

Plateau Small Area Plan

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Recommended by the Catawba County Planning Board – November 28, 2005

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PLAN CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
BACKGROUND	5
Purpose of Small Area Planning	5
Process	5
STUDY AREA	7
HISTORICAL CONTEXT	7
COMMUNITY PROFILE	8
ASSETS AND KEY ISSUES	8
Community Assets	8
Key Issues	8
MAJOR POINTS OF REFERENCE	9
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	9
DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS	12
LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN	13
CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS	13
Current Land Use	13
Land Use Distribution	13
Site Development Patters and Land Design Trends	14
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	15
PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	16
TRANSPORTATION	20
CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS	20
Roads & Highways	20
Pedestrian System	21
Bicycle System	21
Transit System	22
Passenger Rail	22
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	23
PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	24
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES	27
CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS	27
Schools	27
Parks and Greenways	28
Libraries	28
Water Service	28
Sewer Service	28
Emergency Services	28
Law Enforcement	28
Fire Protection	29
Emergency Medical Services	29
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	30
PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	31
HOUSING	33
CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS	33
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	34

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS35

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT37

 CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS37

 GUIDING PRINCIPLES38

 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS39

NATURAL/CULTURAL RESOURCES40

 CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS40

 GUIDING PRINCIPLES44

 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS45

APPENDIX A47

MAPSFollowing Page:

Map 1: Study Area.....8

Map 2: Census Tracts10

Map 3: Current Zoning14

Map 4: Current Land Uses.....14

Map 5: Future Land Use Recommendations16

Map 6: Transportation Recommendations21

Map 7: Proposed Zoning Map Amendments36

Map 8: Natural & Cultural Resources41

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

The concept of conducting small area plans for Catawba County was one of sixteen growth strategies resulting from the County's long-range *Strategic Growth Plan* (1999). The Growth Plan stated that the Small Area Plans "would explore general development patterns and trends and evaluate public service/facility deficiencies needing attention." The document further stated that the plans should also "include conceptual sketch plans based upon appropriate land use and zoning concepts and be used for consideration for future zoning changes and subdivision standards."

In developing the small area plan, a committee would assess their area's current quality of life and sustainability on issues such as traffic congestion, residential development patterns, water quality, library service levels, utility capacities and school facilities. Upon reviewing these issues, the committee then would recommend measures for improvement. Specifically, the Plateau Small Area Planning Committee was asked to discuss and develop goals and action statements for the following issues: 1) economic development; 2) natural resources; 3) cultural resources; 4) community facilities and public services; 5) housing; 6) land use and community design; and 7) transportation. The plan would then include implementation strategies for the goals and action statements, whether it is through ordinance or policy amendments, modified capital improvement plans, or coordination with other agencies to complete specific tasks.

PROCESS

The process for developing the small area plan was a grassroots effort that began with the appointment of the Plateau Small Area Planning Committee in July 2004 by the Board of Commissioners. The 12 Committee members were interested citizens who live or own land in the Small Area Plan boundary and volunteered their time to develop a small area plan for their community. The Committee also included a Planning Board member who served as liaison to the Board. The Committee held its first meeting in August 2004. The County Planning staff and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments educated and assisted the Committee in the development of their community plan.

During the process of developing the plan, the Committee solicited input from citizens in the planning area through a Community Input Meeting held in November 2004. At this meeting, citizens were asked how they saw their community developing in the future using a 10 to 20 year planning period. Nearly 100 residents participated in this meeting, held at the Banoak Elementary School Cafeteria. Results from this Community Input Meeting are provided in Appendix A. The Committee used this input to develop the plan's guiding principles and recommendations. Upon completion of a draft plan, the Committee sponsored another public meeting in August 2005, which also was held at Banoak Elementary School. At this meeting, the Plan's maps and recommendations

were presented to the community. Input from the 44 residents who participated at this meeting was considered by the Committee in amending the draft plan.

When the Committee's recommendations were complete, its final document was presented to the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners for review and consideration for adoption. Presentation to these Boards was through a public hearing process, with the public invited to express its comments on the proposed plan. The Committee and the Planning Board held a joint work session in November 2005 to review the plan recommendations in detail. Based on discussions at this meeting, several minor amendments were made. The Committee then presented the final document to the Planning Board at its November 28, 2005 meeting. Upon hearing citizens' comments at the meeting, the Planning Board recommended the plan to the Board of Commissioners with a minor amendment to support Startown SAP's recommendation for an interchange at Hwy. 321 and Rocky Ford Road to alleviate industrial traffic on Hickory-Lincolnton Hwy.

The Board of Commissioners reviewed the plan in October 2005. The Board of Commissioners then conducted its public hearing and accepted the plan as recommended at its December 19, 2005 meeting.

Over the next five years, issues may arise that have not been addressed in this document. Since the plan is an active document, it is capable of adapting to changes and new challenges. The Plateau SAP Committee recommends reviewing the plan every five years, or as conditions change. Amendments to the Plan have a potential impact on all residents and businesses in the Plateau area and therefore should be treated in a manner that would allow for public input, through notice and hearings, during the amendment procedure.

STUDY AREA

In general, the Plateau Small Area Plan study area is located in the southwest portion of Catawba County west of the Startown area and south of Mountain View, and is bisected by NC Highway 10. On the west side is the Catawba-Burke County line, to the north Greedy Highway, on the east Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, and on the south the Catawba-Lincoln County line.

The Plateau SAP study area encompasses 32,854 acres, including land in dedicated rights-of-way. One significant natural feature flowing through the study area is the Jacob Fork River, which forms in Burke County and joins with the Henry Fork to form the South Fork of the Catawba River in the Startown area. *Map 1, "Plateau SAP Boundary,"* locates the study area.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Within decades after Adam Sherrill crossed the Catawba in the 1740s, white pioneers began settling the land that was to become Catawba County. Mostly these men and women were engaged in farming, drawn to the area by cheap land and abundant opportunities for farming. By the 1770s between 400 and 500 families were estimated to have settled the land west of the Catawba River, according to reports Governor William Tryon sent back to London.

Settlement continued throughout the 18th and into the 19th centuries. As towns grew along the railroad in the central part of the County, farming continued to dominate the Plateau area throughout the late 19th century and into the first decades of the 20th century, even as manufacturing began to make its presence felt.

Five 18th- and 19th-century farms and houses in or adjacent to the Plateau area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One church from 1797, Grace Union Church and Cemetery, is located on the eastern edge of the Plateau area on the Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. The historic location of Jugtown, the site of the Catawba County pottery industry, can be found in the area, as are several local potters who continue to produce the distinctive Catawba Valley pottery. The rural nature of the Plateau community reflects the largely agricultural heritage of the community which still remains. Residents continue to identify churches as significant contributors to the community, and four schools (Blackburn and Banoak Elementaries, Jacob Fork Middle and Fred T. Foard High) attest to the importance of education across the community.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

ASSETS AND KEY ISSUES

During the August 2004 community meeting, Plateau area residents participated in small group discussions to identify their likes, dislikes and future visions of the community. As a result of the discussions, the Plateau Small Area Planning Committee identified broad categories of assets and key issues to direct their work. In the following sections of the plan, more specific comments from the community meeting comprise the guiding principles of each topic.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

- Rural scenery
 - Open space, farmlands
 - Lack of congestion
 - Farming heritage
- Family-oriented community
- Arts and crafts, pottery tradition
- Public services
 - Good schools
 - Fire and EMS services

KEY ISSUES

- Traffic, especially on NC Highway 10 and near all four schools
- Overcrowded schools
- Loss of farmland and open space to residential development
- Lack of recreation programs, especially for children
- Balancing pressures for growth with rural qualities
- Lack of commercial development
- Inadequate code enforcement

MAJOR POINTS OF REFERENCE

The Plateau SAP encompasses 32,854 acres (including right-of-ways) in southwestern Catawba County. NC Highway 10 traverses the planning area from east to southwest. The most significant natural feature in the area is the Jacob Fork River, which joins with the Henry Fork River just east of the planning area to flow south into Lincoln County as the South Fork of the Catawba River.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The Plateau study area experienced a significant population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the area grew at a rate of 20.8%. The population in 1990 for the area was 3,967, while the 2000 Census indicated a population of 5,008, an increase of 1,041 persons (see chart below). This growth rate is nearly the same as for Catawba County, which grew 19.7% from 1990 to 2000. The study area's net gain of 1,041 persons represented 4.5% of the County's total population increase of 23,273.

