

Gastonia 2020: Our Place in The Future Draft Policies Statement



Table of Contents

Demographic Trends	2
Growth Patterns and Directions	4
Economic Development.....	6
Human Resource Development	9
Regional Planning.....	9
Utilities and Urban Services.....	10
Transportation and Land Use Patterns.....	12
Environmental Quality	15
Open Space, Parks, and Recreation	18
Neighborhoods	20
The Center City	22
Community Appearance and Identity	24

Demographic Trends

(Currently under revision and will be forthcoming)

Growth Patterns and Directions

Goal

To be a fiscally and functionally sustainable City through a balanced, well-planned development pattern that promotes a more compact urban core, protects our natural beauty, provides a variety of housing options and leads to citizen satisfaction and pride.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Encourage development that is both geographically and functionally balanced throughout the City.

Tools

- a. Identify and promote areas of underutilized infrastructure.
- b. Ensure infrastructure requirements are available in targeted growth areas.
- c. Identify and address barriers that limit growth and development.
- d. Establish public/private organizations to support redirection of growth.
- e. Ensure zoning ordinance supports goals.
- f. Encourage mixed use developments that are accessible by bike or foot to create vibrant and diverse communities.
- g. Encourage a holistic development pattern that reduces the amount of single use districts functionally separated from one another.

Strategy 2. Encourage well-planned communities that create a sense of place.

Tools

- a. Develop design guidelines so that streets, buildings, and public areas function together.
- b. Promote connectivity both throughout a neighborhood and with other developments.
- c. Promote active and secure open space areas such as pocket parks, plazas, and squares, which foster a strong sense of place.
- d. Create opportunities for community interaction.
- e. Define communities and neighborhoods with focal points to help visitors and residents distinguish areas from one another.
- f. Develop plans and policies that allow for flexibility to changing market demands.

Strategy 3. Maximize the efficiency of City services by concentrating the highest densities near already urbanized areas.

Tools

- a. Support community based organizations involved in revitalizing older neighborhoods
- b. Locate civic buildings in the center city rather than in greenfield areas
- c. Make upgrading existing facilities a priority
- d. Evaluate and prioritize infill and brownfield sites for development
- e. Create programs that encourage home renovation and rehabilitation
- f. Identify and establish new local historic districts
- g. Convert declining strip centers into mixed-use developments
- h. Provide density bonuses to vacant urban core areas

Strategy 4. New development should minimize the depletion of our natural beauty.

Tools

- a. Research opportunities for market mechanisms to conserve private lands such as transfer or purchase of development right programs
- b. Adopt a green infrastructure plan that prioritizes what critical open space areas should be protected
- c. Encourage the protection of land thorough foundations and land trusts.
- d. Research additional zoning tools that preserve open space
- e. Consider policies that protect scenic vistas and natural resources

Strategy 5. Ensure a variety of housing opportunities and choices.

Tools

- a. Review zoning codes to ensure a wider variety of housing types is permitted.
- b. Educate community about positive aspects of providing a wide mix of housing opportunities and blending housing types within neighborhoods
- c. Evaluate current housing mix and compare Gastonia's with communities throughout the region.
- d. Encourage mixed use developments
- e. Ensure appropriate housing opportunities are available for all ages, making special considerations to allow seniors to age in place.

Economic Development

Goal

To achieve a business climate using human capital and infrastructure development to foster diverse economic growth and the latest information transmission technologies while encouraging a stable economy that provides a balance of goods and services, business opportunities and a quality life for all our citizens.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. The City will cooperate and assist with public and private efforts to foster a diverse economy that minimizes the impact of cyclical economic downturns.

Tools

- a. Sponsor economic activities that will enhance the local economy, such as the provision of incentives appropriate for job creation.
- b. Coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce and the Gaston County EDC to monitor local, regional and national economic trends.
- c. Identify and protect vacant or underutilized land that can support various uses.

Strategy 2. The City will work with teaching and training facilities to accommodate new areas of job training programs and ongoing educational opportunities for community residents.

Tools

- a. Working with Gaston College and other training facilities, expand current workforce development efforts.
- b. Pursue more involvement of business leaders in the education and development of the workforce.
- c. Tailor education to match the growing and future job markets.
- d. Pursue obtaining a satellite of the UNC system.
- e. Work with Gaston County public schools to ensure students graduate with marketable skills or obtain the foundation for pursuing higher education.

