



Figure 9.1 Location Map. Mount Mourne is located south of downtown Mooresville and north of the three Mecklenburg county towns of Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson. These communities all embrace New Urbanist and Smart Growth concepts in their zoning ordinances and land use plans (see Chapter 11).

plan (phase four) has been scheduled for 2003–2004. This aims to ensure that a new wave of subsidiary office development, providing space for companies that supply Lowes with goods and services, does not overturn some of the founding principles of the 2000 master plan.

KEY ISSUES AND GOALS

The overall goal of the master plan was to create a development scenario for the 1200 acres (480 hectares) that balanced the area’s economic development potential with principles of Smart Growth, and capitalized on the site’s transportation advantages while maintaining an appropriate urban scale

and environmental protections. The plan thus included detailed provisions for residential, office, and retail buildings, public parks and areas of preserved landscape, and an interconnected street network.

The key issues were:

1. Establishing a distinct identity for the location.
2. Creating a southern gateway into Mooresville.
3. Creating a plan that blended the walkability of a mixed-use urban village around the train station with vehicle accessibility from the freeway interchange for commercial and healthcare development.
4. Ensuring housing affordability in the new neighborhoods.
5. Safeguarding environmental protection and open space provision.

THE CHARRETTE

We held a charrette at a local church on the site for three days in March, 2000 during which neighbors, property owners, developers, real estate agents, church groups and town officials expressed their views in a candid, public environment that aired a long list of issues and opportunities. The town's original intention was to focus on the growing area at freeway Exit 33, and create an attractive southern gateway into the town, leaving Mount Mourne on the fringe of consideration. While not diminishing the importance of this objective, we quickly came to understand the importance of the Mount Mourne community and its history. Accordingly, our first action was to retile the process 'the Mount Mourne charrette,' and establish this identity for the area instead of simply calling it 'Exit 33.' This shift of emphasis was enthusiastically endorsed by all participants, and created a positive atmosphere where local people felt more ownership of the project. It helped turn some initial skepticism into a collaborative attitude.

THE MASTER PLAN (See Plate 32)

Our site analysis and understanding of the local dynamics led us quickly to divide the master plan into four main geographic areas:

1. The Transit Village
2. The Hospital District
3. The Interstate and 'Hospital West'
4. The North Neighborhood.

Additionally, we set out policies on three specific topics:

5. Open Space Design and Environmental Protection
6. Housing
7. A new Development code.

The Transit Village (see Plate 33)

After a number of discussions with the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), Mooresville town leaders, and local residents, we determined that the most logical placement for a train station was near the existing Mount Mourne community where the rail line runs north-south and parallel to a local main road, Highway 115, that connects Mooresville's downtown area with the neighboring town of Davidson in Mecklenburg County to the south. This location also has a good existing east-west street connection to the hospital area and the interstate, just

over half-a-mile to the west. This location is also three miles north of the Davidson station and three miles south of the terminus in the center of Mooresville. Three miles between stations is an ideal distance for the DMU technology as it enables the trains to reach and maintain efficient high speeds for a reasonable distance between slowing down and starting up again at the stops.

Charlotte transit officials required this station to be a park-and-ride facility to serve a wide catchment area in southern Iredell County (a 10-minute drive defines a five-mile radius around the station). While agreeing with this proposal, we realized that a typical park-and-ride stop with its large areas of asphalt parking, would do considerable damage to the environment and character of the existing Mount Mourne community. Accordingly, we developed the station as a hybrid, a park-and-ride facility combined with a pedestrian-oriented TOD.

We believed that due to its unique location, this park-and-ride lot could mature into something altogether more interesting, and we designed the required parking area for 1000 cars on a rectangular block structure with a green square at the center, preserving an existing grove of mature trees. This square is the same dimension as a typical square in Savannah, Georgia (see Figure 6.9). Initially providing as many as 1000 surface parking spaces, as development pressure expands over time, these 400 feet × 400 feet (122 meters × 122 meters) urban sized blocks could be redeveloped with two- to three-story mixed-use buildings served by mid-block parking decks should the land value grow sufficiently to support that cost. These parking structures would be sized to provide enough spaces for continued park-and-ride service.

Placing the station midway between the parking areas and land available for higher density development enabled us to plan a small mixed-use urban village on a grid of streets within 1/4-mile of this proposed transit stop. As the DMU technology for commuter rail is not as pedestrian-friendly as light rail (it's heavier and noisier) the immediate 'on street' relationship between the urban village and the light rail station cannot be replicated. Some extra safety distances are required, and for the station to be in a separate block from the core of the urban village is quite satisfactory in this condition. We recommended in this instance that the village be developed as an 'employment-led TOD,' with a combination of office and housing rather than retail, which should be limited to smaller neighborhood service stores and