

**THE TOWN OF
WEDDINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA**



LAND USE PLAN

**AS APPROVED BY THE
WEDDINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
MARCH 2002
(WITH AMENDMENTS THROUGH APRIL 11, 2011)**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document is a statement of the community's vision for its own future and a guide to achieve that vision through the year 2012. The view of the future expressed in the Land Use Plan (i.e., the Plan) is shaped by local community values, ideals and aspirations about the best management and use of the community's resources.

The Plan uses text, maps and diagrams to establish policies and programs that the Town may use to address the many issues facing the community. Thus, the Plan is a tool for managing community change to achieve the desired quality of life.

This document serves as a replacement to the 1996 Weddington Land Use Plan that was written by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. Elements of that Plan, however, are contained in this document and are duly noted where applicable. The Plan is being adopted pursuant to NCGS 160A-383.

WHY PLAN?

Successful communities do not just happen; they must be continually shaped and guided. A community must actively manage its growth and respond to changing circumstances if it is to continue to meet the needs of its residents and retain the quality of life that initially attracted those residents to the community.

Residents of Weddington value the high quality of the natural environment, the character and diversity of their neighborhoods, as well as the strong sense of “community.” Concern about the impact of new growth has increased as residents have experienced increased traffic congestion, school crowding, and the rapid loss of natural, open areas. Effective growth management can help the community address each of these concerns.

The Town recognizes the importance of coordinating growth management efforts with Union County and adjacent communities. Accordingly, the Town and County should develop coordinated strategies for growth management to make efficient use of both valuable infrastructure that is already in place, and to prevent unnecessary loss of the surrounding open space areas where such infrastructure is not yet in place. A good plan and effective plan implementation measures can curb the trend towards sprawl development while accommodating appropriate new development.

This Plan, once adopted and applied consistently and carefully, will develop and strengthen partnerships among service providers and between the public and private sectors. The partnerships can achieve infinitely more for the community than any would acting alone. An important premise of an effective land use plan is that it creates a “win/win” situation for the public and private sectors, for existing and new neighborhoods, for open space land conservation, and for the community’s fiscal integrity and enhanced quality of life.

WHAT IS IN THE LAND USE PLAN?

This Land Use Plan focuses on land use and development issues facing Weddington, North Carolina. The following listing of sections outlines the major areas covered by the Land Use Plan.

➤ **Section II - Community Vision** defines a vision for the community’s future that is the basis for the Plan’s recommendations. The most significant aspect of Weddington’s planning process has been the high level of citizen involvement. The Town’s approach included surveys, interviews, public workshops, press releases and newsletters, in an effort to inform the public and to capture the thoughts, ideas, hopes and desires of the community. Community values set priorities for community action and plan implementation.

➤ **Section III - Goals, Policies and Recommendations** identifies specific goals and policies intended to guide future growth and development decisions.

➤ **Section IV - Plan Implementation and Administration** outlines recommended strategies needed to achieve the Plan’s goals in a manner that is consistent with the Town’s policies.

➤ **Section V - Context for Planning** summarizes existing conditions, trends and issues facing the community and establishes the setting for the Plan and the basis for its goals and policies. This section:

- Summarizes the Town’s history;
- Identifies natural environmental factors and physical constraints and opportunities that affect development within the planning area;
- Identifies demographic characteristics and trends;
- Identifies issues and regulatory considerations related to existing and future land use and the planning area;
- Establishes the basis for community design and image guidelines for the enhancement of Weddington’s natural and built environments;

- Identifies community facilities and service providers.

WHAT DO THESE TERMS MEAN?

The following terms are used throughout the Plan to convey key concepts:

Development. The physical construction of buildings and/or the preparation of land for non-agricultural uses. Development activities include: subdivision of land; construction or alteration of structures, roads, utilities, and other facilities; installation of septic systems; grading; deposit of refuse, debris, or fill materials; and clearing of natural vegetative cover.

Goal. Description of a desired state of affairs for the community in the future. Goals are the broad public purposes toward which policies and programs are directed. Generally, more than one set of actions (policies) may be needed to achieve each goal. In this Plan, goals are phrased to express the desired results of the Plan; they complete the sentence "Our goal is..."

Policy. A statement of government intent against which individual actions and decisions are evaluated.

Strategy. Individual tasks or accomplishments which, taken together, will enable the Town to achieve its goals. Strategies recommend specific courses of action to implement the Plan.

HOW SHOULD THE PLAN BE USED?

The Plan is a guide to action. It is not, itself, an implementation tool. By ensuring that individual actions are consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the Plan, the Town can effectively achieve the vision. For example, the Planning Board and the Town Council will use the Plan's policies and maps to decide whether to approve a proposed rezoning of land within its Town limits. Zoning and subdivision regulations should govern how development takes place in conformance with the Plan. Upon adoption of this Plan, the Town should review existing development regulations and ordinances to determine their consistency with this Plan.

The Plan should be a dynamic document, subject to periodic amendment when conditions within the Town change. Periodic updates of the Plan will be needed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Town.

The Plan, however, is not an ordinance. It is designed to serve as a guide for future growth and development within Weddington. The Plan therefore does not have the weight nor the mandate for enforcement as does an ordinance. The Town Council will have this Plan as a guide and a factor to consider in its future land use decisions.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Many problems faced by local governments are regional in nature. Issues such as population growth, environmental preservation, growth patterns, and the adequacy of public facilities and services often transcend local, neighborhood or Town boundaries. Accordingly, the study area of the Plan (i.e., the “Planning Area”) looks beyond the corporate limits of Weddington and includes possible future growth areas. They include those areas contained in the Weddington-Marvin annexation agreement that Weddington would have the ability to annex. It also includes other unincorporated areas to the south of Weddington that have also been identified for possible future annexation. Official Town actions in response to this Plan will be limited to the area within the Town’s current and future municipal jurisdiction.

This Plan strongly supports partnerships between Weddington, Union County and communities adjacent to the Planning Area. These partnerships should focus on coordinated growth management and service provision strategies. Through effective coordination, Town residents will enjoy the benefits of a more stable, sustainable region. Failure to coordinate will result in excessive consumption of valuable open space land.

WHO IMPLEMENTS THE PLAN?

The policies and strategies of the Plan must be implemented in a timely manner in order to ensure that the vision of the Plan becomes a reality. Who should be charged with the implementation of the goals, policies and strategies? It should be a joint effort of the Town Council, the Planning Board and Town staff.

II. COMMUNITY VISION

Weddington has the distinct atmosphere of a small town and a quality of life that provides its citizens with a sense of place that is lacking in other parts of the region. The natural environment and community structure that characterize Weddington, along with its land use regulations, have been major factors in shaping the growth of the town and making it a desirable place to live.

Local leaders are aware of the fact that the Town can not prohibit new growth from occurring. Thus, a primary community goal is to maintain the Town's character as new growth occurs. New growth must occur within a framework which is in keeping with the existing community character and which avoids negative social, economic and environmental effects on the town.

Thus, growth in Weddington is inevitable. There are those who favor continued development and more urban amenities than now exist in the community. Virtually no one supports a "growth at any cost" policy. Others, however, are happy with the Town's existing policies of promoting low-density single-family developments. This document evaluates the amount of growth likely to occur and makes recommendations concerning the location and relationship of the land uses in order to establish and maintain a healthy relationship between the developing community and the environment.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In developing a plan, the most important item is assuring that the community has ownership in the product. A public participation process can identify a community's shared preferences and can serve as a means to refine goals and objectives and ensure that Plan implementation measures address these issues. But reaching public consensus is often an intensive, time-consuming and sometimes controversial process. However, there are important benefits to active citizen involvement in the planning process, such as educating the public about local government actions, generating fresh ideas about old problems and improving the community climate of trust and teamwork. A citizenry that is given the opportunity to participate does not feel excluded, even if it doesn't take an active role. Perhaps and most important of all, effective citizen participation, no matter how time-consuming, saves time and builds support for community goals.

The Town of Weddington has taken a number of steps to make public input a meaningful part of the planning process of preparing this Plan. These include:

- The Town undertook a series of surveys (land use, recreation, and visual preference) that addressed a number of key issues facing the Town.
- The Town coordinated with the local media to create awareness of the planning effort and to solicit comments from citizens.
- The Town conducted a series of focus group meetings with a Town-appointed body of approximately 25 residents (which included developers, elected officials, and members of the Weddington Planning Board) to review the survey results and formulate plans of how the Town should grow in the future and recommend what changes, if any, were needed in overall land use planning practices in Weddington.
- The Town conducted public workshops and meetings and to inform the public about the planning process and Plan goals, objectives and possible implementation measures.

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

The Weddington planning process included a visual preference survey of Town residents and property owners that was conducted in April/May 2001. More than 100 persons took part in the survey. Attendees were asked to rank over 125 photographs of various land uses to determine their preferences and how appropriate those land uses would be in Weddington.

