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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan is a long range comprehensive plan that will guide investment and decision-making over the next 10 to 20 years. Policies in this document provide guidance for development decisions.

### 1.1.1 PLAN CONCEPTS

The 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan is the policy foundation for creating a City that in the future does not lose touch with its past. The planning strategy presented in this document is a product of the long-term vision of the Mission 2030 Committee, City Council with the guidance of the Planning Commission and the invaluable input of the community.

The Plan integrates economic development planning with land use planning in order to sustain Morganton's competitive advantage in a global market place and in recognition that an efficient, strong, diverse and resilient economy is essential to the achievement of Morganton's overall development objectives.

The City's ultimate development pattern will be based on the long-term commitment to maintaining distinct planning areas, each with a preferred development pattern. The Plan seeks to create a vibrant central core, supported by employment and retail nodes, strong neighborhoods, and ample open spaces.

### 1.1.2 MORGANTON IN 2030: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In 2030, Morganton is a growing, dynamic and sustainable city that is focused on the future with a strong diverse economy and a balanced and growing population that values and enjoys a high quality of life in a safe and attractive environment. Working together, the City, County and region boast a steady growth in jobs and residents, higher school scores, and a broad range of recreational and entertainment activities. Through regional cooperation the mountain views, rivers and natural areas are protected and are easily accessed by a network of greenways that link downtown, neighborhoods and regional parks.

Morganton's public and private investments in protecting our natural environment, supporting a wide range of cultural and entertainment amenities, maintaining a first-class educational system, and providing ongoing educational opportunities have been the core building blocks for economic prosperity.

### 1.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION

To implement the plan's vision and policies, a series of strategic initiatives are identified. These initiatives include the following:

- An aggressive economic development program that invests strategically in existing and new industries.

- Build partnerships with local, regional, state and federal organizations to work cooperatively to attract and retain employers, tailoring programs to meet individual company needs.
- Strengthen the economy through both diversification and specialization. Invest in growing and retaining specialized businesses.
- Tap homegrown resources to fuel Morganton's economy, invest in the capacity of existing individuals, businesses and industries. Support new technologies.
- Establish a clear, compelling brand identity that works for economic development, tourism and downtown promotion.
- Cultivate Morganton's quality of life as an economic development asset.
- Improve educational attainment to equip the workforce with knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for success in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.
- Sell Morganton to Residents, Newcomers, and Visitors. Morganton is a well kept secret within its own boundaries; residents are often not aware of existing amenities. Marketing efforts must focus on both retaining local citizens, especially young people, and attracting outside companies, employees and tourists to "Discover Morganton and Burke County".
- Proactively market Morganton and the surrounding communities as desirable places to live, work and play.
- Redevelop underutilized commercial and industrial sites. To take advantage of underutilized industrial and commercial land, the City should promote opportunities for reuse based on market demand and innovative design potential.
- Invest in critical amenities. The environmental, entertainment and cultural elements of Morganton's quality of life are critical amenities that must be supported if the region is to fulfill its economic development objectives.
- Protect Morganton's established neighborhoods while encouraging development of a range of housing choices.
- Expand Downtown's role as the business, financial and entertainment center, new or enhanced regional commercial nodes and neighborhood centers can create attractive, decentralized, multi-use development sites for commercial activity and higher-density housing.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Morganton 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan is an official public policy document adopted by City Council. The Plan is a long-range guide for growth, land use and development decisions in the City. The Plan policies are a guide for investment and development decisions. These policies can be amended as new information is available, or to address a specific change in circumstances without straying from the Plan's goals. The Plan is not a static document and should be updated on a regular basis.

The Plan is not a development ordinance; it sets the framework and is the basis for the City's zoning ordinance, and development regulations. The Plan will serve as the basis for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, development regulations and permitting process to implement the Plan.

### 1.2.1 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The City of Morganton's first major Land Development Plan was adopted in 1982 and amended in 1990. The 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan replaces the 1990 Plan as the guiding document for the City's planning efforts.

The Plan serves as the framework for other plans and ordinances relating to the management of growth and development. It is not a stand-alone document, but is supported by, and in turn supports, related plans and ordinances.

### 1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan process was conducted during 2008 and 2009 and is the product of the citizens, the MISSION 2030 Team City Council, the Planning Commission, City staff and consultants. The City Council initiated the process at the 2008 retreat. The MISSION 2030 Team was formed by City Council to work with City staff and the consultant team to develop an economic development strategy and revised Comprehensive Land Development Plan.

The planning process began with community input. The next step was to develop a profile of Morganton – its strengths, weaknesses, and greatest opportunities. Using this information, the MISSION TEAM formed four citizen volunteer task teams, asking them to work through the summer, focusing on four important themes. The recommendations from the task forces were presented to the community for their input, and became the basis for further discussions to develop a community vision, set goals and recommend action strategies that will guide future decisions on public and private investments and community strategies.



### 1.3.1 MISSION TEAM

The MISSION 2030 Team is a volunteer citizen committee that is broadly representative of the interest and livelihoods of the community. The MISSION Team worked closely with City staff and consultants to develop the MISSION 2030 Economic Development Strategy and the Comprehensive Land Development Plan.



### 1.3.2 TASK TEAMS

In June the MISSION 2030 Team formed four task teams to consider economic development strategies that will shape Morganton's future. The task teams were charged with evaluating the area strengths and weakness, identifying regional and national growth and business development trends and developing specific recommendations that would stimulate economic development.

The task teams were:

- Business and Industry
- Retirement
- Tourism
- Youth and Education

The themes of the task teams were drawn from the recent economic development report completed by the Burke Partnership for Economic Development (BPED). Using these industry segments as the starting point, the questions for the task teams focused on the industry requirements, and Morganton's readiness to jump start activity in these areas.



### 1.3.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The public process involved many residents, including those not typically involved in land use issues. This was accomplished through an ambitious community-involvement strategy that provided ready access both to new information and to the process.

More than 175 people came together at Patton High School for the first community meeting to share their ideas about Morganton's future, talk about what is most important and recommend changes that will help improve our community. The participants broke into 12 small groups to discuss three questions:

1. *What should we keep/ preserve/ protect?*
2. *What should we improve/ change?*
3. *What is missing?*

The groups had a wide range of ideas in response to questions 1 and 2 on “What to Keep” and “What to Improve” but several common themes emerged from the groups.

- It's the economy – we need new industries and more jobs
- It's quality of life – protect our natural environment, the Greenway, Catawba Meadows, family friendly atmosphere these are some of our greatest assets and we don't want to lose them.
- It's day to day living – more retail choices – we want to shop here but we need more choices including larger national retailers, we need more restaurants and more types of restaurants.
- It's our children – invest in our children – all children should graduate from high school with opportunities to continue on to college, university, or for additional technical education. Our youth should be encouraged to be curious, to learn, to be creative. They should know about what types of jobs are here in Burke County and learn more about what other career and businesses opportunities are possible.
- It's our future – we need to come together as a community to move our economy forward. We have different styles, different approaches, but we share one vision – strengthen our economy.

Responses to questions 3 - “What is Missing” had several common themes.

- A four year university or college
- Hi-tech and green industries
- Greater variety in retail stores and restaurants
- Links from downtown to the Greenway and Catawba Meadows
- Things for teens to do in town – teen center, recreation, skate park

The community expressed a strong interest in encouraging youth to complete high school and continue on for additional education. There was also concern that there was nothing for youth to do in town. The schools and churches had organized clubs and sports activities, but there were few weekend or summer activities that were available. This was identified as an important issue.



The ideas from the community meeting and additional research on trends and economic issues were used as the basis for forming the four MISSION 2030 Task Teams.

A second community meeting in September, 2008 reported back to the community on concepts that were developed over the summer by the MISSION 2030 Task Teams. The community was asked to discuss the concepts and share their ideas about what else should be considered in the planning process.

The third community meeting in February, 2009 presented the plan concepts. Following the community meeting, the MISSION 2030 Team hosted an open house encouraging property and business owners to discuss issues.

#### 1.3.4 PUBLIC REVIEW AND ADOPTION

The Planning Commission began review of the document in May 2009. Following a joint meeting with the MISSION 2030 Team and discussion of the document, the Planning Commission conducted a public meeting on July 9, 2009. The revised 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan was adopted by the Planning Commission on August 13, 2009.

Upon receipt of the Planning Commission's recommendations, the City Council reviewed the document and scheduled a public hearing on the document. Following the public hearing the plan was adopted on October 5, 2009.



## 1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan is organized into eight chapters.

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 2. Morganton Today
- Chapter 3. Land Use
- Chapter 4. Economic Development
- Chapter 5. Services to the Community
- Chapter 6. Natural and Cultural Resources
- Chapter 7. Housing and Neighborhoods
- Chapter 8. Community Design

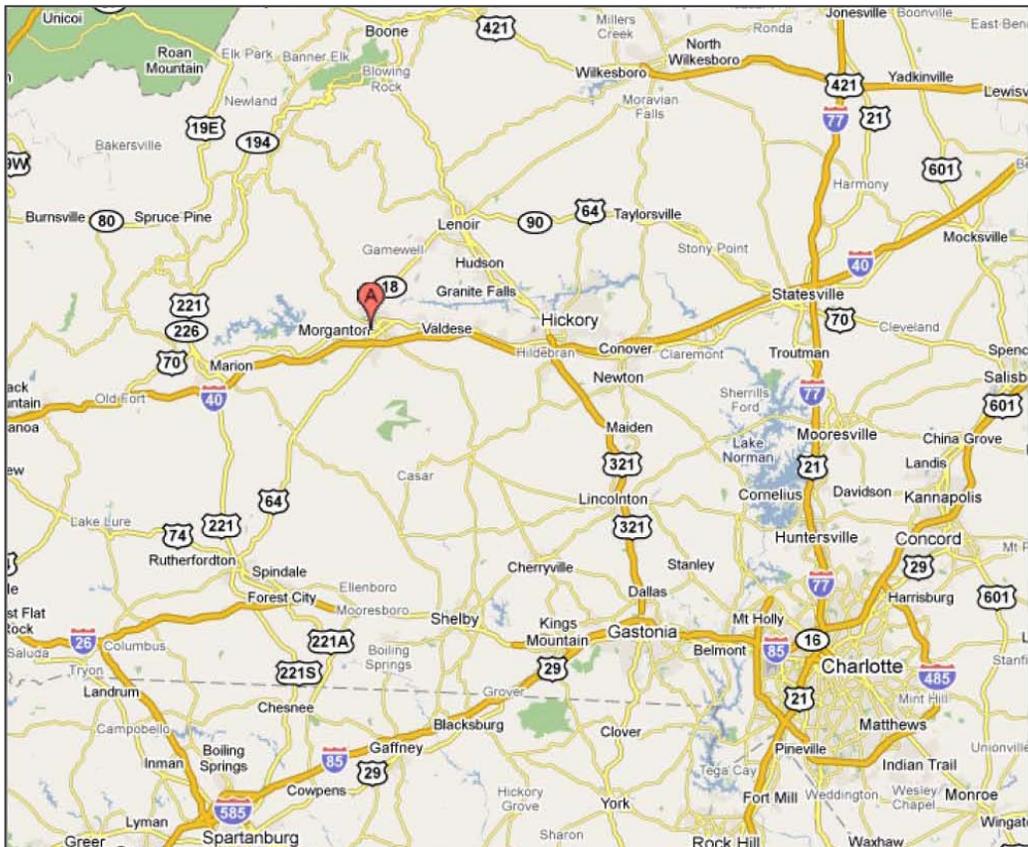
Chapter 8. Community Design includes recommendations for land development patterns in the planning areas, concept areas and corridors.



## CHAPTER 2 MORGANTON TODAY

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Morganton, founded in 1784 and incorporated in 1885, is the County Seat of Burke County. Morganton is the largest municipality in Burke County and serves as its retail, government, financial and service center.



Located in the foothills of North Carolina, Morganton is served by five Interstate 40 interchanges and intersected by U.S. highways 64 and 70 and North Carolina highways 18 and 181. The city is less than one hour drive time to Asheville and Charlotte's Douglas International Airport.

## 2.2 MORGANTON TODAY

### Demographic Base

Morganton is part of the growing “Unifour Region” that includes the counties of Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and Alexander, supporting a population of 358,000 persons. The four counties also comprise the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Reporting on population statistics and trends has traditionally relied on information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The current trends indicate a slight change from the projections and trends used by the Sanford Holshouser and Whittaker Associates *Strategic Economic Development Plan* in 2004. For planning purposes, as new census data will not be available until after the 2010 Census, the statistics and trends as reported by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments will be used in describing the City’s demographic trends.

### Changes in Population

Morganton has a relatively stable population representing approximately 20% of the County’s population. The City has experienced a slight (-0.5%) but steady population decrease from the 2000 Census. Recent analysis by Western Piedmont Council of Governments projects the continued trend of a slight but steady population decrease over the next 20 years.

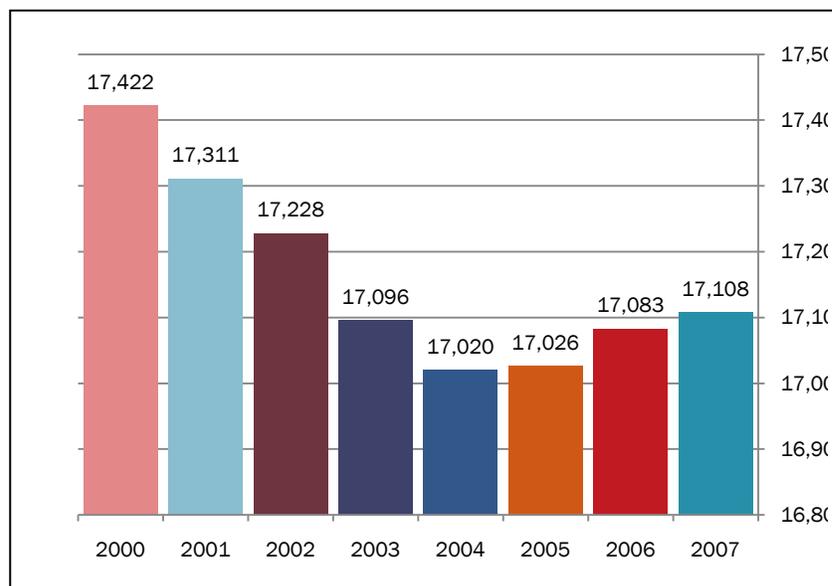


Chart 1 Morganton NC Population 2000 - 2007

### Age Structure

The median age in Morganton is 39.1, compared to the median age in North Carolina which is 35.3. The percent of Morganton’s 65+ populations has consistently been higher than the County or State averages. In 1990, 18% of Morganton’s population was over 65 years of age as compared to 13% of the County and 12% of the State’s population. This trend continued in 2000 with 19% of Morganton population reported as 65+, compared to 13% of the County and 12% of

the State's population. The increase of Morganton's 65+ populations can be attributed in part to longer life expectancies.

### **Population Characteristics**

The predominate race in Morganton is that of whites at 72.6%. African-Americans are the second largest group at 12.8%; persons of Hispanic origin are estimated to be 11.8% of the total population. Burke County's population is reported to 84.9% white, 6.7% African American and approximately 3.6% of Hispanic origin. A large percentage of the population growth in the region can be attributed to a growing Hispanic population.

### **Household Size and Characteristics**

Decreasing household size is another national trend shared by Morganton. In Morganton, the average household size was 2.31 persons as compared to 2.48 in Burke County. In 2000, there were 6,829 households in Morganton, of these 60% were family households and 39.7% were non-family households. Of the non-family households 14.4%, or 982 people, were reported to be 65 years of age or older and living alone.

## 2.3 EDUCATION

The Burke County Public School population is expected to remain relatively steady throughout the planning period. The current population is approximately 14,000 students, similar in size to the 1998-1999 student population.

Educational attainment continues to be an important statistic as an indicator of the availability of a skilled workforce. Burke County Public Schools have focused on reducing the student dropout rate by putting programs in place that work with students at every grade level to encourage them to stay in school. In the past three years, Burke County Public Schools has moved its dropout rate from 6.93 percent to 4.33 percent, a rate that is below the 4.97 percent for the State of North Carolina. Morganton has a higher percentage of residents with bachelors, graduate and professional degrees than Burke County.

The city's high number of residents with bachelors, graduate and professional degrees is usually attributed to the presence a high number of professional employment opportunities in the medical, educational and government fields.

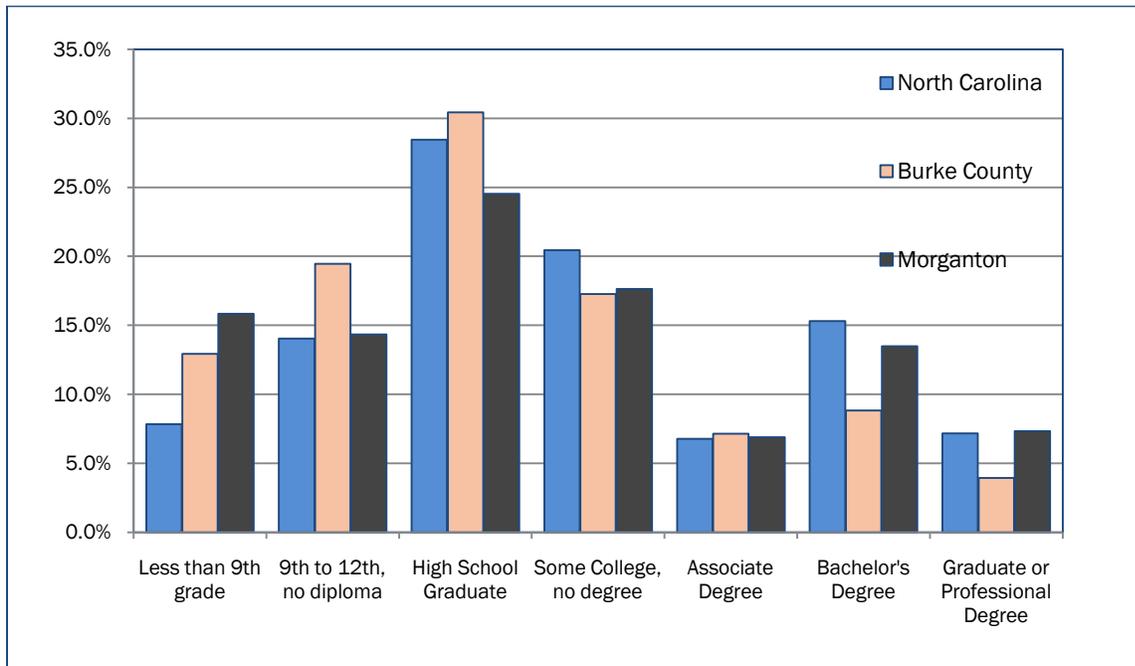


Chart 2. 2000 Educational Attainment Levels Burke County NC

## 2.4 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

A healthy and vital economy is essential to Morganton’s success. Morganton is not in itself a local economy. Activity within the boundaries of the City is part of the economy of the entire Hickory Metropolitan Statistic Area (MSA). While the cities, towns and counties have separate political identities, in economic terms their economies have many similarities. The region has been heavily reliant on manufacturing as the primary industry sector. The changes in the furniture industry have affected the entire region. In 1990 the manufacturing industries accounted for 51% of employment in the Metro area. In 2008, manufacturing jobs made up only 30% of the total employment.

