# MOUNT GILEAD
# MOVING AHEAD
## >>>>>> OUR TOWN 2040

## A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

SUMMER 2021

PREPARED FOR: The Town of Mount Gilead, NC

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

- ➲ Background and Purpose
- ➲ Planning Goals
- ➲ Process & Timeline

## BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

### WHY PLAN?

Mount Gilead Moving Ahead: Our Town 2040 is a comprehensive plan that charts a course for the next 20 years of Mount Gilead's future. A comprehensive plan helps guide decision-making for elected and appointed officials, town staff, and community leaders by defining a shared, long-range vision for the town's future and identifying specific policies that will achieve desirable and appropriate growth in alignment with the community's future vision.

New legislation codified in Chapter 160D of the North Carolina General Statutes requires municipalities with zoning to have an up-to-date comprehensive plan. Mount Gilead Moving Ahead updates and replaces Mount Gilead's 2009 Land Use Plan.

In addition to meeting a statutory requirement, there are several reasons why the town needs a Comprehensive Plan. Mount Gilead is experiencing a very slow, but steady population decline, a shifting economic landscape that presents new opportunities for non-traditional economic development, and a resurgence in community activism and investment in the downtown. These challenges and opportunities create the need for a plan that addresses the changing physical and economic landscape, prepares the town for new demands, and catalyzes the community to take steps toward achieving its desired future.

Mount Gilead's response to socioeconomic and environmental challenges will determine the town's, competitive position in the regional market, quality of life for residents, and overall community health for decades to come. The success of Mount Gilead will require bold leadership that is willing to take calculated risks by pursuing the innovative and transformational strategies proposed in this plan.

### THIS PLAN IS ORGANIZED INTO FOUR (4) CHAPTERS:

01  Town Profile
02  Community Engagement & Vision
03  Recommendations
04  Implementation

## PLANNING GOALS

Mount Gilead Moving Ahead: Our Town 2040 conveys a vibrant, long-range vision by articulating the community's desire for strategic growth while maintaining the town's historic character and authenticity.

Four (4) goals guided the comprehensive planning process:

- Define a shared vision for the future
- Identify a response to current challenges
- Anticipate future demands & opportunities
- Establish priorities for investing resources

## PLANNING PROCESS & TIMELINE

*Mount Gilead Moving Ahead: Our Town 2040* was developed over the course of a five-phase process with the collaboration of town staff, town commissioners, the planning board, and community stakeholders.

| 2019 | | 2020 | | | | | | | | 2021 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OCT. | NOV. | DEC. | JAN. | FEB. | MAR. | APR. | MAY | JUNE | JUL. | AUG. | SEPT. | OCT. | NOV. | DEC. | JAN. | FEB. | MAR. | APR. | MAY | JUNE | JUL. |

**DISCOVERY & DIRECTION SETTING**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS & TREND ANALYSIS**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VISIONING**

**DRAFT PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

**FINAL PLAN ADOPTION**

Project Kick-Off
Site Visits
Identify Key Issues
Review Existing Plans
Public Engagement Strategy

Demographic & Socioeconomic Research
GIS & Land Suitability Analysis
Draft Vision Statements
Draft Policy Goals

Project theme & brandmark
Project Promotions
Develop Supporting Visuals
Draft Future Land Use Map
Public Workshop (3/5/20)
Public Workshop (6/18/20)
Online Survey (6/15 – 7/31/20)

Develop Policy Recommendations
Finalize Supporting Visuals
Finalize Future Land Use Map
Document Layout
Plan Writing

Plan Presentation to Commissioners
Public Review & Comment
Final Revisions
Plan Adoption by Commissioners

# CHAPTER 1

## TOWN PROFILE

# HISTORY



### 11th Century CE

## PEE DEE INDIANS AT TOWN CREEK

The 11th century saw a new, distinct cultural tradition emerge in the Pee Dee River Valley in present-day North Carolina. The new indigenous culture, called "Pee Dee" by archaeologists, gave rise to multiple advanced societies. One such community settled the area approximately 3.5 miles southeast of present-day Mount Gilead at the confluence of Town Creek and the Little River. The Pee Dee Indians constructed an advanced community complex of earthen mounds to host ceremonies and events of spiritual and political importance. The Town Creek community flourished in trade and craft, and eventually moved to live with the Catawba Indians prior to the arrival of European settlers. In 1937, the Town Creek Indian Mounds became the first North Carolina State Historic Site and one of the only state historic sites dedicated to preserving indigenous heritage. The Town pays homage to these first inhabitants with a large mural.



### 1790s – 1850s

## PROVIDENCE SETTLEMENT

Present-day Mount Gilead was originally named Scarborough Meeting House after the first settler of European descent, William Scarborough, facilitated the construction of a log-hewn Methodist church on his land. Leaders of the First United Methodist Church re-named their community Providence in 1820. The post office was established in 1830 as the community gained prominence from the construction of a road linking Fayetteville to Salisbury that crossed through the center of the Providence settlement. Tradesmen and gold prospectors regularly traversed this road and local farms prospered from their new-found access to the large market city of Fayetteville. This period also witnessed the establishment of a prestigious private school called Edinborough Academy in present-day Mount Gilead.



### 1855 – 1930

## NEW CENTURY, NEW TOWN

In 1855, the community's name changed again - from Providence to Mount Gilead. Mount Gilead was surveyed and platted in 1868, and officially incorporated by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1899.

The community grew steadily during this time period, especially after completion of the railroad through Montgomery County in the 1890s. Highly accessible by both road and rail, the Town of Mount Gilead experienced an economic boom as a regional market town for cotton and produce. Numerous businesses and industries strategically located along rail and road corridors in the center of the town.

In the late 1920s, growing demand for electricity spawned the construction of the Tillery Hydroelectric Dam on the Pee Dee River. The hydroelectric plant was put into service in 1928 and formed Lake Tillery as it is known today.

The arrival of the Great Depression delivered a fatal blow to the cotton industry, a fate inflicted on many small towns across the Southeast. As cotton prices fell steadily, farmers transitioned their fields to other cash crops.



### 1930s – 1990s

## TEXTILE TRANSITION

In the second half of the 20th century, cotton's dominance was replaced by textile manufacturing as the supporting pillar of Mount Gilead's local economy. In a way, cotton remained crucial to the Town's well-being; but rather than growing the raw material, textile mills sprouted up throughout town to process it, many of them sock factories.

For sixty years, textile manufacturing was a prominent industrial sector across the state. In the early1990s, textile companies shifted production to overseas factories resulting in mass plant closings and layoffs throughout North Carolina. Mount Gilead was not spared from this reality and many textile mills shuttered their doors by start of the new millennium.

Despite economic ups and downs, this time period saw significant public investment in the area including the construction of the Mount Gilead Elementary and High Schools of which the auditorium and gymnasium remain today. Most notably, President Kennedy established the Uwharrie National Forest in 1961. Now a defining feature of the region, the 52,000-acre wilderness with hills rising 1000 feet from the Yadkin & Pee Dee Rivers provides a source for future economic vitality through recreation tourism.

Several notable Mount Gilead natives rose to prominence during the second half of the century including former Lieutenant Governor from 1985-1989, the late Robert B. Jordan III; and Julius Chambers, prominent civil rights attorney, former NC Central University Chancellor, and first African American editor of the law review at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law.



### 21ST Century

## MOVING AHEAD

Following the exodus of textile mills, lumber and timber quickly emerged as the primary engine of Mount Gilead's economy, taking advantage of the area's plentiful supply of pine forests. Today, several wood-processing and forest-product manufacturing companies call Mount Gilead home and employ over one-third of the town's workforce. One of the largest privately-owned timber companies in the nation, Jordan Lumber, has been operating in Mount Gilead since 1939. Nonetheless, a lack of service industry and professional careers has resulted in a very slow but steady population decline as high school graduates leave Mount Gilead for college or higher-paying jobs.

Despite this phenomenon, a shifting economic landscape and a resurgence in community activism and investment in the downtown positions Mount Gilead to capitalize on new opportunities for non-traditional economic development. In an emerging economy where remote-workers can live anywhere, the town is poised to leverage its charming downtown and proximity to Uwharrie National Forest and Lake Tillery to attract a new wave of residents and visitors.

# DEMOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC TRENDS

This section presents a series of infographics that provide an objective and factual overview of pertinent demographic and socio-economic data to establish a baseline of existing conditions in Pilot Mountain and Surry County today. This data also signals trends that are affecting or will affect the community and future growth patterns.

## POPULATION

Mount Gilead has experienced very slow, but steady population loss over the past two decades at a rate of -2.8%. However, twenty-year population projections for Montgomery County indicate equally incremental, but consistent positive growth. The Piedmont Triad region as a whole is projected to add over 400,000 residents during the same time period (2020-2040). If these trends continue, population change in Mount Gilead will likely remain neutral over the next 20 years. However, the Town is poised to attract its fair share of new residents if a concerted effort is put forth to invest in targeted infrastructure improvements and new economic development initiatives.

### MT. GILEAD POPULATION DECLINE 2010-2018

POPULATION

1,400 — 2000
1,181 — 2010
1,148 — 2018

YEAR

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH 2020-2038

POPULATION

28,085 — 2020
28,484 — 2025
28,881 — 2030
29,278 — 2035
29,517 — 2038
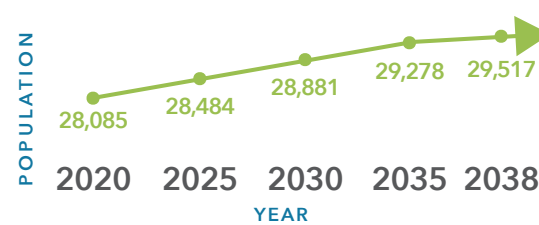
YEAR

IF THESE TRENDS CONTINUE, POPULATION CHANGE IN MT. GILEAD WILL LIKELY REMAIN NEUTRAL OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

## COMMUNITY COMPOSITION

Mount Gilead enjoys a diverse population that is much less homogenous than surrounding Montgomery County and the state of North Carolina as a whole. The town's population is roughly equal halves African American (47.9%) and Caucasian/White (50.4%). Mount Gilead is also home to a small, but established network of Laotian and Hmong families (1.2%).

### MT. GILEAD RACE & ETHNICITY

1.2%   0.5%
47.9%   50.4%

● White  ● African American  ● Asian  ● Pacific Islander

MOUNT GILEAD AVERAGE AGE

39

### AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION

8%
16%
18%
26%
13%
19%

● 0-9 yrs.  ● 10-19 yrs.  ● 20-34 yrs.  ● 35-54 yrs.  ● 55-64 yrs.  ● 65+
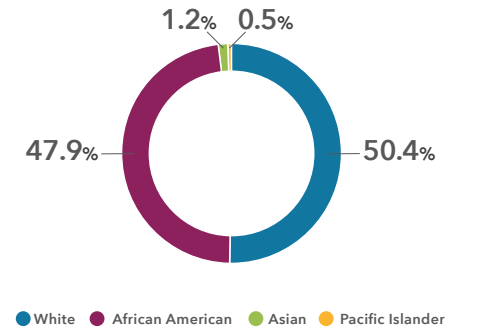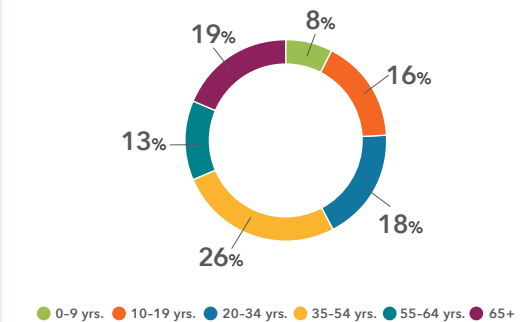
## AGE DISTRIBUTION

Age groups are fairly evenly distributed in Mount Gilead and consistent with age group composition for the state of North Carolina in general. The largest age group is 35-54 years old, representing 26% of the population. Mount Gilead's slow population loss has occurred across all age groups rather than one singular age bracket.

## MEDIAN RENT

$649
**Mt. Gilead**

$568
**Montgomery County**

$844
**North Carolina**

## MEDIAN HOME VALUE

$96,500
**Mt. Gilead**

$101,900
**Montgomery County**

$161,000
**North Carolina**

## HOUSING STOCK & OCCUPANCY

Approximately 79% of Mount Gilead's housing stock is occupied – a significantly higher occupancy rate than Montgomery County at 62.7%.

Mount Gilead's housing stock is aging. Over half of the Town's housing stock is over 50 years old (55.8%). High occupancy and aging housing stock signal a shortage of quality, affordable homes in absence of new construction. Additionally, Mount Gilead's home value is under $100,000 and significantly lower than the median home value of Montgomery County and North Carolina.

## COST BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of homeowners and 63.5% of renters in Mount Gilead are considered cost-burdened by their housing, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing and related costs such as utilities. Both figures for Mount Gilead are well above Montgomery County and North Carolina rates for cost-burdened households and indicate that rental housing is especially unaffordable for most households in town.

## PERCENT OF COST-BURDENED* HOME OWNERS VS. COST-BURDENED* RENTERS

**Mt. Gilead**

63.5%

39%

**Montgomery County**

52.7%

29.5%

**North Carolina**

48.7%

26.8%

**Renters**
**Homeowners**

*30% percent or more of monthly income spent on housing
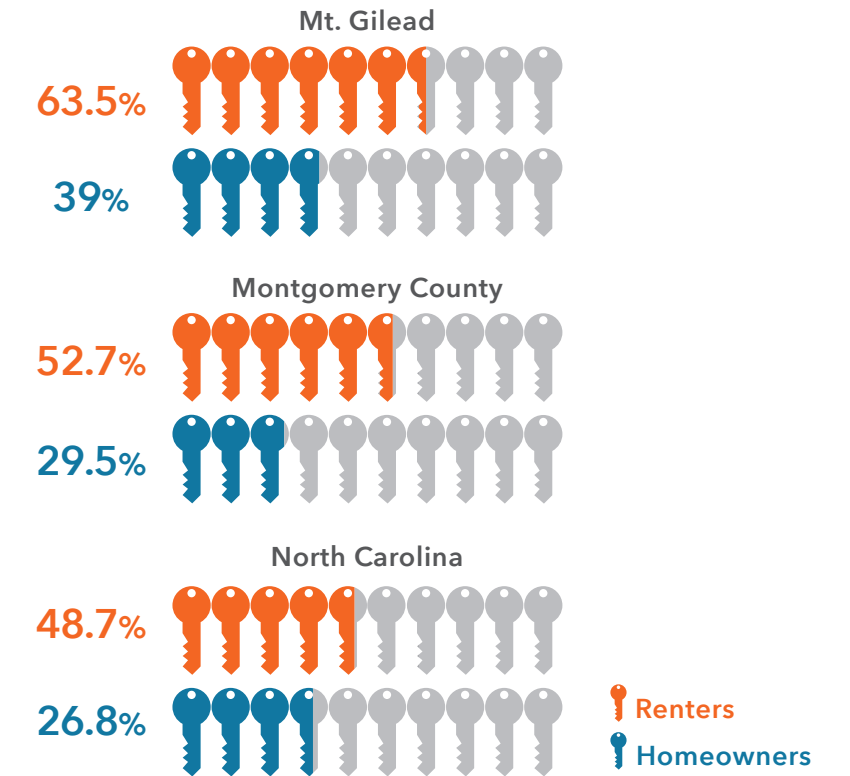
## MT. GILEAD DEGREE ATTAINMENT

**No Degree**
2000 19% | 2017 26%

**High School Degree**
2000 74% | 2017 81%

**Associates Degree or Higher**
2000 17% | 2017 21%
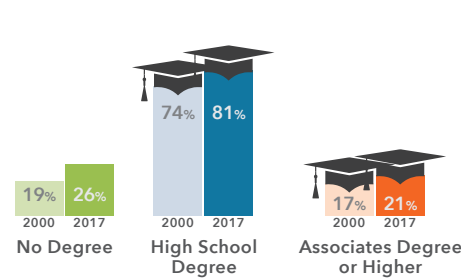
## MT. GILEAD HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE BY RACE

African American 69%
White 91%
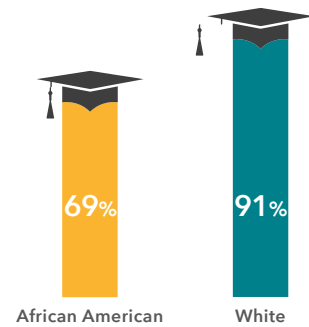
## COMPARISON OF DEGREE ATTAINMENT

**Mt. Gilead**
19% | 81% | 21%

**Montgomery County**
20% | 78% | 22%

**North Carolina**
13% | 87% | 41.2%

● No Degree  ● High School Degree  ● Associates Degree or Higher
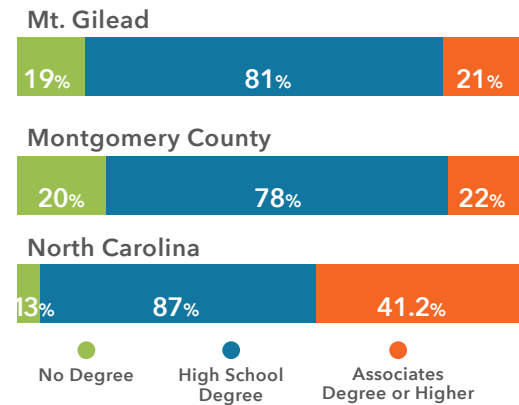
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is a reliable indicator of a population's earning potential. Fortunately, in Mount Gilead high school degree attainment has increased 7% since 2000, and college degree attainment (associates or higher) has increased 4% over the same time period. The number of college graduates in both Mount Gilead (81%) and Montgomery County (78%) lag far behind the national average (41.2%).

Additionally, there is a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American high school graduation rates in Mount Gilead. Ninety-one percent of white students in Mount Gilead graduate high school compared to 69% of black or African American students. This 22% differential is well above differences in graduation rates at the county and national levels.

> THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DISPARITY BETWEEN CAUCASIAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES IN MOUNT GILEAD.

## INCOME & EARNINGS

The median household income in Mount Gilead is $29,063, almost $10,000 lower than the median income of Montgomery County ($38,254) and only about half as much as the median income of the state ($53,320). In considering that data, is it not surprising that Mount Gilead also has the highest percentage of residents living below the federal poverty threshold* (24.5%) as compared to national, state, and county rates. The poverty rate in Mount Gilead has increased six (6) percentage points since 2000. Nearly 73% of all single-mother households in Mount Gilead are struggling to survive under the poverty threshold – 23% more than in surrounding Montgomery County.

### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

$29,063 Mt. Gilead
$38,254 Montgomery County
$53,320 North Carolina

### PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE-MOTHER HOUSEHOLDS LIVING BELOW POVERTY THRESHOLD

72.9% Mt. Gilead
49.8% Montgomery County
41.5% North Carolina
38.7% U.S.
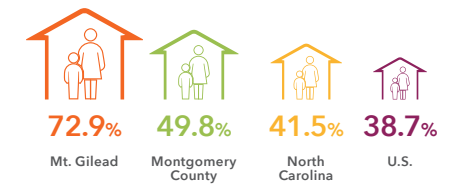
### PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION LIVING BELOW FEDERAL POVERTY THRESHOLD

24.5% Mt. Gilead
16.7% Montgomery County
14.1% North Carolina
13.1% U.S.
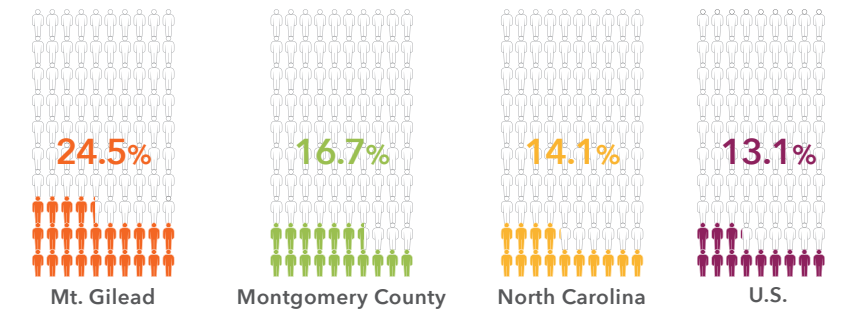
*2017 Federal poverty threshold for a single individual was $12,060 and $24,600 for a family of 4.

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Mt. Gilead **7.2%**

North Carolina **4.0%**

Montgomery County **4.0%**
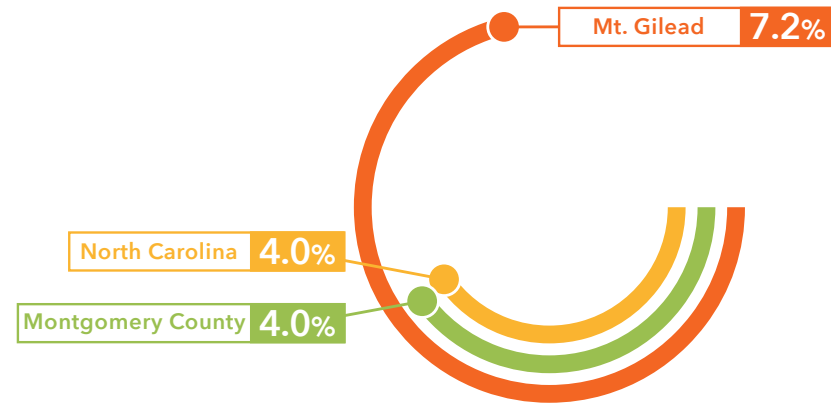
### LARGEST EMPLOYMENT SECTORS FOR MT.GILEAD WORKERS

**32%** Manufacturing

**30%** Education, Healthcare, & Social Services
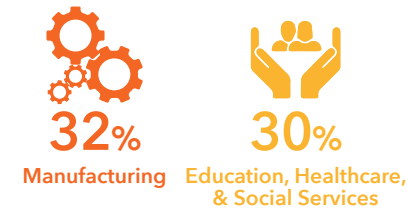
### FASTEST GROWING EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN THE SANDHILLS REGION

1. Food Preparation & Serving Related Occupations
2. Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations
3. Sales & Related Occupations
4. Healthcare Support Occupations
5. Business & Financial Operations Occupations

## EMPLOYMENT

At 7.2%. Mount Gilead's unemployment rate is also significantly higher than Montgomery County and the state of North Carolina (4%). The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic contributed to even higher rates of unemployment across the nation and in areas acutely affected by high infection rates, like Montgomery County. While the lasting economic impacts of the global pandemic are not yet fully understood, recovering the job losses that occurred during 2020 will take several years.

However, several job sectors in the Piedmont Sandhills region are growing; most notably in the food service & healthcare industries and sales. Currently, the largest employment sectors in Mount Gilead are manufacturing (32%) and education, healthcare, and social services (30%).

WHILE THE LASTING ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ARE NOT YET FULLY UNDERSTOOD, RECOVERING THE JOB LOSSES THAT OCCURRED DURING 2020 WILL TAKE SEVERAL YEARS.

## COMMUTE PATTERNS

Mount Gilead's concentration of manufacturing plants, many of which are supported by the lumber industry, draws a significant number of workers to the town every day. Three of Montgomery County's top ten employers are located in Mount Gilead: Jordan Lumber, McRae Industries, and Mohawk). The Town's industrial sector brings in more daily workers (558) than the number of residents who leave for work (444). A very small proportion of the population both lives and works in Mount Gilead (only 40 residents). Top commute destinations for citizens who leave the town for work are: (1) Mecklenburg; (2) Moore and; (3) Randolph Counties.

## BROADBAND ACCESSIBILITY

Another factor that is likely linked to the disparity in graduation rates, lower median salary, higher unemployment, and higher poverty rates is availability and access (or lackthereof) to broadband internet. Only 58% of Mount Gilead households have internet at home, compared to 61% in Montgomery County and 76% in North Carolina. Forty-two percent of the population does not have internet at home and those without internet are disproportionately African American households. Within the Mount Gilead census tract that encompasses the town, 49% of the Black population does not have access to internet at home compared to only 33% of White households that lack internet. Nonexistent or unreliable access to the internet is a severe hindrance to educational attainment and access to the highest paying jobs. This digital divide was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as school closures forced students to learn from home, leaving those without internet access at high risk of falling behind.

## COMMUTER FLOW

**558**   Mt. Gilead **444**

**40**

➡ Employed and live in Mt. Gilead

➡ Employed in Mt. Gilead, but live outside

➡ Live in Mt.Gilead, but leave for work
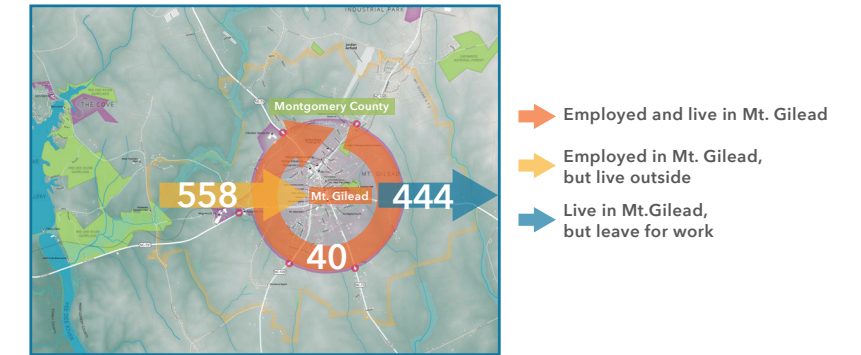
## HOUSEHOLDS WITH INTERNET AT HOME

**58%** Mt. Gilead

**61%** Montgomery County

**76%** North Carolina
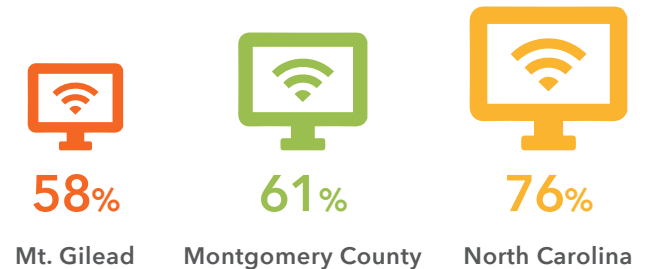
SOURCES: The Opportunity Atlas 2018-2019; On the Map, U.S Census Bureau 2017; American Community Survey 2010-2018; 2016 Occupational Employment Statistics, US Dept. of Labor; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; NC Counts Coalition; NC Dept. of Commerce; NC Office of the State Demographer

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of Mount Gilead occupies 3.5 square miles in the southwest corner of Montgomery County, NC. This area of the state is known as the Piedmont Sandhills region. Mount Gilead is strategically located at the crossroads of NC Highways 731, 109 and 73 which connect the town to the interstate system, facilitating access to metropolitan markets in Charlotte, the Triad, and the Triangle. The town, perched on the edge of the Uwharrie National Forest, is rich in water-based natural resources. It is located 3.5 miles east of the mighty Pee Dee River and Lake Tillery, a popular boating destination. Mount Gilead enjoys the best of both worlds with easy access to both urban centers and destination-quality outdoor recreation opportunities. These assets present the Town with a significant opportunity to position itself for coordinated growth and economic vitality.



GREENSBORO

RALEIGH

DAVIDSON CO.

RANDOLPH CO.

ROWAN CO.

UWHARRIE NATIONAL FOREST

MOORE CO.

