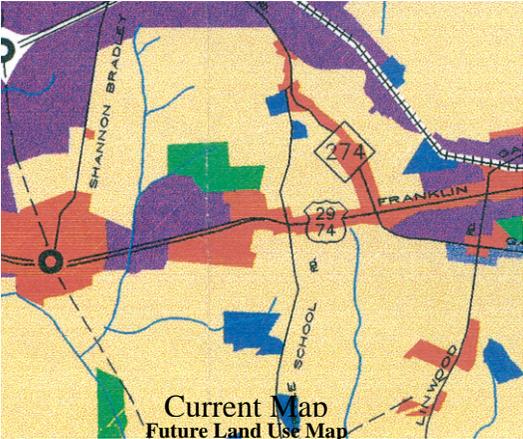


Franklin/Myrtle School Small Area Plan

Adopted February 18, 2003

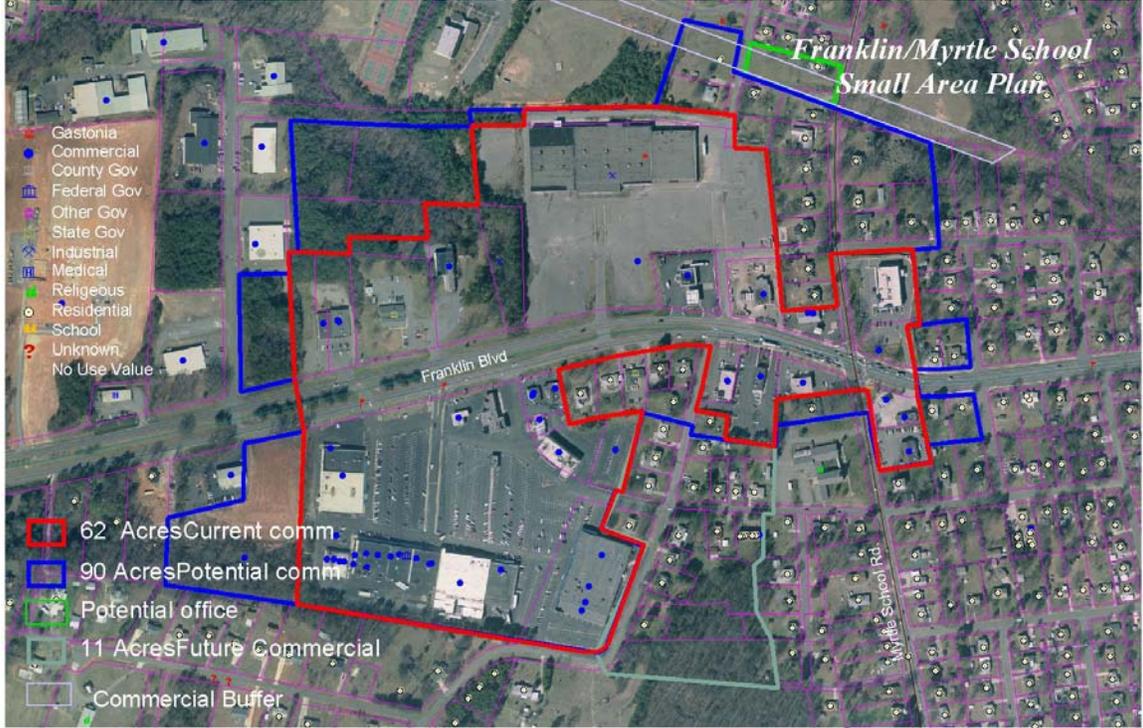
Introduction

This plan area includes properties on all four corners of the Franklin/Myrtle School intersection. The magnitude of development for each of the corners depends on existing development, proposed development, the need for commercial services on the west side of town, land available for development, and the impact on the surrounding residential areas. The plan update is needed to facilitate a large redevelopment/infill retail site. As a result it is likely that a number of properties surrounding this commercial center may transition from residential to commercial.



