

street was taken over by the town, it assumed authority over the space, and could re-classify it as a town street with angled parking.

The fourth phase of the town center consisted of the new 18 000 square foot (1672 square meters) police station, completed in late 2002 to the designs of Charlotte architects LS3P, who also designed the nearby branch library opposite the town's elementary school two blocks away in 1998. Both these buildings demonstrate good urban design sensitivity to the public street, but manifest a conservative, brick and stone neo-classicism in their external appearance, echoing the 'retro' character of all the architecture in the new town center (see Figure 11.6).

A fifth phase, comprising the vital component of affordable housing in the form of small townhomes around the west and north of the site, completed the construction to date at the time of writing in the late spring of 2003. The master plan also sketched in further terraces of mixed-use development along the south side of Main Street to mirror those on the north. This redevelopment on land not owned by the town is not likely to come to fruition for several years, but on other nearby properties a considerable amount refurbishment and infill development has materialized in response to the town's commitment to reviving its historic core. As a result, the 1996 assessed tax valuation of \$800 000 for the town center area had increased by 2003 to several million dollars.



Figure 11.6 Aerial View of partly completed development showing Police Station, LS3P Architects, 2002. The police station is visible on the left-hand side of the photograph, opposite the town hall. Like the town hall it contributes to good urban design but its tepid neo-classicism is disappointing.

IMPLEMENTATION

North Carolina state law allows public-private partnership ventures to occur for downtown revitalization, but this town center project tested the legal boundaries of the statute as the first instance of its use. The town had optioned the site while negotiating with the developer, and upon agreement of terms, assigned the option to the development company. The town then spent \$500 000 to clear and clean up the site, and \$250 000 to bury all the power and telephone lines along Main Street. As part of the clever legal agreement, the town bought back the site of the town hall for \$800 000 and entered into a 'build-to-suit' contract with the developer for the construction of the new building. This enabled the town to save money, benefit from the economies of scale by being part of the larger, overall development with more competitive pricing, and, importantly, enjoy a faster design and development schedule afforded by the private sector compared to conventional process of separate design and competitive bidding for publicly financed municipal buildings (Brown: p. 55). All this innovative manoeuvring necessitated detailed negotiations between the town and the state commission for local government in order to approve the methods of financing.

We noted earlier that Professor Walters' work with the town in the mid-1990s had established the principle of a transit-oriented town center on this site and adjacent properties, with the redevelopment of the old mill as the foundation for this vision. With the economic and critical success of this town center block (it received awards for its detailed design from the American Institute of Architects and the American Planning Association) Cornelius took another bold step in January 2000. Following its innovative precedent on the old mill site, the town contracted to purchase 128 acres (51 hectares) of land immediately on the opposite side of the rail line from the town center, where Campbell's 1996 student thesis had explored a transit-oriented residential development. The town did so 'as a catalyst to support and facilitate the successful development of this property, (but) with no desire to own or develop the property themselves' (Brown, 60). It was their intention to produce a design for a TOD while the property was under their option to buy, and then 'flip' the site, with its design and full zoning in place, to a developer, who would be the actual one to purchase the land and proceed with construction. This strategy kept the town's financial commitment low, while leveraging extensive private investment to complete the project.

The town employed Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company to prepare a master plan and assessments of development feasibility, which they completed through a public design charrette in December 2000. With the plan in place, elected officials and staff interviewed several development companies before selecting one to implement the project. The DPZ plan created an attractive blueprint for the transit-oriented development, and established a viable framework, but some difficult topographic and implementation issues remained unresolved. As a result of some disagreements between the consultants and the town, Charlotte landscape architects Cole Jenest and Stone (members of the original design team) were hired to revise the plan to meet the needs of the town and the selected developer (see Figure 11.7). The commuter rail line is still on schedule to be up and running by 2008, and the first homes in the transit-oriented

development were scheduled to break ground in the summer of 2003.

Cornelius' proactive planning regime moved to consolidate this town center vision in the spring of 2003 when it commissioned the Lawrence Group to prepare a master plan for its remaining land area around the TOD and along the train line, about six square miles, in collaboration with its neighbors, the towns of Davidson and Huntersville. The Lawrence Group set up another public charrette, and the resultant master plan balanced the opportunities for development, particularly spurred by transit and the recent provision of sewer service, with the conservation of some of the last large areas of open farmland in the county (see Plate 53).

Within the study area for this last piece of the puzzle, and immediately to the east and south of the Transit-oriented Development, sits 656 acres



Figure 11.7 Revised TOD Master Plan Layout, Cole Jenest and Stone, Landscape Architects, 2001. This plan retained many elements of the original DPZ plan, but revised parts of the street pattern to suit detailed topographical conditions. The commuter rail line makes a shallow arc on the left-hand edge of the drawing, and the train station will be located next to the pedestrian connection across the tracks to the adjacent town center. The mixed-use development discussed in this chapter is immediately off the drawing on the left-hand side. (Drawing courtesy of Cole Jenest and Stone)