



Gaston County 2035

Comprehensive Land Use Plan



ADOPTION DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 2016

Gaston County

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Prepared for
Gaston County

Prepared by
Gaston County Planning & Development Services

In association with
N·Focus Planning & Design Inc.
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Adopted: September 27, 2016

Foreword

The Gaston County 2035 Comprehensive Plan addresses the changing dynamics and potential population growth the County will experience. The process involved a coordinated effort involving Gaston County Board of Commission, Gaston County Planning Board, Steering Committee Members, Gaston County Planning Staff, N Focus Planning & Design Inc., and most importantly, the citizens of Gaston County who attended meetings and submitted valued input. During this process, multiple key themes and issues were identified with possible solutions to increase the quality of life in Gaston County. This Plan was ultimately guided by the standard principles of Priority Based Budgeting (PBB), as reflected in the Department of Planning & Development Services Mission Statement:

“The mission of the Planning and Development Services Department is to work with the community to achieve its desired future by providing advice and technical expertise to elected officials, appointed boards and commissions, county management, county departments, and citizens of Gaston County, by encouraging planning principles that promote rational, economical, and environmentally efficient use of land, to allow growth in a manner consistent with goals of the County Comprehensive Plan.”

September 27, 2016

Acknowledgements

The plan was developed through an inclusive public participation process. Attendees of the Public Forums and others who participated in the process are also gratefully acknowledged for their time and input.

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Gaston Tomorrow

Gaston County Vision Statement

Gaston County desires an interconnected County that enhances access to economic opportunities, provides for improved and alternative modes of transportation, maintains and increases environmental resources, and allows for planned growth and development, keeping with the character of existing communities.

Flexibility Statement

This Plan is dynamic and flexible and it is not “etched in stone.” It can be changed from time to time as conditions change, and as the Board of Commissioners deems it necessary.



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Gaston County Comprehensive Land Use Plan establishes a guide to project and accommodate changing dynamics that may occur over the next twenty (20) years. The current pace of development and the future growth projections suggest an increase not previously experienced in Gaston County. The aim will be to manage this projected growth, protect county assets, and encourage coordination between the county and municipalities.

Gaston County has not escaped changes associated with recent growth in the Charlotte metropolitan area. Gaston County resides in the Charlotte Metropolitan Area, receiving development pressure as Charlotte grows. In the past, this development pressure has been typically viewed as suburban sprawl. After the 2008 recession, development is starting to increase again in the region, but instead of sprawling development, this increase in pressure is seen mainly around existing Towns and Cities. As the eastern portion of Gaston County lies within twenty (20) miles of Charlotte's urban impact region, this portion of the County will likely experience the majority of pressure in and around Belmont, Mount Holly, and the other incorporated towns. Though growth has historically been slower than in other counties over the past decade, the current trend of development and projections for future regional growth suggest rates unlike the previous couple of decades. (See Metropolitan Impact Map in Appendix A).

Location and Context



Gaston County is located in the southern piedmont region of North Carolina. It is bordered by four (4) counties: Mecklenburg, Lincoln, and Cleveland Counties in North Carolina and York County in South Carolina.

Gaston County is distinct in that it has fifteen (15) municipalities. In the west are Cherryville, Dellview, Kings Mountain, and Bessemer City. In the central and northern portions are Gastonia (the county seat), Dallas, and High Shoals. Spencer Mountain, Ranlo, Lowell, Cramerton, McAdenville, Belmont, Mount Holly and Stanley are located in eastern Gaston County.



Since 2010, Gaston County has experienced moderate growth and has fallen from the second to the fourth largest county in the Charlotte-Metro region. However, the county's proximity

to Charlotte has propelled growth in the eastern parts (Belmont and Mount Holly) of the County which have absorbed many of the new residential and commercial development. The western parts of Gaston County are primarily rural in character, given that they are outside of the twenty (20) mile urban impact ring. This may change as pressing growth continues eastward from Cleveland County, spurred by the potential industrial and/or commercial development opportunities.

Plan Background

Purpose and Function of Plan

The County has been addressing land use planning issues since 1989. The purpose of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, known formally as “Gaston Tomorrow,” is to address the opportunities and tackle the challenges the County will face over the next twenty (20) years. This process includes recording existing conditions, understanding changing local and regional dynamics, and reviewing future land use plans at the county-wide level, as well as targeted small areas or communities.

This document is intended for use by elected officials throughout the County, as well as County staff. It can also be used by citizens and individuals with an interest in development and land preservation.

This plan strives to guide decision-making that affects the entire county (such as major capital investments), or any portion therein, such as approving the development of a small single-family residential neighborhood. Each decision will shape the County’s future and the more these decisions support the established goals, the closer Gaston County will be to realizing its vision for the future.

The intentions of this document include collaboration with the municipalities in the planning process to help develop and update their comprehensive plans. Sections in this chapter highlight the existing critical issues today. These sections also help describe and direct choices concerning future growth and development.

Another intended focus of the plan will be to continue better coordination and collaboration between the County, bordering Counties, and municipalities. Partnering together, especially with areas at the edges of towns and cities (areas of joint interest), provide the opportunity to plan improvements on transportation facilities, land use management, and planning.

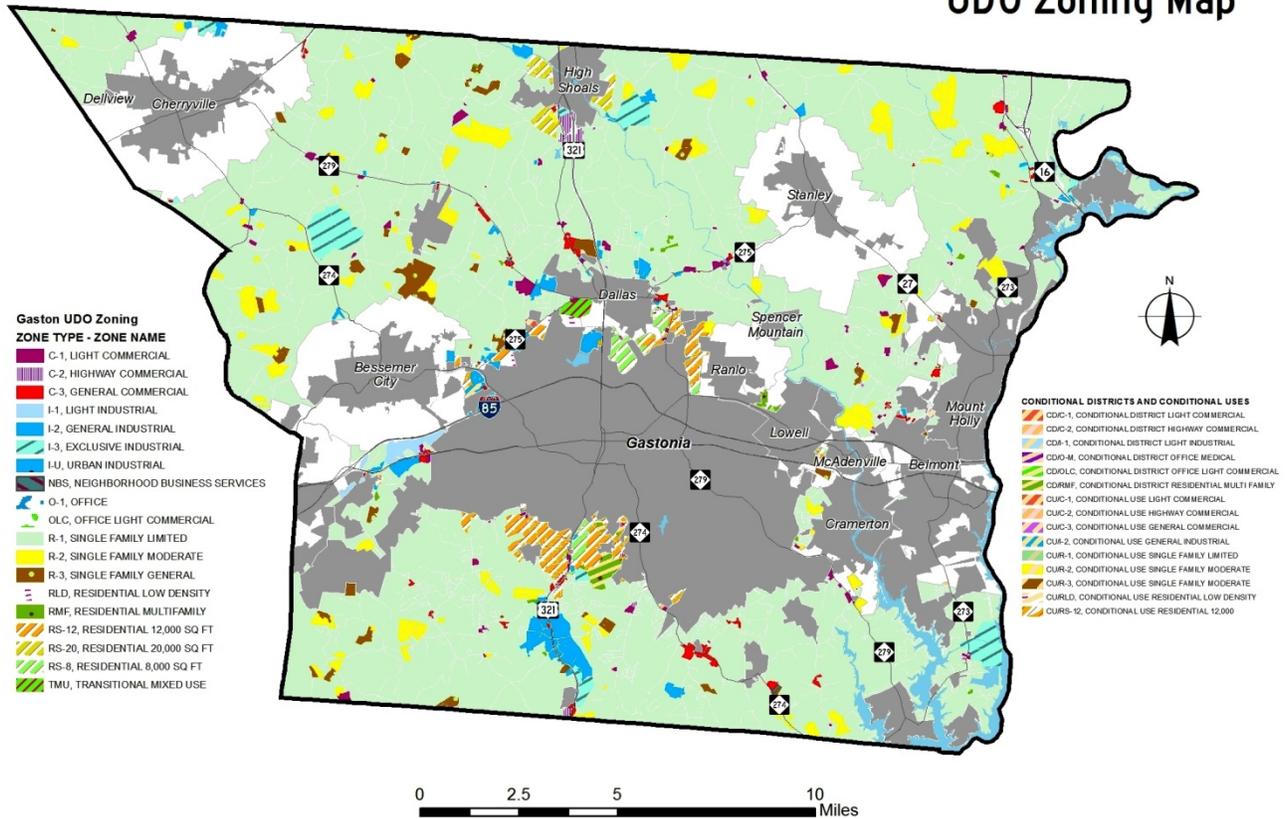
Comprehensive Planning documents are designed to be fluid, allowing for change as baseline standards change for the County.

Definition of Study Area

The Area of Study for this document is the unincorporated area of Gaston County, outside the planning jurisdictions of the municipal governments. Planning related activities are performed by the municipal governments within their corporate limits. Municipalities, also plan within their respective extra-territorial planning jurisdictions. However, where boundaries meet, land planning efforts were examined for coordination with this plan. Gaston County holds planning jurisdiction within the unincorporated areas of the County. The County, therefore, also has authority over the tools to implement the plan (i.e. zoning, subdivision, and other various ordinances).

Below is a map that details Gaston County's current zoning jurisdiction and regulation.

Gaston County, North Carolina UDO Zoning Map



Why Update the Plan?

Gaston County's most recent Comprehensive Land Use Plan was adopted in 2002. While this plan helped the County to plan for many years, community and economic conditions have evolved to a point that the plan must be modified to adjust to these changing conditions.

Planners in 2002 could not have envisioned the increased challenges and opportunities the County would face a decade or more later, such as continuous land development and moderate population growth, strong regional growth, increased traffic, and the need to continue coordinating planning activities among the many jurisdictions that lie in Gaston County.

The economic downturn of 2008 and the resulting slow down of development in the County provided an opportunity to reflect upon lessons learned over the previous decade and identify a strategic course of action for the next and thereafter. An updated Plan also allows the County to apply for Federal and State Land Use, and Transportation Planning Grants. A Plan is generally updated every five to seven years.

What is the Process for Developing the Plan?

The eighteen (18) month process used by Gaston County and the project team recorded current conditions, evaluated changing dynamics and emerging trends, and were synthesized to create a framework for future growth. This process included the establishment of a diverse steering committee, as appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The Steering Committee included individuals from community education, historic preservation, healthcare management, economic development, real estate, land use development, housing, youth leadership, and local government to assist staff and consultants in guiding the process. Once a draft was completed and reviewed by the steering committee, it was forwarded to the Planning Board for review. In the end, a final draft was recommended to the Board of Commissioners for its consideration and adoption.

During the process, citizen input was collected during meetings held in the five (5) small planning area districts: Northwest, North Central, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast; an online survey was conducted for residents and professionals working in Gaston County; phone calls, emails, letters received; and individual interviews with a variety of community leaders and professionals.

N•Focus Planning & Design Incorporated was used to assist the Planning Board, Steering Committee, and County staff with the preparation of this document.

The following sections detail the critical issues and opportunities that are present today, as well as describe the choices for directing growth and development that will occur in the future.

Summary of Key Planning Issues and Opportunities

The planning process identified growth as a key concern for Gaston County. To address, significant community issues and opportunities were also identified. This section provides a summary of these issues that need to be planned for and addressed to accomplish the vision of Gaston County.

- **Moderate Growth Rate by 2035** – The County’s growth rate has been moderate over the last couple of decades, however, some locations are prime for growth. Future development is expected and coordinated efforts to plan for this growth are essential.
- **Rural Character** – Several communities (Northwest, Northeast and Southwest) are especially concerned about maintaining rural character as new land is developed. The conversion of agricultural and rural lands is imminent, especially in the northeast and southeast areas of the county. This development should occur in a manner that respects the existing rural community character.
- **Water and Sewer** – The County does not currently operate a public water or sewer service system. In fact, much of the development in the unincorporated areas is on private wells and septic tanks. Municipalities within the County, however, provide service to some of the unincorporated areas.
- **Fiscal Concerns** – Studies have shown that providing public services to residential neighborhoods can be expensive. To ensure that the local cost of living does not increase and the tax burden stays low, land use in Gaston County will need to be more balanced in

the future. Non-residential development can off-set some costs of servicing residential neighborhoods. The Economic Development Commission is working to expand existing industrial parks and construct new ones to assist with this balance.

- **Schools** – The County partnering with the Gaston County School System will provide many opportunities to improve quality of life and share resources. A couple include the partnership and joint use of parks and recreational facilities, and the ability to leverage schools as a center point to connect citizens together.
- **Environmental Protection / Endangered Species** – The County provides habitat for thirty-one (31) rare animal species, including the bald eagle, the migrating cerulean warbler, the bog turtle and the Gulf Coast spiny soft shell turtle. Protecting their habitats and other environmentally-sensitive lands, such as floodplains and wetlands, is an important goal.
- **Catawba River Crossing** – As traffic congestion continues to increase on US Highway 74 and Interstate 85, there is community interest to relieve some of this pressure by constructing another bridge crossing over the Catawba River targeted for the southernmost part of the County, south of US Highway 74.
- **Intergovernmental Coordination and Cooperation** – The County can play a lead role in organizing and coordinating efforts of county-wide significance and continues to expand possibilities. In the past, the fifteen (15) municipalities and the County have often made independent decisions affecting neighboring jurisdictions. However, many community leaders increasingly realize that coordinated governing approaches are needed to secure the future success of the County. Over ten (10) years ago, the County established G-Camp (Gaston County and Municipal Planners) group to assist with this issue. Continued gatherings to support this effort, including the Elected Officials Seminar (where all county elected officials meet quarterly to discuss issues related to the county), will benefit the County long-term.
- **Transit** – Although transportation planning efforts have not yet expanded local transit opportunities, it is likely that future growth and development will spur the need for more alternative transportation modes in Gaston County. Creating a framework for future transit corridors and transit-oriented development sites along I-85, NC Highway 16, NC Highway 27 and US Highway 74 is necessary to pave the way for new transportation services as traffic congestion increases.
- **Economic Development** – Ideally situated along I-85, I-485 and US Highway 321, in a dynamic region offering numerous quality lifestyles and business opportunities, Gaston County has a proven track record in attracting national and international investment. With a rich history steeped in manufacturing tradition, Gaston boasts a dedicated, capable workforce and convenient access to highways, rail, and air transportation.

Offering close proximity to all the advantages of the bustling urban center of Charlotte, as well as to the mountain and coastal regions, make Gaston County well positioned for corporate and industrial/manufacturing site growth with an array of outstanding options for affordable family living.

The emphasis is on the word “potential.” We must accept that Gaston County is in transition and must continue to re-tool, from the school system up in order to meet the needs and demands of a changing regional and global economy.

- **Image** - The Greater Gaston Development Corporation, a public-private partnership, unveiled a new branding and image for Gaston County in June 2016. Dubbed “Gaston Outside,” the new image is meant to capture what makes Gaston County different. The image of “Gaston Outside” appears on billboards along highways I-85 and US 74, and throughout the region. Gaston County is trying to improve its image and tap into more of the growth pouring into the Charlotte region.



RECREATION AND TOURISM

In Gaston County, the great outdoors could not get any closer. With numerous county parks that feature tennis courts, jogging trails and nature paths adjacent to mountains, lakes and rivers, there's always a way to get back to nature. Fun activities are available year round with Crowders Mountain, the Mountain Island Lake, Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, Christmas Town USA, and nearby Mecklenburg County U.S. National Whitewater Center. With this abundance of recreational opportunities, residents enjoy a world-class quality of life with small-town charm.

Cultural and Recreational Attractions

- **Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden** - located on 400 acres along the banks of Lake Wylie and being developed as one of the most beautiful gardens in the world.
- **Crowders Mountain State Park** - offers hiking, climbing, fishing, camping, and incredible views.
- **Schiele Museum of Natural History and Planetarium** - features galleries with vivid natural history exhibits, outdoor recreations of a Catawba Indian Village and an 18th Century Farm, planetarium and the largest collection of mounted land mammals in the Southeast.
- **Christmas Town USA** – Each December since 1956, hundreds of thousands of twinkling lights turn the small mill town of McAdenville into a spectacular holiday display.
- **The U.S. National Whitewater Center** - an outdoor recreation facility and home to the world's largest recirculating river, 14 miles of biking, hiking and running trails, and one of the world's largest outdoor climbing facilities.
- **Gaston County Museum of Art & History** constructed in 1852 - features authentically furnished period rooms, changing exhibits and North Carolina's largest collection of horse-drawn vehicles.
- **C. Grier Beam Truck Museum** – one of only three truck museums in the U.S.
- **Golf** is a popular recreational activity in Gaston County and the County has several private and public golf courses.
- **Gaston County parks** feature tennis courts, jogging trails and walking/nature trails.
- Home to the **Gastonia Grizzlies** and the **Carolina Speedway**.
- **Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, and Lake Wylie** provide water skiing, wake-boarding and rowing, fishing and sailing. Both lakes are convenient located outside of Charlotte, NC.

Libraries

The Gaston County Library System has 10 branches that offer numerous resources.

Religion

There are more than 700 churches and houses of worship located in Gaston County.

Retail Shopping and Restaurants

Franklin Square, Eastridge Mall, and Shops at Gaston's major retail areas include stores such as Belk, J.C. Penney, Dillard's, Target, Kohl's, T.J. Maxx, and Dick's Sporting Goods.

Gaston County also has many antique and specialty shops, and other retail and restaurant establishments.

Regional Sports and Attractions

- Bank of America Stadium (Home of The Carolina Panthers - NFL)
- Lowe's Motor Speedway (NASCAR Racing)
- Time Warner Cable Arena (Home of the Charlotte Hornets – NBA)
- Paramount's Carowinds
- NASCAR Hall of fame
- Discovery Place
- The Mint Museum
- The Charlotte Knights (AAA Baseball Team)
- Bojangles' Coliseum (Home of the Charlotte Checkers)

All these amenities are within 30 minutes of Gaston County.



Plan Overview

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan contains six (6) chapters and two (2) appendices. The first two (2) chapters provide an overview and background information on the plan and the effort to develop it. Chapters 3 contains goals, objectives, and strategies into themes that will guide future decision-making in the community. Chapter 4 presents Land Use and Transportation elements. Chapter 5 presents the five (5) small area districts in greater detail. Chapter 6 details the community engagement process taken to ensure that this plan is representative of the entire population of Gaston County. Each chapter is described below:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** - provides an overview and summary of the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- **Chapter 2: Key Data and Information** - summarizes some of the key facts that are more fully described in Appendix A: Existing Conditions.
- **Chapter 3: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies** - provides a structured framework that will guide future decision-making in Gaston County.
- **Chapter 4: Future Land Use Plan and Transportation Systems** - outlines how the county will manage future growth and development in partnership with its municipalities through 2035. This chapter identifies future growth areas and future land uses within the county, as well as future transportation systems.
- **Chapter 5: Small Area Planning Districts** - expands on each diverse geographical area to include greater detail specific to each small planning district.
- **Chapter 6: Public Input or Community Engagement Process** - details the process by which community wishes and fears, likes and dislikes, were included in the development of this plan.
- **Appendix A: Existing Conditions** - provides the critical data about County demographics, employment, existing land conditions, and general County services. This information helps to inform public policy discussions as to emerging trends.
- **Appendix B: Maps** - provides larger scale versions of maps that are referenced or shown in the plan.
- **Appendix C: Research and Resources** - provides a list of sources use to help develop the plan.



CHAPTER 2: KEY DATA AND INFORMATION

Introduction

The future planning direction for Gaston County was formed by an analysis of existing conditions and trends for population, employment, schools, transportation, and public utilities. Potential development forecasts for new population growth and development show that the County has ample capacity for future growth. These statistics are organized below. Appendix A and Appendix B: Existing Conditions and Maps, include these statistics and identifies data sources. It also provides a more thorough discussion of the trends and forecasts for the County, as well as maps and charts to illustrate these facts.

Historic and Projected Population

- The total Gaston County's 2010 population was 206,086. This is a nine (9%) increase from 2000 when the population was 190,365. Most of this growth occurred in the incorporated towns.
- The total population in the unincorporated portions of the County has declined since 1980 from 81,867 people to 77,893 people in 2010. With the expected County growth, the towns are becoming the centers of the population.
- As of 2010, the median age in the County is 39 years old. This is older than the median age for the state of 37. The youngest community was the City of Gastonia. This is likely due to the fact that it is the largest urban center in the County where more opportunities for younger generations are provided.
- The average population growth rate for the County between 1970 and 2015 was 10 percent. The highest rate occurred between 1940 and 1950 when the County grew 26 percent. The current annual growth rate for Gaston County is below one percent.
- The County is home to 90,398 households. Households in Gaston County comprised ten percent (10%) of the total households in the Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area. This is an increase of three percent (3%) from 2010.
- Population projections for Gaston County estimate an additional 37,109 new people will reside in Gaston County by 2035. The total population estimate for 2035 is 251,748.

Employment Trends and Forecasts

- Full-time employment in Gaston County increased from 57,525 in 2010 to 62,250 in 2015. Gaston County's proportion of jobs for the entire Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area increased from 7.5% to 8.2% during this period. The employment rate decreased by more than 50% between 2010 and 2015, as shown below in Table 2-1:

Table 2-1: Gaston County Employment Trends

Subject	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2000	1990
Civilian Labor Force	103,587	104,481	104,660	100,500	95,608	96,103	98,708	100,064	97,543	99,985	96,024
Employment Total	97,074	92,144	93,530	89,835	85,004	85,843	84,926	92,303	91,894	94,470	92,082
Unemployment Total	6,160	9,328	10,885	10,673	10,601	10,260	13,782	7,761	5,559	5,515	3,942
Unemployment Rate	6.1%	9.2%	10.4%	10.6%	11.9%	13.5%	14.0%	7.8%	5.7%	5.5%	4.1%

Source: Gaston County Economic Development Commission

Transportation Trends

- Nearly 47,664 of Gaston County workers travel outside of Gaston County for employment, with many (approximately 38,500) traveling along I-85 and other major east-west routes such as NC 16 and US 74 into Mecklenburg County, as well as north-south connectors such as US 321 and NC 279.
- The largest number of commuters into Gaston County (8,061) originates from Mecklenburg County.
- I-85 carries the highest traffic volumes, ranging from 73,000 vehicles per day near the Cleveland County line to 136,000 vehicles per day near the Mecklenburg County line.
- Expectations are that major commuter routes (I-85, US 74, NC 16 and others) will be over capacity by 2016 even with planned roadway improvements.
- Continued residential development will increase demand on local and collector streets, especially during peak hours as commuters connect to and from their homes and major commuting routes.
- Lack of transportation access has had a significant impact on the existing limited road network throughout the County.

Public Education

- The Gaston County Public School system operates twenty-nine (29) Elementary Schools, two (2) Intermediate Schools, eleven (11) Middle Schools, eleven (11) High Schools and one (1) Special Needs Schools, and one (1) Alternative School for a total of fifty-five (55) Schools.
- According to the Gaston County Public Schools, enrollment for 2015-2016 was 32,105 and school capacity was 35,250. The graduation rate for the Class of 2015 is the current highest rate (86.3%). The number of High School Graduates in 2015 was 2,172. More than \$45 million of scholarship money was offered to the graduates.
- Gaston County operates one of the safest bus transportation fleets in North Carolina with 16,000 total number of students transported daily, 12,000 miles traveled daily, 210 school buses, and 47 activity buses.
- As the only public charter schools presently in the County, Piedmont Community Charter (Gastonia) and Mountain Island Charter (Mount Holly) have approximate enrollments of 1,200 and 810 respectively.
- Three proposed new Charter Schools are pending final approval by the State Board of Education. These institutions are: Ridgeview Charter School (Kindergarten through 8th grade), with student capacity of 520, Town Center Charter (Ninth through 12th grade), with student capacity of 600, and Montcross Charter Academy (Kindergarten through 8th grade), with student capacity of 1,100.

Utility Provision

- Gaston County does not currently provide public water or sewer service. In fact, much of the development in the unincorporated areas are served by private wells and septic systems. However, some municipalities within the County provide service to some of the unincorporated areas.
- Duke Energy, Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation, or the municipality will provide electric service.
- Gas services are provided by a Public Service of North Carolina or by the municipality.

Habitat and Environmentally Sensitive Areas

- Almost all of the County's land area falls within the Catawba River watershed and a small area drains to the Broad River in the west.
- The County has nineteen (19) watershed sub-basins, of which thirteen (13) are designated by the State as water supply watersheds, meaning they are used to supply public drinking water.
- Gaston County provides habitat for thirty one (31) rare animal species, including the bald eagle, the migrating cerulean warbler, the bog turtle and the Gulf Coast spiny soft shell turtle.

- Protecting habitats and other environmentally sensitive lands, such as floodplains, watersheds, and wetlands, is an important goal of the County.

Development Trends

- Gaston County issued 3,161 residential building permits between 2010 and 2015. The vast majority (98%) of these permits were for single-family residences.
- Owner-occupied housing units increased 4% between 2010 and 2015. The estimated Owner-occupied housing vacancy is around 2%. The estimated Renter-occupied housing vacancy is 8.9%.
- Between 2000 and 2015, there were 139 developed subdivisions within Gaston County's jurisdiction, with a total of 3,313 lots. Of those lots, 984 lots are still undeveloped. Many of these lots are undeveloped because of the downturn in the real estate market. However, development is starting to pick-up post-recession and these lots are beginning to develop.
- Concentrations of unimproved lots are highest in the Southwest Small Area District, with 241 unimproved lots, and the Northcentral Small Area District, containing 137.
- Since 1983, Gaston County has invested in infrastructure that has assisted in the development of more than 2,700 acres and the construction of more than 6,000,000 square feet of manufacturing and warehouse space. These developments have been spread throughout the County, creating geographically broad employment opportunities.
- Since 2010, Gaston County had almost 1,000,000 square feet of new space constructed representing almost \$300 million of investment. In 2013, Gaston's Owens Corning was the largest manufacturing announcement in the region and fourth in North Carolina.
- The Gastonia Technology Park is generally regarded as one of the premier business parks in the region. It has recruited a number of advanced manufacturing companies and is a great example of government cooperation between Gaston County and the City of Gastonia.
- Gaston County has recruited seven (7) foreign firms to the County in the past five (5) years. Gaston County ranked 10th in total employment growth from 2013 to 2014 and 4th in North Carolina out of 100 counties. From Third Quarter 2009 to Second Quarter 2014, Gaston's average wage increased 10% while manufacturing's average wage increased 24%.
- Gaston County Commissioners funded a Public-Private Site Development Initiative to plan for new retail, office and industrial sites in the County. This has helped landowners and municipalities including Cramerton, Cherryville, Gastonia and Lowell assess new development opportunities.

- Gaston County has provided financial assistance to construct a new Advanced Manufacturing Training Center with Gaston College. This will be a state-of-the-art training facility to assist companies with existing employees and produce more technically-trained workers, which is required by the new facilities Gaston County is recruiting.
- In the Fall 2015 issue of Southern Business Review, the Gaston County Economic Development Commission (EDC) was selected as one of the four best economic development agencies in North Carolina.
- Most of the available retail spaces are located in older centers along US 74 and I-85. Demands are higher for newer centers serving the rapidly-growing population in eastern Gaston County, from Gastonia to Mount Holly and Belmont.
- Gaston County has developed a medical office park adjacent to the hospital. The park now has ten (10) buildings with more than 250,000 square feet of space.
- As of May 2016, more than 90,500 square feet of multi-tenant retail space was under construction and another 114,378 square feet were proposed in projects.
- Gaston's competitive industrial and business parks have a remaining 645 acres of developable land for industrial and business development which is primarily concentrated in locations along the US 74, US 321 and I-85 highways. With less than 30% of its competitive industrial / business park land remaining, it is essential for Gaston County to identify new growth areas for industrial and business parks.

Land Use

- Seventy one percent (71%) of the County is unincorporated. The vast majority of the land located outside municipal boundaries are rural and residential. Twenty seven percent (27%) is used for agricultural and thirty eight (38%) is used for residential.
- Higher-density residential uses are primarily located within the towns and municipalities.
- The majority of employment centers and commercial uses are located within the towns and municipalities (98%).

Development Capacity

- The total acreage in Gaston County is 214,247, according to current Tax data. Of those, 111,786 acres are developed, leaving 102,461 acres available for development, contingent upon limitations of sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, et cetera.

Housing Market

- Housing - As of 2010-2014, the median price of a house in Gaston County is \$124,000, which is lower than the state average of \$153,600 and the national average of \$175,700. The Gaston County median house value has grown by 37% since 2000. The growth rate for the price of a house in Gaston County is lower than the state average rate of 42% and the national average rate of 47%. The median year that a house in Gaston County was built is 1978, which is older than the median year for a house built in the state (1986) and is newer than the median year for a house built in the nation (1976).

Market for Retail and Industrial Development

- Marketable retail and industrial developments are located along the US Highway 74, US Highway 321, and I-85 corridors. Most of these types of development occur in the municipalities due to the availability of public water, sewer, utility, and ample road networks.

Telecommunications and Broadband Development

- Telecommunications and Broadband development is becoming increasingly more pervasive. Therefore, more broadbanding will increase the need for telecommunications infrastructure.
- North Carolina has made connecting classrooms to robust Wi-Fi internet a top priority. As of 2016, nearly 65% of classrooms are connected, and the goal is to connect 100% of the classrooms by 2018.
- The FCC reports that 93% of NC's population has access to the internet at the FCC threshold speeds of 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload. Only 1% of those without access live in urban locations, while 89% of those without access (nearly 640,000 people) live in sparsely populated areas.
- Within North Carolina, 52 of the 100 counties have a household broadband deployment rate equal to or above the US average of 90%.
- Most people access the internet over DSL or cable.



CHAPTER 3: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Introduction

This chapter contains the plan framework – the goals, objectives and strategies that provide guidance for future decision-making in Gaston County.

Goals

Goals are statements about what the County aims to achieve through 2035. Goals give decision-makers and citizens a clear idea about the County's intended direction.

Objectives and Strategies

Objectives provide a definite course of direction for the County that will guide decisions and set a framework for actions. They provide ongoing guidance for elected and appointed officials, community leaders, staff, and administrators as they make decisions about development, programs, and capital investments in the County. *Strategies* outline the specific plan of action to be taken to achieve the County's goals.

How are the Goals, Objectives and Strategies Organized?

The goals, objectives and strategies are organized into the following community concepts:

- Citizen Awareness
- Transportation Systems
- Energy, Water, and Telecommunications
- Quality of Life
- Intergovernmental Communication and Coordination
- Housing
- Future Land Use
- Improve Image
- Importance of Natural Resources
- General Economic Development

GOAL 1: Develop public education resources for residents in order to increase citizen awareness and knowledge into community issues or opportunities.

Gaston County has a great resource in its residents. In order to keep improving the County, the relationship between the County and its residents should be further explored, sharing information that will enlighten both parties. Enhancing this connection will not only strengthen partnerships with schools and businesses, but will also help the County prosper. Specifically, creating public education resources that will be available to all citizens will allow the County to be more transparent and share in the important long-term decision-making process while creating a better informed citizenry.

Objectives and Strategies

Enhance partnerships between the County, its resources, and the school systems.

- Support Gaston College's outreach efforts to citizens and high school students about technical programs, free training for employers, and adult high school.
- Highlight the good quality secondary education that can be found in Gaston County. This is an asset to the current residents and a pull factor for future residents.

Improve partnerships between the County and different businesses and organizations.

- Work with existing and potential businesses and organizations to establish infrastructure that will support Gaston's business community.
- Work with the Greater Gaston Development Corporation to hold public forums to obtain public perception information.

Improve the quality of information available to citizens.

- Create Gaston 101 where citizens can find out general information for the County, as well as specific information that will help them be better engaged and informed residents.
- Share information with residents on the true costs of projects, both the cost of acting on the project, as well as estimated costs of not acting on a project.
- Communicate information on alternative funding sources, such as "Pennies for Progress" used in South Carolina, used to help defray the costs of County infrastructure projects, new and existing.

Improve citizen access to Gaston County information resources.

- Work closely with media outlets; newspaper, television, online; to get facts to community residents.
- Increase utilization of social media outlets as an information distribution system, including an update of the Gaston County website.
- Create a public response system on the County website to increase citizen input into short-term and long-term planning issues.

Address the “disconnect” between the General Assembly and local leaders, creating partnerships among the community.

GOAL 2: Improve the transportation system to include multi-model regional considerations of highways, bicycle and pedestrian connections, mass transit, and connectivity between communities within Gaston County and the larger Charlotte Metropolitan Region.

While Gaston County residents have mobility within their County, connections to the larger Charlotte Metro Region are geographically limited. Additionally, mobility within Gaston County is dominated by the use of the automobile. The County looks to improve multi-model transportation within the County and the larger Charlotte Metro Region by investing in transit and rail, while striving to increase transportation capacity with Mecklenburg County through another Catawba River crossing. Gaston County also looks to improve safety conditions with all major transportation modes, highlighting dangerous areas and providing safe alternatives.

Objectives and Strategies

Increase connectivity between Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties.

- Build the Catawba River crossings bridges while involving the Charlotte business community in a supportive role.
- Connect to the Charlotte Douglas International Airport to encourage growth.

Encourage transportation alternatives throughout Gaston County.

- Build improved rail and truck service to help support growing industry in Gaston County.
- Enhance the public transportation system to be a better and more convenient system.
- Improve and expand infrastructure for non-motorized transportation alternatives.
- Connect trails and greenways to residential areas to link neighborhoods to services.

Support a transportation hub in Gastonia with access to several modes of transportation.

- Create connections between the highway system and alternative modes of transportation.

Improve safety and condition of Gaston County transportation systems.

- Create a timeline of completion for safety and improvement projects.
- Research alternative funding sources for necessary transportation projects.

GOAL 3: Improve energy, water, and telecommunication throughout Gaston County.

Gaston County understands that high quality utility services are vital to having good employers, organizations, attracting new residents and supporting existing ones. Looking forward, Gaston County recognizes its need for enhanced utilities, but also that location plays a large role in shaping future development. The County strives to improve service, but to do so in a way that prevents sprawl-type development.

Objectives and Strategies

Extend the concept of utilities to include broadband technology.

- Provide Wireless Internet Access (Wi-Fi) to all downtowns.
- Utilize the technology to increase outreach into the communities.

Plan utilities for designed areas that are underserved or need improvement.

- Target funding to strategic areas where return on investment will be the greatest.
- Provide utilities in underserved areas to help increase improvement momentum.

Encourage a County-wide partnership to support utility investment.

- Support a Gaston County utility organization that can help defer upgrade and maintenance costs to reach and exceed Environmental Protection Agency standards for water quality.
- Promote cleaner energies and delivery conduits.

GOAL 4: Enhance quality of life to absorb growth while focusing on commercial and community resources, walkability, and agricultural preservation.

Gaston County is a unique place in the Charlotte Metropolitan Region. Here, quality of life includes a good school system, unmatched recreational resources, good quality jobs, and a simple lifestyle that is good for all residents, existing and potential. In order to maintain Gaston's quality of life, the County seeks to encourage the incorporated towns within the County and expand resources in the unincorporated areas to support the overall health and well-being of the County. This may include creating different types of neighborhoods to suit different residents, creating better quality communities instead of just increasing quantity, and leveraging the assets of the County to highlight the benefits of life in Gaston.

Objectives and Strategies

Enhance the overall plans that are collectively established throughout the County / Towns that address the quality of life enjoyed by many.

- Encourage art spaces and downtown redevelopment.
- Improve quality, not sacrificing quality for quantity.

- Set aside quality commercial areas along corridors for development to reduce pressure on sensitive natural resources areas.
- Support a standard of development within the County, where necessary.

Continue to create mixed-use developments where appropriate to support towns and other destinations in the County.

- Enhance land use, zoning, and other regulations to reflect the types of communities desired.
- Connect new developments and redevelopments with greenways where opportunity exists.
- Work to create a network of walkable communities that can support each other economically.

GOAL 5: Foster communication and collaboration among the leadership of municipalities and the County to coordinate strategic investments.

Gaston County recognizes and celebrates the unique qualities of all of its municipalities. The County hopes to improve relationships with and between municipalities in order to tackle some of the bigger issues in the region. If all of the jurisdictions come together on one (1) issue, then Gaston County knows the entire County benefits. Additionally, support from municipalities for land use planning in the County would improve the return on investment by public agencies and all residents within the County.

Objectives and Strategies

Encourage a County-wide partnership to support local and regional initiatives.

- Municipalities would benefit from a regional approach to updating utilities for EPA requirements, maintenance needs, and expansion.
- Municipalities can work with the County to target areas for development.

GOAL 6: Improve the image of Gaston County both to current and potential residents, focusing on retaining and increasing the population of young professionals.

While Gaston County has many positive characteristics, the image of the County has suffered in recent years. The County recognizes the need to improve its image by offering living and employment options that benefit current residents and appeal to incoming young professionals. In order to strive toward an improved image, Gaston County seeks to involve the population in future planning efforts, acknowledging that interests are different for different generations and stages in life. Gaston has already made strides with having a Millennial Focus Group as part of their planning process, as well as having a County-funded gigabyte incubator project.

Objectives and Strategies

Use public education resources to better communicate existing opportunities in Gaston County.

- Along with education for investments and basic government services, use the County website and social media outlets to further explore the advantages of Gaston County.
- Utilize social media and other advanced technology options to continually gain valuable insight into the image and perception of Gaston County, focusing on solutions to citizen concerns.
- Create both a youth voice, and young professional voice, on the County's various boards and councils to represent the incoming population.

Make an investment into Gaston County's image.

- Support quality of life initiatives within municipalities and the County as a whole.
- Define what the County would like its future image to be.
- Encourage community events that speak to the new image of Gaston County.
- Support natural resource initiatives that seek to invest in Gaston County's unique assets.

GOAL 7: Emphasize the importance of our natural resources through highlighting natural environments and encouraging the use of environmental recreation.

The natural environment is an abundant and valuable asset in Gaston County. The County strives to conserve nature through maintaining good stewardship of its environment while emphasizing the use of these areas for all residents. These areas are unique in the Charlotte Metro Region and are a pull factor drawing potential residents and tourists into the County.

Objectives and Strategies

Emphasize the already established recreational amenities and encourage new recreational amenities as appropriate.

- Include information on Gaston's eco-resources on the County website and social media through the public education campaign.
- Promote park and recreation facilities in Gaston County as a way to improve health, enhance the image of the County, and improve the quality of life for current and potential residents.
- Create greenway connections between major recreational facilities to allow for non-motorized and active transportation between Gaston County's facilities.

Conserve the natural environment to maintain Gaston's eco-tourism assets.

- Identify areas around existing assets that will be maintained as natural environment to enhance those facilities.

- Identify potential areas for new eco-tourism sites and/or recreational facilities.
- Create a greenway/blueway buffer to support the existing trail network in Gaston County and create opportunities for trail-side parks and associated facilities.

GOAL 8: Increase economic development throughout the County by supporting municipalities and improving viable job opportunities.

Gaston County has seen some changes in its employment base. However, while some industries have come and gone, a lot of the industries that have stayed in Gaston County have updated their quality of work, their quality of employment, and their skills. This update in industry offers future generations great opportunity, while allowing Gaston County to market itself to new industry as being a place for longevity. The existing resources in the County, along with its great location in the Charlotte Metropolitan Area, maintains Gaston's competitive advantage that the County can market for improved economic development.

Objectives and Strategies

Identify opportunities that already exist throughout the County.

- Inventory current businesses and determine job gaps.
- Map viable job opportunities in the County.
- Coordinate knowledge from the job inventory and mapping project with public education and outreach established in other sections of this Plan.
- Create and update a marketing plan that coincides with job creation and retention while highlighting our strengths.
- Work with media outlets and local schools to change the perception of manufacturing jobs to the highly-skilled, high-salary potential positions in existing Gaston County industries.

Expand tax base to improve opportunity for retaining and attracting talent.

- Focus on retaining and growing small businesses within Gaston County. This includes supporting the efforts of the EDC to make sure needs of the business community are met. Additionally, this includes ensuring quality facilities for business growth.
- Improve international recruitment by emphasizing our strengths and location.
- Create jobs that increase tax base and invest in those that initiate a higher quality of life.



CHAPTER 4: FUTURE LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Introduction

Gaston County is seeing a change in population in recent years, showing a shift in median age (39) to a young adult group followed closely by the 55+ age group. In addition, housing trends are showing growth in one and two-person households. Given this information, the future land use designations for Gaston County seeks to shift with their population, encouraging growth in the job market, housing market, and resource industries.

Land Use

It is the purpose of this Land Use element to demarcate a pattern of future land uses to accommodate the changing nature of Gaston County's citizenry. Starting with Gaston County's history, trends are analyzed to help planners tackle the future stages and prepare the County for continued growth where it is needed. It is important to note that since development trends follow transportation access, the Future Land Use Plan relies upon the Future Transportation Plan. The subsequent Future Land Use Map will offer a framework for the planning tools, i.e. zoning, subdivision regulations, etc., used in Gaston County for implementation of this Plan.

While Gaston County is setting out to plan for the future, County officials have been working in conjunction with municipal and transportation planning efforts to ensure alignment across the County. This Plan recognizes incorporated municipalities and each jurisdiction's extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) rights under the State legislature. Additionally, this plan has consulted and taken into consideration the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln-Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) *The Way Forward: 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan*.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Development in Gaston County has largely focused around access to the Catawba River, initially for proximity to the water for industry and commerce, but more recently for its connection to Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte. Because of this resource, Gaston County has seen the majority of its development in the east and along the I-85 corridor. The Catawba River still remains a draw for tourism, residential development, and commerce, maintaining its associated development pressure.

Much development has occurred within Gaston County's municipalities, historically where many mill towns existed. Today, the infrastructure of those towns have continued to shape the development within the municipalities, punctuated by town centers, mixed-uses within walking distance of each other, an interconnected street network, a pedestrian-friendly building scale, and various public spaces. These cities and towns will continue to thrive as new generations seek out living, working, and recreational places with these same features.

Gaston County’s existing land use shows that the majority of land is being used for agricultural and residential purposes (61% of the total land area of the County), with concentrations of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses around the incorporated areas of the County. The next largest percentage of land in Gaston County is designated as vacant land or open space, showing the availability of land to accommodate future growth. These land use patterns can be felt in the character of the cities, towns, and unincorporated areas of the County, revealing a unique urban and rural contrast in the County. Table 4-1 shows the breakdown of land uses currently existing in Gaston County.

Table 4-1 Gaston County Land Use Designation

Land Use	Acreage	Percentage of County
Agriculture	64,053	29%
Airport	320.0	0.1%
Commercial	4,030.62	2%
Industrial	11,685.70	5%
Institutional/Civic	7,399.30	3%
Landfill, Active and Inactive	313.69	0.1%
Parks/Recreation Areas	7,106.25	3%
Residential (All)	70,432	32%
Utility	2,671.87	1%
Vacant/Open Space	45,535.70	21%
Water (Rivers only)	4,447.24	2%
Water/Sewer Treatment Plant	728.41	0.3%

Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

Gaston County is within the growth impact area of the Charlotte Metropolitan Region, meaning that the County will grow as the region grows. It is important to note that since the 2008 Recession, growth has changed. Instead of the suburban sprawl-type of development experienced prior to 2008, post-Recession growth has largely been concentrated development around existing towns, as modeled in Gaston County’s southeast region.

As the economy improves and growth continues, it is expected to affect Gaston County largely in the east, with US 321 being the approximate outer limit of the anticipated impact area, roughly at the 20-mile mark. Areas west of US 321, namely around Crowders Mountain State Park and Cherryville to the north, is projected to experience less development pressure.

Goals

The following are the Gaston Tomorrow 2035 goals that relate to the Land Use:

- ☐ Improve the transportation system to include multi-modal regional considerations of highways, bicycle/pedestrian connections, mass transit, and connectivity between communities within Gaston County and the larger Charlotte Metropolitan Region.
- ☐ Improve energy, water, and telecommunication throughout Gaston County.
- ☐ Enhance quality of life to absorb growth while focusing on commercial and community resources, walkability, and agricultural preservation.

- ☐ Foster communication and collaboration among the leadership of municipalities and the County to coordinate strategic investments.
- ☐ Emphasize the importance of our natural resources through highlighting natural environments and encouraging the use of environmental recreation.
- ☐ Increase economic development throughout the County by supporting municipalities and improving viable job opportunities.

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Plan creates a pattern for sensible development along existing transportation routes, while maintaining rural character, and encouraging open spaces. The hope of this plan is to create an ebb and flow within the unincorporated areas of the County, where one can drive through one of the County's existing towns, the rolling countryside, and through charming rural centers and communities without blinking an eye.

This section will discuss the guiding principles of determining the future land use, detail the land use designations, and display the completed map. The following general guiding principles are defined:

The underlying principle for land use designations reside with the transportation infrastructure and availability of water and sewer service. The quality of the road network, and the accessibility of the system allows for different land uses to be more appropriate in certain locations. It is with this in mind that nodes for development were highlighted. From there, the availability of water and sewer utility further increased or decreased potential development opportunities. These systems may be upgraded or changed in the future, and land use should be reviewed to follow suit.

Medium and High-density residential areas are targeted around the existing municipalities in Gaston County. These jurisdictions provide the water and sewer availability needed to support these densities and styles of housing. In addition, the County wishes to further support the cities and towns by focusing higher-density development in these areas.

The large majority of Gaston County is rural in nature and should retain the existing character, as it is an attraction for both residents and visitors. To maintain this character, it is assumed that the majority of Gaston County will be rural land use, unless transportation and utility systems can support additional growth. Agribusiness opportunities are encouraged in these areas.

Throughout the rural countryside of Gaston County, roads and utilities come together to create pockets of density where rural communities or rural centers can exist. These centers function to serve the residents in the adjacent neighborhoods. These areas can be residential in nature, or serve as a civic or commercial center for the surrounding residents.

There are currently existing land uses that are to be maintained throughout Gaston County. This Future Land Use Map does not state that these uses are to be removed or changed, but that it falls within a larger agriculture, center, industrial, or residential area.

Land Use Designations

While traditional land use designations are important to Gaston County, the majority of the County's land area exists in rural areas. With this in mind, land use designations for Gaston County's Future Land Use Plan have been separated by character and purpose in these largely open areas.

Rural

Rural areas are areas characterized by green, rolling hills and plenty of open space, along with farmstead style housing, as well as agribusinesses. This designation exemplifies Gaston County and the existing natural resources that exist throughout the jurisdiction. Residential homes are located on large lots and are set back from the roads they front upon. There are many opportunities for agribusiness ventures in this designation as well, including farming, landscaping and associated nurseries, etc. It is understood that this is the default use designation for Gaston County.



Source: Gaston County Planning

Rural Community

Rural communities are areas in the largely Rural areas where there is a number of residential buildings on smaller lots, built closer to the roadway. Driving through these areas, you feel like you are in a neighborhood. These areas may not serve a purpose other than providing homes, but still maintain a neighborhood look and feel.

Rural Center



Source: Gaston County Planning

Rural centers are those rural community areas that serve a specific purpose for the immediate area. These can be civic-oriented, anchored by a church, a community center, historic structures, etc. Or these areas can also serve a commercial purpose, anchored by a rural market, small store, gas station, community daycare centers, related small businesses, etc. These areas exist where transportation and communities exist to support these services. Houses and businesses are closer together and are built closer to the roadway.

Suburban Development

Suburban Development consists of significant single-family residential areas that exist around commercial pockets representing a standard suburban center. Typically, this would resemble subdivisions built around services for those communities. Suburban centers can also include multi-family houses and support services as well. These centers are larger than the rural centers and tend to not serve a significant civic or commercial purpose, aside from immediate neighborhood needs.

Gateway Centers

Gateway Centers are specific places in Gaston County to capture the attention of people entering the County for various purposes. These areas are specifically located along major transportation routes just inside Gaston County's jurisdiction. These centers carry the weight of introducing travelers to the County through the look, feel, and signage in the area.

Gateway Center at NC 16

This location offers an opportunity for those traveling on NC 16 from Mecklenburg or Lincoln Counties to get a small glimpse of Gaston County. While NC 16 is designed to keep traffic flowing and minimize on/off traffic, upon crossing the Catawba River, there is a small segment of the road that can be developed around the high traffic purpose to capture economic development. The center needs to be concentrated around NC 16 and the Catawba River crossing for commercial purposes associated with high traffic volume, as the existing conditions do not lend itself to future residential or mixed use development.