### 2002 Employment by Industry Sector: Morganton NC

NAICS* Code	Industry Sector	Total Employment
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting (C)	151
21	Mining (C)	13
22	Utilities (N)	X
23	Construction (C)	206
31	Manufacturing	6,178
42	Wholesale Trade (D)	100 - 249
43	Retail Trade	2,039
48	Transportation and Warehousing (N)	278
51	Information (D)	100 - 249
52	Finance and Insurance (C)	298
53	Real Estate and Rental Leasing	106
54	Professional and Technical Services	435
55	Management Services (C)	425
56	Administrative and Waste Services	248
61	Educational Services (C)	661
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	2,449

71	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (C)	40
72	Accommodation and Food Service	1,688
81	Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	276
92	Public Administration (C)	X

(C) Not reported for places, data from 2000 Census (N) Not reported for places; (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data of individual companies

In 2009, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments prepared an economic perspective report for the City of Morganton. Between 1990 and 2008 there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of people employed in manufacturing and a significant increase in employment in service jobs in Burke County. The service industry is the largest industry in the City, employing almost 51% of the labor force. The health care and health care related activity industry sector is the largest employment sector.

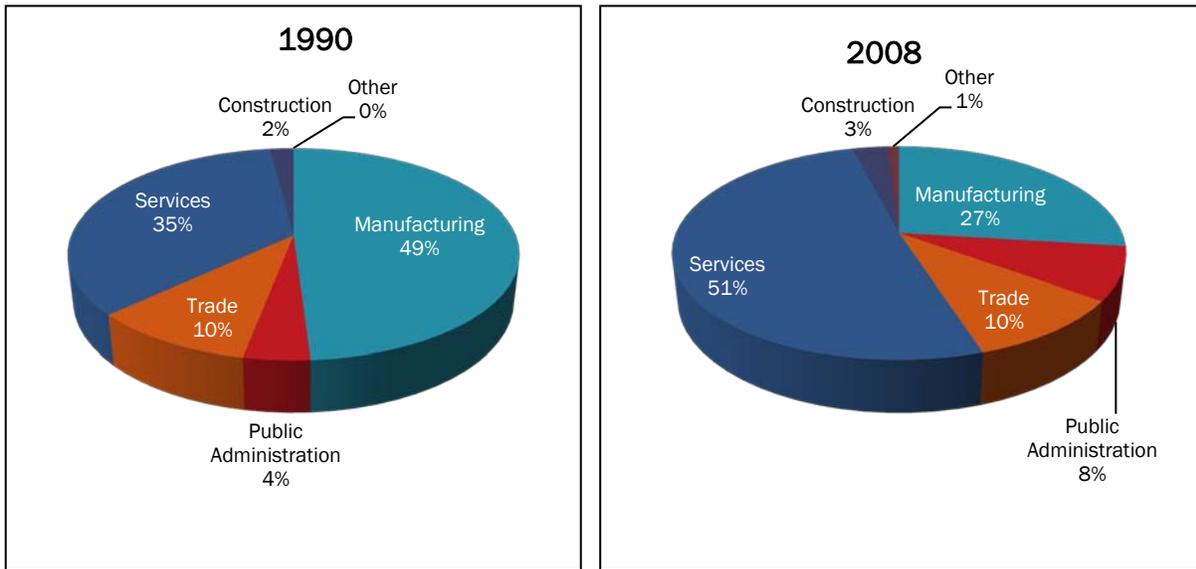


Chart 3. Western Piedmont Council of Governments 2008 Burke County Employment Statistics

The stable nucleus of jobs in healthcare and higher education continues to draw people to the area. While not immune to economic changes, national trends predict a growth in healthcare and health services employment over the next 20 years as baby boomers age. Efforts are underway to grow the healthcare and higher education economic sectors. The Foothills Allied Health and Science Higher Education Center is scheduled to open in fall 2009 in the renovated Doblin Building and will be used to train approximately 500 healthcare professionals annually.

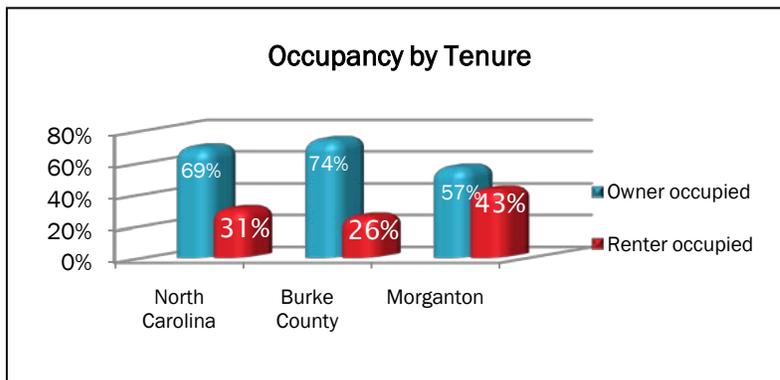
BlueRidge Healthcare System has completed extensive renovations of its facilities in Valdese and Morganton to provide additional healthcare services to the community.

While the percentage of manufacturing jobs has decreased, Burke County continues to have a higher percentage of manufacturing jobs than the national average of ten percent. The downward trend in the percentage of manufacturing jobs in the Hickory Metro Region and Burke County are forecast to continue through the planning period to an anticipated average of approximately 20% of all jobs in the area. It will be important to continue to focus on expanding the industrial base by diversifying the manufacturing base and attracting target industries in areas such as warehousing, assembly and distribution that require a reliable workforce and reasonable operating costs.

## 2.5 WHERE WE LIVE

Type of Housing Unit	
1-unit, detached	63%
1-unit, attached	2%
2 units	4%
3 or more units	22%
Mobile home	9%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0%

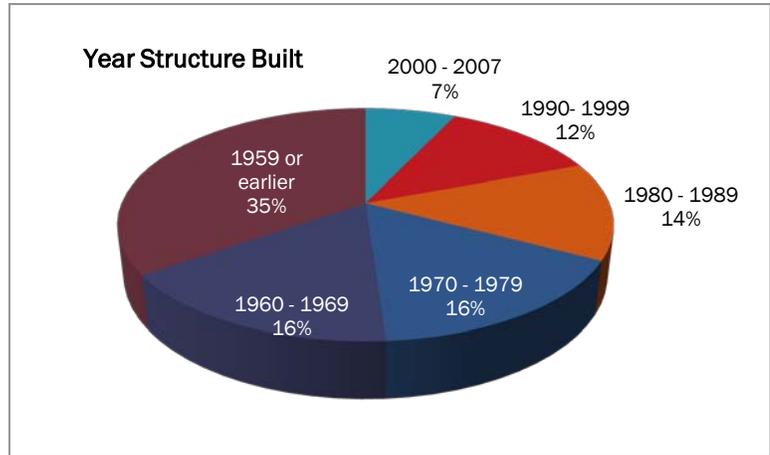
In 2000, there were 7,277 housing units in Morganton, of these 6,815 were occupied. Single family homes comprise 63% of the total number of units; mobile homes were 9% of the total number of housing units.



Approximately 57% of Morganton residences are owner occupied as compared to the County where 74% of residences are occupied by owners.

Of the 6,829 households in Morganton, 60% were family households and 39.7% were non-family households. Of the non-family households 14.4%, or 982 people, were reported to be 65 years of age or older and living alone.

More than 51% of housing stock was built before 1970, less than 20% of the total housing stock was built since 1990. Between 2000 and 2007, approximately 389 new single family homes and 43 multi-family homes were constructed in the City and 164 mobile homes were located on lots in the City.



## 2.6 FUTURE TRENDS

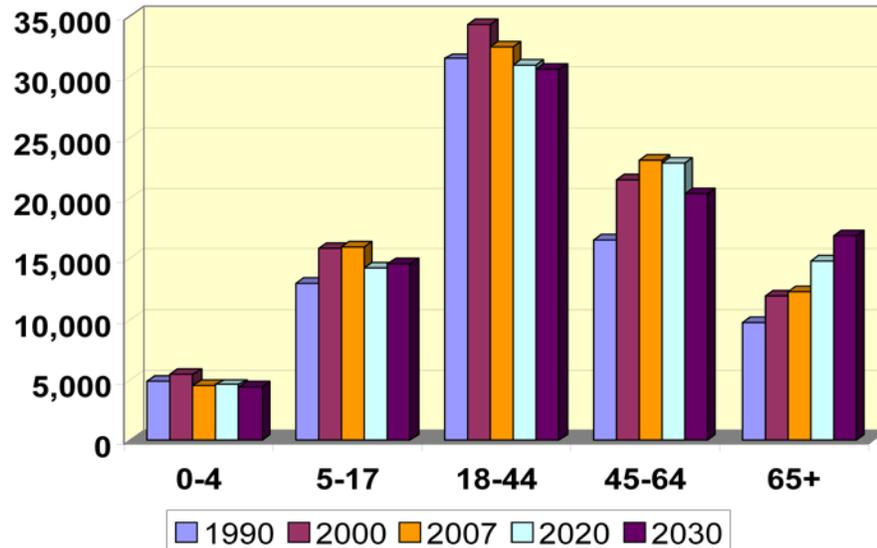
The recent population and employment estimates for the four county region projects a small decrease in the size of Burke County’s population. During the same time period, Catawba County is projected to have the largest increase in population. Catawba County’s population growth is fueled by a number of factors including its location in the US 321 Corridor. The explosion of job growth in Lincoln County and the rise in living costs in nearby counties have attracted new residents to the area.

County	2000	2007	Growth 2000-07	% Growth 2000-07
Alexander	33,603	36,656	3,053	9.1%
Burke	89,148	88,439	-709	-0.8%
Caldwell	77,415	79,376	1,961	2.5%
Catawba	141,685	153,404	11,719	8.3%
Total	341,851	357,875	16,024	4.7%

This trend is projected to continue through 2030 with Burke County having a -1.5% growth over the twenty year time period.

## Age Structure Trends

There has been little change in the age structure since 1990, except for the inevitable aging of different generations, moving their relative proportion along the population curve. The increase in population is expected to occur in the 65 and older age groups. These are generally the older families, empty nester, and retired citizen groups.



The decreases in population are occurring in the age groups of the 18 - 44 and 45 - 64 year olds. A decrease in the working age population has policy and economic implications.

Economic development efforts that focus on diversification of the economy will need to be matched by an overall marketing campaign that changes the image of Morganton to being more than just a great place to raise a family, but also a great place to live for people of all ages, especially younger adults right out school.

Statistics and trends as reported by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments



## CHAPTER 3 LAND USE

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Morganton is the largest municipality in Burke County and serves as the financial, government, cultural and service center. In addition, it is the site of important state and regional governmental operations including the Western Piedmont Community College, Broughton Hospital, North Carolina School for the Deaf and the J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center.

Over the past 100 years, the driving forces in Morganton's economy have been textile and furniture manufacturing, and government employment. Heavy manufacturing and industrial uses were generally clustered in the Carbon City and Kirksey Drive area, with scattered locations throughout the planning area. Residential areas were developed close to the major employers with a range of housing for workers, management and senior management. Commercial and retail areas are located at the major highway interchanges, in strip developments along the major arterials and in smaller neighborhood commercial centers. Downtown Morganton developed as the government, financial, entertainment and service center for the community.

Today, the pattern of development is changing to reflect Morganton's transition from a manufacturing community to a city with a more diverse employment base that includes manufacturing, healthcare, education, light industry and tourism. Close in residential neighborhoods continue to provide a wide range of housing from historic homes to moderately priced single family homes. Newer neighborhoods have begun to be developed outside of the traditional town center. Commercial and retail centers expanded south of I-40 at the Enola Road and Burkemont exits. Smaller commercial centers have followed the new residential development, locating on NC 181 and Carbon City Road

The North Carolina state campus, including Broughton Hospital, the North Carolina School for the Deaf and Western Piedmont Community College continues to be an important asset to the city's economic future. Western Piedmont Community College has added additional buildings and programs to the campus, and the state is in the final stages of planning for a new facility on the Broughton Hospital campus.

Morganton is growing as a medical and medical education center. The recent expansion of the Grace Hospital facility and the opening of the Foothills Allied Health & Science Higher Education Center on South Sterling Street provide opportunities for the continued growth of healthcare as an important economic engine for the area.

The Downtown area continues to be the heart of the community, as the government, financial, service and entertainment center. As in many other small cities, retail uses are primarily specialty shopping. Through Downtown Morganton, the City's Main Street program, the City continues to make investments in destination activities, such as the

movie theater, new restaurants, and café's. Downtown living has enjoyed an enjoyed a resurgence of interest with the development of loft apartments and townhouses.

### 3.2 THE 1990 LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The 1990 Land Development Plan anticipated the continued outward growth of the City through the expansion of the Extra-territorial Jurisdiction. This plan also proposed an aggressive program of annexation to bring urbanizing areas within the City limits. The plan encouraged a continuation of the existing development patterns with additional emphasis on strengthening design standards for commercial development, encouraging a compact urban development pattern in the downtown, and redevelopment of vacant industrial sites. The 1990 Plan encouraged greater diversification in housing choices, including multi-family development and accessory dwelling units. Recommendations were also made to designate and protect historic resources. This included the creation of a program for the designation of local historic districts. The 1990 Plan recommended completion of the Greenway System and investments in additional recreational land and facilities.

#### 3.2.1 EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS

The existing land use map (Map 3.1) for the planning area shows a concentration of manufacturing and industrial development along the major transportation corridors (Interstate-40), Carbon City Road and Kirksey Drive, with smaller scattered locations throughout the City. The East Fleming Drive corridor from Sterling Street to Union Street

continues to be a manufacturing and light industrial corridor.

**2008 Land Use by Category – City of Morganton**

Land Use Category	Acres	%
Heavy Industry	1,341	10%
Light Industry	848	4%
General Business	1,341	6%
Neighborhood Business	127	1%
Office and Institutional	1,642	7%
Central Business District	72	.3%
Residential	11,504	51%
Transition (ETJ)	4,980	22%
	22,693	

*Calculations based on: 2008 existing land use map*

Residential development is primarily low to medium density (1 - 4 dwelling units per acre), with much of the area remaining suburban and rural in character. High density multi-family and attached residential development has occurred sporadically. Residential neighborhoods are largely homogenous with similar style and scale housing.

Downtown is the City's only true mixed-use neighborhood with government, commercial, entertainment and residential uses in close proximity.

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MAP 3.1 EXISTING LAND USE MAP



### 3.3 2030 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan includes recommendations for the area within Morganton's existing Corporate Limits and the area inside Morganton's Extra Territorial Planning Jurisdiction (ETJ) an area outside of Morganton's official corporate limits where Burke County has granted Morganton zoning authority to control development in anticipation of expansion of the city limits.

The 2030 Land Use Plan builds on many of the recommendations from the previous plan. It focuses on achieving a balanced and sustainable land development pattern that will accommodate planned growth; it also seeks to efficiently utilize public infrastructure and protect rural and environmental resources. Overall the 2030 Land Use Plan supports the implementation of the City's economic development strategy.

The key goals of the economic development strategy include:

- Maintain Morganton's manufacturing and industrial base by supporting existing industries and attracting new industries to the area.
- Encourage diversification of Morganton's economic base by encouraging growth of existing small businesses and emerging businesses.
- Strengthen Morganton's marketability as a preferred location for business and their workforce. Focus on assets that will attract businesses in the technical, medical and research sectors.
- Broaden the definition of economic development to include tourism as an industry sector.
- Grow Morganton and Burke County's tourism industry through investments in destination activities and programs, marketing, and supporting hospitality and tourism businesses.
- Strengthen Downtown as a destination for dining and entertainment. Diversify downtown's retail base to include unique retail stores and galleries.
- Build on Morganton's history to become a destination in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War National Heritage Area.

### 3.3.1 LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan graphically illustrates the desired pattern of land use for the City and serves as the basis for delineating zoning districts and establishing development standards. Future growth and development in the City should generally be in conformance with the Official Land Use Plan Map (Map 3-2) and planning area policies.

The City's planning areas include:

- A. Exclusive Industrial
- B. Light Industrial / Flex
- C. General Commercial / Retail
- D. Planned Destination Commercial
- E. Institutional / Government
- F. Commercial / Residential Mixed
- G. Central Business District
- H. Residential Low Density
- I. Residential Medium Density
- J. Planned Residential Mixed Use Development
- K. Recreation and Open Space

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Map 3.2 2030 Land Use Plan



## 3.4 EMPLOYMENT PLANNING AREA POLICIES

### 3.4.1 EXCLUSIVE INDUSTRIAL

Over the years Morganton's industrial manufacturing employers have been the mainstay of the community's economy. As the economy has become more diverse, with a lower percentage of employment in the manufacturing sectors, the demand for industrial sites has diminished. This has left large areas of vacant or underutilized buildings and land and landed zoned for industrial use. To help strengthen Morganton's economic competitiveness, the plan recommends two industrial planning area categories to protect valuable industrial land for existing and future economic development. This approach is intended to focus city and county public infrastructure funding support in these areas.

#### LAND USE

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The Exclusive Industrial Planning Area (EI) includes existing industrial areas and adjacent land well suited for concentrations of industrial manufacturing uses. Uses in this area are predominately heavy industry. The area was chosen because of the availability of rail and proximity to two interstate highway interchanges. The EI designation will help protect valuable industrial land for economic development and signals the city's commitment to continue investing in the infrastructure needed to support industrial uses in these areas.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Non-industrial, large scale retail and residential uses should not be not permitted within this planning area.
- Interstate 40, Exit 98 and Exit 96 should be improved to accommodate easy movement of large transport vehicles. Motorist services, including automobile service center and convenience food establishment should not be permitted to locate at the highway interchanges.
- Redevelopment and Infill Development. The EI Planning Area includes a substantial amount of vacant land and buildings. This area should be marketed as a prime location for new or relocating industrial uses. The EI Planning Area should not be expanded to include additional land area.

### 3.4.2 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/ FLEX SPACE

The Light Industry/Flex includes areas that are transitioning from heavy industry and manufacturing to light manufacturing, research and development, warehousing, and assembly.

Trends indicate manufacturing, machining, and assembly businesses have the greatest potential for growth in Morganton and Burke County. The plan includes an inventory of existing light industrial sites, and recommends re-classification of underutilized or vacant heavy industrial sites for redevelopment as light industrial, assembly and flex-space.

#### LAND USE

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The Light Industrial Planning Areas (LI) are predominately existing industrial areas that are located adjacent to residential and commercial uses. The major concentration of LI development is along Fleming Drive, with additional locations dispersed adjacent to the major thoroughfares. These businesses are important assets to the community, and the planning area provides for continued use, expansion or redevelopment.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Light industrial land should be protected from intrusion by incompatible uses, such as residential or retail uses. The LI planning area should permit limited commercial uses including showrooms.
- Development within LI areas should include natural or structural buffers to reduce impacts of noise, light and vehicle emissions on adjacent non industrial uses. The LI Planning Areas should not be expanded beyond their current boundaries to encourage new or relocating manufacturing or heavy industries to locate in the Exclusive Industrial Planning Area.
- If an existing use in a Light Industrial Planning Area is closed, consideration should be given to reclassify the property to a district that can be more compatible with adjacent areas.

#### INDUSTRIAL /COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT

*Adaptive reuse of existing single user industrial or commercial buildings and sites for multiple users.*

Light Industrial/ Flex buildings are intended to provide space for office, institutional and light industrial uses.

These buildings are located along major thoroughfares, with public utilities and services. Many of the buildings no longer meet the requirements of large single user manufacturing industries but these can be adapted for new users. Buildings that are adapted for multiple users can create affordable rental space that is attractive to new and growing businesses.

As part of the overall economic development strategy, an incentive package should be developed that includes design assistance to reconfigure the building, recommendations for exterior improvements that may include identifying features for new entrances, signage and landscaping to transition the site from industrial to commercial.

