

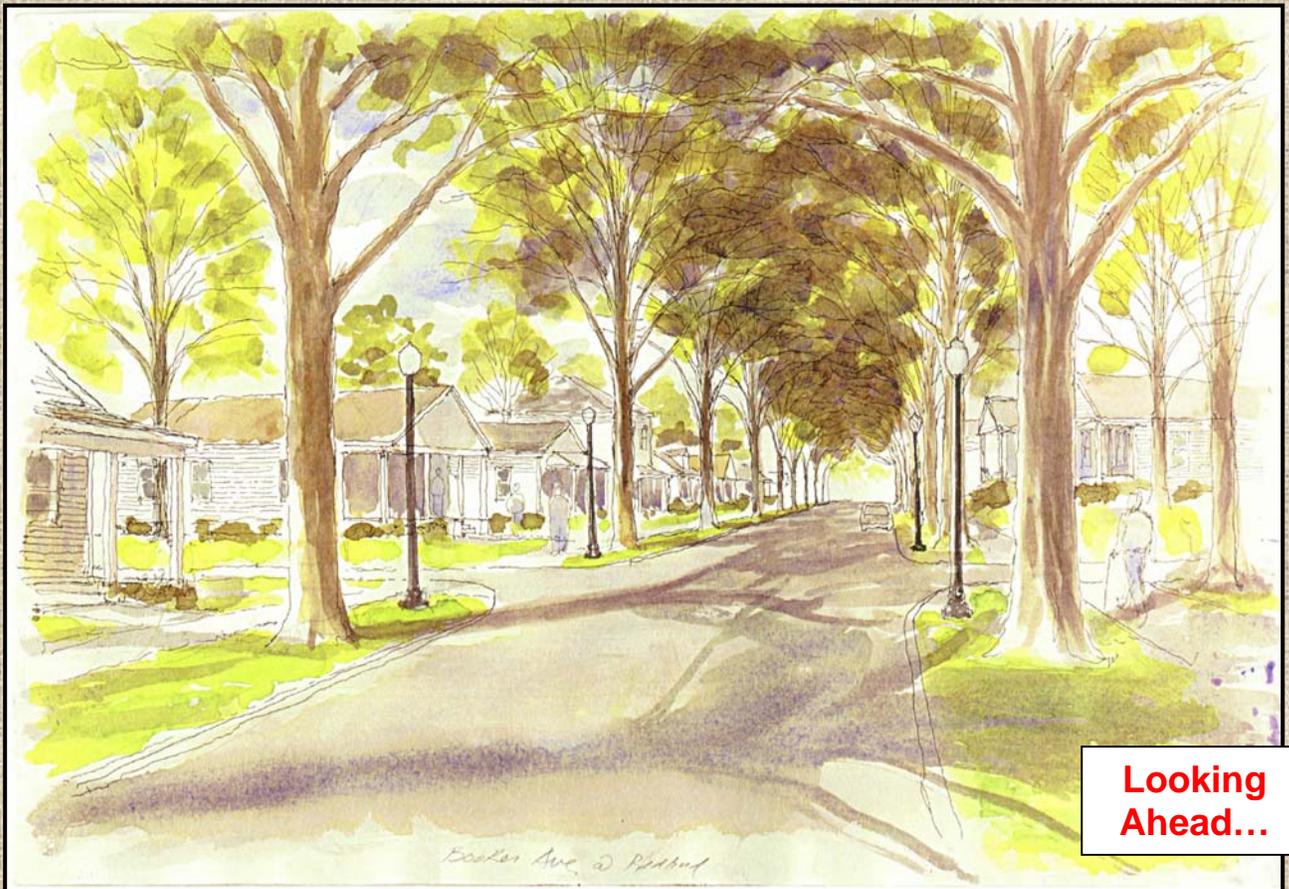
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C. H. WATSON, NOTARY PUBLIC

Chairman of General Committee and author of Colored Charlotte, Manager of Douglassville Land Company. Office 412 E. 2nd Street Charlotte, N. C. Information concerning Douglassville, Washington Heights or Colored Charlotte also views of the 50th Anniversary celebration will be gladly furnished, write today.

Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan

Adopted by Charlotte
City Council
25th February 2002



Looking
Ahead...

Acknowledgements

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission wishes to acknowledge the contributions and thank the individuals who served on the study group for the Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan and include the following:

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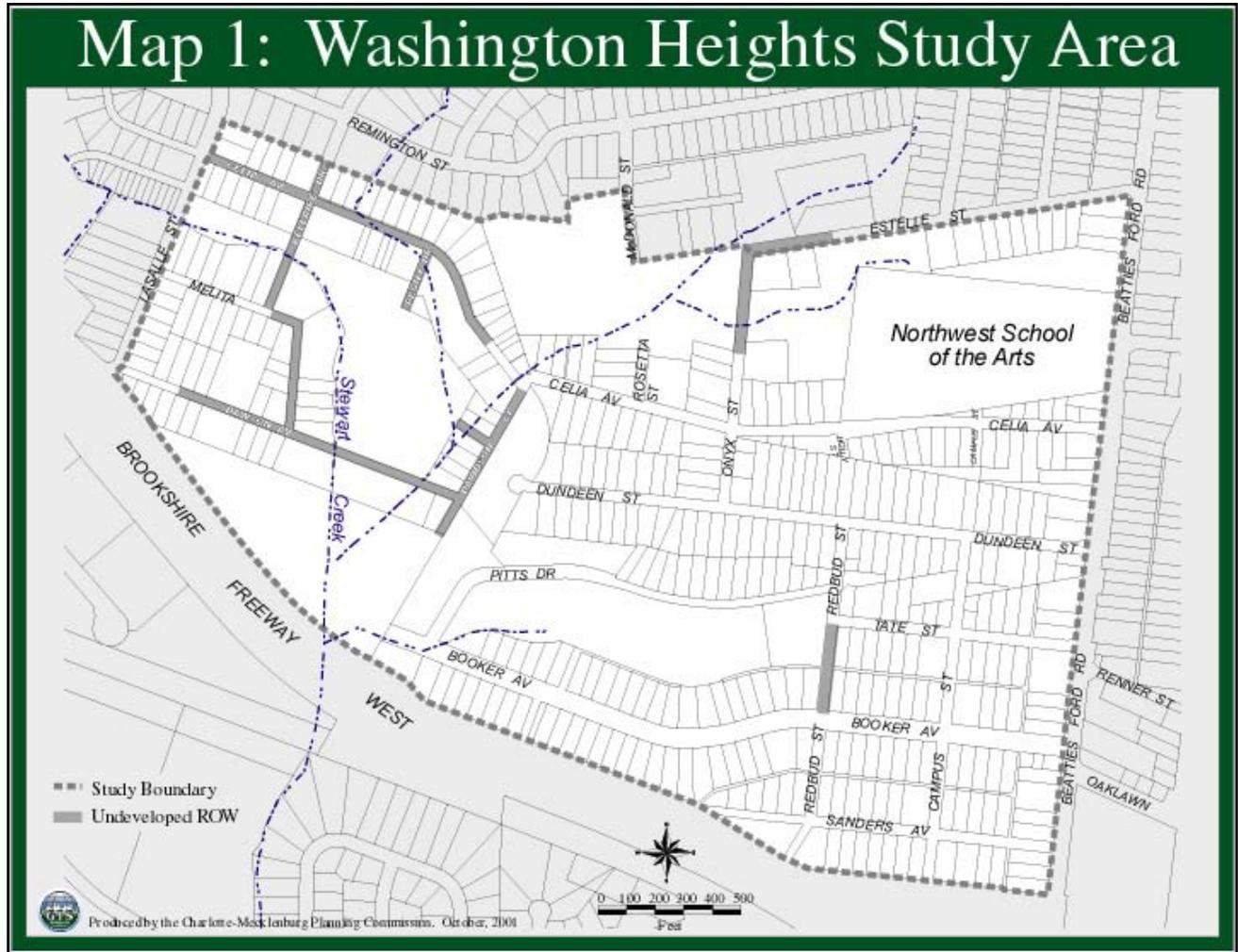
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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The boundaries for the *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan* study area, as shown on **Map 1**, are generally Brookshire Freeway to the south, Beatties Ford Road to the east, Estelle Street to the north and LaSalle Street to the west.



The *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan* amends a portion of the Central District Plan (sub-area 4), which was adopted in January 1993, by providing further direction for development and redevelopment in the community. It provides recommendations for addressing land use and urban design; infrastructure; economic development; public safety; human services; community organizing; community appearance; parks, recreation and open space; and education. The plan was initiated in response to a request from area residents concerned about the appearance of their neighborhood, the high crime rate and the future of the community.

The study group consisted of residents, business and property owners along with City and County staff members. This group met seven times between January and May 2000 to develop a vision for the future of the study area; identify, discuss and analyze the important issues; and formulate objectives/goals and recommendations to address neighborhood concerns. The study group met again in September 2001, to review the draft plan document.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework to guide future public and private decision making towards long term, agreed upon objectives. This plan provides a vision for what this area could be like in the future and contains goals and recommendations for achieving that vision.

KEY ISSUES

The plan concentrates on the following key issue areas identified during the plan development process as summarized below:

1. **Land Use and Urban Design** – Preserve the historic, primarily single-family, residential character of the neighborhood and encourage new residential infill development that complements this historic character. Focus pedestrian oriented neighborhood scale, non-residential development along the Beatties Ford Road Corridor.
2. **Infrastructure** –
 - A. Transportation/Mobility – Vehicular and pedestrian connectivity is limited. Transit service is perceived as inadequate.
 - B. Storm Water – Flooding occurs on some streets in the neighborhood during heavy rains.
3. **Economic Development** – High unemployment and low wages are major issues for the residents of this community, as well as, the need for neighborhood-friendly businesses that provide goods and services for area residents.
4. **Community Safety** – Crime rates are relatively high in comparison to City rates. Drug and assault incidences are the two leading categories of crime incidences.
5. **Human Services** – Washington Heights has many youth and elderly residents, and there seems to be a need for additional services as well as information on existing programs that specifically address their needs.
6. **Community Organizing** – The Washington Heights Neighborhood Association is a strong asset to the community but it needs the participation of more of the residents, landlords and business owners.
7. **Community Appearance** – Over the years the overall appearance of the neighborhood has deteriorated. Some housing is poorly maintained and often garbage or discarded furniture items are left on the street. This is in large part a direct consequence of the high percentage of rental properties in the neighborhood.
8. **Parks, Recreation and Open Space** – L.C. Coleman Park is a great asset to the neighborhood but is currently not very visible or easily accessible from the

neighborhood. Additional structured and programmed leisure activities, especially for the youth and elderly, are needed.

9. **Education** – The high drop out rates and low competency scores of neighborhood children to be addressed.

VISION

Reaching consensus on a vision statement early in the planning process helped guide the development of this neighborhood plan.

Historic Washington Heights has a strong sense of pride and place, formed by its tree lined streets, distinctive architecture, proximity to the city's commercial and cultural heart, and history as a walkable urban neighborhood.

The Vision for historic Washington Heights is to develop and maintain an attractive, historic neighborhood that has a variety of stable housing opportunities and safe, pedestrian friendly streets that provide access to jobs, parks, transit, schools, businesses and other resources. We wish to build on that sense of pride and place to make historic Washington Heights an even better neighborhood in which to live, work and play. We envision a neighborhood that...

...Offers a substantial mix of urban housing types, accommodating various income levels and households.

...Has a complimentary element of neighborhood shops and businesses that serves the neighborhood.

...Has a pedestrian friendly atmosphere and allows people to comfortably meet most of their daily needs without an automobile by such alternative means as walking, riding a bicycle or using public transportation.

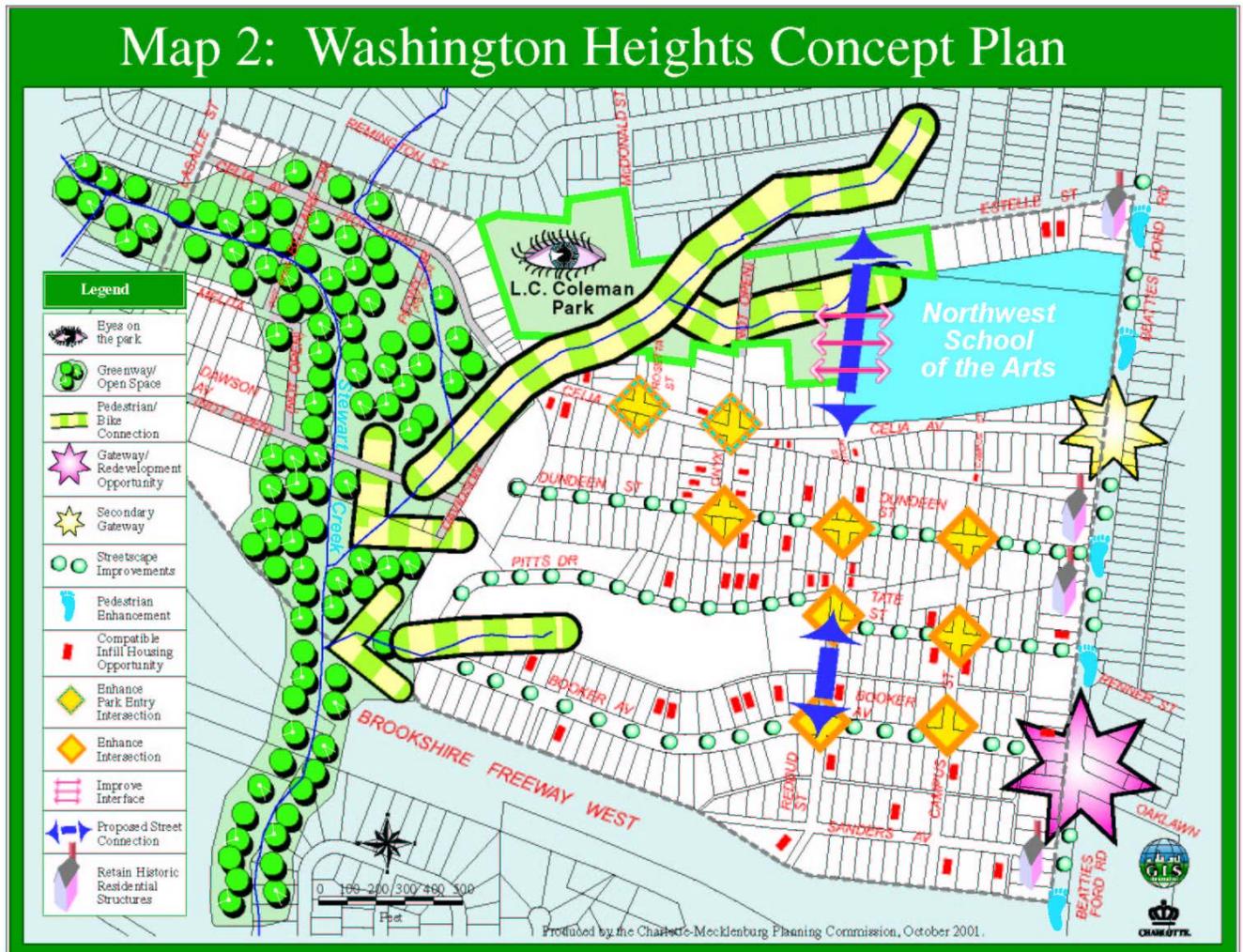
...Maintains and strengthens the beauty of its existing parks and provides opportunities for active and passive recreation for all age groups in a safe environment.

...Supports downtown as a regional arts and entertainment district that enhances the quality of life of its residents and is compatible with the neighborhood's scale and character.

...Recognizes the important role played by institutions such as churches, schools, colleges and universities, government offices and social service agencies and fosters a mutually respectful relationship between and among those institutions and neighborhood residents.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the vision, this plan takes a comprehensive look at the Washington Heights neighborhood and recommends strategies to address a wide range of issues identified during the planning process. **Map 2: Washington Heights Concept Plan** summarizes the key recommendations that need to be carried out to ensure the future stability and vitality of the study area.



Land Use and Urban Design

- Rehabilitate, update and preserve existing housing stock.
- Strengthen and preserve the historic, predominantly single-family, residential character of Washington Heights and encourage infill development that is consistent with and sensitive to the existing historic character of the neighborhood.
- Encourage the development/redevelopment of Beatties Ford Road to create a vibrant corridor that focuses neighborhood oriented mixed use services at key locations to serve the community.

Infrastructure

A. Transportation

- Identify infrastructure needs and improvements such as sidewalk, road connections and bicycle/pedestrian links within and external to the neighborhood.
- Improve traffic flow on Beatties Ford Road and improve the pedestrian realm along this corridor. Roadway improvements should include elements that make the pedestrian realm safer and more appealing such as building facades addressing the street, sidewalks, planting strips with street trees, pedestrian level lighting, pedestrian activated crossing signals and other pedestrian amenities.
- Ensure that current and future transit needs of this community are taken into consideration.

B. Storm Water

- Reduce flooding and storm water drainage issues.

