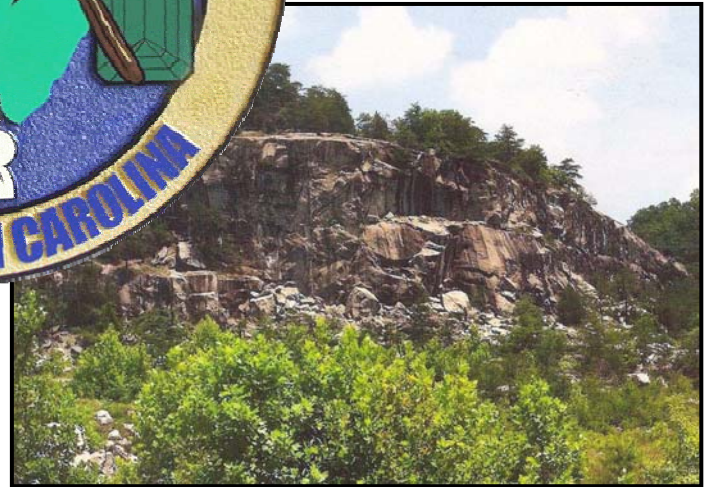


# *Alexander County Comprehensive Plan*



**Adopted April 21, 2008**

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# Introduction

## **Defining A Comprehensive Plan**

According to North Carolina General Statutes, every local government must base its zoning decisions on a long-range plan which describes policies for land-use and growth management issues. These decisions range from rezoning decisions to transportation regulations to policies governing the uses and subdivision of land. Alexander County's "current" plan to guide its Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Commissioners was completed in 1993 and, according to local officials, its 15-year-old policies do not reflect today's land-use and growth issues in Alexander County. The Alexander County Board of Commissioners set the process in motion by contracting with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to assist the County in developing such a plan.

## **The Planning Process**

The *Alexander County Comprehensive Plan* was developed by a 12-person committee appointed by the Alexander County Commissioners in October 2006. Members of the Alexander County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee were drawn from interested citizens across the County, representing a variety of viewpoints on issues pertaining to the County's growth and development. The Committee underwent an intense 18-month process of education, discussion and strategic thinking to develop a draft plan for presentation to the County Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Commissioners. The heart of the *Plan* is a series of recommended growth management strategies in the areas of land use, transportation, economic development, natural and environmental assets, parks and recreation, and historic and cultural resources. If the *Plan* is adopted by County Commissioners, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the County's professional Planning staff will be charged with prioritizing and implementing the strategies proposed in the *Alexander County Comprehensive Plan*.

## **Citizen Involvement**

The process of creating a new *Comprehensive Plan* offered several important ways for citizens to be involved in the *Plan's* development. Early in the process, three community meetings were held at schools across the County (Bethlehem Elementary, CVCC Alexander Center and Hiddenite Elementary). At this first series of meetings, 57 participants described the assets of the County, their concerns about Alexander and their vision for the County. Results from the first series of community meetings are provided in Appendix A. Near the conclusion of the planning process, citizens were given an opportunity to evaluate whether the draft recommendations as developed by the Advisory Committee reflected citizens' concerns and interests. A work session was also scheduled with members of the Advisory Committee, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the County Commissioners. Formal public hearings provided additional opportunities for citizen input at meetings of both these boards in April 2008.

## **The Approval Process**

Members of the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee presented the *Plan* to the Alexander County Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Commissioners during a work session on March 31, 2008. The Planning and Zoning Commission at its April 3, 2008 meeting made minor revisions to the document and voted unanimously to recommend the *Plan* for approval by the Alexander County Board of Commissioners. On April 21<sup>st</sup> the Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing on the *Comprehensive Plan* to give citizens another opportunity for comment on the document. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the *Plan*.

## **Next Steps**

Once approved, the *Plan* needs to be implemented. This important task asks the Planning and Zoning Commission, guided by the County's professional planning staff, to make specific recommendations for implementation to the County Commissioners. Two essential components of implementation involve revising the County's *Zoning Ordinance* and *Subdivision Regulations* to reflect the strategies in the *Comprehensive Plan*. Like most counties, Alexander uses these growth management mechanisms to regulate where and how new residential, commercial and industrial development will occur. The *Plan's* proposed strategies will be accomplished after revisions to the *Zoning Ordinance* and *Subdivision Regulations* are approved by Commissioners and incorporated into these documents.

Any Comprehensive Plan is intended to be an evolving document, revised by elected officials as policies and economic conditions change. The Planning and Zoning Commission and Alexander County planning staff should review the document periodically to determine its effectiveness and the need for revisions to the *Plan*.

## **Acknowledgments**

The Alexander Planning Department was assisted in developing the *Comprehensive Plan* by members of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Planning staff: Senior Planner John Kenny, RPO Coordinator John Marshall and Planner John Kinley. County department staff contributed to the Committee's understanding of key issues from staff at the Tax Department, Parks and Recreation Department and the Alexander County Economic Development Commission. Consulting engineer Doug Chapman of McGill and Associates provided details of current and future infrastructure in Alexander County.

## A Profile of Alexander County

Alexander County, one of four counties that comprise the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), is located in the western Piedmont area of North Carolina. Bounded on the south by the Catawba River and on the north by the Brushy Mountains, Alexander County consists of 260 square miles of the rolling foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains between Caldwell and Iredell Counties. Map 1, “*Alexander County*” depicts the County, Taylorsville, its public schools and Catawba Valley Community College Alexander Center. Alexander County and Taylorsville, its County seat, were formed in 1847 by a commission composed of one representative from the three neighboring counties of Caldwell, Wilkes and Iredell and three men from what is now the Town.

### Demographics

The population of Alexander County grew over the past 15 years by nearly 40%, outstripping the growth of the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA, the state of North Carolina and the nation. In sheer numbers, however, this growth consisted on about 11,000 persons. What is significant here is the rate of growth and the impact such rapid growth has had on a small, mainly rural County. Table 1 displays this information.

<b>Table 1.</b>					
<b>Population, 1990 – 2005.</b>					
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>Change 1990 – 2005</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
<b>Alexander County</b>	27,544	33,612	35,898	10,899	39.6%
<b>Hickory MSA</b>	292,405	341,851	351,715	59,310	20.3%
<b>North Carolina</b>	6,632,448	8,049,313	8,682,066	2,049,618	30.9%
<b>United States</b>	248,709,873	281,421,906	288,378,137	39,668,264	15.9%

Source, US Census, 2007; NC State Data Center, 2007.

Past population growth trends are commonly used as an indicator of future growth. Table 2 shows that Alexander County is projected to grow by nearly 34% percent from 35,898 persons in 2005 to an estimated 47,997 by 2030. During this same period, the number of households is expected to increase at a rate of 40%. Interestingly, the number of persons per household is likely to decrease over time, indicating a population likely to have smaller, single-person households and an older median age in the future. Both of these trends reflect larger patterns seen across the state and the nation. More and more seniors are living longer than in previous decades and often doing so at home.

<b>Table 2.</b>						
<b>Alexander Population Projections, 2005 – 2030.</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>Growth 2005-2030</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Persons	35,898	38,631	43,416	47,997	12,099	33.7%
Households	14,475	15,963	18,242	20,337	5,862	40.5%
Persons/Household	2.48	2.42	2.38	2.36	-0.12	- 4.8%

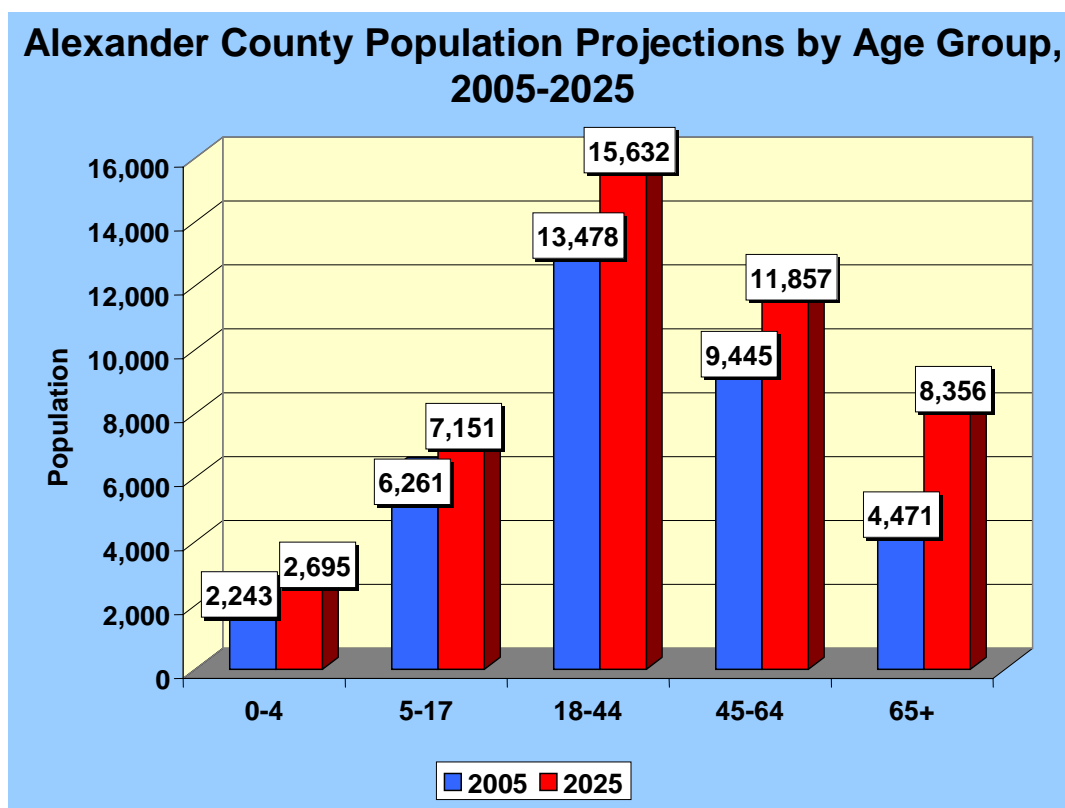
Source: WPCOG Data Center, 2007.



The population data in Tables 1 and 2 reflect the potential population growth across the region and in Alexander County. That growth in population, in turn, is mirrored in the number of dwelling units needed to house the increasing population.

A recent study by data experts at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments revealed that an estimated 1,756 lots on over 1,890 acres of land have been initially approved for residential development in Alexander County. Most of these subdivisions are on Lake Hickory or in the vicinity of Taylorsville. In surrounding counties, new residential developments have also been noted across the region, most especially along the shores of the Catawba River and in higher elevations of neighboring counties. The potential economic and social impacts of these new residents on the County and the region will be huge in the coming decade, economic development experts predict.

Figure 1.



Source: NC Office of State Planning, 2007.

Figure 1 illustrates the age of Alexander’s population in four main groups (pre-school, school age, working adults and older adults) in 2005 and projected for the year 2025. The percentage of Alexander’s “school-age” students (persons 5-17 years old) is projected to increase by about 14% in the two decades from 2005 to 2025. Its population of “younger workers” (persons age 18 to 44) will increase about 16%, while the number of “experienced workers” (age 45-64) may increase by nearly 26%. These projected numbers of job-holders indicate an adequate number of future workers if they continue to develop greater skill levels expected for the technological jobs of the coming decades. The “retirement” age (persons 65 years and older) is predicted to increase by 87% as the baby boomers move into their retirement years. This huge percentage

increase may have serious implications for the County as Medicare and other health costs rise due to this increase in the percent of older adults.

## Educational Attainment and Earning Potential

The income level and educational attainment of a community's residents are often used as common indicators of how robust and dynamic a community will become. According to Table 3, Alexander County's population over age twenty-five has nearly 69% high school graduates, higher than Burke or Caldwell Counties.

Slightly more than 9% of Alexander residents hold a Bachelors degree or higher, the lowest percent among persons over 25 in the Greater Hickory region. The level of educational attainment is expected to rise as older, less educated workers retire and are replaced by younger workers with more schooling. The trend toward a more highly educated workforce will continue as traditional jobs in furniture, textile and hosiery, which required less education, are replaced by jobs in the service and technical sectors with higher educational requirements of its workforce.

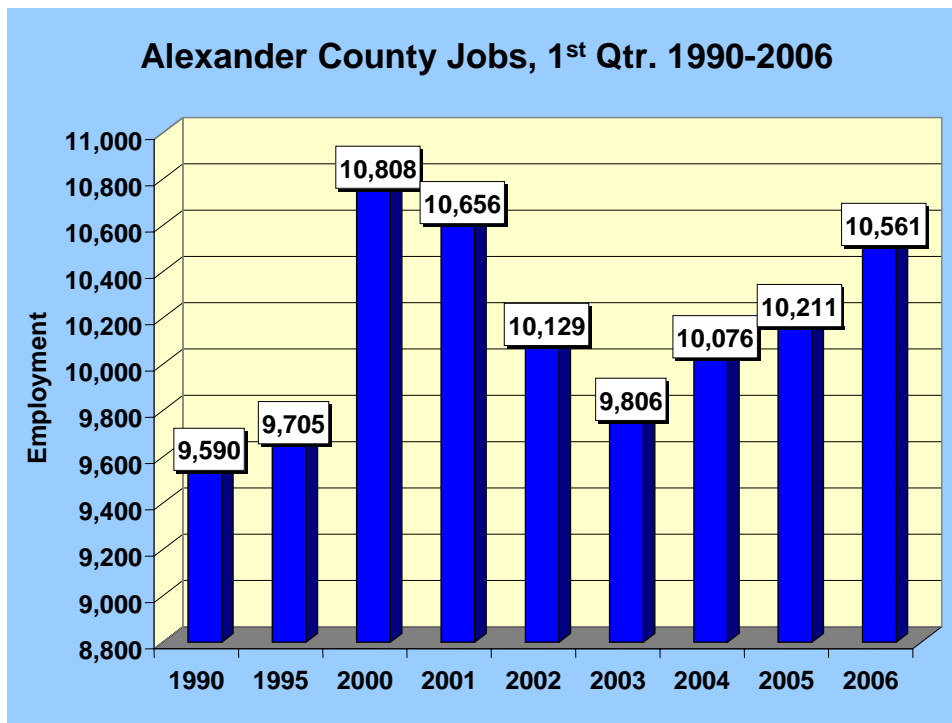
<b>Table 3. Educational Attainment Levels.</b>				
	<b>% High School or Higher</b>	<b>County Ranking</b>	<b>% Bachelors Degree or Higher</b>	<b>County Ranking</b>
<b>Alexander</b>	68.7	78	9.3	94
<b>Burke</b>	67.6	86	12.8	58
<b>Caldwell</b>	66.3	90	10.4	86
<b>Catawba</b>	74.8	43	17.0	28
<b>NC</b>	70.0	NA	22.5	NA
<b>US</b>	75.2	NA	24.4	NA
<i>(County ranking of 1 = highest educational attainment level.)</i>				

Source: US Census, 2000.

## The Changing Employment Situation

The dramatic changes in the regional and local job market are clearly demonstrated in Figure 2. The gradual shift in the number of jobs in Alexander County dropped by 1,000 positions from 2000 to 2003, but bounced back considerably to nearly the 2002 level by the first quarter of 2006.

Figure 2.