In addition, the Town conducted a citizens' survey, in July 2001, to further gauge public opinion on land use and recreational issues. The survey questionnaires and results are found in **Appendix A**. The survey questionnaire was mailed to owners of all parcels within the Town. Survey results were used to identify key community issues. Approximately 45% of all surveys mailed were completed and returned. The survey results showed:

- Over three-quarters (76%) of the respondents felt that preserving open space would improve the quality of life in Weddington. The survey also showed that over one-half (57%) were in favor of the Town providing financial support for the acquisition and preservation of wildlife habitat.
- Preserving the Town's rural atmosphere is extremely important to the Town's residents. The 2001 Weddington Land Use Plan Public Opinion Survey contained the question, "In your opinion, what are the most important development-related issues facing Weddington over the next 10 years?" Almost all (96%) of the respondents considered preserving the

rural/small town atmosphere to be important. The Town has grown significantly over the past two decades. This growth, coupled with the Town's current requirement that all new subdivision lots be at least 40,000 square feet in area, has resulted in significant portions of the Town being developed. Most of these areas prior to development, were farm fields or forests. Their conversion into subdivisions has caused many residents to wonder how "rural" of a feel Weddington has now and will continue to have in the future. Simply said, the rural attributes that have led many persons to move to Weddington are slowly but surely diminishing.

- New housing stock that is comparable in character to that which exists is also an important visual element to the residents of Weddington. Whereas 88% of the respondents favored single-family housing for Weddington, only 6% favored apartments.
- Prohibiting additional commercial development outside of the town center, particularly in the form of linear or strip development along roadways, is an important policy that residents feel should be maintained.
- Residents believe that the Town should maintain a single commercial center. While the existing commercial center should transition to become a more pedestrian-friendly town center, its geographic area should not increase significantly and individual businesses should be limited to the scale needed to serve primarily Weddington's residents.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

The Town's citizen outreach program identified a series of multi-faceted visions that express the overall wishes and desires of residents for the future of Weddington. Overall, the citizens of Weddington are very satisfied with the community, the Town's land development pattern and the quality of life they enjoy. Many people who have moved to Weddington did so to take advantage of the quality of life that the Town provides. When driving into Weddington from nearby Charlotte or Matthews, one notices a distinctly different land use pattern upon entering the Town. As compared with these communities, the Town has been quite successful in maintaining a low-density residential character that sets it apart from many of its neighbors.

The Plan contains many individual goals, policies and implementation recommendations. Together, these detailed statements provide guidance in achieving the Town's vision of its future. Some of these goals reflect long-standing Town policies. Others identify new directions and actions that are designed to maintain the Town's high quality of life. Recognition and discussion of the key issues formed the basis for the Town's development of community vision priorities. The following themes emerged from the public participation process, and provide key policy direction for developing the goals and objectives of the Plan and are reflected throughout the Plan:

PLAN FOR APPROPRIATE AND COMPATIBLE LAND USES:

- Plan for predominantly single-family development. Single-family subdivisions are the preferred land use type; residents continue to show limited interest in having additional commercial development in the Town.

- Pursue the exercise of the Town's extraterritorial jurisdiction. An annexation agreement and boundary has been signed between Weddington and Marvin. This boundary could be used as a starting point for establishing the Town's ETJ boundary. North Carolina General Statute 160A-360 allows municipalities with a population of less than 10,000 persons to establish an ETJ boundary up to one mile from the primary corporate limits. As Union County has adopted and is enforcing zoning, subdivision, and building code regulations in this one-mile area, the Statute requires that the Town of Weddington and Union County jointly agree upon the location of an extraterritorial boundary before one can be implemented. The Town also has the option of seeking the enactment of local legislation to grant the Town the power to exercise an extraterritorial jurisdiction.

- Monitor development patterns in the Town and surrounding areas. There is some concern about the amount and rate of growth that has been occurring. The Town grew at a rapid rate in the 1990's and many farm fields and forested areas were converted into building lots.
- Adopt land use regulations that protect and maintain the Town's open space, unique character and overall quality of life.

COORDINATE THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE PUBLIC SERVICES:

- Continue to coordinate with other jurisdictions to plan, fund, construct, and maintain a regional network of arterial and collector streets. There are a number of critical road improvements scheduled in the Weddington vicinity over the next few years, the most important two being the widening of NC 16 in Union County and the construction of Rea Road Extension coming south from Mecklenburg County and linking into Marvin-Weddington Road. This road is eventually planned to link into NC 84 between Cox Road and Twelve Mile Creek Road. That portion of the construction project between NC 16 and NC 84 is included on the local Thoroughfare Plan, although there is no funding at this time for that project. Changes in alignments, intersections or improvement schedules may affect land use planning and development in Weddington.
- Continue to coordinate development approvals with the availability of adequate water and wastewater facilities. Ensure that on-site systems are limited to those areas where centralized services are not practical and the on-site systems are adequate to meet the long-term needs of the development.

MANAGE NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Use land use planning to protect wetlands, floodplains, aquifers and wellhead protection areas.
- Create a system of open space linkages throughout the planning area. There is considerable concern over the Town's rapid rate of growth and the associated loss of open space. As indicated in Exhibit 2, most of the Town is currently zoned R-40 (i.e., 40,000 square foot minimum lots) with only limited requirements for the provision of open space in subdivisions.

- Develop strategies and regulations for protecting open spaces. There is some concern that the amount and rate of growth that has been occurring will eliminate all of the open spaces that are an essential component of the Town's character.

- Establish standards for development on steep slopes to reduce environmental impacts and hazards to residents. Developments are preferred which are built in concert with and which take advantage of their natural environmental features and attributes.

III. GOALS AND POLICIES

Future Land Use. Weddington's *Land Use Plan* is the fulfillment of extensive input and conversation that has transpired while planning for the Town's future. Land Use policies build the framework on which land use decisions can be founded. They are aimed at providing guidance in the location of future land uses and the redevelopment of existing land uses. Land use is dynamic rather than static. It is a process that is marked by public input and is dependent upon continued participation of residents and business owners for its success. The Land Use plan is that component of this document that links all the factors impacting Weddington. The purpose of the Land Use plan is to institute an ostensibly efficient direction to delineate Weddington's future development patterns - where the community members want to go and how the Town leaders can get there.

The Future Land Use map is not the zoning map for the Town. The Future Land Use map is conceptual and is intended to guide future land use decisions. Future land uses are developed in the context of all of the Plan's goals and policies.

Land Use Goals:

- Goal 1: To ensure that all new development takes place in a manner that conserves open space and scenic views.
- Goal 2: To limit development activities on environmentally sensitive lands.
- Goal 3: To preserve open space and scenic views, while providing opportunities for low-density development.
- Goal 4: To maintain the town's strong single-family residential character.
- Goal 5: To retain a mix of land uses that reinforces Weddington's unique small town character.
- Goal 6: To ensure that the type, location, and scale of existing and future commercial development in the Town provides essential goods and services for the residents of Weddington, and through the development process, preserves open space.

Goal 7: Through the conditional zoning process, provide smaller lot sizes to accommodate a variety of age and income groups, and broader residential preferences, so that the community's population diversity may be enhanced.

Land Use Policies:

Policy 1: Preserve open space and scenic views through appropriate zoning regulations. Require open space preservation in both conventional and conservation subdivisions.

Policy 2: Preserve the Town's natural resources. Depending upon the fragility of the resource, restrictions should limit or prohibit construction, grading, and even vegetative clearing.

Policy 3: Limit development to areas of the Town that have suitable soil and topographic characteristics for development.

Policy 4: Limit development in designated 100-year floodplains, wetlands and along natural waterways to reduce the risk of significant damage and injury to life and property.

Policy 5: Ensure that development is consistent with the Town's quality and aesthetic values, thereby preserving and enhancing property values.

Policy 6: Retain the character of the community by ensuring that new residential development consists of single-family homes.

Policy 7: Continue to allow manufactured housing in Weddington on individual lots within Residential (R) zoning districts in accordance with NCGS 160A-383.1.

Policy 8: Prohibit medium and high-density residential development and large-scale commercial development that could create potential traffic and safety problems for the Town.

Policy 9: Ensure that the scale and design of commercial development is consistent with the unique small-town character of Weddington. Limit such development to small-scale retail and service businesses, primarily serving Town residents, particularly specialty shops and restaurants and prohibit regional scale retail and service

commercial establishments. Provide for open space preservation in new and/or expanded commercial developments.

Policy 10: Limit the number of street curb cuts to avoid traffic congestion and ensure safety.

Policy 11: Ensure that land uses abutting residential development are compatible with the scale, intensity and overall character of existing and planned neighborhoods.

Policy 12: Consider land use descriptions shown in **Exhibit 1** and the Future Land Use Map shown in **Exhibit 2** in making zoning and development decisions.

