

Startown Small Area Plan

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Purpose of Small Area Planning

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 Startown 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 this small area plan was a grassroots effort that began with the appointment of the Startown Small Area Planning Committee in January 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 January 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 May 2004. At this meeting, citizens were asked how they saw their community developing in the future using a 10 to 20 year planning period. Forty residents participated in this meeting, held at the Startown Elementary School Cafeteria. Results from this Community Input Meeting are provided in Appendix A. The Committee used this input in developing the plan's guiding principles and recommendations. Upon completion of a draft plan, the Committee sponsored another public meeting in May 2005, which also was held at Startown Elementary. At this meeting, the Plan's maps and recommendations were presented to the community. Input from the 30

residents who participated at this meeting was considered by the Committee in amending the draft plan. The Committee met on August 30, 2005 to finalize the Plan and voted to recommend the Plan to the Planning Board for its consideration.

It should be noted here that the City of Newton, through its representative Planning Director Glenn Pattishall, did not agree with the Committee's recommendation to remove the extension of Catawba Valley Boulevard from the STIP. Newton and Maiden also objected to the Committee's decision to propose a new alignment of Robinson Road from NC Highway 10 south to Rocky Ford Road and to suggest removing the extension of Robinson Road south from Rocky Ford to Startown Road near Maiden.

When the Committee's recommendations were complete, the 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 September 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 September 26, 2005 meeting. Upon hearing citizens' comments at the meeting, the Planning Board recommended the plan to the Board of Commissioners with Transportation Map 6A, which included the deletion of the Catawba Valley Blvd. Ext. and Robinson Rd. Ext. projects.

The Board of Commissioners reviewed the plan in August 2005. At its October 17, 2005 meeting, the Board of Commissioners conducted its public hearing and accepted the plan as presented, with the inclusion of Transportation Map 6A. In accepting the plan, the Board agreed with the concern that perhaps too many east-west thoroughfares were being planned. The Board acknowledged that the recommendation in the plan to delete the Catawba Valley Blvd. and Robinson Road extension roadways does not remove the projects from the thoroughfare plan. The Metropolitan Planning Organization's actions supersede those of the Board of Commissioners as they relate to thoroughfare planning; therefore, the roadway layout in the Thoroughfare Plan remains in existence. As the MPO Thoroughfare Plan is updated within the next two years, NCDOT will undertake additional traffic studies to look at all the east-west corridors between I-40 and Highway 10. Therefore, the concerns raised by the Startown Small Area Plan Committee will be addressed, as a thorough analysis will occur before a new Thoroughfare Plan is adopted by the MPO.

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 Startown 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 Startown 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 Startown Small Area Plan study area is located west of Newton, south of Hickory and north of Maiden between US Highway 321-Business and Zion Church Road and its continuation, called the Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. The new US Highway 321 freeway bisects the area and provides easy connections between Catawba County and I-85 either to Charlotte or west to South Carolina and Atlanta. The Startown SAP study area encompasses 19,428 acres, excluding land in dedicated rights-of-way. One significant natural feature flowing through the study area is the South Fork of the Catawba River flowing south into Lincoln County. See *Map 1, "Startown SAP Boundary."*

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 Startown area throughout the late 19th century and into the first decades of the 20th century, even as manufacturing began to make its presence felt.

Nine 18th- and 19th-century farms and houses in or adjacent to the Startown area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One church from 1797, Grace Union Church and Cemetery, is located on the western edge of the Startown area on the Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. Another eight houses and cemeteries of local historic interest can also be found in the Startown planning area. The rural nature of the Startown community reflects the largely agricultural heritage of the community which still remains. Residents continue to identify churches as significant contributors to the community, and Startown Elementary School occupies a site in continuous operation as a school for over 100 years.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

ASSETS AND KEY ISSUES

During the May 2004 community meeting, Startown 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 Startown 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 setting
 - Open space, farmlands and wetlands
 - Lack of congestion
 - Sense of neighborhoods
- Community and family orientation
- Good transportation routes, especially US Highway 321
- Public services
 - Schools
 - Zoning enforced

Key Issues

- Traffic, especially on Startown Road
- Fear of annexation
- Overcrowded schools
- Unnecessary expansion/extension of highways
- Loss of farmland and open space
- Balancing pressures for growth with rural qualities
- Commercial development

MAJOR POINTS OF REFERENCE

The Startown SAP encompasses 20,118 acres (including right-of-ways) in southern Catawba County. The US 321 highway traverses the planning area from north to south. Significant natural features in the area include the Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Rivers which join near the US Highway 321 interchange at NC Highway 10 and flow south as the South Fork of the Catawba River.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The Startown study area experienced moderate population growth from 1990 to 2000. The number of people residing in the Startown area grew at a rate of 8.5%. The population in 1990 for the area was 3,755 while the 2000 Census indicated a population of 4,076, an increase of 321 persons (see chart below). The growth rate for the entire county was 19.7%, more than double the rate for this area. The study area's net gain of 321 persons represented about 1.37% of the total County population increase.

Startown SAP Small Area Plan, Study Area Growth, 1990 to 2000				
Year	1990	2000	Net Change	% Change
Persons	3,755	4,076	321	8.5%
Households	1,442	1,608	166	11.5%
Persons/Household	2.60	2.53	-0.07	-2.7%

Source: US Census, 1990, and 2000; compiled by WPCOG Data Center, July 2003.

The number of households grew faster than the number of persons in the study area, resulting in a lower average of persons per household. This trend is consistent with county, state and national trends, all indicating a lower 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, 2000; as compiled by WPCOG Data Center, July 2003.

The Startown area is comprised of portions of Census Tracts 116, 117.01 and 117.02. See *Map 2, "Startown Small Area Plan Census Tracts."* The following information is presented in some detail for the comparison of the Startown SAP, Census Tracts 116, 117.01, 117.02 and Catawba County.

