

Highland Neighborhood Plan



Office of Neighborhoods

2002

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this plan is the Highland Neighborhood, a well established and modest neighborhood with good access to radial streets that lead to work centers, services and shopping.

Located in the northeast quadrant of the city, Highland is a quiet neighborhood of primarily single-family residences intermingled with pockets of small industrial uses. Larger industrial and commercial properties as well as small offices border the neighborhood. The City of Hickory has a prominent presence in the neighborhood. The city owns 123 acres, including a 20-acre vacant tract of land fronting 8th Street Drive NE, and operates the Public Services Complex, Fire Station # 2, Highland Park and Stanford Park.

Three minor thoroughfares bound the neighborhood to the south, west and east. A residential arterial road opened in September 1997, connecting the rapidly growing north-east quadrant to the downtown, bisecting the eastern half of the neighborhood.

The Highland Neighborhood has experienced a moderate rate of social and physical change over the past thirty years. This change is evident in the demographics, types of new development, overall appearance and attitude toward the neighborhood.

Highland residents consider their neighborhood a good place to live and raise a family. Long time residents value the traditional sense of community. The quality and availability of affordable homes is attracting families of diverse ethnic backgrounds and young couples to the neighborhood.

Dedicated neighbors and concerned commercial interests want to plan for ways to

enhance the reputation of the neighborhood through problem solving, as well as through promotion of the many assets of the area.

In examining the data collected during the planning process, it becomes apparent that a moderate degree of change has occurred within the Highland Neighborhood. This change is reflected in general land use, structural conditions, types of residential dwellings, and in trends in homeownership.

In 1967, approximately 5.6 acres or two percent of the total area was used as duplexes or multi-family units. Today, 29 acres or 9.5 percent of the total area in the neighborhood accommodates two or more families.

While there is no historical data regarding homeownership, the current estimate of 44.3 percent of single-family homes in Highland owned by investors and occupied by renters is consequential. Add in the 283 multi-family units and the percentage of rental units in Highland jumps to 67.6 percent. The affordability of multi-family units and duplexes, combined with the availability of single-family homes purchased as investment properties, creates the potential for a less stable, more transient neighborhood.

Residents of Highland were noticing an increase of poorly maintained properties in the neighborhood. Eleven out of the thirteen single-family dwellings identified as needing minor repairs or major maintenance are investment properties owned by landlords. Ten percent of the multi-family units in the neighborhood are in need of repair.

Homeowners expect others to keep properties well maintained to preserve the appearance and image of the neighborhood. It is widely known that the appearance of properties and the level of homeownership have an

impact on the value assessed to all adjacent properties.

Although there has been an increase in commercial occupancy within the Highland Neighborhood during the past thirty years, the neighborhood continues to be predominately residential. There are a number of vacant lots where new, affordable housing could be constructed. A voiced concern is that vacant parcels are becoming sites for multi-family units with greater frequency. This trend disrupts the traditional single-family character of the Highland neighborhood.

Highland is bounded by commercial and industrial development on two sides. Industrial uses, commercial service-type development including plumbing and electrical contractors, auto repair and body shops, warehousing and distribution facilities, nightclubs and restaurants, vacant lots and offices characterize these areas. The exterior appearance of some of the buildings and grounds give the perception that Highland is a neglected neighborhood.

Highland neighbors began the planning process after the city adopted the development concepts contained in the *Hickory by Choice* Land Use and Transportation Plan. The Land Development Code, which implements *Hickory by Choice* was adopted by City Council and went into effect May 1, 2001. The new Code resulted in a major overhaul of the zoning classifications and most of the associated ordinances that had been in place since 1988.

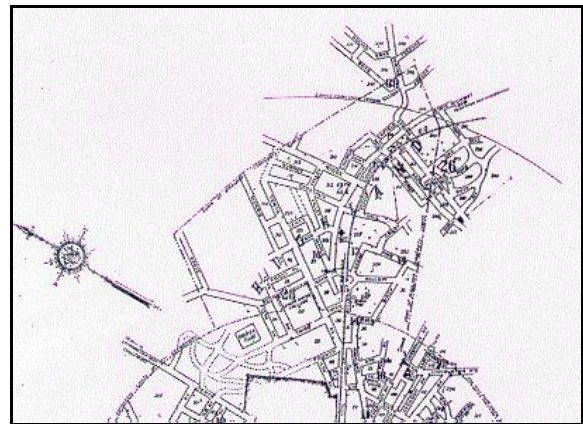
Key recommendations in the *Hickory by Choice* plan are to increase walkability through sidewalk development and to create neighborhood and community business areas to reduce the need to drive long distances across town. Higher density housing and

community services are proposed for areas adjacent to these neighborhood cores. The street system would link residential areas and neighborhood centers to ease traffic and allow pedestrian access.

The strategies, recommended actions and programs set forth in the Plan are designed to meet the social and physical development needs of the Highland Neighborhood over the next five years.

This planning process works only if residents, business owners and property owners work together. While these groups share common interests, some of the concerns are individualistic and must be dealt with accordingly.

By going through the neighborhood planning process, Highland residents and business interests have had the opportunity to decide how they want their neighborhood to evolve, to create a plan to reach their goals, and then to work toward implementation of their Plan.



The 1931 Sanborn Insurance Map index shows how the incorporation of Highland extended the city limits.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Highland Neighborhood Plan is a working document, which addresses the concerns of neighborhood residents, property owners and business interests in an attempt to preserve the livability and long-term viability of this older neighborhood.

The foundation of this Plan is based on active citizen participation and informed decision-making. With the input of residents, property owners and business owners, this Plan is more effective in meeting the particular needs of this neighborhood and stands a better chance of being implemented.

This plan provides an analysis of a wide range of factors which collectively foster Highland's physical, social and economic environment while positively affecting its capacity to continue to function as an integral and unique part of Hickory's neighborhood composition.

The Highland Neighborhood Plan provides the most detailed guidance of any City of Hickory planning document on the issues of planning and development of the respective area. When guidance is needed on an issue for this neighborhood, it is important to refer to the Highland Neighborhood Plan, Hickory's Land Development Code, and all other pertinent adopted city plans to review and weigh all public interests in arriving at well thought out and viable decisions.

Organization of the Plan

The Highland Neighborhood Plan is organized into seven sections.

Section I – Purpose of the Plan introduces the Highland Neighborhood and identifies its

assets and accomplishments, as well as the issues, concerns and expectations of the stakeholders. The purpose and format of the Plan is also explained in this section.

Section II – The Planning Process outlines the process through which this entire plan was derived. The members of the Planning Committee are recognized, as are all of the resource people who helped the Committee formulate the recommendations and strategies included in this Plan by providing information and data for the group to consider.

Section III - Neighborhood Character presents a review and analysis of Highland's historical development.

Section IV - Existing Conditions describes factors that have physical and social impact on the development and evolution of the neighborhood: demographics; land use; zoning; transportation; public infrastructure and facilities; environmental characteristics; building conditions; community development; trends in homeownership; commercial activity and community safety.

This section also summarizes different concerns, trends and issues raised during the Highland Neighborhood planning process based on the perceptions of the Planning Committee, business and commercial property owners, as well as City of Hickory staff.

Section V - The Plan contains a full set of strategies and recommended actions and programs designed to address the issues and to provide guidance for Highland's development over the next five years. The recommendations include a justification for the request, a cost estimate, a timetable for accomplishing the action and assign a responsible party for accountability.

Section VI - Implementation identifies the framework within which these strategies, recommended actions and programs should be implemented.

Section VII - Appendices contain a spreadsheet of the recommendations and seven maps which illustrate the existing land use, current zoning, existing and proposed sidewalks, existing and proposed street lights, building conditions, and property occupancy status in Highland Neighborhood. Maps showing the Housing Enhancement and Economic Development Target Areas are included.

Neighborhood Accomplishments

From its first meeting on June 6, 1995, the Highland Neighborhood Association has actively participated in City's *Neighborhood Focus* program by meeting and hosting neighborhood events regularly. Through hard work and persistence, the neighborhood successfully addressed some immediate concerns and accomplished several short-term goals.



One of the early accomplishments of the Neighborhood Association was a request for a sign at the passive park adjacent to Stanford Park.

The first major accomplishments were the cleanup of the City's Public Works material

storage yard, and with help from the Hickory Police Department, the elimination of gang activities from the Highland Recreation Center. Neighbors worked with the Landscape Services Division to rejuvenate the passive Highland Park and install a sign where before there was none.

For two years, the Neighborhood Association and a church hosted the Halloween Safe House program, which attempts to put the fun and safety back into trick-or-treating. Children and their parents were led by police officers to the homes of neighbors who registered in advance. This is to ensure the children's safety. Highland United Methodist Church expanded the activities and included young people from their congregation.



Lt. Hank Guess distributes candy as part of the neighborhood Halloween Safe House.

On September 10, 1995, the Neighborhood Association held its first ice cream social. There were over 100 people in attendance. This event raised \$300 for the Association. Over the years more ice cream socials and events designed to bring residents of the neighborhood together have been held.

In 1996, the Neighborhood Association held a Police Appreciation Brunch to thank all of the Baker PACT officers for their support of the neighborhood. There were 75 people in attendance.

Neighborhood Association sponsored yard sales, bake sales and donations have raised enough money to apply for a \$500 Sustaining Matching Grant from the City of Hickory in 1996 and 2000. The money was used to host a Street Dance on October 19, 1996 and a multicultural barbeque on October 4, 1997.



The Multi-Cultural Barbeque in October 1997 brought neighbors together for fun, food and fellowship.

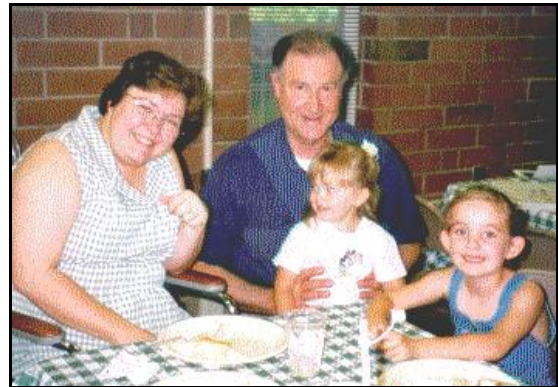
A city sponsored matching grant was used to purchase neighborhood identification signs in 2001. The signs are placed atop street nameplates to let passer-bys know that they are in Highland.



Neighborhood identification signs purchased by residents mark the boundaries and entranceways of Highland.

In June 1997, Highland Neighborhood liaison Fire Chief Herman Bishop announced he was retiring and returning to his home state

of New Mexico after serving the City of Hickory for seven years. Neighbors thought so much of Chief Bishop that they hosted a covered dish supper and honored him with a plaque. Chuck Hansen, the Director of Public Services was appointed as Highland's new liaison.



Neighbors honored Former Fire Chief and Highland Neighborhood liaison Herman Bishop upon his retirement in June 1997.

The group tried to undertake the neighborhood planning process in 1996 but could not muster the community support to participate in the process. Regardless, active neighbors continued to build support by developing a portfolio of information on the Highland Neighborhood Association including services available to residents of the neighborhood. Under new leadership, citizen interest and commitment to the neighborhood planning process was determined sufficient and began the process in early October 2000.

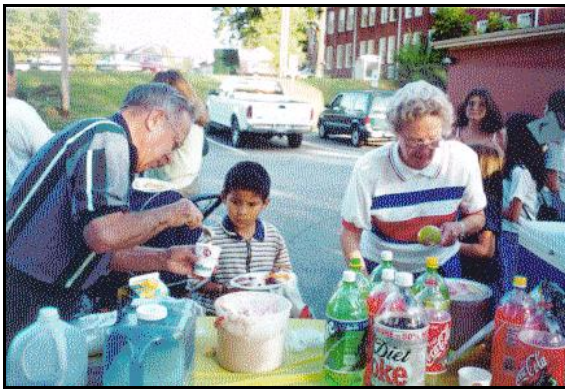
Neighbors have noticed that things are better in the neighborhood since the group became active. When the opportunity to undertake the long-range planning process presented itself, residents and commercial interests came together to participate. They felt that by planning together with the City they could develop positive approaches to resolve their concerns. By participating in the planning process, the group wanted to benefit not

only their neighborhood but also the entire city.

Neighborhood Assets

The Highland Neighborhood has many strengths and assets which will contribute to the success in implementing their long-range neighborhood plan.

- Highland is a friendly, quiet, well-established neighborhood of hard working people - This part of Hickory has long been a modest working class neighborhood. Neighbors that know each other are willing to help each other at a moments notice. Life long residents welcome newcomers and acknowledge the need to involve others, particularly non-English speaking neighbors, in Neighborhood Association activities.



Martha and Jimmie Bolick serve ice cream at the Neighborhood Social in September 2000.

- The neighborhood is centrally located to services, community amenities and jobs - Easy access to good schools and Lenoir-Rhyne College, city parks and recreation facilities, downtown and other shopping opportunities, restaurants and services makes this family-oriented neighborhood a nice place to live for all. The community is serviced by the Piedmont Wagon public transit system. Three churches are

located in Highland to serve neighbors. Highland provides unique opportunities for family owned and operated businesses.

- Homes and property in Highland are affordable - Homeowners agree that this neighborhood provides a good stable asset that allows for a quick return on their investment.
- Excellent rapport with community police - The residents, business and commercial property owners consider their PACT officers an integral part of the neighborhood and another resource to achieve neighborhood improvement success.



PACT Officers enjoy the neighborhood picnic held in Highland Park in May 1997.

- Positive working relationships with City departments - Highland Neighborhood Association has enjoyed the advice and assistance of many city departments throughout its existence. Given the considerable presence of city facilities located in the area, communication between the neighbors and city officials is essential. This excellent working relationship with the City is the key to formulating successful long-range plans for neighborhood improvement.

- Proven record of accomplishments and community support - Ever since the Neighborhood Association was organized, determined leaders have built partnerships with local businesses and other organizations. Initially, the Association developed a portfolio of information on the Highland Neighborhood Association and the services available to the residents of the neighborhood. The Halloween Safe House program and a number of social events involved many neighbors showed that Highland residents are proud of their community.
- Highland Neighborhood is a safe, model environment for an established neighborhood - There are fourth generation families living in the neighborhood. Coupled with an interjection of new and younger residents, this neighborhood has a healthy future ahead.

Issues and Concerns

The Highland Neighborhood has traditionally been a quiet, working class neighborhood filled with comfortable, modest single-family homes occupied by people who have lived in the area most of their lives. In recent years, neighbors have noticed dramatic changes occurring throughout the neighborhood, namely the increase of owner-occupied homes converting to rental units, and the evolving demographic characteristics of the Highland area.

From the beginning, the Highland Neighborhood Association has strived for diverse and active participation from the entire neighborhood. This is not an easy task given language barriers and inherent cultural differences. Neighbors believe they are making progress to break through these barriers and bridge the gaps that divide them.

Highland residents and property owners have realized that the best way to restore and stabilize the neighborhood is to be proactive and plan for inevitable change. Neighbors know that by planning together with neighbors, the city, businesses, and other agencies they can develop ideas and formulate strategies to address these issues, which impact their lives and their neighborhood.

The following are issues identified by the neighborhood and justification for wanting to address these concerns in their Plan.

- Develop the former Bumbarger property for single-family homeownership - Neighbors feel strongly that the City owned property on the east side of 8th Street Drive NE should be developed for homeownership. Neighbors voiced grave concern over the further development of multi-family units in the neighborhood. Neighbors agree on the need for an attractive transition zone from the high-density multi-family development to the north of the property to the single-family character of Highland. Attached single-family development, such as townhomes, on the portion of the property that fronts 8th Street Drive NE would be viewed as a good use of the property. Neighbors feel strongly that the majority of the property should be developed for single-family detached homes resembling the existing character of the neighborhood.



The Bumbarger property off of 8th Street Drive NE presents a unique development opportunity for owner-occupied single-family housing.

- Lack of sidewalk connectivity to the park, bus stops and other destinations - Pedestrian safety is a concern for this neighborhood where many children play and elderly walk for fitness. Despite the presence of a former elementary school, sidewalks lack east to west connectivity. Linking the residential heart of the neighborhood to the recreation complex under construction on 8th Street Drive NE is critical.
- Deterioration of Highland School - The Highland School, built in 1921, was once the centerpiece of the neighborhood. Closed to students in 1980, the building sat empty except for a few pigeons and squirrels. Vandals left their mark with broken windows, which caused the Hickory City Council to consider demolishing the building in 1989. The landmark was saved in 1991 when investors renovated the 11,400 square foot former school into nineteen apartment homes for the elderly. The property has changed hands over the years and deferred maintenance has taken its toll on the building. Highland Apartment residents and long-time neighbors are hoping the new owners will see the social and historical impor-

tance of the landmark and make the necessary repairs while playing an active role in the improvement of the neighborhood.

- Intensive and conflicting development patterns - Current land use and zoning allows uses and densities that are inconsistent with the neighborhood goal of promoting residential renewal. Construction of multi-family units has significantly outpaced construction of new single-family homes over the past thirty years. Years ago when transportation was limited and close proximity of homes to workplaces was a good thing, industrial or commercial use properties were built among single-family homes, and vice versa, Today, the intermingling of land uses causes tension between homeowners and business proprietors.



After sitting vacant for many years, the former Stewart Construction building was reoccupied by Troutman Plumbing in 2001.

- Improving neighborhood traffic problems - Highland residents have accepted the 8th Street Extension road project and the creation of the one-way pair system. Many still express their belief that the one-way pairs make it difficult to get through the neighborhood easily. The road conversion was completed to alleviate congestion from the fast growing northeast quadrant. The neighborhood continues to experience problems with

speeding cars, vehicles running stop signs and instances of vehicles parked on both sides of the street, which impedes safe and normal two-way traffic on the residential streets. Further traffic concerns are generated from commercial or industrial permitted use properties that are interspersed among residential uses. These traffic problems create dangerous situations for children and pedestrians in the neighborhood. Highland wants to explore all possible solutions to traffic concerns.

- Strengthen public safety enforcement - A few years ago, Highland's number one concern was drug activity around Stanford Park and Highland Recreation Center. While an increased police presence has stemmed the activity, neighbors feel that, for the safety of their children and restoration of the neighborhood's sense of security, more can be done. Loud "boom boxes" and car stereos around the park, and from vehicles passing through the neighborhood continue to disrupt the peacefulness of the neighborhood and aggravate residents. The northeast is the fastest growing quadrant in the city. Highland neighbors believe that as more properties are added through annexation and new homes are built, police coverage of the Highland neighborhood will suffer. A number of residents expressed concern regarding the number of stray cats, barking dogs and wild animals and question the effectiveness of the City's animal control program. The Highland Neighborhood Association wants to be proactive and preserve the peacefulness by formally participating in the Police Department's Community Watch program. Neighbors know that by continuing to work with the Hickory Police Department and addressing these concerns street by street, they will make their neighborhood a better place to live.

- Improving the level of code enforcement - The residents of Highland are proud of their neighborhood, but they are witnessing an increase in absentee landlords who do not maintain their rental properties, neglected vacant properties, litter on empty lots and in the streets. Unsightly properties, overgrown lots and accumulations of litter project a negative image of Highland, especially to potential homebuyers. As the new Land Development Code goes into effect, residents will support an expedited, comprehensive code enforcement effort, special zoning or appearance codes to restore neighborhood appearances and attract new homeowners.



This house on 13th Avenue NE remained an eyesore for several years because the owners lived out of the state and let it fall into disrepair.

- Improving physical and economic development opportunities - Highland neighborhood is greatly impacted by commercial and industrial development in and adjacent to its boundaries. The area generally lacks quality retail and service opportunities. Vacant buildings and empty lots diminish the appearance and attractiveness of the commercial corridor. Highland would benefit greatly by working with businesses and the City to examine current land use patterns and zoning in order to assess the situation.

The goal is to create strategies that will prevent inappropriate development, enhance the Highland business area, and advance the City's physical and economic development plans.

- Enhancing neighborhood infrastructure and public property maintenance - Residents of Highland want to maintain and enhance the residential quality of the neighborhood. A lack of street lighting and sidewalks in the neighborhood, and other deficient infrastructure such as streets, drainage systems and right of way maintenance, contribute to a decreased sense of neighborhood health. It is reasonable to believe that improved neighborhood conditions will be conducive to improved overall maintenance, which in turn improves property values. Simple things like timely removal of graffiti, not letting litter accumulate on the road side, regular street sweeping, and edging curbs are actions that are easily cast aside as insignificant. To a neighborhood trying to remain stable and viable, positive appearances are critical.
- Improving recreational activities for all age groups - From young children to widowed and retired neighbors, Highland Neighborhood residents comprise a wide-range of age groups. Concern about the lack of activities and a place for teens to gather for safe and legal entertainment was expressed. The neighborhood is excited about the plans for a new 40,000 square foot Recreation Complex and Administration building at Stanford Park scheduled for completion in Spring 2003. The Neighborhood Association hosted two community-wide meetings to discuss the development of the new facility. They suggested that the building be named "Highland Community and Recreation Center."

Residents have two concerns. The first is that unforeseen problems will stall progress toward realization of the complex. Their second concern is what the City of Hickory plans to do with the existing, under-utilized recreation center and playground adjacent to the Highland School Apartments. Their fear is that if the building is abandoned, it will become a neighborhood nuisance. An associated fear is that the City of Hickory might sell the property for a use neighbors consider inappropriate.

- Enhancing the appearance of the neighborhood and the commercial corridor - The commercial corridor along Highland Avenue NE suffers from a lack of landscaping and street trees, the overall appearance is shabby at best. Residents and business owners know that enhancing the appearance of the neighborhood will in turn enhance the image of Highland and their property values.
- Acknowledging and recognizing Highland's value as a historic neighborhood - A number of architecturally significant structures, homes and commercial buildings, can be found throughout the neighborhood. Some property owners want the opportunity to take advantage of rehabilitation tax credits and other benefits of historic designation. The first step is to build neighborhood-wide support for a historic property inventory.
- Develop effective means of communicating positive aspects of Highland to the whole community - Residents want to attract and involve more young families and professionals to the neighborhood. A good public relations campaign would boost interest among homebuyers and

the professional real estate community. Such a campaign should include homeowners as well as renters. Highland neighbors do things every week to help improve the community, from cleaning up an elderly woman's yard to picking up litter or delivering Meals on Wheels. These activities should be publicized to promote the neighborhood image and fuel the contagiousness of doing good deeds.



Annual litter clean-ups are perfect for showing community pride and spirit. This one was held in May 2000.

INVOLVING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Business, industrial and commercial property owners share the residents' concern for the safety and appearance of the area and desire long-term viability for the area. Business owners depend on a healthy neighborhood to keep customers coming back.

In October 1996, attempts were made to establish a Highland Business Association. Interest in organizing piqued when a special use permit to operate an adult cabaret in the former Miller's Curb Market building on Highland Avenue NE was proposed by an out of town club owner. Hickory City Council denied the special use permit based on testimony given at the public hearing. The groups' interest in organizing soon dissipated.

A special meeting was held in conjunction with the regular neighborhood planning process meetings specifically for business and commercial property owners along Highland Avenue NE and 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road). While these areas are technically outside the recognized Neighborhood Association boundaries, the Planning Committee acknowledged early in the process the effect the commercial and industrial area has on the neighborhood. The Planning Committee supported the idea of a special meeting unanimously.

A luncheon meeting was convened in January 2001 where nineteen property owners, local bankers, real estate professionals, property managers, and small business owner-operators gathered to learn about the intent of the neighborhood planning process and to share their concerns for the area. The following issues were discussed:

- Bar clientele and activities associated with such establishments constitute a public nuisance
- Conversion of Highland and 9th Avenue NE to one-way streets makes access difficult
- One-way streets cause motorists to use private drives as cut-throughs
- Support for the Commercial Landscape Incentive Grant program
- Support the extension of Façade Appearance Grant boundaries



Tom Carr, Executive Assistant for Development, speaks with commercial property owners at the January 2001 meeting.

Neighborhood Expectations

At the beginning of the process, Planning Committee members were asked what they expected out of the process of formulating their neighborhood plan. Their responses were straightforward and worthy aspirations.

Below is a list of comments from the Planning Committee:

- Beautify the neighborhood and parks
- Want to feel safe in the neighborhood
- Pedestrian safety
- Raise levels of respect for others and their property
- More teamwork – City, neighborhood, businesses and property owners working together
- More sidewalks
- More business participation
- More support for cleaning up the neighborhood
- More knowledge of city services
- Let City know we are proud of Highland
- Neighbors get to know neighbors
- Clean up the neighborhood
- Have a neighborhood we can be proud of
- Make Highland a better place to live
- Make Highland a place people want to live

- Increase property values

Early in the process, the Planning Committee identified barriers that might keep them from attaining their goal. Statements included:

- Low community participation
- Neighbor apathy
- Neighbors not wanting to get involved
- Neighbors not cooperating
- Inability to conform to regulations
- Time constraints – people are too busy
- City not willing to pass or enforce regulations to help neighborhood
- Lack of City Council interest
- Funding
- Lack of diversity – how to communicate with those who don't speak English
- Absentee property owners – lax lease agreements
- Planning Committee members giving up on the process
- Politics

Critical to any problem-solving exercise are the acknowledgment of potential roadblocks and the identification of possible solutions. The Planning Committee brainstormed these approaches:

- Raise participation by going door to door
- Pressure neighbors to conform to regulations
- Beg neighbors to participate
- Understand that there is strength in numbers
- Hold fund raisers
- Recognize that some recommendations must be worked into the city's budget process
- Justify the neighborhood's needs
- Translate materials into different languages
- Make effort to invite landlords or make contact with them personally

- Commit to the planning process to avoid giving up
- Vote!

Highland neighbors committed to the planning process and agreed to work toward the resolution of issues and the improvement of their neighborhood.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

In May of 1996, the Hickory City Council endorsed the concept of a ten-step neighborhood planning process as developed and presented by planning staff. This planning process is based on the philosophy of “What they plan, they own.” No one knows better than the people who live and work in a neighborhood what the concerns and needs are and how those issues can be addressed.

The long-range neighborhood planning process is a proactive and responsive systematic evaluation of trends and conditions in the neighborhood. It is a process that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the area to help maintain and stabilize the neighborhood. The process serves as a means to increase citizen participation and effectively allocate resources.