MONTGOMERY CO.

STANLY CO.

MT. GILEAD

CHARLOTTE

UNION CO.

ANSON CO.

RICHMOND CO.

NC

SC

**A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT CONDITIONS PROVIDES THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPING CONTEXT-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY.**
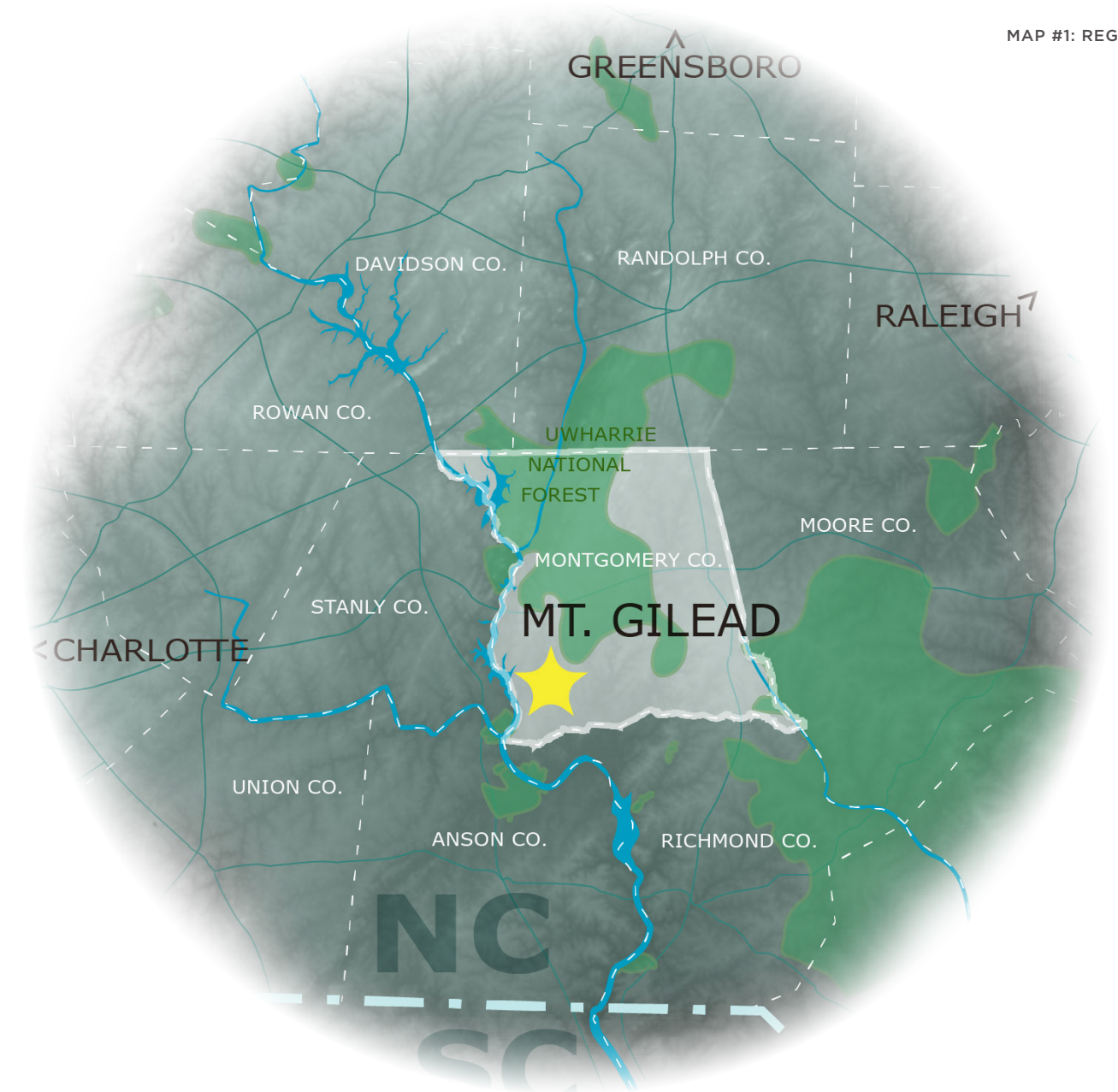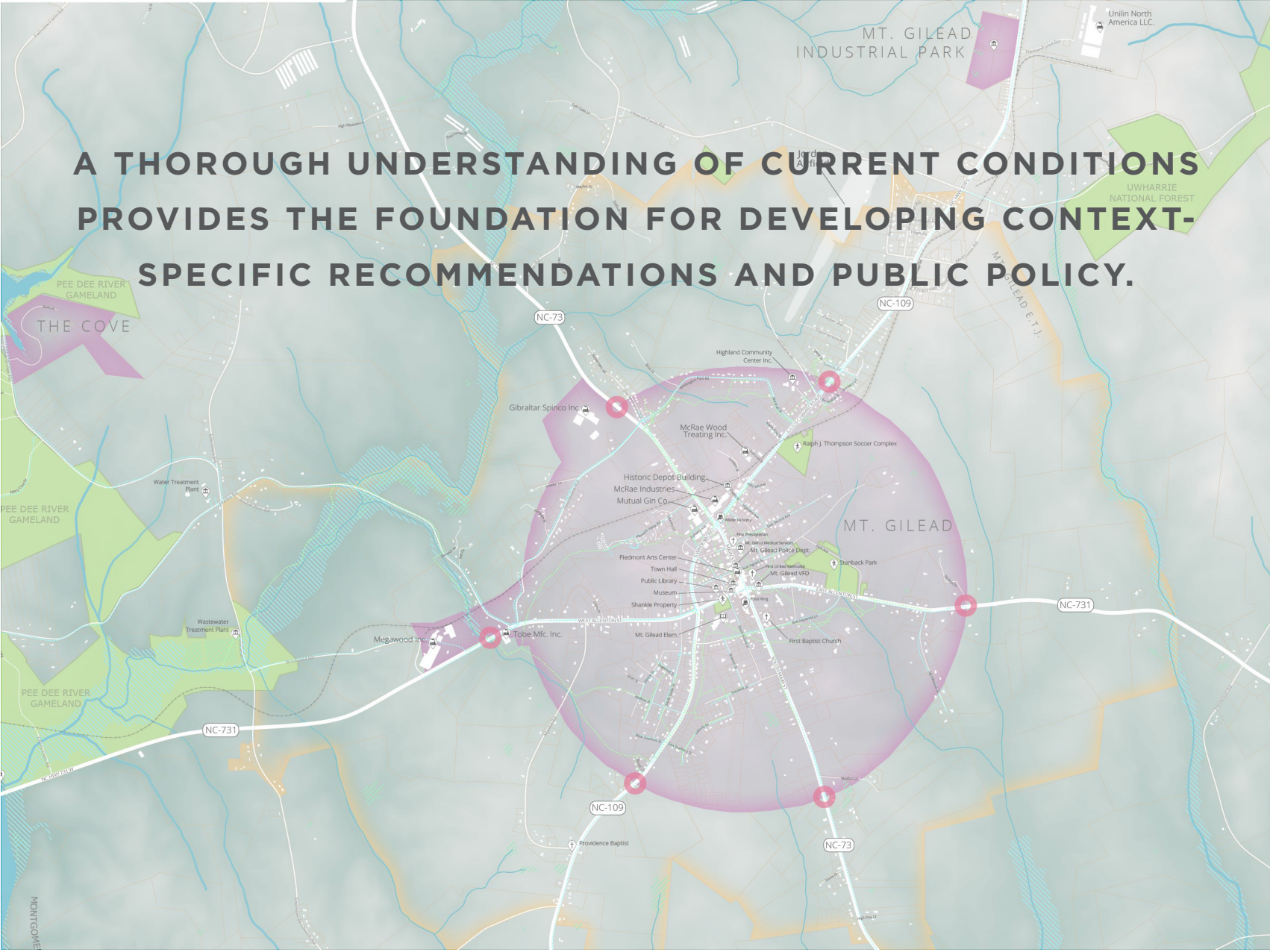
## EXISTING CONDITIONS MAP SERIES

This following map series provides a geospatial presentation of the existing physical environment and development patterns within the Mount Gilead planning jurisdiction and surrounding area. Characteristics of the natural and built environment have significant implications for future land use, development policies, transportation networks, recreation opportunities, and open space preservation. A thorough understanding of current conditions provides the foundation for developing context-specific recommendations and public policy that accounts for the nuances of Mount Gilead's physical traits and historic growth patterns.

## ZONING

The Mount Gilead zoning ordinance identifies nine (9) base districts, although two districts (Residential-Agricultural & Office-Institutional) have not yet been established on the zoning map for specific parcels. In addition, each of the 9 base zoning districts also has a corresponding overlay district to provide the Town discretion in establishing specific performance standards for a unique project. So far, five of the overlay districts have been established on the zoning map for specific properties.

In terms of residential and commercial uses, the zoning map and associated zoning regulations indicate a pattern traditional development that is denser in the Town's core and becomes less-dense the further the distance from the core. While there is some mixing of compatible uses is allowed in each district, permitted uses predominantly follow a Euclidean-style of zoning with strong separation of uses into geographic districts.



MAP #2

MOUNT GILEAD, NC
Current Zoning

THE COVE

LAKE TILLER

INDUSTRIAL PARK

LEGEND

Roads
Railroad

Town Boundary
E.T.J. Boundary
Parcels

Town Zoning

Low Density Residential
Low Density Conditional Use
Medium Density Residential
High Density Residential
General Business
General Business Conditional Use
Central Business
Central Business Conditional Use
Neighborhood Business
Industrial
Industrial Conditional Use
Office Institutional Conditonal Use

0.5 Mile

MAP #3

MOUNT GILEAD, NC
Environmental Conditions

LEGEND

〜 Roads
Town Boundary
E.T.J. Boundary
Parcels
Significant Natural Heritage Areas
Floodplains
Wetlands

Lands Ideal for Farmland Conservation

Top Tier
Mid Tier
Lower Tier

N
1 Mile

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Mount Gilead's advantageous proximity to the Pee Dee River and its tributaries contribute to large swaths of top and mid-tier agricultural land as identified by the NC Natural Heritage Program's Agricultural Lands Assessment which takes into consideration criteria developed by the USDA among other factors. Prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance play a critical role in the production of food, feeds, fibers, and oilseed crops. These farmlands have the ideal combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing high yields year after year.

Farmlands comprise an integral part of open space, wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge areas, rural character and provide access to local food. Consistent with national and statewide trends, Montgomery county is experiencing a loss in farmland, with a 4% decrease in number of farms and acreage of farmland since 2012. Loss of prime agricultural lands puts added strain on less-optimal farmland that is less production. Conservation of Mount Gilead's ideal farmlands will be paramount to preserving local food systems and the town's rural residential nature.

## NATURAL AND RECREATION RESOURCES

Mount Gilead benefits from an abundance of natural and recreation resources in close proximity to the town. The most notable are Lake Tillery, the Pee Dee River, and the Uwharrie National Forest.

Lilly's Bridge Marina, a satellite annexation to the Town of Mount Gilead, is a popular destination on the lake that provides boat storage, a lakeside restaurant, and even mini-golf. This area of the lake, less than 5 miles from downtown Mount Gilead, is home to the Pee Dee River Gameland and features a new public lake access area and boat launch managed by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

The Pee Dee River is located approximately 3 miles west of Mount Gilead. The 30-mile Pee Dee River Blueway begins here, south of the Tillery Dam and extends to Rockingham County. This paddle trail is part of the state-wide Carolina Thread Trail.

The 52,000 acre Uwharrie National Forest is 8 miles driving distance north of Mount Gilead and is a hub for outdoor recreation in the Piedmont. The forest offers miles of hiking, mountain biking, OHV, and equestrian trails in addition to camping, fishing, hunting, and a shooting range.

Within town limits, Mount Gilead offers three primary recreation destinations: Stanback Park, the Shankle property Walking Track, and the Ralph J. Thompson Soccer Complex. Stanback Park features several attractions including a pool and large playground. In the summer, Stanback Park hosts a popular youth day camp. It is owned and maintained by the Town along with the Walking Track. The Ralph J. Thompson Soccer Complex is privately owned and provides facilities for the local youth soccer program. The rural area surrounding Mount Gilead is also home to a handful of equestrian lodges and golf courses.



**MOUNT GILEAD, NC**
Natural and Recreation Resources

MAP #4

OHV Trails to the North

UWHARRIE

NC-27

Wood Run Trailhead

NC-27

Boat Launch

Lake Tillery Family Campground

Tillery Tradition Country Club

NATIONAL

NC-109

Rte. 2

Rte. 6

NC-73

FOREST

INDUSTRIAL PARK

Lily's Bridge Marina
Boat Launch

THE COVE

Ralph J. Thompson Soccer Complex

52

Piney Point Golf Club

PEE DEE RIVER GAMELAND

Stanback Park

Lake Tillery Equestrian Ctr.

Boat Launch    Boat Launch

NC-731

Rte. 6

Shankle Property and Walking Trails

Pee Dee River Paddle Trail

Town Creek Indian Mound

Fork Farm LLC.

NC-109    NC-73

LAKE TILLERY

ROCKY RIVER    PEE DEE RIVER    LITTLE RIVER

LEGEND
- Paddle Trail
- Camping
- Equine Locations
- Boating Locations
- Golf Locations
- OHV Locations
- Historic Conservation
- Misc. Recreation
- Walking Trails
- Roads
- State Bike Routes
- Town Boundary
- E.T.J. Boundary
- Conservation Lands

N
1 Mile

## PUBLIC FACILITIES

Mount Gilead wastewater system came into operation in the 1940s. While the wastewater treatment plant is located just outside town limits, sewer line infrastructure is concentrated within town. The Town maintains more than 30 miles of sewer lines and the wastewater plant can treat up to 800,000 gallons per day, although the typically daily treatment load is 250,000 gallons. More than 90% of Mount Gilead's residents are served by the town's wastewater system. The Town continues to replace aging lines, although the pace of much-needed upgrades are slowed by the substantial cost. Mount Gilead has been successful in securing several grants over the couple of decades to assist with line replacement, but this ongoing effort will be a high priority for the foreseeable future.

The Town purchases treated Lake Tillery water from Montgomery County, but maintains its own water lines. The treatment capacity of Montgomery County's water treatment plant is 6 million gallons of water per day and it currently provides about 3.9 million gallons of water to all five towns in the county, plus some rural areas. The majority of the Mount Gilead's waterline infrastructure is concentrated within town limits, but several lines extend into the Town's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to serve development along major roads. The Town maintains more than 10 miles of lines and one 300,000-gallon elevated tank. More than 95% of Mount Gilead residents are served by the public water system.

Mount Gilead maintains nearly 11 miles of public streets, with the newest addition to the street system located in The Cove residential development, a satellite annexation located near Lake Tillery. The Town has made noticeable progress over the past decade in filling sidewalk gaps throughout town.

## MAJOR EMPLOYERS & COMMUTE DESTINATIONS

Several medium to large manufacturing companies, including three Title V facilities permitted by the NC Division of Air Quality at the highest allowable threshold for air pollutant emissions, are located in Mount Gilead.. Many of these plants are engaged in the production or processing of wood or paper products as a result of the area's plentiful timber industry. Manufacturing employs over one-third of Mount Gilead population. The largest of these employers are identified on the adjacent map. The heat-map illustrates hot-spots for employment in Mount Gilead. Darker red areas have the highest concentration of jobs and are commute destinations for workers in Mount Gilead and surrounding counties.



MAP #6

### MOUNT GILEAD, NC
Major Employers & Commute Destinations

Jordan Lumber & Supplies Inc.

Mohawk Flooring

MOUNT GILEAD INDUSTRIAL PARK

Lilly's Bridge Marina & Riverwild

THE COVE

McRae Wood Treating Inc.

Paperworks

All-Truss

McRae Industries

Tobe Mfc. Inc.

Megawood Inc.

Williamson Farms

LAKE TILLERY

STANLEY COUNTY

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

PEE DEE RIVER

**LEGEND**
- Major Employers
- Roads
- Railroad
- Town Boundary
- E.T.J. Boundary

Number of Jobs per Square Mile
- High
- Medium
- Low

1 Mile

MOUNT GILEAD, NC
Cultural Resources

MAP #7

MOUNT GILEAD INDUSTRIAL PARK

THE COVE

Lilly's Bridge Marina

LAKE TILLERY

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY CENTER

MCAULEY MEMORIAL AME CHURCH

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

MT. GILEAD MUSEUM

HARRIS-CAFFEY HOUSE

LEAH LEVIN AUDITORIUM

HAYWOOD HOTEL

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

TOWN CREEK INDIAN MOUND
5 MILES TO THE SOUTHEAST

LEGEND

Key National Register & NC Historic Preservation Sites

Other Cultural Destinations

Historic District

Town Boundary

E.T.J. Boundary

1 Mile

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Much like its abundant natural assets, Mount Gilead is rich in history and cultural resources. Noteworthy cultural and community assets include the Downtown Historic District, Highland Community Center, and Town Creek Indian Mounds.

Downtown Mount Gilead is a designated Local Historic District and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2005. The district includes 25 contributing buildings constructed in the Town's central business district between 1900 and 1955. Notable architectural styles are Romanesque Revival, Gothic, Queen Anne, Mediterranean Revival, and Art Moderne.

Highland Community Center is a fundamental community development organization in Mount Gilead. The community center occupies the campus of the former pre-integration African American high school off of Julius Chambers Avenue. The community center, its board of directors, and volunteers operate several important programs that serve the Mount Gilead community at large, including programs for seniors, mentoring programs for youth, and continuing education for high school equivalency diplomas in partnership with Montgomery County Community College. Highland Community Center is an active and productive organization that is highly responsive to meet urgent community needs. In response job losses and economic challenges presented by the Covid-19 Pandemic, Highland quickly organized regular drive-through food donation pick-ups for families in need. In addition, the community center offers ball fields for recreation and rents its facilities for meetings and events.

Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site, located 3.5 miles southeast of Mount Gilead at the confluence of Town Creek and the Little River, is one of the most archaeologically significant sites in North Carolina. The site preserves 11th century Pee Dee indigenous culture through re-constructed mounds and structures, and includes an interpretive center on site. Town Creek Indian mound attracts more than 20,000 visitors per year.

# LAND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

The Land Suitability Analysis (LSA) combines the data sets presented in the previous map series into a single geo-spatial model that evaluates and classifies land on a spectrum of most to least suitable for new development. The LSA model takes into consideration several factors, including:

» Existing development status (developed or undeveloped)

» Proximity to public infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, rail, sidewalks, existing & proposed greenways

» Proximity to cultural & recreation amenities, schools, and major employers

» Environmental factors (floodplain, wetlands, and prime agricultural lands)

High suitability land is located outside of environmental hazard areas, is not characterized as prime agricultural land, and is located near existing development and public infrastructure. Low suitability lands are less appropriate for development due to environmental constraints and distance from existing infrastructure.

The LSA provides a broad analysis of existing data and is only one of several considerations used to determine the appropriateness of development for a tract of land. The LSA presents a general snapshot of areas most suitable for development, while highlighting areas that are best suited for conservation. It does not account for site and project-specific factors that must be also be considered on a case by case basis.

The LSA is one of several valuable tools used to develop the Future Land Use Map. Other factors that inform future land use are historic development trends, existing land use policies and infrastructure, community preferences, and professional land planning methodologies.

For a complete list of factors and more details on the LSA methodology, see Appendix A



MAP #8

## MOUNT GILEAD, NC
Land Suitability Analysis - 2020

LEGEND

Land Suitable for Development

High Suitability

Low Suitability

Major Employers
Civic Resources
Recreation Amenities
Sewer Lines
Water Lines
Significant Natural Areas
Parcels
Town Boundary
Mt. Gilead E.T.J.
Conserved/Park Lands
Water Features
Wetlands
A and AE Floodzones
Streets
Highways
Railroads

# INFLUENTIAL PLANS & STUDIES

Mount Gilead and the Piedmont Triad Region have a strong history of long-range planning and documented community initiatives. This section summarizes key recommendations from pertinent plans and studies. *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* builds upon these previous planning efforts and incorporates relevant recommendations where appropriate.

## 2007 Mt. Gilead Downtown Streetscape Improvements

» Offers human-scale landscape improvements in Mt. Gilead Downtown area
» Suggests layout changes and design elements at Mt. Gilead Post Office and Hayford-Ford Restaurant
» Set of plan drawings recommend streetscape improvements along N. Main Street and W. Allenton to facilitate harmonious coexistence of vehicles and pedestrians while making the area a hub of community connectivity .

## North Carolina "Central Parks" Plan

» Montgomery County is part of 7-county Uwharrie Lakes Region
» Promotes use of sustainable recreation and tourism for economic growth
» Develops marketing strategy which suggests preservation of cultural and natural heritage sites while supporting small business development
» Supports planning for future development of small towns within the Uwharrie Lakes region
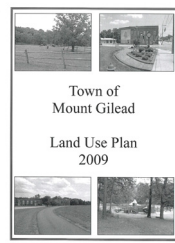
## 2009 Town of Mt. Gilead Comprehensive Land Use Plan

» Encourages planning for walkability, beautification through landscaping design, and supporting a variety of housing types
» Suggests mixed use development in the downtown area while preserving its historic character
» Develop a long-term improvement plan for Stanback Park, as well as promoting recreational facilities and programming throughout the area
» Expand and maintain transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure as Mt. Gilead grows
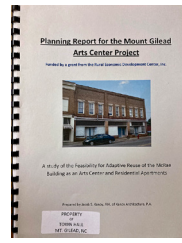
## 2010 Planning Report for the Mt. Gilead Arts Center Project

» Adaptive reuse of the McRae building as a multi-use arts center with apartments
» Ground floor renovation to adapt unused spaces into an art gallery and public studio/classrooms
» Second floor's open space allows for flexibility in designing multiple residential units
» Suggests this creation of desirable and functional spaces will encourage community engagement
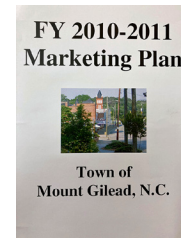
## FY 2010-2011 Town of Mt. Gilead Marketing Plan

» Outlines ways for town leaders to ensure Mt. Gilead's continuing economic development
» Public survey indicates focus on youth engagement and population retention
» Recommends growth of the Mt. Gilead Youth Council to encourage early engagement in civic service
» Recommends establishing a variety of community-making techniques such as local newsletters, updated website, art festivals, and community events to attract young families and businesses.
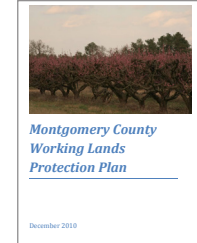
## 2010 Montgomery County Working Lands Protection Plan

» Analysis of agricultural lands throughout the county with focus on the major components of the forestry industry
» Recommends establishing local food cooperatives and farmer's markets highlighting county agriculture
» Suggests engaging public with local agriculture through various organizations; an Agricultural Biotechnology Advocacy Action team, Local Forestry Association Club, Agricultural Education program, and Agritourism destinations website.
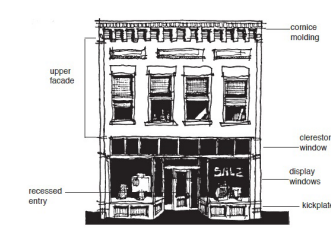
## Mt. Gilead Historic Preservation Commission: Historic District Guidelines

» Downtown Mt. Gilead is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has been locally designated as a Local Historic District
» Establishes procedure for changes of the built environment within the designated Historic District
» Takes into account preservation, reconstruction, and addition of new design for various architectural elements
» Details procedure for retrofitting buildings for ADA-compliant accessibility and sustainable energy systems
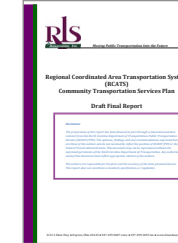
## Montgomery County RCATS Community Transportation Services Report

» Regional Coordinated Area Transportation System (RCATS) connects Randolph and Montgomery counties
» Assesses RCATS Management, Service, and Coordination with other services
» Offers five-year Development, Capital, and Operating plans
» Considers connection with local transportation systems, increasing use of scheduling software, replace and update aging vehicles, and anticipation of future budget changes
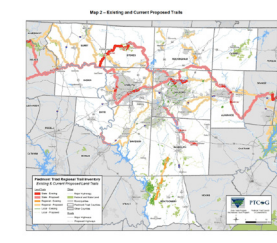
## 2011 Piedmont Triad Regional Trail Plan and Inventory

» Inventories existing and proposed trails throughout the region
» Identifies new proposed connections to help create a regional trail system
» Highlights the importance of local governments to adopt the plan and participate in local efforts to enhance existing trails and develop new regionally connective sections
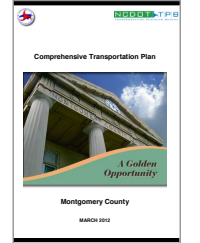
## 2012 Montgomery County Comprehensive Transportation Plan & 2018 Update

» Long range multi-modal transportation plan covers transportation needs through 2040
» Highway improvements include widening, conversion to divided expressways, and other specified changes for 8 specific highway areas
» Public Transportation recommendations suggest more flexible service of the RCATS along with addition of Park-and-Ride lots
» Bicycle recommendations include new local trails as well as connector routes
» Pedestrian recommendations suggest improvements for aging sidewalks and development of new sidewalks along major roads for individual towns within the county

## 20-Year Capital Improvement Plan Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Update

» Identifies major issues in the water and sewage system including material age and wear as well as inadequate service to residents
» Recommends creation of forward-facing plan to budget for replacement and rehabilitation of aging and undersized water lines.
» Establishing said scheduled plan allows the town to streamline financing and ensure construction of updates to sewer and water system issues.  .
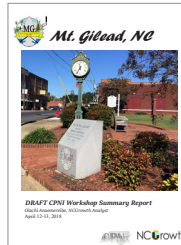


## 2018 Mt. Gilead Main Street Recommendations Report

» Analysis of two-day workshop in which local stakeholders discuss opportunities for economic growth.
» Recommends development of comprehensive Mt. Gilead master plan
» Suggests plan should focus on enhancing the downtown experience while preserving historic infrastructure, building improvements for the Highland Community Center, and rezoning and revitalizing the Russell-Harvell Mill for mixed use.
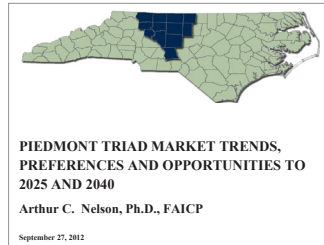


## Piedmont Triad Market Trends, Preferences and Opportunities 2025 to 2040

» Analyzes trends in growth of the counties making up the Piedmont Triad region
» Market trends and preference surveys are used to estimate demand for specific types of development including mixed use housing and walkable communities
» Recommends accommodating anticipated growth by retrofitting suburban commercial corridors
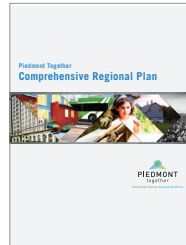


## Piedmont Together Comprehensive Regional Plan

» Highlights equitable solutions to regional issues and offers suggestions for a variety of planning areas; jobs, housing, transportation, healthy communities
» Calls to expand housing choices for all by revitalizing development through infill, promoting mixed income housing, and converting foreclosures into new assets
» Ensure transit infrastructure exists to provide multiple affordable modes of travel across and within the region as well as maintaining the region's freight transportation system
» Build on the region's economy by identifying and supporting emerging industry clusters and investing in the untapped human capital of the region
» Envisions healthy communities throughout the region that support active lifestyles with access to recreation, safe pedestrian environments, and local food distribution



## Triad Tomorrow: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

» Focuses on four broad goals for the region to enhance economic growth
» Build on the region's competitive advantages and leverage the marketplace by targeting existing growth clusters
» Establish and maintain regional infrastructure of highways, railways, air services, and increasing interregional public transit options.
» Support individual communities by ensuring the health of small businesses, local farmers, and retrofitting towns for pedestrian access
» Develop innovative workforce by supporting educational attainment, encouraging civic engagement, and technical training



## 2020 Montgomery County Marketing & Tourism Assessment

» Develops a set of strategic marketing recommendations for Montgomery County
» Identifies the county's top assets to feature in marketing; historic downtowns, natural landscapes, regional and small town events
» Suggests establishing a unique visual brand designed around the Uwharries, launching a tourism website, and using local resident and visitor stories for marketing.
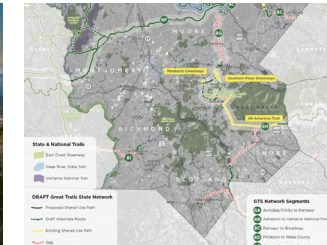


## Great Trails State Plan, NCDOT Division 8

» Identifies a conceptual regional network of planned interconnected trails and greenways
» Route 8F is proposed as a multi-use path through Mount Gilead
» Route 8F would connect the Uwharrie National Forest to Chatham County and subsequently link Mount Gilead the Town of Troy
» Detailed planning at the local level will be required to further evaluate route feasibility

## Other Significant Plans, Studies, & Policy Documents

» Mount Gilead Zoning Ordinance
» Piedmont Triad Regional Open Space Strategy, 2003
» Mount Gilead Historic District National Register of Historic Places Application, 2005
» Piedmont Triad RPO Regional Bicycle Study, 2005
» Piedmont Triad RPO Scenic Byways Screening Study, 2007

» Town of Mount Gilead Annexation Strategic Report, 2010
» Piedmont Triad Regional Report, 2010
» Interstate 73/74 Economic Atlas of North Carolina, 2011
» Piedmont Triad Land Supply Analysis, 2011
» Uwharrie National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan, 2012

» Piedmont Together: Green Infrastructure Network Strategy, 2014
» Piedmont Together: Planning for the Energy Future, 2014
» Piedmont Together: Equity Report, 2014
» Piedmont Triad Environmental Justice Scan, 2016
» Piedmont Climate Resiliency Toolkit, 2018

# CHAPTER 2

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VISION

- Engagement Strategy
- Public Workshops
- Community Vision Statements

## SPREADING THE WORD

A concerted project promotional campaign utilized both print and digital media to raise awareness for the project and encourage participation at public engagement events.



