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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kelley Ann Hall entitled “The Transition to Neotraditionalism: The Case of Huntersville, North Carolina.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Geography.

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The Transition to Neotraditionalism:
The Case of Huntersville, North Carolina

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kelley Ann Hall
May 2005

Dedication

This is dedicated to the person who has fueled
all of my success and who will enjoy this the most.
I love you mom! I cannot thank you enough!

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Abstract

Troubled by the impacts associated with conventional development, the suburban community of Huntersville, North Carolina responded to metropolitan sprawl by adopting strict neotraditional development codes. Although a growing number of municipalities have begun to allow traditional neighborhood developments, few have completely reformed their zoning laws the way Huntersville did in the early 1990s. This thesis asked why Huntersville made the transition to neotraditionalism and what were the consequences of such a drastic step? A number of factors converged, including a rapid build-up of growth pressures and the timely arrival of new urbanist planning philosophies to spur Huntersville's decision. Crucially, however, widespread support from the citizenry allowed the town government to ignore developer opposition and complete the transition. The town's decision had a number of unforeseen consequences, including increased approval time for developments, increased economic segregation, and the appearance of "neotraditional hybrids," that is, developments that only partly followed neotraditional principles. The town's open space goals also came into conflict with is affordable housing and diversity goals. The town modified its codes once it realized that not every neotraditional planning principle had its intended effect or was conducive to the town's development goals. Nonetheless, its tier-based zoning system, emphasis on pedestrian-oriented development, open space preservation, and encouragement of good architecture have identified Huntersville as a progressive community. The town offers a number of important lessons to other communities trying to manage growth.

Table of Contents

Chapter Page

I. **Introduction**……...1

a. How Research Will Enhance Current Literature…….....2

b. Research Design…….....4

1. Phase 1 –Background Collection…….....4

2. Phase 2 –Media and Interviews..……....5

II**.** **The Rise of New Urbanism**……..7

a. The "Suburb"……..7

b. Rapid Decentralization……...8

c. Conventional Development……....9

d. Emergence of New Ideas……....9

e. New Paradigm Established…….....11

f. Current Barriers to New Paradigm…….....13

III**.** **Huntersville Faces Crisis**……15

a. Metropolitan Expansion…….....15

b. Growth Pressures……...16

c. Rail Service Viewed as Way to Handle Increasing Population….....17

d. Huntersville Faces Population and Development Pressures……18

IV. **It All Comes Together In Huntersville**……..21

a. Regional Interest in Neotraditional Paradigm……....21

b. The Arrival of Neotraditionalism to the Charlotte Region……24

c. Neotraditionalism Sparks More Than Just Interest in Huntersville…...26

V. **Building the New Code**……31

a. Public Involvement……31

b. Formation of the Citizen's Committee……..32

c. Walter's Involvement……34

d. Development of the Code……..34

e. The Code……35

1. Variety of Uses……..36
2. Design Regulations……....37
- Architecture…….37
- Pedestrian-Scaled…….38
- Setbacks / Buffers……39
- Garages / Alleys……..39
- Streets……..40
3. Maintaining Rural Character of Huntersville……40
VI. **Reactions, Concerns, and Unintended Consequences**……..43
a. First Neotraditional Developments……43
1. Birkdale Village…….....43
2. Vermillion……..44
b. Opposition to Town's Proposal…….46
c. Reaction to the New Code……..47
1. Vague Language and Increased Approval Time……47
2. Developer Exclusion……..48
3. Open Space District / Density Reductions……..……...49
4. Effect of Increased Regulations on Development…….49
5. Design Guidelines – Problems and Expenses……51
6. Market Demands……52
d. Unintended Consequences…….53
1. Open Space District (OS)……..53
2. Economic Segregation……...53
3. Neotraditional Hybrids……..55
4. Growth Remains……56
VII. **Learning & Adjustments**……57
a. Moratorium Put on the Table…….57
b. New Code……..60
1. Zoning and Density Changes…….60
2. Low-Impact Design……...61

c. Concerns Resulting from 2002 Amendments…….....62
1. Vague Language……62
2. Approval Time……...63
3. Density Requirements……....63
4. Open Space……64
5. Effect on Development……..64
6. Still New Urbanism?.....65
VIII. **Discussion & Conclusion**…….66
a. Factors Allowing a Successful Transition……..……...66
1. Timing and Size…..……...66
2. Community Concern Greater Than Developer Concern……...68
- Developers Lost Power…..……..68
- Widespread Dedication.……...69
b. What Can Be Learned From Huntersville's Experience?..…..……..70
1. On-going Education and Confusion……...71
2. Cannot Please Everyone……....72
3. Beyond New Urbanism….....73
4. Open Space is Antithetical for Income Diversity…….74
c. Conclusion…….76
References……78
Appendix……..86
Vita……..107

List of Tables

Table Page

1. Interviews….....87
2. a) Population Growth Statistics: County Data 1980-2000…….....88
   b) Population Growth Statistics: Municipal Data 1980-2000……88
3. 1996 Zoning Districts & Descriptions……...89

List of Figures

Figure Page

1. Map of Mecklenburg County……..……...93
2. Proposed Rapid Rail Corridors……..94
3. Huntersville's Population Growth: 1980-2000 & 2010 Projections…….95
4. a) Median Household Income 1990-2000…….96
   b) Median Value of Owner Occupied Units 1990-2000…..……..96
5. Huntersville Town Limits & Sphere of Influence…….97
6. Photograph of North Cross Shopping Center ……..…….98
7. Design Graphics: Huntersville's Zoning Ordinance…….....99
8. (a) Conventional Garage.....100
   (b) Traditional Garage…….100
9. Conventional versus Traditional Streetscape Patterns……101
10. a) Location of Birkdale Village……...102
    b) Photograph of Birkdale Village……...103
11. a) Vermillion Master Plan……...104
    b) Photograph of Vermillion's Neighborhood Square…..……...104
    c) Photograph of Vermillion's Live Work Units…….105
    d) Photograph of Vermillion's Row Houses……105
    d) Photograph of Vermillion's Single Family Detached Units……106

Abbreviations

APA	American Planning Association
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CACAIA	Charlotte-Area Chapter of the American Institute of Architects
CCV	Centers and Corridors Vision
CDOT	Charlotte Department of Transportation
CMPC	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission
CMU	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities
CNU	Congress of the New Urbanism
DOT	Department of Transportation
DPZ	Duany & Plater-Zyberk Architectural Firm
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
HC	Highway Commercial (Zoning District)
LLC	Large Landowners Coalition
LN	Lake Norman
MIL	Mountain Island Lake
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
NAHB	National Association of Home Builders
NU	New Urbanism
NCLUESA	North Carolina's Land Use & Environmental Services Agency
OS	Open Space
R-1	Single-Family Residential (Zoning District)
R-4	Multi-Family Residential (Zoning District)
REBIC	Real Estate and Business Industry Coalition
SPD	Strategic Plan for Development
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
TND	Traditional Neighborhood Development/Design
TND-O	Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
UK	United Kingdom
UNCC	University of North Carolina, Charlotte
VPS	Visual Preference Surveys
WWII	World War Two

Chapter I. Introduction

Located north of the city of Charlotte, the suburban town of Huntersville, North Carolina reacted to inevitable sprawl stalking its boundaries in a way different from other metropolitan-fringe communities across the nation. In 1995, the town made an ambitious decision to discard its previous zoning and subdivision ordinances and replaced them with regulations reflecting *neotraditional* planning principles promoted by the *new urbanist* movement. The movement's advocates argue that the creation of healthier urban habitats is necessary due to the current state of our cities. After emerging in the late seventies and early eighties, this concept within city planning has grown popular among architects, developers, and town planners.

New urbanists, also referred to as neotraditionalists, strive to translate traditional town designs into the modern context by rediscovering techniques employed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as high-density, small-scale developments that incorporate front porches, sidewalks, and large public areas. As a result, new techniques, based on old methods of building towns, neighborhoods, and city centers have been formulated. Conventional subdivisions, the development norm from 1945 onwards, have been blamed for weakening the emotional connection people feel towards their communities. Proponents of new urbanism argue that there are methods to counter the weakened state of our cities. The overall aim of traditional design is to return to pedestrian-scale communities of the past and to move away from the segregated use structure present in most contemporary zoning ordinances. Nevertheless, as the movement gains momentum, critics are close to follow. As many powerful players behind city growth not only contest new urbanism, they are vehemently opposed to it.

How Research Will Enhance Current Literature

A number of cities have experimented with neotraditional development initiatives. While many have permitted neotraditional developments by allowing elements to be integrated through overlay districts, very few have completely integrated new urbanist planning principles into zoning and subdivision regulations. One town in particular, Huntersville, is an exception. It completely reformed its development policies in the early 1990s and replaced them with policies reflecting neotraditional design principles. The town's planners convinced the Board of Commissioners to enact a moratorium on development, allowing time to slow the current rate of growth and provide time to re-write zoning laws. The town decided that a new code was necessary in order to satisfy the its development desires.

Seaside and Celebration, Florida, along with Laguna West, California, are towns analogous to Huntersville, as they have fully embraced neotraditional building and design principles into development regulations. Unlike Seaside, Celebration, and Laguna West, Huntersville had development policies in place prior to shifting to this new style of development. Therefore the town did not begin with neotraditionalism, it converted to it. Huntersville is also a much larger community. The other three communities have populations of less than 10,000. Seaside and Celebration are small-scale resort communities rather than residential communities, and therefore rely upon tourism, whereas Huntersville is a more typical suburban bedroom community located near a major metropolitan area.

The following research will determine what was unique about Huntersville that allowed it to adopt neotraditionalism. Grant (2003) briefly explored why new urbanism occurs in some areas and not others in her research on Canadian cities. She hypothesized that support for new urbanism would be greater in communities experiencing significant growth. Her research involved examining planning documents, interviewing staff involved in setting policy, and evaluating current residential projects. She found that some elected officials and professional town staff were committed to new urbanist planning principles, but their implementation approaches differed. Furthermore,

adjustments were made in light of local conditions, as the public did not accept all of the elements suggested by fundamental new urbanists. Reluctance was more prevalent in cities facing fiscal stress and limited growth. Calgary and Waterloo were the two exceptions, as they had both experienced strong growth, which created a political climate that could support innovative ideas. Grant's results indicated that new urbanism was more successful in cities experiencing high population growth and economic prosperity.

Huntersville, like Calgary and Waterloo, is a rapidly growing municipality. The proposed research is similar to Grant's as it attempts to answer the following questions: what allowed the town to adopt neotraditionalism and what compromises were made in light of local circumstances? The proposed research will go a step further and determine the impact of drastic municipal reform and evaluate its success in Huntersville. Answers to these questions will shed light onto how power, motivation and self-interest drive drastic policy change. It will be valuable for other municipalities desiring reform, to understand why those commonly regarded as possessing power - politicians and developers - supported such drastic reform. Huntersville could therefore be used as a model for other metropolitan-fringe communities responding to the impacts of uncontrolled growth, to learn what is necessary to implement similar policies.

In addition, based on what permitted Huntersville's transition, research results will determine factors necessary to facilitate change and develop neotraditional planning practices. Results will also reveal further information regarding the new urbanism, such as; the likelihood that municipalities can successfully adopt this style of development; how communities convince residents, developers, and town managers that there are benefits to neotraditional town planning principles; and whether or not new urbanism is an effective alternative to mitigate uncontrolled conventional suburban sprawl plaguing the nation. The research will augment current literature, as the extent to which neotraditional reform is supported by developers, political leaders and residents has rarely been addressed. This research will shed light onto the potential future of the new urbanist movement. Furthermore, information retrieved from this research will be useful to town planners, elected officials, and developers who wish to undergo similar changes to their current course of development.

Research Design

In order to determine how and why the transition to new urbanism occurred and its consequences for Huntersville, a historical analysis was conducted. In addition to interviews with parties involved in the amendment and development process, past and present government documents, census data, and newspaper articles were analyzed. Together, these sources allowed the reconstruction of the chronology of events between the decision to embrace neotraditionalism and the present day. There were two phases of research, both of which aided in answering the question – How did Huntersville make the transition to a new planning and development paradigm?

Phase 1 – Background Collection

Prior to conducting interviews, I acquired background information on Huntersville, including information on the town's history, and past and present demographic data. I also evaluated the town's geographical layout, its previous and current government development policy, along with development policies held by surrounding municipalities. Finally, I became familiar with the new urbanist development projects present in Huntersville. Together, this information was the focus of the first stage of the research.

Huntersville's regulations before and after the neotraditional ordinance was adopted, were analyzed and compared to policies of other municipalities in the vicinity, thereby distinguishing its codes from others. Upon reviewing past and present zoning and subdivision ordinances, I was able to attain a greater understanding of the alterations made to previous planning practices. Huntersville's open space plan, community development plan, subdivision ordinance, zoning ordinance, and Mecklenburg County's light-rail plan together provided insight into how the town prepared to accommodate neotraditional planning practices. Through understanding what these documents contained and how they had been modified, it became clear what particular planning principles the town emphasized the most.

In order to understand why Huntersville had experienced such abundant population growth over the previous 25 years, the town's geographic and demographic layout was analyzed. Census data from 1980, 1990, and 2000 were examined along with 2010 data collected by the Charlotte Department of Transportation on Mecklenburg County's future population projections. Demographic changes were also compared and contrasted to determine the social and economic characteristics of the residents and how these characteristics changed over time. Variables analyzed were, population composition, average household income, and median price of owner occupied units.

To acquire a familiarity with the developments adhering to the new neotraditional code and better understand critiques, it was necessary to visit these developments. Therefore two trips were taken to Huntersville to view projects built after 1996. Architect Tom Low and Planning Director, Jack Simoneau guided me to the location of these developments and features were observed, and then photographed.

Phase 2 – Media and Interviews

Phase two of the research drew upon published media, in the form of newspaper articles, and in-depth interviews to gather information regarding Huntersville's transition to a new planning paradigm. Newspaper articles published between 1994 and today, discussing neotraditionalism in Huntersville in particular, but also in Mecklenburg County, were scanned. Articles were retrieved from three sources; the Business Journal of Charlotte (1995-2004), the Charlotte Observer (1994-2004), and the Huntersville Herald (2002-2004). The articles from the Charlotte Business Journal were available through an online archive, whereas the articles published in the Charlotte Observer were copied from microfilm at the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County. Because the Huntersville Herald did not have access to an online archive system, editor, Tucker Mitchell sent articles through the mail. These articles discussed what was happening in communities surrounding Charlotte and what affect, if any, they had on influencing Huntersville's decision to embrace new urbanism. This documentation also exposed the interpretations and reactions of the public and the media, not only to this type of policy change, but to the new urbanist movement in general.

Telephone and in-person interviews were conducted with a number of key figures involved in the transition, design, implementation, and development process. Table I lists the names and professions of interviewees, along with the date(s) of the interview. (All tables and figures are located in the appendix) Past and present planning directors, members of the town's Board of Commissioners, architects and designers, along with town developers, were asked to describe their involvement and critique of the transition process. This information assembled the order of events from the beginning, when reform was first discussed in 1995, to the adoption of the new code, and extended to the present day.

Chapter II. The Rise of New Urbanism

The "Suburb"

To understanding what took place in Huntersville, it is important to understand what led to the rise of the suburb, and why these residential communities ignited the new urbanist movement. A brief historical timeline will be presented that sets the stage for the planning and design philosophies adopted in the town of Huntersville.

According to Fishman (1987), *suburbia* can be defined by what it includes – middle class residents – and what it excludes – all industry, most commerce, and all "lower-class" residents. Generally, a suburb is positioned on the fringe of an urban area and is predominantly the site of residences. Though physically separated, suburbs depend greatly upon neighboring metropolitan areas both economically and culturally, as they are the suppliers of employment and entertainment. Fishman also distinguishes between the "classic suburb", associated most commonly with Fredrick Law Olmsted Senior and Junior in the late 19th and the early 20th century, and the "contemporary suburb". He claims that the new suburb is not actually a suburb, but rather a new kind of city, because it no longer depends upon the urban core (Fishman, 1987). What then, were the forces that changed the traditional suburb into what it has become today?

From its earliest usage in the 14th century until the mid-18th century, a "suburbe", was associated with a place of inferiority as it was home to the less economically advantaged of society (Fishman, 1987). The industrial revolution quickly changed this, particularly in America. By the mid-19th century, the industrial revolution was at its peak. Increasing numbers of people who were previously employed in the agricultural sector migrated to cities in search of employment. Large concentrations of worker tenements were built up around factory sites. The sanitary conditions of industrial cities deteriorated quickly, as there were virtually no governmental policies to ameliorate the urban condition during this time (Arnold, 1979). Mass urban immigration continued and

increased congestion. Problems such as crime, poverty, pollution and depression became associated with cities. Elites, who once dominated the center city scene, began to look to the outskirt of their cities. Aided by expanding railroad development, small settlements emerged at the peripheries of urban areas and were exclusively for those who could afford them. According to Kunstler (1996), these earliest suburbs were designed to "project the allure of the wilderness without its wildness".

Rapid Decentralization

From 1910 to 1940, America enjoyed unprecedented population growth, prosperity, and the emergence of the private automobile, all of which led to the first wave of middle-income migrants from central cities to the suburbs (Arnold, 1979). By the end of WWII, the federal government launched a series of aggressive policies to meet the nation's new challenges; postwar housing shortages, public demand for greater access to the suburbs, and the need to connect the country's economic centers. As a result, the Federal Highway Act and the GI Bill were enacted (Urban Land Institute, 1998). Low-interest home mortgage loans granted to soldiers, cheap land, and local government subsidization of utility rates in new communities, combined with federal support for highway construction, led to a proliferation of single-family detached housing developments. These efforts liberated many from the crowded urban living conditions and provided millions of families with homes. It also established a social, economic, and regulatory framework that led to enormous metropolitan growth.

After WWII, automobiles, rather than public transportation shaped suburban growth and the separation between city and suburb increased substantially. Large tracts of land were opened for development as federal and state governments built more boulevards, parkways, and expressways to serve the growing dispersed population (Urban Land Institute, 1998). Homes were mass-produced, pushed back from the street, and front facades were dominated by garages. Strip malls emerged along highways and quickly replaced "main streets" as they were prime shopping locations only accessible by car. Residential decentralization to the suburbs was accompanied by the relocation of manufacturing plants and shopping centers. This shifted the city's center of gravity from

the urban core to its peripheries. One of the unanticipated consequences of growth shifting to the outskirts of urban areas was that downtowns quickly lost their vitality and were left to deteriorate.

Conventional Development

According to Leon Krier, an architect famous for his blatant rejection of modernist architecture, "Every part of the city is zoned in such a way that citizens can only accomplish a single task in a defined place, in a determined manner" (Porhyrios, 1984). The principal objective of *zoning* is to ensure that commercial and industrial development is separated from residential areas. It is a regulatory tool utilized by municipalities to not only control development, but to organize it into districts for the purpose of regulating allowed uses on private land (Kayden, 2004; Arnold, 1979). The suburban development model employed in the second half of the 20th century, commonly referred to as *conventional development,* has been widely criticized. This type of development proposes low-density construction, with single-use zoning and its separated subdivisions, each offering a single housing type and limited value range. This led to neighborhoods being inhabited by residents in single income brackets (Urban Land Institute 2003). The hierarchical roadway system has also allowed widely separated clusters of development, leaving all mobility dependent on vehicles. Critics argue that this has caused a disconnection with places and has impoverished us socially. Howard Kunsler describes the American landscape as the "Geography of Nowhere" in his 1993 book (Kunstler, 1993).

Emergence of New Ideas

Scholars in the 1960s began to voice their disgust with the state of American cities and called for reform. One literary work in particular had an enormous influence on the future of city planning, Jane Jacobs's The Death and Life of American Cities (1961). Jacobs witnessed how Americans' sense of connectedness both socially and spatially was diminishing. "Every place becomes more like every other place, all adding up to the noplace" (Jacobs, 1961). As restaurant chains, malls, and monotonous housing

developments continued to gain ground, the American landscape was criticized as losing its uniqueness and becoming generic. Jacobs emphasized the importance of maintaining networks of public pathways, spaces and activity nodes within cities. She argued for diversity; mixed land use; restoration of old buildings; and concentrated development. This book has been quoted throughout academia as changing the course of city planning during this time. It not only led to the re-emergence of urban design as a fundamental professional field, but it has also been credited as stimulating the earliest neotraditionalists.