As is true across Catawba County, the population is predominately white with slightly higher proportions of minority populations in Census Tract 117.02. Most of the minority residents live outside the study area in the Maiden urban area.

Race and Ethnicity, 2000				
Place	White	Black	Other	Hispanic (any race)
Startown SAP	92.1%	2.9%	5.0%	1.8%
Census Tract 116	91.1%	4.3%	4.6%	4.0%
Census Tract 117.01	89.7%	4.2%	6.1%	5.4%
Census Tract 117.02	87.0%	8.5%	4.5%	2.7%
Catawba County	85.0%	8.4%	6.6%	5.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000; WPCOG Data Center 2003.

Residents aged between 19 and 64 comprise the largest population group of residents in the study area, Census Tracts 116, 117.01, 117.02 and Catawba County. The percent of persons aged 65 and older is somewhat lower in the Startown area than in the County as a whole.

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)
Startown SAP	1,006 (24.7%)	2,606 (63.9%)	464 (11.4%)
Census Tract 116	2,150 (24.1%)	5,840 (65.4%)	939 (10.5%)
Census Tract 117.01	903 (24.0%)	2,359 (62.6%)	503 (13.4%)
Census Tract 117.02	1,660 (25.6%)	4,168 (64.4%)	644 (10.0%)
Catawba County	34,392 (24.3%)	89,868 (63.4%)	17,425 (12.3%)

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000; WPCOG Data Center 2003.

Between 1995 and 2000, 57% of Startown residents remained in the same home compared to 56.2% of persons across Catawba County. However, Startown experienced 17.7% in-migration, which is slightly less than the 18.4% experienced by Catawba County. In-migration refers to those persons that moved into the listed place from another Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) between 1990 and 2000.

Change in Housing and Migration, 1995 to 2000		
Place	% of Persons living in the same house between 1995 and 2000	In-migration 1995 and 2000 (% of population)
Startown SAP	57.0%	720 (17.7%)
Census Tract 116	57.2%	1,812 (21.5%)
Census Tract 117.01	54.7%	641 (18.2%)
Census Tract 117.02	56.3%	1,117 (18.5%)
Catawba County	56.2%	24,359 (18.4%)

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

In 2000, the average commute time for Startown residents was 22.2 minutes, which is slightly higher than the County average of 20.7 minutes. This indicates that most workers who reside in the study area travel to the urban areas for employment.

Commuting Time to Work, 2000		
Place	Average Work Commute Time	% of Workers commuting over 40 minutes to work
Startown SAP	22.2 minutes	9.4%
Census Tract 116	19.7 minutes	9.4%
Census Tract 117.01	21.3 minutes	8.4%
Census Tract 117.02	23.7 minutes	10.2%
Catawba County	20.7 minutes	8.9%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

Approximately 16.7% of the Startown residents work outside Catawba County. Only 15.6% of Catawba County residents, as a whole, work outside the county.

Place of Work, 2000	
Place	% of Workers Employed Outside County of Residence
Startown SAP	16.7%
Census Tract 116	23.1%
Census Tract 117.01	12.0%
Census Tract 117.02	18.1%
Catawba County	15.6%
Hickory-Morganton MSA	25.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

In 2000, 24.7% of the study area residents were employed in professional occupations compared to 23.8% in Catawba County. Employment in the service and professional support occupations also showed little difference between the Startown study area (35.4%) and Catawba County (37.4%). Both the study area and Catawba County as a whole had more workers employed in manufacturing occupations than in the service and professional support sector. Farming occupations represented only 1% of the study area employment, slightly more than the 0.5% for Catawba County.

Employment, 2000				
Place	% Employed in Professions	% Employed in Service & Prof. Support	% Employed in Manufacturing	% Employed in Farming
Startown SAP	24.7%	35.4%	38.9%	1.0%
Census Tract 116	19.5%	35.6%	43.0%	1.9%
Census Tract 117.01	32.0%	33.5%	33.2%	1.3%
Census Tract 117.02	21.3%	36.3%	41.8%	0.6%
Catawba County	23.8%	37.4%	38.3%	0.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

Household income data from 1999 indicates somewhat higher median household income in the study area compared to Catawba County. The percent of persons with household income over \$60,000 was also higher in the Startown area than in the County.

Household Income, 1999			
Place	1999 Estimated Median Household Income	% of 1999 Households with Incomes Below \$10,000	% of 1999 Household Incomes over \$60,000
Startown SAP	\$44,138	5.0%	32.6%
Census Tract 116	\$42,138	7.3%	27.4%
Census Tract 117.01	\$41,848	7.4%	34.2%
Census Tract 117.02	\$42,379	4.7%	29.7%
Catawba County	\$41,058	7.8%	27.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

If job demand increases over the next 10 to 20 years, as predicted, the population in the Startown area is projected to increase at a substantial rate. By 2015 the population of Startown could exceed 5,371 persons, a 31.8% increase. The trend of fewer people per household is expected to continue.

Startown Small Area Plan: Projected Study Area Growth, 2000 to 2015						
Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	Growth 2000 to 2015	% Change
Persons	4,076	4,529	4,973	5,371	1,295	31.8
Households	1,608	1,804	1,997	2,174	566	35.2
Persons/Household	2.53	2.51	2.49	2.47	-0.06	-2.4

Source: WPCOG Data Center, July 2003.

This significant population growth for the Startown area is predicated on growth rates that are more than 31% for the area. Future population growth within the Startown planning will be largely affected by the availability of public water and sewer and the County subdivision policy restricting development in school districts at or near 110% of their school capacity. If current subdivision policies remain in place, population growth will be limited in part by pre-existing or potential small lot development. However, if County policies on school capacities change, or if multi-family or new residential subdivision growth is stimulated by the extension of water or sewer services, the potential growth will increase significantly. These population projections would then need to be revised or updated extensively.

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 Startown study area. Accordingly, most parcels are zoned for residential uses with the bulk of the area falling into the R-2 district (see *Map 4, "Startown 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. The R-2 zoning applies to most of the large undeveloped tracts of land throughout the study area (see *Map 3, "Startown SAP Current Land Uses"*).