### 3.4.3 GENERAL COMMERCIAL / RETAIL

Morganton has a number of commercial corridors that link the city's neighborhoods, business areas, employment centers and downtown. Many of the corridors function as community "main streets" and are an important part of the character of the city. Several are important business corridors with a variety of retail, office and medical centers and service businesses. However a few of the corridors are characterized by vacant or underutilized low intensity strip commercial areas, many of them old, obsolete and in need of renovation.

#### LAND USE

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Development in the General Commercial / Retail Corridors includes light industrial, commercial, retail, office and service uses, and multi-tenant shopping centers.

The plan encourages the development of commercial and commercial mixed use centers as opposed to strip development. Commercial strip areas are frequently characterized by small lot sites with direct access to the main road or older shopping centers.

Underutilized shopping centers and commercial sites can be converted to more appropriate uses that are economic assets. These sites are frequently located along main thoroughfares. Underutilized, they detract from the visual appearance of the community. Redeveloped, these sites can become community assets such as new shops and showroom spaces. New buildings should be placed along the street frontage within the parking areas. Interior buildings can then accommodate a new range of uses, such as institutional, warehousing and showrooms. Revisions to the zoning ordinance can permit this type of redevelopment and provide greater site usage by requiring buildings to be built close to the street and establishing maximum parking requirements. These ideas can be considered as incentives to encourage the conversion of underutilized sites to dynamic occupied business centers.

Redevelopment Areas: General business corridors such as East Fleming Drive between South Sterling and East Union Streets were the workhorse corridors for the city. This was the location for independent auto and tire dealers, welding shops and mini-storage centers. The corridor has changed from being a major thoroughfare for moving high volumes of transport vehicles and employees from the manufacturing sites to connecting roads to a secondary connection. This corridor should be considered as a potential redevelopment area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- General Commercial uses are encouraged to locate along the major thoroughfares in commercial centers.
- Encourage maximum use of commercial and industrial sites by adopting guidelines that encourage greater intensity of development for redevelopment and adaptive re-use projects.

### 3.4.4 PLANNED DESTINATION COMMERCIAL

The destination commercial planning areas are designed to include shopping, services, recreation, employment and institutional facilities serving the region. Uses in the destination retail areas include regional shopping centers, restaurants, hotels and entertainment uses. Destination uses that require direct access to major highways and arterial roads should be located in these areas. Auto-oriented uses that require large areas of outdoor storage or displace space should be located in the Jamestown Road Commercial Corridor or in areas adjacent to the Destination Commercial planning areas.

The plan proposes three destination commercial centers: Burkemont Avenue (south of I-40); Henredon site on Fleming Drive; and the Drexel/ Roses site at Fleming Drive and South Sterling Street.

## LAND USE

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Mixed use development that includes retail, commercial, office, institutional and residential uses is encouraged in the defined areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Burkemont Avenue Infill and Redevelopment The Burkemont Avenue site includes the existing retail area and incorporates undeveloped area to the east and west with frontage on I-40. The first phase of development in this area will be redevelopment of existing under-performing sites or vacant sites. Development guidelines include recommendations for higher density development with buildings arranged to create a sense of defined space with landscaped parking areas and out-parcel buildings located in common alignment close to the main road. An internal network of streets can connect adjacent parcels to the core area expanding opportunities for new development.



### Henredon/Fleming Drive



The Henredon/Fleming Drive site will be developed as a single planned mixed use commercial development with multiple land bays for large single-user retail buildings supported by a range of retail businesses, restaurants, personal service and entertainment uses. Architectural features and landscaping will be organized around a consistent theme in terms of the character, materials, color and scale of the buildings. The project will have an internal network of

streets and pedestrian areas that include formal outdoor space such as a square, green plaza or promenade. The site will have its main access from Fleming Drive.



### S. Sterling Street/ Fleming Drive

The Drexel/Roses site has the potential to be developed to accommodate large retail businesses and retail center. Design concepts for this location included adaptive reuse of the Drexel plant for commercial or flex space.

### 3.4.5 INSTITUTIONAL – INSTITUTIONS/ GOVERNMENT

Morganton has significant concentrations of institutional uses. The land owned by the State of North Carolina is a major component of this category, with the largest concentration of uses at Morganton's primary gateway entrance, Sterling Street. BlueRidge Healthcare campus and nearby medical offices and facilities, and the campuses of Broughton Hospital, Western Piedmont Community College, North Carolina School for the Deaf and the Foothills Allied Health Higher Education Center form an important healthcare, education and employment center for the region. Other concentrations of institutional uses include Enola Road with the J. Iverson Riddle Development Center, and Burke County North Liberty Middle School and Patton High School complex; and Independence Boulevard with Freedom High School and Freedom Park.

#### LAND USE

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The concentrated institutional planning areas are the catalyst for designating Sterling Street and Burkemont Avenue as the primary Morganton gateways. Hotels, restaurants and retail centers are located near these areas serving both residents and visitors.

Broughton Hospital and the North Carolina School for the Deaf buildings and campus are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the historical importance of the buildings and campuses, the two institutions are important to the story of mental healthcare and education for the hearing impaired in North Carolina. A small museum is located in the North Carolina School for the Deaf is open to the public.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The adaptive reuse of the Broughton Hospital and North Carolina School for the Deaf signature buildings are important Morganton landmarks. The City should begin discussions with appropriate agencies regarding future use of signature buildings in the event the state determines they are no longer required for their current uses.

#### FUTURE OPPORTUNITY

The State of North Carolina has plans to develop a new facility on the Broughton Hospital campus. The exact plans for the new facility have not been finalized. The location of this important new facility is an opportunity to be the catalyst for revitalization of the Sterling/Fleming development node. The design and setting of new facility will set the tone for future development.

The plan recommends locating the new facility near the existing buildings in the cluster of mature trees. This has the potential to reduce the impact of a large single building overwhelming the historic character of the campus. This area is adjacent to what was known as Lake Louise before the stream was encased and carried under Sterling Street to the far side of the shopping center. The floodplain could be incorporated in the storm water management plan for the facility creating a gateway entrance water feature.

### 3.4.6 COMMERCIAL/ RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE

Mixed use developments include residential, commercial, and business uses in one area. The intent of the planning area is to encourage a traditional development pattern of residential uses with commercial and business uses in close proximity. It is envisioned that these areas will be developed over time with individual projects being a combination of residential and non-residential uses, either as stand-alone developments or larger developments where both residential and non-residential uses may be included in a single development plan.

#### LAND USE

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Residential development may include single and multi-family development. Areas in close proximity to Downtown and the medical center are well suited to multi-family development.

Stand alone commercial and business development should be designed to limit impacts on adjacent residential uses. Design elements may include the use of landscaped buffers, low scale signage, and downward facing lighting.

### 3.4.7 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Morganton's downtown continues to serve as the economic and cultural center for the region. Small shops, restaurants, financial and business services are the primary business uses. The new multiplex movie theater located is a popular destination for people of all ages. Public buildings include City Hall in a converted knitting mill, Burke County offices, Burke County Courthouse and the historic Burke County Courthouse on the Square.

Over the past several years, the City has made major investments to revitalize Downtown. The award winning "Trading Company" is a signature building in Downtown. The building was renovated through a public/private partnership that leveraged historic mill tax credits and public and private funds. City Hall offices are located in the south wing, with professional, service and retail uses on the main levels. There are forty three apartments on the second and third floors of the former Premiere Textiles Mill.

The multiplex movie theater is a popular destination for people of all ages. The Morganton Main Street Office develops and coordinates community and economic development activities in Morganton's Downtown District including coordinating the Morganton Farmers market, providing funding for façade improvements and development public/private partnerships to leverage private investment in downtown projects.

#### LAND USE

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Downtown Morganton is a mix of one, two and three story buildings. Downtown is a true mixed-use community with office, retail, commercial, government, and residential uses. The Downtown core is organized around the central courthouse square bordered by one and two story buildings, with the Historic Burke County Courthouse in the center of the square.

The core area is defined by two one-way pairs of streets - east/west and north/south, with on-street parking and wider sidewalks complimenting the small town character of the buildings. Moving outward from the center is a mix of larger lot one and two story government, commercial and residential uses, many with on-site surface lots.

There is a wide variety of housing in Downtown including single family attached homes, apartments and condominiums. Several commercial buildings in the central core have second floor apartments. There still several vacant sites in downtown suitable for mixed-use infill development.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Update the Downtown Master Plan in 2011.
- Revise the boundaries of the Central Business District to correspond to the Downtown special tax district.
- Adopt design guidelines for infill development in the core business areas, requiring build to lines, maximum and minimum height restrictions, and façade treatments.
- New multi-story mixed-used development should be located on parallel or side streets with street-level nonresidential and upper-story residential uses.
- On street parking for retail uses should be encouraged, additional parking should be located to the side or rear of principal buildings. Centrally located, shared parking should continue to be encouraged in the core business area.
- As the number of downtown residents' increases, designated parking for residents should be considered.

## 3.5 RESIDENTIAL PLANNING AREA POLICIES

### 3.5.1 RESIDENTIAL LOW DENSITY

Low density residential areas are rural and suburban in character with single family homes at densities no greater than 2 dwellings per acre. The majority of the land in this category is in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) in areas zoned Transition Residential.

#### LAND USE

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Agriculture and horticulture activities, and low density residential development are the principle land uses, with small-scale nonresidential and institutional uses that are compatible with the character of the area. Development patterns in this planning area include single lot buildings, cluster and planned residential and residential mixed use development.

Non-residential development should be limited to small retail and service establishments, and small scale institutional uses such as churches and child care centers. Commercial and institutional buildings should be concentrated at strategic intersections on primary roads. Strategically located neighborhood centers should include businesses that serve the immediate area.

The majority of new residential and residential mixed use development will occur in these planning areas.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- In rural areas, residential subdivisions should be encouraged to cluster development to preserve tree cover and open space and maintain the rural character. A density bonus could be used as an incentive for low impact developments that locate buildings to preserve tree cover and limit the amount of grading. Commercial uses should be located along the secondary roads and at crossroads.
- Commercial uses that serve the farm and horticulture industries may be located on or adjacent to cultivated areas.
- Commercial landscape material display and sales areas should be located on a secondary road. A deceleration and/or turning lane may be required to reduce conflicts between turning vehicles and through traffic.
- Composting and mulch operations should not be located near residential subdivisions.

### 3.5.2 RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM DENSITY

Medium density residential areas are suburban in character with single, two family and multi-family homes at densities ranging from three to eight dwellings per acre.

The 1990 Land Use Plan proposed areas for moderate density and high density residential developments. Moderate density development was described as having five to fifteen dwelling units per acre. High density development was described as have densities exceeding fifteen units per acre. Land planned for high density development was located along major thoroughfares near employment centers. Since 1990, the residential development patterns have been primarily low to moderate density development, with the highest concentrations of moderate density development in areas close to major employers. The densities envisioned in the high density land planning category have not been realized outside of the Downtown.

#### LAND USE

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The Medium Density Residential planning area includes the residential areas within the corporate boundaries and residential areas served by public utilities in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction. Residential development in this planning area ranges from single family homes on large lots to apartments. There is limited vacant land in this planning area, new development will predominantly be redevelopment, infill and small subdivisions.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Infill development should be encouraged in areas served by public utilities.
- Development standards should be adopted that permit small lot cluster development at densities up to 5 dwelling units per acre to reduce land clearance and preserve natural vegetation.
- Neighborhood centers should be strategically located along thoroughfares to provide needed retail uses and services.
- The zoning ordinance should be amended to include regulations for the following housing types:
  - Single family detached housing
  - Single family attached housing (townhouses, patio homes, and quad homes) at densities of 4 to 8 dwelling units per acre
  - Multi-family housing (multiple residential units located within a single building)
  - Small lot single-family detached housing (4 or more dwelling units per acre) should be permitted in planned residential developments that include common open space.

### 3.5.3 PLANNED RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Planned residential mixed-use planning areas will have a range of densities from three to eight dwelling units per acre. The majority of planned residential mixed-use developments will occur on the edges of the City and in the ETJ where larger tracts of land are available.

#### LAND USE

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Mixed use residential areas are planned residential neighborhoods with a diversity of housing types and styles, a range of lot sizes and common open space. The neighborhood transportation network will be designed to encourage walking with internal pedestrian sidewalks and paths, neighborhood streets will be appropriately scaled and connecting to the main entrance corridor. Small appropriately scaled commercial development may be located in a planned residential neighborhood.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Development standards for a planned residential development should include requirements for a range of lot sizes, cluster development to reduce land clearance and preserve natural vegetation.
- Density should be calculated on the total development area, permitting a range of housing densities within the development.
- Development standards should include limitations on percentage of total developable area that may be classified for commercial uses.
- Common open space should be designed for active and passive recreation.

### 3.5.4 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Open space consists primarily of the Catawba River flood plains and those of its tributaries. The other major components of this category are city parks – Catawba Meadows, Freedom, Bethel Road, Shuey, and Shadowline parks, and the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission game lands adjacent to Morganton.

#### LAND USE

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Agriculture, horticulture and silvaculture uses are frequently located in floodplains because of the rich soil and access to water. Best Management Practices recommend holding ponds and setbacks to prevent fertilizer and chemical runoff into the waterways.

The city's parks and recreation areas are important community and economic development assets. The city's Catawba River Greenway system includes the Catawba River Greenway and the Freedom Park Greenway. Catawba Meadows Park is the largest city park in western North Carolina. The complex includes a wide variety of facilities, but the focus is amateur baseball and softball facilities. The complex is linked to Downtown and nearby retail centers and neighborhoods by the Catawba River Greenway.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The City should continue to protect fragile open space and floodplains from development. These areas are unique and non-renewable resources for flood management and support a wide variety of plants and animals. When possible, the City should encourage cluster development outside of the floodplains and limit the amount of fill in these areas.
- The City should continue to invest in completion of the Catawba River Greenway.

## CHAPTER 4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 APPROACH

In 2004, the Sanford Holshouser Business Development Group was engaged by Electricities of North Carolina to develop a strategic economic development plan<sup>1</sup> for Morganton and Burke County. The MISSION 2030 planning process built on the findings and recommendations of the study, updating information and evaluating the recommendations based on new information.

The MISSION 2030 planning process had two phases: strategic planning and land use planning. The MISSION 2030 economic development strategic plan is a separate document and includes the action strategies for economic and community development. The 2030 Land Use Plan is one of the tools to implement the strategic plan, and includes planning areas and design districts that implement the recommendations of the strategic plan.

THE STRENGTH OF MORGANTON'S ECONOMY CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE ECONOMIC STRENGTH OF BURKE COUNTY. THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS CHAPTER RELY ON THE CONTINUED JOINT EFFORTS OF THE CITY, COUNTY AND TOWNS TO RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES, CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOB GROWTH THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ATTRACTING AND GROWING NEW BUSINESS, AND CAPITALIZE ON THE GROWING TOURISM ECONOMY.

### 4.2 BACKGROUND

Burke County's employment sectors have changed significantly since 1990, when manufacturing made up 49% of all employment. Many of the large furniture and textile manufacturers have closed and smaller companies with 300 or fewer employees have taken their place. While there has been a decrease in manufacturing jobs, Morganton and Burke County continue to have a higher percentage of manufacturing jobs compared to the 12% national average. In 2007, approximately 28% of all jobs are in the manufacturing industries.

Morganton and Burke County's economic base has transitioned from a predominantly manufacturing economy to a more diverse service economy, with health care and state government employment accounting a significant percentage of the total jobs.

The City and County have taken steps to improve its ability to attract new investments and retain existing businesses. The City has taken a proactive approach to economic

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<sup>1</sup> City of Morganton, Burke County, North Carolina, Strategic Economic Development Plan, July 2004

development with active efforts in downtown development, enhancing key quality of life amenities, tourism development, business recruitment and existing industry support. The Burke Partnership for Economic Development (BPED) was created in 2003 as a public/private partnership of local governments and the private sector to implement the economic development program. The recently authorized Burke Tourism Development Authority has been charged with investing revenue from the occupancy tax into tourism development.

#### 4.2.1 ECONOMIC SECTORS

Burke County's largest employment sectors are services, manufacturing, trade, public administration and construction. In 2007, Morganton's largest employers were the State of North Carolina, Burke County Public Schools and Blue Ridge Healthcare.

Burke County's employment sectors have changed significantly since 1990, when manufacturing made up 49% of all employment. Many of the large furniture and textile manufacturers have closed and smaller companies with 300 or fewer employees have taken their place. The manufacturing base is becoming more diversified, relying less on one or two industry sectors. Manufacturing now includes furniture and metal working, aerospace, plastic, technical ceramics, medical devices, automobile components, as well as other types of establishments.

Tourism is a growing sector of the economy. With over 75,000 thousands of acres of national and state forest, scenic rivers, lakes and mountains, Morganton and Burke County are rapidly becoming a destination for visitors. In 2000, domestic tourism in Burke County generated an economic impact of almost \$58 million, placing it 41st in travel impact among North Carolina's 100 counties.

Morganton has invested in outdoor recreation facilities, downtown improvements, and special events to grow tourism. The Catawba River District is emerging as a destination for active and passive recreation. The River District includes the Greenway, Catawba Meadows Park, and river access for recreation activities, restaurants and shopping. The Greenway is a popular trail for pedestrians and recreational cyclists. Upon completion the Greenway will link the River District, Downtown and neighborhoods. Catawba Meadows Park is a sports complex with a wide variety of facilities that focus on amateur baseball and softball. The City has partnered with an amateur sports promoter to assist in bringing a robust schedule of amateur sports tournaments to the park. The tournaments have attracted a growing number of participants, generating an increase in revenue from occupancy tax.

In addition to amateur sports, the City sponsors several festivals and events that attract visitors to the area. The annual Red, White & Bluegrass festival is a four day event over the Fourth of July weekend featuring nationally known performers. Now in its sixth year, the event draws thousands of visitors from across the country.

#### 4.2.2 ECONOMIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

There are several key factors that make a community economically successful. In a diversified economy the factors have greater or less importance depending on the industry sector. Traditionally, the manufacturing industry has made decisions based on cost of doing business. Many of the factors that are considered include: location, transportation costs, availability and cost of utilities and public services, availability of a skilled workforce, competitive wage rates, and overall cost of living. These factors may drive the cost of doing business in a location. Secondly, these employers may consider quality of life issues but these are not major decision factors.

Emerging industries are interested in location and costs of doing business, but they are also concerned about quality of life, availability of a highly skilled workforce and access to on-going training and education. These industries will be concerned about community characteristics, availability of housing choices for employees and the overall desirability of the area for current and future employees.

The Tourism Industry thrives in areas that can support the visitor's needs. If tourism is an economic driver in a community there will be several themes and markets that are attracted to the area. Every age and interest segment has different requirements and expectations for the experience. For example, tourism that builds on the natural environment and outdoor recreation will attract people with an eco-tourism focus; they will have different expectations than visitors on a regional winery tour. Underlying the specialized character of successful tourism are several basic elements in common. The quality of the experience is the key factor and this requires a marketable location, hospitality and hotel facilities, year round and seasonal trained workforce, and a safe and attractive location. First impressions are very important to tourists as well as ease of navigating once they arrive. Well designed way finding signage, knowledgeable hospitality employees, and a clean, attractive environment are all crucial to creating a positive visitor experience.

The greatest market segments for economic growth in the near future are: maintaining and expanding the existing manufacturing and industrial base; diversification of the economic base by encouraging growth existing small business and emerging businesses; growing the tourism industry through investments in destination activities and programs; strengthening Downtown as a destination for dining and entertainment and expanding the retail market to capture a greater share of retail sales in the region.