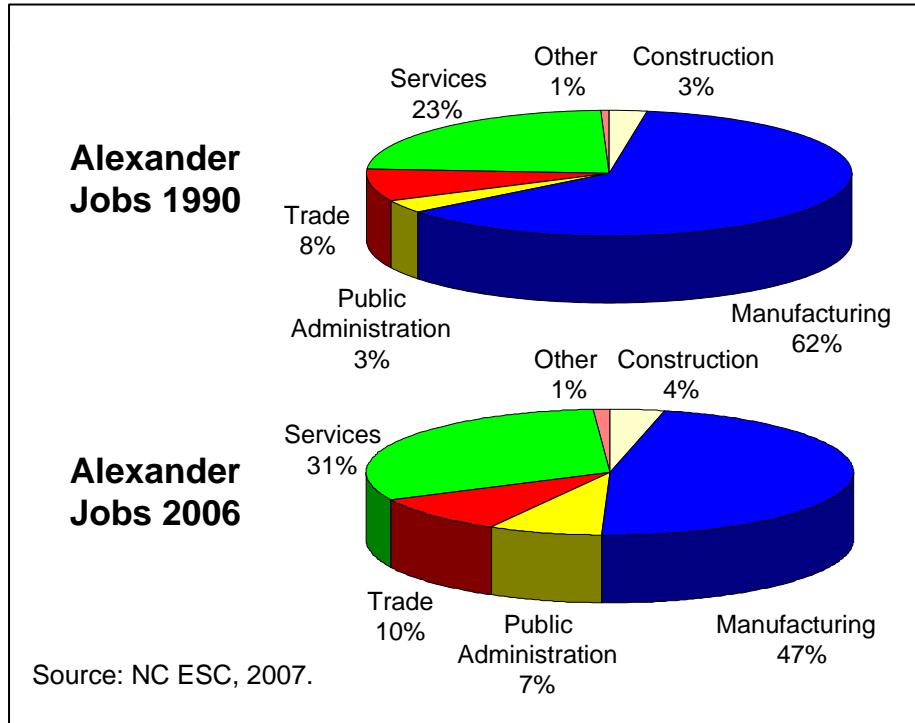
Source: NC ESC, 2006.

The changing Alexander County employment pattern is dramatically shown on page 7. *Figure 3: Alexander County Employment Distribution, 1990 - 2006* shows an economy and job market substantially impacted by outsourcing and factory closings in the manufacturing sector. The data here show that in 1990 the largest employment sector in Alexander County was manufacturing, with 62% of workers. This was followed by 23% employed in the service sector. In 2006 manufacturing jobs had declined 15% from 1990; conversely, service sector jobs increased by 8% during that same period. Retail and Wholesale Trade increased slightly from 8% in 1990 to 10% in 2006. The other main job sectors remained essentially the same in the period from 1990 to 2006.

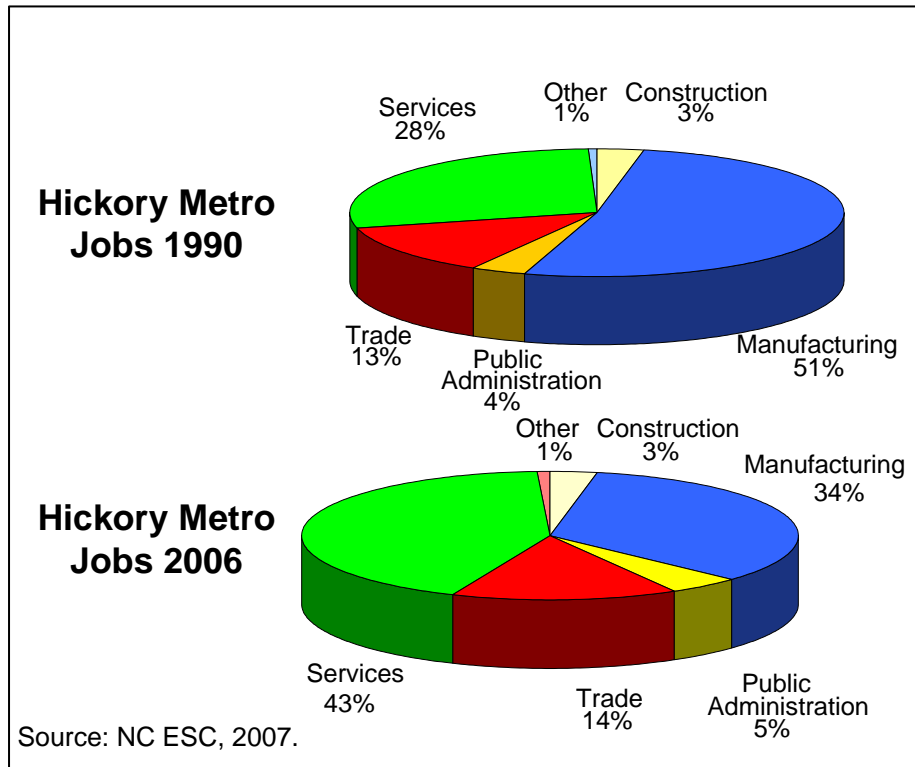
As shown in Figure 4, regional employment patterns reflect the same trends observed in Alexander County in an even more significant fashion. Manufacturing employment dropped by 17% during this period, and service sector employment grew by 15% from 1990 to 2006. Other sectors in 2006 remained close to their share of employment patterns in 1990.

Table 4 shows that in 2005 the estimated median household income in Alexander County was slightly more than \$40,000, a figure that is higher than all Greater Hickory Metro counties and almost equal with the state estimated household income. This figure is most likely due to higher income workers who commute to jobs in Iredell and Catawba Counties. Alexander County also has fewer persons in poverty than in other regional counties. Thirty-five percent of households had an income of less than \$25,000; nearly 8% of households had income above \$100,000.

**Figure 3.**  
**Alexander County Employment Distribution, 1990 – 2006.**



**Figure 4.**  
**Hickory Metro Employment Distribution, 1990 – 2006.**



<b>Table 4. Household Income, 2005.</b>			
<b>Place</b>	<b>2005 Estimated Median Household Income</b>	<b>% Of 2005 Households With Incomes Below \$25,000</b>	<b>% Of 2005 Household Incomes Over \$100,000</b>
<b>Alexander County</b>	<b>\$40,677</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Burke County	\$32,963	36.9	6.0
Caldwell County	\$37,260	35.5	7.0
Catawba County	\$39,279	32.2	11.0
Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA	\$37,391	34.4	8.5
North Carolina	\$40,729	30.6	12.1

Source: American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, 2005.

## Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The ethnic makeup of Alexander County is displayed in Table 5. Alexander's population is substantially less diverse in all ethnic categories than two other Unifour counties. Alexander has fewer African-American or Hispanic residents than other counties across

<b>Table 5. Race and Ethnicity, 2005.</b>				
<b>Place</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Asian/ Other</b>	<b>Hispanic (any race)</b>
<b>Alexander County</b>	<b>92.9%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
Burke County	88.5%	6.7%	4.8%	4.7%
Caldwell County	93.3%	5.4%	1.3%	3.7%
Catawba County	87.4%	8.3%	4.3%	8.1%
Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA	89.5%	7.0%	3.5%	5.7%
North Carolina	74.0%	21.6%	4.4%	6.7%

Source: American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, 2005.

the region. The County's 5.3% African-American population is smaller than other regional counties, and Alexander has the second lowest percent of Hispanic residents. Catawba County is the area's most racially diverse county, but no county in the region comes close to matching the ethnic diversity of North Carolina, in the percent of either African-Americans or Latinos.

# Land Use and Growth Management

## Current Land Use

Land in Alexander County is mainly “residential” or “vacant” in its land use categories. Given the County’s rural and agricultural history, these land use patterns are not surprising. Map 2, “*Alexander County Current Land Use*” displays types of land use across the County; a quick glance reveals the overwhelming amount of land either developed as residential or agricultural or allowed to remain vacant. Unlike other counties in the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA, Alexander is the only local county with a single municipality. Taylorsville, the County seat, is the center of its local government services, and its low population, estimated at fewer than 2,000 persons in 2006, also reflects the County’s rural heritage.

The vast majority of land in Alexander County is devoted to residential uses. Of the nearly 160,800 acres in the County, 96% is occupied by residential uses or is vacant and could be used for residential purposes. From another point of view, only slightly more than 1,000 of the County’s 24,300 land parcels are found in uses other than residential, mostly industrial or commercial usage. Table 6 displays this data.

<b>Table 6.</b>				
<b>Current Alexander County Land Use by Parcels/Acres</b>				
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>%</b>
Residential Improved (Parcels Less than 10 Acres)	15,965	66%	30,556	19%
Residential Vacant (Parcels Less than 10 Acres)	3,821	16%	8,777	6%
Residential Parcels Greater than 10 Acres	3,493	14%	116,406	72%
Non-Residential	1,022	4%	5,055	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,301</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>160,794</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Alexander County GIS, 2007, and WPCOG Data Center, 2007.

## Non-residential Land Use

Like many rural counties, Alexander demonstrates a low percentage of parcels with non-residential uses, slightly over 1,000 parcels or 4% of the total parcels and nearly 5,100 acres or 3% of the County’s total of 160,790 acres of land. Of these 5,100 non-residential acres, existing commercial uses occupy an estimated 1,700 acres and industrial use, which often needs larger tracts, an estimated 3,400 acres.

Agricultural uses occupy a significant percentage of the land over 10 acres and set aside for residential uses. In Table 6 these parcels/acres are included in the category describes as “Residential Parcels Greater than 10 Acres.” The NC Department of Agriculture estimates that 58,300 acres in Alexander County, or about one-half of the total residential acres over 10 acres, are being used for agricultural purposes. These uses include wood lands, farms and family homesteads, among other uses. Most of these 58,300 acres pay reduced County property taxes as bona fide farms, under an NC law which reduces the property taxes on farms used to produce agricultural, horticultural or forestry products.

## Residential Land Use

As Table 6 suggests, these tracts larger than 10 acres are significant because many of them potentially could be subdivided into several smaller parcels for additional housing units. While about half of this land is devoted to agricultural uses and some may be unsuitable for residential uses, much of it has the potential to be sold and subdivided for residential uses. These larger land tracts (those over 10 acres) are found mainly in northern townships of Ellendale, Gwaltneys, Little River, Millers and Sugarloaf (see Table 7). In these County tax districts, over 80% of the residential parcels are found in tracts of 10 acres or larger, placing them in rural areas, less accessible to Taylorsville or commercial attractions in the Hickory area.

<b>Table 7. Current Alexander Residential Land Use by Tax District</b>				
<b>Alexander County Tax Districts</b>	<b>Residential Improved (Parcels &lt;10 Acres)</b>	<b>Residential Vacant (Parcels &lt;10 Acres)</b>	<b>Residential (Parcels &gt;10 Acres)</b>	<b>Non- Residential</b>
Bethlehem	36%	11%	50%	4%
Ellendale	16%	5%	77%	3%
Gwaltneys	10%	4%	82%	4%
Little River	11%	4%	85%	1%
Millers	12%	2%	83%	3%
Sharpes	23%	5%	70%	1%
Sharpes II	28%	7%	55%	10%
Sugarloaf	12%	6%	82%	0%
Taylorsville	28%	8%	57%	6%
Wittenburg	29%	6%	64%	2%
<b>Alexander County</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>3%</b>

Source: Alexander County Tax Office, 2006; WPCOG Data Center, 2007.

While the actual number of new housing units has increased slowly over the past decade, the County's population has grown at the fastest rate of any of the four counties in the region, as discussed earlier. In fact, the County's population grew by 39.6% from 1990 to 2005, while the region increased at a 20.3% rate. Looking ahead, experts predict the County's population will increase at a 33.6% pace from 2005 to 2030 and the region's population is likely to grow at about 22.0% during those same years. This projected population growth, in turn, will likely generate the need for additional single-family and multi-family residential units in coming years.

Table 8 shows County new residential building permit activity during 2007. Total single-family (site-built) units reached 162 while 102 permits for manufactured homes were issued. Across the region, planners have detected a similar pattern of decreasing numbers of manufactured home permits issued since the mid 1990s. Multi-family developments in Alexander County in 2007, which include apartments, condominiums and townhouses, were limited to three permit applications, one each in the northeast portion of the County (Census Tract 401), the Taylorsville area (Tract 404) and the Bethlehem community (Tract 407).

<b>Table 8. Alexander County Building Permit Data, 2007</b>					
<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Single-Family Permits</b>	<b>Multi-Family Permits</b>	<b>Mobile Home Permits</b>	<b>New Single-Family Construction Costs</b>	<b>New Multi-Family Construction Costs</b>
401	8	1	10	\$1,601,390	\$68,020
402	26	0	16	4,819,360	-
403	11	0	11	2,210,650	-
404	22	1	13	4,170,600	450,060
405	21	0	32	4,251,859	-
406	24	0	13	6,136,940	-
407	50	1	7	12,059,941	6,136,940
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>\$35,250,740</b>	<b>\$6,655,020</b>

Source: Alexander County Planning Department, 2008, and WPCOG Data Center, 2008.

## **Current Zoning Districts**

As Map 3, “*Alexander County Zoning*” shows, the current County zoning areas reflect zoning districts that closely parallel existing land use patterns in most of the County. Two zoning districts allow for industrial land uses, a Heavy Industrial Zoning District and a Light Industrial District. These zoning districts are located mainly along NC 127 and NC 90 -- US 64 east of Taylorsville to the Iredell County line. Several parcels with this zoning designation are also located on NC 16 south of the Taylorsville town limits. A Highway-Commercial zoning district has been established along NC 127 in the Bethlehem area, on NC 90 and US 64 east of Taylorsville and on NC 16 south of Town. The few parcels in the Neighborhood Business Zoning District are widely scattered across the County.

Of the three residential zoning districts established by the County Zoning Ordinance, the vast majority of land in the County is zoned in the Residential-Agricultural District. This zoning district allows site-built homes, manufactured housing (mobile homes) on single lots or in parks, and multi-family housing. Lot sizes vary from 12,000 to 30,000 square feet (one-third to two-thirds of an acre) depending on applicable watershed regulations and the availability of public/community water or sewer.

The R-20 Residential Zoning District allows single-family residences at a density (minimum lot size) that depends on whether public or community water or sewer is available. Most of the land zoned R-20 can be found south and west of Taylorsville and in the Bethlehem area, especially along Lake Hickory. A third residential zoning district (Residential-Single Family) allows for increased density (considerably smaller lots) in developments with both public water and sewer.

## **Future Commercial and Industrial Uses**

Community residents, County staff and members of the Alexander County Comprehensive Plan Committee echoed the need for additional commercial and industrial locations in the County. The locations suggested for additional commercial and industrial locations are indicated on Map 4, “*Alexander County Future Land Use.*”



These locations propose general areas, not specific lots, where such development is most appropriate. The Committee's proposals are intended to guide policy makers in decisions regarding future commercial and industrial growth and assist in rezoning decisions coming before the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

Potential locations are shown on Map 4 for additional commercial uses, mainly in the Bethlehem area along NC 127, on NC 16 north and south of Taylorsville and in the Millersville and Wittenburg areas. The Committee's Land Use Recommendations propose that the Planning and Zoning Commission consider adding an Office and Institutional Zoning District to compliment the existing two commercial zoning districts and serve as a transition area between residential and commercial uses. This "O & I" District is proposed for locations south of Taylorsville on NC 16 near existing medical and banking offices. The proposed areas for more industrial locations are mainly near existing industrial plants along US 64 east to the Iredell County line and NC 90 east from Taylorsville.

## **Future Residential Land Uses**

Future policy makers in Alexander County should think about the amount of land currently zoned residential, especially in the RA-20 Zoning District and used primarily for agriculture. These parcels represent land possible to be subdivided into residential uses in the coming decades. While market forces basically drive these decisions, existing data provides some indication of development pressures across the region and western North Carolina.

A recent survey by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Data Center calculated the number of subdivisions proposed in the 12 Future Forward counties, which stretch from I-77 west to the Black Mountains and north from Lincoln and Rutherford Counties to the Virginia line. As of late 2006, the Hickory MSA approved preliminary plats for over 15,000 lots in the Unifour counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba. Nearly all of these proposed subdivisions were along the Catawba River or in the mountain and foothill areas of these counties.

Of these 15,000 lots, 1,756 lots in Alexander County were approved for development in the near future. While approval of a preliminary plat does not necessarily mean a subdivision will actually be developed, it does suggest likely subdivision expansion within a few years. Importantly, any significant growth of large residential subdivisions will depend on the availability of public sewer. In Alexander County, these subdivisions are proposed along the Catawba River, mostly on Lake Hickory, and around Taylorsville. Four subdivisions are also proposed for the southeast portion of the County near the Iredell County line. The current crisis in the mortgage industry, however, seems certain to delay plans of some developers for building approved subdivisions, not only in Alexander but across neighboring counties as well.

