COMMUNITY PLANNING ACADEMY

The academy was developed in 2016 around the following goals:

1. **Educate residents about the role Planning plays in building communities.**

2. **Empower residents to effectively participate in future Planning processes.**

3. **Build relationships between staff, participants, and neighborhoods.**

What can you expect?

The academy is intended to empower participants with the knowledge necessary to be engaged and involved in future planning processes. You can expect to learn when and how you can be effectively involved in processes such as Community Planning and Rezoning. Classes will cover the following topics:

1. <u>Introduction to Planning</u>: What is Planning and why is it important? Brief history of Planning profession.

2. <u>Community Planning</u>: What is it and why is it important? How to be effectively involved in the process.

3. <u>Transportation</u>: Our transportation legacy and key policy changes. Importance of integrating land use and transportation.

4. <u>Zoning & Rezoning</u>: What is zoning and why is it important? How to be effectively involved in the rezoning process.

5. <u>Urban Design</u>: What is urban design and top 10 urban design elements to create a great place.

6. <u>Community Character</u>: What is historic preservation? How to protect community character.

What is Planning?

Planning is essentially about creating great places!

It is the process where the public and private sectors and community members consider and evaluate different alternatives for the built environment. The objective of the planning process is to develop a framework for the built environment that will create equitable, healthy, efficient and comfortable places for present and future generations.
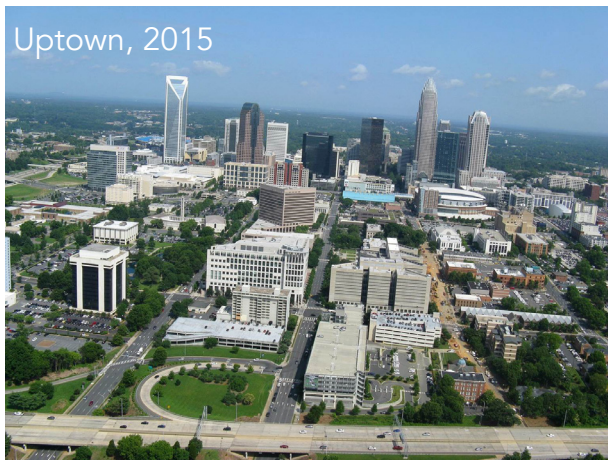

Above: Planning influences the form and function of the built environment. It influences what types of land uses (for example, residential, office or retail land uses) are allowed in a place; how people travel to and through a place; and how a place is designed.

Why is Planning important?

Planning is important because it:

- Provides a framework for future growth;

- Prepares a city for challenges and helps manage risks;

- Maximizes resources and optimizes impacts;

- Protects the environment;

- Impacts and stimulates the economy;

- Creates dynamic and interesting places;

- Provides options for residents.

Uptown, 1975

Uptown, 2015

Planning Framework

The planning framework is organized into two operations. The first action of planning is to define a set of policies or guidelines for future growth. The second action of planning is to apply land development regulations or laws to new development or redevelopment in order to implement the vision of the adopted policies.

POLICY	REGULATION
Vision for future	Tool to implement vision
Community Participation	Staff Administration
Community Plans	Zoning, Subdivision, Tree Ordinances
Guidance	Law

The Community Planning and Zoning & Rezoning classes will provide more information about planning policies and regulations.

History of Planning

EARLY URBAN PLANNING
Civilizations have been organizing and planning spaces since ancient times. For the academy's purposes, however, it's more helpful to understand how the Planning profession has evolved since the Industrial Revolution.
The Industrial Revolution (1820 - 1870) was a period of time in which Europe and America's predominately agrarian and rural societies were transformed by new technologies, such as the steam engine, into more industrial and urban societies.
However, as industrialization and immigration converged in America the living conditions in urban cities became overcrowded and unsanitary. Therefore, in the early1890s a number of social and health reforms as well as Utopian planning movements, such as the City Beautiful and Garden City Movements, emerged in an effort to improve living conditions.

EARLY 20th CENTURY URBAN PLANNING
The mass production of the automobile and both World Wars played an important role in influencing the next era of Planning.
In the early 1900s, Ford produced what is regarded as the first affordable automobile and opened travel to the common middle-class American. As a result, the automobile allowed settlement patterns to evolve away from the compact, traditional town grid pattern to a more spread out, suburban curvilinear pattern.
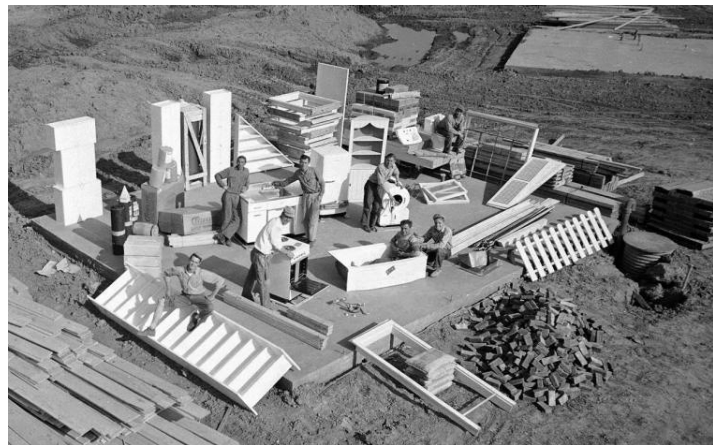
Above: Early urban planning practices emerged in an effort to improve the overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions that occurred as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

World War I (1914 - 1918) and subsequent Great Depression (1929 - 1939) propelled planners away from former Utopian movements to a more utilitarian and functional direction. For example, Planning during the Great Depression years was often referred to as the City Humane Movement due to its focus on social and economic issues and efforts to alleviate the problems of unemployment, poverty, and urban plight that arose due to the depression. Many of the national efforts centered around large public work projects in an attempt to put people back to work.

After World War II (1939 - 1945), returning servicemen took advantage of the G.I. bill and

Above: In the early 20th century, planning practices were aimed at alleviating social and economic issues. For example, the Tennessee Valley Authority was established to provide services such as flood control, electricity and economic development to a distressed region. The Norris Dam (1933-1936) was the first major project for the TVA.

other programs to buy new cars and homes. The demand for new cars and housing led to the construction of sprawling suburban communities like Levittown, NY built specifically to accommodate post-WWII era returning veterans and their families. The builders were guaranteed by the Veterans Administration and the Federal Housing Association that qualified veterans could receive housing for a fraction of rental costs, so homes were mass produced into thousands of identical suburban homes.

Above: Levittown, NY is one of many suburban developments built after WWII for returning veterans and their families. Home production was modeled in an assembly line manner and thousands of identical homes were produced easily and quickly.

LATE 20TH CENTURY URBAN PLANNING
The migration of Americans from cities to suburbs played another important role in influencing the history of Planning.
Due to the migration of Americans from cities to suburbs, inner cities experienced disinvestment and were considered by some to be distressed.

In response to the disinvestment and the continued need for additional housing due to a growing population (Baby Boomers), the government passed the Housing Act of 1949 which provided several provisions. The provision which had the biggest impact on the built environment provided federal financing for "slum" clearance associated with urban renewal projects.

Urban renewal involves the relocation of businesses and residents and demolition of buildings. Then through the power of eminent domain (government purchase of property for public purpose) cities purchase private property for city-initiated development projects such as high-density residential projects or capital improvements such as expressways. Urban Renewal, previously known as Urban Redevelopment, had mixed impacts on communities.
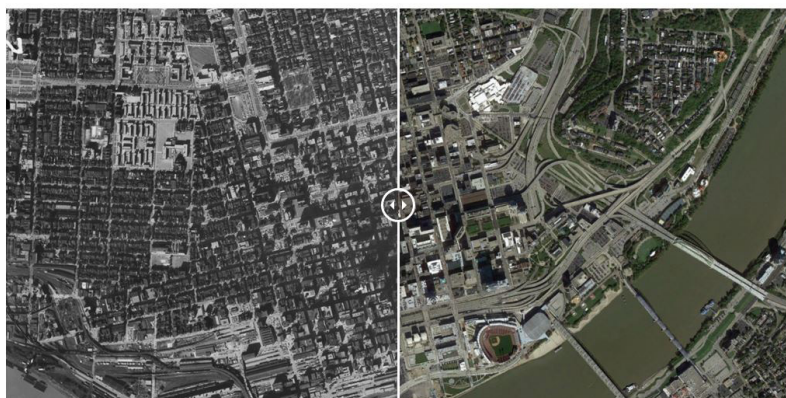
In some cases, urban renewal was successful in revitalizing communities. For example in Pittsburgh, a large section of downtown was transformed into a vibrant area with parks, office buildings and sports arena, now known as the Golden Triangle. In other instances, however, urban renewal destroyed entire communities such as Brooklyn Village in Charlotte. Brooklyn Village, located in Second Ward, was demolished and eventually replaced with a park and government campus.

Above Left: Cincinnati 1955, Above Right: Cincinnati 2013 Urban renewal projects demolished large sections of established neighborhoods in order to construct super streets or expressways.

The next significant event to influence the history of Planning and the nation's built environment occurred in the 1970s when a handful of new federal legislation was passed, all of which were aimed at protecting our environment.
The Environmental Protection Agency (est. 1970) was established in order to protect both human health and the environment. A primary goal of the agency is to help clean up communities that are disproportionately affected by pollution and advance sustainable development nationwide. The EPA is responsible for enforcing the following regulations and federal funding may be withheld from states or metropolitan areas that are not compliant.

• Clean Air Act - regulates air pollution
• National Environmental Policy Act - requires all federal agencies prepare environmental assessments and/or environmental impact statements to evaluate the potential impacts or affects of the project on communities and environments.
• Endangered Species Act - protects habitats of animals and plant species that are threatened or endangered.

