

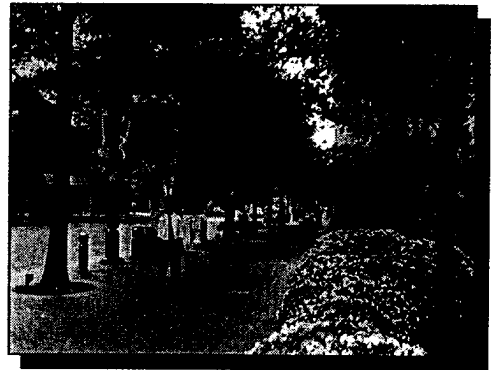
# SOUTHPARK SMALL AREA PLAN

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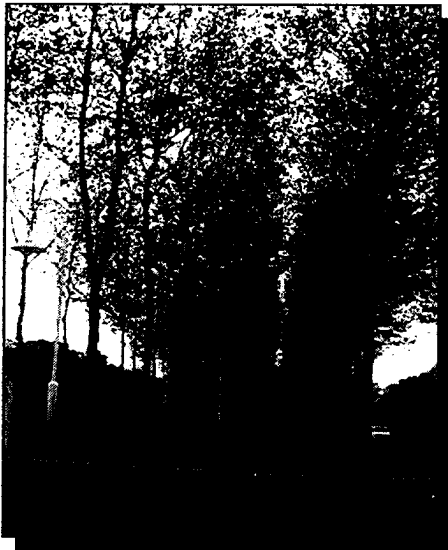
## Volume 1: Concept Plan



*Mixture of Land Uses*



*Public Open Space*



*Transportation Options*

Adopted by the  
Charlotte City Council  
March 27, 2000



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## PREFACE

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This *SouthPark Small Area Plan* is a framework to help guide future public and private decision making toward long-term, agreed upon objectives. It provides a vision of what the SouthPark area could look like in the near future (5-10 years) and contains goals and recommendations for achieving that vision.

The plan was developed with a group of area stakeholders, working with Planning Commission and City Department of Transportation staff to craft recommendations addressing issues of future growth and development. During the plan development process, the diverse group of stakeholders attempted to reach consensus and bring forward a single set of recommendations to guide SouthPark's future. In most instances, the stakeholder group was able to reach such a consensus. However, in a few instances, agreement was not reached. In such cases, the differing opinions were brought forward to the elected officials for consideration. This final plan document, however, includes only the recommendations as adopted by the Charlotte City Council.

The study group also differed on the use of the term "urban" in the document. Many of the neighborhood representatives felt that the term "urban" implied development of the intensity of Charlotte's Center City, and was therefore not appropriate in describing the vision for SouthPark. The development and business representatives on the study group felt that the term "urban" was appropriate because it described the character of the development we were trying to create (i.e., pedestrian-oriented, mixed land use, building orientation). In most instances, staff replaced the term urban with the term "town center". A definition of both town center and urban are included in the glossary.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The boundaries for the *SouthPark Small Area Plan* study area, as shown on **Map 1**, generally encompass SouthPark Mall and the adjacent commercial and office development. A number of adjacent multi-family properties are also included in the study area. Also shown on Map 1 is an area referred to as the Neighborhood Involvement Area. This area was delineated at the outset of the plan development process as the area most impacted by development within the SouthPark study area. As such, special efforts were made to encourage residents from this area to be involved in the planning process.

The *SouthPark Small Area Plan* refines the *South District Plan*, which was adopted in 1993, by providing further direction for guiding development in the SouthPark area. It provides recommendations for addressing land use, transportation/circulation, development design and other neighborhood preservation issues. It was initiated in response to concerns relating to the impact of continued office and commercial development on the surrounding residential areas and on the existing transportation infrastructure.

This plan is intended to provide guidance not only to the governing bodies in future decision making, but also to the development community and to neighborhood residents. It establishes a new vision for the SouthPark area as a town center, developed with the highest attention to design detail, supportive of alternative modes of transportation and providing a highly livable environment.

A study group of neighborhood, business and development representatives worked with City and County staff members in developing this plan. The study group met a total of fourteen times between February and November, 1998 to set a vision for the future of the study area; to identify, discuss and analyze the important issues; and to formulate recommendations to ensure the long-term viability and livability of the SouthPark area. Public meetings were held on April 2, 1998 and October 12, 1998 to gather input from area stakeholders.

### ISSUES

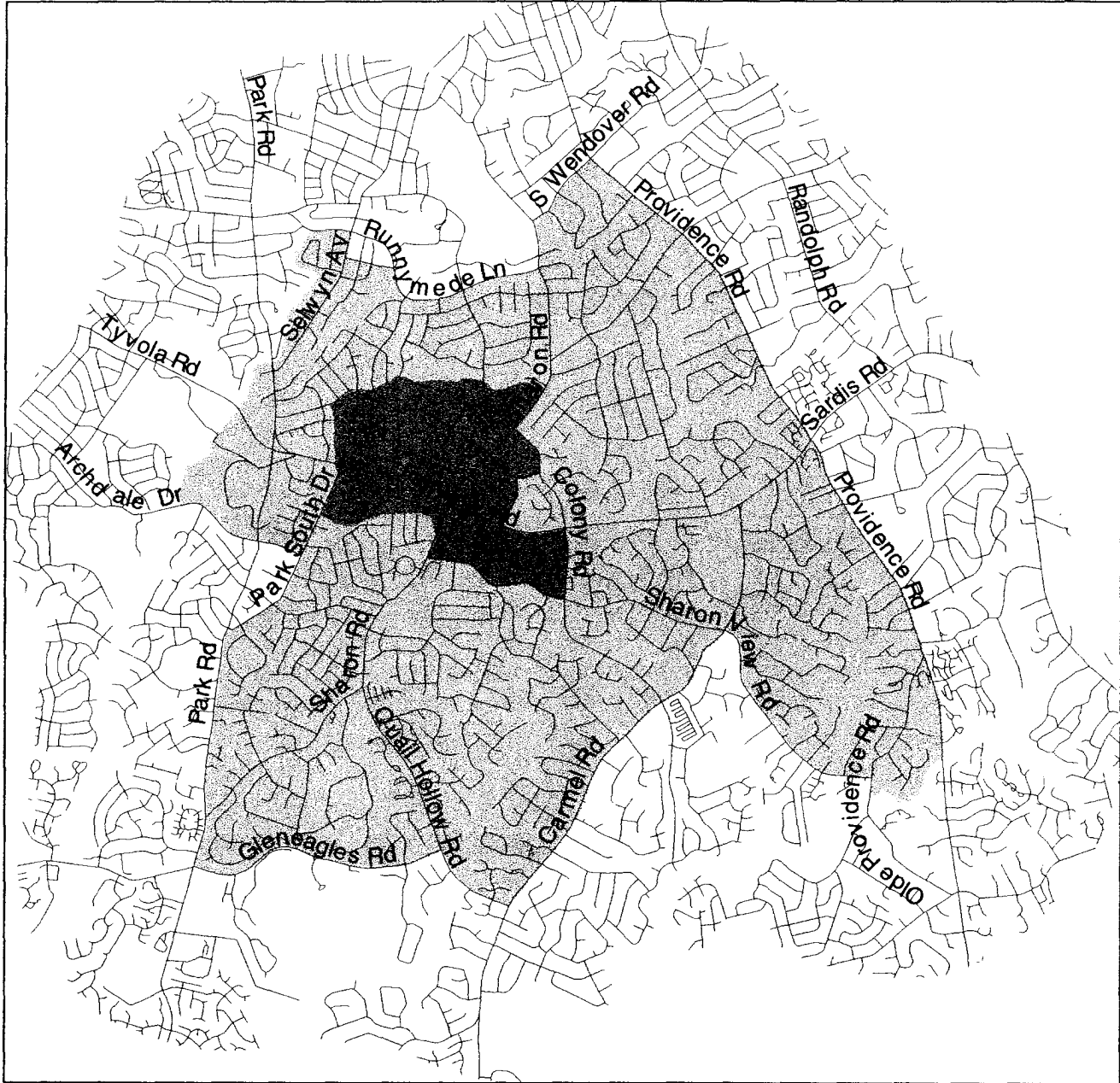
Key issues identified during the plan development process are summarized below.

1. *Land Use/Zoning* – need to understand the long-term development potential provided for in the adopted land use plan and by existing zoning and carefully manage this growth and its impact on the long-term viability of this area.
2. *Transportation* – traffic congestion, cut-through traffic, transit service, connections to mass transit, lack of sidewalks and clearly delineated pedestrian linkages, lack of bicycle facilities, and parking.
3. *Parks and Recreation* - lack of open/green space (public and private) and active recreational facilities.

# SouthPark Small Area Plan

## Study Area Boundary

Map 1



Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, September, 1998.

-  Study Area
-  Neighborhood Involvement Area



4. *Traffic Safety* – special considerations need to be made to ensure the safety of pedestrians, including enforcement of traffic laws when motorists compromise pedestrian safety.
5. *Community Involvement/Neighborhood Preservation* – local government, neighborhoods and development community need to work together to ensure that quality growth and neighborhood preservation coexist.
6. *Environment* – preserve and improve current environmental quality.

## **PURPOSE AND VISION**

It is the challenge of the *SouthPark Small Area Plan* to integrate a mixture of land uses and a range of development intensities into a compatible whole, which will ensure that this area remains a very livable and economically viable place in the long term. Guided by this plan, the SouthPark area will continue to be an outstanding place to live, work, shop and play. To help SouthPark achieve this future, this plan lays out a long-term land use and transportation vision and defines key design principles and recommendations.

The direction that development takes is a basic concern in the SouthPark area. An efficient, safe and humane environment that serves the needs of both the residential and business community can be realized only if all the elements of the area work in harmony. Achieving vitality and quality starts with the recognition of the unique character of the SouthPark area and the future development vision. The plan recognizes that with the growth of Charlotte-Mecklenburg over the last few decades, SouthPark is no longer a suburban location, and will not be able to compete in the long-term with outlying shopping and office areas if it continues to develop in accordance with a suburban model. This plan envisions the SouthPark area transitioning from a suburban shopping and business environment to a town center composed of a balanced mixture of land uses – residential, commercial, office, retail, parks and open space, civic uses - served by a street network that is accommodating to pedestrians, transit, automobiles, and bicycles; and serving as an integral part of a safe, efficient, and convenient future mass transit system.

## **GOALS**

- Create a greater mixture of land uses within the study area, especially by incorporating more multi-family residential development, and protect the surrounding residential areas from encroachment of non-residential land uses.
- Ensure that future development and redevelopment meet specified design standards and furthers the vision created for SouthPark.
- Identify and plan for future mass transit service in the SouthPark area.

- Develop a multi-modal transportation system that emphasizes pedestrian improvements and linkages to mass transit.
- Develop a public gathering space and a network of green spaces.
- Create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment.
- Ensure the long-term viability of neighborhoods and business/commercial areas.
- Maintain a healthy, highly livable natural environment.
- Establish on-going communication linkages between neighborhood residents, businesses, the development community and local government.

## **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Summarized below are the key recommendations that need to be carried out to ensure the future vitality and livability of the SouthPark study area.

### **Land Use and Zoning**

- Incorporate green/open space into all new development.
- Identify and develop a community gathering space.
- Confine non-residential expansion to the existing study area, with no expansion into surrounding residential areas. A limited retail component may be introduced into multi-family developments in specified locations based on established criteria. *(Study group did not reach consensus on this recommendation.)*
- Encourage more residential development within the study area to create more of a mixture of land uses.
- Support the transition of SouthPark Mall into a mixed-use center.

### **Development Design**

- Ensure that new development and redevelopment in the study area meet specific design criteria including the provision of open space, pedestrian-orientation, site design, height limitations, and streetscape improvements.
- Retrofit major roadway intersections, including the following, to make them safer for pedestrians and to add to the aesthetic appeal of the area: Sharon and Fairview Roads; Fairview Road and mall entrance; Barclay Downs Drive and Carnegie Boulevard; Morrison Boulevard and mall entrance; and Sharon Road and mall entrance.
- Encourage development of streetscapes with planting strips, sidewalks, and lighting wherever feasible.
- Link public facilities and integrate them into the community, including linking SouthPark with the greenway system and with nearby schools and libraries.

## **Transportation, Access and Circulation**

- Incorporate SouthPark into the current mass transit planning initiative as one of the key activity centers and identify and plan for how service will be provided to this area.
- Design roadway improvements to also accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users.
- Develop a conceptual street grid to guide future development plans so that an internal circulation system can be developed to provide greater accessibility and circulation within the study area.
- Implement a transit circulator service within the study area, expand existing transit services and complete a comprehensive transit hub plan for SouthPark.
- Provide sidewalks to connect neighborhoods, schools and other public facilities, shopping, restaurants, businesses and recreational areas.
- Provide bicycle linkages to area parks, schools, recreational facilities and the developing greenway system.
- Implement plans to encourage use of alternative transportation in the SouthPark area.

## **Traffic Safety**

- As part of making key intersections safer for pedestrians, consider prohibiting “right turns on red” and installing traffic monitoring cameras to ensure that motorists do not compromise pedestrian safety.
- Give high priority to including neighborhoods adjacent to the SouthPark study area in the City’s neighborhood traffic management program.

## **Community Involvement**

- Establish opportunities for neighborhood, business, development and government representatives to share information and ideas regarding future growth and development in the SouthPark area.

## **Environment**

- Promote development that minimizes automobile dependence.
- Provide more natural buffering for stormwater runoff by implementing greenway development plans.
- Encourage increased environmental sensitivity of area residents, workers and employers through participation in programs like adopt-a-stream, recycling, reduced price transit passes and alternative transportation incentives.

# PLAN ORGANIZATION

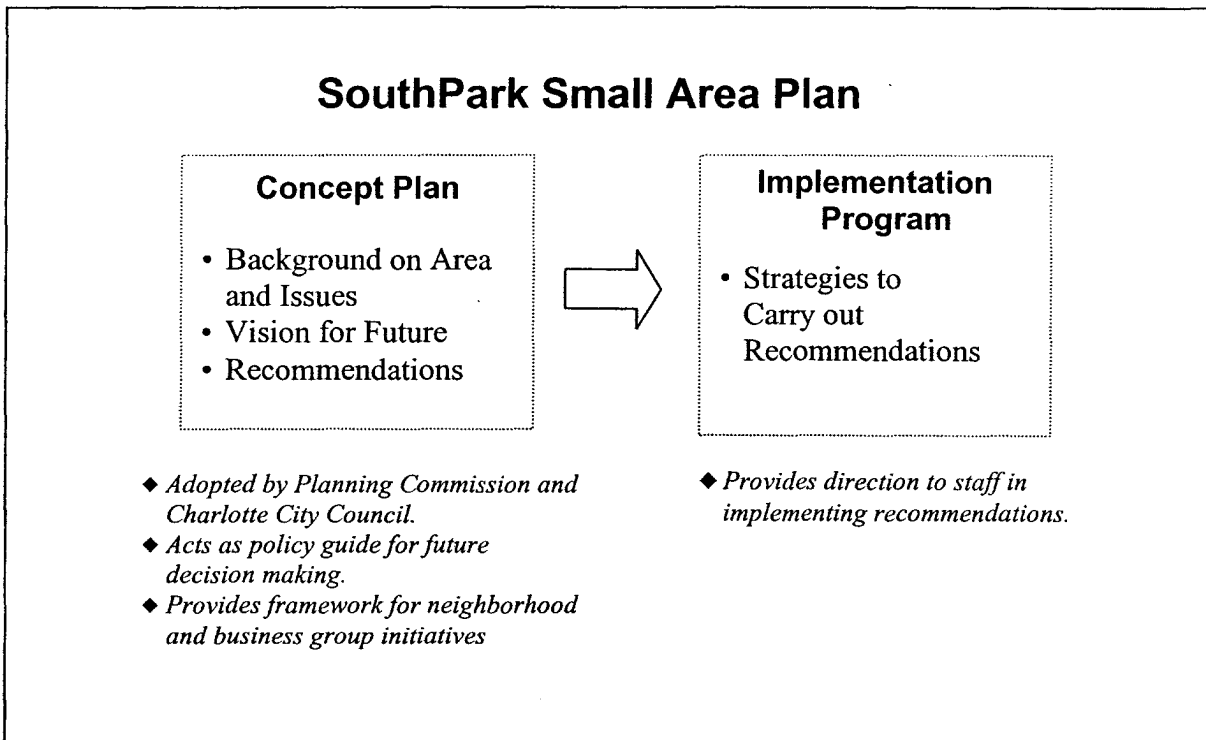
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This *SouthPark Small Area Plan* is divided into two planning documents: Volume 1: The Concept Plan, and Volume 2: The Implementation Program. This document, the Concept Plan, provides background information on the SouthPark area and the key issues raised during the planning process; a vision for the future of the SouthPark area; and recommendations to achieve that vision.