One of the recurring themes from the four community meetings held during the Comprehensive Plan process was the desire to preserve Alexander County's rural landscape and the values that accompany a quieter lifestyle. Since nearly all land areas in Alexander allow some type of residential development, the Committee examined

several planning techniques to allow growth management options to accomplish these goals. These include allowing increased density in the Bethlehem area and near Taylorsville where public water and sewer service are available, encouraging “cluster subdivisions” which preserve open space and enhance the County’s rural character, and require landscaped buffers along thoroughfares and around the perimeter of subdivisions with 25 lots or more. “Cluster subdivisions” can be defined as residential developments in which housing units are built on smaller lots, leaving a substantial percentage of land as permanent open space for use by residents.

The Committee also recommends that the County revise its manufactured home regulations to those standards in effect on July 1, 1999, which required that doublewides and singlewides in the County be constructed to HUD standards. It also suggests that the Planning and Zoning Commission set a reasonable timetable for bringing homes in Manufactured Home Parks into conformity with federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards.

### **Open Space, Mountain Development and Potential Park Locations**

Other ways to preserve open space and maintain the attractive rural quality of Alexander County include encouraging the development of low-density subdivisions of 10 lots or more with a minimum lot size of 3 acres, establishing standards on residential development above 1,500 feet in elevation to preserve views and open space and prevent the spread of wildfires, and developing standards on steep slopes in the County, those greater than 30%, to prevent erosion and dangerous landslides. The Planning and Zoning Commission and professional planning staff will be assigned the task of creating the appropriate language for these standards to be incorporated as revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations.

Other locations across the County have been designated as “open space” by the Committee (see Map 4, “*Alexander County Future Land Use*,”) as areas for potential passive recreation parks. These areas could perhaps be managed cooperatively by Alexander County and other entities which own or control the land. These include Joe and Little Joe Mountains, Rocky Face Mountain and Asbury Mountain, among others.

## **Goal Statements: Land Use**

- Develop progressive and sound land use policies and strategies to ensure that Alexander County grows fairly, effectively and efficiently.
- Adopt sensible, straightforward zoning standards and procedures that are easily understood by developers and the general public.
- Foster distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas in the County.
- Adopt design standards to ensure that new development and redevelopment are assets to the surrounding community and Alexander County.
- Develop walkable, aesthetically-pleasing communities.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
- Protect the distinctive residential character of the County's neighborhoods from the encroachment of inappropriate non-residential development.
- Encourage industrial development in appropriate areas with adequate infrastructure and access to major highways.
- Provide guidelines to developers on increasing landscaping and open space in new developments.
- Develop residential design qualities that do not negatively impact air quality, including pedestrian options such as sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths.
- Promote affordable housing for people in all stages of life.

## **Recommendations: Land Use**

### **Residential Uses**

- Develop guidelines encouraging residential development of increased density (parcels of one-half acre or less) where water and sewer service is available, for example on the outskirts of Taylorsville and in Bethlehem.
- Encourage the "cluster subdivision" concept to preserve open space and enhance the rural character of the County.

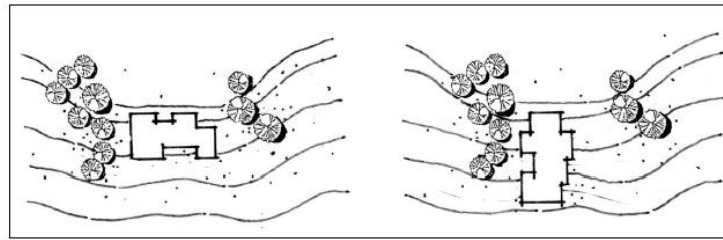
- Require landscaped buffers for large subdivisions (25 lots or more) to be a minimum of 15 feet wide along thoroughfares and recommend a similar landscaped buffer around the perimeter of these larger subdivisions to help preserve the County's rural character.
- Recommend that Alexander County revise its manufactured home regulations to those standards effective July 1, 1999, which would require that doublewides and singlewides already in Alexander County and sold for re-use within Alexander County be constructed to HUD standards.
- Request the Planning and Zoning Commission to set a reasonable timeline for bringing homes in Manufactured Home Parks into conformity with HUD standards.

### **Open Space**

- Encourage subdivisions (10 lots or more) of very low density development (with a minimum lot size of 3 acres) as an effective way of preserving open space and the County's rural character.
- To preserve views and open space in the County and prevent the spread of wildfires, residential development on parcels above 1,500 feet in elevation should be managed by limitations such as:
  - Structures should be limited to 35 feet in height above the existing ground level.
  - Structures must have a 30-foot cleared space or radius around them to prevent damage or destruction by wildfire.
  - Limit the area to be disturbed for development.
  - Structures on such sites should be located to minimize visual impact and preserve trees.
  - Roof and building colors should be limited to earth tones (browns, grays, greens).
  - Lighting should not project into the sky.

### **Steep Slopes**

- To preserve views and steep slopes in the County, prevent erosion and dangerous landslides, development on slopes greater than 30% should be managed by limitations such as:
  - Structures should be limited to 35 feet in height above the existing ground level.
  - Limit the area of disturbance for development sites.
  - Allow maximum density of 1 home per 5 acres. Waterfront properties are excluded from the density restrictions.
  - Require large percentages of open space for subdivisions.
  - Buildings should be oriented along natural topography (Figure 5).
  - Construction should be stepped into the topography (Figure 6 and 7).
  - Discourage large areas of cut and fill.
  - Roads and drives should follow the natural contours when possible (Figure 8).



Do this

Don't do this

Figure 5.

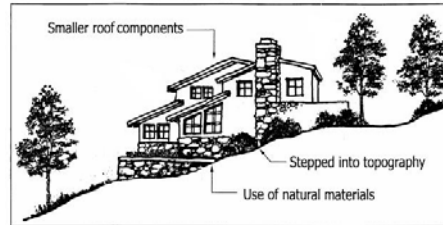
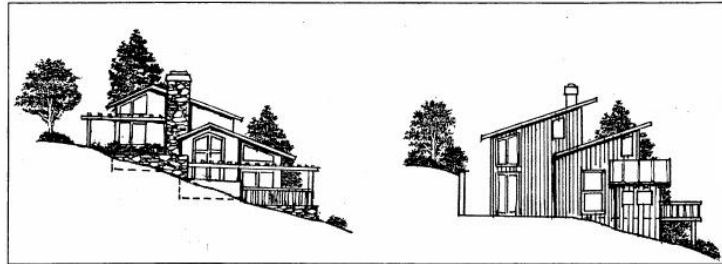


Figure 6.



Do this

Don't do this

Figure 7.

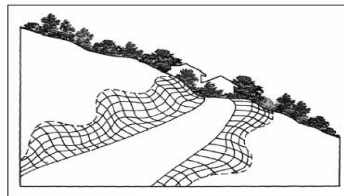


Figure 8.

## Commercial Uses

- Establish an *Office and Institutional* Zoning District separate from the current Highway Business and Neighborhood Business Zoning Districts. The Office and Institutional District use allows services to the public that typically involve less traffic and fewer workers, such as legal or health care services, offices, and publicly-owned facilities such as school administrative offices or parks. The “O & I” district provides a transition between residential and non-residential uses.
- Pursue the concept of “commercial nodes” which propose appropriate locations for future commercial development (see *Future Land Use Map*). Current requirements for Highway Business, Neighborhood Business or the proposed Office and Institutional Zoning Districts would apply to commercial nodes.
- Encourage more attractive commercial buildings on major thoroughfares by proposing brick or masonry fronts and designs which match the standards of buildings in the community.

- Require landscaping along road frontage and within parking areas of commercial uses. Consider planting trees to soften building impacts and provide shade in parking areas.
- Increase existing buffer requirements to screen commercial buildings from adjacent residential uses. All loading, storage and maintenance areas should also be screened from adjacent residential areas.
- Expand the uses permitted for home occupations to allow rural entrepreneurs to develop businesses at their residences. When placing limitations on “rural home occupations,” the Planning and Zoning Commission should consider issues such as:
  - Prohibiting these uses in existing subdivisions;
  - Limiting parking (number of spaces and where allowed) and the number of non-residents employed in the business;
  - Describing the minimum size of the parcel, or the footprint of the residence or accessory building (s);
  - Allowing limited retail sales within “rural home occupation” district;
  - Limiting the placement of vehicles or machinery, and materials used in the business, such as mulch, sand or gravel;
  - Allowing the business use of accessory buildings;
  - Restricting the placement and size of signs.

## **Industrial Uses**

- Additional sites for industrial use, publically financed and managed by local governments, should be developed in areas with adequate water, sewer and transportation (see *Future Land Use Map*).
- Require landscaping along road frontage and within parking areas of industrial uses. Consider planting trees to soften building impacts and provide shade in parking areas.
- Increase existing buffer requirements to screen industrial buildings from adjacent residential uses. All loading, storage and maintenance areas should also be screened from adjacent residential areas.
- Incentives should be pursued to redevelop existing, vacant industrial buildings. Examine grant opportunities, such as federal funding for brownfield mitigation, to assist these efforts.

# Transportation

## Introduction

Alexander County is located within both the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) – the federally-mandated transportation planning vehicle for urbanized areas – and the Unifour Rural Planning Organization (URPO) – a state-funded transportation planning vehicle for rural parts of the state. The southern portions of the County in the Bethlehem community are within the GHMPO while the remaining unincorporated parts of the County, as well as the Town of Taylorsville, are covered by the URPO. Map 5, “*Alexander County Transportation*,” shows the location of the MPO in the Bethlehem community and the RPO in the remaining portions of the County.

Transportation planning in recent years has come to include ways of moving people around by means other than on roads and highways. These other modes of transportation include bus or train, called “transit” systems, or by bicycle or on foot on roads, sidewalks or trails. Aside from transit, these other modes of transportation are not usually found in the unincorporated areas of Alexander County.

## Roads and Highways

US Highway 64 crosses the central portion of Alexander County, from Lenoir to Statesville and provides the County a direct connection to I-40. NC Highway 90 generally parallels this route. NC Highway 16 traverses the County north – south to link Newton in Catawba County and Wilkesboro in Wilkes County. NC Highway 127 connects Alexander south to Hickory and intersects US 64/NC 90 in the Ellendale community.

Table 9 illustrates average daily traffic counts (number of vehicles per day or ADT) at various locations in the County (see Map 5, “*Alexander County Transportation*”). Data for 1997 and 2005 are actual numbers recorded on site. In more heavily traveled locations, NCDOT also performs modeling to determine traffic projections for 2025. None of these projections, however, were performed for roads in Alexander County.

<b>Table 9.</b>			
<b>Average Daily Traffic Count, 1996 – 2005.</b>			
	<b>1997</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>NC 127 at Catawba River Bridge</b>	17,500	21,000	3,500
<b>NC 16 at Millersville</b>	10,100	13,000	2,900
<b>NC 90 between Taylorsville &amp; Hiddenite</b>	7,000	7,600	600
<b>US 64 south of Hiddenite</b>	NA	8,800	NA
<b>NC 127 at NC 90</b>	6,700	9,200	2,500
<b>NC 16 at SR 1403</b>	5,700	6,700	1,000

Source: NC DOT, 2006.

Transportation planners at Western Piedmont Council of Governments are currently developing a 4-county Comprehensive Transportation Plan which encompasses all earlier Thoroughfare Plans and expands the proposals to include all modes of transportation.

Two major road projects in Alexander County are currently listed in the Draft 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program. These projects involve major upgrades and pavement widening to NC127 and NC 16, both unfunded at this time.

- NC 127. Upgrade two-lane and provide some five-lane curb and gutter from SR 1400 (Cloninger Mill Road) in Catawba County to US 64-NC 90 in Alexander County (R-3603) (Unfunded).
- NC 16. Upgrade two-lane roadway from the Catawba River to the Wilkes County line (R-2403) (Unfunded).

## **Access Management**

Access management is a process for providing access to the development of land, while preserving traffic flow on surrounding roadways in terms of safety, capacity, and speed. This is achieved by managing the location, design and operation of driveways, median openings and street connections to a roadway. It also involves use of auxiliary lanes, such as turn lanes or bypass lanes, to remove turning vehicles from through-traffic movement. These techniques have become even more important as the cost of new road construction has increased dramatically in recent years.

## **Transit System**

Officials in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties along with the municipalities of Hickory, Newton and Conover recently passed resolutions creating a regional transit authority. Called Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority, the organization is the first regional public transportation authority with consolidated urban-rural transit service in North Carolina. This system will be designed to address current and future public transportation needs in the four-county region.

The transit authority will assume the operations of the rural and urban transit systems in the four-county Unifour region on July 1, 2008. The following four service providers will be consolidated:

- Alexander County community transportation provided by Alexander County Transportation, a county-operated system;
- Burke County community transportation provided by Burke County Transit Administration Inc., a nonprofit agency;
- Caldwell County community transportation provided by Caldwell County Area Transit System Inc., a nonprofit agency, and
- Catawba County Piedmont Wagon Transit System, operated by the City of Hickory, which provides community transportation to Catawba County residents and fixed-route service for the cities of Hickory, Newton and Conover.

Federal funding paved the way for the multi-year effort to consolidate the four separate systems, including US, NC and local funding to conduct a feasibility study. A full-time regional transit director has been hired to implement the new system beginning on July 1, 2008.



## **Passenger Rail**

The NCDOT has determined that the next major expansion of passenger rail service in the State will be in Western North Carolina. Plans are underway to initiate service between Raleigh and Asheville with stops in downtown Hickory and Morganton. This service may be operational by 2012.

## **Goal Statements: Transportation**

### **Roads and Highways**

- Coordinate transportation policies with land use policies.
- Anticipate and plan for growth resulting from road improvements and widening.
- Conduct congestion mitigation activities to alleviate traffic safety problems and congestion on major highways.
- Preserve efficient and well-maintained roads, areas of low traffic and scenic drives.
- Adopt transportation policies that do not negatively impact air quality.
- Provide for better connectivity of road systems.
- Improve communication between the North Carolina Department of Transportation and citizens when transportation plans are developed and implemented.

### **Other Types of Transportation**

- Encourage the increased use of alternate types of transportation, such as walking, bicycles, buses and railroads.
- Provide safe pedestrian access along sidewalks, trails and bicycle routes.
- Improve connectivity between recreation facilities and other points of interest such as schools, downtown Taylorsville and shopping areas.

## **Recommendations: Transportation**

Public roads in Alexander County are maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Public roads in the Town of Taylorsville are maintained by either NCDOT or the Town. Projects listed in this Plan should be included in the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). Lobbying for inclusion of eligible projects to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) should continue.

### **Roads and Highways**

#### **Requests for NCDOT District Office:**

- Widen NC 16 from Macedonia Church Road to Alspaugh Dam Road to 3 lanes and consider widening NC 16 to 3 lanes from Alspaugh Dam Road to the Catawba County line.
- Widen NC 90 from Taylorsville to Adams Pond Road.
- Add a turning lane at Ellendale and Sugarloaf Elementary Schools.
- Add a traffic light on NC 90 at Old Mountain Road in Hiddenite.

- Widen and resurface road at Hiddenite Elementary School after sewer lines are installed.
- Replace caution light with traffic light at Rink Dam Road and Church Road.
- Increase pavement width on secondary roads for improved safety.

Highway Recommendation for the Alexander County/Taylorsville CTP and STIP:

Encourage elected officials to continue insisting on the importance of the following Highway recommendations included in the Draft 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program:

**Currently in the Draft 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program:**

- NC 127. Upgrade two-lane and provide some five-lane curb and gutter from SR 1400 (Cloninger Mill Road) in Catawba County to US 64-NC 90 in Alexander County (R-3603) (Unfunded).
- NC 16. Upgrade two-lane roadway from the Catawba River to the Wilkes County line (R-2403) (Unfunded).

**Included in the Alexander County or Taylorsville Thoroughfare Plans:**

Encourage NCDOT officials to add the following recommendations to the state TIP:

- US 64. Widen from two-lane to four-lane from NC 90 east of Taylorsville to the Iredell County line.
- SR 1409. Widen and curb and gutter Old Wilkesboro Road (SR 1409) from Mtn. Laurel Street to NC 90 (E. Main Street).
- NC 90. Upgrade to three lane from SR 1600 (Pop Davis Road) to SR 1656 Adams Pond Road.
- Taylorsville. Extend Third Avenue and School Avenue to create an east/west cross-town connector.
  - Extend Third Avenue to Second Avenue SW (SR 1104).
  - Extend Third Avenue to First Avenue Drive.
  - Extend School Avenue to Jay Drive.

