

5. Target Industry Cluster #5 – Spectator Sports

Visit Lake Norman, aka the Lake Norman Convention and Visitors Bureau, estimates that sporting events in Cornelius, Davidson and Huntersville generated approximately \$23 million in visitor spending in 2012. According to the NC Department of Commerce, every \$98,000 in visitor spending supports one job, meaning sporting events supported 235 jobs in the local recreation, hospitality, food and beverage, and retail industries. It is estimated that baseball/softball events alone generated over \$10 million in direct spending. The premier baseball/softball facility (Bradford Park) is located in Huntersville, and features five lighted ball fields.

D. PHASED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The implementation strategy provides the vision and blueprint for the Town to most effectively allocate its resources and manage to achieve its objectives for promoting job creation, attracting private investment, and expanding its tax base while maintaining a high quality of life for its citizens. The following plan incorporates short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives that will enable the Town to take immediate action on certain tasks as well as take initial steps in the planning for long-term projects.

1. Management of Real Estate Assets

Huntersville enjoys substantial and diverse real estate assets targeted to employment supporting uses in various stages of development. These assets are identified and described below in the context of their correspondence to the Major Employment Areas identified in the 2030 Community Plan, their distinguishing characteristics, location within the Town's Economic Analysis Zones (**Chapter 4: Real Estate Market Analysis**), and potential for business opportunities in Huntersville. The real estate assets are presented in the sequence of their readiness to accommodate development, from near-term to long-term opportunities. See Figure 6-1 Economic Opportunity Areas.

a.) Near-Term Opportunity Areas (Years 1-2)

- **The Park Huntersville/Gilead Center** — Located in Zone 3 (see Figure 4-3), Huntersville's signature business park and home to a diverse array of tenants including retail, office, light industrial (e.g. Daetwyler, Forbo-Siegling, Keller, Joe Gibbs Racing, Microban), health care (Novant Health Huntersville Medical Center), and local government (Huntersville Police Dept.). The Park section is positioned to accommodate this broad range of users by virtue of its relatively large lots (2-22 acres) and open space buffers. There are twenty-three lots totaling 184 acres currently marketed for sale. Gilead Center is characterized by small lots of 1-acre average. There are eight lots totaling 8 acres currently marketed for sale. The Park infrastructure is fully developed and tenant ready.
- **Commerce Station** — Commerce Station is one of two major commerce parks located in Zone 8, has two industrial tenants (ABB and Pactiv), and is planned for an additional 300 acres which are not currently under development. Commerce Station is a public industry joint venture development between the towns of Cornelius, Davidson and Huntersville. As owners of the land, the public industry partners are in a position to offer incentives, such as discounted consideration, to attract businesses.
- **Bryton** — 500-acre mixed-use development slated for 2,500 residential units, 1 million square feet of retail and 1 million square feet of flex/office, located in Zone 8. Some retail has been delivered, including a Walmart, and infrastructure is still under development. Zoning is a combination of Transit Oriented Development Residential (TOD-R), Highway Commercial (HC)

and Special Purpose (SP). Bryton also includes a planned transit station stop, one of three proposed for Huntersville.

b.) Medium-Term Opportunity Areas (Years 3-7)

The Red Line Regional Rail (RLRR) Project (a.k.a. "Red Line") is a planned commuter rail transit line to offer passenger service between Charlotte and Mooresville, along an existing 25-mile section of the Norfolk and Southern "O" Line. The Red Line would include three station stops in Huntersville: Hambright Station, Downtown Station and Sam Furr Station and is one of five transit lines included in the 2030 Transit System Corridor Plan, adopted by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) in 2007. The current schedule for implementation of the Red Line is pending development of a system-wide plan to finance the entire transit system. Approval for use of the Norfolk & Southern rail line will also need to be obtained prior to the implementation of passenger rail service. If the project does indeed move forward, it will greatly enhance the attractiveness of the Town's three planned transit station areas to potential investors, and otherwise accelerate economic activity in these areas. Indeed, estimates regarding job creation associated with the RLRR Project suggest that the line would generate 23,000 new jobs in the North Corridor by 2035.

