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2004 LAND USE PLAN UPDATES

The Regional Planning Agency would like to thank Everett Fairchild and the Hixson Leadership Committee for their continuing guidance in development matters in the Hixson-North River area. Additional thanks goes to Chattanooga City Councilmembers Dan Page, Sally Robinson and John Lively and Hamilton County Commissioner Charlotte Vandergriff.

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2002 PLAN

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency would like to thank all of the residents, business owners and other stakeholders in the Hixson-North River area for their time, energy and ideas that went into the creation of this plan. Special thanks goes to the Leadership Committee members who invested many hours over many meetings to provide assistance in developing the plan document. Finally, RPA thanks the many organizations which contributed staff resources and input into the plan: Chattanooga Neighborhood Services, Public Works, Traffic Engineering, Stormwater Management, Parks/Recreation/Arts/Culture, and Police, Hamilton County Department of Education, Hixson Utility District, Tennessee Department of Transportation, Chattanooga Area Regional Transit Authority, Tennessee Valley Authority, and North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy.

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Executive Summary

The Hixson-North River Community Plan was initiated by a request from City Council. Following this request, RPA staff developed a scope of services and defined the study area boundary. Generally, the study area is bounded by Lupton Drive, the Tennessee River and Chickamauga Lake to the south and east, Thrasher Pike to the north, and Boy Scout Road, US 27 and Red Bank to the west. The study area covers more than 16,000 acres of land.

From the outset, the plan sought to accomplish the following objectives:

- Create a unifying and compelling vision
- Define policy for future development
- Identify important community assets and strategies for protecting/enhancing them
- Guide future investments in public infrastructure and services
- Measure success by implementation

The Process

With these objectives in mind, the RPA staff worked with local elected officials to assemble a Leadership Committee that would be involved in the plan’s creation, adoption and implementation. This Committee represents a cross-section of interests in the study area including residents, business owners, developers, natural resource advocates and civic leaders. In addition to forming a committee, RPA staff retained the services of a local transportation consultant, Volkert and Associates, to assess the operating efficiency of several key intersections within the study area and to make recommendations for how they might be improved.

Working with the Leadership Committee, RPA staff organized a series of public workshops to get direct public involvement in crafting a vision and formulating strategies for the plan. These public meetings were held during the months of February and March 2002, in two different locations and dates to maximize convenience. In addition to the public meetings two surveys were conducted (one targeted to residents, the other to business owners). The information and ideas generated from these resources were incorporated into the plan’s vision statement, goals and strategy recommendations.

The Vision

The following vision statement was adopted: “To create a place that promotes community, accessibility and a high quality of life for all residents through planned growth that maintains a visually-attractive and cohesive built environment, convenient public facilities, strong businesses, and protection of the natural environment.” Area stakeholders clearly indicated that community atmosphere, quality natural environment and a positive business environment are what they value most. These assets should be enhanced and protected as the community grows.
Key Plan Recommendations

Based on the vision, several key initiatives deserve emphasis:

1) **Develop a Town Center Complex in the Northgate Mall area:** Such a complex would include a senior center and teen center for services and programming, an outdoor pavilion and park for public events, walking trails, library, post office and other public services.

2) **Promote Planned Growth**: Maintain a policy of directing commercial development within the planned nodes and requiring all new development within those nodes to address infrastructure impacts and to meet the site design principles outlined by this plan. In addition, commercial development codes should be strengthened and enforced to promote better landscaping, site and building design, cleanup and maintenance of existing structures, sign control, stormwater management, buffering of residential communities and protection of important natural resources.

3) **Develop a Community Wide Park-Trail System**: Complete the North Chickamauga Creek greenway system and initiate a north shore Tennessee Riverpark connecting North Chickamauga Creek with Rivermont Park.

4) **Improve Public Education**: Provide more resources to improve facilities and staffing. Reassess the structural integrity of Hixson Middle School and pursue renovation/new construction of it. Upgrade Hixson High School facility. Explore possible UTC/Chattanooga State satellite facility.

5) **Upgrade Substandard Road Infrastructure**: Improve Hamill Road, Ashland Terrace, Hixson Pike-Highway 153 interchange, and the Boy Scout Road-Highway 153 intersection.

6) **Promote more housing for seniors and younger families**: Utilize the land use plan to designate areas for retirement housing, patio homes, and townhomes.

Implementation

Funding for projects/initiatives called for in this plan is not guaranteed. Implementation of the strategies called for in the plan hinges on the active leadership and involvement of the Leadership Committee and community stakeholders in getting them accomplished. These initiatives require partnerships between the city, county, residents, merchants and major employers. The plan will be phased over the next 15 years; reassessment should occur every 5 years.
Section 1: AREA ASSESSMENT

1.1 Study Area Description

The study area is bounded by Lupton Drive, the Tennessee River and Chickamauga Lake to the south and east, Thrasher Pike to the north, and Boy Scout Road, US 27 and Red Bank to the west. The study area covers more than 16,000 acres of land. One of the more significant natural features is North Chickamauga Creek which traverses the middle of the study area and has a floodplain that occupies a fifth of the land area. Three major transportation corridors cross the area: Hixson Pike, Highway 153 and US 27. The study area also hosts several major employers including DuPont, Gold Bond, RL Stowe (Dixie Yarns) and Card-Monroe. Two major retail centers are located in the study area: Northgate Mall and the Four Oaks Shopping Center. Finally, the area contains many neighborhoods of varying ages, some dating back to the early 1920’s.

1.2 History (adapted from an excerpt in the 1985 Hixson Business Directory)

The Hixson-North River area has a rich history dating back to the original Indian settlements that occurred there. On October 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1819, the U.S. Government acquired the Hixson-North River area from the Cherokee Indians. This purchase preceded the purchase of land south of the Tennessee River in 1838 which resulted in the “Trail of Tears”. Following the 1819 land purchase, the settlement of Dallas was developed
containing Hamilton County’s first courthouse. This settlement is now under water in the Dallas Bay area.

The Hixson community got its name from one of the earlier settlers who was a descendant of Ephraim Hixson, Jr.. The family of Ephraim Hixson settled in this area in 1830 on a plot of land just east of the railroad on Old Hixson Pike. During the Civil War, North Chickamauga Creek was used as a staging area for Union Troops on their way to fight the Battle of Missionary Ridge. Soon after the Civil War, the area’s first mills were constructed – “Upper Mill” located on Chickamauga Creek at Boyscout Road, and “Lower Mill” at Lower Mill Road. The first stores did not arrive in the Hixson area until 1880 with the formation of the E.F. Hixson Store. Sited at the present Hixson Middle School gym, the first school was built in 1908, a two-story structure that provided education for grades 1-12.

During the early 1900’s, more people began to reside and conduct business in the Hixson-North River area. Lupton City, a classic mill town, was established by Dixie Yarns company during the 1920’s – the mill is still operating today and the area still retains some of its original inhabitants. The area’s growth trend accelerated with the building of Chickamauga Dam in 1940. The completion of the Dam brought the benefits of flood control, recreation opportunities and cheap electricity. With the added benefit of rail access, DuPont located in the area in the mid 1940’s. DuPont brought a wealth of jobs to the region which spurred the growth in residential subdivisions throughout the study area. With this residential growth came the Highland Plaza retail center in the 1950’s and Northgate Mall in the 1960’s.
Since the 1960’s, the area’s regional significance has increased from the construction of Highway 153 and US 27/Corridor J. These improvements have significantly added to the overall accessibility of the study area and thus its potential for more growth. These growth opportunities have also created challenges with the loss of natural habitat and flooding along North Chickamauga Creek. Local citizens along North Chickamauga Creek formed “HELP” to advocate for the Creek’s protection. This organization has evolved into a full time non-profit organization, North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy. Since their early beginnings, many portions of the creek have been protected and incorporated into a greenway system. Greenway Farms, the former “Spangler Farm” site was acquired in the early 1990’s and is now a site for recreation and environmental education.

1.2 Demographics

Demographic statistics for this area were determined using U.S. Census Data from the 1990 and 2000 Census. Tract, block group, and group are the three census categories in which data is collected. Census tracts 104.31, 104.32, 104.33, and 105.01 are mostly or entirely within the boundary and tract 104.02 has a small portion within the Hixson area.

**Population**

The Hixson-North River Community consists of 28,500 people and approximately 17 percent of Chattanooga’s land area. The population of the area is over 90 percent White, leaving less than ten percent of minority origin. Table A illustrates that from 1990 to 2000 the Total and White populations have barely changed, where the minority population (both Black and All Other) more than doubled.

**Table A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Racial Distribution 1990-2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hixson – North River Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9% - 6% 5% 12%

0% - 50% 100% 150% 200% 250% 300% 350%

WHITE BLACK ALL OTHER TOTAL POPULATION
Age also plays an important role in defining this Community. Table B clearly demonstrates that the Hixson Community is aging. The number of people younger than 34 years of age is declining while the population over 34 increased 18 percent from 1990 to 2000. The largest increase is in those over 65 years of age with a 56 percent increase.

