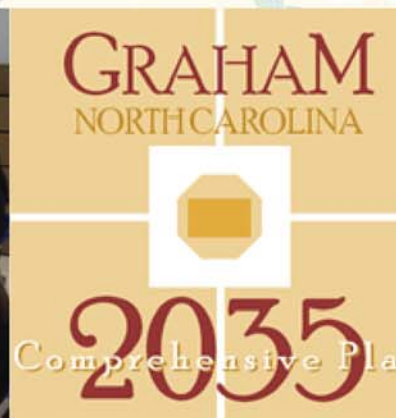


# The Graham 2035 Comprehensive Plan



*A Time of Opportunity*

DRAFT 11-10-2014





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## GLOSSARY

## IMPLEMENTATION OF 2020 GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

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# PART I: SETTING THE STAGE



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Background

Graham is a small community with rich history, a cultural center, and seat of Alamance County, North Carolina. The City is centered around the historic County Courthouse and hosts a high quality of life for residents, a diverse job market for workers and employers, quality educational opportunities for students, and exciting historic and cultural destinations for tourists and visitors. Incorporated in 1851, today Graham finds itself within a growing megalopolis that stretches from Raleigh to Atlanta.

Many forces are at play in the growth and dynamism of Graham, the Piedmont area, and the Southeastern United States. Graham's population is growing and diversifying, which results in new issues and priorities. Meanwhile the community faces dynamic, complex, and interrelated political, environmental, and economic challenges. The City is poised to address these challenges by capitalizing on its many assets, protecting vital resources, and implementing strategic long-term investments.

## The Comprehensive Plan

The comprehensive plan is the guiding policy document for Graham and provides the community an opportunity to outline how it will grow through visions, goals, and policies. The plan is implemented through action-oriented strategies that address issues including opportunities downtown and in key potential growth areas, local and regional transportation, public facilities and services, the natural environment, Graham's historic character, housing and neighborhoods, economic growth and development, and sustainability.

While Graham has several plans that address issues ranging from hazard mitigation to pedestrian network enhancement, one unified plan is necessary for ensuring orderly, efficient, and resourceful growth and development in the community in an integrated manner. This Comprehensive Plan weaves together many previous planning efforts and also addresses emerging trends and new ideas to encourage community involvement and build opportunity in Graham.

As populations grow and challenges become increasingly complex, this plan should serve as a model for small plans across the Southeast that seek to adopt innovative plans with limited resources. While not all small cities are like Graham, the goals and strategies can be implemented in other municipalities and counties in North Carolina.

Following is a description of this process for Spanish-speaking readers. Upon final adoption, summaries of the full plan will be prepared in English and Spanish, an indication of the value Graham places on an open and inclusive community dialogue.

### **Graham y El Plan Integral**

*El Plan Integral de Graham es la vision comun de nuestra comunidad. El plan promove el crecimiento e desenvolvimiento sustentable que la comunidad se quiere para el futuro, hasta el ano 2035. Este plan tiene visiones, metas, y politicas. Estrategias y acciones determinan como implementar el plan. La creacion de este plan es tan importante porque la comunidad, estado, y region tiene cambiado. Hoy en dia Graham está más diversa, tiene más poblacion, más oportunidades, más desenvolvimiento, y hay más desafios que tiene que enfrentar. Este plan es el primer paso para conservar los espacios naturales, reinventir en el centro, crear barrios completos y sostenables, y para abrir y ampliar oportunidades economicas para todas las personas de la comunidad sean de cualquier clase economica, origen etnico, o cultura.*



## **Graham's Growth Management Plan**

The City's Growth Management Plan was adopted in 2000 and since then has served as Graham's comprehensive plan, helping the City grow and improve quality of life. Over time issues and context have changed. The 2000 Growth Management Plan needs to be updated for the following reasons:

- Many of the action items are accomplished;
- The population has changed;
- Local, regional, national, and global changes have resulted in new knowledge and thinking.

These accomplishments and changes justify the need for a new Comprehensive Plan that builds from, reevaluates, and reprioritizes the Growth Management Plan's legacy goals and policies.

## **Public Engagement**

During preparation of this Comprehensive Plan, Graham residents and stakeholders provided feedback that help to identify several important overarching issues and opportunities. The key themes emerging from this public engagement included the following:

### *Grow Downtown*

Downtown is critical to the City's success and should be the focus of new investments and development, including adaptive reuse projects, public art installments, building restorations, use diversification, infrastructure upgrades, small business development, and more.

### *Preserve and Promote Graham's History*

The historic character of Graham is essential to the City's future and should be preserved in order to promote economic development. Historic preservation and using Graham's history as an asset will also help develop a sense of community identity.

### *Improve Schools*

Graham's public schools, and the perception of the public schools, are key factors in the future life of the community and there are opportunities for improvements.

### *Increase Walkability*

Many of Graham's residents want to be able to walk safely to parks, museums, stores, and restaurants and believe that the new plan should improve the accessibility of these assets to existing and future neighborhoods.

### *Expand Economic Opportunity*

The community's demographics are changing and efforts should be made to accommodate new families and make them want to stay. Attracting more high-wage jobs into Graham should be a high priority.

### *Expand and Diversify Housing Options*

Housing options are limited and a new plan should explore ways of diversifying the housing stock to accommodate a range of incomes and family types, as well as promoting and protecting private property investments.

### *Increase Local and Regional Accessibility*

Graham is unique because of its small town character, great parks, and access to regional opportunities. This is very important to residents and visitors and should be maintained and enhanced. One area needing attention is expansion of regional transit options.

### *This is a time of opportunity*

Graham is in a process of substantial change. The combination of loss of a textile-related employment base, strategic geographic locational advantages in a fast-growing regional economy, shifting trends in demographic profiles, and possibilities of new energy and resources help set the stage for positive growth into the future. This is a time of opportunity.

## Plan Framework

This plan is designed to be readable and accessible to the public, and provide pertinent information and guidance to decision-makers. A Community Profile, which documents current and historic conditions, is available as a separate dynamic document to be consistently updated as new data are provided from City, state, and national resources, without the need to wait for the next comprehensive plan rewrite.

From visioning to decision-making, this plan establishes a hierarchy of information to guide the process. These components include each chapter's vision, followed by goals that the City aims to achieve. Under each goal are policies and strategies that will be used by decision-makers to help prioritize projects and implement the plan. Together these components support and inform decision-making by linking broad ideas and priorities based upon existing conditions to recommended guidance and detailed actions.

### Updating the comprehensive plan

Progress on implementing the recommendations of this plan should be monitored and regularly reported to the community. As new trends become apparent within Community Profile or other documents that reveal significant change in the existing conditions, realigned priorities of the public, or new facts and information that justify the addition, subtraction, or amendment of the goals, policies, and strategies in this Plan, an update of the Plan should be prepared. A formal review of Plan implementation and changed conditions should be scheduled for preparation five years after Plan adoption.





# Chapter 2: Our Vision

## Background

This chapter provides visions for Graham, along with themes that are relevant to the vision, goals, policies, and recommended implementation actions that follow. These visions are based on input from the Steering Committee, Graham's public meetings, and online comments provided by residents.

### ***Connected City, Accessible Region***

Graham will be a connected, accessible, and mobile City, where transportation to and from opportunities is not a barrier and where people have the freedom of choice to arrive at their desired destination. From Graham, anyone has affordable access to opportunities throughout the Piedmont without the necessity of owning a car.

### ***Exceptional Public Facilities and Services***

Public facilities meet and exceed the expectations of residents and visitors, and provide the community with opportunities to gather, get active, learn, and interact with nature. City services will meet level of service requirements now and into the distant future through long-term planning and exceptional customer service.

### ***A Healthy Environment***

New growth in Graham will occur sustainably, with minimal impact on the natural environment. Conservation efforts will maintain the health of the watershed, preserve and connected habitat for native plants and animals, as well as reduce pollution through investments in renewable energy sources, clean transportation options, and resource conservation.

### ***A Distinct Community Character***

Graham will be a vibrant, exciting, and distinct place that serves as a source of pride for all who call this community their home. This strong community character attracts a high quality of life, new opportunities, and acts to retain young members and families within the area.

### ***Diverse Housing, Complete Neighborhoods***

Graham will be the best place to live because of its variety of high quality housing options, providing affordable choices to people of all backgrounds. Neighborhoods will be walkable, safe, and vibrant and will promote private investment and enhancement of existing and future properties.

### ***A Strong and Equitable Economy***

With an environment that supports entrepreneurialism, business development, and labor training for a variety of industries and occupations, Graham will be a City with high quality employment opportunities for a diverse workforce. Local spending will help to sustain and grow local companies and foster economic development.

### ***Sustainable Growth, Resilient City***

Graham will be a safe, affordable, and high quality place to live for generations to come with a low carbon footprint, healthy and connected ecosystems, fiscally responsible governance, and long-term hazard mitigation planning. Our community will mitigate climate change impacts on our future as well as reduce the adverse impacts of our way of life on the environment.

## Themes

Themes overlap every chapter and provide guidance and consistency throughout the plan.

### Healthy Active Community

It is important that Graham foster a physical and social environment that promotes safe physical activity as a form of recreation and transportation.

### Fiscal Accountability

Fiscal responsibility is of utmost importance in order to keep property taxes low and sustainably maintain, improve, and expand Graham's exceptional services and public facilities for years to come.

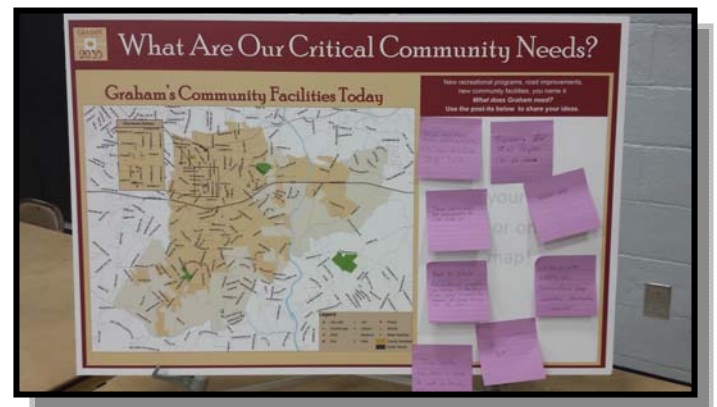
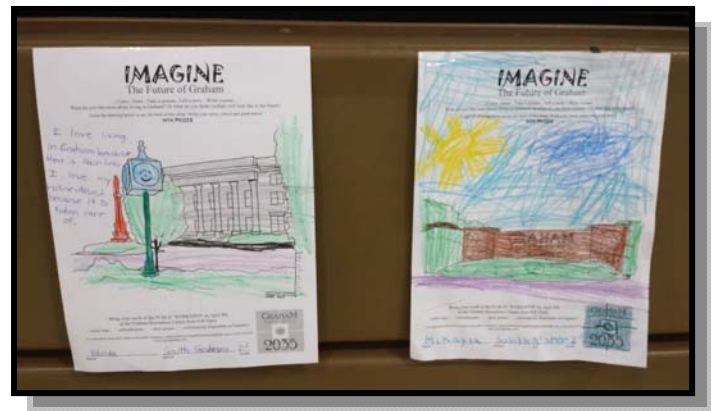
### Equitable Opportunities

Providing opportunities for all people regardless of their social or economic background is key to nurturing a healthy and inclusive community.

### Environmental Responsibility

Conserving the natural environment is crucial because of its huge potential for reducing natural hazards, improving air and water quality, promoting economic development, protecting natural ecosystems, and providing recreational opportunities.

## PART II: KEY ISSUES





# Chapter 3: Accessing Local and Regional Opportunities

## Background

Good transportation is critical for a thriving City. That means having a system that supports the flow of industrial and commercial goods as well as builds context-sensitive networks within compact and vibrant built living environments. But a good system is expensive and cities need to develop efficient systems and find innovative funding solutions for slimmer budgets and increasing populations.

“I want Graham to be a ‘walk-to’ city, where people can access everything no matter where in the city limits they live, as opposed to a ‘drive through’ city where they bypass us and go to Mebane or Burlington.”

-Christopher M.

Following World War II, cities across the country designed transportation networks primarily to accommodate the automobile. Historic structures were torn down to make way for parking lots, cherished neighborhoods bulldozed for freeways, and new development and investment became directed toward low density automobile-oriented development on the urban periphery. Graham was not an exception, but the City’s moderate growth and small town charm meant that it largely maintained its interconnected network of streets near the City center. While some recent development has created disconnected street patterns, this plan seeks to reverse that trend and promote the interconnectivity of streets within future development.



This chapter builds off of the City’s existing Growth Management Plan to promote safe, efficient, interconnected, multimodal transportation systems that foster vibrant neighborhoods and economic development. Through goals, actions, and policies it discusses the existing transportation network in Graham and identifies opportunities for short-term and long-term improvements.

## Related Plans

- *Pedestrian Transportation Plan (2006)*
- *Burlington-Graham MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (2012)*
- *Growth Management Plan (2000)*

## A Multi-Modal System

In Graham, a multimodal system means a transportation network designed for more than just cars and trucks, but also bicycles, pedestrians, and public transit.

“Having options for those who don’t have a car or want to leave their car at home sometimes would be great.”

-John P.

## **Pedestrians**

The overwhelming consensus of academic studies is that walkability improves property values, economic development, and personal health. Walkability improves with more than just infrastructure and is measured primarily by quantifying the 3 Ds: density, diversity, and design. That is, the density of interesting things within a given area, the diversity of places that you walk past, and the layout of the street network. This plan promotes walkability and seeks to improve the pedestrian realm in Graham.

## **Streets**

Streets not only conduct the flow of car and truck traffic but also serve as points of interest in the community. For example, a good neighborhood street can safely serve as a child's play area, and commercial streets with coffee shops and businesses can flourish into vibrant public spaces with outdoor tables and artwork.

## **Transit**

Transit is an important form of transportation for those who do not own a car or do not have the ability to drive, like children and teenagers, the elderly, the poor, and the disabled. It also offers commuters alternative modes of transportation that can save them money over time. With the exception of a Burlington-funded route to Alamance Community College, Graham is not currently served by a fixed-route mass transit system and this plan promotes land use patterns to help increase the viability of regional transit that could serve employees and residents through design and coordination.

