Alamance County Land Development Plan

August 2007

Piedmont Triad Council of Governments
Alamance County
Land Development Plan

The Alamance County Land Development Plan was developed with the cooperation of the citizens of Alamance County, the County Board of Commissioners, the County Planning Board, and the County staff. This plan serves as a guide to help our community make land use decisions and to provide for the orderly growth and development of the County. The plan will be reviewed and revised periodically by the County Board of Commissioners after formal adoption, as conditions within the County’s planning jurisdiction change over time.

Adopted this 6th day of August, 2007 by the Alamance County Board of County Commissioners.

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Alamance County Land Development Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

Alamance County, North Carolina has a population of approximately 140,000 people, and has seen continued growth over the last half century. Alamance County’s growth has begun to impact the quality of life of County residents. The last fifty years has seen countryside turn into subdivisions and large manufacturing employers move away.

Even with these changes the County finds itself in the enviable position of being able to plan for the future development of the County. Alamance County can be proactive and develop a plan to address the challenges the County faces.

1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The Alamance County Land Development Plan is a guide for making strategic decisions about the orderly growth and development of our community. The plan serves as:

1. A Source of Information – containing local demographics, economics, housing, environmental constraints and development suitability, infrastructure, and existing and proposed land use patterns and policies.
3. An Opportunity for Community Involvement – active participation of the County Commissioners, Planning Board, staff and citizens during plan preparation help to ensure community values are represented and embodied in the plan.
4. An Outline of Strategic Actions – a guide for potential land development ordinance recommendations and revisions and a range of activities to implement the vision, goals, policies and recommendations outlined in the plan.

1.2 Planning Period

Twenty Years: 2006 – 2026

1.3 Planning Area

The plan encompasses the entire County (431 square miles) with the exception of the following municipalities and any accompanying extraterritorial planning jurisdictions: Alamance, Burlington, Elon, Gibsonville, Graham, Green Level, Haw River, Mebane, Ossippee, and Swepsonville. The plan focuses on the following townships: Albright, Coble, Faucette, Morton, Newlin, Patterson, Pleasant Grove, and Thompson. The remaining
townships (Boone Station, Burlington, Graham, Haw River and Melville) were studied in less
detail because a majority of the land area in these townships is located within municipal limits
and extraterritorial planning jurisdictions.
Map 1 – Alamance County Townships
1.4 Organization of the Plan

Section 1 – Introduction and Overview: Summary of plan purpose, process, and scope.
Section 2 – Existing Conditions: Detailed analysis of the factors affecting the County.
Section 3 – Community Values: Framework of values based on Steering Committee and citizen input.
Section 4 – General Growth Strategy & Land Development Plan: General goals, land classification system, and development policies for the entire County. Detailed analysis of existing regulations/ordinances and recommendations for the future.
Section 5 – Plan Implementation: Recommendations for implementing, using and revising the plan.

1.5 Planning Process and Methodology

A detailed analysis of existing conditions was conducted to ensure the plan responds adequately to the most relevant and current land development issues and trends. Computerized mapping and database technology, known as geographic information systems (GIS) was utilized to map and analyze a wide variety of demographic, economic, environmental, and urban service growth factors. General population, housing, and economic data was updated from the Destination 2020 Plan, to provide a better understanding of how best to strategically plan for Alamance County’s future growth.

Environmental growth factors were mapped and analyzed to identify the most suitable sites for urban development in the County. A detailed map of existing land uses was developed to identify land development patterns and trends. Physical landscape features including topography, hydrology, and soil limitations were mapped to identify the most appropriate and feasible sites for future growth. Vacant or under-utilized sites located out of the 100-year flood plain and with gentle slopes and few soil limitations were considered prime development sites and most suitable for future growth. Urban service areas including existing and planned roads and existing and planned water and sewer systems were mapped. The provision and maintenance of roads, water services, and sewer services are three of the most influential and expensive factors driving growth. Therefore special attention was paid to analyzing the potential effects of major planned road projects and the potential expansion of water and sewer services.

Extensive input from the Steering Committee and citizens was used to identify core community values and to build ownership of and support for the plan. This framework of community values was applied to the detailed analysis of existing conditions and used to draw conclusions and make land development recommendations. Recommended general growth strategies and guidelines were developed to provide a strategic, proactive vision of where and how the community wishes to grow.
1.6 Land Development Plan Vision

On April, 21, 2003 the Alamance County Board of County Commissioners adopted Destination 2020. This document was developed to guide the future growth and development of the county and to help set priorities for county government in responding to the needs of future growth. The vision statement adopted regarding growth management is outlined below and serves as the primary vision for the Alamance County Land Development Plan.

“We see new developments consuming less land per house, thereby reducing sprawl and preserving open space and farmland. Many new neighborhoods have compatible shopping and services nearby – within walking distance. Residential development does not sprawl all over the countryside but, rather, is clustered in areas well suited for development. The location of new developments has been carefully coordinated with city and county plans for infrastructure, including transportation and transit, water and sewer services, schools, and parks and open space. A growth management system has been established for the unincorporated area, including a flexible system of zoning and development standards.”

– Destination 2020
2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

A detailed analysis of Alamance County’s population, housing, and economy was prepared during the development of the County’s recent strategic planning effort called Destination 2020 in April 2003. Information provided in the Destination 2020 report was utilized as a source for several of the following statistical tables used in this report. Destination 2020 should be referred to for additional statistical information about Alamance County.

2.1 Analysis of Alamance County in Regional Context

Regional Population and Growth

According to the US Census Bureau, Alamance County’s population is growing at a faster rate than the remainder of the Piedmont Triad region, but at a similar rate to the state as a whole. The Raleigh MSA leads the state in population growth. While the Burlington metro area is growing faster than the Durham metro area and Greensboro-High Point metro area. Much of Alamance County’s growth is fueled by the proximity to the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill region. The county is poised to grow at a much higher rate due to the projected increase in North Carolina’s population. According to the U.S. Census 2030 population projections released in April 2005, North Carolina’s population will increase over 50 percent in the next 30 years. This will move North Carolina upward from the 11th to the 7th most populated state.

Table 1- Population Growth and Growth Rate Comparison (2000 – 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Population Growth</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington MSA (Alamance Co.)</td>
<td>130,800</td>
<td>140,533</td>
<td>9,733</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro-High Point MSA (Guilford, Randolph, &amp; Rockingham Co.)</td>
<td>643,430</td>
<td>674,500</td>
<td>31,070</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham MSA (Chatham, Durham, Orange, &amp; Person Co.)</td>
<td>426,493</td>
<td>456,187</td>
<td>29,694</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>8,049,313</td>
<td>8,683,242</td>
<td>633,929</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>296,410,404</td>
<td>14,988,498</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau

Most of Alamance County’s growth has occurred in the southern and eastern portions of the County along its border with Chatham County and Orange County (see Figure 1 below). Select central areas of the county, located within the City of Burlington, have had little or no growth from 1990 to 2000. Key factors fueling growth in the southern and western section of Alamance County include their close proximity to Research Triangle Park, easy access to jobs in the Triad and Triangle and Alamance County’s relatively low tax rates, land prices and development densities.
Employment and Job Growth

Although the population of Alamance County continues to grow at a moderate pace, its job growth has lagged. Alamance County has had a higher proportion of job losses in the past five years than the state average or in either of the comparison metro areas. The loss of manufacturing jobs, particularly jobs in the textile and apparel industries, continue to fuel the outflow of jobs. Alamance County’s economy has historically been much more dependent on textile and apparel jobs than the remainder of the region, the state, or the nation. Ten years ago, 22% of all jobs in Alamance County were in the textile or apparel industries. By 2005, the proportion had dropped to 10%. Overall, 6,700 textile and apparel jobs in Alamance County have been eliminated in the past 10 years. According to projections issued by the US
Bureau of Economic Analysis and the NC Employment Security Commission, continued losses in manufacturing jobs in general and in the textile industry in particular are expected.

Table 2 - Employment & Job Growth Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jobs, 1995</th>
<th>Jobs, 2000</th>
<th>Jobs, 2005</th>
<th>% Change, past 10 years</th>
<th>% Change, past 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington MSA (Alamance County)</td>
<td>52,128</td>
<td>64,644</td>
<td>58,426</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>(9.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro-High Point MSA (Guilford, Randolph, &amp; Rockingham Co.)</td>
<td>299,315</td>
<td>364,485</td>
<td>348,826</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>(4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham MSA (Chatham, Durham, Orange, &amp; Person Co.)</td>
<td>175,413</td>
<td>253,615</td>
<td>255,932</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>2,894,009</td>
<td>3,871,116</td>
<td>3,857,511</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>(0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>116,607,000</td>
<td>129,877,063</td>
<td>131,805,565</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3 - Industrial Classifications
Manufacturing – Textile & Apparel Industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Manufacturing 2005</th>
<th>% Textiles, apparel 2005</th>
<th>% textiles, apparel 10 years ago 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington MSA (Alamance County)</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro-High Point MSA (Guilford, Randolph, &amp; Rockingham Co.)</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham MSA (Chatham, Durham, Orange, &amp; Person Co.)</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Employment Security Commission of NC, Employment & wages in NC
In the past 5 years, Alamance County’s labor force has stayed relatively flat, while the number of jobs in the county has been declining. The gap between the labor force and the number of jobs is at its highest point since 1990.
Regional Commuting Patterns

Alamance, along with 10 other regional counties, is a “net commuter outflow” county. This means that the labor force is higher than the number of jobs in the county. The additional labor force causes higher commuting outflow rates to neighboring counties for employment. Just over 60,000 Alamance County residents work within Alamance County – up from 56,000 in 1990. Another 6,400 work in Guilford County, and 3,600 work in Orange County. 25% of Alamance County’s workforce commutes out of the county to work each day. In 1990, 20% of the workforce commuted out to work.
In 2000, over 7,000 people headed west out of Alamance County to work in the Piedmont Triad region. Almost the same number headed east to work in the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill region. However, the proportion of people commuting to the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill region increased by 72% between 1990 and 2000. During that same time frame, the proportion of commuters heading to the Greensboro/High Point metro area only increased by 25%.

**Unemployment**

Regional unemployment rates are the highest in those counties that straddle the Virginia/North Carolina border. The counties with the highest unemployment rates are the ones with the fewest jobs gained over the past 10 years. The increases of out commuters towards the Research Triangle correspond with that region’s much lower levels of unemployment. Meanwhile, Alamance County’s unemployment rate is much closer to that of the counties that make up the Piedmont Triad. Alamance County’s unemployment rate is also higher than the State of North Carolina’s rate (5.2%) for 2005.

