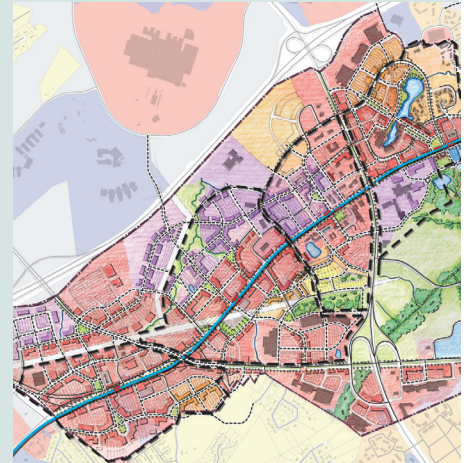
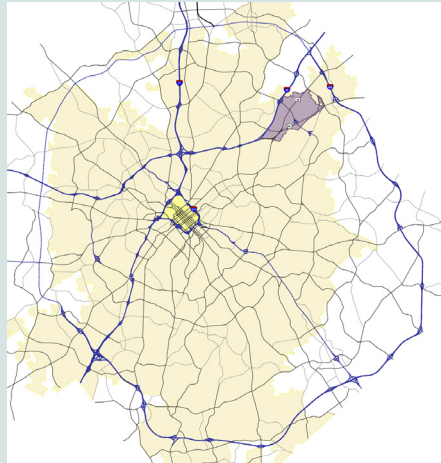
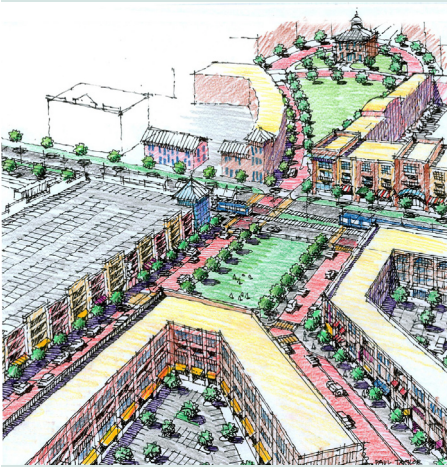


**DRAFT**

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## University City Area Plan



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*Prepared for:*  
**The City of Charlotte and  
The Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission**

*Prepared by:*  
**University City Partners (UCP)**





# **DRAFT**

## **May 2007**

### **UNIVERSITY CITY AREA PLAN**

*Prepared for:*  
**The City of Charlotte and  
The Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission**

*Prepared by:*  
**University City Partners (UCP)**

#### **UCP Board of Directors**

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Deb Ryan  
Roger Sarow  
Olen Smith  
Bob Wilhelm  
Mardee Woodward

---

#### **UCP Staff**

Mary Hopper, *Executive Director*  
Grace Watkins, *Project Manager*

---

#### **Project Consultants**

Troy Russ, Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin Inc. — *Project Manager*  
Addie Weber, Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin Inc. — *Lead Planner*  
Carol Morris - Community Planning Consultant — *Implementation and Technical Writer*  
Melinda Dykes - Kimley Horn and Associates — *Traffic Engineering*  
Jane Lim-Yap, Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin Inc. — *Planning Support*  
Dan Burden, Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin Inc. — *Public Communication and Walkability*  
Paula Tomala, Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin Inc. — *Graphic Artist*







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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PLAN PURPOSE AND FOCUS

Dramatic changes are on the horizon for University City. Construction of a light rail transit line (LRT) along the North-east Corridor will be a significant driver of change. It is scheduled for completion in 2013. Improvements to the NC49/US29 “weave” intersection and extension of City Boulevard will also bring change within the next several years by providing access to hundreds of acres of land that are currently landlocked. In addition, the creation of a major new gateway to the UNC Charlotte campus will be developed off North Tryon Street, creating a long-needed connection to University Place and other development along the corridor.

To prepare for and capitalize on the opportunities these and other changes will soon bring to the area, University City Partners (UCP), which coordinates planning, marketing and other activities in the University City Municipal Service District (MSD), sponsored development of this area plan.