After decades of suburban growth, the New Urbanism movement emerged in the 1980s to promote more walkable, mixed use communities. The movement advocated that neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian, transit, and car; and that accessible public spaces and context-appropriate development are essential.
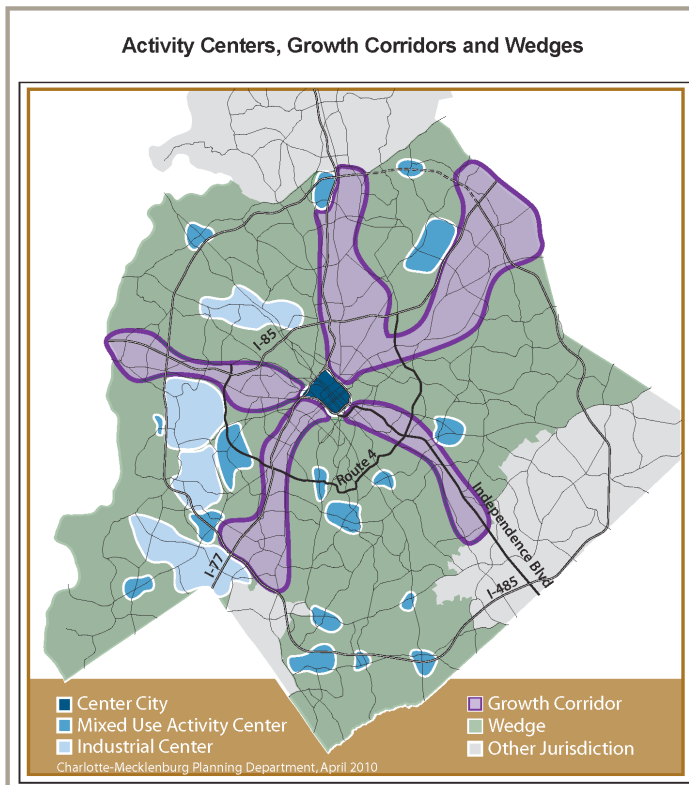

Above: Seaside, FL, a master-planned community, is one of the first cities in America designed on the principles of New Urbanism. The town features a mix of uses organized around a network of walkable streets.

Charlotte's Vision

Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework (adopted first in 1994 and revised in 2010) establishes the vision for future growth and development for Charlotte. The framework identifies three geographic types used to categorize land in Charlotte's "sphere of influence" - Activity Centers, Growth Corridors and Wedges; and outlines the desired characteristics of each geographic area.

Activity Centers, Growth Corridors and Wedges

Legend:
- Center City
- Mixed Use Activity Center
- Industrial Center
- Growth Corridor
- Wedge
- Other Jurisdiction

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department, April 2010

Activity Centers are focal points of economic activity typically with concentrations of compact development. The expectation for Activity Centers in the future is for:
- Further infill development, redevelopment of underutilized sites, and intensification in Center City;
- Greater emphasis on a mix of commercial and civic uses and inclusion of moderate to high density housing;
- Multi-modal transportation system and inter-connected network of streets;
- Priority areas for enhancements to support infrastructure, particularly the transportation network.

Growth Corridors are characterized by the diversity of places they encompass - from historic neighborhoods, to vibrant mixed-use areas, to significant employment and shopping districts - and by the accessibility and connectivity they provide for these places. The expectation for Growth Corridors in the future is for:
- Greater emphasis on office, residential, and mixed use development, especially around transit stations;
- Continuation of industrial and warehouse/distribution uses, particularly in locations with high levels of motor vehicle accessibility;
- Multi-modal transportation system with a dense network of interconnected streets;
- Priority areas for enhancements to support infrastructure, particularly the transportation network.

Wedges are the large areas between Growth Corridors where residential neighborhoods have developed and continue to grow. Wedges consist mainly of low density housing, as well as a limited amount of moderate density housing and supporting facilities. The expectation for Wedges in the future is for:
- Existing neighborhoods to be preserved and enhanced;
- Opportunities for "life-long living" with housing for residents at every stage of life;
- New low density housing, as well as limited moderate to high density housing that is well-designed and strategically located in places with infrastructure capacity to support higher densities;
- Neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses located to serve immediate area;
- Multi-modal transportation system and more street connections to provide residents better access.

While the growth framework provides an overall vision for future growth, specific direction for

land use decision-making will continue to be provided by policy documents such as the General Development Policies and area plans.

The Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework was developed through the community planning process which was facilitated by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department and then reviewed and adopted by appointed and elected officials.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department was established in 1954 and is divided into three divisions:
1. Long Range Planning Services: develops plans and policies that help enhance livability, strengthen economic competiveness, provide transportation options, and ensure the orderly growth of our community.

2. Strategic Planning Services: implements Charlotte's community vision by providing urban design guidance, design services, community outreach, and strategic planning for developing and redeveloping areas.

3. Development Services: provides regulatory services designed to help achieve the community vision. These include managing the rezoning, subdivision and historic district processes; updating the Zoning Ordinance; administering the variance and appeals processes; and making ordinance interpretations.
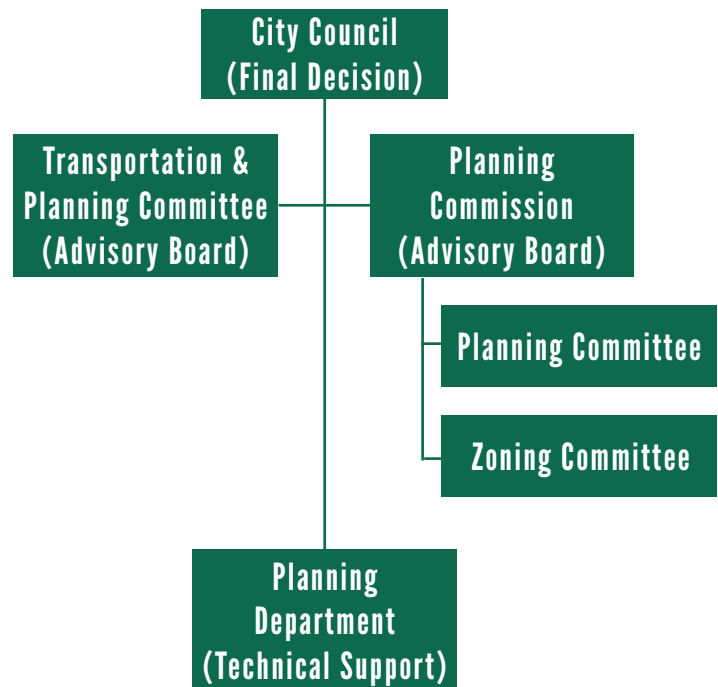
The Planning Commission is an advisory body composed of 14 appointed members. The Commission is responsible for reviewing and providing recommendations for planning policies such as area plans and regulatory processes such as rezonings. The Commission is divided into two Committees:
• Zoning Committee: makes recommendations concerning rezonings, amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, and subdivision variances and appeals.
• Planning Committee: makes recommendations concerning land use, urban design,

transportation and other policies relevant to the planning process; also reviews and recommends action on capital projects and acquisitions of property (Mandatory Referrals).

The Transportation & Planning Committee is another advisory body that reviews and provides recommendations for planning policies and land development regulations. The Committee is composed of 5 City Council members who are appointed by the Mayor of Charlotte.

City Council is responsible for approving all proposed policies, such as area plans, and land development regulations, like rezonings or amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

The community planning process is the framework by which community stakeholders can discuss and define a vision for the future of their community. It is an iterative process which generally includes the following steps:

1. **Identify Stakeholders**: Stakeholders may include a range of community members such as residents, small business owners, industry professionals, and large institutions. Stake-

holders typically have different priorities and aspirations, and the planning process is designed to reflect and balance each of them.

2. **Define Assets, Opportunities, and Vision**: Identifying the assets and opportunities help stakeholders better understand where they want to go in the future. Assets, such as historic landmarks or public parks, are conditions that a community wants to protect in the future. Opportunities, such as vacant lots or poor infrastructure, are conditions that a community wants to enhance or improve in the future. The vision is a consensus of a community's priorities and aspirations for the future. A vision helps guide all policy recommendations.

3. **Information & Analysis**: Planning staff studies a range data such as existing land use patterns, traffic patterns and accidents, population projections, and environmental sensitivities in order identify any additional assets or opportunities worth consideration before developing policy recommendations. This analysis is typically shared with stakeholders early in the planning process.

4. **Develop Alternatives**: Guided by the community's vision, staff develops a range of alternatives (or solutions) that are designed to protect the assets and improve the opportunities, but also respond to the constraints of the existing conditions.

5. **Select Alternatives**: Staff shares the alternatives with community stakeholders and facilitates a conversation about the trade-offs of each option. Stakeholders come to a consensus about which alternative is best for their community.

6. **Adoption & Implementation**: Both the Planning Commission and Transportation & Planning Committee review the proposed area plan policies and provide comments and/or recommendations. The revised plan is then reviewed and approved by the City Council.

Tools to implement the policy recommendations may include future capital improvements and rezonings.

As a stakeholder in your community, it is important to participate in the steps highlighted in green. Without your participation, your priorities, ideas for the future and preferred alternatives will not be known and may not be represented in the final plan. Community input is essential to a successful planning process and truly impacts the final plan recommendations. To be informed about future planning processes in your area sign up on the Neighborhood Organization Contact List at: **http://charlottenc.gov/NBS/CE/CommunityInfo/Pages/Neighborhood-Organization-Contact-List.aspx**

Importance of Plans

Community plans are important because:
- Plans provide continuity across time and gives successive public bodies a common framework for addressing issues like land use and transportation.

- They provide balance and protection for everyone's rights; plans strike a balance among the many competing demands on land by creating development patterns that are orderly and rational, and provide the greatest benefits for individuals and the community as a whole.

- Plans provide a means for protecting our public investments.

- Plans allow communities to direct development in a way that protects valued resources. Planning can identify environmental features like wetlands, agricultural lands, woods and steep slopes and suggest strategies for preserving those resources from destruction or degradation by inappropriate development.

