

Comprehensive Land Development Plan

City of Graham, NC

CITY OF
GRAHAM
NORTH CAROLINA

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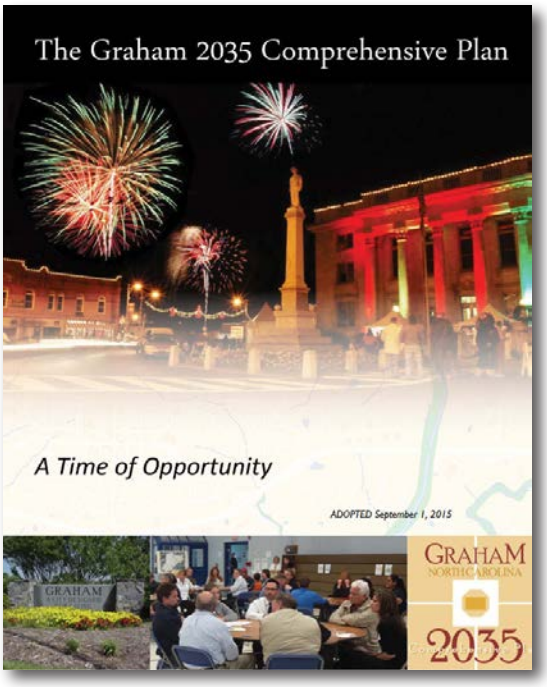
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of a plan is to chart the course for the future. By taking a deliberate look at the current situation, making reasonable projections of anticipated growth, and determining what people would like to see in the future, development can happen in a manner that benefits and strengthens the community and protects valued resources. Developing this plan is an attempt to articulate the collective vision for the future of the City of Graham.

1.2 Relevant Existing Plans

The Graham 2035 Comprehensive Plan (2015 adoption)



The Graham 2035 Comprehensive Plan was an update to the City's 2000 Growth Management Plan. The update was needed because many of the action items from the earlier plan had been accomplished and the population and development patterns of the city had experienced significant change. The new plan was a long-range guide for growth and development, developed with extensive public outreach and collaboration. The plan's vision was crafted through numerous public meetings, community workshops, and a citizen survey, ensuring that it reflected the shared goals and aspirations of Graham's residents. It serves as a foundational document for all future decisions regarding land use, infrastructure, and community services, providing a clear roadmap to guide the city's evolution over the next decade. The plan's implementation is a collaborative effort among city staff, elected officials, and the public. It provides a flexible framework that allows the city to adapt to new challenges and opportunities while staying true to its long-term vision.

Public input for this plan showed desires to:

- Support local businesses
- Preserve and promote Graham's History
- Improve Schools
- Increase Walkability
- Expand Economic Opportunity
- Increase Local & Regional Accessibility
- Ensure that new development is harmonious with existing development

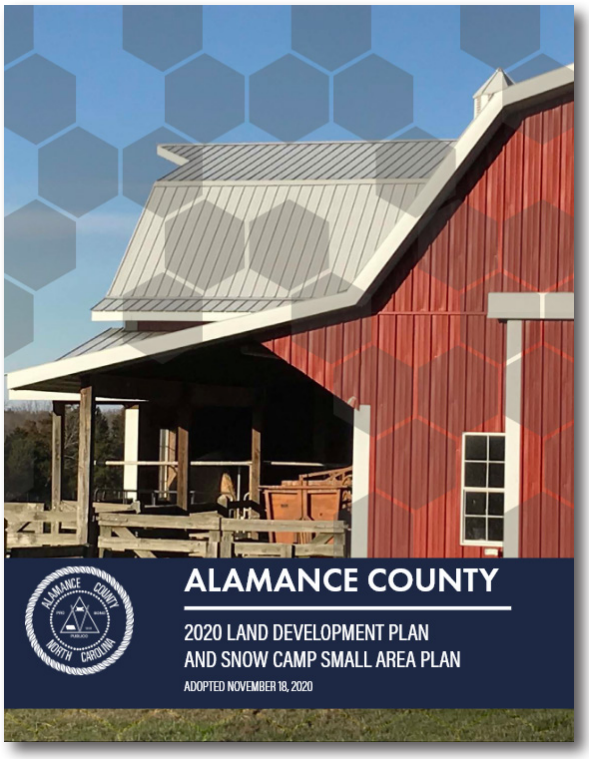
Eno-Haw Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2025 adoption)



The Eno-Haw Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan is a comprehensive document that focuses on identifying potential hazards and developing strategies to reduce their impact on people and property. This plan is crucial for local governments, as it is a requirement for maintaining eligibility for pre- and post-disaster mitigation funding from FEMA.

The planning area for this initiative includes Alamance, Durham, Orange, and Person counties, along with their incorporated communities. The process was a collaborative effort, involving extensive input from county and municipal departments, citizens, and emergency management officials. This broad participation ensures that the plan reflects the unique risks and needs of both the City of Graham and the entire region.

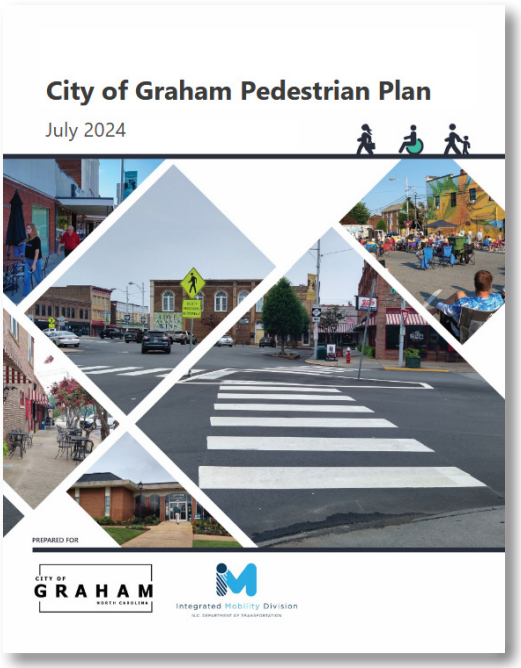
Alamance County Land Development Plan (2020)



Adopted in November 2020, the Alamance County Land Development Plan is a guiding document for land use and growth throughout the county's unincorporated areas. This comprehensive plan is a collaborative effort, developed with input from citizens, the Board of Commissioners, and county staff. Its primary purpose is to provide a framework for orderly growth while balancing the need to protect the county's rural character, agricultural roots, and natural resources.

The plan serves as a guide for land use in the county's unincorporated areas, including those adjacent to the City of Graham. While the county's plan provides a high-level framework, it is the City of Graham's own Development Ordinance that governs all development within its corporate limits and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

City of Graham Pedestrian Plan (2024 adoption)



The City of Graham Pedestrian Plan was developed to understand the community's vision and goals for an improved pedestrian network. Four types of improvements were identified and prioritized:

- Sidewalks, new to connect trip attractors
- Sidewalk Improvement Projects, upgrading existing sidewalks
- Intersection Improvement Projects to increase safety
- Greenway Corridors to provide recreation as well as transportation
- Enhancing existing facilities to meet future needs and ADA standards
- Developing policies and programs to support infrastructure improvements
- Incorporating pedestrian facilities into all municipal and state roadway projects

BGMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2045(2020)

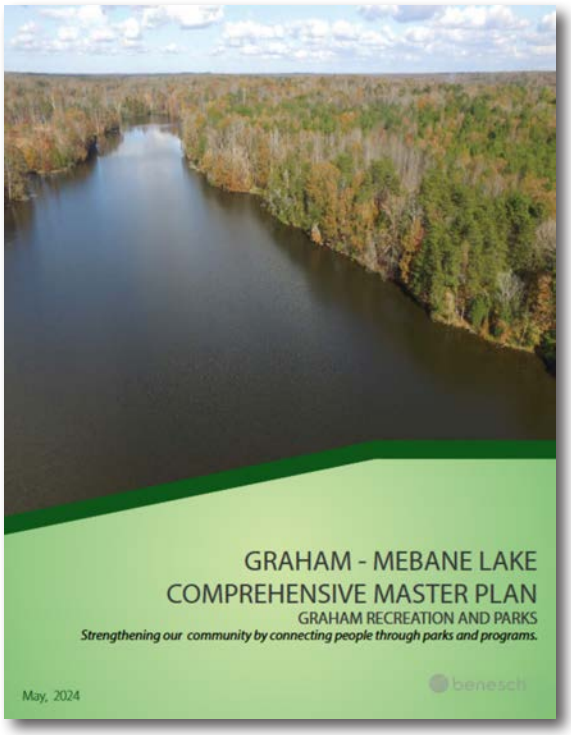


The Burlington Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO) is tasked with providing comprehensive transportation planning for the region. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan, adopted in 2020, outlines transportation goals for the next 20 years. Modes of transportation evaluated as part of this plan include highway, public transportation and rail, bicycle, and pedestrian. This plan does not cover routine maintenance or minor operations issues.

Recommendations relevant to Graham include:

- Intersection improvements to Wilkins Road and Bason Road
- Intersection improvements to West Parker Street
- Intersection improvements to East Elm Street
- Construct sidewalk West Pine Street to North Marshall Street
- Construct sidewalk on Ivey Road to East Gilbreath Street

Graham-Mebane Lake Comprehensive Master Plan (2024)



Graham-Mebane Lake is a signature recreation facility serving residents of both the cities of Graham and Mebane as well as the region. The lake and marina facilities offer residents and visitors access to a 650 acre municipal reservoir. Graham-Mebane Lake serves as the source of drinking water for citizens of Graham, Mebane, Green Level, and Swepsonville. The water treatment plant at the dam distributes 3.8 million gallons of water to 35,000 people on a daily basis. This master plan is a combined effort of the Graham Recreation and Parks staff and Benesch (consulting firm) working with the public and other stakeholders. The plan is designed to provide a comprehensive roadmap for future improvements and management of the lake's resources, balancing recreational opportunities with environmental stewardship.

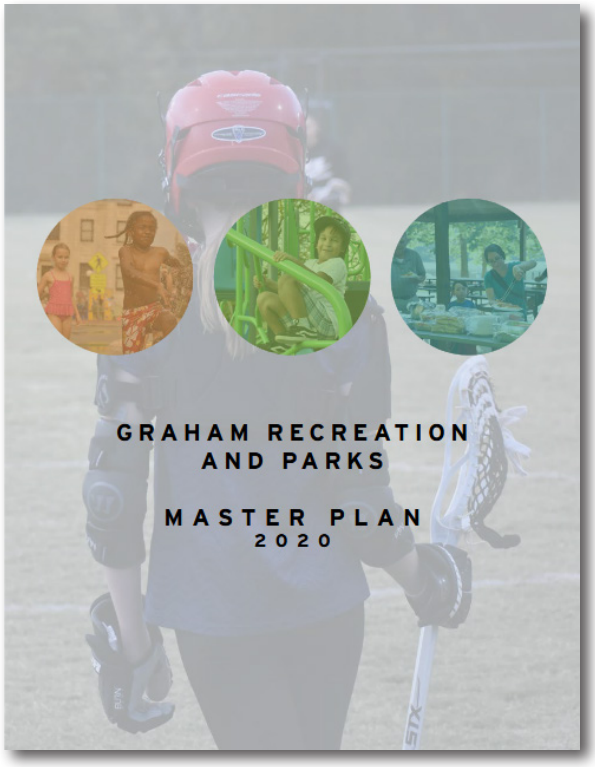
Ten year priority recommendations from the plan include:

- Replace and upgrade the boat launching facilities and vehicular circulation
- Design and construct a new Marina Office/Main Park facility
- Design and engineer a new sea wall to allow redevelopment of the central core area at the marina
- Ensure all existing and future facilities are accessible to all users
- Acquire and master plan the Bason Life Estate tract for consideration as a Nature Area
- Seek additional lakefront properties for potential acquisition in providing additional lake access and recreational opportunities
- Establish a Friends of the Lake committee; develop a work plan
- Seek partnerships with area businesses and agencies that focus on health and wellness to expand programming along the lake.



Graham-Mebane Lake

Graham Recreation and Parks Master Plan (2020)

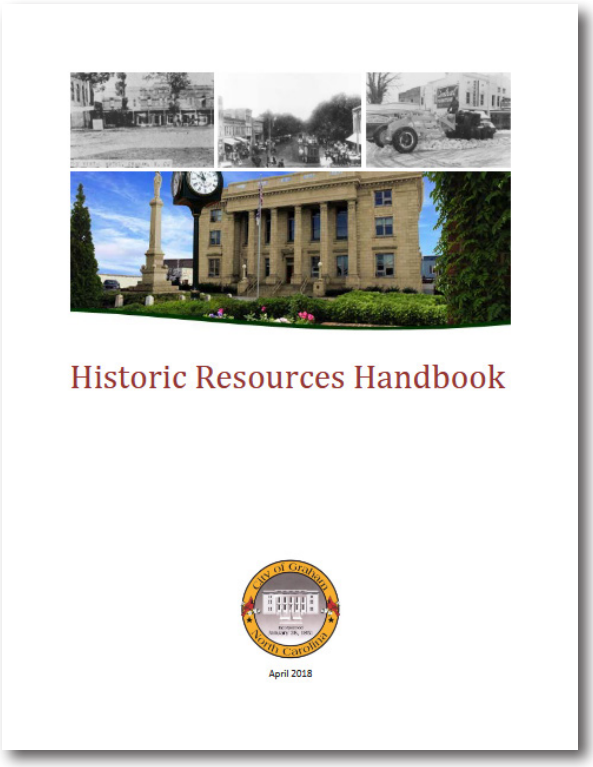


The City of Graham Recreation and Parks Department updated its Master Plan in 2020 to serve as a guide for the development of the Graham Recreations and Parks Department over the next 5-10 years. The master planning process provides opportunities for the public to voice their recreation wants and needs.

This updated planning document will provide staff, decision-makers, and the public with:

- A snapshot of community recreation needs;
- Inventories of existing facilities, programs, and conditions;
- Priorities for staff, program, and facility improvements;
- A framework of data and information to support decision-making;
- A tool to assist in grant applications.

Historical Resources Handbook (2018)



The Historical Resources Handbook emphasizes that historic architecture is important to the look and feel of Graham's downtown. State accreditation emphasizes the historic value of the Courthouse Square and surrounding buildings. The goal of the handbook is to provide clear and concise recommendations on how to undertake projects, from simple repairs to major additions, in a manner that respects the integrity of historic properties. This includes guidance on appropriate materials, colors, and design elements. The preservation of historic properties helps to attract tourists and new businesses, boosting the local economy and maintaining a unique and authentic sense of place. The guidebook aims to:

- Preserve Graham's historic character
- Guide property owners and developers
- Educate the community

1.3 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

The Steering Committee that developed this plan was comprised of local business owners, longtime residents, and local elected officials. The steering committee was the voice of the citizens of Graham and they helped guide the planners from the Piedmont Triad Regional Council to create a plan that would best serve the City of Graham. In addition, a survey and community outreach at local events encouraged citizens to provide input into the plan throughout the planning process.

1.4 Mission Statement

"To preserve Graham's small-town feel, while accommodating future growth, incorporating economic concerns, and protecting the natural environment."



Mural in Downtown Graham

1.5 Public Participation

To assist in updating the City of Graham's Land Development Plan, the Piedmont Triad Regional Council conducted public outreach through a survey of town residents, business and property owners, employees, and other stakeholders. The survey was publicized through official City of Graham communications, the City's Facebook page, public community events, and word of mouth. Public involvement was also garnered through public outreach at the Thursdays at Seven Concert Series in downtown Graham.

Throughout the planning process the overwhelming response was to keep Graham's small-town atmosphere.

201 survey responses were received. Comments were received at local events. Additionally, the survey questions and responses were discussed during the stakeholder meetings.

1.6 Geographic Scope

The entire City of Graham's Planning Jurisdiction and future growth areas including the land found within the City limits, Extra-territorial jurisdiction and other surrounding property were included in this plan.



Downtown Graham

1.7 Organization of the Plan

The City of Graham Comprehensive Plan is organized into nine sections.:

Section 1 - An overview of the plan.

Section 2 - Background information, and facts and figures on demographics.

Section 3 - Current regulatory controls governing land use.

Section 4 - Goals and the supporting strategies to achieve those goals.

Section 5 - Descriptions of each of the three planning districts.

Section 6 - Future Land Use Map

Section 7 - A comparison of development patterns.

Section 8 - Implementation and review

Section 9 - Appendix of sources used to develop this plan

1.8 Key Issues

Growth has been identified as a key issue facing the City of Graham. During meetings with the Steering Committee, the surveys received, and feedback from public events. In particular four questions concerning growth have been raised:

- What kind of Growth does Graham want?
- How much Growth does Graham want?
- Where should Growth be located?
- What should the Growth look like?

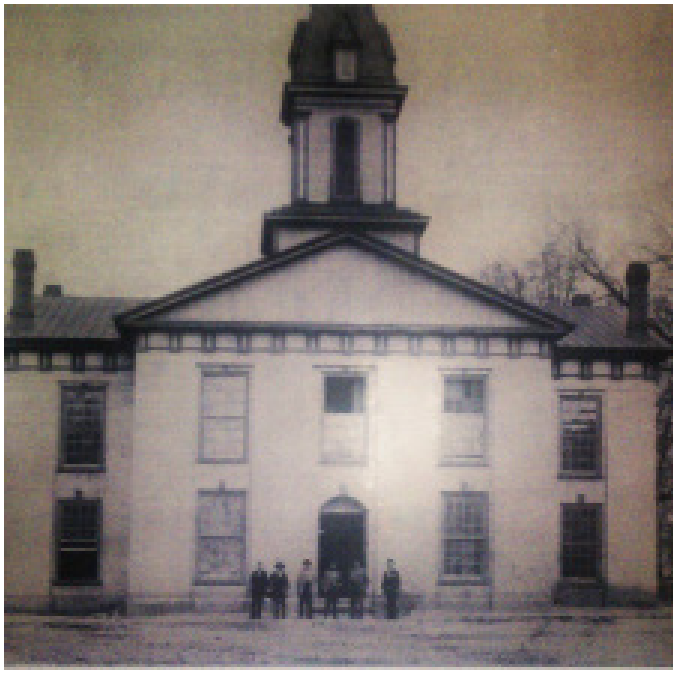
Preservation of the small-town feel was expressed numerous times throughout the development of this plan. Concern was expressed that growth has put pressure on housing costs. Additionally, population growth has caused Graham to have an increase in needed services which then leads to a need to find increased funding for increased public expenditures.