Plateau SAP Small Area Plan, Study Area Growth: 1990 to 2000				
Year	1990	2000	Net Change	% Change
Persons	3,967	5,008	1,041	20.8%
Households	1,546	2,043	497	32.1%
Persons/Household	2.57	2.45	-0.12	-4.7%

Source: US Census, 1990, and 2000; compiled by WPCOG Data Center, July 2004.

The number of households grew significantly faster than the number of persons in the study area, resulting in a lower average number of persons per household. This trend is consistent with county, state and national trends, all indicating a smaller number of persons per household.

Catawba County Population Growth: 1990 to 2000				
Year	1990	2000	Net Change	% Change
Persons	118,412	141,685	23,273	19.7
Households	45,700	55,533	9,833	21.5
Persons/Household	2.59	2.55	-0.04	-1.5

Source: US Census, 1990, and 2000; Catawba County GIS, 2004; as compiled by WPCOG Data Center, July 2004.

The Plateau study area is comprised mainly of Census Tract 118.02 as well as small portions of 117.02 and 118.01. The remaining demographic information is broken down into statistics for the Plateau SAP, Census Tracts 117.02, 118.01, 118.02 and Catawba County. Information listed for Census Tracts 117.02 and 118.01 are statistics for the entire tracts, not just the small part included in the Plateau study area. See "*Map 2, Plateau SAP Census Tracts.*"

As is true across Catawba County, the population in the study area is predominately white with the highest proportions of minority populations in Census Tract 117.02. Most

of the minority residents in Catawba County live outside the study area in the Hickory, Newton and Conover urban areas.

Race and Ethnicity, 2000				
Place	White	Black	Other	Hispanic (any race)
Plateau SAP	92.4%	4.9%	2.7%	0.9%
Census Tract 117.02	87.0%	8.5%	4.5%	2.7%
Census Tract 118.01	90.6%	4.2%	5.2%	1.6%
Census Tract 118.02	90.4%	6.7%	2.9%	1.3%
Catawba County	85.0%	8.4%	6.6%	5.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000; WPCOG Data Center 2004.

Residents ranging in age from 19 to 64 comprise the largest population group of residents in the study area and Catawba County.

Age of Population, 2000			
Place	Persons Age 18 and under (% of all persons)	Persons Age 19 to 64 (% of all persons)	Persons Age 65 and older (% of all persons)
Plateau SAP	1,212 (24.2%)	3,205 (64.0%)	591 (11.8%)
Census Tract 117.02	1,660 (25.6%)	4,168 (64.4%)	644 (10.0%)
Census Tract 118.01	1,434 (27.9%)	3,289 (64.1%)	411 (8.0%)
Census Tract 118.02	1,361 (25.0%)	3,468 (63.6%)	623 (11.4%)
Catawba County	34,392 (24.3%)	89,868 (63.4%)	17,425 (12.3%)

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000; WPCOG Data Center 2004.

Between 1995 and 2000, 68.6% of Plateau area residents remained in the same home compared to 56.2% in Catawba County. In-migration to the study area was 4.9%, which is significantly less than the 18.4% experienced by Catawba County. Census Tract 117.02 experienced 18.5% in-migration, probably due to its proximity to US 321, Lincolnton and more urban areas of the County.

Change in Housing and Migration		
Place	% of Persons living in the same house between 1995 and 2000	In-migration 1995 and 2000 (% of population)
Plateau SAP	68.6%	244 (4.9%)
Census Tract 117.02	56.3%	1,117 (18.5%)
Census Tract 118.01	66.2%	330 (6.4%)
Census Tract 118.02	69.5%	210 (3.9%)
Catawba County	56.2%	24,359 (18.4%)

Note: In-migration refers to those persons that moved into the listed place from another MSA between 1990 and 2000. All of the places listed in the table are part of the Hickory MSA. Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

In 2000 the average commute time to work for Plateau area residents was 26.5 minutes, somewhat higher than the Catawba County average of 20.7 minutes. This difference is understandable considering that most people in the study area commute to surrounding urban areas for employment.

Commuting Time to Work, 2000		
Place	Average Work Commute Time	% of Workers commuting over 40 minutes to work
Plateau SAP	26.5 minutes	11.9%
Census Tract 117.02	23.7 minutes	10.2%
Census Tract 118.01	20.5 minutes	7.1%
Census Tract 118.02	26.8 minutes	12.1%
Catawba County	20.7 minutes	8.9%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

The Plateau study area had a slightly lower percentage of workers employed outside of Catawba County than the County as a whole, suggesting that most residents work near their homes or in the urbanized areas of Catawba County.

Place of Work, 2000	
Place	% of Workers Employed Outside County of Residence
Plateau SAP	14.0%
Census Tract 117.02	18.1%
Census Tract 118.01	12.0%
Census Tract 118.02	13.7%
Catawba County	15.6%
Hickory-Morganton MSA	25.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

In 2000 20.1% of study area residents were employed in professional occupations compared to 23.8% in Catawba County. Employment in the service sector was slightly less in the study area (33.1%) than in the County as a whole (37.4%). Manufacturing was the largest sector, employing 45.1% of the workforce in the study area in 2000. While only 1.7% of study area residents worked in farming occupations, this percentage is three times higher than Catawba County.

Employment, 2000				
Place	% Employed in Professions	% Employed in Service & Prof. Support	% Employed in Manufacturing	% Employed in Farming
Plateau SAP	20.1%	33.1%	45.1%	1.7%
Census Tract 117.02	21.3%	36.3%	41.8%	0.6%
Census Tract 118.01	29.4%	34.4%	35.4%	0.8%
Census Tract 118.02	19.9%	32.9%	45.4%	1.8%
Catawba County	23.8%	37.4%	38.3%	0.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

Household income data from 1999 indicates the Plateau study area had a lower median household income than Catawba County. Census Tract 118.01, which contains part of the Mountain View area, had a significantly higher median income (\$50,701) with 36.9% of households having an income greater than \$60,000. This discrepancy can be

explained by the tract's proximity to Hickory. Presumably, many residents in this area work in Hickory which tends to offer higher wages than rural areas.

Place	1999 Estimated Median Household Income	% of 1999 Households with Incomes Below \$10,000	% of 1999 Household Incomes over \$60,000
Plateau SAP	\$37,362	8.6%	24.0%
Census Tract 117.02	\$42,379	4.7%	29.7%
Census Tract 118.01	\$50,701	4.7%	36.9%
Census Tract 118.02	\$36,860	8.9%	23.4%
Catawba County	\$41,058	7.8%	27.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

If the long-term trend of increasing job demand continues in Catawba County, the population in the Plateau study area is projected to continue increasing at a significant rate. By 2015 the population of the study area could grow by 34.6% and exceed 6,700 persons. The trend of fewer people per household is expected to continue.

Plateau Small Area Plan, Projected Study Area Growth: 2000 to 2015						
Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	Growth 2000 to 2015	% Change
Persons	5,008	5,611	6,164	6,739	1,731	34.6%
Households	2,043	2,348	2,645	2,956	913	44.7%
Persons/ Household	2.45	2.39	2.33	2.28	-0.17	-6.9%

Source: WPCOG Data Center, July 2004.

Future growth of the study area will be largely affected by the availability of public water and sewer. Residential, commercial, and possible industrial development are likely to occur where water and sewer lines exist or are extended. Since many large vacant tracts still exist in the area, however, Plateau's growth also depends on the willingness of property owners to develop their land for more intensive uses.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

CURRENT LAND USE

Residential uses and open space occupy the vast majority of land in the Plateau study area. Accordingly, most parcels are zoned for residential uses with the bulk of the area falling into the R-2 district (see *Map 3, "Plateau SAP Current Zoning"*). The R-2 zoning district is intended to accommodate low-density residential development, agriculture and the necessary governmental and support services in the more rural portions of the County. It permits modular and site-built homes as well as single-wide and double-wide manufactured homes. It also permits bona fide farms. Large undeveloped tracts of land are located throughout the study area (see *Map 4, "Plateau SAP Current Land Uses"*).

The Plateau SAP contains two watersheds where development is limited to protect the public water supply. The Newton water intake is located east of the Plateau study area on NC Highway 10 (see *Map 8, "Plateau SAP Natural and Cultural Resources"*). That area and all the land north and west of NC Highway 10 in the Plateau SAP is in the WS-III Protected area which requires at least one-half acre (20,000 sq. ft.) for each single-family residential lot. Multi-family and non-residential development in the Protected Area is limited to 24% percent lot coverage. The second intake is in Lincoln County and the WS-II Protected Area extends north into the Plateau SAP between NC Highway 10 and Cat Square Road. The WS-II Protected area requires at least one acre for each single-family residential lot. Multi-family and non-residential development is limited to 12% lot coverage.

