

# THE VILLAGE OF WESLEY CHAPEL, NC

## 2030 VISION MASTER PLAN FINAL REPORT

THE COMMUNITY PLANNING WORKSHOP  
a component of  
THE DESIGN + SOCIETY RESEARCH CENTER  
at the  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA at CHARLOTTE

MAY, 2008

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Section

1

Introduction

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Wesley Chapel Overview

The Village of Wesley Chapel is located in Union County, North Carolina, approximately 20 miles southeast of uptown Charlotte, North Carolina. Wesley Chapel's corporate limits are centered on the intersection of Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road and Weddington Road / NC 84. The Town currently consists of just over 5,300 acres of land and has an estimated population of 4,285.

The Charlotte region continues to grow rapidly, and Union County remains one of the nation's fastest growing counties. This growth continues to push further out from the center of Charlotte into formerly rural environments. U.S. Census figures released in March 2008 ranked Union County as the 7th fastest-growing county in the whole nation, while neighboring Mecklenburg was ranked 10th in sheer number of people gained during 2007. Wesley Chapel is situated on the front lines of this outward expansion and thus faces significant and inevitable future growth pressures. The Village's current population of 4,285 (2005 estimate) is projected to swell to 8,611 by the year 2030, increasing the demand for residential land uses, commercial development and public services demanded by those moving to the new dwellings.

Wesley Chapel's heritage is a mix of old and new. The Village itself is young, having incorporated only in 1998. However, a tradition of agriculture and other rural uses dates back hundreds of years. More than half of the residents have lived in the village for less than seven years, adding a tradition of new settlement to the formerly rural area.

Residents old and new alike identify with the town's rural heritage. Over 60 percent ranked the rural heritage as important to preserve in a summer 2007 survey. This same sentiment is echoed on the City's website: *It is the desire of the Wesley Chapel community to preserve its identity as a*

*historic entity dating back to the early eighteen hundreds and ensure that Wesley Chapel remains a great place to live and raise a family.*

The desire to preserve the rural / small-town heritage can create tensions between long-term residents and newcomers. The vision plan for Wesley Chapel attempts to balance the desires of community stakeholders, both older and newer.

## 1.2 Inception of the project

In the fall of 2006, officials from the Village of Wesley Chapel, NC, approached faculty at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with regard to a vision planning study being undertaken for the Village by the graduate Community Planning Workshop. This class, a mixture of architecture and planning students, has a stated mission and history of introducing students to real-world issues in the Charlotte region through undertaking "live" projects to help communities resolve growth related and environmental issues. The class has been co-taught for several years by Assistant Professor Ken Chilton, an environmental planner from the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, and Professor David Walters, a British architect, urban designer and town planner from the College of Architecture at UNC-Charlotte. This program of direct community involvement exists within the umbrella of the College of Architecture's *Design+Society Research Center*, the successor to the *Charlotte Community Design Studio*, or CCDS, that has operated as a grant-funded community design organization since the late 1990s.

As a result of these approaches, meetings were held between Village officials and the faculty members, resulting in an agreement to undertake the preparation of a Vision Master Plan and zoning recommendations for the community during the fall of 2007 within the framework of the Community

Planning Workshop. This work was to be carried out for a fee of \$20,000, administered as a contract for services between the University and the Village. This fee funds the operation of the class to cover research, travel and printing costs, plus a stipend for a specially selected graduate student to act as project manager. Sandra Grzemeski, an architecture graduate student with a background as a planning intern, was chosen to fulfil this role.

Prior to this fall 2007 class, Professors Chilton and Walters held several meetings with Village officials during the spring of 2007 to clarify the scope and aims of the project, to help form a steering committee of citizens, and, most importantly, to administer a comprehensive written survey of the Village population during the spring and early summer. In addition, various demographic and development trends were analyzed prior to the commencement of the class in August, 2007. The study area of the project was defined by the Village as land within the existing Wesley Chapel boundaries plus land then identified as falling within the potential Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) of the Village.

During the summer, Village officials and steering committee members worked to identify a larger group of community "stakeholders" comprising a wide spread of community residents and business people. This larger stakeholder group provides an effective sounding board and feedback mechanism for the plan recommendations, and ultimately, it is these stakeholders who can become important advocates within the community for the plan that they have helped formulate.

## 1.3 Project Scope, Content and Timing

The scope of the project was defined as the production of a "Vision Master Plan" for the community, with a

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time horizon of 2030. This master plan would provide a framework for future development in the Village, illustrate preferred alternatives, and provide resources to guide the implementation of the plan. Clear recommendations for zoning policies and practices would be included, although it was clearly stated that the end product would not produce a full zoning ordinance. That legal documentation is beyond the scope of the project. However, in previous projects of this type, communities have been able to take the detailed recommendations and work with the appropriate Council of Governments (COG) agencies for COG staff to produce zoning and subdivision regulations that accurately match the master plan vision. The equivalent process in Wesley Chapel is an essential further step in the Village's process of successfully managing its future growth and development.

In addition to administering and analyzing the extensive written survey, faculty and students presented the full results and main conclusions to a well-attended public meeting in September 2007. At this time several points of potential conflict in the survey results were identified and discussed. More detail on the written survey, its results and major issues can be found in section 3.1. These are also summarized in the Executive Summary, section 2.

In addition to the written survey, the class devised and administered a "Community Visual Survey" to citizens at a public meeting in October, 2007. This provided a useful tool to clarify residents' opinions about key issues, as visual images can clarify certain options more accurately than multiple choice answers to written questions.

Other analytical work undertaken by the Community Planning Workshop comprised the following:

- a. A Land Capacity Analysis.  
This is a GIS-based (Geographic Information Systems)

process that enables researchers to estimate the impact of different amounts of development on a community, and to estimate the amounts of land needed under various growth scenarios. The results of this analysis can be seen in section 3.3, but in essence the studies indicated that anticipated future population growth will use up almost all the developable land in Wesley Chapel if this new growth is fulfilled by uniform developments of 1-acre lots. This means that the much-valued rural heritage of the community is under great threat and cannot likely survive this kind of development.

- b. An Analysis of the Village's Existing Zoning Regulations.  
This analysis is referred to as a S.W.O.T analysis, standing for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The main conclusions of this analysis are contained in section 3.4, but essentially the studies show that the Village's existing zoning regulations are far from adequate to protect the valued assets of the community or to promote the kinds of more sensitive development needed in the future.

- c. A Transportation and Street Condition Analysis.  
This involved a review of the present and future transportation and traffic projections from the NC DOT, together with an on-site review of all streets within the community. Particular attention was paid to connectivity within and between subdivisions, and each neighborhood in the Village was analyzed and its unique "connectivity index" established. The higher the numeric value of connectivity index, the more efficient and economic is the community's circulation system in terms of choices of route, decreased congestion and faster response times for emergency services; the lower the number, the less efficient the system. Special attention was also paid to the main intersection of Weddington Road (Hwy 84) and

Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road at the budding Village Center. Excerpts from the analysis can be found in section 4.1 (Transportation: Current Conditions) followed by a set of detailed recommendations for future action. These are also summarized in the Executive Summary, in section 2.3.1.

- d. A Study Tour of Progressive Developments in the Charlotte Region.  
Professors Chilton and Walters led a group of elected officials, committee members and stakeholders on a driving tour of Baxter, in Fort Mill, SC, and a variety of developments in Davidson, NC. These commercially successful developments provide excellent precedents for good planning and design at a small community scale that are relevant to Wesley Chapel's future growth.



Professor Chilton explains design concepts to the committee during a walking tour at Baxter Village.



# 1. Introduction

Interim presentations were made at the College of Architecture during the fall semester to groups of elected officials, committee members and stakeholders, and a detailed draft presentation of the main conclusions and recommendations was made to the same constituents in December 2007. This took the form of an extensive PowerPoint presentation and large design graphics that illustrated various development options. The community representatives studied this information over the Christmas break, and a detailed feedback meeting was held in Wesley Chapel in January, 2008.

From this point, further work to finalize the Master Plan recommendations was undertaken by a smaller core group of students under the direction of Professor Walters (Professor Chilton having left the university at Christmas for employment elsewhere). An extensive draft of major sections of the final report was sent to the Village at the end of February 2008, with a detailed feedback meeting held early in March. These and other comments were incorporated into the final report prepared during March and April 2008. The official date of the contract was defined as May 31st, 2008.



*The committee on a walking tour in  
Baxter Town Center.*

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Section

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Executive Summary

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## 2. Executive Summary

This section summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations of the Master Plan. It does not provide complete details or reasoning for the recommendations; these are set out in the relevant sections noted in and subsequent to this summary. The summary begins with a statement of the main issues and conflicts evident from the major survey of Wesley Chapel residents undertaken in the summer of 2007. The survey itself, with an analysis of its conflicts and contradictions, together with other analyses undertaken by the study group are discussed in more detail in section 3. The full set of survey questions and tabulated results is available as Appendix I, included in digital form on the CD accompanying this report.

### 2.1 Main Issues and Conflicts from Surveys and Analyses

Community answers to the written survey illustrated several conflicting priorities. This summary is expanded in section 3.5, but the main conflicts were as follows:

**2.1.1** The very powerful desire to protect and preserve the rural character and heritage of the community (see image at right) is directly at odds with the equally strong wish to maintain house lots of 1-acre. (1-acre zoning has proved to be a poor tool for preserving rural character).

**2.1.2** The majority sentiment for providing “a range of housing prices” (60 percent) is in conflict with the strong attitudes that oppose condominiums, town homes, smaller lots and higher densities (nearly 80 percent of respondents). A meaningful range of housing prices can only be achieved by utilizing some or all of these different house types.

**2.1.3** While a large majority of respondents (78 percent) feel that light industrial development is not desirable in

Wesley Chapel, and nearly half of the respondents (approx. 45 percent) feel new retail or office development is also not appropriate for the community, an even larger majority (95 percent of respondents) wants to maintain low property tax rates. However, without broadening the tax base to include a greater proportion of non-residential uses, residential property taxes will have to increase to cover the rising costs of services and the provision of additional facilities requested by a majority of residents.

**2.1.4** While a majority do not want to encourage new residential or commercial development (approx. 72 percent against new residential; 53 percent against new commercial), similar numbers of respondents (approx. 69 percent) did support new development that mixes retail with offices, restaurants and residences (see image at right).

**2.1.5** There was considerable opposition to retirement homes (over 50 percent) and to any kind of housing that would be suitable for the active elderly in the community (nearly 80 percent of respondents were against condos or town homes – types of housing suitable for elderly active residents). However, the baby boomer generation in American society, and in Wesley Chapel and the greater Charlotte region, will exert an increasingly powerful force on residential and development design and housing for seniors. Therefore appropriate housing and facilities for the elderly, ranging from active elderly housing to nursing home care will be a primary expectation in communities over the next few decades. This will enable families to “age in place” and reduce financial stress and emotional burdens.

**2.1.6** While there were consistent complaints about traffic congestion on the small number of roads that connect the different parts of the community, and the community as a whole to adjacent municipalities, this congestion is caused in part by the citizens’ preferred practice of disconnected



An example of the “Rural Heritage” citizens seek to preserve (top). Baxter Town Center, with a mix of office, residential, and retail uses (bottom).

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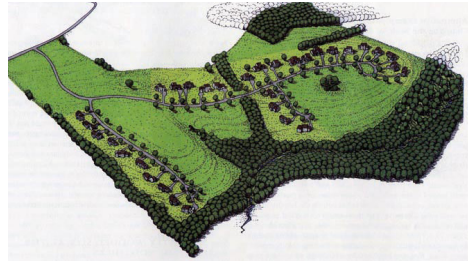
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Conventional Subdivision



Conservation Subdivision



residential subdivisions, often with only one way in and out. Additional congestion is also “home grown” by the fact that nearly 65 percent of residents commute to work in Charlotte, leading to problems at peak travel times on Wesley Chapel’s roads.

**2.1.7** Underlying many of these conflicts and contradictory opinions lies the basic conundrum that, judged by the survey, a large majority of Wesley Chapel residents do not want further growth and development to occur – 73 percent of respondents thought that more residential development was NOT important to the community. However, this anti-development sentiment runs counter to all demographic and development trends in the fast-growing region, and, moreover, to stifle future growth would deprive other Wesley Chapel residents of their legal rights to develop their property.

**2.1.8** There is a related issue that is important relative to questions of future growth: the maintenance of agriculture and farms as viable uses in a rapidly suburbanizing area. A very substantial majority (nearly 95 percent) of respondents valued agriculture as part of Village life, but the experience of other areas demonstrates that the less aesthetic aspects of farm life (smells from silage, fertilizer and animals etc) do not fit well with suburban sensibilities.

**2.1.9** One final issue underpins many of those noted above: whether citizens’ willingness to pay for improved facilities will match the civic and environmental improvements they desire.

*A wooded residential street in St. Alban’s, Davidson, N.C. (top).  
Two sets of neighborhood designs demonstrating traditional vs. conservation development (bottom).*

### 2.2 Other Sources of Information

#### 2.2.1 The Community Visual Survey

This visual survey, administered sometime after the written survey, did shed some light on some of these contradictions having to do with the design of neighborhoods. In particular, when presented with photographs that illustrated various types of development that could form alternatives to standard 1-acre lot subdivisions, a substantial majority (nearly 70 percent) supported medium-density residential neighborhoods (approx. 3 to 4 dwellings per acre) in appropriate locations. The fact that this approval rating for slightly higher densities runs directly counter to the sentiment in the written survey, where over 70 percent “strongly opposed” such densities, is a testament to the power of visual images in surveys. When presented with an image that fairly illustrates the kind of development in question, citizens are capable of more informed judgments than when simply offered verbal descriptions, and where they are left to conjure their own, perhaps inaccurate, mental pictures of development types.

However, the contradictions persisted in two other sets of images that illustrated different design techniques – the conventional 1-acre zoning that did not retain the rural character of the site versus the same number of homes on smaller lots arranged to preserve the landscape to a much higher degree. In one set, 68 percent preferred the large lot version and seemed unconcerned about the loss of rural character; in the second set 57 percent reversed this preference and supported a design that placed homes on smaller lots and conserved more landscape.

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### 2.2.2 Land Capacity Analysis

The GIS-based Land Capacity Analysis provided a clear message: if 1-acre lot zoning is maintained as the only method of residential development then the much-valued rural heritage will be lost forever as Wesley Chapel transforms into a generic suburb that could be located on the edge of any large metropolitan area in the USA. Therefore, if the community is serious about preserving its unique character and rural heritage, future zoning policy must utilize a variety of lot sizes and different types of development.

### 2.2.3 Planning and Zoning S.W.O.T (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

The basic conclusion of the S.W.O.T analysis of the Village's current zoning and subdivision regulations is that they are not well suited to the challenge of managing future growth and some of the inherent contradictions in community priorities noted above. **The recommendation of this study therefore is that a serious rewriting of all regulations take place as a matter of urgency.**

### 2.3 Key Recommendations

The strategies developed in this Master Plan thus attempt to:

- Resolve some of the contradictions from the surveys;
- Capitalize on best design, planning and environmental practices elsewhere in the USA for small communities on the edge of large metropolitan areas;
- Pay attention to demographic and development trends in the region as they are likely to affect Wesley Chapel;
- Create a framework for the inevitable future growth of Wesley Chapel that balances individual property rights with long term community goals and sustainable

environmental management to promote clean water supplies and minimize local air pollution;

- Set higher standards for future design and development of low-density residential development that will ensure that Wesley Chapel maintains its existing rural quality in outlying areas;
- Create a true "heart of the community," by designing over time a new, upgraded Village Center that can provide for a mix of uses, services and housing compatible with a small town environment. Such a Village Center development, supported by 63 percent of survey respondents, will provide a tangible heart and focus of the growing community.

In essence, therefore, and because future growth is inevitable, the overall strategy of the plan is two-fold:

- To create a more integrated Village Center, with a variety of housing, office and shops – to absorb some of the future development pressure; and
- To keep all outlying areas low-density residential, with a strong accent on landscape preservation within the design of all new developments. (See images at right for examples of these strategies.)

As a key part of this strategy, an enhanced transportation network is essential, to improve the connectivity within and around the Village, and to provide planned alternatives for through traffic to avoid the important focal intersection of Weddington and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Roads.



Baxter Town Center is an example of what development in Wesley Chapel's Village Center might be like (top).  
Serenbe, a low-density residential development near Atlanta, preserves the natural landscape of its surroundings (bottom).

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### 2.3.1 Transportation

The single most important key to improving transportation in Wesley Chapel is to improve street connectivity. This provides citizens with more choices of routes to local destinations and thus reduces congestion on the main traffic arteries. This connectivity takes three forms:

- New streets that provide new connections between existing roads to create a more effective “web” of local routes;
- Increased connectivity in new residential subdivisions so that past mistakes of isolated developments are not repeated in the future; and
- Increased linkages for pedestrians and cyclists through existing subdivisions, where practicable, by the insertion and retrofitting of greenways and pedestrian paths. By enabling some journeys to be made on foot or by bicycle, the number of cars trips can be reduced to the benefit of everybody.

These new connections are designed as a range of different types according to their place in the community and their function. These types are;

- Parkways
- Boulevards
- Avenues
- Main Street
- Residential streets
- Greenways

These street types and greenway design are described in detail in section 4.2.

The parkways noted above comprise the second important element of the proposed transportation strategy: the creation

of a “box” of streets around the Village to disperse local and through traffic away from the main intersection of Weddington Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road. This “box” uses existing roads for the most part, upgraded as necessary for their enhanced function. This set of alternative routes, if appropriately signposted, can mitigate the future increased congestion of the main Village Center intersection. This will allow the roads at the heart of the community to remain at a scale compatible with the proposed increase in pedestrian traffic within the developing Village Center over the next twenty years. Details of the proposed design for the Village Center intersection of Weddington Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road are included in section 5.1.3.

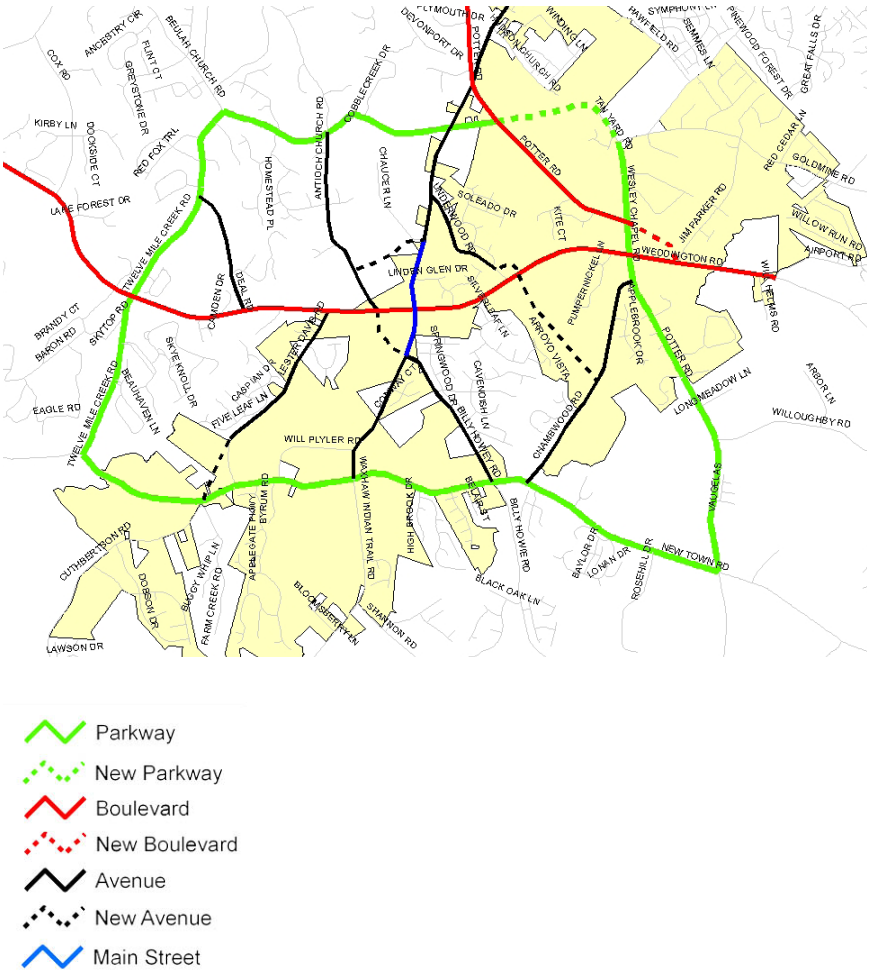
The importance of this enhanced Village Center as part of the overall Master Plan Strategy is described below in section 2.3.2.

### 2.3.2 Urban Design and Village Character

As noted above, the basic planning and design strategy for managing the future growth of the community is to increase the intensity and mix of uses around the developing Village Center while maintaining low-density residential development with higher design and environmental standards in the outlying areas.

#### 2.3.2.1 “The Heart of the Community”: The Village Center and the “Residential Village”

The “heart of the community” comprises the existing commercial areas on three quadrants of the intersection of Weddington and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Roads plus the large undeveloped tracts in the southwest and northwest quadrants of that intersection immediately behind the existing commercial development. These quadrants are conceived



Potential Road Network for Wesley Chapel



## 2. Executive Summary

as the sites for more intensive mixed-use development at the scale of a traditional small town, where residential development and small-scale local offices sit close by the retail core of the community

It is important to generate a greater intensity of use and activity for the Village Center to become a real, central social and cultural focus within the community as opposed to merely a marketing label applied to a generic strip shopping center. This means a greater concentration of shops and small offices together with higher density housing in close (walkable) proximity to the commercial development.

Retail development trends are fast abandoning conventional models of strip shopping centers and moving towards development types that provide a much more integrated experience of living, working and shopping. In essence, the front edge of retail development is returning to traditional American models of “Main Street,” where people can live, work and shop in close proximity and with a far greater sense of experiencing an authentic community “place.”

The Village Center and adjacent sites thus provide a mix of uses and a range of housing types all within easy walking distance of the center. The intersection of Weddington Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road would be as tightly designed as possible to facilitate pedestrian crossing from north to south and east to west (see section 5.1.3). As the (currently new) shopping centers age, become obsolescent and redevelop during the time horizon of the plan (approximately every twelve years for larger “big box” stores) Waxhaw/ Indian Trail Road would gradually become the new “Main Street” for the community. This new Main Street would feature redeveloped buildings close to the street, wide sidewalks and on-street parking. These design possibilities are examined in detail in section 5.

### 2.3.2.2 Rural Character and the Outlying Areas: The “Outer Village”

The principle for all outlying undeveloped areas is that low-density, single-family residential is the most appropriate and predominant use. The Master Plan recommends three different types of residential development that can provide a wide range of different dwelling types while paying much more attention to the preservation of existing landscapes and rural character. These development types are:

- Conservation subdivisions;
- Large lot “Ranchette” subdivisions
- Rural “Farmhouse Clusters”.

a. Conservation subdivisions refer to a type of development that places priority on living within a preserved landscape that retains the appearance of a predominantly rural area. Typically, large homes are carefully placed on smaller lots of between 1/4- and 1/2- acre in areas away from important landscape features and/or screened by existing trees, thus leaving about 50 percent or more of the site as preserved landscape, protected by legal conservation easements that forbid future development on the open land in perpetuity.

This “open space design” also yields substantial environmental benefits in terms of much improved water quality as the run-off from impervious areas is much less using this design concept. The simplest way of thinking about a conservation subdivision is to imagine a golf course



Main Street in Davidson, N.C. (top). Drawing of potential new streets and neighborhoods surrounding the village center (bottom). See Page 39 for detailed image.

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▲  
*New and improved planning and zoning regulations will be needed to preserve the Village's rural character*

residential development without the golf course! A majority of people who buy into golf course subdivisions do not play golf regularly, or at all. Purchasers spend their money to provide themselves with open landscape views from their homes. This kind of design fits well with the strong community support for “open green space” in Wesley Chapel.

b. Large-lot “ranchette” developments provide for large lots of between 2 and 6 acres that are suitable for small horse farms or stables. This can meet a substantial “niche market” in this area. This type of development also provides for large areas of open space, primarily reserved for horse paddocks and trails.

c. “Farmhouse Clusters” are small groups of four to six very large lots, up to 20 acres each, where the houses are nestled together at an appropriate location away from the road, and arranged to resemble a group of farm buildings -- the farmhouse, barns and outbuildings -- when seen from a distance. The access to these dwellings, in keeping with rural precedent, may be a simple narrow gravel drive, serving the whole cluster and drastically reducing the infrastructure costs of the development.

### 2.3.3 Planning and Zoning

The S.W.O.T analysis of Wesley Chapel’s current zoning demonstrated many weaknesses in the existing regulations which give the community few options in managing anticipated future growth, or to position itself advantageously to direct that growth in ways that are consistent with community priorities.

This Master Plan accordingly recommends a major, urgent overhaul of the Village’s zoning and subdivision regulations, particularly through the use of form-based codes. These types of zoning regulations, increasingly common across the

USA, and used by several NC communities in the Charlotte region and beyond, provide much more responsive tools for communities to manage their future by focusing first on the form of development and its character, and secondarily on uses that go inside buildings. Further details and examples of form-based codes that can act as useful precedents for Wesley Chapel are discussed in section 6.

### 2.3.4 Clarification of Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

The land area included in this study was defined by Village officials in early 2007 as comprising the existing Village of Wesley Chapel plus contiguous parcels, developed and undeveloped, that were being considered at that time for inclusion within a potential Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction for zoning purposes. Residents living in these adjacent areas were included in the comprehensive mailing of the written survey and several participated in the visual survey. Their opinions were thus recorded and constitute part of the statistical analysis of residents’ attitudes. Accordingly, even though the status of the potential ETJ has been overtaken by other political and judicial opinions during the later stages of the study, the boundaries of study area have remained consistent so as not to invalidate the analysis stages of the work.

# Section 3

## Community Surveys and Analyses

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Your Community, Your Vision, Your Future....

The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 3.1 Written Survey

Community Surveys and Analyses took several forms:

1. a written survey to all residents;
2. a visual survey of multiple choice images at a well-attended public meeting;
3. a GIS-based Land Capacity Analysis; and
4. an analysis of existing zoning based on the S.W.O.T method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). These are discussed in detail below.

### 3.1 Written Survey

A comprehensive mail survey was conducted in Wesley Chapel during the late spring of 2007. A total of approximately 2,500 surveys were mailed to all residents in Wesley Chapel and the extra-territorial jurisdiction. A total of 641 surveys were returned (an excellent response rate for this kind of survey of about 25 percent). The survey queried residents on the following issues: quality of life; housing and residential development; commercial and industrial development; open space and recreation; ordinances and policies; willingness to pay additional taxes; and general household information. In the following sections, highlights from the survey are presented that correspond with the different sections of the survey instrument. A copy of the questionnaire, full survey results, and PowerPoint presentation given at the September 27, 2007 public meeting are included in digital form as Appendix I on the CD accompanying this document.

#### 3.1.1 Quality of Life

Residents were asked to rate Wesley Chapel as a place to live. Eighty-nine percent of respondents reported that Wesley Chapel is a good-to-excellent place to live. Preserving a rural, small town atmosphere was important to 90 percent of respondents and 84 percent believe that maintaining a clean and healthy environment is important. More than 80 percent of residents believe that chronicling and preserving historic sites is important to Wesley Chapel. About 70 percent of the residents feel that connecting to the heritage of the village is important, and 84 percent want to maintain agricultural activity. Many (73 percent) would support a farmers' market in Wesley Chapel, for instance. Maintaining

a low tax rate is important to 95 percent of respondents, and 54 percent feel that broadening the tax base is important. There is more support for broadening the tax base with retail and office rather than industrial (78 percent are against). Residents consider the provision of emergency services like police, fire and EMT to be important (85 percent). Support for the provision of parks, greenways and bike lanes is high and 75 percent of respondents support these kinds of facilities.

Encouraging a mix of building styles is important to 60 percent of respondents. However, most residents are not supportive of any type of new development and only 26 percent support encouraging new residential development. Yet, 53 percent of respondents believe that creating new jobs in Wesley Chapel is important while 51 percent claim that living close to their job is not important. It seems like residents are uncertain on the level and need for local economic development.

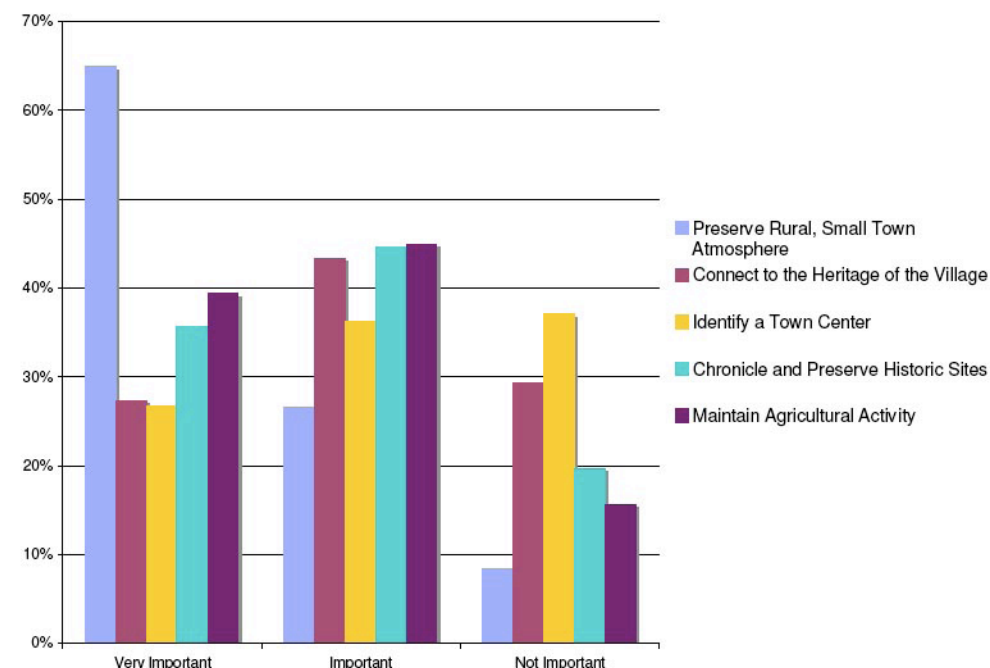
Overall, the majority of residents are happy with many existing features of Wesley Chapel. The following list demonstrates the overall positive impression of the village:

- The architecture style of existing buildings in Wesley Chapel is good according to 73 percent of the respondents.
- The available mix of housing types and prices is considered good by 70 percent of the respondents.
- Community services (fire, police, EMT) are considered good by 63 percent of the respondents.
- Availability of shopping and restaurants is good according to 55 percent of respondents.
- The availability of recreation opportunities for children is good to 52 percent of respondents.

However, a handful of variables concern village residents. For instance, the availability of recreation opportunities for adults is considered poor to 58 percent of respondents, and about half of the respondents feel that the availability of healthcare services in Wesley Chapel is poor.