» **Press Releases**
Press releases were distributed to local news outlets at key points in the planning process to announce the kick-off of *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead: Our Town 2040* and to introduce the draft Future Land Use Map.

» **Post Card**
In the weeks leading up to the first public engagement opportunity, the Town of Mount Gilead completed a direct-mail postcard campaign to notify all taxpayers and utility customers of the date, time, and location of the first public workshop.



» **E-Newsletter**
Mount Gilead's downtown coffee shop and community hub issues a weekly newsletter that is frequently regarded as the local authority on news and events in town. All public engagement opportunities were promoted through this outlet to take advantage of the newsletter's wide audience.



» **Facebook**
A project Facebook page (@mtgileadnc) was established to communicate project background, updates, and promote engagement opportunities. The page has over 200 followers. Facebook advertising was used to promote the online survey and reached nearly 750 local residents.

## ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Public engagement is at the heart of a successful planning process. Purposeful and sincere community outreach is critical to cultivating public trust, expanding support for the plan, addressing concerns early in the process, and building a sense of ownership for plan implementation.

Town staff, the Planning Board, and Town Commissioners guided plan preparation with local perspective and insight. They were also critical in generating community participation through traditional and digital approaches to public engagement. Outreach strategies for *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* included public workshops and an online survey. Details and results are provided on the following pages. (For more detail on public engagement results, see Appendix B).

## PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Two (2) public workshops were hosted in the spring of 2020. Both workshops were drop-in style open houses that provided attendees to review information on existing conditions; communicate their vision for Mount Gilead; and respond to future land use policy and conceptual visualizations.

### WORKSHOP #1

*Mount Gilead Moving Ahead'*s first workshop was held on the evening of March 5th, 2020 at Highland Community Center. The first workshop presented an introduction to comprehensive planning; provided results of the existing conditions & emerging trends analysis; and solicited feedback on community preferences and priorities. It was attended by approximately thirty (30) community members who rotated through a series of stations including:

» Plan Background & Introduction

» Learning Station that presented the infographics and Land Suitability Analysis

» Interactive Map Activity that allowed participants to map opportunities and challenges faced by Mount Gilead

» Visual Preference Survey where citizens could indicate their preference for different types of residential, commercial, downtown, office, institutional, and industrial development by voting on images

## WORKSHOP #1 RESULTS

Results of the Visual Preference Survey indicated a strong desire for upper-story residential in downtown and communicated the types of building form, site design, and architectural styles preferred for commercial, office, and industrial uses. The following images are representative of the community's desired look and feel for the built environment.



**Residential**



**Commercial**



**Office & Institutional**



**Industrial**



**Downtown**

## INTERACTIVE MAP

Workshop participants identified a number of geo-located opportunities and challenges that are impacting Mount Gilead. Here is a sampling of their comments.

**2** "Open the library more days."

**20** "Highland could use a walking trail, more sports opportunities, and central AC."

**27** "The town should be more inclusive with focus on ALL of Mt. Gilead, not just downtown."

**36** "Reduce pollution for better night sky viewing."

**37** "Gateway to town is unwelcoming."

**58** "Offer more services at the community building at Stanback Park."

**42** "Discourage large trucks from driving through town center."

**68** "Expand food, lodging, & entertainment options."



MAP #9: INTERACTIVE MAP RESULTS
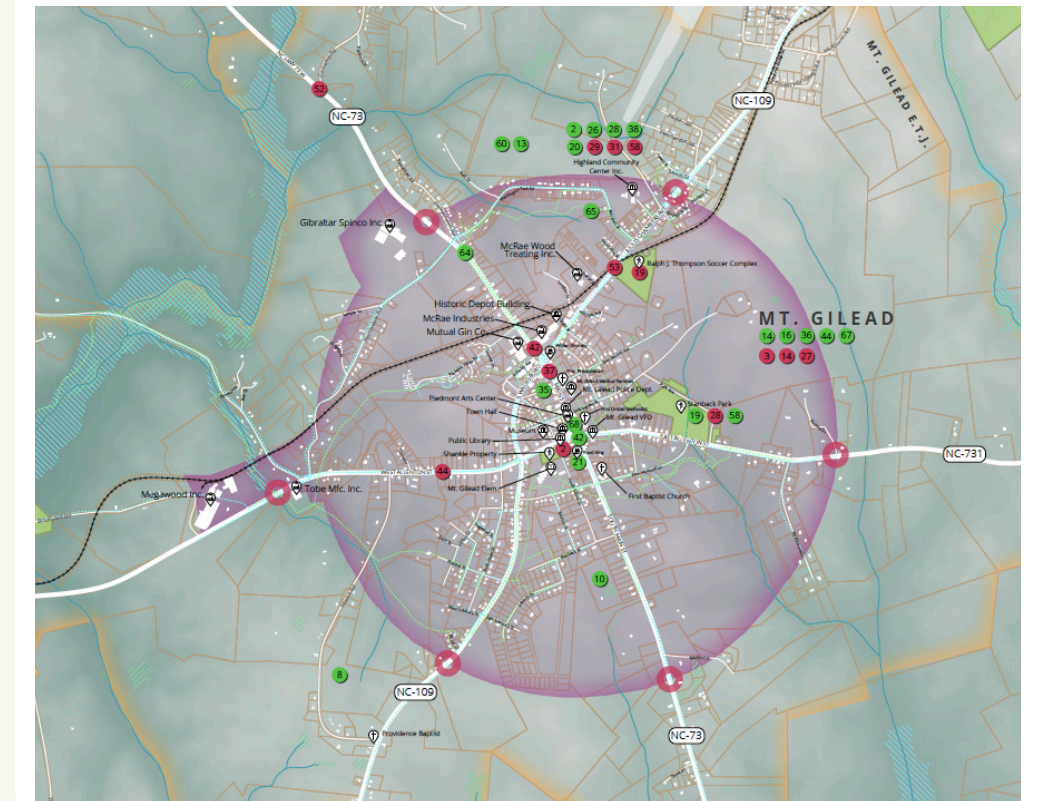
## WORKSHOP #2 & ONLINE SURVEY

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the second phase of public engagement was modified to provide for healthy and safety without diminishing opportunities for participation. An online survey option was added and the drop-in workshop was reformatted to follow all CDC guidelines and reduce the interaction between participants. The workshop took place on the evening of June 18th, 2020. The online survey was available from June 15th through July 31st, 2020.

The online survey and drop-in workshop featured identical content and questions. Both tools presented and solicited feedback on the following:

» Draft Vision Statements
» Preliminary Policy Goals
» Draft Future Land Use Map
» Conceptual Supporting Visuals



PARTICIPANT WORKSHEET

## WORKSHOP #2 & ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Eighty-seven (87) Mount Gilead residents provided responses to the survey either online or at the drop-in workshop. Results from key questions and a sampling of comments are provided here.

### Survey Respondent Comments

*"The sense of connection between neighborhoods should be top priority."*

*"Make sure resources are available to help keep seniors in their homes as they age."*

*"More needs to be done quickly to bring in high speed internet for business as well as residential communities. Adjacent counties/towns have taken steps to work with NC Broadband to bring infrastructure."*

*"Green space near Lake Tillery is being ruined by construction."*

Do the Vision Statements align with your vision of Mt. Gilead in 2040?
YES 85%
NO 15%
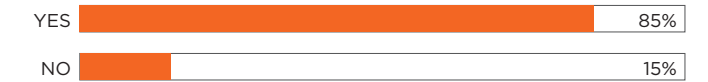
Do the Policy Goals align with your goals for Mt. Gilead?
YES 91%
NO 9%
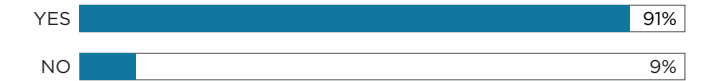
Do you think the Future Land Use Map includes an appropriate amount of protected open space, agricultural land, and recreation space?
YES 89%
NO 11%

Do you think the Future Land Use Map map includes an appropriate amount of land for residential?
YES 100%
NO 0%
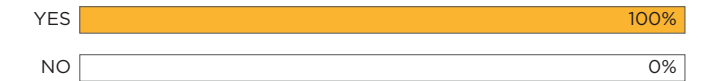
Do you think the Future Land Use Map map includes an appropriate amount of commercial & industrial land?
YES 94%
NO 6%

Do you think the Future Land Use Map map includes an appropriate amount of land for mixed use such as retail, residential, office/institutional
YES 94%
NO 6%

## COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENTS

Valuable insights and ideas gleaned from the community directly influenced the development of Community Vision Statements that articulate a collective future vision for Mount Gilead. The Vision Statements provide the overarching framework for public policy goals and plan recommendations.

### BY 2040

OUR TOWN will feel a strong sense of connection between neighborhoods linked by roads, sidewalks, greenways, families, traditions, heritage, our shared sense of community and love for Mount Gilead.

OUR TOWN will be a cohesive community that celebrates its diversity and champions social, political, and economic equity above historic racial, cultural, and economic divisions.

OUR TOWN will support a variety of housing options and public amenities that meet the needs of multiple generations of citizens, from infants to elders.

OUR TOWN will offer an authentic experience to residents and visitors that centers on the connection between our vibrant, walkable, historic downtown and abundant natural resource-based recreation offerings.

OUR TOWN will balance coordinated growth with preservation of our historic character, rural heritage, and natural resources.

OUR TOWN will offer a high quality of life and excellent public services by strategically directing compatible growth toward areas that are accessible to existing transportation networks and water/wastewater infrastructure in order to most efficiently serve new and existing development.

OUR TOWN will provide abundant recreation opportunities and alternatives to vehicle travel through interconnected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that link neighborhoods to commercial centers, parks, and recreation destinations.

OUR TOWN will support a diverse economy that encourages the growth of traditional sectors and existing business while fostering new opportunities for nature-based recreation tourism, small business growth, and emerging tech & green industries.

# CHAPTER 3

## RECOMMENDATIONS

# CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND USER GUIDE

This chapter identifies recommendations that will guide Mount Gilead leaders and the community at large to achieve the prosperous future identified in the Vision Statements in the previous chapter.

These recommendations are informed by data-driven research, professional best practices, and the rich set of community values that were communicated through the public engagement phase. Collectively, these strategies represent a wide range of tools, resources, and public policy necessary to meet Mount Gilead's existing challenges, future demands, and desired outcomes.

## WHO WILL USE THIS PLAN?

### 01 MOUNT GILEAD BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

*Mount Gilead Moving Ahead: Our Town 2040* serves as a policy and decision-making guide for the Board of Commissioners on matters related to land use and development, economic development, transportation, recreation, and placemaking. The goals, policies, and Future Land Use map will guide decisions on the Town's ordinances and regulations.

### 02 PLANNING BOARD

The Planning Board will use *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* to determine consistency of development proposals and plans with the goals, policies, and recommendations stated in this plan. Consistency with *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* should be the primary basis for deciding to grant or deny any request heard by the Planning Board.

### 03 TOWN STAFF

This plan will guide Mount Gilead town staff in evaluating development proposals, prioritizing projects, and initiating code amendments. Staff will use the plan when preparing its budget recommendations, grant applications, and pursuing partnerships.

Town planning staff should annually review *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* and update the plan at least every five (5) years to reflect completed actions and incorporate new opportunities or challenges.

### 04 PROPERTY OWNERS + DEVELOPERS

The goals, policies, and Future Land Use Map in *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* communicate the types and locations of land uses and development that are desired by the Town. Policies, recommendations, and the Future Land Use Map will help property owners understand what uses and development types may be appropriate for their property and allow them to formulate development proposals that are consistent with the shared vision set forth in this plan. In addition, the plan points to basic sources of information that will help owners and developers understand the capabilities and limitations of their property.

### 05 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVOCATES

Mount Gilead has a strong history of grassroots community leadership that have been responsible for spearheading many community development initiatives over the years. *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* identifies several projects that could be led by local community organizations and agencies working in tandem with the Town.

This plan provides recommendations according to six (6) planning elements:

1. Land Use & Environment
2. Economic Prosperity
3. Infrastructure and Services
4. Transportation & Mobility
5. Parks & Recreation
6. Community Development & Placemaking

Each Planning Element contains the following special features that organize and support plan recommendations: Special Features are identified throughout the chapter by the associated icons shown below.

**Key Challenges** were identified early in the planning process by key stakeholders, town staff, and by Mount Gilead residents through public outreach efforts. Local knowledge and lived experiences combined with professional expertise and understanding of best practices allowed the planning team to pinpoint pertinent issues to be addressed by the *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* plan. The most critical challenges are listed at the beginning of each of the six (6) Planning Elements, and the recommendations that follow them attempt to address these issues.

**Policy Goals** provide the organizing framework for specific recommendations within each Planning Element. Each Policy Goal and recommendation support the achievement of one or more of the Vision Statements.

**Visible Victories** are short-term recommendations that can be immediately implemented to achieve visible and tangible results in support of the long-term vision for Mount Gilead.

**Exhibits** feature special content that provides greater detail on a specific topic.

**Case Studies** provide real-world examples of plan recommendations that have been implemented by other communities with positive results.

**Schematics & Renderings** support plan recommendations through visuals that illustrate possible outcomes of implementing suggested policies.

# PLANNING ELEMENTS

## LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT

### KEY CHALLENGES

! » Lack of new workforce housing
» Protection of existing neighborhood and rural character
» Development encroachment surrounding Lake Tillery

### VISION STATEMENTS

OUR TOWN will support a variety of housing options and public amenities that meet the needs of multiple generations of citizens, from infants to elders.

OUR TOWN will balance coordinated growth with preservation of our historic character, rural heritage, and natural resources.

OUR TOWN will offer a high quality of life and excellent public services by strategically directing compatible growth toward areas that are accessible to existing transportation networks and water/wastewater infrastructure in order to most efficiently serve new and existing development.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HAS LOST 240 FARMS AND 33,521 ACRES OF AGRICULTURAL LAND SINCE 2012.

source: NC Cooperative Extension + 2012 & 2017 USDA Census

Unlike so many other small towns across the country, Mount Gilead has successfully avoided succumbing to suburban patterns of development characterized by strip shopping centers, massive parking lots, and mass conversion of farmland into large-lot subdivisions. Instead, Mount Gilead exhibits a well-preserved traditional development pattern with a historic downtown core surrounded by established neighborhoods and a modest commercial & industrial area that gives way to a greenbelt of pastoral landscapes on the edge of town. This preserved traditional pattern of development is something that sets Mount Gilead apart and now is the time to protect it from sprawling auto-oriented development that requires extensive infrastructure investments. While enticing, that kind of development produces only short-term prosperity in exchange for a hefty long-term maintenance burden on the town.

## FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK

Mount Gilead's framework for future land use is comprised of two components: the Rural-Urban Transect and the Future Land Use Map. This framework serves as the cornerstone of the plan, providing guidance to Mount Gilead's municipal leaders as they make land use development decisions that direct where and how the community will grow.

## RURAL-URBAN TRANSECT

The Rural-Urban Transect* is a land use planning methodology that presents a cross-section of the landscape from rural outerlands to a more urbanized core, and relates development potential to the ecological conditions and human settlement patterns of the land.

The transect establishes a spectrum of land classification for both the environmental and built character of the Town's planning jurisdiction. This allows for the most efficient provision of municipal services and tax-base stability. Growth and conservation are coordinated to ensure that development happens in a fiscally-responsible way. In applying the transect model to Mt. Gilead's Future Land Use Map, the composition of the map is heavily determined by the location of existing infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) and the presence or absence of existing development to inform what the future land use should be in any given area.

The Rural-Urban transect presented here has been adapted for Mount Gilead's specific environmental context, historic development pattern, and desired land uses. Mt. Gilead's historic growth pattern is largely consistent with the Rural-Urban Transect and traditional small-town growth. The Town has grown slowly outward from the downtown with minimal residential sprawl and a surrounding green belt of agricultural land. The transect model and future land use map promote the preservation of this beneficial historic pattern of development so that Mt. Gilead can retain its unique rural character and small-town charm while avoiding sprawling development patterns that result in loss of agricultural lands and costly provision of services.

The Mount Gilead Transect classifies land into six sectors:

1. Rural Conserved Lands
2. Rural Reserved Lands
3. Low Density Rural Community
4. Neighborhood Mixed-Use
5. Commercial/Industrial Mix
6. Town Center

The Sectors allow for more than one kind of use and align with traditional small town development in which residential and compatible non-residential uses coexist together. Appropriate levels of mixed-use provide more locations for housing that is affordable, walkable, and provides convenient access to essential commercial needs like groceries, pharmacies, and retail.

*Originally developed by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company and the Center for Applied Transect Studies

### SCHEMATIC #1: Mount Gilead Future Land Use Transect



| 1 Rural Conserved Lands | 2 Rural Reserved Lands | 3 Low Density Rural Community | 4 Neighborhood Mixed-Use | 5 Commercial / Industrial Mix | 6 Town Center |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Parks & Conserved Public Lands<br>• Greenways & Trails<br>• Agriculture & Forestry by Public or Conservation Agencies<br>• Water Access Areas<br>• Natural Resource Based passive recreation | • Parks and Greenways<br>• Agriculture & Forestry with accessory structures<br>• Low-intensity Agritourism<br>• Water Access Areas<br>• Low-density Single Family Rural-Residential | • Low Density Residential that preserves open-space<br>• Agriculture & Forestry<br>• Agritourism<br>• County & Municipal Facilities<br>• Limited neighborhood commercial<br>• Religious Institutions | • Medium-density Single Family Subdivisions<br>• Mixed Residential Developments<br>• Multi-Family<br>• Neighborhood-Scale Office, Commercial, Entertainment, & Small-batch Manufacturing Mixed-Use<br>• Civic Uses & Parks | • Commercial Centers with National Brands<br>• Light Industrial<br>• Heavy Industrial | • High Density Mixed Residential, Commercial, and Entertainment<br>• Civic and Cultural Uses<br>• Municipal Services and Offices |

SECTORS

Illustration: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP "INGREDIENTS"
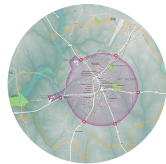


**Historic Development Patterns**

**Existing Zoning Districts**

**Water/ Wastewater Service Areas**

**Land Suitability Analysis**

**Development Concepts from Public Input**

**Rural-Urban Transect Model**

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Mount Gilead's Future Land Use Map is informed by several factors including: historic development trends; the Town's existing zoning districts; existing water/wastewater service areas; the land suitability analysis; development preferences articulated by the community; and the Rural-Urban Transect.

## PURPOSE of the FUTURE LAND USE MAP



**POLICY TOOL**
Guides decision-making on where & how to grow

**DIRECT DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION**
Overarching structures for orchestrating appropriate development patterns

**INFLUENCE ZONING**
Are current zoning districts & development requests consistent with the Future Land Use Map?

## HOW TO USE THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map is a policy tool (in contrast with the zoning map which is a regulatory tool). It is intended to guide Mount Gilead's appointed and elected leaders as they make decisions on where and how the community should grow.

This map provides the overarching structure for orchestrating appropriate patterns of development and conservation throughout Mount Gilead's jurisdictional territory. The Future Land Use Map should influence and inform the Town's zoning as a way to achieve desired growth patterns.

Consideration of specific development requests such as Re-zonings, Conditional Zoning Districts, or Conditional Uses should include a study of the Future Land Use Map to determine whether the request is consistent with the future land use policy vision.

The Future Land Use Map can also serve as the impetus for Town-initiated amendments that make the zoning map more consistent with desired future land use.

The following pages provide a sector-by-sector presentation of the Future Land Use Map. Each map builds upon the previous map to compose the official Future Land Use Map of Mount Gilead, North Carolina.

## Sector 1: RURAL CONSERVED LANDS

Sector 1 is comprised of nature preserves, conservation lands, and Town parks. This sector includes existing major conservation lands under the control of government or private conservation agencies. Many of these lands provide educational, ecotourism, or passive recreation opportunities. This category, indicated in dark green on the Future Land Use Map, comprises lands that are primarily undevelopable, such as swamps, wetlands, riparian buffers, and parks.

Appropriate Land Uses and Development Types:

» Parks and Public Lands

» Greenways & Trails

» Public water-access facilities

» Natural-resource based passive recreation

» Forestry and agricultural practices related to land-management by conservation and public agencies

MAP #11

## Sector 2: RURAL RESERVED LANDS

Sector 2 is comprised of wetlands, environmentally sensitive areas, significant natural heritage areas, sensitive habitat areas, and high-quality agricultural lands that should be targeted for farmland preservation or general conservation. Sector 2 classification also allows for limited development of low-density single family residential. This area should not be targeted for expansion of public or private water and sewer infrastructure. Some areas located within Sector 2 zones could ultimately transition into Sector 1 by expanding public lands and preserving highly sensitive natural resources and riparian areas.

The preservation of environmentally significant rural areas accomplishes many planning goals:

» It discourages sprawl by focusing new growth in and around existing developed areas.

» It plays an important role in natural resource protection.

» It promotes fiscal stewardship by encouraging growth within the municipality for a more efficient use of public facilities and existing infrastructure.

Appropriate Land Uses and Development Types:

» Public water access and related amenities

» Parks & Greenways

» Forestry

» Cultivated farm and timberland with accessory agricultural structures; low-intensity agritourism

» Very Low-density single family rural-residential that maintains preservation of open space and natural landscapes



2 - RURAL RESERVED LANDS
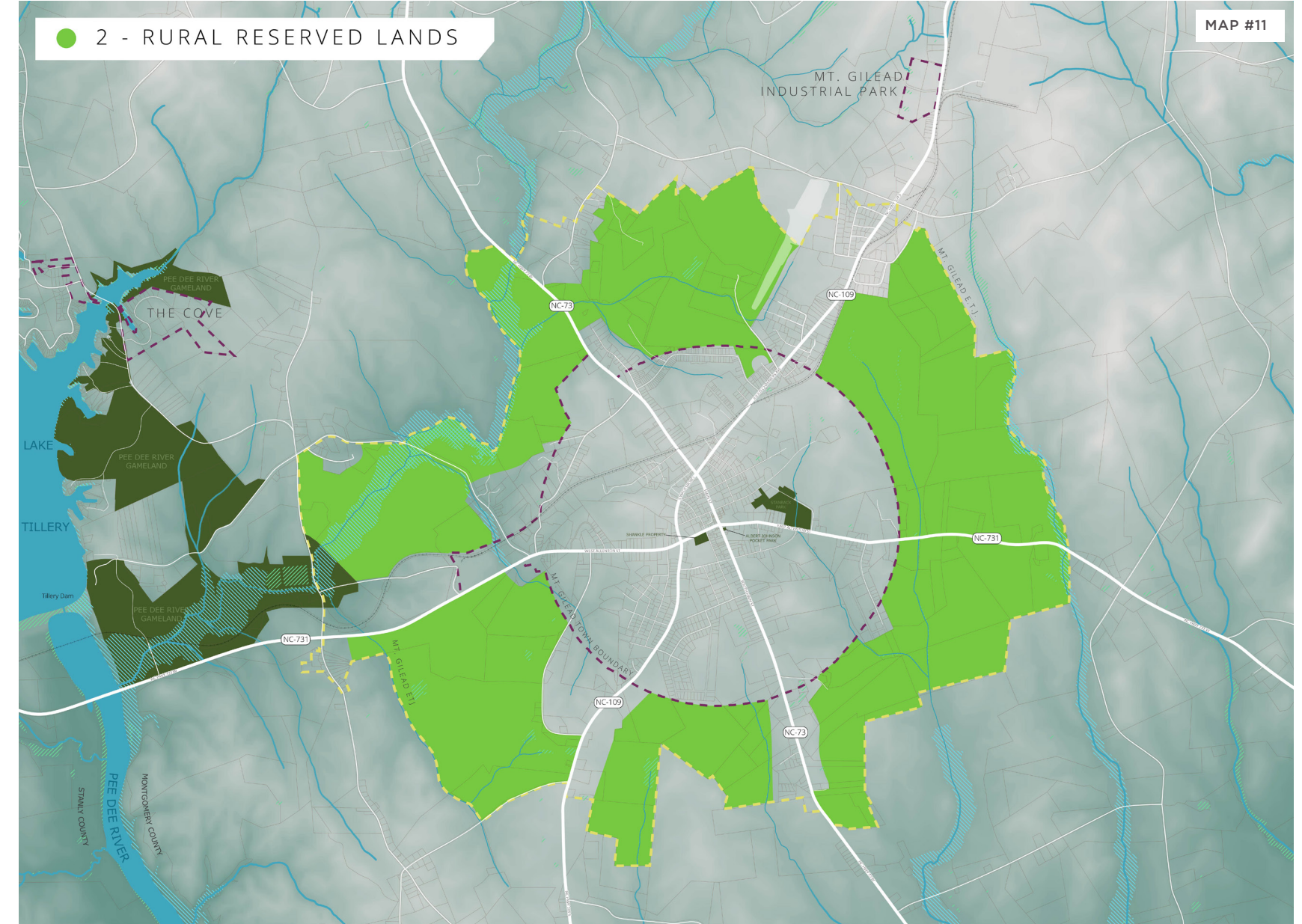
## Sector 3: LOW DENSITY RURAL COMMUNITY

Sector 3 is intended for agricultural lands and compatible low-density rural residential growth that may be supported by limited small-scale neighborhood retail. Residential and non-residential uses should be in keeping with community character. Desirable development in this sector typically consists of cluster development such as conservation subdivisions, or low-density residential development on larger lots.

