

City of Conover

North Carolina

2003 Land Development Plan (Updated Through 2030)



July 2022

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2003 Land Development Plan

(Updated Through 2030)

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2003 Land Development Plan

(Updated Through 2030)

Conover, North Carolina

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction and Purpose

The last comprehensive land development plan for the City of Conover was written and adopted in 2003. This plan was intended to provide recommendations to handle future growth and make public facilities commensurate with the growth. Recognizing the need to evaluate prospective growth patterns and current issues facing Conover, the city wishes to revisit its proposals and plans in a ten-year increment. This plan Update will set forth the City of Conover's goals and objectives through 2030. In doing so, this plan will not only explain in detail the current conditions of the city, but it will also describe prospective plans for the future and include accompanying visual descriptions of this proposed growth. The Update, through much community input, seeks to address myriad community land use issues and concerns through the updated goals and objectives herein the Plan. In addition to responding to future growth, the Plan Update will be in compliance with North Carolina General Statutes 160D, a law that is aimed at streamlining land use planning throughout the state of North Carolina, as well as make county and city planning more uniform. All cities and counties in North Carolina that enforce zoning, must by law have an adopted land use plan in place and one that is current, not more than five years old since the last adoption. This Update is not intended to be a rewrite or new Land Development Plan for Conover, but to update various sections as necessary to make the Plan more current with horizon year of 2030.

The 2003 Land Development Plan Update is an effort to reinforce and improve the community atmosphere of Conover, as well as continue the high level of public service administration. Increased automobile usage has merited that this plan also addresses alternate means of transportation available, which will inherently help create the feeling of "community." As employment and shopping opportunities are developed around neighborhoods, automobile usage will become an option, not a necessity. Also, as a spin-off to the environmental impacts that decreased automobile usage will have, just as important are the environmental improvements that will result from the preservation of open space, another goal of this plan.

As the community continues to grow and change, this Update will serve as a policy guide for the public officials who make overall policy and day-to-day land use decisions. The last nearly 20 years have been a period of extensive industrial growth accompanied by an immense addition of residential units to the city. There has been an array of businesses, institutional facilities, planned unit developments, and residential homes built and improved upon in the last couple of decades. In accordance with providing the best possible service to the citizens of Conover, the city recognizes the need to address these changes and create future plans that will improve the city's ability to accommodate future growth with emphasis through 2030. One major example is how online retail will impact existing and future urban and neighborhood level retail.

Although the 2003 Land Development Plan for the City of Conover was officially adopted as a public document, it was not a development ordinance, but rather serves as a foundation and guide for the establishment or revision of the City's Code of Ordinances. The 2022 Update will carry the same intent. Whereas some planning tools are quite specific in nature (i.e. - zoning, subdivision, and floodplain ordinances), this tool is general and includes broad recommendations for development concepts and growth strategies through the year 2030. It is recommended that near this time that the City consider a total rewrite of this Land Development Plan. As with the 2003 Plan, the Plan Update is intended to serve as a dynamic instrument based on sound planning principles and practices, adopted with the underlying notion that the plan is only a guide. New growth, new services, and changing priorities may mandate that the plan be altered. Periodic review and revision of this plan is recommended and encouraged to ensure its long-term effectiveness for the community. Economic issues, national and state mandates, and environmental factors can all drastically affect these

predictions. Any alterations to the plan will have direct impacts on the residents of Conover; thus, their input regarding changes is necessary to insure continued public support for the plan. The City of Conover deems it necessary to take a proactive approach to growth and development in order to ensure an effective and efficient approach to governance.

Methodology

The 2003 Land Development Plan Update was written from a standpoint of forecasting for the next eight years. This represented good foresight, for the City of Conover has changed dramatically, and such a plan would no longer serve a proper function. In the last ten years, new businesses, apartment complexes, schools, and churches have rendered the old plan dated. In addition to new development, the city has encouraged voluntary and municipal-initiated annexations, which have incorporated more developable land. The 2003 Plan Update seeks to address land use changes since the original 2003 Land Development Plan was approved.

Updating a comprehensive plan, such as this one, is a lengthy and time-consuming process. However, the advantages of a municipality adopting such a guideline far outweighs any type of inconvenience. The 2003 Update process began in the winter of 2021 with information gathering, including a land use survey, planning board steering committee meetings, as well as the most important aspect, a citizen and community input meeting to gauge what the residents of Conover feel are the most important needs for the City heading into 2030. The Update followed a similar 2003 process. In, 2022 more specifically a citizen/stakeholder survey was conducted that allowed citizens to not only rank items by importance, such as commercial development and community appearance, but it also let them write comments on specific areas that they believed needed improvement or addressing. From this survey, the inputs were analyzed and incorporated into the 2003 Land Development Plan Update goals, objectives, and strategies. From the 2003 Plan, several small area plans, covering NC 16 North, North Conover, Thornburg Dr. / US70, the Loop area, Five Points, and Lyle Haven, have been completed and incorporated into the overall plan, though more broad-scoped plans will not. Conover cooperated with Catawba County in the 2002 St. Stephens / Oxford small area plan. Its involvement in this process was essential to Conover's planning abilities since this area borders the city on the north.

The Land Development Plan Update followed a similar process laid out in the 2003 process. Public participation in the planning process was deemed an important element of the Update. Assembling a Steering Committee (Conover Planning Board) that helped guide the development of the plan was the first step in making sure that the public had input in the Plan Update. The members of the Steering Committee met during their regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings or special meetings to discuss the existing conditions within Conover, determine key issues facing the City, and provide feedback on population, economic, and social data. The final Plan Update resulting from these meetings represents the views of the residents and stakeholders of the community. At the beginning of the planning process, the Steering Committee conducted a public input survey to solicit input from community on ideas and concerns. This survey was conducted in February of 2022 and allowed interested residents and stakeholders of Conover a chance to offer input in the land use planning process. Key questions about Conover's growth were also answered by the community through the survey, which was primarily provided online and on paper. The results of the survey helped the Steering Committee identify key land use issues, ideas, and growth concerns to include in the Plan Update.

At the start of the public input survey process residents were asked to give their opinions on what they felt were the most important attributes of Conover's future. These were things that related to the current land uses and development of the City of Conover. In summary, residents listed their top three concerns as more community parks and greenways; improvement of City Center/Downtown or Main Street; storm water management improvement; a decreasing younger demographic; and the lack for grocery stores. While there were others, these were the resonating issues that were most

important to Conover residents and stakeholders. Residents and stakeholders were then asked to rank the type of growth that they would like to see attracted to Conover. Residents wrote as their first choice that residential single-family and multi-family housing along with commercial uses like restaurants and shops. Overall, the residents want to see more growth when it comes to residential choices and commercial products like new places to eat and shop.

The 2003 Land Development Plan Update is designed to be easily used and readily understandable. Technical jargon is used only when necessary, so that every citizen can comprehend what is proposed to take place within his or her community. One main focus of this Land Development Plan is to foster an environment of community in which the ideals of “city” are seen as more valuable than those of “property.” We as citizens do not exist in isolation, nor should we for optimal benefit. Only by understanding and respecting the inescapable fact that we must invest, build, and develop according to the principle of “community” will we improve the sustainability of Conover.

This document is written in general terms and is to be used as a guide. The overall plan is conceptual and is not intended to mandate the exact development pattern. It is also a summary of detailed site-specific plans and is not intended to duplicate that information. For detailed information, one should refer to the specific plan documents. These documents are referenced throughout the Plan. However, the Plan does expand on those existing detailed documents as well as explains how they relate and interact with one another.

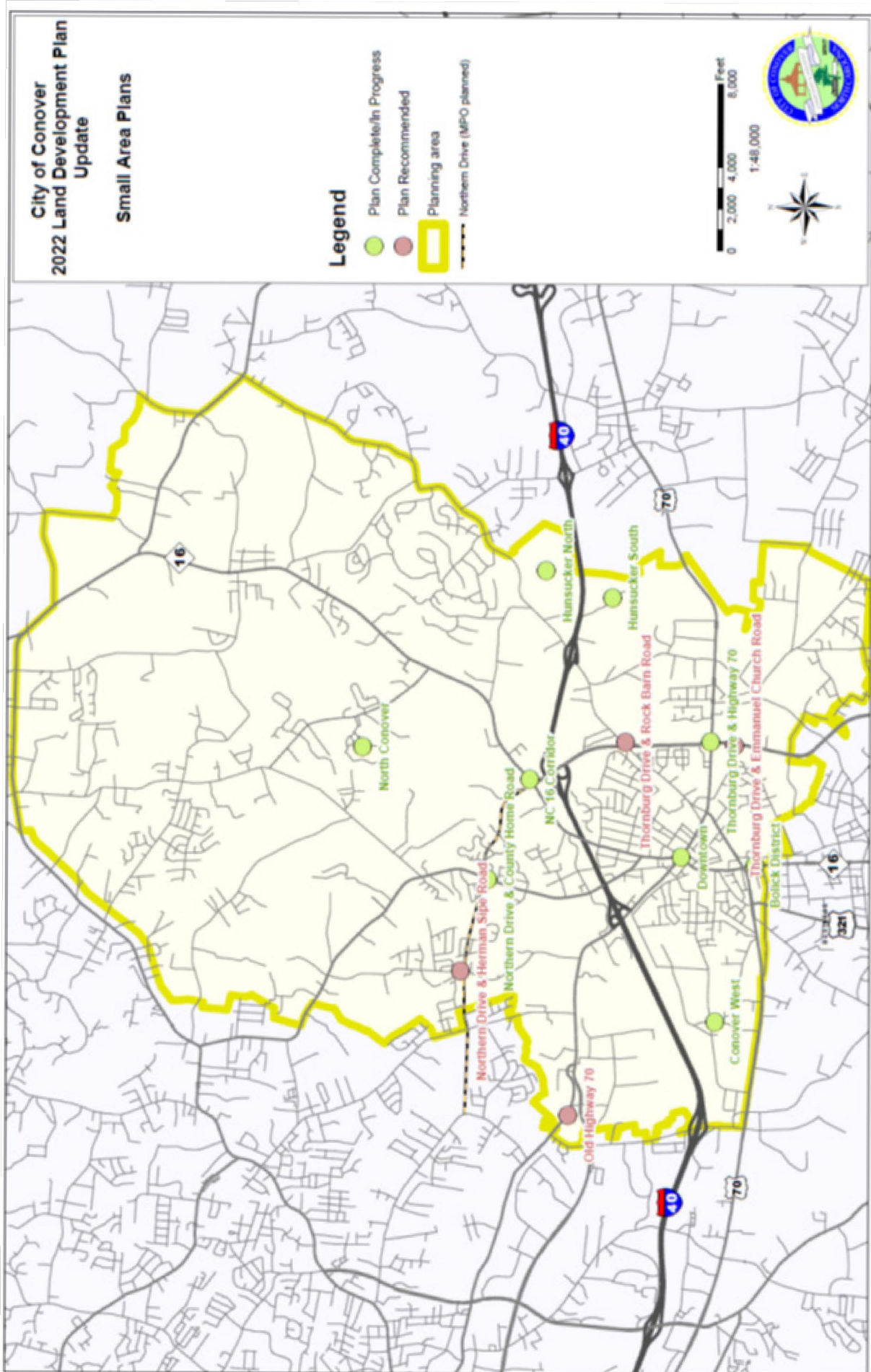
Furthermore, this Plan is meant to cover all geographical areas of the City of Conover and its environs, as well as all municipal community functions that have a relationship with the physical development. The 2003 Land Development Plan links community functions, needs, and locations on a policy level. Through this coordinated effort, responsibilities can be identified and carried out in an appropriate manner by the individual municipal departments working together towards commonly identified goals. This is the keystone of the 2003 Land Development Plan Update: It is written to be utilized and implemented.

Primary Issues continued to be addressed with the Update.

While some of the issues that are to be addressed by this Land Development Plan Update are very similar to those from the original 2003 Plan. There are also many changes that have merited new objectives. In desiring to maintain the economic vitality and versatility that has come to characterize Conover, the city wishes to continue its continual focus on maintaining and improving necessary infrastructure capabilities, such as adequate water and wastewater treatment capacities. Only by ensuring the necessary facilities are available will new businesses, industries, and residents be interested in relocating to the City.

The City of Conover, while wanting to continue expanded growth, must ensure that the development is not occurring simply for the sake of development. While an increased tax base will provide immediate financial benefits for the city, consequences such as less open space, suburban sprawl, and land degradation must be considered. A dominating principle in the 2003 Plan Update is steering development in such a way so that it creates a sense of community and interaction, not isolation and separation. We want to create neighborhoods that are reflective of the socio-economic and cultural diversity that characterize the citizens. By encouraging mixed-use districts where different housing types and commercial businesses co-function side by side, we will experience numerous benefits. For example, shopping will no longer require automobile usage, which will in turn improve the atmospheric quality and physical wellness of the citizens.

Another goal of the 2003 Plan Update is to ensure safe movement and decrease congestion along streets. As will be discussed in the transportation section of existing conditions, actions are currently being taken to fulfill this goal. Providing multi-modal access to various parts of the city and improving the safety of neighborhood streets will be an important goal for the next ten years and beyond.



Goals Objectives, and Strategies of the 2003 Land Development Plan

Goal 1: Reinforce And Improve The Quality Of Life In Conover

Objective: Enhance/Improve the livability and vitality of Conover.

Strategies:

- » Rezone properties where the existing zoning is incompatible with the surrounding development.
- » Minimize the impacts of business and industrial uses adjacent to existing and residential neighborhoods.
- » Merge codes – combine the Conventional and Traditional portions of the zoning code and increase graphics for better understanding. Update existing ordinances to provide for a variety of development that includes mixed-used and walkability.
- » Examine possible areas for Historic Districts.
- » Create an abandoned / vacant building and property policy.
- » Encourage varied lot sizes in all developments so they become vibrant neighborhoods. Improve and reinforce appearance and building standards.
- » Encourage and approve the type of land development that attracts a variety of demographics especially young persons, e.g. mixed-used and walkable developments.
- » Approve residential developments balancing single-family units per acre at varying densities near Conover’s central/downtown core based on land use needs in the area and infrastructure available.
- » Allow for a variety of very low-density “rural” subdivision types outside of the downtown and downtown residential areas in the area designated low density residential on future land use map to curb or prevent suburban sprawl.
- » Research and examine best management practices to address storm water run-off and mitigate community flooding.
- » Develop policy that prevents or mitigates building in the floodplain.
- » Place emphasis on enforcing existing code enforcement regulations and upgrade as conditions change.
- » Increase community engagement opportunities so that residents can provide more input on city business and land development matters.
- » Continue to protect and enhance water quality through continuous monitoring at the water treatment facility.
- » Protect natural environment by preventing invasive plant species.
- » Create opportunity through available resources to build more community parks.

Goal 2: Provide Essential Public Services And Infrastructure With Capacity To Accommodate Growth

Objective: Intentionally and strategically prepare for future growth in Conover that is commensurate with existing infrastructure.

Strategies:

- » Ensure that adequate infrastructure and services are available concurrently with new development.
- » Examine storm-water infrastructure, and seek all opportunities to mitigate run-off and protect water quality.
- » Prepare existing and new roads for future growth.
- » Examine and plan for future broadband and telecommunications expansion.

Goal 3: Improve Alternate Means Of Transportation Such As Sidewalks, Bikepaths, And Enhanced Bus Service

Objective: Create and develop additional transportation options that reduce reliance solely on vehicular travel.

Strategies:

- » Promote transportation improvements such as turn lanes, connectivity, sidewalks, bike paths, four-way stops, walking trails, deceleration lanes, and emergency vehicle access.
- » Develop design guidelines so that streets, buildings, public spaces, parks, and uses are connected and work together.
- » Address roadway traffic patterns and congestion and increase transportation connectivity where necessary and appropriate.
- » Assess, enhance, and address senior citizen transportation needs.
- » Seek opportunities for a commuter train or public transportation to surrounding cities and the greater region.
- » Enhance and nurture a relationship with North Carolina Department of Transportation.
- » Increase public transportation and provide shelters for bus stops.
- » Reconstruct or redesign the 5-point intersection downtown to improve transportation mobility and safety to help City facilitate creation of the center city.
- » Conduct a road assessment to determine which roads should likely be considered for four-lane widening.
- » Partner with North Carolina Department of Transportation and other community entities/ partners to expand sidewalks that promote and allow for walking to schools.

Goal 4: Ensure Accessible Open Space

Objective: Approve future developments that are designed to include preserving open land and that connect to existing greenways and expands pedestrian trails.

Strategies:

- » Establish Open Space Plan – ample and open access to floodplains as parkways/ greenways, neighborhood parks, linkages, maintenance, and improvement – build a “green infrastructure”
- » Increase greenspace and open space throughout City through development process or the purchasing of property.
- » Improve and expand existing greenway system.
- » Make provisions for “pocket parks” and other appropriate open space areas in the Downtown areas and adjacent land.
- » Ensure or enhance the protection of trees and tree canopy during the development process and regulations throughout Conover.

Goal 5: Pursue And Maintain Economic Vitality

Objective: Diversify economy by providing for a variety of employment opportunities and housing types and choices.

Strategies:

- » Evaluate properties throughout the city and encourage infill development projects.
- » Identify and create neighborhood or specific area plans throughout the City.
- » Provide Economic Development information and assistance to recruit and retain viable businesses and industrial development.
- » Seek all opportunities to encourage affordable housing opportunities and housing choice for a variety of demographics to include a special focus on a younger demographic.
- » Provide for housing choice to include single-family, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, multi-family, etc.
- » Investigate undeveloped land or vacant structures in and near Conover’s central core and adjacent areas for missing middle housing opportunities.
- » Establish land use provisions to spur missing middle housing to assist with creating additional affordable housing where appropriate.
- » Identify and seek opportunities to increase grocery retail and restaurants.
- » Reuse existing vacant buildings for future development (adaptive reuse).
- » Encourage infill development on vacant and undeveloped land within the City limits.
- » Work with County and other entities to assist with building small business development.

- » Examine the impact and the need of increased single-family residential density, particular in and around the downtown area to help existing businesses.
- » Encourage a mix of commercial and residential uses in the downtown area.
- » Create a downtown area that accommodates the automobile, the pedestrian, and the cyclist.
- » Allow residential dwelling units on the second story of retail establishments in the downtown.
- » Reduce the pressure for development on rural sites on the outskirts of Conover by allowing denser, medium and small-lot single family housing on sites nearer to the Downtown.

Understanding Conventional Development versus Traditional Development

Most of the issues Conover hopes to address in the next ten years directly or indirectly relate to the notion of “traditional” development, as opposed to conventional. While there is no exact definition for traditional development, there are numerous characteristics that are associated with it. For example, mixed use districts, public transportation, open space preservation, multiple connections, and the creation of a true sense of “community” are all aspects of traditional development, sometimes referred to as “new urbanism.”

The conventional notion of single-use zoning or mono-cultural isolated developments, called “sprawl” is viewed as random development with disconnected highway strip malls, single use subdivisions and heavy dependence on automobiles due to inadequate accessibility. This pattern concentrates and increases traffic



Cline Village Streetscape



Cline Village Focal Point

on certain streets, which causes street congestion and fractures the local community. Traditional development encourages a blend of commercial, institutional, and various types of residential development. By building offices and homes near restaurants and businesses, walking, instead of driving, is encouraged, convenience is maximized, traffic congestion is decreased, and citizens feel more connected with their community.