## Wesley Chapel: Character

### Quality of Life Issues



Graph Illustrating Quality of Life Issues Based On Results from the Narrative Survey.

Your Community, Your Vision, Your Future....

The Village of Wesley Chapel

3.1 Written Survey

3.1.2 Housing and Residential Development

Residents gave their impressions about housing and residential development in the second section of the survey. About 60 percent of respondents feel that it is important for Wesley Chapel to have a range of housing prices for different life phases as well as a range of housing styles, densities, and designs. Yet, 64 percent of respondents feel that the village should minimize further single-family residential development. More emphatically, 89 percent of respondents are against rental apartments and 80 percent oppose construction of condominiums and town homes. A majority (54 percent) of respondents oppose development of patio home or retirement communities. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) are against more housing opportunities for first time home buyers.

Residents were asked about the type of housing growth favored in Wesley Chapel and 86 percent of respondents favor single-family detached housing. Seventy-eight percent of respondents favor single-family detached housing greater than 3,000 square feet. About 40 percent of respondents opposed single-family detached housing less than 3,000 square feet. Residents are adamantly opposed to any type of rental housing (more than 90 percent opposed). More than 80 percent of respondents opposed multi-family rental located above retail shops. Some support for retirement/patio homes (57 percent) and assisted living units (53 percent) exists.

On the survey instrument, respondents were advised that most of Wesley Chapel is currently zoned R-40, or one home per acre (the

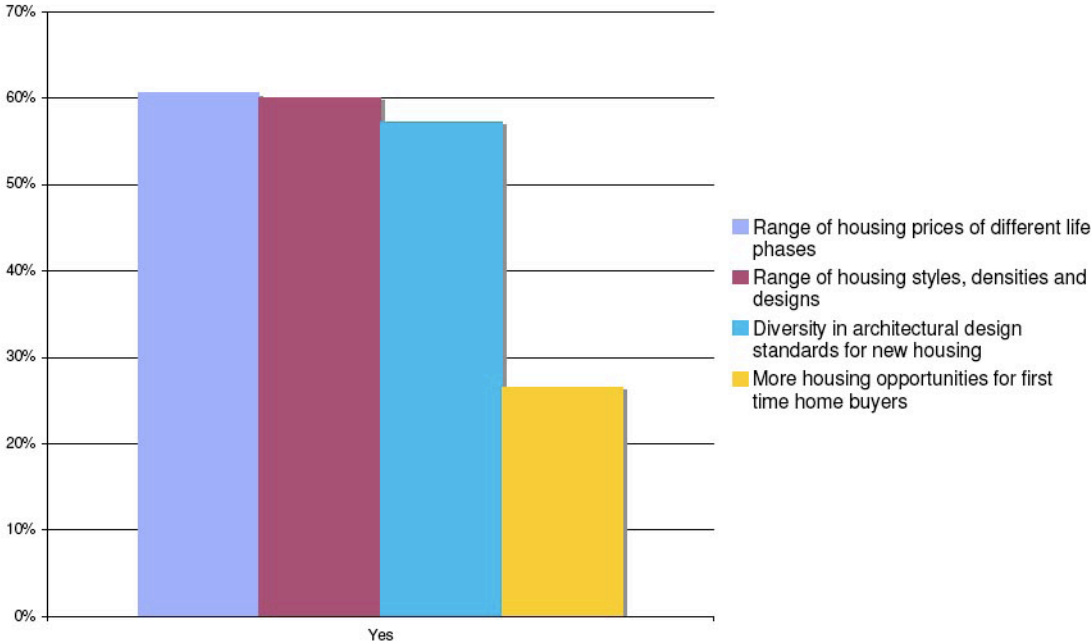
figure 40 refers to 40,000 square feet, or roughly an acre). The respondent was then asked about other density options. Large lot zoning options are favored by most respondents. Most strongly support one-home per two acres (73 percent) or one-home per acre (93 percent). Less dense options like one-home per half-acre (58 percent opposed) or one-home per quarter acre (93 percent opposed) are strongly opposed. However, these results were contradicted by the strongly affirmative answers from 60 percent of respondents to the question noted above regarding the need for a range of housing types, designs and styles.

3.1.3 Commercial and Industrial Development

Wesley Chapel has about 80,000 square feet of commercial real estate at the Harris-Teeter center. An additional 365,000 square feet has been approved that will include a Lowe’s Food Store and Target. Given this context, residents were asked questions about commercial and industrial development. Fifty-four percent of respondents feel that additional commercial development is not good for the future of Wesley Chapel. Providing additional retail development using a big box template surrounded by retail chains is opposed by 81 percent of respondents. Some support for mixed centers (69 percent support) is indicated by a stated preference for commercial development to occur in a setting that mixes retail with office jobs, restaurants, shops, and residences. Sidewalks, bike paths, and pedestrian connections are considered important in commercial areas to 79 percent of the respondents. Almost 60 percent of respondents feel that commercial areas should contain a mix of uses (retail, commercial, residential) in close proximity. From a design perspective, 92 percent of respondents consider architectural standards for commercial buildings to be important.

Wesley Chapel: Housing

Is a Range of Housing Types and Opportunities Important?



Graph Illustrating Housing Types and Opportunities Based on results from the Narrative Survey.

## 3.1 Written Survey

### 3.1.4 Open Space and Recreation

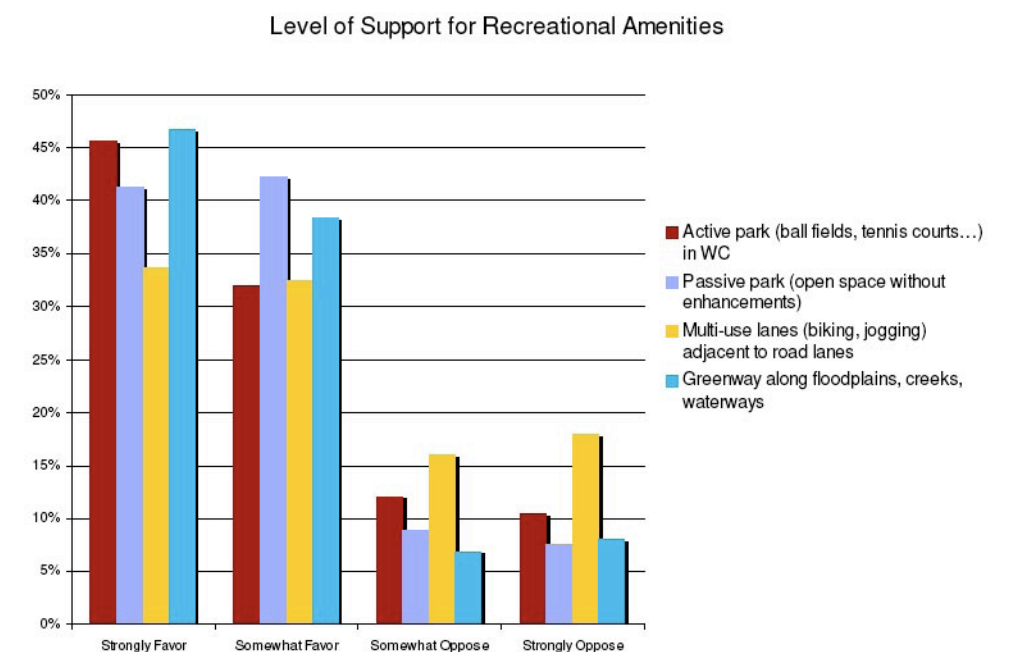
Open space and outdoor recreational activities are important to 88 percent of respondents. Support for active recreation fields (78 percent), passive parks (83 percent), multi-use lanes for biking and jogging near roads (66 percent) and greenways (85 percent) is strong. Dog parks funded by user fees are supported by 53 percent of respondents and outdoor gathering spaces like an amphitheater is favored by 54 percent of respondents. It is important to 75 percent of respondents to provide safe areas for walking and bicycling.

### 3.1.5 Ordinances and Policies

Residents were asked about several ordinances, ideas, and concepts related to growth. The survey instrument included a brief definition of each concept to aid respondents. Across the board, residents support the following ordinances by large majorities:

- Tree Save Ordinance (93 percent)
- Big Box Ordinance (89 percent)
- Sidewalk Ordinance (87 percent)
- Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (94 percent)
- Complete Streets Ordinance (85 percent)
- Accessory Unit Ordinance (63 percent)
- Sustainable Agriculture Zones (93 percent)
- Anti-Monotony Ordinance (90 percent)
- Nuisance Ordinance (88 percent)

## Wesley Chapel: Parks and Recreation



Graph Illustrating Level of Support  
for Recreational Activities Based On  
Results from the Narrative Survey.

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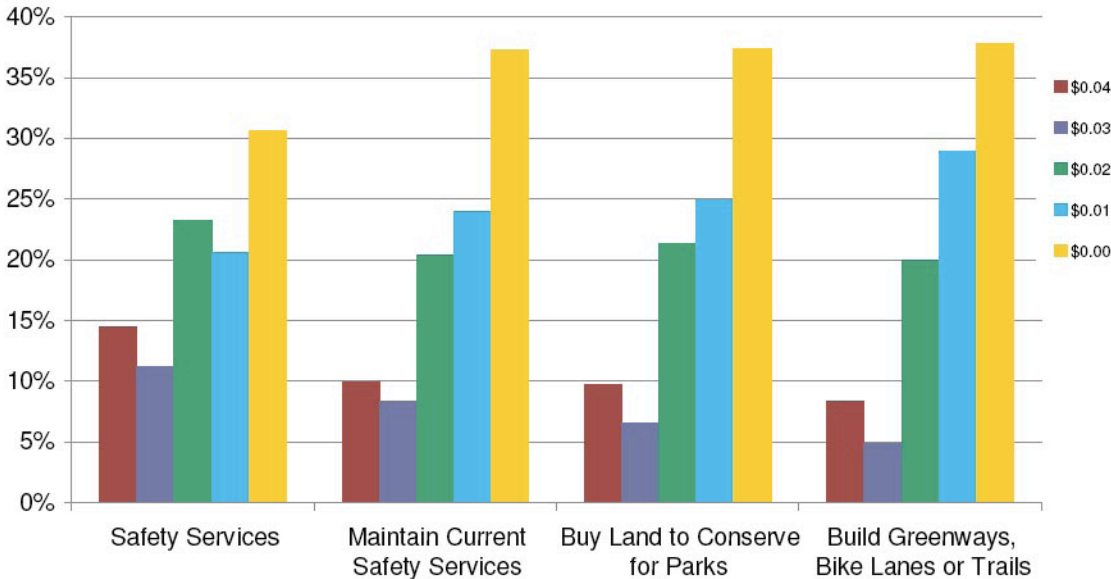
The Village of Wesley Chapel



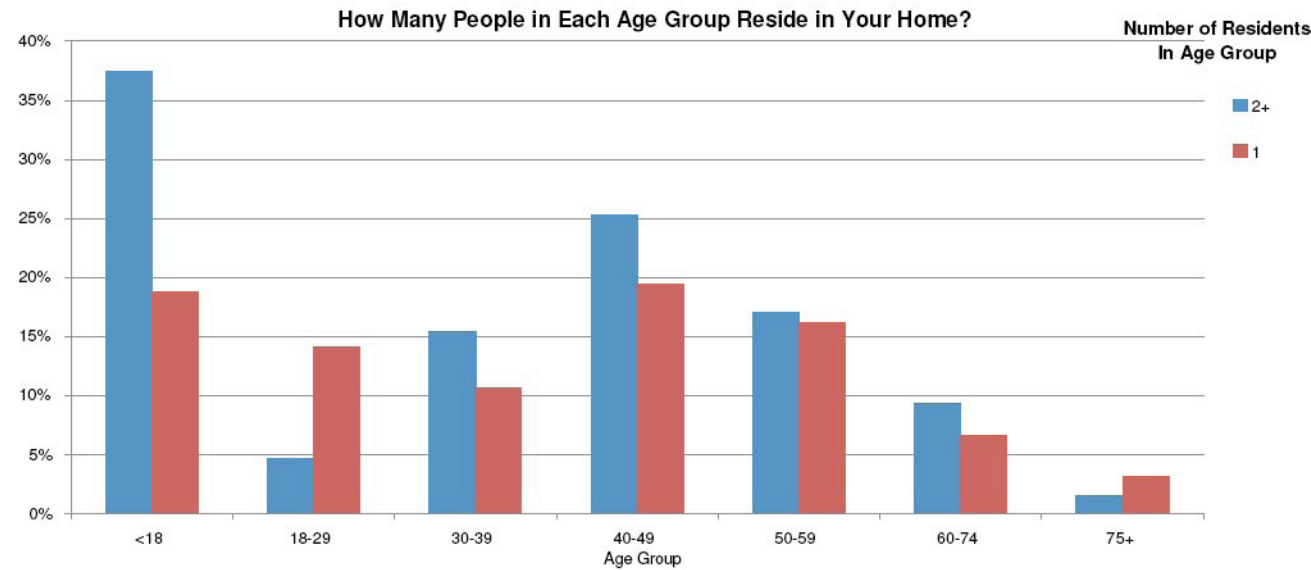
3.1 Written Survey

Wesley Chapel: Willingness to Pay

Willingness to Pay (per \$100 of assessed value) in Additional Taxes to Improve the Following:



Wesley Chapel: Household Information



Graphs illustrating willingness to pay additional taxes (top) and range of ages per household (bottom) based on results from the Narrative Survey.

3.1.6 Willingness to Pay

While it is easy for residents to claim support for a host of planning actions, it is important to gauge the willingness of residents to go beyond rhetorical support in order to implement change. Residents were asked about their willingness to pay additional taxes to support some initiatives, in increments of 1 cent, 2 cents, 3 cents or 4 cents as shown in the graph opposite. Almost two-thirds of respondents (61 percent) are satisfied with the current level of safety services and law enforcement. About 69 percent of respondents are willing to pay additional taxes to improve safety services. A majority (57 percent) of respondents are willing to pay more taxes to buy land to be put into permanent conservation or to use as parks. Additionally, 61 percent of respondents would support tax increases to build greenways, bike lanes, or trails for recreation.

3.1.7 Household & Respondent Information

About 71 percent of respondents have lived in Wesley Chapel for nine years or less. A majority of households (56 percent) report at least one member of the household younger than 18. The other large age cohort consists of households with respondents between ages of 40-49 years of age. Comparatively, Wesley Chapel is a village of newcomers and young families. Issues related to aging will eventually have to be planned for, but are not the most pressing concern for the Village.

More than one-third (36 percent) of householders report a daily commute greater than 50 miles and 54 percent commute longer than 45 minutes daily. Nearly one-quarter of respondents work from home and the rest work mostly in Union and/or Mecklenburg County.

Public sewer service is used by 75 percent of the respondents and 87 percent receive water from the public water system. About 14 percent of respondents receive water from a well and, of those, 76 percent drink the well water. Almost half (47 percent) of those who receive water from a well have access to the public system. About 75 percent of respondents who receive water from the well do not report having problems with the quality of the well water.

The implications of these survey results, together with other conflicts and issues from the analyses are discussed in detail in section 3.5.

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## 3.2 Visual Survey

### 3.2 Visual Survey

The visual survey was intended to shed light on some of the contradictions contained in the results from the earlier written survey. In this it was partially successful. Participants viewed slides in groups of three or four images at a time and were asked to rate them in simple order of preference. Topics included: housing styles; neighborhood styles and design; the design of attached single-family homes; live/work options; architectural styles and materials; office design; road and street detailing; and types of parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

Not all opinions were clear; some contradictions remained. However, some unambiguous preferences were as follows;

- There were clear preferences for homes where the garage was tucked away out of site of the front façade.
- Brick was the clear favorite as the material for homes.
- The favorite housing layouts included many preserved trees.
- Live/work and attached single-family homes were preferred at a small scale.

*Images depicting preferred housing style (top left), preferred neighborhood styles (bottom), and preferred live/work style top right) as selected by the citizens of Wesley Chapel in the Visual Survey.*



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## 3.2 Visual Survey

### *Visual Survey - Continued*

- e. The architectural styles and materials preferred by most respondents had plenty of visual detail and used brick extensively.
- f. Street design preferences were strongly in favor of meandering sidewalks, bike paths and wide green landscaped verges to roadways.
- g. Parks and playgrounds were preferred that had an intimate scale, formal elements such as gazebos and play areas for children.
- h. The most popular image of “rural heritage” was one of pasture land with a cluster of farmhouse buildings on a slight ridge with dense woods behind. This image combined all the major elements: open fields, woods and traditional building groups nestled into the landscape.



◀ Images depicting preferred architectural style (top) and “Rural Heritage” (bottom) as selected by the citizens of Wesley Chapel in the visual survey.

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## 3.2 Visual Survey

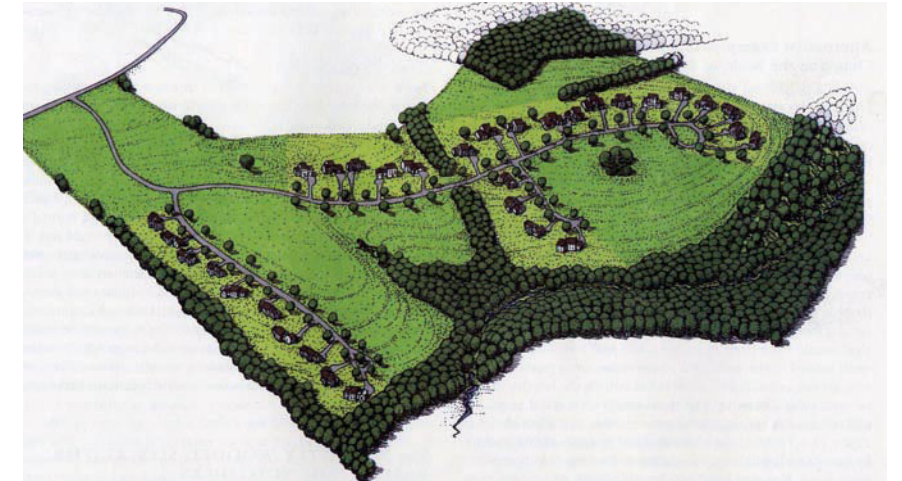
### *Visual Survey - Continued*

The main contradiction concerned the layout of subdivisions, already noted in the Executive Summary. Two sets of images illustrated different design techniques – the conventional 1-acre zoning that did not retain the rural character of the site versus the same number of homes on smaller sites arranged to preserve the landscape to a much higher degree. In one set, 68 percent preferred the large lot version and seemed unconcerned about the loss of rural character, in the second set 57 percent reversed this preference and supported a design that placed homes on smaller lots and conserved more landscape.

Conventional Subdivision



Conservation Subdivision



*Two sets of neighborhood designs  
from the visual survey.*

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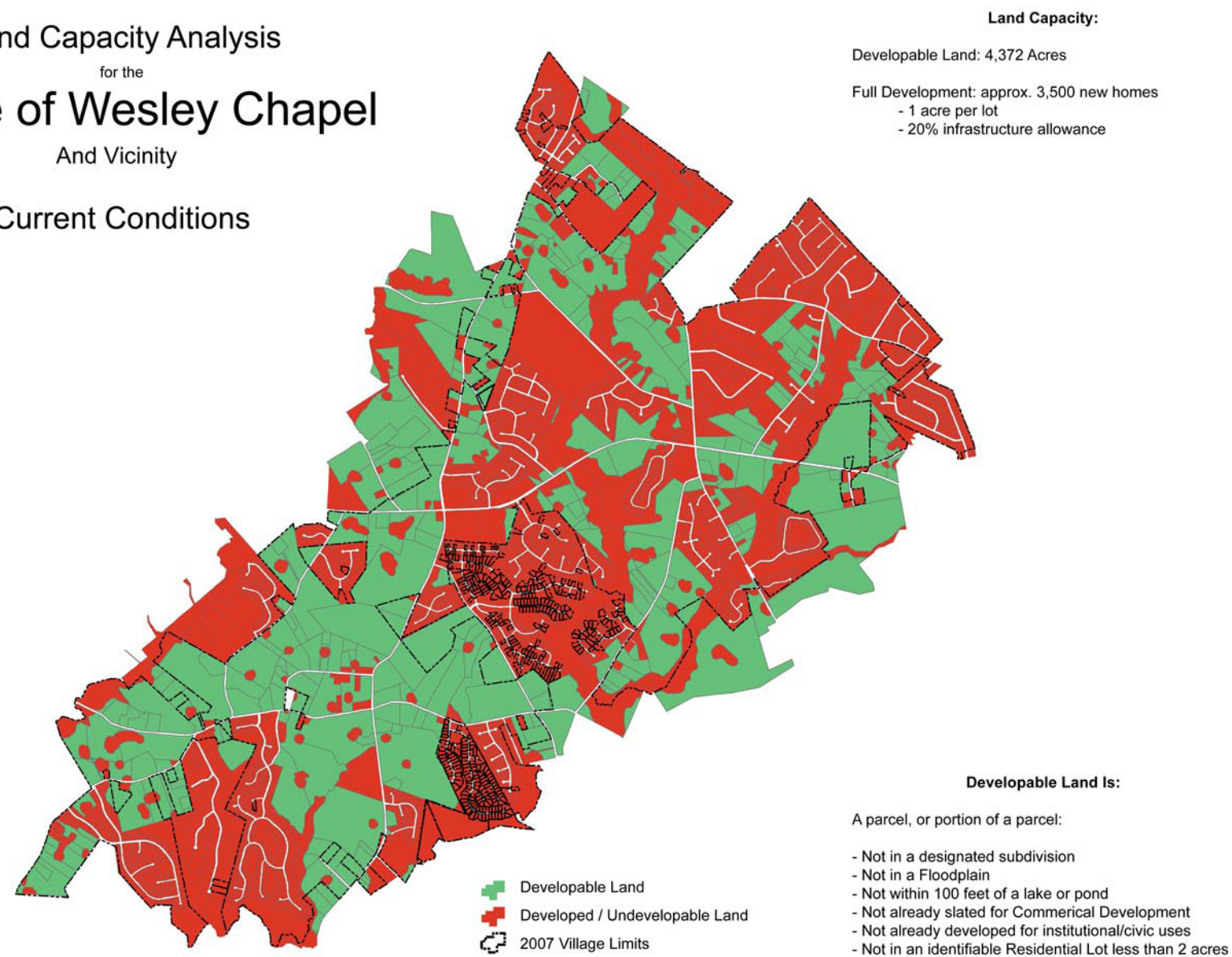
The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

### Land Capacity Analysis for the Village of Wesley Chapel And Vicinity

#### Current Conditions



Map Illustrating current conditions of Wesley Chapel and vicinity.

#### 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

The Land Capacity Analysis uses the detailed Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database of physical characteristics for the Wesley Chapel area, including the land that was previously identified as falling within the boundary of a potential zone of Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). This analysis comprises a series of five maps:

1. A Current Conditions Map that determines the amount of developable land in the community;
2. A "worst case" 2030 Scenario Map that quantifies the amount of open land used up by future growth at the currently preferred density of 1-unit per acre;
- 3, 4 and 5. A series of three Alternative Scenarios that utilize different mixes of residential densities to reduce the amount of land taken by development and increase the amount of land remaining as open landscape to preserve the rural heritage of the community.

The analysis first determined the gross area of developable land, defined as:

- a. not in a designated subdivision
- b. not in a floodplain
- c. not within 100 ft. buffer of a lake or pond
- d. not already slated for commercial development
- e. not already developed for institutional uses
- f. not an identifiable residential lot of less than 2 acres.

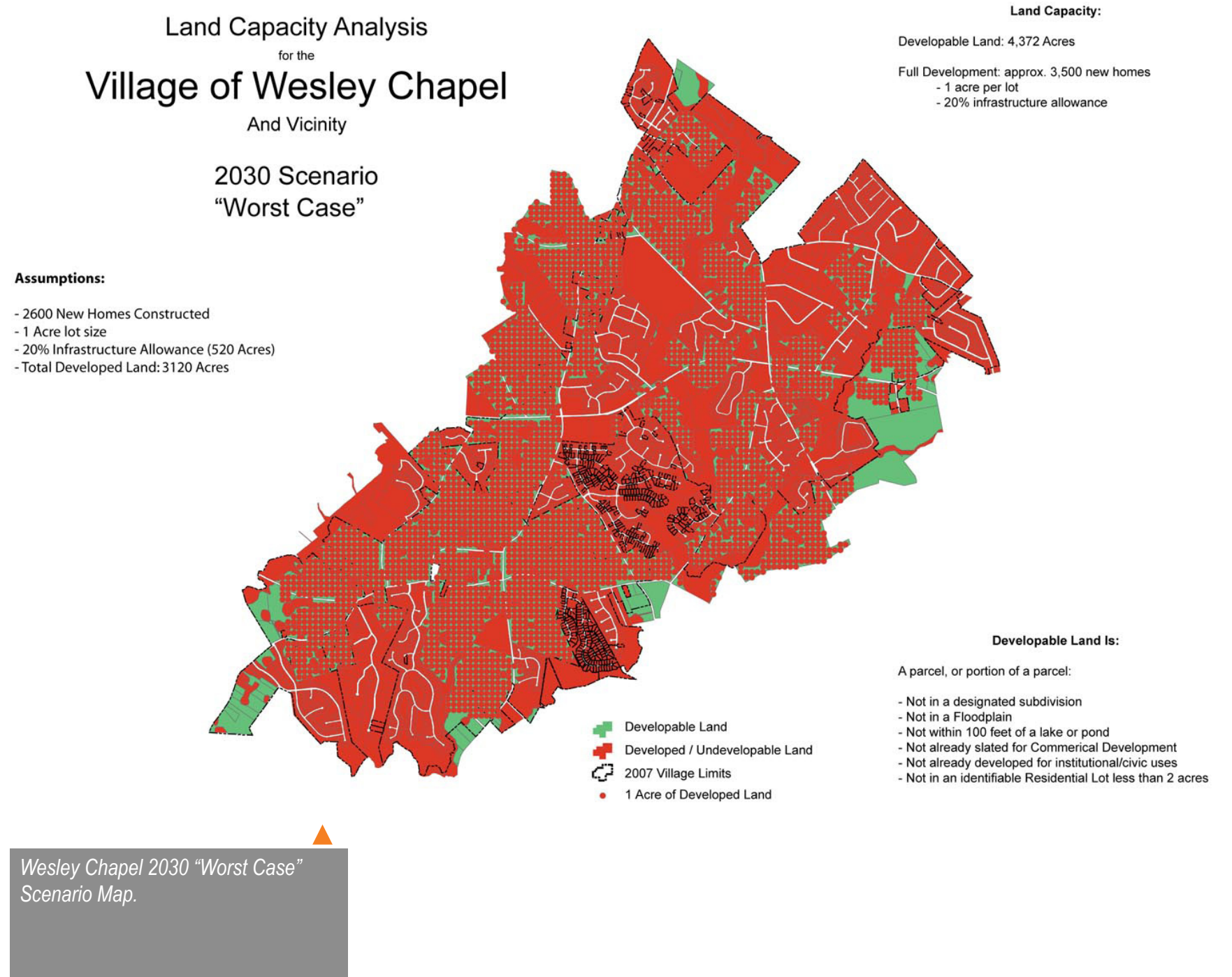
Within the study area, this yielded a land capacity of property available for development of 4,539 acres, shown in green on the Current Conditions Map. Simply as a statistical basis for comparative study, if all this land was developed by property owners exercising their rights to develop their land for housing according to the zoning currently in place in Wesley Chapel, approximately 3,500 new homes could be built on 1-acre lots, allowing approximately 20 percent of land for infrastructure needs such as roads and service easements. (This is a statistical datum only, and is NOT in any way to be construed as a proposal or recommendation! For comparative purposes, this figure is noted in the top right-hand corner of successive maps in this series).

## 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

As a further reality check, the “worst case” 2030 Scenario Map illustrates the impact of a “business as usual” approach for future development based on population projections. These projections are derived from recent Village and Union County growth rates, and project a total of approximately 8,611 residents in the Village by the year 2030. This is an increase of 4,326 persons over the 2005 estimated Wesley Chapel population of 4,285, and thus represents a doubling of the present population.

When an allowance is made for additional population growth within the area defined by the potential zone of Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), this rate of growth could result in approximately 2,600 new homes by 2030 within the study area of the Village and its immediate vicinity. This 2030 Scenario Map illustrates the land area that would be changed from rural to suburban use to accommodate all these dwellings at the density of 1 dwelling per acre that is currently preferred by residents. (The parcels of developed land are represented here, and in subsequent maps, by the areas of red dots overlaid on the green areas of previously open land shown on the Current Conditions Map).

It is apparent by comparing this map with the Current Conditions Map that there is a dramatic reduction in the green areas (undeveloped land) in the community. This means that nearly all the existing open, rural land in Wesley Chapel would be transformed into suburbia by this type of development. All in all, in this worst case scenario, a total of 3,120 acres of rural land would be lost to suburban development. This is in flat contradiction to the community’s strongly stated preference to preserve its rural landscapes and heritage.