**Table B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Hixson - North River Community</th>
<th>Chattanooga</th>
<th>Hamilton County</th>
<th>East Brainerd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Yrs</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 17 Yrs</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 34 Yrs</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 64 Yrs</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and older</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Income**

The U.S. Census Bureau calculates median family income for each census tract. In Table C the median family income of the five census tracts in the Hixson Area is compared to Chattanooga and Hamilton County. The table indicates that each of these tracts have above average incomes. In addition, the percent of people living below poverty level in this area is five percent, much lower than that of Chattanooga City (18%) or Hamilton County (13%).
Housing & Family Characteristics

The Hixson Community has a high percent (71%) of owner occupied units and a low percent of both vacant and rental units. Over the last ten years the type of housing occupancy in the Hixson Community has been very stable.

The number of families in the community has increased by one percent while the number of single parent families has increased 25 percent and married couple families decreased by three percent. These statistics conform to the national trend.

Education & Schools

According to the 1990 Census, people living in the Hixson area were well educated when compared to surrounding areas. Eighty-four percent of people living in the Hixson area graduated from high school compared to 69 percent in the city and 73 percent in the county.

Summary

The population of the Hixson–North River Community is becoming more racially diverse and aging. In addition, according to the Census Bureau the people that live here tend to be financially stable, well educated, and homeowners.

1.3 Retail Market Analysis

This section provides a summary of the retail market analysis prepared by the Information and Research Division of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency. The study mainly examines the supply and demand of the retail trade. The demand of the retail space is determined by estimating trade area household retail expenditures that are based on population and their disposable income. The current supply of retail space was assessed by field survey in Spring 2002.

For the purpose of this analysis, the retail market is defined by four major categories:

- Restaurants & Bars: including fast foods, coffee shops and all eating and drinking establishments.
• Convenience Goods: including grocery, drug, gasoline, convenience stores, and auto supply retailers.
• Apparel & Accessories: including apparel, shoes, jewelry, and cosmetics.
• Comparison Goods: including household equipment, furniture, home furnishings, electronics, appliance, general merchandise stores, toys, and pet supplies.

Currently, the Hixson- North River Community Plan study area has a large retail base of approximately 3 million square feet. Northgate Mall and the surrounding shopping centers along Highway 153 serve as a regional shopping development for the portion of the Hamilton County north/west of the Tennessee River, and also the adjacent counties. The current occupancy rate for the Mall and surrounding retail centers is high, 92%. Sales per square foot are higher than the national average. This commercial success will continue attracting national and regional retailers to the area.

There are 13,850 households in the study area. According to the phone survey, the residents spent 90% of their retail expenditure within the study area. These spending patterns, with the high sales per square foot, demonstrate the strong regional drawing power of the Northgate Mall and Highway 153 area. In addition, 32,413 households in Hamilton County north of the Tennessee River are estimated to spend 70% of their restaurant, apparel and comparison goods expenditure in the study area. Because of the proximity, location and the barrier of the river, it is reasonable to estimate that the residents in Marion, Sequatchie, Bledsoe, Rhea and Grundy counties would spend 30% of their apparel and comparison goods retail expenditure in the study area. The inclusion of portion of these counties in the Northgate Mall’s primary trade area sustains this estimation.

The expenditure analysis indicates that the study area is not capturing all expenditures in the trade area. The study area could support approximately a total of 3,400,000 square foot of retail space. There are currently close to three million square feet of occupied retail space. With the 315,000 square feet of vacant retail space, the study area could support an additional of 85,000 square feet.

Retail expenditure analysis provides a general picture of the relationships between consumer demand and the existing supply of retail businesses. This type of general analysis should not be the only factor in determining if new businesses should be located in the study area. Even in cases where unmet retail demand is found in the analysis, there may be insufficient sales potential to warrant viable new businesses. On the other hand, there may be new business potential even when the analysis indicates oversupply of retail space. There could be unmet needs for particular consumer preferences, store format, product line or price range. Specific market study for a particular business is necessary. Indeed there may be a need to add stores to an area with a high capture rate if the agglomeration/clustering of retail create a strong drawing power from outside the usually defined trade area.
1.4 Public Services

The study area is served by the following public services:

- **Hixson Post Office:** 5024 Hixson Pike by Northgate Mall

- **Library:** Northgate Branch by Northgate Mall

- **Firehalls:**
  - Station #19: 5400 Brunswick Lane near Central Baptist Church
  - Station #22: 6144 Dayton Blvd.
  - Station #16: 3423 Lupton Dr. near Lupton City
  - Dallas Bay Volunteer Fire Station No. 1: 7325 Middle Valley Rd.

- **Police:**
  - City of Chattanooga – Sector 1, Alpha Zone
  - Hamilton County – West Sector

- **Hospital:** Memorial North Park Hospital, 2051 Hamill Road.

- **Schools:** The area also contains several public schools and private schools. The public schools in or adjoining the study boundary are: Hixson Elementary, Middle and High Schools, and Alpine Crest, Big Ridge, DuPont and Rivermont Elementary Schools. Berean Academy, St. Peter’s Episcopal and St. Jude are the local private schools. The public schools in the area are all below their total capacity limit according to data obtained from the Hamilton County Board of Education for the 2001 school year. The graph above demonstrates that
each of the facilities has room to enroll more students before its total capacity level is met. These trends may indicate a need to consolidate school facilities.

- **Parks and Open Space:** The Hixson-North River Community Plan study area contains several community parks: North Chickamauga Greenway and Greenway Farm, Rivermont Park, and Vandergriff Park. These park facilities provide almost 500 acres of park and open space. The North Chickamauga Creek Greenway is managed by the City of Chattanooga and includes Greenway Farm and two miles of pedestrian/bicycle trails, canoe access points, a picnic pavilion and a park area. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) designated a portion of its land that borders the City-owned Greenway property as a Small Wild Area. This area is a State Natural Area and Urban Wildlife Sanctuary.

Rivermont Park is a 61-acre park containing picnic pavilions, a walking trail, tennis courts, a boat ramp, four ball fields and a handicap-accessible playground. The Champions Club, at Rivermont Park, is a full-service public tennis facility. It contains 26 hard tennis courts, a large clubhouse and a pro shop.

Vandergriff Park, located near Hixson Middle School, is the area’s newest park that provides picnicking, walking, and playground equipment for both physically challenged and able-bodied children.
Recently, a new pool opened at the North River Family YMCA. YMCA, in conjunction with the City of Chattanooga, offers this aquatic facility to non-YMCA members. Non-members can pay a daily fee for use of the pool and may attend aquatic classes at the facility.

Area schools provide limited recreational facilities often in the form of walking tracks and playgrounds.

Located just outside the study area is Chester Frost Park. This beautiful park offers fishing on Lake Chickamauga along with swimming, picnicking and boating facilities. Chester Frost also maintains a full-service campground and provides a variety of programs year-round.

1.5 Environment

The Hixson-North River area is bounded by the Tennessee River and Chickamauga Lake to its south and east. North Chickamauga Creek enters the study area along Hwy. 27 and winds its way through Middle Valley and Hixson before entering the Tennessee River below Chickamauga Dam. The creek drains approximately 120 square miles of land and is one of the main local tributaries of the Tennessee River.

Big Ridge’s steep topology (represented by the closely spaced red 50’ contour lines on the map) is a feature of the landscape from the dam to Gold Point Circle. The western side of the ridge has little development on it but the eastern side (east of...
Fairview Rd.) is slightly less sloped and is quite developed.

The 100 and 500-year floodplains comprise about 1/5 of the total study area. The floodplain (depicted in dark blue in the map) generally runs along the creek. Much of the flood-prone land is in the form of large, undeveloped parcels of land, some of which are protected as part of the North Chickamauga Creek Greenway. Those parcels that are developed tend to have low-intensity uses such as a driving range, golf course, or farm.

Cave Springs, the second largest spring in East Tennessee, is the withdrawal point for the Hixson Utility District.

1.6 Transportation

A major component of the Hixson-North River Community Plan is the transportation system, which is essential for the movement of people and goods and the economic vitality of the community. The major arterials, which serve the area, are Hixson Pike and State Route 153. The traffic flow on both of these arterials is highly directional. On weekday morning, approximately 70 percent of the traffic is southbound towards downtown Chattanooga and in the afternoon, the flow is reversed. A major concern of citizens and the Leadership Committee has been the traffic congestion that motorists experience during these times of commuting as well as during the weekday noon periods.

