



CITY OF LEXINGTON 2022 LAND USE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION – A COMMUNITY EMERGING

The City of Lexington was incorporated in 1828 and is the county seat of Davidson County. It has a rich and impactful history in North Carolina as a traditional manufacturing community. For most of its existence, Lexington was comprised of a few anchor industries with supportive housing and services. In response to the exodus of key industries between 1990 and 2010, this resilient community set out to redefine Lexington with a new focus on quality of life. The community is emerging from the long work of re-invention in response to lessons learned from the past, including monopolized industry, passive development, inflexible thinking, and limited creativity.

To the outside, Lexington may have appeared dormant for several years while actively working on initiatives to redevelop its environment for current and future generations. The [2020 Renaissance Plan](#) was created in 2013 with widespread public input to realign City initiatives with the desires of residents and business community. This plan was more of a comprehensive plan addressing a broad range of community elements, but lacked a specific land use plan. Nevertheless, it was a useful tool to inform necessary changes in the regulations to support community vision. Community input indicated that many of the regulations and objectives, including those related to land use and development, were counter to the community expectations. In response, implementation of the Renaissance recommendations started a redefining movement founded in a mantra of review, reconsider, rethink, and revitalize. Newly seated members of City Council set sights on developing a true live, work, play community. The fruits of these initiatives have come to bare and the previous decade's work is beginning to show. Proactive business recruitment and local entrepreneur support helped ease stagnation with new offerings in food, retail, and services. The thinking shifted from preventing to supporting uses such as food trucks, farmers market, pubs and taprooms, breweries, outdoor dining and night life, making Lexington a regional destination for socializing. Reinventing recreation brought new energy and new interest with a skate park, splash pad, and other creative recreational programming. The opening of the amphitheater expanded the entertainment opportunities and will continue to be a focal point for community life post COVID-19. Partnering with the County to provide the Lexington circulating bus system gave residents new mobility options and provided community connections for those without access to a vehicle. The City continues to pursue passenger rail service in order to provide equity in mobility for residents to access universities and job centers via commuter rail. Recruitment of new and varied industrial jobs to Lexington and the surrounding area provides opportunities for residents to utilize their skills and make a good living. Thinking differently about housing is allowing a variety of quality housing options to become available to current and new residents. One of the biggest shifts in the community over the last few years is embracing the cultural diversity of this community. Openness, communication, and inclusion will be the keys to unlocking all of the potential that a true culturally diverse community can offer to enrich the lives of all of its residents. When land use



plans speak of growth, they often refer to geographic boundaries. However, cultural inclusion is one of Lexington’s current and most promising areas of growth opportunity.

Although not a comprehensive plan to further address all aspects of community needs, this land use plan should serve to prescribe building and land use policies that uphold the new thinking relative to aforementioned and upcoming initiatives. The 7 Keys to a City of Choice as derived from City Council’s 2019 planning summit are still relevant as a guideline for land use policies.

- City of **Unity**...safe, inclusive, welcoming, warm, inviting
- City of **Activity**...engaging, fun, lively, healthy, active, savory food
- City of **Urban Design**...aesthetics, historic, evolving, green space, sense of place
- City of **Innovation**...technology, education, smart, bright ideas, sustainable
- City of **Imagination**...art, textured, inspiring
- City of **Connectivity**...mobile, accessible, accommodating, central, network
- City of **Opportunity**...commerce, equity, prosperous, competitive edge utilities.

PREVIOUS LAND USE AND GROWTH PLANS

Like many colonial towns, Lexington was laid out in the traditional grid-iron or rectilinear pattern of blocks intersected by streets with access to rail lines. The Davidson County Courthouse, grain mills and general stores were built to serve the local population. As time passed, manufacturing became a mainstay for the community. Mill village homes began to surface in the early 1900’s to provide housing for those employed in the manufacturing plants. Textiles and furniture sustained the community for almost a century. As growth continued, development patterns changed in the second half of the 20th century as mobility centered on the automobile, allowing for less dense and more suburban type patterns.

The City of Lexington adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1947 and first land use plan in 1961. Updated land use plans were published in 1970, 1978, 1985 and 2004. In 1987, the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments (PTCOG) produced the Land Development Plan for Lexington’s Fringe Area to determine the feasibility of exercising extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction and annexing portions of those areas. The plan reiterated growth policies and optimistic development patterns recommended in many of the city’s previous plan updates; however, an extra-territorial jurisdiction was never adopted. The 1987 plan reiterated growth policies and development patterns recommended in previous Land Development Plan Updates. Each of the city’s previous land use planning efforts analyzed a broad range of factors influencing past and present growth trends. In the mid-1990s with technical assistance from PTCOG, the City began work on the Lexington Growth Plan. This plan focused on social, environmental and urban service growth factors with a time horizon of 1995-2010. This plan indicated the general areas most appropriate for urban growth and annexation, the most suitable types of growth for each area, along with a general timeframe for growth. The most recent land use plan was published in 2004 and focused on strategic growth areas based on development suitability and prescribed development policies



based in the “[new urbanism](#)” approach to land use planning. It was developed at the parcel level with little tolerance for organic infill. As time passed, it became apparent that this strict application of new urbanist methods to existing development could only work with regulatory flexibility and overtime, the land use map became somewhat outdated although a few of the core principles and base environmental data of the plan remained relevant. Most of the environmental existing conditions maps identifying soil types, hydrographic systems, and typography that were studied collectively to form a development suitability analysis map remains fairly valid and usable to inform this current land use plan. The 2004 Land Development Ordinance that was based on the 2003 Land Use Plan was also not applicable in many respects and was replaced in 2010 with a zoning ordinance tailored to Lexington’s built environment. For several years, the 2003 Land Use Plan was only referred to for statements of consistency as required for rezonings, but it was a stretch to bridge the two documents. As a result, in 2019 the 2003 Land Use Plan was repealed by the City Council and replaced by the following seven updated Land Use Planning Policies to allow for more flexibility in allowing for a spectrum of land uses and development, without the rigidity prescribed by the 2003 Land Use Plan:

Land Use Planning Policies (2019)

These policies will be utilized to guide development decisions, as well as zoning text and map amendments.

1. Development that fulfills the vision and expectations of the citizens, leadership, and visitors will be supported through the regulations.
2. Intentional place-making and design will be of utmost importance in developing the built environment, including infrastructure.
3. A variety of residential building types will be supported to provide options in quality housing, with emphasis on single-family, multi-family, and mixed-use buildings in an urban form. Infill will be designed in such a way as to protect the character of established neighborhoods.
4. Regulations will support large-scale and diversified job development and a variety of commercial and service uses that meet the daily needs of residents, while not negatively impacting the community as whole. Entrepreneurship will be nurtured through regulatory mechanisms that allow for creative start-ups in a variety of spaces.
5. Growth patterns will reflect dense, efficient use of land, balanced with protection of the environment and natural resources.
6. Transportation networks will be developed in such a way as to provide seamless intermodal movement.
7. Urban form demonstrated in the historic Uptown will be extended along commercial corridors when practical, with buildings having street prominence and engagement, and parking falling secondary with screening.



In accordance with new State law NCGS 160D, cities must have a current land use plan in place by July 2022 in order to continue to enforce zoning regulations. Although the existing Land Use Planning Policies would technically serve the purpose, this more in-depth revisit of the City's land use patterns and policies will more completely fulfill the intent of the new State law. The 2018 policies are still relevant to the pattern of current development in Lexington, and therefore have been incorporated, updated, and expanded into the 2022 Land Use Policies found on page 25.

GROWTH – ANNEXATIONS AND INFILL

Previous land use plans typically included growth plan recommendations of target areas for the next round of annexations. Lexington's annexation history reflects the long standing policy to undergo a major annexation every 10 years following the Census, and then to provide full service to the newly annexation area and work through code enforcement and the zoning regulations to onboard those areas into the City after-the-fact. The City chose this process in lieu of the more common process of applying preemptive code and zoning enforcement in extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) areas followed by more frequent but smaller annexations from within the ETJ. In 2009, North Carolina legislators changed involuntary annexation laws, and essentially restricted cities to grow primarily through infill development. Voluntary annexations are still permissible, and the City has continued to expand through petitions for annexation, primarily for industrial sites desiring City utilities and public safety services. Given the finite amount of land available, City growth policies must focus on efficient infill and urban level development to grow within, recognize infrastructure constraints and invest in maintenance and capacity, and ensure creative environmental protection measures with higher density land use. Zoning regulations are in place to prohibit uses that take much of the land with little community benefit such as solar farms, hazardous materials storage/manufacturing, landfills, and other uses that may have a negative social or economic effect.