Cline Village Plan DPZ Planners

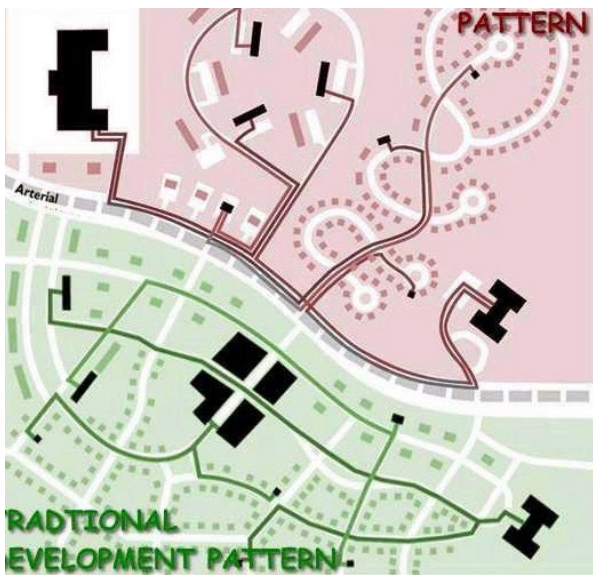
Conover has implemented some strategies associated with traditional development. For example, Cline Village is an excellent example of a traditional neighborhood. With Lyle Creek Elementary as its focal point, and a planned variety of housing types, this development exemplifies tradition. Also, the large tract of land at the corner of NC16 and 10th Street is being planned as a mixed-use district incorporating varied land uses. In addition, by supporting the Greenway Public Transportation system, the City of Conover encourages citizens to utilize the public transportation system.

To some extent,

Another way in which Conover is preparing for the expansion of traditional development designs has been the creation of traditional development zoning districts in addition to the standard zoning. The six created districts are open space, neighborhood residential, neighborhood center, mixed use, campus office and institutional, and corridor commercial. By regulating design standards in these districts, as well as those of conventional zoning, the city has more input as to the final product. Though traditional development is more than simply looking like pre-World War II neighborhoods, the aesthetic nature of development is an important focus of traditional development.



The traditional pattern is historically deeply rooted in our area and can be found in almost any town. It is not a new development experiment. The following example from Conover, North Carolina (Conover Blvd area) is displayed with a textbook diagram of the linear traditional development pattern "Transect". Additionally, a portion of Conover (Oak Shadows, L'Echo Park and downtown area) is shown on the following page as a local example that fits the pattern as a neighborhood area rather than linear form.



Development Patterns
Congress New Urbanism

Neighborhood Aspects of Development

Linear Example: Conover Blvd, Conover, NC



Commercial and Civic

Small Lot Single Family and Multi-Family

Average Lot Single Family

Large Lot Single Family

Park/Open Space

Pond/Natural Area

Transect as provided by the Congress of New Urbanism



Urban Transect

Such examples can be found in most any city or town.

Neighborhood Aspects of Development

Area Example: L'Echo Park Area, Conover, NC



Highway Boulevard Avenue Town Street

Such examples can be found in most any city or town.

Conceptual Development Plan Map

The Conceptual Development Plan Map (CDP) displays the potential land development of Conover and its environs. General land uses are encouraged and to be developed where they are shown. The 2003 CDP map shows specific types of development with regard to topography, streams and floodplains, and existing infrastructure including roads, water and sewer, boundary agreements with adjacent jurisdictions and existing development. In examination of the palette given, this diagram shows development practices and concepts that are feasible and well suited for the conditions. However, this does not dictate future development in the exact configuration shown for streets and higher density areas (or neighborhood cores). Locations of such improvements are subject to the design of the particular future neighborhood and the developer's planner.

This updated 2022 map simplifies the 2003 CDP by eliminating detailed residential developments designed for currently undeveloped areas. This simplification is not intended to ignore the design elements that were considered for the 2003 CDP. The physical elements and conditions taken into account for the creation of that map still apply in the planning of future development and should continue to be considered moving forward. This map is a conceptual design that can vary as long as the proposed developments meet the guidelines of this Land Development Plan Update in conjunction with the existing natural and built environs.









The designation for residential development has been split into two categories, low to medium density and medium to high density. In general, low to medium density would be under six units per acre, medium to high density would be more than six units per acre. While density alone does not dictate the size and style of a residential development, it is useful in helping define the pattern for future residential use. In general, medium to high residential development should be limited to those areas that are served with adequate utility infrastructure, have adequate transportation options, and are in close proximity to facilities such as shopping, dining, recreation, schools, etc. Ideally, medium to high density housing should be located near the commercial nodes on the map.

Mixed use development is covered in Chapter 3: Land Use. The development of commercial node areas in a mixed-use design should be encouraged. Residential density encourages commercial development and the proximity to shopping and services become more accessible to residents. The commercial nodes shown, particularly near the center of the city, take advantage of already existing public infrastructure and maximize its use. Higher density housing in these areas gives more housing choices and reduces automobile dependence.


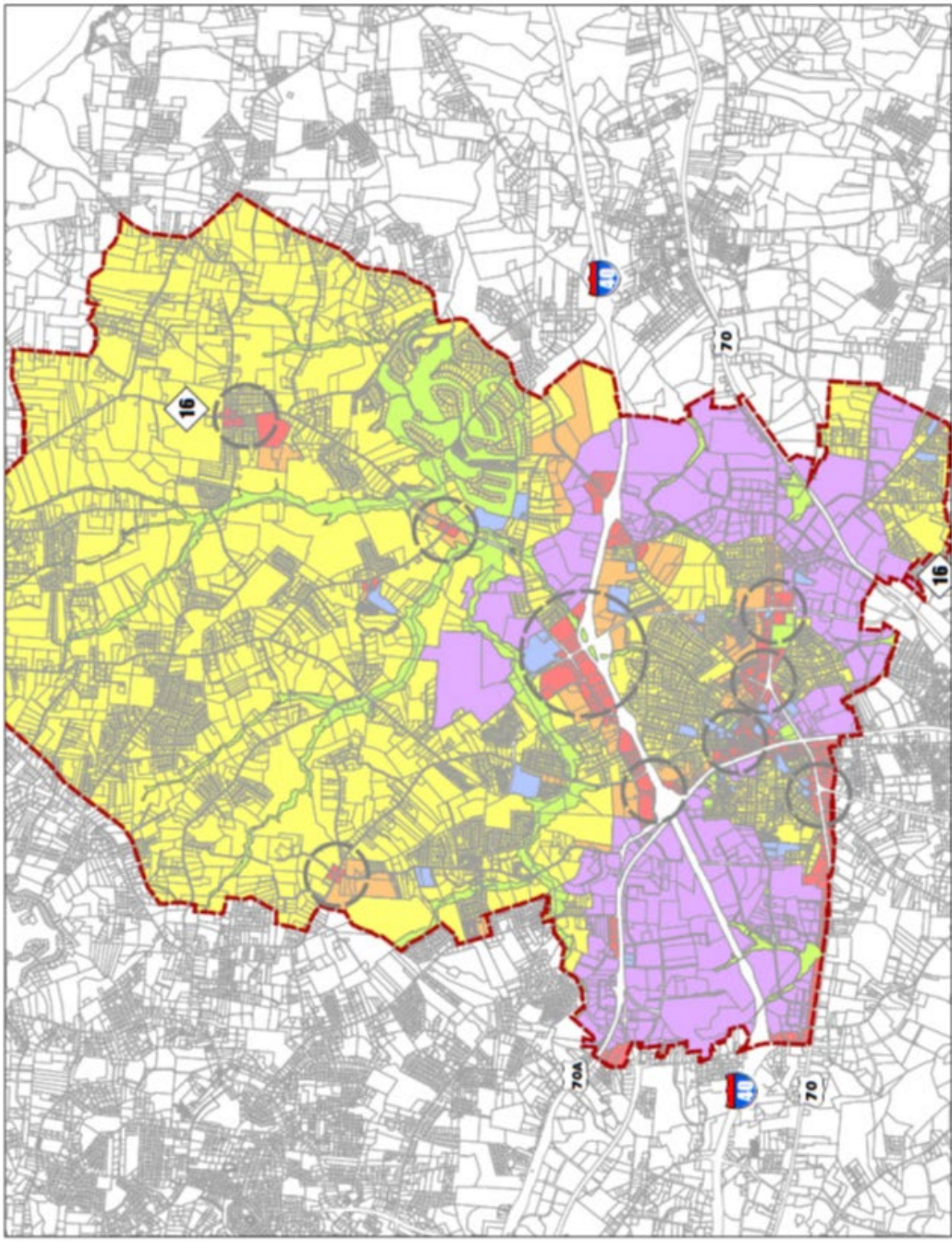
**Land Development Plan
2022 Update**

Conceptual Development Plan

Legend

-  Planning area
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Institutional
-  Park/Open space
-  Low-med residential
-  Med-high residential
-  Commercial node

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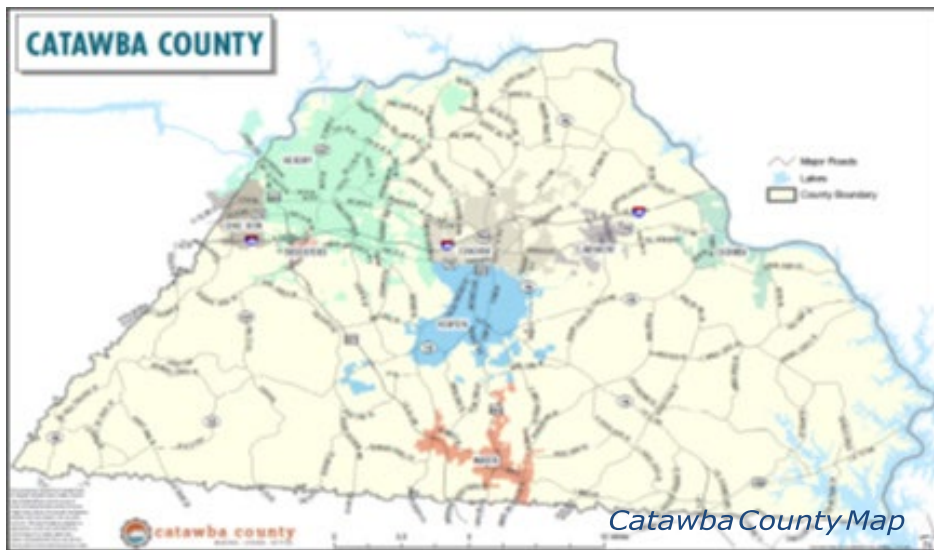
Chapter 2 - Background

Chapter Two: Background

The Conover Area

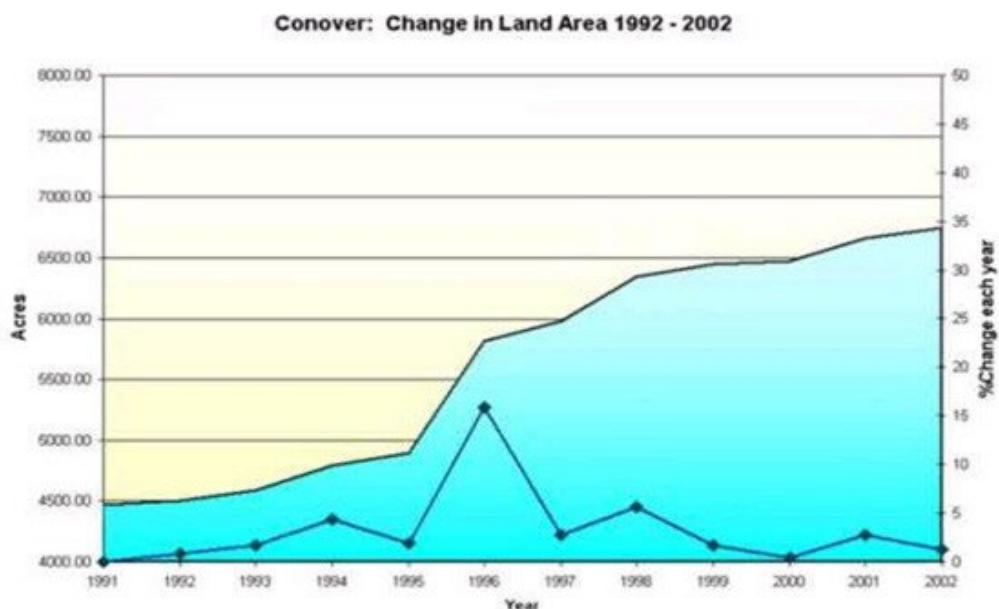
The City of Conover is the geographic center of Catawba County in the western Piedmont area of North Carolina. It is included in the Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the fourth largest MSA in the state. The City had its beginnings around 1859, when a “Y” intersection was formed by the railroad traversing North Carolina. The city was chartered in 1876 and incorporated in the 1876- 1877 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly.

Conover has increasingly expanded its city limits over the past twenty years. In 1980, Conover covered only 2.6 square miles. By 1992, this number had jumped to 6.1 square miles, and today is currently 11.6 square miles. This number, however, does not include the extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction (ETJ), which consists of approximately 3.2 square miles, a 64% decrease from the 8.75 square miles of ETJ in 1992 and a 25% decrease since 2002. This decrease is largely attributable to certain annexations of land previously classified as ETJ.



Thus, it is necessary to view Conover in the context of the broad area over which its realm of influence extends, not only the 11.6 square miles of city limits. Although Conover does not receive property taxes from ETJ areas, it does have zoning and subdivision control and can thus modify development to accent and highlight the city’s development. Therefore, the study area for this document takes that external region into consideration and in many instances refers to it in general terms, which, although not site-specific, must be addressed in the comprehensive perspective of growth and development for the Conover area.

The surrounding municipalities must also be considered when formulating the 2003 Land Development Plan Update. The City of Hickory’s downtown area is located approximately eight miles to the west. However, portions of the cities are adjacent and thus form a common boundary.



The City of Newton is adjacent to the south and shares its northern boundary with Conover's southern limits, while the city of Claremont borders Conover on the east. In 1999, Conover entered into a formal boundary agreement with Claremont, which, in conjunction with agreements with both Hickory and Newton, served to define our growth capacity to the north. In the broader context of the region, Conover is located approximately 50 miles northwest of Charlotte; 60 miles west of Winston- Salem, and 80 miles east of Asheville.

The City of Conover operates under the council-manager form of government, the predominant means for local government administration in the state of North Carolina. Five elected Council members and mayor appoint a professionally trained city manager, who oversees the administration of the city as well as manages all departments located within the city. However, the manager fulfills only an advisory function for the Council, who are responsible for setting the local policies. This form of government allows a nonpolitical administrator to give the council accurate and nonbiased information.



North Carolina Area Map

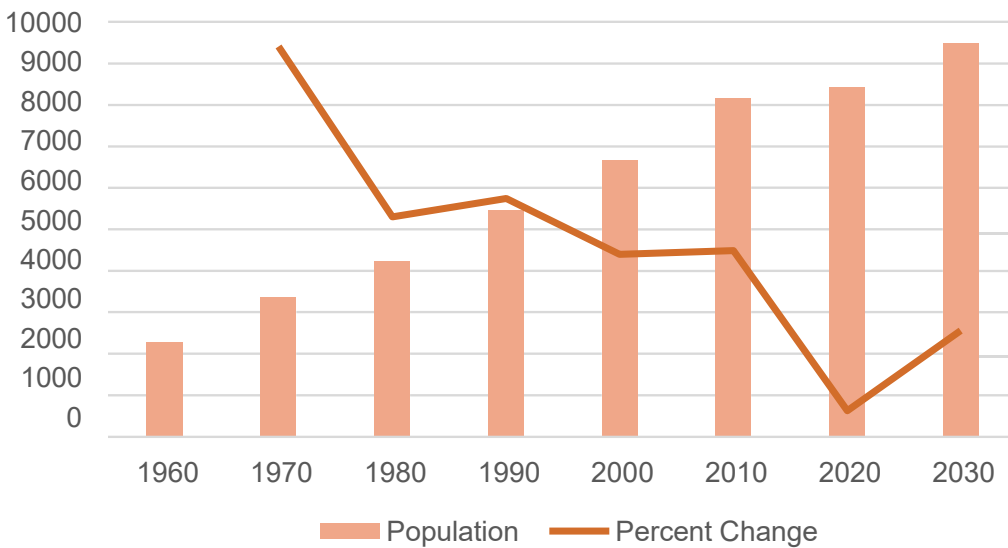
Population

The City of Conover is the third most populous municipality within Catawba County. The current population of Conover, North Carolina is 8,421 based on projections of the latest 2020 US Census estimates. This was an increase of 3.01% from the 2010 population of 8,165, and a 26% increase from the 2000 population.

There was a total of 2,193.34 acres annexed between 1992 and 2001, incorporating both developed and developable land, thereby emphasizing the need for Conover’s re-examination of its Land Development Plan. With more citizens and a more diversified tax base, expanded services and land development criteria must be specified. In 1996, a municipal-initiated annexation integrated nearly 1,100 acres, consisting of area along Rock Barn Road, Southeast Sewer Plant Road, Fairway Drive, Conover West, County Home Road, and Herman Sipe Road. While an annexation requires that the city provide all major municipal services within two years of the annexation, annexed areas in turn increase and diversify the property tax base for the city, as well as provide numerous opportunities for new development. The 2020 Census shows a 18.7% increase in the number of housing units, 3,362 compared to 2,831 in 2020. The majority of new residential development has occurred in the northern portion of the city, because as previously mentioned, the city is bound to the south, east, and west.

Below is a chart showing the population projections for Conover. These numbers reflect the State of North Carolina’s estimation of Conover’s potential population growth by two methods.

Population Projection of Conover, NC



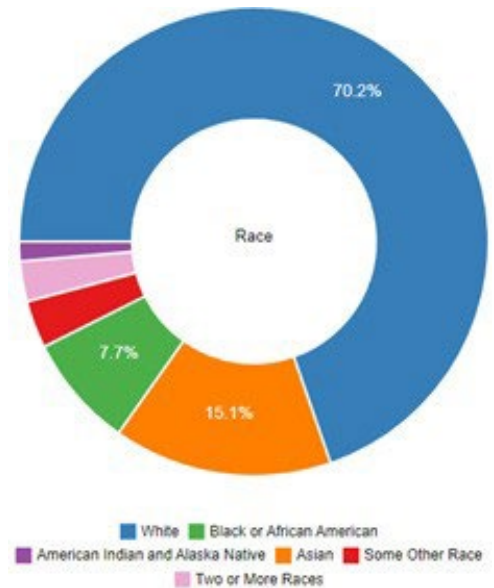
Year	Population	Percent Change
1960	2281	
1970	3355	47.1%
1980	4245	26.5%
1990	5465	28.7%
2000	6667	22.0%
2010	8165	22.5%
2020	8421	3.1%
2030	9499	12.8%

Population Breakdown

Age range of Conover's Population



Racial Classification



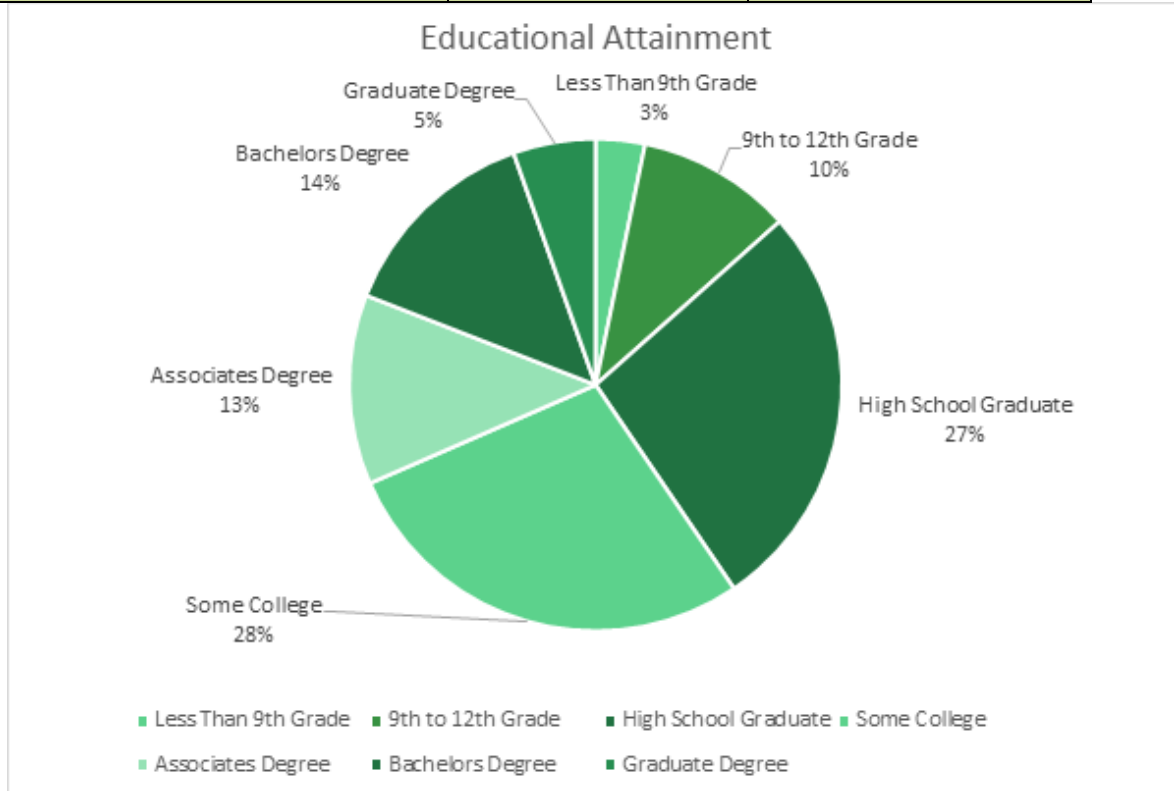
Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 Census

A noticeable and influential change from the 1990 census is the total number of Asian and Hispanics who have migrated to the city. This represents a 500% increase in these population groups from the 1990 Census, however, as of 2020 this number is around 679 or 8% of the population although still a small percentage of the total population. This ongoing transformation will continue to be a pressing issue Conover must deal with for a variety of reasons. For example, not only does this represent increased housing needs, but there are also cultural and code issues that will need addressing, that will help them acclimate while still retaining their individuality.