Economic Development

- Improve linkages between the neighborhood and employment opportunities.
- Sustain neighborhood supportive businesses and encourage development of neighborhood scale mixed-use office and retail development along the Beatties Ford Road corridor at key locations.

Community Safety

- Improve safety in the neighborhood for area residents and business owners.

Human Services

- Increase awareness of existing programs and services available to the community, specifically the youth and elderly.

Community Organizing

- Strengthen and maintain an active neighborhood association.

Community Appearance

- Improve the overall appearance of the Washington Heights neighborhood.
- Promote homeownership opportunities.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

- Improve access and safety and encourage the use of the park and recreational facilities for all residents, young and old.
- Develop the greenway system along Stewart Creek.

Education

- Through design and function, incorporate Northwest School of the Arts so that it becomes an integral part of the neighborhood's fabric.
- Upgrade existing schools in and around the neighborhood to ensure equity in education and facilities and utilize schools as key resources in the community.
- Encourage students to stay in school.
- Encourage parental and citizen involvement in the education system.
- Encourage students to participate in college preparation classes to better prepare them for higher education and/or programs that would better prepare them for employment.

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Plan Organization

This Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan is divided into two planning documents: Volume 1: The Concept Plan and Volume 2: The Implementation Plan.

Concept Plan

This document, the Concept Plan, provides background information on the Washington Heights neighborhood and describes key issues raised during the planning process. It discusses the vision for the future of the Washington Heights neighborhood and provides recommendations to achieve that vision. The Concept Plan has been reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Planning Committee of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission. The Planning Commission forwarded the plan to the Charlotte City Council for review and decision. The Charlotte City Council adopted the Plan on February 25, 2002. It now becomes part of the City's policy framework to provide guidance in future decision making. Plan recommendations are forwarded to appropriate City and County departments for further refinement and inclusion in future work programs. The plan also serves as a guide for neighborhood and business groups to help focus their efforts to enhance the Washington Heights community.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan identifies strategies to implement the recommendations in the Concept Plan. The Implementation Plan is not intended to be an adopted document; rather, it is intended to provide direction to staff and other implementing bodies on possible strategies to most effectively carry out the intent of the Concept Plan.



Background

This plan was initiated in response to a request from residents of Washington Heights, who were concerned about the appearance of their neighborhood, its high crime rate and the general decline of their community. The plan amends the Central District Plan, which was adopted in 1993, by providing further direction for guiding development in the Washington Heights area. It also provides recommendations for addressing human services and other needs identified in the neighborhood. This plan will not only provide guidance to the governing bodies in future decision making, but will also help set priorities for the neighborhood and for City and County departments.

History

Washington Heights was the first streetcar suburb specifically developed for middle-income black residents in Charlotte. Freehold Realty Company, a partnership that had earlier developed Elizabeth Heights, recorded a plat map on June 10, 1913 with the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds laying out more than 200 residential lots. The property lay along the west side of the old country highway just north of the bridge over the Seaboard Air Line Railway tracks. It was just beyond the nineteenth century black village of Biddleville around Biddle University, later Johnson C. Smith University, which was being developed with white suburbs. A trolley line had recently opened along West Trade Street and out Beatties Ford Road from downtown, putting the new suburb of Washington Heights two-and-one-half miles from the center of the City.



WATSON PARK—Washington Height
The only Park around Charlotte for Colored People.
- Owned by C. H. Watson

suburb was to be called Washington Heights, evidently in honor of educator Booker T. Washington, the national black leader. The streets running west from Beatties Ford Road commemorated other local and national black leaders.

To help sell the new suburb, Freehold Realty secured the services of C.H. Watson. Watson who was one of the city's black leaders and listed "real estate" as his occupation in city directories of the period.

ASHINGTON HEIGHTS, the beautiful Negro Suburb, about two miles from the heart of the city, with street cars running through it. It is high and dry, being the highest point around Charlotte. It has beautiful streets convenient to churches and schools. In this suburb is to be found some of the best people and some of the handsomest homes to be found in any part of Charlotte. Persons planning to locate in Charlotte would do well to see "Washington Heights" before buying else-where. In this place are to be found some beautiful lots for sale on very easy terms and at a very low price. For further information write,
C. H. WATSON, 412 E. Second Street.

Original Copy of the Advertisement Penned by C. H. Watson in the mid 1910's taken from "Colored Charlotte"

Existing Conditions

This section of the *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan* provides information on current conditions and key issues raised during the planning process, including a discussion of what is already being planned or implemented relative to a particular concern. The focus of this section is not on providing solutions or recommendations. These can be found in the *Plan Objectives and Recommendations* Section and in the *Implementation Document*.

NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

In July 2000, a neighborhood “Quality of Life Study” was undertaken for the City of Charlotte’s Neighborhood Development Key Business Unit and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission in cooperation with other City and County departments. The purpose of this study was to better understand the issues inner city neighborhoods face, in order to address the needs of these areas so that they may remain or become viable places to live. In this study the Washington Heights Neighborhood was classified as “Fragile”. A fragile neighborhood is considered to experience a lower quality of life and be at risk on multiple fronts; social, physical, criminal and economic.

Table 1 that follows provides valuable insight on the issues that this neighborhood faces. Data for the neighborhood was compiled from 1990 census data and includes the latest 2000 census figures where these are available.

The following should be noted:

- The total population of the neighborhood in 1990 was 1,889 people and the new 2000 Census figures for the same area indicate that the population has declined by nearly 4% to 1,820 people. Comparatively the overall City population has increased by 27% between 1990 and 2000.
- 43% of the population is either younger than 18 or over 65 compared to 34% for the City (2000 Census data).
- 25% of the households are one person head households compared to 30% for the City (2000 Census data).
- 29% of the population in the neighborhood has a high school diploma compared to 23% for the City (1990 Census data).
- 30% of the households are on public assistance compared to 5% for the City (1990 Census data).
- 35% of the households are below poverty compared to 6% for the City (1990 Census data).

**Table 1
Neighborhood Profile**

Source: 1990 U.S. Census data and 2000 U.S. Census data where available
(Based on Block Group 2)

| | Washington Heights 2000 Census | % | Washington Heights 1990 Census | % | City of Charlotte 2000 % | City of Charlotte 1990 % |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Population | | | | | | |
| Total Population | 1820 | | 1889 | | | |
| Black Population | 1728 | 95% | 1854 | 98% | 33% | 32% |
| Children Under 18 | 519 | 29% | 518 | 27% | 25% | 24% |
| Elderly, 65 and over | 253 | 14% | 325 | 17% | 9% | 10% |
| Households | | | | | | |
| Total Households | 669 | | 687 | | | |
| One-Person Head | 166 | 25% | 178 | 26% | 30% | 28% |
| Married with Children | 62 | 9% | 55 | 8% | 21% | 22% |
| Female Head with Children | 114 | 17% | 130 | 19% | 8% | 9% |
| | | | | | | |
| Education | | | | | | |
| Adult, 25 and over | | | 1171 | | | |
| High School Grads | | | 336 | 29% | | 23% |
| College Grads | | | 43 | 4% | | 36% |
| | | | | | | |
| Occupations | | | | | | |
| Adults in Labor Force | | | 891 | | | |
| White-Collar Jobs | | | 239 | 27% | | 62% |
| Blue-Collar Jobs | | | 575 | 65% | | 33% |
| Unemployment | | | 77 | 9% | | 4% |
| | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | |
| Total Households | | | 687 | | | |
| \$0 - \$14,999 | | | 337 | 49% | | 20% |
| \$15,000 - \$24,999 | | | 207 | 30% | | 18% |
| \$25,000 – \$34,999 | | | 66 | 10% | | 17% |
| \$35,000 or more | | | 77 | 11% | | 45% |
| Families Below Poverty | | | 168 | 35% | | 8% |
| HH on Public Assistance | | | 146 | 30% | | 5% |
| Female HH Below Poverty | | | 152 | 32% | | 6% |

LAND USE AND ZONING

Today the primary land use in the Washington Heights Community remains residential, with many of the existing single-family homes in the community dating from the 1910's and 1920's.

As illustrated on **Map 3 Washington Heights Existing Land Use** and listed in **Table 2 Existing Land Use by Acreage**, the study area contains approximately 36 acres of single-family development, 20 acres of multi-family development, 10 acres of vacant land, less than half an acre of office uses and approximately 3.2 acres of Business/Commercial uses. In addition, the study area contains 3 churches, 3 daycare centers and 1 public school, which account for nearly 12 acres of institutional uses. Open space, which is essentially made up of L.C. Coleman Park, accounts for nearly 13 acres.

Table 2
Existing Land Use by Acreage

Source: Mecklenburg County Real Property Tax Data, 2001

| Existing Land Use | Acres | % of Total |
|-------------------|---------------|------------|
| Single Family | 35.93 | 27 |
| Multi-family | 18.31 | 13.5 |
| Office | 0.34 | 0.5 |
| Commercial | 3.17 | 2.5 |
| Institutional | 11.92 | 9 |
| Vacant | 48.99 | 37 |
| Open Space (Park) | 12.78 | 9.5 |
| Utility | 1.51 | 1 |
| Total | 132.95 | 100 |

Existing Zoning

Existing zoning is illustrated on **Map 4**. In comparing the existing zoning to the current land use pattern, several inconsistencies become apparent. For example, several single-family homes are located on land zoned for multi-family development. In many instances the zoning category allows for a more intense use than is currently developed on the property. Correcting the zoning to be consistent with the existing land use could help stabilize the delicate balance of land uses within the neighborhood.

Single-Family Residential

The neighborhood's residential units are predominantly single-family, numbering approximately 200 homes. The architecture of the original homes, many of which still exist today, is typical of the "bungalow" style, which was the most widespread housing type constructed in the County during the 1900 to 1930s. Wide porches with heavy columns and low-pitched roofs characterize these houses. These houses contribute significantly to the neighborhood's unique character.



Examples of the "Bungalow Style" Houses typical in Washington Heights

Multi-family Residential

There is also a large multi-family component that developed in the 1960s. This is made up of 72 duplex units (i.e. 36 buildings with two units each), and 3 apartment developments, Mayfield Terrace Apartments, Dundeen Courts and Washington Heights. Mayfield Terrace and Washington Heights apartment complexes are situated at the western end of Pitts Drive and “Dundeen Courts” is located at the western end of Dundeen Street.

Mayfield Terrace apartments are publicly owned and operated as market rate housing



Mayfield Terrace Apartments

with rents set low enough to be affordable for low-income households. The complex is made up of 46 two-story, town home-style, three and four bedroom units ranging in size from 850 to 1,130 square feet. This complex has recently been renovated. Work included replacing and repairing the roofs, windows and siding, shutters and storm doors. These units are typically 100 percent occupied.

Washington Heights apartments are privately owned and operated. The complex consists of 20 units all of which are 2 bedroom apartments measuring on average 800 square feet.



Washington Heights Apartments

The Northwest Corridor Community Development Corporation (NWCCDC), made up of a group of neighborhood, business, civic representatives and representatives from Johnson C. Smith University, owns Dundeen Courts which is a complex of 26 two story garden style apartments.



Dundeen Courts Apartments

In 2000, the Northwest Corridor Community Development Corporation purchased 10 duplex units on Dundeen Street and converted these into for sale, four bedroom single-family units. The majority of these units have sold under a lease to purchase program.



Converted Duplex Unit on Dundeen Street

Table 3 lists the number of housing units by type for the neighborhood and provides rental information.

**Table 3
Housing Units by Type and Rental Information**

Source: 2001 Real Property Tax Information and 2000 US Census data

| Housing Type | # Units | % of Housing Type to Total | # Rental Units to Total Housing Units | City of Charlotte Rental Figures |
|----------------------------|------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Single Family | 200 | 53 | 127 | |
| Duplex | 72 | 19 | 69 | |
| Apartment | 107 | 28 | 107 | |
| Total Housing Units | 379 | 100 | 303 | |
| % Rental Units | | | 80% | 42.5% |

As shown in **Table 3** there are approximately 179 multi-family units (apartments and duplex units) and 200 single-family units contained in the study area. Nearly 53% of the housing units are single family and 47% multi-family. The development of these “for rent” multi-family units has changed the overall characteristics of the neighborhood. In fact, in the original plan for Washington Heights the parcel of land where Mayfield Terrace apartments is now located was set aside to be developed as a linear park, similar to Latta Park in Charlotte’s Dilworth neighborhood.

The neighborhood has evolved from a predominantly owner-occupied area to a neighborhood where nearly 80% of the housing units are for rent. In comparison, the City’s rental figure is 42.5%. In general, the eastern section of the neighborhood closest to Beatties Ford Road has the highest concentration of owner-occupied residences and the western section is made up of mostly rental units. The western section is also made up of mostly multi-family units. **Map 5** illustrates the ownership pattern for the neighborhood.

Map 5: Washington Heights Residential Ownership Pattern



Office/Commercial

The late 1930s and early 1940s saw a surge of commercial activity along Beatties Ford Road. The stores originally clustered around the area that was once the terminus of the streetcar and this area is still referred to as “The End” by longtime residents. The streetcar stopped running in 1938.

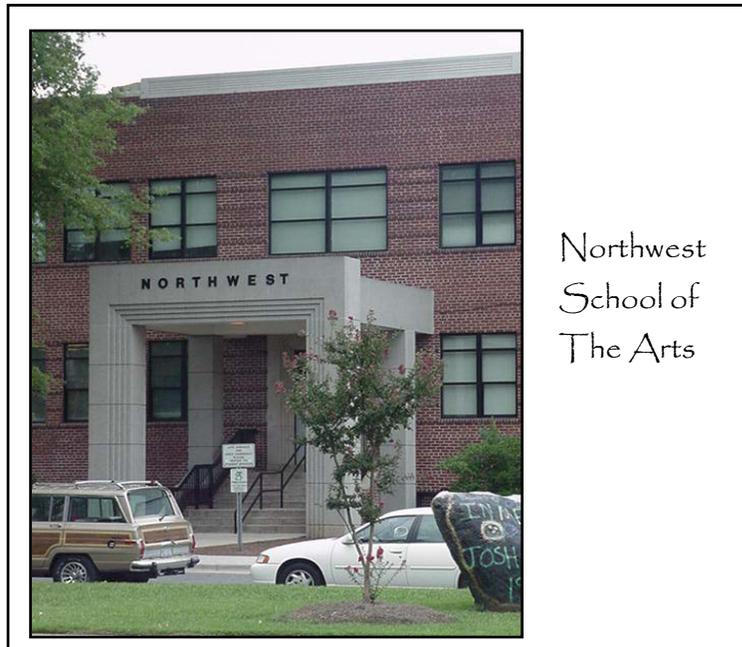
Today many viable businesses and homes exist along Beatties Ford Road. Many of these businesses occupy the original houses and have converted the interior space so that it is suitable for office or commercial use. This trend has contributed to the unique character of the Beatties Ford Road Corridor.

Businesses in the area typically cater to the neighborhood residents with services such as a pharmacy, convenience store, daycare centers and beauty salons. Although there are a few businesses within walking distance of neighborhood residents, other services such as a grocery store and banks are not located in the immediate area and are often somewhat difficult to access, particularly for the elderly.



Hair Braiding Salon on Beatties Ford Road
Utilizing Original Residential Structure

Institutional



Northwest
School of
The Arts

Institutional land uses include a school, churches and day care centers. The Northwest School of the Arts is the major institutional use in the neighborhood. It currently has over 1200 students and 135 staff members during the school year and houses a youth camp during the summer. The school operates as a performing arts magnet school.

There are three churches located within the neighborhood. The school and churches have extended their facilities to the community for neighborhood activities. During the planning process, a number of the study group meetings were held at Tabernacle Baptist Church on Redbud Street.



Tabernacle
Baptist
Church,
Redbud
Street

Parks and Open Space

Park and open space facilities are available for neighborhood residents to enjoy. L.C. Coleman Park offers both leisure and active recreational opportunities for youth, families and the elderly, however it is currently difficult to access and has limited visibility from the Washington Heights neighborhood. This has led to concern for safety and security in and around the park area.

The park is approximately 13 acres and has recently undergone phase one of a two-phase upgrade.



Newly Resurfaced Basketball Courts in L.C.
Coleman Park

This first phase included renovating the basketball courts and softball field, the addition of a children's play area, construction of a new picnic shelter, the addition of lighting and thinning out of trees.

Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation has recently acquired additional parcels north of the existing park in an effort to expand the park. This process has added nearly 10 acres to the existing park area.



New Children's Play Area, L.C. Coleman Park

Stewart Creek, which runs through the western portion of the neighborhood, has been designated as a greenway corridor in the Mecklenburg County Greenway Master Plan, which was adopted in March 1999. This trail, once completed, would start at I-85 and ultimately link up to the Irwin Creek Greenway to the south. The vision set out in the Greenway Master Plan (adopted in 1999) is "...The preservation, protection and appropriate recreational use of flood plains in Charlotte-Mecklenburg through a greenway and greenway trail program that will create a more livable and sustainable community for all residents and businesses."

INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Transportation/Mobility:

1. Roadways

Brookshire Freeway forms the southern boundary of the neighborhood and Beatties Ford Road, a major thoroughfare, forms the eastern boundary. These roads carry a considerable amount of automobile traffic. Beatties Ford Road is also a high pedestrian traffic area. In 2000, the annual average weekly traffic volume on Beatties Ford Road was approximately 22,000 vehicles per day

High congestion locations occur at Beatties Ford Road and Booker Avenue/Oaklawn intersection, at Beatties Ford Road and La Salle and at the east and west bound ramps onto Brookshire Freeway at Beatties Ford Road. Between 1997 and 2000, 34 accidents occurred at Beatties Ford Road and Booker/Oaklawn, 25 at Beatties Ford Road and Celia Avenue, 24 at Beatties Ford Road and Dundeen Street and 21 at Beatties Ford Road and Tate Street.

Many of the internal streets in the neighborhood are dead end streets, inhibiting vehicular and pedestrian movement through the neighborhood. Beatties Ford Road is a high volume traffic corridor and does not have adequate facilities to accommodate pedestrians. The intersections of Estelle Street and Celia Avenue with Beatties Ford Road are problem areas during the school year, as school related traffic has difficulty entering and exiting at the beginning and end of the school day. School related traffic also causes accessibility issues for residents on Celia Avenue, making it difficult to exit or enter their driveways during school entry and exit times.

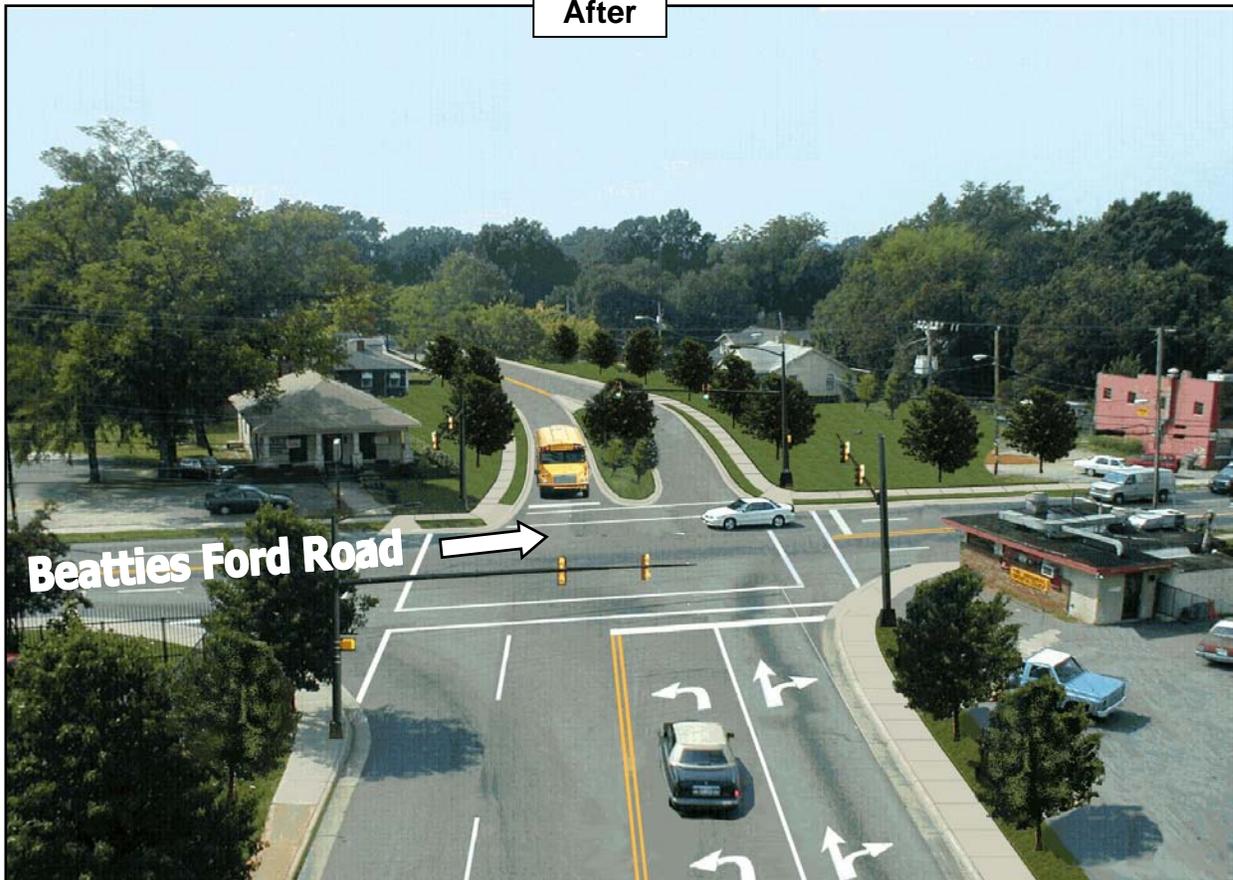
The City of Charlotte is currently working on a major transportation project for Beatties Ford Road. The project involves the widening of Beatties Ford Road to four lanes from Oaklawn Avenue/Booker Avenue intersection to Russell Avenue, just north of the study area.

As part of this project Booker Avenue will be re-aligned with Oaklawn Avenue (See images that follow). Sidewalks, planting strips and street trees are some of the streetscape improvements that will be included in this project. This project was initiated in 1998 and construction is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2001 with a completion date in mid 2003.

Before



After



“Before” and “After” rendering of the re-aligned intersection of Beatties Ford Road and Booker/Oaklawn Avenue looking west down Booker Avenue

Based on the information and preliminary recommendations provided during the development of the Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan, the Charlotte City Council approved funding from the 2000 Neighborhood Improvement Bond Referendum to begin a number of streetscape, infrastructure and road connectivity projects in the neighborhood. These projects are in the bid phase and are scheduled to begin construction in the Fall of 2001 with completion set for mid 2003.

2. Transit

Currently, the Washington Heights Neighborhood is served by one Charlotte area Transit System (CATS) bus route (Beatties Ford Route #7). This route begins in Uptown Charlotte, follows Beatties Ford Road up to Sunset Road, terminating at the Statesville Ave and Sunset Road intersection. According to a survey conducted in December 2000, this route has the third highest ridership of all the local routes in Mecklenburg County with an average monthly ridership of approximately 75,000.

CATS also provides EZ Rider service in the neighborhood. EZ-Rider is a neighborhood based transit service with van routes linking neighborhoods to jobs, shopping and medical facilities. The routes serve as neighborhood circulators that connect to CATS' main bus routes.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is currently engaged in a rapid transit and land use study that will recommend the types of land-use and rapid transit service best suited to serve

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's five major corridors along with a series of improvements for areas outside the main corridors. (The Washington Heights neighborhood is located in the North Transit corridor). The study is designed to identify specific transit service enhancements and once completed it will outline, on a year-to-year basis the types of transit services to be implemented.

The specific needs of this community relating to demand for transit service and the specific goals and objectives for public transit, such as improved access to major destinations, environmental quality and community revitalization, will be studied through this process. The Beatties Ford Road Corridor has also been identified as a location for a "Transit Hub," which is a point of multi-modal transfers that allows riders to connect with local and express CATS bus service as well as other local shuttle service. The location of this hub has not been finalized but the needs of the Washington Heights neighborhood will be taken into consideration during the planning of this facility.



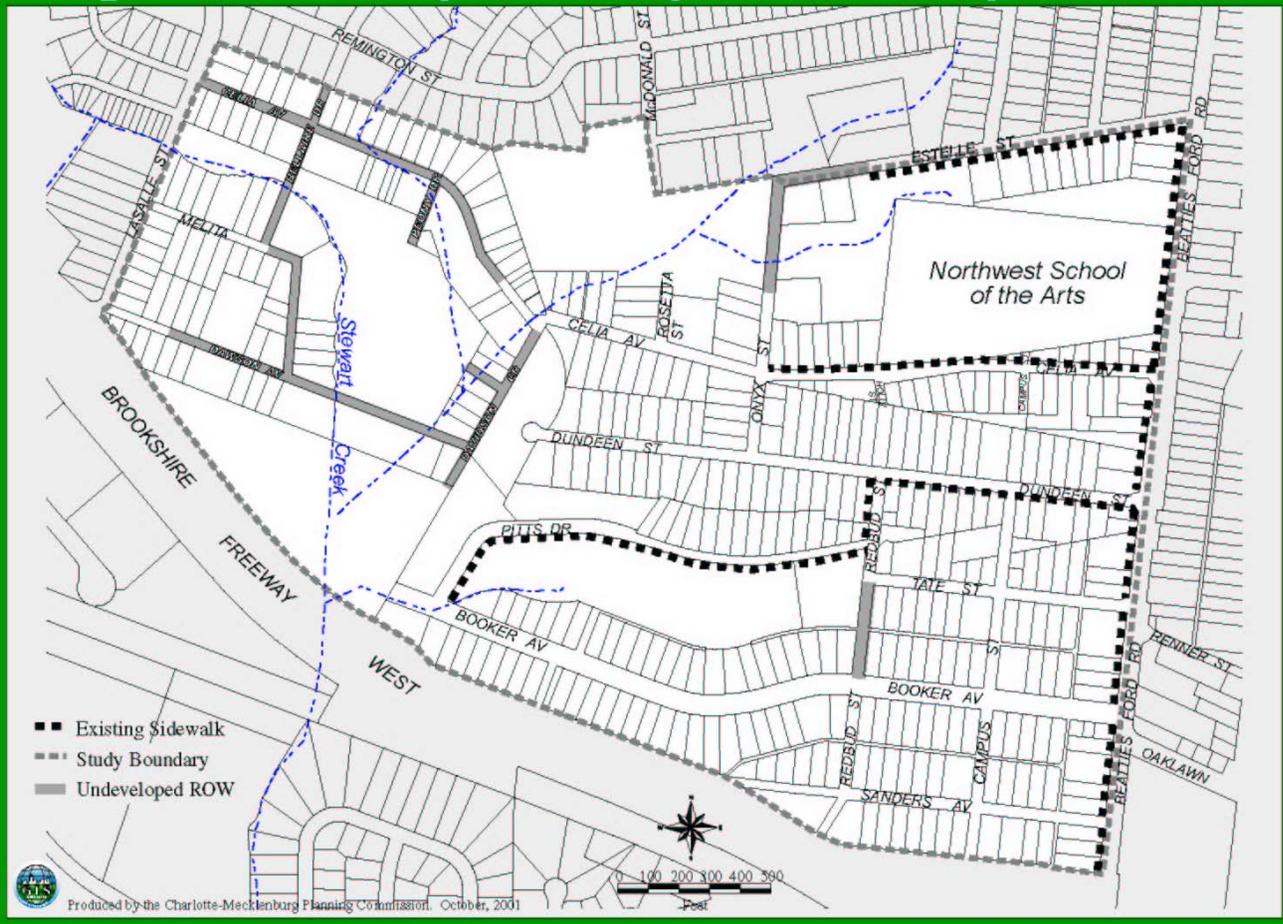
3. Sidewalks/Pedestrian Facilities

The Washington Heights neighborhood has a limited and poorly maintained sidewalk network (See **Map 6**). Additionally, sidewalks are set against the curb in many areas, compromising pedestrian safety and comfort. Crosswalks and other improvements to facilitate pedestrian movement at intersections are also lacking in the study area. Most intersections are not striped with pedestrian crossing markings and do not have pedestrian activated crossing signals.



Sidewalk Set Against The Curb on Beatties Ford Road

Map 6: Washington Heights Existing Sidewalk



4. Bicycle Facilities

Like the majority of Mecklenburg County, the Washington Heights neighborhood lacks facilities to accommodate bicycle travel. Bicycle lanes, paths, parking and ancillary facilities are not provided within the study area, with the exception of a bicycle rack at the Northwest School of the Arts.

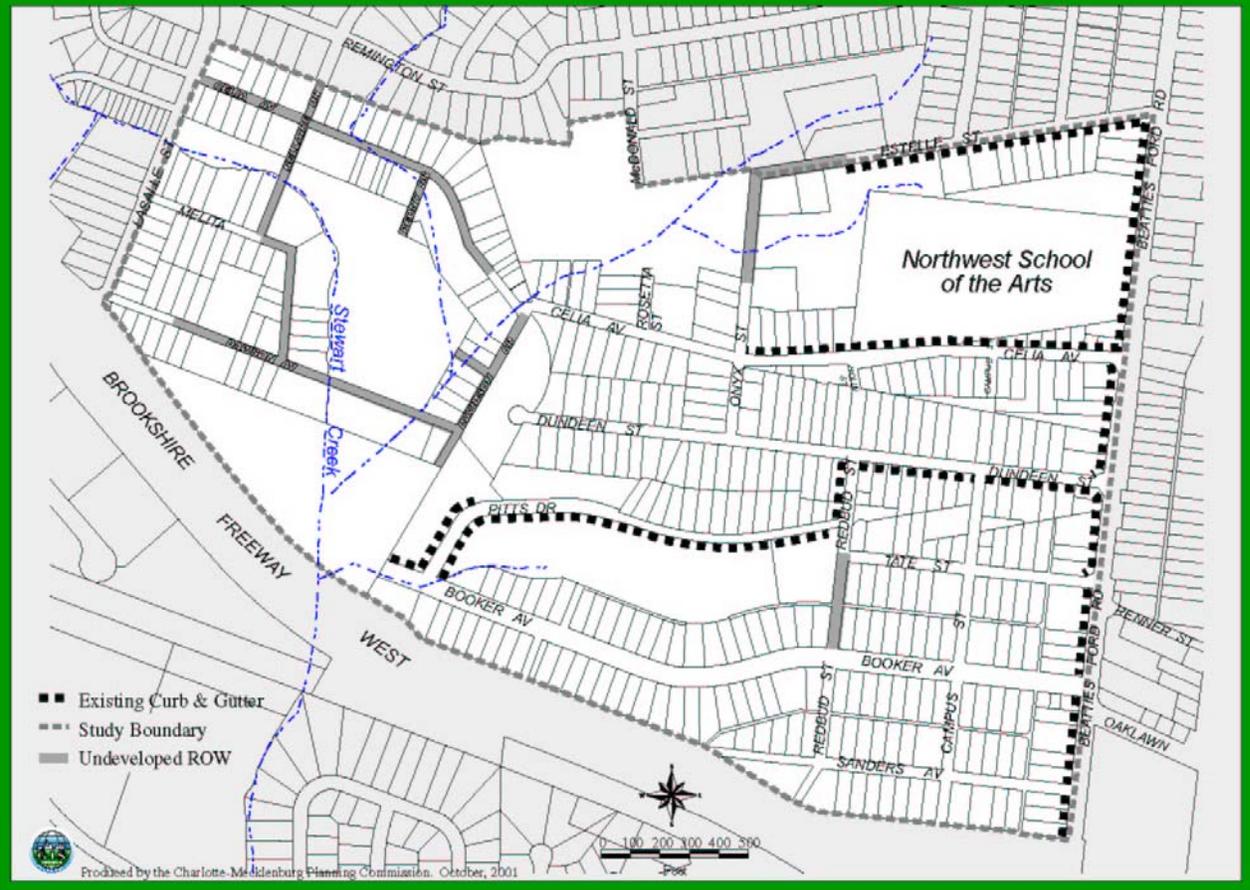
Beatties Ford Road is rated as “Bicycle unfriendly” according to the Bicycle Suitability Map compiled by Mecklenburg County in 1999. High traffic volumes and speeds, as well as narrow lane widths on Beatties Ford Road are the major reasons for the “unfriendly” rating.

In addition, the neighborhood has many dead-end or cul-de-sac roads that do not provide connections for bicyclists or pedestrians to use as an alternative to the Beatties Ford Road thoroughfare for most trip purposes.

B. Storm Water

Various areas in the neighborhood experience flooding. The creek between Pitts Drive and Booker Avenue, running through the Mayfield Terrace apartments, runs into a drainage ditch that is partially open and partially canalized. This area is subject to

Map 7: Washington Heights Existing Curb & Gutter



flooding, especially at the lower end where Pitts Drive meets Booker Avenue. In addition the creek that runs through L. C. Coleman Park towards Stewart Creek also experiences flooding especially toward the lower end of Celia Avenue.

Currently majority of the streets in the neighborhood lack curb and gutter (See **Map 7**).

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Washington Heights has experienced an overall improvement with regard to the prevalence of criminal activity in the neighborhood, but the incidence rate is still high.

Table 4 below gives a summary of crime rates since 1995.