#### 4.2.3 SUSTAINING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Rural areas, like Morganton and Burke County, are facing significant challenges to economic prosperity with the rapid changes in how goods are produced and taken to market. For years, the core industries that drove the economy were insulated from global

competition. The industries required a stable pool of labor, access to raw products, low operating and transportation costs. Many of the jobs in the manufacturing required older skills that valued reliability over specialization. High-technology employment is generally limited to production-level jobs in one or two industry specific branch plants. Higher paying jobs, requiring specialized skills and knowledge are more frequently located in urban areas encouraging younger, more skilled workers from rural areas to relocate.

Morganton's economy is at risk of becoming stagnant and shrinking without a major restructuring to develop a competitive edge that will attract industries and a workforce that is dynamic and creative, able to adjust to market changes, and capitalize on the qualities of life that Morganton offers. The MISSION 2030 Economic Development Strategy is a comprehensive and collaborative approach to building a strong economy.

### 4.3 LAND USE

The 2030 Comprehensive Land Development Plan planning areas, policies and recommendations support the implementation of the overall economic development strategy.

The key goals of the economic development strategy include:

- Maintain Morganton's manufacturing and industrial base by supporting existing industries and attracting new industries to the area.
- Encourage diversification of Morganton's economic base by encouraging growth of existing small businesses and emerging businesses.
- Strengthen Morganton's marketability as a preferred location for business and their workforce. Focus on assets that will attract businesses in the technical, medical and research sectors.
- Broaden the definition of economic development to include tourism as an industry sector.
- Grow Morganton and Burke County's tourism industry through investments in destination activities and programs, marketing, and supporting hospitality and tourism businesses.
- Strengthen Downtown as a destination for dining and entertainment. Diversify downtown's retail base to include unique retail stores and galleries.
- Build on Morganton's history to become a destination in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War National Heritage Area.

## 4.4 POLICY APPROACH

The City will have a strong, diversified economic base that is supported by a climate that grows existing business, attracts new business, cultivates entrepreneurship, creates a world-class workforce, and maintains and enhances an excellent quality of life.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Implement a system approach to economic development
  - a. Strengthen collaborative working relationships between the key organizations actively involved in local economic development.
  - b. Strengthen working partnerships with state and federal organizations affecting economic development.
2. Participate in and actively promote regional economic development efforts.
  - a. Expand participation in regional economic development efforts.
  - b. Continue meetings with regional and state officials and administrative staff to discuss regional economic development opportunities.
3. Encourage growth of the heavy industry and manufacturing sectors by creating a suitable environment for industrial uses
  - a. Discourage commercial development in the exclusive industrial planning areas
  - b. Transportation improvements at Exit 96 and 98 should be designed to accommodate heavy truck traffic.
  - c. Signage at these exits should indicate that this is an industrial area.
4. Encourage diversification of industrial base through growth of light industry, assembly, warehousing and growth of the green industry base.
  - a. Identify locations for lower intensity manufacturing and assembly businesses.
  - b. Encourage redevelopment of underutilized and vacant industrial buildings as flex space uses such as warehouse and storage, trade showrooms, research and product development and laboratories.
  - c. Reclassify vacant industrial/ commercial land for new uses.
5. Encourage growth of commercial and specialized retail sales uses to reduce loss of sales tax revenue.

- a. Identify locations for destination retail that are easily accessible from the highway and located along major thoroughfares.
    - i. Develop guidelines to evaluate large commercial developments to reduce conflicts between destination and neighborhoods uses.
    - ii. Require large site (50+ acres) destination retail centers to have a mix of retail, service and hospitality uses in addition to a destination retailer.
  - b. Identify locations for specialized sales uses such as automobile dealers.
    - i. Develop design guidelines that support clustering automobile dealers in a single target area.
6. Designate certain significant routes of tourist access as Entrance Corridors to encourage development that is compatible with Morganton's community design guidelines.
- a. Define the character of the interstate gateways
  - b. Develop design themes for each of the gateway entrances
  - c. Develop design themes for each of the main corridors
7. Strengthen Downtown as the financial, service, specialty retail and hospitality heart of the community.
- a. Support new and expanding downtown businesses that serve residents and visitors
  - b. Discourage land uses that do not build upon or provide direct support to financial, service, specialty retail, governmental or hospitality service businesses.
  - c. Adopt design guidelines for redevelopment and infill development

## CHAPTER 5 COMMUNITY SERVICES

### 5.1 PUBLIC SERVICES

#### 5.1.1 PUBLIC UTILITIES

The City operates an electrical power distribution system, cable television, Internet and telephone system (CoMPAS Cable), municipal water and sewerage system, and solid waste collection. Each of these systems has sufficient capacity for planned future growth. City owned utilities has been an important asset in attracting and retaining manufacturers. The City is able to offer competitive rates and a high level of customer service.

#### 5.1.2 WATER RESOURCES

Water Resources Department offers water to 38,000 residents in Morganton, parts of Burke County, Oak Hill and US 64/NC 18. The department operates the 18 million-gallons-per-day conventional water plant. The plant has 5 million gallons of onsite finished water storage and a dewatering building to get rid of the solids that accumulate in the water treatment process. Eight pumping stations and 11 finished water storage tanks distribute water throughout the system. The City's water supply is drawn from the Catawba River.

#### 5.1.3 WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Wastewater treatment is provided by the Wastewater Treatment division of the Water Resources Department. The Wastewater Treatment division operates the 10.5- to 13-million-gallons-per-day wastewater treatment plant.

#### 5.1.4 CABLE TELEVISION, INTERNET AND TELEPHONE SERVICE

CoMPAS Cable is the City of Morganton's public cable system. CoMPAS is an acronym for City of Morganton Public Antenna System. CoMPAS Cable, Internet and telephone are available only within the city limits of Morganton, North Carolina.

#### 5.1.5 PUBLIC WORKS

Morganton's Public Works Department provides street maintenance, trash pickup, recycling, cemeteries and grounds maintenance, city warehousing, equipment services and beautification projects throughout the city as well as caring for the Historic Burke County Courthouse lawn and landscaping. The City receives funds from the North Carolina State Street Aid Program (Powell Bill) for maintaining, repairing, constructing, reconstructing or widening of local streets that are the City's responsibility or for the planning, construction, and maintenance of bikeways or sidewalks along public streets and highways. The funds are generated by 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cents on each taxed gallon of fuel oil.

The City of Morganton provides back yard residential garbage collection Monday through Thursday and curbside yard waste services on Fridays. A recycling center is operated on Golf Course Road beside Shuey Park.

#### 5.1.6 PLANNING, BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Department is primarily responsible for: planning, building inspections, zoning enforcement, CDBG administration, urban design, infrastructure inspections, and code enforcement. The Department is also responsible for developing new ordinances, transportation planning, annexations, urban redevelopment services, housing renovation, special projects such as the Catawba River Greenway and the Catawba Meadows Baseball Complex.

The Department staff work with the many Morganton Boards and Commissions such as the Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, Historic Preservation Commission, Community Appearance Commission and Redevelopment Commission. The Department works very closely with other Departments to coordinate new and existing development.

#### 5.1.7 PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

The public safety services and fire protection services are provided by the **Public Safety Department**. The department has an authorized strength of 104 employees consisting of 69 sworn positions and 35 civilian positions that include Fire Engineers.

The **Field Operations Bureau** manages police and fire operations that include the Patrol Division, Criminal Investigations Division, and Special Operations Division. Specialty units within Public Safety include the School Resource Officer Program, D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness Resistance Education), Community Policing, the K-9 program and Police and Fire Reserves. Morganton Public Safety Officers also participate in the Burke County Narcotics Task Force



#### 5.1.8 EMERGENCY SERVICES

Burke County Emergency Services (EMS), Emergency Medical Services Division provides pre-hospital medical services and transports. EMS also operates a Special Operations Unit that responds to Wilderness Medical situations, and special situations with Law Enforcement and Fire Departments, specialized coverage for Mass Gatherings and Special Events, and Mass Decontamination along with the Burke County Hazardous Materials Team and State Medical Assistance Team.

## 5.2 TRANSPORTATION

### 5.2.1 STREETS, ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

Morganton's transportation network consists of three classes of roads: limited access, high speed highways; arterials and collector streets; and the local street system. The first two types are designed to efficiently move traffic. Local streets move traffic within the city, providing access to adjacent properties.

The Morganton collector and arterial system is composed of a combination of radial routes mainly composed of US 70, NC 18, NC 181 and US 64, and circumferential routes, generally known as the Morganton Bypass.

Morganton is one of 28 local governments that participate in the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), a regional planning agency, representing local governments in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties.

Designated as the Lead Planning Agency for the Unifour Rural Planning Organization (RPO) as well as the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), The MPO is also responsible for developing the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP). The COG is the primary local recipient of transportation planning funds received from the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the US Department of Transportation.

Along with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the US Department of Transportation, the local governments participate in a continuing transportation planning process for the Unifour RPO and Greater Hickory MPO. The Unifour RPO works in partnership with the Greater Hickory MPO and the North Carolina Department of Transportation in assisting the four counties and twenty-four municipalities develop a regional transportation planning process.

No new major facilities are being planned at this time, managing and maintaining existing infrastructure is a priority now and will continue to be in the foreseeable future.

### 5.2.2 PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

The Morganton Greenway System offers year-round biking, jogging and strolling and picnicking. The Greenway System includes the Catawba River Greenway and the Freedom Trail Greenway and currently has five pedestrian access points with parking.

#### **CATAWBA RIVER GREENWAY**

The Catawba River Greenway Park offers a total of 3.8 miles of paved, fully accessible walking trail. The Catawba River Greenway runs along the Catawba River from the Rocky Ford Access area off Lenoir Road/NC 18 N. to the Greenlee Ford Access adjacent to the Catawba River Soccer Complex Loop located off Greenlee Ford Road. Along the trail there are picnic shelters and open tables,





**Blueprint Burke**, the county's strategic plan recommends a connected system of trails and parks that would connect with the Morganton Greenway system and Lake James.

The **Lake James Loop Trail** will tie in with the Mountain to Sea Trail, Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail and the Upper Catawba River Canoe Trail. The trail system will also include the existing Lake James State Park trail system connecting a variety of sites located on the lake. Public access sites will include a lake headquarters, a lodge site, rental cabins, camping areas, shopping, dining and an amphitheater. "Pocket Parks" will serve as trail destinations, overlooks and a site for an interpretive center for the Overmountain Victory Trail.

### 5.2.3 AIR TRAVEL

The Charlotte Douglas International Airport is located within one hour drive via 4-lane divided highways which connect to I-85. The airport is the eastern hub for US Airways and supplies numerous transcontinental and international flights daily.

The Morganton-Lenoir Airport is a general aviation airport located along the Burke-Caldwell County line east of US 64. The non-towered airport has a 5,500 foot runway, a localizer approach system, a fixed base operator, engine maintenance services, flight lessons, aircraft rentals, charter service and hangers on site.

The Hickory Regional Airport is located in eastern Burke County and the Asheville Regional Airport is approximately 1 hour 15 minutes away via I-40 to I-26.

### 5.2.4 RAIL SERVICE

Rail service extends through the central portion of Burke County. The Norfolk-Southern Railway services the county. The Morganton yard has a capacity of 75 cars.

The City is working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to bring passenger rail service back to the western part of the state. Morganton is a planned stop on a line that will link Asheville to Raleigh via Salisbury.

## 5.3 EDUCATION AND LIBRARY

### 5.3.1 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Morganton students attend Burke County Public Schools (BCPS). The BCPS system serves approximately 14,000 students and consists of 17 elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools and three specialized schools. Burke Middle College, one of three high schools located in Morganton is an educationally challenging school that offers students the opportunity to take high school core academics that meet graduation and college entrance requirements. In addition, students are dually enrolled in college courses for high school and college credit.

<b>BURKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOCATED IN MORGANTON</b>	
<b>Elementary Schools</b>	
	Chesterfield Elementary School
	Forest Hill Elementary School
	Hillcrest Elementary School
	Mountain View Elementary School
	Mull Elementary School
	Oak Hill Elementary School
	Salem Elementary School
	WA Young Elementary School
<b>Middle Schools</b>	
	Liberty Middle School
	Table Rock Middle School
	Walter R. Johnson Middle School
<b>High School</b>	
	Burke Middle College
	Freedom High School
	Robert L. Patton High School
<b>Other Schools</b>	
	College Street Academy
	North Liberty School

### 5.3.2 WESTERN PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Western Piedmont Community College is part of the North Carolina Community College System. The College offers two year degree programs, adult-education, technical and occupational training and lifelong learning courses. The Small Business Center offers education programs and support services to entrepreneurs and small businesses. The recently announced alliance with Appalachian State University expands opportunities for residents to complete undergraduate degrees in education, social work and nursing and graduate degree programs in education at the WPCC campus.

The Burke Middle College program is a two year program for high school students offered by Burke County Public Schools in partnership with WPCC, with students attending classes on the college campus.

The College is an active partner with local business and industry developing customized programs for employee training and ongoing occupational training programs to upgrade the skills of persons presently employed, and retraining others for new employment in occupational fields.

### 5.3.3 SENATOR SAM J ERVIN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

The Senator Sam J Ervin Library and Museum is located on the Western Piedmont Community College Campus. Senator Sam practiced law in Morganton for thirty years. In the 1920's and early 1930's he served three terms in the North Carolina State Assembly. He was a judge in the Burke County Criminal Court from 1935-1937 and was an associate justice in the North Carolina Supreme Court from 1948 - 1954. In 1946, he was elected to fill out the final year of his brother's term in the United States House of Representatives in 1946.

In 1954, Governor William B. Umstead named Ervin to replace Clyde R. Hoey as the United State Senator from North Carolina. In 1973 Senator Sam was asked to serve as Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, more commonly known as Watergate. While he was known throughout his Senate career as its leading authority on Constitutional law, it was during the Watergate Era that he came to be known as the "Defender of the Constitution". Senator Sam retired from the United States Senate on January 3, 1975 and came home to Morganton where he continued to practice law. He authored several books including "Humor of a Country Lawyer", "Preserving the Constitution", and "The Whole Truth: Watergate".

The **Senator Sam J. Ervin Research Collection** consists of nearly 10,000 books, pieces of correspondence, photos and public and private documents representing the personal, professional and intellectual life of the Senator. The Dr. Jean C. Ervin Mark Twain Collection consists of over 350 books and many collectibles gathered over a fifty-year period by the sister of Senator Ervin, a noted Twain scholar. The oldest books date from the 1870's.

#### 5.3.4 LIBRARY

The Morganton Public Library is one of three Burke County libraries. It was opened in 1923 as a one room library on the second floor of 125 West Union Street. The North Carolina Room maintains a collection of historic documents and provides genealogical research assistance. The library offers a wide range of programs for adults and youth, including adult computer classes, Friday night independent film event, book discussions and cultural events.

The Friends of the Burke County Public Library sponsor two main events, an annual author's luncheon and a book sale to raise funds for the summer reading program.

### 5.4 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

#### 5.4.1 HEALTHCARE

Blue Ridge HealthCare includes two hospitals, two long-term care facilities, a retirement community, advanced wellness center, home healthcare company and seven physician practices. The healthcare system is affiliated with Carolinas HealthCare System, a health leader in North and South Carolina.

Grace Hospital, located on S Sterling Street in Morganton has 184 beds and provides a broad scope of services. Grace Heights Health and Rehabilitation Center and Phifer Wellness Center are located on the Grace Hospital Campus. Phifer Wellness Center is a comprehensive fitness center, with racquetball courts and indoor pool.

Grace Ridge is a nonprofit, continuing care retirement community located on Lenoir Road. The Grace Ridge complex includes cottages, apartments and healthcare facilities.

#### 5.4.2 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Health and human service programs are provided by Burke County Department of Social Services. The Burke Mission Station houses six major service organizations, including the Good Samaritan Clinic, Burke United Christian Ministries and the American Red Cross. The Good Samaritan Clinic provides free healthcare and dental services for qualified clients. The Burke United Christian Ministries provides food, clothing, and shelter and crisis assistance. The soup kitchen and food pantry are operated by the Burke United Christian Ministries.

#### 5.4.3 NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The North Carolina School for the Deaf (NCSD) established in 1891 is located in Morganton adjacent to Western Piedmont Community College and Broughton Hospital. NCSD is a kindergarten through 12th grade school, providing a specialized learning environment for deaf and hard of hearing students. The school offers day school and boarding school options. Boarding students are housed in the newly renovated main building, one of the oldest and most historic buildings on campus. The high school program offers a vigorous and challenging curriculum while giving students the diploma options of Career Prep,

College Tech Prep, College/University Prep and Occupational Course of study. Additionally, the high school provides students with opportunities to gain marketable skills by increasing knowledge and employability in the workforce.

#### 5.4.4 BROUGHTON HOSPITAL

Broughton Hospital is one of four regional psychiatric hospitals with statutory responsibility for operating as a part of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (MH/DD/SAS) within the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to provide help and support to North Carolinians and their families suffering from mental illness. The Hospital serves the western thirty-seven (37) counties of North Carolina, approximately 35% of the State's total population, as part of the State's system of care and treatment for persons with mental illness.



The hospital, opened in 1883 was built in the style of the Kirkbride Plan. Once a state of the art mental health facility, Kirkbride buildings have become obsolete with the introduction of new therapeutic treatments. The building and grounds are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is developing plans for a new building on the grounds.

#### 5.4.5 J. IVERSON RIDDLE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER

J Iverson Riddle Development Center is operated by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and provides comprehensive residential care for 350 people with developmental disabilities from 37 counties in Western North Carolina.

The J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center provides an outpatient dental clinic to ensure access to comprehensive quality dental care for persons with developmental disabilities otherwise unable to obtain dental treatment.

The Human Development Research and Training Institute at J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center works in collaboration with participating universities to conduct applied research, and provide advanced professional training in a variety of disciplines related to developmental disabilities.

The Center's Adaptive Engineering Department designs and fabricates highly customized adaptive equipment, assistive technology. In addition the Department provides for the maintenance and repair of specialized support equipment, as well as individualized mobility and group transit systems.

## 5.5 POLICY APPROACH

### **PUBLIC SERVICES**

There is a significant inventory of underutilized or vacant buildings and industrial sites that are served by public utilities. The City should consider providing greater incentives to new and expanding businesses if they locate in areas that where services are available.

### **PUBLIC SERVICES: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

Recycling and resource recovery programs are progressive, long-range approaches to managing solid waste. The City should evaluate and implement additional programs that encourage cost-effective methods of recycling. Composting should be considered as a method to convert plant material to mulch.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Morganton's transportation system should be an integrated and user-friendly network of well-designed streets that support auto, pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The City should develop a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan that includes recommendations for regional connections.

Greenways and bikeways should be linked as both transportation and recreational opportunities. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements should be considered a fundamental part of land use and transportation planning.

The City should continue to seek funding to complete the planned extensions of the Greenway system. The segment linking Downtown and Catawba Meadows Park should be the first priority.

At the state and federal level, studies are underway to redesign and improve the interstate (I-40) interchanges in Morganton. In the design and construction phases of proposed improvements, streetscape elements consistent with the streetscape and corridor design recommendations of the plan should be included to enhance the appearance and mitigate negative impacts. Streetscape elements include landscaping, pedestrian facilities, decorative lighting and unified signage.

### **RAIL SERVICE**

In March 2001, the North Carolina Department of Transportation Rail Division adopted a phased plan to extend passenger rail service to Asheville and western North Carolina. The plan includes renovating or building train stations that incorporate other community uses. Current budgetary constraints have prompted the NCDOT to delay the return of passenger rail service to the mountains. Morganton should continue to work with the State and communities along the western rail service line to secure funding for rail service.

### **EDUCATION: BURKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

The perceived quality of a school education is strongly linked to the City's long-range economic development goals. The perceived negative image of the public school system has been one of the stumbling blocks in attracting and retaining young families. Continued efforts are needed to improve the image of the schools and to promote the wide range of quality educational opportunities available through the Burke County Public School system.