Because of these traffic concerns and the importance of having a viable transportation system, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency under the guidance of the Leadership Committee employed Volkert and Associates, Inc., a transportation engineering firm, to investigate the operating capacity of these two major arterials.
Eleven critical intersections were analyzed to determine the level of traffic service at each intersection. The operating capabilities of these intersections determine the overall functional service of these arterials. Volkert determined that overall along Hwy 153, two signalized intersections are operating at 75 percent or more of their capacities (Hwy 153 at Hamill Rd. and Hwy 153 at DuPont Parkway). One signalized intersection along Hixson Pike (Hixson Pike at Northpoint Blvd.) is operating at a level above 75 percent. This threshold of 75 percent is considered a significant congestion problem. The consultants also looked at the operating conditions at these intersections for each direction – northbound and southbound and approaches to several intersections were operating at 90 percent and more of their capacities.

In addition to the analysis of these signalized intersections, two unsignalized intersections were investigated – Hwy 153 at Dayton Blvd. and Hwy 153 at Hixson Pike. The level of service at the intersection of Hwy 153 at Dayton Blvd. is good, except that the intersection does not accommodate all turning movements (such as northbound on Hwy 153 to southbound Dayton Boulevard). Finally, the operating conditions at some of the on-ramps and off-ramps at the intersection of Hwy 153 at Hixson Pike are at a high level of congestion during peak hours.
Public participation is vital to the overall success of any plan. From the outset, organizations and community groups were identified and solicited to help with the public involvement effort. Over 100 organization directors from schools, religious affiliations, government, social clubs, senior centers, and businesses were contacted and asked to act as dissemination points for citizen announcements, questions, and general plan information. Of those organizations approximately 80% agreed to the request. To ensure coverage of the whole community, RPA staff sent invitation cards to every property owner within the study boundary. In addition a Leadership Committee of area stakeholders was formed to provide additional input and feedback.

Public meetings were broken into two series of workshops: “Visioning” and “Strategy Building”. To make it convenient for area stakeholders to participate, two sessions for each workshop were held on two different dates and locations. The visioning sessions focused on the identification of issues and generation of ideas that would improve their community. Over 300 people attended the visioning sessions and helped generate over 500 ideas. These ideas were crafted into over 75 goals and a series of vision statements. Participants in the next round of strategy sessions voted on the goals and vision statements to help set priorities. Focus groups, organized by topic, were assembled to begin developing strategies to accomplish each goal. Focus groups were comprised of professionals, active community citizens, and representatives of local/state/federal governments in areas related to commercial business, community/social centers, transportation,
Over 85% of the phone survey respondents supported a Town Center for the Northgate area and would visit it regularly if it were built.

99% of the phone survey respondents supported protection of the North Chickamauga Creek Watershed.

Following the public workshops, RPA staff met with the Leadership Committee to provide additional feedback and guidance. A draft plan was then detailed and presented at a final public meeting on May 20th, 2002.

2.1 Phone Survey

The RPA contracted with an independent professional surveying firm, to conduct a phone survey of households in the study area. The purpose of the survey was to provide a statistical “measuring stick” to compare with the feedback from public meetings. Over 380 households responded to the survey providing a 95% confidence level for the results. The general feedback was that area residents feel that the Hixson-North River area is a great place to live and perceived it to have a positive future. The only area that expressed less positive comments about their living environment were the areas in the north western quadrant of the study area along the northern sections of Highway 153. These areas were experiencing the greatest growth pressures from commercial development along Highway 153 and had a lack of public amenities such as parks. Residents consistently (over 85%) supported a Town Center in the Northgate area and would visit it regularly if it were built. Residents also supported protection of the North Chickamauga Creek watershed (95%). Residents (96%) felt that the economic prosperity of area businesses was important to them, and over 90% of residents shopped within the study area. Finally, residents (95%) agreed that new
commercial development should have a coordinated appearance with the community and provide buffering.

2.2 Business Survey & Focus Group results

RPA also conducted a business survey and a focus group meeting to gather local business perceptions about their community. From the focus group meeting, area business owners cited the following strengths of the study area: convenience, safety, growth environment, community environment, away from congestion of the Hamilton Place area, owners/operators live and work in the community, high quality of life, and loyalty of customers. They cited as challenges the following: lack of available land for businesses/industry, lack of trained workers, perception that codes/plans review staff try to hinder more than help, lack of information in regards to new ordinances, quality of education, flood zone areas, lack of maintenance in and around strip centers, parking in strip centers is limited, and congestion around Northpoint Boulevard/Hixson Pike. Focus group participants identified two key strategies to improve their business environment: 1) Improve accessibility - Extend Northpoint Boulevard to Adams Road; extension of DuPont Parkway and tie back into Northpoint Boulevard; and 2) continue to support growth in the area.

Business Survey

Forty-two businesses responded to the mail survey. Almost all of the respondents (90%) are somewhat or very satisfied with the level of community services in the area. However, they are less satisfied with roads and sidewalks, 21% not satisfied, 67% somewhat satisfied. It is interesting that more than half of the respondents (62%) are not concerned that additional traffic would affect adversely on their business. The respondents listed “Traffic flow improvements” as the most important strategy to enhance business in the area, following by “Clean up of trash and litter in the area” as the second. “Landscaping along major streets”, “The availability of a Fiber Optics network”, “The location of a police precinct in the area” and “Availability of an appropriate workforce” tied for the third top priority.

More than half of the respondents (56%) rated that physical appearance of the business area good, while 34% felt it was fair, only 7% considered excellent. As for assets to their business, a very large majority (74%) believe that it is very important to maintain the natural beauty of the area, 43% in streetscape – street
trees and lighting, 29% in sidewalks and pedestrian connections, 24% in shuttle service, 5% in biking facilities.

Regarding additional commercial development, over 80% of the respondents believe that continued expansion of commercial development along Highway 153 and Hixson Pike corridors would improve their business. More than half of the respondents think there should be the same level of business while 44% believe there should be more businesses. All of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that new business should have a coordinated appearance with the surrounding community. If tax incentives or other similar programs were available, 79% of the respondents would very likely or somewhat likely consider making improvement to update the appearance of their business.

Even though the business respondents were divided on the benefit of a Town Center on their business, they consistently agreed on the location, programs and facilities of a Town Center: a Town Center should locate within the Northgate Mall vicinity, should include a place and program for senior citizens and families; a place to walk and bike; and police precinct. Over 95% of the respondents believe that a Town Center should provide a public meeting place.

A majority of the respondents believed that business stayed the same in the past year. Nearly all of the businesses think positively about the future in Hixson- North River area and intend to stay in the same location for the next five years. Half of the businesses have plans to expand their business in three to five years. More than 60% of the respondents are willing to join a “local” merchants association.

In summary, the business community believes in continued growth of the commercial development along the Highway 153 and Hixson Pike corridors. There are mixed feelings about the level of growth – more businesses or not. They consistently agree on improving the traffic flow, the coordinated appearance of the business community, maintenance of nature beauty, street trees and lighting along major streets as the top strategies to enhance the business. They view a town center more as a community facility than an asset to their business.
Section 3: VISION STATEMENT/PRINCIPLES

3.1 Vision Statement

Every community has a destination or a direction, the challenge is being intentional about expressing it and working together to make it happen. A Vision Statement paints a picture of our desired destination. It forms the foundation for all strategies, goals, and principles outlined in the plan. It should be short and clearly communicate the “essence” of what a community is about and desires to be.

Area stakeholders have adopted the following vision for their community:

Hixson-North River Area Vision:
“to create a place that promotes community, accessibility and a high quality of life for all residents through planned growth that maintains a visually-attractive and cohesive built environment, convenient public facilities, strong businesses, and protection of the natural environment.”

3.2 Principles

Based on this vision statement, a set of principles are outlined that more specifically refine the vision statement. These principles embody the values expressed through the public meetings, focus group discussions, interviews and surveys. They provide the “value framework” for the plan.

Principle: “Community” is important.

Survey respondents, public meeting participants and leadership committee members consistently express that the number one quality they enjoy the most about their area is the “community atmosphere”. What is “community atmosphere”? It has to do with the small-town atmosphere of strong social relationships and a shared identity with an area’s history. It’s about being able to pull up to a small store and seeing someone you know, and strike up a conversation on the spot. How do you promote “community”? By investing in community-building infrastructure: providing regular public events, preserving your history, creating public gathering places, fostering opportunities for informal communication, and maintaining high quality public schools and libraries.
**Principle: Continue to accommodate growth, through good planning and design.**

Area stakeholders embrace growth, provided it is well-planned and designed. “Good” growth should help realize this vision. It should promote harmony with adjoining properties through control of access, building scale/design, landscaping/buffering, and control of runoff. Good growth should protect and enhance natural assets. Finally, good growth should promote community by incorporating community-building amenities such as parks, sidewalks and a mix of uses.

**Principle: Infrastructure should lead development.**

In addition to good planning and design it is necessary that infrastructure should lead development, not vise versa. Infrastructure should at a minimum accommodate existing development and be further improved prior to any new development.

**Principle: Maintain an attractive and vibrant business environment.**

Healthy businesses are an important part of the area stakeholders’ quality of life. We need to pursue opportunities to strengthen the position of existing businesses and create opportunities for new entrepreneurs to locate in the Hixson area. Having a business-friendly local government and community environment is crucial to the area’s success.