Education

An increased population is also reflected in the number of students enrolled in school. With 1,327 residents aged three years or older enrolled in school, providing adequate and up-to-date facilities is a constant concern. The Newton-Conover School Board and Catawba County School systems both operate schools within the city. Along with four public schools, one private school is also located within Conover’s jurisdiction. The schools are Lyle Creek Elementary, Shuford Elementary, Conover School, Newton-Conover Middle School, and Concordia Christian Day School, . Lyle Creek Elementary was built as part of Cline Village, a traditional development located off C & B Farm Road. Senior High schools located in northeast Catawba County and adjacent Newton serve the public upper educational programs for students living in Conover. Below are a table and chart showing the education attainment percentages.

Attainment	Count	Percent
Less Than 9th Grade	184	3%
9th to 12th Grade	583	10%
High School Graduate	1546	27%
Some College	1595	28%
Associates Degree	712	12%
Bachelor’s Degree	780	14%
Graduate Degree	309	5%



* Demographic information was taken from both the 2000 and 2010 Census and the 2008-2019 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an annual demographic survey of the United States. It provides the detailed demographic, economic and housing data that was once supplied by the Decennial Census Long Form. Because the sample size is smaller than the Long Form, the ACS combines data from several years to produce multi-year estimates.

Economy

The City of Conover is located within the economic region known as the Carolinas Partnership, which also includes thirteen counties and those municipalities surrounding Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. This partnership is advantageous for a relatively small city such as Conover, because it provides the benefit of international marketing. The City of Conover is fortunate to have several large industrial areas, making Conover one of the largest employment bases in Catawba County and the Unifour region. Conover West, St. Timothy, Somerset, McLin, and Southeast constitute the major areas of industry and an over 100-acre area north of NC 16 was recently changed to industrial zoning.

While the area's economy in recent years has experienced steady growth due to its diversified manufacturing and commercial oriented base, the city, like other localities since the September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks, has experienced a decline in economic activity. Industrial and manufacturing plant closings and layoffs have helped contribute to the jump in unemployment. While the unemployment rate in 1990 was only 1.9% and the 2000 census estimates it to be 2.8%, the most recent county estimate for 2002 ranks the unemployment rate around 8%. Though the national economy is finally experiencing a slight revival, Conover will have to pay increased attention to the damaged fiber/cable, textile, and furniture-based industries for which the area has been historically associated. Thankfully, the last ten years have seen a diversification of industry, and the closing of the GE factory in 1996 was not as devastating to the city's economy as it could have been. This is discussed later in the industrial land use section.

2022 Update: During the recession that began in 2008, Catawba County's unemployment rate jumped to 16%. The rate slowly fell during the recovery until it reached just over 3% in 2020. The Covid 19 pandemic caused the rate to spike at 20% by April of 2020, but by March of 2022 it had fallen back to just over 3%. As of the update, many employers struggle to find employees to fill all the available positions.

The City of Conover, like the surrounding Catawba Valley region, has experienced a doubled poverty rate. While the poverty rate in 1990 was 4.0% for families, the 2000 Census cites that number at 8.1%. However, despite this increase, Catawba County still has the eighth-lowest percentage of impoverished residents in the state. While the median income for Conover did increase from \$32,054 in 1990 to \$37,583 in 2000, that growth failed to meet the corresponding state increase. According to local economic analysts, this is largely explained due to the fact that lower-wage service industry jobs are gradually replacing manufacturing jobs as the base of the region's economy. In 1990, 1,383 citizens were employed in manufacturing, representing 25% of the population. However, in 2000, there were only 1,365, representing 21% of the population.

2022 Update: The poverty rate for Catawba County in 2020 was 12.4%, down from a high of 15.9% in 2016. The median household income in Conover rose to \$52,237 slightly below the state average but higher than average for the Hickory MSA. The manufacturing sector accounts for more than 30% of employment in Conover.

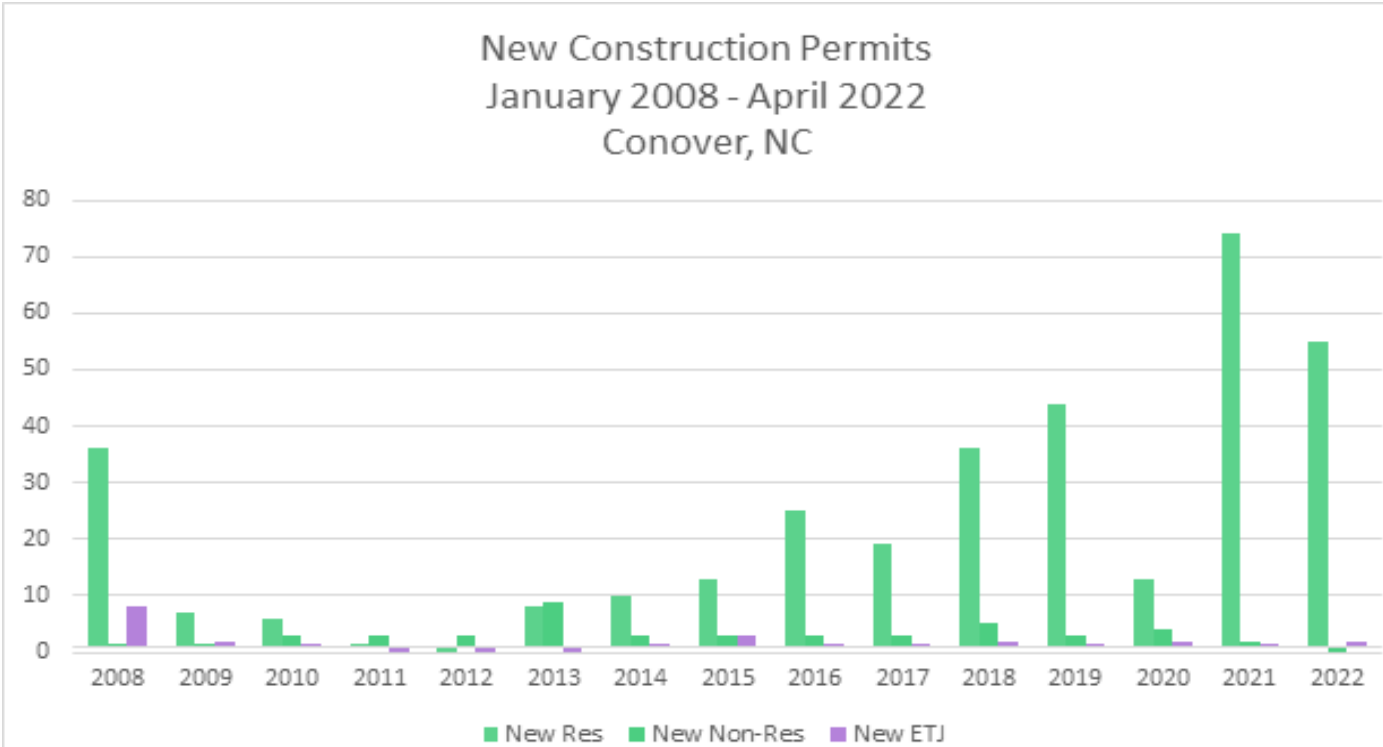
Building permit activity is typically a good indicator of the economic condition of a city. New construction and major expansions generally increase the tax base for a municipality as well as show a reflection of private investment, employment, and sales. Between 1992 and 2001, residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial permits resulted in a total value of over \$242 million. Referto the chart below for details. Of these totals, 723 new residential units, 48 new commercial units, and 30 new industrial units were constructed. The Zoning Permits table below shows the permits issued from 2002-2021. Between 2002-2021, the combined total of residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial permits had a total value of over \$462 million.

Building Permits for 1992-2001								
Year	Residential	Value	Commercial	Value	Institution	Value	Industrial	Value
1992	158	2,618,648	79	4,112,307	25	262,274	36	2,092,549
1993	202	3,342,103	86	1,777,315	21	504,939	30	5,757,287
1994	232	8,435,716	87	1,921,483	28	4,701,431	62	12,525,763
1995	275	6,990,260	74	4,726,419	32	3,010,139	32	3,652,912
1996	339	13,661,335	94	3,232,168	24	1,397,160	39	10,502,764
1997	303	9,261,706	98	6,313,261	20	2,140,234	44	10,096,914
1998	265	12,237,665	107	5,230,011	29	526,350	50	6,203,511
1999	261	14,436,293	114	3,749,151	43	4,799,864	44	12,985,568
2000	262	13,590,544	98	5,318,363	47	7,526,214	83	12,375,435
2001	229	10,342,052	92	3,682,238	30	3,693,268	48	3,242,932
Totals	2526	94,916,322	929	40,062,716	299	28,561,873	468	79,435,635
All Permits Issued from 1992-2001			4222					
Total Value of all permits issued			242,976,546					

Zoning Permits for 2002-2021								
Year	Residential	Value	Commercial	Value	Institution	Value	Industrial	Value
2002	228	8,421,813	123	4,240,705	24	4,984,834	21	4,068,815
2003	225	8,030,652	125	6,066,976	25	1,440,150	32	2,076,706
2004	199	13,789,013	154	2,113,701	50	1,035,717	49	1,986,575
2005	194	17,081,944	119	1,281,446	48	4,774,732	47	1,658,856
2006	192	18,190,724	107	15,709,450	55	2,396,872	25	2,083,180
2007	144	7,228,697	120	2,783,579	38	1,037,070	29	2,434,630
2008	113	9,166,387	107	5,040,202	38	1,541,152	22	234,200
2009	82	2,318,129	67	1,977,944	30	2,160,485	19	1,702,565
2010	80	2,555,005	86	1,280,080	29	18,014,300	18	90,000
2011	48	585,635	111	2,093,317	34	328,350	20	542,371
2012	43	553,668	86	86,403,104	41	4,483,190	20	3,180,221

Zoning Permits for 2002-2021								
Year	Residential	Value	Commercial	Value	Institution	Year	Industrial	Value
2013	75	2,475,119	91	2,643,279	58	543,730	32	7,660,300
2014	77	1,906,518	75	9,139,138	5	152,225	32	1,046,500
2015	52	3,209,043	66	11,082,451	6	455,000	35	7,378,003
2016	87	4,531,687	59	1,870,824	4	3,705,985	38	1,000,951
2017	90	4,776,982	52	597,843	6	1,874,170	27	3,867,055
2018	124	8,031,662	64	3,697,293	4	175,000	24	1,589,685
2019	111	27,553,406	62	659,900	7	225,000	20	9,003,583
2020	105	22,091,561	39	759,369	7	455,500	30	573,045
2021	110	13,761,160	62	1,700,873	6	11,536,500	34	11,697,979
Totals	2379	176,258,805	1775	161,141,474	515	61,319,962	574	63,875,220
All Permits Issued from 1992-2001			5,243					
Total Value of all permits issued			462,595,461					

The 1980s were a decade devoted mainly to industrial growth. Almost no new residential construction took place between 1986 and 1992. In contrast, the mid-1990s experienced both healthy and balanced growth in residential, commercial, and industrial development. However, in the late 1990s, residential construction began to outpace industrial. With new residential development today, Conover is presently looking to expand its industrial and commercial base. This is becoming especially the case as of 2020 where industrial and commercial products are increasing; however residential growth is typically not congruent with this growth. Below is a bar graph showing updated constructions permits issued as of April 2022 for Conover that reveals upward growth since 2014.



New Construction Permits

Source: Conover Planning Department



Chapter 3 - Land Use

Chapter Three: Land Use

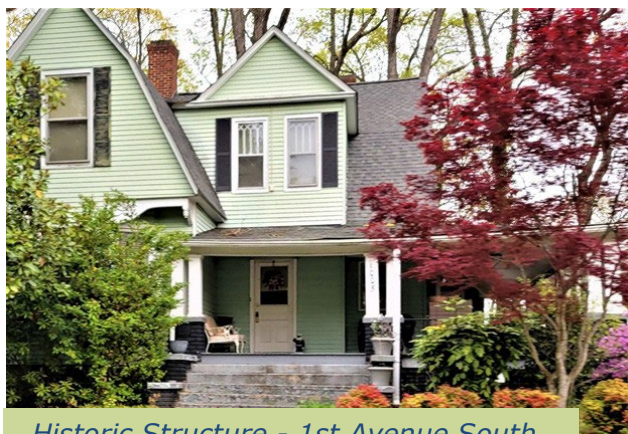
Residential

According to the 2020 Census, the City of Conover's residential population is 8,421. In 2010 the population was 8,165 and in 2000 it was 6,667. Census data reflected 3,805 housing units in the city, representing a 4.13% increase from 2010. Housing was 2,906 in 2000 and 2,831 in 1990. This number also represents 12.4% of Catawba County's total number of housing units where it was 4.8% in 1990. Conover's residential areas are characterized by single-family, multi-family, and manufactured housing in parks and on individual lots. However, the predominant type of housing is single-family residential, representing 79% of the total. Of the 3,805 available housing units, 2,684 are occupied, with an average household size of 2.49 members. The average home price has experienced a steep increase in the last thirty years. Whereas the 1990 Census listed the average price at \$69,800, the 2000 Census price was \$104,900 and in 2020 it has jumped to \$159,300. Of course, this observation must be tempered with the knowledge that cost-of-living increases, wage increases, and inflation all affects this value.

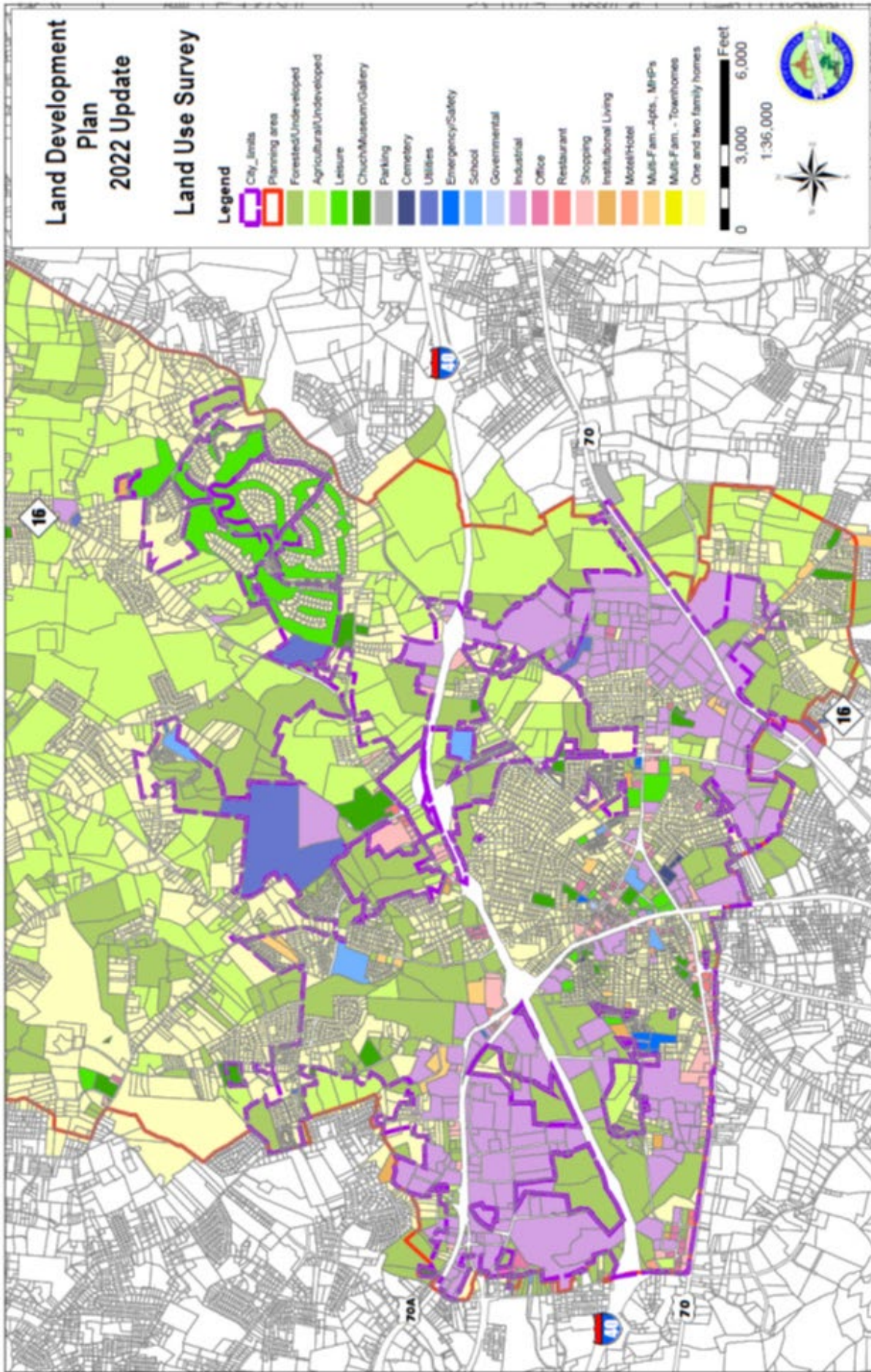
The City has five residential zoning districts: R-20, R-9, R-9A, NR, and NC. Of the zoning districts, R-20 is the largest and least restrictive, allowing single-family, multi-family and manufactured homes. R-9, on the other hand, does not allow for manufactured homes, and R-9A is predominantly all single-family housing. NR and NC are part of the TND portion of the zoning code, with NR focused on a denser style of single-family housing and NC focused on multi-family housing.

The majority of housing units are located near or around the central part of the city, though annexations and new development have resulted in residential districts in both the north and northeastern parts of the city. Single family homes dominate the area immediately to the north and east of downtown, with several areas zoned multi-family also. Southeast and southwest of downtown is predominantly single-family, with some interspersed multi-family projects.

Additionally, the Bolick Historical District, characterized by homes dating back to the late 1800's, is located in this section of the city. This historical district is designated as such to preserve the rapidly disappearing cultural and architectural features that characterize these homes. In addition to this district, Conover is reviewing areas such as Concordia Square, located in the southeast, and 1st Avenue North/South, as historical districts for the same purpose.