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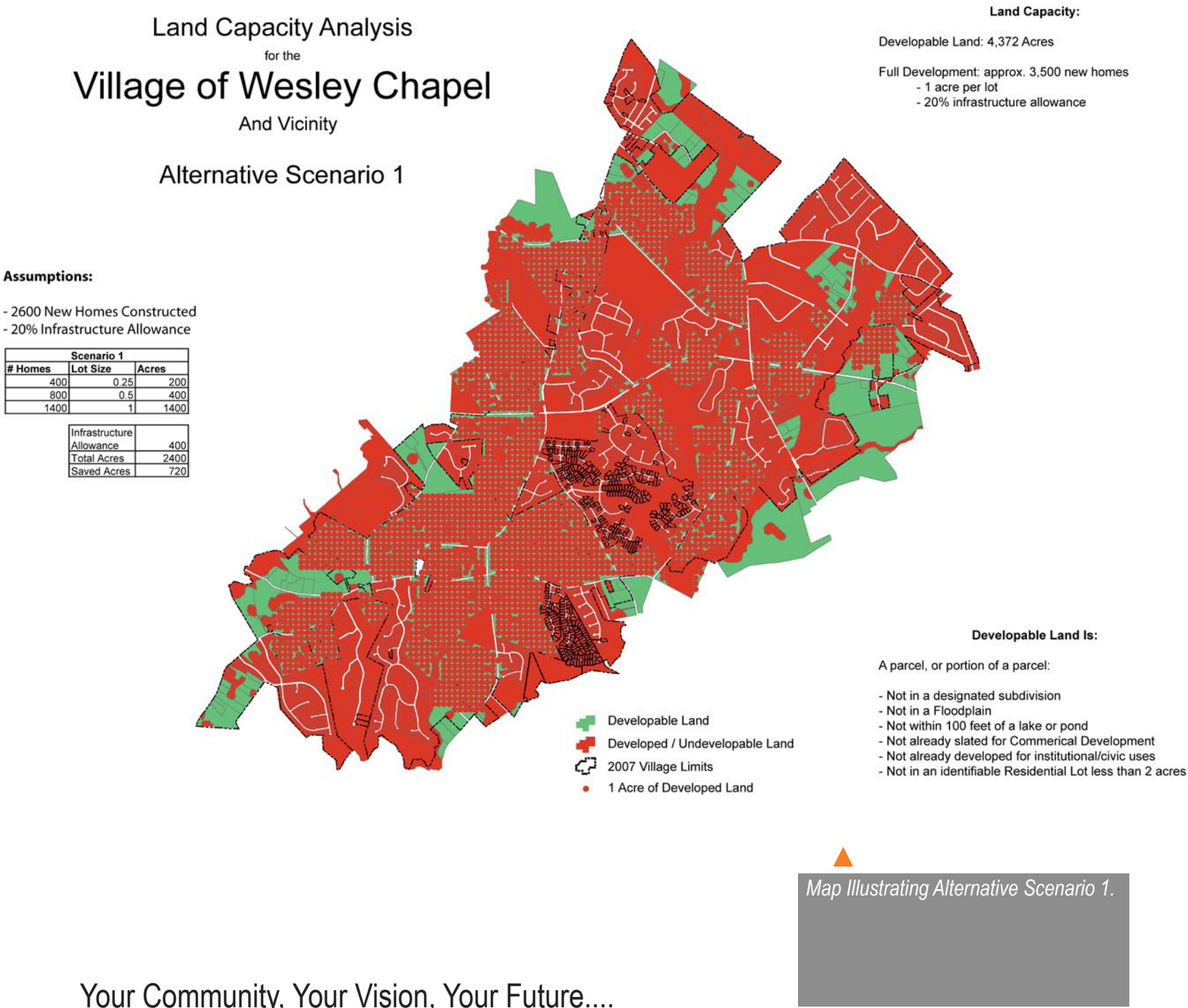


# 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

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In order to honor more fully the community's priority for the preservation of its rural heritage, maps 3, 4 and 5 – 2030 Alternative Scenarios 1, 2 and 3 – illustrate potential alternatives to the extensive level of development of rural land shown in the baseline 2030 scenario. Each map plots the same number of new homes (2,600 in the Village and vicinity) but uses different ranges of lot sizes and densities.

For example, in Alternative Scenario 1, 1,400 homes remain on 1-acre lots, with 800 homes on 1/2-acre lots and 400 homes on 1/4-acre lots. This results in a saving of 720 acres of land that could be retained as working farms or other rural heritage uses, with consequent gains in the visual character of the community by means of areas of open landscape.



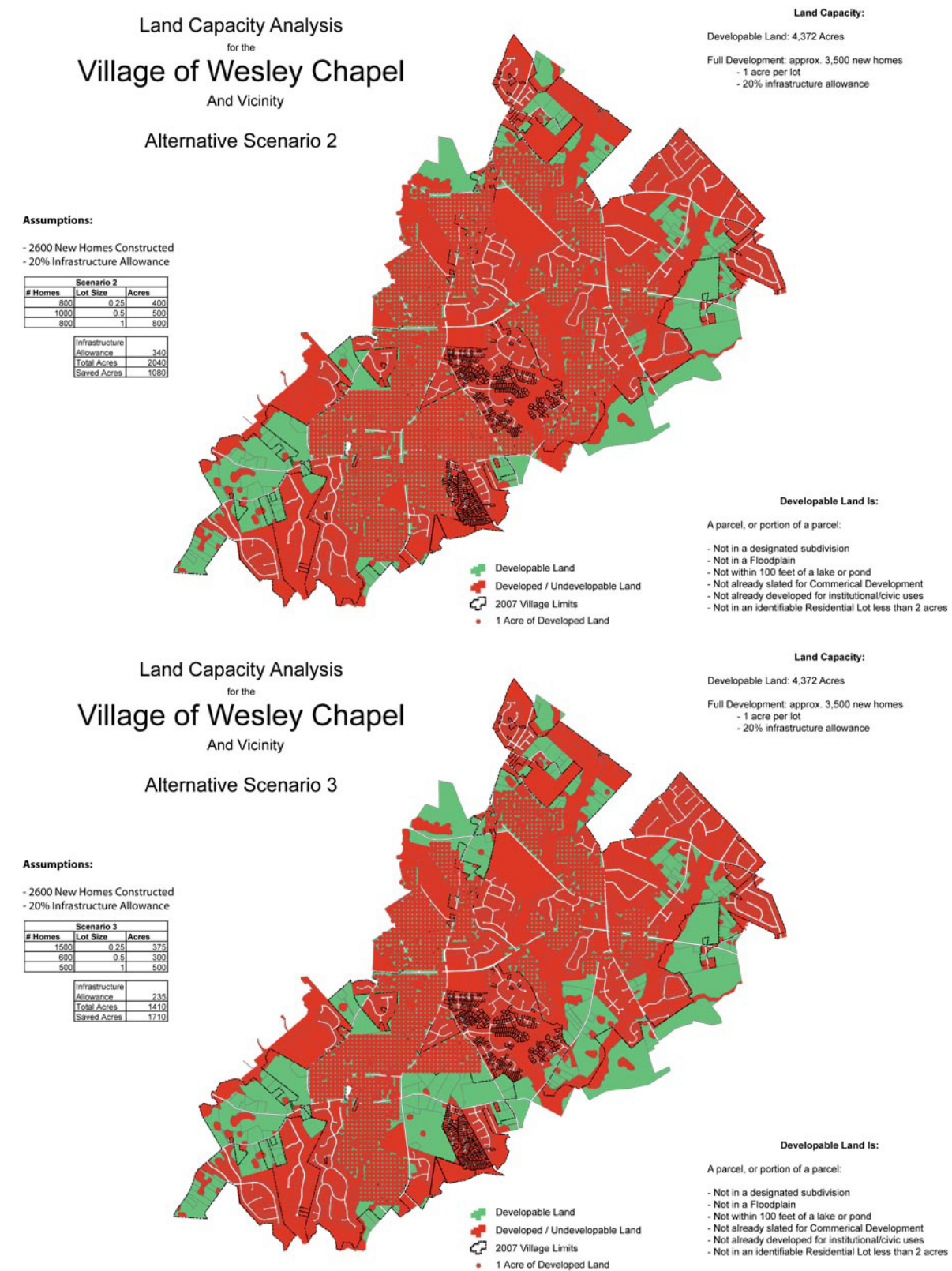
## 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

This logic is extended in Alternative Scenarios 2 and 3 in order to preserve more open landscape and rural heritage features. In Scenario 2, the number of homes on 1-acre lots is reduced to 800, 1,000 homes are placed on 1/2-acre lots, and 800 on 1/4-acre lots. This increases the area of saved landscape to 1,080 acres. Scenario 3 explores the effects of a mix of 500 homes on 1-acre lots, 600 on 1/2-acre lots and 1,500 on 1/4-acre lots. The amount of rural land saved under this alternative rises dramatically to 1,710 acres. In this alternative, more than 50 percent of the land taken for development in the baseline “worst case” scenario is saved as open landscape which can be protected by conservation easements within the individual subdivision design layouts. This saved open space is indicated graphically by the much larger green areas on the plan for Alternative Scenario 3.

It is important to understand that these maps DO NOT represent firm proposals for placement of development, nor do the alternative numbers of homes on different sized lots represent decisions of any sort. These maps and their projections are analysis tools intended to explore the impact of alternative growth management policies, and to help explain and resolve the basic conflict between 1-acre zoning and the preservation of the community’s rural heritage.

The message of this analysis is clear: if the community is serious about preserving its unique character and rural heritage, future zoning policy must utilize a variety of lot sizes and different types of development

Alternate Scenario 2 and 3 Maps.  
See pages 22 and 23 for detailed images.



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The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

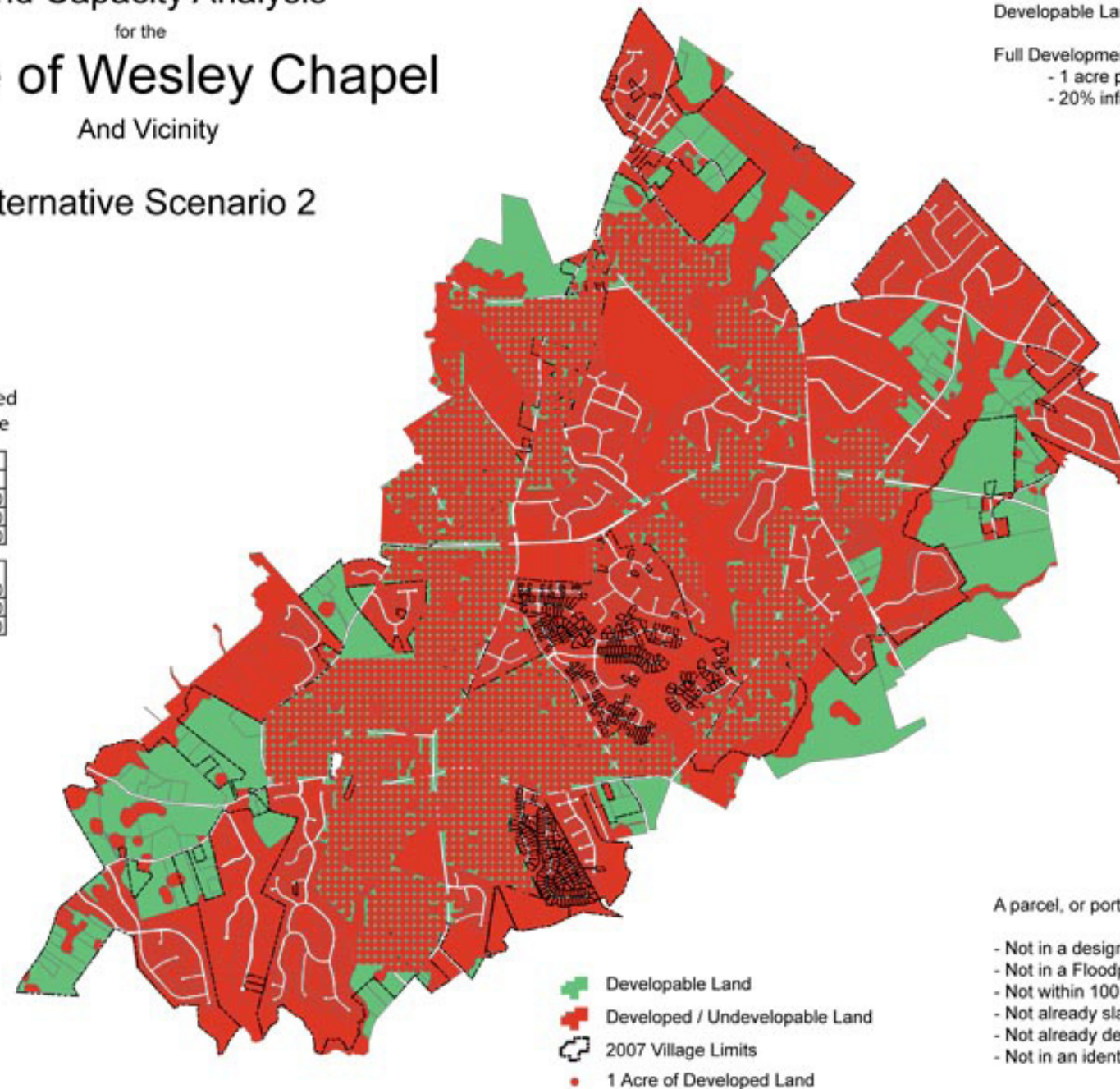
Map Illustrating Alternative Scenario 2 (see accompanying text on page 21).

### Land Capacity Analysis for the Village of Wesley Chapel And Vicinity Alternative Scenario 2

#### Assumptions:

- 2600 New Homes Constructed
- 20% Infrastructure Allowance

Scenario 2		
# Homes	Lot Size	Acres
800	0.25	400
1000	0.5	500
800	1	800
Infrastructure Allowance		
		340
Total Acres		2040
Saved Acres		1080



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## 3.3 Land Capacity Analysis

### Land Capacity Analysis for the Village of Wesley Chapel And Vicinity

#### Alternative Scenario 3

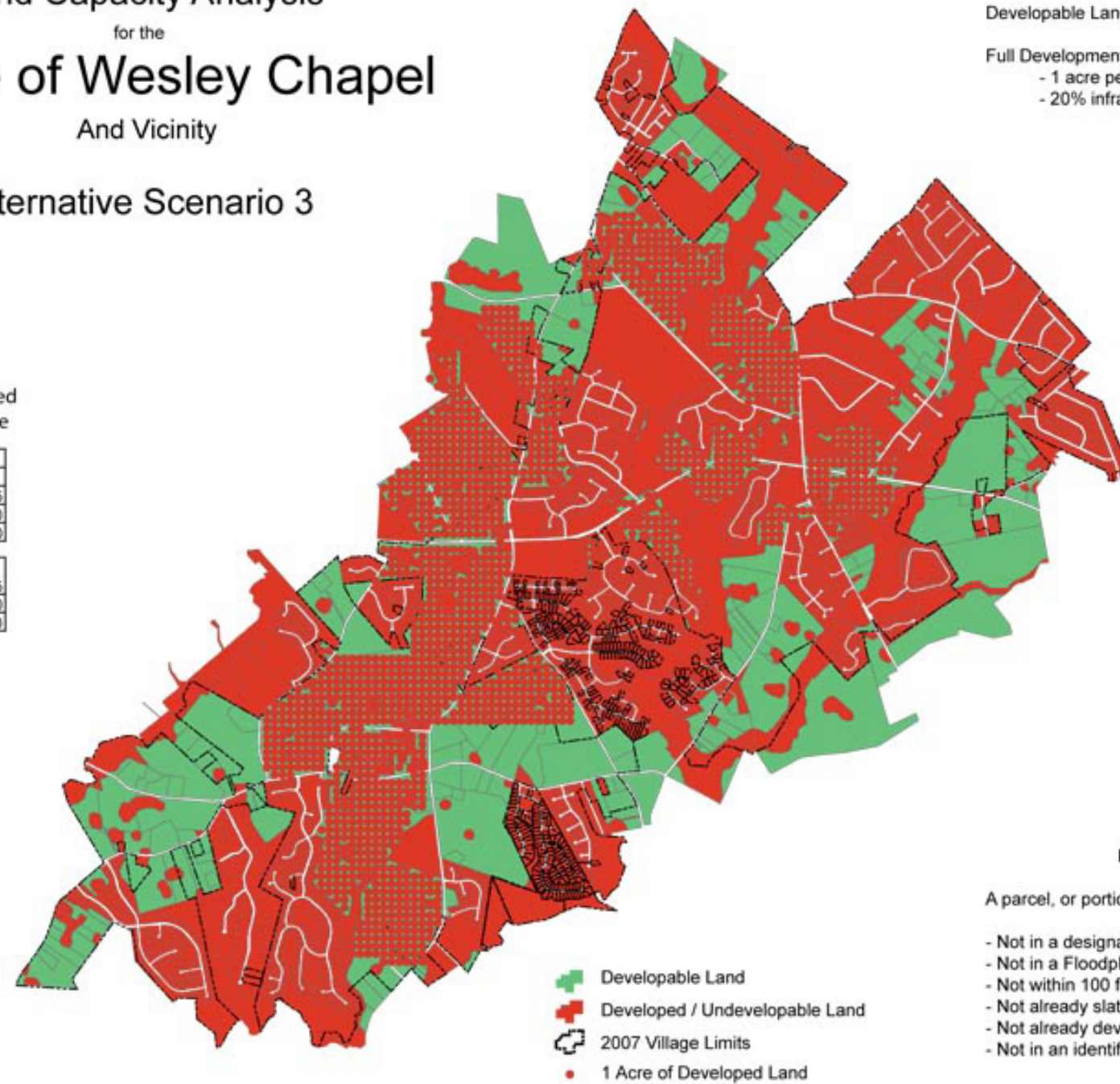
#### Assumptions:

- 2600 New Homes Constructed
- 20% Infrastructure Allowance

Scenario 3		
# Homes	Lot Size	Acres
1500	0.25	375
600	0.5	300
500	1	500

Infrastructure Allowance	235
Total Acres	1410
Saved Acres	1710



Map Illustrating Alternative Scenario 3 (see accompanying text on page 21).

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## 3.4 S.W.O.T. Analysis

### 3.4 S.W.O.T Analysis of Current Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

S.W.O.T refers to a standard method of analysis used in both public and private sectors to evaluate current conditions under four categories: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

This method was used to evaluate Wesley Chapel's current zoning and subdivision regulations to see how well or poorly they provided the Village with the zoning tools necessary to manage growth in an economic and environmentally efficient manner.

The critique of these regulations is quite harsh, as they are the product of a different kind of thinking, dating from nearly 50 years ago, when the domination of the suburban environment by the car was regarded as a benefit and a good thing. This set of ideas had merged into the collective consciousness of society, and until very recently, municipalities all across the USA were following the dictates of ideas developed just after the Second World War. Times have changed and ideas have developed with greater wisdom regarding the shortcomings of this narrow viewpoint. Now we are much more environmentally conscious and aware of the public health dangers that derive from a sedentary, car-dominated lifestyle.

The people who wrote and approved these existing regulations were not incompetent; they were following the conventional wisdom of their time. Even though Wesley Chapel's regulations are fairly recent, they are decades out of date in terms of their relevance to contemporary needs and issues, and even more so when future trends are taken into account. The inescapable conclusion is that the community needs a new set of regulations and it needs them urgently. Clear pointers for appropriate ways forward are provided in section 6 of this report.

#### 3.4.1 Zoning Ordinance

Wesley Chapel's existing zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations were examined under the standard methodology

adapted from corporate planning and evaluation procedures. Known as a S.W.O.T analysis, this analysis checks the existing system of regulation for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The main points of the analysis are noted below.

#### 3.4.1.1 Residential Zoning Districts

Strengths: None

Weaknesses:

- Does not allow for "preservation of rural heritage"  
How:
  - No mention of open space preservation, conservation easements.
  - Cannot encourage or preserve agricultural uses with residential zoning.
  - Does not allow for averaging of lot sizes which would allow open space to be conserved and protected from future development.
- Does not allow for the development of a pedestrian-friendly environment  
How:
  - Separation of land uses removes potential pedestrian destinations from each other and creates excessive walking distances
  - Large lot sizes and setbacks create too a scale of development that is large and uniform, with little scope for interesting "townscape."
- Does not contribute to a more environmentally sustainable growth pattern  
How:
  - 1-acre lots are the worst option amongst residential layouts for protecting water quality as shown by studies from the Environmental protection Agency (EPA). Extracts from EPA analysis are included digitally in Appendix III on the CD accompanying this document.
  - 1-acre lots disturb or modify more land per dwelling than mixed density alternatives with preserved open space.

- 1-acre lots remove more 'rural character' per dwelling than mixed density alternatives with preserved open space.
- Does not contribute to a sustainable tax base  
How:
    - Fewer dwelling units paying taxes to support town ventures.
    - Residential uses pay around \$0.65 on the dollar used.
    - Per dwelling unit infrastructure costs are high.

Opportunities:

- Allows for averaging of lot sizes in developments to equal 1 unit/acre  
Why:
  - Preserves more open space and 'rural character.'
  - Reduces land impact per dwelling unit.
  - Less cost of infrastructure provision per unit.
- Creation of a more dense "Residential Village Center" residential zoning area  
Why:
  - Provides residential choice for varying age segments of the population.
  - Provides more presence and activity close to the Village Center.
  - Creates a more sustainable housing pattern without impacting rural character of the outer portions of the village.

Threats:

- Depletion of 'rural heritage.'
- Subdivision of most land in the Village into 1-acre lots will turn rural land into suburbia.
- Reduction in quality of water and environment (EPA studies).
- Lack of housing choice.
- Inability of population to remain in W.C. as they age and cycle through different life stages, whether easing into retirement or starting life fresh out of school.
- Increasing tax burden upon homeowners.

# 3.4 S.W.O.T. Analysis

## 3.4.1.2 Commercial Zoning Districts

Strengths:

- 1. Geographic location of B-2 district  
Why:
  - Recognizes the importance of a centrally located business district.

Weaknesses:

- 1. Does not allow for the creation of a pedestrian friendly environment  
How:
  - 80-foot setbacks create too much separation between businesses and the pedestrian zone.
  - Lack of design standards allows for blandness and monotony; not interesting to pedestrians.
  - Lack of mixtures of different uses does not create varied destinations for pedestrians.
  - Lack of adjacent, compatible residential uses does not allow for easy pedestrian travel between origin (home) and destination (store).

Opportunities:

- 1. Creation of a Village Center zoning classification with design standards  
Why:
  - Requires development layouts conducive to all modes of travel.
  - Creates a visually interesting, differentiated place.
  - Creates a true destination where people come together for different purposes.

Threats:

- 1. Development of the Village Center into simply another generic strip center / retail plaza.

- 2. The central focus of Wesley Chapel's community becomes indistinguishable from almost everywhere else. There is no special character.
- 3. The Village Center develops with sidewalks and bike lanes that remain empty due to inadequate and inappropriate land planning of the surrounding areas. Empty sidewalks spread a sense of economic failure.

## 3.4.1.3 Light Industrial District

Strengths:

- 1. An industrial district exists in Wesley Chapel's zoning.

Weaknesses:

- 1. Little, if any, land is dedicated for industrial uses.

Opportunities:

- 1. Industrial uses generate more tax revenue than they utilize, thus reducing the tax burden on residential property owners.
- 2. The dedication of more land within Wesley Chapel's corporate limits as industrial.  
Why:
  - Generation of more taxes with no additional costs to homeowners.
  - Creates revenue for other town projects.
  - Contemporary light industrial uses are often non-polluting and can make compatible neighbors.

Threats:

- 1. Wesley Chapel discovers it needs a diversified tax base, including industrial, when it is too late and no suitable land remains for a light industrial business park.

## 3.4.1.4 Landscaping and Buffering

Strengths:

- 1. Recognizes the need for landscaping.
- 2. Recognizes the benefits of buffering incompatible uses and/or structures.

Weaknesses:

- 1. Does not contribute to the 'preservation of rural heritage'  
How:
  - No requirement for native plants that are best suited to local weather conditions, heritage and the natural environment of the Piedmont.
  - Brick walls, allowable as a buffer, are neither rural nor heritage based.
  - Berms, allowable as buffers, are neither rural nor heritage based.
- 2. The landscape promoted by the regulations is generic and not environmentally sustainable  
How:
  - By not restricting allowable plants, those needing more water than naturally occurs can be planted.
  - Allows for plants needing high amounts of pesticide, insecticide, etc.

Opportunities

- 1. Establishment of an Allowable Plant Species List focusing on native and drought-resistant species.

Threats:

- 1. Large scale planting of non-native species of plants.
- 2. Greater water usage for irrigation and plant watering.
- 3. Threat of invasive / exotic species spreading to the detriment of native species.



## 3.4 S.W.O.T. Analysis

### 3.4.1.5 Zoning District Regulations

Strengths: None

Weaknesses:

1. Setbacks for all uses are not conducive to the creation of a pedestrian friendly environment.
2. Commercial setbacks will not create a 'Village Center' feel (min. is 80 feet; much too large).
3. Minimum lot size for non-residential uses is too large (contributes to suburban sprawl feel, detracts from rural character and connectivity).
4. Setbacks for class 1 services encourage traditional, auto-focused transportation, encroaching on pedestrian areas.

Opportunities:

1. Creation of 'Village Center' zoning district to allow for mixed uses and zero setbacks on commercial property to create a traditional "Main Street" environment.
2. Creation of 'Residential Village' zoning district adjacent to the Village Center to allow for a controlled mixed uses, a range of house types and smaller front yard setbacks to encourage pedestrian activity.

Threats:

1. Loss of 'rural character and heritage' through large-lot, suburban zoning.
2. A Village Center that looks and functions just like any other strip center in America.

### 3.4.2 Subdivision Ordinance

#### 3.4.2.1 Blocks

Strengths: None

Weaknesses:

1. 1,500 ft blocks are too long and prevent efficient pedestrian circulation.
2. No connectivity requirement.

Opportunities

1. Require shorter blocks (400 – 600 feet) through either more streets or pedestrian and bicycle connections.
2. Institute a connectivity requirement (links/nodes ratio: see section 4.1.2).

Threats:

1. Continued and unsustainable auto-dependant development that is not conducive to pedestrian and bicycle travel and which extends the response times of emergency services.

### 3.4.2.2 Design Requirements

Strengths:

1. Recognizes importance of bikeways.\*
2. Requires sidewalks.
3. Requires street lighting.
4. Recognizes importance of multiple access points.\*
5. Recognizes importance of minimizing distance of cul-de-sac streets.\*
6. Recognizes importance of open space.\*

\* Note: The regulations "recognize" the importance of these factors but they don't require developers to provide them.

Weaknesses:

1. Language: The ordinance allows for too much wiggle room. Many items are encouraged, but not required. If required, many are required "unless granted a variance by council." This language screams to the developer: Come ask for

concessions! This community's a push-over!

2. No design requirements for commercial or residential structures.

Opportunities:

1. Tighten up the language, change suggestions to requirements.
2. Enact design standards for commercial and residential development.

Threats:

1. Development that continues to meet the bare minimum requirements.
2. Development of ugly "snout-house" subdivisions and cookie cutter developments.

## 3.5 Conclusions, Conflicts and Issues

### 3.5 Conclusions, Conflicts and Issues

Community answers to the written survey illustrated several conflicting priorities, and this section amplifies and expands those points highlighted in the Executive Summary in section 2 above with the addition of issues gleaned from the other survey and analysis instruments. The main conflicts were as follows:

#### 3.5.1 Rural Character

The very powerful desire to protect and preserve the rural character and heritage of the community (over 90 percent of respondents) is directly at odds with the equally strong wish to maintain house lots of 1-acre (approx. 93 percent of respondents). However, uniform 1-acre zoning creates suburbs, sometimes very pleasant places to live, but definitely not rural environments.

Rural environments are characterized primarily by active farming, extensive and preserved open land – meadows and woodlands – and viewsheds free from repetitive housing arrangements with their urbanized details of curb and gutter, concrete driveways and sidewalks and street lighting. (Viewsheds are those main views experienced while driving or walking around the community; these views stick in people's memories and thus come to determine the overall character of a place). Experience across the USA has shown that 1-acre zoning is often the chief culprit for the loss of valued rural heritage and landscapes. Ways around this dilemma are noted in Section 5, Urban Design and Village Character, and Section 6, Land Use, Planning and Zoning.

#### 3.5.2 Range of Housing Opportunities

The majority sentiment for providing “a range of housing prices” (60 percent) is in conflict with the strong attitudes that oppose condominiums, town homes, smaller lots and higher densities (nearly 80 percent of respondents). A range of housing prices can only be achieved by utilizing some or all of these different house types.

#### 3.5.3 Light Industrial Development

While a large majority of respondents (78 percent) feel that light industrial development is not desirable in Wesley Chapel, and nearly half of the respondents (approx. 45 percent) feel new retail or office development is also not appropriate for the community, an even larger majority (95 percent of respondents) wants to maintain low property tax rates. However, without broadening the tax base to include a greater proportion of non-residential uses, residential property taxes will have to increase to cover the rising costs of services and the provision of additional facilities requested by a majority of residents. A modest majority (approx. 55 percent) realized this and thought broadening the tax base was important or very important.

#### 3.5.4 Non-Residential Uses

While a majority do not want to encourage new residential or commercial development (approx. 72 percent against new residential; 53 percent against new commercial), similar numbers of respondents (approx. 69 percent) did support new development that mixes retail with offices, restaurants and residences.



*Baxter Town Center*

*An example of Wesley Chapel's Rural Heritage*

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## 3.5 Conclusions, Conflicts and Issues



▲  
Elderly people can mix enjoyably and usefully with other age groups in environments that promote walking and shared public space.

### 3.5.5 Housing for Elderly Citizens

There was considerable (and very surprising) opposition to retirement homes (over 50 percent) or to any kind of housing that would be suitable for the active elderly in the community (nearly 80 percent of respondents were against condos or town homes – types of housing suitable for elderly active residents). However, during the time frame of this Master Plan (to 2030) the average age of many survey respondents now in their thirties or forties (40 percent) will be approaching retirement age, while another 15 percent will be well into their senior years. In line with national demographic and lifestyle trends across the South, this aging process will bring about some changed attitudes regarding how and where to live. Contradicting the negative figures above, and as noted in 2.1.2 above, 60 percent of respondents did support a range of housing prices for different life phases and a range of housing styles, densities and designs.

Older people increasingly want to stay active in their community, but without the burdens and maintenance costs of large detached homes. This process of “aging in place” has received much study of late, with regard to the public health benefits to the elderly of healthy, walking lifestyles in neighborhoods that provide more appropriate types of housing in safe, pedestrian-friendly environments. This allows elderly people to remain active and involved in their communities.

### 3.5.6 Traffic Congestion

While there were consistent complaints about traffic congestion, this congestion is caused in part by the citizens’ preferred practice of disconnected residential subdivisions, often with only one way in and out. Additional congestion is also “home grown” by the fact that nearly 65 percent of residents commute to work in Charlotte, leading to problems at peak travel times on Wesley Chapel’s roads. While this Master Plan can do little to solve this latter problem caused by patterns of working and living beyond the scope of the plan, greater connectivity between subdivisions in the future can substantially reduce traffic congestion on existing roadways by providing a range of alternative routes for local journeys.

### 3.5.7 Growth and Property Rights

Underlying many of these conflicts and contradictory opinions lies the basic conundrum that, judged by the survey, a large majority of Wesley Chapel residents do not want further growth and development to occur – 73 percent of respondents thought that more residential development was NOT important to the community. It is clear that citizens, including the large number of those who have recently arrived in Wesley Chapel, think that the best way to preserve the remaining rural character of the community is to stop further growth. However, this anti-development sentiment runs counter to all demographic and development trends in the region, and, moreover, to stifle future growth would deprive other Wesley Chapel residents of their legal rights to develop their property.

The issue thus becomes: how to create a framework that guides future development in ways that protect property rights, meet community goals, and protect the environment, particularly in respect to water and air quality. Over 97 percent of survey respondents said that having a clean and health environment was “very important or important.” However, recent federal EPA studies have clearly shown that standard 1-acre zoning has a much greater negative impact on water quality than housing on smaller lots with more preserved open space (see Appendix III on the CD).

### 3.5.8 Agricultural Heritage

There is a related issue that is important relative to questions of future growth: the maintenance of agriculture and farms as viable uses in a rapidly suburbanizing area. A very substantial majority (nearly 95 percent) of respondents valued agriculture as part of Village life, but the experience of other areas demonstrates that the less aesthetic aspects of farm life (smells from silage, fertilizer and animals etc) do not fit well with suburban sensibilities.