R-1 zoning is permitted along Robinson Road and Sandy Ford Road as well as south of Newton along Rome Jones Road. The R-1 zoning district is similar to R-2 except that it does not permit manufactured homes or two-family dwelling units.

Mixed-use development (ED-MX) and industrial development (ED-I) are permitted along US Highway 321 at the NC Highway 10 and Startown Road interchanges. These zoning districts were designated by the *US 321 Corridor District Plan*, adopted by Catawba County in July 1996. The ED-MX and ED-I districts promote higher quality development through stringent design standards. The ED-MX zoning district allows for any combination of retail/commercial, office/institutional and residential components but never exclusively large-lot, single-family homes. The ED-I district allows for primarily industrial/warehousing/distribution uses with accessory office uses permitted. Commercial uses are very limited within the Startown study area at this time.

The Newton water intake is located in the western part of the Startown study area along Highway 10. Development is limited in the WS-III Critical Area surrounding the intake, required by the NC Water Supply Watershed legislation. The Critical Area requires one acre for each single-family residential lot. Multi-family and non-residential development in the Critical Area is limited to 12% percent lot coverage. The WS-III Protected Area allows more development, requiring 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.

LAND USE DISTRIBUTION

The Startown SAP encompasses 19,428 acres of land (not including right-of-ways). Most of this land (91%) is zoned residential; the remaining 9% is zoned for non-residential uses (industrial and commercial).

Startown SAP: Total Zoned Acreage			
	Total Acreage	Non-Residential Acreage	Residential Acreage
Startown SAP	19,428 (100%)	1,781 (9.2%)	17,647 (90.8%)

Source: Catawba County GIS, 2004.

Non-residential zoning consists of 1,470 acres designated for industrial uses, 47% of which is vacant, and 311 acres of commercially zoned land, of which 70% is vacant. All of the vacant industrial and commercial land is located along the US Highway 321 Corridor.

Startown SAP: Acreage Zoned Non-Residential			
LAND USE	Total Acreage	Total Vacant Acreage	% Vacant
Industrial	1,470	684	47%
Commercial	311	219	70%
Office-Institutional	0	0	N/A

Source: Catawba County GIS, 2004.

Residential uses occupy the greatest percentage of land in the study area (17,647 acres); yet over 82% of the residentially zoned land is vacant or in tracts larger than four acres with a structure. 8,062 acres are entirely vacant while 7,898 acres are in lots of four acres or more that could be subdivided into two or more lots. If 85% of the land available for residential use were developed, the Startown area could see an additional 13,560 acres developed for residential purposes. These land use statistics suggest that a substantial amount of additional development could occur in the Startown study area.

Startown SAP: Acreage Zoned Residential				
	Total Residential Acreage	Total Vacant Acreage	>4 Acres + Structure	<4 Acres + Structure
Startown SAP	17,647	8,062 (41.5%)	7,898 (40.7%)	1,687 (8.7%)

Source: Catawba County GIS, 2004.

SITE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND LAND DESIGN TRENDS

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

Greater industrial activity is also expected in the Startown area along US 321 where the highway provides the infrastructure necessary to support industrial uses. The *US 321 Corridor Plan* anticipates this growth by requiring more stringent development standards than are permitted in other parts of the county. Commercial uses may increase along US Highway 321; however, large strip centers and big box retailers are unlikely to emerge in the Startown

area. Hickory, Newton and Conover offer large shopping alternatives for residents of the study area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Committee recognizes that some portions of the Startown area may be annexed by surrounding municipalities. If annexation occurs, the Committee requests that the municipalities consider the land use recommendations listed in the Startown Small Area Plan.

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

- Focus commercial growth in Commercial Development Nodes, rather than strip development along highways in the Startown area.
- 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.

LAND USE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

RESIDENTIAL

- 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.
- 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:
 - Limit access in new subdivisions to landscaped interior roads and networks.
 - Provide a 30-foot landscaped buffer along road frontages.
 - Limit signage to monument-style signs that are low to the ground.
- 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.
- 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:
 - 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.
 - 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 Road.
 - All subdivisions and individual homes along Startown Road north of Settlemyre 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.
- 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:

- Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of one unit per two acres.
- Cluster subdivision design is encouraged.
- 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.
- All major residential subdivisions in the Startown SAP should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Limit access in new subdivisions to interior roads and networks (see Transportation Recommendations).
 - 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.
- It is recommended that school capacity no longer be a consideration regarding minimum lot sizes for new developments.

COMMERCIAL

- 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.

- 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*.
- Businesses in the Startown SAP should adhere to the following appearance and design criteria:
 - Encourage parking areas to be located to the side or rear of buildings.
 - Encourage mixed-use development at commercial nodes. (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.
 - Require landscaped areas along road frontages and within parking areas located in front or side yards.
 - 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.
 - Lighting at all commercial or mixed-use development be angled downward and shielded to avoid illuminating the night sky.
 - Encourage brick or masonry fronts on buildings while avoiding blank walls. Visual interest can be achieved through architectural details, distinctive lighting or awnings.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT NODES

- A Community Center Node should be designated at the following intersection (see Map 5, “*Startown SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*”):
 - 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.

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

- 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.

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

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

OPEN SPACE

- Thirty percent (30%) of total acreage in major single-family subdivisions should be required to be dedicated as open space or natural areas, which may be located within the development for community use. 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).

- Preserve green space specifically for passive recreational uses, including hiking trails, primitive camping areas, canoe access, etc.
- Develop passive recreation facilities on the Blackburn Landfill as land becomes available.

TRANSPORTATION

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

Transportation planning for the Startown study area is coordinated by the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO). The GHMPO was created from the Hickory-Newton-Conover MPO when the Hickory urban area expanded after the 2000 Census. The southern portion of the Startown area is included in the County Thoroughfare Plan. Although significant growth in retail, commercial and residential land uses have generated sharp increases in traffic in certain areas of Catawba County, growth has been slower in parts of the Startown area as evidenced by moderate traffic increases.

