

## CHAPTER V-A LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

The evolution of land use in the City of Concord has been dynamic amid exponential growth in recent years. The City has grown to nearly 12 times its original size since its incorporation, resulting in an increase to over 60,000 residents. Originally a rural community, Concord has evolved into a thriving urban center in a region rich with diversity and continued growth potential.

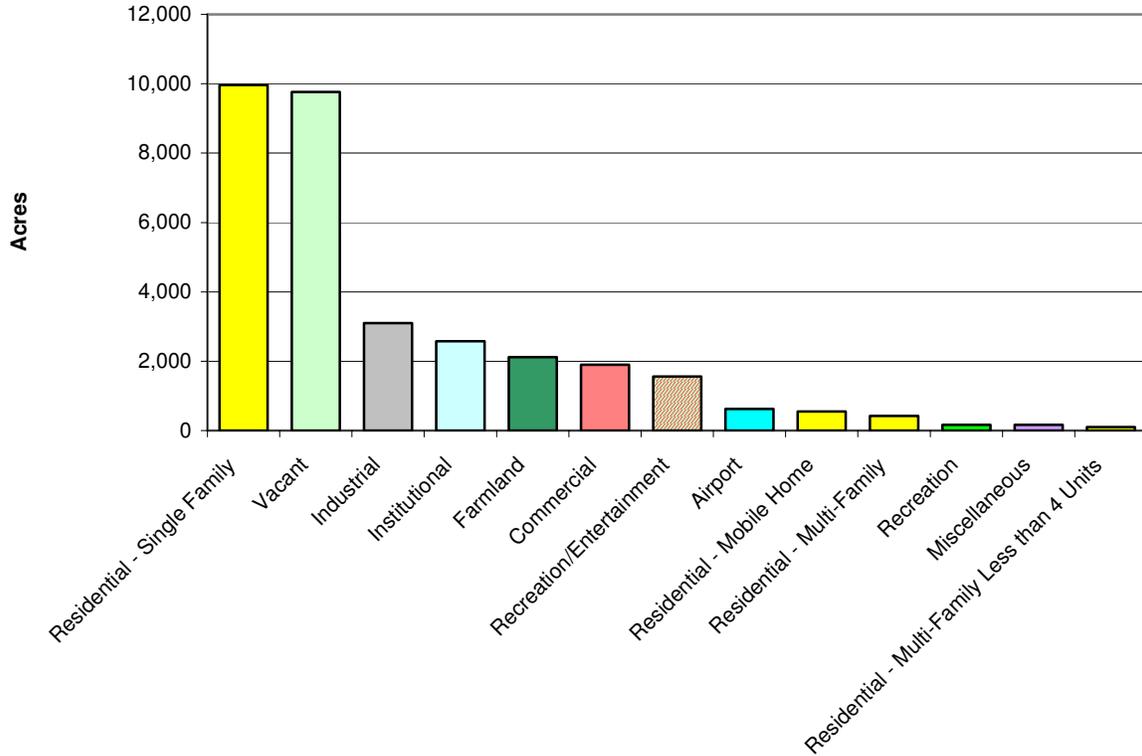
### 1. Existing Land Use and Vacant Land

As detailed in Table V-A-1, the land use occupying the greatest percentage of land in the City of Concord is single-family residential use. Almost 10,000 acres of land – representing 30.2% of total current land use – is single family residential. The next largest category is Vacant land which accounts for 29.6% of the City total. Much of this vacant land however has already been subdivided and slated for single family residential development, and is incorporated in large satellite areas that have recently been annexed in anticipation of this development. Farmland use accounts for only 6.4% of total land use in the City, and has in fact diminished in both total acreage and percentage from 2002, by almost 375 acres. The Lowe’s Motor Speedway and accessory uses, along with two golf courses and the Cabarrus Arena and Event Center, comprise the recreation and entertainment category, which accounts for nearly 4.7% of total land use while Recreation (parks) accounts for another 0.5%. Commercial uses make up 5.7% of existing land use, while institutional uses – including government facilities, utilities, landfill, senior centers, churches, schools, and cemeteries – comprise 7.8% of land uses.