Historic Structure - 1st Avenue South



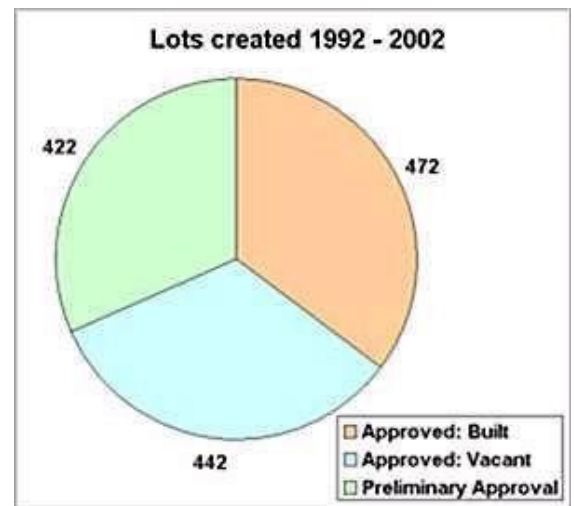
Staff will also create an inventory of places and vistas to be used in this study. Adapting and moving forward are always welcome, but we must not lose sight of historical precedents that originally shaped the appearance of Conover.

An issue Conover will have to address regarding future development is the tendency for residents and developers to move to the outskirts of the city instead of investing in vacant lots closer to the center, also called “infill development.” Most of the new residential subdivisions since 1990 do represent infill development. By encouraging infill development instead of sprawl, developers, homeowners, and service providers all benefit. Although developers may initially be drawn to external areas because of their cheaper land value, their added expense of extending proper infrastructure facilities will far outweigh any initial advantage. Homeowners benefit, because not only will they be closer to the city, but their housing costs will also reflect the lack of infrastructure costs. Service providers, such as Public Works, benefit in that they don’t have to construct new infrastructure for those areas. Due to the city’s boundary limitations on growth, all targeted areas for new residential development are to the north. As the city continues to rapidly expand the availability of residential units, issues such as providing adequate and cost- efficient services to these areas must be kept in mind. For example, the installation of water lines along Lee Cline Road and C & B Farm Road, as well as sewer line installation in the Cline Creek basin, have set the stage for development and potential annexation of this land. Ensuring adequate water supply, sewer-line installation, and solid waste service are only a few of the issues that such development would raise.

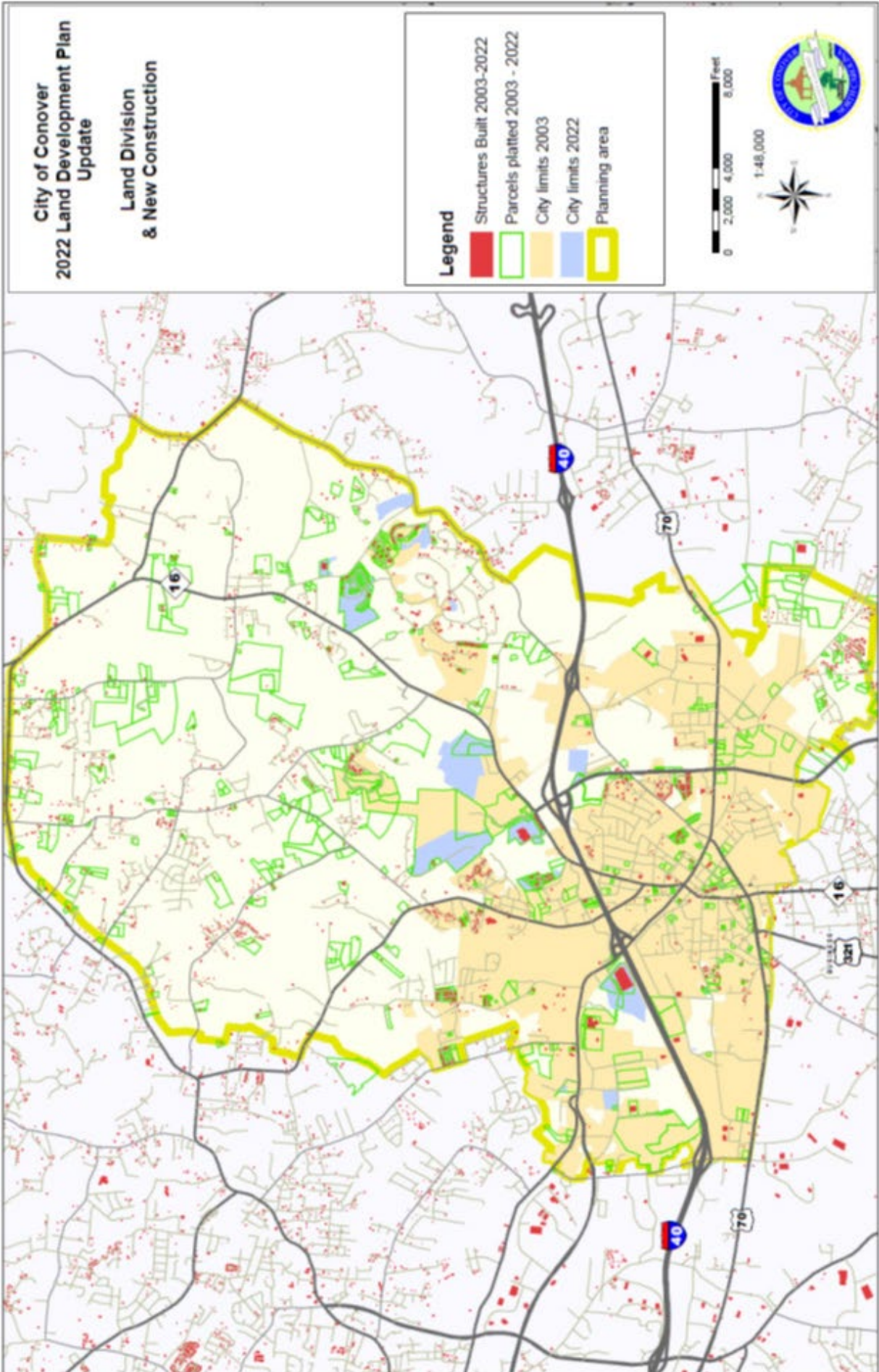
2022 Update: Therapid expansion in residential growth seen in the 1990s slowed substantially in the 2000’s. Over the last twenty years, lots in the subdivisions which were platted when this plan was originally adopted have slowly been built out. No major subdivisions have been platted in that time and building lots have become scarce. The cost per square foot of construction has nearly doubled, though shortages caused by the 2020 pandemic may ease as supply chain issues return to pre-pandemic status. It will continue to be important to direct residential growth in such a manner that sprawl is minimized and denser housing options near existing infrastructure is encouraged. Over the last several years, the city has taken measures to encourage denser development through changes to the zoning code.

The utilization of Community Development Block Grants has enabled Conover to substantially extend its water and sewer lines, helping to provide these services for areas that would not otherwise be afforded these amenities. Also, by extending utilities, annexation possibilities are greatly expanded.

During the 1991 Council / Staff Retreat, the City Council set a goal for a 5% increase in dwellings within 5 years. At that time there were 2,135 residences (not including multi-family units), which meant by 1996, the Council thought 2,242 residences was an attainable goal. By 1994, that goal was met and by the year 2000, there were 2,660 residences. Since the last plan was written in 1992, a total of 1,336 residential lots have been approved in form (preliminary plat approval). Of that total, 914 lots have been approved by final plat and 472 homes have been constructed, leaving 442 new lots vacant. For multi-family dwelling units, 380 units have been approved, while 251 of those have been constructed.



Lots created



Over the last ten years, the majority of new homes were valued between \$150,000 and \$225,000, filling the need for affordable housing. Prior to the 1990s, most homes built were higher valued homes. A more balanced and diverse housing options will be required in new developments. In smaller developments, a predicted pattern of housing type placement will be followed.

The expansion of Conover to the north follows the boundary agreements with the adjacent jurisdictions. Primarily being residential, this development concentrates higher density residential dwellings around a neighborhood core with lower density development the further removed from that core. This follows the "Transect" of neighborhood development as described in the section "Understanding Conventional Development versus Traditional Development." This type of information is continually collected to educate developers on effective and efficient ways to build neighborhoods.

Development shall follow the historical patterns as the local examples of the northeast, southeast and southwest neighborhoods, not the prevailing development patterns of the 1980s and 1990s. This includes a connected street pattern, variety of housing types and sizes centered around a neighborhood core, being a civic, recreational, or commercial concentration. The Plan Update goal is to continue this pattern of development. All new development shall also recognize and respect existing neighborhoods. This includes density and dwelling types of similar characteristics to be constructed where there are adjacent boundaries for a minimum distance of one block. New development is encouraged to be built in the primary development area (defined as the area presently served by municipal water and sewer services) to increase the customer base without costly expansion of services. This in turn also reduces the impacts of a sprawl type development scenario.

There are areas where existing development and/or zoning are incompatible with the surrounding development. These areas, such as a commercially zoned parcel in the middle of the Southeast neighborhood or an industrially zoned property surrounded by residential in the 5th Avenue NE area, should be zoned accordingly so that no further expansion would take place. Other larger areas identified which should be reviewed are US70A, 4th Street SW, US70, and Herman Sipe Road.

2022 Update: Residential uses were removed from industrial zone and several commercial zones as allowed uses when the code was recently updated. Some considerations should be made for rezoning existing residential uses in those areas to a residential zone, where practical.

Commercial

Commercial land use is designated as such to provide locations for retail and service establishments that typically include supermarkets, discount stores, and department stores, as well as specialty shops, restaurants, and personal services businesses. While there are several classification categories for commercial areas, such as “regional” and “community” shopping centers, for purposes of this plan, only the central business district and strip commercial are defined since that is the dominant commercial development in Conover.

- **Central Business District (CBD):**

The CBD is the original commercial core of a city and serves to promote the center city. Traditionally, it developed as the City or city started to be established, adapting to serve all the needs of the local people. These areas typically offer an array of services, including governmental facilities, restaurants, local specialty stores, and service businesses, such as banks. Higher density residential and mixed use including residential should be encouraged in this district that will facilitate increased pedestrian movement in the downtown area.

Conover’s Central Business District is located at the intersection of two major roads US 70A (First Street) and NC 16 (First Avenue), placing it at the heart of the city. Specialty stores, convenience stores, and public and private offices inhabit this district.



Downtown Conover

- **Strip Commercial and Local Convenience:**

Strip commercial development occurs when several independent businesses are located next to each other, forming a linear commercial area along a major thoroughfare. This can also be in a form of a single development “shopping center” based by an anchor store, such as a grocery and/or retail store, and secondary stores within the center. These businesses include all types of retail, wholesale, and service establishments. Local convenience stores are generally the quick-stop types located on transportation corridors.

There are several examples of strip commercial in Conover, especially along US70-321B.

While developers see a major thoroughfare as an accessible means of attracting customers, this type of development only serves to disserve the city as a whole. The high visibility gained by developing on major thoroughfares, which originally draws investors, becomes its own problem because of the excessive and dangerous traffic and congestion that result. These types of stores usually offer no aesthetic qualities and typically are noticeable from the street by only a large, obtrusive road sign,



Conover Boulevard and 7th Street Place SW

which is necessitated due to the placement of the building so far back from the street to allow for parking. This type of development normally resembles a “sea of asphalt” due to the large parking lots that dominate their appearance. As newer centers are built, older ones become less vibrant and only stay marginally competitive, therefore becoming a burden on the community, both financially and aesthetically.

It is imperative for Conover to consider Transit Oriented Development (TOD) type developments that encourage all types of transportation modes to interact with both customers and mixed-use traffic. Buildings should be required to move up to the front of the property along the street right of way and place parking to the side and rear. Parking requirements facilitated through the zoning ordinance, should be reduced where shared parking can be accomplished where business have different parking peaks.



Bowmans Grocery

- **Neighborhood Business Core:**

This is a small type of retail establishment or operation with primary access from foot or bicycle traffic, thereby making the service area closely defined. There is limited vehicular parking in the rear and side of the building. The building itself is located close to the street and is recommended to be a two-story structure with the second level serving as storage, office, or residential use. A convenience store is an equivalent in use but built in a pedestrian / neighborhood manner.



Quinns Store Southern Village Chapel Hill, NC

Conover’s Neighborhood Business Stores are concentrated at noted areas on the conceptual development map. These are primarily located at entrances to neighborhoods (as planned to be at the intersection of County Home Road and Northern Drive) or at the center, serving as a neighborhood core

- **Commercial Blocks or Centers:**

The commercial blocks (or centers) are located in areas with regional accessibility providing retail on the first level and retail, office, and in some occasions, residential uses above. This is a grouping of stores, as opposed to the strip commercial model in a linear form. A reduction of parking is generally warranted, as shoppers tend to walk more freely between uses, thus uses are sharing the parking requirements. Similar in design as the Central Business District, this serves on more of a regional scale. Services are similar to Strip Centers, which include specialty stores, retail stores, and public, and private offices inhabit this district. These also function as Mixed-Uses areas with a variety of building use opportunities. This type of mixed-use development should be required and encouraged.



Birkdale Huntersville, NC

This is to be located at the intersection of NC16 North and Thornburg Drive as a regional service and retail district. On a smaller scale (one or two blocks maximum) these can be situated at the entrance to a large neighborhood or residential area.

Existing Conditions

As mentioned previously, Conover is looking to expand its commercial base, as residential and industrial development have become dominant in the last 20 years. Commercial development can be seen as having the best of both residential and industrial assets. For example, while commercial businesses typically pay more property taxes and use more municipal services than residential use, they also provide services to residents without creating an unattractive appearance. Commercial uses are evident along I-40, US70-321B, US70A, and NC16. By locating on heavily traveled roads, these businesses are more accessible to a larger customer base. Canova Shopping Center, Villa Park, and Cross Country Village are all examples of commercial shopping areas. Sales tax share is a very important income stream for Conover. This can account for 30-40% of the revenues in addition to property taxes.

While Conover is not home to a major shopping mall, Valley Hills Mall, conveniently located in neighboring Hickory, is accessible from US70-321 or I-40. Canova Shopping Center opened in 1987. With K-Mart and Lowes Foods serving as its anchors, the center also provides several restaurant and shopping options. Since this center is located away from downtown, its increased usage has not caused undue congestion through downtown and the redevelopment of Villa Park, a commercial center dating back to the 1950s, is a strong prospect for the near future, but must be renovated and possibly revamped into alternate uses. Other examples of commercial development are the I-40 Business-Park, located on 10th Street NW, and ConWest, located on Commerce Street SW.



Canova Center

As of 2022, the Center has waned in occupancy and usage. This is not a local issue but a national issue with big box retail. The City needs to refocus on property and building reuse to keep contributing to the local economy. As of 2022, the Center has waned in occupancy and usage. This is not a local issue but a national issue with big box retail. The City needs to refocus on property and building reuse to keep contributing to the local economy.

Aligned with the theme of traditional development in the past, Conover desires to focus on the creation of commercial nodes over the next ten years with a concentration of mixed-uses including multi-family which includes townhomes, apartments, and attached housing both rental and owner occupied. Commercial nodes are basically neighborhood business centers or cores, interspersed throughout the city around which residential development is built. By developing in such a manner, shopping is conveniently located within walking distance, thereby simultaneously decreasing traffic congestion, and improving air quality. By doing this, it will also address the lack of sufficient grocery and service facilities available to residents throughout the city. Residents in the upper north and northeast parts of the city, as well as the southwestern region, face this predicament. Residents are forced to either drive an extended distance or travel outside of the city limits. If Conover wishes to pursue its pattern of development outward, the city must resolve this dilemma. Conditional zoning is a tool for Conover to consider addressing this dilemma.

Though the city is proposing no new drastic plans for the central business (CBD), it does desire to continue its 1980s plan for the beautification of the downtown area. Beginning in the 1980s, a systematic process was begun to replace aging sidewalks, street lighting, and plantings, as well as encourage individual businesses to improve their building appearances. Thus, the city, recognizing the importance of a stable and flourishing downtown, plans to continue its general fund allocation of downtown improvements. Since the 1992 plan, the city has renovated City Hall, which had formerly also served as a fire station. The former Public Works facility was fully rehabilitated as the Police Station. The city should pursue options or first right for refusal to purchase the

remaining three privately owned parcels in “City Hall block” for future expansions. As part of the continuing improvements to downtown, brick crosswalks are planned for various streets within the CBD. As of 2022, additional renovations have been completed in the CBD district and surrounding areas. Also, existing historic buildings have improved to adaptive reuse for mixed-used development. A great example is the newly renovated Broyhill Furniture Building, now known as the Conover Station.

Through a partnership with Catawba County, in which the Conover Express Library, a branch of the Catawba County library, was originally opened in the late 90’s/ early 2000 on the bottom floor of City Hall. It has now been relocated to the renovated Conover Station. With a wide selection of books and its own computer lab, residents no longer need to travel far to enjoy a good book or to access the internet.

While Conover recognizes the necessity of improving and developing the downtown area, it also realizes that its location and main purpose should remain basically unchanged. The CBD should serve as a financial, governmental, and office core of the city, not as an expansive commercial development zone. Primary tenants for the downtown should be relatively small service businesses, banks, and local restaurants. By encouraging beautification and appropriate businesses, the CBD can maintain its small-town charm while still providing a necessary function for the citizens.



Conover Station

Mixed-Use Districts

As mentioned previously, mixed-use zoning districts are characteristic of the traditional development design. By allowing a variety of land uses, convenience and community are maximized, while minimizing traffic and isolation. Mixed-use districts are a pedestrian-oriented environment in which housing, work, restaurants, retail, and civic institutions exist in tandem. By serving as an anchor for a residential neighborhood and serving the broader community, these districts provide a dual benefit.



A difficulty associated with incorporating mixed-use districts is that once conventional zoning is in place, overhauling that system is a time-consuming and often controversial process. Citizens often fear change, regardless of the fact that this will be an improvement to their lives, both in relation to convenience and aesthetics. Presently, Conover has a few areas zoned as mixed-use, two are located off Highway 16 and another is in the Conover Station area. Over the next ten years, more mixed-use districts can be incorporated through rezoning, but only in appropriate places and can also serve as neighborhood centers.



New commercial and mixed-use developments shall be based on the neighborhood cores or nodes in the northern expansion area, with a regional area centered on NC16 North at the new interchange with Interstate 40. This regional center shall be built in a traditional development pattern (as a conceptual layout or design). There is a need for grocery and service businesses in



the northern expansion area. The NC16 North district has exceptional accessibility with the new interchange, the land's relationship to Interstate 40 and serving as a regional center for northeastern and eastern Catawba County. This will be built as commercial blocks including shopping center type and mixed-use buildings. Recent regional examples, which have been built, include Rosedale, Jetton and Birkdale developments in Huntersville, Cornelius as well as Davidson, North Carolina in northern Mecklenburg County. These three examples offer buildings which anchor the street, safe pedestrian movement facilities, and proper internal and external vehicular connection

to neighborhoods and thoroughfares. Shown is the Rosedale development placed upon the NC16 North area as a real example of this concept and how it relates and could be built upon that land.

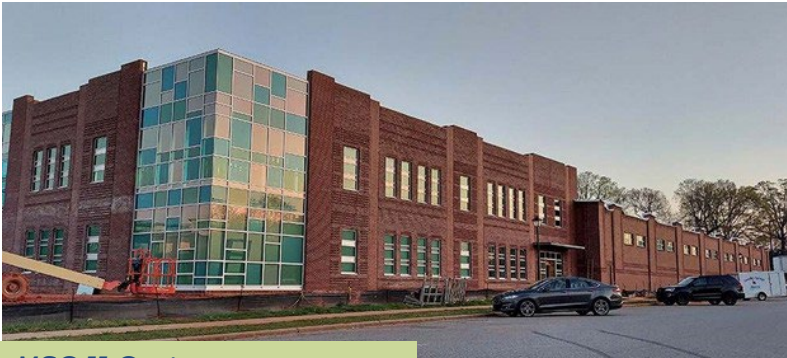


Automobile dominated development will be allowed to continue along Conover Boulevard (US70), however, that development will be somewhat altered to bring building(s) forward as required by the code (as can be seen with the Nagano Restaurant on Conover Boulevard West). Few vacant parcels remain, and a set of completely different requirements would not accommodate or fit the existing pattern. Also, the southern properties on Conover Boulevard West and Boundary Street are in the City of Newton's jurisdiction, where Conover's policies do not apply. To this end, it is recommended that the principles of the Commercial Corridor Zoning District be incorporated into all commercial zones.