Figure 5 – Regional Unemployment Rates: 2005

Unemployment Rate
- 7% or more
- 6% to 7%
- 5% to 6%
- Less than 5%
2.2 Analysis of Alamance County Trends

Alamance County Population and Growth

Alamance County experienced a steady increase in population during the past several decades. In particular, the county population increased twenty-one percent between 1990 and 2000 (see Table 4 below). It is estimated that the county population reached 140,533 persons in 2005, and this produced over a seven percent increase in population in the five years since 2000. This indicates a more modest increase in population than the twenty-one percent increase experienced in the previous decade, assuming the estimated trend remains constant.

Table 4 – Alamance County Population Growth (1980-2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>99,319</td>
<td>108,213</td>
<td>130,800</td>
<td>140,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeric Change</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8,894</td>
<td>22,587</td>
<td>9,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Change</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8.95%</td>
<td>20.87%</td>
<td>7.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2005

Table 5 compares population changes for each of Alamance County’s thirteen townships. Townships are countywide geographic regions, and the US Census Bureau typically includes the population of municipal incorporated areas when compiling township demographic statistics (see Map 1 – Alamance County Townships on page 3 for a geographic orientation of Alamance County’s township and municipal boundaries). All thirteen townships experienced population growth during this period. Newlin Township had the highest increase—nearly 58%. In general, the northern three townships (Faucette, Morton, Pleasant Grove) experienced the smallest percentage increases in population. The five townships along the I-40/I-85 Corridor (Boone Station, Burlington, Graham, Haw River, and Melville) experience moderate percentage increases in population growth through the 1990’s. Alamance County’s southern townships (Albright, Coble, Newlin, Patterson, and Thompson) experienced the largest percentage increases in population.
Table 5 – Alamance County Township Population Growth (1990-2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>1990 Population</th>
<th>2000 Population</th>
<th>Numeric Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patterson</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>42.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coble</td>
<td>3,231</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone Station</td>
<td>14,895</td>
<td>18,926</td>
<td>4,031</td>
<td>27.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton</td>
<td>4,501</td>
<td>5,084</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>12.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faucette</td>
<td>3,007</td>
<td>3,241</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>7.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>19,327</td>
<td>22,827</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>18.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albright</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>32.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newlin</td>
<td>3,296</td>
<td>5,192</td>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>57.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>4,809</td>
<td>7,125</td>
<td>2,316</td>
<td>48.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melville</td>
<td>9,277</td>
<td>13,244</td>
<td>3,967</td>
<td>42.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Grove</td>
<td>2,779</td>
<td>3,732</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>34.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>32,797</td>
<td>35,143</td>
<td>2,346</td>
<td>7.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haw River</td>
<td>4,927</td>
<td>5,495</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>11.53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2005

For the purposes of this plan, land use recommendations were developed for the eight (8) “County” townships. The “County” Townships are highlighted in the above chart and include: Albright, Coble, Faucette, Morton, Newlin, Patterson, Pleasant Grove, and Thompson.

**Alamance County Housing Trends**

Between the 1990 and 2000 US Census several of the “County” townships experienced dramatic changes in the percentage of housing units located within the township (See Table 6). The southern townships with the exception of Coble, all experienced rapid increases in the percentage of new housing units. Albright, Newlin, Patterson and Thompson all experienced greater than 40% increases in the number of housing units. The northern townships of Faucette, Morton, and Pleasant Grove experienced somewhat less explosive growth, but still added between 15% - 40%. The density of houses per square mile also increased significantly in these rural/county areas (See Maps 2 & 3 – Single Family Homes Density by Township and Manufactured Homes Density by Township).
MAP 2 - Single Family Homes Density by Township
Table 6 – Alamance County Housing and Density Growth (1990 – 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Housing Units</th>
<th>Growth Rates</th>
<th>Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patterson</td>
<td>51.28</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>1,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coble</td>
<td>30.66</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>1,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone Station</td>
<td>25.89</td>
<td>5,487</td>
<td>7,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton</td>
<td>37.11</td>
<td>1,773</td>
<td>2,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faucette</td>
<td>34.62</td>
<td>1,222</td>
<td>1,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>18.56</td>
<td>8,240</td>
<td>9,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albright</td>
<td>20.49</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>1,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newlin</td>
<td>65.93</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>34.92</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>2,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melville</td>
<td>28.47</td>
<td>3,789</td>
<td>5,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Grove</td>
<td>44.10</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>1,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>23.34</td>
<td>14,876</td>
<td>15,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haw River</td>
<td>15.34</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>2,382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the past five years, Alamance County has experienced a decline and then increase in new housing construction. This overall trend can be largely attributed to the recent downturn in the regional and national economies. However, since 2002 the County has experienced a sharp increase in housing development. In 2004 the County issued 313 residential building permits countywide (see Chart 3). Permits for residential construction include four major categories: traditional “stick” built, modular, double-wide manufactured homes, and single-wide manufactured homes. Multi-family construction (i.e., apartment units) is not included due to the low number of permits that have been issued for this type of residential development in recent years. Residential permits issued annually in the municipal areas of Burlington and Graham are not included in Chart 3 since they have their own inspections departments.

Chart 4 breaks down housing construction among Alamance County’s eight “County” townships. The number of residential building permits issued for new residential construction is “stacked” upward by year. Municipal incorporated areas that are located within any one of the eight “County” townships are also included with the total in Chart 4. Over the past five years, most new residential development has occurred in Newlin and Thompson Townships. Both townships are located in the southeastern corner of the County and border Chatham and Orange counties. In general, Alamance County’s southern townships are experiencing higher levels of new residential growth than the northern townships of Morton, Faucette and Pleasant Grove. The County’s close proximity and accessibility to both the Research Triangle and Piedmont Triad regions (i.e., larger metropolitan areas), along with its relatively lower tax rates, land prices, and development densities are likely factors influencing the County’s general development pattern.
Alamance County has experienced a dramatic shift in the type of residential development constructed since 2000 (see Chart 5 below). In 2000, roughly the same number of permits were issued for stick built homes and manufactured homes. However, since 2000 the number of manufactured home permits has decreased while the number of stick built permits has increased. It is evident that the overall increase in residential construction is attributed to the increase in “stick built” housing units between 2000 and 2004. Chart 5 also reveals a “spike” upward in new stick built housing units constructed between 2003 and 2004. It remains to be seen, however, if this upward trend continues. For the purpose of definition, modular residential units are taxed as real property and regulated by State building code similar to conventional stick built homes.
Chart 5 - Alamance County Annual New Residential Construction Types

Source: Alamance County Planning & Inspection Departments, 2005
Alamance County Agricultural Production Analysis

This subsection presents a picture of agricultural uses and their production in Alamance County. Table 7 below compares farms in the county between 1997 and 2002. The number of farms declined by almost 7% in the period between 1997 and 2002.

Table 7 – Alamance County Farm Comparison (1997-2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>% Change 1997-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Farms</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>-6.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Farm Acreage</td>
<td>113,548</td>
<td>97,793</td>
<td>-13.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Farm Acreage</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-7.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Value of Ag.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products Sold ($1,000)</td>
<td>$34,603</td>
<td>$28,713</td>
<td>-17.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USDA, 2002 US Census of Agriculture

The average farm size fell 7.81% between 1997 and 2002 and the market value of agricultural products sold has maintained a negative trend since 1997. Based upon Table 7, 51.2% of the total land within Alamance County was farm use in 2002. It is evident from the Table 7 that the number of farms, total farm acreage, average farm acreage, and market value of agricultural products sold have all decreased since 1997.

Table 8 below compares major agricultural products raised in Alamance County from 1997 to 2002. The acreage totals for tobacco, corn, soybeans and forage/silage have all fallen since 1997. On the other hand, the number of sheep/lambs and wheat acreage has increased.

Table 8 – Alamance County Major Agricultural Products (1997-2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>% Change 1997-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number Cattle/Calves</td>
<td>22,969</td>
<td>16,307</td>
<td>-29.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Hogs/Pigs</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>-33.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Sheep/Lambs</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>219.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Acreage</td>
<td>3,137</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>-56.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn for Grain Acreage</td>
<td>3,357</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>-63.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat for Grain Acre.</td>
<td>2,645</td>
<td>2,905</td>
<td>9.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans Acreage</td>
<td>2,910</td>
<td>1,522</td>
<td>-47.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forage/Silage Acreage</td>
<td>14,682</td>
<td>13,905</td>
<td>-5.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USDA, 2002 US Census of Agriculture
Although agricultural products continue to play an important role in the County’s economy, the number of acres of harvested cropland has been declining since 1987. Between 1987 and 2002, the number of acres of harvested cropland has decreased by roughly 19% (see Chart 6 below).

Source: USDA, 2002 US Census of Agriculture

*Chart 6 – Alamance County Harvested Cropland (1987-2002)*
2.2 Analysis of Urban Service Growth Factors

Water System Overview

Alamance County does not provide any water service directly to its citizens. The water systems that are located in the County are part of four municipal systems (Burlington, Graham, Mebane, and Ossippee). As a result, water service is readily available to properties owners and residents along the I-40/I-85 corridor. As you travel further north or south from the urban core of the County water service gradually dissipates (see Map 4 – Existing Water Systems).

In general, the municipal systems provide water service to their residents and occasionally extend service into the County. The largest of these municipal systems is owned and operated by the City of Burlington. Burlington provides water service to its residents as well as the Town of Elon, the Town of Gibsonville, the Town of Haw River, and the Village of Alamance. Burlington draws its water from Lake Mackintosh and the Stoney Creek Reservoir. Currently, Burlington’s system has a total water capacity of over 30 million gallons daily (mgd) with an average consumption of between 11 and 12 mgd.

The City of Graham and Mebane share a water treatment facility that is located off of US 70 on Graham-Mebane Lake. The water treatment plant has a 12 mgd capacity of which Graham is allocated 8 mgd and Mebane 4 mgd. Consumption of this water is reported at less than half of total production. Additionally, the Graham/Mebane facility also serves the Town of Green Level.

The Town of Ossippee (Alamance County’s newest municipality) also provides water service to its residents. Ossippee utilizes several community wells to distribute potable water to its citizens. Ossippee’s system primarily provides water service within the town limits.

Conclusions

Water service is primarily available within the urban core of Alamance County along the I-40/I-85 corridor. The County does not provide any water service directly to its residents. As a result, the county’s more intense urban development has been concentrated within the municipalities of the county. This situation acts as a “de facto” growth boundary that has limited dense development in the County. Without access to public water, development in the County must rely upon wells on individual lots (and larger lot sizes). However, the municipalities continue to annex property and extend municipal services further north and south of the I-40/I-85 corridor which will encourage more intense land development practices.
**Wastewater System Overview**

Alamance County does not provide wastewater treatment service to its citizens. The sewer systems that are in existence within Alamance County are owned and operated by the City of Burlington, the City of Graham, and the City of Mebane. These three entities provide sewer service to their residents and occasionally service properties outside their city limits (see Map 5 – Existing Sewer Systems).