### 3.5.9 Willingness to Pay

The final issue from the written survey underpins many of the ones noted above, namely citizens’ willingness to pay for the civic and environmental improvements they desire. Comfortable majorities

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The Village of Wesley Chapel

## 3.5 Conclusions, Conflicts and Issues

of respondents supported improvements in or new opportunities in areas such as recreation and sport, bikeways, greenways and parks, village sponsorship of community events, village identity and signage programs. When asked about their willingness to pay increased taxes to support these new programs and infrastructure, the largest numerical group (usually between 30 and 40 percent of respondents) answered that they would NOT be willing to pay. While the majority, generally about 60 percent in total agreed that they would be willing to pay slightly increased taxes, by far the largest segment of this group indicated that their willingness extended only to 1 or 2 cents increase per \$100 of property value. At current rates such increases to residential property taxes would only bring in between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year to the municipal coffers. This is not a very large sum of money relative to the stated desires of the survey respondents.

Important issues and potential conflicts that arose from the other analyses can be summarized as follows:

### 3.5.10 Visual Survey

As noted in the Executive Summary, the major unresolved issue from the visual survey relates to the design of residential neighborhoods. Citizens were shown two pairs of slides comprising two sets of drawings that illustrated two different ways of laying out a subdivision. On each pair of drawings, one version showed a conventional large lot layout that paid little attention to the landscape, rural heritage features and environmental issues of the land. The alternative showed the same number of homes arranged on smaller lots in ways that saved the rural heritage features and was more sensitive to the environment.

In the first set of slides, citizens preferred the large lot version that did most harm to the rural heritage. In the second set, public opinion reversed itself, with a majority voting for the more environmentally conscious alternative.

It is clear from this confusion that many citizens do not understand clearly the environmental implications of their preferences, and are

thus willing to pursue types of development that will largely destroy the landscape heritage they say they value so much.

Another important result from the Visual Survey indicated that when neighbourhoods were well designed, residents were more open to higher densities than was apparent from the visual survey. One photograph in particular, from the St. Albans development in Davidson, NC, showed neat, modest single-family detached housing on lots of approximately 1/4-acre. This development received a favourable rating from nearly 70 percent of respondents, by far the highest of any of the six alternatives, including illustrations of large-lot wooded development.

### 3.5.11 Land Capacity Analysis

These analysis maps explored the impact of alternative growth management policies to help resolve the basic conflict between 1-acre zoning and the preservation of the community's rural heritage.

The message of this analysis is clear: if 1-acre lot zoning is maintained as the only method of residential development then the much valued rural heritage will be lost forever as Wesley Chapel transforms into a generic suburb that could be located on the edge of any large metropolitan area in the USA. Therefore, if the community is serious about preserving its unique character and rural heritage, future zoning policy must utilize a variety of lot sizes and different types of development with tougher design and environmental standards.

### 3.5.12 Planning and Zoning (S.W.O.T) Analysis

The basic conclusion of the S.W.O.T analysis of the Village's current zoning and subdivision regulations is that they are not well suited to the challenge of managing future growth and some of the inherent contradictions in community priorities noted above. **The recommendation of this study therefore is that a serious rewriting of all regulations be undertaken as a matter of urgency.** This report defines and outlines the basic policies and standards required for future growth management as the basis for

this rewriting task and indicates a range of precedents and best practices: the task of writing the new codes themselves should be carried out by a team of expert consultants, or with the help of the local Council of Governments (COG) staff if appropriate.



Wooded lots in St. Alban's,  
Davidson, N.C.

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## 3.6-3.7 The Master Plan and Civic Leadership



▲  
Elected officials in many Carolina communities are using design and planning workshops to involve citizens in public debate about the future of their communities.

### 3.6 The Role of the Master Plan

The Master Plan therefore attempts to resolve these contradictions as far as possible, always favoring solutions that hold most promise for a prosperous and sustainable future for the community in the medium to long term. This inevitably means some compromises with some opinions and preferences currently held by survey respondents. This plan utilizes current thinking about sustainable development in planning and urban design in order to avoid the mistakes of the past and to create the most environmentally and economically appropriate framework for future growth. The detailed proposals that comprise this vision are described in the following sections 4, 5 and 6. Section 4 deals with Transportation; Section 5 with Urban Design and Village Character; and Section 6 with Land Use, Planning and Zoning.

### 3.7 The Role of Civic Leadership

The Master Plan is comprised of a series of initiatives – planning concepts, illustrative designs and policies -- that are welded into a complex whole. Each part of the plan depends on other parts for its success: for example, the proposals in the transportation section are inextricably tied to the land use and planning concepts and vice versa. The ambitions of this plan and the expectations of the client body are not likely to be met if the plan is parsed apart and bits and pieces implemented out of context from the whole package of measures.

The challenges faced by Wesley Chapel are serious, and to achieve a secure future, socially, economically and environmentally, some of the concepts and recommendations run counter to some contemporary community preferences as revealed in the written survey. This survey was a very valuable document in many ways, but it did also indicate that substantial proportions of the citizens do not always have a fully comprehensive grasp of the issues or the implications of certain ideas. Indeed some community preferences, such as the disdain for housing for the elderly, or for young families, seem very odd and more than a little disturbing. These exclusionary attitudes seem unaware of the demographics of the aging process that will affect all citizens within the 20-plus year time horizon of the plan, or for the structure of family values whereby young people

starting out on their working lives can be attracted back into the community to be near their parents and/or grandparents. Additionally, the desire expressed by a large majority to stop further development now that they themselves are in residence is not possible without overturning fundamental American values enshrined in the nation's culture since the days of the Founding Fathers. Stopping growth could only be achieved by depriving other Village residents of their basic property rights to develop their land.

The plan thus takes an objective and politically neutral long-term view. It respects property rights and is founded on the best planning and design practices available in America today; it also examines trends that are likely to affect all our futures. In the big picture, changes in American lifestyles over the next twenty-plus years to the time horizon of this plan will be increasingly determined by global trends as opposed to national or local preferences. Rising petroleum and construction costs will eventually affect American lifestyles, perhaps in quite dramatic ways, making traditional suburban land use and transportation patterns progressively more expensive and difficult to maintain.

The policies and vision necessary to meet these challenges are not necessarily the most popular, but they are the best and most appropriate. Continual education and dialogue in the community is thus essential for success, and the final sections of this document provide the community with a blueprint for the future that can only be fulfilled with the help and drive of talented and committed leadership as well as broad citizen support. Keeping focused on the vision and garnering the support necessary for implementation are thus the primary challenges for today's and tomorrow's civic leaders in the unique community that is Wesley Chapel.

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# Section 4

## Transportation

Your Community, Your Vision, Your Future



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## 4.1 Current Conditions

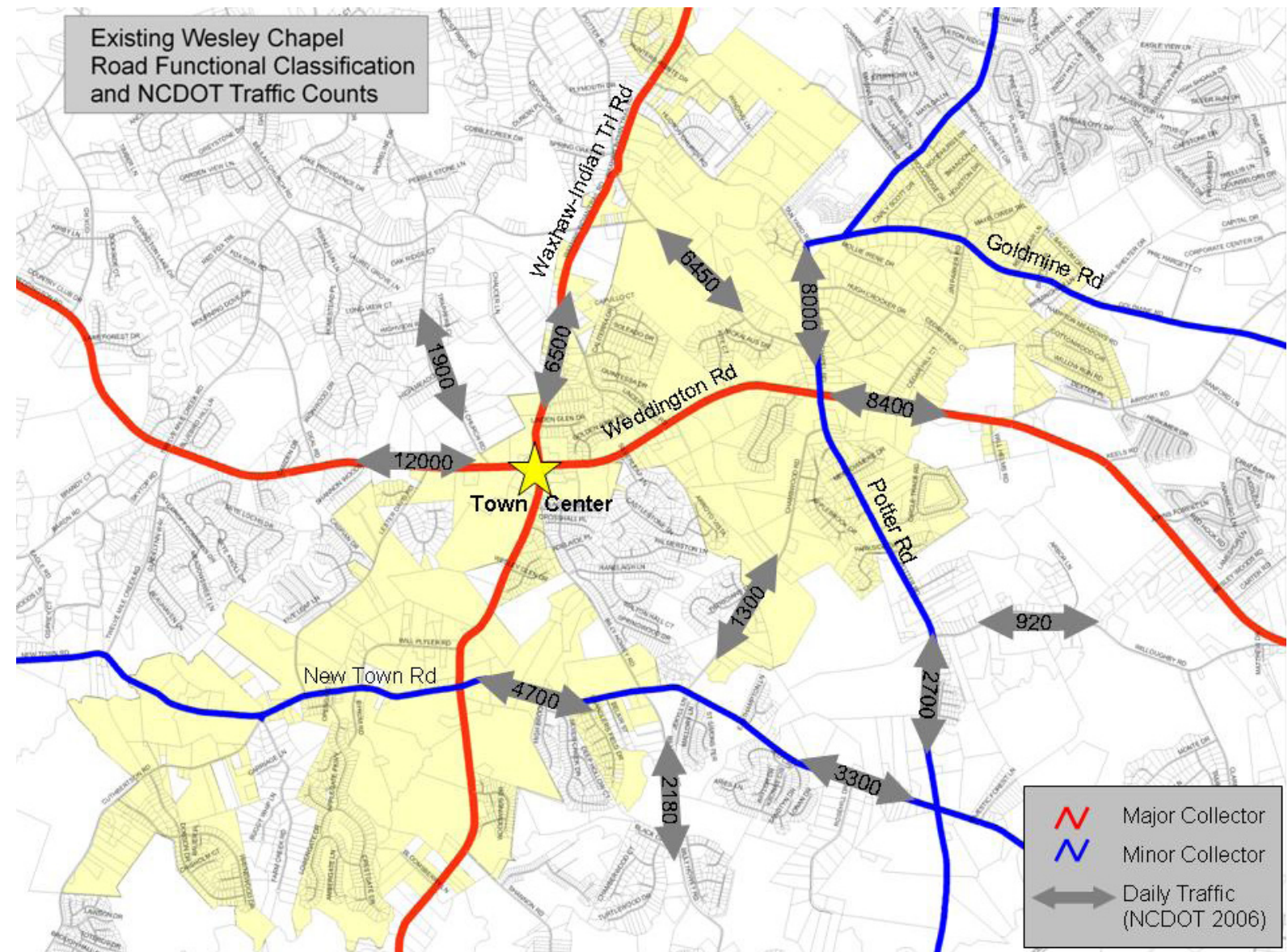
### 4.1.1 Roads

Wesley Chapel is a small town experiencing fast residential growth which will have an effect on the road network. It is important to understand the existing transportation conditions in the village. The following are observations from field exercises and research.

All public roads in Wesley Chapel are maintained by NCDOT, and are generally characterized as Minor Collectors, Major Collectors, or Local/Residential Roads (See Map on this page). Major Collectors (Weddington Rd, and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Rd) are roads that link small towns with nearby larger towns or cities, or to routes of higher classification and serve the more important travel corridors. Minor Collectors (Goldmine Rd, New Town Rd, Potter Rd, and Wesley Chapel Rd) provide service to the remaining smaller communities and link the locally important traffic generators with their rural corollaries. Local roads are all roads not defined as arterials or collectors; primarily providing access to land and homes with little or no through movement.

In general, speed limits on Minor and Major Collectors are 45 mph, with 10-12 ft lanes, no gutter system and no pedestrian or bicycle amenities. Local roads typically have slower speeds (25 mph for residential) and roads within new subdivisions tend to have sidewalks and curb & gutter, in response to new subdivision requirements.

The 2006 traffic counts (See Origins and Destinations Map) collected by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) specify that the majority of trips in Wesley Chapel occur on Weddington Rd, Potter Rd, and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Rd. There are few alternative routes to these roads and the street network is disconnected; this can be demonstrated by the number of T-intersections on Weddington Rd.



Existing Wesley Chapel Road Functional Classification and NCDOT Traffic Count Map

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# Connectivity Analysis Wesley Chapel Subdivisions

NAME	Streets	Intersections	Ration
Potters Bluff	1	2	0.50
The Glen at Wesley Oaks & Wesley Glen	4	5	0.80
Fox Fire Estates	1	2	0.50
Heather Glen	7	8	0.88
Wesley Woods	16	16	1.00
Berkshire	12	13	0.92
Wexford	1	2	0.50
Weddington Plantation	7	8	0.88
Lindenwood	11	12	0.92
Twin Cedars	1	2	0.50
Meadowmere	1	2	0.50
Wesley Downs	1	2	0.50
King's Grant	5	6	0.83
Hunter's Pointe	16	15	1.07
Wesley Glen	0	0	
The Brooks	11	12	0.92
Goldmine	9	7	1.29
Cedar Hill	4	6	0.67
Quintessa	19	20	0.95
Wesley Estates	4	6	0.67
Ivey Hill	1	2	0.50
Hampton Meadows	7	8	0.88
Champion Forest	11	11	1.00
Houston Farm	5	8	0.63
Potter Place	0	0	
Price Mill	2	2	1.00
Court Square	4	8	0.50
Pilgrim Forest	5	6	0.83
Wesley Springs	7	8	0.88
Stonegate	23	25	0.92
Heather View	0	0	
Potter's Trace	2	2	1.00
Average Connectivity Index for Wesley Chapel			0.79



Existing Connectivity Analysis Chart (top)  
Subdivision Connectivity Example (bottom)

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## 4.1 Current Conditions

### 4.1.2 Subdivisions

Typically, the existing subdivisions in Wesley Chapel are not well connected to adjacent streets and other neighborhoods. While subdivisions that were recently built may have more than one point of access, the bulk of older subdivisions have only a single access point, making them largely disconnected from the street network.

Connectivity within subdivisions is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents by providing safe and convenient access for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. Well-connected streets can provide more possible routes which reduces vehicular congestion, thus making traffic flow more efficient. Connected streets also provide better access for emergency and service vehicles. Furthermore, pedestrian and bicycle access is enhanced by well-connected streets.

The connectivity of a subdivision is measured by a connectivity ratio. The ratio divides the number of intersections (including dead ends) by the number of links (segments between intersections). This ratio is a way to compare and evaluate the connectivity of a subdivision. Best practice requires a connectivity ratio of at least 1.4. It is very difficult, or impossible, to improve automobile connectivity to subdivisions that are already completed, therefore pedestrian connectivity should be enhanced in existing subdivisions where possible.

Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), an inventory of all the subdivisions in Wesley Chapel was done to assess the connectivity ratios, the average ratio was 0.79 (See ExistingConnectivity Analysis Chart).

## 4.2 Recommendations

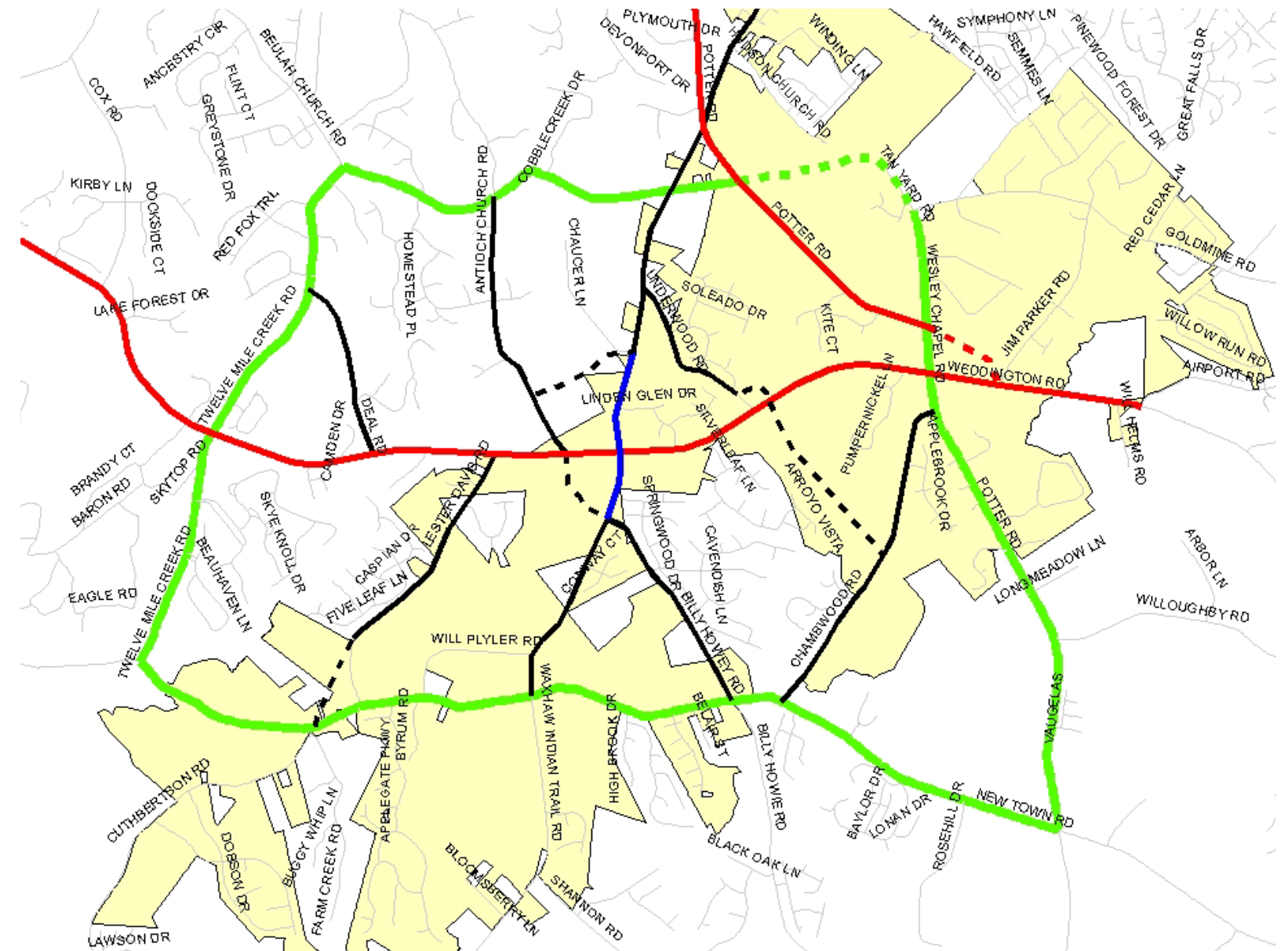
### 4.2.1 Roads

The purpose of the following recommendation is to provide alternatives for all modes of transportation within the Village of Wesley Chapel. The goal of these recommendations is to facilitate multi-modal (pedestrians, bicycles, & automobiles) transportation choices and to encourage sustainable development patterns, which support Wesley Chapel's Town Center.

The intersection of Weddington Rd and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Rd is the most congested intersection in Wesley Chapel (See Potential Street Network Map). This area has been identified as the proposed Town Center, and is already a burgeoning commercial district with a Target and Harris Teeter. Future traffic volumes associated with residential and commercial growth will only exacerbate the congestion at this key intersection.

The existing road network funnels most traffic through this intersection and provides few meaningful alternative routes for through-trips (trips whose destination is not intended to be Wesley Chapel). Most rural collectors, which serve local trips, are not connected in a way that provides relief for the Town Center. The existing streets do not provide any pedestrian amenities and the automobile speeds are high (typically 45 mph) discouraging walking in Wesley Chapel.

To achieve the above stated goal, a network of streets and new connections is suggested to guide future road development. The street network identified is comprised of five types of streets, which are further described in the following pages, and each road type is accompanied by a design concept cross-section for use as a guide in future decision making. Illustrative designs of how these new connecting streets could be built by developers as a part of the overall development process are shown in section 4.3.



Three important new “Avenues” shown dotted on the map on this page – the Billy Howie Extension linking Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road with Weddington Road, the link between Antioch Church Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road, and from Chambwood Road to Weddington Road – are described in more detail in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

Potential Street Network Map

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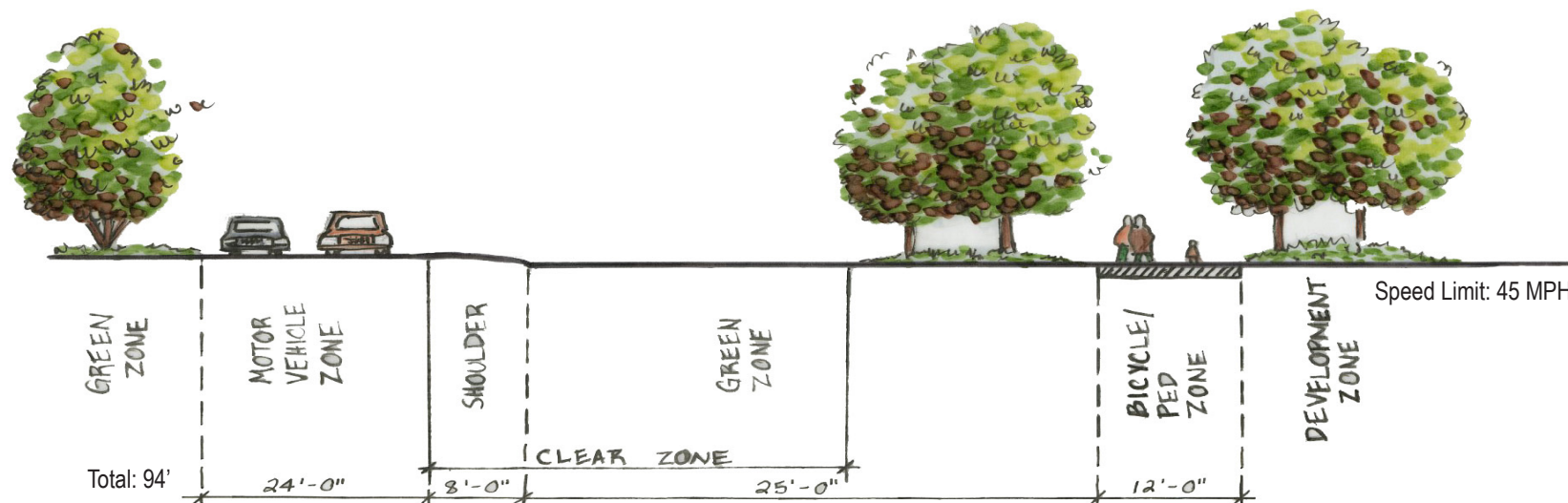
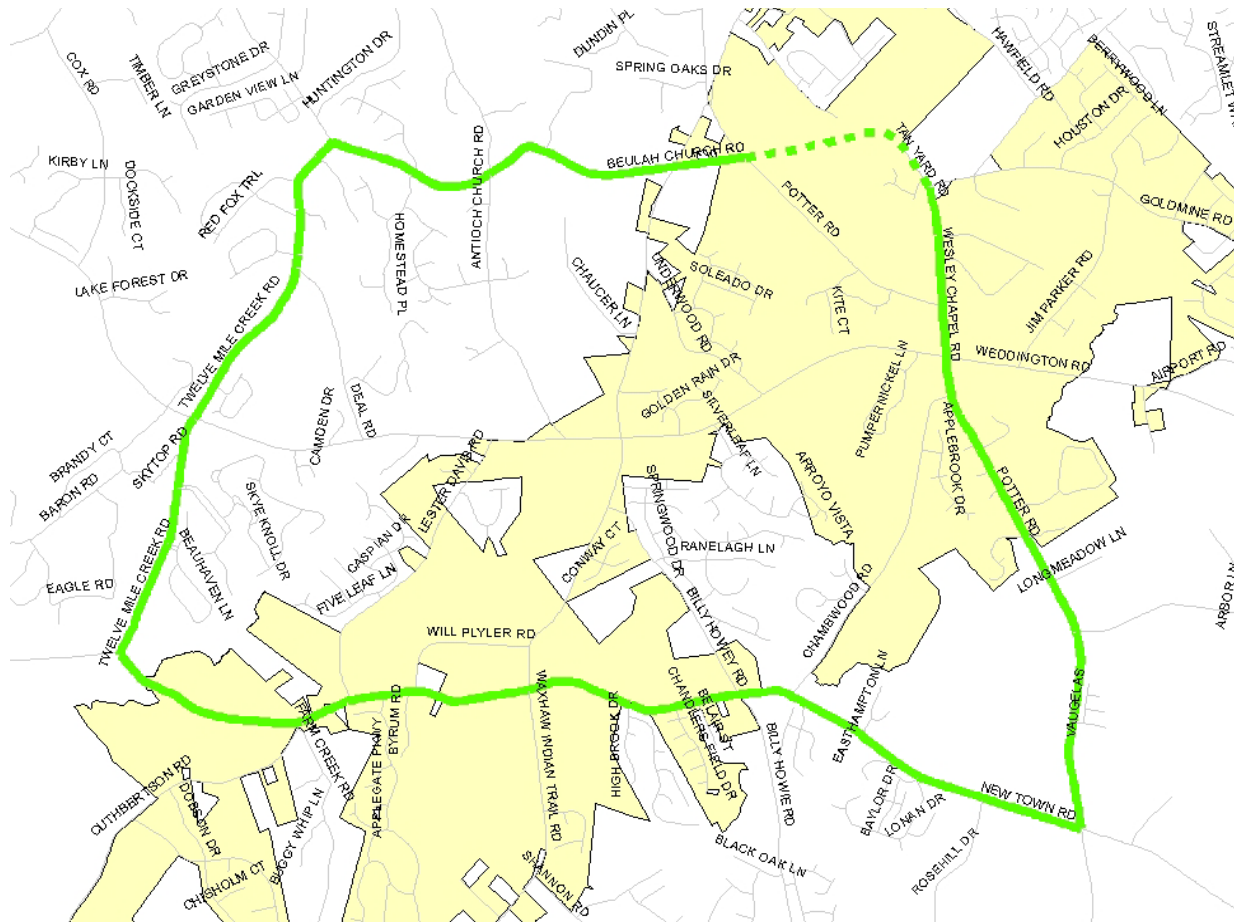
The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1.1 Parkways

Parkways are auto-oriented roads whose purpose is to move vehicles at a higher rate of speed. The roads identified (Beulah Church Rd, Twelve Mile Creek Rd, Potter/Wesley Chapel Rd, & New Town Rd) for Parkways in Wesley Chapel were done so to provide alternative routes for through-trips other than Weddington Rd and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Rd. The key to making this concept work is to lower the speeds of Weddington Rd & Waxhaw-Indian Trail Rd (via lower speed limits, new stop lights, or pedestrian cross-walks). In addition, maintaining or even raising speeds on the Parkways creates a competitive alternative route. Due to increased speeds on Parkways, pedestrians should be accommodated on a separate path for safety.



Potential Parkway Map (top)  
Parkway Image Example (above)  
Parkway Rendering Example (bottom)

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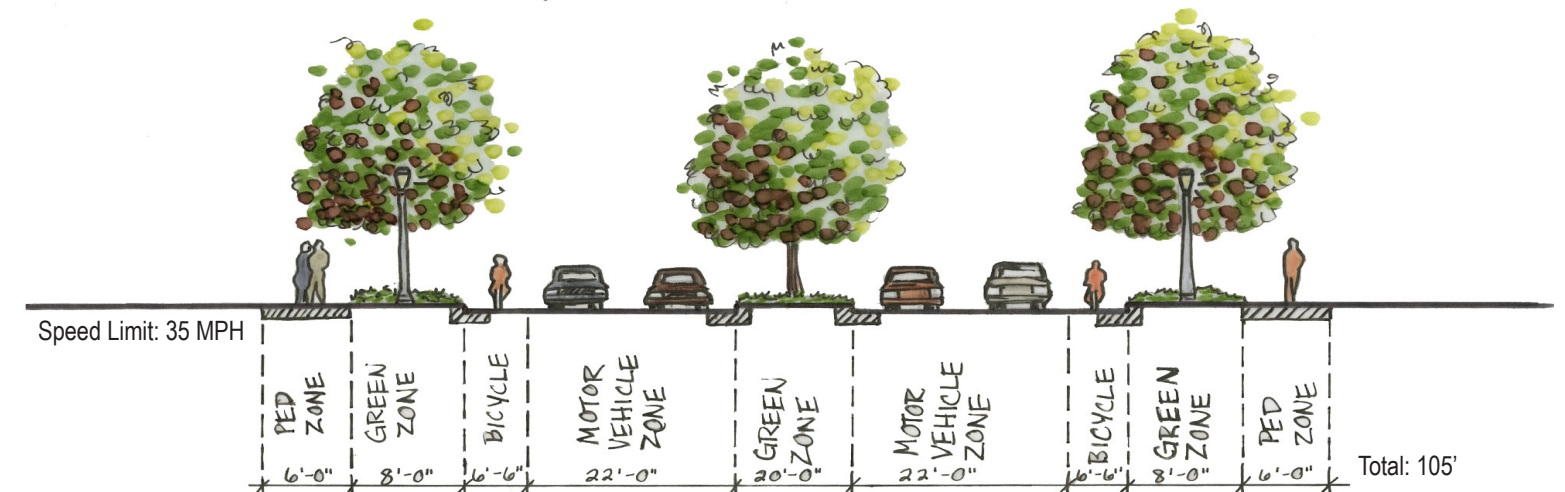
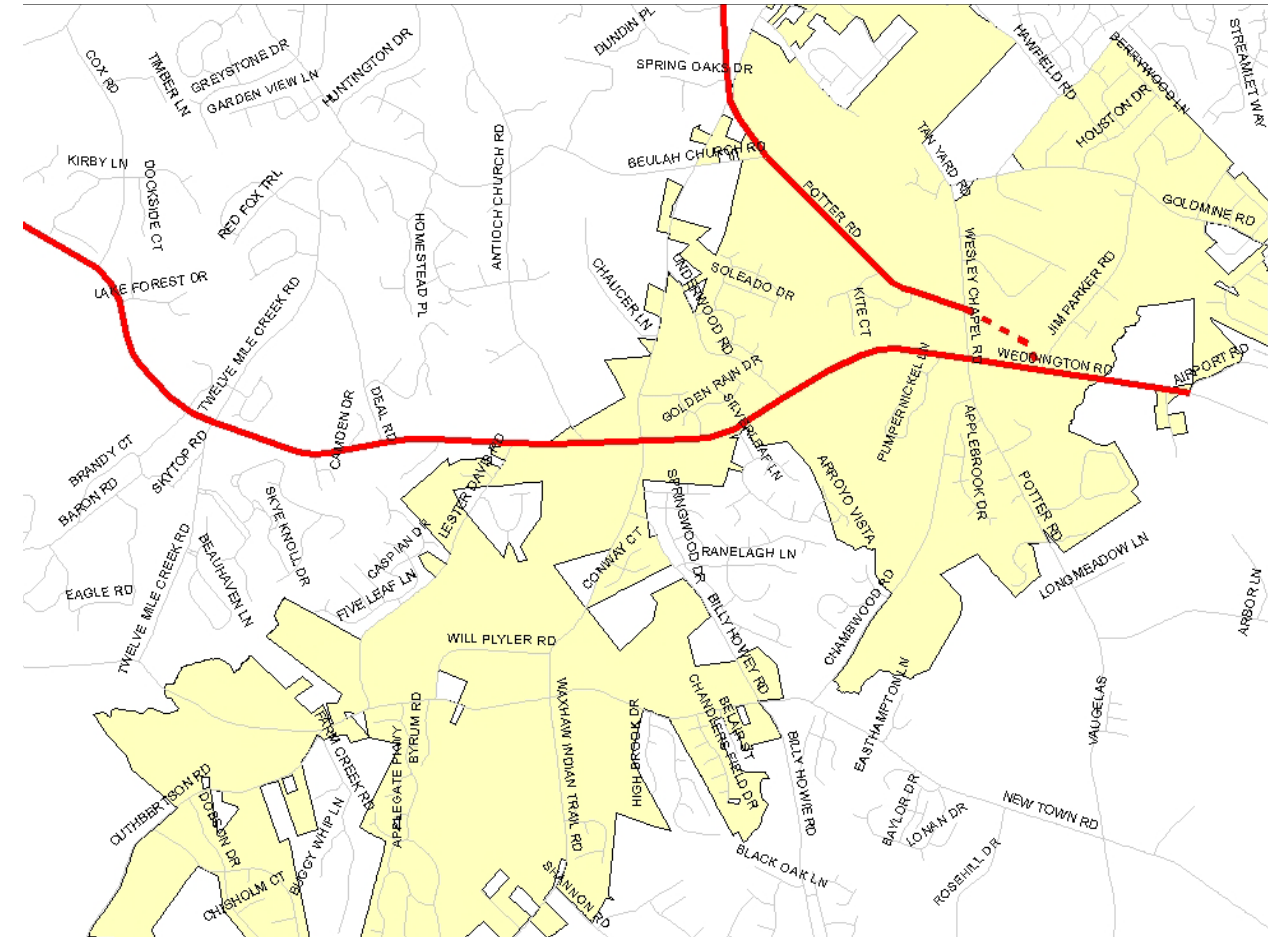
## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1.2 Boulevards

Boulevards are high volume roads that accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Typically, there is a landscaped median that increases the amount of green-space and provides pedestrian refuge at street crossings. Vehicle speeds for a boulevard should be appropriate for pedestrian safety (35 mph max). Cross-walks and pedestrian signalization should be provided at logical intervals to facilitate pedestrian movements. Weddington Rd and Potter Rd have been identified as boulevards by NCDOT for the 2030 Horizon Year (MUMPO), but the road has not been designed. This is an opportunity for Wesley Chapel to partner with NCDOT to ensure an appropriate cross-section and design speed is implemented.