**Table V-A-1, Existing Land Uses by Category, 7/1/2006**

Land Use Category	Land Use Total		Land Use Excluding Center City	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Airport	626.1	1.9%	626.1	2.3%
Commercial	1,895.3	5.7%	1,411.5	5.1%
Farmland	2,117.6	6.4%	2,114.1	7.7%
Industrial	3,097.6	9.4%	2,633.6	9.5%
Institutional	2,579.9	7.8%	2,170.7	7.9%
Miscellaneous	164.8	0.5%	121.3	0.4%
Recreation	167.7	0.5%	84.2	0.3%
Recreation/Entertainment	1,562.5	4.7%	1,562.5	5.7%
Residential - Mobile Home	548.6	1.7%	498.1	1.8%
Residential - Multi-Family	421.1	1.3%	274.5	1.0%
Residential - Multi-Family Less than 4 Units	97.7	0.3%	31.8	0.1%
Residential - Single Family	9,964.9	30.2%	7,624.6	27.6%
Vacant	9,767.4	29.6%	8,453.5	30.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,011.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>27,606.6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure V-A-1  
Chart Showing Land Use Type by Percentage**



\* Total acreage calculated using digital map data and does not reflect City's total legal acreage.  
(Source: City of Concord, 2006)

**Residential**

As illustrated in Figure 23 – Current Land Use, single-family residential development is found throughout the City. Concentrations of single-family developments are found off of Poplar Tent Road, Weddington Road, Roberta Road, Pitts School Road, NC Highway 49, Branchview Drive (NC 136) and throughout the Center City area. Multi-family residential, duplex and mobile home park developments are primarily concentrated in the Center City area, with some multi-family development in the vicinity of Davidson Highway (NC 73) and Interstate 85. Additional duplex developments are scattered throughout the City.

**Industrial**

Industrial development is dispersed in several areas, including the southern area of the City, near the Concord Regional Airport, in the vicinity of Lowe's Motor Speedway, along Concord Parkway North (US 29), and in the heart of the Center City area. Concord's largest industry, Philip Morris, is located on tracts totaling more than 1,800 acres on both sides of Concord Parkway South (US 29). The International Business Park, located on International Drive, is home to several industries and includes vacant properties suited for future industrial development.

### **Farmland**

6.4% of Concord's land area is still being used for agricultural purposes. This 2,117 acres of farmland is located primarily in the western portion of the City, off Weddington Road, Concord Parkway South (US 29), Pitts School Road, Roberta Road and Davidson Highway (NC 73). It is anticipated that over time, much of this farmland area will be developed into other uses.

### **Recreation and Entertainment**

There is a significant amount of recreation and entertainment land use located in Concord. These areas include sites that are publicly-owned and also sites under private ownership, but designed for public use. Lowe's Motor Speedway is the largest site of this category within Concord, with more than 1,345 acres of land, not including several more acres utilized as accessory uses. The Rocky River Golf Club, rated one of the top 100 golf courses in North Carolina, is located off Speedway Boulevard near Lowe's Motor Speedway. The Cabarrus Country Club is located off Rock Hill Church Road, just north and adjacent to property owned by Philip Morris on the northwest side of Concord Parkway South. The new Cabarrus Arena and Events Center at Expo Park, home of the Cabarrus County Fair, is in the far eastern area of the City, off US Highway 49.

### **Commercial**

Much of the commercial development in the City is along the Concord Parkway/Warren C. Coleman Boulevard (US 29/US 601) corridor, west of the Lowe's Motor Speedway along Speedway Boulevard, along Concord Parkway South (US 29), and in the heart of the Center City area. Within these areas are two commercial developments of regional importance. Concord Mills is a super-regional retail and entertainment complex with 1.4 million square feet of retail space containing 225 stores, sitting on nearly 295 acres of land directly off of Interstate 85 on Concord Mills Boulevard. Since its opening in 1999, Concord Mills has been a catalyst for development along Concord Mills Boulevard and Speedway Boulevard near the I-85 interchange. The other regionally significant commercial center is the 578,000 square foot Carolina Mall sitting on 366 acres, which includes 3 anchor department stores and 42 smaller retail shops. Located in the Center City area, just off of I-85 on Davidson Highway (NC 73), the Carolina Mall anchored this commercial corridor of the City since its opening in 1972.