Exhibit 1: Future Land Use Categories

Land Use	Description
Traditional Residential	This category applies to areas where most of the lots and parcels are less than six acres in area. Most of this area is platted and is, or will be zoned for 40,000 sq. ft. lots at a density of approximately 1 dwelling unit per acre, in accordance with the Town’s current Residential (R) zoning regulations.
Conservation Residential	This category applies to the areas within the Town that are currently zoned R-40 and are six acres or greater in area. Most of this area has not been platted and the Town will allow for the creation of conventional or conservation subdivisions. Conventional subdivisions shall have minimum lot sizes of 40,000 square feet, plus be subject to a 10% open space requirement. Conservation subdivisions shall be subject to a conditional zoning and allow for smaller lot sizes, yet retain a density of approximately one dwelling unit per 40,000 square feet.
Neighborhood Business	Existing commercially zoned parcels that lie in the vicinity of the “Town Center” or near the intersection of New Town Road and NC 16. This area is intended for neighborhood scale businesses that serve the needs of Weddington’s residents.

Policy 13: Through the conditional zoning process, provide for alternative smaller lot sizes to accommodate a variety of age and income groups, which promotes community, residential, and population diversity.

Policy 14: Allowing alternative smaller lots to promote residential and population diversity in the community.

INSERT

Exhibit 2: Future Land Use Map

Public Facilities and Services Goals:

Goal 1: To ensure that the park and recreation needs of Weddington residents are met with adequate recreational facilities in the area.

Goal 2: To provide safe and convenient mobility for Weddington residents of all ages.

Goal 3: To have all Weddington residents provided with an efficient delivery of emergency services.

Goal 4: To ensure that all existing and future developments in Weddington are served by adequate water and sewage disposal facilities.

Public Facilities and Services Policies:

Policy 1: Require that roads be designed and constructed to provide a high level of safety and attractiveness. Road design shall consider the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists, as well as the character of the neighborhood through which the road travels.

Policy 2: Coordinate with State and local officials to stay informed and have input on road and thoroughfare plans that impact Town residents.

Policy 3: Ensure that all new roads will be constructed to NCDOT standards.

Policy 4: Plan for and equitably fund the efficient provision of emergency services.

Policy 5: While most new roads in Weddington in the past have been publicly owned and maintained roads, continue to allow for privately maintained roads, provided they are built and maintained to meet all applicable NCDOT standards.

Policy 6: Identify the recreational needs of the Town's residents through periodic surveys and assessments, as appropriate.

Policy 7: Ensure that public recreation facilities and programs within Weddington serve the needs of all residents and are accessible to all citizens.

Policy 8: Ensure that the Town's Park and Recreation Advisory Board coordinates with civic groups to identify potential sites for both active and passive recreation, and examine methods of acquisition, operation, and maintenance.

Policy 9: Monitor and have input on utility extensions by Union and Mecklenburg Counties.

Policy 10: Require transportation, water, wastewater and drainage system improvements to be constructed concurrent with new development and that provide adequate capacity to meet demands from existing and new users.

Community Design and Image Goals:

Goal 1: To maintain and enhance the Town's aesthetic qualities and physical character.

Goal 2: To retain a single commercial center within the Town that occupies the same area as the existing commercial core. While businesses in the center will maintain the small-town scale needed to serve local residents, the design of the center should become more pedestrian-oriented.

Community Design and Image Policies:

The overriding objective of the policy guidelines set forth in this section is to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens, and future citizens of the Town.

Policy 1: Encourage the preservation of older homes and structures in the community to preserve a sense of history

Policy 2: Support the adaptive reuse of historic structures in the community.

Policy 3: Adopt design standards for future non-residential developments.

Policy 4: Consider erecting new public signs that are more attractive and appealing, and install landscaping around these signs to beautify the Town and to draw the attention of persons traveling through Weddington.

Policy 5: Give the highest priority for beautification efforts and corridor design to major thoroughfares and key entryways.

Policy 6: Coordinate with local utility companies and developers when placing electric, telephone, and cable television lines underground in accordance with the Town's Subdivision Ordinance in order to minimize removal or degradation of trees during installation and maintenance of such facilities.

Policy 7: Ensure that new commercial development is designed with pedestrian-oriented features that provide safe, attractive and convenient linkages to residential neighborhoods, wherever practical.

Policy 8: Use regulatory and non-regulatory incentives to encourage good design. Maintain development standards and regulations that provide adequate flexibility to respond to changing conditions and needs in the community.

Policy 9: Require redevelopment and new development projects to incorporate public spaces.

Policy 10: Continue to support the Weddington Historic Preservation Commission's efforts to preserve historically significant structures and sites.

Growth Coordination Goals:

Goal 1: To implement the plan through appropriate regulations and, to the extent practical, coordinate with Union County and other service providers.

Goal 2: To consider ways to coordinate the timing, location and intensity of new development with the provision of public facilities that are adequate to serve the new development.

Growth Coordination Policies:

Policy 1: Pursue planning jurisdiction over the area surrounding Weddington's borders and negotiate an extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) agreement with Union County, per NCGA 160A-360, or through local legislation, to ensure that land use, public improvements and development are consistent with the desired character of the Town.

Policy 2: Use voluntary annexation, where appropriate, to ensure that proposed developments in areas adjoining Weddington's Town limits are consistent with the Town's development standards.

Policy 3: Participate in a coordinated, regional approach to transportation planning and seek adequate funding to support all transportation needs.

Policy 4: Work closely with officials from NCDOT and Union County to ensure that subdivision plans and development proposals do not interfere with existing roads or planned roadways designated in the Thoroughfare Plan.

Policy 5: Communicate on a continuing basis with officials from Mecklenburg County, Union County and the other municipalities of western Union County to keep abreast of and have input on developments that may impact the Weddington area.

Policy 6: Coordinate with other service providers on the timing and location of installation or replacement of utilities.

Policy 7: Continue to play an active role on the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO).

Policy 8: As this Plan is not an ordinance and is not in itself binding on the Town Council, before rendering zoning change recommendations or decisions, the Planning Board and the Town Council shall carefully consider the proposed change and its consistency with the goals and policies of this Plan.

Policy 9: Coordinate with the County library system to provide convenient and accessible library services.

IV. PLAN ADMINISTRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This element provides for the implementation and ongoing administration of the Land Use Plan by:

- Describing the processes for monitoring and amending the Plan over time;
- Explaining specific strategies required to achieve the Plan's goals and objectives; and
- Scheduling the implementation of plan strategies.

PLAN MONITORING & AMENDMENT

The Land Use Plan is intended to serve as a guide for public and private development and land use decisions through the year 2012. As local and regional conditions change, changes to the policies (including maps) and strategies will be required to keep the plan current. While specific procedures for amendment should be adopted by ordinance, the following paragraphs outline the process for monitoring and amending the plan. The Town should conduct an annual review to determine its progress in achieving plan goals, objectives and strategies. During this review, the Town should evaluate development decisions (e.g., zoning changes, subdivisions, building permits and public works projects) that have been made by the Town and other jurisdictions, growth trends and the progress made in accomplishing the strategies listed in this Plan element. The result of the annual review may be to recommend revisions to policies, the future land use map or the implementation program.

POLICY REVISIONS

To ensure that the Land Use Plan remains an effective guide for decision-makers, the Town should conduct periodic evaluations of the Plan policies and strategies. These evaluations should be conducted every three to five years, depending on the rate of change in the community. Should a major review be necessary, the process should encourage input from merchants, neighborhood groups, developers, and other community interests through the creation of a Citizen Review Committee. Any Plan amendments that appear appropriate as a result of this review should be processed according to the adopted Plan amendment process. These evaluations should consider the following:

- Progress in implementing the Plan;

- Changes in community needs and other conditions that form the basis of the Plan;
- Fiscal conditions and the ability to finance public investments recommended by the Plan;
- Community support for the Plan's goals and policies; and
- Changes in State or federal laws that affect the Town's tools for Plan implementation.

LAND USE MAP AMENDMENTS

The future land use map is a guide for development and land use decisions. Changing conditions (e.g., market conditions, economic development initiatives, redevelopment prospects, etc.) will result in the need to periodically amend the future land use map. While land use amendments may occur more frequently than policy changes, they should not occur more than twice per year. By limiting opportunities to amend the future land use map, the Town will reduce the potential for incremental land use changes that result in unintended policy shifts.

DESCRIPTIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Successful implementation of the Plan results from many individual actions by the Town, other public jurisdictions, and private decision-makers over the course of many years. The vision, goals and objectives describe what the community wants to become and the policies describe how decision-makers should respond to varied circumstances. To accomplish the Plan's goals and objectives, the Town will need to accomplish many tasks throughout the life of the Plan. These key action items will be used to accomplish the Plan's goals in the initial years of plan implementation. While most of the items identified in the following discussion will be carried out by the Town, some items may require coordination with Union County or some other entity.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The following list of strategies should be reviewed and updated annually to reflect community accomplishments, new approaches to community issues, changing conditions, shifting priorities and new demands.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive or all inclusive -- the Town, County and other public and private entities will take numerous actions throughout the life of this plan to achieve the community's goals. This list of strategies is intended to identify those deemed to be of the highest priority that should be pursued by the Town over the next several years. The strategies shown are not listed in priority order as each, if implemented, will provide meaningful long-term

benefit to the Town. Notwithstanding the above, actual legislative decisions or implementation strategies made in the future in Weddington will be in the Town Council's discretion.