- **Hambright Station** – (See Bryton)
- **Huntersville Station** — Located around Huntersville's traditional downtown; this area has a Town Center Zoning designation which supports a diverse array of uses of relatively high density in a compact, pedestrian oriented environment. Planning for transportation improvements are underway, which could be funded in part from Tax Increment Financing (TIF, or synthetic TIF) as discussed in Section 4-C of this report. The case for downtown revitalization is strong, as the Town will accrue both tangible and intangible benefits through redevelopment: the development program projects 586 new jobs supported; increased property values will generate net new property tax revenues; a revitalized downtown will serve as the activity center for nearby neighborhoods and employment nodes; and, a revitalized downtown will create a source of pride for the Town. The redevelopment of the downtown should be a priority action item for the Town, with or without a transit station.
- **Sam Furr Station** — The greater area surrounding the proposed Sam Furr transit station comprises a significant amount of CB and SP zoned land, located east of the Norfolk Southern rail line. While the SP zoned area contains existing industrial uses, the CB zoned land is largely undeveloped with the exception of a large warehouse in the northeast quadrant of Old Statesville and Sam Furr Roads. If the RLRR project does not come into fruition, development of this area will likely be longer term.
- **06-07 and R03-09 (Mt. Holly/Huntersville Road West of I-77)** - The two large CB zoned tracts to the south of The Park Huntersville and west of I-77 (referred to as R06-07 and R03-09 in Figure 4-6), represent medium term commercial development opportunities for Huntersville. The two areas comprise 666 acres.

c.) Long-Term Opportunity Areas (Years 8-16)

- **R06-07 and R03-09 (Mt. Holly/Huntersville Road West of I-77)** - The two large CB zoned tracts to the south of The Park Huntersville and west of I-77 (referred to as R06-07 and R03-09 in Figure 4-6), also represent long term commercial development opportunities for Huntersville.
- **NC 73 Land Use & Economic Development Plan Area** - In 2005, a small area and economic development plan was prepared for a 3½ mile stretch of NC 73 from Davidson-Concord Road to Poplar Tent, traversing the jurisdictions of Davidson, Huntersville and Cabarrus

County. The plan anticipates the widening of NC 73 as recommended in the 2003 NC 73 Transportation and Land Use Corridor Study. The Plan provides for a Central Business District that straddles both Davidson and Huntersville, and allows for commercial building heights of 2 to 6 stories. The Huntersville portion of the Plan Area is estimated to equal 100 acres, and also contains a Research and Development District and a Neighborhood Center. Anticipated build-out is 20 to 30 years. In 2012, Huntersville updated its portion of the NC 73 LUEDC Plan. This plan modified the NC 73 Plan but reiterated the recommendations for a mixed-use land use pattern along NC 73, with adjoining office/flex and light industrial uses.

d.) Conclusions and Recommendations

All of Huntersville's CB zones are appropriately located in the higher density area situated in the I-77/NC-115 area of the Town, which is recommended for a "Higher Intensity" development pattern in the 2030 Community Plan (Figure 6-2). Economic Analysis Zones encompassed in this development pattern include 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Zone 10 is the exception in the "Lower Intensity" areas by virtue of the NC 73 Plan.

- **Master/Small Area Planning** — The Town may want to consider creating small area plans for commercially zoned districts where higher density development (and associated employment) may occur, as a means of maximizing its current inventory of non-residentially-zoned land, along with the resulting tax base for the Town. While there is sufficient acreage currently zoned for employment type land uses, area plans would provide the Town with a valuable tool for integrating these uses into areas which have previously been characterized by either a low-intensity or underdeveloped land use pattern.
- **Preserve Non-Residentially Zoned Land** — It is reasonable to assume that demand for residential development will continue to outpace non-residential development in the foreseeable future. As Huntersville approaches residential build-out, developers and landowners are likely to bring pressure to bear to rezone non-residential land to residential. This trend is well documented in other jurisdictions, and is one the Town should remain mindful of and resist when and if the occasion warrants. In order to attain an optimal balance of residential and non-residential development, the town should maintain its inventory of land for employment generating uses (i.e., office, industrial, etc.) in order to ensure its economic sustainability into the future.

2. **Coordinate Economic Development Programs and Support Services**

Huntersville's economic development initiatives will be most effective through the enhancement of the ongoing efforts of the LNREDC and other advocacy organizations. Although the subsequent action items in this section fall outside of the responsibilities of the LNREDC, the Town can take steps to coordinate more effectively with its economic development partners.

- Establish a point person for economic development: — The town should assign an individual as a de facto economic development director, who can interact with LNREDC, CPCC, and other economic development organizations. This individual will administer activities associated with the recommendations contained herein, and help ensure that public policy is consistent with Huntersville's economic development objectives.
- Connect to and coordinate with the network of available business resources: The economic development point person should become familiar with all of the local, state, and federal assistance programs and funding mechanisms that support economic development, including deadlines for submitting grant applications, eligibility requirements for various programs, etc.