Gateway Center at Crowder's Mountain (US Highway 74 & Sparrow Springs Road)

The gateway center at Crowder's Mountain offers a wonderful opportunity to showcase the rich natural resources that Gaston County contains. This area can be developed to offer services for visitors of the park, such as a hotel and parking, in such a way that enhances the overall area, instead of detracting from it. The existing transportation system and views in the area create the perfect opportunity. This gateway center needs attention to detail so as to not deter from the area, but improve the overall image. Crowder's Mountain State Park is a large pull factor bringing tourism into Gaston County and should be developed appropriately, but guarded from unintentional encroachment.



Source: Gaston County Planning

Gateway Center at US Highway 321 and the North Carolina / South Carolina State Line

This area offers travelers not only the first glimpse of Gaston County, but also North Carolina. The area has an existing industrial infrastructure and feel, which can be used to create a 'Gateway to Industry' in Gaston County. There is a state historic marker upon entering Gaston County, which leads to rail and utility industry flanking 321. This area is also a generator of rail trips for the region, which can be emphasized for increased manufacturing.

Utilities

This area covers or depicts primarily utilities.

Industrial

This area is primarily for industrial and manufacturing based uses, currently and projected in the future.

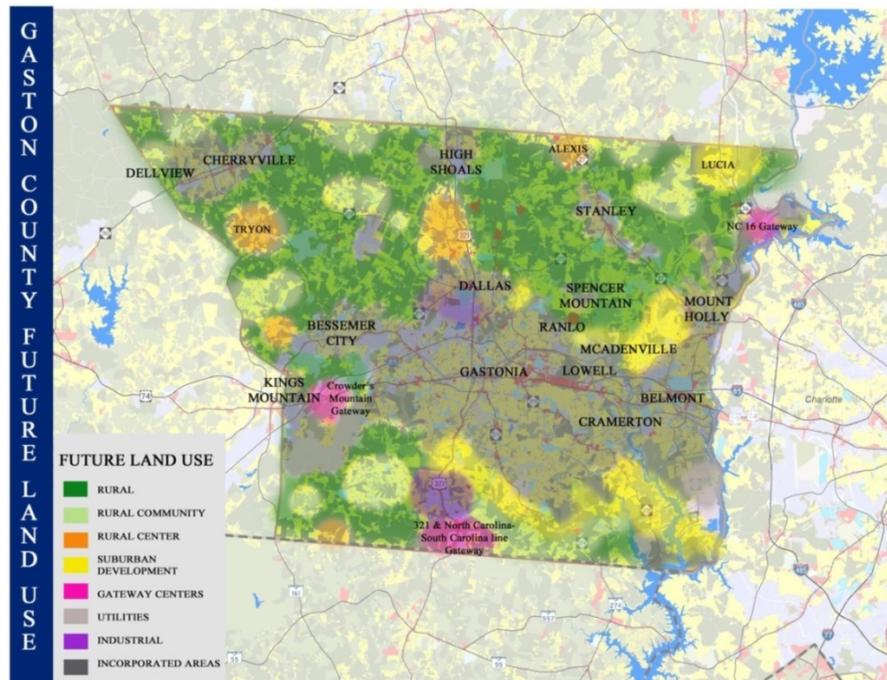
The following table (4-2) breaks down the land use by category:

Table 4-2 Gaston County Future Land Use Designation

Land Use	Acreage	Percentage of County
Rural	106,740.9	49%
Rural Community	10,937.16	5%
Rural Center	1,824.86	0.8%
Suburban Development	12,436.41	6%
Gateway Center	725.4	0.3%
Industrial	1,301.9	0.6%
Utilities	900.3	0.4%
Incorporated Areas & ETJ	83,856.85	38%

Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

Future Land Use Map



Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

Recommendations

Review Zoning Code

The Gaston County Zoning Code should be reviewed and updated to align with the adopted Future Land Use Map. Zoning districts should be evaluated to determine if the standards for the district reflect the character of the community. If not, the districts can be re-drawn, or the standards revised, to accurately reflect the community's atmosphere.

Review Development Standards

Development standards should be reviewed for each zoning district to ensure that the character of the areas is maintained. In addition, the impact of traffic generation on old farm-to-market road networks should be included in this review.

Create Focused Development Areas

Gaston County supports growth in existing municipal areas, but also recognizes the potential for growth to occur outside of these areas. However, growth outside of municipal areas should be focused in areas that are accessible, allow for available services, support existing municipalities, and/or are ripe for the opportunity to create destinations that will bring a return on County investment. In order to achieve targeted growth, areas that meet these conditions have been highlighted in the Future Land Use Map. Gaston County should strategically plan for investment in the areas highlighted on the Future Land Use Map to retain the character of the surrounding areas.

Growth Area Plan for Northeast Gaston County

As growth increases in the Charlotte Metropolitan Region, Northeast Gaston County will experience development pressure. It is recommended to take an in-depth look at the impact of such pressure on the area before development starts to increase. This would include analyzing mobility systems, housing possibilities, and other issues that will affect the region. Special attention should be placed upon Lucia, which can handle a fair amount of residential development.

Small Area Plans

There are numerous places around Gaston County that need special attention due to unique needs of the area. These areas should be earmarked for small area plans to offer the detailed analysis and offer alternatives for growth.

Southwest Gaston County

The southwest portion of Gaston County, around Crowders Mountain State Park, has an extensive Rural Community area, but lacks connectivity to US 321 S. A small area plan should be completed to detail how to improve connectivity in the area, maintain the natural feel of the area, and offer alternatives for the Gateway Center designated for the area.

Tryon

The Rural Center around Tryon is the perfect location for continued growth in northwest Gaston County. This community has a new fire department, an existing school, and has road infrastructure to handle such growth. A small area plan of Tryon will help to determine the right level of development for the existing systems and help grow Tryon while maintaining its character.

Support Transit Improvements

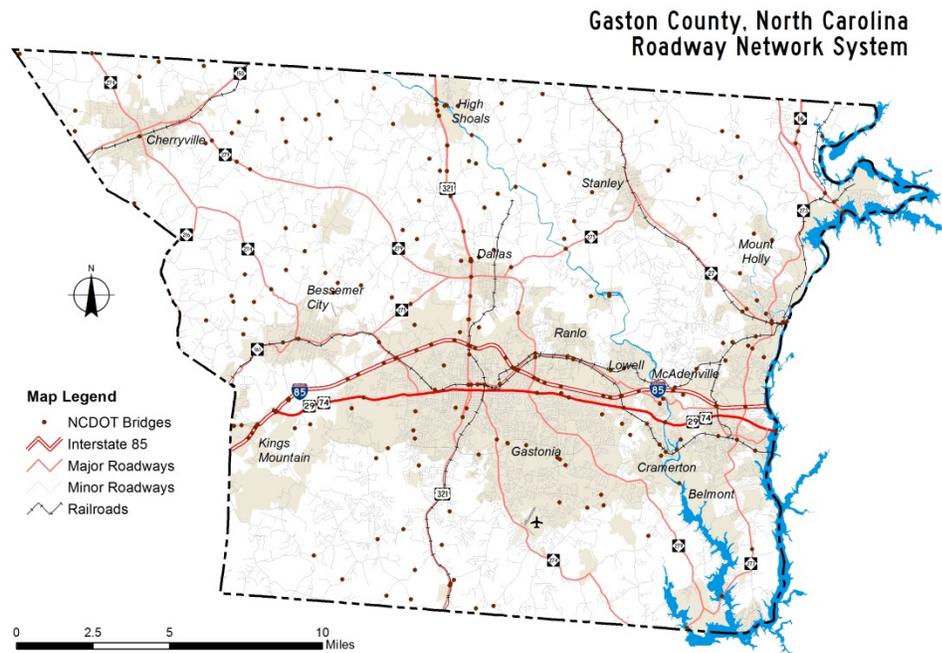
The future land use plan has focused on concentrating density and development in areas with high transportation accessibility, mainly automobile, and also the availability of sewer utility. By implementing the Future Land Use Plan, Gaston County will create pockets of increased density that have the potential for becoming transit nodes. When looking into Bus Rapid Transit, the County can use the Future Land Use Plan to mark appropriate locations for bus stations, such as a civic- or commercial-based Rural Center.

Transportation

Gaston County lies west in the Charlotte Metropolitan Region and as such funnels traffic to and from Mecklenburg County. In addition, the County has some bustling cities and towns, such as Belmont, Cramerton, Mt. Holly, as well as Gastonia, all requiring connectivity within Gaston County and other areas in the Metro Region. As future planning occurs, mobility choices would likely improve connectivity and be desired by residents.

The purpose of the Transportation element of the Land Use Plan is to increase mobility and access throughout Gaston County, and to surrounding areas, in a way that allows Gaston County to maintain its character and appeal to residents, employers, and tourists. Land development follows transportation access; land cannot be developed if it is not accessible. With that in mind, Gaston County has taken inventory of its transportation system, travel patterns, and accessibility to determine enhancements that will work in concert with land use decisions to better the County. This element will create a strategy that prioritizes investments in existing structures or new structures that are needed for access. This plan will also create the backbone for the future land use decisions that will further exemplify the character of Gaston County.

The nature of the transportation system is that it includes every level of government, from local transit systems and town streets to federal highways. Investment for transportation is high at the state level, which is why this plan recognizes the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), as well as at the regional level, highlighted by the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO). This plan also includes travel information from various national sources to show the different levels of service within the transportation system. It is Gaston's goal to coordinate its system with all users and make the best decisions possible.



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Existing Conditions

Gaston County, like many other counties in the Charlotte Metropolitan Region, has a heavy commuter link to employment centers in neighboring Mecklenburg County. It has been estimated that there are approximately 30,000+ daily commuters from Gaston County to Mecklenburg County. This heavy peak-hour migration creates strong dependence on the arterials which cross the Catawba River, especially US Highway 29-74 and Interstate 85. Other secondary crossings include NC Highway 16 and NC Highway 27.

The Metrolina Regional Household Travel Survey (composed of 11 counties in North and South Carolina) completed in 2012, gives an idea of the types of travel patterns in Gaston County. This survey, administered to 4,231 households, shows that about a quarter of respondents have a travel destination other than work when their trip origin is their home, while another quarter of respondents' travels do not begin at home. The Metrolina Regional Household Travel Survey thus shows that focusing all transportation funding on facilitating commuting will deliver inefficient results because of the travel patterns of commuters living in Gastonia.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

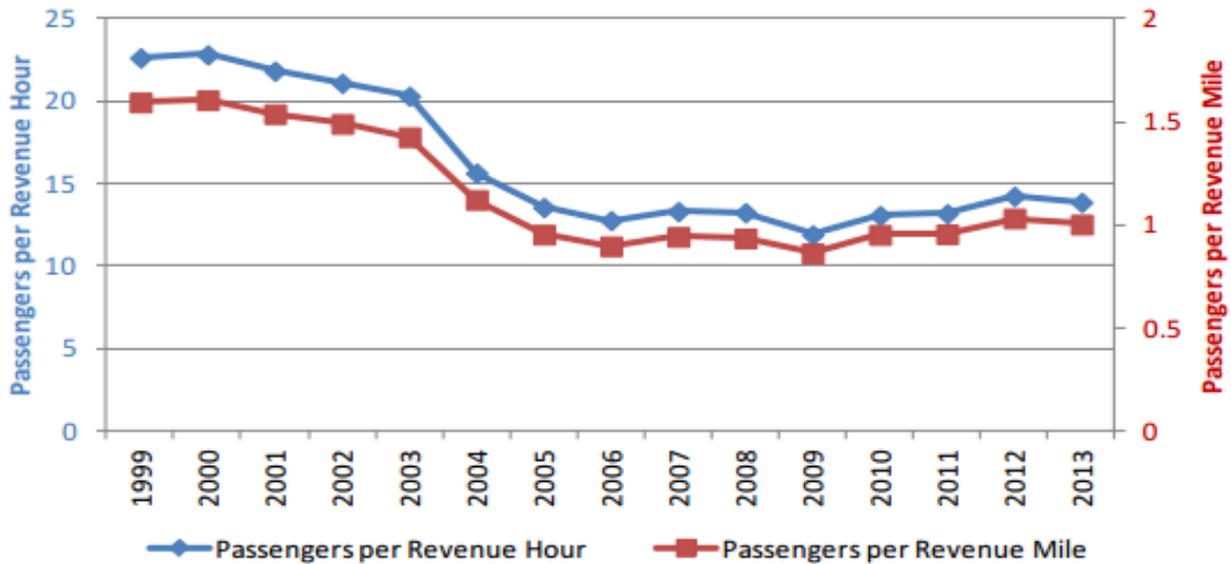
Gaston County is a member of the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO), expanded in 2013 from the Gaston Urban Area MPO. The MPO is responsible for providing transportation planning services to the designated urbanized area. The goal of the MPO is to determine transportation plan options that are "continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive." In light of this, it is Gaston County's stance to review the current and future GCLMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan and incorporate it into the Transportation element of this plan. Gaston County observes the long range transportation plans and policies by NCDOT and USDOT as facilitated by GCLMPO as it reviews all land use development proposals.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) requires that each MPO develops and maintains a Long Range Transportation Plan with a minimum twenty-year planning horizon. The most recent (January 2016) update of the GCLMPO 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan fulfills this requirement. The Plan has numerous goals and objectives focused on a Catawba River crossing, land use, streets and highways, public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle transportation, rail and air transportation, the human and physical environment, and freight and goods movement.

Transit

Gastonia Transit operates numerous fixed routes with all buses coming to a central location at Bradley Station, conveniently located in downtown Gastonia. The service provided by Gastonia Transit generates 250,000 trips annually. However, this number is smaller than the levels of bus transit ridership in the early 2000's as indicated below (Figure 1). Gastonia Transit also offers bus routes that operate between Downtown Gastonia and Gaston College—located in the Town of Dallas. Similarly, Downtown Gastonia is connected to Uptown Charlotte via a Bus Route (85X – Gastonia Express) operated by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS). Gastonia Transit also provides limited fixed route bus service, as well as demand response van service.

Figure 1: Gastonia Transit System Performance Measures



The Gaston County ACCESS paratransit service provides additional service to individuals seeking health and human services. ACCESS provides accessibility to the Gaston County Health Department, Cooperative Extension, and the Department of Social Services, as well as serving Gaston College students and riders with origins and destinations in the Town of Dallas.

Additional transit-related services include regional metro van-pools, which operate between Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties. The success of this program has resulted in the likely expansion of the program in the near future.

Many citizens have expressed the desire for expanded transit service to public and institutional destinations outside Gastonia limits and to other communities. Future studies, including the Community Transportation Service Plan and Transit Feasibility Study, will seek to address ways to expand the existing transit service to areas within the county as well as commuter options to Mecklenburg County.

Railroad

There are two (2) primary lines passing through the study area: Norfolk Southern Railroad (NSRR) and Chessie-Seaboard Merger (CSX). While AMTRAK does maintain passenger rail service twice daily through the City of Gastonia, the primary focus is on freight. Given the amount of traffic to and from Mecklenburg County, however, other studies have identified the potential for commuter rail between the two counties.

The Norfolk Southern main line from Atlanta to Washington, DC., passes through Gaston County. The NSRR, in the study area, parallels NC Highway 7 and passes through the towns of

City	Boardings + Alightings
Burlington	24,781
Cary	88,616
Charlotte	184,911
Durham	80,013
Fayetteville	57,171
Gastonia	1,508
Greensboro	123,080
Hamlet	4,944
High Point	37,225
Kannapolis	18,713
Raleigh	159,784
Rocky Mount	54,331
Salisbury	26,061
Selma-Smithfield	13,597
Southern Pines	7,567
Wilson	62,404

Table 4.3: AMTRAK 2015 Passenger Ridership

Lowell, McAdenville, Cramerton, and Belmont where the line branches. One branch turns south, serving a Duke Energy power plant. The other line goes across the Catawba River into Mecklenburg County. The main line is a busy freight railroad with numerous long freight trains in both directions: NCDOT Rail Division has estimated that current daily volume is in excess of 40 trains per day, with annual gross tonnage on the order of 28 million tons.

In addition, Amtrak operates the Crescent, a major train service between New Orleans and New York. This daily inter-city passenger service traverses the study area and currently has a flag stop in Gastonia. However, it is important to note that for the year 2015, boarding and alighting at the Gastonia Station were the lowest of all Amtrak Stations in North Carolina as seen in Table 4.3. This could indicate that Gastonia needs to create plans to move its AMTRAK train station closer to downtown Gastonia in order to connect with other public transit modes such as Greyhound, Gastonia Transit, Gaston Access and Charlotte Area Transit. The accommodation for a better level of public transportation service between Gaston County and Mecklenburg County could aid the commute for almost a quarter of workers living in Gaston County that travel daily to Mecklenburg County. Land around the new Amtrak location can be developed into office buildings, retail and residential. Additionally, as Mecklenburg County has plans to move its Amtrak location more central in Charlotte's Uptown, this could create a better opportunity for commuters in Gaston County as well.

Air Quality Status and Transportation Conformity

Automobiles have been identified as the largest contributors to North Carolina's air pollution. However, automobile technology is improving to help address pollution associated with auto emissions. More people are driving and traveling longer distances than ever before. As a result, our air pollution worsens as roads become more congested. While the GCLMPO handles air quality standards and conformity specifically, this Plan seeks to support air quality improvements in the County by looking at the current transportation system and traffic information to determine ways to ease congestion. By reducing the amount of time a vehicle will idle as well as by offering different modes of transportation, exhaust should lessen, ultimately improving ambient air quality.

In North Carolina, seven urban areas must complete conformity analyses on their transportation plans because they lie within an air quality "maintenance" area. Gaston County is located in one of these seven areas which historically had issues with air quality, primarily from ground-level ozone. In addition to making it hard to breathe, ozone also damages crops and trees.

Transportation conformity regulation requires that the MPO determine the vehicle emissions that the urban area will generate under its transportation plan. If the emissions exceed the limits established in the State Air Quality Implementation Plan, then Federal money may be withheld from designing highway projects, purchasing right-of-way or pursuing construction projects. In July 2015, the Charlotte Metropolitan Area became the last in North Carolina to comply with the 2008 ozone standard, marking the first time the state had met all air quality standards since the 1990s.

Airport

Gaston County has one (1) municipal airport operated by the City of Gastonia and located in the southern portion of the city's jurisdiction along Union Road (NC Highway 274). It is a limited facility with a relatively short, 3,500-foot runway and a total of 30 employment jobs according to United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Master Records.

The Gastonia Municipal Airport has over 50,000 operations, mostly due to its high number of local operations. Correspondingly, the airport facilities at Gastonia Municipal Airport do not accommodate a large number of commercial flights. An NCDOT study of the economic impacts of airports in North Carolina found that the airports in the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Region have some of the smallest economic impacts in the Charlotte Metropolitan Area, as they only contribute \$162,000 of total State and Local taxes (NCDOT 2012 Economic Contribution of North Carolina Airports). Close proximity to the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, as well as lack of further development potential, have prompted discussions regarding the possible relocation and upgrade of the airport.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways are receiving more attention as we begin to understand the importance of modal integration and alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle. Providing dedicated areas for pedestrians and bicycles further defines the pedestrian and vehicular realm of transportation corridors, thereby increasing the safety, convenience, and viability of alternate modes. Recent efforts to enhance the provision and infill of pedestrian facilities have been initiated by a number of communities within the county via capital improvements and development-oriented sidewalk policies. In addition, a non-profit group, *Connect Gaston*, working in conjunction with the GCLMPO, has developed a plan for proposed greenways, which would connect with Gaston's existing greenways to provide a network of interconnected greenways throughout the County.

The North Carolina Board of Transportation adopted a Complete Streets policy in July 2009. The policy directs NCDOT to consider and incorporate all modes of transportation when building new projects or making improvements to existing transportation infrastructure. Under the new policy, NCDOT will collaborate with cities, towns, and communities during the planning and design phases of new streets or improvement projects. The Carolina Thread Trail plans to interconnect fifteen counties in the south-central piedmont of North Carolina and the north-central portion of South Carolina in order to create recreational, environmental, and economic development opportunities while also offering citizens with public access and a healthier lifestyle.

Distributed among the County and along mid-size transportation routes, rural communities and rural centers arise due to the proximity of services provided. While population density is not as high as places like Belmont or other densely-developed areas in Gastonia, biking and pedestrian projects should be encouraged. Several Bike and Pedestrian projects in Downtown Gastonia have been awarded funding by the NCDOT. These improvements are needed as walking and accessibility by foot is not feasible. Figure 2 displays State Transportation Improvement Projects in Gaston County and the Bike/Pedestrian projects are displayed in pink.

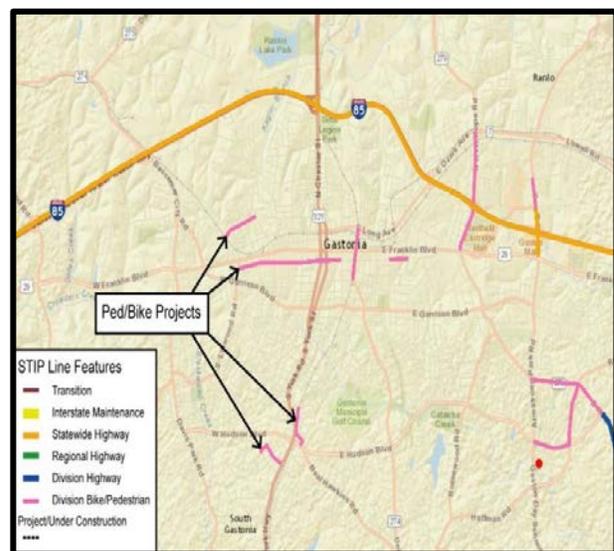


Figure 2: NCDOT Transportation Improvement Projects

Major Highways

US Highway 321: US Highway 321 is a four-lane facility that runs north-south and goes through downtown Gastonia, where it becomes a one-way couplet consisting of York Road northbound and Chester Street southbound. The section of US Highway 321 north of I-85 is heavily used with 39,000 vehicles per day and the section immediately south of I-85 carries less than 100,000 vehicles per day. The portion of US Highway 321 that passes through the City of Gastonia and the historic district is a two lane one-way facility. It averages approximately 9,500 vehicles per day.

Wilkinson Boulevard (US Highways 29-74): Wilkinson Boulevard, a major arterial, runs parallel and to the south of I-85. Within the study area, US 29 / US 74 starts as Franklin Boulevard in the center of Gastonia and travels east towards the Catawba River and into Mecklenburg County. It passes just north of Charlotte Douglas International Airport in route to Center City Charlotte and points northeast (US 29) and southeast (US 74). A 2014 traffic count shows that US 29 / US 74 carries between 20,000 and 25,000 vehicles per day.

Interstate 85: I-85 is the most heavily traveled roadway within the study area. I-85 is a six-lane facility between Gastonia and Belmont and it widens to an eight-lane facility through Belmont and across the Catawba River into Mecklenburg County. According to 2015 traffic count, I-85 is currently carrying between 95,000 and 110,000 vehicles per day. It is important to note that the Belmont, Cramerton, and McAdenville have come together to produce a Build a Better Boulevard plan focused on Wilkinson Boulevard.

Statewide Transportation Funding

Few local priorities are annually funded through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process due to the competition among all the municipalities in the State. Therefore, the STIP should not be singularly relied upon to fulfill the transportation needs of the County. The following represents the current funded and unfunded requests made by the GCLMPO for inclusion in the North Carolina Transportation Improvement Program:

NCDOT 2016-2025 State Transportation Improvement Projects

- **I-85/ US 321 (Exit 17) to US 74 (Exit 10). Widen Roadway** / Type: Statewide / Category: Mobility/ Construction Year: 2024
- **I-85 / Geometric Safety Improvements to interchange** / Type: Statewide / Category: Mobility/ Construction Year: 2017
- **I-85 / US 321 to NC 273. Widen to 8 lanes** / Type: Statewide / Category: Mobility/ Construction Year: 2024
- **West Walnut Ave / West Airline Ave to North Firestone Street. Construct sidewalks** / Type: Statewide / Category: Bike and Pedestrian / Construction Year: 2025
- **NC 274-Broad Street / East 4th avenue to Long Avenue. Add bike facilities, improve sidewalks, and make bike/pedestrian improvements to intersection/** Type: Division needs / Category: Bike and Pedestrian/ Construction Year: 2024

- **Henderson St., McArver St., Mountain View St. / Construct sidewalk on side** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Bike and Pedestrian/ Construction Year: 2025
- **South Marietta St., Hilltop Drive, Gardner St. / Construct missing sidewalk one side.** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Bike and Pedestrian/ Construction Year: 2024
- **South New Hope Road / Missing sidewalk on both sides of road, address ADA compliance of existing sidewalk and make pedestrian.** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Bike and Pedestrian/ Construction Year: 2024
- **South New Hope Road / Widen to 3 lanes** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Highway / Construction Year: 2022
- **NC 7 / Widen to multi-lanes** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Highway / Construction Year: 2021
- **NC 7 / Construct Northbound through lane and intersections** / Type: Regional Impact / Category: Highway / Construction Year: 2022
- **Beaty Road / Smith Street to Ferstl Avenue. Construct Sidewalk.** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Bike and Pedestrian/ Construction Year: 2023
- **Highland Street / Construct Sidewalk on both sides of road** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Bike and Pedestrian / Construction Year: 2019
- **West Charlotte Avenue / Construct intersection improvements** / Type: Division Needs / Category: Highway / Construction Year: 2021
- **US 29-74/ Replace bridge over South York Catawba** / Type: Division Needs / Category: STI / Construction Year: 2024
- **Bradford Heights Road / Replace bridge over Catawba** / Type: Division Needs / Category: STI / Construction Year: 2022
- **Willow Side Drive / Replace bridge over Stanley Creek** / Type: Division Needs / Category: STI / Construction Year: 2016
- **Killian Road / Replace bridge over Johnston Creek** / Type: Division Needs / Category: STI / Construction Year: 2019
- **Alexis Road / Replace Bridge over Hoyle's Creek** / Type: Division Needs / Category: STI / Construction Year: 2019
- **NC 273 / Replace Bridge over Duke Power Feeder Canal.** / Type: Division Needs / Category: STI / Construction Year: 2023

Goals

The following are the Gaston Tomorrow 2035 Transportation Element goals:

- ☐ Improve the transportation system to include multi-modal regional considerations of highways, bicycle/pedestrian connections, mass transit, and connectivity between communities within Gaston County and the larger Charlotte Metropolitan Region.
- ☐ Develop public education resources for residents in order to increase citizen awareness and knowledge into community issues or opportunities
- ☐ Enhance quality of life to absorb growth while focusing on commercial and community resources, walkability, and agricultural preservation.
- ☐ Foster communication and collaboration among the leadership of municipalities and the County to coordinate strategic investments.
- ☐ Emphasize the importance of our natural resources through highlighting natural environments and encouraging the use of environmental recreation.

Future Transportation Plan

Crowders Mountain - South of I-85, Southern Gastonia

This area is rich in environmental amenities as well as experiencing very high volumes of traffic from I-85 West. Residential communities are also present between Crowder's Mountain and Highway 321. A way to cope with the high traffic present on I-85, is to strategically implement a southern corridor among residential communities, employment opportunities (industrial parks) and an inter-county connection to Mecklenburg County. This area, in Crowder's Mountain, would serve as a starting point for this service due to its lack of connectivity to other areas.

Southern Gastonia also experiences a high number of freight traffic originating from York County in South Carolina. Southern Gastonia also possesses the Gastonia Municipal Airport, which has a low economic impact on its region due to its focus of local operations as well as its proximity to a larger airport in Mecklenburg County.

Downtown Gastonia, Town of Dallas, High Shoals

Highway 321 is shared by all three locations. This area feeds the traffic on I-85 east to Mecklenburg County. Alternative transportation modes are available in Downtown Gastonia as well as connecting to Gaston College in the Town of Dallas (ACCESS Transit). Downtown Gastonia is also served by an AMTRAK line, connecting them to Mecklenburg and Cleveland County. The Town of Dallas has a high turnover ratio of residents commuting to other areas for employment.

Cherryville and Bessemer City

There is a high presence of industrial parks as well as opportunities to retain their load of traffic traversing these areas. Originally founded as a center of mining activities, Bessemer City is again a mining center. The Lithium Corporation of America has erected an impressive seven million dollar plant to process the rich vein of spodumene found in abundance in this area. A vast amount of rural

communities are also present and they could be used as reference point to where future development will occur.

Stanley, Mount Holly, and Northeast Gaston County

This area adjacent to NC 16 offers opportunities for development due to the high traffic from Charlotte. Several industries are now located within the area including DSM Desotech, Deb SBS, Buckeye Technologies, U. S. Leisure, Outdoor Lifestyles, and International Dyeing Machine Company.

Eastern Gaston County

This area is highly developed and densely populated. Textiles and hosiery manufacturers are the basis of Belmont's industry. This could be an opportunity to link skilled/unskilled workers to manufacturing jobs in this area, as well as offering training at the North Carolina Textile School located near Belmont. Pedestrian-friendly streets have been developed in this area; as well as blue walk crossings, taking advantage of their natural resources. Its proximity to Mecklenburg County also attracts many tourists, contributing to I-85 traffic.

Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan

The Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan (PRCIP) is an extension of the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR), which is under development from Charlotte to Washington, D.C. The extension from Charlotte would travel southeast portions of South Carolina and into Atlanta. The purpose of the Atlanta-Charlotte PRCIP is to improve intercity travel and mobility between Atlanta and Charlotte by expanding the region's transportation capacity and reliable mode choices through improvements in passenger rail services.

This corridor will also be an important extension to the planned SEHSR Corridor System developing important linkages to other metropolitan areas along the East Coast (Washington, D.C.; New York; and Boston). Investment in passenger rail is an essential part of the regions multimodal transportation system and its ability to support population and economic growth throughout the SEHSR Corridor Network.

Recommendations

Connectivity

Connectivity should be improved within Gaston County as well as to areas outside of the County. The County needs to increase connections between job centers and skill and unskilled workers as manufacturing opportunities increase, while also alleviating congestion and reducing traffic time in major highly-utilized roads. Additionally, Gaston County should determine feasibility of expanded routes to/from employment centers, including the town of Dallas, City of Gastonia, low employment neighborhoods and Gaston College. Lastly, the County may want to consider designing a southern connector corridor aimed at linking various areas of Southern Gaston County to the Charlotte Metropolitan Area. This would include the possibility of connecting Crowder's Mountain recreational-environmental services to Highway 321, while transitioning eastward as there is little current connectivity to 321 in Southern Gaston County. The identification of two additional future bridge crossings over the South Fork and Catawba Rivers reinforce the importance of east-west mobility within the region.

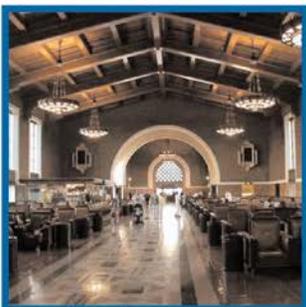
Improve Safety

Gaston County has experienced an increase of total crash fatalities between 2013 and 2014 according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Traffic Safety Facts, while also experiencing a three-fold increase of crash fatalities involving speeding in the same time frame. Investing in transit and route extensions with Mecklenburg County, while striving to increase transportation capacity and improve safety conditions with all major transportation modes, highlighting dangerous areas and providing safe alternatives, would help to address safety.

Coordination with State and Regional Agencies

Coordination with NCDOT, the Charlotte MPO, and the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO), on intra-city transit initiatives, such as bus rapid transit service (see Rapid Transit – Seek the Opportunity), will be paramount in providing true mode choice for the residents of the region.

RAPID TRANSIT - SEEK THE OPPORTUNITY



Public Transportation Choices Gaston Urban Area MPO

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) performed in 2005-2006 planning and engineering studies to explore opportunities to improve public transportation service from the vicinity of I-485 and Wilkinson Boulevard to Center City Charlotte. Frequent, convenient service will be provided by CATS, using Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT) or Streetcars.

What Does This Mean for the Gaston County?

The link to CATS' West Corridor service could be a significant opportunity for the Gaston Urban Area to improve its accessibility to and from other parts of the Greater Charlotte area. Of equal importance, the linkage between transportation and land use is the key to both successful implementation of rapid transit in Gaston County and to achieving the kind of community we want to live in over the coming years.

Transportation and Land Use

What does a rapid transit line have to do with land use? Why is land use important to the transit service? Actually, it's a mutually beneficial relationship. Transit provides better accessibility to the parcels of land it serves and thereby makes those locations more valuable. To take advantage of the value of the locations, property owners and developers seek to maximize their returns by developing more intensively where permitted. More intensive development creates more need for transportation and generates more ridership for the transit service, making it more cost-effective, able to provide better service, and helping to justify the investment in the transit system.

It is also important to understand the extent to which rapid transit can influence urban form, design, land use and thus the future of the area. Without rapid transit, continuing the present pattern of development means that sprawl will accompany growth, and the area will remain heavily dependent on private autos for transportation. This in turn will result in increased highway congestion as well as a reduced quality of life for those Gaston County residents who cannot use private autos for travel. Sprawl also is a less sustainable development pattern. A more compact development form would be more pedestrian and cyclist friendly, requiring less consumption of fossil fuels and less ground devoted to serving the needs of private autos.



BRT guideway in middle of arterial street, Eugene, OR

What Are Our Options?

There are several ways for the Gaston Urban Area to link to the CATS' West Corridor service, and a choice of the potential changes in land use and development patterns that would be most necessary and advantageous in connection with the new transportation options. The primary study area is a band about 2-3 miles wide running between the western end of the CATS' West Corridor service, in the vicinity of Wilkinson Boulevard and I-485, and downtown Gastonia. The options include several modes of transportation in addition to BRT and LRT, and several different alignments (routes) in the corridor.

Potential changes in land use and development include increased housing density and economic activity in the vicinity of transit stations, potential redevelopment of selected station areas, and application of the concept of mixed-use development, within the study area through the year 2030.

What would increase density mean for Gaston and its surroundings?

With appropriate planning, zoning, and design criteria, the area could appear even more attractive than it does at present. Redevelopment of properties in the vicinity of rapid transit stations could feature mixed-use, pedestrian friendly development that would attract residents and businesses alike. The increased density would make rapid transit more viable and enable frequent, convenient service.

Without increasing density, a "sprawl" development pattern is the likeliest outcome. The use of an automobile becomes a necessity and people without access to a vehicle have very limited mobility. Dispersion of trip origins and destinations makes it increasingly challenging to provide public transportation. Roadway congestion increases. Costs of providing public utilities to new development plus added highway capacity are higher than they would be with a more efficient growth pattern.

Over the past twenty five (25) years, researchers have suggested several threshold measures. Conventional wisdom today holds that at a minimum, hourly local bus service requires 3-4 dwelling units per residential acre (du/A). Moderate (i.e., half-hourly) levels of bus service are warranted at 7 du/A, and frequent service at 12 du/A. Express bus service (similar to BRT) with walk access, or LRT service, is warranted at densities of 9 or more du/A, although if BRT access is by personal vehicle rather than pedestrian access, the service may be warranted at a density as low as 3 du/A.

In addition to the residential density mentioned, it has been generally held that BRT or LRT service requires an employment center in the region with at least 20 million square feet of non-residential floor space. Center City Charlotte is projected to grow well beyond the recommended minimum square footage for BRT during the next 20-25 years. Heavy rail or commuter rail is generally thought to be warranted only where the employment center has at least 50 million square feet of non-residential floor space and residential density is above 12 du/A.



Aerial View for Gastonia Multi-Modal Transit Site

A Unique Opportunity: A Multi-Modal Center in Downtown Gastonia

The feasibility of a Gastonia multi-modal center that would enhance the attractiveness of transit services in Gaston County was investigated as an option to be pursued in addition to the steps indicated above. The existing Bradley Station is well situated geographically but lacks space for growth. The ground on which it stands is subject to undermining; large voids reaching under the property have been observed from the railroad embankment that forms the north boundary of the property. An alternative location nearby with

more growth potential and less apparent subsurface instability was identified and a concept plan for modular development of the facility was created. A rendering sketch is shown above.

The site is bordered by East Main Avenue, east of South Broad Street. The concept plan proposes an ultimate configuration including a central platform with six city bus berths, two intercity bus berths, and two BRT berths. A canopy over the platform and a ticketing/waiting building would be included. The site borders the P&N alignment, so if commuter rail service were

introduced a walk-way would lead from the waiting room to the commuter platform. Similarly, if the Amtrak station were relocated to the multi-modal facility, the walkway could be extended to south of the mainline tracks, where a platform could be provided. Plans call for closing East Main Avenue at the P&N right-of-way, which could make the portion of the street in front of the multi-modal facility and appropriate terminal for an LRT line. Land for a Park & Ride lot may be developed on the southwest corner of the site, as part of a multi-purpose project.



CHAPTER 5: SMALL AREA PLANNING DISTRICTS

Introduction

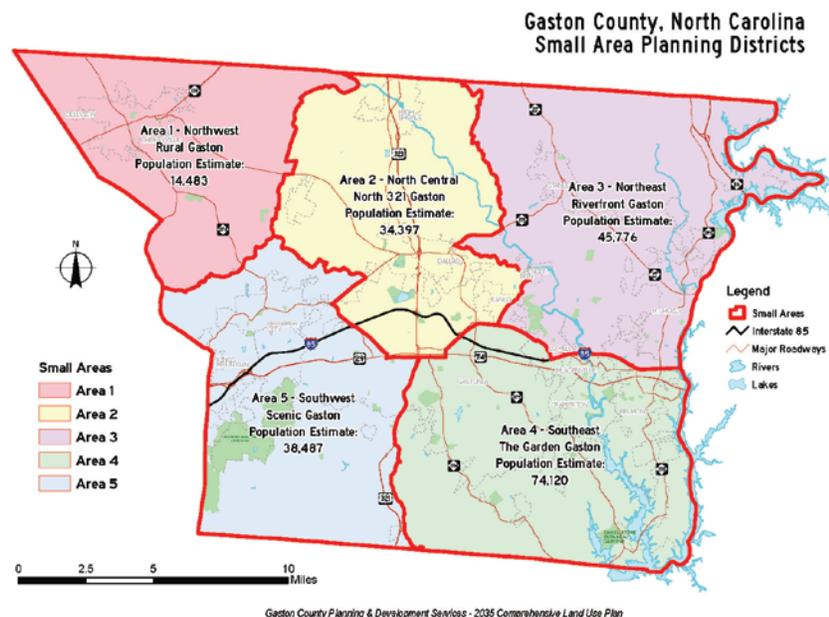
Gaston County is in a unique position of having an opportunity to set forth a process which will direct its future. Differing land uses, fifteen (15) municipal planning jurisdictions, differing opinions of what the future and quality of life should be, and differing opinions on how to use the County's limited resources showcase differences within the county. As a result, the small area planning districts concept was conceived in earlier plans to allow for diversity within the overall planning process.

The County is divided into five (5) small area planning districts based on their similar land use and related factors within the district. This allows for specific development strategic plans, which may be different from other areas, while accomplishing the overall vision set for Gaston County. Municipal entities participating in an active planning role can be included with this concept for better plan coordination.

The land use planning pertaining to each small area planning district was a product of gathering citizen input in current conditions in the different area districts. The type of input received was based on general questions relating to citizens and their desires in each area. See Chapter 6 for Public Input and the community engagement process.

Land Use in Gaston County's Planning Areas

Below you will find a detailed description, and associated Area maps, for the planning areas used by Gaston County.



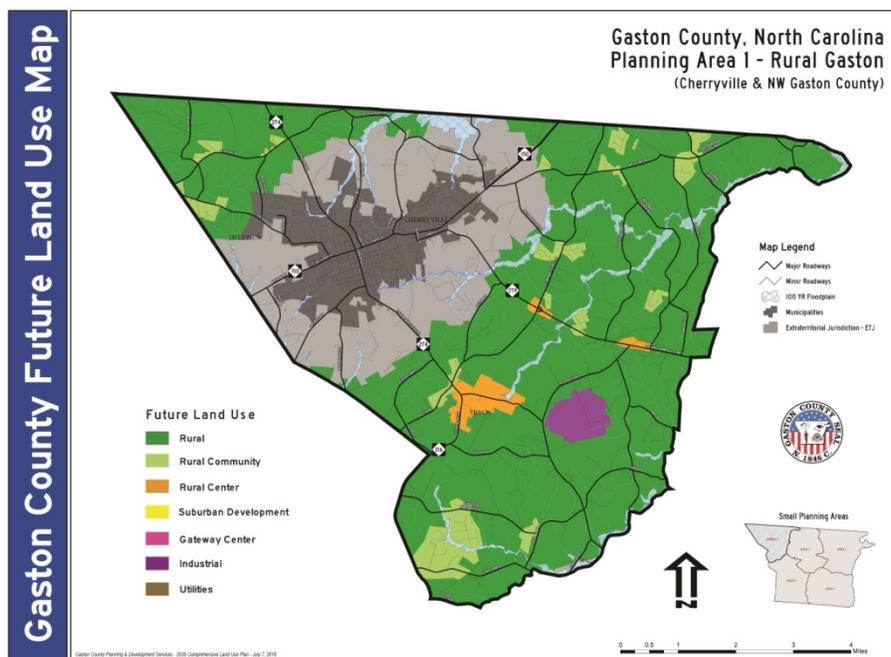
Area 1: Rural Gaston/Northwest Gaston (Cherryville and surrounding area)

This portion of the County has extensive open spaces with rolling hills and high knolls that lead up to the mountains west of Gaston County. However, this area experiences high traffic volumes along Highway 274, allowing for a Rural Center to be established around the existing community of Tryon. This area has some existing services and businesses and can be expanded as a rural development pocket in Gaston County and could continue to grow and provide a sub-regional center. Additionally, there are various areas of concentrated residential development scattered throughout this region where houses are closer to the streets with smaller lot sizes; this represents a rural community.

Aside from development in and around Cherryville Town Limits, Dellview Town Limits, and the corresponding extraterritorial jurisdictions, the majority of the region is established to remain rural in feel. This would look like larger lot sizes, houses a distance back from road right-of-ways, and open spaces. However, it is important to note that while this area is highlighted mainly as Rural, agricultural based businesses would be allowed to operate without issue.

Key issues for citizens in this area include:

- Preservation of open space
- Road improvements and better connectivity to other areas of the County and throughout the region
- Increased job opportunities
- Preservation of agriculture and maintaining the rural “feel” of the community
- Repurpose vacant buildings and facilities for new economic opportunities
- Steer development towards existing infrastructure



Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

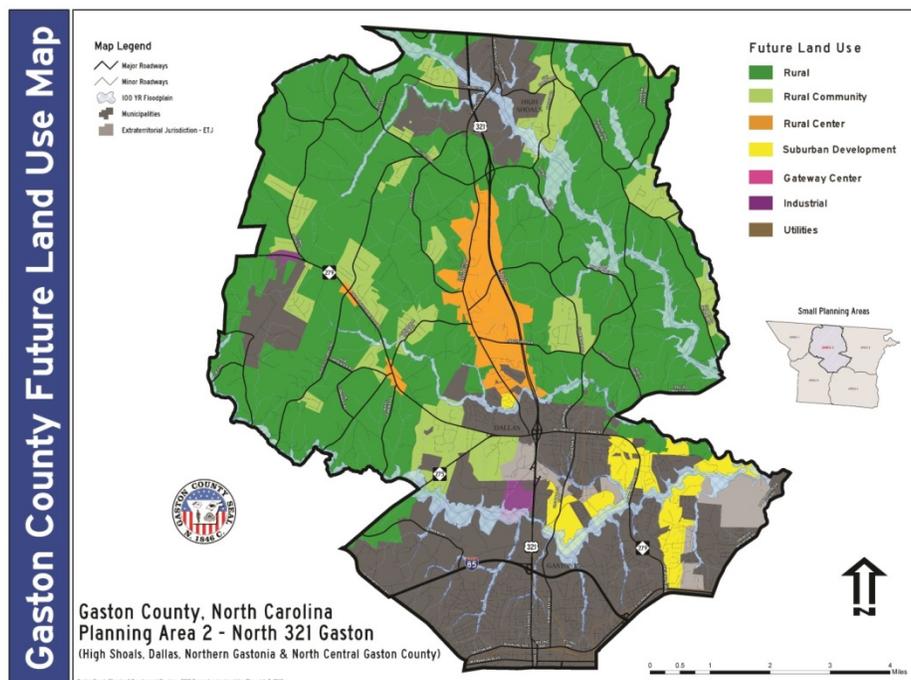
Area 2: North 321 Gaston/North Central Gaston (High Shoals, Dallas, and surrounding area)

This region of Gaston County has seen a large amount of development due to US 321 being a major transportation route for this area. There are high traffic volumes extending from 20,000 to 32,000 motorists as a daily average. Gaston College and many commercial opportunities lie in this area, making this region ripe for increased development. Due to the presence of Business 321, a large Rural Center is highlighted along this thoroughfare. It is possible to extend the existing public water and sewer services to this area, allowing for an increase in residential development, should it be needed.

A large portion of this area resides in Gastonia, Dallas, High Shoals, and portions of Ranlo and Spencer Mountain. While there are established pockets of residential development, the rest of the area is designated as Rural as the County focuses growth in existing municipalities that have proper utility access. Additionally, transportation access is limited and lessens the farther off of U.S. 321 travels, further supporting the Rural-land use designation.

Key issues for citizens in this area include:

- Preservation of open space
- Road improvements and better connectivity to other areas of the County and throughout the region
- More transportation alternatives
- Preservation of agriculture and maintaining the rural “feel” of the community
- Steer development towards existing infrastructure and areas immediately surrounding towns and cities



Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

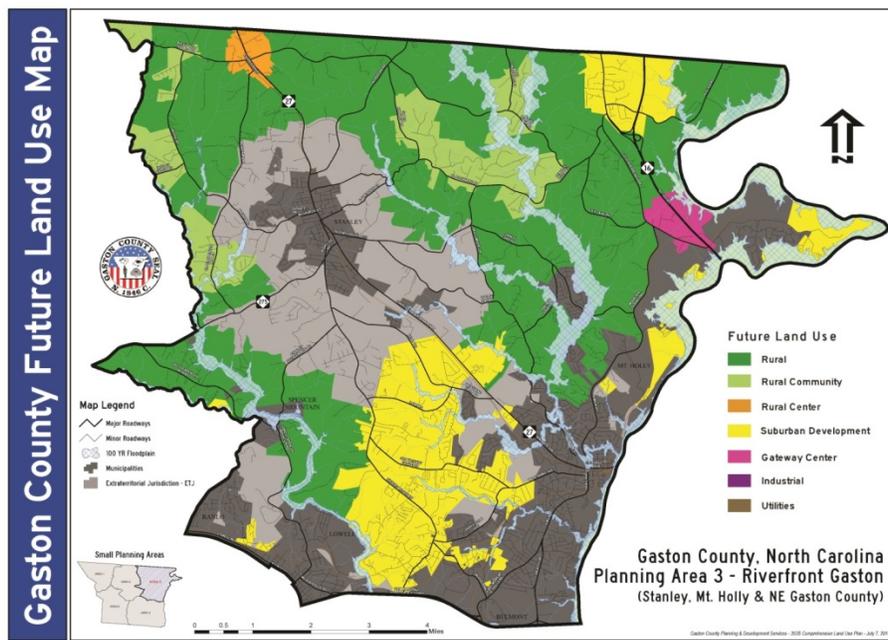
Area 3: Riverfront Gaston/Northeast Gaston (Stanley, Mt. Holly, and surrounding area)

This region of Gaston County is unique in that there are high numbers of transportation trips made along Highway 27 and NC 16; however, travelers either continue on to Lincoln County, or they leave the two thoroughfares to disperse south in Gaston County. There are pockets of Rural Community along the west boundary of this planning area, and one larger pocket between Stanley and the Catawba River, as well as a Rural Center in Alexis. Additionally, the Lucia community is a place that has potential for Suburban Development, supporting travelers along NC Business 16. There is a large area west adjacent to Mount Holly that has been designated as Suburban Development, supporting travelers along Highway 27 and also the growth in Stanley, Mount Holly, Lowell, and McAdenville. The rest of this region is highlighted for Rural to match the surrounding open spaces and direct development toward the areas of high mobility.