Strategy 1: Incorporate design standards into the zoning ordinance to ensure that non-residential developments are well designed and in harmony with neighboring land uses.

Strategy 2: Evaluate the creation of a new zoning classification to address the needs of areas of the Town where new residential development would not be appropriate.

Strategy 3: Amend the conditional use zoning review standards to require that the following be addressed on site development plans:

- a. Relationship of the proposed development to adjacent properties;
- b. Buffering, screening, and landscaping both within and around the development;
- c. Preservation of existing vegetation;
- d. Parking designs, landscaping and building layout;
- e. Access to and from the development and also within the development;
- f. The view from adjoining public roads;
- g. Architectural design;
- h. The impact of the additional traffic from the development on neighboring thoroughfares.

Strategy 4: Ensure that the Town's subdivision regulations require roads to be designed and constructed to meet North Carolina Department of Transportation (NC DOT) standards.

Strategy 5: Adopt access standards to preclude direct access from residential subdivision lots onto designated major or minor thoroughfares depicted on the Town's Thoroughfare Plan.

Strategy 6: Require subdivisions to provide individual lots access through internal subdivision roads.

Strategy 7: The Town should review its contract with the Union County Sheriff's Department on an annual basis to ensure that adequate police services continue to be provided.

Strategy 8: Allow conservation subdivision on large, unplatted parcels (i.e., subdivisions that retain R-40 housing yields but allow for smaller lot sizes), through the conditional zoning process to preserve open space and scenic views.

Strategy 9: Require conditional zoning for all commercial development to ensure that it is compatible with the community character.

Strategy 10: Conduct an annual review of this Land Use Plan to monitor the Town's progress in achieving its goals.

V. CONTEXT FOR PLANNING

The Plan sets forth a vision to emphasize, develop, and strive to be widely recognized as an aesthetically pleasing small town community, providing a superior quality of life, and family environment. The plan's intent is to make the preceding vision a reality by focusing on creating a place that feels, not just looks, like a community and functions like a community. This involves the development of places designed, constructed and maintained to stimulate and please the senses, to encourage community use, and to promote civic and personal pride. If the Town leaders adopt policies meeting the aforementioned criteria, then Weddington will not only continue to be a great place to live as its residents strongly believe it is, but also, by cultivating a sense of well-being among its residents, it will encourage value-added development.

This document presents recommendations concerning future land use planning for the Town of Weddington. The Plan provides updates on the services provided by the Town, the impacts that roads and public water and sewer facilities have had on the Town, and a report on current land use practices and patterns found in the Town. Population forecasts are also included using information from the 1995 Plan. Based on this information, a set of goals, objectives and implementation recommendations were formulated to serve as a guide to the Town's Planning Board and Town Council when making future recommendations and decisions pertaining to growth, development, and land use.

BACKGROUND

Location. The Town of Weddington lies in the northwest portion of Union County, North Carolina. Weddington is located approximately 15 miles southeast of downtown Charlotte and 10 miles northwest of Monroe. Lancaster County, South Carolina is located a few miles to the southwest (refer to Exhibit 3). Weddington covers approximately 11 square miles and is comprised of mainly low-density single-family housing. The town is located primarily in Sandy Ridge Township with a small portion in Vance Township, Union County, and one lot in Mecklenburg County. It is bordered by the City of Charlotte, the Villages of Marvin and Wesley Chapel and the Towns of Indian Trail and Stallings.

Historical Development. The Town of Weddington was incorporated in 1983. Weddington adopted zoning and subdivision regulations in 1987.

The Role of Planning. Land use planning is designed to provide strategic guidelines for the future growth and development of a community. Land use decisions made by a community are fundamental. They shape the community’s very character—what it is like to walk through, what it is like to drive through, who lives in it, what kind of jobs and businesses exist in it, how well the natural environment survives and whether it is an attractive or ugly place. In some cases, land use decisions may directly affect human life and health. Because land development patterns affect property taxes and the level of public services, land use planning decisions are closely tied to the fiscal health of the community.

Land use planning is a process through which a community reaches decisions about the future physical development of their town. A land development plan, also known as a “land use plan”, is a primary tool in the planning process. Land use plans provide a mechanism for a community to influence its growth and development. Equally important, the land use plan can be a valuable mechanism to provide protection for natural resources; preservation of rural lands; maintenance of commercial and economic bases; development of needed public facilities; and improvement the local quality of life.

Planning Area and Other Jurisdictions

The Planning Area, described on Page 9 and depicted on **Exhibit 4**, extends beyond the Town’s current corporate limits. Planning beyond the corporate limits is designed to create a *comprehensive* approach to growth management – community issues typically don’t start and end at precise boundaries, but reflect development practices and pressures within a general geographic area. Actual growth management measures, however, will be limited to within the Town’s current or future municipal jurisdiction. Preparing for growth means that development proposals should be encouraged in appropriate areas, based on land use intensity and available infrastructure, and discouraged in inappropriate areas. The determination of infrastructure availability often is dependent upon the potential of undeveloped land to permit expansion, based on a fiscal impact analysis to ascertain the economic feasibility of such an expansion. **Exhibit 4** also shows the location and proximity of other jurisdictions that will impact growth and development in, and around, the Town, current zoning in the Town and the Planning Area, and a number of “landmarks” referred to elsewhere in the Plan.

INSERT

Exhibit 4: Weddington Planning Area Map

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Weddington's natural environment is a valuable resource that provides both opportunities for development and constraints. The primary environmental factors affecting growth trends are: air quality, hydrology, topography and soils. Clean air, abundant water supplies, scenic rolling hills and prime agricultural lands enhance the Town's quality of life. Decisions affecting growth and development will have long-term impacts on the condition of these resources for future generations. By managing growth, Weddington can provide for the needs of residents and businesses without sacrificing the natural assets that contributed to the region's growth. The maps, tables and text in this section describe the opportunities and constraints resulting from the Town's natural environment.

Topography. Weddington lies entirely within the Southern Piedmont physiographic region and is characterized by a broad, gently rolling landscape, with steeper slopes along the drainage ways. Streams in the area include the Six and Twelve Mile Creeks, and other small tributaries. All of these streams eventually drain into the Catawba River to the southwest in Lancaster County, South Carolina. The highest elevations in Union County are located in the Weddington area.

The major floodplain areas are along Six and Twelve Mile Creeks, and several other tributaries. The Town of Weddington is a member of the National Flood Insurance Program and, accordingly, has adopted land use regulations that severely limit the amount of new construction that can take place within floodplain areas.

Geology. Considering the limited sewer service coverage area in Weddington, the most critical environmental limitation affecting land development is the capability of soils to handle waste disposal. Three main general types of soils are found in Weddington: "Cecil-Applying" soils in the northern portion of town; "Tatum" in the southern portion; and "Iredell-Gaston-Mecklenburg" soils concentrated in the very northwestern portion of town.

Cecil-Applying soils are characterized by gently to strongly sloping land and well-drained soils that have a loamy surface layer and dominant clayey subsoil. These soils have good development potential for roads, buildings and septic systems. The area that contains this type of soil is predominantly forestland, with some agriculture and residential development. The main management concerns for cropland or pasture are the slope and the hazard of erosion. The high content of clay in the subsoil and the slope are also limitations affecting building site development.

Tatum soil is mainly found in the western part of Union County. These soils are characterized by gently to steep sloping land and well-drained soils that have a loamy surface layer and a dominant clayey subsoil. The area that contains this type of soil is used mainly as cropland and pasture, with forestlands dominating the steeper parts. The hazards of the slope and erosion are the main management concerns for cropland and pasture use. The limitations affecting building site development are the high content of clay, the shallow depth to bedrock and the slope.

Iredell-Gaston-Mecklenburg soils are also mainly found in the western part of Union County. They vary from nearly level to steeply sloping land and have well drained soils that have a loamy surface layer and predominant clayey subsoil. The area is used mainly as cropland, pasture and forestland, with some residential development. The hazards of erosion, wetness, slow permeability, a moderate to very high shrink-swell potential, and the slope are the main management or development concerns.

Within the general soil areas, some other soil types are found in small quantities. These areas are generally found around streams, but also may be due to strongly sloping land or clayey subsoil. The same areas that are unsuitable for septic systems generally have moderate to severe limitations for building residences or small commercial buildings. All of these areas have severe limitations for building streets and roads. Union County Health Department officials, nonetheless report that the Weddington area generally contains some of the best soils found in Union County for the placement of wells and septic tanks.