2003 Land Development Plan Updated Through 2030 |

There are opportunities along the US70 corridor for redevelopment of properties with several older and obsolete structures scattered along the roadway. One such opportunity is the Villa Park Shopping Center, having sufficient land with multiple access, located at a major intersection. A major renovation or full redevelopment is encouraged.



MSC II Center



*Development Scenarios
Block Pattern versus Strip
Pattern*

Industrial

Industrial growth is a necessary component for any growing and thriving city, such as Conover. Attracting even small industrial businesses provides huge economic assets for the city. Not only do new industries mean new and more jobs for residents, but the property taxes also these businesses pay contribute a significant portion to the overall tax base. For example, with the current tax rate at 50 cents per 100-dollar valuation, a \$150,000 home would pay \$750, compared to \$5,000 for a million-dollar industry. However, to be fair, one must consider the additional acreage required for an industry. Assuming an 8-acre industry is equivalent to 16 homes, with an average value of \$150,000, the homes' total property taxes would be \$12,000. However, those homes also represent a potential 16 service calls, whereas the industry can account for only one. In addition, the city's gain on personal property taxes is much higher for industry due to equipment and inventory. Also, the level of utilities service required by an industry is much larger than for any household, another economic benefit for the city. However, it is important to note that Conover adheres to a "No 'Wet Industry' Policy", meaning they do not scout for industries that require a large capacity of water to function. The rationale is that as industries use vast amounts of water, they decrease the city's capacity level, thereby hindering future growth without an adequate supply.

Conover has encouraged maintaining a diversified industrial base for more than the last ten years, instead of focusing on a single industry. However, some may argue that this diversification became more of a necessity after the 1996 closing of the General Electric Plant. The plant, which was a community staple for forty years, was also a major source of revenue for the city. Thus, planning foresight enabled the city to not be devastated by such a loss. While the financial loss was significant, especially with regards to public utilities, it has not been the devastating loss that it perhaps could have been. By no longer focusing on such a single dominant industry, Conover has been able to bring in manufacturing businesses, furniture and warehousing industries, and distribution centers among many other types. By diversifying, the city need not wait for a single industry's failure or bankruptcy to impact or become a financial encumbrance for the city.

Conover's Industrial growth over the last ten years has been significant and financially advantageous. Between 1990 and 2001, 477 industrial permits were issued for a total value of \$83,684,142, representing 32.87% of the total value of all permits issued during that time.

Perhaps more noteworthy, of these permits, 33 were issued for new industrial facilities. The industrial zoning areas within the city are primarily west, southwest, and southeast of the downtown area, with some of the areas lying adjacent to the downtown area. Since 2002, several key industries have located in Conover, in sectors such as farm implement manufacturing, small market furniture manufacturing, textile product manufacturing and distribution.



Since 2002, several key industries have located in Conover, in sectors such as farm implement manufacturing, small market furniture manufacturing, textile product manufacturing and distribution.

Although there are no areas in Conover that fit the typical description of an industrial park, there are



Conover West Sign

several zoning districts for which manufacturing and general business occupants are designated. These districts are M-1 (General Manufacturing), EM-1 (Exclusive Manufacturing), and B-4 (General Business). Conover's primary industrial centers are Conover West, St. Timothy, McLin, Somerset, and Southeast. Primarily manufacturing, textile, and fiber-optic industries characterize these five areas. Conover West, the most recent major addition to industry, was initially planned as three disjointed industrial areas. However, with the City serving as a catalyst for communication and cooperation among the three developers, it was made clear that a unified effort would not only be more cost efficient but also more marketable to prospective tenants. In reference to the Community Development Block Grant chart in the previous section, another benefit of adding infrastructure is that it serves as a selling point for new industries and businesses that want to locate within the city. Another advantage results from the city's strong industrial base, the daytime population remains three times higher than the resident population. Conover continues to be an employment center to the area. This statistic needs to be continually monitored and to balance the housing needs of the city.

The economy of today has changed dramatically from just the last plan update. Our region, coupled with a national recession in 2002 and 2008-2011, is going through a fundamental economic shift. The traditional industrial base has been changing and textiles, furniture, and fiber/cable manufacturers are going to have slower recover cycles. However, many longstanding businesses have stayed, adapted, and prospered in the changing business environment. Ongoing recruitment of industrial and advanced service sectors will continue to diversify the industrial base. Medical, research/development, tourism, call centers, and aged services are just a few examples of alternate or increased recruitment directions. Even as important to develop land is the understanding that Conover alone cannot foster its own industrial success. Collaboration with all regional jurisdictions will add to support of industries and spin off opportunities within the city. These two efforts (expansion of local firms and recruitment of outside interests) are imperative for an effective economic development policy and for industrial prosperity.



McLin Creek Industrial



US 70A Area

Transition lands along US70A (First Street West), Thornburg Drive (between Emmanuel Church Road SE and Keisler Road SE), and the Keisler Dairy Road area within the city should be rezoned for future industrial development. This land, together with land availability within the existing industrial districts will allow new businesses to locate within the region for several years to come. These industrial districts need to be continually reviewed to reflect the national change in the types of uses now in demand. Accordingly,

aesthetics also play an important role and it is recommended that standards for metal buildings be developed, such as street facades must be brick or masonry. One cannot be stagnant and the area to the north offers the potential for light industrial and heavy business uses near Shook Road and NC16 North (where existing industry is located), should be investigated in a defined area. Also, the economic development projects, which help create new job opportunities, only serve to strengthen the economy, and therefore encourage new development. Attracting new industries yet maintaining adequate utility and land capacity for new commercial and residential uses, will be a focus for Conover for the next ten years.

Open Space

Over the last ten years, the city has turned the need of open space into a priority. Developments in the early 1990s need not preserve open space in any form, although it was required by code. In the mid-1990s, that notion evolved to what amounted to leftover land in developments; in the last few years, useable open space placement is now specifically identified.

Since 2003, just over 25 acres of public open space have been added to the city's jurisdiction. These 9 recreational parks not only enhance the beautification of the city's natural resources, but they also provide a safe, clean environment for individuals and families to spend their leisure time, as well as promote physical fitness.

The nine parks are: City Park, located on 5th Avenue SE; Gateway Park, located on 2nd Avenue NE; Hines Park, located on 4th Street SW; Washington- Southwest Park, located at 2nd Street SW; Hunsucker Park, located at 8th Street NE; Majestic Park, located on 2nd St Drive SW; Travis Park, located at 6th Street Court NW; Rowe Park, located on 9th Street SW and Downtown Park, located at 2nd Avenue NE. Most parks include picnic tables and a gazebo, and playground equipment. Other amenities, such as softball fields and basketball courts, are unique to each park. With the rapidly increasing number of residents, especially children, the city must ensure that ample and accessible open space is available and keeps pace with corresponding growth. Though Conover has no recreation department, the County YMCA is located in Conover and provides easy access for citizens seeking a more standardized and formal means of recreation.



Conover City Park



Downtown Park Gazebo

Residential developments have been required to preserve or create open spaces within subdivisions. Although developers are initially responsible for the maintenance of these areas, as these areas gradually become acclimated into recreational areas, the city will likely take over their upkeep when homeowner associations fail to maintain the properties. Several of these "private" open spaces are scattered throughout the city in newer subdivisions.

In light of these recent steps, the city must better plan open space development and acquisition or risk a haphazard collection of small tracts with no communal purpose. Park development shall follow the definitions and designs as contained within the Zoning Ordinance, of which all serve distinctive purposes. Of utmost importance, good placement, visibility, and access are imperative for parkland to function properly. Poor placement, visibility, access, and design leave the open space undesirable for use and causes the space to ultimately fail.



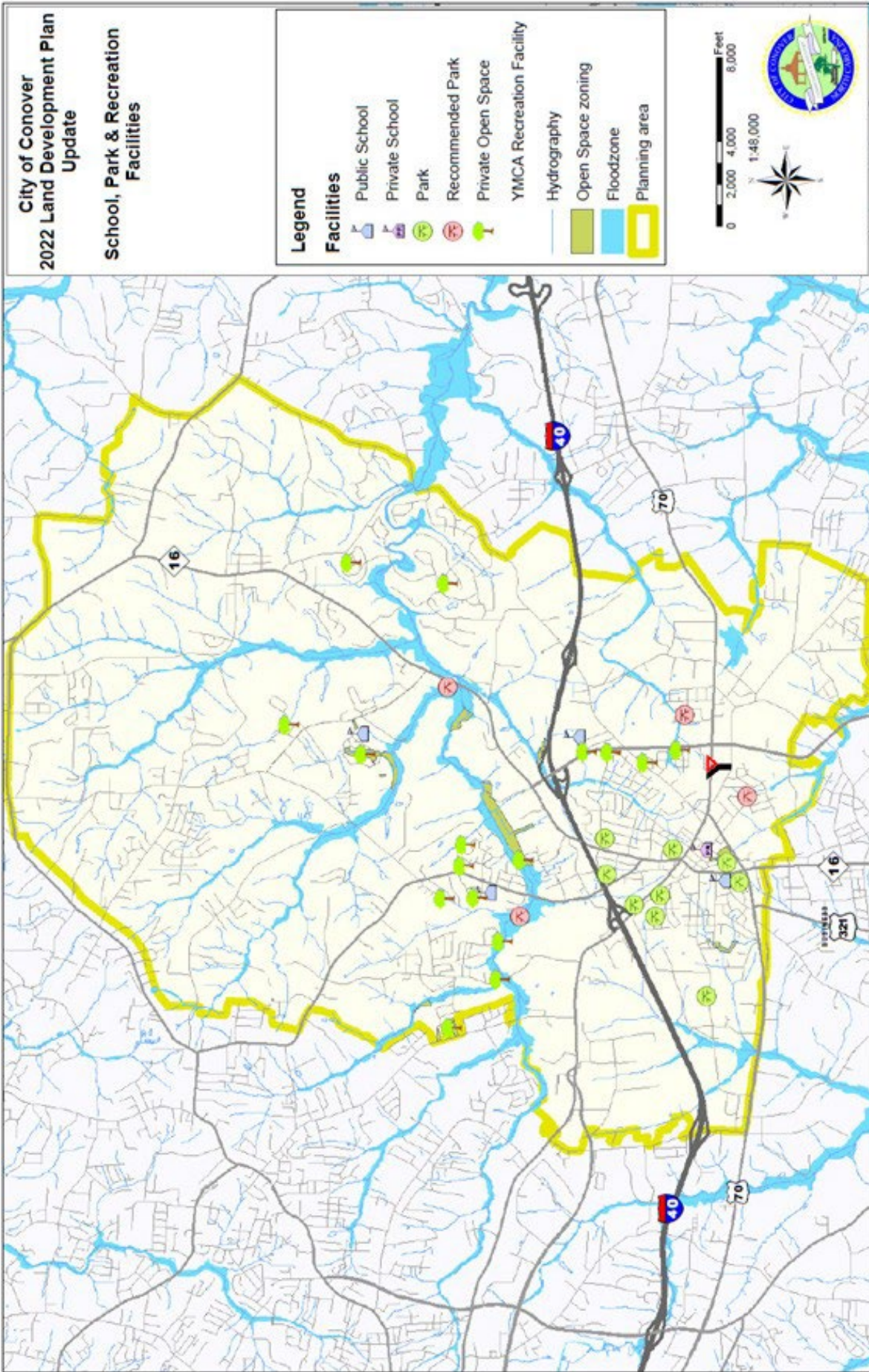
Poor Placement and is not permitted. There is poor visibility for the park stuck behind houses with a narrow access.



Good Placement and is encouraged. There is good visibility on all sides with direct access.

The City worked to establish a greenway system primarily along the floodplains of Lyle and Cline creeks through requiring developers to dedicate the areas as a part of the open space requirements of the code and work with property owners of developed lands. Where this is not feasible, utilization of the public right-of-ways (such as water, sewer, and streets with sidewalks) will provide connection in between open spaces. As a part of the greenway system, park improvements were recommended where Lyle Creek crosses under Section House Road and Herman Sipe Road; Lee Cline / Rifle Range Roads where Cline Creek crosses; and a regional park at the confluence of Lyle and Cline creeks at NC16 North and along floodplains in Conover West commercial area. Regarding this recommendation, the Lyle Creek Greenway was completed in 2016 as a section of The Carolina Thread Trail. The Carolina Thread Trail is continuing to expand in Conover. The City needs to continue working with landowners, developers, and property owners to make connections to provide this healthy and environmentally positive transportation option.

Parks also act as neighborhood cores when designed as commons or greens. This, coupled with the possibility of higher density dwellings, provides an active, defined, and safe gathering space for residents. Parks also need to be established where deficiencies in neighborhoods exist. Neighborhoods in the southeast, lower southwest, and northwest areas of Conover in particular have sufficient open space available to serve their residents' needs but is currently under-utilized. To address, Conover could place requirements in the subdivision ordinance where developers of all types build sidewalks, walking trails, and/or pays a fee in lieu of for the expansion of trails, parks, bike lanes, and other alternative transportation options.





Chapter 4 - Mobility

Chapter Four: Mobility

Transportation Introduction

Every aspect of our daily lives is influenced by and adapted to our means of transportation, the quality of the roads, and the available modes of transportation. As a corollary to transportation, the volume of traffic will also have a tremendous impact on our daily commutes, as well as on the level of safety we experience as we utilize the roads and street system. The condition of transportation facilities heavily influences the overall desirability of a community as a place to live and work. Additionally, economic development is equally dependent on an adequate traffic circulation system and the proper relationships of those facilities are essential to the development and use of the land. Land usage and design is inextricably linked to transportation facilities. Thus, considering all of this, as well as the tremendous costs associated with street construction, it is important that Conover plan for a logical road pattern that serves a functional purpose.

This section describes the existing condition of Conover's transportation facilities, system, and capabilities. Background information is reviewed on the traffic circulation system and its functional design, which provides an understanding of the purpose of the system and its characteristics. The street classification names may differ among different regions as to their exact name. Located within the parentheses are synonymous terms.

Hierarchy / Function / Classification

- » **Highway (Major arterial):** A street designed for fast-moving, large-volume traffic, often for statewide and interstate travel. For safety reasons, these roads have controlled access, free of driveways and intersections, which interfere with traffic flow.
- » **Boulevard (Minor arterial):** A street designed for relatively free movement that serves urbanized areas travel purposes. This is a multi-lane roadway and should be designed with landscaped median and bike lanes.
- » **Avenue (Major collector):** This type of road serves major intracounty travel corridors and provides access and connection to the roadway system. Different from a boulevard in that its length is a finite distance and serves specific locations within the urbanized area.
- » **Town Streets (Minor collector):** These roads link the local traffic generators with nearby neighborhood areas. It is designed to carry light to medium traffic volumes within the neighborhoods.
- » **Neighborhood (Local) Street:** This local road primarily provides access within residential neighborhoods and serves as a medium for short-distance travel. It is not designed for heavy volumes of traffic.
- » **Alley:** These are public service access that serve as only a secondary means of access to property, access to parking and service areas.

Existing Roadway Facilities

Conover has exceptional proximity to national, regional, and local transportation facilities. Immediate access to Interstate 40 by four separate interchanges gives Conover a direct link to interstates that offer national transportation access equidistant from markets in the northeast, southeast, and midwest. Excellent regional highway access by Interstate 40, which bisects North Carolina and connects with other interstate routes such as Interstates 85, 77, 26, and 95, also opens Conover up to external travelers as well as provides easy access for residents. Transportation access is also very good in Conover for local traffic. Interstate 40, US70, and US 70A provide east/west access, while US 321 and NC 16 provide north/south routes. Highway NC 16 continues to be an expanding major connector to the City of Charlotte and residential and commercial growth is being expanded towards Catawba County and Conover.

For clarification, listed below are a few local examples of each of the branches of the hierarchy:

- » **Highways:** Interstate 40
- » **Boulevards:** US 70/321, US 70, US 70A, NC16, Section House Road (SR 1491), 1st Street West (SR 1007), County Home Road (SR 1484), Rock Barn Road (SR 1709), Thornburg Drive (SR 2642)
- » **Avenues:** Debra Herman Road, 10th Street Northwest, McLin Creek Road, Keisler Road, 7th Street Place Southwest, 4th Street Southwest, and Bumgarner Industrial Drive
- » **Town and Local Streets:** Bolick Drive, Atherstone Street, Deal Avenue, Edgewater Lane, 8th Street NE, 5th Street NE, 3rd Street SE as examples
- » **Alleys:** Those rear access roads located within Cline Village

The 2001 Hickory-Newton-Conover Urban Area Transportation Plan, published by the NCDOT for the Urban Area, revealed several traffic issues that Conover will have to address in the very near future. Six major roads that facilitate transportation in and through Conover are currently experiencing congestion problems (NC 16, 1st Street, 10th Street Place, Emmanuel Church Road, McLin Creek Road, and Rifle Range Road). Some of 1st Street West's problems are being addressed at this time by constructing an extension and by widening the street. However, the other streets' problems need addressing. Also, the transportation plan reveals that seven streets, while functioning fine currently, are going to face capacity and congestion problems by the year 2025 (Section House Road, Conover-Startown Road, County Home Road, Rock Barn Road, NC 16, Fairgrove Church Road, and 4th St. SW). Still one of the most congested areas in Conover, and one of the most dangerous, is the notorious five-points intersection located in downtown. Traffic counts from 1999 indicate that over 55,000 vehicles per day traverse this area. The City will continue to place an emphasis on roadway improvements, such as protected left turns, signalization, pedestrian crossings with signals and deceleration lanes in conjunction with new roads.