Strategy 3. The City will provide the infrastructure necessary to accommodate existing and new businesses, while conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural resources of the community.

Tools

- a. Plan for the timely provision of adequate infrastructure including roads, sewer and water to allow development in areas designated for retail, office and industrial uses.

- b. Maintain adequate funding sources for infrastructure. Research available grant opportunities and seek legislation for additional funding options.
- c. Work with Gaston County and other utility providers to coordinate water and sewer functions.
- d. Proactively prepare for evolving infrastructure required for new technology industries
- e. Economic development should be expanded without endangering Gastonia's quality of life.
- f. Consider the benefits derived by preserving and protecting Gastonia's natural and cultural heritage when planning infrastructure expansion.

Strategy 4. The City will protect the business climate for existing businesses and maintain opportunity for business expansion.

Tools

- a. Provide technical assistance and outreach services to existing and prospective businesses, such as site locations, permitting processes and financing.
- b. Streamline and effectively communicate the internal development process.
- c. Increase the coordination of land use planning throughout the County to include a common database of GIS.
- d. Involve the business community in the development of citywide programs that may affect them.
- e. Protect existing businesses and industrial areas from encroachment of incompatible uses.
- f. Work to prevent disinvestments from occurring in older parts of Gastonia.
- g. Ensure that sufficient housing opportunities are available for the local labor force.

Strategy 5. The City will work to promote business opportunities for existing businesses and encourage the relocation of new businesses.

Tools

- a. Develop marketing and branding strategies to promote the City.
- b. Promote the availability of employment for all. This may be accomplished by:
 - Coordinating with public and private agencies to identify and help individuals requiring special assistance to obtain and maintain employment.
 - Encourage local employers to provide labor market information.
 - Encourage public schools and the local community college and university to determine what vocational and professional training is necessary and available for the current and future labor market needs with the possibility of setting up satellite programs in or near the community.

- c. Support special events such as festivals, street fairs and parades that create a positive image of the City.
- d. Create a positive image of the City to visitors by providing attractive and functional landscaping and architectural designs throughout the City, paying special attention to its gateways.

Strategy 6. The City will cooperate with economic development plans across Gaston County and the region in a manner that minimizes conflict between jurisdictions.

Tools

- a. Coordinate comprehensive economic development efforts with other cities and agencies, specifically the Gaston 2012 plan.
- b. Research and consider requiring a countywide impact study for developments of regional impact that are likely to have effects outside of the local government's jurisdiction.

Human Resource Development

Yet to be approved

Regional Planning

Yet to be approved

Utilities and Urban Services

Goal

Safe and reliable services that meet public demand, maintain consistency with land use plans and policies, and remain environmentally sensitive and cost efficient.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Plan and locate new utility infrastructure that supports the community's vision for the location and pace of growth.

Tools

- a. Ensure that water and sewer long range plans are consistent with the long range land use plan.
- b. Consider ways for development to pay its fair share of the growth related portion of their infrastructure needs.
- c. Research policies that require new developments are supported by adequate public facilities.
- d. Discourage major utility extensions that would compromise the effort to stabilize and redevelop Gastonia's central core.

Strategy 2. Encourage utility planning that contributes to a high quality of life for Gastonia residents and businesses by ensuring safe and efficient utility delivery.

Tools

- a. Upgrade facilities when new technologies prove to be safer and more efficient.
- b. Continue to conserve and protect existing natural resources to ensure a continued supply of clean water.
- c. Ensure that sufficient capacity is available to meet the City's future infrastructure needs.
- d. Promote the undergrounding of existing utility lines in specified redevelopment corridors.

Strategy 3. Require that utility planning protect Gastonia's natural environment and resources.

Tools

- a. Design, locate, and construct facilities to reasonably minimize adverse impacts to the environment and to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- b. Balance the need for provision of utilities at a reasonable cost with the need to protect the environment and natural resources.
- c. Work with Gaston County and others to pursue policies that minimize or eliminate new septic systems subdivisions.

- d. Continually monitor and improve systems to prevent excess storm run-off.

Strategy 4. Work with regional partners to improve utility services where possible.