## **Bicycling**

Bicycling can serve as both a form of transportation and of leisure and exercise. This plan seeks to aggressively improve the viability of bicycling as a legitimate method of accessing opportunities and points of interest. Transportation and park facilities should be designed to safely accommodate bicyclists of all ages and riding abilities.

## **Commuting**

Most people who live in Graham work elsewhere and most jobs in Graham belong to people living outside of the City. Accessibility to onramps for I-40/85 is important. Street connectivity is key because it increases the number of viable paths to and from onramps, home, and places of interest.

## **Parking**

Although the plan promotes multiple modes of transportation, it does not ignore the fact that most people in Graham own vehicles and use them to travel to work, the store, and recreational areas. Many businesses rely on sufficient parking capacity to attract customers. This plan acknowledges the importance of parking, and also acknowledges that it should not jeopardize pedestrian safety and accessibility.

## **Streets and Alleyways**

Alleys are important because they enhance the frontage of businesses and homes by moving things like trash, recycling, parking, and utilities to the back of buildings. This improves the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood. They also remove curb cuts and driveways from the front of businesses, which reduces the risk of a collision with pedestrians and bicyclists on the sidewalk.



## Goal 1: Context-Sensitive Transportation

The design of Graham's streets will fit in with and enhance the adjacent land uses.

### **Policy 1.1: Context-Sensitive Infrastructure**

New transportation Infrastructure should promote and correspond with the land use goals of the Graham 2035 Comprehensive Plan, including the Future Land Use Map.

### **Policy 1.2: Safe Access to Businesses and Homes**

Limit direct highway access or the number of curb cuts to commercial activities by directing development to proposed regional and village centers and requiring internal connectivity between commercial uses, uniformity in design standards, and rear alley access where feasible.

### **Policy 1.3: Parking Behind Buildings**

Require off-street parking in the rear of new commercial buildings with access provided by alleys

### **Policy 1.4: Required Automobile Parking**

Improve parking efficiency and limit the development cost of parking, promote shared parking arrangements

### **Action 1.1: Corridor Improvement Program**

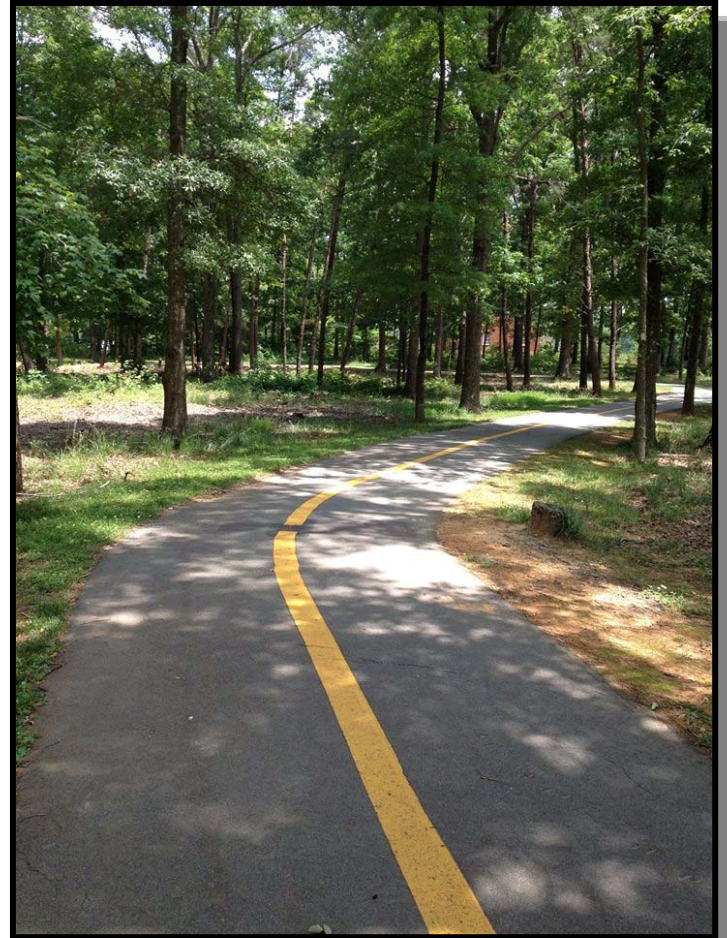
Explore the possibility of forming a corridor improvement program for the Town Center and South Main Street that will place utilities underground, improve pedestrian crossings, and construct a landscaped median on South Main Street.

### **Action 1.2: Parking Space Maximums**

Adopt required parking space maximum regulations in order to prevent the overdevelopment of parking.

### **Action 1.3: Link Recreational Resources**

Promote a greenway system that links together the City's recreational resources.



## Goal 2: Interconnected Transportation Network

Graham's road network will be highly connected with short walkable blocks and multiple pathways to any single destination in the City

### **Policy 2.1: Connectivity**

Promote interconnectivity within new residential and commercial developments.

### **Policy 2.2: Road Network**

An adopted Thoroughfare Plan Map should indicate the location of future roads throughout Graham and provide a coordinated, efficient, and dense street network.



### **Policy 2.3: Fewer Dead-end Streets**

Discourage or prohibit the development of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets in new projects.

### **Policy 2.4: Greenway system**

Promote a greenway system that links together the City's recreational resources and provides connections to commercial, employment, and residential areas. Greenways along stream buffers should be prioritized in order to protect the stream watershed.

### **Action 2.1: Improve Connectivity**

Amend subdivision and zoning regulations to require interconnectivity between new subdivisions. Require maximum block lengths and minimum right-of-way connectivity ratios.

### **Action 2.2: Develop City Street Plan**

Coordinate with NCDOT and Alamance County to develop and implement a City Street Plan and Thoroughfare Plan to have minor roads built by developers and maintain an interconnected road network.

### **Action 2.3: Promote InterCity Bikeway System**

Partner with Burlington, Mebane, and the MPO to develop an intercity bikeway system, preferably including off-street bike paths and greenways.

### **Action 2.4: Build Haw River Trail**

Coordinate with NCDOT, Alamance County Recreation and Parks Department, and other entities to build and maintain the Haw River Trail.

## **Goal 3: Multimodal Street Design**

Graham will have efficient, safe, and accessible streets that accommodate many travelers and protect Graham's community character.

### **Policy 3.1: Complete Streets**

New roads and road improvements should be designed as complete streets that are designed to provide access to all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, and automobiles.

"There are still long stretches of roads with no sidewalk and little or no shoulder, which makes it difficult to combine errands with exercise."  
-Jeff T.

Ideally, on all non-industrial and non-rural streets, 50% of the right-of-way should serve bicyclists and pedestrians while the other 50% should serve automobile traffic.

### **Policy 3.2: Limit Street Width**

Reduce roadway lane widths in order to slow down vehicular traffic in areas where bicycle and pedestrian traffic is encouraged.

### **Policy 3.3: Implement Road Diets**

Reduce the number of vehicular lanes in order to paint separated bicycle lanes and allow for on-street parallel parking in areas where bicycle and pedestrian traffic is encouraged.

### **Policy 3.4: More Sidewalks**

Increase the length of sidewalks on future and existing roads.

### **Policy 3.5: Increase Safety**

Provide for pedestrian and bicycle safety at all street crossings, including cross-walks, bulbouts, signage, and tight curb return radii.

### **Action 3.1: Encourage Sidewalks and Street Trees**

Amend subdivision and zoning regulations to require that all new development include sidewalks and street trees, especially where part of the adopted Sidewalk Plan.

### **Action 3.2: Increase Bicycle Parking**

Amend building code regulations to require the installation of bicycle parking for all new development.

“For us the biggest obstacle to a healthier lifestyle is a lack of safe bike lanes. As we look to grow Graham, bike lanes would be a wonderful blessing.”

-Keith D.

### **Action 3.3: Amend Street Cross-Sections**

Amend street cross-sections with the intent of increasing the right-of-way width serving pedestrians, bicyclists, and low-impact stormwater infrastructure.

## **Goal 4: Accessible Transit Service**

Students, workers, and residents in Graham will have access to an efficient bus system that accesses local and regional opportunities without needing for a car.

### **Policy 4.1: Transit Viability**

Promote transit-oriented land use patterns specifically around activity centers identified on the Future Land Use Map.

### **Policy 4.2: Accommodating Street Design**

Design streets near future and existing public transit stops to accommodate pedestrians by providing wide sidewalks, shade, bicycle parking, and safe access to and from the stop.

### **Policy 4.3: Van and Car Pool**

Promote carsharing PART Vanpool services and for intercity commuting.

# Chapter 4: Enhancing our Public Facilities and Services

## Background

Future growth will affect emergency and public services and public facilities for current and future residents. The City of Graham is highly regarded for the quality of its parks and public services. While Graham's continued growth necessitates planning for new infrastructure, it is the primary priority of this plan to maintain existing infrastructure in good repair and to maximize the utilization of investments already made. This plan aims to maintain adequate levels of service, reduce energy and maintenance costs, protect water resources, and reduce solid waste.

"Graham has responsive local government and public services staffs. I've never had an issue that the department I contacted didn't help me resolve. This has not been the case in larger towns I've lived in."  
-Jeff T.



## Related Plans and Documents

- *Alamance County Solid Waste Management Plan (2012)*
- *Graham Wastewater Report (2014)*
- *Graham Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan (2012)*

## Schools

Education is a primary concern of people living in Graham and it is a critically important topic because of education's strong correlation with quality of life and economic development. The City is served by several public schools within the Alamance-Burlington School System, including four elementary schools, two middle schools, three high schools, and a combined middle/high school. Additionally, Alamance Community College is located in Graham. Although the City does not control school budgets or policies, this plan will suggest collaborative actions that can be taken to improve education.





“Graham will be much more appealing to families/businesses if our school system is improved and has a reputation for excellence. Once a good school system is in place and employment opportunities offering higher wages become available, all other components of Graham's growth will likely enjoy success as well.”  
-John P.

There are multiple opportunities for Graham's residents, business leaders, and stakeholders to become more involved in enhancing the conditions and operations of public schools within the City.

### **Recreation and Parks**

Graham is home to several parks including Bill Cooke, Marshall Street, Greenway, Oakley Street, and South Graham Parks. Additionally, Graham offers recreational opportunities at the Graham Recreation Center, the Maple Street Center, Graham Civic Center, Haw River Access and other locations throughout the City. This plan aims to promote the continued high quality service provided by the City and County's Recreation and Parks departments.

### **Public Safety**

“We have such wonderful parks both city and county around here, and that's what we need to keep open and beautiful.”  
-Hope M.

The City of Graham provides police and fire safety to residents and visitors of Graham. These services make up the largest proportion of general fund appropriations. The Fire Department currently has one station with a combined force of full-time employees and volunteers. The Police Department works to prevent crime and protect life and property. The department services four patrol zones within the City and officers are encouraged to implement community policing techniques in cooperation with co-workers and citizens.

### **Public Works**

The City's Public Works Department houses the Sanitation Department, Streets and Highways Department, Property Maintenance Department, and City Garage. The Sanitation Department collects solid waste and administers the City's recycling contract. The Streets and Highways Department maintains the City's streets, sidewalks, street signs, streetlights, and storm sewer. It also participates in the City of Graham Stormwater Management Program. The Property Maintenance Department landscapes and maintains public grounds.

### **Water and Wastewater**

The City of Graham operates a combined enterprise fund for Water and Sewer and is co-owner of the Graham-Mebane Water Treatment Plant with the City of Mebane. The plant is located on Graham-Mebane Lake in the northeastern part of Alamance County. The lake provides 2.8 billion gallons of storage and the water treatment plant has a treatment capacity of 12 million gallons per day and treated water storage capacity of six million gallons. In addition to serving Graham and Mebane, the Towns of Green Level and Swepsonville are also served by this plant. The City's water currently meets federal and state water quality requirements and is projected to meet demand over the lifetime of this plan. In addition to these large fixed investments, the City's utility systems require continual investment to keep pace with growing demand, replace aging facilities, and keep systems in a state of good repair.

### **Civic Engagement**

Strong civic engagement and public trust is essential in effective governance. By being transparent, providing opportunities for public collaboration in decision-making processes, and fostering involvement among typically underrepresented and vulnerable populations Graham can not only continue to earn the respect and trust of citizens, but also lead the way in responsive local governance.

## Community Broadband

Communities across the United States and around the world are beginning to provide community broadband using fiber optic technology, enhancing participation in digital democracy and civic engagement, expanding opportunities for education and research, and driving job creation, entrepreneurialism and economic growth. While initiating development of ultra-high speed bandwidth in Graham may seem challenging, such initiatives are being explored by local governments and institutions within the Piedmont and throughout North Carolina.

### **Action 4.1: Increase Community Involvement in Schools**

Create new opportunities for neighborhoods and parents to become involved in school functions, and seek additional opportunities for community use of school facilities.

### **Action 4.2: Explore Broadband and Fiber Options**

Pursue options for assuring basic internet service and coverage to all areas of Graham, and explore possibilities for extension of high-speed fiber optic technologies to businesses and residences in Graham.

## Goal 5: Quality Facilities and Services

Graham will continue to be served by high-quality public facilities and services.

### **Policy 5.1: Manage Outward Growth**

Because of limited resources and the desire to keep property taxes low in Graham, the City shall consider the impacts of proposed low density Greenfield developments on service and facility life cycle costs and limit outward expansion. Proposals to extend utility service should:

- Be sufficient in capacity to accommodate the extension

- Meet City standards
- Enhance the contiguous development of the City
- Maintain consistency with the Future Land Use Map

### **Policy 5.2: Maintain Existing Infrastructure**

Maintain in good condition existing public utility facilities to accommodate infill and to allow for the most efficient use of existing infrastructure

### **Policy 5.3: Full-Cost Pricing**

Promote full-cost pricing of utility services to address the true long-term cost of providing service, including the cost of infrastructure maintenance and promoting rational economic choices.

### **Policy 5.4: Use the Future Land Use Map**

Utilize the Future Land Use Map of this plan to make decisions regarding future utility extensions and investments.

### **Policy 5.5: Conserve Water Resources**

Through education outreach, infrastructures, and service pricing, promote the conservation of water resources for long term security.

### **Policy 5.6: Consider Purple Pipe Infrastructure**

Consider the development of purple pipe reuse water infrastructure

### **Policy 5.7: Increase Use of Reclaimed Water**

Promote the use of reclaimed water by incentivizing rainwater collection and other forms of reclaiming water.