The 1960s also witnessed a decline in the demand for single-family detached housing. This type of housing captured 90 percent of the market in 1950. By 1960 this number decreased to 60 percent and even further in 1970 (Arnold, 1979). These changing housing demands were attributed to the rising cost of single-family housing and the presence of fewer families. The environmental movement also gained ground during the 1960s with the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Arnold, 1979). Urban regeneration and renewal emerged as popular themes. These changes forced municipalities to reconsider current planning and development practices.

It was not until the early 1980s that planners, architects, environmentalists, and social commentators showed an interest in comprehensive community planning (Klaus, 2002). These interests were fueled by fiscal crises, environmental concerns, and changing demographics. Untamed growth was no longer a financial option for all municipalities. Not only were a number of downtown areas in need of renewal, but also many cities were paying more for services in suburban areas than what they were receiving from taxes (Urban Land Institute, 2003).

As environmental awareness spread in the 1980s, the concept of *sustainable development* was formed (Grant, 2003). Continued depletion of open space, water quality, and agriculture lands became concerns not only for governmental officials, but also developers and residents. Arendt found that people desired to live near environmental amenities such as forests, farmlands, and meadows. He documented that nearly 40 percent of people living in golf course communities did not play golf (Arendt, 1996). This suggested that people were attracted to open space and landscaped

neighborhoods with walking trails. Therefore, because these environmental amenities were in demand, they should be preserved. He also found that homes located in areas where significant open space was conserved, appreciated faster than their conventional counterparts (Arendt, 1996; also mentioned in Eppli and Tu, 2000).

Throughout the country, the changing demographics of homeowners and renters have placed pressures on developers to build new housing styles. Family size, age, ethnicity, and lifestyle have all influenced this change. A generation ago, 40 percent of all household consisted of "typical families" – a married couple with children – today, it accounts for only 26 percent (Urban Land Institute, 2003). This indicates that the typical single-family dwelling - located in a low density subdivision with a large yard - is no longer in such high demand. Later marriages, fewer children, no children, gay couples, and singles make up a large portion of the market force today, and these populations tend to favor higher-density housing. As the "baby boomers" enter retirement age, homebuyers are getting older. This cohort, which now constitutes 1/3 of the homeowner population, has different housing demands than they once had (Urban Land Institute, 2003). There has also been a large increase in minority populations. William Frey studied the ethnic makeup of new suburbanites in 2000, and found that 27 percent of the suburban population in large metropolitan areas was made up of minorities, up from 19 percent in 1990 (Urban Land Institute, 2003).

In addition to economic, environmental and demographic changes, people are beginning to question the perceived gains associated with living in conventional development. As suburbs continue to develop farther from central cities, traffic congestion, overcrowding, and social problems have plagued these areas along with aging infrastructure, poverty and pressures for more sustainable planning and development practices.

New Paradigm Established

A new approach to city planning and development surfaced in the 1980s with its rhetoric of flexibility of zoning and subdivision ordinances, mixing uses, diversity, public participation, and appreciation of heritage. This new type of development has most

commonly been referred to as new urbanism or neotraditionalism. New urbanists borrow heavily from the ideas employed in the 19th and early 20th centuries by the Olmsted's classic suburban developments (Klaus, 2002).

By 1993, the movement's philosophy became more structured as architects and town planners Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Peter Calthorpe, Dan Soloman, Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides created the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) (Norquist, 1998). Today, the CNU has over 2,300 members from a variety of disciplines; engineers, elected officials, planners, bureaucrats, architects, environmentalists, developers, and investors (CNU Website, 2004). Frequent meetings are held by members to brainstorm ways to alter current development practices by changing local zoning policies, decreasing sprawl, and opposing the dominance of conventional development. Members have developed a *Charter of the New Urbanism* that outlines favored development patterns and policies. The charter introduces guidelines a city or community can follow: promote mixed-use neighborhoods that accommodate varying income groups; offer transportation alternatives to avoid automobile dependency; emphasize dense development; support infill and redevelopment projects rather than sprawl; frame urban places with architecture and landscape designs that respect local traditions; finally construct public gathering areas such as parks, greenways, squares, and sidewalks (CNU Website, 2004). According to new urbanists, people aspire to be a part of a community and long for close relationships with neighbors, and therefore are willing to live in diverse, compact neighborhoods that are transportation and environmentally friendly.

Seaside, Florida was marked as the first Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) based on neotraditional principles. It was greeted with intense media interest and has since been considered the initiating force driving the new urbanist movement. Since the development of Seaside, hundreds of communities adhering to new urbanist methodologies have sprung up across the country. In June of 1999, New Urban News identified 252 traditional neighborhood developments in the U.S. Today there are over 640 that are either complete, under construction or in the planning process (*New Urban News*, 2003).

Current Barriers to New Paradigm

Despite the fact that a growing number of communities are integrating neotraditional ideas into town planning, ninety-five percent of suburban development remains conventional (Ellis, 2002). Consequently, there are prominent hurdles standing in the way of neotraditional development. One is that these planning principles are illegal in most communities across the country, and municipal reform is unlikely. Contemporary zoning practices often require extensive setbacks and large lot sizes. They also tend to forbid higher density developments, narrowing street widths, and mixing retail and commercial with residential, all of which are encouraged by new urbanists.

In addition, new urbanism has been accused of restraining developers by requiring mixed uses, greater density, sidewalks, interconnectivity, and more varied architecture. (Proponents of new urbanism, on the other hand, claim that this type of development allows greater flexibility for developers, such as allowing mixed use landscapes that do not require large setbacks and lot sizes.) Although these ideas are gradually becoming easier to implement as more developers and town officials are becoming aware of them, there is still limited evidence documenting their success. Moreover, present planning and engineering practices provide little guidance for developers interested in experimenting with neotraditional building design, therefore making experimentation risky (Wolshon, 1999).

Another obstacle facing new urbanist developments is cost. Increased attention to detail and architecture, along with varied structural designs and uses require more up-front costs. Increased expenses make it difficult to entice private or small-scale developers with limited resources. A developer without substantial investment capital could not afford failure. Due to the rarity and cost of neotraditional projects, his or her willingness to invest in such projects would be doubtful. Developers will also build what sells. If their interests can be addressed with contemporary trends in the market, then there is little incentive to experiment with new building techniques that require greater investment.

New urbanist town planning principles have faced other obstacles. Neotraditional developments have been criticized for basing their philosophies on models that failed in the past (Ellis, 2002). They have also been accused of attempting to use social engineering tactics to enhance a lost sense of place. Critics have also charged neotraditional developments as being "classist", in that they cater primarily to the upper middle class, therefore only perpetuating segregation by class and race (Ellis, 2002).

Barriers are significant and originate at various levels of local, state and federal government. If policymakers are hoping to limit sprawl, they must find ways to convince developers and suburban residents that there are benefits to a more urban, compact style of developing and living. Concrete evidence regarding whether adopting these tactics actually improves the current state of urban areas is not available. This makes it very difficult for municipalities to adopt the movement's policies and initiate change.

Despite barriers, several cities and towns have responded to the public's and developer's desire for neotraditional development by implementing ordinances that legalize new urbanism. But as criticisms remain, how a municipality can make the transition to new urbanism and integrate its planning philosophies into ordinances remains uncertain. Since Huntersville has been experimenting with neotraditionalism for a decade, its experience will be used to answer this question.

Chapter III. Huntersville Faces Crisis

Metropolitan Expansion

Metropolitan expansion is primarily a response to economic development, fueled by population growth. An increase in a city's population will almost always result in greater stress on housing and city services. In order to accommodate more people, a city expands in an effort to alleviate stress. Regardless of how urban growth is perceived, the out-migration of people from metropolitan areas has impacts on urban-fringe towns. According to Bryan Stumpf, project manager for the HNTB Corporation in Indianapolis, "metropolitan fringe growth" is primarily residential based growth driven by people leaving the city. New residents commonly desire to live in small towns while enjoying the benefits of employment in the neighboring city (APA Conference, 1999). The amount of growth is dependent upon the economic well being of nearby metropolitan areas. Stumpf argues that with advances in technology and commuting ease, that this type of growth is an inevitable phenomenon. Places undergoing intense population growth are faced with demands for affordable housing and space dedicated to retail, commercial and recreational uses, along with adequate infrastructure to connect people to services.

Charlotte, North Carolina is an example of a growing city with rapidly growing suburbs. The second largest financial center in the U.S., following New York City, Charlotte is the largest city in North Carolina (McCoy, 2001). Located in Mecklenburg County, Charlotte's wealth of employment opportunities have attracted residents to the county as well as to the neighboring counties of Union, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Rowan, and Cabarrus, as well as York County in South Carolina. Table 2 (a) lists population statistics for Mecklenburg County and its surrounding counties for 1980, 1990, and 2000. Mecklenburg County in particular experienced substantial population growth between 1980 and 2000. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the county was home to approximately 404,270 residents. This number expanded to 695,454 by the year 2000.

The remaining land in Mecklenburg is dispersed among six smaller towns; Matthews, Pineville, Mint Hill, Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson. Figure 1 illustrates Mecklenburg County and the location of these towns.

In the 1980s the most intense development was concentrated primarily toward Charlotte's southern borders. During this time, the towns of Matthews, Mint Hill, and Pineville underwent significant population growth. By the 1990s, most of southern Mecklenburg County was developed and growth shifted north. According to the 2000 census and future projections produced by the Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT), north Mecklenburg County is currently the target of intense development and population in-migration. Table 2 (b) displays population growth statistics for municipalities within Mecklenburg between 1980 and 2000. The regions Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) – Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill MSA - is over 1.3 million (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). These numbers reveal trends in population growth affecting the region over the past 20 years.

Growth Pressures

Intense growth strains a community's ability to respond proactively to development pressures. This strain is not always perceived negatively. A study conducted by the University of North Carolina Charlotte's, School of Economics, was released to the public in March of 2002 (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 11, 2002). Commissioned by the Real Estate and Building Industry Coalition (REBIC), the study claimed that new homes add enough to a community's tax base to offset the costs of building additional schools, roads and other infrastructure necessary to accommodate new residents. According to this argument, growth adds taxpayers and therefore increases municipal revenues (Connaughton & Madsen 2000).

Others claim that there are substantial unaccounted costs associated with growth, especially when not adequately controlled. Widening roads, expanding sewer lines, increased air and water pollution, and congested roads and schools are just a few of the pressures associated with rapid growth. The construction and maintenance of public works can pose financial burdens for rapidly growing municipalities. According to an

article published in the Charlotte Observer in 1995, some residents in the Charlotte-area voiced their opposition to higher property taxes necessary to accommodate growth, while new residents, who often choose to reside in the suburbs because of the lower property taxes, were disconcerted that their taxes would rise to accommodate more growth (*The Charlotte Observer*, February 26, 1995).

Regardless of whether growth is welcome, pressures associated with growth are having an impact on the communities and counties surrounding Charlotte. As a result, Charlotte is a blessing and a curse for many of these communities. The economic prosperity enjoyed is a direct result of these communities' proximity to the city and employment opportunities. But many of these communities are being completely engulfed by metropolitan expansion. As a result, a number of these communities have implemented development regulations to better control the future of their towns. Huntersville is an example of a town that enacted strict development regulations. In the mid 1990s, the town decided that the initiation of new planning principles, based on traditional town development, would help counteract the negative impacts associated with uncontrolled growth.

Rail Service Viewed as Way to Handle Increasing Population

The metropolitan area is preparing to follow in the footsteps of Washington D.C., Dallas, Denver and Seattle in implementing rapid transit lines. A land-use and transit plan was initiated by the Charlotte City Council and Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners in 1994. The plan proposed the construction of a rapid transit system as a means of supporting the projected population growth and to attain the goals set forth in the Centers and Corridors Vision, (CCV). The goals of the CCV were to sustain economic growth while protecting citizens' quality of life. The plan aimed to reduce the total vehicle travel, thus reducing traffic congestion and increasing air quality and provide for lifestyles less dependent upon private automobile use (Avin et al., 1999).

The plan identified five major transportation and development corridors extending from the center city to the county's borders and beyond. Figure 2 illustrates the location of the corridors. The proposed rail line has greatly affected municipal planning in and

around Charlotte, especially around future transit stations. Municipalities have begun receiving tax money from the county to develop detailed plans for their transit stops and the areas surrounding these stops. Many of these stops will allow concentrations of offices and high density commercial and residential units. This development plan will attract more people to transit stops and therefore provide an alternative to driving. Feeder bus services will also connect neighborhoods to transit stations, again encouraging an alternative to driving. The project is expected to be completed by 2007 and manage about 500,000 rail passengers annually by 2015 (McCoy, 2001).

Huntersville Faces Population and Development Pressures

Incorporated in 1873, Huntersville was initially a farming community. With its proximity to the railroad, the town quickly grew (Town of Huntersville Website, 2004). There were two events that fueled even more growth to north Mecklenburg, the damming of the Catawba River, and the construction of Interstate 77. In 1963, the Catawba River was dammed and Lake Norman was created (*The Charlotte Observer*, July 18, 1999). The opening of Interstate 77 in the early 1970s made north Mecklenburg County more accessible. Growth quickly became concentrated along its corridor. Figure 1 (b) shows Huntersville in relation to I-77 and Lake Norman. The allure of undeveloped farmland, the Piedmont topography, along with the proximity to Lake Norman, and direct access to Charlotte via I-77, encouraged tremendous population growth by the 1980s. Amenities, such as available lakefront property, caused developers to flock to the towns in north Mecklenburg County to meet demands for new housing, business and retail. The towns of Cornelius, Davidson, and Huntersville, all located along I-77 and bordering the lake, more than doubled in population during the 1990s. Huntersville's population was documented as 1,294 in 1980 and jumped to around 3,000 in 1990. As of 2000, Huntersville was home to over 25,000 residents, a 728% increase in population from 1990-2000 (US Bureau of the Census, 1980-2000). Figure 3 displays the town's population growth between 1980 and 2000 along with population projections for 2010, revealing that growth is expected to dramatically increase. Median household incomes and the value of owner-occupied homes also increased substantially between 1990 and

2000. Increases are illustrated in Figures 4 (a) and 4 (b). Household income more than doubled from 1990 to 2000 ($30,510 to $71,932). The average value of owner-occupied homes went from $85,600 in 1990 to $182,200 in 2000. These increases reflect dramatic demographic changes affecting Huntersville over the previous decade.

Due to the amount of undeveloped land remaining in its jurisdiction, projections favor further growth in Huntersville. In 1995 the city limits encompassed 14 square miles. Through an annexation request in 1996, the town's corporate boundaries (city limits) increased to 37.7 square miles. In the mid-1980s the North Carolina General Assembly altered its annexation laws, allowing municipalities to determine sensible future boundaries for their communities. Towns would therefore control zoning within their "sphere of influence", which is land outside the town's limits that could potentially become incorporated into the town limits through future annexed requests (*The Charlotte Observer*, July 18, 1999). As of 1998, Huntersville's zoning jurisdiction extended 64 square miles. This meant that residents owning land outside of the town limits would be subject to Huntersville's zoning laws, although not its property taxes (Town of Huntersville Website, 2004). Figure 5 displays Huntersville's corporate boundaries in green and the land designated to the 'sphere of influence' in gray.

Faced with rapid population growth, recent un-welcome residential and retail developments, and projections of continued growth; Huntersville found itself facing a predicament. Despite being aware that growth was inevitable, concerns were raised among town officials regarding the types of developments being built. The town prided itself on its rural, small-town character and began witnessing developments that were not familiar to the town. Figure 6 displays a picture of the North Cross shopping center built in the early 1990s. North Cross was built in a typical conventional style, with large structural setbacks and abundant front parking. Ann Hammond, Huntersville's Planning Director from 1988 to 2000, described this development as "not unique to the town" and as being "convenient but at the same time threatening to the greatly valued small-town character" (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). Hammond mentioned how strong anti-Charlotte sentiment emerged during the 1990s among many of the town's residents. There were increasing concerns that sprawl would eradicate Huntersville's uniqueness

and that current conventional building patterns would allow more unwanted development. According to David Walters, professor of Architecture at UNC Charlotte's Urban Institute, and Ann Hammond, there was a general consensus that Huntersville did not want to develop in the same manner as Charlotte's southern suburbs had in the 1980s. One community in particular was mentioned as accepting "any and all commercial developments" and "completely destroying the small-town character once possessed (interviews: Hammond June 6, 2004 & Waters September 9, 2004).

While citizens, planning staff, and political leaders in Huntersville began witnessing the impacts their ordinances and zoning laws were having on their community, they began exploring ways to acquire more control over the appearance of their town. As a result, during the early 1990s, the town decided to adjust its development regulations in hopes of preventing consumption by suburban sprawl that had already engulfed large portions of the Charlotte region.

Chapter IV. It All Comes Together In Huntersville

Regional Interest in Neotraditional Paradigm

Interest in neotraditionalism was not restricted to Huntersville; in fact, it was not the first municipality to restructure its planning practices to accommodate neotraditionalism. By the early 1990s, there was growing eagerness among a number of communities surrounding Charlotte to modify the pace and style of development taking place. During this time, interest in new planning regulations emerged in the towns of Davidson, Cornelius and Belmont. These three municipalities, along with Huntersville, made significant changes to their development regulations by the end of the 1990s. This regional interest played a role in influencing Huntersville's decision to make the transition to neotraditionalism. What initiated this regional interest and how did these towns inspire one another?

With Mecklenburg County's land-use and transit plan being initiated in 1994, municipalities who were given direct access to the transit lines began reevaluating their future growth plans. The town's along the lines, such as Matthews, Mint Hill, Pineville, Belmont, Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson and others outside of Mecklenburg County, not only selected the location of transit stops, but decided upon the types of developments allowed at these stops. Rail stations in the past were the location of dense, mixed-use developments; including commercial, business and high intensity residential development. New urbanist designs promote similar high density and mixed-use development styles. Despite whether or not the towns along the rail corridor mandate neotraditionalism, many are incorporating elements into their rail station plans. According to an article published in the Charlotte Business Journal, as commuter trains will be functioning soon, more towns are accepting plans from developers who propose

more mixed-use and higher densities around rail lines (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, September 8, 2000). Matthews, for example, adheres to a conventional zoning ordinance, but will allow mixed-use design proposals for its upcoming rail stop. Huntersville has also created an elaborate plan for the area along the corridor which will allow increased densities for homes and offices within ½ mile of each side of the rail line. The upcoming rail line has therefore played a significant role in influencing regional support of new urbanist philosophies.

Belmont, located twelve miles west of Charlotte, was considered to be the first suburb of Charlotte to welcome neotraditionalism. Home to approximately 9,000 residents, Belmont has devoted itself to preserving its past (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). In 1994, it was decided that the town's zoning regulations implemented in the 1960s, which favored sprawl, needed to be revised (City of Belmont Website, 2004). During the time it took to develop the new ordinance (1991-1994), a group of task forces were in charge of formulating recommendations that would aid in the creation of a more livable community, which the residents of Belmont would desire to be a part of. Provisions supported restoration projects, traditional neighborhood developments, greenways, public transportation and tourism. The goal was to have fully integrated, mixed use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods by minimizing traffic congestion, suburban sprawl, infrastructure costs and environmental degradation. The city restored many of its buildings when it was decided that its historical amenities could attract tourists and therefore be economically advantageous (City of Belmont Website, 2004).

Davidson, like Huntersville, faced extreme growth pressures in the early 1990s. In the fall of 1994 the town of Davidson hired professor of architecture and proponent of traditional neighborhood development (TND), Dr. David Walters. Walters was asked to assist the town with making changes to its ordinances in order to allow TND developments. The first step was to install a moratorium on new subdivisions and virtually all zoning changes. The town hoped to encourage densely populated neighborhoods, enough to support the upcoming mass transit proposed for the Charlotte region. In 1994, Walters and Davidson's Town Planning Director, Tim Keane, wrote Davidson's new code. They used some of the philosophical concepts outlined in the

Seaside Code, which was developed by DPZ in the mid 1980s. Since new urbanism was unfamiliar to most developers, DPZ developed a method of including graphics in ordinances to present architectural regulations in a more interpretable manner. Walters and Keane agreed that the idea of incorporating extensive graphics into the ordinances to help explain guidelines visually, would work well in Davidson. But because the Seaside Code was unique to the town of Seaside, a lot of inventing had to be done (Walters interview, September 8, 2004).