The City should support efforts to raise awareness of the importance of public education to the future of Morganton and the County. The public school system must be able to attract and retain highly qualified teachers and administrative personnel to continue to improve test score, graduation rates, and increase the percentage of students continuing on to college and university.

Burke County Public Schools have made great strides in improving test scores and graduation rates. It will take a concerted effort to dispel the image that education is not a high priority for Morganton residents. Children should be encouraged to actively participate in school programs and after school activities.

#### **EDUCATION: WESTERN PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

Workforce development is an important element of Morganton's overall economic development strategy. Continuing education opportunities, as well as job training and lifelong learning, are important components of supporting a learning environment. Western Piedmont Community College is poised to expand the current range of degree and non-degree programs to provide even greater opportunities for residents to pursue career interests.

#### **HEALTHCARE**

Morganton is the regional center for specialized education and healthcare. The presence of these institutions is an opportunity to build on these assets to expand economic development opportunities in the areas of research, medical equipment research and fabrication, and specialized healthcare services.

An example of clustered services, Turning Point Services is a private provider of specialized services for people with developmental disabilities and mental retardation. Turning Point Services is one of the ten largest employers in Morganton. Programs include day programs, semi-independent residential services, group homes and respite care for families providing in home care.



## CHAPTER 6

# NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

### 6.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

Morganton, centrally located in Burke County, is a broad valley lying south of the Catawba River. The terrain in Morganton and central Burke County is characteristic of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina. The topography varies between gently rolling to steep terrain with ridges and hills drained by valley streams. Elevations in the City range between 1,000 to 1,200 feet above sea level, which is typical for the area. Downtown is located on a ridge line which runs northeast and southwest and offers beautiful views of the mountains and the Catawba River Valley.

#### 6.1.1 WATER RESOURCES

The Catawba River and its tributaries are the most important resources in Morganton and Burke County. The entire city drains into the Catawba River Basin. The major creeks that drain the Morganton area into the Catawba River Basin are: Silver Creek, Bailey Fork, Hunting Creek and Fiddlers Run in the south; and Canoe Creek, Wilson Creek and Warrior Fork to the north. The creeks contribute to the Catawba River Basin but are also limiting factors to development due to steep slopes associated with the channels.

#### 6.1.2 OPEN SPACE

Open space consists primarily of the Catawba River flood plains and those of its tributaries. The other major components of this category are golf courses – Quaker Meadow and Mimosa County Club, city parks – Catawba Meadows, Freedom, Bethel Road, Shuey, and Shadowline parks, and the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission game lands adjacent to Morganton.

#### 6.1.3 WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION NATURAL AREAS

In 2007, approximately 2,800 acres at the confluence of the Johns and Catawba rivers in Burke County were added to the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission's game lands program, protecting a unique wetlands and riverine system. The land acquired from Crescent Resources includes 17 miles along both sides of the Johns River and Lower Creek downstream of N.C. Highway 18, as well as Catawba River-Lake Rhodhiss frontage. This is adjoined by 1,000 acres upstream on the Johns River, acquired in November 2006 by the Wildlife Commission with support from Ducks Unlimited and the N.C. Natural Heritage Program. The Johns River Game Land represents one of western North Carolina's most significant land and water conservation areas.

The confluence of the Johns River with the Catawba hosts rich bottomland habitats and extensive forested floodplains which are rare in the foothills and mountains. Wetlands lace the land, enhancing the water quality of Lower Creek and the Johns River and attracting migratory waterfowl and a wide variety of animals and aquatic life. Designated as High Quality Waters and as a Significant Aquatic Habitat, the Johns River lands are also home to the federally threatened bog turtle. An important section of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail crosses the land, adding historical significance to the purchase.



#### 6.1.4 FLOODPLAINS

A floodplain, or flood plain, is flat or nearly flat land adjacent to a stream or river that experiences occasional or periodic flooding. It includes the floodway, which consists of the stream channel and adjacent areas that carry flood flows, and the flood fringe, which are areas covered by the flood, but which do not experience a strong current.

Catawba Meadows is the largest floodplain area, with smaller areas adjacent to the major creeks that flow into the Catawba River.

Floodplains play a central role in maintaining the health of, rivers, lakes, wetlands and estuaries. When managed properly, floodplains can provide for agriculture, grazing, and the harvesting of timber and fiber. Vegetated floodways form the green infrastructure network that connects open space and natural areas and serves as a transportation corridor for birds and other wildlife.

Riverine floodplain development has a direct impact on flooding dynamics. Construction and regarding of the floodplain can obstruct or divert water to other areas. Filling reduces the floodplain's ability to store excess water, sending more floodwater downstream and causing floodwater to rise to higher levels. This also increases velocity of floodwater.

Agriculture, horticulture and silvaculture uses are frequently located in floodplains because of the rich soil and access to water. Best Management Practices recommend s holding ponds and setbacks to prevent fertilizer and chemical runoff into the waterways.

## 6.2 NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS

Of the 100 counties in the state, Burke County ranks in the upper third in terms of rare plant species, rare animal species and natural community types. Twenty-two natural community types are documented from the county. Fifty-four rare plant species, with six ferns, 38 flowering plants, eight liverworts and two mosses are recorded. Forty-one rare animal species are documented with four mammals, five birds, one reptile, two fishes, three freshwater mollusks, one terrestrial mollusk, eight mayflies, two stoneflies, five caddis flies, eight dragonflies and two butterflies. All of Burke County is located within the Catawba River drainage. The main stem of the Catawba River crosses central Burke County from east to west. Lake James and Lake Rhodiss are two large impoundments created for hydro-electric generation.

### 6.2.1 NATIONAL PARK FACILITIES

The 512,760 acre Pisgah National Forest covering much of the north and central western mountains of North Carolina is located within easy driving distance of Morganton. There are numerous scenic, active recreation areas and nature preserves within the National Forest. With more than 950 miles of trails accessible by foot, bike or horse it is a popular recreation destination.

Grandfather Mountain, located in Pisgah National Forest is a privately owned scenic travel attraction. It is one of the world's most environmentally diverse nature preserves.

The Linville River Wilderness Area and Linville Gorge are part of the Pisgah National Forest. The gorge is formed by the Linville River as it descends 2,000 feet from its headwaters on Grandfather Mountain to open levels in the Catawba Valley. The terrain is extremely steep and rugged with an assortment of rock formations including Sitting Bear, Hawksbill, Table Rock, and the Chimneys. Linville Falls, which measures 150 feet, has the largest volume of water of any waterfall on the northern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Table Rock Mountain climbs to 3,930 feet and is visible from Downtown Morganton. Table Rock is a hub for climbing activity in the Linville Gorge. From the summit, Hawksbill Mountain and Sitting Bear pillar can be seen to the north, The Chimney's and Shortoff Mountain to the south. Grandfather Mountain, Boone, Blowing Rock, Beech Mountain, and the Blue Ridge Parkway are all visible from the summit.

The Wilson Creek area is part of the Grandfather District of the Pisgah National Forest. The area is just south of the Blue Ridge Parkway near Grandfather Mountain and east of NC 181, north of Morganton. Wilson Creek was added to the National Wild and Scenic River System on August 18, 2000. The headwaters are below Calloway Peak and the creek stretches over 23 miles before emptying into John's River.

Brown Mountain, located in the Pisgah National Forest offers 34 miles of off highway vehicle (OHV) trails. The Brown Mountain Lights of Burke County, near Morganton, is a natural phenomenon that has been part of mythology dating back to 1771 when the area was explored by Geraud Brahm. The lights can be seen from as far away as Blowing Rock or the old Yonahlosse Trail over Grandfather Mountain some fifteen miles away. The lights can also be seen from the Brown Mountains Overlook, 20 miles north of Morganton on NC highway 181.

The Blue Ridge Parkway, a scenic roadway, travels 469 miles to connect the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee.



Burke County is part of the 25 county region of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. The area was designated in 2003 in recognition of the unique character, culture and natural beauty of Western North Carolina. The federal legislation established a non-profit organization to manage plans and projects to protect, preserve, interpret and develop the unique natural, historical and cultural resources of the area. The Southern Campaign of the American Revolution National Heritage Area includes the Overmountain Victory Trail and McDowell House in Morganton and is located in the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

### 6.2.2 STATE PARKS FACILITIES

There are three State Parks within a 50 mile radius of Morganton. The facilities include: South Mountain State Park, Lake James State Park and Mount Mitchell State Park.

The **South Mountain State Park**, with 17,481 acres, is the largest park in the NC State Park system. The park is located south of Morganton. The park includes elevations up to 3,000 feet, a waterfall dropping 80 feet and more than 40 miles of trails. It is considered to be one of the state's most rugged parks and has historically been focused on provided backcountry experiences. The recently completed park master plan maintains this as the focus for the park and provides for further conservation and protection of the park's unique lands and natural resources while establishing a blueprint for long-term development of facilities, recreation, and environmental education opportunities. In recognition of the sensitive natural resources and challenging topography, most of the park will remain natural and undeveloped.

**Lake James**, a 6,510-acre lake with more than 150 miles of shoreline, is the centerpiece of Lake James State Park. The 2005 master plan for the 2,900 acre area provided a clear development plan for the park. The park land consists of two major peninsulas, Paddy Creek Peninsula and Long Arm Peninsula, which flank a central lake cove and an upland area to the west, designated the Center Parcel. The Center Parcel is separated from the two major peninsulas by streams, the Upper Tributary and the Lower Tributary. A third stream, the Mill's Creek, bisects the Center Parcel. Intensive park uses are concentrated within the Paddy Creek Peninsula and the northern reaches of Long Arm Peninsula. These areas offer the largest expanses of developable land.

Multi-use trails for hiking and bicycling will link all sites within the park and will be the dominant use in the more mature woodlands. A central loop trail on Paddy Creek Peninsula will connect the major uses in that area. Trails within the park will be established to link with the Over Mountain Victory Trail as well as the Lake James Trail proposed by Burke County. Trails on Long Arm Peninsula will be organized with larger central spines that will also provide service and emergency access within the park. Multi-use trails will loop off of these main trails. The smaller trails will be routed and designed to provide varying levels of technical challenge while allowing hikers and cyclists' deeper access into the more scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of the park, especially on Long Arm.

To meet the local community and state needs, a new swim beach is planned along the southern shore of Paddy Creek Peninsula. This new facility will triple the visitor capacity of the existing beach at the previously developed site south of Canal Bridge. The new swim beach facility will include parking, a convenience drop-off, bath facilities, staff offices and concessions. The main picnic area will be nearby as well as the community building, group shelters and an activities lawn.

Crescent Resources has retained ownership of a large parcel within Lake James Park for a planned lodge facility.

Black Mountain, the highest point east of the Mississippi is located in the 1,946 acre **Mount Mitchell State Park**. The park is located in Yancey County north of Asheville and offers hiking, camping, picnic and educational facilities.

### 6.2.3 HUNTING CREEK WATERSHED PROTECTION PROJECT

The Carolina Land and Lakes Resource Conservation and Development Council has initiated a study of the Hunting Creek watershed to determine methods and opportunities to improve water quality as well as address local community needs such as infrastructure improvements and greenways and facilitate community involvement in water quality awareness. The City of Morganton is currently working on a Phase II Storm water Management Plan. While this also includes areas outside of the Hunting Creek Watershed, steps taken to protect the Hunting Creek Watershed will further facilitate the larger scale storm water planning effort. The planning process will update the current land cover GIS data to be used in field analysis and identify Best Management Practices in water quality management.

#### 6.2.4 CATAWBA RIVER GREENWAY AND CATAWBA MEADOWS

The Catawba River Greenway and Catawba Meadows Park are part of the Catawba River Canoe Trail which extends from Black Bear Access on Lake James to Lake Lookout Shoals Access on Lake Lookout Shoals. The 82-mile river trail has 24 boating access points and four portages along the route. The National Park Service formally certified the Greenway as part of the Overmountain Victory Trail. The Park Service placed historical markers along the Greenway walking trail commemorating the historic King's Mountain March.

### 6.3 CITY PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Morganton is recognized throughout the state as having excellent park facilities along with high quality recreation programs. The City of Morganton Parks and Recreation Department maintains over 178 acres of land developed for recreational use including three recreation centers, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a soccer complex, eleven parks, a skeet range and Catawba Meadows Park.

#### CATAWBA MEADOWS PARK

Catawba Meadows Park, the largest city park in Western North Carolina, is the centerpiece of Morganton's extensive parks and recreation system. The complex includes a wide variety of facilities, but the focus is amateur baseball and softball facilities. The quality of the complex enabled the City to be one of the two finalist communities in the 2008 bid for the relocation of the Southeast Region Headquarters of the Little League Baseball and Softball.



Through a partnership with the City of Morganton and Atlantic Coast Athletic Promotions amateur sports tournaments are hosted at Catawba Meadows. In 2009, there will be two Triple Crown Tournaments which allow teams to qualify for the 2010 World Series and 2010 Triple Crown Summer Nationals. The Catawba Meadows facility has additional land for expansion. Discussions are ongoing on options to expand the site as a tourism destination by adding more active ball-fields, adventure center, climbing walls, zip lines, ropes, bike course and kayak and sports rental equipment. The facility has been successful in attracting regional competitions and has been a key factor in increasing the benefits from tourism.

#### CATAWBA RIVER GREENWAY

The Catawba River Greenway Park offers 3.8 miles of paved, fully accessible walking trail. The Catawba River Greenway runs along the Catawba River from the Rocky Ford Access area off Lenoir Road/NC 18 N. to the Greenlee Ford Access adjacent to the Catawba River Soccer Complex Loop located off Greenlee Ford



Road. The City owns an additional two miles of undeveloped riverfront properties downstream from US 64/NC 18 bridge and 1.5 miles of additional greenway easement along Warrior Fork Creek.

#### FREEDOM TRAIL GREENWAY

The Freedom Trail Greenway connects Freedom Park and Freedom High School to the Catawba River Greenway. Freedom Trail extends .6 miles from the Freedom Trail Access Point adjacent to Freedom Park and is highlighted by a 226-foot, 90-ton pedestrian bridge that crosses the Catawba River.

**CITY OF MORGANTON RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

<b>FACILITY</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>SIZE</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>SITE INCLUDES</b>
Bethel Park	Bethel Road	24 acres	Morganton	2 lighted tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, 7/10 mile walking track, 9 hole disc golf course, dog park, 6 picnic shelters with grills, multi-feature playground
Catawba Meadows Park	Catawba Meadows Drive	230 acres	Morganton	5 lighted Little League baseball fields, 4 lighted youth/adult softball/baseball fields, field house, observation and eating area, meeting rooms, batting cages, merchandise center
Catawba River Soccer Complex	Greenlee Ford Road	30 acres	Morganton	2 lighted regulation soccer fields, field house, concession stand, picnic shelter, multi-featured playground
Carbon City Park	Carbon City Road	2 acres	Morganton	2 tennis courts, basketball court, picnic shelter, multi-featured playground
Drexel Heritage Park	West Concord Street	3 acres	Morganton	¼ mile walking track, multi-featured playground, 4 picnic shelters
Gene Turner Park	King Street	6 acres	Morganton	2 lighted youth baseball fields, 2 batting cages, field house, concession stand
Freedom Park	Independence Blvd	30 acres	Morganton	1 mile lighted walking track, regulation sand volleyball court, lighted softball field, 6 lighted tennis courts, practice fields, multi-featured playground, 4 basketball courts, 4 family picnic shelters with grills
Martha's Park	Collett Street	1.4 acres	Morganton	Fenced and gated play area, multi-featured playground, 3 picnic shelters, children's water splash pad, swing sets
Martin Luther King Jr.	Bouchelle	1 acre	Morganton	Playground equipment, 2 picnic shelters, ¼ mile walking

FACILITY	LOCATION	SIZE	OWNER	SITE INCLUDES
Park	Street			track
Shadowline Park	Shadowline Drive	12 acres	Morganton	Practice soccer and softball fields, picnic shelter, 2 horseshoe courts, playground equipment
Shuey Park	Golf Course Road	16 acres	Morganton	2 lighted softball/baseball fields; American Legion Baseball Field, field house, 2 concession stands, 5 horseshoe courts, picnic shelter
Collett Street Park & Recreation Center	Collett Street	15 acres	Morganton	Recreation Center with gymnasium for basketball, weight/exercise room, social hall; 5 lighted tennis courts, Olympic size swimming pool; oriental garden
Morganton Skeet and Trap Range	Causby Quarry Road	1.5 acres	Morganton	3 lighted skeet fields, club house and meeting room
Morganton Aquatic Center	Alphabet Lane		Morganton	Aquatic center, Olympic size swimming pool
Mountain View Community Center	First Street		Morganton	Community center adjacent to Martin Luther King Park. Meeting and activity space, gymnasium, seating for 300 during basketball, game room, kitchen. Outdoor: 25 meter swimming pool and wading pool, 1 lighted softball field, playground

**BURKE COUNTY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

<b>FACILITY</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>SIZE</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>SITE INCLUDES</b>
Parker Road Park	Parker Road	17 acres	Burke County	Large picnic shelter, pond/lake, 1 mile walking trail, basketball court, play equipment, horseshoe pits
Morganton-Burke Senior Center	Green Street		Burke County	Program offices and meeting facilities for senior programs

**PRIVATE OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

<b>FACILITY</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>SIZE</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>SITE INCLUDES</b>
Mimosa Hills Golf Club				Private play - 18 hole golf course
Quaker Meadows Golf Club				Public play - 18 hole golf course
Silver Creek Golf Course				Public play - 18 hole golf course
Riverview Sports Complex				Games rooms, batting cages, driving range and putt-putt

**PRIVATE RECREATION FACILITIES**

<b>FACILITY</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>SIZE</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>SITE INCLUDES</b>
Phifer Health and Wellness Center	Grace Hospital		Grace Hospital	Health and Wellness Center

The citizens of Morganton have traditionally placed a high value on the natural environment, parks and recreation. The Morganton Recreation Commission has been an active partner with the City in developing many of the recreation facilities. The City of Morganton has successfully secured millions of dollars in grant funding for Catawba Meadows and the Greenway. The City continues to actively seek grant funding to expand these facilities.

The City provides funding for parks and recreation facilities and programs. The four day Red, White and Bluegrass sponsored by the Department of Recreation draws thousands of people from across the region and country for a four day music festival. The City provided funding to help grow the event from a concept to an established annual event.

The 2015 Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan identified the need to explore additional funding sources, beyond the City's general fund. Suggestions included general obligation bonds for capital improvement programs, gifts, mandatory land dedication through the land development process and grants. The study recommended instituting a fees and charges for use of facilities.

## 6.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

### 6.4.1 CITY OF MORGANTON MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

The City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium (CoMMA) includes a 1,058 seat auditorium and rehearsal spaces. The ceiling of the main gallery features an original fresco by artist Benjamin F. Long. CoMMA hosts 125-140 events per year including Broadway productions, concerts, meetings, art displays and receptions.

### 6.4.2 MUSEUMS

#### HISTORY MUSEUM OF BURKE COUNTY

The History Museum of Burke County, Inc was established in 2003 to promote the collection, preservation, educational interpretation and display of our heritage. The museum's collections of Burke County history are displayed at the Old City Hall, East Union Street and the Rail Road Depot on South Green Street.

#### OLD BURKE COURTHOUSE



The Old Burke County Courthouse is located on the Courthouse Square, downtown Morganton. The courthouse, built in 1837, was the summer seat of the NC Supreme Court from 1848 – 1861. This restored building is the focal point for Morganton's National Register District; it houses the Historic Burke Foundation, the Heritage Museum, and the Visitor Information Center.

