



NORTHWEST SECTOR

The Northwest Sector of Gastonia’s 2010 Planning Area is perhaps the most specialized of the six sectors. The Sector has been identified for a number of years as Gastonia’s primary industrial growth area, and major public investments in roads and utility service have taken place.

The Northwest Sector has the following boundaries:

- *North:* NC 279 (Dallas-Cherryville Hwy.)
- *East:* US 321, Interstate 85, Kaylor Branch Creek, Essex Street and the Southern Railroad.
- *South:* Franklin Blvd.
- *West:* Interstate 85, Oates Road, NC 274 and Costner School Road.

The Northwest Sector is a combination of urbanized areas and rural or semi-rural areas. Urbanized residential and commercial areas are primarily located in the southern and eastern portions of the Sector, near Franklin Blvd. and Bessemer City Road. Urbanized industrial park areas are located north of Interstate 85, an area that has some of Gastonia’s largest employers. Rural and semi-rural areas are located in the northern and western portions of the Sector. These areas will eventually urbanize, and the 2010 Future Land Use Map calls for industrial development there.

Two significant recreational areas are located in the Sector. The T. Jeffers Center is a full-service recreation center, located near Bessemer City Road and Crescent Lane. It is the most recently built of Gastonia’s recreation centers. Rankin Lake Park, on the other hand, is one of Gastonia’s oldest, dating to

the creation of Rankin Lake as a reservoir in the 1920’s. Rankin Lake itself could eventually become a recreational asset if a new water storage reservoir is created along with a new water treatment plant.

The Northwest Sector has a declining population, in part due to the emphasis on industrial development, but also because several of the Sector’s older neighborhoods have aging populations, housing deterioration and commercial encroachment. Revitalization and conservation of these neighborhoods will be important to the long term viability of the area.

LAND USE

The Northwest Sector has the following land use ratios, as shown in Figure 1:

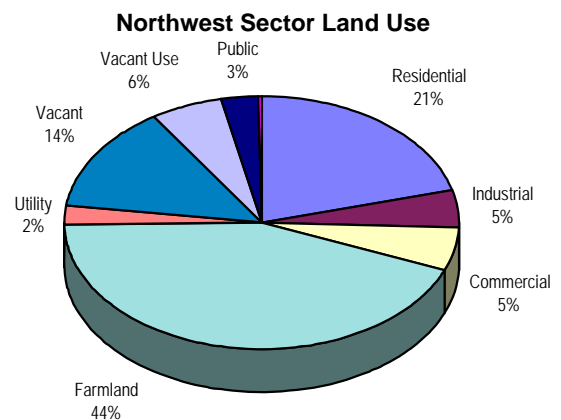


Figure 1

The largest of the land use categories is farmland. Much of this farmland is expected to become industrial land, consistent with the Industrial Growth Triangle land use policy.

Current industrial land accounts for about 5% of the acreage in the Northwest Sector. Most of the industrial land is concentrated in the area immediately north of I-85. Further growth of industry in the Northwest Sector is one of the primary goals of the City.

Residential land use occupies a relatively small percentage of the acreage, compared to the other five sectors. Most residential land is located near Bessemer City Road, Shannon-Bradley Road and Edgewood Road. The remaining residential land is rural or semi-rural, with few subdivisions or neighborhoods.

Commercial Land use is concentrated in two areas, along Franklin Blvd and at the junction of I-85 and Bessemer City Road. Further commercial growth could occur along Franklin Blvd, particularly if a mixed use business park is developed near the proposed US 321 Bypass.

Vacant uses are sites that have been developed but not currently used, and they are more prevalent in the Northwest Sector than in any other sector. Redevelopment and re-use of vacant sites is important to the long-term viability of the Northwest Sector.



TRANSPORTATION

The Northwest Sector has the following thoroughfares, as shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2
Northwest Sector Thoroughfares

Major		Minor	
North-South	East-West	North-South	East-West
US 321	US 29/74	Jenkins Rd	Hargrove Rd.
Myrtle School Rd	Interstate 85	Fairview Rd	
Bessemer City Rd	Jenkins Dairy Rd	White-Jenkins Rd.	
Shannon Bradley Rd	NC 279	Edgewood Rd	
NC 275	Crowders Creek Rd		

The Southern Railroad also crosses the Northwest Sector. Railroad service, although not needed by all industries, is nevertheless important to industrial growth.

Several new or expanded thoroughfares are planned for the Northwest Sector. The proposed US 321 Bypass will cross the Sector in a north-south direction. This four lane divided highway, still ten to thirty years in the future, will further open up the Northwest Sector. An important strategy for the Bypass is to determine the corridor and use all available tools to begin protecting the it, in cooperation with Gaston County.