NC Highway 16 has been modified by NCDOT in recent years to keep the flow moving on the route. This creates a limited amount of access for motorists off NC Highway 16. That being said, when motorists enter Gaston County across the Catawba River, there is the potential for a Gateway to Gaston County, creating opportunity for those services that relate to heavy transportation use.

Key issues for citizens in this area include:

- Preservation of open space
- Road improvements and better connectivity to other areas of the County and throughout the region
- Increased job opportunities
- Maintaining the rural “feel” of the area
- Increased commercial opportunities



Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

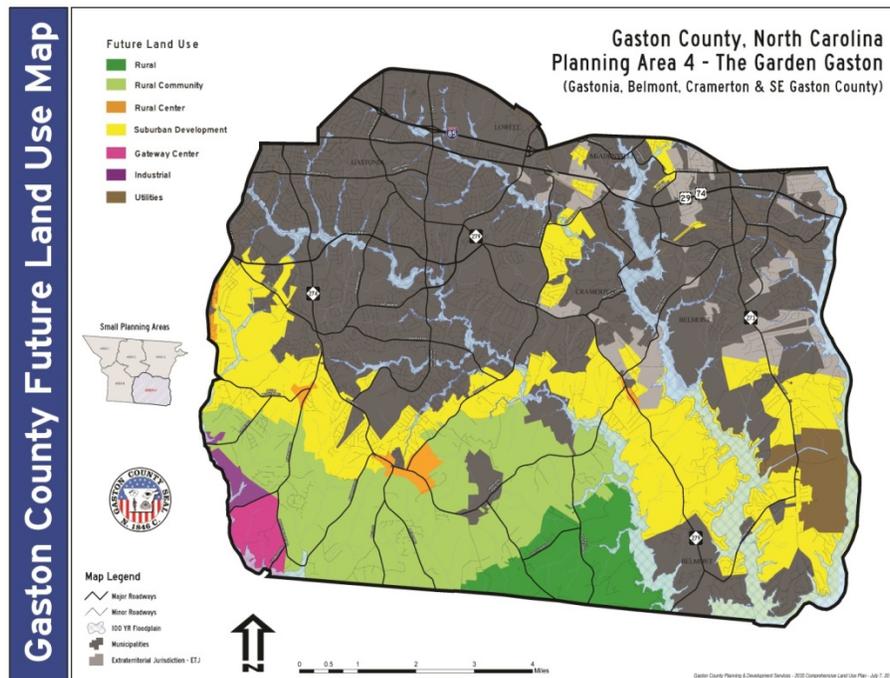
Area 4: The Garden Gaston / Southeast Gaston (Belmont, Cramerton, and surrounding area)

This region is largely incorporated by Belmont, Cramerton, McAdenville, Lowell, and Gastonia. Because of this, only the southernmost portion of the County is under its jurisdiction. This land is highlighted as Rural to ensure that development stays concentrated in the municipalities that serve sewer and water. There are various pockets for Suburban Development highlighted along the borders with Gastonia, Cramerton, and Belmont, supporting their growth. The major transportation routes also run through the municipalities and connect those locations to South Carolina.

It is important to note the significance of Gastonia Municipal Airport. Though this lies within Gastonia, the area surrounding the airport may be used in the future for growth. Surrounding County land is designated as Suburban Development, Rural Community and/or Rural in this plan, but that may change should the airport decide to expand. There is some areas designated Rural Center near the intersection of Union and Beatty Roads to cover the diversity of commercial and civic uses currently developed there with the potential expansion in the future.

Key issues for citizens in this area include:

- Road improvements and better connectivity to other areas of the County and throughout the region
- Another bridge crossing the Catawba River
- Increased walkability and connectivity between communities
- Continued coordination amongst local government agencies
- Maintaining enhanced quality of life



Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

Area 5: Scenic Gaston/Southwest Gaston (Crowders Mountain State Park, Gastonia, and surrounding area)

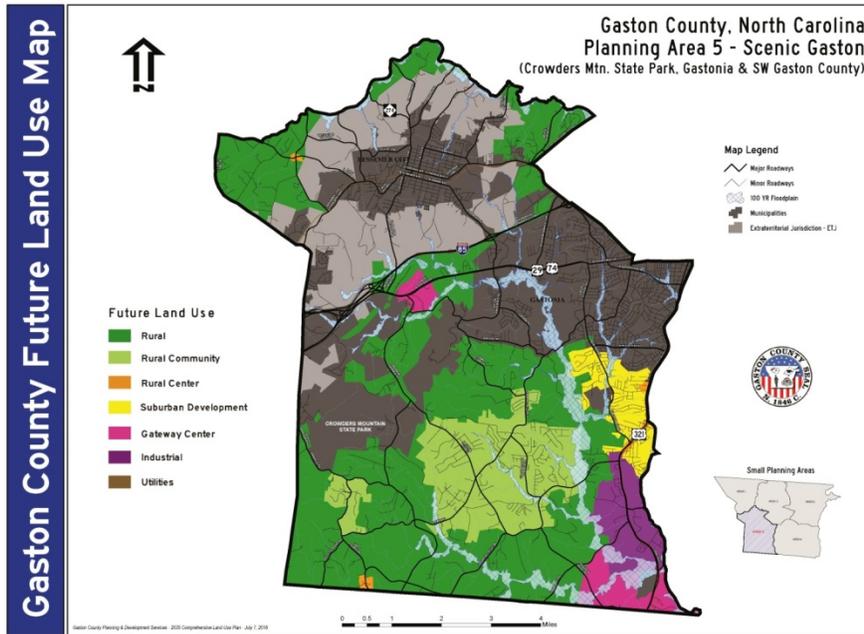
This area is full of Gaston County's largest tourist pull factor – Crowders Mountain State Park and the surrounding natural land. There is a large pocket of residential development southeast of the Park that is highlighted as a rural community as it has added value due to its proximity to the Park. Because of the access allowed by US Highway 74 and Interstate 85, an area north of the Park has been highlighted for a Gateway Center. This Center is envisioned as a location where potential hotel, parking, and other tourist-based services could thrive, if developed in keeping with the surrounding natural area. Special attention should be given to design standards for this gateway to ensure that this area does not detract from the natural beauty of the State Park.

Along US 321, this region feels very different, as freight rail is a major factor. This specific location is a large trip generator for the rail, and surrounding areas support the transportation use. At Gaston County's southern boundary with York County, South Carolina, there is another Gateway Center highlighted. This gateway will have a much different feel, as it should be geared toward the industrial feel of this region. It is a great opportunity for economic growth supporting current Gaston County industry and offers a great return on investment in targeted development. In this same vein, the areas north of the Gateway Center are designated for Industrial uses associated with utility and rail industry. There is a Suburban Development highlighted between the Industrial use and Gastonia to support both Gastonia and the employees of the industry. In addition, there is some Rural Center north of the industrial area along the front of US Highway 321 to capture the areas commercial and civic uses.

The majority of development pressure will be around the Park or the Industrial area along US 321. Additionally, the rural areas have little accessibility to 321, having only two minor connector streets, which hinders concentrated development. Should the County wish to expand growth in this area, there should be special attention placed on viewshed analysis from Crowders Mountain, as well as accessibility studies to determine the best route for a new thoroughfare to service the area.

Key issues for citizens in this area include:

- Preservation of open space
- Road improvements and better connectivity to other areas of the County
- Preservation of existing conditions while allowing low to moderate growth
- Repurpose vacant buildings and facilities for new economic opportunities
- Increased commercial opportunities along existing major thoroughfares



Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services

(Larger scale Small Area Planning District Maps can be found in Appendix B)



CHAPTER 6: PUBLIC INPUT

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the community engagement process or various methodologies used to garner citizen and community input from around the County during the development of the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Below is a summary of the efforts conducted.

Steering Committee

Early in the planning process, a steering committee consisting of a diverse group of individuals was formed from a variety of interests from around the County. Members were appointed by the Board of County Commission. The membership of the Steering Committee was carefully chosen to be representative of citizenry, organizational affiliations, and geographic distribution of the County. Meetings were generally well attended by the membership. If a member was unable to attend a meeting, they were still kept informed of the plan's progress via frequent informational updates. The steering committee played an important advisory role in the planning process. The committee also provided guidance to County staff and consultants on the planning process; served as a communication link between the process and the area they represented; assisted in getting the word out about citizen input meetings, and advised on plan content. Once a draft plan was developed, the steering committee was charged with recommending it to the County Planning Board for its review and consideration. One of the primary methods of gathering citizen or public input was with the citizen input meetings. Ten meetings were held in total in various recognizable locations throughout the county (see below information or citizen input meetings held in 2015 and 2016).



Steering Committee Meeting



Below are activities conducted as a part of the community engagement and/or citizen input process:

Technical Experts and Community Leaders Interviews

On-line Surveys

G-CaMP (Gaston County and Municipal Planners) Meetings

Millennial Focus Group

Non-profits Outreach

Citizen Input Meetings (10 meetings; see map below)

Citizen Input Meetings Questions (see below)

Newspaper Articles (Gaston Gazette, Charlotte Observer, Belmont Banner)

Citizen Input Meetings map and locations for both 2015 and 2016 (see below)

Citizen Input Meeting Information Cards (distributed throughout the County, at County local libraries, town halls, et cetera, where the public frequent (see below)

Citizen Input Meetings posted on Gaston County

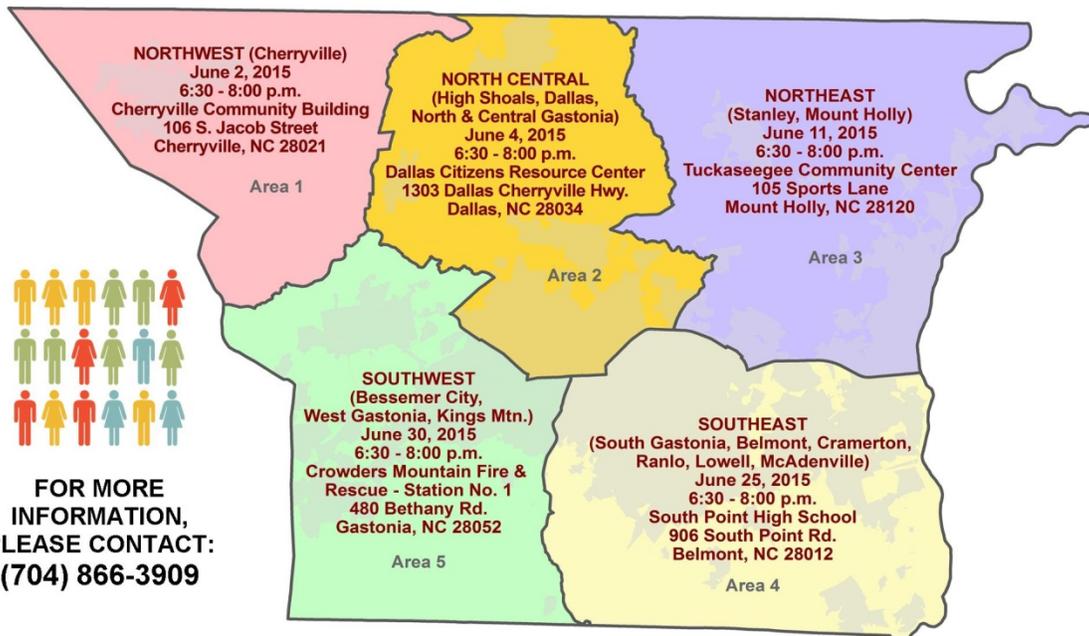
Steering Committee outreach within their personal/professional networks

2015 CITIZEN INPUT MEETINGS CARD



The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a guide for growth and development for the coming years in Gaston County. The final plan will be broken down into five different areas of the county. The plan is being developed by a diverse steering committee appointed from various geographical areas and career industries. Your input at these meetings will help to determine how your area and the county will develop in the next 20 years.

**GASTON COUNTY, NC
2035 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN
CITIZEN INPUT MEETINGS**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:
(704) 866-3909**

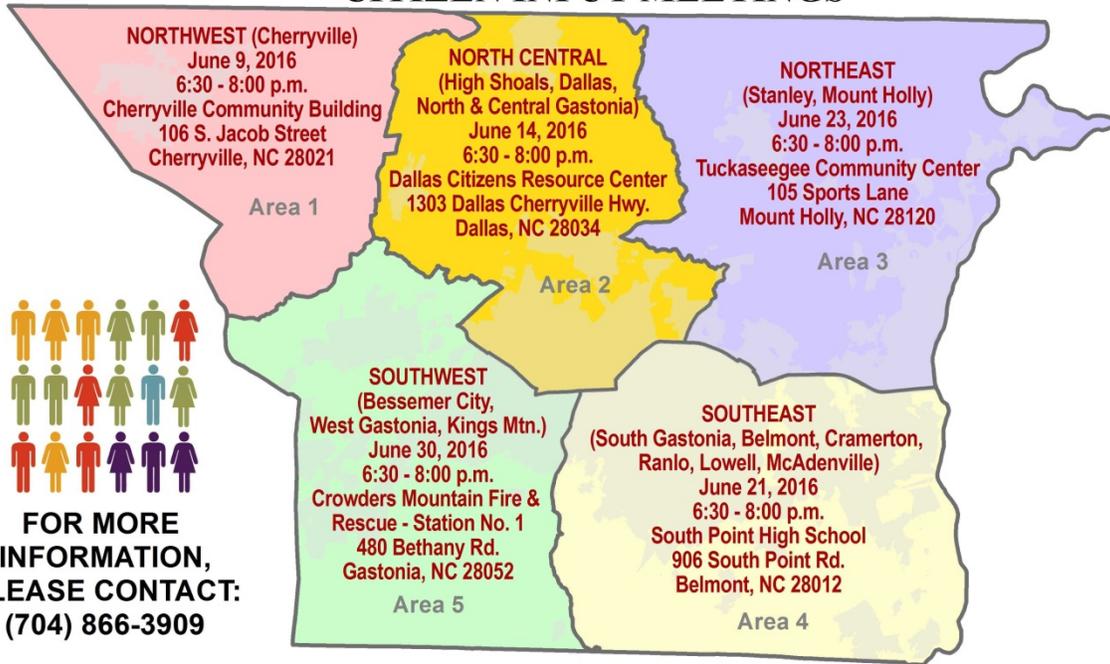
“Come out and give your thoughts about how Gaston County should grow. Please spread the word to friends, relatives and neighbors...”

2016 CITIZEN INPUT MEETINGS CARD



The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a guide for growth and development for the coming years in Gaston County. This is the second round of Citizen Input Meetings. Your input at these meetings is vital to determine how your area and the county will develop in the next 20 years. (see meeting schedules below)

GASTON COUNTY, NC 2035 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN CITIZEN INPUT MEETINGS



“Come out and give your thoughts about how Gaston County should grow. Please spread the word to friends, relatives and neighbors...”

Citizen Input Meeting

Thu, June 09, 2016

Gaston County is holding citizen input meetings throughout the County for their 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The meeting for the Belmont area is scheduled for June 21, 2016 at South Point High School from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a guide for growth and development for the coming years in Gaston County. Your input at these meetings will help to determine how our area and the county will develop in the next 20 years. For more information call 704 866-3909.

— Banner News

Summary of Citizen Input Meetings

Area 1: Rural Gaston/Northwest Gaston (Cherryville and surrounding area)

- **Briefly describe how you envision Gaston County in 20 years:**

Citizens generally want it to stay the same, with some road improvements and better jobs.

- **What do you like about Gaston County?**

Citizens enjoy the location, people, and climate.

- **What do you dislike about Gaston County?**

Citizens dislike the taxes and strict developmental regulations.

- **What factors, existing or future, do you feel negatively impact Gaston County?**

Citizens expressed concern for the lack of good jobs, transportation, and our image.

- **Do you see growth coming to your area? If not, why?**

The majority said 'no' due to lack of transportation and the large area of agriculture.

- **What type(s) of growth would you like to see in your area?**

Citizens wanted little to no growth, including minimal residential and industrial.

- **Do you think Gaston County needs to improve its infrastructure, such as transportation, water, and sewer?**

Citizens want a better, safer transportation network.

- **What do you think would help create more jobs in Gaston County?**

Citizens think lower taxes and better education and transportation would help.

- **Do you have any other comments or areas of interest you would like to see addressed in the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan?**

Citizens want fair treatment among all the residents of Gaston County.

Area 2: North 321 Gaston/North Central Gaston (High Shoals, Dallas, and surrounding area)

- **Briefly describe how you envision Gaston County in 20 years:**

Citizens want it to continue to grow, encouraging many different types of growth.

- **What do you like about Gaston County?**

Citizens love the location, parks, and small town charm.

- **What do you dislike about Gaston County?**

Citizens dislike the county's growth rate, traffic congestion, and taxes.

- **What factors, existing or future, do you feel negatively impact Gaston County?**

Citizens feel that a negative image is our biggest issue, as well as a lack of mass transportation.

- **Do you see growth coming to your area? If not, why?**

Many said 'yes', but some said 'no', due to a lack of land.

- **What type(s) of growth would you like to see in your area?**

Many people wanted mixed-use development, as well as industrial that provided good paying jobs.

- **Do you think Gaston County needs to improve its infrastructure, such as transportation, water, and sewer?**

Citizens want improved transportation, especially around US 321.

- **What do you think would help create more jobs in Gaston County?**

Citizens want to see a better appearance, better policies, and better school programs would help.

- **Do you have any other comments or areas of interest you would like to see addressed in the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan?**

Citizens want to preserve green space and address housing needs.

Area 3: Riverfront Gaston / Northeast Gaston (Stanley, Mt. Holly, and surrounding area)

- **Briefly describe how you envision Gaston County in 20 years:**

Citizens see it as a bustling urban county with good transportation.

- **What do you like about Gaston County?**

Citizens love the friendliness of the people and diversity.

- **What do you dislike about Gaston County?**

Citizens dislike the lack of strong development, with little to no character.

- **What factors, existing or future, do you feel negatively impact Gaston County?**

Citizens expressed concern for our transportation issues and unplanned developments.

- **Do you see growth coming to your area? If not, why?**

Citizens said 'yes' due to the proximity to Charlotte, while others said 'no' due to the dwindling availability of land.

- **What type(s) of growth would you like to see in your area?**

Citizens want to see more residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

- **Do you think Gaston County needs to improve its infrastructure, such as transportation, water, and sewer?**

Citizens feel there is a need to connect disconnected areas of the county and increase river crossings.

- **What do you think would help create more jobs in Gaston County?**

Citizens think less restriction and more infrastructures would help.

- **Do you have any other comments or areas of interest you would like to see addressed in the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan?**

Citizens want better transportation and less regulation.

Area 4: The Garden Gaston / Southeast Gaston (Belmont, Cramerton, and surrounding area)

- **Briefly describe how you envision Gaston County in 20 years:**

Citizens see a sustainable community with a booming population.

- **What do you like about Gaston County?**

Citizens love the low home prices and small town feel, all within a short distance to Charlotte.

- **What do you dislike about Gaston County?**

Citizens had some concerns for leadership.

- **What factors, existing or future, do you feel negatively impact Gaston County?**

Citizens found issues with a negative image as well as aging infrastructure.

- **Do you see growth coming to your area? If not, why?**

Citizens said 'yes' due to the proximity to Charlotte and the airport.

- **What type(s) of growth would you like to see in your area?**

Citizens would like to see the county become more easily traversed, and growth in residential and jobs.

- **Do you think Gaston County needs to improve its infrastructure, such as transportation, water, and sewer?**

Citizens want to improve infrastructure, roads, and walkability.

- **What do you think would help create more jobs in Gaston County?**

Citizens said progressive leaders, tax breaks, and focusing on higher-paying jobs would help.

- **Do you have any other comments or areas of interest you would like to see addressed in the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan?**

Citizens want green preservation and road improvements, while retaining small town charm.

Area 5: Scenic Gaston/Southwest Gaston (Crowders Mountain State Park, Gastonia, and surrounding area)

- **Briefly describe how you envision Gaston County in 20 years:**

Citizens see it as a convenient living option for those who work in Charlotte.

- **What do you like about Gaston County?**

Citizens love the proximity to Charlotte and natural amenities (Crowders Mountain, Catawba River, etc.)

- **What do you dislike about Gaston County?**

Citizens dislike how limited transportation is, traffic, and junked-up yards.

- **What factors, existing or future, do you feel negatively impact Gaston County?**

Citizens said our negative reputation, traffic, and the lack of offering Gaston College as a 4-year school, were negative factors.

- **Do you see growth coming to your area? If not, why?**

Citizens said 'no', due to the high concentration of agriculture.

- **What type(s) of growth would you like to see in your area?**

Citizens want it to stay the same, with some agricultural and industrial growth.

- **Do you think Gaston County needs to improve its infrastructure, such as transportation, water, and sewer?**

Citizens wanted to improve connectivity to Charlotte.

- **What do you think would help create more jobs in Gaston County?**

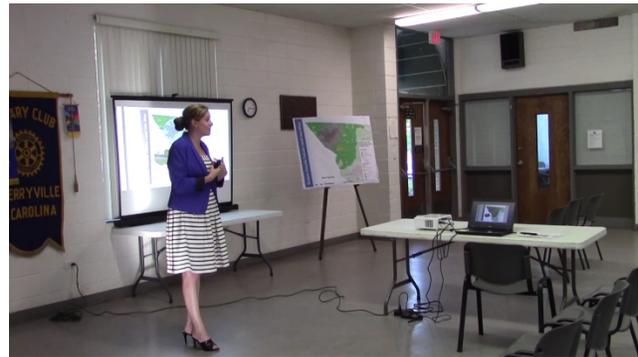
Citizens said tax breaks, breeding a skilled workforce, and transportation projects would help.

- **Do you have any other comments or areas of interest you would like to see addressed in the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan?**

Citizens wanted environmental conservation, affordable housing, and a new bridge to Charlotte.

Presentation of Draft Land Use Plan

In June of 2016, Gaston County Planning Staff presented the initial results of the Future Land Use Plan back to the public in the same locations as the 2015 meetings. While some meetings were better attended than others, many citizens came to offer their support for the planning process and for the future steps in the County. Generally, the residents of the County and staff of various incorporated jurisdictions were pleased with the results. The most stated comment was to emphasize the importance of a bridge crossing in Southeastern Gaston County. Otherwise, residents agreed with suggested land use designations and offered little, to no, changes for the plans.



Citizen Input Meetings

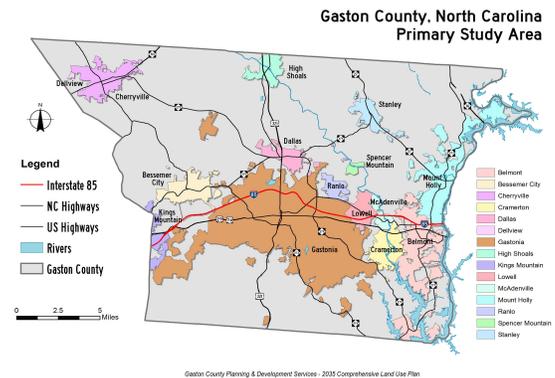


APPENDIX A: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Introduction

This summary presents the background content with which the plan was developed. The summary reflects conditions in the County when the plan was being drafted (2015-2016). Conditions, trends, and dynamics contained in this appendix include:

- Location and Context
- History of Gaston County
- Population and Growth
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Land Use Patterns and Projections
- Economy
- Transportation
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Parks, Open Space, Trails, and Recreation
- Historic Sites and Landmarks
- Infrastructure and Services
- Healthcare in Gaston County
- Education and Libraries
- Emergency Services



Location and Context

Gaston County has a total of 364 square miles, of which 8.1 square miles is water. It is located on the border of South Carolina, and less than 20 miles west of Charlotte, North Carolina. Gaston County contains fifteen municipalities.

These municipalities include:

- Belmont
- Bessemer City
- Cherryville
- Cramerton
- Dallas
- Dellview
- Gastonia
- High Shoals
- Kings Mountain (part)
- Lowell
- McAdenville
- Mount Holly
- Randle
- Spencer Mountain
- Stanley



History of Gaston County

Gaston County was formed from the lower portion of Lincoln County in 1846. The topography of the County is gently rolling to hilly, with several pronounced ridges, including Kings Mountain Pinnacle, Spencer Mountain, Jackson's Knob, Paysour Mountain and Crowders Mountain. Elevations above sea level in Gaston County range from 587 feet in the southeast corner to 1,705 feet at the pinnacle of the Kings Mountain ridge in the southwest. The average elevation is estimated at 825 feet. The County has a temperate climate characterized by moderate temperature variations and moderate humidity. The average temperature is about 60 degrees Fahrenheit, ranging from an average winter temperature of 43 degrees to a summer average of 78 degrees. Average annual precipitation is 44 inches, with 54% relative humidity. The primary components of the drainage system in Gaston County are the Catawba River with the South Fork River as its major tributary.

The early settlers of Gaston County were principally Scotch Irish, German and English. Upon their arrival, they found a few Catawba Indians remaining, but this tribe soon moved to South Carolina. In anticipation of an attack by the Cherokees who were then engaged in border warfare, a Fort was constructed at the junction of the Catawba and South Fork rivers. Relations were maintained with the few Native Americans in the area, and there is no indication that the Fort was ever necessary.

Early Gaston County never knew the agricultural prosperity some of the other counties of the State enjoyed. Normally, the small farms were self-sufficient, but the crop yield was relatively low. Corn, one of the more abundant and prosperous crops, was quickly converted into whiskey by one of the forty eight (48) licensed distilleries in the County. By 1870, Gaston was known as the "Banner Corn Whiskey County of Carolina". In addition to distilleries, mines in various parts of the county yielded in varying quantities – gold, lime, sulfur, tin and iron. Furnaces for smelting ore were found early around Mount Holly, Bessemer City and High Shoals.

Between 1844 and 1848, the industrial boom in Gaston County had its origin. During this three (3) year period, the first three (3) cotton mills in the County were established along the rivers for water power and the textile industry grew. Rural residents moved to the mill villages and towns as the textile industry became the dominant force in the County. Today, some textiles within the County are still present, but fails to compare to their height in the mid-20th century.

The textile industry grew because of the use of steam power and the coming of the railroads. The people that came to work in the mills were rural residents and mountain farmers. This County became the world's largest textile center with over one hundred (100) mills within our County boundary, with also the largest mill in the south, Loray Mill, located in Gastonia. When the textile industry relocated off-shore, Gaston County's economy became more diversified.

The industrial base has continued to diversify. Electrical goods, motor oil filters, chemicals, plastics, brick and tile, business forms, resistors, corrugated boxes, lithium compounds, and a host of other items are currently manufactured in Gaston County to balance out our industrial community.

The Gaston County public school system is the ninth largest in the State with an enrollment of better than 31,256 students. It is a consolidated system assuring the same quality education for all students both urban and rural. The school system includes special programs, which are available for exceptional students, as well as for the handicapped and the learning disabled.

Institutions of higher education in the County include Gaston College, a two (2) year county-supported community college operating under the North Carolina Board of Community Colleges and Belmont Abbey College, a private four (4) year liberal arts college that also boasts a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Gaston County is home to CaroMont Health, one of the most advanced health care systems in the region. CaroMont employs 3,800 dedicated professionals and includes Gaston Memorial Hospital and a network of primary and specialty physician offices. Gaston Memorial was named one of Thomson Reuter's Top 100 hospitals. The 435-bed general and acute care facility offers many services including:

- CaroMont Cancer Center
- CaroMont Diabetes Center
- CaroMont Heart Center
- CaroMont Emergency Trauma Services
- CaroMont Surgical Services
- The Birthplace at Gaston Memorial
- Courtland Terrace Long Term Care Facility
- Gaston Hospice

Carolinas Rehabilitation - Mount Holly is one of the newest rehabilitation locations for Carolinas Healthcare Systems (CHS). The 40-bed, 48,000 square foot inpatient facility treats stroke, orthopedics and other general rehabilitation patients. Outpatient services include physician services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, workers compensation as well as treatment for neurological disorders. Features include: indoor therapy gym and an outdoor therapy courtyard; simulated residential environment.

Over the last twenty five (25) years, the Gaston County Board of Commissioners tasked the Economic Development Commission with the responsibility of creating a competitive business environment. Since 1990s, the County has developed a number of industrial, business and office parks. In recent years the County has developed one of the premier industrial parks in the Gastonia Technology Park. To supplement the creation of a physical environment, the County has supported the Business Retention and Expansion Program in the Economic Development Commission. This is a vital service to existing companies and newly located firms in Gaston County.



Population and Growth Context

The population of Gaston County was 206,086 according to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, an 8.7% increase from 2000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, the population estimate for Gaston County in 2015 is 213,442. The Gaston County population is predicted to grow approximately 9.2% approximately, with current conditions, between 2010 and 2020.

Table A.1 - Gaston County Municipal Population 1980-2010

Municipality	1980 Population	1990 Population	2000 Population	2010 Population
Belmont	4,607	8,434	8,705	10,076
Bessemer City	4,787	4,698	5,119	5,340
Cherryville	4,844	4,756	5,361	5,760
Cramerton	1,869	2,371	2,976	4,165
Dallas	3,340	3,012	3,402	4,488
Dellview	7	10	11	13
Gastonia	47,333	54,732	69,661	71,741
High Shoals	586	605	729	696
Kings Mountain (part)	650	756	590	1,054
Lowell	2,917	2,704	2,662	3,526
McAdenville	947	830	619	651
Mount Holly	4,530	7,710	9,618	13,656
Ranlo	1,774	1,650	2,198	3,434
Spencer Mountain	169	135	51	37
Stanley	2,341	2,823	3,053	3,556
County Balance	81,867	79,867	75,610	77,893

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population Density and Distribution

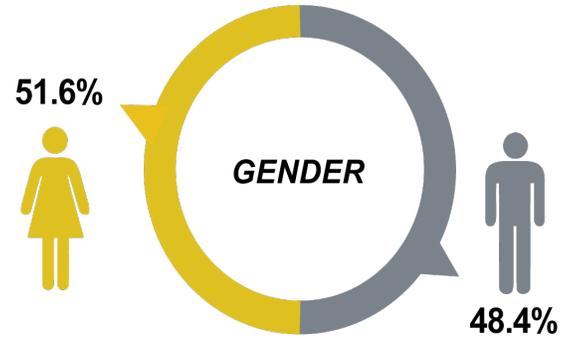
Most of the population growth in Gaston County between 2000 and 2010 occurred in the County's eastern towns near the Mecklenburg County border, including Mount Holly, Belmont, and Cramerton. Among the identified small areas within Gaston County, the population grew fastest in the Southeast, including the City of Gastonia from 69,661 to 76,685 persons. The County is becoming more densely populated, as the Census Bureau 2010 population density for the County was 578 persons per square mile, when compared to the Census 2000 results of 534 persons per square mile. This is a 7.6% increase over the ten year period, and recent trend data suggests that it continues to increase. The more dense areas are predominantly in and around the incorporated cities and towns where urban services i.e. public water and sewer, etc. tend to be available. This is further supported and correlated with housing units per square mile data which showed an increase as well of 11%, factored from 249 housing units per square mile in 2010 to 221 in 2000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total Urban Population is 165,595 (80.4%) and the Rural Population is 40,491 (19.7%) where the City of Gastonia is the most populated city with 73,209 persons and the City of Mount Holly in second most populated city with 13,094 persons approximately. Belmont is third with 10,076 persons.

Population Age

According to the US Census Bureau, the median age in Gaston County is 39.4 years – higher than the State (37.4) and the U.S. (37.2).

Gender Characteristics

The female population of Gaston County is greater than the male population, with 51.6% females and 48.4% males respectively.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau – ACS 2009-2014

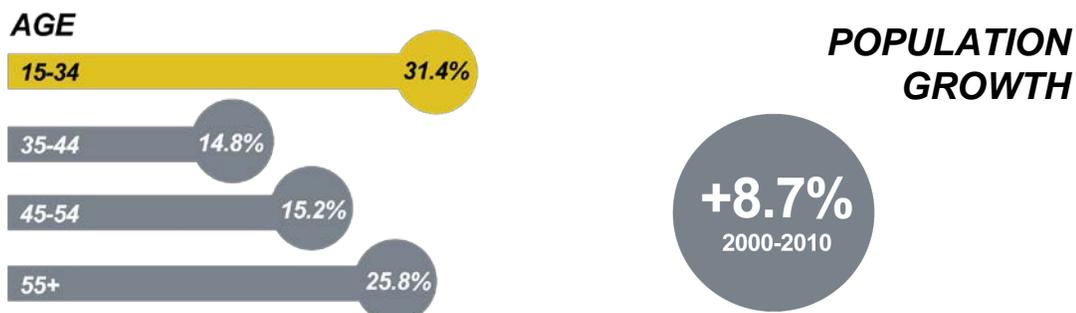
Racial Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), Gaston County is predominantly White (80.2%) with Black/African American as the next largest racial group (16.1%). The percentage of Hispanic/Latino origins is 5.9%, two or more races 1.5% and Asian alone 1.2%. The Foreign born population is about 4.8%.

Population Trends and Projections

Gaston County growth has been slower than in other counties over the past decade. The County population percent change between 2010 and 2015 was 3.6%. The total population for Gaston County based on the Decennial 2010 Census was 206,086, and the total population for 2000 was 190,365. That is a difference of 8.6% increase in ten years. Mount Holly, Belmont, and Cramerton have been the fastest growing communities in Gaston County in the last decade (see Table A.1).

The following infographic, table and graph represent the regional population projections for Gaston County and the surrounding areas. These projections were prepared based on previous population trends, local real estate market analysis, current land use conditions, and discussions with the economic development professionals.



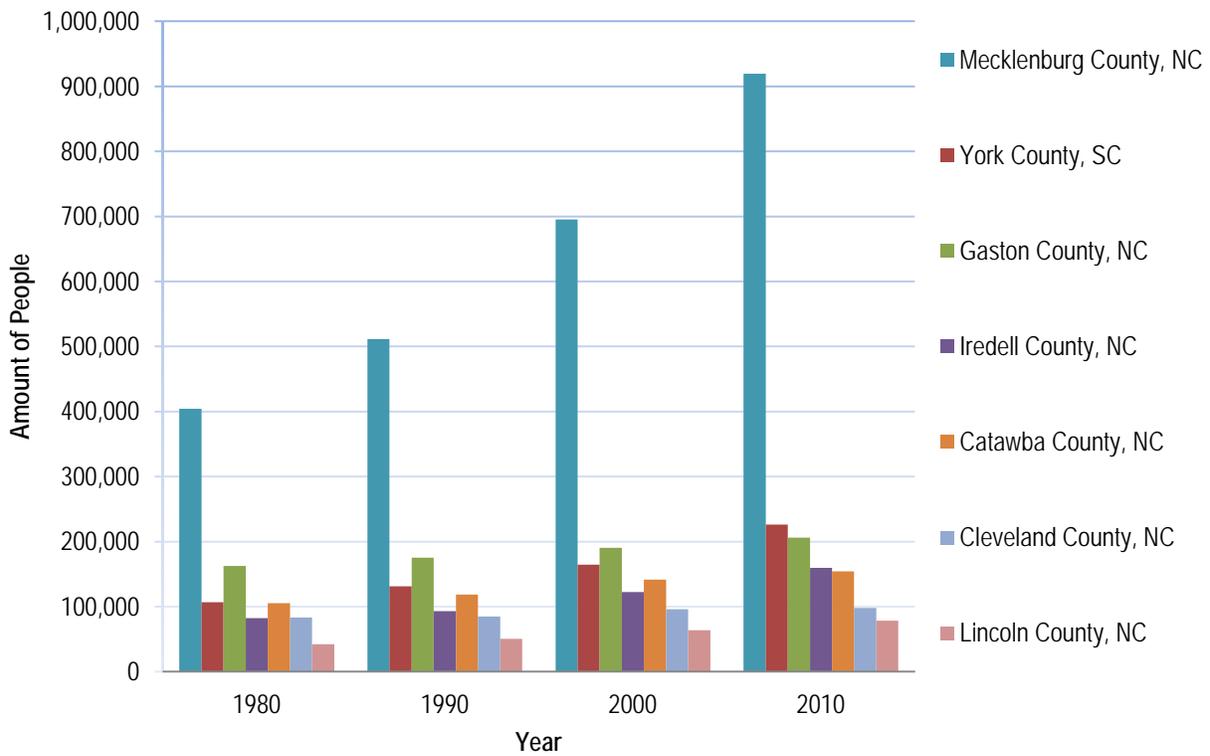
Source: U.S. Census Bureau – ACS 2009-2014

Table A.2 - Regional Population Trends

Regional Pop. Projections (Counties)	2000	2010	Total Increase	Annual % Change	2015	2025	2035
Catawba County, NC	141,685	154,358	12,673	0.9%	161,227	175,576	191,202
Cleveland County, NC	96,287	98,078	1,791	0.2%	99,010	100,891	102,808
Iredell County, NC	122,660	159,437	36,777	3.0%	183,353	238,358	309,866
Lincoln County, NC	63,780	78,265	14,485	2.3%	87,148	106,931	131,204
Mecklenburg County, NC	695,454	919,628	224,174	3.2%	1,067,688	1,411,484	1,865,981
York County, SC	164,614	226,073	61,459	3.7%	268,236	368,287	505,659
Gaston County, NC	190,365	206,086	15,721	0.8%	214,639	232,454	251,747

Source: Based on US Census Bureau Data and Other Relevant Resources

Regional Area Growth (1980-2010)



Source: US Census Bureau

Housing and Neighborhoods Context

Overview

The purpose of the Housing and Neighborhoods context is to establish strategies that will guide housing construction in Gaston County for the next twenty (20) years. The goal of these strategies is to ensure the availability of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for all County residents. Gaston County's population has grown moderately over the past ten (10) years however it is expected to continue growing at a much faster pace in the next twenty (20) years as the region begins to build out towards Gaston County. The population growth within Gaston County will demand approximately 20,000 new housing units over a twenty (20) year period. Ten percent (10%) of units will be attached multi-family with the remaining 90% being single-family housing, including manufactured homes.

According to the 2010 US Census, Gaston County's population was comprised of 206,086 persons living in approximately 88,686 housing units. From 2000 to 2010, the number of housing units increased by 12.5% from 78,842 to 88,686. The U.S. Census Bureau Building Permit Tracking Data noted an additional 5.5% or 5,974 dwelling units in 2005-2010, resulting in the total of 88,686 dwelling units for Gaston County. With this rate of growth, County needs are highlighted, and housing is one of the most basic needs of the population. In order for Gaston County to accommodate a growing population, it will be necessary to ensure that adequate housing opportunities are provided for all residents.

One broad area of consensus that emerged from the community input meetings was the desire to preserve and enhance Gaston County's quality of life and livability. Among the methods identified from responses provided at citizen input meetings, was the emphasis on directing residential growth towards urban services as a key to achieving this goal, as a way to reduce suburban sprawl, and ensure the stability and livability of neighborhoods and communities throughout the county. The Gaston County Vision Statement is written from the context of a twenty (20) year horizon into the future. The following values include Gaston County's expected housing and quality of life accomplishments by 2035:

- ✓ *Gaston County has retained the unique characteristics of its cities, towns, rural settlements, and its historic buildings and districts;*
- ✓ *Gaston County has raised the bar for development quality through innovative development that enhances community character while meeting needs for housing affordability;*
- ✓ *Gaston County's urban areas have witnessed downtown revitalization, infill development and creative re-use of historic buildings;*
- ✓ *Avoidance of sprawl and other forms dispersed, inefficient, low density (bedroom community and trip commercial) development;*
- ✓ *Compact, pedestrian-friendly development patterns that incorporate mixed uses and densities, conserve resources, and encourage transit, biking, and walking as convenient alternatives to automobile use.*

In our cities and urban areas we have achieved ...

- ✓ *Compact, contiguous and higher-density development of residential, commercial and employment uses efficiently served by existing or expanded public facilities and services;*
- ✓ *Well-defined urban edges designed and sized to accommodate the largest proportion of the County's growth, and within which consistent County policies are applied for land use, development standards, annexations and public facility extensions; and revitalization, redevelopment and adaptive re-use of underutilized buildings and sites.*

In our rural areas we have achieved ...

- ✓ *Retention of farmland, rural character, and lifestyles consistent with sound, well-managed growth;*
- ✓ *Reduced pressure for development of farmland and greater options for large landowners;*
- ✓ *Reduced pressure on farming operations from population growth in rural areas; and*
- ✓ *Compatible, low-density development that retains rural character.*

It is extremely important that the focus on the Housing Context is considered when reading this section. The County plays a very limited role in providing housing. In fact, the Housing Context almost exclusively addresses private-sector entities. The County's role in providing housing is to guide the type, location and density of housing by means of the Gaston County Comprehensive Plan and Unified Development Ordinance.

The first section of the Housing Context presents an overview of Gaston County's projected housing growth through 2035. The second section details housing characteristics, including housing stock by type, tenure, age, household size and household income. The third section of the Context addresses the housing issues facing Gaston County, i.e. housing costs and sprawl. The final section of the Housing Context presents goals and strategies describing what Gaston County aims to achieve, and actions required to meet those goals.

Background

As noted in the population context, the current 2015 population of Gaston County is approximately 214,639 persons with an annual increase of 0.8%. By 2035, the population is expected to increase almost 16.8% to 251,747 persons. Total families are declining, and family size is decreasing. The majority populations in the county are middle-aged or senior citizens. As baby boomers begin to retire, the amount of elderly persons in Gaston County will rise significantly. Gaston County also has a high percentage of workers who commute to Charlotte for work, and the number of commuters is expected to continue rising. Gaston County's median household income of \$42,045 in 2014 is significantly lower than the 2014 state average of \$45,946, as well as all other neighboring counties in North Carolina. Mecklenburg County is expected to continue to have a higher median income

than Gaston County in the future. Gaston County's poverty level declined slightly from 2000 to 2010. The 2014 poverty level (18.10%) is higher than the state average (17.5%), however.

Housing Growth

Due to the increasing population of Gaston County, housing stock must be continually expanded to meet housing needs. The table below (Table A.3), 1990-2035 Housing Units Growth, shows the total number of housing units in the County in 2000-2010. During the next twenty (20) years, Gaston County is expected to create around 12,010 additional housing units, which will double the current amount of housing stock. Fortunately, there is an adequate supply of land identified on the Gaston County Future Land Use Map to accommodate the projected housing needs.

Table A.3 - 1990-2035 Housing Units Growth - Gaston County, N.C.

Year	Housing Units	Annual Percent Change	Occupied Units	Average Household Size
1990	69,133	16.8%	66,088	2.65
2000	78,842	14%	73,936	2.53
2010	88,686	12.5%	79,867	2.54
2015	91,088	2.7%	80,175	2.53
2025	93,410	2.6%	89,650	2.52
2035	95,810	2.6%	91,632	2.45

Source: US Census Bureau

The number of household units in Gaston County has increased 9.8% in the past ten (10) years, which is a comparably greater increase than the state average of 9.6%. This indicates that Gaston County is a moderate growth area within the state. However, the percentage of growth seems to be declining each decade. In addition to declining percentage growth margin, the average household size is also gradually decreasing. Gaston County's average persons per household dropped from 2.65 in 1990 to 2.54 in 2010. As the total number of persons per household decreases over the next twenty five (25) years, steps should be taken to accommodate smaller families. The decrease in average household size reflects an overall trend for the state, as well as for the entire county.

Housing Characteristics

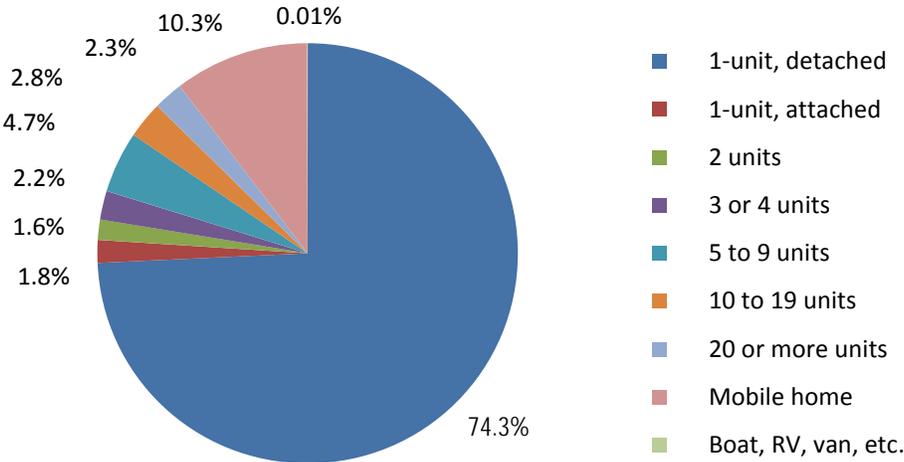
Housing Types

Gaston County contains a variety of housing types, which include single-family, attached and detached, multifamily structures, and manufactured housing. The figure below (2014 Gaston County Housing Type Details) demonstrates the current percentage share in each housing types, while Table A.4 presents actual numbers and percentages to compare. The majority of housing is single-family detached (74.3%), typically located in large-lot subdivision. Concerns expressed during the Gaston County 2035 Comprehensive Plan Citizen Input Meetings was that the continuation of large-lot, detached single-family subdivisions as the majority housing type contributes significantly to



sprawl, housing affordability issues, and loss of the unique small town, rural character of Gaston County. Diversification of housing choices, including compact development within the municipalities and rural housing in the remaining communities are desired. It should be noted that triplex and quadraplex housing units are almost all located within the city of Gastonia.

2014 Gaston County Housing Type Details



Source: American Community Survey - US Census Bureau

Table A.4 - 2014 Gaston County Housing Type Details

Units in Structure	Gaston County, North Carolina	
	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	89,356	100%
1-unit, detached	66,356	74.3%
1-unit, attached	1,573	1.8%
2 units	1,393	1.6%
3 or 4 units	1,979	2.2%
5 to 9 units	4,211	4.7%
10 to 19 units	2,538	2.8%
20 or more units	2,025	2.3%
Mobile homes/Manufactured homes	9,243	10.3%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	38	0.0%

Source: American Community Survey - US Census Bureau

Multi-family units are becoming increasingly popular, and mobile home or manufacturing housing is still common in Gaston County. The next highest category is manufacture housing with 10.3%. However, it should be noted that Gaston County's percentage of manufactured housing is lower than the state's average of 12.9%. During the next twenty (20) years, Gaston County is expected to increase its levels of town homes, apartments, and other attached, multi-unit structures. The major contributing factors to the change in unit structures are due to changing needs of the population. Single-family detached housing units will remain popular, but attached one-unit structures and multifamily units will rival single-family detached units for market share in the future.



Eagle Park Subdivision – Belmont, NC

Housing Composition by Bedrooms

The majority of housing units in Gaston County contain three (3) bedrooms; however, most renters lease units with two (2) or fewer bedrooms. Between 2000 and 2010, one (1) bedroom units increased as a percentage of total housing units. The relatively small number of bedrooms per house or apartment is the result of fewer members per household as well as an increasing elderly population. In addition to the stable level of one (1) bedroom units, however, three (3) or more bedroom units increased. This increase can be attributed to rising incomes and housing valuations.

Table A.5 - Gaston County Housing Composition by Number of Bedrooms

Number of Bedrooms	2000	2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
No bedroom	420	357	366	834	2,130	2,542	2,791	2,767
1 bedroom	5,345	5,441	5,092	4,863	4,855	5,119	5,193	4,968
2 bedrooms	25,272	28,803	28,558	27,889	26,644	25,807	25,538	25,153
3 bedrooms	35,374	40,226	42,174	41,957	41,923	41,987	42,336	43,767
4 bedrooms	6,573	8,806	9,099	9,803	10,510	10,884	10,744	10,331
5 or more bedrooms	952	1,483	2,050	2,190	2,161	2,336	2,345	2,370

Source: American Community Survey - US Census Bureau

Housing Costs

Gaston County's cost of living is relatively comparable to Charlotte, NC, because of the proximity in distance. Census data also support this assumption. Gaston County's median house value of \$137,500 is about \$27,800 lower than the State average, as shown in Table A.6. The County is continually receiving new occupants from the Charlotte Metropolitan Area, which is a major contributing factor to increased house value. As noted earlier, the amount of commuters to Charlotte continues to rise, and many of these people are choosing to purchase homes in Gaston County.