LAND USE DISTRIBUTION

The Plateau SAP encompasses 32,295 acres of land (not including right-of-ways). Most of this land (99.1%) is zoned residential; the remaining 0.9% is zoned for non-residential uses (industrial and commercial).

	Total Zoned Acreage		
	Total Acreage	Non-Residential Acreage	Residential Acreage
Plateau SAP	32,295 (100%)	280 (0.9%)	32,015 (99.1%)

Non-residential zoning consists of 228 acres designated for industrial uses, 61% of which is vacant, and 52 acres of commercially zoned land, of which 33% is vacant.

	Acreage Zoned Non-Residential		
	Total Acreage	Total Vacant Acreage	% Vacant
Industrial	228	138	61%
Commercial	52	17	33%
Office-Institutional	0	0	NA

Residential uses occupy the greatest percentage of land in the study area (32,015 acres). Yet over 94% of the residentially zoned land is vacant or in tracts larger than four acres with a structure. Over 14,600 acres are entirely vacant while 15,500 acres are in lots of four acres or more that could be subdivided into two or more lots. For example, if 85% of the land available for residential use were developed, the Plateau area could see an additional 13,185 acres developed for residential purposes.

	Acreage Zoned Residential			
	Total Residential Acreage	Total Vacant Acreage	>4 Acres + Structure	<4 Acres + Structure
Plateau SAP	32,015	14,665 (45.8%)	15,512 (48.5%)	1,838 (5.7%)

These land use statistics suggest that a substantial amount of additional development could potentially occur in the Plateau study area.

SITE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND LAND DESIGN TRENDS

Historically, rural and agricultural uses were the most dominant land use in the Plateau study area. In recent decades, scattered housing developments have been built throughout the area. More growth is expected in areas where public water and sewer lines are extended. Generally, residential activity has consisted of a mixture of manufactured home communities and site-built subdivisions.

Commercial uses may possibly increase along NC Highway 10; however, large strip centers and big box retailers are unlikely to emerge in the Plateau study area. Hickory, Newton and Conover offer large shopping alternatives for residents of the study area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

RESIDENTIAL

- Balance growth with the community's rural character
- Organize and plan residential development
- Encourage aesthetically pleasing subdivision design
- Promote affordable housing for people in all stages of life
- Reserve open space in new subdivisions
- Encourage residential design qualities that do not negatively impact air quality, including pedestrian options such as sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths

COMMERCIAL

- Target commercial growth to appropriate areas
- Pursue incentives to encourage quality, community-oriented businesses
- Require more aesthetically pleasing designs for commercial uses
- Buffer commercial uses from residential areas
- Encourage quality mixed-use development on appropriate sites

OFFICE-INSTITUTIONAL

- As with commercial uses, require more aesthetically pleasing designs and buffers from residential areas

INDUSTRIAL

- Target industrial growth within the study area to specific, appropriate sites

OPEN SPACE

- Preserve open space, pastures and scenic views
- Support and encourage agricultural uses
- Protect natural resources
- Develop options for passive recreational uses

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

RESIDENTIAL

- Designate residential density districts, as shown on *Map 5, "Plateau SAP Future Land Use Recommendations."* The densities indicated are average densities and are not minimum lot sizes.
- Higher-density residential development, shown in yellow on *Map 5*, should be located ¼ mile south of NC Highway 10 from Hickory-Lincolnton Highway to the Plateau planning boundary east of Propst Crossroads. This density matches the recommendations from the Mountain View SAP on the north side of NC Highway 10.
 - Residential development in this area should adhere to the following design concepts:
 - Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per 0.34 acres, since the County public water service is available.
 - Cluster subdivision is encouraged to preserve the rural character of the area.
- Medium-density residential development, shown in blue on *Map 5*, should be located ¼ mile on both sides of NC Highway 10 from the Plateau planning boundary west of Propst Crossroads to Cat Square Road.
 - Residential development in this area should adhere to the following design concepts:
 - Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per 1 acre. This density is recommended to take advantage of the available public water without significantly adding to the congestion on NC Highway 10.
 - Cluster subdivision design is encouraged to preserve the rural character of the area.
- Lower-density residential development, shown in green on *Map 5*, should be located ¼ mile north of NC Highway 10 to the northern planning boundary and ¼ mile south of NC Highway 10 to the Lincoln County border. Lower-density development should also occur west of Cat Square Road.
 - Residential development in this area should adhere to the following design concepts:
 - Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per 2 acres.
 - Cluster subdivision design is encouraged.

- All major residential subdivisions in the Plateau planning area should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
 - Require cluster subdivisions to maintain a 30-foot landscaped buffer around the perimeter of the subdivision.
 - Provide 30% common open space that is easily accessible and usable for recreation.
 - Encourage traditional neighborhood design by adopting techniques such as pedestrian-accessible and walkable neighborhoods through connected streets (including stub-outs instead of cul-de-sacs to encourage future connectivity), greenways or trails, street trees and community amenities such as neighborhood parks. Neighborhoods should also provide a variety of housing types and sizes.
 - Limit access in new subdivisions to interior roads and networks (see Transportation Recommendations). This requirement would improve safety and maintain the rural appearance of the area.
- It is recommended that school capacity no longer be a consideration regarding minimum lot sizes for new developments.

COMMERCIAL

- Commercial businesses in the Plateau planning area should adhere to the following appearance and design criteria:
 - Require landscaped areas along road frontages and within parking areas located in front or side yards.
 - Encourage parking areas to be located to the side or rear of buildings.
 - Encourage mixed-use development at the Neighborhood Commercial Node. (This concept allows residential and commercial uses in the same building).
 - Commercial development should be aesthetically pleasing, designed at a walkable pedestrian scale and create a desirable destination point.
 - 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.
 - Lighting at all commercial or mixed-use development be angled downward and shielded to avoid illuminating the night sky.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT NODES

- A Rural Commercial Node should be designated at the following intersections (see *Map 5*):
 - Honey's Supermarket
 - NC Highway 10 at Cat Square Road – the intersection should be redesigned to accommodate increased traffic.
 - NC Highway 10 at Hickory-Lincolnton Highway – the intersection should be redesigned to accommodate increased traffic.

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. Re-examination of the Rural Commercial Nodes should occur within five years or when transportation funding through NC Moving Ahead becomes available to determine whether the area available for commercial development is sufficient or if a Neighborhood Commercial designation is warranted.

- A Neighborhood Commercial Node should be designated at the following intersection (see *Map 5*):
 - NC Highway 18 at Willis Road

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

- In addition to the commercial nodes proposed above, the Committee recognizes that other commercial, industrial and/or office-institutional development opportunities exist at the Neighborhood Commercial Node designated on NC Highway 127 at Propst Crossroads immediately north of the planning area and in the ED-I zoning district east of Hickory-Lincolnton Highway.

OFFICE-INSTITUTIONAL

- Office and institutional uses should be allowed within the Rural and Neighborhood Commercial Nodes. Otherwise, the Committee believes that the land currently zoned for office and institutional purposes is adequate.
- Redevelopment of office and institutional uses should strive to preserve the rural viewshed by adhering to the design standards recommended for commercial development.
- Abundant landscaping should be provided to screen parking, loading, storage and maintenance areas.

INDUSTRIAL

- The land currently zoned for industrial uses is adequate. The Committee is concerned that the road systems in the Plateau planning area cannot handle the increased traffic (especially large trucks) associated with additional industrial uses.
- Nonconforming industrial uses should not be rezoned to allow expansion.

- Redevelopment of industrial zoned property should strive to preserve the rural viewshed by adhering to the design standards recommended for commercial development.
- Abundant landscaping should be provided to screen parking, loading, storage and maintenance areas.

OPEN SPACE

- Thirty (30) percent of total acreage in single-family subdivisions should be required to be dedicated as common open space, which may be located within the development for community use, natural areas or along the perimeters of the development. Existing vegetation should be allowed to provide this open-space buffer if deemed adequate.
- Preserve green space specifically for passive recreational uses, including hiking trails, primitive camping areas, canoe access, etc.