City of Conover
Land Development Plan
2022 Update

Transportation: Streets

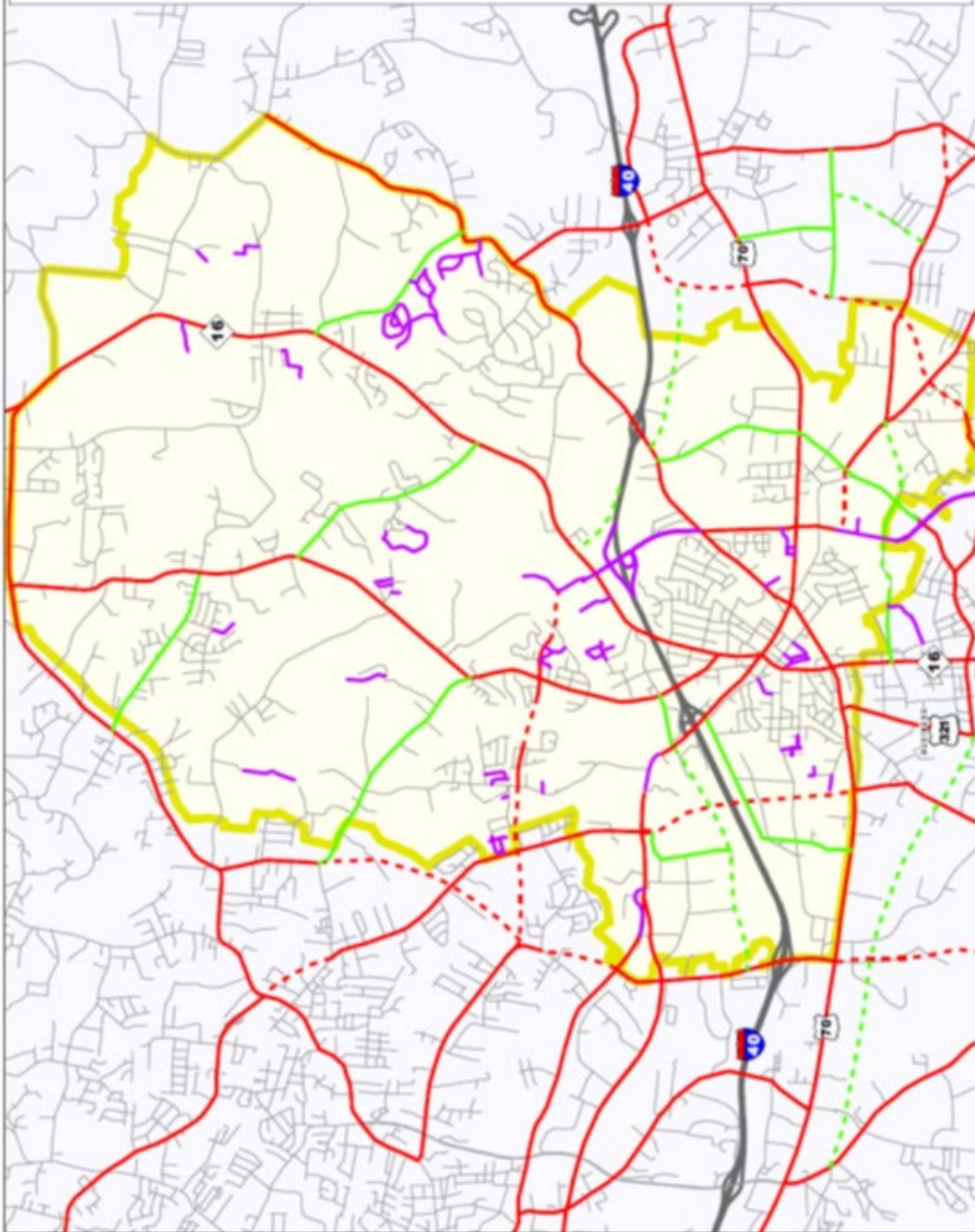
Legend

Thoroughfares

- MAJOR, EXISTING
- MAJOR, PROPOSED
- MINOR, EXISTING
- MINOR, PROPOSED

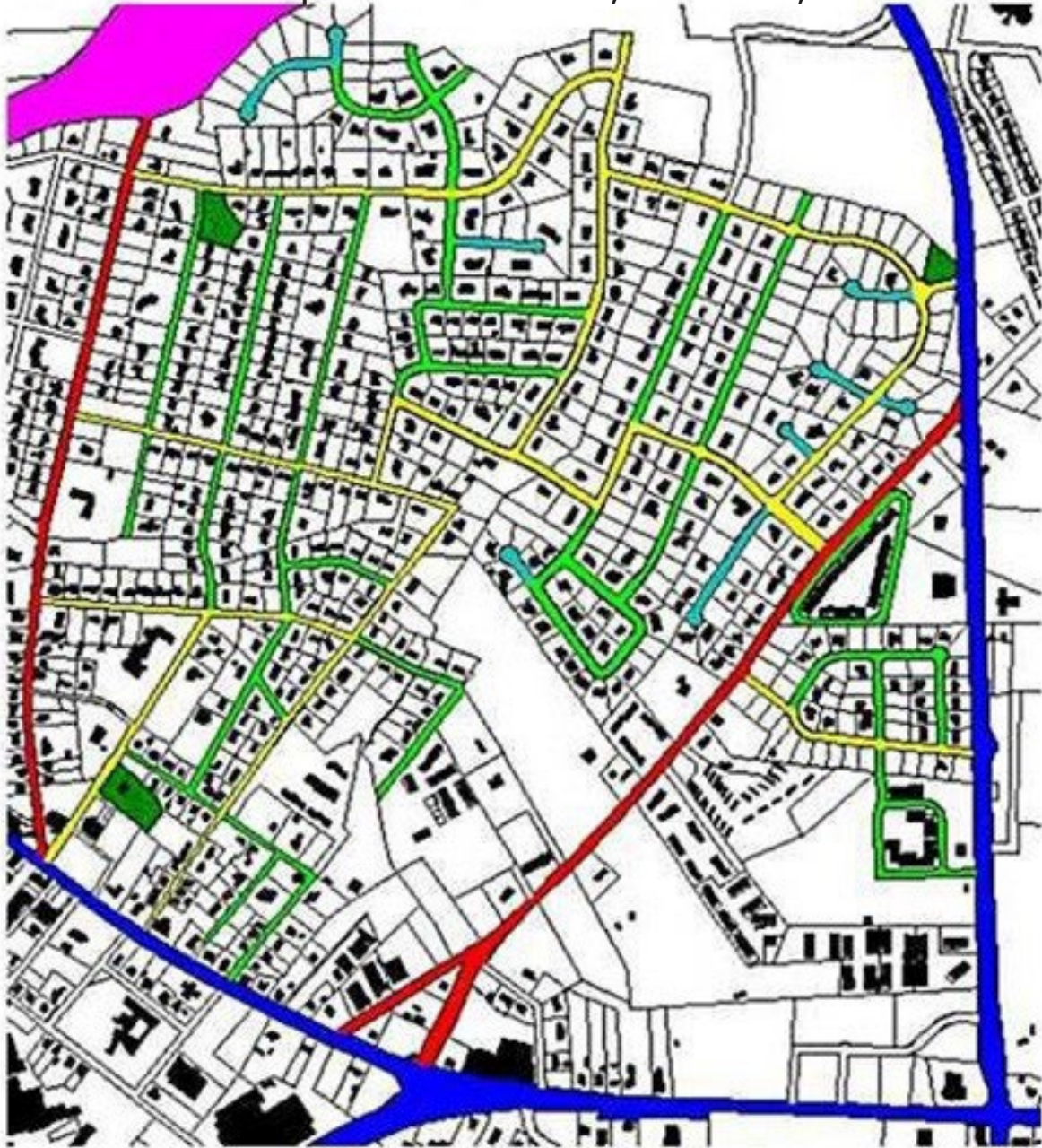
Planning area

Roads built
2003 - 2022



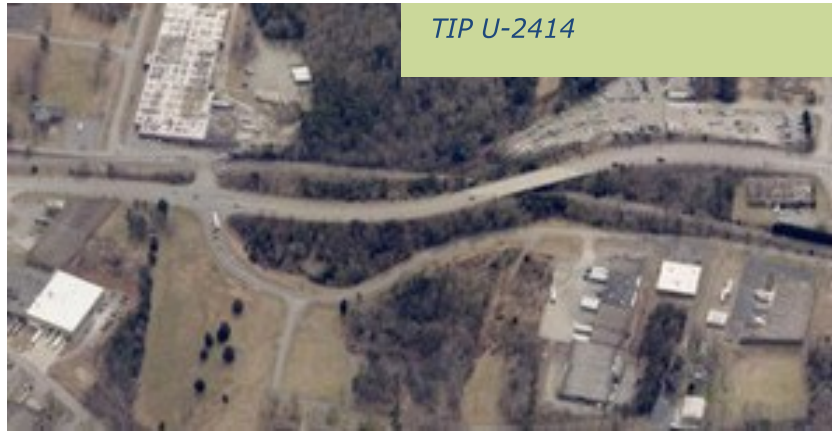
Hierarchy/ Function /Classification of Streets

Example: L'Echo Park, Conover, NC



Such examples can be found in most any city or town

Two North Carolina Department of Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) were completed since 2003 that have had significant impacts on Conover. TIPU-2414, also known as the Tate Boulevard Extension (1st Street West) project, resulting in the multi-lane widening of a major East-West road north of I-40, as well as a multilane connection between the downtown of Conover and Hickory.



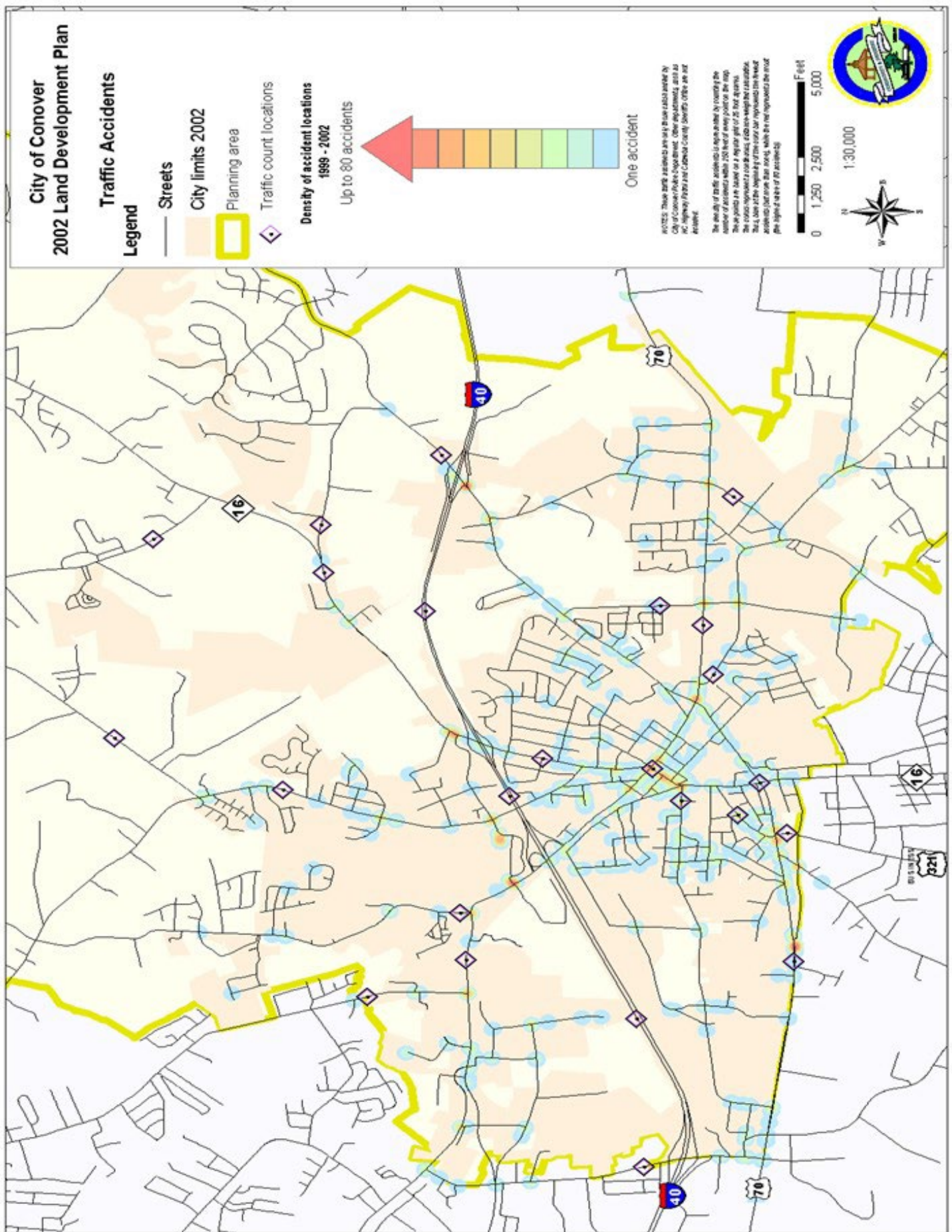
TIP U-2404, also known as the “Eastern Loop” created a new interchange on I-40 and widened NC 16 south of Newton to north of Conover into a four-lane divided road. By creating a loop around Conover, much of downtown’s traffic was diverted, thereby decreasing congestion in the five points intersection.

It is important to recognize that Conover must continue to follow the Transportation Plan as adopted by the MPO for the Urbanized Area. Links, such as the two NCDOT projects mentioned above are imperative to keep traffic flowing during peak times and offering alternative routes. Conover’s policy of requiring thoroughfare right-of-ways to be dedicated when development occurs is key to the implementation and continued success of the Transportation Plan.

Accident Hotspots

Increasingly congested streets have contributed to the dramatic increase in vehicle accidents within the last ten years. It is apparent that Conover’s residents desperately need a viable alternative to individual automobile usage. In 1992, there were only 377 accidents, compared to 647 in 2002, a 71.6% jump. The list below identifies the most accident-prone locations.

Five Points Intersection; 1st Avenue South in Downtown; 7th Street Place SW and US 70 Conover Blvd and Boundary Street; 1st Street East and Rock Barn Road; 10th Street NW and US 70A; 1st Avenue North and I-40; Pilot Truck Plaza.



Alternate Modes of Transportation

Providing alternate modes of transportation is going to be an increasingly important concern for Conover, as with all municipalities. Urban sprawl and the degradation of the CBD as a central shopping area have contributed to an increasing reliance on automobile transportation. We have become a society that considers the definition of “walking” to be the distance traveled from our front door to our driver’s seat. Not only does this not promote physical fitness, but it also increases toxic automobile emissions and contributes to already congested streets. It is Conover’s duty to provide multi-modal transportation routes, but it is each citizen’s duty to capitalize on those opportunities.

Unlike many urban areas, the Hickory-Newton-Conover area has one of the better highway systems in the nation and, thus, relies very little on public transit. As a prime example, the average daily travel (ADT) of I-40 more than doubled from 1984 to 1994. The ADT on US 70 and US 321 also experienced increases during this time period that exceeded national averages for urban areas. One mode of transportation, air travel, which was available as of the 1992 Land Development Plan via the Hickory Regional Airport, is no longer operational. Due to the short commute to Charlotte Douglas International Airport along US 321 and I-85, coupled with the September 11th terrorist attacks, Hickory Regional Airport was forced to close its terminal in April of 2002. Hickory is currently in the process of recruiting another service provider. However, the Greenway Public Transportation system and Norfolk Southern Railroad are still existent. Conover can also unlock the potential of our streets with better management of our parking and freight systems and targeted neighborhood improvements. Together, these actions will also make it easier and more affordable for everyone to get to their homes or schools, jobs or small businesses by car or bus, walking, biking, or scooting.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **Greenway Public Transportation System**

The Greenway Public Transportation system provides transportation services for the citizens of Catawba County. General public transit buses operate in Hickory, Newton, and Conover six days a week. The Greenway system is managed by the local leaders who have made significant contributions to the communities of Alexander County, Conover, Newton, Hickory, Catawba County, Burke County, and Caldwell County. The service focuses on the areas served by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. It currently services approximately 127,000 a year. A task force was formed in 2000 to create a master transit plan that would coordinate with other transit plans, such as sidewalk and bikeway paths. Improvement recommendations ranged from adding new routes to decreasing riding time. These recommendations span a period of 25 years, but hopefully an immediate and noticeable benefit will result.



RAIL

- **NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILROAD**

Norfolk Southern Railroad provides rail service to Conover. This service is limited to freight only, which is an essential part of the industries in the city. The rail connectors are located along US70A into downtown and follows NC16 (one block to the east). The second rail follows lower McLin Creek Road until it reaches US 70, then runs parallel to US 70 East towards Claremont. One train a day offers freight pickup and delivery service, operating six days a week. However, up to fourteen trains a day pass through Conover.



- **Western North Carolina Passenger Rail**

The former Governor Hunt's Transit 2001 Commission recommended that passenger rail be re-established in Western North Carolina. The recommended route would extend from Raleigh to Asheville via Salisbury. The route would extend through Catawba County using the existing Norfolk-Southern main line tracks. The proposed plans include the acquisition and rehabilitation of the historic train station in Hickory, which would later serve as a stop on the route. The Greenway Public Transit system is considering an additional service in which a bus would provide transportation for rail passengers to and from the station. The current NCDOT Rail plan shows a passenger rail connection between Salisbury and Asheville, with a project timeline of 2020-2035.

SIDEWALKS / BIKEWAYS / GREENWAYS

Within the citizen survey, when residents were asked about what they believe is the most important item when it comes to future transportation of Conover the top element was the addition of more sidewalks, trails, and safer places to walk.

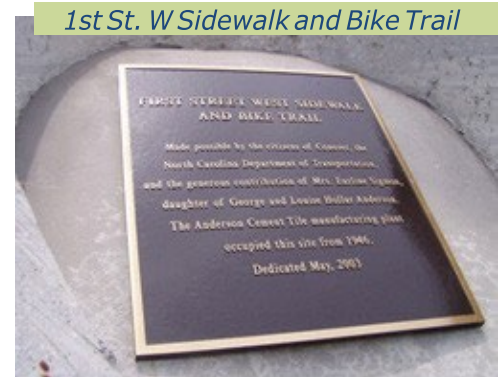
- **PLANNING FOR PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES**

Pedestrian facilities and operations create safe and comfortable walking conditions along the roadway and satisfy ADA compliance requirements. Nearly all best practices require adequate public right-of-way, which may or may not exist where development has already occurred. In areas planned for future increases in residential density or development, adequate right-of-way should be

secured or preserved to accommodate future sidewalks and road enhancements that improve the pedestrian network.

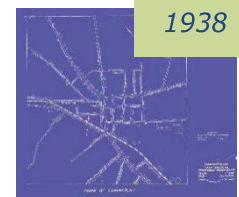
- **Sidewalks.**

Sidewalks and walkways provide pedestrians with a space to travel separated from motor vehicles, typically within the public right-of-way. Sidewalks are associated with significant reductions in pedestrian collisions with motor vehicles. The recommended minimum clear width (free from obstructions) for a sidewalk or walkway is 5 feet, which allows two people to pass comfortably or to walk side-by-side. Wider sidewalks should be installed near schools, at transit stops, in downtown areas, or anywhere high concentrations of pedestrians exist. Sidewalks should be continuous along both sides of a street and sidewalks should be fully accessible to all pedestrians, including those that utilize wheelchairs. A buffer zone of 4 to 6 feet is desirable and should be provided to separate wheelchairs. A buffer zone of 4 to 6 feet is desirable and should be provided to separate pedestrians from the street.



- **SIDEWALK & BIKEWAY PLAN**

Conover has produced sidewalk plans dating back to the 1930s. While construction of sidewalks has been somewhat lacking in previous years, the Council passed the Sidewalk Plan and ordinance in 1999 that requires all developments to build sidewalks as a part of the required infrastructure. Since that time, several portions of sidewalk have now been built along with the creation of a new Pedestrian Plan in 2008. It is the adopted policy that any development along the identified roadways must construct a sidewalk. The routes shown within the existing neighborhoods were selected to provide a walking loop through the neighborhood along the City streets. Those will receive priority when a sidewalk petition is received by the city following the ordinance. In areas where gaps remain and connection is necessary, the city will provide those connections through scheduled construction.



Additionally, as a part of the Newton-Conover Loop project (and the Council's commitment to building a pedestrian network) the City contracted with NCDOT to construct eight-foot-wide sidewalks along the entire length of the new roadway within the city. This also provides a safe alternate connection to Shuford Elementary School and benefits all residents throughout the city. Providing safe alternatives to automobile transportation should lead to improved air quality, less congested streets, and healthier residents.

- **Gateway Sidewalk / Bikeway Connection Project**

The city was awarded over \$200,000 in state funds through the North Carolina Department of Transportation via the Transportation Enhancement Program in 2000 to construct a sidewalk and bikeway path that connects the downtown area along First Street West (US 70A) to Canova Center. These funds were also allocated to build Gateway Park, a linear park between US70A and Norfolk Southern Railroad, to serve as an active gateway into downtown from I-40. These two portions of the project were recently completed and dedicated in May 2003. The second phase (currently not funded) includes bikeway/sidewalk paths along County Home



Road, 10th St. NW, and First Ave. North (NC 16), as well as landscaping enhancements for the I-40/US 70A interchange (Exit 130). If awarded, the total project links commercial and residential areas with four city parks.

In 2021, the City undertook a project to design bicycle and pedestrian improvements along 1st Street from the Gateway Park to Thornburg Drive. The grants total approximately \$2.8 million, with a project completion date of 2025.

- **GREENWAYS**

A greenway system has been designed to utilize the floodplains along streams and creeks throughout Conover, as shown on the map. A more complete explanation of the project can be found in the Open Space section of Chapter 3, Land Use.

Greenways protect the floodplains from intrusive development, which can elevate potential flood levels. These areas should be left as natural areas or play fields with pedestrian and bicycle trails throughout the project. Being able to use flood prone land in this way benefits the citizens with recreation and useable open space.