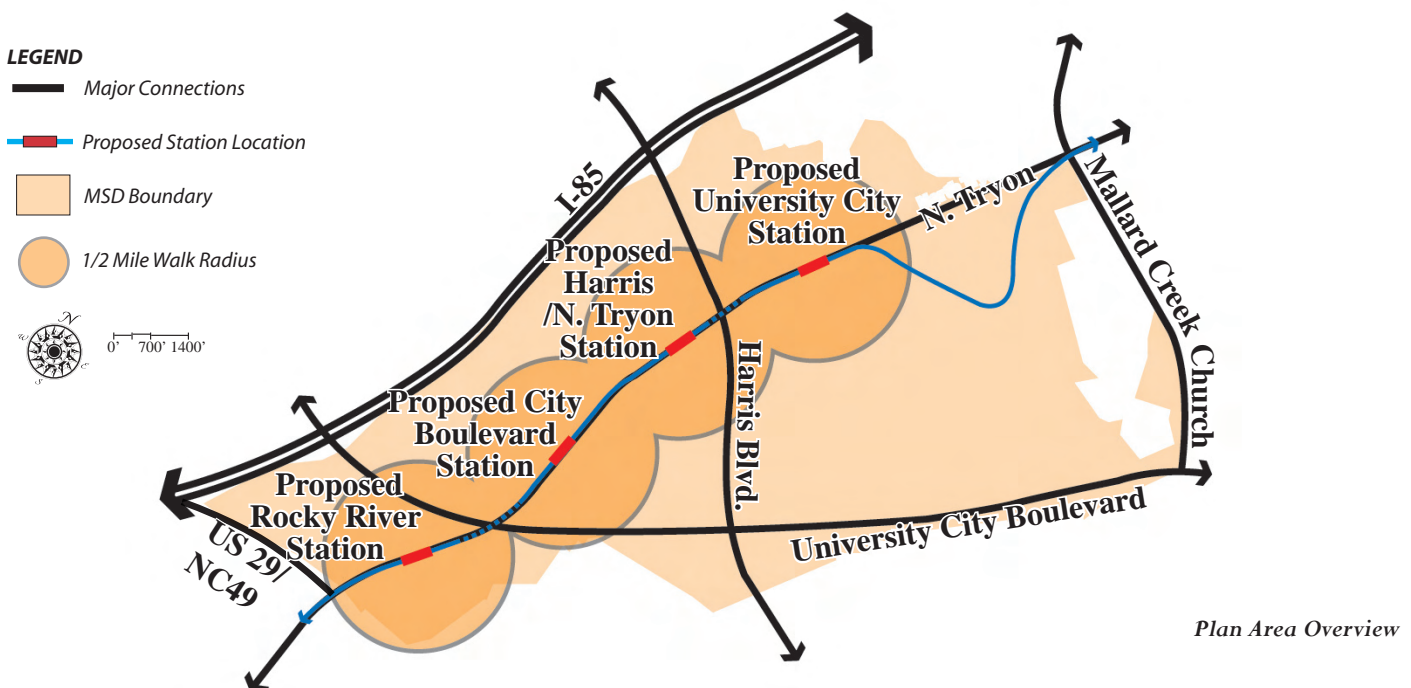
This plan updates the portion of the adopted Northeast District Plan that addresses the MSD. It provides policy guidance for future growth and development, and includes Transit Station Area Plans and streetscape plans for University City’s MSD.

#### Plan Boundaries

The plan addresses the area contained within the official boundaries of the University City MSD, generally located north of the US29/NC49 “weave”, east of I-85, south of Mallard Creek Church Road and the west of University City Boulevard. (See Plan Area Overview graphic below.)

#### Planning Process

The process began in 2005, when UCP developed an Urban Boulevard Study that focused on creating a vision and plan for the North Tryon Corridor. During this same period, the City of Charlotte undertook a detailed design study of the US29/NC49 “weave”, the area where these two major thoroughfares currently merge. The Boulevard Study was closely coordinated with the City’s project. Together, these studies provided the foundation for this area plan. A number of public forums, a design charrette and numerous one-on-one interviews with property owners and other key stakeholders were held over two years to gather input for both projects. The Concept Plan (Volume I) will be reviewed and adopted by City Council. Recommendations included in the Implementation Plan (Volume II) will be considered on a case-by-case basis after the Concept Plan has been adopted.







## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PLAN VISION AND GOALS

---

University City will be **transformed** into a distinct and **vibrant people-oriented place** that is **urban in scale** and design. It will be **energized** by the highly successful Northeast Corridor Light Rail Transit line that will operate along the North Tryon corridor and will be a **popular** and **accessible destination** for people of all ages, income levels and backgrounds, **offering diverse** and unique **choices** for living, shopping, working, learning and **enjoying** leisure **time**.

*Achieving this vision will come about by:*

#### **Goal 1:**

Promoting and designing the Northeast light rail corridor as a premier public space and gateway in University City;

#### **Goal 2:**

Identifying opportunities for and encouraging the development of lively, well designed transit station areas in which a variety of urban housing types, retail and employment uses and public open spaces are integrated to create distinct, compact and “walkable” communities;

#### **Goal 3:**

Encouraging development/redevelopment of areas at the edges of the MSD that is compatible with transit-supportive development and is pedestrian-oriented;

#### **Goal 4:**

Improving connectivity throughout University City to reduce reliance on the major thoroughfares, accommodate transit riders, encourage walking and bicycling and better connect existing institutions with the rest of the community;

#### **Goal 5:**

Creating a network of public open spaces, parks and greenways to help define the public realm; and

#### **Goal 6:**

Supporting a healthy natural environment.

### Key Plan Recommendations

Designing and promoting the Northeast LRT corridor as a premier public space and gateway in University City is the central goal of this plan. As currently planned, the transit line will be constructed within the median of North Tryon before diverting north of J.W. Clay to serve the UNC Charlotte campus.

