

VILLAGE OF WESLEY CHAPEL 2015 LAND USE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Village of Wesley Chapel is located in the rapidly growing western part of Union County, North Carolina. The area that encompasses Wesley Chapel, like much of western Union County, had been primarily agricultural land for many years. Given its proximity to Charlotte, the area has been steadily losing its “farming” atmosphere and has witnessed a significant amount of suburban residential development. In 1998, in response to increasing residential and commercial development in Union County, residents of the Wesley Chapel area incorporated to form the Village with their primary goal being to preserve the low-density residential character of the area. The Village adopted its current Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances on August 22, 2000 to further help guide the growth of the community.

Location, Existing Land Use and Demographics

The Village is located in Union County to the northwest of the City of Monroe and to the Southeast of the Town of Weddington. Portions of Wesley Chapel lie about 3 ½ miles from the Mecklenburg County border and the City of Charlotte (see Map 1). North Carolina Highway NC 84, an important thoroughfare in Western Union County that connects Wesley Chapel with Monroe and Weddington, runs through the heart of the Village. Most of the incorporated area lies in the Sandy Ridge Township with small areas lying in Vance and Monroe Townships.

Existing land use in the Village is almost entirely residential and agricultural. Low-density, single family residential development predominates and is interspersed with agricultural and forest land. Most residential subdivisions were platted and approved by Union County before being annexed. These subdivisions were designed using County zoning standards and, therefore, often have smaller lot sizes, narrower cul-de-sac widths, an absence of sidewalks and other features different than those subdivisions platted and approved by The Village. These lots have been given a special Residential Union County (RUC) zoning to formally grandfather their unique features. There are a few non-residential uses scattered throughout the Village, consisting of several churches, schools, a fire station and a couple of small businesses. There are currently two completed supermarket shopping centers at the intersection of NC 84 and Waxhaw-Indian Trail, and another shopping center under construction at the same intersection that will have additional retail, restaurant and office space.

According to the US Census Bureau, Union County had the highest percentage population growth of any county in North Carolina, growing 46.78% between 1990 and 2000. During this time the population of Wesley Chapel more than doubled, growing from 1,018 persons to 2,549 persons. Much of the Village’s population growth during this time can be attributed to annexations as well as to some new residential development. The 2000’s saw continued growth, with the population reaching 7,463 persons in the 2010 Census through a mixture of population growth, voluntary annexation and new residential development.

Land Use Planning Process Background

In 2003, the Village of Wesley Chapel conducted a planning process to draft a land use plan for its planning area, i.e. the area within the corporate limits and adjoining unincorporated areas. Centralina Council of Governments assisted by sending a survey of land use issues to Village Council and Planning Board members, which the Village used to hold a public forum to solicit public input and reach consensus on the issues identified in the survey.

Later in 2003, the Centralina Council of Governments drafted a land use plan based on the consensus items from the public forum and further joint meetings of the Planning Board and Village Council. The Planning Board recommended approval of the Land Use Plan draft and on December 8, 2003, the Village Council conducted a public hearing and adopted the plan with some revisions.

In 2006, the Mayor appointed a Master Plan Committee tasked to create a Master Plan driven by public input and resident participation to reflect our community's collective vision for the future. After researching and discussing what should be included in Wesley Chapel's Master Plan, Council hired the UNC-Charlotte Community Planning Workshop to work with the Master Plan Committee on preparing the Master Plan. Beginning February 2007, the Committee and UNCC engaged the community in a series of surveys, public forums and focus groups to craft a vision balancing future population growth, economic development and quality of life. Stakeholders, comprising a wide spread of community residents and business owners, were then identified and recruited for the purpose of providing feedback on a number of ideas, initiatives and recommendations coming out of the consultant's study. In addition to gathering and analyzing survey results, the consultant's project work included existing zoning analysis (S.W.O.T. / code audit), land capacity analysis (GIS), growth scenarios, preliminary land plan, alternative housing layouts / typologies, development strategy plan and regulatory concepts / principles. An extensive draft of major sections was given to the Village Council and Master Plan Committee and detailed feedback provided to the consultants. The Master Plan was presented to the community in May 2008, which included a summary of community input, how the input was used in the final master plan and theories and proposals for Wesley Chapel. The Master Plan was never adopted by the Village Council, however, the document continues to be used as a reference and as basis for further planning and study.