**Principle: Natural amenities, such as North Chickamauga Creek, woodlands and hillsides are an important part of the community’s identity and quality of life.**

From the community’s beginning as a small rail stop, natural features have shaped the lives of its residents. Events such as fishing or swimming in North Chickamauga Creek, exploring a forested ridge or looking out that incredible vista from their doorstep are a big part of who they are; they want them to be a part of their children’s identity too. It’s what makes the Hixson-North River area unique. It’s one of the reasons they call this area home. These amenities should therefore be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

**Principle: Maintain and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods.**

The Hixson-North River area is known for its livable neighborhoods. Area residents want to ensure livability is maintained as the area grows. When new development takes place, priority should be placed on ensuring the protection of existing neighborhoods from any impacts. In addition, to improve livability accessibility to public services such as parks, sidewalks, transit, police and fire should be improved.
Section 4: PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction: Community Building Blocks

The plan recommendations are divided into six topics which represent the key building blocks of a community: neighborhoods, commercial centers, parks and open space, streets, natural environment and community buildings. To create a healthy, vibrant community that fully realizes its vision, all of these elements must be addressed and work in concert together. Think of all the things you might do during the course of a week that affect your quality of life: you live in a house or apartment in a neighborhood, you go to work, you shop for your week’s needs, you go out for a movie or nice dinner, you go to the park to exercise or just sit and enjoy watching people, you go to school. These are just a sample of the things you might do every day that have a significant impact on your quality of life.

COMMUNITY ELEMENTS

Think about how any one of these “tasks” might affect your quality of life if they become more difficult: what if your neighborhood was not as safe or comfortable to live in? what if your trip to your job became more difficult? what if your favorite store near your neighborhood closed? what if you had no convenient park to go to? These are just a few examples of what can go wrong without a clear community plan. The purpose of the plan recommendations is to ensure that all the community building blocks work together to improve the quality of life for area businesses and residents.
4.1 COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Commercial centers represent the places where we work and shop. They include major employers in business, technology, and industrial sectors. While all commercial development is market driven, the purpose of the plan is to guide where and how this development occurs. Most area stakeholders expressed concern over the visual quality and physical impacts of uncontrolled commercial development on adjacent neighborhoods. Stakeholders also expressed a desire to retain existing businesses and promote future job growth. Public input tells us that communities are generally satisfied with the services that their commercial centers provide. Problems typically arise when commercial and residential areas grow closer to each other. What provisions can be made to ease the transition between residential and non-residential? What effect will potential development have on surrounding property values? The following is a summary of commercial development goals and strategies.

The following list of goals derived from community input at public meetings.

- Improve the appearance and control impacts of commercial development.
- Incorporate community amenities into commercial development.
- Concentrate or cluster commercial development as opposed to strip development.
- Increase the variety and quality of places to shop and to eat.
- Re-use vacant commercial buildings.
- Renovate and revitalize existing commercial areas.
- Increase opportunity for more high-quality jobs and business growth in the area.

Goal #1 Improve the appearance and control impacts of commercial development

Survey respondents and public meeting participants consistently expressed concern about the litter and visual blight of the area’s commercial thoroughfares, and the lack of adequate buffering where commercial areas abut neighborhoods. Commercial thoroughfares are the gateways to area communities and neighborhoods; they are the first thing visitors see. In order to attract quality jobs, business patrons and residents, you must have a visual “welcome mat” that is appealing to them. Finally, the impacts of commercial development on public infrastructure such as roads and drainage systems should also be addressed.

Strategies:

- Increase code enforcement for trash and litter pick-up.
• Create a local beautification program sponsored by area businesses to promote landscaping and clean business sites.
• Target streetscaping (street trees, pedestrian lights) in core business locations such as Ashland Terrace-Hixson Pike, Northgate Area, and the section of Hixson Pike between Cassandra Smith Road and Bay Ridge Road.
• Develop a gateway beautification project for the Hixson Pike-Highway 153 interchange.
• Adopt better code standards for Commercial Development - This would address storm water drainage, landscaping, specify building type and size, sign specifications of commercial developments.
• Require new commercial development to include street and infrastructure improvements to address any impacts.
• Adopt a Site Plan Review Process- This would ensure that all the code standards and impacts are systematically addressed on the site.
• Reduce the amount of curb-cuts through organized development efforts to enable controlled access and avoid excessive and dangerous turning motions.

Goal #2  
Incorporate community amenities into commercial development

New commercial development, particularly larger commercial centers, create opportunities for incorporating important community building amenities such as parks, plazas, sidewalks, community buildings and bike trails.
Strategies:

- Pedestrian corridors with safe sidewalks or paths should be provided for people who choose to walk or ride bicycles from one business to another or from one commercial center to another.

- Search for opportunities to incorporate trails/parks into buffer areas and within the main commercial site itself.

**Goal #3  Concentrate or cluster commercial development as opposed to strip development**

Commercial nodes are recommended over strip development. Strip development is defined as continuous stretch of commercial retail development without any defined breaking point, containing multiple curb cuts and having very little change of land use. Strip development significantly reduces the ability of roads to handle traffic due to all the turning movements. Strip development can negatively affect property values due to lack of amenities, visual clutter, and poor economic sustainability. Finally strip development has the most potential damaging impact to natural features by obscuring views and providing no break in paving.

Alternatively, commercial nodes maximize opportunities for amenities (sidewalks, landscaping, open spaces) and long-term economic sustainability by having a more geographically defined location where goods and services are available. More definable access points also increase the operating efficiency of adjoining roads. Commercial nodes also increase opportunities to locate “community” assets such as libraries, schools, cultural facilities, community meeting places, and government centers into higher

*It may become necessary in the future to reexamine the recommended land use along Hwy 153 and Hixson Pike to ensure the continued success of the Hixson-North River Community. Adequate infrastructure, site design, and traffic and market study will be vital components for any rezoning request.*
density nodes. These nodes of higher density development should be interspersed with stretches of low-moderate intensity land uses along the suburban strip. This creates pulses of development with peaks and troughs of commercial activity that will feed new life into suburban strips.

Strategy

- Define specific locations for commercial development in the Land Use Plan.

**Goal #4  Increase the variety and quality of places to shop and to eat**

Having a variety of shopping and dining choices greatly enhances the quality of life for its residents, and increases the area’s regional draw as a destination. While the Hixson-North River area does provide good shopping and dining opportunities, survey responses and public meeting participants indicate that there is room for improvement.

Strategies

- Develop new commercial nodes to increase shopping/eating experiences.
- Utilize the resources of the local Hixson Chamber and local developers/realtors to recruit new shopping/eating establishments to existing commercial areas.
- Take advantage of the Northgate Town Center concept (see Community Buildings Section) to recruit new stores.

**Goal #5  Re-use vacant commercial buildings**

Re-occupation of existing vacant “big boxes” should be a priority. At the date of this writing, several of the most notable empty boxes are filling up: the “old” Walmart is being redeveloped with a hobby store and the vacated Goody’s store site is being redeveloped as a restaurant. In talking with area realtors, some sites have remained vacant due to the inability of the property owner and the prospective tenant to reach a financial agreement. Nonetheless, area community leaders should be vigilant in pursuing the occupation of these buildings due to the negative perception such voids create for the community.
Strategies:

- Form a task force of local realtors/developers to identify potential clients for existing empty buildings.
- Give tax incentives to businesses that renovate and redevelop vacant commercial areas.

**Goal #6  Renovate and revitalize existing commercial areas**

Revitalization of existing commercial centers should be encouraged to maintain economic viability. Where possible, revitalization should include a healthy mix of retail, office, public, open space and residential uses. To be effective, revitalization efforts for existing commercial centers should result in a substantial visual impact and involve funding partnerships between the property owners, merchants, local chamber, city and county. Centers targeted for renovation include Northgate Mall and Highland Plaza.

Strategies:

- At the initiation of the commercial center owner, form a redevelopment team consisting of the owner, local merchants, chamber and city/county to formulate a redevelopment program tailored to the development. Leadership of the owner will be key.
- Give tax incentives to businesses that renovate and redevelop vacant commercial areas.

**Goal #7  Increase opportunity for more high-quality jobs and business growth in the area**

Attracting new businesses and the retention and growth of existing business firms are important to the health of the region. From large manufacturers such as the DuPont complex to the small individually owned home office, Hixson hosts a large variety of business organizations that shape the overall health of the community. DuPont, RL Stowe, Chattanooga Group, Gold Bond, Card-Monroe and Vincent Printing are among the major employers in the study area.