Two other new roads are proposed for the Northwest Sector. The first is a bypass of NC 279, between US 321 and the proposed US 321 Bypass. The second is an extension of Jenkins Dairy Road, to connect with the proposed NC 279 Bypass. Both roads will provide access to land that is planned for industrial development.

The Northwest Sector has an abundance of open land, with good access to transportation and utilities, that is suitable for industrial development.

POPULATION AND HOUSING TRENDS

The population of the Northwest Sector was approximately 6,600 in 1990, a population decline of about 1,000 since 1980. By 2010 the sector is projected to have a more modest population loss and a resident population of about 6,000, a decline of 10% between 1990 and 2010, as shown in Figure 3.

Population decline is expected in the Northwest Sector due to the emphasis on industrial development within the Sector, the loss of residential land as industry develops and a declining population in the older neighborhoods of the Sector. The Northwest Sector currently has the smallest population of the six sectors, with about 8% of the 2010 Planning Area population.

The Northwest Sector had an estimated 3,500 housing units in 1990, of which 82% were single-family, 8% multi-family and 10% mobile homes. Multi-family housing in the Sector is largely scattered among many small complexes of 20 units or less, the majority of which are located near Crescent Lane and Shannon-Bradley Road. Mobile homes in the Northwest Sector are mostly located outside the City Limits of Gastonia.

Housing production has been relatively steady in the Northwest Sector since 1950. The percentage of housing built by decade is shown in Figure 4.

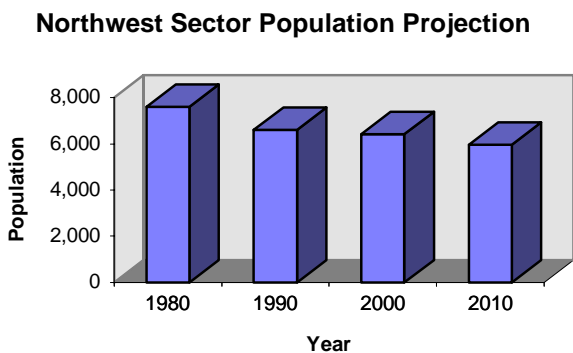


Figure 3

Decade Built: Northwest Sector Housing

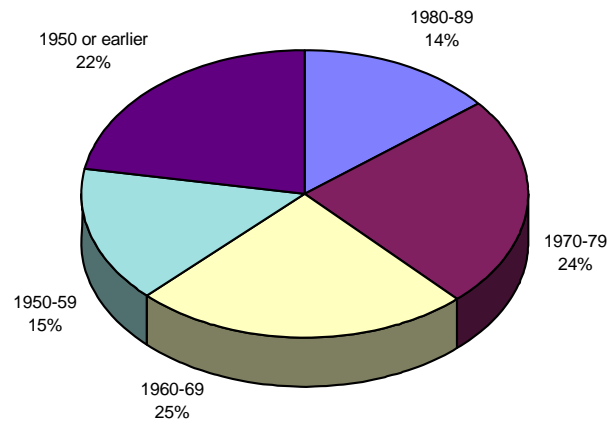


Figure 4

Nearly half of the housing units were built in the 1960's and 1970's. The Northwest Sector had a slowdown in housing built during the 1980's, with only 14% of the total.

EMPLOYMENT

Workplaces in the Northwest Sector employed approximately 11,250 people in 1989. Nearly twice as many people work as live in the Northwest Sector.

Northwest Sector Employment, 1989

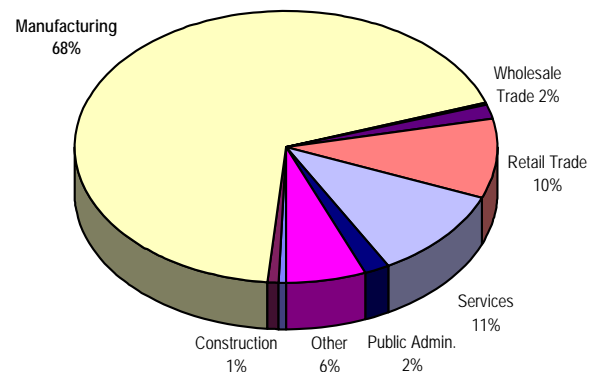


Figure 5

Manufacturing employment has a greater share of total employment in the Northwest Sector than any other Sector. As industry grows in the Sector, manufacturing will become even more dominant. This employment is highly desirable due to the high

wages and high land values created by industrial growth.

Retail trade and services are the next two largest employers in the Northwest Sector. This employment is concentrated in the Franklin Blvd corridor and, to a lesser extent, along Bessemer City Road. Growth in retail trade could occur if steps are taken to improve the aesthetics of Franklin Blvd, and if a mixed use business park is developed near the intersection of Franklin and the proposed US 321 Bypass.

No other employment sector has more than 2% of the total employment, reflecting the specialization of the Northwest Sector.