More specific strategies to carry out the general recommendations found in the Concept Plan, are provided in the Implementation Program document.

The Concept Plan was reviewed and adopted by the Planning Committee of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission. The Planning Commission then forwarded the plan onto the Charlotte City Council for review and decision. Once adopted by the Charlotte City Council, the plan becomes part of the City's policy framework to provide guidance in future decision making. Plan recommendations are forwarded on to appropriate City and County departments for further refinement and inclusion in future work programs. The plan also serves as a guide for neighborhood and business groups for focusing their efforts to enhance the SouthPark community.

The Implementation Program identifies strategies to implement the recommendations in the Concept Plan. The Implementation Program is not intended to be an adopted document. Rather, it is intended to provide direction to staff and other implementing bodies in most effectively carrying out the intent of the Concept Plan.



## **EXISTING CONDITIONS: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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This plan refines the *South District Plan*, which was adopted in 1993, by providing further direction for guiding development in the SouthPark area. It provides recommendations for addressing land use, transportation/circulation, development design and other neighborhood preservation issues. It was initiated in response to concerns relating to the impact of continued office and commercial development on the surrounding residential areas and on the existing transportation infrastructure.

This section of the *SouthPark Small Area Plan* provides background information on the study area and the key issues raised during the planning process. The emphasis is on current conditions, including a discussion of what is already being planned or implemented relative to a particular concern. The focus of this section is not on providing solutions or recommendations. These can be found in a separate section, and in the accompanying implementation document.

### **LAND USE AND ZONING**

The SouthPark Study Area (**Map 1**) includes SouthPark Mall and the adjacent commercial and office development. A number of adjacent multi-family properties are also included in the study area. The SouthPark area is located in Charlotte's South District. The boundaries as defined for this small area plan are Park South Drive and the Carnegie Boulevard office area on the west, the Barclay Downs neighborhood on the north, Colony Road on the east and Sharon View Road and the Beverly Woods neighborhood on the south.

Development of the SouthPark area began in the 1960's. Today, the majority of development in the study area is commercial and retail as shown on the existing land use map. (**Map 2**). **Table 1** lists the building square footage by type that currently (1997) exists within the study area.

**TABLE 1**

#### **SouthPark Study Area Existing (1997) Building Square Footage and Land Area**

*Source: 2/1997 Real Property Tax Information (by tax parcel)*

<b>Building Type</b>	<b>Existing Building Sq. Ft.</b>	<b>Total Acreage</b> (excluding vacant)
Commercial	2,367,837	146.6
Office	4,937,297	217.9
Residential	1,943,578	180.0
Institutional	34,415	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,283,127</b>	<b>550.6</b>

As shown in Table 1, approximately 2.4 million square feet of commercial, 4.9 million square feet of office and 2.0 million square feet of residential existed within the study area in 1997. The study area encompasses approximately 653 acres. Of this total acreage, approximately 102 acres was vacant, as shown in **Table 2**. Approximately 8 acres of this vacant land was zoned for commercial use, 48 acres for office, and 31 acres for residential development. Also shown is a miscellaneous category that includes land specifically dedicated as open space or parking area (i.e., not to be developed). Of this 15 acres of miscellaneous vacant area, ten acres was zoned as office and five acres was zoned as commercial.

Noticeably missing from this land use tabulation is land devoted to park and recreation uses. Park Road Park is a 125-acre district park located just outside of the SouthPark study area. It provides a wide range of active and passive recreation facilities. However, no public park and recreational facilities are located within the study area, with the exception of the recently developed Panther Park located within the Live Oak neighborhood. The *South District Plan* and the *Parks Master Plan*, 1989, identified the need for a district park in the immediate SouthPark area, south of Fairview Road. While the park plan recommended the purchase of 100 acres in this area, the district plan suggested purchasing a lesser acreage and utilizing it to a higher intensity due to the lack of resources for acquiring land. To date, land has not been identified or acquired for development of a park in the SouthPark area.

**TABLE 2**  
**SouthPark Study Area Existing (1997) Vacant Acreage**

*Source: 2/1997 Real Property Tax Information (by tax parcel)*

<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Vacant (acres)</u>
Commercial	8.2
Office	48.3
Residential	30.5
Miscellaneous*	<u>15.4</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>102.4*</b>

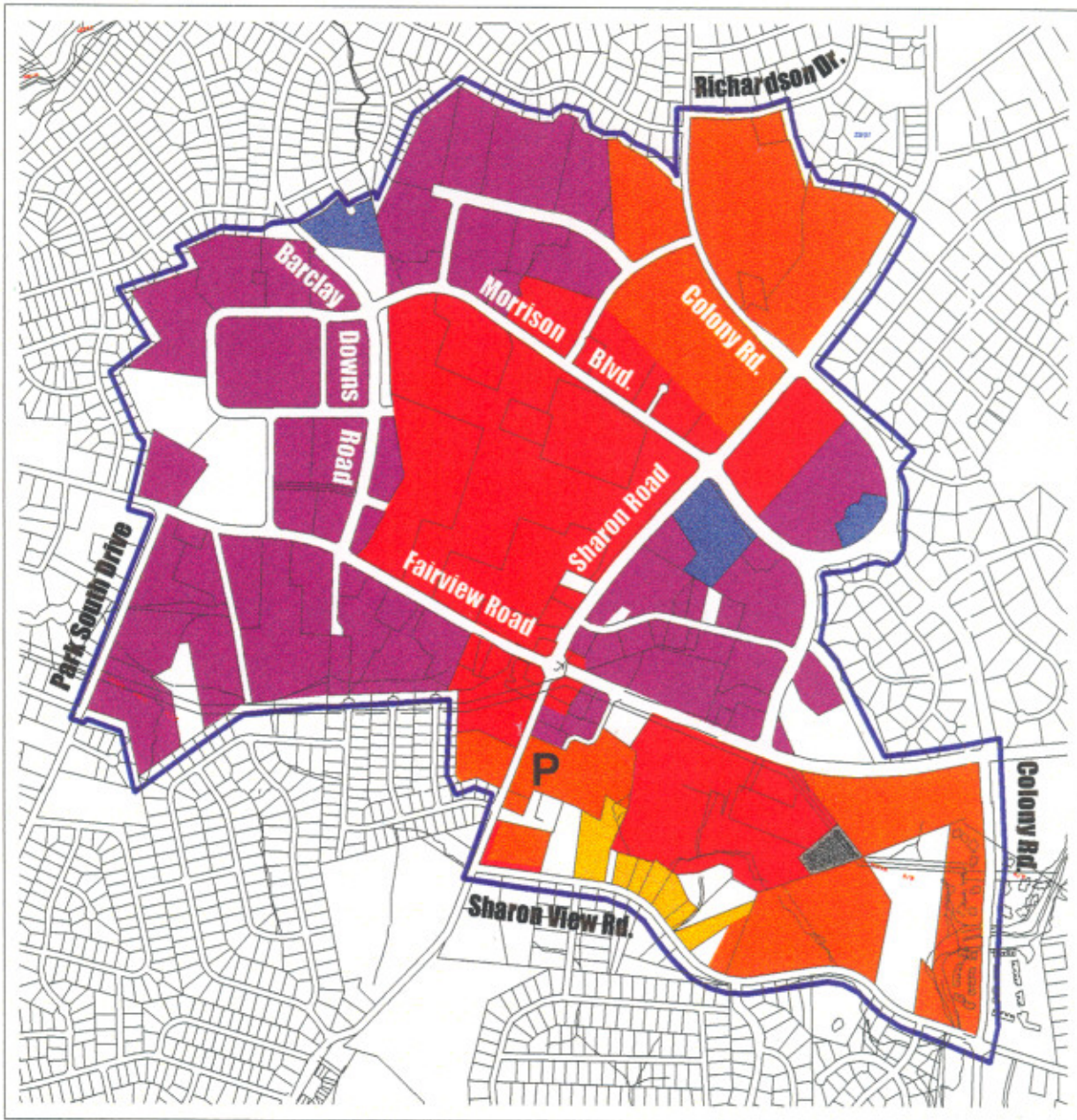
\* Includes some areas dedicated as open space or parking.

Existing zoning is illustrated on **Map 3**. As shown, the core of the study area is zoned for shopping center development (B-1 S.C.D.). Surrounding this retail core, are varying intensities of office zoning (O-1 to O-15 CD) and higher density multi-family residential. Commercial Center (CC) zoning has been applied to the area encompassed by the Phillips Place development on Fairview Road. This CC zoning allows for a mixture of land uses including retail, office and residential.

# SouthPark Small Area Plan

## Generalized Existing Land Use

Map 2



Source: Based on Charlotte-Mecklenburg Tax Data Files as of January 1998

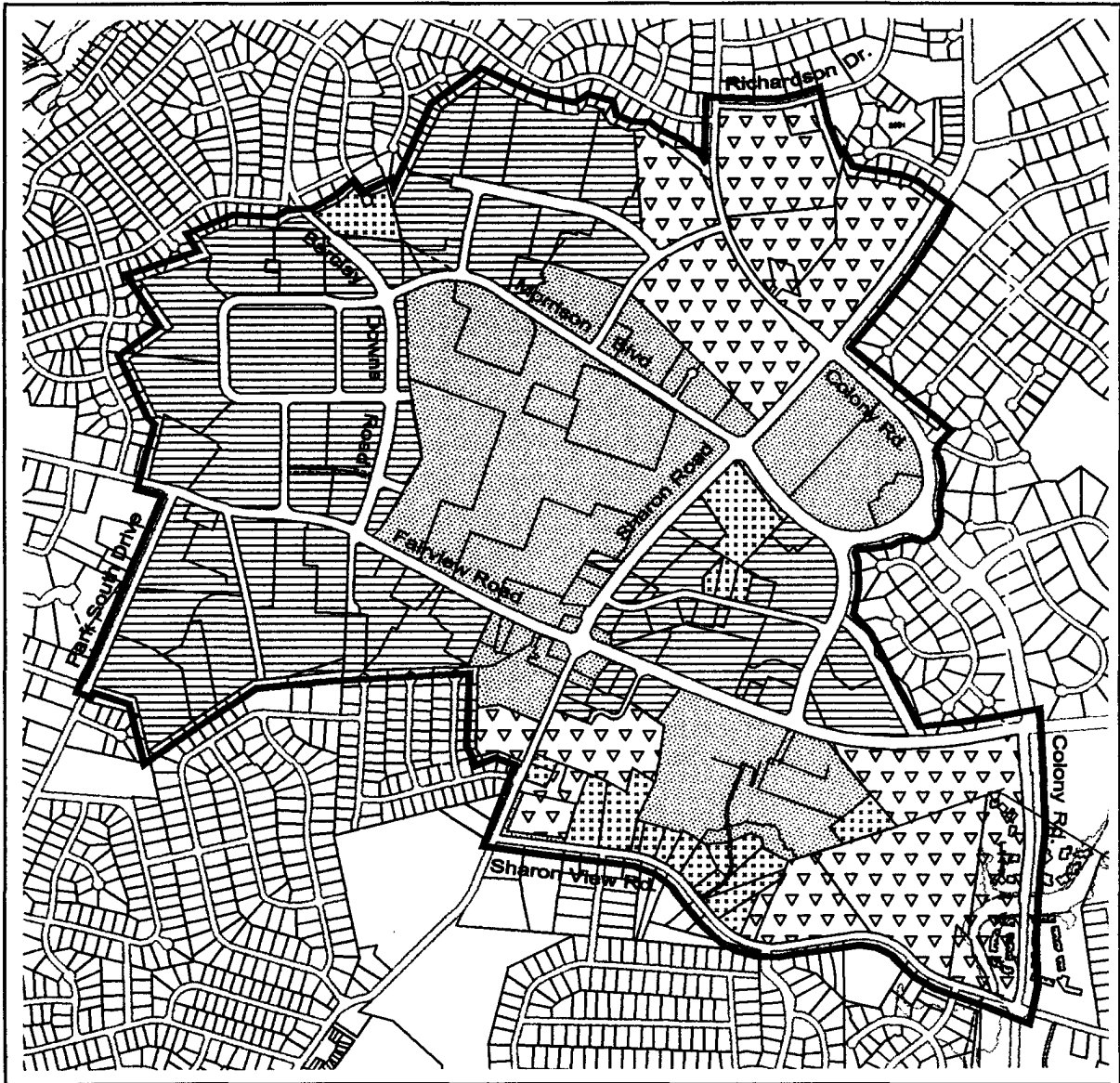
- |                                       |            |               |               |
|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| Multi-Family / Single Family Attached | Commercial | Institutional | Existing Park |
| Single Family                         | Office     | Utilities     | Vacant        |



# SouthPark Small Area Plan

## Generalized Existing Zoning

Map 3



Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, September 1998

 Single Family  
 Multi-Family

 Commercial  
 Office



Scale : 1" = 1400'



As development pressure continues to increase in the SouthPark area, proposals for infill and redevelopment projects will grow. Given existing zoning, it is estimated that approximately 1.6 million square feet of office space could be added to the SouthPark study area (**Table 3**). This development scenario assumes that vacant land will be developed at the highest floor area ratio allowed under current zoning and that all conditional development site plans are built at the maximum allowable square footage. These conditional plans, alone, account for approximately one million square feet of future development potential in SouthPark.

In addition to the potential for future office development, it is estimated that under current zoning approximately 140,000 square feet of additional commercial space is allowed in the SouthPark area. This additional commercial space has been approved in conditional development plans, but not yet built. Table 3 summarizes potential development scenarios under existing non-residential zoning.

**TABLE 3**  
**SouthPark Study Area Non-Residential Development Potential**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Existing Building Sq. Ft. as of 2/99<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Additional Sq. Ft. Allowed<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Total Building Sq. Ft.</b>
<b>Commercial Development</b>	2.4 million	0.14 million	2.56 million
<b>Office Development</b>	5.3 million	1.64 million <sup>3</sup>	6.91 million
<b>Total Office and Commercial</b>	<b>7.7 million</b>	<b>1.78 million</b>	<b>9.47 million</b>

*The information in the above table illustrates the development potential in the SouthPark study area if currently vacant parcels were to be developed to the maximum extent allowed under existing zoning **and** building space currently approved in existing CD plans were to be built:*

Notes:

1. Existing building square footage is based on February 1999 tax data from Mecklenburg County G.I.S. Real Estate system on line.
2. Includes estimated future development for vacant, non-residentially zoned parcels and approved, but not built conditional district (CD) plans. The building square footage figures were taken from CD site plans where applicable. If no CD plan applied, the maximum square footage was calculated based on the floor area ratios (F.A.R.s) in the adopted South District Plan (assuming no structured parking).
3. This number assumes that all parcels will be developed at 100% of their allowed maximum square footage (assuming no structured parking). A lower number may be more reasonable given that: 1) some small parcels will likely not be developed, and 2) recent trends indicate that some parcels have not been developed at their maximum potential.

## DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

When the SouthPark area began to develop in the late 1960's and 1970's, the area was truly a suburban location. The suburban character of development that predominates the area today was based on a vision of SouthPark as a suburban office park and regional retail center. As such, buildings are set back from the streets and development is designed for the convenience of people in automobiles. Surface parking lots, numerous driveway cuts, and lack of connectivity are typical features of such suburban development. Various land uses tend to be separated and spread out across the landscape.

Many of the office and commercial buildings are beginning to look dated and developers are increasingly faced with the challenge to upgrade the 1950's, 60's and 70's buildings to make them more competitive with their suburban counterparts. As the corner stone of the study area, a "makeover" of SouthPark Mall will be important not only to the success of the center itself, but to the health and economic vitality of the entire area. The mall owners have expressed a desire to expand the existing facility. They are considering ways to reinvent the center to provide a shopping and entertainment experience which gives its patrons a variety of specialty retail choices, an architectural environment that provides ease of pedestrian movement and lessens dependence on the automobile, and an aesthetically pleasing built environment of indigenous architecture which contains detail and interest.

