

Summary of Recommendations
Major Corridor Ordinance Task Force ("MCOTF")
January 7, 2008

The MCOTF was charged to provide development guidelines along the County's major corridors and to map designated economic nodes, a process recommended by the Land Conservation and Development Plan.

The major corridors of Chatham County are defined as Routes 1, 15-501, 421, 64, 87, and 751. Additionally, Old Graham Road and Pittsboro-Moncure Road should be included in the study area.

The recommendations of the MCOTF include designating the major corridors into two overlay types: (1) Commercial Nodes; and (2) Scenic Overlay Districts. Commercial developments are encouraged in the commercial nodes but not in the scenic overlay districts. Higher development standards are recommended in the scenic overlay districts in order to encourage commercial uses to locate in the commercial nodes. All applications for development along the corridors will be considered using the conditional use process.

Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the scenic and node overlay districts is to ensure that commercial developments are designed in a way that generally promotes and/or retains rural character along the major corridors throughout Chatham County. A major purpose is to promote an appropriate balance between development and conservation of open space. Another important purpose is the promotion of good air and water quality by preserving tree cover and natural landscaping. Further, the recommended design requirements for node overlay districts will ensure high standards for commercial developments in Chatham County.

Types and Location of Commercial Nodes

The following table shows the five types of commercial nodes, the size limitations on each and the approximate location. See the map at Ex. 4 for the precise location of commercial nodes.

Type of Node	Description of Size of Node	Locations (<i>see also map</i>)
Crossroads Activity Center (CAC)	Site not to exceed 2 acres for convenience store/entrepreneur operations.	Can occur anywhere in the scenic overlay districts, but no closer than 3 miles from other CACs.
Neighborhood	Up to 2 small retail or grocery anchors with up to 40,000 square feet each and ancillary outlets not to exceed 160,000 square feet. This type node permits retail, office, research and civic uses.	Rt. 87 at a point north of Gum Springs Rd and south of Chicken Bridge Rd .

Community	Up to 2 large retail or grocery anchors (up to 80,000 square feet each) with ancillary retail, restaurants, services and offices allowed. Total node not to exceed 320,000 square feet.	3 nodes identified along Rt.15-501 North: (1) Colepark/Chatham Crossing (2) Chatham Downs; (3) Briar Chapel/Ferrington Place
Regional	No limit in size of individual structures or of the total development. Retail office, research, and civic uses. Residential uses are also encouraged as part of the overall mix.	Intersection of Rts. 902 and 421, lying one-half mile back from the intersection point on each route.
Special	Development that does not fit a standard mix of non-residential uses. Primarily for non-retail development, such as a corporate campus, research campus, industrial use, or offices. No limit in size of structures or of the total development within the node.	3 nodes: identified: (1) Intersection of Rts 64 and 751; (2) US1, Technology Corridor; (3) US1 Southermost interchange .

In addition to these nodes on the major corridors, there were two additional economic activity centers recognized by the MCOTF: (1) a neighborhood scale node at Governor's Village; and (2) an Industrial Cluster northeast of Moncure. These are shown on the Land Use Plan map recommendations, but are not part of the zoning recommendations.

Higher Standards for Development in the Scenic Overlay District

The Scenic Overlay Districts lie along the corridors outside the commercial nodes, and are deemed inappropriate for more intense use in terms of access, infrastructure, and the environment. The higher standards in these districts are designed to encourage businesses to locate in the commercial nodes.

In addition to the standards applied in commercial nodes, development in the scenic overlay districts must:

- Have a deeper buffer requirement - The total buffer requirement between the roadway and the development increases from 100 feet (commercial node standard) to 150 feet.
- Building size is limited - Single use buildings have a maximum size of 65,000 square feet.
- Access to the corridor is limited - Only one road access point is allowed unless additional access is required for public safety.
- Signage is limited - Fewer, smaller signs are allowed. Signs are limited to earth tones with no more than three colors used.

