

Theme 6: Natural Conservation and Historic Preservation

Both natural areas and historic properties have a significant role in safeguarding a specific community character for Garner. Protection, and sometimes restoration, of natural resources and historic properties in the planning area are important to making the area more authentic and unique in the larger Triangle region. One-of-a-kind areas like Lake Benson and the old Garner train depot create “Kodak moments” for residents, employees, and visitors in the area. Natural areas and historic properties throughout the community also make residents feel more connected to, and take more pride in, their town.

Natural resource topics important to the comprehensive plan include: environmental stewardship, floodplains, tree canopy and forest cover, and a comprehensive and connected green infrastructure network that links important natural features in the community via a system of natural corridors. Increased conservation efforts for the comprehensive plan are also acknowledged as a viable trade-off for accepting higher densities and less private open space in some of the activity centers identified for the planning area. Recommendations for the natural resource topics in Chapter 3 should be refined in subsequent plans and studies completed by the town or its partners. Additional, often more detailed, considerations should also be addressed in the town’s Unified Development Ordinance.

Historic preservation topics important to the comprehensive plan are focused on protecting structures, properties, and resources that tell the history of Garner: from its agrarian roots in 1751, to the arrival of the train in 1847, to buildup of the downtown in 1874, to designation of the Central Highway through Garner in 1916, to relocation of the Central Highway in the 1950s, and the town’s recognition as an All-America City in 2013 (see Chapter 1). Protecting historic places in the town ensures an understanding of its past is handed off to future generations.

Implement a tree canopy preservation program for the planning area.

Undeveloped land in Garner generally includes a mixture of grasslands and tree stands. Older neighborhoods in the town have mature street trees and landscaping. Some newer neighborhoods display minimal tree-save canopy in aerial photography; however, new plantings along streets and in parking lots, common areas, and private yards are expected to replace a portion of the tree canopy lost to new development.

Shade trees planted throughout the community provide simple and beautiful solutions to clean the air, prevent stream erosion, save energy, and cool streets and buildings. Tree planting and preservation programs, a tree advisory committee, tree care ordinance, conservation easements, and capital investments should all be considered as ways to increase and sustain the town’s tree canopy in the future.

Recognition of the town’s future efforts to sustain meaningful tree canopy in the community should include a Tree City USA designation application. American Forests — a national conservation and advocacy group for creating healthy and resilient forests throughout the country — recommends a target of 40% to 60% urban tree canopy for a forested state.

Town officials should implement local tree planting and tree care policies and ordinances to include minimum criteria for tree save areas, preferred number of new tree plantings, native species list, tree caliper at planting, and tree spacing criteria. In some instances, town officials may want to consider payment-in-lieu provisions in the tree ordinance for more dense, urban development projects where tree save area requirements adversely impact other goals of the comprehensive plan. The funds collected should be used to purchase tree save areas in other parts of the community. New single-family neighborhoods should not participate in the payment-in-lieu program.

In addition, Town officials may want to fund an awards program to celebrate urban forestry and the people who advocate for it. For example, the City of Charlotte makes annual awards for specimen tree of the year, personal connection to a tree (story submission), corporate friend of the urban forest, and proud partner of the tree canopy for advocacy.



Protect natural areas and environmental assets throughout the community.

Town officials should safeguard natural areas and environmental assets in the community using information presented in the comprehensive plan and more-specific functional plans to follow (e.g., an update to the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan or an update to the Wake County Open Space Plan).

A comprehensive and connected system of green space should be integrated into the built environment as 1) a deliberate effort to protect natural areas, and 2) as amenity accessible to citizen to enjoy the outdoors. Two specific considerations for protecting natural areas in the community include:

Lake Benson and the Swift Creek Corridor

Lake Benson and the Swift Creek corridor constitute an important wildlife corridor, habitat for plants and animals, and population destination for recreational amenities. The area should be managed and protected to ensure all three assets thrive long into the future.

Swift Creek Tributaries

Tributaries for Swift Creek extend north and south to points throughout Garner. Preserving, or sometimes restoring, the tributaries as natural, open drainage ways in the community will help with stormwater management and provide opportunities for new greenways that can link neighborhoods with nearby commercial areas, parks, or natural areas.

Identify and protect important and historic structures, properties, and resources in the community that provide connections back to the town's past.

Town officials should work with their partners at state and county governments to identify and protect historic properties in the community either in place or, if needed, as structures relocated to another location suitable for their preservation.

Provide more opportunities to share the culture and history of the town with residents and visitors.

Celebrate local history with planned events and a dedicated history page on the town's website. Consider creating a storytelling portal in conjunction with the website, or independently, so that residents can share family history and other information with others. Provide tools for uploading and sharing images, recipes and more, in order to preserve traditions for generations to come.



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