The City of Burlington operates two wastewater treatment facilities and serves the largest number of customers. Both of these facilities are located along the Haw River, the East Burlington Wastewater Treatment Plant is located near the Town of Haw River and the South Burlington Treatment Plant is located south of the City of Graham. According to City reports, Burlington has a 24 mgd capacity with an average daily treatment volume ranging from 13 – 15 mgd.

The City of Graham’s wastewater treatment plant is located off of Gilbreath Street along the Haw River. The facility has a 5 mgd capacity and currently averages 1.75 to 2.0 mgd. The City of Graham also sends some of its wastewater to the South Burlington Treatment Plant for processing.

The City of Mebane has a treatment facility off of Corrigidor Street. The wastewater treatment plant is undergoing plans for expansion. Currently, the facility is approved to treat up to 2.5 mgd and averages about half of that capacity.

The communities of Elon, Gibsonville, Haw River, Swepsonville, and the Village of Alamance all send their sewage to one of the City of Burlington plants. Green Level provides sewer service through an agreement with Haw River and the City of Burlington. Ossippee operates a small package treatment plant to treat the sewage from its residents.

**Conclusions**

Limited sewer service is available to County residents adjacent to many municipalities. The majority of residents that have sewer service reside within the city limits of a municipality. As a result, the sewer service is confined to the county’s urban core located along the I-40/I-85 interstate corridor. This has enabled denser development to locate within cities, while Alamance County has not had as much development pressure. In the future, as sewer service is extended into the County, their will likely be a movement towards denser developments occupying quality farmland as prices for land continue to escalate.
Map 5 – Existing Sewer Systems

[Map showing existing sewer systems in Alamance County]
**Transportation System**

Alamance County is in the enviable position of having two federally designated interstate routes transverse the County. I-40/I-85 connects Alamance County to the Research Triangle Park to the east and the Piedmont Triad to the west. Additionally, I-40/I-85 serves as a major thoroughfare through North Carolina and the southeastern region of the United States. As a result, Alamance County is located in a strategically important position.

In 2004, the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO), which includes Alamance County as a member, conducted a transportation planning study in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The plan recommended highway, pedestrian, bicycle, and other improvements for proper traffic circulation and area-wide mobility through the year 2030. Specifically, the document identifies road segments likely to exceed their capacity by the year 2030 and recommends road improvements and additions necessary to satisfy the County’s anticipated transportation needs.

Building on the transportation planning study in 2004, the BGMPO developed a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) from which projects may get state funding. The TIP is a cooperative priority setting process involving the State DOT and the local governments that form the BGMPO. The TIP sets forth those transportation projects which, based on a variety of criteria, are to receive priority funding over the ensuing several year period. The list below highlights transportation improvements that the BGMPO designated as priority projects for the 2007 – 2013 TIP.

1. **NC 119 RELOCATION**, I-85 TO EXISTING NC 119 NORTH OF WHITES LEVEL ROAD MULTI-LANES ON NEW LOCATION.
2. **COOK ROAD / NEW ROUTE**, US 70 TO NC 100. MULTI-LANES, PART ON NEW LOCATION.
3. **MEBANE STREET WIDENING**, HUFFMAN MILL ROAD TO NC 54 WIDEN TO MULTI-LANES.
4. **NC 54 WIDENING**, NC 100 (MAPLE AVENUE) TO US 70 (CHURCH STREET). WIDEN TO MULTI-LANES WITH CURB AND GUTTER.
5. **GRAND OAKS BOULEVARD EXTENSION**, SR 1146 (KIRKPATRICK ROAD) TO NC 62 (ALAMANCE ROAD) WIDEN TO MULTI-LANES, SOME NEW LOCATION.
6. **NC 62 (ALAMANCE ROAD)**, SR 1306 (MEBANE STREET) SIDEWALKS TO US 70 (CHURCH STREET). WIDEN TO MULTI-LANES WITH CURB AND GUTTER.
7. **SOUTHERN LOOP**, NC 62 to NC 87 WIDEN TO MULTI-LANE WITH CURB AND GUTTER PARTIAL NEW LOCATION.
8. **NC 61 BYPASS**, UNIVERSITY DRIVE TO COUNTY FARM ROAD. FOUR LANE DIVIDED ON NEW LOCATION.
9. **US HIGHWAY 70**, WESTBROOK AVENUE TO GREENSBORO MPO. WIDEN TO MULTI-LANE FACILITY WITH CURB AND GUTTER.
10. **NC 87 IN ALAMANCE COUNTY TO US 29 IN REIDSVILLE**, WIDEN TO MULTI-LANES.
11. **TUCKER STREET @ I-85/40 INTERCHANGE** NEW FULL ACCESS INTERCHANGE LOCATION.

*Conclusions*

With increased access to transportation facilities, comes increased pressure for land development. Road access needs to be carefully managed to preserve the function of major thoroughfares throughout Alamance County’s jurisdiction, and to preserve the community’s character and quality of life as growth occurs. A comprehensive access management policy would be a useful tool for managing access along major thoroughfares in the county. The majority of road projects planned for the near future are all located within the urban core of the county. As more people move into the “County” serious consideration needs to be paid to the needs of the more rural parts of Alamance County. One issue that was brought up at several community meetings was providing better access to the northern portions of Alamance County. This is a need that can be addressed through the BGMPO planning process.
Parks and Recreation System

The Alamance County Recreation and Parks Department owns and operates park facilities at six locations in the county. These locations include the Recreation and Parks Office in Graham, Cedarock Park in Burlington, Morgan Place Park in Elon, Pleasant Grove Recreation Center in northeast Alamance County, the Eli Whitney Recreation Center on Greensboro-Chapel Hill Road, and the Ray Street Recreation Center in Graham. The Department also uses over 20 community owned, school owned, and municipal owned facilities and fields around Alamance County to operate its countywide athletic program.

Currently, the Recreation and Parks Department is developing a Recreation Master Plan and conducting a county needs assessment survey. The survey is being conducted to help enhance the future development of leisure activities in Alamance County. This information will be used to assist in the development of a comprehensive master plan for the County’s park and recreation system and will be provided to the Recreation & Parks Advisory Board and County Commissioners to assess recreational needs of the county.
2.3 Analysis of Environmental Growth Factors

Existing Land Use

Land uses were mapped and analyzed to identify existing land development patterns within Alamance County. An existing land use map was developed using data from the County Tax Department’s records obtained in the Fall of 2005 (see Map 6 - Alamance County Existing Land Use). Table 9 shows the acreage and share totals for each major land use category within the Plan’s study area. Municipal City Limits and ETJ areas are shown on the Alamance County Existing Land Use Map for reference and planning analysis purposes, but are not included in the acreage totals below. Acreage and percentage numbers are based on the land area within tax parcels, and do not include land area within road and railroad rights-of-way. The Residential land use category contains only site built homes and manufactured homes on parcels of less than 5 acres. Additional existing land use categories include: Agricultural/Vacant, Commercial/Office, Industrial, Institutional/Public, Open Space/Recreational, and unknown.

Table 9 – Acreage & Share Totals for Existing Land Use Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Land Use</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Share (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>109,254.42</td>
<td>57.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural/Vacant</td>
<td>73,647.46</td>
<td>38.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional / Public</td>
<td>3,930.38</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1,587.42</td>
<td>0.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space / Recreational</td>
<td>1,140.52</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial / Office</td>
<td>1,082.75</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>477.20</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>191,120.15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alamance County Tax & GIS Departments, 2005

The following sub-section provides a more detailed description of the approximate amounts and general patterns of existing residential and non-residential land uses throughout the county’s planning jurisdiction.

Residential – The study area contains approximately 191,120 acres. About 57 percent of the study area (109,254 acres) is occupied by site-built and manufactured single-family homes on parcels 5 acres or less. The majority of these residences are located along primary roads in the county and also near existing municipalities. An examination of site-built and manufactured home density by township over the past ten years reveals that the southeastern corner of the County is receiving much of the new residential growth (see Maps - Single Family Homes Density by Township and Manufactured Homes Density by Township). This is most likely in response to this area’s proximity and accessibility to Research Triangle.
Map 6 - Alamance County Existing Land Use
Agriculture – About 38 percent of the land within the county’s study area (73,647 acres) is categorized as being used for agricultural and other related purposes. This primarily consists of traditional farming practices such as crop production, horticulture, viticulture, and animal husbandry. In order to minimize the number of land use categories and simplify the acreage calculations process, vacant land (property with an assessed value of less than $10,000) that is not currently farmed was also included in this category. The production of agricultural acreage varies considerably throughout the county. A more thorough analysis of agricultural production is discussed in the previous section.

Table 10 below presents the main types of buildings or facilities included in each major non-residential land use category. The primary factor used in determining an existing land use designation was the County Tax Department’s current land classification records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10 – Facilities Included in Major Non-Residential Land Use Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional / Public</strong> – schools, churches and church-owned facilities, governmental properties, and cemeteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial / Office</strong> – retail services, restaurants, automobile dealers, automobile service facilities, offices and convenience stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial</strong> – manufacturing, saw mills, gas and oil storage, mining and quarrying, public utilities, landfills, and airports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional / Public – About 2.06% of the study area (3,930 acres) is categorized as institutional / public uses. Church facilities and schools are the most prevalent institutional uses found in the study area.

Commercial / Office – Approximately 0.57% of the land within the study area is being used for commercial / office purposes (1,082.75 acres). The predominate commercial / office development pattern in the county study area consists of stand alone convenience stores, gas stations and small, locally-owned business establishments. Most commercial / office uses within the county are scattered along primary roads.

Industrial – Approximately 0.25% (477 acres) of industrial land uses lie within the study area. The Alamance County Landfill and the Alamance-Burlington County Airport are some of the largest industrial sites within the county. A variety of other smaller industrial uses are scattered throughout the county.

Recreational and Open Space – The recreational land use category contains 1,140 acres or approximately 0.60% on the study area. This category includes land that is currently being used for golf courses and campgrounds. Alamance County’s planning jurisdiction contains multiple golf courses that provide much of the county’s recreational acreage. Additionally, Cedarrock Park offers county residents a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a day in the park.
Existing Land Development Regulations

The General Purpose of Land Development Regulations

Alamance County uses a variety of regulatory tools to manage land development within its jurisdiction. These tools include: a subdivision ordinance, a watershed zoning ordinance, a flood damage prevention ordinance, a wireless communications facilities ordinance, a mobile home park ordinance, a sexually oriented business ordinance, a height restriction ordinance, and a farmland preservation ordinance. Each of these ordinances have been crafted and adopted to provide specific rules and regulations for the development of land within Alamance County. Below is more detailed explanation of each ordinance.