TRANSPORTATION

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

Transportation planning for the Plateau study area is coordinated by the Unifour Rural Planning Organization (URPO) -- a recent state planning process that focuses on rural areas in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties and the Town of Taylorsville. All other municipalities in this region participate in the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), created after the 2000 Census. The MPO was created from the Hickory-Newton-Conover MPO when the Hickory urban area expanded after the 2000 Census. Though various areas of Catawba County have experienced significant growth in retail, commercial and residential development with consequential increases in traffic, growth has been comparatively slow in the Plateau-Banoak area, with moderate traffic increases.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Secondary Road system serves the Plateau study area. NC Highway 10 crosses the area in a generally east-west direction, and NC Highway 127 leads into and out of the area. NC Highway 127 and NC Highway 10 connect to the east with US Highway 321, a limited-access freeway connecting Catawba County south to Gastonia and Charlotte (via I-85) and north to Lenoir and the mountains. The following table illustrates average daily traffic counts (number of vehicles per day or ADT) at various locations in the study area (see *Map 6, "Plateau SAP Transportation Recommendations"*). Data for 1991 through 2003 are actual numbers recorded on site. In more heavily traveled locations, NCDOT also performs modeling to determine traffic projections for 2025. None of these projections, however, were performed for roads in the Plateau SAP.

Plateau SAP: Average Daily Traffic Count, 1991-2025				
	NC Hwy 127 north of NC Hwy 10	Plateau Rd. south of Propst X-Rd	NC Hwy 10 west of NC Hwy 127	NC Hwy 10 east of Cat Square Rd
1991	7,700	3,200	6,400	4,500
1996	9,400	NA	6,700	5,300
2003	9,500	5,500	7,800	5,100
2025	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*

	NC Hwy 10 west of Cat Square Rd	NC Hwy 10 near Lincoln Co Line	NC Hwy 18
1991	4,000	3,700	3,400
1996	4,700	5,000	3,300
2003	4,600	5,000	2,700
2025	NA*	NA*	NA*

Source: NCDOT AADT maps, 1991-2003; and *Hickory-Newton-Conover Urban Area Transportation Plan, Technical Update #1, 2001*. * No projections were done on locations in the Plateau area for 2025.

To reduce traffic congestion and adequately provide for future travel demands, the MPO adopted the Hickory-Newton-Conover Urban Area Transportation Plan in 1986 and updated the plan in 1996 and 2001. The most current update does not include any projects located within the Plateau area.

The Catawba County Thoroughfare Plan addresses future transportation needs in the areas of the County that lie outside the metropolitan planning areas. This includes the entire Plateau study area. The updated plan was adopted in October 2003 based on traffic projections through 2025. The plan identifies several “major collector roads” and “minor collector roads” in the Plateau area, thoroughfares intended to carry more vehicles than smaller, secondary roads. Labeling these roads as collectors enables them to receive additional funding for road projects such as widening, intersection improvements, bridge replacements and signalization. The County also uses these designations to help direct certain land uses (such as schools, day cares, etc.) to these roads because they can accommodate additional traffic. The Catawba County Thoroughfare Plan designates NC Highway 10 and NC Highway 18 as major collectors and Old Shelby Road, Rhoney Farm Road, Cat Square Road, Plateau Road and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway as minor collectors.

NCDOT has allocated funding from Governor Easley’s “*NC Moving Ahead*” initiative to add an additional two feet of pavement (increasing pavement width from 22 feet to 24 feet) along the 8.24-mile stretch of NC Highway 10 from the intersection with NC Highway 127 west to the Lincoln County line. Hickory-Lincolnton Highway will also be widened 19 feet to 22 feet between the Lincoln County line and NC Highway 10. Finally, *NC Moving Ahead* will fund an additional turn lane at Banoak Elementary School and redesign access at Blackburn Elementary School.

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

Presently, Catawba County does not require sidewalk construction in new developments. In general, the Plateau SAP area lacks a pedestrian system with sidewalk connections between residential areas. However, it is now policy of the MPO and NCDOT to evaluate any new road construction project for potential pedestrian needs (i.e., sidewalks and crossover) and bicycle accommodations.

BICYCLE SYSTEM

The Plateau SAP study area does not currently have an integrated system of bicycle trails. NCDOT has funded a Bicycle Route Map and signing project that has been underway for several years. In compliance with NCDOT’s policy, future road widening projects should be evaluated for their potential to provide bicycle routes.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Piedmont Wagon Transit System offers limited transit service to Plateau SAP residents. Vans are available five days a week through Piedmont Wagon to transport senior citizens and disabled residents in the area. Currently no fixed Piedmont Wagon routes exist in the County outside Hickory, Newton and Conover.

PASSENGER RAIL

The NCDOT has determined that the next major expansion of passenger rail service in the State will be in Western North Carolina. Plans are underway to initiate service between Raleigh and Asheville with a stop in downtown Hickory. This service is expected to be operational by 2010.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

- Encourage better communication between the North Carolina Department of Transportation and citizens when transportation plans are developed and implemented.
- Alleviate traffic safety problems and congestion on major highways, including increased numbers of traffic signals or turn lanes where appropriate.
- Anticipate and plan for growth that will result from road improvements and widening.
- Adopt transportation policies that do not negatively impact air quality.
- Minimize speeding.
- Preserve good roads, areas of low traffic and scenic drives.
- Maintain adequate stormwater drainage systems.
- Coordinate transportation policies with land use policies.
- Encourage alternate modes of transportation, including increased use of existing modes such as public buses, school buses, railroads, bicycles and pedestrian.
- Provide for better connectivity of road systems.

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

- Provide safe alternatives for pedestrians.

BICYCLE SYSTEM

- Provide safe options for bicyclists.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

- Increase opportunities to link with existing transit routes.

PASSENGER RAIL

- Study connections, via the Piedmont Wagon Transit System, with the Western North Carolina Passenger Rail Service.

PLAN RECOMMEDATIONS

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, "Plateau SAP Transportation Recommendations."*

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

Request from NCDOT District Office:

- Improve communication by transportation officials when advertising public hearings for new roads, road changes, etc., which may include individual notification to affected property owners.
- Evaluate traffic engineering at all schools. Turn lanes should be mandatory when new schools are built. Roads at existing schools should be retrofitted with turn lanes and caution lights.
 - At Banoak Elementary School, a caution light on the west side should be installed before the crest of the hill to warn drivers of the school.
- Install caution lights or similar devices at:
 - NC Highway 10 at Providence Church Road – a left turn lane is also recommended for traffic heading east on NC Highway 10.
 - NC Highway 10 at Old Shelby Road – a left turn lane is also recommended for traffic heading east on NC Highway 10.
- Redesign intersections at:
 - NC Highway 10 and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway – Add protected left turn arrows.
 - Rocky Ford Road and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway – Many GDS trucks use this route to get to the landfill, and there have been several serious accidents at this intersection.
 - NC Highway 10 and NC Highway 127 – Add protected left turn movements to improve traffic and safety near Fred T. Foard High School.
 - NC Highway 10 at Blackburn Elementary School – The Committee supports the *NC Moving Ahead* project to redesign this intersection.
 - Banoak Road and Lefevers Road at Banoak Elementary School – Most school traffic exits onto NC Highway 10 via this intersection.
 - NC Highway 10 at Cat Square Road
 - Old Shelby Road at Rhoney Farm Road – Sight distances are very limited for northbound drivers on Rhoney Farm Road.
 - Old Shelby Road at Cooksville Road – Consider adding a left turn lane into the Cooksville Grill on Old Shelby Road.

- Reduce the speed limit on the following roads:
 - NC Highway 10 between Willis' Package Store and the Lincoln County line – The Committee recommends reducing the speed from 55 to 45 mph because of sharp curves and traffic around Honey's Supermarket.
 - NC Highway 10 from Propst Crossroads to Providence Church Road – Reduce speed limit to 45 mph.
 - Old Shelby Road – reduce speed limit to 45 mph.
- Improve the following roads for safety purposes:
 - When *NC Moving Ahead* funding is available, recommend straightening curves on Plateau Road.
 - When *NC Moving Ahead* funding is available, recommend straightening sharp curves on Old Shelby Road before the Burke County line.
 - Improve visibility at the steep embankment on Providence Church Road at NC Highway 10.
 - Widen bridge on Old Shelby Road south of Greedy Highway.
 - Widen Cat Square Road.
 - Widen shoulders on Plateau Road between Grace Church Road and Scronce Road to provide additional safety margin on curvy section of road.
- Explore possible local scenic highway designation for the following road(s):
 - Old Shelby Road
 - Greedy Highway
 - Hickory-Lincolnton Highway
 - In order to introduce visitors to the local pottery tradition, create a "Pottery Trail" extending down Plateau Rd. from the intersection of Propst Crossroads to Burts Road into Lincoln County where it becomes Zur Leonard Road to Cat Square Road and north on NC Highway 10 back to Propst Crossroads.

Revisions to the Catawba County Thoroughfare Plan:

- Add an extra 1-2 feet of asphalt to Old Shelby Road when repaving.
- Add an extra 1-2 feet of asphalt to Plateau Road when repaving.
- Recommend a new interchange on US Hwy. 321 at Rocky Ford Road to help alleviate industrial truck traffic, especially trucks from Blackburn Landfill, on Hickory-Lincolnton Hwy.