The Hixson-North River area has several locational advantages and unique opportunities to foster more job growth. Hixson has rail access, direct access to interstate corridors via Highland Plaza.
US 27 and Highway 153, yet still maintains a “rural community” atmosphere. Only 3% of the Hixson study area is used for industrial purposes. The greatest constraint facing the Hixson area is a lack of available land suitable for industrial/business development – there are however a few notable exceptions. Potential sites for larger employers include the Adams Road area, the old Dixie Yarns property recently purchased by Blue Cross/Blue Shield and parcels of land around the DuPont industrial complex. Moving forward, successful recruitment/retention of jobs will hinge on the following strategies.

Strategies:

- Extend fiber-optics into the area to attract more employers.
- Create a “high-tech” business incubator facility.
- Create a satellite a community college campus in the Hixson area to provide a workforce training resource.
- Explore mutually supportive relationships among existing employers (purchasing, marketing, employee training, office support etc.).

4.2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The mission statement addresses “quality of life” and “protection of the natural environment” which is directly affected by quality and quantity of area’s natural resources such as water, vegetation, and wildlife. The Hixson-North River study area lies within the North Chickamauga Creek Watershed (shown right). Approximately 80% of that watershed is comprised of land within Hamilton County (about 1/3 is covered by this plan). Quality of any watershed is dependent on relationships between topography, vegetation, water flow, riparian habitat, development, and imperviousness.

Vegetation, water flow, and riparian habitat are largely impacted by the level of imperviousness. It is estimated that 8% of the Watershed is impervious and the target percent for protection of the primary stream, North Chickamauga Creek, is 10%. In respect to the Hamilton County portion of the North Chickamauga Creek Watershed this means approximately 1,239 acres of land is available for conversion to impervious cover. This does not reflect effects that may result regarding storm water and flood related issues.

Imperviousness is the sum of roads, parking lots, sidewalks, rooftops, and other impermeable surfaces in the urban landscape.
Within the City of Chattanooga, detention ponds installed & maintained to standard are eligible for a 25% discount in their storm water fee. Furthermore, if it includes a quality treatment aspect that removes 80% of the pollutants, you may be eligible for an additional 25% discount.
monitoring station located within the study boundary is Roger’s Branch near Valleybrook residential area. The mean flow rate at this station for the year 2001 was 1.92 just a little over the mean flow of 1.72 for the Mountain Creek area, a comparable location. A recent USGS flow study of North Chickamauga Creek Watershed indicated that water lost from impervious surface may be an important factor for adequate recharge of the Cave Springs ground water system. Additional information may be obtained at http://water.usgs.gov.

Flooding, a result of a high impervious surface to seepage ratio is high volumes and speed of water in areas that would not naturally receive these situations. Well-planned developments can reduce overall effects of runoff via landscaping, protection of steep slopes, creation of detention ponds, and the use of alternative building materials such as pervious asphalt. Control of unnatural flooding is difficult and costly. Within the Hixson-North River study boundary there are several neighborhoods currently experiencing recurrent flooding. Two examples are the new Old Stage Run Subdivision located off Cassandra Smith road and Valleybrook homes just off Hixson pike.

Strategies:

- Create steep slope ordinance and strengthen landscape ordinances.
- Partner with Storm Water Management departments in providing storm water planning and to improve the storm water detention requirements.
- Provide incentives for developers willing to use environmentally friendly development practices (such as preserving open space, landscaping with native vegetation, providing abundance of trees, and reduction of environmental impact).
- Create site review policy for a new resource conservation land use code.
- Encourage cost/benefit/results studies by UTC graduates students for presentation to city/county elected officials.

**Goal #2  Protect Floodplain and Woodlands (watershed) Along Streams, Particularly North Chickamauga Creek**

Erosion, another effect of increased runoff, most often occurs along stream banks where larger volumes of water rush in flooding the area and washing away vegetation, soil, and sediment. The vegetation, soil, and sediment carried away are deposited downstream resulting in turbidity, flow blockage, and increases in organic materials that affect fish activities and may cause additional flooding. Vegetation along streams, rivers, and creeks is essential in maintaining a healthy water channel and providing necessary habitat for animals.
and water dependent plants. Riparian corridors also create excellent opportunities for bird watching and low-impact hiking. As seen above, clear-cuts to the natural landscape during development of slopes can create additional erosion and storm water concerns.

Woodlands are an extremely important benefit to communities because of their unique ability to clean the air and absorb heat. Roof tops, parking lots, and streets greatly contribute to a phenomenon known as the Urban Heat Effect. Such concentrations of high temperature can cause increases in air pollution and dramatically alter weather patterns. Studies show tree cover greatly reduces high temperatures. In addition trees help to reduce unnatural flooding.

Strategies

- Encourage multi-partner efforts to buy tracts of land along the creek.
- Create riparian protection zones.
- Create a resource conservation land use code and zone to protect healthy woodlands.
- Provide incentives for developers willing to utilize existing vacant structures and use environmentally friendly development practices (i.e. planting of trees, alternative building materials).

### 4.3 NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods are the places where we live. They include single-family subdivisions, apartment buildings, retirement communities and townhomes. A healthy community should provide a variety of housing opportunities. From the public meetings and survey responses, area stakeholders identified a need for more starter family and retirement housing. Participants also mentioned concerns about the impacts from commercial encroachment and uncontrolled animals. The foundation for any neighborhood improvement is to form a neighborhood association to pool resources and strategically focus work efforts.
Based on this feedback, the following goals were crafted:

- Beautify our neighborhoods
- Make our neighborhoods more pedestrian-friendly
- Buffer neighborhoods from commercial areas
- Better leash-law, animal controls
- Promote underground utilities
- Limit cell towers in neighborhoods
- Create younger home owner and senior housing opportunities (townhomes, retirement centers, small lot housing)

### Goal #1 Beautify our neighborhoods

Maintaining a neat and orderly appearance in our neighborhoods is important to maintain livability and property values. The following strategies can be employed to ensure neighborhood cleanliness:

**Strategies:**

- Apartments/Duplexes along Ely Road – investigate potential building code violations.
- Create a neighborhood association if one does not currently exist.
- Establish an annual neighborhood “clean-up” day in coordination with the annual community-wide “Sparkle Day” organized by the Scenic Cities Beautiful Commission.
- Inform area residents about what the housing code requires and partner with local government staff on reporting and enforcement.
- Investigate opportunities to increase fines for litter abuse.

### Goal #2 Make our neighborhoods more pedestrian-friendly

Walkability is important to having a livable neighborhood. High quality neighborhoods should provide opportunities to walk in and around the neighborhood. Off-road paths and sidewalks should be incorporated in every neighborhood where topography makes it feasible.
Strategy:

- Incorporate sidewalks/pedestrian paths in new subdivisions, unless topography makes it impractical.

**Goal #3  Buffer neighborhoods from commercial areas**

Existing neighborhoods bordering commercial areas should not be subjected to the visual blight, noise or light pollution. Such impacts affect the livability and thus the property value of these neighborhoods.

Strategy:

- New commercial developments, particularly large scale “big box” developments, should provide substantial vegetative buffers to mitigate scale, noise and light impacts they generate. The landscape ordinance should be amended to increase buffer width and planting density requirements.

**Goal #4  Better leash-law, animal controls**

Public meeting participants and survey respondents particularly noted problems with uncontrolled pets.

Strategy:

- Investigate the current city/county code requirements for animal control and improve if necessary.

**Goal #5  Promote underground utilities**

Underground utilities are not required as part of the subdivision/zoning code. Rather than mandating underground utilities, incentives should be created through the Electric Power Board to encourage this practice.

**Goal #6  Limit cell towers in neighborhoods**

The recent proliferation of cell towers in Chattanooga and Hamilton County prompted both local governments to create a set of standards and a review procedure for approval. Since these new code requirements have recently been adopted, the plan recommends
monitoring the situation to see if the new code requirements (which discourage location of cell towers in established neighborhoods) will work.

Goal #7 Create younger home owner and senior housing opportunities

In order to promote more first-time home buyer and senior housing opportunities, there will need to be more sites zoned for smaller housing units such as townhomes, flats and retirement facilities. This can be accomplished by designating potential sites in the Land Use Plan.

Strategy:

- Designate areas within the study area for senior housing/starter homes in the Land Use Plan.

4.4 PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Parks and open spaces are the “green spaces” and physical facilities we use to play informal and organized sports, to walk or ride a bike, or simply to relax for a picnic in. As noted in the assessment section, the Hixson-North River community is well-endowed with park spaces with a few exceptions. The key objective is to work towards creating connections across the park and open space network, realizing its full potential. The following list of goals came out of the series of community meetings. The goals are listed in order of importance as determined by the community.

- Extend the greenway along the north shore of the Tennessee River connecting Chickamauga Dam with Rivermont Park
- Better utilize existing parks- publicize park locations and programs
- Complete the extension of the North Chickamauga Creek Greenway
- Create a regional system of trails using North Chickamauga Creek as the spine
- Create more bike paths
• Provide more neighborhood parks/playgrounds throughout the area
• Create a soccer field complex

Many of these goals reflect an interest in seeing the completion of proposed plans and projects. If available, updated information regarding the completion of certain projects has been included.