- Through public dialogue among stakeholders the planning process is able to develop a collective vision for the future.

Plan Recommendations

Community plans can incorporate a range of policy recommendations including:

1. **Land Use**: Plans can identify where certain land uses, such as residential or commercial, are appropriate. These land use recommendations are reflected in the Future Land Use Map (available here: **vc.charmeck.org**). Plans can also identify what densities, or units per acre, are appropriate. Plans, however, can not identify where specific tenants, like Starbucks or Target, are appropriate.

   Please note, consistent with North Carolina state statutes, when the Charlotte City Council approves a rezoning that is not consistent with the adopted land use plan, that rezoning updates the adopted land use.

2. **Transportation**: Plans can identify where new street connections, bicycle lanes, or pedestrian improvements are appropriate. They can also define a future street cross-section for various roads.

3. **Urban Design**: Plans can provide design guidelines for elements such as height and orientation. Plans, however, can not provide guidelines for architectural styles such as Colonial verse Bungalow

4. **Open Space**: Plans can recommend the preservation of environmentally sensitive features such as wetlands and steep slopes. Plans typically identify parks or greenways that Mecklenburg County has committed to through their own planning process.

Expectations for Community Plans		
Identify and provide policies to address development opportunities and issues	*But not...*	Create regulations and laws
Possibly recommend zoning changes in appropriate locations	*But not...*	Rezone property
Identify public and private investments needed to achieve vision	*But not...*	Provide funding and implementation means overnight
Guide more appropriate development	*But not...*	Halt development

Below: The generalized land use scale orders uses from least impactful to most impactful. Typically, the best practice is to locate uses with similar impact adjacent to one another. However, certain design elements such as stepped-back building height or vegetated buffers can be used to mitigate the impact of a more intense land use adjacent to a less intense land use.

Open Space • Single Family • Multi-Family • Institutional • Office • Commercial • Distribution • Industrial

Impact

Above: In 1768, Charlotte's land area was only 0.7 square miles and the town's population was less than 500 people. The illustration of Tryon Street features the only two modes of transportation available at the time, walking and horseback.

Our Transportation Legacy

IN THE BEGINNING

In 1768, when Charlotte was established by European settlers the transportation choices available to residents were limited to walking or horseback and horse drawn carriages. The limited number of transportation options meant proximity was important and therefore, the town was developed along a compact and well-connected grid of streets.

Did you know?

Look at a map of Center City Charlotte today and you'll see the grid of square blocks that points to its time under Colonial influence. Tryon, the city's main street, still carries the name of North Carolina's Colonial governor William Tryon.

Tryon Street, however, does not align to the compass, as in many Colonial towns. Instead, it runs along a low ridgeline with a diagonal slant. That's because it predates European settlement. Tyron Street follows the Nations Path, the great trading route of the Catawba and other Native American tribes, which ran from Georgia up to the Chesapeake Bay.
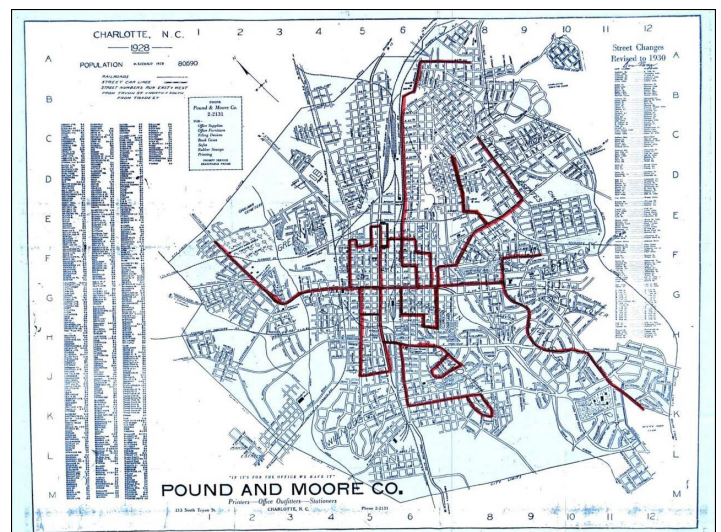*(Source: The History of Charlotte from Old South to the New South to Newest South by Dr. Tom Hanchett)*

THE STREETCAR

In 1891, the first streetcar opened from Uptown to the new suburb called Dilworth. Streetcar technology allowed people to begin spreading out from the central business district to streetcar suburbs. However, residents still only had a few transportation options to get to the streetcar so while new streetcar suburbs radiated outward from town the suburbs were still organized around a compact grid of streets.

Above: By 1928, Charlotte's population grew to 80,690 people. The streetcar technology made development beyond the central district possible. Streetcar lines highlighted in red include Dilworth, Elizabeth, Belmont, Plaza Midwood, Villa Heights, Wesley Heights, and Biddleville.

THE AUTOMOBILE

In 1908, the Ford Motor Company began producing the Ford Model T; it was generally regarded as the first affordable automobile and opened travel to the common middle-class American. The automobile played a critical role in reshaping settlement patterns as it allowed development to evolve away from the traditional, compact, grid pattern to a more suburban, spread out, curvilinear pattern.

Above: On Tryon Street, horseback and horse drawn carriages are replaced by the streetcar and automobile. Walking, however, was and will continue to be an important mode of transportation.

Throughout the early 20th Century, the automobile influenced how planners thought about and planned for the built environment. A few examples include:

• 1929: Radburn, New Jersey was founded as "a town for the motor age." The planners, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, aimed to incorporate many of the Garden City planning principles but designed the community to explicitly separate different modes of transportation. For example, the pedestrian paths did not cross any major roads at grade.

• 1932: Frank Lloyd Write introduced a suburban development concept called Broadacre City in his book, Disappearing City. With availability of modern technologies such as the automobile, Broadacre City proposed the antithesis of the city and recommended each family be given one acre of land from the federal lands reserves. Private lots and the central business district would be connected and accessible by car.

After World War II (1939 - 1945), both in Charlotte and nationwide, a large number of returning servicemen took advantage of federal housing programs to purchase new, mass produced homes that were constructed in suburbs. Vehicle ownership also grew exponentially at this time and Charlotte's transportation planners focused their efforts on expanding the city's road network to accommodate the growing number of cars.

Throughout the second half of the 20th Century, as the city's population continued to grow and Charlotte expanded its road network the community came to understand some important lessons. A transportation network that only focused on one mode of transportation, the automobile, not only excluded people who couldn't or didn't want to drive but created conditions that were unsafe for anyone who wasn't in a car. It also meant the city would inevitably experience serious traffic congestion.

Therefore, in the 1990s, planners started to think differently about Charlotte's growth and transportation goals, and by 1994 the city adopted a growth framework known as *Centers and Corridors*. The intent of *Centers and Corridors* was to establish a strong link between land use and transportation in order to guide growth into areas that could support new development and away from areas that could not support growth. This growth framework was eventually updated and is now known as the Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework and provides an overarching policy basis for other growth-related initiatives.

Transportation Policies Today

There are a number of coordinating agencies responsible for planning and maintaining the various components of our city's transportation system:

• State of North Carolina Department of Transportation (N.C. DOT): As one of the state's largest government agencies, N.C. DOT is responsible for maintaining approximately 80,000 miles of roadways and 18,000 bridges and culverts across the state, as well as regulating and implementing programs to support rail, aviation, ferry, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian transportation. N.C. DOT maintains approximately 20% of the freeways or major thoroughfares in Charlotte.

• Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO): A federally designat-

ed Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Charlotte Urbanized Area which includes parts of Iredell County, Union County and Mecklenburg County. CRTPO is responsible for coordinating transportation policy for local government jurisdictions within the tri-county planning area and for prioritizing regional projects for federal and state funding.

• Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS): CATS builds and maintains Charlotte's transit system which includes bus, light rail, services for disabled, and vanpools. The Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) is the policy board for CATS and is responsible for reviewing and recommending all long-range public transportation plans.

• Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT): CDOT is committed to enhancing the driving, bicycling, and walking experience through planning, operating and maintaining the city's transportation choices for residents and visitors. An important objective for CDOT is to sustain, maintain, and enhance the city's transportation infrastructure. Approximately 80% of the city's streets are owned and maintained by CDOT.

The above-mentioned agencies are responsible for the developing the following long-term and short-term policies that help guide the development of our transportation network and ultimately how residents get around the community.

1. 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):

CRTPO oversaw the planning process for the 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan which was adopted in April 2014. This plan defines the policies, programs and projects to be implemented over the next twenty-five years in order to reduce congestion, support land use plans, and provide mobility choices throughout the tri-county planning area. The MTP contains recommendations for: streets and roads, transit routes, guideways, greenways, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

2. Transportation Action Plan (TAP): The Transportation Action Plan was developed by CDOT and adopted February 2017. The TAP is the Charlotte's long-range, comprehensive multimodal transportation plan which defines: the city's transportation goals, objectives and policies, strategies for addressing challenges and opportunities over the next 25 years, and the types of investments needed to reduce today's deficiencies and keep pace with growth. The TAP recommends funding to maintain street resurfacing, operate signalized intersections, construct roadway projects, sidewalks, bike facilities, and traffic-calming projects.

3. 2030 Transit System Plan: In 2002 and 2006, CATS developed and MTC adopted the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan, a long-rang plan which consists of multiple rapid transit improvements in five corridors, a series of Center City improvements, and bus service and facility improvements throughout the region. Once complete the system will consist of 25 miles of commuter rail, 35 miles of light rail, 16 miles of streetcar and an expanded network of buses and other transit services.

4. Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG): The Urban Street Design Guidelines, developed by CDOT and adopted in 2007, are applied to the planning and design of new and modified streets in Charlotte and its Sphere, including State-maintained surface roads. The guidelines define five street classifications (Main Streets, Avenues, Boulevards, Parkways and Local Streets), and provide design standards for the cross-sections, speeds, and functional and aesthetic design elements of each classification. The guiding principles of the USDG are to build a "complete street" network that: establishes the image and identity of the city and provides a safe, convenient, and comfortable network for all users to support the city's livability and economic development.