**Table 4
Crime Statistics**

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Crime Analysis Department, 2001

| Frequency of Incidents | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Offence | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| Aggravated Assault | 57 | 44 | 54 | 52 | 48 | 36 |
| Non-Aggravated Assault | 62 | 71 | 89 | 65 | 60 | 58 |
| Burglary | 44 | 47 | 45 | 21 | 28 | 38 |
| Auto Theft | 9 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 14 |
| Vandalism/Damage To Property | 31 | 42 | 44 | 30 | 31 | 29 |
| Sex Offence | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 205 | 217 | 243 | 181 | 182 | 178 |
| Drug Arrests | Not Available | Not Available | 54 | 65 | 41 | 60 |

(Note: Drug arrest data is not available for 1995 and 1996 so these numbers have not been included in the Totals).

Since the early 1990s Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department has assigned Community Police Officers to Washington Heights as part of the “Community Problem Oriented Policing” program. This is defined as a philosophy under which the police, community, and other service providers enter into interactive partnerships to identify community needs, establish priorities, and develop innovative police-community responses to problems. The partnership is based on a program where police and the community share the responsibility for problem solving and engaging in open, honest two-way communication. In this way problem identification is achieved through officer observation and citizen input.

This program has been very successful in helping to decrease the severity and number of incidents in the neighborhood. It has also improved relationships between residents and police and the perception of safety by neighborhood residents. There is still, however, a relatively high incident of serious crime when compared to City of Charlotte figures.

Map 8 gives a geographic snap shot of reported incidences for 2000 and provides some guidance as to trouble hot spots.

Map 8
Location Analysis of Reported Criminal Offences in 2000
 Source: Research, Planning and Analysis Bureau – Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, 2001



ENVIRONMENT

In 1996, the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners adopted a creek use policy, which states, in part, "...It is the intent of the Commission that all Mecklenburg waters shall be suitable for prolonged human contact, and recreational opportunities and shall be suitable to support varied species of aquatic life..."

As a result of the above policy and other initiatives Mecklenburg County has seen great improvement in the quality of water in the creeks and lakes. County-wide greenway plans, buffer requirements, limiting filling and building in the floodplain and a new multi-objective greenway plan have been adopted and funded, all enhancing the natural function of our creek system while providing open space and connecting neighborhoods in an increasingly urban environment. Stewart Creek runs through the western part of the neighborhood and has been designated as a greenway corridor in the Mecklenburg County Greenway master plan (adopted in March 1999).

Opportunities and Issues

In creating a future vision for the Washington Heights neighborhood, the study group looked at how to build on the existing strengths and opportunities of the neighborhood in order to enhance the character and vitality of the entire study area. Key strengths and opportunities identified in the study process are listed below:

- Location - close proximity to Center City, interstates I-77 and I-85, schools and churches.
- Historic significance of the neighborhood - the first streetcar suburb developed specifically for black residents in Charlotte Mecklenburg started in 1913.
- An active neighborhood association - residents are concerned and engaged in issues affecting the future vitality of their neighborhood.
- Many long time residents.
- L.C. Coleman Park.
- Existing and future access to transit.
- J.C. Smith University, situated just south of the neighborhood has historic relevance as an historically black university and is a wonderful asset to the broader community.
- Northwest School of the Arts, a magnet school, is situated in the neighborhood.
- The historic Excelsior Club, completed in 1946, was, and still is, an important gathering place for blacks in Charlotte.
- After school and summer school programs offered by neighborhood residents.
- Neighborhood scale service retail.



New Play
Set -
L.C.
Coleman
Park



"Biddle Hall" -
Johnson C.
Smith
University



The "Excelsior Club"

Washington Heights has many positive attributes that can be built upon. There are also issues associated with the neighborhood that need to be addressed. In the *Charlotte Neighborhood Quality of Life study (2000)*, Washington Heights was described as "Fragile". The report described fragile neighborhoods as places experiencing social, economic, physical and criminal problems. Some of the variables measured for Washington Heights indicated a high percentage of the neighborhood residents receiving food stamps, high drop-out rates, low competency-test pass rates, high percentage of births to adolescents, higher than average crime rates, high substandard housing index, low percentage of homeownership and low pedestrian friendliness ranking.

Although the Washington Heights neighborhood study area is considered Fragile, by focusing financial and human resources to address concerns identified through the plan development process, the neighborhood can move towards becoming a more stable, desirable and livable community.

The key issue areas, identified during the plan development process, are listed below:

1. **Land Use and Urban Design** – The historic character of the neighborhood is being eroded by new infill development that is not consistent with existing historic

architecture. Homes are often boarded up or in need of repair. In many cases this is due to the financial constraints of residents or lack of maintenance by landlords. The single-family character of the neighborhood is being eroded by multi-family projects that were developed primarily in the 1960's.

2. Infrastructure –

- A. *Transportation/Mobility* – Vehicular and pedestrian connectivity is limited due to dead end streets and the lack of sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. The efficiency of transit, which is impacted by scheduling and routing, is not frequent enough to adequately serve the needs of the community. Traffic on Beatties Ford Road is congested, especially during rush hours and school hours. The staggered alignment of Oaklawn/Booker Avenue with Beatties Ford Road creates traffic safety and operational problems.
 - B. *Storm water* - Storm drainage problems along some neighborhood streets cause flooding in some areas. Flooding also occurs along Stewart Creek.
3. **Employment** – Washington Heights is located in the shadows of the Center City, as well as other major employment areas. However, unemployment and low wages are a major issue for residents in this community. Residents experience problems accessing available jobs and/or they lack the necessary education or training required to obtain available positions. The median household income for Washington Heights' residents is less than half that of the City of Charlotte's median household income. The percentage of persons receiving public assistance is three times the City percentage.
 4. **Community Safety** – Crime rates for the neighborhood have decreased over the past five years, yet are still higher than City rates.
 5. **Human Services** – Washington Heights has a high percentage of youth and elderly residents, yet there is limited awareness of services and activities, health and mental health programs, and school programs available that specifically cater to these groups.
 6. **Community Organizing** – The Washington Heights Community Association meets on a regular basis and takes on numerous community projects. The association is a great asset to the community, yet it is challenged with getting more residents involved.
 7. **Community Appearance** – There are a number of areas and structures that are well maintained but over the years the overall appearance of Washington Heights has deteriorated. Overgrown lots and alleys, abandoned cars, poorly maintained residential and commercial structures, as well as litter, are common throughout the neighborhood.

8. ***Parks, Recreation and Open Space*** – The L.C. Coleman Park provides a relatively large recreational facility in the community. However the park needs to be more accessible and have stronger visual links to the neighborhood. Additional opportunities for structured leisure activities are needed in the community.
9. ***Education*** – Curriculum provided in some schools does not fully respond to the needs and interests of area students and a higher than average percentage of students drop out of schools.

Vision and Concept

VISION STATEMENT

Reaching consensus on a vision statement early in the planning process helped guide the development of this neighborhood plan.

Historic Washington Heights has a strong sense of pride and place, formed by its tree lined streets, distinctive architecture, proximity to the city's commercial and cultural heart, and history as a walkable urban neighborhood.

The Vision for historic Washington Heights is to develop and maintain an attractive, historic neighborhood that has a variety of stable housing opportunities and safe pedestrian friendly streets that provide access to jobs, parks, transit, schools, businesses and other resources. We wish to build on that sense of pride and place to make historic Washington Heights an even better neighborhood in which to live, work and play. We envision a neighborhood that...

...Offers a substantial mix of urban housing types, accommodating various income levels and household types.

...Has a strong element of neighborhood supportive shops and businesses to complement downtown's regional commercial character.

...Has a pedestrian friendly atmosphere and allows people to comfortably meet most of their daily needs without an automobile, by such alternative means as walking, riding a bicycle or using public transportation.

...Enhances the beauty of its existing parks and provides opportunities for active and passive recreation for all age groups in a safe environment.

...Supports downtown as a regional arts and entertainment district that enhances the quality of life of its residents and is compatible with the neighborhoods scale and character.

...Recognizes the important role played by institutions such as churches, schools, colleges and universities, government offices and social service agencies and fosters a mutually respectful relationship between and among those institutions and neighborhood residents.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

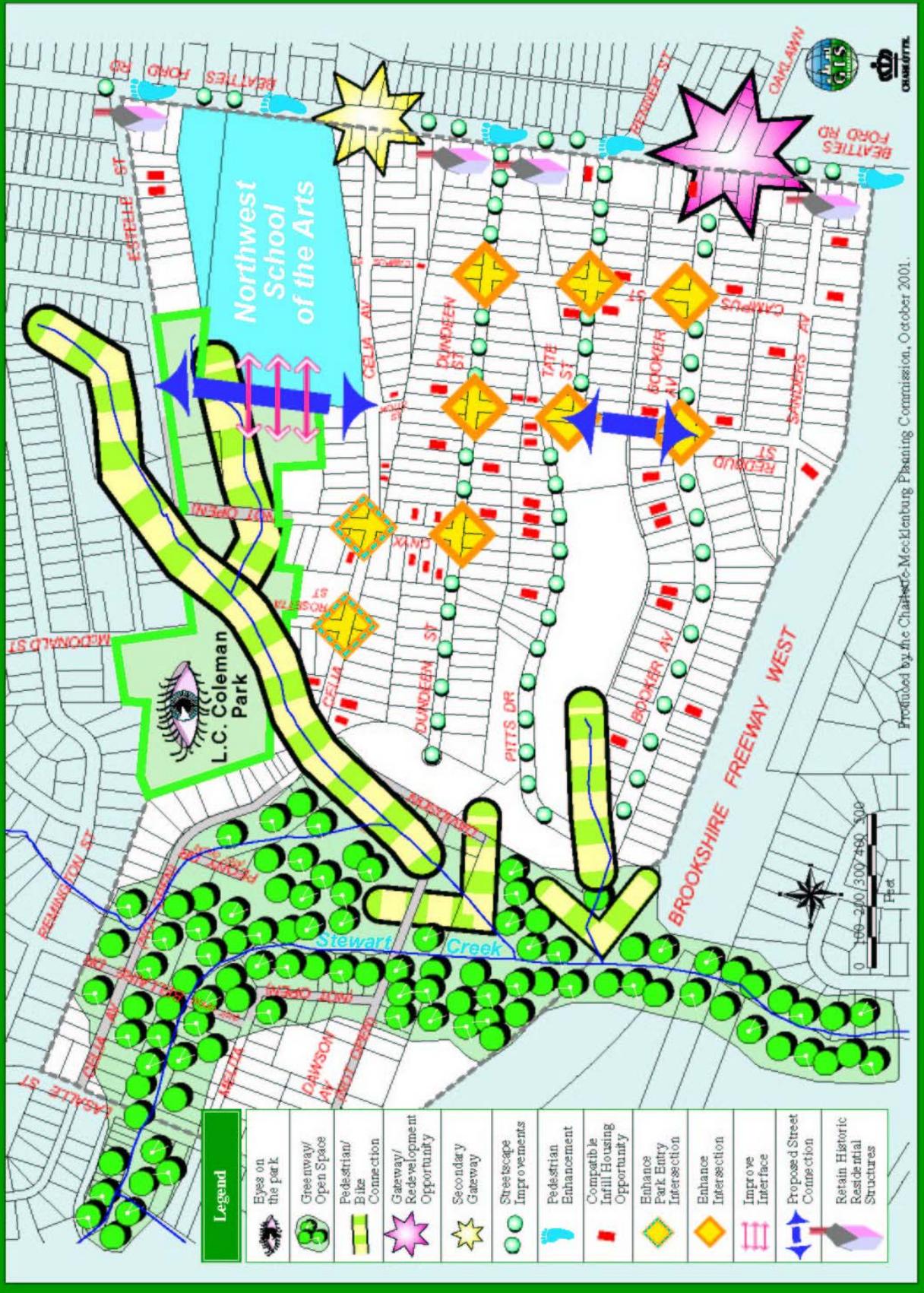
The Concept Plan (**Map 2**) illustrates the proposed major land use and physical improvements for the Washington Heights neighborhood. The primary goals of the concept plan are to maintain the historic integrity of the neighborhood and improve its livability and viability.

The major development concepts are illustrated on **Map 2** and described briefly below:

- There are many historic residential structures along Beatties Ford Road that should be retained even if their use changes, for example, from residential to office or commercial, as these help create a unique sense of community along the corridor.
- The large number of currently vacant lots within the neighborhood provides a wonderful opportunity for infill development. This development however, needs to be sensitive to and compliment the existing historic character of the residential structures in the neighborhood.
- The Concept Plan proposes looking at the possibility of links between the school and the park and the neighborhood and recommends seeking ways to deal with the relationships between these elements.
- The overall transportation concept seeks to improve accessibility and connectivity within and external to the neighborhood for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Additional sidewalks, roadway connections, bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings and increased transit service are envisioned as part of an overall transportation/mobility strategy.
- One of the key mobility/connectivity recommendations of the Concept Plan seeks to connect Washington Heights to neighborhoods to the north without having to utilize Beatties Ford Road.
- The intersection of Booker Ave/Oaklawn Avenue and Beatties Ford Road forms a focal point and an entrance to the neighborhood. The intersection is currently offset, creating traffic and pedestrian safety issues. The plan therefore supports the realignment of this intersection. This realigned intersection should be utilized for redevelopment opportunities such as a mixed-use node forming a gateway into the neighborhood off Beatties Ford Road.
- The vision for the intersection of Celia Avenue and Beatties Ford Road is that of a secondary gateway into the neighborhood. This is a very busy intersection with much of the activity originating from the school. The concept plan seeks to incorporate the school as an integral element of the neighborhood.

- Beatties Ford Road is a high volume traffic corridor. It is also a high volume pedestrian traffic area. The roadway improvements proposed for Beatties Ford Road should include elements that make the pedestrian realm safer and more appealing. The plan, therefore, recommends establishing a Pedestrian Overlay District for the Beatties Ford Road Corridor. Elements such as building facades addressing the street, sidewalks, planting strips with street trees, pedestrian level lighting and other pedestrian amenities should be considered for this corridor.
- Street and pedestrian improvements are also necessary on many of the internal streets to improve connectivity, not only for vehicular traffic but also for pedestrian and bicyclists. Specifically, the plan recommends connecting Redbud Street between Booker and Tate Street; investigating a link between Estelle Street and Celia Avenue, possibly linking to Redbud Street; providing sidewalk and planting strips along Booker Avenue and Pitts Drive and creating pedestrian/bicycle links between the school, through the park and connecting with the proposed greenway along Stewart Creek.
- The Concept Plan seeks to integrate L.C. Coleman Park into the neighborhood and provide better safety and security for park users by investigating ways to increase the visibility or “Eyes on the Park” and activity in the park.
- The plan envisions the development of a greenway along Stewart Creek with bicycle/pedestrian paths that could become part of a larger network through the study area and connecting to other neighborhoods.

Map 2: Washington Heights Concept Plan



PLAN GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following goals and recommendations were developed as guides towards accomplishing the vision set out above. They are discussed under the following categories: land use and urban design; infrastructure; economic development; public safety; human services; community organizing; community appearance; education and parks, recreation and open space. It should be made clear that the neighborhood based organizations will need to play a key role in the implementation of many of these recommendations.

Land Use and Urban Design

The existing land use pattern in the neighborhood is predominantly residential with non-residential uses concentrated along Beatties Ford Road. The long-term vision for the neighborhood is to preserve its historic residential character and encourage retail and office uses that complement the neighborhood to be focused along the Beatties Ford Road Corridor, especially around the Booker Avenue intersection. The proposed future land use is illustrated on **Map 9** and **Map 10** highlights the land use changes that are recommended to amend the Central District Plan.

Additionally the following land use and urban design goals and recommendations are proposed to help achieve this vision.

Goal 1 - Rehabilitate, update and preserve existing housing stock.