#### BROUGHTON HOSPITAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The Broughton Hospital Patient Library houses the archival records of Broughton Hospital from the hospital's opening in 1883 to the 1950's. An artifact collection in the Avery Administration building includes such items as a 1914 painting of the Broughton campus, an antique wooden wheelchair and turn of the century furniture.

#### NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The North Carolina School for the Deaf Historical Museum maintains a collection of artifacts related to the history of the school and education of the deaf and hearing impaired.

#### BERRY FARM/ JOARA

The Berry Farm is the site of an on-going archaeological survey and excavation. The archaeological work suggests that the town of Joara is located at the Berry site. During the late-sixteenth century, Joara was the most dominant, and possibly the largest, town in what is now modern-day Piedmont and western North Carolina. It served as a center of trade

and a hub for travelers. Its economic and political prominence and its location near navigable routes, major trails, and good farmland prompted Spanish explorer to construct near the Indian town. In great part because the Spanish abandoned and the region approximately sixty years before the English moved into the area in great numbers, Joara's decline is not recorded, and it remains a mystery.

A foundation has been established to raise funds to continue the archaeological work and to house artifacts.

#### MCDOWELL HOUSE AT QUAKER MEADOWS

Captain Charles McDowell, son of the Revolutionary War leader Colonel Charles McDowell, built this federal-style brick plantation house in 1812 on the land the McDowell family settled in the 1760's. In September 1780, Col. McDowell and his brother Joseph gathered the Overmountain men from the western mountains, on the grounds of the plantation to plan a march to the Battle of King's Mountain.



The Battle of King's Mountain is considered to be a turning point in the American Revolution. The house has been deeded to the Historic Burke Foundation and is open to the public.

## 6.5 HISTORIC LANDMARKS

The City has nine National Register of Historic Places districts: Avery Avenue Historic District; Broughton Hospital Historic District, Morganton Downtown Historic District, North Carolina School for the Deaf Historic District, North Green Street – Bouchelle Street Historic District, South King Street Historic District, West Union Street Historic District, and White Street- Valdese Avenue Historic District. The City has eighteen buildings, structure or places that have been individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic designation contributes to the City's revitalization through improved property maintenance and economic incentives for rehabilitation.

## 6.6 POLICY APPROACH

Morganton's natural and cultural resources contribute to the overall high quality of life for residents. They are also important economic development and tourism assets. Many entrepreneurs and knowledge based employers place a high value on the overall quality of life in making decisions about where to locate. As the City aggressively pursues the growth of knowledge-based industries, the overall quality of life and the quality of the natural environment will be critical elements to a successful development strategy.

Morganton enjoys access to an abundance of natural resources. While the resources are abundant, they are also fragile and must be protected. Local action and regional cooperation are critical in achieving the goals of protecting and enhancing the environmental quality, and developing a comprehensive network of greenways throughout the region.

At the present time many of the recreation, conservation and open spaces that are enjoyed by residents are managed by different entities. It will be important for Morganton to continue to work with the state, county and regional governments to protect natural resources and open space.

Morganton's arts, entertainment, and cultural resources are both a city and regional resources for tourism and economic development. Clustering activities that add a greater vibrancy to downtown can be achieved by providing a mix of quality retail and entertainment uses as well as encouraging the development of art, retail and ecotourism incubators to attract residents and visitors. To successfully market Morganton as a destination for visitors and new businesses, it will be important to create a clear identity or 'brand name' for the City and surrounding areas.

## CHAPTER 7 HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

### 7.1 APPROACH

A continuing goal of the City is to maintain the housing quality and established character of existing neighborhoods throughout the community and to promote development of new neighborhoods that contain a variety of housing types and densities, with amenities and services to ensure opportunities for households of all ages, types and income levels.

### 7.2 BACKGROUND

Morganton is known as a family town, a community with safe neighborhoods and a range of housing choices. Morganton's older neighborhoods are predominately comprised of modest single family home built before 1970. These areas are largely homogeneous with few vacant lots or new development altering the character of the neighborhoods.



Six neighborhoods are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as Historic Districts. Each has a unique character and style. The West Union Historic District is one of the oldest neighborhoods, with individual home's dating back to the early 1800's. The Avery Avenue-Lenoir Road, North Green Street-Bouchelle Street, South King Street and White Street- Valdese Avenue Historic Districts were designated as having architectural and engineering significance. These neighborhoods have a combination of Craftsman style bungalows and larger late Victorian and Colonial Revival style homes. The Jonesboro Historic District is notable as Morganton's only intact historically African American community. These neighborhoods have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but are not locally designated. Various residences both within and outside of the National Register districts are listed on both the National Register and locally.

The Riverside neighborhood has some of the city's larger, estate homes built during the period when Morganton's furniture and textile industries were booming. The neighborhood has built out slowly over time with new homes and home additions still in progress.





Newer suburban neighborhoods expand out from the central city. There are two golf club communities – Mimosa Hills Golf and Country Club (within the city limits) and Silver Creek Plantation Golf (just outside the ETJ). Silver Creek Plantation, the newer of the two, still has lots available for development.

Residential development is demand driven, with local builders and developers completing a limited number of houses each year. A challenge for newcomers is the availability of new homes for purchase. The majority of new homes are built by contract, taking upwards of twelve to fifteen months to complete.

***Housing Options***

Single family homes comprise approximately 70% of the housing choice in Morganton. To remain competitive as a desirable place to live and work, it will be important to encourage a wider range of housing and neighborhood choices. Responding to market trends, builders have begun to build new single story and low maintenance homes targeted to empty nesters and retirees. Henry’s Glen neighborhood has a range of housing styles and

sizes from smaller attached townhomes to large lot single family homes. This is the first development built with a mix of housing styles and sizes.

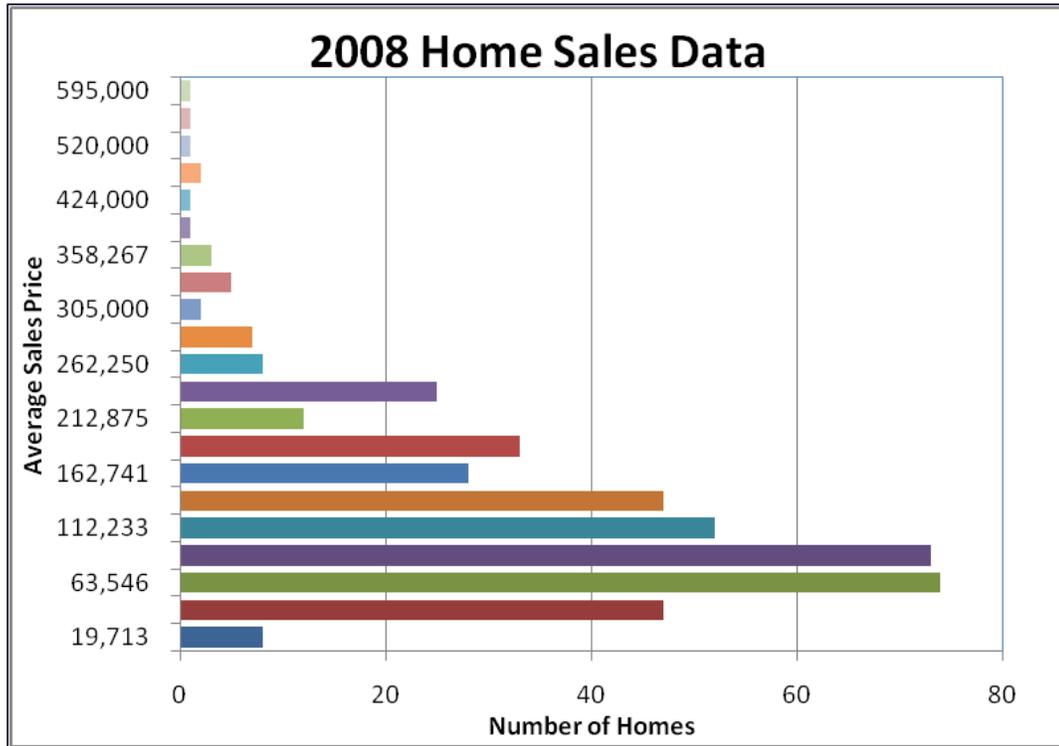
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT	# UNITS	%
2000 - 2007	553	7%
1990- 1999	955	12%
1980 to 1989	1,060	14%
1970 to 1979	1,261	16%
1960 to 1969	1,279	16%
1959 or earlier	2,722	35%

Downtown condominiums and townhomes are gaining in popularity with several new developments offering loft apartments in rehabilitated mill buildings and new construction townhomes and above shop homes. Several of the older downtown buildings have been renovated to include homes on the upper floors above the stores.

Grace Ridge Community Retirement Community is the City’s only continuum of care retirement community. The community is affiliated with Blue Ridge Health Care.

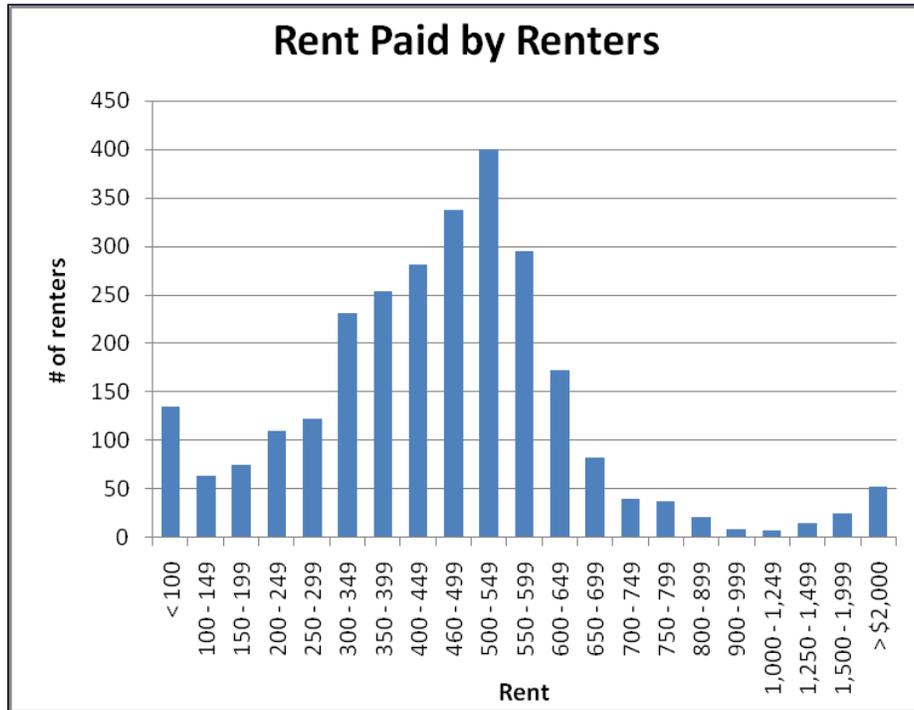
### *Housing Affordability*

Morganton has traditionally been known as a community of moderately priced single-family homes. In a recent Board of Realtor's report the average sales price for a home in Burke County in 2008 was \$156,886. Under current lending standards, this would require the borrower to have an annual income of approximately \$50,000. In 2007, the average annual wage <sup>1</sup> was \$31,096 and the median household income was \$32,743.



However, there are many families whose annual income falls below average or who would prefer not to be homeowners. There are limited choices for renters. Many of the rental properties are single buildings with 3 to 9 units. Several of the newer large apartment complexes include community recreation amenities. In 2007, the median rent was \$587.

<sup>1</sup> Source: NCESC, 2008



Affordable housing has become a concern of not only housing advocates but also policy makers and employers. Data from the American Housing Survey confirms that increasing numbers of households have been joining the ranks of households with “critical housing needs”, paying at least half their income for housing or living in substandard conditions.

### 7.3 POLICY APPROACH

Morganton's neighborhoods one of its most important assets. The City should strive to have a range of housing types, styles and price ranges to meet the needs of current and future residents.

#### Recommendations

Protect and strengthen Morganton's established neighborhoods.

- Discourage development that will negatively impact the character of a neighborhood.
- Encourage appropriately scaled additions, infill and redevelopment that maintain the character of the neighborhood.
- Encourage upgrading and renovation of older housing stock as a source of affordable housing.

Encourage development of a wide range of quality housing types to meet the needs of residents.

- Provide opportunities for a greater mix of housing types, which are appropriately located, scaled and designed in relation to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Adopt development guidelines for residential planning areas that correspond to the built characteristics of the neighborhoods.



Protect Morganton's historic neighborhoods and homes through the conservation of historic structures and their settings.

- Appropriately scaled infill development should be encouraged in Morganton's close in neighborhoods to take advantage of existing public infrastructure.

Encourage compatible rehabilitation and infill in historic neighborhoods.

- Promote state and federal incentives to include tax credits to encourage rehabilitation of historic structures.

Adopt and enforce appearance criteria for manufactured housing.

- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to create three classes of mobile homes and establish appearance criteria to differentiate among the classes, allowing greater flexibility in the location of manufactured homes.
- Encourage development of planned residential neighborhoods that support innovative land and building design and promote integration of open space and community services.
- Residential developments 50 acres or greater should be permitted to include low-intensity business activity mixed-use buildings developed at a scale that is compatible with the residential buildings.



## CHAPTER 8 COMMUNITY DESIGN

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall goal of the Comprehensive Land Development Plan is to make Morganton an attractive place for people of all ages, backgrounds and incomes to live, work, shop and play. This goal requires not only sound land use and economic policies but also a strong commitment to excellence in community design and appearance.

The quality of the physical environment – attractive streets, buildings, parks and open space – has a direct impact on the Morganton’s economy, the sustainability of neighborhoods, and the successful stewardship of its unique natural and cultural resources.

The Community Design element of the Plan is a discussion of the general design principles that will guide future infill, new development, street improvements and redevelopment of underutilized sites. Community design recognizes that Morganton is not uniform in design or form, rather the City is comprised of elements, each with its own set of place-defining characteristics. Design principles associated with each area are intended to guide future land use and zoning and provide landowners and developers with ideas regarding site development and building decisions.

### 8.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Community Design element of the Plan is a discussion of the general design principles that will guide future infill, new development, street improvements and redevelopment of underutilized sites. Community design recognizes that Morganton is not uniform in design or form, rather the City is comprised of elements, each with its own set of place-defining characteristics. Design principles associated with each area are intended to guide future land use and zoning and provide landowners and developers with ideas regarding site development and building decisions.

#### **Region**

Morganton is governmental, cultural and economic hub for Burke County. County government offices, courts, and school board offices are located in the City. The City is also home to Western Piedmont Community College, Broughton Hospital, the North Carolina School for the Deaf and Grace Hospital. The City’s image goes beyond its political boundaries; visitors, newcomers, and businesses form their impressions of Morganton at a regional level. Therefore it is important to reach across political boundaries to promote sensible development, attractive transportation networks and good design throughout Burke County.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Morganton should work with Burke County, Drexel and Valdese to protect the scenic beauty of the area by protecting natural waterways and guiding the pattern of development along the major connecting thoroughfares.
- Major transportation routes within the community should be attractively landscaped and designed to minimize disturbance of the natural environment. Gateways and appropriate signage should welcome visitors and newcomers to the community.
- Landmarks, environmental, historic and cultural tourism attractions should be protected from visual and physical encroachment by incompatible uses.

### **City**

The City owes its distinctiveness to its compact urban form; development is concentrated around Morganton's downtown, with density of development generally decreasing as it radiates from the center of downtown. Visual impressions of Morganton are formed at key entrance points along major transportation routes, with the Burke Courthouse and Table Rock Mountain as the City's predominant visual landmarks.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Gateways should be established along major transportation routes leading into the City. Major transportation routes should be attractively landscaped and should include appropriate signage to direct visitors and promote Morganton's unique attractions.
- Morganton should have well-defined edges to support and understanding of the City's image and create a clear sense of arrival and departure.  
New development along the City's edges should promote a positive image of the City by respecting natural features, emphasizing high-quality building design, and incorporating appropriate landscaping.

### **Downtown**

Downtown is characterized by a pedestrian friendly streets and a mixture of restaurants, and retail stores; and office, residential and institutional uses. Downtown streets form an interconnected grid and are designed to accommodate vehicular and pedestrian use. Buildings are typically set close to the street and often adjoin each other. Parking is generally concentrated in rear parking areas or along the street front.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Downtown should be designed to accommodate a mixture of uses. Downtown's historic character should be preserved and used to guide new development.
- Downtown development should make maximum use of the site. Buildings should be set close to the street with ground floor facades that emphasize pedestrian activity.
- Access and circulation within the downtown should be efficient, convenient, and attractive. Streets should be designed to accommodate multiple modes of traffic: pedestrian, bicycles, automobiles. Two-way streets should be encouraged to the maximum extent feasible.

- On-street parking should be reserved for shoppers and short-term visitors. Long-term parking should be concentrated in the interior parking lots.

### 8.2.1 COMMERCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT AREAS

#### **Destination Retail Centers**

Destination Retail Centers contain the shopping, services, recreation, and employment uses that serve the region. These centers are typically located along main thoroughfares or near exits from interstate highways. They are characterized by large sites with deep setbacks and large expanses of parking. Uses in the destination retail planning area or center include big-box retail stores, shopping malls or centers, national chain restaurants and entertainment attractions. Auto-oriented uses that require large areas of outdoor storage or display space should be located along commercial corridors or adjacent to a destination retail center.

The plan proposes three destination retail centers: Burkemont Avenue (south of I-40); Henredon site on Fleming Drive; and the Drexel/ Roses site at Fleming Drive and South Sterling Street.

#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Destination retail centers should be located along major thoroughfares with easy access to the highway. Traffic improvements should avoid impact on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Mixed-use development is encouraged, however, the predominant uses within the defined retail centers are retail, commercial, office and/or institutional.
- Buildings should be arranged to create a sense of defined space with an internal network of streets and pedestrian areas. Sidewalks and walkways adjacent to buildings should include landscaped areas with trees, shrubs and benches.
- Architectural features and landscaping should present an attractive and inviting appearance to these buildings from the road. Architectural design should be organized around a consistent theme in terms of character, texture, materials, color and scale of buildings.
- Large retail buildings should feature multiple building entrances to provide pedestrian convenience and mitigate the effect of an unbroken building façade.
- Out-parcel buildings should be located in common alignment close to the main road.
- Parking should be located in the center or to the rear or sides of buildings. Large parking areas should be divided into landscaped parking quadrants linked by crosswalks and pedestrian paths.
- High-density residential development (4 - 12 dwelling units per acre) may be located above retail establishments or in multi-story buildings. Single family detached residential should not be permitted.

### **Commercial Corridors**

Commercial corridors are intended to serve as retail strips for customers from throughout the City and area generally located on arterial streets. They are characterized by linear development on wide roads. The commercial corridors have been the workhorse corridors for the City. Individual sites have been developed over time with a wide range of building styles, setbacks and amenities. Land uses along primary commercial corridors often consist of a variety of services including banks, restaurants, gas stations and convenience stores, and personal services. Land uses along secondary commercial corridors often consist of a variety of business supportive services such as vehicle services, including tire sales, vehicle repair and used-car dealers. Many of the uses along these corridors have been ‘grandfathered’ and may no longer be permitted to develop with the same setbacks, lot sizes or uses.

#### **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

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- Commercial development should be concentrated at key intersections and should encourage higher-density, mixed-use development. Curb cuts should be minimized; shared entrances and parking lots should be encouraged.
- Site development should be maximized through reduced parking spaces, increased lot coverage.  
Visual clutter, outdoor storage and excessive lighting should be discouraged. Signs should be attractively designed and located on monuments or ground mount signs.

### **Local Commercial Centers**

Local commercial centers are intended to serve multiple neighborhoods but generally do not draw customers from a citywide or regional market area. These centers are typically located along arterial or collector streets and are characterized by large sites, linear development, deep setbacks and large expanses of parking. Uses often include grocery stores, restaurants, and small retail and personal service shops.