Existing Conditions

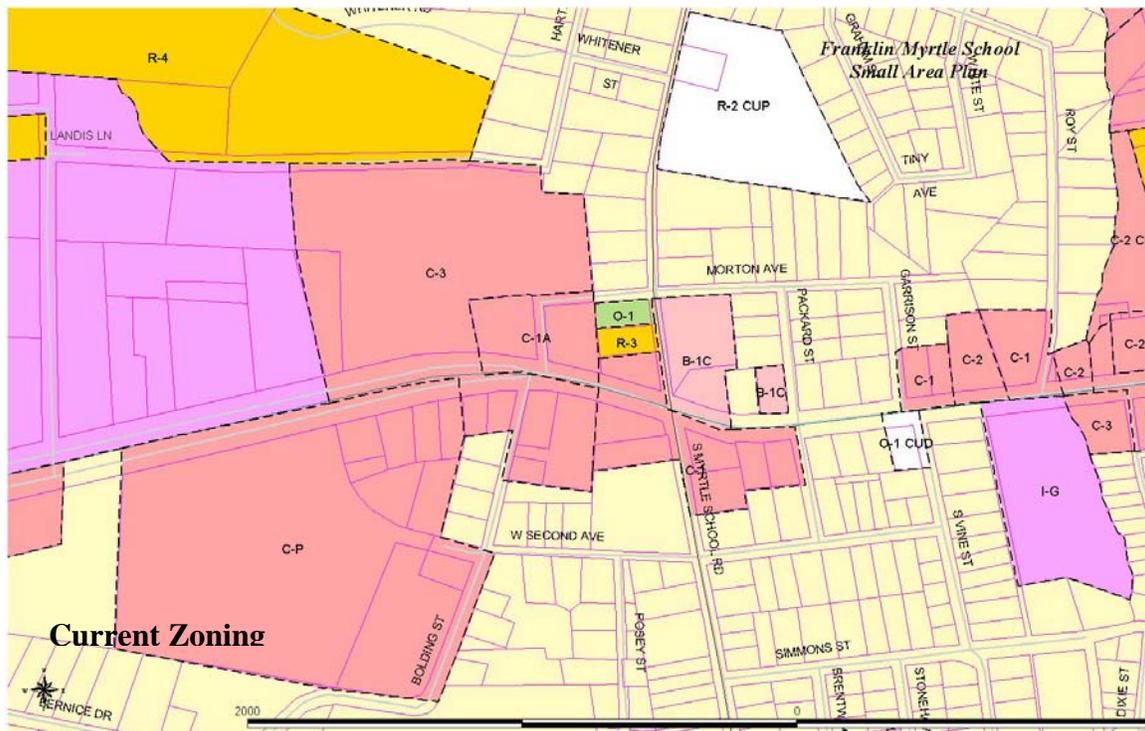
This commercial center consisting of approximately 62 acres has struggled to maintain



commercial integrity, as well as, declined in its ability to serve the community. Dixie

Village Shopping Center consisting of approximately 21 acres has served as the center's backbone of retail activity after the closing of Nichols Department Store approximately 15 years ago leaving a 12-acre vacant site. The latest commercial construction was the Eckerd's drugstore at the corner of Myrtle School and Franklin. The latest average daily vehicle trip data indicates that almost 29,000 vehicles cross the intersection of Franklin/Myrtle School daily.

There are 12,300 dwelling units within a three-mile radius of the study area compared with the Franklin Square/Eastridge Mall area 15,438 dwelling units. Also, there have been over 400 new single-family residential subdivision lots approved within the last 5 years within this same three-mile radius of the study area.



Surrounding neighborhoods have been impacted negatively by the commercial development along Franklin Boulevard. Any change in the land use plan permitting an expansion of commercial uses could have a further negative effect on these neighborhoods unless such changes are tempered with good buffering and compatible design elements. Such elements would include sidewalks, trees and landscaping that blend the commercial with the residential tree canopy and building design that complements the neighborhood.

A number of residences along Franklin have been rezoned to commercial and converted to nonresidential while others that were rezoned are still used for residential. These single lots zoned commercially will add to future problems of strip development and commercial encroachment into surrounding neighborhoods.

It is vital for this commercial center to succeed as a strong retail presence bringing needed goods and services to this part of town.

One key provision of the “Major Development Issues” section of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan states why commercial and residential development is so important to west Gastonia:

GROWTH DIRECTION

- 4. Gastonia is not growing in a geographically balanced fashion. In recent years the west side has fallen behind the east side, leaving the west side with an aging population, fewer shopping opportunities, and an increased poverty class. To achieve a more balanced growth pattern, strategies should be undertaken to address the problems of the west side and support quality growth in areas that are experiencing stagnation or decline.*

The present underutilized status of properties along this portion of Franklin Boulevard should be considered as an infill opportunity as promoted by the “Growth Scenarios” section of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan:

INFILL/REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIO

The infill development and redevelopment growth scenario is characterized by utilizing undeveloped land within the city’s existing service area, resulting in a more compact city.