Tools

- a. Continue to work with other municipalities in the development of new wastewater facilities, such as outfalls, pump stations and treatment facilities.
- b. Continue to work with Gaston County to explore the feasibility of a regional water and sewer system.
- c. Continue to work with partners to protect the water quality of Mountain Island Lake.
- d. Explore ways to strategically provide City services such as fire and police to new outlying development.
- e. Work with Gaston County to establish more cohesive development policies; thus minimizing the City's urgency to annex and provide new public facilities outside of the planned growth areas.

Strategy 5. Ensure that City facilities, such as police, fire and recreation are easily available for all citizens.

Tools

- a. Implement the recommendations for improvements and new facilities of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan to ensure a fair geographic dispersal of recreation opportunities.
- b. Pursue opportunities to establish community facilities as neighborhood meeting spaces.
- c. Maintain current government service facilities and locate new ones within the Center City.
- d. Promote the availability of Gastonia Transit to access City facilities.
- e. Encourage locating complimentary facilities adjacent to each other. For instance, parks adjacent to a libraries adjacent to schools.

Strategy 6. Seek opportunities for the City to provide education and to assume a leadership role within the community.

Tools

- a. Conduct City business in a manner that leads by example through activities such as recycling, water conservation, and energy conservation whenever possible.
- b. Encourage and support programs aimed at reducing average and peak day water usage: such as, rate structures, water restrictions and best practices education.
- c. Use the excess water supply as a marketing tool to attract additional municipal customers and new industrial companies.
- d. Seek grant funding for new sustainable technology projects.

Transportation and Land Use Patterns

Goal

An efficient, multi-modal transportation system that is environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible, while being responsive to the community's needs, consistent with land use plans, and fosters economic vitality.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Ensure that transportation plans are coordinated with land use goals.

Tools

- a. Design a transportation system that supports land use goals for compact, accessible, walkable neighborhoods.
- b. Prioritize transportation improvements based upon improving existing efficiencies, available right-of-way, and consistency with future land uses.
- c. Base development approvals upon adequate system capabilities at acceptable levels of service.
- d. Concentrate higher density development along transit corridors.
- e. Coordinate transportation improvement projects with water and sewer extensions and the growth this Plan anticipates.
- f. Improvements to and new construction of roads should be designed to minimize the negative impacts to established neighborhoods.

Strategy 2. Develop an efficient street and highway network capable of providing an appropriate level of service for a variety of transportation modes.

Tools

- a. Enhance mobility by increasing connectivity of the existing and future street network.
- b. Continue to evaluate the timing sequence and implement optimum phasing of all signals on all major thoroughfares.
- c. Increase transportation alternatives by adopting a "complete streets" policy that accommodates all street users such as: bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders.
- d. Implement transportation system and demand management techniques to maximize road capacity and improve traffic flow. Transportation system management (TSM) improvements include: exclusive turn lane, access management programs, HOV lanes and other measures that improve efficiency while requiring minimal construction. Transportation demand management (TDM) improvements are congestion reducing travel demand programs, like ride sharing, flextime, transit usage, walking and bicycling.
- e. Develop a connectivity policy that addresses intersection spacing, number of cul-de-sacs and their length, number of access points, connections to adjoining property and bike and pedestrian facilities.

- f. Develop a collector street plan to determine long range connections for new development.
- g. Develop a Street Type overlay that defines the street use and design features that support adjacent land uses.

Strategy 3. Increase the community's use of the transit system and pursue objectives that support rapid transit to Charlotte.

Tools

- a. Develop and establish minimum land use densities near transit centers and corridors.
- b. Consider adding new routes and possibly expanding the service to other communities.
- c. Provide transit service that is affordable, practical, dependable, comfortable and desirable.
- d. Continue to address the needs of the transit dependent population, persons with disabilities, and other special needs groups.
- e. Prioritize the completion of sidewalk connections serving transit stops.
- f. Increase the number of bus shelters, especially at high usage stops such as shopping centers and medical facilities.
- g. Continue methods to increase transit use, such as: marketing, special programs, service analysis.
- h. Once determined, protect the right of way for a rapid transit corridor to Charlotte.

Strategy 4. Develop a transportation system that promotes healthy neighborhoods and improves environmental quality.