Amend the County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to:

- Minimize driveways along thoroughfares by encouraging service roads for residential and non-residential development.

- Establish regulations that all new residential driveways connecting to major and minor collector streets must be at least 12 feet wide for the first 20 feet of length with a minimum 3-foot turn radii. In the Plateau planning area, these roads include NC Highway 10, NC Highway 18, Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, Plateau Road, Cat Square Road, Rhoney Farm Road, and Old Shelby Road (see *Map 6*).

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

- When Banoak Elementary School expands, add a pedestrian crosswalk across Lefevers Road to Ritchie Field.

BICYCLE SYSTEM

- The Plateau SAP supports the bicycle routes previously submitted to NCDOT for approval (see *Map 6*).
- Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along the designated bicycle routes for increased safety.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

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

PASSENGER RAIL

- Encourage Piedmont Wagon to schedule trips to coordinate with the Western North Carolina passenger rail service.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

SCHOOLS

The Plateau study area is located within the Banoak and Blackburn Elementary School districts, with a majority of kindergarten through sixth-grade students attending Banoak Elementary School. All students then move on to attend Jacobs Fork Middle School and Fred T. Foard High School for their middle school and high school education.

In 1999, the Catawba County, Hickory, and Newton-Conover Schools systems commissioned the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to develop the *Catawba County Growth Estimation Model*. This model identified and examined various factors and trends that impact student population and helps plan for future school facilities. This model was updated in July 2004, and data is currently being analyzed for the 2005 update.

Banoak Elementary School

Banoak is one of Catawba County's smaller elementary schools with a capacity of 350 students. In addition to its small student capacity, the school is hampered by its outdated buildings and lack of land for expansion. The WPCOG's *Growth Estimation* modeling expects the school to exceed 110% of capacity by next fall and continue to surpass school capacity by 125% in the 2010-11 school year. Although the percentage above school capacity is high, the number of Banoak students above capacity by 2011 is expected to be only 78 students.

Plans to increase the school's capacity by adding eight classrooms, a new cafeteria and more administrative space are on the system's long-range plan. The eight classrooms would bring Banoak's student capacity to 534 students. No date has been placed on these additions and the plans are currently unfunded.

Blackburn Elementary School

Preliminary student population growth data also show that the student population at Blackburn Elementary School has exceeded building capacity (675 students) since 2000 and will remain over capacity until 2011. After the 2008-09 school year, enrollment seems likely to exceed 110% of building capacity, a point at which school overcrowding becomes apparent. There are no current plans to renovate or expand the school.

Jacobs Fork Middle School

All students in the Plateau study area who attended Banoak and Blackburn Elementary Schools will be assigned to Jacobs Fork Middle School. With a capacity of 700 students, Jacob Fork Middle School is not projected to exceed its student capacity level in the next seven years.

Fred T. Foard High School

Fred T. Foard High School, with a current enrollment capacity of 1,225, is expected to remain near or slightly above capacity until 2011. The new Maiden High School, presently under construction in the Town of Maiden, will ease some of the current enrollment pressures at Foard when it opens in fall 2006. The Catawba County School Board has realigned the school district boundaries to send some students currently in the Foard district to the new, larger Maiden High School. Revisions to district boundaries do not affect students in the Plateau planning area.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Parks and greenways are discussed in the *Natural and Cultural Resources* section (see page 41).

LIBRARIES

Catawba County operates a well-established library system, including one central library, six branch libraries and a law library. Although the Plateau community is not within the three-mile primary service area recommended by the American Library Association, it is served by three libraries in the surrounding area: the Southwest branch in Mountain View on NC Highway 127, the Maiden branch library and the Newton main library. At this time, no additional branches are planned for Catawba County.

WATER SERVICE

The only public water line in the Plateau area was extended by the City of Hickory along NC Highway 10 and north on Cooksville Road to the Cooksville Volunteer Fire Department.

In coordination with the municipalities, utility service providers in Catawba County have formed the Utilities Technical Advisory Committee to address water and sewer issues on a countywide basis.

SEWER SERVICE

No public sewer service is available in the Plateau area nor is any planned for the near to mid-term future.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Catawba County Emergency Communications Center is the central receiving point for all 911 calls in Catawba County. The center is regarded as one of the most advanced centers in western North Carolina utilizing the newest software and technology. The center dispatches all fire, medical, rescue and police calls for service within Catawba County, except police for Hickory, Newton and Maiden. The center also gives medical instructions to callers while they await the arrival of medical personnel.

Law Enforcement

The Catawba County Sheriff's Department serves the study area. The patrol division is made up of twenty-six officers among four shifts. The Sheriff's Department also operates a jail and maintains security for the court system in Catawba County. Crime

prevention, investigations and civil enforcement are other functions conducted by the Sheriff's Department.

Fire Protection

The Plateau study area is served by two volunteer fire departments. The Propst Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department is located near the intersection of NC Highway 127 and NC Highway 10. In addition to a Chief and Assistant Chief, the department has over forty volunteers that serve as firefighters. A new station is being considered in the Propst fire district near the southeastern boundary of the planning area.

The Cooksville Volunteer Fire Department, located near the intersection of Old Shelby Road and Cooksville Road, serves the western part of the Plateau area. The station has a Chief, Assistant Chief, and twenty-six volunteer firefighters. The extension of the water line to the department and installation of numerous fire hydrants along the line has greatly improved the fire department's capabilities to respond to fire emergencies.

Emergency Medical Services

The Propst Crossroads Base is located at the intersection of NC Highway 10 and NC Highway 127. Paramedic staff from this station serve the Plateau area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SCHOOLS

- Plan to accommodate student enrollment growth.
- Plan for community-based, neighborhood schools.
- Create opportunities to use school facilities for comprehensive community and recreation activities.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

- Provide adequate recreational opportunities, both active and passive, for all segments of the population.
- Encourage innovative ideas to create new recreational opportunities.
- Encourage conservation easements or greenways along the Jacob Fork River.

LIBRARIES

- Maintain adequate level of library services for the community.
- Encourage continued cooperation with municipalities.

WATER/SEWER SERVICES

- Take a cooperative regional approach to planning future water and sewer infrastructure.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Maintain existing levels of service and expand those services as demand requires.
- Consider ways to expand emergency facilities by locating them with existing or future public facilities.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOLS

- Recommend that the Catawba County Board of Education accelerate funding for the planned additions to Banoak Elementary School to ease projected overcrowding. These renovations are essential to the continued success of the school and should be completed as soon as possible.
- The County should remove school capacity as a factor in determining residential density for new developments when the Plateau Small Area Plan land use and housing recommendations are adopted.
- School planners should use the future residential density recommendations made by the Plateau Small Area Planning Committee when identifying school expansion needs.
- Establish partnership opportunities between the schools and other community groups to enhance the use of local facilities, such as the Banoak Community Center, for community and recreational activities.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

- Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses on the Jacob Fork River. Explore the possibility of developing formal public canoe access, which would alleviate landowners' concerns about trespassing, boater safety and parking access.
- Explore the adaptive reuse of the southern portion of the Blackburn landfill site for recreational activities, such as a golf course 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

- Maintain existing levels of library service and increase as needed. Explore options for locating public library facilities on school sites.

WATER/SEWER SERVICES

- Partner with municipalities to provide utilities that are consistent with adopted land use plans, "smart growth" principles and higher-density development areas.