Recommendations

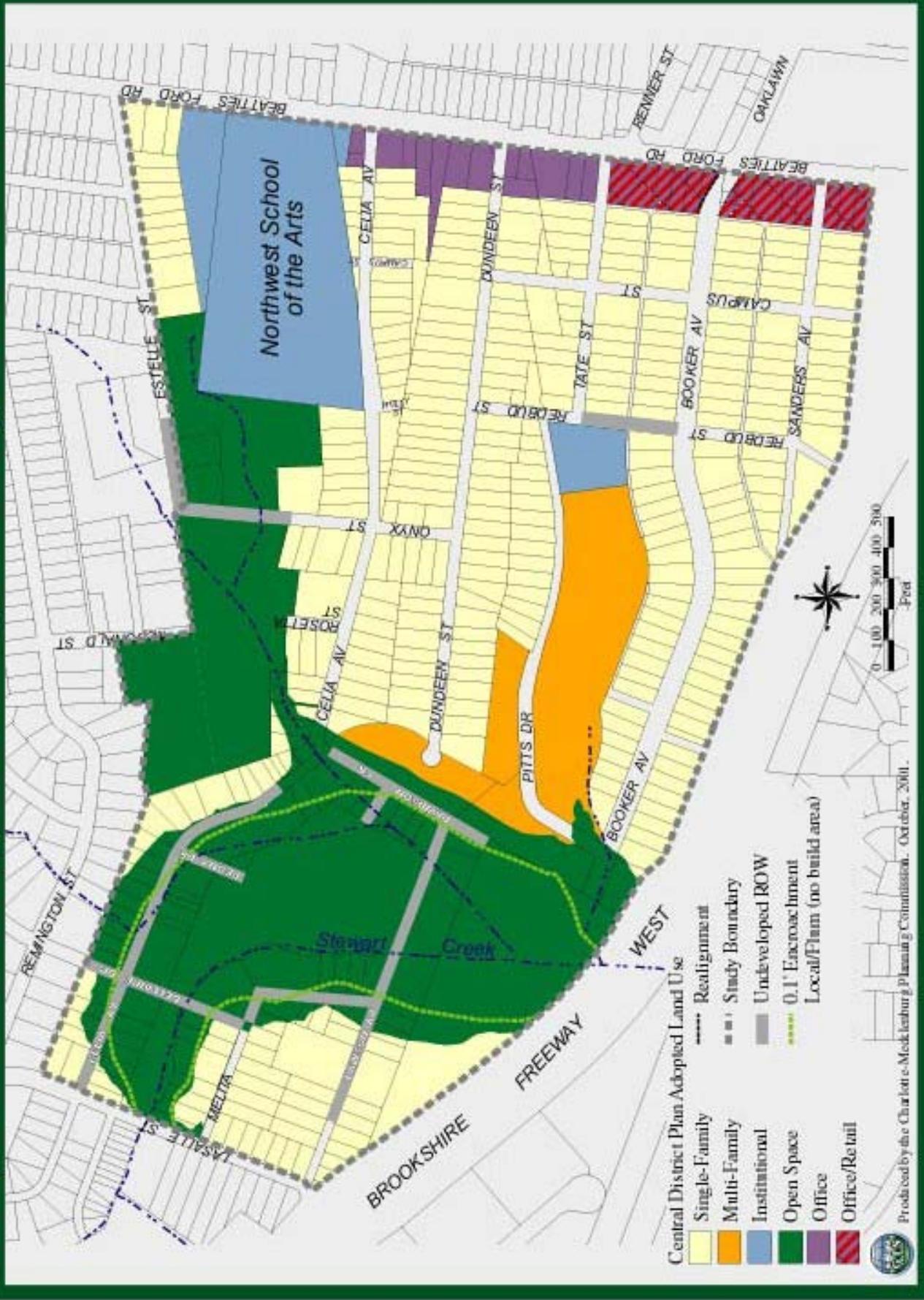
- a) Maintain the existing, predominantly residential development pattern within the neighborhood, with single-family at a density of up to 5 dwelling units per acre and multi-family at a density of up to 12 units per acre.
- b) Work with city departments and other agencies to determine if there are assistance programs available in order to rehabilitate and/or update existing housing stock.
- c) Initiate concentrated housing code enforcement in the neighborhood.

Goal 2 - Strengthen and preserve the historic residential character of Washington Heights and encourage infill development that is consistent with and sensitive to the historic roots of the neighborhood.

Recommendations

- a) Establish and encourage the use of a set of design guidelines, provided in this document, to encourage developers/homebuilders to construct new infill housing that is consistent with or compliments existing historic structures.
- b) Maintain the existing residential land use pattern within the neighborhood.

Map 9: Washington Heights Proposed Land Use

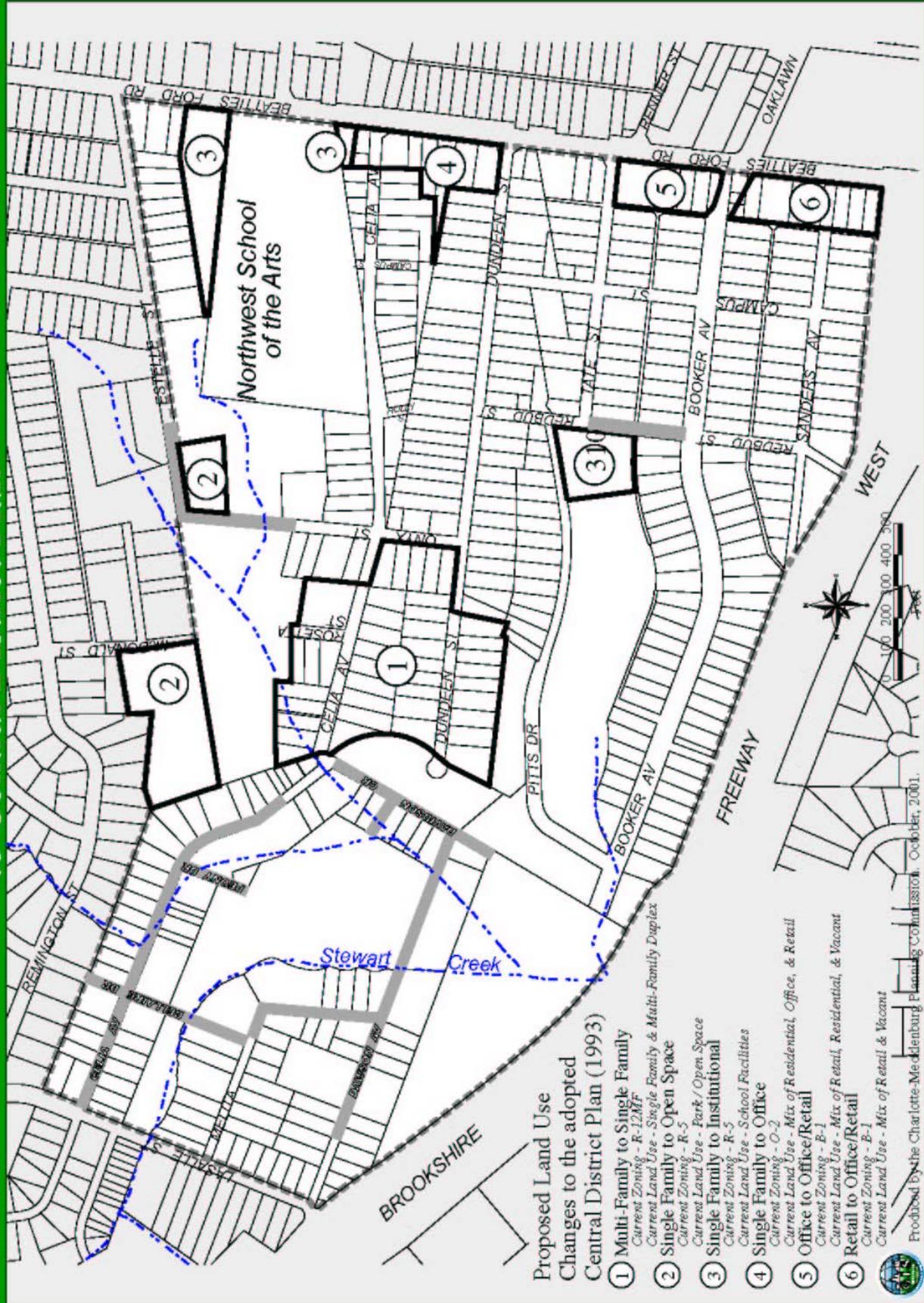


- Central District Plan Adopted Land Use
- Single-Family
 - Multi-Family
 - Institutional
 - Open Space
 - Office
 - Office/Retail
 - Realignment
 - Study Boundary
 - Undeveloped ROW
 - 0.1' Easement
 - Local/Plum (no build area)

Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, October, 2001.



Map 10: Washington Heights Proposed Land Use Changes to Central District Plan



Goal 3 - Promote homeownership opportunities.

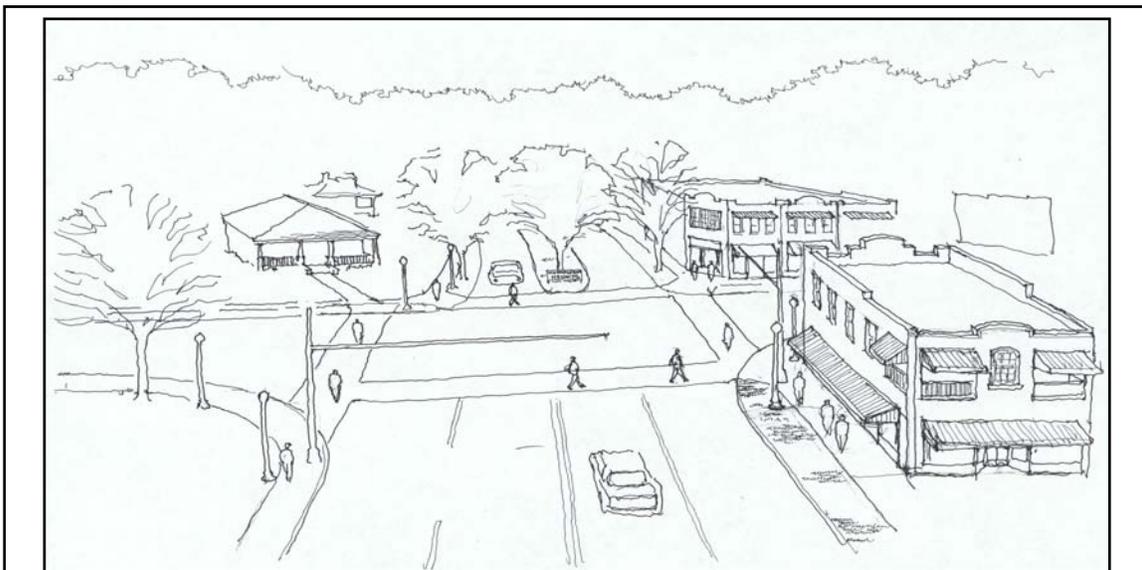
Recommendations

- a) Train and educate prospective buyers on budgeting, home maintenance, credit repair and other responsibilities of homeownership.
- b) Work with existing organizations to develop education and outreach services in order to increase awareness of homeownership opportunities and assistance programs.

Goal 4 - Encourage the development/redevelopment of Beatties Ford Road to create a vibrant corridor that focuses neighborhood oriented mixed use services at key locations to serve the community.

Recommendations

- a) Promote the development of neighborhood serving retail and office that is urban in scale and pedestrian oriented along Beatties Ford Road. Non-residential development should be capped at two stories in order that it fit in with the overall scale of the corridor and should be appropriately buffered from abutting residential uses.
- b) In the event that commercial or office tenants/uses wish to locate along Beatties Ford Road, encourage the reuse of existing residential structures for these uses.
- c) Focus mixed-use development at the realigned intersection of Beatties Ford Road and Booker/Oaklawn Avenue to create a focal point for the neighborhood. This can be office and/or retail development, vertically or horizontally integrated, with no single retail use to be greater than 10, 000 square feet.



Rendering Showing the Potential Redevelopment of the Realigned Intersection at Beatties Ford Road and Booker Avenue with Pedestrian Oriented Mixed-use Buildings (looking west down Booker Avenue)

- d) Improve the neighborhood convenience center at Beatties Ford Road and Tate Street to help stabilize the neighborhood.
- e) Implement a streetscape plan that enhances the Beatties Ford Road corridor and entrances to the community, including neighborhood identification signage, decorative lighting and bus shelters designed with historic detail and street trees.

Infill Housing Design Guidelines

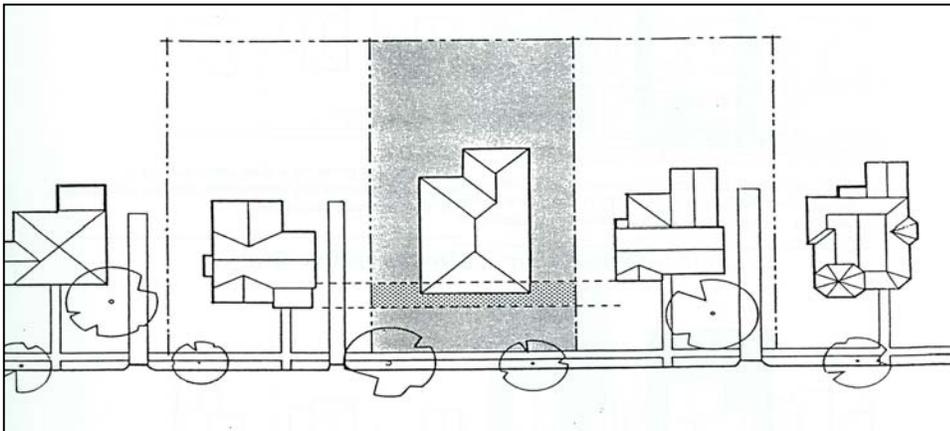
The Washington Heights neighborhood has approximately 60 single-family residential lots that are currently vacant. This is a wonderful opportunity for revitalizing the community through new construction of homes. However, the design of these new houses is critically important to ensure the neighborhood retains, and is able to strengthen, its historic residential character.

These guidelines are intended for use by developers and individuals, as a tool to guide their projects. The neighborhood association will have a crucial role to play in ensuring that these guidelines are utilized to their fullest potential.

The design guidelines discussed here are based on a study undertaken in 1996 by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and the Infill Housing Study Group, supplemented with some additional recommendations that relate more specifically to the architecture of the buildings themselves. The diagrams represent various elements that should be considered in the design of new infill projects. These relate to context and designed that encourages infill developments to blend with and enhance the existing fabric of the neighborhood. The design guidelines address the following design elements:

- Setback
- Scale and Proportion
- Massing
- Orientation
- Location of Garages
- Location of Parking
- Architectural Design Details

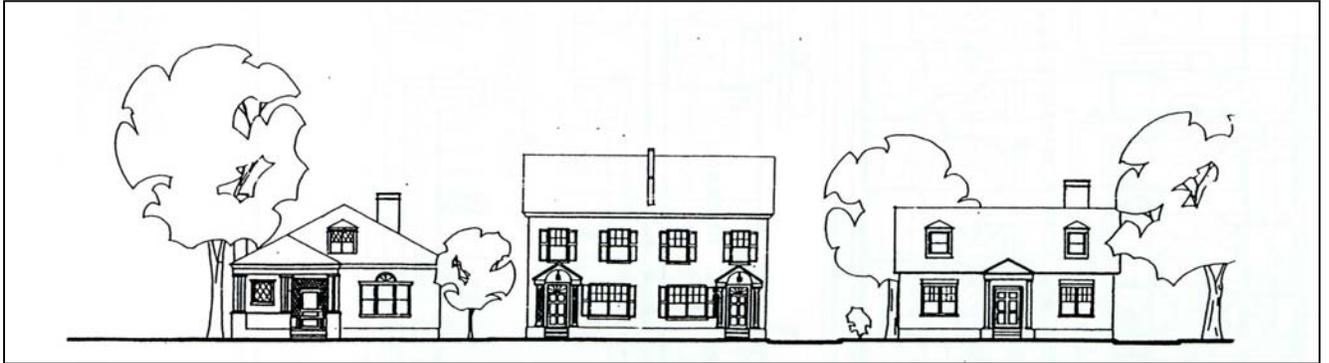
Setback



Appropriate Siting of Building:

To preserve the streetscape, new construction should maintain the setback established by neighboring buildings.

Scale and Proportion



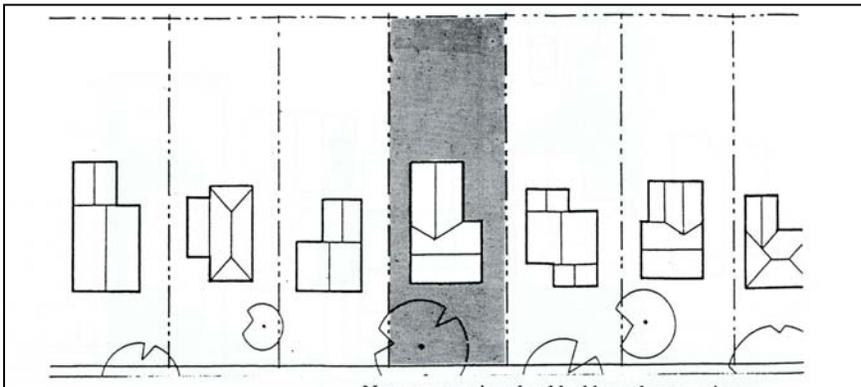
Appropriate Scale and Proportion: New development that uses appropriately scaled building mass, heights, fenestration, and entry size compliments the surrounding buildings and respects the neighborhood fabric.

