LIVABILITY VISION FOR THE FUTURE

GREATER CHARLOTTE IS HOME.
Home to generations of families and cultures from all over the world. Home to neighborhoods that blend thriving businesses with natural landscapes. Home to endless opportunities for all, where good people make great things happen.

As we pursue our livability vision, we embrace the following Guiding Principles:

- WELCOMING We are a hospitable destination for those seeking opportunity.
- INNOVATIVE We are entrepreneurial and pioneer solutions to support a prosperous community.
- CONNECTED We are physically and socially linked to one another.
- INCLUSIVE We celebrate our differences and see them as strengths that bind us together.
- PREPARED We provide opportunities for learning and applying new skills—in school, on the job, and throughout our lives.
- HEALTHY We protect the foundation of our community—our residents and the environment.
- RESILIENT We collaborate and innovate in the face of a changing environment, evolving economy, and diversifying culture.

MECKLENBURG LIVABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN

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INTRODUCTION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Mecklenburg County is a remarkable and unique place, poised on the threshold of transition as our community continues to grow. The Greater Charlotte area has moved from being a crossroads regional destination to a national economic center with increasing global ties. This is projected to be one of the fastest growing urban areas in the country between now and 2030. We want to preserve our character, embrace innovation, welcome new cultures, and move with vitality into the future.

The purpose of this Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan (Plan) is to construct a unified Vision that gives voice to our commonly-held aspirations. There are numerous communities in Mecklenburg County, organized around eight governmental jurisdictions: Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, and the Towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill, and Pineville. There are also hundreds of non-profit organizations and businesses that provide essential services – all of whom are necessary to meet the needs of Mecklenburg County residents.

As of 2012, the local governments, non-profits, and businesses in Mecklenburg County had developed over 200 different plans focused on specific areas of community interest. These plans contain important information and strategies that can guide progress. And as the number of plans increases, there is opportunity for better collaboration, and greater understanding about issues not being addressed that are in need of attention.

In 2013, a feasibility study was prepared examining whether or not a community plan would help bring together interested parties and develop a unified vision to support livability. Through the interviewing of community stakeholders, that study found the following:

● Given the many plans and programs currently underway in Mecklenburg County, there would be considerable value in working to “knit together” existing activities and resources.
● Community engagement is critical and fundamental to any initiative in Mecklenburg County.
● Performance measurement matters. Identification of strategies and actions with specific performance measures and indicators of success will help encourage implementation of recommended actions.

Following the recommendations of the feasibility study, the eight local jurisdictions within the County and Foundation For The Carolinas agreed to partner and prepare this Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan. This Plan builds on the recommendations of the feasibility study, and presents a community-driven, stakeholder-vetted, and local-government-endorsed plan to support the livability of Mecklenburg County now and into the future. This Plan is a living document that will be modified as actions are implemented (learn more on page 19).

We would like to acknowledge the more than 2,000 residents of Mecklenburg County who contributed to the development of this initial Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan. We could not have done this without you, and are grateful for the time, energy, and ideas that you so graciously provided. Your collective Vision and Plan for the future will deliver a Greater Charlotte full of Big City Opportunities with Small Town Feel!

If you have questions about this effort, please contact the Mecklenburg County Manager’s Office at 704-336-7600 or by using the Contact Us feature on http://livablemeck.com. The online version of this plan available at http://livablemeck.com includes additional information not included in the paper copy, such as internet links to each Plan, Program, and Partner that is assisting us in reaching our Vision.

We thank the community workgroups and more than 2,000 residents of Mecklenburg County who contributed to the development of this initial Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan. We could not have done this without you, and are grateful for the time, energy, and ideas that you so graciously provided. Your collective Vision and Plan for the future will deliver a Greater Charlotte full of Big City Opportunities with Small Town Feel!

“Everyone – public, non-profit, private and philanthropic – has a role to play in making Mecklenburg County more livable. We all need to leverage our resources, connections and opportunities.”

