

# MISSION 2030 PLAN

A Vision For Economic Success for Morganton, North Carolina

In 2030, Morganton is a growing, dynamic and sustainable city that is focused on the future with a strong diverse economy and a balanced and growing population that values and enjoys a high quality of life in a safe and attractive environment.

Working together, the City, County and region boast a steady growth in jobs and residents, higher school scores, and a broad range of recreational and entertainment activities. Through regional cooperation our mountain views, rivers and natural areas are protected and easily accessed by a network of greenways that link downtown, neighborhoods and regional parks.

Morganton's public and private investments in growing and attracting business and industry, protecting our natural environment, supporting a wide range of cultural and entertainment amenities and maintaining a first-class educational system have been the core building blocks for economic prosperity.

# OUR COMMUNITY

Established in 1777, Morganton is the county seat and cultural, governmental, financial and commercial center of Burke County the largest county in Western North Carolina. Sitting in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains between Hickory and Asheville, Morganton's location along I-40 makes it an important economic center for the region.

Morganton and the surrounding counties, cities and towns are blessed with scenic rural landscapes, bountiful natural resources and a rich historic and cultural heritage. Lakes James State Park, the Linville Gorge and Pisgah National Forest and South Mountains State Park are short drives from the city, and Morganton prides itself on providing big city services wrapped in small town charm.

During the past 100 years, the driving forces in Morganton's economy have been textile and furniture manufacturing and government employment. The City's central location and access to abundant natural resources made it a desirable location for business and industry. As the traditional textile and furniture manufacturing base has changed, Morganton has successfully attracted a diverse base of international, national and local manufacturing industries.

As the City has matured it has successfully retained its small town character and a strong downtown. The City's Catawba River Greenway and Catawba Meadows Park are national models on how to protect natural resources for public use in an urban environment.

Today Morganton is an integral part of a larger regional economy, Morganton's well developed highway and rail transportation network and utilities infrastructure make an ideal location for business and industry. Home to numerous multi-national, regional and local industries, Morganton's business friendly approach strongly supports the location and expansion of business and industry.



# STRENGTHS & GOALS

The City of Morganton has a strong track record of creating public and private partnerships that benefit the City. By working closely with residents and businesses, Morganton has been able to invest in improvements to strengthen our competitive advantage.

Morganton's City Hall illustrates how the City was able to work with private partners to save and revitalize an old hosiery mill and create a facility that's admired by local leaders throughout state.

Morganton's Catawba Meadows Park is a great success that brought together the City of Morganton, state agencies and local sports promoter to create one of the largest municipal athletic parks in western North Carolina. Baseball and softball tournaments at the park draw thousands of visitors to Morganton every year and the facility provides residents with access to more than 200 acres of green space, ball fields, volley baseball, disc golf, greenway path and much more.

Similar partnerships have been instrumental in launching tourism initiatives that benefit the whole community. Building on these successes, the 2030 Plan recommendations require the support and action of many partners.

Maintaining Morganton's competitive advantage as a desirable location for industry requires partnerships between the Burke Economic Development Council, the City, Towns, County and State as well as local business leaders who play an important role in marketing Morganton. The Burke Industrial Park is an example of an economic development partnership project of the City, County and Towns.

Western Piedmont Community College has a leadership role in providing training and education for employees. The College has developed courses tailored to the specific needs of employers, as well as providing continuing education opportunities for all residents.

The Burke County Chamber of Commerce and the Center for Entrepreneurship provide education and support for small businesses and entrepreneurs as they navigate the complexities of growing a successful business.

The Burke County Tourism Development Authority plays a pivotal role in supporting the growing tourism industry as well as partnering with organizations such as the Chamber and the Center for Entrepreneurship to identify and support emerging business opportunities.

It will be through the sustained efforts of all of the partners, focusing on economic growth that creates jobs and wealth, that the community's vision will be achieved.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The goal of the Mission 2030 project was to create a vision for Morganton's future that the entire community would want to support. From the launch of the project in 2008 to its completion in 2009, residents of Morganton and Burke County provided input on how they want their community to grow, and the Mission 2030 consultants listened.

The Mission 2030 consultants actively sought the ideas of the community through workshops, interviews, on-line surveys, roundtable discussions and an open house.