### **Action 5.1: Water Efficient Construction**

Incorporate water saving and water efficient construction requirements into appropriate development regulations.

# Chapter 5: Conserving our Natural Environment

## Background

Conservation of the environment plays a major role in fostering long-term economic growth, as well as providing better air and water quality and recreational opportunities. This chapter provides strategies for decreasing Graham's development impact on the natural environment.

Decision makers across the state and around the country are increasingly recognizing the environmental impacts of growth and development. Such awareness has burgeoned due to longstanding environmental neglect: urban sprawl, loss of agricultural and rural lands, habitat loss and fragmentation, and increased pollution of our air and water. This plan recognizes that environmental protection and long term economic development go hand in hand.

### Watershed Health

Everyone lives in a watershed, yet many of us take for granted the streams that go by our backyards and wind under bridges and through underground culverts. Graham lies within the Cape Fear River Basin. Several freshwater streams run through the City's corporate limits including:

- Haw River
- Town Branch
- County Home Branch
- Big Alamance Creek
- Back Creek (Little Creek)
- Little Alamance Creek
- Bowden Branch (Boyd Creek)



Decreasing polluted runoff into these streams is critically important because of the high social, environmental, and economic value of these waters, which are used for fishing, kayaking, canoeing, trails, greenbelts, parks, aesthetics, riparian vegetation, wildlife habitat, and drinking water. Several scientific studies have found that by protecting streams, communities benefit from increased tax bases, recreation-oriented businesses, tourism, state and federal government expenditures, and corporate relocations. Additionally, protecting streams can reduce costs for services such as roads, sewers, and flood control.

### Low Impact Development

Low impact development (LID) is an approach to urban development, redevelopment, and retrofits that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features and minimizing impervious surface area. In practice, LID facilities include bioretention areas, rain gardens, green roofs, rain barrels, and swales. Implementing LID can benefit communities by reducing the impact of built-up areas and promoting the natural movement of water within the watershed.





#### ***Action 6.1: Encourage Low Impact Development***

Promote the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques to mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff. Such techniques should include the use of green roofs, rain gardens, cisterns, and rain barrels, as well as reducing impermeable surfaces and restricting unnecessary grading and clearing of natural vegetation.

#### ***Action 6.2: Expand Wastewater Reuse Options***

Explore opportunities for reuse of treated wastewater at Graham's wastewater treatment plant to further reduce the nitrogen and phosphorous load to the Haw River and reduce non-potable water consumption where feasible.

## **Goal 6: Healthy Streams**

Streams within Graham's planning area will be clean and healthy, with heavily vegetated and connected riparian buffers that make Graham more attractive. This goal seeks to reduce non-point source pollution and minimize soil erosion and sedimentation.

#### ***Policy 6.1: Water Quality BMPs***

Use non-structural best management practices (BMPs) to improve water quality, such as public education program and monitoring and control of illicit discharges

#### ***Policy 6.2: Stream Protection***

Protect the Haw River and other streams in Graham through overlay districts, open space conservation, tree coverage programs, floodplain and riparian buffer conservation, greenway acquisition, improved public and private design and construction practices, and limits to impervious surface cover.

#### ***Policy 6.3: Groundwater Protection***

Protect groundwater from the adverse effects of development. The likelihood of groundwater contamination should be considered in policy and development decisions.

# Chapter 6: Building upon our Community Character

## Background

Like many small historic towns across North Carolina, Graham has a charming character that builds off of well-connected neighborhoods and an attractive urban fabric. This chapter focuses on the benefits of the City's existing character and how to preserve that character during future growth and expansion, as well as how to promote the City's historic treasures.

The following policies and initiatives provide guidance for protecting the City's community appearance. A few of these policies are linked to policies introduced in other chapters of this plan, and are important considerations in making adjustments to zoning and land use regulations, recruiting businesses and economic activity, and approaching redevelopment of aging and/or vacant properties.



## Goal 7: Attractive Community Appearance

Graham will grow and develop in a manner that preserves the historic character of the city and encourages quality design.

### **Policy 7.1: Public Space**

Develop an upgraded “wayfinding” and signage system for installation along gateways and corridors. Designate gateways for entrances to the historic downtown area, and further develop plans for public improvements and landscaping in the gateway areas. Expand public and private tree planting initiatives in appropriate locations. Promote the incorporation of street trees along new roads.

### **Action 7.1: Public Space**

Develop commercial and residential site design guidelines that enhance community character and appearance.

### **Policy 7.2: Design of Development**

Encourage development that complements existing architectural designs of the neighborhood. Encourage the development of mixed-use projects that combine compatible uses within one site. Encourage infill development within the district, as well as redevelopment efforts of deteriorating structures.

### **Action 7.2: Landscaping Standards**

Upgrade landscaping standards to help beautify and buffer development sites

### **Policy 7.3: Commercial Corridors**

Discourage commercial strip development along major thoroughfares. Ensure that development along Highway 54 does not replicate the highway commercial/strip development characteristic of South Main Street. This can be accomplished by promoting nodal development through a regional commercial center and village center with sufficient separation between centers. Encourage development in village

and neighborhood centers to serve Graham residents. This pattern should be promoted over the highway commercial/strip development that has occurred along South Main Street.

### **Action 7.3: Corridor Planning**

Initiate a corridor improvement program for the Town Center and South Main Street that will place utilities underground, improve pedestrian crossings, and construct a landscaped median on South Main Street. Discourage highway commercial/strip development along transportation arteries and proposed interstate interchanges by directing these commercial activities to proposed village and neighborhood centers.

### **Policy 7.4: Encourage Transitional Buffers**

Provide transitional buffers between proposed commercial and village centers and existing or proposed single-family neighborhoods that would consist of landscaping, multi-family developments and/or townhouse developments.

### **Action 7.4: Zoning Ordinance Adjustments**

Make necessary changes to the zoning ordinance to allow for the type of development that is desired by the community.

### **Action 7.5: Prepare Small Area Plans for Key Areas**

Develop more detailed area plans that are consistent with the vision, goals, and policies of this plan.

### **Action 7.6: Zoning Ordinance Adjustments**

Obtain a “State Historic Site” sign along the interstate to recognize the Courthouse Square and North Graham Historic Districts.

### **Action 7.7: Seek to Place Utilities Underground**

Work in conjunction with the downtown businesses to place utilities underground.



# Chapter 7: Expanding our Housing Options

## Background

Local and nationwide demographic changes are resulting in new housing needs and preferences. This chapter outlines strategies for protecting home values, promoting home investments, and maintaining diverse high quality residential neighborhoods.

This chapter also includes strategies for healthy and active living environments.

### Equity

Shelter is a basic human need, yet not everyone in Graham has safe and healthy living environments. Race, income, immigration status, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, and disability can limit choices. Working to provide a fair and equitable housing market is essential for expanding choice and opportunity for everyone in Graham, and creating a strong and inclusive community.

### Housing + Transportation

The low cost of high quality homes is one thing that makes Graham an attractive place to live. The average

household in Graham spends less than thirty percent of their income on housing. But, while housing is affordable, current transportation patterns are costing those living, working, and studying in Graham. An average household owns 2 vehicles, drives 27,000 miles annually, and spends more on transportation than on housing. The idea of affordability should be reexamined and location needs to become an important consideration in the development of new housing.

## Goal 8: Variety of Housing Options

Regardless of family size, income level, or other factors, people in Graham will have access to housing choices that accommodate their needs.

### Policy 8.1: Housing variety

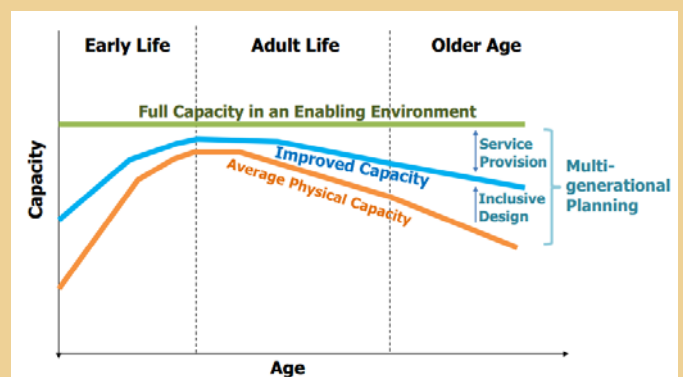
Encourage a mix of housing types within Graham to increase choice. These can include single family dwelling units, multifamily dwelling units, small units, pre-fabricated homes, co-housing, and clustered housing.

### Policy 8.2: Variety of ownership opportunities

Encourage a variety of homeownership opportunities and choices by supporting the development of condominiums, cooperatives, and land trusts.

### Graham: A Multigenerational City

Multigenerational planning is a comprehensive approach to community and economic development that enables people of all ages and abilities to lead active and fulfilling lives. By developing diverse communities we create neighborhoods where young people can afford to live, families can comfortably raise children, and growing elderly populations may remain rooted in the communities that they care about.



Source: Planning Across Generations Project



**Policy 8.3: Physically-accessible housing**

Ensure pedestrian-oriented housing designs with access to nearby services

**Policy 8.4: Stock of affordable housing**

Preserve and increase the stock of long term and permanent affordable housing to meet the needs of the community that are not met by private market conditions. Coordinate planning efforts with housing developers and non-profits organizations.

**Policy 8.5: Affordable housing location**

Facilitate expanding the variety of types and sizes of affordable housing units in centralized locations with access to convenient transit, education and training facilities, mixed-use districts, and employment areas.

**Policy 8.6: Effect of regulations on affordability**

Evaluate development regulations and seek to decrease development costs by reducing eliminating certain requirements such as road pavement width and parking requirements.

**Policy 8.7: Renovations**

Structure renovations within existing neighborhoods should provide quality, sustainable housing that enhances and upholds the character of the neighborhood. After exhausting all renovation options, blighted, uninhabitable buildings should be replaced with new infill structures that are compatible with the neighborhood and enhance its visual appearance.

**Policy 8.8: Green building**

Encourage green practices in housing and neighborhood construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes. Explore the use of modified LEED-ND standards to evaluate new housing projects.

**Policy 8.9: Neighborhood Associations**

Graham will support the creation of neighborhood associations and assist their promotion of community policies and strategies.

**Policy 8.10: Improve existing housing**

Graham will work with landowners, neighborhood associations, and other relevant organizations to seek strategies to address blighted, uninhabitable, and hazardous housing, accessory structures, and lots.

**Action 8.1: Healthy Neighborhood Initiative**

Consider developing a healthy neighborhood initiative to revitalize older central neighborhoods using tax credits, loan pools, marketing, community events, code enforcement, and infrastructure investments.

**Action 8.2: Neighborhood Conservation District**

Consider the adoption of a Neighborhood Conservation District to preserve, revitalize, protect, and enhance significant older areas within Graham.

**Action 8.3: Community Design Manual**

Consider the development and adoption of a community design manual

## Goal 9: Vibrant Neighborhoods

Graham is home to exceptional residential neighborhoods that serve their populations by supplying complete communities and multigenerational living options, with access to transportation, employment, and services.

**Policy 9.1: Diverse Neighborhoods**

Encourage a mix of housing types within neighborhoods, including detached, duplex, multifamily, townhomes, and live-work units.

**Policy 9.2: Promote Infill Housing**

Strive to direct most new housing into downtown, existing neighborhoods, vacant buildings and properties, and other infill locations near existing City infrastructure and services.

***Policy 9.3: Multigenerational Housing***

Promote buildings and neighborhood designs that serve multiple age groups simultaneously and meet the needs of young people, families, older adults, and people with disabilities, especially in focus areas and in close proximity to services and multiple transportation options, especially future transit stops.

***Policy 9.4: Accessory Dwelling Units***

Actively support and encourage accessory dwelling units within residential neighborhoods as a means of increasing the stock of affordable housing within stable neighborhoods and provide an additional means of income for homeowners.

***Action 9.1: Incentivize diverse housing***

Develop incentives for developers and homebuilders to increase diversity, affordability, and accessibility within new development and redevelopment projects.

***Action 9.2: Update zoning ordinance***

Update the zoning code and other land use regulations to allow and encourage multigenerational, multiuse, and accessible residential neighborhoods.

# Chapter 8: Bringing Business to Graham

## Background

Every great City has a strong economic foundation with a broad number of choices in education and employment. Graham has many assets that make it an ideal place to live and work, with a high potential for economic growth and investment. This chapter outlines strategies for creating opportunities for small-business growth, workforce training, and attracting firms that can provide good jobs and grow the City's economy.

Graham's economic development principles outline some of the community's guiding values, which include the following:

### Create vibrant centers, especially downtown

Graham should grow employment and a mix of uses around downtown and focus areas. Vibrant centers create spillover effects and foster small business development and innovation. Create the next generation of employment sanctuaries by facilitating development through public-private partnerships.

### Improve access to living wage jobs

Good quality jobs for low educated workers are critical for the future of Graham. Household prosperity varies greatly by employment type. Meanwhile, the wealth gap has grown across the United States, leading to challenges for small communities with dwindling resources. Graham's economic foundation was built on manufacturing, which has seen declines over the past several decades



### Maximize land use efficiency

Communities are often lured into public private partnerships that result in the inefficient use of land which can end up costing the public over the long term. Graham should plan for the efficient allocation and use of infrastructure over time, especially within employment and industrial areas.

“Graham would benefit from aggressively seeking entrepreneurs and investors who would restore the city's historic, crumbling buildings and open businesses such as restaurants, galleries, antique shops, performing arts venues, and food stores. This would create local jobs, generate tax revenue and promote Graham as a premiere North Carolina city. Restoring and revitalizing the downtown area of Graham will attract new residents to the city and bring increased consumer spending.”

-Elaine M.

### Make education a strong point

An educated population and skilled workforce are critical for promoting economic development. Schools in Graham represent a huge asset for promoting the City and improving the area's quality of life. Alamance Community College should become a focal point within the City and region.

### **Attractive compact built form**

It may be tempting to view any growth as an indicator of success and a healthy economy, however conventional development – that development which is dispersed and disconnected – could pose future challenges to meet the fiscal, social, environmental, public health, and long term economic development needs of the community and put at risk achievement of the goals in this plan. On the other hand, developing exciting places with bike paths, sidewalks, and other pedestrian-oriented elements is an important economic development technique. With its rich history and charming small-town character, Graham can be a destination within the state and a high quality living and working environment.