A. ISSUES

- A-1.** The Northwest Sector is well positioned for industrial growth, with good access to transportation, favorable zoning, and water and sewer service already in place.
- A-2.** Although the Northwest Sector has a very high potential for industrial growth, a lack of fully developed industrial parks could dampen future growth.
- A-3.** Housing deterioration is a concern in the older neighborhoods of the Northwest Sector.
- A-4.** The Franklin Blvd. commercial corridor is suffering from commercial vacancies, under-use of buildings, general urban clutter and a lack of buffering between pedestrians and traffic.
- A-5.** The Northwest Sector has had a decline in shopping and retail outlets, requiring a trip to the east side for all but groceries and the most basic goods and services.
- A-6.** The Northwest Sector has a lack of primary care health services, such as family physicians and dentists.
- A-7.** All of the schools in the Northwest Sector are considered “at-risk” by the Gaston County Schools.
- A-8.** Commercial uses are encroaching residential neighborhoods near Bessemer City Road.

B. FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIES

- B-1.** Include recruitment of retailers to new or under-used sites as part of our economic development efforts.
- B-2.** Develop a retail/office marketing package, providing information necessary for promoting new retail and office development.
- B-3.** Support the preservation and adaptive re-use of the Arlington Elementary School site.
- B-4.** Support the redrawing of school attendance zones to adjust the socio-economic balance in Northwest Sector schools and better reflect the overall student population.
- B-5.** Initiate systematic code enforcement on a rotating basis for endangered neighborhoods, with each neighborhood to be reviewed at least once every five years.
- B-6.** Work with property owners and the NCDOT to screen salvage yards along Franklin Blvd.
- B-7.** Complete the following water main construction projects:

<u>Line/Location</u>	<u>Size"</u>	<u>Length</u>
1. 321 N. of I-85	16	5,000
2. Jenkins Rd.	12	5,200
3. Beaverbrook Ln.	8	300
4. NC 275 fr. Vandenburg to NC 279/NC 279 fr. NC 275 to US 321	16	18,000
5. Vandenburg Rd./White-Jenkins Rd./NC 279	12	23,600
- B-8.** Determine the corridor of the proposed US 321 Bypass, and use all available tools, in cooperation with Gaston County, to protect the right-of-way.
- B-9.** Expand Bessemer City Road to a multi-lane thoroughfare, and work with NCDOT to include a planted median if at all possible.
- B-10.** Widen all approaches to the intersection of Bessemer City Road and Northwest Boulevard.
- B-11.** Support the establishment of primary health care practices on the west side.

C. LONG-RANGE STRATEGIES

- C-1. Determine and protect the corridors of the proposed NC 279 Bypass and Jenkins Dairy Road Extension.
- C-2. The City should organize and initiate a major public-private effort to establish a first-class “high tech” industrial/business park with attractive surroundings in or near our city limits. The city should play active roles, as needed, in development entity organization, land acquisition, installation of infrastructure, and marketing. Such a project could involve the use of the existing non-profit development entity created by the EDC.
- C-3. Strategically extend City utilities as needed to support new industrial development in the Northwest Sector.
- C-4. Begin stream maintenance on the following creeks, if a funding source can be identified:

Proposed Streams for Maintenance

<u>Stream</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Length/ft.</u>
Long Cr	200' east of New Hope Rd. to Kaylor Branch	13,600
Highland Branch	Long Creek to Caldwell Street	5,400
Kaylor Branch	Long Creek to 2000' south of I-85	6,250

- C-5. Pursue an annexation strategy focused on the Northwest Sector to bring City services to some of the unincorporated parts of the Sector.
- C-6. Develop a greenway plan.

D. LAND USE STRATEGIES

- D-1. Evaluate the zoning of established single-family neighborhoods.
- D-2. Develop a corridor plans for Franklin Blvd, with emphasis on public-private cooperation.
- D-3. Following completion of advance planning and location studies for the proposed US 321 Bypass, the corridor should be fully evaluated for economic development opportunities by determining the best locations for well-planned business and industrial parks.
- D-4. Work toward the eventual removal of salvage yards along West Franklin Blvd.
- D-5. Use a targeted, site-specific enhancement strategy to create high-potential nodes of growth in the Northwest Sector. This “priming of the pump” could spark further growth in its vicinity.
- D-6. Minimize conflicts between industrial land use and residential/institutional land use. Protection of residential-agricultural and exclusive industrial zoning is a key strategy for minimizing those conflicts.
- D-7. Protect established residential neighborhoods from additional commercial encroachment.
- D-8. Avoid the placement of additional assisted family housing projects in the Northwest Sector.

NORTHWEST SECTOR STRATEGY MAP

The Strategy Map on the next page is a graphical representation of some of the strategies—short-term, long-term, and land use—in this plan. The map is generalized, showing *approximate* locations for the various strategies.



2010 Planning Areas

Northwest Sector Strategy

Figure 6