Table A.6 - Gaston County Value of Housing Units

Home Value	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2010	Year 2014
Less than \$50,000	4,888	5,699	4,732	5,835
\$50,000 to \$99,999	20,642	18,302	14,191	12,392
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10,140	16,294	11,932	12,283
\$150,000 to \$199,999	3,834	6,148	9,170	10,127
\$200,000 to \$299,999	2,054	3,501	7,879	5,839
\$300,000 to \$499,999	621	1,625	2,822	3,399
\$500,000 to \$999,999	175	645	1,411	993
\$1,000,000 or more	23	25	372	191
Median (dollars)	\$90,300	\$105,700	\$127,400	\$137,500

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Occupancy Rates and Tenure

Approximately 89% of housing units in Gaston County are currently occupied, with vacancy rate of 11%, which is lower than the state average of 15%. Seasonal, recreational or occasional use occupancy rates demonstrate that Gaston County's population is mostly comprised of permanent residents. Housing Tenure describes the occupants of units. They are either owner-occupied or renter-occupied. Owner-occupied housing comprises 59.5% of the housing market, and rental housing equals approximately 29.2% of the housing market. The percentage share of rental housing is expected to increase as new residents move to Gaston County. The 2014 total of Owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage in North Carolina is 1,627,256, and in Gaston County 34,580.

Table A.7 - 2014 Housing Occupancy

Subject	North Carolina		Gaston County, NC	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
HOUSING OCCUPANCY				
Total housing units	4,385,668	100%	89,356	100%
Occupied housing units	3,742,514	85.2%	79,209	88.6%
Vacant housing units	643,154	14.8%	10,147	11.4%
Owner occupied	2,460,360	56.1%	53,135	59.5%
Renter occupied	1,276,229	29.1%	26,074	29.2%
Owner with mortgage	2,898,927	66.1%	34,580	65.1%
Owner w/out mortgage	1,486,742	33.9%	18,556	34.9%
Homeowner vacancy rate	2.4	(X)	1.8	(X)
Rental vacancy rate	8.2	(X)	8.9	(X)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Urban and Rural Housing Composition

Gaston County is comprised of three hundred and fifty six (356) square miles of incorporated and unincorporated land. Urban and Rural Housing Composition, as shown below, shows that as of the 2010 census, approximately 19.4% of the total households in Gaston County were located in the unincorporated (rural) areas of the County. This percentage has declined since 2000 when 21.7% of households were in unincorporated areas. As can be seen in the table below, the total urban households are expected to continue to grow at a fairly high rate over the next twenty (20) years. Rural households are expected to increase very little; however, housing within urban clusters will continue to increase.

Table A.8 - Urban and Rural Housing Composition

Gaston County Urban and Rural Households	2000	% of Total 2000	2010	% of Total 2010	2015	2025	2035	% of Total 2035
Total of Households:	78,842	100%	88,686	100%	91,088	93,410	95,810	100%
Urban:	61,732	78.3%	71,486	80.6%	73,488	75,545	77,660	81.1%
Rural:	17,110	21.7%	17,200	19.4%	17,600	17,865	18,150	18.9%

Source: US Census Bureau

Age of Housing

Most of the housing stock in Gaston County is less than twenty five (25) years old.

Table A.9 - Gaston County, NC - Year Structure Built

Subject	North Carolina		Gaston County, NC	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT				
Total housing units	4,385,668	100%	89,356	100%
Built 2010 or later	62,763	1.40%	660	0.70%
Built 2000 to 2009	908,670	20.70%	13,916	15.60%
Built 1990 to 1999	903,261	20.60%	13,975	15.60%
Built 1980 to 1989	712,627	16.20%	13,235	14.80%
Built 1970 to 1979	632,427	14.40%	13,481	15.10%
Built 1960 to 1969	422,767	9.60%	12,250	13.70%
Built 1950 to 1959	330,717	7.50%	10,236	11.50%
Built 1940 to 1949	169,560	3.90%	4,675	5.20%
Built 1939 or earlier	242,876	5.50%	6,928	7.80%

Source: US Census Bureau

Housing Issues

Housing Diversity

Gaston County's overall population continues to grow at a moderate rate. The population context confirms this, showing trends in family structure and income levels that have occurred in the past decade. Within the County, families are shrinking in size and the elderly population is continuing to increase. These facts, coupled with the population growth recently experienced by Gaston County, point towards a need for more housing alternatives. The statistics presented in this context reinforce this need. The addition of new housing type alternatives and required housing-type diversity within Gaston County will help relieve current fears and financial constraints expressed with a continued residential development pattern of only detached single-family housing.

There is an increasing demand for housing to accommodate person (empty nesters, the elderly, young single professionals, etc.) that do not meet the traditional household profile of a family with children. A variety of regulatory approaches should be explored to meet these needs, beginning with regulatory changes to encourage a mixing of housing types and sizes within new developments. A large-scale development, for example, could include areas for single-family lots, townhouses, and multifamily units. Regulatory approaches to diversifying the housing mix should be based upon incentives or other forms of tradeoffs. For example, some communities in North Carolina have limits on the size of a certain percentage of the units in developments in certain districts to make them affordable and suitable for smaller households. This approach might be explored for application in Gaston County. Large parts of Gaston County are currently zoned at a relatively low density. Rezoning of large tracts to higher densities often generates public opposition. Communities across the country have addressed this problem through options ranging from modified zoning and development standards that provide density incentives and/or flexible land use mixes, to disincentives for suburban development.

Affordable Housing

Current market trends indicate a steady upward shift in house sales prices that is making it more difficult for middle-income households in particular to be able to purchase a home. Multifamily structures are providing relatively inexpensive housing options for these households. It should also be noted that the percentage of manufactured housing remained stable from 1990-2000, indicating that stricter zoning regulations and different housing choices are beginning to slow the proliferation of manufactured homes in Gaston County. Also, the market has had an impact on the reduction as well.

As shown in Table A.10, between years 2000-2010, the median house value rose from \$86,600 to \$126,800. The rise can be attributed to inflation and increased demand. Over the next twenty (20) years, the median value is expected to rise to \$165,250. Contrary to the median house value the median gross (cash) rent remained relatively stable during the past decade. Rent increased approximately \$368 in 2000 to \$678 in 2010. Linear projections suggest that rent will be around \$950-\$1,100 per month in (2035), however, as more citizens move to smaller housing options, which are abundant in apartment complexes or assisted-living communities, the demand for these housing options may cause an additional increase in monthly rent.

Table A.10 - Projected House Values and Median Rent

	1990	2000	2010	2015	2025	2035
Median House Value	\$66,377	\$86,600	\$126,800	\$127,500	\$141,500	\$165,250
Median Gross Rent	\$368	\$550	\$678	\$725	\$820	\$950

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

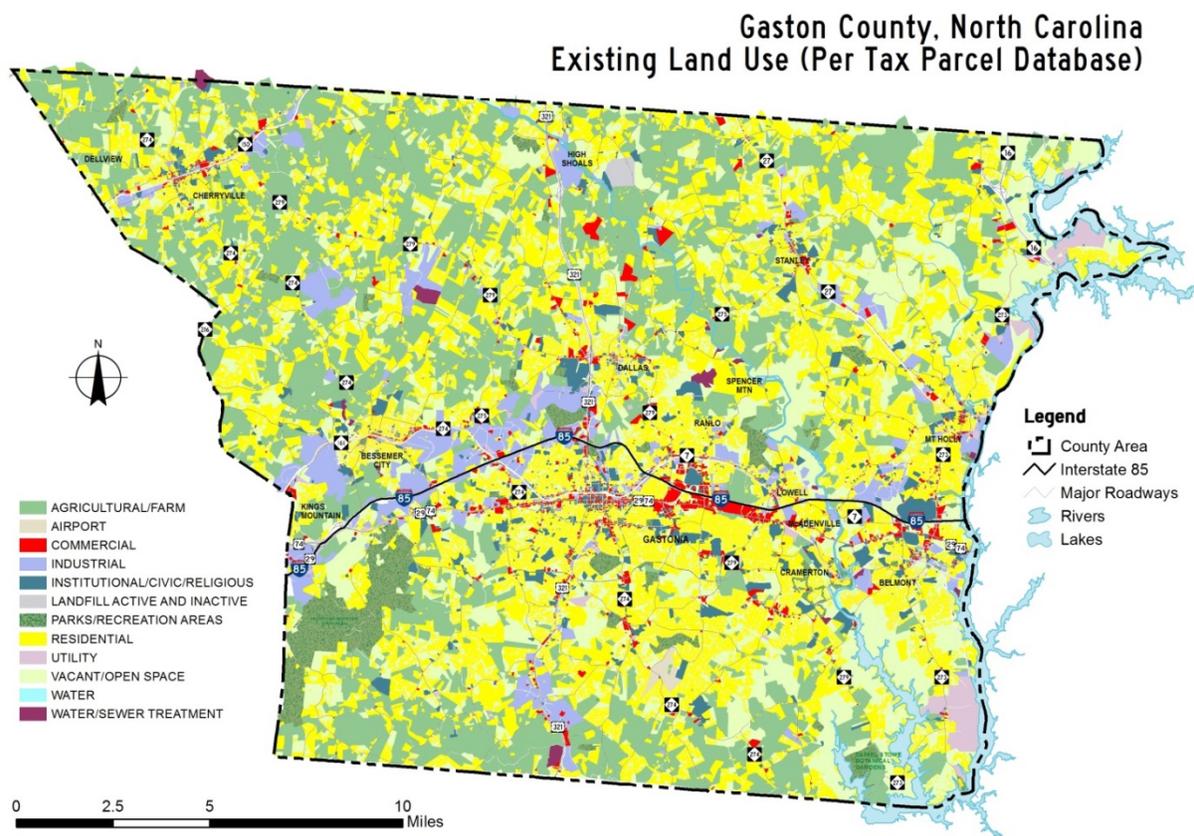
Housing Age and Quality

The median year of construction for owner-occupied houses is 1996. The median year of construction for renter-occupied houses is 1985. Less than 1% of all housing types lack complete plumbing facilities or kitchen facilities. Based on the 2014 ACS – 5 year estimates, 43.8% of the total houses use utility gas, 48.7% use electricity, 3.1% bottle, tank, or LP gas, 2.5% use fuel oil, kerosene, and 1.5% use other fuels.

Land Use Patterns and Projections

Existing Land Use

Seventy nine (79%) percent of the land in the County is unincorporated. The majority of all land in the County is agricultural and is concentrated in the unincorporated areas (27%). Approximately 30% of the County is used for residential purposes; 30% of lands in the unincorporated portions of the County are residential. The majority of very low-density residential uses and mobile homes are found in the unincorporated County while most higher-density residential uses (multi-family and group housing) are within incorporated communities. The majority of employment and commercial uses are located in incorporated communities.



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Table A.11 - Gaston County, NC - Existing Land Use

Land Use	Unincorp. Total (Acreage)	% Unincorp.	Total County (Acreage)	% Total County
Agricultural				
<i>Agricultural Subtotal</i>	53,204	79%	64,053	27%
Residential				
Single-Family Residential (Large lot 100+ acres)	556	0.82%	1,800	0.77%
Single-Family Residential (20-99 acres)	5,103	7.55%	6,512	2.79%
Single-Family Residential (5-20 acres)	12,725	18.82%	16,029	6.87%
Single-Family Residential (Less than 5 acres)	26,255	38.83%	46,213	19.80%
Multi-Family Residential	92	0.14%	1,107	0.47%
Group or Other Housing	837	1.24%	1,886	0.81%
Mobile Homes/Manufactured Homes	4,188	6.19%	4,891	2.10%
<i>Residential Subtotal</i>	44,517	65.83%	70,433	30.18%
Non-Residential				
Commercial	1,163	1.72%	4,183	0.01%
Industrial	3,431	5.07%	14,358	6.15%
Office	59	0.09%	431	0.18%
<i>Non-Residential Subtotal</i>	4,653	6.88%	18,972	8.13%
Other				
Civic-Institutional	1,828	2.70%	6,969	2.99%
Vacant Lots & Open Space	18,789	27.79%	45,383	19.45%
Parks Recreation	872	1.29%	7,106	3.04%
Landfill & Other	314	0.46%	681	0.29%
<i>Other Subtotal</i>	21,803	32.24%	60,139	25.77%
Total	67,621	100%	233,374	100%

Source: Gaston County Planning & Development Services and Gaston County Tax Office

Existing Zoning

The County is currently zoned predominantly residential (94%), the majority of which is low density single-family residential development. The second largest category is land zoned for Industrial purposes (4%). Remaining zoning comprises (4%).

Table A.12 - Gaston County Zoning Districts

Zoning District	Total Acres	% Total
Residential		
R-1	114,815.49	86.04%
R-2	5,437.95	4.07%
R-3	1,763.61	1.32%
RLD	204.06	0.15%
RMF	157.40	0.12%
RS-12	2,274.30	1.70%
RS-20	618.12	0.46%
RS-8	734.22	0.55%
Commercial		
C-1	767.26	0.57%
C-2	237.12	0.18%
C-3	734.21	0.55%
Industrial		
I-1	365.8	0.27%
I-2	2,309.82	1.73%
I-3	2,291.34	1.72%
I-U	7.64	0.01%
Conditional Districts		
CD/C-1 & CD/C-2	14.26	0.01%
CD/I-1	0.66	0.00%
CD/O-M	9.65	0.01%
CD/OLC	0.79	0.00%
CD/RMF	342.76	0.26%
Conditional Uses		
CU/C-1 & CU/C-3	56.86	0.04%
CU/I-2	63.2	0.05%
CU/R-1, CU/R-2 & CU/R-3	13.95	0.01%
CU/RLD	17	0.01%
CU/RS-12	3.22	0.00%
Other Zoning		
NBS	16.25	0.01%
O-1	7.62	0.01%
OLC	0.13	0.00%
TMU	184.89	0.14%
Grand Total	133,449.58	100%

Gaston County Planning & Development Services

New Development

Residential Development Activity

Between 2000 and 2015, the number of residential building permits issued in Gaston County averaged slightly more than 900 per year. However, based on 2015 year-to-date data, 867 annual residential permits were issued (see Table A.13). This continuing decline results in a 2007-2015 annual average of about 700 residential permits. The decrease in permitting during the last four (4) years is a result of lack of water/sewer infrastructure outside of the municipal areas and the downturn in the national and regional housing markets known as the “Great Moderation” or “Great Recession”.

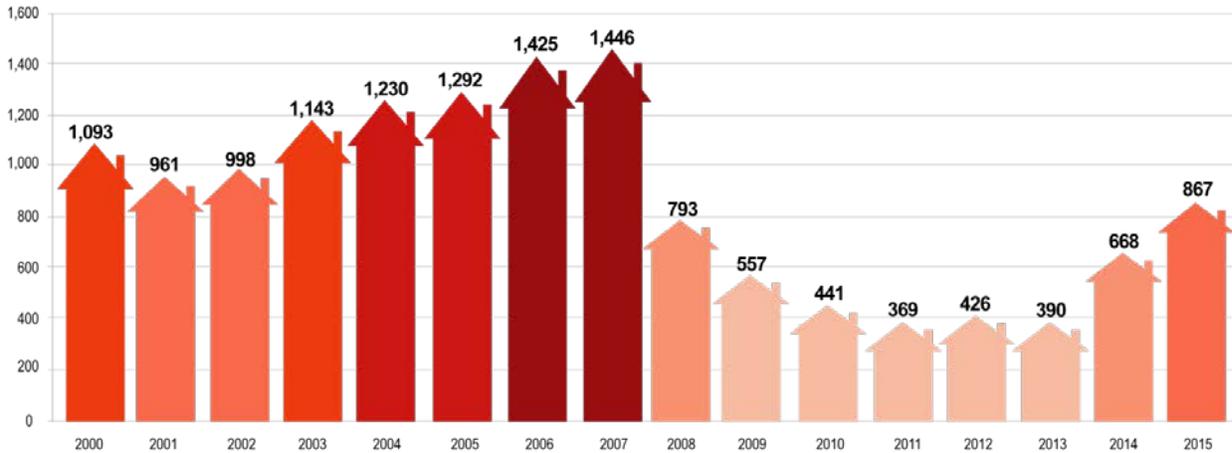
In 2013-2014 Belmont, Mount Holly, Cramerton and some areas in Gastonia start seeing some solid recovery in residential development. New home construction is on an upward trend, but some cities still issued 25-30% fewer residential construction permits in 2015 than in 2007. (See figure below – Total Residential Building Permits)

Table A. 13 - Gaston County Residential Building Permits

Year	Total of Building Permits
2000	1,093
2001	961
2002	998
2003	1,143
2004	1,230
2005	1,292
2006	1,425
2007	1,446
2008	793
2009	577
2010	441
2011	369
2012	426
2013	390
2014	668
2015	867

U.S. Census Bureau – Building Permits Data

Total Residential Building Permits



U.S. Census Bureau – Building Permits Data

Approved Subdivisions

Between 2000 and 2015, there were 139 developed subdivisions within Gaston County's jurisdiction, with a total of 3313 lots. Of those, 984 lots are unimproved, or vacant. The Southwest Small Area Planning District contains the most unimproved lots with a total of 241. The Northcentral Small Area Planning District contains the most improved lots with only 137 lots calculated as unimproved.

The Tax Assessor office calculated 103,779 property parcels located within Gaston County. Throughout the County, 74,323 are listed as residential properties. As of 2010, the county has seen increased residential development within the incorporated areas in the Southeast Small Area Planning District. With the addition of McLean South Shore and The Conservancy at McLean, which were approved in 2014 by the City of Belmont, along with the expansion of Cramer Woods subdivisions which are located in Gastonia, significant growth is expected. Several other properties developed in the eastern portion of the County will also contribute to a significant impact on that area in terms of land use, road networks, schools, infrastructure, utilities and emergency services.

Economy

Employment Trends

Gaston County had 62,250 full-time business and industrial employees within its borders in 2014, representing 6.5% of the Charlotte MSA’s 954,262 jobs. This is almost three percentage points below its share of MSA population. The total number of 2014 businesses with paid employees in Gaston County was 3,917, and in the Charlotte’s MSA were 56,408 establishments.

Table A.14 - Gaston County Full Time Employment by Industry 2014

Industry	Total of Establishments	Total of Employees
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3	10
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2	3
Utilities	23	595
Construction	342	2,486
Manufacturing	269	13,003
Wholesale trade	214	3,800
Retail trade	631	9,380
Transportation and warehousing	96	1,398
Information	28	480
Finance and insurance	203	1,170
Real estate and rental and leasing	158	1,317
Professional, scientific, and technical services	292	1,335
Management of companies and enterprises	32	866
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	207	3,606
Educational services	35	1,045
Health care and social assistance	444	11,535
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	43	681
Accommodation and food services	356	6,599
Other services (except public administration)	535	2,939
Industries not classified	4	2
Total	3,917	62,250

U.S. Census Bureau - 2014 County Business Patterns

Gaston County had 90,343 employed people 16 years and over in 2014, where 9,350 of those people are employed in the Government sector. The 2014 average weekly wage in Gaston County was \$757, in North Carolina it was \$890, and in the U.S. it was \$1,035.

The total number of businesses (all sizes) created between 2014-2015 was 711 according to the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The total available Industrial Buildings was 39, with 4,065 total Private Industry establishments, 289 Manufacturing establishments, and 4,402 Self Employed businesses. Table A.15 shows Gaston County full time employment by industry 2010-2014.

Table A.15 - Gaston County Full Time Employment by Industry 2010-2014

Industry	2010	2014	Total Change	Total % Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	10	10	0	0%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3	3	0	0%
Utilities	698	595	-103	-14.8%
Construction	2,717	2,486	-231	-8.5%
Manufacturing	10,835	13,003	2,168	20.0%
Wholesale trade	2,599	3,800	1201	46.2%
Retail trade	9,228	9,380	152	1.6%
Transportation and warehousing	1,162	1,398	236	20.3%
Information	420	480	60	14.3%
Finance and insurance	1,320	1,170	-150	-11.4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	994	1,317	323	32.5%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1,362	1,335	-27	-2.0%
Management of companies and enterprises	1,393	866	-527	-37.8%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	2,828	3,606	778	27.5%
Educational services	900	1,045	145	16.1%
Health care and social assistance	11,203	11,535	332	3.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	819	681	-138	-16.8%
Accommodation and food services	5,762	6,599	837	14.5%
Other services (except public administration)	3,270	2,939	-331	-10.1%
Industries not classified	2	2	0	0%
Total	57,525	62,250	4,725	8.2%

U.S. Census Bureau - 2014 County Business Patterns



Gastonia Technology Park – Gastonia, NC

Locations of Major Employers

Major Employment Nodes

Five business / industrial parks are located in Gaston County with additional space for future businesses:

1. Gastonia Technology Park
2. South-Ridge
3. Summit at Court Drive
4. Kings Mountain Corporate Center
5. Oaks Commerce Center



Convenient access to interstate highways and close proximity to the Charlotte Douglas International Airport makes Gaston County's business and industrial parks a strategic advantage for business success. The Gaston County Economic Development Commission (EDC) is committed to making Gaston County a profitable location for businesses to call home. From business retention and expansion, to workforce development, the EDC's primary mission is to enhance and provide long-term quality growth of the Gaston County business environment. In addition, the EDC manages a broad inventory of business property, including three (3) county-owned shovel-ready business parks.

For more information, please visit: www.gaston.org

GASTONIA TECHNOLOGY PARK

The Gastonia Technology Park (GTP), a NC Certified Site, is a Class A, shovel ready development, owned by Gaston County and developed for advanced manufacturing and technology opportunities. The 422-acre park was developed with a campus-like design with park covenants, extensive landscaping, street trees and sidewalks.

Over 93 acres of pre-graded, sites are available to reduce time, risk and cost for your project. A parkway-style road runs through the entire park creating convenient ingress and egress with two park entrances. Robust utilities are provided in the park for a wide range of needs including free redundant electrical power generation and fiber optic service.

The GTP is strategically located 20 minutes from Charlotte, providing easy access to US321, I-85, I-40, I-77 & I-485. This high-capacity transportation access enables employers to attract from a four-county area. In addition, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, with non-stop flights to over 120 locations, is only 15 miles away.

SOUTH-RIDGE BUSINESS PARK

South Ridge Business Park is a 425 acre master-planned park for distribution and manufacturing opportunities. The property within the park can be subdivided into sites from 5 to 30 acres. South Ridge Business Park includes extensive landscaping and street trees, street lighting and restrictive covenants for construction. Over 35 acres of pre-graded sites are available to reduce time, risk and cost for your project. All utilities are in place and ready to provide service to your facility.

South Ridge Business Park is located 1 mile north of Interstate 85 and within 25 miles of Charlotte Douglas International Airport and is home to Hunter Douglas, Dole Fresh Vegetables and Advanced Drainage Systems.

SUMMIT AT COURT DRIVE

The Summit at Court Drive is a 60-Acre, Class-A business park development owned by Gaston County. Located immediately adjacent to Gaston Memorial Hospital, it is the site of many medical practices and testing facilities and is within close proximity to prime hotel space. Situated along Court Drive in Gastonia, the park is less than one mile north of I-85, and within a short 20-minute drive to Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

The park is ideal for medical and office use and has been developed as a pedestrian friendly campus with convenient access to many nearby amenities. Nearly half of the park is pre-graded and ready for development and includes extensive landscaping and street trees, street lighting, sidewalks and restrictive covenants for construction.

KINGS MOUNTAIN CORPORATE CENTER

The Kings Mountain Corporate Center is a 164 acre privately owned green field industrial development. Hanes Brands is the major tenant of the KMCC and purchased 35 acres in 1995 for the construction their 370,000 square foot distribution center. Other companies in the area include Firestone, LNS Turbo and Southern Container.

All utilities are present with the City of Kings Mountain providing water, sewer and natural gas service to the property. This is a partially developed area which will require the extension of utility service lines to the specific site of choice. Duke Energy has an extensive infrastructure in the area with service provided from 12KV and 44KV lines.

The property has extensive frontage along the I-85 which provides tremendous visibility for a company. Access to Interstate 85 is within 1 ½ miles from either US Highway 74 or the NC 161 interchange. The Charlotte Douglas International Airport is 26 miles from the Kings Mountain Corporate Center. Companies seeking a development with extensive interstate highway exposure and access to a major airport will find that the Kings Mountain Corporate Center will fulfill many needs.

OAKS COMMERCE CENTER

The Oaks Commerce Center is a 280 acre privately owned industrial park. Over 95 acres have been developed by the tenants of the park. Cross Automation, Wilbert Plastics, Dixie Industrial Supply, Carus Phosphates, Logisco Kiser-Harris and DePalo Bakery have facilities in the park.



All utilities are present with the City of Belmont providing water and sewer service to the property. Public Service Natural Gas supplies the natural gas to customers in the area and Duke Energy has an extensive infrastructure in the area with service provided from 12KV and 44KV lines.

Access to Interstate 85 is within 1.5 miles from either US Highway 74 or the NC 16 interchange. The Oaks has frontage along the interstate highway which provides tremendous visibility for a company. The Charlotte Douglas International Airport is 6 miles from the Oaks Commerce Center. Companies seeking a quality industrial park with interstate highway exposure and access to a major airport will realize the exceptional value of the Oaks Commerce Center.

For more information, please visit: www.gaston.org

GIBSON INDUSTRIAL PARK

This industrial park is located just north of the Town of Dallas, NC; with 440 feet of paved road frontage, convenient to Interstate 85, US Highway 321 to Hickory, and Interstate 40.

Major Employers

The County’s largest employers as of 2014 are shown in the following table:

Table A.16 - Gaston County Top Employers 2015

Company	Employment	Type
Gaston County Schools	1,000 & over	Education & Health Services
Caromont Health	1,000 & over	Education & Health Services
Gaston County	1,000 & over	Public Administration
Wal-Mart Associates	1,000 & over	Trade, Transportation & Utilities
American & Efirid	1,000 & over	Manufacturing
Wix Filtration	1,000 & over	Manufacturing
Freightliner Corporation	1,000 & over	Manufacturing
City of Gastonia	500-999	Public Administration
Pharr Yarns	500-999	Manufacturing
Gaston College	500-999	Education & Health Services
Dole Fresh Vegetables	500-999	Manufacturing
Century Employer Organization	250-499	Professional & Business Services
Integrated Staffing Solutions	250-499	Professional & Business Services
Barrett Business Services	250-499	Professional & Business Services

The North Carolina Employment Security Commission, Labor Market Information Division

Unemployment

The County unemployment rate in 2015 according to the North Carolina Employment Security Commission was 6.1%, which is significantly lower than 2010 (13.5%).

Table A.17 – Gaston County Employment

Subject	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2000	1990
Civilian Labor Force	103,587	104,481	104,660	100,500	95,608	96,103	98,708	100,064	97,543	99,985	96,024
Employment Total	97,074	92,144	93,530	89,835	85,004	85,843	84,926	92,303	91,894	94,470	92,082
Unemployment Total	6,160	9,328	10,885	10,673	10,601	10,260	13,782	7,761	5,559	5,515	3,942
Unemployment Rate	6.1%	9.2%	10.4%	10.6%	11.9%	13.5%	14.0%	7.8%	5.7%	5.5%	4.1%

Source: Gaston County Economic Development Commission

Agriculture

In terms of agriculture, enterprises such as beef cattle, poultry, nurseries and greenhouses, and locally marketed fresh vegetables have increased as the number of farmers markets have increased in recent years. The Cooperative Extension focuses is on expanding agricultural production to meet the growing demand for healthy local foods in Gaston County and the Charlotte region.

County leaders are focused on job creation and workforce development through improved education. Despite the recent recession, the region is forecasted to gain a great deal of residential development and commercial growth over the next ten years. There will be growing demands to build and maintain schools and infrastructure throughout the County.

Educational and training programs for producers of agricultural, horticultural and of forest products and services will enhance their ability to achieve financial and lifestyle goals and to enhance economic development locally, regionally and statewide. North Carolina's yield produces a wide variety of agricultural, food, fiber, and horticultural products that make major contributions to local communities and the State's economy. In 2006, the estimated farm gate value of agricultural and horticultural production was \$8.2 billion, placing NC as the 8th largest in the nation. The total economic impact of these agricultural, horticultural and food industries account for approximately one-quarter of the State's economy. North Carolina farm numbers have declined consistently for decades as a result of economies of scale and global competition in traditional agricultural commodities.

Producers of traditional commodities have been forced to expand or leave agriculture. There is continual technological change and the relative profitability of individual farm enterprises changes over time; therefore, farmers must respond by modifying their farming operations. Changes in consumer demand create new opportunities for producers unable or unwilling to compete in commodity production. North Carolina's rapidly growing population creates competition for resources and the need for well-informed and well-crafted public policy to resolve conflicts and meet society's goals. The farming industry will diversify by producing energy feedstocks, bioenergy, or other value-added products that will increase rural economic development. Growth in alternative forms of agriculture will include, among others, organic, niche-market production, and pasture-

raised livestock. Opportunities for diversification of operations and increased income on North Carolina farms will increase as emerging, alternative and entrepreneurial agricultural business opportunities are created in the marketplace. Farmers will increase their capacity to supply product for local food sales through market planning efforts, producer and consumer education, beginning farmer training programs and local market infrastructure development. The fastest growing area of consumer demand in agriculture continues to be organic.

Income and Poverty

Gaston County's economy benefits from being located just west of the Charlotte business center. In addition, the County's proximity to an international airport and interstate highway system are economic advantages. Despite these advantages, Gaston County's poverty rate of 17% is higher than the State average. In addition, the County's graduation rate from high school and its number of citizens with bachelor degrees are well below the State averages. While traditional employees of the textile and manufacturing sectors are struggling to find replacement jobs, eastern parts of the County are becoming bedroom communities for commuters to Charlotte.

Income

The median household income is \$42,158 (2010-2015), 6.35% higher than 2000 (\$39,482) but still lower than the Charlotte MSA of \$53,549 (2014) and lower than North Carolina median household income of \$46,556 (2014).

Table A.18 - Gaston County Median Household Income

County	Year 2000	Year 2010	Year 2015	% Increase 2010-2015	Year 2025	Year 2035
Catawba County, NC	\$40,536	\$43,484	\$45,397	4.4%	\$49,223	\$53,049
Cleveland County, NC	\$35,283	\$38,208	\$39,197	2.6%	\$41,175	\$44,142
Iredell County, NC	\$41,920	\$48,962	\$51,889	6.0%	\$57,743	\$63,597
Lincoln County, NC	\$41,421	\$47,450	\$48,664	2.6%	\$51,092	\$55,948
Mecklenburg County, NC	\$50,579	\$55,294	\$56,472	2.1%	\$58,828	\$61,184
York County, SC	\$44,539	\$51,925	\$53,568	3.2%	\$56,854	\$60,140
Gaston County, NC	\$39,482	\$40,335	\$42,158	4.5%	\$45,804	\$51,273

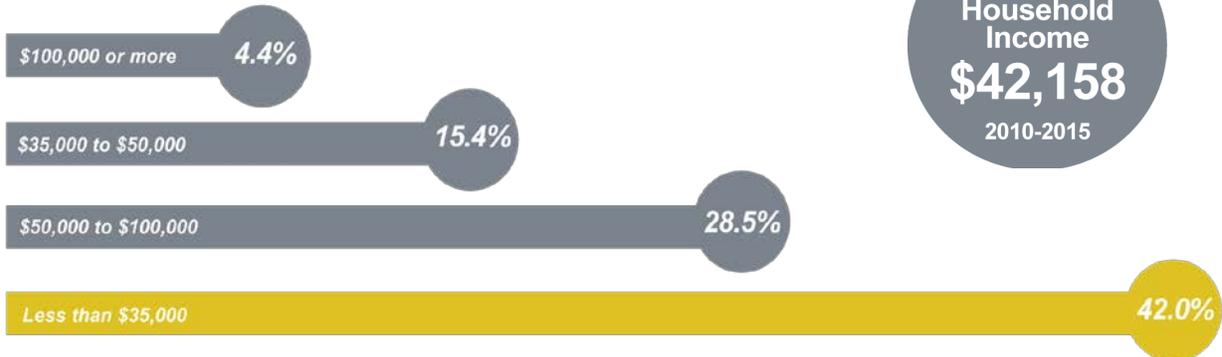
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table A.19 - Median Household Income by Age

Gaston County Median Household by Age	Year 2010	Year 2015
Total:	\$43,253	\$42,158
Householder under 25 years	\$25,339	\$23,837
Householder 25 to 44 years	\$47,971	\$46,696
Householder 45 to 64 years	\$51,818	\$50,086
Householder 65 years and over	\$27,791	\$30,399

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

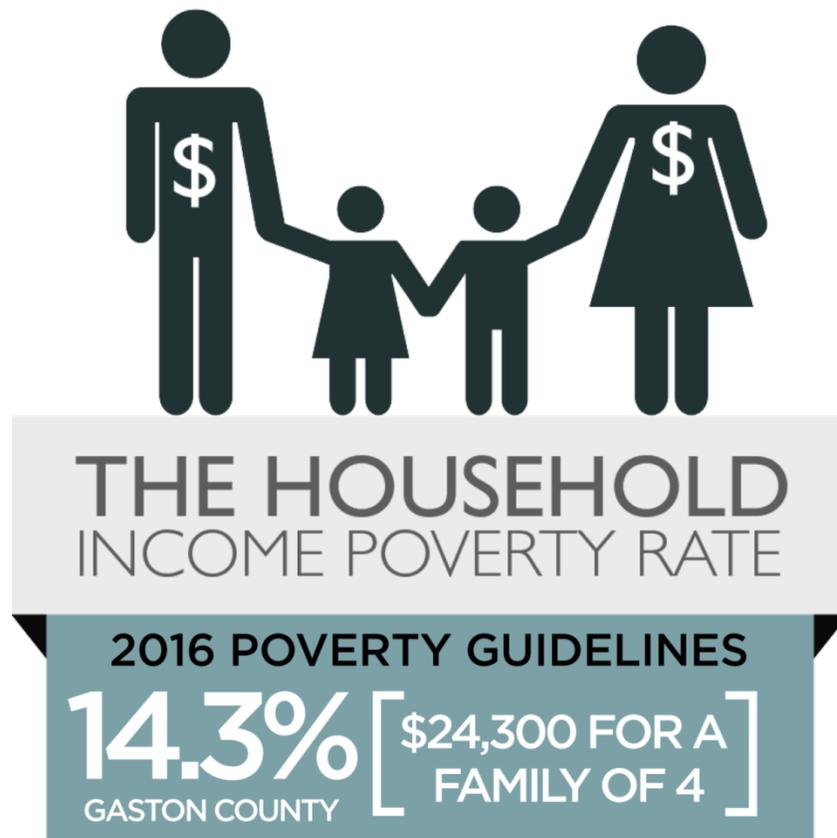
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Poverty

In 2014, 36.4% of families with female head of household, 6.6% married couple families were below the poverty level. The percent of all-families below the poverty level in 2014 was 14.3% and all people 18.1%.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Employment Forecast

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare occupations and industries are expected to add the most jobs in the next 20 years. With the increase in the proportion of the population in older age groups, more people in the labor force will be entering prime retirement age. As a result, the labor force participation rate is projected to decrease and labor force growth to slow.

Two types of industry, advanced manufacturing and transportation and warehousing, will generate some of the largest numbers of jobs during the next 10-20 years in the extended Charlotte region. The North Carolina Department of Commerce, projects an overall annualized growth rate of 1.3% for the southwest region of North Carolina, expecting to add about 140,000 positions in the next 10-20 years, with nearly 40,000 job openings available each year.

The region (Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, Iredell, Rowan, Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Stanly, Union, and Anson) is the second- largest employer in North Carolina, and its annualized growth rate is similar to the Northeast and Southeast regions. In 2012, the top five occupation sectors were Office and Administrative Support, Sales and Related, Food Preparation and Serving Related, Transportation and Material moving, and Production. In the next twenty (20) years Production occupations may fall out of the top ten (10) and potentially be replaced by Management occupations. Construction and Extraction sector occupations are expected to grow annually by 2.8%. The median annual wage for the southwest is \$34,453, which is higher than the State median of \$31,850. Farming, Fishing, and Forestry are the only declining occupation sector for the region.

Table A.20 shows the projected labor force in Gaston County.

Table A.20 - Projected Gaston County Labor Force Data

Subject	1990	2000	2010	2015	2025	2035
Total in Labor Force	96,783	101,206	104,481	103,587	107,215	111,846
Employed (Civilian)	95,441	95,741	91,083	97,475	102,641	104,576

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Workers in the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$23.25 in May 2015, similar to the nationwide average of \$23.23, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia had 73,160 jobs in business and financial operations, accounting for 6.6% of local area employment, significantly higher than the 5.1% share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$36.41, compared to the national wage of \$35.48.

Gaston County is the fourth-largest county in the Charlotte Region with a population of over 200,000. With six (6) fully equipped business parks and numerous buildings ranging from high-end to inexpensive, Gaston County offers incentives (among the best in the region) and a workforce eager for new opportunities. It's location just west of Charlotte means it is closer to the Charlotte Douglas

International Airport than any other county, even closer to the airport than areas of Mecklenburg County.

Economic Development Resources

Gaston County Economic Development Commission (EDC) maintains close working relationships with key allies to leverage resources and to strengthen Gaston County's business climate and quality of life.

Strategic Alliances:

- North Carolina Department of Commerce
- Charlotte Regional Chamber
- Greater Gaston Development Corporation
- Employment Security Commission
- City of Gastonia
- City of Belmont
- City of Mount Holly
- ElectriCities
- North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources
- North Carolina Department of Transportation

Professional Affiliates:

- North Carolina Economic Developers Association (NCEDA)
- Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC)
- International Economic Development Council (IEDC)

Workforce & Training

- Gaston County Workforce Development Board
- North Carolina Employment Commission
- Gaston College Corporate Education
- Gaston Career Climb
- Small Business Council

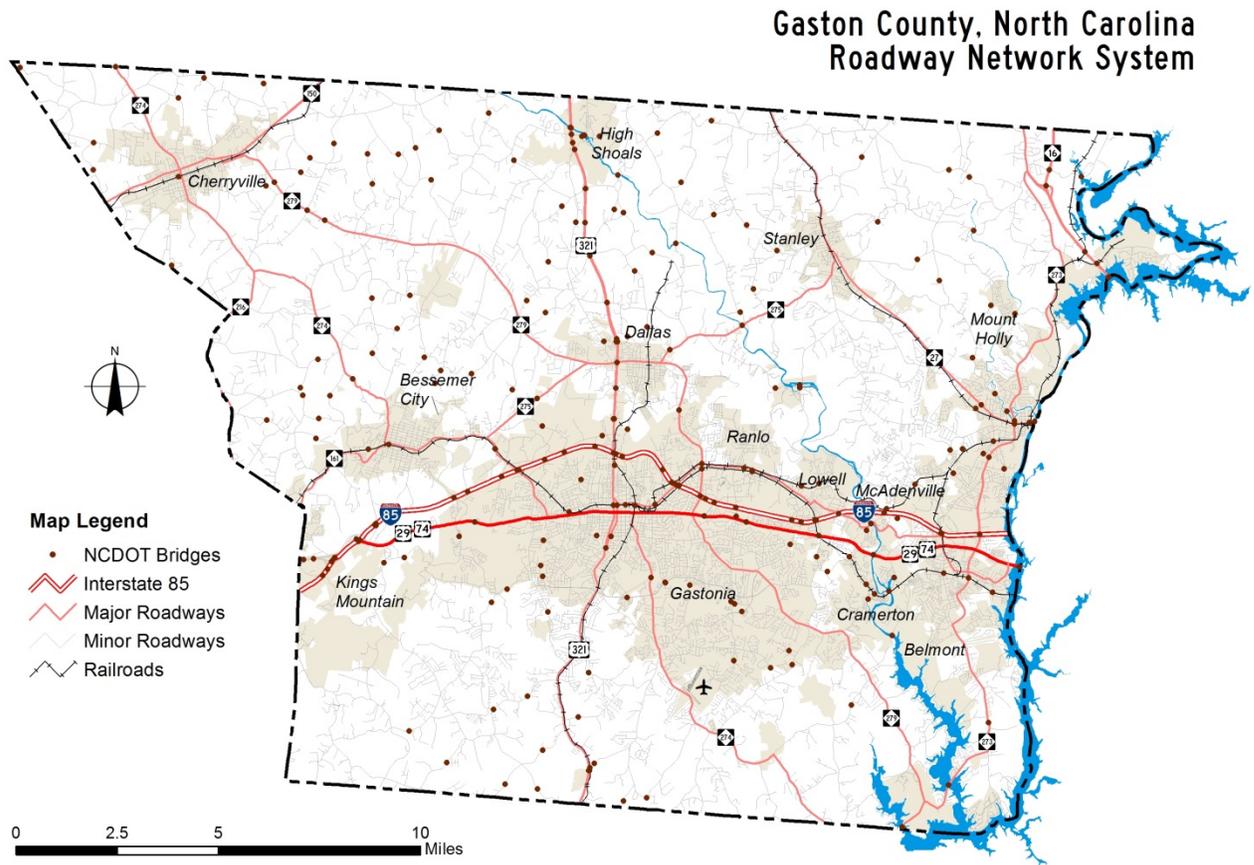
Local and Regional Educational Institutions

- Gaston College
- Belmont Abbey College
- North Carolina Community Colleges
- UNC Charlotte – Research Institute & Career Center
- NC State University – Industrial Extension Service
- Gaston County Schools

Transportation

Gaston County lies west in the Charlotte Metropolitan Region and as such funnels traffic to and from Mecklenburg County. In addition, the County has some bustling cities and towns, such as Belmont, Cramerton, Mt. Holly, as well as Gastonia, all requiring connectivity within Gaston County and other areas in the Metro Region. As future planning occurs, mobility choices would likely improve connectivity and be desired by residents.

Gaston County, like many other counties in the Charlotte Metropolitan Region, has a heavy commuter link to employment centers in neighboring Mecklenburg County. It has been estimated that there are approximately 30,000+ daily commuters from Gaston County to Mecklenburg County. This heavy peak-hour migration creates strong dependence on the arterials which cross the Catawba River, especially US Highway 29-74 and Interstate 85. Other secondary crossings include NC Highway 16 and NC Highway 27.



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Environment and Natural Resources

Overview

Gaston County is part of the Piedmont Plateau, between the foothills of the Appalachians and the sand-hills of the coastal plain. Located on the western side of the Catawba River valley's middle basin, creeks and other tributaries of the Catawba system create the County's gently rolling hills characteristic of the Piedmont. From its northwest corner at about one thousand (1,000) feet above sea level, the County slopes gently southeast down to 587 feet at the confluence of the Catawba River and its largest tributary the South Fork.

These gently rolling hills are punctuated by a series of striking geologic features that form part of the County's visual heritage and sense of identity: the monadnocks known as Crowders Mountain, Kings Pinnacle, Paysour Mountain, Jackson's Knob and Spencer Mountain. These landmarks rise up from the land almost as columns of stone, towering up to 800 feet above their surroundings.

Crowders, Kings and Paysour Mountains form a line arcing from the southwest towards the north, and Jackson's Knob and Spencer Mountain trace a parallel line through the County's center. They are geologic reminders of prehistoric eras in Gaston County, before time eroded the softer rock that once encased them. In Revolutionary War times, they were sources of valuable iron ore, strategic assets that each side fought to control and protect. Today, they are repositories of the County's most significant plant and wildlife habitats and among its richest store of bio-diversity.

Creeks of the Catawba system carve through the gently rolling hills characteristic of the Piedmont, while monadnocks, rocky masses that stand isolated after softer rock surrounding them is eroded away, punctuate the landscape and form part of the County's visual heritage and sense of identity. Despite long reliance on manufacturing as an economic base, over 40% of the land area remains in woods or forest, the highest percentage of any of its neighboring North Carolina counties. Gaston County soils are mostly variations of sandy clay loam soils with varying properties that make them generally suited for agriculture and development.

Of the many significant natural heritage sites in Gaston County, most lie atop the monadnocks and along creeks' floodplains. The area's rare plant species include big leaf magnolia, Schweinitz's sunflower, Georgia aster, and the magnolia vine. Gaston County provides habitat for 31 rare animal species, including the bald eagle, the migrating cerulean warbler, and the bog turtle.

Despite its rich farming heritage, Gaston County's agriculture is declining, due mainly to rising land prices, which make development a more financially attractive option. Efforts to protect agricultural lands are underway, especially in conjunction with protecting natural buffers along waterways.

Climate

Gaston County has long, hot summers because moist tropical air from the Gulf of Mexico persistently covers the area. Winters are cool and fairly short, with only a rare cold wave that moderates in one or two days. Precipitation is fairly heavy throughout the year, and prolonged droughts are rare. Summer precipitation, mainly afternoon thunderstorms, is adequate for all crops.

Severe local storms, including tornados, strike occasionally in or near the area. They are of short duration and cause variably spotty damage. Every few years, in summer or autumn, a tropical depression or remnant of a hurricane moving inland causes extremely heavy rains for up to three days.

Winter Storms usually only produce a few inches of snow a few times each winter that only impair roads for one to three days. Ice storms are more frequent and can result in power outages and hazardous driving conditions, especially on bridges and other elevated surfaces.

Table A.21 - Gaston County Annual/Seasonal Normal Temperatures

Season	Precip (in)	Min Tmp (°F)	Avg Tmp (°F)	Max Tmp (°F)
Annual	42.97	49.4	60.5	71.6
Winter	10.92	31.2	42.3	53.4
Summer	11.92	67.9	78	88.1
Spring	9.55	47.8	59.8	71.7
Autumn	10.58	50.4	61.5	72.7

Source National Center for Environmental Information (formerly National Climate Data Center) <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/> & 1989 Soil survey of Gaston County North Carolina

Topography and Hydrography

Gaston County is in the southern Piedmont physiographic region. The land area of the county is 228,666 acres or about 357 square miles, which includes 1,850 acres of water in areas less than 40 acres. In addition, 4,224 acres of water is in large lakes. The County generally is characterized as gently rolling or hilly with several prominent ridges and smaller mountain ranges in the central and western parts. Elevation ranges from 587 feet in the southwest corner of the County to 1,705 feet at the pinnacle of the Kings Mountain Range in the southwest. Generally drainage is from northwest to southeast, and most streams drain into the Catawba River or its major tributary, the South Fork Catawba River.

Gaston County has an abundant supply of water from rivers, streams, lakes and ground water. The Catawba River and its principal tributary, the South Fork Catawba River are the only reliable sources within the Catawba River Basin capable of supplying large quantities of water for domestic and industrial use. Drilled and bored wells are used in Gaston County. Drilled wells are less common, but are more reliable than bored wells and seldom go dry. The average yield is twenty (20) gallons per minute.

Water

Gaston County is bordered on the east by the Catawba River, Mountain Island Lake, and Lake Wylie, while the Catawba River's tributaries traverse the County. These resources provide a range of benefits to the County's citizens: recreation, fishing, drinking water supply, and, as permitted by the State, wastewater discharge. The quality of water in the County's creeks, rivers, and lakes varies from "High Quality" waters to "Class C" waters (suitable not for swimming but for recreational boating, fishing, and aquatic life). Gaston County currently has 32.5 miles of streams with impaired water quality, which do not meet the standards for the lowest classification, Class C waters. The County has approximately nine (9) miles of streams that were once but are no longer impaired.

Urban development is now the chief origin of non-point-source pollutants in the County's water bodies. When land is cleared and graded, stormwater washes soil into creeks. Development produces more paved surfaces, so less stormwater soaks into the ground and more washes into creeks, creating higher, faster-moving volumes of water that can erode streambanks. As new housing continues to be provided in areas of the County that must rely on septic tanks for sewage disposal, the potential for septic tank failure and groundwater contamination increases.

Water Quantity

Almost all of the County's land area falls within the watershed of the Catawba River and a small area drains to the Broad River in the west. The Catawba River's tributaries follow the northwest-to-southeast slope of the land, negotiating their way around the monadnocks and prominent ridgelines. Catawba and Crowders Creeks flow west-to-east across the southern part of the County, Stanley and Dutchman's Creeks meander north-to-south through the northeast; and the largest tributary, the South Fork / Catawba Rivers, cuts a wide swath in between with its own important tributaries: Long, Beaver Dam and Hoyle Creeks. These resources provide a range of benefits to the County's citizens such as recreation, fishing, drinking water supply and, as permitted by the state, wastewater discharge.