Throughout the planning process, the concepts and recommendations were shared using the MISSION 2030 website, cable television, and presentations to organizations such as the Burke County Board of Realtors, Newcomers Club, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce and Burke Economic Development Authority.

Hundreds of residents, business leaders and community partners invested thousands of hours to research and discuss our strengths and weakness regional and national growth trends and business development and employment opportunities. Everyone involved worked together to agree on specific recommendations that will help stimulate our local economy.

Through Mission 2030, the community came together to chart a future course and develop an implementation strategy to move the City forward, and achieving those challenging goals, will require the continued commitment of the participants to be partners in implementing the Mission 2030 Plan.



# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The Mission 2030 Plan combines economic development planning with land use planning to sustain Morganton's competitive advantage in a global market place. The Plan recognizes that an efficient, strong, diverse and resilient economy is essential to achieving Morganton's overall development objectives.

The Plan lays out a vision for economic success that will influence the future growth of our community. Economic development strategies include:

- **Grow Morganton's manufacturing and industrial base by supporting existing industries and attracting new industries to the area.**
- **Encourage diversification of Morganton's economic base by encouraging growth of existing small businesses and emerging businesses.**
- **Strengthen Morganton's reputation as a preferred location for business and their workforce. Focus on assets that will attract businesses in the technical, medical and research sectors.**
- **Grow Morganton and Burke County's tourism industry through investments in destination activities and programs, marketing, and supporting hospitality and tourism businesses.**
- **Strengthen Downtown Morganton as a destination for dining and entertainment. Diversify the downtown's retail base to include unique retail stores and galleries.**

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# MISSION TEAM

## Steering Committee

John Branstrom	Don Hemstreet
Bruce Hershock	Linda Lindsey
Bill Allman	Kelly Messenheimer
Richard Avery	Jerry Norvell
Susan Berley	Dianne Reihl
David Burleson	Natalie Rudisill
Dr. Jim Burnett	Robert Salsbury
Scott Coley	Doug Smith
Mike Cronk	Anissa Freeman Starnes
Rich DeAugustinus	Jim Toner
Judy Francis	Scott Walker
Michael Fulenwider	Don Wright
Rod Harrelson	

# COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

Burke County Board of Realtors	Historic Burke Foundation
Burke County Chamber of Commerce	History Museum of Burke County
Burke County Government	Joara Foundation
Burke County Homebuilders Association	Morganton Downtown Development Association
Burke County Public Schools	Morganton Main Street Advisory Council
Burke County Travel & Tourism	Olive Hill Community Development Corporation
Burke Economic Development Council	Town of Drexel
Crescent Resources	Western Piedmont Council of Governments

# PROJECT STAFF

## *City Staff*      *Consultants*

Lee Anderson, AICP	Mary Means & Associates
Michael Berley	Jinni Benson
Jackie Cain	- <i>President Jinni Benson + Partners</i>
Joshua Harris	Elaine Van S, Carmichael, ACIP
Sharon Jablonski	- <i>President Economic Stewardship, Inc.</i>
Sally Sandy	

