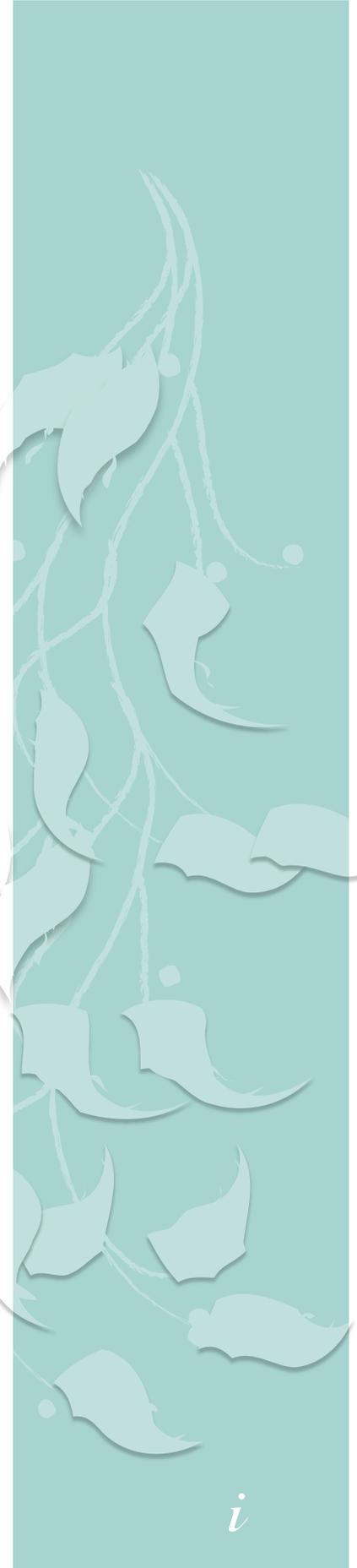




*Executive
Summary*



Executive Summary

The Steele Creek Area Plan defines the vision and land use policies for the plan area and provides specific direction to guide future growth and development, consistent with the *Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework*. This Executive Summary provides the highlights of the plan document, however, much more detailed information can be found in Part I: Concept Plan.

Plan Boundary

The Steele Creek plan area is approximately 27,000 acres and has a population of approximately 35,000. The plan area is bounded generally by Shopton Road on the north, and South Carolina state line on the south, the Catawba River on the west, and I-485 on the east. See **Map 1, Area Plan Boundary**.

The area encompasses a diverse mixture of residential, retail, office and industrial land uses. A large portion of the area, particularly closer to I-485, I-77 and South Tryon, includes more intense development primarily located within four Activity Centers—RiverGate and Whitehall / Ayrley Mixed Use Activity Centers; the Westinghouse Industrial Center; and the portion of the Shopton Road Industrial Center that is included within the plan area boundary. Several large industrial parks are also located in the plan area, providing employment opportunities with companies like International Paper, Siemens, Shutterfly and Time Warner Cable.

Vision Statement

The vision for the Steele Creek area is to create a unique and sustainable community that is a great place to live, work, and recreate, while preserving the community's character by incorporating natural and historic features into new development. The community will implement this vision through the following actions:

- Protecting the Catawba River, McDowell Nature Center and Preserve, natural features and historic places;
- Providing a balanced mixture of land uses with enhanced public facilities that include quality schools;
- Developing a safe, accessible and efficient transportation system for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists;
- Encouraging community design that recognizes the natural environment; and
- Creating an interconnected network of parks, greenways and open space amenities.

Much of the plan area is within a Wedge and includes low to moderate density residential developments like Yorkmont, The Crossings, The Sanctuary and The Palisades. The McDowell Nature Center and Preserve is also located within the Wedge and is the oldest nature preserve in Mecklenburg County. Ninety percent of the preserve is undeveloped, forested, rolling terrain along the banks of Lake Wylie. The plan area also includes additional public facilities such as schools, parks, libraries and greenways.