1.9 How to Use the Plan

The plan is designed as a growth management guide for the community. Elected officials, appointed board members, City staff, developers, and citizens should view the plan as a tool that can be used for making development decisions. This document is not an ordinance, but will be used to guide rezonings and development decisions by Graham's elected and appointed boards.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 History



Original Alamance Courthouse (c.1900)

The beginnings of Graham date back to the mid 1800's. On April 19, 1849 the residents of Orange County, one of the largest counties in North Carolina at that time, voted by a narrow margin to divide Orange County into two counties because of its vastness, and therefore the difficulty in serving all its residents from the county seat. The western part of the county became Alamance County, so named for the Battle of Alamance, which occurred during the Revolutionary War on a site within the county.

The most desirable location nearest the geographical center of the new county was chosen as the site for the courthouse and thus, the county seat. The original size was a square containing 75 acres bounded on the north by what became Market Street and on the south by what became McAden Street. This new town was named Graham in honor of the Whig Governor of North Carolina at that time, William A. Graham. The town became the first town to be incorporated in Alamance County, in January, 1851. Graham was laid out by local surveyor Silas Lane and follows the Lancaster square plan. This plan was named after its early use in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The plan features a large square at the intersection of the main streets, created by notching out the corners of the adjacent blocks. Only a few of North Carolina's one hundred county seats use the Lancaster square plan, a plan that is the most dramatic in its visual impact and also the least resistant to traffic congestion. This scheme survives in only a few towns, including Pittsboro, Whiteville, Carthage, Mocksville, Lincolnton, and Graham. The square in Graham is among the most emphatic examples, principally because of the quality and intactness of the block faces that frame the square. Commercial buildings surround the notched-out square and turn the corners to the axial streets – Main Street running north-south and Elm Street running east-west. Commercial and residential buildings then line these axes and the secondary streets. The original brick and stucco courthouse was completed in 1851, but was replaced by the current structure in 1923.

The first commercial building, W.J. Nicks Grocery and Feed Store, a three-story brick structure, was built in 1850 at the southeast corner of the square. On the northwest corner of the square were the town's water supply, a wooden pump and water trough. This area became the trading center and the court square resembled the commons of a New England Village.

In 1856, plans were announced that the

North Carolina Railroad, running from Goldsboro to Charlotte, would pass within one block of the courthouse. With this announcement came images of a peaceful square becoming filled with smoke, dirt, and grime from the massive steam engines and noise from the engines scaring all the horses and other animals on the square. Graham's residents decided to pass an ordinance forbidding the construction of a railroad within one mile of the courthouse. With this ordinance, Graham's only chance of becoming a large metropolis was lost. The railroad company located its maintenance and repair shops approximately three miles west of Graham, and this area became known as Company shops and grew into what is now the City of Burlington, the largest city in the county.



Oneida Cotton Mills

At the time of the Civil War, Graham was an educational, legal, and business center. In 1885 an early tobacco factory was built, but by 1890 textiles had replaced tobacco as the major industry. By the turn of the century, Graham had become a "quiet and attractive residential village" and within the next several years, Graham had a water works and electric plant. In 1911, the Piedmont Railway and Electric Company began a streetcar service between Burlington, Haw River, and Graham, ending its line on North Main Street in front of the courthouse. Graham has experienced substantial growth after World War II. In 1961 Graham was no longer referred to as the Town of Graham, but instead, as the City of Graham.

In 2015, Graham was involved in developing the N.C. Commerce Park, an 1,100-acre economic development zone, with parcels certified by the N.C. Department of Commerce. The area includes parcels owned by dozens of private land-owners who have voluntarily become partners. The area includes parts of Graham, Mebane, and unincorporated Alamance County. Site development involved $12 million for infrastructure, jointly funded by the three local governments and the N.C. Department of Transportation. The project is an economic development success story that underscores how vital regional collaboration is for community and economic development.

Today, Graham has more than 17,000 residents living in an area of nearly 10 square miles. The proximity to the I-40/85 corridor has contributed to steady growth for several decades. Graham has been transforming from rural to suburban and urban since the 1960's. In 2020, the NC Department of Commerce selected Graham to participate in the Downtown Associate Community (DAC) Program. This initiative through the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center is designed to equip the City with the tools to build a sustainable organizational foundation and conduct strategic economic development in downtown Graham.

In this plan update, the downtown, the residential, and the industrial areas are all woven together to create the fabric of the City of Graham.

2.2 Population, Housing, & Economy

In this demographic section, Graham is compared to Alamance County, North Carolina, and the municipalities of Davidson, Lexington, Mebane, and Hope Mills. These municipalities were chosen because they have a similar demographic makeup to Graham and because they all are located along an interstate highway in close proximity to another major city. Demographic data was obtained from the NC State Demographers office for 2021 population estimates and the US Census Bureau's Decennial Census and 2020 American Community Survey (ACS).

Population

Overview

The 2021 population in Graham was 17,570 people, per the NC State Demographer Certified Population Estimates, up from the 2020 Decennial Census count of 17,157. The current city limits are approximately 10.7 square miles, yielding an overall population density of 1,642 people per square mile, or about 2.56 people per acre. The City also has an extraterritorial jurisdiction of about 6.2 square miles, creating a total study area of 16.9 square miles.

There was significant discussion in the stakeholder meeting that this population number was lower than current population. There was a feeling that the local population, especially the growing Hispanic population, may not have been accurately counted in the census. In addition, the census was taken in 2020 during the height of the Covid pandemic and it is believed that many residents did not participate in the census for that reason.

Graham has seen significant population growth over the past several decades, and has been growing at a faster rate than Alamance County over the past 20 years. Between 2010 and 2020, the City's population grew by 21.2% (adding 3,004 people) while the County population only grew by 13.4%. As of 2020, 10% of the County's total population lived in Graham.

Figure 1: Historical Population

	Graham			Alamance County			% of County
	Population	Change	% Change	Population	Change	% Change	
1950	5,026	-	-	71,220	-	-	7.1%
1960	7,723	+2,697	53.7%	85,674	+14,454	20.3%	9.0%
1970	8,172	+449	5.8%	96,502	+10,828	12.6%	8.5%
1980	8,674	+502	6.1%	99,319	+2,817	2.9%	8.7%
1990	10,426	+1,752	20.2%	108,213	+8,894	9.0%	9.6%
2000	12,683	+2,257	21.6%	130,800	+22,587	20.9%	9.7%
2010	14,153	+1,470	11.6%	151,131	+20,331	15.5%	9.4%
2020	17,157	+3,004	21.2%	171,415	+20,284	13.4%	10.0%

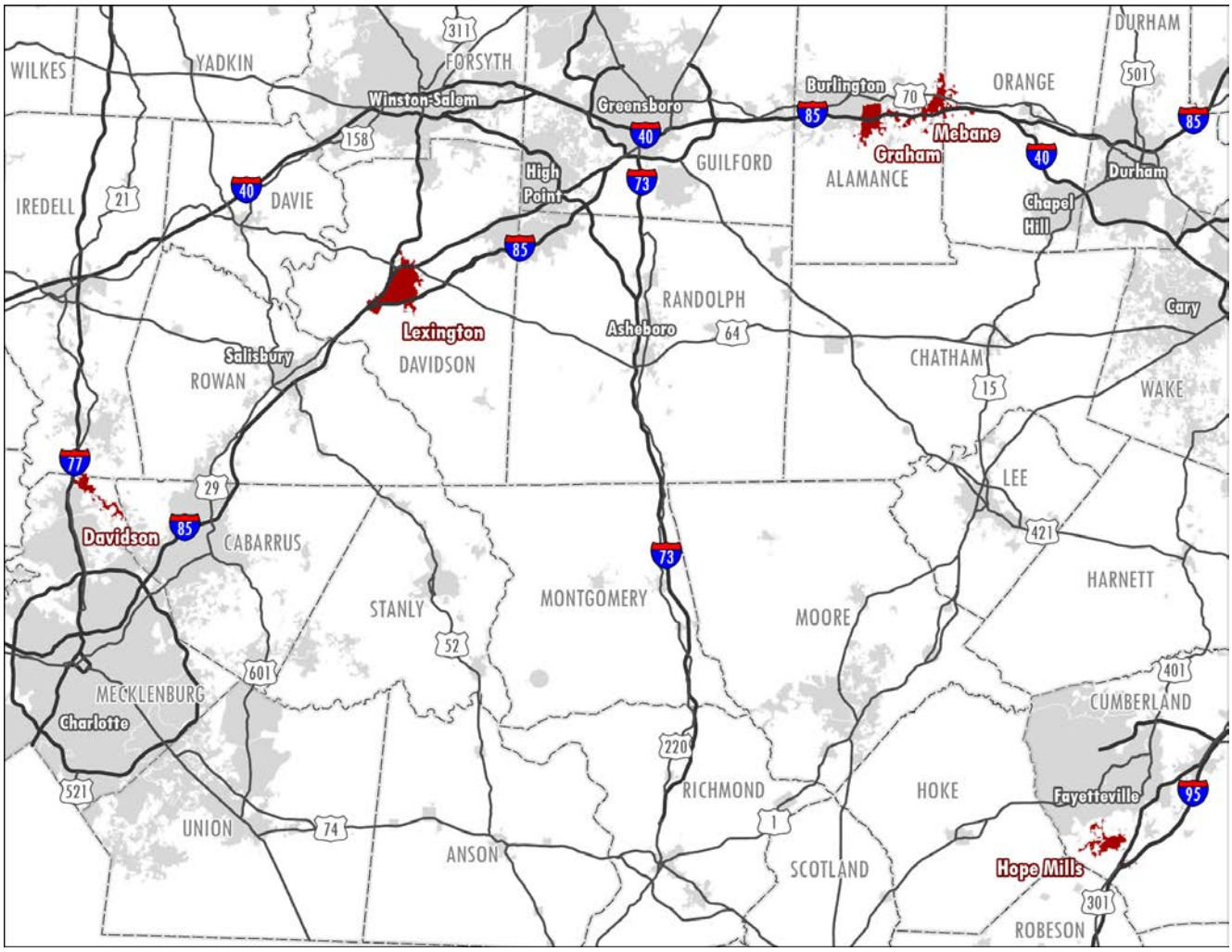
Source: Decennial Census (1950-2020)

Graham is similar in population size to Davidson, Hope Mills, Lexington, and Mebane. Between 2010 and 2020, Lexington's population grew the least (4%) while Mebane's population grew the most (56%).Figure 3: Population Comparison

Figure 2: Comparison Municipalities & Map

Jurisdiction	2010 Population	2020 Population	% Change 2010-2020	2021 Population
North Carolina	9,535,483	10,439,388	9%	10,556,299
Alamance County	151,131	171,415	13%	174,212
Davidson	10,944	15,106	38%	15,297
Graham	14,153	17,157	21%	17,570
Hope Mills	15,176	17,808	17%	18,058
Lexington	18,931	19,632	4%	19,650
Mebane	11,393	17,797	56%	18,116

Source: Decennial Census (2010-2020); 2021 NC State Demographer Certified Population Estimate



Map of Comparison Municipalities

Projections

The North Carolina State Demographer only provides population projections at the county level. Since Graham has been growing at a faster rate than Alamance County, this may not be the best way to predict Graham's future population. Instead, this report assumes Graham will continue to grow at a rate similar to that of the past decade. Between 2010 and 2020, Graham had an average annual growth rate of 1.94%, meaning each year the City's population grew by 1.94%. The table below shows population projections out to year 2040 for Alamance County (provided by the NC State Demographer) and for the City of Graham, based on the average annual growth rate between 2010 and 2020 applied out to 2040. Graham can expect to see a population of 25,329 by year 2040, an increase of 48% (8,172 people) from the year 2020.

Looking back at the City of Graham Growth Management Plan (2000-2020), this plan significantly underestimated population growth. This plan estimated in the year 2020 the City population would reach only 14,126. The 2020 Decennial Census reported a population of 17,157. The state projected the County population to be only 146,992 in Alamance County, whereas the County actually reached a population of 171,415. Because of Graham's location between the Triad and the Triangle, Graham can probably expect a continued high growth rate out to year 2040.Figure 4: Projected Population

Figure 3: Population Projections

Year	Alamance County[3]	City of Graham[4]
2020[1]	175,415	17,157
2021[2]	174,212	17,570
2022	174,862	17,911
2023	176,920	18,259
2024	178,956	18,614
2025	180,994	18,976
2026	183,030	19,345
2027	185,066	19,721
2028	187,102	20,104
2029	189,139	20,495
2030	191,173	20,893
2031	193,207	21,299
2032	195,244	21,713
2033	197,282	22,135
2034	199,316	22,565
2035	201,352	23,004
2036	203,388	23,451
2037	205,424	23,907

Year	Alamance County[3]	City of Graham[4]
2038	207,459	24,372
2039	209,496	24,846
2040	211,533	25,329

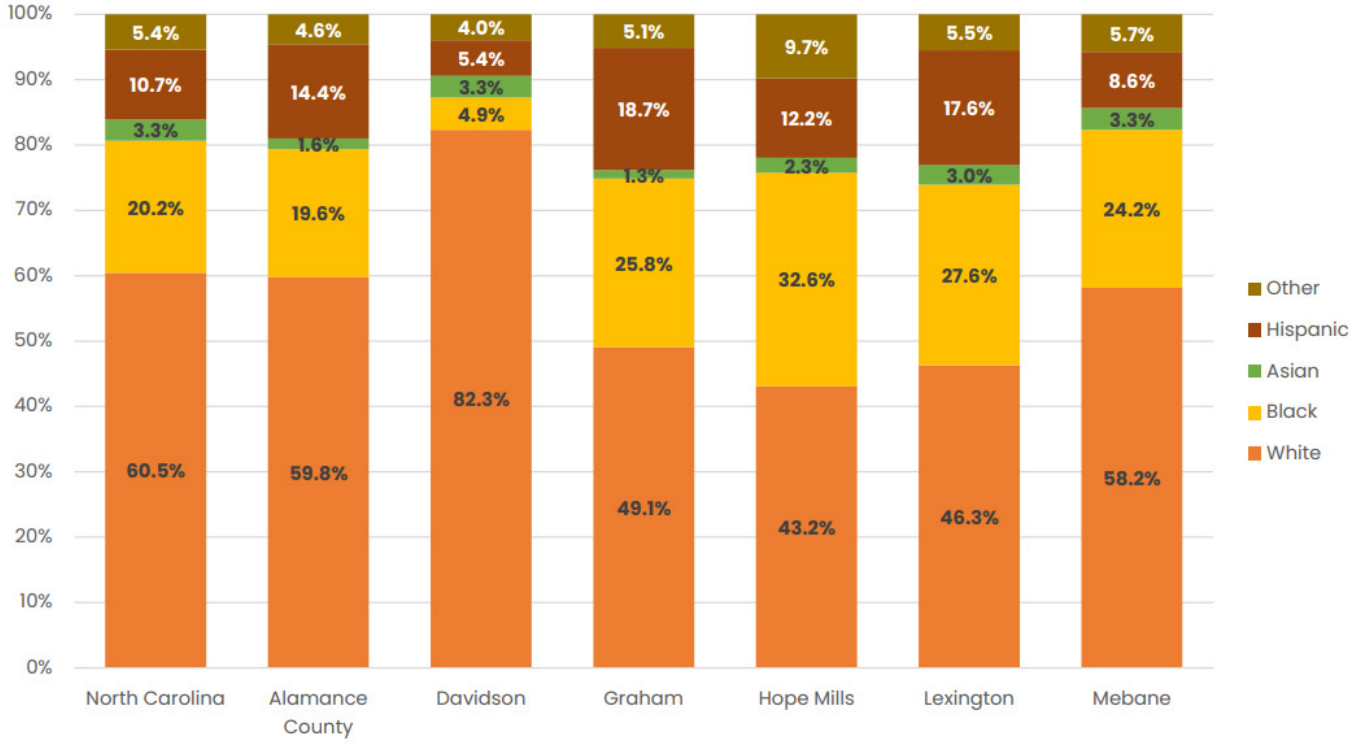
1 2020 Decennial Census, Redistricting Data
2 2021 NC State Demographer Certified Population Estimate
3 NC State Demographer Population Projections by County (2022-2040)
4 PTRC applied AAGR of 1.94% to each year (2022-2040)

Note: At the time of this demographic report, only 2020 Census Redistricting data is available which includes only total population and race/ethnicity. For all other sections the most recent American Community Survey data is used (2021).

Race

As of the 2020 Decennial Census, about half of Graham's population is white (49.1%) while 25.8% is black, 18.7% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, and 5.1% some other race. This composition is mostly similar to the other comparison jurisdictions, except for Davidson, which has a much higher percent white population. Graham has a lower percentage of white population and a higher percentage of black and Hispanic population than both Alamance County and the State. The white population has remained relatively stagnant between 2000 and 2020 in Graham, while the minority populations have increased significantly.

Figure 4: Race & Ethnicity Comparison (2020)



Source: 2020 Decennial Census, Redistricting Data

Figure 5: Population Over Time by Race

	2000 Population		2010 Population		2020 Population		Change 2000-2010		Change 2010-2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	8,530	66.5%	8,241	58.2%	8,420	49.1%	(289)	-3.4%	179	2.2%
Black	2,753	21.5%	3,191	22.5%	4,426	25.8%	438	15.9%	1,235	38.7%
Hispanic	1,301	10.1%	2,229	15.7%	3,213	18.7%	928	71.3%	984	44.1%
Asian	94	0.7%	171	1.2%	222	1.3%	77	81.9%	51	29.8%
Other	155	1.2%	321	2.3%	876	5.1%	166	107.1%	555	172.9%
TOTAL	12,833	-	14,153	-	17,157	-	1,320	10.3%	3,004	21.2%

Source: 2000, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

Student Population

Public schools in Graham are run by the Alamance Burlington School System. Their data shows that the county-wide kindergarten through twelfth grade school population is far more diverse than the adult population.

