



Independence Boulevard Area Plan Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the City developing a plan for this area? The purpose of the plan is **to establish a vision and set of policies to help position the corridor for growth** and reinforce existing neighborhoods for continued stability and livability. The plan is intended to guide property owners, developers and elected officials in making land use and development decisions. It will be used as a tool to evaluate rezoning applications and development plans and, with City projects, to coordinate and prioritize infrastructure service provision, funding allocation, and other initiatives.

The area plan will focus on land use and accessibility. It will not reevaluate existing plans for rapid transit or highway improvements. However, the development of sustainable land use scenarios will likely require some changes to roadway access and connectivity.

2. When will the plan be completed? A draft plan document is scheduled to be completed in **January 2010**. Then it will take another three to six months for the public and elected and appointed officials to review the plan. It is likely that City Council will adopt the plan in the spring of 2010.

Plan implementation will take much longer. Area plans are long-term plans that are typically implemented by the private sector through the redevelopment process and by the public sector through rezonings and identified infrastructure projects as funds become available. Some of the recommendations in the plan may not be realized for many years while others may be implemented within 1-5 years.

3. How will the plan recommendations be implemented? The area plan is divided into a Concept Plan and an Implementation Guide. The Concept Plan describes the policy framework and recommendations while the Implementation Guide identifies the specific actions that will assist in implementing the Concept Plan. Specific improvement projects recommended in the plan will be listed and assigned a general priority/time-frame in the Implementation Guide. Staff will then work to identify potential funding sources for these projects as part of the plan implementation process.

Area plans are long-term plans that are typically implemented by the private sector through the redevelopment process and by the public sector through rezonings and identified infrastructure projects as funds become available. In many cases City Council will need to approve funding for specific projects. Some projects may be funded quickly while others may not be funded for many years. Also, some projects will be implemented by the private sector during the land development process.

4. How can citizens become more involved with the area planning process? **In addition to the June 24, 2008 public meeting to “kick-off” the planning process, there have been two additional public meetings in October 2008 and January 2009.** The public will also

have the opportunity to provide comments to the Planning Committee of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and City Council during the review and adoption process. All of these meetings are open to the public and notification of each is sent to all property owners, area neighborhood organizations, elected/appointed officials and other stakeholders.

Citizens can become even more involved by volunteering to serve on the advisory group.

The advisory group will work with staff and consultants to develop the plan policies. Participation in the advisory group is open to the public, but entails a commitment to attend several additional meetings and workshops.

5. *Who makes the final decision on the plan?* The **Charlotte City Council** makes the final decision on the plan. City Council considers the recommendations of several bodies, including the Planning Committee of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and City Council Committee. They also consider public comments, as well as comments from other boards and agencies, including the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board.

6. *What do you mean when you say that “the area plan could recommend a change to the City’s adopted future land use map for property in the plan area”?* The City has an adopted future land use map that shows a specific future land use for every parcel of land within the City’s jurisdiction. This map provides guidance for future development. ***Once adopted, the Independence Blvd. Area Plan will update the adopted future land use for the plan area. In doing so, the future land use for some parcels may change.*** In many areas, however, there won’t be any changes. Whether or not the plan recommends a change, it won’t affect how property is currently used. It will only provide guidance for the future.

7. *What is the difference between the future land use in an area plan and zoning?* 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. Zoning designations are legal requirements, which determine how parcels of land may be used.*** When property owners want to develop or use their property in ways that do not conform to their current zoning regulation, they must apply for a change in their zoning classification, also referred to as a rezoning. Zoning regulations, and the rezoning process, are often a key part of implementing area plans.

8. *What are the plans and schedule for widening Independence Boulevard?* The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is in process of preparing design plans for the widening of Independence Boulevard from the current end of the expressway at Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane (approximately 1.6 miles). ***The project calls for an eight-lane divided expressway with median-running busway, along with new partial-cloverleaf interchanges at Sharon Amity Road and Idlewild Road. The current schedule calls for right-of-way acquisition to begin in Fiscal Year 2009 and construction to begin in Fiscal Year 2011.*** Environmental and design studies are currently underway. The total estimated cost is \$153.5 million.

The Charlotte Department of Transportation and Charlotte Area Transit System are working

with NCDOT's Roadway Design Engineers and Consultants to coordinate traffic control during construction, extend the existing Busway and ensure that adequate right-of-way is preserved for the future construction of Bus Rapid Transit or Light Rail Transit.

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9. What are the plans and schedule for rapid transit on Independence Boulevard? *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 MTC selected Bus Rapid Transit as the preferred transit mode for the Southeast Transit Corridor, which** extends 13.5 miles from Charlotte's Center City to I-485 in Matthews, and **encompasses the Independence Boulevard plan area. However, the MTC also delayed implementation for a minimum of five years to allow a reconsideration of Light Rail Transit for this corridor.** In the interim, the MTC authorized the extension of the existing Busway with the NCDOT Independence Boulevard widening project and instructed CATS to preserve the right-of-way necessary to construct either BRT or LRT in the future. Sixteen stations were identified along the Southeast Corridor, seven with park and ride facilities.

10. How can you find out what is being proposed or developed in the immediate area on-line? What are the plans? What else is coming?

Rezoning Information (www.rezoning.org). If a project is the result of a rezoning request, rezoning petitions are listed on the Planning Commission website by year and petition number. The rezoning petition usually includes a site plan for the request.

Future Land Use Plans (www.charlotteplanning.org). All property within the City of Charlotte's jurisdiction is included in one of six district plans. It may also be covered by an area plan, which updated the district plan. A listing of completed policy plans, district plans and area plans is available on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission website.

Transportation Projects (www.mumpo.org and charmeck.org). The Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) oversees the development of the transportation system in Mecklenburg and Union counties and information about transportation plans, programs and projects is available on their website. The City of Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) has information about transportation planning within the City and Engineering and Property Management lists information about roadway improvements (City and State roads) and sidewalk program are available at their department links on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg website.

Schools (www.cms.k12.nc.us). Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has information about schools and school planning on their website.

Utilities (www.cmutilities.com). Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities provides water and sewer services to the City of Charlotte and greater Mecklenburg County -- including the towns of Matthews, Mint Hill, Pineville, Huntersville, Davidson, and Cornelius. Information about projects, programs and billing is available on their website.

Stormwater Services (www.charmeck.org). Stormwater Services has projects and programs designed to control storm water runoff, prevent or reduce flood risks, restore the natural and beneficial functions of the floodplain, protect the quality of water in our creeks and lakes and maintain storm drainage systems. Information about these programs is available on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg website or by calling 704/336-RAIN.

Park and Recreation (www.charmeck.org). Information about parks, greenways, activities and programs, aquatics and facilities is available on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg website.