Four transit stations will be built along the corridor within the MSD. An internal UNC Charlotte campus station will also be constructed. Transit station areas will be established around the

four main stations, including all properties within ½ mile walking distance of the stations.

Since the station areas will consume the majority of land within the MSD and their development will greatly influence the district’s remaining edge areas, the plan recommendations primarily focus on the station areas. A summary of the vision, guiding development principles and recommendations for transit station and edge areas are as follows. The land use recommendations for the entire study area are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SUMMARY OF TRANSIT STATION AREA PRINCIPLES

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*The complete text of the Transit Station Area Principles can be found in the first chapter of the General Development Policies (2001).*

#### Land Use

- **Encourage highest density uses** (15-20/du/ 0.5-0.75 FAR) closest to the transit station and transition to lower densities adjacent to existing single family neighborhoods.
- **Encourage a mixture of residential, office, service-oriented retail and civic uses**, either through mixed or multi-use development.
- **Disallow automobile-dependent uses**, such as automobile sales lots, car washes and drive-thru windows.
- **Consider special traffic generators**- such as cultural, educational, entertainment or recreation uses-to locate in station areas.
- **Preserve existing stable neighborhoods.**
- **Encourage a mixture of housing types**, including workforce/affordable housing.

#### Mobility

- **Create a multi-modal environment** that emphasizes pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles.
- Provide an **extensive pedestrian system** throughout the station area to minimize walking distances, connect to neighborhoods, accommodate large groups of people, and eliminate sidewalk gaps.
- **Design the pedestrian system to be accessible, safe and attractive**, by using planting strips, street trees, on-street parking and bicycle lanes.
- **Develop an interconnected street network** with maximum block lengths of 400': provide mid-block crossings if blocks are larger.
- **Establish parking maximums**, rather than minimums.
- **Minimize surface parking** and encourage shared parking facilities.

#### Community Design

- **Orient buildings to front on public streets or open spaces.**
- **Minimize setbacks and locate parking to rear.**
- **Provide windows and doors at street level** and minimize walking distance to entrances.
- **Screen unsightly elements**, such as dumpsters, loading docks, service entrances and outdoor storage from the transitway.
- Include **active uses on the ground floor** of parking structures.
- Include streetscape elements such as trees, pedestrian lighting and benches to **encourage pedestrian activity.**
- **Place utilities under ground**, wherever possible.
- **Establish public open spaces** that act as development catalysts and serve as focal points around transit stations.
- **Design open spaces to be centers of activity** that include items such as benches, fountains and public art.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

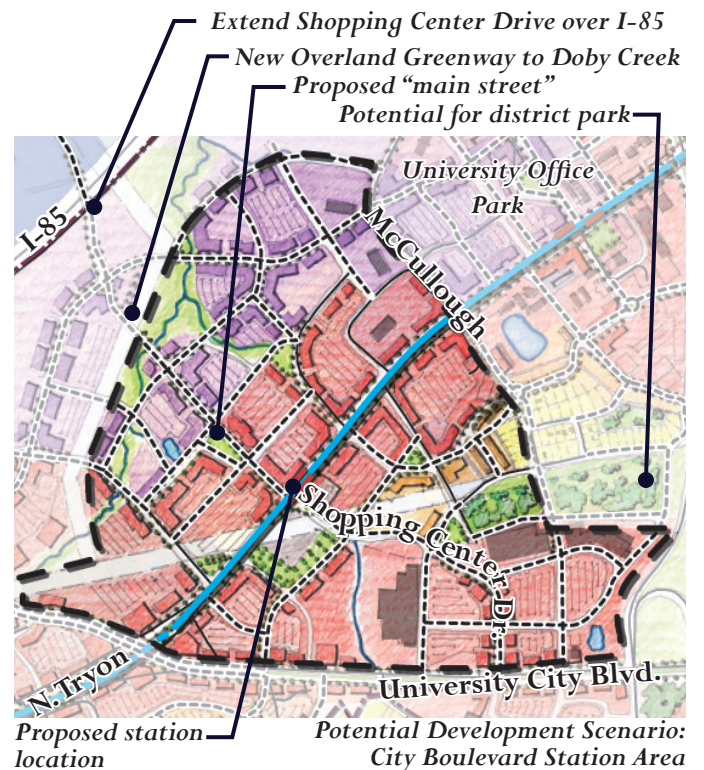
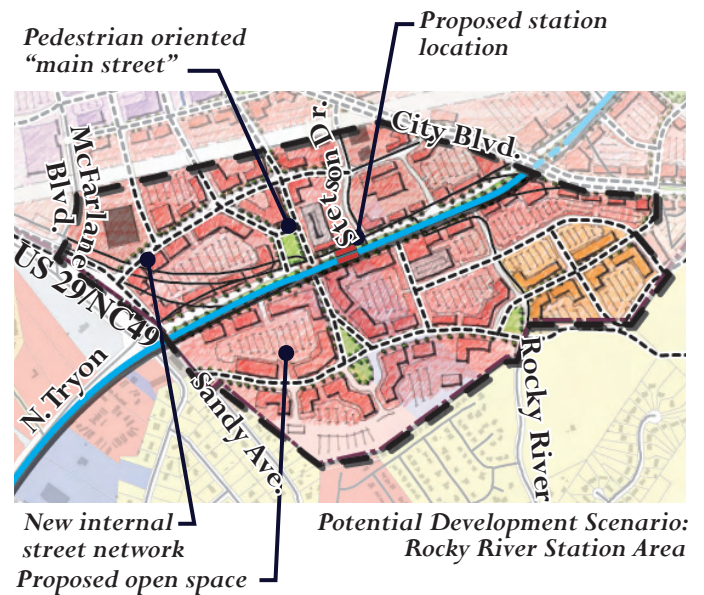
#### Transit Stations