Overview

Although the five sections of the MCOTF recommendations deal with separate topics, they are interactive and overlapping. Accordingly, the separate sections must be read "simultaneously" in order to understand how the standards cooperate to produce developments that achieve desirable results.

The commercial nodes will be substantially shielded from the corridors (80% opacity is the goal) through the use of existing vegetation or supplemental plantings that provide a 60-foot-wide buffer plus 20 feet on either side of the buffer to protect the "critical root zone." Similar buffers will be required around the perimeter of the development where necessary to shield residential uses from commercial uses. The number of access points for commercial nodes will be limited to the greatest extent possible

and a "right-in, right-out" system will be used to enhance traffic flow. One monument sign (with downcast lighting) is allowed at each entrance to the commercial node. These signs are limited to a maximum area of 150 square feet and a height not exceeding 10 feet from the ground plane. Standards for internal wall signs, projecting signs and free-standing signs in the development limit their size, height and design.

Buildings in the development are to be clustered to foster pedestrian movement and they will be pulled off the corridors and screened by the vegetative buffers. They will be arranged so as to enclose and define space and provide opportunities for public interaction. Open spaces such as common greens should be provided at a central location in the development. Areas should be provided for outdoor eating facilities and sidewalk cafés. Sidewalks will be designed to form a circulation system in the development so that conflicts between pedestrians and traffic are minimized. Corporate logo buildings will not be allowed and "large scale" retail outlets will be surrounded by storefront buildings so as to reduce their massive appearance and create pedestrian scale.

Parking areas are subject to a 50% shading requirement. They should be "broken into smaller, interconnected modules" and located behind buildings. Multi-use pathways may be used in the buffers allowing for pedestrians and bicycles. Parking facilities should be provided for bikes and for alternative vehicles, e.g., electric and biodiesel vehicles. Bus bays and transit shelter spaces should be provided for future transit purposes.

Design Standards

The design standards are presented in five major categories: (1)Access and Traffic; (2)Parking Areas; (3)Building Design and Layout; (4)Landscaping and Buffers; and (5)Signs.

Access and Traffic

Entrances

- The number of access points to developments shall be limited to allow for the free flow of traffic along the corridor
- Access points will use a "right-in, right-out" system when possible.
- Landscape islands will separate ingress and egress lands
- Entrances will include a 50-foot deceleration/acceleration lane, 10 feet wide, when NCDOT standards do not require otherwise.

Sidewalks/Paths

- Sidewalks, 5 feet in width, will be installed on both sides of all arterials, collector streets and non-residential cul-de-sacs and along the front of the development.
- To preserve rural character, multi-use paths may be used instead of sidewalks but should be designed to minimize vehicle crossings. Where crossings do occur, they should be carefully designed to ensure the safety of pedestrian and other path users.
- Pedestrian walkways are to be designed to form a circulation system so that conflict between pedestrians and traffic are minimized.
- Sidewalks are required only on one side of local streets. They are required to connect the principal entrances of buildings in the development.

Bicycles/Transit

- Shelter space for transit users is to be provided.

- If a bus stop is located on the corridor, a bus bay is to be provided so that buses can pull out of the way of traffic.
- Bicycle lanes are to be provided on frontage streets. Bicycle parking and bike racks are to be located close to building entrances.

Parking Areas

This sections includes provisions for the location and design of off-street parking areas, the amount of parking space, shared parking, transit parking, bicycle parking, "alternative vehicle parking" (e.g., electric or biodiesel-fueled vehicles) and, importantly, shading required for parking lots, including a "shaded area calculation."