Lyle Creek Greenway Sign

In 2021, the City undertook a project to design bicycle and pedestrian improvements along 1st Street from the Gateway Park to Thornburg Drive. The grants total approximately \$2.8 million, with a project completion date of 2025.











Residents and stakeholders in the input meeting indicated that they want Conover to be greener, safer, and more sustainable. Through expanded place-making programs, neighborhood greenway connections, and a growing network of multimodal corridors with successful partnerships, it is possible to achieving this ideal.

Disclaimer: The traffic accident map and alternative transportation map were not updated due the available data, however, with the changing nature of transportation, please refer to the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Organization (GHMPO) for more current maps and data.

City of Conover
2002 Land Development Plan

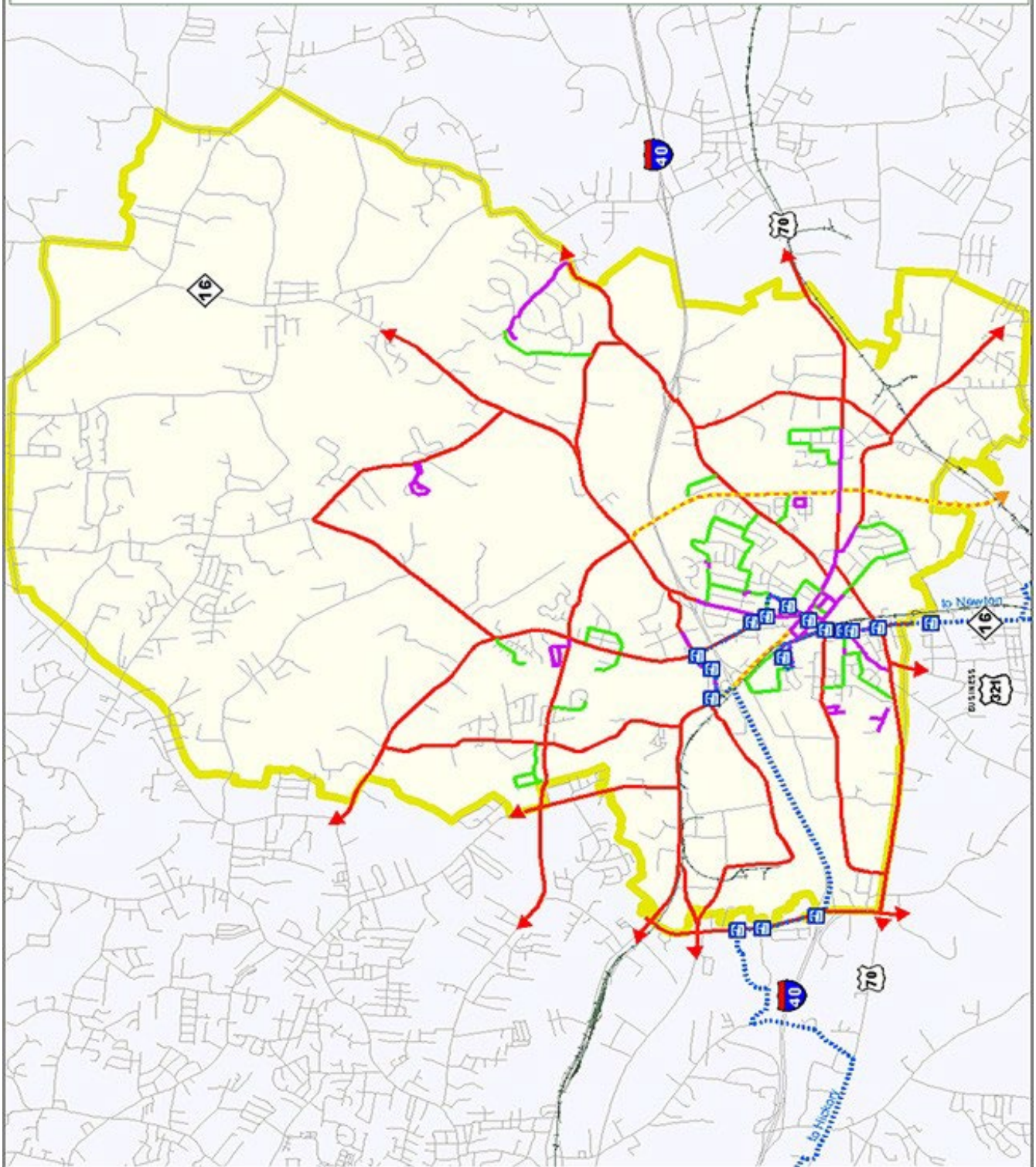
Transportation:
Alternative Transportation

Legend

-  Conover bus stops
-  Bus routes
-  Railroad
-  Streets
-  Planning area
-  Sidewalks
Existing
-  Funded / Under construction
-  Proposed: Neighborhood
-  Proposed: Thoroughfare
-  Arrows indicate a proposed connection to sidewalks in other jurisdictions



1:48,000





Chapter 5 – Public Utilities and Services

Chapter Five: Public Utilities and Services

Utilities

The City of Conover Public Works Department is responsible for the urban services including water; sewer; streets; sanitation; and park maintenance. Over the previous decades, the department relocated to a new facility on 4th Street Southwest. It was previously located where the current police station is today. Public works has helped lead the way in the city by utilizing new technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), and Automated Meter Reading (AMR). Through the software program, City Works, GIS, and GPS technologies are combined in such a way as to trend historical data on work-orders associated with infrastructure, such as sewer and water lines, manholes, valves, and hydrants. Public Works has also had to meet numerous federal and state mandates and quality standards.

Water Service

Water and sewer lines are two aspects of public works that indirectly mandate where new development will occur. Development generally “follows” this infrastructure, and thus its placement is more of a science than probably most presume.

As recent as the early 1980s, Conover was still operating off a well system. However, recognizing the limitations it placed on growth, Conover entered into a regional partnership with the City of Hickory when it decided to expand the water treatment plant. The City of Conover purchases finished water from the City of Hickory, which treats surface water from Lake Hickory on the Catawba River. The plant is jointly owned by the cities of Conover and Hickory. Conover owns 3 million gallons per day (gpd) capacity and currently uses.



Approximately 1.72 million gpd. This translates into 5,021 accounts being served daily. This partnership is beneficial to both Hickory and Conover, because through the Eastern Catawba County Partnership, Conover provides water service to Claremont and other portions of eastern Catawba County. Not only does providing water to these areas serve a neighborly function, it also helps those areas benefit from the utility tax charged by Catawba County and administered through UTAC. Although there is ample water capacity at present, customer growth will probably mandate increased available capacity soon. Additionally, from a land development perspective, by providing city water to areas outside the corporate limits, developers will be more attracted to the area. The rationale is that city water and sewer lines allow for greater density by precluding the necessity of large lots required for the placement of wells and septic tanks.

The city owns, operates, and maintains its own elevated water distribution system, which consists of 115 miles of water lines and two 1-million-gallon water storage tanks. This storage capacity is double what it was as of the writing of the 1992 Land Development Plan. However, the increase in water usage has not doubled, going from 1.1 million gpd in 1992 to 1.72 million gpd in 2002. This is a definite advantage for the city since storage capacity should always be equal to at least one day’s usage. Thus, in 1992, usage exceeded capacity. The city had recognized this dilemma and in October 1991, purchased 6.74 acres located on NC 16 at Shell Hollar Road (SR 1703), on which to build additional tanks. Although two tanks are sufficient currently, there is enough land to construct two additional

elevated water storage tanks if warranted in the future by growth, which can expect the necessitation of new elevated water storage tank by 2010. Due to increased development, annexations and outside customers, the number of water customers has increased from 2,238 in 1992 to 5,021 in 2002, representing a 125% increase. The city also maintains 645 fire hydrants, a 54% increase from the 419 it maintained in 1992, and a 162% increase from the 246 hydrants in 1981. Looking to the next ten years, the number of customers is projected at nearly 10, 100.

Growth is encouraged in the northern growth area where there is adequate service, meaning the established water lines loops around Herman Sipe Road / County Home Road; Lee Cline Road / C&B Farm Road; and NC16 North / Shook Road / Rock Barn Road. However additional water service should be put into place where additional loops can be placed into service with minimal line construction, existing customer base can be served, and growth restricted to a reasonable area without promoting sprawl development. These next priorities for water line placement are as follows: Rock Barn Road (St. Johns Church Road to Shook Road); Houston Mill Road (Lee Cline Road to Swinging Bridge Road); Rock Barn Road (Shook Road to Oxford School Road); and Workman Street (Deborah Herman Road SW to Simpson Street SW).

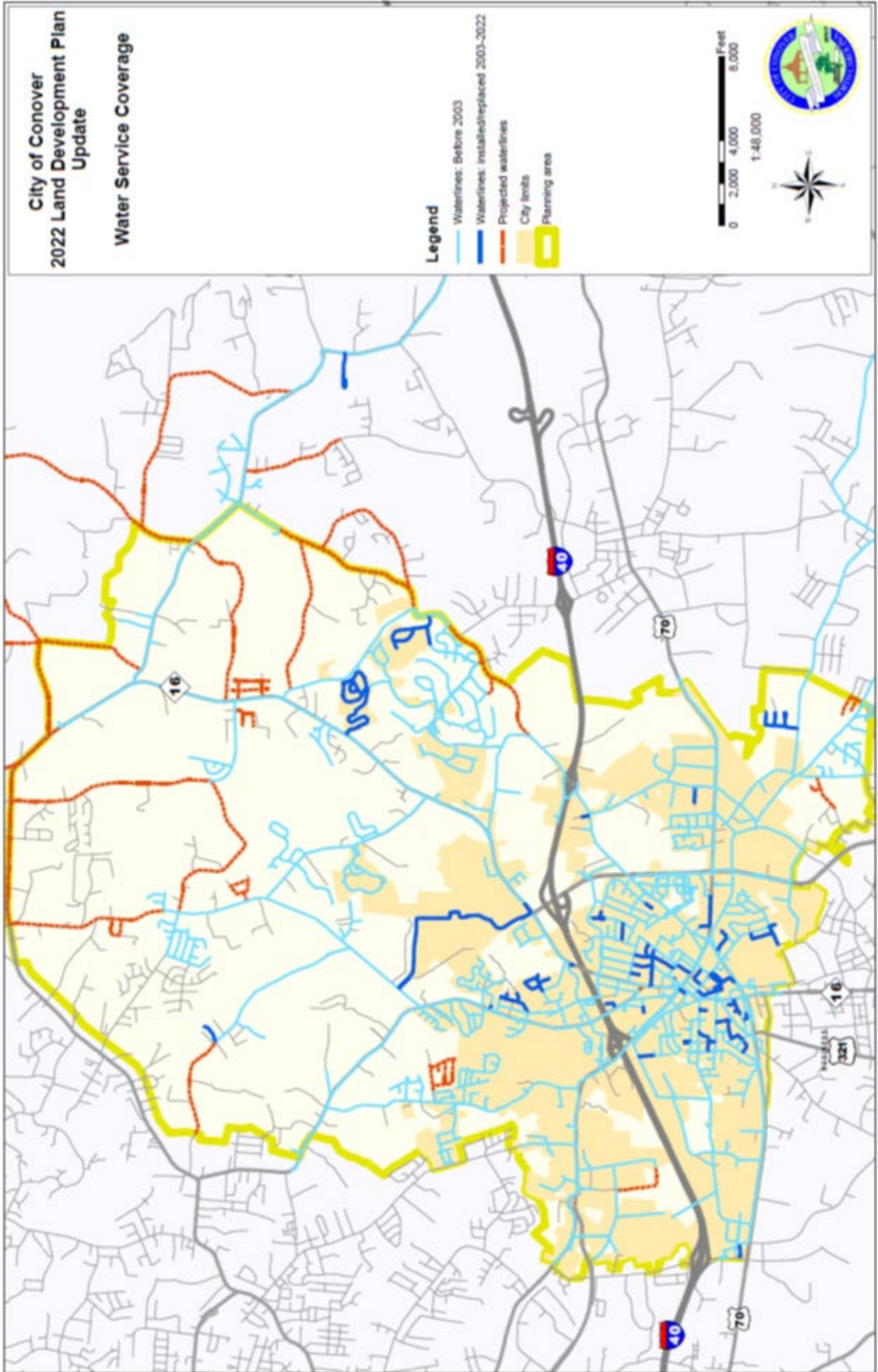
It is Conover's philosophy that continued partnerships with Community Development Block Grant assistance and adjacent jurisdictions to assist and implement projected water line extensions is necessary. This is not only in the expansion of customer growth, but more importantly as a manner to supply public services (e.g., clean potable water and fire protection) at a reasonable cost to all users. It is also important that the city continue working with developers to oversize water lines through new development projects for potential extensions beyond that development for future water service.

Two major technological improvements have been implemented in the last few years. The first is new automated meter reading (AMR) system, which utilizes a radio signal sent from a car to a water meter, was implemented in the city in 2000.



With a current read rate of 98% and a reduced read time from 15 days to two, the system has proven to be a huge asset for the city. With a current customer base of 5,021, this efficient system will increasingly become more important as new areas are annexed and new customers are integrated. The second is the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) program to monitor the water distribution system.

This high-tech computer system allows there to be 24-hour monitoring for total water inventory, reservoir levels, and the rate of speed at which certain valves open and close. This system serves to prevent many problems that could be disastrous, such as all water valves closing simultaneously. As water lines continue to be built in new areas, constant supervision will become increasingly important to ensure water quality.



Sewer service

As mentioned earlier, the placement of sewer lines help dictates where growth will occur. Over 120 miles of sewer lines, seven pump stations, and 3500+ manholes constitute Conover's sewerline collection system. The number of users utilizing the sewer system has increased by 76%, going from 1,952 customers in 1992 to 3,433 customers in 2002. The city adheres to a strict policy that anyone wishing to connect to the sewer system be annexed into the city, since the system is paid for and maintained by the taxpayers.



NE Wastewater Treatment Plant

The City of Conover maintains and operates a wastewater treatment facility: the Northeast Wastewater Treatment Plant. Conover also owns 10% of the capacity in a plant operated by the City of Newton, the Clark Creek Regional Plant. These multiple plants are necessary because the city lies in three separate drainage basins, and it is easier to locate the plants at natural low topographic places rather than providing for numerous pump stations. The city also, in conjunction with Hickory, Newton, and Catawba County, utilizes the Compost (Sludge) Facility located off Fairgrove Church Road.

The Northeast WWTP, located off Highway 16 on Hillview Drive, has a capacity of 1.5 million gallons per day, with a daily average flow of .65 million gallons per day.

This plant was expanded in 1991, more than doubling its original capacity, in order to meet requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. After treating the water, this plant discharges into Lyle Creek in the Catawba River Basin.

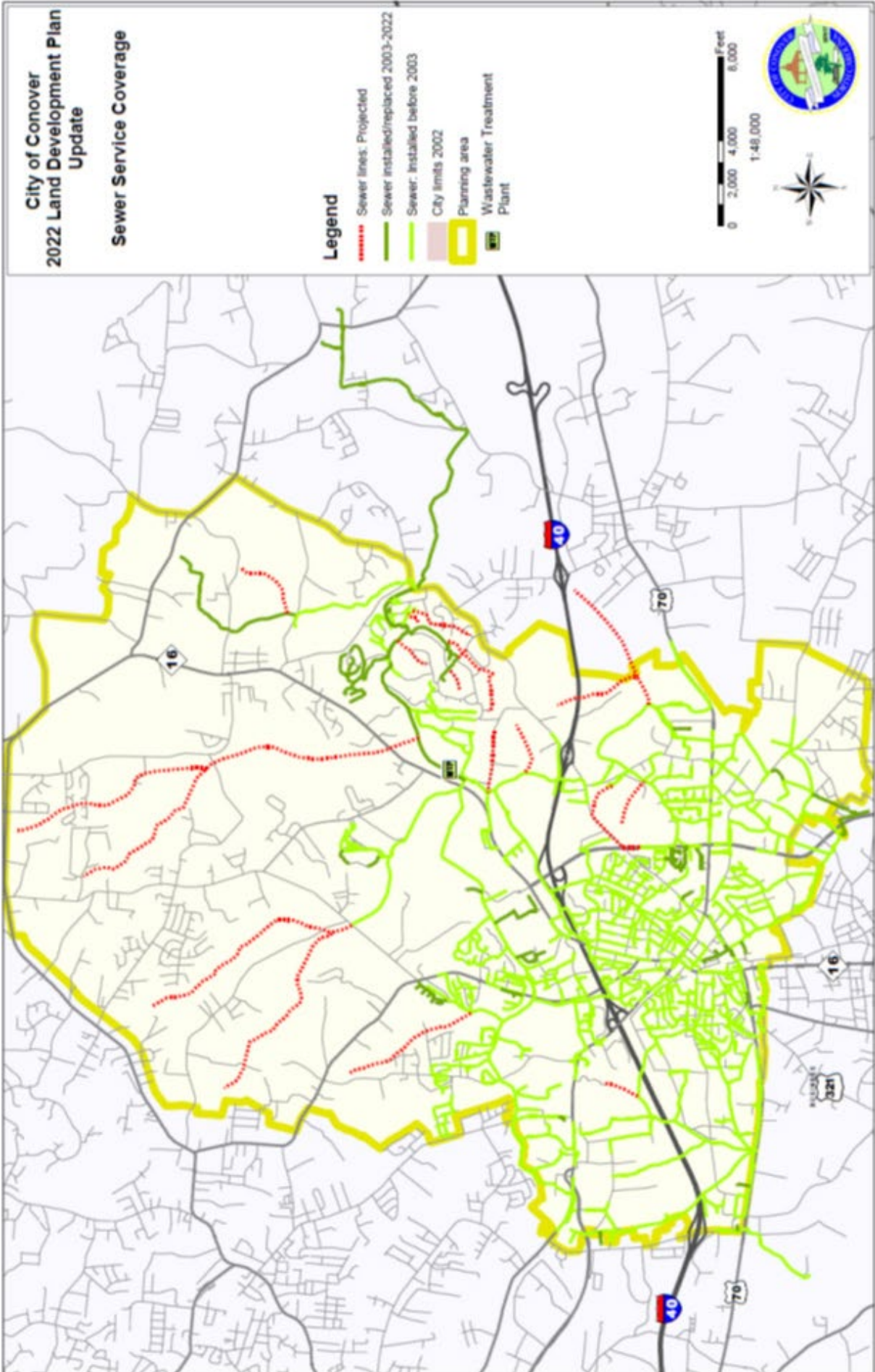
The NE Plant will likely require an expansion sometime in the next ten years due to the developing Northeast area of the city.

2003 marked the beginning of the Overflow Response Communicator, a telemetry system installation on manholes funded by a \$43,000 grant from the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund to help keep raw sewage out of streams and rivers. This system, more vital as new sewer lines are installed, and more users utilize existing lines.

The first priorities for future extensions are within areas already served by sewer service. There is available land for development within the basins where major outfall lines are in place. However, development pressure may bring about the need for extensions in areas, which are undiscernibly served, and in areas close to or within developed areas. This priority level includes the basins within Rock Barn Rd / McLin Creek Road; McLin Creek / Banner Road; St. Timothy Industrial district; and St. Johns Church Road areas. Other priorities include extensions as per developers' partnerships within the Rifle Range Road; Herman Sipe Road / County Home Road; and NC16 North / Rock Barn Road basins. It is Conover's philosophy that continued partnerships with Community Development Block Grant assistance and adjacent jurisdictions to assist and implement projected sewer line extensions is necessary. This is not only in the expansion of customer growth, but more importantly as a manner to supply public services at a reasonable cost to all users. It is also important that the city continue working with developers to oversize sewer lines through new development projects for potential extensions beyond that development for future sewer service.

The City is always looking at partnerships with other local governments that provides cost effective, efficient service to all customers. Conover is a proud and active member of the Utility Technical Advisory Committee, which includes Catawba County and the municipalities contained within. The main focus of this committee is to ensure that adequate utility service is provided to areas within the county that are not part of any particular municipality.