Subdivision Ordinance

Subdivision ordinances are locally adopted laws governing the process of converting raw land into building sites. Regulation is accomplished through subdivision plat approval procedures, under which a land owner or developer is not permitted to make improvements or to divide and sell lots until a proposed subdivision plat has been approved. Approval of a proposed subdivision is based on compliance of the proposal with development standards set forth in the subdivision ordinance. Attempts to record an unapproved plat with local registry of deeds, or to sell lots by reference to such a plat, may be subject to various civil and criminal penalties. Subdivision regulations serve a wide range of purposes. To a health official, for example, they are a means of insuring that a new residential development has a safe water supply and an adequate sewage disposal system. To a tax official, subdivision regulations help to secure adequate records of land titles. To school or park officials, they are a way to preserve or secure school sites and recreation areas needed to serve people moving into new neighborhoods. To realtors and homebuyers, they are an assurance that home sites are located on suitable, properly orient ed, well drained-lots, and are provided with the services and facilities necessary to maintain and enhance property values.

The stated purpose of the Alamance County Subdivision Ordinance is to:

- assure the appropriate layout and use of land;
- provide safe, convenient and economic circulation of vehicular traffic;
- provide for the dedication or reservation of street right-of-way, utility easements and public facility sites;
- assure the proper installation of streets and utilities;
- avoid undue concentrations of population; and
- ensure proper legal description, identification, monumentation and recordation of property boundaries.
Watershed Zoning Ordinance

The watershed zoning ordinance is established to impose higher development standards on land located upstream of and draining into the drinking water supply than is generally imposed on other property. The intent is to exclude certain activities and maintain current development patterns in order to prevent the risk of pollution from more intense land uses.

The watershed zoning ordinance is divided into three parts (see Map 7 – Overlay / Zoning Districts): Watershed Critical Area (WCA), Balance of Watershed (BOW), and Rural Community District (RCD).

Watershed Critical Area (WCA) - The WCA is the area extending either one mile from the normal pool elevation of a water supply reservoir or to the ridge line of the watershed (whichever comes first); or one mile upstream from the intake located directly in the stream or river (run of the river), or the ridge line of the watershed (whichever comes first). In order to maintain a predominantly undeveloped land use intensity pattern in the WCA, single-family residential, multi-family residential and non-residential development are allowed at a maximum of one dwelling unit or use per two acres (1 d.u. or use/2 ac.). Built-upon area for multi-family residential and non-residential development can not exceed six percent (6%) of lot area except for expansion of existing development. All new lots to be used for multi-family structures, community business or industrial purposes are required to obtain a zoning permit from the County’s Zoning Administrator before any building permits may be issued. Additionally, many more intense land uses are prohibited from locating in a WCA area. They include: cluster development, sites for land application of residuals or petroleum contaminated soils, landfills, incinerators, and waste processors, commercial uses which sell, store, or distribute motor fuel or other hazardous materials, solid waste management facilities, airports, industry, metal salvage facilities including junkyards, manufacturing, use or storage of any hazardous production material (HPM) or highly toxic material (HTM) or determined by the Alamance County Board of Commissioners to be injurious to the health, safety or welfare of the County’s residents due to the explosive, flammable or toxic characteristics of the materials, package treatment plants, and community sewage facilities, except for subsurface septic tanks. (These facilities are allowed only if the Health Department determines that a public health problem can be alleviated by constructing such facilities), and underground fuel or chemical storage tanks (except for L.P. Gas Storage).

Balance of Watershed (BOW) - The BOW is the entire land area contributing surface drainage to a specific point, the public water supply intake, minus the watershed critical area. In order to maintain a predominantly undeveloped land use intensity pattern in the BOW, single-family residential uses are allowed at a maximum of one dwelling unit per acre (1 d.u./ac.). No lot can be less than one (1) acre. All multi-family residential and non-residential development requires a minimum area of forty thousand square feet (40,000 sq. ft.) per dwelling unit or non-residential development use, when more than one unit or use is to be sited on a lot. Built-upon area can not exceed twelve percent (12%) of lot area except for expansion of existing development. All new lots to be used for multi-family structures, community business or industrial purposes are required to obtain a zoning permit from the County’s Zoning Administrator before any building permits may be issued. Additionally, some land uses are prohibited from locating within the BOW area. They include: sites for land
application of residuals or petroleum contaminated soils, discharging landfills, and storage of hazardous materials unless a spill containment plan is implemented.

Rural Community District (RCD) - This zoning district is designed to limit development and to preserve the rural character of an area. In order to maintain a predominantly undeveloped land use intensity pattern in the RCD, single-family residential uses are allowed at a maximum of one dwelling unit per acre (1 d.u./ac.). No lot used for residential or community business purposes can be less than one acre (43,560 sq. ft.). Lots used for industrial purposes can be no less than 1 acre. All multi-family residential and nonresidential development requires a minimum area of forty thousand square feet (40,000 sq. ft.) per dwelling unit or non-residential development use, when more than one unit or use is to be sited on a lot. Built-upon area for business and industrial uses can not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the lot area except for expansion of existing development. A zoning permit is not required for the development of single-family homes. All new lots to be used for multi-family structures, community business or industrial purposes are required to obtain a zoning permit from the County’s Zoning Administrator before any building permits may be issued. The following land uses are prohibited from locating within the rural conservation district: sites for land application of residuals or petroleum contaminated soils, sexually oriented businesses as defined by Alamance County’s Ordinance Regulating Adult Establishments, discharging landfills, medical waste facilities (portable or permanent), and storage of hazardous materials unless a spill containment plan is implemented.

Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance

Alamance County utilizes a flood damage prevention ordinance to provide extra protection to the public’s health, safety, and general welfare in flood prone areas. The flood damage prevention ordinance seeks to minimize public and private losses from flooding. In all areas of special flood hazards (where base flood elevation data is provided) Alamance County’s ordinance requires the lowest floor elevation of any new (or substantially improved existing structure) to be a minimum of two feet above the base flood elevation and prohibits placement of new manufactured homes in this area. In areas where the base flood elevation data is not available, the County requires the lowest floor elevation (including the basement) to be at least two feet above the highest adjacent grade. All encroachments (including fill material or structures) must be located at least twenty feet away from the top of the bank, or one times the width of the stream at the top of the bank, which ever is greater.

Wireless Communication Facilities Ordinance

The purpose of Alamance County’s wireless communication facilities ordinance is to establish standards for the location, permitting, and appearance of wireless telecommunication facilities located on property within Alamance County’s jurisdiction. These standards are necessary in order to provide for orderly development and to ensure the protection of the public health, welfare, and safety of the citizens of Alamance County. As a result of these regulations Alamance County can help to ensure quality wireless service throughout the county that may be utilized for public and private purposes. The basic requirements of the
ordinance include a minimum separation requirement between towers, a fall zone, and co-
location requirements to minimize the number of cell towers and maximize efficiency.

**Mobile Home Park Ordinance**

In 1996, Alamance County updated its mobile home park ordinance. The new ordinance was
developed to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of
Alamance County through the development of regulations that require adequate lot sizes and
configurations, established set-backs, and established road standards for mobile home parks.
A mobile home park is defined as containing three (3) or more manufactured homes on one
tract of land.

**Sexually Oriented Business Ordinance**

Alamance County has adopted a Sexually Oriented Business Ordinance to establish
standards for the location, licensing, operation, and appearance of sexually oriented
businesses located within Alamance County’s jurisdiction. These standards mitigate adverse
secondary impacts on the community, which may include increases in crime rates, decreases
in neighborhood property values, and disturbances of the peace. Important and substantial
government interests in preventing deleterious effects and protecting the integrity of
neighborhoods provide a constitutional basis for reasonable regulation of the time, place, and
manner under which sexually oriented business may operate. Specifically, the ordinance
requires a minimum separation between sexually oriented businesses and particular land
uses (i.e. daycares, churches, major subdivisions). Additionally, the ordinance requires the
licensing of the business itself, the managers, and the entertainers of all sexually oriented
businesses operating within Alamance County’s jurisdiction.

**Height Restriction Ordinance**

Alamance County utilizes a height restriction ordinance to regulate development around the
Burlington-Alamance Regional Airport. The purpose of the ordinance is to regulate the height
of objects in the vicinity of the airport to assure compatibility with aviation activity and to
maintain clear zones and approach zones in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration
requirements. The obstruction to air navigation has the potential of endangering the lives and
property of users of the Burlington-Alamance Regional Airport, and the property or occupants
of land in its vicinity. Additionally, obstructions may affect existing and future instrument
approach minimums or reduce the size of areas available for the landing, take-off, and
maneuvering of aircraft, thus impairing the utility of the Burlington-Alamance Regional Airport.

**High Impact Land Uses and Polluting Industries Ordinance**

The Board of County Commissioners recently adopted a High Impact Land Uses and
Polluting Industries Ordinance for Alamance County. The regulations have been adopted for
the purpose of promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Alamance
County, and to promote the peace and dignity of the County. The ordinance established
criteria relating to specifically identified high impact land uses / polluting industries. These
uses by their very nature produce objectionable levels of noise, odors, vibrations, fumes, light, smoke, and/or other impacts upon the lands adjacent to them. The standards shall allow for the placement and growth of such uses, while maintaining the health, safety, and general welfare standards of established residential and commercial areas in Alamance County. A minimum separation between high impact land uses and surrounding properties has been established as part of the regulations.

**Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance**

Alamance County’s Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program has enjoyed a great deal of success. Many farm owners have petitioned for inclusion into the program *(See Map – Overlay / Zoning Districts)*. The purpose of the ordinance is to promote agricultural values by increasing the public’s awareness of the existing agricultural community and its way of life. The ordinance also encourages the economic and financial health of agriculture; and increases protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms. The ordinance establishes many benefits for participating farmers and other county residents. The Program:

- Preserves and maintains agricultural areas within the county;
- Informs non-farming neighbors and potential land purchasers that the participating farm may emit noise, dust, and smells (this feature may help avoid conflicts between neighbors and potential nuisance claims);
- Gives the farming community a better voice in decisions made by Alamance County Commissioners affecting farmland;
- Requires the Alamance County Commissioners to use farmland “as a last resort” if they are attempting to condemn county lands;
- Provides greenspace and natural resources as the county’s population and development expands;
- Maintains opportunities to produce locally grown food and fiber.

Farmer participation in the program is voluntary and the farmer may terminate his/her participation at any time.

**Land Development Regulations Conclusions**

Alamance County has amended its regulations over the years to improve the quality of development in the community. As an outgrowth of this Land Development Planning process, the County will continue to refine its ordinances to reflect community values and to encourage quality development as the County grows. Some of the key issues the County intends to address as an outgrowth of this Land Development Plan include:

- Encouraging new types of development and greater creativity in meeting community needs.
- Encouraging open space, greenways, trails and sidewalks.
- Examining the relationship between new development and the strain it places on public infrastructure.
- Preserving farmland and open space.
• Maintaining a clear distinction between urban uses (the “city”) and rural uses (the “county”).
Land Development Suitability Analysis

Three key environmental growth factors—steep slopes, soil limitations, and flood hazard areas—were mapped and analyzed to identify physical limitations and regulatory constraints affecting future land development (see Map 9 – Development Limitations). Each of these factors has a varying degree of negative impact on potential new growth, and often can be mitigated with additional expense and design. For example, building a subdivision in a flood hazard area can be overcome by reserving flood prone lands, grading and filling approved flood areas, building homes above the base flood elevation, and utilizing public sanitary sewers. Results of this analysis were used to determine the potential suitability of vacant land for higher intensity development, and to formulate strategies for future growth.