- Brian Collier, Executive Vice President, Foundation For The Carolinas

HISTORICAL AND PROJECTED POPULATION DATA

Sources: 1950-2010 – US Census Bureau; 2050 – Connect Our Future Regional Scan Document, August 2013
Engagement

Community engagement is the foundation of the Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan. Interviews with community stakeholders began in 2012 with the development of a feasibility study. This input continued with the involvement of residents, businesses, private and non-profit organizations, and government partners that have been fundamental to the development of the Plan. From the outset, the common theme has been informing, convening, collaborating, and empowering the community. With a focus on change and innovation, this approach of informed, collaborative empowerment is critical to the success of the Plan. The result - The Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan has over 2,000 authors who have contributed time and ideas. It is a plan created by the community to achieve a common vision.

The approach to community engagement in the development process has been broad and multi-faceted, and was developed by the following groups:

- **Oversight Committee** - Leadership from the eight local governments and Foundation For The Carolinas provided strategic direction at every step.
- **Workgroups** - Four topic-based workgroups developed the Vision and Guiding Principles, and provided key input into the Strategies, Actions, and Measures. A fifth group reviewed recommendations and provided overarching feedback.
- **Staff and Stakeholders** - Calibrated ideas for implementation through participation in interviews, focus groups, and a series of reviews.
- **Community At-Large** - Shared feedback with workgroup members, at an open house, and other community-organized meetings. Online participation via meckconnector.org, social media, and surveys.
- **Elected Officials** - Eight governing bodies provided feedback on the initial Vision and Guiding Principles, and again during the development of the final plan.

Definitions and Plan Organization

The Plan was developed with the input of residents and many community partners. An aspirational **Vision** lays the foundation, and highlights the characteristics of the place in which we want to live and work. The Plan is organized around a consensus set of **Guiding Principles**, and identifies recommended **Strategies and Actions** that build upon initiatives already underway or that present new opportunities. Finally, the Plan includes suggested **Success Measures** for each strategy, to help us monitor over time the implementation and effectiveness of these actions. This Plan is a living document, and the strategies, actions, and success measures will be modified over time.

Below are definitions for the main features of the plan:

**Vision**
A description highlighting the characteristics of the place in which we want to live and work.

**Guiding Principles**
Statements of what we value, for use in developing strategies and actions.

**Strategies**
Pathways for making progress, and a framework for how we will achieve the vision. Tells how we will expand upon existing initiatives, add new initiatives, or leverage resources in a new way.

**Actions**
Policies, programs, partnerships or other “interventions” that jurisdictions, community partners, and local stakeholders will undertake to implement a proposed strategy or strategies.

**Success Measures**
Specific data or quantitative information that can be used to track, report, and evaluate progress in pursuit of the strategies. Utilizes information that is easy to obtain, document, and update on a periodic basis.

On the next page is the Vision for the Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan, along with the key Guiding Principles for moving into the future, and 21 Strategies (marked A through U for purposes of tracking and identification).

Beginning on page 8, listed under each Strategy are specific Actions designed to produce identifiable results. Actions that are best positioned for immediate implementation are flagged with a Q.

At the conclusion of each of the 21 Strategy frameworks is a recommended Success Measure - a quantifiable metric to help determine, over time, if the Strategies and Actions are producing measurable gains in the livability of our communities.

There is additional background information included in the appendices. Appendix A lists the participants involved in constructing the plan. Appendix B identifies related plans and programs currently in place, to be referenced and drawn upon as implementation proceeds. Appendix C has information sources and citations for the success measures, and Appendix D lists potential partners to be involved with implementation of the recommended actions.
### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
**We are...**

**CHARACTER**
- Entertainment
- Opportunity

**JOBS**
- Entrepreneurship
- Commerce

**ENGAGED RESIDENTS**
- Transportation Choices

**COMMUNITY**
- Participation

**A SKILLED WORKFORCE**
- Quality Education

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
- Healthy Foods

**FUTURE WELL-BEING**
- Collaboration

**WELCOMING**

**INNOVATIVE**

**CONNECTED**

**INCLUSIVE**

**PREPARED**

**HEALTHY**

**RESILIENT**

### DESCRIPTORS:
Our focus is on...

- **CHARACTER**
  - Welcoming
  - Inclusive

- **JOBS**
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Connected

- **ENGAGED RESIDENTS**
  - Opportunity

- **COMMUNITY**
  - Participation

- **A SKILLED WORKFORCE**
  - Quality Education

- **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
  - Healthy Foods

- **FUTURE WELL-BEING**
  - Collaboration

### STRATEGIES:
**We will...**

**SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS**
- Build a safe community [A]
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Increase access to community-based arts, science, and history education [B]
- Increase global economic competitiveness [F]
- Continue to be an inviting destination for residents, visitors, and businesses [C]
- Promote the redevelopment, reuse, and rehabilitation of declining and vacant properties [G]
- Celebrate and integrate history, culture, and diversity [D]
- Leverage technology [H]

