictions across the region experienced shortages in safe, affordable housing as prices for new and existing houses rose at rates faster than median incomes. These conditions continue to strain local, and county budgets and they struggle to find ways to pay for the services and other costs related to growth.

Demographic changes have posed new realities for the region, such as shrinking household size, new service needs for an aging population, and a more ethnically diverse citizenry. New development has meant increased demand for costly urban services and increased pressure on vital natural resources. Population growth will result in the conversion of significant amounts of vacant land to residential, commercial, and industrial development. While coordination with Gaston County and other jurisdictions within the county led to development of the Unified Development Ordinance, the City will need to continue to work with adjacent municipalities to develop a growth management strategy. The City should continue to work to resolve development and growth management issues having impacts transcending the City's political jurisdiction, by participating in regional Technical Advisory

Committees. Issues surrounding water quality will be coordinated with Gaston County and other agencies having appropriate jurisdiction. Issues of regional and state significance will be coordinated with the regional or state agencies having jurisdictional authority.

TRANSPORTATION

Among the long list of transportation issues facing the region resulting from increasing population and the region's sprawling development patterns are unmanageable congestion, longer travel times and trip lengths, increasing energy consumption, declining air and water quality, increasing traffic safety problems, increasing maintenance and construction costs, and, lost habitat and natural areas. Urban highways, roads, and mass transit systems cover multiple jurisdictions within an urban area and impact local land use development. This overlap creates the need for coordination among all planning stakeholders within the region. With the effects of the economy felt by all, decisions about where to invest limited transportation funding are becoming harder to obtain. Regional partners will continue to explore ways to improve the existing transportation systems and target investments towards the creation of a multi-modal system balanced for every citizen in the region.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

As the region grew over the past 20 years, so did environmental issues related to rapid urbanization. Green infrastructure is a key component of the region's quality of life and economic competitiveness, including natural resources, environmental quality and open spaces. Regional partners have been engaged in a consistent battle to curtail loss of open space, protection of farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, parks, recreational areas, watersheds, and scenic views.

Changing demographics associated with increased life expectancy, an aging population, retirement of the baby boomers, more immigrants, changes in the ethnic make-up, and generational diversity are expected to create new demands on municipal and transportation services.



Figure 9-2: Regional Education Trends, Population 25 and Older

		Gastonia	Gaston Co.	North Carolina
Population 25 years and over	Total	46,045	137,431	5,964,892
	Less than 9th grade	10%	8%	6%
	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	11%	14%	11%
	High school graduates (includes equivalency)	28%	31%	29%
	Some college, no degree	22%	21%	20%
	Associate's Degree	7%	8%	8%
	Bachelor's Degree	15%	12%	17%
	Graduate or professional degree	7%	6%	9%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

“Environmental awareness, or environmental action, is not a turf issue. It is something that we all have to address and work towards solving.” – Jennifer Stultz, Mayor of Gastonia

ECONOMIC SHIFTS

Undoubtedly, over the past 20 years, the Greater Charlotte region has grown a strong economy with diversified businesses, healthy urban centers, excellent accessibility, a strong distribution network, and effective universities and community colleges. The region boasts a strong banking center, headquarters of several Fortune 500 companies, a major share of the nation's motor sports industry, and hundreds of small business success stories. This is a diverse region and every county and jurisdiction has experienced varying degrees of success and challenges. However,

AIR QUALITY

Over the past 10 years, there has been an emerging sense of urgency regarding air quality. Regional partners understand that environmental pollutants do not recognize political or geographical boundaries. As explained in the Environmental Quality Chapter, eight of the region's 15 counties have been designated non-attainment for the eight-hour ozone standards. Poor air quality has a dual affect on the region; 1) it compromises the quality of life due to the health implications that come from inhaling air pollutants and the damage to the environment, and 2) puts the region at risk of losing federal transportation funding due to its non-attainment status.

recent changes in the economic climate suggest other areas of the economy, such as the financial sector, are vulnerable and communities should strive to create a more balanced economic sector not too heavily focused on one sector. Within the region, many counties are in a state of crisis due to large layoffs and record high unemployment levels, while other counties' are simply experiencing slow growth. However, the region is poised to rebound and has a common desire for continued economic growth. One key strategy is to develop innovative programs and partnerships to retrain former textile factory workers to work in the knowledge based business that are locating throughout the region. The region commonly recognizes workforce training is an essential component in the overall economic development strategy to help workers adjust to the current job market, and to prepare jobs that may emerge in the new economy.

