

# Summerfield Comprehensive Plan Objectives and Policies



Town of Summerfield, NC  
Adopted May 11, 2010

Our Town  
Our Plan



# Summerfield Comprehensive Plan

## Our Town Our Plan



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Mark E. Brown, Mayor  
Dena Barnes, Mayor Pro Tem  
Alicia Flowers  
Dianne Laughlin  
Robert "Bob" Williams  
John Wray

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

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Randy Tinsley, Co-Chair  
Doug Canavello  
Jeff Chalmers  
Charlie Chappell  
Al Colanero  
Dwayne Crawford  
Kenneth Dunham  
Alicia Flowers  
Bill Gordon  
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Jeffrey Johnson  
David Layton  
Terry McLean  
Paul Milam  
Lewis Nash  
Anne Nusskern  
Alice Patterson  
Ernie Showfety  
Linda Southard

### TOWN STAFF

Michael Brandt, Town Manager  
Chris Anderson, Town Planner  
Valorie Halvorsen, Town Clerk  
Carrie Spencer, Planning Technician  
George Holub, Parks and Recreation Supervisor

### CONSULTING PLANNER

Glenn R. Harbeck, AICP  
Glenn Harbeck Associates, Inc.  
Community Planning and Public Involvement



# Summerfield Comprehensive Plan

# Our Town Our Plan



## Objectives and Policies

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- Growth Factors Statistical Analysis
- Growth Factors Map Atlas
- Action Agenda
- Executive Summary



# Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

## PLANNING FOR SUMMERFIELD

This Comprehensive Plan marks a major new phase of the Town of Summerfield's relatively young planning program. The following chronicles the history of planning in Summerfield since its incorporation:

- 1996** The Town of Summerfield is **incorporated**. Proper planning and growth management are identified as major priorities for the new town government.
- 1997** In June, Town Council adopted the **Town of Summerfield Unified Development Ordinance**. The ordinance has since been amended many times to address emerging development issues.
- 1998** In January, Town Council established a **Long Term Planning Committee** to prepare a plan for the community. The LTPC met for over 2 years to develop a **Long Range Plan for Summerfield**.
- 1998** In June, Town Council adopted the **Northwest Area Plan**, prepared by the Guilford County Planning Department, as an interim guide for growth and development.
- 2000** In November, Town Council adopted the **Long Range Plan** prepared by the Long Term Planning Committee. The Plan set many recommendations, since carried out, that focused mainly on the use of the Town's Development Ordinance to achieve desirable land use patterns.
- 2003** In January, Town Council commissioned a **Market Analysis and Commercial Needs Assessment** to identify the location and character of several commercial nodes in the community. The study employed a "*highest and best use*" evaluation, along with some public input, to determine its findings as to the location of certain commercial development locations.
- 2004** In June, Town Council appointed a **Town Core Committee**, "*to recommend conceptual changes to the Summerfield Development Ordinance for the Town Core*".
- 2005** In January, the Town Core Committee presented its **Findings and Recommendations for the Town Core**, including recommendations for several new Zoning Districts. At the same time, recognizing a lack of consensus on the recommendations, the report called for a Small Area Plan to directly involve more property owners and businesses.
- 2007** In June, Town Council appointed a **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee** charged with responsibility for guiding the preparation of a first ever *comprehensive* plan for Summerfield.
- 2008** In July, Town Council, the Zoning Board and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee met in a joint workshop to identify growth and development issues for the new **Comprehensive Plan**.
- 2008** In September, the **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee** hosted a special town meeting at which over 600 growth issues concerning the future of Summerfield were identified by some 170 citizens. The Steering Committee then met monthly to develop objectives, policies, and actions for each of 12 priority policy areas identified by the public.

Collectively, all of the Town's plans and ordinances make up a local planning program intended to properly guide quality development in Summerfield. This new Comprehensive Plan is intended to build upon the Town's previous planning initiatives, while adding some of the most current and effective planning principles and methods to the Town's growth management system.

