

Chapter 11. Growth Management and Future Land Use

11.1 Alternatives for managing growth

Local governments have a variety of tools they can use to direct development and to influence its scope, form and impact. They can:

- adopt regulations to govern how and where development may occur (through a zoning ordinance and map, subdivision ordinance, form-based regulations);
- create incentives and other policies to influence the type of development that will occur; and
- plan for and provide infrastructure (water, sewer, schools and government services) and work with infrastructure providers (towns, utility companies, NC DOT) to develop/improve infrastructure in areas where development is desired.

The zoning map and corresponding zoning ordinance define the types and intensities of land uses that are allowed in each area of the map. Government policies can provide incentives for a variety of development characteristics. Incentives can include reduced fees, streamlined development process, increased density/intensity, decreased parking requirements, etc. Development characteristics that may qualify for an incentive could include the provision of “affordable” housing, preserving large areas of open space, building a greenway/walkway, providing jobs, preserving a cultural/historic site, and more.

Transportation and water and sewer (or wastewater) infrastructure are key components for development of moderate intensity. Individual homes, small farms and small businesses can be located in most places because they typically don’t need public water and sewer service and although they do need to have access from a road, it could be a secondary road. However, larger businesses and organizations (churches, schools, government centers, etc.), businesses that depend on customer traffic, larger residential developments and resorts need to be located on or near main roads and most need public water and sewer service. By carefully planning water and sewer expansion and improvements in coordination with changes/improvements to the transportation system, a local government can have a strong influence on where new development will take place.

In North Carolina, the state Department of Transportation (DOT) has a strong influence on planning and making changes to the transportation system. Working through the Land-of-Sky Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) and with the towns and DOT, the County can influence future transportation plans. DOT also must honor the County’s Comprehensive Plan, and it’s Future Land Use map as it makes transportation plans and implements projects. It is fortunate that DOT and the RPO are currently working with the County to develop a County transportation plan; this Comprehensive Plan will inform and influence the transportation plan.

There are a myriad of non-transportation infrastructure providers in the County and these are described in more detail in Chapter 10:

- Mars Hill, Marshall and Hot Springs provide water and wastewater service to their town and some surrounding areas;
- French Broad Electric and Progress Energy provide electricity and limited broadband service in the County;
- Verizon, Charter, BellSouth, Aloft, M.A.I.N. and Hughes Net provide internet and/or phone service, each in different parts of the county;

The County will need to communicate its vision and desires to these providers and work with them to improve or change the services that are being provided.

11.2 Preserving Rural Character and Natural and Cultural Resources

Preserving the rural character of the county involves maintaining the traditional ties to the land and to rural communities that define the character of Madison County. It also involves having new development designed in ways that are sensitive and complimentary to the context and character of the area. Achieving these objectives is based on a few basic principles:

1. New development in rural areas not directly tied to traditional land-based economic activities should be minimized and directed to existing towns and developed areas to maintain the integrity of the rural economy and landscape while preserving the traditional role and character of rural settlements.
2. The viability of the agriculture and rural economy must be maintained and enhanced as much as possible, while recognizing that agriculture is changing and will look differently and consist of a different set of products in the future than it has in the past. It has also become increasingly difficult for families to rely on farming as their only source of income, so this needs to be considered while addressing economic viability.
3. Providers of public infrastructure and services must coordinate policies and capital investment decisions in rural areas.
4. Site and building designs should respect the scale and character of the surrounding buildings and landscape.



Maintaining rural character and rural communities is complex because it involves actions by the public and private sector and is affected by the regional and more global economy. The public sector can provide technical expertise and facilities to rural entrepreneurs, regulate how and where land development occurs, invest in public infrastructure. The private sector provides the businesses and jobs and is the primary steward of the land and landscape. Having a shared vision that values the rural aspects of the county will help Madison County maintain its rural character and heritage.

11.3 Recommendations for Future Land Use

The **Future Land Use Map** (Map 16) depicts some of what was described in the previous section – concentrating development in already developed areas, along main roadways and in community centers. These concepts are described here, then framed as more specific recommendations in the next section.

