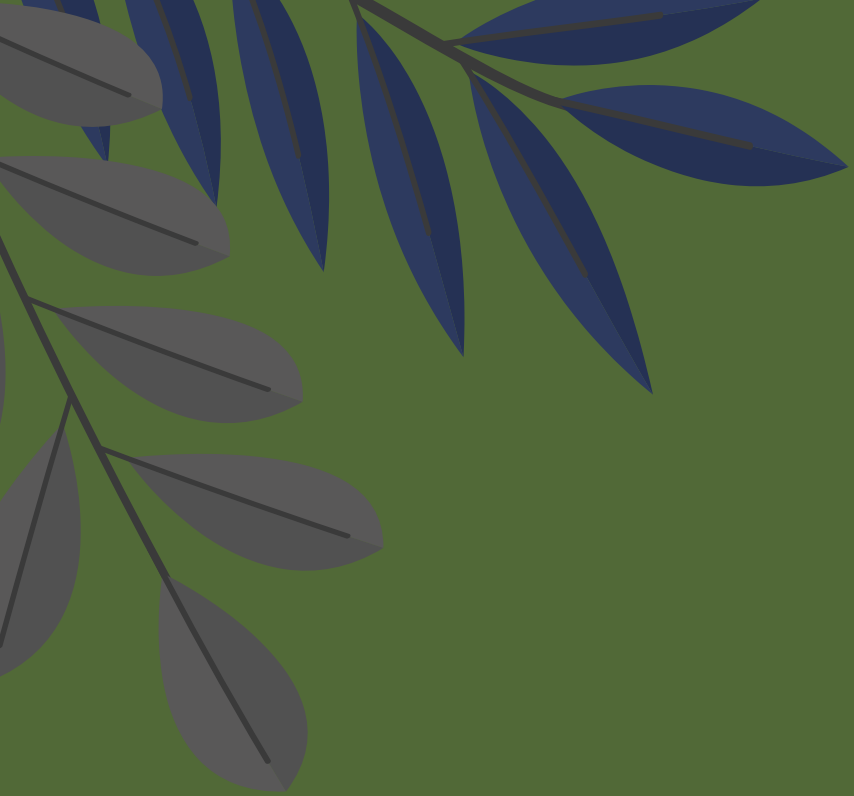




# Town Center MASTER PLAN





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# INTRODUCTION

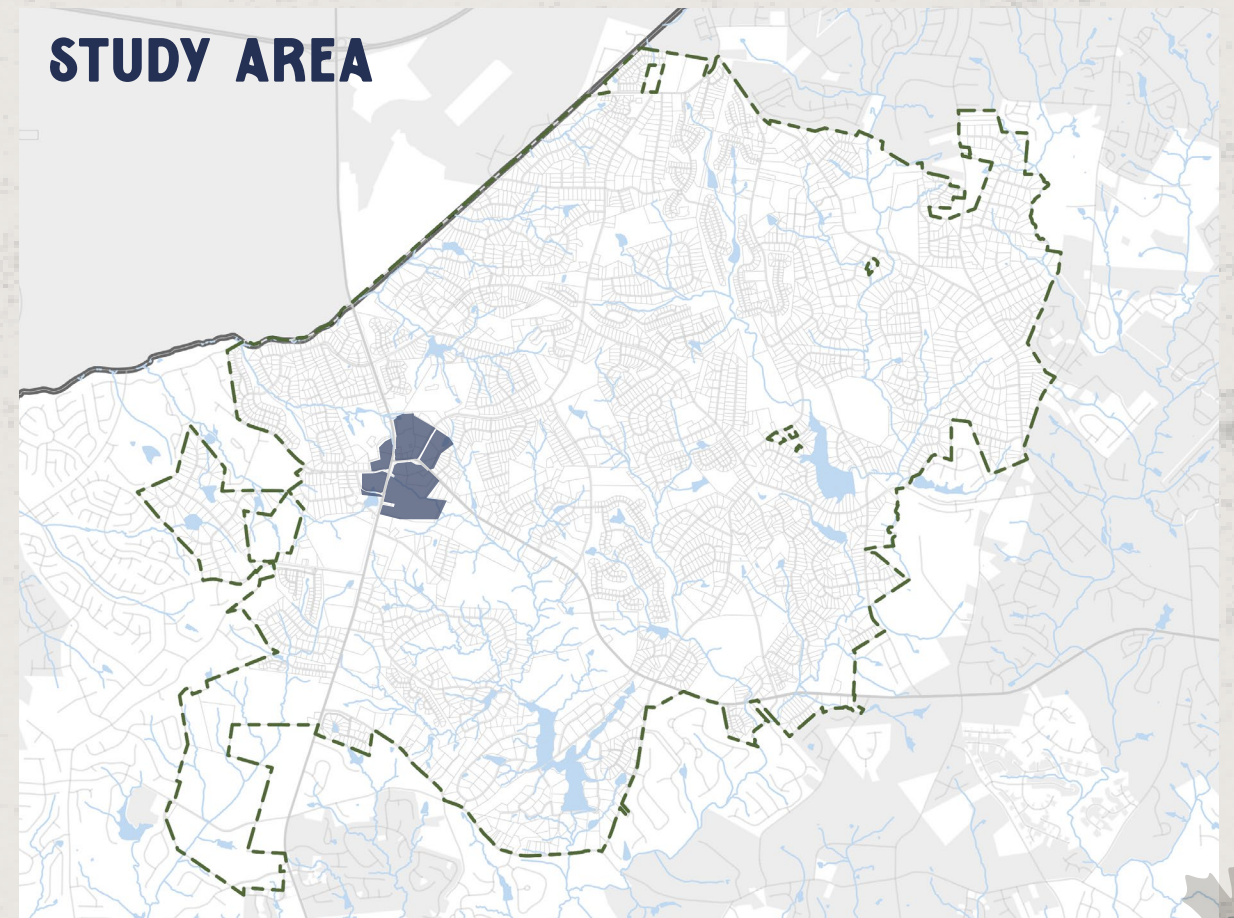
**W**eddington is a Town in Union County, North Carolina with a population of approximately 14,000 residents. Located just outside the 485 Beltway, that defines the Charlotte metro region, Weddington saw its population nearly double between the 2000 and 2020 census counts. While Weddington retains a small town feel and rural character, its growing population has brought about the need for community conversations and planning for its future.

In 2015, the Town established a Downtown Overlay District and associated Land Use Plan policies. Despite additional population growth, little development has occurred within the Downtown Overlay District over the past eight years. This master plan is intended to evaluate the location and form of a new Town Center as part of an overall analysis of the Downtown Overlay District.

The Downtown Study Area includes the parcels, including the Downtown Overlay, and designated as future business as shown to the right. All commercial development proposed within the downtown overlay, however, is subject to a conditional zoning process. Conditional zoning approvals require property specific standards and conditions (typically including a site plan) and are considered by the Town Council on an ad-hoc basis. This conditional zoning status for all commercial development within the overlay serves to blur the vision for Weddington and its Downtown District.

We can now provide some clarity. This master plan documents a community-driven process in which residents were provided multiple opportunities, over a six-month period, to provide input and share their vision for the future of Weddington and a potential new Town Center. Based on this input, this plan offers a clear picture for a Weddington Town Center that will embody the Town's character, improve community amenities, and enhance quality-of-life. This compelling vision is complemented by pragmatism, by providing a deliberate and thoughtful approach to phasing and implementation.

