

STARTOWN SMALL AREA PLAN

PLAN AS RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE AND PLANNING BOARD

Following are the complete recommendations from the Startown Small Area Plan identified by issue. Maps referred to are available for viewing on the County's web page at:

http://www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/planning/small_area/startown/

or the Planning Department.

SECTION I: LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

RESIDENTIAL

- LU-1 Designate residential density districts, as shown on *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations and Residential Densities*. The densities indicated are average densities and are not minimum lot sizes.
- LU-2 A high-density mixed-use Village, as shown in brown on *Map 5*, is proposed in the northern portion of the SAP west of Startown Road. Multi-family homes should be permitted in the village area, which may include a mixture of apartments, patio homes, cluster developments and zero-lot line developments. Multi-family homes should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Limit access in new subdivisions to landscaped interior roads and networks.
 - .2 30-foot landscaped buffer along road frontages.
 - .3 Limit signage to monument-style signs that are low to the ground.
- LU-3 Internal open space is proposed in the Village, either for passive or active use, at a rate of 5% of the property or 10,000 square feet, whichever is greater. A community building, bicycle path, tennis courts, etc. could be included; the 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer, however, may not be included in this calculation.
- LU-4 The area proposed for high-density residential development, as shown in yellow on *Map 5*, is located in two portions of the Startown SAP, north of NC Highway 10 and east of Startown Road between Newton and Maiden. Residential development in these areas should adhere to the following design concepts:

- .1 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of one unit per 0.5 acres with no public water OR one unit per 0.34 acres where water is available.
- .2 Mandatory clustering should be required for all major subdivisions on Startown Road south of NC 10, Sigmon Dairy Road and Rome Jones Road in order to preserve the rural character of the area. Mandatory clustering is also required for all major subdivisions on Startown Road north of Settlemyre Bridge Road.
- .3 All subdivisions and individual homes along Startown Road north or Settlemyre Bridge Road and south of NC Highway 10, Sigmon Dairy Road and Rome Jones Road should be set back 100 feet from the right-of-way. Where a 30-foot landscaped buffer is required, it may be included within the 100-foot setback.

LU-5 The area proposed for low-density residential development, as shown in green on *Map 5*, is located approximately ¼ mile west of Startown Road to the western SAP boundary and south of NC Highway 10 to the Lincoln County border. Low-density residential is also recommended for the ½ mile corridor along US 321 north of NC Highway 10 in order to preserve the rural views from the highway. Residential development in this area should adhere to the following design concepts:

- .1 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of one unit per two acres.
- .2 Cluster subdivision design is encouraged.
- .3 All subdivisions and individual homes along Blackburn Bridge Road and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway north of Blackburn Bridge Road should be set back 100 feet from the right-of-way. Where a 30-foot landscaped buffer is required, it may be included within the 100-foot setback.

LU-6 All major residential subdivisions in the Startown SAP should incorporate the following additional design criteria:

- .1 Landscaping/buffering – a 30-foot natural buffer with trees and/or dense shrubbery should be required around the perimeter of all subdivisions, at entrance(s) and along thoroughfares; the purpose of this buffer is to help preserve the rural character of the Startown community.
- .2 Provide 30% common open space that is easily accessible and is usable for recreation; some of the required open space should be located outside the 100-year floodplain. The 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer may be included in this calculation.

.3 Limit access in new subdivisions to interior roads and networks (see Transportation Recommendations).

.4 Encourage traditional neighborhood design by adopting such techniques as pedestrian-accessible and walkable neighborhoods through connected streets, sidewalks or greenways, street trees, and community amenities such as neighborhood parks. Neighborhoods should also provide a variety of housing types and sizes.

LU-7 It is recommended that school capacity no longer be a consideration regarding minimum lot sizes for new developments.

COMMERCIAL

LU-8 Coordinate with NCDOT and the Town of Maiden to establish a gateway entrance to Catawba County with attractive signage on US Highway 321 at the Startown Road interchange. Encourage NCDOT to landscape all interchanges along US Highway 321.

LU-9 An interchange is proposed on US Highway 321 at Rocky Ford Road (see Transportation Recommendations). Development at this interchange should adhere to the design standards established in the *US 321 Corridor Plan*.

LU-10 Businesses in the Startown SAP should adhere to the following appearance and design criteria:

.1 Encourage parking areas to be located to the side or rear of buildings.