The funds to provide these services come through a county-wide utility tax of 2 cents per \$100 valuation of property. By assisting these county territories, Conover benefits on several levels. For one, we are helping our neighbors have access to services they could not normally implement. We are also having direct input on how these areas should develop, which will be beneficial if any of these territories are annexed in the future. The City will continue to follow water and sewer expansion plans with coordination from our surrounding jurisdictions, to include considering both water and sewer availability fees for all new access to the systems. This would give the City a capital fund to expand the plants and trunk lines without having to burden the existing customer base for this new development



Services: Street Maintenance

The annual street service cost per resident, which includes street, sidewalk, and drainage maintenance (i.e. patching, surface treatment, and resurfacing), provision of traffic signs and lighting, right-of-way maintenance, and new street construction was \$276.57 in 2001. This is a significant amount of continual service at a very low rate. The same responsibilities in 1999 cost \$340.58 annually. This 19% decrease in cost is attributable to the increase in development along areas that were previously already being maintained. Initial residential street construction is typically the responsibility of the developers.

In the last ten years, the street division of public works was responsible for street construction that helped revitalize the downtown area's infrastructure and resurfaced many others. It also served as a support service for city projects, such as park construction and the City Hall renovations. In keeping with the last ten years' revitalization of downtown, the city installed brick crosswalks in several areas. This division is responsible for constructing and maintaining the new and proposed sidewalk and bikeway paths mentioned previously.



Snow Removal

The City of Conover has approximately 92.14 miles of public streets within its jurisdiction, 16.28 miles, or 18%, more than that accounted for in the 2003 Land Development Plan. Of that total, 55.84 miles are city streets, and 36.30 miles are maintained by the state. Of the city streets, the majority are paved (52.53 miles). The new development that is still under construction, Cline Village, represents the first time that residential alleys have been built in Conover, constituting .31 miles as of the present.

Sanitation Collection

The sanitation division of the Conover Public Works Department provides weekly refuse collection for single-family residents in the city, as well as small commercial areas that do not have space for a private dumpster, provided they do not generate more than 2 roll-out containers weekly.



Curbside Recycling

Recognizing the importance of protecting our environment, Conover encourages all citizens to reduce waste via recycling. The city provides recycling bins, and curbside collection is made according to the household collection schedule. Routine recyclable items include newspaper, magazines, glass (clear, green, and brown), as well as

aluminum cans. The Recycle program during the year 2000 kept a total of nearly 1,211 tons of garbage from having to go to the landfill. As the population increases, recycling programs will become more important as a means of protecting and preserving our environment.



Curbside Sanitation Vehicles

Cemeteries, Parks, and Grounds Division

The grounds and parks division of public works maintains nine municipal parks, four more than in 1992. This trend will continue with new development transferring open space lands to the city as required by development regulations. The construction of road projects within the City has created additional maintenance responsibility for this division. Through municipal agreements, new trees, planted areas, grass strips and medians, utility strips, and sidewalks along with landscaping and maintenance of NCDOT right-of-ways are the responsibility of this division.

Growth for the sake of growing, unchecked and undirected is detrimental to the city's well-being. Streets, Sanitation and Parks / Grounds divisions are an integral part of proper municipal service in Conover's growth. Land development alone is not desirable. Appearance and continual maintenance is necessary for directed and beneficial quality growth to occur.

Therefore, just as funding are included for infrastructure improvements, Conover is cognizant of the fact that resources are in place for these essential services.



Washington-Southwest Park

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The City of Conover's Police Department is a firm believer in the effectiveness of community – police interaction for the optimal protection of residents. The department is comprised of 28 full-time officers, 1 Code Enforcement Officer, 2 civilian Records Clerks, 5 part-time officers, 1 part-time Records Clerk and 5 volunteer Police Chaplains. Considering only the full-time officers, this translates into one officer for every 275 citizens approximately.

As a mechanism to improve police protection, the department instituted a bike patrol unit that currently consists of three officers. The completion of the sidewalk and bikeway paths, as well as a focus on traditional development patterns, such as commercial nodes, will improve the mobility and effectiveness of the bike patrol unit. As with other services, expanded city limits and an increase in citizen numbers have substantially increased the workload and police coverage required of the department since 1992. However, the department still reports an average response time of only three minutes. The police station is centrally located next to City Hall at 115 2nd Avenue NE.

Fire Department

The City of Conover's fire department utilizes both full-time, as well as 35 volunteers, compared to 58 in 1992. As of 2022, the Conover Fire Department operates 3 Fire stations and is a "combination fire department", made up of part-time members, full-time members, and full-time staff members. Presently the Department has 19 full-time members and 24 part-time firefighters and officers which provide staffing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year at all 3 fire stations. The fire department provides protection for citizens and businesses within the city limits, as well as within the Conover Rural Fire District.



Fire Response

The department currently operates three fire stations. Station Two is located on 1st Street West, and was first built in 1971, with an enlargement constructed in 1976. It serves primarily the northwest and southwest areas of the city. Fire Station One, located on Conover Blvd. East, was dedicated in 1996, and serves primarily the northeast and southeast areas of the city. The third fire station is located in Cline Village on C & B Farm Road, to provide fire services to the rapidly developing northern areas, as well as to the Conover Rural Fire District. The design process for the proposed station began in July 2002 and construction should begin in the late 2003. With such expanded service, Conover is also considering contracting with the St. Stephens / Oxford departments to provide their fire services.

The Conover Fire Department has been preparing for an upcoming insurance grading survey, which will determine the rates that all property owners in Conover pay for fire insurance. The department is hoping to attain a class 5 rating as a result of improved and expanded fire protection services, the third fire station, and the increased connectivity of streets that resulted from the I-40 interchange project. In trying to provide quick and efficient fire protection to all residents, the fire department purchased a new fire truck in 2001 and, through a loan from the US Department of Agriculture, is slated to purchase two new pumpers. As land use intensifies and districts become denser, this additional fire protection will be an invaluable asset. The Conover Fire Department receives an average of 440 calls per year, with an average response time of four minutes.



Fire Station #3 Building

The Catawba County Communications Center dispatches the Conover Police and Fire departments through its Enhanced 911 system. By integrating GIS, the police respond with the officers assigned to that particular patrol zone and optimum fire routes are discernable, as well as the exact location of the closest fire hydrants for each call. Adequate public safety standards should be incorporated for future development with Police and Fire protection in mind.



Chapter 6 - Environment

Chapter Six: Environment

Clean air and water are essential to public health, the environment, as well as the economy in Conover. Air, water, and land quality concerns are beginning to plague the Catawba County area due to increased population densities, industrial growth, and a growing dependence on the automobile. Adherence to federal and state laws, as well as educating citizens, will be key factors in Conover's pursuit of environmental health.

Air Quality

Like other municipalities, Conover must obey federal and state environmental standards, but it has also taken the initiative to join with other governments in Catawba County in achieving air quality goals. Through the Catawba Air Quality Committee (CAQC) and the WPCOG, Conover, along with other Unifour jurisdictions, recently adopted the Early Action Compact and has developed a set of prioritized items for improving air quality.

The Early Action Compact (EAC) is an agreement between the North Carolina Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 office (Atlanta) and ten (10) local governments. The local governments are Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties and the municipalities of Hickory, Newton, Conover, Morganton, Lenoir, and Taylorsville. The EAC represents a partnership of Local, State and Federal Agency efforts to develop a State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the Unifour Area. It includes the memorandum of agreement, the protocol for the local EAP and the overall SIP development and schedule.



Air Pollution

In 2003, the Unifour Area violated the new EPA 8-hour ozone standard of .08 parts per million (ppm) for ozone. Our area's two ozone monitors, in Lenoir and Taylorsville, had three-year averages of .086 and .091 respectively. These numbers are slightly over the new standard. In April of 2004, EPA designated new nonattainment areas in the United States and this area was designated based upon our three-year average. The nonattainment designation is something that Conover wants to avoid due to the tremendous negative effects upon our economic development and transportation planning activities. Higher ozone values also indicates that the negative impacts upon the health of our citizens, especially the young and elderly, is increasing. The EAC serves two major purposes: the delay of implementation of nonattainment penalties until 2007 and an obligation to prepare the SIP by December 31, 2004 rather than 2007.

2022 Update: Catawba County was removed from the non-attainment status in 2011 and continues to conform to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air-quality standards. Staff should continue to monitor and maintain this air quality standard or seek to improve to protect the residents of the City.

The City of Conover has already accomplished two of the proposed suggestions by establishing landscaping standards for parking lots and encouraging Smart Growth tactics. Agriculture planted in parking lots is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also provides a system of carbon dioxide absorption. Smart Growth encourages compact development, thus automatically reducing the need for automobile travel, which in turn decreases the toxic automobile emission level. Conover also supports the expansion of the Piedmont Wagon Transit System and, through the sidewalk/bikeway paths, hopes that automobile transportation will decrease. Working with NCDOT to develop bike lanes and the Carolina Thread Trail could assist in reducing automobile traffic and thus mitigating potential air pollution issues.

Water Quality / Storm Water Management

The city has also had to adhere to the federal Clean Water Act, which will become even more important as the population density increases. The Clean Water Act mandates water quality standards and has recently begun to focus in on non- point source pollution also, such as storm water.

Through the lab facilities at the wastewater treatment plants and the new telemetry system on manholes, Conover has already taken initiatives to preserve water quality. However, storm water management will become more important and more difficult to manage as development decreases the natural filtration system.

Storm water runoff is the rain or snowmelt, mixed with pollutants such as oil and pesticides that it absorbs, that runs off streets, rooftops, parking lots, lawns, and other land surfaces. Historically, open ground space served as an adequate filtering system, which prevented excessive amounts of untreated water from flowing down storm drains directly into the streams and rivers. However, constant development has increased the number of sidewalks, curbs, and gutters at the expense of open land. The federal government, through the Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Water Act, has recognized the vast amounts of untreated water that are entering our lakes and streams and has made storm-water management a top priority.



Water Quality

Currently, the City of Conover is classified as a Phase II area, requiring that they take steps to inform the public of the dangers, involve the public in their decisions, and formulate an action plan if there were a major pollution of our water sources, such as a major oil spill. However, it is recognized that with more street construction and residents, there is the possibility of Conover becoming Phase III status, which will require a special drainage basin specifically for storm-water runoff. This water will then need to undergo a treatment process before being dispensed back into the streams.

The laboratory at the NEWWTP continually analyzes Conover's water quality. Staff continues to be innovative in developing monitoring, testing, and advance early detection systems. Conover should consider encouraging best management practices (BMP's) into the development process. This could include curb inlet cuts that could water the required landscaping and trees, and natural filtering as opposed to piping runoff straight to an impoundment feature.

Development Constraints

Though often unnoticed, natural environmental features, such as soils and wetlands, must be thoroughly analyzed and be a top priority when considering new development and land use. Some areas are not suitable for development, and we as citizens, must learn to accept that and work with, not against, our natural surroundings.

Topography and Soils

A topography analysis is useful in determining locations that may be a concern for future development. Slopes of 10-25 % are considered to have moderate to severe limitations for development, requiring a detailed review prior to development. Generally, slopes in the Piedmont region of North Carolina do not limit development to the degree that the Foothills and Mountain regions do. While some severe slopes are present within the study area, they are typically concentrated along creek banks.

It is recommended that slopes of over seven percent (7%) are precluded from terracing or benching development practices for “slab” or “on grade” built homes on small lots. This development type is only suited for less severe slopes due to excessive land grading and drainage problems which arise. Building construction with basements or crawlspaces is more conducive to sloping grades. It is also recommended that no building construction is permitted on slopes over twenty percent (20%) due to the severe slope, unless extreme care is taken, and precautionary measures are included during construction to prevent soil erosion.

The Catawba County Soil Survey, prepared by the US Department of Agriculture, indicated the suitability, degree, and type of limitation for dwellings, septic fields, industrial development, and roads. Development limiting soils, such as Congaree, Chewacla, and Worsham, were identified as flood prone or poorly draining, while four soil subtypes of three other soils, Cecil, Pacolet, and Madison, were identified as having severe and/or eroded slopes. These soil types are generally found within and along creeks. Although most soil types within Conover are highly suitable for development, individual site analysis should always occur prior to development.



Terraced Lots



Floodplains

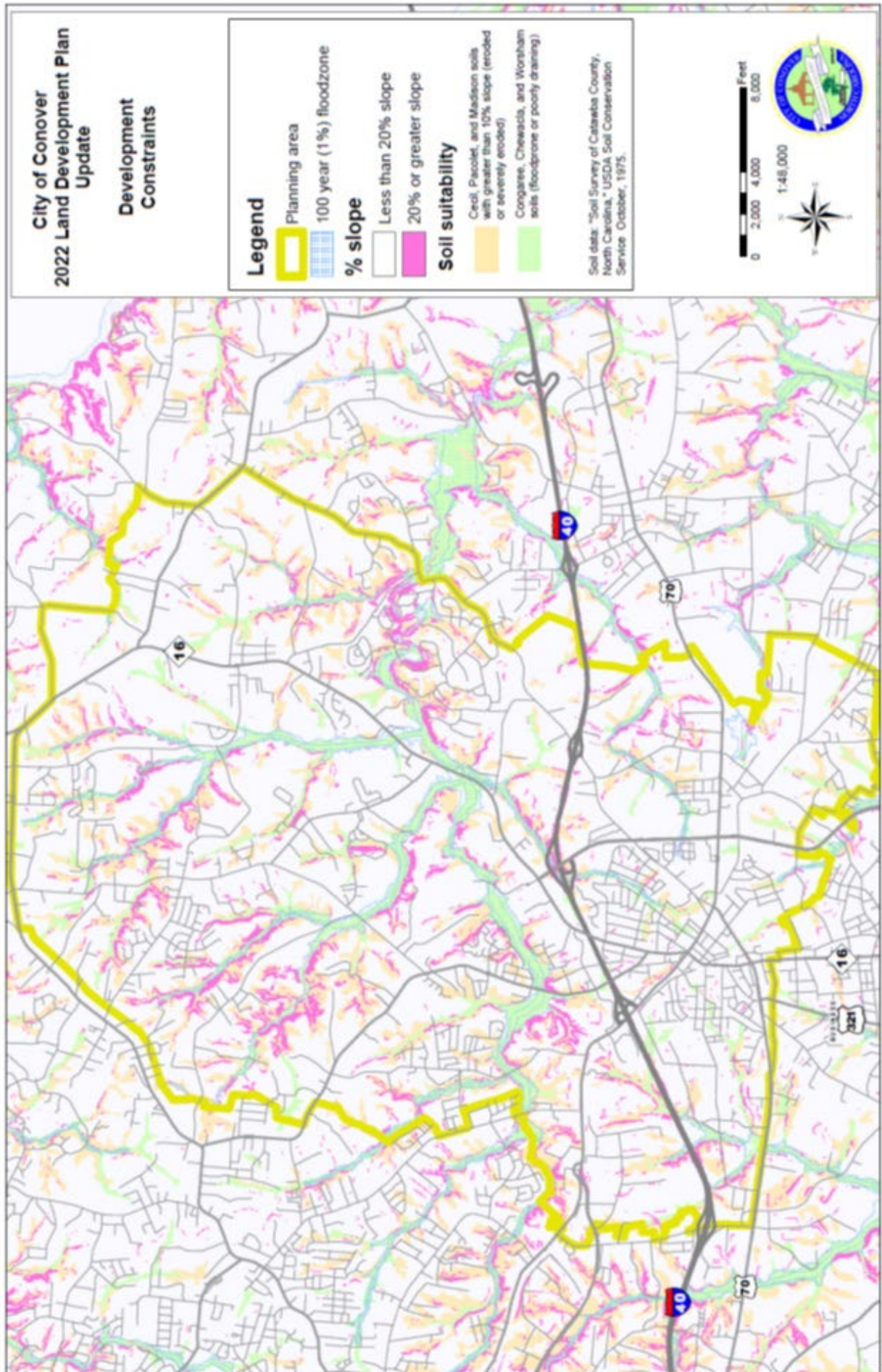
The first flood study for Conover was done in 1980 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with the most recent in 2007. This study identified the 100-year floodplain and flood hazard area for the city, including portions of Lyle, Mull, Mclin, Cline, and Conover Creeks. Special development regulations, such as floodproofing, must be adhered to for any structures to be built in these areas. Development within the floodway (the area adjacent to the creek) is prohibited. Overall, development within flood prone areas is highly discouraged by the city.

Floodplains do serve important functions in providing an area for creeks to overflow during flood events, as a buffer for toxins before entering the stream and potential recreation or land preservation opportunities (see the Open Space section of Chapter 3 Land Uses). Land within designated floodplains is discouraged for development of structures.

Water Supply Watershed Protection

A 1989 North Carolina General Statute established the “Water Supply Watershed Protection Act,” which serves to protect the raw drinking water supply for the citizens of North Carolina. The final regulations and classifications were adopted in 1992 by the Division of Environmental Management, a division of the NC Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources. In compliance with the act, the city adopted a zoning ordinance in 1993 that established the Water Supply Watershed Protection District. For clarification, a watershed is a large area of land from which water contributes to only one stream or river.

A small portion of Conover, in the Lake Norman watershed, is classified as a WS-IV protected area and includes the eastern fifth of the city. This area basically extends from the NE WWTP south through Brian Drive and McLin Creek Road to the Emmanuel Church Road and Travis Road intersection.





Appendix

2003 Land Development Plan (Updated through 2030) Conover North Carolina

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CITY OF CONOVER

GROWTH ANALYSIS

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<i>Population</i>	2281	3255 (+42%)	4245 (+30%)	5465 (+29%)	7367 (+34.8%)	8165 (+10%)	8421 (+3%)
<i>Area</i>	1.84 sq. mi. (1177.6 ac.)	2.24 sq. mi. (1433.6 ac.) (+22%)	2.6 sq. mi. (1664 ac.) (+15%)	6.03 sq. mi. (3856.3 ac.) (+132%)	9.29 sq. mi. (5943.8 ac.) (+54.1%)	10.76 sq. mi. (6891.7 ac.) (+ 15%)	11.06 (7078.4 ac.) (+2.7%)
<i>Annexations</i>	n/a	7	23	64	66	35	8
<i>Area Annexed</i>	n/a	.4 sq. mi. (256 ac.)	.36 sq. mi. (230.4 ac.)	3.43 sq. mi. (2192 ac.)	3.05 sq. mi. (1952.1 ac.)	.81 sq. mi. (516.4 ac.)	.36 sq. mi. (229.6 ac.)
<i>Assessed Valuation</i>	16,407,728 *	36,795,000 (+124%) ¹	118,116,655 (+221%)	372,554,612 (+215%)	820,283,211 (+220%)	1,063,939,201 (+29%)	1,240,784,052 (+17%)
<i>Tax Rate</i>	.50 **	.52 ¹ **	0.48	0.40	0.36	0.38	0.50
<i>Tax Levy</i>	\$82038	\$191,334 (+133%)	\$566,960 (+196%)	\$1,490,218 (+162%)	\$2,951,241 (+98%)	\$4,246,375 (+48%)	\$6,203,921 (+46%)
<i>Building Permits In Dollars</i>	n/a	8,998,050 prev. 10 yrs.	12,400,666 prev. 10 yrs.	69,371,631 prev. 10 yrs.	231,885,772 prev. 10 yrs.	201,957,776 prev. 10 yrs.	214,781,897 prev. 10 yrs.

* Figures adjusted up from 6,563,091 (1960) and 14,717,964 (1970) when assessments were made at 40% of value.

** Figures adjusted down from 1.25 (1960) and 1.30 (1970) when assessments were made at 40% of value.

¹ Figures adjusted/or vehicle billing; 1991 - 1998 are actual, 1999 is an estimate.

FY 1990 -91 and FY 1999-2000 were County revaluations.

The County now does a revaluation every four years, the next will be FY 2022-23.



Planet Labs, Inc.

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