**BUILD A SAFE COMMUNITY [A]**
- Expand capacity and increase use of sidewalks, bikeways, greenways/paved trails, bus routes, and rail [I]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]
- Build stronger connections across diverse population groups [J]
- Leverage technology [H]

**MAKING IT EASIER FOR NEW BUSINESSES TO SUCCEED AND EXISTING BUSINESSES TO FLOURISH [E]**
- Build stronger connections across diverse population groups [J]
- Leverage technology [H]
- Increase local economic competitiveness [F]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

**INCREASE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS, SCIENCE, AND HISTORY EDUCATION [B]**
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

**INCREASE GLOBAL ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS [F]**
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

**CONTINUE TO BE AN INVITING DESTINATION FOR RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND BUSINESSES [C]**
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

**PROMOTE THE REDEVELOPMENT, REUSE, AND REHABILITATION OF DECLINING AND VACANT PROPERTIES [G]**
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

**CELEBRATE AND INTEGRATE HISTORY, CULTURE, AND DIVERSITY [D]**
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

**LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY [H]**
- Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish [E]
- Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs [M]
- Balance available housing options [K]
- Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents [L]

### Note:
Each strategy addresses multiple Guiding Principles. Icons are shown under each strategy to indicate linkages.

**Common Theme Associated with all Strategies: Engage the Community - Inform, Convene, Collaborate, and Empower**

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**VISION AND PLAN SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

**GREATER CHARLOTTE IS HOME.**

Home to generations of families and cultures from all over the world. Home to neighborhoods that blend thriving businesses with natural landscapes. Home to endless opportunities for all, where good people make great things happen.

Home to generations of families and cultures from all over the world. Home to neighborhoods that blend thriving businesses with natural landscapes. Home to endless opportunities for all, where good people make great things happen.
C Continue to be an inviting destination for residents, visitors, and businesses

ACTIONS:

i. Provide convenient and flexible public transportation options for the traveling public.
ii. Create opportunities to learn and share information about immigrant cultures and unique areas throughout the County.
iii. Build inviting gateways into communities and develop on-street visitor kiosks.
iv. Expand safe and artistic bus shelters and bike racks in consultation with local historians and community members.

D Celebrate and integrate history, culture, and diversity

ACTIONS:

i. Increase the number of structures and areas of historical significance permanently preserved through public/private partnerships.
ii. Incorporate local history in education (K-12) curriculum, teaching children about their neighborhoods and the community.
iii. Educate people about local history, highlighting preservation opportunities and examples of older buildings that have been retrofitted for re-use.
iv. Host community dialogue around history and cultural diversity in Mecklenburg County.
v. Commission artists to tell community stories in a contemporary way that serves as a discussion point, both historically and surrounding our growing immigrant population.

STRATEGIES, ACTIONS, AND SUCCESS MEASURES

A Build a Safe Community

ACTIONS:

i. Increase the participation and number of residents and business owners/occupants in neighborhood safety and emergency preparedness programs.
ii. Increase collaboration and communication between law enforcement and neighborhood organizations to develop violence prevention plans, improve response times, and reduce justice involvement.
iii. Support safe walking and biking by focusing on education, infrastructure improvements, and enforcement.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Resident perceptions of safety.
- Crime Index Rate by Neighborhood Area.
- Police Department Proactive Community Service Hours.