The moratorium on development was lifted in October of 1995, when Davidson's Board of Commissioners approved the new ordinance. The ordinance encouraged "village center" developments and implemented strict guidelines for the town's outskirts to better protect the rural character in those areas (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 2, 1995). According to planning director at the time, Tim Keane, "the new plan was designed to accommodate growth without losing what they (Davidson) have". The plan served as a parallel code for developers. Developers could therefore choose between the old code and the newer code that reflected traditional small towns. Town officials hoped that once developments allowed under the new code appeared, that the old code would eventually give way to the new (*The Charlotte Observer*, June 28, 1995).

Cornelius was the next north Mecklenburg town to make adjustments to its regulations. They too hired Walters to assist with the process in the early fall of 1995. Unlike Davidson, Cornelius did not enact a moratorium on development to allow time to make changes to its zoning ordinance. Walters and his team of students from the Urban Institute developed detailed designs of street patterns, building types, open space, and landscape conservation for each of Cornelius' the planning areas. "I foresee a lot of commercial development, but the aim is to humanize it and make it comfortable for pedestrians, as well as convenient for vehicles, with emphasis on comfort for pedestrians" said Walter in an interview with the Charlotte Observer in January of 1996 (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 24, 1996). He used Myers Park in Charlotte as an example of the potential of integrating various social groups, where high-density condos are directly next to million dollar homes.

The Arrival of Neotraditionalism to the Charlotte Region

By 1995, with the help of the media, interest in neotraditional planning ideas had arrived to the Charlotte region. Since there were a number of institutions, organizations, and people credited for bringing new urbanist philosophies to the area, and because they are interconnected, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly who or what was responsible. Sponsors included the CMPC, UNCC Urban Institute and School of Architecture, Duany & Plater-Zyberk Architectural Firm, Charlotte Regional Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and the Charlotte Observer. People such as Andres Duany, Tom Low, David Walters, Ann Hammond, and Tim Keane have also received credit for initiating these ideas in Charlotte, particularly north Mecklenburg County. Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, both professors of architecture at the University of Miami's School of Architecture, maintain a number of town planning practices. Their firm, called Duany & Plater-Zyberk, (DPZ), was founded in 1980 and has been responsible for not only designing over 250 new homes as well as existing communities, but for initiating the new urbanist movement. The firm offers a range of planning and architectural services such as providing assistance in the writing of land use codes along with educating the public about principles of new urbanism (Duany & Plater-Zyberk Website, 2004). The firm's widespread advocacy of principles of traditional town design was later responsible for the creation of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), in 1993.

By the early 1990s, Andres Duany made his way across the country conducting presentations and workshops discussing the state of American cities and suburbs and ways in which changes could be made to prevent what was being called "placeless sprawl". In March of 1995, Duany made his first appearance in the Charlotte area (*The Charlotte Observer*, February 26, 1995). He conducted several presentations on ways in which towns could mitigate the impacts of conventional zoning and development practices and adopt new planning and development regulations. A presentation in particular was given to a group of over 200 residents, developers, and town officials in north Mecklenburg County (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 2, 1995). The topic of his presentation was titled "Maintaining and Reinforcing Small Town Identity in the Face of

Metropolitan Growth". He discussed ways in which small towns, such as Huntersville, Davidson and Cornelius, could preserve their character by making changes that reflected past development patterns. With reference to nearby areas where new planning practices have been successfully implemented, such as Charleston, South Carolina, he suggested applying these principles to new developments in the Charlotte region. Duany maintained that through proper planning, small-historic towns could be not only preserved, but improved. Because of the upcoming construction of the mass-rail system, he recommended that the suburbs being served by the rail line function as traditional railway suburbs as opposed to Charlotte's sprawling suburbs (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 2, 1995). Duany's presentation served as an educational tool for the general public, as people became more aware of what neotraditional planning entailed. It also supported the efforts being made by Belmont and Davidson during this time.

Architect Tom Low, who had previously studied with DPZ in Miami, and a native of the Charlotte area, convinced the firm to open an office there in 1995. He argued that there was a lack of neotraditional development in the area, and therefore a market to be served (Low interview, September 20, 2004). The Charlotte Area Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (CACAIA) agreed to fund monthly luncheons when the Charlotte-based firm opened in fall of 1995. Low was appointed chair for the CACAIA and in charge of organizing the agendas. As neotraditionalism was making an impact in the Charlotte area and the media, Low was asked to bring interested architects to town to discuss these issues. Several of these meetings were open to the public. Columnist, Mary Newsom, with The Charlotte Observer attended these meetings and published discussions in a bi-weekly column called The Urban Forum (Low interview, November 1, 2004). According to Low, these meetings and the publicity they received, served as an effective way to attract interest in neotraditionalism and inform the public on what it was hoping to accomplish. On occasion, Low would conduct seminars geared toward the development community, such as the one titled, "Techniques of Traditional Neighborhood Developments." "These seminars received huge interest, so we were confident that interest was out there." He mentioned that a significant proportion of this

attention came from developers interested in the marketing potential of traditional neighborhoods (Low interview, September 20, 2004).

DPZ was not the only force promoting new urbanism. According to Davidson-based developer Frank Jacobus, Professor David Walters was the first to bring these ideas to the Charlotte region (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004). Walters, born in the United Kingdom, claimed that he never really began working with neotraditionalism; it was what he was always familiar with. He stated in an interview that he fully embraced English planning philosophies and described his support for neotraditionalism as simply a continued philosophy from his childhood (Walters interview, September 8, 2004). In England it was called neovernacular – and from the 1970s onward there was a deliberate attempt to fashion new development and redevelopment using philosophies similar to new urbanist philosophy. New urbanism was not defined yet by the Congress of the New Urbanism when he began his professorship at UNC's Urban Institute. Beginning in the fall of 1994, Walters provided consulting work and design graphics to aid in north Mecklenburg's transition to neotraditionalism.

Neotraditionalism Sparks More Than Just Interest in Huntersville

Huntersville's previous ordinance was adopted in May of 1991. With the exception of regulations unnecessary for a small town, it was modeled after Charlotte's. At the time, town staff believed that similar regional legislation would be effective and therefore, supported by developers (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). Common to most conventional zoning ordinances, a number of strictly single-use districts were allowed (19 total), including residential, multi-family, office, commercial, business, and industrial districts. Each district included maximum density requirements and minimum lot sizes, yard space, and setback requirements; all of which were designed to minimize crowding and to promote compatibility of buildings (Huntersville's Official Zoning Ordinance, 1991).

Planning director at the time, Ann Hammond, recalled elected officials and residents not being pleased with the way growth was occurring around the Charlotte region in the early 1990s (Hammond interview, June, 4 2004). Officials and publicly

active residents were desperate to preserve the small-town character that had attracted them to Huntersville. In an interview with David Walters, he suggested that during this time the town as "looking for any mechanism to end widespread indiscriminate development taking place around Charlotte" (Walters interview, September 8, 2004). As a result of this growing concern, town planners Hammond and Stuart Mullen were responsible for brainstorming ways in which the town could accommodate development in a manner that better suited the town.

Ann Hammond described how a breakthrough came in 1993 when an acquaintance at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission (CMPC) gave her an article printed in the Wilson Quarterly by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk titled "The Second Coming of the American Small Town" (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). The article, published in 1992, discussed how growth was no longer perceived as beneficial and that conventional zoning law – referred to as Euclidian Zoning – primarily functioned to benefit the car, and was no longer necessary. The article argued that there was a need for traditional ways of building towns and neighborhoods that are better connected, engage civic life, and no longer segregate income groups from one another. The article concluded by stating that "building real towns will require changing master plans, codes and road-building standards, and above all, attitudes" (Duany & Plater-Zyberk, 1992).

The ideas presented in this article were what Hammond believed reflected the changes Huntersville was interested in; returning to the design structure of traditional neighborhoods; mixing of uses and incomes; reducing the role of the vehicle. Hammond distributed the article to the four-member Board of Commissioners and Mayor Randy Quillen. According to Tim Breslin, Town Commissioner from 1993 to 2003, "there was a general desire at this time to help manage growth and create a more coordinated development plan to control haphazard development". He had heard parts of proposals presented by neotraditionalists prior to being presented with the article. Once he read the article he agreed with Hammond that the ideas presented, fit the town well (Breslin interview, September 15, 2004). The tactics presented in the article were favored

unanimously by elected officials and considered to be compatible with how the town wished to develop.

In the fall of 1994, Huntersville was preparing to restructure their Long Range Policy Guide with the hope of better controlling growth in its jurisdiction. Since updating this guide was on the agenda, it seemed appropriate to discuss what legal changes would be necessary to implement traditional planning principles. The final document, titled the 'Strategic Plan for Development', embraced neotraditional concepts and was finalized in the fall of 1995. The plan established a vision for the physical development of the town limits and surrounding "sphere of influence". "Visual preference surveys", VPS, were distributed to interested town residents and developers to determine which neotraditional principles, if adopted, would be accepted. The surveys included illustrations of traditional towns, buildings, and neighborhoods. Participants were asked to compare traditional pictures to their conventional counterparts and then asked which they preferred. According to Hammond, an overwhelming majority (90%) preferred the traditional development pattern because it best represented the characteristics of "old" Huntersville (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004).

As a result of the positive feedback provided by the surveys, the four members on the Board of Commissioners and Major Quillen decided that the town needed to create zoning and subdivision ordinances that reflected these preferences. In October 1995, Mayor Pro Tem Kim Phillips proposed a moratorium on new construction to take effect November 14, 1995. "Due to rapid development up here (Huntersville), we are possibly facing the type of commercial development we might not prefer", said Major Pro Tem Phillips. "We want to have time to close any loopholes in our zoning ordinance" argued Phillips (*The Charlotte Observer*, October 22, 1995).

Moratoriums ("a suspension or delay of any action or activity"__ The American Heritage Dictionary, 1994) are commonly used by municipalities to allow time to better define development laws. They are usually in response to unintended development patterns that are allowed by law, but not desired. Town staff and board members determine their length, which can range from weeks to years. Municipalities can establish moratoriums as long as they define clear parameters, such as what the

suspension will apply to and for what length of time. Developments approved for construction by town staff and elected officials but not constructed prior to a moratorium are by law exempt from the regulations proposed in the moratorium. Those opposed to such measures claim that moratoriums are economically disadvantageous, since they discourage businesses from building and relocating to the area. In an article published in the Charlotte Observer in January of 2003, a developer argued that moratoriums only exacerbate sprawl by pushing homebuyers to outlying counties where development is welcome (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 31, 2004). A moratorium was proposed on new subdivisions in Lincoln County, North Carolina and was rejected by the County's commissioners. The commissioner who suggested bringing new development to a standstill stated his disappointment in the board's decision and wished that the town could have taken a break and tried to slow development until they could better control things (*The Charlotte Observer*, October 10, 1997). "Right now if somebody presents a subdivision plat to the county we've got eight or ten little steps for them to go through," Commissioner Craig said. "And if these steps are met, they're in. We should slow this down and put more teeth in the ordinance".

Directly before the Town Board convened to decide on the moratorium on new development, an unsigned flier was sent to board members. It claimed that residents of Huntersville would not be able to divide their property for family members, sell to developers for new homes and businesses, or rezone their land if they allowed the town to proceed with the moratorium and make changes to development laws. "These fliers were wrong on all accounts", argued the mayor at the time, Randy Quillen (*The Charlotte Observer*, November 19, 1995). The claims in the flyer will be discussed in Chapter IV & V where a detailed description of the zoning changes and sources of opposition will be presented.

Despite the concerns raised in the fliers, the year-long moratorium was approved by three out of four commissioners and was enacted on the 14th of November (*The Charlotte Observer*, November 19, 1995). The intention of the moratorium was not only to forestall additional development that was considered to be threatening, but also to learn more about what the town wanted, and educate the public on the changes being prepared.

"We're trying to control what is probably the only part of north Mecklenburg so close to Charlotte that is rural in nature and hasn't been messed up by urban sprawl" said Mayor Quillen (*The Charlotte Observer,* November 19, 2004). Placed solely on new developments, the moratorium was enacted to draft new codes that reflected what was presented in the Strategic Plan for Development (SPD) and what was determined by the visual preference surveys. Therefore, the SPD was used as a policy guide, but it needed backing by specific zoning regulations. The moratorium applied not only to the area within the town limits, but also its extraterritorial jurisdiction (outlined in Figure 5). Plans approved prior to the moratorium were exempt and developments of small subdivisions that would not require installing public facilities such as streets and storm drains also received exemption (*The Charlotte Observer*, October 22, 1995).

Chapter V. Building the New Code

Public Involvement

As the town of Huntersville was proposing drastic development changes, it took advantage of the year allotted by the moratorium to engage the community in an in-depth education process. Widespread education is imperative in order to build support and ensure that ideas being proposed will not only be understood, but accepted.

Citizen committees are effective ways for municipalities to ensure that what they are proposing is desired. An example of successful use of citizen participation took place in Portland, Oregon in the early 1970s. In 1973, when Mayor Goldschmidt took office, the city of Portland was facing many problems, such as demographic shifts and sprawl (Abbott, 1983). Goldschmidt invited key players in the community on a retreat to discuss the state of the city and potential adjustments that could be made. City council members, town staff, and neighborhood activists attended the retreat. By including various interest groups in tackling the city's problems, his administration was able to spark Portland's gentrification and renewal movement. (Abbott, 1983).

There are a number of techniques utilized by municipalities to smooth the process of change between the development, adoption, and implementation of a plan. Gianni Longo argues that there are three such techniques. They include visioning, visual preference surveys, and charrettes. Huntersville made use of all of these techniques between 1995 and 1997. As was discussed earlier, *visual preference surveys* (VPS) are used to measure preferences toward particular patterns of development to determine whether or not the public supports guideline changes. *Visioning* aims at creating support for the elements of the plan, mainly for comprehensive plans like the one proposed in Huntersville. This process is drawn out as participants go through several steps such as brainstorming about the future, organizing ideas and ways to implement goals (Longo,

2004). The final public participation technique is called a *charrette*. It is an intense meeting with various interest parties, such as architects, planners, engineers, fire marshals, citizens and others. These groups meet, discuss, and later design a plan for development. The first new urbanist development approved in Huntersville, called Vermillion, used a charrette process and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter. All of these techniques work well in translating ideas into physical plans, and because they include the public, they are designed to reach clearly understood outcomes.

Formation of the Citizen's Committee

In the fall of 1995, following the decision to enact the moratorium, Ann Hammond asked Dr. David Walters to assist Huntersville with the education and re-writing process and to perform consulting work similar to that he had previously provided to the towns of Davidson and Cornelius. The town's board of commissioners supported her request. A citizen's committee was then formed to work with Walters, town staff and board members to assist in re-writing the laws.

By January of 1996 the citizen committee (also referred to as the stakeholder's group, and the land plan implementation committee) was formed. The committee was chaired by town Commissioner Jill Swain and included over 20 volunteers who met every other week to discuss how to put into practice the guidelines for growth that the board had adopted in the Strategic Plan for Development. Commissioner Swain would later state in an article published in the Charlotte Observer that she was amazed that the community cared enough to make the transition happen (*The Charlotte Observer* June 1, 1996). Through slide shows, readings, and lectures, committee members educated themselves about towns, neighborhoods, housing types, and codes. The purpose of these educational tools was to help members determine what features would work in Huntersville.

The citizen's committee, consisting mainly of residents, town staff, and a developer, began discussing which features of neotraditionalism were desired. Two developers were invited to take part in the citizen's committee, local developer by the

name of Nate Bowman and a large Charlotte-based development firm (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). The Charlotte-based firm never took part in the meetings. Another developer, Frank Jacobus, was not included on the committee, but he attended every public meeting during the year-long moratorium to learn more about what the town was planning and how the proposed change would impact him (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004).

The town brought a number of speakers to the public meetings during this time to teach residents and staff members about the new planning philosophy being adopted. Hammond recalled one speaker in particular, Tom Hylton, who had a tremendous impact on the town. After hearing him speak at a conference on the "virtues of small towns", Hammond asked Hylton to address a crowd of interested parties in north Mecklenburg County. His speech reinforced many of the ideas Huntersville was trying to implement and served as a confidence-building tool which further eased the town's transition (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004).

According to Hammond and Walters, the presence and support of local developer, Nate Bowman, was also a huge asset. He provided confidence that developers would support changes when he stated that he could not only work with the new code, but also make a profit (Walters interview, September 8, 2004). Bowman grew up in a small, walkable town in the Northeast. He claimed that this was his first taste of what a "good" community could be (Bowman interview, September 20, 2004). He later moved to Davidson to study and has lived in Huntersville ever since. He recalled that the ideas presented during the committee meetings quickly clicked with him and he became enthusiastic about building a traditional neighborhood. He would later be responsible for bringing DPZ back to Huntersville to conduct a charrette for his Vermillion development. The charrette took place during the moratorium and generated media attention. This attention made the town feel special and served as a morale boost to help get the ordinance approved in 1996 (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004).

Walters' Involvement

Dr. David Walters was expected to lead public meetings, and prepare designs. He presented designs of traditional neighborhoods found in the Charlotte region that residents of Huntersville would be familiar with, such as Myers Park, a streetcar suburb in Charlotte, and the Dilworth community. Davidson's historic downtown was also used as a reference. He then presented pictures of conventional suburban neighborhoods and strip shopping centers, such as those found in the suburb of Pineville (Walters interview, September 8, 2004). Residents compared pictures of houses, streets, parking lots, offices, apartments and stores in both traditional and conventional neighborhoods and small towns. Committee members were then asked to choose what they preferred. Once preferences were tallied, members began learning how to mandate features into their development code. In an interview with the Charlotte Observer in June of 1996, Hammond stated that "virtually everyone picked traditional downtowns versus the strip shopping centers" and that "people didn't realize that those things could be built in Huntersville" (*The Charlotte Observer*, June 1, 1996).

Development of the Code

While Walters was in charge of educating the public, soliciting public input, and creating the design typologies, town staff was responsible for writing the code language and ensuring that legal aspects were addressed. Although a lot of reinventing had to be done, town staff borrowed from a number of sources to build Huntersville's subdivision and zoning ordinances: Davidson's recent neotraditional code, the Seaside Code, and Randall Arendt's philosophy on open space preservation (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004 & Walters interview, September 8, 2004).

To learn more about town design and neotraditionalism, Ann Hammond entered the UNCC's Urban Institute in the fall of 1995. She was influenced by Walter's involvement with assisting the community she worked for and wanted to become more proficient in neotraditional planning (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). The knowledge she gained at the Urban Institute enhanced her ability to understand the features of the codes she was writing and the laws she would later enforce.

Hammond described what was going on in Davidson in the fall of 1994 as having a profound influence on Huntersville's decision to embark upon the adoption of new codes (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). Due to its proximity, Davidson also served as a local model. Walters stated that is was helpful to have the experience and insight gained in the development of Davidson's and Cornelius's codes when it came time to develop Huntersville's (Walters interview, September 8, 2004). Although Davidson was different, as it was originally a college town with a more traditional layout, Hammond and Walters borrowed elements from Davidson's code to build Huntersville's code.

As was mentioned in Chapter II, Randall Arendt was responsible for setting forth the importance of conserving and preserving open space. He developed the "conservation subdivision" as a model residential neighborhood. His ideas were used to create the open space district later found in the 1996 ordinance (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). The specific features found in this district will be presented in the next section, where zoning changes will be discussed.

The Code

By the end of 1996, the new code was ready for review. With the help of the citizen's committee, town staff was confident that they had accurately determined what regulations were needed to encourage the types of development favored by the community. It was then up to the board of commissioners to determine whether or not they agreed.