## **MISSION 2030 PLAN**

A Vision For Economic Success

City of Morganton, North Carolina

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# MORGANTON

## MISSION 2030 PLAN: A VISION FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS

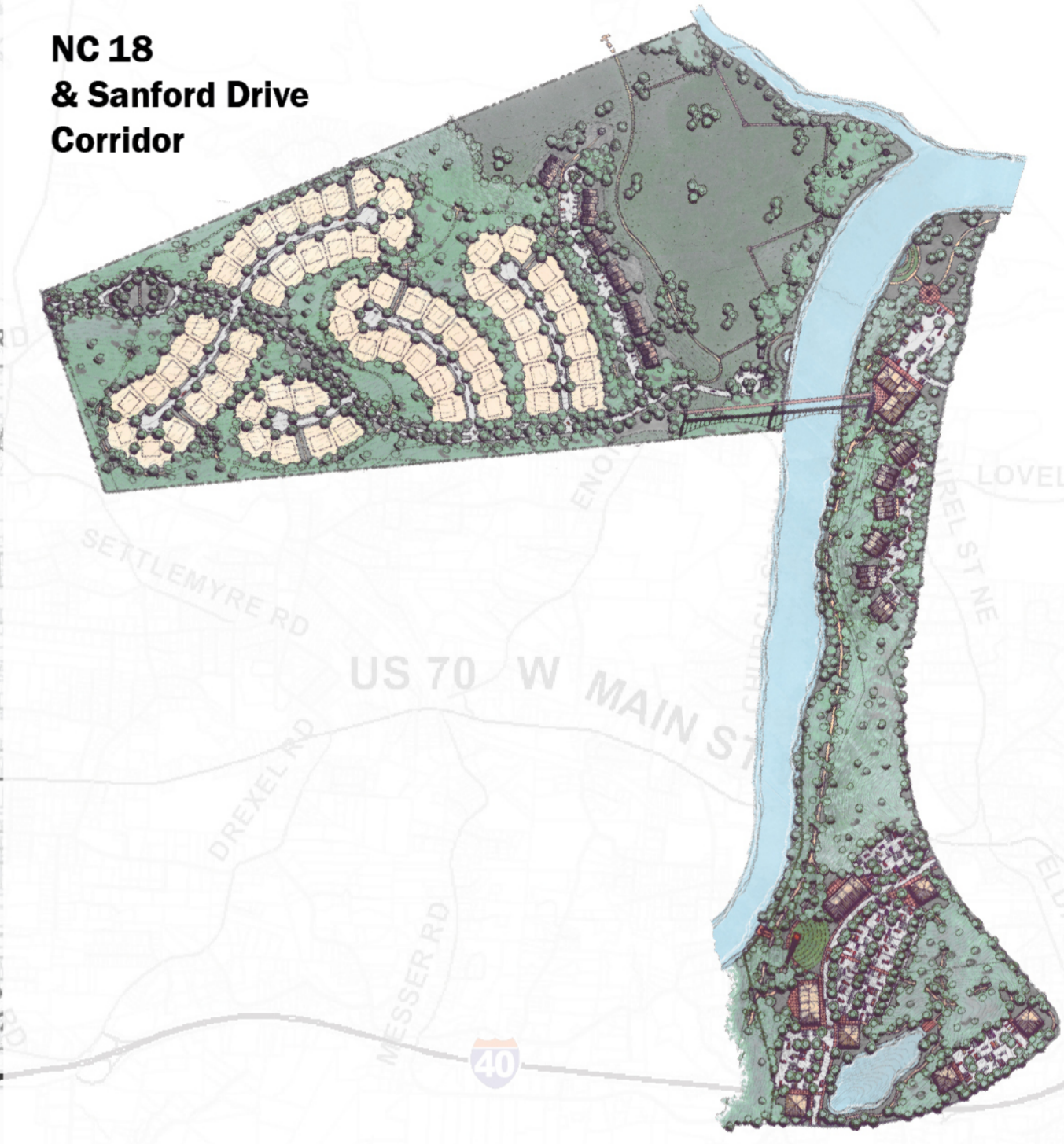
The Mission 2030 Plan is a long-range, comprehensive plan that will guide development, land use and decision-making during the next 10 to 20 years in the City of Morganton.