The planning process is geared more towards long term problem solving and gaining a broader understanding of the issue as opposed to immediate response to someone's complaint.

The Highland Neighborhood Plan is the result of a consensus building process. Through open, honest and thoughtful discussion, the Planning Committee reached points of agreement and developed strategies to address concerns and implementation actions to achieve their goals.

Steps in the Planning Process

ORGANIZATION AND MEETING PROCESS

The residents of Highland formed a Planning Committee and agreed to meet twice a month to hear from resource people and to discuss their issues of concern and develop strategies to address these concerns.

Each meeting was based on a specific concern about some functional area. Specific questions, such as, “What can we do about the junky house next to mine?” and “What can be done about speeding vehicles?” were explored as part of the planning process on the date designated for the particular topic.



Parks and Recreation Director Mack McLeod spoke to the Planning Committee about plans for the new recreation center at Stanford Park.

Opening lines of communication between the Planning Committee and the City allowed two of the neighborhood's concerns to be addressed prior to the adoption of the plan.

Members of the Planning Committee received a notebook to help keep the agendas, minutes and other materials organized throughout the planning process. The notebook contained a narrative describing the Neighborhood Planning Process, a tentative project schedule, and a set of ground rules for the Planning Committee to follow as the process progressed.

The Planning Committee's primary role was to attend the meetings and openly discuss the issues. Active listening and each person's participation was key to having thorough understanding and debate of the topics. Each member was also encouraged to act as a neighborhood liaison, to talk about the Committee's meetings and solicit comments from Highland neighbors in an attempt to keep

those not directly involved in the process informed.

The City of Hickory's Neighborhood Coordinator, Tricia Huffman facilitated the planning process and prepared the agendas and notes from each of the meetings. In addition, she gathered pertinent data and arranged for the appropriate resource people to present to the group. Another key component of the Neighborhood Coordinator's role was to keep the process moving. While thorough discussion of the ideas and recommendations was important, the group was encouraged not to get bogged down with irrelevant details or personal animosity.

The Planning Committee meetings were subject to open meeting laws and reporters were encouraged to attend. Publicity of any planning process is good because the whole community can be informed as to what the Planning Committee discussed. One of the important aspects of a planning process is to try to involve and inform as many people as possible so that no one is surprised by any of the recommendations at the end of the process.

On two occasions, postcards were mailed to every household, owner occupied and rental, every commercial property owner, and identified business operator inviting them to become involved in, or at the very least more aware of, the development of the Highland Neighborhood Plan.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The Highland Neighborhood Plan represents a consensus of the residents and business owners and others who have participated in preparing the Plan.

On average, fifteen residents attended semi-monthly planning committee meetings and

actively participated in the development of the Highland Neighborhood Plan. Many more were kept abreast of the planning process progress and discussions via mailings.

Such an intensive undertaking would not have been possible without the dedication and determination of an optimistic group of neighbors and property owners who have a desire to enhance the quality of life in Highland.

The Planning Committee met a total of thirteen times to hear from resource people, discuss strategies and recommendations to include in the plan and review drafts of the plan. The Committee was generally representative of the geographic boundaries of the neighborhood.



Public Services Director Chuck Hansen discusses an issue with a commercial property owner at one of the planning meetings.

Since these people live in or have a vested interest in the neighborhood, they are the most knowledgeable of their needs. They also will play a critical role in monitoring the progress and implementation of the Plan.

Neighborhood Planning Committee

Iris Benfield
Carolyn Bolick

Floyd Bolick
Jimmie Bolick
Martha Hunt-Bolick
Lois Bollinger
Janice Brown
Ron Burns
Rodney Cain
Art Caldwell
Heather Caldwell
James Carswell
Katie Childers
Byron Carroll
Norma Frye
Paul Haskins
Annette Horne
Sean Huffman
Shirley Jernigan
Kathryn Kaylor
Henry Kyzer
Burl Lehman
Kathryn Lehman
Sheila Little
Hal Monroe
Jimmy Roddy - Hickory Yarns
Bobby Rozzelle
Carolyn Rozzelle
Scott Smart
Rendy Snyder
Betty Sullivan
Wilfred Wells

Business and Commercial Property Owners

The business and commercial property owners in Highland have a substantial influence in the area and represent a very important segment of the neighborhood. A special meeting was held in January 2001 to gather their input in formulating strategies for the Plan.

Teresa Burgess - BB&T
Debra Barr - Catawba Valley Bank
Robert Campbell - Highland Ave. NE
Nancy Combs - Main Ave. NE property
Pat Couch - PB Associates
Claudette Franklin - Highland Ave. NE

property
Jim Goforth - Prudential Hickory Metro
Real Estate
Emma Gene Hedrick - Highland Ave. NE
property
Deanie Hilton - Sandy Ridge Road property
David Holland - Holland Alignment
Al Kale - Realty Connection
Stephen Lane - Peoples Bank
S. Micah Lee - Peoples Bank
Chris Miller - Rental property management
Joe Reynolds - former Southern Furniture
Hardware property
Steve Smirch - Top Notch Homes
John and Peggy Stratton - Stratton Electric
William Wallace - Sandy Ridge Road home-owner

City of Hickory Council Members

Alderman Ward # 1 - Hamilton Ward
Alderswoman Ward # 5 - Sally Fox

Media

The local media was supportive throughout the Highland Neighborhood Planning process. Numerous articles appeared in the local paper. Continued media attention will be necessary to aid in the implementation of the Plan.

Steven Mackay - Hickory Daily Record

Hickory Police Department

In 1993, the Hickory Police Department committed to community-based problem solving citywide. The initiative is known as Police and Community Together (PACT).

PACT has developed into an integral part of the community. Officers work under decentralized supervision, which allows them to identify and solve problems effectively. Each PACT has a Commander, a Supervisor, a Criminal Investigator and several officers assigned to provide police services with emphasis on problem solving and responsive-

ness to customer needs. These officers have evolved from the traditional law enforcement role.

Along with targeted enforcement, officers are involved in all aspects of the community. They often serve as a link between the residents of the community and other city and county public service providers.

Highland residents and business and commercial property owners are blessed with opportunities to interact with the Hickory Police Department. The Baker PACT maintains an office in the Highland School Apartments building.

Residents and commercial interests are grateful for their strong relationship with the Police Department.

Hickory Police Administration

Chief Floyd Lucas
Capt. Clyde Deal
Capt. Steve Wright
Capt. Tom Atkins

Baker PACT

Lt. Thurman Whisnant, Commander
Sgt. Mike Carter
Master Officer Reid Baer
Master Officer Vince Hopson
Master Officer Mike Crisp
Master Officer Robert George
Master Officer Todd Punch
Master Officer Soua Vang
Master Officer Deborah Hansen
Master Officer David Seery
Master Officer Cory Smithey
Investigator Brett Porter
Officer Kongpheng Lo
Officer Bobby Lineberger
Officer Brain Ollis

City of Hickory Resources

One of the key tenets of this type of neighborhood-driven, citizen participation

based planning process is the involvement of resource people. Individuals who, based on their professional expertise and talents, contributed to the knowledge and informational needs of the Planning Committee to produce this plan are:

Donna Andrews, Parks & Recreation
Tim Bennett, Sanitation
Ed Bowman, Public Services Manager
Kelly Boyd, Leadership 2000 Intern
Tom Carr, Exec. Asst. of Development
Donna Cullum, Planner
Hannah Childers, Leadership 2000 Intern
Kevin Greer, Utilities Manager
Chuck Hansen, Neighborhood Liaison
Todd Hefner, Community Development
Fred Hollar, Deputy Fire Chief
Tricia Huffman, Neighborhood Coordinator
Trudy Huffman, Community Development
Mack McLeod, Parks & Recreation
Gerald Sherwood, Building Inspections
Keith Stahley, Planning Director
J. R. Steigerwald, Economic Development
Nathan Vannoy, Traffic Division
Armin Wallner, Building Inspections



Leadership 2000 intern Hannah Childers assisted in the data collection and analysis.

Other service providers and agencies also contributed to this planning process. The people listed below assisted the Planning Committee by either speaking to the group or providing necessary information.

North Carolina Dept. of Transportation
Reuben Chandler

Hickory City Schools
Joyce Brendle

Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Taylor Dellinger – Data Analyst

Graphic display of information is critical to the understanding of current and proposed conditions in the neighborhood. The final maps contained in Appendix II were produced by Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) staff under the direction of planning staff. Many thanks go to Kristen Bullock, Steve Libera and Daniel Ezell for their patience and expertise.

Volunteer Editors and Proofreaders
Paula S. Atwood
Nancy T. Reynolds

DATA COLLECTION

As part of the planning process, a neighborhood profile was created based on demographics, public safety statistics, infrastructure inventory, and housing data collected by the Planning staff.

Data sources for this information included the 1990 and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, the 1967 Analysis of Hickory's Neighborhoods, Catawba County Real Property Master Index Listings, field surveys conducted by staff, as well as information provided by City departments and other resource people who either spoke to the Planning Committee during the course of the planning process or otherwise provided pertinent data.

Most of the information contained in the Plan is up-to-date through June 2001.

The Highland Planning Committee evaluated all the data presented throughout the process, assessed the implications for their neighborhood, and agreed on a set of strategies designed to involve, educate, motivate and most importantly, enhance the neighborhood.

The historical development of Highland was researched and compiled by Planning Staff. Sources included: *A History of Catawba County*, Compiled and Published by Catawba County Historical Association, Inc., Edited by Charles J. Preslar, Jr. *From Tavern to Town* by Kirk F. Mohny and Laura A.W. Phillips; Meeting minutes of the Hickory City Council; Lenoir-Rhyne College website; and a variety of newspaper articles from The Hickory News and Hickory Daily Record dating back to 1931.

Personal recollections from long time Highland residents Martha Hunt-Bolick, Norma Frye, Lois Bollinger, Iris Benfield and former Highland resident Gary "Buzz" Roseman add to the colorful history of the neighborhood.

PLAN PREPARATION AND REVIEW/ADOPTION

The final stage of the planning process is review and adoption of the plan. A first draft was presented to the Planning Committee for their review in October 2001. A neighborhood meeting to introduce the draft plan was held on January 21, 2002. After receiving the residents' comments plus comments from City staff and other agencies, the draft Plan presented to the Hickory Regional Planning Commission for their review and recommendation on February 27. A final draft of the Plan was presented to City Council for their consideration on March 19, 2002.

This Plan supplements a variety of other master plans that have previously been adopted by the City of Hickory.

The Highland Neighborhood Plan represents an intensive long-range planning effort, which took several months to complete. The Plan includes written recommendations of strategies, actions and programs that should be taken or developed to protect and/or improve the neighborhood. Where possible, the costs associated with each recommendation are estimated. Responsibility for implementation of the recommendation or strategies is assigned and a time frame for completing the task is set.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Historical Development of Highland

The Town of Highland was incorporated on March 1, 1905. The act named O. T. Rockett as mayor and H. C. Killian, P. C. Coons, Perry L. Hefner, and W. J. Norton as commissioners. According to 1931 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the town hall and fire station was located on Highland Avenue NE near Ron's Auto repair shop at the intersection with 9th Street Drive NE.

It is probable that the name of the town was taken from Highland Academy, which stood on the campus of the present Lenoir Rhyne College, part of which was embraced within the corporate limits of Highland. John W. Mauser, Sr., drew the charter for the town, and it is said that he suggested using the academy's name.

Highland Academy, according to tradition, was named by J. G. Hall, trustee of the property on which the institution stood, for the novelist Sir Walter Scott, who wrote of the Scottish Highlands. The first floor of the academy contained instructional space and the second floor a chapel for student worship services. The building was later used as a men's dormitory, then a church building for a mission congregation before it was torn down.

Highland Academy was the forerunner of Lenoir College. The original property, a 56-acre tract one mile north of the Hickory business district, was part of the estate of a Watauga County lawyer, Captain Walter Lenoir. Before he died in 1890, Captain Lenoir donated the land as a campus for a church-sponsored college. The school opened September 1, 1891. It carried the name "Highland College," but four months later it was

chartered under the name of Lenoir College in memory of the donor of the land. The college became Lenoir-Rhyne in 1923, in honor of Daniel E. Rhyne, a Lincoln County industrialist who boosted the endowment and other assets of the institution.

Additional mayors who are known to have served the municipality, listed alphabetically, are Joseph H. Bolch, Neil W. Clark, Rev. Downs, Arthur T. Fox, Charles E. Hefner, Perry L. Hefner, Berry Houston, Julius E. Huffman, Oscar E. Leonard, John W. Mauser, Jr., J. Parks Robinson, William S. Robinson, and William S. Stanley.

Most of the residents of Highland worked in furniture factories or cotton mills earning \$1.50 for a 12-hour workday. Life-long residents recall tough times in the neighborhood. When asked for historical photographs of the community and its residents, Planning Committee members commented that most families were too poor to afford such luxuries. Highland was, and still is, a working class neighborhood.

INCORPORATION INTO HICKORY

Highland lost its identity as a municipality when its boundaries were incorporated into the City of Hickory on September 1, 1931, against the wishes of Highland townspeople.

Newspaper headlines on Friday, February 6, 1931 read "Greater Hickory Bill Gets Unanimous Approval."



Headline from the February 6, 1931 Hickory Daily Record lets the community know that incorporation is eminent.

Known as the Greater Hickory Consolidation Bill, the bill to extend Hickory's city limits by taking in the towns of Highland and West Hickory was introduced by Representative Pitts. A public hearing on the matter was held before the General Assembly committee on counties, cities and towns.

Hickory City Attorney C. W. Bagby read telegrams of support from the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the president of Lenoir-Rhyne College, and mill officials who were paying 70 percent of the taxes in the two towns.

Opposition was lead by Representative W. C. Feimster of Newton who was the attorney representing the town boards of Highland and West Hickory in the fight against incorporation. Feimster argued that the per capita indebtedness of Hickory was larger than the per capita indebtedness of the two towns to be taken in under the bill. Furthermore, Feimster had petitions with the signatures of 594 West Hickory voters and 586 Highland voters opposing the bill. He urged the committee to consider the wishes of the people over the telegrams of a few people, even though the latter owned most of the property.

J.L. Murphy of Hickory also spoke at the committee hearing. He told the group that Hickory was supplying water and fire protection to the suburbs and allowing children from the suburbs to attend its high school. He said the towns tried their cases in Hickory municipal court, and even kept their citizens in the Hickory jail. Murphy pointed out that the mills support the annexation because they thought their taxes would be less and they would get more for their money.

Mr. Bagby concluded his testimony at the public hearing by telling committee members that even though Hickory charged the two

towns for water and fire protection, the fees did not cover the entire costs. Bagby stressed that there would be many savings in the cost of city government, and that 16 less schoolteachers would be needed if there were only one central high school. In a final political statement, he explained that two of the wards would always be Republican, two Democratic, two doubtful and the mayor elected at large.

An article in the Hickory Daily Record let residents of Highland and West Hickory know that if the two towns merged with Hickory, they would be able to insure their property and belongings at a much lower rate.



Newspaper article in the February 6, 1931 Hickory Daily Record touts the benefits of a town merger with Hickory.

At the time, Hickory proper was rated Class B in insurance terms. Consolidation of the three local governments meant that residents and property owners in Highland and West Hickory could obtain insurance for 15 to 25 percent cheaper. The insurance rate for a shingle roofed, frame home in Hickory was thirty-seven cents. The rate for the same home in Highland or West Hickory cost fifty-two cents.

Despite the lack of support from voters of Highland and West Hickory, the Hickory City Council moved forward with the union. At the first city council meeting in September, the elected body welcomed two new representatives. The adopted resolution read:

“Whereas, during the night of August 31 – September 1, 1931, the population of the City of Hickory increased from 7,300 to 11,000, as a result of the union between Highland, West Hickory and the City of Hickory; and whereas the towns of West Hickory and Highland as a natural consequence of this great increase in population have ceased to exist; and whereas we all rejoice in the destruction of the imaginary lines that have heretofore separated the three towns; and whereas the City of Hickory recognizes the great debt it owes to the founders, builders and citizens of the former towns.

Now therefore be it resolved that the City Council of Hickory does hereby extend a hearty welcome to its new citizens, does hereby thank the former boards of Aldermen of the said towns for electing Hon. Chas. E. Hefner and Hon. Frank Hammond members of the City Council, that it does hereby pledge its honor that all portions of the enlarged City will receive equal consideration and that there shall be in its deliberations and actions no North, East, West or South Hickory, but one community; and that the City Council will, and hereby requests all City Officers, and employees to, sincerely endeavor to be worthy of the heritage left us by the builders, and founders of West

Hickory, Highland, and of Hickory.”

The resolution was unanimously adopted and so declared by Mayor Bascom B. Blackwelder to have passed on its first reading.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Highland Graded School

Neighbors who attended Highland School fondly recall that the school was the common gathering place of the neighborhood. Former resident Gary Roseman writes, “the school was where the plays were performed, the cakewalks conducted, the Halloween carnivals held, and where the good citizens of Highland went on Election Day to cast their ballots for city council, mayor, federal, state and county offices, and presidential elections. It was the common denominator of community life.”

According to a 1980 article appearing in The Hickory News, an agreement between the Town of Highland and Elliott Building Company dated March 1, 1921, is on file at Hickory City Hall. J. D. Elliott agreed to build a school in Highland for \$49,500, to be completed by September 1, 1921. Highland Graded School housed eleven grades for northwestern Catawba County before being added to the Hickory City school system as an elementary school.

The two-story brick school building has a simple, but handsome symmetrical design with a hipped slate roof, multiple, twelve over twelve sash windows, and a slightly projecting, nine-bay-wide center section with a central entrance recessed behind a round arch.



Highland School, built in 1921, still stands as a landmark in the neighborhood.

Miss Mary Rowe was the school's first principal, followed by Reverend J.E. Barb, Reverend G.E. Long, Loy Sox, J.L. Kiser Joe B. Caldwell, Vance Hefner, Stoye Starnes, Howard Abernethy and _____ Huss.

Highland Graded School became a junior high for eighth and ninth graders after the Town of Highland merged with Hickory in 1931. Tenth and eleventh graders attended Claremont Central High School.

An insurance analysis in 1938 valued the 14,974 square foot building at \$38,435 replacement cost. Highland Graded School had 363 pupils in February 1938 under principal Vance H. Hefner.

A gymtorium and lunchroom were added adjacent to the original building in 1951 and the old auditorium was converted into classrooms. Cost of the project was \$102,307. Extensive remodeling was completed in 1962.

In 1962, 333 pupils were enrolled. In 1968, 288 pupils in grades first through sixth were enrolled in Highland School. In 1970, 293 pupils were enrolled.

Declining enrollment in the late 1970s forced the eventual closing of one of the oldest

schools in Hickory. The home of the Highland Hawks locked its doors in June 12, 1980.

Hickory City Council bought the 84,000 square foot Highland Elementary School building and grounds from the Hickory Board of Education for \$45,000 on October 7, 1980. The city planned to convert the gymnasium to a recreation facility.

Sadly, the grand old school sat vacant and neglected for the next nine years. The Hickory Fire Department occasionally used the structure for various training programs. Vandals broke out most of the windows and pigeons roosted in the rafters contributing to the deterioration. The building had become an eyesore and a liability to the City of Hickory, so at the November 17, 1987 City Council meeting, elected officials agreed to allocate \$45,500 to demolish the building.

Citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with City Council's decision to demolish the building in several letters to the editors of the local newspapers. Public opposition stalled the demolition action until the Historic Properties Commission was able to convince City Council that the building was worth saving.

On February 7, 1989, members of the Historic Properties Commission presented a report on the condition of Highland School and asked the Hickory City Council to pursue options for saving Highland School. The structure was in better shape than Claremont Central High School before its renovation, the Commission noted in its presentation. Rescuing the building would save the City the expense of demolition and put the property back on the tax roll, Mrs. Frances Moody told the City Council. The Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina played a critical role in convincing the Commission and the City Council that the prop-

erty was marketable. That evening the Hickory City Council decided to defer action on the matter as two investors had expressed interest in acquiring the old school.

A special meeting of the City Council was called for May 9, 1989 to receive a proposal from Trenton Properties of Charlotte, NC to purchase Highland School at a reduced rate under security of a low interest loan. City Council authorized staff to begin negotiations with Trenton Properties. Midway through the negotiations, the investors comprising Trenton Properties split. One of the investors continued negotiations with the city under a new partnership.

City of Hickory subdivided the gymnasium and lunchroom from the main school building and sold the property to Highland School Limited Partnership of Lexington, NC for \$123,500 in November 1989.

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Highland School Apartments were opened for occupancy on March 3, 1991. Eighteen, 600 square foot apartments and one 400 square foot efficiency apartment provided an affordable place to live for the elderly.

The blaze of hope was soon doused. The Partnership stopped making payments in 1993 and filed for bankruptcy in 1995. Despite several changes in management, the Partnership could not keep the fire burning. The City of Hickory foreclosed on the property in September 1996. The Hickory Public Housing Authority had expressed interest in acquiring the property since 1994. Finally, in December 1997, the City sold it to the Hickory Public Housing Authority for \$147,909.75.

From the start, the Hickory Housing Authority had problems making up for years of deferred maintenance. Conditions worsened

with each rainstorm. Pigeons and squirrels had once again made their homes in the attic.

In July 2000, the Housing Authority sold the property to Northwest Properties of Hickory LLC. Residents of Highland School Apartments are hopeful that under new ownership they will continue to have a safe, decent and affordable place to live. Neighbors are hoping for a commitment to preserving the historic structure and its value to the neighborhood.

Public Services Complex

The Public Services Complex on 9th Avenue NE opened in 1982 at a cost of \$2.6 million. The site serves as the central location for most of the City of Hickory's service operations, such as water and sewer utility construction and maintenance, solid waste collections, street construction and traffic management. Over 240 workers are employed at this location.

Fire Station #2

Station #2 was dedicated on June 7, 1983. It houses one engine company consisting of one pumper and four firefighters on a 24-hour basis. The fire education division of the department is also located at this station.



Neighbors consider having Fire Station #2 located on 9th Avenue NE an asset.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

Highland Baptist Church

Eighteen people from Shuford Mill Village chartered Highland Baptist Church in 1912. The Church's first home was a building on Highland Avenue that doubled as the town hall and jail.

After the depression, the Church grew strong enough, both in numbers and finances, to plan a Sunday school mission in the Shuford Mill Village. The mission later became East Hickory Baptist Church.

By 1949, Highland Baptist had 750 members and four associated churches. Members decided to expand the mother church and bought the property where the current edifice stands today on the corner of 9th Avenue NE and 8th Street NE. In December 1952, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the new church building.



Highland Baptist Church is prominently located at 9th Avenue NE and 8th Street NE.

In March 1954, the congregation moved into its new location complete with an educational building. In 1957, Highland Baptist continued the tradition of branching out

through missions. Springs Road Baptist, Midway Baptist and Lakeview Baptist Churches originated from members of Highland Baptist Church.

Highland United Methodist Church

According to historical accounts, there was no Methodist Church in Highland prior to 1924. Church services for many denominations were being held in the Highland YMCA building located in the Shuford Mill Village. Reverend M.A. Huffman, a Methodist minister was conducting all the services. The Reverend was blind and lived in Brookford at the time, so he had to walk from Brookford to Highland led by a small boy to attend the services.

Interest for a Methodist Church continued to grow until in 1924 the Methodist Conference sent Reverend Robert Stafford and his wife to organize the church. There were 38 charter members. Church services were held in a tent during the summer and at Highland School in the fall. The original name of the church was Stafford Memorial Methodist Church in honor of the Reverend, but was changed shortly thereafter.

In 1951, the congregation realized its dream of becoming a station church and began making plans for a permanent home.

The Church purchased property on 12th Street Place NE from J. Hillary Frye and his wife in 1957 after spending four years raising money for the building fund. The congregation of Highland Methodist Church held groundbreaking ceremonies for its architecturally striking new church and education facilities in November 1960.

Harrell and Clark Architects of Hickory designed the contemporary styled church. The sanctuary seats 500 people, with the choir

seated in the balcony. The Sunday school facility included a fellowship hall, a kitchen, 25 classrooms and church offices.



Highland Methodist Church's unique architecture makes for a beautiful landmark in Highland.

Predominate features include laminated wood arches and exposed masonry walls. A large chancel window of thick mosaic style glass chipped to give brilliance dominates the gabled end of the sanctuary. The abstract scene depicts the crucifixion of Christ and his resurrection.

In July 1992, members of the Church dedicated its chime/bell tower on the front lawn. The tower was dedicated to the glory of God and in honor of Dr. Robin F. Gatwood, the church's choir director for more than 25 years.

Pilgrim Baptist Church

Pilgrim Baptist Church is a small church located on 11th Street NE. The 1966 City Directory lists the Church of God at this address.



Pilgrim Baptist Church on 11th Street NE was at one time a Church of God congregation.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

There were no recreational facilities in the neighborhood until the City of Hickory acquired the cafeteria, gymnasium and most of the grounds of the former Highland Elementary School.

Highland Recreation Center

Highland Recreation Center formerly served as the cafeteria and gymnasium for Highland Elementary School. Built in 1951, the cafeteria easily converted to a center where gym courts, pool tables, ping-pong tables and meeting space are available to the public. The recreation center opened as a city-owned facility in September 1981.

The grounds consist of a volleyball court, basketball court, a shuffleboard court, a T-ball practice field, a youth soccer field, a horseshoe pit and new playground equipment, which was installed in 2000. A parking lot across 11th Street NE serves as overflow parking when ball practice and other events are held on the field.



Highland Recreation Center and grounds attract a variety of visitors year round.

Highland Park

Opened in 1959, Highland Park is a neighborhood serving passive park located adjacent to Stanford Park and the State National Guard Armory. Passive parks are parks with no facilities or fields for organized athletics and are maintained by the city's Landscape Services Division rather than the Parks and Recreation Department.

This quiet park provides shady places to sit and two creeks to explore. Long-time residents refer to the area as "Slick Rock" and fondly recall playing in the waters of a branch of Falling Creek.



The creek through Highland Park was once a popular spot for neighborhood children to play.

The Neighborhood Association played an instrumental role in prompting the city Landscape Services Division to install appropriate signage for the park in 1997.