Tools

- a. Implement transportation system and demand management techniques to maximize road capacity and improve traffic flow. TSM improvements include: exclusive turn lane, access management programs, HOV lanes and other measures that improve efficiency while requiring minimal construction. TDM are congestion reducing travel demand programs, like ride sharing, flextime, transit usage, walking and bicycling.
- b. Accelerate the development of the greenway system in order to increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian trips.
- c. Develop safe, accessible and attractive street corridors that are desirable for walking and bicycling.
- d. Encourage private sector participation in vanpool programs.
- e. Design transportation systems and facilities that preserve and complement the area's natural features.

Strategy 5. Ensure that regional programs and projects are consistent with the City's plans and policies.

Tools

- a. Continue to work with established regional transportation organizations.
- b. Continue efforts with regional trail system.
- c. Promote additional bridge crossings over the Catawba River to handle increases in traffic on I-85 and US 29/74.

Strategy 6. Expand transportation funding levels to maintain and improve the transportation system.

Tools

- a. Work with the legislature to increase the amount of transportation funding for Gastonia projects.
- b. Consider seeking or establishing alternative funding sources for roadway construction.
- c. Support regional, state and federal transportation initiatives to increase transportation funding.

Environmental Quality

Goal

Maintain a healthy natural environment that provides a good quality of life, helps maintain property values, and promotes tourism while allowing new development.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Protect watersheds, streams and wetlands to ensure excellent water quality that meets the residential and commercial needs of the community.

Tools

- a. Promote building methods that reduce the amount of impervious surface: such as impervious concrete, multi-story development and structured parking.
- b. Continue to monitor water quality and conditions to determine the effectiveness of regulations and recommend changes as needed.
- c. Conserve wetlands and riparian areas which have significant functions related to flood protection, sediment and erosion control, water quality, groundwater recharge and discharge, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- d. Strictly protect significant water bodies, riparian areas, and wetlands so that their important functions and values are retained as new development occurs.

Strategy 2. Protect and improve Gastonia's air quality by reducing the amount of airborne contaminants.

Tools

- a. Enable a variety of transportation alternatives such as walking, bicycling, ridesharing and transit.
- b. Promote land use patterns that reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled, such as: infill, mixed use and transit oriented developments.
- c. Develop a connectivity policy to improve efficiency of travel throughout the city for automobiles, bikes, and pedestrians. Explore ways to provide connections between non-residential uses and to link residential areas to major destinations. Require that new neighborhoods connect to existing neighborhoods, stub out to vacant land to provide for buildable connections, and provide multiple access points for large residential subdivisions.
- d. Develop a collector street network plan to provide safe and efficient movement of all types of traffic.
- e. Encourage the usage of clean fuels such as compressed natural gas and electric power for public transit, school buses and personal vehicles.

Strategy 3. New development will be sensitive to the natural environment.

Tools

- a. Improve development standards that will protect the natural environment.
- b. Consider a tree management program that reduces the negative effects of clear cutting, saves heritage trees, requires tree plantings in new developments, and requires the replacement of diseased and damaged trees in buffer areas and naturally sensitive areas.
- c. Encourage cluster developments designed to maximize protection of ecologically valuable land.
- d. Establish a minimum density for new development along future transit corridors, specifically Franklin Boulevard.
- e. Require greenway construction when new developments occur along planned routes.
- e. Establish new outdoor lighting policies that address glare and light pollution.
- f. Favor new industries that utilize non-polluting systems.
- g. Balance the conservation of significant natural resources with the need for other urban uses and activities through evaluation of economic, social, environmental, and energy consequences of such actions.

Strategy 4. Use well-reasoned environmental regulations to ensure the protection of our natural resources.

Tools

- a. Practice fair, consistent and vigorous code enforcement.
- b. Ensure adequately trained staffing is available to monitor and enforce regulations.
- c. Prepare and maintain a list of properties, in order of priority, desirable for public acquisition in order to insure long term natural resource conservation.
- d. Actively solicit donations of property or easements to protect and enhance identified resources.
- e. Actively manage the pruning and cutting of trees and shrubs on public lands with scenic designations and improved policies on clearing vegetation along utility lines and easements.

Strategy 5. Improve environmental awareness throughout the community.