Massing



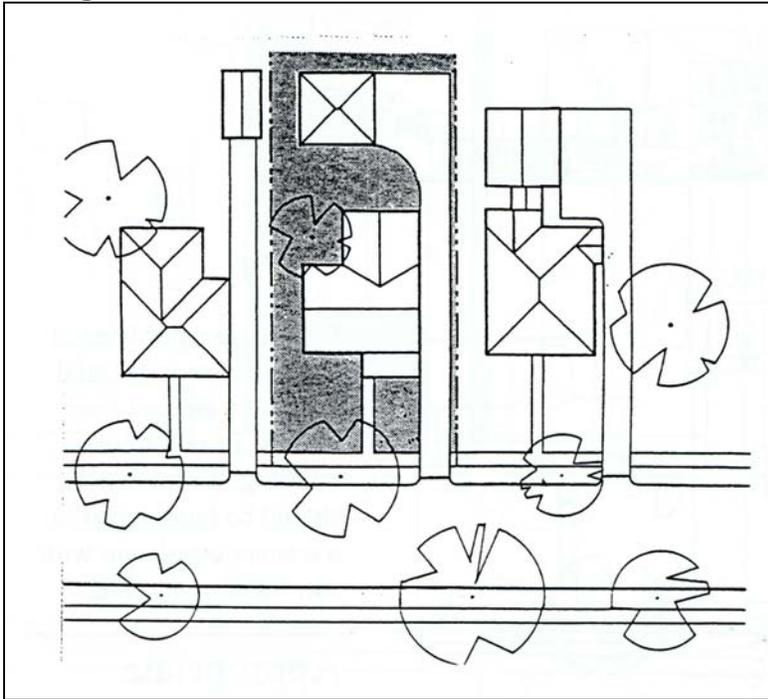
Appropriate Mass: New construction can make use of architectural elements found on adjacent buildings, such as gables and porches, to create appropriate mass by breaking up long facades.

Orientation



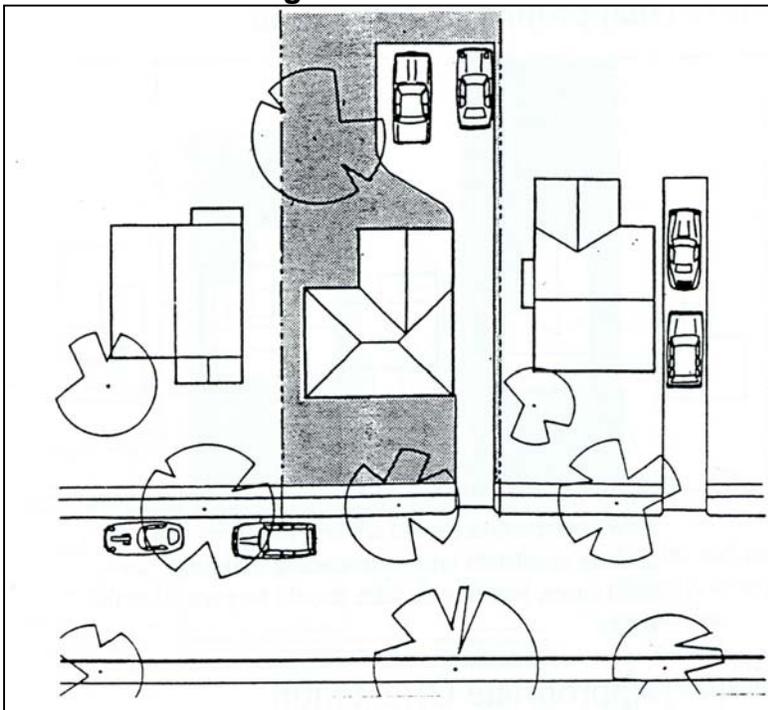
Appropriate Orientation: New construction should address the street in a manner consistent with surrounding buildings. In most cases, building facades should be parallel to the street.

Garage Location



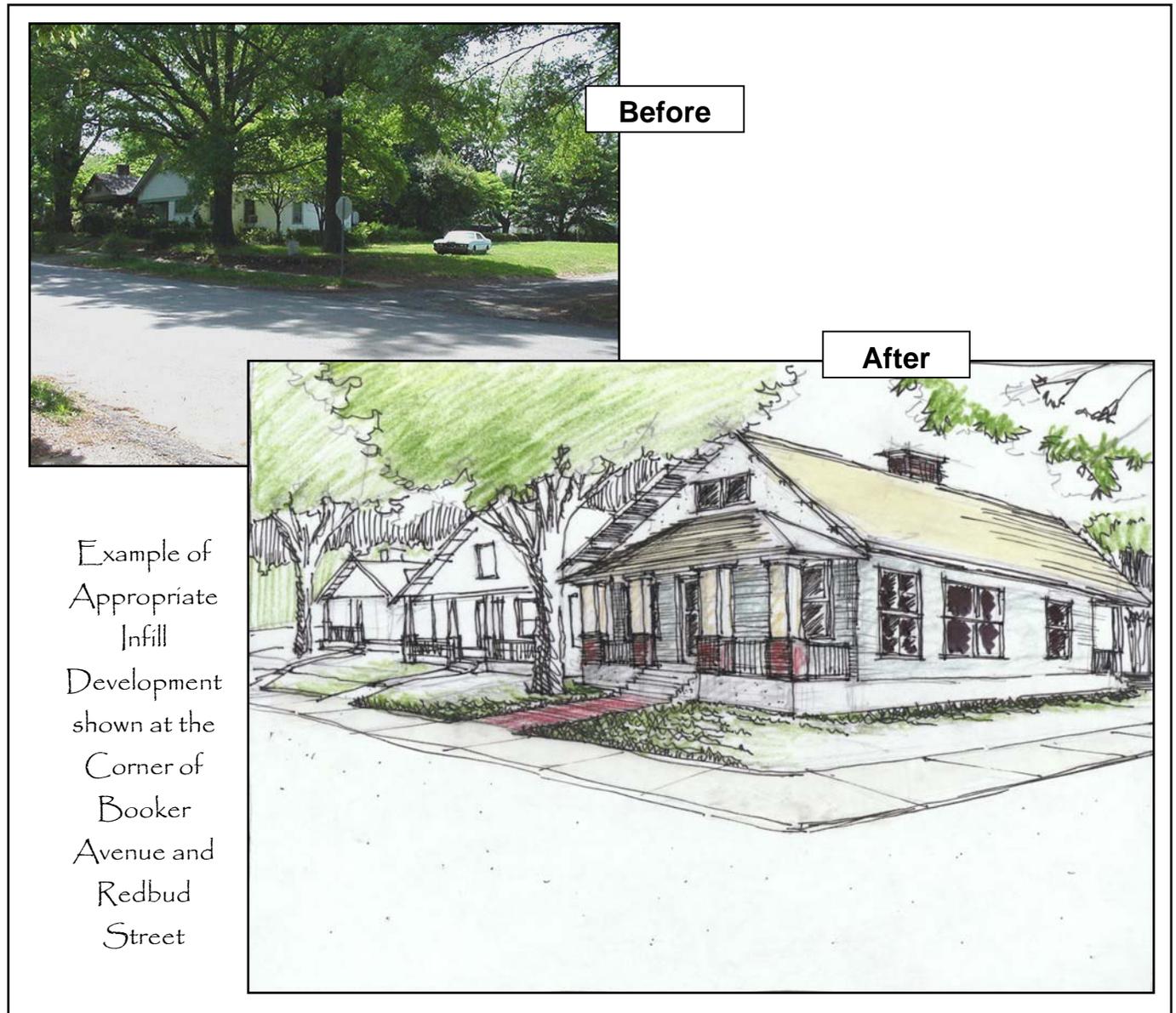
Appropriate Garage Locations: Garages located at the rear of buildings maintain the residential and pedestrian character of the street. On street parking is encouraged where permitted.

Location of Parking



Appropriate Location of Parking: Parking behind new residential construction maintains the pedestrian character, and prevents automobiles from dominating the streetscape. On street parking is encouraged.

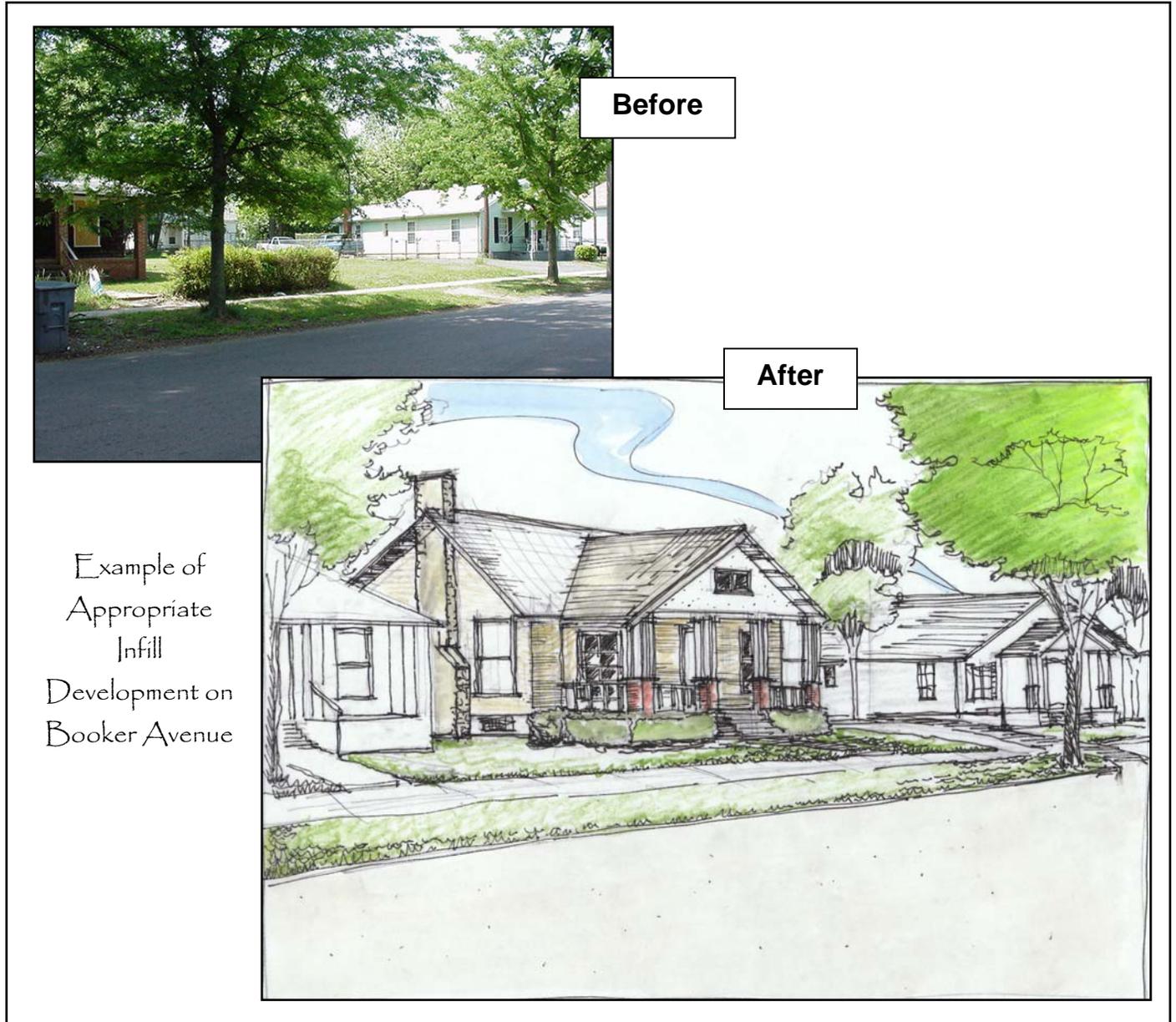
Architectural Design Details



New Residential construction should incorporate the following design details:

- Brick or wood siding or at minimum, hardy plank siding are the desired façade materials. Masonite and vinyl siding would not be appropriate historic materials.
- Foundations should be raised masonry foundations and not poured slab on grade.
- Fireplaces should only be constructed with brick.
- Exterior stairs should have enclosed risers.
- Porches should be of a useable size with substantial columns for roof support and should extend along the majority of the front façade of the house. Roof pitches should have a 5:12 pitch or greater.

- Eaves should have an overhang of at least 12”.
- Window treatment should incorporate a muntin pattern accomplished with either TDL (true divided light) or STDL (simulated true divided light with exterior, molded, permanently affixed muntin bars) - or no window divisions if appropriate to the plan.



The benefits of architecturally complimentary infill housing in Washington Heights accomplishes several goals. Well-designed infill housing provides efficient use of land, utilizes existing infrastructure and can have a positive effect on the quality of life in this historically significant neighborhood. Infill housing that addresses the historic component of Washington Heights can enhance its character, viability and function, thus making it an even more desirable community.

Infrastructure

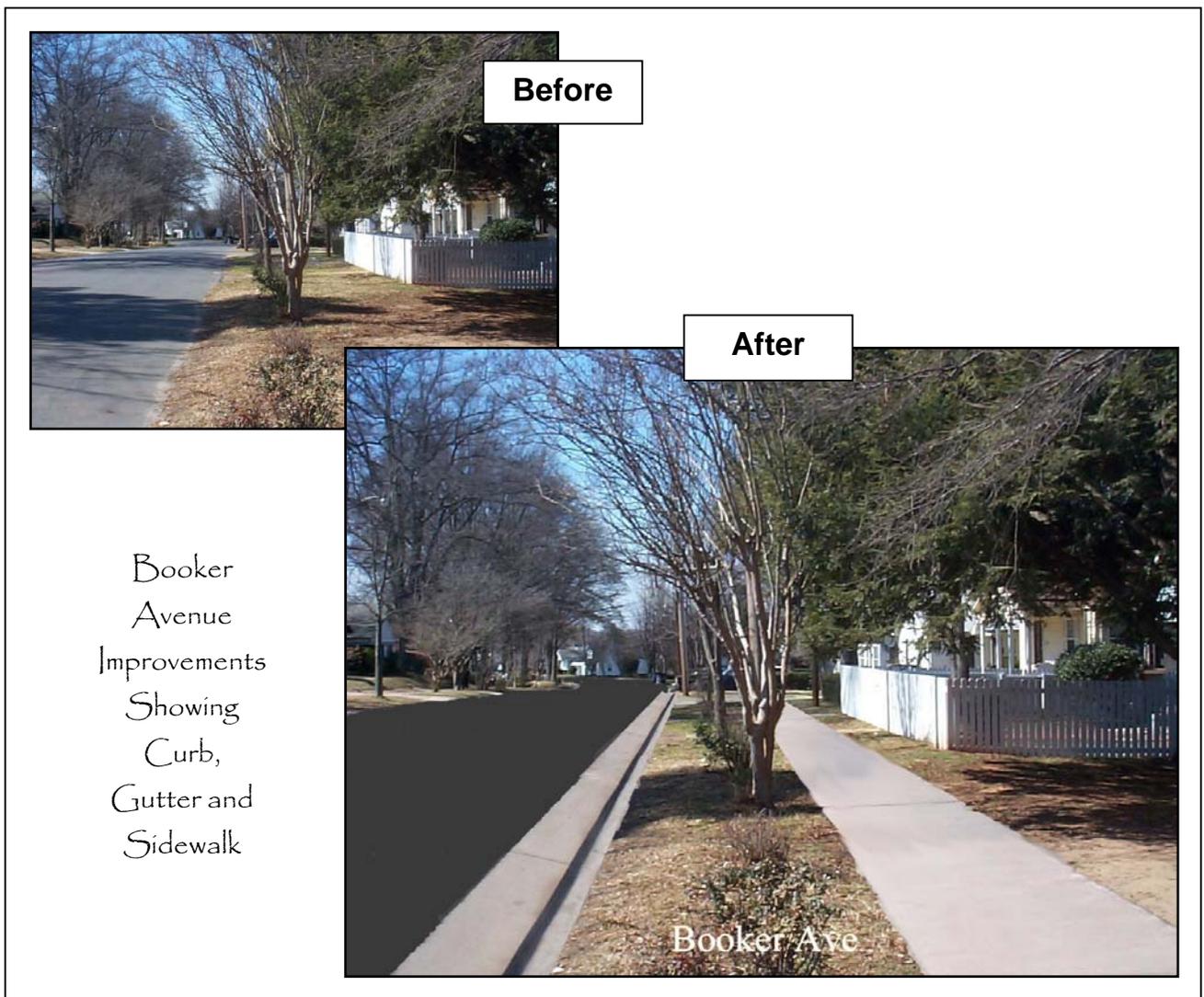
Infrastructure in the neighborhood is currently inadequate. Vehicular and pedestrian movement is inhibited due to limited connectivity and poor sidewalk facilities. Beatties Ford Road is a major thoroughfare with high traffic volumes and poor pedestrian facilities. Flooding occurs along some streets in the neighborhood, especially at the west end of Celia Avenue, Dundeen Street, Booker Avenue and Pitts Drive.

A. Transportation

Goal 1 – Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation and safety in the neighborhood.

Recommendation

- a) Support County plans to develop the Stewart Creek Greenway and provide pedestrian and bicycle links to this greenway.
- b) Provide sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, planting strips and other pedestrian amenities throughout the neighborhood.



- c) Work with the Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT), Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation to determine the possibility of a link between Washington Heights and neighborhoods to the north to provide an alternative to using Beatties Ford Road.
- d) Investigate ways to relieve the school related congestion on Celia Avenue at Beatties Ford Road and along Celia Avenue.
- e) Evaluate the need for “School Zone”, speed limit and “Children At Play” signs.
- f) Work with the Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) to determine where to lower speed limits and determine where traffic calming devices may be appropriate.

Goal 2 - Identify infrastructure needs and improvements.