Robinson Park (Stanford Park)

Robinson Park, as it was known in its pre-Stanford name, was one of the first two parks built and owned by the City. The other one was West Hickory Park.

When Robinson Park was built in 1956 it only consisted of what was Stanford Field #1 until construction of the new recreation complex began in June 2001. For many years the Breakfast Optimist Club annually provided funds to the City for park improvements. For those contributions, the field became known as Breakfast Optimist Park, while Field #2 was known as G.H. Stanford Park. When the Breakfast Optimist Club ceased existence, the name of the entire park became known as Stanford Park.

Development of the park continued through the years with the third softball field having been completed in 1986. In 1994, Field #3 was re-named the Bob Carrier Field in recognition of his 24 years of service as Assistant Parks and Recreation Director.

The facility includes three, lighted adult softball fields, two concession stands with restrooms, a tennis court, playground equipment, a picnic shelter with grills, and a basketball court.

The park is currently under renovation and construction of a new 40,000 square foot Parks and Recreation facility and skateboard park is expected by Spring 2003.



Stanford Park hosted many softball games before being closed in 2001 to make way for the new Recreation Complex.



Hickory Dyeing and Winding, now Hickory Yarns, has been in business at its location on 10th Street NE since the 1940s.

ECONOMIC GROWTH INFLUENCES

The presence of the railroad on the eastern edge of the neighborhood undoubtedly had the most influence on the economic growth of Highland. Furniture manufacturing, hosiery mills and other industries lined the tracks from downtown Hickory through Highland and beyond.

Historical newspaper accounts boast of expanding facilities, quality employees and record sales of firms such as Shuford Mills, Ford Hosiery Mills, and Hy-Lan Furniture Company.

Long time residents recall playing in a tremendous sand pile owned by Kerr Sand Company located on 9th Avenue NE. Kerr relocated to West Hickory making way for Highland Baptist Church to buy the property for their new church building in 1949.

The working class Highland neighborhood provided convenient housing for the workers employed at the commercial businesses and industrial factories characteristic of the time.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS - 1967

According to the 1967 study entitled “An Analysis of Hickory’s Neighborhoods”, prepared for the Hickory Planning Commission by Eric Hill Associates, Inc. of Winston-Salem, Highland Neighborhood was part of Study Areas 8 and 9. The boundaries of Study Area 8 included 12th Avenue NE from 5th Street NE, and 7th Street NE and the westside of 8th Street NE. Study Area 9 covered the remainder of the neighborhood.

The consultant observed that the mixed land use appeared to be the major problem, and the zoning, as it existed, further complicated the situation.

In 1967, the entire area was served with sewer and water facilities and most of the streets were paved, except for the streets along the edge of the city limit lines.

Single-family residential comprised the largest category of land use at 42 percent in Study Area 9, the consultant noted. Vacant land made up 22 percent of the total area. A considerable amount of the vacant land in 1967 is where the City Public Service Complex and Fire Station # 2 are located today.

The Hill Study recommended investigating acquisition of the property for recreational purposes since the park next to the armory

and the playground at Highland School inadequately served the neighborhood.

The consultant determined that blight was not a serious problem in this area with 78 percent of all structures being in standard condition. Hill recommended a concentrated code enforcement effort along 12th Street NE and 15th Street NE to restore the neighborhood to standard conditions.

The study noted that the area contained mixed use with commercial and light industrial uses scattered throughout most of the neighborhood. This condition remains today.

The consultant asserted that the residential area north of 9th Avenue NE was in standard condition at the time, yet the industrial zoning in place threatened the good condition. The consultant recommended that the zoning be studied and adjusted to prevent further mixed use and the chance of blight.

The zoning classification applied to Highland in 1967, is the same as it is today - high density residential adjacent to industrial, commercial and office and institutional. While in 1967 there were only 16 multi-family structures covering 5.5 acres, today there are 49 structures covering 29.3 acres in the neighborhood.

Seven residential structures and five commercial structures were considered dilapidated, and 41 residential structures and two commercial structures were rated deteriorating in 1967. The study attributes the blight to mixed land use and warns of the risk of further decay if the zoning is not remedied.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS - 1983

College interns conducted a second comprehensive housing condition survey in 1983. The students noted that the Highland area

had deteriorated significantly in 15 years. Their report indicated that only 25 percent of the housing stock was in standard condition, a significant drop from the 81 percent reported in 1967.

The students surmised that since people who occupied the homes worked in the near-by industries, public and/or private incentives were needed to upgrade their homes.

In the 1983 study, the students acknowledge the construction of the public services facility and Fire Station # 2. They commented on how the well-sited and built structures add to the community flavor.

By 1983, commercial and light industrial land uses had increased, as had housing units since 1967, the students observed.

Between 1967 and 1983, vacant land gave way to high-density multi-family units. Most dilapidated structures, whether they were commercial or residential, were also replaced by multi-family units. Large single-family houses have been converted to apartments and a mobile home park created in that time-frame.



Disguised as condominiums, these units on 8th Street NE represent one of the 28 multi-family buildings constructed in the neighborhood since 1980.

The students concluded that if the City wished to keep the neighborhood from becoming a blighted area that contains only furniture factories, renewal projects needed to start immediately.

Due to coding irregularities and inconsistencies, the housing conditions data compiled by these students is not comparable to data from the 1967 and 2001 studies. Yet, the data does provide a snapshot of the conditions in Highland in 1983.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The initial step of this neighborhood planning process involved a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the area's existing conditions. The inventory provided a sound basis from which the Planning Committee could formulate strategies to address the neighborhood's needs.

The data collected included demographics, land use characteristics, current zoning, environmental characteristics, public infrastructure and facilities, structural conditions, trends in homeownership, public safety, and traffic patterns and behavior.

This section describes and summarizes different concerns, trends and issues raised during the Highland Neighborhood planning process, based on the perceptions of the Planning Committee and other concerned residents as well as planning staff.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of Highland have changed significantly over the years according to long-time residents. The US Census of Population and Housing information for 1990 and 2000 was used to examine and describe the population in Highland.

The 1990 Census indicated a total population of 1,311 residents. The 2000 population count stands at 1,391 residents, a negligible increase of 80 people.

However, Census data supports what neighbors are fully aware of – that Highland is a racially and ethnically mixed neighborhood.

Table 1 compares Highland and the City of Hickory by race. The Census data for High-

land indicates that the neighborhood is similar to the demographics of the entire City.

According to 2000 Census data, 78.4 percent of the residents in Highland are white, which is slightly higher than the City's 77.2 percent. Only 3.74 percent of the City's population resides in Highland.

Highland residents comprise 3.8 percent of the City's white population and 3.3 percent of the City's black population according to the 2000 data. Hispanic and Asian residents represent 6.6 percent and 2.8 percent of the population respectively.

The 2000 Census reflects the recent influx of people of Asian and Hispanic origin unlike the 1990 Census. The strong economy and low unemployment rate in the Hickory Metro area has attracted more immigrants to the area. Many of these families have chosen to live in Highland, presumably because of the affordability and availability of housing.

Table 2 shows the number of residents in Highland and the City of Hickory who in 2000 were either under age 18 or age 65 and older. The neighborhood closely compares to the City's percentage, with 3.2 percent of the City's youth and 3.5 percent of the City's population of people aged 65 and older living in Highland.

The neighborhood closely compares to the City's percentage in terms of household size, albeit slightly lower. Census 2000 data indicates that the average persons per household in Highland is 2.16, while the average persons per household citywide is 2.35.

Highland has a slightly higher percentage of single parent households and a slightly higher percentage of single person households.

TABLE 1. 2000 CENSUS DATA BY RACE

Highland							
White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian/Pac. Is.	Other Race	Mixed Race	Hispanic	Total
1090	171	5	41	57	28	189	1391
78.4%	12.3%	0.4%	2.6%	4.1%	2%	13.6%	3.74%

Hickory							
White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian/Pac. Is.	Other Race	Mixed Race	Hispanic	Total
28747	5243	70	1474	1146	542	2863	37222
77.2%	14.1%	.2%	3.96%	3.1%	1.5%	7.7%	

SCHOOL DATA

The neighborhood has evolved as one of the more ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Hickory. Review of Hickory City Schools and Catawba County Public Schools enrollment records categorized by race and address supports that statement.

Enrollment records for 2000 indicate that only 3.2 percent of all Hickory City school students reside in Highland. The average age of children residing in the neighborhood is eight years.

Table 3 represents the number and percentage of all students in Hickory public schools and those who reside in the Highland neighborhood by race and compares those numbers with the city as a whole.

Until 1980, children residing in Highland attended Highland Elementary. Students in Highland now attend four different elementary schools, two different middle schools and either Hickory High School or St. Stephens High School. The neighborhood is divided between the county school system and the city school system. Residents with school age children are quick to point out the lack of neighborhood schools and how that fact harms the neighborhood.

TABLE 2. 2000 CENSUS DATA BY AGE AND ONE PERSON/SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

Highland				
Total H'holds	Under 18	65 or Older	One-Person Household	Single Parent Household
643	279	177	243	69
	20%	12.7%	37.8%	10.7%

Hickory				
Total H'holds	Under 18	65 or Older	One-Person Household	Single Parent Household
15,372	8,669	5,058	4,954	1,374
	23.3%	13.6%	32.2%	9%

TABLE 3. PERCENT OF ALL HICKORY STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESIDING IN HIGHLAND BY RACE

Hickory Students						
Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multi-Racial	Amer. Indian	Total
461	1183	390	2425	98	4	4562
10%	26%	8.6%	53.2%	2.2%	0.08%	

Highland Students						
Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multi-Racial	Amer. Indian	Total
7	40	19	80	2	0	148
4.7%	27%	12.8%	54%	1.4%	0%	

Percent of Hickory Students Residing in Highland						
Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multi-Racial	Amer. Indian	Total
1.5%	3.4%	4.9%	33%	2%	0%	3.2%

The results of the 2000 Census is likely to cause the school district boundaries to be redrawn in the near future.

HOUSING VALUES AND INCOME

The mean value of a home in Highland in 1990 was \$59,876, \$7,424 less than the City’s average of \$67,300. According to the Census data, the mean contract rent in Highland was \$405 compared to \$384, the citywide average. This figure suggests that rental housing in Highland is slightly above the city average, yet still affordable. Data for 2000 was not available at the time of publication.

Income information is not available at the Census block level; therefore an analysis of mean family income for Highland could not be considered.

Land Use Characteristics

The Highland Neighborhood boundaries encompass approximately 310 acres or slightly less than half of a square mile.

Table 4 illustrates that more than 154.51 acres or 50.71 percent of the land use in the neighborhood is developed for residential purposes.

TABLE 4. HIGHLAND LAND USE IN ACRES AND PERCENTAGE

Land Use	Parcels	Acres	Percent
Single Family *	390	128.13	41.25
Multi-Family	49	29.38	9.46
Commercial or Industrial	28	19.48	6.27
Institutional	4	4.83	1.56
Public	14	74.4	23.95
Vacant	71	54.39	17.51
Total	549	310.61	100%

* Includes attached, detached and mobile homes

RESIDENTIAL

Highland is predominately a single-family residential neighborhood with a mix of moderate density multi-family and duplex units as well as mobile homes.

There has been negligible growth in the new single-family housing market over the past thirty years. Only ten new single-family homes have been built in Highland since 1967, and one of those was a replacement for a home destroyed by fire.

Overwhelmingly, new construction in Highland has been multi-family complexes of four to twelve units, which do not share the same characteristics as the existing buildings. These two-story buildings do not relate to the street like the existing housing. Proliferation of these buildings has diminished the traditional character of the neighborhood.



This four-unit complex on 13th Street NE is an example of how apartments have diminished the single-family character of the neighborhood.

A sixteen-unit mobile home park was created in the mid-1980s despite objections from adjacent property owners.

Highland School Apartments

The former Highland Elementary School was converted to 19 apartment units in 1991. Since that time ownership and man-

agement has changed numerous times. Deferred maintenance over the years has taken its toll on the building. Residents report that windows are inoperable, roof leaks cause damage to the interior rooms, and squirrels and pigeons have returned to roost through gaping holes in the soffits. More on the former school can be found in the *Historical Development* section of this plan.

Now controlled by local private investors, Highland School Apartment residents are hopeful that conditions will improve and the historically significant structure will continue to provide much needed affordable housing for the elderly.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL

Commercial and industrial development in Highland is concentrated along the thoroughfares which create the southern and eastern boundaries of the neighborhood.

Had Highland Neighborhood Association chosen to extend their boundaries to include Highland Avenue NE to the south, and 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road) to the east, the percentage and total acres of commercial property would have been significantly higher.



Top Notch Frames operates on 12th Avenue NE in the midst of single-family homes.

An interesting situation to note is that commercial and industrial property in Highland is

routinely surrounded by residential uses. Such a phenomenon is indicative of an era when it was desirable to have places of work located close to where people lived, or the development happened prior to the adoption of zoning codes.

PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC

Highland is home to the National Guard Armory. Classified as semi-public land, the 3.8 acre facility serves as the base of operations for the 731st Mechanical unit.



The National Guard Armory has been in Highland neighborhood since 1947.

The City of Hickory owns 123 acres of public land in the neighborhood. Stanford Park, a 37 acre district park featuring three regulation size adult softball fields is the predominate public use. Stanford Park is currently under renovation. In 2003, this park will become the site for the Parks and Recreation Department Administration offices, three softball fields, and a skateboard park.

A passive park appropriately named Highland Park is adjacent to Stanford Park and the Armory. The city's Landscape Services Division maintains the grounds of this park.

The Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains the Highland Recreation Center and practice soccer field on 11th Street NE. An overflow parking lot on the

east side of the road serves this facility. The 3.16 acre parcel was subdivided from the Highland School in 1989.

The city’s 31 acre Public Services Complex on 9th Avenue NE serves as the base of operations for approximately 260 employees. Fire Station #2 occupies the same parcel. The City also owns three vacant lots adjacent to the Public Services Complex. Two of the lots are used to provide access to employee parking. The City obtained the sliver of a parcel on the corner of 12th Avenue NE and 15th Street NE after a dilapidated house was removed.

INSTITUTIONAL

The four institutional land uses in Highland are Highland Baptist Church, Highland United Methodist Church, Pilgrim Baptist Church and the Cooperative Christian Ministry. All of the churches own one or more vacant lots adjacent to the church, most of which are used for parking.

VACANT

There are 71 vacant lots in the Highland neighborhood totaling 54.4 acres. This represents 17 percent of the total land in the neighborhood. A number of the vacant lots in the residential portion of the neighborhood are located in flood plains along one of the branches of Falling Creek, making some of them difficult to develop due to topography. Other vacant lots are either being used as parking lots or located adjacent to undeveloped street rights-of-way making lack of accessibility the most likely reason they are not developed.

Worth noting is the former Bumbarger property. Once it was determined that the new recreation complex was better situated at the current Stanford Park, City Council had to consider uses for the 14-acre vacant lot. During the course of the planning process, the City of

Hickory acquired approximately eight additional acres of vacant property adjacent to the former Bumbarger property. The City Council has committed to requesting development proposals for a single-family housing subdivision that meets the land development concepts set forth in the *Hickory by Choice* Plan.

The *Existing Land Use* map illustrates the current land uses in Highland and can be referenced in Appendix II - Map 1.

Current Zoning

Zoning regulations and classifications are adopted to implement the City of Hickory’s long-range development plan. In essence, zoning is an indication of how the city thinks development will evolve over time.

Highland Neighborhood’s current zoning was put into place after adoption of the 1986 Land Development Plan. The city’s 2001 update of the land development code as a result of the *Hickory by Choice* process had little immediate impact on Highland proper. However, the residential area will benefit in the long term from the new code through the adopted design standards for multi-family development, landscaping requirements and property maintenance standards.

Table 5 provides an overview of how land in Highland is zoned and how many acres each zoning category comprises. A description of each of the categories follows, illustrating the diversity of permitted land uses in the area.

TABLE 5. HIGHLAND ZONING IN ACRES AND PERCENTAGE

Zoning	Acres	Percent
--------	-------	---------

C-5	2.85	.92
NC-1	3.92	1.26
I-1	53.89	17.35
OI-1	6.01	1.9
PD-MHP (16 units)	1.85	.6
R-5	242.1	77.94
Total	310.62	99.97%

RESIDENTIAL

The majority of the neighborhood is residentially zoned R-5, which allows a variety of moderate intensity residential uses including single-family, two-family and multiple family dwelling types under conventional or planned development controls. The minimum lot size is 8,000 square feet, typical of older neighborhoods in Hickory.



Bungalows, such as this one on 14th Street NE, are typical of the homes found in Highland neighborhood.

A mobile home park of sixteen units is located on 14th Street NE. The zoning was changed to Planned Development-Mobile Home Park in the early 1980s. Seven other mobile homes are located in the neighborhood. These units must have been in place prior to annexation in 1984 because mobile homes are only allowed in R-6 zoning classification.

OFFICE AND INSTITUTIONAL

Slightly less than two percent of the land in Highland is zoned for office uses. Office and

Institutional, O & I - 1, serves as a transition zone between residential and business or industrial districts. Moderate to high-density residential and office and institutional uses are allowed in this district. Retail, heavy commercial or industrial uses are not allowed.

The O & I - 1 zone is found at the Armory on 13th Avenue NE, and the office building at the intersection of 9th Avenue NE and 12th Street NE. Three buildings fronting 8th Avenue NE are also zoned and used as offices.



This office building at 9th Avenue NE and 12th Street NE serves as a transition from commercial and industrial zoning to residential.

COMMERCIAL

Commercial zoning is found primarily on the periphery of Highland proper. Only about 7 percent of the neighborhood is zoned for commercial use.

When the Land Development Code associated with *Hickory by Choice* was adopted in 2001, one of the locations targeted for proactive rezoning was the Springs Road/Sandy Ridge Road corridor. These thoroughfares are adjacent to the eastern edge of the neighborhood. Properties along 15th Street NE close to the intersection of 9th Avenue NE were rezoned from commercial C-5 to NC-1.

The NC-1, Neighborhood Core Commercial district is intended to implement the “Neighborhood Core Commercial District” policies of the city’s Comprehensive Plan, *Hickory By Choice*, within areas of existing commercial development. These regulations are intended to allow the reasonable use of properties as they are presently used and configured and to provide for their conversion as development or redevelopment occurs.

The NC-1 district regulations provide for the protection of surrounding residential structures through setbacks, screening and lighting restrictions. Other regulations under the NC-1 zoning call for connectivity, community open space and pedestrian access.

Along 8th Avenue NE and 9th Street NE, the southwest boundary of Highland, six properties are zoned C-5. Had the Neighborhood Association chosen to extend their boundaries to include Highland Avenue NE from 8th Avenue NE to 16th Street NE, the number of commercially zoned properties would have been significantly higher.

The C-5, Commercial district is established to provide for a wide variety of retail, service, manufacturing and warehousing activities in areas where past land development practices have produced a mixed pattern of land uses and irregular lot sizes/configurations. It is the City’s general intent that existing C-5 districts not be extended and that new areas of C-5 zoning not be established.

INDUSTRIAL

Highland still shows the effects of development without zoning controls. In several locations throughout the neighborhood industrial facilities are adjacent to single-family homes, which on occasion results in disagreements between homeowners and business operators.

The I-1, Limited Industrial district is established to provide regulations for the development of areas generally devoted to light manufacturing, processing and assembly uses, warehousing, distribution and servicing enterprises and office activities controlled by performance standards to limit the effect of such uses within the district and on adjacent districts. Development in this district under the planned development process is encouraged.

The new Land Development Code requires new development to meet regulations regarding building design standards, screening, parking lot and loading areas, lighting signage and connectivity.

SPECIAL USE PERMITS

It is necessary for property owners to obtain a special use permit when a use which would not be appropriate generally or without special study throughout the zoning district but which, if controlled as to number, size, location or relation to the neighborhood, would promote the public health, safety and general welfare. Special uses are those uses that require, because of their inherent nature, intensity, and external effects, special care in the control of their location, site design and methods of operation.

A special use permit remains in effect even though the use may cease or property ownership changes.

Three special use permits have been granted in Highland. Highland Baptist Church was granted a special use permit in March 1993 to operate a childcare center at 828 9th Avenue NE. Christian Community Outreach Ministries at 870 8th Street NE was granted a permit in December 1996 to operate a

membership organization in a residential district.

Despite strong opposition from neighbors and surrounding property owners, a special use permit was granted to Exodus Outreach Missionary Center to operate a congregate living facility at 1135 12th Street NE in 1998. Nine men in the substance abuse recovery program lived in the house from October 1998 to October 1999. The special use permit stays with the property even though a single family currently occupies the rental house.

The *Zoning* map found in Appendix II - Map 2 illustrates the current zoning in Highland.

ZONING INTENSITY AND DENSITY

The Planning Committee discussed what they believe are the detrimental effects of the current land use zoning intensities and densities.

Intensity is the allowable square footage to be built on a lot. Zoning density is how many units are allowed to be built on a lot.

Neighbors are concerned that both intensity and density are threatening the character of the traditional neighborhood. They are seeing more dense multi-family development on lots they feel are better suited for single-family homes.

The R-5 zoning classification allows for an attached or detached single-family house to be built on a lot of no less than 8,000 square feet. To build a duplex, a minimum lot size of 12,000 square feet is required. Any multi-family complex requires 16,000 square feet and a minimum lot width of 80 feet. The maximum units per acre is 10 without a planned development, or 20 with a PD-TND, or Planned Development – Traditional Neighborhood Development.

The PD – TND district is intended to implement the neighborhood core policies of the

city's Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan, *Hickory By Choice* by providing new locations for traditional neighborhood development. The PD – TND district is a Conditional Use Zoning District and no development can occur without a conditional use permit. Rezoning to a TND designation shall follow the Planned Development process.

The PD-TND zoning is significant in that it provides a development option for the former Bumbarger property on 8th Street Drive NE. The property is currently zoned R-5. If the City chooses to rezone the land to a planned development, the neighborhood should have some degree of assurance that it will develop in a manner compatible with the existing neighborhood.

Analysis of the land use and current zoning data show that 2.2 percent of property in Highland is residentially zoned, meets the minimum lot size for multi-family development, and is vacant. The former Bumbarger property and adjacent property that the city has acquired is excluded from the figure because the City has committed to making the land available for a single-family subdivision promoting home-ownership at that location.

Two options exist for property owners to proactively preserve the sense of a traditional single-family neighborhood. One is to petition for a rezoning, or down zone properties from R-5 to a lower classification.

Changing zoning requires a change in the ordinance and can be a complicated process. To re-zone an area, seventy percent of the property owners have to agree and sign a petition that is presented to the Regional Planning Commission before it goes to the City Council for their consideration. Rezoning requests can take two to three months if there is no opposition. It is up to the

neighbors to gather the necessary signatures since the property owners typically initiate rezoning requests.

The second option is to draft neighborhood conservation overlay district.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION OVERLAY

A Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District, (NCOD) when adopted, applies to whatever zoning classifications regulate development in a defined area. A major purpose of this zoning category is to maintain the general quality of residential neighborhoods. Development that is sensitive to neighborhood character can be encouraged through overlay zoning regulations that are “customized” to neighborhood needs as defined by the neighborhood plan.

The overlay district applies to new development only in terms of setbacks, building height, lot frontage and size, lot width at the right-of-way, building entrances, building placement on the lot, including building setbacks and distances between buildings. Nothing else can be regulated through the NCOD. Permitted land use, density, landscaping and other appearance, architectural style, maintenance, and outbuildings typically cannot be regulated through the NCOD.

When an overlay zoning regulation is applied to an area, the existing zoning remains intact but is modified by the overlay regulation. The neighborhood will be outlined and highlighted on the official City zoning map as a “Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District.” Particular regulations of the NCOD are “laid over” those of the existing zoning.

A conservation district makes no existing structure or lot non-conforming; rather the emphasis is on making new construction appear similar in character to the existing neighborhood.

Other neighborhoods that have completed the neighborhood planning process have developed and implemented a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District specific to their area to help control future development.

HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

Highland is a traditional neighborhood with several architecturally significant homes. Review of the tax records show that 380 single-family homes are over 50 years of age. Parts of the neighborhood could be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and eventually the creation of a historic district.



The Sigmon House on 9th Avenue Place NE was built in 1884.

Highland School is on the National Register of Historic Places, but not on the list of locally designated properties. This property is eligible for rehabilitation tax credits, yet not subject to local design review guidelines.

Highland Planning Committee members recognize that there are opportunities to preserve the historical structures that remain in the neighborhood not only for preservation sake, but also for economic development and tourism reasons. Most of the Planning Committee agreed that it would be valuable to at least have the area surveyed so that the neighborhood and property

owners would know which properties and areas could be eligible.

The baseline for historic designation is that the structure is over 50 years old. Typically, the building is architecturally significant or some person important to the historical development of the city was associated with the site. Just because a building has been altered or covered in artificial siding does not automatically make it ineligible for designation. National Register nominations are usually written by a historic resource professional since the application must include researched items that support the claim.

There is no real downside of National Register listing since it is purely honorary. One of the financial benefits is that homeowners can claim a thirty percent state income tax credit on the amount of money spent over two years to substantially rehabilitate the structure. Owners of income producing properties can claim a forty percent federal and state income tax credit. Listing affords a certain degree of limited protection. Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that prior to undertaking any federally funded, licensed or assisted project a determination of effect on a National Register resource must be made.

Some property owners dislike the extra control the locally designated historic district zoning overlay places on their property. By ordinance, any property within a locally designated historic district is required to follow the adopted Design Review Guidelines and seek approval from the Historic Preservation Commission prior to making major changes to the exterior of the structure. Some property owners are concerned about the burden of cost of replacement of historic materials. Further emphasizing the benefits of the state and federal rehabilitation tax credits available to property owners to help defray the cost is important information to pass on to property owners.

An inventory of historic properties could show that parts of the neighborhood are potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and possibly the creation of one or more historic districts. Historic property designation would be pursued only if eligible property owners in Highland were in favor of the proposal.

The City's inventory of historic properties was last updated in 1999. The scope of the update did not include any properties in the Highland area due to budget limitations. The Hickory Historic Preservation Commission would have to agree to commit resources for a survey of this neighborhood.