The NCDOT Secondary Road system serves the Startown study area, except for the federal and state highways, US Highway 321 and NC Highway 10. US Highway 321 is the freeway connecting Hickory south to Gastonia and Charlotte (via I-85) and north to Lenoir and the mountains. NC Highway 10, the other major thoroughfare, bisects the study area from east to west. The following table illustrates average daily traffic counts (number of vehicles per day or ADT) at various locations in the study area (see *Map 6A, "Startown SAP Transportation Recommendations"*). Data for 1991 through 2002 are actual numbers recorded on site; 2025 data are projections based on NCDOT modeling.

Startown SAP: Average Daily Traffic Count, 1991-2025				
	NC Hwy 10 east of Hky-Lincolnton Hwy	Rocky Ford Rd east of Hky-Lincolnton Hwy	Hky-Lincolnton Hwy north of Reepsville Rd	Blackburn Bridge Rd east of Hky-Lincolnton Hwy
1991	5,800	700	1,600	N/A
1999	8,400	1,000	2,300	1,200
2002	8,300	1,200	N/A	1,200
2025	14,900	N/A	7,800	N/A

Source: NCDOT AADT maps, 1991-2002; and *Hickory-Newton-Conover Urban Area Transportation Plan, Technical Update #1*, 2001 (for 2025 projections).

In addition to traffic counts at these locations, NCDOT also provided two counts on the northern portion of Startown Road, at Milton Street in 1999 (8,700 vehicles daily) and just south of the Old Conover-Startown Road in 2001 at 11,000 vehicles per day. Two traffic counts are also available in Maiden, just outside the study area, at Startown Road north of West Maiden Road (8,300 vehicles daily in 2002) and on US Highway 321 south of the Startown interchange (24,000 vehicles in 2002).

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 includes one project that will

significantly affect the Startown study area: the Southern Corridor, passing through the northern Startown study area south of Catawba Valley Boulevard. The County's Thoroughfare Plan, also recently updated, includes the Robinson Road extension, from NC Highway 10 south to West Maiden Road. Although these thoroughfare improvements are recommended by the local governments, the Robinson Road extension is not yet included in the *State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)*. The Southern Corridor, however, is included in the *STIP* but is unfunded at this time. *Map 6A, "Startown SAP Transportation Recommendations,"* illustrates the current and planned transportation system in the Startown area.

US Highway 321:

- This highway is included in a special Corridor district with specific development standards, approved by Catawba County, Hickory, Maiden and Newton in the mid-1990s;
- The *Mountain View Small Area Plan* proposes a North Carolina "Scenic Highway" designation for US Highway 321 north of NC Highway 10.

Robinson Road Extension:

- Although NCDOT has completed a "functional design" based on existing subdivisions, topography and likely road alignment, the project is not yet included in the *STIP*.

Southern Corridor:

- This proposed road would connect Settlemyre Bridge Road from the bridge west to River Road near its intersection with US Highway 321. The road will extend west to I-40 at Interchange 121 in Long View and east to US 321-Business in Newton.
- The project is included in the unfunded section of the *STIP*.
- The Mountain View SAP also supported construction of this thoroughfare with a four-lane, landscaped median design.
- Design standards for the Southern Corridor should include accommodations for bicyclists, according to the Mountain View SAP.

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

Presently, Catawba County does not require sidewalk construction in new developments. In general, the Startown 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 Startown 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 since the summer of 2001 with expected completion in 2006.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Piedmont Wagon Transit System offers limited transit service to Startown residents. Vans are available, five days per week, through Piedmont Wagon to transport senior citizens and disabled residents. No fixed Piedmont Wagon routes currently exist in the Startown area.

PASSENGER RAIL

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. A portion of the former Hickory Depot, now entirely occupied by a restaurant, will revert to a passenger waiting area. This service is expected to be operational by 2009.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

- Encourage better communication between NCDOT 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 highways.
- Maintain adequate stormwater drainage systems.
- Coordinate transportation policies with land use policies.
- Encourage alternate modes of transportation, including increased use of existing means 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.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN 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 6A, "Startown SAP Transportation Recommendations."*

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

- Improve communication by transportation officials when advertising public hearings for new roads, road changes, etc., which may include individual notification to affected property owners.
- 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.
- Explore possible local Scenic Byway designation for the following roads:
 - US Highway 321
 - 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:

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

Revisions to the Unifour MPO and Catawba County Thoroughfare Plans:

- 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.
- 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.
- Recommend eliminating the Robinson Road extension project south of Rocky Ford Road to West Maiden Road due to concerns about loss of open space in the US Highway 321 Corridor.
- 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.
- Focus attention on the Southern Corridor as the top priority east-west road for future development as an alternative to Catawba Valley Boulevard Extension.
- 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.
- Incorporate the Early Action Compact for air quality into the *State Transportation Improvement Plan*.

Amend the County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to:

- 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:
 - Hickory-Lincolnton Highway
 - Startown Road
 - NC Highway 10
 - Robinson Road
 - Sandy Ford Road
 - West Maiden Road

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

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

- 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

- The Startown SAP supports the bicycle routes recommended by the Catawba County Bicycle Mapping Committee, which as been submitted to NCDOT for approval (see *Map 6A*).
- 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 Startown community.

PASSENGER RAIL

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

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

SCHOOLS

The Startown study area is located within the Startown and Blackburn Elementary School districts with a majority of students attending Startown Elementary. A majority of these elementary students then attend Tuttle Middle School and Maiden High School for their middle school and secondary education. Elementary students in the western third of the Startown planning area are currently assigned to Blackburn Elementary, and they then attend Jacobs Fork Middle School and Fred T. Foard High School. A few students in the southeast corner of the Startown planning area attend Maiden Elementary School.