## STUDY AREA



# TOWN HISTORY

**EARLY 1700s** Land owners began to push for a clearer boundary between Virginia and Carolina



**1700**



**LATE 1770s** Wave of Highland Scots settle in Weddington



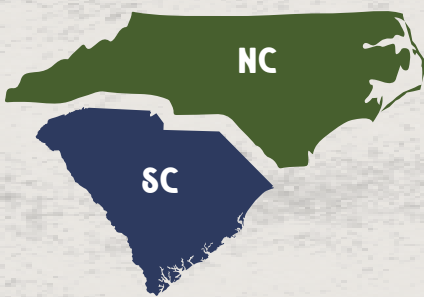
**1800**

**1865** Civil War ends

**1824** Boswell donates 4 acres of land to build Sandy Ridge Episcopal Church



**1712** North and South Carolina made an official split



**1739** Gabriel Johnston, royal governor of North Carolina and native Scotsman, encouraged 360 Highland Scots to settle in North Carolina and later provided them a ten-year tax exemption for doing so



**1775** Reuben Boswell, Town settler and veteran of the American Revolution, was born



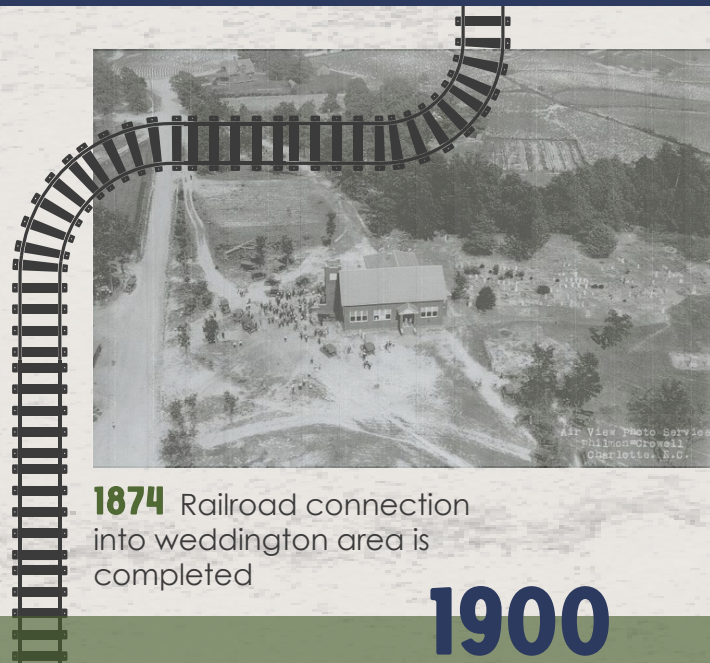
**LATE 1700s** North Carolina is a fully-formed state with permanent boundaries

**1861** Civil War begins

**1866-1877** Reconstruction era experiences economic challenges due to fewer markets for cotton

**1826** Boswell's daughter marries a man named Weddington and welcomes a baby (Reuben B Weddington)





**1874** Railroad connection into weddington area is completed

## 1900



**1934** School burns down again and is rebuilt

**1925** School burns down and is rebuilt

**1975** Weddington school closes due to low enrollment



**1994** The Thomas-Wrenn House, home to Weddington Town Hall, is designated historic by the state of North Carolina

## 2000

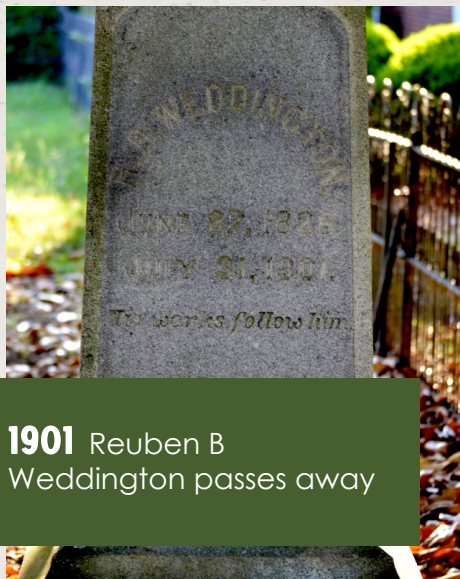
**2010** The Mecklenburg – Union Municipal Planning Organization becomes the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization, expanding collaborative efforts for the Charlotte metro area.



**2020** North Carolina General Assembly consolidates and clarifies planning responsibilities for county and municipal governments in Chapter 160D of the NC General Statutes



**1890** Sandy Ridge Methodist Episcopal Church is renamed Weddington Methodist Church in honor of the contributions of Reuben B. Weddington



**1901** Reuben B Weddington passes away



**1983** House Bill 597, an act to incorporate the Town of Weddington in Union County becomes effective



**2013** Weddington Land Use Plan is adopted



**2015** Zoning Downtown Overlay District is created



**2019** Weddington adopts an updated Land Use Plan

**2017** Town Purchased one adjacent parcel by Town Hall





# VIRTUAL Engagement

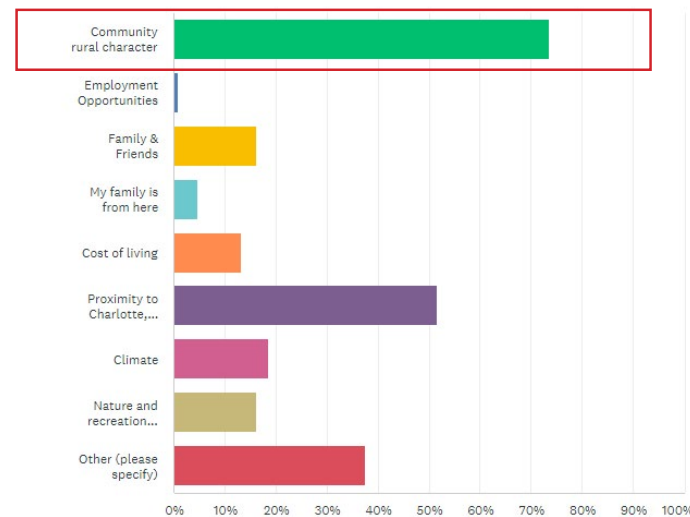
Since its launch on February 1, 2023 the interactive project website was viewed by more than **1517** unique visitors. These visitors were able to provide input through a variety of methods including the posting of comments on zoomable Town map and an open format "Idea Wall". Approximately, **271** individuals utilized the online survey that was posted to the website for over eight months.



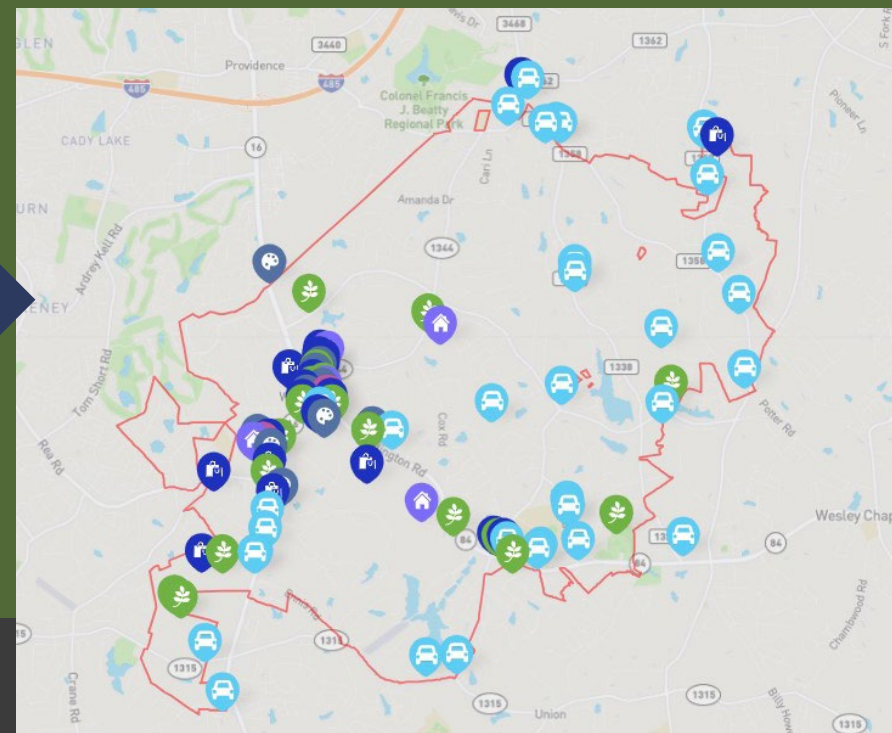
The online public engagement for this project included a number of questions to gauge the community's priorities and interests. When asked why people chose to live in Weddington, the overwhelming answer was "Community Rural Character." This theme has shaped the direction of the project and the spirit of the Town Center plan.