LAND USE PLANS INFORM ZONING REGULATIONS AND DECISIONS

Urban planning is important for the orderly development of the built environment and management of infrastructure. Land use plans are the primary vision of cities, and the zoning ordinance or unified development ordinance (zoning and subdivision regulations combined) contains the regulations to realize the goals and objectives of the land use plan. This Land Use Plan is intended to guide land development and manage growth through guiding policies and to inform the latest Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), adopted on June 28, 2021. The UDO regulations are written to cause the City's landscape reality to match the vision expressed by City Council in the Land Use Plan. Normally the land use plan is adopted first, and then the ordinance is written to implement the plan. However, 2020 changes to State law required updates to the UDO by July 1, 2021, and then required land use plan updates by July 1, 2022, which caused the UDO to be adopted prior to the Land Use Plan. If necessary, the UDO may be amended following adoption of the land use plan if it is determined that the two documents do not complement.



However, because the ordinance was written based on more current land use planning policies that remain valid, it is not expected that many ordinance amendments, if any, will be necessary.

Outside of annexation plans, many land use plans are left on the shelf after serving as the basis for the UDO. However, one key factor in the City's current UDO elevates the importance of this land use plan – conditional zoning. Conditional zoning was officially recognized and enabled by the State with adoption of NCGS 160D. Conditional zoning provides flexibility in development and allows City Council full discretion in approving developments that would otherwise not be permitted by the UDO. The 2021 UDO contains provisions for conditional zoning. With conditional zoning now in place, land use plans are important to inform the Planning Board and City Council in making these legislative (subjective) decisions. The land use plan map contains broad recommendations for areas based on general land use. Ideally, masterplans will eventually be created for all of the areas within the City. These masterplans will be a more detailed guide and vision for particular areas with specific recommendation based on analyzed data, professional guidance, and a deep-dive community engagement process. Like pieces in a puzzle, as masterplans are developed, the land use plan should be amended to include those masterplans as the overriding land use plan for each particular area. Currently, a masterplan for the Depot District is underway. Base data has been collected for the area and the process is approaching the next step, to engage the community for input on development preferences. Redevelopment in Lexington is occurring at unprecedented rates, and it is best to get masterplans ahead of development to the degree possible. Although City Council will continue to have full discretion in approving conditional zoning proposals, the hope is that they will be armed with masterplans to inform those decisions.

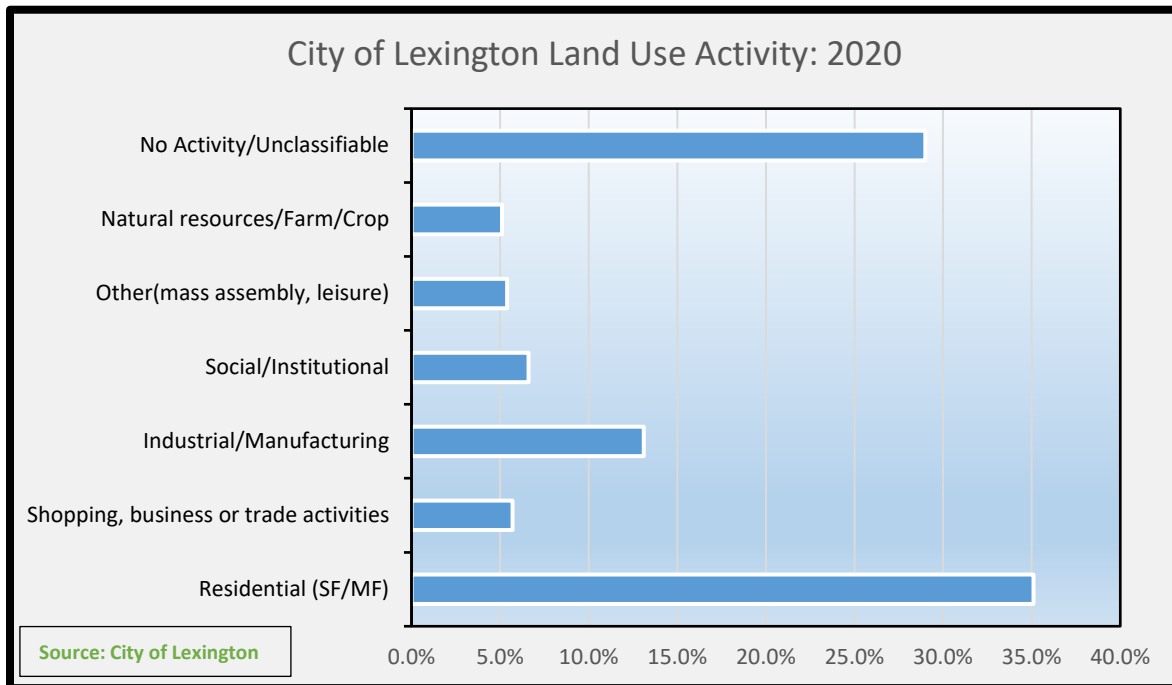
Several other benefits of a well-planned city include environmental protection, intentional recreation and green space, walkability, stable property values, and public safety. The planning process requires public input, professional recommendations from certified staff, and leadership from the Planning Board and City Council. The process includes analysis of changes in land use, development, and population in order to identify current opportunities and to forecast future land uses. In addition, the community is typically invited to provide input regarding the overall needs and preferences for the built environment.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

CURRENT LAND USE PATTERNS

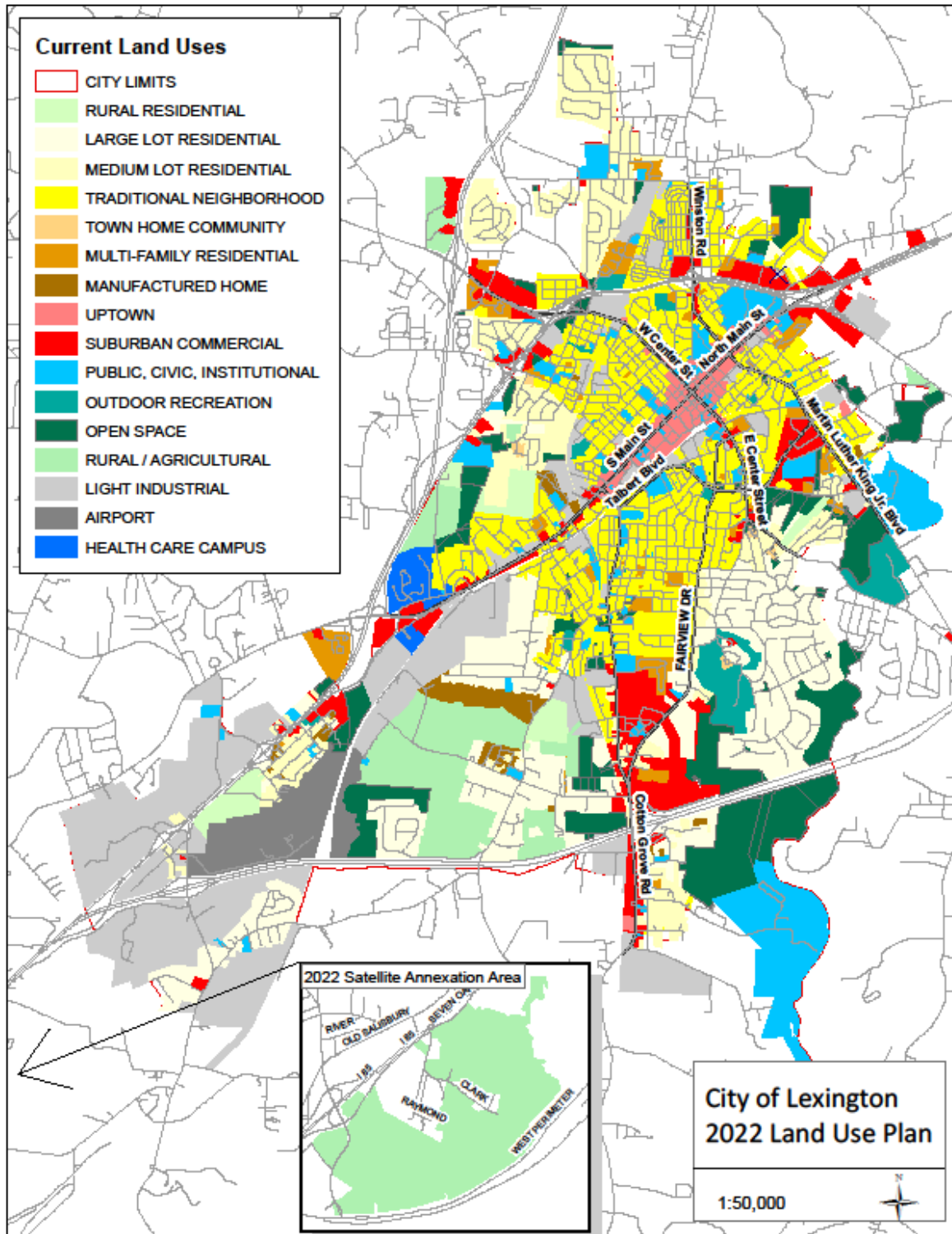
Currently, there are more than 9,600 parcels totaling 12,283 acres in the City limits. Most of the land area is zoned for residential uses at 78% of the total area. In 2020, the City inventoried and measured the primary land uses as shown in the graph, below. Residential uses absorb most of the developable land with 35%, with vacant/undeveloped property in second at 29%. Industrial and manufacturing comprised the third largest land use at 13%. Lexington has a typical mix of retail space to serve the local population such as stores and restaurants typical of a city of its size. In the past ten years, most building permits have been for multifamily residential, single family residential and commercial/retail space. *During the writing of this document, and following much of the data collection, the City annexed a large industrial tract of land, being approximately 760 acres. The entire area is zoned industrial and will host the development of a large industrial park, namely the NC 85 Center. Please note that this acreage represents approximately 6% of the City and would substantially change the calculations contained herein. In order to illustrate the organic land use patterns of the community minus this large recent addition, it has not been included within the calculations, however notes are provided with certain data to provide adjustments.* The current allocation of land uses is, as follows:



**does not include 760 acre industrial satellite annexation area*

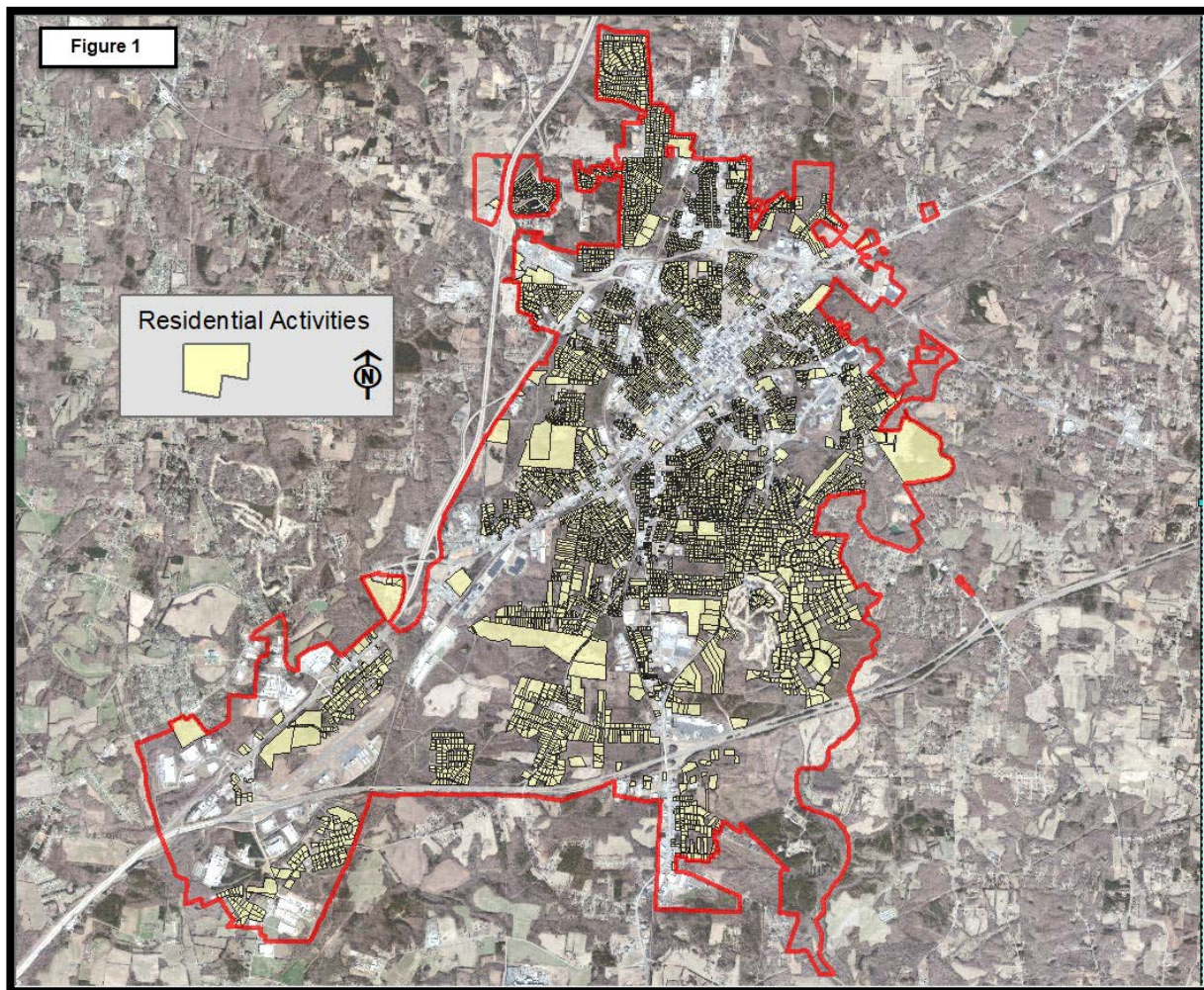


CURRENT LAND USE MAP



RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Residential activity is generally located around accessible corridors and on the fringes of commercial growth corridors (Figure 1). Neighborhoods surrounding the urban core (uptown area) are generally laid out in a rectilinear pattern, with post WWII subdivision areas located further away from the urban core. As growth moved away from the urban core, many neighborhoods are characterized by a more suburban character with curvilinear access streets, less connectivity to collector streets and cul-de-sacs. Referencing records kept by the Lexington Planning Department over a five-year period from 2016-2021, the City used (subtracted) 2.1% of its vacant land for residential buildings. During this period, there was nominal use of available land (>1%) for all other development. However, overall vacant land increased by 14.7% over the period, which can be attributed to demolitions. There have been 106 residential building demolished during the period. A total of 1,551 out of 1,570, or 74% of total undeveloped parcels in the City are zoned for residential uses.