- Continue to pursue Community Development Block Grants for the expansion of utilities.
- Expand availability of public funding for failing septic systems.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

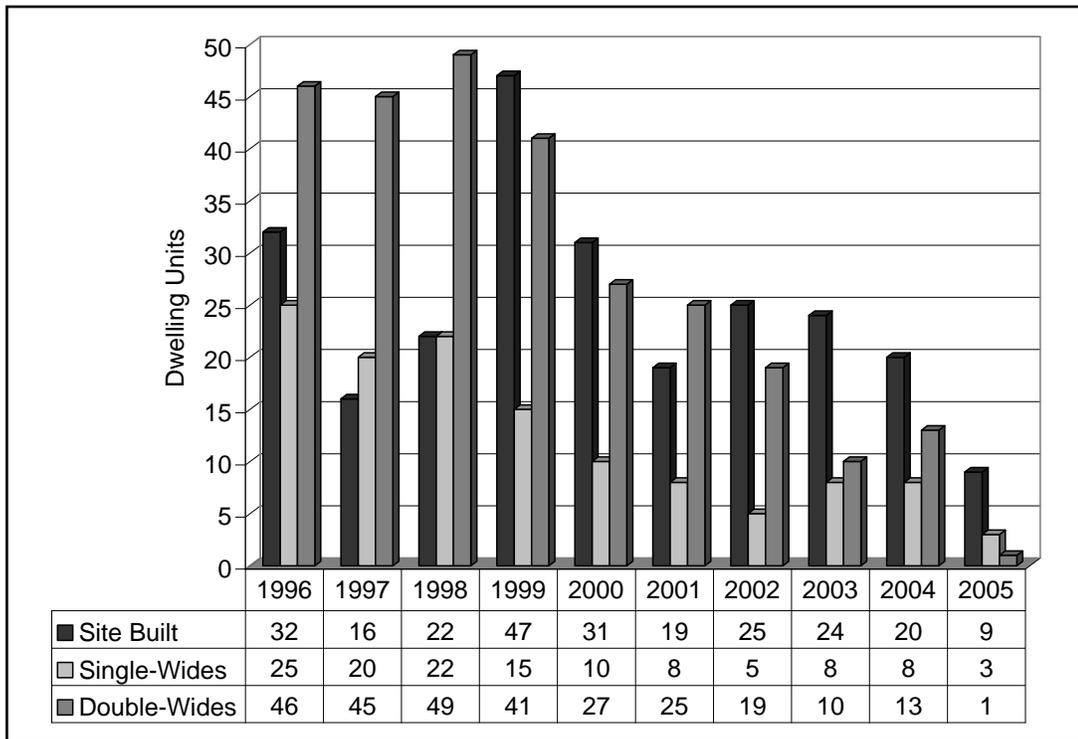
- Maintain existing levels of service.
- Continue to support and develop measures to reduce medical response times.

HOUSING

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Since 1998, the average number of houses constructed every year has declined steadily in the Plateau study area. The decline in new housing stock can be largely contributed to the economic downturn during recent years. The total population is still growing slowly, however, which suggests that residents are choosing to purchase existing homes rather than building new ones. Catawba County issues building permits for all new construction. The following table shows the total number of building permits issued from 1996 through June 2005. Since 1996, 645 housing units have been added, including 245 site-built homes, 124 single-wides and 276 double-wides.

Building Permits for the Plateau SAP, 1996 – June 2005



Source: Catawba County Building Inspections, 2005. 2005 data is January through June only.

Although the number of manufactured homes built has exceeded site-built homes nearly every year, the number of permits issued for manufactured homes has dropped dramatically since 1999. This trend may be explained by rising costs of manufactured housing, which may be attributed to two factors: the appearance standards adopted by the County in 1996 and consumer demand for larger homes with more amenities. The trend of fewer manufactured homes in the Plateau area, especially single-wides, is consistent with other areas of the County.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SINGLE-FAMILY

- Encourage aesthetically-pleasing subdivision design.
- Encourage the preservation of open spaces as development increases.
- Encourage a diverse range of housing densities and types that will meet the needs of all segments of the population, household types and income levels.

MULTI-FAMILY

- Encourage the construction of multi-family housing as an affordable housing option.
- Development of multi-family housing should occur where appropriate infrastructure and services exist.

MANUFACTURED HOMES

- Provide for the equitable location of manufactured housing that meets the housing needs of the population while maintaining the character of the community.

RETIREMENT

- Promote low maintenance, alternative housing opportunities for seniors.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL RESIDENTIAL USES

- The Plateau Small Area Plan Committee recommends the Planning Board and staff investigate the possibility of developing a County-wide minimum housing standard. It should apply to single-family, multi-family housing and rental housing, with standards limiting the number of individuals inhabiting a single dwelling unit.
- Where possible, landscaping and buffering should be done with native vegetation. Native plants generally survive better and require less maintenance than non-native species.

SINGLE-FAMILY

- Residential subdivisions should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
 - Require cluster subdivisions to maintain at 30-foot landscaped buffer around the perimeter of the subdivision.
 - Provide thirty (30) percent common open space that is easily accessible and usable for recreation.
 - Encourage traditional neighborhood design by adopting techniques such as pedestrian-accessible and walkable neighborhoods through connected streets (including stub-outs instead of cul-de-sacs to encourage future connectivity), greenways or trails, street trees and community amenities such as neighborhood parks. Neighborhoods should also provide a variety of housing types and sizes.
 - Limit access in new subdivisions to interior roads and networks (see Transportation Recommendations). This requirement would improve safety and maintain the rural appearance of the area.
 - Develop higher-density single-family housing where appropriate infrastructures and services exist or are planned.

MANUFACTURED HOMES

- Rezone the areas shown on *Map 7, Plateau SAP Proposed Zoning Map Amendments*.
 - Approximately 30% of the land in the Plateau SAP is proposed for rezoning to R-1 (which allows stick-built or modular homes). The basis for this rezoning is to preserve the appearance and character of the higher-density area along NC Highway 10. R-1 is also proposed along the NC Highway 18 corridor to preserve views along the major rural highway. The “Cooksville” and “Plateau” areas are also proposed to be R-1 because they are established communities with few existing manufactured homes.

- Approximately 70% of the land in the Plateau SAP is proposed for rezoning to R-3 (which allows double-wide manufactured homes, modular homes and site-built homes). The basis for this rezoning is to preserve the rural views as well as property values in the Plateau community.
- Allow existing manufactured homes in the R-1 and R-3 zoning district to be replaced with manufactured homes based on their nonconforming status.

MULTI-FAMILY

Lack of public water and sewer service limits the feasibility of large-scale multi-family developments in the Plateau planning area. To accommodate affordable housing needs, duplexes should continue to be allowed on individual lots and in residential subdivisions, provided that the following criteria have been met:

- Duplexes should be required to have 1.5 times the land area required for single-family homes.
- Duplexes are encouraged to blend in with the character of surrounding individual homes through shared driveways and design of the front entrances.
- Multi-family housing should be permitted as part of a mixed-use development in the Neighborhood Commercial Node (see Land Use Recommendations).

RETIREMENT

As with multi-family housing, lack of public water and sewer service limits the feasibility of retirement communities in the Plateau area. Homebuilders should consider the needs of seniors when designing new homes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

In the last decade, Catawba County's economy has moved away from its dependence on traditional manufacturing industries (such as textile, hosiery and furniture) as an increasingly lively service sector has begun expanding. During the 1990s, jobs in manufacturing grew by 6.2% while service sectors jobs grew by 39.7%. It should be noted that service sector jobs often pay less than manufacturing jobs and may provide fewer benefits. However, this sector also includes workers in the health professions, legal services, auto repair, hotels and motels and engineering.

During the last four years, manufacturing has sustained heavy job losses in Catawba County and across North Carolina. Between the second quarter of 2000 and the second quarter of 2004, over 14,600 jobs in Catawba County were lost with 12,497 of these jobs in manufacturing alone. While the manufacturing sector is beginning to improve at the national level, such improvements have not yet been experienced locally.

Two significant efforts are currently underway to assist the County in overcoming these job losses. FORESIGHT, the continuing Catawba County strategic planning effort, has completed a series of strategies designed by a Task Force focusing exclusively on "Jobs and the Economy." Their recommendations are in the initial implementation stages. Another effort, called Future Forward, has developed a comprehensive economic development strategy for a 12-county area stretching from I-77 west to McDowell County and from the mountains to the South Carolina state line. These counties, mainly located in the 10th and 12th US Congressional Districts, worked together to create strategies, several of which have won significant funding from the federal Economic Development Administration.

Since few commercial or industrial facilities are located in the Plateau community, most residents work in the urban areas of Catawba County. Only a handful of commercial and industrial sites are located in the Plateau planning area. Significant acres zoned for industrial uses are located just across Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, extending south of NC Highway 10 and east to US Highway 321, in the Plateau planning area. While this land is mostly vacant at this time, the County is planning for industrial development on the several hundred acres located just north of the Blackburn landfill off Rocky Ford Road.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Facilitate and encourage new, community-focused economic development in the Plateau area.
- Create more aesthetically pleasing commercial, industrial and mixed-use developments.
- Industrial areas should be directed to areas with appropriate infrastructure.
- Encourage limited commercial and office-institutional development, which observes established development standards, to provide additional retail opportunities for area residents closer to home. These areas should be adjacent to similar commercial developments, such as along NC Highway 10 or at the interchanges of US 321.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore the interest of the local pottery community in working together to improve marketing and visibility of pottery sales.
- A Neighborhood Commercial Node is proposed for the intersection of NC Highway 18 and Willis Road in the southwest corner of the Plateau area. See *Map 5, "Plateau SAP Future Land Use Recommendations."* 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.
- Three Rural Commercial Nodes are proposed for the Plateau area. The Rural Commercial Nodes 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. They are recommended for the following intersections (see *Map 5*):
 - NC Highway 10 and Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. This node borders the Startown and Mountain View planning areas and would provide supporting retail development for the industrial activities that may occur north of the landfill.
 - NC Highway 10 and Rhoney Farm/Cat Square Roads. This node is designed to allow some expansion of the small commercial area already existing at this intersection.
 - NC Highway 10 at Honey's Supermarket near the Lincoln County border. The node allows limited expansion of the commercial area already existing at this location.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Jacob Fork, the major river running through the Plateau community, rises in the South Mountains and drains east to the South Fork of the Catawba River. Considerable land bordering the river is floodplain, limiting its development but providing natural habitat for fish, birds, small mammals as well as trees and flowering plants. The floodplain also offers good opportunities for passive recreational activities, such as hiking, picnicking, etc. Other smaller water bodies in the Plateau area include Haas Creek, Pott Creek and Indian Creek, which drain south into Lincoln County.