## **Institutional and Office**

Institutional uses including the NorthEast Medical Center, City of Concord and Cabarrus County government facilities, utilities, landfill, senior centers, churches, schools, and cemeteries are located throughout the City, with a concentration in the Center City area. The government offices of the City of Concord and Cabarrus County are in the Center City, as are Barber Scotia College and the NorthEast Medical Center. Professional office uses are clustered in the vicinity of the NorthEast Medical Center, off Branchview Drive (NC 136) and Lake Concord Road, and near the Concord Regional Airport along Derita and Poplar Tent Roads.

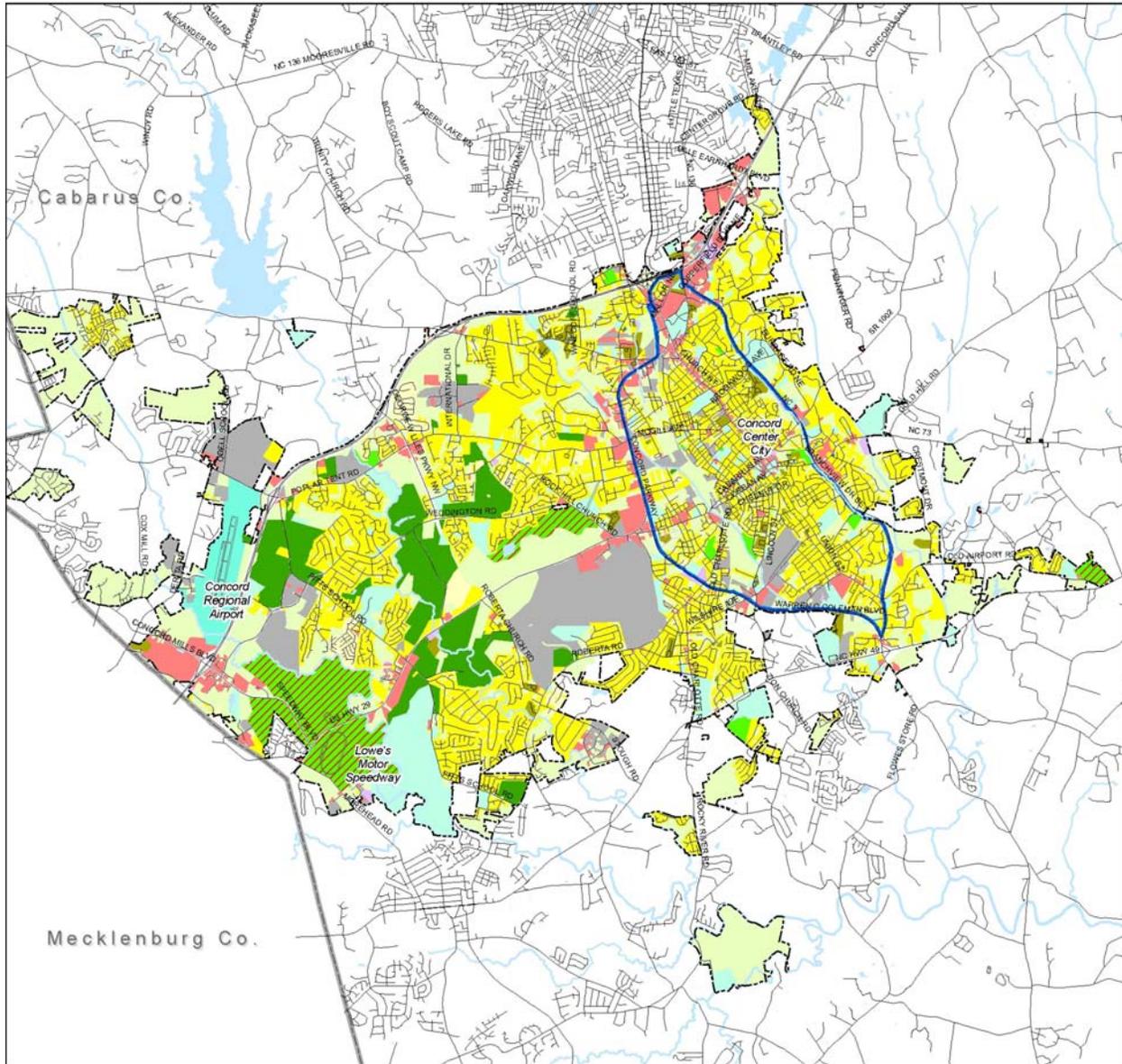
## **Airport**

The Concord Regional Airport, in addition to being a major land use, has been and remains a catalyst for commercial and industrial development. The Airport is located in the northwest area of the City, adjacent to I-85, Poplar Tent Road and Derita Road. In 2005 the runway was extended by 1,900 feet to bring the total length to 7,400 feet. This allows for larger aircraft and greater fuel and passenger capacities, while improving safety.

## **Vacant Land**

There are 9,764 acres of vacant land in Concord, of which 8,454 acres (86%) lie outside the Center City area. Large vacant tracts are located at several points along I-85, including Copperfield Boulevard, within the International Business Park, along Poplar Tent Road, and north of the Speedway on Weddington Road and Speedway Boulevard. Much of the vacant land located in the incorporated satellite areas of the city are part of planned residential developments, and will be converted to mainly single-family residential use. In addition, numerous vacant tracts are found along Branchview Drive (NC 3) and within the Center City area, and many sizable vacant tracts are also scattered throughout the City.

# Figure V-A-2 City of Concord Existing Land Use



**Legend**

Land Use Category	
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span>	Airport
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Commercial
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	Farmland
<span style="color: grey;">■</span>	Industrial
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span>	Institutional
<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	Miscellaneous
<span style="color: limegreen;">■</span>	Recreation
<span style="color: yellowgreen;">■</span>	Recreation/Entertainment
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	Residential - Mobile Home
<span style="color: olive;">■</span>	Residential - Multi-Family
<span style="color: darkolivegreen;">■</span>	Residential - Multi-Family < 4 Units
<span style="color: gold;">■</span>	Residential - Single Family
<span style="color: lightyellow;">■</span>	Vacant
<span style="border: 1px solid blue; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Center City Boundary