Tools

- a. Use all available media outlets to educate landowners and businesses about the benefits of best land management practices.
- b. Continue and enhance existing public educational programs to improve community wide advocacy and appreciation of water quality protection.
- c. Continue to cooperate and pursue the development of inter-jurisdictional agreements to protect water sources, improve our air quality and minimize differing environmental standards and regulations across the region.

- d. Develop partnerships with land conservancies and other public and non-profit environmental agencies to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

Goal

An abundance of parks and open spaces connected by trails and greenways that accommodates the variety of recreation needs of a growing and diverse population.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Provide an open space system that protects natural habitat areas, enhances our quality of life and links people, neighborhoods and resources together.

Tools

- a. Continue to develop the greenway system as the “emerald necklace” that ties together natural areas throughout the City.
- b. Encourage landowners to donate land for open space using conservation easements and other financial incentives.
- c. Modify open space requirements for new residential development to enhance the quantity, quality and contiguity of open space.
- d. Encourage new development to use natural features and open space as an integral part of the development.
- e. Minimize significant loss of natural features during the site preparation phase of new development.

Strategy 2. Provide park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of a diverse population at accessible locations throughout the City.

Tools

- a. Implement the recommendations of the recently completed Parks, Recreation and Open Space Long Range Plan according to the following priority schedule.
 - i. Renovation of Lineberger Park
 - ii. Renovation of Rankin Lake Park
 - iii. Phase I of Greenway Development
 - iv. Land Banking
 - v. SE Community Center Building
 - vi. Second Youth Sports Complex
 - vii. Development of Davis Park (as a passive facility) and Phillips interconnecting trails
 - viii. One Regional Skate Park and two new modular setups
 - ix. Improvements to Adult Recreation Center
- b. Continually update facility needs to reflect demographic changes.
- c. Promote recreation facilities as a center of civic activity where people gather to play, interact and learn about each other.
- d. Design new and improve existing recreation facilities that are safe, secure and aesthetically pleasing.
- e. Provide adequate funding to ensure proper facility maintenance.

- f. Increase staffing levels as new programs are offered and facilities are built.

Strategy 3. Construct and encourage additional greenway trails to capitalize on available open space, to provide an alternative mode of transportation, and connect new and existing neighborhoods.

Tools

- a. Continue to implement the *Connect Gaston Plan* and Master Greenway Plan in Parks, Recreation and Open Space Long Range Plan.
- b. Require greenway dedication for new residential and non-residential development located as shown on an approved Greenway Master Plan Map.
- c. If new development is located adjacent to a constructed or planned greenway, encourage connection points during subdivision or rezoning process.

Strategy 4. Increase participation with other public and private agencies to maximize the efficiency of the City's facilities and programs.

Tools

- a. Where feasible, partnership with other public and private agencies to provide joint park, recreation and open space facilities.
- b. Communicate park and recreation programs through community watch groups and local churches.

Strategy 5. Maximize all available and develop new funding sources for the maintenance and expansion of parks and recreation facilities and open space opportunities

Tools

- a. Continue to utilize the land development process as a provider of additional recreation space.
- b. Encourage the dedication of properties for recreation through appropriate incentives and tax relief programs.
- c. Consider a bond referendum or other financing mechanisms to finance the needs demonstrated in the 2005 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.
- d. Utilize volunteers to build and maintain park, recreation and greenway facilities whenever possible.
- e. Consider hiring a development administrator for parks, recreation, open space and greenways to plan and manage the construction of new facilities, grant writing and administration, and master plan implementation.

Neighborhoods

Goal

Ensure that new and existing neighborhoods provide a sense of community, offer a variety of quality residential alternatives, contain strong neighborhood institutions, and provide easy access to daily activities.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Encourage well-planned neighborhoods that have a sense of community.

Tools

- a. Create opportunities for community interaction.
- b. Promote active and secure open space areas such as pocket parks, greenways, plazas, and squares, which foster a strong sense of place.
- c. Define communities and neighborhoods with focal points to help visitors and residents distinguish one area from another.
- d. Develop guidelines so that streets, buildings, and public areas function together.
- e. Promote connectivity both throughout neighborhoods and between developments.
- f. Working with other public agencies, promote strong, active neighborhood leadership through programs such as Community Watch.
- g. Promote neighborhood institutions such as schools and churches to help define local neighborhoods.

Strategy 2. Ensure a variety of housing opportunities and choices for all income levels.