All of the municipalities within the County that provide a public water system obtain their drinking water from Mountain Island Lake or the South Fork / Catawba Rivers. The County does not provide public water supply and wastewater treatment systems.

Water Quality

The County has nineteen (19) watershed sub-basins, of which thirteen (13) are designated by the State as water supply watersheds, meaning they are used to supply public drinking water. The quality of water in the County's creeks, rivers and lakes varies from "High Quality Waters" in predominantly undeveloped WS-II water supply watersheds, to "Class B" water bodies (suitable for swimming), to "Class C" waters (suitable not for swimming but for recreational boating, fishing and aquatic life) in more developed WS-II and WS-IV water supply watersheds.

Of the streams in water supply sub-basins, all are currently rated as meeting the standards for their designated use as water supply sources. This means they at least meet "Class C" criteria. Within the water supply sub-basins, the areas closest to public water supply intakes are further regulated to limit the density of development and minimize the potential for polluted runoff to reach the intakes.



Under US EPA regulations, the State annually identifies streams, rivers and lakes that have impaired water quality (meaning they either are rated as “Not Supporting” or only “Partially Supporting” their designated use) and reports them in its Section 303(d) list. Gaston County currently has 63.2 miles of streams and over 2,600 lake acres with impaired water quality on its Section 303(d) list.

The impaired streams are Catawba Creek, Crowders Creek, McGill Creek (a tributary of Crowders Creek), and the lower section of Dallas Branch (a tributary of Long Creek). These streams are not meeting the standards for the lowest classification, Class C waters for recreational boating, fishing and aquatic life.

The NC 2000 Section 303(d) list also reports “delisted waters”, that is, previously impaired streams that have been cleaned up and are not meeting standards. The County has approximately nine (9) miles of delisted streams: Abernathy Creek (a tributary of Crowders Creek) and the 4.5 mile section of Long Creek running through the Town of Dallas, from NC Highway 275 on the west to the Dallas Branch on the east.

Technically referred to as “point-source-discharges”, the disposal of wastewater from textile plants, sewage treatment plants, and other industries is regulated by state permits. The discharge permits specify the amount and types of materials that may be discharged into rivers and other surface water bodies, but violations of those permits are unevenly enforced and penalties are too low to be a significant deterrent.

A coalition of permitted dischargers in Gaston County has formed to address public concerns over issues such as discharge color and cloudiness that, although within permitted standards, are visually disturbing and possibly harmful to aquatic life.

“Non-point-source” refers to dispersed sources of pollutants such as runoff, groundwater recharging of streams, and streambank erosion. Sediment is the major non-point-source pollutant in Gaston County’s water bodies, damaging aquatic habitats, detracting from its appearance and increasing the cost of cleaning the water for public drinking water systems. Agriculture is no longer the prime source of sediment pollution due to improved livestock watering practices, no-till cropping, and maintenance of natural buffers between fields and water bodies.

Urban development is now the chief source of sediment in the County’s water bodies. As land is cleared and graded, rains wash soil into creeks and as development produces more paved surfaces, less stormwater soaks into the ground and more washes into creeks, creating higher faster-moving volumes of water that erode streambanks.

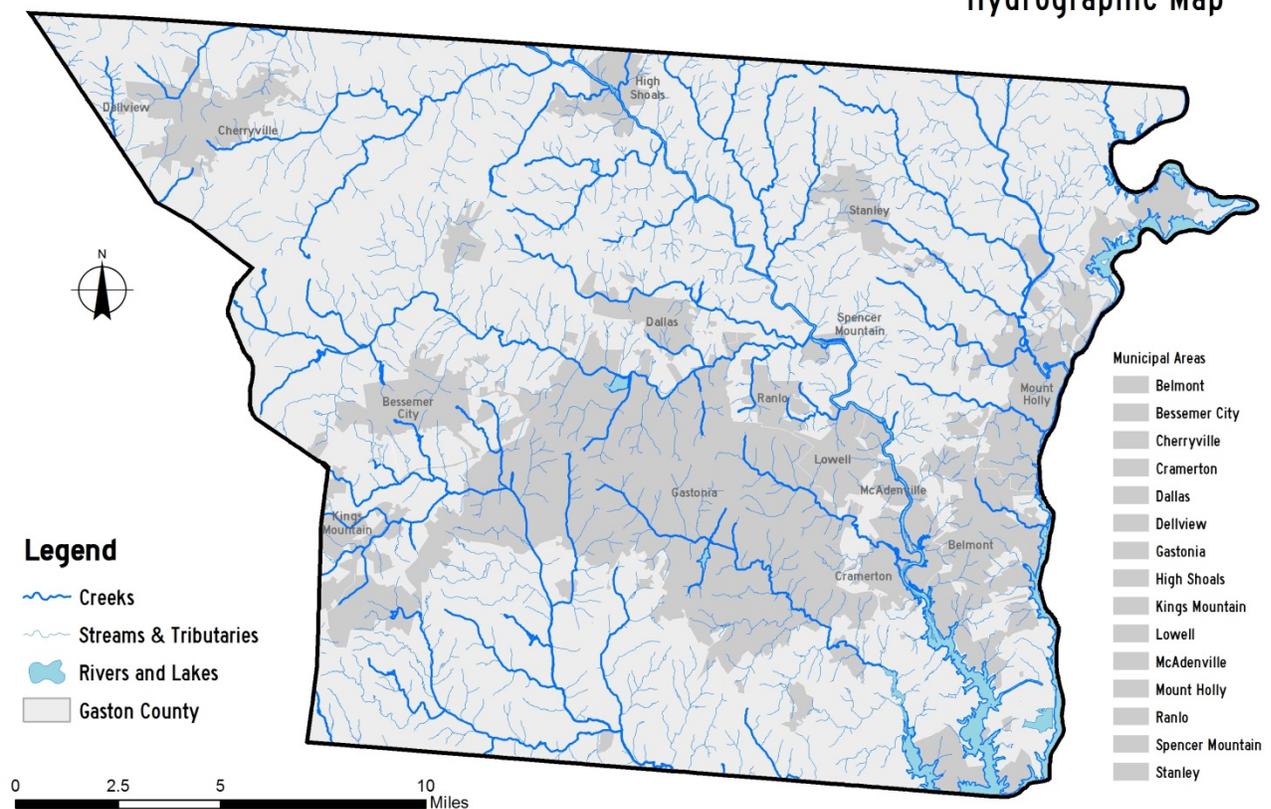
To protect significant waterways from these non-point-source pollutants, the non-profit Catawba Lands Conservancy has identified the South Fork / Catawba Rivers, Stanley Creek, South Crowders Creek and Mountain Island Lake as four (4) of its highest priority areas for land conservation projects, including conservation easement donations and purchases of land. As of June 2001, the Conservancy had permanently protected over 1080 acres of land in Gaston County.

The County’s Quality of Natural Resources Commission created a task force to explore water quality issues in the South Fork River. The task force collaborated with the Catawba Lands Conservancy and the Carolinas Land Conservation Network in 1999-2000 to help plan for protection of watershed from sedimentation. The first step was to develop a computer model that prioritizes sections of

streams in the South Fork watershed for establishment of natural buffers along the streambanks. Gaston County adopted the current Sedimentation and Soil Erosion Control Ordinance in 2003 and Storm Water ordinance in 2007. The Quality of Natural Resources Commission is now preparing recommendations for a proposed update to these ordinances.

As new housing continues to be provided in areas of the county that currently must rely on septic tanks for sewage disposal, the importance of homeowner familiarity with and adherence to septic tank maintenance regimens increases, as does the potential for septic tank failure and groundwater contamination.

Gaston County, North Carolina Hydrographic Map



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Air

As part of a growing metropolitan area, Gaston County shares in the region's air quality problems. Ground-level ozone from traffic emissions, off-road emissions, and coal-burning power plants combine with small airborne particulates to form smog. Increasingly, summer days are marked by high levels of air pollutants. Land use planning at the County level is but one part of the solution to this complex regional issue.

The consequences of our air quality problems include limitations on vulnerable groups' ability to be outdoors, lost workforce productivity, increased healthcare costs and, unless regional solutions are undertaken, potential loss of federal transportation funds and imposition of more costly cleaner-burning gasoline formulas. Land use planning at the County level is but one (1) part of the solution to this complex regional issue.

Plant and Animal Habitat

Even though Gaston County has several large tracts of protected public lands, the vast majority of forest and other wildlife habitats are privately-owned. The main threat to plants and wildlife is the loss of habitat and especially the loss of corridors that connect habitats. As plant and animal communities continue to grow in parallel to human growth, more and more conflicts will result.

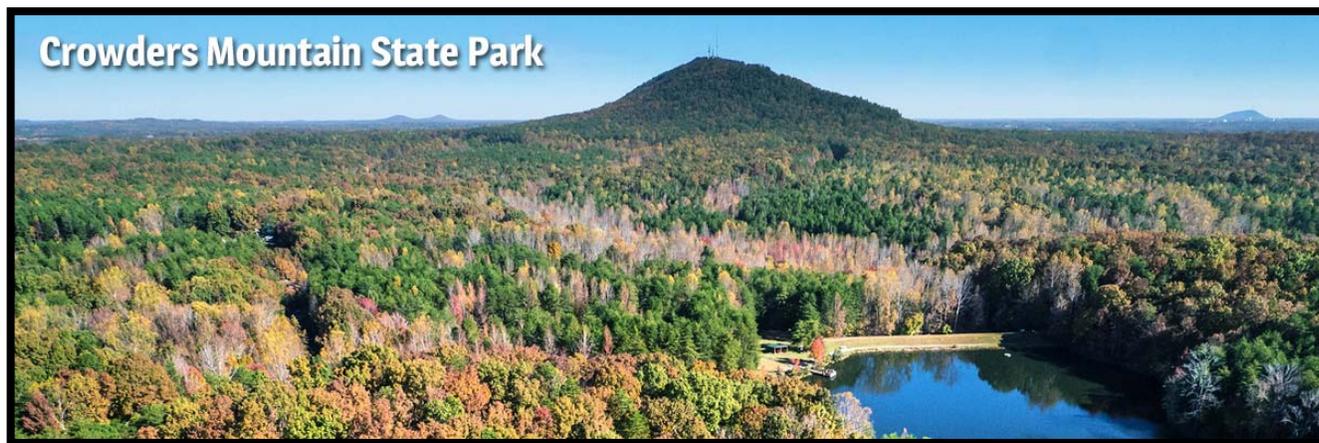
Providing buffers and flexible regulations that allow for better management will be necessary; For example municipalities may now establish Urban Archery Season to reduce deer populations. The NC wildlife commission also offers Green Growth Tool Box training for County and municipal planners.

More information can be found at: www.ncwildlife.org

Scenic Resources

Scenic Highway Corridors

Located on the western side of the Catawba River valley's middle basin, creeks and other tributaries of the Catawba system create the County's gently rolling hills characteristic of the Piedmont. From its northwest corner at about 1,000 feet above sea level, the County slopes gently southeast down to 587 feet.



Courtesy of North Carolina State Park Office

Opportunities for scenic and recreational trails in Gaston County are beginning to be identified. The City of Gastonia produced a greenways plan called "Connect Gaston," with the intent of spurring development of greenway trails from the City out into the County. The abandoned rail corridor running north of Dallas towards High Shoals along the South Fork is just one example of a potential greenway for the County's residents.

The County has only one designated Scenic Byway in the state's program for recognizing rural roads valued by communities for their scenic appeal: the road in and around Crowder's Mountain. However, other opportunities for designated Scenic Byways abound in the County's rural areas. The County has created within its zoning ordinance a Scenic Corridor Overlay District and applied it to portions of South New Hope and Armstrong Roads leading from the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden. This overlay regulates development features such as sign height, size, and setback from the road. The zoning ordinance also designates the general area around the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden as a Scenic View Overlay District.

The Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden is a private non-profit organization that owns and manages approximately 400 acres of land between the South Fork Catawba River and Crowder's Creek where they both join Lake Wylie. It is intended to be both a professional horticulturalists' resource and an educational and recreational resource for the entire Southeast. The Garden will showcase both traditional garden design and management, and historic uses of the natural landscape such as a working 1880-1920 Heritage farm and Native American settlement.



Photos Courtesy of Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden

With the opening of its grand visitors pavilion and its first large-scale gardens in 2000, the Garden is currently drawing over 150,000 visitors per year. Within next few years, it expects to be receiving over 200,000 visitors per year, and employing about 200 people. When the grounds are fully developed, approximately 250 staff will serve over 500,000 visitors a year.



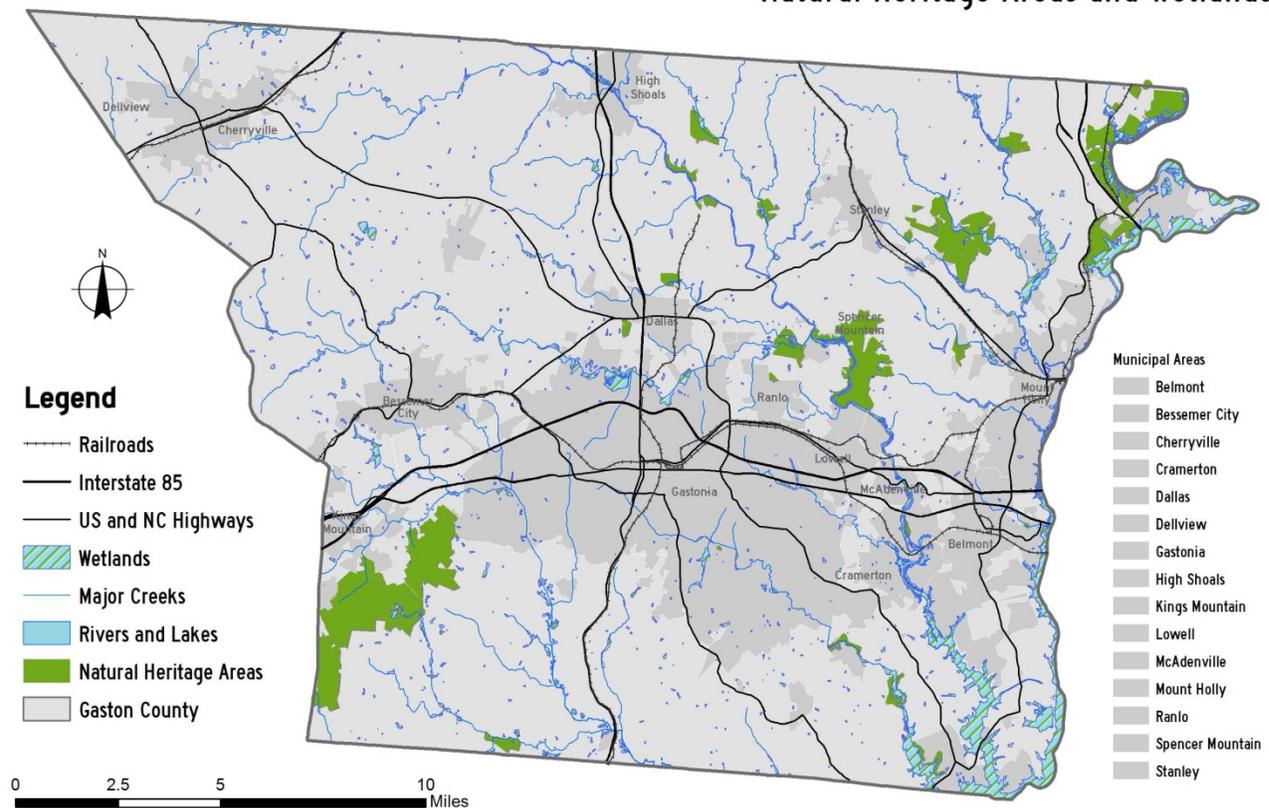
Photo Courtesy of Gaston Outside Go...

Wetlands

Most private wetlands were converted to agricultural use prior to 1985. Wetlands must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Cost share of up to 100% for restoration with an agreement of 10 or 30 years; and or permanent. One of the most significant habitat alterations has been to wetlands. North Carolina has lost and continues to lose wetlands at an alarming rate.

It is widely recognized that wetlands provide significant environmental benefits, including assimilation of pollutants, flood water storage, ground water recharge, carbon sequestration, and fish and wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, this recognition has come late. Tiner (1984) and Dahl (1990) estimated that 50% to 55% of the original wetland area in the conterminous United States has been lost since pre-settlement times. This loss has not ceased. In the mid-90's, some 15% of current wetlands are estimated to be in a state of transition to other land uses (Moorhead and Cook, 1992). More recent status and trends reports for the United States show a net gain of wetland acreage although a large portion of that is due to increases in ponds (Dahl, 2006). In addition a more recent study showed that losses of wetlands continue in coastal watersheds of the eastern US (Stedman and Dahl, 2008).

Gaston County, North Carolina Natural Heritage Areas and Wetlands



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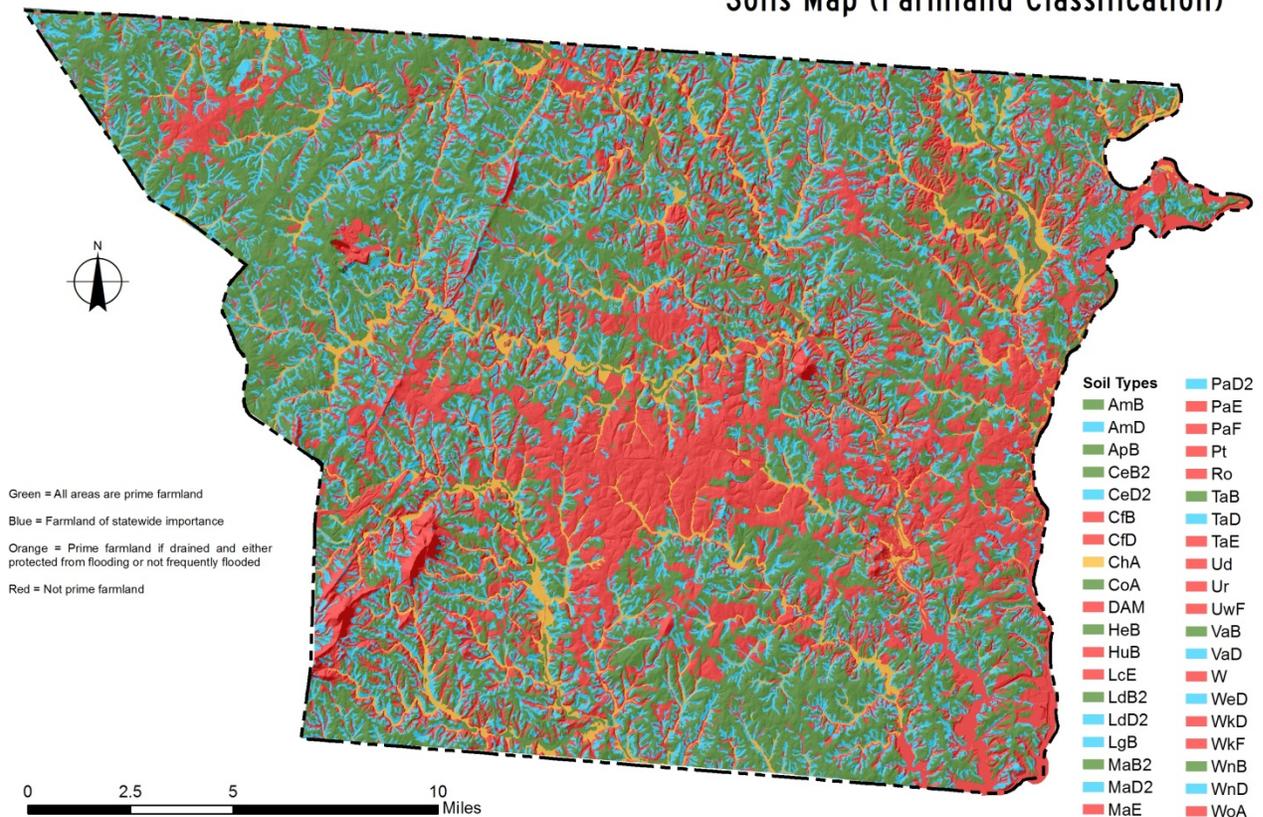
Soils

Gaston County soils are classified among 23 major types, mostly variations of sandy clay loam soils with evocative names like Cecil, Gaston, Tatum, and Pacolet. The varying soil types have different properties that make them more or less suited for agriculture and development.

Based on rankings by state soil scientists at the Soil and Water Conservation District, over 51% of the County's soil is prime farm soil – meaning it ranks among the state's best soils for agricultural productivity. Another 17% is "state important" soil, falling into the next highest category of agricultural productivity.

From the perspective of development, the County's soils are relatively easy to work with, especially where public sewer systems are available. The County's typical soils tend to perk slowly, presenting moderate to severe limitations on the use of septic tanks. Less than 8% of the County's soils are subject to frequent or occasional flooding, and except in those floodplain areas, they have generally low shrink-swell potential. Slopes greater than 25% hinder building construction, but only about 16% of the County's land is in slopes greater than 25%. Otherwise, the dominant soils present only slight to moderate restrictions on construction of homes and only moderate restrictions on commercial construction.

**Gaston County, North Carolina
Soils Map (Farmland Classification)**



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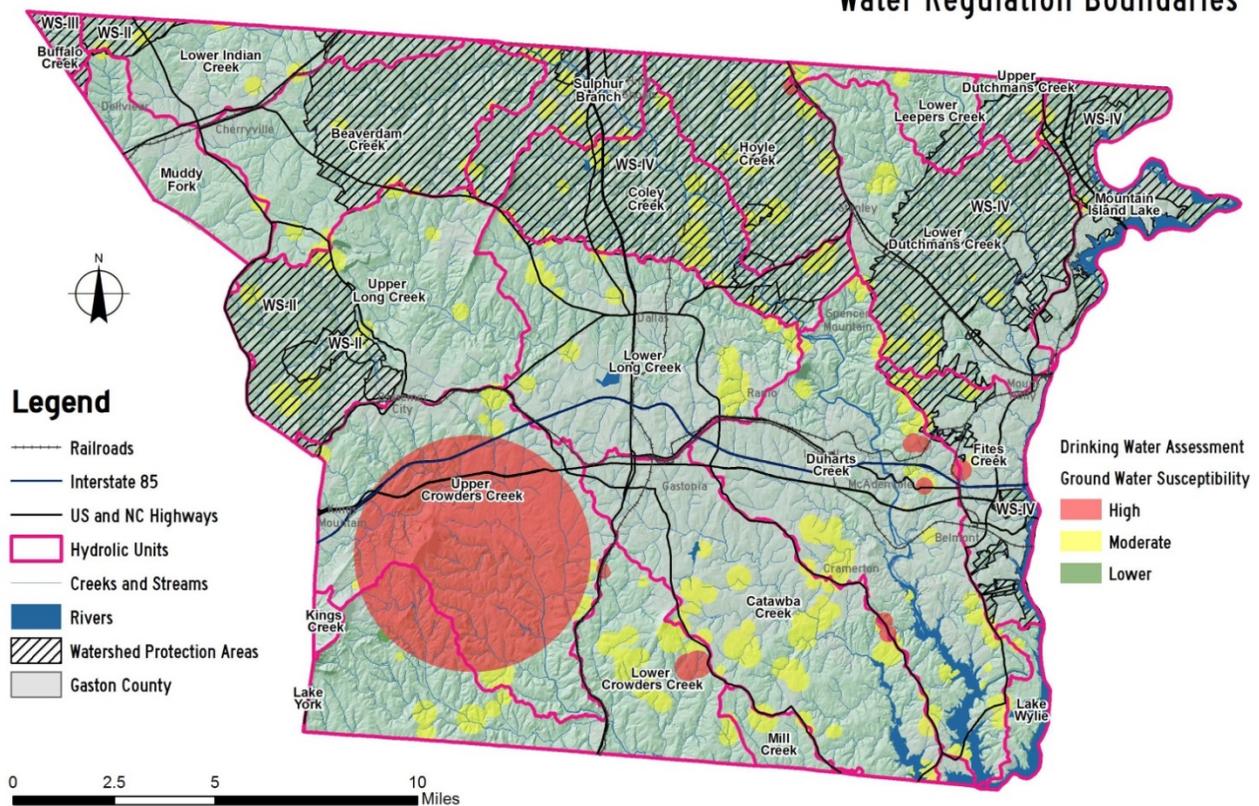
Protected Watersheds

The County has 19 watershed sub-basins, of which 13 are designated by the state as water supply watersheds, meaning they are used to supply public drinking water. The quality of water in the County's creeks, rivers and lakes varies from "High Quality Waters" in predominantly undeveloped WS-II water supply watersheds, to "Class B" water bodies (suitable for swimming), to "Class C" waters (suitable not for swimming but for recreational boating, fishing, and aquatic life) in more developed WS-III and WS-IV water supply watersheds.

Of the streams in water supply sub-basins, all are currently rated as meeting the standards for their designated use as water supply sources. This means they at least meet "Class C" criteria. Within the water supply sub-basins, the areas closest to public water supply intakes are further regulated to limit the density of development and minimize the potential for polluted runoff to reach the intakes.

Under U.S. EPA regulations, the state annually identifies streams, rivers and lakes that have impaired water quality (meaning they either are rated as "Not Supporting" or only "Partially Supporting" their designated use) and reports them in its "Section 303(d) list".

**Gaston County, North Carolina
Water Regulation Boundaries**



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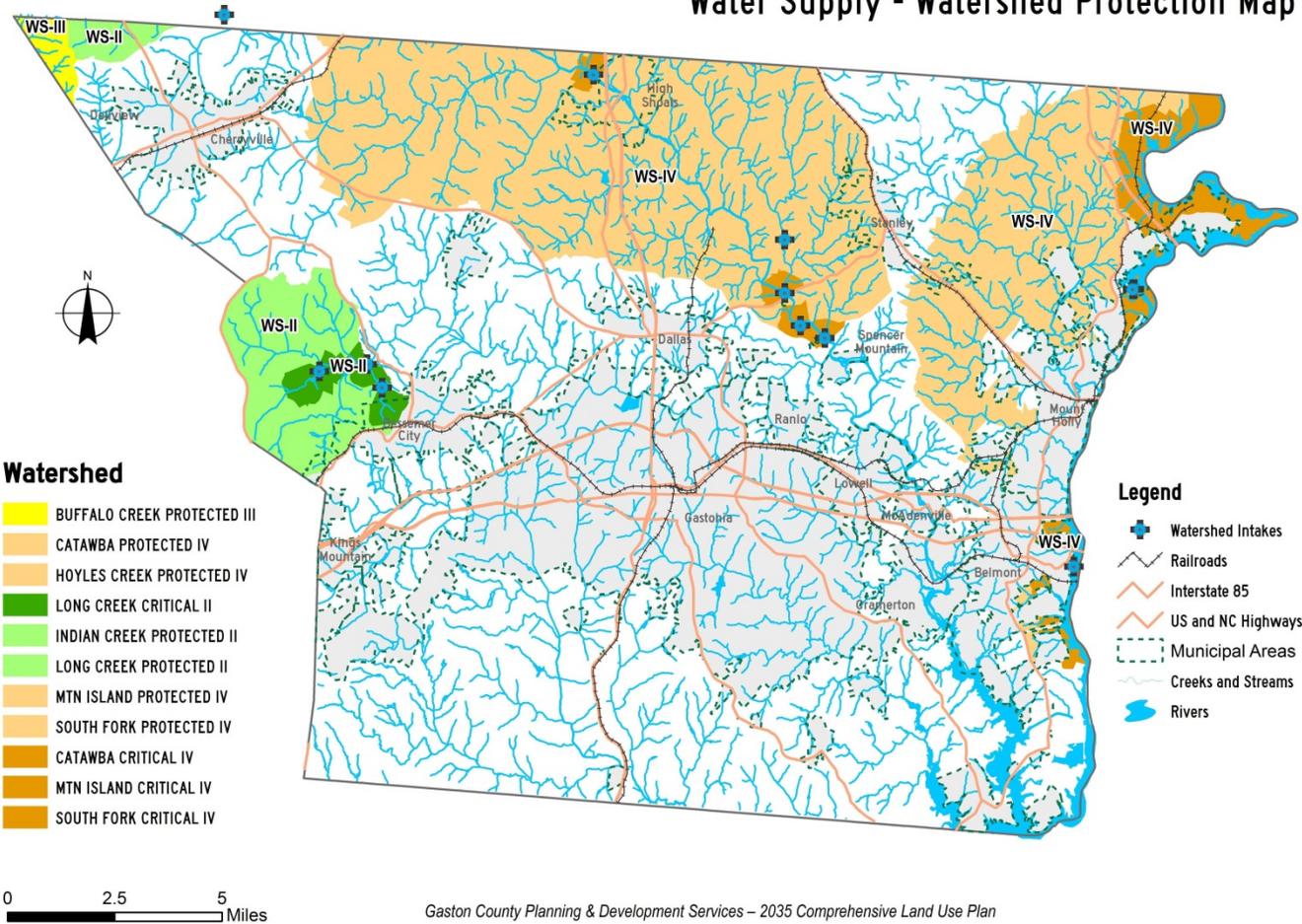


Gaston County currently has 32.5 miles of streams with impaired water quality on its Section 303(d) list. The impaired streams are Catawba Creek, Crowders Creek, McGill Creek (a tributary of Crowders Creek), and the lower section of Dallas Branch (a tributary of Long Creek). These streams are not meeting the standards for the lowest classification, Class C waters for recreational boating, fishing, and aquatic life.

The NC 2000 Section 303(d) list also reports “delisted waters”, that is, previously impaired streams that have been cleaned-up and are now meeting standards. The County has 8.9 miles of delisted streams: Abernethy Creek (a tributary of Crowders Creek) and the 4.5 mile section of Long Creek running through the town of Dallas, from NC 275 on the west to Dallas Branch on the east.

Technically referred to as “point source discharges”, the disposal of wastewater from textile plants, sewage treatment plants, and other industries is regulated by state permits. The discharge permits specify the amount and types of materials that may be discharged into rivers and other surface water bodies, but violations of those permits are unevenly enforced and penalties are too low to be a significant deterrent.

Gaston County, North Carolina Water Supply - Watershed Protection Map





Currently meeting the state standards for its designated use as a water supply source, and for Class C uses, the South Fork River in Gaston County once earned the nickname the “Rainbow River” due to dyes in the discharges to it from textile plants. A coalition of permitted dischargers in Gaston County has formed to address public concerns over issues such as discharge color and cloudiness that, although within permitted standards, are visually disturbing and possibly harmful to aquatic life.

“Non-point-source” refers to dispersed sources of pollutants such as runoff, groundwater recharging of streams, and streambank erosion. Sediment is the major non-point-source pollutant in Gaston County’s water bodies, damaging aquatic habitats, detracting from its appearance and increasing the cost of cleaning the water for public drinking water systems. Agriculture is no longer the prime source of sediment pollution, due to improved livestock watering practices, no-till cropping and maintenance of natural buffers between fields and water bodies.

Urban development is now the chief source of sediment in the County’s water bodies: as land is cleared and graded, rains wash soil into creeks, and as development produces more paved surfaces, less stormwater soaks into the ground and more washes into creeks, creating higher, faster-moving volumes of water that erode streambanks.

To protect significant waterways from these nonpoint source pollutants, the non-profit Catawba Lands Conservancy has identified the South Fork Catawba River, Stanley Creek, South Crowders Creek, and Mountain Island Lake as four of its highest priority areas for land conservation projects, including conservation easement donations and purchases of land. As of June 2001, the Conservancy had permanently protected over 1080 acres of land in Gaston County.

The County’s Quality of Natural Resources Commission created a task force to explore water quality issues in the South Fork. The task force collaborated with the Catawba Lands Conservancy and the Carolinas Land Conservation Network in 1999-2000 to help plan for protection of the watershed from sedimentation. The first step was to develop a computer model that prioritizes sections of streams in the South Fork watershed for establishment of natural buffers along the streambanks. The Quality of Natural Resources Commission is now preparing recommendations for a proposed Sedimentation and Soil Erosion Control Ordinance.

As new housing continues to be provided in areas of the County that currently must rely on septic tanks for sewage disposal, the importance of homeowner familiarity with and adherence to septic tank maintenance regimens increases, as does the potential for septic tank failure and groundwater contamination.

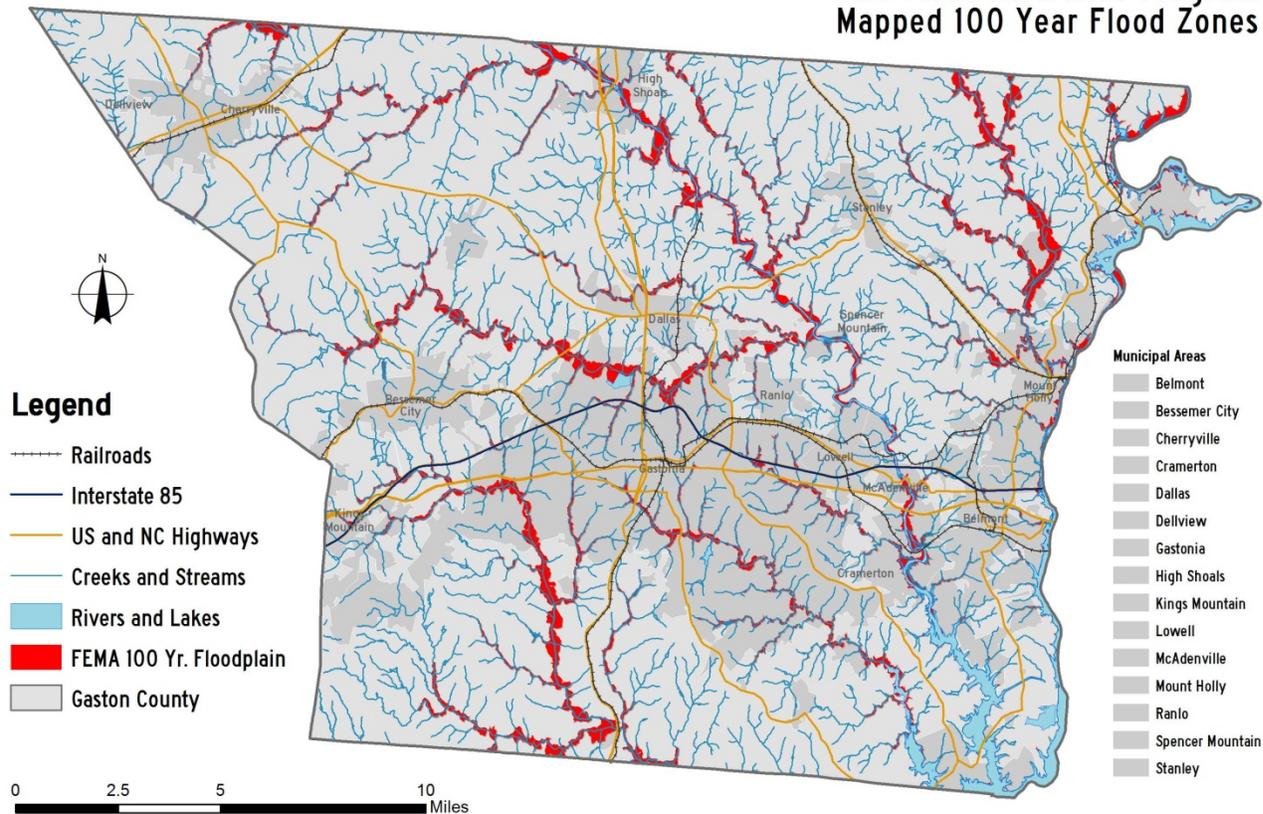
Floodplain

A floodplain or flood plain is an area of land adjacent to a stream or river that stretches from the banks of its channel to the base of the enclosing valley walls and experiences flooding during periods of high discharge. It includes the floodway, which consists of the stream channel and adjacent areas that actively carry flood flows downstream, and the flood fringe, which are areas inundated by the flood, but which do not experience a strong current.

The State of North Carolina, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Cooperating Technical Community partnership initiative, has been designated as the first Cooperating Technical State (CTS). As CTS, the State will assume primary ownership and responsibility of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for all North Carolina communities as part of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This project will include conducting flood hazard analyses and producing updated, digital FIRMS (DFIRMS).

North Carolina faces extreme hazards and consequences from hurricanes and flooding. Since 1989, there have been 14 federally declared disasters in North Carolina. Damage from Hurricane Floyd alone has reached \$3.5 billion. Hurricane Floyd destroyed 4,117 uninsured and under-insured homes.

Gaston County, North Carolina NC Flood Insurance Program Mapped 100 Year Flood Zones



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space

Gaston County is empowered by the laws of the State of North Carolina (G.S. 160A-351) to establish and operate a supervised recreation system. The General Statute directs both state and local government to provide recreational opportunities for citizens of all ages, and also supports the establishment of a parks and recreation system as a proper government function. The State defines recreation as activities that are diversionary in character and aid in promoting entertainment, pleasure, relaxation, instruction, and other physical, mental, and cultural development and leisure time experiences.

The statute gives the County the authority to:

- 1) Set aside land and buildings for parks, playgrounds and other recreational activities;
- 2) Acquire real property for parks and recreation programs and facilities;
- 3) Appropriate funds for the operation of a recreation system; and,
- 4) Accept a gift of real or personal property for parks and recreation programs.

The Gaston County Parks and Recreation is conducted as a line department, rather than an authority. The law also allows two or more local governments to establish and operate a parks and recreation system.

The inventory of existing recreation facilities is organized in three parts: recreation facilities operated by the Gaston County Department of Parks and Recreation; recreation facilities operated by the cities and towns of Gaston County; and, public and private recreation facilities open to the general public.

The facilities are categorized into one of the following park classifications: District, Community, School, Neighborhood, Mini-Parks, Linear Parks, and Unique or Special Use Parks. These classifications are described in more detail in Section IV. A second attempt to maintain continuity is reference to one of the five small areas created in the 2002 Gaston County Comprehensive Planning Program that geographically describes the location of the park.

The Gaston County Parks and Recreation Department is charged with providing a broader level of service for an overall larger population than any single city or town in the county. For this reason, a more detailed analysis of district, community, and school parks has been completed. Neighborhood and mini-parks, although an important component of the entire park system, are primarily the responsibility of municipalities.

There are many private recreational opportunities Gaston County. These include fitness clubs, church programs and sports leagues, country clubs, private schools, community organizations and golf courses. Private recreation providers typically require memberships, annual fees, contributions or other discretionary qualifications for participation. Therefore, while acknowledging their existence and contribution to the overall quality of life in Gaston County, the master plan does not take into account private facilities that are not available to the general public.

Classifications of Park Land

The recommended park classifications for Gaston County are separated into three general categories: sites for active recreation, resources oriented areas, and specialized facilities. Space requirements, typical facilities and programs, and unique natural features further define the park classifications.

A **Regional Park** is an area of natural quality for natural resource-based outdoor recreation that is within a one hour driving distance of several communities. Generally, 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management with less than 20% developed for recreation. The size is 1,000 acres or more and typically includes state parks, state natural areas, and large natural resource based county parks. Activities include nature study, picnicking, camping, fishing, boating, swimming, and various trail uses.

A **District Park** provides recreational opportunities similar to a regional park, but on a significantly smaller parcel of land. Like regional parks, district parks emphasize passive recreational opportunities but they may also include, or exclusively provide, active recreational facilities. A district park usually has at least 200 acres of land and provides a five to eight (5-8) mile service radius. A district park can be very specialized [such as a golf course], or be relatively small in size, but still have great impact on recreation within a region. Active recreational facilities located in a district park can include play areas, ball fields, hard surface courts, golfing, swimming, boating, multipurpose fields, picnic facilities and various types of trails.

A **Community or School Park** provides a wide variety of active recreational opportunities, including a recreation center building, ball fields, hard surface courts, walking/jogging trails and picnicking. When possible it is usually developed adjacent to a school or provides a swimming pool. Natural or landscaped areas are provided for passive recreation. The minimum size for a community or school park is three to five (3-5) acres, but 40 to 80 acres is more desirable. The average service area for this park is 2 to 3 miles.

The **Neighborhood Park** is a basic unit of a park system and serves as the recreational and social center of the neighborhood. Its focus is on informal active and passive activities like field and court games, playground apparatus, picnic shelters and tables for crafts and board games. Ideally the neighborhood park is safely accessible through sidewalks and bike paths. The park should be 5 to 15 acres in size and serve an area population of up to 5,000 or more.

A **Linear Park** or Greenway is an area developed for one or more varieties of recreational travel such as hiking or biking. The key functions of linear parks are: they tie park components together to form a cohesive park, recreation and open space system; they emphasize harmony with the natural environment; they allow for uninterrupted and safe pedestrian movement between parks and throughout the community; they provide people with a resource based outdoor recreational opportunity and experience; and, they enhance property values.

The acreage and service area of a linear park is variable and is subject to existing natural and man-made features, the existence of public right-of-way and the public demand for this type of park. Although corridor widths can be as little as 25 feet, 50 are considered the minimum, and widths exceeding 200 feet optimal. Based upon the assumption that a linear park will contain some type of trail, the standard of .5 mile per 1,000 people is established for this classification.

Unique or Special Use areas exist to enhance or utilize a special man-made or natural feature. They can include beaches, geological formations, historical sites, arboretums, conservation easements, floodplains, botanical gardens, parkways and sites of archeological significance. They can also include specific purpose facilities such as athletic stadiums, civic centers, natatoriums and gymnasiums. The park and recreation industry has not established minimum standards for acreage, or population service areas for unique and special use areas.

Table A.22 - Park Classifications in Gaston County

Classification	Typical Size Ranges	Typical Service Area	Total Number in Gaston County	Current Total Acreage
Regional Park	1,000 ac.	50-60 mi. radius 100,000 pop.	1	3,500 acres
District Park	200 to 400 ac.	8-10 mi. radius 20-50,000 pop.	4	680 acres
Community / School Park	40+ ac Minimum	2-3 mi. radius 5-15,000 pop.	22	512 acres
Neighborhood Park	5 to 15 ac.	1/2 to 1 mile 5,000 pop.	31	214 acres
Linear Park	Varies	County- Wide	2	89 acres
Unique or Special Use Park	Varies	County-Wide	16	196 acres

Source: Gaston County Parks and Recreation Office

Crowders Mountain State Park meets the current and 2020 need for a regional park in Gaston County. The County is more than 1,000 acres deficient in district park land; however, the eight mile service radius of the four existing district parks covers the entire county with the exception of Cherryville. The county is 200 to 300 acres deficient in community/school park land. The three mile service radius of the existing community and/or school parks illustrates land deficiencies in the North Central, upper Northeast and Northwest areas of the county. There is an immediate need to acquire land for district, community/school and linear parks.

Based upon the inventory, a large number of unique and special use parks exist in the municipalities, but there are only two County-owned sites. The special use parks classification includes single purpose athletic facilities and stadiums. The Parks and Recreation Commission had identified a need for a multi-field "hub" athletic complex. Acquisition of hundred or more acres of land for this type of facility would decrease the need for community/school park land.