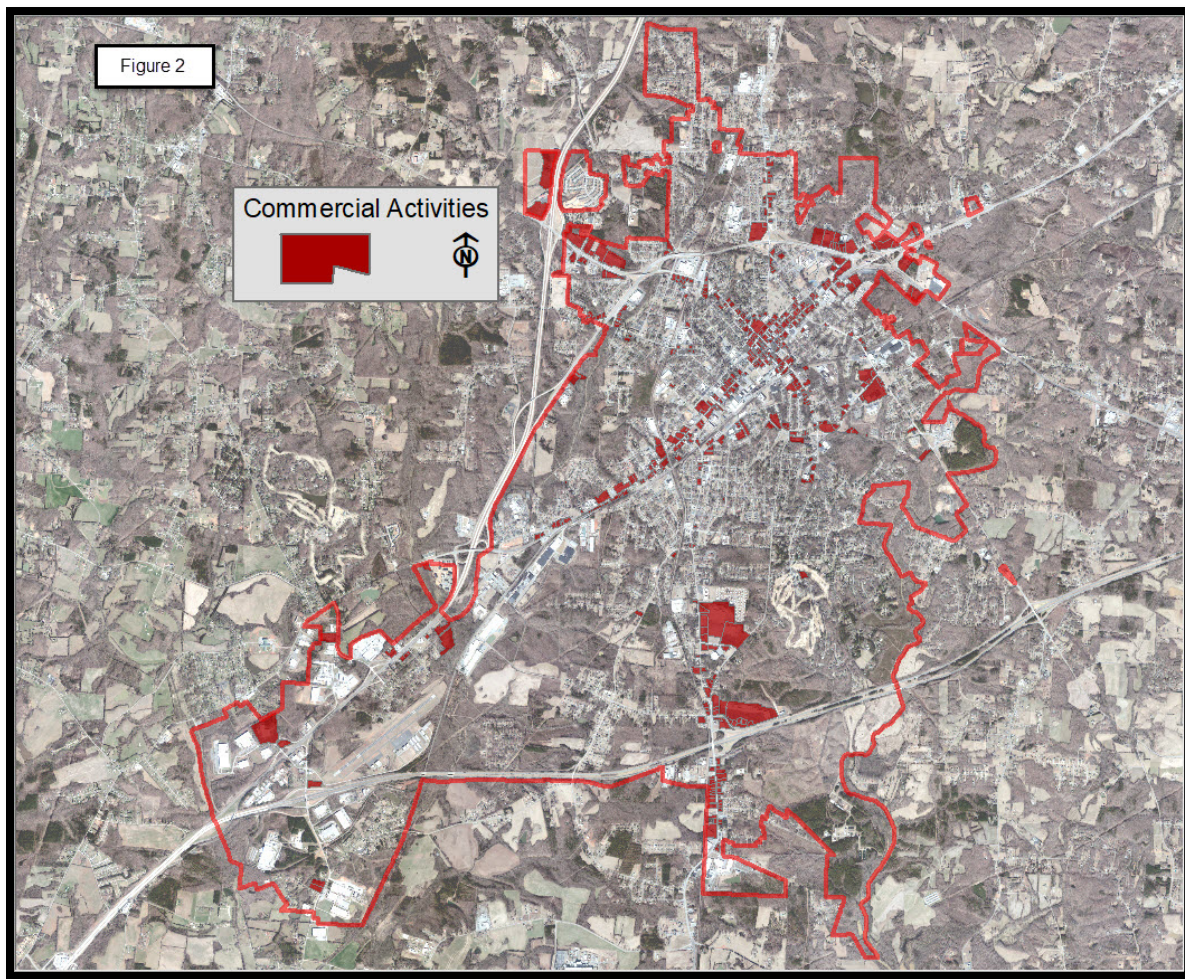


Very recent trends indicate that residential development is expected to grow exponentially over the next few years. Even with the steady growth from 2016-2021, 2022-2025 will likely be many times higher showing steep inclines. In response to national, state, and local housing shortages, development of residential units is soaring with periodic pauses in construction related to fluctuations in steadily increasing inflation and supply chain issues resulting from COVID-19. City Council recently approved an additional 700 residential units by conditional zoning with several more applications in process. Many of the existing vacant deteriorated homes that would have previously been targeted for demolition are now being renovated and occupied.

It will be important to ensure that the necessary number of future housing units are available to meet the needs of the community. Unmet housing needs can cause overcrowding, inflated prices, and residents and potential residents to move to other communities. It is critical that programs, development approvals, and partnerships aim at keeping housing affordable for Lexington's population, while ensuring quality. The last housing study was completed several years ago by the UNC Chapel Hill Center for Urban and Regional Studies. A Homeownership Strategic Plan was completed in 2007. Since this time, the built environment, demographics, economics, and programs have changed. An updated housing study would provide valuable insight to better align land use planning with the needs of the community.

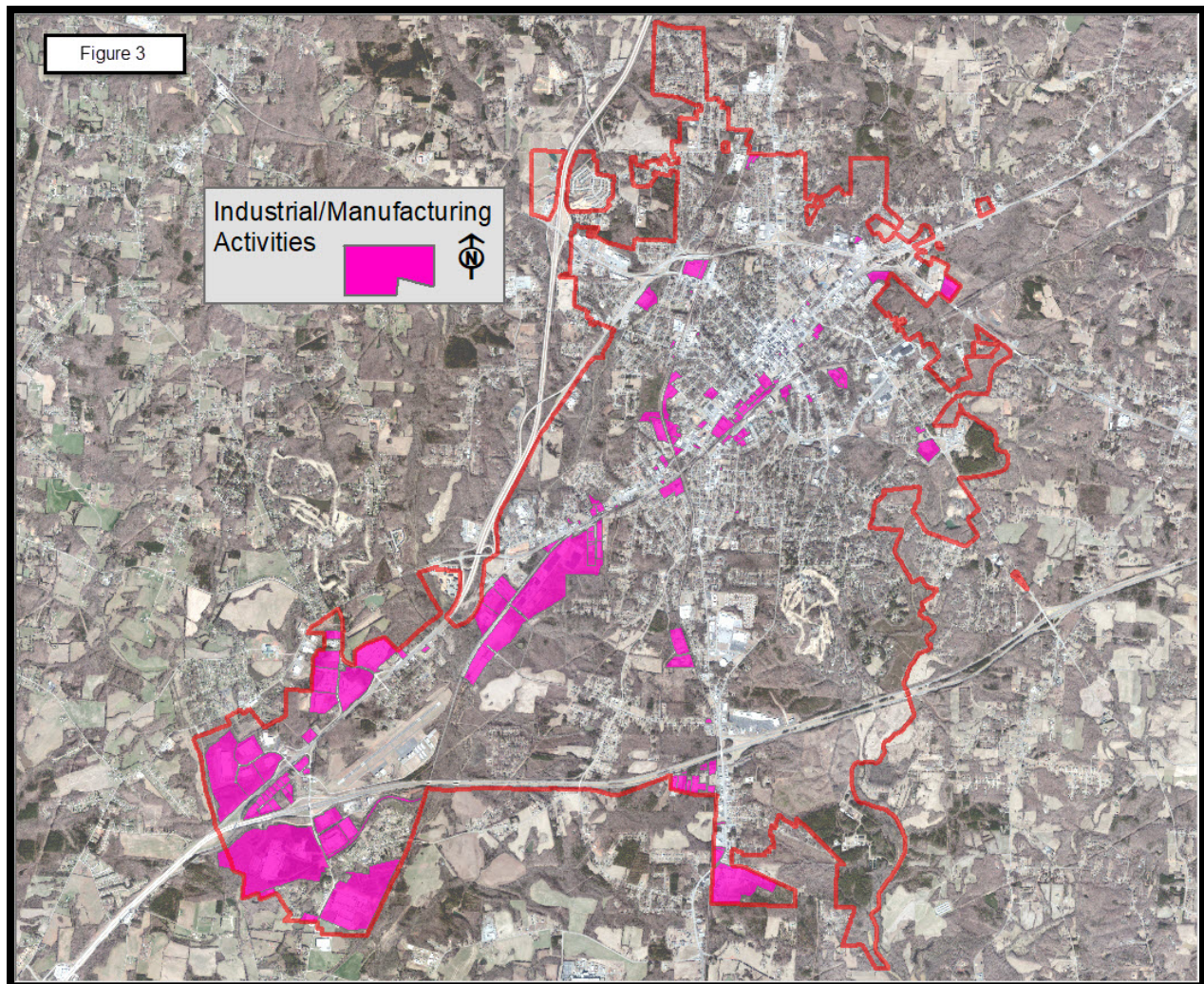
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

The majority of commercial and retail trade activity naturally follows the major thoroughfares with concentrations near major intersection as traffic volumes are available to support such activities. As with many communities, growth that occurred post WWII, became more suburban in design with the core design philosophy being automobile-dependent. A common pattern in small town southern communities includes a central business district (CBD), surrounded by traditional walkable neighborhoods, with varied large industries within close proximity to the CBD surrounded by mill housing, and then suburban development further out. Lexington's CBD is the historic Uptown, which generally encompasses the area radiating from the City square at Main Street and Center Street, and from Fifth Street to Fifth Avenue. Approximately 25% of all retail activities in the City are within the Uptown, and suburban retail activity (strip/shopping) centers represent the remainder. Main and Center Streets, Cotton Grove Road/NC Highway 8, Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Winston Road, Fairview Drive, and Talbert Boulevard represent the major thoroughfares intersecting the City, with most having direct highway or interstate access.



INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING ACTIVITIES

Historically speaking, the City's industrial activity has relied on the railways for distribution of raw materials and distribution of finished products to markets. In such, many of the older industrial buildings producing furniture and textiles were distributed via the railway. More recently industrial activity has located close to major thoroughfares with direct highway and interstate access for trucking distribution. Southwest Lexington is clearly on its way to becoming an industrial corridor with the Lexington Business Center, Lexington Industrial Park on Brown Street, and the NC 85 Center which includes the 760 acres recently annexed. Lexington's connectivity is a key asset for industrial recruitment. Located in the center of the State and along the East Coast, and at the convergence of two interstates and key several highways, it is the hub of economic corridors. In addition, there is main line railroad access and an airport. With large acreage available adjacent to these transportation assets, Lexington is ideally situated for industrial logistics.





FACILITIES (INFRASTRUCTURE)

Facilities include the full array of governmental functions and operations necessary to support existing and new development provided by the City of Lexington. They involve infrastructure such as streets, sidewalks, and water/wastewater utilities. The City of Lexington operates a full range of utility service that include water/wastewater, electric, natural gas, and stormwater. The location of these facilities and infrastructure are crucial in shaping future land use patterns. Collectively, these facilities and services represent a portfolio of city investments in future development addressing the needs of citizens and businesses. Currently, the policy of the City of Lexington is that all streets, water, sewer and storm drainage facilities within a subdivision, including any required water quality retention ponds, are paid for by the developer. Existing properties without water and wastewater utilities available are required to pay for line extensions with the cost borne by the developer or builder and are required to pay fees for water/wastewater taps, meters, and system development.

The location and condition of public infrastructure is a major component affecting development decisions. A community's ability or inability to provide critical infrastructure plays a determining role in the level of private investment the community can expect to attract and how well it can grow property values over time. It also has a direct impact on the quality of life for residents who rely on it every day.

DEVELOPABLE LAND SUPPLY

In terms of land availability, the current city limits of Lexington encompass 12,283 acres. Only 3,562 acres are categorized as vacant and unprotected (or developable). Assuming that 10% of that developable acreage would be utilized for open space, roads and public utilities, a total of 3,206 acres would remain for development. If half of that resulting acreage is allocated for future residential development, at an average density of five housing units per acre, the maximum amount of additional housing units that could be accommodated within the current Lexington city limits is 8,015. Based on recent growth rates, the available residential land could be built-out by as early as 2030.

GEOGRAPHY

Situated in the Piedmont region, Lexington generally has a rolling topography, with trees and soil conditions indicative of the area. This topography typically requires wastewater pump stations for the remaining developable land supply and may present challenges for ongoing maintenance and operations.

Areas for infill typically have access to existing infrastructure with occasional need for water and wastewater extensions.

Land use and development patterns are influenced by their surrounding environment. Natural features and statutory regulations often dictate where growth can occur and what form it will



take. The following items outline environmental features that impact development within the City of Lexington:

HYDROLOGY

The City of Lexington falls within the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin. Two streams – Swearing Creek and Abbotts Creek – flow through the City of Lexington. Swearing Creek and Abbotts Creek flow into High Rock Lake and provide drinking water south of Lexington for various communities. There are several smaller tributary streams leading to both Swearing Creek and Abbotts Creek. These streams and creeks provide a natural pathway for gravity wastewater mains but can present challenges for building and wastewater pumping to large diameter outfalls leading to the wastewater treatment plant.

FLOODPLAINS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates “Special Flood Hazard Areas” throughout the United States. These areas, commonly referred to as floodplains, consist of property adjacent to a creek, stream, or river which would be inundated by a flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. A flood event of this magnitude was often referred to as a “100-year flood” in previous FEMA terminology. Development within these areas is heavily regulated to minimize loss of life and property. In addition to Special Flood Hazard Areas, FEMA designates “Floodways,” which is the channel of a stream and adjacent land areas that must be reserved to discharge flood waters without increasing water surface elevation beyond a specified height. Development within a Floodway is severely restricted. FEMA also identifies areas that would be inundated by a flood event having a 0.2-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year (formerly referred to as a “500-year flood”). These areas have far fewer development restrictions. A map illustrating the location of these various FEMA-designated areas within the City of Lexington can be found on the following webpage <https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home>. Property owners can purchase insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) once their community has adopted a federally prescribed set of standards governing development within FEMA-designated flood hazard areas.

WATER SUPPLY

The City of Lexington owns and operates a public water supply and distribution system which provides potable water to a large portion of the City’s homes and businesses. The system includes two elevated water tanks, water distribution lines, one water filtration plant and a reservoir. As of 2021, the system had a total of 9,000 metered connections collectively using an average of Millions of Gallons per Day (MGD), and only used 33% of its available water supply. The water distribution system is in good condition, but the water plant, built in 1922 and upgraded in 1961 is in need of rehabilitation.



WASTEWATER

The City of Lexington owns and operates a regional public sewer system which allows for the safe and sanitary collection and treatment of the City's wastewater. The system served 8,970 total connections and only treated 45% of its permitted capacity of 6.5MGD in 2021. It is comprised of gravity main, force mains, wastewater pumping stations and a treatment plant upgraded to a Bio Nutrient Removal system in 2003. The plant discharges treated water into Abbotts creek, which feeds into High Rock lake. The plant's solids handling system is in need of replacement to ensure continued operation of the system. Infill and infiltration of the gravity main network is observed during high rain events warranting spot maintenance and systematic outfall rehabilitation.

ROADWAYS

Lexington has 125 miles of city-maintained roadways within corporate limits. NC Highway 8 (Main Street and Cotton Grove Rd) is the primary roadway that carry's vehicular traffic through Lexington (14,000 to 20,000 average annual daily traffic). Lexington is situated between Interstate 85 to the south of the corporate limits (58,000 average annual daily traffic) and Interstate 285 to the west (27,000 average annual daily traffic). Highway 29/70 (15,000 average annual daily traffic) and Highway 64 (13,500 average annual daily traffic) intersect on the north side of the corporate limits. Local traffic is served by a network of secondary roadways. Speed limits drop from 55mph to 35mph along the major roadways as they cross into the city, before eventually dropping to 20mph in the uptown area. The North Carolina Department of Transportation in conjunction with the High Point Metropolitan Organization have conducted several long-term infrastructure studies and plans to identify mobility needs for the area. Current improvements include widening Winston Rd (NC Highway 8) and multiple bridge replacements including two bridges as you exit Highway 29/70 to access a gateway to the Depot District. Additional improvements are in the current Transportation Improvement Planning model and set to be prioritized in FY 2023. **Note – average annual daily traffic figures are based on 2019 NCDOT collected data (pre-COVID-19)*

As the community works toward a collective vision for its future, the residents and businesses of Lexington recognize that a high-quality transportation system balances the needs of all users by operating safely and efficiently while supporting the community and enhancing its character. The City's transportation system links residents, business owners, and visitors to homes, businesses, schools, and parks. The various modes used to move people and goods around and through Lexington rely on a network of infrastructure that includes roadways, county provided transit services, and sidewalks. Interstate facilities in Lexington are maintained by NCDOT, have the greatest access control, and can accommodate the highest traffic volumes (83,500 average annual daily traffic). Lexington is approximately 55 miles from Charlotte, 35 miles from Greensboro, and 25 miles from Winston-Salem.

SIDEWALKS



Non-recreational pedestrian facilities within Lexington include sidewalks along most state-maintained roadways and some city-maintained roadways. New sidewalk is required on all new development to provide walkability and improve safety.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

The City of Lexington maintains a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permitted under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The City's MS4 consists of a combination of storm drain piping, roadside ditches, and sheet flow. New developments are required by City ordinance to have curb and gutter drainage systems except low density projects that can have grass lined drainage ditches and swales. High density developments are required to treat the first 1" of runoff from the developed property. Lexington is in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin, with Swearing Creek and Abbotts creek passing through the city.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The City of Lexington's Public Services Department is responsible for collecting household garbage, recycling, and yard waste trimmings. Household garbage is dumped into the Davidson County Landfill, which is located approximately 7 miles east of Lexington and is estimated to last 10+ years with a plan in place to construct additional capacity allowing for 25+ years of solid waste disposal. Recycling is taken to North Davidson Garbage Service and Material Recovery Facility, which is located 4 miles north of Lexington. Material taken to this facility is sorted for resell. Yard waste trimmings are taken to a local debris and composting facility for recycling and resell.