#### **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

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- Local commercial centers should maximize site development through reduced parking spaces, increased lot coverage, and parcels developed along street frontages.
- Parking lots should have multiple vehicular entrances that are clearly marked and attractively landscaped. Parking lots should have trees located in the interior of the site and along street frontages.
- Visual clutter and excessive lighting should be discouraged. Signs should be consolidated and attractively designed.

### **Industrial Corridors and Centers**

Industrial areas are intended to serve as employment hubs that attract workers from the City and the region. They are typically located in areas that provide convenient transportation access such as the railroad, interstate highway and major thoroughfares. They are characterized by large sites with perimeter fencing, outdoor storage, deep setbacks and large expanses of parking and a main entrance.

Morganton has three distinct types of industrial corridors or centers.

- Many of the large furniture and textile manufacturers located near the center of the City within easy walking distance of adjacent neighborhoods. Over time, the City completed a wide ring road to provide convenient truck access for these industries to the transportation distribution network of interstate highway state highways to these developments.
- Manufacturers developed single sites in what were then outlying areas. These contained one or more buildings with large expanses of parking, outdoor storage and a main entrance.
- A manufacturing and industrial center has been developed over time at the western edge of the city in the area bounded by the interstate highway and NC state highway 18. The majority of this development is west of the Catawba River. The area is served by rail and a network of arterial roads.

### **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

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- Active industrial and manufacturing centers and sites should be protected from encroachment of incompatible land uses that would discourage expansion of these employment uses.
- In active industrial and manufacturing centers, redevelopment and development of industrial uses should be encouraged. Sites that abut major thoroughfares should have landscaping along the street frontage. Outdoor storage should be shielded from public view, and perimeter fencing should be attractive.
- Vacant industrial and manufacturing sites near the center of the city should be redeveloped. Several of the large sites are well suited to be redeveloped for mixed-use retail, office and residential developments. The sites are usually under single ownership and can be developed as large planned communities.
- Vacant industrial and manufacturing sites and buildings in or near downtown should be redeveloped as mixed use flex employment, retail and residential developments. Many of the buildings are two and three story brick structures that have unique architectural features that can be preserved.
- Vacant industrial and manufacturing sites and buildings along the City's entrance and gateway corridors should be redeveloped as flex employment centers, retail or residential developments. Redevelopment along the City's entrance and gateway corridors should conform to the proposed design guidelines for that area.

## 8.2.2 RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Neighborhoods are the basic building blocks of the community. Neighborhoods consist of not only homes, but also parks, streets, shops, schools, places of worship, community centers and services.

The design characteristics, density and configuration of neighborhoods range from rural to urban. The plan encourages development of urban neighborhoods near the institutional employment centers and downtown.

Urban neighborhoods are more diverse with a greater share of the land area dedicated to commercial and community facilities. Rural areas are traditionally low-density residential areas with fewer public services and limited commercial services.

The Plan encourages the inclusion of a diverse mix of housing types and price ranges in every neighborhood. Workforce housing should be included in urban neighborhoods.

### **Downtown Neighborhoods**

Downtown neighborhoods are characterized by small lots, one and two story buildings, consistent building setbacks and an interconnected grid of streets. Downtown neighborhoods provide a wide range of housing opportunities from condominium apartments to larger historic homes from the Victorian era.

#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Recognized historic buildings should be preserved and should be used to guide new development.
- Setbacks for residential structures should be consistent.
- All streets should have sidewalks and should be lined with trees; on-street parking and rear-access parking should be encouraged.

### **Low density residential planning areas**

The traditional development pattern in the low density residential planning areas is single family residences set back from the roadways, frequently buffered by trees and vegetation. Agricultural outbuildings, barns, workshops and other structures are frequently located near the primary residence. Large fields are broken by lines of trees and land in its natural vegetative state. Agriculture and low density single-family residential development are the principal land uses, with small-scale nonresidential and institutional uses that are compatible with the rural character of the area.

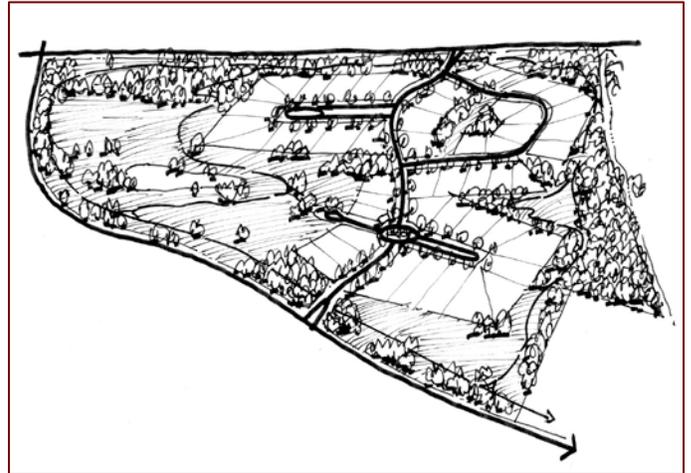
#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Buildings should be located to conserve open space and farmland.
- Buildings should be setback and/or buffered from public roads to preserve scenic views. On wooded lots, buildings should be located within the wooded fringes to preserve tree cover.

### **Low Impact Development**

Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to development that mitigates potential environmental impacts by using various land planning and design practices and technologies to conserve and protect the natural resource systems and reduce infrastructure costs. A LID approach protects open space, mature landscapes and native vegetation. Land disturbance is minimized to reduce impacts to ecological and biological processes both on and off site. Wetlands and pond systems can be incorporated in site design to provide storm water management solutions that are aesthetic and have recreational benefits.



#### **Guidelines for low impact development may include:**

- Reducing non-porous surfaces by options such as clustering, narrower streets and shared access points.
- Requiring natural features such as creeks, streams, large stands of trees and vegetation to be protected from disturbance.
- Limiting nonresidential uses to small retail and service establishments, bed and breakfast inns, home-based businesses and small-scale institutional uses such as churches.

### **Medium Density Residential Planning Areas**

The medium density residential planning areas are intended to encourage development of vibrant communities that offer a combination of residential, commercial and employment opportunities, at a pedestrian friendly scale. They include suburban, transitional and traditional neighborhoods.

### **Suburban Neighborhoods**

Suburban neighborhoods are conventional or planned developments that provide homogeneous groupings of housing types at densities of three to five units per acre depending on the availability of adequate streets, utilities and public services and facilities.

#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Neighborhoods should include a reasonable mix of housing styles, exterior materials and façade treatments.
- Lots should minimize the size of front and side yards to increase the size of private open space (rear yard) and decrease the length of driveways.
- Cul-de-sacs should be limited to the minimum required to handle environmental and engineering constraints.
- Sidewalks and pedestrian paths should be designed to supplement the existing street systems.

### **Transitional Neighborhoods**

Transitional neighborhoods are located within ½ mile of the Downtown and serve as the transition from suburban to a more urban development pattern.

#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Neighborhoods should include a diverse mix of housing types at densities ranging from three to eight dwelling units per acre depending on the availability of adequate streets, utilities and public services and facilities.
- Workforce housing, townhouse and small lot residential development is encouraged.
- Civic or community uses such as a church or community center are encouraged to locate in prominent locations within the neighborhood abutting a collector road.
- On street parking should be encouraged
- Garages should be set well back from the front façade or located in the rear of the building lot.

### **Traditional Neighborhoods**

The Traditional Neighborhood community design area includes the established neighborhoods located within close proximity to Downtown. Neighborhoods include single-family detached and attached homes, small commercial and office areas, multi-family residential developments, and public and private institutions.

Because these neighborhoods are located close to the Downtown a higher density of residential development should be encouraged. Housing in the form of duplexes, mansion apartments, cottages and garage apartments should be considered as infill and for redevelopment of larger sites.

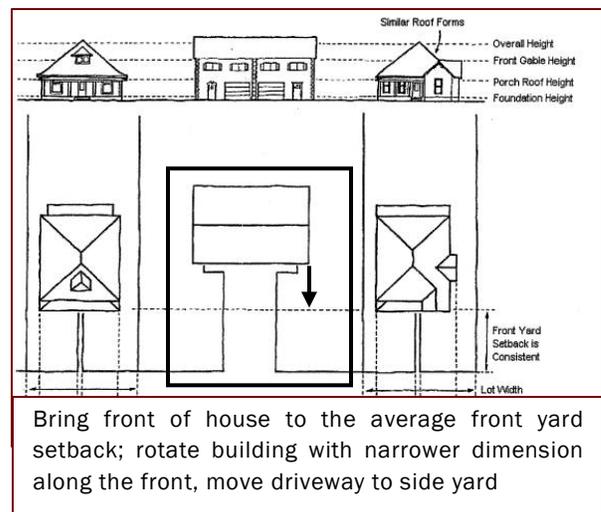
In general the street network is a grid pattern with paved streets that accommodate two-way traffic and on-street parking. Sidewalks are limited and frequently in need of repair.

Small area plans may include a single neighborhood or multiple adjacent neighborhoods with similar characteristics. The small area plans will develop applicable standards for additions and new construction.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### New or infill residential development

- New construction should be compatible with adjacent structures. Compatibility standards include building orientation, massing, bulk, setback, height, appearance, such as roof pitch, material, shape and alignment of windows and doors and the presence of porches.
- The existing gridded street pattern should be preserved or extended. Cul-de-sac streets should not be permitted.
- Multifamily buildings should be of a similar height and setback as adjacent buildings. Attached housing should be in groups of no more than four units (mansionettes), with limited pavement in the front yard. Parking should be located in the rear, accessed by an alley or driveway.



### Renovations and additions

- Expansion of existing structures should be compatible in height, setback and design with adjacent structures.
- One of the most important visible elements of a building is the roof. The original roof pitch should be retained.
- Porch enclosures should be encouraged.
- Additions should be not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  story higher than the average height of the adjacent structures and should occur at the rear of the structure, reducing the visual impact of the addition from the street. Additions that are the same height as the existing structure may be located on the side of the building.

### Nonresidential development

- Nonresidential uses should be located along thoroughfares, preferably at intersections that connect adjacent neighborhoods.

- Non residential uses should be neighborhood scale retail, service and professional offices.
- Residential uses may be located on the upper floors of nonresidential buildings.
- On-street parking is encouraged. Parking lots should be located in the rear or side of the buildings. Where feasible off street parking areas should be interconnected.
- Signage should be appropriately scaled.

### **Mixed Use Residential Planning Areas**

Mixed Use Residential Planning Areas are envisioned as the transition between rural areas in the County and the Town. These areas will develop as unique communities incorporating an innovative blend of rural and suburban development features with a balance of built and natural environments.

Land uses will include varying densities and development patterns, with higher density mixed use village centers and residential clusters. The Plan envisions that these mixed used developments will foster a sense of place and community identity, with an integrated mix of residential and non-residential uses organized around the community center.

To achieve the desired land development patterns and the protection of open space, development in the Mixed Use Residential Planning Areas will be required to connect to the City water and sewer system, except where it is determined that the extension of water and sewer lines cannot be engineered.

### **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

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Mixed Use Residential Planning Areas have a mix of housing types with non-residential uses integrated into the overall master plan to create pedestrian friendly self-sustaining developments.

- Neighborhoods will be developed with specific design criteria that help to form open space (which may include active and passive recreation) surrounding the residential development.
- The neighborhood center is intended to create a sense of place and identity for the community, with a compact grouping of residential, business, commercial retail and service and civic uses providing convenience goods and services to residents of the community.
- The neighborhood center can vary in scale, design and use depending on the scale of the community it serves. The total area dedicated to the non-residential uses should not exceed five percent of the area of the proposed development. The following location and design criteria apply.
- Residential development in the neighborhood center may include second floor living units and live-work housing located along the periphery.

## 8.2.3 STREETS

### **Streets**

Street design principles address the design of new and existing streets and are intended to provide guidance for improvements. These principles address seven general elements of the streetscape: automobile accommodations, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, trees, signs, lighting and buildings. These principles are discussed in greater detail in the Community Design examples.

### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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#### *Automobile*

- Arterial street designs should encourage tree-lined streets with attractive pavement and efficient travel lanes.
- In downtown, residential neighborhoods, and local commercial centers, narrow vehicle travel lanes should be used to discourage speeding.
- On-street parking is desirable on most streets as it provides a buffer between pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic.
- Textured paving materials should be encouraged to mark entrances to residential areas and where slower design speeds are desired
- Access within and adjacent to key business sites should be encouraged.

#### *Bicycles*

- Bike lanes should be encouraged. Bike accommodation should be striped or colored lanes on collector streets, minor arterials and thoroughfares. Entrances to the Greenway and on-street crossings to connect to the Greenway should be clearly marked with textured paving materials and signage.

#### *Pedestrians*

- Sidewalks should be provided on both sides of residential, downtown and collector streets.
- Wide streets with multiple lanes should have center medians that create a pedestrian refuge.
- Crosswalks in downtown and neighborhood commercial areas should be clearly marked with textured paving materials.
- Entrances to the Greenway and on-street crossings to connect to the Greenway should be clearly marked with textured paving materials and signage.

#### *Trees, Signs and Lighting*

- Trees are an essential element of the city's streetscape and should be planted along all non-suburban streets.

- Center medians planted with shrubs and trees should be used on major thoroughfares.
- Planting strips, the area between a curb and sidewalk should be used to accommodate street trees.
- Lighting should be decorative and pedestrian scale in downtown, residential neighborhoods, and commercial centers.
- Signs (public and private) should be limited in number and scaled in size to minimize visual clutter.

### *Buildings*

- Building location and design should be considered as important elements of the streetscape and should be used to define the street corridor as a public place, especially at major intersections.
- Building setbacks should be consistent along the street frontage. Building fronts and entrances should face a street.

## 8.3 COMMUNITY DESIGN CORRIDORS AND NODES

Design illustrations were developed to study development and design approaches for the following: Gateway Entrances; Hospitality Corridor – South Sterling/Fleming Drive, NC 18 Heritage Corridor; the River District; a Commercial Center at the intersection of Carbon City Road, West Fleming and Sanford Drives and Union Street; Jamestown Road Commercial Center; redevelopment of manufacturing building for mixed use flex employment and retail use. Please note that these illustrations are concepts and intended to provide ideas for further discussion and as such they do not imply intent on the part of the City to require redevelopment or development as illustrated.

### 8.3.1 GATEWAYS AND ENTRANCES DESIGN CONCEPTS

#### GENERAL DESIGN CONCEPTS

The gateway entrances serve many different purposes. Entrances that serve as gateways to the City and County for visitors and travelers should incorporate design features and signage that create an attractive and welcoming appearance and provide clear directions for navigating to destinations. Planned public improvements should incorporate unique design features that over time will create a unified design signature for the City.

#### Wayfinding Signage Program

A unified wayfinding signage program can be installed at key entrances, along entrance corridors and in downtown to direct visitors to their destinations. The design can be adapted for use throughout the county and towns creating a unified visual identity.

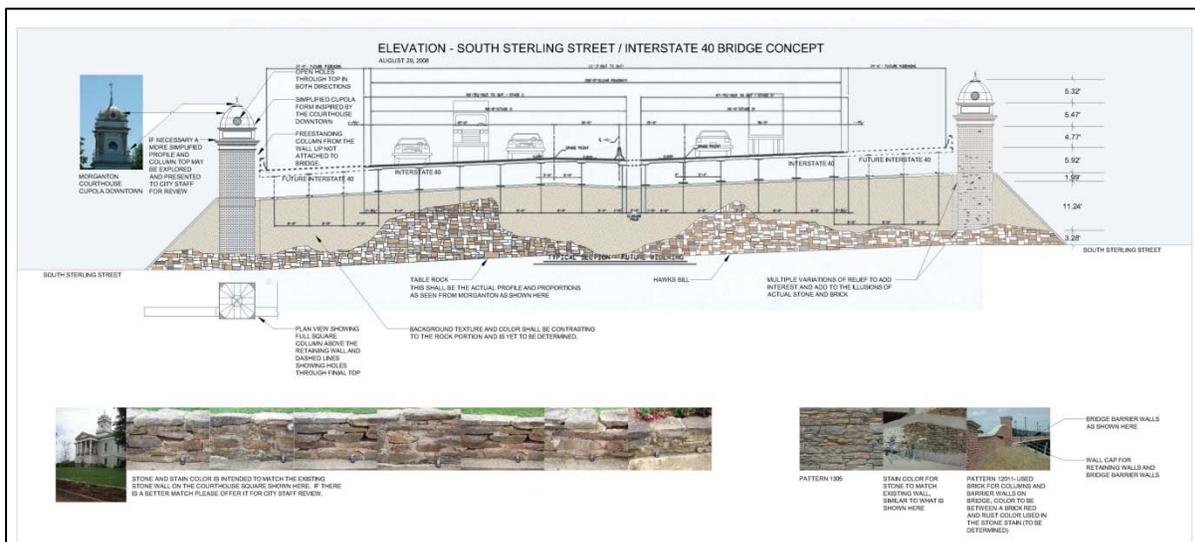


## Highway Bridges

Design features can be incorporated in highway bridges and entrances as they are re-built or improved.



Simple design features that are unique for the community can welcome visitors and travelers letting them know that they are entering a new area.



This bridge design was done as an example for Exit 105 S. Sterling Street. The design incorporates design features that echo the landmark features of the Historic Burke Courthouse, Table Rock Mountain and stonework from the Broughton Hospital and North Carolina School for the Deaf landscapes.

### NC Highway 18 - River District Bridge

The North Green Street/ NC Highway 18 bridge crosses the Catawba River and is the gateway to the River District and the Revolutionary War Heritage Corridor. The bridge is scheduled to be rebuilt in the next few years. A design concept was developed for the bridge that would become an important entrance feature and create an attractive vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian link between the River District and the emerging retail and employment center along North Green Street.



The bridge deck includes sidewalks on both sides, with open iron work railings that provide a view to the Catawba River. The iron work railings include a wave design element, with simple bridge abutments that echo a Revolutionary War Monument.



## HOSPITALITY CORRIDOR DESIGN CONCEPT

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The Hospitality Corridor is located along South Sterling Street from I-40 Exit 105 to the railroad trestle, or the edge of the Central Business District. BlueRidge Healthcare and Broughton Hospital, Foothills Allied Health and Science Education Center, the North Carolina School for the Deaf anchor the corridor, with hotels and restaurants serving employees, visitors and residents.

The corridor has the potential to become a signature entrance for Morganton. There are several opportunities that the City can leverage to strengthen the visual appearance and character of the hospitality corridor.

- The North Carolina Department of Transportation is scheduled to begin rebuilding the I-40 Exit 105 in 2010, with improvements to the exit and entrance ramps. This is an opportunity for Morganton to leverage the highway infrastructure improvements to create a signature gateway with signage and roadway enhancements.
- The Broughton Hospital Redevelopment plan could include improvements along the thoroughfare and development of a landscaped water feature on the northeast corner of the property.
- Sterling Street/ Fleming Drive is a potential redevelopment area. This area could become a destination shopping center.