ENSURING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Population shifts have placed strains on the county's ability to adequately balance the need to build more schools while maintaining the infrastructure of existing schools. In 2001, the county passed an \$89 million school bond that provided funding to expand, renovate, and construct new schools throughout the county. The school board crafted a two-part plan, and in Phase I, many of the schools were renovated and expanded. In Phase II, the district plans to construct additional schools, but locations have not yet been determined. A new school often stimulates significant traffic and residential development near the new school site. Given this fact, it is imperative that City work closely with Gaston County Schools. The educational structure and current funding levels cannot keep pace with the increased needs of a changing demographic. Inter-jurisdictional coordination on issues related to funding for capital costs of school renovation, expansion, and new construction is needed for these important assets to be maintained.

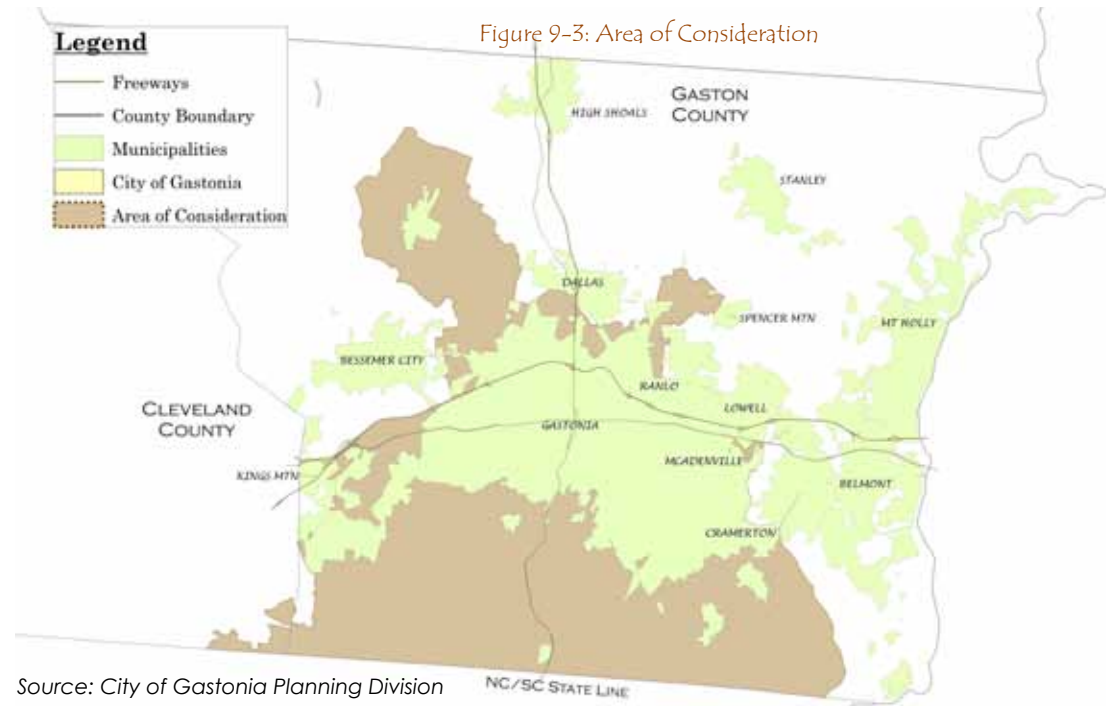


A growing community places greater demands on the school system, creating a need for more or expanded schools. Working together to find creative solutions to address the educational needs of the citizenry takes vision, leadership, and skill and will be essential for providing a high quality of life for the future.

ANNEXATION

Annexation is a necessary means to provide for orderly urban growth, expansion of services, and a stable source of revenue. The entire community benefits from improved health and safety of areas with adequate urban services. North Carolina State law establishes the basic framework for a municipality to expand through annexation. The various methods and procedures by which annexation may be accomplished and the qualification criteria an area must meet in order to be considered for annexation are set forth in the State annexation statutes. Cities are the basic provider of essential governmental services needed to support urbanized areas. In return for the ability to annex, municipalities must extend local urban services such as police and fire protection, water and sewer lines, recreational services, solid waste collection and support for the local public street system.