Key Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities and constraints that were identified through public input and an examination of the existing conditions helped to focus the planning process. Key opportunities identified include proximity to the Catawba River and interstate access, both of which contribute to the uniqueness of this area. Other opportunities include preserving the neighborhoods and natural environmental features; convenience of Activity Centers for shopping, entertainment and employment; and, availability of parks and greenways. Some of the major constraints that were identified include the impact of increased development on the natural environment and lack of public facilities and local street connectivity.

Summary Of Goals And Policies

The Steele Creek Area Plan provides goals and detailed policies to ensure that the future envisioned for this area is achieved. Below are the plan goals and a brief summary of the policies.

Land Use

GOAL: Establish a land use pattern that offers a mix of land uses and the opportunity to live, work and recreate in close proximity.

Key Policies Highlights

Wedge

- Development in the Wedge should remain predominantly lower density residential, typically up to 4 dwelling units per acre.
- Neighborhood supporting land uses and moderate density housing are encouraged at strategic locations, primarily along thoroughfares as shown on **Map 3, Recommended Future Land Use**.
- The community-size retail center approved as part of the Palisades mixed use town center is appropriate to expand to serve the needs of the growing population in this area.

Activity Centers

- Future development/redevelopment in the RiverGate and Whitehall/Ayrsley Mixed Use Activity Centers should facilitate the transition to a more pedestrian-oriented environment.
- Westinghouse Industrial Center transverses through the center of the plan area and is the largest industrial core in the Carolinas. While this area is developed with over 20 million square feet of industrial development, additional industrial development is appropriate for the area.

Community Design

GOAL: Encourage sustainable development that promotes accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists while integrating green amenities and environmentally sensitive features.

Key Policies Highlights

- Building and site design in Steele Creek should be reflective of its surrounding built and natural environment and respect existing neighborhoods.
- Development should orient towards an internal street network and provide a landscaped buffer along South Tryon Street to improve the aesthetic quality of the roadway.

- Improved pedestrian connections and accommodations for cyclists and motorists should be provided throughout the Steele Creek area to encourage a safe pedestrian and vehicular network for all users.

Transportation

GOAL: Provide a safe, accessible and efficient street network for all users.

Key Policies Highlights

- Improve area connectivity by providing streets, cross access, internal site circulation and multiple entrances.
- Upgrade farm-to-market roads and extend/widen key thoroughfares.
- Improve intersections for both vehicular and pedestrian safety and mobility.
- Enhance the pedestrian and bicycle network and encourage bikeway connections to greenways as development occurs.

Infrastructure & Public Facilities

GOAL: Provide public facilities to maintain and improve service levels to area residents

Key Policies Highlights

- Encourage new development and redevelopment to incorporate open space (either natural and/or improved) so that it is a prominent component and an amenity.
- Link greenways with other greenways, parks, preserves, neighborhoods, schools, retail centers, Activity Centers and employment areas.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle access to recreational amenities as development occurs.

Natural Environment

GOAL: Encourage environmentally sensitive land development practices that enhance the area's land, air and water quality.

Key Policy Highlights

- Preserve tree canopy, native plants and other environmental features by incorporating them into development, and using sensitive site design and construction techniques.
- Target environmentally sensitive areas for preservation when acquiring land for public purposes.
- Develop a network of green spaces that include greenways, nature preserves, parks and open spaces.
- Encourage floodplain preservation and support floodplain reclamation along the major creeks in the area.

Key Implementation Strategies

The Implementation Guide identifies strategies to implement the policies in the Concept Plan and is not adopted by elected officials. The Implementation Guide includes a number of improvement projects and is intended to be a guide for staff. Some of the key implementation strategies are:

- Utilize land use and community design recommendations to guide and evaluate development proposals.
- Seek street connections as development occurs to improve connectivity within the area.
- Enhance a number of intersections in the plan area to improve traffic flow, area accessibility and safety.
- Explore funding sources for local government participation in development of the street network that will be constructed through the land development process.
- Request easements and/or dedications during the land development process to expand the Walker Branch Greenway.