In 2007, the Village obtained matching grant funds for hiring a consultant to prepare a Transportation Plan for Western Union County. The Village of Marvin, Town of Waxhaw, Town of Weddington and the Village of Wesley Chapel coordinated with the Centralina Council of Government and hired Martin/Alexiou/Bryson, PLLC to prepare the Western Union County Local Area Regional Transportation Plan. The Plan was created through consultant direction, steering committee oversight and technical committee input and addressed vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian needs throughout the Western Union County region. The Plan was adopted in late 2009 by all participating municipalities and is used as a guide to direct current and future transportation planning, initiatives, ordinance amendments, and decision-making.

Additional planning efforts include the formation of numerous committees to explore the ideas advanced by the Master Plan and to implement other priority action items identified by Planning Board and Council. A Parks and Recreation Committee was established in November, 2008, in order to prepare a plan for obtaining park land as well as plan for a greenway. A survey was conducted and a Parks and Recreation Master Plan was prepared by the Parks and Recreation

Committee with the guidance of a hired consultant. A park parcel was obtained, now named Dogwood Park, and grant funds were sought and successfully awarded for build-out of Phase I of the park. In December, 2008, a Downtown Committee was created in order to further study some of the ideas advanced by the Master Plan. The Downtown Committee report was produced and included action items to implement some ideas from the Master Plan as well as some original ideas envisioned by the Committee itself. The Downtown report was not adopted; however, it is being used as a basis for further planning and study. In addition, a Town Hall Committee was established in order to plan and oversee construction of a new Town Hall adjacent to the Village Commons shopping center. Finally, a Carolina Thread Trail greenway planning effort was extended to Union Co., where Wesley Chapel participated in numerous workshops in order to establish a possible route for a future regional greenway. The Union County Carolina Thread Trail component was adopted by Wesley Chapel in July, 2011.

In order to update the Land Use Plan for the Village, the Planning Board has reviewed and updated the 2003 Land Use Plan and Map. The Board used recent planning efforts and surveys as input for the document. Background, Goals and Policies have been updated to reflect the continuing build-out of the Village commercial center at the Waxhaw-Indian Trail/Weddington Rd. intersection, residential subdivision development and annexations. Input for this update has also been gathered from Village of Wesley Chapel Advances, which are annual public forums meant to gather citizen input as well as policy direction from the Planning Board and Village Council.

The Future Land Use Plan was reviewed again by the Planning Board and the Village Council in 2015. A few changes were made to the text and the accompanying Future Land Use Map to reflect changes in land use patterns and regulations.

Periodic Review

Every five (5) years the Land Use Plan will be reviewed by the Village Council and Planning Board. The review will monitor the implementation of the plan and assess the need for any changes. However, the Land Use Plan will be assessed at the annual Village Advance. In addition, surveys have been conducted periodically during the Village's planning efforts, and will continue to be conducted, in order to assess the changing needs and expectations of residents on an ongoing basis.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Note: Various policies listed below reference specific geographic locations, which are shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map, included the end of this document.

Residential Development

Goal 1: *To maintain the strong single family low-density residential character of the Village.*

Policies:

1. Low-density residential development, one (1) house per minimum 40,000 square ft., shall be the standard to which future subdivisions shall be designed and built, except for conservation subdivisions.
2. Areas that were previously platted with lots smaller than 1-acre or that were zoned R-20 by Union County at the date of adoption of this plan, shall be allowed to develop at medium densities [i.e., lot sizes of less than forty-thousand (40,000) square feet].
3. The standard housing type shall be single family residential, although allowances for manufactured housing are made in designated areas.
4. Connectivity of streets within and between subdivisions shall be promoted through the consideration of zoning and subdivision regulations which incentivize the use of street designs which can support connectivity through safety measures such as traffic calming infrastructure.
5. For residential subdivisions, protecting existing mature hardwood trees within subdivisions and along thoroughfares shall be required, as outlined in the Retention of Existing Vegetation Section of the Subdivision Ordinance.
6. The Village encourages the voluntary protection of open space and vistas from public roads through dedication of neighborhood common areas and other amenities. In addition, additional open space conservation measures shall be considered, including the utilization of building envelope regulations or provision of development incentives.
7. Residential subdivisions shall have sidewalks, curb and gutter along external streets.
8. Incentives shall be considered which encourage developers of new major subdivisions to dedicate public access easements along the Carolina Thread Trail, if located along the route, as part of any open space conservation measures already required or incentivized. Greenway planning and construction shall be required to have privacy buffers installed and maintained between the Thread Trail and residential subdivision lots.

Non-Residential Development

Goal 2: *To prevent strip development from occurring anywhere in Wesley Chapel by limiting new non-residential development to designated strategic locations.*

Policies:

1. The Village's commercial, governmental and institutional hub, located at the intersection of NC 84 and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road, should be supported and encouraged to finish build-out.
2. Commercial development beyond the Village's commercial, governmental and institutional hub will only be allowed at areas designated on the Land Use Plan map. Commercial development will be limited to low density small-scale retail which provides neighborhood services, rural cottage industries and/or small-scale recreational opportunities.
3. Office/institutional clusters, including medical offices and/or continuing care residential facilities, should only occur at areas designated on the Land Use Plan map. Such development should generate low traffic volumes and occur in a condensed area in the vicinity of major intersections. Uses that generate high traffic volumes shall not be encouraged outside the Village's commercial hub. Driveway access onto NC 84 shall be limited. Traffic Impact Analysis shall be required for all such new uses.
4. The Village shall support the location of a variety of low impact County service facilities that are commonly found in residential areas, including but not limited to libraries, police stations, fire, and rescue squad stations. The Village would support the location of such facilities as conditional uses in residential areas subject to their compatibility with the surrounding area. Facilities specifically discouraged throughout the Village include those typically not in keeping with a rural atmosphere. Those facilities discouraged include, but are not limited to, solid waste and County wastewater treatment facilities.
5. Public recreation facilities shall be located at Dogwood Park and at the rear portion of the Town Hall property owned by the Village.
6. An area for light industrial development shall be located at the intersection of Will Plyler and Waxhaw-Indian Trail Roads.

Goal 3: *To encourage that new non-residential development be attractively designed, pedestrian friendly and in harmony with surrounding development.*

Policies:

1. Non-residential uses having a gross floor area in excess of 10,000 square feet developments in the Village shall be developed to serve both the pedestrian and the motorist. Non-residential uses having a gross floor area in excess of 10,000 square feet should be pedestrian friendly, allowing pedestrians to circulate safely and comfortably, within the development and pedestrian-accessible from adjoining neighborhoods and developments. Sidewalks, curb, and gutter shall be required along all external streets of non-residential

developments. (The Village's Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to implement this policy.)

2. Non-residential development with buildings located towards the street as opposed to located behind large areas of parking shall be required. (The Village's Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to accommodate this policy.)
3. Building fronts visible by the general public and from public roads shall have decorative fronts. Metal or cement block facades visible from public roads shall not be permitted. (The Village's Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to fully implement this policy.)
4. Off-street parking areas shall be adequately landscaped especially those that are visible from public roads.
5. Ground-mounted signs limited in size but sufficiently large for visibility shall be required for non-residential development. (The Village's Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to implement this policy.)
6. Non-residential buildings shall be limited to a maximum height of 2-stories.
7. Form-based codes and/or a hybrid zoning ordinance incorporating form-based code elements shall be considered for application to certain areas and/or certain uses within the Village in order to allow for a greater flexibility of uses while regulating traffic, encouraging pedestrian accessibility, and enhancing overall design of development projects.
8. Protecting existing mature hardwood trees to the greatest degree feasible within non-residential developments and along thoroughfares shall be required. (The Village's Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to fully implement this policy.)