Potential Boulevard Map (top)  
Boulevard Image Example (above)  
Boulevard Rendering Example (bottom)



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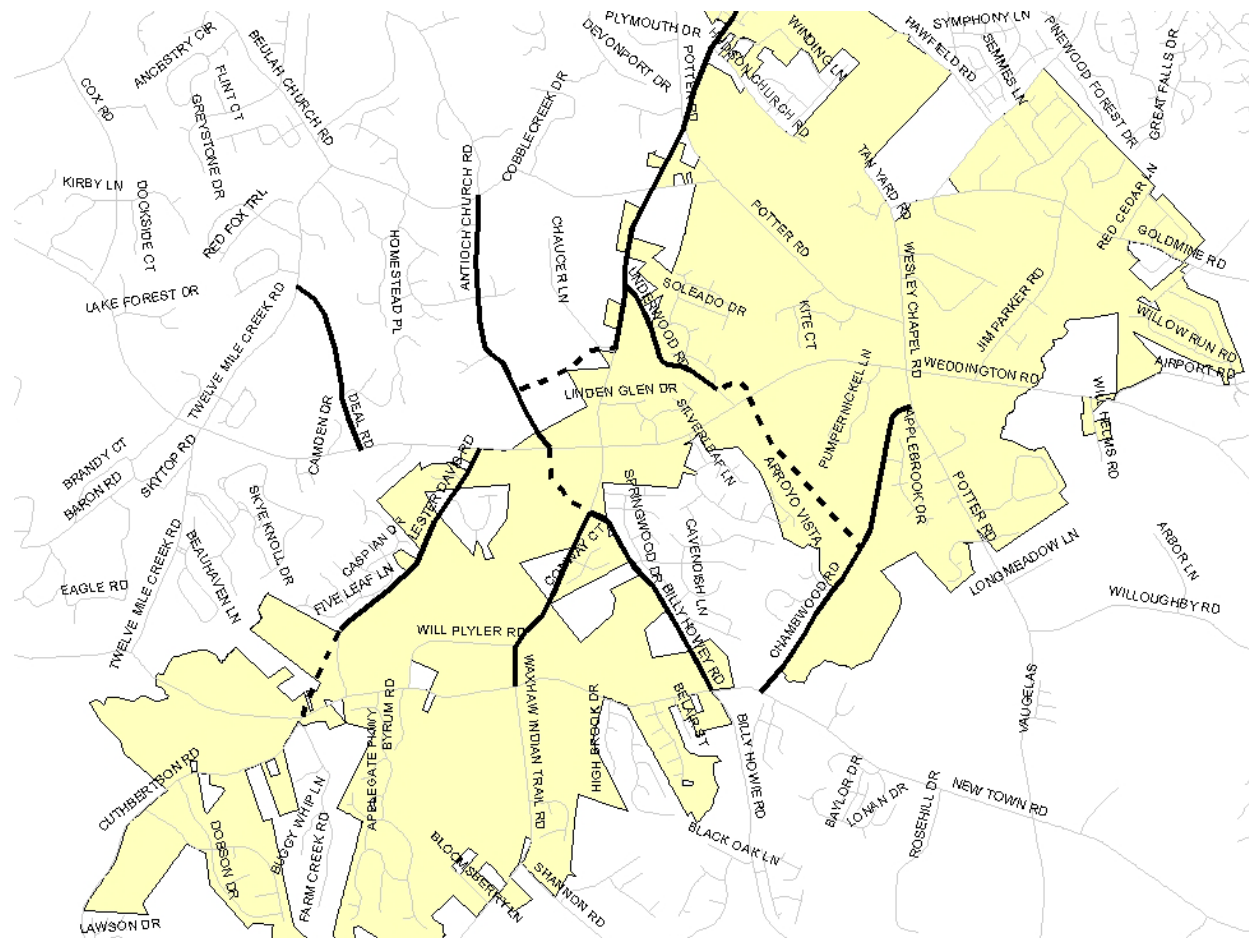
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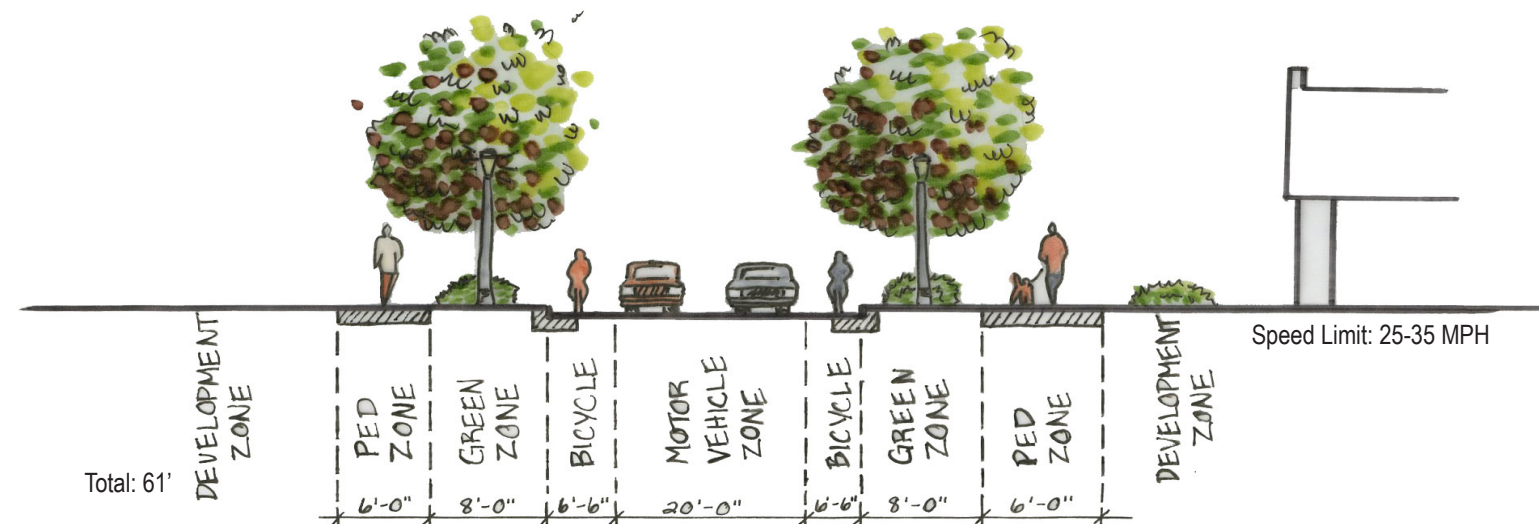
## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1.3 Avenues

Avenues are primarily designed for local trips. They provide access from neighborhoods to commercial areas, and other parts of the village. Avenues serve an important function in providing transportation choices, because they are designed to provide a balance of service for all modes of transport. They include high-quality pedestrian access, and bicycle accommodations such as bike lanes. In some situations avenues may be integrated into neighborhoods. Creating new avenue connections can alleviate pressure on the Town Center intersection by providing alternative routes for local trips. Speeds should be reduced (35 mph max) to ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle movements.



Potential Avenue Map (top, right)  
Avenue Image Example (above)  
Avenue Rendering Example (bottom)



Your Community, Your Vision, Your Future....

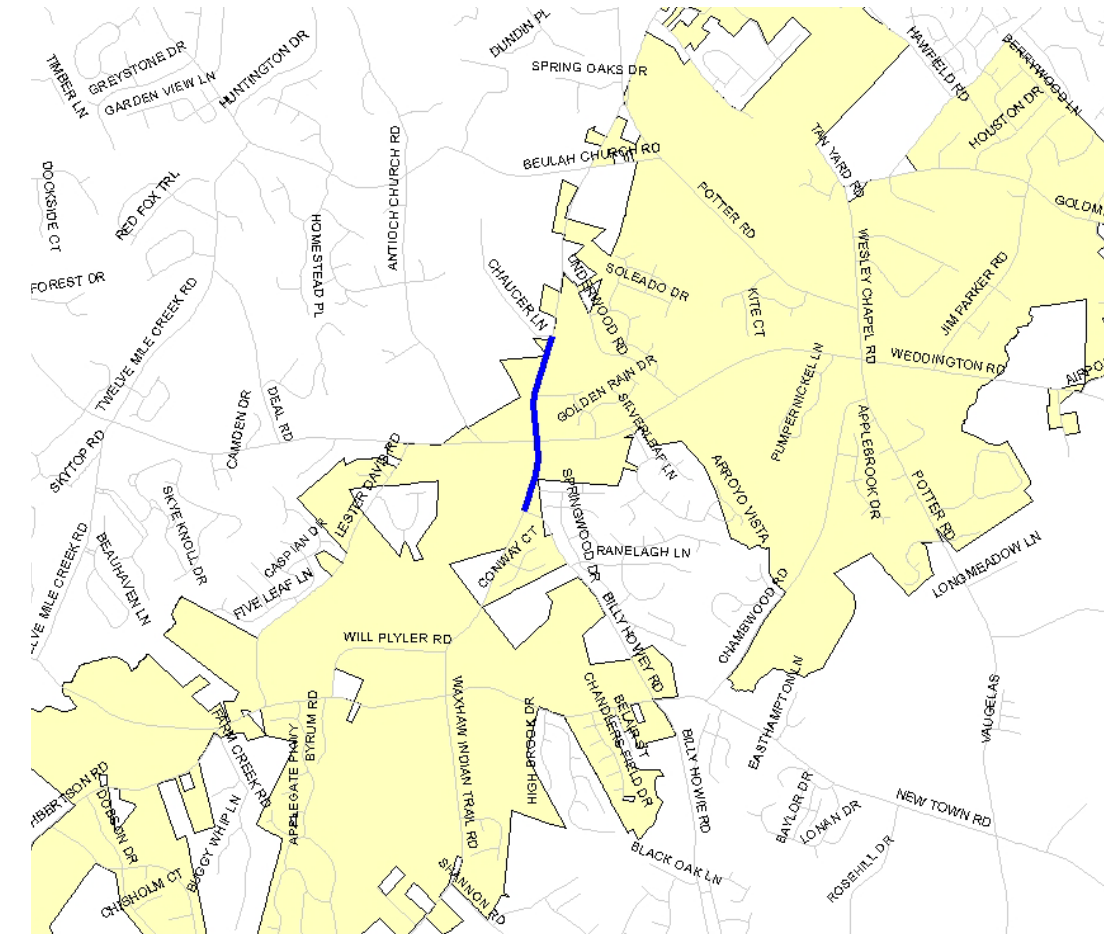
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## 4.2 Recommendations

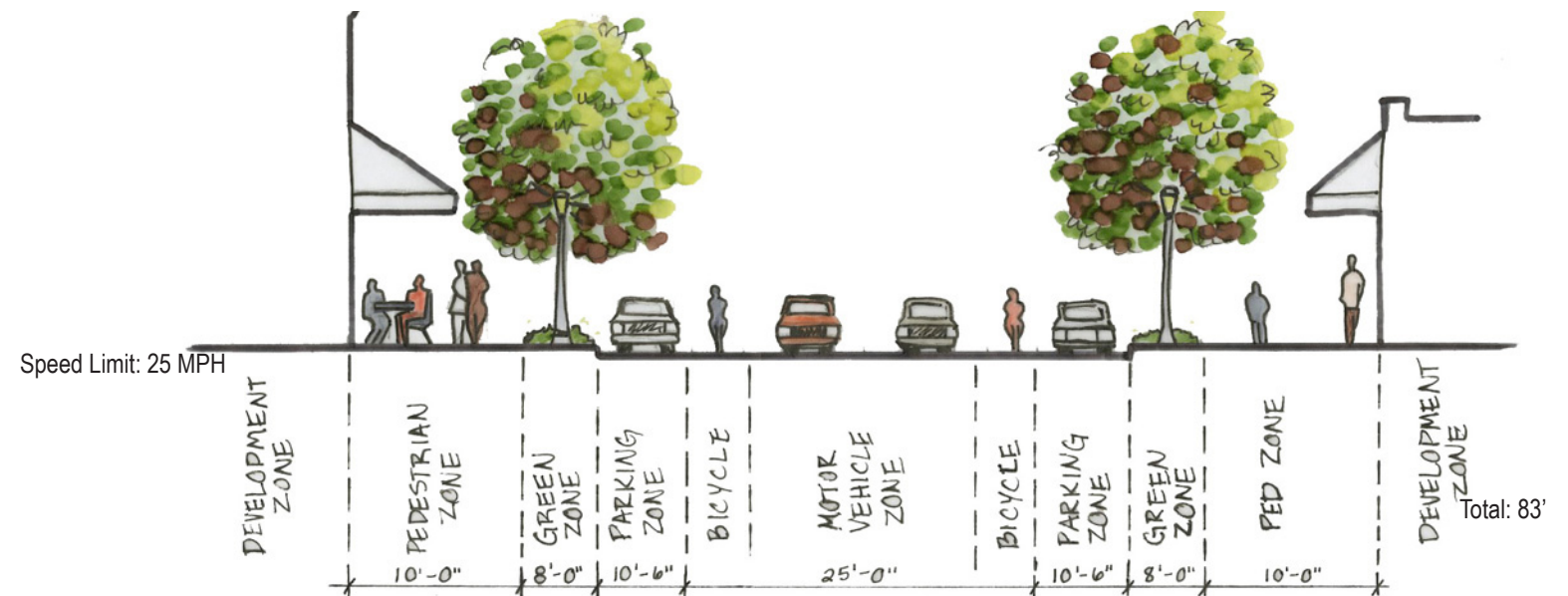
### 4.2.1.4 Main Street

Main Streets are pedestrian oriented streets that are within or abutting commercial or civic districts. They are destinations, places where you take family who may be visiting, or where you want to have a cup of coffee and people watch. Commercial or mixed use development should be of a pedestrian scale, with on-street parking. Pedestrian amenities are important to entice people to walk, shop and eat, this includes wide sidewalks, benches, lighting, and public art. Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road has been identified as Main Street because of the location of the Town Center and the burgeoning commercial district. Future development and redevelopment of existing uses should be scaled down to support the Main Street concept. Vehicle speeds must be lowered to support pedestrians (25 mph max).

The continuity of Main Street across Weddington Road, to unite the north and south portions of Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road will need careful design of the intersection, turn lanes and pedestrian signalization to ensure good connectivity and safe crosswalks for cyclists and walkers. The suggested detailed design of this intersection is shown in section 5.1.3.



Counter-clockwise from top right: Potential Main Street Map; Main Street Image Example; Pedestrian-oriented Intersection Design; Main Street Rendering Example.



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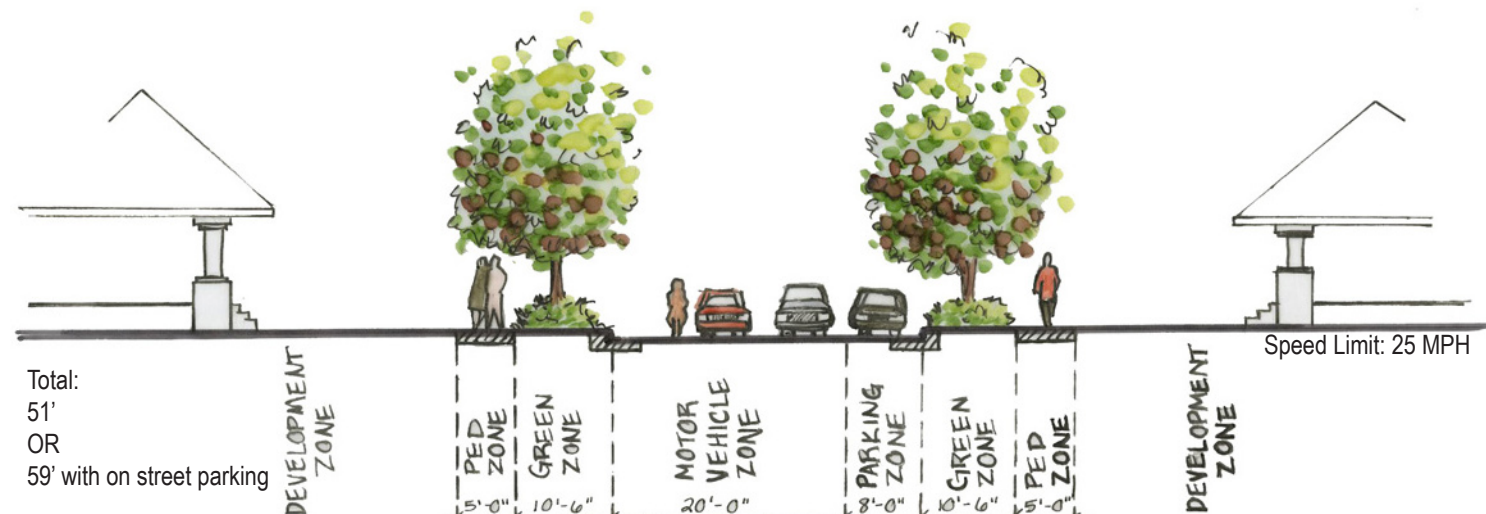
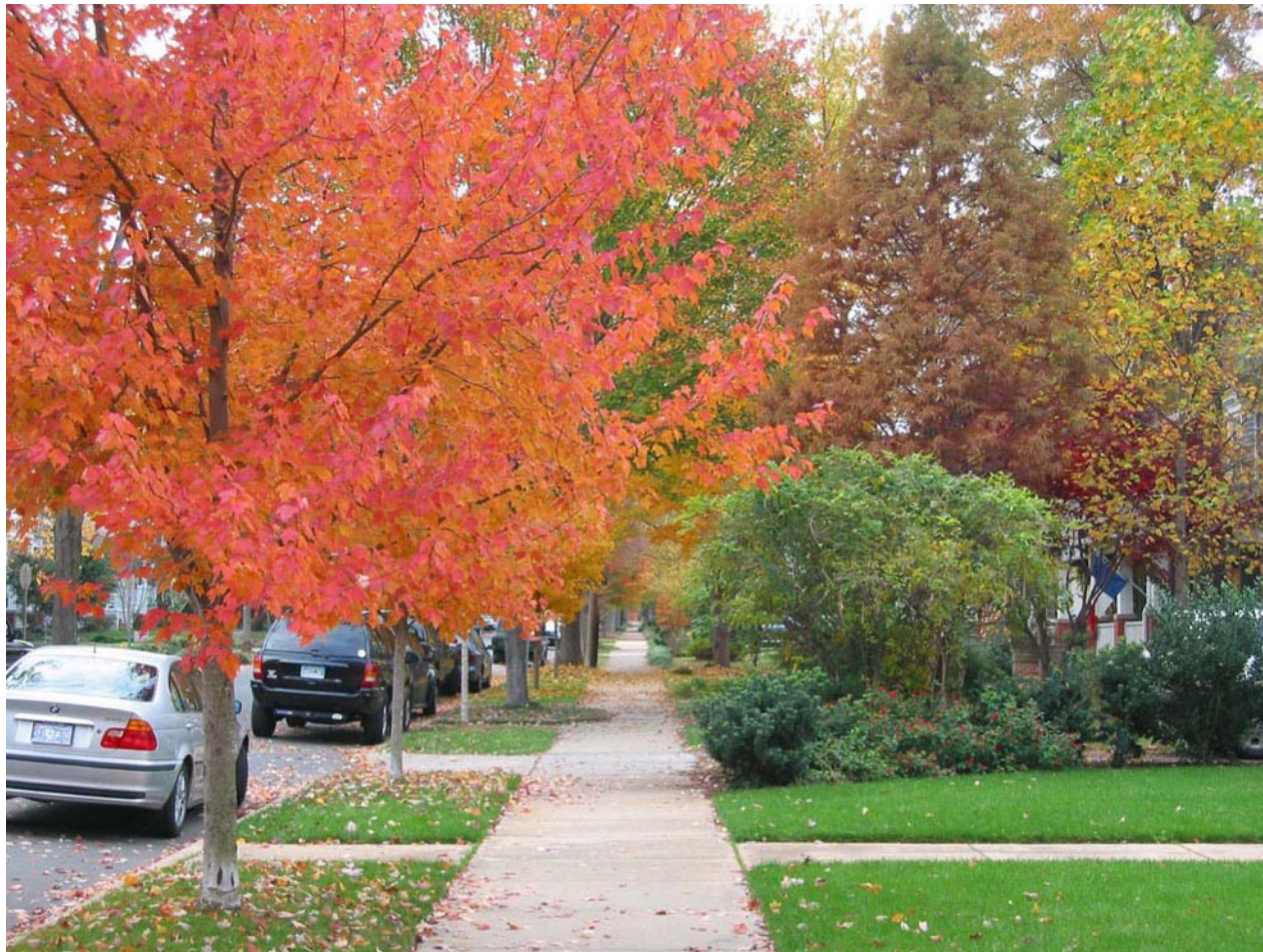
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## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1.5 Residential Streets

Residential streets are usually built as a part of a residential subdivision and are low speed in nature. The purpose of these streets is to provide access to the residential properties and to accommodate safe pedestrian movements of the residents. On-street parking may or may not be utilized, and should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Wide planting strips are important to accommodate street trees. Vehicle speeds are slow (25 mph max) and therefore the cross-section doesn't require a designated bicycle lane.



Residential Street Example (top)  
Residential Street Rendering (bottom)

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## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.2 Subdivision Connectivity

One mechanism for enhancing connectivity in new subdivisions is to require shorter block lengths. Shorter blocks ensure that vehicular traffic does not become focused on only one or two streets and provides flexibility for the residents of the neighborhood. Shorter blocks also create a better walking environment, by providing numerous direct and indirect routes throughout neighborhoods.

This plan makes the following recommendations for future subdivision developments to improve connectivity:

- New subdivisions should have a minimum connectivity ratio of 1.4 (links/nodes).
- Block length between cross streets should be minimized to 600 feet maximum, with 400 feet preferred.
- Stub streets should be required at site boundaries for connectivity to future subdivisions or roads. Later developments should be required to connect to stub streets in adjacent subdivisions.
- New subdivisions should have at least two access points.
- Pedestrian connections and connections to greenways should be encouraged as a beneficial amenity to residents.
- Connect roads that are disconnected. There are instances where roads are blocked for unknown reasons.

### 4.2.3 Greenways

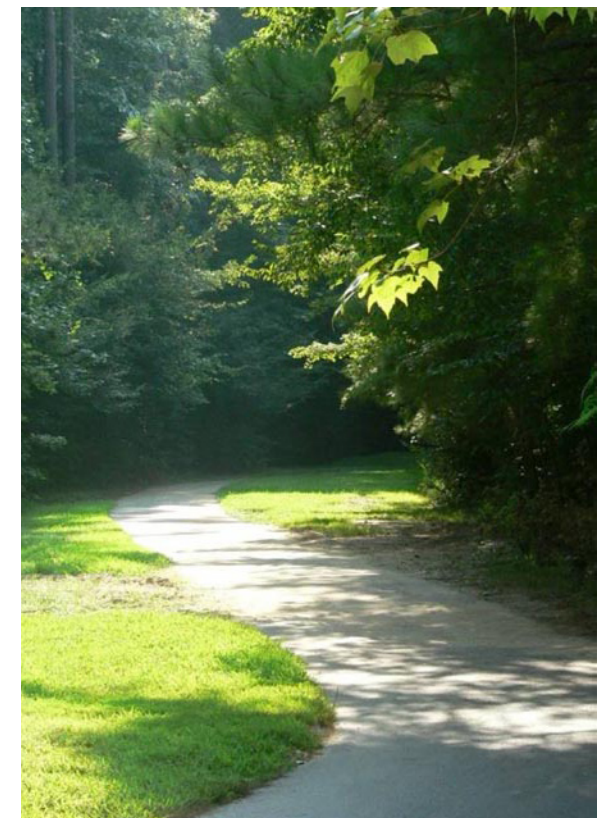
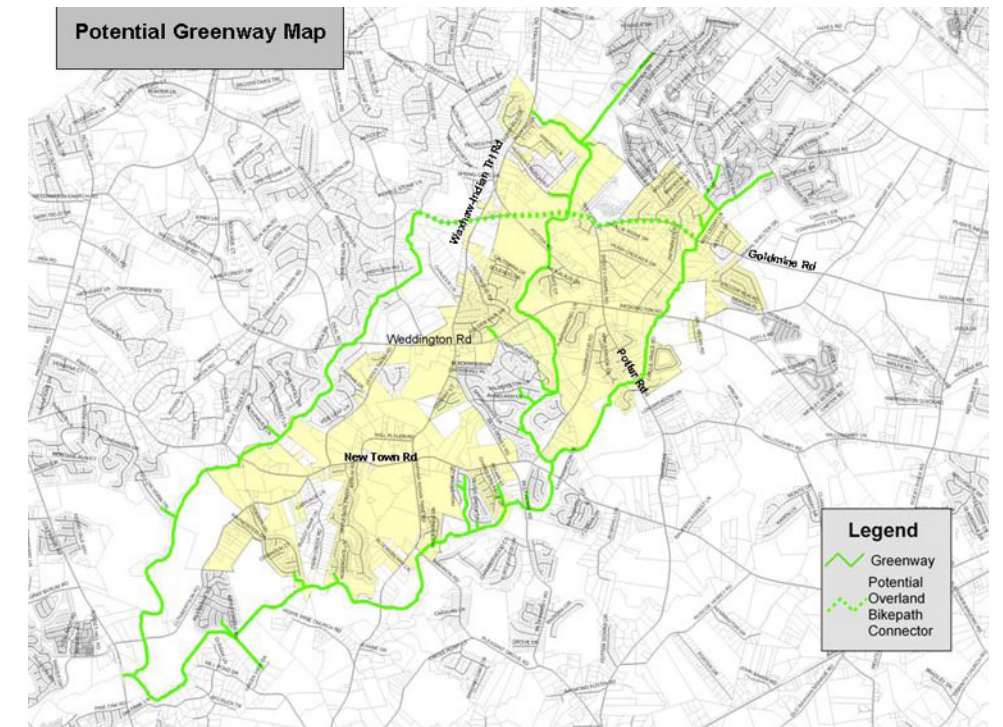
Greenways are open spaces which serve as vegetated buffers and promote leisure activities. They are able to protect natural habitats, improve water quality, and reduce the impacts of flooding in floodplain areas. They are often designed as linear corridors from either natural geographic features, such as rivers and streams, or from manmade such as abandoned railroad beds and utility

corridors. Most greenways contain trails, which enhance existing recreational opportunities, provide routes for alternative transportation, and improve the overall quality of life in the area. These trails can be paved or unpaved, and can be designed to accommodate a variety of trail users, including bicyclists, walkers, hikers, joggers, skaters, horseback riders, and those confined to wheelchairs.

Benefits of Greenways:

- They are a non-motorized extension to the street network.
- Trails promote physical activity, fitness, and health.
- A greenway can highlight and protect the natural, scenic, historic, and cultural aspects of the area.
- Safe family recreation.
- Greenways provide contiguous habitat for wildlife.
- Greenways provide desirable amenities that raise the quality of life for a community; homes located nearby tend to have higher property values.

The natural geography of Wesley Chapel, as well as the network of dirt roads associated with utility lines, makes it well suited for a greenway system. This is apparent in flood zones and stream buffers, which are not suited for development, but are ideal areas for greenways. Therefore, the analysis of the area's topography and drainage shows strong potential for such a greenway network. In addition to these natural depressions, utility easements can be used as links to existing or proposed neighborhoods. Further study should be undertaken to try to "close the loop" at the northern edges of the Village by utilizing improved residential streets with wider sidewalks and/or bike lanes to link the natural geography of the creeks. A completed loop system has greater value both for recreation purposes and as a system of alternative transportation. The map at right demonstrates a potential greenway network that could be implemented, with further engineering and analysis.



Potential Greenway Map (top)  
Example Greenway Image (bottom)

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The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.4 Summary

The recommendations in this plan provide potential health, sustainability, development, and traffic benefits, but as in all things there will be tradeoffs and costs that will need to be understood and accepted by the Village of Wesley Chapel, such as:

- Planning, design and construction cost to implement greenway system, and other facilities recommended above.
- Home prices may rise. The cost to build more new and higher quality streets by developers will probably be passed on to the buyers.

These recommendations provide a broad template for a more robust transportation network that serves all modes of transport and attempts to support the Town Center concept. To implement these concepts will require broader coordination with multiple stakeholders in order to be accomplished. For instance, citizens and local leaders need to work with developers, NCDOT, elected officials, and neighborhood villages to promote a functional village transportation network. The design guidelines will need to be codified into ordinances at the village level and stakeholders must be willing to invest village funds in order to achieve many of the objectives outlined in the transportation recommendation section of the vision plan. As in most plans, the implementation of this plan will be incremental and success will largely hinge on the political will to see it through.