Environmental Characteristics

Three branches of Falling Creek, which originates in a Lake Hickory cove east of the bridge across NC 127 north, affect the terrain of Highland. A fork of the creek splits in Stanford Park. One stream crosses 12th Avenue NE in the 600 block and flows toward Lenoir-Rhyne College.

The other stream flows east, crosses 8th Street NE and follows 9th Street NE until it terminates in a vacant lot at the intersection of 9th Street NE and 9th Avenue Place NE.

The third branch crosses 8th Street Drive NE and parallels 13th Street NE into the Public Services Complex off 9th Avenue NE.

Topographical features such as free flowing streams can be scenic and provide wooded green space in the neighborhood. Yet they can also collect litter, become overgrown, and are prone to flooding during heavy rainstorms.



One of the branches of Falling Creek disappears into a culvert under 12th Avenue NE.

Community Development

The City of Hickory administers community development programs to assist low to moderate-income families. The Community Development division of the Planning Department is responsible for disbursement of federal funds the City receives annually from Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2001, the City will receive approximately \$413,000 for housing programs to improve living conditions primarily for low to moderate income households.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

Funds received under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program can be used for the following activities:

- Acquisition of real property
- Disposition of real property
- Public facilities and improvements such as: senior centers, recreation facilities, centers for the disabled, neighborhood facilities, street improvements, water and sewer facilities, pedestrian malls, flood and drainage facilities, etc.
- Clearance and demolition
- Public services not otherwise available and specifically provided for residents of

comprehensive neighborhood revitalization areas

- Interim assistance in areas where future comprehensive revitalization is planned
- Payment of the non-federal share of eligible federal grant-in-aid programs
- Urban renewal completion
- Relocation payments and assistance
- Loss of rental income
- Removal of architectural barriers
- Housing rehabilitation assistance
- Code enforcement
- Historic preservation
- Economic development
- Funding for neighborhood-based non-profit entities to achieve neighborhood revitalization
- Comprehensive planning
- Program administration

Projects that cannot be funded with CDBG funds are: government facilities, schools, stadiums, art and cultural museums or centers, hospitals, wastewater treatment facilities, operating or maintenance expenses, equipment or political activities.

Over the years, the City has focused on housing rehabilitation, downpayment assistance, development of a single family subdivision, support of non-profit agencies, such as FACED and InterFaith, and infrastructure improvements, such as curb and gutter and sidewalks in income eligible areas. Most of the Community Development funds are spent on housing rehabilitation.

HOUSING REHABILITATION

The Housing Rehabilitation program allows income eligible homeowners to borrow money at a favorable interest rate to repair single-family homes. The Urgent Repair

program is designed to alleviate conditions which pose an imminent threat to the life or safety of very low income and low income homeowners with special needs. Home Energy Loan Program or HELP funds may be used to effect energy-efficiency measures in association with the comprehensive rehabilitation of owner occupied dwelling units.

While records are not kept indicating where money is spent in specific areas, there is little doubt from staff's perspective that Highland has benefited from housing rehabilitation funding.

FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS

The Planning Committee was curious as to how the neighborhood could increase levels of homeownership. Staff suggested referring potential homebuyers to the Community Development Division for more information. The First-Time Homebuyers program provides a zero interest loan to qualified families. Loans are re-paid at zero percent interest upon final payment of the first mortgage, refinance of the first mortgage or when the house is sold. There are some qualifications that the applicant must meet in order to be eligible.

The current income qualifying standards are: one person makes less than \$27,250; family of two makes less than \$31,150; family of three makes less than \$35,050. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets the income standards based on Census data. Census block data would indicate which areas are eligible or a door-to-door survey could indicate income levels of the rental properties. The income level of the occupant is taken into consideration, not the property owner.

CDBG FUNDING FOR SIDEWALKS

Community Development funds can be used to install curb and gutter and sidewalks in areas of town that meet the guidelines. Generally, parts of the northeast, and all of the southeast and

southwest quadrants of Hickory meet these requirements. Only about \$25,000 of CDBG funds is allocated to sidewalks each year. The Planning Committee identified the segment of 12th Avenue NE from 12th Street to 15th Street NE, approximately 2,265 feet as an area that was in need and would most likely qualify for the funds.

Requests for funding and projects are solicited annually during a series of public meetings and are forwarded to the Citizens Advisory Committee for their consideration and recommendation. Project requests need to be specific, in writing, and include about one or two blocks of the area. Not all requests are funded due to budget limitations and priorities; however, it is acceptable to make the same request in subsequent years.

HOUSING OWNERSHIP ENHANCEMENT

The City of Hickory has created new programs to promote single-family infill homeownership in targeted neighborhoods. These programs include designing a neo-traditional single-family subdivision on the Bumbarger property adjacent to Stanford Park and then marketing the entire property for sale to the private sector for implementation.

In June 2001, the City adopted a program to provide infrastructure support for new homeownership in target neighborhoods. Highland is one of those targeted neighborhoods. Under the program, the City will reimburse homeownership developments \$5 per linear foot for new curb and gutter, \$6 per linear foot for new sidewalks, \$12 per linear foot for new streets, \$10 per linear foot for new water lines, \$20 per linear foot for new sewer lines and \$500 for individual sewer taps and \$500 for individual water taps.

The program is only for single-family owner occupied homes, townhomes or condominiums, and is not limited by the income of the homeowners. The City hopes to promote more middle and upper-end housing in targeted areas. The Community Development Division administers the program.

Trends in Homeownership

The Highland Neighborhood has evolved over the years from a predominately owner occupied, single-family neighborhood to an area where more than half of all the residential dwelling units are rental.

The *Structural Conditions and Rental Status* map in Appendix II - Map 3 illustrates the number and location of all the rental properties in Highland Neighborhood according to Catawba County Real Property Tax Index as of December 2001.

The 1967 Eric Hill Associates study indicated there were 423 housing units in Highland. Data collected in 2001 show a total of 674 housing units in Highland. Of those, 67.8 percent or 457 units are rental. Of the 393 single-family homes in Highland, 174 or 44.3 percent are used as rental homes.

During the past thirty-three years, there has been a net loss in the number of single-family homes in the neighborhood. Only twelve single-family dwelling units were constructed between 1967 and 2001.

In comparison, 2000 Census Data shows the city's percentage of owner occupied housing units stood at about 55 percent; the remaining 45 percent were rental units.

In contrast, multi-family units have proliferated in Highland. Since 1967, 23 apartment complexes containing three or more units were con-

structed in the past thirty-three years. Data shows that 172 housing units have been added to the neighborhood.



New apartment complexes, such as this one on 14th Street NE, disrupt the streetscape and bear no relationship to the existing housing in the area.

As the comparison of the data on residential types from 1967 and 2001 clearly illustrates, the character of the Highland Neighborhood has changed largely because of the proliferation of multi-family developments.

No one section of the neighborhood has a higher concentration of rental housing than another. Rental units are distributed almost equally throughout Highland.

The 2001 study indicates that 55.7 percent of the neighborhood residents are homeowners. Although data is not available for the percentage of homeownership in 1967, it is suspected that the percentage of homeowners was much higher during that period.

Table 6 illustrates the property occupancy status of residential parcels in Highland as of December 2001.

TABLE 6. 2001 - PROPERTY OCCUPANCY STATUS

Single-Family - Owner Occupied	219
Single-Family - Rental	174
Multi-Family Rental Units	283

676	Total residential dwelling units
55.7	Single-family units are owner occupied
%	
44.3	Single-Family units are rental
%	
457	Total rental units
67.6	Housing units in Highland are rental
%	

The Planning Committee was informed that the market to convert owner occupied housing to tenant housing is strong in Hickory. Hickory is the rental housing market provider for the four-county Unifour area, thereby creating a shortage of single-family detached rental housing and an explosion of apartment complexes located in the area.

Highland has good school districts and with the new recreation complex on 8th Street Drive NE, the neighborhood is destined to become more popular.

Economic Development Influences

Highland is fortunate to have many neighborhood services close by. Banks, dry cleaners and laundromats, auto parts stores, a drug store, a florist, a bakery, a seasonal produce stand, three ethnic food stores and a grocery outlet, a fuel/convenience store, a liquor store and several restaurants are within a half mile of the heart of the neighborhood. However, access to the shopping and service areas along Sandy Ridge Road and Springs Road is difficult due to the lack of street connectivity and the one-way streets.

The recently adopted *Hickory by Choice* comprehensive land use and transportation plan identifies Highland as a Neighborhood Core area just south of a Community Commercial Core (Kool Park Road and Springs Road). That means that in the future, neighborhood-serving businesses will be encouraged to locate in the area rather than “big box” retailers. The city’s

Economic Development Coordinator maintains that good access to major roadways is what is driving the commercial growth adjacent to Highland.

A number of new construction projects in the past few years have added to the growth of the surrounding area. Highland’s market is small retail and service businesses. Recent examples are: the redevelopment of the Sandy Ridge Plaza (Captain’s Galley) and the addition of Stone Hearth Bakery; construction of a gas station/convenience store/Bojangles restaurant at the corner of 16th Street NE and 9th Avenue NE; the Highland Center/Hollar development at 9th Avenue NE and 15th Street NE; the expansion of Springs Road Commons (Winn Dixie); the addition of the Catawba Valley Bank in front of the Food Lion; the two new drugstores - all indicate a place where business is good and growth will bring more.

Businesses along Springs Road had once feared that the opening of 8th Street Drive NE would divert traffic and customers from Springs Road, but traffic counts indicate that that has not happened.

APPEARANCE IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

The Hickory City Council funds two non-residential matching grant programs – one for landscape improvements and one for façade improvements.

The Downtown Appearance Improvement Incentive Grant was developed and adopted by City Council as part of the implementation of the City Center Plan.

The maximum amount that can be requested is \$5,000. This 50-50 matching grant was initially limited to the one-mile radius of downtown. However, in the West Hick-

ory/Westmont Neighborhood Plan, neighbors requested that the boundaries be extended to include the 1st and 2nd Avenue SW corridor to US 321. Highland Planning Committee could request the same such consideration for Highland Avenue NE.

The Landscape Incentive Grant was developed to improve the appearance of privately owned properties through landscaping projects that go beyond what is required by city ordinance. Eligible properties are located along Lenoir-Rhyne Blvd. (between Tate Blvd. And Hwy 70 SE), NC 127 (between 8th Avenue NE to 31st Street NE), and Springs Road (between Highland Avenue NE to 26th Street Drive NE), or any other property along a city or state owned roadway outside of the public right-of-way. This 50-50 matching grant has a maximum funding level of \$2,500. The Community Appearance Commission reviews the requests and makes a recommendation to City Council.

The purpose of the matching grants is to provide an incentive for commercial property owners to upgrade the appearance of targeted areas in an effort to spur economic development.

Structural Conditions

The structural conditions in Highland are good. According to a field survey, 94 percent of the properties are well maintained, while six percent of the properties are in need of maintenance or major repair.

Based on the field survey conducted by staff in July 2001, the physical condition of the

neighborhood’s buildings were placed in one of two categories: well-maintained or in need of repair. The results of the study are illustrated in the *Structural Conditions and Rental Status* map in Appendix II - Map 3.

Dwellings classified as “well-maintained” were considered free of any obvious building deficiencies. Dwellings classified as in need of repair exhibit signs of serious conditions such as foundation, rotted wood or roof damage. Appearance items such as peeling paint or an unkempt yard were not considered in the rating.

The condition of each structure was evaluated from the street by looking at exterior features such as the roof, chimney, exterior walls, doors, windows, gutters, soffits, bargeboards, foundation, porch, stairs, and paint.

The data presented in Table 7 and Table 8, which compares 1967 and 2001 housing conditions by type, indicates that there has been great improvement in terms of the number of seriously deteriorated structures. The improvement came primarily because all of the dilapidated and most of the deteriorating single-family homes were demolished and replaced by either commercial buildings, mobile homes or multi-family structures. Unfortunately, new single-family housing construction has not kept pace.

TABLE 7. 1967 - HIGHLAND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS BY TYPE

	Number of Buildings				% of Total
	Single Family	Public & Semi-Pub.	Com. & Indust.	Total	
Standard	265	5	12	282	84%
Deteriorating	39	--	3	42	13%

Dilapidated	5	--	4	9	3%
Totals	309	5	19	333	
% of Total					
Substandard	14%	0 %	37%		

TABLE 8. 2001 - HIGHLAND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS BY TYPE

	Number of Buildings					% of Total
	Single Family	Multi-Family	Public & Semi-Pub.	Com. & Indust.	Total	
Standard	383	42	8	26	459	95.4%
Deteriorating	13	5	0	4	22	4.6%
Dilapidated	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Totals	396	47	8	30	481	
% of Total						
Substandard	3.3%	10.6%	0%	13.3%		

In 1967, approximately 17 percent of the total residential structures were identified as substandard compared to 2001 in which only three percent of the total residential structures have been identified as substandard. This indicates that during the past thirty-three years, efforts to reduce the physical decline of housing within Highland has retarded further deterioration, and impacted the neighborhood positively by reducing the number of substandard dwellings.

In terms of real numbers, eleven rental, single-family homes need some repair and only two single-family, owner occupied homes need some repair.

Five multi-family structures are showing signs of deterioration based on the windshield survey. Of the total number of multi-family buildings in Highland, 10.6 percent are in need of repair.

The majority of the dwelling units in need of repair are rental properties and are scattered throughout the neighborhood. The commercial properties in need of repair are

primarily located in the 9th Street Drive NE/9th Avenue NE area.



Huffman TV building on 9th Street Drive NE has been abandoned since 1996. This building was once the corner food store.

Substandard structures create a negative visual image for the neighborhood to visitors and potential homebuyers. However, just because a property looks bad from the outside does not mean it is below standards. If the property is not maintained, there usually is a reason. The owner could be physically or financially unable to take care of the property. This is an issue aesthetically critical homeowners easily overlook. On the other hand, absentee landlords have a responsibility to maintain their rental properties.

MINIMUM HOUSING CODE

While structural conditions in Highland are good at the moment, the housing stock is aging. The need to remain vigilant with code enforcement is imperative before more of the deteriorating structures slip into further disrepair.

Neighbor to neighbor communication is often the best way to deal with problems in the neighborhood. It may take several contacts to motivate the owner to improve the property, but this approach advances everyone's understanding of the situation.

The City of Hickory employs two full-time Minimum Housing Code Inspectors. Property inspections are scheduled based on complaints received from staff, citizens or tenants with a valid petition.

The Minimum Housing Code is adopted as a local ordinance that addresses matters such as the building foundation, mechanical and electrical hazards. What the minimum housing code does not address, the State building code does, so there are minimum standards that must be met regardless.

The ordinance spells out the procedure for initiating minimum housing code inspections. An inspection happens if (1) an inspector sees a potential violation; (2) a public official reports it; or (3) a petition signed by five residents is submitted to Building Inspections. The enforcement of the petition process is necessary to decrease the large number of landlord-tenant disputes that the inspectors were frequently finding themselves involved.

Minimum housing code enforcement is complex with legalities and the process can take up to two years or more, particularly if the property owner refuses to cooperate.

Once the complaint is received, the inspector seeks access to the property to inspect for violations. If access is denied, the inspector must obtain an administrative search warrant and return to the property, usually with a police officer. The inspector conducts the inspection according to a checklist of items defined by the code. A report is written and a letter seeking compliance is sent to the property owner with specific deadlines to make the repairs.

If the owner does not comply, the inspector requests a title search to locate all owners of the property from the City's legal department. The property owner is given every opportunity to comply with the code. If the property owner still does not comply, a complaint and notice of hearing is sent via certified mail. A hearing is held where the inspector and the property owner and/or their attorney gives testimony to the Building Inspections Department. Per the code, the owners are given 60 days to make repairs.

The inspector determines the cost of repairs using a computer program. If the repairs are going to cost more than 50 percent of the tax value of the structure, then the building is designated as "dilapidated". If it will cost less than 50 percent of the tax value to repair than the building is determined to be "deteriorated".

For deteriorated structures, property owners are given 60 days to repair, demolish or vacate and close. Vacate and close means to board up the building and remove the utilities. There is nothing in the code that calls for follow-up inspections to determine at what point the structure deteriorates enough to meet the over 50 percent of the value threshold. For dilapidated structures,

property owners are required to demolish or repair to code.

Neighbors know that boarded up structures are an eyesore and harm property values. The City's code allows for boarded up structures to remain as long as the building is secure. Some Planning Committee members felt that the City should impose a time limit. The Committee learned that a State general statute allows for such a provision in counties with a population over 160,000. Catawba County is close, but has not exceeded the population threshold.

If nothing has been done in 60 days, the inspector requests a second title search and prepares a request for City Council to condemn the building. City Council considers the request at a regularly scheduled meeting. Inspectors are prepared to present the facts and the property owner is allowed to appear and present their side. The City Council decides whether or not to pass the demolition ordinance. If passed, there is a 30-day period for appeal. The Building Inspections Department sends out a request for bids on demolishing the property. If the property owner does not appeal and a reasonable bid is received, the structure is demolished. The City then processes a lien on the property to recover the cost of the demolition once the property is sold. In short there is at least a four-month long process to have a building demolished, that is if nothing else holds up the process.

Minimum Housing Code enforcement officials must walk a fine line between causing a property owner to correct deficiencies and requiring corrections so costly as to effectively take the building out of service completely. Often the cost of purchasing and restoring an existing deteriorated or

dilapidated structure exceeds the appraised value of the structure following rehabilitation.

The city can levy civil penalties in the amount of \$50 per day if the property owner continues to not comply with repair orders or condemnation orders. Civil penalties have not been used frequently in the past. However, the Building Inspections department has issued several recently that are proving to be effective at convincing property owners to comply.



Once an eyesore, this home on 13th Avenue NE received a new lease on life in 2001 when new owners moved in.

NUISANCE CODE

Nuisance code enforcement is closely related to minimum housing code enforcement. The City's Nuisance Code covers abandoned, junked and nuisance motor vehicles, overgrown lots, wooded lots, and trashy yards. One person is employed full time to deal with these types of code enforcement issues.

According to the Code, a vehicle is considered "junked" if it does not have a current tag, cannot be moved or is partially dismantled or wrecked. When a complaint is turned in or is actually seen by the inspector, the inspector notifies the property

owner that they have ten days to contact the inspector or to get the vehicle running or placed an enclosed building. Putting a cover over the vehicle does satisfy the code if the cover is sunlight and mildew resistant. Extensions can be granted to give the owner more time to comply. If the owner cannot be located, the vehicle is tagged and the inspector checks back in ten days. If it is still there, the vehicle is towed. The towing company keeps the vehicle for 15 days and has the option to sell the vehicle.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

For many years, the condition of commercial buildings was not regulated because no state enabling legislation existed to give municipalities this authority. A newly adopted State general statute does allow the city to apply demolition regulations if the building is in a designated redevelopment area. Highland is far from qualifying as a redevelopment area.

The *Hickory by Choice* plan supported the idea of drafting commercial property maintenance standards. With the adoption of the Land Development Code in May 2001, an ordinance was put in place that requires maintenance of commercial properties. For example, the code prohibits more than 20 percent of the exterior of any structure to be unmaintained. Peeling paint, broken windows and ripped awnings are specifically noted, as well as a provision that specifically prohibits accumulation of debris on the property. Additional staff will be hired to enforce the code.



The former service station on the corner of Highland Avenue NE and 12th Street NE is marked with graffiti and broken windows.

Public Infrastructure

Parts of Highland neighborhood look tattered and tired. Deferred maintenance and apathy in parts of the neighborhood combine to create an image of an area where few care. Perhaps some do care, but do not know how to go about reporting problems or just expect the City to fix the situation in time. Some residents attribute the decline to an increase in rental properties or changing demographics. Regardless of the cause, the effect is apparent and the trend needs to be reversed. Implementation of the recommendations in the Highland Neighborhood Plan can be the first step.

STREET MAINTENANCE

Potholes and utility cuts make for bumpy, unattractive streets in residents opinions.

In Hickory roads are either maintained by the state or by the city. Major roads such as NC 127, Springs Road, Sandy Ridge Road, the northern and southern one-way pairs through downtown, and Lenoir-Rhyné Blvd. are NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) roads and are the state's responsibility to maintain. NCDOT contracts with

the city to repair potholes on the state roads. The NCDOT contracts with private companies to resurface their roads.

City street crews strive to repair potholes within 24 hours of being reported. Street resurfacing is done according to a priority list that was determined by a consultant's study completed in 1997. The pavement management study is scheduled to be updated by early 2002.

Planning Committee members commented on the poor condition of the 1000 – 1300 blocks of 10th Street NE and the 900 – 1300 blocks of 12th Street NE. Street Division staff examined the locations and noted a number of utility cuts that need to be redone, but concluded that the street surface is sound and will not need a complete resurfacing for at least five or more years.

Gravel Roads

Currently, only a small segment of 13th Street Place NE between 14th Avenue NE and 15th Avenue NE is unpaved. City Council allocates funds each year to pave one mile of gravel roads. Every unpaved street in the city is on a priority list maintained by the Engineering Department. The 13th Street Place NE segment will most likely be paved by 2004.



The only gravel road in Highland is 13th Street Place NE and the connecting segments to 14th Avenue NE and 15th Avenue NE.

SIDEWALKS

Highland has good sidewalk coverage with approximately 13,763 linear feet or 2.6 miles of sidewalk. There is a fair level of sidewalk connectivity due to the recent road construction projects. Sidewalks are found primarily on the high traffic volume roadways.

However, some of the existing sidewalks are in need of some maintenance particularly along 9th Avenue NE and at street intersections. The lack of sidewalks in good repair creates a dangerous situation for all pedestrians.

The *Sidewalks* map found in Appendix II - Map 4 illustrates the locations of existing sidewalks and proposed locations for new sidewalks in Highland.

The Planning Committee is recommending an additional 11,935 linear feet or 2.3 miles of new sidewalks. Some of the proposed sidewalks fall outside the actual boundaries of the neighborhood, yet the group felt strongly about providing connectivity to other neighborhoods and commercial centers and therefore recommended extending the sidewalk to meet existing sidewalks.

Sidewalks in Hickory are constructed in one of four ways. First, the City Council allocates funds each year to implement the Sidewalk Master Plan. The Plan was developed by a citizen committee and adopted by the City Council in 1997 and was updated in 2000. The plan prioritizes locations for new sidewalk in all quadrants. Extra weight was given to locations around the ten most used Piedmont Wagon bus stops, parks and

schools. If a neighborhood has completed the planning process and has identified a sidewalk need, then that location is added to the list.

Two major sidewalk projects are on the list for Highland. Sidewalks are slated for the west side of 8th Street Drive NE, from 12th Avenue NE to 19th Avenue NE, and 13th Avenue NE from 7th Street NE to 12th Street NE. Sidewalk construction will be done in conjunction with the development of the new recreation complex at Stanford Park. The east side of 8th Street Drive NE is slated for year nine according to the plan, but is likely to occur as development of the Bumbarger property happens.

The second way to get sidewalks installed is for NCDOT to install sidewalks as part of any new road construction project as the city requests. Third, since 1988, the city has required developers to install sidewalks as new development occurs in areas that were identified in the Master Plan. That is the reason some sidewalks around town start and stop on an individual property.

Finally, property owners can petition for sidewalks to be installed in front of their property. This process requires the owners to pay half the linear foot cost to install the sidewalk and curb and gutter if none exists.

Planning Committee members agree that most residents want sidewalks, but are reluctant to donate the right-of-way necessary to construct the sidewalk.

The group discussed the need for sidewalk along 12th Avenue NE from 5th Street NE to 7th Street NE. There was agreement that this section might not qualify for CDBG funds. Several Planning Committee mem-

bers agreed that a sidewalk was needed on 12th Avenue NE for pedestrian safety.

The segment of 12th Avenue NE from 12th Street to 15th Street NE would most likely qualify for CDBG funds. Staff reminded the Planning Committee that dead end streets do not qualify for CDBG funding and therefore should be left out of the request for new sidewalks.

Curb and gutter is an extra cost, yet it typically adds value to the property. Curb and gutter projects are usually related to storm drainage and must have a logical start and stopping point, therefore in most cases more than one property owner must agree to the project.

Sidewalk Maintenance

Sidewalk maintenance requests such as overgrown shrubs blocking sidewalks and trip hazards should be reported to Public Services. The Street Division provides routine right-of-way maintenance from the spring to the fall and sidewalk repair mostly in the winter months as needed and as weather permits. Sidewalks along 12th Street NE were repaired in 2000.

STREET LIGHTING

There are approximately 133 existing streetlights in the Highland Neighborhood. Several property owners elected to have security lights installed for extra lighting and security at their own cost.

The City bears the cost of streetlights under a lease agreement with Duke Power and spends over \$380,000 a year on roadway illumination.

The City follows accepted professional standards for the placement and illumination

quality of streetlights. While irregular placement of streetlights has occurred in the past, the preferred policy is that the lights should be on one side. This avoids a checkerboard effect on the roadway causing adverse effects on the driver's eyes.

In the past, lights were placed at intersections and midpoints only. The current policy calls for streetlights to be placed approximately every 200 feet. The future goal is to have uniform coverage to meet the accepted professional standards.

The creation of the one-way streets added to the number of streetlights in the neighborhood. However, there are specific locations throughout the neighborhood where streetlights do not exist, creating dark portions of the roadway. Neighbors do not feel safe in those areas at night because of the lack of illumination.

The *Streetlights* map found in Appendix II - Map 5 illustrates the locations of existing streetlights, security lights and proposed locations for new streetlights in Highland.

RIGHT OF WAY MAINTENANCE

Some neighbors expressed their concern about the effect of lax right of way maintenance in Highland. The claim is that the city does not edge the curbs or sweep the streets as frequently as was done in the past.

The City of Hickory purchased a street sweeper that can also spray herbicide to kill grasses that grow over the gutter pan. The city edges the curbs as part of routine maintenance. The street sweeper follows the tractor to clean the gutter pan. Sidewalks on main travel ways are cleaned once a year. Sidewalks in residential areas

are not routinely cleaned unless there is a problem area that has vacant property. In most residential areas, the property owners maintain the curb, utility strip and edging of sidewalks.