### **Growing Sustainably**

Several cities and towns in the area have capitalized off of conservation of rivers and forests, not only by promoting and benefiting from tourism, but also through less tangible long-term economic benefits. Greening neighborhoods and commercial districts with street trees and parks have been proven through research to directly increase the value of property.

## **Goal 10: A Resilient Economy**

Graham will have a diverse and robust local economy fostered by economic development opportunities within the City's planning area.

### **Policy 10.1: Diverse job market**

A diversified job market that provides employment opportunities for persons with varying education levels and skill sets is needed and encouraged

### **Policy 10.2: Prioritize and Market Education**

Graham will increase accessibility to education through strategic and coordinated investments. The City will market itself as a leader in education and cutting-edge educational opportunities at all levels.

### **Policy 10.3: Economic resilience**

Graham improves its economic resilience to economic, social, and environmental instability through a strong local economy and equitable opportunities for prosperity.

### **Policy 10.4: Competitive advantage**

Graham works to strengthen its existing comparative economic advantages including a high quality and highly diverse workforce, local education and research institutions, and high quality of life.

### **Policy 10.5: Regional coordination**

Graham will work to promote a positive economic environment by working to compete with, not against, other local municipalities for high-quality jobs and economic development opportunities

### **Policy 10.6: Locally owned businesses**

Facilitate the creation and growth of small locally-owned businesses and support programs that provide technical and financial assistance to promote sustainable operating practices.

### **Policy 10.7: Tourism**

Promote Graham as a tourist destination with a focus on Graham's historic downtown, access to the Haw River and Haw River Trail (portion of the North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail), art, museums, and parks.

### **Action 10.1: Business Incubation**

Develop a business incubation program.

### **Action 10.2: Collaborate with regional networks**

Utilize resources available through UNC Chapel Hill and other state government authorities and non-profits to develop and evaluate economic development programs.

### **Action 10.3: Partner with business leaders**

Work with local business leaders, school district officials, and Graham City Council to provide



supplemental community investments in local schools and Alamance Community College.

#### **Action 10.4: Planning capacity**

Identify federal and state funding sources to expand Graham's long-term planning and economic development capacity.

#### **Action 10.5: Reduce barriers**

Work with local businesses and economic development partners to identify and address unnecessary barriers to local business development.

#### **Action 10.6: Business opportunity information**

Provide a clearinghouse for information on locating a business in Graham and the available State and local resources available to small business, including funding, training, grants, and location assistance.

## **Goal 11: Prosperous Centers**

Graham will be home to several nodal employment centers that contain a variety of businesses, uses, and services.

#### **Policy 11.1: Innovative spaces, spaces of innovation**

Promote the development of flex space, live-work units, and adaptive structures for office, retail, and light industry.

#### **Policy 11.2: Retail centers**

Because of market limitations on the amount retail space the City can viably support, Graham promotes retail within focused centers of activity that will host a large variety of small retail spaces while generally discouraging sprawling isolated retail that does not promote a cohesive urban fabric.

#### **Policy 11.3: Downtown**

A vibrant downtown is critical for Graham's economic success. Graham's downtown is a priority when considering incentives, investments, regulations, and

marketing. Encourage entertainment options to locate within Graham's downtown.

#### **Policy 11.4: Gateways**

Consider efforts to create attractive gateways from major corridors running through Graham, including freeways, highways, and the Haw River Trail.

#### **Action 11.1: Facilitate focused development**

Incentivize pedestrian-oriented nodal development consistent with this plan by incentivizing smart growth development. The City could choose to utilize some of the following methods:

- Expedited permit review
- Deferred tax payments
- Covering some building expenses
- Low-interest loans
- Providing infrastructure
- Flexible and innovative regulations
- Small area plans and form-based codes

## **Goal 12: Active Employment District**

The employment district, a joint planning area, representing enormous opportunity to develop the local economy due to its location, regional accessibility, and highly developable status, will host a variety of companies.

#### **Policy 12.1: Cluster development**

Align plans and investments with efforts that direct strategic business development resources to enhance the competitiveness of business in clusters

#### **Policy 12.1: Business development leader**

Strive to have Graham's built environment, business growth programs, and infrastructure investments showcase examples of best practices for small towns throughout the Southeast.

#### **Action 12.1: Develop Employment District Plan**

Develop a plan for the employment district in order to maximize economic growth within this area.

## Goal 13: Industry Recruitment

Graham prospered from manufacturing, an industry which is redefining itself throughout the country. With its many assets, strategic location, and large amount of industrial land, Graham will become an industrial center with areas that include flex space developments, incubator districts for emerging local businesses, industrial headquarters offices, and dispersed neighborhood employment areas. These areas promote opportunities for middle-wage jobs and upward mobility.

### **Policy 13.1: Industrial land**

Provide industrial land that encourages industrial business creation, growth, and retention

### **Policy: 13.2: Green industry growth**

Encourage improvements to the cleanliness, safety, and ecological performance of industrial development and freight corridors by facilitating adoption of new technology and design, conserving trees on industrial properties, and use of renewable energy sources. Work to attract environmentally responsible companies and foster growth in green industries in Graham.

### **Policy 13.3: Buffers**

Enhance natural areas, landscaping, and tree features as buffers between industrial properties and neighborhoods and other non-industrial uses.

### **Policy 13.4: Mixed use**

Encourage a mix of uses and focused development that includes light industry

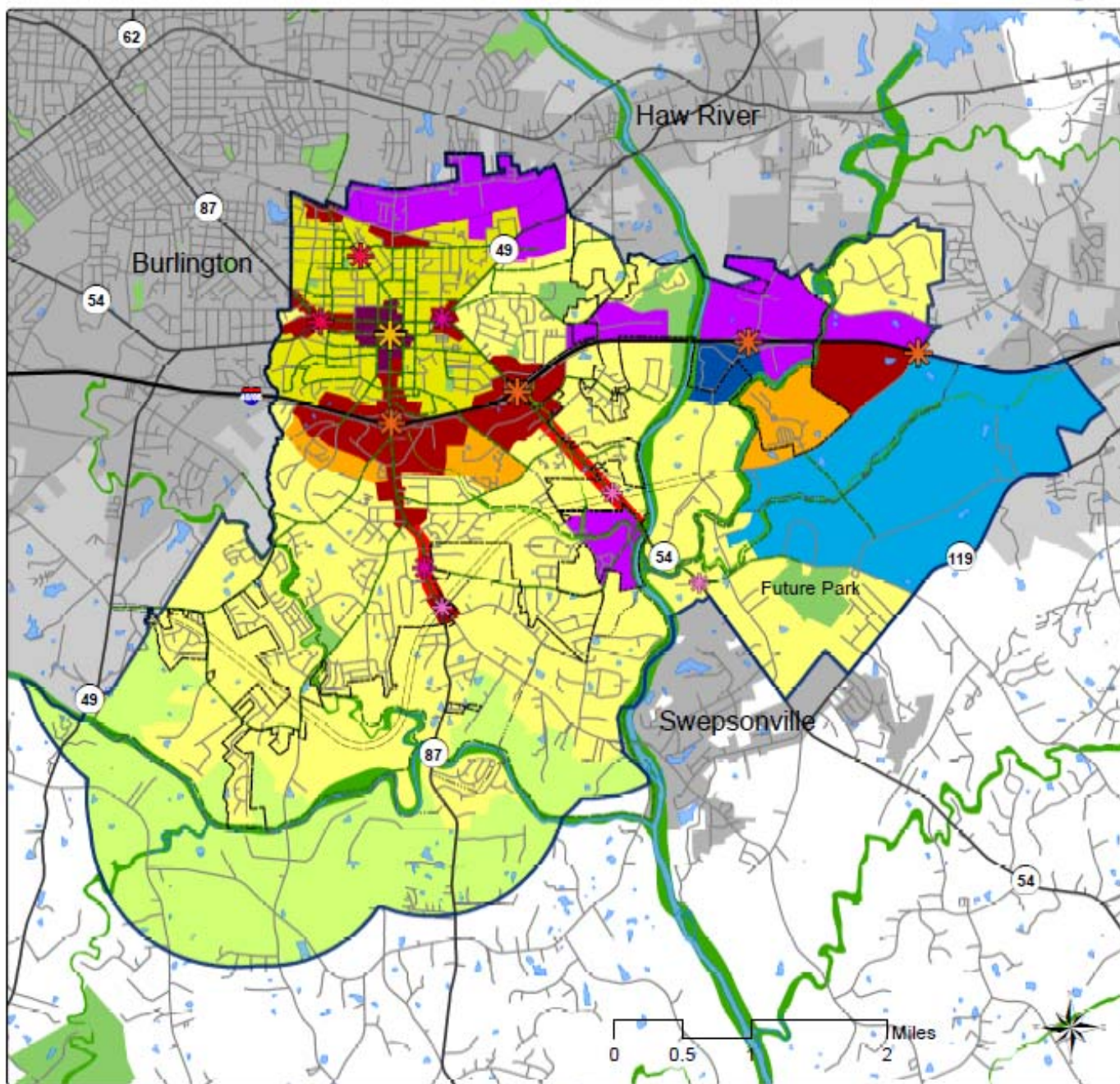
### **Action 13.1: Industrial redevelopment**

Encourage reinvestment and intensification at existing industrial sites. Encourage redevelopment of existing buildings and infrastructure for industrial growth.

### **Action 13.2: Consider freight corridors**

Encourage freight-oriented industrial development to locate where it can maximize access to major freight routes, including I-40/85 and state highways.

## PART III: LAND USE





# Chapter 9: Future Land Use

## BACKGROUND

The Future Land Use Map provides direction for land use changes in Graham over time. Future land use designations provide information on where and how to grow in an efficient, sustainable, and orderly manner. Physical form is a critical component of future growth and this chapter addresses development patterns in Graham. The Future Land Use Map follows several growth principles, and will guide the City's land use decisions. These guiding principles are:

### **Develop a compact, mixed-use, and focused pattern of growth**

Graham will focus compact development in well-defined areas in order to increase the viability of regional transit, preserve open space, rural areas, and environmentally sensitive lands, efficiently provide public services and infrastructure, and promote infill development and redevelopment. Compact growth

areas include a number of communitywide activity destinations, including downtown and future mixed-use activity centers that will serve as focal points and centers of activity.

### **Increase travel choice among residents and visitors**

Present day land use and transportation patterns primarily accommodate a single mode of travel: the automobile. The City's new growth pattern will facilitate travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. Transportation infrastructure will use context-sensitive solutions and will be organized around and woven into a compact pattern of small blocks with interconnected streets and paths.

### **Provide an interconnected system of open lands**

Maintaining a web of open space provides recreational opportunities, conserves natural habitats, and reduces the harmful impacts of urban runoff into waterways. This chapter seeks to provide Graham residents with access to open space and promote the City as a destination for outdoor recreation by maintaining and expanding its network of trails, greenways, bikeways, parks, and open space.



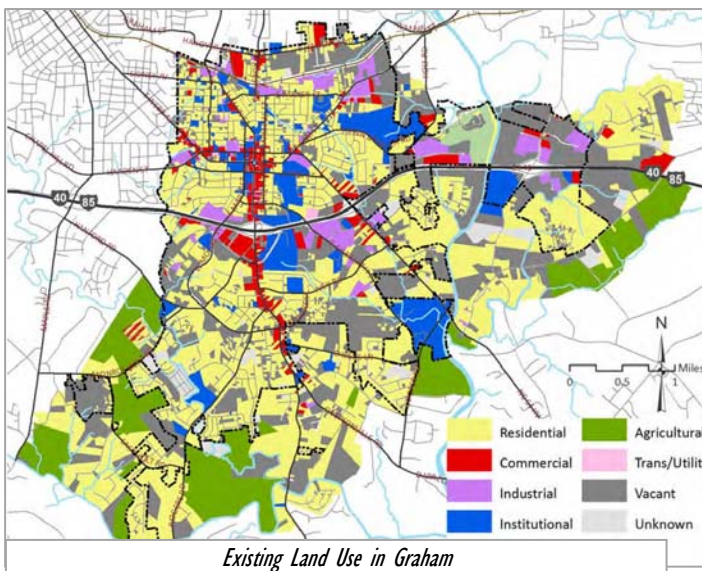


## Reduce greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions

Land use and transportation patterns have direct effects on greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollutants. By focusing development in a compact, pedestrian-oriented, and mixed-use manner this plan aims to reduce energy use and daily automobile trips while maintaining a high quality of life for people who live and work in Graham. This chapter also promotes flexible zoning regulations that promote renewable energy production and water reclamation.

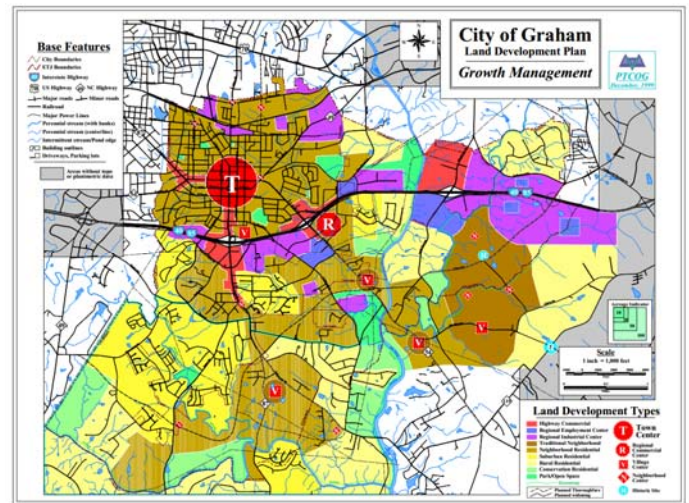
## Existing Land Use Patterns

The existing land use map shows general land uses within the City of Graham and its ETJ. Over the years this land use pattern developed as a result of market forces and previous land use policies and zoning regulations. Comparing the prior future land use plan to existing land uses shows that development has generally remained consistent with previous spatial policies.



Graham's previous future land use plan was adopted by the City in 2000 with Graham's Growth Management Plan and included nine land use categories. The new Future Land Use Map aims to expand upon the previous plan by reinvisioning the

built environment and developing around focused centers.