Why do you choose to live in Weddington? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 211 Skipped: 0



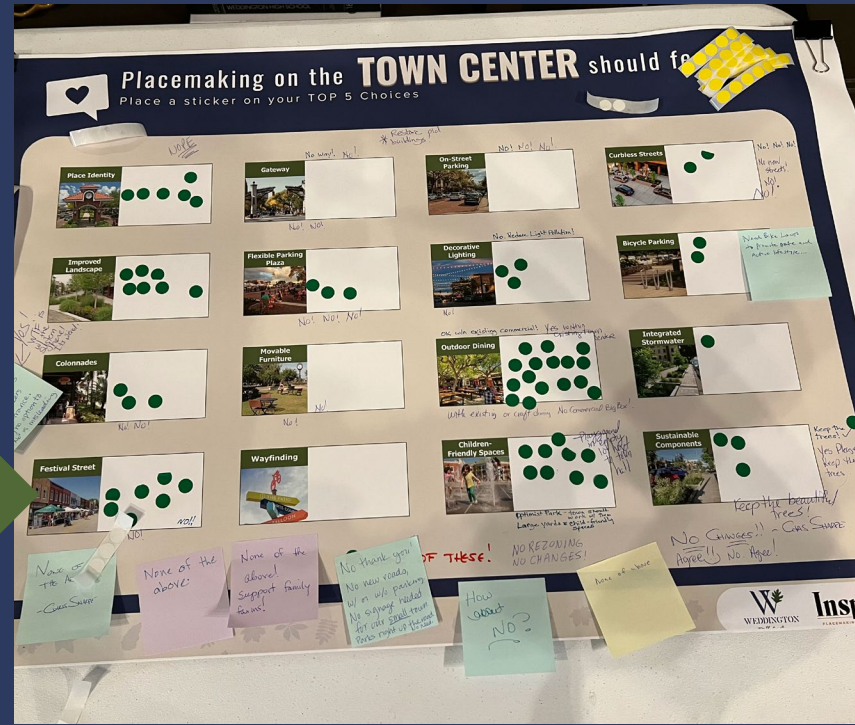
**57** individuals posted comments on the map, and many others responded to those comments. The comments that were the most common related to wanting to maintain commercial uses within the existing Downtown Overlay area, which is reflected in the Town Center project.



# IN-PERSON Engagement

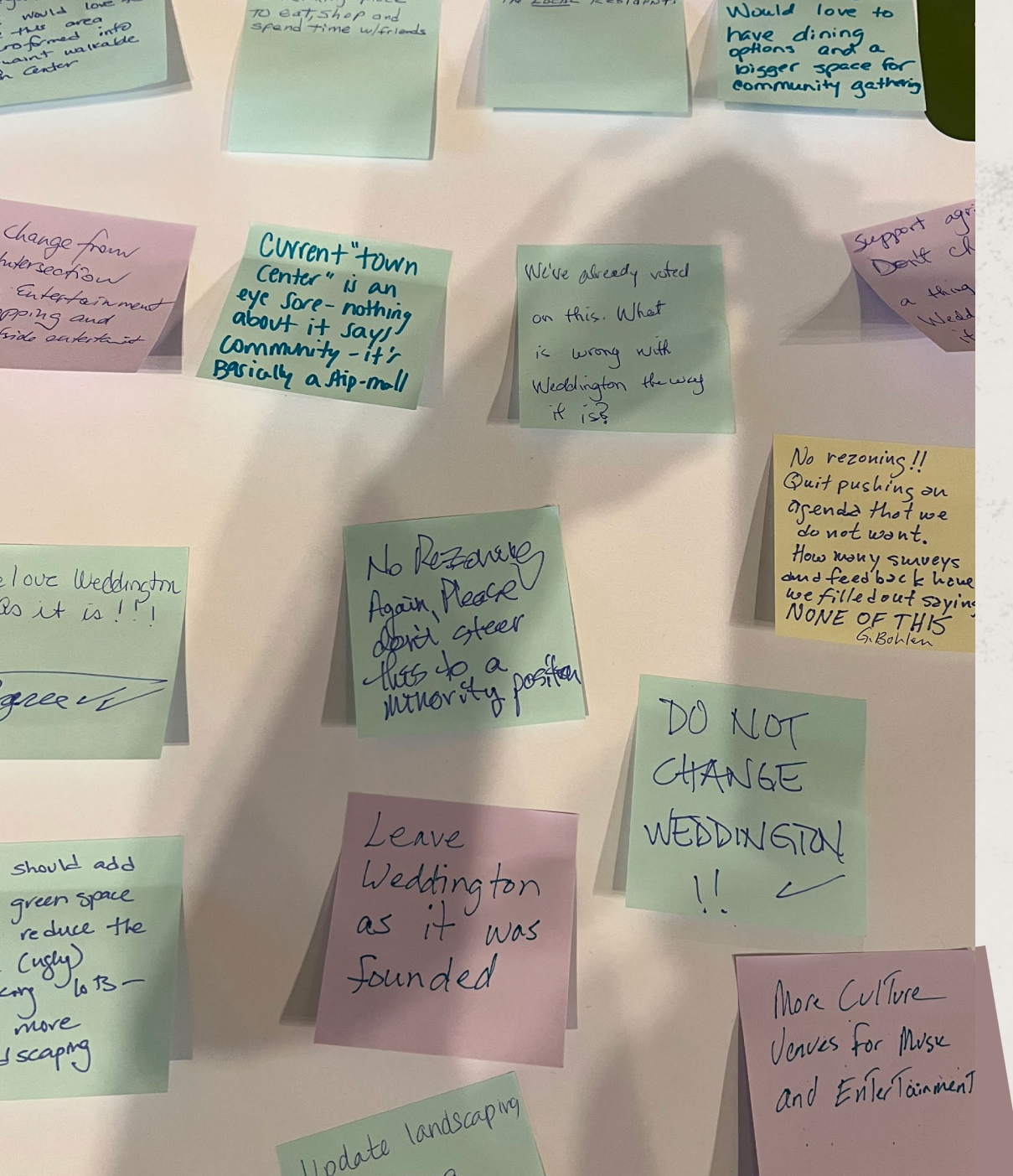
Steering Committee meetings were held at the beginning and end of the planning process and supplemented by two in-person public engagement efforts at the Weddington Town Hall, the first was held on April 21, 2023 and the second on June 20, 2023. This second public engagement event focused on the Downtown/ Town Center Master Plan and was attended by approximately forty town residents. This workshop was a continuation of the April open house that elicited initial resident feedback on the definition and design of the Weddington "town center." Through several activity stations, this design workshop was designed to identify common themes that would help advance a vision for the Weddington Town Center.