## NEED FOR THIS PLAN

Communities seldom stand still; they are continually growing, changing, and evolving as places of human interchange and investment. Summerfield is no exception. This Comprehensive Plan, therefore, addresses a number of pressing issues facing the town that require considerable attention and concerted action. Among these issues are:

### Sample Growth Issues

- **Allowing the appropriate level of COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT to serve the needs of Town residents.**
- **Responding to strong citizen interest in making Summerfield more WALKABLE AND BIKEABLE.**
- **Preserving the RURAL CHARACTER of the community with emphasis on open spaces and tree preservation.**
- **Mitigating the NEGATIVE IMPACTS of the new I-73 CONNECTOR and the widening of US 220 as they pass through and divide Summerfield. Creating a connected network of local town streets.**
- **Ensuring a reliable supply of POTABLE WATER for residents and business over the long term. Protecting the GROUNDWATER AQUIFER.**
- **Maintaining a high quality of residential development while allowing for a VARIETY OF SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING TYPES to meet the needs of empty nesters, senior citizens, and young families.**
- **Providing for adequate PARK AND RECREATION improvements commensurate with the demands of the Summerfield community.**
- **Maintaining and promoting a community that presents an ATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE AND HIGH QUALITY IMAGE.**
- **Working with the County to provide for EXCELLENT SCHOOLS while serving as true community centers, accessible and well-utilized by the citizenry.**
- **Planning carefully for the future of the SUMMERFIELD ROAD focus area. Working closely with property owners, residents, and businesses on a plan agreeable to all.**
- **Striking a balance between preserving the HISTORIC CHARACTER of older properties, while allowing owners the latitude to make good use of their asset.**
- **Maintaining town government as small, accessible, and citizen-engaged, with LIMITED SERVICES and low taxes.**

### Where Addressed in the Plan

- ▶ Policy Area 1: Appropriate, Limited Commercial Development
- ▶ Policy Area 2: Sidewalk, Bikeway, and Trail System
- ▶ Policy Area 3: Community Character Preservation
- ▶ Policy Area 4: Transportation Improvements
- ▶ Policy Area 5: Water Supply and Sewage Treatment Options
- ▶ Policy Area 6: Appropriate Housing and Residential Development
- ▶ Policy Area 7: Park and Recreation Improvements
- ▶ Policy Area 8: Attractive Community Appearance
- ▶ Policy Area 9: Quality School Facilities
- ▶ Policy Area 10: Summerfield Road Focus Area
- ▶ Policy Area 11: Historic Preservation
- ▶ Policy Area 12: Summerfield as a Limited Services Local Government

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Preparation of this plan involved an informed and active group of citizens, the Summerfield Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Appointed by the Town Council in June 2007, this 20+ member committee represented a broad cross section of Summerfield's citizens. Through the efforts of the Steering Committee, every objective, policy statement, and implementation action considered for this plan was reviewed and discussed, endorsed, set aside, or improved. In addition, the Plan Steering Committee received considerable support from the staff and consultant to the Plan, and input from the many civic leaders, board members, and citizens who were interviewed or attended meetings held for the plan.



*Back Row: Ken Dunham, Randy Tinsley, Jeff Johnson, Jeff Chalmers, Dwayne Crawford, Al Colanero  
Middle Row: Nancy Hess, Alicia Flowers, Paul Milam, Doug Canavello, Charlie Chappell, Terry McLean  
Front Row: Linda Southard, Mia Malesovas, Anne Nusskern, Ernie Showfety, David Layton  
Current Members Not Pictured: Bill Gordon, Lewis Nash, Alice Patterson*

*The Steering Committee would also like to acknowledge the service of the following former members:  
Addison "Dail" Perry Jr, David Shaw, Dawn Ford, Erin McLean, Gary Ajemian, Mitchell Fahrer, Parker Jackson, Peggy McPartlan, Steven Pierotti, William (Bill) True, Matt Devaney, Kim Parker*

## COMMUNITY INPUT GUIDED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In July 2008, work began in earnest on the Summerfield Comprehensive Plan. The Steering Committee held a joint kick off meeting with the Town Council and the Town Zoning Board. Plans were set in motion immediately for the three groups to host a special town meeting for the plan.



In September of 2008, some 170 town residents crowded into the Summerfield Elementary School cafeteria and voiced hundreds of concerns, hopes, and ideas for the future of their town. As a result of that town meeting, a number of priority topics were identified for use in drafting a new Comprehensive Plan for Summerfield.