**Goal #1   Extend the greenway along the north shore of the Tennessee River connecting Chickamauga Dam with Rivermont Park**

The current plan shows completion of the greenway expansion along the north shore in 2005. Not all of the land is in “public ownership” at this time- the City portion will allow for trails to be built while the other portions are still privately owned.

Strategy:

• Work in cooperation with the private land-owners, the City and County to provide funding for the project in upcoming budgets.
Goal #2  Better utilize existing parks and publicize park locations and programs:

Both the City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County Parks and Recreation departments have good, easy-to-use websites listing park locations and programs. (www.chattanooga.gov and www.hamiltontn.gov) City parks and programs are also advertised on cable Channel 3. Hamilton County Parks & Recreation introduced a brochure in fall 2001 listing the programs, special events and facilities provided by that department. The current guide (March 2002-August 2002) is the second of such pamphlets and is currently being distributed through certain schools. The County’s parks department is exploring a potential increased distribution of the pamphlet in the future and should be encouraged in expanding that distribution.

Strategy:

- Seek to utilize local churches, neighborhood and other civic organizations such as the Chamber to advertise park facilities and programs.

Goal #3  Complete the extension of the North Chickamauga Creek Greenway

Currently the North Chickamauga Creek Greenway extends from Lake Resort Drive along the Creek, wraps around Greenway Farm and ends just to the north of that facility. The City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County should continue in partnership with nonprofit organizations regarding the further development of the existing greenway system. Additionally, the City and County’s acquisition of easements and property facilitates growth of the system. An obvious partner is the North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy. Instrumental in the development of the current greenway, one of this organization’s projects is the extension of the Greenway along the length of North Chickamauga Creek. The Conservancy may be reached online at www.northchick.org.

Strategy:

- Continue the ongoing partnership between the City of Chattanooga, Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, and the North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy to identify, acquire and fund improvements to the greenway system.
**Goal #4  Create a regional system of trails using North Chickamauga Creek as the spine**

The Mountain Creek Greenway was recently added to the City’s Greenway Master Plan. The proposed greenway (running along the northwest portion of the study area) will provide walking trails and recreational opportunities while linking apartment complexes, neighborhoods, schools and businesses in the Mountain Creek area. The greenway is tentatively proposed to extend from the Tennessee River and Baylor School northeast towards Hwy. 153 and potentially connect with the North Chickamauga Creek Greenway. This proposed greenway is another linkage in the comprehensive greenway system that is working to create a regional system of trails. Again, the City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County’s partnerships with the Trust for Public Land, North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy and other nonprofit organizations will encourage further implementation of the greenway system. The City and County should acquire easements or purchase property to facilitate and encourage further growth of that system.

**Strategy:**

- Continue the ongoing partnership between the City of Chattanooga, Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, and the North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy to identify, acquire and fund improvements to the greenway system.

**Goal #5  Create more bike paths**

The recently completed Chattanooga Urban Area Bicycle Facilities Master Plan proposes a variety of bike facilities- bike lanes and bike routes- for the Hixson-North River Area. Approximately 22 miles of bike facilities are proposed in the bike plan for the study area. This mileage does not include trails that could be developed within proposed and existing greenways.

**Strategy:**

- Implement the recommendations of the Chattanooga Urban Area Bicycle Facilities Master Plan.

**Goal #6  Create a soccer field complex**

The area’s soccer complex construction is to begin soon (potentially Spring 2002). The plan is for 4 soccer fields. The complex, which will include walking trails, is not designed to be regional but seen more as serving as a community/city park.
Strategy:

- Fund and build the Soccer Complex as defined in the Recreate 2008 Plan through the City of Chattanooga Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Dept.

**Goal #7  Provide more neighborhood parks/playgrounds throughout the area**

Throughout the public input sessions residents expressed a need for more neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Mini-parks or pocket parks are small neighborhood parks that are usually less than one acre. There are several parks of this type found in neighborhoods including Ramsgate and Bay Pointe Subdivisions. While some neighborhood’s parks are larger-scale, with tennis courts or even pools, this isn’t the only possibility. A small plot of land reserved for community members’ use may provide the type of opportunity that neighborhoods desire. Individuals, neighborhood organizations or other non-profit groups wishing to develop such parks may obtain professional guidance and consultation from the Chattanooga parks department, but ownership and maintenance is to be left to the developer of such park.

Chattanooga’s Park and Facilities Master Plan (Recreate2008) determined that public school sites, although owned by Hamilton County, could provide neighborhood park facilities to areas identified as deficient in access to recreation. Hixson Elementary, Big Ridge Elementary, DuPont Elementary and Hixson High School were schools identified in our study area as school facilities that could see dual-use as neighborhood parks. The key issue that must be resolved for the use of public school recreation facilities is reimbursement for increased maintenance costs due to community use.

A neighborhood park is recommended, in Recreate2008, for the area of Hixson west of Highway 153 and immediately north of Red Bank although there are currently no plans for development of that site. Again, the City of Chattanooga Parks, Recreation, Arts & Culture division is encouraged to begin the process of researching a site location for this area and present a timeframe of possible development of the park.
Strategies

- Partner with area public schools and churches to increase community access to on-site recreation and meeting facilities.
- Follow up with the Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Department to site a new neighborhood park in the northwestern quadrant of the Highway 153 as called for in the Recreate 2008 Plan.

4.5 TRANSPORTATION

As described in the Area Assessment of this plan, the major corridors of State Route 153 and Hixson Pike are near capacity for handling traffic through the core of the study area. The major cause of the capacity problem is due to through traffic during the morning and afternoon peak traffic hours and during the noon hour of the weekday. During these times the major trip purpose is the commuting work trip from home to work in the morning and then work to home in the afternoon. Therefore, the critical movement in the intersections along these corridors is the through trip.

Proposed improvements to ease right turn or left turn movements would not significantly improve traffic flow in Hixson-North River Community. Therefore, there are two major solutions to the traffic problem:

1. Increase the capacity of the existing roads and intersections.
2. Provide new road connections within the area to relieve the traffic congestion on the existing streets.

Other solutions that would address traffic flow as well as improve access to important traffic generators is the construction of sidewalks and bicycle facilities, the installation of enhancements to streets for safety and appearance, and the provision of transit services.

These solutions are in accordance with the following goals that were developed in public meetings held in the study area:

- Improve substandard roads and intersections
- Create alternate routes to relieve congestion
- Improve/eliminate railroad crossing on Hamill Road
- Add more sidewalks along major thoroughfares in neighborhoods
- Add bike lanes
- Add transit shuttle for the Northgate Area
The solutions generally described above can be obtained through actions outlined in the following recommendations:

**Goal #1 – Improve Substandard Roads and Intersections**

The most significant amount of work proposed by the plan involves improving existing substandard roads and intersections. These projects should be completed prior to any other major transportation projects in the study area.

**Strategies:**

- **Reconstruct the Intersection of Hwy 153 and Hixson Pike.**

  The most congested area as determined by the traffic study prepared by Volkert and Associates, Inc. is shown at right. This area includes the central commercial core from the intersection of DuPont Parkway at Hwy 153 to the intersection of Hixson Pike at Northpoint Blvd. Four of the eleven intersections that were analyzed by the Volkert study are in this area. Widening
of Hwy 153 and Hixson Pike in this area would be cost prohibitive and would impact negatively to existing businesses along these corridors. A more effective solution to the traffic congestion in this commercial core would be to reconstruct the intersection of Hwy 153 and Hixson Pike. Two alternatives for this reconstruction are a diamond interchange and a partial cloverleaf as shown below in figures 26 and 27.

- **Examine reconstruction of Hwy 153 from US 27 to Dayton Blvd.**

  This reconstruction would address traffic flow and congestion as well as improvements at the intersections of Hwy 153 at Dayton Blvd, Boy Scout Rd, and US 27.

- **Improve Signalized Intersections.**

  Through-traffic movements mainly caused traffic problems at the eleven analyzed intersections. To maximize operating efficiency, these intersections should be periodically evaluated to adjust signal phasing. Intersections where improvements should be made are as follows:

  1. State Route 153 at Gadd Road
  2. State Route 153 at Hamill Road
  3. State Route 153 at DuPont Parkway
  4. Hixson Pike at Middle Valley Road
  5. Hixson Pike at Northpoint Blvd.
6. Hixson Pike at Hamill Road
7. Hixson Pike at DuPont Pkwy
8. Install a closed loop system along Hixson Pike from Ashland Terrace to Adams Rd.
9. Develop a computerized traffic signal system along State Route 153 from DuPont Parkway to Grubb Road.
10. In accordance with a regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) (to be developed in the Spring and Summer of 2002) install surveillance cameras at strategic locations along Hixson Pike and State Route 153 for the purpose of controlling traffic during congested periods from a remote traffic management center. These cameras would also be used to detect traffic incidents as they occur and dispatch emergency vehicles more quickly to the scene of the incident.