With support from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund, Catawba County commissioned *An Inventory of Significant Natural Areas* in April 2002. The inventory describes the narrow riparian corridor along the Jacob Fork in the Plateau area as the least disturbed river corridor in Catawba County. The relatively high water quality, intact tracts of forest and slow-moving water provide breeding grounds for a variety of birds and help support a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. To preserve these habitats and water quality, the inventory recommends the establishment of undisturbed vegetation buffers along the riparian corridor and promotes the use of conservation easements where possible.

To protect water quality, the State of North Carolina enacted the Water Supply Watershed Protection Program in 1989. The program requires all local governments with land use planning jurisdiction in the designated watersheds to administer a Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance to protect surface drinking water. Since the Jacob Fork serves as Newton's water supply source, the entire Plateau area north and west of NC Highway 10 falls within the WS-III Protected Area. (See *Map 8, "Plateau SAP Natural and Cultural Resources."*) In addition, a small area of the SAP west of Cat Square Road between NC Highway 10 and the Lincoln County border is located within the WS-II Protected Area to preserve a water supply in Lincoln County.

Development within the WS-III Protected Area surrounding the Newton water intake is limited to one house per half acre for single-family development. Multi-family and non-residential development is limited to 24 percent lot coverage or 70 percent impervious surface if a 5%/70% Bonus permit is approved by the Catawba County Board of Adjustment. The WS-II Protected Area in the southern portion of the Plateau area along Indian Creek allows one house per acre for single family development. Multi-family and non-residential development is limited to 12 percent lot coverage or 70 percent impervious surface if a 5%/70% Bonus permit is approved by the Catawba County Board of Adjustment.

Besides protected watersheds and undeveloped land along the area's creeks, another significant natural feature is the rural, undeveloped land that still remains in many sections of the community. Considerable acreage simply remains as undeveloped

woodland and open fields. These open spaces and floodplains along its creeks constitute much of what symbolizes for residents the quiet, rural character of the Plateau area.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Organized recreational activities are limited in the Plateau area at this time. A youth sports program is run locally at the Banoak Community Center, behind Banoak Elementary School. Other youth sports activities take place at the various schools in the area.

Cycling is very popular throughout the planning area because of the rural scenery and relative lack of traffic. NCDOT has funded a Bicycle Route Map and signing project that has been underway for several years (see *Map 8*). With recent staff turnovers in NCDOT, however, little progress has been made on this project.

The Blackburn Landfill, adjacent to the Plateau planning area off Rocky Ford Road, may be able to offer some innovative recreational uses for nearby residents. The Catawba County Board of Commissioners approved a conceptual plan in 1998 to allow the buffer area surrounding the landfill to be used for recreational activities such as a golf course, walking trails or ball fields. Other recreational options might include activities such as a picnic area, ball fields for sports programs of civic clubs, putt-putt course, a ropes course, a swimming pool, a community meeting facility or an educational forest. The revenue generated from these activities could be used to fund their operating costs. The land directly over the closed landfill would be preserved as open space and wildlife habitat.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Plateau area is fortunate to have several sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see *Map 8*). These properties have been recognized by state and federal historians as worthy of preservation for their significance in American history, architecture and culture.

Along Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, the eastern boundary of the Plateau planning area, three properties are listed on the National Register. The Shuford-Hoover House is a well-preserved cottage originally built in 1790 with later additions around 1840 and 1925 to accommodate the large farm families that lived there during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. South of the Rocky Ford Rd. intersection is the Grace Union Church and Cemetery, which is the only remaining mid-nineteenth century church building in Catawba County. Although the church was constructed in 1857, the cemetery has grave markers dating from the 1820s. Further south on Hickory-Lincolnton Highway is the Abraham Anthony Farm which contains a two-story brick house built in 1877.

Another historic two-story brick house is located on the Keever-Cansler Farm near the intersection of Macedonia Church Road and Reepsville Road. Daniel Keever, who built the house around 1879, began farming after serving in the Confederate Army during the

Civil War. By 1910, the property had been acquired by John Jacob Cansler, whose family retained the farm until 1980.

Further north is the Wesley's Chapel Arbor and Cemetery. Methodists of Wesley's Chapel United Methodist Church used this late-nineteenth-century arbor for outdoor worship and meetings. The arbor may have also housed the Wesley's Chapel Academy, a school which developed after the Civil War and operated until the public school system was established around the turn of the twentieth century. The cemetery dates back to the 1850s.

One of the most significant National Register properties in the Plateau area is the Warlick-Huffman Farm, located off Providence Church Road, near the junction with NC Highway 10. Sidney Halma's *Catawba County: An Architectural History* describes the farm as "one of the most picturesque of all historic properties in the county" (p. 189). The farmhouse was built around 1820 by Solomon Warlick, a prosperous farmer and wagon maker who was also a grandson of the first Warlick family to settle in western North Carolina. By 1871, Warlick sold the 363-acre farm to Miles Huffman. The house remained in the Huffman family until 1937.

Many other properties of local historic significance also exist in the area. Persons interested in a more comprehensive list are encouraged to consult the Catawba County Historical Association, Gary R. Freeze's *The Catawbans: Crafters of a North Carolina County*, or Sidney Halma's *Catawba County: An Architectural History*.

HART SQUARE

Located in southwestern Catawba County, Hart Square represents the thirty-year continuing effort by Dr. Robert Hart of Hickory to preserve, restore and reconstruct life during the 1840's in North Carolina. This recreated mid-nineteenth century village has sixty-one original log structures. Each year in October, Dr. Hart opens the restoration project to the public when the log structures are accompanied by persons in period costumes, food, arts, crafts, trades and music.

CATAWBA VALLEY POTTERY

Another unique cultural feature of the Plateau community is the local pottery tradition that has been maintained since the early 1800s. The local clay from the Jacob Fork and nearby South Fork Rivers yielded excellent material for sturdy pots that early Catawbans used for food storage. Unlike earthenware pots in other parts of the North Carolina Piedmont, pottery from this area used a distinct alkaline glaze that produced a more lustrous sheen. After the Civil War, the pottery demand increased substantially. As one potter remarked in 1902 after sending four wagon loads at once, "our jugs are invading Charlotte." The popularity of the pottery gave rise to the informal community of Jug Town. In all, it is estimated that over 130 potters lived and worked in this area between the mid-eighteenth century and the Depression.

Refrigeration, glass jars, factory-canned goods and mass production all led to the decline of local pottery as utilitarian vessels in the early twentieth-century. In turn,

Catawba Valley potters began to embrace individualism and innovation to market their wares as folk art pieces instead. Burlon Craig led the movement and provided the link between past and present potters in the Catawba Valley. While he kept alive the traditional nineteenth-century methods of production, Mr. Craig incorporated advanced swirl patterns, snake designs, exaggerated face jugs and a variety of ornamental pieces. He also mentored other potters, such as Charlie Lisk, Joe Reinhardt, Kim Ellington, Albert Hodge and Steven Abee. Together, these potters have revived the local pottery industry and ensured the survival of this craft for years to come.