.2 Encourage mixed-use development at commercial nodes. (This concept allows residential and commercial uses in the same building).

.3 Commercial development should be aesthetically pleasing, designed at a walkable pedestrian scale and create a desirable destination point.

.4 Require landscaped areas along road frontages and within parking areas located in front or side yards.

.5 Abundant landscaping should be provided at site entrances, in public areas, and adjacent to buildings. All loading, storage, and maintenance areas should also be heavily landscaped. Where possible, landscaping and buffering should be done with native vegetation. Native plants generally survive better and require less maintenance than non-native species.

.6 Lighting at all commercial or mixed-use development be angled downward and shielded to avoid illuminating the night sky.

.7 Encourage brick or masonry fronts on buildings while avoiding blank walls. Visual interest can be achieved through architectural details, distinctive lighting or awnings.

LU-11 A Community Center Node should be designated at the following intersection (See Map 5, *Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*):

.1 The proposed interchange at US Highway 321 and Rocky Ford Road

The Community Center Node should include regional commercial and mixed uses with a total area of 20 to 40 acres per node and a maximum gross leasable area of 100,000 square feet per lot.

LU-12 A Neighborhood Commercial Node should be designated at the following intersection (See Map 5, *Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*):

.1 Settlemyre Bridge Road at Startown Road (an intersection of the future “Southern Corridor”)

The Neighborhood Commercial Node should include a mix of commercial and residential uses with a site area of 10 to 25 acres and maximum gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet per lot.

LU-13 A Rural Commercial Node should be designated at the following intersection (See Map 5, *Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*):

.1 NC Highway 10 and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway

The Rural Commercial Node should serve residents of the immediate neighborhood with maximum site area of 10 acres and a maximum gross leasable area of 15,000 square feet per lot.

OFFICE-INSTITUTIONAL

LU-14 Office and institutional uses should be allowed in Neighborhood Commercial Nodes as well as in mixed-uses permitted at the interchanges on US Highway 321.

LU-15 Office and institutional uses should strive to preserve the rural viewshed by adhering to the design standards recommended for commercial development.

LU-16 Abundant landscaping should be provided to screen parking, loading, storage and maintenance areas.

INDUSTRIAL

LU-17 The land currently zoned for industrial uses is adequate.

LU-18 Industrial zoned property which is developed or redeveloped should strive to preserve the rural viewshed by adhering to the design standards recommended for commercial development.

LU-19 Abundant landscaping should be provided to screen parking, loading, storage and maintenance areas.

OPEN SPACE

LU-20 Thirty percent (30%) of total acreage in major single-family subdivisions should be required to be dedicated as open space, which may be located within the development for community use, natural areas. The 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer may be included in this calculation. (Existing vegetation should be allowed to provide this open space buffer if deemed adequate).

LU-21 Preserve green space specifically for passive recreational uses, including hiking trails, primitive camping areas, canoe access, etc.

LU-22 Develop passive recreation facilities on the Blackburn Landfill as land becomes available.

SECTION II: TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Catawba County does not maintain roads and therefore the following recommendations will be forwarded to NCDOT or used in areawide thoroughfare planning. Note: For the following recommendations, refer to *Map 6, Startown SAP Transportation Recommendations*.

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

T-1 Improve communication by transportation officials when advertising public hearings for new roads, road changes, etc., which may include individual notification to affected property owners.

T-2 Coordinate with NCDOT and the Town of Maiden to establish a community gateway entrance to Catawba County with attractive signage on US Highway 321 at the Startown Road interchange. Encourage NCDOT to landscape all interchanges along US Highway 321.

T-3 Explore possible local Scenic Byway designation for the following roads:
.1 US Highway 321

- .2 NC Highway 10 west of Startown Road to Hickory-Lincolnton Highway south to Blackburn Bridge Road to Startown Road, back to NC Highway 10. Coordinate with Lincoln County the possibility of extending this scenic loop south along Startown Road to River Road or Ritchie Road then north back into Catawba County.

