

## Public Involvement

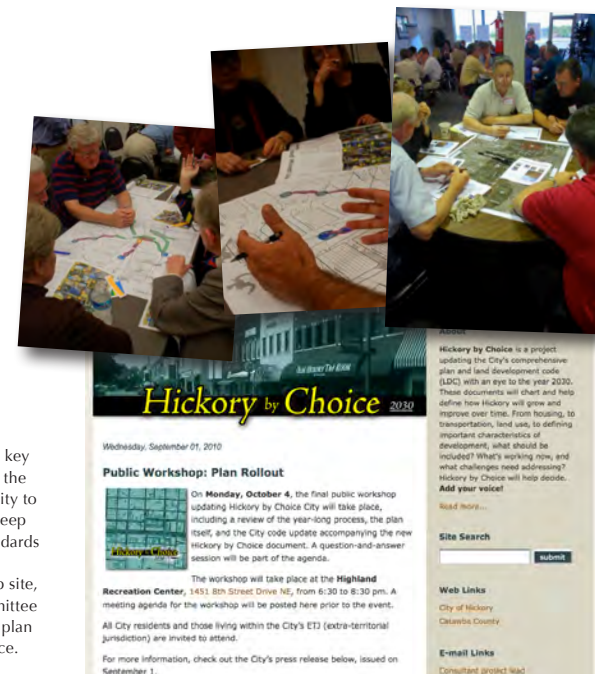
Planning is not a specific science. Every community is different, and every community requires a uniquely defined approach at preparing an effective plan and set of development regulations. One thing is constant, however. Public participation is key to success.

Hickory initiated this process by appointing an advisory committee and by committing to a series of interactive public workshops. These workshops were designed to get the community involved and to ensure that the policies and standards emerging from this process responded to the community's desires and needs. The City also sponsored a project web site, and several individual activities focused on getting the word out to a variety of audiences.

Table 1 identifies some of this process' outreach events and activities, illustrating the level of effort the City expended to obtain public guidance at different stages in the plan's preparation. The process was inclusive and interactive, with participants teaching us about their community and learning how to apply planning philosophy and technique to ensure community goals are achieved.

**Table 1** – Sampling of public outreach events and activities

Events and Activities	Orientation	Vision	Policy	Implementation
Advisory committee introduction	■	■		
Advisory committee meetings	■	■	■	■
Radio interviews	■	■		
Television interview	■	■		
Stakeholder interviews	■	■	■	■
Project web site	■	■	■	■
Workshop 1 - Vetting the vision	■	■		
Workshop 2 - Centers and corridors		■	■	
Workshop 3 - Land use strategies		■	■	
Workshop 4 - Non-residential standards			■	■
Workshop 5 - Residential standards			■	■
Neighborhood college	■		■	
Box City	■	■		



Public participation played a key role in this process, ensuring the community had an opportunity to verify its overall vision and keep involved as policies and standards were proposed to achieve it. Interactive workshops, a web site, and an active advisory committee all contributed to ensure the plan reflects the community's voice.

for the

# City of Hickory

## Hickory by Choice 2030

### Land Development Code



October 2010

# Hickory by Choice 2030: Role and Adaptation

Comprehensive plans serve multiple purposes, but must accomplish **three basic goals** to be fully successful. This understanding motivated our work to prepare Hickory by Choice 2030, shaping the way in which we approached the public, wrote the document, and worked with agency staff:

- Goal One – Achieve compliance with State statutory requirements, including all elements identified by law (this is the least difficult bar to clear)
- Goal Two – Capture and express the community’s vision, and translate it accurately into public policy
- Goal Three – Empower the community through the planning process and through the plan itself; nurture a culture of an informed and capable citizenry

This new version of the plan replaces the original Hickory by Choice adopted in 1999. Hickory was a much different place 11 years ago, and the plan needed updating, particularly in three key areas.

## Vision

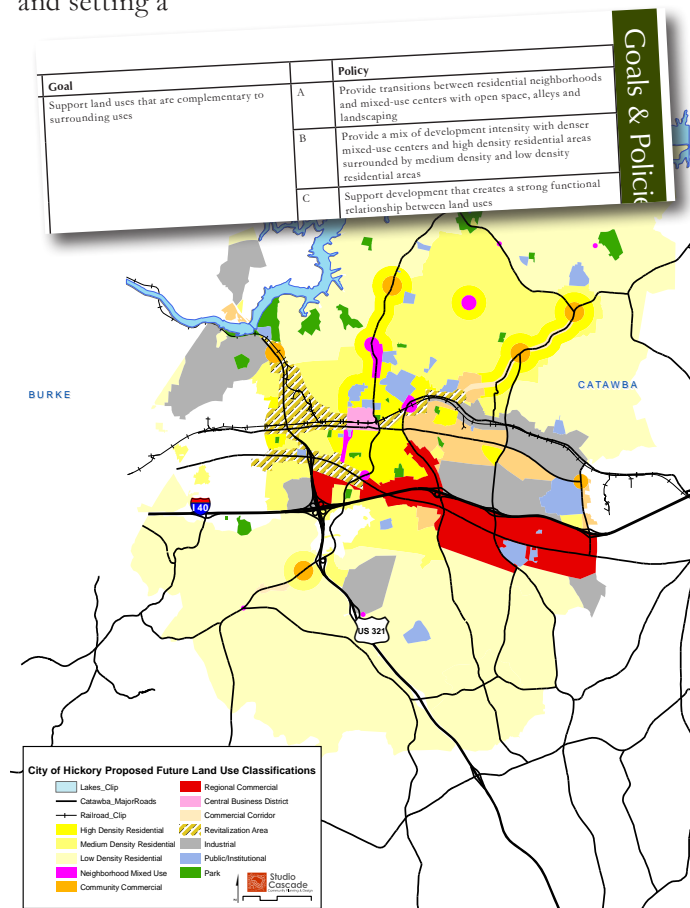
Hickory's 1999 plan did not establish a clear vision, but its goals and policies called for a community transformation rooted in continued economic prosperity and a wholesale revision of the way the City regulates land development. The call for the creation of pedestrian-oriented centers may have sounded good at the time, but this past decade failed to deliver.