Considerable amendments were made to the previous ordinance that set it apart from the new one. For one, there were significantly fewer districts available in the new ordinance, three residential, three mixed-use, and three commercial (the previous ordinance had 19 single-use districts). Each of these districts also encouraged accommodating multiple uses rather than strictly single uses. Table 3 lists the various districts and information regarding each. It also included overlay districts, a zoning district that applies in conjunction with another zoning district (American Planning Association, 2004). There were four overlay districts allowed; traditional neighborhood

development overlay district (TND-O), manufactured home overlay, Mountain Island Lake (MIL) watershed overlay, and the Lake Norman (LN) watershed overlay. For example in the open space district, the TND overlay district could be applied. The final two overlay districts were present in the previous ordinance and were designed to protect public water supplies in the MIL and LN watersheds from nearby developments. Development in these areas faced stricter regulations, such as limited amounts of impervious surface and extensive use of vegetative buffer strips to protect water supplies.

The following will review specific alterations made to the previous ordinance, along with general philosophies supporting those changes. Specific changes such as new design standards, building typologies, architectural regulations, and mandated open space, were based on principles founded by the Congress of the New Urbanism.

Variety of Uses

Conventional zoning legislation mandates single-use districts, such as the common R-1 district that permits strictly single-family detached dwellings. Since these dwellings usually possess analogous square footage, building materials and architecture, they are priced alike. Single-use districts, such as the R-1 district, prohibit different building types and densities, such as multi-family dwellings (apartments), offices, or commercial uses, from being integrated with one another. Neotraditionalists argue that by separating these uses, people have not only become isolated from income groups other than their own, but they have also been forced to rely upon vehicles as their only means of transportation. Allowing multiple uses to be placed in proximity to one another provides for greater pedestrian accessibility to shops and services, as well as adjacent neighborhoods. The objective of providing for a variety of uses also provides for economic diversity within each district.

Huntersville's new code proposed that all zoning districts allow for at least two uses. For example, the traditional neighborhood development overlay district (TND-O) required developers to accommodate multiple housing styles and prices, such as constructing both single-family detached dwellings and attached townhomes. This development tactic would encourage the construction neighborhoods with several

housing varieties, thereby reducing the formation of residential pockets of economic homogeneity (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). In addition to residential units, the TND-O district must include civic buildings, stores, offices, churches or schools. By allowing small-scale commercial uses within or adjacent to neighborhoods, residents are provided with the opportunity to walk, rather than drive, for daily needs. The neighborhood center district (NC) allowed for more square footage dedicated to retail and office spaces, versus the neighborhood residential district, but still encouraged residential units. Finally, the town center district required the most commercial and office space, but still allowed for high density housing such as row houses or apartments (refer to Table 3). Growth was therefore encouraged to be most concentrated around the future location of the rail line and the town center district.

According to Ann Hammond, members of the citizen's committee were adamant about not having a strict multi-family district, like the previous R-4 district, which allowed only apartments (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004). Due to this general distaste for the appearance of huge apartment complexes, residents supported incorporating multi-family dwellings into single-family neighborhood settings. As a result, apartments and other forms of attached housing could constitute up 30 percent of the housing units in subdivisions within the residential districts.

Design Regulations

Unlike the old ordinance, its neotraditional replacement displayed extensive graphics to indicate acceptable development typologies. In all but the open space district, densities and minimum lot sizes were not regulated, therefore providing greater flexibility in terms of the scale of housing and allowed uses. Hammond claimed that because density was irrelevant in the ordinance, the town hoped that design, not density would guide growth (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004). The following design regulations; architecture, pedestrian-scaling, and streets, are described in the ordinance with both words and illustrations.

Architecture: Zoning ordinances are usually clear and proscriptive, and rarely address architectural design issues. The new code made attempts to achieve

compatibility between building types by mandating strict design and architectural regulations. New buildings were required to respect the general spacing and scale of existing structures, and "emphasize the building character of the town and re-establish its local identity" (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 4, 1996). After facing years of haphazard development, town staff believed that these regulations would not only help to control the types of developments, but the style of developments (Breslin interview September 15, 2004, Hammond interview, September 13, 2004, & Walters interview, September 8, 2004). Graphics were used to display acceptable architectural designs best representative of Huntersville's historical identity. Figure 7 illustrates examples of permitted design standard found in the ordinance, including attached and detached homes, and mixed-use developments. The buildings displayed were approved models that developers could follow. Pictures of the architecture found in southern mill towns, such as Concord, North Carolina, and Charlotte's historic Dilworth community, were provided. The ordinance also made reference to attached row houses (townhomes) prominent in Charleston and Savannah.

Pedestrian-Scaled: The design guidelines were developed to encourage compact and walkable neighborhoods that include many public places where residents could interact with one another and therefore build stronger community ties. In order to develop a pedestrian-scaled environment, developers were required to comply with the town's strict building and street regulations. Not only were all structures were required to provide pedestrian access from the front of buildings. Sidewalks were required on both sides of the street in all zoning districts, except the highway commercial district, which was not intended to be a pedestrian environment. Rather than conventional strip-shopping centers where parking was heavily concentrated in the front of the business, the new ordinance expected parking in the rear or sides of the building. Appendages such as porches, bay windows, and balconies were encouraged to promote the transition between the public street and the private dwelling, especially in the predominately residential districts. These accessory structures were thought to enhance a more pedestrian-scaled environment by increasing the comfort of the pedestrian. The proposed ordinance also required that neighborhoods contain distinct, recognizable centers. Suggested centers

included fountains, squares, small parks, statues, fountains, courtyards, and plazas. Finally, neighborhoods were encouraged to have clearly defined edges that extend no more than ¼ mile from center to edge. This would ensure that residents could easily access their entire neighborhood without getting into their car. If the planned parcel was too large to allow this, multiple centers were required.

Setbacks/Buffers: The previous ordinance required that all structures be setback from the street 50 feet in the R-1 district (single family residential) to 20 feet in the R-6 district (multi-family district) (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, 1991). Setback requirements were reduced to 10 feet in the new ordinance. Buildings are also expected to have consistent setbacks and be aligned along streets. In more rural areas, larger setbacks are permitted as long as long rows of irregular trees are provided. Reduced setbacks were intended to encourage a stronger "public realm". Public open space, squares, and sidewalks allow opportunities for community members to share common recreation areas. The proposed ordinance outlined examples of unattractive uses, such as parking lots. Both large and small parking lots were required to be limited in size and broken up with vegetative buffers to encourage a more "human scaled/pedestrian" environment. Uninterrupted areas of parking lot, allowed only in the highway commercial (HC) district, were allowed as long as extensive foliage buffering is in place. These buffers would apply to uses that could not respect a human scale, especially big-box retail and storage facilities.

Garages/Alleys: Garages were encouraged to be setback and detached from the housing unit. In order to reduce visual emphasis on the car, garages must be setback. Huntersville's town staff suggested a 10-foot setback to create more inviting views of the house. Figure 8 displays pictures of two homes in Huntersville, one with a conventional style garage – built under the previous code – that extends out past the home, and the other home was built under the new code and in compliance with garage setback requirements. The town also recommended that garages be accessible from back alleys. These alleys were encouraged to form continuous networks within the neighborhood. If physically and topographically possible, the town suggested that utilities be placed under or along these rear alleyways.

Streets: According to traditional neighborhood street design, it is imperative to encourage interconnectedness. Conventional subdivisions commonly contain one entrance/exit; therefore all traffic is forced to rely upon one road. According to neotraditionalists, this design typology increases traffic as large amounts of local traffic are funneled onto few collector/arterial streets, and decreases pedestrian safety. Figure 9 illustrates a traditional streetscape, with interconnected networks of street patterns, versus a conventional street design, with cul-de-sacs. Huntersville's new code proposed that all new developments be built on a "fine-grained network of low speed, pedestrian-friendly, public streets that are broken into blocks and connected to adjacent neighborhoods" (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 5, 1996). Unlike the previous conventional ordinance, the neotraditional ordinance suggested that all new subdivisions have multiple points of access and connect to other neighborhoods. Therefore, cul-de-sacs were not allowed unless topographically necessary. Traffic-calming measures were also encouraged to decrease high-speed through traffic. Block lengths and widths were also reduced, as long segments of pavement were thought to increase traffic speed and discourage pedestrian activity along streets. Streets in the more urban neighborhoods and downtown core were encouraged to be lined with buildings, sidewalks, and street trees. The town decided that sidewalks and street trees provide additional safety buffers between drivers and people on foot. The end result would be an interconnected street system that was safe and accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, and mass transit.

Maintaining Rural Character of Huntersville

Neotraditionalists encourage the preservation of open space not only for places were residents can intermingle, but as effective ways to preserve the environment. Since Huntersville prided itself on its rural character, a considerable effort was made to preserve open space in the town's periphery. According to the town's vision in 1995, as one left the main urban corridor of town, one would find an increasing amount of open space (Jack Simoneau interview, Huntersville's Current Planning Director, May 27, 2004). Two methods of open space conservation were proposed during the moratorium. The first method was to designate a large portion of land east and west of downtown

Huntersville as the Open Space zoning district. The proposed ordinance defined open space as any area that was not divided into private or civic building lots, streets, right-of-ways, parking or easements (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 6, 1996). Modeled after ideas set forth by Randall Arendt in his book, "Rural by Design", the goal of this district was to "encourage the development of compact neighborhoods that set aside significant natural vistas and landscape features for permanent conservation". (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 3, 1996) Town staff proposed allowing two and ½ units per acre as long as at least 15 percent of the land was designated as open space. Densities were regulated on a sliding scale, meaning that higher densities were allowed as long as additional open space was set aside by the developer (For each 1% of open space exceeding the required 15%, the number of units in the project may be increased by 1%).

The final method of conserving open space was to allow large landowners to practice their Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). TDR is a market-based technique that encourages the voluntary transfer of growth from places where a community would like to see less development, to places where they would like to see more (Pruetz, 1999). Rights could be sold on environmentally sensitive areas, open space, agricultural land, wildlife habitats, or historic landmarks. This initiative, first practiced in Maryland, allows landowners to take whatever development rights are allowed on their property and sell them to a developer, as long as they forfeit these rights upon sale. A developer could then use those purchased rights elsewhere. Although rare, this method is often seen as an attractive way to preserve land, because communities are not only able to preserve undeveloped land with little or no public funding, but they have a way to guide growth where it can be most efficiently accommodated. This tactic was first discussed in Huntersville during the time the new ordinance was drafted. The town viewed this as a way to maintain some of the countryside east and west of town that had predominantly been agricultural, while concentrating development along the rail-line and urban corridor. However, because Huntersville had to first seek approval from the state's General Assembly before allowing the practice of TDR, it was not incorporated into the new code

in 1996. The town eventually made their request to the Assembly in 1998. The outcome of this request will be discussed in Chapter VII.

Chapter VI. Reactions, Concerns, and Unintended Consequences

First Neotraditional Developments

The first concept plans for development, complying with the town's new regulations, were Birkdale Village and Vermillion. Both of these developments began prior to the approval of the 1996 neotraditional ordinance, but followed concepts outlined in the proposed ordinance. They would later be considered Huntersville's signature new urbanist developments.

Birkdale Village

Located directly off Interstate 77, Birkdale Village is a 52-acre, mixed-use shopping center; including a variety of retail establishments, restaurants, a cinema, and high density residential units. Figure 10 (a) illustrates the location of the project in relation to Interstate 77 and Huntersville's town center. Figure 10 (b) shows the project, including its high density residential units set above retail shopping. The development is surrounded by The Greens, a residential neighborhood, composed mainly of single-family detached units, and a small number of attached dwellings. Developed by Crosland and Pappas Properties, Birkdale was financed by two multinational banks. The development was completed in 2002 without the use of public funds or investment tax credits (Urban Land Institute Website, 2004). According to Birkdale's marketing website, "Birkdale brings to the shopping and residential environments a scale and texture that is atypical of either conventional shopping centers or housing communities" (Birkdale Village Website, 2004). Julianne Smith-Hamilton, director of marketing research and communications with Crosland Land Company, recalled that work began on Birkdale prior to the town having specific codes in place. The plans were submitted in 1994, when the town first began taking steps toward embracing neotraditionalism.

Birkdale received approval because it was a mixed-use project that incorporated ideas that would later be reflected in the ordinance. Crosland worked alongside Shook and Kelley, a Charlotte-based architectural firm. "We (Crosland) and the community (of Huntersville) are happy with the final project, and it was worth the painstaking process of charting new territory with the legislation" (Smith-Hamilton e-mail, October 11, 2004).

In 2003, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) identified Birkdale Village as the nation's best mixed-use development and awarded them with the 2003 Pillars of the Industry Award (NAHB Website, 2004). Despite this recognition, there have been concerns regarding the location of the project, traffic impacts, and whether or not it reflects true new urbanism. An online electronic bulletin board, dedicated to the discussion of the "Failures of New Urbanism", contained posted concerns relating to the Birkdale project (Cyburbia Forums Website, 2004). Common issues facing commercial and retail centers, especially large-scale projects, are accessibility and parking. These concerns were coupled with accommodating additional residential traffic in and around the Birkdale development. One opinion mentioned the traffic congestion affecting Birkdale and how it is generating negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. It was also posted on the board that the effort to induce pedestrian activity was a failure. "Personally, I don't think that it is any better than a strip mall and stamping it with the title of "New Urbanism" is just a smoke screen to hide what it really is" (Cyburbia Forums Website, 2004). Since it was built on farmland and located away from the town center and proposed rail line, another entry argued that it failed to solve the problems associated with sprawl and continued to encourage auto-dependency. Not every opinion posted on the bulletin was skeptical of the development. A number of entries mentioned how the project took steps in the right direction and agreed that, although it was not perfect, it was still better than traditional shopping malls.

Vermillion

Unlike Birkdale Village, Vermillion was not a corporate endeavor and therefore did not have access to the same financial backing. After being approached by local Huntersville developer Nate Bowman during the 1995 moratorium, Tom Low (then

working with DPZ) agreed to provide consulting work and conduct a charrette for the residential development in 1996. The 360-acre parcel, adjacent to the town center, was later called Vermillion. Modeled after the street-car suburb of Myers Park in Charlotte, Vermillion was Huntersville's first traditional neighborhood development. Only the first phase of the project is complete today (35 out of 360 acres). The development's master plan is illustrated in Figure 11 (a). This plan exhibits the projects location in relation to the rail line. The development will eventually reach the rail line and include a school, swimming pool, recreation club, a small inn, offices and additional retail (The Vermillion Team Website, 2004). Currently, the development contains a dense center, including a public square lined with live-work units, commercial buildings (dry cleaners, a restaurant, DPZ's office, and others), along with attached rowhouses and a community church. Figures 11 (b), (c), and (d) are photographs of the neighborhood center, the live-work units, and the rowhouses surrounding the center. Extending beyond the center are larger single-family residences. Figure 11 (e) shows an example of a single family home located in the neighborhood.

Vermillion gained its first media recognition in July of 1999 (*The Charlotte Observer*, July 19, 1999). The neighborhood was mentioned as Huntersville's signature new urbanist development, as it contained mixed-uses and was within walking distance to the proposed rail line and the town center. Ann Hammond cited in the same article that the town hoped to apply lessons learned in Vermillion throughout Huntersville. Tom Low described Nate Bowman as a "renegade developer" as he faced a lot of criticism and resistance by being the first to construct a traditional neighborhood development (TND) under the new code (Low interview, September 20, 2004). Resistance came from investors who warned Bowman that there was not a market for the development's proposed attached row houses (Bowman interview, September 20, 2004). Despite criticisms, Bowman attracted enough investors to begin the Vermillion neighborhood, and in 2000, received the Sierra Club Smart Growth Award for the project (Duany & Plater-Zyberk & Company Website, 2004).

The following is a quote taken from a marketing flyer for a single-family home in Vermillion. It quote reveals the context in which "traditionalism" is being sold.

> "Vermillion is a very quaint community that will totally charm you. The "round-about" courtyard has park benches to greet your neighbors and friends. The community offers numerous shops, dining, and activities all just a simple walk from your front door. The lamppost lights and sidewalks make this a true post card setting now for the magic of this incredible home. Once you open the doors, your search will be over. Welcome home!" (Allen Tate Realtors, May 2004).

Opposition to Town's Proposal

Huntersville's decision to make the transition to neotraditionalism failed to receive universal support. Other than the anonymous flier distributed to the Board of Commissioners prior to the moratorium approval, opposition did not surface until the end of the drafting process. In the weeks prior to the ordinance being adopted, the prominent real estate coalition in Charlotte, called REBIC, voiced its concerns. Affiliates of the coalition argued that the zoning changes being proposed, especially those in the town's recently extended jurisdiction would greatly *down-zone* property. (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). The term down-zone implies the reduction of allowed densities, leading some to believe that they would not receive full monetary value for their property. Ann Hammond argued that REBIC was upset because they strongly supported conventional development and that Huntersville's new ordinance would threaten the development styles they were accustomed to building (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004). Town Commissioner Tim Breslin, who served on the Board from 1993 to 2003, also recalled a number of small business owners voicing concern and speculation as to how the new ordinance, if enacted, would affect them. With regard to the town's new signage regulations, there was uncertainty as to how the new ordinance would affect advertising abilities (Breslin interview, September 15, 2004).

The greatest source of support, according to those interviewed, came from the citizens of Huntersville. Overall, town staff and members of the Board of Commissioners felt that they acquired substantial support from the community, at least from those actively involved with the Citizen's Committee. Because there was general speculation that those associated with REBIC were not concerned about Huntersville, the coalition was not effective in their opposition (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). Consequently, despite opposition to the proposed ordinance, by late November of

1996, the new regulations were approved by the Board of Commissioners and implemented into law.

Reaction to the New Code

Since unfamiliar alterations were made to Huntersville's development laws, directly after the new code was adopted, developers, business owners and residents had a difficult time determining how the changes would affect them. According to Commissioner Breslin, once the developments began to appear, people began to understand how they would be affected, and this is when the real concern emerged. He recalled that, directly after the ordinance was approved and when the first developments were being built, town staff spent a substantial amount of time correcting misunderstandings regarding the intentions of the new regulations (Breslin interview, September 15, 2004). Concerns formed around several specific issues.

Vague Language and Increased Approval Time

Since the language and format of the new ordinance was different than what people were accustomed to, there was confusion regarding the document's intentions. Statements like "developments have to fit Huntersville" and "incorporating detailed architecture" caused confusion and led to complaints. These vague requirements made developers more reliant on town staff for interpretation and identification of what was permitted. As a result, Huntersville's planning staff obtained a greater degree of discretion when it came to determining what constituted a sufficient design. This not only meant that it took longer for developers to receive approval for a plan, but it required town staff to spend additional time reviewing plans and making recommendations. Many developers voiced their frustration about this. New regulations required them to spend more time generating designs than what was required under the previous code.

When asked whether Huntersville's codes changed the way developers view starting projects in the area, developer Russell Ranson claimed that it took longer to get his projects approved in north Mecklenburg County. After taking six years to complete

two projects, and the additional cost of building according to neotraditional principles, he was hesitant to apply for more projects in the area (Ranson interview, October 21, 2004). An article published in the Charlotte Business Journal in April of 1997 also discussed how planning ordinances reflecting traditional town design might not necessarily slow development, but the stricter design guidelines have altered the way developers view the area. "It's taking much longer for retail developers to get their projects okayed", Crosland retail president Steve Vermillion said, after being required to attend a number of meetings with the Cornelius's planning department before receiving approval for his project (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, April 11, 1997).

Developer Exclusion

The town drastically changed development rules and this created apprehension. Some developers were adamantly opposed to Huntersville's new regulations, while others exhibited curiosity and enthusiasm. After learning more about neotraditionalism and what would be expected of him as a developer, Nate Bowman began the process of developing Vermillion.

However, developers such as Frank Jacobus and Russell Ranson stated that developers were totally excluded from the town's decision. Jacobus declared in an interview that he was not invited to join the citizen's committee. When the town was deciding whether or not to enact a moratorium on development, he was trying to obtain rezoning for an apartment development in Huntersville. When the moratorium was enacted, his development was stopped. It was at this point that he took interest in what the town was doing. Jacobus claimed that he requested to be on the citizen's committee, was informed that it was full, and was told that he could instead attend all of the public meetings (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004). Developer Russell Ranson also stated that, because developers were excluded from the town's policy changes, there was a lack of recognition of the impacts these decisions would have on the community (Ranson interview, October 21, 2004).