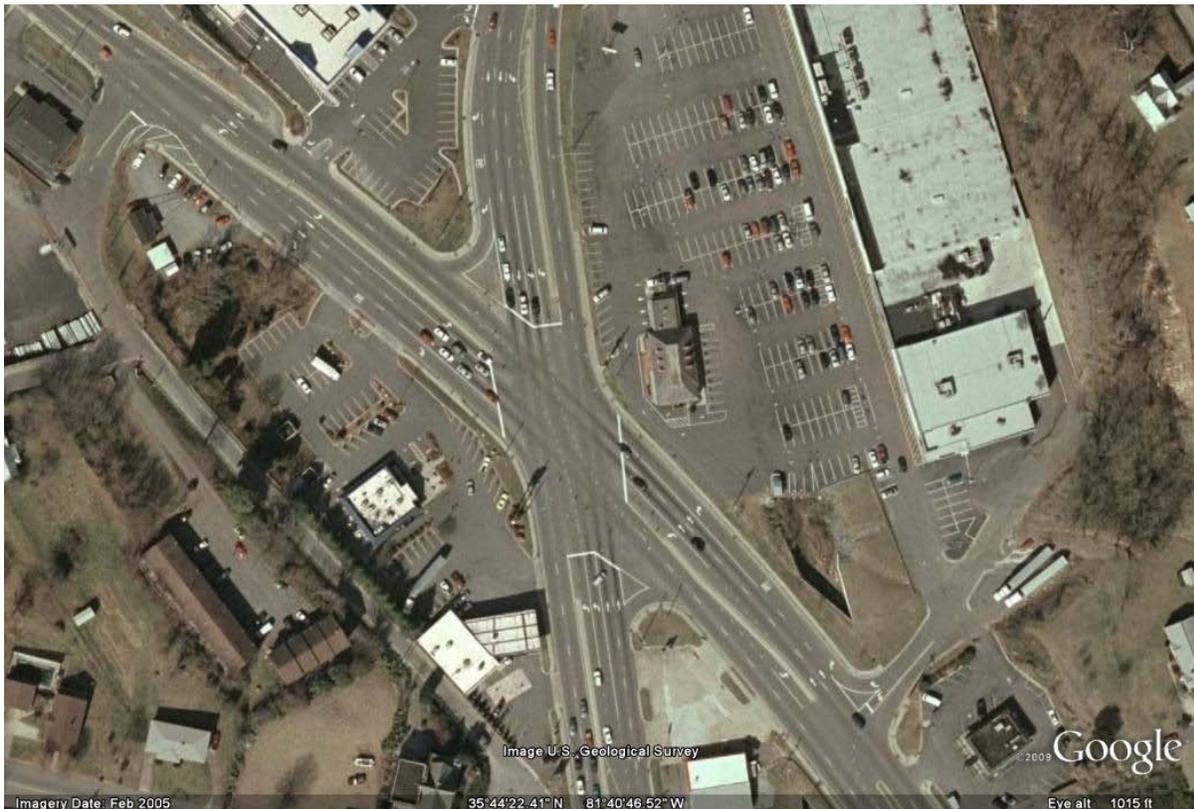
## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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- Developments not located in a center or node may be setback from the roadway. Minimal parking should be provided in front of the buildings. Employee and additional customer parking should be located at the side or rear.
- Landscaping along the street frontage should be limited to street trees planting in the planting strips to create a more attractive pedestrian environment.
- Shared entrances and interparcel connections should be considered whenever possible. Where feasible curb cuts should be consolidated.
- Outdoor storage should be screened from view.
- The landscape planting strip should separate the sidewalk from the curb and roadway.
- Pedestrian amenities should include well defined crosswalks and refuge area for crossing from east to west.

## SOUTH STERLING/ FLEMING DRIVE DESIGN CONCEPT

Function: This is a high visibility intersection. The roadway was designed to carry high volumes of transport truck traffic to and from the manufacturing complex to the east. The intersection is poorly defined with multiple lanes in each direction and limited pedestrian facilities. Improvements to the configuration of the intersection are constrained by existing development and the stream bed that crosses under the shopping center parking lot.



There are three important opportunity sites adjacent to the intersection. The vacant Drexel Plant #7, Roses Shopping Center and planned development on the Broughton Hospital property.



## DESIGN CONCEPT

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The design concept reconfigures the intersection, by narrowing the roadway and installing landscaped medians to create a more urban and pedestrian friendly area, installing entrance features on the north and south corners, adding low walls to frame the parking lots, and installing additional landscaping to soften the impact of the pavement at the wide intersection.

The shopping center is redeveloped adding small shops along the edge of the parking lot with trees and a low wall to define the edge of the parking lot separating pedestrian and vehicular entrances.

The culvert that encases the stream running from the Broughton Hospital campus under the roadway and shopping center parking lot is opened at two locations and included as a landscape feature.

The site bounded by College Street, South Sterling Street and Fleming Drive is redeveloped to include a gateway plaza with pedestrian crosswalks. A small food/beverage store could be incorporated in the redevelopment scheme.

Landscape medians are installed at the intersections and along Fleming Drive, transforming the roadway from an industrial thoroughfare to city streets.

The design concept encourages the use of low walls as defining landscape features to create vehicle entrances and separate the sidewalk from the parking lots. By using a combination of low shrubs, street trees and lighting what was a wide open intersection with poorly defined vehicle entrances and few pedestrian amenities, the intersection becomes an attractive gateway to Downtown and crossroads leading to the Catawba Meadows and the mountains.



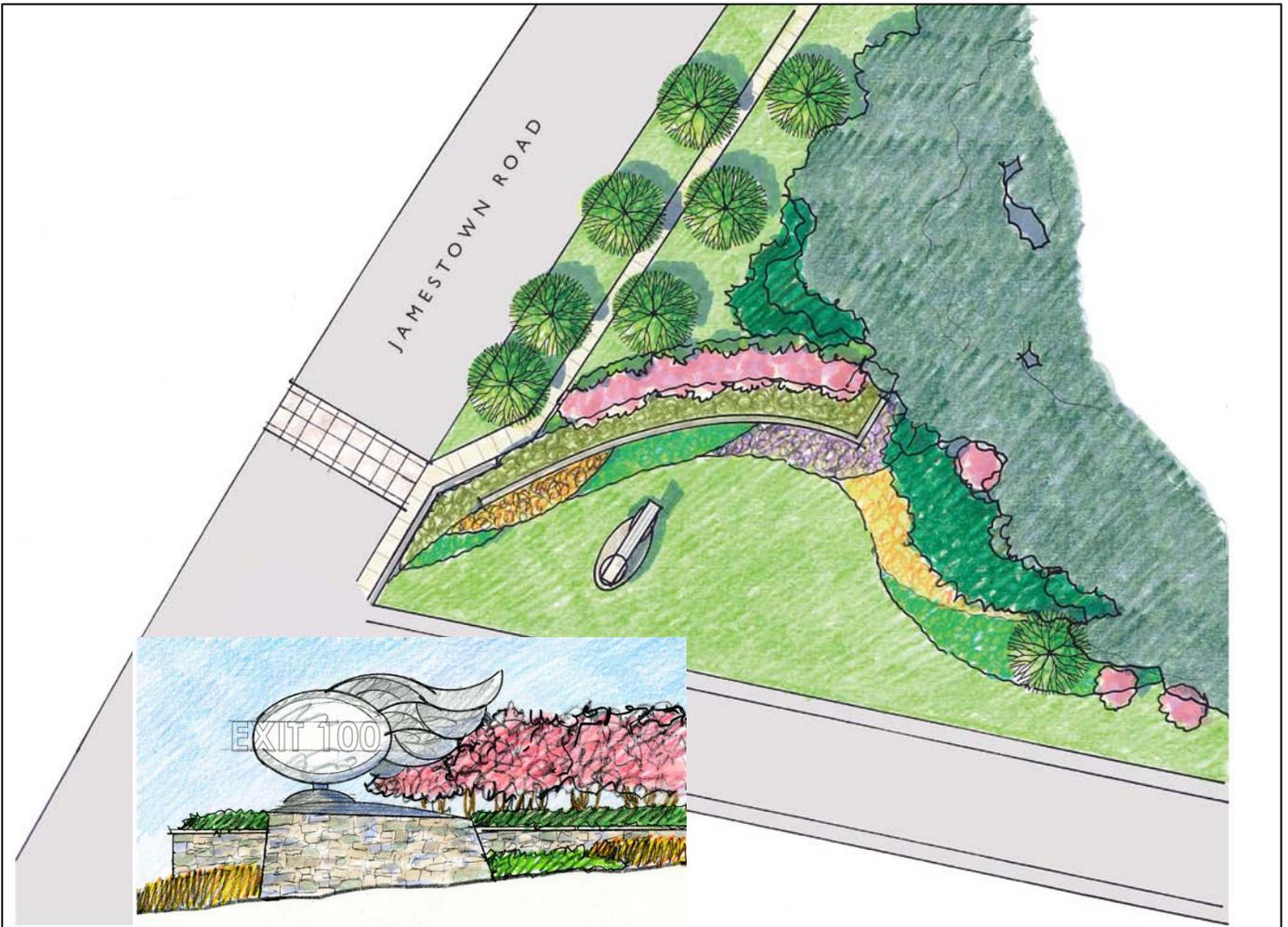


Drexel Plant #7 is a vacant structure adjacent to the Rite Aid Pharmacy. The large brick building is a significant landmark at the entrance to downtown. The site is directly across from the shopping center and has ample parking to accommodate multiple uses.

A design concept was developed for the adaptive reuse of the buildings for flex employment space, office, retail and residential uses.

The addition of new glass windows and awnings at ground level, an entry plaza with outdoor seating and landscaping creates an attractive gateway building. There are additional manufacturing sites further along Fleming Drive that have potential for redevelopment as a destination retail center. Drexel Plant #7 is physically separated from these sites and should be redeveloped for smaller scale uses that would enhance the pedestrian feel of the corridor.

Rite Aid Pharmacy is a relatively new building with entrances on Fleming Drive and South Sterling Street. The design concept proposes the addition of a low wall with landscaping to frame the corner of the intersection. Installing awnings over the windows would soften the façade and transform a suburban style building to a more urban design. Redevelopment of the Drexel plant would create an opportunity to incorporate similar landscape elements at both locations.



Route 40 - Exit 100 Gateway Sign Concept Plan

MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA Land Use Plan Update

SCALE: 1" = 10'



## JAMESTOWN ROAD GATEWAY AND CORRIDOR DESIGN CONCEPT

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Interstate 40 Exit 100 Jamestown Road is an opportunity location a broad range of commercial uses, from general retail to large-scale commercial sales and services. Many of these are larger-scale commercial activities are oriented towards customers arriving by vehicle, and have operating characteristics that are less compatible with retail activities envisioned in the destination retail centers and downtown. The larger-scale retail commercial activities are vital to serve the resident's needs and to bring revenue to the City and County. Examples of these uses include automobile sales and services, hardware and home improvement, and landscape and garden centers. The Jamestown Road Commercial Corridor is an ideal location for these types of commercial uses and services.

One of the key commercial activities that falls within the category of larger-scale commercial uses is Motor Vehicle Sales. There are currently five new car dealers within the City limits. The land designated as Commercial Corridor/Motor Vehicles Sales Corridor already houses two of these dealerships. The remainder of the City's dealerships are scattered throughout the City.

A recent analysis of sales tax revenue identified automotive sales as one of the largest missed opportunities for Burke County. Motor vehicle and parts sales in Burke County are significantly lower than would be projected for a similar size community. Many of these sales are lost to neighboring counties. Increasing the volume of sales of new and used vehicles would be of great benefit to the City and County. Studies indicate that the distance separating dealerships can be detrimental to their performance, particularly with the trend to cluster auto dealerships and the advent of regional auto mall typically located near highway interchanges.

A design concept was developed to explore the possibility of defining this area as a destination for motor vehicle sales and related services.

The design concept begins with creating a unique entrance sign for Jamestown Road.

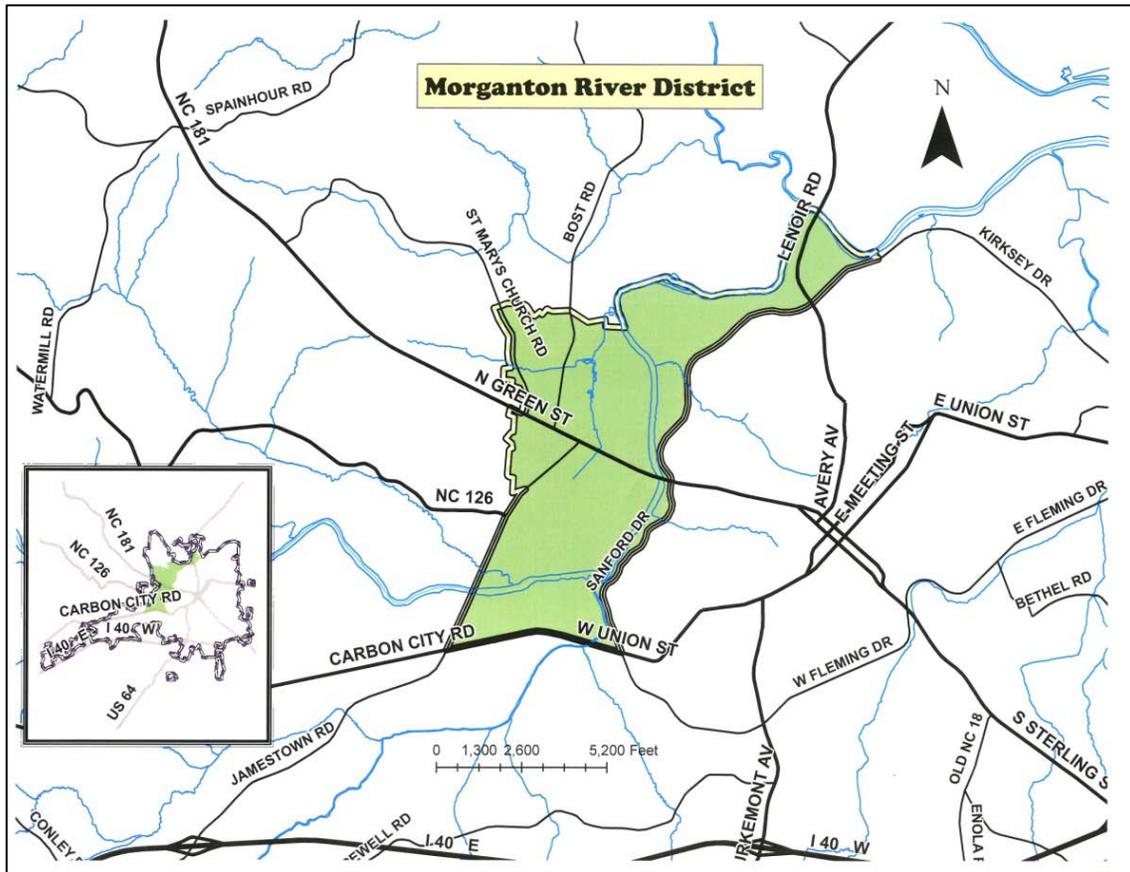


Exit 100 - Jamestown Road Corridor  
MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA Land Use Plan Update



The design concept for Jamestown Road is three or four blocks in length and includes automobile related uses. The existing service station could be expanded as a motorist service center with restaurants, market, fuel and carwash. It is located adjacent to the exit ramp and provides easy access for travelers and would support the adjacent automobile and motorcycle dealers, garden center and home improvement stores.

An important element of the design is the compact urban character of the area, with building brought close to the roadway and parking lots framed by landscaping. Motor vehicle dealerships could include unique façade design elements and lighted indoor showrooms that would contribute to the destination character of the area.



### CATAWBA RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN CONCEPT

Morganton's River District is anchored by the Catawba Meadows Sports Complex and Catawba River Greenway. There is an emerging restaurant and entertainment center at North Green Street. The City has plans to extend the Greenway to link Downtown and the neighborhoods to the River District. The River District has the potential to become a recreation and outdoor destination. The Economic Development Strategic Plan encourages development of an incubator space for seasonal vendors.

The West Union Street/ Sanford Drive and North Green Street/Sanford Drive intersections have the greatest potential for redevelopment as gateways to the River District.



The shopping center on Carbon City Road is an opportunity site for redevelopment as a mixed use retail and entertainment center. The design concept illustrates the redevelopment of the site one and two story buildings in the interior of the site, with a restaurant located along the river. Two story apartments face Golf Club Road with parking to the rear of the buildings.

The opposite corner is redeveloped with a mix of residential and commercial uses. Buildings are brought up to the roadway with parking in the rear defining the intersection.

Additional landscaping, plazas and pedestrian crossings are added at the corners to enhance the pedestrian character of the area.



## NORTH GREEN STREET RIVER DISTRICT GATEWAY

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The bridge over the Catawba River is an entry point to the Catawba Greenway and the gateway to the Revolutionary War Heritage Corridor. North Green Street /NC 18 is the primary transportation link from Interstate 40 to Lake James and other mountain destinations. It serves as an important gateway corridor.

The design concept for this area begins with the design of the replacement bridge over the Catawba River. The design incorporates both elements of the river and the Revolutionary War monuments. As the area is developed with recreation, retail, employment, and residential uses it will become a lively area for pedestrians and bicyclists. The bridge design emphasizes the changing nature of the roadway by incorporating design features to encourage pedestrians to use the bridge as a link between retail and recreation uses.



## NORTH GREEN STREET HERITAGE CORRIDOR DESIGN CONCEPT

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The North Green Street Corridor is an important heritage corridor, employment and retail center. This was one of the most challenging community design corridors in the City. The goal was to encourage reuse and redevelopment of the vacant manufacturing and industrial buildings with new employment uses, encourage the continued development of retail and commercial uses, and enhance the visual appearance as an important heritage corridor.

The design concept encourages maintaining North Green Street as a two lane roadway with clearly defined entrances to retail and employment centers. New buildings should be brought close to the roadway creating a defined edge softened by shrubs and landscape material.

There is a significant development site on the south side of the street beginning at the intersection with Bost Road. The site presents some topographic challenges. The design concept proposes the addition of a new road that would serve the site allowing the buildings to be built close to the roadway with parking in the rear.

On the north side of the street on the site of the former K-Mart, the design concept proposes adding new buildings along the street frontage with split rail fencing and low shrubs and landscape materials transforming an outdated shopping center into a modern attractive mixed use retail center.



### **Revolutionary War Heritage Corridor**

Catawba Meadows and the McDowell House located on Bost Road are important historic resources in the story of the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War. Both are accessed from North Green Street.

Many historians consider the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780 to be the turning point in America's War for Independence. This decisive battle successfully ended the British invasion into North Carolina and forced the British to retreat from Charlotte into South Carolina to wait for reinforcements. This triumphant victory of the Overmountain Men allowed General Nathanael Greene the opportunity to reorganize the American Army.

The Overmountain Men of 1780 from the northwestern mountains of North Carolina and today's eastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia gathered at Catawba Meadows and the McDowell House to join forces with other Patriot militiamen to confront the British Army at Kings Mountain.

The National Park Service has initiated a study to evaluate the resources associated with the South's role in the Revolution as a new National Heritage Area. Catawba Meadows and the McDowell House are important resources that would be included in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War Heritage Area.

The design concept incorporates split rail fencing as a design element along the roadway with sidewalk and a wide planting strip accenting the rural character of the area.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **MISSION 2030 TEAM**

John Branstrom (Co-Chair)

Bruce Hershock (Co-Chair)

Bill Allman

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Scott Walker

Jim Toner

Don Wright

We would like to acknowledge the many members of the Morganton and Burke County community who participated in this process.

### **Planning Commission**

#### *City Council Appointments*

Claude Huffman

Mark McMahon

Hank Dickens

Edward Kerns

Marc Sholar

Hugh Tate Ervin

Bill Lennon

Charlie Sasser

Otto Woerner

#### *County Commission Appointments*

Susan Janney

Louis Vinay

**City Council**

Mel Cohen, Mayor

Dr. Alfred Hamer Jr., Councilman & Mayor Pro Tem

John Cantrell, Councilman

Forrest A. Fleming., Councilman

Larry Whisnant, Councilman

**City Manager**

Sally Sandy, City Manager

**Planning Director**

Lee Anderson

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