- Infill sites result from a lack of or insufficient access to public services, physical/ environmental limitations, or a general unattractiveness to the market;*
- Undeveloped tracts in urban and suburban areas not used during earlier growth would be developed with minimal outward expansion;*
- Large tracts of open land remaining in certain areas within the urbanized portion of the city represent significant opportunities for future infill development; and,*

Redevelopment of declining or transitional areas would be the objective of urban revitalization.

Development Potentials

This commercial center is surrounded by residential neighborhoods on three sides and industrial to the west, which makes any future commercial expansions limited. The potential redevelopment of the Nichols site by a big box retailer such as Wal-Mart will bring an increase (approximately 8,600 per day) in the volume of shoppers to the area making the surrounding parcels more desirable for redevelopment. Approximately 17 acres are available for redevelopment which brings the to potential of the center to 90 acres. Also, to the east of Bolding Street 11 more acres could be redeveloped as one large commercial parcel or an expansion to Dixie Village.

If the Nichols site is redeveloped by a “big box retailer” commercial development should be maximized at the Franklin/Myrtle School intersection. The surrounding residential areas should be protected from the effects of encroaching commercial uses. This can be accomplished by requiring good design practices and encouraged the setting of a standard for future development. As recommended for other areas of commercial transition throughout the City new commercial areas should be in the form of unified developments. Buildings of less than 20,000 square feet of floor space should be oriented close to the street with parking behind and between buildings. Streetscape should include trees, sufficient and safe lighting for pedestrians, one style of street light that is complementary with the neighborhood and the commercial center, wide sidewalks set back from the corridor, and pedestrian crosswalks. Primary building materials should be stone, brick, wood, decorative CMU, stucco and glass. Stone should be encouraged as an accent material also for developments in this area and for other future developments on the west side of town as a theme in response to the character of Crowder’s Mountain.

Issues

- I. A need for retail goods and services in the west side of Gastonia
- II. New residential growth on the west side of Gastonia
- III. The 321 Bypass interchange near Shannon Bradley Road and Franklin Boulevard intersection.

Goals 1 Limit the number of future driveways and encourage unified developments.

Objective

- Recommend a minimum 3-acre lot for commercial development where possible using conditional use zoning.

Goal 2 Encourage redevelopment of existing commercial and surrounding residential property for the purpose of maximizing quality development

Objective

- Allow properties adjacent to this commercial center to be rezoned if the resulting development will not harm the character of adjoining neighborhoods.

Goal 3 Prohibit commercial access through neighborhood streets.

Objectives

- Terminate neighborhood streets within neighborhoods that give access to commercial development.
- Require all commercial development to access major thoroughfares.

Goal 4

Protect stability and character of surrounding neighborhoods

Objective

- Temper commercial development with good buffering and compatible urban design elements. Such elements should include sidewalks, trees and landscaping that blending the commercial with the residential tree canopy also, building design that complements the neighborhood.

Goal 5

Improve appearance of street lighting and traffic signals similar to policies in other parts of the City.

Objectives

- The City should upgrade the street lighting at this commercial center for greater safety and consider lighting styles designs that complement the new design standards.
- Traffic signals should be installed on free standing supporting structures and eliminate the cable hung lighting.

Goal 6

Provide for greater pedestrian safety and circulation.

Objectives

- Provide for crosswalks along Franklin Boulevard and Myrtle School Road.
- Provide pedestrian walkways through large parking lots out to public sidewalks.
- Provide sidewalks along major corridors.

Goal 7

Require unified development, building design standards, and landscaping standards.

Objective

- As recommended in other areas of commercial transition new commercial areas should be in the form of unified developments. The buildings with less than 20,000 square feet of floor space should be oriented close to the street with parking behind and in

between buildings. Streetscape should include trees, lighting, wide sidewalks set back from the corridor, pedestrian crosswalks. Primary building materials should be stone, brick, wood, decorative CMU and stucco in earth tone colors, and glass. Stone should be encouraged as an accent material also for developments in this area and for other future developments on the west side of town as a theme in response to the character of Crowder's Mountain.

Objective

- Require all rezoning request to be in the form of conditional use to accomplish the plan objective.

Franklin/Myrtle School
Small Area Plan



Old Nichols
Department Store
Site



Rezoned for Wal-Mart
By Planning Commission 01-9-02
11 Acres Future Commercial/Institutional
62.2 Acres Current comm. shp
94 Acres Potential comm. shp