5. Charlotte WALKS: The Charlotte WALKS Pedestrian Plan, developed by CDOT and adopted in 2017, is a five-year plan which brings together a number of existing walkability initiatives and identifies new strategies for meeting the pedestrian safety and walkability goals described in the city's Transportation Action Plan. The plan lays out a number of action items, including 3 key action items that require near-term attention: 1. Address back-of-curb sidewalks as redevelopment occurs; 2. Amend the 50% Rule sidewalk exemption; 3. Provide more crossing opportunities on thoroughfares.

6. Charlotte BIKES: The Charlotte BIKES Plan, developed by CDOT and adopted May 2017, is the city's blueprint to becoming a bicycle-friendly city. Charlotte BIKES provides the vision, goals, strategies and recommended efforts to both expand the city's physical network of bicycle facilities with a corresponding growth in a culture which recognizes and welcomes the bicycle as a means of transportation for cyclists of all ages and abilities.

A Transportation Network of Choices

As mentioned earlier, Charlotte's focus throughout the 1950s and 1960s was to build a road network that quickly and swiftly moved cars. During this time, the city stopped building sidewalks and investing in public transit. As a result, about a third of the city's thoroughfares and many of the subdivisions built during this time do not have sidewalks.

Many of the policies identified in the last section are aimed at rectifying these conditions and creating a well-connected network that serves all modes of transportation. In particular, the "complete street" policy adopted in 2007 as a part of the Urban Street Design Guidelines plays an important role in ensuring our future transportation network supports all users. A street is "complete" when it is designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete streets include facilities for all modes of transportation: sidewalks for pedestrians, bike lanes for cyclists, and travel lanes for automobiles and transit. The complete street policy requires any new road constructed within the city to include multimodal facilities.

Complete streets are important because approximately 30% of Charlotte's population (250,000 residents) don't drive so complete streets give these residents safe access for getting around. And for the 70% of residents who do drive, complete streets still offer these residents with transportation choices so they can walk to the park or grocery story if wanted.

An easy way to chart the city's progress in constructing complete streets is to track the emergence of our bicycle network:
- 2001 – 1 mile of bike lane
- 2006 – 36 miles of bike lanes
- 2015 – 91 miles of bike lanes

In order to retrofit the incomplete streets, those built prior to 2007, the city can either purchase additional right-of-way (ROW) and widen the street or resurface the existing ROW and incorporate new facilities. Resurfacing is the most cost-effective way to retrofit incomplete streets, but it means working with certain constraints and limitations.

Above: East Boulevard was redesigned as a complete street to provide safe and comfortable facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles. The street still carries the same amount of traffic, but residents now have a chance to cross the street in more places, bicyclists have dedicated space, and there is more green space within the right-of-way.
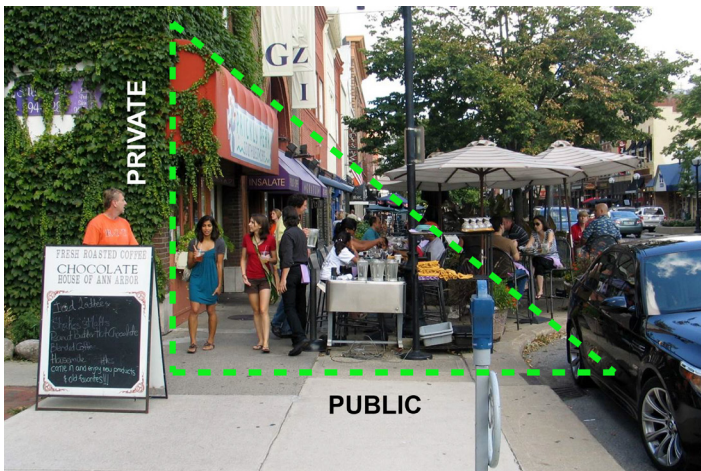
Urban Design & Placemaking

What is Urban Design?

Urban Design is the discipline of creating equitable, vibrant, and sustainable places with distinct identities. The profession pulls from other built environment disciplines such as planning, architecture, and landscape architecture but focuses on shaping the physical setting of the public realm.

The public realm is the space that the general public has right of access to and is the setting for street life. It is typically defined as the space along a street between the building facades. Urban Design influences both private elements along the building facades and public elements within the street.

Above: Urban Design focuses on shaping the physical setting within the "Golden Triangle," the space between private buildings and the public right-of-way where street life takes place.

Top 10 Design Elements

Each place is different and there are a number of options for creating a vibrant public realm. There are, however, fundamental design principles that help ensure a successful public realm. If the following 10 elements are designed well you're likely to enjoy a dynamic public realm.

1. Contextual Streetscapes: As discussed in the Transportation & Mobility class, streets make up 13% of the land area in Charlotte so the design of streets understandably plays an important role in influencing the character of our community.

There are a number of elements that make up a streetscape but not every element is needed to create a successful streetscape. It is important to select the appropriate streetscape elements based on the surrounding context. Streetscape elements can include:

- Travel Lanes
- Medians
- Bike Lanes
- On-Street Parking
- Curb and Gutter
- Planting Strip
- Sidewalk
- Amenity Zones
- Seating
- Lighting
- Trash Receptacle

Above: While the two streetscapes above do not have the same design elements each are appropriate for the surrounding context and are considered successful streetscapes.

In order to determine what elements are needed for a streetscape professionals must evaluate the surrounding context:

• What is the street's role in terms of transportation? Is it a collector street intended to carry heavy loads of commuter traffic? Or is it a neighborhood street that carries less traffic?
• What land uses are along the street?
• What constraints are present? Is there enough room to include all the desired streetscape elements?

2. Safe Sidewalks

Sidewalks are a vital element for a vibrant public realm because they enable pedestrians to walk to and through the space. It is considered best practice to provide some separation between travels lanes and the sidewalk in order to offer pedestrians a sense of safety. The width of sidewalks, however, can vary depending on the type of place they serve:

• Neighborhood Streets: Avg. 5' sidewalks
• Mixed-Use Streets: Avg. 6 - 8' sidewalks
• Urban Commercial Streets: 8'+ sidewalks
• Outdoor Dining: Requires 12'+ sidewalks

Above: In many situations, it is ideal to provide a planting strip and trees in order to buffer the sidewalk from adjacent vehicular traffic.
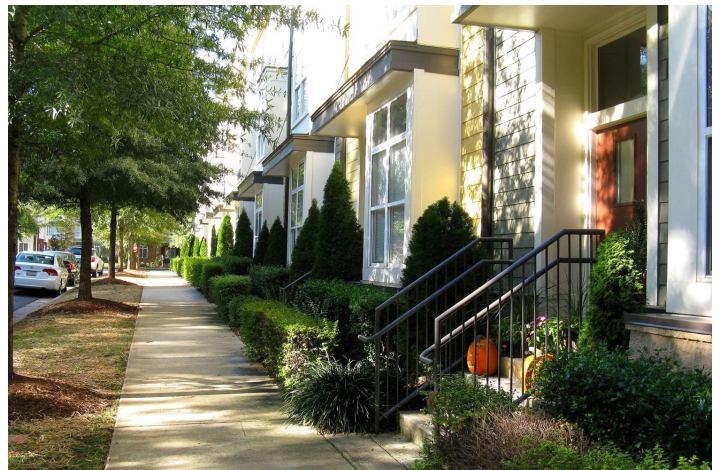
3. Frequent Connections

Connections from surrounding uses to the public realm are also important because, similar to sidewalks, they help bring pedestrians to the public space. Connections can include a number of elements such as sidewalks, gates,

and stairs - anything that allows pedestrians to move from a private space to the public realm. Connections from surrounding buildings and parking are almost always encouraged. Connections from private residences to the public realm, however, should be designed to provide a sufficient level of privacy for residents.

Above: While a sidewalk connection from the residence to the public realm is provided the fence prohibits residents from using the connection. The fence should be replaced with a functional gate.

Above: The stairway provides both a connection to the public realm and a degree of separation from it which offers residences as sense of privacy.

4. Active Building Edges

In order to have a vibrant public realm, building edges need to be active rather than blank. An active building edge includes elements that provide visual interest and offer a connection between activity inside the building and the public realm. Some common elements used to activate a building edge include transparent windows and frequent building entrances.

Above: The transparent windows and frequent entrances create an active building edge which helps enliven the public realm and create an interesting place to walk.

5. Prominent Building Entrances

As described, frequent building entrances can help activate a building edge and provide regular connections between the private space inside a building and the public realm. One prominent building entrance per building is also important because it helps pedestrians know where to first enter the building. Prominent building entrances also contributes to the unique character of a public space.

Above: Pedestrians can easily find this building entrance which is located at a prominent corner and is emphasized by a large staircase and monumental street numbers.

6. Appropriate Building Form

The form of buildings (height, width and overall massing) plays an important role in enhancing the public realm. Buildings with a small to medium form (low to medium building height and moderate building width) are not usual-

ly an issue because the scale of their design provides an inherent rhythm or level of interest along a block. Buildings with a larger form (tall building height and long building width), however, can be problematic if they are not designed to incorporate frequent elements of interest along the ground floor. For example, a tall, block-long building with no windows, entrances or architectural details along the first floor will feel intrusive and domineering from the public realm. If, however, the same first floor is treated with various elements of interest the form will feel more inviting and approachable from the public realm.

Above: The ground floor of the yellow building is lined with opaque corrugated metal which makes this large form feel uninviting and oppressive from the sidewalk. In comparison, the ground floor of the brick building incorporates a lot of windows, regular entrances, and various materials for architectural interest. The ground floor treatment of the large brick building is more inviting and approachable.