Limited municipal services, such as fire protection, emergency services, and public water infrastructure may be available, but public sewer services is typically not available or appropriate. Development in this sector is primarily served by private well and septic.

Special consideration should be given to protect historically agricultural and woodland areas.

Encourage neighborhood commercial to locate near road intersections and existing compatible uses and community facilities

Appropriate Land Uses and Development Types:

» Agriculture and agritourism destinations and related businesses
» County and municipal facilities
» Limited neighborhood commercial
» Low-density residential neighborhoods that prioritizes preservation of open space and natural landscapes
» Forestry and timberland
» Agritourism
» Religious institutions



3 - LOW DENSITY RURAL COMMUNITY

MAP #12
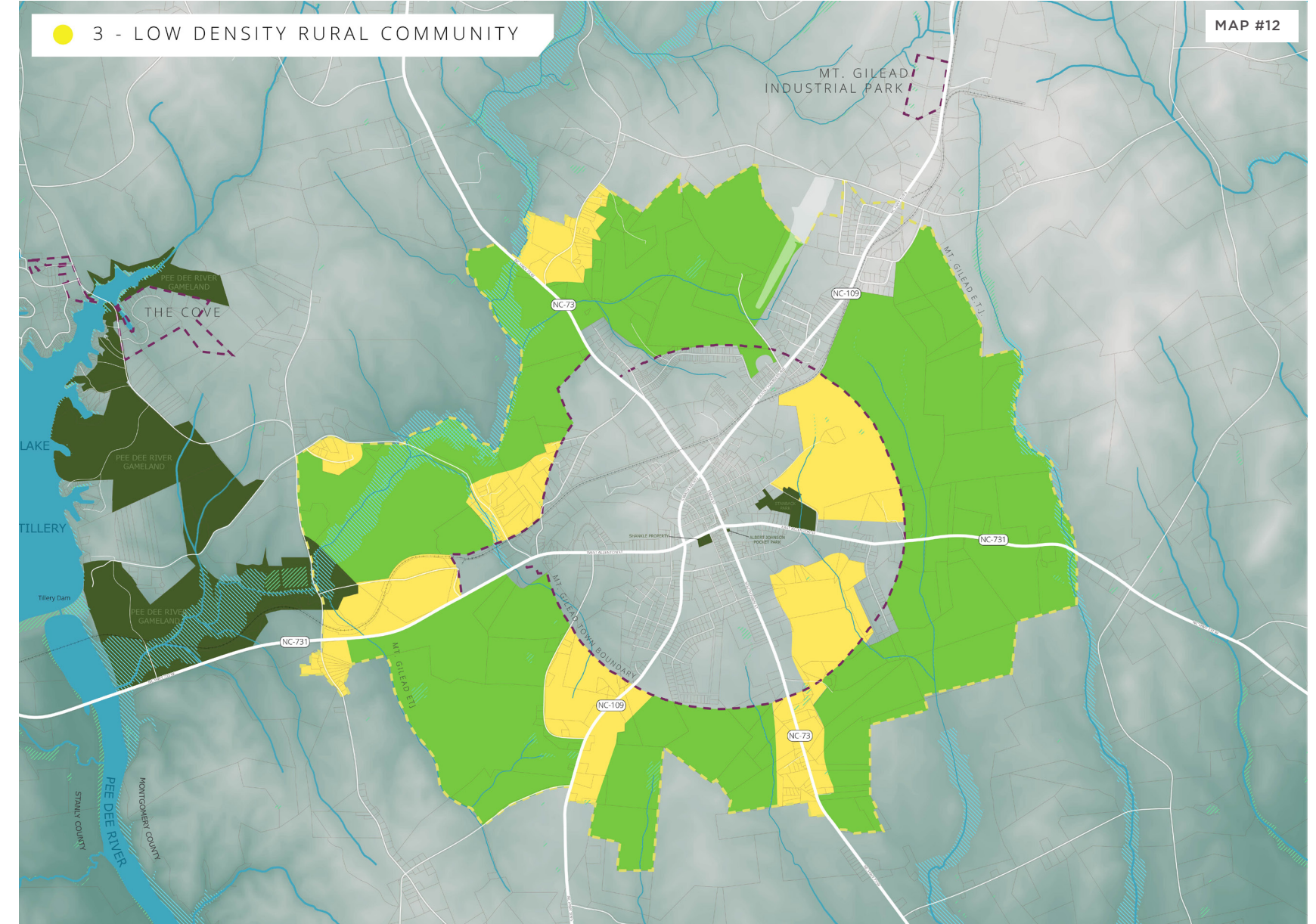
## Sector 4: NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED USE

Sector 4 contains medium-density residential developments and neighborhood-scale commercial nodes. This sector is characterized by an interconnected local road network, available water or wastewater, and walkable neighborhoods that connect to parks, preserved open space, commercial nodes, and other neighborhoods. This pattern of development can provide significant public health benefits by creating safe and accessible opportunities for walking and biking.

Appropriate Land Uses and Development Types:

» Medium-density single family neighborhoods

» Mixed residential developments that provide a variety of housing types

» Neighborhood-scale Multi-family developments

» Neighborhood office, commercial, or entertainment mixed-use that could include artisanal maker-space or small-scale manufacturing.

» Civic uses such as parks, schools, fire departments, community centers, libraries, Town and County facilities

» Encourage neighborhood-serving commercial to locate near road intersections, and other neighborhood-serving facilities such as schools and parks and existing compatible commercial uses.

» All new development and redevelopment in Sector 4 shall connect to municipal water service.

» Medium residential densities and compatible commercial uses are encouraged to locate within Sector 4 where both water and wastewater services are available.



MAP #13

● 4 - NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED USE
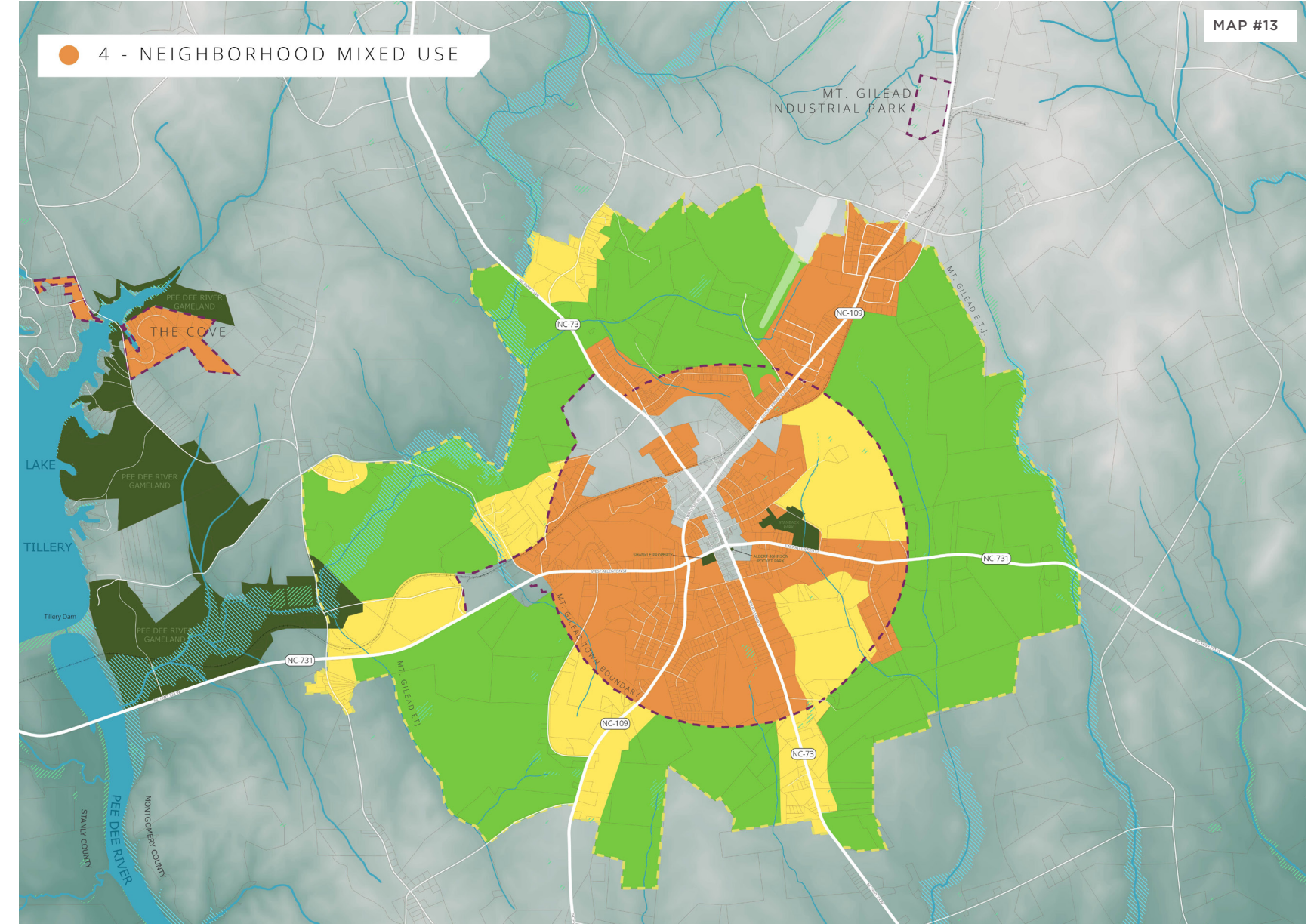
## Sector 5: COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL MIX

The Sector 5 classification is supported by major transportation corridors, public water and wastewater infrastructure. This sector provides for a full range of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses that are encouraged to locate within Sector 5 where both water and wastewater services are readily available.

Appropriate Land Uses and Development Types:

» Light Industrial

» Heavy industrial facilities

» Commericlal centers with national brands



5 - COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL MIX

MAP #14
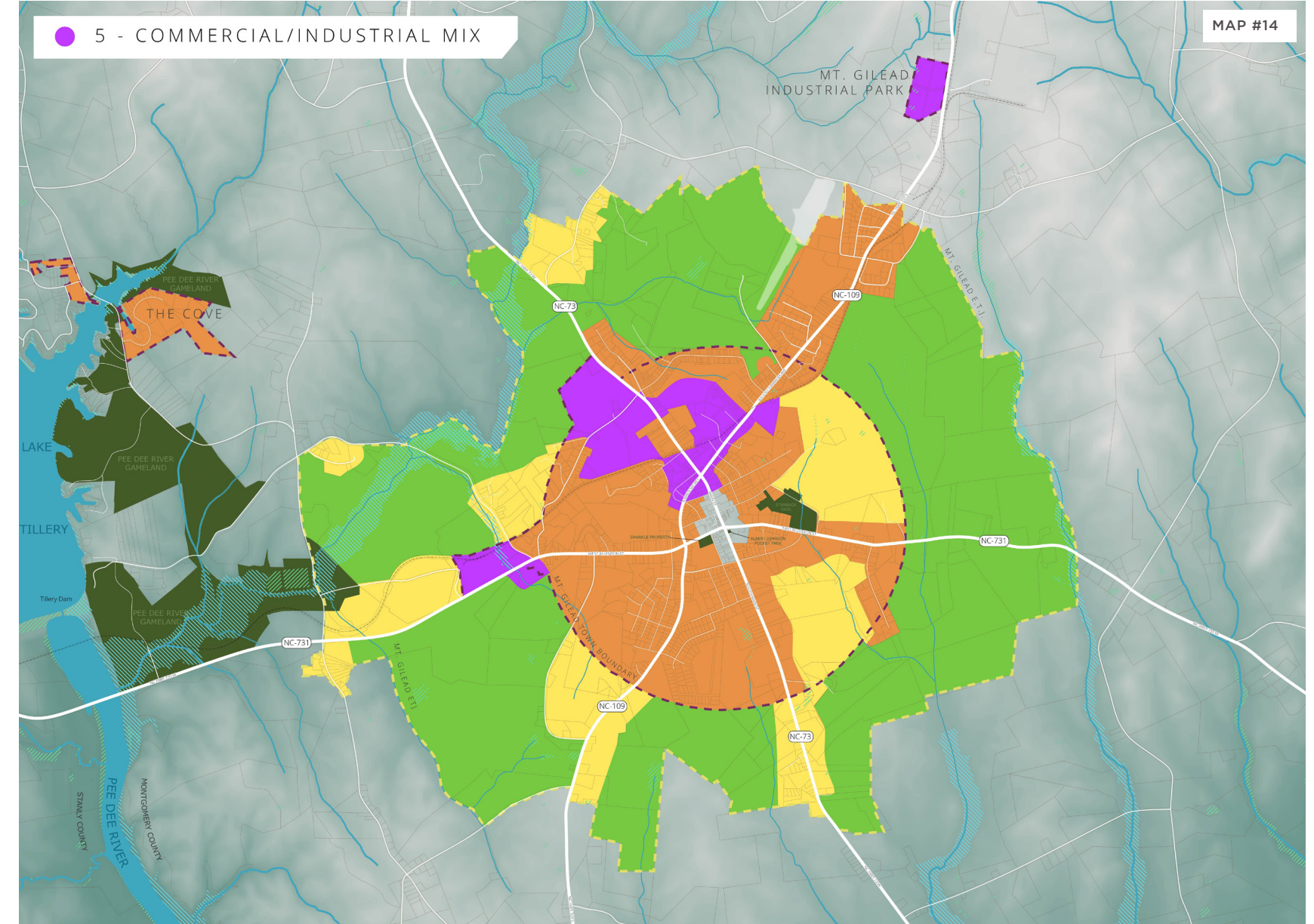
## Sector 6: TOWN CENTER

Sector 6 is characterized by a dense, compact street grid, a well-developed pedestrian network, and readily-available water or wastewater infrastructure. The Town Center is a complete community with walkable neighborhoods and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes. Development should prioritize the preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings, encourage compatible infill development and locate parking on the street or side and rear of buildings. Architectural standards for Mt. Gilead's Town Center Historic District should be strengthened to ensure appropriate scale, massing, orientation, and location of buildings. The Town Center is well provided for in terms of urban services, making it the most efficient and fiscally responsible area for redevelopment or development of underutilized land.

Appropriate Land Uses and Development Types:

» Mixed residential, commercial, and entertainment uses

» Civic and cultural uses

» Municipal services

» Medium to high residential densities and commercial uses are encouraged to locate within Sector 6 areas where both water and wastewater services are available



MAP #15

● 6 - TOWN CENTER

# MOUNT GILEAD FUTURE LAND USE MAP



MAP #16

**LEGEND**

**Future Land Use**

- **1** - Rural Conserved Lands
- **2** - Rural Reserved Lands
- **3** - Low Density Rural Community
- **4** - Neighborhood Mixed Use
- **5** - Commercial / Industrial Mix
- **6** - Town Center

- Key Gateway Locations
- Parcels
- Town Boundary
- Mt. Gilead E.T.J.
- Water Features
- Wetlands
- A and AE Floodzones
- Streets
- Highways
- Railroads

0.5 Miles
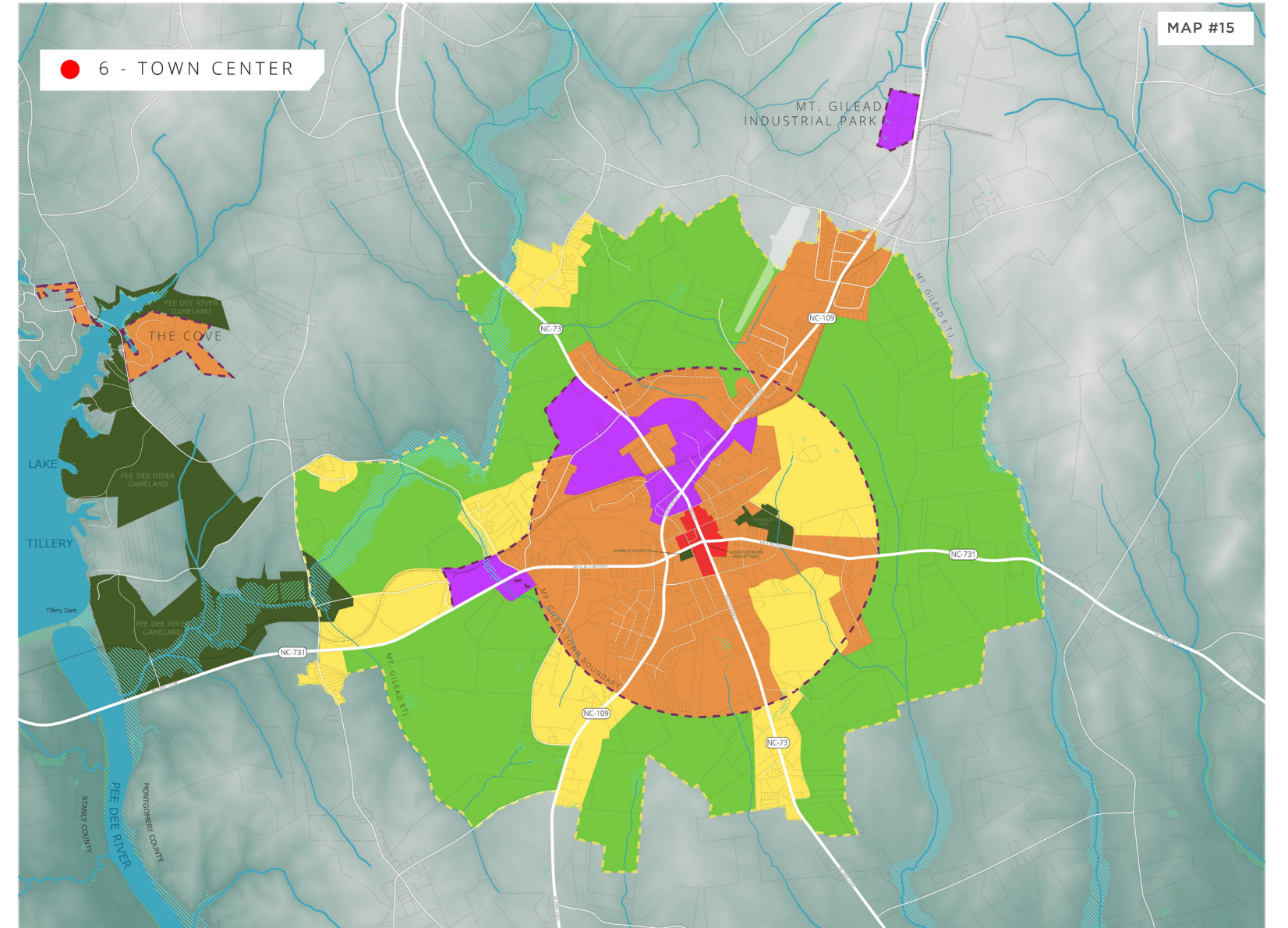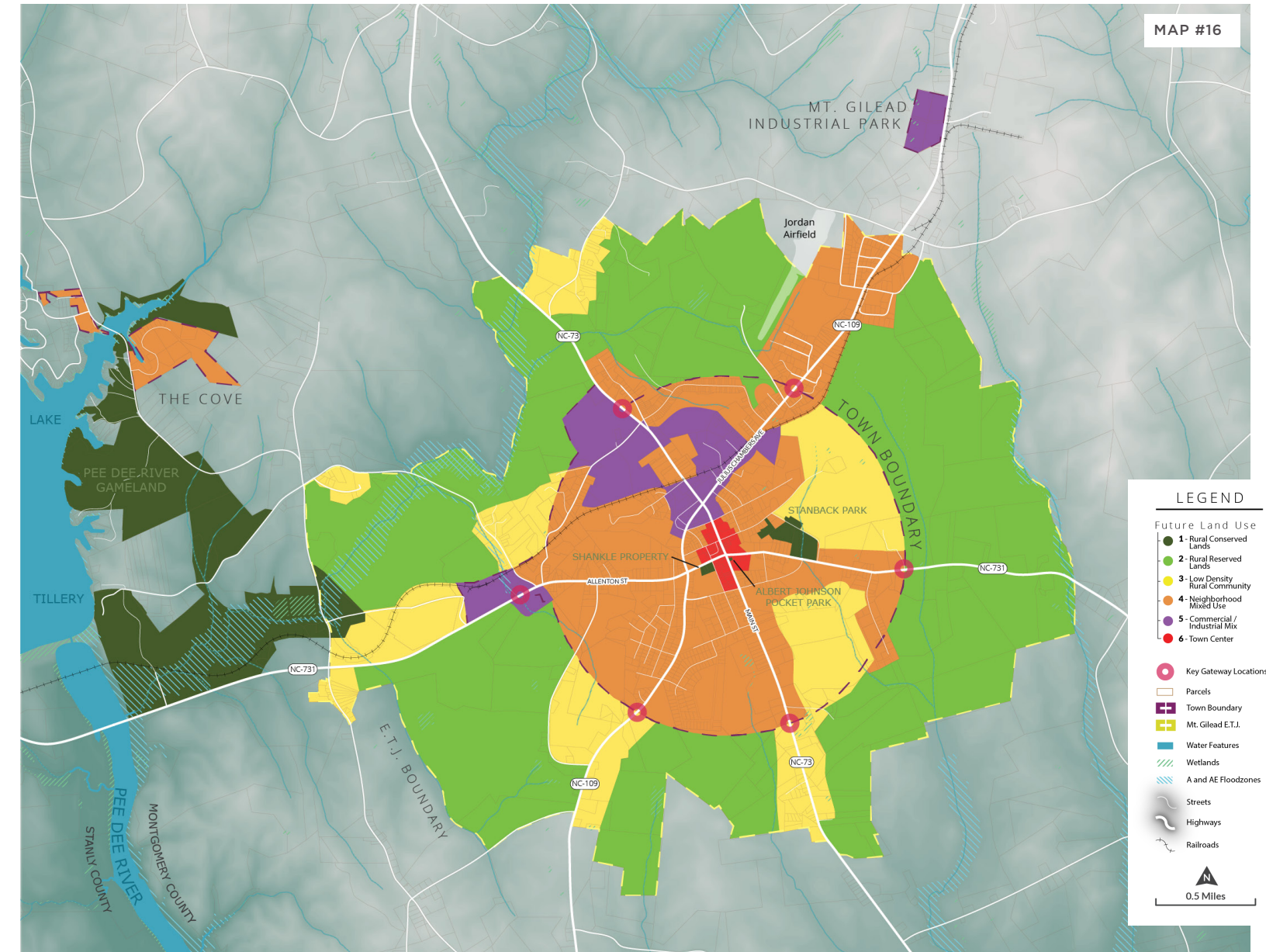
## LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT
## POLICY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1  Encourage new development in areas with existing available infrastructure.

1.1  Amend Zoning Ordinance for consistency with the 2040 Future Land Use Map and recommendations of *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead*.

1.1.1  Explicitly provide for vertical mixed-use in the Central Business District.

1.1.2  Explicitly provide for neighborhood mixed-used development in Sector 4.

1.1.3  Reduce minimum parking requirements and add maximums for Sector 5, Commercial/Industrial Mix.

1.2  Adopt Conservation Cluster Development standards to encourage smart growth and open space preservation.

1.3  Incentivize new commercial development in targeted growth areas (Sectors 4, 5, 6).

1.3.1  Grant relief from tap fees by spreading payments out over a period of months.

1.3.2  Scale development regulations and requirements based on size of project and impact. Develop a threshold or tier system so as not to over-burden or discourage smaller projects and adaptive reuse.

1.3.3  Reduce or eliminate minimum lot sizes for zoning districts that correspond with Sectors 4, 5, 6.

1.4  Require annexation for all new development around Lake Tillery that desires public sewer service from Mt. Gilead. Require conservation cluster development as conditions of service in order to conserve the natural aesthetic of Lake Tillery and maintain efficient extension of necessary infrastructure.

## LAND IS THE BASE RESOURCE FROM WHICH COMMUNITY PROSPERITY IS BUILT AND SUSTAINED. IT MUST NOT BE SQUANDERED
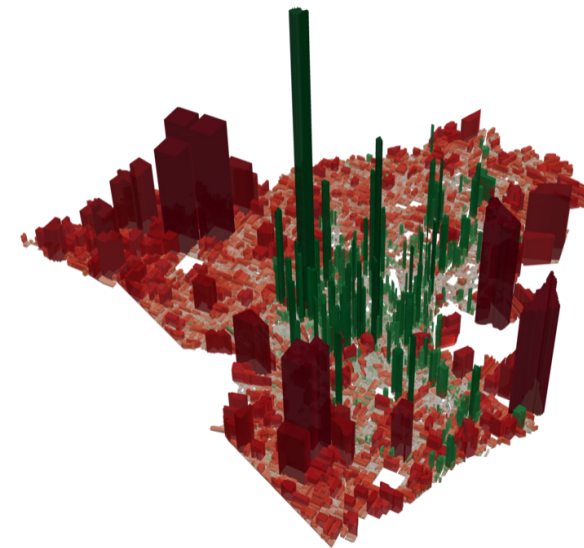
Source: Urban3 and Strong Towns

### CASE STUDY #1: A The Financial Case For Smart Growth And Traditional Development Patterns

Property tax revenue is the lifeblood of a local government's budget. Often, development of any kind is mistakenly heralded as a good thing because it signals new private investment, increased property value, and subsequently, increased tax revenues for the town. But not all development contributes to the long-term wealth of the town.

Towns, cities, and developers have historically measured the productive value of development by the total value of real estate and the total tax production. This metric is inherently flawed in that it ignores the cost of land consumption and long-term public infrastructure maintenance. Growth, in and of itself, does not equate to the creation of wealth. A financially-solvent town needs to make sure that its land use is productive: that the development activity taking place on land within the town is creating enough wealth to support the infrastructure and services needed for that place to continue to exist and thrive.

A more accurate measurement of the productivity of development is tax-value per acre. Geoanalytics firm, Urban3, and new urbanism non-profit, Strong Towns, have expertly utilized this method of measurement to prove the efficacy of traditional patterns of development and new smart growth over auto-oriented suburban development at generating long-term wealth rather than long-term maintenance liability for towns and cities.

Take for example, the analysis pictured to the left of Lafayette, Louisiana. The 3D model illustrates which parts of the city generate revenue through taxes and which parts cost the city money in maintenance. Green indicates revenue-generating properties (profit), while red signals expense-generating properties (loss). The higher the column, the more revenue or the greater the expense to the city. The analysis clearly indicates that the city's downtown core, where parcels are smaller and development is more compact, generates sustainable revenues while the surrounding sprawl costs the city more in services than it generates in revenues..