In general, unfavorable areas are not as conducive to higher intensity development (i.e., higher intensity uses such as dense subdivisions and industrial/commercial developments) as favorable areas, and are primarily located in the northern portion of Alamance County. The predominant development constraint in this area of the county is soil limitations. Overall, the Development Limitations Map on the following page indicates that Alamance County is not severely constrained by environmental factors, and higher intensity development is feasible in select areas. The three environmental growth factors are discussed separately in more detail below.

Topographic Slope Limitations

Virtually all of Alamance County is located within the Haw River Valley and its numerous tributaries. This has a profound impact on the topography of the County. The degree of slope throughout the planning area was calculated using topographic contour data provided by the Alamance County GIS Department. This data was used to generate a topographic contour map with a contour interval of 20 feet (see Map 8 – Elevation Profile).

Potential future land uses are quite variable in their sensitivity to steep topographic conditions (see Map 9 – Development Limitations). Structures such as houses and small commercial and institutional buildings may have more topographic flexibility because their small footprints require less grading than large industrial buildings, shopping centers, and schools. Another consideration is the land value of developable sites. For high-value sites such as those designated for industrial or commercial use, the costs of grading typically represent a smaller share of total development costs than on lower value sites. Thus, a developer proposing a project on a commercial site may view it as economically feasible even if steep topography calls for excessive grading. As a “middle ground” estimate for most land uses, a 20% slope (20 feet of fall per 100 horizontal feet) was used as the threshold for steep slope limitations. Steep slopes are widely scattered throughout the county’s jurisdiction, but they are generally concentrated along the major river banks and tributaries making these areas inappropriate for higher intensity uses. Additionally, property located near Cane Creek Mountains and Bass Mountain, in the southern portion of Alamance County, contain areas subject to steep slope limitations.
Soil Limitations

Some soil conditions can make land development more difficult or expensive. In Alamance County, predominant soil limitations include hydric/wet (flood plain) soils, shallow depth-to-rock (bedrock) content, high shrink-swell potential due to high clay content and moisture fluctuations, and slow permeability (or poor percolation) resulting from water not adequately filtering through the soil. GIS digital soils maps and attribute data from the Alamance County Soil Survey (USDA Soil Conservation Service) were used to identify areas containing one or more of these severe soil limitation conditions (see Map 9 – Development Limitations). Because the mapping units for soils are only indicative of prevailing soil types in those areas, the actual distribution of hydric, rocky, shrink-swell, or slow permeability soils may differ somewhat from what is shown. Even where such conditions actually occur, there may still be a means to undertake higher intensity development, although with greater difficulty or expense. Soils with slow permeability also make for difficulty in locating septic systems. This would apply primarily to lower density residential growth without access to public sewer services. Soil survey data indicates areas with soil limitations including slow permeability, hydric soils, and wet soils are predominately located in the northern portions and southwestern portions of Alamance County.

Flood Hazard Area Limitations

Development suitability is also affected by the location of a flood plain. Areas within the floodplain where the chance of being flooded is one percent or greater in any given year are called special flood hazard areas (SFHAs). For regulatory purposes, SFHAs are divided into zones - the floodway and A zones. The floodway area is the river or creek itself and the area very near the river or creek that carries the flood waters. The A zone is the area that would be inundated during a 100-year flood.

Flood damage prevention regulations require special site planning and construction standards to minimize the threats to personal safety and damage to property caused by flooding (see Map 9 – Development Limitations). SFHAs are designated on the official maps issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and establish base flood elevations to use in meeting the construction standards specified in the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. For obvious reasons, development is not allowed in an area designated as a floodway. Outside of the floodway, any fully enclosed space in a new residence or mobile home must be situated above the designated base flood elevation. Accessory structures (e.g. sheds, detached garages) may be built within SFHAs if special criteria are met. Non-residential structures are allowed if they are certified as floodproofed or watertight by a professional engineer or architect.

The Flood Damage Prevention regulations in Alamance County require a Flood Development Permit for any development activities proposed within SFHAs. The lowest floor elevation of any new structure or substantially improved existing structure, is required to be a minimum of two feet above the base flood elevation in all SFHAs. In areas where the base flood elevation is not available, the lowest floor elevation (including the basement) is required to be at least two feet above the highest adjacent grade. All encroachments to SFHAs (including fill
material or structures) must be located at least twenty feet away from the top of the bank or five times the width of the stream, whichever is greater. The regulations also set out procedures for obtaining a Floodplain Development Permit.

The Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 and the National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994 mandate the purchase of flood insurance as a condition of Federal or federally regulated financing for acquisition and/or construction of buildings in SFHAs. These Acts prohibit Federal agency lenders, such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) and United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Rural Housing Service, and Government-Sponsored Enterprises for Housing (such as Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae) from making, guaranteeing, or purchasing a loan secured by real estate or mobile home(s) in a SFHA, unless flood insurance has been purchased and is maintained during the term of the loan.

The County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) which promotes sound development practices within areas vulnerable to potential 10, 50, 100, and 500-year flood events. A flood event refers to the probability that a flood will occur in any 10, 50, 100, or 500-year period. Each of these events has a 10, 2, 1, and .02 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded during any year respectively. For example, the likelihood of a 10-year flood event occurring every year is 10%. This does not mean that every 10 years a flood of that magnitude will occur; the actual probability is much higher.

To help protect public health, safety, and welfare, and to minimize losses due to flooding, local jurisdictions may prohibit development within all areas of special flood hazard (100-year flood zones) and unmapped areas subject to periodic flooding within the County jurisdiction. The 100-year floodplain area is divided into a floodway and a floodway fringe. The floodway is the channel of a stream plus any adjacent floodplain that must be kept free of encroachment so that a 100-year flood can be carried without substantial increase in flood heights. The area between the floodway and the 100-year floodplain boundaries is called the floodway fringe. The floodway fringe encompasses the portion of the floodplain that could be completely obstructed without increasing the water-surface elevation of the 100-year flood more than 1 foot at any point. Minimum federal standards limit such increases to 1 foot, provided hazardous velocities are not produced.

An immediate increase in water-surface elevation of the 100-year flood may not be increased more than 1 foot due to individual obstruction in the floodway fringe. However, each new development affects the whole system in many ways. Development encroachment within floodplains reduces the flood-carrying capacity, increases the flood heights and velocities, and increases flood hazards in areas both up and down stream from the development itself (see Figure 1 – Floodway Schematic). Similar effects occur when areas are “reclaimed” from the floodplain by adding fill and increasing elevation. Although individual property rights are an important focus of this plan, caution is given to permitting short-term individual economic gain at the expense of other property owners up or down stream.
Figure 1 – Floodway Schematic

Line A-B is the flood elevation before encroachment.
Line C-D is the flood elevation after encroachment.
Natural and Human Environmental Features Analysis

Alamance County includes a wide-range of unique natural and human environmental features. These range from historic sites to areas of high quality farmland. The Natural and Human Environmental Features Map provides a geographic illustration of the natural and human environmental features described in more detail below.

Natural Heritage Areas

An inventory of significant natural areas was conducted in Alamance County by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. Natural Heritage areas are sites which support natural assemblages of fauna and flora which are significant to the county, our region, or the state. Seventeen (17) individual natural heritage areas have been identified within Alamance County. Below is a list of all of the sites and associated acreages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Heritage Areas</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stony Creek Mountain</td>
<td>427.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Creek Upland Depressions</td>
<td>101.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimesville Road Basic Forest</td>
<td>76.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alamance Enon Slope</td>
<td>27.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altamahaw Alluvial Forest</td>
<td>115.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Mountain</td>
<td>469.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Elder Bottomlands</td>
<td>110.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cane Creek Mountains</td>
<td>586.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Cliff Bottomlands</td>
<td>60.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedarock Park</td>
<td>441.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Creek Alluvial Forest</td>
<td>95.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Hill Monadnock</td>
<td>327.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observatory Woods</td>
<td>147.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Hill Xeric Woodlands</td>
<td>103.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxapahaw Sloughs and Slopes</td>
<td>314.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stony Forest Creek</td>
<td>245.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli Whitney Rich Slopes</td>
<td>173.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Natural Heritage Elements

Natural Heritage Elements represent occurrences of a rare plant or animal species confirmed at the time of the Natural Heritage Inventory. Alamance County contains at least 24 natural heritage elements. These range from a four toed salamander to dry oak hickory forests. A detailed list of all the Natural Heritage Elements located within Alamance County can be obtained through the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.
Map 10 – Natural and Human Environmental Features
Historic Sites

The Office of State Historic Preservation conducted an inventory of historic properties in Alamance County in 1986. The archaeological survey covered 1,030 acres and identified sixty-five previously unrecorded archaeological sites. A special treatment on "The Potters of Alamance County" was part of the final report. The Historic Preservation Office statewide inventory contains information on over 350 prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in Alamance County. The inventory included public buildings, private residences and outbuildings. There are a total of 53 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Alamance County. Below is a list of some of the key sites included on the National Register of Historic Places in Alamance County:

- Alamance Battleground State Historic Site (listed in 1970)
- Bellemont Village Historic District (listed in 1987)
- Glencoe Mill Village Historic District (listed in 1979)

Wetlands

The US Fish and Wildlife Service maintains the National Wetlands Inventory, which was used to identify wetlands located within the study area. Small areas of wetlands can be found scattered throughout Alamance County, typically limited to areas adjacent to streams or other bodies of water.

High Quality Farmlands

According to the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, high quality farmland in Alamance County generally consists of Cecil and Applian soils, with a slope of less than 8%. Based on these criteria, a majority of Alamance County is considered high quality farmland.

Impaired Rivers and Streams

Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act requires states to identify rivers and streams which do not meet water quality standards or have become impaired. The following is a list of rivers and streams that are impaired in Alamance County and the primary reason given for impairment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River/Stream</th>
<th>Impairment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haw River</td>
<td>Fecal Coliform Bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Alamance Creek</td>
<td>Impaired Biological Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Alamance Creek</td>
<td>Impaired Biological Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Branch Creek</td>
<td>Fecal Coliform Bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varnels Creek</td>
<td>Impaired Biological Integrity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

A goal of the Land Development Plan is to build upon the important existing features found within Alamance County and make certain that they are preserved for future generations. The location and distribution of these features can have a substantial influence on recommended future land uses. For example, placing a historic farm house on the National Register of Historic Places would enable the property owners to obtain federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation and restoration projects. Knowing the location of high quality farmland can be valuable in guiding the location of future development to avoid impacts to these important agricultural regions.
3.  COMMUNITY VALUES

3.1 The Public Involvement Process

Advisory Committee

Public involvement is the cornerstone of a successful future land use planning effort. Numerous opportunities were provided to the residents of Alamance County to allow for community input into the Land Development Plan. The fifteen member Alamance County Planning Board was appointed by the Alamance County Board of Commissioners to serve as the Advisory Committee for this planning process and oversee the project. The Advisory Committee began meeting in October 2005.