##### Rocky River Road Station Area:

- Locate the transit station on North Tryon Street midway between the proposed US 29 Bypass and the proposed City Boulevard extension.
- Create a new street network in the station area, including a new internal street network that connects with the City Boulevard extension.
- Create a pedestrian-oriented “main street” adjacent to the transit station that extends east and west of North Tryon Street.
- Promote transit-supportive mixed uses throughout the station area, transitioning to predominantly residential next to the existing single family neighborhoods off Rocky River Road.
- Locate a significant CATS park-and-ride station on the west side of North Tryon Street near the transit station.
- Provide access to Rocky River Road and existing neighborhoods to the south.

##### City Boulevard Station Area

- Locate the LRT station near Shopping Center Drive and North Tryon Street.
- Establish Shopping Center Drive as the station area’s pedestrian-oriented main street and extend it west across I-85 to provide access to prime development sites on the west side of North Tryon Street and to create an alternative to Harris Boulevard.
- Promote transit supportive mixed-uses within ½ mile walking distance of the transit station on both sides of North Tryon Street.
- Consider locating a district park east of North Tryon Street and establishing a new overland greenway on the western edge of the station area that will connect to the future Doby Creek greenway west of I-85.

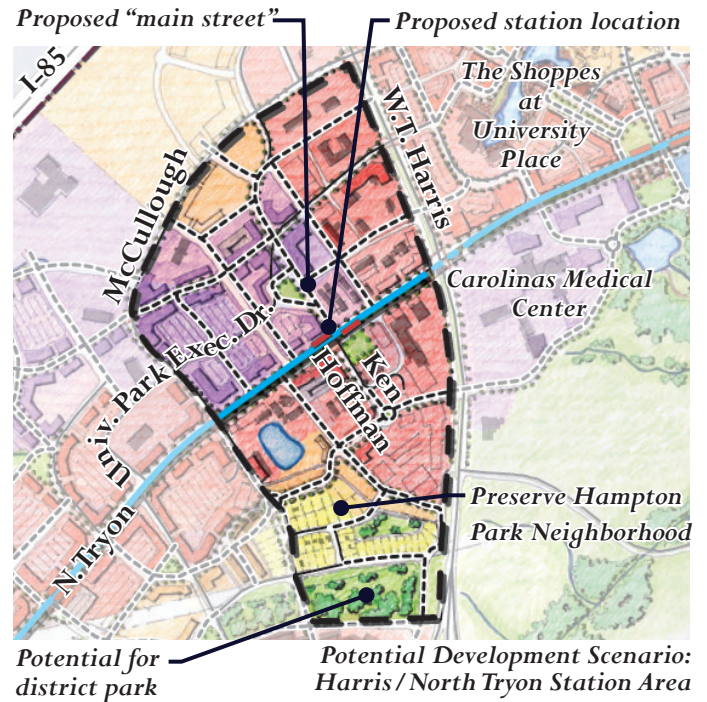




## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

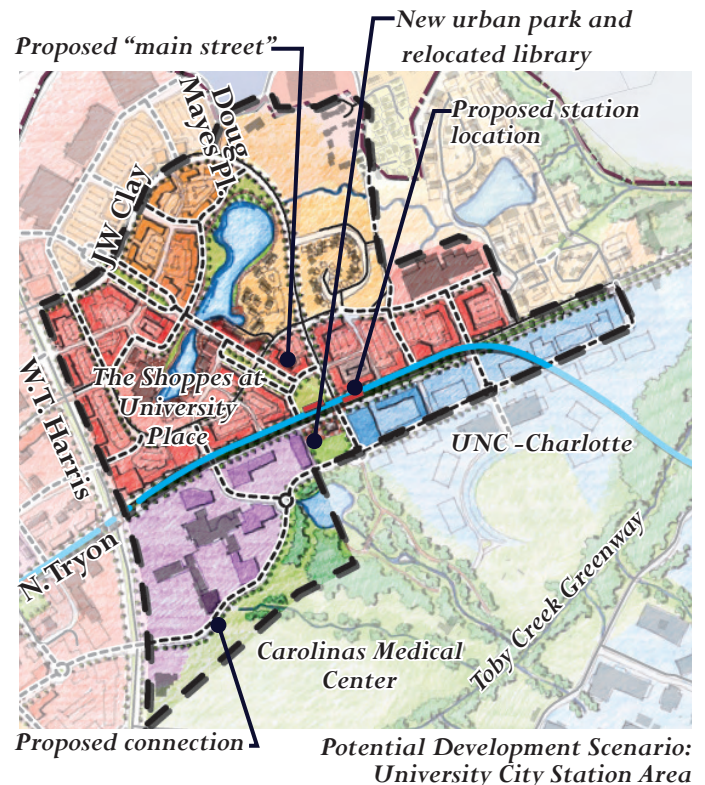
### Harris / North Tryon Station Area

- Locate the LRT Station at the intersection of Ken Hoffman Drive and North Tryon Street.
- Extend Ken Hoffman Drive as the station area's pedestrian-oriented main street, extending it west of North Tryon Street to University Executive Park Drive.
- Promote transit-supportive mixed use development along North Tryon Street on both sides of the station area transitioning to a more employment oriented mix along Ken Hoffman Drive on the west side and McCullough Drive on the east side of the station area.
- Consider creating a district park east of North Tryon Street.