- Parking areas are to be "broken into smaller, interconnected modules" and located behind buildings so they are closer to the street for transit users and pedestrians.
- Diagonal on-street parking is encouraged along interior streets but parallel parking may be used on side streets.
- Existing parking provisions as stated in the County Zoning Ordinance apply, although the minimum parking spaces stated in the Zoning Ordinance is considered to be the maximum number of spaces.
- Parking areas are subject to a 50% "shading requirement." Developers are required to submit a parking lot shading plan showing all surface areas included in the shading calculation and trees drawn to scale showing the canopy size at 15 years of age.
- Shade trees shall be located a minimum of 50 feet on center throughout the parking areas.
- Pedestrian cut-throughs shall be located so that the roots of shade trees are not adversely affected.
- "Shared parking" is encouraged when it serves different uses with different operating hours or peak business periods. This system allows smaller parking areas than might otherwise be necessary. A shared parking plan is required along with a justification that shows the feasibility of shared parking.
- Bicycle parking with racks is to be provided near all non-residential and multi-family residential buildings.
- Additional parking spaces above the maximum are allowed when pullout for buses and passenger shelter and parking for alternative vehicles, e.g., electric or biodiesel-powered vehicles are provided.

Building Design and Layout Standards

- Buildings should be clustered together to foster pedestrian movement. They should be placed off the corridor and screened from view by vegetation. Buildings that front more than one street should have multiple entrances. Storefront-type buildings, containing a proliferation of side-by-side stores, are preferred.
- Maximum building height is limited and is not to exceed the mature height of the vegetative buffer at the corridor edge. One-half of the ground-level façade and 25% of the second floor façade is to be composed of window space. Awnings are encouraged.
- An open space for community gatherings should be provided at a central location in the development. Expanded sidewalks and areas for outdoor eating, including outdoor cafés, should be included in the design.
- Corporate prototype buildings are not allowed, i.e., building designs inescapably linked to particular corporate tenants. Rather, building design that allows for adaptive re-use is required.
- "Unbroken building mass" is not to exceed 100 linear feet. Structures greater than 65,000 square feet should wrap smaller shops around their exterior where possible to create a living pedestrian

scale streetscape." Smaller storefront buildings should be used in front of large-scale buildings (and parking decks) to reduce their massive appearance and create pedestrian scale.

- Gas station/convenience stores in Crossroad Activity Centers are to be "residential in form, scale, and detail" and use pitched roofs. Roofs or covers of any refueling area or car wash should use the same architectural lines as the parent building. Any refueling center should be screened from the corridor. Residential units, such as a second floor apartment, are encouraged.

Landscaping and Buffering

- Buffers to screen the development from the corridor, and around the perimeter of the property are required. The corridor buffer consists of 60 feet plus 20 feet on both sides to protect the "critical root zone," measured from the final edge of the corridor .
- Newly planted vegetative buffers shall include a mix of larger shade trees, evergreen trees, understory trees and large and small shrubs. This mix shall be designed to create a buffer which, with five years of maturation, "will provide a satisfactory screen under normal conditions." The goal is a buffer that will provide 80% opacity to a ten-foot height . . . within a five-year growth period after planting. Note that if recycled wastewater will not be available, new plantings shall use drought-tolerant vegetation wherever possible.
- The developer is responsible for maintaining the adequacy of the buffer screening function. Dying or deteriorating trees and plants shall be replaced with plants of like size and type.
- If utility lines must cross the buffer, they should do so underground at ingress/egress points so as not to disturb the buffer vegetation.
- The use of mowable turf grasses should be minimized because they require high levels of maintenance, including mowing and irrigation, which contributes to pollution. Irrigation standards are stated but treated wastewater should be used wherever possible and, as noted above, drought-tolerant species should be used otherwise.

Signs

- One monument sign (with downcast lighting) is allowed at each entrance to the commercial node. These signs are limited to a maximum area of 150 square feet and a height not exceeding 10 feet from the ground plane. Colors are not restricted in the commercial nodes but the structure of the sign base and its other features shall be compatible with the material and architecture of the development.
- Signs mounted flat on walls (wall signs) may be up to 10% of the building façade area or 100 square feet whichever is less. Two wall signs may be used if together they do not exceed the maximum size.
- Certain kinds of signs are prohibited (e.g., internally illuminated signs, signs on roofs, chimneys and balconies; billboards and mobile signs) and select others, not subject to Zoning Ordinance regulation are regulated in the commercial nodes, usually by requiring a smaller sign.