SouthPark has the reputation as a location for obtaining quality goods and services. That same quality is readily apparent in the new building architecture of recent years. While some of the buildings constructed in the early years of SouthPark have a "modern style" indigenous of the fifties and sixties, many of the recent developments have a more traditional style. Competition is driving the market to produce higher quality projects. Recent development has provided a higher level of attention to detail, site design, materials and long term viability than was typically found in earlier developments.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Roadways

Two major thoroughfares, Fairview Road and Sharon Road, along with several minor thoroughfares, traverse the study area. These roads carry a considerable amount of vehicular traffic. In 1999, the average daily traffic volume on Fairview Road was approximately 41,000 vehicles per day. Approximately 36,000 vehicles per day traveled on Sharon Road. **Table 4** gives a more detailed account of traffic volumes in the area. Traffic volumes are also listed for several minor thoroughfares to provide a more complete picture of study area traffic patterns.

Like many areas of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the SouthPark area has experienced growing traffic volumes over the last several years. Roadway widening and intersection improvements have helped alleviate congestion somewhat, for the short-term. Unfortunately, the thoroughfare system in this part of the City does not provide drivers with many

**TABLE 4**  
**SouthPark Study Area Average Daily Traffic Volumes**

<b><u>Sharon Road</u></b>	<b><u>1995</u></b>	<b><u>1996</u></b>	<b><u>1997</u></b>	<b><u>1998</u></b>	<b><u>1999</u></b>
	<b><u>Volume</u></b>	<b><u>Volume</u></b>	<b><u>Volumes</u></b>	<b><u>Volumes</u></b>	<b><u>Volumes</u></b>
Sharon Rd. N of Runnymede Ln.	27,000				25,600
Sharon Rd. S of Runnymede Ln	26,700	No Counts	No Counts	No Counts	29,400
Sharon Rd. S of Sharon Ln	41,200	Available	Available	Available	39,900
Sharon Rd. N of Fairview Rd.	31,100				37,300
Sharon Rd. S of Fairview Rd.	35,800				46,000
Sharon Rd. S of Sharonview Rd.	32,700				---
<b><u>Fairview Road</u></b>					
Tyvola Rd. W of Park Rd.	---	31,900	No Counts	No Counts	
Fairview Rd. E of Park Rd.	----	39,100	Available	Available	
Fairview Rd. E of Barclay Downs	49,900	46,400			45,900
Fairview Rd. E of Sharon Rd.	29,100	45,100			35,700
Fairview Rd. W of Simsbury Rd.	34,000	---			
Fairview Rd. W of Columbine Cir.	41,400	---			
Fairview Rd. W of Wintercrest Ln.	36,000	---			
<b><u>Colony Road</u></b>					
Colony Rd. S of Selwyn Ave	3,300	---	---	---	No Counts
Colony Rd. N of Runnymede Ln	---	4,700	---	---	Available
Colony Rd. S of Runnymede Ln	14,700	---	---	15,700	
Colony Rd. N of Morrison Bv.	13,000	---	---	---	
Colony Rd. N of Fairview Rd.	---	---	20,000	---	
Colony Rd. S of Fairview Rd.	11,100	---	---	---	
Colony Rd. S of Sharon View Rd.	5,000	---	---	6,400	
<b><u>Barclay Downs Drive</u></b>					
Barclay Downs Dr. N of Morrison Blvd.	13,900	13,600	---	No Counts	No Counts
Barclay Downs Dr. S. of Runnymede Ln.	9,900	9,400	---	Available	Available
Barclay Downs Dr. S of Scofield Rd.	---	---	11,300		
<b><u>Providence Road</u></b>					
Providence Rd. N of Fairview Rd.	32,700	No Counts	No Counts	No Counts	No Counts
Providence Rd. S of Fairview Rd.	42,400	Available	Available	Available	Available

Source: Charlotte Department of Transportation

alternative routes and traffic will continue to build as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area grows. Whether the SouthPark area is your destination, or you are traveling through the area to reach the Coliseum area, Uptown, or other destinations, your choice of routes is limited. Fairview Road provides the east-west linkage in this area and Sharon Road, the most immediate north-south linkage.

Even trips internal to the immediate SouthPark area most often include use of the thoroughfares since developments are seldom connected internally, and pedestrian amenities are lacking. The lack of a good grid network of collectors and thoroughfares in this area, causes Sharon and Fairview Roads to experience the pressure of continuing growth and development both inside and outside of the immediate SouthPark area.

In 1995, the Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) analyzed roadway demands in the SouthPark area. That analysis looked at the impact of future development on the transportation system. For the analysis, future development was determined by using the future land use recommendations in the *South District Plan* (1993). The analysis estimated that given the land use scenarios from the *South District Plan*, development in the SouthPark area could potentially include up to 2.7 million square feet of retail and 11.8 million square feet of office. A transportation modeling program was used to estimate future year (2015) traffic volumes, given this development potential and assuming planned road projects would be completed. The analysis concluded that the daily traffic volumes in the year 2015, would be approximately 50,000 cars a day on Sharon Road and approximately 53,000 cars on Fairview Road.

CDOT is currently working toward providing six lanes on Sharon Road (from Sharon View to Sharon Lane) and on Fairview Road (from Colony Road to Park Road). However, these projects along with the extension of Rea Road are the only major roadway improvements planned for this area.

### **Transit/Mass Transit**

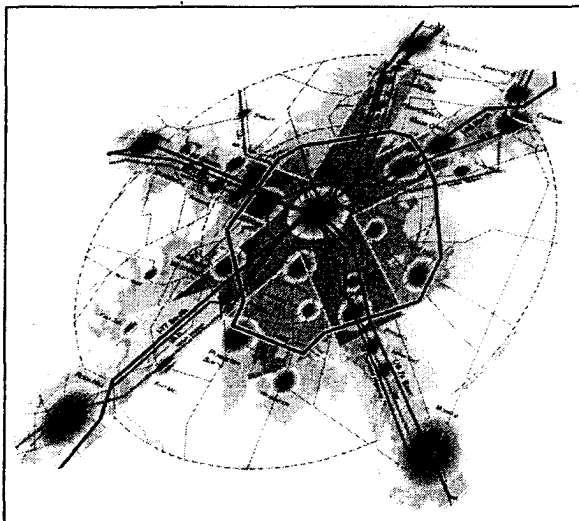
Currently, the SouthPark area is served by five Charlotte Transit bus routes. Three of these routes provide local service and two provide cross-town service. Local routes run along Queens Road, Park Road, and Selwyn Avenue. Cross-town routes link the SouthPark area with the UNCC area and the City's West Side, as well as with the Park Road shopping area. Seven days a week, buses start running at 5:45 a.m. and continue service until 12:20 a.m. Bus service is offered approximately every half hour. According to a boarding survey completed in March 1998, these routes are heavily used. The study concluded that approximately 1000 people per day boarded buses at SouthPark Mall and at the two stops on Morrison Drive during a typical weekday.

Charlotte's current Five Year Transportation Plan (1997-2002) emphasizes the expansion of transit services as a means to lessen traffic congestion and provide alternatives for travel in the Charlotte area. The plan also identifies SouthPark as a future transit mini-hub. As a transit mini-hub, SouthPark would have a much higher level of transit service. More routes would emanate from SouthPark, similar to how transit currently radiates from the Uptown area. The mini-hub service would improve access to major employment centers, expand

service for areas at the City's edge, and improve mobility in the mini-hub areas. In conjunction with the provision of mini-hub transit service, CDOT plans to implement a package of services designed to encourage the use of alternative transportation in the SouthPark area.

In 1996, CDOT conducted a study to identify potential locations for a transit hub facility in the SouthPark area. The study identified six potential locations that met a number of criteria including centralized location, good accessibility and compatibility with surrounding land uses. The three most favorable sites are located in the SouthPark Mall parking lot along the two mall entrance roads leading from Barclay Downs Drive. This transit facility would act as a transfer point for buses serving the SouthPark mini-hub area, including those that would tie into a future mass transit system, and would likely have the ability to accommodate approximately 6-8 buses. Development of the facility is projected to be within the next 2-4 years. Completion depends on the success of the SouthPark mini-hub type transit services and the ability to find a suitable location for the hub.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is currently engaged in a mass transit and land use study that will recommend the types of land-use and mass transit service best suited to serve Charlotte-Mecklenburg's five major corridors -- the University, Independence, South, Airport and North Mecklenburg corridors. Potential transit options being considered include: buses, busways, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, light rail and diesel multiple units. Decisions about what kind of transit will be used and where it will be located will depend on a number of things, including land use patterns, cost estimates, service needs and ridership forecasts.



*As a major employment center, SouthPark will be connected to future mass transit corridors.*

Although the SouthPark area is not located in one of these five transit corridors, it is critical that the area be linked to future mass transit. The high concentration of employment in SouthPark, in particular, necessitates mass transit linkages to ensure continued accessibility and livability in this key activity center. As part of the mass transit and land use plan, transit stops have been identified at Tyvola Road on the South Corridor and Sharon Amity Road on the Independence Corridor to provide future linkages to the SouthPark area. Express feeder bus service is proposed to run along Tyvola and Fairview

Roads to link SouthPark to mass transit in these two corridors and to thereby provide access to the entire mass transit system as currently planned. During the second phase

of the mass transit process, more detailed analysis and recommendations for feeder services will be provided. The South and Independence Corridor have been identified as the highest priority for continued analysis, with the Environmental Impact Study already underway in the South Corridor.

## **Sidewalks/Pedestrian Facilities**

The SouthPark area is fortunate to have a fairly complete sidewalk network on the thoroughfares that traverse the area. However, some gaps exist in this network. Additionally, sidewalks are set against the curb in many areas, compromising pedestrian safety and comfort.

Crosswalks and other improvements to facilitate pedestrian movement are also lacking in the study area. Some intersections are not striped as pedestrian crossing areas and do not have pedestrian activated crossing signals.

## **Bicycle Facilities**

Like the majority of Mecklenburg County, the SouthPark area lacks facilities to accommodate bicycle travel. Bicycle lanes, paths, parking and ancillary facilities are not provided within the study area, with the exception of a bicycle rack at the public library.

Most of the thoroughfares within the study area were rated as “bicycle unfriendly” in the Bicycle Suitability Map recently completed for Mecklenburg County. High traffic volumes and speeds, as well as narrow lane widths on these thoroughfares were the major cause of the “unfriendly” ratings.

In addition, the study area is surrounded by cul-du-sac neighborhoods that do not provide connections for bicyclists and pedestrians to use as an alternative to using the thoroughfare system for most trip purposes.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE**

Situated in south Charlotte, the SouthPark area has developed with a mix of business, shopping and upscale residential living. Development began in the mid 1950's when the Morrison Family sold 90 acres of farmland to the Celenese Corporation who built SouthPark's first office building. The development of SouthPark Mall followed in 1970, also on farmland once owned by the Morrison Family. From these early days of development, SouthPark has grown to be the second largest business district in the state. (Bissel-Hayes webpage)

The success of SouthPark is connected to the stable neighborhoods that surround the business and commercial core. Residents in the SouthPark area enjoy economic health and vitality and the safe and well-maintained neighborhoods that they live in. A number of neighborhoods surround the study area including Barclay Downs, Foxcroft, Beverly Woods, Live Oak, Mountainbrook, Morrocroft and Picardy. Neighborhoods in the area began developing in 1960 with the opening of the Beverly Woods and Beverly Woods East neighborhoods. Huntingtown Farms, another neighborhood in the area, began development in 1964 and was completed in 1980. A majority of the neighborhoods in SouthPark were

built in the 1970's, including such communities as Foxcroft, Foxcroft East, Barclay Downs, Deering Oaks and Parkdale. Many of these neighborhoods have active and informed neighborhood associations. The SouthPark Neighborhood Coalition and the Southeast Coalition of Neighborhood Associations are two organizations that have been especially active in SouthPark area issues and concerns. Both of these organizations draw membership from the numerous neighborhoods throughout the SouthPark area.

A look at the socioeconomic make-up of the neighborhoods surrounding the SouthPark study area will help to provide a context for future planning. The 1990 U.S. Census provides a snapshot of the socioeconomic make-up of the study area neighborhoods as shown in **Table 5**. However, changes have taken place in this area since 1990 that are not reflected in the Census data. As shown, the area includes all of census tracts 29.01, 29.03, 29.04, 30.05, 30.06; census block groups 1 and 4 in tract 30.07; and census block group 1 in tract 31.02.

The total population of the SouthPark neighborhood area was 29,347 in 1990. The area was almost exclusively white, with less than 3 percent black population. Over 66 percent of the households earned more than \$35,000, compared to only 45 percent in the City overall. Residents in these neighborhoods were also more likely to have completed college (62 percent) and to work in white collar jobs (86 percent) compared to the City average of 28 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

## ENVIRONMENT

The SouthPark area, like Mecklenburg County overall, generally has a good environment which continues to make it a desirable and livable community. Our air meets national standards and we continue to have an adequate, safe source of drinking water. However, as the County continues to grow, more stress will be placed on air and water quality, and on the amount of solid waste we generate.

With the ability to build an additional approximately 1.6 million square feet of office and 140,000 square feet of commercial space within the SouthPark study area, it can be expected that the air quality will be affected. Currently, the County is nudging the limits with its overall air quality in accordance with minimum federal levels. In 1995, Mecklenburg County was designated as an attainment area for the national ground-level ozone standard. Since that time, levels above the standard have occurred several times. An ozone awareness program has been implemented throughout Mecklenburg County and the City, with its five year transportation plan, is dedicating greater resources to providing for alternative transportation. Such measures are particularly important in more developed areas, like SouthPark.

Mecklenburg County is divided into eight water basins based on geography. The SouthPark study area lies partly in the South Water Basin and partly in the Southeast Water Basin. According to the *State of the Environment Report*, 1998, while these basins have some of the lowest water quality in the County, surface water quality in the immediate vicinity of the

**TABLE 5**

**SouthPark Neighborhood Involvement Area Socioeconomic Profile**

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

	CT 29.01 Total	%	CT 29.03 Total	%	CT 29.04 Total	%	CT 30.05 Total	%	CT 30.06 Total	%	CT 30.07 BG 1 Total	%	CT 30.07 BG 4 Total	%	CT 31.02 BG 1 Total	%	Total for Area	% of Area	% of City
<b>Population</b>																			
Total	6,028		2,505		6,160		7,425		4,002		686		1,488	6	1,254		29,347		
Black	85	1	106	4	265	4	186	3	55	1	54	8	9	19	32	3	792	3	32
Under 18 yrs	1,151	19	491	20	1,469	24	1,486	20	816	20	150	22	285	8	279	22	5,977	20	24
65 yrs. & over	1,056	18	371	15	608	10	1,092	15	330	8	62	9	124		220	18	3,801	13	10
<b>Households</b>																			
Total	2,741		1,119		2,459		3,111		1,788		232		616		602		12,436		
One-person head	927	34	304	27	587	24	790	25	573	32	26	11	147	24	264	44	3,592	29	28
Married w/children	598	22	217	19	628	26	818	26	399	22	81	35	169	27	137	23	2,966	24	47
Female head w/children	67	2	55	5	160	7	65	2	64	4	0	0	19	3	9	1	439	4	9
<b>Education</b>																			
Adults, 25 yrs. & over	4,435		1,841		4,191		5,390		2,819		494		1,044		937		21,151		
High School Grads	463	10	203	11	422	10	749	14	346	12	56	11	101	10	176	19	2,516	12	81
College Grads	2,885	65	1,284	70	2,800	67	3,160	59	1,773	63	302	61	686	66	327	35	13,217	62	28
<b>Occupations</b>																			
Adults in Labor Force	3,389		1,306		3,535		4,075		2,428		410		919		661		16,723		
White-Collar Jobs	2,923	86	1,157	89	3,124	88	3,477	85	2,124	87	360	89	749	82	461	70	14,375	86	65
Blue-Collar Jobs	377	11	109	8	347	10	535	13	276	11	40	10	144	16	127	19	1,915	11	35
Unemployed	89	3	40	3	64	2	63	2	28	1	10	2	26	3	13	2	333	17	4
<b>Income</b>																			
Total Household	2,741		1,119		2,459		3,111		1,788		232		616		602		12,668		
\$0-\$14,999	306	11	100	9	208	8	270	9	112	6	17	7	29	5	184	31	1,226	10	20
\$15,000-\$24,999	420	15	82	7	261	11	272	9	265	15	17	7	31	5	43	7	1,391	11	18
\$25,000-\$34,999	308	11	109	10	265	11	466	15	325	18	7	3	72	12	84	14	1,629	13	17
\$35,000 an up	1,707	62	828	74	1,725	70	2,103	68	1,086	61	191	82	484	79	291	48	8,415	66	45
Families Below Poverty	35	1	28	3	55	2	28	1	25	1	0	0	0	0	4	7	175	2	8
HH on Public Assistance	34	1	16	1	35	1	45	1	39	2	7	3	4	6	43	7	223	2	11
Female HH Below Poverty	18	.7	28	3	33	1	10	.3	13	.7	0	0	0	0	4	.7	106	.8	27

**NOTE:** The SouthPark neighborhoods correspond to Census Tracts 29.01; 29.03; 29.04; 30.05; 30.06; Blocks 1 and 4 in 30.07; and Block 1 in 31.02.



study area is generally of fair quality. The key component in Mecklenburg County's efforts to improve surface water quality is the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program. The objective of this program is to produce measurably cleaner surface waters and restore the usability of our streams. The program focuses on increasing public awareness and involvement in efforts to restore stream quality, promoting intergovernmental cooperation in addressing planning and development issues effecting water quality, measuring water quality conditions, and identifying and addressing specific pollution problems through the development of water basin plans.