With the facilitation and technical assistance from PTCOG staff and the Alamance County Planning Department, the Committee reviewed a wide range of factual information about the County’s demographics, urban services, and environmental features. The Committee utilized this information to temper and refine their vision for the future growth of Alamance County. The Advisory Committee was also instrumental in the six community meetings held throughout the County in February and March of 2006.

Community Meetings

In February and March of 2006, six community meetings were held throughout the County to gain citizen input into the land use planning process. The community meetings consisted of two primary components: an exercise to gather input on 20 key “issues” questions and an opportunity to fill out the Land Use Preference Survey. A detailed sample agenda is provided in the Appendix of this document, as well as the list of the 20 key “issues” questions. Finally, all of the data that was collected at each meeting was attributed to one of the thirteen townships that make up Alamance County. This was accomplished by asking participants which township they resided in before the start of each meeting. A complete summary of the results of the meetings can be found in the Community Meeting and Land Use Preference Survey Report that was presented to the Advisory Committee in April, 2006. Below is a summary of the key findings from the Key Issues and Land Use Preference Survey. The “Core” Townships are defined as follows: Morton, Faucette, Pleasant Grove, Coble, Albright, Patterson, Newlin, and Thompson.

Key Issues Exercise Findings

- 8 out of the 8 “Core” Townships voted for “Much More” Open Space/ Natural Area Protection.
- 8 out of 8 “Core” Townships voted for “Much More” Farmland &/or Agricultural Area Protection.
- 8 out of the 8 “Core” Townships voted for “More” or “Much More” Protection from Noxious or Unwanted Land Uses.
8 out of the 8 “Core” Townships voted for “More” or “Much More” Parks/Recreation/Greenway Opportunities.
7 out of the 8 “Core” Townships voted for “More” or “Much More” Land Development Regulations.
5 out of the 8 “Core” Townships “Disagree” with the statement that “No one has the right to tell another person how they should or should not use their land”.
5 out of the 8 “Core” Townships voted for “Less” or “Much Less” Residential Growth in Rural Areas.

Land Use Preference Survey Findings

8 out of the 8 “Core” Townships responded that they would like to see “Less” Apartments, Townhomes/Condominiums, Duplexes, Multi-Family Dwellings in their immediate community.
8 out of the 8 “Core” Townships responded that they would like to see “More” Traditional Farmland (Pasture, Cropland) in their immediate community and in Alamance County as a whole.
7 out of the 8 “Core” Townships responded that they would like to see “Less” Manufactured Homes (on individual lots) and Manufactured Homes (in mobile home parks) in their immediate community and in Alamance County as a whole.
7 out of the 8 “Core” Townships responded that they would like to see “Less” Commercial/Offices/Retail/Services/Shopping in their immediate community.

- **Likes:** Farmland Preservation, Greenways, Parks, Open Space, Conservation Programs.
- **Dislikes:** Manufactured Home Parks, Clear Cutting of lots, Junk Cars, Trash, Landfills.
- **Dreams:** No Zoning, Impact Fees, Managed Growth, Preservation of Northern and Southern portions of the County.
- **Other Key Issues:** Protecting Rural Areas, Public Transportation, Need for Zoning

Conclusion

The Community Meetings appeared to be a success and offered citizens a chance to share their opinions and voice their concerns about future growth in Alamance County. The meeting also provided elected officials, planning board members/advisory committee members, and staff an opportunity to listen to the people that their serve and represent. Many of the ideas generated by participants echo, confirm, and support the months of work the Advisory Committee spent on drafting the plan. The citizens input obtained from participants of the Community Meetings provided the Advisory Committee and staff with a good indication of the community’s values that were utilized in creating this land development plan.
4. GENERAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Three major underlying aims of this land development plan are to:

1. Balance individual property rights with the public interest;
2. Balance the free market economic system with appropriate public intervention; and

If a totally unrestrained free market system and individual development choices were yielding only the types of growth that Alamance County residence desire, there would be little need for land development planning or regulation. However, this does not appear to be the case. A collection of individual decisions are gradually generating a land use pattern that, left unmanaged, will overtake the rural landscape, place additional burdens on public services, and erode the quality of life that originally attracted new residents and businesses to Alamance County.

Therefore, the county needs to develop conscious strategies for proactively managing the type of growth that is consistent with the county’s overall vision and goals. Stated another way, growth management strategies help to set the “tone” and provide the general direction for future growth and development. These strategies seldom need to rely on heavy-handed government regulation. For example, if protection of open space is a general goal for the county, then several approaches may be used to achieve this goal. One could be regulation through the zoning ordinance to essentially require reservation or dedication of open space as development occurs. An equally effective approach might be to structure a system of incentives that encourage a developer to reserve open space by encouraging clustering techniques through density bonuses. Another alternative might be to educate landowners concerning the tax benefits of conservation easements. It may be advantageous to “think outside of the box” by assisting small farmers in gaining access to better technology, which would enable them to make a profit and thereby preserve working farms. Finally, the role of the county in extending infrastructure and creating development pressure on vacant land cannot be overlooked.

4.1 Land Use Categories

A modified version of the North Carolina Land Classification System was used as the basis for determining Alamance County’s growth strategy over the 20 year planning period. The system contains five broad classes of land described below.

- Developed – Lands where existing population density is moderate to high and where there are a variety of land uses that have the necessary public services.
- Transition - Lands where local governments plan to accommodate moderate to high density development during the following twenty year period and where necessary public services will likely be provided to accommodate that growth.
• **Community** – Lands where low to moderate density development is grouped in existing neighborhoods and cross-road community settlements and where it will occur in similar neighborhoods and settlements during the following twenty year period and which may require extensive public services now or in the future.
• **Rural** – Lands where very low to low density residential uses are integrated into the rural landscape dominated by agricultural and forestry uses and where local governments will provide minimal public services.
• **Conservation** – Environmentally sensitive lands where very low-intensity residential, open space, recreational or greenway uses are preserved to enhance quality of life and promote recreational and tourism opportunities.

By taking this approach, the county should be able to anticipate and prepare for future development with a reasonable degree of success. The Land Classification Map can serve as a framework for developing growth policies that provide flexibility at the local level in guiding specific land use decisions (subject to the limitations set forth within each of the five broad classification definitions). For example, commercial development should be permissible within the Developed, Transition, and Community classes but should not be encouraged within Rural or Conservation lands.

The Land Classification System is designed to achieve the following goals:

• Encourage coordination between local land use policies and those of the state or region. By virtue of using a uniform system of classification, plans prepared at various levels of government and by different agencies are more easily understood and integrated with one another.

• Provide a guide to public investment in land. For example, State and local agencies can anticipate the need for early acquisition of lands and easements for
schools, recreation areas, transportation, and other public facilities within the Transition class.

- Aid in better coordination of regulatory policies and decisions. Conservation and Rural lands will help to focus the attention of state and local agencies and interests on the conservation of valuable natural, cultural, and historic resources within Alamance County. Transition and Community lands will be of concern to those agencies and interests working for high quality development through local land use controls.

- Be broad and flexible enough so that frequent changes in the Land Classification Map are not necessary. The map should be updated periodically in order to reflect unforeseen changes such as the establishment of large scale public facilities or industries.
### 4.1.1 LAND CLASSES and DESCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Classes</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Development Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>To provide for continued intensive development and redevelopment of existing municipalities.</td>
<td>Lands currently developed for urban purposes with urban services available.</td>
<td>Typical municipal or public services including water, sewer, police and fire protection, and recreation facilities.</td>
<td>Existing moderate to high density.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>To provide for future intensive urban development on lands that are most likely to be scheduled for provision of necessary public utilities and services.</td>
<td>Lands being developed for urban purposes but which do not yet have usual urban services, lands necessary to accommodate population growth over the next 20 year period, lands which can be readily serviced with usual urban services, lands generally free from severe physical limitations for development.</td>
<td>Typical municipal or public services currently available or to be made available at the time of development or soon thereafter.</td>
<td>Moderate to high density land uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>To accommodate existing and future community centers within the County that have a mixture of land uses at strategic locations throughout the County (i.e. crossroads communities, natural features, etc).</td>
<td>Lands where low to moderate density development is grouped in existing settlements or will occur in such settlements during the following twenty year period.</td>
<td>Typical municipal or public services are currently not available and are not likely to be provided to these areas in the near future.</td>
<td>Low to moderate density land uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>To accommodate existing residential neighborhoods and to balance the need to retain the area's rural character and beauty with the strong demand for continued residential development.</td>
<td>Lands where residential development is grouped in existing neighborhoods and cross-road community settlements and where it will occur in similar neighborhoods and settlements during the following 20 year period, lands.</td>
<td>Primarily well and septic system developments with no anticipation of public water and/or sewer services being provided over the next 20 year period</td>
<td>Low to moderate density with a strong emphasis on cluster development to help retain rural character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Overlay</td>
<td>To preserve the natural, recreational and scenic resources of the county and environmentally sensitive areas to enhance quality of life and promote recreational and tourism opportunities.</td>
<td>Lands primarily located along streams and rivers and within areas containing floodplains, steep slopes, and/or severe soil limitations.</td>
<td>No services and limited access only.</td>
<td>Limited residential development and very low-intensity open space, recreational or greenway uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Growth Strategy Map

The general growth strategy map (see attached Map 11 – Growth Strategy) was established to provide a broad planning context in which to apply the above outlined land use classifications. The Growth Strategy Map shows the general location of strategic growth areas throughout the county. This map should be utilized to guide growth and development into the appropriate area of the county.
Map 11 – Growth Strategy
5. LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Mission

In October 2005, the Alamance County Land Development Plan Steering Committee held its first meeting to begin work on the County’s long-range Land Development Plan. Members identified a wide variety of land development issues to be addressed. These issues were included on a survey and key issues exercise that was subsequently utilized at six community meetings held throughout the County. The Steering Committee was charged with working with the Piedmont Triad Council and Governments and Alamance County Planning Department Staff to develop a plan for the future development of Alamance County.