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.

The “new” Maiden High School

Presently under construction, the new Maiden High School is scheduled to be completed on a new site in the Town of Maiden, west of its present location on W. Main St. It will be built to accommodate 1,000 students, nearly twice as large as the capacity of the current high school. Plans call for the new high school to welcome its first students in August 2006. Community meetings to discuss new school attendance boundaries have been held this spring and will continue according to Catawba County school officials.

It seems likely that some students currently in the Fred T. Foard or Bandys High School attendance districts may be assigned to the new Maiden High School. This change may help relieve some of the current enrollment pressures at Foard and Bandys. Students assigned to the new Maiden High School attendance district may also attend the old Maiden High, reconfigured as a middle school. Plans also call for converting Tuttle Middle School, east of Maiden, to an elementary school.

Startown Elementary School

Startown Elementary occupies an historic site on Startown Road near the NC Highway 10 intersection. A public school has occupied this site for over 100 years. Preliminary data for the *Catawba County Growth Estimation Model* shows that the student population at Startown Elementary School remains near building capacity (775 students) since 2000 and will remain near capacity until 2011.

Blackburn Elementary

Preliminary data also shows 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.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

At this time, there are no public parks or greenways in the Startown planning area. The City of Newton is in the initial stages of developing a 100-acre park at its water intake along NC Highway 10 just west of US Highway 321. The park will be located at the point where the Jacob Fork and the Henry Fork Rivers join to form the South Fork of the Catawba. Newton proposes to develop softball and soccer fields, hiking and mountain bike trails, a canoe launch and picnic areas. The park will enable people to enjoy the Jacob Fork River in active and passive ways. The City is seeking a cooperative venture with Catawba County in developing this park.

LIBRARIES

Catawba County operates a well-established library system. The Catawba County Library System operates one central library, a law library and six branch libraries. Although the study area is served by three of those branches, only a small portion of the Startown SAP is within the three-mile primary service area of a branch library. The main Newton library and the Maiden branch directly serve the eastern portion of the study area. The Southwest branch is located in Mountain View on Highway 127. Currently, no additional library branches are planned for Catawba County.

WATER SERVICE

The City of Hickory, City of Newton, Town of Maiden and Catawba County have provided water service to areas within the Startown study area. In some cases, the County pays for construction of the water lines while the municipalities maintain the lines. In such cases, revenues are shared between the County and the respective municipality. The major water lines in the study area extend along Startown Road, NC Highway 10 and Sandy Ford Road

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 County-wide basis.

SEWER SERVICE

Sewer service is not available in most of the study area; however, the City of Hickory, City of Newton and the Town of Maiden have sewer lines in close proximity to the Startown planning area. The City of Hickory operates a sewer line which extends into the northeastern section of the study area. The City of Newton has extended a sewer line along NC Highway 10 and south along Hickory-Lincolnton Highway. The municipalities have long-range plans to extend sewer service into various parts of the Startown SAP. The Utilities Technical Advisory Committee addresses sewer concerns on a county-wide basis.

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

Fire protection in the northern portion of the Startown study area is provided by the City of Hickory. The Fairbrook Station, located on Sweetwater Road near US Highway 70, responds to rural fire calls as necessary. Located on Catawba Valley Boulevard, the Southeast Station opened in July 2003 and provides fire protection to the Robinson Road and Sandy Ford Road areas.

The Mountain View Volunteer Fire Department is located on NC Highway 127 and serves the northwestern portion of the Startown study area surrounding the US Highway 321 Corridor. Areas east of this district are served by the Startown Fire Department, located on Startown Road adjacent to Startown Elementary School. The Newton Fire Department acquired the Startown Volunteer Fire Department through a merger in 2001.

The southern portion of the Startown study area is served by the Maiden Fire Department and the Propst Crossroads Fire Department. The Maiden Fire Department is located in downtown Maiden and serves the Startown Road area west to the South Fork of the Catawba River. The area west of the South Fork is served by the Propst Crossroads Fire Department, located at the intersection of NC Highway 127 and NC Highway 10. A new station is being considered in the Propst fire district near southwest corner of the Startown area.

Emergency Medical Services

Although an EMS base is not located within the study area, two bases respond to calls within the Startown area. The Propst Crossroads Base is located at the intersection of NC Highway 10 and NC Highway 127. This base responds to calls for the southwestern portion of Catawba County. The Newton base, located in southern Newton off US Highway 321-Business, also serves the study area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SCHOOLS

- Plan to accommodate student enrollment growth.
- Plan for community-based, neighborhood schools.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

- Encourage conservation easements and/or greenways along the Henry and Jacob Fork Rivers and the South Fork of the Catawba River.
- Provide adequate recreation facilities, both active and passive, for all segments of the population.

LIBRARIES

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

WATER/SEWER SERVICES

- Provide water and sewer services in higher density areas in close proximity to existing municipal boundaries.
- Take a cooperative regional approach to planning of 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.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOLS

- Continue to use and enhance school facilities for comprehensive community and recreation activities.
- 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.
- School planners should use the future residential density recommendations (see Land Use Plan Recommendations) when identifying school expansion needs.
- Explore the feasibility of funding options for constructing school facilities.