For more information visit: <http://www.gastongov.com/departments/parks-recreation>

Existing Recreation Facilities

Table A.23 - Gaston County Outdoor Facilities - Chart 1

Jurisdiction	Dog Parks	Concession Stands	Frisbee / Disc Golf	Equestrian	Picnic Shelters	Playground
Gaston County	1	7		1	13	6
Belmont					2	4
Bessemer City					1	3
Cherryville		1			1	5
Cramerton		2			3	3
Dallas						2
Gastonia		2			23	15
High Shoals		1				
Kings Mountain						
Lowell		1			1	1
McAdenville						
Mount Holly		1			6	5
Ranlo						2
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley						
Totals	1	15	0	1	50	46

Table A.24 - Gaston County Outdoor Facilities - Chart 2

Jurisdiction	Lakes	Rope Courses	In-Line or Roller Skating	Skateboard Parks	Swimming Pools	Walking / Running Tracks
Gaston County	4	0				8
Belmont						1
Bessemer City					1	1
Cherryville				1	1	1
Cramerton			1		1	2
Dallas						1
Gastonia	1		1	1	2	4
High Shoals						
Kings Mountain						
Lowell						1
McAdenville						
Mount Holly						2
Ranlo						1
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley						
Totals	4	0	2	2	5	22

Table A.25 - Gaston County Indoor Facilities - Chart 1

Jurisdiction	Aerobic Studios	Recreation / Community Centers with GYM	Recreation / Community Centers without GYM	Senior Citizen Centers	INDOOR Swimming Pools	INDOOR Walking or Running Tracks
Gaston County				1		
Belmont		1	1		1	
Bessemer City		1		1		
Cherryville			1			
Cramerton	1	1		1		
Dallas		1				
Gastonia		4	4			
High Shoals						
Kings Mountain						
Lowell			1			
McAdenville						
Mount Holly		2				
Ranlo			1			
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley						
Totals	1	10	8	3	1	0

Table A.26 - Gaston County Indoor Facilities - Chart 2

Jurisdiction	Weight Room	Exercise Equipment Room	Indoor Climbing Wall	Roller Skating with Hockey	Indoor Football	Indoor Soccer
Gaston County	1					
Belmont						
Bessemer City						
Cherryville						
Cramerton	1	1				
Dallas						
Gastonia						
High Shoals						
Kings Mountain						
Lowell						
McAdenville						
Mount Holly		2				
Ranlo						
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley						
Totals	2	3	0	0	0	0

Table A.27 - Gaston County Fields & Courts - Chart 1

Jurisdiction	Baseball	Football	Soccer	Tennis	Basketball	Softball
Gaston County	14		8	20		4
Belmont			1	4	3	
Bessemer City				1	2	
Cherryville				6	4	
Cramerton	1			2	4	1
Dallas			1	4		
Gastonia	2		4	32	6	4
High Shoals						
Kings Mountain						
Lowell			6		1	
McAdenville			1			
Mount Holly					2	
Ranlo				1	1	
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley						4
Totals	17	0	21	70	23	13

Table A.28 - Gaston County Fields & Courts (Single / Multi-Use) - Chart 2

Jurisdiction	Volleyball	Horseshoes	Baseball / Softball	Football / Soccer	Basketball / Tennis	Restrooms
Gaston County	1	26	19	9		14
Belmont	1		4	2		2
Bessemer City			2			2
Cherryville		1	5			1
Cramerton	2					2
Dallas			1			
Gastonia	1	5	9	3		9
High Shoals			1			
Kings Mountain						
Lowell			1			
McAdenville						1
Mount Holly	1		5			1
Ranlo			1			1
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley			2			2
Totals	6	32	50	14	0	35

Other Facilities

Table A.29 - Gaston County - Other Facilities

Jurisdiction	Controlled Airplane	Gaston County YMCA	Stowe Botanical Garden	Crowders Mountain State Park	Lake Wylie Access	Mountain Island Lake Access
Gaston County	1			Public		
Belmont			Private		Private	
Bessemer City						
Cherryville		1				
Cramerton						
Dallas						
Gastonia		2				
High Shoals						
Kings Mountain						
Lowell						
McAdenville						
Mount Holly		1				Public
Ranlo						
Spencer Mtn.						
Stanley						
Totals	1	4	0	0	0	0



Photo Courtesy of Gaston County Parks and Recreation Office



Parks Matrix		Playgrounds	Basketball Courts	Baseball/Softball Fields	Tennis Courts	Soccer Fields	Multi-Use Fields	Volleyball Courts	Skateboard Park	Picnic Areas	Track/Trails	Swimming Pools	Kitchen	Equestrian Facilities	Fishing	Canoeing/Kayaking	Heritage Sites	Handicap Access	Restrooms
County Parks																			
1	Bessemer City Park	●	●	●		●	●			●	●								●
2	Camp Sertoma									●	●		●						●
3	Catawba Heights Elementary			●															
4	Chapel Grove Elementary	●		●		●	●												
5	Cramerton Middle School			●		●					●								●
6	Dallas Park	●		●	●		●			●	●			●	●		●	●	●
7	East Gaston High School			●	●														●
8	Forestview High School			●	●	●					●								
9	George Poston Park	●		●		●	●	●		●	●				●			●	●
10	Hershal H. Beam Elementary					●	●				●								
11	Lewis Brooks Airfield									●									
12	New Hope Elementary			●		●					●								●
13	North Belmont Park	●		●		●	●			●	●								●
14	Pearl Henderson Park			●		●													
15	Pinewood Elementary			●		●	●				●								
16	Robinson Elementary			●		●					●								
17	South Fork River Park									●	●				●	●			
18	Tryon Park	●		●		●				●	●								●
19	W.A. Bess Elementary Elementary	●		●		●					●								●
Gastonia Parks																			
1	All American Park	●								●									
2	Bradley Center and Park	●	●	●	●	●	●			●			●					●	●
3	East Park	●								●								●	
4	Erwin Center and Park	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●					●	●
5	Ferguson Park	●		●	●						●								●
6	I.C. Falls Park	●	●	●							●								
7	Lineberger Park	●	●				●		●	●	●	●						●	●
8	Martha Rivers Park	●		●		●	●	●		●	●							●	●
9	Optimist Club Park	●								●									
10	Phillips Center and Park	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●					●	●
11	Rankin Lake Park	●								●	●		●		●	●		●	●
12	Sims Legion Park			●					●		●							●	●
13	Smyre Millenium Park	●								●	●								
14	T. Jeffers Center and Park	●	●	●	●					●	●		●						●

Parks Matrix		Playgrounds	Basketball Courts	Baseball/Softball Fields	Tennis Courts	Soccer Fields	Multi-Use Fields	Volleyball Courts	Skateboard Park	Picnic Areas	Track/Trails	Swimming Pools	Kitchen	Equestrian Facilities	Fishing	Canoeing/Kayaking	Heritage Sites	Handicap Access	Restrooms
Belmont Parks																			
1	Belmont Central Field	●	●	●		●					●								
2	Crescent Park and Dwight Frady Fields	●	●	●						●									
3	Davis Park	●		●	●	●				●	●							●	●
4	Gantt Park					●					●								
5	Linford Park		●								●							●	
6	Reid Park	●	●	●		●	●			●	●								
7	Rodden Ballfield			●		●													
8	Stowe Park	●				●		●		●	●							●	●
Bessemer City Parks																			
1	Bessemer City Pool and Park	●	●		●					●	●	●						●	●
2	Central Park									●	●								
3	Founders Park									●	●								
4	Indian Spring Park	●	●				●			●									
5	Kevin Millwood Park			●															●
6	Uptown Park									●									
Cherryville Parks																			
1	Aaron Moss Park		●	●	●		●			●	●								
2	Andy Hovis Community Skate Park								●										
3	Ben Black Park	●	●		●					●									
4	Bill Edwards Park	●	●							●									
5	Gazebo Mini Park									●									
6	J. Ralph Beam Jr. Heritage Park									●							●		
7	Kenwood Park	●	●							●									
8	Robert H. Ballard Park	●	●	●						●	●	●							●
9	Stroupe Park									●									
10	Westgate Park	●	●		●					●									
Cramerton Parks																			
1	Central Park				●					●	●								
2	Goat Island Park	●								●	●				●	●			
3	McAdenville Elementary	●		●		●	●				●								
4	Riverside Park and Greenway		●							●	●				●	●		●	●
5	Stuart W. Cramer High School		●	●	●	●					●							●	●
High Shoals Park																			
1	High Shoals Park	●		●							●								



Parks Matrix		Playgrounds	Basketball Courts	Baseball/Softball Fields	Tennis Courts	Soccer Fields	Multi-Use Fields	Volleyball Courts	Skateboard Park	Picnic Areas	Track/Trails	Swimming Pools	Kitchen	Equestrian Facilities	Fishing	Canoeing/Kayaking	Heritage Sites	Handicap Access	Restrooms
Lowell Parks																			
1	Bob Bolick Park	●									●								
2	Harold Rankin Park	●	●							●									
3	Joe Hudson Park		●																
McAdenville Parks																			
1	Legacy Park	●									●								
2	McDonald and Dolphin Fields	●		●	●	●				●	●						●	●	
Mount Holly Parks																			
1	Catawba Heights Neighborhood Park	●								●									
2	Mountain Island Park	●								●	●			●	●				
3	River Street Park	●	●	●			●			●	●								
4	Tuckaseegee Park	●		●	●			●		●	●						●	●	
5	Veterans Park	●								●									
6	Woodlawn Park	●	●							●									
Ranlo Parks																			
1	Ranlo Central Park	●	●	●	●													●	●
2	Gardin Park	●																	
Stanley Parks																			
1	Harper Park	●	●	●						●	●							●	●
2	R.M. Thompson Park			●														●	●



Photos Courtesy of Gaston County Parks and Recreation Office



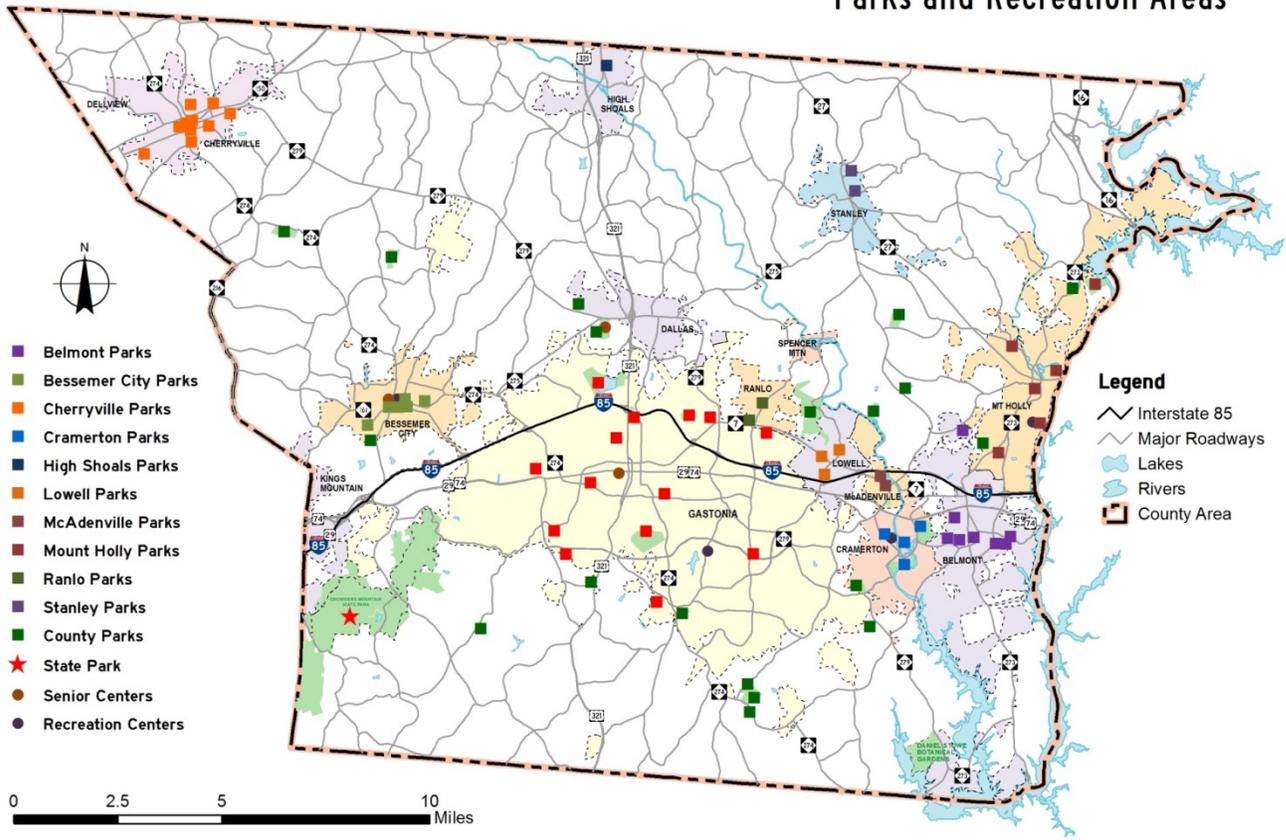
Recreational Centers		Swimming Pools	Basketball Courts	Gymnasium	Meeting Rooms	Classes	Kitchen
1	Bessemer City Park & Recreation Center	●	●		●		●
2	C.B. Hess Recreation Complex	●	●	●	●	●	●
3	Southeast Center (National Guard Army)		●	●	●	●	●
4	Tuckaseegee Community Center		●	●		●	●

Senior Centers

1	City of Gastonia Adult Recreation Center
2	Gaston County Senior Center
3	Kiser Senior Center



Gaston County, North Carolina Parks and Recreation Areas



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

State Parks

Crowders Mountain State Park

A registered national heritage site, the peaks of Crowders Mountain rise 800 feet above the surrounding countryside. In the year 2000, an additional 2,000 acres were added to the park to connect it with Kings Mountain National Military Park and Kings Mountain State Park in South Carolina. The park offers camping, hiking, picnicking, rock climbing, fishing and canoeing. For more information visit: www.ncparks.gov



Courtesy of North Carolina State Parks Office



Camping: Located approximately one mile from the park office are secluded areas for camping. Both campgrounds are reached by trail and all supplies must be packed to the campsites.



Hiking: Hiking trails lined with wild flowers and mountain laurel lead along the ridges and to the summits of Crowders Mountain and the Pinnacle. Circle the lake on a gravel path or view aquatic plants and animals along the narrow creek.



Outdoor Dining: Scattered throughout the picnic area are 28 tables and 8 grills in beautiful wooded areas. Drinking water and restrooms are located nearby. Two large shelters with tables and grills area available for group picnics.



Rock Climbing: Experienced climbers will enjoy the challenges of Crowders Mountain. Climbing is permitted in designated areas only. Pitons, bolts or similar devices that may damage cliff faces are not permitted.



Water Sports: Located near the park office and picnic ground, the nine-acre, man-made lake has ample parking nearby. Canoes can be rented at the park office from Spring through late Fall year-round, weather permitting.



Fishing: Fish from choice fishing spots on the banks or try your luck from the seat of a canoe. Bass and bream are waiting to be caught! Anglers must have a North Carolina fishing license. Swimming and private boats are not permitted.

Open Space

Open space in Gaston County is defined as areas of publicly or privately owned natural area that is protected for natural and cultural resources. Conservancies, Land Trusts, and Greenways are examples of different types of land preservation that reserve and dedicate open space to ensure critical lands are protected for clean drinking water, recreation, tourism, healthy forests, and working farms that produce fresh, local foods. Approximately 7,900 acres of vacant land is deemed open space areas in Gaston County.

Gaston County is home to several other recognizable open space destinations that draw visitors from around the two-state area:

- Crowders Mountain State Park (2,000+ acres).
- Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden (400+ acres).
- Mountain Island Educational State Forest, (1,300-acre educational forest straddling Lincoln and Gaston Counties at Gaston's northeast corner).



Courtesy of North Carolina Educational State Forests

Greenways

With oversight provided by a steering committee of municipal, county and interested non-governmental organizations, residents in Gaston County, North Carolina, participated in a locally-driven process to create this Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Gaston County Communities, also referred to as the Greenway Master Plan. This plan is meant to serve as a guiding document for greenway and trail development within the county, cities and towns in Gaston County.

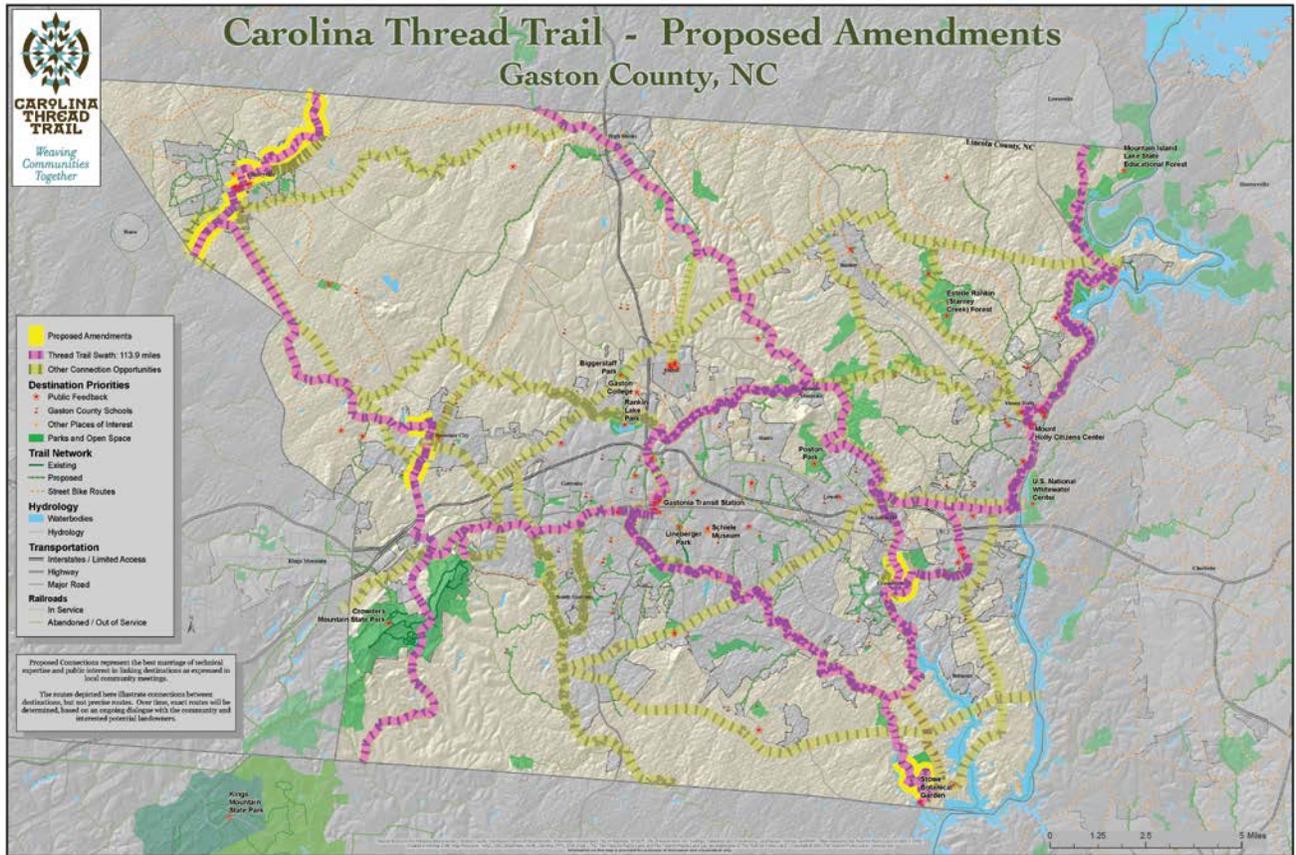
The Master Plan includes an introduction to the benefits of greenways and trails, a description of current conditions in Gaston County, a summary of the planning process undertaken, a concept map for a network of greenways and trails throughout the county, introduction to the Carolina Thread Trail proposed route, and a description of recommended implementation steps. These action steps are intended to provide ideas for local governments to fund segments and expeditiously put them on the ground.

The Carolina Thread Trail initiative, which has helped to spur the development of this plan, is an effort to encourage 15 counties in the south-central piedmont of North Carolina and the north-central portion of South Carolina to create a large, interconnected trail system that will preserve and increase the quality of life within the local communities. This plan presents a conceptual route for trails throughout the county, some of which will receive the Carolina Thread Trail designation. Lands to be incorporated can include prime farmland, wildlife habitat, environmentally fragile lands, open fields and forests.

In general, a greenway is a linear corridor of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use, transportation or environmental protection. A trail is a linear route on land or water with protected status and public access typically for recreation or transportation purposes. For the sake of brevity, the word "trail" will be used throughout this plan to encompass both types of amenities.

The Carolina Thread Trail is a regional network of greenways, trails and conserved lands that will reach approximately 2.3 million citizens. It will link people, places, cities, towns and attractions. The Thread will help preserve our natural areas and will be a place for the exploration of nature, culture, science and history, for family adventures and celebrations of friendship. It will be for young, old, athlete and average. This is a landmark project, and creates a legacy that will give so much, to so many, for so long. The scale of The Thread's connectivity is unparalleled and is based on certain guiding principles and core values: Collaboration, Community Self-Determination, Connectivity, Inclusivity, Leverage, and Respect for the Land and Respect for the Landowners.

During the planning process, Gaston County Communities determined the location of their segments of The Thread by having alternative routes to consider. Portions of these routes included public lands or property owned by willing landholders, including developers who want to offer this amenity to their neighborhoods. The broad corridors featured present multiple opportunities and adjustments to the route can be incorporated as more landowners are engaged. Expert trail builders indicate that trails are built by assimilating parcels over time in this fashion and that eminent domain is very rarely used.

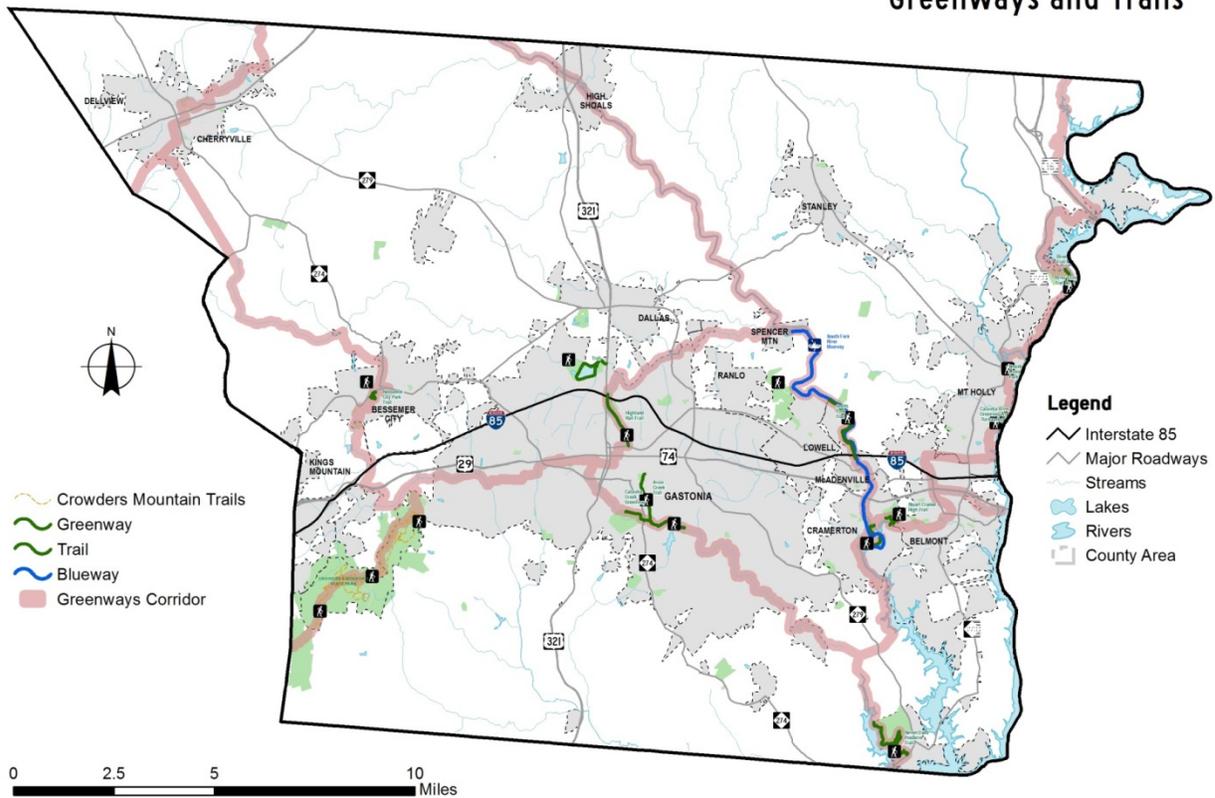


Avon/Catawba Creek Greenway, Gastonia, NC – Courtesy of Carolina Thread Trail



Gaston County in concert with NCDOT, and GCLMPO, is in the process of constructing a pedestrian trail from Gastonia Technology Park to Gaston College, and Dallas Park (near Dallas-Cherryville Highway). This project is schedule to be built in the next few years. (See *City of Gastonia Urban Greenway, Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Map in Appendix B*).

Gaston County, North Carolina Greenways and Trails



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Historic Districts and Landmarks

Historic Districts

Dallas Square: Designated in 1973, this fine collection of nineteenth (19th) and early twentieth (20th) century buildings, dated between about 1840 to 1900, help tell the story of Piedmont village life in Dallas, which served as the County seat of Gaston County from 1847 to 1911. Notable structures include the Greek Revival style old Gaston County Courthouse, the County jail, the Hoffman Hotel, the Rhyne Store, the Smyre-Pasour House, the Matthews Hotel, the Late Victorian style Wilson-Spargo House and the Setzer General Store.

Belmont Abbey Campus: Designated in 1993, this 540-acre campus is known for its Gothic Revival and American Benedictine architecture, centered around the Abbey Cathedral (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973) with its terraced courtyard dominated by a statue of Saint Benedict (1924).

Belmont Commercial: Designated in 1996, this district encompasses the central business district as well as residential neighborhoods built during the textile boom period of the early twentieth (20th) century. This district includes notable examples of Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Bungalow / American Craftsman architecture. Notable buildings include the R.L. Stowe Mills Office Building, Bank of Belmont, Piedmont and Northern Railroad Depot, Belmont Hotel, Sacred heart College, and Belmont High School.

Loray Mill Village: Designated in 2001, this district consists of the Loray Mill and its surrounding village which demonstrates a significant example of textile mill construction and technological innovation in the South during the early twentieth (20th) century. The district includes the five-story Loray Mill and all or parts of some thirty (30) blocks of frame mill houses constructed primarily between the early 1900s and the 1920s. They include notable examples of Colonial Revival, Gothic Revival, and Bungalow / American Craftsman architecture. Other notable buildings include the Loray Baptist Church.

Gastonia Commercial: Designated in 2004, this district includes commercial, civic, institutional, and multi-unit residential buildings which were built between the 1890s and 1954 and include notable examples of Colonial Revival and Classical Revival architecture. Notable buildings include the U.S. Post Office, York Medical Building, Kress Department Store, Leibowitz Department Store, Ideal Moving Picture Theater, City Hall, First Baptist Church, and the Gaston County War Memorial Hall.

York Chester Neighborhood: Designated in 2005, this district contains an eclectic mix of nationally popular styles and vernacular house forms common to the suburbs and residential areas that developed in North Carolina's towns and cities during the last decades of the nineteenth (19th) century and the first half of the twentieth (20th) century. Among private homes, this district also includes one (1) school, one (1) synagogue, and Oakwood cemetery.

McAdenville Commercial: Designated in 2009, this district includes Cottages, Victorian, Italianate, and Colonial Revival or Bungalow Craftsman architecture which has been preserved in the nineteenth (19th) century homes, buildings and mill houses throughout the community. More than eighty-five (85) acres have been designated as a nationally registered historic district.

Mount Holly Commercial: Designated in 2012, this district encompasses the central business district of Mount Holly. The buildings were built between about 1883 and 1960, and characterized by one- and two-story brick commercial buildings. Notable buildings include the Classical Revival style Mount Holly Bank, Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, First Presbyterian Church, and Charlie's Drugs and Sundries.

Bessemer City Commercial: Designated in 2014, this district encompasses the central business district of Bessemer City. The buildings were built after 1896 and include one- and two-story commercial buildings and two (2) large and sprawling textile mill complexes. Notable buildings include the Whetstone Cotton Mills-Huss Manufacturing Company-Algodon Manufacturing Division of Pyramid Mills, Southern Cotton-Mills-Osage Manufacturing Company, Gamble Hardware, Central Drug Store, Winn-Dixie Grocery, Shulman's Department Store, and Kincaid Service Station and Pontiac Dealership.

Museums

Schiele Museum: Gastonia's Schiele Museum of Natural History features the largest collection of land mammal specimens in the Southeast, five (5) permanent galleries with vivid natural history exhibits, outdoor recreations of an Indian Village and an 18th Century Farm, and the James H. Lynn Planetarium featuring a spacious theater that surrounds the audience. The Schiele is one (1) of only seventy (70) museums in the United States designated as an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, enabling it to work with Smithsonian artifacts and materials, and also offers a variety of continuously changing exhibits.

Gaston County Museum: Located in Dallas, this multifaceted attraction, located in the former Hoffman Hotel which was constructed in 1852, features authentically furnished period rooms, a "hands-on" parlor, a gift shop and changing exhibits which explore art, history and historic preservation.

Belmont Museum: Located in Belmont, this colonial style purpose-built building houses a collection of items relating to the local history of the districts within the City of Belmont, including household items and early industry tools and machinery.

The Brevard Station Museum: Located in Stanley, this repository for historical artifacts and information pertaining to the region around the town also includes an abundance of space for displaying collections and exhibits depicting the advent of the railroad, information and artifacts regarding the textile industry, past businesses, town government happenings, farm life, vintage clothing and other articles showing early domestic life, culminating in a large collection of military artifacts.

Cherryville Historical Museum: Located in Cherryville, exhibits follow the history of the town from the 1800s until today. Artifact and research collections include a fire truck, photographs, art, medical equipment, farm equipment, written histories, old records, school annuals, genealogy and locally written books. Educational programs are offered.

C. Grier Beam Truck Museum: Located in Cherryville and housed in the original gas station where Carolina Freight had its humble beginnings, explore over 7500 square feet of vintage trucking

memorabilia covering over seven (7) decades. Exhibits include vintage trucks dating back to 1927, photos and memorabilia.

Historic Landmarks

Belmont Abbey Cathedral: designated in 1973 (NR)
Gaston County Courthouse: designated in 1979 (NR)
Hoffman Hotel: designated in 1980 (NR)
Gastonia High School (Ashley Arms): designated in 1982 (NR)
Rhyne Store (Dallas): designated in 1982 (NR)
Hoyle House (Dallas): designated in 1984 (NR)
Long Creek Presbyterian Church: designated in 1986
County Courthouse 1848 (Dallas): designated in 1986 (NR)
Ormand Iron Furnace: designated in 1987
Bethel Lutheran Church: designated in 1989
Dr. J.D. McLean (office): designated in 1989
St. Joseph's Catholic Church: designated in 1991 (NR)
Gastonia Central School: designated in 1993 (NR)
United States Post Office (Belmont): designated in 1995 (NR)
Mount Holly Textile Mill: designated in 1996 (NR)
Shell Station (C. Grier Beam Truck Museum): designated 1997
Mt. Olivett Methodist Church: designated in 1998
Robinson-Gardner Building (Gastonia): designated in 1999 (NR)
Masonic Temple (Gastonia): designated in 2000
Dallas Grade School / Dallas High School: designated in 2002 (NR)
Mayworth School (Cramerton): designated in 2002 (NR)
Loray Mill and Loray Mill Village: designated in 2004
Tryon Courthouse site (1768): designated in 2004
Lowell Teacherage (community building): designated in 2005
Landers Chapel, School, Cemetary: designated in 2005
Mount Holly P & N Station: designated in 2005
St. Paul Baptist Church (Gastonia): designated in 2006
Bank of Belmont: designated in 2007 (NR)
Central School (Bessemer City): designated in 2008 (NR)
Standard Hardware (Gastonia): designated in 2009 (NR)
Stowe Manor (Belmont): designated in 2010 (NR)
Memorial Hospital (Gastonia): designated in 2012 (NR)
Armstrong Apartments (Gastonia): designated in 2012 (NR)
Belmont P & N Station: designated in 2014 (NR)
Chronicle Mill (Belmont): designated in 2015

** NR indicates landmark is listed with the National Register of Historic Places **

** Additional landmarks are private homes; not open to the public **

Infrastructure and Services

Water and Sewer

The County neither owns nor operates water and sewer treatment facilities. The operation of such facilities being limited to several municipal governments which include: Belmont (Belmont Converting, Bessemer City, Cherryville, Gastonia, High Shoals, Kings Mountain (part), Mt. Holly, and Stanley. Recently, the Towns of Ranlo and Dallas have elected to develop their own treatment facilities, both in operation in 1989.

The County, over the years, has employed three policies to address the extension of water and sewer lines, which are: Utility Extension Policy - 1968/1988; Economic Development Grants 1980/1983; and Water and Sewer Capital Improvements Plan funded by a portion of 1983 Local Option Sales Tax. The first two policies have been limited to addressing water and sewer infrastructure to basically industry and other commercial concerns. Under the current policy, any water or sewer project may be considered, but due to the limited amount of funds only the interconnections of municipal systems and placement of the infrastructure to industrial sites were addressed. The County, in the past, has endeavored to address the future needs of water and sewer in the areas where water and sewer lines have been placed using County funds, by intentionally oversizing the line capacity for future growth. The current policy addresses funding of water and sewer lines in the unincorporated area under the following criteria:

With the increasing growth which is occurring in the unincorporated area of Gaston County, demands for a municipal type water and sewer system will only increase. This growth points out the need for water and sewer in the unincorporated areas of the County. In the efforts to stretch the limited water and sewer funding, the County constantly is reviewing proposals and encouraging cooperative efforts for provision of water and sewer services in the County. One of the most recent cooperative efforts among several local governments is the Two Rivers Utilities. This agency, owned and operated by the city of Gastonia, provides water plant services to multiple municipalities within Gaston County.

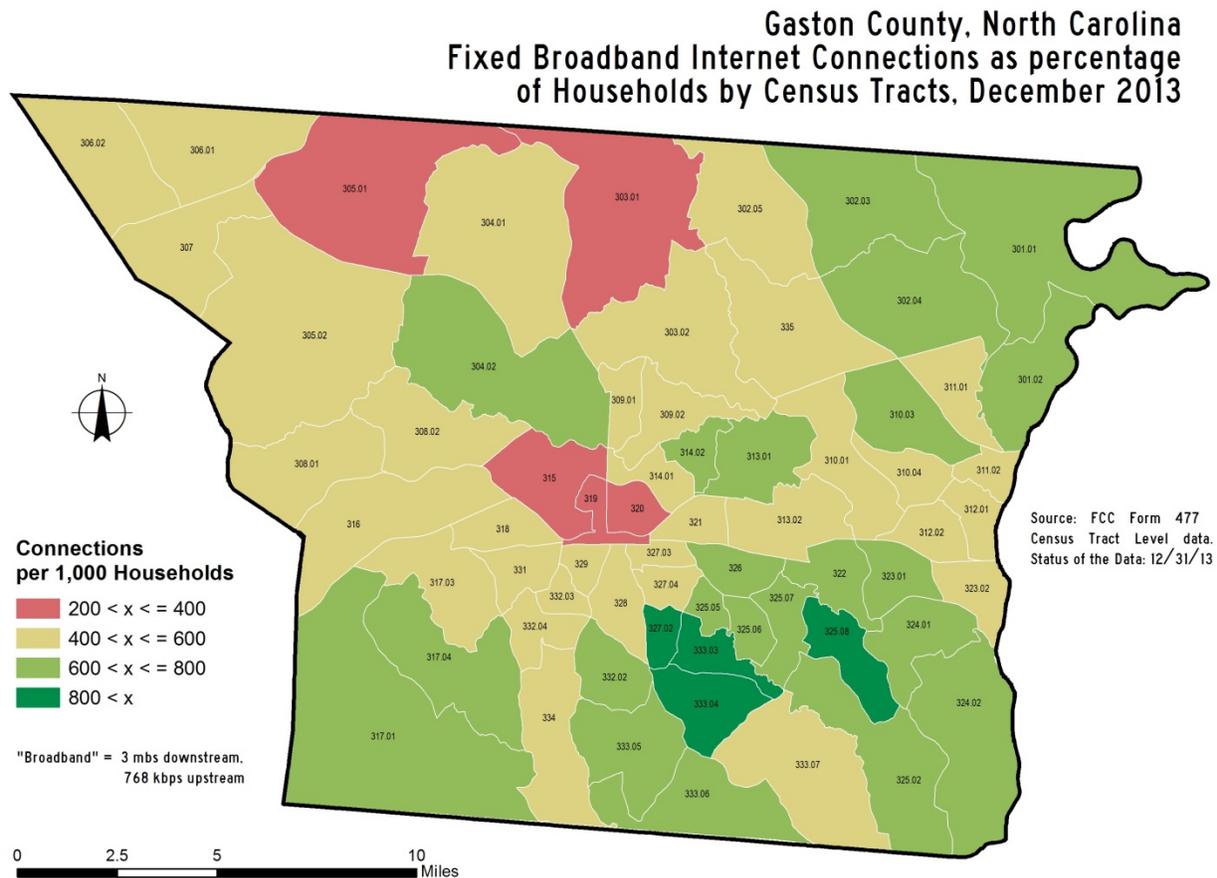
Table A.30 - Gaston County Water & Sewer Providers

	WATER		SEWER	
	Provided	Provided By	Provided	Provided By
BELMONT	YES		YES	
BESSEMER CITY		TWO RIVERS		TWO RIVERS
CHERRYVILLE	YES		YES	
CRAMERTON		TWO RIVERS	YES	
DALLAS	YES		YES	
DELLVIEW		CHERRYVILLE		CHERRYVILLE
GASTONIA	YES		YES	
HIGH SHOALS	YES		YES	
KINGS MOUNTAIN	YES		YES	
LOWELL		TWO RIVERS	YES	
MCADENVILLE		TWO RIVERS	YES	
MOUNT HOLLY	YES		YES	
RANLO		TWO RIVERS		TWO RIVERS
SPENCER MOUNTAIN		TWO RIVERS		MCADENVILLE
STANLEY	YES	MOUNT HOLLY	YES	MOUNT HOLLY

Source: Gaston County Planning and Development Services

Telecommunications and Broadband Development

- Telecommunications / Broadband – This development activity is becoming increasingly more pervasive. Therefore, more broadbanding will increase the need for telecommunications infrastructure.



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

In June 2016, North Carolina released a State Broadband Plan, detailing affordable high-speed internet across North Carolina. This plan outlines recommendations for the state to increase internet access, focusing on lowering infrastructure construction costs, preparing a 21st century workforce, increasing small business adoption, and expanding access for K-12 students at home.

North Carolina has made connecting classrooms to robust Wi-Fi internet a top priority. In 2016, nearly 65% of classrooms are connected, and the goal is to connect 100% of the classrooms by 2018. The comprehensive State Broadband Plan builds on that progress in targeted areas and also looks at ways to support new health care technologies and provide the necessary tools to public safety responders to ensure North Carolina's safety.

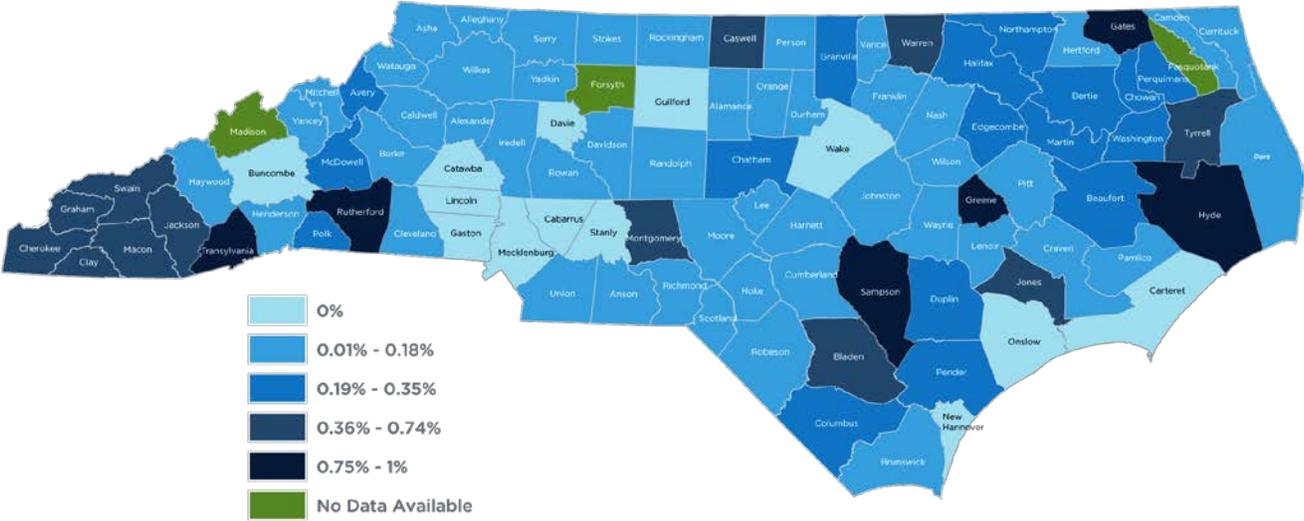


The plan finds that new technologies, user demand, and greater reliance on internet access will require ongoing infrastructure upgrades within our state. North Carolina and Gaston County ensure a healthier broadband ecosystem by encouraging competition through updated policies and laws. In areas where competition is lacking, policy makers must empower communities to form more equitable partnerships with service providers.

Developed by the Broadband Infrastructure Office within the North Carolina Department of Information Technology, the plan offers lawmakers and local officials specific recommendations to foster broadband deployment and adoption. A collaborative effort, the plan uses feedback gathered from more than a dozen stakeholder listening sessions, discussions with nearly 80 subject matter experts, and a survey of 3,500 local leaders. More information can be found at: www.ncbroadband.gov

The FCC reports that 93% of NC's population has access to the internet at the FCC threshold speeds of 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload. Only 1% of those without access live in urban locations, while 89% of those without access (nearly 640,000 people) live in sparsely populated areas.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WITHOUT BROADBAND ACCESS BY COUNTY



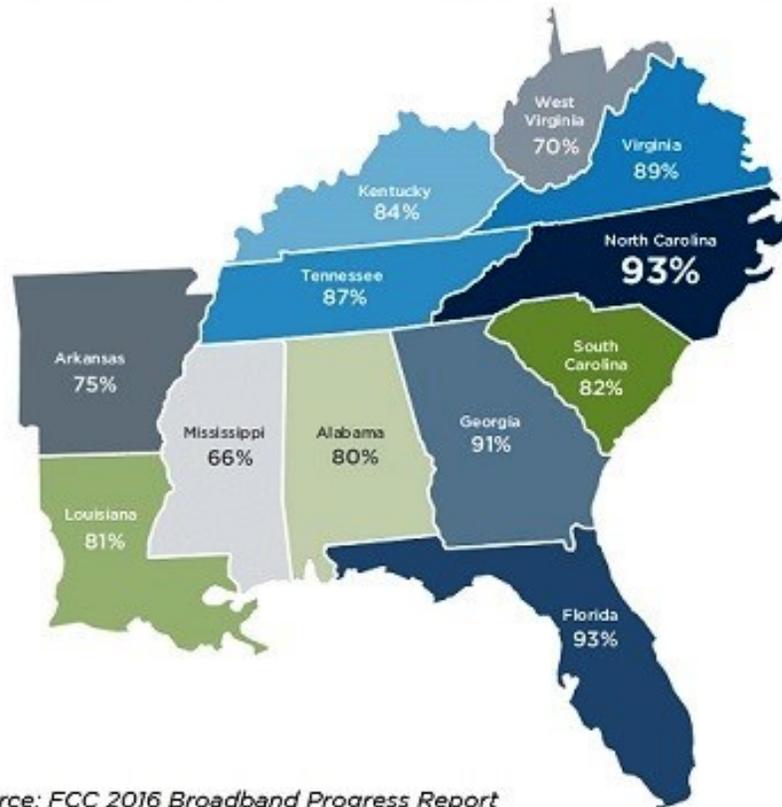
Source: FCC 2016 Broadband Progress Report, data current as of December 31, 2014

Within North Carolina, 52 of the 100 counties have a household broadband deployment rate equal to or above the US average of 90%. Most people access the internet over DSL or cable. The proliferation of DSL was aided by federal or state telecommunications laws and regulations, and cable by local cable television franchise agreements.

While the coverage is pervasive this infrastructure was not originally intended for current internet usage and applications. New and increased data demands have exposed problems with latency, reliability, and bandwidth. New technologies, such as DOCSIS 3.1, promise to increase DSL bandwidth. Without these technologies or network upgrades using fiber-optic cable within the next three to five years, many regions of the state will not be able to support the needs of businesses and individuals.

While FTTP deployment has nearly tripled to 10% since 2013, according to the North Carolina Department of Commerce's (NCDOC) 2013 Innovation Index, NC's rank, 37th, remains lower than all peer states. Updated and current information suggests that deployment rates for FTTP are well above 10 percent, but significantly less than the US average-25%.

**NORTH CAROLINA A LEADER IN BROADBAND
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY**
93% BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT AMONG HIGHEST IN REGION



Source: FCC 2016 Broadband Progress Report

Healthcare in Gaston County

Healthcare in Gaston County NC is ranked among the best in the US

Over 200 physicians serve Gaston County NC, including 90 primary care practitioners and more than 100 specialists. Gaston County also has over 60 dental practices.

CaroMont Health

Gaston County NC is home to CaroMont Health , one of the most advanced health care systems in the region. CaroMont employs 3,800 dedicated professionals and includes Gaston Memorial Hospital and a network of primary and specialty physician offices. Gaston Memorial was named one of Thomson Reuter's Top 100 hospitals. The 435-bed general and acute care facility offers many services including:

- CaroMont Cancer Center
- CaroMont Diabetes Center
- CaroMont Heart Center
- CaroMont Emergency Trauma Services
- CaroMont Surgical Services
- The Birthplace at Gaston Memorial
- Courtland Terrace Long Term Care Facility
- Gaston Hospice

Carolinas Rehabilitation - Mount Holly

Carolinas Rehabilitation - Mount Holly is one of the newest rehabilitation locations for Carolinas Healthcare Systems (CHS). The 40-bed, 48,000 square foot inpatient facility treats stroke, orthopedics and other general rehabilitation patients. Outpatient services include physician services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, workers compensation as well as treatment for neurological disorders.

Education and Libraries

The Gaston County public school system is the ninth largest in the State with an enrollment of better than 31,256 students. It is a consolidated system which assures the same quality education for all students both urban and rural. The school system includes special programs, which are available for exceptional students, as well as for the handicapped and the learning disabled.

Institutions of higher education in the county include Gaston College, a two (2) year county-supported community college operating under the North Carolina Board of Community Colleges and Belmont Abbey College, a private four (4) year liberal arts college that also boasts a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Gaston County Offers High-Quality Education Opportunities

Gaston County places an emphasis on quality education. Residents of the county's many communities enjoy a proximity to nationally-ranked public schools, institutions of higher education, unlimited training resources and a future workforce of capable, local graduates.

Gaston County's Educational Offerings Include:

- Fifty (55) public schools enrolling over 32,000 in 30 elementary, 2 intermediate, 11 middle, 10 high, 1 special needs, and 1 alternate school. About 88% subsequently enroll in some form of higher education.
- Highland School of Technology is one of only six high schools in the state to receive the Honor School of Excellence status. Highland is one of only 30 schools in the nation selected as a national high school model. The student body is selected through a lottery system.
- Gaston County also has public charter, independent, and religious private schools.
- Gaston County opened its first Elementary Magnet School called Hawks Nest "STEAM" Academy at former Hawks Nest Intermediate School.

Table A.31 - Gaston County Schools - Total Enrollment (PMR Month 3) 2010-2016

School Name	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
ASHBROOK HIGH	1291	1320	1446	1454	1420	1408
BELMONT CENTRAL ELEM	717	691	675	683	676	724
BELMONT MIDDLE	709	737	763	762	723	733
BESSEMER CITY CENTRAL	356	332	330	343	304	431
BESSEMER CITY HIGH	542	509	583	642	626	654
ECHS AT BESSEMER CITY	104	127	118	147	170	197
BESSEMER CITY PRIMARY	353	329	336	321	334	442
W.BLAINE BEAM INTERMEDIATE	235	224	229	230	193	191
BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY	631	617	514	541	533	531
CARR ELEMENTARY	675	663	682	679	634	688
CATAWBA HEIGHTS ELEM	307	340	338	336	323	343
CHAPEL GROVE ELEM	476	491	460	439	434	458
CHERRYVILLE HIGH	641	617	588	591	544	534

CHERRYVILLE ELEM	444	464	431	420	421	393
WARLICK SCHOOL	120	98	97	105	102	103
COSTNER ELEMENTARY	633	634	597	581	555	537
STUART W. CRAMER HIGH				526	780	1046
CRAMERTON MIDDLE	865	859	857	869	830	838
EAST GASTON HIGH	1468	1491	1520	1220	1104	966
ED SADLER ELEMENTARY	424	406	457	504	544	489
WEBB STREET	162	160	160	150	154	146
FORESTVIEW HIGH	1281	1232	1182	1119	1137	1178
GARDNER PARK ELEM	581	530	615	601	653	657
GRIER MIDDLE	650	673	734	698	676	664
HAWKS NEST INTERM.	215	198	163	149	149	174
HIGHLAND TECHNOLOGY	560	561	557	559	551	550
HOLBROOK MIDDLE	799	770	758	746	737	718
HUNTER HUSS HIGH	1044	974	983	1057	1143	1109
J.B. PAGE PRIMARY	329	333	333	348	349	346
JOHN CHAVIS MIDDLE	525	498	497	444	421	412
KISER ELEMENTARY	509	472	432	416	447	433
BESSEMER CITY MIDDLE	572	606	605	544	543	522
LINGERFELDT ELEM	398	455	458	455	465	444
LOWELL ELEMENTARY	564	521	552	558	542	543
MCADENVILLE ELEM	147	141	145	156	166	192
MT. HOLLY MIDDLE	800	791	769	756	762	775
FOREST HEIGHTS ELEM	418	406	386	366	381	383
NEW HOPE ELEM	537	521	520	493	540	543
NORTH BELMONT ELEM	366	344	375	401	393	402
NORTH GASTON HIGH	1087	1081	1065	1052	1082	1119
PINEWOOD ELEMENTARY	524	537	541	544	574	576
PLEASANT RIDGE ELEM	242	222	261	256	278	427
IDA RANKIN ELEM	646	614	646	622	635	638
ROBINSON ELEMENTARY	342	337	353	388	349	317
SHERWOOD ELEMENTARY	587	589	605	637	642	712
H.H. BEAM ELEMENTARY	593	574	554	576	592	577
SOUTH POINT HIGH	1342	1290	1290	1114	1089	1024
SOUTHWEST MIDDLE	848	814	824	819	861	784
SPRINGFIELD ELEM	410	438	456	438	434	423
STANLEY MIDDLE	545	539	532	528	485	480
TRYON ELEMENTARY	369	360	322	349	352	367
W.A. BESS ELEMENTARY	668	651	627	579	555	576
W. C. FRIDAY MIDDLE	651	660	666	701	694	676
WOODHILL ELEMENTARY	309	355	426	398	422	575
YORK CHESTER MIDDLE	369	374	375	406	387	372
Grand Total	31,280	30,892	31,196	31,253	31,349	31,540

Source: Gaston County Schools

Gaston College

Gaston College enrolls over 5,000 students each term in curriculum programs and averages over 16,000 students annually in its Continuing Education programs. Part of the North Carolina Community College System, Gaston College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate degrees. Students choose from a variety of associate degrees, diploma, and certificate programs in liberal arts, trade and industrial, engineering technology, allied health, and business and public service. The College also operates an innovative BioEd Center. For more detailed information, visit [NC Community Colleges BioNetwork](#). Gaston College main campus is located in Dallas, NC. Other campuses are located in Lincolnton, NC and Belmont, NC.

Belmont Abbey College

Belmont Abbey College, founded by the Roman Catholic Church in 1876, is a co-educational liberal arts college offering bachelors and master's degrees. The Abbey was ranked as one of the best colleges in the Southeast by U.S. News & World Report and The Princeton Review. The Abbey was likewise ranked first in North Carolina – and second in the Southeast – for class size by the U.S. News & World Report.

Belmont Abbey College is home to more than 1,700 students, and it is located in the historic town of Belmont, North Carolina approximately ten minutes west of Charlotte, the largest city in the Carolinas. Students who come from other areas have a chance to see and become part of the educational, economic, and cultural dynamism of the Piedmont area of North Carolina.

Interstate 85 conveniently abuts the campus on its way to other thriving areas in the Carolinas. Charlotte Douglas International Airport, one of the South's major transportation hubs, is ten minutes away.

The scenic campus is impressive. Most of the older buildings, which were engineered and built by the monks themselves before the beginning of the twentieth century, provide charm and atmosphere. There are also many modern buildings, and the wooded, landscaped grounds provide an ideal setting for study. The entire central campus was designated as a National Historic District in 1993.

Gaston County Libraries

The Gaston County Public Library operates ten facilities including the Main Library in Gastonia and branches: Belmont, Bessemer City, Cherryville, Dallas, Gastonia -Ferguson Branch (Erwin Center), Lowell, Mt. Holly, Stanley, and Union Road.