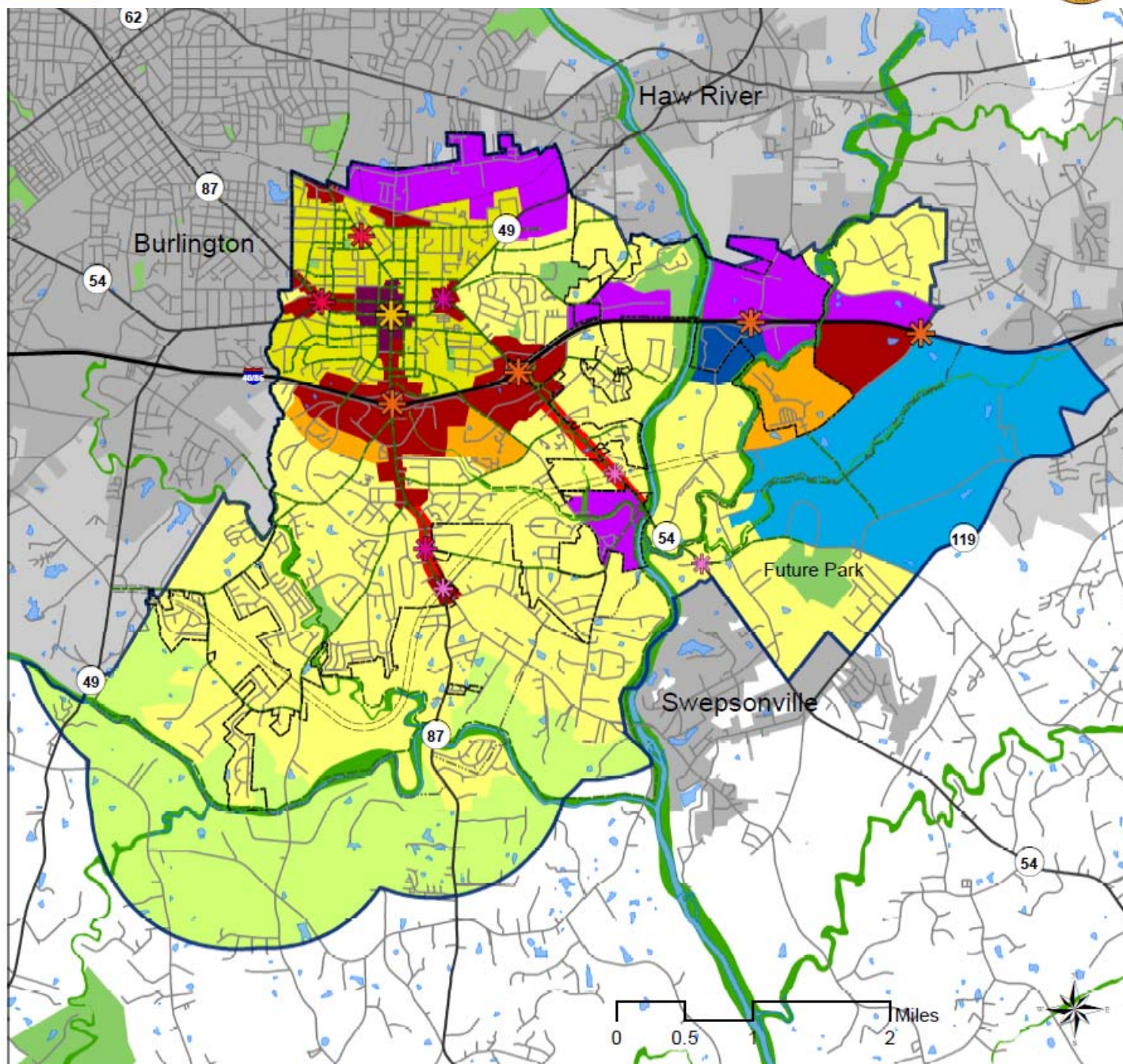


The Future Land Use Map, which guides long term policy and land use decisions, is distinct from the zoning map, which amounts to direct regulation of land use, density, and dimensions within the boundaries of the City and its ETJ. The Future Land Use Plan is one of the community's tools to wisely shape the City's future over time as exemplified in the images below. This change occurs at the pace of the private market through zoning changes, which in North Carolina are made in accordance with a comprehensive plan.

On the next page, Graham's Future Land Use Plan is displayed, followed by descriptions of the various land use categories and selected illustrations.



# DRAFT Future Land Use Map



## Neighborhoods

- Mixed Use Residential
- Downtown Residential
- Suburban Residential

## Edges

- Rural Residential
- Floodway

## Districts

- Downtown District
- Mixed Use Commercial
- Education District
- Employment District
- Industrial

## Corridors

- Commercial Corridor
- Proposed Southern Loop
- Bike/Ped Corridors

## Boundaries

- Graham City Limits
- Graham ETJ
- Planning Area

## Centers

- Downtown Regional Node
- Interchange Regional Node
- Community Activity Center
- Neighborhood Activity Center
- Potential Activity Center
- Parks & Open Space

## Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map represents a spatial arrangement that reflects the values of the community. While the map represents a two-dimensional development plan to promote orderly development, land use categories provide the third dimension to growth. Land use categories outline the type of encouraged development and provide a guide for zoning changes. This plan organizes the future land use map into six urban components:

- Neighborhoods
- Districts
- Edges
- Boundaries
- Corridors
- Centers

Each of these components serves a critical function in cities like Graham. Where appropriate, components contain goals and policies that maintain consistency between the future land use categories in order to promote orderly development and a vibrant, unique, and diverse community.

## Zoning

Goal 9.1 below addresses the application of the Future Land Use Map for zoning requests and other zoning changes. North Carolina municipal zoning enabling legislation requires that zoning be “in accordance with the comprehensive plan.” State zoning statutes also require that Planning Board review of zoning amendments include written comments on the consistency of the proposed amendment with the comprehensive plan and any other relevant plans (such as a small area plan, corridor plan, or transportation plan) that have been adopted by the local government’s City council. The council is also required to adopt a statement on plan consistency before adopting or rejecting any zoning amendment. While these written comments are required, they do not limit the council’s discretionary power to adopt or not adopt zoning amendments.

## Goal 14: Sustainable Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map establishes the desired development pattern for the City of Graham and serves as a blueprint for future growth.

### Policy 14.1: Land Use Designations

The Future Land Use Map of this plan will be the primary guide for future land use and transportation decisions.

### Policy 14.2: Guide for Future Zoning Decisions

The Future Land Use Map of this plan will serve as the primary guide for future zoning decisions, along with policies and strategies from this chapter.

### Action 14.1: Initiate Code Revisions

Develop new zones, initiate rezonings, and revise the zoning code to carry out the goals and policies of this chapter and the Future Land Use Map. Consider the adoption of form-based codes and small area regulating plans for some future land use areas.

## Neighborhoods

The term *neighborhood* refers to the idea of a compact, walkable, diverse, and connected community. As the building blocks of City urban fabric, neighborhoods should be organized around small scale activity centers that provide civic and commercial functions within a five to ten minute walk for residents to meet their daily needs.

In this plan neighborhoods include mixed-use residential, downtown residential, suburban residential and rural residential future land use categories. Goals and policies listed for neighborhoods apply to all of these categories. Specific policy guidance is also provided for each category.

## Connecting Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods will be well connected internally and externally for bicyclists, pedestrians, and commuters.

### ***Policy 14.3: Street and Right-of-way Network***

Small blocks and high connectivity ratios should be established and maintained both within and between neighborhoods. In redevelopment and all new neighborhood development:

- Prohibit dead ends and cul-de-sacs unless barriers or topography preclude a throughway
- Require blocks shorter than 600 feet from intersection to intersection and encourage frequent pedestrian connections
- Provide off-street pedestrian and bicycle routes
- Require sidewalks on both sides of all new neighborhood streets with street trees planted between the sidewalk and curb

### ***Policy 14.4: Traffic Calming***

Neighborhood streets should be designed to slow down traffic by decreasing street pavement widths, providing short blocks, encouraging on-street parking, planting street trees, and constructing bulb-outs and tight curb return radii of between 5 and 15 feet at intersections.

## Making Places

New neighborhoods enhance the quality of life of and expand choices for the residents who live there and represent the vibrancy and diversity of Graham.

### ***Policy 14.5: Housing diversity***

Provide variation in housing typologies and lot sizes within new neighborhood developments

### ***Policy 14.6: Enhance the Public Realm***

The public realm should be enhanced within all new neighborhood development and redevelopment utilizing the following techniques:

- Locate buildings near the front of the property line, orient them toward the street, and include front porches and other private outdoor spaces
- Consider view corridors of natural features and landmarks and encourage streets to terminate on a visually interesting feature
- Recess garages behind the front of buildings to avoid streetscapes dominated by garage doors
- Incorporate alleys into new neighborhoods to decrease the need for driveways and to provide for accessory buildings, utilities, and services, and parking off of neighborhood streets

## Greening our Neighborhoods

### ***Policy 14.7: Neighborhood parks***

Homes should be located no more than a half mile from parks and ideally one quarter mile or less. In addition to carrying out other policies in this chapter, the following techniques should be used in new development:

- Locate parks in the center of new neighborhoods and establish them as a central activity point
- Encourage building frontages to face toward neighborhood parks in order to enhance safety and creation of an outdoor room
- Encourage neighborhood pocket parks of ¼ acre

### ***Mixed Use Residential***

Mixed Use residential areas in Graham are located between mixed use commercial areas and single family housing neighborhoods. They include a variety of uses, but are primarily high-density residential neighborhoods.



**Principal uses:** multifamily housing, duplexes, townhomes, detached single family housing on small lots less than 6,000 square feet in area, group homes, and live-work units

**Secondary uses:** Neighborhood-oriented commercial, Non-retail uses, day care, parks, schools, small civic facilities, offices and flex space, studios, bed-and-breakfasts; secondary uses are most appropriate when located at street intersections.

### Desired Pattern

Mixed use residential neighborhoods should include diverse housing options. Housing should be built at a human scale, with buildings that reflect Graham's historic architecture and which create a comfortable space along the street.

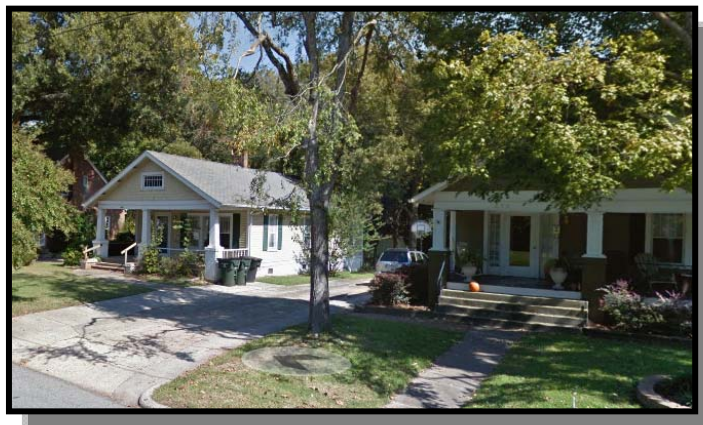
### Transportation

Automobile parking should be located on the street, and behind homes with ingress and egress via rear alleys. All new street development should include wide sidewalks on both sides with street trees placed at 30-40 foot intervals. Where possible, blocks should be broken up to create street lengths of less than 600 feet between intersections. Textured crosswalks and other traffic-calming facilities should be used to increase the safety and visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Current Zoning Districts	R-18, R-12, R-MF, R-G, I-1, I-2
Appropriate Form	2-5 story building heights
Appropriate Dimensional Standards	0-15 foot front build-to line; No minimum side yard setbacks; 16 foot minimum lot width and 50 foot maximum lot width

## Downtown Residential

Downtown residential areas are located in and around the City's historic downtown area. These neighborhoods are compact, connected, and diverse.



**Principal Uses:** Predominantly detached single-family homes; new neighborhoods may include duplexes

**Supporting Uses:** Places of worship, daycares, park facilities, schools, civic spaces; designated neighborhood centers may include neighborhood-oriented commercial, small professional offices, live-work units, and home occupations provided they do not generate excessive traffic and parking

### Desired Pattern

Many of Graham's downtown residential neighborhoods include sidewalks, tree coverage, small and medium-sized lots, a variety of housing choices, human-scale buildings oriented toward the public realm, attractive architectural features, and porches and stoops that facilitate social interaction and provide eyes on the street. This pattern should be maintained and continued with policies that promote home rehabilitation and context-sensitive infill development.

### Transportation

Automobile parking should be located on the street, and in garages set back from the front of the home.

Where public right-of-way widths permit, street reconstruction projects should include sidewalks on both sides of the street. Street trees should be planted at 30-40 foot intervals between the curb and the sidewalk. Textured crosswalks and other traffic-calming facilities will increase the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Current Zoning Districts	R-12, R-7, R-MF
Appropriate Density	3-6 dwelling units per acre
Appropriate Dimensional Standards	New homes should consider adjacent lot sizes and building orientations

### Suburban Residential

The suburban residential land use area is an important category in this plan because it makes up more area within Graham's planning area than any other future land use category. It also features the lowest density of all of the designated future land uses in this plan. Conventional residential practices tend to result in disconnected, homogenous, automobile-oriented developments. This plan changes the paradigm by promoting diverse, walkable, and connected neighborhoods. Suburban residential neighborhoods are primarily settings for existing and future single family detached housing, but may also contain additional housing typologies and low-impact supporting uses in neighborhood activity centers. Affordable detached homes within attractive walkable neighborhoods will continue to make Graham an attractive place to live for people who work in Graham and surrounding communities.

**Principal Uses:** Predominantly detached single-family homes; new neighborhoods may include a range of duplexes, accessory dwelling units, townhomes, and small scale multi-family dwellings of twelve units or less

**Supporting Uses:** Places of worship, day cares, park facilities, schools, civic spaces; designated neighborhood centers may include neighborhood-oriented commercial, small professional offices, live-work units, and home occupations provided they do not generate excessive traffic and parking

### Desired Pattern

Recent residential developments in Graham have resulted in disconnected, low density, automobile-oriented patterns. Many new neighborhoods lack pedestrian connectivity. Most new homes are built with garages in the front of the house and wide impermeable driveways. While the automobile will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for people living in this area, neighborhoods should include pedestrian-friendly design, with a diverse array of housing built around neighborhood centers. In new neighborhoods, garages should be set back from the front of the home, or accessed via a rear alley. Houses should be set back no more than 20 feet from the front property line and have a front porch to create vibrant and safe neighborhood streets.