Combining nine small parcels into a 3.5-acre tract at the corner of South Main and Haywood Streets presents an opportunity to extend the traditional mixed-use downtown block to undeveloped land south of the Food King. This concept presents an opportunity for 22,600 SF of new mixed-use space characterized by upper story residential or office space and ground floor retail, entertainment, and restaurants that front on South Main Street. Thoughtful architectural and site design can extend the vernacular of Main Street to create a cohesive aesthetic that respects the historic nature of Mount Gilead's downtown square.

The concept also includes a bungalow or cottage court on School Street that provides single-family workforce housing for young professionals, like teachers or other public service personnel. The residential component of this concept provides a captive market for ground-floor businesses located in the mixed-use buildings. It provides residents with walkable access to dining, retail, and recreation in the heart of Town.

The suggested policies and code amendments contained in this section of the plan can help facilitate and encourage this type of development. Mount Gilead's zoning ordinance is one of the most powerful tools that the Town can use to incentivize or discourage certain types of development, so it's imperative to frequently evaluate the zoning ordinance to ensure that it supports desired development patterns. It's important to note that this type of development can be constructed in phases over time and does not have to occur all at once.

A development concept such as this, in coordination with participating landowners, could be a strong candidate for working with the *Incremental Development Alliance*, a non-profit aimed at supporting small, local developers who want to implement new neighborhood-scale projects in their own towns. Learn more at *incrementaldevelopment.org.*

## SCHEMATIC #2: Mixing it Up at Main & Haywood





Massing model illustrates building height and setbacks



Credit: Opticos Designs

THREE STORY MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT: 2 UNITS @ 11,300 SF EACH.

BUNGALOW COURT: 10 SINGLE UNITS @ 855 SF EACH AND INDIVIDUAL DRIVEWAYS

## SCHEMATIC #3: Conservation Cluster Development Patterns
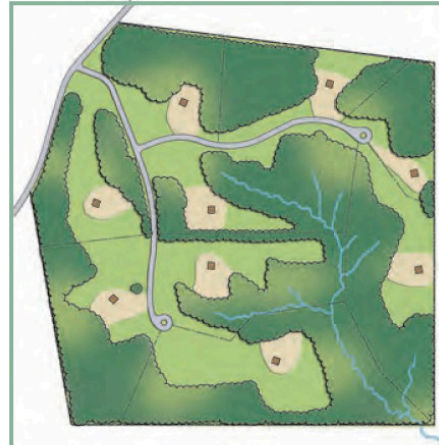


| Figure 10 | **Option 3**<br>Estate Lots<br>50% Density Reduction<br>9 Lots<br>Typical Lot Size:<br>160,000 sq. ft. (±4 acres)<br>No common<br>open space required |
| Figure 11 | **Option 4**<br>Country Properties<br>70% Density Reduction<br>5 Lots<br>Maximum Density:<br>10 acres per<br>principal dwelling<br>No common<br>open space required |
| Figure 12 | **Option 5**<br>Hamlet or Village<br>Double Density<br>36 Lots<br>Lot Size Range:<br>6,000 to 12,000 sq. ft..<br>70% Undivided<br>Open Space |
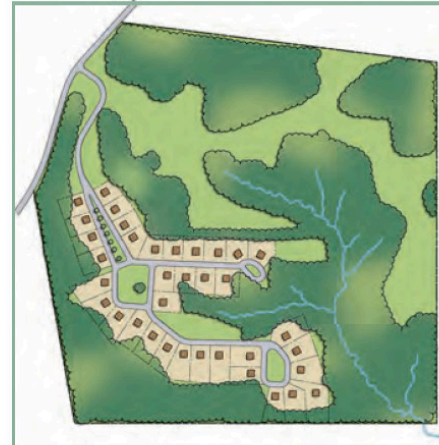
*Credit: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Natural Lands Trust*

The Conservation Cluster approach to development is characterized by a smaller development footprint that prioritizes green space preservation by designing with a higher number of units per acre clustered in a smaller area of the overall project site. This approach to development is the opposite of traditional suburban sprawl that consumes large acreages for a small number of residential or commercial units. This type of development can be incentivized or even required through the Town's zoning ordinance. The illustration depicts three approaches to residential development on the same site comparing conventional development with a Conservation Cluster approach. Each development requires the same investment in water and sewer infrastructure, however the Conservation Cluster design quadruples the number of residential units, making the infrastructure investment financially sustainable while also preserving the maximum amount of green space.

2. Provide desirable housing that meets the needs of diverse income levels, physical abilities, and multiple generations.

2.1   Provide a supply of affordable residential lots for development by ensuring that zoning districts in Sector 4 (Neighborhood Mixed Use) allow for more flexible development standards such as:

2.1.1   Minimum lot sizes at 5,000 sq. ft.

2.1.2   Minimum lot width at 50ft.

2.1.3   Shallow front and rear setbacks at 15ft.

2.1.4   Zero-lot line or very shallow side setbacks (5ft.)

2.1.5   Encourage garages at the rear or side of houses

2.1.6   Eliminate or reduce the additional lot square footage that is required with the addition of dwelling units.

2.2   Allow duplexes, town homes, condominiums, cottage/bungalow courts, and multifamily housing by-right in the zoning districts located in Sector 4.

2.3   Attract Low-income House Tax Credit and Senior Housing Tax Credit projects by offering a streamlined zoning process, density bonuses, and reduced minimum parking requirements in Sector 4.

2.4   Explore potential for establishing a community land-trust program that will allow lower income residents to purchase homes and build equity at subsidized rates.

### CASE STUDY #2: Creating Community Wealth: Durham Community Land Trust

A community land trust is a legal structure that enables individuals to become homeowners while ensuring the permanent future affordability of homes. In this structure, a non-profit organization (or trust) purchases a portion of land, legally assuming ownership. Individuals purchase or rent homes on this land, while paying a small nominal monthly rental fee for the land on which the house sits.

Homeowners in a land trust build wealth and share this back into the community to ensure future affordability of the homes. As market values of their homes increase, homeowners earn a percentage of this difference at time of resale which also reduces the cost to the next homeowner. This protects the community from gentrification and rising costs of surrounding property. While costs remain low, owners are still able to make improvements to their own homes and maintain their land.

Established in 1987, the Durham Community Land Trust (DCLT) in Durham, NC furthers their mission by making improvements to homes and land for energy sustainability, advocating for transit options in their communities, and expanding property ownership to accommodate rentals and multi-family properties. DCLT has provided rental homes for over 250 adults and 150 youth earning 60% or lower Area Median Income, with average rent $700 lower than the city's average rent in 2020. By empowering low-income residents and maintaining low housing costs in perpetuity, land trusts protect renters, homeowners, and communities.

### CASE STUDY #3: Mobile Makeover: City of Lenoir Mobile Home Standards

Manufactured housing or "mobile homes" provide a form of affordable and practical housing in areas where there is a shortage of reliable housing. When appropriately regulated and located on a site, manufactured homes can exist harmoniously rather than detract from the aesthetics of the surrounding area. The City of Lenoir, NC regulates the placement and exterior features of manufactured homes to preserve the visual integrity of the built environment while allowing this highly affordable and available form of housing as an option for residents who are otherwise unable to purchase or construct their own homes. For example, the City only permits double-wide mobile homes constructed after 1976 and requires the following appearance standards to be met:

» All towing apparatus, wheels, axles, and transporting lights must be removed.
» The home must be permanently placed on a masonry foundation with a finished exterior of brick, stone, stucco, or split-faced concrete masonry units.
» The pitch of the roof must be at least 3 to 12 and finished with a type of shingle that is commonly used in standard residential construction.
» A covered porch must be permanently mounted to the ground at the front door, a minimum of 36 square feet, with a front-gabled roof oriented towards the street.
» Stairs to all exterior doors of the home are required and must be permanently mounted to the ground.
» Exterior facades must be vinyl or wood siding, stone, brick, or other non-metallic material



2.5 Partner with Habitat for Humanity of the NC Sandhills to identify locations and recipient families for new build projects.

2.6 Allow manufactured housing by right in the ETJ with lot requirements and design standards to protect existing rural residential character.

2.7 Allow attached or detached accessory dwelling units in all residential districts by right.

2.8 Work with the Mt. Gilead Redevelopment Corporation to convert the second floor of the Piedmont Arts Center Building to residential units as recommended in the 2010 Planning Report for the Mt. Gilead Arts Center.

2.9 Incentivize upper story residential in downtown buildings by establishing a Town-administered grant program to assist downtown building owners with architectural assessments and feasibility studies for converting upper-stories into residential units.

2.10 Incentivize upper story residential in new mixed-use development through a streamlined zoning process, by-right construction, density bonuses, and reduced minimum parking requirements. Permit on-street parking along the lot frontage to count toward required parking.

3. Preserve rural residential and traditional character.

3.1 Protect rural and residential character by adopting commercial design standards for highway corridors that prohibit strip-style linear development and corporate architecture that does not contribute to the traditional vernacular of the town.

3.2 Preserve residential character by adopting design standards for multi-family housing that will ensure compatibility with existing neighborhoods.

3.3 Update subdivision regulations to include the following in order to continue the character and precedent of historic neighborhoods:

3.3.1 Require internal and external street connectivity

3.3.2 Prohibit cul-de-sacs as much as possible

3.3.3 Incentivize Conservation Cluster Subdivisions through a streamlined approval process and density bonuses

3.3.4 Differentiate subdivision standards based on Land Use Sector in order to facilitate appropriate block lengths (600ft. or less), connectivity, and compact, walkable developments in Sectors 4, 5, and 6.

### CASE STUDY#4: Moving Lenoir to the Second Floor

Many cities seek to renovate historic downtowns with ground-level commercial opportunities and upper story residential units. Promoting the economic and cultural benefits of this kind of redevelopment has empowered property owners, business owners, and more to seek grants and funding to sell and redevelop their property for second-story residences. Many of the barriers to success for this kind of development are rooted in lack of information and financial support provided to key players and property owners.

Lenoir's "Moving Lenoir to the Second Floor" and Building Upgrades and Improvements for Lenoir Downtown (BUILD) programs help to alleviate these barriers through a variety of financial incentives. In Lenoir's downtown area, commercial property owners and business owners renting commercial space are eligible to apply for BUILD grants based on tangible interior and exterior building improvement costs. The BUILD grant has a matching requirement, as recipients are required to invest $2 for every $1 received from the grant, ensuring the program covers 33.33% of all building rehabilitation costs up to $5,000. As a result of these programs' education and financial incentives, Lenoir has achieved significant progress in downtown redevelopment. As of April 2020, 8 property owners began renovations and 8 more properties sold, ushering in over half a million dollars in private investment in the area and one-million in private acquisitions in a single year.
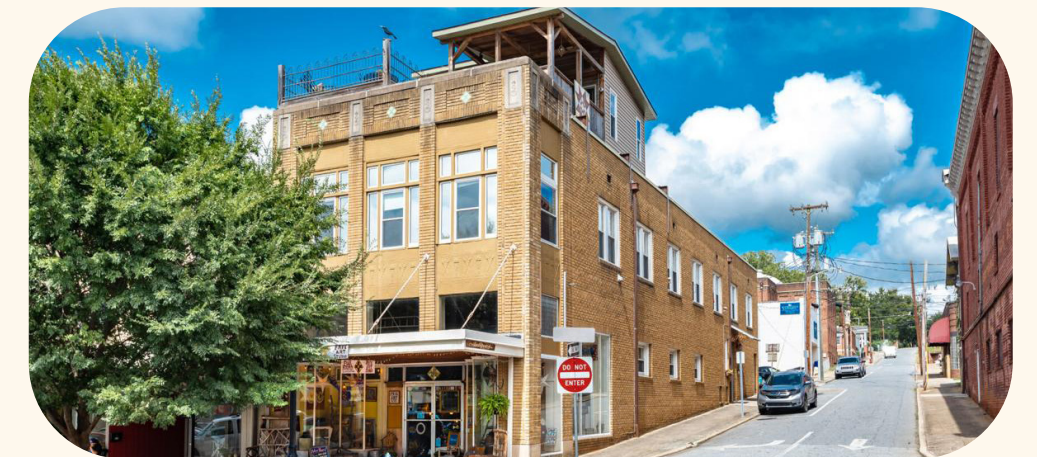
4. Protect historic quality of downtown Mt. Gilead.

4.1  Continue protecting historic architecture by enforcing both the National Register Historic District Standards and the Downtown Historic District Guidelines in their respective districts and requiring Certificates of Appropriateness for proposed modifications to buildings.

4.2  Consider working with a licensed architect to strengthen the Downtown Historic District Guidelines by setting specific architectural design standards and improving clarity with illustrated schematics.

4.3  Amend zoning ordinance to ensure that off-street parking is not required for businesses in the Central Business District. Explicitly permit shared parking between adjoining, adjacent, or nearby lots.

4.4  Pursue grant funding from state and federal programs to provide seed money for a façade grant program to encourage façade upgrades to downtown buildings.

4.5  Consider establishing a Municipal Service District for the Downtown core to provide funding for downtown infrastructure, streetscape, and aesthetic improvements.

4.6  Consider amending code-enforcement regulations to include an Interim Relief Clause that would allow the Town to make property improvements at a premium and assess fees or tax-liens on buildings that owners have failed to upkeep.

5. Provide appropriate transition between intensity of development.

5.1  Transition Zoning Ordinance toward a form-based code that prioritizes regulation of the physical form of development (scale, mass, type of buildings and streets) more than separation of uses.

"A TOWN IS SAVED, NOT MORE BY THE RIGHTEOUS MEN IN IT THAN BY THE WOODS AND SWAMPS THAT SURROUND IT."

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"WITH MULTIPLE PERMIT-REGULATED MANUFACTURING FACILITIES IN OR NEAR THE TOWN, INCLUDING TWO TITLE V GENERATORS WITH THE POTENTIAL TO EMIT 100+ TONS OF POLLUTANTS PER YEAR, EMISSION LEVELS OF FUTURE HEAVY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE CAREFULLY ANALYZED TO DETERMINE THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON AIR QUALITY."

— 2009 MOUNT GILEAD LAND USE PLAN

6. Provide for neighborhood-scale commercial nodes.

6.1  Incentivize infill development and redevelopment of existing buildings through streamlined permit process, reduced application fees, and by-right construction.

6.2  Reduce minimum parking standards to allow for easier small-scale commercial development. Allow on-street parking along the lot frontage to count toward parking requirement.

7. Preserve prime timber lands, agricultural lands, open space, and water resources.

7.1  Partner with Montgomery County to develop a Strategic Land Use Plan for Lake Tillery aimed at smart growth that conserves the natural and aesthetic value of the lake and provides for new public access and recreation locations.

7.2  Work with Montgomery County, Three Rivers Land Trust, and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to prevent total privatization and development of the lakeshore by conserving lakefront property for public access & low-impact recreation tourism.

7.3  Take an active role in assisting the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Water Management Group to develop a river basin management plan to balance pressure on Lake Tillery for increased river flow and drinking-water supply.

7.4  Consider a cap on the number of active Title V air pollutant industries permitted within the Mount Gilead zoning jurisdiction.

7.5  Encourage owners of prime farmland to take advantage of incentives and participate in the County's Voluntary Agriculture District and/or establish an agricultural conservation easement held by a local land conservancy like Three Rivers Land Trust.

### EXHIBIT #1: Lake Tillery

By the Numbers:

Water Source: Pee Dee River

Created:1928

Area: 5,000 acres

Miles of Shoreline: 118

Miles from Mt. Gilead: 5

The Tillery hydroelectric dam on the Pee Dee River was put into service in 1928, creating the 5,000-acre impoundment known today as Lake Tillery. The lake and hydroelectric dam are managed by Duke Energy. Lake Tillery continues to be a popular outdoor recreation destination for boating, fishing, and water sports. Mount Gilead is located less than five miles from the Lilly's Bridge area on the eastern side of the lake. This area is home to Lilly's Bridge Marina, a destination in its own right as a full-service marina, restaurant, and hang-out complete with mini-golf. Opposite the lake from Lilly's Bridge Marina, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission manages a public boat launch and lake access area with vault toilets and a large, modern picnic shelter. The Pee Dee River Blueway, a designated section of the Carolina Thread Trail, begins south of the Tillery Hydroelectric Dam and extends 30.5 miles to Rockingham.

Over the past decade, the shoreline of Lake Tillery has seen increasing development of private residential subdivisions, including The Cove, a satellite annexation of Mount Gilead. While Mount Gilead does not have jurisdictional control over property surrounding Lake Tillery, it can leverage regulatory authority over new developments through its utility extension policy and annexation policy. It is in the Town's best interest to work with Montgomery County and local land trusts to develop a conservation plan for Lake Tillery to ensure the preservation of this asset for outdoor recreation tourism and public lake access.

## ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

### KEY CHALLENGES

! » Realize Mount Gilead's potential as a destination for recreation tourism in the Uwharrie National Forest, at Lake Tillery, and on the PeeDee River in order to capture higher volume of tourism dollars at local businesses

» Fill vacant downtown storefronts with merchants, retailers, and small businesses

» Lack of business diversity

### VISION STATEMENTS

OUR TOWN will offer an authentic experience to residents and visitors that centers on the connection between our vibrant, walkable, historic downtown and abundant natural resource-based recreation offerings.

OUR TOWN will support a diverse economy that encourages the growth of traditional sectors and existing business while fostering new opportunities for nature-based recreation tourism, small business growth, and emerging tech & green industries.

THE ECONOMIC VITALITY AND RESILIENCY OF SMALL TOWNS CAN LARGELY BE TRACED TO THE SINGLE PRINCIPAL THAT *PLACE MATTERS*. A SENSE OF PLACE IS WHAT DISTINGUISHES A COMMUNITY FROM EVERYWHERE ELSE. IT IS WHAT ATTRACTS TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE AND ENTICES BUSINESSES TO LOCATE HERE INSTEAD OF THERE.

Manufacturing is a proud tradition in Mount Gilead and currently employs over one-third of the population. The manufacturing companies appear to be stable long-term employers given that many are engaged in the production or processing of wood and paper products from the area's abundant timber and have easy access to the state highways that criss-cross the town. Mount Gilead's industrial park faces challenges, but provides a readily-available location for new industrial tenants and should be marketed widely to diverse sectors including emerging technology, logistics & distribution, and green industries, in addition to traditional manufacturing.

Mount Gilead's greatest opportunity for diversifying its economy lies in the town's ability to capitalize on its proximity to Lake Tillery, the Uwharrie National Forest, Pee Dee River, and Town Creek Indian Mounds as outdoor recreation tourism destinations. Mount Gilead's well-preserved, historic downtown has the potential to establish the town as a basecamp for the outdoors by offering unique shops, restaurants, and even lodging in a friendly, walkable atmosphere. In a shifting economy where remote-workers can live anywhere, the town is poised to leverage these assets to attract a new wave of residents and investment. It's imperative that Mount Gilead's economic development strategy include a diverse range of initiatives.

## POLICY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Attract new citizens and visitors to Mount Gilead.

   1.1 Implement a distinct & recognizable visual brand for the Town.

   1.2 Build upon the 2020 Montgomery County Marketing & Tourism Assessment to develop a Mount Gilead-specific marketing strategy:

       1.2.1 Identify the Town's target audiences for downtown visitation and outdoor recreation tourism

       1.2.2 Identify a strategy for traditional and digital marketing, including social media outreach

   1.3 Promote downtown Mount Gilead to new residential developments around Lake Tillery.

   1.4 Redevelop the Town website based on target market research and key messaging about Mount Gilead's downtown & outdoor recreation assets.

   1.5 Partner with downtown churches and civic uses, such as the elementary school, to provide additional public parking during times that the parking lots are not used for church or school. Install signage to direct visitors to these lots.

2. Leverage natural resources for outdoor recreation and agritourism.

   2.1 Work with the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) to establish Town participation in the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council.

   2.2 Install wayfinding signage from nearby recreation destinations to Downtown Mt. Gilead.

       2.2.1 Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site

       2.2.2 Lake Tillery & Lily's Bridge Marina

       2.2.3 Uwharrie National Forest

### CASE STUDY #5: Placebranding: Community-Driven Visioning in Belmont, NC

Place-branding is a community-driven visioning process aimed at achieving consensus on identity and aspirations. A place-brand reflects the character and spirit of the community. In essence, it is a storytelling tool; a vehicle for broadcasting a community's identity. Place-branding communicates both tangible and intangible assets of the City through visual and written mediums. The place-branding process answers vital questions about the community's identity and shared goals. Results of the place-branding process have significant implications for community and economic development.

Throughout 2019 and 2020, the City of Belmont, NC engaged in a place-branding process to discover, organize, and articulate the city's identity by developing a brand identity, tagline, and logo system. The process included in-depth stakeholder and pubic engagement through focus groups and an online survey to inform development of the brand identity and style. The resulting brand platform, logo system, and promotional collateral represent the celebrated diversity of Belmont and its many offerings while honoring the City's heritage as a railroad town and former textile hub. The place-branding campaign included the creation of brand collateral such as downtown banners, storygraphics for marketing, a signage package for new city facilities, and a promotional video.

### EXHIBIT #2: Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site

BY THE NUMBERS:

**Settlement Established:** 11th Century

**State Historic Site Established:** 1955

**Annual Visitors:** 20,000

**Miles from Mt. Gilead:** 3.5

Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site, located 3.5 miles southeast of Mount Gilead at the confluence of Town Creek and the Little River, is one of the most archaeologically significant sites in North Carolina and has been the subject of continuous archaeological investigations since 1937.

Town Creek Indian Mound, the only state historic site dedicated to interpreting Indigenous heritage, preserves 11th century Pee Dee indigenous culture through re-constructed mounds and structures. The state historic site includes an interpretive center on site and attracts more than 20,000 visitors per year.

From around 1200-1400, the Pee Dee culture flourished in trade and craft. The various mounds and fortified structures served multiple community purposes, from mortuaries and burial sites to ceremonial spiritual and political venues. Mount Gilead honors these original inhabitants with a large mural facing Allenton Street in downtown.

### EXHIBIT #3: Uwharrie National Forest

BY THE NUMBERS

**Established:** 1961

**Land Area:** 52,000 acres

**Miles of Hiking Trails:** ~85

**Miles of Mtn. Bike Trails:** 60

**Miles of Equestrian Trails:** 40

**Miles of OHV Trails:** 17

**Miles from Mt. Gilead:** 8

A defining feature of the region, the Uwharrie National Forest was established in 1961, making it one of the newest additions to the National Forest system. The 52,000-acre wilderness rises from the Yadkin & Pee Dee Rivers to provide the region with an enormous source for outdoor recreation adventures. The National Forest offers hiking, mountain biking, Off Road Vehicle, and equestrian trails in addition to camping, fishing, hunting, and a shooting range. Approximately 25 miles of the planned 50-mile Uwharrie National Recreation Trail are established in the National Forest today. As demand for outdoor recreation amenities continue to grow, Mount Gilead has a significant opportunity to leverage its proximity to the Uwharrie National Forest through strategic marketing efforts and the establishment of a physical connection from town to trails via a multi-use path.



Photo by: Adam Mowery for *Our State Magazine*

2.3 Re-establish a community farmers market in downtown Mount Gilead.

2.4 Encourage farm-to-table restaurants.

2.5 Encourage farm stands and markets with value-added agricultural products.

2.6 Encourage grocers and food-service businesses to source local products for sale and distribution.

2.7 Encourage and promote area agritourism enterprises such as you-pick farms, vineyards/wineries, breweries, farm tours, mazes, and nature-based destinations.

2.8 Partner with Montgomery Community College, Piedmont Conservation Council, Three Rivers Land Trust, Center for Environmental Farming Systems, Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District, and local agricultural landowners to establish an incubator farm that provides available land and capital to aspiring farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs.

FARMERS MARKETS PROVIDE ACCESS TO HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD AND BRING NEIGHBORS TOGETHER TO FOSTER A THRIVING SENSE OF COMMUNITY.



CASE STUDY #6: Growing the Next Generation of Farmers: Hines-Chapel Incubator Farm

Mt Gilead and surrounding Montgomery County have a rich agricultural history, but with a nationwide shortage of new farmers due to lack of funding, land, and other resources, it is essential to take active steps to preserve this agricultural heritage. One way to encourage new and sustained agricultural activity is through the support of an incubator farm. Incubator farms are like incubator businesses as they assist start-up farms and agricultural businesses in the form of access to land and capital. The goal of incubator farms in general is to lower the barrier to entry for family or small farms to thrive and prosper in the early years of establishing.

The Hines Chapel Incubator Farm proposed in Guilford County provides tangible resources to help ensure success of small, new farms through shared infrastructure, equipment, storage facilities, access to rentable tracts of land, market access, and professional training. Its management structure is in the form of a non-profit organization, which encourages the organization to operate in interest of the public good and not face larger financial hurdles while ensuring a consistent and dedicated staff. This Hines Chapel Incubator Farm also has been developed through intensive public engagement with key stakeholders through workshops and meetings, leading them to be able to form specific mission statements, goals and objectives for their individual project area. A clear strategic plan for incubator farms considering the local area's needs, funding, land access, management structures, and partnerships with community resources can bolster the success of the new and growing farmers.

3. Attract new businesses while supporting the retention and expansion of existing businesses and industry.

3.1 Request assistance from the NC Main Street Rural Planning Program to develop a Five-year Strategic Plan for the Mount Gilead Redevelopment Corporation. Include strategies for expanding operations to include broader economic development tasks such as marketing, business recruitment, small business support, and property acquisition for redevelopment.

3.2 Attract new, clean industry to Mount Gilead.

3.2.1 Work with Montgomery County and Jordan Lumber to pursue Certification for the Industrial Park through Duke Energy's Site Readiness Program.

3.2.2 Continue working with PSNC, Montgomery County, and Jordan Lumber to resolve natural gas volume issues at the Industrial Park.

3.2.3 Work with Jordan Lumber and Montgomery County to brand and promote the Industrial Park to appeal to a variety of modern industries including tech uses such as data centers or server farms.

3.2.4 Amend zoning ordinance to allow for solar farms in Sectors 2 & 3 with appropriate regulatory and design standards to protect significant viewsheds and rural vistas.