Request from NCDOT District Office:

- T-4 Add turn lanes with turn signals or make intersection improvements at the following intersections:
- .1 West Maiden Road at Canslers Crossroads (traffic signal)
 - .2 NC Highway 10 and Startown Road (left turn signal turning west onto Highway 10)
 - .3 Improve intersection of Sigmon Dairy Road and NC Highway 10 to increase turn radius for truck traffic
 - .4 Install left turn signal on Startown Road at Sandy Ford Road
 - .5 Reduce visibility problems at the intersection of Sigmon Dairy Road and Rome Jones Road
- T-5 Explore with NCDOT the possibility of diverting truck traffic from Sandy Ford Road between Robinwood Road and Startown Road.
- T-6 Improve the following roads to enhance safety (for example, improved bridges, curves, drainage issues):
- .1 Curves on Robinson Road north of Sandy Ford Road

Revisions to the Unifour MPO and Catawba County Thoroughfare Plans:

- T-7 Recommend a new interchange on US Highway 321 at Rocky Ford Road to accommodate industrial traffic, especially trucks from the Blackburn Landfill, on Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. The proposed interchange on US 321 at Rocky Ford Road should adhere to the design standards established by the *US 321 Corridor Plan*. This recommendation would also require improvements to Rocky Ford Road.
- T-8 Evaluate the feasibility of extending Robinson Road from NC Highway 10 south to Rocky Ford Road, on a new route west of existing subdivisions to the intersection of Rocky Ford Road and US Highway 321.
[It should be noted that the City of Newton, through its representative Planning Director Glenn Pattishall, objected to the committee's decision to propose a new alignment of Robinson Road from NC Hwy. 10 south to Rocky Ford Road.]
- T-9 Recommend eliminating the Robinson Road extension project south of Rocky Ford Road to West Maiden Road due to concerns of loss of open space in the US Highway 321 Corridor.

[Newton, as well as the Town of Maiden, did not endorse the committee's suggestion to eliminate the extension of Robinson Road south from Rocky Ford Road to West Maiden Road.]

T-10 Recommend that future phases of Catawba Valley Boulevard not be built because of concerns over increased commercial development in the northern Startown SAP area and the number of east-west connecting roads between I-40 and Settlemyre Bridge Road.

[The City of Newton did not agree with the committee's recommendation to remove the extension of Catawba Valley Blvd. from the Unifour MPO Transportation Plan.]

T-11 Focus attention on the Southern Corridor as the top priority east-west road for future development as an alternative to Catawba Valley Boulevard Extension.

T-12 Recommend that the Southern Corridor west of Startown Road be built as a four-lane, divided, landscaped boulevard design. East of Startown Road, a four-lane "urban design" is recommended, which requires less right-of-way.

T-13 Incorporate the Early Action Compact for air quality into the *State Transportation Improvement Plan*.

Amend the County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to:

T-14 Establish regulations that all new residential driveways connecting to arterial and collector streets must be at least 12 feet wide for the first 20 feet of length with a minimum 3-foot turn radii. These roads include:

- .1 Hickory-Lincolnton Highway
- .2 Startown Road
- .3 NC Highway 10
- .4 Robinson Road
- .5 Sandy Ford Road
- .6 West Maiden Road

T-15 Driveways along thoroughfares should be minimized by encouraging service roads for residential and non-residential development.

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

T-16 Sidewalks should be included with the construction of the Southern Corridor and, if built, the extensions of Catawba Valley Boulevard and Robinson Road.

BICYCLE SYSTEM

- T-17 The Startown SAP supports the bicycle routes recommended by the Catawba County Bicycle Mapping Committee, which has been submitted to NCDOT for approval (see *Map 6*).
- T-18 Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along the designated bicycle routes for increased safety.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

- T-19 Enhance Piedmont Wagon routes to provide increased service for the elderly.
- T-20 Request Catawba County to initiate a feasibility study for expanding the Piedmont Wagon route into the Startown community.

PASSENGER RAIL

- T-21 Encourage Piedmont Wagon to schedule trips to coordinate with the western North Carolina passenger rail service.
- T-22 Determine feasibility of creating a light rail passenger service along the existing rail corridor from Catawba to Hickory with stops at urban centers.

SECTION III: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOLS

- CF-1 Continue to use and enhance school facilities for comprehensive community and recreation activities.
- CF-2 The County should remove school capacity as a factor in determining residential density for new developments when the Startown Small Area Plan land use and housing recommendations are implemented.
- CF-3 School planners should use the future residential density recommendations (see Land Use Plan Recommendations) when identifying school expansion needs.
- CF-4 Explore the feasibility of funding options for constructing school facilities.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

- CF-5 Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses and/or boating options on the South Fork River.
- CF-6 Explore the adaptive reuse of the Blackburn landfill site for recreational activities, such as a golf or putt-putt course, hiking, biking and walking trails, picnic areas, a ropes course, an educational forest, a swimming pool or a community meeting facility.