Amend the County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to:

- Require Traffic Impact Studies for residential or commercial developments generating 4,000 vehicle trips per day or more. Schools and government facilities should be included.
- Require turn lanes for all developments generating 2,000 vehicle trips per day or more.
- Require developers to construct road improvements when a required Traffic Impact Study indicates that a transportation level of service would be exceeded.

- Revise the County Zoning Ordinance to increase setbacks on NC 16 from the Catawba River north to the Wilkes County line and on NC 127 from the Catawba River north to Ritchie Road to allow for eventual highway improvements.
- Include projected traffic counts from proposed developments in addition to existing traffic when reviewing development proposals.
- Limit driveway cuts on major highways and encourage shared access points for both residential and commercial subdivisions and developments.
- Establish that all new driveways connecting to arterials and collector streets must be at least 12 feet wide for the first 20 feet of length with a minimum 3-foot turn radii.
- Establish minimum standards requiring additional connectivity of new neighborhoods where practical. Require stub-outs to future developable properties. Require second entrances to subdivisions over 200 lots.
- Require dedication of right-of-way along frontage of residential and non-residential development to accommodate future road widening.
- When road and highways are resurfaced, add additional pavement to accommodate the safety issues on narrow secondary roads.
- Support completion of State schedule to pave remaining 58 miles of gravel roads in the County.
- Require turn lanes at existing and future schools to move traffic and improve safety.

### **Scenic Byways**

- Explore possible local Scenic Byway designation for the following roads:
  - NC 16 north of Taylorsville to the Wilkes County line, and
  - NC 90 west from NC 127 to the Caldwell County line.

### **Access Management**

- Encourage the County to promote access management techniques to enhance existing roads, extend their life and promote safe vehicle movement.

### **Pedestrian System**

- Support Taylorsville's continued efforts to expand the Town's sidewalk network.
- Encourage sidewalks, or a comparable pedestrian/bicycle path, in new high density housing developments.

- Land development patterns that minimize the use of automobiles should be encouraged. Cooperative public/private efforts should be used to create pedestrian and bicycle linkages within and between developments.

### **Bicycle System**

- Continue to support vigorously a proposed bicycle mapping and signing project with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Division of NCDOT.
- Designate bicycle routes that tie in with existing or planned bicycle routes in surrounding counties.
- When roads and highways are resurfaced, widen the roads to accommodate bicycle traffic.

### **Transit System**

- Continue supporting and publicizing the new regional transit system.
- Enhance transit routes to provide increased service for the elderly.
- Create a transit route from CVCC – Alexander Center to the main CVCC campus in Hickory.
- Encourage the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) to add stops along main roads to increase service.

### **Passenger Rail**

- Encourage transit service to schedule trips to coordinate with the western North Carolina passenger rail service.

# **Economic Development**

## **Regional Trends**

Alexander County has experienced a substantial increase in unemployment in recent years. With the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs and several small businesses that provided support services to the furniture industry, Lenoir has also been significantly affected by this trend. Economic stagnation and instability precludes active land development and robust growth. Many planners and economists envision an economic vitality for the region that transcends the recent downturn, promises a brighter future and is based on a set of realistic goals. A 12-county economic development project called Future Forward developed a series of strategies that articulate these goals:

- Improvement of the education and skills of available workforce.
- A renewed sense of entrepreneurship and innovation among area businesses.
- Development and concurrent protection of both urban and outdoor amenities to promote a high quality of life.
- Advancements in cooperation among local governments and governmental agencies.
- A more diversified economy that places more emphasis on retail, tourism, health care, education, retirement services, and a globally competitive manufacturing sector.

*Source: Future Forward Economic Alliance, 2002*

## **New Educational Opportunities**

Signs already exist that this vision is beginning to take shape. Training and educational opportunities are abundant for people who have lost their manufacturing jobs and are interested in learning new skills to earn a living. Community leaders and County officials are working diligently to attract high-tech industries conducive to success in the new economy.

The Future Forward Economic Alliance established the Engineering Technology Center in Hickory to provide education and training opportunities to better prepare workers for a more diverse workforce and economy. The ownership of the facility has recently been deeded to Appalachian State University. Other educational programs involve innovative partnerships between local community colleges and the UNC system.

All three local community colleges – Catawba Valley Community College with a new classroom building in Taylorsville as well as a main campus on Hickory, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute in Hudson and Boone, and Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton – have collaborated with NC state-supported universities to offer new educational and training opportunities to local residents.

The Hickory Metro Higher Education Center focuses on degree-completion offerings, ranging from education and medical fields to 4-year and Masters programs offered locally by ten colleges and universities. Such ventures allow students to begin course

work at a local community college and complete a four-year degree without leaving the Hickory Metro region.

In 2005 CCC&TI in partnership with Caldwell County Schools established the Early College and Career Center curriculum. The Early College curriculum will allow students to enroll at CCC&TI as high school freshman and within five years graduate from the College with an Associates Degree. In 2006 the Early College was officially established as a four-year program which allows high school students to enter the College during their junior year and after four years receive both a high school diploma and certification in one of four technology related fields (construction technology, information technology, electrical technology and plumbing) from the Community College.

Although this region is currently a difficult transition from an economy based largely on manufacturing to a new, more diversified economy less susceptible to global forces, the area is positioned for future economic success and growth.

## **Alexander County Economic Development Commission**

The Alexander County Economic Development Commission has recently been reorganized as a 501c (3) non-profit organization with a five-member Board of Directors. The Board consists of four representatives from County industries and the County Manager. EDC staff are Alexander County employees and staff and operations are funded mainly by the County.

Successful economic development hinges on the ability to recruit new businesses, retain existing companies and encourage direct investment in the community and other economic development projects, EDC officials note. A major focus of the Alexander EDC is extending water and sewer lines to serve existing and potential manufacturing industries in the County. Alexander EDC describes its special interest in a training program to help young workers understand the positive options offered by employment in the furniture industry. The EDC actively recruits new industries to the Alexander Industrial Park, a 60-acre facility with complete infrastructure on the rail line. The EDC also is working to diversify its manufacturing employers by pursuing green energy projects, plastics-based manufacturers and metal fabrication industries. Its website, [www.alexanderedc.org](http://www.alexanderedc.org), lists available properties in the County.

## **Infrastructure Improvements**

Existing water and sewer lines are shown in detail on Map 6, "*Alexander County Economic Development.*" Alexander County's public water sources are provided by the City of Hickory in the southwest area of the County and by the City of Newton via Energy United Water Corporation in Hiddenite and eastern portions of the County. Alexander County government has entered into a long-term agreement with the City of Hickory to provide for the county's water needs for the future. A 20-year agreement provides the County with a guaranteed source of approximately 2.5 million gallons of water daily. Hickory's water plant has a production capacity of 32 million gallons per day.

Water lines extend along the County's major roads, including NC Highway 127, NC Highway 16 south to the Catawba County line, into the Town of Taylorsville, and east along the industrial corridor of NC 90 and US 64 to the Iredell County line. Water has also been extended north on NC 16 to the Sugarloaf community. Public water is present throughout the Bethlehem area and along Rink Dam Road. Many areas in the southern half of the County, below US Highway 64 and NC Highway 90, are served by water lines, mostly 4-inch through 8-inch lines. Water lines also extend up Cheatham Ford Road to Sulphur Springs Road in the northeast quadrant of Alexander. Few water lines have been extended into the northwest area of the County.

A new water line will soon be under construction in the Vashti area, largely unserved by any community water system. The project will extend 6-inch and 8-inch water lines from the existing Energy United line out Sulphur Springs Road. This area of the County has historically experienced water shortages, especially so during the current drought, and inadequate water pressure. The project will loop dead-end water lines and boost water pressure to an acceptable level by connecting to the high pressure zone of Taylorsville's water system.

The Town of Taylorsville operates a wastewater treatment facility which currently has a permitted capacity of 800,000 gallons per day. Plans have been proposed to expand the facility to more than 1,000,000 gallons per day. Outside of service to the Town limits, public sewer service extends south along NC 16 to County Home Road and the Alexander Correctional Institution and west along NC 90 and US 64 to Ellendale Elementary School. Further sewer service has been extended east along the NC 90 corridor to the Broyhill Plan and the Mitchell Gold/Bob Williams Plant along Millersville Road. Alexander County is currently developing a project to extend sewer service further along the corridor to the Craftmaster facility east of Hiddenite. The City of Hickory is currently provides sewer service in portions of the Bethlehem community along NC 127 north to Clayton Marcus and Bethlehem Elementary School, east along Rink Dam Road to Heritage Farm Road, and to portions of the Olivers Landing development.

Growth and economic development are often dependent on water and sewer availability. Siting of commercial and industrial facilities is difficult if not impossible without adequate infrastructure. Though much of the denser populated areas of the County have water service, many of those lines may have limited capacity for growth and adequate fire protection. General plans for future extensions of water and sewer lines, while not precisely determined at this time, suggest at a minimum a need for additional sewer to serve commercial and industrial uses along the NC 127 and NC 90 corridors. Consideration should be given to the long term sewer capacity and conveyance needs of these areas. Further, the nature and type of additional residential development in Bethlehem will be dependent on extending sewer lines into developing areas.

Natural Gas services in Alexander County are provided by PSNC Energy for eastern Alexander County and Taylorsville, and Piedmont Natural Gas in the Bethlehem community.



## **Goal Statements: Economic Development**

- Direct new industrial development to areas with appropriate infrastructure.
- Develop policies for extending utilities to potential industrial and commercial sites, recognizing that such extensions will also directly affect residential development.
- Develop policies to encourage more aesthetically-pleasing commercial, industrial and mixed-use developments.
- Assist workforce officials, schools and the community college to focus on ways to improve the skill sets of existing workers for new types of manufacturing or service sector jobs.

## **Recommendations: Economic Development**

### **Commercial Land Use**

- Establish an Office and Institution zoning district separate from the current Highway Business and Neighborhood Business Zoning Districts. The Office and Institution use allows services to the public that typically involve less traffic and fewer workers, such as legal or health care services, offices, and publicly-owned facilities such as school administrative offices or parks.
- Pursue the concept of “commercial nodes” which propose appropriate locations for future commercial development (see *Future Land Use Map*). Current requirements for Highway Business, Neighborhood Business or Office and Institution zoning districts would apply to commercial nodes.
- Encourage more attractive commercial buildings on major thoroughfares by proposing brick or masonry fronts and designs which match the standards of buildings in the community.
- Require landscaping along road frontage and within parking areas of commercial uses. Consider planting trees to soften building impacts and provide shade in parking areas.
- Increase existing buffer requirements to screen commercial buildings from adjacent residential uses. All loading, storage and maintenance areas should also be screened from adjacent residential areas.

### **Industrial Land Use**

- Additional sites for industrial use, publically financed and managed by local governments, should be developed in areas with adequate water, sewer and transportation (see *Future Land Use Map*).

- Require landscaping along road frontage and within parking areas of industrial uses. Consider planting trees to soften building impacts and provide shade in parking areas.
- Increase existing buffer requirements to screen industrial buildings from adjacent residential uses. All loading, storage and maintenance areas should also be screened from adjacent residential areas.
- Incentives should be pursued to redevelop existing, vacant industrial sites. Examine grant opportunities, such as federal funding for brownfield mitigation, to assist these efforts.

### **Transportation**

- Require Traffic Impact Studies for residential or commercial developments generating 4,000 vehicle trips per day or more. Schools and government facilities should be included.
- Limit driveway cuts on major highways and encourage shared access points for both residential and commercial subdivisions and developments.
- Require dedication of right-of-way along frontage of residential and non-residential development to accommodate future road widening.
- When road and highways are resurfaced, add additional pavement to accommodate the safety issues on narrow secondary roads.
- Encourage the County to promote access management techniques to enhance existing roads, extend their life and promote safe vehicle movement.

### **Community Facilities**

- Support development of an “urgent care” facility in the County, open seven days a week, 24 hours.

## Environment, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation

### **Environment: Air Quality**

Two key environmental issues affect Alexander County, as well as the other counties in the Hickory Metro region: the quality of our air and our water. Air quality, especially the presence of ozone, is important to Alexander and neighboring counties because of the health implications of high ozone levels. Ozone can irritate the respiratory system, reduce lung function, aggravate asthma and inflame and damage the lining of the lungs. It may also weaken the immune system against disease. Children, the elderly, adults who are active outdoors and people with respiratory disease are the most at risk from high levels of ozone.

Alexander County has one of two regional ozone monitors, located behind the National Guard Armory off NC 16, just north of Taylorsville. EPA declares an area “nonattainment” for ozone if the monitor has a three-year average of more 0.084 parts per million. Table 10 shows that air quality exceeded the three-year standard from 1999 through 2003. Since the Hickory Metro is in an Early Action Compact (EAC) area, however, penalties associated with nonattainment status for ozone are suspended as long as the area works toward having monitors below the 0.084 parts per million federal standards by the end of 2007. Both Alexander County and Taylorsville are members of the Early Action Compact (EAC). EAC Policies adopted by Alexander County and Taylorsville include vehicle inspection and maintenance programs, city and county energy plans, and creating air awareness programs.

<b>Table 10. Air Quality at Taylorsville Monitor, 3-year Average 1999 -- 2006</b>	
<b>Three-Year Average</b>	<b>Taylorsville Monitor, Parts Per Million</b>
1999 to 2001	0.087
2000 to 2002	0.091
2001 to 2003	0.088
2002 to 2004	0.082
2003 to 2005	0.077
2004 to 2006	0.076

Source EPA and NCDAQ, 2007.

Table 10 clearly shows the success the EAC has had. The Taylorsville monitor has been below the current standard since 2003. The Early Action Compact and the favorable weather patterns have enabled the region to be declared “in attainment” by EPA early in 2008. It is important to note, however, that EPA has recently lowered the ozone standard to 0.075 parts per million. Now that the

standard has been lowered, Alexander County once again is likely to be in nonattainment status for ozone.

## **Environment: Water Quality and Quantity**

The drought experienced by the Southeast in 2007 has sharply brought home the impact that lower water levels in the region's lakes and streams have on everyday life. These effects are obvious not only in lower lake levels and diminished recreational opportunities for boating, swimming and fishing, but sharp limits on water for washing cars and watering lawns and shrubs. The drought has also lent additional urgency to the question of NC allowing water to be transferred from one river basin to another, most recently the decision to allow Concord and Kannapolis the option of transferring up to 11 million gallons a day from the Catawba River basin. Two suits challenging that decision have been brought by the State of South Carolina and the "Protect the Catawba Coalition" against the NC Environmental Management Commission.

In addition to these issues of the quantity of the region's water supply, other concerns are related to the quality of water for drinking, recreation and industrial uses. Lake Rhodhiss, the water supply for Lenoir, Valdese and Granite Falls, has been declared "impaired" by the state, chiefly because of sediment from agriculture, forestry and residential growth. Water experts suspect that Lake Hickory may also receive that same classification in the coming years.

Modifications to local ordinances regulating stormwater may help limit increases in sediment and thus alleviate the water quality of the lakes of the upper Catawba River. Federal regulations now require many municipalities of moderate size (those with populations between 1,000 and 25,000) are approving ordinances to reduce the amount of stormwater flowing into the lakes by a variety of means including stormwater retention ponds, less curbing, or paving which permits water to soak into the ground, limiting runoff. Alexander County is currently not covered by these federal stormwater regulations.

Alexander County is located in the Catawba River and the South Yadkin River basins and the amount of land covered by buildings, pavement and gravel surfaces is regulated by a County Watershed Ordinance which has been required by NC since 1993 (See Map 7, "*Alexander County Historic Sites, Cultural Sites, Parks & Environmental Areas.*") Two current water providers draw water from the Catawba River and require controls on development in Alexander County within 5 miles of those water intakes on Lake Hickory and Lookout Shoals Lake. Stricter regulations exist on development within one-half mile of the water intakes. Watershed regulations for the discontinued water intake on the South Yadkin River remain in effect until the state allows the County to remove those restrictions.