7. Proper Building Placement

Where a building is placed on a lot, either setback from the street or built close to the street,

impacts the public realm. Buildings that are built close to the street help frame the public realm, and a well-framed space frequently feels safe, active and interesting. Buildings setback from the street can contribute to a vibrant public realm but active uses such as outdoor dining or a parklet need to be incorporated into the setback. The public realm is hampered when a building is setback from the street and inactive uses like a parking lot are located in the setback.

Above: The two new buildings being constructed on the north side of the street are built close to the pedestrian realm. The existing building in between the construction sites is setback from the road and a parking lot is located between the building and public realm. The parking lot detracts from the pedestrian experience.

8. Thoughtful Transitions

Similar to building form, transitions between buildings along a block can either impact or enhance the public realm. Thoughtful transitions such as a step down in height between a mid-rise and low-rise building allow two different forms to harmoniously occupy the same block. An abrupt change in building forms, however, can make pedestrians feel like something is out of place or context.

9. Well-Placed Parking

Parking is an important amenity for urban communities. However, thoughtful design of the type of parking and location of parking is important to protect a vibrant public realm. On-street parking, when feasible, provides convenient short-term parking for storefronts

Above: On-street parking is provided in front of the main building. Additional parking is provided in the surface parking lots located to the side and rear of the building.

and creates a buffer between vehicular traffic in the travel lanes and pedestrians on the sidewalk. On-street parking, however, is not always feasible or sufficient. On-site parking can include surface parking lots or structured parking decks. In order to protect the public realm and ensure it's occupied by active uses, surface parking lots should be located to the rear or side of buildings. Structured parking is expensive to construct so it is typically only feasible with a minimum amount of density. When structured parking is feasible, it should be located within the site and wrapped with active uses. Structured parking, like blank building edges, should not be adjacent to the public realm.

10. Opportune Open Space

Open space within the public realm may include small formalized plazas or landscaped parklets. These spaces are usually created by

recessed building facades or at the corner of lots. They offer pedestrians an opportunity to sit and rest or chat with others, enjoy a bite to eat, or interact with public art or an installation.

Left and above: The outdoor seating area and public fountain fill in space not utilized by a building footprint. Both spaces offer a unique element of interest for the public realm and provide residents an opportunity to interact with other people or their public space.

Placemaking: What & How?

Placemaking is both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region. Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine or reinvent a local asset or space in order to create something that is unique, inspiring and reflective of the community's identity.

Anyone can participate in placemaking:
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Local Students
- Advocacy Groups
- Local Government
- Urbanists (People who love cities)
- Planners
- Kids

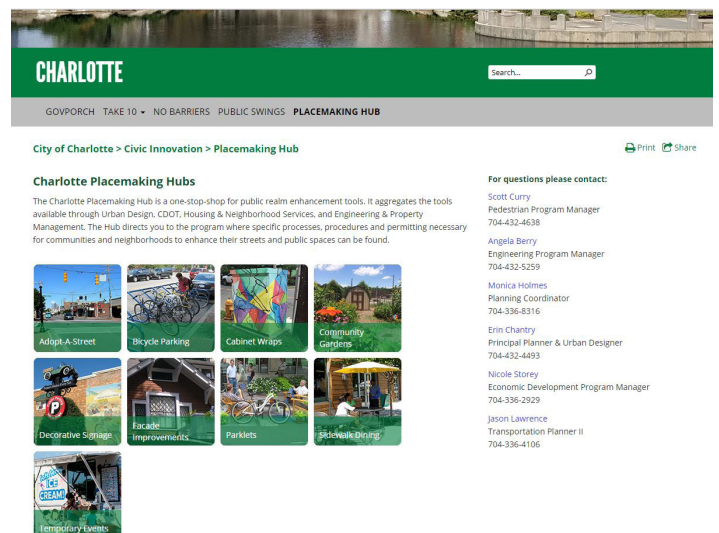And there are so many types placemaking:
- Temporary events
- Parklets
- Little Free Libraries
- Building/Pavement murals
- Neighborhood bus stops
- Neighborhood bike racks
- Painted intersections

THE ORIGINAL PLACEMAKERS

- Interactive artwork
- Games
- Street seats
- Guerrilla gardening
- The options are endless...

If you have a placemaking idea or want to learn more about the topic please visit the **Charlotte Placemaking Hub**, an online one-stop-shop for placemaking references and tools:

http://charlottenc.gov/civicinnovation/Pages/default.aspx

Above: The Charlotte Placemaking Hub is an amazing online resource for anyone interested in creating unique places for their neighborhood.

17

What is Community Character?

A community's character is defined by a number of tangible and intangible elements such as historical events, the residents, and unique assets like beautiful environmental features or a special attraction. A community's character is also defined by components of the built environment including land use, design, and transportation. To assess the character of your community's built environment consider the following:

1. What types of land uses (residential, commercial, institutional) are present in your community?

2. Where are the land uses located in relation to one another? For example, are residential uses separate from or mixed among nonresidential uses?

3. How tall are the buildings throughout your community? Are buildings taller in one location versus another? (HEIGHT)

4. Are buildings setback from or built close to the street? (SETBACK & BUILD-TO-LINE)

5. Are buildings spaced close together or far apart from one another? (SPACING & YARDS)

6. Do buildings face or front the major streets, rear alleys or other buildings? (ORIENTATION)

7. Do the majority of buildings include specific features like a front porch or a front-loading garage? (ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES)

8. How wide are the majority of streets? Do the streets permit two-way or one-way traffic? (STREETS)

9. Is there on-street parking along the streets? Where is the majority of parking permitted (Private driveways, parking lots located between buildings and the street, parking lots located behind or to the side of buildings)? (PARKING)

10. Are there sidewalks along one or both sides of the street? How wide are the sidewalks? (SIDEWALKS)

11. Does the streetscape include a hardscaped amenity zone or a grassy planting strip? (BUFFERS)

Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation is one of the most well-known tools for protecting community character. It is the practice of protecting and preserving sites, structures, or districts which reflect elements of local or national cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological or architectural history. In other words, historic preservation protects places (typically 50+ years old) that contribute to a community's distinctiveness and character. It protects places that give communities a sense of identity, history, and authenticity - all of which are an important competitive advantage for today's economy.

Preservation at the National Level

The National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service, is the nation's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects deemed worthy of preservation. Income producing properties listed on the National Register may qualify for a 20% tax incentive in exchange for preserving the site. The City of Charlotte currently has seven neighborhoods listed on the National Register:

- Croft
- Elizabeth
- North Charlotte
- Pharrsdale
- W. Morehead St. Industrial District
- Dilworth*
- Wesley Heights*
- Hermitage Court*

Designated as both National Register Historic District and Local Historic District

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit advocacy organization that protects and celebrates America's history. The Trust is a great resource for information about historic properties as well as guidance for saving your community's historic places.
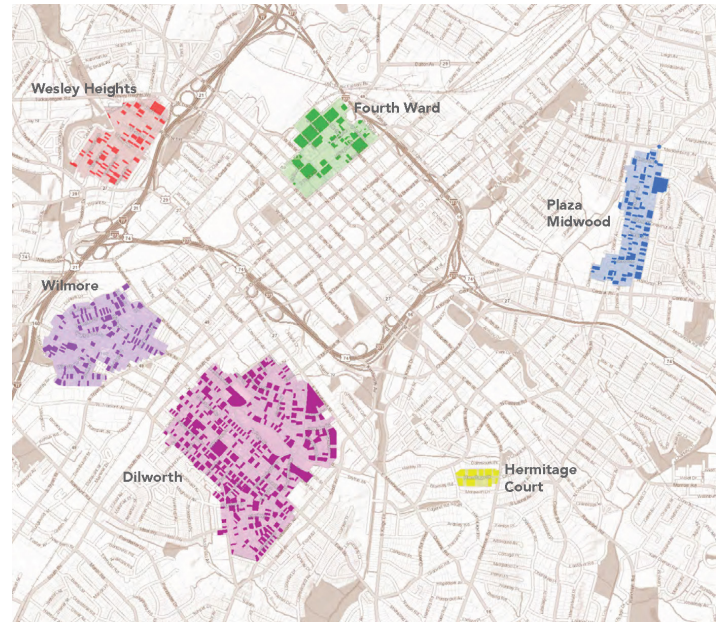
Preservation at the State & Local Level

Similar to the national level, North Carolina has a government department, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), that assists with the identification, evaluation, protection and enhancement of significant properties within our state. Both income producing and residential historic properties are eligible for state tax incentives. North Carolina also have a statewide non-profit advocacy organization, Preservation North Carolina, which helps place protective covenants on properties and maintains a database of historic properties available for purchase.

At the local level, Charlotte has two municipal agencies that oversee historic properties. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC), a county agency, oversees the nomination and preservation of individual sites. HLC also has a revolving fund to purchase properties and apply protective covenants before reselling them. The Charlotte Historic Districts Commission (HDC), a city agency, oversees nomination and preservation of local historic districts. The designation of both individual sites and historic districts must be approved by the Charlotte City Council. The Charlotte Museum of History is the local non-profit advocacy organization responsible for promoting and celebrating Charlotte's history.

Charlotte Historic Districts

In Charlotte, historic districts are designated by an act of City Council through the rezoning process, after public review and comment. Once approved, the designation functions as a zoning overlay and exterior changes to a structure within the district are subject to the Historic District Design Guidelines and review by the

Charlotte Historic Districts Commission and staff. The Commission is a body of citizens appointed by the Mayor and City Council to administer the guidelines, as outlined by the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance.

Above: Charlotte's six historic districts include Fourth Ward, Dilworth, Plaza Midwood, Wesley Heights, Wilmore, and Hermitage Court.