During the Open House, a board with images was set up to ask what features are of most interest, if a Town Center would be developed. The highest ranked features included outdoor dining, family friendly spaces, and improved landscaping



It was quite clear that there was not consensus on an architectural style. If a Town Center is developed on Town owned property, the Town can host a workshop to discuss styles and themes.





## People who **don't** want any change.

How do we provide solutions that create minimal change to the Town while creating impact for future evolution?

## People who **do** want change...

- want **more gathering** spaces
  - Areas for families to play, dine, and shop.
  - An area for the Town to host holiday events, festivals, or live music.
- want **more green space**
  - The Town Center should have landscaping that minimizes its impact on adjacent areas while beautifying the experience for visitors.
  - Residents see opportunity for a park on Town-owned land adjacent to Town Center.
- want **more walkability**
  - The Town Center should better serve visitors traveling by foot and bicycle or those with limited mobility.

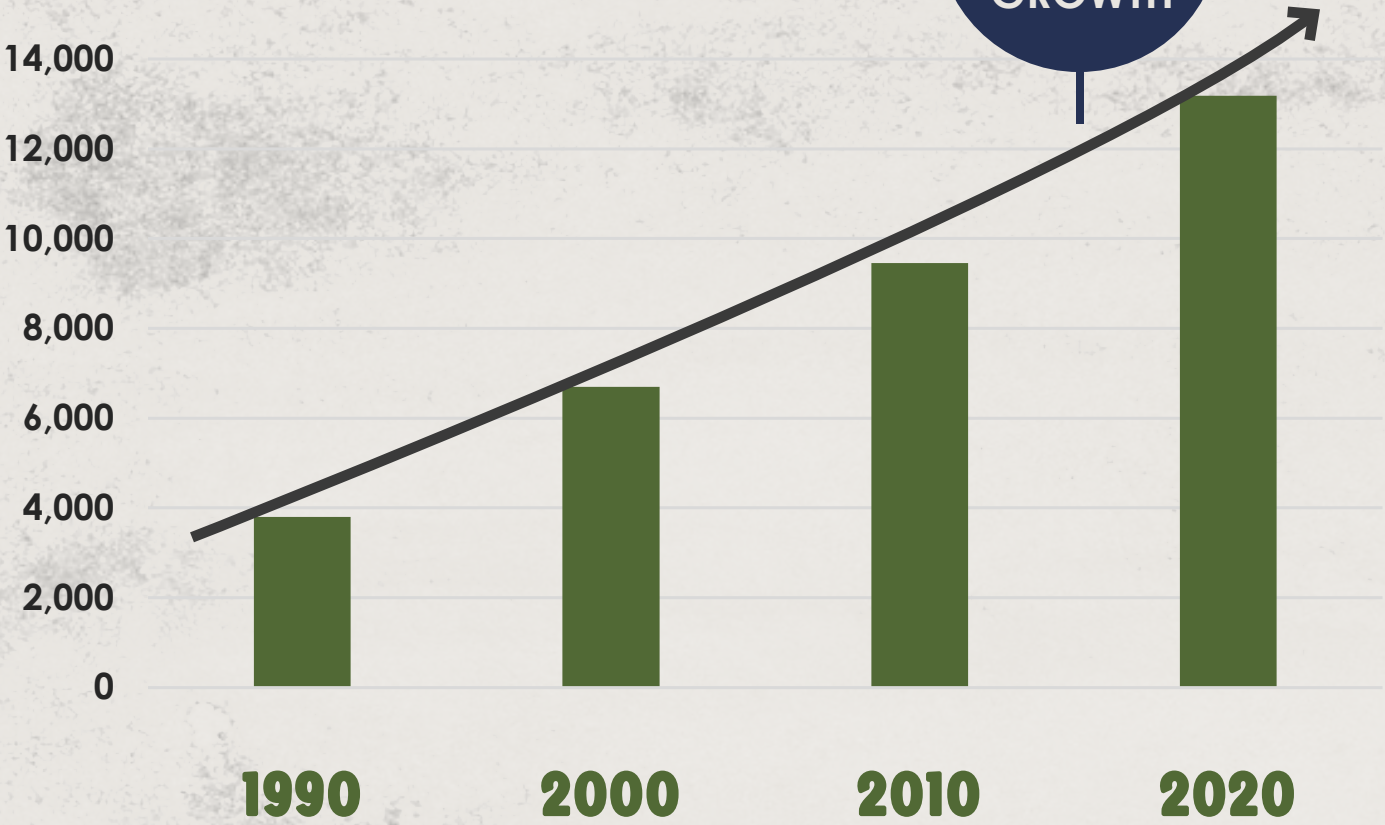
**Character Preservation is the Common Theme**



# POPULATION GROWTH IS A THREAT TO COMMUNITY CHARACTER

WEDDINGTON POPULATION

39%  
GROWTH



Weddington has increased residents in the past ten years by 39%. This rapid population growth is a threat to Weddington's community character and residents are concerned about the future quality of life in the Town. The existing study area includes over 144 acres. Any plan with high densities and intensities across this entire area would undermine the rural character of Weddington residents love and want to maintain.

Through the community engagement process, it quickly became apparent that the community was not in favor of an urban downtown with densities and intensities found in the City of Charlotte. The following guiding principles generally reflect feedback from the public engagement. This project required the crafting of a Town Center Plan and the intention is to preserve community character and enhance quality of life by concentrating on a smaller focus area within the original Downtown Study Area. A small-scale Town Center, low on intensity but high on quality, can provide more public green space and create a sense of place, without undermining the unique rural character of Weddington.

Source: U.S. Census

# Guiding Principles



# 1

## KEEP IT SMALL.

Preserving Town character is important. Some residents expressed a desire for no new development at all. In an effort to be sensitive to this sentiment, the goal of the study was to explore small scale opportunities to create outdoor dining, green space and a walkable Town Center. A prudent approach includes a reduced footprint and small independent phases.



# 2

## PROVIDE GREEN SPACE.

There is a dearth of park and public open space within Weddington. The creation of a Town Park, with an open green lawn to support a variety of activities and programs, will reduce the density and intensity of development and provide a compelling focal point for the Town Center.



# 3

## CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE.

The restaurants and stores within the Weddington Corners Shopping Center are popular with residents but it lacks walkability and opportunities for outdoor dining. The Town Center should offer a distinct, yet complementary, design that embodies the character of Weddington. While the scale should be small, the execution should be meticulous. Traditional architecture, quality building materials, and thoughtful landscape design will serve to preserve community character and improve quality of life.