Persons interested in more information about Catawba Valley pottery and its tradition should consult Barry G. Huffman's *Catawba Clay: Contemporary Southern Face Jug Makers* and Terry Zug's *Turners and Burners: The Folk Potters of North Carolina*. An Internet website focusing on Catawba Valley pottery (www.cvpottery.com) provides information of the history and development of this local pottery tradition.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

- Water quality is a vital concern for the public and should be protected.
- Encourage cluster development to preserve open space, wildlife habitats and the rural character of the Plateau area.
- Preserve ample open space for future generations.
- Encourage conservation easements or greenways along the Jacob Fork River.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide adequate recreational opportunities, both active and passive, for all segments of the population.
- Encourage innovative ideas to create new recreational opportunities.
- Create opportunities to use school facilities for comprehensive community and recreation activities.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Preserve properties of local and national historic significance.
- Encourage the application of adaptive reuse techniques for historic properties in the Plateau area.
- Improve visibility of the local pottery traditions and existing shops in the area.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

- Encourage open space preservation by seeking opportunities for conservation easements, wetland mitigation and educational programs for farmers. One available option is offered by the North Carolina Division of Natural Resources' Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP), which identifies opportunities for stream mitigation in targeted watersheds to mitigate NCDOT construction projects elsewhere.
- Support the continuation of agricultural and farming activities, including related activities such as roadside stands.
- Preserve the community's open spaces through density controls, zoning and subdivision regulations which establish higher-density and lower-density residential districts (see *Map 5, "Plateau SAP Future Land Use Recommendations"*).
- Thirty percent of total acreage should be required as open space in single-family subdivisions, which may be located within the development as community-use open space, along the perimeters of the development and/or contained in the 30-foot buffer along road frontage required in cluster subdivisions.
- Consider requesting the North Carolina legislative authority, 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 Plateau community.
- Evaluate conservation opportunities to preserve the unique characteristics of the Jacob Fork River in the vicinity of the Catawba Valley Wildlife Club.
- Establish partnership opportunities with the Foothills Conservancy to preserve and protect segments of the Jacob Fork River for recreation opportunities, conservation areas and as a drinking water supply.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses on the Jacob Fork River. Explore the possibility of developing formal public canoe access, which would alleviate landowners' concerns about trespassing, boater safety and parking access.

- Establish partnership opportunities between the schools and other community groups to enhance the use of local facilities, such as the Banoak Community Center, for community and recreational activities.
- Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along designated bicycle routes for increased safety.
- Explore the adaptive reuse of the southern portion of the Blackburn landfill site for recreational activities, such as a golf course 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.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- In order to introduce visitors to the local pottery tradition, create a “Pottery Trail” extending down Plateau Rd. from the intersection of Propst Crossroads to Burts Road into Lincoln County where it becomes Zur Leonard Road to Cat Square Road and north on NC Highway 10 back to Propst Crossroads.
- Explore the interest of the local pottery community in working together to improve marketing and visibility of pottery sales.
- Encourage the continued preservation of Hart Square.
- Encourage the application of adaptive reuse techniques for historic properties in the Plateau area.

Appendix A:

Plateau Community Meeting Results (November 4, 2004)

Specific issues that residents voted on are listed below. The number beside each issue indicates the number of votes it received. If an issue does not have a number beside it, the issue was listed for voting but no one voted for it.

What do you like about the Plateau Area?

Transportation – (4)

Close proximity to cities, business (2)
Central location between cities
Good access to shipping (1)
Good location to travel to mountains and beach
Access to highways (1)
Proximity to schools

Community – (41)

Pretty
Family-oriented community (7)
Lower population (1)
More stable population (not transient)
Laid back, country people (1)
“Neighbors are still neighbors” (2)
The “way it is” (6)
Rural character (4)
Potential for growth
Low crime, safe (11)
Heritage (rural farm land provides continuity from past to present) (3)
Peace and quiet, secluded (2)
Arts and crafts, pottery trade (4)
The Grill and Honey’s
Tradition (“feels like home”)
Independence

Residential – (4)

Space, big yards, as reflected in larger lots (acreage), privacy, low density (1)
No large housing developments (3)

Public Services – (20)

Not commercialized (3)
Good, community-oriented schools (3)
Teachers
Churches (2)
No city taxes (2)

Low traffic
No industrial uses (7)
Close to fire department
Good fire, EMS departments (3)

Environment – (38)

Rural scenes (6) –cows, creeks, farm fields, trees, grass
Views of valleys, hills, mountains (2)
Wildlife (2)
Out in the country—hunting allowed
Open spaces (3)
Gardens
Farmland and wooded areas (21)
Nature, wildlife (1)
Parks (1)
Clean environment and diverse ecology (1)
Water quality of the River (1)

Other Comments

No curfews
“We live in the country.”

I would love to see water extended down Plateau road approx. 5 miles past Fred T Foard, until you at least hit Scronce Road. I know that Plateau Church located right at the intersection of Plateau and Scronce Road suffer tremendously with the iron problems, damaging bathrooms and kitchen areas, as do the residences (myself included) in this area. There are businesses past Fred T Foard, which would also benefit from this extension. Do you know if there are plans for water extension?

<p>What concerns do you have for the Plateau Area?</p>

Transportation – (30)

Trash on highways (1)
Congestion, heavy traffic on Hwy 10, Plateau Rd by middle, high schools (15)
Speed limit on Hwy 10 (2)
Caution lights needed in congested areas
Traffic at schools – bad, bad, bad
Need wider roads –Hwy 10, secondary roads (6)
Fewer kids driving to school (1)
Maintenance of roads (5)
Lack of public transportation

Community – (25)

Drug houses
Rifle range (6) [Wildlife Club]
No community watch

Unemployment

New people making changes (1)

Don't look like Mountain View (5)

Community signs needed (4)

Lack of active, passive recreation areas, parks

Expand recreation programs, exercise facilities, facilities for kids (9)

Environment – (13)

Maintaining quality of the environment

Disappearing farmland and wilderness (2)

Industrial pollution – keep from happening (2)

Too much development – tracts should remain large and undeveloped (7)

Growth will diminish rural landscape

Lack of open space/recreation areas within subdivisions (1)

Developers to retain certain number of trees/ acre (1)

Public Services – (54)

Code enforcement—junk cars, campers at home sites, dilapidated structures, condemning dangerous property, “junk” areas (18)

Greater law enforcement presence, response time (5)

Fast medical access (1) [EMS]

Overcrowded schools, lack of current school funding (for Banoak additions), need for better schools, more schools

Too many regulations, less government dictation (4)

Restrictions, tax rates on farming by government (8)

No sewer lines (do not want) (5)

Lack of water for fire departments (1)

Land Use/Zoning (53)

Restrictions on land (2)

No annexation (48)

Overdevelopment—high density housing (2)

Big land developers (1)

Small scale community development

Not forced to connect to water/sewer

Residential (17)

Population growth, too much residential growth (4)

Large development -- crowding

Mobile home parks (5)

Don't want more subdivisions (2)

High density residential – ½ acre lots too small (4)

No minimum housing standards

Commercial/Industrial – (1)

Chicken farm (smells)

Keep out development and big business (1)
Need commercial business sites cleaned
No commercial growth
Industry – too much

What is your future vision of the Plateau Area?
--

Transportation – (6)

Widening of roads (2)
Better road maintenance (4)
Public transportation

Public Services – (71)

Taxes reviewed and reduced; keep taxes low through less government (4)
Less regulation on personal property (6)
Better school facilities—funding to match needs (3); new school/addition at Banoak (30)
Satellite County services (police, fire, EMS) (7)
Sheriff substation (11)
Recycling station (1)
More water lines and hydrants (3)
Choice to connect to water/sewer
Better ways of handling waste water
Better ways of handling storm water run-off/storm drainage for developments
More agricultural districts
Install gate at [Propst] Crossroads (1)
Satellite library (3)
Commissioners elected by district in County (3)
Disaster prevented

Residential – (9)

New housing pays for itself
Limited housing development (3)
Less trailers, more stick built (6)

Commercial/Industrial – (15)

Limited commercial development
Small commercial development
Dining facility, family restaurant (4)
More shopping, jobs, restaurant (2)
Height requirement for buildings (1)
No strip malls (3)
No big boxes (1)
Grocery store
Industrial park
Protect current small businesses (4)
Tighter restrictions on nightlife business (ie, noise, hours of operation)

Environment – (16)

Same or more open spaces – keep farms! (6)
Greenways (1)
Adequate water supply (4)
Save farmlands and large tracts (1)
Drill own well (1)
Maintain rural landscape (1)
Organic gardening/land conservation
Retain forest areas (2)

Growth Management (42)

Limit development through zoning (4)
No rezoning
Slower growth (3)
Organized and controlled growth (7)
No concentrated growth in any one area
“Stay the same” (1)
Keep area rural (27)

Community – (18)

YMCA, family-oriented recreational business (3)
Large, multi-purpose sports facility, recreation complex (2)
Develop Ritchie Field (recreation) (10)
Need parks – walking trails, recreation
Farmers market, community bulletin board, bazaar/common area (no flea market) (3)
Community ministry (food pantry)
Retain family-oriented community