Each municipality may develop its own annexation program within the guidelines and procedures set by the State's legislation. The City of Gastonia regularly uses two methods of annexation: 1) Petition annexation and 2) Involuntary or city-initiated annexation. The large number of incorporated places surrounding Gastonia limits the areas that are developed and open to annexation by the City. Agreements have been negotiated with all adjoining jurisdictions that determine who will annex land around Gastonia. The City will need to continue to review its annexation agreements and coordinate with adjoining municipalities to update them as necessary.



Looking Ahead

Over the past few years, the Charlotte region has made enormous strides in opening and maintaining communications regarding regional growth and development issues. Specifically, increased communication has led to new policies addressing issues related to population growth, economic shifts, transportation and air quality. However, the current housing crisis, coupled with a general downturn in the economy and resultant job losses, has impacted all sectors of the community, presenting a new set of issues, the effects of which are likely to be far greater than in previous economic downturns. Prior to the housing and economic crisis, regional partners were struggling with ways to manage resources and control rapid growth and development.

This map indicates the "area of consideration" or sphere of influence – an area around the city limits of Gastonia where future annexation into the city would be considered if conditions were conducive.



New realities have led to the discovery of new issues centered on declining revenues. Public, civic, and private organizations have been forced to make tough decisions forever changing the way in which each operates. Cooperation and coordination will be essential, since recovery requires active dialogue at every level, and commitment to long term goals. Specifically, for local governments, it calls for controlling costly infrastructure spending in suburban fringe areas, looking seriously at alternatives to traditional transportation modes, and using existing utility capacities more effectively. Furthermore, regional cooperation should expand in the areas of recreation and open space planning, housing, water supply, wastewater treatment, and solid waste disposal. Gastonia should seek to maintain its leadership role within the region, and increase its coordination efforts with regional partners encouraging even higher levels of stakeholder participation in future activities.



Issues

There are many planning and regional growth management issues, such as transportation and water quality management, that transcend jurisdictional boundaries. The environmental long term effects of a sprawling development pattern, lack of transportation funding, and scheduling of transportation improvements concurrent with development are all issues that could be better managed through a coordinated approach.

- The City of Gastonia has a long history of close inter-jurisdictional coordination between Gaston County and adjacent counties and municipalities. Regional planning has been an effort coordinated through the Centralina and Catawba Councils of government. In order for Gastonia to create a high quality of life for its citizens and address specific growth and development related issues, we must continue to reach across jurisdictional and governmental boundaries for effective solutions. Monthly staff review meetings and cooperation on development issues, as well as monthly attendance at meetings by a liaison planner from the county point to ongoing coordination and a close relationship between the City and County.
- Land use patterns throughout the region require long commutes resulting in an imbalance of services, jobs and housing. For many people concerned with the quality of urban life, the continuing outward explosion of urban growth patterns is a problem that needs a solution. Development patterns are inextricably linked to open space preservation, mobility options, and public service provisions. Jurisdictions across the region are recognizing the need for more compact, pedestrian friendly developments, which offer a greater use of mixes. The financial cost of supporting current land development patterns is greater than most communities can afford.
- Air pollution exceeds healthy levels on many days each year throughout the region. Along with increased population in cities and surrounding counties comes more cars, trucks, and industrial and commercial operations, generally resulting in more pollution. Not only does poor air quality compromise quality of life, but it threatens the future potential of the region to receive funding from federal sources for infrastructure improvement projects. The Charlotte region must collectively find ways of improving air quality, especially during this period of rapid growth when infrastructure needs become more critical.
- Over the past ten years, the region has seen huge losses of manufacturing jobs in textile and furniture businesses. Many counties throughout the region are in a state of crisis due to large layoffs and record high unemployment levels, while other counties are simply experiencing slow growth. Partnerships should be strengthened to address the new economic realities and help prepare citizens for the changing economy.
- With higher per-capita carbon emission rates than three-fourths of U.S. regions, the Charlotte region is facing critical environmental challenges. Regional partners are addressing environmental impacts through local action in an ad hoc fashion. In order to properly address environmental issues that affect the region's quality of life, partners must work cooperatively toward implementing air and water quality environmental policies on all levels.

ISSUES



ISSUES

- During the housing boom the region discovered that the result of sprawling development patterns could mean failure during times of resource constraint. Also, the melt down of the housing market coupled with the economic crisis caused a fundamental shift in the desire of people on where they live and work. Many local governments across the region have seen drastic reductions in tax revenues due to the economic crisis. Unemployed and impoverished workers pay less in income taxes and also purchase less, reducing sales tax receipts. While, property and business taxes have also been driven down by the foreclosure and financial crises. Regional leaders must acknowledge that future development will be sustainable only if the natural resource land is protected and if new growth is concentrated in existing population centers or suitable areas served by appropriate infrastructure.
- The revitalization of older, industrial cities starts with local leaders, who must develop and articulate their own vision for success, and the means by which to collaboratively realize it.