Hydrology. Public water service provided by the Union County Public Works Department is available throughout the Planning Area, as shown in Exhibit 5. Nonetheless, there are many residences that are served by wells. According to the Union County Health Department, the Weddington area has an adequate supply of good quality ground water. There are different water-bearing zones, or aquifers, based on the geologic formations underground. Wells outside the slate area, west of NC 16, offer better yields than those on the east side of the highway (inside the slate area). Currently, an average yield of five to six gallons per minute exists. Generally, wells in the Weddington area are not as deep as wells in other areas of the County. There are some areas in the eastern part of Weddington where the availability of quality well water is sometimes a problem. This is especially true in areas to the east of Beulah Church Road.

COMMUNITY GROWTH

Population Growth. Weddington is part of the Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area. Over the past two decades, the Charlotte area has been growing at a rapid rate and is one of the fastest growing regions in North Carolina and the Southeast. Leading the growth in the Charlotte area has been Union County. Between 1990-2000, Census figures show that the population of Mecklenburg County (which includes Charlotte) has grown by 36%. Union County has grown at an even faster pace, 47%, during this time period. The Town of Weddington has outpaced both counties and has increased its population 76% since 1990.

The estimated population at the time of incorporation (1983) was approximately 970. According to the 2000 Census, the Town's population is 6,696. Weddington is predominantly composed of white persons living in relatively large family households. According to the 2000 Census, 96% of the population is white and 95.5 percent of Town residents live in family households. These percentages are significantly higher than the rest of Mecklenburg and Union Counties. The average household size is 3.10 people, which is also larger than household sizes in Mecklenburg and Union Counties, which are 2.49 and 2.81 persons respectively. According to the 2001 citizens' survey 7% of the population is pre-school age (younger than 6), 22% of the population is school age, 6% is college age, 24% is aged 23-44, 34% is aged 45-64, and 8% of the population is 65 and older. The 2000 Census population for Weddington and surrounding areas are presented on **Exhibit 6**.

Exhibit 6: Population Comparisons

Jurisdiction	2000 Population	Percent Increase, 1990 – 2000
Weddington	6,696	76.1%
Indian Trail	11,905	513%
Matthews	22,127	62%
Charlotte	540,828	36.6%
Union County	123,677	46.9%
Mecklenburg County	695,454	36%

Source: 2000 Census

The consistent pattern of recent growth in the Charlotte region indicates continuing strong growth in the Weddington area for the foreseeable future. The Weddington area is already experiencing higher rates of residential growth than any other portion of the Charlotte

Metropolitan region, with the exception of northeastern Mecklenburg County. This is primarily due to its location, south of Charlotte and close to the region's "Outerbelt," I-485. In addition, southern Mecklenburg and northwestern Union Counties are scheduled for a number of road improvements that will further improve accessibility to and from Weddington, the most significant one being Rea Road Extension and the widening of a portion of NC 16 from Weddington to I-485. Rea Road Extension, scheduled for completion in 2002, will give Weddington area motorists a second direct means of accessing I-485.

Projected Population. Small areas such as towns or neighborhoods provide the most difficulty for projecting populations. This is because there are many external factors that affect population changes and these are difficult to predict. Some of these factors include variable impacts of the regional or larger United States economy, fluctuations in housing costs or mortgage interest rates, or other factors that affect the desirability of one county or town versus another. Weddington's population is growing mainly due to the healthy regional economy, the town's favorable quality of life and Weddington's proximity to Charlotte. If any of these factors changes in the future, the rate of population growth in Weddington could also change.

Weddington has been experiencing fairly steady growth over the past ten years, as evidenced by the large number of new homes constructed each year. A population-forecasting model was applied in Weddington in 1995 as part of the Town's Land Use Plan. That model estimated the Town's population through 2010 based on the following assumptions:

- Steady population growth will continue into the future;
- Household size will remain constant (the 1990 Census reported 3.11 persons per household; the 2000 Census 3.10 persons per household);
- The Charlotte Metropolitan region will continue to have a healthy economy;
- Regional development trends as have evolved in the past ten years will continue to operate over the next fifteen years;
- Public sewer service will not be expanded in the Town, except for the very northwestern portion that lies in the Six Mile Creek basin;
- Public water service will not be expanded in the town during the projection period; and

- Roads will be improved according to the North Carolina DOT TIP schedule.

Several projection methodologies were tested to derive projections of Weddington's future population through 2010. The final projections were based upon the assumption that recent past population growth and new house construction trends will continue into the future. Assuming a "status quo" growth rate, the projected populations were 7,150 residents in the year 2005 and 8,400 residents in 2010. These figures likely underestimate the amount of growth given that the Town had an official population of 6,696 in 2000 and approximately 160 zoning permits, primarily for new single family dwellings, are issued annually by the Town.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Public facilities are important and often are expensive to build and subsequently maintain. Failure to plan them wisely often results in inadequate and misplaced facilities that can drain the community's funds without providing satisfactory service. It is important to take into account existing and proposed land use patterns and the existing and anticipated size, composition and distribution of the population.

In order to maintain a high quality of life for residents of residential areas, the Town needs to assure that public facilities and infrastructure are available to serve them in a convenient and functional manner. Infrastructure includes adequate means for access and mobility, water and sewer service, and stormwater systems.

The Town's basic infrastructure policies should require that transportation, water, wastewater and drainage system improvements be constructed concurrent with new development and are adequate to meet demands from existing and new users. While the Town does not currently provide utilities for the entire service area, it does require that adequate utilities be provided for all new development. Connection to a public water and/or sewer system is currently mandated for new developments based on the proposed size of the development and its proximity to existing public water and sewer lines.

Transportation. The transportation system is the circulation network of the community. It brings people and products into an area and enables them to move freely from one activity to another. Land use planning and transportation go hand-in-hand. The location and type of future land use will have an effect on traffic flow and volume. By the same token, the road network affects how land will be used in the future.

Transportation system components exert substantial and lasting influence and impacts on the configuration and characteristics of land use and development within the area they serve. They can enhance pedestrian safety, land values, community or neighborhood character and quality of life.

Weddington is a member of the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO), a regional transportation planning body. MUMPO currently consists of all municipalities in Mecklenburg County as well as Weddington, Indian Trail, and Stallings in Union County. MUMPO's decision-making body consists entirely of elected officials from its member local governments. Recommendations as to which transportation projects should be funded are made by MUMPO (as part of the region's Thoroughfare Plan or "TIP") and forwarded to NCDOT. Actual funding and construction decisions are made by NCDOT.

The Town of Weddington does not maintain any public roads. Thus, most public roads in Weddington are maintained by NCDOT. There are some privately maintained roads as well. State law forbids counties from owning and maintaining roads. Weddington's subdivision regulations require that roads be built to NCDOT standards. Most new roads in Weddington are public roads. Privately maintained roads are allowed provided they are constructed and maintained to NCDOT standards.

The main roads that presently lead into Weddington are NC 16, NC 84 and Weddington-Matthews Road. NC 16 runs north to Charlotte and south to Waxhaw and runs through the western portion of Weddington. NC 84 runs east-west and connects Weddington to Monroe. NC 84 terminates at NC 16. Weddington's Town Center is located at this intersection. Weddington-Matthews Road runs between the Towns of Weddington and Matthews. All of these are two-lane roads. The Town will not become involved with road maintenance; however, road conditions and needed improvements are to remain a high priority. Major and minor thoroughfares for Weddington are as depicted on the currently adopted MUMPO Thoroughfare Plan.

The road project with the greatest impact on Weddington has been the completion of the southern portion of the Outer Belt, I-485. The intersection of I-485 at NC 16 is approximately two miles from the northern boundary of the town. This road greatly enhances Weddington's accessibility to Mecklenburg County and points beyond.

Two other major road projects are either underway or to be started soon. A section of NC 16, which runs from the Rea Road Extension to I-485 (NCDOT Project U-2510A), is scheduled for

widening in the next five years. Right-of-way acquisition is to begin in 2002 with construction to start in 2004. Another project that will affect Weddington, making it more accessible to Charlotte-Mecklenburg and bringing more traffic through the town, is the Rea Road Extension (NCDOT Project U-2506). Rea Road currently is being extended from I-485 south to Marvin-Weddington Road and continuing to NC 16, just south of the Town Center. Completion is anticipated in June 2002.

In summary, road projects that are scheduled for the near future will make Weddington more accessible to and from the north and northwest. This area represents the southern part of Charlotte metropolitan areas, which contains a large number of residents and is growing at a fast rate. These road projects should help to shorten driving times from Weddington to south Charlotte and to the southern part of Mecklenburg County. The new Rea Road extension should alleviate some of the traffic currently being experienced on NC 16, especially during the morning and afternoon rush hour periods.

Water System. The Town of Weddington relies on Union County Public Works for the provision of public water and sewer services. The Town will not be involved in funding, operating, or maintaining a public water and/or sewer system. As indicated in **Exhibit 5**, major water lines found in the Town are located on NC 16, NC 84, Matthews-Weddington Road, Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road, and Marvin-Weddington Road.