First, along portions of the main roads (25-70, 213 and 19), a variety of medium intensity uses can be accommodated and should be encouraged. The “mixed-use corridors” designated on the map are those areas where it is appropriate and desired to have retail and service businesses, offices, light-medium manufacturing, apartments/condominiums, educational facilities and similar types of uses.

A few “neighborhood/community centers” have been identified on the map – in the Spring Creek community, near Wolf Laurel, along Leicester Highway (NC 63) in southwest Madison and in the Laurel community center area. These are areas that already contain gathering places and/or neighborhood businesses and that are logical areas to grow into community centers, with a wider range of businesses and gathering places. This plan recommends doing a more detailed plan for each of these areas that would look at specific needs and characteristics of each area. The plans should address context-sensitive development to preserve the character of these communities and recommend appropriate zoning for these areas.

Around each town is an area (approximately two miles from the existing town limits) that represents where more dense development could occur, due to the proximity to a town and to main roads and water/sewer infrastructure. The County has zoning jurisdiction over the areas outside of town limits, except for around Mars Hill where the Town controls zoning and land use in its Extraterritorial Zoning Jurisdiction (ETJ).



Another proposed future land use is an area where businesses and industries could locate more closely together. These “business and industry” clusters identified on the map are areas that are near both Marshall and Marshall, accessible by main roads and have or are near utilities. These areas already have a couple different types of businesses and seem to be good locations

to cluster additional businesses. The one near Marshall contains the Mashburn Medical Center, NC Cooperative Extension, County Fairgrounds and some retail businesses along the roads. The one of the west of Mars Hill contains Micro Switch.

The County and towns will need to work together to plan for infrastructure and development in the areas just outside the towns. The towns provide water and waste water services in and around their town boundaries and have control over expansions and rates.

11.4 Recommendations for Managing Growth and Development

New or Revised Regulations

11.4.1 Allow a variety of medium intensity uses along portions of the main roads, as shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Modify zoning regulations, by defining a new zoning district or overlay district, to allow a variety of medium intensity uses along portions of the main roads – US 25-70, US 19, NC 213, NC 63 and NC 209. The “mixed-use corridors” designated on the map are those areas where it is appropriate and desired to have retail and service businesses, light to medium manufacturing/industrial businesses, offices, apartments, condominiums, educational facilities and similar types of uses. It is important to “contain” larger scale developments to these and similar areas, in order to keep and maintain the rural character and scenic beauty that is highly valued by residents.

11.4.2 Allow higher-density development adjacent to and around the towns.

Using the areas shown around each town on the Future Land Use Map as a general guide, modify zoning regulations to allow more dense development in these areas. These are areas where more dense development could occur, due to the proximity to a town and to main roads and water/sewer infrastructure. The County could use their R-1 zoning district for this area (it is currently not being applied to any areas on the Zoning Map). The zoning should be modified to allow smaller lot sizes, duplex and multifamily units and mixed uses where current and planned infrastructure can support this level of intensity. The County should also consider encouraging cluster-style housing developments in these areas, as a way to provide more affordable housing near the towns.

11.4.3 Develop community plans for the neighborhood/community centers identified on the map to determine appropriate regulations and guidelines for these centers.

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detailed plan for each of these areas that would look at specific needs and characteristics of each area. The plans should address context-sensitive development to preserve the character of these communities and recommend appropriate zoning for these areas.

11.4.4 Adopt a zoning district that allows a mix of businesses and industries and apply it to the areas identified as “business and industry clusters.”

The “business and industry clusters” are areas that are near both Marshall and Marshall, accessible by main roads and have or are near utilities. These areas already have a couple different types of businesses and appear to be good locations to cluster additional businesses.

11.4.5 Allow for nodes of mixed-use development around the new interchanges along US 19

US 19 is currently being widened to a limited access facility. This means it will have some full and partial interchanges along its length, but additional access (streets, driveways) will not be allowed in the areas between the interchanges. Mars Hill has zoning jurisdiction for the area near the town and I-26 and the County has jurisdiction along the rest of US 19. Mixed-used development, as described in 11.4.1 should be allowed in the areas around the interchanges.