5.2 General Plan Goals

General goals for this Plan were formulated based on an analysis of existing regional trends and county development conditions, and from the discussions and observations conducted throughout this planning process. The following goals (listed in alphabetical order) are the first step in determining “where we want to go tomorrow,” and serve as an initial guide in developing an overall county vision:

- Achieve a moderate rate of population growth
- Develop a sense of vision for the overall future of Alamance County
- Development should pay more of its way when possible
- Encourage high quality growth
- Ensure that the costs of new development do not exceed the service demands that are generated
- Equip leaders to make good development decisions
- Maintain a positive identity for the county and its individual communities
- Maintain quality of life
- Maintain rural character
- Preserve agriculture and family farms, as well as the agricultural heritage of the county
- Preserve open space and natural areas
- Promote flexibility in development regulations
- Protect highway corridors from potential future development
- Protect private property rights
- Provide a forum for communications with the citizens of the county
- Seek a realistic balance among the many diverse interests in the county, and especially between economic and environmental concerns
5.3 Growth Management Policy Guidelines

The following Growth Management Policies serve as guidelines for making land development decisions that help the county achieve its vision for the future. These policies may assist in the review and approval process for specific land use development proposals, site plans, and/or selectively incorporating them into county ordinances, policies, and other plans (e.g., strategic, budgetary, economic, etc.).

5.3.1 Economic Development

1. Encourage new and expanding industries and businesses that: (1) diversify the local economy, (2) utilize a more highly skilled labor force, and (3) increase area residents’ incomes.
2. Protect, enhance and encourage a high quality of life, image and cultural amenities as an effective approach to economic development.
3. Balance the benefits of continued economic development against the possible detrimental effects such development may have on the quality of life enjoyed by area residents.
4. Encourage the continued growth of the area’s tourism and retirement industries.
5. Focus economic development efforts on the revitalization and reuse of currently unused or underutilized structures and sites in appropriately located commercial and industrial areas.
6. Support coordination of economic development resources with various local agencies and seek regional coordination and interaction with a shared economic interest.

5.3.2 Transportation

1. Prioritize transportation improvements to maximize the use of existing roadways as a cost-effective and environmentally sound means of meeting area transportation needs.
2. Protect the safety and usefulness of area thoroughfares by encouraging service roads, common access points, and avoiding frequent driveway cuts.
3. Support pedestrian, bikeway, and other similar facilities as energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation alternatives.
4. Interconnect roads and streets to facilitate an efficient flow of traffic and people.
5. Preserve the integrity of established residential and commercial areas, to the extent possible, from environmental and traffic impacts associated with new or improved transportation facilities.
6. Support transit services that: (1) provide mobility to population groups lacking personal transportation, (2) reduce the level of in-town and peak-hour auto traffic, and (3) reduce the demand for parking.
5.3.3 Water and Sewer Services

1. Concentrate water and sewer services within the limits of a geographically defined urban growth area consisting of the Developed and Transition classes. However, water or sewer system improvements may be necessary in rural areas to maintain adequate service to existing customers.

2. Do not encourage or participate in the extension of water and sewer services to properties within the Rural and Conservation Overlay classes. Exceptions to this policy may include the provision of services to other local governments, cooperative agreements on major economic development projects, and extension of lines needed to improve pressure in growth areas but which must run through Rural or Conservation areas.

3. Develop an overall water/sewer facilities plan to reflect and further refine these policy guidelines.

5.3.4 Industrial Development

1. Encourage a public service and regulatory environment conducive to industrial development, tempered by environmental quality considerations, design standards, and the availability of public financial resources.

2. Discourage the location of proposed industrial development in areas where the desirability of existing and planned non-industrial uses would be diminished. Discourage the encroachment of non-industrial uses upon existing or planned industrial sites.

3. Locate Industrial development on land which is physically suitable and has unique locational advantages for industry. Advanced planning for the identification of such land is encouraged for high priority for industrial developments.

4. Separate heavy industrial sites from non-industrial areas through the use of natural features, green belts, buffering, major transportation facilities, and/or other suitable means.

5. Locate new light industry in urbanized areas to take advantage of available services and to minimize home-to-work distances. Require careful design and/or landscaping to ensure compatibility with surrounding areas.

6. Locate new warehousing, storage and distribution facilities in areas with direct access to appropriate thoroughfares.

7. Encourage new industrial development to locate in existing and planned industrial parks where practical.

8. Locate new industrial uses so that they blend in with surrounding land uses and the community.

9. Provide adequate off-street parking facilities for all industries.

10. Discourage the use of environmentally fragile areas as industrial sites.
5.3.5 Commercial Development

1. Encourage commercial development to occur in clusters or planned shopping centers to minimize the proliferation of “retail strip” locations.
2. Locate regional commercial centers adjacent to interstates, major arterials or mass transit routes and they shall contain or be adjacent to existing or planned concentrations of employment and housing.
3. Locate community commercial centers adjacent to arterial highways or mass transit routes, and contain or be adjacent to other community facilities such as schools, offices, or places of public activity.
4. Locate neighborhood commercial centers adjacent to collector streets or local streets and near other neighborhood facilities such as schools and parks, and integrated into the design and circulation of the residential neighborhoods they serve.
5. Cluster highway-oriented commercial uses along segments of arterial and collector streets, and contain land uses which are mutually compatible and reinforcing in use and design; they should be designed in such a way as to minimize signage, access points and excessive lengths of commercial strip development.
6. Limit rural area commercial development to local convenience stores, farm supply stores, and generally accepted rural retailing establishments and cluster these uses near intersections.
7. Encourage mixed-use commercial development where appropriate and where compatible with surrounding residential uses.
8. Encourage new commercial development to locate within existing areas of commercial activity.
9. Encourage compact development in order to reduce the costs of public services.
10. Provide adequate off-street parking in order to ease congestion and to improve the efficiency of traffic arteries. The appearance and location of parking should emphasize the development and de-emphasize the parking area.
11. Serve businesses with roads and streets of a capacity sufficient for safe traffic flow. Large businesses should locate at major intersections.
12. Commercial areas should promote pedestrian traffic and should be planned with the objective of minimizing travel time between businesses. Sidewalks should be required between existing and planned commercial developments.
13. Serve commercial sites with all necessary utilities. Businesses that consume considerable quantities of water should be served by central water and sewerage facilities.

5.3.6 Office and Institutional Development

1. Encourage office and institutional development to locate as a transitional land use between activities of higher intensity and those of lower intensity.
2. Discourage linear stripping of offices along thoroughfares in favor of planned office parks or clusters of offices with common access and parking.
3. Encourage office development to locate in developed and transitional areas.
4. To achieve maximum efficiency and utilization of public facilities, public/semi-public uses such as postal facilities or libraries should be located centrally to the population they serve.

5. Protect the natural environment to enhance the function of public/semi-public uses. The preservation of natural areas on the site creates better buffers.

6. Provide adequate parking, access, and utilities for all public/semi-public uses.

7. Land required for the expansion of public/semi-public activities should be anticipated and reserved if possible; sites should be reserved for schools, utilities, transport, and other related facilities before the lands become prematurely developed.

8. Encourage the multiple use of public/semi-public facilities; schools may serve as recreational facilities or community centers in addition to serving as educational facilities.

5.3.7 Residential Development

1. Support the protection and rehabilitation of viable neighborhoods to insure their continued existence as a major housing source and as a reflection of the long term quality of life in Alamance County.

2. Support the continued viability of single-family homes as a major housing source while allowing and encouraging alternate forms of housing.

3. Utilize innovative and flexible land planning techniques, for example cluster development, as a means of encouraging development configurations which are more desirable and which may better safeguard existing natural land and water resources.

4. Consider the housing needs of the elderly, handicapped, and low to moderate income households in the County’s policies and actions regarding residential development.

5. Serve high density residential development with both public/community water and public/community sewer facilities.

6. Locate residential development that does not have access to either public/community water or public/community sewerage facilities in areas where soil and geological characteristics are conducive to the long-term support of on-site systems such as wells and/or septic tanks.

7. Discourage residential development activities in the 100 year floodplain.

8. Serve residences with a safe and efficient transportation network; the physical size and design of roads and streets should be scaled to accommodate the traffic volumes and population they serve. Encourage multiple entrances to residential subdivision developments and interconnectivity among neighborhoods.

9. Use buffer areas (e.g. open space or public/semi-public uses), where appropriate, to separate incompatible uses of land.

10. Centrally locate places of work, shopping, and recreation within residential areas in order to promote efficient access and reduce vehicular trip lengths.

11. To promote efficiencies in the delivery of urban services, encourage residential areas to develop in a manner that minimizes “leap frog” development (i.e. leaving large vacant areas between developments).

12. Protect natural resources in residential development and minimize adverse impacts upon the natural environment (e.g. stream pollution, soil erosion, destruction of wildlife habitat).

13. Incorporate residential development incentives (e.g., density bonus) to promote higher design standards that include reservation of environmentally sensitive areas, landscaped
berms, masonry walls along entranceways, curb and gutter streets, sidewalks, and traffic calming islands.

5.3.8 Agricultural and Rural Preservation

1. Forestry, agriculture and low density residential development are the preferred land uses in the rural areas of the County, as identified on the Land Classification Map. Urban level development is not encouraged in the rural areas.
2. Develop programs, incentives, or options that moderate the conversion of agricultural tracts of land to higher intensity uses.
3. Conserve rural area lands with high productive potential, to the extent possible, for appropriate forestry and agricultural uses.
4. Farms, woodlands, and floodplains are recognized as an integral part of the County’s open space system.

5.3.9 Open Space and Recreation

1. Plan future park development and open space preservation to provide for the rational and equitable distribution of recreation and open space opportunities within the County. An open space/recreation plan should be developed and updated.
2. Determine future sites for park, recreation and open space facilities to meet multiple objectives for natural area conservation, visual enhancement, promotion of culture and history, and watershed and flood prone area protection.
3. Encourage the provision of open space and recreation facilities in private development to complement the demand for publicly financed facilities.
4. Identify and develop an appropriate recreational system of open space greenways within the County. Encourage the use of natural corridors, such as floodplains, and man-made corridors, such as utility and transportation rights of way and easements.
5. Facilitate land acquisition for new recreation sites in advance of need to achieve desirable locations at cost effective levels.

5.3.10 Historic and Cultural Preservation

1. The identification, restoration and active use of structures, buildings, monuments, and neighborhoods of historic or architectural significance is encouraged as a means of enhancing their economic and cultural value to the County. National registration and designation of local historic areas is encouraged, when appropriate.
2. Encourage appropriate adaptive reuse of the County’s historic resources.
3. Develop the tourism potential of the area’s architectural and historic resources.
4. Prohibit destruction of architectural, historic, and archaeological resources in the County.
5.3.11 Community Appearance

1. Recognize the significance of major roadway entrances into the county as measures of community image and quality through landscape, signage, and other visual improvements.
2. Jointly improve with private property owners and developers the appearance and design of major street corridors through improved landscaping and sign control.
3. Provide and maintain street trees for visual relief, summer cooling, improved air quality and livability through public policies and actions to encourage planting and maintenance.
4. Infill development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of structures and sites should occur in a manner that is consistent and supportive of the neighborhood and architectural context of the surrounding area.
5. Encourage development that preserves the natural features of the site, including existing hydrography and topography, and significant existing vegetation.