## EXHIBIT #4: Duke Energy Site Readiness

The Mount Gilead Industrial Park is a Certified North Carolina Industrial Site, meaning that this site has been vetted for certain characteristics and has completed specific site preparations in order to demonstrate a greater level of preparedness for new industrial operations. The industrial park could further distinguish itself and benefit from greater visibility by participating in Duke Energy's Site Readiness program. The program allows local government and economic development officials to work with professional site selection consultants to determine a strategy for further enhancing a site with the goal of recruiting national companies to North Carolina. Additionally, participating sites are eligible to apply for a $10,000 matching grant from Duke Energy to implement the strategy. After each site's state of readiness has advanced, Duke Energy's business recruitment team markets each site nationwide to targeted companies looking to expand or relocate their operations. The program is highly competitive, with only six sites selected for participation in 2020, but it has proven successful. Since its inception in 2005, the program has helped prepare properties across the state resulting in 5,650 new jobs and nearly $6.4 billion in capital investment. Duke Energy is the electric provider for sites participating in the program.
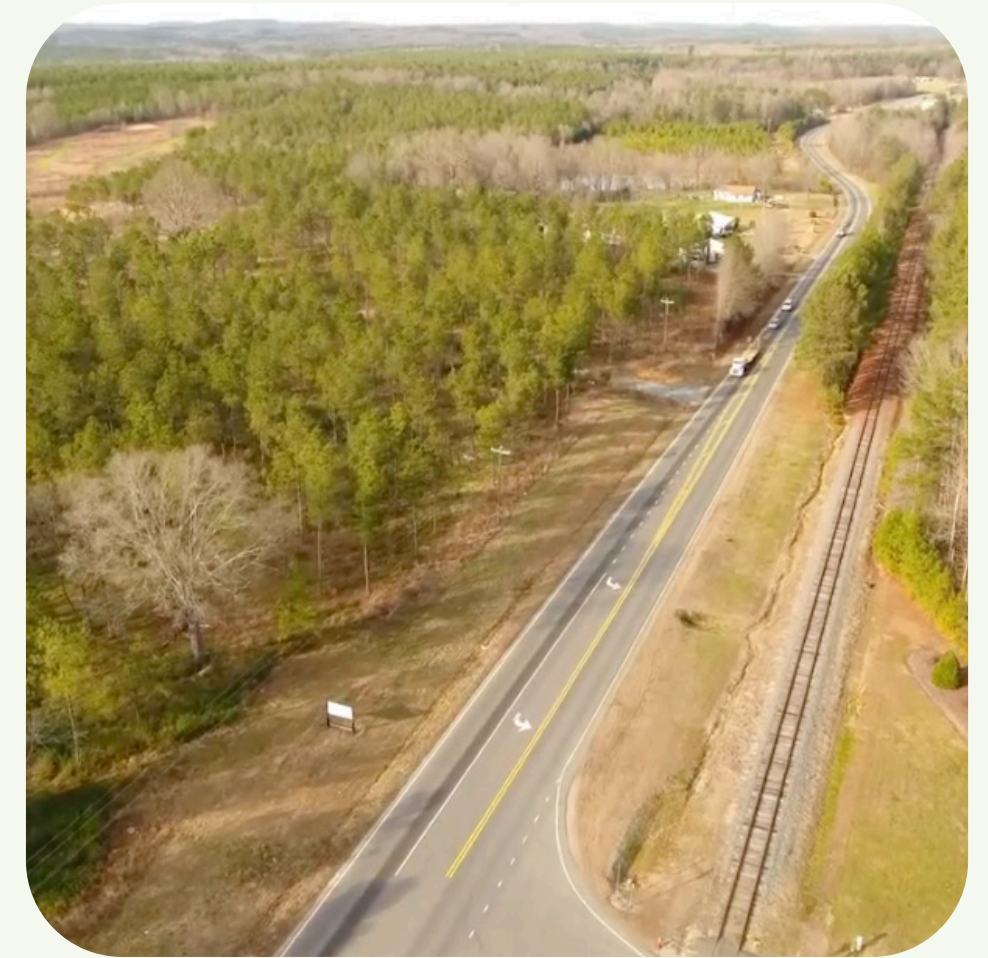
3.3 Attract businesses that supply basic goods and groceries to Mt. Gilead.

3.3.1 Work with property owners with available land in targeted growth areas (Sectors 4, 5, 6) to develop a strategy for commercial recruitment.

3.4 Encourage and grow small and mid-sized businesses.

3.4.1 Continue active participation in the NC Small Town Main Street Program. Leverage grant opportunities available to member Towns for business recruitment and building renovations.

3.4.2 Establish a dedicated business incubator space in the Piedmont Arts Center that fosters innovative start-ups, young businesses, artisans, and minority-owned businesses. Consider renaming this building to appeal to a broader range of entrepreneurs.

3.4.3 Work with Market Montgomery Chamber of Commerce & Tourism to develop and implement targeted social media campaigns that highlight Mount Gilead businesses.

3.4.4 Develop strategic partnerships with Piedmont Triad Regional Council Business Investment Fund and other non-profit Community Development Financial Institutions to facilitate financial assistance for start-ups and small businesses located in the greater Piedmont Triad region that are underserved by traditional financial institutions.

## CASE STUDY #7: Textile Mill To Opportunity Factory: Gaston Techworks

Business incubators are designed to foster local innovation and collaboration, house budding small businesses, and offer educational opportunities all under one roof. Entrepreneurial individuals from the community have access to shared office space at lower costs than a traditional office, and benefit from a variety of resources offered by the organization.

One successful example is TechWorks, a technology-focused nonprofit business incubator in Gaston County. Branded as an entrepreneurial tech hub and learning center "committed to job creation, economic growth, innovation, and talent development," TechWorks centers their mission on empowering the local community. Partnering with OpenBroadband, they have provided free Wi-Fi to the surrounding area and downtown, as well as other businesses and residents in the county. They have also partnered with Gaston College, UNC Charlotte, and other K-12 school systems to provide training in subjects such as coding, digital marketing, and entrepreneurship. By offering essential services that will grow into the future, TechWorks has succeeded in acquiring 2.5 million dollars of funding in government investment along with private and foundation contributions. TechWorks inhabits a renovated former textile mill, which offers 14,000 square feet of co-working space, conference rooms, and event space. The renovation of industrial buildings into hubs of economic and community growth also offers a great opportunity for transforming aging infrastructure into a multi-functional working venue for small local businesses by leveraging historic mill preservation tax credits.
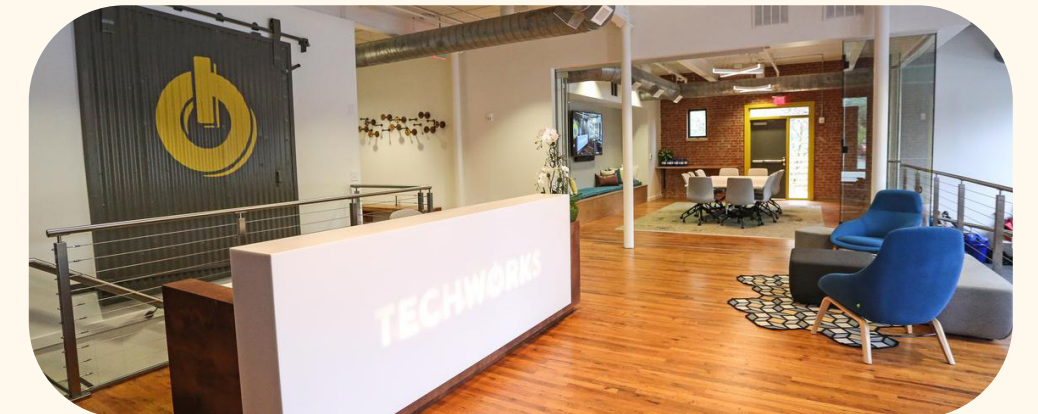
## Lot Layout and Location Criteria

STREET

STREET

Entry Vestibule

ALDI

±17,000 sq. ft.
141' x 117'

9' x 18'
Parking Stalls

### What We Look For

- ±17,000 square feet with a minimum of 85 dedicated parking spaces
- 2.5 acre pads for purchase and development
- End-cap or in line space with minimum of 100' of frontage
- Signalized, full access intersection preferred
- Dense trade area population within 3 miles
- Sites located in community and regional shopping districts with convenient access to population
- Sites zoned to allow grocery use
- Daily traffic count in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day

\* Consumers view ALDI as the affordable price leader among leading grocers, according to Market Force Information. The surveys were conducted among more than 6,000 consumers across the United States and Canada in March 2011, March 2012 and May 2013.

\*\* Based upon a price comparison of comparable products sold at leading national retail grocery stores.

[1] LoudDoor, 2013

**ALDI**

For more information about ALDI real estate opportunities, please visit **www.aldi.us.**

## EXHIBIT #5: ALDI Real Estate Opportunities

One of the primary issues raised by citizens throughout the public engagement phase, was the lack of businesses that supply basic goods and groceries. While Mount Gilead does have a small grocery store, many residents leave the town, and even the county, to do their weekly shopping. This results in retail leakage for the town as dollars earned by citizens are spent elsewhere, and is perceived as a quality of life issue for current and future residents. In evaluating strategies to address this challenge, both the Town and owners of available property should be discerning in their decision making to ensure that new development in complementary to the town's existing character in scale and corporate responsibility. One option to consider is the modestly-sized grocery chain, ALDI. ALDI operates with an aggressive expansion model and has an active real estate program that is continuously seeking new available locations. The company lists specific site criteria on the real estate opportunities section of its website, and invites property owners or project partners to submit candidate properties for consideration directly to the regional real estate contact.

## EXHIBIT #6: Community Development Financial Institutions

In addition to the PTRC Business Investment Fund, the Greensboro Community Development Fund, Carolina Community Development Fund, and Piedmont Business Capital are all North Carolina Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) that lend to start-ups and expanding local businesses, with an emphasis on supporting businesses that have difficulty accessing financing through traditional lending sources.

These non-profit community loan funds support underserved communities and community-minded entrepreneurs that are committed to starting and building locally-owned small businesses. CDFIs focus on lending to socially responsible businesses and organizations that stand to make an impact in revitalizing their communities. Each CDFI offers flexible rates, personal business counseling, and an higher rates of loan approval for non-traditional businesses and minority-owned businesses.

3.4.5   Attract vibrant transitional businesses, such as food trucks and pop-up vendors, by amending the Zoning Ordinance to permit these uses by right in appropriate locations.

3.4.6   Partner with available commercial property owners to recruit successful businesses in nearby towns to open second locations in Mount. Gilead by offering subsidized rent and/or utilities during the start-up period.

3.4.7   Amend Zoning Ordinance to allow and encourage outdoor patio seating and dining on downtown sidewalks with adequate width.

3.4.8   Scale zoning and development permit fees by project size so that fees are proportionate to the size and cost of the project.

3.4.9   Reduce restrictions on home-based businesses to foster fledgling small business, expand the local economy, and increase neighborhood wealth.

3.4.10 Partner with property owners of vacant commercial lots in downtown to attract and incentivize infill development that extend or fill gaps in the street wall.

3.5   Attract new lodging business to support the tourism industry.

3.5.1   Work with downtown property owners with available buildings to attract a boutique hotel.

3.5.2   Amend Zoning Ordinance, consistent with state regulations, to allow for Airbnbs that will provide lodging for visitors and an extra source of income for Mount Gilead residents.

3.5.3   Pursue a Public-Private Partnership with a project-specific development agreement to develop a unique Town-owned lodging destination oriented toward outdoor recreation travelers. In this arrangement, a private company can lease the property from the Town and conduct business operations of the facility.

"MOBILE AND TRANSITIONAL BUSINESSES OFTEN PROVIDE AN AVENUE TOWARD A PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT"



Photo by: Abby Weeden Photography

## CASE STUDY #8: Treehouse Tourism on the Cashie River

In 2016, the Mayor of the small Town of Windsor formed a committee to find new ways to boost tourism utilizing the 55-mile Cashie River which flows through the town. The committee leveraged their natural resources to develop a unique tourism destination in a set of small, tucked away elevated cabins which sit above the river in the trees. These treehouses are linked to the nearby campground and the natural landscape with a 480-foot-long boardwalk to intertwine the experience of tourists with the natural setting. With a $190,000 grant from the NC Department of Commerce, Windsor contracted experts from the reality TV show "The Treehouse Guys" to help design and build the treehouses and used this filmed opportunity to further amplify the marketing for their area. Tourists are encouraged to engage with the town's natural setting with nearby kayak and canoe rental and guided river tours. Local Food Trucks also offer food to visitors in the campground or tourists travel to the nearby downtown area to dine. Since opening in 2017, the treehouses have seen near-constant rental by visitors to Windsor from across the country. Building off this success, the town later received another large state grant to add two more treehouses which were opened late 2018.

## CASE STUDY #9: From Vacant to Vibrant: Adaptive Reuse through Public-Private Partnerships

Public-Private Partnership (P3) legislation, passed by the NC General Assembly in 2013, provides flexible contracting authority under which local governments can partner with a private developer for the construction, operation, and financing of a capital project. The Town of Hendersonville recently utilized this contracting authority to rehabilitate and convert a dilapidated historic mill building to create 35 new rental apartments for workforce and moderate-income residents. The freshly renovated Grey Mill in downtown Hendersonville opened its doors to new residents in 2020, offering a positive impact on the local economy and quality of life of the area workforce.

With a total development investment of $8.5 million, the town of Hendersonville was able to partner with multiple private and public entities to redevelop the Grey Hosiery Mill which stood unused and vacant for over 20 years. One close partnership was with the Development Finance Initiative (DFI) at the UNC School of Government. DFI offered a variety of services including parcel analysis, public engagement, and creating a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the project. DFI also helped to select Belmont Sayre, LLC as a private developer to partner with Hendersonville for the renovation of Grey Mill.

The success of the project has led to the city and developers being honored with multiple awards including the NC Main Street Award the Bronze Rank in the Real Estate Redevelopment and Reuse category of the International Economic Development Council's awards program. The property value is now estimated at $6 million and is expected to generate nearly 65 thousand dollars of tax revenue for the city and county each year. The location of the mill along with the massive amount of local and statewide support and funding also catalyzed even more overall development throughout the area.
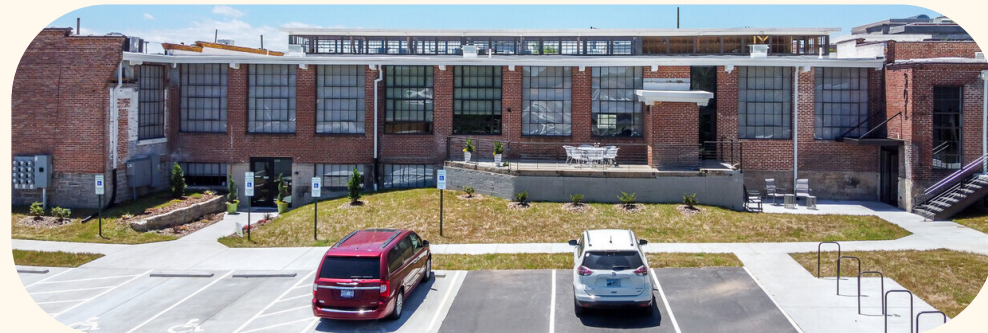


3.6 Publish and promote an inventory of available industrial properties in Sector 5.

3.7 Continue working with PTRC to identify candidate sites for the Regional Brownfields Redevelopment Program.

3.8 Preserve and facilitate adaptive re-use of Mount Gilead's historic structures.

   3.8.1 Coordinate with private owners and potential re-developers of historic properties to pursue state and federal historic preservation tax credits to complete adaptive reuse projects of historic mills and factories.

   3.8.2 Follow recommendations of the *2018 Construction Professionals Network Institute & NC Growth - Mt. Gilead Report* for assessing, acquiring, and rehabilitating the Russell-Harvell Hosiery Mill. Consider a Public-Private Partnership with a project-specific development agreement to rehabilitate the site and return the mill to a productive mixed-use facility. (See Appendix C for details on Public Private Partnership legislation).

   3.8.3 Work with a consulting firm to assess the community's desired use for the Historic Train Depot and evaluate the integrity of the structure and feasibility of rehabilitation for adaptive re-use

3.9 Return abandoned commercial properties to productive use and encourage new infill development by developing a strategic foreclosure program for properties that are severely tax-delinquent and are routinely cited for code violations.

## CASE STUDY #10: Delinquent to Desirable: Returning Properties to Productive Use through Strategic Foreclosures

A Strategic Foreclosure is a tool available to most towns and cities to recover tax dollars while putting abandoned properties back on the private market for redevelopment. Often, towns must invest tax dollars to abate abandoned properties through the code enforcement process. If a property owner fails to pay the town for the cleanup, those charges are added as a lien on the property, just like unpaid taxes.

By foreclosing on such properties, Mount Gilead can create investment opportunities in a neighborhood while avoiding growing costs associated with never-ending abatement efforts. And when properties are proudly owned and maintained, neighborhoods are stronger and more resilient.

When a tax delinquent property faces foreclosure, any party that has an ownership interest must be served notice of the foreclosure action. Parties with ownership interest have an opportunity to pay the past due taxes to avoid foreclosure. The City of Lenoir works closely with a law firm that specializes in these types of foreclosures because most abandoned properties identified for strategic foreclosure require extensive title work to identify the owners. Often, a Guardian Ad Litem is appointed on behalf of unknown heirs. On average, it takes 12-18 months from the time the City of Lenoir initiates foreclosure until the time the property is auctioned.

Employing this process, the City of Lenoir has successfully returned several dilapidated and/or delinquent properties to active use at the hands of private investors. Occasionally, the City becomes the owner of the property and can market and sell the property itself or pursue strategic development projects through a Public-Private Partnership.

## CASE STUDY #11: Getting connected: Grants Expand Internet Access in Rural NC Towns

In 2016, ten rural NC towns received $272,000 in grant funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission to expand broadband internet in their towns. A total of 415 businesses were impacted by the internet expansion. In the Town of Walnut Cove, free downtown WIFI was installed that now allows every business on Main Street to utilize the free internet rather than paying for it individually. Programs and grants similar to the ARC grant are made available through the NC GREAT grant program and MCNC. The GREAT (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology) program was authorized by the NC General Assembly in 2018 and subsidizes the costs of private companies providing connectivity in rural areas where the limited number of households make it unprofitable to extend broadband service. MCNC is a non-profit fiber-optic provider that maintains an open-source fiber-optic backbone across the state. MCNC also provides middle-mile fiber optic service to anchor institutions such as community colleges or local governments. The network is also available for private telephone, electric, or internet providers, to connect and then provide last-mile service to residences and businesses.



4. **Increase socioeconomic mobility by expanding accessibility to broadband internet.**

   4.1   Work with local internet service providers to pursue grant funding to expand internet access in Mount Gilead.

   4.2   Explore potential to use the Spectrum Internet Assist program: a low cost broadband program delivering up to 30 MBPS to low-income households.

   4.3   Work with Montgomery County Schools to continue operation of WiFi hotspots in Mount Gilead.

   4.4   Support the continued operation of Highland Community Center's internet classrooms.

## EXHIBIT #7: Highland Community Center & Montgomery Community College Partner to Bridge the Digital Divide

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the depth of the digital divide in America, Highland Community Center was exploring ways to bridge the local gap and provide free internet to approximately 42% of Mount Gilead residents who do not have access to internet at home. When local schools transitioned to online-only instruction, the urgency for establishing internet classrooms increased. In partnership with Montgomery Community College and supported by CARES Act funding, Highland opened four internet classrooms to students in the fall of 2020. The classrooms were complete with COVID-19 PPE and staffed by a full-time coordinator. This significant effort complemented other community-led efforts to provide internet access including a free WIFI hotspot provide by McRae Industries in their corporate parking lot and free WIFI provided by the Town outside of Town Hall, the Police Department, and Fire Station.

CASE STUDY #12: Yeehaw! The Durham Central Park Food Truck Rodeo

Hosting a food truck rodeo is a unique way to bring new visitors to downtown while showcasing local and regional street food and budding culinary businesses. In Durham, the Central Park Food Truck Rodeo operates rain or shine on five Sundays throughout the year through the afternoon from 12-4pm. Residents and tourists gather in central park and can pick and choose drinks, meals, and snacks from a bouquet of local food trucks that line up along 2 sections of closed streets. The options range from small vendors of popcorn or popsicles to full meals from restaurants-turned trucks. Located in an area where Durham's farmer's market is located, most visitors are familiar with the venue and can lounge, play and dine in the shaded grassy areas or surrounding picnic tables. A small play area and pavilion area also offer further engagement. The event brings visitors of all ages and interests to the area directly adjacent to Durham's downtown area with an abundance of free parking options in dedicated weekend lots. This food truck rodeo guides individuals to a high-energy, explorative event that continues as people venture into retail and restaurant venues less than a 5-minute walk down the street.



5. Continue to invest in and promote seasonal festivals and events to tourists and regional visitors.

5.1 Continue investing in and growing Mount Gilead's existing festivals.

5.2 Consider hosting new non-traditional festivals and recurring monthly events downtown.



Mount Gilead Annual Fall Festival

## INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

### KEY CHALLENGES

**!**

» Aging water and sewer infrastructure require significant replacements and upgrades

» Service gaps in solid waste collection

» Retain qualified, high quality public works and police personnel with competitive wages and benefits

### VISION STATEMENTS

OUR TOWN will offer a high quality of life and excellent public services by strategically directing compatible growth toward areas that are accessible to existing transportation networks and water/wastewater infrastructure in order to most efficiently serve new and existing development.

IN ORDER FOR MT. GILEAD TO FUND CONTINUED MAINTENANCE OF ITS WATER & SEWER NETWORK, THE TOWN MUST ADD NEW CUSTOMERS TO THE EXISTING SYSTEM AND REFRAIN FROM EXPANDING LINES WITHOUT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE LONG-TERM COSTS.

Mount Gilead provides critical infrastructure and support services to ensure public safety and welfare. These critical services and infrastructure include: wastewater treatment, a public water system, public works, and law enforcement. The Town works closely with the Mount Gilead Volunteer Fire Department to ensure fire protection for the Town's citizens and structures. Curbside garbage collection is contracted out to a large sanitation service provider. Citizens can participate in a self-service recycling program by depositing their recyclables at a central location at Town Hall. Curbside recycling and leaf/limb pick up are currently not provided as regular services.

Mount Gilead's aging water and sewer infrastructure requires substantial upgrades. The Town has made continuous progress on necessary improvements over the past decade with the help of grant programs, but efforts must remain ongoing to replace lines and infrastructure in order to avoid system failures.

Maintaining the public water and wastewater systems is one of the Town's most crucial services. Mount Gilead's growth management policies have a significant impact on the Town's ability to continue providing quality water and wastewater services to all customers. Currently, the Town evaluates applications for public water and sewer service according to the *Utility Allocation and Extension Policy,* first adopted in 2007. The Town's utility allocation policy and continued ability to provide safe and efficient water & wastewater service is inextricably linked to its development policies and regulations.

In order for Mount Gilead to fund continued maintenance of its water and sewer network, the town must add new customers and development to the existing system and refrain from expanding water and sewer lines without very careful consideration of the long-term maintenance costs..

## POLICY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to provide safe, high-quality public water and wastewater service in a sustainable and fiscally responsible manner.

   1.1 Continue implementation of the Town's *20-Year Capital Improvement Plan* for water and sewer infrastructure to plan for replacement of aging water and sewer infrastructure, prioritizing targeted growth areas (Sectors 4, 5, 6).

   1.2 Update inventory of water and sewer lines and facilities to systematically prioritize upgrades.

   1.3 Pursue state grants and USDA loan funding to facilitate replacement of aging water and sewer infrastructure.

   1.4 Coordinate with Montgomery County Planning to manage residential growth around Lake Tillery to ensure that development doesn't outpace water and sewer infrastructure.

   1.5 Review the 2007 Utility Allocation and Extension Policy to require that new development must connect to the Town's water system at the expense of the developer if it is within a reasonable distance from an existing water main. Continue extension policies that ensure that the cost of growth is not borne by existing water customers.

   1.6 Any Town-initiated expansion of utilities shall reinforce targeted growth sectors (4, 5, & 6) for increased development densities.

   1.7 Develop standard details for construction of water and wastewater infrastructure to ensure quality, consistency, and adequate volume and pressure for fire suppression.

2. Correct service gaps in solid waste collection for yard waste and recycling.

   2.1 Determine demand for curbside recycling & yard waste and the price threshold that customers are willing to pay for these services. If demand warrants, contract with service provider for curbside recycling and yard waste collection.

   2.2 Encourage waste reduction strategies by promoting and providing education on composting, mulching, reuse, recycling, and reducing litter.

3. Attract and retain qualified, high quality personnel in all Town departments.

   3.1 Conduct study of peer cities & towns to identify improvements that can be made to employee benefits packages.

   3.2 Conduct a rate study for employee salaries and wages.

   3.3 Develop a take-home vehicle program for police officers as an incentive for new hires.

4. Continue to support the Mount Gilead Volunteer Fire Department in providing excellent fire and emergency response services.

   4.1 Attract and retain qualified, high quality fire volunteers and personnel.

      4.1.1 Work with Montgomery County to evaluate and plan for phased implementation of paid fire department positions.

      4.1.2 Develop a program for training junior firefighters and recruit high school students in the Mount Gilead area to participate.

   4.2 Work with Montgomery County to evaluate solutions for equitable distribution of fire-tax revenue to each fire district based on need rather than property value.

   4.3 Advocate for a county-wide capital improvements program for fire equipment and apparatus.

   4.4 Plan for fire department capital improvements (such as facility expansion) to meet increasing demand for fire and emergency service and faster response times.

   4.5 Consider a facility rental program that will allow the Mount Gilead Fire Department to generate revenue as a community center and venue space for public and private events.

5. Plan for capital improvements to town buildings.

   5.1 Conduct a Needs Analysis and Cost Analysis to evaluate the need for space and the capital required to improve the current Town Hall or construct a new one.

   5.2 Plan and begin budgeting for improvements to the existing Town Hall or new construction.



### EXHIBIT #8: Mount Gilead Volunteer Fire Department

In addition to protecting life and property, Fire Departments are responsible for the insurance ratings that determine local home and building owners' insurance premiums. In 2020, the Mount Gilead Volunteer Fire Department lowered their ISO Class Rating from a six (6) down to a five (5). A rating of one (1) is best achievable rating. After months preparing for the inspection, the Mount Gilead Volunteer Fire Department demonstrated that it is better-equipped and more prepared than ever to respond to a fire at any time. The department's improved rating should result in lower insurance premiums for property owners within the Town of Mount Gilead district and the Gilmont Fire District.

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

### KEY CHALLENGES

**!**

- » Mitigate semi-truck and logging traffic through historic town center
- » Improve walkability and safety in downtown district
- » Lack of sidewalks and walkable environment throughout residential neighborhoods

### VISION STATEMENTS

OUR TOWN will feel a strong sense of connection between neighborhoods linked by roads, sidewalks, greenways, families, traditions, heritage, our shared sense of community and love for Mount Gilead.

OUR TOWN will provide abundant recreation opportunities and alternatives to vehicle travel through interconnected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that link neighborhoods to commercial centers, parks, and recreation destinations.

**THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS SECTION ARE AIMED AT HELPING MOUNT GILEAD ACHIEVE A WELL-BALANCED, MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.**

Mount Gilead's transportation system is comprised of its roads, rail, bike, pedestrian, and transit networks, as well as access to air travel. Mount Gilead primarily relies on its road network to meet most transportation needs. However, the rail line plays an important role transporting industrial freight to market. The Town's growing sidewalk network is well utilized and contributes to overall quality of life. The recommendations in this section are aimed at helping Mount Gilead achieve a well-balanced, multi-modal transportation system.

Mount Gilead maintains 11 miles of streets while the North Carolina Department of Transportation maintains the major state highways that connect the Town with the rest of the state. The 2012 Montgomery County Comprehensive Transportation Plan is the primary guiding document that identifies NCDOT road, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements in and surrounding Mount Gilead.

For more than 130 years, Mount Gilead's railroad has provided a direct connection to regional markets across the Piedmont. What began as the Aberdeen and Asheboro Railroad in the 1890s, is now the Aberdeen and Western Carolina short line freight railway operated by Norfolk Southern. The line is active today, hauling lumber, forest products, agricultural products, and other goods manufactured in Mount Gilead to markets in Charlotte and beyond.

