


Northlake Area Plan
Frequently Asked Questions
Summary

The following represents a summary of frequently asked questions about the Northlake area planning process.

Area Plan Process

1. *How will improvements to the Northlake area be prioritized?*

The plan document that results from the area plan process is divided into a Concept Plan and an Implementation Plan. The Concept Plan describes the policy framework and recommendations while the Implementation Plan identifies the specific strategies that will assist in implementing the Concept Plan. Specific improvement projects recommended by the plan will be listed and prioritized as part of the Implementation Plan. Planning Commission staff will then work to identify funding sources for these projects as part of the plan implementation process. 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.

2. *Will developers have more influence in the planning than area residents?*

The area plan process is open to the public, everyone's input is considered equally and no group has any more influence than another.

3. *To whom do you report recommended changes?*

The Charlotte City Council makes the final decision on recommended changes. 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.

4. *Why is an area plan being discussed now instead of five years ago when development and roads were being planned and not constructed? How do you change things now?*

The City has identified many more needs for area planning than they have resources to accomplish. Each January, an interdepartmental team reviews planning needs based on considerations, such as recommendations of previous planning initiatives, increases in rezoning activity inconsistent with the adopted plan, policy changes, demographic changes, transportation/infrastructure improvements, and gaps in planning initiatives. Selected plans are then incorporated into the work program. However, having an area plan in place doesn't ensure that there will be funding for all the necessary infrastructure improvements.



5. *Will the Northlake area plan result in being incorporated into Charlotte or Huntersville?*

No. Annexation is pursued through a separate process. A portion of the study area was annexed into the City of Charlotte in March 2006. The Northlake Mall property was recently approved to be annexed by the City Council in November 2006. This annexation will become effective on February 28, 2007. The remainder of the study area is within the City of Charlotte's Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and will be annexed at some point in the future.

6. *How will development in the area be guided and controlled?*

The purpose of the Northlake Area Plan is to provide a vision and recommendations to guide property owners, developers and elected officials in making land use and development decisions within the study area. It will be used as a tool to evaluate rezoning applications and development plans and with City initiatives to coordinate and prioritize infrastructure service provision, funding allocation, etc.

7. *How long until the plan will be completed?*

Typically, area plans take about a year to develop and then spend about six months in the review and adoption process. Area plans are long-term plans that are typically implemented by the private sector through the redevelopment process and through 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 3-5 years.

8. *What type of process are you referencing that may recommend a change in the future use of property within the study area? How does it directly involve my property and my home?*

In the adopted plans for the Northlake area, the Northwest and Northeast District plans and the Westside Strategic Plan, there are specific future land use recommendations for every parcel of land in the study area. The Northlake Area Plan will update the currently adopted plans and, in doing so, may propose changes to the adopted future land use recommendations for some parcels. In many areas, for example, established residential neighborhoods, there won't be a proposal to change the land use recommendation. Whether or not the plan recommends a change, it won't affect how property is currently used.

9. *Structurally, how will Braemar be affected by the plan?*

The structure of the Braemar neighborhood will not be changed by the Northlake Area Plan. It is expected that established single family neighborhoods will continue to be recognized as residential.



10. *How do regular citizens become more involved with the process?*

At least two public meetings, a workshop January 16-18th and a charrette February 5-8th, will be held during the development of an area plan. 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 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 involved by participating in the public meetings, January workshop and February charrettes and, if possible, by volunteering to serve on the advisory group. The advisory group will work with staff and consultants to develop the plan recommendations. Participation in the advisory group is open to the public, but entails a commitment to attend several additional meetings and workshops.

Land Use/Zoning

11. *Why will land be zoned one way only to change each time someone requests a change?*

Zoning regulations, and the rezoning process, are often a key part of implementing area plans. There are a variety of zoning categories that can be used to implement a land use recommendation. The specific zoning category that is used is usually chosen once the property owner has a development plan that they are ready to proceed with.

12. *Will residential areas be subject to zoning changes (i.e. tear down houses for retail (commercial) development)?*

The plan will not be recommending that established residential neighborhoods be changed to retail land uses. The plan may recommend that areas that are currently vacant, already zoned for retail uses and/or are underutilized be shown as retail on the future land use map.

Sometimes, the plan may recommend a rezoning to match the existing land use and zoning category. These are called, “corrective rezonings.” If any of these are recommended, the rezoning does not happen automatically with the adoption of the plan but would go through the rezoning process after the plan is adopted. Whether or not the plan recommends a land use change, it won’t affect how property is currently used.