Figure 6: Student Population by Race

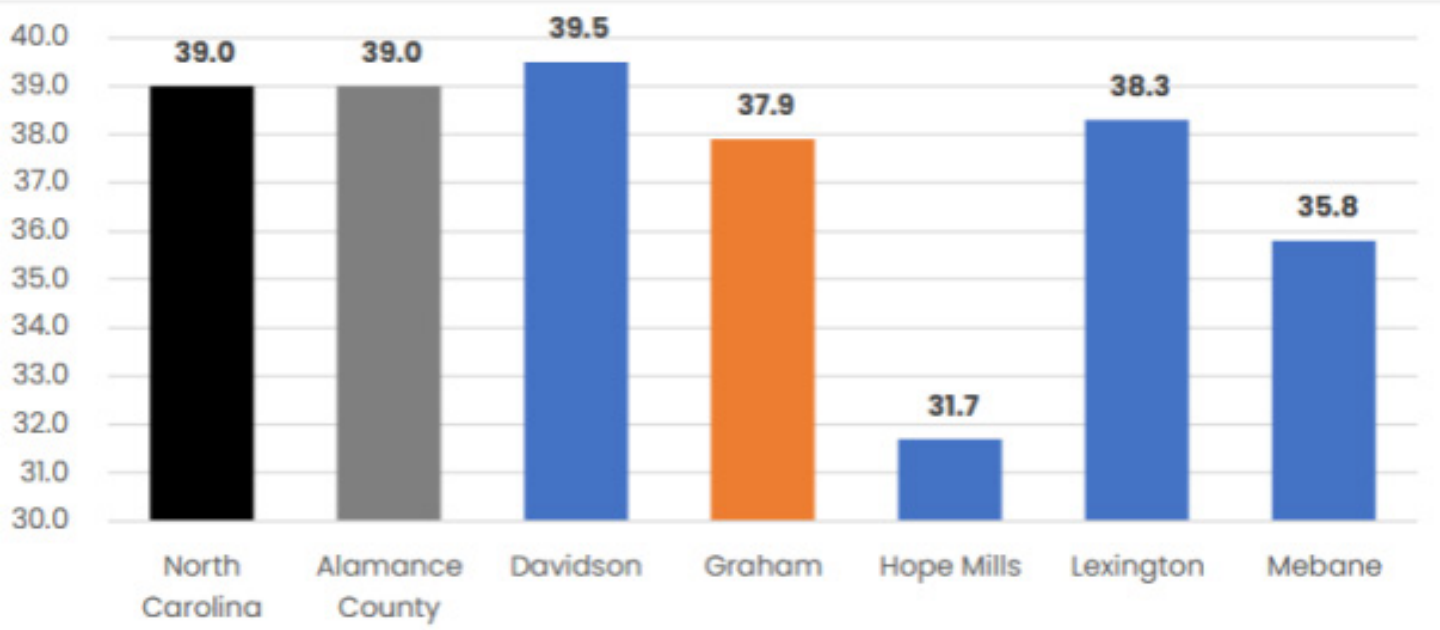
Race	Number of Students (approx.)	Percentage
Black or African-American	5577	24.5%
Asian	395	1.7%
Hispanic	6903	30.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	66	0.3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	25	0.1%
White	8080	35.6%
Biracial	1670	7.4%
Total	22,716	-

Source: Burlington-Alamance k-12 fast facts

Age

The median age of the population in Graham is 37.9. Only Hope Mills and Mebane have a much lower median age. Graham has a large older adult population (ages 55 and over) that has been growing at a much higher percentage rate than the rest of the population over the past decade. The age range 55 to 64 grew 52.2% and the age range 65 years and over grew by 37%. The middle-aged adult age range (35 to 54 years) saw a slight decrease in population during this time.

Figure 7: Median Age Comparison (2021)



Source: 2021 ACS

Figure 8: Graham's Change in Age Ranges (2000-2021)

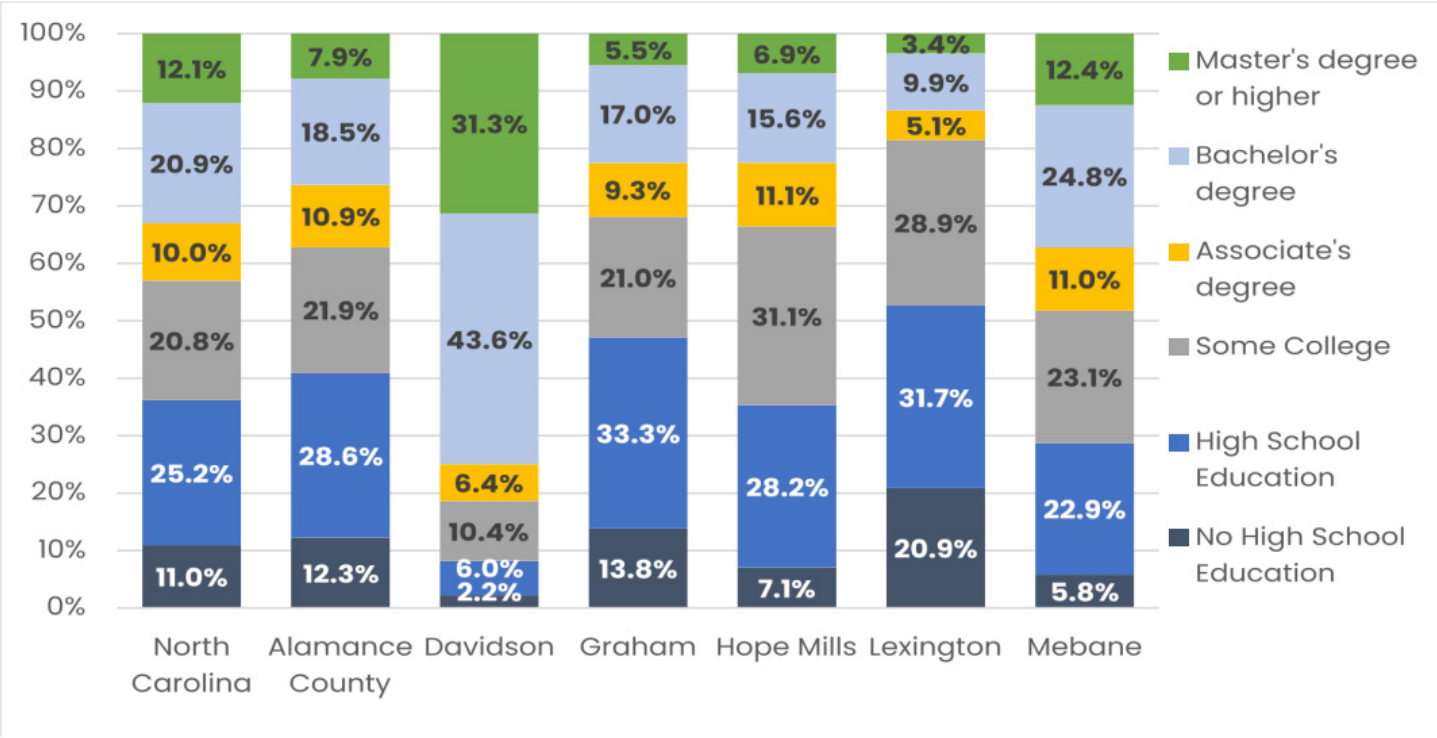
	2000		2010		2021		2000-2010		2010-2021	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 5	964	7.5%	1,051	7.4%	1,352	8.1%	87	9.0%	301	28.6%
5 to 17	2,111	16.4%	2,522	17.8%	2,767	16.5%	411	19.5%	245	9.7%
18 to 24	1,276	9.9%	1,083	7.7%	1,496	8.9%	(193)	-15.1%	413	38.1%
25 to 34	2,171	16.9%	1,984	14.0%	2,140	12.7%	(187)	-8.6%	156	7.9%
35 to 44	1,915	14.9%	1,866	13.2%	1,795	10.7%	(49)	-2.6%	(71)	-3.8%
45 to 54	1,506	11.7%	1,929	13.6%	1,900	11.3%	423	28.1%	(29)	-1.5%
55 to 64	1,076	8.4%	1,647	11.6%	2,506	14.9%	571	53.1%	859	52.2%
65+	1,814	14.1%	2,071	14.1%	2,837	16.9%	257	14.2%	766	37.0%
Total	12,833	-	14,153	-	16,793	-	1,320	10.3%	2,640	18.7%

Source: 2000 & 2010 Decennial Census; 2021 ACS

Education

Graham's population is fairly well educated. However, almost 14% of the population (ages 25 and older) did not complete a high school education. About 32% have an Associate's degree or higher; 22.5% have a Bachelor's degree or higher; and 5.5% have a Master's degree or higher. In comparison, the Town of Davidson has a much higher percentage of the population with at least a Bachelor's degree (75%) and 31.3% with a Master's degree or higher. Graham's education attainment is on par with that of the State and County.

Figure 9: Educational Attainment for the Population 25+ Comparison (2021)



Source: 2021 ACS

Poverty & Income

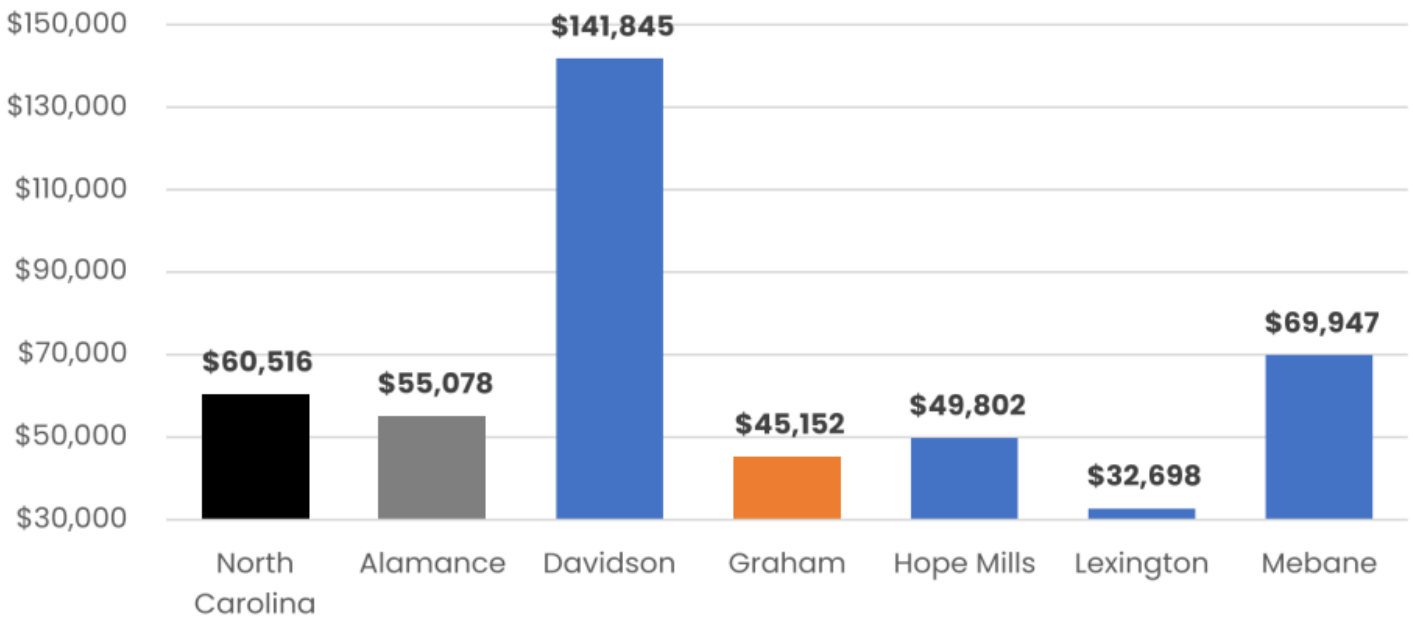
Graham has a high percentage (23.7%) of its population living below the poverty level (3,960 people). Children in Graham (under age 18) have the highest poverty rate of any age group, with 35% of children living in poverty (1,434 children). About 22% of adults (ages 18 to 64) live in poverty (2,165 adults) while about 13% of older adults (ages 65 and over) live in poverty (361 older adults). These rates are much higher than the State and County and all other comparison jurisdictions, except for Lexington.

Figure 10: Poverty Rate Comparison (2021)

	North Carolina	Alamance County	Davidson	Graham	Hope Mills	Lexington	Mebane
Children (0 to 17)	19.3%	20.4%	6.3%	35.0%	21.4%	33.1%	17.6%
Adults (18 to 64)	12.8%	13.3%	7.4%	22.2%	14.4%	24.4%	5.6%
Older Adults (65 and over)	9.4%	9.9%	3.8%	12.8%	8.3%	13.3%	15.1%
Total Population	13.7%	14.4%	6.5%	23.7%	15.8%	24.9%	10.0%

Source: 2021 ACS

Figure 11: Median Household Income Comparison (2021)



Source: 2021 ACS

The median household income in Graham is $45,152. This statistic is lower than the State and County. Only Lexington has a lower median household income. Graham's income levels have increased since 2000 ($35,706) and since 2010 ($39,034)

Housing

Figure 12: Housing Overview Comparison (2021)

	North Carolina	Alamance County	Davidson	Graham	Hope Mills	Lexington	Mebane
Vacancy Rate	13.7%	8.7%	9.5%	8.9%	10.5%	16.2%	5.9%
Rental Rate	34.1%	33.5%	21.2%	45.5%	35.9%	60.9%	41.0%
Median Gross Rent	$988	$875	$1,352	$825	$926	$747	$1,009
Median Home Value (Owner Occupied)	$197,500	$168,900	$478,000	$150,900	$141,100	$117,100	$223,300
Median Year Built (all housing units)	1989	1985	2000	1980	1993	1972	2002
% Single Family	69.8%	70.0%	77.0%	65.2%	76.3%	72.0%	65.6%
% Multi-Family	18.2%	18.4%	22.9%	29.1%	21.2%	23.3%	34.4%
% Mobile Home/Other	12.0%	11.6%	0.1%	5.7%	2.5%	4.8%	0.0%

Source: 2021 ACS

Occupancy & Tenure

There are roughly 7,783 housing units in Graham as of the 2021 ACS. About 8.9% of these (695 units) are vacant. Of the 7,088 occupied housing units, 54.5% are owner occupied and 45.5% are renter occupied.

Housing Values

The median home value of owner-occupied homes in Graham is $150,900. This statistic is slightly lower than the State and County. Davidson and Mebane have much higher home values. Graham housing is very affordable in comparison to the immediately surrounding areas of Mebane and Alamance County.

Units in Structure

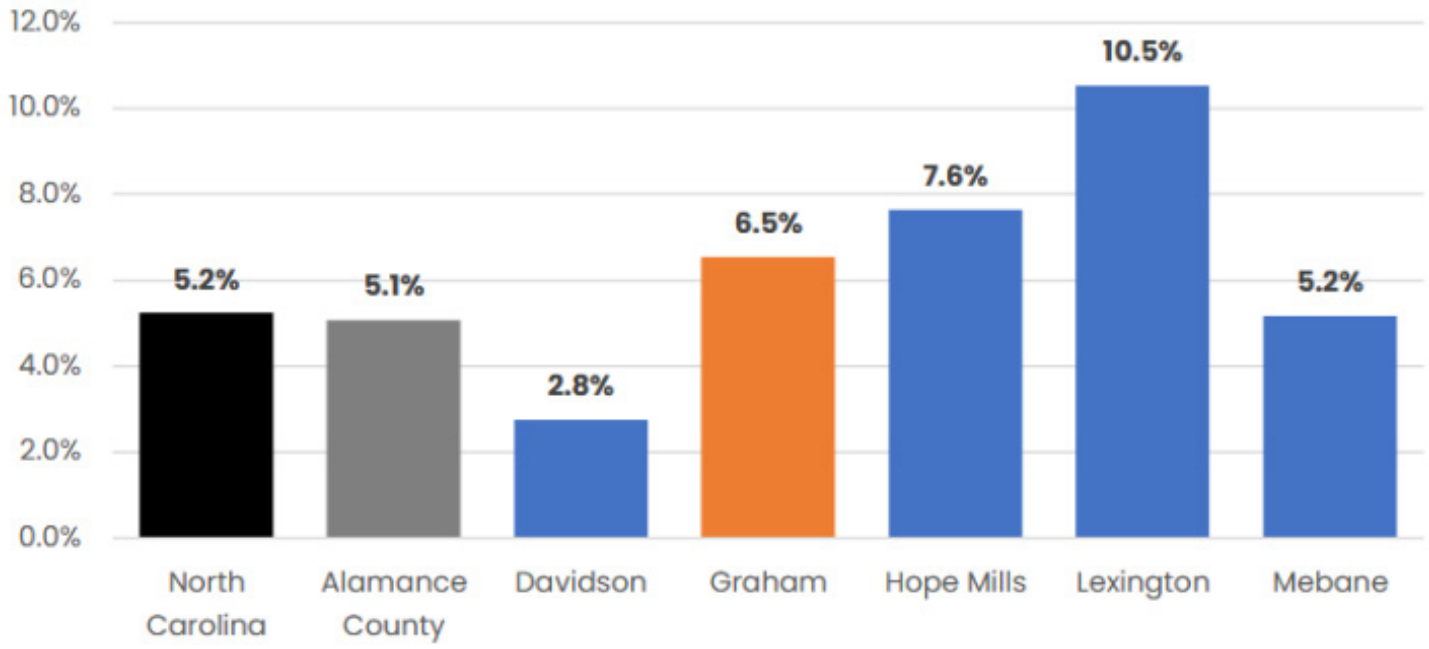
The majority of housing units in Graham are single family homes (65.2% or 5,074 units). 29.1% (or 2,256 units) are multi-family units. Most of the multi-family units consist of buildings with 2 to 19 units. Graham has a few multi-family complexes with over 20 units in each building. The remaining units in Graham are mobile homes (5.7% of 444 units).

Economy

Workforce

The labor force is considered to be anyone age 16 and over who is employed or looking for work. In Graham, there are 13,085 people age 16 and over. An estimated 7,972 of those (or 60.9%) are in the labor force. Roughly 522 people (or 6.5%) of the labor force is unemployed.

Figure 13: Unemployment Rate Comparison (2021)



Source: 2021 ACS

Commuting Patterns

According to the 2022 Census OnTheMap, only 8.6% of Graham's labor force both lives and works in Graham. The remaining 91.4% of the labor force commutes outside of Graham for work each day. The majority of these commuters work in other parts of Alamance County (37%); 12.4% commute west to Guilford County; 10.8% commute east to Orange County, 7.2% to Durham County and another 7.2% to Wake County.

There are an estimated 6,767 jobs in Graham's city limits. Only 8.6% of these workers both live and work in Graham, while the remaining 91.4% commute from other areas into Graham each day. The majority of these commuters drive from other parts of Alamance County (50%); 9.8% commute from Guilford County; 3.6% from Orange County; and 2.2% from Wake County.