## Policy

Hickory by Choice proposed policy to guide land use and transportation, focusing on these two key topics to inform the community's zoning and transportation

planning. In the intervening years, however, the City realized that its long-range plan needed to be more comprehensive, providing guidance from a wider perspective. Hickory by Choice 2030 now includes chapters addressing housing, economic development, utilities, parks and recreation, the environment and others, enabling the City to consider its decisions and initiatives within a much broader policy context.

In addition, the message in the new policies is changed, recognizing the level of investment in existing development patterns, the uncertainty of economic prosperity, and the factors contributing to Hickory's quality of life. This new policy document is shaped to fit Hickory, identifying a desired future and setting a



Hickory's long-range land use plan calls for the creation of several neighborhood centers, but it recognizes the importance of the community's commercial corridors, emphasizing their interdependent relationship. It also provides special designations for the central business district and several "revitalization areas" along the community's railroad corridors. The plan's goal and policy matrix clearly relates planning priorities to the community's long-range vision.

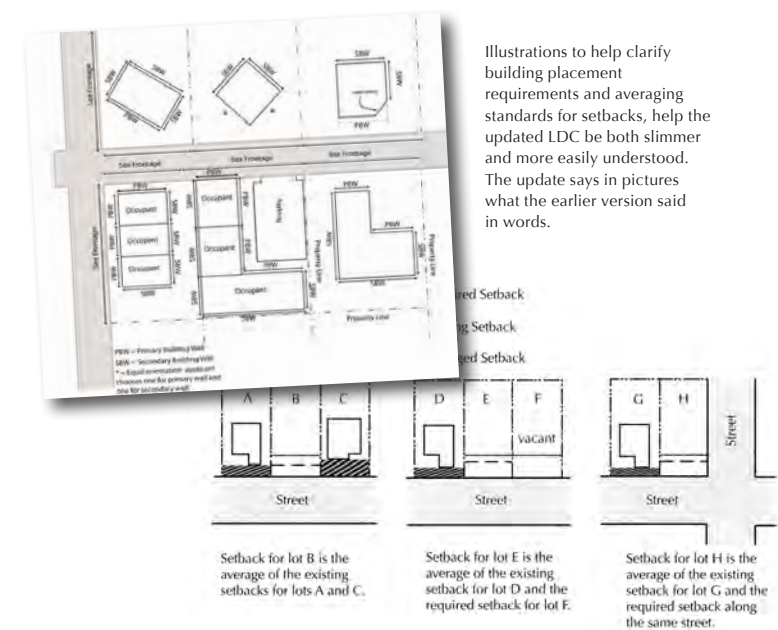
course to achieve it...while respecting what makes the community great today.

## Implementation

Hickory by Choice 2030 is a long range plan, establishing policies to help the City react to opportunities as the future presents them. It also suggests several actions the City can take, identifying and prioritizing specific, budgetable projects or programs the City can sponsor to help this plan along its way. Some of these items carry over from the original Hickory by Choice, but others are new, generated by this process and vetted by extensive community participation.

## Land Development Code

The Land Development Code (LDC) is a critical tool to implement the long-range policies from Hickory by Choice 2030. Three principles underpinned work in its update:



## Neighborhood friendliness

The new code had to be sensitive to the community's existing neighborhoods, proposing standards that respect the way neighborhoods function and look. In some cases, this meant scaling back the number of zoning districts included in the existing code, providing for a better blending of the mixed-use neighborhood center, and reworking the City's smaller-scale commercial zoning districts.

## Business friendliness

While the commercial corridors were the focus of much of the zoning code's revisions, the new standards also provided for increased flexibility in land use regulation, parking standards and building design...all intended to allow business to prosper while protecting residential areas from negative impacts.

## Accessibility

The LDC came into this process at more than 400 pages long. It leaves this process at something a bit lighter, featuring graphics, a streamlined land use table and a reorganized system of zoning districts. By reconfiguring the code in this way and adding illustrations of the various requirements, the code is more accessible to all its likely users. City staff, officials, residents, businesses and anyone using the code should find it easier to use than its predecessor. It may not ever be light reading, but this version is designed to allow users to get information quickly and without confusion.