A final water concern is the issue of floodplain and its impact on development in Alexander County. Floodplain areas in the County are located primarily along the Catawba River, Middle Little River, the Lower Little River, the South Yadkin River and Elk Shoals Creek. New floodplain maps have been developed by the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), which depict the boundaries of those areas. The new floodplain maps became effective in December 2007. These revised floodplain maps are more accurate than the 1978 maps because new technology allows more precise mapping of the 100-year flood plain where development is limited by the chance of substantial flooding.

## **Natural Resources**

Outstanding among the natural resources of Alexander County are the Catawba River and the higher elevations of the Brushy Mountains at the County's northern border with Wilkes County. Together with its rivers, streams and hills like Rocky Face, Barretts Mountain and Asbury Mountain, these natural features define the County's unique physical assets. They are distinctive attributes of the County's scenic beauty that future generations must value and preserve.

The state of North Carolina, under its Natural Heritage Program, describes "outstanding elements of the natural diversity of our state." This program inventories rare species and natural communities to educate the public and help establish priorities for protection of these resources. Alexander, unfortunately, is one of 14 counties with a Natural Heritage Inventory yet to be completed.

Two mountains in the County, however, have been set aside as having significant natural value. Joe and Little Joe Mountain in the Brushy Mountains just east of NC Highway 16 North, are owned by the Nature Conservancy of North Carolina as a "dedicated nature preserve." Rocky Face Mountain in the Vashti area is a "registered Natural Heritage Area," owned by the Felburn Foundation and managed by Carolina Land and Lakes Resource Conservation and Development, a program of the US Department of Agriculture. Located in Newton, Carolina Land and Lakes allows limited public access to the 300-acres of Rocky Face it manages.

A preliminary listing by the Natural Heritage Program describes two plants ("Dwarf-flowered Heartleaf" and "Torrey's Mountain-mint") and three animals ("Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat," the bog turtle and the bald eagle) as "threatened" or "significantly rare" in the County.

## **Regional Recreation and its Economic Impacts**

A recently completed regional study describes the economic impact of existing and future recreational activities across the four-county area. The *Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan*, completed in December 2006 by consultants

under the direction of the Unifour Recreation and Open Space Task Force, proposes that recreational tourism may provide an economic benefit to help offset the decline in the area's traditional manufacturing industries. The region's cultural and historic resources, and its abundant natural resources of mountains and lakes, offer excellent opportunities to capitalize on persons interested in outdoor activities like bird watching, canoeing, rafting, non-whitewater kayaking, climbing, hiking and trail running.

This study proposes two future projects in Alexander County, the Taylorsville Greenway (14 miles, from Town Park past Matheson Park along Stirewalt Creek to the Lower Little River "Blueway") and the Lower Little River Paddle Trail or "Blueway" (13 miles, beginning at Jaycee Park north of Taylorsville and follows the Lower Little River to the Catawba River east of NC 16). See Map 7, *"Historic Sites, Cultural Sites, Parks & Environmental Areas."*

## **County Parks & Recreation Department**

Alexander County owns and operates four County parks – Bethlehem Park, Dusty Ridge Park, East Alexander Park and Jaycee Park. Table 11 below describes basic information about these County-owned facilities. Unlike many counties in western North Carolina, Alexander offers an extensive recreation program open to all County residents. Sports activities, such as tackle/flag football, soccer, basketball, baseball, softball and T-ball, wrestling and cheerleading are important components of the County recreation programs. The gymnasium at the old Wittenburg Elementary School on NC Highway 16 is also open to the public, during weekdays from 8:30 – 4:30, for general recreation activities.

The recreation programs offered by the County Recreation department are assisted by a Citizen Advisory Board appointed by the Alexander County Commissioners. Its eight members are complimented by one member of the Alexander County Board of Commissioners, the County Manager, the Recreation Director and the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners.

In addition to the County parks mentioned here, all Alexander County elementary and middle schools facilities are typically used for recreation programs. Recreation programs are also offered at private community parks, such as at Salem Park, the Ellendale Ruritan Park, Gwaltney Park and Town Park in Taylorsville. (These community centers are located on Map 7, *"Alexander County Historic Sites, Cultural Sites, Parks & Environmental Areas."*) The Town of Taylorsville does not offer organized recreational programming.

<b>Table 11. Alexander County Parks and Recreation Department</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Recreation Facilities &amp; Programs</b>
<b>Bethlehem Park</b>	13 acres	Baseball/softball fields (lighted) (2)
	Picnic shelter	Soccer field (lighted) (1)
	Restrooms	Tennis courts (4)
<b>Dusty Ridge Park</b>	70 acres	
	Nature trail	
	Playground equipment	
	3 picnic shelters	
	Concession stand	
	Restrooms	Baseball/softball fields (lighted) (3)
<b>East Alexander Park</b>	25 acres	
	Picnic shelter	
	Walking trail	
	Playground equipment	
	Concession stand	Baseball/softball fields (lighted) (3)
	Restrooms	Soccer/football fields (lighted) (2)
<b>Jaycee Park</b>	17 acres	Baseball/softball field (lighted) (1)
	Playground equipment	Tennis court
	Restrooms	Basketball courts (2)

Source: Alexander County Parks & Recreation Department, 2007.

### **Goal Statements: Environment, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation**

- An essential natural resource that must be protected is the Catawba River, the main source of water for human consumption, industrial use and recreation.
- Preserve open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas in the County.
- Encourage cluster residential development to preserve open space, wildlife habitats and the rural beauty of the County.
- Ensure that adequate recreational opportunities, both active and passive, are provided for all segments of the population.
- Encourage innovative ideas to create new recreational opportunities.

- Continue to use and enhance school facilities for comprehensive community and recreation activities.
- Encourage the development of additional trails and greenways for the health and well-being of citizens.
- Preserve ample open space for future generations.

## **Recommendations: Environment, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation**

### **Environment**

- Continue educating the public about the importance of preserving water resources.
- Work to make the public more aware of the ways in which stormwater runoff, pollution and sediment impact their lives. All County residents need to understand how these issues impair the region's water quality, so they can help reduce these occurrences and improve water quality.
- Encourage industries and the general public to continue supporting the goals of the Early Action Compact for improved air quality across the region.
- To preserve views and open space in the County and prevent the spread of wildfires, residential development on parcels above 1,500 feet in elevation should be managed by limitations such as:
  - Structures should be limited to 35 feet in height above the existing ground level.
  - Structures must have a 30-foot cleared space or radius around them to prevent damage or destruction by wildfire.
  - Limit the area to be disturbed for development.
  - Structures on such sites should be located to minimize visual impact and preserve trees.
  - Roof and building colors should be limited to earth tones (browns, grays, greens).
  - Lighting should not project into the sky.
- To preserve views and steep slopes in the County, prevent erosion and dangerous landslides, development on slopes greater than 30% should be managed by limitations such as:
  - Structures should be limited to 35 feet in height above the existing ground level.



- Limit the area of disturbance for development sites.
- Allow maximum density of 1 home per 5 acres. Waterfront properties are excluded from the density restrictions.
- Require large percentages open space for subdivisions.
- Buildings should be oriented along natural topography.
- Construction should be stepped into the topography.
- Discourage large areas of cut and fill.
- Roads and drives should follow the natural contours when possible.

## **Natural Resources**

- Educate the public about Alexander County’s natural resources and their stewardship for future generations.
- Continue to publicize the existing farmland preservation designation as a valuable way of preserving the County’s agricultural legacy and its rural attractiveness.
- Continue working to increase public access to the Catawba River, both on Lake Hickory and east of Oxford Dam.
- Support the recommendations of the *Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan* for a canoe trail or “blueway,” as well as a “greenway” or walking/biking trail, along the Lower Little River from north of Taylorsville to the Catawba River.

## **Parks and Recreation**

- Establish a Future Park Planning Committee to study options for expanding the County’s park system by providing active and passive recreational opportunities for all ages. Examples of more diverse recreational options for consideration by the Future Park Planning Committee could include:
  - Exploring ways to work with Carolina Land and Lakes Resource Conservation & Development to share responsibility for Rocky Face, one of the County’s unique resources.
  - Considering the feasibility of adding public lands on the Catawba River east of the Oxford Dam and opposite Riverbend Park in Catawba County.
  - Examining options for public park land in the County’s northwestern quadrant.
  - Collaborate with the Town of Taylorsville to support the recommendation of the *Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan* for a “greenway” from Matheson Park in Taylorsville along Stirewalt Creek to the Lower Little River “blueway.”

- Allocate additional resources to existing parks for improving
  - parking,
  - sidewalks/walking trails,
  - restrooms, concession areas,
  - playground equipment,
  - mowing equipment,
  - lighting and additional soccer/football fields.
- Consider establishing a “Capital Improvements Budget” to plan for these and other park and recreation improvements over several budget years.
- Finalize a partnership to provide a publicly-accessible indoor swimming pool.

## **Historic and Cultural Resources**

Alexander County has a variety of historic and cultural assets, described in this section of the *Plan*. Map 7: “*Alexander County Historic Sites, Cultural Sites, Parks & Environmental Areas*” shows those sites in the County.

Experts in economic development and tourism are finding that historic sites and cultural events are attractive locations and activities for tourists. Many people enjoy visiting an area, viewing the sites, staying overnight, browsing festivals and possibly purchasing mementos to remind them of the experience and the sites when they return home. The sites and cultural events of Alexander County represent an untapped opportunity for attracting tourists to the County.

### **Historical Resources**

The Lucas Mansion, located in Hiddenite, is a beautifully restored Victorian home. James Paul Lucas purchased the home as a resort residence. The house was originally two stories, but the second story was raised to become a third story and a new second story was built between the original stories. The mansion is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and now serves as the home of the Hiddenite Center, a folk life and cultural arts education center and museum. Visitors may view the first floor which is furnished as in the days of Mr. Lucas, the second floor with various gallery displays, and the third floor with a unique collection of dolls spanning more than one-hundred years.

An Historic Conservation Committee was appointed in January of 2008 by the County Commissioners. This committee’s goals include fundraising, applying for grants to restore historic structures, research, preservation and exhibition of the County’s historical assets.

Built in 1790 by Richard Cook, Linney’s Mill is located at the north east corner of the County on Rocky Creek. Mr. Cook’s widow married Randolph Mayberry, and for many years the mill has been known as Mayberry Mill. In 1937 W. T. Linney built a dam and waterwheel on the Creek. Today, the mill is fully operational and capable of producing approximately 600 pounds of corn meal per hour.

The Alexander Railroad (the “June Bug” Line) traverses 18 miles connecting Taylorsville to Statesville. The railroad’s name is thought to be derived from a speech made by an Alexander County legislator who spoke promoting the charter for the railroad. “Gentleman, there’s a mine in Hiddenite with a mineral so precious that a June bug could fly away with enough on its wings to pay for the whole railroad,” he quipped. The rail line was constructed around 1887. The Alexander Rail Company, based at the railroad’s old depot in Taylorsville, began in 1946 when the corporation bought the line at scrap value. The company has four active locomotives which haul over 200,000 tons of products per year.

A large outcropping of granite known as Rocky Face is located north east of Taylorsville. The mountain, once the site of a granite quarry, is estimated to contain 200 million tons of stone above the ground. The mountain is registered as a Natural Heritage Area. The land, owned by the Felburn Foundation, is managed by Carolina Land and Lakes Resource Conservation and Development and is open to hikers.

Oxford Dam, located on the Catawba River at NC Highway 16, was constructed in 1928 by Southern Power Company. It was designed to create Lake Hickory, one of the largest lakes in the south. Electricity is produced when water in the lake flows through turbines which power electrical generators. The hydro-electrical power plant is now operated by Duke Energy.

The community of Hiddenite is named for the unique green mineral, first discovered in 1879 by W. E. Hidden. The area, home to several emerald mines, contains some of the largest emeralds ever found in North America. In 2003, James Hill unearthed a 1,861.9 carat emerald crystal. The Hiddenite Mines have recently been named one of the top 40 historic mining districts in the US. Visitors can spend time prospecting for hiddenite, emeralds and other gems by digging or sluicing.

The Old Jail, constructed in 1913, is located in downtown Taylorsville. It is one of the oldest buildings in the County and one of North Carolina's oldest jails still standing. Today it houses a museum dedicated to the lives of the jailers and their families and serves as the home of the Alexander County Ancestry Association's research library.

## **Cultural Resources**

The most prominent cultural resource in Alexander County is the Hiddenite Center, located in the Lucas Mansion. Founded in 1981 by Eileen L. Sharpe and Ruel Y. Sharpe, the Center is dedicated to providing education on folk life and cultural arts. The Center operates an educational complex and offers various arts and dance classes and organizes cultural events and performances, held at Alexander Central High School's auditorium.

The Hiddenite Celebration, usually in the month of September, is held in the community of Hiddenite and the Taylorsville Apple Festival occurs in the month of October. These highly anticipated annual festivals have numerous food and craft vendors, folk art tents, performances by dancers and musicians, and other activities. The community of Vashti celebrates the fourth of July with a parade, and the Bethlehem Star is lit at an annual Christmas event in the Bethlehem community.

## **Goal Statements: Historic and Cultural Resources**

- Preserve cultural and historic properties of local, regional and national significance.
- Build on the public's interest in historic and cultural travel to promote opportunities for tours and trips to these sites in Alexander County.

## **Recommendations: Historic and Cultural Resources**

- Work with the Chamber of Commerce and EDC to market the County's historic and cultural features to encourage tourism.
- Research ways to partner with the Greater Hickory Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau to increase tourism opportunities in Alexander County.
- Establish a County History Museum.
- Support the recently-established Historic Preservation Committee and its mission to help preserve historic properties in the County. Assist this new Committee in compiling an inventory of locations and structures of historical significance.
- Continue to publicize the existing cultural events and programs, such as those sponsored by the Hiddenite Center and local festivals.
- Develop additional cultural events.

## **Appendix A: Citizen Comments from Community Meetings**

### **Alexander County Community Meeting (Jan 9, 16, 18, 2007)**

Specific issues that residents voted on are listed below. The number beside each issue indicates the number of votes it received. If an issue does not have a number beside it, the issue was listed for voting but received no votes.

