



# LAND USE PLAN

Amended May 1, 2023



## Introduction

The North Carolina General Statute 160D, Article 5, requires a local government to adopt and reasonably maintain a land use plan as a condition of adopting and applying zoning regulations. Originally adopted in 1999, the Town of Cornelius Land Use Plan is updated periodically in accordance with the wants and needs of the community, the built environment, and market conditions.

## Form-Based Review Options

Proposed development requests that exceed the Typical Development Characteristics for building height and/or residential density may be considered under a *form-based review* in the Civic, Highway Commercial, Neighborhood Mixed-Use, Waterfront Mixed-Use, Catawba Mixed-Use, Downtown District, Corporate Mixed-Use, Business Campus, and Industrial land use categories. The *form-based review* shall include, but not be limited to consideration of how the following elements are incorporated into a proposed development request:

1. Affordable Housing
2. Architectural and Site Planning Innovation
3. Open Space and Landscaping (exceeding requirements)
4. Public Amenities
5. Transportation Improvements (vehicular and/or pedestrian)

## Civic

Civic facilities are focal points in the region. They typically include a building or complex of buildings that serve a public purpose, including a library, school, community center, or a place of worship. Visual qualities and the surrounding grounds often make civic facilities a landmark within the area.

### Primary Land Uses:

- School
- Place of worship
- Government administration building
- Library
- Community Center
- Fire and police station

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Neighborhood Park
- Other government buildings

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 3 Stories/45'

# PUBLIC PARKS & OPEN SPACE

## Public Parks and Open Space

Public parks and open space include active and passive land dedicated for permanent conservation. These areas are typically undisturbed and protected from development by government agencies or by public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Development of recreational uses should limit impervious surfaces of facilities and infrastructure.

### Typical Primary Land Uses:

- Community park
- Natural area
- Golf course

### Typical Secondary Land Uses:

- Small lakes
- Cemetery
- Greenway
- Dedicated open space within residential neighborhoods

# RURAL PRESERVATION

## Rural Preservation

Contains very low density rural residential development, farms, equestrian uses, and environmentally sensitive lands. Rural preservation areas promote the protection of environmentally sensitive lands from more intense development. Development should only include very low-density residential uses, up to a maximum of one dwelling unit per five acres.

### Typical Primary Land Uses:

- Farm
- Single-family residence
- Equestrian Services/Business

### Typical Secondary Land Uses:

- Places of worship and civic uses
- Natural areas
- Open space and recreation

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Residential Density: 1 Dwelling Unit/5 Acres

# LOW DENSITY SINGLE FAMILY

## Low Density Single Family

Low density single-family residential neighborhoods are generally formed as subdivisions or communities, with a relatively uniform housing type and density throughout. Homes are oriented interior to the site and typically buffered from surrounding development by transitional uses, water bodies, or natural areas. Low-density single-family neighborhoods are found in close proximity to suburban commercial and suburban office centers and provide the rooftops necessary to support the commercial and office uses within the centers. The extension of public utilities within low-density single-family areas is appropriate.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Single family residence

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Natural areas
- Places of worship and civic uses
- Community center
- Pool and amenities

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Residential Density: 2 Dwelling Units/Acre

# MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

## Medium Density Residential

Medium Density Residential neighborhoods are generally formed as subdivisions or communities, with a relatively uniform housing type and density throughout. Homes are oriented interior to the site and typically buffered from surrounding development by transitional uses, water bodies, or natural areas. Medium Density Residential neighborhoods are found in close proximity to suburban commercial and suburban office centers and provide the rooftops necessary to support the commercial and office uses within the centers. The extension of public utilities within Medium Density Residential areas is appropriate.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Single family residence

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Natural areas
- Places of worship and civic uses
- Community center
- Pool and amenities

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Residential Density: 4 Dwelling Units/Acre



## Neighborhood Mixed Use

Neighborhood mixed use areas offer residents the ability to live, shop, work, and play in one community. They include a mixture of housing types and residential densities integrated with goods and services residents need on a daily basis. A residentially focused design, and the scale of the development encourages active living, with a comprehensive and interconnected network of walkable streets. Neighborhood mixed-use areas support multiple modes of transportation and are located along the corridors leading into the Downtown District.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Condominium
- Apartment
- Restaurant
- Community-serving commercial
- Professional office
- Civic use
- Single-family detached home

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Pocket or community park
- Place of worship
- Natural areas

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 2 Stories/30'
- Residential Density: 3 Dwelling Units/Acre

# WATERFRONT MIXED USE

## Waterfront Mixed Use

Waterfront mixed use offers the opportunity to activate the water's edge in areas along Lake Norman and Lake Cornelius to encourage public use. Any non-single-family development shall include a public waterfront boardwalk. A variety of water-oriented, non-residential uses can be appropriate in a working waterfront; considering environmental impacts and design qualities. Development should maximize being near, seeing, and interacting with the lake. Building architecture and site design should emphasize public over private uses and activities. Commercial areas should be designed to minimize impervious surfaces and maintain natural stormwater flows. In mixed-use buildings, residential is not allowed on the ground/first floor.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Single family residence
- Restaurant
- Hotel
- General office

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Civic uses
- Pocket park

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 4 Stories/60'
- Residential Density: 5 Dwelling Units/Acre