Alterations eligible for staff review include:
1. Rear additions (neither taller nor wider than the existing structure and less than 50% increase in square footage)
2. Accessory buildings
3. Restoration
4. Fences/Walls
5. Decks/Patios
6. Windows/Doors
7. Mechanical Units
8. Tree Removal (Dead)
9. Landscaping

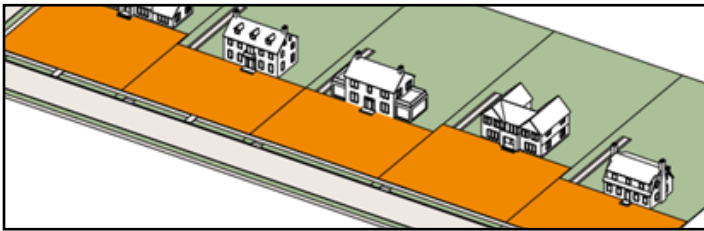Alterations that require review by the Commission include:
1. Demolition
2. Additions taller and wider than the existing structures and more than 50% increase in square footage
3. Changes to the front facade
4. Painting of unpainted masonry
5. Tree Removal (healthy)
6. New Construction

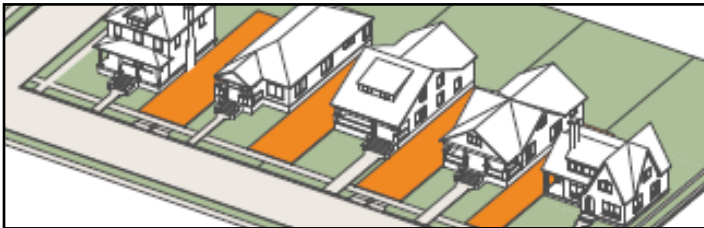Staff and the Commission may not regulate:
1. Demolition beyond delay for 365 days
2. Color (except unpainted brick)
3. Architectural style of new construction

While the architectural style of new construction can not be regulated, the Historic District Design Guidelines provide guidance for the appropriate form and pattern of new construction within a historic district. Essentially, new construction should be consistent or compatible with the following elements as established along a street.
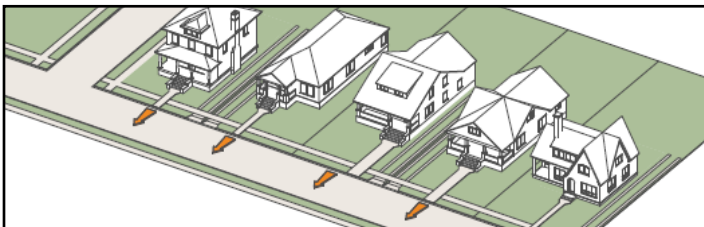
Setback: is the distance between the building wall and the property line or right-of-way boundary at the front of the lot.

Spacing: refers to the side yard distance between buildings.

Orientation: refers to the direction in which the front of the buildings face.

Massing & Complexity of Form: the overall massing of a building relates to the organization and relative size of the building sections or parts of a building in relationship to each other and other buildings on the street. A building's mass can be simple (a box) or complex (a combination of many boxes or projections and indentions).

Height & Width: the height, how tall a building is, and the width, how wide a building is, are the two primary considerations for determining if new construction is an appropriate size for the established character.
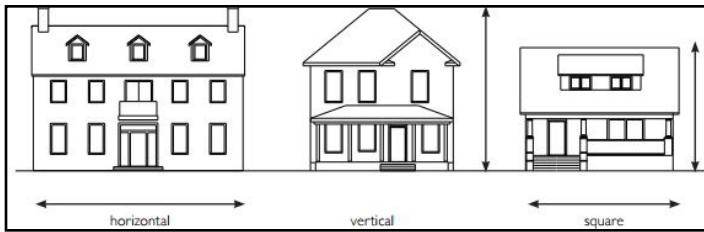

Scale: the relationship of the human form to the building. Height and width are the beginnings of creating scale; however, other elements such as cornices, porches, windows, etc further define scale. Scale is also the relationship of the building to buildings around it.

Features such as windows and doors, foundation articulation, porches, and materials create scale that relates a building to the human scale.

Directional Expression: the relationship of height and width of the front elevation of a building mass provides its directional expression. A building may be vertical, horizontal, or square in its proportions.
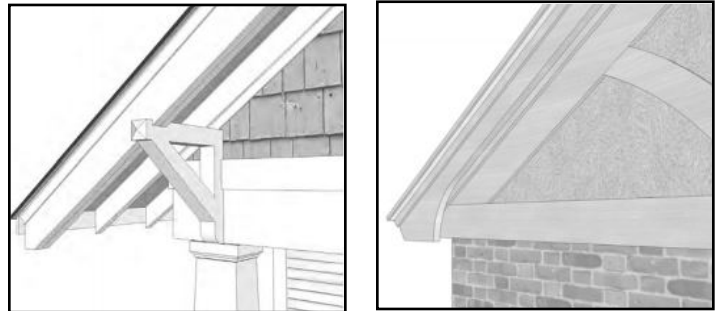

Foundations: are the base of the building. When built on a concrete slab without a visible foundation, new buildings may appear shorter and out of scale with surrounding historic buildings.

Roof Form & Materials: the pitch and orientation of gables and hips should reflect those of surrounding structures.

Cornices & Trim: are used to define eave and cornice lines of roofs, articulate areas of openings and siding on walls, create porch elements, and define the edge of a wall and foundation.

Left: Many bungalows have large decorative brackets for supporting overhangs. Right: Half-timber framing decorates the eave of Tudor house. New construction should take cues from surrounding buildings on the appropriate use of trim.

Doors & Windows: the size, proportion, rhythms, pattern and articulation of door and window openings help give buildings its individual style and character.

*Left: Colonial Revival
Middle: Bungalow
Right: Tudor Revival*

Porches: have traditionally been a social gathering point, as well as a transition area, between the exterior and interior of a residence. Historic Districts in Charlotte have a rich variety of porch types and styles from which design cues may be taken.
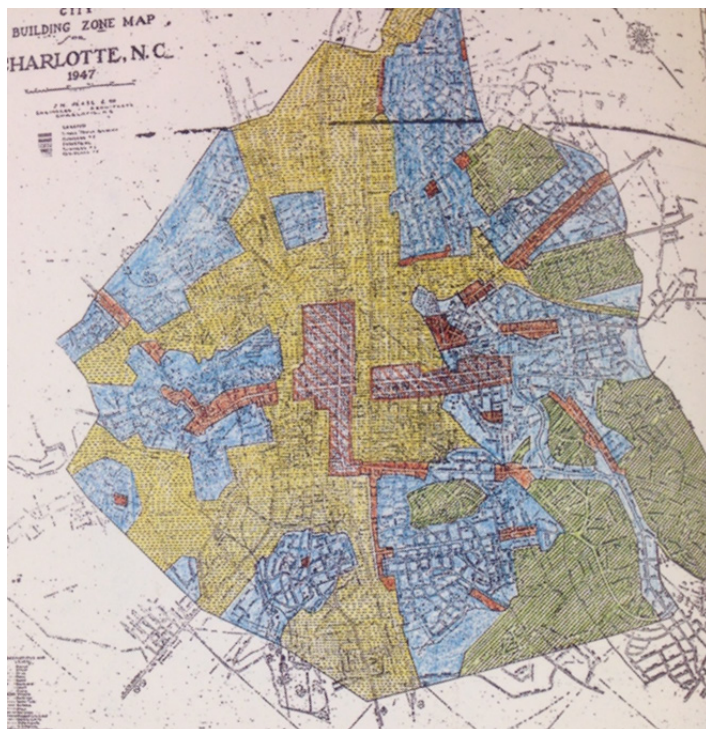
Zoning & Rezoning

What is Zoning?

The planning framework is organized into two operations. The first action of planning is to define a set of policies (guidelines) for future growth. The second action of planning is to apply land development regulations (laws) to new development or redevelopment in order to implement the adopted policies.

Zoning falls into the second action of planning. It is a regulatory tool used by governments to control the physical development of land and the types of land uses that may be put on individual properties. Zoning is essentially one of the rule books that dictate where and how things can be built. The purpose of zoning and all development regulations is to balance the interests of individuals with the health, safety, and welfare of all people.

Zoning in Charlotte

In order to take advantage of federal funding opportunities, Charlotte's first Planning Commission was established in 1944. A few years later, in 1946, the first Subdivision Regulation Law was adopted and set a minimum street width and lot size for new development in the city. In 1947, the first Zoning Ordinance and Map was adopted for the City of Charlotte. The ordinance was a "conventional model" and focused primarily on the separation of land uses. Over the next 43 years, the ordinance was amended with text amendments and evolved to reflect the changing needs of a growing city. By the late 1980s, it was clear a comprehensive update of the ordinance was needed, and the city was developing the *2015 Comprehensive Plan.* Therefore, a comprehensive update was complete by 1990 to better reflect the vision of

Above: Charlotte's first Zoning Ordinance and Map had five zoning districts: Single Family (green), Multifamily (blue), Central Business District (red stripe), Neighborhood Business (red), and Industrial (yellow).

the plan. The 1990s ordinance has also been amended over the last 25+ years but is generally organized into several categories: general rules and applicability, special processes, zoning districts, and development standards.

Zoning Districts & Development Standards

There are three categories of zoning districts in Charlotte's current ordinance:

• General Districts - There are 41 general districts and they're divided into residential and non-residential categories. Each district has an abbreviation that includes a letter to represent the type of district and a number to represent the level of intensity. For example, the Single Family district is represented by the letter R and there are five levels of intensity (from 3 dwelling units per acre up to 8 dwelling units per acre). So the abbreviation R-3 stands for Single Family up to 3 dwelling units per acre.

- Overlay Districts - Overlay districts are applied in conjunction with an underlying zoning district. Overlay districts permit additional land uses or require additional development standards on top of the underlying zoning district uses and standards. For example, the Historic District Overlay applies additional design standards to the underlying Single Family districts. Overlay districts are intended to be applied to a large area and should not be applied to just one or two parcels.