Mecklenburg County continues to generate municipal solid waste at a rate considerably higher than the national average and lacks adequate capacity and options to meet its future disposal needs. As the County overall, and SouthPark in particular, continues to grow and develop, waste generation will likely continue to climb. Recycling and waste reduction programs are currently being conducted by both government and private entities in an effort to meet waste reduction goals and to reduce the cost of doing business.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES**

In creating a future vision for the SouthPark study area, we must think about how we can build on today's strengths and opportunities to enhance the character and vitality of the entire study area. Some of these key strengths and opportunities identified in the study process are listed below:

- Convenience – current mixture of uses enables people to live and work close to services they need (grocery store, churches, banks, shopping).
- Beauty of area - landscaping and architecture provide aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Vitality of neighborhoods – most are well-kept, safe, upper-income areas.
- Quality of existing development - residential and non-residential development generally adheres to very high design and construction standards.
- Involved community - residents are concerned and engaged in issues affecting the future viability of SouthPark area.
- Economic viability of mall and business community - the mall and surrounding business, office and commercial uses are thriving.

The SouthPark study area has all the essential elements to make the area work in the long term. The attributes listed above make SouthPark a desirable place to live and work but have also caused the area to experience problems associated with growth. Addressing concerns in the following six areas will be critical to ensuring the long-term stability of the study area. Focusing on these priorities will allow the SouthPark area to continue enjoying the tremendous strength and vitality it is experiencing today. Each priority should be thought of as part of the big-picture and the long-term implications of their focus should continually be considered.

1. *Land Use/Zoning* – need to understand the long-term development potential provided for in the adopted land use plan and by existing zoning and carefully manage this growth and

it's impact on the long-term viability of this area.

2. *Transportation* – traffic congestion, cut-through traffic, transit service, connections to mass transit, lack of sidewalks and clearly delineated pedestrian linkages, lack of bicycle facilities, and parking.
3. *Parks and Recreation* - lack of open/green space (public and private) and active recreational facilities.
4. *Traffic Safety* – special considerations need to be made to ensure the safety of pedestrians, including enforcement of traffic laws when motorists compromise pedestrian safety.
5. *Community Involvement/Neighborhood Preservation* – local government, neighborhoods and development community need to work together to ensure that quality growth and neighborhood preservation are coexistent
6. *Environment* – preserve and improve the current environmental quality.

# VISION AND CONCEPT PLAN

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## VISION STATEMENT

This plan envisions the SouthPark area transitioning from a suburban shopping and business environment to a town center composed of a balanced mixture of land uses – residential, commercial, office, retail, parks and open space, civic uses - served by a street network that is accommodating to pedestrians, transit, automobiles, and bicycles; and serving as an integral part of a safe, efficient, and convenient future mass transit system.

## DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The attached concept map (**Map 4**) illustrates the proposed major land uses and physical improvements for the SouthPark study area. The focus of the concept plan is on ensuring that future development and redevelopment provides for quality development, environmental integrity, economic vitality and a continued high level of community livability. To that end the plan concept seeks to maintain and enhance the existing neighborhoods, to introduce multi-family residential into the office and retail core, and to prevent the expansion of non-residential development into the neighborhoods adjacent to the study area. Further, the plan proposes the development of design standards that will ensure that green space is incorporated into development; that development meets specified design standards; and that SouthPark becomes an enjoyable place for people to walk and bicycle.

The major development concepts are illustrated on Map 4 and described briefly below:

- The plan concept of adding multi-family residential development to areas currently zoned for office and retail development will assist in achieving several plan objectives. In particular, this will provide more housing opportunities close to employment, shopping, and transit, helping to reduce automobile dependence. Additionally, substituting residential development for some office development will serve to lessen future traffic volume increases.
- Serving the area with future mass transit is critical for continued viability.
- The provision of a network of green/open spaces is an especially important ingredient in the concept plan. Green space is essential in creating a truly livable environment. The creation of small pocket parks, public open space, linkages to the developing greenway system and the development of a large community gathering area are key concepts.
- Non-residential expansion must be limited to the existing study area and not be permitted to encroach into the adjacent neighborhoods. Maintaining the integrity of the nearby neighborhoods is critical to the long-term viability of the SouthPark area.
- Linkages between various land uses, facilities and transit corridors are essential.

- Design concerns are crucial in the successful transition of the SouthPark area from a suburban shopping and office development into a thriving, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use center. Streetscape improvements which include wide sidewalks set off from the curb, planting areas for street trees, pedestrian level lighting, crosswalks and landscaping will help to provide an environment that is safer and more conducive to walking. Attention to building and site design will also be important in achieving the future vision for SouthPark. In particular, buildings need to front the street, parking areas need to be screened and provide for safe pedestrian access and connections, and development must be at a pedestrian scale.

The corner stone of this effort will be the “makeover” of SouthPark Mall. Attention must be paid to recreating the architecture to give the sense of a pedestrian oriented “town center” or “village hub” and to providing an environment that offers a mixture of uses, including green/open space.

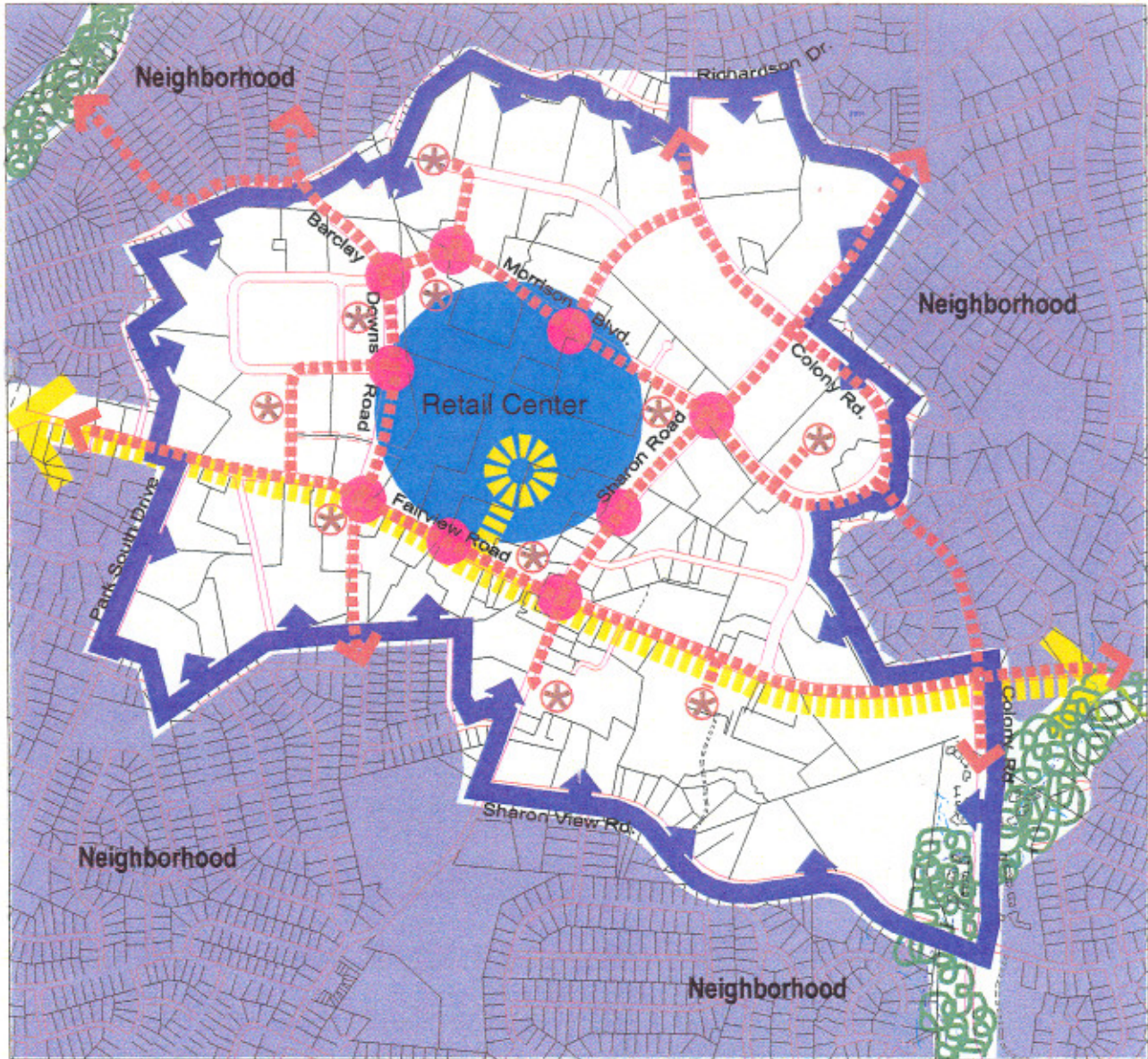
- The overall transportation concept seeks to improve accessibility within and external to the SouthPark study area for both pedestrians and vehicles. Additional sidewalks, bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, and greatly increased transit service are envisioned as part of an overall transportation strategy. The plan also envisions linkages to the Little Sugar Creek Greenway demonstration project that would become part of a larger network linking the study area to parks, schools, neighborhoods, libraries and other facilities.

As important as these development concepts are to ensuring the long-term livability and viability of the SouthPark area, continued communication and cooperation between the various interest groups in the SouthPark area is the key to attaining the vision set out in this plan. These development concepts can be successfully implemented only if leaders of the neighborhoods, businesses and development community are committed to working together to reach their shared vision. These groups must find common ground and resolve to address issues in a positive way. It is intended that these concepts provide the platform for open, constructive and continuing dialog.

# SouthPark Small Area Plan

Map 4











## Concept Map



Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, December 1998



Not to Scale

- |   |                                      |   |   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|
|  | Mass Transit Linkage                 |  | Neighborhoods                               |
|  | Transit transfer station             |  | Non-Residential Limits                      |
|  | Greenway                             |  | Mixed use - Office, Residential, and Retail |
|  | Pedestrian Connections               |  | Major Open Spaces / Green Spaces            |
|  | Regional Retail Center / Residential |  | Pedestrian Intersection improvements        |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The plan recommendations discussed below, provide a more detailed understanding of the key development concepts proposed in this plan. The recommendations are divided into six sections:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Development Design
- Transportation, Access and Circulation
- Traffic Safety
- Community Involvement
- Environment

### I. Land Use and Zoning

The SouthPark area currently includes a mixture of office, commercial/retail, institutional and residential land uses. Such a mixture of land uses is a strength of this area and should be encouraged. If well designed, mixed land uses stimulate pedestrian activity, support transit use and bicycling, create a sense of place, and make for a more livable environment. It is the challenge of the *SouthPark Area Plan* to balance this mixture of land uses and range of development intensities into a compatible whole. Of particular importance is implementing strategies to ensure that parks and open space are included as integral components of SouthPark's land use future and that neighborhoods surrounding the study area are protected from any encroachment of non-residential uses.

Recommendations in each section of this plan are proposed to help balance land uses through design regulations, transportation and circulation improvements and safety considerations. The development of a zoning overlay district is proposed as a way to greatly enhance the area's inventory of green/open space and to create an environment conducive to transit, walking and bicycling. In addition, to ensure that the area retains a significant public gathering space, it will be necessary to identify and plan for the development of such a space.

The following land use recommendations are proposed to help ensure that the SouthPark area achieves a balance of land uses into the future. Land use recommendations are also illustrated on **Map 5**.

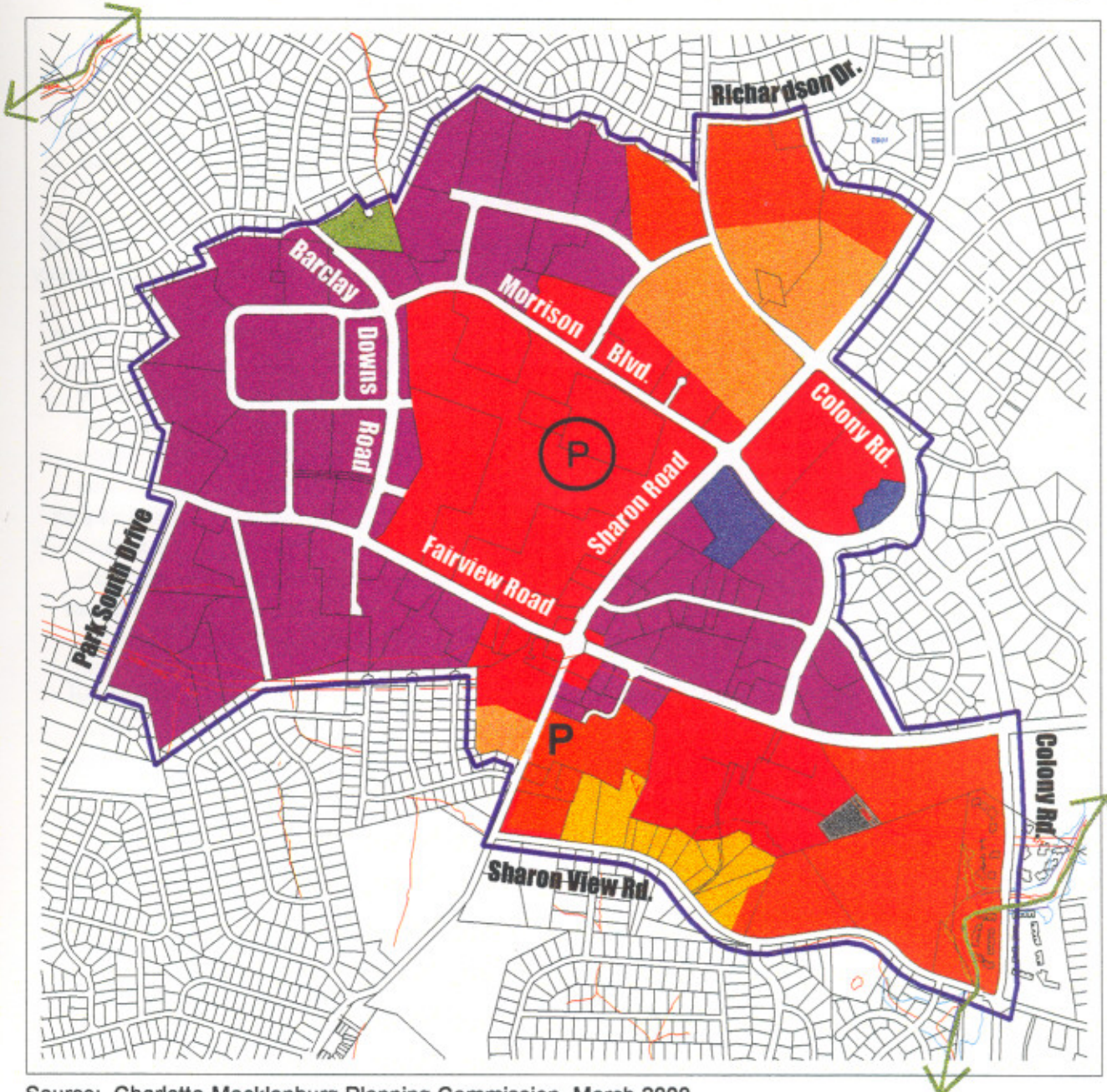
#### A. Parks and Open Space

Parks and open spaces are fundamental features of livable and enjoyable communities. Parks act as neighborhood meeting places, recreational activity centers, passive recreation areas and lunch time picnic spots. Because their function is primarily "public activity," they are most appropriately located central to residential or core areas. Parks should reinforce retail and residential areas by creating places suitable for informal gatherings or public events. The following recommendations will help to ensure that more parks and open space are provided in the study area:

# SouthPark Small Area Plan

## Proposed Land Use

Map 5



Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, March 2000

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Multi-Family / Single Family Attached        | Commercial or Commercial-Residential mixture | Recreation  |
| Multi-Family with limited Retail / Service   | Office or Office-Residential mixture         | A public gathering space is proposed within the "core" of the study area. |
| Multi-Family / Single Family up to 12 d.u.a. | Institutional                                | Existing Park   |
| Utilities                                    | Proposed Greenway                            |   |

**Note:**

Proposed land use is based on development of a zoning overlay district that provides more specific criteria for land use intensities and design standards.