Recommendations

- a) Improve or replace existing infrastructure to encourage a more pedestrian friendly community (roads, sidewalks, curb and gutter, decorative lighting and destination banners).
- b) Pursue placing utilities underground whenever streets are widened or new streets are built.

Goal 3 - Improve traffic flow and the pedestrian realm on Beatties Ford Road.

Recommendations

- a) Improve access and reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts to business along Beatties Ford Road.
- b) Encourage driveway sharing.

Goal 4 - Ensure that current and future transit needs of this community are taken into consideration.

Recommendations

- a) Ensure that the Washington Heights neighborhood is included in the current rapid transit planning initiative and ensure service will be provided.
- b) Provide appropriate facilities for transit riders and examine options for locations of bus shelters with design standards that promote safety and complement the character of the neighborhood.

B. Storm water

Goal 1 - Reduce flooding and storm water drainage problems.

Recommendations

- a) Identify and address existing storm water problems in the area to reduce the potential for flooding.
- b) Install curb and gutter on streets as needed.

- c) Discourage development in the flood plain.

Employment and Economic Development

Residents in Washington Heights experience high unemployment, low wages and a high percentage of dependence on public assistance. The recommendations in this plan seek to provide information, access and links to existing programs and opportunities that are available through the City and other agencies to help residents find and retain well-paid jobs.

Goal 1 - Improve links between the neighborhood and employment opportunities.

Recommendations

- a) Provide education and training programs to help people find and retain employment.
- b) Consider a JobLink Center for the Beatties Ford Road corridor.
- c) Investigate ways to communicate employment and job training opportunities to the community such as job fairs, City Employment and Business Services training programs, mentorship programs, leadership development and vocational training programs through brochures, radio stations, churches and businesses.

Goal 2 - Sustain neighborhood supportive businesses and increase opportunities for economic growth.

Recommendations

- a) Maintain an active merchant's association and develop incentives that encourage businesses to get involved.
- b) Encourage residents to support area businesses.

Community Safety

The incidences of serious crime have been steadily declining over the past five years; however, rates are still relatively high when compared to City averages. The goals and recommendations discussed below are some of the possible strategies that can help improve the overall safety for all stakeholders in Washington Heights and the overall stability of the larger community surrounding the neighborhood.

Goal 1 – Improve safety in the neighborhood for area residents and business owners.

Recommendation

- a) Maintain and build on the strong relationship between police, area businesses and residents that exists today.
- b) Encourage citizen involvement in safety programs such as neighborhood watch, "Drug Free Zone" program, business watch, neighborhood fire prevention, citizen's academy and the youth police academy.

- c) Encourage and provide opportunities for youth to interact informally with police as mentors.
- d) Pursue the use of safe signs – “Helping Hands” – in the neighborhood
- e) Have an annual “Bring the Neighborhood Together” day.
- f) Improve lighting in the neighborhood.
- g) Educate residents, particularly the elderly, on programs to acquire and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- h) Investigate the potential of providing security alarms in homes where elderly people reside.
- i) Encourage efforts to strengthen laws pertaining to drug-related activities.

Human Services

There is a large number of youth and elderly residents in Washington Heights, who typically require more specialized activities and services. At this time there seems to be a limited awareness of such programs and services and the recommendations here attempt to deal with these issues.

Goal 1 – Increase awareness of existing programs and services available to the community, specifically the youth and elderly.

Recommendations

- a) Provide information on tenant/landlord mediation programs.
- b) Continue to support the summer and after school youth programs.
- c) Coordinate with area schools and churches to partner with neighborhood organizations to provide appropriate programs and services to the community.
- d) Educate and publicize programs available from Social Services and the Health Department, including drug prevention, abstention, teenage pregnancy, parenting and mental health programs.

Community Organizing

One of the greatest strengths of a neighborhood can be its neighborhood association. It is through this organization that a neighborhood can foster a sense of community, lobby for common goals, mobilize resources and be a strong, united group of stakeholders. In the case of Washington Heights the neighborhood association is very strong and active. These recommendations therefore seek ways to provide support and strengthen this association.

Goal 1 – Strengthen and maintain an active neighborhood association.

Recommendations

- a) Encourage residents to volunteer to help with community activities and programs, especially those for the youth and elderly.

- b) Encourage the neighborhood organization to meet regularly with landlords to discuss the condition of houses and apartments.
- c) Develop strategies to prevent the displacement of residents through gentrification.
- d) Obtain non-profit status for the neighborhood association in order to qualify for grants and other programs.
- e) Encourage neighborhood residents, including youth, to participate in leadership training programs such as “Community University” and “Neighborhood Symposium”.
- f) Increase efforts to recruit members and involve them in the community, especially renters and landlords.
- g) Provide information to neighborhood residents on how to access government services and programs.
- h) Continue to provide information and develop new ways to communicate neighborhood activities and events to residents.

Community Appearance

The historic origins of the neighborhood are of great significance. Over the years houses have deteriorated, inconsistent residential structures have been built and the overall appearance of the neighborhood has deteriorated. These goals and recommendations seek ways to improve on existing structures, encourage consistent new infill construction and improve the general appearance of the neighborhood.

Goal 1 – Improve the overall appearance of the Washington Heights neighborhood.

Recommendations

- a) Consider donating alleys within the neighborhood (not along Beatties Ford Road) to the adjacent property owners for personal residential use and maintenance.
- b) Coordinate programs to encourage property owners, absentee landlords, residents and businesses to better maintain their property.
- c) Provide streetscape improvements along Beatties Ford Road and interior streets to include: sidewalks and planting strips with trees, a defined gateway to the community with a neighborhood entrance sign, decorative street lighting and a reduced number of visible power lines.
- d) Increase the enforcement of litter, zoning and abandoned vehicle ordinances.
- e) Encourage residents to pursue matching grant funds for neighborhood beautification projects.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

L.C. Coleman Park provides a wonderful opportunity for the greater community as a gathering place for active and passive recreation. It also has the added advantage of backing up to Northwest School of the Arts and therefore provides opportunities for joint use. The recommendations in this plan deal with the issues of access, safety and

programming of the park space. Also, the plan identifies the need to consider linking open spaces, such as the park and the proposed greenway, to each other through a network of pedestrian/bicycle pathways.

Goal 1 - Improve access and encourage the use of parks, greenways and recreational facilities by all residents, young and old.

Recommendations

- a) Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access to L.C.Coleman Park.
- b) Provide and inform residents of recreational activities and programs especially for children and senior citizens.
- c) Investigate the possibility of Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation co-developing facilities with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to maximize joint-use opportunities.
- d) Support Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department's development plans for Stewart Creek Greenway.

Education

Education was established as a key priority focus area for the study group. By directing attention and resources toward making the best of all opportunities in this arena the neighborhood will become stronger and more stable. The recommendations below seek to determine and understand the opportunities and to take advantage of these.

Goal 1 – Encourage students to stay in school.

Recommendation

- a) Partner with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and neighborhood principals to develop partnerships that support improved education attainment for students in this neighborhood.
- b) Provide information to students, parents and citizens about various school policies.

Goal 2 – Encourage students to participate in college preparation classes to better prepare them for higher education and/or programs that would prepare them for employment.

Recommendations

- a) Improve academic standards and performance at existing schools.
- b) Better prepare students who do not plan on attending four-year colleges for technical training and/or job placement after graduation.
- c) Increase educational opportunities for after school and out of school time.

Goal 3 – Upgrade existing schools in and around the Washington Heights neighborhood to ensure equity in education and facilities and utilize these as key resources in the community.

Recommendation

- a) Work with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools to make school facilities available to the community during after school hours and during the summer.

Goal 4 – Encourage parental and resident involvement in the education system.

Recommendation

- a) Provide information to students, parents and citizens on Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' educational opportunities.

Conclusion

The Washington Heights Neighborhood needs special attention over the next several years. This plan attempts to provide the direction needed to ensure that development of the neighborhood through investment by residents, property owners, business owners and the public sector is consistent with and furthers the vision established for this neighborhood.

Many of the recommendations will need to be modified as new circumstances arise. The implementation of these recommendations will be a joint effort involving the energy and resources of neighborhood residents, area stakeholders, the neighborhood organization, City and County departments and other agencies active in Charlotte.

Volume Two of this plan provides more detailed information on implementation strategies needed to achieve the plan objectives.

Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan

Volume 2:
Implementation Plan

February 25th 2002



Introduction

This document outlines the steps that should be taken to implement the *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan*. The City Council will not adopt the *Implementation Plan*, however, many of the actions identified will require future Council approval and will be brought before them for approval on a case-by-case basis.

Implementing the vision and goals of the *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan* will require ongoing collaboration between various City and County departments, property owners and residents and other organizations.

Implementation Strategies

The *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan* focuses on nine key issue areas:

- Land use and urban design
- Infrastructure
- Employment and Economic Development
- Community safety
- Human services
- Community organizing
- Community appearance
- Parks, recreation and open space
- Education

For each of the above, the *Concept Plan* identified general planning goals and recommendations. Now, in this *Implementation Plan*, these goals and recommendations are highlighted and strategies to implement them are identified.

(Note: The implementing agencies responsible for each implementation strategy are noted in brackets).

1. Land Use and Urban Design

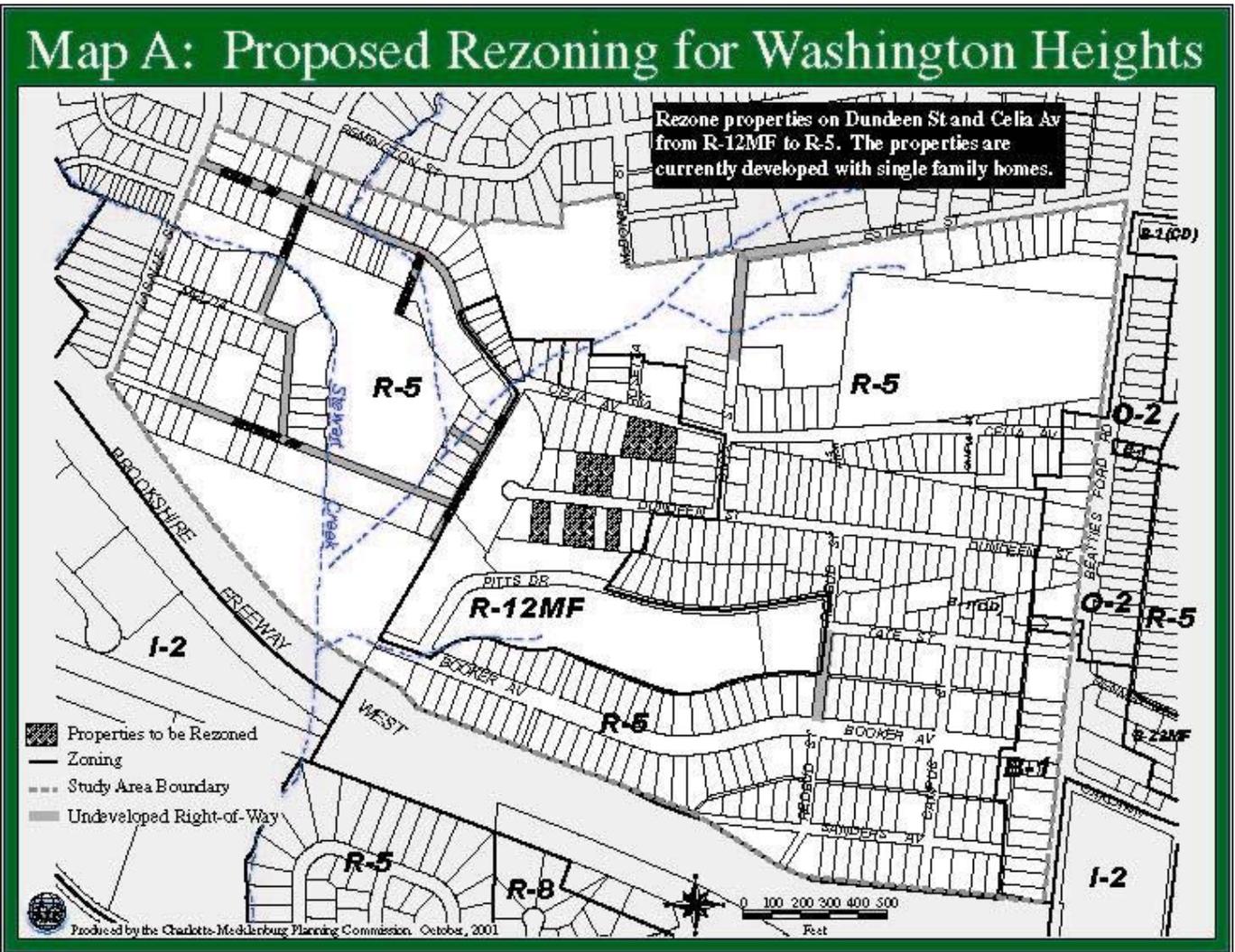
Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Rehabilitate, update and preserve existing housing stock.
- Strengthen and preserve the historic residential character of Washington Heights and encourage infill development that is consistent with and sensitive to the existing character of the neighborhood.
- Promote home ownership.
- Encourage redevelopment opportunities along the Beatties Ford Road corridor.

Implementation Strategies

- a) The following rezonings should be initiated for parcels currently redeveloped with single-family units along the western sections of Dundeen Street and Celia Avenue from R-12MF to R-5 (**See Map A**). This will more accurately reflect the existing development and limit additional multi-family development in this area thereby encouraging owner occupancy as opposed to rental. The tax parcels identified are as follows: 069-062-31, 069-062-33, 069-062-34, 069-062-36, 069-062-41, 069-062-42, 069-062-43, 069-062-53, 069-062-54, 069-062-55. (**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission**)
- b) The expansion of non-residential development should be limited to the Beatties Ford Road Corridor. If the use of existing residential structures along Beatties Ford Road changes from residential to office or commercial, the new tenant should be encouraged to utilize and maintain the character of the original residential structure. (**Neighborhood Organization**)
- c) Continue to support and publicize programs that create and encourage homeownership. This should include programs and incentives to attract a variety of income groups to the neighborhood. (**Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department and the Neighborhood Organization**)
- d) Various groups should work together to ensure that students and residents are able to access and utilize area schools and parks to their greatest potential. (**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation, Joint Use Task Force, Neighborhood Organization**)
- e) Investigate the opportunity to link L.C. Coleman Park with Stewart Creek Greenway. (**Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation**)
- f) Preserve sensitive open space and discourage new development in the floodplain. (**Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and City Engineering**)

- g) New infill housing should adhere to the “Infill Design Guidelines” established in the Concept Plan. **(Neighborhood Organization and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission)**
- h) Undertake a concentrated housing code enforcement program in the study area to address the overall condition of the housing stock. **(Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department Housing Services Division)**
- i) Educate residents and property owners on programs and resources available to assist with home repairs. **(Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department Housing Services Division).**



2. Infrastructure

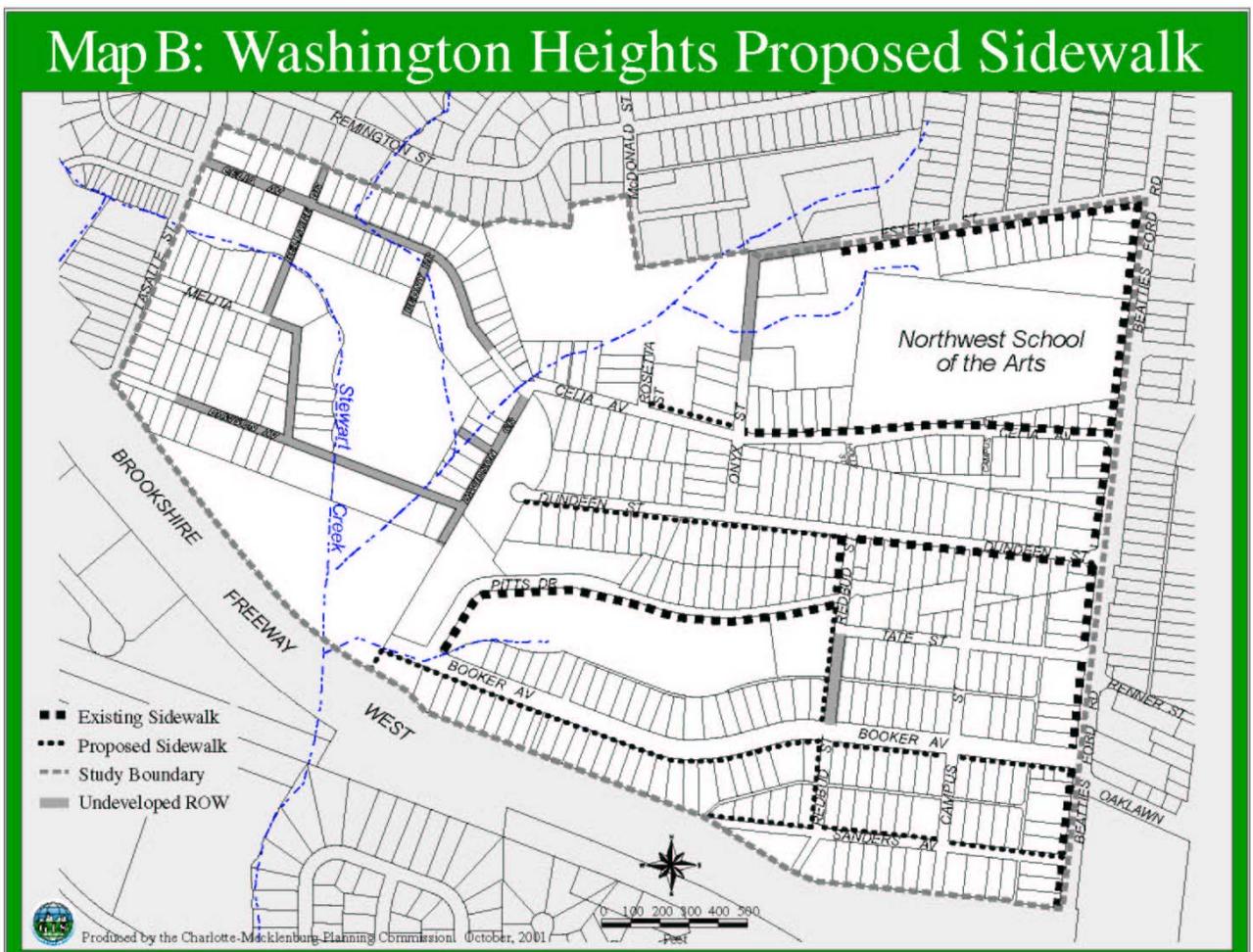
A. Transportation/Mobility

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and safety in the neighborhood.
- Identify infrastructure needs and improvements.
- Improve traffic flow and improve the pedestrian realm on Beatties Ford Road.
- Ensure that current and future transit needs of this community are taken into consideration.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Ensure that a sidewalk network is provided throughout the study area and into adjacent areas to link the study area with the Beatties Ford Road Corridor, L.C. Coleman Park and the Northwest School of the Arts. **Map B** indicates where sidewalks are needed. (City of Charlotte Engineering and Transportation Departments and the Neighborhood Organization)