PUBLIC PREFERENCE AND URBAN FORM

The essence of city planning is designing development regulations and implementing projects that result in an intentional landscape where all humans are fulfilled and happy. Land uses must be balanced and properly located, mobility systems must work, and the environment should feel pleasing. Although certain development elements are common to all well-planned communities, each city has its own personality, preferences, highlights, and deficiencies. Mapped land use analysis and public input are two tools used to compare cities to the norm, and to provide insights into the nuances of the particular community. Each city's land use plan should be tailored to ensure that boilerplate regulations are not prescribed that fall short of fulfilling local expectations.

In order to assess the preferences of local residents, an online survey was open from November 2021 to April 2022 to gather public perceptions and desires relative to land uses. A portion of the survey included an abbreviated visual preference survey focused on five dimensions of urban form including: density and scale, site layout, streets and streetscapes, offerings, housing and neighborhood form, commercial building form, architectural character and pedestrian environments. A total of 249 replies were received.

Typically, visual preference surveys in cities almost always result in the same preferences. For that reason, development regulations derived from this commonality serve as the template for most zoning ordinances. Overall, people favor traditional urban form (pre-WWII) with similar architectural and site elements that convey safety, walkability, and nature. Conversely, non-organic suburban subdivisions and highway shopping centers typically do not score well. This post WWII development was built to accommodate humans, but only if they were in an automobile. Auto-centric development perpetuated separation of daily interactions and uses and led to automobile dependence. It also reduced the independence of children and the elderly. After some time, auto-centricity lost its appeal and there began a resurgence of traditional urban form, namely 'new urbanism.' A few examples of universally supported design elements include:

1. Buildings should be at or near the sidewalk and at least twice the height of the width of the street with a band between the first and second floor in order to provide a human scale, visually safe, walking environment. Commercial buildings that are set back too far and lack height relative to the street convey a sense of vulnerability and unprotected environment, and become limited to access by vehicle only.
2. Residential doorways that are located near the sidewalk should be elevated at least three feet above sidewalk and setback with a front porch or stoop in order to convey a sense of privacy.
3. Residential front porches provide a semi-private space for neighborhood interaction. Front porches should not be seen as secondary to garages.



4. Streets should be uniform relative to building placement. People are less comfortable walking along a street where setbacks are varied as it conveys unpredictability and surprise spots of vulnerability for car contact.
5. Businesses that rely on walk-in traffic or are open to the general public should contain a minimal amount of glass, such as a store-front with display windows and a glass door. People typically won't walk into a building they can't see into without a prior arrangement or appointment, regardless of directional signage.
6. Humans are naturally drawn to vegetation and it should be incorporated into urban settings. Trees, hanging plants, planter strips between the street and sidewalk, and trees in parking lots greatly increase positive response to a picture, regardless of the land use, building, or setting.
7. Streetscapes should contain sidewalks and there should be a planter strip or preferably a planter strip with a row of trees to separate cars and pedestrians.

Overall, the Lexington survey results support the typical responses for visual preference surveys and also provide additional insights specific to this community.

1. The Uptown and Depot District are preferred destinations, followed by parks.
2. Outdoor dining is strongly supported.
3. Commercial areas outside of the Uptown were the least preferred areas of the City.
4. Low density neighborhoods and traditional walkable, mixed-use areas are preferred.
5. The way a building relates to the street is important for multifamily develop settings. This supports requirements for buildings to front streets with parking areas being secondary in importance.
6. Building height-to-street relationship is important. Varied setbacks were disliked.
7. Landscaping is important. Similar uses with more landscaping were liked more.
8. More sidewalks are needed, especially on Fairview Drive, which was noted specifically more than any other street as needing sidewalks.
9. Affordable housing options was noted repeatedly with many requested to make housing close to uptown more affordable.
10. Village setting with a mixture of housing types and small business all within walking distance (coffee shops, restaurants, etc.) was the preferred setting for people to live in. Neighborhoods with large yards and small yards followed.
11. Front porches were nearly unanimous with more than half indicating a strong preference for front porches.
12. About half the respondents need a 2-3 bedroom house, with about one-third needing a larger house with 3 or 4 bedrooms.
13. Nearly 70% of the respondents preferred a one-story house.
14. More than 70% of the respondents felt that public art is important.



15. Less than half of the respondents felt like the community clearly reflected their culture, with 47% feeling like it is only reflected in a few areas of the city and 11% feeling like it was not reflected at all.
16. Most people utilize their own personal car to meet transportation needs. There was considerable support for riding the train if it was available. A few did not drive at all.
17. Public parks are important with 80% of the respondents indicating that they use the city parks often or sometimes.
18. Most people report that they have spent more time outside due to COVID-19.

In addition to the responses, respondents were offered the opportunity to make suggestions of what they'd like to see in Lexington. Overall, most of the suggestions fell into the following categories:

1. Variety in grocery stores. Trader Joes, Harris Teeter, Whole Foods, Lowes Foods, Publix, health food stores, etc.
2. Variety in restaurants – national sit-down casual dining, locally owned, more variety in cuisine and cultural representations
3. More and varied retail – Target, Marshalls, shoe stores, Hobby Lobby, Michaels, book store, music store, Mast General Store, etc.
4. Arts, arts, arts! Galleries, plays, black box theater, public art, exhibits, sculptures, music, centers for the arts, lessons, performances, murals, etc.
5. Entertainment – movie theater, bowling, beach volleyball, batting cages, tea room, activities for families and teens, etc.
6. Inclusion – intentional inclusion, welcoming to all, blur zone, recognizing diversity
7. Longer hours – extending the hours of restaurants, stores, entertainment so that they don't close early and are open every day
8. Dog park
9. Transportation – Uber, Lyft, train, more buses, options for disabled and elderly, etc.
10. Affordable housing choices, apartments in the Uptown
11. Larger gathering areas, indoor and outdoor
12. More park spaces in the Uptown, more parks, parklets
13. Outdoors - many responses indicated that residents want improvements to enjoy being outdoors in a variety of ways – walking dogs, running, walking, dining, gathering, etc. Opportunities include alleys, greenspaces in and around the Uptown, building greenways and trails, expanding outdoor dining. (This correlates to the responses related to COVID impacts which indicate that people spend more time outdoors now than they did pre-COVID.)

Land use plans inform zoning decisions, especially conditional zoning approvals. The specific desires of the community relative to specific uses is helpful in guiding City Council support of such uses. In addition, these insights are helpful to leadership in supporting or creating initiatives. It is important to note that only 249 responses were received, representing only 1% of the



community. At a minimum, a 10% response rate with assurance of a diverse participation would be needed to assume that it is representative of the entire community. Nevertheless, community input is always valued and should be taken into account. It is recommended that broader surveys be conducted in the future in order to further align with the overall community expectations.

POPULATION

HISTORICAL GROWTH

Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census to determine the number of people living in the United States. The census also gathers other demographic and economic data as well. The statistics gathered by the Bureau during the decennial census, combined with statistics they gather annually as part of the American Community Survey are used to evaluate trends and make projections.

Over the last 50 years, Lexington's population fluctuated between growth and stagnation as manufacturing began to move outside of the US, severely impacting local jobs. Like many mill towns, Lexington was unable to diversify the economy quickly enough to replace these losses and suffered periods of extreme decline before recently rebounding. Lexington's population grew steadily throughout most of the 20th century, reaching 17,205 in 1970. However, during the late 1970s, the City's population declined by about 1,500 persons (-9%) to 15,711. Between 1980 and 1990, Lexington experienced a slowed growth rate, adding only 563 people from natural population increase and an additional 2,021 people through annexation. The City added approximately four square miles in the 1980's with the annexation of approximately 4 square miles to the south end of the corporate limits. The reported population in 1990 was 19,319. Lexington added an additional 5.62 square miles in the late 1990's and the City's population grew by 3,372 people – the most growth seen since the 1920s. By 2000, the population hit 19,922. However, the 2010 Census showed the first decline since 1980. This decline was primarily attributed to out-migration due to job losses in manufacturing and a Census undercount.