Typically, streets without curb and gutter are not swept, nor are they edged. The city recently acquired one more street sweeping truck to better service the many miles of curbed and guttered streets.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The City of Hickory collects over 29,000 tons of garbage annually. Eleven tons of recyclables and yard waste were diverted from the landfill in 2000. About 54 percent of Hickory's residential waste in 2000 was diverted from the county landfill. The participation rate in the recycling program is 70 percent citywide.

The transient nature of renters often results in improperly placed trash roll out containers at the curb. As problems are reported to the City, sanitation staff delivers a form letter to the house explaining how to put their rollout containers, yard waste, and bulky items out at the curb correctly. Literature has recently been translated to Spanish and Hmong to accommodate the ethnic diversity citywide.

Highland Planning Committee members report problems with unclean dumpsters at apartment complexes. The solution is simple. Residents need to have their property manager call Public Services at 323-7500 and request deodorization of the dumpster as needed.

There are 49 multi-family structures with 290 housing units in Highland. The average number of units is 5.74, with the largest

complex having 22 units. This type of dispersion presents two issues.

The first issue is that the solid waste ordinance adopted in September 2001, allows for apartment complexes of six or fewer units to be serviced by rollout curbside containers. Seventy-three percent of the multi-family buildings in Highland are six or fewer units, and therefore are served by rollout containers. Some neighbors voiced concern over the appearance of rows of rollout containers left at the curb for days.

The second issue is that apartment dwellers do not have handy access to recycling services. Recycling containers have been provided to multi-family units in other parts of the city, but the service has not been expanded to Highland. Generally, the complexes are large, with many families taking advantage of the service. Recycling is voluntary, and the city has left it up to property managers to setup and provide access to the containers.

Fortunately for Highland residents, the City maintains a recycling drop off center in the 1300 block of 9th Avenue NE, next to Fire Station # 2. The center is heavily used, and is cleaned up once a day by city staff.

Glass, corrugated cardboard, newspaper, plastic and aluminum are collected at the center. In 2001, the City began collecting mixed paper (junk mail, cereal boxes and non-waxed paper cartons) at the drop off center. Multi-lingual signs were placed on the recycling containers at the drop off site to better serve citizens and increase sorting compliance.



The recycling drop off center is located on 9th Avenue NE adjacent to Fire Station #2.

LITTER

Litter is a problem citywide. Neighbors are frustrated that seemingly there is a lack of enforcement as well as a lack of effort to clean up the litter.

The Neighborhood Association conducts a litter pick-up twice a year, yet that does not seem to be enough to stay ahead of the problem. The Street Division does some picking up of litter in right-of-ways on major roads, not necessarily residential streets.



Highland neighbor Byron Carroll enlists the aid of youngsters in keeping the neighborhood litter free during a clean up in September 2001.

The City working with the Community Appearance Commission contracts to have

community service workers clean up the worst litter areas in the city. Neighbors are encouraged to report to Public Services any location that needs cleaning up.

Police officers must see littering take place in order to write a citation. Trash blowing out from the back of uncovered trucks is a large part of the litter problem.

Sadly, a Planning Committee member suggested that residents have just become accustomed to litter being everywhere and therefore do little to correct the problem.

Public Facilities

Because the City of Hickory owns many of the larger, more visible properties in Highland, the Planning Committee suggested a concentrated maintenance effort on the City's part would boost neighborhood appearance. Areas of specific concern are the eroded banks around the Highland Recreation Center and deferred right-of-way maintenance.

FORMER BUMBARGER PROPERTY

The Bumbarger property is now in three parcels bisected by 8th Street Drive NE. Additional acreage was acquired in 2001. The largest tract is 14-acres of vacant land on the east side of 8th Street Drive NE. Neighbors recall the old family home that sat atop the knoll. The property was originally purchased in 1995 for two reasons: to make way for the extension of 8th Street NE and to enable the City to develop a soccer complex.

As the road was completed, the city realized that the remainder of the property could only accommodate three soccer fields, not sufficient to meet the demand.

An alternative site for the soccer complex was pursued, leaving the land for consideration as the location for the City's first facility built for the sole purpose of meeting recreational administration and activity needs.

The City proceeded to work with a consultant, the neighborhood and other interested groups to develop plans for a recreation facility that was functional in form and use. Highland Neighborhood Association hosted the facility planning session in October 1999 where staff and the consultants listened and tried to accommodate a wide variety of concerns and ideas. In March 2000, the Neighborhood Association hosted the facility design review session where the consultants presented a preliminary design and sketches of the proposed building.

Attendees were pleased with the design and the fact that most of the requests heard in the previous meeting were accommodated. However, one nagging concern lingered - How would children get from the new recreation complex across 8th Street Drive NE, a four-lane road, to the ball fields at Stanford Park safely? City Council members shared this concern and challenged staff to examine alternatives. Expecting youngsters to walk a block to the pedestrian crosswalks was unrealistic. City staff explored the possibility of an overhead pedestrian bridge or an underground pedestrian tunnel. Both were determined to be cost prohibitive.

Finally, a solution appeared – move the new complex to the west side of 8th Street Drive NE and rework the configuration of the softball fields. The City owned enough acreage to accommodate the 40,000 square foot proposed building as well as the three softball fields, concession and scorekeepers tower, parking, playground and picnic shel-

ter space, a walking track and a skateboard park.

City Council approved the relocation of the recreation complex and authorized the commission of a new site plan on September 5, 2000.

During the planning process, committee members expressed unanimous concern that the use of the Bumbarger property would be decided without input from Highland. The fear is that the City might sell the property to a developer who would build high-density multi-family units similar to those that have been recently constructed on 8th Street Drive NE, north of the neighborhood boundary.

The Hickory City Council discussed potential uses for the Bumbarger property at the Council/Staff Retreat held in March 2001. A recommendation was made to pursue development of an affordable, single-family home subdivision that is consistent with the concepts put forth in *Hickory by Choice* and the new Land Development Code.

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

In the City of Hickory, there are two types of parks – active and passive. Passive parks have only playground equipment or picnic tables, where an active park has ball fields or courts where organized sports are played. Active parks are classified as neighborhood or district serving depending on what activities take place at the park. District parks serve the whole city and usually have playing fields, such as Stanford Park in Highland or Kiwanis Park in Kenworth. The new recreation complex at Stanford Park will be a district park.

The Landscape Division of Public Services not the Parks and Recreation Department maintains Highland Park, which is considered passive.

Vandalism in the parks and at recreation facilities is uncommon yet does occur. Damage to restrooms, overturned trashcans or broken signs are the most frequent findings. Police and Parks and Recreation staff work together to prevent and repair damage when it happens.

Stanford Park

Highland's own Stanford Park is located at 8th Street Drive NE and 13th Avenue NE. The 37-acre park is perfectly situated to serve as a district park and recreation facility for the entire city. More than 90 percent of the city's population lives within 2.5 miles of the site according to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Stanford Park is expanding to include a 40,000 square foot recreation complex after years of planning, community input and design. This facility will be the first recreation center in the city that is designed with recreation as the primary function. All the existing centers are old schools that have been converted for recreation use.

The 1997 Parks and Recreation Master Plan indicated a need for another recreation facility in the northeast. Conceptual designs for a multi-purpose recreational facility were developed and discussed with the public in several meetings starting in 1998 to 2000.

The original location for the center and the park administration offices was on the east-side of 8th Street Drive NE. After citizens and City Council members raised concerns about children crossing the busy road safely, the building site was moved to the westside

of the street at the current Stanford Park location.

The three existing ball fields, parking lot and concession stand in Stanford will be removed and the entire property graded for the new center and three new softball fields and score booth/concession stand that will be arranged in a wagon wheel shape.

The building will be located in what is currently an open field that once served as the borrow pit when 8th Street Drive NE was constructed. Parks and Recreation Administration offices will be moved to the new center that will house two gyms, a portable stage, a dividable community room with a catering kitchen, an indoor soft playground, fitness and aerobics rooms, and locker rooms. The interior space is designed so that different sections of the building can be shut off when not in use (i.e. the community room could be accessed without opening the entire building).

Plans call for the center to be open seven days a week, from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m.



The architects rendering of the recreation complex at Stanford Park is a modern design.

The exterior of the building is to be constructed of brick with a raised seam, col-

ored metal roof. The new complex at Stanford Park is proposed to include a supervised skateboard facility to be developed at the same time the rest of the complex is built. An outdoor basketball court, picnic shelter and paved recreation trail are also shown on the grounds. The trail will not be lit and will accommodate walkers, joggers, cyclists and rollerbladers. A swimming pool is not included in the plans at this time as was once discussed. The drawing shows approximately 210 parking spaces and room for building expansion as well as an outdoor playground for future development.

Neighbors expressed concern about the park entrance onto 8th Street Drive NE. The final design showed that the entrance was moved farther north to avoid the crest in the hill and provide better sight distance. The other entrance to the park off 13th Avenue NE and 7th Street NE is also a concern as some motorists fail to yield as they enter the park.

Existing buildings, fencing and lighting were removed for site grading in late June 2001. If the weather cooperates and all else goes well, the building should be ready to open in the spring of 2003. Landscaping of the grounds will happen as the season permits.

Concurrently, the Public Art Commission is examining the possibility of a public art piece in front of the new Stanford Park Recreation Complex. Members of the Highland Planning Committee embraced the idea of the placement of an appropriate piece of art and expressed a desire to be included in the art selection process.

Once the complex is opened, Highland Recreation Center will be closed and the City Council will eventually decide what to do with the center as well as the remainder of the Bumbarger property.

Highland Recreation Center

The 1997 Parks and Recreation Master Plan noted that the Highland Recreation Center was heavily used by a wide variety of socio-economic classes and ethnic backgrounds. In the plan the consultant assessed that the building exhibits a wide variety of maintenance, operational and aesthetic problems typically associated with old school buildings.

The Highland Recreation Center is a supervised facility when it is open Tuesday through Friday, 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. All recreation centers are closed on Sunday and Monday.

There was a time when the Neighborhood Association viewed Highland Center as a liability, which attracted unruly groups. The situation appears to have subsided, as few reports of problems were recorded in 1999 or 2000.

As the City of Hickory prepares to open the new recreation complex at Stanford Park, neighbors have expressed concern about the disposition and future use of Highland Recreation Center. Members of the Planning Committee suggested converting Highland Recreation Center into a Senior Center when the new recreation facility is opened. Currently there are two Senior Centers operated by the City of Hickory – Brown-Penn in the southwest and Westmont in the northwest. There is some question among Planning Committee members regarding the definition of a senior center. A pilot program implementing senior programs at Highland Recreation Center in 1997 was terminated after three months due to low interest.

One persistent concern at the Recreation Center property has been the condition of the bank on the west side of the recreation center property. Erosion and lack of ground cover has created a washed out, neglected slope highly visible from 10th Street NE.



Neighbors are concerned about the appearance of the eroded bank at the Highland Recreation Center.

Highland Park

The neighborhood is fortunate to have a quiet natural space known as Highland Park within its boundaries. Some neighbors still refer to the area as “Slick Rock” and recall playing in the branch of Falling Creek as children. The creek and popular picnic spot’s name comes from the long gray rocks just below the surface made slick by the flowing water. Time has worn away the small sandy beach beside the creek that residents remember.

In 2000, the Landscape Services Division submitted an Urban Forestry grant to enhance Highland Park. Unfortunately, the grant was not funded.

Planning Committee members expressed concern for preservation of the trees and creek that runs along the westside of property and eventually flows through Highland Park.

Staff assured the Planning Committee that Highland Park would not be altered because of the construction at Stanford. The drainage way between the park and the Armory will be improved during the construction process.

Community Safety

Overall, Highland is a nice and quiet neighborhood. Police officers know that no place in the city is without problems.

Illegal activity of any kind damages the reputation of the community and city. The neighborhood recognizes that illegal activity can only be eradicated through the combined efforts of the neighborhood, police, city officials and open dialogue with property owners.

The City of Hickory is divided into five sections for police resource allocation purposes. Each section is known as a PACT, or Police And Community Together. The Lieutenants for each of the PACTs are held accountable every week for the types of calls and any problems in their PACT. The officers of Baker PACT serve the Highland neighborhood.

The boundaries of Baker PACT stretch from Tate Boulevard, north to the east side of NC Highway 127, and run east from NC 127 to the city limits. Highland is just one of the many neighborhoods in this primarily residential area that includes a satellite annexation subdivision known as Catawba Springs, approximately six miles from the city limits.



Baker PACT Master Police Officers Baer and Hopson review the number of calls for service in Highland at a Planning Committee meeting.

There are 14 Baker PACT officers. There are no less than two, and no more than four officers on duty in Baker PACT at any given time. Two officers in Baker PACT are certified for bike patrol. Bike patrol occurs mostly at night and is effective because bike officers can get places cars cannot and can sneak up on unsuspecting criminals.

Neighbors have developed a cooperative and trusting relationship with Baker PACT officers and are confident that officers will be there when they need them. However, neighbors perceive problems with speeding, cut through traffic, loud stereos blasting from passing vehicles, drug dealings, vandalism, cats and dogs running loose, and noise.

Citywide police calls for service have increased due to growth and annexation as well as increased citizen awareness. Citywide police officers respond to over 48,000 calls for service a year. PACT officers expect the calls for service to increase over time as more development occurs and the city's population increases.

In a twelve-month period (September 1999 to September 2000), officers responded to

1,495 calls for service in Highland. This is considered low for a residential area surrounded by mixed commercial and industrial property. It was noted that had the neighborhood boundaries included Highland Avenue NE and Lenoir-Rhyne College the number of calls for service would be much higher. The data indicates that the commercial areas and bars attract more crimes and generate many more police calls for service than does the residential area.

The type and number of police calls for service in the Highland neighborhood for one year was tabulated and analyzed. Twenty out of 100 different classifications of police calls for service from September 1999 to September 2000 by location were mapped and presented to the Planning Committee for discussion. The maps were graphed to show the distribution of calls, not the exact location of the incident, to see if any patterns developed.



PACT Commander Lt. Thurman Whisnant leads the Planning Committee in a discussion of community safety concerns.

The Planning Committee members examined the maps of police calls for service on October 30, 2000 and made the following comments:

- Highland has a lot of crime

- Highland has a lot of minor crime
- Real crimes (drugs, prostitution, burglaries) are not happening in Highland
- Maps show that some police calls for service are concentrated while others are dispersed
- Expected to see more drug and property crimes
- Not as bad as I thought it would be
- Neighbors may complain but they are not calling in to report things (i.e. animal control)
- 12th Street NE has a concentration of a variety of calls for service
- Feel my property and home are safer than I thought
- Pleased that there isn't more property damage
- My street is quiet and I feel safe
- Neighbors have few reasons to call police
- Pleased to see that there is a low number of breaking and enterings
- Shocked! – Did not realize how things are – Now I am more aware of the situation
- Expected more noise complaints – loud “boom boxes” from vehicles are a problem
- Loud mufflers are a problem

From the exercise, Planning Committee members became more aware of how their perceptions differ from the reality of actual police calls for service. The rental property owners seemed shocked by the information presented on the maps. Long time residents said they expected to see more calls and more serious offenses represented on the maps.

By quantifying the numbers and types of police calls for service, neighbors were able to see that police officers are in the

neighborhood more often than they realize. Officers conducting property checks, vehicle stops or responding to suspicious person calls result in increased police visibility.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Most of the accidents with property damage and accidents with personal injury happen at what is commonly known to police officers as “malfunction junction” – the one-way crossover intersection at 8th Avenue NE and Highland Avenue NE by Lenoir-Rhyne College. The accident numbers are not as high as other intersections in the city, but are somewhat high due to the volume of traffic daily along this road and the complexity of the intersection.

Other accident hot spots noted were in front of Highland Baptist Church, 9th Avenue NE and 9th Street NE, 8th Street NE at 12th Avenue NE, 15th Street NE at 11th Avenue NE and various locations along 12th Avenue NE.

SPEEDING

Speeding continues to be a problem according to Planning Committee members. In actuality, speeding is a problem city-wide. Motorists disregard the posted speed limits and travel at a speed they find comfortable. Pedestrians or neighbors visiting in their yards have no idea how fast a vehicle is traveling as it passes them, yet they know it makes them feel uncomfortable to walk along the road or on the sidewalk.

Locations prone to speeding noted by the Planning Committee include the one-way pairs of 8th Street NE and 9th Avenue NE, as well as 12th Street NE, 12th Avenue NE, 13th Avenue NE and 13th Street NE.

It is no surprise that active enforcement and police presence deters speeders but officers cannot be in every neighborhood all of the time. One of the best means of slowing speeders is for an area to have the reputation of enforced speed limits. Highland can gain this kind of reputation through the continued efforts of the Baker PACT officers.

Design features such as road widths, on-street parking and other conditions that affect the environment of the roadway are also effective means of slowing traffic. This approach is known as traffic calming which is discussed further in the *Traffic Calming* segment in the Transportation Influences section

DOMESTIC TROUBLE AND ASSAULTS

Domestic trouble calls are any dispute police respond to within a household. Domestic trouble calls for service were distributed throughout the neighborhood. Sixty-seven domestic calls were responded to over a one-year period. Police caution that even though the number seems high, compared to the city as a whole, it is not.

In Highland, these calls for service are concentrated in rental and apartment units.

Domestic and juvenile assaults are reports of any kind of unwanted touching. Twelve of these calls were reported with a concentration of calls to Oakcreek Apartments I and II on 8th Street NE. Due to the potentially volatile nature of domestic calls, two police officers are sent on each call. With the new domestic violence laws, if evidence of abuse exists offenders are taken to jail.

DRUG VIOLATIONS

The data showed that the numbers of drug violations in Highland are very few. Only

three were reported in one year and all in rental units.

Planning Committee members questioned police about what things neighbors should be on the look out for when trying to determine if drug activity is taking place. In response, the PACT Commander advised them to look for lights on all day and night, people hanging out, and cars coming and going at all hours. He told the group this quote, "A community will have what problems it allows," and encouraged neighbors to call suspicious activity in to the police, but not to put themselves in harms way. It can take a long time for the Narcotics unit to build a case against a drug suspect. Citizens can make anonymous tips, which are recorded and passed on to narcotics officers.

ILLEGAL PARKING

There were seventeen calls regarding illegal parking in Highland. The pattern from the map suggests problems arise around the apartment buildings that do not have adequate parking. If people are illegally parking, residents need to call the police and report it to see if other patterns can be established.

A Planning Committee member asked about the situation in front of Highland Baptist Church. When cars are parked along 9th Avenue NE, it is difficult to get around them. This becomes an issue particularly since 9th Avenue NE is the closest east bound route for people who live on the one-way street. There was some concern noted about potentially upsetting the Church, but a dangerous situation might exist. The PACT Commander was not aware that seven accidents with property

damage had occurred in front of the Church.

LITTERING

While there have not been any reports of littering in Highland, steps are being taken to reduce littering citywide.

The Community Services Unit initiated a Litter Watch program in 2000, where citizens are encouraged fill out a postcard when they see someone littering from a vehicle. When citizens see someone littering they can fill out the postcard by recording the license tag, make and color of the car, and the location of where the offender littered and send the postcard to the police. The Community Services Unit will then mail a warning letter to the owner of the vehicle. An officer must actually see someone littering in order to issue them a citation.

NOISE COMPLAINTS

A total of fifty-one noise complaints were reported for the neighborhood over the one-year period. Most of the calls were either at the mobile home park, apartments or rental houses. Sometimes a noise complaint cannot be tracked, so the call is attributed to the address of whoever made the call. The call could range from a barking dog to a loud party or passing car. Boom boxes from passing vehicles are hard to catch. Repeat offenders are tracked and officers can issue a \$50 civil citation that is due within 72 hours if witnessed by the officer. There is little doubt that excessive or constant noise affects the quality of life in any neighborhood.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Animal control calls were dispersed throughout the neighborhood, yet a concen-

tration of calls was shown along 12th Street NE. These types of calls can be about animals running loose or constantly barking dogs that affect neighbors' quality of life. There are only two animal control officers to cover the entire city. They work during the day, but are on call 24 hours a day to handle priority calls.

A Planning Committee member noted that with all the land clearing and intense development happening in the surrounding areas, it is not unusual for foxes, possums, raccoons and other wildlife to be found in Highland. As humans build more and more highways and subdivisions and continue to encroach on animal habitats, how are the creatures supposed to react? The point is that humans overwhelm animal habitat, and the clash of lifestyles is often troublesome for both.

Animal Control Officers are dispatched by the Hickory Police Department in response to complaints and animal bite calls. When laws are violated, Animal Control officers can issue written warnings and citations. Officers also capture animals running at large in violation of the law.

The City of Hickory adopted ordinances to help promote responsible pet ownership and prevent the mistreatment of animals. Under the city ordinances, it is unlawful to: allow a dog or cat to run at large; keep a vicious animal in the city; tease or molest an animal; and have an animal that repeatedly barks or cries. Owners and keepers of animals are supposed to be responsible for the acts of their animals.

SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM

The spay/neuter program is funded by the Hickory City Council to assist with the

costs of spaying and neutering dogs and cats. The program requirements include: the pet owner must be a City of Hickory resident; have an individual income of \$20,000 or less or a household income of \$25,000 or less. There is still a small cost to the participant. Applications for the program are available at the Hickory Police Department or from an Animal Control Officer.

Transportation Influences

The Hickory-Newton-Conover Urban Transportation Plan is a comprehensive transportation study of this region that was first drafted in 1986. The local governments adopted the current Transportation Plan in 1996.

The Transportation Plan documents the facts and methodology used to develop the local transportation plan. Population projections, area employment, commercial growth, housing and the existing road system are all carefully examined in the document. It is a 25-year plan for not only vehicular traffic, but also pedestrians, bicycles and public transit. The associated map indicates future roadway proposals and is used as a guide when planning for development. The plan is used to determine which corridors need to be protected for future development or expansion.

The primary transportation movers in Highland are 8th Street NE, 9th Avenue NE, and 16th Street NE or Sandy Ridge Road. Springs Road is not within the defined boundaries of the neighborhood, yet is a significant thoroughfare as the traffic count shows.

Minor thoroughfares that affect the neighborhood are 8th Street NE, 9th Street NE and 5th Street NE, which forms the

western boundary. Minor thoroughfares are designed to collect traffic from local access streets and carry it to the major thoroughfare system.

Table 10 illustrates the annual average daily traffic counts for 1994 and 1999 on the key thoroughfares in Highland.

Table 10. AVERAGE VEHICLES PER DAY ON MAJOR STREETS IMPACTING HIGHLAND

AA DT = Annual Average Daily Traffic	AA DT 1994	AA DT 1999
9 th Avenue NE – 1400 block	9,300	5,600
8 th Street NE – 1200 block	NA	11,000
8 th Street NE – 800 block	9,200	9,400
8 th Avenue NE – 800 block	NA	4,400
Highland Ave NE – 1100 block	13,100	13,000
16 th Street NE – 900 block	NA	24,000

NA = Not Available

The reduction in traffic on 9th Avenue NE and Highland Avenue NE can be explained by the fact that the roads were converted to one-way traffic in 1997.

The traffic count for 8th Street NE strongly indicates that motorists coming into town from the rapidly growing northeast quadrant are in fact using the road.

Within the neighborhood, 12th Street NE and 12th Avenue NE carry a higher than normal vehicle count for residential streets. One explanation is the additional traffic generated by the Public Services complex located in the neighborhood. A second probability is that motorists are seeking shortcuts to destinations outside the neighborhood.

EIGHTH STREET EXTENSION

The construction of the 8th Street Extension, now known as 8th Street Drive NE, was part of a bond referendum put before the voters in the late 1980’s. The bond was approved by 75 percent of the voters. The

need for connectivity and higher capacity roadways was acknowledged when the City realized that most of the growth was occurring in the northeast quadrant.



Construction of the one-way pairs, 8th Street NE and 9th Street NE at 13th Avenue NE in 1998.

As the Huntington Woods Condominiums property was divided for development in the early 1980s, the city was able to reserve the road corridor. Eighth Street Drive NE was built by the city, not by the state. The road opened several, once land-locked, large parcels for development.

It was determined that 8th Street NE and 9th Avenue NE should be converted to one-way traffic to accommodate incoming and outgoing traffic flow from the fast growing northeast.

The impact of the road project on the neighborhood was considered before the project was done. Public input sessions were held, and NCDOT approved of the 8th Avenue/9th Avenue NE conversion. Engineers considered widening 8th Street NE to accommodate two-way traffic flow. The road widening alternative was rejected because it would have necessitated the demolition of several homes.

ONE-WAY STREETS

The creation of the one-way streets in Highland has hindered road connectivity. Residents claim the road configuration makes it difficult to get through the neighborhood. While many complain about the one-way roads, some neighbors like them because it makes it easier to get out of driveways on busy streets.

Others question the impact on emergency medical and fire response time. Fire officials informed the Planning Committee that the conversion of the roads caused the fire department to change their travel route, and estimate the change added 45-55 seconds to the response time.

The one-way streets disrupted some residents routine travel patterns. Many a complaint was heard from some residents during the planning process about how difficult it is to get to Springs Road because of the 9th Avenue NE one-way street.

Highland Neighborhood is certainly affected by surface transportation changes implemented in 1998. The conversion of Highland Avenue NE, 9th Avenue NE, 9th Street NE and 8th Street NE to one-way traffic, coupled with the four-lane extension of 8th Street Drive NE to 16th Street NE and the crossover at Lenoir-Rhyne College has undoubtedly altered the character of the neighborhood. Had the streets remained as two-way streets the road would have needed to be widened which would have meant the demolition of homes, removal of mature trees and the taking of front yards.

When asked about the current roadway configuration, some neighbors and business owners impulsively respond that they would like the streets converted back to

two-way traffic. They claim conversion of Highland and 9th Avenue NE to one-way streets made access to businesses difficult, and has caused drivers to use private drives as cut-through.

Realistically, in bound traffic volume from the rapidly growing northeast quadrant precludes converting the streets back to two-way traffic. The one-way configuration is necessary to manage congestion now and in the future. The majority of the Planning Committee expressed their support for leaving the roads as they are presently.

CONNECTION TO 16TH STREET NE

On paper, it seems appropriate to suggest extending 12th Avenue NE through Catawba Mailing Service property and Sandy Ridge Plaza to connect to 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road) to improve connectivity. Such a proposal could possibly require displacement of two houses and one multi-family unit and possibly a business, in addition to condemnation of property if easements are not granted. Other considerations are the difference in grade between the shopping centers, the presence of overhead utilities, and the potential for increased traffic on 12th Avenue NE.