### Transportation

Automobile parking should be located on the street, and behind homes with ingress and egress via rear alleys. All street rights-of-way should include sidewalks on both sides with street trees placed at 30-40 foot intervals within grass swales. Where possible, blocks should be broken up to create street lengths of less than 600 feet between intersections.

All new neighborhoods should connect to future and existing neighborhoods. Neighborhood streets should function as yield streets to calm traffic and decrease impermeable surface. Where determined to be unnecessary and where swales are present, curb and gutter should be discouraged to decrease development and maintenance costs and facilitate stormwater runoff.

<b>Current Zoning Districts</b>	R-18, R-12, R-7, R-MF, R-G, O-I, C-MXR, I-1
<b>Appropriate Density</b>	3-6 dwelling units per acre
<b>Appropriate Dimensional Standards</b>	New neighborhoods should consider a variety of lot sizes with consistent setbacks along the same street

## **Districts**

Districts include multiple buildings with a diversity of uses arranged in a form conducive to the primary function of the district. They may have centralized ownership or a regulating masterplan or small area plan, and serve a unique function within the City and region.

In this plan districts include the downtown district, mixed-use commercial districts, the education district, the employment district, and industrial districts. In some cases, such as downtown and some of the industrial districts, future land uses are already well defined by current land uses. In other cases, like the employment district, the district characteristics may not currently be present and planning and market forces will play a major role in shaping the area over the coming decades. Achieving efficient, orderly, and attractive development within some districts will be more easily achieved through the development and implementation of small area regulating plans.

## **Circulation and Access**

Districts will be designed to accommodate all modes of travel including bicycling, walking, driving, and riding the bus.

### ***Policy 14.8: Multimodal Streets***

All new streets and street redevelopment should be designed to accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians, and automobiles, unless within industrial areas where heavy freight is expected. Pedestrian access should be enhanced through the following practices:

- Incorporate street trees into sidewalk design
- Include street furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, and bulb-outs at pedestrian crossings
- Apply road diets that allows additional space for separated bicycle lanes

### ***Policy 14.9: Interneighborhood Connectivity***

With the exception of industrial areas, districts should be connected to residential neighborhoods via arterial roads, local streets, and bicycle and pedestrian greenways. Superblocks with perimeters in excess of 2,400 feet should be avoided. Where adjacent neighborhoods worry about cut-through traffic, consider one-way streets as a temporary solution.

### ***Policy 14.10: Automobile Parking***

Parking should be provided as parallel or diagonal on-street parking. Off-street parking should be shared and located behind buildings or beside buildings with planting buffers. The City should adopt maximum parking requirements in order to reduce the number of spaces commercial entities may have.

## **Concentrated mix of uses**

Districts feature a mix of uses and an attractive and inviting public realm that emphasizes the district's unique identity.

### ***Policy 14.11: Arrangement of Uses***

Uses in districts, with the exception of industrial districts, should be organized to promote multimodal transportation access and viability and support future transit stops

#### **Policy 14.12: Arrangement of Structures**

Buildings in districts, with the exception of industrial districts, should contribute to a cohesive urban fabric that promotes walking and biking viability through the following practices:

- Orient buildings toward plazas, parks, and streets
- Minimize building setbacks from public streets
- Place parking in the rear of all commercial and residential buildings

#### **Policy 14.13: Large Commercial Establishments**

The design of large retail buildings shall be consistent with Graham's historic architecture. Large retail buildings should incorporate low impact development design, provide pedestrian and bicycle access, and hide parking with street trees and other landscaping.

#### **Downtown District**

A vibrant downtown is critical for the success of any City. The urban fabric of downtown Graham exhibits many of the characteristics of successful places: Buildings located up to the front of the lot, wide sidewalks, on-street parking, awnings, transparent doors and windows, vertical mixed-use buildings, terminated vistas, and small blocks all make downtown a vibrant and charming pedestrian-friendly environment. This design was no accident; it was and continues to be the most efficient way of building a City for people moving around on foot and using public transportation.

The downtown district should foster vibrant activity day and night by including diversity in land use, including offices, homes, restaurants, entertainment venues, high quality public gathering spaces, and cultural opportunities. In this way, downtown Graham will be the focal point of the community.

#### **Desired Pattern**

New buildings in downtown should be located no further than 10 feet from the front lot line and should include transparent windows on at least 50% of the first floor facade. Multiple stories and a mix of uses are desirable. The building design should also consider the existing historic architecture throughout downtown.

#### **Transportation**

Downtown streets should be built as places, not just transportation corridors, and should primarily accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. Automobile parking should be located on the street, creating a barrier between moving traffic and the sidewalk, and behind or below buildings. Bicycle racks should be located throughout downtown. In all new street redevelopment projects, street trees should be placed at 20-30 foot intervals.

#### **Mixed Use Commercial**

Mixed use commercial areas include commercial and office developments primarily located at major intersections. These areas provide a mix of retail, commercial, office, multifamily residential and institutional uses. Buildings are multiple stories, with architectural details, surface textures, and modulation of light and shade, and should be built at a human scale.

Currently, several large commercial buildings exist within the mixed use commercial future land use category. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Big-box stores impose hidden costs that don't appear on the price tags of the products they sell: traffic congestion; loss of trees, open space and farmland; displaced small businesses; substitution of jobs that support families with low-paying jobs that don't; air and water pollution; dying downtowns with vacant buildings; abandoned shopping centers; and a degraded sense of community." In some cases, the development of large



retail buildings can cost communities in opportunity costs, and long-term costs associated with additional road maintenance and service provision. Graham will consider the full impacts from to large retail development proposals and recommend or require more sustainable alternatives.

### Desired Pattern

Mixed use commercial land use areas currently include many strip and other low density commercial developments. These should be redeveloped over time into pedestrian-oriented nodal centers of activity. New buildings in mixed use commercial areas should be located no further than 15 feet from the front lot line and should include transparent windows on at least 50% of the first floor facade. Multiple stories and a mix of uses are desirable.

### Transportation

Automobile parking should be located on the street, creating a barrier between moving traffic and the sidewalk, and behind buildings. Bicycle racks should be located in front of all new buildings and all new street redevelopment should include 8-15 foot wide sidewalks with street trees placed at 30 foot intervals. Where possible, blocks should be broken up to create street lengths of less than 600 feet between intersections. Alleys are also highly encouraged in order to reduce curb cuts and remove utilities and trash from the front of buildings.

commute to ACC via automobile and therefore surface parking lots currently make up a large percentage of the campus’s ground cover.

This district is located adjacent to the Haw River, providing the site with a major visual and environmental asset and necessitating implementation of low impact development. The City should work with Alamance Community College and other stakeholders to develop a small area plan consistent with the goals and policies of this plan.

### Desired Pattern

Over time, the education district should be planned to include compact transit oriented development. Such development should consist of mixed use buildings that include housing for students, staff, and instructors, commercial uses for daily needs, flex

Current Zoning Districts	R-MF, B-1, B-2, O-I, I-1
Appropriate Form	3-5 story building heights

space, and other space for light industry and employment. Parking structures should be placed on the periphery of the campus and behind buildings to allow for centralized green spaces. Buildings within this district should be threaded into a walkable urban fabric focused around a transit-accessible node.

### Transportation

Automobile parking should be located on the street, behind buildings, and in parking garages. Bicycle racks should be located in front of all new buildings. Off-street bicycle and pedestrian and facilities should connect the campus to surrounding neighborhoods, as well as connect to the Haw River Trail and other greenways throughout the City.

Current Zoning Districts	R-18, I-1
Appropriate Form	2-6 story buildings

### Education District

The education district currently includes the campus of Alamance Community College. This area represents a significant opportunity to partner with private sector companies to train workers for local jobs located in Graham and the AICDZ. Most students

## Employment District

The employment district is a joint land use area between Mebane, Graham, and Alamance County. It currently contains several uses, including farms, single family homes, natural groundcover, and warehousing.

### Desired Pattern

The employment district should be studied and planned in order to accommodate a range of employers and provide office space, industrial space, commercial space, institutional space, and residential housing. This should be planned to limit environmental impacts, preserve open space and open corridors, and develop high-quality and adaptable buildings for a variety of companies.

### Transportation

The employment district should support the viability of safe walking and bicycling as a serious form of transportation, while also ensuring the most efficient transportation network possible for freight trucks and other heavy vehicles that require regional access.

Current Zoning Districts	R-18, I-1, Unzoned
Appropriate Density	6 dwelling units per acre; 0.5 Commercial/Industrial FAR

## Industrial

Industrial districts contain large one and two story buildings with easy access to the major roads like state highways and Interstate 40/85 for heavy freight vehicles. Some of these uses may be considered noxious and therefore adequate buffers must exist between industrial uses and other land uses, as well as natural areas. Graham's wastewater treatment plant is also located in an industrial area.

### Desired Pattern

Industrial districts should have limited setbacks between the front of the property line and between adjacent industrial uses in order to use land and infrastructure efficiently. These uses should be heavily buffered from residential neighborhoods, parks and open space, and streams. Such areas should follow orderly development patterns and seek to maintain minimal adverse environmental impacts.

### Transportation

Transportation infrastructure in this district should primarily accommodate heavy freight vehicles by providing wide lanes with shoulders. Freight routes should avoid pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. Intersections along freight routes should maintain appropriate curb radii to accommodate large vehicles.

Current Zoning Districts	R-18, I-1, I-2
Appropriate Density	0.3-0.5 Commercial/Industrial FAR

## Corridors

Corridors serve as connections between important places and along highly trafficked roads. But in this plan corridors do not simply plan for street maintenance. Instead corridors represent a network of travel routes, increase choices for people to move throughout the City, reducing automobile dependency, providing a link to parks and open space, and overall enhancing travel within Graham.

In this plan, corridors include designated commercial corridors as a future land use category, as well as the southern loop road proposed by NCDOT, and paths designating enhanced bicycle and pedestrian routes.

## Commercial Corridor

Two commercial corridors within Graham include spans along NC-54 and NC-87 where single family residential uses are being replaced with automobile-oriented commercial uses. The commercial corridor land use exists in order to acknowledge this slow and incremental yet persistent land use transition, and address the challenges posed by this growth pattern.

### Desired Pattern

Ideally, most future development will be focused in strategically located clusters identified within this plan. Where commercial growth occurs along the identified NC 54 and NC 87 corridors, pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety should be promoted through high quality planned development.

### Transportation

These corridors currently comprise extremely long blocks and very few intersections, which result in low connectivity and can be detrimental to adjacent neighborhoods. While limited access roads may be beneficial for high-speed mobility in rural areas, this plan acknowledges that as Graham continues to grow and expand along these corridors, new intersections should be developed. Intersections should be spaced at no more than 1000 feet and preferably less than 800 feet in order to improve access to future development and increase connectivity along these corridors. Additional rights-of-way and pedestrian easements should be obtained through property acquisition and landowner dedication at the development and redevelopment stage.

Driveway curb cuts at each commercial business and residential home increase the likelihood of collisions. To reduce this risk, and improve the aesthetic quality and accessibility of commercial businesses, rear alley access, divided slip lanes, and mid-block shared parking should be provided along the commercial corridor.

Current Zoning Districts	R-12, R-MF, R-G, B-2, I-1
Appropriate Density	6 dwelling units per acre; 0.5 Commercial/Industrial FAR

## Edges

Edges serve a critical function as boundaries of the built environment. Edges protect the bucolic nature of rural areas and forests as well as provide buffers between the built environment and waterways. In this plan, edges include the rural residential future land use category and stream floodway.

### Rural Residential

The rural residential area includes low density housing, farms, and undeveloped natural areas including streams and mixed oak-pine forests.



### Desired Pattern

For the planning horizon of this plan, rural residential areas should maintain their existing rural character. In order to do this the City shall not extend water and wastewater lines to properties located within this future land use area until 2035.

### Transportation

Roads in rural residential areas should limit their impact on the environment by limiting encroachment into sensitive environmental areas and reducing

impermeable surface area. Acquisition of land and easements should be considered for trails, especially along streams, and for protection of riparian buffers.

<b>Current Zoning Districts</b>	No existing zoning
<b>Encouraged Zoning Districts</b>	Adopt a new rural zoning district
<b>Appropriate Density</b>	2 Acres per dwelling unit

### ***Floodways***

The designated floodway areas on the Future Land Use Map include trees and natural cover that buffer streams from the built environment, provide space for trails and recreation, support habitats, and reduce flood hazards. This area should contain no development.

### **Boundaries**

Boundaries on the Future Land Use Map show the existing border of the City of Graham, the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction boundary, and the planning area.

### **Orderly Growth**

Graham will use its influence to maintain the existing character of rural areas on the City's southern periphery, as well as to slow outward growth and direct inward growth.

#### ***Policy 14.14: Realm of Influence***

The City's influence should be extended to the future planning area boundary identified by the Future Land Use Map.

#### ***Policy 14.15: Zoning of new land***

Land that falls within Graham's expanded Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to the City's south should be fall within a rural zoning category.

## **Centers**

Regional nodes and activity centers are mixed use districts of commercial, entertainment, civic, and residential concentrations that center on a focal point, typically at a crossroads of major corridors. These regional nodes vary in geographic area, building sizes and scales, and service area, but all maintain walkable and multimodal characteristics with activity on the street and sidewalk and in public spaces like parks, squares, and plazas.

Because they are such important places within the City, centers should also be aesthetically pleasing and care should be taken to provide attractive signage, plant trees along the edge of streets, use high quality building materials, and hide utilities and electrical wires in rear alleys or underground.

### ***Downtown Regional Node***

The downtown regional node serves as Graham's primary center of commercial and civic activity and serves populations beyond the extent of the planning area. Chapter 3 of this plan discusses downtown.

### ***Interchange Regional Node***

Interchange regional nodes, like the downtown regional node, serves a market within and beyond the extent of Graham's planning area. These areas are discussed in depth in Chapter 4 of this plan.

### ***Community Activity Center***

Community activity centers generally serve, not just the surrounding residential areas, but also populations living within the Graham and neighborhoods within a three to five mile radius. These centers should be pedestrian-oriented in character and may include a vertical mix of uses including neighborhood-oriented commercial such as small grocery stores, dry cleaners, coffee shops, small restaurants, small professional offices and live-work units.