- Preserve and enhance the Hampton Park neighborhood.



### University City Station Area

- Locate the LRT Station at the intersection of J.W. Clay Blvd. and North Tryon Street
- Establish J.W. Clay as the station area's main street creating attractive urban "entrance parks" on the east and west sides of the intersection of J.W. Clay Blvd. and North Tryon Street.
- Promote mixed use development with a concentration of pedestrian-oriented uses with ground floor retail west of North Tryon Street and expansion/intensification of institutional-uses east of North Tryon Street.
- Connect J.W. Clay to the hospital loop road and create a signalized intersection with Harris Boulevard.
- Relocate the library to the west side of J.W. Clay. (A land swap with the Hospital would be required.)
- Create an interconnected street network through University Place to enhance connectivity, encourage infill development and elevate University Place's role as University City's Town Center.
- Promote internal street connectivity around University Place and extend that street network north across a tributary of Mallard Creek.



#### LEGEND

- Proposed Station Areas
- Proposed Station Location
- New Streets
- Existing Streets



- Open Space/Park
- Transit Supportive Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Mixed-use
- Office



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### University City MSD Edge Area Highlights

#### Edge Area A: I-85 Frontage Area

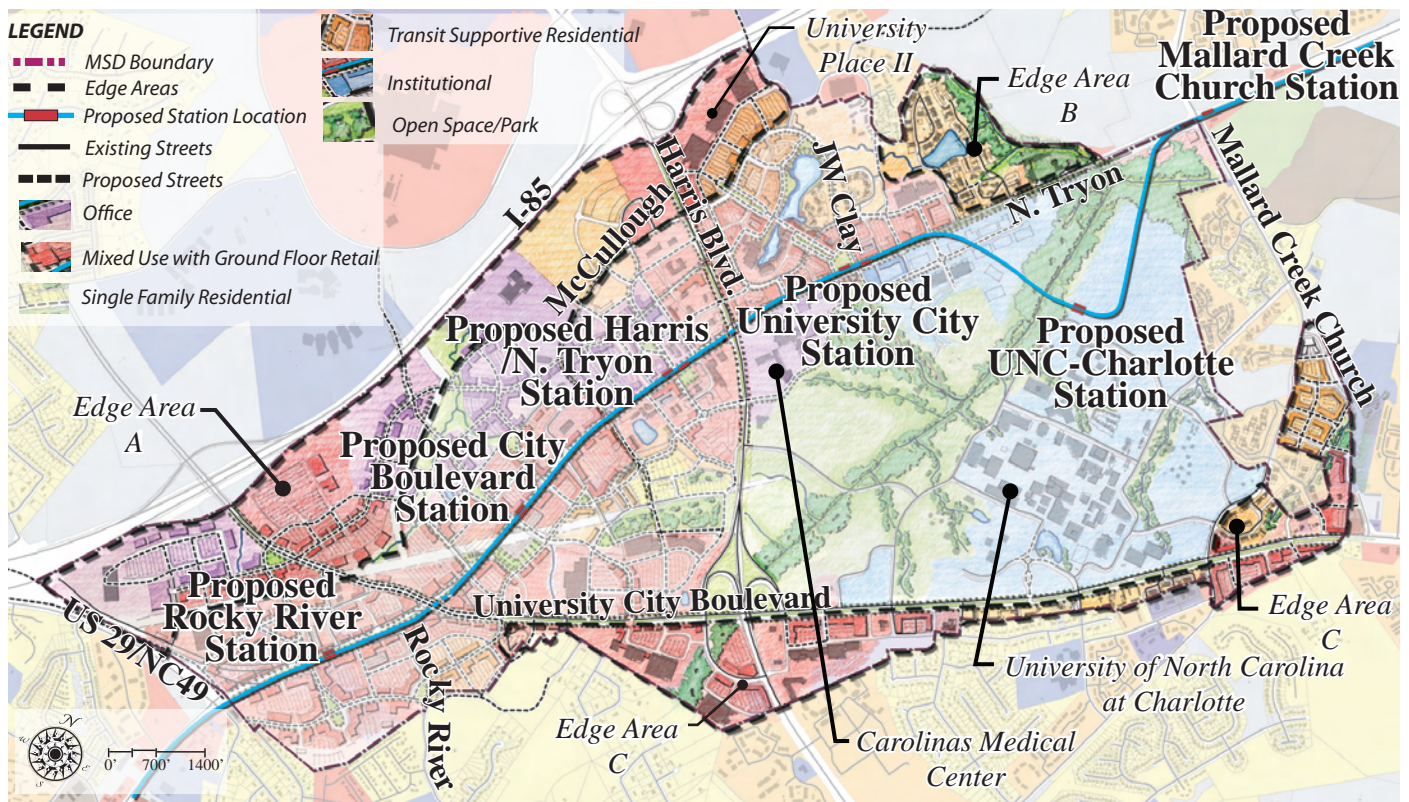
- Promote a mix of large-scale employment and retail uses close to the I-85/City Boulevard Interchange. Improvements to the “weave” and extensions of City Boulevard and McCullough Drive are critical for development within this interchange area.
- Encourage an employment, retail (ground floor preferred over free standing) and residential mix for the rest of the frontage area west of Harris Boulevard, with an emphasis on employment uses. Development should be pedestrian-oriented along McCullough Drive. Intensification of land uses within the existing shopping area (University Place II) to the east of Harris Boulevard is also recommended, including office and moderate density (up to 17 DUA) residential development in addition to the retail uses.