Many of the Town's older subdivisions were developed prior to the placement of water lines in the Weddington area and thus rely on individual water wells. New subdivisions may be required to hook onto public water (and sewer) lines depending on the number of lots in the subdivision and the distance to an available line. Town regulations may require new subdivisions to hook onto public water (and sewer) lines. If County water lines are located within one-half mile of subdivisions containing 10 to 39 lots or one mile of a subdivision of 40 lots or more, then the developer must connect to these lines to provide water service and fire protection for the subdivision. As a result, in recent years, many of Weddington's subdivisions have been connected to public water.

Two major water expansions are proposed for Weddington through Year 2010. They include the placement of water lines along New Town Road between NC 16 and Cuthbertson Road and the extension of a water line along an portion of Potter Road to loop into a line that is found on Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road.

As previously mentioned, there are some areas of the Town where the quality of well water is sub-par (i.e., in certain areas east of Beulah Church Road.) Union County Public Works is presently involved in a program to help finance the construction of water lines in one such area to serve a subdivision located east of Potter Road.

Wastewater System. Union County Public Works has a limited public sewer system in Weddington, as indicated in **Exhibit 5**. The northwestern portion of Weddington is part of the Six Mile Creek basin and a limited amount of sewer service is found in this portion of the Town. Sewage in the Six Mile Creek Basin is treated on McAlpine Creek in Mecklenburg County through an agreement between Union County and Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities Department.

The remainder of Weddington is located in the Twelve Mile Creek Basin. Sewage from this basin is treated at a plant located south of Weddington near Waxhaw. There is currently a limited amount of public sewer service available in Weddington within this Basin. Union County anticipates, however, the construction of a number of lines by 2010 that will greatly increase the availability of sewer in the Town. One such line is found along Mundy's Run Branch and will extend in a southeast direction from the Town Center. (The shopping center currently found in the Town Center is hooked onto sewer via a force main that hooks back into Mecklenburg County.) A second line, located farther to the east, is partially constructed along Culvert Branch. This line has been put in by a developer and will, upon completion, extend north to near Matthews-Weddington Road. A small branch off of this main line is also being proposed for installation by the developer. Heading further east, a third line is being proposed for installation by Union County along an unnamed tributary and could serve much of the northeastern part of the Town. Finally, a line along the West Form of Twelve Mile Creek is currently under construction and, by Year 2005, is expected to extend up to Beulah Church Road. The County has plans to further extend this line northward along the Creek by Year 2010.

Police. The perception or reality of a lack of safety in a community or neighborhood can deter private community investment. Safety can include personal security as well as the structural and fire-rated safety of buildings. Police protection in Weddington is provided by the Union County Sheriff's Department. In addition to the basic level of service provided by the County, the Town contracts for the services of three deputies. In the past, the Town has made donations to these Departments. Three police officers from the Union County Sheriff's Department are assigned to Weddington and have an office in the Town Hall. The town has a contractual agreement with the Sheriff's Department and pays them for this level of service. The Sheriff's Department provides adequate police protection for the community.

Fire/Rescue. Fire protection in Weddington is provided by three volunteer fire departments. The extreme northeast portion of the town is served by the nearby Stallings Volunteer Fire Department; with that station being located in Stallings along Old Monroe Road. The Providence Volunteer Fire Department, whose headquarters are located on Hemby Road a short distance west of Weddington-Matthews Road, serves the extreme northwest portion of Weddington (as well as adjacent portions of Mecklenburg County). The remaining portions of the Town are served by the Wesley Chapel Volunteer Fire Department, with headquarters in Wesley Chapel at the intersection of Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road and Billy Howie Road, east of Weddington. The Wesley Chapel VFD also has a substation located south of Weddington on NC 16.

All three volunteer fire departments stated that current manpower and equipment is adequate to serve the needs of the area. The departments have mutual aid agreements with each other and other volunteer fire departments in the area. According to the Count Fire Marshall, response times vary depending upon the time of day and the location of the fire.

Fire departments undergo periodic reviews by the Insurance Services Office ("ISO") to determine the adequacy of the community's fire protection services and to establish the local insurance risk factor. The Providence VFD currently has an ISO rating of "6", while the Stallings and Wesley Chapel VFD's have ratings of "6/9"--- Structures have a rating of "6" if they lie within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant; otherwise they have a rating of "9". Given the large amount of growth that has taken place in the Weddington area in recent years, the Wesley Chapel VFD has purchased a latter truck and is the only VFD in Union County to have such a piece of equipment.

Parks and Recreation. Parks, Recreation and Open Space are an important part of the quality of life element for any community and an important aspect of a land use plan. Recreational facilities in Weddington are presently limited in scope and location. The Town's one existing facility, partially located within the corporate limits, Optimist Park, is located on NC 84. The park contains baseball and soccer fields, a playground, and a picnic area and is currently in the process of expanding. This facility is not owned by the Town, but rather is owned by a private not-for-profit organization. A private, membership-only swim and racquet club is also located on Weddington-Matthews Road. The Town has created a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board that meets on a quarterly basis. This board serves as the lead agency for planning, organizing and coordinating a variety of community improvement and beautification projects.

Another park facility, Colonel Beatty Park, is located west of Weddington-Matthews Road, with an entrance on this road, just south of Walker Road (near the Mecklenburg-Union County border). It is approximately 275 acres in size. Active recreation facilities include nine tennis courts, six volleyball courts, two basketball courts and five soccer fields. The facility also includes a large indoor and several outdoor picnic shelters, two playgrounds and hiking trails.

In addition, a YMCA fitness center is located in the Town Center, at the Weddington Corners Shopping Center. A second YMCA facility is located nearby in Mecklenburg County on Weddington-Matthews Road.

Schools. Schools are a vital community component. Though their primary purpose is one of educating students and preparing them for later challenges, communities also are defined by the quality of the school system. Cities with a successful school district, as measured by student performance, teacher proficiency, successful programs and available capacity add immeasurable value to community image and property values. Schools also help define neighborhoods and underscore the linkage between education and the arts.

Weddington is part of the Union County School System. The majority of students in Weddington currently attend Weddington High School, Weddington Middle School or Weddington Elementary School. The school complex housing all three schools is located on NC 84 immediately east of the Town's corporate limits. The remaining students attend Sun Valley High School (Wesley Chapel-Stouts Road), Wesley Chapel Elementary School or Indian Trail Elementary School. An elementary school is anticipated to open in Marvin in the Fall of 2002.

Union County Public Schools follows a policy that assigns students to the schools that are nearest to where they live. Of course, when a school is overcrowded, students that would normally be assigned to that school based on its proximity to them would instead be assigned to the next closest school. Weddington Elementary School (3927 Twelve Mile Creek Road) currently has an enrollment of 1,041 students. Weddington Middle School (5903 Deal Road) has a current enrollment of 865 students. Weddington High School opened in the fall of 2000 Enrollment is currently stands at approximately 1100 students. Given the high level of growth in the area, school overcrowding is a major concern throughout all of western Union County.

Adequate schools are an essential part of the Town's quality of life. The Town and the Union County Public School system should coordinate land use and school facility decisions to ensure that adequate school capacity for new development is provided as that development occurs.

Library. Libraries are another integral community service that enhances quality of life. Libraries are more than repositories of books, tapes and videos. Modern libraries have outreach programs that perform valuable community services educating, informing and entertaining all segments of the population.

The Town has plans to construct a branch facility of the Union County Library System. Library services to the residents of Weddington and Union County are provided through the Union County Public Library. The main library facility is located in Monroe and branch libraries are located in Waxhaw, Indian Trail, and Marshville. There are no public library buildings in Weddington; however, a study committee has been reviewing locations within the Town.

Towns that have or desire to have a branch library are responsible for providing the building and paying for maintenance and utilities. The County provides the staff and materials for the branch. The Union County Library provides an outreach service throughout the County to elderly individuals who cannot get out to a library and to some day care centers and nursing homes. This service is provided on an individual need basis. Typically, individuals or centers are visited by the outreach van every six to eight weeks.

General Municipal Facilities and Services. The Town of Weddington owns an historic house in the town center (at the corner of NC 84 and Weddington-Matthews Road). The house contains a public meeting room, storage space and office space for the Town staff and the three police officers who work in Weddington. There are five part-time Town employees: the Clerk/Town Administrator, a Zoning Administrator, Finance Director, Tax Collector and a receptionist. The Town has a mayor-council form of government. The Town is presently looking at the possibility of developing a new town hall facility with the possibility of having a branch of the Union County Public Library located with it.

LAND USE

The Town should explore zoning alternatives that allow for better integration of the town center and residential development within and adjacent to this center.