- Improve Key Streets to Increase Capacity and Safety.

While additional widening of Hwy 153 and Hixson Pike would be very costly and disruptive to businesses, improving key streets and roads would increase the traffic carrying capacity of the street system, improve safety to motorists, and provide opportunities to add sidewalks and bike lanes. These streets/roads that should be widened include the following:

1. Middle Valley Road from Hixson Pike to Boy Scout Road (3 lanes with 10 foot shoulders)
2. Widen Ashland Terrace from Hixson Pike to the Red Bank City Limits (5 lanes with bike lanes and sidewalks)

Illustrative 5 lane Cross-Section

3. Widen and upgrade Northpoint Blvd. to meet city standards (5 lanes).
4. Widen Gadd Road from Norcross to State Route 153 (5 lanes)
5. Improve Hamill Road from Hixson Pike to Highway 153 (2 lanes w/ sidewalks, curb/gutter, culverts)
Goal # 2  Design and Construct New Roads to Serve as Alternate Traffic Routes to Relieve Traffic Congestion on Existing Major Arterials.

In addition to improving substandard roads, creating new network options (while more costly) can make a substantial improvement in traffic flow conditions.

In particular, the plan recommends the extension of DuPont Parkway to connect with Hixson Pike somewhere between Northpoint Boulevard and Middle Valley Road.

Strategies:

- **Add to the Long-Range Transportation Plan a Proposed Extension of DuPont Parkway from State Route 153 to Hixson Pike with Connections to and around Northgate Center.**

  1. Upon completion of the Chattanooga Urban Area Origin and Destination Survey presently underway and a subsequent analysis to determine trip forecasting models, develop and test alternative alignments for an extension to DuPont Parkway to the north and east. These alignments would include connections to Northpoint Boulevard (and providing a new access to Northgate Mall) and/or to Cassandra Smith Road and/or to Hixson Pike near its intersection with Middle Valley Road.

  2. Upon determining the traffic carrying benefits of the various alternative alignments to the total network of streets within the Hixson- North River Community, select the most feasible alignment, determine cost estimates, and add the proposed improvement to the Chattanooga Urban Area Long Range Plan through review and approval of the Chattanooga Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

  3. Design and construct the DuPont Parkway Extension to “boulevard standards” with sidewalks, bike lanes, and streetscape features such as trees and decorative lighting.

- **During the interim between now and the completion of a DuPont Parkway Extension, explore minor connections and links to provide access to the Northgate Mall and/or Town Center and to relieve traffic congestion along State Route 153 and Hixson Pike within the vicinity of the commercial core now presently served only by these major arterials.**

  1. Explore the extension of Godsey Lane from Hamill Rd. to Hixson Pike at Northpoint Blvd. to provide access to Northgate Mall and to relieve congestion along Hwy 153 and Hixson Pike.
2. Explore potential links between parking areas that would encourage shoppers to park once and walk to various store through the utilization of sidewalks and pedestrian crossings within the shopping center.
3. Explore the location of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in context with the development of a higher density mixed-land use “town center” in the vicinity of the Northgate Mall.

**Goal #3**  
**Improve/eliminate railroad crossing on Hamill Road**

The extension of DuPont Parkway would do a lot to alleviate commuter congestion problems at the Hamill Road railroad crossing. Any changes to the railroad crossing would have to be approved by the Norfolk-Southern Railroad.

**Goal #4**  
**Add more sidewalks along major thoroughfares in neighborhoods**

To enhance the connectivity of existing Hixson-North River Neighborhoods with bordering destinations (schools, churches, and commercial centers), sidewalks should be added along strategic locations of the major collector roads. Some examples include Ashland Terrace from Ely Road to Hixson Pike, Hamill Road from the railroad crossing to Highway 153, and Hixson Pike between Cassandra Smith Road and Big Ridge Road. Many of these projects can be completed in conjunction with state widening projects.

Strategies:

- Complete sidewalks where designated on the Transportation Map
- Pursue funding support of sidewalk improvements through MPO funded transportation projects
Goal #5  Create more bike lanes

The recently completed Chattanooga Urban Area Bicycle Facilities Master Plan proposes a variety of bike facilities- bike lanes and bike routes- for the Hixson-North River Area. Approximately 22 miles of bike facilities are proposed in the bike plan for the study area. This mileage does not include trails that could be developed within proposed and existing greenways.

Strategy:

- Implement the recommendations of the Chattanooga Urban Area Bicycle Facilities Master Plan
Goal #6  Add transit shuttle for the Northgate Area

Transit services are currently provided along the Hixson Pike Corridor up to the Northgate area. Area stakeholders have expressed a need for a local shuttle service for shoppers in the Northgate area. In addition, they would like to see a small van provide a demand response neighborhood service.

Strategies:

- Explore the opportunity for a Northgate Shuttle route system
- Explore the development of a neighborhood-based demand response transit service

4.6 COMMUNITY CENTERS

Community centers are the places we gather for public/semi-public events or to receive public services such as the library, post office, schools, churches or other community facilities. Overwhelmingly public input has emphasized the need for a “Town” or “Community” Center located centrally in the study area. What does such a center mean in terms of services/function? Focus group discussions indicated need for a space to accommodate senior-citizen services and events, youth facilities, a public space to gather for community events, and a police precinct. Preliminary analysis indicates the Northgate area to be the best location for such a facility/development. Due to the cost associated with such an endeavor, it will require a full range of public/private, federal, state and local funding support to accomplish.

Participants also expressed concern over the physical condition of area schools, particularly Hixson Middle School. A system-wide physical assessment of all schools was recently carried out and did not single out Hixson Middle as a priority for physical rehabilitation. Based on feedback from the school’s teachers, principal and parents, there are substantial public safety and access issues with the Hixson Middle School.
The following goals were developed based on the input from public meetings:

- Create a community center complex that provides a senior center, teen center, local precinct, a park, and a gathering place to conduct public meetings and events.
- Expand and renovate the public library
- Improve the public school grounds and facilities
- Locate fire station on Big Ridge

Strategies:

- Northgate Town Center – partner with Northgate Mall, area property owners, the chamber, Senior Neighbors and other service providers to develop a "Hixson Town Center" near Northgate Mall. The library and post office should be upgraded as part of the effort. Other elements should include a park for public events and pedestrian walking trails connecting to Northgate Mall. A police precinct and other local government services may also be incorporated.

**CONCEPT ILLUSTRATION**

Vacant property behind existing post office

- Hixson Middle School – sponsor an independent architecture study to reassess the physical condition of the school.
- Expand and renovate the public library - the current library needs more books and departments (geneology, history, business) more technology – internet capabilities.
- Encourage development of fire station on Big Ridge.
Section 5: LAND USE PLAN UPDATE 2004

5.1 Plan Update

The Hixson-North River Plan has been tested by many commercial and residential rezoning requests since its adoption by the Chattanooga City Council in July 2002. At that time the plan recommended that it may be necessary in the future to reexamine the recommended land use along Hwy. 153 and Hixson Pike to ensure the continued success of the Hixson-North River Community. While minor changes have been made to the original text, the land use plan recommendations along those corridors, in addition to the rest of the plan area, have been examined and updated to reflect recent changes in land use patterns.

Several projects have either been completed, under construction or slated to begin since plan completion. These include:
- Corporate Image office complex
- North River Civic Center
- Proposed Target store with additional retail: 30 acres, 2 new traffic lights, and 300,000 sq. ft of new retail, development plan also includes 4 or 5 outparcels
- Stonewall Farm: 106 acres, residential subdivision with mixed single-family detached homes and townhouses
- Proposed Office Development (between Northgate ring road and Hamill Rd.)
- Bank and Office Development: Winding Lane at Hwy. 153
- Several new small strip commercial centers
- Oasis Office Park: Hamill Rd.
- North River Sports Barn: Hamill Rd.
- City of Chattanooga Soccer Fields: Access Rd.

Additionally, several rezoning requests have been denied or deferred.

This update will allow the Hixson-North River Community Plan’s Land Use Plan:
- To better meet plan principles
- To allow flexibility of land use categories
- To clarify intent of land use categories
- To provide a detailed analysis of certain focus areas
5.2 Plan Update Process

On September 14, 2004, Chattanooga City Council formally requested that the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency update the previously adopted Hixson-North River Community Plan. Following this request, an Open House was held at the North River Civic Center to gather input from community stakeholders regarding the proposed land use map updates and recommendations. A meeting with the Hixson Leadership Committee, which was formed during the initial plan development, provided additional feedback on proposed changes.

5.3 Land Use Plan

This updated plan, like the land use plan adopted in 2002 by City Council, incorporates the desired community vision, principles and goals into a future land use development pattern. It should serve as a guide to property owners for thinking through development strategies and local elected officials when reviewing rezoning proposals. Any potential change to the existing land use pattern, through a rezoning request, is contingent upon the applicant’s carefully designed site plan and collaboration with the Regional Planning Agency and other City departments to address the project’s impact on the surrounding area.