# The Vision

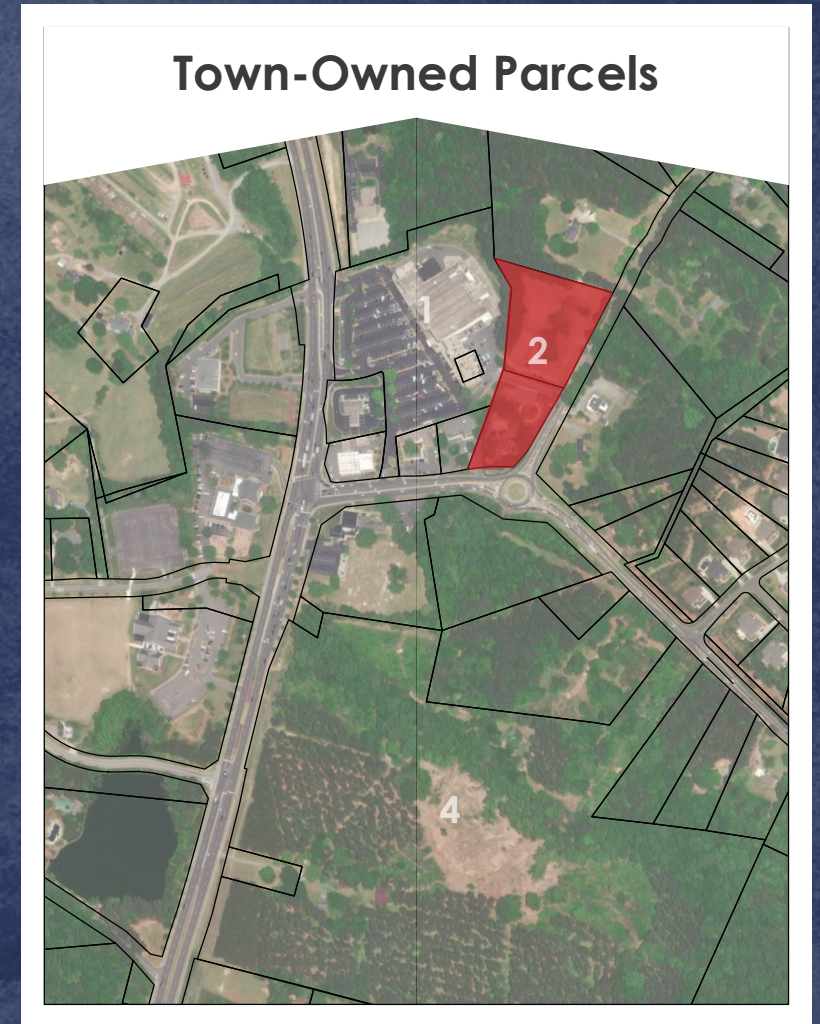
The preservation of Town character is a clear priority for the residents of Weddington. The established guiding principles, created from community input, were not aligned with the advancement of an urban plan for a 144-acre Town Center District. Therefore, the decision was made to concentrate planning and design efforts on the northeast quadrant of Providence Road and Weddington Road, an area just under 34 acres that would be referred to as the Focus Area. The initial, and perhaps only, phase, of the Town Center Plan is limited to two town-owned parcels; totaling just under five and a half acres.



**STUDY AREA: 144.07 ACRES**

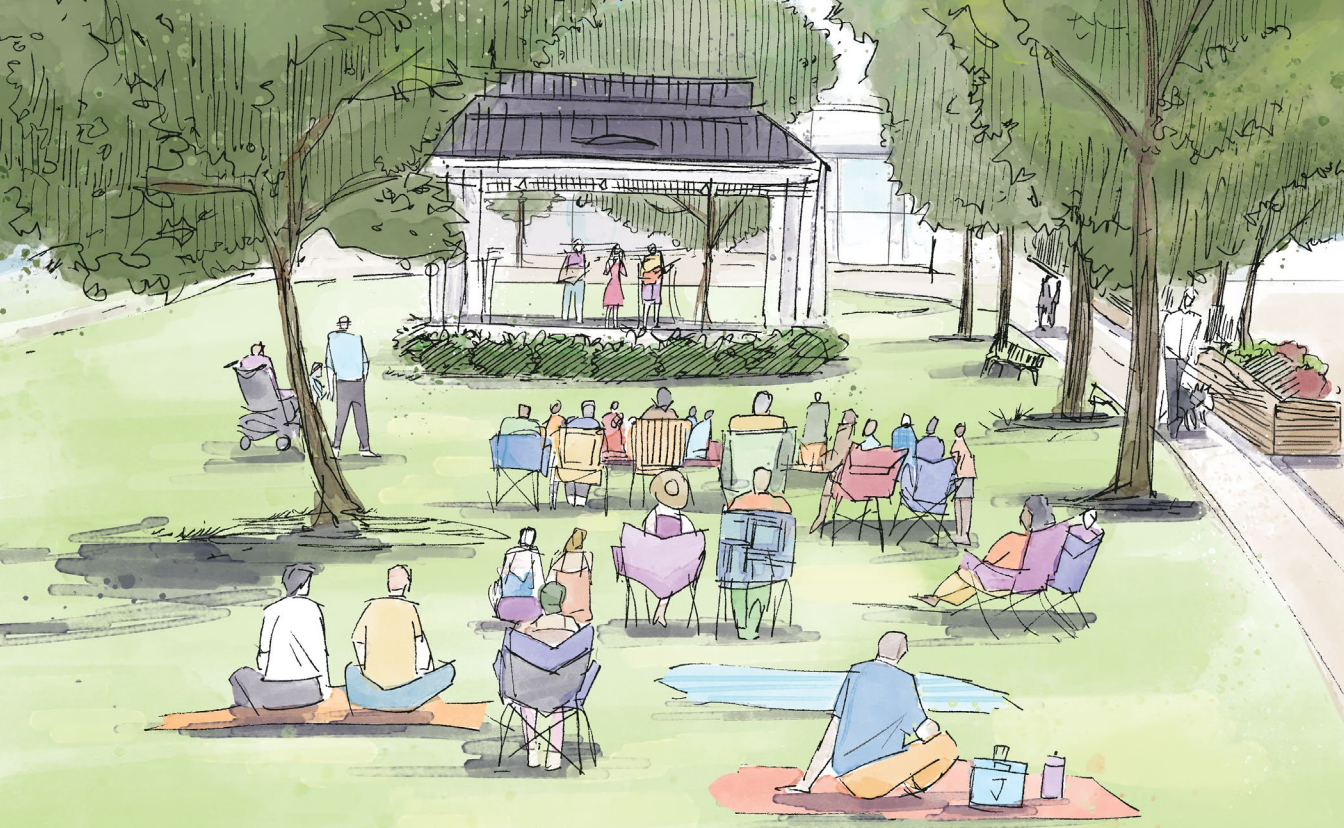


**FOCUS AREA: 33.97 ACRES**



**Town-Owned Parcels**

**PHASE 1: 5.43 ACRES**



*Create a Sense of Place*



# Create a Town Center

Small scale changes, executed well, can make a big difference. The goal of Phase 1 is to create a lush green park that will embody the character of Weddington and provide quality-of-life enhancements, such as more recreational space and outdoor dining options, that were requested by residents. With a focus on thoughtful design, low intensity, and attention to details, Phase 1 will be limited to two parcels of Town-owned properties comprising less than five and a half acres in total.