Buildings should be located along the sidewalk, face the street, reflect the architecture of the surrounding neighborhood, and range in height from one to three stories. Off-street parking should be shared and located behind buildings or beside buildings with planting buffers.

### ***Neighborhood Activity Center***

Neighborhood activity centers are located within residential areas and serve the neighborhood, especially homes within a ¼ mile to 1 mile radius. These centers should be pedestrian-oriented in character and may include a vertical mix of uses including neighborhood-oriented commercial such as small grocery stores, dry cleaners, coffee shops, small restaurants, small professional offices and live-work units.

Buildings should be located along the sidewalk, face the street, reflect the architecture of the surrounding neighborhood, and range in height from one to three stories. Off-street parking should be shared and located behind buildings.

### ***Potential Activity Center***

The plan designates potential activity centers, which are major intersections that do not currently contain significant commercial activity but that may change in character over the coming years.

## PART IV: IMPLEMENTATION



# Chapter 10: Action Plan

## Introduction

The policies and initiatives identified in the plan will be made real through consistent and focused attention to implementation. The City administration, present and future City Councils, and other governmental entities should actively use the Comprehensive Plan as a key reference for decisions and actions. Here is a review of the goals that are identified in this plan, focusing on Graham's future:

### **Goal 1: Context-Sensitive Transportation**

The design of Graham's streets will fit in with and enhance the adjacent land uses.

### **Goal 2: Interconnected Transportation Network**

Graham's road network will be highly connected with short walkable blocks and multiple pathways to any single destination in the City.

### **Goal 3: Multimodal Street Design**

Graham will have efficient, safe, and accessible streets that accommodate many travelers and protect Graham's community character.

### **Goal 4: Accessible Transit Service**

Students, workers, and residents in Graham will have access to an efficient bus system that accesses local and regional opportunities without need for a car.

### **Goal 5: Quality Facilities and Services**

Graham will continue to be served by high-quality public facilities and services.

### **Goal 6: Healthy Streams**

Streams within Graham will be clean and healthy, with heavily vegetated and connected riparian buffers that make Graham more attractive and help reduce pollution and erosion.

### **Goal 7: Attractive Community Appearance**

Graham will grow and develop in a manner that preserves the historic character of the city and encourages quality design.

### **Goal 8: Variety of Housing Options**

People in Graham will have access to housing choices that accommodate their needs.

### **Goal 9: Vibrant Neighborhoods**

Graham is home to exceptional residential neighborhoods that serve their populations by supplying complete communities and multigenerational living options, with access to transportation, employment, and services.

### **Goal 10: A Resilient Economy**

Graham will have a diverse and robust local economy fostered by economic development opportunities within the City's planning area.

### **Goal 11: Prosperous Centers**

Graham will be home to several nodal employment centers that contain a variety of businesses, uses, and services.

### **Goal 12: Active Employment District**

The employment district, a joint planning area, representing enormous opportunity to develop the local economy due to its location, regional accessibility, and highly developable status, will host a variety of companies.

### **Goal 13: Industry Recruitment**

Graham will become an industrial center with areas that include flex space developments, incubator districts for emerging local businesses, industrial headquarters offices, and dispersed neighborhood employment areas.

### **Goal 14: Sustainable Future Land Use**

The Future Land Use Map will serve as a blueprint for future growth.

The Action Plan provided here compiles the action statements discussed in previous chapters. Immediately following, as an Appendix to this 2035 Comprehensive Plan, is a summary matrix documenting the status of actions recommended in the Graham 2020 Growth Management Plan. Those action recommendations have been considered, along with recent community dialogue and committee meetings, to identify a refreshed set of action recommendations in this 2035 Plan. Each of the 14 goals in this 2035 Comprehensive Plan has associated action recommendations, and those are summarized here, grouped according to goal number:

**Action 1.1: Corridor Improvement Program**

Explore the possibility of forming a corridor improvement program for the Town Center and South Main Street that will place utilities underground, improve pedestrian crossings, and construct a landscaped median on South Main Street.

**Action 1.2: Parking Space Maximums**

Adopt required parking space maximum regulations in order to prevent the overdevelopment of parking.

**Action 1.3: Link Recreational Resources**

Promote a greenway system that links together the City's recreational resources.

**Action 2.1: Improve Connectivity**

Amend subdivision and zoning regulations to require interconnectivity between new subdivisions. Require maximum block lengths and minimum right-of-way connectivity ratios.

**Action 2.2: Develop City Street Plan**

Coordinate with NCDOT and Alamance County to develop and implement a City Street Plan and Thoroughfare Plan to have minor roads built by developers and maintain an interconnected road network.

**Action 2.3: Promote InterCity Bikeway System**

Partner with Burlington, Mebane, and the MPO to develop an intercity bikeway system, preferably including off-street bike paths and greenways.

**Action 2.4: Build Haw River Trail**

Coordinate with NCDOT, Alamance County Recreation and Parks Department, and other entities to build and maintain the Haw River Trail

**Action 3.1: Encourage Sidewalks and Street Trees**

Amend subdivision and zoning regulations to require that all new development include sidewalks and street trees, especially where part of the adopted Sidewalk Plan.

**Action 3.2: Increase Bicycle Parking**

Amend building code regulations to require the installation of bicycle parking for all new development.

**Action 3.3: Amend Street Cross-Sections**

Amend street cross-sections with the intent of increasing the right-of-way width serving pedestrians, bicyclists, and low-impact stormwater infrastructure.

**Action 4.1: Increase Community Involvement in Schools**

Create new opportunities for neighborhoods and parents to become involved in school functions, and seek additional opportunities for community use of school facilities.

**Action 4.2: Explore Broadband and Fiber Options**

Pursue options for assuring basic internet service and coverage to all areas of Graham, and explore possibilities for extension of high-speed fiber optic technologies to businesses and residences in Graham.



**Action 5.1: Water Efficient Construction**

Incorporate water saving and water efficient construction requirements into appropriate development regulations.

**Action 6.1: Encourage Low Impact Development**

Promote the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques to mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff. Such techniques should include the use of green roofs, rain gardens, cisterns, and rain barrels, as well as reducing impermeable surfaces and restricting unnecessary grading and clearing of natural vegetation.

**Action 6.2: Expand Wastewater Reuse Options**

Explore opportunities for reuse of treated wastewater at Graham's wastewater treatment plant to further reduce the nitrogen and phosphorous load to the Haw River and reduce non-potable water consumption where feasible.

**Action 7.1: Public Space**

Develop commercial and residential site design guidelines that enhance community character and appearance, to be used in review of development applications.

**Action 7.2: Landscaping Standards**

Upgrade landscaping standards to help beautify and buffer development sites

**Action 7.3: Corridor Planning**

Initiate a corridor improvement program for the Town Center and South Main Street that will place utilities underground, improve pedestrian crossings, and construct a landscaped median on South Main Street. Discourage highway commercial/strip development along transportation arteries and proposed interstate interchanges by directing these commercial activities to proposed village and neighborhood centers.

**Action 7.4: Zoning Ordinance Adjustments**

Make necessary changes to the zoning ordinance to allow for the type of development that is desired by the community.

**Action 7.5: Prepare Small Area Plans for Key Areas**

Develop more detailed area plans that are consistent with the vision, goals, and policies of this plan.

**Action 7.6: Zoning Ordinance Adjustments**

Obtain a "State Historic Site" sign along the interstate to recognize the Courthouse Square and North Graham Historic Districts.

**Action 7.7: Seek to Place Utilities Underground**

Work in conjunction with the downtown businesses to have utilities placed underground.

**Action 8.1: Healthy Neighborhood Initiative**

Consider developing a healthy neighborhood initiative to revitalize older central neighborhoods using tax credits, loan pools, marketing, community events, code enforcement, and infrastructure investments.

**Action 8.2: Neighborhood Conservation District**

Consider the adoption of a Neighborhood Conservation District to preserve, revitalize, protect, and enhance significant older areas within Graham.

**Action 8.3: Community Design Manual**

Consider the development and adoption of a community design manual

**Action 9.1: Incentivize diverse housing**

Develop incentives for developers and homebuilders to increase diversity, affordability, and accessibility within new development and redevelopment projects.

**Action 9.2: Update zoning ordinance**

Update the zoning code and other land use regulations to allow and encourage multigenerational, multiuse, and accessible residential neighborhoods.

**Action 10.1: Business Incubation**

Develop a business incubation program.

**Action 10.2: Collaborate with regional networks**

Utilize resources available through UNC Chapel Hill and other state government authorities and non-profits to develop and evaluate economic development programs.

**Action 10.3: Partner with business leaders**

Work with local business leaders, school district officials, and Graham City Council to provide supplemental community investments in local schools and Alamance Community College.

**Action 10.4: Planning capacity**

Identify federal and state funding sources to expand Graham's long-term planning and economic development capacity.

**Action 10.5: Reduce barriers**

Work with local businesses and economic development partners to identify and address unnecessary barriers to local business development.

**Action 10.6: Business opportunity information**

Provide a clearinghouse for information on locating a business in Graham and the available State and local resources available to small business, including funding, training, grants, and location assistance.

**Action 11.1: Facilitate focused development**

Incentivize pedestrian-oriented nodal development consistent with this plan by incentivizing smart growth development. The City could choose to utilize some of the following methods:

- Expedited permit review
- Deferred tax payments
- Covering some building expenses
- Low-interest loans
- Providing infrastructure
- Flexible and innovative regulations
- Small area plans and form-based codes

**Action 12.1: Develop Employment District Plan**

Develop a plan for the employment district in order to maximize economic growth within this area.

**Action 13.1: Industrial redevelopment**

Encourage reinvestment and intensification at existing industrial sites. Encourage redevelopment of existing buildings and infrastructure for industrial growth.

**Action 13.2: Consider freight corridors**

Encourage freight-oriented industrial development to locate where it can maximize access to major freight routes, including I-40/85 and state highways.

**Action 14.1: Initiate Code Revisions**

Develop new zones, initiate rezonings, and revise the zoning code to carry out the goals and policies of this chapter and the Future Land Use Map. Consider the adoption of form-based codes and small area regulating plans for some future land use areas.

Some of the circumstances and ideas described in this plan are compelling and should be at the top of the list of what to accomplish first. Others have a longer-term context.

A next step in determining an implementation strategy for this Graham 2035 Comprehensive Plan will be to review all recommended actions and assign priorities. This process should result in a grouping of actions according to the following categories:

- **Top Priority** initiatives are those that should be pursued upon adoption of the Plan and should be well underway within two years of Plan adoption.
- **Ongoing Initiatives** are existing projects or actions that should continue to be a priority for the City.
- Initiatives that **Need Attention** are important actions which should be pursued as resources and circumstances permit.

# GLOSSARY OF PLAN TERMS

Below is a list of urban planning terms that are used within the Plan, their respective definitions, and relevant links to websites.

## **LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Excellence)**

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) in 1998, LEED provides a suite of development standards for environmentally sustainable construction. LEED is also a certification that development professionals can acquire that identifies their environmentally sustainable construction expertise.

<http://www.usgbc.org>

## **Low Impact Development (LID)**

Low impact development is a term that has come to describe best management practices for stormwater runoff management through on-site design, such as a rain garden. This contrasts with traditional stormwater techniques that divert water off a development site and into a traditional stormwater system.

## **Mixed-Use Development**

A building or development that incorporates two or more different uses such as, but not limited to, residential, office, retail, public, or entertainment. Vertical mixed-use developments incorporate a mix of uses within the same building, typically with different uses on different floors. Horizontal mixed-use developments incorporate a mix of different uses within different buildings in a common development.

## **Pedestrian-Friendly / Pedestrian-Oriented Development / Walkable Development**

Pedestrian-friendly developments are designed with an emphasis primarily on the sidewalk and on pedestrian access to the site and building, rather than auto access and parking areas.

## **Sustainability / Sustainable Development**

Sustainability describes the concept of a community meeting the needs of the present population while ensuring that future generations have the same or better opportunities. The sustainability concept traditionally incorporates economic, social, and environmental themes and can be used as a way of guiding development policy within a community.

## **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**

Transit-Oriented Development typically describes a mixed-use development that includes moderate and/or high-density housing located along transit routes. The location, design, and mix of uses in a transit-oriented development emphasize pedestrian-oriented environments and encourage the use of public transportation.





# Graham 2020 Growth Management Plan Implementation Evaluation

**Instructions:** The following matrix outlines the various goals, strategies, and planning area recommendations set out in Graham’s 2020 Growth Management Plan. The matrix includes several checkboxes to denote the status of each of these plan recommendations, and a section for providing additional notes. Please review the document, and identify the appropriate status: completed, implementation underway and still relevant, still relevant but not yet implemented, and no longer relevant.

