

321 Eco-Tech Development Plan

Introduction

Over the past 15 years, Catawba County has undertaken a series of long-range planning initiatives to provide for the coordinated growth and development of the County. These plans included a county-wide comprehensive plan, referred to as VisionQuest 2010 (1996), a US 321 Corridor District Plan (1996), a Strategic Growth Plan (1999) and smaller focused plans referred to as “Small Area Plans” (SAP).

With the completion of US 321 in 1997, several plans were completed focusing on the economic development opportunities associated with this new highway. The US 321 Corridor District Plan provided for a coordinated growth and development analysis of the corridor. These plans were directed by the County. The cities of Hickory, Newton and Maiden jointly participated in the study. The County further refined its vision for the US 321 corridor through the preparation of small area plans for Mountain View (2002) and Startown (2005).



US Highway 321

321 Eco-Tech Development Plan

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Within the last five years, there has been noticeable activity in and around the US 321 corridor. The following three sites act as anchors and catalysts for the future growth in this area:

- EcoComplex - The goal of this Catawba County project is to take waste stream and convert those resources into a commodity leading to energy production. The vision over time would realize a group of innovative businesses developed around the core facility (Blackburn Landfill). This project is located off Rocky Ford Road west of US 321 within the juris-



EcoComplex

diction of Catawba County.

- Target - This 1.5 million square foot distribution center opened in 2008 and is within the jurisdiction of the City of Newton. The facility, projected to employ 800 people, is located on Hwy. 10 west of the US 321/NC 10 interchange.
- Apple - A 500,000 square foot data center is projected to employ 50 people with an additional 250 people in support services. This facility is located on Startown Road south of the US 321/Startown Road interchange within the jurisdiction of the Town of Maiden.

PURPOSE



Target

The purpose of the 321 Eco-Tech Development Plan, hereafter referred to as the “Plan”, is to: (1) review previously adopted/accepted plans relative to the Plan area, (2) develop a set of goals based upon applicable principles in the Startown and Mountain View SAP , and (3) prepare a series of Plan Action Strategies (PASs) with measurable outcomes, timelines and relevant agreements. See the Plan Action Strategy (PASs) Legend at the end of this chapter and each Plan Action Strategy (PASs) table at the end of their respective chapters. The legend explains the symbols, prioritization, and timelines associated with each PASs. The appendix also has a consolidated PASs table for convenience. The plans described in the *Background* section are still valid and serve as the foundation for this Plan.



Apple

More specifically, the Plan addresses a series of issues focusing upon:

- A smaller geographic area than what was previously defined within the Foresight 321 Task Force Report, US 321 Corridor District Plan, Future Forward, and the Mountain View and Startown SAPs;
- The Identification of potential green economic and educational opportunities;
- The coordination of utilities between local governments through signed agreements and de-

lined boundaries;

- An improved transportation network;
- A more defined development approach for each interchange along US 321;
- Identifying proposed industrial parks based upon the themes of green energies, technology, and transportation; and
- Modifying land use regulations and design standards.

PLAN AREA

The Plan Area includes the land around US 321 and is bounded by the City of Hickory's jurisdiction north of River Road, Hickory-Lincolnton Hwy. to the west, the Catawba-Lincoln county line to the south, and Startown Road, Sandy Ford Road and the Henry Fork River to the east. The cities' planning areas are not included within the Plan Area; however, their participation in this Plan is crucial to the economic development of the corridor, to ensure compatible land uses, and provide cost-effective installation of public utilities. The boundary for the Plan is depicted on *Map 1: Plan Area*. *Note: All maps referenced in the Plan document are located at the end of the relevant chapter.*

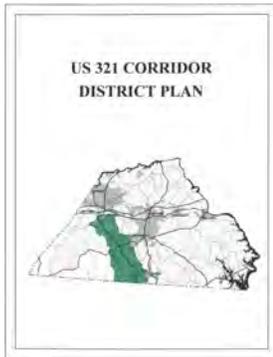
BACKGROUND

As noted in the *Introduction* above, several plans have been adopted/accepted which include components relative to the US 321 corridor or focused entirely on the corridor. Following is an overview of those plans and key components, several of which are incorporated into this Plan.

Foresight (1990) - The 321 Task Force prepared a coordinated report for the Foresight Committee to analyze the impacts of constructing the US 321 by-pass corridor through Catawba County. The report identified:

- Areas of population growth
- Need for utilities expansion
- Transportation needs
- Land use recommendations and unified develop-





ment standards

- Economic development opportunities

US 321 CORRIDOR DISTRICT PLAN (1996) - This plan was prepared in response to the Foresight report recommendation that the local governments along the US 321 corridor adopt uniform land development codes and policies. This plan included 16 goals generally grouped into major policy areas as follows:

- Transportation
- Utilities
- Conservation
- Future Land Uses
- Urban Design and Site Planning

The US 321 Corridor District Plan recommended the proactive rezoning of urban activity centers located at interchanges which supported the plan's goals to provide for economic development opportunity sites and planned, coordinated development.