# Phase





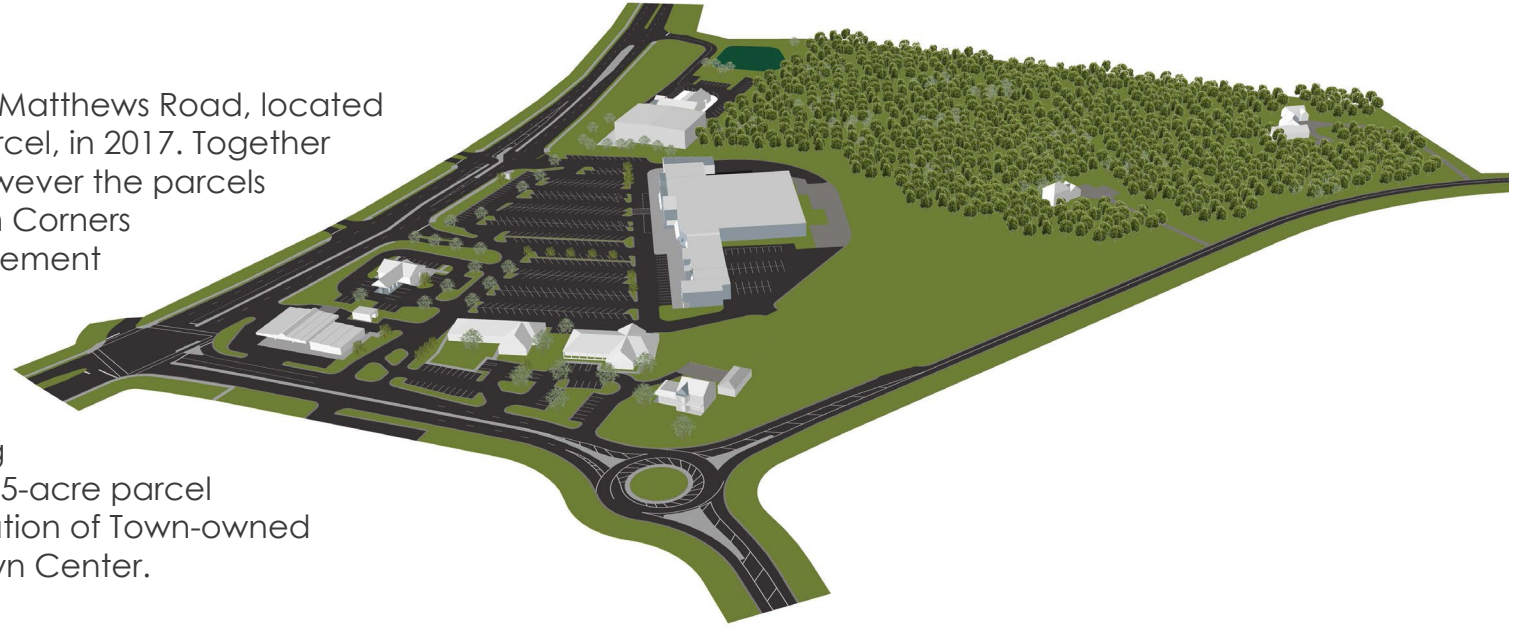
**Town-Owned Parcels**

# PHASE 1A

## Reconnect the Town-owned parcels

The Town purchased the 3.2-acre parcel at 6924 Weddington Matthews Road, located directly adjacent to (northeast) the Weddington Town Hall parcel, in 2017. Together these two parcels total 5.5 acres of Town-owned property, however the parcels are divided by a rear access road that serves the Weddington Corners shopping center. Per the terms of the Temporary Driveway Easement Agreement between the Town and the shopping center, executed in 2020, the Town has the option to relocate the driveway easement at its discretion.

Phase 1a will unify these two Town-owned parcels by vacating the existing access road and thereby creating a contiguous 5.5-acre parcel anchored by the historic Weddington Town Hall. This consolidation of Town-owned property will provide ample space for the design of a new Town Center.



**Divided: 3.30 & 2.13 Acres**



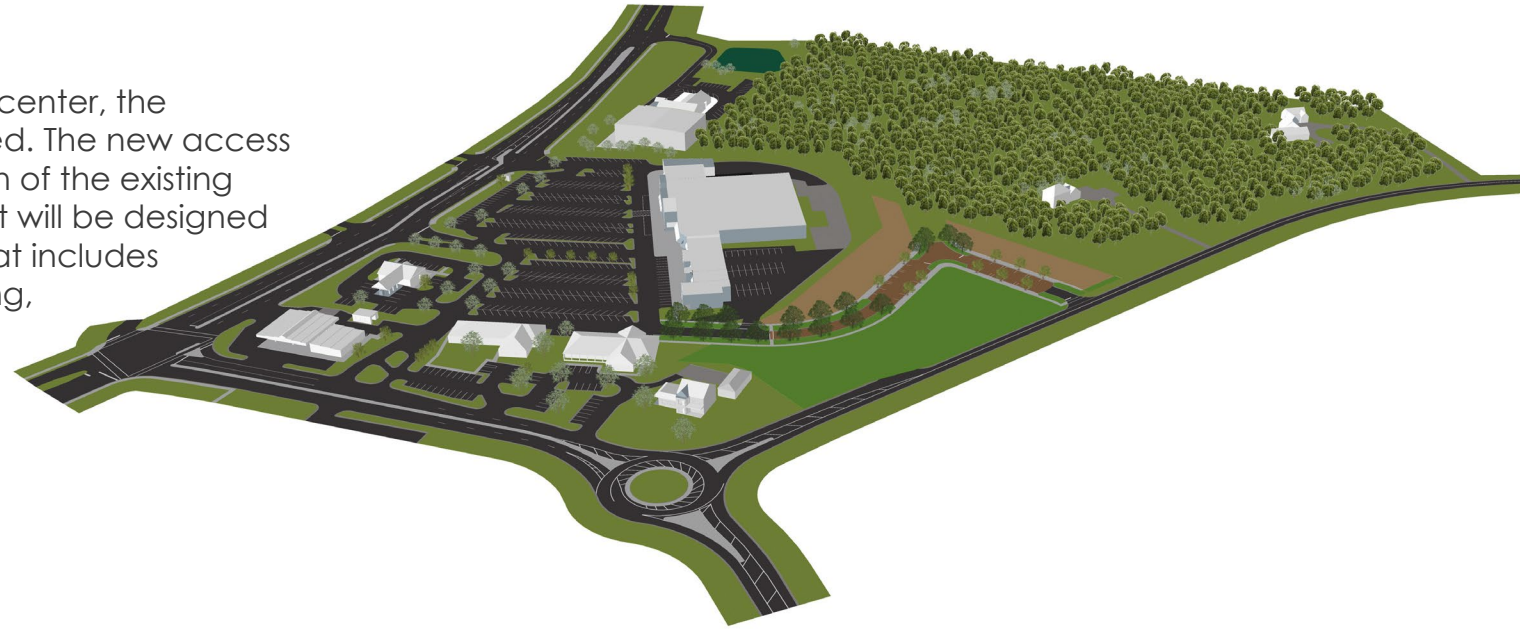
**United: 5.43 Acres Total**



# PHASE 1B

## Build a new street

Per the terms of the easement agreement with the shopping center, the vacated access road and easement will need to be relocated. The new access point from Weddington Matthews Road will be provided north of the existing location and designed as a formal Town street. This new street will be designed as a walkable "main street", with enhanced streetscaping that includes wide sidewalks, shade trees, street furniture, decorative lighting, and on-street parking.