Plan Recommendation, Goal, Strategy (page #)	Completed	Implementation Underway and Still Relevant	Still Relevant but Not Yet Implemented	No Longer Relevant
Please review the goals, strategies, and planning area recommendations listed below and place a check in the column that accurately describes the current status of implementation.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>STRATEGIC ISSUES (pages 31-33)</b>				
1. Hire part-time zoning enforcement officer to enforce zoning ordinance. (p. 31)	✓			
2. Implement design standards for future development. (p. 31)			✓	
3. Develop a community appearance competition for residential and commercial development to be administered by the Appearance Commission. (p. 31)			✓	
4. Steer new commercial development into commercial centers identified within each planning district. (p. 31)		✓		
5. Develop Overlay Zoning Districts to raise the standards of development along Graham’s major thoroughfares. (p. 31)	✓			

Plan Recommendation, Goal, Strategy (page #)	Completed	Implementation Underway and Still Relevant	Still Relevant but Not Yet Implemented	No Longer Relevant
6. Rezone commercial property that is vacant or not being used for a commercial purpose to residential if it is not within an identified commercial center. (p. 31)			✓	
7. Develop a City sponsored grant program for façade and sign improvements. (p. 32)	✓			
8. Continue efforts begun under the Graham Downtown Vision's Project within the public and private realm. (p. 32)			✓	
9. Work in conjunction with the downtown businesses to have utilities placed underground. (p. 32)			✓	
10. Develop "Historic Walk Guide" to be available throughout the City. (p. 32)	✓			
11. Obtain a "State Historic Site" sign along the interstate to recognize the Courthouse Square and North Graham Historic Districts. (p. 32)			✓	
12. Develop events in addition to "Arts Around the Square" in cooperation with downtown businesses. (p. 32)		✓		
13. Promote interconnectivity within new residential and commercial developments. (p. 32)		✓		
14. Develop a City Street Plan to work in conjunction with the adopted Thoroughfare Plan to have minor roads built by developers. (p. 32)			✓	
15. Discourage the use of cul-de-sacs within new development. (p. 32)		✓		

Plan Recommendation, Goal, Strategy (page #)	Completed	Implementation Underway and Still Relevant	Still Relevant but Not Yet Implemented	No Longer Relevant
16. Adopt Sidewalk Plan to showcase where additional pedestrian walkways should be built in the future. (p. 32)	✓			
17. Require new development to include sidewalks that are part of the adopted Sidewalk Plan. (p. 33)		✓		
18. Promote development that utilizes pedestrian walkways to connect with adjacent land uses. (p. 33)		✓		
<b>GOALS TO GUIDE US INTO THE FUTURE (pages 34-37)</b>				
1. Support efforts to protect sensitive natural resources, including wetlands, waterways, slopes, floodplains. (p. 34)		✓		
2. Encourage the restoration of creeks and streams that aid in the control of stormwater runoff. (p.34)		✓		
3. Increase the Haw River's role within the City's planning jurisdiction. (p. 34)		✓		
4. Continue to support efforts that identify, restore and/or reuse cultural and historic structures, buildings, monuments, and neighborhoods. (p. 34)		✓		
5. Promote Graham's Cultural and Historic Resources as a potential tourist destination. (i.e. Arts, Around the Square, Alamance County Arts Council, Downtown, Providence Church, etc.). (p. 34)		✓		
6. Discourage the destruction of cultural and historic resources within the Planning area. (p. 34)		✓		

Plan Recommendation, Goal, Strategy (page #)	Completed	Implementation Underway and Still Relevant	Still Relevant but Not Yet Implemented	No Longer Relevant
7. Encourage development that compliments existing architectural designs of the neighborhood. (p. 34)		✓		
8. Adopt and enforce community appearance standards that help to improve the aesthetics of the City. (p. 34)			✓	
9. Enforce landscaping standards to help beautify and buffer development sites. (p. 34)		✓		
10. Encourage the placement of utility wires underground. (p. 34)		✓		
11. Promote the incorporation of street trees along new roads and the extension or widening of existing roads. (p. 34)		✓		
12. Encourage the creation and use of alternative forms of transportation regionally and within the planning area. (p. 35)		✓		
13. Adopt a sidewalk and bicycle plan for the City that will outline desired locations for new sidewalks and bicycle paths. (p. 35)	✓			
14. Promote development that reduces the number of trips generated by incorporating multiple uses at one site. (p. 35)			✓	
15. Require interconnectivity between subdivisions. (p. 35)		✓		
16. Reduce and restrict the number of curb cuts and driveways along major arterials. (p. 35)			✓	
17. Water and sewer service shall be encouraged in areas where it is economically feasible and beneficial to the City and residents. (p. 35)		✓		



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18. Promote the continued cooperation between Graham and the surrounding municipalities in offering water and sewer connections that help to defray the cost of providing services. (p. 35)		✓		
19. Discourage the extension of water and sewer service into areas that are not prime for development. (p. 35)		✓		
20. Provide various and adequate community facilities for all residents throughout the City (i.e. Senior Citizens Center). (p. 35)			✓	
21. Plan for the construction of new facilities in areas of the City that are lacking facilities. (p. 35)			✓	
22. Encourage the utilization of existing facilities that can be used for multiple purposes. (p. 35)		✓		
23. Continue to promote the single-family home. (p. 35)		✓		
24. Encourage the conversion and development of higher density residential development around the downtown and other designated activity areas. (p. 35)		✓		
25. Prohibit residential development that is in close proximity to incompatible uses or provide proper buffering to protect existing uses and new development. (p. 35)		✓		
26. Improve community aesthetics within established residential areas. (p. 35)			✓	
27. Continue to protect established residential areas from incremental rezonings to a lower land use. (p. 35)		✓		

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28. Encourage commercial development within designated village centers as opposed to continued commercial strip development. (p. 36)		✓		
29. Prohibit the encroachment of commercial development into established or planned residential areas. (p. 36)		✓		
30. Increase the overall retail diversity throughout the City. (p. 36)			✓	
31. Emphasize that downtown is the commercial center of the City. (p. 36)		✓		
32. Encourage commercial development that utilizes effective landscaping and buffering to aid in improving the overall aesthetics of the community. (p. 36)		✓		
33. Promote “clean” industries that balance economic development with environmental concerns. (p. 36)			✓	
34. Encourage new industries to locate within existing industrial parks within the City or designated areas located on the future development map. (p. 36)		✓		
35. Prohibit the encroachment of industrial development into non-industrial areas. (p. 36)		✓		
36. Encourage the development of mixed-use projects that combine compatible uses within one site. (p. 36)				
37. Promote the location of mixed-use development at designated village centers. (p. 36)		✓		

Plan Recommendation, Goal, Strategy (page #)	Completed	Implementation Underway and Still Relevant	Still Relevant but Not Yet Implemented	No Longer Relevant
38. Office and Institutional Development shall be encouraged to develop within the Central Business District (CBD). (p. 36)			✓	
39. Emphasize the importance of Graham's CBD as the seat of City and County Government. (p. 36)				
40. "Promote planned office parks within the City as opposed to linear office complexes." (Salisbury) (p. 36)			✓	
41. Discourage high-density development in the agricultural/rural areas of the planning jurisdiction. (p. 36)		✓		
42. Conserve important agricultural and rural landscapes within the planning jurisdiction. (p. 36)			✓	
43. Plan for adequate recreational facilities to serve all parts of the City. (p. 36)		✓		
44. Encourage the incorporation of open space design within new developments. (p. 36)		✓		
45. Promote a greenway system that links together the City's recreational resources. (p. 36)			✓	
46. Provide support and assistance to the Alamance County Chamber of Commerce's efforts. (p. 38)		✓		
47. Encourage the reuse and revitalization of unused or underutilized structures and properties. (p. 37)		✓		
48. Promote new and expanding businesses which: help to diversify the local economy, utilize a higher skilled labor force, increase the prosperity of City residents and are not detrimental to the environment. (p. 37)		✓		

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<b>NORTH GRAHAM PLANNING DISTRICT POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (pages 48-49)</b>				
1. Encourage infill development within the district, as well as redevelopment efforts of deteriorating structures. (p. 48)			✓	
2. Create more neighborhood (“pocket parks”) parks within the district on vacant and undeveloped lots. (p.48)			✓	
3. Preserve established residential neighborhoods within the district. (p. 49)		✓		
4. Improve enforcement of existing zoning ordinance to improve community appearance. (p. 49)		✓		
5. Prohibit the continuation of additional commercial strip development along major thoroughfares. (p. 49)			✓	
6. Continue to encourage the redevelopment efforts underway within the Town Center. (p. 49)		✓		
7. Promote the Town Center as the commercial and governmental center of Graham. (p. 49)		✓		
8. Create alternative routes for commercial traffic through the Town Center. (p. 49)			✓	
9. Adopt an Overlay Zoning District for the major thoroughfares within the district that will place additional development standards on top of existing zoning requirements. Additional requirements could include: design criteria, building orientation, landscaping, signage controls, and limited curb cuts. (p. 49)	✓			



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10. Encourage tourism within the Town Center through promotional campaigns that highlight the Court House Square and North Main Street Historic Districts. (p. 49)			✓	
11. Initiate a corridor improvement program for the Town Center and South Main Street that will place utilities underground, improve pedestrian crossings, and construct a landscaped median on South Main Street. (p. 49)			✓	
12. Promote homeownership within the district as a way to protect established neighborhoods from down zoning. (p. 49)				✓
<b>CENTRAL GRAHAM PLANNING DISTRICT POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (pages 50-51)</b>				
1. Ensure that development along Highway 54 does not replicate the highway commercial/strip development characteristic of South Main Street. This can be accomplished by promoting nodal development through a regional commercial center and village center with sufficient separation between centers. A regional commercial center could include a major anchor store(s) interspersed with smaller commercial activities, office and institutional uses, multi-family, and governmental facilities located within an integrated complex. (p. 50-51)		✓		

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2. Limit direct highway access or the number of curb cuts to commercial activities by directing development to proposed regional and village centers and requiring internal connectivity between commercial uses, as well as uniformity in design standards. (p. 51)			✓	
3. Provide a transitional buffer between the proposed commercial and village centers and existing or proposed single-family neighborhoods that would consist of landscaping, multi-family developments and/or townhouse developments. (p. 51)		✓		
4. Adopt an Overlay Zoning District for the Highway 54 and South Main Street corridors that would apply additional development standards to regulate building design and construction, site layout, landscaping, signage, and traffic patterns. (p. 51)	✓			
5. Develop and promote a greenway system along rivers, creeks, and tributaries to provide recreational opportunities for residents and protect environmentally sensitive areas. These corridors would also protect scenic areas for the community and provide a natural buffer for waterways. (p. 51)		✓		

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6. Develop a community park to serve the district, which could include a recreation/community center building, fields, hard surface courts, and picnicking areas. The area south of Interstate 40/85 has been largely under-served with recreational facilities and there is a growing need for such a center in this district. (p. 51)			✓	
7. Encourage residential development that conserves land along rivers, creeks, and tributaries to protect environmentally sensitive areas, promote open space preservation, and provide a natural buffer for waterways. (p. 51)		✓		
8. Encourage neighborhood residential development in remaining undeveloped areas that are adjacent to existing residential developments. Additionally, interconnectivity between neighborhoods should be a priority for new developments. (p. 51)		✓		
<b>SOUTH GRAHAM PLANNING DISTRICT POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (pages 52-53)</b>				
1. Improve the transportation network to allow for east-west corridors in the southern section of Graham, which would alleviate pressures on South Main Street and offer residents alternative transportation routes. (p. 52)		✓		
2. Encourage commercial development in the district in village and neighborhood centers to serve the residents of South Graham. This pattern should be promoted over the highway commercial/strip development that has occurred along South Main Street. (p. 53)		✓		

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3. Expand the jurisdictional boundaries of Graham in order to ensure consistent development patterns along the existing boundaries of the district. (p. 53)			✓	
4. Expand the greenway system along rivers, creeks, and tributaries to encourage open space preservation, floodplain protection, and offer residents additional areas for recreational activities. (p. 53)		✓		
5. Develop neighborhood and community parks, where appropriate, to provide additional recreational alternatives for residents of the district. Particular emphasis should be placed on using land that is currently owned by the City along the Haw River. (p. 53)		✓		
6. Encourage conservation residential development along rivers, creeks, and tributaries to protect environmentally sensitive areas from excessive development and to offer residents of the community larger areas of open space for recreation. (p. 53)		✓		
7. Include neighborhood residential development in the district to complement existing residential areas and encourage interconnectivity between neighborhoods. These developments should be located in close proximity to a village center or neighborhood centers to promote pedestrian access and decrease automobile trip lengths and travel times. (p. 53)		✓		



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<b>HAWFIELDS PLANNING DISTRICT POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (pages 54-55)</b>				
1. Encourage the development of an office/institutional/light industrial center developed similar to a corporate campus, office park, or regional employment center. An office park or center would offer additional employment opportunities for the residents of the surrounding community and compliment the proposed traditional neighborhood development in the district. (p. 54)		✓		
2. Discourage highway commercial/strip development along transportation arteries and proposed interstate interchanges by directing these commercial activities to proposed village and neighborhood centers. In particular, commercial development should encourage internal access between facilities and avoid numerous curb cuts along highways. (p. 55)		✓		
3. Encourage a traditional neighborhood development pattern in targeted areas, which includes socio-economic diversity through a mix of housing types and price ranges. Additionally, commercial, office, and institutional uses should be incorporated into the site layout. A development of this nature should also preserve existing historical landmarks and protect environmentally sensitive areas. (p. 55)		✓		

Plan Recommendation, Goal, Strategy (page #)	Completed	Implementation Underway and Still Relevant	Still Relevant but Not Yet Implemented	No Longer Relevant
4. Intersperse neighborhood centers within traditional neighborhood developments and other residential areas to serve the daily needs of residents and encourage pedestrian access over automobile use. (p. 55)			✓	
5. Strategically locate village centers throughout the district to serve the needs of surrounding residents and to encourage transportation efficiencies by reducing automobile travel times and distances. Additionally, dense development patterns should be encouraged in these centers to increase pedestrian access to adjacent facilities over automobile use. (p. 55)			✓	
6. Encourage rural residential and conservation residential development in identified areas to preserve a portion of the rural character of the district and to protect environmentally sensitive and flood-prone areas. (p. 55)		✓		
7. Develop a greenway system along rivers, creeks, and tributaries to encourage open space preservation and offer residents of the district a continuous trail for recreational activities. (p. 55)		✓		
8. Ensure the protection and preservation of historic landmarks within the district. (p. 55)			✓	
<b>IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW: FIRST STEPS (page 56)</b>				
1. Hold workshops for the City Council and Planning Board on how the plan can be used upon adoption. These workshops will review different parts of the plan during meetings. (p. 56)	✓			

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2. Implement a “Staff Recommendation” or a “Staff Memo” on all new developments, rezonings, special use permits, and PUD’s. The staff recommendation will include an analysis of how the proposed development will meet the Growth Management Plan’s recommendations. (p. 56)	✓			
3. Make necessary changes to the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the type of development that is desired by the community. For example, current B-2, General Business zoning would not allow a mixture of commercial and residential uses that might be found in a Village Center. (p. 56)		✓		
4. Create overlay zoning districts for high growth corridors that raise the standards for development. (p. 56)	✓			
5. Advise the City Council and Planning Board to use the Growth Management Plan when making rulings on rezonings, special use permits, and subdivisions. (p. 56)	✓			
6. Develop more detailed area plans that build upon the foundation established by the Graham Growth Management Plan (GGMP). (p. 56)			✓	
7. Inform the Alamance County Planning Department of this plan and work with them in implementing the plan outside Graham’s extra-territorial jurisdiction. (p. 56)		✓		