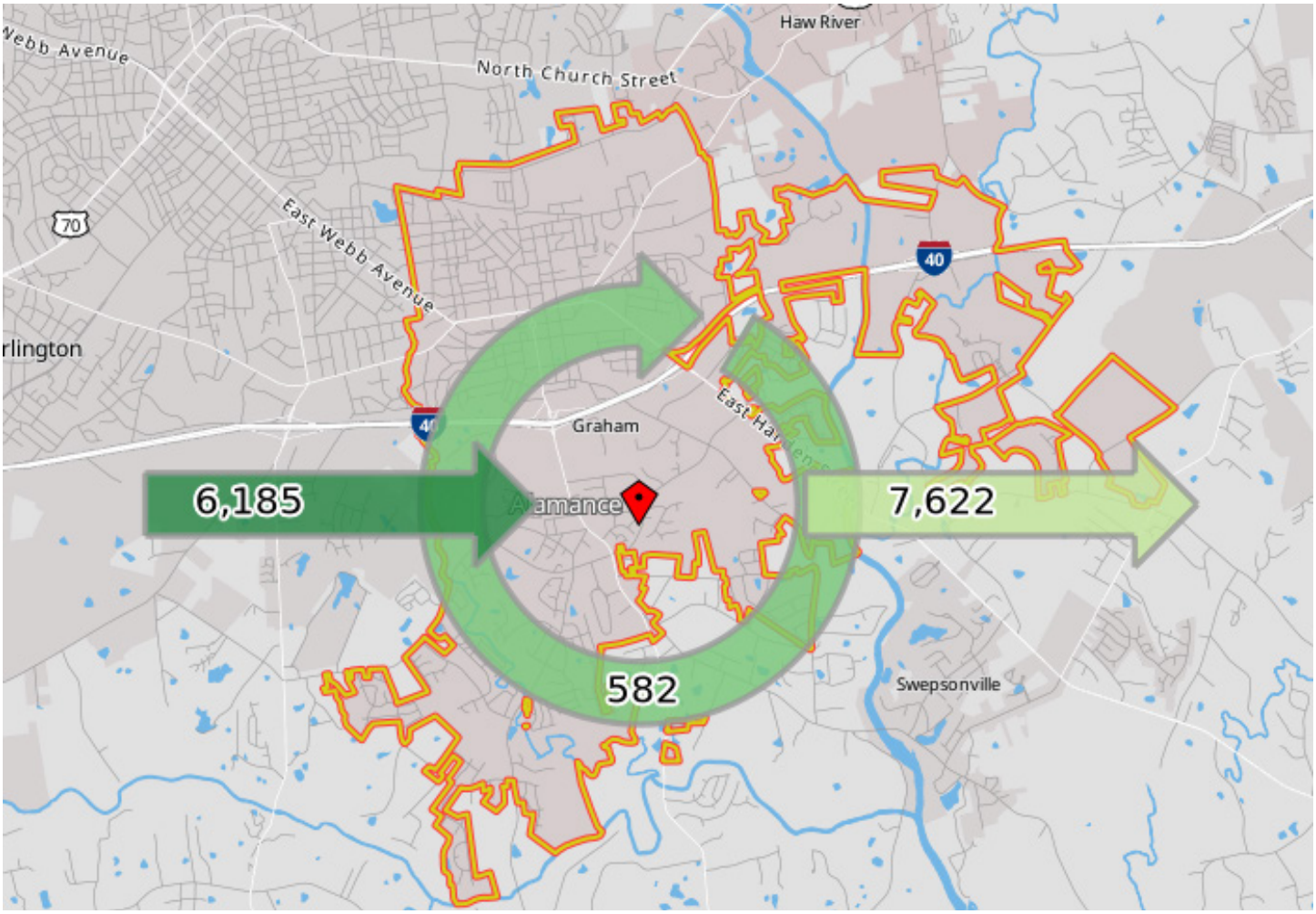
Graham loses about 1,437 people each day as 7,622 workers commute out of Graham and only 6,185 workers commute into Graham.

Figure 14: Inflow/Outflow of Graham Workers (2022)

Inflow/Outflow	Count	Percent
Labor Force Living in Graham	8,204	
Employed in Graham	582	8.6%
Commute outside Graham for Work	7,622	92.9%
Employed in Graham (Jobs)	6,767	
Living in Graham	582	8.6%
Commute into Graham for Work	6185	91.4%
Net Flow of Workers	-1,437	

Source: 2022 Census OnTheMap

Figure 15: Inflow/Outflow of Graham Workers (2022)



Source: 2022 Census OnTheMap

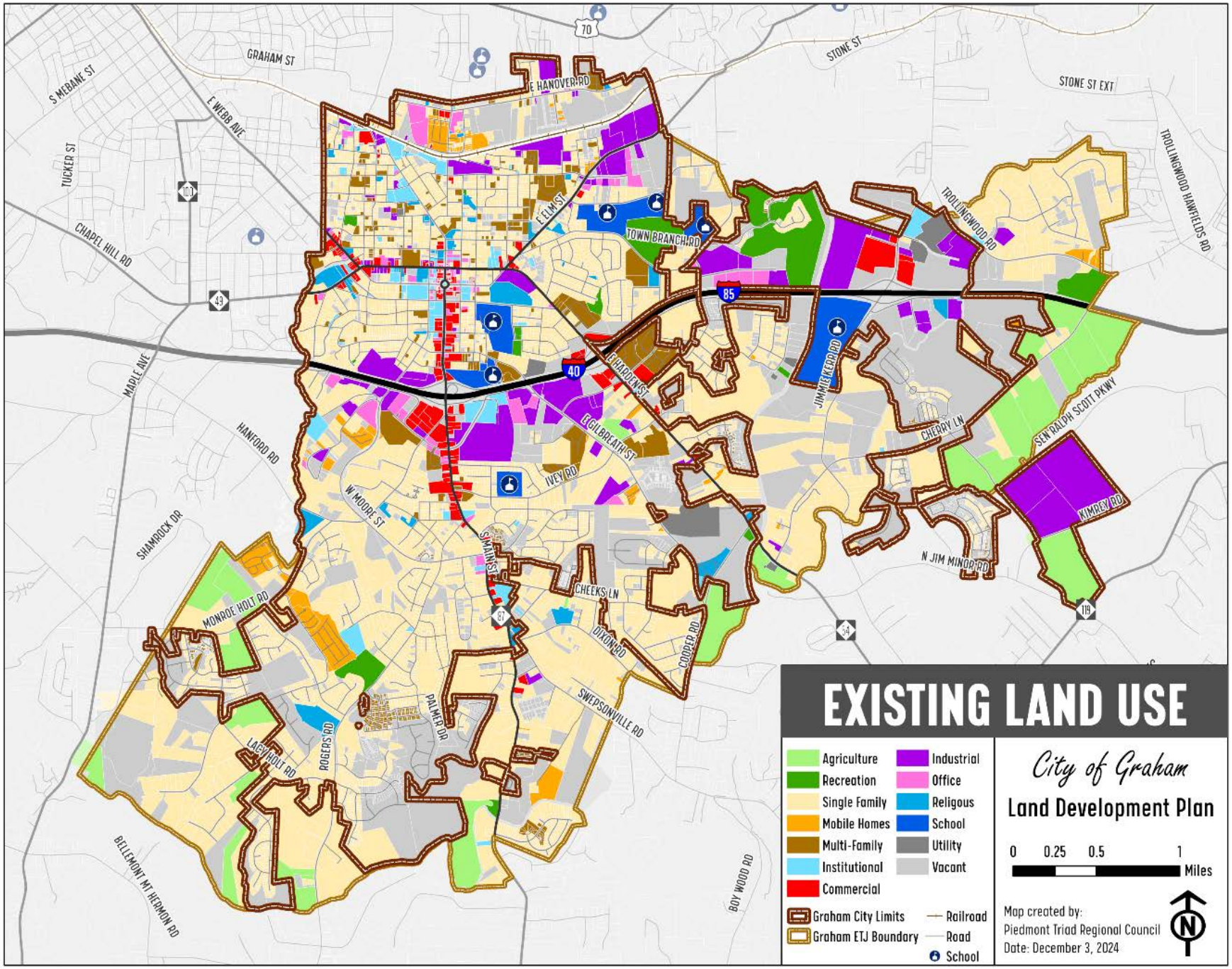
2.3 Existing Land Use

Understanding the current landscape of development within the City of Graham is the essential first step in effective long-range planning. This section presents the Existing Land Use (ELU) Table and Map, which collectively serve as a critical baseline for our Comprehensive Plan. The ELU Map provides a detailed visual representation of how every parcel of land within Graham's corporate limits and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) is currently utilized. Complementing the map, the ELU Table offers a statistical breakdown of these land uses by category, quantifying the acreage dedicated to residential, commercial, industrial, public, and open space functions.

These tools are indispensable because they offer a snapshot of Graham's current physical development patterns. They allow us to identify concentrations of specific land uses, pinpoint areas of undeveloped or underutilized land, and observe the relationships between different types of development. By establishing this clear picture of "where we are now," the Existing Land Use Table and Map become the foundation upon which we can assess past growth, understand present challenges, and, most importantly, formulate realistic and aspirational policies for Graham's future growth and development. They are the initial diagnostic tools that inform all subsequent recommendations within this Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that our strategies are grounded in the community's current reality.

Existing Land Use Table

	CITY		ETJ		TOTAL	
LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT	ACRES	PERCENT	ACRES	PERCENT
Agricultural	80.8	1.1%	545.9	14.6%	626.7	5.8%
Recreation	188.9	2.6%	30.0	0.8%	218.9	2.0%
Single Family	2,378.9	33.2%	1,827.9	48.9%	4,206.8	38.6%
Mobile Homes	99.1	1.4%	61.1	1.6%	160.2	1.5%
Multi-Family	309.2	4.3%	6.6	0.2%	315.8	2.9%
Institutional	132.0	1.8%	8.3	0.2%	140.3	1.3%
Commercial	190.5	2.7%	4.5	0.1%	195.0	1.8%
Industrial	590.6	8.2%	9.7	0.3%	600.3	5.5%
Office	113.9	1.6%	0.3	0.0%	114.1	1.0%
Religious	114.8	1.6%	6.8	0.2%	121.6	1.1%
School	215.7	3.0%	0.0	0.0%	215.7	2.0%
Utility	69.8	1.0%	4.6	0.1%	74.5	0.7%
Vacant	1,783.5	24.9%	894.1	23.9%	2,677.6	24.6%
ROW	891.8	12.5%	336.0	9.0%	1,227.8	11.3%
TOTAL	7,159.5		3,735.7		10,895.2	


EXISTING LAND USE
Agriculture
Recreation
Single Family
Mobile Homes
Multi-Family
Institutional
Commercial
Industrial
Office
Religous
School
Utility
Vacant
Graham City Limits
Graham ETJ Boundary
Railroad
Road
School
City of Graham
Land Development Plan
0 0.25 0.5 1
Miles
Map created by:
Piedmont Triad Regional Council
Date: December 3, 2024
GRAHAM ST
S MEBANE ST
E WEBB AVE
TUCKER ST
CHAPEL HILL RD
MAPLE AVE
HANFORD RD
SHAMROCK DR
MONROE HOLT RD
LACY HOLT RD
ROGERS RD
BELLEMONT MT HERMON RD
PALMER DR
SWEPSONVILLE RD
BOY WOOD RD
COOPER RD
DIXON RD
CHEEKS LN
S MAIN ST
W MOORE ST
IVEY RD
E GILBREATH ST
E HADEN ST
E ELM ST
E HANOVER RD
TOWN BRANCH RD
JIMMIE KERR RD
CHERRY LN
N JIM MINOR RD
SEN RALPH SCOTT PKWY
KIMREY RD
TROLLINGWOOD RD
TROLLINGWOOD HAWFIELDS RD
STONE ST
STONE ST EXT
70
85
40
49
87
54
119

National Register of Historic Places

The National Historic Preservation Act created the National Register in 1966. The act recognizes and protects properties of historic and cultural significance that warrant consideration in federal undertakings such as highway construction and urban renewal projects. In addition, the act also provides incentives for local and private preservation initiatives. Listing on the National Register is primarily an honor that shows a structure or structures have been researched and evaluated according to established procedures and determined to be worthy of preservation for its historical value. Being listed on the National Register does not carry with it any restrictions unless the owner wishes to apply for federal benefits such as a grant or tax credit. Income-producing historic properties are eligible to receive a 20% state tax credit and a 20% federal investment tax credit for the cost of a certified rehabilitation project. Non-income-producing historic properties are eligible for a 30% state tax credit.

Graham has two Historic Districts and three individual buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The North Main Street Historic District spans approximately twenty-four acres on the north side of Downtown Graham from the intersection of North Main Street and Albright Avenue. This primarily residential area features large dwellings erected for the leading businessmen, doctors, and industrialists in Graham, as well as smaller houses for tradesmen. Many of the residences are sited on spacious lots with mature shade trees and boxwoods, and epitomize nationally popular architectural styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as Queen Anne, Neoclassical, and Elizabethan Revival.

The Graham Historic district is centered on the courthouse and the surrounding square. The original courthouse from 1849 was built in an age where the county was the center of government and society. Alamance County Courthouse anchors the Graham Historic District. Construction began in 1849. It was originally constructed as a brick courthouse to handle the government business. Over the years the courthouse was modified and eventually replaced by the current 1920's Neoclassical Revival courthouse.



Current Courthouse, built 1924

Commercial services proliferated in the courthouse square. Nick's Store (102 South Main St) on one corner was built in 1851. Scott Store is on another corner of the square. Wealthy residents built homes in the surrounding streets.

The Courthouse Square Historic District has also been designated a local historic district by the City Council. The Graham Historic District Commission is responsible for administering the Courthouse Square Historic District, which is composed of most of the downtown. The Commission is responsible for the

review of Certificates of Appropriateness (COA's) for structures and land within the district. The role of the Historic District Commission is to preserve the historic and cultural character of Graham and to protect the downtown from any inappropriate changes that may negatively impact the special qualities found within the Courthouse Square Historic District.

The Oneida Cotton Mills and Scott-Mebane Manufacturing Complex is a small historic district composed of two historic industrial concerns. Oneida Cotton Mills (219 West Harden St.) was the first cotton mill established in Alamance County and dates from 1882. Scott-Mebane Manufacturing Company (220 West Harden St.) sits directly across West Harden Street and south of the cotton mill complex and was built around 1900. Oneida Cotton Mills has been converted into apartments, preserving the historic structure while allowing for continued use.

Preserving historic resources is important for several reasons. It helps tell the stories of local history which feeds into a shared community identity. Historic preservation supports economic development by stabilizing property values and by attracting visitors to its unique and beautifully preserved and rehabilitated structures.

Resources to aid the preservation effort include:

- **The State of North Carolina Division of Historical Resources (multiple programs housed under this Division)**
- **Preservation North Carolina**
- **U.S. Department of the Interior: Historic Preservation**
- **Alamance County Historic Properties Commission**

The City of Graham has developed a partnership with the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission whereby the Commission handles all of the City of Graham's landmark designations to the State of North Carolina. This partnership is a great example of non—duplication of municipal services to save taxpayer money.

2.5 Community Facilities & Services

Water

Graham operates its own water system consisting of over 104 miles of water mains. The Haw River flows through the region and several critical watershed areas and lakes are important for the region's water supply:

- Graham-Mebane Lake is a 650-acre municipal reservoir, fed by Quaker Creek and four other creeks (Otter Creek, Mill Creek, Stagg Creek, and Back Creek). The lake's primary purpose is as a source of drinking water for the citizens of Graham, Mebane, Green Level, and Swepsonville, and no swimming or wading is allowed.
- Stoney Creek Watershed
- Big Alamance Creek Watershed

Additionally, the City is currently in the process of updating the main water line from downtown to the water treatment plant at Graham-Mebane Lake. City leaders have, and will continue, pursuing state funding for infrastructure improvements.

Wastewater

Graham operates its own wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) along with 93 miles of sanitary sewer lines throughout the City. The wastewater treatment plant was constructed in 1960, with upgrades in 1980 and 2002. The present capacity is 3.5 million gallons per day. Through the hard work of the staff and City Council, the City of Graham received an unprecedented $11 million dollars from the North Carolina state legislature in 2023 for utility improvements. This funding has allowed the City to keep the public utility rates low. Currently Graham is embarking upon the largest wastewater improvement project in the city's history. This $84 million dollar project is underway to upgrade and expand the WWTP to 5.0 million gallons per day and to relocate portions out of the floodplain. This expansion will provide adequate capacity for continued development.

Schools

Graham prides itself that there are a number of educational opportunities for residents. Graham is part of the Alamance-Burlington School System (ABSS). The school system is the result of a 1996 merger between the Burlington City and Alamance County School Systems.

Graham High School

A small, comprehensive, public high school located near the heart of Graham. It serves a diverse and inspiring group of young people. It has a public safety academy that includes specialization for Fire Fighter Technology and Emergency Medical Technology. There is a pre-collegiate academy that supports students in graduating high school while also obtaining an Associate's Degree of their choice from Alamance Community College. The Advanced Integrated Math and Science (AIMS) Academy allows students to graduate high school with a Certification in Basic Laboratory Techniques and be close to completing an Associate's Degree in Applied Science from Alamance Community College.

North Graham Elementary

An arts integration school. Students enjoy learning through dance, drama, visual art, and music throughout every school day. North Graham offers many different opportunities for students such as: orchestra, dance, science fair, and the Science Olympiad. There are approximately 350 students in pre-kindergarten through 5th grade.

South Graham Elementary

A 50 year old public school with a student population of approximately 500. The school serves pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. Their vision is to create an environment that does the following: nurtures positive relationships; strengthens self-efficacy and identity; develops the whole child; encourages peer interactions; supports independence, promotes self-regulation, prioritizes communication, balances teaching approaches, integrates and balances curriculum and builds higher order thinking skills.

Graham Middle School

A public school with a student population of approximately 500 students. The school serves 6th through 8th grades. With a focus on fostering learning and personal growth, the school utilizes a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework that helps schools and districts provide students with the support they need to succeed academically, socially, and behaviorally. Graham Middle School offers a variety of classes and extracurricular activities to

support student development.

Ray Street Academy

A public school and part of ABSS but it provides an intense one-on-one education to students that have difficulty in the traditional school settings. They also require uniforms and have a strict discipline policy. 93% of students at Ray Street Academy are disadvantaged. The class room sizes are also typically smaller in comparison to traditional schools.

River Mill Academy

A public charter school which serves approximately 800 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. River Mill Academy offers a challenging college and university preparatory academic program. In addition, River Mill Academy participates in interscholastic athletics in several sports.