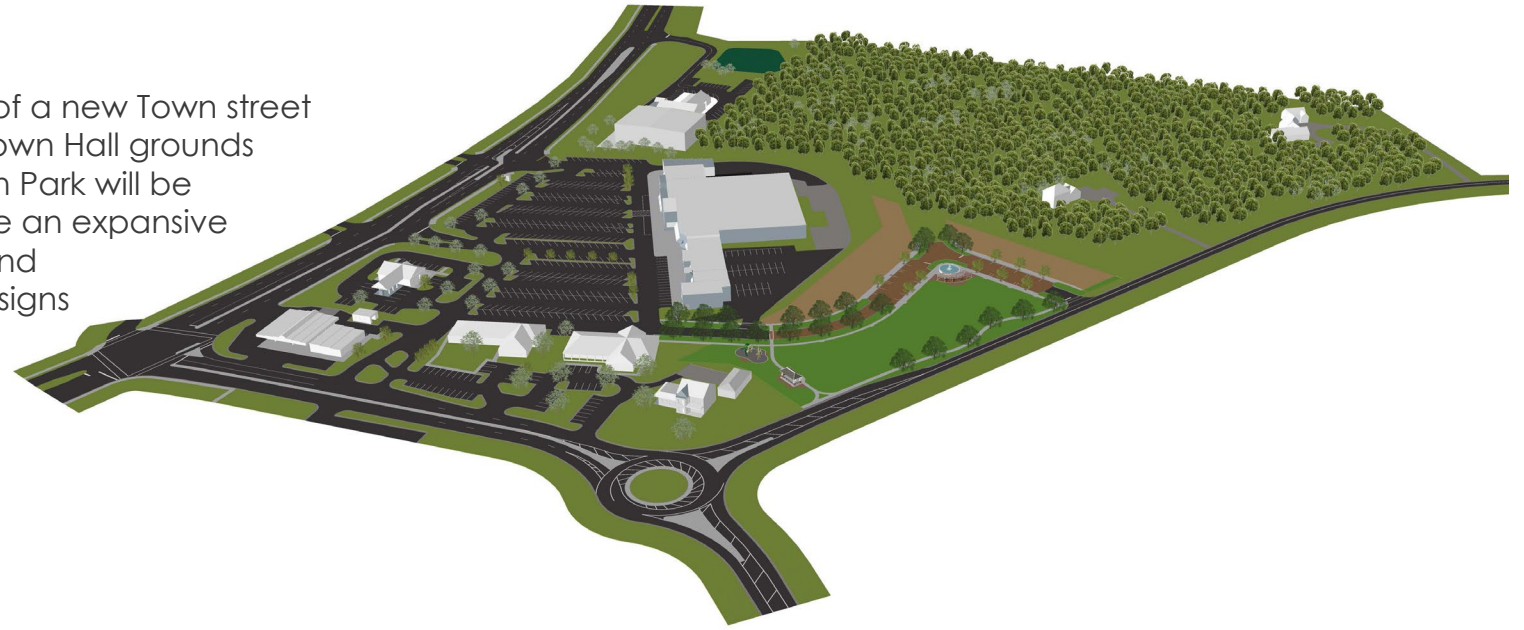
### Proposed Realignment of Road



# PHASE 1C

## Build a Town Park

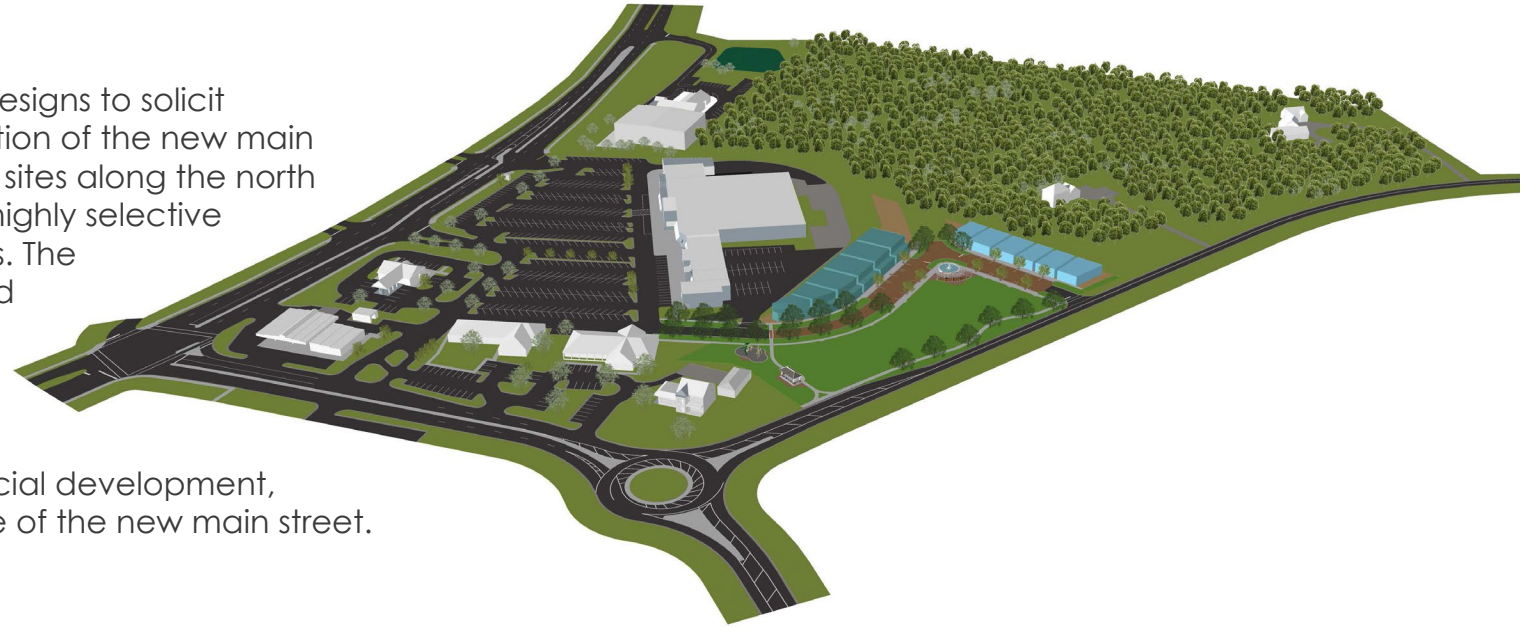
The consolidation of the Town property, and the construction of a new Town street around its perimeter, provides the opportunity to extend the Town Hall grounds and create a signature park space for residents. The new Town Park will be approximately 5.43 acres in size. Initial design concepts include an expansive grass lawn accented by a small performance stage, playground equipment and a decorative fountain. More detailed park designs should be advanced with additional community input, to create a new public space that is unique to Weddington and serves the wide range of ages and abilities within the Town.