#### **What do you like about Alexander County?**

##### **Location (43)**

Rural setting (21)  
Natural landscape – beauty (11)  
Close to Mountains, Beach, Charlotte, Hickory, Winston-Salem, Statesville (8)  
Minerals (3)  
Farms  
Retirement location

##### **Community (58)**

Safety – low crime (8)  
Tax rate (8)  
Friendly people (7)  
School system (7)  
Great place to raise and support a family (6)  
Peaceful (6)  
Diversity is growing (4)  
Church/community cooperation (4)  
Potential – organized (3)  
Good work ethic (2)  
Cleanliness (2)  
Quality of life (1)  
Working farms  
Good work environment  
Improvement of industrial park  
Dry County  
Apple orchards  
Winery  
Golf course

##### **Residential (6)**

Volunteers – willingness to help neighbors (4)  
Well kept communities – tight knit (2)

##### **Transportation (3)**

Little congestion (3)  
Road conditions

**Governmental & Civic Facilities/Activities (8)**

Public services – Police, Fire & Rescue (2)  
Good facilities – YMCA in works (2)  
Civic Clubs (2)  
ACHS Auditorium (2)  
New library

**What concerns do you have for Alexander County?**

**Economic Development (14)**

Over-development (5)  
Economic development (3)  
Equal development throughout the county (2)  
Balance growth while maintain the rural setting (2)  
Liquor by the drink (2)  
More active development of recreation for tourism

**Jobs (14)**

Lack of jobs (11)  
Diversity in jobs for county – educated & skilled (3)  
Lack of trade education

**Transportation (15)**

Transportation (6)  
Road improvements – signs, paint, narrowness (5)  
Vehicle speed – Hiddenite school through town (4)  
Traffic congestion  
NC 127 bridge over Catawba River

**Environment (16)**

Catawba IBT (6)  
Water quality issues (5)  
Urban interface – causing wildfires (3)  
Protecting our environment & water sources (2)  
Taking care of wetlands  
Protection of Lake Hickory

**Government Infrastructure (29)**

Water & Sewer (15)  
Increase of property tax (8)  
Annexation by Hickory – Bethlehem (3)  
Downtown revitalization – power/utility pole removal (1)  
Tax rate for farms (1)  
Lack of tax base options other than property tax (1)  
Lack of public utilities  
Politics in way of progress  
Increase in crime

### **County Facilities (24)**

Lack of Hospital (11)  
Lack of outdoor recreation facilities (4)  
Jail system outdated and overcrowded (2)  
What is county's plan for creation (2)  
Need of more school construction – capacity (2)  
Hiddenite schools expanded (1)  
Cost of operating County with growth (1)  
After 6pm, no health care in county (1)  
Unfunded mandates  
Medicaid cost burdens – county sales tax  
Balanced budget  
Unfair spending on schools  
Sherriff not in Bethlehem  
Alexander County needs own identity, not follow after Catawba County  
Lack in educating public in county needs for funding & growth

### **Land Use/Zoning (17)**

Residential lots too small (4)  
Residential development of farmland (4)  
Uncontrolled growth (3)  
Number of abandoned homes & buildings (2)  
Lack of “ridge laws” (2)  
Don't want minimum lot size (1)  
Protecting agricultural needs (1)  
Mobile home lot size

### **Commercial (21)**

Lack of restaurants (8)  
Loss of retail (7)  
Hotels/Motels/Tourism (4)  
Big box retail harming small businesses (1)  
Lack of anchor businesses downtown (1)  
Lack of good grocery store

### **Other (28)**

Lack of variety of leisure/recreation activities – putt putt, movies, bowling, YMCA (14)  
Advocates for elderly – transportation, housing (4)  
Control of illegal aliens within county (3)  
Substance abuse (drugs) education & control – aggressive prosecution (2)  
Fear of change (2)  
Leash law enforcement (1)  
Open burning  
Poverty in the county  
Few internet access  
Limited cable & satellite options



## What is your future vision for Alexander County?

### **Economic Development (23)**

More jobs (10)  
Downtown Taylorsville revitalization (6)  
Liquor by the drink/beer county wide (5)  
Industrial diversification (2)  
Defining what Alexander County “Is” “offers” “protects”  
Promote local spending  
Clean Operating industry  
Tourism study

### **Expanded County Facilities/Services (54)**

Hospital (14)  
More recreation for youth-YMCA (11)  
More parks throughout county – State Park (9)  
Better schools & buildings – capacity (5)  
Minimum housing code (5)  
County water system (3)  
Regional prison hospital (2)  
Second high school (2)  
County-wide DSL for internet access (2)  
Develop pay impact fees (1)  
More free trash days at land fill – “clean up day”  
More elementary schools  
Nicer restaurants  
Bigger jail

### **Transportation (29)**

Expand roads in Bethlehem-Hwy 127, 16, 64 (28)  
More pedestrian facilities (1)  
Active airport  
Stop light at Bethlehem Elementary

### **Growth Management (23)**

Keep rural nature with controlled steady growth (8)  
Control growth – don’t lose farms (6)  
Control development (4)  
Tighter zoning – bigger lots, junk, chicken farming (3)  
Gated communities (2)  
Incentives for preserving farm lands & forests  
Restriction on “ridge line” development  
Let growth happen where the market dictates  
Preservation of the small town atmosphere

### **Leadership/Public Involvement (2)**

More blue collar residents involved in politics (1)  
Local government cooperation based on good ideas not politics (1)

Not repeating mistakes of other counties  
Revise terms of office for county commissioners – 2 years vote  
County future left in the “hands” of registered voters

**Commercial and other Amenities (19)**

More retail, restaurants, and entertainment (8)  
Motel/overnight facility (5)  
Incentives for local retail (4)  
More commercial development (2)

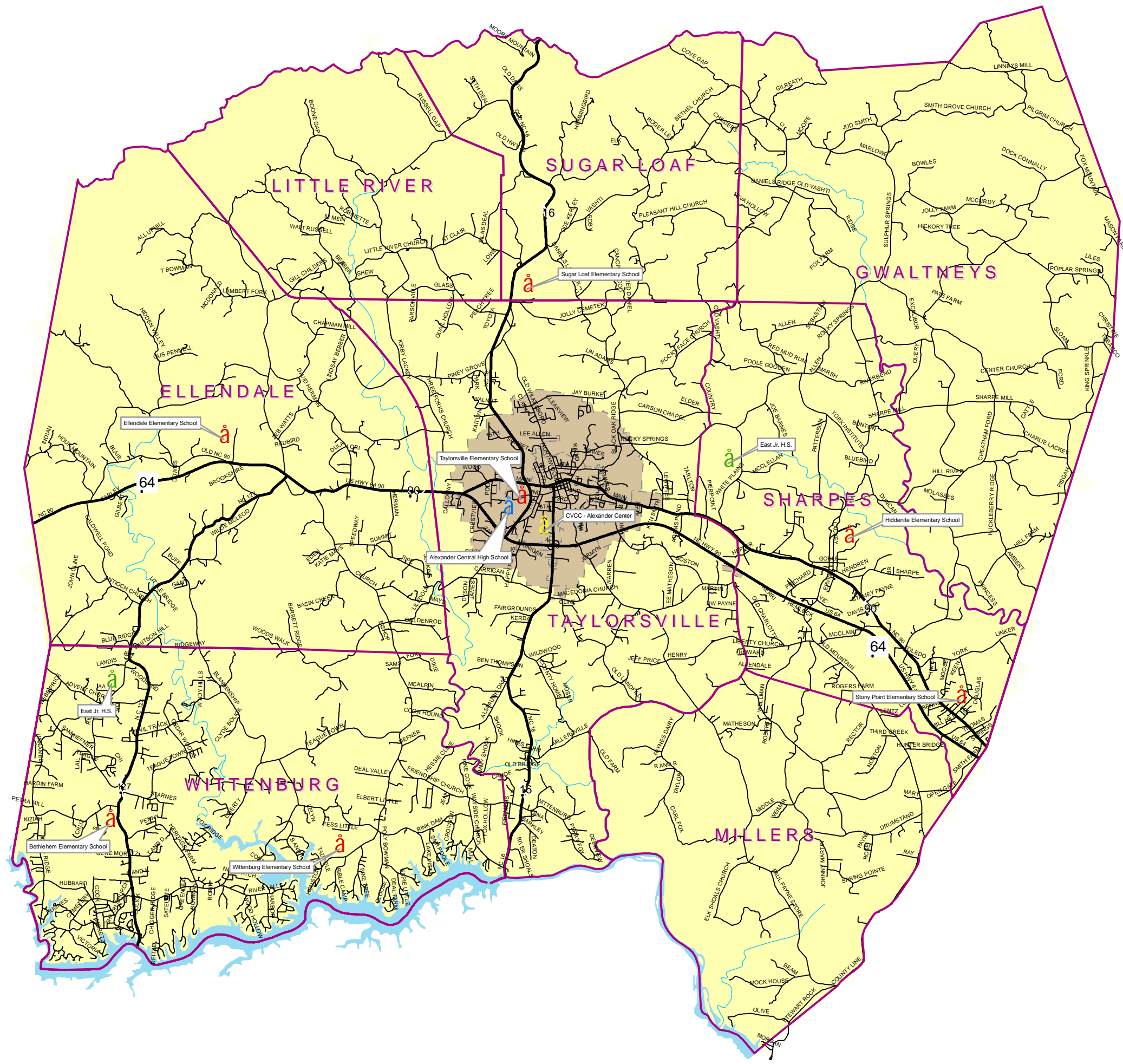
**Other (7)**

Incorporation of Bethlehem (3)  
Develop 20 year plan (2)  
“Grow-em up, educate, and keep-em” (2)  
University  
New Episcopal Parrish

**Appendix B:**  
**Dates/Topics of Alexander County**  
**Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Meetings**

10/24/2006	Introduction to Planning Process, Demographics
11/16/2006	County, Regional Planning Regulations and Issues
12/14/2006	Planning for January Community Meetings
01/09/2007	Bethlehem Community Meeting
01/16/2007	Hiddenite Community Meeting
01/18/2007	Taylorsville Area Community Meeting
02/14/2007	Transportation
03/15/2007	Transportation
04/19/2007	Existing Land Use
05/17/2007	Existing Land Use
06/21/2007	Existing Land Use
07/19/2007	Future Land Use
08/16/2007	Future Land Use
09/20/2007	Land Use Recommendations
10/18/2007	Finalize Land Use Recommendations
11/15/2007	Environment, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
12/13/2007	Historic and Cultural Resources
01/24/2008	Committee Review of Plan Recommendations
02/21/2008	Community Review of Plan Recommendations
03/20/2008	Final Revisions to Plan; Committee Vote on Plan

03/31/2008	Committee Work Session with Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioners
04/03/2008	Formal Presentation, Public Hearing and Decision by Planning and Zoning Commission
04/21/2008	Formal Presentation, Public Hearing and Decision by Board of County Commissioners




**MAP 1.**  
**Alexander County**

**Legend**

-  Townships
-  Taylorsville Town Limits and Planning Area
-  Elementary Schools
-  High School
-  Jr. High Schools
-  Community College









(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data)

 1:115,000

# MAP 2. Alexander County Current Land Use

## Legend

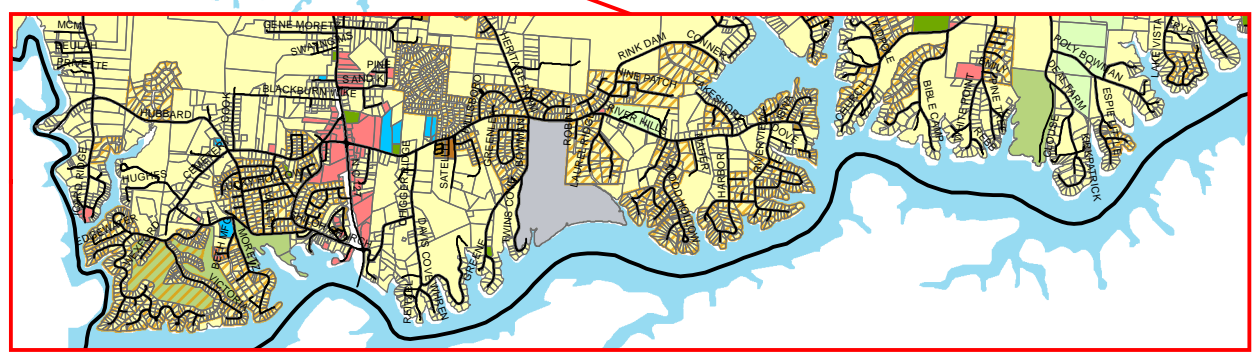
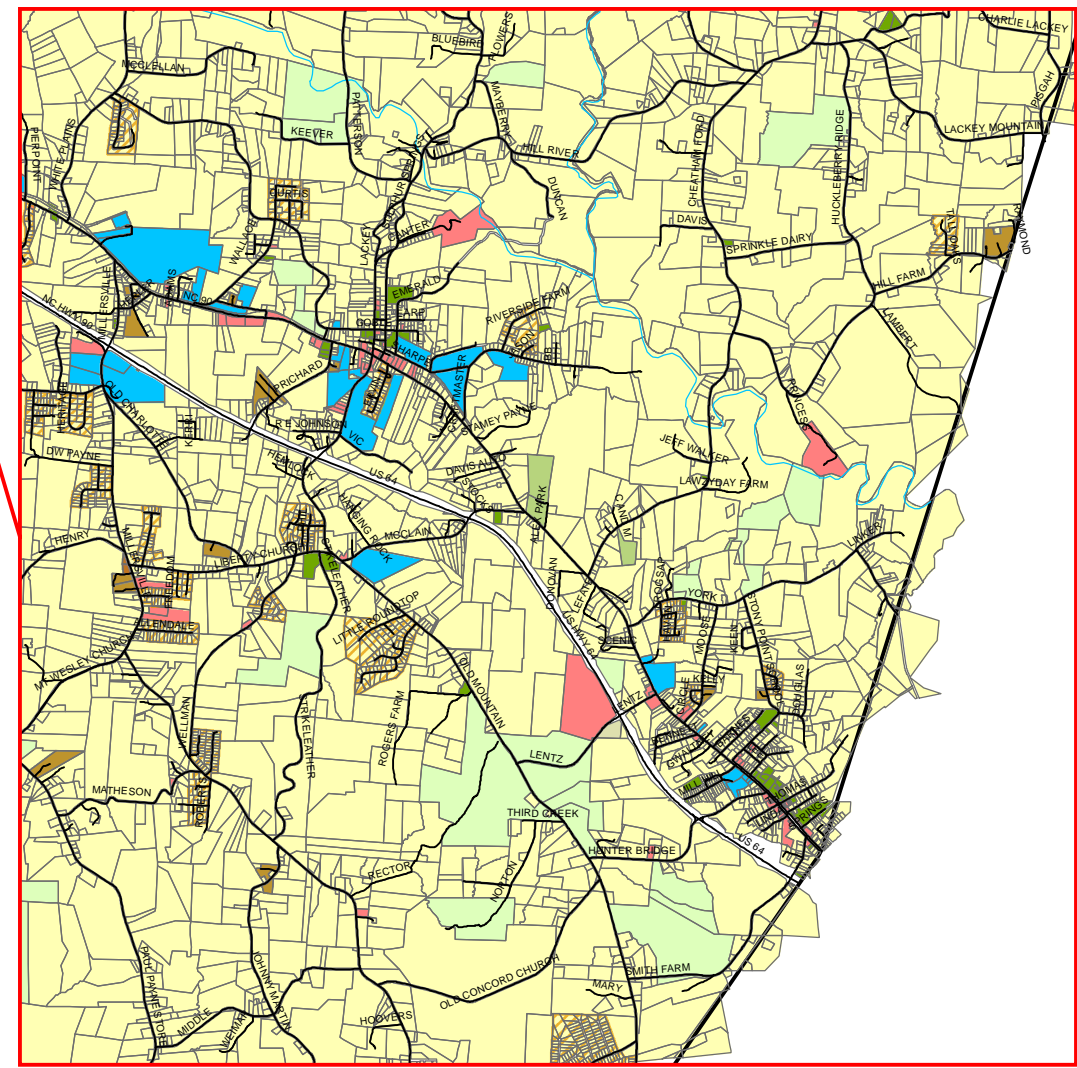
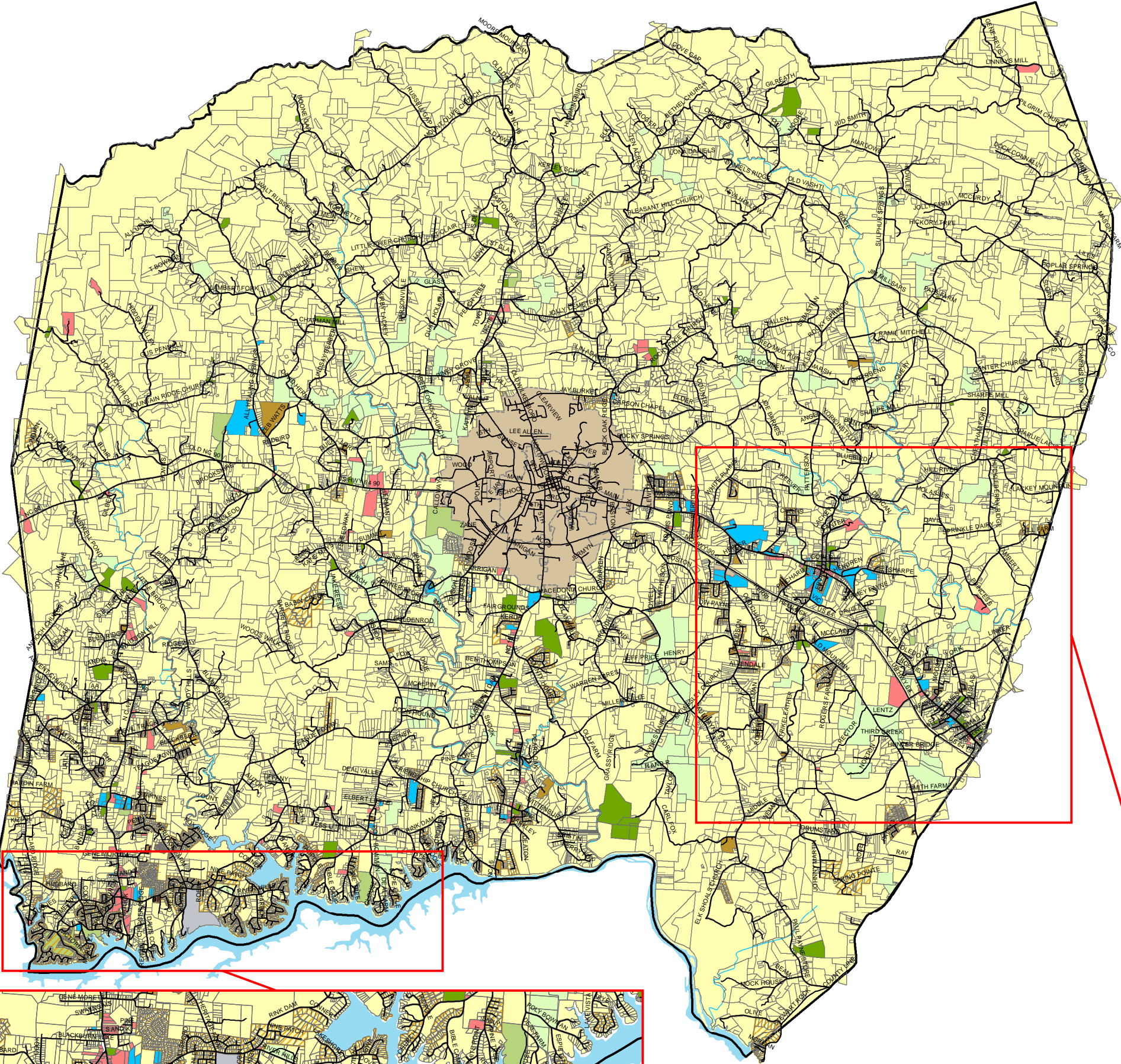
- Current Land Use
-  Subdivisions
  -  Manufactured Home Parks
  -  Planned Unit Developments
  -  Farmland Preservation
  -  Commercial
  -  Exempt
  -  Industrial
  -  Parks and Open Space
  -  Residential
-  Taylorsville Town Limits and Planning Area



(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data.)

