

Building on and conserving the existing character will help the Town attract quality development with favorable design qualities and amenities. That development can also build infrastructure to help ensure long-term financial viability in a "virtuous circle" of sustainable improvements.



KEEPING OUR CHARACTER
















- Balance costs with revenues
- Influence design to keep within our character and improve value
- Create a healthy brand
- Partner with civic and other organizations, public and private
- Recommendations should address school performance

Community character includes the assortment of elements that make a place unique. It can attract business, visitors, and tourists and makes citizens proud to call their community home. Character is not an artificial creation but the result of preservation and enhancement of an area's natural and cultural features over many years. Garner residents need practices and policies that ensure they will continue to enjoy their small-town atmosphere while still benefiting from new growth and development.

Landscaping, material choices for exterior structures, bridge designs, streetscaping, greenways, lighting, wayfinding, gateways, and many other choices influence the overall character of the Town. Employing streetscaping, secure design principles, and more rural design treatments without unduly hindering development will help create a greater variety of places and protect, conserve, and build upon the current places of value.

Garner's schools are often cited as under performing their peers in other parts of Wake County, which is accountable for restrictions on the quantity and types of housing constructed in recent years. While municipalities have little direct input into their school's funding or operations they can indirectly influence and contribute to improving performance.

- **VIRTUOUS CIRCLE**
- **NOUN**
- A recurring cycle of events,
- the result of each one being to
- increase the beneficial effect of
- the next.
-
- *The civic leader said, "We need to attract*
- *investment to create a virtuous circle in*
- *which increased economic activity leads*
- *to more investment, more investment*
- *leads to more economic activity, and so*
- *on."*

supports us		practice or policy	
			Market a healthy brand that celebrates the local flair of Garner and emphasizes the Town's positive evolution.
			Promote design standards that enhance community appearance and maintain a unique sense of place.
			Encourage redevelopment and reuse of existing sites and buildings that are complimentary to the surrounding area.
			Create a "historical and cultural" centerpiece. Use the Downtown Streetscapes plan to identify design treatments and strategies.
			Display community values and pride through our architecture, landscape design, and public art.
			Promote open spaces and natural features such as major trees, streams, hills and woodlands.
			Promote coordination between neighborhood associations, municipalities, and communities to promote the preservation of each area's historic resources.
			Design and build attractive and creative landscaped gateways that display the unique character of the place.
			Develop an infrastructure improvement plan to address the appearance of railroad bridges and water towers.

Benefits Available from Adopting Recommended Policy or Practice.



HEALTH
supports community health and environmental quality



ELEVATE
instills quality in appearance, design, or community



FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY
adds value to people, businesses, and town

focus group
summary, 2016

"Garner doesn't want to be Raleigh, but we want to have the benefits from being near Raleigh and part of a metropolitan area while minimizing downsides."



On Display

Attractive and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes communicate a small-town feel and a human scale environment.

Come on In

By focusing on creating attractive and unique gateways Garner can attract new visitors and encourage people to return.

CHARACTER RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a Regular Evaluation Among Peers

During the planning process, one of the most popular topics was, "How do we compare to our peers?" Information can be time-consuming to obtain, but fortunately there are newer, on-line resources that can help expedite such comparisons. Particularly noteworthy is the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) Livability Index. This index weighs numerous factors into seven categories (housing, neighborhoods, transportation, health, environment, engagement, and opportunity). Each category is given a 0-100 score and also produces an overall score. Most importantly, each category can be weighted as more or less important, and it allows direct comparisons to other places.

Review the AARP Livability Index (<https://livabilityindex.aarp.org>) and other tools to create a relevant evaluation to other peer towns.



Present the evaluation results at Council retreats, annual reports, and periodic strategy reports to create a culture of acceptance for peer reviews and progress.



Approximately 4 hours of staff time per evaluation period (plus an additional four hours initially to establish the best tool and scoring). Good intern task.



Create a Support Network for Public Schools

Schools are an important component of keeping the Town's character and moving Garner Forward. Municipalities don't have a direct financial role enhancing public schools or their performance in North Carolina, but they can provide indirect support in a number of ways. A cooperative effort can create an open and reliable network between school administrators, town staff, and civic organizations. Bimonthly "in-reach" meetings involving the school, the Town, and community partners can determine schools' individual needs and then apply resources to volunteer efforts to maintain/repair school grounds and landscaping; donate books and supplies; or work directly with teachers to enhance school curricula.

Assign staff person to coordinate initial project outline, contact civic agencies, and school contracts, and the first 12 months of meetings and activities.



Work with civic organizations and churches (e.g., Rotary, Lions) to create a sustained network of assistance with Garner's school administration.



Approximately 5-10 hours of staff time per week (more initially) and, depending on projects, cap budget at \$5,000 per year for materials.



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