- Dundeen Street from Redbud Street to Dundeen Courts Apartments.
 - Sanders Avenue from Beatties Ford Road to its western end.
 - Tate Street from Beatties Ford Road to Redbud Street.
 - Celia Avenue from Onyx Street to its western end.
 - Beatties Ford Road already has sidewalk, but once the road is widened, ensure that new sidewalk and planting strip are installed along the entire length of the newly expanded roadway.
- b) Work to improve connectivity in the neighborhood and links to other neighborhoods by constructing roadways and or pedestrian/bicycle links(**Charlotte Department of Transportation and Charlotte Engineering Department in consultation with Neighborhood Organization**). In particular:
- Construct Redbud Street between Booker Avenue and Tate Street.
 - Investigate constructing a road from Celia Avenue to Estelle Street as part of the effort to ease school related congestion, as well as determining if such a road would help in creating a link between the park and the school. Such a road should be designed to allow for automobile traffic to circulate efficiently, yet the primary focus of this road should be the pedestrian.
 - Investigate building a network of pedestrian/bicycle routes that link the school with the park and Stewart Creek Greenway. Implement the Pedestrian Overlay District for the Beatties Ford Road Corridor to encourage a pedestrian friendly realm along the corridor. This should be a priority work program item for the Planning Commission and added to the FY 2001/2 work schedule. Development of the PED plan should involve considerable public involvement, including continued input and direction from the *Washington Heights Neighborhood Plan* Study Group. (**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission**)
- c) Ensure that all signalized intersections have well marked pedestrian crosswalks. (**Charlotte Department of Transportation**)
- d) A comprehensive landscaping/street tree planting plan for the Beatties Ford Road corridor and the internal neighborhood streets should be developed. This should be done in consultation with the neighborhood stakeholders. Ensure that the intersection of Booker Avenue and Beatties Ford Road is designed as a focal point and “the entrance into the neighborhood”. (**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, Charlotte Department of Engineering and the Neighborhood Organization**)
- e) Determine whether there is a need to install a traffic signal at Beatties Ford Road and Celia Avenue. (**Charlotte Department of Transportation**)
- f) Ensure that future transit service best meets the needs of area residents, employers and employees. The following issues should be addressed:

- An analysis of current ridership figures and patterns along this section of Beatties Ford Road should be undertaken in order to determine the optimal location and number of bus stops/shelters. **(Charlotte Area Transit System, Charlotte Department of Transportation, Charlotte Department of Engineering, Neighborhood Organization)**
- The Beatties Ford Road Corridor has been identified as a location for a transit hub. To ensure that this facility takes the needs of the Washington Heights neighborhood into account, a representative from the neighborhood and from the Northwest School of the Arts should be included on the study group established to investigate this proposal. **(Charlotte Area Transit System, Northwest School of the Arts, Neighborhood Organization)**
- Consider developing a custom shelter that utilizes architectural elements and materials or some other unique community element, which helps identify this area as one that is unique. **(Neighborhood Organization and Charlotte Area Transit System)**

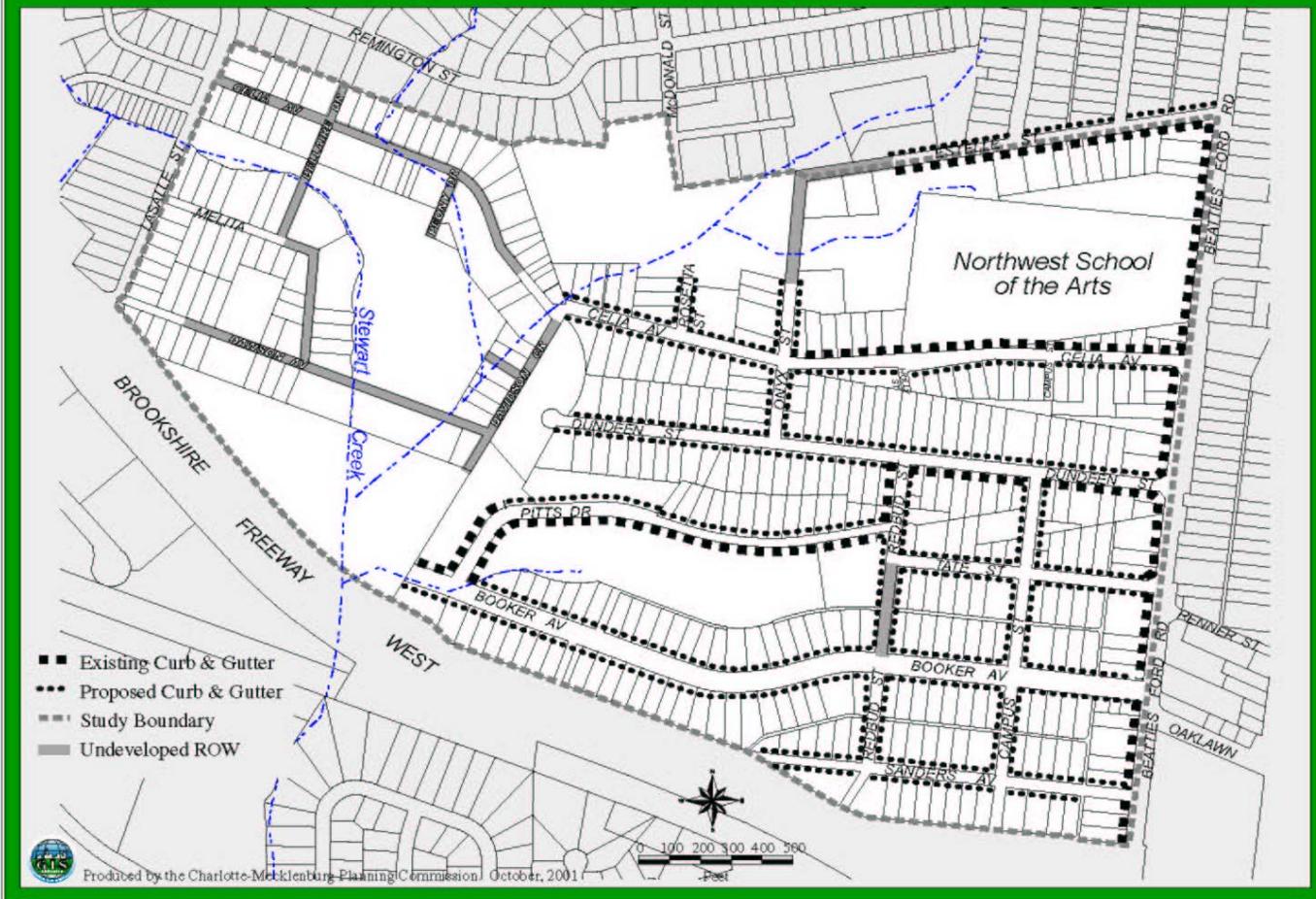
B. Storm Water

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|--|
| <p>Goal and Recommendation Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce flooding and storm water drainage problems |
|--|

Implementation Strategies

- a) Provide curb and gutter throughout the study area and into adjacent areas to enhance storm water management and minimize the threat of flooding **(See Map C)**. Curb and gutter should also be provided along any newly constructed road sections in the neighborhood such as Redbud Street. In particular install curb and gutter at the following locations **(Charlotte Department of Engineering)**:
- Both sides of Sanders Avenue along its entire length.
 - Both sides of Booker Avenue along its entire length.
 - Both sides of Tate street along its entire length.
 - Both sides of Dundeen street where it currently does not exist.
 - Both sides of Celia Avenue where it currently does not exist.
 - Both sides of Estelle Street where it currently does not exist.
 - Both sides of Campus Street along its entire length.
 - Both sides of Redbud Street where it currently does not exist.
 - Both sides of Pitts Drive where it currently does not exist.
 - Both sides of Onyx Street along its entire length.
 - Both sides of Rosetta Street.

Map C: Washington Heights Proposed Curb & Gutter



3. Employment and Economic Development

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Improve linkages between the neighborhood and employment opportunities
- Sustain neighborhood supportive businesses and increase opportunities for economic growth

Implementation Strategies

- a) Determine how to best service the neighborhood, so that the residents have efficient access to jobs and other neighborhood services such as shopping centers. The transit schedules should take into account that many of the residents in the neighborhood work shift hours, which means they require off peak service. **(Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department, Charlotte Area Transit and Neighborhood Organization)**
- b) Provide information and support to residents on existing programs and centers, such as the JobLink Center at 500 West Trade Street, that have been established to help job seekers find and retain quality jobs. **(Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department Employment Services Division)**
- c) Encourage the formation and/or strengthen the merchants' organization in the neighborhood. **(Neighborhood Organization)**
- d) Encourage the development/redevelopment of the realigned intersection at Booker Avenue and Beatties Ford Road to be attractive, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood scale mixed-use development at this intersection. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department Business Services Division, Northwest Corridor CDC, Merchants Organization and Neighborhood Organization)**
- e) Improve the appearance of existing retail/commercial development by encouraging property owners to take advantage of façade improvement grants, infrastructure improvement grants and other such programs. **(Neighborhood Development Department Business Services Division, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, Northwest Corridor CDC, Merchants Organization and Neighborhood Organization)**

4. Community Safety

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Improve safety in the neighborhood for area residents and business owners.
- Maintain and strengthen the relationship between police, area businesses and residents.
- Encourage citizen involvement, especially youth, in safety programs and to interact with police on an informal basis.
- Improve lighting in the neighborhood.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Maintain and strengthen traditional community-based policing efforts. The personal relationships that develop among community police officers, businesses and neighborhood groups are an important crime prevention tool. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and Neighborhood Organization)**
- b) Publicize information regarding reductions in crime in the neighborhood. Publicize these reductions through the media, business and community newsletters. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and Neighborhood Organization)**
- c) Consider developing a program similar to San Diego's "Safe Streets Now." This program trains and empowers residents and business owners on nuisance abatement techniques. With this program, citizens learn to identify and document activity at properties causing nuisances, and bring civil charges against a property owner for non-compliance. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and Neighborhood Organization)**
- d) Encourage police, landlords and property managers to share police arrest records on a regular basis. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and Neighborhood Organization)**
- e) Reduce crime by concentrating on the special needs of youth by initiating a comprehensive public education program to do the following **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, Neighborhood Organization and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools)**:
 - Increase parents' awareness of children's needs.
 - Indicate what services are available.
 - Teach parenting skills.

5. Human Services

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- The Department of Social Services should increase awareness of existing programs and services available to the community, specifically the youth and elderly.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Survey the residents of the study area, to determine the human services needs of the community. **(Neighborhood Organization and Department of Social Services)**
- b) Develop and distribute a directory of programs and services that addresses the human services needs identified in the above survey. **(Social Services Agencies and Neighborhood Organization)**
- c) Encourage potential leaders in the study area to attend leadership development training classes through the City of Charlotte's Neighborhood Development Department and other relevant programs. **(Neighborhood Organization, Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department and Department of Social Services)**
- d) Develop relationships with private companies and public agencies through partnerships and mentoring programs. **(Neighborhood Organization and Neighborhood Development Department)**
- e) Target youth in the area for various summer job programs. **(Charlotte Neighborhood Development Employment Services Division and the Neighborhood Organization)**

6. Community Organizing

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Strengthen and maintain an active neighborhood organization.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Increase the organizing and capacity-building skills of neighborhood leaders by providing support and education on problem solving techniques, accessing information and other government services. **(Neighborhood Organization and Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department)**
- b) Encourage the Neighborhood Organization to develop a priority work program to begin implementing the recommendations noted in the Concept Plan. **(Neighborhood Organization and Charlotte Neighborhood Development Division)**

7. Community Appearance

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Improve the overall appearance of the neighborhood.
- Investigate donating alleys to adjacent property owners for personal residential use and maintenance.
- Provide streetscape improvements along Beatties Ford Road and interior streets.
- Increase enforcement of litter, zoning and abandoned vehicle ordinances.
- Encourage residents and business owners to pursue matching grant funds for neighborhood beautification projects.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Encourage an adopt-a-street program for all major and minor thoroughfares. **(Neighborhood Organization, Community Improvement and Charlotte Department of Transportation)**
- b) Initiate streetscape/landscaping projects on key thoroughfares. Also consider ways to reduce visual clutter by removing and/or consolidating overhead utility wires and billboards. **(Charlotte Department of Transportation, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, Charlotte City Engineering and the Neighborhood Organization)**
- c) Develop an educational program that reaches businesses, and especially apartment complexes, about appropriate ways to containerize garbage and about the rules for roll-out garbage and bulky item pick-up. **(Community Improvement a Division of Charlotte Solid Waste Services and Neighborhood Organization)**

8. Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Improve access and encourage the use of parks and recreational facilities for all residents, young and old.
- Develop the greenway along Stewart Creek.
- Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access to L.C. Coleman Park.
- Encourage Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools to explore joint-use opportunities.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Consider revising the master plan for L.C. Coleman Park in consultation with the neighborhood and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. During this process the recommendations made in the *Concept Plan* should be taken into consideration. This would be a good opportunity to take advantage of joint-use opportunities and the needs of the neighborhood as expressed in the *Concept Plan*. **(Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department, Neighborhood Organization and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools)**
- b) Once the revised master plan has been developed, consider accelerating the construction of capital improvements proposed for the L.C. Coleman Park. **(Neighborhood Organization and Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department)**
- c) Encourage collaboration to develop and coordinate a comprehensive outreach initiative focusing on the needs of the neighborhood youth, teens and seniors. The initiative should consider traditional and non-traditional recreational, cultural and educational programs and activities. **(Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department, the YMCA, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, neighborhood coalitions, churches and other organizations)**

9. Education

Goals and Recommendation Highlights

- Encourage students to stay in school.
- Encourage students to participate in college preparation classes to better prepare them for higher education and/or programs that would better prepare them for employment.
- Upgrade existing schools in and around the Washington Heights neighborhood to ensure equity in education and facilities and utilize these as key resources in the community.
- Encourage parental and citizen involvement in the education system.

Implementation Strategies

- a) Ensure that the physical appearance and maintenance of schools in and near the neighborhood are of the highest standard. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Neighborhood Organization)**
- b) Accelerate the efforts to upgrade and improve the schools in and around the neighborhood. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Neighborhood Organization)**
- c) Work with area businesses to create more apprenticeship and other work based training opportunities for students. **(Northwest Corridor CDC, Neighborhood Organization, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Neighborhood Merchants Association)**
- d) Investigate ways to change the current system that will allow students who are expelled to stay in school, rather than being turned away from the system altogether. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Neighborhood Organization)**
- e) Investigate ways to make school buildings and grounds more accessible and available to residents and the community organization, free of charge, for public meetings and other community events. **(Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte Neighborhood Development Department and Neighborhood Organization)**
- f) Stress to the school board members and county commission members to keep in mind that inner city schools experience a different set of issues/problems than do suburban schools. **(Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Neighborhood Organization)**



CHARLOTTE.

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PLANNING COMMISSION**