**+** 1:125,000

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Produced on 4/4/2008



# MAP 3. Alexander County Zoning

**Legend**  
Alexander County Zoning

- Highway Commercial (H-C)
- Heavy Industrial (H-I)
- Light Industrial (L-I)
- Neighborhood Business (N-B)
- Residential (R-20)
- Residential Single Family (R-SF)
- Residential-Agricultural (RA-20)

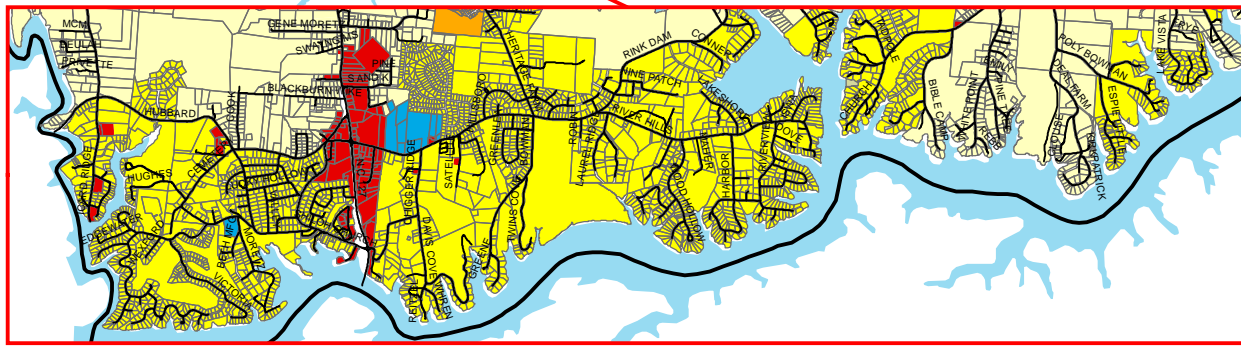
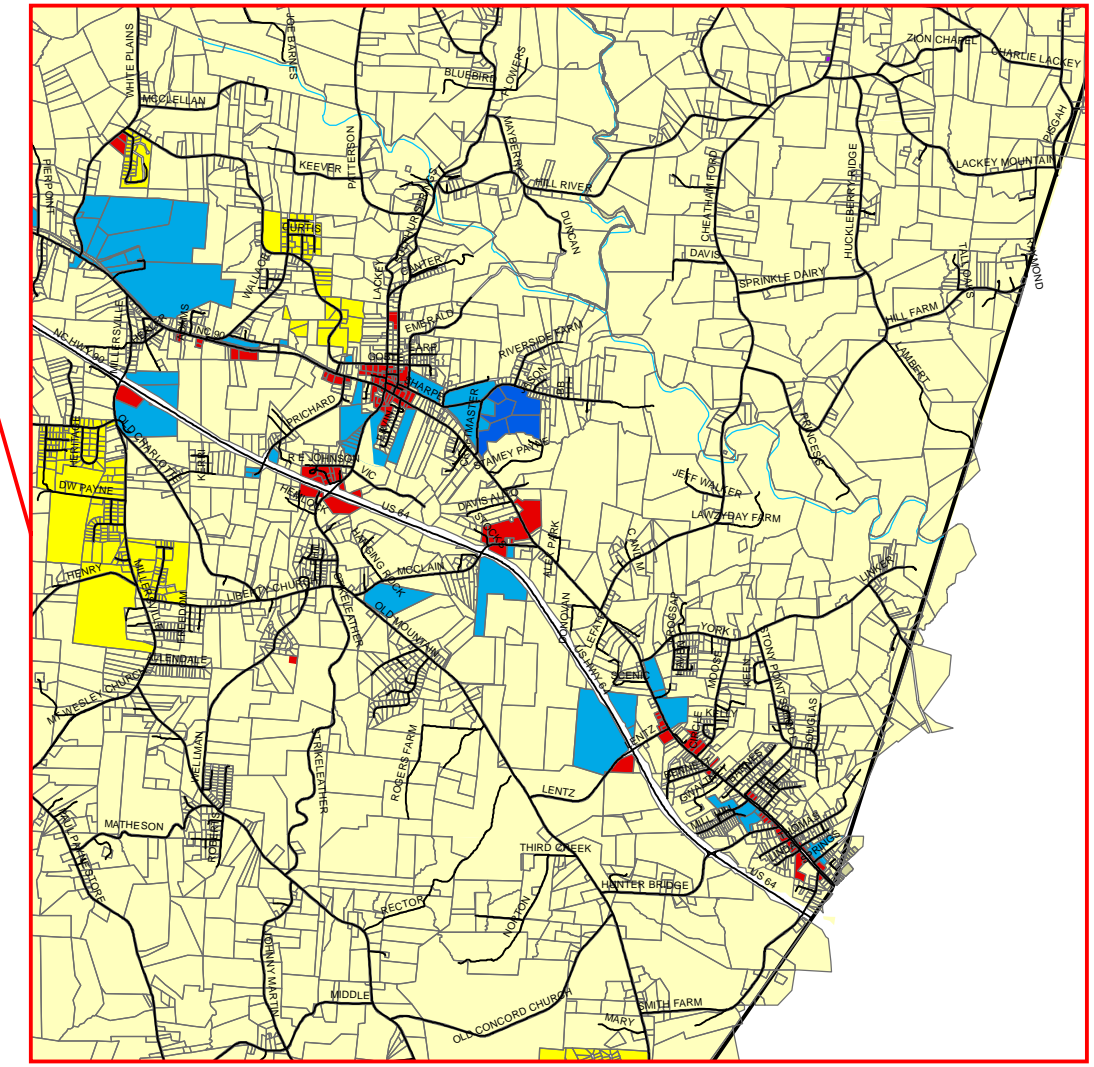
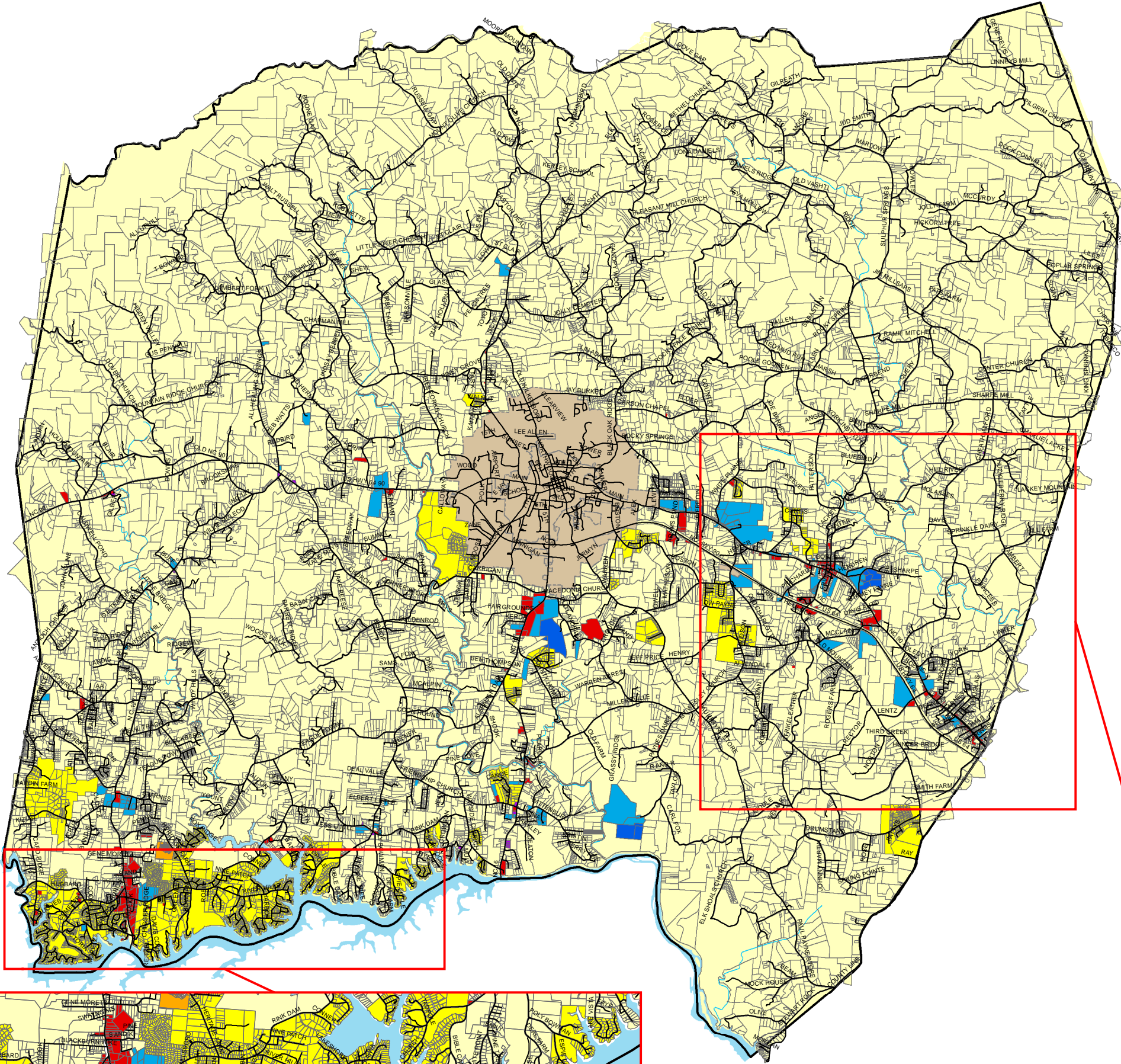
Taylorsville Town Limits and Planning Area

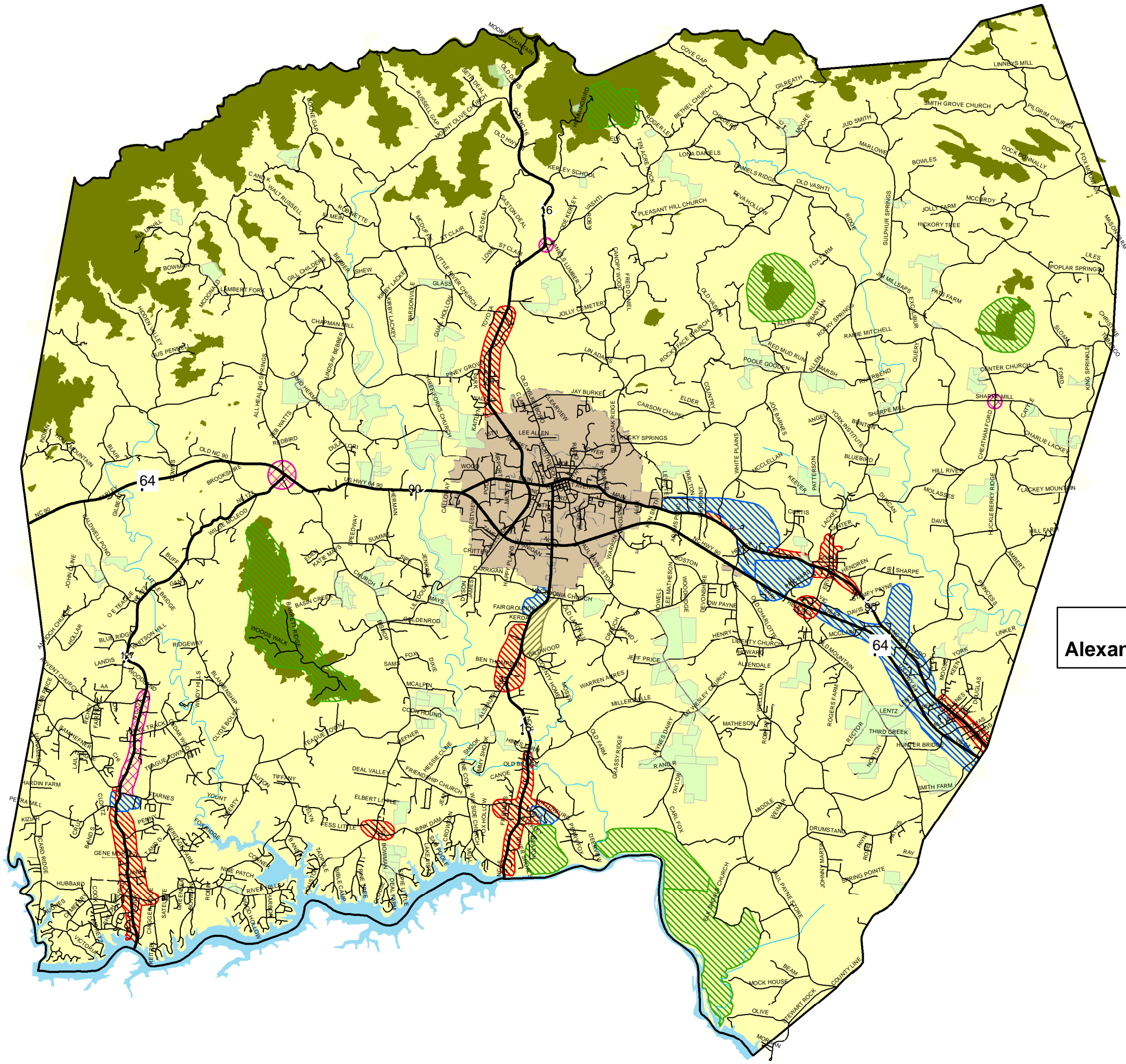


(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data)

**+** 1:125,000

(Z:\wpcog\_projects\Alexander\_LU\_gw\alexander\_county\_existing\_zoning.mxd)  
Produced on 4/4/2008





**MAP 4.**  
**Alexander County Future Land Use**

**Legend**

**Proposed Future Land Use**

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Neighborhood Business
- Office-Institutional
- Open Space
- Residential
- Farmland Preservation
- Mtn. Top Protection (1,500 Ft. + Elevation)