Nearly one-half of the Town's area, primarily within the western and southern portions of Weddington, remains undeveloped and consists primarily of farms and forestland. Certain areas in Weddington will receive significant pressure to accommodate new growth and development. When reviewing the land use element and the future land use map for this Plan, consideration should be given to the following:

- Future land uses are not zoning designations -- they are intended to guide local decisions on zoning, subdivision and other land use matters.
- Future land uses reflect a future condition -- uses designated on the map may be appropriate in 10 years, but currently may not be appropriate due to reasons of compatibility, availability of adequate public facilities, or proximity to services.
- The Future Land Use Map is dynamic -- as justified by changing conditions in the community, the future land use map should change. While map amendments should not be made frequently, periodic adjustments to better achieve community goals will help the community achieve its planning goals.
- The maps and text of the Land Use Plan are to be used together -- the text and tables in this element guide interpretation of the Future Land Use Map.
- Single-family residential land uses make up the greatest percent of Weddington' land uses. Vacant lands still comprise significant acreage in the entire Town, but continue to be developed with new single-family development. Neighborhoods, for the most part, stand-alone and are generally not connected with each other (although the Town's subdivision regulations do call for streets to be stubbed at the periphery of a subdivision in order to allow for connectivity in the future.)

Land Use and Community Growth Model. Using land development data collected in 1995, and combined with then existing land use guidelines and demographic data, a community growth model was developed by the Urban Institute at UNC Charlotte as part of Weddington's 1996 Land Use Plan. The model helped identify the general development trends in the Town--land that has been consumed by growth, land that is undeveloped and developed [large lot] parcels for which providing infrastructure will be a significant expenditure, if needed. Under that model, Weddington's land area was categorized using the following formula:

- Land that had residential development, but was located on a main road and often on large lots was categorized as Rural Residential;
- Land that has been developed as residential use in existing subdivisions or as institutional or commercial use was categorized as Developed; and,
- Agricultural, wooded and vacant parcels were categorized as Vacant.

Existing Land Use. Existing land uses are shown in **Exhibit 7** and are current as of February 2001. The exhibit illustrates generalized land uses; the associated data should be used to monitor the consistency of future growth and development in the Planning Area with the goals, policies and recommendations of this Plan.

The 1995 Weddington land use model indicated that 12 percent of the Town's land area, or approximately 1,250 acres, was "Rural Residential." Twenty-eight percent, or approximately 2,900 acres was considered "Developed," while the remaining 60 percent, or approximately 6,200 acres, was considered "Vacant." According to this model, if all Weddington's then "Vacant" land was developed at the density allowed by the Town, the Town could accommodate an additional 17,365 persons, as shown in **Exhibit 8**. With a 2000 population of 6,696, this results in the Town having a build-out population of over 23,000 persons.

Exhibit 7: Existing Land Use Map

Exhibit 8: 1995 Weddington Land Area Classification

Zoning	Number of Acres				Maximum Population Increase
	Developed	Rural Residential	Vacant	Total	
R-40	1,892.7	1,163.8	5,762.9	8,819.4	16,573
R-60	754.8	35.6	256.8	1,047.2	485
R-80	280.8	45.9	214.6	541.3	307
Total	2,928.3	1,245.3	6,234.3	10,407.9	17,365
Percent	28%	12%	60%		

Source: UNC Charlotte, Urban Institute

The vast majority of the Town’s housing stock has been constructed since 1980 and has typically been on the higher end of the housing market. The Town’s housing stock largely consists of detached single-family units on one-acre (or greater) lots. While single-family residences are predominating, the Town contains an existing small, though concentrated, area of residential duplex development along Hemby Road. The area is zoned for this type of duplex development. However, the creation of this zone is not intended to encourage this type of development, nor to suggest that other areas of the Town should be zoned accordingly.

Although the Town has grown geographically since incorporation as a result of a few voluntary annexation petitions, Weddington’s population growth has been occurring primarily from immigration into the Town. The pattern and density of new housing development is relatively uniform throughout the Town. This is largely due to the Town’s R-40, R-60, and R-80 (minimum 40,000, 60,000, and 80,000 square feet per lot, respectively) zoning regulations. Since 1998, the Town has issued an average of 160 zoning permits per year. According to the 2000 census, the average household size in Weddington is 3.10 persons. This results in a growth of approximately 500 people per year.

As indicated in **Exhibit 9**, almost all of structures within the Town of Weddington are single-family units. In November 2001, 11 duplex units and 23 mobile homes were located in the Town, as compared with 2,140 single-family units. There are no multi-family dwellings in Weddington. This is somewhat unusual as it is commonly assumed that most communities have at least some multi-family housing within their jurisdictions. However, Weddington is not a

typical town; it is a distinctive residential community whose land use regulations call for low-density single-family homes. As compared with most communities, lot sizes are somewhat greater than the norm. Older homes are scattered throughout the Town, while the newer homes are primarily found in subdivisions. Allowing alternative smaller lots in future growth will contribute to community diversity.

Exhibit 9: 2001 Weddington Housing Characteristics

Type	Number	Percent
Single-Family Units	2,140	98.5%
Duplex Units	11	0.5%
Mobile Homes	23	1.0%
Total Housing Units	2,174	

Commercial Development. As indicated previously, the Town has very limited commercial activity. The only commercial area in Weddington is located at the intersection of NC 16 and NC 84. Commercial development in Weddington is confined to that area located at the northeast quadrant of the intersection NC 16 and NC 84 (i.e., “Town Center.”) The existing commercial development is zoned for business, retail, and office uses. Uses are limited in nature and size; setback requirements are significant. Tenants in the shopping center include a grocery store, YMCA fitness center, two take-out restaurants, a mail delivery center, a gift shop, and an animal hospital. Adjacent to the shopping center is a small professional office complex and a convenience store. Weddington’s Town Hall lies adjacent to this shopping/office complex. All land that is currently zoned for commercial purposes in Weddington is found in the vicinity of the Town Center.

Although commercial facilities are limited within Weddington itself, there are numerous commercial facilities within a short distance of Weddington. There are a number of existing shopping centers within five miles from Weddington, with more planned or under construction.

The large amount of commercial development in southern Mecklenburg County and western Union County, close to Weddington, provides additional commercial development opportunities and supports existing Town demand. Future commercial development in the Town should therefore be limited due to existing traffic volumes on major thoroughfares and overall community sentiment as reflected in the 2001 public opinion survey. The visual preference

survey showed the community's clear dislike of typical suburban, strip commercial development. However, the survey also showed a preference for innovative commercial uses that blend in, rather than are differentiated from, adjacent residential areas. Such land uses, such as limited retail and office, if properly designed, can be both appealing and harmonious with adjacent land uses.

The largest existing shopping facility close to Weddington is the Arboretum, at Providence Road and NC 51. It contains over 500,000 square feet of retail floor area and contains a wide variety of stores, including grocery, discount retail, clothing, restaurants, fast food, and movie theaters. It is one of the largest shopping centers in southern Mecklenburg County and serves many of the shopping needs of Weddington residents. The Arboretum is located approximately five miles north of the Weddington "Town Center."

Located much closer to Weddington, at the intersection of NC 16 and I-485, is a smaller shopping area, that includes a strip shopping center and a two "big box" home improvement stores, as well as an office complex.

A third major shopping complex, Stonecrest, serves the Weddington area and is located at the intersection of I-485 and Rea Road. It also contains approximately 500,000 square feet of retail space and, in many respects, is similar to the Arboretum in terms of size and function.

In nearby Marvin, a commercial rezoning was recently approved by the Village Council paving the way for that community's first commercial endeavor. A fifteen-acre parcel was rezoned to accommodate a small shopping area along the west side of that portion of Rea Road Extension that lies in Marvin. No formal plans have been submitted as of yet to the Village Council for construction. A similar sized tract along the east side of Rea Road Extension that lies in the unincorporated portion of Union County and also is zoned for commercial purposes. Both areas will likely be developed once Rea Road Extension project is completed.

The Union County Board of Commissioners have recently expressed their desire to develop additional commercial facilities within the County to stem the flow of shoppers going to Mecklenburg County. Of major interest to Weddington is the Commissioners' desire to develop a major commercial complex at the intersection of NC 16 and Cuthbertson Road near Waxhaw. This area lies about five miles south of Weddington.

Other existing shopping areas that are relatively close to Weddington include Plantation Market, on Weddington-Matthews Road in Matthews; Potter Square, which lies off Old Monroe Road in

Stallings; and at the intersection of McKee Road and Potter Square in Stallings. There also are two other strip shopping centers that lie along US 74 in Indian Trail that provide many of the same shopping opportunities as are found in the other previously mentioned shopping facilities. The only true “downtown” shopping opportunities that are located nearby are found in Matthews, which includes a limited number of specialty shopping stores, restaurants, and offices.

Historical Preservation

The Weddington area has deep historical roots. Weddington faces challenges due to evolving *suburban sprawl* development patterns, which do not possess the same characteristics (rural, agricultural uses, open space) as the area’s former development characteristics. New development within the fast growing community has superimposed land uses onto what had been vacant undeveloped land. One point that will provide stability, as well as a sense of tradition, is the existence of historic sites throughout the Planning Area. As Weddington continues its pattern of new residential and non-residential development, it will be important for the Town to see that these important references to the past are preserved.