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

- Work with landowners and local conservancies to establish passive recreational uses and/or boating options on the South Fork River.
- 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

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

WATER/SEWER SERVICES

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

EMERGENCY SERVICES

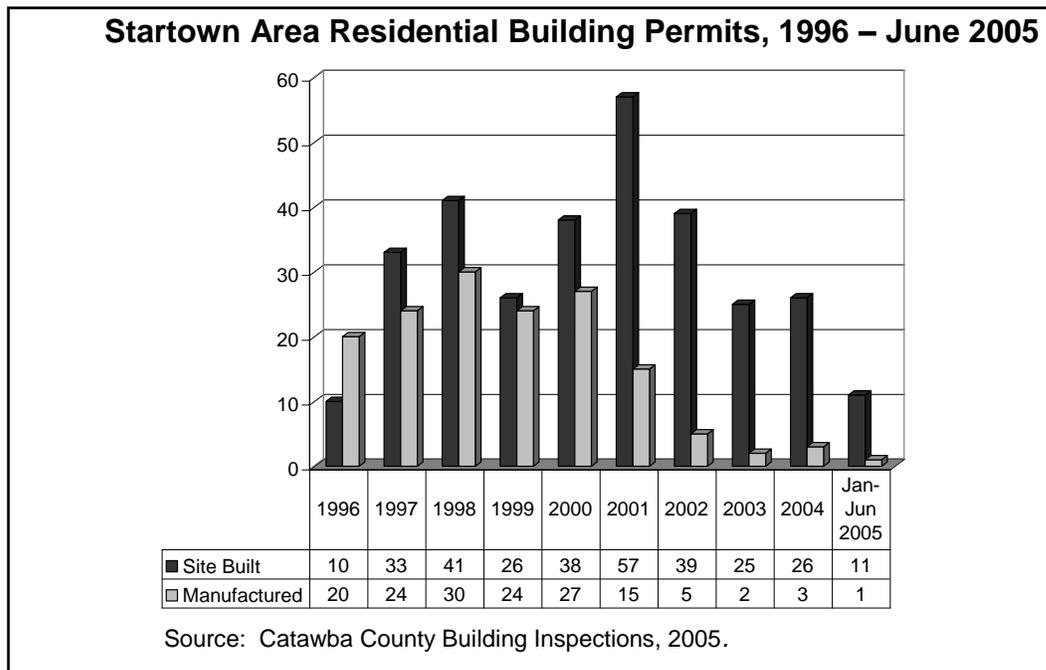
- Maintain existing levels of service.
- Continue to support and develop measures to reduce medical response times.

HOUSING

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Since 2001, the average number of houses constructed every year has decreased steadily in the Startown study area. The decline in new construction can be largely attributed 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 by type of home (site-built or manufactured home). Since 1996, a total of 457 housing units have been added, including 306 site-built homes and 151 manufactured homes.



Until 2000, the construction of manufactured homes kept pace with the number of site-built homes in the area. Since 2001, however, the number of permits issued for manufactured homes has dropped dramatically. This trend may be explained by the rising costs of manufactured housing, closing much of the cost gap with stick-built homes. The rising costs of manufactured homes 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 Startown 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 requirements and income levels.

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.

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.

RETIREMENT

- Promote low maintenance, alternative housing opportunities for seniors.

HOUSING PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL RESIDENTIAL USES

- 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.
- Where possible, landscaping and buffering should be done with native vegetation. Native plants generally survive better and require less maintenance than non-native species.
- All subdivisions and individual homes along Startown Road north of Settlemyre 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

- Residential subdivisions should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Limit access in new subdivisions to interior roads and networks (see Transportation Recommendations).
 - 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.
 - 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.

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

MANUFACTURED HOMES

- Rezone the areas shown on *Map 7, "Startown SAP Proposed Zoning Map Amendments."*
- 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.
- 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 double-wide 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.
- 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.

MULTI- FAMILY

- 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.
- 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.

RETIREMENT

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

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 to develop. 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 twelve-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 Tenth and Twelfth US Congressional Districts, worked together to create strategies, several of which have received significant funding from the federal Economic Development Administration.

Since few commercial or industrial facilities are located in the Startown community, most residents work in the urban areas of Catawba County. The few existing commercial and industrial uses in the Startown SAP are located north of the County landfill between Rocky Ford Road and NC Highway 10, and at the US Highway 321 interchanges.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Facilitate and encourage new, community-focused economic development in the Startown 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.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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.

- 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."*

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.

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

- 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.

- 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.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

NATURAL RESOURCES

Two major rivers run through the Startown area and affect not only the quality of the surface water but have important cultural and historic ties to the community (see *Map 8, "Startown SAP Natural and Cultural Resources"*). The headwaters of the Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Rivers rise in the South Mountains and drain east into the Startown area. The Henry Fork and Jacob Fork join near the US Highway 321 interchange at NC Highway 10 and flow south as the South Fork of the Catawba River. Considerable land bordering these rivers 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, canoeing and picnicking.

Clark Creek, a major creek located on the eastern end of the district, was placed on the 303(d) list of impaired streams in 2002 by the North Carolina Division of Water Quality after significant concentrations of fecal coliform and copper were discovered. As a result, the Division of Water Quality developed a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program to assess, monitor and improve the water quality in Clark Creek. The TMDL encourages local governments to seek initiatives to involve the public and development community in improving water quality.

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 designated watersheds to administer a Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance to protect surface drinking water. The Jacob Fork is the source for Newton's water supply and, as a result, a small portion of the western Startown area surrounding the Newton water intake falls within the WS-III Watershed. Another small portion of the SAP boundary along the South Fork is located within the WS-IV Watershed, which drains south into Lincoln County.

Development within the WS-III Critical Area surrounding the Newton water intake is limited to one house per acre for single-family development. Multi-family and non-residential development is allowed to cover 12% of the lot area with impervious material such as asphalt, gravel and buildings. The WS-III Protected Area allows one house per half acre for single-family development. Multi-family and non-residential development is limited to 24% lot coverage or 70% impervious surface if a "5%/70% Bonus" permit is approved by the Catawba County Board of Adjustment.

The WS-IV Protected Area in the southern portion of the Startown area requires 15,000 square-foot lots when curb and gutter is not used, and public water or sewer service are provided. When no public utilities (water and sewer) or curb and gutter are installed, lots cannot be smaller than one-half acre. Multi-family and non-residential uses are limited to

24% impervious coverage of the lot with curb and gutter and 36% without curb and gutter. Within the Protected Area, planned developments may use the high-density option of 70% impervious coverage with stormwater controls.