Open Space District/Density Reductions

A number of land owners in Huntersville voiced their concern regarding density and open space requirements in the new open space district (OS). Those angered by the OS district formed the Large Landowners Coalition (LLC) made up of about 100 north Mecklenburg residents with 10 acres or more (*The Charlotte Observer*, December 3, 2000). Members of the LLC argued that impact of the regulations would reduce buildable land, make their properties less desirable to developers, and thereby reduce property values. Planning director at the time, Ann Hammond, argued that developers could put 2.5 or more houses per acre if they allowed more than 15 percent open space. She further claimed that the LLC's fears were unwarranted, as land prices in Huntersville at the time were skyrocketing, therefore providing evidence that the mandated open space preservation would not lower property values (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). In an article published in the Charlotte Business Journal in 2000, REBIC's executive director Mark Crammer, argued that once Huntersville was granted extended jurisdiction rights, property that had once been allowed 3 units per acre under the previous ordinance, was reduced to 2.5 units per acre (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, May 19, 2000). The new ordinance did however allow greater densities if developers allotted more land to open space. This compromise did not please all members of REBIC or residents who owned large amounts of land in the town's periphery. Similar concerns regarding the OS District remained after Ann Hammond resigned in the fall of 2000. She was replaced by Jack Simoneau who would later attempt to reconcile this debate by making alterations to this district (See Chapter VII).

Effect of Increased Regulations on Development

Once the ordinance was enacted, there was a brief period of time when developers waited to submit plans to town staff. Vermillion and Birkdale Village were approved by this time, and there were a few neotraditional developments underway in Davidson and Cornelius, but there was still uncertainty regarding the new regulations. Charles Knox Jr., president of the Knox Group, was skeptical about some of the new provisions in north Mecklenburg County, such as the architectural controls (*The Charlotte Observer*, June 1,

1996). He claimed that he was supportive of what the towns were doing, but before deciding to experiment with neotraditionalism on his company's land in Davidson, he was going to wait and determine how the market responded to neotraditional building patterns (*The Charlotte Observer*, June 1, 1996).

Several developers argued that the ordinance's stringent new policies will make developers go elsewhere (Walters interview, September 8, 2004). Will Whitley, a partner in the retail brokerage firm Forest City Enterprises Inc., argued that "many big-box retailers want stores in the area, but the zoning requirements make it practically impossible" (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, April 11, 1997). Huntersville did have two commercial projects decide not to build in the area due to the regulations, one restaurant chain and one popular big-box retailer. The new ordinance would not allow the restaurant to construct a 40 foot sign, so they took their business elsewhere. Due to its large size and parking requirements, the big-box retailer was expected to comply with one of two options; they could either conceal the large-scale nature of their building and large parking lot with extensive vegetative buffers, or they could construct separate entrances for each of the store's departments. These options were thought to create a more "human-scaled" shopping center, instead of a single big-box development. According to Ann Hammond, she was confident that the town had reached an agreement with the big-box retailer, but they also decided to take their business elsewhere (Hammond interview, June 4, 2004). Huntersville does allow big-box retailers; they just have to comply with one of those options prior to receiving a building permit.

Others developers, however, expressed more support of what the north Mecklenburg towns were trying to accomplish, such as Tommy Norman, a Lake Norman developer. He argued that the region (north Mecklenburg) is much different then others and that that they are going to set a standard that will be successful (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, April 11, 1997). The development company, Bryan Properties, also built a golf course community which also had to adhere to Huntersville's regulations. They were expected to connect streets, set-back garages, build homes closer to the street, incorporate sidewalks on both sides of the street, and comply with landscaping and lighting regulations. Instead of viewing the regulations as impediments, Bryan Properties

claimed that they enjoyed building neotraditional projects because they felt that it was a better way to develop (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, April 17, 1998).

Design Guidelines - Problems and Expenses

The town received concerns that the style of development being mandated would be more costly (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, May 19, 2000). The new architectural and streetscape guidelines in particular, raised financial concerns. New street design standards emphasized shorter block lengths, narrower streets, on-street parking, alleys, and sidewalks on both sides of the street. Traffic regulations sparked concern from both developers and Huntersville's Fire Marshal. There was and still is a concern that fire equipment cannot get through some of the town's neighborhoods due street and alley widths (Simoneau interview, May 27, 2004).

According to town staff, developers were not as concerned with building narrower streets, they did, however, voice concern about other street and architectural regulations which raised the cost of development. Developers Frank Jacobus and Russell Ranson argued that placing sidewalks on both sides of the street, building detached garages, incorporating amenities such as neighborhood centers and pocket parks, and requiring multiple connector streets through developments, increase the cost of development and therefore elevate housing prices (Jacobus & Ranson interviews, October 21, 2004). Russell Ranson (Crosland Land Development Company) claimed that increased costs were due in part to the increased amount of impervious surfaces and the grading required on neotraditional designs. Conventional subdivisions commonly require one access street than their neotraditional counterparts that require more than one access street, therefore requiring redundant road frontage, argued Ranson (Ranson interview, October 21, 2004). With regard to the new sidewalk requirements, developer Frank Jacobus agreed with the town's regulations that sidewalks should be located on arterial roads, but disagreed with requiring them along residential roads and would simply raise the price of homes. Jacobus argued that the code was attempting to convince people to give up their cars and that this was a naïve attempt (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004). The new code also mandated that garages be pulled back at least 10 feet from the house. This meant that the

house and the garage could not share a common wall, therefore requiring additional building material, and additional costs.

Market Demands

The final source of concern came from developers and academics who argued that by mandating neotraditionalism, the town was ignoring current market demands. Once neotraditional developments began to appear across the country, more media coverage and research was dedicated to the subject of new urbanism. There was a desire to determine how residents responded to a return to more traditional neighborhood developments. A number of research polls found that people did not prefer new urbanist developments to their conventional counterparts. Architect Cusato cited market studies showing that 30 percent of homeowners like the idea of living in traditional communities, but that 30 percent were still sold on suburban living (The remaining 40 percent were undecided) (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, May 19, 2000). Developer Russell Ranson also cited a study revealing that 80 percent of the people polled preferred conventional neighborhoods (Ranson interview, October 21, 2004). Arguing that TNDs appealed less to families, Ranson believed that people would rather live on large lots and have the ability to watch their kids play in front of their houses instead of down the street at the neighborhood's designated open space.

Results based on research polls conducted for the Charlotte area were reiterated in research administered by Emily Talen (2001). Talen evaluated whether or not suburban residents would likely support new urbanism. By conducting attitudinal surveys in a suburb outside of Dallas, Talen expected that residents would favor their current living conditions instead of a new urban form. Respondents were evenly divided in their responses. Fifty percent agreed that they spent too much time in their cars and 75 percent said they preferred low-density development and large yards. Many were therefore willing to buy into many of the elements found in traditional urbanism, such as transportation alternatives, but still wanted low density living environments. Talen also found that an overwhelming majority (73 percent) said that they had not heard negative

views about low-density suburban development, and did not associate social or environmental problems with them (2001).

Unintended Consequences

Since the new ordinance was a prototype, the town could not predict and prepare for all of its impacts. It was understood that once sufficient time passed and the effects of the new regulations became apparent, alterations may become necessary. Hammond, Breslin, and Low agreed that there would be problems with the regulations. The following will outline the unforeseen consequences of the new code. Again, the level of severity of these consequences depends upon who was affected by them.

Open Space District (OS)

Many of the developments built in the open space district were not intended, as the ordinance provided little guidance for the types of developments desirable in those areas. The town was trying to convert the previous R-3 zone (3 residential units per acre) to an open space zone but wanted the same acreage to apply in the new ordinance. High density housing was permitted in an effort to preserve more rural open space in the town's periphery. Developers were therefore encouraged to cluster developments and leave more undisturbed areas in the OS District. This led to a proliferation of townhomes that lacked compatibility and integration not only into their neighborhoods but to the rest of town. Many long-time residents living near those areas became concerned by the dense developments appearing in the previously rural section of town, such as the attached row houses, and by the amount of traffic they generated. In response to this concern, in May of 2000, the town held a public meeting on the open space zoning district. The town hired a consulting firm, Land Ethics Inc., to conduct the meeting in hopes of generating more effective ways to preserve open space.

Economic Segregation

According to Huntersville's current planning director, Jack Simoneau, mandating neotraditionalism does have an effect on housing prices (Simoneau interview, May 27,

2004). Since regulations required a greater amount of impervious surfaces, architectural design, and open space preservation, they were more costly to build. Increased development prices are balanced by increased home prices, thereby potentially excluding particular income groups from residing in the area. According to statistics gathered by the United States Bureau of the Census, the average home price and average household and income in Huntersville increased substantially over the past two decades. Figure 4 (a) and (b) illustrate graphs depicting these increases. These averages are well above regional averages, except in Cornelius and Davidson, both of which either encourage or mandate new urbanism.

Market studies conducted by REBIC and Eppli and Tu reveal that neotraditional neighborhoods sell for more. In their book, "Valuing the New Urbanism", Eppli and Tu examined price differentials that homebuyers are willing to pay for housing in new urbanist communities compared to surrounding conventional developments (2000). They found that the price differential were statistically significant, and speculated that consumers were willing to pay more to live in new urbanist communities than for properties with comparable housing characteristics within conventional suburban developments. However, they were unable to speculate on the profitability of these developments as little information is available on the overall cost to build new urbanist communities.

Developer Frank Jacobus argued that the town's regulations affect affordable housing opportunities, due the increased costs associated with neotraditional development. Riverside, Jacobus' most recent development in Huntersville, is a single-family subdivision based on new urbanist styles. He claimed to have spent $7,000 more on infrastructure, due the increased impervious surface required, than he was accustomed to spending ($20,000 v. $13,000) (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004). Russell Ranson compared two neighborhoods he had worked on in Davidson, one with conventional style (The Woods at Davidson) and one neotraditional (Lake Davidson Park). One had alleys and one did not. He argued that the homes in the new urbanist neighborhood cost 33 percent more for 24 percent smaller lots. According to Ranson, the new urbanist

guidelines mandate higher housing prices and serve as a "social mining device rather than a superior community design tactic" (Ranson interview, October 21, 2004).

Neotraditional Hybrids

Strict new urbanist's argue that many of the new developments in Huntersville are "pseudo-new urbanist or hybrids" rather than true new urbanist (Simoneau interview, May 27, 2004). When the new code was drafted in 1996, the town decided that they would not mandate commercial and civic uses in all residential developments, unless adequate foot and vehicular traffic was available to sustain such uses. This resulted in many of the developments in the open space district, east and west of the town center, failing to possess fundamental neotraditional elements, such as mixed-uses. Tom Low, considered to be a strict new urbanist, argued that because of this, there are a number of subdivisions that have been built since the new code was adopted that are not truly neighborhoods reflecting traditional design (Low interview, September 20, 2004). Although they conform to the reduced structural setbacks, sidewalk requirements, and include front porches and alleys, many of these developments are not connected to the rest of Huntersville and have failed to mix uses. This not only encourages vehicular reliance, but leads to income segregation, as many of the developments contain residents with similar incomes. The initial intention of the code was to encourage economically diverse and interconnected neighborhoods.

As very few homeowners and renters know the difference between pure-TNDs and the hybrids, especially when similar marketing slogans are used, Tom Low claimed that the hybrids have negatively affected the "true" new urbanist developments in the area. According to developer Nate Bowman, he built a "quality development" (Vermillion), and because the hybrid developments used cheaper products and failed to include civic or commercial uses, they were able to sell their units for less, but market them as TNDs (Bowman interview, September 20, 2004). Low argued that the result of mandating TNDs, developers looked for loop-holes and he attributed this problem to the town's decision to forbid conventional subdivisions. If traditional neighborhood developments were an option, like they were in the town of Davidson, only developers

who were dedicated to building "quality" neighborhoods would choose to build them. This would in turn maintain "true" neotraditional authenticity (Low interview, September 20, 2004).

Growth Remains

In the early 1990s, there was a general desire to formulate new patterns for development that would better control growth. Many residents expected the new codes to slow the pace of development taking place in Huntersville. Despite this expectation, and concerns from developers that the town's strict guidelines would inhibit growth, the town's population continued to increase. With population projections favoring Huntersville, there were concerns as to whether or not the town could handle the additional growth expected. "We (Huntersville) are growing at such a pace that we are out-growing our infrastructure" stated Bill Russell of the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, April 12, 2004).

There were also increasing traffic and environmental concerns resulting from growth. As rural roads leading to new subdivisions in the OS District were becoming more congested, the town was concerned whether its aging infrastructure was sufficient to handle increased traffic. The impact of construction on pollution levels on nearby water sources also alarmed town officials. By 2002, Huntersville's section of McDowell's Creek was identified as being the most polluted in the county. "The effects of growth are threatening the quality of life, which is attracting development in the first place" (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, March 3, 2002).

Chapter VII. Learning & Adjustment

Moratorium Put on the Table

By 2002, the town faced the same problems it had confronted in early 1990s; dissatisfaction with the types of development occurring, continued growth, increasing traffic congestion, and environmental stress. Responding to these concerns, the Board of Commissioners arranged a public meeting in January of 2002, to discuss enacting a second moratorium on major residential subdivisions. Town officials agreed that a moratorium would again allow time to address problems and formulate alternatives to the 1996 code of ordinances. "We feel that the purpose of the moratorium is not to change the ordinance, but to tweak it, to really define and eliminate questions" said Bob Council, Planning Board Chairperson (*The Charlotte Observer*, February 24, 2002). Residents spoke for and against the proposed moratorium at the meeting. One active resident argued that the moratorium could be a chance for the town to get a plan together on how to deal with traffic created by the new subdivisions (Vernadine Carter, who lives off recently populated Gilead Road). On the other hand, the president of Lake Norman's Chamber of Commerce said that the moratorium would discourage businesses from coming to the area (*The Charlotte Observer*, February 24, 2002).

Despite concern, the moratorium was approved unanimously in February of 2002 and was to be in effect for one year. The moratorium applied to larger residential plans (those requiring new streets or facilities such as parks, schools, and water, sewage or drainage improvements). It excluded commercial and small-scale residential developments (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 27, 2002). The moratorium applied to land in both the town limits and the town's 64 square mile area of jurisdiction. Commissioners exempted six subdivision plans containing approximately 1,600 homes because they had already been approved (*The Charlotte Observer*, February 24, 2002).

During the year-long moratorium, several public meetings were held to assist in crafting an ordinance that would gain the support of both the residents and developers. One of the primary reasons the moratorium was enacted was to provide time to develop a new action plan for the town's periphery. One problem with the 1996 ordinance was that it unintentionally allowed undesirable developments in the areas located in the open space district (Breslin interview, September 15, 2004). Town staff worked on a plan to organize development in a more coherent manner that concentrated high density uses near the center of town and gradually decreased densities into the periphery. In order to do this, the town suggested dividing the previously zoned open space district into "rural" and "transitional" districts and applying new density limitations in these areas (1 home per 3 acres or 1.2 homes per acre as long as 60 percent of the tract was left as open space). Townhomes or row houses were not recommended in either of these districts and only a limited number of duplexes were proposed. These changes were thought to better maintain the town's rural character.

In addition to the lower density requirements in the rural and transitional sections of town, town staff suggested to elected officials that the new ordinance not offer density credits for land unsuitable for development. The previous ordinance (1996) did make exceptions for unbuildable land and this request angered large landowners. The property of nearly 5,000 landowners would be rezoned if town staff recommendations were approved by the board (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 12, 2003). Responding to a letter of concern by the Large Landowners Coalition (LLC), the town held a meeting in October of 2002 and invited members of this group (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 8, 2003). A number of these landowners were concerned that open space requirements were too severe, and that they would not be given credit for open space on land that was unsuitable for development, such as floodplains, steep slopes, and wetlands. Town staff believed that current environmental deterioration and congestion occurring in the rural sections of town were partially the result of allowing density credits for land sensitive to development (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004). As a result of the meeting, however, the board compromised with the LLC: it would allow density credits for land

unsuitable to development. It also decreased open space requirements from 60 percent preservation to 45 percent.

The town staff was also exploring ways to improve the town's water quality during the moratorium. As more land in the rural sections of town was cleared for development, water quality was affected by construction run-off. By the late 1990s, McDowell Creek, in the thick of the new development, had the poorest water quality of any water body in the county. Officials in Mecklenburg County approached the town with new standards that would require developers to use construction techniques called *low-impact development*. Builders would have to use either non-structural or structural means to mitigate water degradation (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 2003). The specifics regarding these low-impact development tactics will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Despite the fact that drastic changes were again being proposed, the process went smoothly. Town planning director, Jack Simoneau described the 2002-2003 moratorium as the most "civilized debate" he had ever been associated with (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004). Simoneau attributed the smooth transition to the decision to include the large landowners in discussions prior to adopting the new ordinance in 2003. Members of the LLC were therefore aware of how they would be affected by the new code before it was adopted in 2003. Simoneau admitted that many of the large landowners were considerably disadvantaged by density reductions in the rural district. Although allowing density credits was a concession between town staff and elected officials, this compromise worked in favor of large landowners and eased the transition process (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004).

While Simoneau described including members of the LLC as being a strategic decision, the previous planning director, Ann Hammond, regretted not including these parties in the adoption of the 1996 ordinance (Hammond interview, September 13, 2004). In 1998, the town absorbed land that had previously been under the county's jurisdiction. Despite awareness that the town would eventually receive zoning rights over this land, landowners were not invited to join the citizen's committee and participate in developing the new code. Once incorporated, property owners were notified that their land was

zoned open space and down-zoned from 3 units per acre to 2.5 units per acre. Many of these new residents felt as though they had been taken advantage of and that they were unaware of Huntersville's zoning laws because they previously did not own property within the towns limits (*The Charlotte Observer*, December 3, 2000).

In January of 2003, just before the ordinance was scheduled to be approved, residents again had the opportunity to respond to the proposed changes (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 8, 2003). Some agreed that growth needed to be controlled. Others argued that the proposed zoning and density changes would greatly diminish property values. "The plan they are proposing is grand theft" said Ed Bost, a Huntersville resident (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 2003). Planning board chairman, Bob Council acknowledged the landowner's concern, but explained that the affect on property values would only be a short term phenomenon. Since the proposed changes would be working toward conserving open space and making the town a more desirable place to live, property values would eventually rise (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 27, 2003). The Town Board agreed that in time, as the town expanded and infrastructure was improved, land in the transitional and rural districts would eventually be rezoned to accommodate higher densities (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004).

New Code

Despite concerns, the Board approved the new code by a 3 to 1 majority and adopted its regulations on February 17, 2003 (*The Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 2003). Although significant changes were made, the ordinance remained true to the philosophy in the 1996 code (Simoneau interview, May 27, 2004). Major changes were to the zoning districts, open space regulations, allowed densities, and water quality initiatives. Above all, the new ordinance attempted to provide clearer language and guidance on what could be built.

<u>Zoning and Density Changes</u>

As a result of the problems associated with the previous ordinance, the town decided that it was necessary to regulate density, specify lot size and width, and mandate

more open space requirements in the town's periphery. This was thought to better maintain the town's rural character. With hopes of guiding growth in a more orderly manner, the town adopted a "tier- based" zoning system. The 3 tiers; urban, transitional and rural, were arranged so that densities would gradually decline toward the outskirts of town, where more open space would be found. This ensured that the highest densities would be concentrated around the Interstate, town center, and future rail line.

In keeping with the rural character of the eastern and westerns edges of town, the rural and transitional districts mandated lower density developments and significant open space preservation. The 1996 ordinance regulated density on a sliding scale but had a base density of 2.5 units per acre as long as 15 percent of the development was dedicated as open space (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 3, 1996). Although densities were again regulated on a sliding scale, the new ordinance significantly reduced base densities and mandated more open space conservation. In the transitional district, the base densities ranged from .8 units per acre with 25 percent open space to 2 units per acre with at least 45 percent open space. Therefore if a developer built 2 units per acre, he or she would have to set aside at least 45 percent of the parcel as open space. The rural district faced even stricter density regulations. Base densities ranged from .4 units per acre with 25 percent open space (about 1 unit per 3 acres) to 1.2 units per acre with at least 45 percent open space (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 3, 2003).