Jordan Airfield is a private-use grassed airstrip, owned and primarily used by Jordan Lumber. Montgomery, Stanly, and Anson Counties all operate small public airports with asphalt runways within 15-20 miles of Mount Gilead.

The Regional Coordinated Area Transportation System (RCATS) provides the only public transportation service in Montgomery County. Curb-to-curb transportation services for older adults, persons with disabilities, and the general public are provided on a county-wide basis. Montgomery County residents in need of transportation can make an advance reservation for transportation medical appointments Monday-Friday and grocery shopping on Thursday morning. Alternative transportation options such as rideshare services (Uber and Lyft) are extremely limited in Montgomery County and currently do not provide a reliable option for transportation.

The Town boasts a strong and growing pedestrian network in its commercial center that extends outward to many neighborhoods. The Town has made progress in filling sidewalk gaps and must continue prioritizing such connections to all Mount Gilead neighborhoods. Bicycle infrastructure is extremely limited, although NC State Bicycle Route 6 bisects the Town via Highway 731. Expanding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is one of the most strategic investments the town can make to enhance quality of life, improve community health, expand equity in transportation, and encourage vibrant streetscapes both downtown and throughout neighborhoods. Connectivity and culture thrive hand in hand.

## POLICY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Perform pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements in downtown and at small business growth areas.

   1.1 Work with NCDOT to identify and provide signage for preferred semi-truck routes that bypass the downtown.

   1.2 Pursue grant funding through NCDOT for a bicycle and pedestrian plan that identifies and prioritizes sidewalk gaps and bike infrastructure projects.

   1.3 Continue filling sidewalk gaps identified for Mount Gilead in the Montgomery County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

   1.4 Coordinate with NCDOT's R-5826 project to include streetscape improvements at the intersection of Main Street & Allenton Street, such as installing crosswalks and pedestrian signalization.

   1.5 Contract with a design firm to update and develop construction documents for downtown streetscape improvements based on the 2007 plan.

CITIES FAIL AND SUCCEED AT THE SCALE OF HUMAN INTERACTION.

## SCHEMATIC #4: Wonderfully Walkable: Main & Allenton Streetscape Improvements

*Mount Gilead Moving Ahead* envisions improved walkability and a safer pedestrian environment at the Town's main intersection and center of commerce.

The improvements suggested in this concept include:

» Bike lanes connect downtown to Stanback Park

» Proposed treatment such as crosswalks and curb extension encourage reduced vehicle speed, discourage commercial truck traffic, and encourage bicycle and pedestrian modes of travel

» Maintains existing parking spaces and does not reduce parking



EXISTING CONDITIONS

2. Increase access to transportation options for citizens with mobility and independent living challenges.

2.1 Support RCATS and seek public & private funding for the expansion of services:

2.1.1 Extend service hours from to 5:30pm to accommodate afternoon medical appointments and employment commutes.

2.1.2 Establish shuttle routes in Montgomery County between Mount Gilead, Troy, Biscoe, and Star.

2.1.3 Increase staff and fleet capacity to include more available drivers to accommodate next-day rider reservations and emergency trips.

2.1.4 Increase the number of round-trips that a rider can use per week (current limit is 3/week).

2.1.5 Develop mobile application and/or online portal for making ride reservations.

2.1.6 Increase targeted marketing and communication of services in English and Spanish to populations in need.

2.2 Explore partnerships with private transportation providers to fill service gaps.

3. Improve appearance and flow of major thoroughfares and roads.

3.1 Limit driveway cuts on highways and collector roads:

3.1.1 Set a minimum distance between driveways.

3.1.2 Set a maximum number of driveway cuts allowed per lot.

3.1.3 Require interior vehicle connections between businesses and buildings.

3.2 Concentrate commercial development density at strategic locations along major corridors, while limiting highway access along intervening stretches of road.

3.3 Develop Streetscape Corridor plans for the following highway corridors. Plans should address potential for road diets, multi-use paths, center medians, and street trees to make them more appealing for commerce and walkability.

» NC Hwy. 731 (E. Allenton Street) from Main Street to the town limits

» NC Hwy. 109 (Julius Chambers Avenue) from N. Main Street to the town limits

» N. Main Street from NC Hwy. 109 to Ingram Street

3.4 Adopt the NC Complete Streets Manual and amend Street Design Standards in the Zoning Ordinance to include preference for Complete Streets where practicable.

## CASE STUDY #13: When Money Grows on Trees: Street Trees as Economic Development

Street trees and landscaping help separate pedestrians from motor vehicle traffic. Trees and plantings also provide interest by framing the street, softening the appearance of hard surfaces and providing color, fragrance, and seasonal decor. They also provide shade and areas of refuge for pedestrians. Street trees enhance the pedestrian experience, increasing foot-traffic and encouraging downtown visitors to stay long. More people spending more time on Main Street means a vibrant streetscape and increased sales for local businesses. The NC Forest Service provides grants on an annual basis to local governments for establishing or enhancing the urban canopy with street-trees.

4. Provide and promote walking and bicycle infrastructure for a safe alternative to vehicle travel.

4.1   Establish a community organization to focus on planning and implementing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including greenways.

4.2   Leverage the Indian Heritage Trail Scenic Byway and the scenic rural roads around Mount Gilead to develop bicycle tourism.

4.2.1   Promote road cycling as an outdoor recreation activity in Mount Gilead.

4.2.2   Work with NCDOT and Montgomery County to install cycling lanes & signage on the Indian Heritage Trail Scenic Byway, State Bicycle Route 6, and the Route 5 loop identified on the 2005 Montgomery County Bike Plan in the Piedmont Triad Regional Council RPO Bicycle Study and the Montgomery County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

4.3   Connect community destinations such as schools, parks, and major employers via greenways and trails.

4.3.1   Amend Zoning Ordinance to require that all new development must include the installation of bicycle amenities, such as racks and storage facilities.

4.3.2   Amend Zoning Ordinance Article 6 to require new development to construct pedestrian or multi-use connections to adjacent commercial areas, neighborhoods, and parks.

4.3.3   Install bike racks, storage, and maintenance stands in downtown and at public parks to accommodate cycling and to signal support for bicycles as a valid and encouraged form of transportation.

4.3.4   Establish a bike-loan or earn-a-bike program and community bicycle shop operated by a parks and recreation entity or non-profit organization.

5. Actively participate in the Piedmont-Triad Regional Council Rural Planning transportation planning process to facilitate transportation projects in alignment with this plan.

5.1   Maintain consistent attendance at meetings and representation in the RPO planning process to ensure that Mt. Gilead transportation projects, including bicycle & pedestrian, are prioritized in the State Transportation Improvement Plan.

CASE STUDY #14: Building "Bikequity" at the Durham Bike Co-op

Bicycles have the power to make our local communities a better place as an environmentally-friendly and socially-just transportation mode, a basis for community, and a means to health and wellness. Bicycle cooperatives provide a way for all members of the community to have access to a bicycle regardless of financial means. For example, the Durham Bike Co-op is a nonprofit entity that operates an earn-a-bike program whereby community members can earn a bicycle through volunteer hours. The co-op also provides repair services, tools, storage space, and training to help members learn how to fix bikes. Individuals must be members to have their bicycle repaired at the co-op, with yearly membership earned through either a $30 donation or 3 hours of volunteering. The repair shop is run by volunteer members who work with donated bicycles and donated parts. Volunteers work in different capacities in the shop while it is managed by democratically elected board members who serve short terms and are also members themselves. Through volunteer engagement, the Durham Bike Co-op offers a community space for individuals to learn and build new skills while accessing reasonably priced resources.

## PARKS & RECREATION

### KEY CHALLENGES

! » Lack of master plans for key recreation properties in town

» Lack of dedicated committee or staff for parks and recreation

### VISION STATEMENTS

OUR TOWN will offer an authentic experience to residents and visitors that centers on the connection between our vibrant, walkable, historic downtown and abundant natural resource-based recreation offerings..

OUR TOWN will provide abundant recreation opportunities and alternatives to vehicle travel through interconnected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that link neighborhoods to commercial centers, parks, and recreation destinations.

OUTDOOR RECREATION IS A KEY ELEMENT OF THE NEW ECONOMY FOR MOUNT GILEAD.

Mount Gilead benefits from an abundance of recreation resources both within and surrounding the town. While the Town does not have a parks and recreation department or formal staff position, it does maintain two park facilities. The most notable is Stanback Park which features a public swimming pool, large playground, picnic pavilion, basketball court, tennis courts, baseball fields, pickleball courts, and plenty of space for unprogrammed and passive recreation. In the summer, the Town partners with Montgomery County to provide a six-week youth recreation day camp at Stanback Park. Mount Gilead's other park properties include the Walking Track at the Shankle Property and the future Albert Johnson Pocket Park on Main Street. The privately owned and operated Ralph J. Thompson Soccer Complex offers a popular youth soccer program for area residents.

In addition to its traditional parks, Mount Gilead is strategically located a short drive from the Uwharrie National Forest, Lake Tillery, and the Pee Dee River which attract visitors and outdoor recreation tourists from across the state and region. With 74 miles of trails and 47,401 acres of public land and open space, Montgomery County stands head and shoulders above other counties in the Piedmont region when it comes to the quantity of opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Outdoor Recreation is a key element of the new economy for Mount Gilead. As a small town in a rural county striving to attract investment, tourism, young families, professionals, and retirees, Mount Gilead must continue to create accessible trails and greenways, inviting parks, and connectivity to its abundant public lands and water resources. Recreation is not merely a quality of life amenity, but a critical component of the Towns' economic development strategy.

## POLICY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve quality of parks and recreation fields and facilities.

1.1 Develop Parks and Recreation Master Plan for capital improvements of town-owned open space.

1.2 Construct the Albert Johnson Memorial Park according to the 2020 site plan.

1.3 Develop a plan for a new town park at the Shankle property adjacent to Mt. Gilead Elementary School.

1.4 Develop a joint-use and maintenance agreement with Montgomery County Schools to enable public use and ensure routine maintenance of basketball courts adjacent to Mount Gilead Elementary.

1.5 Develop a master plan for Stanback Park that will be competitive for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant to finance proposed improvements. The plan should consider the following:

1.5.1 Convert Park Avenue to a north-bound one-way street and multi-use greenway in the southbound (park-adjacent) lane.

1.5.2 Restore natural creek-flow through center of park as an attractive landscape feature and natural play-area.

1.6 Consider banning smoking in public parks and civic spaces to ensure an enjoyable, healthy, and family-friendly environment. Install signage to discourage smoking in these areas.

### SCHEMATIC #5: Pocket Park Paradise: The Albert Johnson Memorial Park

The Mount Gilead Community Foundation, in partnership with the Town of Mount Gilead, spearheaded an effort in the spring of 2020 to develop a conceptual plan for a charismatic pocket park in the heart of downtown Mount Gilead. The park will occupy an undeveloped lot on South Main Street that is owned by the Town, and honors the legacy of longtime community champion and former foundation president, Albert Johnson.

The concept plan capitalizes on the dual utility of this humble park as both a performance venue and garden oasis in the center of town by providing flexible space for programming and built-in seating. Key features include a curvilinear flagstone walkway, tiered seat-walls, location for a sculpture installation, rain garden to address on-site drainage, and performance stage that utilizes the Town's historic water tower lid as a roof. The Mount Gilead Community Foundation is now in the process of raising funds for full design and construction of the park.



## Johnson Park Concept Plan
### Mt. Gilead, NC


Brick seatwall


Walkway


Rain garden
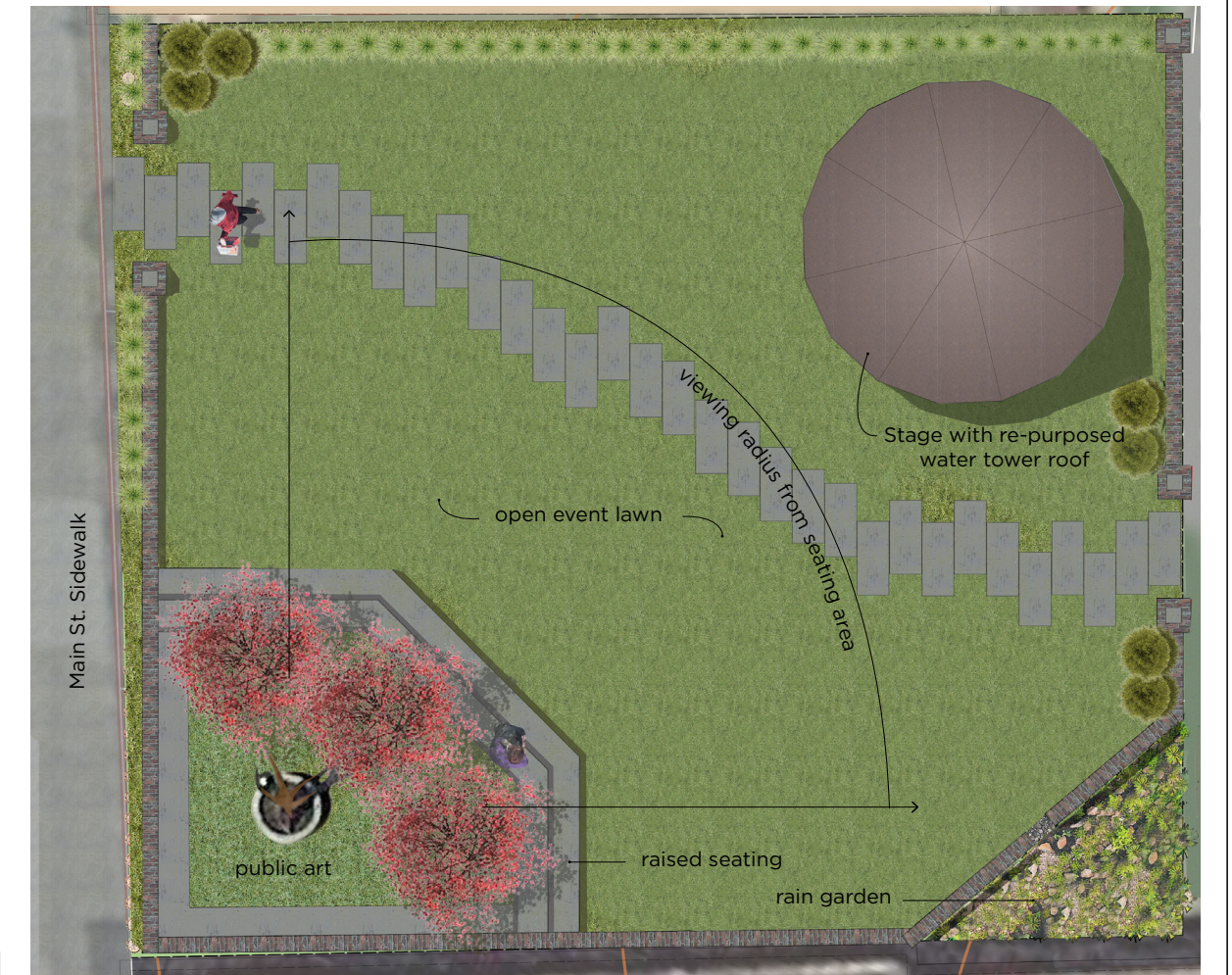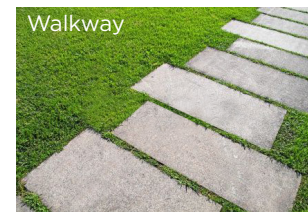
MOSAIC
CIVIC STUDIO
April 10, 2020

Scale 5'  10'



Main St. Sidewalk

viewing radius from seating area

Stage with re-purposed water tower roof

open event lawn

public art

raised seating

rain garden

## SCHEMATIC #6:
## Showtime at Shankle Park

Public sentiment throughout the planning process expressed a desire to develop the Town-owned Shankle Property adjacent to Mount Gilead Elementary School into a destination community park. The concept illustrated here establishes the Shankle Property as the "Town Green" and a true community gathering space and performance venue in the center of Town. Recreation amenities complement the existing walking track and provide additional play opportunities for elementary school students.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

## SCHEMATIC #7:
### Splash Down at Stanback Park

Stanback Park is a tremendous asset to the Mount Gilead community. The 26-acre park offers multiple amenities including a public swimming pool. The park is primed for updates and improvements to its existing infrastructure. If supported by a park master plan, Stanback Park could be highly competitive for grants, including a North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant, to fund destination-quality improvements such as a splash pad.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

### CASE STUDY #15: From Main Street to the Mountains: Connecting downtown to the National Forest in Brevard, NC

Brevard, NC is working with local foundations and agencies to secure grant funding for the Estatoe Trail that connects its downtown to the nearby Pisgah National Forest. The City and its partners have been successful in building 4.8 miles of a natural surface greenway trail that extends from Davidson River campground in Pisgah National Forest to Brevard College, just north of downtown. In recent years, the City secured $90,000 in funding from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and $240,000 in funding from the Pisgah Health Foundation to extend the Estatoe Trail to Brevard's historically Black neighborhood, Rosenwald, and its downtown district. The greenway provides a critical connection between the city's two most important economic engines: the central business district and outdoor recreation in Pisgah National Forest.
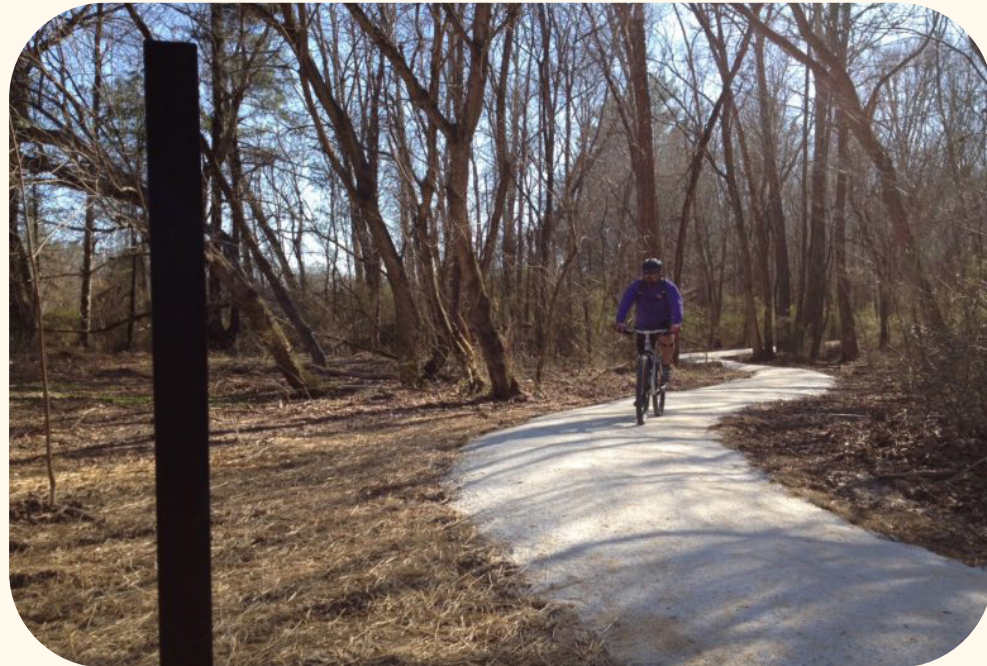


2. Strengthen relationships and support for civic organizations that maintain park facilities and manage programming efforts to ensure continued operations that are fiscally sustainable.

2.1 Reinstate the Parks and Recreation Commission or hire a part-time Parks and Recreation Director that could eventually transition to a full-time employee.

2.2 Partner with Highland Community Center to develop the outer property at the community center for recreation such as multi-use sports fields and a walking trail.

2.3 Evaluate fiscal sustainability of Stanback Park Summer Program and pursue fundraising strategies to ensure continuation of the program at low cost to local participants.

3. Connect Mt. Gilead's recreation assets via greenways and trails.

3.1 Develop a greenway master plan that will connect downtown Mount Gilead to the Uwharrie National Forest, Lake Tillery, and other key destinations.

3.2 Participate in future updates to the Piedmont Triad Regional Trail Plan & Inventory to advocate for the inclusion & prioritization of trails & blueways near Mount Gilead.

3.3 Advocate for development of multi-use path 8F (Uwharrie National Forest to Chatham Co.) as identified in the North Carolina Great Trails State Master Plan.

### EXHIBIT #9: The Economic Case for Greenways

An interconnected network of greenways and trails is a powerful economic development tool. Trails and greenways impact local and regional economies by enhancing quality of life for residents, increasing nearby property values, lowering healthcare costs, and providing a venue for community events. Most significantly, greenways, trails, and sidewalks serve as the catalyst for stimulating private investment and recreation tourism.

Greenways and trails stimulate small business development and private investment by attracting a new customer base. This new customer base increases consumer spending in existing businesses along the trail and also attracts new trail or greenway related businesses such as bicycle rental or a trailside café. As local businesses are patronized by trail users, they purchase supplies and services from manufacturers in other sectors of the economy, thereby multiplying the impact of the trail throughout the county.

The boost to local economies provided by trails and greenways is considerable. A 3-year study of study of greenways by North Carolina State University (completed in 2018), found that for every $1.00 spent on trail construction, $1.72 were generated annually in local business revenue, sales tax revenue, and benefits related to improved health & transportation. The study also reported that across the four greenways studied, 790 jobs were supported through trail construction. Similarly, an economic impact study of the Swamp Rabbit Trail in South Carolina found that the trail generated a $6.7 million dollar return on investment in its first three years.

Residential properties located near a trail or greenway also benefit from a significant increase in property values. The greenway is an amenity that commands a higher price for nearby homes. The Little Miami Scenic Trail in Ohio is associated with higher property values up to one mile away from the trail. For every foot closer to the Little Miami trail, single-family home value increases by $7.

Home values increase near trails because they are an attractive amenity to families and professionals looking to relocate. As a result, homes near greenways often sell faster. The National Association of Homebuilders states that "Trails consistently remain the number one community amenity sought by prospective homeowners".

4. Support existing programming and explore opportunities for new programming that provides safe entertainment and recreation opportunities for youth and young adults after school and in the evenings.

4.1　Work with the Mt. Gilead Library to develop innovative programming that activates the library in the evenings and on weekends for pre-teens and teens especially.

4.2　Partner with organizations like Highland Community Center and local Churches to develop creative pre-teen and teen after-school and weekend programming and safe hang-out spaces.

5. Improve public access to water-based recreation resources.

5.1　Work with Montgomery County, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, and regional conservation organizations to conserve lakefront property around Lake Tillery and plan for new public lake access.

5.2　Work with NC Wildlife Resources Commission and Duke Energy to improve existing and create new recreational water access locations on the Pee Dee River.

5.3　Urge Duke Energy and Alcoa Power Generating Inc. to better coordinate dam releases to stabilize unpredictable lake levels and river flows.

## CASE STUDY #16: Empowering the Next Generation through "My Durham"

Youth Programs offer active programming to engage teens and pre-teens after school and during weekends. The "My Durham" program was designed by teenagers, for teenagers. By placing this authority with the teens who would be participating in the program, it ensures that activities and events are actually engaging and interesting to participants. The program is housed in two different locations in Durham: the Durham Teen Center at Lyon Park and the Weaver Street Recreation Center. These two centers offer a variety of resources any time of day including computer labs, gaming lounges, basketball and baseball, and more. The program is open for teens aged 13-18, runs Monday through Friday from 2:30-5:30 and is entirely free, offering a fantastic option for families to keep their teens engaged and active while out of the house during this time. Programming includes field trips, outdoor sports, healthy cooking classes, "Digital Brilliance Hour" where teens learn how to code their own computer games, video game tournaments, and encouraging youth to socialize and get to know the resources the city has to offer. By providing a safe space for youth to hang out, socialize, or get homework done, the My Durham youth program ensures engagement in new learning and community building from each generation of teens.

## COMMUNITY & SENSE OF PLACE

### KEY CHALLENGES

!

» Building community cohesiveness and unity across historic racial and socio-economic divisions

» Lack of attention to sense of place and investment in residential neighborhoods

» Retain small town character amidst strategic growth

### VISION STATEMENTS

OUR TOWN will be a cohesive community that celebrates its diversity and champions social, political, and economic equity above historic racial, cultural, and economic divisions.

OUR TOWN will offer an authentic experience to residents and visitors that centers on the connection between our vibrant, walkable, historic downtown and abundant natural resource-based recreation offerings.

OUR TOWN will balance coordinated growth with preservation of our historic character, rural heritage, and natural resources

A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE DOES NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT. IT IS THE OFTEN RESULT OF DELIBERATE PLACEMAKING EFFORTS BY NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS, OFFICIAL TOWN AGENCIES, AND INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS WORKING TOGETHER.

Mount Gilead's distinct identity has developed over time as a result of its rich history, inspiring pastoral landscape, and the vibrant personalities of its people. Together, these elements often influence the built environment which, in turn, impacts everyday life as we interact with and navigate the network of roads, buildings, pathways, and places we've created. Whether we are aware of it or not, we often have an emotional association with a place, especially the places we frequent most. Mount Gilead has long evoked a distinctive sense of place in many people, as evidenced by its enduring heritage and the common sentiment among newcomers that the Town and community "just feel like home."

Sense of Place is more than just a nice feeling; it translates to tangible economic impact by drawing people to town as a result of both the built environment and the vibrant energy of the community. This feeling is evident in the patina of a historic building, a lively farmers market, peaceful park, vibrant library, or an energetic school yard filled with laughter. Sense of Place is hard to measure, but critical to the sustained economic prosperity of a community. Streets, sidewalks, and parks full of activity represent the ability to sustain restaurants, local shops, the arts community, and dynamic third places like cafés and breweries. Tax revenue generated from downtown districts can help fund streetscape improvements and new amenities such as free Wi-Fi. Mount Gilead's diversity is one of its most outstanding community assets. Diversity of cultures, food, arts, languages, talents and abilities add to the vitality and resiliency of a community - making it stronger and more attractive to a wider variety of visitors, residents, and new business.

A strong sense of place does not happen by accident. It is often the result of deliberate placemaking efforts by neighborhood organizations, civic associations, official town agencies, and individual citizens working together to make their community more livable and loveable.

## POLICY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Nurture a sense of place and community pride in Mt. Gilead.

1.1 Consider establishing a Mt. Gilead Beautification Committee to identify and lead implementation of beautification initiatives throughout the town.

1.2 Develop a gateway signage system and work with private property owners or NCDOT right-of-way to improve existing or establish consistent recognizable gateways into Mt. Gilead by installing new signage, landscaping, and street trees at or near the following intersections, in order of priority:

» NC Hwy. 109 (Julius Chambers Avenue) and Williams Street

» NC Hwy. 731 (E. Allenton Street) and Six Pine Drive

» NC Hwy. 73 (N. Main Street) and PaperWorks driveway entrance

» NC Hwy. 731 (W. Allenton Street) and Tobe Manufacturing driveway entrance

» NC Hwy. 73 (S. Main Street) and Medford Place

» NC Hwy. 109 (S. Wadesboro Boulevard) and Rance Lane

1.3 Cultivate pride of place in Mt. Gilead's various distinct neighborhoods by establishing a neighborhood sign program to install signs at the entrances to each neighborhood.