▲  
*Wesley Chapel Residential Street*



## 4.3 Illustrative Designs

### 4.3 Illustrative Designs for Potential New Streets and Neighborhoods

#### 4.3.1 New Connecting “Avenues” around the Village Center

These two illustrative plans show how two important new street connections, the Billy Howie Road Extension (lower part of plan) and the connection between Antioch Church Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road (upper part of plan) can be integrated into the new development plans for these important sites around the Village Center. These new streets would be built by developers according to Village specifications as part of the development process. Larger versions of these plans with more detail can be seen in section 5.1.

*Illustrative neighborhood designs showing the Billy Howie Road Extension (bottom) and the connection between Antioch Church Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road (top)*



#### LEGEND:

- STREET LOADED SINGLE FAMILY HOMES
- REAR LOADED SINGLE FAMILY HOMES
- TOWNHOMES
- LIVE/WORK UNITS
- EXISTING BUSINESSES
- GREEN SPACE
- WATER BODY



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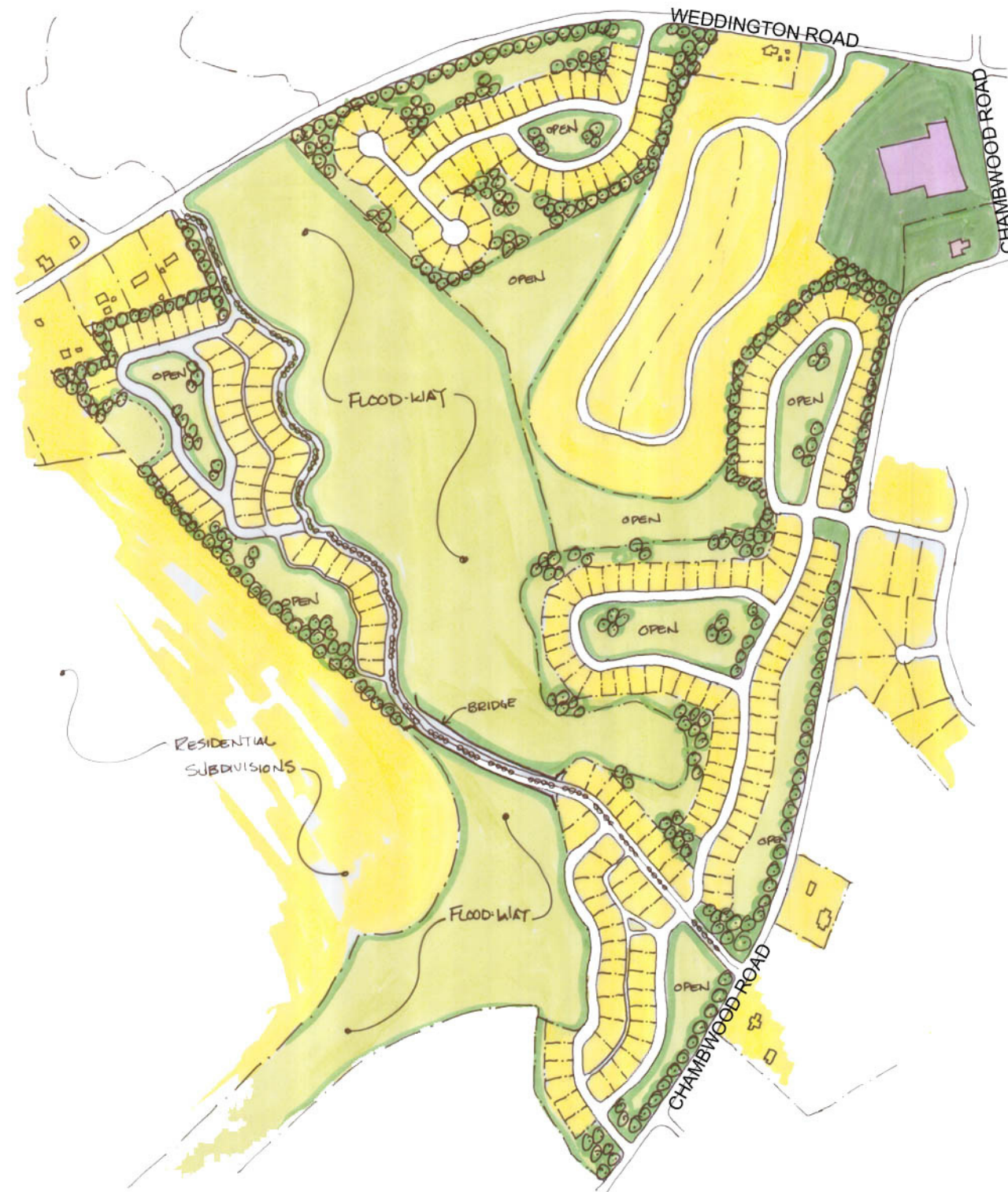


## 4.3 Illustrative Designs

### 4.3.2 Suburban Connectivity

This illustrative design examines a difficult suburban condition working with an extensive floodplain between Chambwood Road and Weddington Road. This new link creates an important element of the overall Village connectivity pattern shown in section 4.2.1, and this illustrative design indicates how this road can be built as an integral part of the site development, providing access to new residential areas as well as serving a community transportation purpose.

The new Avenue winds its way northwestward with only one crossing of the floodplain. This area is then designed around this connecting street as a form of conservation subdivision, with large areas of open space preserved in perpetuity by legal easements. The overall site area is approximately 239 acres, of which about 75 acres are in a floodplain. Including this floodplain, approx. 153 acres or about 64 percent, remains as permanently preserved open space. There are 242 single-family home sites of approximately 1/4-acre to 1/3-acre, giving a gross residential density of almost exactly 1 dwelling per acre.



◀ Floodplain Design

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# Section 5

## Urban Design and Village Character

Your Community, Your Vision, Your Future





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The Village of Wesley Chapel

## 5. Urban Design and Village Character

The basic growth management premise that informs this vision master plan is one where the embryonic Village Center currently under construction, instead of remaining a generic retail strip and big box development, extends and expands its ambitions to become a fully operational Village Center in the traditional sense. To achieve this, the Village should actively encourage or require a mix of uses -- retail, office and residential -- in integrated and compact layouts in the future development of adjacent sites. This will encourage walkability, create a safe pedestrian environment at the heart of the community, and provide an enlarged customer base for existing and new stores in the Village Center.

Many trends in real estate development and population demographics point to this type of development and community building as the most attractive to large sections of the population, from aging baby boomers and empty nesters to younger demographic groups eager for lifestyles that are different from their parents' standard suburbia. Allowing some modest increase in residential density for those market segments who prefer that kind of environment can help limit the development pressure on the outlying, more rural areas of the Village.

To complement this urbane focus of the growing center of the community, this plan proposes more advanced design concepts in the layout of residential subdivisions throughout the community. Essentially, these areas will remain low-density single-family areas, but with a far greater emphasis on the preservation and enhancement of rural landscape features. This can be achieved mainly through the adoption of what has become known as conservation subdivision design, where important areas of rural landscape or ecological features are preserved from any future development, and the housing then arranged economically on a variety of lot sizes, generally less than 1-acre in size, in a manner that allows everybody in that development access to the preserved green space. In its turn, this preserved open space provides visual enrichment of the

"rural character" for the community at large.

The master plan also proposes a variety of lower-density, larger lot opportunities for niche residential markets, such as "ranchettes" for small horse paddocks and stables related to a main dwelling, or very large lot "farmhouse clusters", where a small group of dwellings is designed to mimic the appearance of a traditional cluster of farmhouse buildings and barns when seen from a distance amidst large private holdings of preserved open land.

All these development options are illustrated below.

### 5.1. Village Center

#### 5.1.1 Role of the Village Center

To create the framework for the Village Center and grow the development beyond generic strip center and outparcel development, emphasis must be given to properties to the south and west of the existing Harris Teeter strip center and to the west and north of the newer Lowe's Foods supermarket and convenience retail development. These areas have great potential to develop as truly mixed-use neighborhoods. These can provide walkable connections to existing retail, add new retail in a pedestrian-friendly format, and provide a range of housing types, chiefly live-work units, attached single-family town houses, and detached single family homes at different price points and lot sizes. Each new neighborhood would also incorporate small parks, playgrounds and other green spaces. Illustrative designs for these new neighborhoods were noted in Section 4.3 above as they both include important new street connections as part of the overall Transportation Plan, and the drawings are repeated here as examples of the new types of development. Please note that these drawings are illustrative only; they are NOT specific development proposals.



*Pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods can allow residents to walk to the Village Center from a range of different types of housing.*

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## 5.1 Village Center

### 5.1.1 Village Center

#### 5.1.1.1 Southwest Quadrant of Village Center

This development can be used to create a center for Wesley Chapel and provide more of a “town center” feeling around the junction of Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road and Weddington Road. This means denser residential development to provide a “critical mass” of residents who can walk to shops and other facilities in the Village Center, much like the development at Baxter in Fort Mill. Being able to minimize the number of car trips helps to reduce traffic congestion around this important intersection. The local street network is improved by the creation of the Billy Howie Road Extension through the new development, extending the current road to Weddington Road west of the Weddington – Waxhaw/Indian Trail intersection. This provides an important alternate route for local traffic to avoid the congested intersection.

The layout includes a mixture of live/work units, “urban mansions” – condo units in buildings that look like very large houses, town homes and single-family lots ranging in size from one-quarter acre to one-half acre lots. It also includes two bodies of water that will be used to provide open public green spaces, which are internally located away from the main roads. These open spaces provide approximately 23 acres of permanent public open space close to the Village Center.

A mixture of housing types and open spaces will provide a lively environment for residents who can also connect on foot to the existing Harris Teeter/ Target developments. The development spans an area of 127 acres with a selection of 12 live/work units, 3 urban mansions with 6 condos in each, approximately 229 town homes, and 223 single-family units at a density of approximately 3.8 units per acre.



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## 5.1 Village Center



*Davidson's town center illustrates how new mixed-use buildings can help define Main Street in close and compatible proximity to housing*

*Public spaces close to the Village Center with a variety of housing types can create opportunities for people of all ages to come together for community events*



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The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 5.1 Village Center

### 5.1.1.2 Northwest Quadrant of Village Center

This segment of potential new development around the expanded Village center covers an overall area of 143 acres. Of this land area, a total of 28.5 acres is preserved as public open green space.

New buildings provide 4 new small commercial buildings to complement the 9 existing commercial structures in the plan currently under construction. Also included are approximately 30 live/work units, 334 single family detached homes on various sized lots at a density at a density of approx. 4 dwellings per acre (similar to Myers Park or Dilworth in Charlotte). The layout design also incorporates an important new street connection from Antioch Church Road to Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road to assist local traffic flow through and around the Village Center.

The mix of smaller types of single-family housing provides opportunities for active seniors to remain part of the community in a central location. Sites identified for attached single-family homes in both neighborhoods may also be developed for more specialized senior housing. This kind of demographic diversity, aided by good urban design and convenient walkability to shops and offices, can create a genuine “heart of the community” at the center of the Village.



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## 5.1 Village Center



*Left:*  
Town homes and live/work units can fit comfortably together close to the Village Center, providing a range of economic opportunities

*Right:*  
Single-family housing faces public open space within easy walking distance of the shops and offices in the heart of the Village center



*Left:*  
Single-family homes close to the center can be served by alleys, allowing an uncluttered pedestrian streetscape to encourage walking in the neighborhood

*Right:*  
Single-family housing faces public open space within easy walking distance of the shops and offices in the heart of the Village center



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## 5.1 Village Center

### BAXTER TOWN CENTER COMMERCIAL PARCEL PLAN

Pedestrian oriented mix of retail, office, restaurant and civic uses. Over 380,000 square feet at build-out.



#### 5.1.2 Precedents

The designs illustrated above are based on current best practices in urban design and real estate development for the long-term growth of small communities such as Wesley Chapel. The following examples of different development types illustrate successful built examples that have influenced the designs for Wesley Chapel.

##### 5.1.2.1 Mixed-Use

###### Baxter Village

Baxter Village is located in Fort Mill, South Carolina and was designed to put merchants back at the heart of everyday life and foster close relationships between neighbors. Rocking chair front porches, tree-lined streets, trails and classic homes make walking to Baxter Town Center a forgotten pleasure of small town life. Prices start at \$308,000.

With a public library, elementary school, medical campus, Urgent Care Center, Community Center, and over 400 acres of open space with parks and trails, Baxter and Baxter Town Center offer an unmatched commercial sales and leasing opportunity.

Businesses that locate themselves in Baxter Town Center enjoy a ready-made market created by a unique pedestrian village. In the heart of Baxter Village, Baxter Town Center is surrounded by over 400 new homes with 900 more to be built over the next several years. Most of the homes are within walking distance to Town Center.

Market Street offers broad pedestrian plazas for outdoor dining and window shopping.

Website: <http://www.villageofbaxter.com>



Town Center of Baxter Community

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The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 5.1 Village Center

### Lenox Village

With the character of a small Tennessee town, Lenox Village is taking shape on the outskirts of South Nashville, Tennessee.

Patterned after Tennessee traditional historic neighborhoods, Lenox Village is planned with pedestrians in mind. Tree-lined streets and a network of wide sidewalks will create a strong pedestrian connection between residential areas and the Village neighborhood retail/office area, the Village Green, and the 15 acre open space that connects the community. Prices start at \$90,000 for condos and \$300,000 for single family homes.

Website: <http://www.lenoxvillage.com>



Image of live/work community  
"downtown" area



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## 5.1 Village Center

### Vickery

Vickery is a classically inspired neighborhood development rooted in traditional town planning designed by Andres Duany of Duany Plater-Zyberk. Located in South Forsyth County, Georgia, on 210 acres, Vickery exemplifies the best of neighborhood building and planning practices with an eye toward a classical architectural style. The size of the units range from 2,705 - 4,513 square feet and are priced from \$492,000.

The Vickery project is made up of a town center, with a Y.M.C.A. and community green as focal points. The project also includes retail, office spaces, and residential products that include live/work units, townhomes, and single-family homes.

Webiste: <http://www.hedgewoodhomes.com>



Courtesy of Hedgewood Properties



Courtesy of Hedgewood Properties



Courtesy of Hedgewood Properties

Image of typical housing found in the subdivision



Courtesy of Hedgewood Properties

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## 5.1 Village Center

### 5.1.2.2 Mixed Housing Types

#### Harborside

Harborside at Lake Carolina is a multi-phased community development north of Columbia, South Carolina. The Charleston Style homes are a component of multiple residential styles. Priced between \$225,000.00 to \$650,000.00, the two and three story single family homes range from 1,800 to 3,500 square feet on 1/4 acre lots. The houses feature two - five bedrooms and alley-way parking which help to maintain the rural feel of a small town while being conveniently located to shopping and dining. The small town architectural style of the shops and offices blend seamlessly into the neighborhood located near them.

Website: <http://www.lakecarolina.com/harborside>



Images of residential street with medium density housing



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## 5.1 Village Center

### Vermillion

Behind a promenade of trees reminiscent of Charlotte's Myers Park, Vermillion welcomes you home to a neighborhood of distinguished addresses, picturesque swim club, delightful parks, and miles of forested area. Located in Huntersville, residents are treated to the feel of yesterday with plenty of today's sought after amenities like a competition-sized pool, splash pool with cabanas, extensive sun deck, a Village Center with restaurant greenbelts and wooded forests parks, playgrounds, an outdoor pavilion close to downtown Huntersville, and Lake Norman and Birkdale Village shopping areas. Units are at least 2,800 square feet and are priced from \$420,000.

Vermillion represents a return to gracious living and a re-awakening to nature. A good neighborhood plan connects a neighborhood to a town and Vermillion, located in Downtown Huntersville is the perfect example.

Website: <http://www.newvermillion.com>



Image of Live/Work community common area



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## 5.1 Village Center

### A New Neighborhood in Old Davidson (St. Alban's)

A New Neighborhood in Old Davidson is a modern sustainable development which maintains the small town feeling of Davidson and Davidson College. The townhomes are two story single family homes in the heart of St. Alban's. They are located close to larger homes in the neighborhood, but blend in with them using classical architectural styles and features. Prices start at \$250,000.

Website: <http://www.stalbanssq.org>



Image of town center looking towards the townhomes



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## 5.1 Village Center



Building 8



Building 9



Front entry to typical townhome

### Baxter Village

The townhouses at Baxter Village in Fort Mill, South Carolina are 2 bedroom, 3 bathroom units whose prices range from \$200,000.00 to \$250,000.00. The townhomes are located conveniently to local village shopping, dining and local schools. Many units have off-street parking as well as parking in front while still providing a small town atmosphere. The developer, Clear Springs Development, designed the townhouses to blend in with the village using street front porches and classical architectural elements.

Website: <http://www.villageofbaxter.com>



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## 5.1 Village Center

### 5.1.2.3 Affordable Housing for Young Families and Seniors

#### The Bungalows

Thirty-two units of rental housing have been built on Park and Jetton Streets to meet Davidson's need for housing for people who earn up to 50% of local area median income. The design for this project came from a thorough, community design charrette, creating a plan that reflects the traditional character of housing in Davidson. The nine buildings are bungalow style, a historically dominant housing type in town.

No Available Website



Each of these "bungalows" contains three affordable apartments. The development is integrated into a neighborhood with housing for families of different types and ages close to Davidson's downtown.



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## 5.1 Village Center

### 5.1.3 Potential 2030 Redevelopment Scenario

The scope and time frame of the vision master plan extends as far out as 2030, which although quite a long way into the future is less than twenty-five years from the date of its inception. A twenty-five year time horizon is normal for such a vision plan, and this plan accordingly stresses that substantial changes from present conditions are likely to occur during that time, including some that may not appear relevant or possible when viewed strictly from a present-day focus.

A twenty-five year time frame provides for at least two refurbishment or rebuilding cycles for the existing retail development and its extension currently under construction. For example, the average time for, say, a Target store to either rebuild itself, or more problematically, vacate the premises and leave behind an empty big box is only twelve years. That means that the spanking brand new development currently under construction could go through two cycles of obsolescence during the time frame of this plan.

If managed to the community's advantage, this retail cycle can be used to continually upgrade the visual and design quality of the Village Center along with maintaining its economic performance. Indicators in the retail development sector show that the conventional strip center is becoming an outdated and underperforming model. In its place are types of development that stress pedestrian experience in the creation of new, mixed-use "Main Streets" or "Town Centers." Accordingly, this plan illustrates a completely revised vision for the Village Center of 2030, one that creates a walkable Main Street, manages traffic by dispersing it through added connectivity links, and develops mixed residential areas within walking distance of the shops, offices and restaurants within the Center. This is a future recreation of the traditional American Main Street that was wiped out by car-dominated suburbia, and illustrates a powerful community vision for the matured and larger Wesley Chapel community of 2030.



Potential 2030 Redevelopment  
Scenario

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The Village of Wesley Chapel

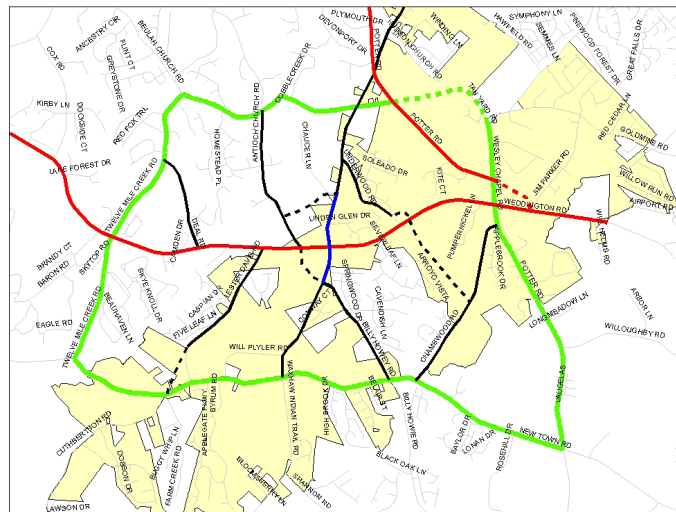


## 5.1 Village Center

The basis of design for the Weddington Rd./Waxhaw-Indian Trail Rd intersection concept is a combination of the output from the Traffic Impact Analysis Report, prepared by Kublins Transportation Group for the JDH Capital project, roadway typologies laid out in this chapter, and pedestrian oriented design principles. The number of lanes identified in the following concept is consistent with the number of existing lanes and the additional laneage recommended in the report , on page 4 under the section Improvements By Others. Specifically, the improvements identified are:

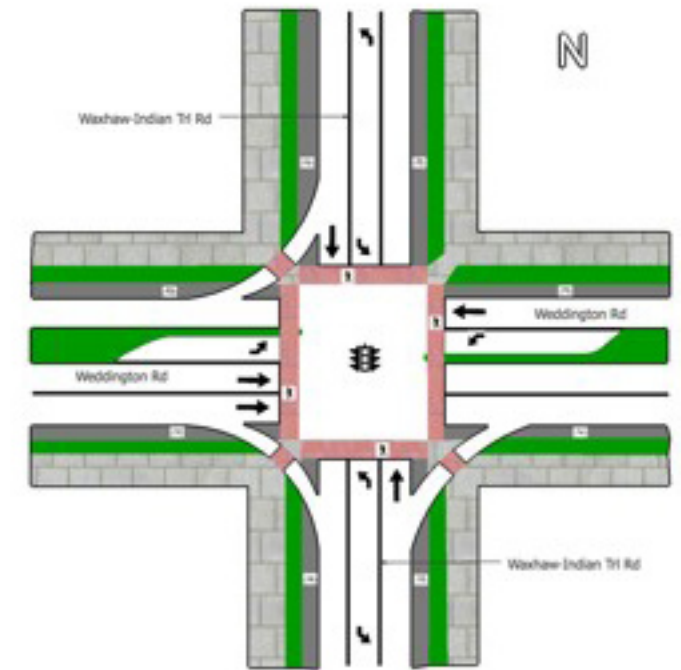
- 1) Eastbound right turn lane on Weddington Rd
- 2) Northbound right turn lane on Waxhaw-Indian Trl Rd
- 3) Southbound right turn lane on Waxhaw-Indian Trl Rd
- 4) Additional eastbound through lane on Weddington Rd. (for 500 feet to the west and 600 feet to the east)

The lanes identified in this concept are attributable to the current and expected increase in traffic at this intersection, and will improve automobile traffic flow.



The current condition of this intersection is not pedestrian friendly and it should be of concern to the Village of Wesley Chapel that widening at this intersection is being recommended to accommodate more vehicle traffic. That is why the design of this intersection should include the following amenities and principles, to make it a pedestrian friendly intersection:

- 1) Pedestrian countdown signals at all quadrants.
- 2) Pedestrian refuge islands at right slip lanes, and at median near left turns.
- 3) Crosswalks across all lanes including right slip lanes. The crosswalks at a minimum should be striped, but a stamped concrete treatment should be explored.
- 4) Sidewalks and curb ramps at all quadrants of intersections.
- 5) Slower speeds on Weddington and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Roads- 35 mph max.



*The proposals for the intersection at Weddington Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road (top right) should be seen in the context of the overall transportation plan for the Village (left, and see Section 4.2.1 [page 33] for full details). The increased connectivity of Village streets and highways will help reduce the future traffic loads on this intersection and make feasible a more pedestrian-friendly design at the heart of the community. Pedestrian controlled crosswalks and islands (bottom right) enhance pedestrian safety and make crossing major roads easier.*





## 5.1 Village Center

Examples of typical Main Street environments

Clockwise from left:  
Davidson, NC; Parker, CO;  
Baxter, NC; Morgantown, WV



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## 5.2 Conservation Subdivisions

As noted above, this report identifies and recommends conservation subdivision design as the most appropriate development type to achieve the Village's stated goals of low-density residential development while retaining as much of the rural character of the landscape as possible. Some precedent examples of successful and attractive conservation subdivisions are illustrated below, followed by an illustrative design for a particular site within Wesley Chapel. Please note that this drawing is illustrative only; it is NOT a specific development proposal.

### 5.2.1 Precedents

#### The Fields of Long Grove

The Fields of Long Grove was constructed in Long Grove, Illinois, a community of predominantly two- and three-acre lots. The Village was initially developed in an historic woodland for which the Village was named. The early development is well-integrated into the woodland and is nearly invisible to the outside observer. This style of development gave the Village its unique character, and The Fields of Long Grove has continued this development tradition. Lane Kendig, inc. (now Kendig Keast Collaborative) was hired by McHugh Construction to develop a plan for a 160-acre site. It is a planned unit development at the density of one house per two acres, with over 80 percent of the site devoted to open space. About 50 acres of the site were restored to an Illinois tall grass prairie. Another 30 acres of the site were retained in prairie and irrigated with the development's wastewater.

The homes are placed on the site to be sheltered from view from main roads by prairie and tree lines selectively reinforced with landscaped berms. The homes are on quarter-acre lots landscaped to preserve the rural qualities of the area. This project represents a completely new form of residential development for Long Grove. The development

used the planned unit development (PUD) process in order to build on one-quarter acre lots. The normal PUD simply used one-acre lots instead of the two- or three-acre lots of normal zoning. The response from residents and elected officials has been enthusiastic.

This project won the "Best in American Living" award given by the National Association of Homebuilders.

Website: <http://fieldsoflonggrove.com>



Streetscape of typical thoroughfare



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## 5.2 Conservation Subdivisions

### Scioto

Scioto is located in Powell, Ohio and is built by developer Joshua Homes. Scioto is located on a total of 749 acres with a total of 315 acres (or roughly 42%) preserved as green space for the residents to enjoy outdoor activities. This unique, fairly dense conservation subdivision is home to 1259 units with an average lot size of .2 acre. The average home price is \$219,000-\$800,000 with home prices steadily increasing in the area since the completion of Scioto. Scioto offers a variety of outdoor activities including hiking, walking, biking, fishing, hunting, and farming.

Website: <http://www.villagecommunities.com/communities/community.cfm?communityID=2>



Image of community greenway adjacent to the homes



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## 5.2 Conservation Subdivisions

### Centerville

Located in Tallahassee, Florida, Centerville is an example of an award winning conservation subdivision that offers preserved green space and many outdoor activities. Built by Conservation Community Group, LLC and Kohler and Associates, Centerville is built on 975 total acres. There are a total of 200 total lots with an average lot size of 1.5 acres and an average home value of \$175,000-\$550,000. Approximately 680 acres (or roughly 70%) is preserved as open space for its residents to enjoy. This open space provides a variety of activities including hiking, equestrian functions, fishing, and hunting. This community is sought after by families who want to escape the typical subdivision lifestyle while preserving the environment.

Website: <http://www.centerville-florida.com>



Open space images of Centerville conservation subdivision



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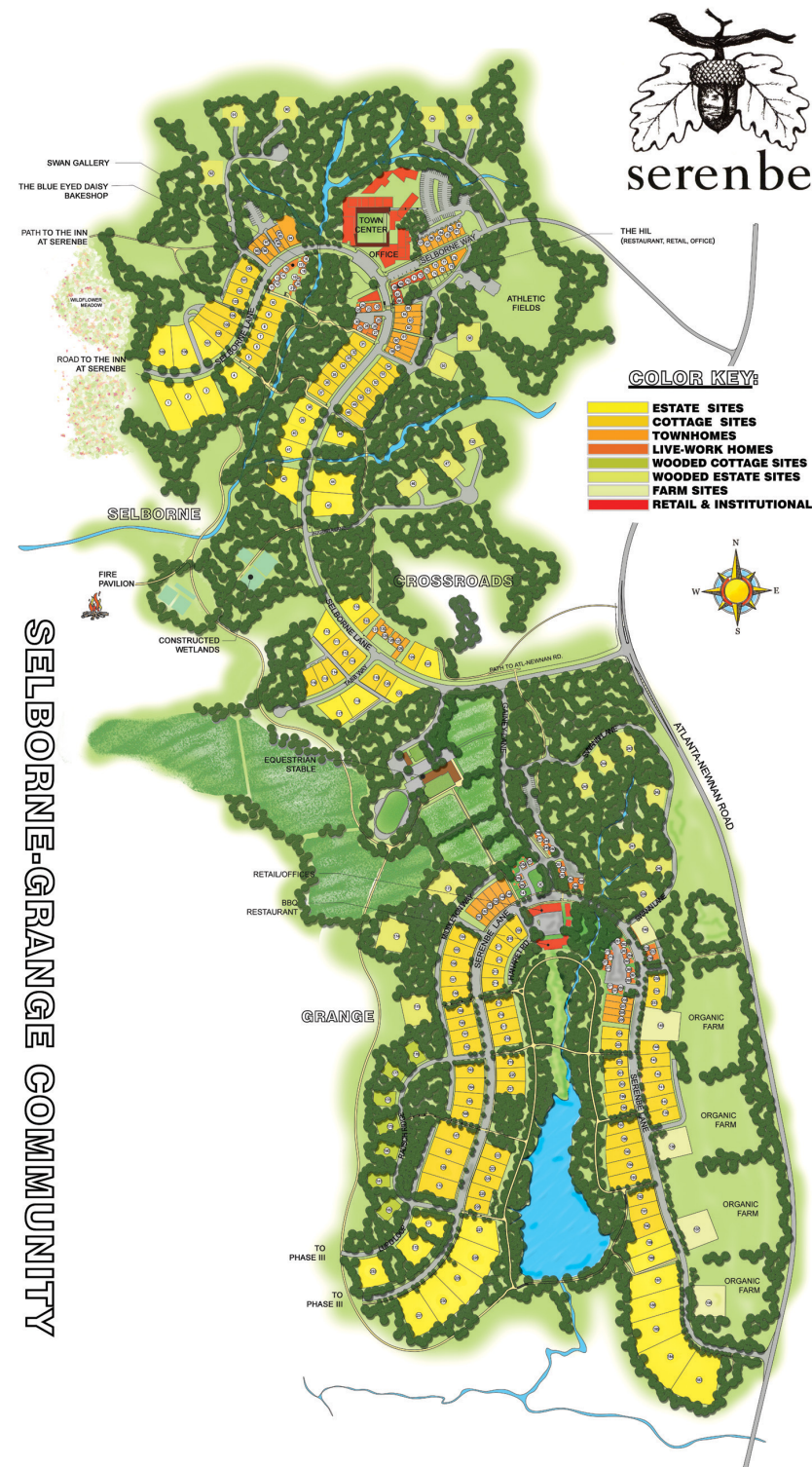


## 5.2 Conservation Subdivisions

### Serenbe

Serenbe is a conservation subdivision located in Atlanta, Georgia. Built by developer Morgan and Bartos, LLC, the overall size of Serenbe is 900 acres. Serenbe is built on the “notion that a community is a living part of its natural surroundings, but something to be built at nature’s expense”. Serenbe offers a variety of sustainable ideas including Earth-Craft Houses that are extremely energy efficient and offer low maintenance, innovative Wastewater Treatment processes, Storm Water Management that takes runoff and directs it into the natural systems in place, Organic Farming, and Land Preservation. There are a total of 200 lots with an average lot size of .5 acre. The average home value in Serenbe is \$300,000-\$500,000 with home prices steadily increasing since its development. A total of 720 acres (or 80%) is preserved as green space and is used for a variety of outdoor activities including hiking, biking, walking, and fishing.