Objectives & Tools

Objective 1

Continue coordination of Development and Growth Management Issues.

Tools

- a) The City shall resolve development and growth management issues having impacts transcending the City's political jurisdiction, by participating in the COG CONNECT Advisory Committees.
- b) Issues involving Mount Island Lake water quality shall be coordinated with Gaston County and other agencies having appropriate jurisdiction. Issues of regional and state significance shall be coordinated with the regional or State agencies having jurisdictional authority.
- c) Improve the communication and coordination of the planning and development permit process between City and County offices, the public and other governments agencies.
- d) Encourage growth and reinvestment in areas with adequate access to area utilities and with convenient access to transportation corridors.
- e) Determine most appropriate places for growth and place limits on extension of water and sewer infrastructure to ensure the plan works.
- f) Collaborate on a multi-jurisdictional level to address stormwater issues.
- g) Adopt development strategies that help protect and sustain the regional water supply.
- h) Explore opportunities for further regional cooperation and coordination.

Objective 2

Continue to increase multi-jurisdictional communication with adjoining jurisdictions and regional planning agencies.

Tools

- a) Increase involvement in regional planning agencies, i.e. Centralina Council of Governments, Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
- b) Increase participation and cooperation with Gaston County staff, and staff of other cities in Gaston County, and surrounding counties.
- c) Increase knowledge of happenings, i.e. development decisions, events, etc. in adjacent counties and cities.
- d) Coordinate with adjoining jurisdictions on issues such as location of growth and development, provision of public facilities and services, conservation of natural resources, revenue sharing.

Objective 3

Continue to coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions regarding proposals for new development near common borders in order to foster a sustainable land use pattern.

Tools

- a) The City will continue coordination with the surrounding jurisdictions of Lowell, Cramerton, Ranlo, Mt. Holly, Dallas, Bessemer City, Kings Mountain, Belmont, Charlotte, and Mecklenburg County in planning efforts, ensuring opportunities to review and comment on land use and development proposals within the defined areas of interest of these jurisdictions.
- b) Continue to participate in multi-jurisdictional regional planning projects and activities that are administered by the Centralina Council of Governments.
- c) Promote Gastonia's citizens' interests in regional and

OBJECTIVES & TOOLS



OBJECTIVES & TOOLS

- state growth management decisions.
- d) The City should support regional and state growth management decisions, while promoting policy that supports cities as the best building blocks of an efficient, stable, and compact urban region.
- e) The City shall support regional growth management decisions that promote the development of an orderly efficient and compact urban form, prevent future unincorporated urban development, and favor development near existing municipal services.
- f) Advocate coordinated public facilities and services necessary to support the regional land use pattern.

Objective 4

Coordinate transportation planning and service provision with regional transportation agencies.

Tools

- a) Continue work with Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the regional transportation planning network to encourage local governments to implement a system of fully interconnected arterial and local streets, pathways and bikeways.
- b) Promote the development and preservation of various freight modes and modal connections to adequately serve the movement of freight within the region and provide effective linkages that serve statewide, national and international markets.
- c) Work with regional partners to encourage physical linkages, such as bike and pedestrian pathways between communities to connect important regional assets such as parks and community services.
- d) Support the production and preservation of lifecycle and affordable housing with links to

jobs, services and amenities accessible by auto, transit, biking and walking.

Objective 5

Schools play an important role in the quality of life and desirability of the City. The City will continue to coordinate with the Gaston County School District to anticipate future growth and plan for the location of schools, co-locating other facilities and services, and other issues.

Tools

- a) Gastonia shall encourage the Gaston County School Board mutually agree on, promote and support high-quality community neighborhood development by coordinating site searches, planning and design public educational facilities as well as assuring the consistency of those facilities with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations.
- b) Work to improve safe walking and bicycling routes to school.
- c) Promote consistency in zoning through the UDO process.
- d) Gastonia shall encourage the state, the region, adjacent municipalities and counties, Gaston County School Board and special districts to review their proposed public facility improvement plans and plan amendments with Gastonia for consistency with the policies and criteria of this Comprehensive Plan.