1.4 Utilize minimum housing code to address residential decay, blighted properties, and junked vehicles to increase safety, protect quality of life, and property values.

1.5 Invest in streetscape infrastructure of legacy neighborhoods: Develop a Town-administered program or partner with a local non-profit to establish a neighborhood-based grant program that provides matching funding and resources to blocks of individuals who want to improve the aesthetics and performance of their neighborhood street.

1.6 Invest in downtown placemaking.

1.6.1 Install landscaping such as planter boxes and hanging baskets on light posts to create an inviting pedestrian environment.

### CASE STUDY #17: First Impressions: Making a Statement at Key Gateways

Consistent, recognizable gateway signage helps towns to establish a visual identity and convey a sense of arrival to the town as a desirable destination. The City of Locust recently installed a new gateway sign on Highway 24/27 to greet visitors and welcome locals returning to town at the western entrance. It was designed with natural characteristics in mind, featuring faux-stone supporting the eye-catching orange sign that includes the city's name and slogan. The sign itself is surrounded by neat landscaping of plants encircled by a stone border. The project also features a solar powered light source to illuminate the sign at peak hours. The goal of the City Beautification Division that took on this project is to "make the City of Locust as appealing to the senses as possible." With that in mind, this gateway signage certainly helps to welcome new visitors and those returning home all while demonstrating the city's pride and attractiveness.

1.6.2 Separate existing parking lots from sidewalks in downtown by installing decorative seat walls or planter boxes to enhance the pedestrian experience.

👁 1.6.3 Install street furniture such as seating and trash receptacles that double as functional public art.

1.7 Cultivate the arts and cultural offerings in Mt. Gilead.

1.7.1 Encourage development of an arts council to facilitate cultural and economic development through the arts in Mt. Gilead.

1.7.2 Develop a sculpture program for installing permanent or rotational public art exhibits in key locations and landscapes throughout Mt. Gilead, such as the Albert Johnson Memorial Park.

👁 1.7.3 Expand mural program to other areas of Mt. Gilead, including creative applications like electrical boxes or stairs. Consider Percent for Art program to fund commissions.

👁 1.7.4 Host a monthly downtown art-crawl that highlights public art installations, features local artists, and engages downtown businesses.

1.8 Consider establishing a community garden and edible landscapes in downtown planters.

1.9 Amend Zoning Ordinance to ensure that limitations on non-conforming structures also apply to non-conforming signs.

2. Celebrate the diversity of Mt. Gilead by encouraging multi-cultural, community-wide events that intentionally bring together populations with different racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

2.1 Prioritize investment in festivals and events that highlight underrepresented cultures and populations with a focus on uniting diverse audiences from varying racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

3. Provide community gathering and event space by investing in existing cultural and community centers, and exploring locations to open new community centers or offer new programming.

3.1 Continue investing and partnering with Highland Community Center. Develop a master plan for the site and plan for improvements that will allow the center to generate revenue.

3.2 Pursue new programming and uses for the Leah Levin Memorial Auditorium such as an event space for public and private functions.





CASE STUDY #18: Grassroots Neighborhood Revitalization with the Oswego Renaissance Association

Consistent, recognizable gateway signage helps towns to establish a visual identity and convey a sense of arrival to the town as a desirable destination. The City of Locust recently installed a new gateway sign on Highway 24/27 to greet visitors and welcome locals returning to town at the western entrance. It was designed with natural characteristics in mind, featuring faux stone supporting the eye-catching orange sign that includes the city's name and slogan. The sign itself is surrounded by neat landscaping of plants encircled by a stone border. The project also features a solar powered light source to illuminate the sign at peak hours. The goal of the City Beautification Division that took on this project is to "make the City of Locust as appealing to the senses as possible." With that in mind, this gateway signage certainly helps to welcome new visitors and those returning home all while demonstrating the city's pride and attractiveness.

CASE STUDY #19: Friday Night Lights: Spotlight on Visual Arts in Boone, NC

Crawls invite the public to view local artists' work in public art installations, galleries, or studios in a concentrated geographic area so that individuals get the chance to see a variety of art through the duration of the event. In Boone, the First Friday Art Crawl takes place along the downtown area's King Street. Public art installations are featured at the local university's Center for Visual Arts, as well as in local art cooperatives and shops. Local musicians participate in jam sessions at venues along the downtown area and perform at restaurants where art crawl visitors stay after to grab a meal. More formal concert series are also hosted at different venues downtown as well. Artists are able to gather engagement and make sales, and small businesses along the downtown area often stay open later and offer drinks and snacks to visitors. Many businesses also have unique offerings, such as raffles and giveaways or big sales. The popular event is marketed through social media, word of mouth in downtown businesses, and by posters hung throughout the community. The reliability and regularity of the event also ensures its success, as people are sure to find something exciting happening downtown every first Friday throughout the year, rain or shine.



3.3 Consider promoting the Mount Gilead Museum as an event space for weddings, receptions, and corporate meetings to generate revenue for the museum and bring visitors to the Town.

4. Cultivate a town and community that is attractive to young families & professionals in order to promote youth retention and encourage young citizens who leave to return and invest in Mt. Gilead.

4.1 Provide affordable, reliable childcare options for working parents.

4.1.1 Partner with organizations like Highland Community Center and local churches to explore opportunities to provide low-cost child care programs during week days.

4.1.2 Incentivize new child care centers and redevelopment of existing buildings for child care by offering a streamlined zoning process, reduced application fees, and reduced minimum parking standards.

4.1.3 Partner with commercial property owners with an appropriate, available space to recruit child care businesses.

4.1.4 Work with local non-profit organizations and churches to establish a scholarship program to subsidize child-care for low-income working parents.

4.2 Instill a sense of community ownership and youth participation by recruiting younger citizens to engage and volunteer in community events and organizations. Consider re-establishing the Mount Gilead Youth Council or include high school student representatives on key appointed boards and committees responsible for hosting community events.

4.3 Work with Montgomery County Schools, local industries, and businesses to establish an internship/apprenticeship program for Mt. Gilead high school students enrolled in Career & Technical Course Pathways.

5. Allow older generations to age in place with grace and dignity.

5.1 Support expansion of existing senior programs at Highland Community Center and local churches.

5.2 Supplement Montgomery County senior services by encouraging meal-delivery programs, in-home chores & handy-work assistance programs, and wellness check programs by local organizations and volunteers.

# CHAPTER 4

## IMPLEMENTATION

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

*M*ount Gilead Moving Ahead: Our Town 2040 provides a wide-ranging policy framework to guide decision-making across all levels of community action from Town government to civic-minded individuals spearheading a specific project.

The true impact of *Mount Gilead Moving Ahead*: Our Town 2040 will come from the accomplishing the policy goals and many strategies identified in the plan to achieve the community's ultimate vision for Mount Gilead. Investment in Mount Gilead's collective future must continue with a renewed commitment by Town staff, elected officials, appointed board members, and the community at large – all working in harmony to improve the Town they love.

This chapter is comprised of several Implementation Matrices. The first six (6) matrices correspond with each Planning Element and identify priority recommendations within each element. Each matrix identifies the coordinating agencies responsible for leading the implementation of each priority recommendation as well as the timeframe for completing priority recommendations as either short term, mid-term, long term, or continuous.

» **Short-term:** achievable in less than two years

» **Mid-term:** achievable in 2-5 years

» **Long-term:** may take more than 5 years

» **Continuous:** ongoing efforts

This chapter also includes a matrix that organizes all recommendations related to Downtown Mount Gilead. A reference list of all Visible Victories is included, as well.

"THE GREATEST RISK
ISN'T OCCASIONAL
FAILURE.
IT'S SUSTAINED
MEDIOCRITY."

— LUKE WROBLEWSKI

### PLAN MAINTENANCE

Planning for community success and vitality never stops. Town staff should continuously monitor progress toward achieving the plan's vision and goals. Town staff, the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners should review progress on plan implementation each year as part of the Town's budget retreat. This practice will give the Board of Commissioners the opportunity to establish implementation priorities during each budget cycle in order to ensure that the Town's budget includes the necessary resources to move forward with the implementation priorities.

*Mount Gilead Moving Ahead*: Our Town 2040 should be fully updated every five (5) years and adjusted in response to shifting challenges, new opportunities, changes in the economic and social needs of the community, emerging technology, and the advent of new best practices in community planning. Citizen voices should always be a part of the conversation.

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRICES

## LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENT

| PRIORITY RANKING | RECOMMENDATION | COORDINATING AGENCIES | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.1  Amend Zoning Ordinance for consistency with the 2040 Future Land Use Map and recommendations of *Mt. Gilead Moving Ahead*. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 2 | 1.2  Adopt Conservation Cluster Development standards to encourage smart growth and open space preservation. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 3 | 1.4  Amend Town ordinances to require annexation for all new development around Lake Tillery that desires public sewer service from Mt. Gilead. Require conservation cluster development as conditions of service in order to conserve the natural aesthetic of Lake Tillery and maintain efficient extension of necessary infrastructure. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 4 | 2.6  Amend Zoning Ordinance to allow manufactured housing by right in the ETJ with lot requirements and design standards to protect existing rural residential character. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 5 | 3.1  Protect rural and residential character by adopting commercial design standards for highway corridors that prohibit strip-style linear development and corporate architecture that does not contribute to the traditional vernacular of the town. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Mid-Term |
| 6 | 4.1  Continue protecting historic architecture by enforcing both the National Register Historic District Standards and the Downtown Historic District Guidelines in their respective districts and requiring Certificates of Appropriateness for proposed modifications to buildings. | Town Staff, Main Street Advisory Board, Historic Preservation Commission | Ongoing |
| 7 | 7.1 Partner with Montgomery County to develop a Strategic Land Use Plan for Lake Tillery aimed at smart growth that conserves the natural and aesthetic value of the lake and provides for new public access and recreation locations. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Staff | Mid-Term |
| 8 | 5.1  Transition Zoning Ordinance toward a form-based code that prioritizes regulation of the physical form of development (scale, mass, type of buildings and streets) more than separation of uses. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Long Term |
| 9 | 2.7 Allow attached or detached accessory dwelling units in all residential districts by right.. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 10 | 7.2 Work with Montgomery County, Three Rivers Land Trust, and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to prevent total privatization and development of the lakeshore by conserving lakefront property for public access & low-impact recreation tourism. | Town Staff, Three Rivers Land Trust, NC Wildlife, Montgomery County Staff | Long Term |

## ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

| PRIORITY RANKING | RECOMMENDATION | COORDINATING AGENCIES | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3.4.8  Scale zoning and development permit fees by project size so that fees are proportionate to the size and cost of the project. | Town Staff, Planning Board, & Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 2 | 3.3.1  Work with property owners with available land in targeted growth areas (Sectors 4, 5, 6) to develop a strategy for commercial recruitment. | Town Staff, Local Property Owners, & Developers, Montgomery County Economic Development | Ongoing |
| 3 | 3.6  Publish and promote an inventory of available industrial properties in Sector 5. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Economic Development | Short Term |
| 4 | 4.  Increase socioeconomic mobility by expanding accessibility to broadband internet. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Schools & Community College, Highland Community Center | Mid-Term |
| 5 | 3.5  Attract new lodging business to support the tourism industry. | Town Staff, Local Property Owners, & Developers, Montgomery County Economic Development | Ongoing |
| 6 | 3.1  Request assistance from the NC Main Street Rural Planning Program to develop a Five-year Strategic Plan for the Mt. Gilead Redevelopment Corporation. Include strategies for expanding operations to include broader economic development tasks such as marketing, business recruitment, small business support, and property acquisition for redevelopment. | Mt. Gilead Revelopment Corporation Board, Town Staff, NC Main Street | Mid-Term |
| 7 | 3.4.2  Establish a dedicated business incubator space in the Piedmont Arts Center that fosters innovative start-ups, young businesses, artisans, and minority-owned businesses. Consider renaming this building to appeal to a broader range of entrepreneurs. | Mt. Gilead Revelopment Corporation Board, Town Staff | Long Term |
| 8 | 1.1  Implement a distinct & recognizable visual brand for the Town. | Town Staff, Brand Steering Committee, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 9 | 1.4  Redevelop the Town website based on target market research and key messaging about Mt. Gilead's downtown & outdoor recreation assets. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Short Term |
| 10 | 2.2  Install wayfinding signage from nearby recreation destinations to Downtown Mt. Gilead. | Town Staff, Civic Organizations, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |

## INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

| PRIORITY RANKING | RECOMMENDATION | COORDINATING AGENCIES | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.1 Continue implementation of the Town's *20-Year Capital Improvement Plan* for water and sewer infrastructure to plan for replacement of aging water and sewer infrastructure, prioritizing targeted growth areas (Sectors 4, 5, 6). | Town Staff | Ongoing |
| 2 | 1.2 Update inventory of water and sewer lines and facilities to systematically prioritize upgrades. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 3 | 1.4 Coordinate with Montgomery County Planning to manage residential growth around Lake Tillery to ensure that development doesn't outpace water and sewer infrastructure. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Staff | Ongoing |
| 4 | 1.5 Review the 2007 Utility Allocation and Extension Policy to require that new development must connect to the Town's water system at the expense of the developer if it is within a reasonable distance from an existing water main. Continue extension policies that ensure that the cost of growth is not borne by existing water customers. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 5 | 1.6 Any Town-initiated expansion of utilities shall reinforce targeted growth sectors (4, 5, & 6) for increased development densities. | Town Staff, Planning Board, Town Commissioners | Ongoing |
| 6 | 3.1 Conduct study of peer cities & towns to identify improvements that can be made to employee benefits packages. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 7 | 5.1 Conduct a Needs Analysis and Cost Analysis to evaluate the need for space and the capital required to improve the current Town Hall or construct a new one. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 8 | 4.2 Work with Montgomery County to evaluate solutions for equitable distribution of fire-tax revenue to each fire district based on need rather than property value. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Staff | Mid-Term |
| 9 | 1.3. Pursue USDA loan funding and grants to facilitate replacement of aging water and sewer infrastructure. | Town Staff | Ongoing |
| 10 | 4.1.1 Work with Montgomery County to evaluate and plan for phased implementation of paid fire department positions. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Staff | Long Term |

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

| PRIORITY RANKING | RECOMMENDATION | COORDINATING AGENCIES | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.4 Coordinate with NCDOT's R-5826 project to include streetscape improvements at the intersection of Main St. & Allenton St. such as installing crosswalks and pedestrian signalization. | Town Staff, NCDOT, Piedmont Triad RPO | Mid-Term |
| 2 | 1.1 Work with NCDOT to identify and provide signage for preferred semi-truck routes that bypass the downtown. | Town Staff, NCDOT | Short Term |
| 3 | 1.2 Pursue grant funding through NCDOT for a bicycle and pedestrian plan that identifies and prioritizes sidewalk gaps and bike infrastructure projects. | Town Staff, NCDOT, Piedmont Triad RPO | Short Term |
| 4 | 4.1 Establish a community organization to focus on planning and implementing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including greenways. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners | Mid-Term |
| 5 | 4.3 Connect community destinations such as schools, parks, and major employers via greenways and trails. | Town Staff, NCDOT, Piedmont Triad RPO, Property Owners, Private Consultant | Ongoing |
| 6 | 1.3 Continue filling sidewalk gaps identified for Mt. Gilead in the Montgomery County Comprehensive Transportation Plan. | Town Staff, NCDOT | Ongoing |
| 7 | 3.3 Develop Streetscape Corridor plans for specified highway corridors. Plans should address potential for road diets, multi-use paths, center medians, and street trees to make them more appealing for commerce and walkability. | Town Staff, NCDOT, Private Consultant | Long Term |
| 8 | 3.1 Amend development ordinances to limit driveway cuts on highways and collector roads. | Town Staff, Planning Board, Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 9 | 1.5 Contract with a design firm to update and develop construction documents for downtown streetscape improvements based on the 2007 plan. | Town Staff, Private Consultant, NCDOT | Mid Term |
| 10 | 5.1. Maintain consistent attendance at meetings and representation in the RPO planning process to ensure that Mt. Gilead transportation projects, including bicycle & pedestrian, are prioritized in the State Transportation Improvement Plan. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners | Ongoing |

## PARKS & RECREATION

| PRIORITY RANKING | RECOMMENDATION | COORDINATING AGENCIES | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.1   Develop Parks and Recreation Master Plan for capital improvements of town-owned open space. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 2 | 3.1   Develop a greenway master plan that will connect downtown Mt. Gilead to the Uwharrie National Forest, Lake Tillery, and other key destinations. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 3 | 2.3   Evaluate fiscal sustainability of Stanback Park Summer Program and pursue fundraising strategies to ensure continuation of the program at low cost to local participants. | Town Staff, Montgomery Countuy Staff, Community Partners | Short Term |
| 4 | 2.1   Reinstate the Parks and Recreation Commission or hire a part-time Parks and Recreation Director that could eventually transition to a full-time employee. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners | Mid-Term |
| 5 | 1.2   Construct the Albert Johnson Memorial Park according to the 2020 site plan. | Town Staff, Mt. Gilead Community Foundation, Private Consultant | Long Term |
| 6 | 1.3   Develop a site-specific plan for a new town park at the Shankle property adjacent to Mt. Gilead Elementary School. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 7 | 1.5   Develop a master plan for Stanback Park that will be competitive for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant to finance proposed improvements. | Town Staff, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 8 | 2.2   Partner with Highland Community Center to develop the outer property at the community center for recreation such as multi-use sports fields and a walking trail. | Town Staff, Highland Community Center, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 9 | 1.4   Develop a joint-use and maintenance agreement with Montgomery County Schools to enable public use and ensure routine maintenance of basketball courts adjacent to Mount Gilead Elementary. | Town Staff, Montgomery County Schools | Short Term |
| 10 | 4.2   Partner with organizations like Highland Community Center and local Churches to develop creative pre-teen and teen after-school and weekend programming and safe hang-out spaces. | Town Staff, Highland Community Center, Local Churches, Civic Organizations | Mid-Term |

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & PLACEMAKING

| PRIORITY RANKING | RECOMMENDATION | COORDINATING AGENCIES | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.4 Utilize minimum housing code to address residential decay, blighted properties, and junked vehicles to increase safety, protect quality of life, and property values. | Town Staff, Code Enforcement Contractor | Ongoing |
| 2 | 1.9 Amend Zoning Ordinance to ensure that limitations on non-conforming structures also apply to non-conforming signs. | Town Staff, Planning Board, Town Commissioners | Short Term |
| 3 | 3.1 Continue investing and partnering with Highland Community Center. Develop a master plan for the site and plan for improvements that will allow the center to generate revenue. | Town Staff, Highland Community Center, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 4 | 4.1 Provide affordable, reliable childcare options for working parents. | Town Staff, Highland Community Center, Churches, Other Community Organizations, Private | Long Term |
| 5 | 1.7.1 Encourage development of an arts council to facilitate cultural and economic development through the arts in Mt. Gilead. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners | Mid-Term |
| 6 | 1.6.1 Install landscaping such as planter boxes and hanging baskets on light posts to create an inviting pedestrian environment. | Town Staff, Main Street Advisory Board | Mid-Term |
| 7 | 1.6.3 Install street furniture such as seating and trash receptacles that double as functional public art. | Town Staff, Main Street Advisory Board | Mid-Term |
| 8 | 1.2 Develop a gateway signage system and work with private property owners or NCDOT right-of-way to improve existing or establish consistent recognizable gateways into Mt. Gilead by installing new signage, landscaping, and street trees at identified intersections. | Town Staff, NCDOT, Private Consultant | Mid-Term |
| 9 | 1.1 Consider establishing a Mt. Gilead Beautification Committee to identify and lead implementation of beautification initiatives throughout the town. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners | Mid-Term |
| 10 | 3.2 Pursue new programming and uses for the Leah Levin Memorial Auditorium such as an event space for public and private functions. | Town Staff, Town Commissioners, Community Organizations | Mid-Term |

## DOWNTOWN RECOMMENDATIONS

| ID | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|
| Land Use 4.1 | Continue protecting historic architecture by enforcing both the National Register Historic District Standards and the Downtown Historic District Guidelines in their respective districts and requiring Certificates of Appropriateness for proposed modifications to buildings. |
| Land Use 4.2 | Consider working with a licensed architect to strengthen Downtown Historic District Guidelines by setting specific architectural design standards and improving clarity with illustrated schematics. |
| Land Use 4.3 | Amend zoning ordinance to ensure that off-street parking is not required for businesses in the Central Business District. Explicitly permit shared parking between adjoining, adjacent, or nearby lots. |
| Land Use 4.4 | Pursue grant funding from state programs, such as NC Main Street, to provide seed money for a façade grant program to encourage façade upgrades to downtown buildings. |
| Land Use 4.5 | Consider establishing a Municipal Service District for the Downtown core to provide funding for downtown infrastructure, streetscape, and aesthetic improvements. |
| Land Use 4.6 | Consider amending code-enforcement regulations to include an Interim Relief Clause that would allow the Town to make property improvements at a premium and assess fees or tax-liens on buildings that owners have failed to upkeep. |
| Econ 1.3 | Promote downtown Mt. Gilead to new residential developments around Lake Tillery. |
| Econ 1.5 | Partner with downtown churches and civic uses, such as the elementary school, to provide additional public parking during times that the parking lots are not used for church or school. Install signage to direct visitors to these lots. |
| Econ 2.2 | Install wayfinding signage from nearby recreation destinations to Downtown Mt. Gilead. |
| Econ 2.3 | Re-establish a consistent community farmers market in downtown Mt. Gilead. |
| Econ 3.4.1 | Continue active participation in the NC Small Town Main Street Program. Leverage grant opportunities available to member Towns for business recruitment and building renovations. |
| Econ 3.4.2 | Establish a dedicated business incubator space in the Piedmont Arts Center that fosters innovative start-ups, young businesses, artisans, and minority-owned businesses. Consider renaming this building to appeal to a broader range of entrepreneurs. |
| Econ 3.4.7 | Amend Zoning Ordinance to allow and encourage outdoor patio seating and dining in downtown and on sidewalks with adequate width. |
| Econ 3.4.10 | Partner with property owners of vacant commercial lots in downtown to attract and incentivize infill development that extend or fill gaps in the street wall. |
| Econ 3.5.1 | Work with downtown property owners with available buildings to attract a boutique hotel. |
| Econ 5.1 | Continue investing in and growing Mt. Gilead's existing festivals. |
| Econ 5.2 | Consider hosting new non-traditional festivals and recurring monthly events downtown. |

| ID | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|
| Transportation 1.1 | Work with NCDOT identify and provide signage for preferred semi-truck routes that bypass the downtown. |
| Transportation 1.4 | Coordinate with NCDOT's R-5826 project to include streetscape improvements at the intersection of Main St. & Allenton St. such as installing crosswalks and pedestrian signalization. |
| Transportation 1.5 | Contract with a design firm to update and develop construction documents for downtown streetscape improvements based on the 2007 plan. |
| Transportation 4.3(c ) | Install bike racks, storage, and maintenance stands in downtown and at public parks to accommodate cycling and to signal support for bicycles as a valid and encouraged form of transportation. |
| Parks 1.2 | Construct the Albert Johnson Memorial Park according to the 2020 site plan. |
| Parks 1.3 | Develop a plan for a new town park at the Shankle property adjacent to Mt. Gilead Elementary School. |
| Parks 1.4 | Develop a joint-use and maintenance agreement with Montgomery County Schools to enable public use and ensure routine maintenance of basketball courts adjacent to Mount Gilead Elementary. |
| Parks 1.6 | Consider banning smoking in public parks and civic spaces to ensure an enjoyable, healthy, and family-friendly environment. Install signage to discourage smoking in these areas. |
| Community 1.6.1 | Install landscaping such as planter boxes and hanging baskets on light posts to create an inviting pedestrian environment. |
| Community 1.6.2 | Separate existing parking lots from sidewalks in downtown by installing decorative seat walls or planter boxes to enhance the pedestrian experience. |
| Community 1.6.3 | Install street furniture such as seating and trash receptacles that double as functional public art. |
| Community 1.7.2 | Develop a sculpture program for installing permanent or rotational public art exhibits in key locations and destinations throughout Mt. Gilead, such as the Albert Johnson Memorial Park. |
| Community 1.7.3 | Expand mural program to other areas of Mt. Gilead, including creative applications like electrical boxes or stairs. Consider Percent for Art program to fund commissions. |
| Community 1.7.4 | Host a monthly downtown art-crawl that highlights public art installations, features local artists, and engages downtown businesses. |
| Communtiy 1.8 | Consider establishing a community garden and edible landscapes in downtown planters. |
| Community 3.2 | Pursue new programming and uses for the Leah Levin Memorial Auditorium such as an event space for public and private functions. |
| Community 3.3 | Consider promoting the Mt. Gilead Museum as an event space for weddings, receptions, and corporate meetings to generate revenue for the museum and bring visitors to the Town. |

## SUMMARY OF VISIBLE VICTORIES

Visible Victories are short-term recommendations that can begin immediate implementation to achieve visible and tangible results in support of the long-term vision for Mount Gilead. This list summarizes the Visible Victories identified throughout Chapter 3: Recommendations.

» Implement a distinct & recognizable visual brand for the Town.

» Install wayfinding signage from nearby recreation destinations to Downtown Mt. Gilead.

» Re-establish a consistent community farmers market in downtown Mt. Gilead.

» Work with Market Montgomery Chamber of Commerce & Tourism to develop and implement targeted social media campaigns that highlight Mt. Gilead businesses.

» Amend Zoning Ordinance to allow and encourage outdoor patio seating and dining in downtown and on sidewalks with adequate width.

» Consider hosting new non-traditional festivals and recurring monthly events downtown, such as a food truck rodeo.

» Consider a facility rental program that will allow the Mt. Gilead Fire Department to generate revenue as a community center and venue space for public and private events.

» Install bike racks, storage, and maintenance stands in downtown and at public parks to accommodate cycling and to signal support for bicycles as a valid and encouraged form of transportation.

» Develop a joint-use and maintenance agreement with Montgomery County Schools to enable public use and ensure routine maintenance of basketball courts adjacent to Mount Gilead Elementary

» Consider banning smoking in public parks and civic spaces to ensure an enjoyable, healthy, and family-friendly environment. Install signage to discourage smoking in these areas.

» Develop a gateway signage system and work with private property owners or NCDOT right-of-way to improve existing or establish consistent recognizable gateways into Mt. Gilead by installing new signage, landscaping, and street trees at key gateways.

» Cultivate pride of place in Mt. Gilead's various distinct neighborhoods by establishing a neighborhood sign program to install signs at the entrances to each neighborhood.

» Install landscaping such as planter boxes and hanging baskets on light posts to create an inviting pedestrian environment.

» Install street furniture such as seating and trash receptacles that double as functional public art.

» Expand mural program to other areas of Mt. Gilead, including creative applications like electrical boxes or stairs. Consider Percent for Art program to fund commissions.

» Host a monthly downtown art-crawl that highlights public art installations, features local artists, and engages downtown businesses.

» Consider establishing a community garden and edible landscapes in downtown planters.

» Consider promoting the Mt. Gilead Museum as an event space for weddings, receptions, and corporate meetings to generate revenue for the museum and bring visitors to the Town.


Outdoor Dining Plaza adjacent to The Ford Place

MOUNT GILEAD
MOVING AHEAD
》》》》》 OUR TOWN 2040