Website: <http://www.serenbecommunity.com/home.html>



Site plan preserving rural heritage in the Serenbe Community

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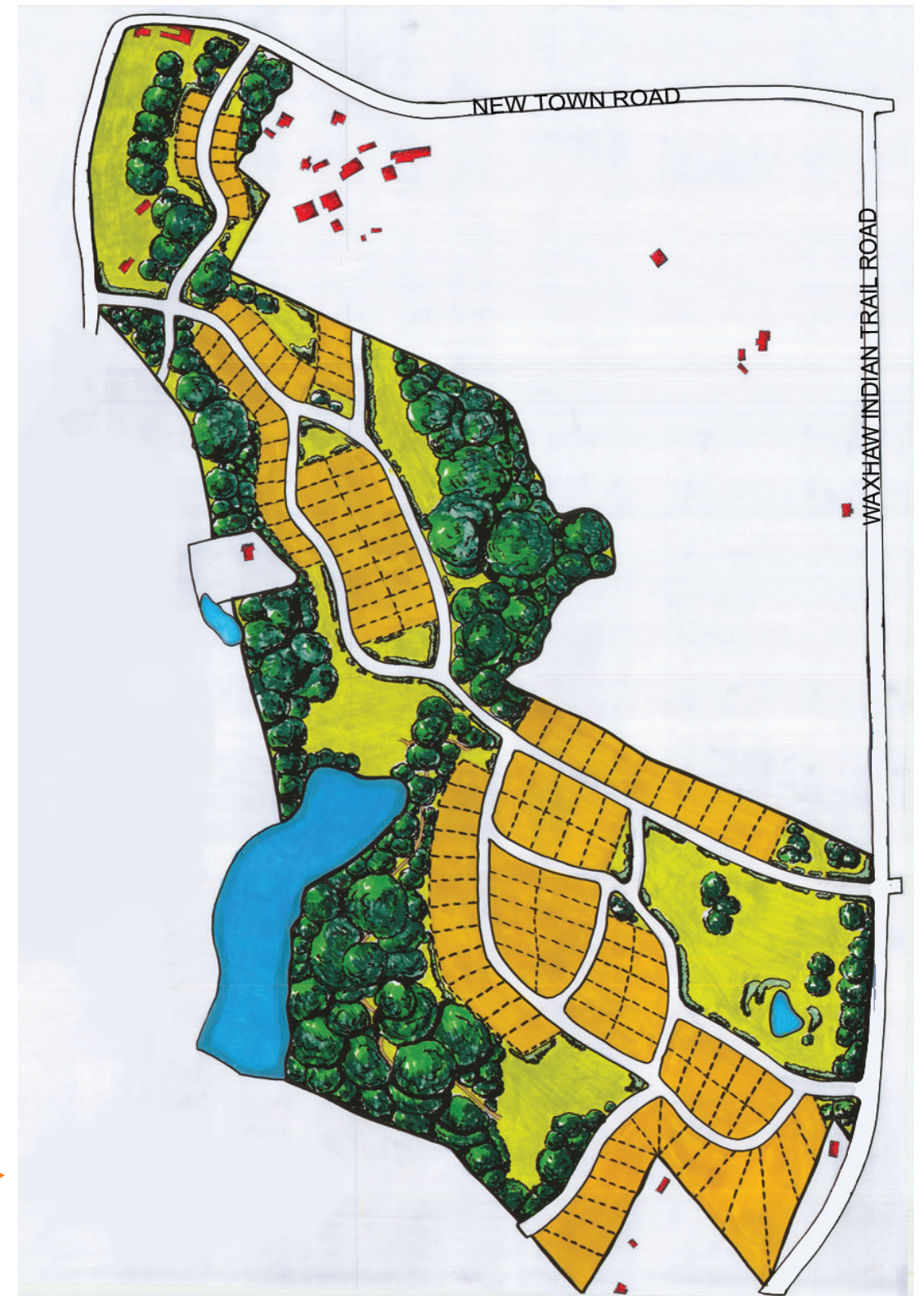
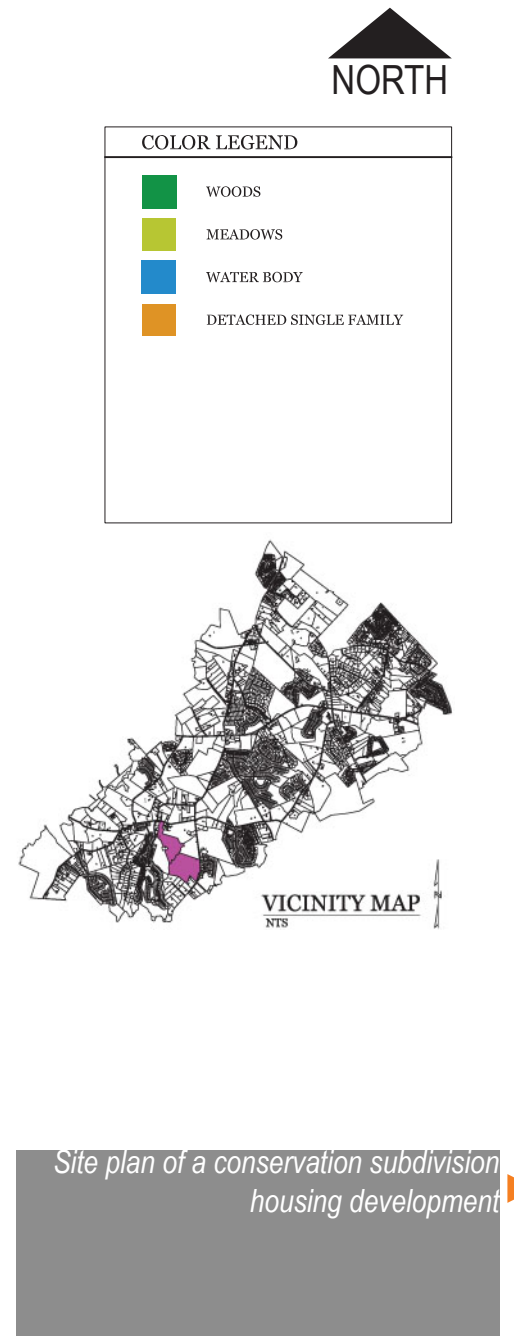


## 5.2 Conservation Subdivisions

### 5.2.2 Illustrative Design

The site selected to illustrate the potential for a conservation subdivision is located southwest of the intersection of new Town Road and Waxhaw/Indian Trail Road. This area contains dense woodland, occasional meadows and a few water features. In this design, the 135-acre site is developed to preserve large areas of natural landscape to be viewed and explored. A system of slow-speed residential streets (see section 4.2.1.5) provides easy access and connectivity without creating high-traffic cut-throughs, and provides carefully designed sequences of views to areas of natural landscape.

The 135-acre site yields 135 home sites at a gross density of 1 dwelling per acre, but the single-family homes are sited on smaller lots, between 1/4- and 1/2-acre to preserve nearly half the site as open space, protected in perpetuity by conservation easements.



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Website: <http://www.chevalinc.com>

# The Village of Wesley Chapel



## 5.3 Low-Density Residential Alternatives

### 5.3.2 Ranchette Development Illustrative Design

Total Acres: 224

Acres Open Space: 115

Acres Private Lots: 109

Percent of Land Reserved for Public Space: 51.2

Connectivity Ratio:

Nodes: 9 / Links: 8 = 1.125--okay for rural

Lots: 32

Size: From 2-6 acres

The rural ranchette community is designed for lots between two to six acres. There is ample open space for future horse stables, pastures, gardens, horse facilities, parks, and trails. The trail system will encompass the community in a 100' wooded buffer behind the lots. The trail is accessed via open spaces throughout the neighborhood. With this layout over half of the 224 acre subdivision is preserved for public use. This design is illustrative only of the site potential for this kind of low-density development and is not a firm proposal for a site-specific layout.



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## 5.3 Low-Density Residential Alternatives

### 5.3.3 Precedent

Farmhouse Cluster (ultra-low density single-family residential development)

Farmhouse clusters are small groups of four to six very large lots, up to 20 acres each, where the houses are nestled together at an appropriate location away from the road, and arranged to resemble a group of farm buildings -- the farmhouse, barns and outbuildings -- when seen from a distance. The access to these dwellings, in keeping with rural precedent, may be a simple narrow gravel drive, serving the whole cluster and drastically reducing the infrastructure costs of the development.

Examples of farmhouse cluster zoning can be found in Huntersville, NC and the illustration shows the appearance of a typical residential grouping. Prices for the Ramah Oaks homes generally start in the high \$800,000 to \$900,000 range and have an upper limit as defined by the local housing market. The average lot sizes range from 3 to 5 acres.

Website: No Available Website. Information provided courtesy of the Huntersville Planning Department.



Top Left: Private road access to farmhouse cluster

Top right: General views of property

Bottom Left:  
Typical dwelling in farmhouse cluster

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## 5.3 Low-Density Residential Alternatives

### 5.3.4 Farmhouse Cluster Illustrative Design

Minimum project size and frontage on public road: 10 acres with a minimum of 30 feet of frontage on a public road.

Lots: 4-6 accessed by way of a shared private drive

Lot size shall be a minimum of at least 2 acres per lot

The location of building sites shall be determined through a site analysis which identifies features to be preserved as open space;

At least 50% of the tract shall be designated as open space. Open space preservation shall be irrevocable. In the Farmhouse Cluster open space may also include portions of private building lots subject to a conservation or open space easement.

Permitted uses of open space lands to be preserved shall correspond generally to physical conditions at the time of subdivision approval. Restrictive covenants shall limit uses to the continuation of certain agricultural activities (pastureland, crop cultivation) or recreation uses that preserve the view from public streets of rural heritage features to be preserved. For example, fields or pasture land preserved as required open space may continue to support cultivation or grazing; however existing woodlands may not be clear-cut.

The project shall maintain a generally rural appearance from public road(s).

*Site plan of a "farmhouse cluster" housing development*



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# Section 6

## Land Use, Planning and Zoning

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## 6.1 Current Conditions

### 6.1.1 Residential Land Use and Zoning

The Village of Wesley Chapel is primarily zoned for large lot development. Most neighborhoods require a minimum one-acre lot per single-family home. No allowances currently exist for multi-family housing or smaller lot sizes (with the exception of those previously developed under the jurisdiction of Union County). Village residents expressed a strong desire to continue this zoning practice.

At odds with one-acre lot zoning are the desires to preserve the rural heritage, the small town atmosphere of the village, and a greater diversity of housing options. While one-acre lots increase the amount of land allocated to the individual property owner, they do not decrease the amount of land developed. Were Wesley Chapel to develop at its currently predicted rate, over 86% of available 'rural heritage' land would be lost to development. In effect, the rural heritage would be overtaken by suburban tract housing on large lots by 2030. While this housing may be individually pleasant, en masse it is definitely not "rural" in character.

Subdivisions in the village are required to install curbing, sidewalks, and street lights, features often associated with urban and suburban environments. Strong support for the sidewalks exists within the Village. Yet, very little is accomplished through their construction as no different land uses are linked with those sidewalks and very few destinations are accessible within walking distance.

### 6.1.2 Commercial Land Use and Zoning

The Village of Wesley Chapel has a developing commercial center at the intersection of NC-84 and Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. This development is anchored by a Harris Teeter and is a typical suburban prototype. Other national retailers like Walgreens and Target can be found in the commercial core.

Development of commercial land is confined to a central district around the intersection in an effort to create an identifiable town center.

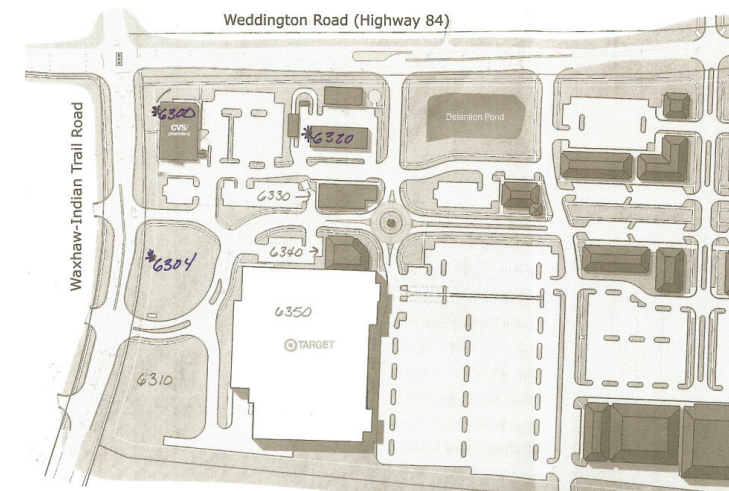
The majority of survey respondents favor the development of a town center at this location. The desire to create a town center, linked with the previously mentioned support for sidewalks (which also includes bicycle lanes), stands at odds with the current commercial zoning and design standards. All commercial business in the town center's B-2 zoning district must be set back a minimum of 80 feet from the street. This distance creates a significant gap between the street, its pedestrian environment (sidewalk) and the shops themselves. Pedestrian activity is discouraged through this practice as persons must walk from the sidewalk and across a parking lot to reach a tenant. Then, after visiting the tenant, the person must walk back across the parking lot to the sidewalk to continue on their journey.

An expansion of the Wesley Chapel Town Center, adjacent to the Target Store, has been approved. Phase II incorporates the development of a commercial area reminiscent of a mix between a "main street" and a strip center. Interestingly enough, this development does not meet the requirements of the Village's B-2 zoning district and had to be approved on a conditional basis. This illustrates two important points:

1. Market forces support denser, mixed, walkable commercial environments – The developer had to request the conditional use zoning from the Village
2. The Village is willing to allow this type of development – The request had to be approved by the Village's planning and zoning commission

At present, no connection between, or mixing of, residential and commercial land uses exists. Persons must drive to the town center, then drive home – often driving from one store

to another due to the pedestrian unfriendly design mentioned earlier. Since no residential uses exist in or adjacent to the town center, no pedestrian origin-destination traffic is generated. A person simply cannot walk easily from their home to any store or restaurant and back.



Existing commercial land uses -  
Plan for the SE corner of Hwy. 84 and  
Waxhaw - Indian Trail Rd. (top).  
Current village center (bottom).



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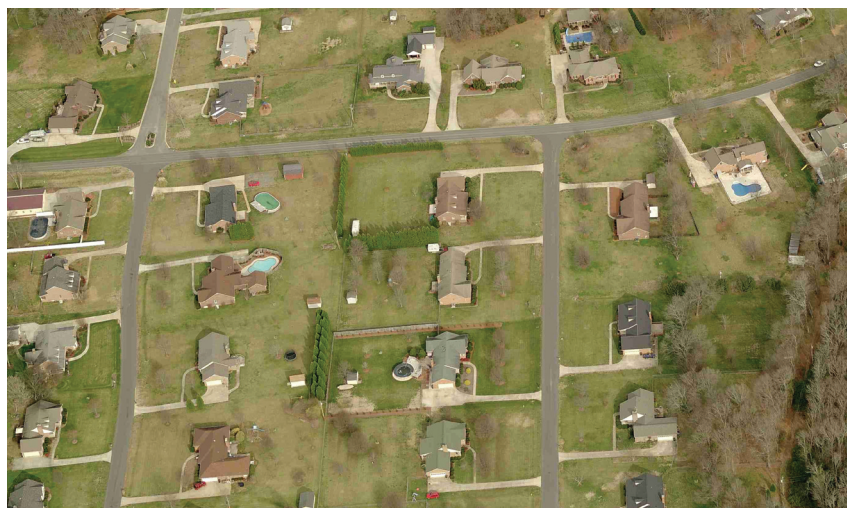
The Village of Wesley Chapel



# 6.1 Current Conditions

## 6.1.3 Industrial Land Uses









The Village of Wesley Chapel currently has a zoning designation for light industrial use. However, no land is currently zoned for industrial. A balanced tax base would likely ease the burden on homeowners to fund growth-related expenditures. At present, Wesley Chapel receives no tax benefits of industry. Thus, a land use that generates more revenue than it uses in services is available to the Village and should be considered in terms of appropriate land allocation.

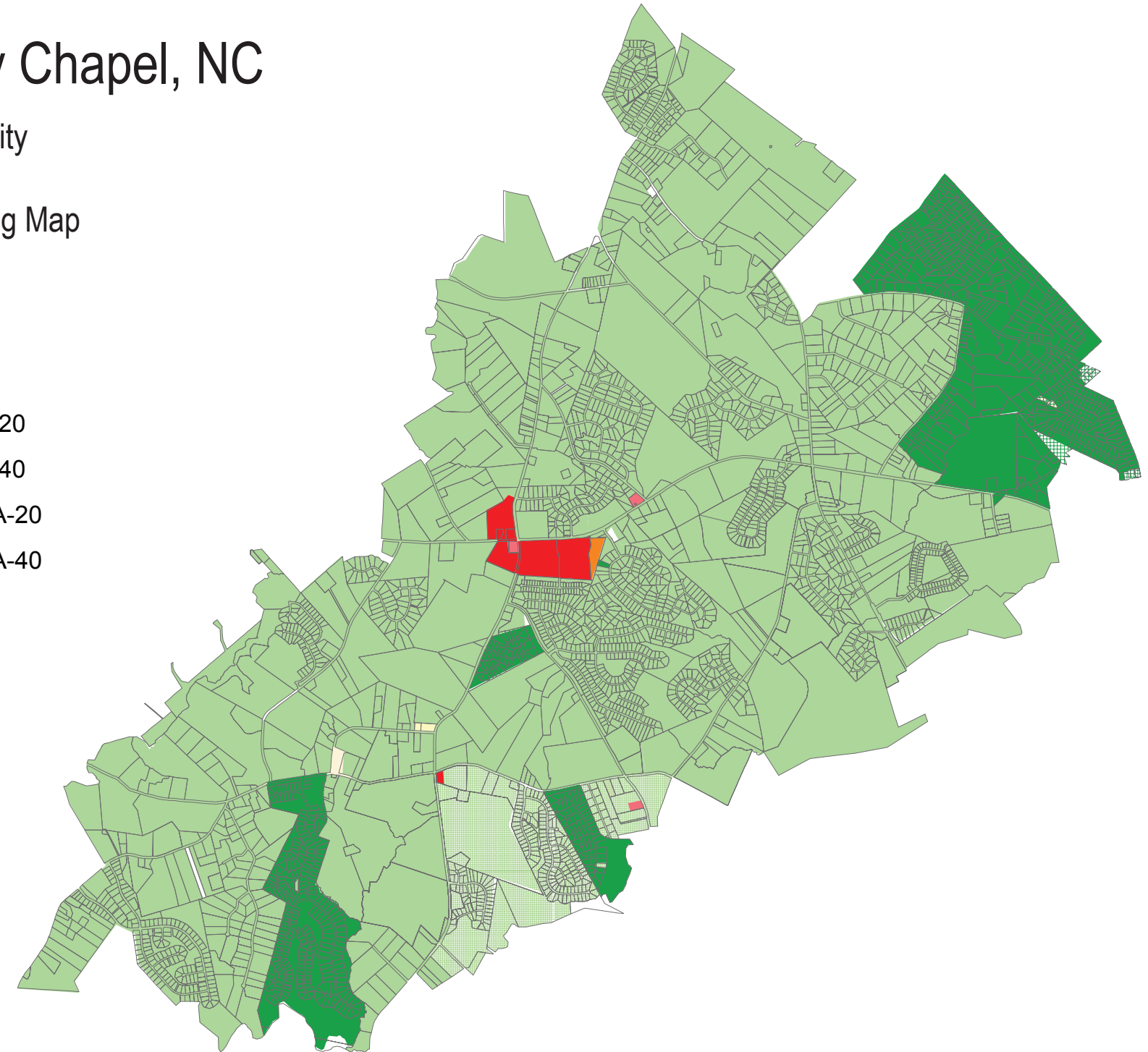


## Village of Wesley Chapel, NC And Vicinity

### Current Zoning Map

 Parcels

	B-1		R-20
	B-2		R-40
	L-1		RA-20
	O-I		RA-40



An example of the "Rural Heritage" citizens seek to preserve (top).

Landscapes like this are threatened by Wesley Chapel's current 1 acre lot zoning practices. These precious landscapes could soon develop into 1 acre lot subdivisions with little preservation, such as the one pictured (bottom).

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## 6.2 Best Practices

### 6.2.1 Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivisions comprise a technique used to help communities achieve sustainable growth while preserving significant amounts of open space. Conservation subdivisions employ more stringent environmental guidelines to protect open space, viewsheds, and habitat.

The use of conservation subdivisions would be a valuable tool for Wesley Chapel to maintain its rural heritage while allowing property owners to exercise their property rights. Conservation subdivisions combine common open space around clustered lots to minimize sprawl and the consumption of land. These subdivisions have the same overall housing density as a normal subdivision, but lots are placed closer together to achieve larger areas of open land and less impervious surfaces. Smaller lots have less water lost to runoff, reduced road surface and utility lines, and lower costs for lot grading.

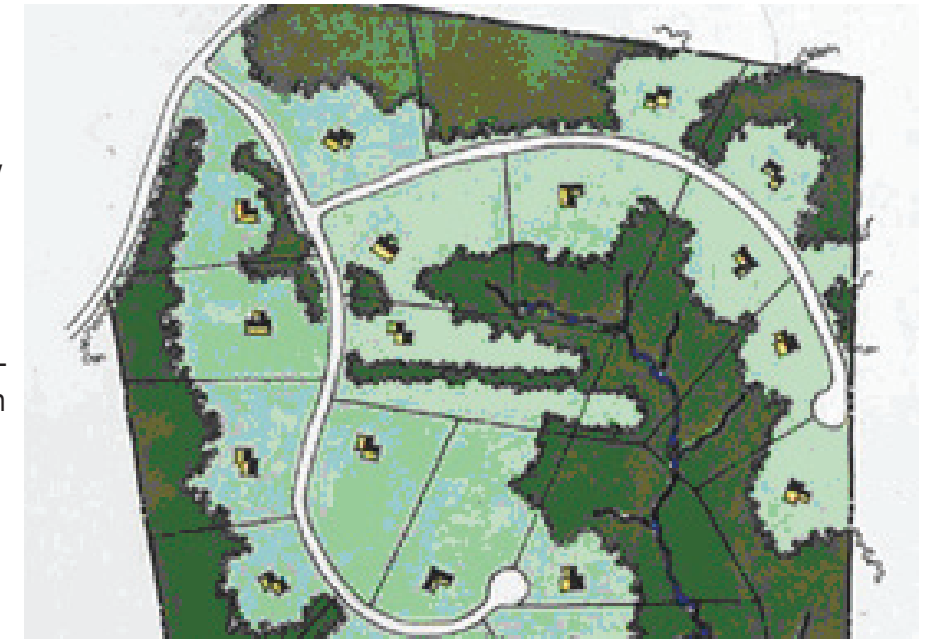
Open space in a conservation subdivision is legally protected and typically maintained by the homeowner's association. For example, in a conservation subdivision, homes could be placed on  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre lots instead of 1 acre lots, allowing more open space and preserving the rural heritage of the community.

Local examples of conservation subdivision design can be seen in the Palisades and Baxter Village subdivisions.

### 6.2.2 Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are an additional strategy for preserving farmland and rural heritage. Conservation easements set aside land in a voluntary, legally binding agreement that prevents development on the land in perpetuity or limits the location of development on a parcel. Conservation easements protect land's ecological or open space value while

permitting an owner to continue to use the land or to sell it or pass it on to heirs. Even the most restrictive easements typically permit landowners to continue traditional uses of the land like farming and ranching. In some instances, no further development is allowed on the land. The activities allowed by a conservation easement depend on the landowner's wishes and the characteristics of the property. Conservation easements may be designed to cover all or only a portion of a property. Additionally, the Internal Revenue Service allows a deduction if the easement is perpetual and donated exclusively for conservation purposes. The amount of the tax deduction is determined by the value of the conservation easement. A weakness of conservation easements, from a community point of view, is the reliance upon voluntary actions of landowners who are not seeking to develop their property.



*The images to the right illustrate the differences between standard, large-lot zoning (top) and conservation subdivisions (bottom).*

*The two images represent the same tract of land with the same number of houses, though the conservation subdivision (bottom) has a far greater percentage of preserved open space in shared ownership.*

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## 6.2 Best Practices



*Afton Village (top), in Concord, NC, utilizes several principles of TND in its design.*

*Cannon Village (bottom), in Kannapolis, NC utilizes principles of TND to create a walkable town center.*



### 6.2.3 Traditional Neighborhood Development

Traditional Neighborhood Development, or TND, builds upon the neighborhood design of small towns and older neighborhoods. The goal is to create a new neighborhood that feels 'classic, old-fashioned, or small town.'

Traditional residential neighborhoods include sidewalks, small parks, plazas, and often utilize smaller lot sizes, shorter setbacks, and architectural detailing to create a pleasant environment that is friendly to pedestrians while accommodating automobiles. The physical appearance of these neighborhoods is often regulated through the use of strict design restrictions that prevent the construction or development of buildings and/or uses that are not compatible with the character of the neighborhood.

TND includes more than housing. TND principles are often applied to all land uses to create a cohesive and functional neighborhood. Newer developments that resemble 'main streets,' such as Baxter Village, SC, and newer residential developments, like Vermillion in Huntersville, NC, are local examples of TND inspired design. To date, market acceptance has been strong in TND-styled neighborhoods.

#### Major Principles of TND

- Development in the form of compact, walkable neighborhoods or districts
- Development around a defined center (often with open space and or prominent buildings)
- Interconnected street design that accommodates both pedestrian and automotive uses
- Development of multiple housing types for different age and market segments

#### Benefits of TND

- Less land used for development, which leads to more open 'rural' space
- Less per-dwelling cost for infrastructure and service provision
- Accessibility for a range of age groups: kids can walk to school, friends, parks, corner store; elderly can walk to the store, friends, doctor; neither group dependent upon persons to drive them to and from destinations

### 6.2.4 Town Centers

Development patterns throughout the second half of the twentieth century created much of today's suburban and exurban (just beyond the suburbs) environments. What developed is the familiar landscape of house after house, complete with winding street patterns and automobile dependency. While this form of development succeeded in providing housing and ownership opportunity to millions of Americans, it fell short in creating unique places, preserving rural heritage and protecting our ecology. Throughout the Charlotte region, one suburb bumps directly into another with no visual cues that one has entered a new place. This form of development is fiscally inefficient and lacks amenities that are typically associated with dynamic communities.

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## 6.2 Best Practices

Cities and towns across America have realized that past suburban forms of development are no longer appropriate to modern consumer tastes and citizen needs. “Urban” problems like congestion, school-overcrowding, loss of open space and socio-demographic change have followed new development into the suburbs. One strategy that many communities are implementing is the creation of town centers that are reminiscent of old town centers like Waxhaw or Davidson. Each Town Center seeks to establish a distinct identity for the town while providing a place for residents to congregate for shopping, entertainment, dining, and living. Traditional Neighborhood Development is a central component of transitioning suburban sprawl into dynamic communities.

Creating a successful town center is far more complicated than attracting a group of merchants and entertainment venues. The best centers consider their environment from all perspectives, at all times of day in order to craft a vibrant area. The Urban Land Institute, a real estate think tank, has published a list of the best principles for creating town centers. They include, among others:

- The creation of an enduring and memorable public realm. This includes attractive and safe public spaces that the community can use singly, in small groups, or in large gatherings
  - A respect for market realities
  - The integration of multiple uses
  - Capturing the benefits of density. These include less land area developed and lower infrastructure costs
  - A connection to the community
- (Adapted from: Ten Principles for Developing Successful Town Centers, Urban Land Institute, 2007)

An “endearing and memorable” public realm includes numerous factors. One of the most paramount is for the

place to create an emotion that attracts residents to visit and stay in the Town Center. This is achieved through several different methods. First is the creation of an attractive pedestrian realm through widely accepted design principles. For instance, wide sidewalks, trees, and storefronts are pleasing to the eye and attract people to retail environments. Parks, open space, and street furniture (benches, tables) provide places for people to rest, wait on others in their party, or enjoy an afternoon snack. A second, and equally important, method for creating a sense of place is through the use of varied, detailed, and aesthetically pleasing architecture. Buildings that capture the eyes of people are more likely to generate foot traffic to their tenants and more likely to entice people to stay longer and explore.

Mixed (or multiple) use development can seem a bit confusing or frightening at first. Many people associate dense, urban environments with tall buildings, crime, low property values and congestion. This is not the case in terms of the “small-town” urban character suggested by this plan. The scale of a mixed-use development must fit the environment where it is proposed. For instance, a mixed-use development around a town center would differ in scope between Wesley Chapel and Charlotte. Any town center in Wesley Chapel would have to respect the existing community scale. Examples of Town Centers that respect their town’s sizes include traditional towns like Davidson, NC and new developments like Baxter Village in Fort Mill, SC.

A mix of uses allows for a higher utilization of the land and its infrastructure. For example, entertainment venues like movie

theaters or restaurants, which generate more traffic in the evenings, compliment professional offices, which generate more traffic during the day. Parking and access roads can therefore be shared by both uses if located close enough to one another. Residential uses, whether above street retail or in adjacent traditional neighborhoods, provide a steady supply of customers and foot traffic to the center – helping to create a customer base for merchants and adding to activity on the street and sidewalks. This activity assists in maintaining the safety of the town center by having “eyes on the street,” a basic element of community planning. All of these principles fit precisely with traditional, small-town layouts.



*Birkdale Village (right), in Huntersville, NC is a vibrant Town Center that successfully mixes land uses to create a lively, safe public place.*

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## 6.2 Best Practices



University Research Park, Charlotte, NC - Recreational trails on business sites provide recreational opportunities for employees and link into the greenway system (top). Well designed buildings blend into the landscape and are shielded from view by natural buffers (bottom).

### 6.2.5 Research / Business Parks

Industrial land often generates a negative public perception. Industrial is associated with smokestacks, odors and visually unappealing buildings, but this traditional image is antiquated as most industry in the United States has shifted from heavy manufacturing into technology and high precision, small scale manufacturing. In fact, many industrial parks like the research park in Charlotte's University City is a park-like setting that provides habitat for deer, owls, hawks, raccoons and a range of wildlife. In addition, the park contains a greenway for residents and workers to walk, run and cycle in a suburban context.

Light industrial uses are a benefit to any municipality as they generate more revenue for the town than they use in services. This is the only land use that consistently meets this financial objective: residential development most always uses much more money in services than it generates in revenue while commercial development can go either way. Industrial land use balances the tax burden; without it residents are forced to shoulder the entire burden of municipal services through their individual property taxes.

It is possible to have land dedicated to industrial use, maintain the character of the town, and even preserves some of the natural landscapes around the sites. These are often referred to as 'Business' or 'Research' parks, the difference between these parks and those that are nothing more than a conglomeration of bland buildings is the presence of actual parkland and strict architectural guidelines.