According to the 1996 UNC Charlotte Land Use Plan, there are at least ten (10) older buildings within the Town limits that have historic and/or architectural importance. Most of these buildings are large old farmhouses in restored or restorable condition. The styles found include Victorian/Queen Ann, Neoclassical, Colonial Revival, and Eclectic stylized houses. There were also a number of small folk houses. A significant market exists today for these older homes and it will be important for the Town to make every effort to assure that they remain, and remain in a state that their importance warrants. Accordingly, the Town has created a Historic Preservation Commission that meets on a regular basis.

COMMUNITY DESIGN AND IDENTIFICATION

Appearance is an issue that affects all aspects of physical planning, as well as a community’s environment. All too often the visual environment has been neglected in American communities. Weddington is fortunate in that it has only recently been under the process of transformation from rural to suburban land use. Today the community is at a crossroads; it can take measures to avoid the negative visual elements suffered by most urban areas. Many communities throughout America are virtually indistinguishable today, containing numerous architecturally similar structures, flashing lights, large signs, strip commercial development, etc. Many communities today are realizing, with the support of court decisions, that they must take an active role not only in promoting, but in regulating for an improved visual appearance.

It is a commonly held belief that the appearance and form of the environment can influence the self-expression and development of the individual. More concretely, the look of a community's surroundings is also important to the economic well being of its residents; deteriorating appearance can be tied directly to the decline of residential and business areas and their property values. Not only have private individuals and civic organizations been active in appearance campaigns, the role of government in community appearance has become an accepted necessity. Planning and land use regulations have generally been justified on the basis of health and safety concerns, rather than aesthetics. However, municipalities have for quite some time been enacting ordinances (with court support) which control appearance solely on the basis of aesthetics. Thus, community appearance activities and controls have become more frequently recognized as legitimate and important local government activities, rather than activities which are simply limited to volunteer groups.

The Town of Weddington does have an ad hoc "Beautification Committee" that is staffed by volunteers. Given the importance of the Town's appearance and character to its residents, the Town Council should consider formally creating and appointing a beautification committee to look at appearance and aesthetic issues facing the Town and make recommendations to the Town Council.

Fortunately for Weddington at present, there are few negative elements and many positive elements of the community's appearance. Since its incorporation, Weddington leaders have been successful in setting the Town apart from many of its neighbors. Sign clutter, strip development, and urban decay are not problems associated with Weddington. In many respects, the Town is fortunate that it lies in a high-growth and high-income area. As a result, what is of concern to many Weddington residents is the amount of growth that has taken place in the community, rather than the type of growth. At present, all Town entrances are designated with standard "Town Limit" signs as found in most municipalities. Although there are a number of entrance ways into the Town, the most traveled are on NC 16, NC 84, Weddington-Matthews Road, and, once it is completed, Rea Road Extension.

Although one is able to differentiate land use patterns and densities when coming into Weddington, especially from Mecklenburg County, there are no true "landmarks" that give people a sense of place or arrival in Weddington. This is largely a result of the community's development pattern, as prescribed by its land use regulations. Weddington is a suburban residential community that is being developed in terms of dispersed subdivisions, as opposed to the concentric patterns in which older towns have developed.

Without question, Weddington's suburban and rural environment is its most visible attribute. The Town's zoning regulations set it apart from many of its neighbors. Whereas neighboring areas in Mecklenburg County allow standard lot sizes as low as 10,000-15,000 square feet, 40,000 square feet is the minimum lot size in Weddington. Even in unincorporated portions of Union County, lot sizes as low as 20,000 square feet are allowed (with even smaller lot sizes allowed in clustered developments).

Site Design. Site design plays a significant role in assuring land use compatibility. Factors include transitioning between land use types, intensities, and densities using buffers and floor area ratios, conserving environmental assets using standards to preserve open space and limit impervious surfaces, providing adequate vehicular and pedestrian traffic circulation and connectivity, mitigating potential nuisances, such as signage, excessive noise, smoke, heat, light, vibration or odors detectable to human senses off the premise, and designing for public safety.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Growth is anticipated to occur throughout the Planning Area, limited primarily by infrastructure and land availability. The Town, however, continues to have little influence on how land located in unincorporated areas is developed, as it currently does not have an extraterritorial jurisdiction. The Town, however, currently regulates development pursuant to its zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations within its municipal limits. Infrastructure availability is a key growth management tool. The Town can, in the future, focus on ensuring that development does not exceed its site carrying capacity, based on environmental conditions, water and sewer availability and capacity and natural resources protection, its accessibility, via an adequate transportation network, and is consistent with locally-accepted design standards. Capacity constraints can be used to determine the development potential of a property for specific densities or intensities; development potential can be correlated to a preferred level of service (LOS) and available capacity. The Town will need to evaluate inclusion of these growth management tools in its regulations.

Annexation. Annexation is the legal process whereby the corporate limits of a town or municipality are extended to encompass additional urbanized land and population. In North Carolina, annexation is the public process by which cities may extend municipal services, voting privileges, regulations and taxing authority to new areas with the specific intent of protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare.

To prepare for long-term growth, it may become necessary for Weddington to annex adjoining lands for the well being of the community. However, annexation must be done in accordance

with State law and established policies and plans, rather than on an ad hoc basis. It is imperative that the Town establishes a defined, long-term annexation and growth strategy, as a natural extension of the Land Use Plan process – a strategy that identifies opportunities, constraints and fiscal impacts. Areas that have been targeted for possible future annexation include those unincorporated areas that are included in the Plan’s study area. These areas either lie within the Town’s annexation agreement area with the Village of Marvin (unincorporated areas primarily west of Weddington), or have been found to be eligible for future involuntary annexation (unincorporated areas primarily south and southeast of Weddington.).

At the present time, the Town of Weddington encompasses approximately 11 square miles of land area, approximately half of which is undeveloped. This is a considerable area for a town with the budget size and limited staff administered by the Town of Weddington. The purpose of this portion of the land use plan is not to identify areas that the Town may annex. Rather, its purpose is to make the future annexation process a planned and orderly process with respect to voluntary and involuntary annexations. This can be done by identifying criteria that should be used by the Town in evaluating petitions for annexation or involuntary annexations. In considering whether petitions for annexation should be favorably considered, the Town should consider the following factors:

- Whether the development of the proposed annexation area is consistent with the existing patterns of development in the Town;
- Whether the property has need for services that are not projected to be provided by the Town;
- Whether the annexation of property would be a logical geographical expansion of the Town limits;
- Whether the property and its owners would be better served by becoming a part of a Weddington or a neighboring municipality;
- Whether the property is in Union County, and whether the property is under consideration for annexation by another municipality; and,
- Whether the property is fully or partially developed, and whether the petition is from residents of the property or from a developer.

Since shortly after its incorporation, the Town of Weddington has had a policy of entering into “annexation agreements” with neighboring jurisdictions. Such agreements are subject to the provisions of Part 6, Article 4A of the North Carolina General Statutes. The purpose of such agreements is to identify areas that each community agrees NOT to annex into. Any such agreement can be valid for a period of up to twenty years. Once the agreement is executed, a participating city may withdraw from it with five years notice. To date, the Town has executed such agreements with the City of Charlotte and the Village of Marvin. The agreement with Charlotte (which was legislatively enacted) basically states that neither city will annex properties across the County line.

This section of the land use element identifies key issues relating to annexation, growth and development within the Planning Area. Most significantly, this element focuses on cooperative and coordinated growth management with the County and neighboring jurisdictions and assessing the fiscal impact on Town resources prior to committing the Town to a course of action.

Growth management strategies directly affect growth in and around Weddington. Planning and preparing for growth, and improving inter-governmental and service provider coordination, particularly in matters relating to capital improvements and development standards is critical. Particularly important is the coordinated limitation of development in inappropriate locations (*i.e.*, in open space or in outlying portions of the Planning Area) or where infrastructure is inadequate.

The Town of Weddington should take steps to ensure that in the future it does not become involved in costly annexation litigation battles with its neighbors. Other municipalities with which annexation agreements are suitable and appropriate include the Village of Wesley Chapel and the Towns of Stallings and Indian Trail.

Extraterritorial Planning Jurisdiction. The State of North Carolina allows incorporated municipalities to exercise selected land use planning authority in areas located outside of corporate boundaries. This process is referred to as extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The detailed powers and limitations of ETJ are defined in NCGS 160A-360. Due to the rapid pace of land development occurring near Weddington, the Town should pursue establishing planning jurisdiction over the area surrounding Weddington’s borders. With the County Commissioners’ and the Town Council’s consent, an extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) agreement should be prepared and adopted. This would enable Weddington to have land use planning control over

unincorporated areas in Union County that surround Weddington up to one mile from the Town's existing primary corporate limits. Given that Union County exercises zoning and subdivision regulations as well as State Building Code regulations in unincorporated areas around Weddington, the creation of an ETJ for Weddington would be subject to the approval of the Union County Board of Commissioners or by local legislation.

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY SURVEYS