Over the ensuing months, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee reviewed the many growth issues identified by the public and also evaluated growth factors associated with the Town's development. The results of the Committee's work are presented in three parts: Common Objectives, Policies, and Actions.

This Comprehensive Plan represents an important new benchmark in planning for the future of Summerfield. The intent of the plan is to create a shared vision for the Town to preserve its natural and cultural heritage, and to give appropriate direction for desirable growth and development. In completing this plan, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has fulfilled its charge of recommending a new long range plan for consideration of adoption by the Town Council of Summerfield.

### COMMON OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND ACTIONS— WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

*As noted above, this plan contains three different types of statements, each serving a special purpose:*

1. **COMMON OBJECTIVES** describe a **desirable condition** for the Town the way we would like to see it. They are the foundation for Policies and Actions. One of the best ways to evaluate the Policies and Actions is to understand the intent of each Common Objective and see whether the Policies and Actions will help make it happen.
2. **POLICIES** are **officially adopted positions** of Town government with regard to preferred or required courses of action. Their primary purpose is to provide guidance to decisions and actions today. When a policy is applied, it does not go away. Policies can and should be used over and over again in support of the Common Objectives. There are normally several policies

lending support to each Common Objective. While policies may be amended, such changes should be infrequent to provide for consistent, predictable decision-making over a several year period.

3. **ACTIONS (Under Separate Cover) are a to-do-list** of things that could be done in support of the Common Objectives and Policies. Unlike an objective or policy, once an action is completed, it goes away; it gets checked off the list. The Town may consider actions as potential work program items for implementation in subsequent fiscal years. It should not be expected that all or even most implementation items could be completed in any one fiscal year. Priorities must be chosen. Actions should also be updated each year in concert with the Town's work program and budget process.

## HOW TO USE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan have been designed for regular use to (1) guide public decisions at the Town level, (2) coordinate actions at the county, regional, state, and federal levels, and (3) provide information for private sector decisions. As officially adopted policies of the Town, they are to be used primarily in managing growth and development and as a foundation for decisions on Town facilities and services. The following paragraphs detail how various parties involved in decision-making may use the policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

- ***As Used by the Town Staff***

Reviewing Development Proposals--Town staff should consult the Common Objectives and Policies in reviewing development proposals. Such development proposals would typically include rezoning requests, (see section below entitled **Zoning Amendments and Consistency...**) subdivision reviews, site plan reviews, driveway permits, special use permits, sign permits, and the like. All Policies are given a unique identification number allowing them to be referenced by "chapter and verse" in staff recommendations to Town boards.

Suggesting Changes in Town Services-- Town staff should consult the Common Objectives and Policies before making recommendations about changes in Town facilities and services. Recommendations to be presented to the Town Council should first be evaluated according to their consistency with the adopted policy positions of the Comprehensive Plan. Town staff should have a thorough knowledge of the Common Objectives and Policies, and be able to draw upon them routinely. This is especially important during preparation of the annual work program and proposed budget.

- ***As Used by Appointed Boards and Committees***

Before their regular meetings, members of appointed boards and committees of the Town should review proposed agenda items in light of the Town's adopted policies. The Town Zoning Board, for example, should review development proposals with regard to how well they match up with the Town's policies on transportation, housing, community appearance, and so forth. The Town's Parks and Recreation Committee will want to review the plan as it applies to park and recreation improvements in the town. Town Staff should assist various Town Boards and Committees, as appropriate, by pointing out policies applicable to each agenda item. Board and committee

members should then draw their own conclusions as to the consistency of a particular agenda item with the Town's adopted Comprehensive Plan Policies.

- ***As Used by Summerfield Town Council***

In their authority to rezone properties, approve proposed developments as well as changes in Town facilities and services, the Town Council has the final word on the actions of Summerfield government. As customary, Council should take into account and weigh the interpretation of Policy as provided by all interested parties, the Town staff, and advisory boards and committees. Decisions on programs and capital improvement expenditures are also made with greater confidence when they can be evaluated for consistency with the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Over time, a track record of policy interpretation forms a reliable foundation for decision-making.