Low-Impact Design

As water quality is directly impacted by the amount of impervious surface present, the town decided that residential uses within areas designated as "critical" and "protected" would be subject to density limitations, impervious surface limitations, buffer requirements, and engineering controls (Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, Article 3, 2003). Working alongside North Carolina's Land Use and Environmental Services Agency, (NCLUESA), Huntersville initiated new water quality regulations that required developers to practice "low-impact" designs techniques (Town of Huntersville, Open Space Plan, 2000). The new ordinance did allow higher density options to developers within Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake Critical Areas as long as engineering

controls, known as Best Management Practices (BMPs), were used to manage storm water runoff. BMPs are a series of measures, including both structural controls (wet detention ponds, grass swales) and non-structural controls (land-use controls and vegetative buffers), to ensure that construction run-off does not exacerbate pollution (Town of Huntersville, Open Space Plan, 2000). The NCLUESA perceived that low-impact requirements would expand throughout Mecklenburg County if successful in Huntersville.

Concerns Resulting from 2002 Amendments

For the second time, Huntersville made drastic changes to their regulations and, again, people had a difficult time determining how they would be affected. A number of concerns and complaints regarding these changes surfaced upon adoption of the new ordinance and remain today. Many of the concerns mirror those raised in response to the 1996 alterations: vague language; increased approval time; open space and density requirements; negative effects on development; and the continuation of neotraditional hybrids; economic segregation.

Vague Language

Uncertainty remains regarding what, exactly, the new regulations prohibit. Developer Frank Jacobus provided an example of confusing rhetoric found in the current ordinance. He argued that the town contradicts itself by requiring builders to use more impervious surfaces in order to construct alleys and sidewalks, while at the same time requiring the use of low-impact development strategies which prohibit the use of excessive impervious surfaces (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004).

The code continues to contain guidelines such as “developments must fit the community”. Town staff and developers continue to struggle with statements such as these. In response to confusion regarding what the regulations require in terms of design controls, the town is preparing to release a design manual to better clarity regulations.

Approval Time

Again developers and town staff voiced concerns regarding the time is takes to review and approve development plans. In order to ensure compatibility with the town's development goals, Jack Simoneau described how each set of plans takes considerable time to review (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004). This not only makes for a more lengthy approval process, but gives town staff more discretion in determining what is acceptable. Developers have voiced concern because they are expected to conduct a lot more work prior to breaking ground. Developer Nate Bowman expressed his frustration with the town. As the second phase of his Vermillion project nears, he finds himself facing the same battles due to extensive staff turn-over and the amount of time it takes for the town to review a plan (Bowman interview, September 20, 2004). This upsets him because his development continues to be hailed by the new urbanist community. Bowman also mentioned in an interview that he was "burnt out" and had yet to witness any progress by the new urbanist movement, at least in the Charlotte region, in terms of support from developers (Bowman interview, September 20, 2004).

Density Requirements

Developers argued that density reductions negatively affect profitability in Huntersville (Ranson & Jacobus interviews, October 21, 2004). Simoneau acknowledges that density alterations in the rural and transitional districts have had an affect on the pace of development and will affect the pattern of development in these areas. Simoneau also recognizes that the large landowners in the town's periphery rightly felt that their land had been down zoned. Density reductions have made land less attractive to developers who wish to build higher density developments (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004). Since the new ordinance limits density so severely, developer Frank Jacobus argues that most projects will not be profitable unless developers opt to build estate-home neighborhoods (Jacobus interview, October 21, 2004). Jacobus, developer Russell Ranson, and Simoneau have voiced concern that these lower density requirements will force housing prices to the upper tier of the regional market and exclude lower income groups from homeownership.

Open Space

Huntersville still struggles to conserve open space. The North Carolina General Assembly rejected the towns request to utilize transfer of development rights (TDR). The town was hoping that these rights would better enable them to conserve more of the town's remaining open space and therefore better preserve Huntersville's rural character. REBIC lobbied heavily against the proposal claiming that landowners would not be given their full ability to utilize their property (*The Charlotte Business Journal*, March 19, 1999). Since the TDR program was rejected, the town has turned to the private sector for assistance. Due to increasing property values, it is unlikely that Huntersville will have adequate funding to meet the town's open space goals through purchase. One method of acquiring and preserving open space is the purchase of *conservation easements*. This is a voluntary program in which a landowner sells development rights to the town (Town of Huntersville, Open Space Plan, 2000). The landowner retains ownership of the property and may continue to farm the land, live on, or ultimately sell the land. The only restriction is that the land cannot be subdivided, and no additional homes or structures may be built. Huntersville also began working with the Catawba Land Conservation Committee to find a way to conserve more open space in Huntersville (Simoneau interview, May 27, 2004). In addition, the county has also acquired land along the river and the town recently passed a bond referendum to use money to acquire more open space.

Effect on Development

Despite a rezoning request, town staff has not received a subdivision plan for property in the rural and transitional districts since the new code was adopted in 2003 (*The Huntersville Herald*, April 2, 2004). Although this has many concerned, Simoneau is confident that this will eventually change. As the urban corridor fills in, the town will eventually allow more land in the transitional and rural districts to accommodate higher densities. He also stated that delays were attributed to the availability of utilities in the undeveloped portions of the town jurisdiction, along with the fact that developers are still learning the new code and marketing strategies (*The Huntersville Herald*, April 2, 2004,

interview with Simoneau). In June of 2003, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities (CMU) placed a moratorium on sewer expansion in the northern part of the county until the McDowell Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant could be expanded to handle new residents (*The Charlotte Observer*, June 29, 2003). Construction on the sewers is proceeding at this time.

Still New Urbanism?

Although remaining true to many of the principles found in the 1996 ordinance, town officials claim that the new code contains less new urbanism than the previous code (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004). The town rather restricts dense growth from taking place in the town's rural and environmentally sensitive areas, and concentrates development along the rail corridor. After witnessing the impact of allowing dense development everywhere – especially in the open space district – the town was reluctant to demand that all developments contain a mixture of uses, such as commercial and civic. The new code does not reflect true urbanism in Tom Low's opinion as it does not address mixed-uses and affordable housing. Low would prefer the creation of village centers in the outskirts of town so people would be able to satisfy daily needs without relying upon their cars. He also argued that by banning low-income housing opportunities, such as townhomes in the rural and transitional districts that the town has failed to address the importance of income diversity (Low interview, September 20, 2004). The town of Davidson attempted to address this issue by mandating that all new developments set aside fifty percent of the housing as "affordable" in the rural areas (Simoneau interview, September 21, 2004). At the present time, Huntersville has not explored this option.

Chapter VIII. Discussion & Conclusion

Factors Allowing a Successful Transition

Huntersville embarked upon a revolutionary journey. Throughout the past ten years there have been a number of factors that made this journey possible. These factors are not mutually exclusive, rather interconnected events based on power and politics. Growth pressures, the rise of the new urbanist movement, and Huntersville's small size allowed the town to change its course of development. However, if it were not for widespread community dedication to control unwanted growth, the town would not have been able to ignore developer opposition. The following will discuss these factors and identify lessons to be learned from Huntersville's experience. This information will be beneficial for communities who have embarked upon similar municipal reform.

Timing and Size

There were three events that occurred simultaneously that assisted in Huntersville's transition; emergence of the new urbanist movement, growth pressures, and proposed rail line. By the late 1980s the neotraditional movement began to organize and gain popularity. Once the Congress of the New Urbanism was created in 1993 and the first developments adhering to its tenets were constructed, the field quickly generated interest from academics and the media. Charlotte had its first dose of new urbanism in 1995 when Andres Duany spoke at venues across the metropolitan area. Prior to his visit, Huntersville was struggling to cope with unprecedented development and population growth. Planning Director Ann Hammond believed, and later the Board of Commissioners agreed, that Duany's ideas would help to better preserve Huntersville's small-town character. Therefore a significant event that motivated change was that new

urbanist planning philosophies infiltrated the region at the time Huntersville was searching for ways to change.

Population growth played a considerable role in Huntersville decision and ability to make the transition to neotraditionalism. As Chapter III outlined, Mecklenburg County and surrounding counties have been subjected to rapid population growth as a result of regional economic success. This growth, along with projections favoring more growth, instilled confidence that there was a demand for land within the town's jurisdiction. Because this demand was so great, the northern towns of Huntersville, Davidson and Cornelius were able to maintain more control over the types of development they would tolerate within their borders. Municipalities without such prosperous housing markets would not exercise this same discretion, as economically they would have little choice but to approve every development project. Previous and projected growth, along with geographical amenities, became a basis for power and activated the search for planning alternatives.

An additional factor that allowed Huntersville to embrace neotraditionalism with greater ease was the region's mass transit system, proposed shortly before Huntersville's decision to reform its codes. Because developments at these stops are traditionally dense in nature and offer a mixture of services for the commuter, communities with direct access to the rail line are adopting elements of new urbanism in their transit plans. Huntersville, in particular, reorganized its zoning districts to ensure that growth would be centered along the rail line. Mass transit is not only an important principle emphasized in new urbanist philosophy, it is often the most difficult element of new urbanism to obtain as it requires state support and extensive funding.

Finally, change is much more manageable when it takes place on a small scale. With only four board members, (due to population increases there are five today) one mayor, and two town planners, Huntersville did not have to convince and educate many people on proposed changes. If Huntersville were the size of Charlotte; with a population over 600,000, and with 14 planning commissioners, 9 county commissioners, and 12 council members, drastic reform would be less probable (Charlotte-Meckleburg Planning Commission Website, 2004).

Community Concern Greater than Developer Concern

Huntersville's accomplishments were dependent upon a series of events that occurred at the same time. However, the town was able to successfully embrace new planning practices because the concerns of the community outweighed the concerns raised by developers.

Developers Lost Power: Huntersville drastically altered the way local developers conducted business. Compared to neotraditional codes, conventional codes are extremely straightforward, making them popular among developers. Due to their rarity and architectural regulations, neotraditional codes require extensive interpretation. This research has presented arguments made by developers who claimed that Huntersville's codes were not only more restrictive, but more expensive, and were counterproductive for affordable housing goals. Why then did developers not mobilize and object to the town's decision?

Politicians have power as they tend to make decisions. Developers on the other hand, possess a substantial amount economic power. Since their job requires them to be fully aware of development regulations, developers are very active in local politics and tend to sway political decisions. In contrast, public opinion is not as influential. Unless directly impacted by political change, the general public rarely shows interest in political issues. In addition, it is unusual for the public to not only agree on an issue, but mobilize to initiate change. If the public does make an effort to mobilize, as was the case in Huntersville, they can acquire enormous political influence. If public opinion is never aroused, politicians will continue to listen to demands and concerns made by developers. Therefore, in order to undergo massive municipal reform, citizens must be dedicated to a common goal. In the case of Huntersville, this occurred because the community felt that their quality of life was in jeopardy unless action was taken. As a result, this dedication provided the town the necessary strength to ignore opposition voiced by local developers and the Real Estate and Business Industry Coalition (REBIC).

Furthermore, if Huntersville were any larger, it would have also been difficult to convince lawmakers and developers to stop construction entirely while new regulations were formulated. It would have also been more difficult to achieve collective community

action. The larger the community, the greater change that powerful members – those associated with development companies backed by extensive resources – would not allow such change to occur. Due to Huntersville's size and the separation of these parties, the town was able to ignore developers and carried on with its agenda.

Widespread Dedication: Based on similar decisions made by surrounding communities, and widespread support from town planning staff, local new urbanist advocates, and above all, residents of Huntersville, town officials were confident that the decision to implement neotraditional code reflected what was best for the town.

According to those interviewed, Ann Hammond provided the momentum that allowed the transition to occur. Her passion for neotraditionalism, and her ability to successfully show why neotraditionalism would work for Huntersville, made the transition possible. She was able to convince her co-workers, the Board of Commissioners, and the mayor, that what she was proposing could work for Huntersville. She was replaced by someone equally passionate, ensuring that the policies she worked to adopt would remain. However, without growth pressures and the support of the Board of Commissioners, the mayor, the town planning directors of Davidson and Cornelius, the DPZ firm, Dr. Walters, and the community, she would not have been successful in her mission.

Regional collaboration and dedication to neotraditionalism also helped instill confidence that if Huntersville were to proceed with their agenda, they would not only be supported by the housing market, but by other municipalities. Belmont, Davidson, and Cornelius therefore became local prototypes that Huntersville followed. Because these communities experimented with new urbanism before Huntersville, they were models the town could mimic. Although they had all created regulations that were a little different, they worked together and learned from one another's mistakes. As Davidson was the first north Mecklenburg town to embrace new urbanism; officials, business owners, residents and developers in Huntersville knew they were not alone. This assurance lessoned the perceived risk.

Local advocates of the new urbanist movement, dedicated to teaching others about the benefits of new urbanism, guided Huntersville through the transition process,

and provided an additional source of confidence. Dr. David Walters and Tom Low, both activists for new urbanism, assisted in building Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson's codes. Since Walter's provided similar consulting work to the three north Mecklenburg towns, the towns share similar missions and continue to learn and support one another. The town also received media attention by having Tom Low and the DPZ office later stationed in the Vermillion neighborhood. This attention instilled further confidence. The DPZ office continues to be an excellent resource for the town as people come from all over to visit Vermillion and then take tours of Huntersville. Also, through his bi-weekly Urban Forum sessions, Low continues to spread the movement's ideas in and around the Charlotte-area.

The final and most important source of dedication came from the citizens of Huntersville who were active in building the new code. Driven by feelings of desperation concerning the fate of their town, residents of Huntersville were open to new ideas presented by town officials. Through the use of comparative slide shows outlining the problems with conventional development and how new urbanist development could counteract such problems, the town was able to effectively sell neotraditionalism to the community. When informed that new regulations would help control unwanted growth threatening Huntersville's small-town character, those passionate about preserving that character supported the town's decision. This support became a great source of power that allowed the town to proceed with its agenda. However, the support received from the public was based on the premise that stricter regulations would reduce growth, when in fact the 1996 ordinance did not control growth, rather augmented sprawl. Therefore in a non-conscious way, and acting on behalf of what was believed to be in the town's best interest, Huntersville's officials were able to take advantage of the public's desperation, and fulfill its agenda.

What Can Be Learned From Huntersville's Experience?

Despite being labeled as "the most progressive community in Mecklenburg County", Huntersville's transition was not free from struggle, criticism and opposition (*The Charlotte Observer*, October 15, 1999). Throughout the past ten years, Huntersville

has been forced to learn from its mistakes and make drastic changes to solve those mistakes. Despite adjustments, the town continues to face obstacles due to the fact that they have an ordinance unlike most. The town must continuously educate the public, new officials, and staff members about the regulations, and there is still confusion. Due to unforeseen consequences resulting from the first code (1996) the town made adjustments. Adjustments were not universally supported. Avid new urbanists claim that changes fail to encourage true neotraditional planning practices. With this in mind, how can other communities learn from Huntersville to determine the effects of neotraditional codes? The answer to this question will provide lessons in politics, new urbanism, and open space preservation.

On-going Education and Confusion

Widespread development and business practices were significantly altered when Huntersville reformed its zoning regulations and new practices had to be learned. This required not only political support and dedication, but tremendous time and education. Not all municipalities have access to the resources required to initiate such change. Since town planning staff is the first contact with the public, they are responsible for interpreting the laws, ensuring that plans comply with those laws and for determining impacts. Huntersville's planning staff and elected official were not only required to spend a substantial amount of time on writing an entirely new ordinance, but on educating themselves, the public, new staff members, and officials on the new regulations.

As staff, officials, and residents come and go the education process must continuously be repeated. Therefore, this process did not end when the 1996 code was adopted. In fact, once the codes were in place, confusion regarding the intentions of the regulations surfaced. This confusion required not only additional time and patience, but continued support and enthusiasm from those responsible for interpreting the law. Conventional zoning regulations are straight forward and require very little overhead for the developer. Developers in Huntersville are now expected to design projects that architecturally "fit" the character of the town. This means that town planning staff and

elected officials must negotiate the adequacy of all proposed developments. Every plan must undergo a lengthy review process in order to determine whether it will integrate sufficiently into the rest of the town. This ambiguity has expanded the review process and created frustration on the part of town planners and developers. Even among developers who support neotraditionalism, there has been frustration with the efficiency of Huntersville's planning process. Consequently, if a community has adopted neotraditional codes, they should be prepared to spend more time and resources on continued education and interpretation of the laws, because everyone involved is much more active in the planning process.

Cannot Please Everyone

Consequences resulting from changes made to the ordinance in 1996 were not foreseen in 1994 when the town embarked upon its transition to neotraditionalism. Officials understood that alterations would eventually become necessary once development began, but problems were underestimated. Since the codes were not specific enough, developers built subdivisions that were not what the town wanted, especially those located in the open space district. It was alleged that by mandating compact development in these areas, more open space would be preserved. But, as a result, developers took advantage of the higher permissible densities in the open space district to maximize profit. The majority of these dense developments were constructed on green-field sites in the previously rural section of town. They not only lacked integration to the rest of Huntersville, they triggered traffic congestion and environmental degradation. As a result, although it was not the town's intention, the 1996 code actually encouraged sprawl. The town learned that when given the opportunity, developers will chose to build in the outskirts rather than on remaining parcels located near the town's center. There is not only greater flexibility when it comes to parcel size on land that has never been developed, but construction prices are lower when there are fewer neighborhoods to connect streets and sidewalks.

Since the initial ideology embraced in 1996 became counterproductive to the town's goals, compromises were then made and principles were altered. The town

decided that the only way to discourage the amount of development taking place in the town's periphery was to enact strict density and open space requirements that made it more financially attractive to build near the town center and future rail line. Revisions made in 2002 reflected this decision. The tier-zoning system, included stricter regulations in the town's remaining open space, was seen as a way to better preserve the greatly valued rural character. This zoning tactic was adopted to allow the town time to gradually prepare itself and its infrastructure for further development.

This research has uncovered that reluctance is inevitable when change is proposed, even if it is necessary. Municipalities will rarely obtain the support of all members of society when proposing radical zoning reform, especially when individuals are directly impacted. Town's hoping to follow in Huntersville footsteps should realize that there are going to be unintended consequences that arise due to the fact that neotraditional regulations are rare and few municipalities have experimented with them. This type of planning also has new winners and losers. Developers, who under conventional codes have a lot more control over what they construct, are no longer allowed this same discretion under neotraditional codes. This discretion has been transferred to town staff and elected officials. Also, now that allowed densities in the rural and transitional districts have been greatly reduced, large landowners can no longer make as much profit from selling their land.

It is in the best interest of elected officials to negatively impact the fewest number of people. For that reason, it is the responsibility of municipalities to learn from their mistakes and make regulatory adjustments to counteract those mistakes. Since not every new urbanist principle will work everywhere, town's who have adopted neotraditional codes have to be prepared to adapt to local situations and unforeseen consequences, and be willing to revise regulations.

Beyond New Urbanism

Strict new urbanists claim that Huntersville has only two projects reflecting true traditional urbanism, Vermillion and Birkdale Village. They claim that everything else is merely a hybrid, marketed as new urbanism, when in fact it is no different from

conventional development. This argument is based upon the outcome of two of Huntersville's regulations; one, not requiring mixed uses in the open space district (currently the rural district); and two, limiting density so severely in the rural and transitional districts, that income diversity is unlikely. Huntersville's initial goal was to mitigate uncontrolled growth and preserve its small-town character and not every new urbanist planning principles was conducive to this goal. Many of the principles were based on neighborhood-level planning rather than comprehensive town planning and failed to situate neighborhoods within communities, such as the subdivisions in Huntersville's open space district. These subdivisions acted as rather as self-contained, independent modules, disconnected from the rest of the town. The town not only wanted all developments to be integrated into the broader structure of the town, but wanted them to reflect its character. Therefore, due to their unforeseen consequences, the town abandoned some of the new urbanist principles present in the 1996 ordinance.

The town decided that it was not practical to enforce mixed use developments in the town's periphery because there were not enough people to sustain such uses. Furthermore, in order to reduce sprawl, town officials decided that it was is in the town's best interest to grow in sections. When the town center fills, and necessary densities are established around the rail line, higher densities will be allowed in the outskirts and developers will opt to build reasonably priced homes.

Although many communities actively embrace elements of new urbanism, this country has yet to witness one which adheres to all of the principles of new urbanism. Is it even possible to mandate strict new urbanist principles as defined by the Congress of the New Urbanism? Furthermore, even Seaside, considered to be the signature new urbanist village, struggles with income diversity and affordability. Does a municipality need to enforce all of the elements of new urbanism to construct a successful community? Is not what Huntersville has accomplished a better alternative to conventional building?