- Conditional Districts - Conditional districts allow for certain uses that can not be predetermined or controlled by general district standards. Therefore, in order to apply one of the five conditional districts a property owner must request a rezoning and submit a site plan which outlines the requested land uses and development standards.

For every zoning district, the ordinance identifies the land uses permitted within the district and the development standards for all construction. There are three categories of permitted land uses:
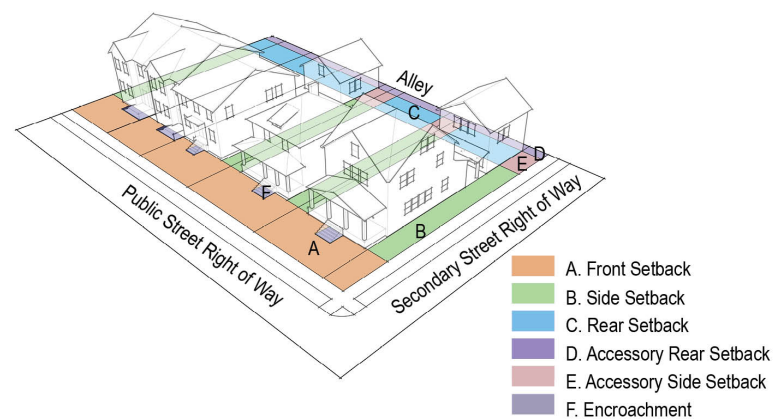
- Permitted by right - Land uses permissible within a zoning district.

- Permitted with prescribed conditions - Land uses permissible provided they meet specified conditions.

- Permitted accessory uses - Land uses permissible provided they are subordinate to or serve a principal land use.

In addition to land uses, the ordinance defines a set of development standards for all construction. Here is some of the most frequently used development standard terminology:

- Density - the number of residential dwelling units per acre of land; determined by dividing the number of dwelling units by the total number of acres in the parcel to be developed.

- Setback - the distance between the building wall and the property line or right-of-way boundary at the front of the lot.

- Side & Rear Yards - the minimum distance required between the principal structure and the side or rear property line.

Above: Overlay districts are applied in conjunction with an underlying zoning district. For example, the TS overly is applied on top of the office and business zoning districts. The properties zoned Neighborhood Services (NS), a conditional district, and Mixed Use Development District (MUDD-O) have conditional plans which supersede an overlay.

A. Front Setback
B. Side Setback
C. Rear Setback
D. Accessory Rear Setback
E. Accessory Side Setback
F. Encroachment

Above: When planning a new structure start by identifying the setback and yard requirements. Typically, after subtracting the setback and yards, the remainder of the lot is available for the footprint of a building.

- Height - the vertical distance between the average grade at the base of a structure and the highest part of the structure, not including chimneys and roof structures for equipment.

- Parking - area reserved for parked vehicles. Rear parking refers to lots located behind a building. Front parking refers to lots located between the building and a street.

Above: The required width of a buffer and the number of planted trees or bushes varies depending on the size of the property as well as the type of adjacent uses or structures.
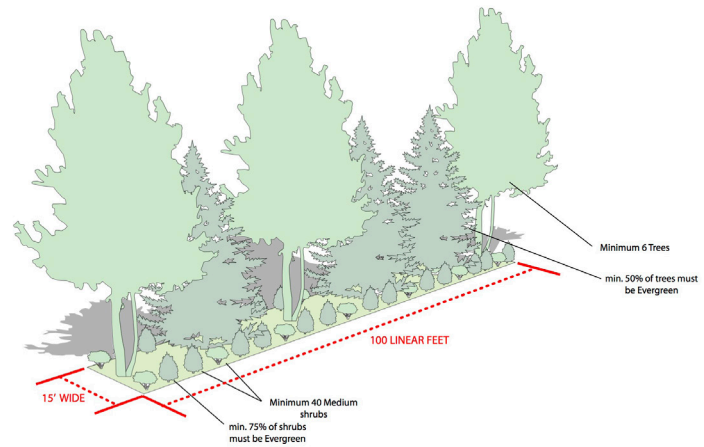

- Buffers - a strip of land with natural or planted vegetation located between a use or structure and a side/rear property line intended to separate and partially obstruct the view of two abutting land uses from one another.

A few of the special processes you should be familiar with are:

1. Appeals
An appeal is a request initiated by an applicant (sometimes a developer or a citizen) who believes the Planning Staff made an error in applying the standards of the Zoning Ordinance. The request for an appeal goes before the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) for review and deliberation. The ZBA is made up of 5 appointed citizens, and their job is to evaluate only facts and decide what they believe is the actual meaning and intent of the ordinance. The ZBA does not have the authority to change the ordinance. If the ZBA approves an appeal then staff's interpretation is reversed or modified. If the ZBA denies the approval then staff's interpretation is upheld, but the applicant can then appeal the decision with the Mecklenburg County Superior Courts.

2. Variances
A variance is a request, initiated by a property owner, to vary the development standards of the Zoning Ordinance. A variance can not be granted for a land use change. Like appeals, a variance request goes before the ZBA and the board can only grant a variance when three findings are met:

1) An unnecessary hardship will result from strict application of the ordinance;

2) The hardship is peculiar to the property in question and is not generally shared by other properties;

3) The request is consistent with the spirit, purpose, and intent of the ordinance.

If these findings are met then a variance will be granted.

3. Text Amendments

Text amendments are a revision or amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and may be initiated by a number of stakeholders including City Council, Planning Staff, and residents. Amendments are necessary when:

1) A new land use emerges which is not accounted for by the current ordinance (for example, breweries emerged as a new land use in the mid 2000s);

2) An existing land use evolves beyond the functionality and impact regulated by the current ordinance.

Text amendments go through a public process, similar to the rezoning process, and are posted with rezoning petitions on the **rezoning.org** webpage.

Subdivision Ordinance

In addition to the Zoning Ordinance, there are a number of other ordinances such as the Tree Ordinance and the Post-Construction Stormwater Ordinance that regulate growth and development in Charlotte. The Subdivision Ordinance, administered by the Planning Department, is an important regulatory tool that helps ensure all property has adequate access to public facilities and guarantees the overall orderly development of land by regulating:

1. The number and spacing of new streets;

2. The number of required ingress and egress points for a subdivision;

3. The standards for different street cross sections.

Rezoning in Charlotte

If a property owner wants to develop or redevelop their property for a use not permitted by the existing zoning district then they need to request a rezoning which is a method for amending the zoning classification of one or more parcels of land. In Charlotte, a rezoning request or petition may be submitted by a property owner, developer, or business owner. There are two types of rezonings petitions:

• Conventional rezonings request entitlements permitted by a general or overlay zoning district. In other words, a conventional rezoning is simply requesting a change from one zoning district to another. Since the petition is not requesting uses or development standards that are different from or above and beyond what is permitted by the zoning ordinance the petition is not required to submit a site plan or hold a community meeting.

• Conditional rezonings request entitlements that differ from the land uses and development standards permitted in general or overlay districts. Conditional rezonings are essentially tied to a specific land use or development proposal and therefore, must have a site plan to document the proposed development. Petitioners are required to host a community meeting which allows stakeholders to review and ask questions about the proposed development. Conditional rezonings can be identified by the letters included at the end of the zoning designation.

Conventional	Conditional
Property owner signature not required	Property owner signature required by State Law
No site plan submittal	Site plan submittal required
No community meeting required	Community meeting and report required
Not tied to specific uses/proposal	Commitment to specific uses and proposal

Above: Conventional rezonings basically go by what is permitted in the ordinance. A conditional rezoning is tied to a specific use or proposal that differs from what is permitted by-right by general or overlay zoning districts. About 20% of the rezonings in Charlotte are conventional and 80% are conditional.

Conventional	Conditional
O-1	O-1(CD)*
TOD-M	TOD-MO**
	B-2(CD) SPA*
	NS, CC, RE-3, MX*

*Above: * Commits to standards that go beyond the base zoning ordinance requirements and are specific for each petition.*
*** Reduces or eliminates the base zoning ordinance standards, AND typically commits to other standards that go beyond the base zoning ordinance requirements. Also specific for each petition.*

Rezoning Participants: Roles & Responsibilities

There are a number of participants involved in the rezoning process. Below is a quick overview of each participant's role and responsibilities:

• Applicant Team - The applicant team may include the property owner, a developer, an agent who represents either the property owner or developer, and a designer who manages the design of the proposed development. The applicant team is responsible for submitting the petition, making revisions to the petition based on input, and making their case to City Council for why they should approve the rezoning request.

• City Staff - The staff team includes professionals from a number of city departments including Planning, Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT), Engineering & Property Management (EPM), Park & Recreation, and others as needed. City staff is responsible for administering the rezoning process, providing requested information to all other participants, analyzing the petition and providing feedback to the applicant, and providing appointed and elected bodies with a professional recommendation.

• The Public - The public may include a number of stakeholders such as property owners, residents, business owners, and institutions. The public is responsible for reviewing petitions, attending community meetings (for Conditional Rezonings only), contacting both the applicant and city staff with questions, and informing elected officials of their support or opposition.

• Zoning Committee: The Zoning Committee is a sub committee of the Planning Commission which is an advisory body made up of appointed residents. The committee is responsible for reviewing petitions and making a recommendation to City Council based on findings from the public hearing and staff's analysis.

• City Council - City Council is responsible for making a decision about each petition based on findings from the public hearing, staff's analysis, and the recommendation from Zoning Committee.

The Rezoning Process

The rezoning process is typically 3 - 6 months depending on the complexity of the petition. On average, a conditional rezoning takes 5 months to move through the process.

1) Presubmittal: The first step of the process is for the applicant team to meet with Planning Staff. In this meeting, the applicant outlines their request, and staff provides initial comments about the appropriateness of the request and identifies potential hurdles.