Alamance Christian School

A private faith-based school with classes from preschool through the 12th Grade. It has an enrollment of approximately 550 students with an average class size of 18 students. There are plans for a major expansion which should increase the number of students significantly.

Bradford Academy

A faith based, private Christian School that uses the classical model of the Trivium. It was established in 2008 and provides grades Kindergarten thru 12th grade. Students wear uniforms and have a required dress code.

The Burlington School

A college preparatory school serving preschool through 12th grade and offers programs in academics, athletics, and the arts. Their progressive curriculum emphasizes strong foundations across core subject areas, character education and community service. Extracurricular activities range from competitive athletics to fine arts, as well as a variety of interest-based clubs.

Burlington Christian Academy

A school that aims to inspire their 900 plus students to excellence for the glory of God through exceptional academics, Biblical Truth, and intentional discipleship. Their programs include 4th/5th grade Servant Leadership Academy, Spanish classes, National Junior Honor Society for Middle School Students and National Honor Society for High School Students, historical trips on the East coast of America, 32 athletic teams, fall and spring plays, and over ten active middle school clubs.

Blessed Sacrament School

Established in 1935, is a fully accredited Catholic School offering pre-kindergarten through 8th grade Standard and Accelerated curriculum, and programs for students with Special Needs. The school focuses on problem-based experiential learning and the integration of STEM thinking into a broad range of activities and learning opportunities. Approximately 300 students attend.

The Hawbridge School

A tuition free charter school with classes from kindergarten through the 12th Grade. It has an enrollment of approximately 550 students. The faculty-designed Hawbridge Model involves differentiated, individualized instruction to foster academic, behavioral, emotional and social development; interdisciplinary teaching; outdoor and place-based education; and sustaining a community where everyone feels appreciated and included. Extracurricular programs include clubs, student-directed micro-enterprises and internships in craft-making, theater, and organic gardening. Through the Hawbridge Outdoors program, students, faculty, and

chaperones go hiking, biking, camping, canoeing, horseback riding, zip-lining, rock climbing and ice-skating on weekend excursions. Hawbridge Sports offers students soccer, cross country, volleyball, basketball, and ultimate Frisbee competitions.

Clover Garden School

This charter school recently underwent a $20 million expansion to increase its enrollment. This school provides students a high quality education that follows NC state standards. The school opened in 2001 and has increased its enrollment exponentially each year.

Alamance Community School

A tuition free public charter school started in 2019. Serving kindergarten through 7th grade, they have plans to expand to 8th grade in 2025. Set in a specially designed school, the main teaching method is project based learning. There is an emphasis placed on developing the mindful habits of persisting, questioning, striving for accuracy, imagining, innovating, thinking flexibly and independently. A lottery system is used to admit students as applications routinely exceed admission slots.

Alamance Community College (ACC)

Founded in 1958 to serve the occupational needs of the area's residents. The college is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and offers over 200 areas of study. ACC has an annual credit enrollment of approximately 7,750 students per year. The Alamance Community College is a valuable resource to the community and offers the opportunity for local residents to improve their education and also provides local employers with qualified workers. ACC has proven to be a strategic partner in the future development of Graham and continues to provide workforce training, educational opportunities to attract the most desirable industries to the area.

Alamance Community College Biotechnology Center of Excellence is a great example of how ACC is building its curriculum offerings for the next generation of trained workers in Graham. This new 32,000 sq ft $20 million facility will train students to work in the life science industry.

ACC is also home to the Alamance-Burlington Early College program for high school students which allows them to attend college level classes full time starting as a freshman in high school and gives them the opportunity to graduate with a two year degree upon high school graduation.

Education is a major component of economic development. Industries want an educated, trainable workforce which Graham is proud to have.



ACC Biotechnology Center of Excellence

Transportation

Roadway System

"All roads lead to Graham". Graham is a logistical wagon wheel of commuting traffic. There are two major interstates. I-40 (traveling East to the Wilmington coast and West all the way to California) travels right thru the heart of Graham's downtown. I-85 travels North and South. Highway 70, Highway 54, Highway 49 and Highway 87 all bring people together daily around the court square in the historic downtown. Because Graham has such a strong logistical web of highways, it has been able to attract numerous industries that rely heavily on logistics (i.e., UPS opened a 600,000 sq ft facility (one of the largest on the East Coast), Amazon, Lidl Distribution, and Walmart distribution all have located in Graham because of the highway infrastructure.

Proposed transportation infrastructure projects on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) include:

- NC 54 (East Harden Street) At NC 49 (East Elm Street) Intersection Improvements
- NC 54 (East Harden Street) at SR 1945 (Riverbend Road) / SR 2431 (Johnson Street). Intersection Improvements
- I-40 / I-85 Interchange. Upgrade Ramp Intersections
- SR 2106 (Woody Drive) Intersection Improvements
- NC 87 At I-40 Eastbound On-Ramp. Install Pedestrian Accommodations

Public Transit

Link Transit offers service to the City of Graham. Stops are located at the downtown Alamance County Offices, the South Main Street park & ride lot, and Alamance Community College on Jimmy Kerr Road. Alamance County Transportation Authority (ACTA) provides daytime transportation services Monday through Friday that must be scheduled a day in advance. ACTA also offers specialized transportation services through their app for a low cost daily fee or free if scheduled a day in advance. The steering committee noted that service improvements were needed for both of these entities. Concern was also expressed regarding bus stop locations. Link Transit recently adopted a five year plan that was finalized in 2025. It was noted that on demand transit system would be preferable to provide shorter transit times and greater safety. On demand transit would also not require a way to get to a bus stop nor require lengthy waits at bus stops.

Bicycle

Pine Street Bike Lanes run nearly a mile along Pine Street, providing an east- west bicycle route connection. There are recreational cycling loop trails at three local parks: Bill Cook Park has a paved mixed use loop trail; Graham Regional Park has a paved mixed use loop trail; and South Graham Park has a natural surface loop trail.

Pedestrian

The downtown core is reasonably well served by sidewalks. However, there are locations where residents would benefit from additional or wider sidewalks. The vision of the 2006 Pedestrian Transportation Plan is to create a pedestrian friendly environment with a

system of pedestrian facilities linking together destinations, allows for safe interactions between pedestrians and motorists, supports alternatives to automobile travel, and advances the community's mobility. The City is currently updating the Pedestrian Plan.

Air

Major airports near Graham are Piedmont Triad International Airport and Raleigh-Durham International Airport. Burlington Alamance Regional Airport is located off the I-40 corridor and provides efficient service to aircraft ranging from corporate jets to general aviation. Burlington Alamance Regional Airport recently announced plans for expansion and service offerings.

Rail & Other

Daily passenger service is available through Amtrak at the Burlington train station. The high-speed rail corridor, from Raleigh to Charlotte within the state and between Washington D.C. and Atlanta on a regional scale, pass through Graham. Due to the presence of the high-speed rail corridor, future road improvements or construction must be in the form of overpasses in an effort to reduce at grade crossings.

Fire Protection

The Graham Fire Department is a combination fire department with nineteen volunteer, twelve part-time,



Graham Fire Department Engine 10

and nine career personnel. The Graham Fire Department holds a Class 3 Fire Protection Insurance Rating. The average response time for the department is 6 minutes 40 seconds. To decrease response times, Graham should explore the possibility of adding a substation in the Graham Regional Park.

Solid Waste

The City of Graham Sanitation Department runs weekly automated solid waste routes, curbside collection of yard waste, and bulk brush pick-up. Bulk item pick-up of large items is handled on a call in basis. The department also handles street sweeping, and administers the City's recycling contract.

Parks and Recreation

Graham Recreation and Parks maintains many facilities to provide residents with convenient access to recreation.

Graham Regional Park

Graham Regional Park has a picnic shelter, an inclusive playground, open play fields,

a youth challenge course, a zip-line, a paved trail, and workout equipment. Graham Paddle Access and Longmeadow Trailhead offer access to the 60 mile long Haw River Trail for hiking and paddling. A local outfitter, Haw River Canoe and Kayak provides canoes, kayaks, and tubes to travel down the Haw River.

The Graham Recreation and Parks Department opened the newest addition to Graham Regional Park, the playUNITED Inclusive Playground, in September 2020. This inclusive playground designed with the assistance of teachers from the Department of Exceptional Children of Alamance-Burlington School System is intended to provide a play environment that addresses the physical and social needs of all ages and abilities. It's a space in which families can actively engage and play. The playground features a poured in place rubberized surface; zero entry, double wide decking to access two large play units featuring multiple slides, play panels, climbing opportunities and a rocking feature; a double zip line featuring a Zero-G seat; several swings featuring expression swings and Zero-G seats; a merry-go-all; two colorful "shadow play" elements; semi-confined, safe areas that allow children to choose when or if they will fully engage in the play environment; shade structures; multiple benches and the entire playground is secured by fencing. The Inclusive Playground qualifies as a National Demonstration Site for PlayCore.



Graham Regional Park

Graham Regional Park also has the Youth Challenge Course, an outdoor obstacle course and fitness destination that connects people of all ages and backgrounds to socialize with their family and friends while getting more fit. Designed to engage children and families–together–the obstacle course is a great way to encourage multi-generational fitness and recreation. In this area of the park, you will also discover a zip-line, a paved accessible mixed-use trail (.3 mile), swing-set, slides, climbing boulders, a landscaped water feature, workout equipment, bike rack, and plenty of open green space for all types of recreational activities.

Bill Cooke Park

Bill Cooke Park offers baseball fields, tennis courts, pickleball, basketball court, two picnic shelters, a playground, a walking track, a mixed use trail, a dog park. Greenway Park has open play fields and a playground. Recently the city council



Bill Cooke Park

purchased additional land to expand Bill Cooke Park and has plans to add additional walking trails.



South Graham Municipal Park

South Graham Municipal Park

South Graham Municipal Park features a playground, nature trail, walking track, tennis courts, volleyball, pickleball, basketball courts, and picnic shelters.

Oakley Street Park

Oakley Street Park has a playground, a playing field, exercise equipment, and a walking track. Harman Park has a playground, a walking path, and a horseshoe pit.

Greenway Park

Greenway Park features green space and separate playground areas suitable for children ages 2 to 5 and 5 to 12

Marshall Street Park

Marshall Street Park features green space and a small playground suitable for children ages 5 to 12.

Harman Park

Harman Park features green space and a playground area suitable for children ages 5 to 12.

Graham Recreation Center

The Graham Recreation Center is approximately 16,500 square feet in size and has a full-size gym that is approximately 6,600 square feet with bleachers and 4 basketball goals. The half-size gym or small gym is approximately 3,200 square feet in size and contains 2 basketball goals. There is one multi-purpose room available for rent which is equipped with tables and chairs for approximately 40 people.

Other amenities for the Graham Recreation Center include a weight and fitness room, lockers, changing areas, and shower areas in both restrooms, as well as a warming kitchen.

In the outdoors, the center features a large lighted playground with a Gaga Ball pit. Graham Recreation & Parks was an NCRPA Promotes Healthy Play & Recreation Statewide Initiative Awardee.



Greenway Park

Maple Street Center for Performing Arts

The Maple Street Center has a large hardwood floor ideal for any performing arts or active event. The main room measures approximately 29' x 42' perfect for any small rental of 40 or less. The center contains 30+ chairs, 3 card tables, and 2 six feet rectangle tables.



Volleyball Court at Graham Civic Center

Center opportunities include Line Dancing, Hip Hop Step Classes, Beginner Yoga Classes, Beginner Shag Lessons with Bud Catoe, Mahjong, TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), and Alamance Arts' art classes are just examples of a few programs being held at the Maple Street Center. The center is also available to rent for showers, birthday parties, family events, meetings, study groups, etc.

Graham Civic Center

Indoors: The main area of the Civic Center is approximately 29' x 50', seats approximately 75 people with 10 rectangular tables and 6 round tables. Other amenities for this facility include a small warming kitchen, guest Wi-Fi, and audio/visual equipment.

Outdoors: The park surrounding the Civic Center features a sand volleyball court, playground, green space, and a picnic shelter (first come, first served).

Goley St., Johnson Ave., & Apollo Fields (Graham Middle School Complex)

Apollo Field is used for football, flag football, soccer, and lacrosse. Goley Street Field is used for youth baseball and softball. Facility also provides a sandstone walking track (.29 mile outer loop & .21 mile inner loop), including a StoryWalk®. Johnson Avenue Field is used for youth baseball and softball and has a grass infield.

Graham-Mebane Lake

Graham-Mebane Lake features a marina, bank fishing area, and a picnic shelter. A major renovation has started at the Graham Mebane Lake to improve the docking and launching of boats at this facility. Its office has also been renovated and new handicap bathrooms installed. The lake staff hosts multiple fishing tournaments, picnic/social events, and pontoon boat sunset cruises. Residents are allowed to fish, jet ski, paddleboard, rent john boats, kayaks, canoes and water-ski on the lake.



Graham-Mebane Lake Kayak rentals

SECTION 3: CURRENT DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Land development in Graham is regulated by the "City of Graham Development Ordinance" which includes the zoning requirements and the subdivision regulations.

3.1 Zoning

Zoning is essentially a means of insuring that the land uses of a community are properly situated in relation to one another, providing adequate space for each type of development. It allows the control of development density in each area so that property can be adequately serviced by such governmental facilities as the street, school, fire, police, recreation, and utility systems. This directs new growth into appropriate areas and protects existing property by requiring that development afford adequate light, air and privacy for persons living and working within the community. Zoning is probably the single most commonly used legal device available for implementing the land-use plan of a community. Zoning may be defined as the division of a governmental unit into districts, and the regulation within those districts of:

- The height and bulk of buildings and other structures;
- The area of a lot which may be occupied and the size of required open spaces;
- The density of population;
- The use of buildings and land for trade, industry, residence or other purposes.

If a property is zoned properly for its intended use, then the needed permits can simply be obtained through application and the payment of any required fees. If a rezoning is required, the approval of the City Council must be obtained. This process can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, depending on the magnitude, complexity and any controversy generated by the proposal. This process involves a public hearing where neighbors and other interested parties can voice their opinions on the proposed change. The Planning Board and City Council will consider these comments, along with staff reports and the city's comprehensive plan, before making a final decision. The city's land use plan and the development ordinance work together to provide a clear and predictable framework for growth, while also allowing for flexibility to address unique development proposals.

3.2 Zoning Districts

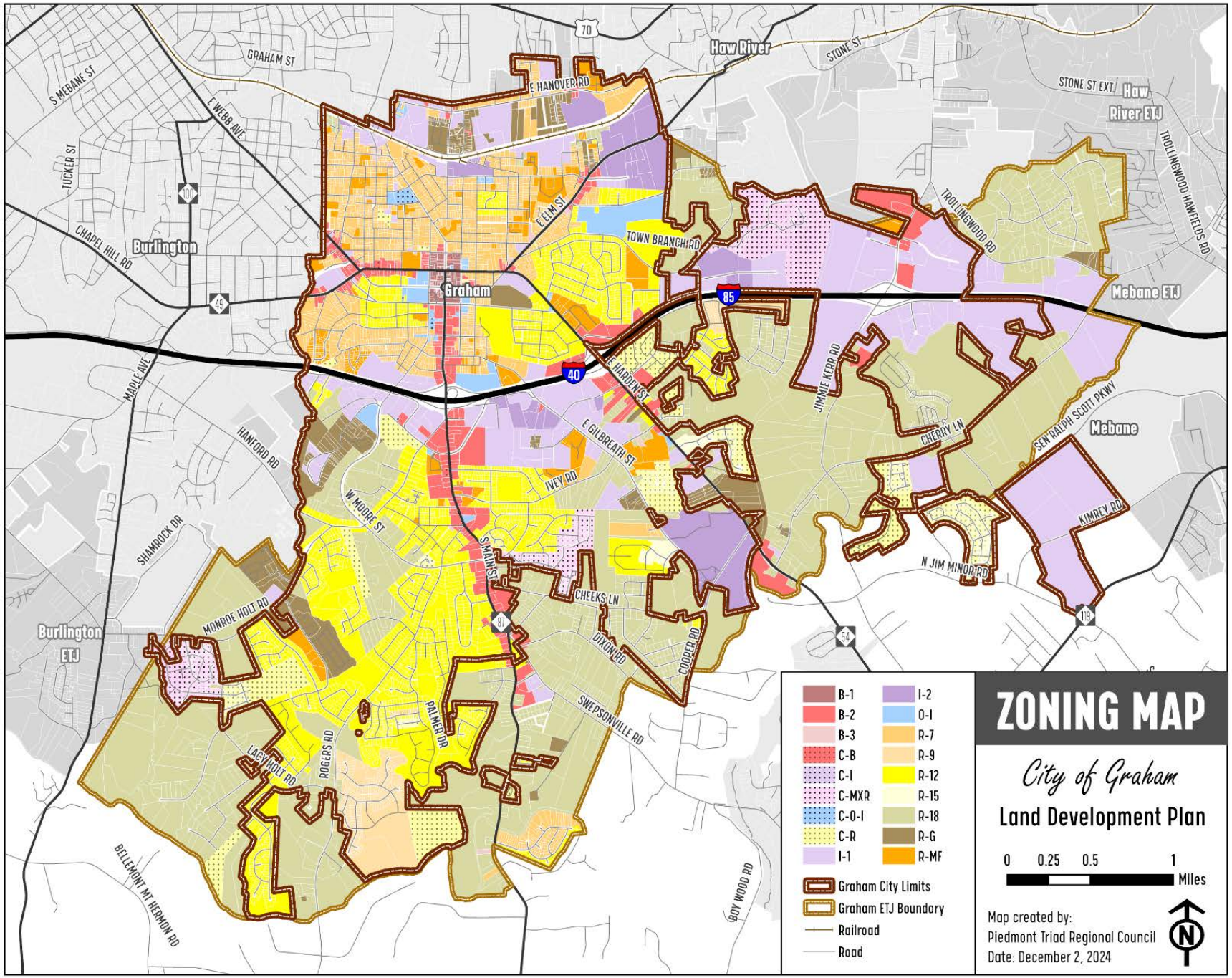
The City of Graham is divided into the zoning districts shown in the table below. Each district comes with a specific set of rules detailing permitted uses,including but not limited to; building height limits, minimum lot sizes, and required setbacks. The table shows the percentage of land zoned for each district broken down between the corporate municipal limits and the extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Zoning District Table

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	CITY		ETJ		TOTAL	
		ACRES	PERCENT	ACRES	PERCENT	ACRES	PERCENT
B-1	Central Business	25.1	0.4%	0.0	0.0%	25.1	0.2%
B-2	General Business	342.4	4.8%	52.6	1.4%	395.0	3.6%
B-3	Neighborhood Business	13.5	0.2%	2.8	0.1%	16.2	0.1%
C-B	Conditional Business	5.8	0.1%	0.0	0.0%	5.8	0.1%
C-I	Conditional Industrial	0.2	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	0.2	0.0%
C-MXR	Conditional Residential Mixed Use	277.7	3.9%	6.8	0.2%	284.5	2.6%
C-O-I	Conditional Office and Institutional	8.3	0.1%	0.0	0.0%	8.3	0.1%
C-R	Conditional Residential	411.1	5.7%	30.3	0.8%	441.3	4.1%
I-1	Light Industrial	1,172.7	16.4%	226.3	6.1%	1,399.0	12.8%
I-2	Heavy Industrial	334.2	4.7%	1.9	0.1%	336.1	3.1%
O-I	Office and Institutional	105.1	1.5%	0.0	0.0%	105.1	1.0%
R-12	Medium-Density Residential	1,468.0	20.5%	46.4	1.2%	1,514.5	13.9%
R-15	Medium-Density Residential	26.7	0.4%	0.0	0.0%	26.7	0.2%
R-18	Low-Density Residential	808.2	11.3%	2,940.6	78.7%	3,748.8	34.4%
R-7	High-Density Residential	629.5	8.8%	44.1	1.2%	673.6	6.2%
R-9	High-Density Residential	199.1	2.8%	3.9	0.1%	203.1	1.9%
R-G	General Residential	227.2	3.2%	126.7	3.4%	353.9	3.2%
R-MF	Multifamily Residential	244.5	3.4%	10.6	0.3%	255.1	2.3%
ROW	Right of Way	860.3	12.0%	242.7	6.5%	1,103.0	10.1%
TOTAL		7,159.5		3,735.7		10,895.2	

Most of the historic part of the City is zoned R-7, while the surrounding rural landscape of the extra-territorial jurisdiction is R-18. The major arterials into and out of the City are slowly being rezoned to General Business, B-2. It is important to note that a request to change the zoning ordinance, whether by application for a general district or a special district, is a request to change the basic plan for the area where the property is located. For example, if someone applies to change the zoning from residential to commercial to allow a used car lot, regardless of the special conditions on the site, the basic issue is still whether a business should be located on that property and does it meet the general purposes of the ordinance. Such decisions or changes to the plan may not individually have a large impact, but taken collectively may indicate the need to revise or modify the plan to meet continuing demands for growth and development.