Connecting 12th Avenue NE to 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road) could provide quicker access

to shopping, dining and other services, yet could create other problems.

While some members of the Planning Committee feel greatly inconvenienced by the missing connection, others contend that it is not worth the expense of building a road. Furthermore, the connection could create some unintended results. Traffic on 12th Avenue NE would increase and neighbors fear the street would become more of a “raceway” than a beneficial road connection. There was not strong group support for making this suggestion a recommendation of the plan.

RAILROAD CROSSING CLOSINGS

In March 2000, the Hickory City Council approved the recommendations of the NCDOT Rail Division's updated *Western Piedmont Traffic Separation Study*. The purpose of the study is to reduce accidents at rail/highway at-grade crossings. A significant factor motivating the study is the highly anticipated return of rail passenger service to Hickory, and the need to improve safety and reduce crossing conflicts in that event.

Twenty-two crossings were examined in the study. In eleven cases, improved crossing gates, pavement markings, signage or improving sight distances are the actions that will result. Seven of the crossings were recommended for closure. One of these crossings is in Highland.

All crossings were evaluated using the criteria developed for the NCDOT Rail Crossing Safety Program. Criteria used in evaluating the Hickory crossings include: accident history; present and future vehicle traffic; train traffic; hazardous materials; type of roadway; type of property served; school bus route; emergency route; type of

warning devices present; redundant crossing; potential for grade separation; feasibility of implementing roadway improvements and economic impact if crossing is closed.

The railroad crossing at 10th Street NE/SE will be closed after the roadway approaches at the 12th Street NE/SE crossing are modified. Essentially the railroad grade has been raised over the years. The improvement will remove the hump caused by the elevated grade and include upgrades in crossing arms and signals. Improvements are projected to be complete by 2004.

One of the most visible rail crossing improvement projects is at 15th Street NE and the Shuford Mills building on Highland Avenue NE. The old mill warehouse was demolished to make way for the realignment of the road. The intersection will be improved by taking out a railroad spur track and the two turns on 15th Street NE. The hump at the railroad crossing will be removed to make it easier for traffic to flow. The project is happening sooner than expected because Shuford Mills was ready to demolish the building and is participating in the construction.

STATE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The northeast quadrant is experiencing more growth than any other quadrant. The demand for immediate road improvements is evident. The widening of 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road) is an identified future need in the regional transportation plan, but has not been placed in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) as of yet.

Residents question the sensibility of allowing more subdivisions to be built along 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road) without improving the road. The city does require de-

velopers to connect to existing road networks when possible. Road connectivity is important in that it provides more options. Still, the two-lane street is quickly reaching capacity. Since 16th Street NE is a NCDOT roadway, there is little the City of Hickory can do to improve the situation.

The one-way crossover at Lenoir-Rhyne College is one portion of a NCDOT project that will eventually include the widening of Lenoir-Rhyne Blvd., from Tate Blvd., to the railroad bridge underpass at 7th Avenue NE. To accommodate the rail line during construction, current plans call for closing the road and detouring the traffic for 22 months. Right-of-way acquisition is in progress. Construction is not likely until 2002 or 2003.

The North Crosstown Loop, of which some protected right-of-way is shown on maps north of Stanford Park, would improve connectivity by linking 5th Street NE at 14th Avenue NE (near Hampton Heights Golf Course) to Springs Road at 12th Street Drive NE (Spencer Road). The new crosstown loop would pass north of Stanford Park and between 14th Avenue NE and 16th Avenue NE. This project is on the Transportation Improvement Plan but is unfunded; therefore, it will be several years before the road becomes a reality.

McDonald Parkway is east and north of the Highland area. This transportation project will provide an alternative route for east-west travel and help ease traffic growth in the future.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The City of Hickory has joined with Conover and Newton as a consortium to provide public transportation to the region. Known

as Piedmont Wagon, the loop and two directional bus system serves the periphery of Highland Neighborhood.

There are nine Piedmont Wagon bus stops in Highland. Two are southbound on 16th Street NE (Sandy Ridge Road) at 14th Avenue NE and Sandy Ridge Plaza. Five stops are along 9th Avenue NE from Springs Road to 8th Street NE, and two stops are along 8th Street NE to the edge of Lenoir-Rhyne College campus.

Some residents voiced a need for more convenient Piedmont Wagon bus service. Further discussion of what “convenience” means and what steps could be taken will be pursued by Piedmont Wagon officials and residents.



Sidewalks do not serve the five Piedmont Wagon transit stops along 9th Avenue NE.

Planning Committee members noted that there are no sidewalks at the bus stops along 9th Avenue NE. These stops serve the residential section of the neighborhood.

CURRENT SPEED LIMITS

Throughout the city, residential speed limits are typically 35 miles per hour. Only in specific areas, such as the downtown area and high pedestrian areas such as school zones, are speed limits reduced to 20 or 25 miles per hour. Residents can petition for speed reduction through the Traffic Calming request process.

Speed limits are determined by what is known as the 85th percentile rule: the speed at which 85 percent of the traffic travels or less. Other factors such as the geometry of the road and the density of driveway cuts are taken into consideration when considering optimal operating speeds.

As an initial step to implement the traffic calming policy, Hickory Police Department purchased four radar trailers. The trailers are equipped with radar and a display that shows the vehicle's speed as it passes, providing immediate feedback to the driver. After the trailer has been in place for a few days, officers follow-up with traffic surveillance in the area and issuing citations.

The radar trailer was stationed on 12th Street NE for several days in April 2001 and is often placed in various locations on 8th Street NE. The trailer is designed to make motorists aware that they are exceeding the speed limit. Neighbors believe traffic slowed down while the trailer was present, but know that the trailer is only a temporary deterrent to speeding.

TRAFFIC CALMING

The City of Hickory began investigating solutions to traffic problems through traffic calming techniques after hearing from most

of the neighborhoods that speeding in residential areas was a problem.

On-street parking is one way to slow traffic because it reduces the lane width. Typically, the road must be twenty-three feet or wider to accommodate on street parking on one side. Any changes to existing on street parking areas would require an amendment to the City's current parking ordinance and City Council action.

The City Council, at its November 2, 1999 Council Meeting, requested the City Manager to develop options for a traffic calming program, identify potential streets for speed limit reductions and investigate the feasibility of using monitoring equipment to enforce red light violations.

On February 15, 2000, the City Council adopted a traffic calming policy, which provides the means for residents to request speed limit reductions, multi-way stops and speed humps.

The policy provides the means for residents to request speed limit reductions, multi-way stops and speed humps. This process involves five distinct steps:

1. **Citizen Request** – A citizen contacts the City Planning Department and identifies a speeding or cut through traffic problem in writing.
2. **Evaluation** – Staff including traffic, police, fire, engineering and planning evaluates the complaint and determines if a valid problem exists, and if the street is appropriate for traffic calming.
3. **Criteria** -- If a valid problem is found to exist, staff uses the following criteria to determine if a traffic calming program could be developed:

- A street must be classified as a two-lane, local residential street. (Not a major transportation plan roadway or minor transportation plan roadway carrying more than 5,000 vehicles per day)
 - The street's pavement width must be less than or equal to 40 feet.
 - The average annual daily traffic volume is greater than 500 vehicles per day and less than 5,000 vehicles per day.
 - The speed of 15% of the traffic on the street exceeds the posted speed limit by at least 5 mph.
4. **Resident Petition** – If the street qualifies for traffic calming, staff would develop a program that may include speed reductions, multi-way stops, speed humps, or other appropriate measures and forward this program and an official petition to the interested citizen. A petition bearing the signature of 75% of the residents on the affected street or streets would be required to proceed with the process.
 5. **Prioritization of Installation** – After submittal of the petition, the street will be rated for priority and scheduled for installation depending on funds budgeted.
 6. **Cost** – The cost of the installation of traffic calming measures including speed humps is borne by the City of Hickory.

Following receipt of a written notice of a speeding or cut-through traffic problem by the Planning Department, staff will determine if the problem is valid and if the street meets the qualifying criteria. If it is determined that the problem is valid and that the street meets the criteria, a petition will be mailed to the interested party. The policy states that it is the interested party's re-

sponsibility to complete the petition and return it to the City.

THROUGH TRUCK TRAFFIC

All public streets are open to vehicle travel, yet in most cases residential streets are not designed to accommodate large trucks.

During the planning process, residents along 13th Street NE relayed their experiences with tractor-trailers getting stuck on 13th Avenue and 13th Street NE. The location of utility poles and tight turns make it difficult for big trucks to maneuver without hitting the pole or tearing up someone's front yard. Rub marks on utility poles are evident at the intersection. Big trucks should only be in that area to make deliveries to either of the two commercial businesses on 13th Street NE.

In response to resident requests, a truck traffic study was conducted on Tuesday, January 9th and Wednesday, January 10th, 2001. Data analysis and vehicle classification followed. Counters were placed in the 1100 block of 13th Avenue NE and the 1200 block of 12th Avenue NE. The data collected showed that 13th Avenue NE averaged 1,100 vehicles per day. Eighty-five percent were cars, 11 percent were trucks with trailers, two percent were two axle trucks with a longer wheelbase, and two percent were classified as other such as motorcycles, buses and tandem trucks.

The data collected for the 1200 block of 12th Avenue NE indicated that an average of 1,300 vehicles per day travel this road. Eighty-two percent of the vehicles were cars, 13 percent were pick-ups with trailers, two percent were two axle trucks, and three percent were classified as all others.

A traffic ordinance amendment that allowed for the posting of a “No Thru Trucks” sign on 13th Avenue NE, east of 12th Street NE, and 13th Street NE north of 12th Avenue NE was adopted by City Council on March 20, 2001. The signs advise truck drivers that they should not travel down that road. If trucks are caught on the road without being there for a purpose, such as making a delivery, the drivers could be issued citations.



A No Thru Truck sign was placed on 13th Street NE to indicate to lost truck drivers that the road does not accommodate large trucks.

ON-STREET PARKING

Planning Committee members expressed concern about on street parking impeding the flow of traffic, particularly on 9th Avenue NE in front of Highland Baptist Church.

Problems with on-street parking became apparent when the one-way streets became operational in September 1997.

Residents of Village Park Townhomes, across 8th Street NE from Highland Baptist Church, contacted the city with a number of concerns regarding unsafe on-street parking. The Traffic Division investigated and recommended on-street parking prohibitions for some of the problem segments.

The amendments to the Traffic Ordinance were ordained by City Council on October 21, 1997.

Intersection encroachment protection with "no parking" signs for 8th Street and 9th Avenue NE was also accomplished, which actually seemed to be the most serious of the problems.

In reaction, Highland Baptist voiced strong concerns about on-street parking capacity being diminished. The Church relies upon these facilities as overflow parking for events, most notably the "Mother's Morning Out" weekly program.

The Traffic Division affirmed much of the existing on street parking, as many of the impacted streets are capable of supporting limited parking, and helped the apartments obtain facility lighting and the church get "no thru traffic" signs in the process.

Another location of concern is 12th Street NE. Posted signs indicate that on-street parking is prohibited on the eastside of 12th Street NE from 9th Avenue NE to the dead end. Yet, on occasion someone parks his or her vehicle in the “no parking” zone. The situation appears to be more of momentary aggravation rather than an everyday occurrence that is creating an unsafe condition.

From September 1999 to September 2000, Hickory Police responded to seventeen calls about illegal parking. Two of those calls were on 12th Street NE and two of the calls were to the vicinity of Highland Baptist Church. During the same time frame, fifteen motor vehicle accidents with property damage were reported.

Business and Commercial Concerns

Family owned and operated companies who have been in the area for many years represented the business sector on the Highland Planning Committee throughout the planning process.

Highland industries and commercial businesses have witnessed a gradual progression of change in the character and composition of the area. Several small, family-owned specialty companies remain in the area while other necessary neighborhood service oriented businesses have long since left. The most obvious need is for a full service neighborhood grocery store.

Over the years, most of the smaller industries such as the hosiery mills and furniture makers have closed their doors and torn down the buildings.



The Baker Heritage building on 9th Avenue NE was vacated and demolished in March 1998.

In recent years, many of the properties on the heavily traveled thoroughfares have been upgraded, such as Sandy Ridge Plaza and Highland Center. A new Eckerd's drug store replaced a steak house restaurant in 1999. The businesses in this area are easy to find and appear to have adequate parking for their needs.

Meanwhile, Highland Avenue NE remains virtually stagnant. Automotive repair and retail shops are interspersed among houses, nightclubs, mini-warehouse storage facilities, small industries and furniture stores. Latino entrepreneurs have within the past three years opened a grocery, auto sales lot and restaurant on Highland Avenue NE.



Vast parking lots and lack of landscaping contribute to the run down appearance of Highland Avenue NE.

The appearance of the corridor is unappealing, at best, with potential remaining to be uncovered. Numerous utility poles on both sides of the street with lines criss-crossing the roadway makes this one of the most visually cluttered corridors in the city.

Some older, poorly maintained buildings create an image of a less than desirable place to do business. So much so that in October 1996, an out of town interest tried to obtain a special use permit to operate a topless bar on Highland Avenue NE. Business and property owners joined with neighbors and clergy to successfully oppose the proposal. City Council denied the special use permit.

SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting was held in January 2001 as part of the planning process specifically

for businesses and commercial property owners to gather their input because of their substantial influence in the area. The meeting provided an opportunity for neighbors to hear the issues and concerns of business people and vice versa.

An estimated 119 commercial properties fill the area between the railroad tracks and 9th Avenue NE, and along Sandy Ridge Road and Springs Road to 14th Avenue NE. All were invited to attend the meeting.

Based on the sentiment heard at the meeting, business and commercial property owners feel disconnected from the residential part of the neighborhood even though some of these businesses have been in the area for many years. The creation of the Highland Avenue NE and 9th Avenue NE one-way pair system seems to have exacerbated the issue.

IMPACT OF ONE-WAY CONVERSION

Commercial business owners who attended the special meeting expressed their dissatisfaction with the one-way conversion of 9th Avenue NE and Highland Avenue NE that occurred in 1997. One shop owner commented on how it has harmed access to his businesses and that customers have told him that they avoid the area because of the road system. A Realtor commented that the inability to gain easy access to the businesses hurts the value of the property. Other businesses report problems with motorists cutting through their parking lots.

With the conversion of the downtown one-way streets in August 1999, many asked why the streets through their neighborhood could not be converted back to two-way traffic. Downtown serves a different purpose, they were told. With the amount of

traffic projected and the daily in-migration of people from outlying areas who come to work in Hickory coupled with the population growth of the northeast, the one-ways are necessary to move traffic. One of the alternatives to the one-way pair system considered by the city included removing a row of houses on 9th Avenue NE.

ZONING

The Land Development Code adopted in May 2001 is based on the principles set forth in the *Hickory by Choice* Plan. Springs Road and NC 127 were the only two areas subject to a proactive rezoning. Properties that front Springs Road were rezoned from C-1 (commercial) to NC-1 (Neighborhood Core – 1) upon adoption of the code. The NC-1 zone replaces the C-5 zone. It calls for increased landscape standards and disallows quasi-industrial uses among other uses. The zoning only affects properties as they develop or are redeveloped. Existing uses are grand fathered.

The properties fronting Highland Avenue NE are zoned C-5. The properties fronting 9th Avenue NE are zoned I-1. The zoning of these properties was not affected by the code.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City Council is considering authorizing potential incentives for commercial and office redevelopment in the City Center area and targeted business improvement areas identified in approved neighborhood plans. The proposed boundaries include the Highland Avenue NE corridor.

The new policy is based on a fifty percent incentive for five years for commercial or office projects in targeted areas with a \$500,000 new tax base threshold. To fur-

ther promote City Center development, corporate headquarters locating in the targeted areas that create \$3 million or greater tax base would be eligible for a 100 percent incentive for five years. The incentives would be prorated if new or renovated facilities include a mix of corporate headquarters and other offices or retail space.

The incentives are performance driven and are not awarded until the tax base and jobs are created. Furthermore, when the incentives are granted, the City will state “citizenship expectations” for recipients such as supporting community charities, projects and institutions, assisting City and County staff in recruitment of suppliers, and providing volunteers to participate on City boards and commissions.

The City of Hickory employs an Economic Development Coordinator to work with property owners if they are interested in developing or redeveloping their properties.

APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT

The City’s Commercial Landscape Improvement Grant is available to property owners who want to install landscaping beyond the minimum that the code requires. This grant is available to commercial property owners only along major corridors, such as Springs Road, Highland Avenue and NC 127. The maximum amount is \$2,500 and is based on a 50 percent match by the property owner.

In some locations the lack of right-of-way impedes the city from installing more landscaping without property owners donating right-of-way.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highland Plan is the result of a planning process that proactively involved the residents and other interested individuals, working together to identify their priorities and devising action steps that meet the current and future needs of their neighborhood.

The set of strategies, action steps and recommendations in this plan were developed to preserve or improve the Highland Neighborhood.

While the plan does not attempt to address all the issues and concerns in the neighborhood, the plan does provide the framework to begin the process of making living in Highland more desirable by: preserving Highland School; addressing concerns of public safety; managing traffic; strengthening code enforcement efforts; enhancing entranceways into the neighborhood; improving the appearance of the business corridors; and, building the neighborhood's organizational capacity to sustain the neighborhood's cooperative spirit while progressing toward their implementation goals.

The recommendations are the result of thoughtful consideration of information provided to the Planning Committee by the various resource people during the planning meetings. Thorough analysis of the data presented and examination of feasible options aided in the group's justification for making the recommendations.

Highland School

The former Highland Elementary School has survived years of deferred maintenance

since it was converted to housing units for the elderly in 1991. Neighbors recognize and honor the historical and sentimental significance of the building not only as a landmark, but also as a home to many elderly neighbors. Their desire is for the Highland School to remain as the cornerstone of the neighborhood, and be restored to provide safe and decent housing. Highland School is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a locally designated landmark, and is eligible for state and federal rehabilitation tax credits.



The Highland Apartments, formerly an elementary school, is the cornerstone of the neighborhood.

PRESERVE HIGHLAND SCHOOL

Recommendations

- Maintain contact with owners of Highland School Apartments to promote the continued operation of the facility and sound maintenance of the building.
 - Justification: Neighbors have an interest in developing a relationship with the owners of the Highland School Apartments in an effort to preserve the building and the valuable purpose it serves in the neighborhood
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood and Highland School property owners

Community Safety

The Planning Committee learned that Highland is a relatively safe and secure neighborhood. Yet there is always room for improvement and opportunities to work with PACT officers to ensure the health and safety of the neighborhood. Neighbors expressed the need to be proactive instead of reactive to community safety issues.

PROMOTE CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY WATCH

The group agreed that re-establishing a Neighborhood Watch program and learning more about crime prevention were important steps to maintaining the low crime rate in the neighborhood. They pledged to take advantage of more crime prevention programs. Police encourage residents to be “nosey neighbors” and report suspicious people and vehicles.

Persistent community action and renewed involvement from a Community Watch Block Captain network is necessary to restore a sense of safety and well being in Highland. Neighbors must get involved to make a difference in community safety.

Recommendations

- Continue to encourage neighbors to report incidents of illegal activity in the neighborhood to the PACT Commander and Hickory Police.
 - Justification: PACT officers rely on neighbors to report suspicious activity
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood
- Invigorate the Community Watch and Block Captains system for street-by-street communication and crime prevention.
 - Justification: Community Watch promotes neighbor-to-neighbor communication and fosters a sense of security
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Hickory Police Department

ENFORCE NO LITTERING LAW

Litter is everywhere it seems. It is even more noticeable to neighbors who have participated in community clean-up days. Trash along the roadsides harms the image of the city and individual neighborhoods. Neighbors identified the need for more neighborhood clean-ups and stronger enforcement of litter laws.

City officials agree. Each spring the City participates in the NCDOT's Litter Sweep campaign. Neighbors are encouraged to report the worst areas to the Street Division. The city contracts with a non-profit agency to provide a supervisor for a work crew of people who must fulfill community service hours. Each Saturday, the crews clean up the locations identified as problem spots for litter.

To step-up enforcement efforts, in April 2000, the Hickory Police Department introduced a new program, designed to allow citizens to report those who litter by filling out a post card. The citizen reporting the littering remains anonymous. This post card asks for the license plate number of the vehicle, where someone was seen littering, the make of the car, color of the car, street and intersection where someone was seen litter-

ing, and the date and time a person was spotted littering from a vehicle.

The HPD Community Services P.A.C.T. (Police and Community Together) will then send a letter to the registered owner of the vehicle, along with the North Carolina General Statute on littering (14-399). No fines are attached with the letter, but recipients are reminded that if caught by law enforcement, the fine for littering could be a maximum fine of \$1,000.

The Litter Watch post cards are available in the Hickory Police Department lobby, City Hall, neighborhood meetings, and community watch meetings.

Recommendation

- Request that the City encourage aggressive enforcement of litter laws and development of innovative programs to stop littering.
 - Justification: Enforcement would help stem illegal littering and programs get the community involved in the effort to prevent littering
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible parties: Community Appearance Commission, Hickory Police Department

ENFORCE NOISE ORDINANCE

Loud music from vehicles cruising through the neighborhood is disruptive and frustrating to residents. In response to complaints concerning “boom boxes” and loud music from vehicles, Hickory Police developed and are using a specific civil citation form to address violations of the noise ordinance. The civil citation carries a fine of \$50.00, which must be paid within 72 hours. If this penalty is not paid, the City

may proceed in civil court and the fine continues at \$50.00 per day. All police officers can issue the citation without prior warning or supervisory approval. An incident report is not necessary. An officer may determine a violation has occurred without a citizen complaint.

The Planning Committee understands that at times when a complaint is reported the offender is gone before an officer arrives at the scene. The Committee maintains that most of the offenders may not necessarily live in the neighborhood, but are usually the same people. The PACT Commander encouraged the neighbors to record the license tags, time and date each time someone drives through the neighborhood creating a disturbance, so that an officer can be made aware of the frequency of the problem.

The neighbors believe that people with a propensity to cut through Highland blasting their stereos will continue to do so unless they are issued a citation or two. While the problem with loud music from vehicles passing through the neighborhood may never be completely eliminated, residents are urged to continue to report persistent problems.

Recommendations

- Encourage officers to be more diligent about issuing civil citations for violations of the noise ordinance.
 - Justification: Loud music emanating from vehicles disrupts the peace and quiet of the neighborhood and is against the law
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Hickory Police Department

ADDITIONAL ANIMAL CONTROL ENFORCEMENT

The group discussed what to do about persistent animal control problems. Stray cats and dogs running loose can create problems and are a nuisance to some residents. The key element of pet ownership is responsibility. Animal Control officers respond to complaint calls as they are received. Two animal control officers patrol the entire city Monday through Friday during regular working hours. On-duty police officers respond to requests for service or complaints received after hours. If the situation warrants, the animal control officers can be called to assist on weekends or nights.

Members of the Planning Committee recognized that one of the problems with the current system is lack of staff and equipment, such as traps that can be left with homeowners until the unwanted animal is captured.

Recommendation

- Assess feasibility of adding one Animal Control Officer and appropriate equipment to provide adequate coverage of the city.
 - Justification: Current levels of animal control service are not adequate to meet the needs and concerns of citizens.
 - Cost: \$24,000 for personnel and equipment (not a vehicle)
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible parties: Hickory Police Department

Traffic Safety

Traffic safety issues are of great concern to the Highland neighborhood. Members of

the Planning Committee shared a number of personal near miss traffic accident experiences at unsafe intersections in the neighborhood and problems with speeding and reckless drivers.

RADAR TRAILER PLACEMENT

Since 1998, the Hickory police have used portable speed indicator trailers to make drivers more aware of their speed. The trailers are equipped with radar and a display that shows the vehicle's speed as it passes, providing immediate feedback to the driver. After the trailer has been in place for a few days, officers typically follow-up with surveillance in the area and issuing citations. In 2000, additional radar trailers were purchased so that each PACT has its own radar trailer. The trailers are placed at different locations depending on citizen requests and known problem spots. Placement of the radar trailers are a temporary deterrent, yet are effective in raising motorist awareness.

Recommendation

- Request that the radar trailer be placed with greater frequency throughout the neighborhood. Suggested locations include: 900 block of 8th Street NE; 1000 to 1200 block of 12th Street NE; and 1300 block of 12th Avenue NE.
 - Justification: The high visibility of the radar trailer raises motorist awareness and reduces vehicle speeds.
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood and Hickory Police Department

ENFORCE SPEED LIMITS

Residents see more speeders than they do officers citing drivers for speeding. The per-

ception is that issuing citations for speeding is not a priority. The speed of a vehicle is difficult to determine without proper radar equipment. Often pedestrians sense a vehicle is traveling much faster than it actually is, and therefore report that speeding is a problem.

Recommendation

- Encourage rigorous enforcement of speed limits.
 - Justification: All drivers exceeding the posted speed limit are a hazard.
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible party: Hickory Police Department

REQUEST TRUCK TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

Mixing industrial/commercial land uses with residential properties presents a problem when tractor-trailers and other large trucks must use narrow residential streets to make deliveries. The situation became an issue when a furniture foam company from Ohio proposed occupying the former Stewart Construction building on 13th Street NE. The tight turning radius from 13th Avenue NE on to 13th Street NE would have prevented truck traffic from safely turning unless a utility pole was relocated.

While ultimately the company decided to locate elsewhere, members of the Planning Committee expressed their desire to have the 1200 block of 13th Avenue NE and the 1200 block of 13th Street NE posted with “No Thru Truck” signage as a warning to lost truck drivers of insufficient roadway on 13th Avenue and 13th Street NE to maneuver large trucks safely. Installation of such signage requires City Council to au-

thorize an amendment to the Traffic Ordinance.

Recommendation

- Request the installation of “No Thru Truck” signs at the intersection of 13th Avenue NE at 12th Street NE, and 13th Street NE at 12th Avenue NE.
 - Justification: The roadway is not able to accommodate tractor-trailers and the required turning radius
 - Cost: \$246.00
 - Time table: COMPLETE April 2001
 - Responsible party: Traffic Division



Signage installed in April 2001 prohibits heavy trucks from 13th Street NE.