The Gaston County Public Library delivers services via three program areas:

Administrative & Technical Services - Acquires, catalogs, processes, and distributes library materials for/to all Gaston County library service outlets. Staff provides technical support for the library's automation system and advisory and resource assistance to public service staff. Administration manages the Library budget, personnel, and day-to-day library business operations, determines system wide library service direction, and establishes service policies and procedures.

Main Library Services – Provide direct assistance to the public in-house, by telephone, FAX, email, and the library's website via there service points: Children's, Circulation, and Reference.

Responsibilities include registering borrowers, processing loans and returns, answering reference and information requests, planning and conducting library activity programs, and assisting in-house users with library materials and equipment.

Branch Library Services - Facilitate the delivery of library materials and services to citizens throughout the County. Staff provides direct assistance to library users: registering borrowers, processing loans and returns, answering reference and information requests, planning and conducting library activity programs, and assisting in-house users with library materials and equipment.

Resources available through the Gaston County Public Library include:

- AUDIOBOOKS, CDs, DVDS
- CAREER GUIDES
- GENEALOGY & LOCAL HISTORY
- INTERLIBRARY LOANS
- LARGE PRINT BOOKS
- MEETING ROOMS
- NEWSPAPERS
- PUBLIC-ACCESS COMPUTERS
- VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS
- BESTSELLERS
- FAX SERVICE
- INFORMATION SERVICES - IN-LIBRARY & TELEPHONE
- JOB-SEARCH CENTER
- MAGAZINES & PERIODICALS
- ONLINE DATABASES
- PHOTOCOPY SERVICE
- SPANISH LANGUAGE MATERIALS
- TAX FORMS

Library-sponsored and co-sponsored educational and cultural activities include offerings for young people and adults:

- AUTHOR VISITS
- COMMUNITY EXHIBITS & DISPLAYS
- LIBRARY TOURS
- PERFORMING ARTISTS
- BOOK TALKS
- LECTURES
- STORYHOURS
- SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Emergency Services

Emergency Management

The Office of Emergency Management is the coordinating agency for all activity in connection with emergency management. It is the instrument through which the governing bodies of the cities and the county may exercise the authority and discharge the responsibilities vested in them during disaster emergencies.

When an emergency arises or disaster threatens, the county's response is coordinated by activating and manning the **Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**. Representatives from the county and municipalities gather information and make decisions in the EOC and communicate to the proper authorities in the field and to the State and FEMA as required. The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for maintaining and ensuring readiness of the EOC.

The department administers and provides staff to the Local Emergency Planning Committee. The committee was formed as required by the Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act, known as S.A.R.A. This act concerns emergency planning and community-right-to-know laws for potentially harmful materials. This 23-member committee is responsible for helping develop local emergency response plans to handle these materials in the event of an accident at hazardous waste or chemical plants in the county.

Responsible and/or tasked with planning response, notification and evacuation within 10 miles of two (2) nuclear power plants; Updating and yearly adoption of the Emergency Operations Plan and the Nuclear Response Plan; Homeland Security threats and funding; Chemical reporting/LEPC; Hazard Mitigation Plan; Public education on hazards; Charlotte area UASI Homeland Security planning and funding; Monitoring situations and/or conditions; Keeping management and other elected officials and emergency responders informed of pending threats from hazards; Flood possibilities from lakes, rivers and streams and flood zone building restrictions; Work with many non-government agencies such as Red Cross, ARES, Duke Energy and United Way.

Fire Marshal

The function of the Fire Marshal's Department is twofold -protection and prevention. The Fire Marshal provides fire protection by coordinating and directing the activities of the 21 volunteer fire departments. The Fire Marshal coordinates the training of the volunteers as well as investigates fires of a suspicious nature.

In the area of fire prevention, the Fire Marshal conducts fire inspections of schools, day care centers, foster homes, commercial buildings and records any violations and assures corrections.

Gaston Emergency Medical Services

The purpose at GEMS, as the condensed mission statement says, is to "Preserve Life and Promote Safety." Much of what GEMS does is responding when someone needs medical assistance. GEMS has the medical and rescue training and equipment to respond to any type of situation. When a person's life hangs in the balance, GEMS does the best to use all our knowledge, skills, and tools to

save them. GEMS uses these same capabilities to treat any situation to reduce the morbidity or long term effects of sudden illness or injury. Of course, there are a lot of times when what GEMS does best is show some compassion to those GEMS called to see. Part of the job is also to promote safety and educate people about safe practices. After all, GEMS would rather get to know you in some manner other than to treat you in an emergency.

GEMS values preparedness, proficiency, pride, and compassion. Preparedness includes training, equipment readiness, response plans, medical treatment protocols, and the well-being of the caregivers, just to name a few. Proficiency has to do with how well-trained and practiced they are. Pride relates to how well they do their job. Finally, but just as important, is compassion. GEMS' goal is to treat every patient they see just as they would want their own family members treated, proficiently and compassionately.

To do their job well, full-time personnel are Paramedics and are also trained as Emergency Rescue Technicians. In addition, GEMS has several special teams made up of paramedics with specialized training. Special Tactics and Rescue (STAR) team members are technician level trained and equipped for Trench rescue, Confined Space rescue, Structural Collapse rescue, and High Angle rescue; some are also trained as Rescue Divers and some as Swift-water Rescue Technicians. Our Bicycle Emergency Response Team (BERT) deploys medics on bikes for large event coverage and standbys. GEMS also has a group of Tactical medics which train to deploy in support of the local SWAT and Emergency Response Teams. In addition, a group of personnel train with the local Bomb teams to support their operations.

GEMS was established in 1982 as a basic level ambulance provider. Today, it operates all Advanced Life Support units, and deploys a Rescue Support Unit and various special teams. They were the first EMS service in North Carolina to achieve accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services in 1995. GEMS was the 2002 recipient of the Emergency Medical Services magazine Gold Standard EMS Service of the Year Award.

All of those at GEMS values the relationship with the people of Gaston County. You might see GEMS responding to an emergency or standing by at a local school event. You might even see GEMS "posting" (sitting at a corner to cover the response zone of another unit). Wherever you see us, GEMS is here for you.

Preserve Life - Promote Safety

The mission of Gaston County Emergency Medical Services (GEMS) is to preserve and enhance the quality of life for the residents and visitors of Gaston County by providing superior quality Emergency Medical Service.

Gaston County Police

The Gaston County Police Department was created by Legislative Act on July 1, 1957 and began operation with a chief, a secretary and 23 sworn officers. At that time the Department was primarily responsible for providing police service to the unincorporated areas of the county. Since that time, however, additional duties and responsibilities have been given to the Gaston County Police. Today, the Department employs 136 sworn officers who provide police services to a community of approximately 90,000 residents and spanning an area of over 270 square miles that along with the

unincorporated areas of Gaston County also includes providing police services to the incorporated towns of High Shoals and Spencer Mountain. In addition, the Department employs 94 civilians who provide 911 Communications and Animal Control throughout Gaston County.

Since its inception in 1957, the Department has continually grown stronger and more proficient. By 1991, the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) awarded accreditation status to the Department, making it the 190th internationally accredited police agency.

Office of the Chief

This office manages each division, which is commanded by an Assistant Chief or Director. Within each of the operating divisions are various units that carry out the Department's operational and administrative functions. The Chief also directly manages all budgetary functions of the Department as well as the Professional Standards Unit and Planning and Analysis Unit.

Community Policing Division

The Community Policing Division is overseen by an Assistant and is comprised primarily of uniformed officers assigned to one of four geographical areas known as zones. Each zone is commanded by a Captain. The officers assigned to each zone are further divided into squads that cover rotating 12-hour shifts and are supervised by a Sergeant. The Community Policing Division is responsible for controlling and preventing crime through regular patrols, answering calls for service, apprehending offenders, enforcing criminal and traffic laws, conducting preliminary investigations and working with the community to solve neighborhood crime problems. This Division also has two specialized patrol units: the K-9 Unit and a seasonal Marine Enforcement Unit, and two special response teams, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) and the Hazardous Device Unit (HDU), whose specially trained members are available 24 hours a day to assist in crisis situations.

Investigations/Support Services

The Investigations and Support Services Division is overseen by an Assistant Chief and is comprised of the Criminal Investigations (CIU) which includes the Crime Scene Search Unit, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and the Support Services Unit. The Criminal Investigations Unit is responsible for the investigation of major felony offenses, select misdemeanors, missing persons, unattended deaths, offenses involving juveniles and the processing of evidence. Property and Evidence is also included in this unit. The Special Investigations Unit is primarily responsible for narcotics investigations, but is also charged with investigating gambling and prostitution offenses. The Support Services Unit includes Educational Services, which provides School Resource Officers to County schools; Employee Development, which is responsible for employee training; Recruitment and Selection, which handles all aspects of the hiring process; Accreditation, which is responsible for maintaining all necessary information to maintain compliance with accreditation standards and Police Information Processing, which is primarily responsible for maintaining the Departments records and providing 24-hour access for both public and officer inquiries.

911 Communications

The Gaston County Police Department 911 Communications Division is overseen by an Assistant Chief and is directed by 911 Communications Director. The 911 Communications Division is

comprised of 53 employees covering 4 shifts, who provide 24-hour coverage of emergency 911 calls and radio transmissions. The Unit is charged with maintaining and operating the computer-aided dispatch system for police, fire and medical calls, as well as receiving both emergency and non-emergency calls for service. The 911 Communications Division provides telecommunications services for the Gaston County Police Department, Gastonia Police Department, Bessemer City Police Department, Cramerton Police Department, Lowell Police Department, Ranlo Police Department, Stanley Police Department, Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement, Gastonia Fire Department, All 26 County VFD's and Municipal Fire Departments, Gaston Emergency Medical Services (GEMS) and all county volunteer rescue squads.

Animal Care and Enforcement

The Animal Care facility is administered by the Animal Enforcement Unit. The Animal Care and Enforcement Division provide animal control services and maintain the animal shelter for all of Gaston County. The mission of Animal Care and Enforcement is not only to enhance the safety of citizens, but also to ensure the proper care and treatment of animals. This is accomplished through animal-related services which reflect our professionalism and a concern for responsible pet ownership. Animal Control became a Division of the County Police Department on September 18, 1995 and later renamed to Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement in 2015.

Sheriff's Office

It is the mission of the Gaston County Sheriff's Office to provide quality law enforcement, detention, court security and civil services to the citizens and visitors of Gaston County. It's dedicated to conducting themselves in a manner respectful of the trust that has been placed upon us. They are dedicated to this mission and to the people.

Their Vision is to work for excellence through education, training and empowering its employees to provide the highest professional services to the citizens of Gaston County.

Court Division

The Gaston County Sheriff's Office assigns deputies to maintain order and control in Gaston County's 262,000-sq.foot Courthouse. There are nine district courts, three superior courts that require one or more sworn deputies at all times. Deputies also perform other functions within the courthouse such as security screenings, interior and exterior patrols of the courthouse and its surroundings, inmate movement, serve criminal warrants and civil papers, and fulfill orders of the court.

The security of the Gaston County Courthouse begins at the front door. People entering the courthouse must place all handbags, briefcases, and items in their pockets on a table or in a basket to be searched. As the person's possessions are being checked, he/she must step through the metal detector. Many different items may activate the alarm. It is not unusual for people to be scanned with a handheld detector. Pocketknives, pepper spray, firearms or any item that could be used as a weapon will not be allowed in the Courthouse. The Sheriff's Office will not store any items for any person. Any property left or surrendered will be considered abandoned and is subject to being destroyed. Persons in possession of weapons that constitute carrying a concealed weapon (N.C.G.S. 14-269) or possession of a weapon on courthouse property (N.C.G.S. 14-269.4) will be prosecuted.

All counties have the capability to post their criminal district calendars to the web, but some may not have adequate staff or time to perform this service. Some counties also include criminal superior calendars. Only a few have the capability to post civil calendars. If you have a question regarding the calendars for a particular county please click the link for information on how to contact the Clerk's office.

Field Operations Division

The duties of the Field Operations Division include the service of civil process, such as Summons, Summons and Complaints, Notice of Hearings, Summons in Summary Ejectments, Writs of Possession (real and personal property), Executions, Claim and Delivery, Order of Attachments, and Subpoenas. The Field Operation Division is also responsible for the service of criminal processes, such as Warrants, Orders for Arrest, Criminal Summons.

One deputy on each shift is assigned as a domestic violence deputy to serve all domestic violence orders, arrest warrants and to assist in any other domestic violence processes.

Detention Center

The Gaston County Jail opened November 1, 1999. The Jail has over 160,000 square feet and has a total bed capacity of 408 with an operating inmate capacity of 368. The facility houses male state pretrial detainees and convicted inmates sentenced to serve their time under the supervision of the Sheriff. The Jail is also contracted with the United States Marshal's Office to house pretrial federal inmates at a per diem rate of \$73.00 per day.

There is an on-site Medical Unit which has medical staff available 24 hours a day to provide medical care to the inmates at the jail and jail annex. The jail kitchen is operated by a contract food service provider, which provides three (3) meals a day to all inmates housed in the jail and the jail annex. The menus are prepared in consultation with a registered dietitian including any special or modified diets meeting the state requirements of 2100-2500 calories per day.

The jail offers numerous programs for the inmate's benefit which include library, high school classes for 16 and 17 year old inmates, GED classes, AA/ Substance Abuse, and HIV classes.

The Gaston County Jail Annex was initially constructed to provide additional housing for inmates and opened on May 3, 1996. The Annex has 24,740 square feet and a total bed capacity of 176 with an operating inmate capacity of 159. The Annex facility is used to house male and female pretrial inmates, convicted inmates and weekenders sentenced to serve their time under the supervision of the Sheriff.

The Jail Annex also houses sentenced inmates with court ordered work release. The Jail Annex has a contract with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to house sentenced federal inmates on Federal Work Release program also at a per diem rate of \$80.00 per day. The Jail Annex staff is responsible for verifying and approving the employment status of each inmate prior to starting the program; for the daily monitoring and surveillance of each inmate on the program; keeping track of their employment status, hours they are out of the facility and recording their job site locations. Inmates on the Federal Work Release program pay a subsistence payment, which is 25% of their gross wages for each pay check they draw, off-setting what the Federal Bureau of Prisons pays monthly.

State Work Release inmates pay a daily rate based on their yearly income with the minimum being \$18.00 per day and the maximum being \$36.00 per day until their sentence is completed. The Jail Annex is also responsible for inmates sentenced to serve weekends in jail, by processing the inmates in and out of the facility each weekend and ensuring their sentence requirements are fulfilled.

Immigration Enforcement

In February 2007, Gaston County Sheriff's Office entered into a partnership with the Department of Homeland Security to identify and process individuals arrested in Gaston County who are in the country illegally. This process, known as the 287 (g) Program, allowed the Gaston County Sheriff's Office to become the second of eight counties in North Carolina to perform this service on the East Coast.

The voluntary initiative, authorizing state and local authorities to work with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) to identify and detain immigration offenders, is found in Section 287 (g) of the "Immigration and Nationality Act." The initiative is designed to effectively multiply the forces of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement capabilities through the enhanced cooperation and communication with state and local law enforcement.

As of June 2010, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials have certified sixteen deputies from Gaston County to carry out certain duties traditionally handled by Federal Immigration Officers. These deputies determine whether there is probable cause for an immigration violation and complete the processing for criminal aliens. This process includes fingerprinting, preparing documentation to place aliens in deportation proceedings and preparing documentation to deport aliens following immigration protocol.

Using equipment and technology called IDENT, deputies now fingerprint and photograph all non US born arrestees. The IDENT system searches a special biometric database that only contains information on aliens that have been arrested or have had some type of immigration encounter. Additional information regarding an arrestee's immigration status will be determined based on an in-depth interview of the individuals past history.

Since April 2007 through April 2014, these deputies have identified and interviewed 2,312 foreign born nationals. Of these, 1,959 have been processed for deportation.

Community Services

One of the key elements of its mission is to provide outstanding public service to the citizens of Gaston County. These are some of the Community Services: Honor Guard, Project Lifesaver, Explorer Program, Public Fingerprinting, Gun Permits, Jail Tours.



APPENDIX B: MAPS

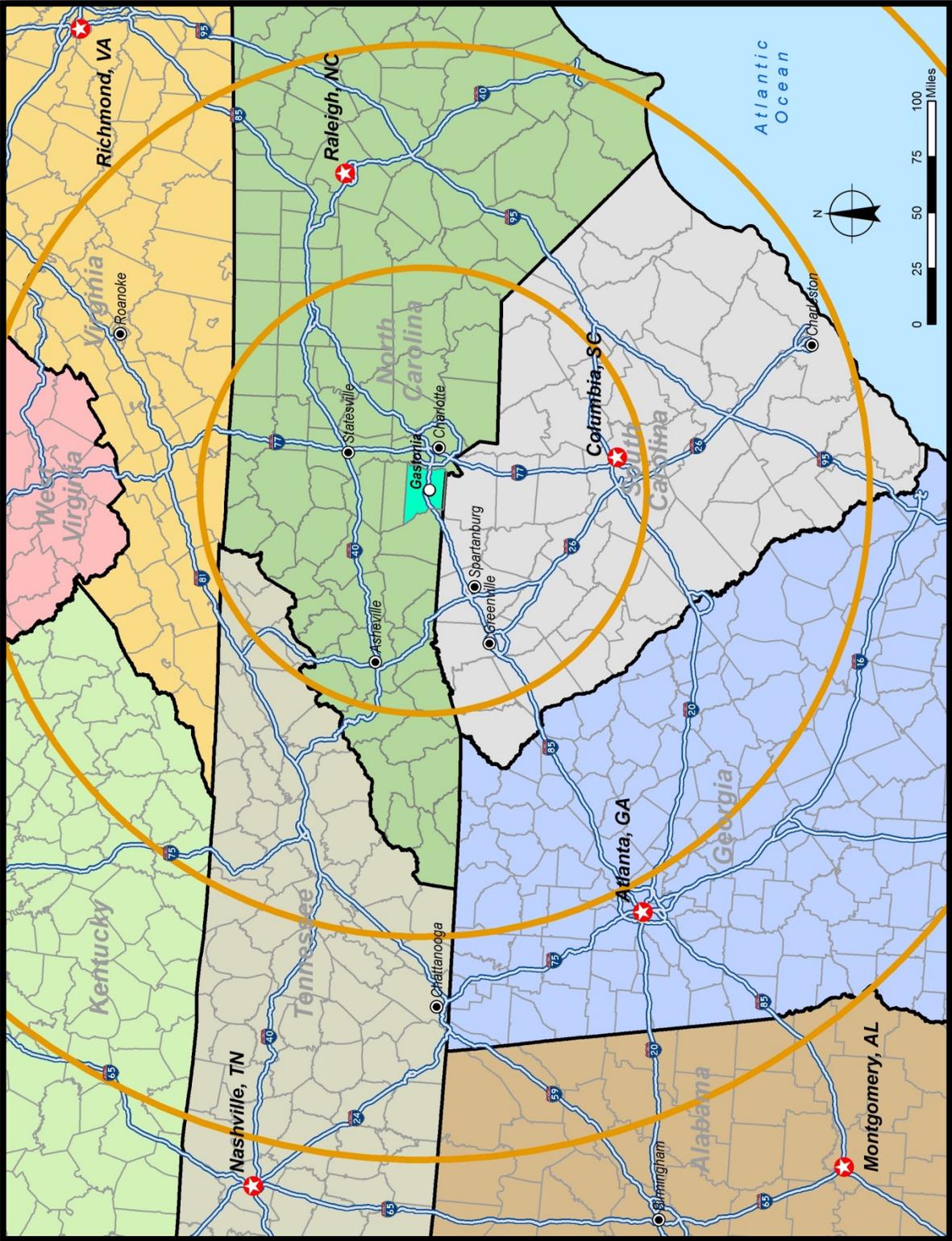
Maps

EXISTING CONDITIONS INVENTORY

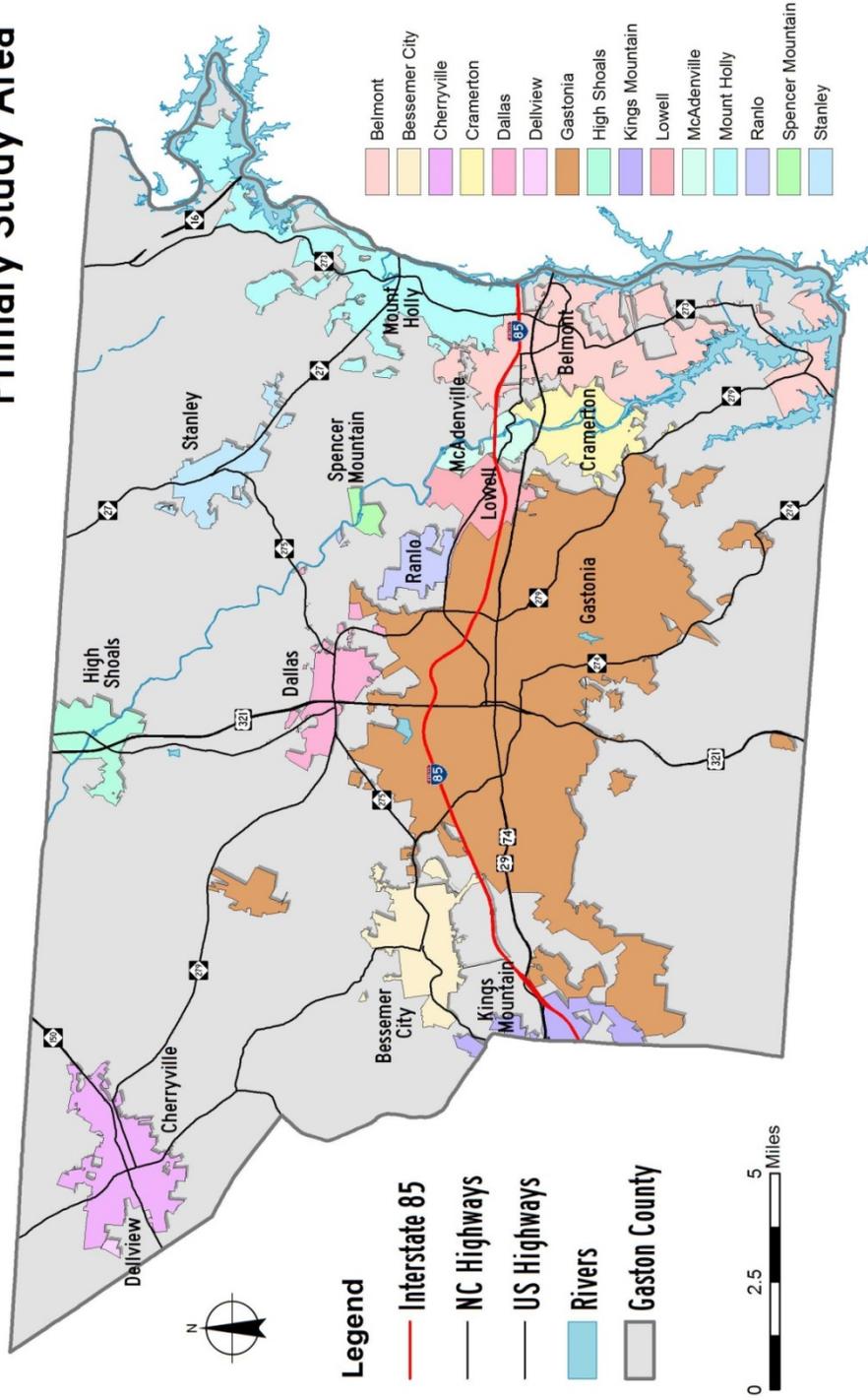
- Regional Context Map
- Primary Study Area Map
- Existing Land Use Map
- Small Area Planning Districts Map
- Hydrographic Map
- NC 100 Year Flood Zones Map
- Slopes and Existing Ridges Map
- Water Regulation Boundaries Map
- Water Supply – Watershed Protection Map
- Natural Heritage Areas and Wetlands Map
- Historic, Cultural, and Recreation Resources Map
- Greenways and Trails Map
- Population Density by Census Tract Map
- Parcel Density Map
- Residential Subdivision Map

FUTURE LAND USE

- Future Land Use
- Area 1 – Rural Gaston (Cherryville & NW Gaston County)
- Area 2 – North 321 Gaston (High Shoals, Dallas, Northern Gastonia & North Central Gaston)
- Area 3 – Riverfront Gaston (Stanley, Mt. Holly & NE Gaston County)
- Area 4 – The Garden Gaston (Gastonia, Belmont, Cramerton & SE Gaston County)
- Area 5 – Scenic Gaston (Crowders Mtn. State Park, Gastonia & SW Gaston County)

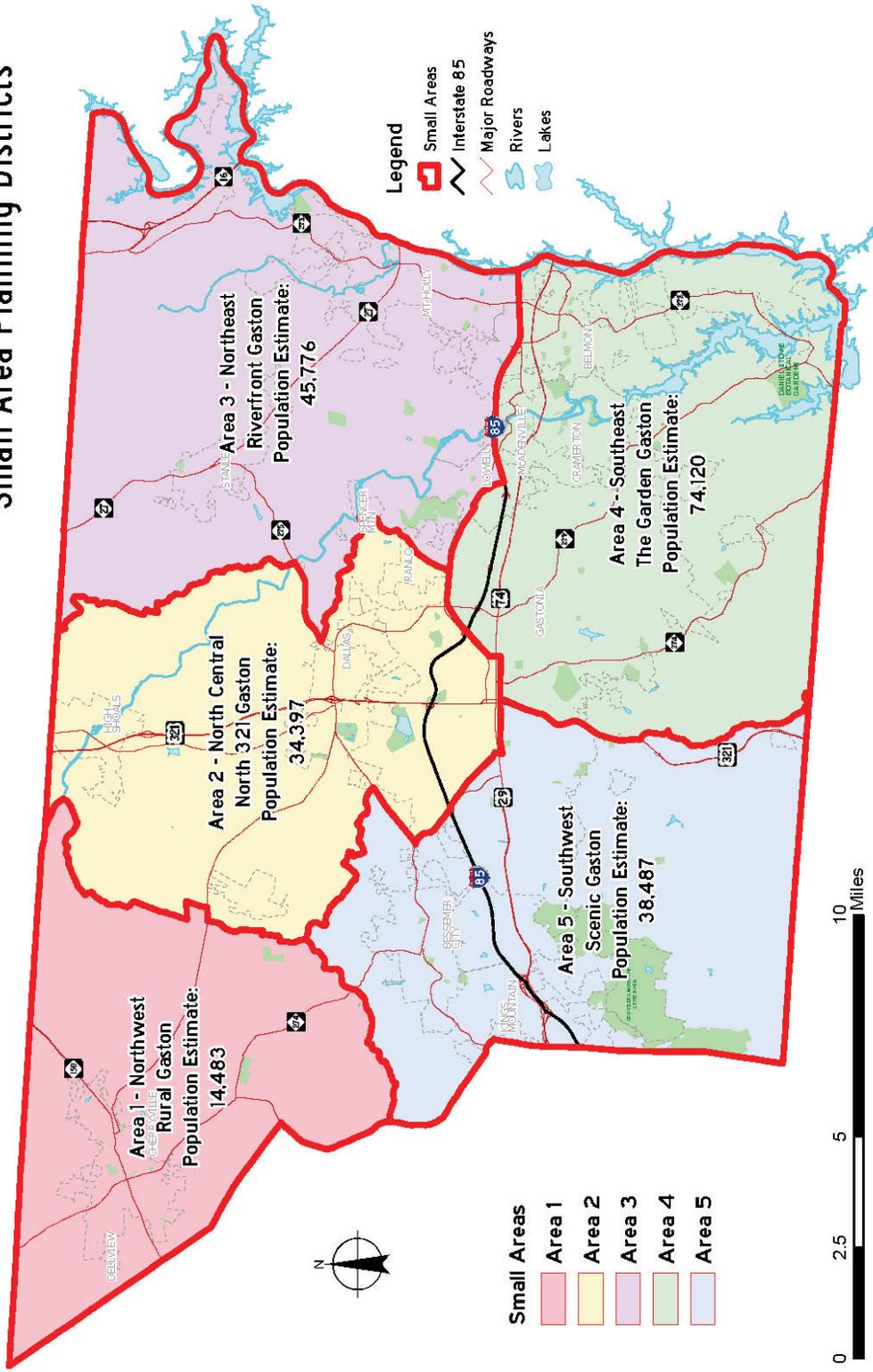


Gaston County, North Carolina Primary Study Area



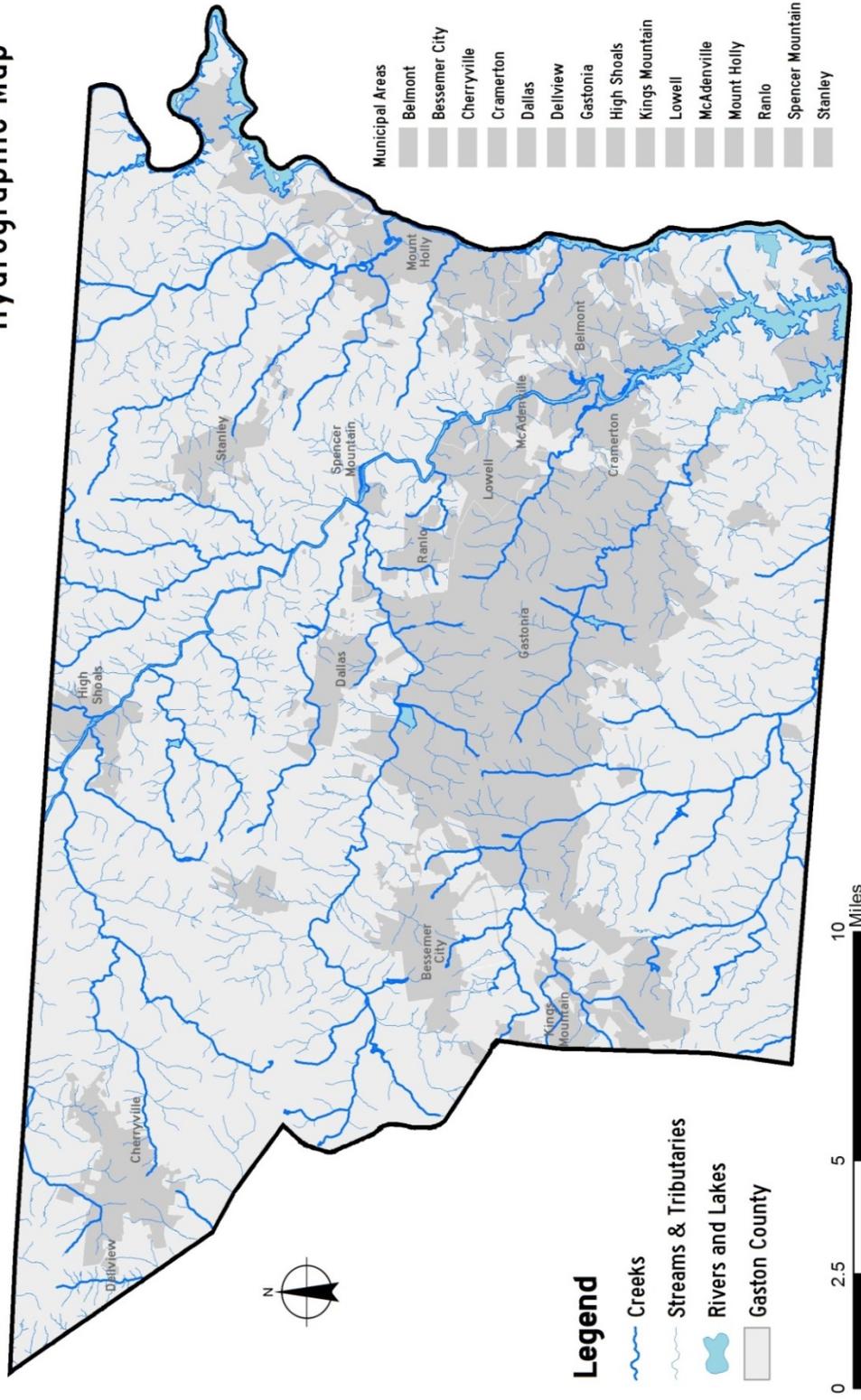
Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Small Area Planning Districts



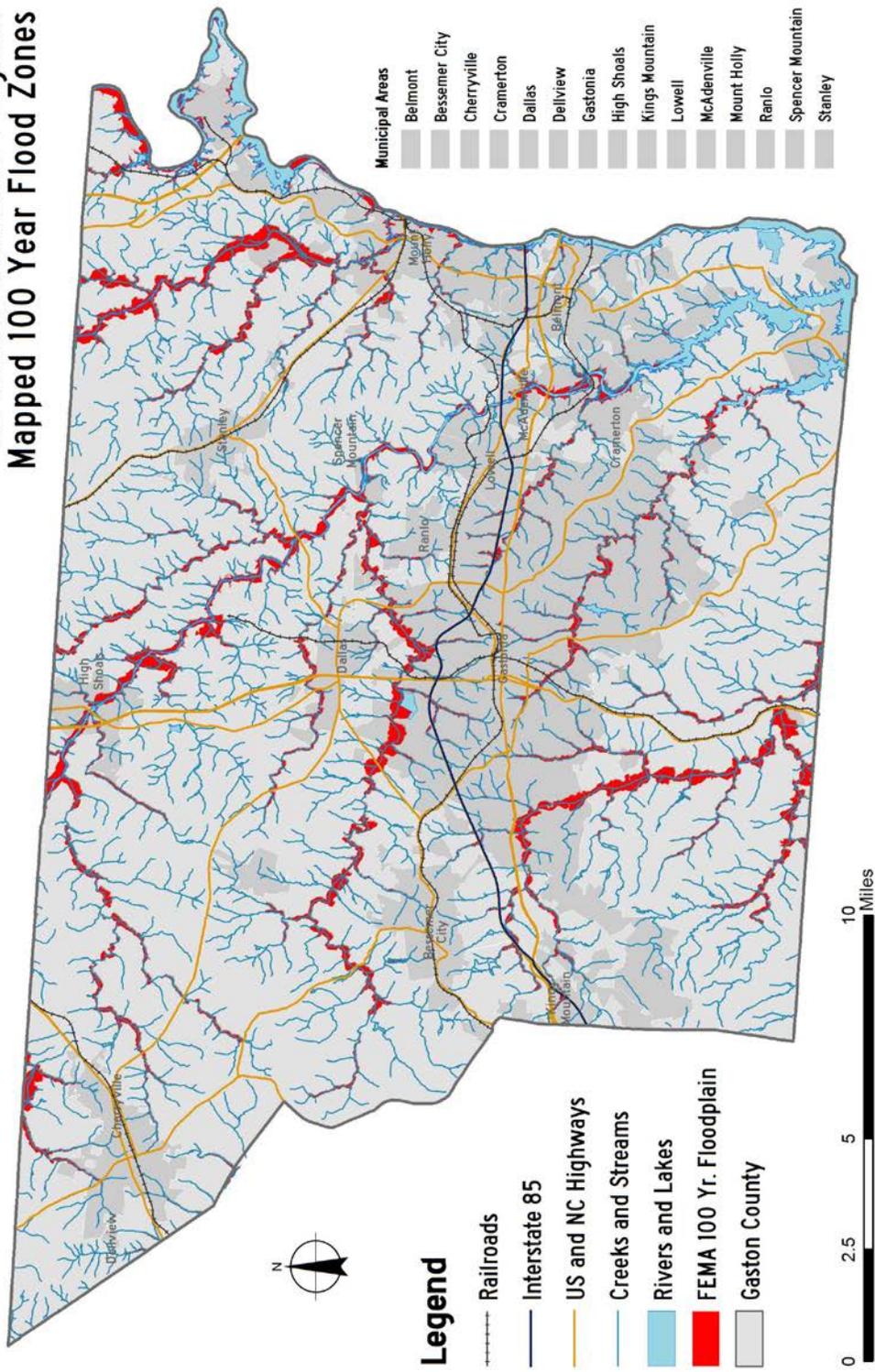
Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Hydrographic Map



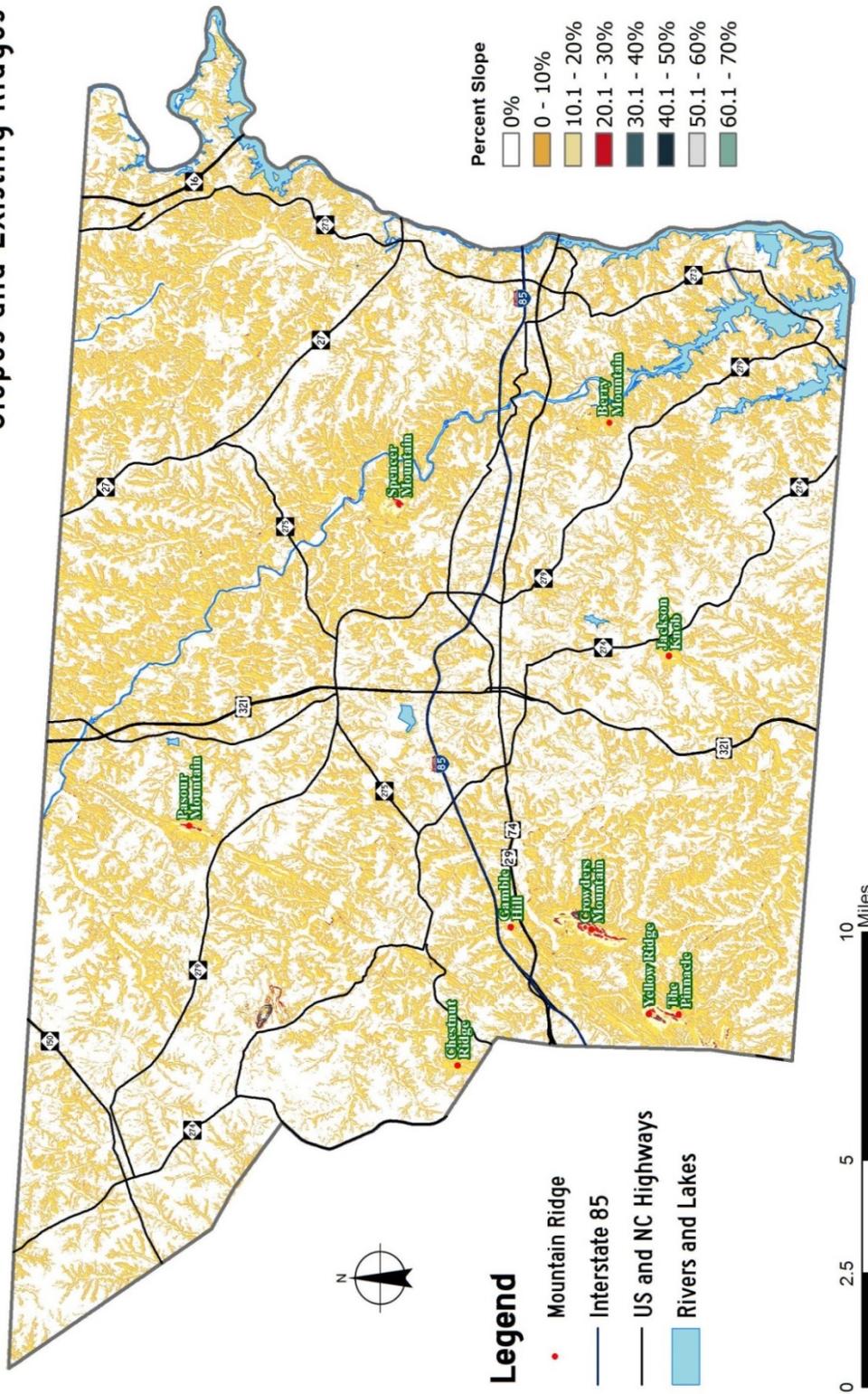
Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina NC Flood Insurance Program Mapped 100 Year Flood Zones



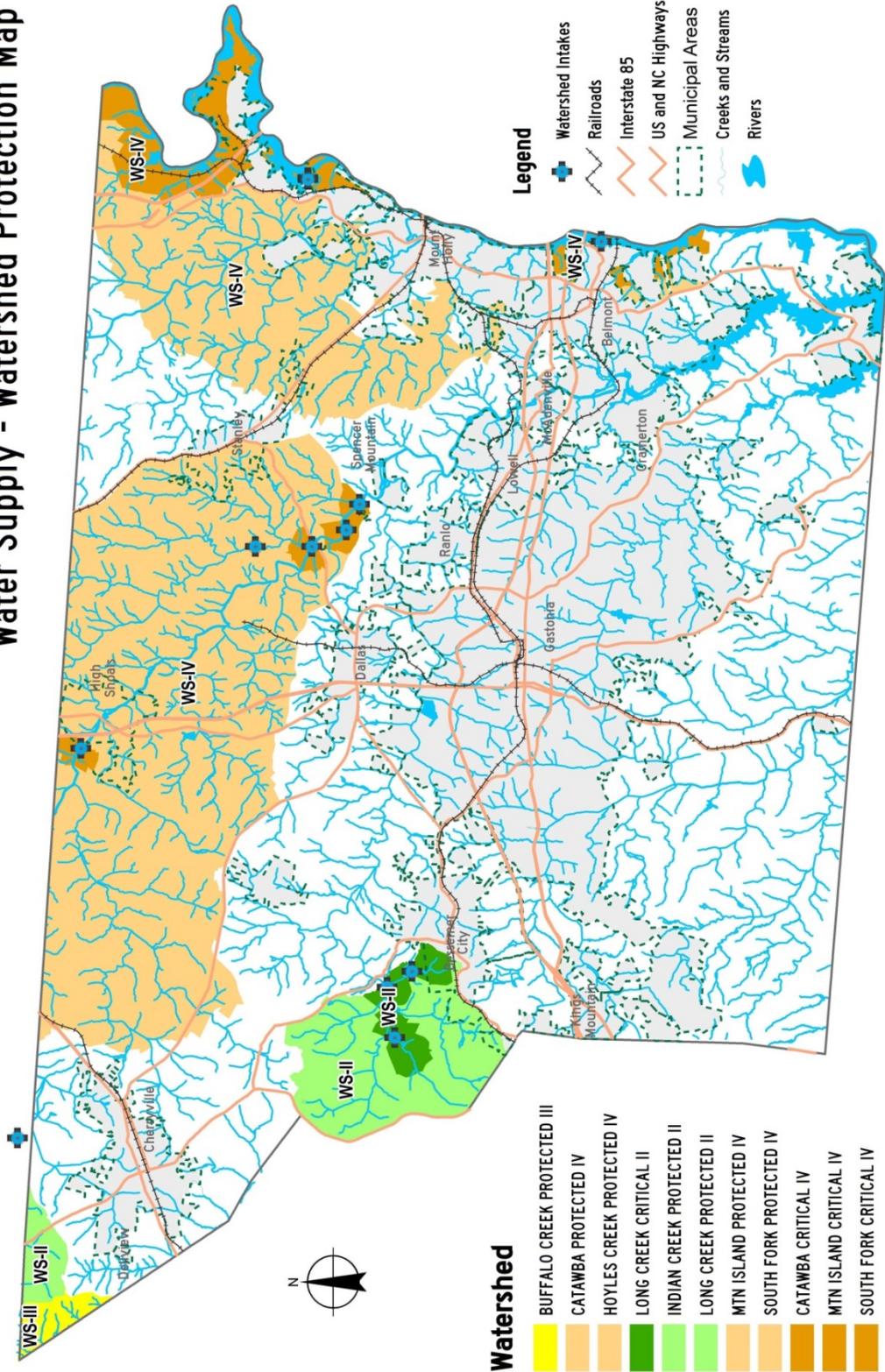
Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Slopes and Existing Ridges

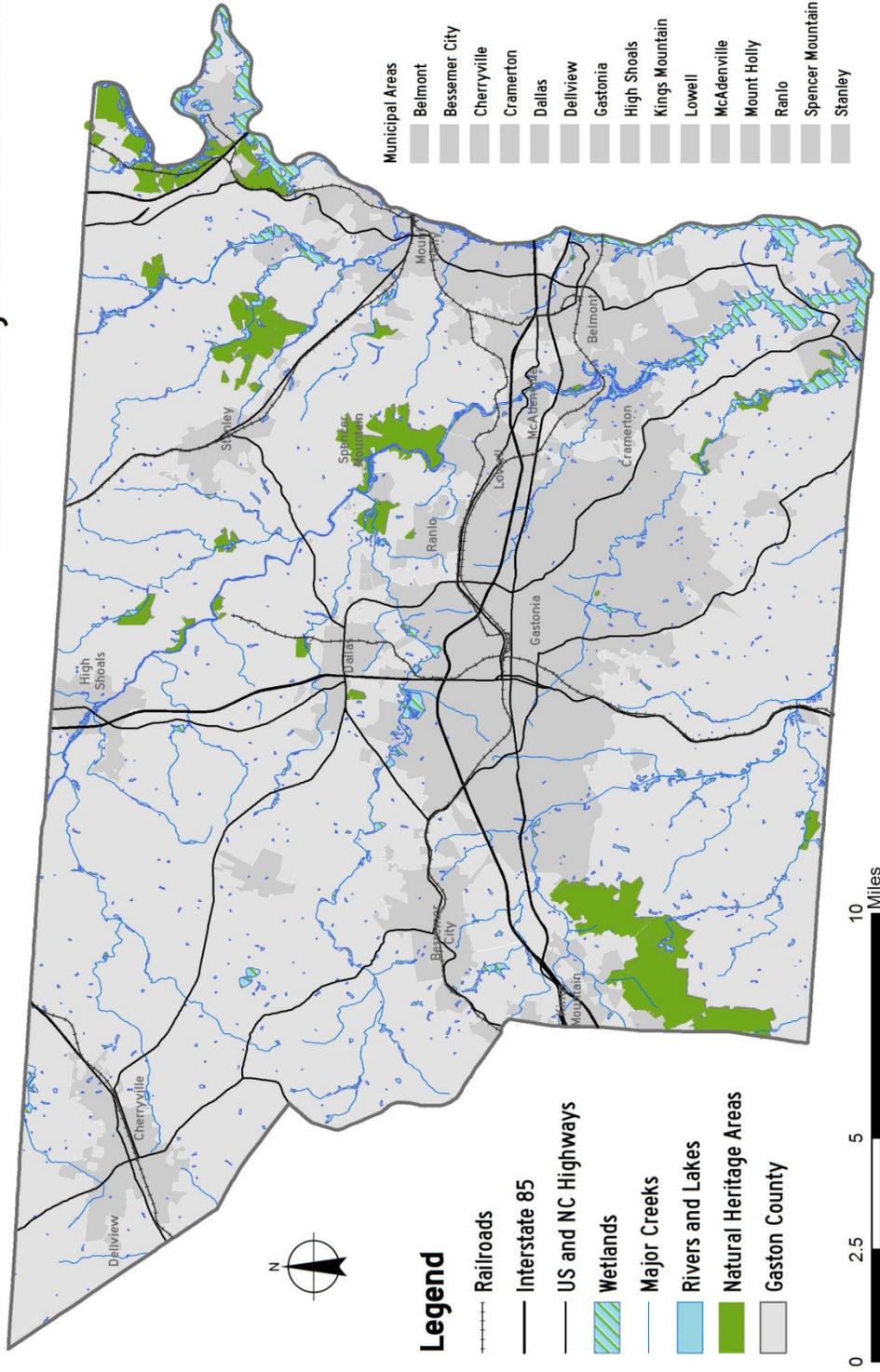


Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Water Supply - Watershed Protection Map