2) Application Assessment: If the applicant chooses to pursue the rezoning they must submit an application which is reviewed by staff for completeness and then distributed to relevant city departments such as CDOT and EPM.

3) Citizen Notification: Next, city staff sends out a number of notifications to inform stakeholders about the rezoning petition. A large yellow sign with an uppercase Z is posted on the subject property. The rezoning case number is posted at the bottom of the sign. For more information about the case visit **rezoning.org.** Mail notices are sent to property owners within 300' of the subject property and to registered neighborhoods within one mile of the subject

property. To register your neighborhood visit the Neighborhood Organization Contact List at: **http://charlottenc.gov/NBS/CE/CommunityInfo/ Pages/Neighborhood-Organization-Contact-List.aspx.** If a community meeting is required (for Conditional Rezonings only) the applicant team will also send meeting notifications to property owners and registered neighborhoods. Finally, a legal notice is posted in the newspaper.

Community Meetings (for Conditional Rezonings only) are a great opportunity for stakeholders to be engaged in the rezoning process. At a community meeting, the applicant team will share their concept design for the site. Stakeholders should review the design and ask any questions they have about the project. It is important to think about the project and its relationship to the surrounding context. This is an opportunity for stakeholders to collaborate with the petitioner so try to think about the proposed concept in relationship to the big topics covered in the Community Planning Academy:

- Are the proposed land uses compatible with the surrounding land uses?

- Does the proposed design accommodate all modes of transportation to or through the site?

- Does the proposed design include the top ten urban design elements for a great public realm?

4) <u>Staff Support</u>: Throughout the process, staff is available to support all rezoning participants. For the public, staff is available to answer questions about the rezoning process or anything specific to a pending petition as well as provide guidance on how to participate. For the applicant team, staff is available to answer questions about the rezoning process and provide reminders about upcoming deadlines as well as provide technical comments about the proposed site plan.

5) <u>Site Plan Review</u>: After site plans are distributed to city staff, each department reviews the proposed design concept for compliance with relevant land development policies and regulations. If staff identifies issues the applicant team has an opportunity to revise the concept and resubmit a second or third iteration. Typically, two to four iterations are complete before the petition goes to public hearing or for review by the Zoning Committee.

It is important for stakeholders to review the site plan submissions to ensure each iteration reflects the 1) priorities identified in the community meeting or 2) comments submitted via phone or email. See "How to Review a Site Plan" at the end of this chapter.

6) <u>Staff Analysis</u>: Planning staff prepares a technical analysis and professional recommendation as to whether or not City Council should approve the rezoning request. The staff analysis is based on the following:
- Consistency with adopted policies
- Compatibility with surrounding context
- Community benefits such as improved infrastructure
- Site design
- Site plan notes
- Transportation and infrastructure
- Environmental impacts
- Compliance with land development ordinances

The analysis is not based on citizen comments. Stakeholders should share comments either at the public hearing or contact City Council.

7) <u>Public Hearing</u>: As mentioned above, the public hearing is a great opportunity for stakeholders to speak in favor for or in opposition to a rezoning petition. Stakeholders must sign up to speak with the City Clerk (704-336-2248). Speaking time is limited to 3 minutes total if there is no opposition or 10 minutes per side if there is opposition.

8) <u>Zoning Committee</u>: The Zoning Committee attends the public hearing in order to hear input from stakeholders. After the public hearing, the Zoning Committee holds a meeting to discuss the petitions among committee members. The meeting is open to the public but no new or

additional public comments may be received during this meeting.

9) City Council: City Council typically makes a final decision for rezoning petitions at the subsequent Zoning Council meeting. In addition to speaking at the public hearing, stakeholders are encouraged to contact elected officials via phone, mail or email.

As a stakeholder in your community, it is important to participate in the steps highlighted in green.
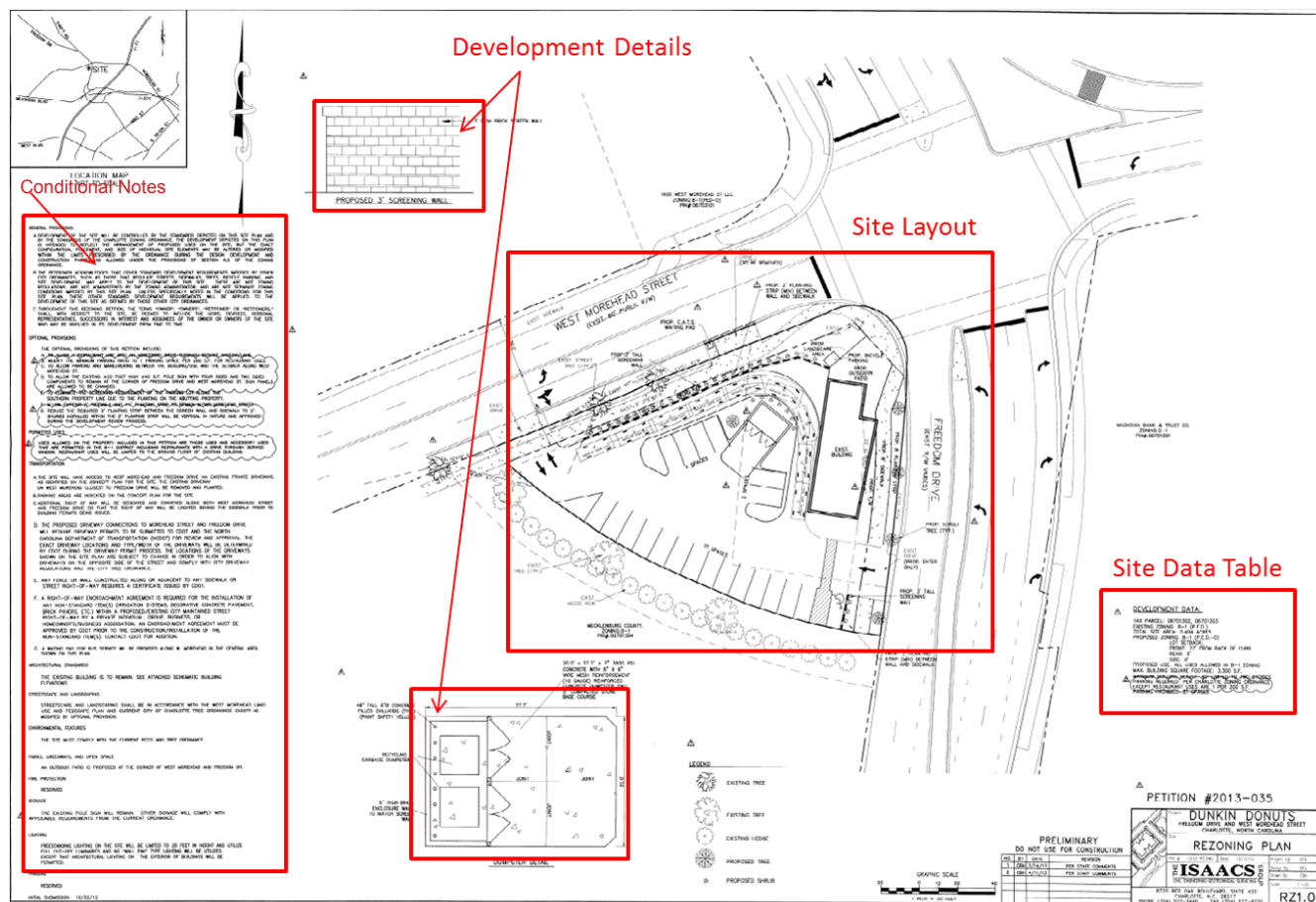
How to Read a Site Plan

As mentioned above, conditional rezonings require a site plan which includes both a site layout and conditional notes. The plan may sometimes also include elevations (for illustrative purposes only). If approved, the site plan becomes a regulating document so it is important for stakeholders to review a plan and ensure any negotiated commitments are documented on the plan. Reviewing a site plan,

however, can be overwhelming if you don't know what you're looking at. Here are a few tips for systematically digesting most site plans.

1) Familiarize yourself with the content: Most site plans will have a Site Data Table, a Site Layout, and Conditional Notes. Some plans may also include details about select development elements.

2) Read the Site Data Table: This data table provides some quick development stats that will give you an idea of what's being proposed. The table typically includes some of the following:
- Parcel IDs
- Total site acreage
- Existing and proposed zoning
- Existing and proposed land uses
- Number of proposed residential units
- Proposed residential density
- Proposed non-residential square footage
- Maximum building height
- Number of proposed parking spaces

Right: The example site plan includes a site layout, conditional notes, site data table, and development details.

3) <u>Mark up the Site Layout</u>: There is a lot of information included on the site layout and not all of it is relevant to stakeholders. The easiest way to decipherer what's important is to use some colored markers or crayons to identify some of the most critical elements. For example:

- Circle the ingress and egress points (aka driveways) in red.
- Color the planting strip or buffer green.
- Color the sidewalks grey.
- Outline the surface or structured parking in blue.
- Cross out on-street parking in blue.
- Color proposed buildings using the corresponding land use colors (see page 8) based on the uses proposed for each building.

4) <u>Read the Conditional Notes</u>: The notes are equally as important as the site layout, and they provide more detail about permitted uses or development standards than illustrated on the site plan. The notes are typically organized into standard categories:

- General Provisions - identify applicability of various development ordinances.
- Optional Provisions - outline provisions opting in or out of development standards. required in the proposed zoning district
- Permitted Uses - defines allowed, prohibited or other land use restrictions.
- Transportation - outlines right-of-way dedication, required private or public streets, add additional transportation improvements.
- Architectural Standards - defines commitments to building materials, details or treatments such as blank walls.

Stakeholders should ensure the notes document any commitments negotiated between the petitioner and community stakeholders. On second or third site plan revisions, changes to the notes should be outlined for easy identification.

Below: By marking up the site layout it becomes easier to understand the design of the proposed development. Be sure the proposed development includes safe pedestrian connections to and through a site.