# PHASE 1D

## Frame the park

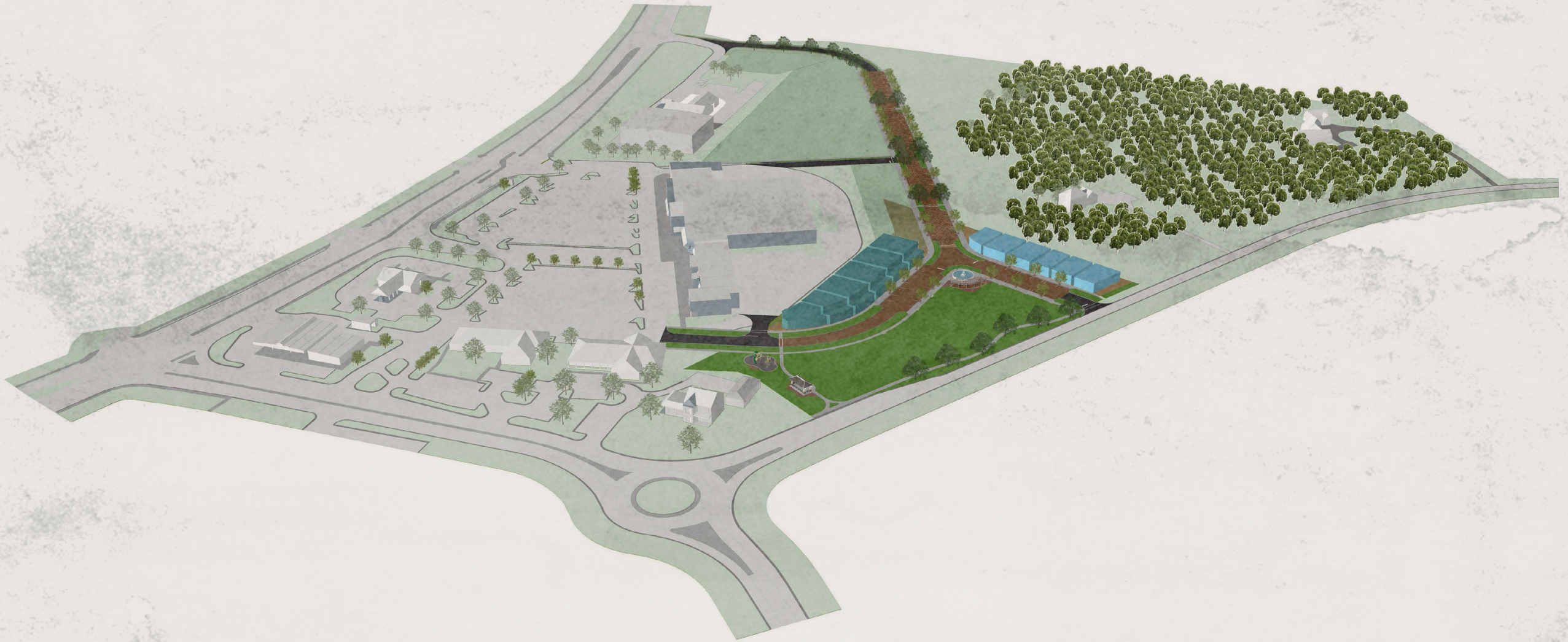
The final step in Phase 1 seeks to leverage thoughtful public designs to solicit complementary private investment. The design and construction of the new main street and park will provide multiple pad-ready development sites along the north and west edges of the new main street. The Town should be highly selective in their process to identify a potential developer for these sites. The sites provide an ideal opportunity for specialty retail stores and quality sit-down restaurants that feature outdoor dining. Strict building height and architecture standards should be developed. Two-story buildings along the western side would help mask the existing service areas of the shopping center. Noting residents concerns regarding intense commercial development, single-story buildings may be appropriate along the north side of the new main street.



# Extend the Road

## Phase 2

The completion of Phase 1, with the construction of a new main street, park, shops, and restaurants, may fulfill the community's wants and needs for a new Town Center in Weddington. Should the Town wish to expand the size of the Town Center to address future needs, Phase 2 of this Town Center Plan includes the extension of the new main street to the north and west and connecting as a full intersection at Providence Road. This road extension would provide additional street connectivity, alleviating some of the traffic congestion at the intersection of Weddington and Providence. The new main street extension should replicate the design of phase 1, including enhanced streetscaping with wide sidewalks, shade trees, street furniture, decorative lighting, and on-street parking.



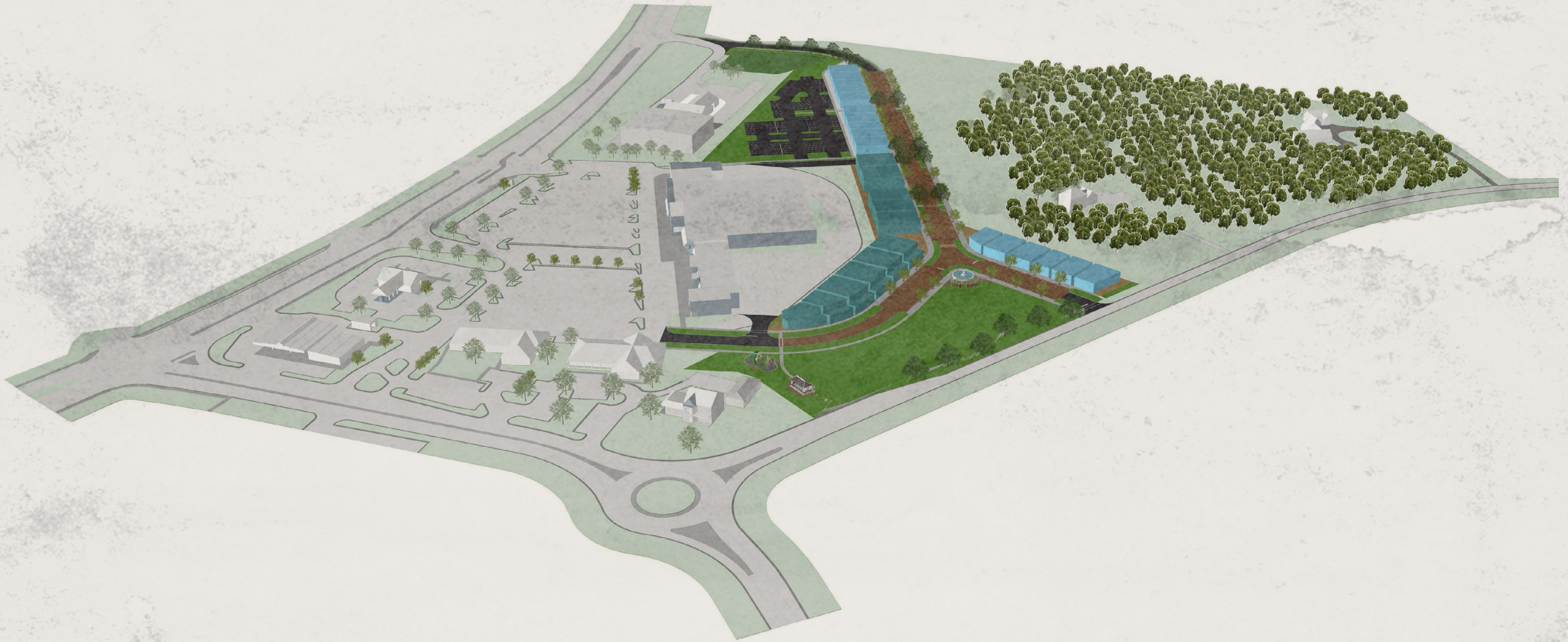
# Enhance the Town Center



Phase

The commencement of Phase 2 will reflect a desire for Phase 3, an expansion of the Weddington Town Center. Phase 1 development will provide valuable precedents and lessons learned to help guide this next phase of development. Phase 3 should include a continuation of the architectural styles and character of the first phase. Two to three story buildings may be wrapped around the rear service areas of the shopping center and front the new main street extension. The Town may want to consider a full or partial acquisition of property to the east for the creation of additional park space. The density and intensity of Phase 3 development should reflect the community's desire to maintain its small town feel and charm.















# SUMMARY

The population of Weddington has nearly *doubled* over the past 20 years and this change has dramatically altered the landscape of the community for many long-time residents. While change is inevitable, thoughtful planning can help preserve community character and enhance quality of life.

Weddington, like all communities, has diverse thoughts and opinions that reflect its diverse population. Through this planning process many residents expressed a preference for a do-nothing approach while others expressed a desire for a plan that would provide for more green space, restaurants, and retail shops, in a more traditional and walkable town center.

### **Town Council Preferred Options:**

The Town Council met on January 29, 2024 and indicated they no longer wanted to include a commercial component to the Town Center Plan. Instead, they wished to see only a park. Option 1 is solely a park with a driveway connecting to the north of the Town owned site. Option 2 includes a driveway and path around the park.

**Option 1**



**Option 2**