EXPLORE TRAFFIC CALMING

The traffic situation in neighborhoods seems to be getting worse citywide. Speeding and reckless drivers degrade the peace and jeopardize pedestrian safety in the neighborhood. The Traffic Calming policy adopted in February 2000 is designed to enable residents to petition for the appropriate traffic-calming device in their neighborhood. The idea of traffic calming for places that experience habitual problems like speeding, cut-through traffic and running

stop signs needs to be explored further by the Neighborhood Association.

Neighbors and Baker PACT officers should assess the effectiveness of any traffic calming device and enforcement over a period of time to determine need for further traffic calming measures.

Recommendation

- Determine specific locations for initiation of the traffic-calming petition and submit Phase I Evaluation form to Planning and Development Department.
 - Justification: The city's traffic calming program is the appropriate means of addressing problems with speeders and other concerns
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood

MONITOR ACCIDENT RATE AT INTERSECTIONS

Since the conversion of 8th Street NE and 9th Street NE to one-way traffic, thirty-one motor vehicle accidents were reported at the intersections, particularly the intersection of 9th Avenue NE, in one year. Without further investigation, the causes of the accidents are uncertain and steps to reduce the number of accidents delayed.

Recommendation

- Compile accident data for the past four years (1998 – 2001) for the intersections of 9th Avenue NE and 8th Street NE and 9th Avenue NE and 9th Street NE to see if a pattern and cause for the accidents develops. Make recommendations for intersection safety improvements if the situation warrants.

- Justification: Neighborhood concerns about on-street parking and one year of accident data support the investigation of the cause of accidents at these intersections.
- Cost: Staff time
- Time table: Within one year
- Responsible parties: Hickory Police and Traffic Division

IMPROVE PAVEMENT MARKINGS

Motorists have trouble seeing pavement markings at night or in foul weather, particularly if the markings are faded. Neighbors perceive faded pavement markings to mean that streets in Highland are neglected. The intersection of 12th Street NE and 9th Avenue NE is of particular concern. If motorists traveling south on 12th Street NE are in front of the stop bar on the pavement, the traffic light will not change and the frustrated motorist eventually runs the light.



This vehicle is caught running the red light, maybe because the stop bar on the pavement is faded away, and the motorist does not know to wait behind it to trip the signal to change.

Recommendation

- Request that the Traffic Division survey the area and identify locations where pavement markings should be installed or refreshed.

- Justification: To improve the safety of roadways through increased visibility of edge of pavement lines, center lines, turn arrows and stop bars
- Cost: Estimated at \$40.00 per intersection
- Time table: Within six months
- Responsible party: Traffic Division

- Justification: To improve the residential area to shopping and service centers
- Cost: Staff time
- Time table: Within two years
- Responsible party: Traffic Division

Transportation

INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

While neighbors and business owners reluctantly resolve to live with more traffic and the occasional inconvenience presented by the one-way streets, they do feel some short-term improvements can be made at key locations.

The complaint is that because of the one-way configuration, Highland residents are forced to travel an extra half a mile to access the shopping centers and in particular the convenience store/fast food restaurant at the intersection of 9th Avenue NE and 16th Street NE. Another issue raised during the planning process is that motorists on 15th Street NE are darting across three lanes of traffic on 9th Avenue NE to cut through the parking lot of Highland Center as a short cut to south bound routes. If access from 15th Street NE utilizing 9th Avenue to 16th Street NE could be provided, residents would have an alternative to traveling the extra distance to the shopping centers and points beyond.

Recommendation

- Study possible improvements for the intersection of 9th Avenue NE and 15th Street NE at 16th Street NE.
 - Justification: To provide convenient access from the Highland resi-



The intersection of 16th Street NE and 9th Avenue NE is recommended for study and possible improvements.

REWORK I-40 TRAILBLAZER SIGNAGE

With the conversion of Highland Avenue NE to one-way traffic came the issue of how to direct motorists and delivery truck drivers unfamiliar with the area back to Interstate 40. Trailblazer signs with the blue interstate logo were installed along Highland Avenue NE and at 16th Street NE to 9th Avenue NE. Neighbors familiar with the area find the location of the signs confusing.

Recommendation

- Rework the location of the I-40 trailblazing signage along Highland Avenue NE and 16th Street NE.
 - Justification: Providing clear directional signage might lessen the probability of large trucks getting lost in the residential area
 - Cost: Staff time
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Traffic Division

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE NEEDS

The Piedmont Wagon operates a fixed route system that serves Hickory, Conover and Newton. Highland residents are able to catch a bus at five locations along 9th Avenue NE and two locations along 8th Street NE. Some residents expressed a need for more convenient service. Transit officials routinely meet with citizens regarding route changes and service needs. The opening of the recreation complex in 2003 might warrant additional service to that part of the neighborhood.

Recommendation

- Arrange a meeting with transit officials to discuss routes and service needs in Highland.
 - Justification: The need for transit services in Highland is probably greater than expected, and neighbors would like the opportunity to provide input
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood and Transit Division

Public Services and Infrastructure

Highland is an older neighborhood, lacking the neatness of new homes and tidy streets. Crumbling curb and gutter, poorly maintained utility right-of-ways, unswept streets, limbs overhanging sidewalks and eroding banks are common in parts of the neighborhood. Members of the Planning Committee expressed the need for a neighborhood-wide major clean-up effort by property owners and the City of Hickory.



Crumbling curb on 12th Avenue NE contributes to the neglected appearance of the neighborhood.

The Planning Committee requests the city to help create the environment for “contagious curb appeal” by edging grass along curbs and sidewalks, repairing crumbling curbs and the removal of an abandoned water meter in the 900 block of 9th Street Drive NE. The effort would concentrate on infrastructure and other maintenance issues.

COOPERATIVE CLEAN-UP PROJECT

Planning Committee members feel that the City should commit to making Highland a show place through routine maintenance of public right-of-ways. The idea is that a few actions on the part of the city will cause neighbors to clean up their properties.

Recommendation

- Plan and initiate a major clean-up project to make Highland Neighborhood a show place.

- Justification: Only in partnership with the City can Highland neighbors succeed at restoring the neighborhood infrastructure to acceptable levels
- Cost: Undetermined
- Time table: Within two years
- Responsible party: Neighborhood and Public Services Department

- Justification: A hazardous condition exists at this location
- Cost: Undetermined
- Time table: Within one year
- Responsible party: Public Services Department

REMOVE ABANDONED UTILITY CULVERT

Hidden in a grove of trees on vacant property in the 900 block of 9th Street Drive NE is an abandoned water meter and hydrant that used to serve Windy City Knitting Mill and Piedmont Hosiery Mill. The mills were demolished sometime between 1965 and 1983, leaving behind the utility culvert that has now become a hazard. The situation has gone undetected for so long that a tree has grown up through the displaced manhole cover.



A close look at this abandoned water tap on 9th Street Drive NE shows a tree growing through the manhole cover.

Recommendation

- Remove the unsafe situation that has been created by the abandoned utility culvert in the 900 block of 9th Street Drive NE.

ADDITIONAL SIDEWALK NEEDS

The Planning Committee is aware of the Sidewalk/Bikeway Master Plan and the priorities set forth in the plan. The Committee had the opportunity to look at a map of all the sidewalks in the neighborhood and identify locations where they believe new sidewalks would be beneficial. The anticipated completion of the new recreational facility at Stanford Park in spring of 2003 emphasizes the need for additional sidewalks in the neighborhood.

The Planning Committee noted the lack of connection between an east-west route (from 5th Street NE along 12th Avenue NE to 15th Street NE) to a north-south route (existing sidewalk along 8th Street NE to new Recreation complex).

The plan and budget for the recreation complex indicate that sidewalks near the park will be installed as the facility is built. Year two (2002) of the Sidewalk Master Plan calls for sidewalk along the westside of 8th Street Drive NE from 13th Avenue to 19th Avenue NE, and sidewalk along 13th Avenue NE from 8th Street NE to 12th Street NE. Members of the Planning Committee ranked the segment of sidewalk along 13th Avenue NE from 8th Street NE to 12th Street NE as their top priority.

Year eight of the Master plan calls for sidewalk along the west side of 8th Street Drive NE from 19th Avenue to 21st Avenue NE. Year nine calls for sidewalk on the

eastside of 8th Street Drive NE from 13th Avenue NE to 21st Avenue NE.

Proposed locations for new sidewalks are indicated on the accompanying map in Appendix II – Map 4. The Planning Committee is recommending an additional 11,935 linear feet or 2.3 miles of new sidewalks are needed in Highland.

Two key connecting segments of new sidewalk proposed in the Highland Neighborhood Plan that are not currently considered in the Sidewalk Mater Plan are along 12th Avenue NE from 12th Street NE to 15th Street NE and the segment of 12th Avenue NE from 5th Street to 8th Street NE.

Planning Committee members expressed their desire for 12th Street NE and 13th Street NE to connect in the development of the Bumbarger property. As this new residential subdivision is built, the sidewalk from the subdivision should connect to the existing sidewalk on 12th Street NE.

Recommendations

- Request that the identified sidewalk needs in the Highland Neighborhood Plan be added to the Sidewalk/Bikeway Master Plan.
 - Justification: A safe, serviceable pedestrian circulation system needs to be established to serve the needs of the neighborhood and provide pedestrian access to the new recreation complex at Stanford Park
 - Cost: \$106,370 (9,670 x \$11.00 per foot)
 - Time table: Dependent on appropriation of funds and construction
 - Responsible parties: Engineering Department, Street Division and Sidewalk Task Force

- Request the sidewalk connection on 12th Street NE from 13th Avenue NE into the Bumbarger property be completed as development of the subdivision occurs.
 - Justification: Provides continuous sidewalk along 12th Street NE and pedestrian access from one residential section to another
 - Cost: Incorporated into overall request
 - Time table: Within four years
 - Responsible parties: Engineering Department, Street Division

SEEK CDBG FUNDS FOR SIDEWALK

The Planning Committee learned that Community Development Block Grant funds could be used to construct sidewalk in areas that are income eligible. Neighbors must formally request such funding at community development public hearings, which are held each year in late January or early February.

Recommendation

- Seek Community Development Block Grant funds to complete the 12th Avenue NE sidewalk segment from 12th Street NE to 15th Street NE.
 - Justification: This segment is possibly eligible for CDBG funding and represents a critical east-west pedestrian link
 - Cost: \$24,915 (2,265 feet x \$11.00 per foot)
 - Time table: Within three years
 - Responsible Party: Neighborhood and Community Development Division

ASSESS INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE NEEDS

In parts of Highland, sidewalks, curbs and gutters are in need of repair and general maintenance. The appearance and image of the neighborhood is jeopardized when public infrastructure is allowed to deteriorate.

Recommendation

- Request that the Street Department conduct a comprehensive assessment of the infrastructure conditions in Highland, and perform necessary maintenance.
 - Justification: Serviceable and attractive infrastructure is important for pedestrian safety and neighborhood appearances
 - Cost: Staff time materials and labor
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible party: Street Department

ADDITIONAL STREET LIGHTING NEEDS

As part of the data collection process, the location of streetlights and security lighting was mapped. It is well known that ample street lighting can be a major deterrent to crime as well as creating a greater sense of security in the area. Staff conducted an inventory of current street lighting within the neighborhood. The Planning Committee assessed the existing conditions and indicated on a map their suggestions for approximate locations for more streetlights.

The Planning Committee recommends adding 16 new streetlights in Highland. The map will be submitted to the Traffic Division for their review and determination of need.

Recommendation

- Request the recommendations of the Neighborhood and Traffic Department street lighting study be implemented.
 - Justification: Street lights should be added to enhance motorist and pedestrian safety and deter crime
 - Cost: Monthly charge to the City per light. (Approximately \$8.00 per light: 16 streetlights x \$8.00 = \$128 per month)
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Traffic Division, Duke Power

RESURFACE STREETS

Street resurfacing is guided by a pavement management study conducted by ITRE (Institute for Transportation Research and Education) at North Carolina State University. The study ranks every street in the city as to its condition and need for resurfacing. The Street Division uses the study to schedule annual maintenance needs. According to the 1997 study there are no streets in Highland neighborhood in need of immediate resurfacing. Highland Planning Committee members feel differently. Numerous utility cuts, alligator asphalt spots and dips cause uncomfortable vehicular travel on some streets in Highland.

Recommendation

- Request resurfacing of 1000 – 1300 block of 10th Street NE and 900 – 1300 block of 12th Street NE.
 - Justification: Street resurfacing is a step toward upgrading the appearance of Highland and 12th Street NE is a heavily traveled primary road in and out of the neighborhood. Tenth Street NE is also in need of resurfacing
 - Cost: Undetermined

- Time table: Within five years
- Responsible party: Street Division

UNPAVED ROADS ON PRIORITY LIST

Currently there is an estimated 531 feet of unpaved streets in Highland. Four owner occupied and four rental homes front the segment of 13th Street Place NE between 14th Avenue NE and 15th Avenue NE.

The majority of the homes located along these seventeen segments of unpaved roads are rental properties. The chance of getting everyone to agree to the assessment is highly unlikely.

Recommendation

- Request that priority consideration be given to paving the gravel road segment of 13th Street Place NE between 14th Avenue NE and 15th Avenue NE.
 - Justification: Paving the gravel street could have a positive impact on the image of the neighborhood and land values
 - Cost: Estimated at \$35,000
 - Time table: Within three years
 - Responsible parties: Engineering Department, Street Division

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT TRASH COLLECTION

Highland has residents who are either uninformed or unconcerned about the city ordinance requiring the removal of rollout trash cans from the curb within 24 hours. Non-compliance is high most likely due to the turnover of renters. Neighbors feel that the city needs to develop educational materials in multiple languages to provide information about proper disposal of household trash as well as junk and white goods.

Recommendation

- Develop a means of providing information in multiple languages about the residential rollout trash container requirements to city sanitation customers.
 - Justification: The transient nature of the neighborhood results in violation of the city ordinance
 - Cost: Staff time and division materials
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible Parties: Solid Waste Division, Waste Reduction Board

EXPAND MULTI-FAMILY RECYCLING

The number of multi-family units in Highland creates an opportunity to look for options to involve occupants of smaller apartment complexes in reducing the amount of solid waste going to the landfill by providing on-site recycling.

Recommendation

- Explore more opportunities to expand multi-family recycling services to complexes with five to twenty units.
 - Justification: The high number of multi-family complexes in the neighborhood warrants investigation of opportunities and costs of providing this service
 - Cost: Staff time
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible party: Solid Waste Division

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL ON PROPER DISPOSAL OF USED TIRES

Residents in Highland, and many other neighborhoods, frequently complain about old tires dumped by the road or worse stacked up in a neighbors yard. The city Sanitation Division does not collect used

tires because tires are not accepted at the landfill when mixed with other waste. Yet, the landfill will accept up to 10 tires per year, per household. There is no charge for these 10 tires at this time; however, citizens must take the initiative to drive them to the Blackburn Sanitary Landfill on Rocky Ford Road. Catawba County in turn pays a private company to collect the tires for recycling.

Instead of suggesting that the city provide an additional service, neighbors feel that the issue of junk tires could be managed if an educational brochure were developed for distribution on an as needed basis.

Recommendation

- Draft and provide for distribution an informational brochure for residents about proper disposal of used automobile tires.
 - Justification: Such a brochure would benefit the entire city by promoting proper disposal of used tires, removal of a potential neighborhood eyesore and mosquito breeding grounds
 - Cost: Undetermined
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible parties: Solid Waste Division, Waste Reduction Board

Land Development and Zoning

The Planning Committee agreed that promoting and preserving the single-family character of Highland is a priority. Residents are concerned about the possibility of more multi-family units and expansion of industrial uses in their neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Planning Committee learned of an innovative approach to neighborhood controlled growth. Both Kenworth and Green Park neighborhoods have developed and adopted Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Districts to preserve the character of the neighborhood.

A Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District, (NCOD) if adopted, would apply to whatever zoning classifications regulate development in Highland. A major purpose of this zoning category is to maintain the general quality of the neighborhoods. Development that is sensitive to neighborhood character can be encouraged through overlay zoning regulations that are “customized” to neighborhood needs as defined by the respective neighborhood plan.

The overlay district would apply to new development only in terms of setbacks, building height, lot frontage and size, lot width at the right-of-way, building entrances, building placement on the lot, including building setbacks and distances between buildings. Nothing else can be regulated through the NCOD. Permitted land use, density, landscaping and other appearance, architectural style, maintenance, and outbuildings typically cannot be regulated through the NCOD.

When an overlay zoning regulation is applied to an area, the existing zoning remains intact but is modified by the overlay regulation. The neighborhood will be outlined and highlighted on the official City zoning map as a “Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District.” Particular regulations of the NCOD are “laid over” those of the existing zoning.

A conservation district makes no existing structure or lot non-conforming; the emphasis is rather on making new construction similar in character with the existing neighborhood.

The NCOD zoning category would have to be approved by the Hickory Regional Planning Commission, and adopted by the Hickory City Council with the intent of providing some flexibility in regulations governing development in older neighborhoods.

The Highland Neighborhood would have to circulate the rezoning petition and obtain a majority of the property owners' signatures to agree to the overlay district. The neighborhood plan would have to be approved first, before the neighborhood could request a hearing for an NCOD.

Recommendations

- Request Planning staff work with the neighborhood to develop the criteria for a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District for Highland.
 - Justification: Protect the single-family character of the neighborhood and promote compatible new development
 - Cost: Staff time
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible parties: Planning Department, Regional Planning Commission, Neighborhood
- Initiate the process of garnering neighborhood support and the necessary signatures for the rezoning petition to adopt the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District when it is developed.

- Justification: The neighborhood must support the proposed rezoning and file the petition
- Cost: Materials to contact property owners
- Time table: Within two years
- Responsible party: Neighborhood

DEVELOPMENT OF BUMBARGER PROPERTY

Highland neighbors are pleased that the City is seeking proposals for development of single-family homes for ownership on the 20 acres of vacant land in Highland known as the Bumbarger property. This project presents a one of a kind opportunity for the City to promote traditional neighborhood development and homeownership. The project has the potential for significant impact on the neighborhood in terms of street connectivity and compatibility. Neighbors are concerned that they will be left out of the design proposal review process.

Recommendation

- Seek input from Highland neighbors and allow time for citizen review and comment on development proposals for the Bumbarger property.
 - Justification: The new subdivision is within the boundaries of Highland and has the potential to affect street connectivity in the neighborhood
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood and Planning Department



Compatibility of residential development on the 20 acres the city owns known as the Bumbarger property is a concern of Highland residents.

EXPLORE ELIGIBILITY FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Close to 97 percent of the single-family homes in Highland were built before 1950. While there are other criteria to consider when designating properties as historic, the sheer number of older structures demonstrates a strong possibility of obtaining historic designation.

Some of the potential areas for further investigation are: 8th Street NE from 8th Avenue NE to 12th Avenue NE; in the vicinity of Highland School; and 9th Avenue NE and 9th Avenue Place NE near Highland Baptist Church

Historic property designation would be pursued only if eligible property owners in Highland were in favor of the proposal.

Recommendations

- Request that the Historic Preservation Commission consider a survey of Highland to supplement the city's historic resource inventory update.
 - Justification: Determine eligibility of properties in the neighborhood

- for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places
 - Cost: \$10,000
 - Time table: Within three years
 - Responsible parties: Historic Preservation Commission, Planning and Development

- Based on the results of the survey and property owners' desire, pursue the creation of a historic district in Highland.
 - Justification: To preserve the historic homes in the neighborhood, and enhance property values
 - Cost: Dependent on the number of properties
 - Time table: Within four years
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood, Historic Preservation Commission

SIGN ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT

Neighbors are concerned about the visual clutter created by illegal signs.

Recommendation

- Encourage more rigorous enforcement of the sign ordinance.
 - Justification: Prompt removal of illegal signs discourages additional signs and visual clutter
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Immediately
 - Responsible party: Planning and Development

Economic Development

The business and commercial property owners are an important part of the Highland neighborhood. Their concerns are similar to those held by the residents. Increased code enforcement will help the area in terms

of appearance and improved property values.

- Responsible party: Neighborhood and Economic Development

PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Highland residents and the current business owners in the adjacent commercial corridor desire options to traveling across town to purchase general merchandise items, to do grocery shopping, or even to have a sit-down meal in some place other than a fast food restaurant.

Planning Committee members specifically asked for: more choices of sit down restaurants with atmosphere; a hardware store with convenient hours; a movie theatre; and Caribou Coffee shop.

In this market-driven environment, the majority of new development is locating on the heavily traveled Highway 70 SE. With the abundant supply of vacant land and the success of merchants and restaurants already located along the Highway 70 corridor, it is unlikely that the tide will cease in the near future.

Highland residents and property owners can hope that infill development becomes more inviting as costs to build in outlying areas becomes costly.

Recommendation

- Work with the City's Economic Development Coordinator to market and seek appropriate neighborhood serving businesses.
 - Justification: Highland lacks many neighborhood service type of businesses that residents and commercial property owners find desirable
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Immediately

EXTEND DOWNTOWN APPEARANCE GRANT PROGRAM BOUNDARIES

The Downtown Appearance Grant Program developed out of a recommendation from the First and Second Avenue SE/SW Business Plan and *City Center Plan*. The program was developed to add an incentive for property owners to make aesthetic improvements. The theory is that if one property is "spruced-up", then others will follow. Property owners are required to match half the cost of the project (50/50 matching grant - \$5,000 maximum). The Community Appearance Commission must approve all projects.

The original boundary of the grant program area was the one-mile radius from downtown, but was expanded to include First and Second Avenue SW up to US 321 at the request of the West Hickory/Westmont Neighborhood Plan.

Recommendation

- Request that the boundaries of the Downtown Appearance Grant Program be extended to include Highland Avenue NE to 16th Street NE, and 9th Avenue NE from 16th Street NE to 9th Avenue Place NE.
 - Justification: The appearance of 9th Avenue NE and Highland Avenue NE corridors would greatly be enhanced if property owners were able to take advantage of the matching grants
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Community Appearance Commission

**SUPPORT CONTINUATION OF THE
LANDSCAPE INCENTIVE GRANT
PROGRAM**

The Planning Committee learned of the Community Appearance Commission's Landscape Improvement grant to provide an economic incentive for commercial property owners to beautify their properties with landscaping. Landscaping might be a way for some businesses to stop cut-through traffic in their parking lot. The neighborhood supports the encouragement of cooperative tree plantings especially along heavily traveled corridors.

This program provides an economic incentive for the improved appearance of privately owned, non-residential properties along major corridors within the city. The purpose is to promote the beautification of the city by encouraging private property owners to make an investment in the environment and aesthetics of the city. The program is a fifty-fifty match grant, reimbursable to the property owner after submission of proof of payment for the completed landscaping.

The application is reviewed by the Community Appearance Commission and awarded based on the merit of the project. The maximum grant amount is \$2,500.00. The applicants have 120 days to complete the project.

Recommendation

- Continue funding of the Commercial Landscaping Incentive Matching Grant program.
 - Justification: A significant percentage of the properties in Highland Neighborhood are commercial or industrial in nature. Providing an incentive for improving commercial

landscaping would enhance appearance citywide

- Cost: \$45,000 (Community Appearance Commission budget)
- Time table: Within one year
- Responsible party: Community Appearance Commission

Community Development

The Planning Committee inquired about the existing community development homeownership and rehabilitation programs. Residents are particularly interested in ways to get landlords involved in rehabilitating their rental properties. The need to raise awareness about the availability of the funds and promote Community Development programs became apparent through the discussion. Also, residents are interested in seeking other ways to direct more of the Community Development Block Grant funds to Highland.

PROMOTE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Recommendations

- Support the City's First Time Homebuyers, Housing and Rental Rehabilitation programs to promote homeownership and housing rehabilitation in the neighborhood through the distribution of literature at meetings and other events.
 - Justification: Providing information and encouraging applications could stimulate interest in homeownership and could lead to a decrease in the number of structures in the neighborhood in need of minor or major repairs thus enhancing the overall appearance of the neighborhood
 - Cost: Reproduction of handouts

- Time table: Immediately
- Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Community Development
- Target tenants and investment property owners with a mailing of information regarding the City's First Time Homebuyers program.
 - Justification: Providing information and encouraging the conversion of rental properties back to owner occupied homes will help stabilize the neighborhood
 - Cost: Estimated \$251.35 in postage (.55 x 457 rental units)
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Community Development

ASSESS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS YEARLY

The Community Development Department is required to hold public meetings annually to gather citizen input on housing needs and priorities. Typically, these meetings are poorly attended because people feel they do not have a stake in the issue or do not realize the importance of voicing their concerns.

If Highland neighbors are serious about improving housing conditions, raising levels of homeownership or providing sidewalks in an area that might not otherwise have the opportunity, Highland neighbors, churches and other service agencies need to assess the community's needs and attend the Community Development public meetings when advertised.

Residents need to submit a written proposal for use of Community Development Block Grants after examining Census data and identifying qualifying areas. A survey

of occupants may be necessary to gather data on tenant income. A comprehensive approach to obtaining funds would include setting long and short-term priorities for the neighborhood.

Recommendation

- Assess housing and infrastructure needs in the eligible areas yearly, determine priorities and voice neighborhood concerns at the Community Development Block Grant neighborhood meetings.
 - Justification: It is going to take a concerted neighborhood effort to make needs and priorities known to the Citizens Advisory Committee and Community Development staff
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood

REQUEST CURB AND GUTTER AND SIDEWALKS IN INCOME ELIGIBLE AREAS

Public infrastructure such as curb and gutter and sidewalks in income eligible areas are funded with Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) as needs are identified and priorities are determined. The Highland neighborhood meets these requirements. CDBG funds can also be used to pay the sidewalk and curb and gutter assessment on behalf of a low-income family if such a project was to take place.

Recommendation

- Request curb and gutter and sidewalks along 12th Avenue NE from 12th Street NE to 15th Street NE are funded with CDBG money.
 - Justification: Eligible areas of the neighborhood are in need of this type of infrastructure to improve property values, image and drainage

- Cost: Dependant on actual footage installed
- Time table: On-going
- Responsible parties: Community Development, Citizens Advisory Committee

Parks and Recreation

Residents of Highland eagerly anticipate the opening of the Recreation Complex at Stanford Park. After two years of planning and soliciting citizen input, the plans and design of the facility reflect the needs and desires of the entire community.