#### Edge Area B: North of University City Station Area

- Promote a mix of residential housing (up to 17 DUA), with some smaller-scale retail and/or office development at the northern edge, reflecting the existing land use. However, redevelopment to better integrate uses through pedestrian connections should be considered in the long-term. A new street paralleling North Tryon Street and connecting the University Place area with Mallard Creek Church Road is also recommended.

#### Edge Area C: City Boulevard/Mallard Creek Church Road Edge Area

- Promote a pedestrian-oriented mix of retail, office and moderate density (up to 17 DUA) housing on the east side of City Boulevard, both north and south of the Harris Boulevard interchange area.
- Encourage residential development (up to 17 DUA) to remain/redevelop along City Boulevard directly across from the UNC Charlotte campus and along Mallard Creek Church Road.



Potential Development Scenario of the MSD Edge Areas



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Transportation/Streetscape Design

Establishing North Tryon Street as a light rail transit corridor will greatly enhance mobility into and throughout University City as well as provide tremendous opportunities for more urban scale development and redevelopment in the district. The preliminary alignment of the dual tract LRT and locations of transit station locations for the Northeast Corridor were approved in 2006 as part of the 2030 Corridor System Plan and will be refined over the next several years as the detailed design work for the corridor is completed.

Providing easy access via foot, bicycle, transit and/or motor vehicles throughout University City is essential for the successful implementation of the urban land use and transportation vision for the district. It will rely on the creation of a new internal street network that will provide greater connectivity throughout the MSD and much needed alternatives to North Tryon, City Boulevard and Harris Boulevard where congestion is already heavy. Street blocks that are no longer than 500 feet and with a maximum block perimeter of 1,800 feet should be created as part of this internal street network.

