

Independence Boulevard Area Plan

Comments from the March 28 and April 11, 2011 Public Comment Sessions

Citizen Comment	Staff Response	Proposed Changes to Draft Plan
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Now that the transitional setback is gone, the Plan will impose new development standards and halt development. 2. The Plan does not include revisions to the transitional setback. 	<p>Area plans are policy documents. They address land use issues and define how land should be used in the future. The future land uses adopted as part of an area plan are policy, not regulatory.</p> <p>The transitional setback is a zoning regulation within the City Zoning Ordinance that provides setback requirements for buildings along thoroughfares. Council modified the transitional setback in April 2009 which is reflected in the current draft of the area plan. In March 2011, Council voted to eliminate portions of the transitional setback along Independence Boulevard which is after the draft plan was completed.</p>	<p>The list of proposed changes to the April 2010 draft of the Independence Boulevard Area Plan includes revised language and graphics to reflect the new modifications to the transitional setback as it relates to Independence Boulevard.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Market Analysis provides an unrealistic basis for the plan. 	<p>A market analysis is one of many sources of information considered in developing area plans. Other resources include community input, environmental features and adopted City policies, such as the General Development Policies (GDPs), Transportation Action Plan (TAP) and Centers, Corridors, and Wedges (CCW).</p> <p>The market analysis for the plan area revealed the need for neighborhood serving retail, an opportunity to focus regional retail at nodes, the potential for multifamily along Independence and the opportunity to reinvest in the existing neighborhoods.</p>	

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4. The Plan will rezone station areas to Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zoning districts when there's no market to develop TOD.	No areas will be pre-zoned for TOD. TOD zoning will be applied on a case by case basis if and when requested by the property owner. Additionally, zoning districts other than Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) are appropriate to implement the land use vision. In response to market challenges in the plan area, the Plan provides flexibility for implementation to respond to market demands.	
5. TOD along Independence will be different than South Boulevard.	The Southeast Corridor (Silver Line) transit stations will be located within the middle of an expressway which is much different than the location of the stations along the South Corridor Blue Line. Therefore, the surrounding land uses for Independence Boulevard will rely on access and connections from supporting network streets to flourish. The development character of each station area will vary based on its surrounding connections to a greater extent than the transit station areas along the South Corridor.	
6. Future street connections will reroute traffic into neighborhoods.	New street connections, particularly those parallel to Independence Boulevard, are proposed to support the land use vision and to facilitate redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties along Independence. The access these new connections provide is critical to the long-term viability of the adjacent properties, and the corridor overall. The connections are not intended to reroute traffic through single-family neighborhoods, however, it will be important to design these connections so they do not have unintended impacts. The goal of the Independence Boulevard Area Plan is to develop a comprehensive transportation network that addresses the more localized travel needs, improves the livability of local streets and provides for the long-term sustainability of the neighborhoods and businesses in the plan area.	

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<p>7. Finalize transit decision and then finalize land use plan.</p>	<p>The transit decision was made in 2006. The 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan, approved in November 2006 by the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), sets the course for rapid transit in Mecklenburg County. The Commission selected Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as the transit mode for the Southeast Transit Corridor, which extends 13.5 miles from Charlotte's Center City to I-485 in Matthews. Six of these stations are located within the Independence Boulevard Area Plan boundary. The MTC also delayed implementation for a minimum of five years to allow a reconsideration of light rail transit for this corridor. Sixteen stations were identified along the Southeast Corridor, seven with park and ride facilities. The Area Plan provides flexibility to respond to either LRT or BRT. If the MTC revises its transit plans for Independence, the Area Plan can be amended, if needed, much like will be done for the other transit corridors (ie. the University City Area Plan will be amended to respond to changes in the number and location of station areas).</p>	
<p>8. Plan inconsistent with ULI –Rose Fellowship Observations and Concepts.</p>	<p>The Independence Boulevard Area Plan provided the framework for the implementation ideas shared by the Urban Land Institute (ULI)- Daniel Rose Fellowship Panel. The three main ideas were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. BRT/Express bus on Independence in HOT lanes with 3 Regional Nodes/Transit Stations along Independence Boulevard at Sardis Road, Conference Drive and Briar Creek Road; b. Streetcars on Central Avenue and Monroe Road; and c. Promote auto-oriented retail on Independence and neighborhood serving, mixed-use development on streetcar lines. <p>The Independence Boulevard Area Plan provides future land</p>	