- ***As Used by Other Local, Regional, State, and Federal Government Authorities***

The Town should make an effort to make public officials in nearby municipalities, as well as those of Guilford County and the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments, aware of the Comprehensive Plan. They should be encouraged to consult the plan when considering plans and projects under their authority. Decisions by municipalities concerning water and sewer extensions, transportation, and land use planning, in particular, should be done, to the extent possible, in concert with the policies of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Similarly, the Town should call the Plan to the attention of State and Federal officials, particularly with regard to transportation investments, growth management policies, and economic development initiatives under the authority of those governments.

- ***As Used by Development Interests***

Developers, property owners, builders, and others involved in the development community should consult the Common Objectives and Policies

when formulating their own development plans. By making their plans consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan Policies, the chances of development plan approval should increase, thereby saving guesswork, time, and money. The quality of development proposals drawn up for review may also improve if the developer knows that the effort put into the design is more apt to receive a favorable response.

- **As Used by the General Public**

Residents of Summerfield can and should reference specific Comprehensive Plan Common Objectives and Policies, when speaking in favor or in opposition to a particular proposal before the Town Council or other appointed Town boards and committees.

## **ZONING CHANGES AND CONSISTENCY WITH THE TOWN'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

North Carolina General Statute 160A-383 requires that "*prior to adopting or rejecting any zoning amendment*" each local governing board "*shall adopt a statement describing whether its action is consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan and explaining why the board considers the action taken to be reasonable and in the public interest*". For the purposes of this statute, this document constitutes Summerfield's *comprehensive plan*.

The above referenced law requires that the Town Zoning Board review of proposed zoning amendments include written comments on the consistency of the proposed amendment with the *comprehensive plan* and any other relevant plans (such as a small area plan, a corridor plan, or a transportation plan) that have been adopted by the Town. Further, the Town Council is also required to adopt a statement on plan consistency before adopting or rejecting any zoning amendment. These written comments are required, but do not limit Council's discretionary power to adopt or not adopt zoning amendments.

In other words, Town Council retains the power to approve a zoning amendment that, on its face, is not consistent with the *comprehensive plan*. At the same time, Council's decision to approve an "inconsistent" zoning amendment must not be taken lightly; Council's approval must be justified by reasons written into the permanent record as to why a zoning amendment found to be inconsistent nonetheless warrants approval. In these situations, there may be fundamentally sound reasons why a particular zoning amendment should be approved.

## **AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan is the policy foundation for guiding zoning decisions, as well as a broad range of other decisions of Town government. The plan's essential elements—the Common Objectives and Policies—are intended to remain substantially unchanged during the plan's tenure. Frequent changes to these elements would undermine the plan's effectiveness in directing a steady course for the Town's growth and development over the long haul. Nevertheless, future circumstances may warrant amendment of the plan. Consult the Town Planner for procedures involved for consideration of an amendment to the Plan.

### KEY WORDS OFTEN USED IN POLICIES (GLOSSARY)

As the plan is used over time by the various parties identified above, a consistent decision-making pattern will evolve. Also, users of the plan will find it helpful if they employ a consistent vocabulary when interpreting the meaning of the policy statements. Certain key words are used frequently in policy statements. The glossary below conveys the specific meaning of these key words as used in Policy Statements for the Summerfield Comprehensive Plan.

1. **adequate**: sufficient to achieve the intended purpose or prevent harm
2. **allow, authorize, permit**: official action to let something happen
3. **control**: to regulate or direct
4. **discourage**: to not favor; to dissuade
5. **encourage**: to favor or foster (also see support)
6. **may**: provides the option, but not required; permissive
7. **preferred**: the favored course among alternatives but does not preclude other options
8. **prohibit**: not allowed, period; to totally prevent
9. **promote**: to proactively encourage, to take positive steps
10. **reasonable**: practical, sufficient to do the job; not extreme
11. **require**: to mandate something
12. **shall**: mandatory, not optional; a more formal term for “will”
13. **should**: preferred or recommended but not mandatory in all cases
14. **significant**: important; determined by quantity, quality or relative impact
15. **support**: to foster; may imply financial support

The Common Objectives and Policies of the Summerfield Comprehensive Plan begin on the following page.