FUTURE USE OF HIGHLAND RECREATION CENTER

Once the new recreation complex is opened, the Highland Recreation Center will be closed. The final disposition of the facility is unknown. The property could be sold or kept for some other city use. Neighbors recognize that the decision is up to City Council. Some of the ideas generated by the Planning Committee include a charter school, a senior center or another city use.



Neighbors are concerned about the future use of Highland Recreation Center after the new center at Stanford Park opens in 2003.

Residents hope that decision makers will carefully consider the impact of the use on the neighborhood, and seek their input throughout the process.

Recommendation

- Seek neighborhood input into the future use of the Highland Recreation Center once the facility is closed.
 - Justification: Neighbors feel certain uses could be detrimental to the health and well-being of the neighborhood
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within three years
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood, Parks and Recreation Department

NAMING OF THE RECREATION FACILITY

The City of Hickory has a policy for naming public facilities. City policy allows for naming opportunities for significant donations. In the absence of a significant donor, the Highland Neighborhood Association initiated the petition process. The Association gathered 72 signatures of support for the name, and submitted the application in accordance with city policy. The Neighborhood Association suggested naming the recreation complex “Highland Community and Recreation Center.” City Council took the application under consideration at their August 15, 2000 meeting. No action will be taken until the facility is completed.



Construction on the new recreation building began in the fall of 2001.

Recommendation

- Consider Neighborhood Association recommendation to name building “Highland Community and Recreation Center”.
 - Justification: The proposed name recognizes the neighborhood, while at the same time acknowledging that the new facility is more than just a place for sporting activities and recreation programming. The new center is a place for the community to come together as a whole
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible party: Administration

INSTALL DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Recommendation

- Ensure that appropriate signage directing visitors to the recreation complex is installed.
 - Justification: Clearly understandable directional signage will assist visitors in finding the new recreation complex
 - Cost: \$50 per sign
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible parties: Parks and Recreation and Traffic Division

EXPAND PROGRAMMING FOR 9 YEAR-OLDS AND UNDER

The Planning Committee discussed the need for organized programs directed at children under the age of nine.

Recommendation

- Explore expanding programming for younger children.
 - Justification: To determine need for programming for younger residents to use City of Hickory recreational facilities without having to compete with other users
 - Cost: Staff time
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Parks and Recreation Department

DEVELOP WEEKEND PROGRAMMING FOR TEENS

Planning Committee members discussed the lack of organized activities for teenagers on weekend nights. The idea is that Parks and Recreation sponsored programs would provide an option for youth rather than “hanging out” or looking for trouble. Suggestions included partnering with the Youth Council to determine the types and locations for such programming.

Recommendation

- Explore instituting weekend night programs for teens at recreation facilities.
 - Justification: To provide a safe alternative for youth to interact on weekend nights
 - Cost: Staff time
 - Time table: Within two years
 - Responsible parties: Parks and Recreation Department and Youth Council

PUBLIC ART FOR RECREATION CENTER

The Planning Committee learned about the Public Art Commission and their charge of incorporating a piece of public art at the recreation complex at Stanford Park. Residents voiced their support for the idea, and expressed a desire to be involved in the selection process.

Recommendation

- Invite one or more Highland residents to represent the Neighborhood Association in the selection process of a piece of public art for the recreation complex.
 - Justification: Including residents in the process of selecting a public art piece ensures representation and offers an opportunity for the neighborhood to offer their perspective
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within three years
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Parks and Recreation and Public Art Commission

BANK EROSION AT HIGHLAND CENTER

The western property line of the Highland Recreation Center fronts 10th Street NE. The bank is eroded and poorly maintained. The overhead tree canopy makes it impossible to grow grass on the slope. Neighbors recommend general clean up of the bank, and request that appropriate steps be taken to beautify the area and cover the bare ground.



The bank at Highland Recreation Center is eroded to the point that tree roots are exposed.

Recommendation

- Investigate options for the stabilization and beautification of the bank on 10th Street NE at the Highland Recreation Center.
 - Justification: The bank is in need of maintenance and measures should be taken to improve the appearance of city property
 - Cost: Dependant on option
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible parties: Parks and Recreation Department and Public Services

Code Enforcement

After hearing from city staff, the Planning Committee concluded that the current housing code enforcement process is working as well as it possibly can given the imposed legal limits. Members agreed that the condition of structures in the neighborhood and the appearance of many homes and commercial properties have vastly improved over the past five years. Preceding neighborhood plans recommended increasing the number of code enforcement personnel and the city has responded positively, thus resulting in improvements citywide.

CONTACT OWNERS OF NEGLECTED PROPERTIES

The Planning Committee discussed the benefits of personal contact with landlords and property management companies regarding problematic and unkempt properties. The Highland Neighborhood is willing to put pressure on property owners and provide information to them in an attempt to get them to maintain their properties. Some members of the Planning Committee expressed willingness to help neighbors who might be unable to do the work themselves.

Recommendation

- Develop a dialogue with the owners of neglected properties to encourage housing rehabilitation and to inform owners of the existing programs and funding sources for housing rehabilitation.
 - Justification: Personal contact allows for open communications of neighborhood desires and property owners positions
 - Cost: Dependent on method of contact, postage and materials
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood

ENFORCEMENT OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

Planning Committee members expressed their desire to work with commercial property owners to improve the appearance of the neighborhood. The commercial and industrial buildings within the neighborhood are of particular concern since residents see those buildings daily. However, the group expressed the need to improve the appearance of the buildings on vital routes.

With the passage of the Land Development Code in 2001, came the passage of a property maintenance code that applies to commercial and residential properties. More detail can be found in Section 10-14.2 of the Land Development Code.

In essence, standards mandate that a structure shall have no more than 20 percent of its exterior roofs, walls and other elements covered with disfigured, cracked, or peeling surface materials for a period of more than 30 consecutive days. Broken windows, holes in exterior surfaces including roofs and walls, ripped awnings, loose materials, loose elements or other obvious exterior defects are also not acceptable.

The Code orders that on-site features such as parking areas and fences shall be maintained in working order and reasonably free of defects. The property owner shall maintain the property and the exterior portions of any structures thereupon free of accumulations of debris, junk, garbage, or trash including but not limited to discarded furniture and other household goods, inoperative appliances, inoperative vehicles, and inoperative equipment except within approved dumpsters or trash enclosures, enclosed storage areas or on land approved for the operation of a junk yard.

The Property Maintenance Code sets the standards by which property owners, both commercial and residential must maintain their properties.

Recommendation

- Request swift and decisive enforcement of the property maintenance code.
 - Justification: Poorly maintained commercial and residential properties are a blight on the neighborhood and harm property values and

the image of the neighborhood that many are working hard to protect and improve

- Cost: None
- Time table: Within six months
- Responsible party: Building Inspections Department

ENFORCE BAN ON PARKING ON UNPAVED SURFACES

Residents in Highland and many of the older neighborhoods complain about vehicles parked in front yards on the grass rather than in the driveway or on the street. Such practice kills the grass creating bare spots and eventually an unattractive dirt yard. The problem is common in older neighborhoods where the homeownership rate is low.

With the passage of the Land Development Code in 2001, came the passage of an ordinance that prohibits the parking or storage of any motor vehicle whether operable or inoperable, on any portion of a front yard or any side corner yard facing a street on any residentially zoned or used property except in an area that is used as a driveway to the property. More detail can be found in Section 10-1.6 of the Land Development Code.



Parking vehicles in front yards kills grass and creates unattractive dirt patches.

Recommendation

- Request swift and decisive enforcement of the code that prohibits parking motor vehicles in front yard or any side corner yard.
 - Justification: Consistent enforcement of the code is the only way to end the destructive practice of parking vehicles in the front yard
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible party: Planning and Development

Neighborhood Enhancement

Highland is, and has been, a good place to live and raise a family. Enhancing livability factors will increase levels of homeownership and the value of the neighborhood.

The Planning Committee expressed the need to attract and involve more members, both homeowners and renters and particularly young families.

The group wants to explore ways to promote the value of the neighborhood. They know that the opening of Stanford Park in 2003 will boost the area, yet there are other assets in Highland that they feel should be promoted. Good school districts, affordable housing and the ability to get a good return on your home investment quickly were just a few mentioned.

DEVELOP PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS FOR HIGHLAND

The Planning Committee recognizes the need to get Realtors interested in neighborhood as a market for first time homebuyers rather than investors.

Recommendation

- Draft a promotional brochure about Highland and distribute to real estate agencies and others
 - Justification: To promote the many assets and affordability of Highland Neighborhood
 - Cost: Estimated at \$500
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood

BEAUTIFY ENTRANCEWAYS

The Planning Committee recognizes that there are no clearly defined entranceways into the neighborhood. There are several streets and avenues that lead into Highland; several opportunities to let anyone who enters into the neighborhood know that they are in Highland via a distinctive feature. These entranceways can be used to create a sense of neighborhood identity and upgrade the image of the neighborhood.

The Planning Committee learned about the City's Adopt-A-Spot program. The program was established to encourage individuals, businesses and organizations to contribute to the beautification of the city. Copies of the operating guidelines and agreement were distributed. Participants must agree to an 18-month commitment to maintain the spot. The spot must be on city property and plantings should not exceed 30 inches in height. The participant must supply all landscaping materials and labor. Adopt-A-Spot sponsors are identified with a small plaque supplied by the city.

Recommendation

- Determine best approach to beautifying entrances and come to agreement on how to fund and execute the plan. Options include but are not limited to participating in the City's Adopt-A-Spot

program, and/or collaborative efforts with businesses.

- Justification: Neighbors need to take the lead in determining beautification needs for the entranceways
- Cost: None until plan is determined
- Time table: Within six months
- Responsible parties: Neighborhood, others as needed

SUPPORT CONTINUED FUNDING OF UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

The Planning Committee is interested in improving community appearance by reducing visual clutter caused by numerous overhead utilities. The Committee learned that the Appearance Commission is asking City Council to set aside funds each year to bury utilities where possible and/or use mast arms at intersections instead of wooden poles and span wire.

All new subdivisions in the city are required to have underground utilities, so the residential development on the Bumbarger property will have underground utilities.

An ordinance adopted in October 2001 requires all new utility distribution and service lines be put underground if they have to cross public rights of way for new service. Aerial crossings of public rights of way to access a single lot or single family home are exempt, and a permit is required for exceptions to be granted by the Planning Director. See Land Development Code, Section 10.15 *Underground Utilities* for more information.

As in most cases, there are pros and cons to buried utilities most notably the initial costs associated with placing overhead wires underground. While underground lines negate worry about losing power during wind and

ice storms, the issue is reliability over the years and how long people are willing to wait to have power restored in case of failure. With underground lines, problems are harder to locate and fix. Furthermore, Duke Power will not put the primary feeders underground so the need for some utilities to remain above ground exists.

Even though burying utilities is expensive, committing to improving the appearance of the community is an important decision the City needs to make. For established areas, solutions such as consolidating lines on poles or making the poles higher should be explored.



Highland Avenue NE is cluttered with numerous overhead utility lines.

Recommendation

- Support continued funding for projects that promote the burial of utilities.
 - Justification: An abundance of overhead utilities are unsightly and harm the appearance of the city.
 - Cost: \$50,000 City Center budget and \$50,000 Community Appearance Commission budget
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood, Community Appearance Commission

Neighborhood Organization and Capacity Building

The organization and continued involvement of the Neighborhood Association is important to the success of the neighborhood planning process. A formal structure is necessary to provide leadership and accountability to the group. Participation from the different groups that live and work in the neighborhood is very important to building a sense of community and shared vision for the future of the neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Association should look for opportunities to publicize the success of the neighborhood through events and press releases. One of the keys to building the capacity of the neighborhood is being informed of decisions made by the City of Hickory that might impact Highland.

ENCOURAGE DIVERSE PARTICIPATION

Although the existing Neighborhood Association is active, only a small percentage of residents attend neighborhood meetings and/or actively participate in community activities.

Most of the members of the Neighborhood Association are homeowners. A significant number of Highland residents are renters. The Neighborhood Association needs representation from all residents. Emphasis should be placed on one-on-one communication, neighbors talking to neighbors, encouraging renters to get involved. The need to develop means for basic communications with non-English speaking neighbors was also identified. Neighbors do not have to go at this task alone. The Hickory Community Relations Council stands ready to assist the neighborhood in reaching out to others.

One idea was to consider publishing the Neighborhood Plan in a different language.

Recommendations

- Reach out to residents who traditionally are not involved in Neighborhood Association activities through face-to-face contact, fliers and other means.
 - Justification: Community-wide involvement is necessary to the sustained viability of the Highland Neighborhood Association
 - Cost: None
 - Time Table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood

- Strive to understand and deal with issues of diversity in the neighborhood by working with agencies such as the Community Relations Council.
 - Justification: Education and the simple act of getting to know our neighbors will promote understanding of cultural differences
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: On-going
 - Responsible parties: Neighborhood and Community Relations Council

- Contact the churches in the neighborhood to assist with neighborhood activities and outreach.
 - Justification: By joining with the churches in the neighborhood, resources can be leveraged and partnerships formed to benefit the neighborhood that were not possible before
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood and neighborhood churches

COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY

The Neighborhood Association needs to be diligent about generating positive publicity for and about Highland. Continued promotion of Highland's community spirit and, most importantly, celebrating the successes as they occur will aid in the promotion of a quality neighborhood image.

Recommendation

- Appoint one person in the Neighborhood Association to serve as the Community Liaison. This person would work at communicating the mission and activities of the Neighborhood Association through pre-meeting and post-meeting press releases, event publicity, and personal contact with the media and others such as real estate agents.
 - Justification: Good publicity will stimulate interest in the neighborhood and help to promote a quality image
 - Cost: Budget for supplies necessary to create articles (e.g., paper, photographs, etc.)
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood

EXPAND INVOLVEMENT COMMUNITY-WIDE

There is an overall need to disseminate information to the residents of the neighborhood. Many residents are not aware of certain ordinances, laws and items of general interest such as the other master plans adopted by the City.

There are a variety of citywide initiatives in progress that affect Highland. To stay informed on issues impacting the neighborhood, it is important for a member of the Association to attend city meetings and ac-

tively participate in decision-making processes.

Recommendation

- Appoint one or two people from the Neighborhood Association to serve as a Government Liaison. These people would attend City Council meetings and relevant board and commission meetings and report back to the group.
 - Justification: Positions the neighborhood to be proactive and respond to activities or proposals that may affect the neighborhood
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood

PLAN MORE NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS

Scheduling neighborhood cleanup days is a great way to raise awareness and get others involved in improving the neighborhood. Such events say to the whole community “We care about our neighborhood!”

Recommendation

- Sponsor two neighborhood cleanup days a year.
 - Justification: To beautify Highland, raise awareness and show support for the neighborhood
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within one year
 - Responsible Party: Neighborhood

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Many of the residents in Highland are unable to take proper care of their yards and homes. Neighbors suggested taking steps to identify and assist neighbors in need of help cleaning up on a regular basis as a means of developing community and fos-

tering a caring environment. Publicize neighbor helping neighbor activities as good public relations.

Recommendation

- Identify neighbors who are in need of assistance with basic yard work or simple repairs and arrange a “Neighbor Helping Neighbor Day”.
 - Justification: To foster community spirit by volunteering to assist those in need with simple household tasks
 - Cost: None
 - Time table: Within six months
 - Responsible party: Neighborhood

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

Guidance offered in the Highland Neighborhood Plan should be referred to during relevant decision-making processes concerning the area. To the extent that this Plan charts a course for Highland's future, the strategies and recommended actions should be followed and carried out by the Neighborhood Association, the City and other agencies as referenced in the Plan. The residents of Highland themselves, regardless of whether or not they participated in the planning process, are viewed as playing a key role in all implementation efforts. This section discusses the mechanisms that may be used toward that end.

Plan Adoption

The residents of Highland play an important role in moving a draft plan that they can support through the public review process to adoption with a minimum of delays and serious changes. After the Hickory City Council accepts the Highland Plan, it will become the official detailed guide for managing Highland's future development. It will provide the most detailed guidance of any City document on planning and development issues within this neighborhood. This Plan is generally compatible and supportive of other City adopted plans.

Active citizen input was involved in the Plan's formulation, review and adoption and has resulted in a plan that reflects a community consensus on how Highland should develop and address issues of concern.

Plan Implementation

The true measure of a Plan's acceptance may best be described in terms of the degree to which it is used and supported during relevant decision-making processes. The residents of Highland, the Hickory City Council, service provider agencies, and the City Administration each have important roles in the implementation processes.

The residents of Highland, particularly the members of the Planning Committee, have a very critical role in participating in and monitoring the use of the Plan's provisions. Highland Neighborhood confirms its support for the Plan by including the recommendations in their Neighborhood Association activities and structure and initiating the petition processes necessary to accomplish the recommended policy changes.

The City Council demonstrates its support for the Plan by adopting the Plan's strategies and encouraging timely implementation.

The Plan sets forth several strategies that require the active involvement of service providing agencies including the City. These organizations are crucial to the implementation of the Highland Neighborhood Plan. The neighbors can participate in support of the programs provided by these organizations; likewise the programs can be used by the neighbors to address concerns, stabilize unhealthy trends and enhance the quality of life for all Highland residents.

Several of the City Council appointed Boards and Commissions are affected by some of the recommendations in the Highland Neighborhood Plan. Support and advice from these boards and commissions is critical to the successful implementation of

the Plan. The Appearance Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission and the Animal Control Advisory Board should be informed and involved as necessary.

Finally, the City Administration plays an important role by overseeing the implementation responsibilities assigned to the various departments. The specific city departments must commit to implementing the Plan by incorporating the recommendations into their workplans within the recommended timetable. Revising strategies and even seeking more resources at a later date may be necessary to follow through on implementation of the Plan.

Conclusion

The Highland Neighborhood Plan identifies the issues and concerns of the neighborhood, the tasks involved in addressing them, a time frame in which the strategy or action should be implemented, and the various parties involved in resolving them.

Implementation is by far the most difficult phase of any planning process.

The reality is that the neighborhood has less of an influence on some issues, such as the future use of the school, than others do. Yet, the recommendations are included in the Plan so that others know the group discussed the issue during the planning process and actions, which can be pursued in the future.

Above all, by participating in the planning process, members of the Committee got to know their neighbors better and collectively participate in a process that will gen-

erate positive change in the neighborhood over time. Many of the group discussions revealed many pleasant surprises, such as evidence of a low crime rate and number of well-maintained properties, which indicate that the quality of life is good in Highland.

In short, this long-range neighborhood planning process offered, and will continue to offer the residents, business owners and commercial property owners of Highland the opportunity to plan proactively for the future of their neighborhood.

INTRODUCTION.....	1
PURPOSE OF THE PLAN.....	4
ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN	4
NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOMPLISHMENTS	5
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS	7
ISSUES AND CONCERNS	8
<i>Involving the Business Community</i>	12
NEIGHBORHOOD EXPECTATIONS	13
THE PLANNING PROCESS	15
STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS.....	15
<i>Organization and Meeting Process</i>	15
<i>Citizen Participation</i>	16
<i>Data Collection</i>	19
<i>Plan Preparation and Review/Adoption</i>	19
NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER.....	21
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHLAND.....	21
<i>Incorporation Into Hickory</i>	21
<i>Public Facilities</i>	23
<i>Community Institutions</i>	26
<i>Recreational Facilities</i>	27
<i>Economic Growth Influences</i>	29
<i>Neighborhood Conditions - 1967</i>	29
<i>Neighborhood Conditions - 1983</i>	30
EXISTING CONDITIONS	32
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS.....	32
<i>School Data</i>	33
<i>Housing Values and Income</i>	34
LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS.....	34
<i>Residential</i>	34
<i>Commercial and Industrial</i>	35
<i>Public and Semi-Public</i>	35
<i>Institutional</i>	36
<i>Vacant</i>	36
CURRENT ZONING	36
<i>Residential</i>	37
<i>Office and Institutional</i>	37
<i>Commercial</i>	37
<i>Industrial</i>	38
<i>Special Use Permits</i>	38
<i>Zoning Intensity and Density</i>	39
<i>Neighborhood Conservation Overlay</i>	40
<i>Historic District Designation</i>	40
ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.....	41
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	42
<i>Community Development Block Grants</i>	42
<i>Housing Rehabilitation</i>	42
<i>First-Time Homebuyers</i>	43

<i>Housing Ownership Enhancement</i>	43
TRENDS IN HOMEOWNERSHIP	44
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCES.....	45
<i>Appearance Improvement Grants</i>	45
STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS	46
<i>Minimum Housing Code</i>	48
<i>Nuisance Code</i>	49
<i>Commercial Property Maintenance</i>	50
PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE	50
<i>Street Maintenance</i>	50
<i>Sidewalks</i>	51
<i>Street Lighting</i>	52
<i>Right of way Maintenance</i>	53
<i>Solid Waste Management</i>	53
<i>Litter</i>	54
PUBLIC FACILITIES.....	55
<i>Former Bumbarger Property</i>	55
<i>Parks and Recreation Facilities</i>	56
COMMUNITY SAFETY	59
<i>Traffic Accidents</i>	61
<i>Speeding</i>	61
<i>Domestic Trouble and Assaults</i>	61
<i>Drug Violations</i>	61
<i>Illegal Parking</i>	62
<i>Littering</i>	62
<i>Noise Complaints</i>	62
<i>Animal Control</i>	62
<i>Spay/Neuter Program</i>	63
TRANSPORTATION INFLUENCES	63
<i>Eighth Street Extension</i>	64
<i>One-Way Streets</i>	65
<i>Connection to 16th Street NE</i>	65
<i>Railroad Crossing Closings</i>	66
<i>State Transportation Projects</i>	66
<i>Public Transit</i>	67
<i>Current Speed Limits</i>	68
<i>Traffic Calming</i>	68
<i>Through Truck Traffic</i>	69
<i>On-Street Parking</i>	70
BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL CONCERNS	71
<i>Special Meeting</i>	71
<i>Impact of One-Way Conversion</i>	72
<i>Zoning</i>	72
<i>Economic Development</i>	72
<i>Appearance and Landscape Improvement</i>	73
PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS.....	74
HIGHLAND SCHOOL	74
<i>Preserve Highland School</i>	74
COMMUNITY SAFETY	75
<i>Promote Crime Prevention and Community Watch</i>	75
<i>Enforce No Littering Law</i>	75
<i>Enforce Noise Ordinance</i>	76
<i>Additional Animal Control Enforcement</i>	77
TRAFFIC SAFETY.....	77

<i>Radar Trailer Placement</i>	77
<i>Enforce Speed Limits</i>	77
<i>Request Truck Traffic Control Devices</i>	78
<i>Explore Traffic Calming</i>	78
<i>Monitor Accident rate at Intersections</i>	79
<i>Improve Pavement Markings</i>	79
TRANSPORTATION	80
<i>Intersection Improvements</i>	80
<i>Rework I-40 Trailblazer Signage</i>	80
<i>Public Transit Service Needs</i>	81
PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	81
<i>Cooperative Clean-Up Project</i>	81
<i>Remove Abandoned Utility Culvert</i>	82
<i>Additional Sidewalk Needs</i>	82
<i>Seek CDBG Funds for Sidewalk</i>	83
<i>Assess Infrastructure Maintenance Needs</i>	84
<i>Additional Street Lighting Needs</i>	84
<i>Resurface Streets</i>	84
<i>Unpaved Roads on Priority List</i>	85
<i>Educational Materials about Trash Collection</i>	85
<i>Expand Multi-Family Recycling</i>	85
<i>Educational Material on Proper Disposal of Used Tires</i>	85
LAND DEVELOPMENT AND ZONING	86
<i>Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District</i>	86
<i>Development of Bumbarger Property</i>	87
<i>Explore Eligibility for Historic Designation</i>	88
<i>Sign Ordinance Enforcement</i>	88
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	88
<i>Promote Economic Development</i>	89
<i>Extend Downtown Appearance Grant Program Boundaries</i>	89
<i>Support Continuation of the Landscape Incentive Grant Program</i>	90
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	90
<i>Promote Community Development</i>	90
<i>Assess Community Development Needs Yearly</i>	91
<i>Request curb and gutter and sidewalks in income eligible areas</i>	91
PARKS AND RECREATION	92
<i>Future use of Highland Recreation Center</i>	92
<i>Naming of the Recreation Facility</i>	92
<i>Install Directional Signage</i>	93
<i>Expand Programming for 9 Year-Olds and under</i>	93
<i>Develop Weekend Programming for Teens</i>	93
<i>Public Art for Recreation Center</i>	94
<i>Bank Erosion at Highland Center</i>	94
CODE ENFORCEMENT	94
<i>Contact Owners of Neglected Properties</i>	95
<i>Enforcement of Commercial Property Maintenance Code</i>	95
<i>Enforce Ban on Parking on Unpaved Surfaces</i>	96
NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT	96
<i>Develop Promotional Materials for Highland</i>	96
<i>Beautify Entranceways</i>	97
<i>Support Continued Funding of Underground Utilities</i>	97
NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING	98
<i>Encourage Diverse Participation</i>	98
<i>Communication and Publicity</i>	99

Expand Involvement Community-Wide..... 99
Plan More Neighborhood Events 100
Neighbors Helping Neighbors..... 100

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN..... 101

PLAN ADOPTION..... 101
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION..... 101
CONCLUSION..... 102

APPENDICES

I. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

II. MAPS

- Existing Land Use
- Zoning
- Structural Conditions and Rental Status
- Sidewalks
- Streetlights

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. 2000 Census Data by Race..... 32
Table 2. 2000 Census Data by Age and One Person/Single Parent Households..... 32
Table 3. Percent of All Hickory Students in Public Schools Residing in Highland by Race..... 32
Table 4. Highland Land Use in Acres and Percentage..... 33
Table 5. Highland Zoning in Acres and Percentage..... 36
Table 6. 2001 Highland Property Occupancy Status..... 44
Table 7. 1967 Highland Structural Conditions by Type..... 46
Table 8. 2001 Highland Structural Conditions by Type..... 46