



The Town

Case Study 3: Mooresville, North Carolina



PROJECT AND CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

Mooresville is a town of approximately 20 000 people, located on the urban periphery of Charlotte, North Carolina. Charlotte, named for the wife of King George III, is the hub city of the largest urban region in the Carolinas with an overall population of some two million people, and is located within Mecklenburg County, designated in honor of Queen Charlotte's birthplace in northern Germany. Mooresville sits in southern Iredell County, 30 miles north of central Charlotte and just over the county line that separates Iredell from Mecklenburg. The town is the northern terminus of a proposed commuter rail line (the North Transit Corridor) linking Mooresville and three towns in northern Mecklenburg County with Charlotte city center. Interstate 77, one of the main north-south arteries in the state passes through the town's incorporated area to the west of the downtown and through the project area, providing the town and the project site with good freeway access from a number of interchanges. This transportation infrastructure will be enhanced when the proposed commuter rail line begins operation in 2008.

The project area comprises 1200 acres (480 hectares) of predominantly greenfield land located three miles south of Mooresville's downtown. The topography is generally flat and gently rolling with few dramatic slopes or other features. Our master plan provided a framework to manage the growth around a new regional hospital (the Lake Norman Regional Medical Centre) and an aging interstate interchange (Exit 33). The new growth fuelled by this large hospital, the extensive suburban expansion of Charlotte around the nearby Lake Norman, and the potential for future transit-oriented development

around a station planned near the hospital have combined to bring considerable pressure to bear on this area (see Figure 9.1).

The social heart of the project area is the small historic settlement of Mount Mourne, located toward the southeast of the site, and adjacent to the existing, lightly used freight railroad that will be transformed in the near future to a commuter train service utilizing the same kind of Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) planned for the central area of North Carolina and featured in the first two case studies. With a post office, school, fire station and several churches, Mount Mourne possesses as much civic fabric as many small towns, and thus provides a solid foundation for the master plan.

This plan represents the second and third phases of a detailed study process that lasted two years with plenty of public input and participation, and which examined transportation, environmental, land use and zoning issues in the Mooresville area. As part of the first phase, before we were involved, the town had employed a separate traffic consultant to establish a new roadway plan and redesign elements of the freeway interchange (Exit 33) on the site.

Since the completion of our first version of the master plan in 2000 (phase two in the overall process), we and other consultants reworked it in 2001 (phase three) following the relocation of a major corporate headquarters to the site. The Lowes corporation (a major 'do-it-yourself' and home improvement retail chain) was attracted to the site by the accommodating provisions of the original plan and its synchronised zoning ordinance that made relocation of their large facility relatively straightforward. This major new complex has affected the area so much that a second revision of the master