Open Space is Antithetical for Income Diversity

This research has shown that Huntersville continues to struggle with conserving open space. The tier-based zoning system was developed to concentrate growth near the

existing center and encourage the preservation of open space by making it less appealing to build in the town's periphery. This tactic reflects theories of urban growth presented in the early 20th century, such as Ernest Burgess "concentric zone" model. He observed that the urban environment begins with "a central business district at the center around which all other uses formed" (Hartshorn, 1980). Outside of the central zone was the working class residential zone. Burgess found that lower income residents, because they economically have fewer choices, commonly inhabit areas around the central business district where land is less appealing. Beyond this zone is the location of middle class residents. The final zone is inhabited by affluent populations who enjoyed larger lots and the rural environment. This model was criticized as being too simplistic, especially with the "centerless" development trends present after WWII and for failing to explain the impact of transportation routes on land uses (Hartshorn, 1980).

Today, academics, planners, and architects are beginning to realize that the concentric model is still relevant today. Even among the new urbanist community, this idea of tier-based growth, where development is concentrated around a central business district, is being considered. Recently, members of the CNU developed the "Smart Code" based on "Transects" of development intensity. The goal, similar to Huntersville tier system and Burgess's concentric rings, is to encourage the densest development around the urban core, and gradually accommodating lower densities farther out into the rural district, where only large plots of land and agriculture are allowed (Duany & Plater-Zyberk Company Website, 2004). Although this tactic is thought to help reduce and control sprawl, zoning for this type of development-style is counterproductive to the availability of affordable housing as it mirrors Burgess's income segregated urban zones.

Huntersville's open space goals are therefore antithetical to its affordable housing and diversity goals. Factoring in land prices, cost of infrastructure, and neighborhood amenities, it is unlikely for a developer in Huntersville to build affordable units on land that can only accommodate 1 unit per 3 acres. In order for this to happen, it would depend upon a developer passionate enough about affordable housing that he or she would be willing to forfeit potential profits of building larger, mansion-style homes. As

of now, neighborhood amenities, such as public open space, walking paths, and central squares, cost more, and these costs are being covered by greater home prices.

The town's experience has revealed that in order to prevent uncontrolled growth, codes must require the most intense development to be centered on existing infrastructure. Town officials are aware that the outcome of this decision has reduced affordable housing opportunities. However, if density limitations were not required in the rural sections of town, which was the case in the 1996 code, developers would opt to build there, thus contributing to additional sprawl. This would be counterproductive to open space goals and led to increased infrastructure and service costs for the town. The lesson to be learned is that at the present time, open space preservation near a rapidly growing metropolis will only be possible at the expense of affordable housing opportunities.

Conclusion

To conclude, there are two fundamental lessons that can be learned from Huntersville transition to neotraditionalism. The first lesson addresses the ability for municipalities to replicate what Huntersville accomplished. There were a number of factors that converged during Huntersville's search for planning alternatives; significant growth pressures followed by regional infiltration of new urbanist planning philosophies. Despite these factors, if it were not for widespread support from the citizenry, the town would not have obtained the power to complete the transition. Although there were a number of conditions that made Huntersville appear unique, these same conditions are no longer necessary precursors for change. Today, there are an increasing number of neotraditional developments and communities that have integrated these principles into their zoning regulations. There were very few models to follow when Huntersville embarked upon change. These ideas were still fresh and there was considerable uncertainty regarding market demands for traditional development. Because these ideas are now more familiar, change would be less drastic. Nevertheless, although cities no longer have to be "special" in order to adopt neotraditionalism, they do have to be supported by the community. This support is often ignited by a communal threat, such as

unwanted growth. Without community support, Huntersville's attempts at municipal reform would have been futile.

The final lesson is that because neotraditional planning principles are still rare, once they are implemented, they demand additional time for interpretation, and will require alterations in light of local circumstances. Municipalities therefore need to be capable of dedicating increased staff time to the on-going learning process that is required by neotraditional codes. Since the impacts of the first code were unforeseen, Huntersville had to think beyond new urbanism and adapt to local needs. The town quickly learned that not all neotraditional planning principles were conducive to the town's development goals. For example, the open space preservation and affordable housing goals did not juxtapose well. In order to determine reasonable regulations, towns must evaluate the demands and potential consequences of each goal. Therefore, municipalities following Huntersville's lead have to be willing to accept unintended consequences, learn from mistakes, and make reasonable adjustments.

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Appendix

Table I. Interviews

Name	Profession	Date of Interview
Ann Hammond	Former Planning Director of Huntersville	6/4/04 & 9/13/04 (both phone)
Jack Simoneau	Current Planner Director of Huntersville	5/27/04 & 9/21/04 (both in-person)
Nate Bowman	Developer/Life-long resident of Huntersville	9/20/04 (in-person)
Tom Low	Duany & Plater Zyberk Design Architects	9/20/04 (in-person) & 11/1/04 (phone)
David Walters	Professor of Architecture UNCC	9/8/04 (phone)
Tim Breslin	Former Town Commissioner	9/15/04 (phone)
Julianne Smith-Hamilton	Director of Marketing and Research, Crosland Land Company	10/11/04 (e-mail)
Russell Ranson	Developer	10/21/04 (phone)
Frank Jacobus	Developer	10/21/04 (phone)

Table 2 (a)
Population Growth Statistics: County Data 1980-2000

				1980-1900	1900-2000
County	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**Percent Change**	**Percent Change**
Cabarrus	85,895	98,935	131,063	15.2	32.5
Gaston	162,568	175,093	190,365	7.7	8.7
Iredell	82,895	92,931	122,660	12.6	32
Lincoln	42,370	50,319	63,780	18.8	26.8
Mecklenburg	404,270	511,433	695,454	26.5	36
Rowan	99,186	110,605	130,340	11.5	17.8
Union	70,380	84,211	123,677	19.7	46.9
York, SC	106,720	131,497	164,614	23.2	25.2
MSA	971,389	1,162,093	1,499,293	19.6	29

(Source: US Census Bureau as complied by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 2000, www.charmeck.org/Deparments/Planning/research+and+gis/Home.htm.)
(Iredell County is not considered to be apart of MSA but was included because it borders Mecklenburg)

Table 2 (b)
Population Growth Statistics: Municipal Data 1980-2000

				1980-1990	1990-2000
Place	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**Percent Change**	**Percent Change**
Charlotte	314,447	395,934	540,828	25.9	36.6
Davidson	3,241	4,046	7,139	24.8	76.4
Cornelius	1,460	2,581	11,969	76.8	363.7
Huntersville	1,294	3,014	24,960	132.9	728.1
Matthews	1,648	13,651	22,127	728.3	62.1
Mint Hill	7,915	11,567	14,992	46.1	29.6
Pineville	1,525	2,970	3,449	94.8	16.1
County	404,270	511,433	695,454	26.5	36

(Source: US Census Bureau as complied by Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission 2000, www.charmeck.org/Deparments/Planning/research+and+gis/Home.htm.)

Table 3

1996 Zoning Districts & Descriptions

Districts	**Open Space**	**Neighborhood Residential**
Abbreviation	OS	NR
Classification	Residential	Residential
Intent	"encourage the development of compact neighborhoods and rural compounds that set aside rural heritage features for permanent conservation" (Ordinance 1996 , p8)	"provides for residential infill development surrounding the traditional town center and its logical extensions" (Ordinance 1996, p14)
Permitted Uses	single family, bed and breakfast inns, cemeteries, churches, duplexes, civic, parks, schools, TNDs (65 acres or more), transit shelters	single and multi-family homes, inns, cemeteries, churches, commercial use in mixed use building, government, parks, schools, TNDs (40 acres or more) transit shelters
Permitted Buildings and Lot Types	attached homes, civic buildings, detached homes, in approved TND-O	apartments, attached homes civic building, detached house mixed use, in approved TND-O
General Requirements	development intensity: 2.5 units per acre with 15 percent open space, open space is calculated on sliding scale	in major subdivisions within ¼ mile of proposed transit stops, the percentage of dwelling units are not limited, streets must be interconnected

(Source: Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, November 1996)

Table 3 Continued

Districts	**General Residential**	**Neighborhood Center**
Abbreviation	GR	NC
Classification	Residential	Mixed Use
Intent	permits the completion of conventional residential subdivisions already existing or approved by the town prior to the effective date of 1996 regulations (Ordinance 1996, p13)	"provides for the location of shops, services, small workplace, civic, residential buildings central to a neighborhood within walking distance Of dwellings" (Ordinance, p16)
Permitted Uses	single family homes, cemeteries, churches, duplexes on corner lots, government buildings, parks, schools	single and multi family homes, inns, civic, community, commercial, offices, cemeteries, churches, government, parks, schools, transit shelters, transit-oriented parking lots, neighborhood gas station
Permitted Buildings and Lot Types	civic building, detached house, other types approved by Board of Commissioners	apartment, attached house, civic, building, detached house, mixed use, storefront, workplace
General Requirements	compliance with previous ordinance, adopted 1991	developed on an interconnected pattern of streets and limited to approximately 1/4 miles in radius

(Source: Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, November 1996)

Table 3 Continued

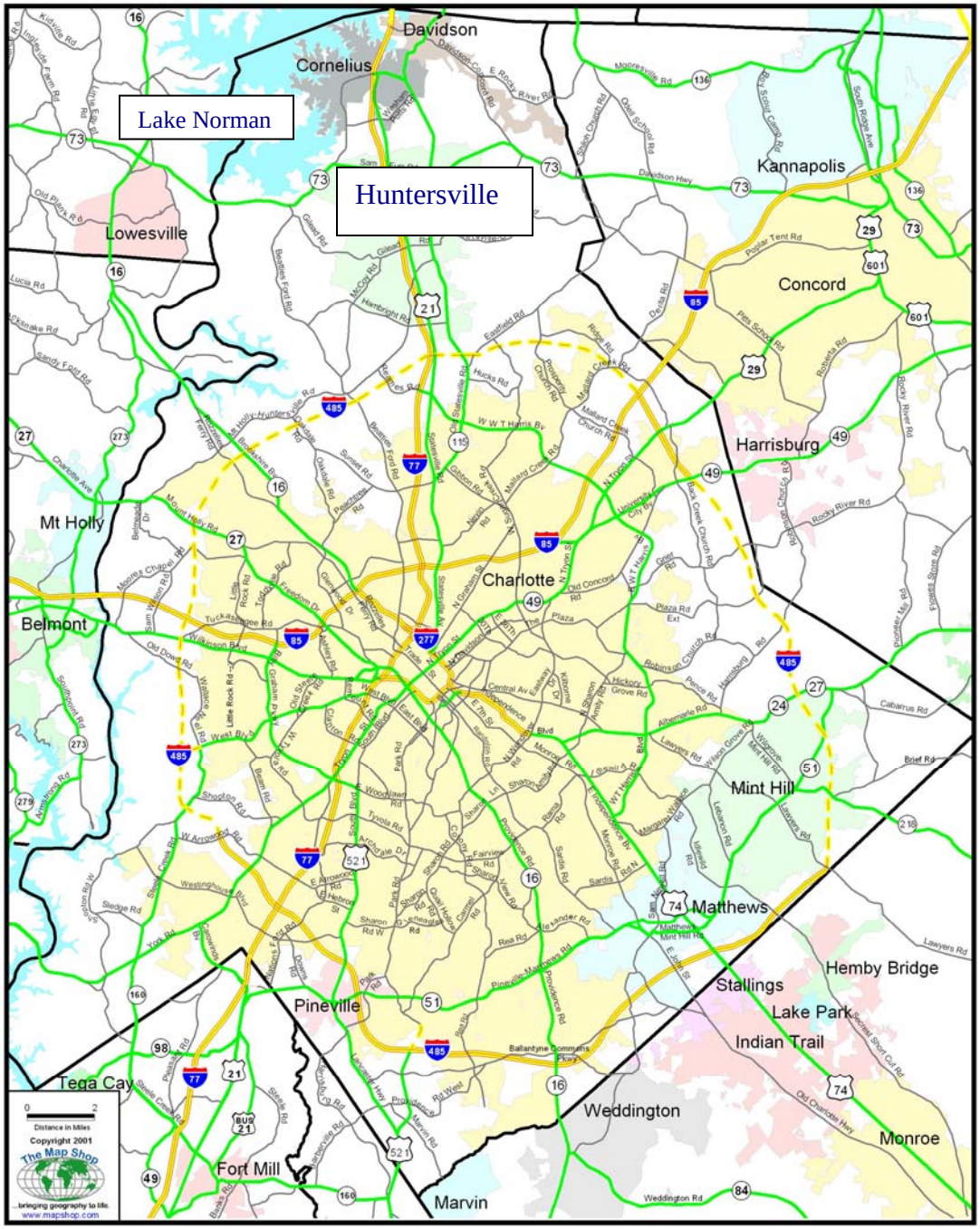
Districts	**Town Center**	**Highway Commercial**
Abbreviation	TC	HC
Classification	Mixed Use	Commercial
Intent	"provides for revitalization, reuse, and infill development in Huntersville's traditional town center" (Ordinance, p18)	"provide primarily for auto- dependent uses in areas not amenable to easy pedestrian access and a comfortable pedestrian environment", serves Interstate traffic (Ordinance, p22)
Permitted Uses	inns, civic, community, commercial, government, multi-family, nightclubs, restaurants, single family homes, auto sales (up to 2 acres), cemeteries, gas stations, parking lots, parks, schools, transit shelters	amusement facilities, armories, auctions, churches, civic, community, commercial, storage yards, government, motels, multi and single homes, nightclubs, restaurants, pawnshops, schools, adult uses, car wash, gas stations and repairs, parks, vehicle sales, vocational schools
Permitted Buildings and Lot Types	apartment, attached house, civic, detached house, mixed use, storefront, workplace	apartment, attached house civic, detached house, highway commercial, mixed use, workplaces
General Requirements	multiple uses are expected in a pattern reflecting a pedestrian - Oriented environment, while accommodating high densities	"maximum first floor area for highway commercial buildings may be exceeded only where massing of buildings is Varied to reduce perceived scale and and volume", "Property boundaries Adjacent to freeways or expressways Will require a 50 foot foliated buffer yard; and frontages on major or minor arterials will require formal street tree planting" (Ordinance 1996, p23)

(Source: Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, November 1996)

Table 3 Continued

Districts	**Traditional Neighborhood Development**
Abbreviation	TND-O
Classification	Mixed Use
Intent	"provide for the development of new neighborhoods and the revitalization or extension of existing neighborhoods, which are connected on a fine network of interconnected pedestrian oriented streets and other public spaces" (Ordinance, p32)
Permitted Uses	inns, civic, community, commercial, government, single and multi-family, cemeteries, churches, day care, neighborhood gasoline (excluding repair), schools, transit shelters
Permitted Buildings and Lot Types	apartment, attached house, civic, detached souse, mixed use (up to 6,000 sq ft.), storefront (6,000 sq. ft) and workplaces (up to 6,000 sq. ft)
General Requirements	must offer a mixture of housing types and prices along with civic, pre-school/elementary schools are encouraged, must contain a recognizable center and clearly defined edges (optimum size is ¼ miles from center to edge) TND-O can be applied in the NR district (>40 acres) or OS district (>65 acres), maximum size is 200 acres, if larger, has to be developed as multiple TNDs.

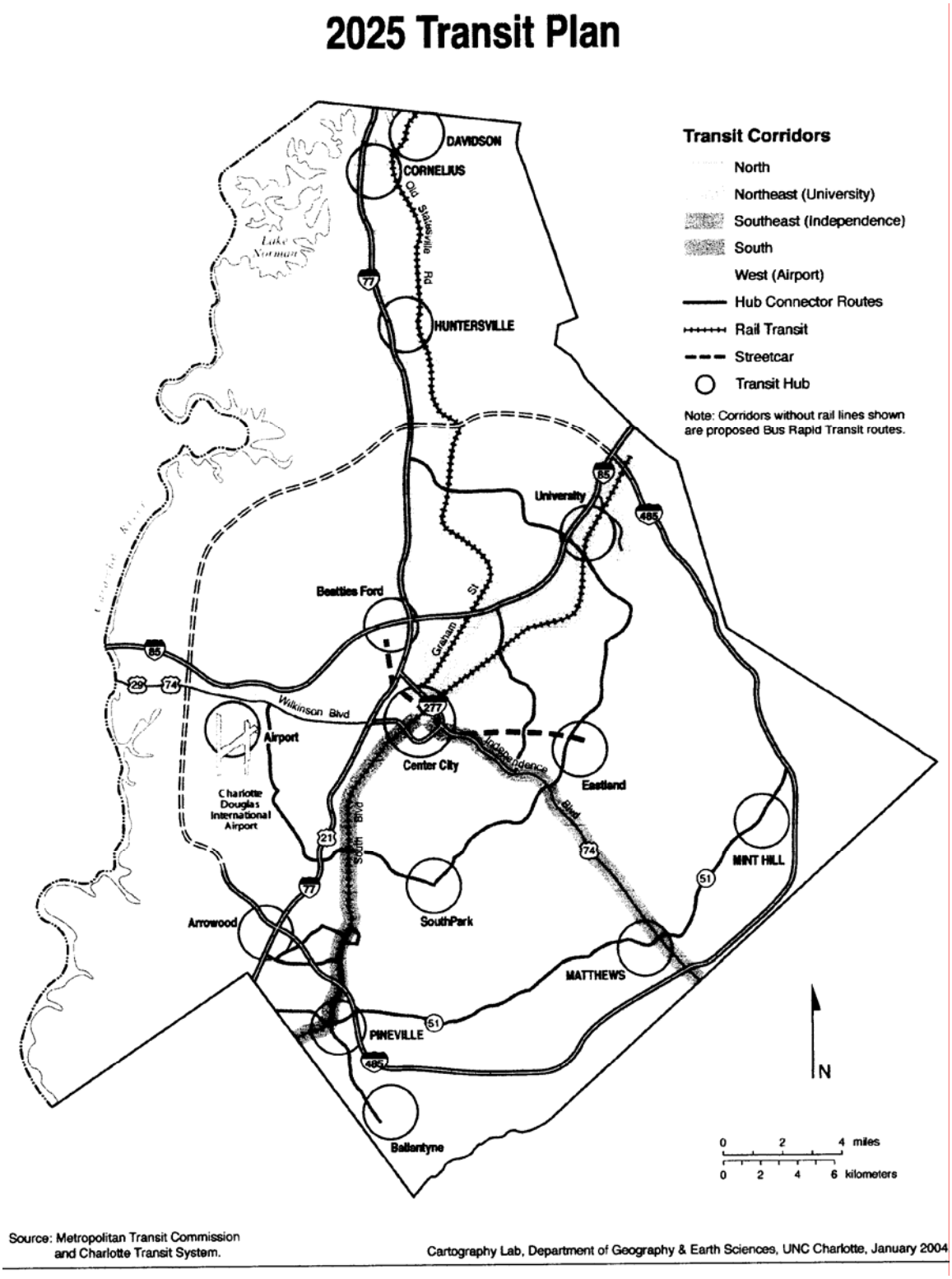
(Source: Town of Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, November 1996)



(Source: Rootsweb Website, http://www.rootsweb.com/~ncmeckle/meck2001.jpg, Printed December, 2004)

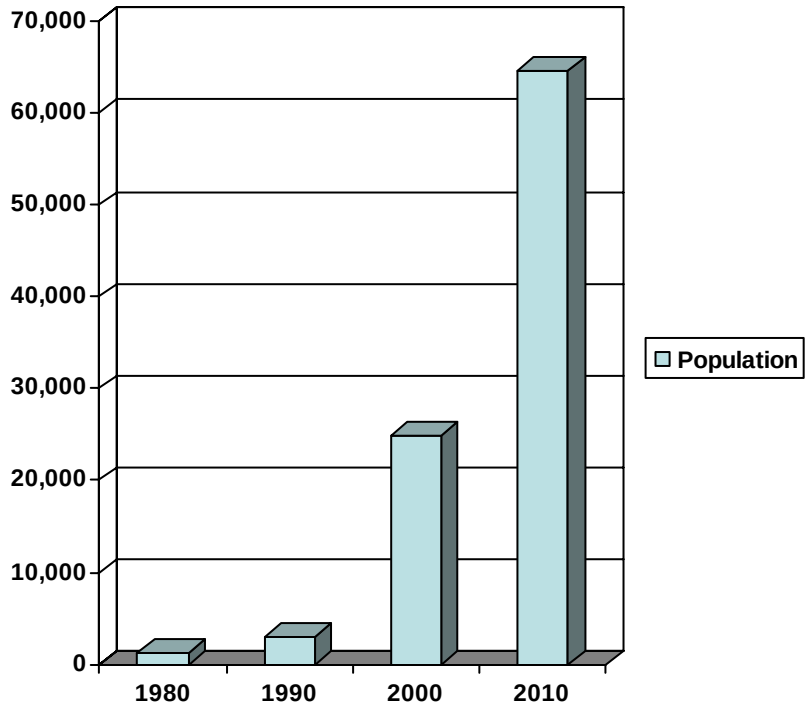
Figure 1

Map of Mecklenburg County (Including Lake Norman and Interstate 77)