3.3 Zoning Map



3.4 Zoning Overlay Districts

Overlay zoning is a regulatory tool that creates a special zoning district, placed over an existing base zone(s), which identifies special provisions in addition to those in the underlying base zone.

Courthouse Square Historic District ("Historic District")

Established for the purpose of protecting and conserving the heritage of Graham, Alamance County and the state; for the purpose of safeguarding the character and heritage of the district by preserving the district as a whole and any individual property therein that embodies important elements of its social, economic, cultural, political or architectural history; for the purpose of promoting the conservation of such district for the education, pleasure and enrichment of residents of the district and Graham, Alamance County, and the state as a whole; for the purpose of fostering civic beauty; and for the purpose of stabilizing and enhancing property values throughout the district as a whole.

Planned Unit Development

Established to promote innovative design in development by providing flexibility in regard to permitted uses and bulk regulations. Graham's regulations are designed to promote the development of attractive, desirable communities of place, where residents and visitors can work and live in a development pattern that integrates residential and non-residential uses in a design that is accessible to pedestrians and encourages the use of alternative modes of transportation and shared parking and offers greater convenience to the residents of the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

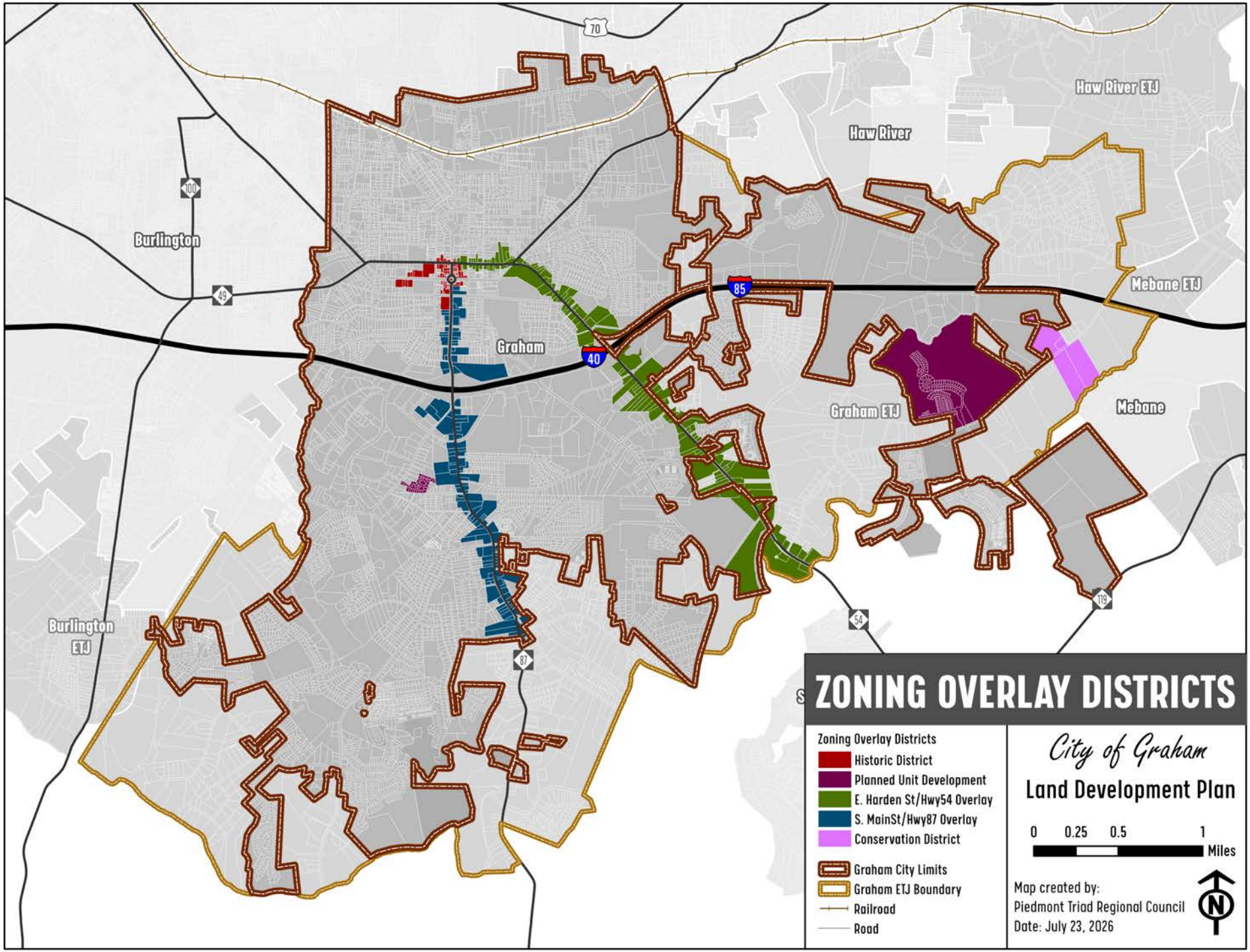
South Main Street/Highway 87 Overlay District

Established to preserve the visual character of the corridors leading from I-40 and I-85 into Graham's historic business district. Signage, landscaping, building materials, colors, design, and overall site use should complement and not detract from the established historic district design standards. Because the Overlay District starts at the Highway 87 southern boundary of the City Limits, many citizens and visitors will see this part of the City on a daily basis. In order to arrive at the central business district, or "Historic District Overlay Zone", from the City Limits, one must travel along the Overlay District. It is very important that the Overlay District is compatible with many of the design standards in the historic district since these two overlay zones are adjacent to one another.

East Harden Street/Highway 54 Overlay District

An aesthetically important thoroughfare for the City of Graham. It is intended to supplement, rather than replace the underlying zoning in this area. It does not address elements such as use or intensity (which are still controlled by the underlying zone), rather it addresses design elements such as signage, lighting, and access.

3.5 Zoning Overlay Districts Map



3.6 Rezoning

When a property is zoned and development is imminent, it is imperative that the governing body take into account the planning put into this land use document. The strength of this document and the will of the public for enforcement can only be realized through strict adherence to its guidance. Future development should be harmonious with existing development in order to protect the rights and expectations of existing long-standing residents. Governing bodies should not arbitrarily rezone property and must ensure that any new proposed development improvements are consistent with this Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Specific explanation as to how the development is or is not consistent with the plan should be outlined in the motion for approval or denial. If governing bodies do not adhere to this land use plan, it loses credibility, can affect property values, cause unintended costly development that is difficult to remedy, and open the city to liability and challenges. Thoughtful consideration should be given when a governing body allows for rezoning of property and all the proposed uses allowed under the rezoning should be carefully considered.

3.7 Conditional Use Zoning

Conditional Use Zoning is an important zoning tool that allows the governing body to require additional conditions that will, in its opinion, assure that the proposed use in its proposed location will be harmonious with the area. Some things to consider are parking, access to property, floodplains, lighting, fencing, pollution, neighboring land uses, existing development, noise, dedication of common areas, recreational amenities, walkways, pedestrian traffic, roadway speeds, traffic studies, right-of way improvements, screening, number of units, lot size, watershed concerns, location of structures on property, scale of buildings abutting property, height of structures, exterior features, signage, number of entrances to property, emergency egresses, waterways, railroads, existing easements, creation of jobs, school capacity, utility capacity, assembly use, how much the proposed use will generate in additional traffic. Emphasis should be given for the length of driveway, distance of structure to curb, where driveways and sidewalks are on the same side, special care should be taken to ensure that cars will not block the sidewalks by providing adequate driveway length and yard depth. Developers should be encouraged to commit to keep established natural buffers, mature landscaping and trees and discourage clear cutting which helps substantially with erosion control. Cul-de-sacs and streets need to be wide enough to be able to allow for fire trucks, sanitation trucks, and school buses to be able to turn around safely, especially if on street parking is allowed. Adequate setbacks that ensure fire safety and allow for access should be required from developers. If storage cannot be located in the rear of the property, consideration for how this might affect how property owners may use their garage for storage rather than park cars. This may displace cars to the street or driveways. Use of biocell stormwater control systems by developers should be encouraged. This promotes a greenspace that is easier to maintain over time than a pond. Emphasis on how the use will affect the tax basis, availability of utilities, utility improvements, consistency with other long-range goals, in-fill vs urban sprawl, vacancy, historical features, architecture, hours of operation, topography of land to be developed, natural resources located on the property, historic preservation, and the mix of proposed uses.

3.8 Subdivision

Subdivision regulations are locally adopted laws governing the process of converting raw land into building sites. They normally accomplish this through plat (map) approval procedures, under which a developer is not permitted to make improvements or to divide and sell his land until the governing body or planning board has approved a plat of the proposed design of his subdivision. The approval or disapproval of the local government is based upon compliance or noncompliance of the proposal with development standards set forth in the subdivision regulations. In the event that the developer attempts to record an unapproved plat with the local registry of deeds or to sell lots by reference to such a plat, he may be subject to various civil and criminal penalties.

Subdivision regulations may serve a wide range of purposes. To the health officer, for example, they are a means of insuring that a new residential development has a safe water supply and sewage disposal system and that they are properly drained. To the tax official they are a step toward securing adequate records of land titles. To the school or parks official they are a way to preserve or secure the school sites and recreation areas needed to serve the people coming into the neighborhood. To the lot purchaser they are an assurance that he will receive a buildable, properly oriented, well-drained lot, provided with adequate facilities to meet his day-to-day needs, in a subdivision whose value will hold up over the years.

Subdivision regulations enable the City to coordinate the otherwise unrelated plans of a great many individual developers, and in the process to assure that provision is made for such major elements of the land development plan as rights-of-way for major thoroughfares, parks, school sites, major water lines and sewer outfalls, and so forth. They also enable the City to control the internal design of each new subdivision so that its pattern of streets, lots and other facilities will be safe, pleasant, and economical to maintain. From the standpoint of the local governing board, subdivision regulations may be thought of as having two major objectives. First, these officials are interested in the design aspects of new subdivisions, as are the other officials mentioned. But secondly, they are also interested in allocating the costs of certain improvements most equitably between the residents of the immediate area and the taxpayers of the City as a whole.

When subdivision regulations require a developer to dedicate land to the public or to install utilities or to build streets, they represent a judgment that the particular improvements involved are (1) necessary in a contemporary environment and (2) predominantly of special benefit to the people who will buy lots from him (presumably at a price sufficient to cover the cost of these improvements) rather than of general benefit to the taxpayers of the City as a whole.

SECTION 4: GOALS TO GUIDE US INTO THE FUTURE

During the planning process several issues were identified that impact the entire planning jurisdiction. The issues are:

- Land Use (people want to keep Graham's small-town feel)
- Downtown (people like the events and want more)
- Culture & History (preservation)
- Transportation (connectivity with bike & pedestrian improvements)

4.1 Land Use and Management Systems

Goal 4.1.1: Continue to improve the community's appearance to assure that Graham maintains its "small-town" charm.

Strategy 1: Continue to enforce the zoning ordinance.
Strategy 2: Update the sign ordinance.
Strategy 3: Educate the public on illegal signage.
Strategy 4: Create a web app/ software to allow the public to report code violations.
Strategy 5: Implement design standards for development and add overlays with specific design elements and signage on every main entryway:

- Jimmy Kerr Road
- NC 54 East & West Harden Street
- US 49
- Washington Street
- I-40/ I-85
- Main Street/ Highway 87

Strategy 6: Continue to focus and encourage residents to enhance the beautification of our Town.

Goal 4.1.2: Reduce the proliferation of commercial strip development occurring along Graham's major thoroughfares.

Strategy 1: Steer new commercial development into commercial corridors on South Main Street and West Harden Street.
Strategy 2: Encourage internal connectivity between commercial plazas with sidewalk, trail and driveway connections for new development or redevelopment.

Strategy 3: Develop new Overlay Zoning Districts to raise the design standards of development along Graham's major thoroughfares.
Strategy 4: Update the Future Land Use Map.
Strategy 5: Change mini-storage to a special use.
Strategy 6: Adopt an overlay to create a protected viewshed along the interstate.

4.2 Downtown

Goal 4.2.1: The downtown Central Business District is a vibrant, economic engine.

Strategy 1: Continue the City sponsored grant program for facade and sign improvements.
Strategy 2: Continue efforts begun under the Graham Downtown Vision's Project within the public and private realm for signage.
Strategy 3: Work in conjunction with the downtown businesses to have utilities placed underground.
Strategy 4: Move gas meters to rear of buildings.
Strategy 5: Extend the business district to Maple Street and Marshall Street.
Strategy 6: Encourage small businesses to locate downtown.
Strategy 7: Expand the farmer's market.
Strategy 8: Extend 20 mph speed limits out from Court Square to slow traffic.

Goal 4.2.2: Increase regional awareness of downtown as a potential shopping and tourist destination.

Strategy 1: Ensure that the "Historic Walk Guide" is available at public locations and businesses throughout the City and updated regularly.
Strategy 2: Obtain a "State Historic Site" sign along the interstate to recognize the Courthouse Square and North Graham Historic District's.
Strategy 3: Continue to develop events in addition to "Arts Around the Square" in cooperation with downtown businesses.
Strategy 4: Continue to install marker plaques on Historic Buildings.
Strategy 5: Add more locations for the Historic Walk Guide.

4.3 Culture & History

Goal 4.3.1: Preserve Graham's Historic Properties

Strategy 1: Continue to support efforts that identify, restore and/or reuse cultural and historic structures, buildings, monuments, and

neighborhoods.

Strategy 2: Promote Graham's Cultural and Historic Resources as a potential tourist destination. (i.e. Arts, Around the Square, Alamance County Arts Council, Downtown, the Alamance County Children's Museum, the Haw River Trail, the Haw River, the Graham Mebane Lake Providence Church, etc.)

Strategy 3: Support and encourage the preservation of cultural and historic resources within the Planning area.

Strategy 4: Maintain the historic Lancaster Square layout of downtown.

Strategy 5: Avoid disrupting the historic granite curbing at all without a permit. The Historic Resource Commission should be consulted when any changes to the historic curbing or layout of the historic district is being considered.

Strategy 6: All alterations and improvements to Historic Properties should be consistent with the Historic Resources Handbook and follow the guidelines set by the NC Historic Preservation Office.

4.4 Transportation

Goal 4.4.1: Increase the number of alternative routes throughout the City.

Strategy 1: Develop a graduated scale for required road widths dependent on the total number of homes both present and future, and whether on street parking is anticipated.

Strategy 2: Require multiple access points of ingress and egress from residential developments if there will be more than 100 homes or if the development can potentially connect to future development.

Strategy 3: Utilize a City Street Plan to work in conjunction with the adopted Thoroughfare Plan to have minor roads built by developers.

Strategy 4: Consider future development when determining road widths for new development. Establish a graduated scale for proper street width.

Strategy 5: Add standards for cul-de-sacs. Minimum radius dependent on number of houses

Strategy 6: Kiosks for garbage

Strategy 7: Road width dependent on future number of homes

Strategy 8: Require double-width driveways to avoid parking congestion

Goal 4.4.2: Improve the walkability of the City.

Strategy 1: Require new development to include sidewalks that are part of the adopted Sidewalk Plan.

Strategy 2: Increase percentage of budget dedicated to sidewalk

maintenance.

Strategy 3: Require brick stamped concrete for crosswalks downtown and encourage use in other areas with high pedestrian traffic

Strategy 4: Promote traffic calming measures in court square.

Strategy 5: Install traffic calming measures within a 5 minute walk of courthouse square.

Strategy 6: Promote development that utilizes pedestrian walkways to connect with adjacent land uses.

Strategy 7: Promote mixed use development to reduce the number of trips between uses.

Strategy 8: Extend greenway system to the City's recreational resources using recommendations from the Pedestrian Transportation Plan

Strategy 9: Encourage pedestrian and bike facilities on lower speed (<45mph) roads. Physical barriers between the roadway and pedestrian/ bicycle paths should be considered best practices.

4.5 Environmental and Natural Resources

Goal 4.5.1: Wisely use our natural resources for present residents and ensure those resources will exist for future generations.