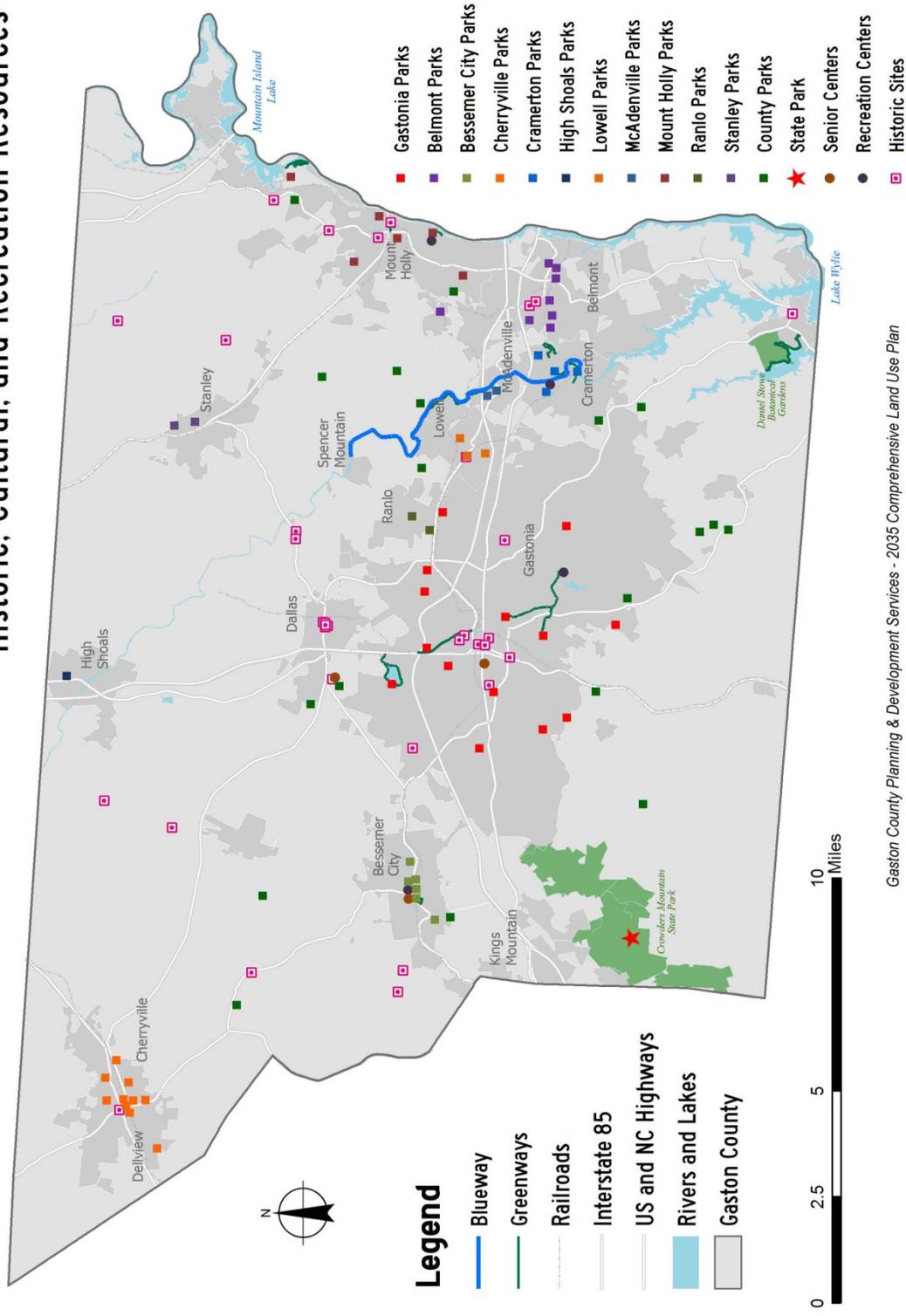


Gaston County, North Carolina Natural Heritage Areas and Wetlands

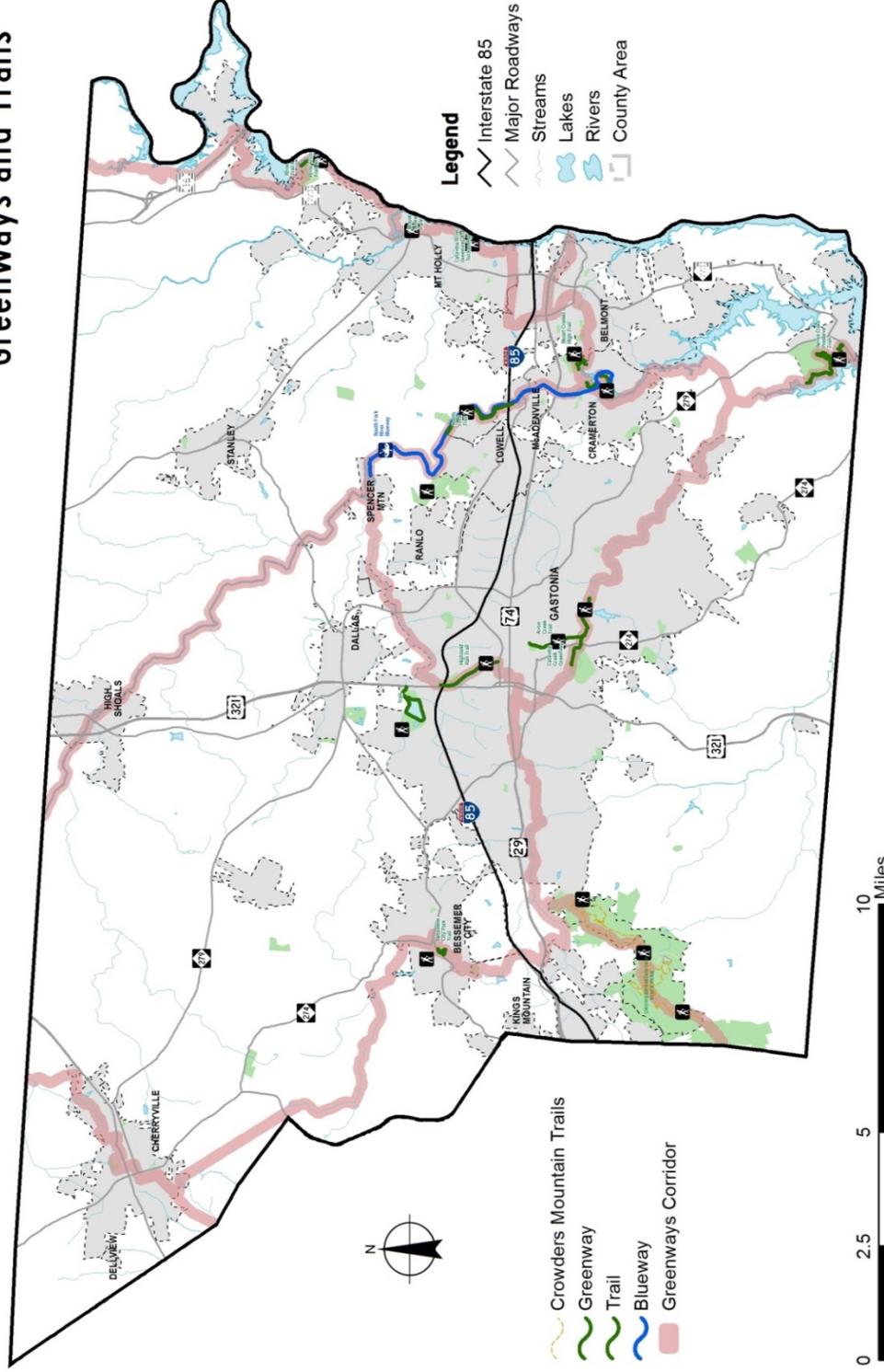


Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Historic, Cultural, and Recreation Resources

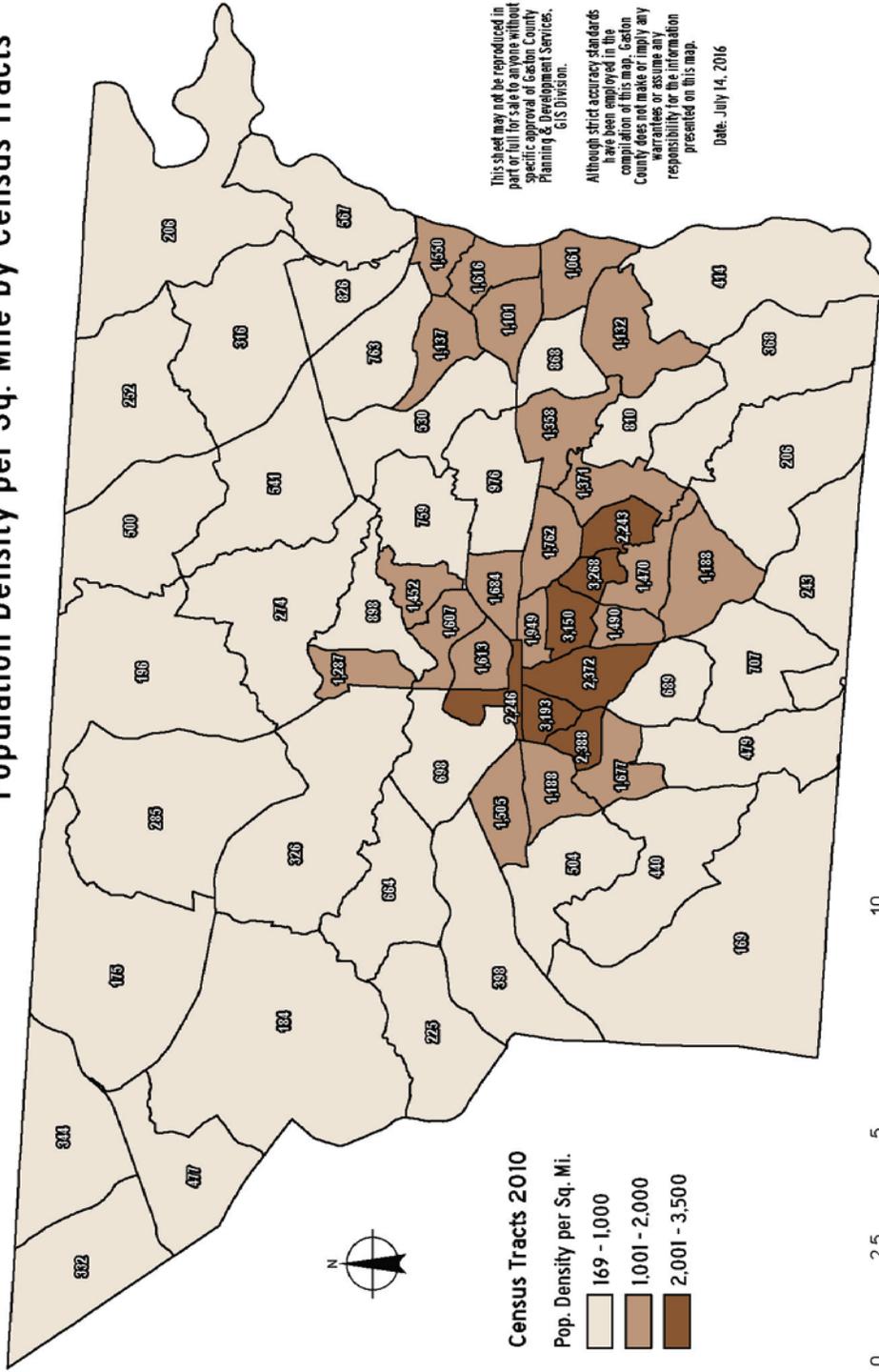


Gaston County, North Carolina Greenways and Trails



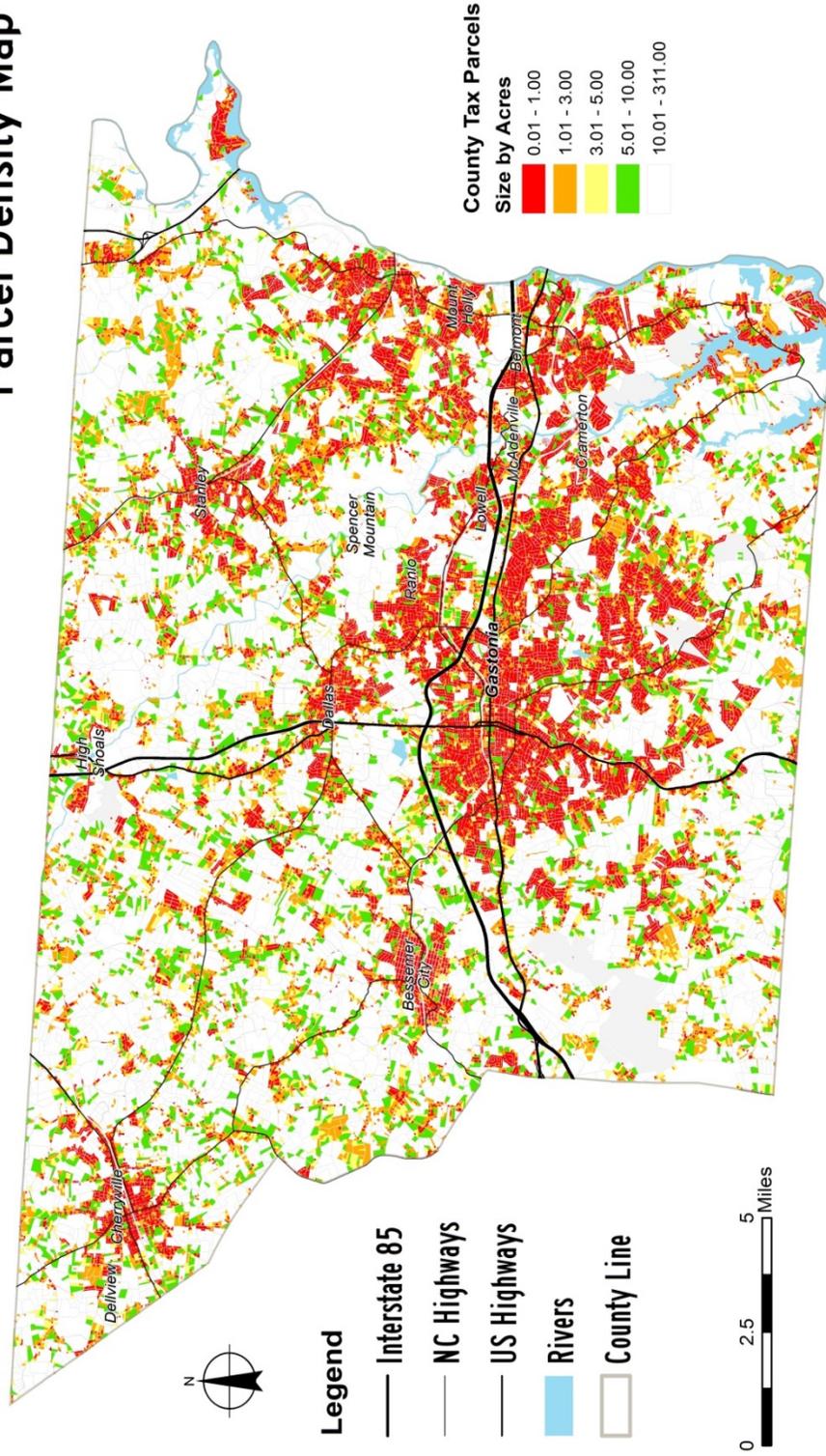
Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Population Density per Sq. Mile by Census Tracts



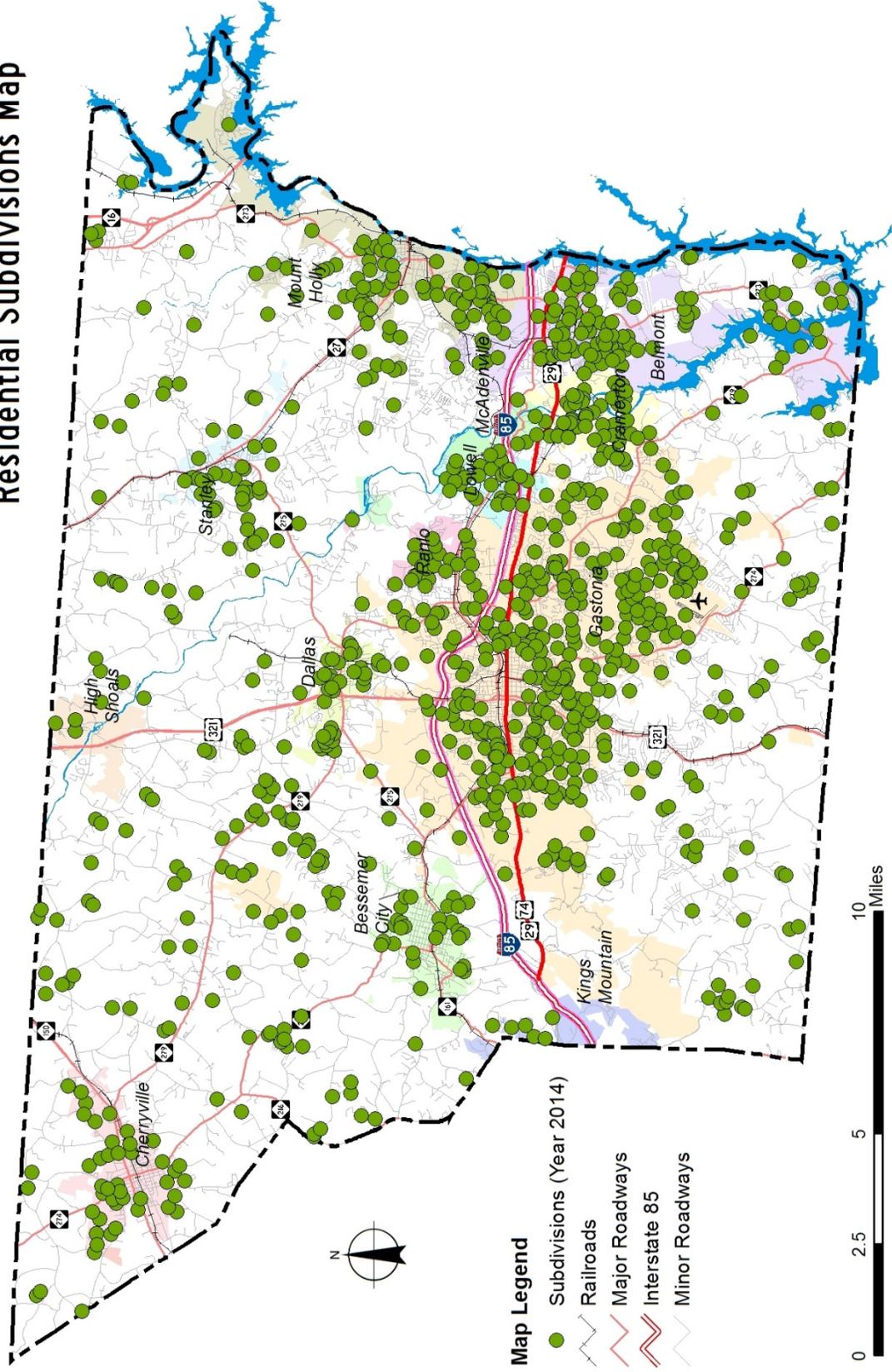
Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Parcel Density Map

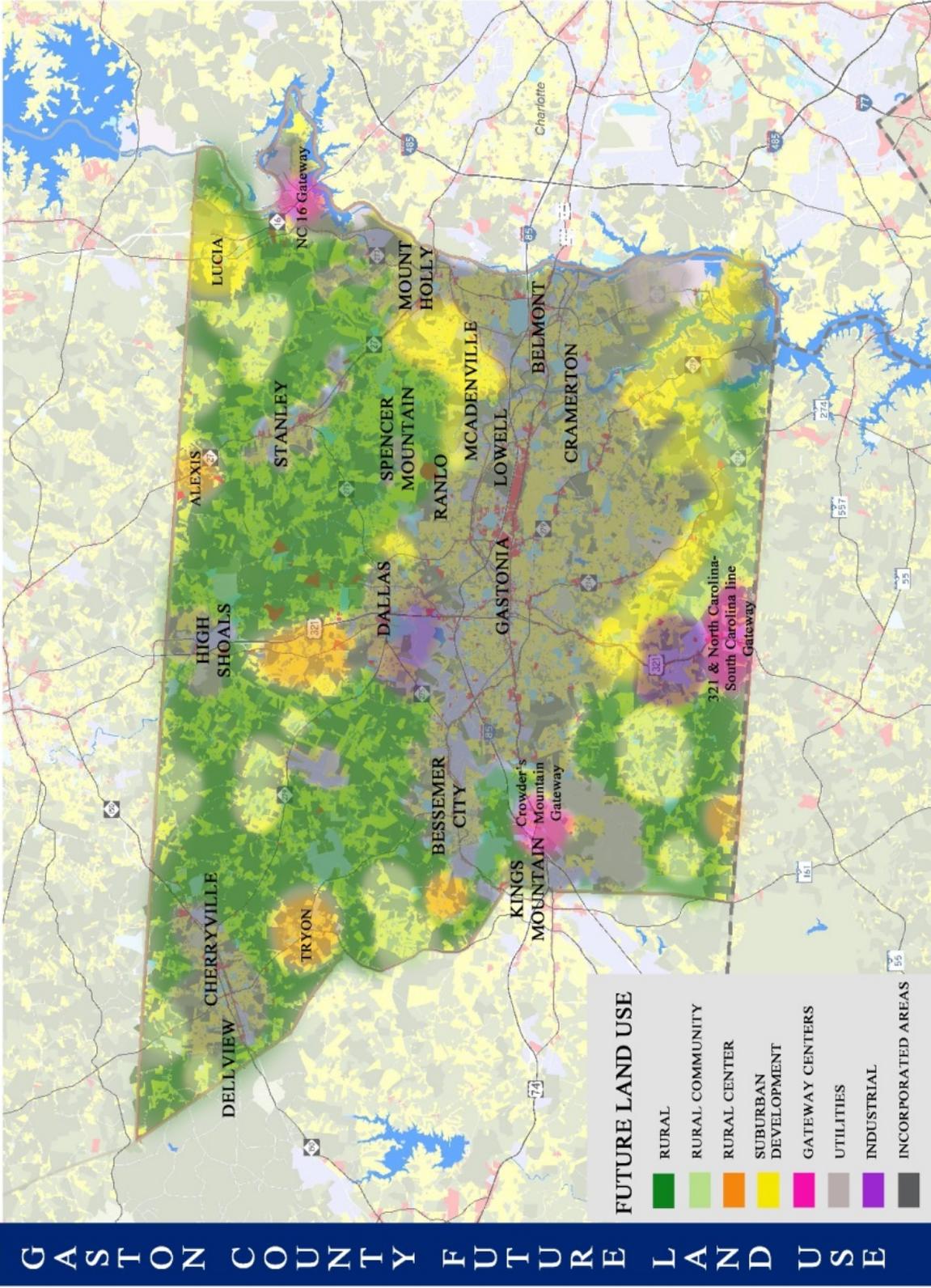


Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gaston County, North Carolina Residential Subdivisions Map

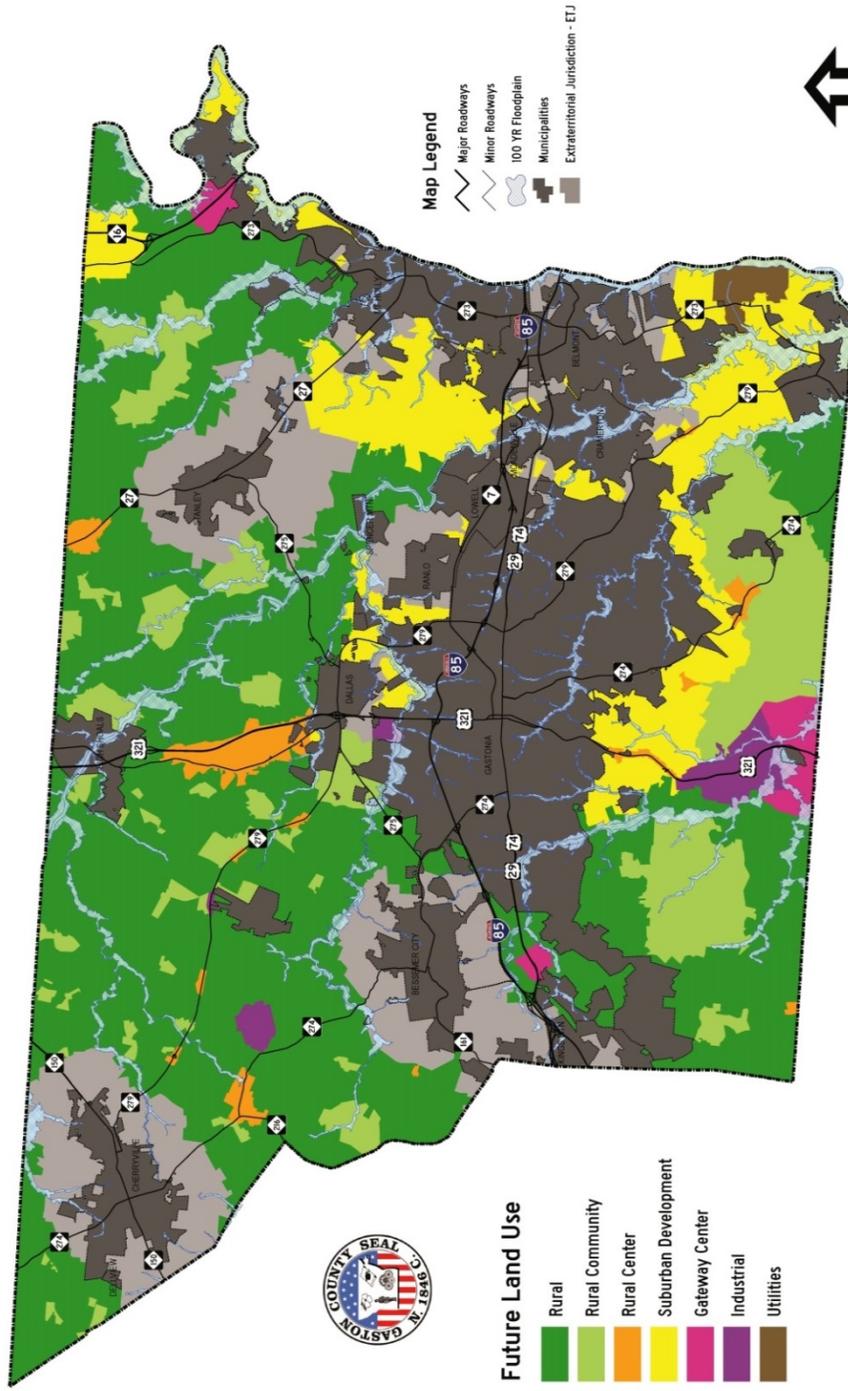


Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan



Gaston County Future Land Use Map

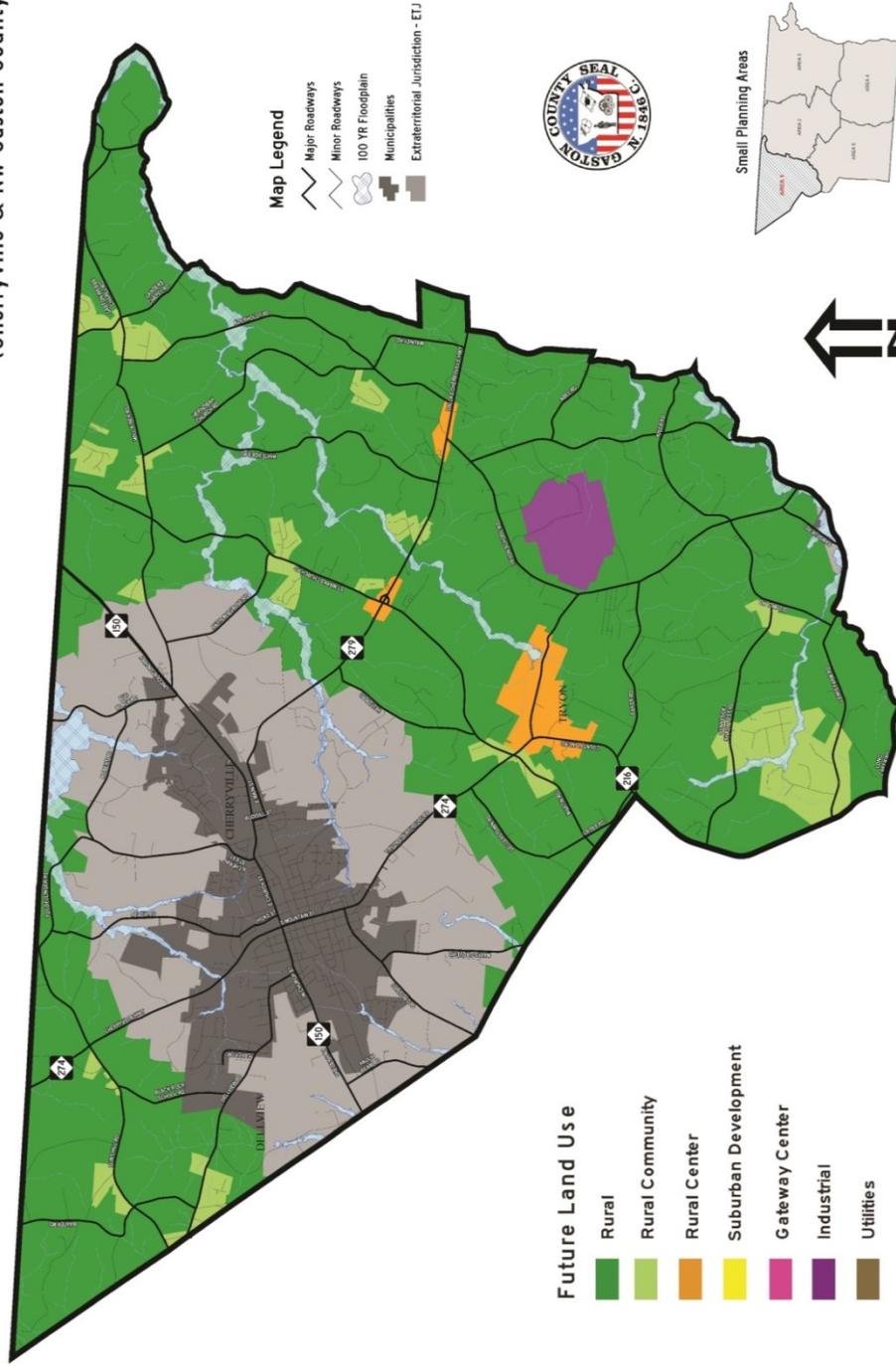
Gaston County, North Carolina 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan - July 7, 2016

Gaston County Future Land Use Map

Gaston County, North Carolina Planning Area 1 - Rural Gaston (Cherryville & NW Gaston County)



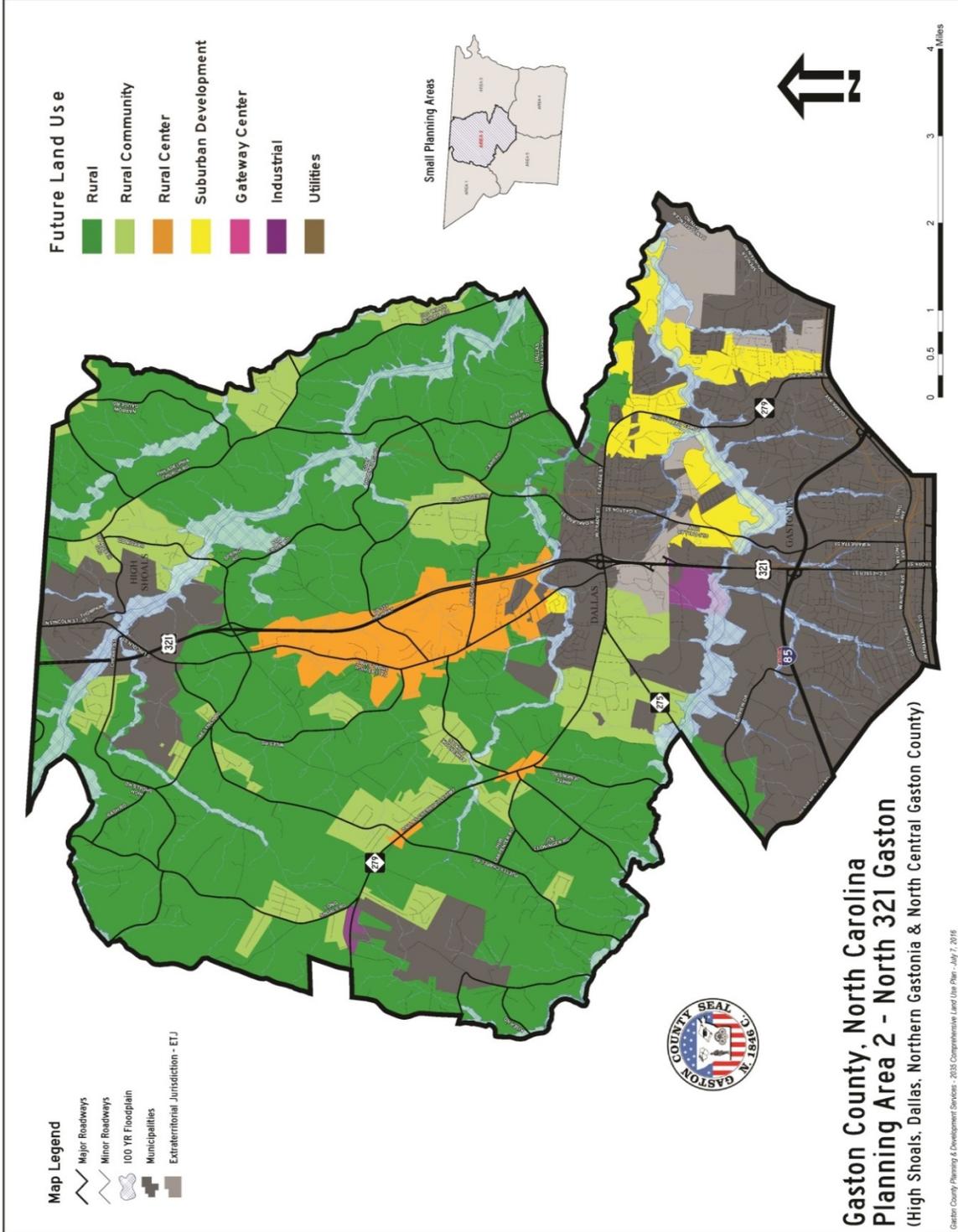
- Future Land Use**
- Rural
 - Rural Community
 - Rural Center
 - Suburban Development
 - Gateway Center
 - Industrial
 - Utilities

- Map Legend**
- Major Roadways
 - Minor Roadways
 - 100 YR Floodplain
 - Municipalities
 - Extrajurisdictional Jurisdiction - ETJ



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan - July 7, 2016

Gaston County Future Land Use Map



Gaston County Future Land Use Map

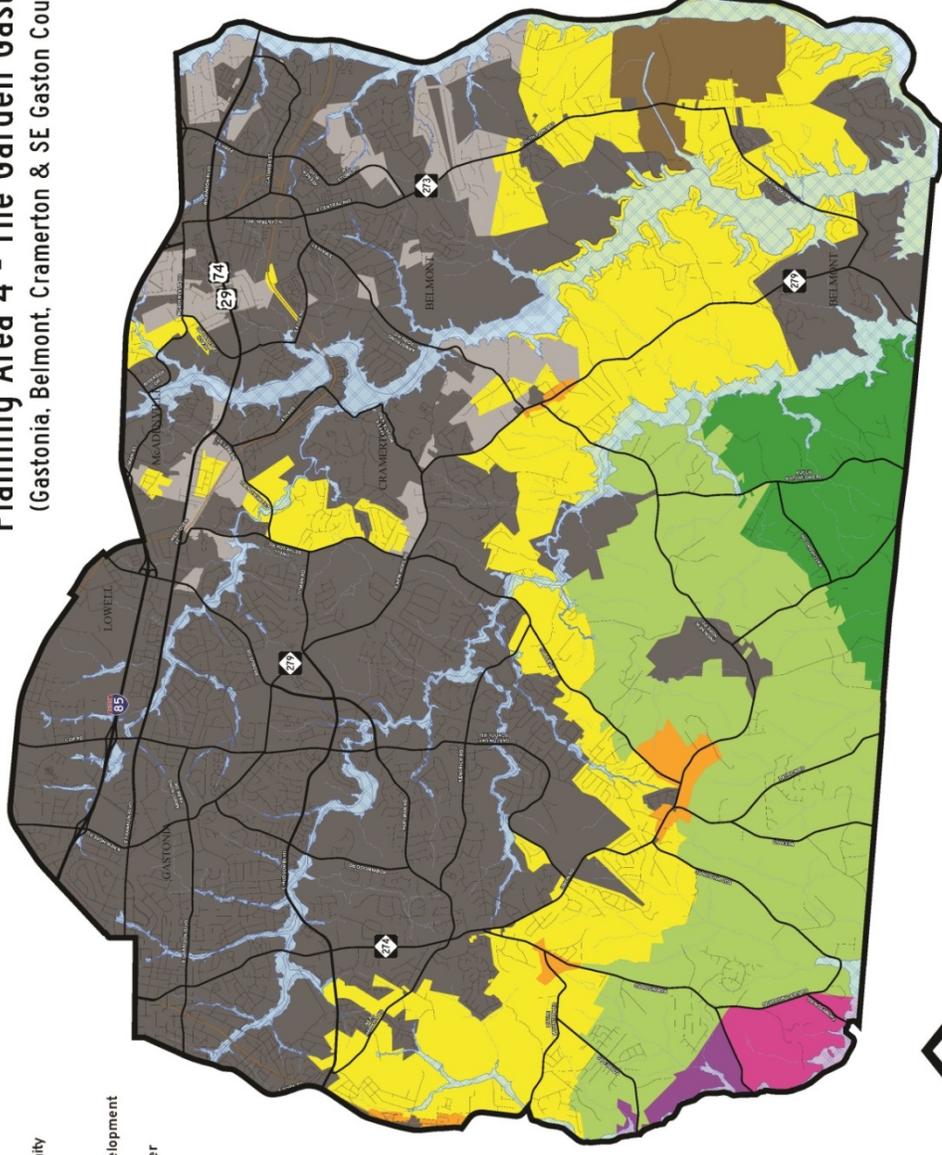
Gaston County, North Carolina Planning Area 4 - The Garden Gaston (Gastonia, Belmont, Cramerton & SE Gaston County)

- Future Land Use**
- Rural
 - Rural Community
 - Rural Center
 - Suburban Development
 - Gateway Center
 - Industrial
 - Utilities



Map Legend

- Major Roadways
- Minor Roadways
- 100 YR Floodplain
- Municipalities
- Extraterritorial Jurisdiction - ETJ



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan - July 7, 2019

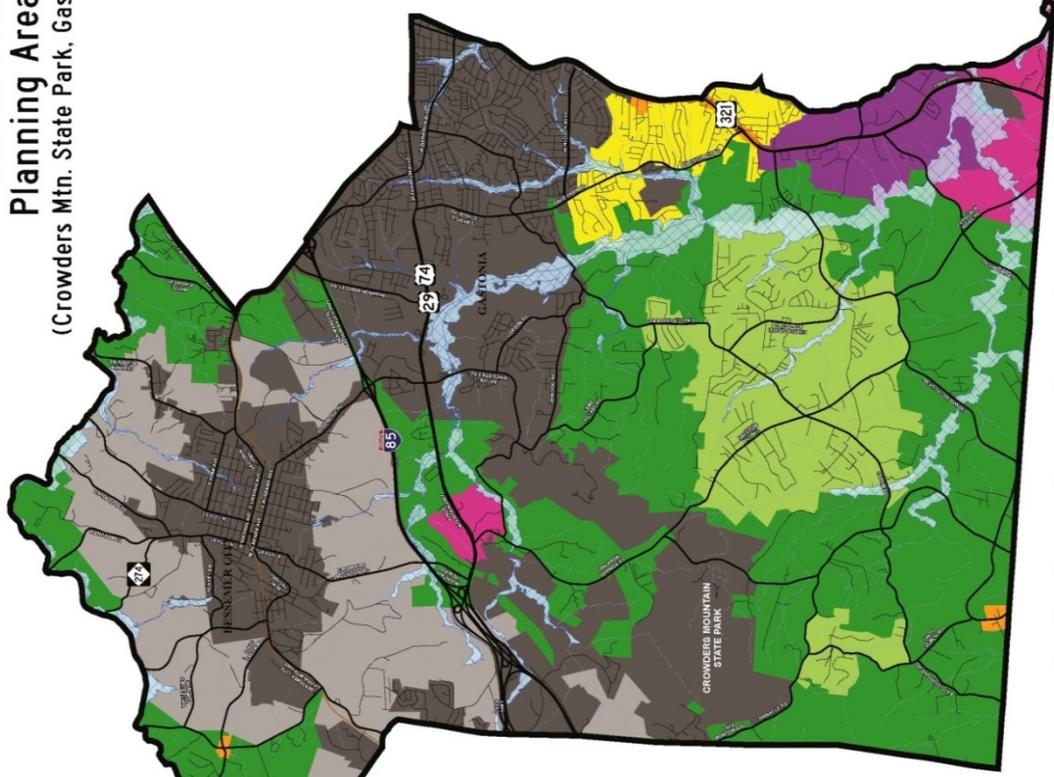
Gaston County Future Land Use Map



Gaston County, North Carolina Planning Area 5 - Scenic Gaston (Crowders Mtn. State Park, Gastonia & SW Gaston County)

- Map Legend**
- Major Roadways
 - Minor Roadways
 - 100 YR Floodplain
 - Municipalities
 - Extraterritorial Jurisdiction - ETJ

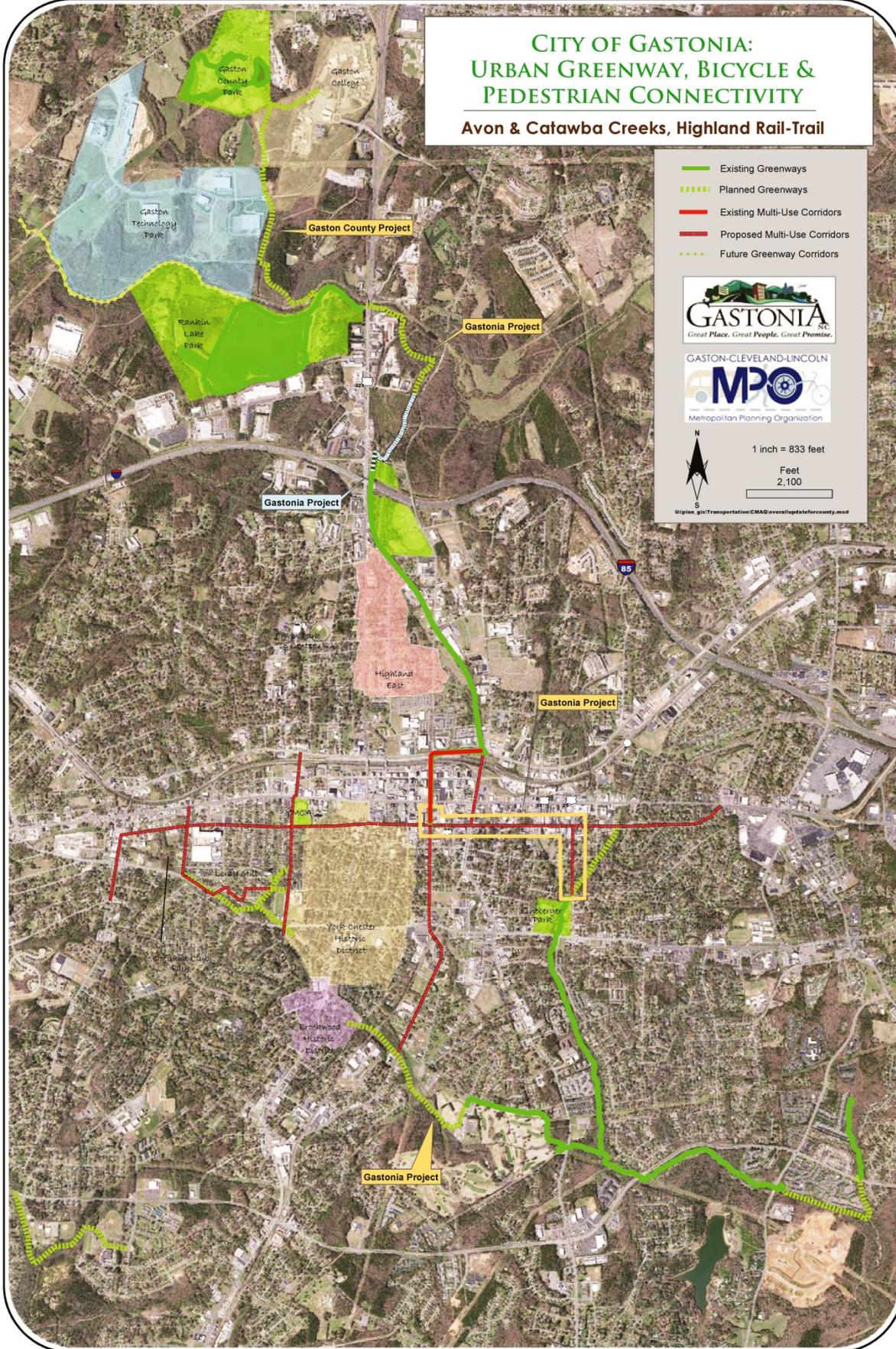
- Future Land Use**
- Rural
 - Rural Community
 - Rural Center
 - Suburban Development
 - Gateway Center
 - Industrial
 - Utilities



Gaston County Planning & Development Services - 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan - July 7, 2016

CITY OF GASTONIA: URBAN GREENWAY, BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

Avon & Catawba Creeks, Highland Rail-Trail





APPENDIX C: RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

Endnotes

1. United States Census Bureau – www.census.gov
2. United States Geological Survey – www.usgs.org
3. United States Department of Labor – www.dol.gov
4. United States Department of Agriculture – www.usda.gov
5. United States Department of Transportation – www.transportation.gov
6. Federal Emergency Management Agency – www.fema.gov
7. Bureau of Labor Statistics – www.bls.gov
8. Southeast Corridor – www.sehsr.org
9. North Carolina Department of Transportation – www.ncdot.gov
10. North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management – www.osbm.nc.gov
11. North Carolina Floodplain Mapping Program – www.ncfloodmaps.com
12. North Carolina Heritage Program – www.ncnhde.naturalreserve.org
13. North Carolina State Parks – www.ncparks.gov
14. North Carolina Department of Public Safety – www.ncdps.gov
15. Center for Geographic Information and Analysis – www.cgia.state.nc.us
16. Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization – www.gclmpo.org
17. Centralina Council of Governments – www.centralina.org
18. UNC Charlotte Urban Institute – www.ui.uncc.edu
19. Charlotte Regional Partnership – www.charlotteusa.com
20. North Carolina Cooperative Extension – www.gaston.ces.ncsu.edu
21. Gaston Economic Development Commission – www.gaston.org
22. CaroMont Health – www.caromonthealth.org
23. Gaston County Travel and Tourism – www.visitgaston.org
24. Greater Gaston Development Corporation – www.gastonoutside.com
25. Gaston Regional Chamber – www.gastonchamber.com
26. United Way of Gaston – www.unitedwaygaston.org
27. Carolina Thread Trail – www.carolina.threadtrail.org
28. Gaston County Planning and Development Services – www.gastongov.com
29. Gaston County Schools – www.gaston.k12.nc.us
30. Gaston County Parks and Recreation – www.gastongov.com
31. Gaston County Natural Resources – www.gastongov.com
32. Gaston County Tax Office – www.gastongov.com
33. Gaston County Health and Human Services – www.gastongov.com
34. Gaston County Public Works – www.gastongov.com
35. Gaston County IT Department – www.gastongov.com
36. Lincoln County Planning Department – www.co.lincoln.nc.us
37. Cleveland County Planning Department – www.ccncgov.com

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38. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Planning Department – www.charmeck.org
 39. York County, SC Planning Department – www.yorkcountygov.com
 40. Mountain Island Educational State Forest – www.ncesf.org
 41. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – www.unc.edu
 42. University of North Carolina at Charlotte – www.uncc.edu
 43. North Carolina State University – www.ncsu.edu
 44. Belmont Abbey College – www.belmontabbeycollege.edu
 45. Gaston College – www.gaston.edu
 46. Piedmont Community Charter School – www.pccharter.org
 47. Mountain Island Charter School – www.micharter.org
 48. Family Promise of Gaston County – www.gastonfamilypromise.org
 49. The Gaston Gazette – www.gastongazette.com
 50. The Charlotte Observer – www.charlotteobserver.com
 51. The Shelby Star – www.shelbystar.com

From the mountains in
the west to the rivers in the
east to charming
small towns and big
businesses everywhere

in between, let's