Not to Scale

**I.A.1 Community Gathering Space:** Develop a community gathering (i.e., green/open space large enough to accommodate community events like the Charlotte Pops concerts) in the SouthPark study area.

**I.A.2 Greenways:** Support the development of the Little Sugar Creek/Briar Creek Greenway as part of the Greenways Master Plan Update to connect Park Road Park with SouthPark area neighborhoods and schools; and, provide for pedestrian and bicycle linkages to the greenway system.

The use of utility rights-of-way and local streets and sidewalks should be considered in providing such linkages. Also, the development of the McMullen Creek Greenway should be considered as part of the Greenways Master Plan Update to provide recreation and transportation opportunities for SouthPark area residents and visitors.

**I.A.3 Overlay District:** Incorporate green/open space into all new development as discussed in the design development section of this document. (*See design development section for more detail.*)

**I.A.4 School Facilities:** The parks, open space and recreational facilities proposed as part of the School Campus Partnerships' master plan for Myers Park High, Selwyn Elementary and Alexander Graham Middle schools should be considered in the overall plan for providing a network of green/open space in the SouthPark area, as should facilities at all nearby public schools.

Community utilization of these schools would greatly enhance the accessibility of recreational resources, which are otherwise very limited in the SouthPark area.

## **B. Mixed Use Development**

**I.B.1 Multi-Family Development:** Encourage multi-family residences to be incorporated into new office and retail development within the study area.

This recommendation could be accomplished through the development of an overlay district that would also mandate specific design standards as outlined in the development design section of this document. The purpose of this new zoning district would be to provide for a greater mixture of uses within the study area, and to create a truly urban, pedestrian-oriented environment where reliance on the single-occupant automobile would no longer be the only transportation option available. In addition, residential development would likely produce less traffic than the corresponding amount of office or retail development within the study area.

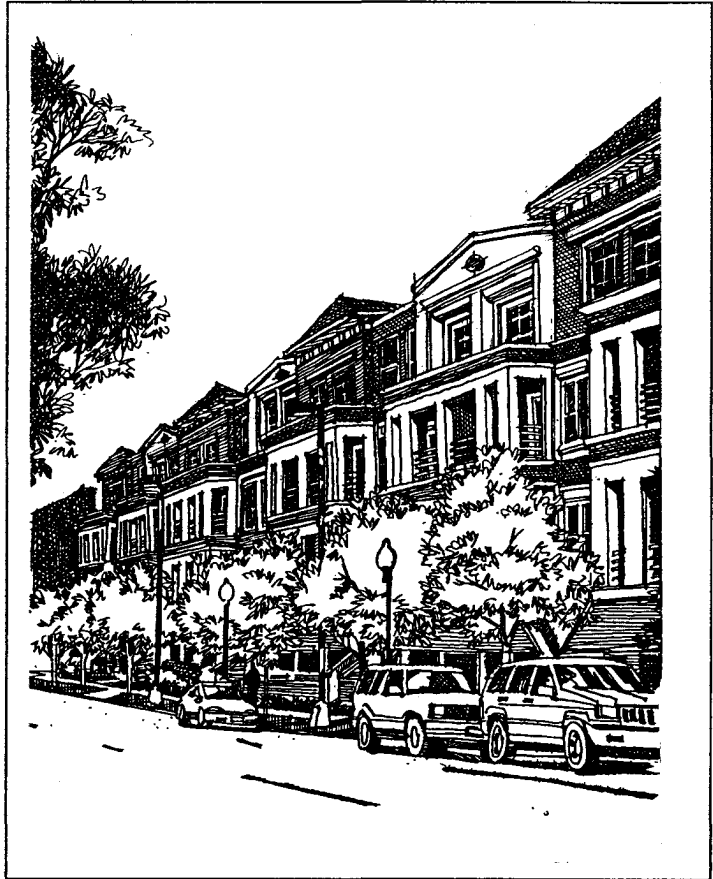
Such an overlay district could be applied in conjunction with the existing zoning. The overlay district would grant additional land use flexibility and add specific development requirements upon the underlying zoning districts. The effect is to have both the overlay district and the underlying zoning controlling the use and development of each lot.



The general criteria for creation of the overlay district have been developed during the development of this SouthPark Area Plan. The design criteria are discussed in detail in the design development section of this document. The land use criteria are discussed in more detail in the accompanying implementation document.

### **C. Expansion of SouthPark Mall**

**I.C.1 Mall Expansion:** Any proposed expansion of SouthPark Mall should further the vision of this area as transitioning into a town center. Any such proposal should continue to require approval of a detailed site plan that addresses the established design standards, supports alternative transportation strategies, and provides for a mixture of land uses including a public green/open space designed to accommodate large community events. Any such proposal would continue to be subject to the standard review and approval process, including traffic impact studies.



*Multi-family development above first floor retail and office.*

### **D. Expansion of Non-Residential Uses:**

**I.D.1 Non-Residential Expansion:** Limit non-residential expansion to the existing study area, with no expansion into surrounding residential areas permitted as indicated on the adopted *South District Plan* map. In addition, areas within the study area shown as residential on the adopted *South District Plan* map should remain. However, a limited retail/business component may be appropriate if integrated into multi-family developments in specified locations as suggested in the implementation document and to be determined in the development of the overlay district (and listed below as reference):

- a. the establishment is located on the ground floor of a building that contains a substantial number (as defined in overlay district) of residential dwelling units; and
- b. the establishment has direct access from a major or minor thoroughfare; and
- c. the allowed uses are limited to restaurants up to 4,000 sq.ft., dry cleaners, retail sales, sundries/convenience store without gas pumps, bakeries, barber shops, and artist studios; and
- d. no drive-through services are permitted.

## **II. Development Design**

Design concerns are perhaps the most crucial element in the successful transition of the SouthPark area from a suburban shopping and office development into a thriving, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use center. In particular, attention must be given to the following key elements when considering the design of future development in the SouthPark area:

- Unique sense of place
- Visible, community-oriented open/green spaces
- Human scale/pedestrian oriented development
- Development supportive of, and connected to mass transit
- A sense of quality and beauty
- Commitment to neighborhood protection
- Environmental integrity
- A feeling of security
- A variety of transportation options
- An inviting environment

The following design recommendations are proposed to ensure that development in the SouthPark study area is of the highest quality, addresses the above key elements and furthers the vision of this area as a pedestrian-oriented mixed use center.

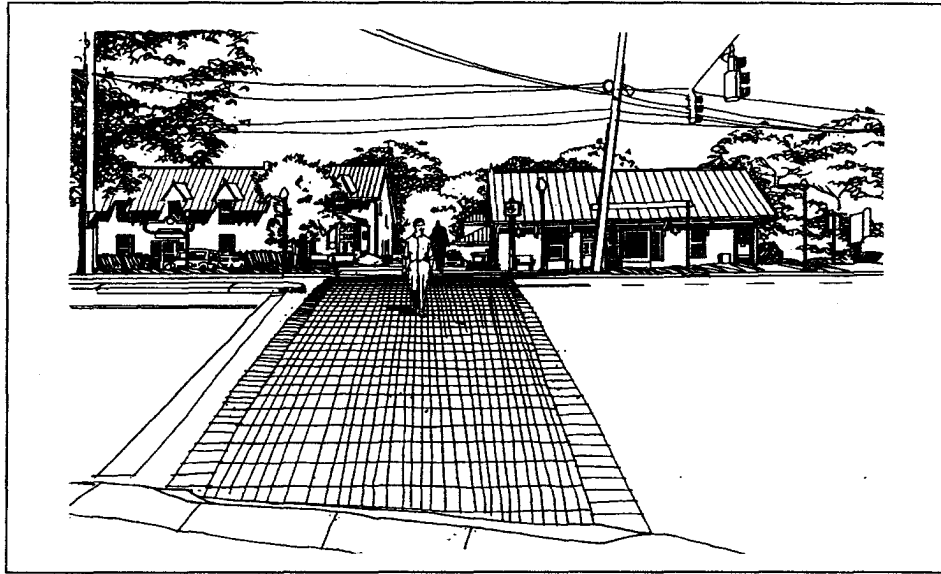
To ensure that these design recommendations are implemented, a design overlay district should be developed for the SouthPark study area that mandates that specified minimum design standards be met in all future development projects. This district should address the provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and amenities, open space, landscaping, building design, parking, buffers, building height, streetscapes, linkages, and circulation. The framework for addressing these concerns was laid out in the SouthPark study group process and is provided below.

### **A. Intersections and Pedestrian Crossings**

To ensure pedestrian safety, intersections must be designed to draw attention to the pedestrian. Special paving surfaces can be used to define the pedestrian walking zone. The color of the paving material can provide this delineation and the texture of the material can provide a surface/texture change that alerts the driver that they have entered the pedestrian walking zone.

**II.A.1 Crosswalks:** Crosswalks in the immediate SouthPark area should be constructed using colored concrete pavers at a width of ten feet. The pavers should be laid out in a herring bone pattern with concrete bands on the outer edges to lock the pavers.

Such crosswalk design not only adds to the safety of the pedestrian, but also enhances the esthetic appeal of this area. An alternative to using pavers would be stamped concrete. In this process the concrete is colored to look like a stone or brick material.



*Improved crosswalks enhance pedestrian safety.*

**II.A.2 Architectural Elements:** Architectural elements should be introduced at key intersections to enhance pedestrian safety and provide greater aesthetic appeal.

Such architectural elements currently help to define the intersection of Morrison Boulevard and Barclay Downs Drive. Similar type elements should be incorporated at other intersections on Fairview Road, Sharon Road, and Morrison Boulevard, especially at the mall entrances. Through the use of color, material, signage, and lighting these architectural elements will help to define the areas where interaction between pedestrians and automobiles is greatest.

**II.A.3 Landscaping:** Plants should be used to define the intersection as a unique place along the roadway.

Planting at the edges of the sidewalk; using unique trees at the intersection; planting flowerbeds with brightly colored flowers that grab your attention; and using evergreen plantings to provide year round interest; all work together to announce the intersection as a special place.

**II.A.4 Traffic Signals:** All signalized intersections in the SouthPark study area should include pedestrian activated crossing signals. These signals are programmed with the traffic lights at intersections to tell pedestrians when it is safe to walk. Any intersections which do not have these signals, should be given top priority to be retrofitted with such signals.

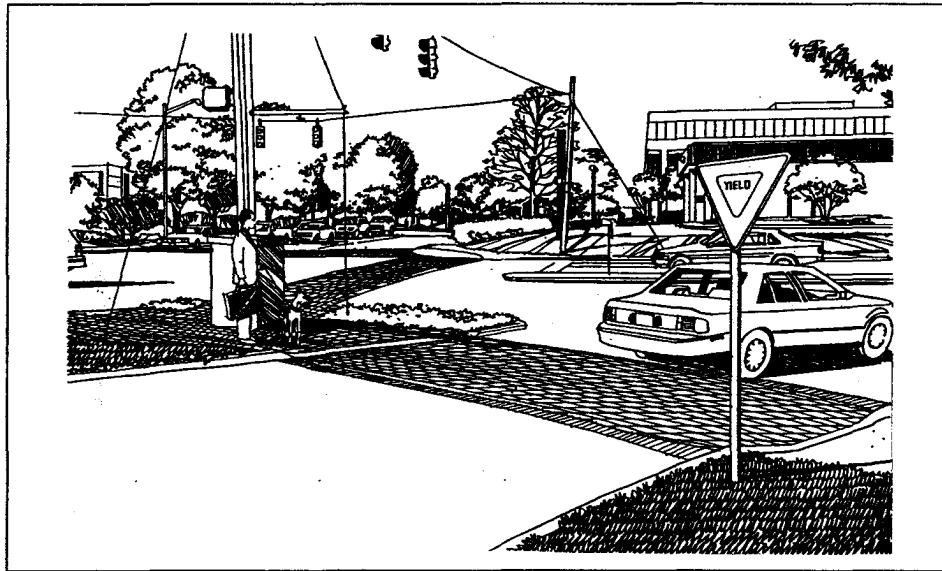
**II.A.5 Lighting:** All intersections should be adequately lit for both automobile and pedestrian safety.

Two levels of lighting should be utilized. First, street lighting is needed to illuminate

the roadway for the safety of vehicular traffic. Illumination levels should allow drivers and pedestrians to be clearly seen. The lighting should cover the roadway without being blocked by tree branches. The second level of lighting is pedestrian lighting. This lighting should adequately illuminate the pedestrian way and become an aesthetically pleasing element of the streetscape.

**II.A.6 Refuge Islands:** Pedestrian refuge areas should be provided at key locations whenever feasible to provide pedestrians with “refuge” areas as they cross multi-lane roadways.

Typically, these refuge islands are located midway across the street. They provide the pedestrian an opportunity to break up the long expanse between curbs on streets that have six and more lanes of traffic. In conjunction with the refuge islands, special crosswalk paving (as previously mentioned) should be installed. Refuge islands should be handicap accessible.



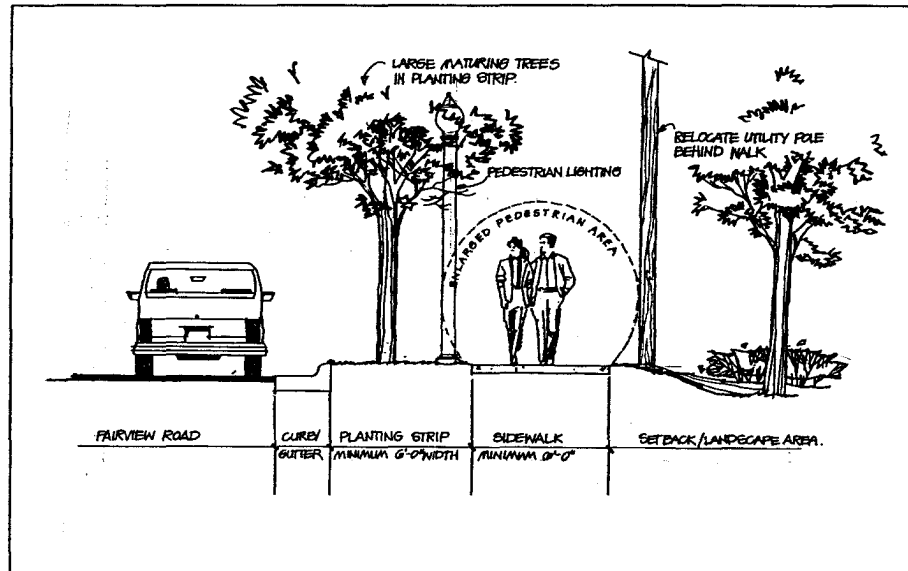
*Pedestrian “refuge” areas should be provided at key locations on multi-lane roads.*

## **B. Streetscape Improvements**

Important to the future of the SouthPark area is a system of moving people in cars and on foot which is safe, vibrant and allows people to get where they need to go. Providing streetscape improvements is critical to the success of this system. Currently, SouthPark has a full range of streetscape types. The streetscape environment provided around the Rotunda and SeaLand buildings is perhaps one of the most envied in Charlotte. Wide sidewalks, set off from the roadway, shaded by double rows of trees, and lighted with decorative pedestrian scale fixtures create an enjoyable place to walk. In contrast, the section of Fairview Road from Foxcroft East to Sharon Road has many of the least desired characteristics – lack of trees, sidewalk next to the curb and no pedestrian amenities.