### Future Street Cross Sections

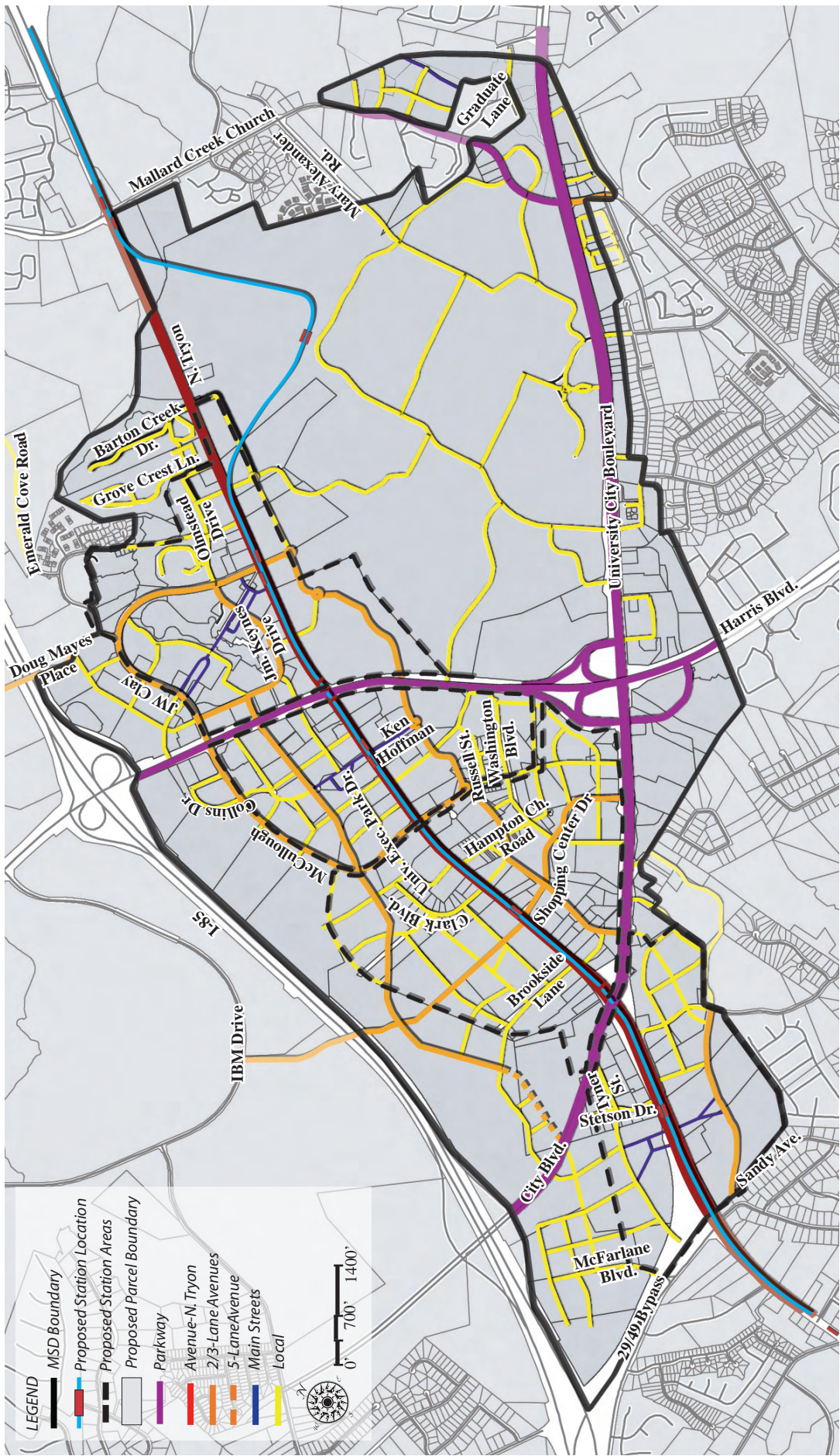
Future cross sections for many streets located within the MSD have been identified in the plan (Executive Summary Map #3) and are based on the City's Urban Street Design Guidelines (pending adoption). These cross-sections provide the basis for determining required building setbacks and the future character of the streets regarding the number of lanes, pedestrian, bicycle and transit accommodations and provisions for on-street parking. The cross-sections are measured from the back of the curb to the front of buildings. **These cross-sections do not represent plans for immediate road improvements, but reflect recommended long-term changes to be considered for implementation once a major portion of the necessary right of way and/or funding is available.** Table 1 identifies the proposed cross-sections for existing and future streets in the MSD. The majority of proposed new streets will be local streets constructed, in large part, by the private sector through the development process.

**TABLE 1 - Future Cross Sections**

	MAIN STREETS	AVENUES				PARKWAY	LOCAL- RESIDENTIAL	LOCAL- COMMERCIAL
Number of Lanes	2	2	3	5	Tryon	C.B./U.C.B/ Harris	2	2
Width of Lanes	13'-0"	11'-0"	11'-0"	11'-0"	11'-0"	Varies	10'-0"	13'-0"
Bike Lane	No	6'-0"	6'-0"	6'-0"	6'-6"	No	No	No
Sidewalk	12'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"	5'-0"-10'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"
Planting Strip	8'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"	10'-0"	15'-0"	8'-0"	8'-0"
On-street Parking (From face of curb)	7'-0"	7'-0"	7'-0"	7'-0"	No	No	7'-0"	7'-0"
Curb & Gutter	2'-6"	2'-6"	2'-6"	2'-6"	2'-6"	2'-6"	2'-6"	2'-6"
Median	No	No	Optional	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Width of Median	No	No	16'-0"	16'-0"	58'-0" (LRT)	Varies	No	No



NEW STREET NETWORK CLASSIFICATIONS\*



\* This is a conceptual graphic representation of how the University City Area's street network could develop.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Streetscape Development Standards

The Streetscape Development Standards are provided to define the character and width of the area behind the curbs, between the buildings and the curbline. The standards include required setbacks, sidewalk widths and street-tree planting areas for all new developments and major redevelopment in areas zoned TOD (Transit-Oriented Development), MUDD (Mixed Use Development District) or NS (Neighborhood Service), as well as in areas where the TS (Transit-Supportive) Overlay or PED (Pedestrian) Overlay Districts have been designated and/or an adopted streetscape plan or station area plan has been adopted.