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<p>8. (continued)</p>	<p>The Area Plan calls for mixed use, pedestrian-oriented development along Monroe road that would be very supportive of a future streetcar. However, a decision about streetcar would need to come from the MTC.</p> <p>The Independence Boulevard Area Plan also supports auto-oriented retail on Independence Boulevard, particularly at some key locations where it could best be supported by existing or proposed street network.</p>	<p>Staff is considering language the following language to include in the draft to addresses the ULI concepts:</p> <p>The ULI –Fellowship Panel recently conducted a study that recommended reducing the number of transit stations along Independence Boulevard between Briar Creek and Sardis Road North. The MTC has begun considering those recommendations. In the event that the MTC decides to revise the 2030 Corridor System Plan to reduce the number of transit stations within the plan area, the future land use policies for the stations that are eliminated should include a mixture of retail, office and residential land uses with community design characteristics inherent in transit station area principles which are appropriate for these locations even without rapid transit in place.</p>

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<p>9. Need clarification on recommendation for the bridge at Farmingdale Road/Glendora. Why aren't we doing this now?</p>	<p>As NCDOT's road widening project progresses, it could potentially create a barrier between neighborhoods and within station areas by limiting locations where it will be possible to cross Independence Boulevard.</p> <p>The Implementation Guide, which is not adopted by Council, recommends a study for a bridge at Farmingdale/Glendora Roads to determine if it is needed to improve connectivity between neighborhoods.</p> <p>Similar to Hawthorne Lane and Pecan Avenue, these crossings would not have any ramp connections to Independence Boulevard, but would help connect neighborhoods and development on either side of the evolving freeway.</p>	
<p>10. Need clarification on recommendations for future park/greenway designations. What do I tell property owners?</p>	<p>Every parcel within the area plan boundary has a future land use recommendation. Only those parcels owned or proposed for ownership by Mecklenburg County are recommended as park/open space or greenway.</p>	
<p>11. Need clarification on recommendations for Potential Stormwater locations. What do I tell property owners?</p>	<p>The Independence Boulevard Area Plan identifies, in general, potential locations for new regional stormwater facilities that may be needed for redevelopment under the stormwater regulations in the Post-Construction Controls Ordinance (PCCO). The redevelopment of small parcels—such as those found in the western portion of the plan area—is sometimes difficult under the PCCO, due to the amount of land needed to accommodate the buildings, parking, and stormwater facilities required. The locations provided were only meant as possible locations given topography and hydrology of the area, as well as in places where existing streams could be restored to serve stormwater as well as recreational functions.</p>	<p>Staff proposes to move this map to the Implementation Guide to serve as a reference as development occurs.</p>

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<p>12. Needs clarification on recommendations for the Property Acquisition Program.</p>	<p>The Implementation Guide, which is not adopted by Council, includes a strategy to develop and evaluate a process to purchase parcels where existing or proposed Independence Boulevard road improvements have impacted parcel viability.</p> <p>Staff has had preliminary discussions to develop a process, prioritization methodology and cost estimates. However, a comprehensive analysis is not intended until after Council adopts the area plan and provides further guidance for this implementation strategy.</p>	
<p>13. Plan should decide the future transportation conditions along Independence Boulevard.</p>	<p>This document establishes a vision for the Independence Boulevard Plan Area and provides policies to guide future growth, development and reinvestment along Independence Boulevard as it continues to undergo transformation from a major arterial to a limited access expressway with plans for bus rapid transit or light rail transit.</p> <p>The purpose of the area plan is not to reevaluate existing transportation decisions, but to provide a land use and vision that is responds to those decisions.</p>	