Strategy 1: Support efforts to protect sensitive natural resources including wetlands, waterways, slopes, floodplains, etc.

Strategy 2: Encourage the restoration of creeks and streams that aid in the control of stormwater runoff.

Strategy 3: Increase awareness of and access to the Haw River: Identify areas to develop Trail Programs, acquire easements to expand Haw River Trail, develop a plan to reward developers who put in public amenities and recreational features along Haw River and future residential developments.

Strategy 4: Designate areas for recreation.

Strategy 5: Increase permitted density for developers dedicating open space beyond the minimum amount required.

Strategy 6: Utilize a billboard on I-40 to advertise open space, trails, and recreational amenities.

Strategy 7: Include Recreation & Parks in staff plan review.

Strategy 8: Make landscaping for commercial buildings dependent on building size.

Strategy 9: Develop standards requiring developers to keep existing mature trees and landscaping buffers.

Strategy 10: Increase the age and size of trees planted in required buffers.

Strategy 11: Create perimeter and interior vegetated buffer standards.

Strategy 12: Encourage bio-swales or bio-cells instead of detention ponds and

consistently research methods of water retention that are aesthetically pleasing.

Strategy 13: Encourage open space residential subdivisions that create compact neighborhoods and rural cluster developments that set aside significant natural vistas and landscape features for permanent conservation.

Strategy 14: Encourage developing with the natural topography of the land to reduce grading and stormwater runoff issues.

Strategy 15: Develop requirements that an existing vegetated buffer be left whenever possible versus cut and planted buffers.

Strategy 16: Encourage environmentally friendly roofing such as using durable and recyclable materials, and roofing options with higher energy-efficiency.

SECTION 5: PLANNING DISTRICT GUIDELINES

5.1 Planning Areas

The City of Graham Planning jurisdiction has been divided into three individual districts to plan for the future growth of the City. These three areas are:

- North Graham / Downtown Graham
- South Graham (south of I-40)
- Cherry Lane/North Carolina Commerce Park North Graham Planning District

5.2 North Graham Planning District

Background

The North Graham Planning District contains the historic core of the City. A wide variety of land uses are found within the district including: the Central Business District (CBD), established and historic residential areas, industrial operations, and a wide variety of commercial businesses. The major thoroughfares through the district are NC 87, NC 49, and NC 54. The streets follow a basic grid system that allows for numerous routes between locations. Highway 70 skirts the northern edge of Graham and is a major connection between Chapel Hill and Greensboro which people use to travel to and from Graham.

The district is the most urban of the four planning districts and was developed along traditional neighborhood development principles. Most of the area was developed before the 1950's. The district also has two historic districts and numerous structures that are eligible for nomination to the National Register.

Boundaries

The boundaries for the district are Interstate 40/85 on the south, the City limits of Graham to the west, the City limits of Burlington and Haw River to the north, and the Haw River to the east.

Existing & Emerging Conditions

- Downtown revitalization efforts have attracted developers and new businesses.
- Infill opportunities are available throughout the planning district for residential, industrial and commercial developments.
- Existing infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, roads, parks, etc.) reduces the cost of new development.
- Many areas need reinvestment to help improve community appearance.
- Commercial strip development has begun to infringe on residential areas.
- Older industrial facilities are still providing employment opportunities.

- Historic resources within the district should be capitalized on.

Planning District Growth Management Plan

The North Graham Planning District encompasses the traditional center of commerce, government, and industry in Graham. In order to enhance and preserve the valuable resources within the district it is recommended that the following efforts be undertaken.

Policies & Recommendations

Policy 5.2.1 Encourage infill development within the district, as well as redevelopment efforts of deteriorating structures.

Policy 5.2.2 Create more neighborhood ("pocket") parks within the district on vacant and underdeveloped lots.

Policy 5.2.3 Preserve established residential neighborhoods within the district.

Policy 5.2.4 Improve enforcement of existing zoning ordinance to improve community appearance.

Policy 5.2.5 Prohibit the continuation of additional commercial strip development along major thoroughfares.

Policy 5.2.6 Continue to encourage the redevelopment efforts underway within the City Center.

Policy 5.2.7 Promote the City Center as the commercial and governmental center of Graham.

Policy 5.2.8 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.

Policy 5.2.9 Encourage tourism within the City Center through promotional campaigns that highlight the Court House Square and North Main Street Historic Districts.

Policy 5.2.10 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.

Policy 5.2.11 Add greenery to create traffic calming.

Policy 5.2.12 Promote homeownership within the district as a way to protect established neighborhoods.

Policy 5.2.13 Expand the size of storm drains in downtown to reduce flooding risk.

Policy 5.2.14 Install stamped brick concrete crosswalks.

5.3 Southern Graham Planning District

Background

The Southern Graham Planning District contains the area associated with the first suburban growth in the City of Graham. The district is composed of a variety of land uses including commercial, residential, and industrial uses. A majority of the district is developed with relatively few large undeveloped tracts of land. The major thoroughfares within the district are NC 87, NC 54, and Gilbreath Street. Commercial strip development can be found along South Main Street. Areas directly behind the commercial developments range from multi-family apartments to cul-de-sac subdivisions.

Boundaries

The boundaries of the district are Interstate 40/85 on the north, the Haw River to the east, and the Burlington/Graham City limits to the west. The southern boundary for the Southern Graham district is Big Alamance Creek.

Existing & Emerging Conditions

- Incremental rezonings along South Main Street have led to the proliferation of commercial strip development.
- Vacant land is beginning to be developed at higher densities (i.e. multi-family and smaller single-family lots).
- An increase in the number of multi-family rezoning requests.
- Widening of NC 54 will place development pressures similar to that seen along South Main Street.
- Commercial and multi-family developments have begun to infringe upon established single-family residential areas.
- Most of the district is furnished with water and sewer.
- Graham Regional Park provides multiple recreation opportunities including an adaptive playground for all ages and abilities.

Planning District Growth Management Plan

The Southern Graham Planning District addresses the existing and emerging conditions of the district and creates a better sense of place through managed growth. In order to accomplish this task, it is recommended that the following Policies & Recommendations be followed.

Policies & Recommendations

Policy 5.3.1 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.

Policy 5.3.2 Limit direct highway access or the number of curb cuts for 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.

Policy 5.3.3 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.

Policy 5.3.4 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.

Policy 5.3.5 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.

Policy 5.3.6 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.

Policy 5.3.7 Encourage neighborhood residential development in remaining undeveloped areas that are adjacent to existing residential developments. Additionally, interconnectivity between neighborhoods should be encouraged for new developments but this connectivity should strongly take into consideration the harmonious use, road width, and increase in traffic on existing roads.

5.4 Cherry Lane/ NC Commerce Park Planning District

Background

The City of Graham's extra territorial planning jurisdiction has properties contained within it that are adjacent to the NC Commerce Park Planning District. This location provides an area for economic growth. This once historical and agricultural area has developed over the past 20 years with large mixed-use neighborhoods such as Old Fields and Cherry Creek and has large tracts adjacent to the NC Commerce Park

area. Initial construction of both Lidl and Walmart within the district opened the doors for additional industrial and warehouse uses in this area. The 1,100 acre park loosely includes portions of Graham, Mebane, and unincorporated Alamance County areas. Through a combination of annexations, rezoning, and municipal water and sewer extensions, as well as collaboration between local governments, this area can offer a multitude of development possibilities.

Boundaries

The district is comprised of the land east of the Haw River, south of the Town of Haw River, west of NC 119 and north of the Town of Swepsonville.

Existing & Emerging Conditions

- The 2022 Burlington Graham Comprehensive Transportation Plan shows Cherry Lane being widened to twelve foot lanes, with paved shoulders and turn lanes at key intersections and a sidepath.
- The district has large tracts of vacant land with some vacant land being developed.
- Incremental rezonings and subdivisions can lead to unplanned growth.
- The Interstate access and Alamance Community College offer a number of opportunities for future employment growth.
- Widening of NC 54 will add pressure to the district due to the proximity of the Cherry Lane/ NC Commerce Park area to the Interstate.

Planning District Growth Management Plan

The Cherry Lane/ NC Commerce Planning District provides a location for economic growth. The goal of this growth is to provide jobs and a tax base for the community. In order to accomplish this task, it is recommended that the following Policies & Recommendations be followed.

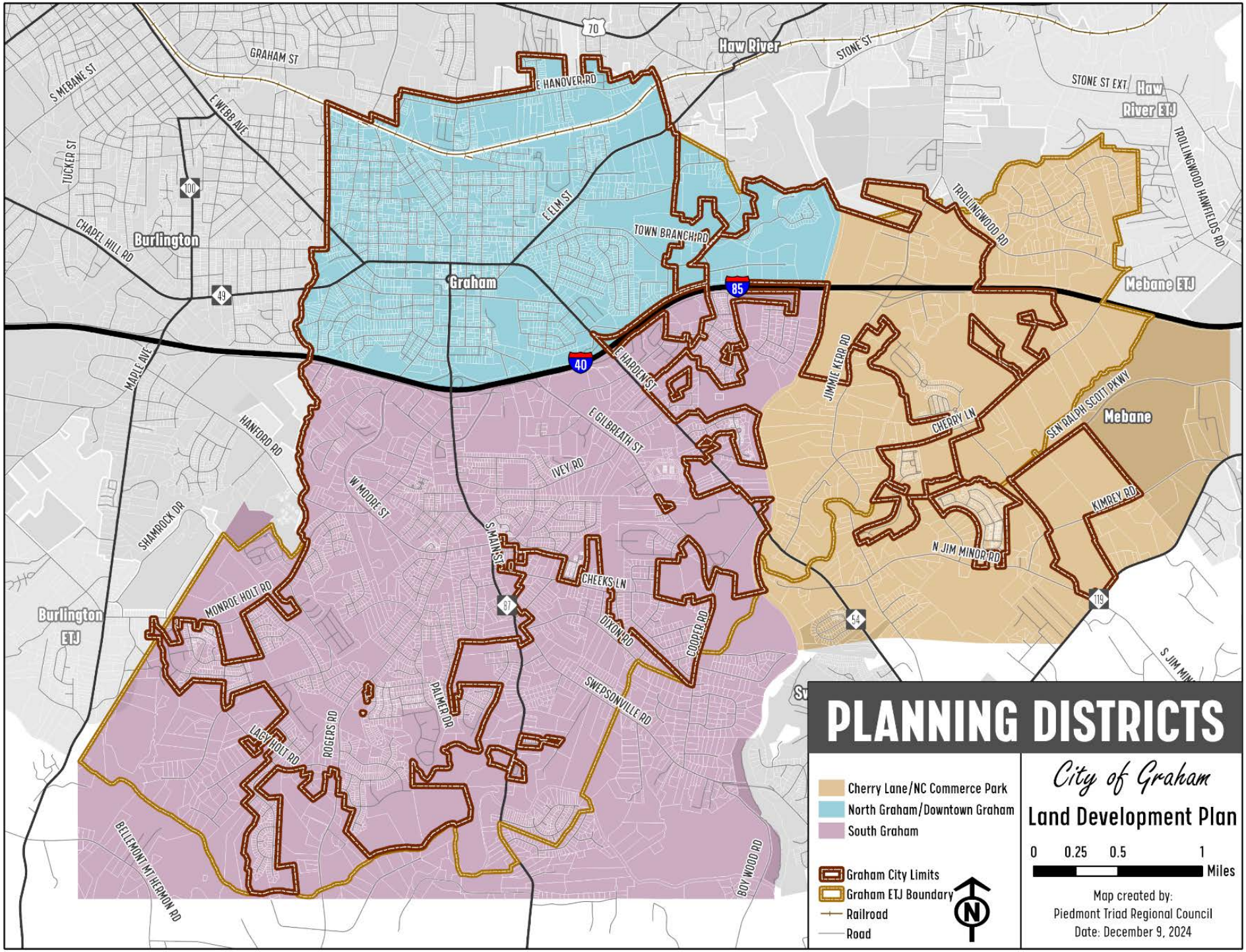
Policies & Recommendations

Policy 5.4.1 Require development within an integrated complex to reduce the number of driveways.

Policy 5.4.2 Encourage rural residential and conservation type residential development along with sensitive industrial development with large vegetative buffers and preservation of sensitive visual and historical components, environmental, and flood prone areas.

Policy 5.4.3 Develop a greenway system along rivers, creeks, and tributaries to encourage open space preservation as part of (and between) employment centers to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips between uses and offer residents of the district a continuous trail for recreational activities.

5.5 Planning District Map



SECTION 6: FUTURE LAND USE MAP

By identifying areas suitable for different land uses, the Future Land Use Map helps strategize where to focus growth, protect natural areas, and manage development pressures.

6.1 What is a Future Land Use Map?

A Future Land Use Map is a planning tool that visually represents a community's long-term vision for how land within its jurisdiction should be used and developed. It guides decisions on zoning, growth patterns, and infrastructure investments by identifying areas designated for various uses, such as residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open spaces. The map reflects community goals, balancing development with environmental preservation, infrastructure capacities, and quality of life considerations. By illustrating the desired locations for future growth and conservation, the Future Land Use Map serves as a strategic framework for managing sustainable development over time.

6.2 Applying Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map establishes the desired development pattern for the City of Graham and serves as a blueprint for future growth. The Future Land Use Map of this plan will be the primary guide for future land use and transportation decisions. The Future Land Use Map of this plan will also serve as a primary guide for future zoning decisions, along with policies and strategies from this section.

City staff, developers, and residents can use the map to understand where specific types of land uses—such as residential, commercial, or open space are encouraged, ensuring that future growth respects the town's limited infrastructure. By referencing the map, decisions on zoning changes, development proposals, and infrastructure investments can be made in a way that promotes growth and redevelopment while maintaining Graham's small-town feel and environmental integrity. The map helps manage growth thoughtfully and ensures it supports the long-term goals of the community.

6.3 Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map presented here represents a spatial arrangement that reflects the values of the community. Land use categories outline the type of encouraged development and provide a guide for zoning changes and future development ordinance updates.

Each of the future land use categories have a general description outlining goals for types and intensity of development. Policy recommendations found in other sections of this document should also be considered in any land planning board or governing board decision when applicable to the future land use category for a development regulation decision.

Mixed Use Residential

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

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

Secondary uses: multifamily housing, duplexes, townhomes, neighborhood commercial, non- retail uses such as day care, parks, schools, small civic facilities, offices and flex space, studios, bed-and-breakfasts; secondary uses are most appropriate when located at or near 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.

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

It is desirable that automobile parking 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.

Appropriate Density	3-6 dwelling units per acre
Appropriate Dimensional Standards and Building Orientations	New homes should consider adjacent lot sizes

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. Conventional residential practices tend to result in disconnected, homogeneous, 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, townhomes, and small-scale multi-family dwellings of twelve units or less

Supporting Uses: Places of worship, day cares, park facilities, schools, civic spaces, and consideration of accessory dwelling units, provided they are designed to maintain the single-family character of neighborhoods. 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

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, it would be desirable for garages to be set back from the front of the home, or accessed via a rear alley.

Transportation

It is desirable that automobile parking be located on the street, and behind homes with ingress and egress via rear alleys, and that street rights-of-way 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.

It is desirable that new neighborhoods 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.

Appropriate Density	3-6 dwelling units per acre
Appropriate Dimensional Standards and Building Orientations	New neighborhoods should consider a variety of lot sizes with consistent setbacks along the same street

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, dwelling units, 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.

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.

Appropriate Form	2-5 story building heights

Education District

The education district currently includes the campus of Alamance Community College (ACC). This area represents a significant opportunity to partner with private sector companies to train workers for local jobs located in Graham and the Commerce Park. Most students 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 development patterns. Such development should consist of mixed-use buildings that include housing for students, staff, and instructors, commercial uses for daily needs, flex 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.

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.

Appropriate Form	2-6 story building heights

Employment District

The NC Commerce Park has a joint land use agreement between Mebane, Graham, and Alamance County. The employment district extends beyond the Commerce Park border and currently contains several uses, including farms, large lot single family homes, natural groundcover, distribution and warehousing. As rezoning occurs to employment district, it can be incorporated into the NC Commerce Park joint land use agreement.

Desired Pattern

The employment district should 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 riparian 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. This may need to be accommodated through shared use trail connections.

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.

Appropriate Density	0.3-0.5 Commercial/Industrial FAR

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 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.

Appropriate Density	6 dwelling units per acre; 0.5 Commercial/Industrial FAR

Rural Residential

The rural residential area includes low density housing, farms, and undeveloped natural areas including streams and mixed oak-pine forests, in areas not served by City water and sewer services. Where possible cluster subdivisions should be considered to allow preservation of existing open space.

Desired Pattern

For the planning horizon of this plan, rural residential areas should maintain their existing rural and low-density residential character. In order to do this the City will avoid extending water and wastewater lines to properties located within this future land use area for the near and medium-term future.

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.

Conservation Overlay

The conservation overlay on the Future Land Use Map include floodway areas, 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 vertical development unless flood proofed and necessary for supporting trails or recreation. Existing parks are also included in this future land use category to preserve the excellent parks and recreation systems that exist in Graham.