B Increase access to community-based arts, science, and history education

ACTIONS:

i. Find additional opportunities to integrate art, STEM, and history in community programs and services.
ii. Ensure stable resources supporting cultural trips for schoolchildren.
iii. Provide information about the positive impacts of arts and culture on daily life.
iv. Integrate art into public buildings and parks.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Arts/culture participation: Total number of participants/donations in cultural activities.
- Contributions per Capita to Arts, Culture, and Humanities Public Charities.
- Public art investment.
- Creative Vitality Index.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Total area of national/state/local historic district coverage.
- Awareness of and engagement with local history and culture.
- Number of local/national historic landmark designations.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Resident “Welcoming” rating cross-tabulated with length of time in region.
- Total Attendance to Arts and Culture Events.

WE ARE . . . WELCOMING

Our focus is on: Character, Entertainment, Opportunity, Safe Neighborhoods

80% of residents believe Charlotte-Mecklenburg is a safe place to live

WE ARE . . . INNOVATIVE

Our focus is on: Jobs, Entrepreneurship, Commerce

E Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish

ACTIONS:

i. Broaden economic development efforts to include supporting entrepreneurship and small businesses through coordinated educational institution, investor, and local government programs.

ii. Simplify existing development review and approval processes for developers.

iii. Help accredited investors to participate in early-stage investing.

iv. Expand recruitment of external and local high-growth entrepreneurial businesses that create jobs.

F Increase global economic competitiveness

ACTIONS:

i. Craft a common, unified message branding the assets and global nature of Mecklenburg County.

ii. Grow available workforce to match employer needs.

iii. Develop an industry inventory to help market the diverse local economy as a hub for healthcare, energy, infrastructure, and technology.

iv. Leverage international business partners to highlight Mecklenburg’s quality of life.

H Leverage technology

ACTIONS:

i. Encourage private investment in fiber optic networks to promote and brand the community as an early adopter and supporter of innovative technologies.

ii. Expand student and staff access to, and use of, technology-based educational services for career development.

iii. Incorporate Smart City development across the government, private, and academic sectors in Mecklenburg County, embedding digital technology.

iv. Identify and reduce barriers to fiber optic and technology-related expansion.

v. Secure broadband expansion and provide Internet access to all residents of Mecklenburg County, especially those living in under-served neighborhoods.

vi. Work collaboratively across public and private sectors to pursue technology solutions for health care, education, public safety, and energy efficiency.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

● High-speed broadband coverage: Percent of County covered (geographic area or households and businesses).

● Percentage of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) academic and business demands for service supported by technology infrastructure.

● Median Broadband Speed by User Type (in megabits per second for homes, schools/libraries, small businesses, medium businesses).

● Digital and Media Literacy Index.

HISTORICAL AND PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT DATA

Source: Connect Our Future Regional Scan Document, August 2013

SUCCESS MEASURE:

● Public awareness about local/global economic interconnections.
WE ARE . . . CONNECTED

Our focus is on: Engaged Residents, Transportation Choices

I. Expand capacity and increase use of sidewalks, bikeways, greenways/paved trails, bus routes, and rail

**ACTIONS:**

i. Identify transportation and mobility connectivity gaps for the addition of more bus cross-connector routes.

ii. Develop a more integrated and active transportation system by increasing connectivity of streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, and greenways/paved trails.

iii. Increase bicycle friendliness through street and greenway/paved trail improvements.

iv. Connect lower-income and at-risk neighborhoods with infrastructure.

v. Secure creative and innovative funding mechanisms for initiatives that reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.

vi. Expand availability of bicycle education services.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:**

- Transportation Mode by Type.
- Vehicle Miles per Capita.
- Streets with Sidewalks.
- Bicycle Friendliness Index.
- Air Quality Index: Number of days of unhealthy air quality for sensitive groups.

J. Build stronger connections across diverse population groups

**ACTIONS:**

i. Identify where the community has successfully brought diverse populations together and build on successes.

ii. Encourage entrepreneurial activities that support diverse, welcoming, and inclusive programming in public spaces.

iii. Expand programs addressing specific neighborhood issues that support neighborhood dialogue and develop neighborhood leaders.

iv. Incorporate social capital and equity in evaluation for funding projects.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:**

- Openness and Acceptance of the Community toward People of Diverse Backgrounds.
- Perception of a Sense of Community.