Tools

- a. Educate community about positive aspects of providing a wide mix of housing opportunities and blending housing types within neighborhoods.
- b. Continually evaluate current housing values to ensure a mix consistent with other similar sized North Carolina cities.
- c. Encourage mixed-use developments.
- d. Encourage developments that allow seniors to age in place.
- e. Continue community development assistance to homeowners and potential first-time homebuyers.

Strategy 3. Ensure new neighborhoods provide public spaces, pedestrian connections and a variety of landscaping.

Tools

- a. Consider adopting general development policies to provide guidelines for residential location and design, balanced land use patterns, connectivity and mixed use development.
- b. Elevate building standards to promote the use of a variety of materials that reduces homogenous developments.
- c. Ensure new residential developments contain inviting and convenient recreation spaces.
- d. Consider polices that require sidewalks on both sides of the road.
- e. Consider policies that require tree lined street.
- f. Consider polices such as a tree ordinance to preserve mature trees.

Strategy 4. Strengthen the urban core by protecting and enhancing older established neighborhoods.

Tools

- a. Promote infill development that utilizes current infrastructure and sparks redevelopment within older neighborhoods.
- b. Construct pocket parks, greenway trails and sidewalks in existing neighborhoods
- c. Use incentive programs to create new markets for redevelopment in existing neighborhoods.
- d. Strengthen code enforcement activities to eliminate areas of blight.
- e. Discourage a sprawling development pattern that weakens older inner city neighborhoods.

Strategy 5. Preserve and conserve Gastonia's cultural and natural heritage.

Tools

- a. Consider polices that protect scenic vistas and natural resources.
- b. Encourage the protection of land through foundations and land trusts.
- c. Review older neighborhoods for possible new local historic district designation.
- d. Adopt a green infrastructure plan that prioritizes which critical open space areas should be protected.
- e. Provide technical assistance to property owners in applying for and utilizing state and federal assistance programs for historical housing.
- f. Encourage redevelopment of existing mill villages.

The Center City

Goal

The center city will emerge as an energetic 24-hour destination featuring a variety of retail outlets, cultural and civic activities, and quality housing opportunities, which will provide the stability necessary to increase property values and attract new private investments.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Create a sense of place by reconnecting people to the center city.

Tools

- a. Encourage activities such as parades and festivals to reestablish the center city as a meeting place in order to support increased commercial activity and to attract new private investment.
- b. Create active destination points such as parks, restaurants and entertainment venues that attract people to the center city.
- c. Reconfigure the Franklin Boulevard corridor to become Gastonia's larger main street, focusing on both the road pattern and adjacent land uses.
- d. Enhance and expand design guidelines to ensure that the renovation of existing buildings and new construction are compatible with the scale and character of the downtown.
- e. Enhance the connection between established center city neighborhoods and the downtown by infilling key sites that rebuild the urban core.
- f. Retain existing civic facilities such as the YMCA, Post Office, and local government offices in the center city and locate new civic facilities in the center city.
- g. Move toward and eventually require active uses such as restaurants and retail outlets on ground floors within the Central Business District.
- h. Increase public safety programs to include both foot and bike patrols.
- i. Increase presence of code enforcement, especially in the older residential neighborhoods.

Strategy 2. Attract new investments through well-promoted incentive programs.

Tools

- a. Working with the Downtown Development Corporation and the Gaston County EDC, enhance and expand the marketing program for the promotion of the current façade grant and incentive programs.
- b. Continually evaluate the incentive program to ensure that it contains a variety of options that provide long-term benefit and creates a center city that is business ready.
- c. Create a civic symbol that defines and brands the downtown and include it on all brochures.

- d. Promote the federal and state tax credits available for the National Register Historic Districts of downtown, Loray Mill and forthcoming York-Chester.
- e. Consider establishing new National Register or local historic districts in additional older center city communities such as Highland and the CDA mill village.
- f. Working with the Gaston County Public Schools, consider the possibility of offering a school choice option to encourage residential relocation to the center city.
- g. Use self-financing bonds to support the center city.

Strategy 3. Increase the number of people living downtown by providing a unique residential experience.