(Source: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. http://www.charlottechamber/files/Profilestransit.pdf., 2004)

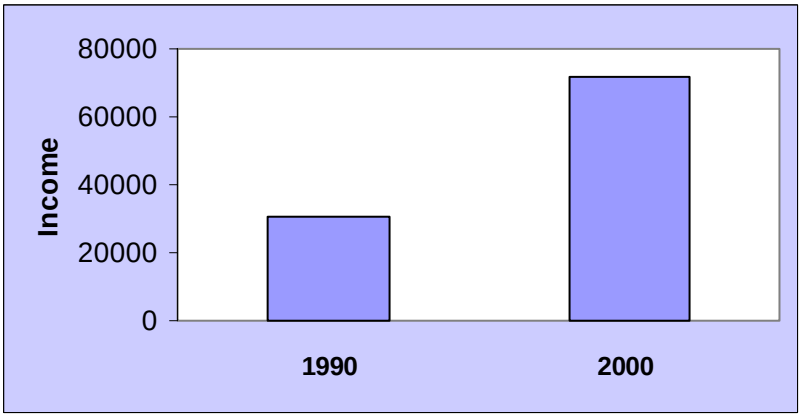
Figure 2 Proposed Rapid Rail Corridors



(Source: US Census Bureau as complied by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 2000. Future Projection complied by Charlotte Department of Transportation, 2004)

Figure 3

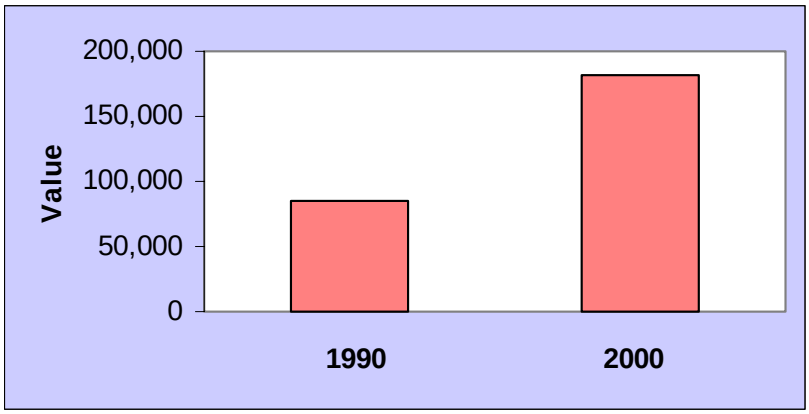
Huntersville's Population Growth: 1980-2000 & 2010 Projection



(Source: United States Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000)

Figure 4 (a)

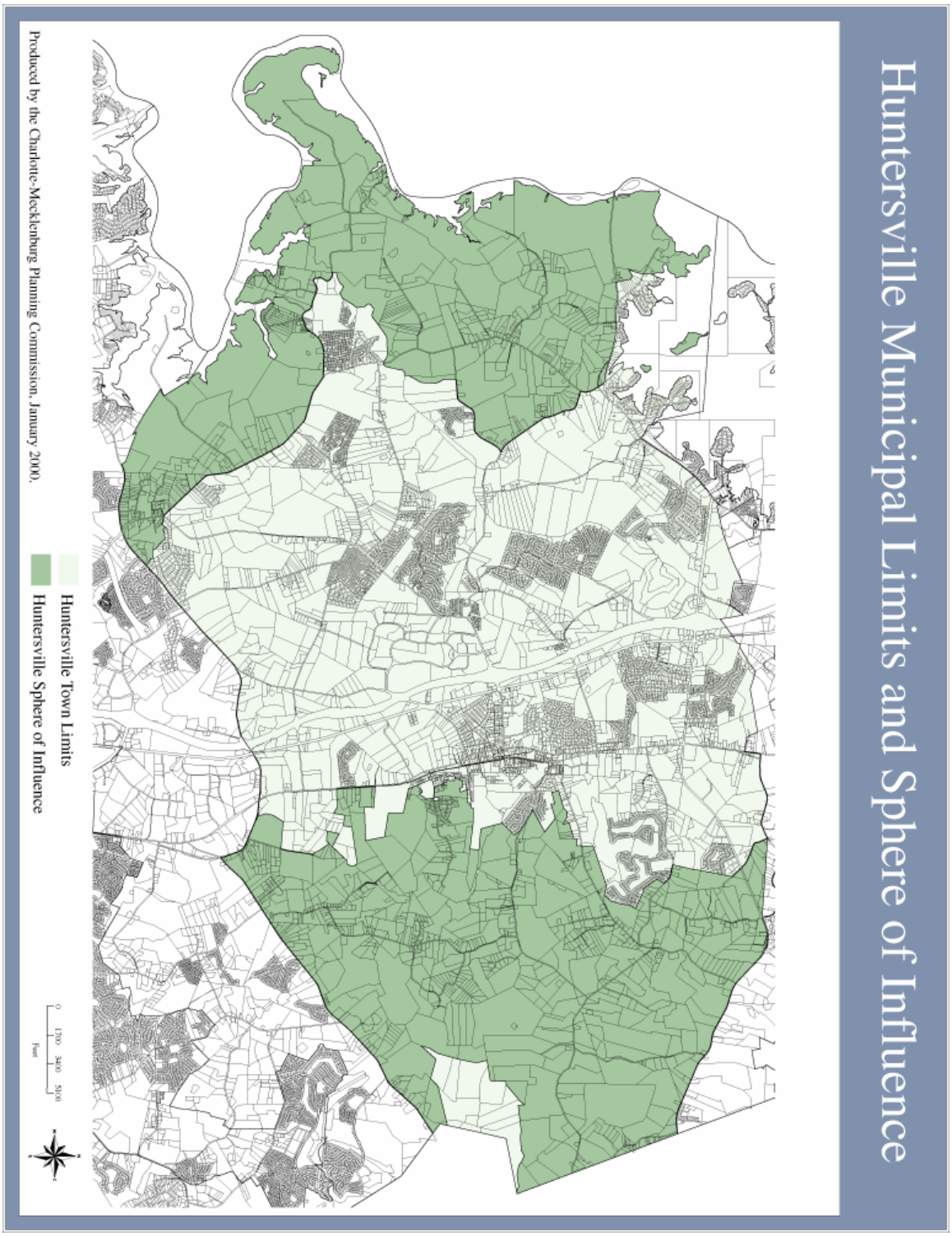
Median Household Income 1990 – 2000



(Source: United States Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000)

Figure 4 (b)

Median Value of Owner Occupied Units 1990 – 2000



(Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 2000, http://www.charmeck.org/Departments/Planning/Home.htm)

Figure 5

Huntersville Town Limits & Sphere of Influence



(Source: Photograph taken by Kelley Hall, September 20, 2004)

Figure 6

Photograph of North Cross Shopping Center (Conventional Strip Mall)



Building Type: Single Family Detached House (Zoning Ordinance, Article 4, page 65)



Building Type: Attached House (Zoning Ordinance, Article 4, page 67)



Building Type: Shopfront Building (Zoning Ordinance, Article 4, page 59)

Figure 7

Design Graphics: Huntersville's Zoning Ordinance (1996)



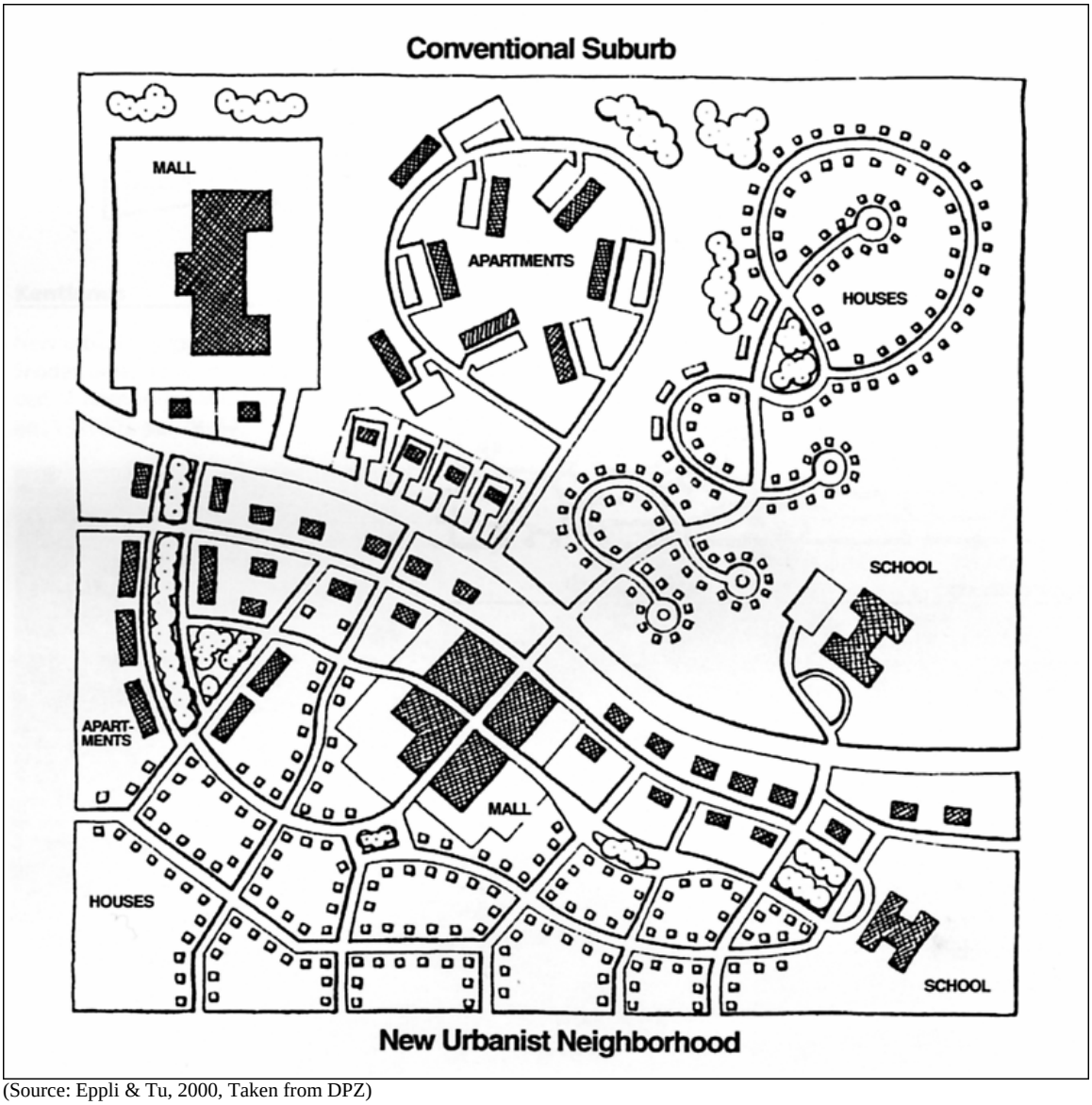
(Photograph of Home in Cedar Field Subdivision, Taken by Kelley Hall, September 2004)

Figure 8 (a) Conventional Garage (Protruding)



(Photograph of Home in Tanner Creek Subdivision, Taken by Kelley Hall, September 2004)

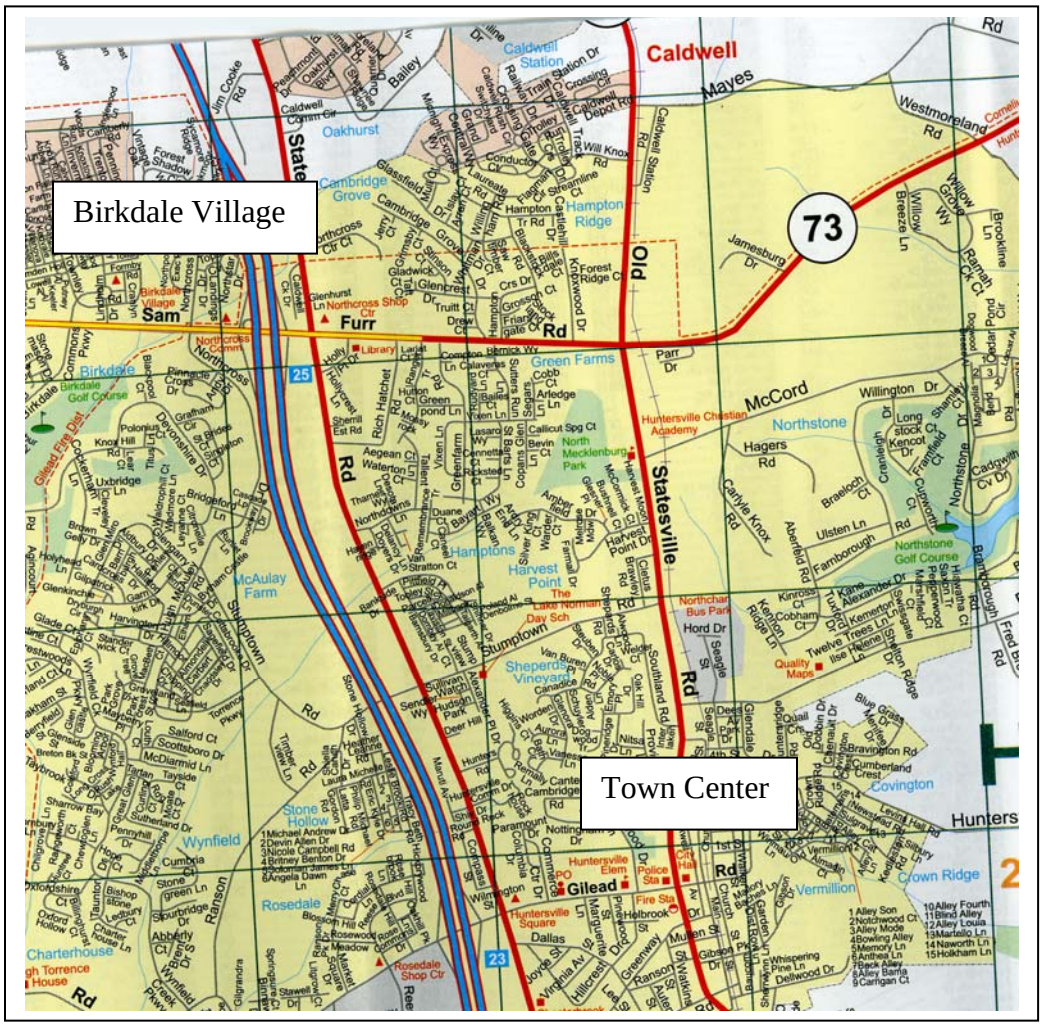
Figure 8 (b) Traditional Garage (Setback)



(Source: Eppli & Tu, 2000, Taken from DPZ)

Figure 9

Conventional versus Traditional Streetscape Patterns


Birkdale Village
Town Center
Caldwell
Caldwell Station
Mayes
Westmoreland Rd
Oakhurst
Cambridge Grove
Hampton Ridge
Old Furr Rd
Jamesburg Dr
73
Willow Grove Wy
Willow Breeze Ln
Brookline Ln
Rannah Ct
Parr Dr
Green Farms
McCord
Willington Dr
Northstone
Hagers Rd
Huntersville Christian Academy
Statesville Rd
Carlyle Knox Rd
Braeloch Ct
Ulsten Ln
Farmborough Rd
Northstone Golf Course
Brantborough Rd
Hampton
Harvest Point
McAulay Farm
Stumptown
Lake Norman Day Sch
Northchase Bus Park
Hord Dr
Kinross Ct
Kenton Ridge Ln
Cobham Ct
Kane Alexander Dr
Twelve Trees Ln
Quality Maple
Sheperds Vineyard
Van Buren Rd
Southland Rd
Glendale Dr
Bravington Rd
Cumberland Crest
Covington
Hunters
Stone Hollow
Wynfield
Cumbria Ct
Rosedale
Charterhouse
Torrence House
Huntersville Elem
Police Sta
Fire Sta
Gilead
Huntersville Square
Dallas
Vermillion
Crown Ridge
Helbrook St
Mullen St
Gibson Pl
Whispering Pine Ln
Dellwood Dr
Ranson St
Watkins St
Greenway St
Hillcrest Ln
Virginia Av
Joyce St
Rosedale Shop Ctr
Northcross Shop Ctr
Glenhurst Ln
Glenforest Dr
Truitt Ct
Drew Ct
Forest Ridge Ct
Knobwood Dr
Hampton Tr Rd
Will Knox Rd
Caldwell Depot Rd
Caldwell Station Rd
Caldwell Comm Cir
Jim Cooke Rd
Bailey Rd
Cambridge Grove Dr
Glassfield Dr
Northcross Dr
Northcross Commons Pkwy
Birkdale Village Sam
Birkdale Golf Course
Gilead Fire Dist
Library
Holly Hill Dr
Larkin Ct
Compton Ln
Berwick Wy
Calaveras Ct
Cobb Ct
Arledge Ln
Callicut Spg Ct
Bevin Ct
North Mecklenburg Park
Harvest Moon Ct
McCormick Ct
Harvest Point Dr
Braeloch Ct
Amberfield Rd
Wander Ln
Farmall Dr
Cleeus Rd
Bravell Rd
Seegle St
Deer Hill Dr
Hunters Run Ln
Nitsa Ln
Provence Ln
Oak Hill Rd
Dogwood Tr
Cambridge Rd
Nottingham Dr
Paramount Dr
Commerce Dr
Columbia Dr
Wilmington Dr
Almaden Dr
Vermillion Dr
Garden Rock Dr
Main St
Church St
Gabriel Pl
Delwood Dr
Fine Ln
Whispering Pine Ln
Greenwood Dr
Hillcrest Ln
Lee St
Autry St
Ranson St
Watkins St
Virginia Av
Joyce St
Dallas
Rosedale Shop Ctr
Market Square
Stone Hollow Dr
Michael Andrew Dr
Devin Allen Dr
Nicole Campbell Rd
Britney Benton Dr
Angela Dawn Ln
Rosedale Dr
Meadow Ln
Rosewood Ln
Cumbria Ct
Stone Ln
Ranson Ln
Abberly Ct
Sourbridge Dr
Bishop Stone Ln
Taunton Ln
Oxfordshire Ct
Oxford Hollow Ct
Charterhouse Ln
Torrence Creek Pkwy
Wynfield Forest Dr
Glenandra Ln
Stanwell Ct
Salford Ct
Scottsboro Dr
McDiarmid Ln
Tayside Ln
Sharrow Bay Ln
Sutherland Dr
Pennyhill Ln
Hoke Ct



(Source: Illustration by Crosland Inc., & Shook Kelley, taken from Walters, 2004)

Figure 10 (b)

Photograph of Birkdale Village



(Source: Duany & Plater-Zyberk Company Website, www.dpz.com)

Figure 11 (a)
Vermillion Master Plan



(Source: Vermillion Website)

Figure 11 (b)
Photograph of Vermillion's Neighborhood Square



(Source: Photograph Taken By Kelley Hall, June 4, 2004)

Figure 11 (c) Photograph of Vermillion's Live-Work Units



(Source: Photograph Taken By Kelley Hall June 4, 2004)

Figure 11 (d) Photograph of Vermillion's Row Houses



(Source: Photograph Taken By Kelley Hall, June 4, 2004)

Figure 11 (e) Photograph of Vermillion's Single Family Detached Units

Vita

After graduating in May of 2005, Kelley Hall left academia and lived happily ever after.