This plan highlights elements that should be pursued to make all the streets in the SouthPark area comfortable and safe for area residents, workers and visitors.

The elements that make the streets near the Rotunda building successful include abundant planting area for street trees, wide sidewalks conducive to walking, lighting to illuminate the walks, and plant materials to soften the street.



*Recommended cross section for typical street.*

The following elements should be incorporated throughout the study area:

**II.B.1 Planting Strip:** The planting strips along all streets in SouthPark and the surrounding neighborhoods should be a minimum of eight feet wide.

This width establishes the foundation for the entire pedestrian environment. It provides a real and perceptual buffer for the pedestrian from the automobile. The strip also gives the street tree ample space for root growth. Grass grown in this eight foot area softens the space and provides an esthetically pleasing edge for drivers and walkers. Planting strips also provide a place for installing pedestrian and street lighting, switching gear for traffic signals, and bus stops.

The strategy for SouthPark is to have planting strips on all streets. To accomplish this will involve considerable effort since many of the streets currently have the sidewalk at the back of the curb. Some of this may be accomplished through the redevelopment process. To be truly successful, however, it will be critical for the business and neighborhood groups to work together to encourage property owners to grant easements for the walks to be moved back.

**II.B.2 Street Trees:** A comprehensive street tree planting plan should be developed for the SouthPark study area.

Street trees create wonderful canopies, positively impact property values and add environmental integrity. A planting plan would provide a guide as to the appropriateness of tree species at specific locations. Such a plan should recommend the use of large maturing wherever feasible.



*Street trees in wide planting strips create an inviting pedestrian environment by providing shade and buffering the pedestrian from busy streets.*

**II.B.3 Lighting:** Pedestrian level lighting should be made an integral element throughout the SouthPark area.

Adding pedestrian level lighting to the streets around the mall and on the streets leading into the neighborhoods will increase safety and the perception of safety. The lights need to have a traditional design to complement the wide variety of building styles in the area. The simple black pole and acorn fixture commonly found in other areas of the city would be a good basic solution. The height of the poles should be twelve feet. This provides the necessary foot candles to illuminate the sidewalk and protects the fixture from vandalism. The lights should be spaced approximately forty feet apart (closer at intersections).

**II.B.4 Sidewalks/ Pathways:** Sidewalks should be at least six feet wide.

This width will accommodate walkers, strollers, and other sidewalk users. Guidelines need to be developed for the types and location of various sidewalk materials. Special paving may enhance certain areas, however, if several different surfaces are used in close proximity, the outcome may not be esthetically pleasing. A network of sidewalks is needed in the SouthPark area to connect residential, office, and commercial areas. Currently segments of sidewalks are missing. Walks are needed on Barclay Downs Drive to link the neighborhood to the mall, on Colony Road from

the schools to the neighborhood, and between Phillips Place and the Sharon View Road area. (*Additional locations are specified in the accompanying implementation document.*)

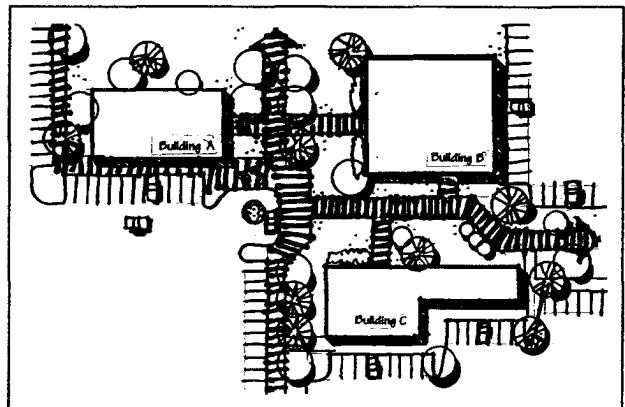
### **C. Site Characteristics**

As SouthPark continues to develop careful attention must be paid to how this growth occurs. Currently, buildings are constructed according to a suburban design standards. Large surface parking lots, large landscaped campuses, and buildings that do not address the street are a few of the antiquated designs currently used. As new development continues, mechanisms must be established to ensure that the design is consistent with the future vision proposed for the SouthPark area. Minimum design standards would help to insure that business and the surrounding neighborhoods grow in a mutually beneficial way.

#### **II.C.1 Building Orientation:** Buildings need to have their “front door” facing the street.

This will provide a stronger streetscape by encouraging people to access the buildings along a common pedestrian corridor. It will also interject the streets with animation and pedestrian traffic, giving the area health and vitality. Well- defined entrances and clear storefront windows are important design features to include in buildings fronting the street. Office and retail spaces should be easily accessed at the first floor level.

In addition to the entrances, the buildings need to have minimum standards for how the architecture interfaces with the pedestrian. Materials and building details are needed at the pedestrian level to create interest. Buildings of multiple stories need to have a clearly defined base. Cornices, moldings, and other ornamentation used in combination will create the needed variety. Requiring windows at street level will create interest and break up monotonous blank walls.



*Walkways should be provided to link buildings to each other and to the street.*

#### **II.C.2 Building Height:** Building height should be compatible with surrounding development.

Maximum height limitations should be specified based on location, with buildings abutting single-family neighborhoods consistent with the current maximum (40 feet). Height of buildings further from the single family areas may be higher, but should be in keeping with the town center vision. Specific height limitations will be determined in the proposed overlay district.

**II.C.3 Buffers:** Landscaping, screening, setbacks, gradual transition of intensity or use type, and other site design approaches should be used to create a transition between different types of land uses. However, transition approaches, especially those that require increased land area, need to be balanced with the objective of promoting transit-supportive, compact, connected development. In the case of a vegetative buffer, more emphasis should be placed on the density of the buffer than the width of the buffer. Buffer requirements need to be developed which take into account the various land uses and vision for the SouthPark area.

**II.C.4 Street Amenities:** Development needs to incorporate amenities that promote pedestrian activity along the street.

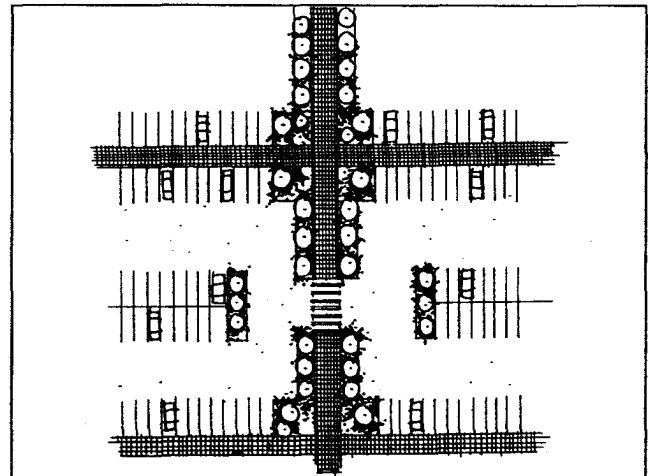
Artwork, fountains, pools, street furniture, landscaping, and pocket parks need to be mandated. Every building, regardless of function, should have some unique feature that contributes to the street environment. The net goal is to create a public focus for the community.

**II.C.5 Architectural Character:** Architectural guidelines should be established to ensure future developments are compatible with existing structures.

The building architecture should have a strong town center orientation. The architecture should evoke a sense that the visitor has arrived at a destination. Architecture that functions with the street life will do this. Seating areas, outdoor cafes, public open/green space, a clock tower, and community buildings help to create this environment. Pitched roofs, quality building materials such as brick and stone, inviting large clear glass window, and signage which guides and animates the spaces are a few of the elements that should be included in the building architecture.

**II.C.6 Parking:** As development increases the availability for surface parking will begin to decrease. Structured parking will be used more often to meet the zoning requirements of the higher density developments. It is important to set minimum standards for how these structures are built and function.

Parking decks and surface lots need to be screened or architecturally detailed from the public street, pedestrian areas and adjacent developments. Particular attention needs to be paid to how residential development interfaces with parking. Attention should also be given to the placement of



*Pedestrian paths through parking areas should be provided and clearly delineated.*



parking on the site to ensure the visual impact to these facilities is minimized. Parking should be designed so it does not dominate the site. Incorporating parking into the building or behind the building is desirable.

All surface parking should have landscaping to break up the large parking cells into smaller landscaped “pockets”. Pedestrian paths through the lots should be clearly defined. Circulation in the parking areas should be simple.

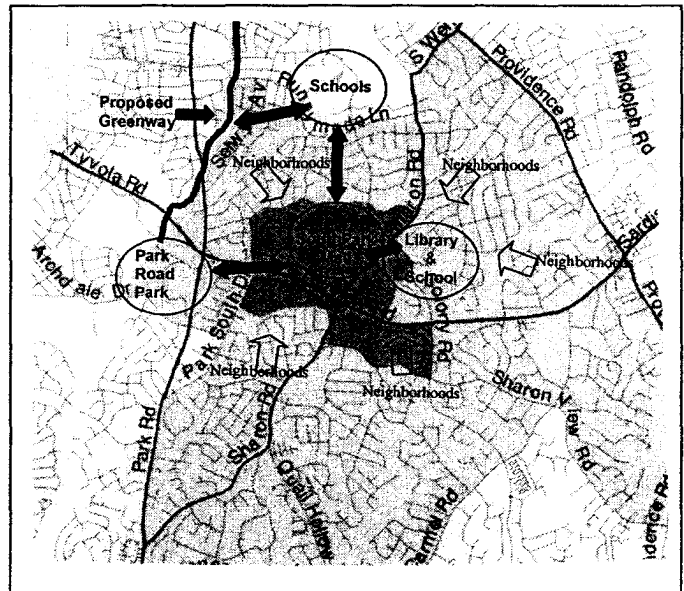
Valet parking, if used, should be done at the existing curb. Creating cutouts in the public sidewalk is not acceptable as it compromises the pedestrian areas. If special valet parking is desired, it should be incorporated into the parking lot or deck area. Shared use parking should be allowed as an incentive wherever appropriate.



*Retail shops on the ground floor of a parking deck encourage pedestrian activity and create a more visually pleasing environment.*

#### **D. Open Space**

Four key categories of open space should be provided for to create a network of green/open space in the study area: linkage to public facilities, greenway connections, new development, and large gathering areas for public events. Information on each of these is also included in the land use section of these recommendations. Below are recommendations regarding park and open space design considerations. Well-designed parks and open spaces will create a greater level of compatibility between the different land uses.



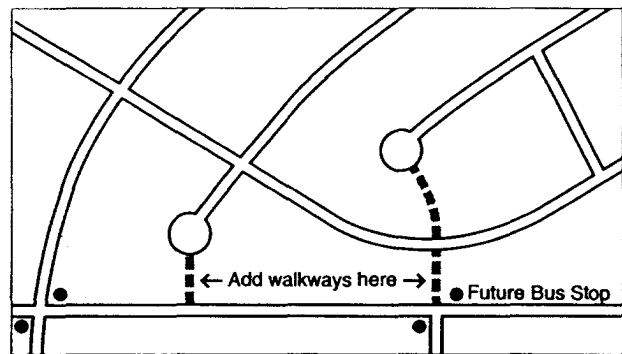
*Pedestrian and bicycle linkages should be provided to connect schools, shopping, greenways, parks, library, etc.*

**II.D.1 Linkage to Public Facilities:** SouthPark has many facilities that need to be better integrated into the community. A planning process is currently underway to increase the community visibility of the school campuses of Myers Park High, Selwyn

Elementary and Alexander Graham Middle. Part of increasing this visibility is making school facilities a resource to the surrounding neighborhoods. Area schools, including Myers Park High, Selwyn Elementary, Alexander Graham Middle, and Sharon Elementary, need to be directly connected to the neighborhoods and be accessible to the core SouthPark study area.

The Morrison Library also needs to be better connected to other areas of SouthPark. Intersection pedestrian improvements and a well connected system of sidewalks is needed to get people safely to the facility. Pocket parks and places to sit and relax should also be provided along these sidewalks. Landscaping and lighting need to be included as well. Routes from the adjacent neighborhoods need to be clearly defined. For example, workers in SouthPark office buildings should be able to easily walk to the library.

Bus stops and any new transit facilities should be easily accessible. It is important that open space links the neighborhood rider to the stops and the workers to their places of employment. The stops need to be designed for the comfort of the riders. They need to have some protection from the weather, be a comfortable distance from the traffic, and have simple clear graphics to denote their locations.



*Bus stops must be easily accessible to neighborhood riders.*

**II.D.2 Greenway Connections:** Connecting SouthPark to the Mecklenburg County greenway system opens up the possibilities for pedestrians and bicyclists to get to other parts of the City without depending on the automobile. Recreational use of the greenways provides additional opportunities for area residents. Little Sugar Creek/Briar Creek and McMullen Creek offer the potential for bicycle linkages to other parts of the greenway system. Design standards and ways of accessing these greenways need to be addressed in cooperation with the residents and County greenway planners. Property acquisition, path construction requirements and points of access are issues that need to be better defined.

**II.D.3 Within New Development:** To insure that useable open spaces continue to be reserved, they should be required in new development and redevelopment.

Development should be required to provide a prescribed amount of open space based on the gross square footage of proposed floor area. (Such requirements are used to achieve similar objectives in Charlotte's Center City.) The open spaces created need to be useable. They can not be left over fragments that were not part of the building or parking. **Open space must be located so that it is accessible to and from the street.** This allows the public to experience and enjoy them, and enables connections to be made between open spaces through use of the public sidewalk. The open space

in mixed-use, multi-family developments should be the focal point, with the development surrounding it, as in a village square.

Amenities in the open space need to also be mandated as a development requirement. Seating should be required so the spaces can be passively enjoyed ( i.e. people watching, eating lunch, resting from a walk, and reading). In addition, trees should be required. Trees add to the beauty of the space and provide shade on hot summer days. Along with the trees, visual continuity and a sense of quality can be realized by setting minimum landscape standards. Entrances, front yards, plazas and pocket parks with natural landscapes combine with man made designs to create the environmental feeling of quality. The plant materials and their design should be orchestrated in a composition that blends in with the surrounding community. The use of native plants should be made a priority.

**II.D.4 Public Spaces:** SouthPark lacks public parks and large gathering areas for public events. It is important that the community works together to design and develop these places and integrate them into an overall open space network for the SouthPark area. Parks and open spaces should be designed for people and should therefore relate to the human scale. Emphasis should be placed not only on the function or utility of the park space, but also on visual and aesthetic considerations.

**III. Transportation, Access and Circulation** *(See also design development recommendations.)*

Accessibility and movement are prerequisites to success in the SouthPark area. Attention must be given to the street system, transit, linkages to mass transit, traffic flow, bicycle facilities and pedestrian circulation. It is especially critical to introduce alternative modes of transportation into SouthPark's future.

**III.1 Roadways:** Major roadway improvements planned for the SouthPark area include widening Sharon Road to six lanes from Sharon View to Sharon Lane; widening Fairview Road to six lanes from Colony Road to Park Road; and extending Colony Road to Rea Road. The design of these roadway improvements should accommodate bicycles, pedestrians and transit users.

**III.2 Connections:** New development should be connected to existing and future development to allow greater access and circulation between adjacent uses without having to access the thoroughfare system. Such connections should facilitate bicycle and pedestrian circulation as well as automobile circulation.

**III.3 Transit Hub Services:** The City of Charlotte's Five Year Transportation Plan places an emphasis on the expansion of transit services and the development of transit services at 5 –6 mini-hubs located at major activity centers throughout the city. Transit services in SouthPark are should evolve in a three stage process.