CENSUS 2020

According to a comparison of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, the City's population grew 3.7% from 18,931 in 2010 to 19,632 persons in 2020. Much of Lexington's population is classified by the Census Bureau as traditionally hard-to-count. In preparation for Census 2020, the City planned a massive "Team Unity – My City I Count" partnership initiative to increase responses and obtain a full count through large and frequent community events, school programming, church and business participation, door to door contact, etc. Unfortunately, due to COVID, most of those efforts and events were cancelled. COVID severely diminished the effectiveness of the City's Census 2020. The State of North Carolina distributes a portion of sales tax back to communities based on population. Due to the COVID impacts on the Census, Lexington will suffer those losses annually until 2030. Locally, through utilities records, school enrollment, building



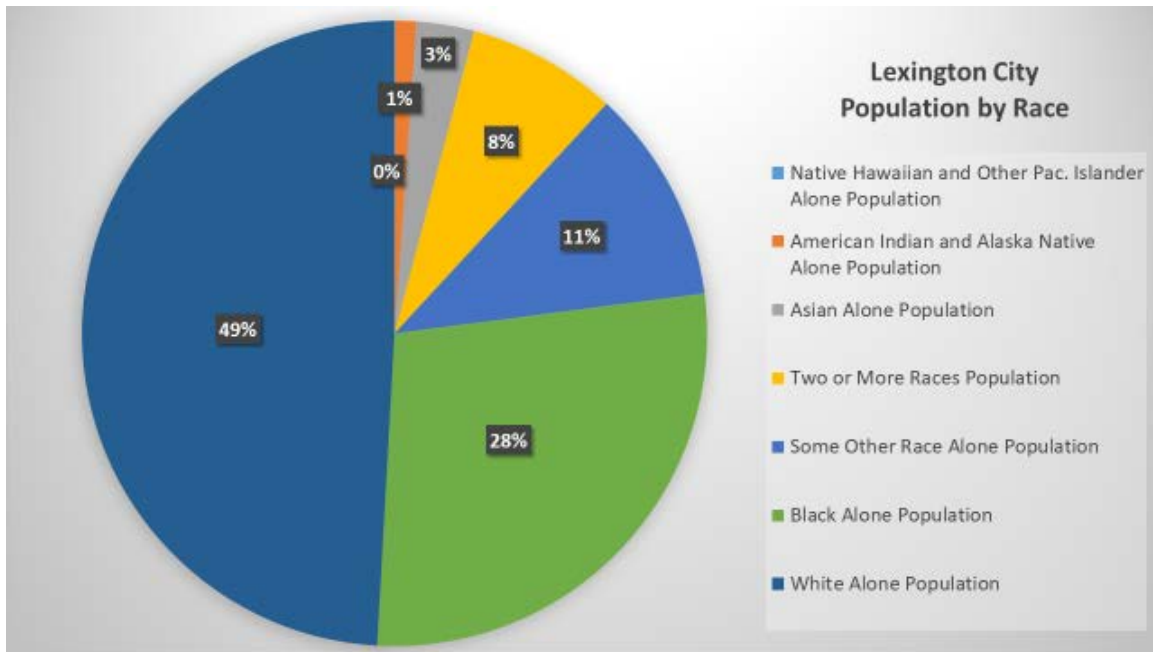
permits, and housing units, it is evident that Lexington, despite some gains in population, was severely undercounted.

City of Lexington Census Data Comparison 2010 vs. 2020				
	Census 2010 Population	Census 2020 Population	Population Change	Percentage
Lexington	18,931	19,632	701	3.70%
Davidson County	162,878	168,930	6,052	3.72%
Denton	1,636	1,494	(142)	-8.68%
High Point	104,371	114,059	9,688	9.28%
Midway	4,679	4,742	63	1.35%
Thomasville	26,757	27,183	426	1.59%
Wallburg	3,047	3,051	4	0.13%

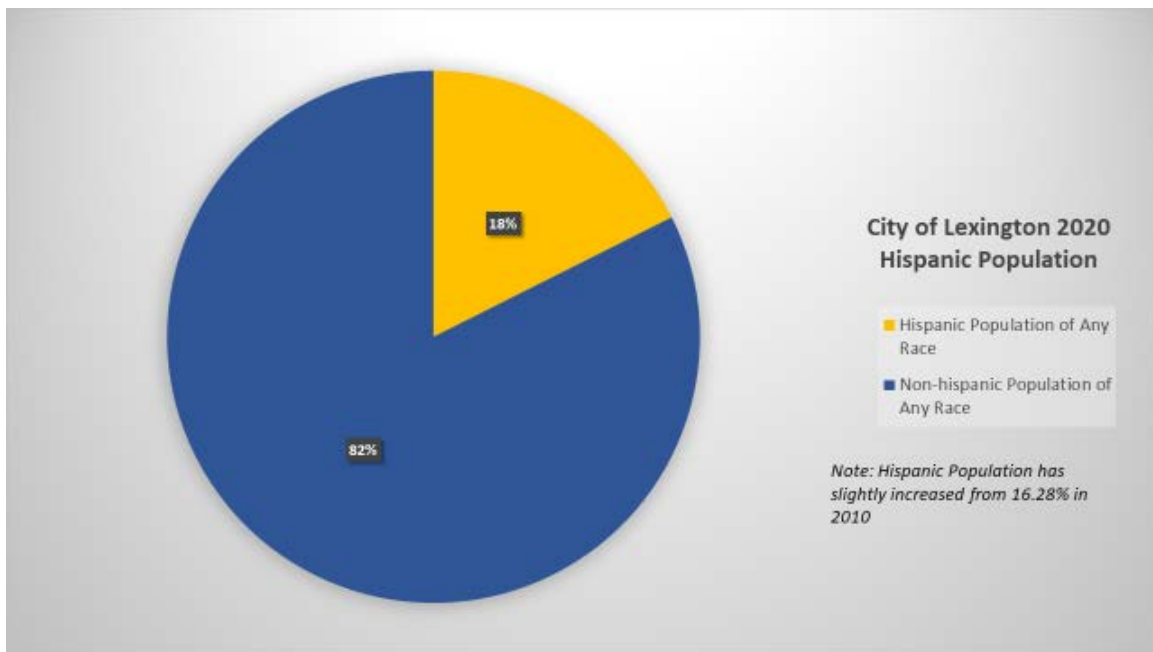
DIVERSITY

Lexington’s greatest opportunity lies in its people. As evidenced by the 2020 Census, Lexington’s population is becoming rich in diversity, supporting opportunities for broader thinking for community problem solving, as well as multicultural events and art offerings. The 2020 Census demonstrates growth in races other than white. Also, Lexington’s neighborhoods have demonstrated increased integration. In contrast to previous Censuses, most neighborhoods are no longer predominantly one race. It is well known that diversity increases the success of any business, organization, or community. With such broad thinking available, Lexington is poised to create a community of choice for all residents and businesses.

City of Lexington Increased Diversity (Census 2010 – 2020)		
	2010 %	2020 %
Native Hawaiian and Other Pac. Islander Alone Population	0.01%	0.03%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone Population	0.67%	1.10%
Asian Alone Population	2.93%	2.98%
Two or More Races Population	2.58%	7.76%
Some Other Race Alone Population	10.70%	11.08%
Black Alone Population	28.40%	27.93%
White Alone Population	54.71%	49.11%



The City has become more diverse, with two or more race population (multiracial) having the highest growth rate of 11.08% to reach 8% of the population. Some other race (besides the choices provided on the survey) represents the third largest population group.



In addition to race, the Bureau records origin. Lexington’s population is now 18% Hispanic origin.