Taylorville Town Limits and Planning Area

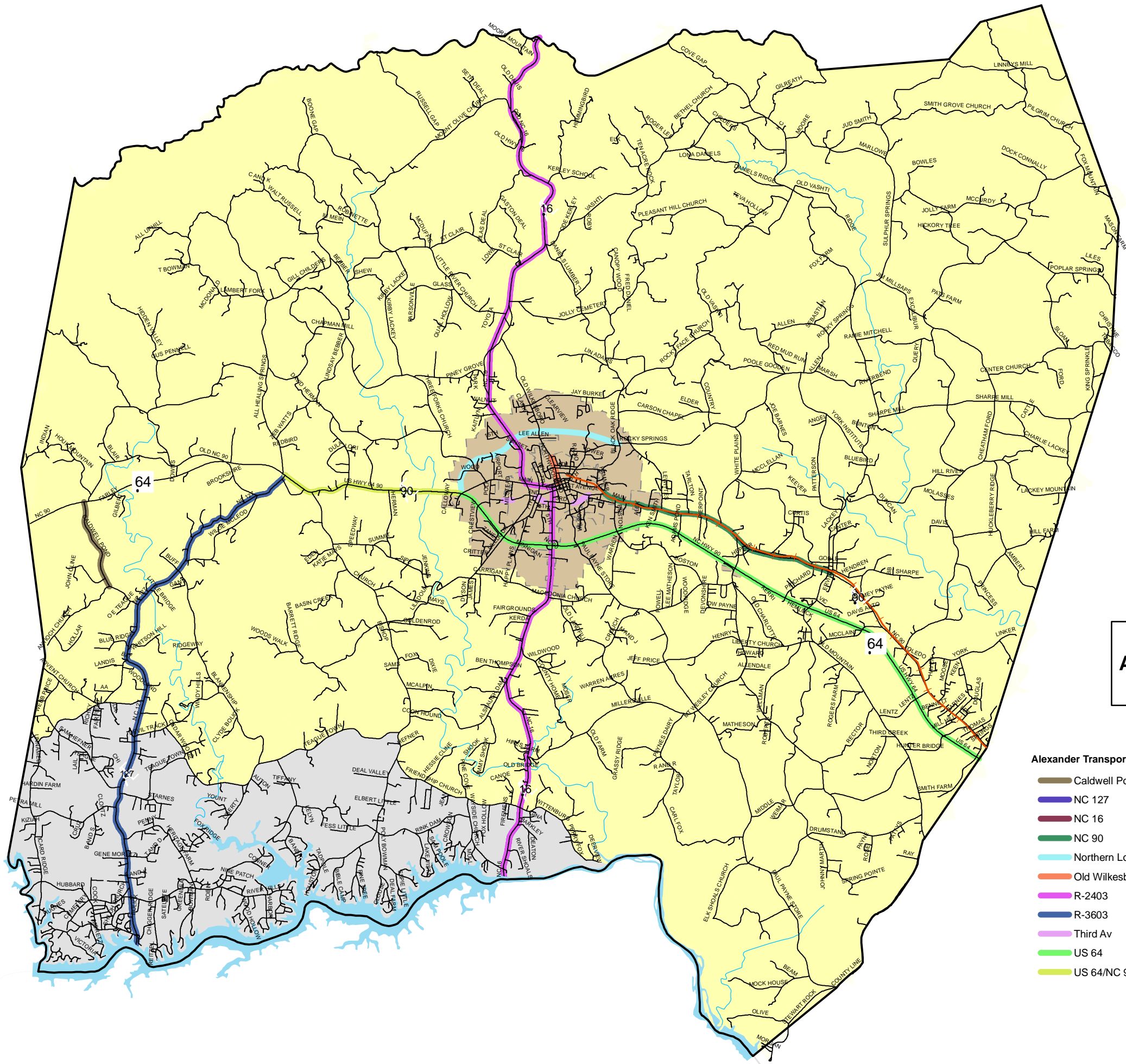


(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data)



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## MAP 5. Alexander County Transportation

### Legend

- Alexander Transportation Improvement Projects**
- Caldwell Pond Rd
  - NC 127
  - NC 16
  - NC 90
  - Northern Loop
  - Old Wilkesboro Rd
  - R-2403
  - R-3603
  - Third Av
  - US 64
  - US 64/NC 90
  - Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Planning Boundary
  - Taylorsville Town Limits and Planning Area
  - Alexander Railroad



(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data.)

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# MAP 6. Alexander County Economic Development

## Legend

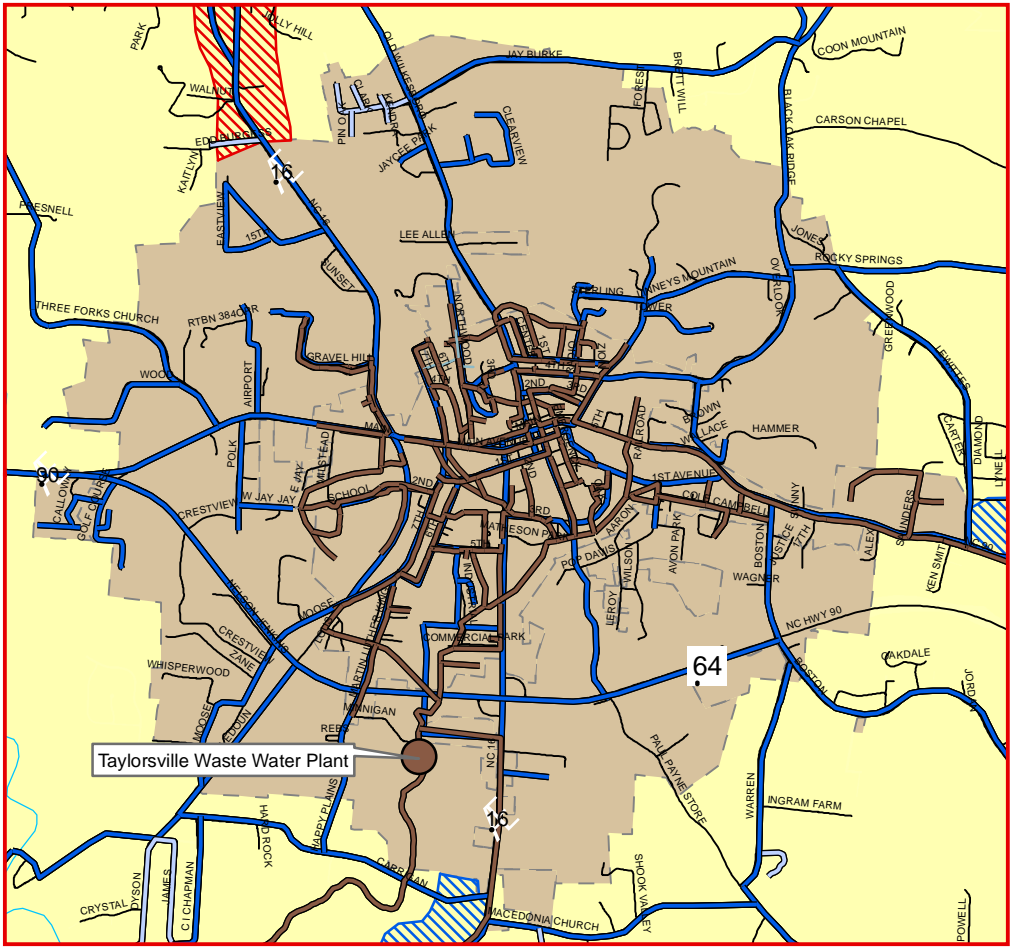
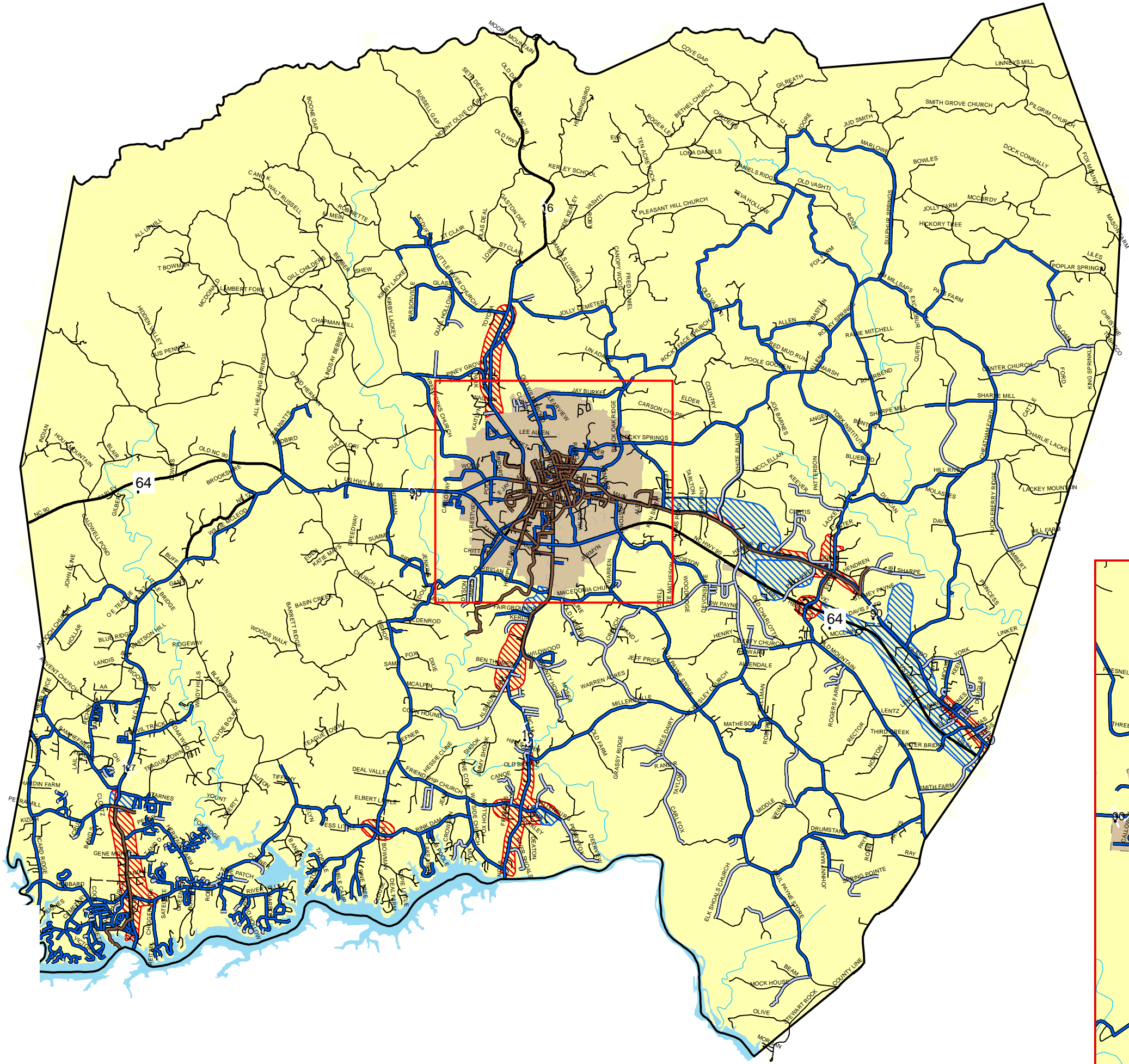
- |                                 |                    |  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| <b>Proposed Future Land Use</b> | <b>Water Lines</b> | <b>Sewer Lines</b>                         |
| Commercial                      | Less than 6" Line  | Gravity and Pressure                       |
| Industrial                      | 6" Line or Larger  | Taylorsville Town Limits and Planning Area |

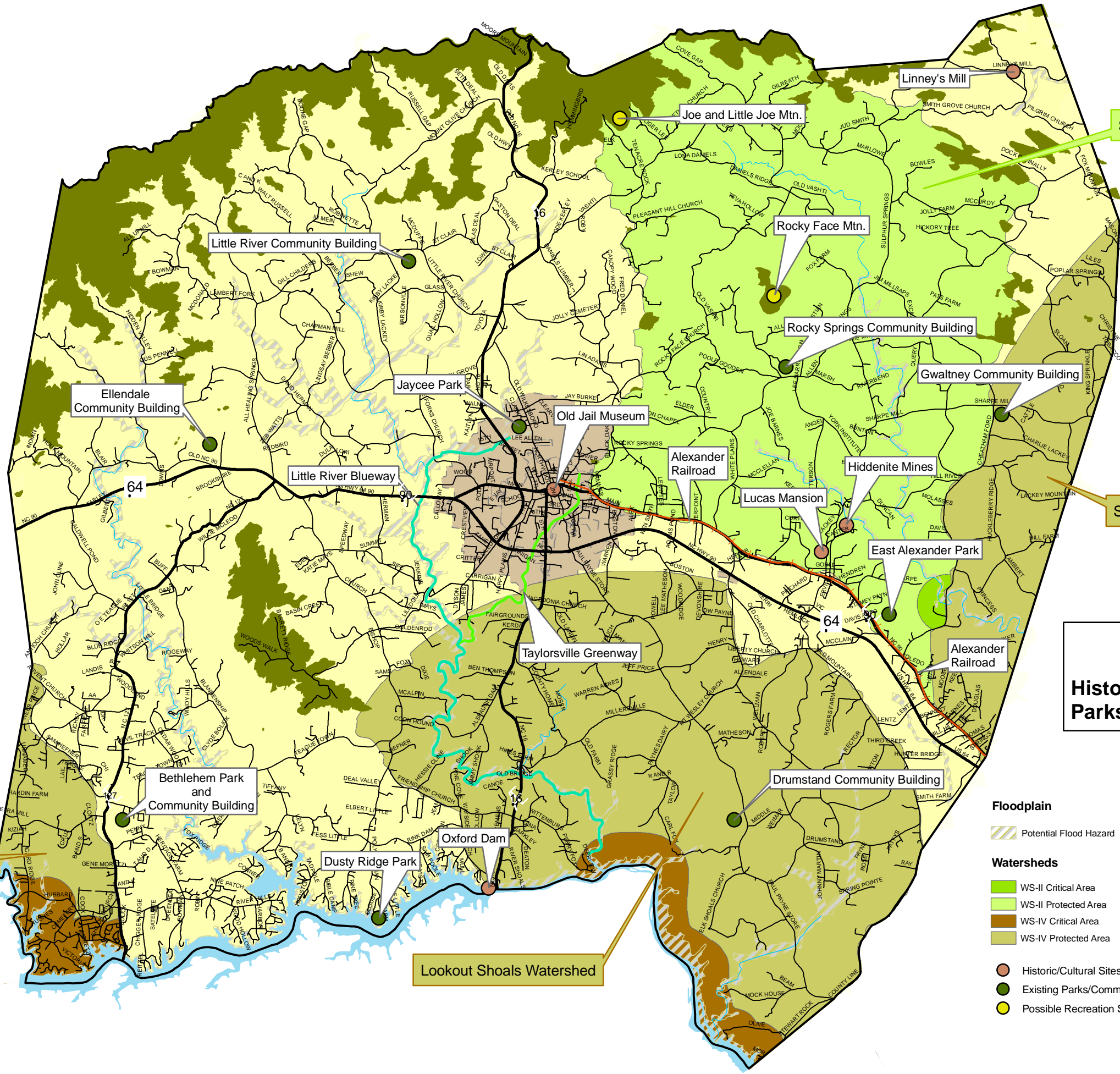


(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data.)

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Produced on 4/4/2008





**MAP 7.**  
**Alexander County**  
**Historic Sites, Cultural Sites,**  
**Parks & Environmental Areas**

**Legend**

- Potential Flood Hazard
- Taylorsville Town Limits and Planning Area
- WS-II Critical Area
- WS-II Protected Area
- WS-IV Critical Area
- WS-IV Protected Area
- Historic/Cultural Sites
- Existing Parks/Community Buildings
- Possible Recreation Sites
- Alexander Railroad
- Mtn. Top Protection (1,500 Ft. + Elevation)
- Taylorsville Greenway
- Little River Blueway



(This map was created by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments using the latest data)

1:115,000