

NORTHERN LAKES AREA PLAN

NORTHERN LAKES AREA PLAN: (Continued from December 12, 2007 Planning Board meeting.) Adoption of the Northern Lakes Area Plan. This Area Plan is being presented to the Planning Board for a recommendation to the Guilford County Board of County Commissioners. Text on file in the Planning and Development Department.

NORTHERN LAKES AREA PLAN SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

On September 21, 2006, the Guilford County Board of Commissioners adopted the Guilford County Comprehensive Plan. Policy 1.1.3 of the Future Land Use Element of the Plan states:

Policy 1.1.3: Prepare, in conjunction with a citizen group, a Northern Lakes Area Plan, beginning in September 2006.

Pursuant to this policy, the Guilford County Planning and Development Department convened a committee of local residents and stakeholders in October 2006 to develop the Plan.

PROCESS

On October 10, 2006, the Guilford County Planning and Development Department hosted a kick-off event for the Plan at Brown Summit Middle School. Fliers were distributed at area businesses and churches advertising the event, and print media serving the area were notified. Staff also contacted several large local landowners and other active citizens to encourage their participation and help spread the word. The purpose of the kick-off was to recruit volunteers to serve on the committee that would develop the Plan over the next year. Through this event, as well as through additional outreach efforts over the next several weeks, a committee of 17 citizens was established. Over the next several months, a core committee membership of 12 citizens emerged.

Over the next seven months, the committee met monthly to hear presentations and participate in discussions with staff and other speakers on topics relevant to plan development. These presentations covered environmental issues such as well and septic provision, watershed and floodplain regulations, and open space and farmland preservation; infrastructure concerns related to transportation, water and sewer provision, and parks and recreation; and future development/land use scenarios. Following these presentations and discussions, the committee identified and prioritized important topics and concerns that became the basis for developing the Plan. High priority topics were incorporated into the Plan's Vision Statement, and then elaborated upon as goals and policies. The Committee reached consensus on these recommendations, and then used the Vision Statement and its associated goals and policies to create a future land use map.

After several months of refinement and discussion by the Committee, and numerous consultations with staff from the City of Greensboro, the Town of Summerfield, and Rockingham County, consensus on the Draft Plan was established, and the Committee hosted two public walk-through meetings to invite public comment. These meetings were held on November 5 and 6, 2007 at Brown Summit Middle School. Fliers were distributed, news releases were issued to local print and televised media, and Committee members spread the word through their churches, homeowners' associations, and schools. Staff and committee members were on hand to discuss the Plan, and comment forms were distributed.

Following the generally favorable reaction from the public at the two public walk-through meetings, a public hearing for the Planning Board was scheduled for December 12, 2007 to provide a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

SUMMARY OF PLAN ELEMENTS

The Plan consists of two primary elements: the recommended future land use map, and the goals and policies.

Recommended future land use: The Committee heard presentations from County and City of Greensboro staff on the potential future impact of water and sewer provision in the Northern Lakes area, and the impacts that infrastructure could have on future land use patterns. The Committee determined that areas north of Lake Townsend have already been established as low-density residential areas, with a mixture of large-lot subdivisions, open space, and small commercial areas. Higher densities in these areas would be complicated by rigid watershed restrictions, and would be inconsistent with established development patterns. Higher densities are appropriate, however, on properties south of Lake Townsend, south of NC 150 in Brown Summit, and in the portion of the unincorporated Guilford County generally bounded by Yanceyville Road to the west and US 29 to the east. These areas are all potentially served by Greensboro water and sewer services and, with the exception of the areas along Air Harbor Road east to the Norfolk Southern rail line, are unencumbered by watershed restrictions.

Commercial development is generally recommended for established commercial nodes or at intersections of major roads or interchanges. Moderate commercial nodes (1/4 mile radii) are recommended for intersections at Church Street/NC 150, US 29/NC 150, the east side of US 29/Hicone Road, and the proposed interchange of the Urban Loop and Yanceyville Road. Minor commercial nodes are recommended for Spencer-Dixon Road/NC 150 just north of the new Northern Middle/High complex, and at an established node at Summit Avenue/Hicone Road. The historic downtown of Brown Summit is recognized as a mixed-use center where a combination of homes, churches, businesses, and institutional uses are appropriate.

Attached to the future land use map is a description of each land use category to aid in interpretation and implementation.

Goals and Policies: The recommended goals and policies are designed to augment the future land use map, and will serve to advise policymakers on the issues of highest concern for residents and business owners in the Northern Lakes area. The goals and policies are divided into four general categories, which are summarized below:

Transportation: Recognizing that funds for major infrastructure upgrades are scarce, the Committee has recommended best management practices in access management, alternative transportation options, and the continued support of programmed improvements such as the Northern Loop.

Recreation and Quality of Life: The Committee felt that important regional open space initiatives should be supported and encouraged, and that whenever possible individual developments should be designed with conservation in mind.

Rural Character and Agricultural Preservation: The size and scale of new development should reflect the area's rural heritage, and measures should be taken to ensure the viability of active farmland. The Committee also felt it important to recognize that individual property rights should be carefully balanced by the desire to maintain rural character.

Residential and Commercial Needs and Design: New development should incorporate high-quality, environmentally-friendly design elements, and should be located in areas efficiently served by existing infrastructure.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Plan, designed to be implemented through the development review process, will probably be most applicable during the zoning amendment process. Rezoning requests should be consistent with the adopted Plan, and developments should incorporate several of the recommended goals and policies into their design. The Plan should also be consulted frequently when policies are being considered as they relate to transportation and other infrastructure improvements. The Plan will also be helpful when advising citizens, business owners, and other government officials of the expected pattern and type of new development in the Northern Lakes area of Guilford County.