NC 181 Corridor



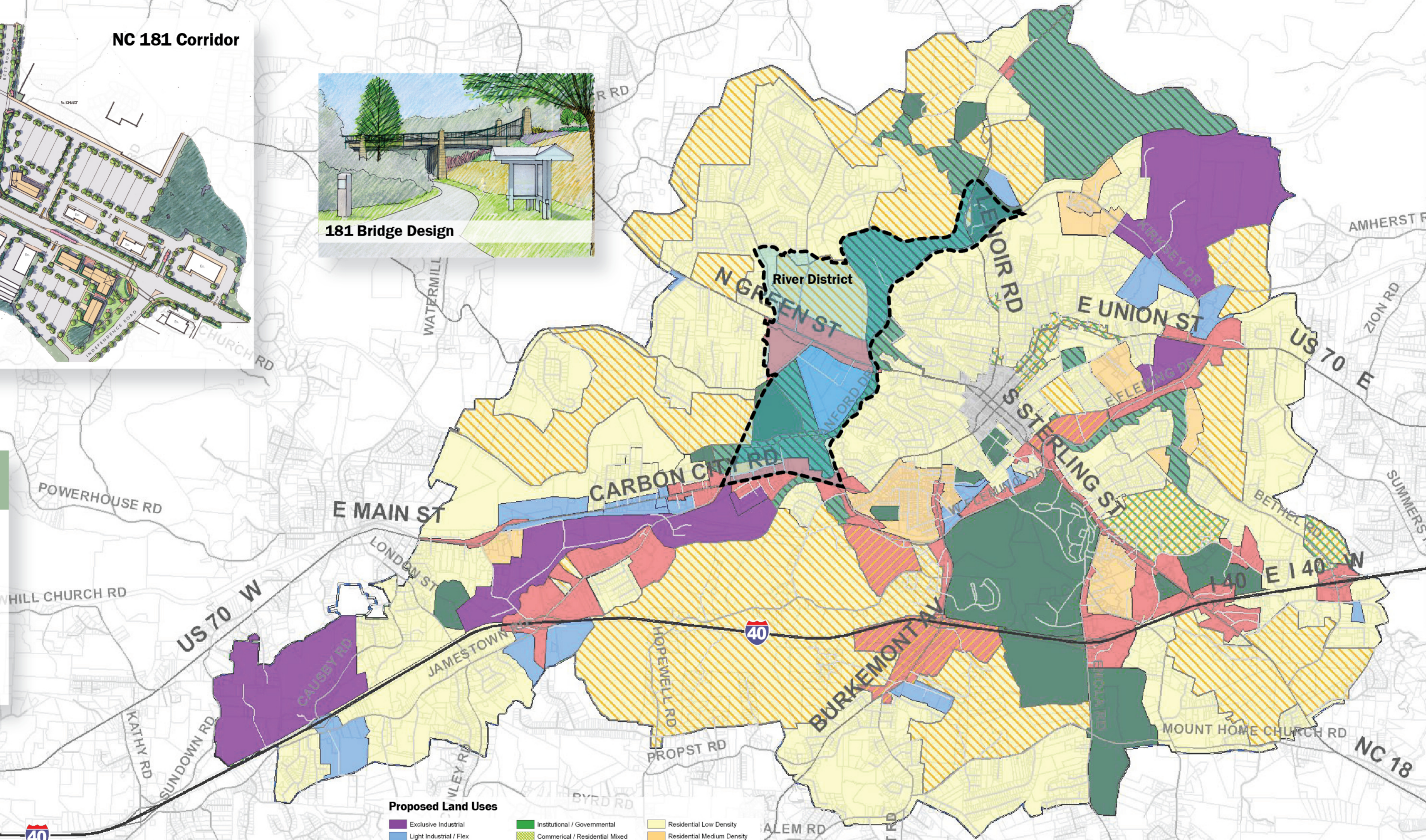
181 Bridge Design



NC 18 & Sanford Drive Corridor

### Embrace Tourism

- Recognize tourism as a local growth industry
- Support business that promotes visitors to the area
- Create a strong brand as 'Nature's Playground'
- Invest in and promote corridor and gateway enhancements
- Improve hospitality training opportunities
- Promote Downtown as a visitor attraction
- Promote River District as a destination
- Encourage events that bring visitors to the area
- Network within region to bring national attractions to the area
- Create wayfinding programs



W. Union Crossroads Corridor

### Expand Retail

- Attract local and national retailers through new recruitment techniques
- Maintain a strong and diverse central business district
- Support partnerships that grow retail
- Invest in corridor enhancements to support commercial development
- Encourage new ordinances and guidelines that are business friendly
- Revitalize existing commercial centers
- Market identified locations for commercial development

### Retain, Support & Recruit Industry

- Encourage expansion and growth of existing industries
- Recruit technology and growth industries
- Support growth of healthcare industry
- Maintain communication and relationships with existing industries
- Conserve land for manufacturing and business development
- Encourage partnerships and co-location of key agencies supporting economic development

### Diversify Neighborhoods

- Promote diverse housing types
- Diversify housing choices
- Promote retirement living
- Support downtown housing
- Encourage development of infill housing
- Identify and protect historic neighborhoods
- Promote mixed use living opportunities



Sterling Street & W. Fleming Drive Corridor