5.3.12 Environmental Quality

1. Support continued improvements to public sewage collection and treatment facilities, with an emphasis placed on servicing existing or planned densely developed areas where environmental and economic benefits can be realized.
2. Prohibit higher intensity development in the 100-year floodplain. If development must occur, low intensity uses such as open space, recreation, and agricultural activities are preferred.
3. Discourage higher intensity development in the critical water supply watershed areas.
4. Runoff and drainage from development and agricultural activities are to be of a quality and quantity as near to natural pre-development conditions as possible.
5. Discourage industries producing excessive noise, odor, air and water pollution, or other harmful impacts, unless such adverse impacts can be clearly overcome through effective mitigation.
6. Anticipate local area requirements for solid waste disposal facilities through advanced planning; facilities should be located and designed to not adversely impact significant natural or man-made resources.
7. The location of hazardous waste storage and disposal facilities within the County is not encouraged.
8. Support the use of land conservation efforts within the County.

5.3.14 Planning Coordination

1. Facilitate coordinated local and regional intergovernmental planning for land use, transportation, water and sewer, tourism promotion, historic preservation, greenway and trail planning, parks and recreation, open space preservation, and economic development.
2. Encourage public involvement in decisions on land use and development by making the public aware of proposed developments at the earliest opportunity, as well as fostering communication between developers and the public.
3. Encourage neighborhood and special area planning, where feasible and appropriate, to foster public involvement in the production of closely tailored, action-oriented neighborhood plans and programs.
5.4 **Future Development Regulations**

The Alamance County Land Development Plan includes recommendations on revising, updating, and adding additional land development ordinances that will help achieve the goals of this plan. In particular, the following recommendations focus on addressing the key issues identified through the community meeting process. These key issues include:

- Open Space / Natural Area Protection
- Farmland and/or Agricultural Area Protection
- Protection from Noxious or Unwanted Land Uses

A wide variety of planning tools are available for consideration in order to address the key issues identified through the community meeting process. In order to decide which tools would be most useful and viable for Alamance County, three different Growth Management Strategies were presented to the Steering Committee in June 2006. Below are the three options presented to the Steering Committee for its consideration:

**OPTION A: Lower Impact on Fiscal Resources, Staff, and Property Rights**
- Improve Existing Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance
- Revise Existing Subdivision Regulations
- Strengthen Existing Watershed/Zoning Ordinance
- Coordinate/Assist Non-Profits with Farmland/Open Space Conservation Easement Program
- Amend Floodplain/Riparian Buffer Ordinance to encourage dedication of easements for trails

**OPTION B: Medium Impact on Fiscal Resources, Staff, and Property Rights**
- All measures listed in Option A, plus…
- Develop Noxious or Unwanted Land Use Ordinance (similar to existing Adult Establishment Ordinance)
- Establish Public Meeting/Notification Requirement Prior to Proposed Land Use Changes
- Encourage Open Space/Clustering of Homes as part of Subdivision Regulations
- Create Scenic Corridor Overlays to regulate land use, signs, etc.
- Initiate Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program
- Amend Land Assessment/Taxation Program to better support Agriculture

**OPTION C: Higher Impact on Fiscal Resources, Staff, and Property Rights**
- All measures listed in Options A & B, plus…
- Adopt Partial/District/Countywide Zoning
- Create a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program
- Implement an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)
After reviewing the alternatives outlined above the Steering Committee recommended that a hybrid of all of OPTION A and parts of OPTION B be included in the Land Development Plan. The following section provides a more detailed description of these recommendations. These tools are an attempt to put into place measures to preserve open space, encourage agriculture and ensure properly planned growth.

5.4.1 Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program

Alamance County has been proactive and the community has embraced the Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program. As a result, it is recommended that several improvements be made to the program.

1. Designate an Alamance County Staff person to serve as a liason between farmland conservation non-profits and farmers. This individual can assist non-profits in finding quality sites within the county to conserve as well as providing farmers with the resources and contacts they need to make informed decisions about their land.

2. Support the work of the Alamance County Voluntary Agriculture Board and their efforts at developing a Farmland Preservation Plan for the county that will provide alternative tools for the continued preservation of farmland.

3. Adopt the Enhance Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program that is part of the North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS 106-743.1) and is included in Appendix B of this document. The Enhance Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program has several benefits:
   a. Ability of the County to purchase and place farmland into a conservation agreement limiting the use of the property for agricultural uses.
   b. Property placed into a conservation agreement may receive up to twenty-five percent (25%) of its gross sales from the sale of nonfarm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm that is exempt from zoning regulations.

5.4.2 Subdivision Regulations

Below is a list of suggested improvements to the Alamance County Subdivision Ordinance. This list has been developed from the work of the Alamance County Land Development Plan Steering Committee, Community Meetings, and Destination 2020. The effective implementation of these recommendations will ensure that land subdivided in Alamance County will be well planned.

1. Prohibit the creation of flag lots along State Numbered Highways in the County.
2. Amend the Subdivision Regulations to allow no more than six (6) lots on a private road.
3. All subdivisions that are created from a “parent parcel” of more than 10 acres shall submit a Sketch Plan for the future development of the property. The Sketch Plan shall include proposed number of lots, potential street layout and potential utilities.
4. Encourage the protection and preservation of environmentally sensitive areas along rivers, streams, and creeks through developer donated conservation/recreation
easements. As part of the subdivision review process the Alamance County Staff should encourage developers to donate easements along waterways for conservation and recreation needs.

5. Encourage open space protection through density bonuses. Considerable time and effort may need to be spent educating County staff (i.e. Environmental Services) and the public about cluster developments. In particular, the acceptance of alternative well and septic system designs will need to be embraced to allow for the clustering of homes (an example/model Cluster Subdivision Ordinance can be located in Appendix B).

5.4.3 Public Notification Requirement

1. Prior to granting approval to any subdivision request that must go before the County’s Technical Review Committee the Alamance County Planning Department shall send out a Public Notification Letter to all property owners adjacent to the property requesting to be subdivided. The letter shall be sent by first class mail to the owner of the properties according to the Alamance County Tax records. The letter shall serve as official notification to surrounding property owners of the impending subdivision and provide the name and contact information of the subdivider and planning staff. The letter shall be sent out within 10 days of the subdivisions submittal to the Planning Department.

5.4.4 Potential County Zoning Processes

Residents of Alamance County are fortunate to have multiple county zoning models to explore county zoning. Appendix B contains detailed information on two county zoning scenarios for consideration in Alamance County. The first scenario is available to all counties in North Carolina and could only be implemented through the Board of County Commissioners actions (NCGS 153A-342). This option would result in a district or small portion of the county being zoned.

The second scenario is only available to Alamance County residents and is more of a grass roots process that could result in county zoning by voting precinct. It should be noted that many counties in North Carolina began with some form a limited or district zoning that eventually resulted in the entire county being zoned. The Land Development Plan Steering Committee recommends that the voting precinct scenario be investigated by those individuals that are interested in implementing zoning in Alamance County. This scenario allows citizens to vote on the issue of zoning directly.

5.4.5 Minimum Housing Code

A minimum housing code is not a “wish list” of what the perfect house would look like. If a house fails to pass this code, it probably is not safe to be occupied. Such houses also have
an effect on surrounding properties. Nothing devalues surrounding properties and
discourages others from reinvesting in their homes more than an irresponsible property
owner that does not maintain a property. These codes also protect communities from out-of-
town property owners that may have inherited property that they have never seen and never
intend to maintain. These situations lead not only to immediate health and safety problems
but can affect an entire neighborhood. Appendix B contains an example ordinance that is
recommended for adoption by the Land Development Plan Steering Committee.

5.4.6 Junk / Abandoned Car Regulation

A key issue identified through the community outreach portion of the Land Development Plan
was the regulation of junk and abandoned cars. The purpose of a junk/abandoned car
ordinance is to establish guidelines for the removal and disposal of abandoned, junked,
and/or nuisance motor vehicles on County-owned and private property within the County’s
ordinance-making jurisdiction. The adoption of a junk/abandoned car ordinance will help to
promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of citizens. Appendix B contains
an ordinance that was created by the Alamance County Planning Staff subsequent to the
completion of the Destination 2020 Plan. The Land Development Plan Steering Committee
recommends that this ordinance be adopted and implemented in an effort to improve the
quality of life in Alamance County.
6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Recommendations for Implementing the Plan

To aid in the effective use of the Land Development Plan several actions will need to be taken.

1. Hold workshops for the County Commissioners and Planning Board on how the plan can be used upon adoption. These workshops can review different parts of the plan during scheduled meetings.
2. Implement a “Staff Recommendation” on all planning related items that come before the Planning Board and County Commissioners. The staff recommendation will include an analysis of how the item being considered is viewed by the Land Development Plan.
3. Make the necessary changes to the Alamance County Regulations that are recommended in this plan.
4. Inform citizens of the goals and policies established with the adoption of the Land Development Plan.

6.2 How to Use the Alamance County Land Development Plan

To aid in the effective use of this document, the following explains for example, how different users can employ the strategies and policies in deciding upon a typical development requests and planning for the future of Alamance County:

As Used by the Developer
The developer or property owner can submit a development request that is consistent with County policy, thereby increasing the chances for approval, and minimizing guess work and time wasted.

As Used by the County Staff
The Alamance County staff reviews development requests, recommends that the request be approved or denied, and prepares a report for the Planning Board. In making their decision and report, the staff reviews relevant planning documents, including plans adopted by the County. Using the adopted policies will facilitate the County staff’s review of the request. The staff will be able to point out those policies that support the request, and those that are in conflict with the request, thereby shaping the overall staff recommendation.

As Used by the Alamance County 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 request with the County’s adopted Land Development Plan. As always, the Planning Board should take into account the true intent of the policies, but may choose to give different weight to different policies.
As Used by the General Public
Residents of Alamance County can and should reference specific policy statements when speaking in favor of or in opposition to a development requests and other growth related issues.

As Used by the Alamance County Board of Commissioners
The Alamance County Board of Commissioners can and should reference the Land Development Plan when making decision on future funding of County programs (i.e. parks, recreation, schools, etc.), reviewing potential development regulations, determining important community issues, and for guiding the overall development of Alamance County. Over time, a track record of policy interpretation forms a consistent foundation for decision making.

6.3  Revisions and Monitoring

As the Land Development Plan is used and development occurs in Alamance County it will be necessary to make revisions to the plan in order to keep it current. A major development, new road, or water and/or sewer extension can drastically change an area of the planning jurisdiction. It is recommended that the County periodically review the Land Development Plan to examine the changes that have occurred and to recommend any revisions.

The Alamance County Planning Department Staff will be responsible for bringing the Land Development Plan back before the Planning Board once a year. This will provide the Planning Board with 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 Staff, the Planning Board, and the County Commissioners should make minor changes to the plan as necessary.