



G



Chapter

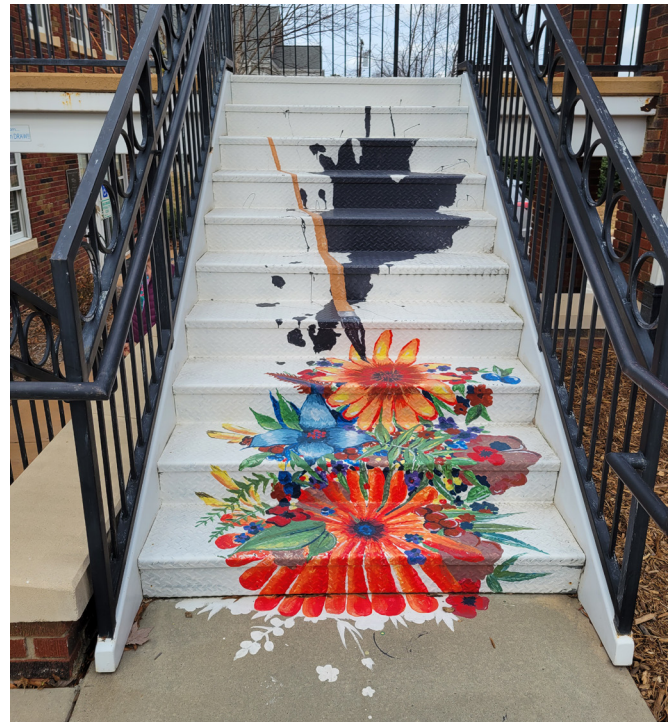
3

**Land Use and
Community
Character**

Introduction

In describing a town, “character” refers to the features that make up and distinguish a place. As noted in the first two chapters of this document, land use, development, open space, and infrastructure all contribute to “community character.” Therefore, physical form and design considerations are emphasized in the plan.

The supporting recommendations provided in this chapter give guidance for accommodating future growth and change while preserving and enhancing the qualities that make the town a desirable place to live, work, learn, and play. They aim to improve the town’s neighborhoods, activity centers, and public spaces with policies that address a range of attributes, including a mix of uses and amenities that expand the local economy, enhance social interaction, protect environmental resources, instill a unique sense of place, and improve the overall quality-of-life for residents.



Planning Themes

Planning effectively for the future requires awareness of the character-defining features that are or can be exhibited in the built environment and establishing a policy guide that ensures those features remain key elements even as change occurs over time.

In the early stages of this planning process, a group of stakeholders, which included design professionals, were assembled to assess the character of Garner. The participants explored the character-defining features to express the “essence” of the town.

Essence - The intrinsic nature and indispensable qualities exhibited in abundance, as if in concentrated form, that make a place what it fundamentally is.

As the committee members described the town as a whole and the places within, they organized their thoughts into three categories:

Appearance

The aesthetics of the place resulting from the combination of physical characteristics.

Function

The purpose of the place, taking into consideration the activities the spaces within can support.

Feel

Experience (or memories) associated with the physical environment, such as elements that give a nod to the history and heritage of the place, that connect people to it.

The resulting list of descriptors refers to the experience of living in, working in, and visiting Garner, now and in the future. These terms and phrases were offered by the committee members to acknowledge the current conditions they have observed in the town and to note some of their aspirations.

Quality of Development

Building materials, trees, landscaping, art

Diversity / Sense of Community

Mix of housing products within neighborhoods, more activities for all age groups, engagement is fostered, pride

Local

Accommodating, facilitating, supporting local businesses

Community Support

More places to come together, hubs, parks, fun places

Scale

Walkable streets/areas, less automobile use (and less traffic)

Safety

Visibility, lines of sight keep eyes on the street (and other spaces)

Historic Preservation

Conservation (i.e., buildings, rail, water tank), features to connect to past

Natural Environment

Conservation, natural elements are integrated

The input from the committee helped inform ideas about how to evaluate existing and future development. This level of detail can better equip Garner to conserve, create, leverage, and celebrate the features that give—or will give—Garner its distinct identity.

Six themes emerged from the exploration of the character-defining features. These themes are associated with those features, which are informed by the desired future development pattern and can be reinforced through policies. The recommendations presented in this section are organized around these six themes:

Emphasis on the Public Realm

Land Use Mix and Development Intensity

Home and Neighborhood Choices

Site Design and Development Scale

Community Connections

Natural Conservation and Historic Preservation

Town Initiatives

Several ideas related to enhancing the quality of life and economic prosperity in Garner were explored during the planning process. Integrated into the recommendations are explanations of proposed initiatives to advance these ideas, and they are presented on pages distinguished with a blue background.

About the Focus Areas

This chapter concludes with a series of focus area illustrations prepared to demonstrate conceptually how the recommendations under each planning theme might be applied in future development and redevelopment. Specific recommendations are provided with each to identify the opportunities while adjusting for the context of each focus area.