LIBRARIES

- CF-7 Continue cooperation with municipalities in providing library service.
- CF-8 Maintain existing levels of library service and increase as needed.
- CF-9 Explore options for locating public library facilities on school sites.

WATER/SEWER SERVICES

- CF-10 Major utility expansions in high-density areas, as indicated on *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*, should have a priority.
- CF-11 Partner with municipalities to provide utilities that are consistent with adopted land use plans and “smart growth” principles.
- CF-12 Continue to pursue Community Development Block Grants for the expansion of utilities.
- CF-13 Areas with septic failures should be considered for public sewer service.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

- CF-14 Maintain existing levels of service.
- CF-15 Continue to support and develop measures to reduce medical response times.

SECTION IV: HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL RESIDENTIAL USES

- H-1 The Planning Board and staff investigate the possibility of developing a County-wide minimum housing standards. It should apply to single-family, multi-family housing and rental housing, with standards limiting the number of individuals inhabiting a single dwelling unit.
- H-2 Where possible, landscaping and buffering should be done with native vegetation. Native plants generally survive better and require less maintenance than non-native species.
- H-3 All subdivisions and individual homes along Startown Road north of Settlemyre Bridge Road and south of NC Highway 10, Sigmon Dairy Road, Rome Jones Road, Blackburn Bridge Road and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway north of Blackburn Bridge Road should be set back 100 feet from the right-of-way. Where a 30-foot landscaped buffer is required, it may be included within the 100-foot setback.

SINGLE-FAMILY

- H-4 Residential subdivisions should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
 - .1 Landscaping/buffering – a 30-foot natural buffer with trees and/or dense shrubbery should be required around the perimeter of all subdivisions, at entrance(s) and along thoroughfares; the purpose of this buffer is to help preserve the rural character of the Startown community.
 - .2 Provide 30% common open space that is easily accessible and is usable for recreation; some of the required open space should be located outside the 100-year floodplain. The 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer may be included in this calculation.
 - .3 Limit access in new subdivisions to interior roads and networks (see Transportation Recommendations).
 - .4 Encourage traditional neighborhood design by adopting such techniques as pedestrian-accessible and walkable neighborhoods through connected streets, sidewalks, street trees, and community amenities such as neighborhood parks. Neighborhoods should also provide a variety of housing types and sizes.

.5 Cluster subdivisions are required in certain high-density residential areas and encouraged in low-density residential areas (see Land Use Plan Recommendations). Clustering preserves open space and rural character.

H-5 Development of higher density single-family housing should occur where appropriate infrastructure and services exist or are planned.

MULTI-FAMILY

H-6 The areas already zoned 321-ED(MX), the proposed Village along Startown Road, and the proposed Neighborhood Commercial and Community Center Nodes are sufficient to accommodate the need for multi-family housing in the Startown planning area. These areas are appropriate for multi-family development once public water and sewer service are available.

H-7 Duplex or two-family homes should continue to be allowed as a permitted use in all residential districts regardless of the availability of water or sewer infrastructure.

MANUFACTURED HOMES

H-8 Rezone the areas shown on *Map 7, Startown SAP Proposed Zoning Map Amendments*.

.1 Twenty-five percent (25%) of the land in the Startown SAP is proposed for rezoning to R-1 (which allows stick-built or modular homes). The basis for this rezoning is to protect property values, appearance and character of the community where higher density is proposed. Furthermore, the demand for manufactured housing in the Startown area has decreased consistently over the past several years, suggesting that less land needs to be zoned to permit this type of housing.

.2 Sixty-four percent (64%) of the land in the Startown SAP is proposed for rezoning to R-3 (which allows double-wide manufactured homes, modular homes and site-built homes). The proposed rezoning permits doublewide manufactured homes as an affordable housing option, while the required 100-foot setbacks along certain roads and low density will preserve the rural character of the Startown community.

H-9 Allow existing manufactured homes in the R-1 and R-3 zoning district to be replaced with manufactured homes based on their nonconforming status. Subdivisions that have been approved for manufactured homes should continue to be allowed to place them on remaining vacant lots.