5.4 Reclassification

Through this update, many properties receive a different land use category from the 2002 plan. The community plan’s revised categories and changes are meant to be broad enough to give the public flexibility in implementation. They are also intended to be clear enough to provide local officials sufficient direction in making informed decisions to be protective of the area. The map now shows classifications for the highest recommended uses for particular areas. The revisions to the Hixson - North River Community Plan should remove any potential ambiguity from the original plan although more than one zoning district may be consistent with a single land use classification. Changes to revised categories include:

- Parks/Open Space/Recreation:
  Recreation areas like Creeks Bend and Valleybrook golf courses and the Girls Preparatory School athletic fields have been removed from the Parks / Open space / Recreation land use category because such areas are privately owned and could potentially be redeveloped in the future. The same holds true for institutional buildings not owned by the government. Also, the demarcation of the proposed North Chickamauga Creek Greenway follows the center of the creek since the process of plan design and site acquisition is ongoing.

- Medium/High Density Residential:
  The Medium / High-Density Residential use has been removed from the 2002 map because it is important to set appropriate uses and density now. There are areas with that category that may not be appropriate for a density of 10 units per acre or more. Areas marked “medium/high density residential” have been marked either Medium-Density Residential or High-Density Residential.

- Corridor Mix:
  The Corridor Mix land use category addressed the areas located along the travel corridors and between large commercial areas. Specifically it targeted areas along Dayton Blvd, Hixson Pike and Highway 153. A primary goal in the community plan is to “concentrate or cluster commercial development as opposed to strip development”. As evident from recent development activity and rezoning requests, it is necessary to now recommend a range of land uses that may be more appropriate. While the “corridor mix” land use category was intended for existing retail, most of the delineated areas are already zoned for commercial uses. Excluding further
commercial development in these areas that are by now substantially developed, could mean the potential loss of desirable projects and plans in the future.

The plan now classifies appropriate land use based on the following categories:

- **Low-Density Residential**
  Detached single-family dwellings dominate; some exceptions made for townhouses, patio homes and two-family dwellings if density is compatible.

- **Medium-Density Residential**
  Single-family dwellings, townhouses, patio homes, two, three and four family dwellings if density is compatible.

- **High-Density Residential**
  Single family dwellings, townhouses, patio homes, two, three, four and multi-family dwellings.

- **Light Business Mix**
  Neighborhood Commercial, Office, Limited Residential, or similar uses.

- **Medium Business Mix**
  Convenience Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Office, Residential, or similar uses

- **Heavy Business Mix**
  Convenience Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Region-Serving Planned Commerce Center, Office, Residential, Light Industry, Warehouse, Wholesale, or similar uses.

- **Office**
  Offices only.

- **Office / Residential**
  Offices, any residential

- **Heavy Industrial**
  Manufacturing & processing

- **Institutional**
  Government, Education, Religious Facilities, or similar uses.

### 5.5 Strategies

Although several land use categories have changed, the goals and strategies found in the current plan are still relevant. Input for the 2004 Update stressed the importance of several of the existing strategies to the community particularly in regards to site design and vehicular access. This update emphasizes applicable strategies by reiterating language developed in the 2002 plan:

- Reduce the amount of curb-cuts through organized development efforts to enable controlled access and avoid excessive and dangerous turning motions.

- Pedestrian corridors with safe sidewalks or paths should be provided for people who choose to walk or ride bicycles from one business to another or from one commercial center to another.

- Search for opportunities to incorporate trails/parks into buffer areas and within the main commercial site itself.
Excessive curb-cuts can be avoided though the consolidation of properties while vehicular and pedestrian access issues can be addressed with assistance from the Regional Planning Agency and City Traffic Engineer and County Engineer.

The following illustration depicts how an area now designated as Light Business Mix could develop:

Potential Expansion of **Light Business Mix** with the following provisions:
1. Consolidation of properties
2. 2 or 3 curb cuts
3. New traffic signal
4. Landscaped buffers
5. Pedestrian connections
6. Park
5.6 Focus Areas

This update addresses several focus areas. Often, these sites are caught between commercial development and the surrounding neighborhood and are often identified by developers for commercial expansion. The purpose of identifying each area individually is to develop a strategy to balance commercial demand while protecting existing neighborhoods.

Focus Area 1: Hamill Rd. at Godsey Dr.

The Bradington Park subdivision is currently bounded by the railroad track to the east, Hwy. 153 and commercial development to the west, and North Park Hospital and offices to the north.

The entire subdivision is recommended for Office District development as a complement to the hospital and the offices north of Hamill Rd. Also appropriate for this area is Medium Business Mix which will allow larger scale commercial development. However, any proposed rezoning for this area should only be considered for the entirety of the subdivision. This will help prevent piecemeal, non-residential development that would negatively impact the remaining residents.

Additionally, any potential development should provide a public street (concept shown here) connecting Dupont Parkway to Godsey Dr. This will help mitigate traffic impacts of the development on the already congested intersection at Hwy. 153 and Hamill Rd. However, the City Traffic Engineer should review all proposed road improvements.

Focus Area 2: Triangle at Hwy. 153, Hixson Pike and Hamill Rd.

This area, adjacent to Northgate Mall, is seeing the development of a new office park and sports club south of Hamill Rd. Surrounded by commercial development, many of the single-family residences in this area are impacted by an increased level of noise and traffic.

While this update is not recommending a specific land use for the residential portion of this "triangle", the Hixson-North River Community Plan acknowledges the pressure exerted on the residences by potential commercial developers.

As is the case of the Bradington Park subdivision, this area should be considered for rezoning(s) only if multiple property consolidations are involved.

One of the main goals in the Hixson-North River Plan is to develop commercial nodes. Nodes provide for long-term economic sustainability as well as providing more opportunities for amenities and more definable access points for vehicular traffic.

This update identifies a node suitable for expanded commercial development: the area centered on Hwy. 153 from US 27 to Dayton Blvd. Development of this area as commercial complements recommendations found in the Soddy-Daisy Comprehensive Plan for the properties north of the US 27 interchange. Within this general area, the site most sensitive to slope and greenway concerns, while providing good vehicular access, is south of US 27, west of Hwy. 153 and north of W. Boy Scout Rd. Development of this site could provide approximately 37 acres of new retail opportunities.

Another site in the same area, property east of Hwy. 153 and south of Boy Scout Rd, has been identified in the past for a potential commercial development. Due to the sensitive nature of that site regarding both environment and transportation, two options are being presented.

Focus Area 3: No Intersection Improvement

If no intersection improvements are made to the Dayton Blvd. / Hwy 153 interchange, the site is most appropriate for High-Density Residential. This relatively dense residential development will increase the traffic significantly at that intersection but not to the extent that a large commercial complex would.

Additionally, the smaller building footprints usually found in multi-family development would enable a building site that takes the steep slope into consideration and decreases the need for “cut and fill”.

Focus Area 3: Intersection Improvement

As the intersection of Hwy. 153 and Dayton Blvd. currently exists, the Heavy Business Land Use category is only appropriate if major intersection/interchange improvements (area shaded in gray on map) are undertaken by the developer. The amount of traffic generated by a large commercial development at this site is not only a traffic generating issue but also a congestion and safety issue on lateral streets such as Boy Scout Rd. and Sandswitch Rd.

Any interchange, intersection and access improvements will need to involve the City of Chattanooga Public Works Department and potentially the Tennessee Department of Transportation.
5.7 **Natural Environment**

The Resource Conservation classification has been taken off the land use map found in the original Hixson-North River Community Plan because it is not a land use category. However, the proper maintenance and preservation of the area’s natural and historic resources, specifically water quality and slope issues, must be taken into consideration when determining land use categories and rezoning requests.

All natural environment impacts should be considered with any proposed development. However, one area of particular concern in regard to potential development is the area around the US 27 and Hwy. 153 interchange (see Focus Area 3).
Focus Area 3: Intersection of Hwy. 153, US 27, Dayton Blvd., and Boy Scout Rd

The area surrounding the intersection of these roads has the potential for further development. However, this area is impacted by several environmental factors and includes a portion of the North Chickamauga Creek. Any development—whether as identified in this land use plan or in accord with the existing zoning—should take the protection of all floodway, floodplain and highly sloped areas (as identified on the map below) and the creek into consideration.

Additionally, this plan supports the implementation of the North Chickamauga Creek portion of the City of Chattanooga’s Master Greenway Plan. A greenway is a corridor of protected open space managed for conservation, recreation and non-motorized transportation. Greenways, as vegetated buffers, protect natural habitats, improve water quality and reduce the impacts of flooding in floodplain areas. Most greenways contain trails, as does the North Chickamauga Greenway, which enhance existing recreational opportunities, provide routes for alternative transportation, and improve the overall quality of life in an area. Any development along the creek should take into account the plans for the greenway and, if needed, provide for greenway expansion.