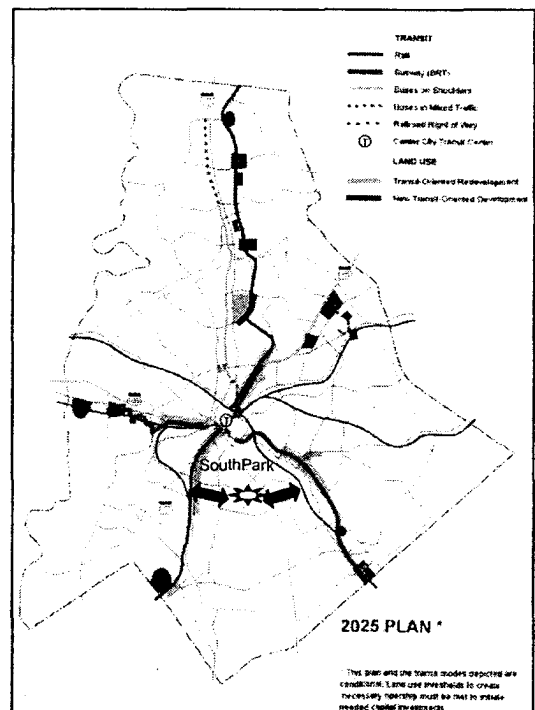
1. Initially, a circulator shuttle service, similar to the uptown shuttle, serving the commercial office and retail areas should be started which focuses on the variety of transportation needs of the area employees and shoppers.
2. As the circulator service gains acceptance, a point deviation service should be started to focus on the transportation needs of the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.
3. The third stage of service should provide wider reaching linkages to other parts of the City including the airport and the South Boulevard and Independence Boulevard transit corridors. The linkages to the South Boulevard and Independence Boulevard mass transit corridors will be essential to continued growth in the SouthPark area.

To ensure that this future transit service best meets the needs of area residents, employers and employees, CDOT should complete a comprehensive transit hub plan for the proposed SouthPark mini-hub. The plan development process should include an interdepartmental team, as well as extensive involvement of a study group of area stakeholders (i.e., residents, employers, employees, and developers). The plan should not only determine the location, design, development schedule and funding for a transit hub, but should also specify how it will facilitate mass transit connections between SouthPark and the transit corridors.

**III.4 Mass Transit:** Although the SouthPark area is not located in one of these five transit corridors, it is critical that the area be linked to future mass transit.

The high concentration of employment in SouthPark, in particular, necessitates mass transit linkages to ensure continued accessibility and livability in this key activity center. As part of the mass transit and land use plan, transit stops have been identified at Tyvola Road on the South Corridor and Sharon Amity Road on the Independence Boulevard Corridor. In the next phase of the transit planning process, staff will be completing a more detailed analysis of the proposed feeder systems.

SouthPark should be incorporated in the next phase of the transit planning process as one of the key activity centers that will be linked to the identified corridors. The mass transit plan should specifically address the issue of how service will be provided in the SouthPark area. In particular, it should address plans to provide express feeder bus service along Fairview and Tyvola Roads to connect SouthPark to



*The next phase of the mass transit plan should address how service will be provided in the SouthPark area.*

mass transit in the South and Independence corridors. A recommendation regarding the need and potential/feasibility of a dedicated bus lane or busway along these roads, to provide this connection, should be examined as part of the long range mass transit plan.

- III.5 Sidewalks/Pathways/Pedestrian Facilities:** Sidewalks are needed on Barclay Downs Drive to link the neighborhood to the mall area; on Colony Road, especially to link the schools with the neighborhoods; and on Sharon Road and Morrison Boulevard. A pedestrian linkage is also needed between Phillips Place and the Sharon View Road area. *(A more specific list of sidewalk needs is provided in the accompanying implementation document.)*
- III.6 Bicycle Facilities:** Providing bicycle linkages from the SouthPark area to Park Road Park, area schools, recreation facilities (i.e., YMCA), public facilities (i.e., the library) and the greenways system should be identified as high priorities in the Bicycle Transportation Plan currently under development.
- III.7 Street Grid:** A collector street grid should be developed for the SouthPark area to provide guidance for the inclusion of an internal circulation system in future redevelopment plans that would provide greater access and connectivity throughout the study area.
- III.8 Alternative Transportation:** Plans already developed to encourage the use of alternative transportation in the SouthPark area should be implemented in conjunction with planned hub service and pedestrian improvements. These plans are intended to raise the awareness and utilization of alternative transportation modes (transit, vanpools, carpools, walking, bicycling) by designating employee transportation coordinators at major SouthPark employers, providing ride-share matching information, beginning public information/relation campaigns (may be tied to ozone awareness campaigns), working with area business to provide incentives for employees/customers using alternative transportation, and marketing of shuttle service.

**IV. Traffic Safety** *(See also design development recommendations.)*

Vital to the long-term viability of any community is ensuring that area residents and visitors feel safe. The SouthPark area is currently perceived as a safe area to live, work and visit. However, it is not considered a safe place to walk. Even with the implementation of intersection design improvements, additional measures may need to be undertaken to ensure pedestrian safety. For SouthPark to become a vital town center, it will be critical that walking be a safe and enjoyable alternative to the automobile.

- IV.1 Right Turn on Red:** A prohibition of right turn on red should be considered at intersections that will provide key pedestrian linkages. Allowing right turns on red

lights creates constant traffic movement at intersections and is especially hazardous to pedestrians.

- IV.2 Pedestrian Activated Crossing Signals:** All signalized intersections in the SouthPark study area should include pedestrian activated crossing signals. These signals are programmed with the traffic lights at intersections to tell pedestrians when it is safe to walk. Any intersections that do not have these signals should be given top priority to be retrofitted with such signals.
- IV.3 Crosswalks:** Crosswalks should be well marked and designed to raise drivers' awareness that they are in a pedestrian crossing area.
- IV.4 Lighting:** Adding pedestrian level lighting to the streets around the mall and on the streets leading into the neighborhoods will increase safety and the perception of safety.
- IV.5 Medians and Refuge Islands:** Pedestrian refuge areas should be provided at key intersections whenever feasible to provide pedestrians with a "refuge" area as they cross multi-lane roadways.
- IV.6 Enforcement:** Installation of traffic monitoring cameras should be considered at key intersections to ensure that motorists obey traffic laws and do not compromise pedestrian safety. Police officers stationed at key locations could also provide traffic enforcement to ensure pedestrian safety.
- IV.7 Neighborhood Traffic Management:** Neighborhoods adjacent to the SouthPark study area should be given high priority for consideration as part of the City's neighborhood traffic management program. As SouthPark continues to grow, it is crucial that the traffic impact on the surrounding neighborhoods be carefully managed. The safety and livability of these neighborhoods is of utmost concern. Traffic calming and enforcement measures should be considered to mitigate traffic impacts.

## **V. Community Involvement**

An informed and involved community is an essential ingredient in the long-term viability of the SouthPark area. Neighborhood, business and development community representatives have worked together in developing a vision for the SouthPark area and providing recommendations to achieve that vision as part of this *SouthPark Area Plan*. Continued communication and cooperation between these stakeholders, and local government representatives will be needed to implement the plan recommendations.

- V.1 Communication:** Establish opportunities for neighborhood, business, development and local government representatives to share information and ideas regarding future growth and development in the SouthPark area.

## **VI. Environment**

The SouthPark area, like Mecklenburg County overall, generally has a good environment which continues to make it a desirable and livable community. Our air meets national standards and we continue to have an adequate, safe source of drinking water. However, as this area continues to grow, more stress will be placed on air and water quality, and on the amount of solid waste we generate.

According to the *State of the Environment Report, 1998*, recently completed by the Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP), the relatively easy corrections to our environment have been made. The report identifies the challenge ahead as understanding and accepting that each individual is responsible for the environment and that individual choices, actions and votes will determine the future of our environment. The MCDEP continues to urge the community to choose the path of investing in the environment as a way of sustaining community livability and creating a healthy future.

Using the recommendations from the *State of the Environment Report* as a guide, this SouthPark Area Plan sets out the following recommendations to ensure continued environmental quality.

### **A. Air**

**VI.A.1 Land Use:** Promote land-use development that minimizes transportation dependent on single occupancy vehicles. (*See also recommendations in land use and transportation sections.*)

**VI.A.2 Transportation:** Promote the use of alternative transportation in the SouthPark area.

### **B. Water**

**VI.B.1 Greenways:** To provide more natural buffering capacity from stormwater runoff in the SouthPark area, support the development of the Little Sugar Creek/Briar Creek Greenway and consider adding McMullen Creek to the Greenway Master Plan currently under development.

**VI.B.2 Programs:** Encourage SouthPark area businesses and neighborhoods to participate in environmental programs like Adopt-A-Stream, Big Sweep, SWIM and Earth Day.

**VI.B.3 Reduce Water Use:** Encourage SouthPark area businesses and neighborhoods to promote lower water use to decrease the volume of wastewater generated.

### **C. Land**

**VI.C.1 Reduce and Recycle:** Work with area employers and neighborhood/community organizations to reduce the amount of waste generated and to encourage recycling.

## CONCLUSIONS

The SouthPark Area is generally regarded as one of Charlotte's most prestigious locations. Among the benefits of this "notoriety" are increasing property values, a bounty of upscale shopping, an array of noted businesses, a flagship grocery store, choice restaurants, an aesthetically pleasing environment, and higher quality development. However, a high cost is being paid for these benefits in the form of traffic congestion, loss of open/green space, poorer air quality and loss of a sense of "community".

This plan attempts to provide the direction needed to ensure that growth and development does not jeopardize the future livability and economic viability of the SouthPark area. Guided by the recommendations set out in this plan, future growth will be designed to further the vision of SouthPark as a mixed-use town center. The focus will be on creating an environment that attracts pedestrians by providing safe and comfortable walkways, pocket parks, a community gathering space, a mixture of land uses, a variety of transportation options, attractive storefronts, and interesting streetscapes. Part of creating this town center atmosphere is to also protect the adjacent residential areas from encroachment of non-residential land uses and to provide transit linkages to other areas of the community.

Volume Two of this plan provides more detailed information on implementation strategies needed to achieve the plan goals.



## GLOSSARY

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**New Urbanism** – A compact form of urban development that offers an alternative to suburban sprawl development. It embodies the following general design principles: people first, grid street pattern, complementary land uses, lively civic life, diverse housing, huddled homes, local color and significant open space. The key features of new urbanism include: 1) a mix of land uses; 2) compact development; and 3) preeminence given to people.

**Open Space** – Land which has been reserved (or earmarked) for parks and recreation purposes; conservation of land or other natural resources; or historic, architectural, or scenic purposes. Open space is a vital ingredient in providing for recreation needs, in fostering a sense of natural environment in the midst of extensive urban development, and in creating a high quality of life.

**Suburban** – Usually refers to the area of dispersed development on the periphery, or just outside of a more densely developed city. The term is also used in reference to the general characteristics that often define development in suburban areas such as: large lots; dominance of automobile-oriented site and building designs; commercial strip development; large nondescript retail facilities; extensive parking areas; and, spread out development.

**Sustainability** – The ability to remain economically, socially and environmentally viable over the long term.

**Town Center** – The defining core of a geographic area that functions as the economic and social hub and provides the surrounding community with a distinguishable identity, oftentimes articulated in the building architecture, landscaping and hardscape features (i.e., decorative lighting, monuments, fountains). The town center should be designed as a compact core with a pedestrian scale and orientation; an emphasis on connectivity and “parts that fit together to form a cohesive whole”; and a mixture of commercial, business, residential, and civic land uses. A central green/public square and/or a network of green/open spaces help to define and organize the town center and to make it a place where people come not only to conduct business, but also to pursue leisure activities. A town center is distinguished from an urban center chiefly by its emphasis on relatively less density than that characteristic of a central business district. For example, while 20 + story buildings are typical in the Charlotte Center City, height limitations of 3-7 stories (based on specific location within the study area) would be more typical in the SouthPark Town Center.

**Traffic Calming** – Any of a number of techniques used to slow the speed of motor vehicle traffic, usually in areas of high pedestrian traffic. Such techniques include the use of speed bumps/humps, stop signs, traffic circles, on-street parking, neck-downs, street tree plantings and other landscaping, raised pedestrian crosswalks, bicycle lanes, etc.

**Urban** – An area usually defined in terms of population density (i.e., a large number of people living and working in a small geographic area). There is no agreement, however, on

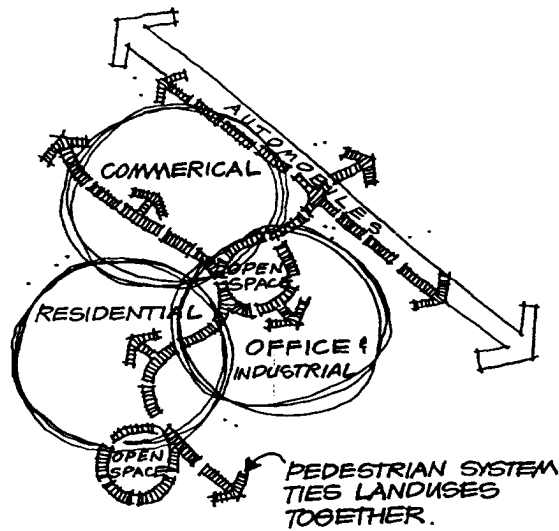
how many persons per square mile make an area urban, and probably there can be no agreement since a community's definition of "urban" is relative to the existing development pattern, as well as to the location and type of development.

The term "urban" is also used to refer to the character of an area and involves the existence of certain design elements, chief of which are pedestrian scale and amenities, building orientation (i.e., buildings fronting the street with pedestrian entrances), and attention to façade treatment. In terms of land use, an urban area is characterized by a mixture of uses in close proximity, often within the same building.

# SOUTHPARK SMALL AREA PLAN

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## Volume 2: Implementation Program



March 27, 2000



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# IMPLEMENTATION

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## INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the steps needed to implement the concept outlined in the accompanying document, the *SouthPark Small Area Plan*, Volume 1: Concept Plan. This implementation document will not be adopted by City Council, however, many of the actions identified will require future Council approval and will be brought before them for approval on a case by case basis.

## PLAN STRATEGIES

The *SouthPark Small Area Plan* focuses on six key issue areas:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Development Design
- Transportation, Access and Circulation
- Traffic Safety
- Community Involvement
- Environment

For each of the above, the concept plan identifies general planning goals and recommendations. The following highlights the goals and identifies strategies to implement the recommendations.

### I. Land Use And Zoning

#### Goals

- Create a greater mixture of land uses within the study area, especially by incorporating more multi-family residential development.
- Protect the surrounding residential areas from encroachment of non-residential land uses.
- Develop a public gathering space and a network of green/open spaces.
- Ensure the long-term viability of neighborhoods and business/commercial areas.

#### Implementation Strategies

- I.a** Develop an overlay district for the SouthPark study area that requires development to meet specified design standards, encourages multi-family development within the study area, provides for open space, and is pedestrian/transit supportive, as discussed in the concept plan. The general criteria for creation of the overlay district were developed during the plan development process and are provided below and illustrated on the proposed land use map provided in the concept plan document.

### **Additional Rights and Restrictions for Land Currently Zoned for Office Uses:**

1) Design Standards: All new development and redevelopment must meet the design standards to be developed for this overlay district, as discussed in the development design section of the concept plan document, including established height limitations.

2) Residential Development: To encourage a mixture of uses on land currently zoned for office development, the overlay district will allow an increase in the density of multi-family development greater than the currently permitted 12-22 units per acre. The allowed increase in multi-family density would be based on an appropriate site plan incorporating the design standards established for the SouthPark area. Multi-family development densities would be controlled by the height limitations to be established as part of the proposed overlay district. The overlay district would specify maximum building heights based on location, with buildings abutting single family neighborhoods consistent with the current maximum (40 feet). Height of buildings further from the single family areas may be higher, but should be in keeping with the town center vision.

If the dwelling units are located in the same building as the office, the multi-family units would not be counted towards the F.A.R. limit. The established height limitations would serve to control the residential densities. A retail component would be permitted to occupy up to 100 percent of the ground floor in an office or office/residential development.

3) Development Incentives: To make it more feasible for developers to do mixed use developments, certain incentives would be provided. Such incentives would include increasing the “by right” density for residential as noted above, lowering the parking requirements in developments with a mixture of office and residential uses; and, decreasing set-back and buffer width requirements and relying more on design standards to ensure that adjacent uses are compatible. (*Specifics of incentives will be determined during the development of the proposed overlay.*)

4) Disallow Use of Office Districts/Intensities Overlay: Amend the South District Plan so that higher density office uses are no longer supported as shown on Map 4, page 16 of that plan. This would help to promote a mix of land use, since office uses are already the predominate use in the study area.

5) Encourage All New Office Development to Support Alternative Transportation Measures: New office development would be encouraged to participate in alternative transportation programs and to identify an employee transportation coordinator (ETC). In addition, new development should be designed to be transit supportive, especially in terms of site layout and provision of pedestrian facilities.