WE ARE . . . INCLUSIVE

Our focus is on: Community Participation

K. Balance available housing options

**ACTIONS:**

i. Encourage developers to incorporate Universal Design features, walkability, and transportation options for older adults and persons with disabilities.

ii. Incorporate into zoning considerations a range of housing options such as accessory dwellings, small lots/homes, and live-work units.

iii. Engage the community in a dialogue about the importance of offering a mix of housing types and the economic benefits the options provide.

iv. Enhance mixed-income and mixed-use housing opportunities, including the identification of special housing districts to encourage live-work-shop-create environments.

v. Develop anti-displacement strategies that encourage housing rehabilitation and enable residents to remain in neighborhoods.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:**

- Housing diversity by neighborhood area map.
- Percent of families spending 30% of household income or more on housing costs.

L. Coordinate the work of organizations addressing the needs of at-risk residents

**ACTIONS:**

i. Expand the social safety net and continuum of services.

ii. Identify pathways out of poverty for low-income residents and create a database of assets and programs needed in neighborhoods to guide the support of the faith community, non-profits, and other organizations.

iii. Facilitate the development of Memoranda of Understanding between organizations providing similar services to connect missions and encourage efficiencies.

iv. Enhance coordination of social services between Mecklenburg County, non-profits, and schools.

v. Promote volunteer opportunities to serve at-risk residents.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:**

- Opportunity for Upward Social Mobility: difference in expected economic outcomes between children from high and low-income families.
- Percent of Individuals in Poverty.

M. Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural services programs

**ACTIONS:**

i. Expand scholarships/reduced fees for residents’ participation in recreation programs, and provide free access to all outdoor arts and park facilities.

ii. Identify opportunities for public facilities serving as joint-use neighborhood centers.

iii. Explore opportunities for use of public facilities during non-standard times for community gatherings.

iv. Increase access to and availability of swim facilities and lessons.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:**

- Recreation Program Participation.
- Resident rating of the availability and affordability of public recreation and cultural programs.

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**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, 1-year American Community Survey, 2011.
WE ARE . . . PREPARED
Our focus is on: A Skilled Workforce, Quality Education

Expand and enhance learning across all age groups

ACTIONS:

i. Develop a common definition of career readiness, and coordinate the roles of various organizations working on career-readiness to develop common goals.

ii. List relevant education and training opportunities categorized by different demographics (i.e. youth, adult) and local as well as global work opportunities.

iii. Expand lifelong learning opportunities to professionals and aging populations.

iv. Evaluate curricula, and encourage businesses to help mold the educational system to better prepare students for the workforce.

v. Support Pre-K and K-12 out-of-school care and education curricula to expand capacity for schools to partner with families.

vi. Integrate soft skills training into public school curriculum.

vii. Raise the profile and use of career readiness certificates with employers and residents.

viii.Expose parents to different types of careers possible for their children.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

● Students Proficient in End of Course Tests.37
● Percent of Adults with High School Diploma.38
● Post-secondary attainment.39
● Career readiness certificates.40

72% of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools 9-12 Graders are proficient in End of Course tests
Source: Mecklenburg Quality of Life Dashboard

WE ARE . . . HEALTHY
Our focus is on: Physical Activity, Healthy Foods, Clean Environment

Create a culture of health and wellness

ACTIONS:

i. Establish a resident toolkit for easy navigation of preventative physical health services and behavioral/mental health services, and create community ambassadors for the toolkit.

ii. Address language barriers in the provision of health services.

iii. Reevaluate residents’ access to healthy food through an updated community food assessment.

iv. Increase businesses providing wellness programs for their employees.

v. Develop preventative programs and community events designed to promote improved health and wellness decision-making.

vi. Assure free and low-cost health clinics are open and accessible throughout the community.

vii. Review local government regulations to mitigate barriers to healthy food initiatives and establish policies and programs in support of the local food system, including farmers markets and entrepreneurial small grocers.

viii. Facilitate the expansion of mobile farmers markets with healthy food products in low food-access areas and on under-utilized land.

ix. Support a K-12 healthy choices campaign.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

● Clinic/Medicaid Access.64
● American Fitness Index Ranking.65
● USDA Food Access Research Atlas (Food Desert Map).46
● Language Service Performance Measures.47
● Access to Routine Mental Healthcare.54
● Behavioral Health Integration Checklist.49

