

Natural Environment Policies

A good land use plan balances preservation of the area's natural resources with the demand for new development. This is possible with careful planning and adherence to policies and regulations. The specific environmental policies contained in this plan are based on the more general principles and policies in the *General Development Policies*, 2007.

The primary environmental features of the Plan Area are the streams and tributaries, the mature tree canopy in many neighborhoods, and the parks and greenways.

Natural Environment Policies

The following policies, along with existing adopted policies and regulations and the other policies within this area plan, will help to ensure the protection of the Independence Boulevard Plan Area's natural environment.

NE-1 Natural stream courses should be restored where feasible. As the Independence Boulevard area developed, numerous waterways were buried beneath

Natural Environment Goal

To protect and enhance important ecological and recreational spaces through expansion of the parks and greenways system, reclamation of "lost" assets such as buried streams, and creation of a comprehensive stormwater management strategy, while also encouraging land use and transportation activities that positively impact land, air, and water quality.

roads and parking lots, homes and shops. Portions of some of these creeks, especially Edwards' Branch, were covered and/or piped many years ago as part of stormwater routing systems. This covering removed connections to natural floodplains and wetlands that moderate occasional flooding events and can provide natural treatment for stormwater. Additionally, many other streams were channelized but left open to more efficiently route flows of stormwater. Stream daylighting or opening streams that were covered and or recontouring channelized streams could provide a number of benefits, including:

- Creating aesthetic views for adjacent land uses
- Providing effective neighborhood buffers
- Providing locations for new or expanded greenways and other recreation uses
- Potentially lowering the floodplain elevation
- Providing for Charlotte's stream mitigation bank
- Contributing to a regional stormwater system

Map 17 shows the sections of buried streams that could potentially be restored. These are primarily located in places where there is a need and opportunity for aesthetic treatments and buffers (primarily on Independence Boulevard near the Coliseum Shopping Center), as well as where they can contribute to a regional stormwater approach. **Figures 20 and 21** show potential design cross-sections for stream channel restoration and stormwater wetlands. These designs feature riparian stream bank zones to create a naturalized edge to the stormwater facilities.

Figure 20 - Stormwater Wetland Cross-section

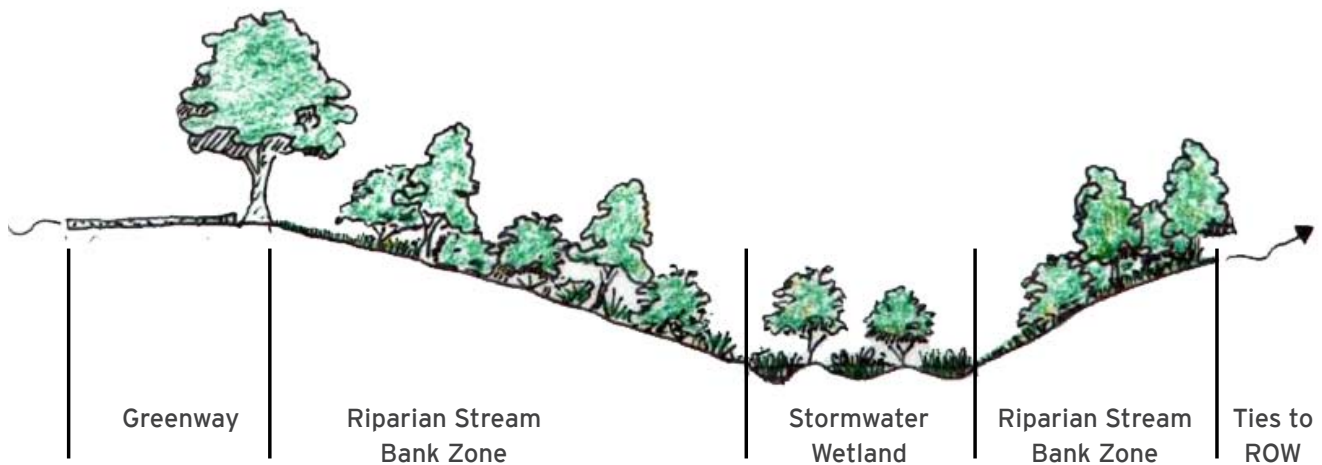
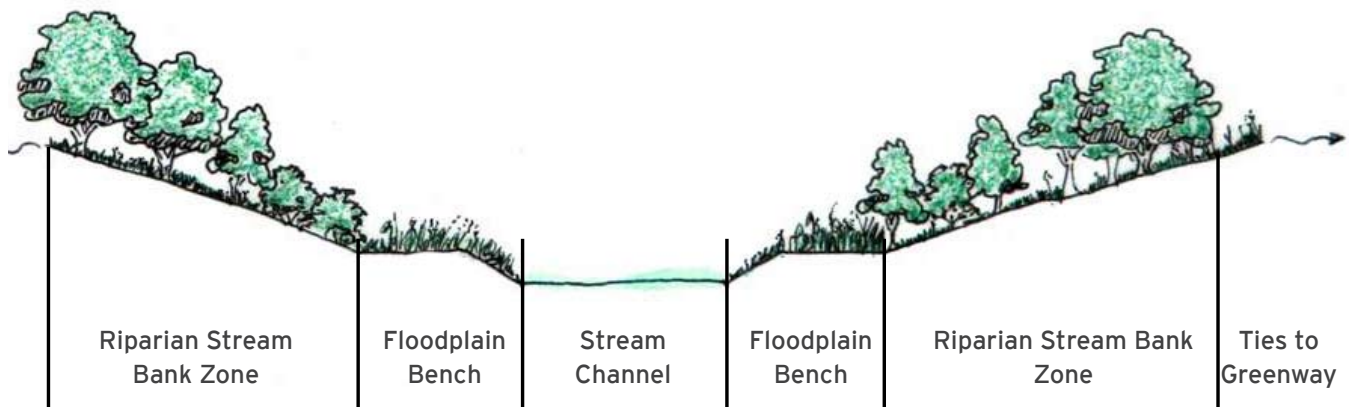


