Charlotte’s Growth Framework: Centers, Corridors and Wedges

Austin Chamber of Commerce
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Debra D. Campbell, Planning Director
Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Department
Discussion Outline

- Geographic and Organizational Framework
- Why we need a Growth Framework?
- What is the Framework?
- How do we use it?
- Questions
Commission formed by an Interlocal Agreement as a planning advisory body to City and County in 1954

Metropolitan Planning Agency also formed with professional staff

Authority extends to:
- City of Charlotte
- Unincorporated portion of Mecklenburg County
Planning Department

**Planning Department Duties**

- Rezoning
- Subdivision Admin.
- Land Use/Area Plans
- Economic Development
- Urban Design
- Transportation
- Capital Facilities
- Historic District
- GIS/Research
- Zoning Administration

**Planning Commission Duties**

Advise City Council on short and long range land use and design plans and general planning matters. 14 members - 7 appointed by City and 7 by County.
WHY WE NEED A GROWTH FRAMEWORK
Charlotte’s population more than doubled between 1980 and 2010

In the next 25 to 30 years, Charlotte is expected to add 280,000 more people and 320,000 more jobs

This is comparable to adding the population of St. Louis, Cincinnati or Pittsburgh.
Growth Trends

- Growing Aging Baby Boomer Population (1946-1964)
  - Simplification of lifestyle
  - Shifting of residential location from suburban to urban

  - Enjoy urban lifestyle
  - Sense of place important

- Growth in Non-Family Households
  - Growth of Empty Nesters
  - Massive growth in singles and non-child couples

- Market Potential for more Urban Environments
  - In-town housing growth increasing office and retail potential

This group has choices in the market. They won't move to an inferior location.
Changing Conditions

- Redevelopment becoming more common
- Demographic changes leading to different housing needs and preferences
- Environmental considerations included in development
- Affordable housing is increasingly challenging
- Need for new infrastructure continues to grow as upgrading and repair of existing infrastructure becomes more important
It’s not if we grow, it’s how we grow!

The Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework is intended to address “how we grow”

- Provides the broad vision for the community
- Simplified context for growth and development
- Consistent starting point for other planning efforts
  – such as area plans
WHAT IS THE GROWTH FRAMEWORK?
Adopted Future Land Use

- Includes all property within Charlotte and unincorporated portion of Mecklenburg County
- Developed with much community input
- Adopted by Charlotte City Council
- Plans are Policy not Regulatory
Charlotte’s “Comprehensive Plan”
Includes elements of a typical comprehensive plan, but not in a single document!
Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework

- Was initially endorsed by Council in early 1990s
- Update addresses recent growth trends and changing conditions
- Also expands overall concept and provides additional definition and guidance
- Update adopted by Council June 2010
Goal Statement

Charlotte will continue to be one of the most livable cities in the country, with a vibrant economy, a thriving natural environment, a diverse population and a cosmopolitan outlook. Charlotteans will enjoy a range of choices for housing, transportation, education, entertainment and employment. Safe and attractive neighborhoods will continue to be central to the City’s identity and citizen involvement key to its viability.
Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework

Guiding Principles
As it continues to develop, Charlotte will strive for:

1. High-quality, context-sensitive community design
2. Protection of established neighborhoods
3. Residential opportunities to accommodate a diverse population in quality and livable neighborhoods
4. Diligent consideration of environmental benefits and impacts
5. A healthy and flourishing tree canopy
6. More walkable places with a variety of activities
7. A diverse, growing and adaptable economy
8. Revitalization of economically challenged business and residential areas
9. Enhanced transportation networks for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit user
10. Efficient and coordinated investment in infrastructure that keeps pace with existing and future development
Establishes a vision for future growth and development by:

1. Identifying three geographic types used to categorize land in Charlotte – Activity Center, Growth Corridor and Wedge

2. Outlines desired characteristics of future development in each of these areas – but relies on area plans to provide guidance for what specific land uses are appropriate at specific locations
Activity Centers are:
Concentrations of economic and/or mixed use development located throughout the community. *(Initially identified by amount of non-residential development.)*

Expectation is for:
- more urban development form
- infill and redevelopment
- mix of uses *(likely will be achieved with a variety of zoning districts)*
- interconnected street network
- pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- enhanced infrastructure

Activity Centers: Comprise 10% of land area
1. Center City
2. Mixed Use Activity Centers
3. Industrial Centers
New activity centers may be identified through the area planning process.
Growth Corridors are:

Five elongated areas that stretch from Center City to the edge of Charlotte. They include a diversity of places, from historic neighborhoods to vibrant mixed used areas to major employment districts. *(Initially identified by high-capacity transportation facilities.)*

**Expectation is for:**

- office, residential and mixed use, especially around Transit Stations;
- industrial and warehouse/distribution uses
- redevelopment
- more pedestrian form of development, with greatest intensity development in the Transit Station Areas
- preservation/enhancement of neighborhoods
- dense, interconnected street network
- enhanced infrastructure

**Growth Corridors: Comprise about 20% of land area.**

1. Transit Station Areas
2. Interchange Areas
3. Established Neighborhoods
4. General Corridor Area
Wedges are:
The large and primarily residential areas located between Growth Corridors and excluding Activity Centers.

Expectation is for:
- preserving/enhancing neighborhoods
- low density housing and limited, strategically located moderate to high density housing
- neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses
- transportation system providing residents better access to and from work, shopping, schools and recreation
- safe, convenient and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle facilities

Wedges: Comprise about 70% of land area
HOW DO WE USE THE FRAMEWORK?
Area Plans

How will the Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework be used?

The more specific policies, plans and regulations provide guidance for decision making regarding future development, such as a rezoning decision.

For Example:
The adopted area plan provides specific guidance for the appropriate residential density of future development.
Area Plans

Catawba Area Plan
Concept Map

Charlotte's quality of life in the coming years will be largely dependent upon how the city responds to growth.

The basic premise of Charlotte's growth strategy is to guide growth into areas that can support new development or are in need of redevelopment, and away from areas that cannot support new growth.

The strategy is designed to ensure that development occurs in a way that enhances the community, sustaining Charlotte as a livable center or a growing region well into the future.

Wedges are the large areas between Growth Corridors where residential neighborhoods have developed and continue to grow. The Wedges contain mostly low density housing, as well as a limited amount of moderate density housing and supporting facilities and services.

Growth Corridors are the linear growth areas from the Central Business District to the edge of Charlotte, roughly parallel to Interstates 77 or 85 or U.S. 74. They are appropriate locations for significant new growth. Within the Growth Corridors, there are three types of subareas:

- General Corridor Areas
- Transit Station Areas
- Interchange Areas

Concept Map: Proposed Land Uses within the Wedge Area

Concept Map: Proposed Land Uses within the Growth Corridor Area
Area Plans

- Design guidance for creating an interconnected sidewalk system
- Development scenarios to illustrate well-connected mixed use
Other Plans, Policies & Ordinances

- 2030 Transit System Plan
- Transportation Action Plan
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities
- Mecklenburg County Library Facilities Plan
- Tree Canopy Preservation Goal: 50% by 2050
- Post Construction Controls Ordinance
- Tree Save Ordinance
Conclusions

- Used as a foundation for development of more detailed policies, plans and regulations;
- Establishes a consistent framework for capital planning;
- Serves as a basis for evaluating Charlotte’s success in addressing growth and redevelopment issues; and
- Establishes a common vernacular i.e. way of communicating the growth and development vision for the community.