Enhance partnerships between workforce development initiatives and employers

ACTIONS:

i. Establish a career pathways roundtable to continually adjust school curricula to meet employers’ current and future needs.

ii. Focus attention on high school preparedness and the students’ transition to ninth-grade.

iii. Provide students with additional internship, apprenticeship, and mentoring work-based learning opportunities.

iv. Provide specific and coordinated job-training to residents in their 20s.

v. Strengthen programming and support employers hiring at-risk residents for a more inclusive workforce.

vi. Raise the status of post-secondary training with parents by communicating the importance and different types of post-secondary education.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

● Number of Businesses Receiving Workforce Development Services.31
● Percentages of Job-Seekers Trained/Employed.42
● Percent of High School Graduates Pursuing Higher Education.45

SUCCESS MEASURES:

● Students Proficient in End of Course Tests.37
● Percent of Adults with High School Diploma.38
● Post-secondary attainment.39
● Career readiness certificates.40

● Number of Businesses Receiving Workforce Development Services.31
● Percentages of Job-Seekers Trained/Employed.42
● Percent of High School Graduates Pursuing Higher Education.45

72% of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools 9-12 Graders are proficient in End of Course tests
Source: Mecklenburg Quality of Life Dashboard
Protect and restore the natural environment

**ACTIONS:**

i. Conduct a comprehensive review of local government environmental protection regulations and identify opportunities to improve navigation for the development community.

ii. Establish a public-private environmental education and coordination roundtable to enhance collaboration across entities.

iii. Encourage local governments to become Certified Community Wildlife Habitats and continue certifying Master Naturalists.

iv. Implement the Catawba Basin Water Supply Master Plan recommendations.

v. Preserve and expand the tree canopy through street programs, ordinances, and community engagement.

vi. Partner to integrate environmental considerations into the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

vii. Monitor the health of nature preserves and heritage sites.

Coordinate open space, greenways/paved trails, and parks planning with neighborhood accessibility

**ACTIONS:**

i. Create a mechanism for distribution and exchange of information across jurisdictions regarding location of parks and greenway/paved trails proximate to neighborhoods.

ii. Purchase additional land for open space, greenway/paved trails, and parks purposes.

iii. Promote stream corridors in communities as greenways/paved trails that connect residents with the natural environment and opportunities for recreation and active transportation.

Manage zoning and development to revitalize community character and the natural environment while allowing for growth and innovation

**ACTIONS:**

i. Improve street networks by investing in road improvements and connecting transportation modes.

ii. Develop and adopt sustainable infrastructure goals and/or guidelines for public capital projects that respond to population growth as well as natural and man-made events.

iii. Establish mechanisms to provide residents and developers with information on sustainable building as new development and redevelopment occurs, and during the plan review/permitting process.

iv. Incorporate into zoning considerations: infrastructure availability, density, and timing to best align land use planning with essential services to create vibrant, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.

v. Enhance the tree canopy through innovative development processes and collaboration.

vi. Launch building retrofit incentive programs in all jurisdictions.

Manage resources wisely

**ACTIONS:**

i. Implement a community engagement/education campaign on energy use and avoided costs, promoting the benefits of cost savings and environmental improvements, with emphasis on tenants and landlords.

ii. Expand recycling participation.

iii. Encourage the installation of water re-use systems for residential, business, and industrial purposes.

iv. Explore innovative solutions for addressing biodegradable, and construction and demolition waste.

v. Increase the use of clean and reliable energy solutions.

vi. Partner with local governments to develop a Mecklenburg County Energy Management Plan for public infrastructure.

vii. Reduce sources of light pollution.

viii. Conduct water audits and other analyses to prevent water leaks in commercial, public, and residential structures.

 ix. Facilitate community-wide conversion of turf to surfaces that use less water, i.e. xeriscaping, low-turf, etc.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Percent of Land Area Treating Stormwater Runoff
- Certified Community Wildlife Habitats
- Master Naturalists
- Number of Trees Planted

- Street Connectivity Index
- Green Built North Carolina, LEED Certified, and/or Energy Star® Certified buildings
- Percent of Land Area Covered by Tree Canopy