Transportation

13. *How will the roads be improved, specifically Mt. Holly-Huntersville, to handle increased traffic?*

Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road is not currently listed in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for any improvements. The opening of the I-485/Harris Boulevard interchange is expected to relieve some of the traffic pressure on Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road. However, Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road is a major thoroughfare, which suggests that it will be widened to a four-lane cross-section in the future. The LRTP defines the policies, programs and projects to be implemented over the next twenty years to provide mobility choices in Mecklenburg and Union counties. An update to the LRTP will begin soon and new projects will be evaluated and added at that time.

14. *Will problems with traffic be prevented?*

With improved street connectivity and the implementation of planned road improvements, traffic conditions in the Northlake area should improve over time. Increased street connectivity can reduce vehicle travel by reducing travel distances between destinations and by supporting alternative modes of transportation. It also tends to improve walking and bicycling conditions, particularly where paths provide shortcuts that can make walking and cycling faster than driving.

15. *Why hasn't I-485 been finished? Will there be a noise wall constructed as part of I-485?*

The portion of I-485 currently under construction has been delayed for a number of reasons including poor weather, problems with contractors and unexpected design related problems. The portion from Old Statesville Road (NC 115) to I-85 has not been started because there is a lack of funding.

Noise walls will be built as part of the I-485 construction on the south side of I-485 from Beatties Ford Road east to Long Creek and on the north side of I-485, just east of Long Creek, to the westbound ramp (northwest quadrant) at the Harris Boulevard interchange.

16. *Will public transportation improve and provide more accessibility to the area?*

CATS has no immediate plans to improve or alter existing bus service in the Northlake area. CATS currently has one local bus (#7) and two express (53x and 77x) routes that provide transit service within the Northlake Area Plan boundaries. The existing service is available seven days a week and there is an existing Park and Ride located adjacent to Dillard's department store at Northlake Mall. Citizens can contact CATS with requests for service additions, alterations or improvements. These requests are investigated and considered by the CATS Operations Division on a trimester basis. In terms of rapid transit, the Northlake area is part of the North Corridor Commuter Rail Line (LYNX Purple Line), with the proposed Eastfield Station located within the plan boundaries. Implementation of the proposed LYNX Purple Line Commuter Rail Project will require revisions to existing public transit service. Any draft recommendations from the Northlake Area Plan will be reviewed and investigated by CATS staff. They will then be evaluated for consideration pursuant to the Metropolitan Transit Commission's adopted policies and plans and based on CATS' available budgetary resources.



17. *Are there plans to widen the roads (Statesville, Reames)?*

The Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) long-range transportation plan call for widening Statesville Road from I-85 to Exit 28 in Cornelius in the plan's 2020 horizon year. This means that funding is anticipated sometime between the end of 2010 and 2020. There are no plans to widen Reames Road.

Community Safety/Services

18. *Has a new police station been planned for the study area?*

The Northlake study area current falls within the North Patrol Division. The division office is located at 10430-R Harris Oaks Boulevard. There are no plans to add an additional office within the Northlake Study area. However, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) is proposing to revise patrol division boundaries and add a 13th division. For more information on the proposed, revised boundaries for the North Patrol Division, please visit www.cmpd.org and click on the link to Patrol Districts. The redistricting plan is scheduled to take effect in January, 2007.

19. *Are you planning on building more schools in my community?*

Yes, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) is proposing to locate a new elementary school within the study area. Neither a location nor a timeframe for operation has yet to be determined.

CMS also has plans to open a new elementary school and a new middle school just to the east of the study area along Hucks Road. Timeframe for operation has yet to be determined.

CMS is currently updating their schools master plan (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Ten Year Capital Plan) and is presenting it to the public for review and comment this winter. The master plan may reveal additional information regarding school facilities within the Northlake study area. We will continue to update relevant school information as we work with CMS throughout the Northlake planning process.

20. *Will the Long Creek Greenway be developed with walkways/nature trails?*

The Long Creek Greenway was proposed as part of the Mecklenburg County Greenway Master Plan, which was adopted in 1999. The Master Plan identifies the Long Creek Greenway as a potential greenway trail corridor. As a potential greenway, it has not been designed yet, so the types of amenities that it will include are not yet known.

Other

21. *How can you find out what is being constructed and what is being proposed 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 sphere of influence is included in one of seven district plans. It may also be covered by an area plan, which updates 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 charmack.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.