### **Additional Rights and Restrictions for Land Currently Zoned for Business/Retail Uses:**

1) Design Standards: All new development and redevelopment must meet the design standards to be developed for this overlay district, as discussed in the development design section of the concept plan document, including established height limitations.



2) Residential Development: To encourage a mixture of uses on land currently zoned for business development (B-1, B-2, etc.), the overlay district would allow an increase in the density of by-right multi-family development greater than the currently permitted 22 units per acre. The allowed increase in multi-family density would be based on an appropriate site plan incorporating the design standards established for the SouthPark area. Multi-family development densities would be controlled by the height limitations to be established as part of the proposed overlay district. The overlay district would specify maximum building heights based on location, with buildings abutting single family neighborhoods consistent with the current maximum (40 feet). Height of buildings further from the single family areas may be higher, but should be in keeping with the town center vision. If the dwelling units are located in the same building as the business/commercial/retail use and if they occupy at least 50 percent of the total floor area of buildings on the lot, the multi-family units would not be counted towards the F.A.R. limit.

3) New Office Development: Office development on land currently zoned for business or retail should be considered only if it is part of an integrated, mixed-use development plan.

4) New Retail Development: Retail development other than that provided as part of an office and/or residential development should be limited to the areas currently zoned to accommodate such uses (i.e., the core SouthPark area).

5) Encourage All New Business Development to Support Alternative Transportation Measures: New business development would be encouraged to participate in alternative transportation programs and to identify an employee transportation coordinator (ETC). In addition, new development should be designed to be transit supportive, especially in terms of site layout and provision of pedestrian facilities.

6) Expansion of SouthPark Mall: Any proposed expansion of SouthPark Mall should further the vision of this area as transitioning into a mixed-use, town center. Any such proposal should continue to require approval of a detailed site plan that addresses the established design standards, supports alternative transportation strategies, and provides for an integrated mixture of land uses including a public green/open space designed to accommodate large community events. Any expansion proposal would continue to be subject to the standard review and approval process, including traffic impact studies.

#### **Additional Rights and Restrictions for Land Currently Zoned for Residential Uses:**

1) Design Standards: All new residential development and redevelopment must meet the design standards to be developed for this overlay district, as discussed in the development design section of the concept plan document.

2) Multi-Family Development: The overlay district would not automatically grant additional land use flexibility to land already zoned for multi-family development. The underlying zoning would continue to dictate the uses and densities permitted by right. However, higher density multi-family development may be appropriate in certain locations, based on the multi-family locational criteria provided in the *General Development Policy Guide*.

3) Retail/Business Development: A limited retail/business component may be appropriate if integrated into multi-family developments in locations shown on **Map 1i** if the following criteria are met:

- a. the establishment is located on the ground floor of a building that contains a substantial number (as defined in overlay district) of residential dwelling units; and
- b. the establishment has direct access from a major or minor thoroughfare; and
- c. the allowed uses are limited to restaurants up to 4,000 sq. ft., dry cleaners, retail sales, sundries/convenience store without gas pumps, bakeries, barber shops, and artist studios; and
- d. no drive-through services are permitted.

**I.b** The development of the SouthPark study area overlay district should be a priority work program item for the Planning Commission and added to its FY 99 work schedule to begin as soon as possible upon approval of the small area plan. Development of the overlay should involve considerable public involvement, including continued input and direction from the *SouthPark Small Area Plan* study group members.

**I.c** Continue to limit non-residential expansion to the existing study area, with no expansion into surrounding residential areas permitted, as indicated on the adopted *South District Plan* map. In addition, areas within the study area shown as residential on the *South District Plan* map should remain as such. However, a limited non-residential component may be introduced as part of a multi-family development in specified locations (Map 1i) according to the criteria listed above in #3.

**I.d** Consider adding McMullen Creek to the Greenway Master Plan and implement development of Little Sugar Creek/Briar Creek Greenway as a master plan demonstration project.

**I.e** Work through the rezoning process to create a mixed-use town center at the core of the SouthPark study area. In particular, this will require the addition of residential and open/green space in this core SouthPark area.

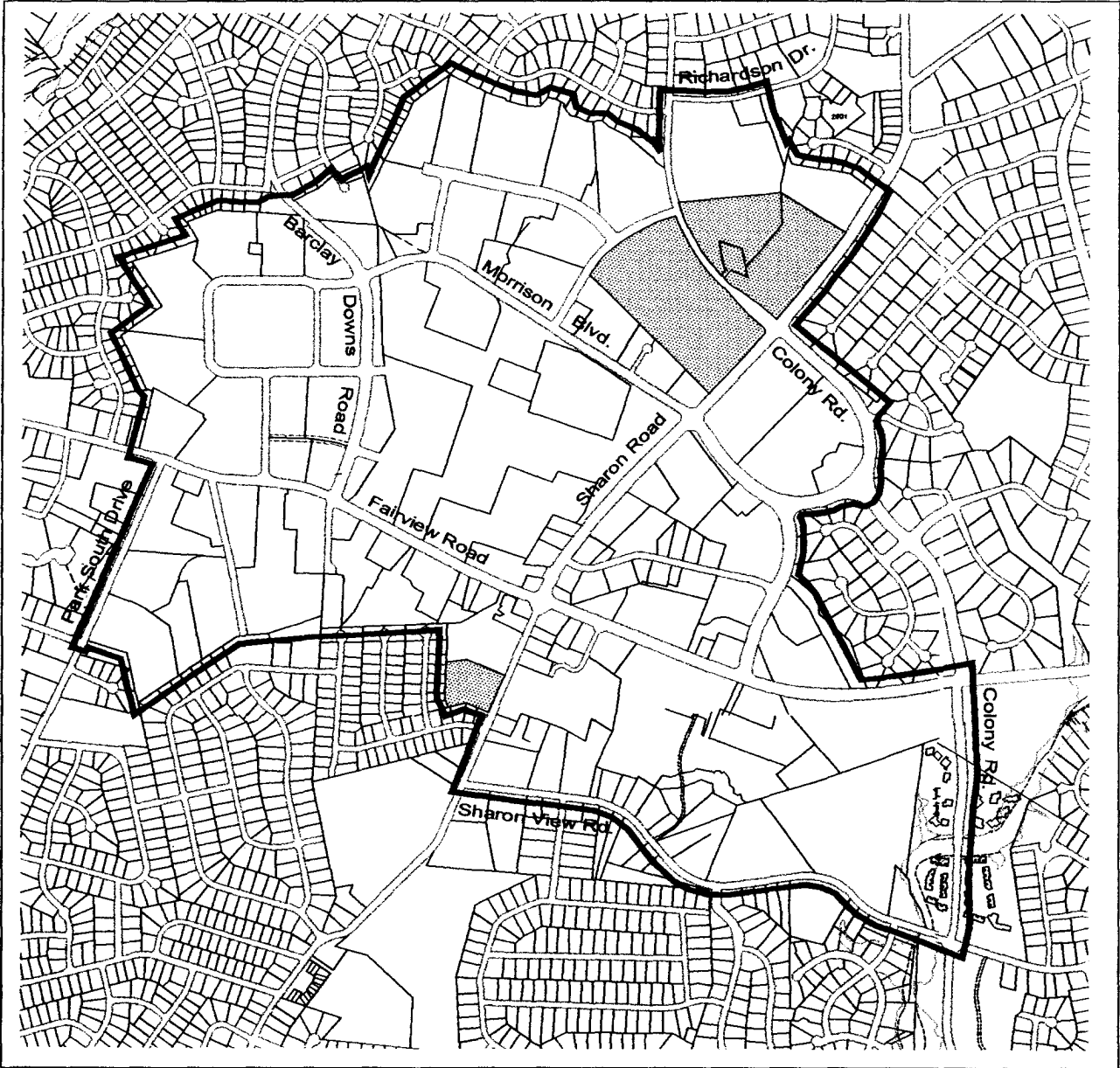
**I.f** Work through the rezoning process to provide a community gathering space in the SouthPark study area that can accommodate functions and events comparable to those held at the space currently utilized for Pops concerts at the corner of Sharon Road and Morrison Boulevard.

**I.g** Work with the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System and the Joint Use task force to ensure that SouthPark area school facilities are easily accessible to area residents, especially for recreational purposes.

**I.h** Amend the *South District Plan* so that higher intensity office uses are no longer supported as shown on Map 4, page 16 of that plan

**SouthPark Small Area Plan**  
Potential Areas to Allow Retail/Business  
In Multi-Family Zoning

Map 1i



Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, October 1998

 Areas Considered for Allowing Business/Retail as part of a Multi-Family Building

## **II. Development Design**

### **Goal**

- Ensure that future development and redevelopment meet specified design standards and further the vision created for SouthPark as a town center.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- II.a** Develop an overlay district for the SouthPark study area that requires development to meet specified design standards, encourages multi-family development within the study area, provides for open space, and is pedestrian/transit supportive, as discussed in the concept plan.
- II.b** The development of the SouthPark study area overlay district should be a priority work program item for the Planning Commission and added to FY99 work schedule as soon as possible upon approval of the small area plan. Development of the overlay should involve considerable public involvement, including continued input and direction from the *SouthPark Small Area Plan* study group members.
- II.c** Work with business and neighborhood groups to encourage property owners to grant easements to allow existing sidewalks along thoroughfares to be moved back from the curb to allow a planting strip to be added to the existing streetscapes.
- II.d** Develop a comprehensive street tree planting plan for the SouthPark study area.
- II.e** Work through the rezoning, site plan review, community planning and joint use processes to ensure that development is linked to public facilities.

## **III. Transportation, Access And Circulation**

### **Goal**

- Develop a multi-modal transportation system that emphasizes pedestrian improvements and linkages to mass transit.
- Identify and plan for future mass transit service in the SouthPark area.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- III.a** Continue plans to widen Sharon and Fairview Roads to six lanes.
- III.b** Work through the rezoning and site plan review process to encourage connections (i.e., bicycle, pedestrian, and automobile) between existing and future development to allow greater access and circulation in the SouthPark area.
- III.c** To ensure that future transit service best meets the needs of area residents, employers and employees, CDOT should complete a comprehensive transit hub plan for the proposed

SouthPark mini-hub. The plan development process should include an interdepartmental team, as well as extensive involvement of a study group of area stakeholders (i.e., residents, employers, employees, and developers). The plan should not only determine the location, design, development schedule and funding for a transit hub, but should also specify how it will facilitate mass transit connections between SouthPark and the transit corridors.

- III.d** As the first phase of creating a transit mini-hub, implement transit circulator service and enhanced bus service in the SouthPark area.
- III.e** SouthPark should be incorporated in the next phase of the transit planning process as one of the key activity centers that will be linked to the identified corridors. The mass transit plan should specifically address the issue of how service will be provided in the SouthPark area. In particular, it should address plans to provide express feeder bus service along Fairview and Tyvola Roads (including the addition of limited stop service to Uptown) to connect SouthPark to mass transit in the South and Independence corridors. A recommendation regarding the need and potential/feasibility of a dedicated bus lane or busway along these roads, to provide this connection, should be examined as part of the long range mass transit plan.
- III.f** Ensure that sidewalks are provided throughout the study area, and into adjacent areas to link the study area with SouthPark neighborhoods and public facilities. Such sidewalks should meet the criteria discussed in the development design section of the concept plan and the proposed overlay district. In particular, sidewalks are needed in the following locations:

#### Sharon Road

- Need sidewalks on both sides between Wendover Road and Morrocroft Lane
- From Morrocroft Lane to Colony Road, need planting strip and trees on northbound side; (*However, sidewalk has just been constructed against the curb due to space constraints.*) and on southbound side need wider sidewalks and trees to be planted in existing planting strip.
- Need sidewalk on northbound side from Sharon Station to Fairview Road

#### Colony Road

- Sidewalks from Runnymede Lane to Rockbrook Drive exist on only one side of the road, sidewalk should be on both sides if feasible.
- Sidewalks stop at Rockbrook Drive. The sidewalk should be extended to the entrance to Myers Park High School, (Picardy Place) on both sides of the road if feasible.

#### Runnymede Lane

- Has a sidewalk on both sides from Sharon Road to Selwyn Avenue, but these need to be better maintained.

#### Michael Baker Place

- Needs a sidewalk on both sides from Runnymede Lane to Selwyn Avenue.
- Bridge is especially dangerous for pedestrians.

### Fairview Road

- Need sidewalks from Wrencrest to Assembly Street on mall side.

### Barclay Downs Drive

- From Ferncliff Road to Morrison Blvd. sidewalks are on only one side of the road, and there is no planting strip. Sidewalks and planting strips should be added to both sides of Barclay Downs Drive.

### Morrison Drive

- Need sidewalks from Barclay Downs Drive to South Park Suites, on South Park mall side of road.
- Need planting strip next to sidewalk near Specialty Shops.

### Roxborough Drive

- Need sidewalks on both sides from Colony Road to Morrison Boulevard.

### Other Pedestrian Connections

- Need sidewalk/pedestrian linkage from specialty shops area across Morrison to the mall and through the mall property to Fairview Road.
- Need a pedestrian linkage between Phillips Place and the Sharon View Road area.

**III.g** Ensure that the Bicycle Transportation Plan, currently under development, identifies and prioritizes needed bicycle facilities in the SouthPark area.

**III.h** Develop a conceptual collector street grid for the SouthPark area to provide guidance for the inclusion of an internal circulation system in future redevelopment plans.

**III.i** Implement plans to encourage the use of alternative transportation in the SouthPark area.

## **IV. Traffic Safety**

### **Goal**

- Create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment.

### **Implementation Strategies**

**IV.a** Design roadway improvements and pedestrian facilities (i.e., sidewalks, crosswalks, medians, and pathways) in accordance with the criteria/design standards discussed in the accompanying concept plan to be included in the proposed overlay district.

**IV.b** As pedestrian improvements (i.e., crosswalks, sidewalks and other linkages) are completed and the transit circulator service is implemented in the study area, consider prohibiting drivers from turning right on red at key locations. These locations should include all signalized intersections in the area of the mall “super block” (i.e., Sharon

Road at Morrison Boulevard, mall entrance, and Fairview Road; Fairview Road at mall entrance and Barclay Downs Drive; Barclay Downs Drive at Carnegie and Morrison Boulevards; and Morrison Boulevard at Roxborough Drive and Sharon Road). Whenever possible, pedestrian crosswalks should be placed at these locations to minimize the need to prohibit right turn on red when exiting the mall site.

- IV.c** As pedestrian improvements (i.e., crosswalks, sidewalks and other linkages) are completed and the transit circulator service is implemented in the study area, consider adding pedestrian activated crossing signals at all signalized intersections within the SouthPark study area.
- IV.d** Ensure that all signalized intersections have well marked pedestrian crosswalks designed in accordance with the design criteria discussed in the accompanying concept plan document.
- IV.e** Provide sidewalks on both sides of all major and minor thoroughfares and collectors throughout the study area. *(Specific locations are provided in the transportation, access and circulation strategies section of this document.)*
- IV.f** Sidewalks should be provided on local neighborhood streets as specified in the subdivision ordinance.
- IV.g** Consider providing pedestrian refuge areas at intersections of multi-lane roadways, whenever feasible.
- IV.h** Evaluate the feasibility of using traffic monitoring cameras at key intersections to assist in enforcing traffic laws related to pedestrian safety (i.e., drivers not stopping at crosswalk, turning right on red when prohibited, running red lights).
- IV.i** Include the neighborhoods adjacent to the study area as high priority areas (if requested by the neighborhood) for consideration as part of the City's neighborhood traffic management program.

## **V. Community Involvement**

### **Goal**

- Establish on-going communication linkages between neighborhood residents, businesses, the development community and local government.

### **Implementation Strategy**

- V.1** Work with the SouthPark Area Council, the SouthPark Coalition of Neighborhoods and the local development community to establish on-going opportunities for neighborhood, business, development and local government representatives to share information and ideas regarding future growth and development in the SouthPark area.

## **VI. Environment**

### **Goal**

- Maintain a healthy, highly livable natural environment.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- VI.1** Implement the land use and design strategies specified in this document to provide a mixture of land uses which support alternative transportation, promote the creation of a network of green/open spaces, and provide more natural buffering capacity for stormwater runoff.
- VI.2** Implement the transportation, access and circulation strategies specified in this document to provide SouthPark area drivers with alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle.
- VI.3** Work with area businesses and neighborhoods to encourage participation in environmental programs, including alternative transportation programs.







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