Tools

- a. Encourage a variety of housing types and price ranges throughout the center city.
- b. Encourage the highest residential density within the downtown core.
- c. Encourage upper floor residential space.
- d. Encourage mixed use developments throughout the center city
- e. Locate and encourage the development of key infill sites to rebuild the urban core.
- f. Make downtown living desirable by encouraging household services such as food stores, dry cleaners, recreation facilities, and entertainment outlets to locate nearby.

Strategy 4. Ensure easy mobility throughout the center city for cars, pedestrians and cyclists.

Tools

- a. Provide an adequate circulation system to serve the area ensuring that pedestrian ways, streets and transit operate efficiently within the center city.
- b. Create visually pleasing and safe pedestrian links from downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- c. Consider new transportation alternatives such as a “rubber tire trolley” or busses to serve the center city.
- d. Develop an urban trail or other similar pedestrian corridor.
- e. Build greenway connection to Sims Park and other trails as indicated in the Park and Recreation Plan.
- f. Complete the Marietta Street pedestrian bridge and plaza.
- g. Plan for the establishment of a multimodal transit center in the downtown.

Community Appearance and Identity

Goal

To enhance the quality of the visual environment, particularly our gateways, corridors and neighborhoods to create a distinctive and appealing image that demonstrates our community pride.

Strategies and Tools

Strategy 1. Display our pride by enhancing public spaces, roadways, and neighborhoods through tree plantings, landscaping, limited signage and other improvements.

Tools

- a. Develop gateway streetscape plans that establish a unique visual character along each entryway corridor. Include guidelines for public and private landscaping and the elimination of sign clutter.
- b. Develop streetscape design standards that require more visually appealing, pedestrian-attractive streets with shade trees, center medians, and sidewalks that accommodate the necessary range of transportation modes, such as transit, pedestrian and automobiles.
- c. Implement a program to selectively remove overhead utility lines at designated areas or along major corridors.
- d. Coordinate visual improvements with land use planning during the study and redevelopment of underutilized roadway corridors, such as West Franklin Boulevard.
- e. Where possible, locate parking lots behind buildings, in the interior of a block, or create buffers to ensure parking lots do not dominate the street frontage along major corridors.
- f. Require internal landscaped medians in parking lots, which offer safe pedestrian travel and breakup an expanse of asphalt.

Strategy 2. Utilize public spaces and facilities as opportunities to highlight our community appearance and identity.

Tools

- a. Place civic facilities, such as community buildings, government offices, recreation centers, post offices, libraries, and schools, in central locations.
- b. Design public spaces and civic facilities to set a standard in quality design, to provide a focal point and meeting place, and to express community identity within the context of the surrounding private development.
- c. Increase community wide interaction by hosting a variety of cultural events.

Strategy 3. Promote the many benefits of good community appearance and the importance of aesthetics.

Tools

- a. Develop and implement a coordinated program for the installation of attractive directional and informational signage throughout Gastonia, graphically consistent with a citywide image-marketing program.
- b. Develop a strategy to attract innovative developers who have a reputation for quality design.
- c. Enhance and increase the promotion of the yard of the week program.
- d. Working with Keep Gastonia Beautiful, identify areas for city beautification projects and allocate the necessary funds to maintain an on-going beautification program.
- e. Continue and expand homeownership programs to increase community pride through ownership.
- f. Provide on-going training for boards and commission members who are involved in the development review process.

Strategy 4. Amend City regulations to strengthen and promote citywide beautification.

Tools

- a. Strengthen and enforce codes pertaining to the unkempt appearance of private property.
- b. Maximize the opportunity to be a good role model by maintaining public property in an exemplary manner.
- c. Ensure adequate code enforcement staffing is available to implement desired code enforcement levels.
- d. Explore regulatory approaches aimed at improving amenities and building materials for new construction.

Strategy 5. Increase the level of volunteerism and leadership from a broad citizen base.

Tools

- a. Encourage strong and effective citizen participation in community and municipal affairs.
- b. Utilize the City's website and possible e-mail distribution lists to keep citizens aware of the government process.
- c. Help local civic groups, businesses and neighborhood associations identify and participate in community wide clean-up and building projects.
- d. Promote solid waste minimization and recycling programs.

Strategy 6. Identify and initiate funding sources.

Tools

- a. Aid local businesses and neighborhood groups in locating funding sources for plantings and markers at key entrances and gateways.
- b. Expand the existing façade grant program to other areas of the City.