The Catawba Lands Conservancy has been an active participant in preserving open space along the South Fork. The organization now owns or partially owns 3,000 acres in Catawba, Lincoln and Gaston Counties. Currently, the Catawba Lands Conservancy has two projects in the Startown area (see *Map 8*). A 66-acre tract, part of the historic Oakwood Farm, was donated to the organization in 2003. At least one other landowner of the former Oakwood Farm has placed his land in a conservation easement and is the process of restoring the historic buildings on the property. Eventually, the farm may be opened to the public as a historical and educational resource. Further south, the Catawba Lands Conservancy owns 280 acres, known informally as the Viles Farm, which received a Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant to preserve water quality along the South Fork.

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 portions 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 Startown area.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the passive recreational opportunities offered by the floodplain along the South Fork, other unique recreational opportunities exist in the Startown area. For example, the Optimist Club is very active in the community and offers youth basketball, baseball and football at Startown Elementary School.

Catawba County is currently exploring innovative recreational uses for the Blackburn Landfill on Rocky Ford Road. The 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 could include activities such as a picnic area, ball fields for sports programs of civic clubs, a 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 landfill sections that have been filled and closed would be preserved as open space and wildlife habitat.

The City of Newton is in the initial stages of developing a 100-acre park at its water intake along NC Highway 10 just west of US Highway 321. The park will be located at the point where the Jacob Fork and the Henry Fork Rivers join to form the South Fork of the Catawba. Newton proposes to develop softball and soccer fields, hiking and mountain bike trails, a canoe launch and picnic areas. The park will enable people to enjoy the Jacob Fork River in active and passive ways. The City is seeking a cooperative venture with Catawba County in developing this park.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Startown area contains the original site of the historical town of Crowdertown (also known as “Ulrichsburg,” “Crowderstown” or “Crowder’s Town”). The “town” was established by the German settler, Ulrich Krauter, near the present-day intersection of Startown Road and Settlemyre Bridge Road. According to a 1999 article by Mills Yoder Bridges, Ulrich Krauter arrived in the Carolinas around 1763 and traveled northwest up the Wateree River. The British Crown granted him 450 acres of land in Mecklenburg and Lincoln Counties (Catawba County had not yet been established), which he sold as smaller lots in July 1789 and established Crowdertown. Although several lots were developed as farms, no physical traces of Crowdertown remain today.

The Startown area is fortunate to have several sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These properties have been recognized by state and federal historians as worthy of preservation for their significance in American history, architecture and culture. Many other properties of local historic significance also exist in the Startown area. The Committee has emphasized the importance of several of these properties, which are shown on *Map 8*. Persons interested in a more comprehensive list are encouraged to consult the Catawba County Historical Association or Sidney Halma’s *Catawba County: An Architectural History*.

The Wilfong-Wilson Farm and the Weidner Rock House are located north of NC Highway 10 near the US 321 Highway. The Wilfong-Wilson Farm is one of the largest remaining active farms north of NC Highway 10. The Weidner Rock House is a two-story stone structure constructed in 1789 by the son of the first settler in the area. Although the house was originally constructed in the floodplain overlooking the confluence of the Henry and Jacob Fork Rivers, it was moved uphill to its current location in the 1840s with teams of mule-drawn wagons.

Along Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, the western boundary of the Startown planning area, there are three properties 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 Road 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.

East of Startown Road are four farmhouses listed on the National Register. The Rudisill-Wilson House was constructed between 1818 and 1821. After being sold to Mr. Ezekial Wilson in 1855, the property remained in the Wilson family until 1949. The Franklin D. Reinhardt House and William Pinckney Reinhardt House, located along Sigmon Dairy Road, are nearly identical houses constructed by two brothers in the mid-1840s. Mr. Franklin Reinhardt served four terms in the North Carolina General Assembly before returning to the area to serve as one of Catawba County’s first magistrates. The Harren-Hood House is located further north on Sigmon Dairy Road. The house is a two-story, late-Victorian frame

house built around 1908. Mr. Alonzo Harren sold the house and land to Mrs. Ella Hood in 1925 and it has remained in the Hood family since.

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 Startown area.
- Preserve ample open space for future generations.
- Encourage conservation easements or greenways along the Henry and Jacob Fork Rivers and the South Fork of the Catawba Fork.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide adequate recreational opportunities, both active and passive, for all segments of the population.
- Encourage innovative ideas to create new recreational opportunities.
- Continue to use and enhance 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 Startown area.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN **RECOMMENDATIONS**

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

- 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."*
- 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.
- Encourage residential subdivisions to follow design criteria for preserving trees or replacing them with native species, if necessary.
- Seek approval for a NCDOT Scenic Byway designation for the route recommended on *Map 6A, "Startown SAP Transportation Recommendations."*
- 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

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

- Support the establishment of an historical marker on Startown Road showing the original location of Crowdertown.
- Support the preservation of Oakwood Farm, an historic dairy farm near the intersection of US Highway 321 and NC Highway 10.

APPENDIX A

The following are the results from the first community meeting held May 11, 2004 at the Startown Elementary School. Forty (40) residents participated in this meeting.

Community Meeting Results (May 11, 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 Startown Area?

Transportation – (2)

Easy traffic flow (1)
Good location – within easy distance of shopping, towns, etc. (1)
Highway 321 – travel to Charlotte easier
No billboards

Community – (5)

Neighborhoods (2)
Active church community (2)
Sense of community (1)
Small community atmosphere
Familiarity of people
Quiet/people oriented community
Growing/diversification
Pace of life
Historical sites
Not congested/low density
Opportunity

Residential – (2)

Limited mobile homes (2)
Limited apartments
Majority residential
Majority owner occupied homes

Public Services – (7)

Schools (4)
Good Zoning (Enforced) (3)
Few restrictions
Police/Emergency/Fire Protection
Service/Infrastructure

Environment – (19)

Open spaces (7)
Rural (6)
Pasture land for domestic animals (2)
Farmland (1)
Seeing stars in night sky (1)
Naturalness of area (1)
Wetlands – streams/ponds (1)
Walnut Creek
Forest land
Cows & horses
Wildlife
Clean

Other Comments

We think the Startown area is a beautiful area, but it's behind the times with the world growing as fast as it is. We need to have more stores and maybe a recreation center for kids to have things to occupy their time.