# CATAWBA MIXED USE

## Catawba Mixed Use

The Catawba Mixed Use area serves local economic, entertainment, and community activities. Uses and buildings are located on small blocks with streets designed to encourage pedestrian activity. Non-residential development in these areas should focus on providing services to residents of the Town and visitors. These areas should provide an appropriate pedestrian experience, with bicycle amenities, ample sidewalks with appropriate lighting, and wayfinding signage to orient visitors to points of interests. In mixed-use buildings, non-residential uses are required on the first floor and should focus on providing services to the residents.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Townhome
- Condominium/apartment
- Restaurant
- Community-serving commercial uses
- Professional office

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 2 stories/30'
- Residential Density: 4 Dwelling Units/acre

# DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

## Downtown District

Downtown is a focal point of Cornelius. It is the hub of civic, cultural, and governmental activities for the entire Cornelius community. Uses and buildings are located on small blocks with streets designed to encourage pedestrian activity. Buildings typically stand two or more stories in height. Residential units may be found above storefronts. Parking is satisfied using on-street parking and shared rear-lot parking strategies. The compact, walkable environment and mix of residential and non-residential uses in the Downtown District support multiple modes of transportation.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Community-serving commercial uses
- Restaurants
- Professional offices
- Townhomes
- Condominiums
- Government buildings, post office
- Fire/Police Station
- Public Plaza
- Mixed Use Buildings

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Daycare
- Farmers Market
- Pocket Park

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 3 Stories/45' on street front; stepping back to 4 Stories/60'.
- Residential density follows form-based review utilizing conditional zoning process focused on art, design and compatibility.
- Non-residential on the 1st floor
- No 100% residential buildings

# CORPORATE MIXED USE

## Corporate Mixed Use

This category is applied to particular areas of Cornelius where it is expected that office-oriented businesses will be concentrated. The expectation is development of quality corporate offices, and related uses may include medical offices, corporate centers, and technology centers. A small level of residential activity may be included, as a secondary use, with the expectations that residential space will not be developed without non-residential space, and that if a development project is phased, non-residential space should be the first phase. Clusters of uses that support or serve one another are encouraged to locate in the same business center.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Corporate center
- Multi-tenant professional offices
- Research and technology centers
- Medical offices
- Hotel

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Supporting commercial uses
- Restaurant
- Bank
- Copying/printing services

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height (Adjacent to I-77): 4 Stories/60'
- Residential Density: 3 DUA (not allowed on 1<sup>st</sup> floor)

## Business Campus

Business Campus areas include a wide range of business, light industrial, office, research and development, and related ancillary uses, such as restaurants and small-scale retail and convenience shopping. They generally take on the appearance of an office development, yet with warehousing capabilities. Business Campus centers may take the form of a “campus” in the integration and coordination of uses and quality and character of the development. These areas are prime locations with good access to major road networks and should be reserved for high-return employment generating uses such as office buildings or light manufacturing or warehousing operations.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Corporate offices
- Research and Development
- Light industrial and warehousing
- Flexspace

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Bank
- Copy and printing services
- General government services
- Business-campus-supporting retail and restaurants
- Recreation uses

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 3 Stories/45'

# HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

## Highway Commercial

Highway commercial areas include retail and commercial uses that serve the greater community and visitors. These areas may include some regional-scale establishments designed to fit within a smaller town context. Highway commercial development should be located in development nodes or centers, reducing access points from main roadways. Where possible, master planning of multiple development sites is the preferred method for designing commercial centers to enhance the character of the development, consolidate access points onto the highway, and ensure accessibility and safety. Non-residential development in these areas should focus on providing services to residents of the Town and to visitors. Regional retail establishments are also appropriate if they are designed in a manner that upholds the small-town character and design aesthetic. Automotive sales uses are not appropriate in this district.

### Primary Land Uses:

- General commercial services
- Sit down or fast food restaurants
- Multi-tenant commercial
- Big box commercial
- Bank
- Hotel
- Professional office

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Recreation facilities
- Natural areas
- Places of worship and civic uses
- Open space and recreation

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 3 Stories/45'  
(Hotels may be considered to 6 Stories/90')

# INDUSTRIAL

## Industrial

Industrial centers provide employment opportunities in the Cornelius planning area. Each center supports manufacturing and production uses, including warehousing, light manufacturing, and assembly operations. These areas are found in close proximity to major transportation corridors and are generally buffered from surrounding development by transitional uses or landscaped areas that shield the view of structures, loading docks, or outdoor storage from adjacent properties. Clusters of uses that support or serve one another are encouraged to locate in the same light industrial center.

### Primary Land Uses:

- Light manufacturing and assembly
- Processing facilities
- Laboratory
- Warehouse
- Distribution

### Secondary Land Uses:

- Small scale commercial uses

### Typical Development Characteristics:

- Building Height: 1-2 Stories

### Form-Based Review Considerations:

Proposed development requests that exceed the Typical Development Characteristics for building height may be considered under a form-based review. The form-based review shall include, but not be limited to consideration of how the following elements are incorporated into a proposed development request.

1. Affordable Housing
2. Architectural and Site Planning Innovation
3. Open Space and Landscaping (exceeding requirements)
4. Public Amenities
5. Transportation Improvements (vehicular and/or pedestrian)