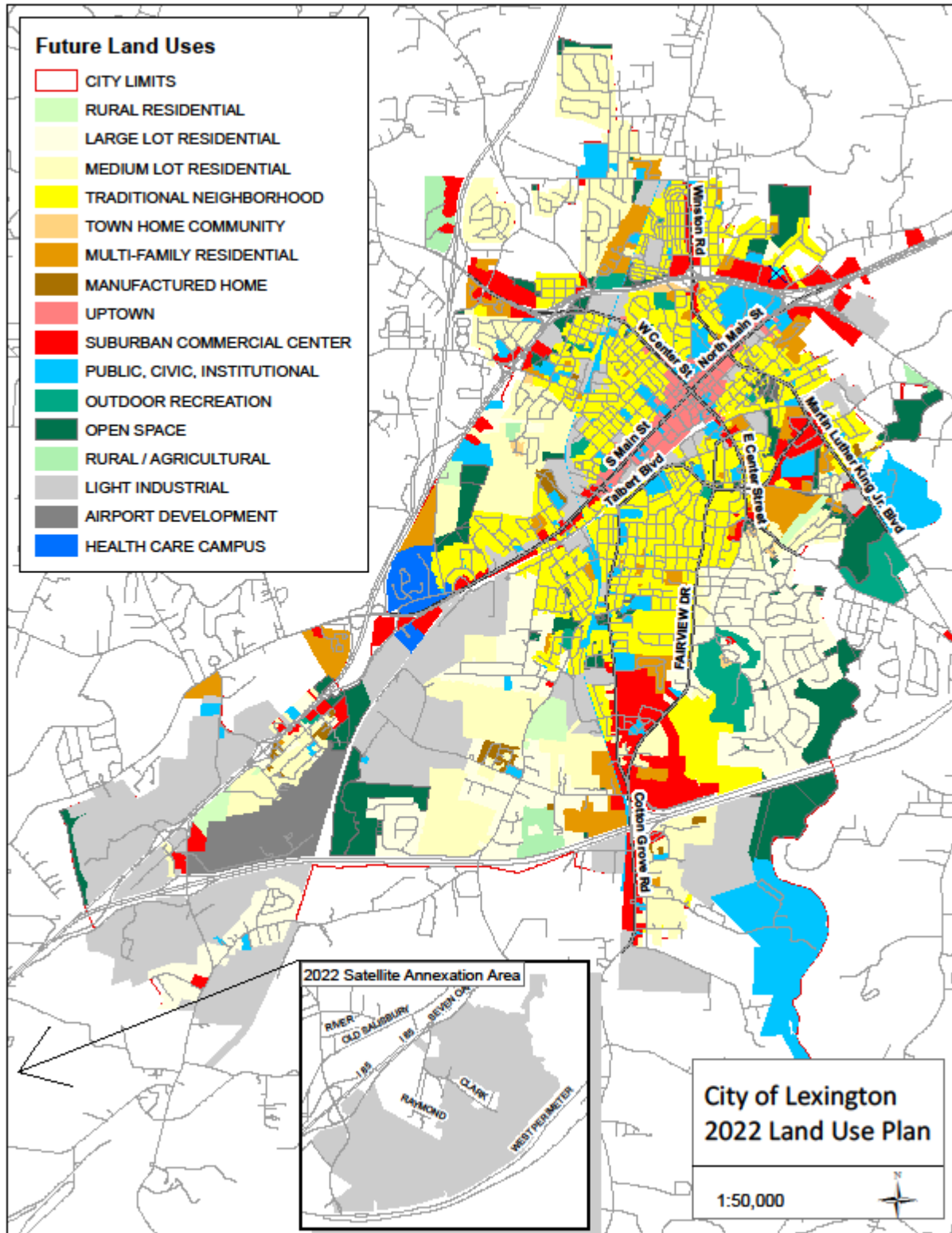
FUTURE LAND USE

Based on current land uses and recent trends, the following projections were made in order to establish the future land use map:

1. Industrial growth will continue in southwest Lexington and in the 760-acre satellite annexation area also to the southwest. This job center will support current and new residents and will perpetuate spinoff industries and supportive commercial uses.
2. Large lots in Lexington, especially in the south and southwest area with access to I-85 will develop with higher density residential uses including apartments, townhomes, condominiums, and small lot one-family homes.
3. Medium lots (less than 10 acres) interspersed throughout the community will continue to be subdivided at the edges of existing neighborhoods for small lot residential uses.
4. The Uptown urban core will continue to expand and infill with mixed-use urban form and will merge with the Depot District.
5. The Depot District will expand to the north (Main Street) with mixed-use, entertainment, retail, restaurants, the arts, community gathering, apartments, etc. and will expand to the south (Talbert Boulevard) with mixed-use, greenspace, and development that transitions to complement the Lincoln Park neighborhood. (Final determinations in this area will be revised based on Depot District masterplan with community input.)
6. Commercial shopping centers will continue to expand through infill, new parking lot outparcels, and surrounding commercial development of vacant or underutilized land.
7. Commercial activities will continue to expand and infill along major thoroughfares. South Main Street and Cotton Grove Road will see the highest rates of commercial growth.



FUTURE LAND USE MAP





2022 LAND USE POLICIES

Based on the information learned from the Census, land use trends, recent development, and community input from the land use and visual preference survey, the 2018 Land Use Planning Policies have been updated below. When adopting or rejecting any rezoning text or amendment to the UDO, State law requires City Council to approve a brief statement describing whether its action is consistent or inconsistent with this land-use plan. If a zoning map amendment is adopted and the action was deemed inconsistent with the adopted plan, the zoning amendment has the effect of also amending the future land-use map automatically with no action required. A plan amendment and a zoning amendment may be considered concurrently. The following policies will be used in conjunction with the future land use map to inform zoning and development decisions as well as to amend the UDO in order to better fulfill the policies. Note: The following are not in order of priority.

1. Design of the built environment should reflect principles of quality, creativity, walkability, connectivity, inclusion, nature, and environmental respect.
2. Land uses and design that reflect the cultural diversity of the community and create a welcoming environment for all are encouraged.
3. Development that fulfills the vision and expectations of the residents, visitors, and leadership will be supported.
4. A variety of commercial and service uses that meet the daily needs of residents, while not negatively impacting the community as whole will be supported. Increase in the variety of grocery stores, restaurants, retail, and entertainment offerings are encouraged.
5. Land uses and design that provide for outdoor enjoyment of patrons and residents are encouraged. (Outdoor dining, greenspace, parks, courtyards, parklets, trails, etc.)
6. A variety of residential building types will be supported to provide options in quality housing, with emphasis on single-family, multi-family, and mixed-use buildings in an urban form. Options should include a range in affordability. Infill will be designed in such a way as to protect the character of established neighborhoods. Lot sizes and densities will be commensurate with existing surrounding neighborhoods. Higher density development in close proximity to low density residential development should incorporate ample open space and edge treatments to reduce impacts.
7. Land uses, development, design, and initiatives that support the Arts are encouraged.
8. Land uses, development, design, and initiatives that provide for community gathering are encouraged.
9. Land uses that provide for a variety of entertainment offerings for families, teens and multi-generational are encouraged.
10. Development that provides for night-life and social activities while respecting existing development will be supported.
11. Development that leverages City-owned utilities and existing infrastructure is encouraged.
12. Repurposing and/or renovating existing vacant structures is encouraged. Historic



preservation provides an authentic and organic depth that cannot be replicated with new development and is therefore encouraged and supported.

13. Mixed-use developments will be encouraged so that neighborhoods have convenient access to local goods and services. Commercial uses with second and third story residential uses are encouraged.
14. Uses that incorporate provisions for dogs are encouraged.
15. Large-scale and diversified job development will be supported in areas identified for industrial growth and new areas with access to interstate and highways, and/or rail.
16. Entrepreneurship will be nurtured that allows for creative start-ups in a variety of spaces.
17. Each development should be reviewed relative to sustainability and use of technological advances. Energy efficiency, smart buildings, healthy buildings, and use of green materials and systems are supported.
18. Community gardens, edible landscaping, and shared food systems are supported.
19. Growth patterns will reflect urban, efficient use of land, balanced with protection of the environment and natural resources.
20. Transportation options will be developed and supported to provide mobility for all residents, especially for those who do not drive. Such options include public circulator buses, train, sidewalks, bike lanes, scheduled transport vans/buses, Uber/Lyft and other similar services, etc.
21. Urban form demonstrated in the historic Uptown will be extended along commercial corridors when practical, with buildings having street prominence and engagement, and parking falling secondary with screening.
22. Walkability, not only Uptown, but throughout the community is essential to building a sustainable and viable community. Pedestrian and/or bikeway connections should be at the forethought of any live, work, gather, and play development design.
23. Each new development or redevelopment is an opportunity for creating a sense of place that further enriches the authenticity of Lexington. Careful time and consideration will be spent on the details of design to incorporate inviting elements that add enjoyment to the lives of all people in the community. Elements such as convenient seating, decorative lighting, art, landscaping, hardscapes, greenspace, fire/water features, and outdoor rooms are encouraged. It is in these intentional places where people are able to rest, restore, slow down, reduce stress, connect, laugh, make memories, and enjoy community life.