What concerns do you have for the Startown Area?

Transportation – (18)

Don't want Catawba Valley Boulevard Extension to cross New Jerusalem Church property
(leave as is – protect scenic property) (15)
Traffic on Startown road (speeding, large trucks) (2)
Left turn signal at Startown and Highway 10
Do not want Startown Road to be a "4" lane
Too much traffic (1)
Widening of roads breaks up farms/other lands
Traffic around school
Robinson Road Extension design around school
Questioning the need/location of extending Robinson Road
Against 2 lane road from Robinson Road to Cansler Crossroads
Don't want Highway 64-70 to be another Independence Boulevard
Lack of maintained/paved roads

Community – (25)

Annexation (12)
Balance of property owner rights vs. restrictions (6)
Historic preservation (4)
Urban sprawl/overdevelopment (2)
Unclean areas and houses (1)
Changing of land use
Growing without a plan
Rapid growth
Impact of growth on rural character
Congestion – don't become a Mountain View
No expansion of Hospice

Environment – (17)

Loss of the farm (13)
Incentives to keep the farms running (2)
Air Quality Control (1)
Protection of waterways and basins (Catawba River) (1)
Encourage environmental neighborhoods (more green space)

Public Services – (9)

Overcrowded schools (5)
Lack of public input on land use decisions (funeral home) (2)
Lack of quality development standards
Lack of school capacity/use of trailers for classrooms (1)
Want sewer (1)
High insurance rates based on lack of fire protection (water lines, hydrants, etc.)
Water and sewer (don't care to have it extended)
Pave/sewer promises from Newton
Lack of recreation facilities parks/wellness facilities
Landfill expansion/possible contamination

Bus service

Residential

Placement of mobile/modular homes

Manufactured homes and habitat homes which depreciate – Robinson Road

Too much residential development

High density residential developments

Commercial/Industrial – (2)

Industrialization along US Highway 321 (1)

Encourage utilization of existing commercial buildings (1)

Too many businesses

Industrial complexes

Limiting commercial development to major intersections

Don't have strip development (put along roads and disperse but in pods)

Potential for strip commercial along Startown Road

Have commercial or industrial zoning (want residential)

Big box retailers

Other Comments

I am concerned that it will become more congested, too commercialized, and will not remain as residential as it is now due to the new 321. The Hwy 10 and Startown intersection is so congested. We need left turn signals at that intersection. The intersection of Old Conover Road and Startown Road even has a left turn lane and left turn signal light at it and there is not near the traffic as at the Startown intersection with Hwy 10. I would like to see some restrictions on planned single housing and less mobile homes. I would like to see more police presence in the area. My fear is Hwy 10 and Startown may slowly become another Hwy 70 or 321 business, or god forbid another Mountain View (Hwy 127) catastrophe.

Our concerns for this area is Startown school needs to be bigger to handle more children in the area. We also think that Startown Road needs to be wider. They also need a policeman at the school earlier in the morning when the traffic starts to pickup and not just for 15 minutes

What is your future vision of the Startown Area?

Transportation – (15)

- Rural dirt roads paved (7)
- No additional 4 lane roads (3)
- No road on new Jerusalem (3)
- Improve existing major roads (Hwy. 10, Hwy. 321, Startown Rd., Robinson Rd.) (1)
- Widen Startown Road (1)
- Additional road built to reduce traffic on Startown Road
- Scenic by-way (Highway 321)
- Utilization of existing roads before new roads are built
- Rocky Ford Road blocked at end of pavement
- Develop road system for business/residence – such plan should precede development

Public Services – (14)

- Expansion of water/sewer services (4)
- People should be able to do what they want on their land (3)
- Organized zoning (2)
- Full paid fire protection (2)
- New cultural facilities, library, museum, historical and recreational venues, park, community center (2)
- Adequate school facilities (1)
- Use schools for recreation/cultural activities
- Startown Middle School
- More educational facilities
- Services for the elderly (transportation/medical)
- Coordinate “infrastructure” (cable, internet) with road development
- “Low” taxes

Residential – (16)

- Village concept (12)
- Planned communities like “Stone’s Throw” (landscaping, trees, entrance) (2)
- Dillworth in Charlotte – dense, able to walk to stores, restaurants, etc. (1)
- Minimum lot size five acres (1)
- Good mix of high, medium, low density residential
- No apartments
- Ownership of homes

Rural character/more family/less industry

Commercial/Industrial – (7)

- Shops in downtown Newton occupied (3)
- Density closer to city (don’t want industrial area) (1)
- Reuse of existing facilities (1)
- Neighborhood retail (1)
- Limited industrial (1)
- More “restrictions” on industrial development for 321 – Highway 10
- Limit commercial/industrial development along 321 to interchanges

No commercial development around Highway 321
Businesses on main thoroughfares
Wendy's restaurant on corner
Direct business towards US 321
Jobs

Environment – (2)

Rural (2)
Open space preserved if property owners compensated
Green space – improvement of air & water quality

Community – (18)

Modest growth with enforced good zoning (9)
Leave Startown as is (7)
If eventually annexed would prefer Newton (1)
Organized development (1)
BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Near Anybody)

Other Comments

I hope it will not become too commercialized. We have a fire department, churches, grocery store, gas stations-we need a park and possibly a pharmacy, maybe a small family restaurant. Sidewalks would be nice and public transportation would be wonderful. I hope the small community atmosphere will continue

We think that the future of this area can be a great one, with more stores, possibly industries and recreation for the kids. And I also think that North Carolina needs a lottery, so that the revenue can stay in this state to get things that we need.