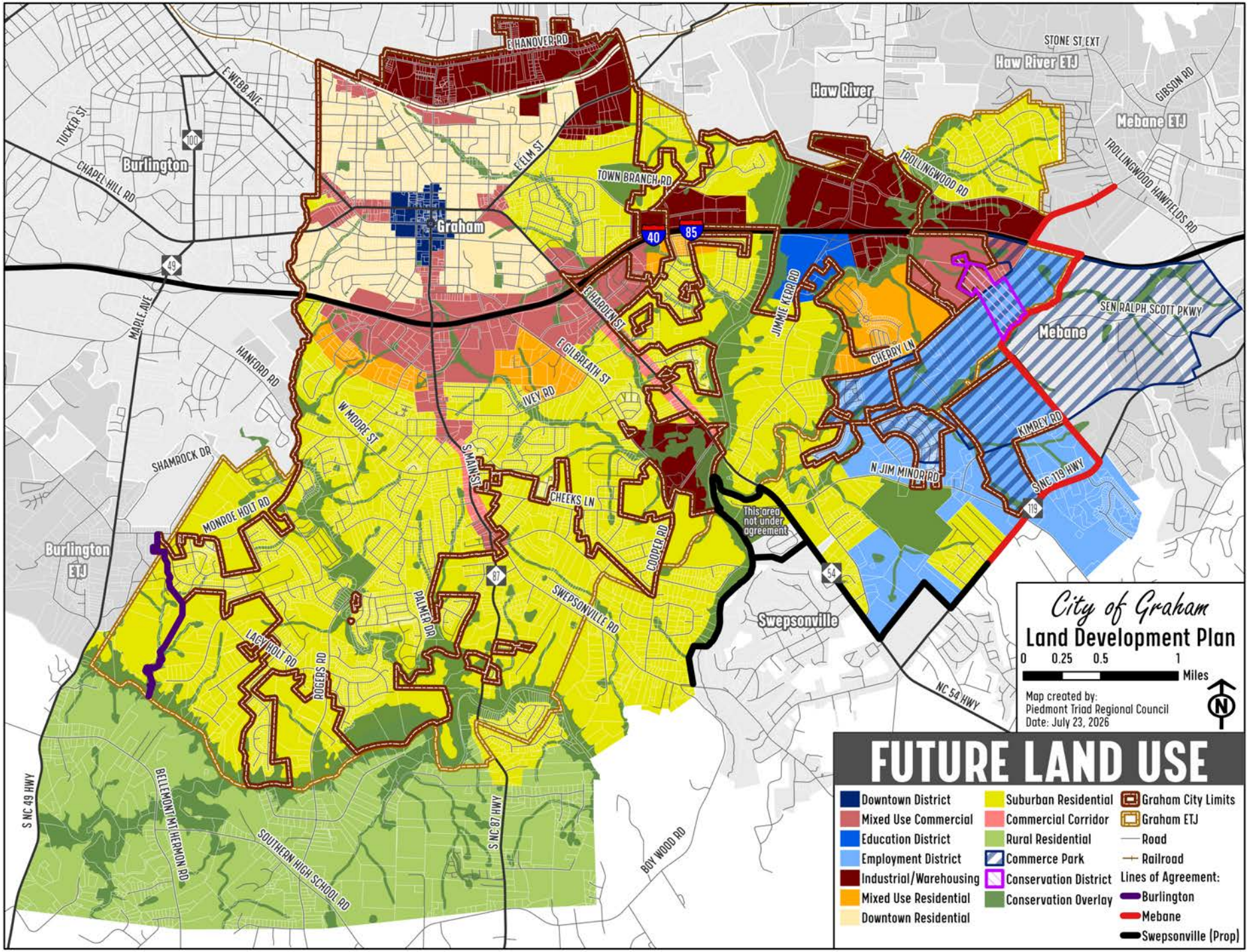
Relationship to Density Calculation

The land area of the conserved areas should not count towards the overall acreage in the density calculation.

Conservation District/Easement

Conservation Districts are local, state-subdivided entities that protect farm land by assisting with conservation planning, implementing best management practices, and managing farmland preservation programs. They connect farmers with funding, such as cost-share programs for water quality and Voluntary Agriculture Districts (VAD) to preserve working lands from development.

6.4 Future Land Use Map



SECTION 7: COMPARISON OF DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The Graham Comprehensive Plan provides a new vision for the development of the City and surrounding area. The vision includes several new types of development patterns. This section provides a general explanation of the differences between the current approach and the desired development type.

7.1 Strip Development vs. Commercial Centers

Strip Development



Currently most of Graham's commercial development has occurred in linear strips along major thoroughfares. Many are a mix of a larger anchor establishment, such as a grocery store or restaurant, and smaller retail shops. Common characteristics include:

Commercial use orientation, automobile friendly, ample parking lots, large setbacks from streets, unattractive building design, less restrictive access to roads, flexible bay sizes, lower rents, rapid construction times, lower startup costs, site flexibility, short business move-in times, and are highly customizable.

Commercial Center



The Commercial Center concept is based on applying the attributes of a traditional downtown to a new site that is smaller in scale. Common characteristics include:

Mixed-use (commercial, office, residential) orientation, pedestrian/ automobile friendly, strategically located and interconnecting parking, buildings close to road, attractive architectural design, more restrictive access to roads, less flexibility in bay size, higher rents, more lengthy construction times, higher startup costs, site constraints, longer startup for business, and are highly customizable.

Recommendation

The Graham Comprehensive Land Use Plan seeks to encourage the development of both strip centers and commercial centers where most appropriate, with respect to acreage and surrounding infrastructure, while incorporating the more positive characteristics of each. Strip centers should have varying facade heights which break up the individual units and should vary in color and material types (brick, stucco, stone, etc.). Strip development should include green space (minimum 5-10%) such as landscaping and trees in parking areas. Outside seating is also welcomed. Interconnectivity between uses, shared parking, fewer curb cuts, clustering of multiple uses, and pedestrian/bike friendly accommodations are encouraged.

Common vs. Desirable Strip Development Design

Common Building Designs for Strip Development

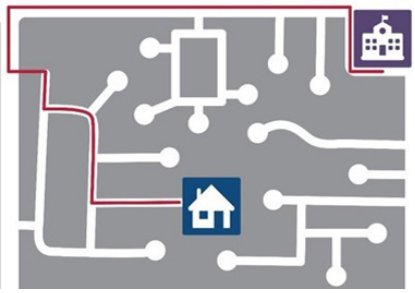


Desirable Building Designs for Strip Development



7.2 Unconnected Roads vs. Road Network

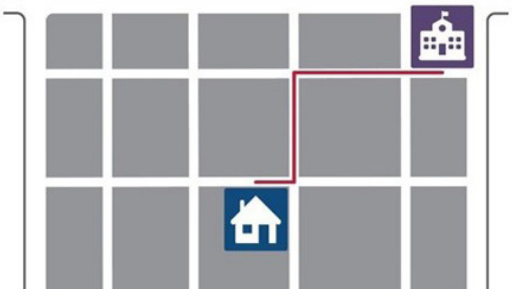
Unconnected Roads



The current proliferation of cul-de-sac neighborhoods has resulted from the highly desirable characteristics of the subdivision category. Homeowners value the calmer and less dense traffic patterns, the propensity for neighborhood interactions, the overall community feeling engendered by closer neighborhood proximity, the ability to walk and/or bicycle in the neighborhood, and the sense of separation from the hustle/bustle of city activity. However, there are certain disadvantages that accompany this type of development. Without adequate road width and cul-de-sac radius, city services and emergency services may be hampered. Parking in the streets can hinder traffic as well. Lack of through traffic routes can be considered both as desirable and undesirable. Cul-de-sac development is typically done within a larger grid type road network so there is generally a combination of slower and faster traffic patterns for the average homeowner. The characteristics of unconnected roads include:

- Lower Capacity
- Fewer Route Choices
- Longer Driving Distances
- Single Mode of Transportation

Road Network



A development based on a grid or road network type system also offers both advantages and disadvantages. It could possibly aid in relieving traffic congestion found on some major thoroughfares and disperse traffic throughout the city. It may or may not provide greater capacity, more route choices, more access, and shorter distances. Whether or not these attributes are desirable might well be debated. Issues such as safety, city services access, emergency vehicle access, neighborhood "feel", etc. should be considered in choosing this development paradigm. The characteristics of road networks include:

- Higher Capacity
- More Route Choices
- Shorter Driving Distances
- Multiple Modes of Transportation

Recommendation

The Graham Comprehensive Plan seeks to encourage the development of both the Unconnected Roads and the Road Network paradigms within new residential and commercial areas to provide citizens with more transportation and living options throughout the city. Each model has both positive and negative aspects which should be carefully weighed with respect to the area of the city under development consideration. These design considerations include, but are not limited to: Use of "T" turnarounds, appropriate block lengths, appropriate street widths, and traffic calming features. A well planned, connected road network can be incorporated into new subdivisions, new commercial centers, even office parks, and stub-outs are encouraged to undeveloped and landlocked properties.

7.3 Separation of Uses vs. Mixed-Use

Separation of Uses



The standard zoning ordinance has created a situation in which all uses must be segregated from one another. This has reduced the occurrence of lively neighborhoods that include a neighborhood store, as well as the removal of residences from the Central Business District in many communities. While some uses need to be separated from one another, many would work well together if designed properly. For example, the construction of five three-story multi-family apartment buildings in the middle of a single-family residential district would not be appropriate. However, a multi-family townhouse development that is designed to complement the surrounding neighborhood may fit in. The Separation of Uses has resulted in the creation of "pods" of development. The Separation of Uses is compounded with unconnected road networks, requiring all traffic to use a main road to travel. It is to be noted, however, that the Separation of Uses assists in managing infrastructure demands and may reduce nuisances caused by mixed use environments. It also allows for more efficient infrastructure planning, such as road design in industrial zones.

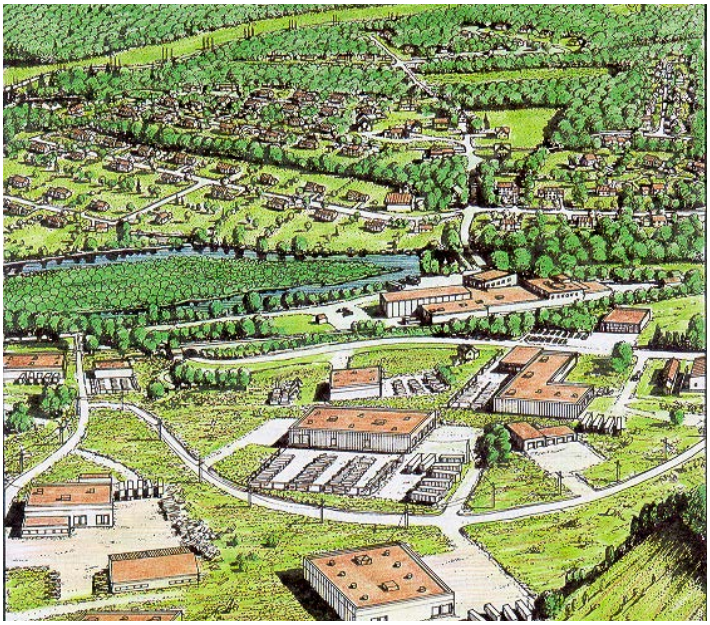
Mixed Use



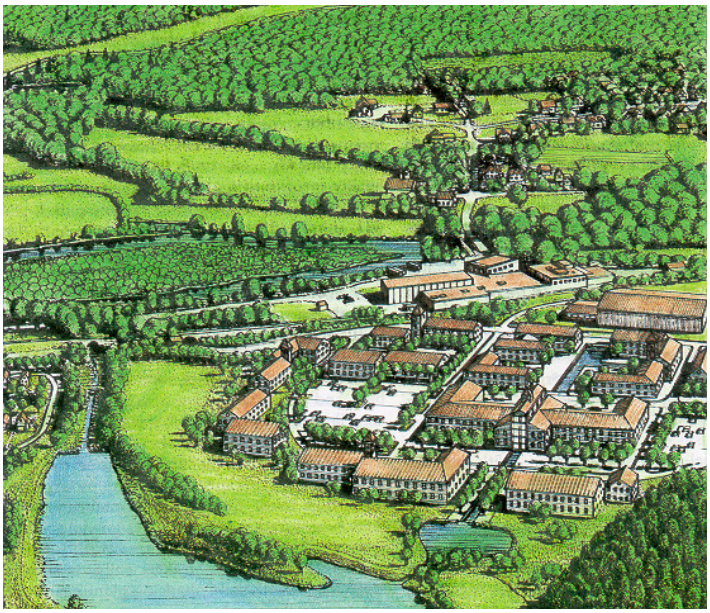
The concept of Mixed Use began before zoning was required and many uses could be found within a singular neighborhood. When pre-planned mixed use provides an effective concept to encourage lively neighborhoods that intertwine to serve a multitude of needs. The Central Business District in Graham exemplifies mixed use as there are office and retail establishments with residences on the upper floor. Problems occur and opposition may arise when a multitude of uses are added after an established use has defined the area. Careful consideration must be given to transitions between uses. Not all commercial uses are compatible with residential, institutional uses, and vice versa. Factors such as use intensity, building height, privacy, noise, lighting, traffic, landscaping, fencing, and setbacks should be thoroughly evaluated when introducing a new use adjacent to an established one. Equal attention should be given to which use existed first and whether the proposed adjoining use will function harmoniously with the existing development. Transitional uses - such as office and institutional uses - can serve as effective buffers between commercial development and residential neighborhoods. Neighborhood markets and convenience stores, in particular, can either enhance or negatively impact nearby areas depending on their location, design, and operations including the presence of sidewalks, operating hours, lighting, and ongoing maintenance.

7.4 Conventional Development vs. Open Space Development

Conventional Development



Open Space Development



Illustrations from Rural By Design, Randall Arendt

Conventional development maximizes the number of lots or retail space that can be created out of any piece of land. This method pays less attention to environmental factors, neighborhood design, or open space; however it provides for initial lower costs of land and resident privacy. The goal of this development paradigm is to maximize the number of houses or businesses on the site as allowed under the current zoning ordinance. As a result, land that should be preserved due to environmental conditions or topography typically is turned into a backyard or graded for parking. In addition, this type of development places a greater burden on the City because it often does not provide recreational space for the residents and results in overcrowding at parks and other recreational facilities. The conventional business development is often aesthetically unpleasing, causes increased runoff to other properties, and increases traffic.

The City of Graham has recently adopted an open space provision for the R-12, R-15, and R-18 Zoning Districts. These provisions seek to encourage the development of compact neighborhoods and rural compounds that set aside significant natural vistas and landscape features for permanent conservation. Per the City of Graham Development Ordinance, open space is defined as any area that is not divided into private or civic building lots, streets, rights-of-way, parking, or easements established for the purposes other than open space conservation. The land designated to be open space is to be permanently protected from development and can be used by the developed neighborhood as a recreation amenity. The developer can build the same number of units but on smaller lots, resulting in substantially less infrastructure to be installed as a result of the clustered development. By encouraging open space development, recreational opportunities for citizens is increased, travel time to recreational opportunities is decreased, the amount of infrastructure to be maintained is decreased, and the attractiveness of the community is increased.

SECTION 8: IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW

8.1 How to Use the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a tool to be used as a guide for future development. It is a general consensus by the residents of what they would like the future development of Graham to be. The plan is not a prescriptive regulatory document, it is a guide that utilizes public input to inform land use decisions in Graham.

City Staff

The City staff reviews zoning petitions, recommends that the petition be approved or denied, and prepares a written zoning report for the Planning Board. In making their decision and writing the report, the staff reviews relevant planning documents, including the plan adopted by the City. Using the adopted plan will facilitate the City staff's review of the rezoning request. The staff will be able to point out those goals, policies & recommendations, and location of development types that support the rezoning, and those that are in conflict with the rezoning, thereby shaping the overall staff recommendation. In addition, the staff can also use the plan to warn developers about potential conflicts before being confronted at a public hearing.

City of Graham Planning Board

Prior to the regular meeting, each Planning Board member can make his or her own determination as to the consistency of the proposed rezoning with the City's adopted goals, policies and recommendations, and Future Land Use Map. As always, the Planning Board should consider the recommendations of the Graham Comprehensive Plan in interpreting the true intent of the policies, but may choose to give different weight to different policies.

Graham City Council

In its legislative authority to rezone property, the City of Graham City Council has the final word as to whether the rezoning request is consistent with the various plans that affect the property in question. The City Council should review the rezoning with the Comprehensive Plan's goals, policies and recommendations, and Future Land Use Map in mind. As customary, the City Council should also consider and weigh the interpretation of policy as explained by the property owner, the Planning Board, City staff, and the general public. Over time, a track record of policy interpretation forms a consistent foundation for decision-making.

Developers

Developers can utilize the Comprehensive Plan to see if their development proposals meet the plan's General Goals, as well as the Planning District Policies and Recommendations. Before consulting the Future Land Use Map developers should make sure that the overall plan for the proposed development meets the Goals, Policies and Recommendations established in the plan. Finally, developers can look at the Future Land Use Map to see if their proposed use is a recommended use in that specific area.

General Public

Residents of the City of Graham can and should reference specific goals, policies and recommendations, and the Future Land Use Map when speaking in favor of or in opposition to a rezoning request.

8.2 Strategic Issues

The Strategic Issues found in Section 4 of the Graham Comprehensive Plan include strategies for addressing the four issues that were identified as concerns for the entire community. The issues are Land Use, the Downtown, Culture & History, and Transportation. By identifying these issues and developing some strategies to address them, the City is in a position to start work on reaching the goals for each issue. This section of the plan provides an opportunity for the City to begin work on something right away.

8.3 Planning District Guidelines

The Planning District Guidelines should be used as a second check on any development proposal. The Planning District Guidelines include the type of development that is to be encouraged in each of the three planning districts. In addition, each planning district has a set of Policies and Recommendations that provide a framework for making development decisions within the district. When reviewing a proposed development, the Developer, Staff, Public, Planning Board, and City Council should determine first if that type of development is desired in the location that is proposed. Secondly, check to see if the development meets the goals for the district.

8.4 Revisions & Monitoring

As the Comprehensive Plan is used and development occurs in Graham it will be necessary to make revisions to the plan in order to keep it updated. A major development, new road or water and sewer extension can drastically change an area of the planning jurisdiction. The Steering Committee would like to recommend that the City convene a meeting of the Graham Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee once a year to look at changes that need to be addressed as well as provide an opportunity to monitor the City's progress with implementing the plan. The City of Graham Planner will set up the yearly meeting of the Steering Committee to review and monitor the Comprehensive Plan. This meeting will provide the Steering Committee an opportunity to discuss how well the plan has been implemented and review any changes that need to be made. It should be noted that the staff, Planning Board, and City Council should make minor changes to the plan as necessary. The Comprehensive Plan will only be a document worth using if it is kept up to date and used daily by the staff and monthly by the City Council and Planning Board.

SECTION 9: APPENDIX – SOURCES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

9.1 Sources

- Better Block Trailer- Alamance Healthy Places Grant
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9.2 Acknowledgments

City Council

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- Bonnie Whitaker
- Joey Parsons

Steering Committee

- Jennifer Talley
- Chuck Talley
- Judy Hall
- Chad Huffine
- Dean Ward
- Eric Crissman
- Joey Parsons

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- Megan Garner, City Manager
- Aaron Holland, Assistant City Manager
- Cameron West, Senior Planner

Planning Board

- Dean Ward, Chair
- John Wooten, Vice Chair
- Chad Huffine
- Tony Bailey
- James Stockert
- Michael Benesch
- Elizabeth Kirkpatrick

Piedmont Triad Regional Council

- Jesse Day, Regional Planning Director
- Carter Spradling, Assistant Regional Planning Director
- Malinda Ford, GIS Administrator
- Dawn Vallieres, Senior Regional Planner
- Sam Stalder, Regional Planner