FUTURE FORWARD (2003) - In the Summer of 2002, a committee of business, government, and academic leaders was formed to include twelve counties in North Carolina's 10th and 11th Congressional District. The Future Forward Committee set out to create a regional economic development strategy which would serve as a guide to the future and identify critical public and private investments in response to significant economic challenges in the area. This plan identified key elements of the "Future Forward Vision" by focusing upon:

- Improving education and skills of the workforce
- Encouraging a renewed sense of entrepreneurship and innovation
- Promoting a more diverse economy
- Developing and protect the outdoor amenities/environment
- Encouraging teamwork of local governments



MOUNTAIN VIEW SMALL AREA PLAN (2002) - This plan is one of seven plans prepared for the unincorporated areas of the County resulting from one of the sixteen strategies identified the County's Long Range Strategic Growth Plan. The plan addresses a host of recommendations some of which are listed below:

- Land Use and Community Design
 - If utilities are available to support multi-family developments, the preferred location for such developments would be along the US 321 corridor
 - The US 321/River Road interchange should be designated for mixed-use development consisting of multi-family and commercial uses
 - Direct office-institutional uses to the US 321 Corridor and River Road interchange
 - Encourage office or institutional developments in park-like settings
 - Limit industrial uses to the US 321 Corridor.
 - If industrial uses are developed, encourage light intensity uses in park-like settings.

- Transportation
 - Continue to support the completion of construction of US 321 interchange at Sandy Ford Road
 - Upgrade existing roads and evaluate the need for new connectors between US 321 and NC 127

- Community Facilities and Public Services
 - Provide canoe and raft portage points on the Henry Fork and Jacob Fork.
 - Create trails along the Henry and Jacob Forks to accommodate the needs of hikers, bicyclists and equestrians
 - Designate areas for utility expansion, direct



Bakers Mountain



*Community interest meeting.
Mountain View*



Mountain View Transportation Map



Canoe access along river



US 321 and Bakers Mountain



Henry Fork River

growth in those areas and require utility placement prior to development

- Partner with municipalities to provide utilities consistent with adopted land use plans
- Economic Development
 - Include areas of transition in the US 321 corridor on the future land use plan. The transition areas should include activities such as:
 - Office developments
 - Neighborhood retail/commercial and entertainment uses
 - Public facilities
 - Mixed-use developments
 - Designate the US 321 corridor as a scenic highway and adopt appropriate regulations to protect the scenic quality of the area as development occurs.
 - Designate the northeast quadrant of the interchange at US 321 and River Road as ED(I) for future industrial development
 - Industrial uses, if developed, should be constructed in an attractive park-like setting without heavy traffic, air and noise pollution. Light industrial uses should be the focus of such development.
- Natural Resources
 - Create scenic and wildlife corridors by utilizing rivers, such as the Henry Fork and Jacob Fork, and floodways for open space planning

STARTOWN SMALL AREA PLAN (2005) –This plan is also one of seven plans prepared for the unincorporated areas of the County resulting from the County’s Long Range Strategic Growth Plan. Following are plan recommendations relative to the US 321 corridor:

- Land Use and Community Design
 - Work with NCDOT and the Town of Maiden to establish a gateway entrance into Catawba County with attractive signage on US 321 at the Startown Road interchange.
 - Recommend an interchange on US 321 at Rocky Ford Road.
 - Encourage higher development standards are including location of parking areas (rear or side), landscaping, building materials, walkability, and buffering.

- Transportation
 - Add turn lanes, turn signals, and make intersection improvements, where warranted, along major collectors and minor arterial roads with the plans boundaries.
 - The new interchange at US 321 and Rocky Ford Road should be designed to accommodate industrial traffic, especially trucks from the Blackburn Landfill on Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. The proposed interchange on US 321 and Rocky Ford Road and improvements to Rocky Ford Road should adhere to the design standards established by the US 321 Corridor Plan.

- Community Facilities and Public Services
 - Work with land owners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses and boating opportunities along the South Fork River.
 - Explore the adaptive reuse of the Blackburn Landfill, including recreational opportunities.

- Housing
 - Encourage traditional neighborhood design utilizing techniques such as pedestrian-accessible and walkable neighborhoods through connected streets, side-



*Community interest meeting.
Startown*



*Welcome to Catawba County
Sign—South of Startown*



Startown Elementary



Traditional Neighborhood Design



Cluster Subdivision Design



Commercial/Mixed-Use

walks, street trees, and community amenities.

- Neighborhoods should include a variety of housing types and sizes
- Cluster subdivisions are required in certain high density residential areas.
- Development of higher density single family housing should occur where infrastructure and services exist or are planned.
- Economic Development-
 - Pursue a light industrial park along NC 10 near the US 321 interchange.
 - Support development of commercial, office, and residential uses.
 - A community center commercial node on US 321 at the future interchange at Rocky Ford Road.
 - Rural commercial node at the intersection of NC 10 and Hickory-Lincolnton Hwy.
- Cultural Resources
 - Support the preservation of Oakwood Farm near the intersection of US 321 and NC 10.
 - Partner with municipalities to provide utilities consistent with adopted land use plans and smart growth principles.

PROCESS

The Plan was drafted by the Catawba County Planning staff with technical assistance from the following:

- Catawba County Utilities and Engineering
- Catawba County GIS
- Western Piedmont Council of Governments
- City of Hickory

- Town of Maiden
- City of Newton
- Economic Development Commission
- NCDOT
- Cooperative Extension
- Catawba County Schools
- Catawba County Historical Association

The Plan was presented to the Lake Hickory Rotary Club on April 19, 2011, Chamber's Land Use Development Board on April 20, 2011, and the public at a public forum on June 16, 2011. Approximately 20 citizens attended the public forum to provide feedback on the plan recommendations and implementation strategies. Additionally, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing on the plan at its June 27, 2011 meeting. One person spoke to the plan. The Planning Board recommended the Plan to the Board of Commissioners.

The Board of Commissioners similarly conducted a public hearing on the plan at its July 11, 2011 meeting. Two people spoke to the plan. The Board discussed the plan and accepted the plan as presented.