RETIREMENT

- H-10 Options for retirement living are suggested in the ED-MX zoning district and in the proposed mixed-use Village on Startown Road.
- H-11 Retirement housing is an alternative at the other recommended commercial nodes if the appropriate infrastructure is available.

SECTION V: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

ED-1 Pursue a high-quality, attractive business and light industrial park along NC Highway 10 near the US Highway 321 interchange on land currently zoned ED-I (see *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*).

- .1 In this complex, allow industrial uses in a campus-like setting.
- .2 This development should observe the following appearance and design criteria:
 - .1 Landscaped areas along road frontage;
 - .2 Use native vegetation where possible;
 - .3 Limit size of signs;
 - .4 Require internal streets as well as interconnectivity among the several businesses and industries;
 - .5 Design standards and other access management methods that will control traffic movement and driveway connections from major roads;
 - .6 Require sidewalks at the proposed business/light industrial park.
- .3 The EDC, the County and the City of Newton should partner on development plans for the proposed Business/Light Industrial Park.

ED-2 In the area currently zoned 321-ED(MX), support the development of commercial, office and residential uses consistent with the standards outlined in the Land Use Plan Recommendations.

ED-3 A Community Center Commercial Node is recommended for the intersection of US Highway 321 and the proposed interchange with Rocky Ford Road. See *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*.

- .1 This node should include regional commercial and mixed uses with a total area of 20 to 40 acres per node and a maximum gross leasable area of 100,000 square feet per lot. Businesses in this area should buffer structures and parking from US Highway 321. Architectural controls and landscaping for parking areas should be required at this Community Center development.

- ED-4 A Neighborhood Commercial Node is proposed for the intersection of Startown Road and the extension of Settlemyre Bridge Road (the new Southern Corridor). See *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*.
- .1 This node should include a mix of commercial and residential uses with a site area of 10 to 25 acres and maximum gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet per lot.
- ED-5 A Rural Commercial Node should be designated at the following intersection (See *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*):
- .1 NC Highway 10 and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. The Rural Commercial Node should serve residents of the immediate neighborhood with maximum site area of 10 acres and a maximum gross leasable area of 15,000 square feet per lot.
- ED-6 Explore the adaptive reuse of the Blackburn landfill site for joint economic development and educational options, perhaps including relocating the Catawba Valley Community College turf management program to this site to partner with turf and landscaping operations.

SECTION VI: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

- NC-1 Preserve the community's open spaces through density controls, zoning and subdivision regulations which establish two density areas, higher-density (one dwelling unit per 0.34 acres with public water, one dwelling per 0.5 acres without public water), and lower-density (one dwelling per two acres). Since these densities are recommended averages and not minimum lot sizes, cluster development is encouraged (or required in certain areas) to preserve open space. See *Map 5, Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations and Residential Densities*.
- NC-2 Thirty percent (30%) of total acreage should be required as open space in single-family subdivisions. The 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer may be included in this calculation.
- NC-3 Encourage residential subdivisions to follow design criteria for preserving trees or replacing them with native species, if necessary.

NC-4 Seek approval for a NCDOT Scenic Byway designation for the routes recommended on *Map 6, Startown SAP Transportation Recommendations*.

NC-5 Consider requesting North Carolina General Assembly, if necessary, to allow Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), which would encourage development in areas with adequate infrastructure and preserve open space in more rural parts of the county like the Startown community.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

NC-6 Request the County to explore cooperative ways to partner with Newton in developing Jacob Fork Park.

NC-7 Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses and/or boating options on the South Fork River, including the Henry and Jacob Fork Rivers.

NC-8 Explore the adaptive reuse of the southern portion of the Blackburn landfill site for recreational activities, such as a golf or putt-putt course, hiking, biking and walking trails, picnic areas, a ropes course, an educational forest, a swimming pool or a community meeting facility.

NC-9 Explore the adaptive reuse of the Blackburn landfill site for joint economic development and educational options, perhaps including relocating the Catawba Valley Community College turf management program to this site to partner with turf and landscaping operations.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

NC-9 Support the placement of a historical marker on Startown Road showing the original location of Crowdertown.

NC-10 Support the preservation of Oakwood Farm, an historic dairy farm near the intersection of US Hwy 321 and NC Hwy. 10.