Figure 21 - Stream Channel Restoration Cross-section



NE-2 The greenway network should be expanded throughout the Plan Area. This network provides substantial recreation opportunities, in addition to environmental benefits. Map 17 identifies locations where the system could be expanded in the Independence Boulevard Plan Area. Many of these places are also potential locations of stream restoration and regional stormwater facilities. The expansions are focused on constructing Briar Creek Greenway and a linkage along Edwards' Branch, and linking Campbell Creek Greenway to Briar Creek Greenway via over-land trail connectors.

NE-3 Residential and commercial development and redevelopment in the Plan Area should limit the pressures for urban sprawl in outlying greenfields. Often, the most sustainable approach to urban growth

lies in the redevelopment of existing places. The land use section of this document identifies the locations where redevelopment and intensification of uses is most appropriate and feasible.

NE-4 More transportation choices should be provided in the Independence Boulevard Plan Area. These choices will allow more people to walk, bike, or take transit for their daily needs, thus reducing automobile usage. By mixing and intensifying uses in appropriate locations, implementing urban design guidelines will make streetscapes and buildings more attractive and inviting. Moreover, investing in transit, and alternate modes of transportation will be a more viable transportation option. This will support air quality goals identified in the County's 2008 *State of the Environment* report.

NE-5 Site design techniques that protect the natural environment should be encouraged. Site designs and construction practices should: 1) facilitate the use of alternative modes of transportation; 2) reduce ground level temperatures; 3) minimize impacts to the natural environment; 4) reduce the amount and improve the quality of stormwater run-off; and 5) use water efficiently.

NE-6 Impacts to tree canopy should be minimized. The tree canopy was cited during public workshops as one of the best attributes of the Independence Boulevard Plan Area. Any impacts to this canopy arising from new infrastructure projects or (re) development should be minimized to the greatest extent possible, so the canopy can flourish and remain a healthy and viable part of the Plan Area's environment.

Conclusion

As the City of Charlotte continues to attract new residents and businesses, pressures for development and redevelopment will likely intensify. The ability to successfully accommodate growth, while maintaining a high quality of life, is not likely without planning. To that end, this document sets the stage for managing future growth and development consistent with the *Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework* and the community's vision for the future.

Upon adoption, the *Independence Boulevard Area Plan* will provide land use guidance to implement the community's vision to:

- concentrate development intensity at nodes, which are the focus of neighborhoods linked together by green connections which are typically greenways, parks, and trails;
- locate Regional Nodes at the most highly-connected locations in the Plan Area, where Independence Boulevard is crossed by major regional access streets with Briar Creek, Conference Drive, and Sardis Road North Stations future rapid transit stations.
- encourage smaller, local-serving Neighborhood Nodes occur along Monroe Road south of Independence and Albemarle Road on the north side of Independence Boulevard.

This repositioned development pattern will help to revitalize the area by creating a more connected, walkable, and green community. Natural features - creeks, greenways, and parks, are able to be used as amenities to spur additional high-quality residential development. By re-orienting development away from



Example of ground floor retail uses with residential units above

Independence Boulevard and toward new side street connections, a more walkable development pattern can be created and maintained over time, creating nodes of commercial activity with elements of higher-intensity, transit-supportive residential, office, and limited commercial areas to link the neighborhood nodes. All of these changes will serve to help maintain and enhance the existing neighborhoods.