The entrance of the University Research Park in the University area of Charlotte is marked with a tasteful sign. The buildings are shielded from view by tree canopy and setbacks. Interwoven throughout the Research Park are public parklands and a greenway that links the Research

Park to other areas, providing recreation for the public and for employees as well as connectivity for those who live nearby.

Tasteful architecture is another beneficial aspect of a successful research/ industrial park. In Wesley Chapel, business or research parks should be located in one focal area so that they are not all spread throughout the village.

### 6.2.6 Form-Based Codes

Wesley Chapel's development and subdivision ordinances are based on what is called, by planners, Euclidian zoning. Simply stated, Euclidian zoning focuses on the regulation and separation of land uses. This type of zoning, now nearly one hundred years old, formed as a response to the poor conditions in turn-of-the-century industrial towns. Under Euclidian zoning incompatible land uses were separated geographically. For example, polluting factories would no longer be located next to residences.

This form of zoning worked with varying degrees of success in early towns where mobility was limited to foot or streetcar. However, as Americans became more mobile by the middle of the 20th century, the shortcomings of this form of zoning became more evident. Residential uses became further separated from all other uses, including those which residents depended upon on a regular basis, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and libraries. As a result, residents became more and more dependent upon their automobiles to reach all destinations outside of their house.

By focusing on the use of land cities were able to separate land uses from one another, but still held little to no control over the look of their town. As a result strip malls, big-box stores, and monotonous subdivisions became the suburban norm. A lack of attention to street patterns, connectivity, and



## 6.2 Best Practices

landscaping combined with a rigid adherence to the need to move cars around town as quickly as possible led to wide highways, no sidewalks, and winding subdivisions that could require driving nearly a mile to reach another home in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, many cities realized too late the visual and functional consequences of their land use regulations.

While applicable to the industrial city, current conditions do not necessarily merit the separation of uses. Our building materials, types of industry, and technology permit the mingling of different land uses without incompatible noise levels, fire or health hazards, or odors. Traditional zoning ignores the relative fluidity of use and permanence of buildings. Old houses can become bed and breakfasts or boutiques, warehouses can become churches or condos, malls can become offices, gas stations can morph into pizza places, and so forth. The building remains while the use changes over time.

In response to the problems of Euclidian zoning and paying attention to buildings' changes in use, a new form of land use regulation began to develop in the 1980s. To best preserve the visual character of a community, zoning ordinances (and persons) must first be concerned with how the building and surrounding area look (its form). Form-Based Codes, the outcome of this thought process, focus first on the form of the development, allowing communities greater control over their appearance and function.

The form of buildings is regulated through detailed requirements for different building types: single-family homes have different requirements than commercial buildings. Typically regulated elements include setbacks, height, materials, building frontages, and accessory building locations.

One such example of a Form-Based Code is one that does not permit "snout-houses." Garages have become commonplace for homes of all types in the United States, but fitting them onto smaller lots has presented problems for builders. In response, many houses now have garages that stick out in front of the house, like a snout. What results is a streetscape dominated by garage doors, not houses, and often driveways as wide as the garage, reducing the visual appeal of a neighborhood. These can also pose safety concerns for persons on sidewalks and the street as both pedestrians and vehicles have less time and space to react to the presence of each other. Form-Based Codes can regulate garage placement, requiring it to be behind, on the side of, or recessed from the house.

Form-Based Codes do not ignore use, as there are still permitted and prohibited uses within each land classification. Rather, they accept the fact that some uses will change and the change can occur with out a negative visual impact on the city.

In addition to regulating the form of buildings, Form-Based Codes can also be used to guide the development of the street and pedestrian networks in a city. The importance of circulation, connectivity, and mode choice are discussed at length in the transportation section of this document. Form-Based Codes, such as those regulating minimum connectivity, block length, street cross sections, and pedestrian areas can be used to ensure new development follows good street design principles.

*Snout Houses - Homes with garages that extend beyond the main part of the house are often referred to as 'snout houses.' These can be prevented through the use of form based codes.*

Cities across the country are recognizing the importance of Form-Based Codes and the Charlotte Area is a hotbed for the practice. The Cities of Belmont, Locust, Huntersville, Davidson, and Cornelius all have form-based codes as well as many other smaller North Carolina towns: Brevard, Fletcher, and Knightdale. Even more cities have begun to adopt elements of form-based codes into their existing ordinances.

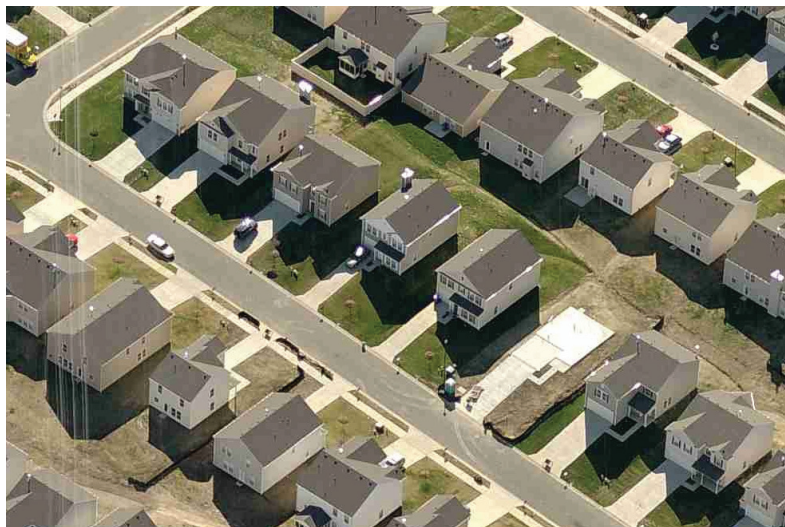


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## 6.3 Ordinances

Residents of Wesley Chapel responded positively in the community survey to multiple ordinances that regulate certain facets of development. Residents voiced their support for such items as a big-box ordinance, tree-save ordinance, and many others. What follows are brief descriptions of a variety of planning-related ordinances that have been adopted by towns throughout the country.



### 6.3.1 Big Box Ordinance(s)

Big box ordinances take two forms:

#### 1. Limitations on Square Footage

A big box ordinance can limit the gross square feet of a retail building. Big box ordinances pertain to stores like Wal-Mart, Target, Home Depot and Costco. The goal of limiting square footage is to preserve the aesthetic character of the local area while preventing future eyesores like abandoned or under-utilized retail centers. The wrong placement or aesthetic appearance of a big box building can negatively affect the local economy and property values. By limiting the size of Big Box retailers, some small town's hope to ensure that local retail development fits the scale of the community while protecting the visual appeal of an area. They also help to maintain competition between smaller local businesses by preventing a single retailer from dominating the local market.

Towns with such ordinances include Bennington, Vermont, and Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

#### 2. Demolition Costs

Thousands of vacant Big Box stores exist throughout the country. As chains go out of business, or move into larger locations, they leave behind large, bland buildings that often remain vacant. Big Box stores are engineered to meet the needs of the original store and are not well suited to adaptive reuse. As a result, many towns (including Oakdale, CA) now

*Big, Empty Box (top) - a Target store sits vacant in Kannapolis, NC just 12 years after it was built.*

*Subdivisions such as this one (bottom) in Cabarrus County can occur without anti-monotony ordinances.*

require Big Box stores to pay money or issue a bond to the town before construction to cover the demolition costs of the store should it close. If the big box does close, the bond can be used to raze the building, leaving behind a large, vacant lot much more suited to new development than if the old building had remained.

Many communities do not see the need for this type of ordinance, as many can not envision their bright new Wal-Marts or Targets ever closing. However, history shows us that land uses and consumer tastes can change. "Big-box" stores have an expected lifespan of between 7 and 15 years before they are either significantly renovated or vacated, often leaving vacant buildings and community eyesores in their wake.

### 6.3.2 Anti-Monotony Ordinance

Anti-monotony ordinances prevent new development that lacks significant variation among structures. This type of ordinance is most often applied to residential subdivisions, specifically production builders. Production home builders often offer a limited number of home plans with little architectural difference. This form of development reduces builder costs, but does not provide an attractive built environment. The worst case scenario of a monotonous subdivision is one with nothing but protruding garages facing the street, or one with the same four house plans throughout the entire development.

Several jurisdictions throughout the nation (including Cary, NC and Aurora, CO) have adopted anti-monotony regulations. These include requiring like models to be separated by a different model, or require residential units to differ from one another by providing a variety of options including, but not limited to, wall or siding materials, architectural style, roof type or shape, or window and door orientation.

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## 6.3 Ordinances

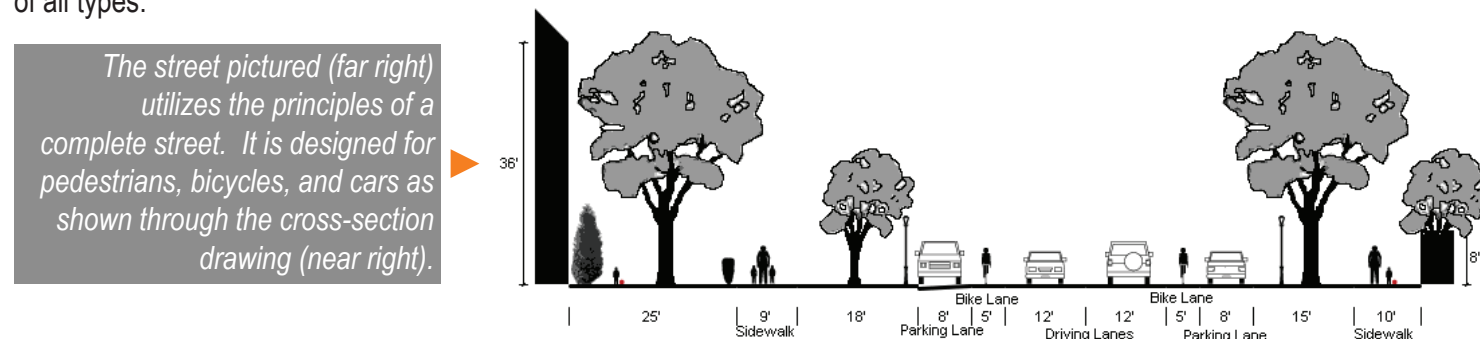
### 6.3.3 Complete Streets Ordinance

A complete streets ordinance mandates that streets be designed for everyone. They must adequately and safely accommodate the pedestrian, cyclist, public transit user (if applicable) and motorist. The increased transportation choice promotes physical activity and provides safe routes for children to walk to school.

The relevance to Wesley Chapel would be retrofitting existing roads and mandating that new roads accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. According to [completestreets.org](http://completestreets.org), the following are characteristics of successful complete street ordinances:

- Aims to be comprehensive, integrated, and connected
- Works in the context of the community and is flexible to accommodate differing street patterns
- Establishes performance standards
- Applies policy to new and retrofit projects
- Is able to be adopted by all agencies that have jurisdiction over roads like public transit or Department of Transportation.

Many municipalities have incorporated the ideals of a complete streets ordinance into their zoning and subdivision ordinances. Davidson, Huntersville, and Cornelius all utilize “complete streets” design guidelines in their form-based codes. Charlotte has recently adopted its Urban Street Design guidelines, a complete manual for all types.



### 6.3.4 Tree Save Ordinance

The purpose of a tree save ordinance is to set requirements on saving trees of a certain size, in a certain quantity, or require the planting of trees in subdivisions or development areas. Tree save ordinances are also used to regulate the protection, preservation, installation, and long-term management of trees. There are a number of different conditions used to determine which trees to save including existing and proposed grading; age, condition and type of tree; and location of site improvements and utility connections. Landscape requirements are intended to minimize potential nuisances such as visual impacts from adjacent properties and apply to both public and private property. Trees act as buffers for noise, dust, odor, litter, and light glare while providing a separation of space and creating a sense of privacy. Trees also help to produce better air quality while promoting the preservation of open space and maintaining the aesthetic character of the area. All of which make the preservation of trees an integral part of the development of a town.

Section 404.3 of the Wesley Chapel Subdivision Ordinance encourages the retention of existing vegetation, but makes no requirement that any existing trees be saved. The ordinance states only that retention of existing trees will be looked upon favorably if a developer requests a waiver of the minimum buffer and landscaping requirements.

### 6.3.5 Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance

This ordinance is a strategy to orchestrate growth by tying the approval of development to the existence of an adequate level of public facilities, i.e., water, sewer, schools, roads, etc. These ordinances can delay or stop development projects if adequate facilities are not available where a developer wishes to build. Development cannot continue until the problem is ameliorated. Literature by the Maryland Planning Department (see Resources section) establishes how adequate public facilities ordinances can be effective in managing growth. It goes on to say that growth should be directed to areas where development is suitable. A large component of the provision of adequate public facilities is a suitable comprehensive plan that effectively projects future, standard service levels. This kind of ordinance should work in tandem with the comprehensive plan or growth plan not as a lone policy.



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## 6.3 Ordinances

### 6.3.6 Sustainable Agricultural Zones

In a fast growing suburban area, the protection of the rural heritage should mean more than the preservation of landscapes for visual pleasure, although that is important. True preservation of the rural heritage means encouraging and protecting agricultural uses from suburban encroachment for those property owners who wish to keep farming their land. Unfortunately there is no easy answer in the western part of Union County which is receiving the brunt of suburban expansion. Methods that are easier (from an administrative view) have problems: either they do not really protect land in perpetuity or they involve downzoning which runs up against valid property rights arguments. The more effective programs have additional layers of complexity that makes them cumbersome to administer. Some key resources are identified in section 6.4.2.



Some alternatives are:

#### 1. Agricultural Protection Zones

Advantages: quick, relatively easy, separates agricultural uses from the current R-40 zoning

Disadvantages: reduces property value; downzoning; not permanent (can be rezoned and developed)

#### 2. Conservation Easements

Land placed into conservation easement with Catawba Lands Conservancy or similar legally enfranchised land trust

Advantage: preserved open space

Disadvantages: reduced land value; CLC tends to preserve pristine landscapes, not farm fields (although some local farms have been preserved).

#### 3. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

In theory this is the best method of preserving farmland. Under this program, the development rights of farmland (the sending area) are sold (transferred) to another property owner, preferably near the Village Center. This second property owner can add the development rights of the farmland acreage to the existing development rights for his or her own parcel of land, known as the "receiving area or district," thus gaining increased density near the center of the community while preserving farmland on the outskirts. The advantages are that this is a market-based transaction without using taxpayers' money to buy land (as is sometimes the case with a kindred Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program of the type noted below under Agricultural Easements.

In practice this has proved difficult to administer in North Carolina; state laws do not make this process easy. Under certain conditions, cities and counties are authorized to use "severable development rights" (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-66.10 - .11). Through the municipal zoning ordinance, the local legislature must indicate the receiving districts for these transferred right for additional development.

The Town of Huntersville tried to start a program with volunteer property owners several years ago, but intense opposition and lobbying by local real estate interests, developers and homebuilders killed the program. In 2005-06, Orange County, NC, undertook a detailed feasibility study of the concepts, but at this time few firm policies have been enacted.

#### 4. Agricultural Easements

Some counties have agricultural easement programs, including Forsyth County, NC. Forsyth's program has been in place since the mid 80's, is set up like a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, and has preserved over 1,200 acres. PDR involves paying for the development rights of a property to ensure that the property is not developed. PDR is usually initiated to protect or preserve agricultural land or land containing significant environmental or cultural resources. The details of the agreement between the property owner and qualifying nonprofit organization or government agency are typically recorded in a conservation easement.

Advantages: geared toward agricultural land, long-running local example

Disadvantages: complexity discussed earlier regarding PDR/TDR

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## 6.4 Recommendations

### 6.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that Wesley Chapel consider the implementation of form-based codes to shape future growth in their community. These codes should be developed to focus on the rural, residential village, and village center land uses present and desired within the community. Adoption of codes based first on the form of the buildings and second on the uses in the buildings will give the Village the most control over its appearance as it continues to grow.

#### 6.4.1 New Zoning Categories

Six separate zoning categories, each with its own set of codes, are recommended by this study.

##### 1. Village Center

This land use category is focused around the intersection of Waxhaw-Indian Trail and Weddington Roads and is focused around the highest intensity use. Development in this category is best described as ‘traditional main street’ and includes curbfront stores, offices, and residential uses on the upper level(s) of buildings.

Form based codes for this category should call for “back of curb” development. This would call for all structures, of all uses, to start just beyond the sidewalk, creating a pedestrian friendly environment. Other provisions should be made to require storefront windows, street trees, street furniture, variations in building materials, and height restrictions.

##### 2. Residential Village

This land use category lies just beyond the village center and is best described as the traditional, small-town neighborhood. Homes are linked to one another with sidewalks, can feature

alleyways and porches, and are built close enough to the road to create a safe-space for persons of all ages. This safe space is monitored by the ease with which one can see the street from their home. Form based codes for this area should be tied to the type of building desired. Single family dwellings should have a maximum required setback of 20 feet with minimal side yard setbacks. Architectural materials and detail may be included in these codes. Neighborhood level service businesses should be required to develop “back of curb” storefronts, creating a more pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood feel. Permitted uses in this zone would specifically include special housing for seniors subject to the same general urban design guidelines for building placement and setbacks.

##### 3. Outer Village

This land use category lies beyond the Residential Village and covers the great majority of the land within Wesley Chapel and immediate vicinity. It is characterized by three types of low-density single-family residential development: the conservation subdivision; the “ranchette” subdivision, and the rural “farmhouse cluster.” All three types of development are intended to preserve as much natural landscape as possible while meeting various market demands for low-density development, from the equivalent of 1 dwelling per acre in the conservation subdivision to as much as 1 dwelling per 5 or 10 acres in the farmhouse cluster.

In order to preserve open space within the “Outer Village” zone, it is recommended that Wesley Chapel consider the following standards for each of the three types of development.

##### Conservation Subdivision

- Adoption of an open space ratio  
An open space ratio is the ratio of undisturbed land to land used for residential lots and infrastructure. It is recommended the Village require a minimum ratio of 0.5.

- Adoption of a maximum gross density  
Wesley Chapel residents expressed support of one home per acre development. Rather than require one acre lots, a maximum gross density allows for open space to be considered in the density calculation. It is recommended the Village consider a maximum gross density of 1 dwelling unit per acre in the Outer Village.

For example:

A 100 acre plot of land is designated ‘Outer Village’ and a developer is seeking to build homes on the property. To meet the open space ratio at least 50 acres of land would need to remain undisturbed, leaving 50 acres for infrastructure and private lots. On these 50 acres, no more than 100 dwelling units could be built to meet the maximum gross density requirement.

- Adoption of a minimum lot width of 60 feet and a minimum setback of 30 feet to character
- Relaxation of the sidewalk ordinance to maintain the rural character
- Requiring, at minimum, a crushed gravel pedestrian path along one side of the road. This path may be located a reasonable distance from the road, so as to maintain the rural character.

## 6.4 Recommendations

### Ranchette Development

- Adoption of an open space ratio.

As with the conservation subdivision, an open space ratio is the ratio of undisturbed land to land used for residential lots and infrastructure. It is recommended that the Village require a minimum ratio of 0.5 for this type of development also.

- Relaxation of sidewalk ordinance to maintain the rural character.
- Requiring, in lieu of sidewalks, at a minimum, a crushed gravel path along one side of the road. This path may be located a reasonable distance from the road and screened by landscape so as to maintain a rural character.

### Rural/Farmhouse Cluster

This development type allows for the development of “large-lot” homes in subdivisions with a rural character.

- Adoption of 5 acre minimum lot size in the ‘Rural Estate’ classification
- Requiring dwellings to be grouped in one central area along one right-of-way
- Relaxation of the sidewalk ordinance to maintain the rural character
- Requiring, at minimum, a crushed gravel pedestrian path along one side of the road. This path may be located a reasonable distance from the road, so as to maintain the rural character.

### 4. Business Park

This land use category allows for the development of research and light industrial firms in a specific area of the Village. Form based codes for this must emphasize the preservation of open space, existing stands of trees, and the planting of appropriate trees and shrubs to shield structures and cars.

### 5. Existing Residential

This land use category is intended to encompass all existing residential development within the Wesley Chapel village limits and ETJ that does not fit the definitions of any of the other land use categories. It is recommended the Village of Wesley Chapel consider not allowing any new development of land with this classification.

### 6. Institutional (existing)

This land use category is intended to encompass all existing institutional development in the Village of Wesley Chapel. Existing schools, churches, and other institutional buildings fall under this classification.

#### 6.4.2 Recommended Ordinances

It is recommended that Wesley Chapel adopt additional ordinances as well as modify the existing tree-save provision of their subdivision ordinance. The following recommendations are derived from the community survey:

- Adoption of a big box ordinance that limits square footage and requires a demolition bond to ensure the Village maintains its small-town feel and limits future nuisance

properties.

- Adoption of a complete streets ordinance is recommended to force new development to occur in a way that focuses on connectivity and the needs of cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists.
- Adoption of anti-monotony language into the zoning ordinance will help to differentiate neighborhoods and create a unique sense of place in new developments
- The tree-save provision in the existing subdivision ordinance should be re-worded to mandate the preservation of existing stands of trees, rather than simply encourage the practice.
- Adoption of a Sustainable Agricultural Ordinance or Overlay Zone that will incentivize and protect existing farming uses from encroachment by new residential development.



## 6.4 Recommendations

### 6.4.3 New Zoning / Land Use Map

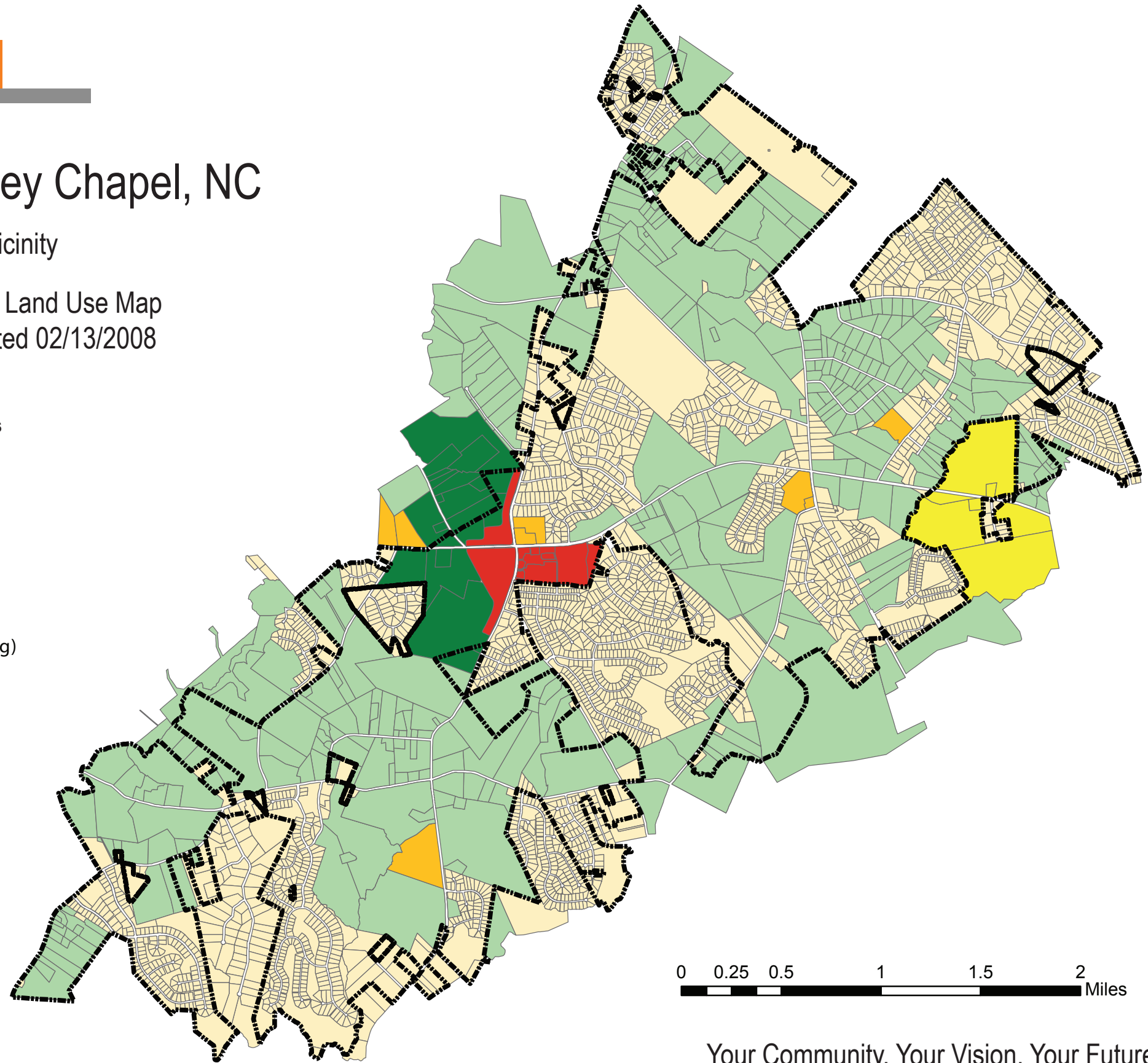
## Village of Wesley Chapel, NC

and vicinity

Recommended Land Use Map  
DRAFT - updated 02/13/2008

#### Proposed Land Use Categories

- Village Center
- Residential Village
- Outer Village
- Existing Residential
- Business Park
- Institutional (existing)
- Village Limits



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## 6.5 Resources / Model Code References

### Form-Based Codes

Belmont, NC Land Development Code  
<http://www.cityofbelmont.org/webroot/departments/show/11>

Brevard, NC Unified Development Ordinance  
<http://brevard.govoffice.com>

Cornelius, NC Land Development Code  
<http://planning.sitewizard.biz/page2.html>

Davidson, NC Planning Ordinance  
<http://www.ci.davidson.nc.us/units/planning/ordinance/default.asp>

Fletcher, NC Land Development Code  
<http://www.fletchernc.org/content/282/288/79/205.aspx>

Knightdale, NC Unified Development Ordinance  
<http://www.knightdalenc.gov/planning/udo.html>

Locust, NC Zoning Ordinances  
<http://www.locustnc.com/zoningordinances.html>

### Conservation Subdivisions

Knightdale, NC Unified Development Ordinance  
<http://www.knightdalenc.gov/planning/udo.html>  
 The Rural Residential classification in this ordinance uses some components of Conservation Subdivisions (lot sizes, multi-use paths, etc.). Minimum open space dedication is based on a formula rather than a solid number. For this to work for a Conservation Subdivision, the formula should be replaced with a minimum percentage dedication.

Locust, NC Zoning Ordinances  
<http://www.locustnc.com/zoningordinances.html>  
 The Open Space District (OPS) classification in Article 3.2.1 provides a good model for the “Outer Village” land use classification for Wesley Chapel. This classification allows for both Conservation Subdivision and Farmhouse Cluster Developments.

Community Choices: Quality Growth Toolkit – Conservation Subdivisions. Atlanta Regional Commission.  
[http://www.atlantaregional.com/documents/CONSERVATION\\_SUBDIVISION\\_TOOL.pdf](http://www.atlantaregional.com/documents/CONSERVATION_SUBDIVISION_TOOL.pdf)  
 The Atlanta Regional Commission has published an informational book about Conservation Subdivision design and implementation. It is a useful tool for understanding the development type, process, and implementation.

Reichert, Alan and Liang, Hsin-Yu. 2007. “An Economic Analysis of Real Estate Conservation Subdivision Developments,” *The Appraisal Journal*. Summer 2007. pp. 236-245.  
<http://www.aiohio.org/tajarticle.pdf>  
 This article demonstrates the value-added benefits of Conservation Subdivisions as compared to standard subdivision practices.

### Farmhouse Clusters

Cornelius, NC. Land Development Code. Section 5.1  
[http://planning.sitewizard.biz/customers/106030913560022/filemanager/LDC/CH\\_05.1\\_Rural\\_Preservation.pdf](http://planning.sitewizard.biz/customers/106030913560022/filemanager/LDC/CH_05.1_Rural_Preservation.pdf)

Locust, NC Zoning Ordinances  
<http://www.locustnc.com/zoningordinances.html>  
 The Open Space District (OPS) classification in Article 3.2.1 provides a good model for the “Outer Village” land use classification for Wesley Chapel. This classification allows for both Conservation Subdivision and Farmhouse Cluster Developments.

### Traditional Neighborhood Development

Brevard, NC Unified Development Ordinance  
<http://brevard.govoffice.com>  
 The Residential Mixed-Use (RMX) classification described in Chapter 2 allows for the construction of a mixture of residential structures similar to those for the proposed “Residential Village.”

Cornelius, NC. Land Development Code  
[http://planning.sitewizard.biz/customers/106030913560022/filemanager/LDC/CH\\_05.8\\_Traditional\\_Neighborhood.pdf](http://planning.sitewizard.biz/customers/106030913560022/filemanager/LDC/CH_05.8_Traditional_Neighborhood.pdf)  
 The TND described in Section 5.8 provides an example for a land use category similar to the proposed “Residential Village” for the Village of Wesley Chapel. Cornelius’ TND includes provisions for neighborhood level commerce, which the Village could choose to adopt, or relegate solely to the “Village Center.”



# 6.5 Resources / Model Code References

Big-Box Ordinances

Oakdale, CA.  
<http://www.newrules.org/retail/oakdale.html>  
This website provides an overview of the changes made to the City of Oakdale’s ordinances to prevent abandoned and poorly designed big-box facilities.

Wauwatosa, WI  
<http://www.wauwatosa.net/ImageLibrary/InternetBigBoxOrdinanceFinal.pdf>  
Wauwatosa’s Big-Box Ordinance creates measures to control the design of big-box stores, their relation to the surrounding community, and their re-use.

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance

*Managing Maryland’s Growth: Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances, Models & Guidelines # 24.* Maryland Department of Planning.  
<http://www.mdp.state.md.us/mgs/pdf/mg24.pdf>

Davidson, NC Planning Ordinance  
<http://www.ci.davidson.nc.us/units/planning/ordinance/default.asp>  
Section 18.0 provides example language for an APFO.

Complete Streets Ordinances

<http://www.completestreets.org>  
This website provides information about “Complete Streets” as well as a list of successful projects and policies.

Sustainable Agriculture

Agricultural Protection Zones  
  
Overview: [http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/29478/FS\\_APZ\\_9-98.pdf](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/29478/FS_APZ_9-98.pdf)

Lands Conservancy  
<http://www.catawbalds.org/what.php>

Transfer of Development Rights  
  
<http://www.serconline.org/tdr/stateactivity.html>  
[http://www.co.orange.nc.us/planning/TDR\\_files/TDR\\_Overview\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.co.orange.nc.us/planning/TDR_files/TDR_Overview_Brochure.pdf)  
[http://boonecountyky.org/pc/PDR\\_TDR.pdf](http://boonecountyky.org/pc/PDR_TDR.pdf)

Agricultural Easements  
<http://www.aftresearch.org/PDRdatabase/33.htm>  
<http://www.co.forsyth.nc.us/Conservation/FPP.aspx>

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