### Recommended Public Infrastructure Improvements

- **North Tryon Street:** As currently planned, North Tryon will be designed as a 4-lane cross-section that does not preclude widening to 6-lanes through the entire study area. In addition, several intersections, particularly the North Tryon/W.T. Harris Boulevard intersection, may require additional improvements in the long-term to maintain reasonable levels of mobility. In 2007, CDOT will initiate a detailed analysis of this intersection to determine design options, including accommodating LRT and possibly an interchange.
- **City Boulevard:** Construction of the extension of City Boulevard and an at-grade intersection improvement at the US 29/NC49 “weave” are planned for the near-term future, with completion expected no later than 2012.
- **Other Street Improvements:** In addition to improvements to North Tryon Street and the extension of City Boulevard, the highest priority street improvements should be:
  - Extension of McCullough Drive to the City Boulevard;
  - Extension of J.W. Clay Boulevard to Harris Boulevard (on south side of North Tryon) including a signalized intersection at Harris Boulevard;
  - Extension of Shopping Center Drive north from North Tryon over Interstate 85, connecting to IBM Drive; and
  - Extension of Doug Mayes Place north over Interstate 85, connecting to Louis Rose Drive.

Improvements to other existing streets in the district will be considered for implementation when major portions of the necessary rights-of-way and/or funding are available. Most of the new streets or extensions of existing streets will be local streets and will largely be constructed by the private sector through the development process. To ensure connectivity throughout the MSD, the City of Charlotte will need to create a partnership to construct those segments of local streets that developers would not otherwise be required to build.

The following are general recommendations for infrastructure improvements in the public right-of-way. Detailed engineering plans and further public input will be required for these improvements once public funding is secured for their implementation.

### Improvements for Safety and Convenience of Pedestrians and Cyclists

**Sidewalks and Curb Ramps:** All streets in the district, especially those within station areas, should eventually have sidewalks on both sides of the streets and Type II curb ramps on all corners at intersections.

**Street Crossings:** Pedestrian crossings should be provided along North Tryon Street at and near all transit stations and other key intersections. Crossings should also be provided at key intersections along Harris and City Boulevards. Crosswalk enhancements such as high-visibility crosswalk markings, countdown pedestrian lights, “no turn on red” regulations and “pedestrian zone” signage should be considered at designated street crossings. Construction of pedestrian refuge islands should also be explored.

**Bump Outs:** Bump outs should be constructed on two or three-lane avenues and local streets where blocks are longer than 600 feet.

**Speed Limit:** Speed limits of 30 mph along North Tryon Street and City Blvd, 45 mph along Harris Blvd. and 25 mph along all other roads should be maintained in the MSD to provide greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Pedestrian Scale Lighting:** Pedestrian-scale lighting should be installed within the public right-of-way of streets throughout the MSD, with highest priority given to areas having the greatest volume of pedestrian activity.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Bicycle Routes/Lanes:** An inter-connected bicycle network of bike lanes, bike trails and signage should be established for the MSD including official bike lanes established for key streets in accordance with the street cross-sections.

**Bicycle Parking and Signs:** The City's Zoning Ordinance requires that bicycle parking be provided in all new development of a certain size. This plan recommends that the City install bicycle racks in key locations within transit station areas and work with business owners to share the cost of installing racks for existing developments. In addition, signs identifying bicycle routes should be installed throughout the MSD.

**Public Art:** City Policy requires that for many capital projects, 1% be spent for public art. Future capital projects within the MSD should include public art, particularly at or close to station areas.

**Benches and Trash Cans:** UCP should install benches and trash cans where pedestrian activity is highest, including transit station locations.

### Parks, Greenways/Open Space

Parks and greenways will be an important amenity for University City as it becomes more intensely developed with pedestrian-oriented uses. Recommendations for such infrastructure improvements include:

- Locating a district park in University City to accommodate future population growth. The area in or around the Hampton Park neighborhood may be a possible location to consider.
- Encouraging development of small urban pocket or mini-parks and/or pedestrian plazas within transit station areas to provide outdoor spaces for daily activities and special events. These small parks/plazas should be located in highly accessible and active areas.
- Providing new greenway connections within the MSD including:
  - The Toby Creek Greenway that will extend across the UNC Charlotte campus to the south side of City Boulevard. A sidewalk connection will be provided to establish the critical link between the greenway and North Tryon Street at J.W. Clay Boulevard.

- The Barton Creek Greenway on the west side of North Tryon that will include sidewalk connections along J. W. Clay Boulevard and will follow Barton Creek and cross over North Tryon via a pedestrian crossing where it will then connect with the fitness trails on the UNC Charlotte campus.
- A proposed overland greenway connection from the future Doby Creek Greenway west of I-85 to the City Boulevard Transit Station.

### Environment

Implementing the land use, design and transportation recommendations in this area plan, in addition to the environmental recommendations included in the General Development Policies (in draft stage), will help ensure that University City has as healthy an environment as possible. Clustering development along grid streets, promoting pedestrian activity and bicycling, providing open spaces, encouraging infill development on underutilized and vacant sites, sharing parking and using innovative practices to collect, treat and disperse storm water run-off are among the environmental recommendations included in the plan.



FUTURE LAND USE