11.4.6 Establish a design review process and maximum square footage requirements for buildings in the Retail-Business and Mixed-Use Corridor zones.

To ensure that designs are compatible with community character and contain safe access, the County should establish design guidelines and a design review process so these issues are discussed and understood up front. It can be set up as “mandatory review, voluntary compliance” process as a way to provide information to developers and some influence over the design.

Especially with national franchises and chain stores, experience shows that communities that accept standard corporate design get that design. In communities that insist on more context-sensitive designs that fit with their community character, get custom designs from the national chains and franchises.

Along with this, the County should consider incorporating a maximum square footage requirement in the Retail-Business and Mixed-Use Corridor zoning districts, or a threshold that triggers the Conditional Use process. For example, large stores like Wal-Mart are typically 120,000 to 140,000 square feet and a typical Lowe’s is about 150,000 square feet. The Conditional Use process could be used for buildings that were proposed to be larger than 50,000 square feet, which is a little larger than a football field. This would ensure more oversight and discussion for very large buildings.

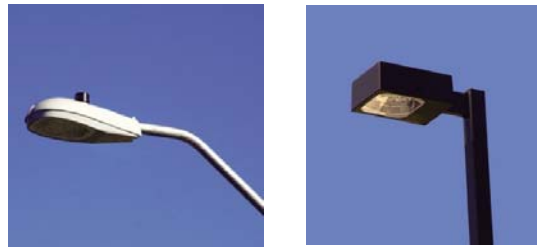
11.4.7 Consider increasing the minimum lot size in R-A zoning to encourage rural and agricultural land uses and development and to preserve rural character.

The current minimum lot size in the Residential-Agriculture (R-A) zone is one acre (or 40,000 square feet). This level of allowable density makes it harder to keep land in agricultural use because it is often more lucrative to subdivide and develop the land. Once land is subdivided it cannot easily be put back together or back into agricultural use. The County should look at the lot sizes in this R-A area and determine a reasonable minimum size based on the sizes of existing agricultural enterprises. Farms with specialty crops, like mushrooms and ginseng, that do not require as much land as other crops and livestock need to be considered as well.

11.4.8 Adopt lighting regulations to enhance safety, preserve rural character and the night sky.

As more growth and development comes to Madison County and western North Carolina, more attention needs to be given to lighting fixtures and designs. Numerous counties and towns across the U.S. have adopted lighting regulations over the past 10-20 years to address excess lighting and lighting that lights adjacent properties. It is difficult to administer and enforce lighting regulations for single family residential properties, but the County should consider adopting regulations for multi-family and other types of development. Simple language that requires “full cut-off” fixtures (i.e., ones that shine light down and not up), and prevents light from shining directly on vehicular traffic or adjoining properties addresses the main issues. Language similar to this was recently included in the Planned Unit Development ordinance that was adopted earlier this year.

Established in 1988, the **International Dark-Sky Association** is an educational, environmental 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to protecting and preserving the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting. IDA’s website, www.darksky.org, contains many resources related to outdoor lighting.



Two examples of “full cut-off” lights.

Policies and Incentives

11.4.9 Provide incentives to encourage more affordable housing.

The County should consider providing incentives, like increased density, for developers willing to include a percentage of affordable housing units in a residential development. Many places offer a “density bonus” if 10 to 20 percent of the housing units in a subdivision or multifamily development.

Education

11.4.10 Develop and distribute educational materials to help citizens understand county zoning and subdivision regulations and the review and approval processes.

The general public often does not understand regulations or how they can have effective input on decisions. The County should develop some brochures or information sheets explaining the legal responsibilities and requirements of the Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and County Commissioners; the development review and approval processes; and when and how to provide meaningful input. This information could be made available on the County's website, at County offices and as features in the News Record and Sentinel.

Please refer to the recommendations in Chapter 5 (Environmental Issues and Natural Resources) for additional recommendations related to managing growth and preserving rural character.