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Single-Family Water Consumption
- Non-residential (commercial/industrial) water consumption
- Average monthly residential/business electricity consumption
- Average monthly residential/business natural gas consumption
- Solid waste per capita

81% of Mecklenburg County watersheds contain streams considered impaired for their intended use

ACTIONS:

i. Expand training programs for residents who want to serve on non-profit or local government advisory boards.

ii. Develop a leadership self-discovery program aimed at grassroots volunteers and neighborhood leaders.

iii. Create a crowd-sourced asset map of current and potential neighborhood leaders, reaching out to traditional and non-traditional sources (e.g. meet-up groups, leadership program alumni, schools, etc.) to enhance public and private outreach.

iv. Create intentional interactions between established and emerging leaders to encourage participation in civic activities and in other leadership roles.

v. Develop better messaging about what it means to be a leader to create/foster a more diverse pool of future changemakers.

vi. Establish a culture of businesses allowing employees to have and use a community engagement allowance.

vii. Coordinate with neighborhood leaders in communicating information and gathering input.

viii. Develop a program explaining the purpose of community involvement and fostering engagement.

SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Total Leadership Charlotte and ENCOUNTER Charlotte Participation.
- Total volunteer hours.

GOING FORWARD

Successful implementation of actions requires:

1. community and leadership support; 2) a well-defined governance structure; 3) regular, relevant, and meaningful measures of success; and 4) a system for updating the Plan. To keep the Plan off the shelf and in the community, the following structure will be used going forward:

Overall Management

Two-hundred potential community partners, including local governments, non-profits, and private sector entities, have been identified. The initial implementation year (2015-2016) will establish a Livability Network of partner and resident working groups. Working groups will focus on Strategies within the Plan that they can influence. An alignment group will exchange ideas and information among working groups to emphasize the inter-relatedness of issues and focus on Plan linkages. The charge of these working groups will be:

- Evaluate actions for each Strategy and determine those actions to be addressed;
- Validate success measures used, establish baselines, and document progress; and
- Determine collaborative opportunities to work across Partner programs.

The first annual reporting cycle will begin in 2016. Reporting will be scheduled so as to allow local government partners adequate time to adjust their strategic planning initiatives to align with plan initiatives. Mecklenburg County will facilitate the overall management of the plan. Chief responsibilities of overall management will include:

- Fostering collaboration between implementing partners using a series of working groups;
- Communicating work in progress, ongoing implementation efforts, and progress being made;
- Monitoring implementation of actions by partners; and (for consistency with above listing)
- Reporting plan strategy and action progress.

Plan Amendments and Updates

Because the plan will be a living document as actions are undertaken and our community continues to grow, it is anticipated that it will be updated or amended periodically. Working groups will make recommendations regarding Actions that should continue into the proceeding year’s plan. Amendments to Strategies will be considered on a three to five year cycle as recommended by working groups and endorsed by elected bodies.

Defining Success

How will we know if we have been successful? Improved livability is perceived in many ways. In some cases, success will be synonymous with the implementation of Actions. In other cases, we will want to know whether the accomplishment of Actions has changed the perception of our community or taken us closer to the Vision. And lastly, many will look to the measures, determining if, through our efforts, there was measureable improvement toward our Strategies.

The flexibility afforded to us by using the Plan as a living document carries through to our implementation. Just as Strategies, Actions, and Measures will be reevaluated and modified as needed going forward, how we define success will also evolve. Our changes will be purposeful, and will benefit from collaborative community engagement.

We will support that active and collaborative dialogue during the first year of implementation with the intent of establishing the immediate actions and collaboratively agreeing on the methods for measuring progress on the Plan. Our objective will be to identify specific targets for all goal areas as the implementation workgroups develop agreed upon measurements of our success.

Summary

This Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan has been prepared with extensive participation and input from residents, public and private organizations, community leaders, and local governments in the County. It expresses a collective vision for our future. It ties together the multiple existing plans and programs that are currently in place, and highlights issues needing attention. It will be implemented through collaborative action to enhance the livability of Mecklenburg County. It puts in place a network of public and private community partners that commit to work together. And working together, we will achieve our Vision.

For current information related to Plan implementation, including partners and other updates, please see http://livablemeck.com.