Source: City of Concord  
Business & Neighborhood Services, GIS  
7/1/2006

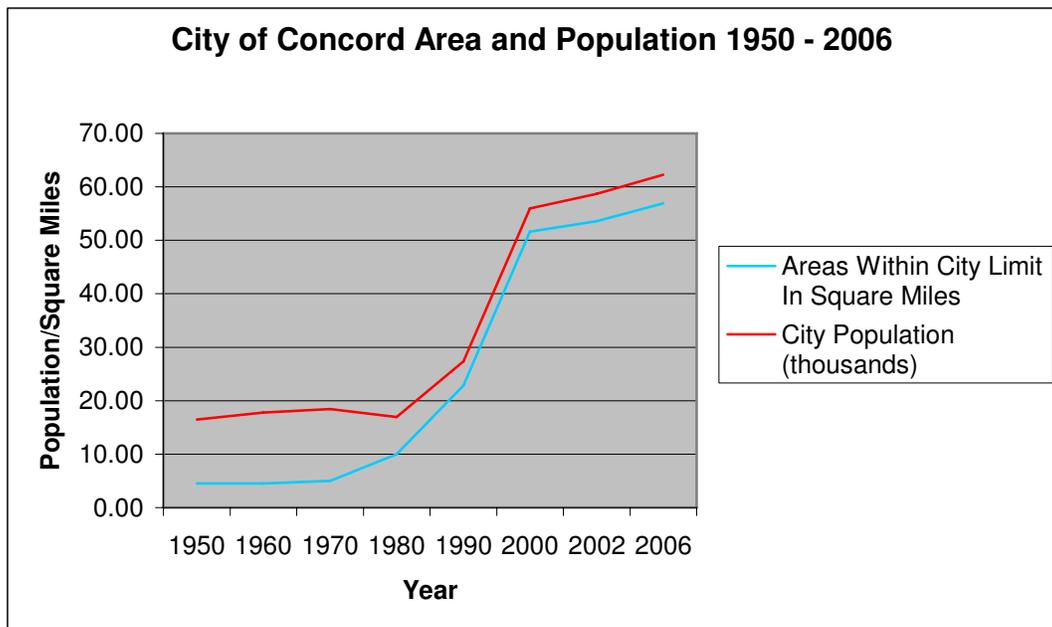
## 2. Annexation Trends

In five decades, Concord has grown from a small town of 4.5 square miles and 16,486 people in 1950 to a sizable city of more than 53 square miles and 58,710 people (2002 estimate). The City more than doubled in size when it annexed nearly 30 square miles between 1990 and 2000 – the 4<sup>th</sup> largest area annexed by a North Carolina municipality during this time period. From September 1985 to December of 2002, Concord annexed more than 27,260 acres (42.6 square miles), bringing 18,130 new residents into the City. Table V-A-2 shows land area and associated population by decade/year.

**Table V-A-2**  
City of Concord Area and Population 1950 - 2006

Year	Areas Within City Limit In Square Miles	City Population
1950	4.50	16,486
1960	4.50	17,799
1970	5.00	18,464
1980	10.00	16,942
1990	22.85	27,347
2000	51.64	55,977
2002	53.56	58,710
2006	56.94	62,291

*Source: US Census, 2000 Census; City of Concord*



### **3. Annexation History**

Annexation records maintained by the City since September of 1985 indicate a steady growth in land area with several large annexations. In 1986, Concord annexed more than 5,124 acres in the vicinity of Concord Parkway and Warren C. Coleman Boulevard (US Highways 29 and 601), bringing 8,567 residents into the City limits. A large annexation completed in late 1995 in the area of I-85, Concord Parkway (US Highway 29), and Rocky River added more than 8,802 acres and 6,200 new residents to the City. Since 1980, forty-eight of the annexations have been voluntary with 33 voluntary annexations occurring between 1980 and 1990.

In December of 2002, Concord totaled in excess of 34,280 acres, or 53.56 square miles, in size. More recent annexations completed near the end of 2002 added another 636.38 acres to the City. The largest of these annexations – known as Moss Creek subdivision and located between Odell School Road, Davidson Highway (NC Highway 73), Harris Road and Rocky River – included more than 400 acres of land. Though these recent annexations did not bring additional residents into the City at the time of annexation, they have the potential for residential development that could significantly add to Concord's future population.

**Table V-A-3  
City of Concord Growth Record (1985 - 2006)**

Year	Annexed Area (Acres)	Cumulative Total Area within City Limits		Population Annexed	Cumulative Total City Population
		Acres	Sq. Miles		
1985 <sup>1</sup>	378.57	7379.27	11.53	505	18,430
1986	5267.73	12647.00	19.84	8646	27,071
1987	1501.44	14148.44	22.11	6	28,414
1988	291.46	14439.72	22.56	663	29,090
1989	185.61	14625.33	22.85	17	28,897
Jan '90 <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	-	27,347
1990 <sup>2</sup>	1973.90	16580.80	25.91	636	27,983
1991	2089.72	18922.65	29.57	576	28,835
1992	1337.92	20260.57	31.66	756	28,809
1993	660.57	20921.14	32.69	26	31,773
1994	1878.35	22799.49	35.62	9	32,406
1995	9087.48	31886.97	49.82	6251	39,268
Jul '96 <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	-	41,793
Dec '96 <sup>4</sup>	-	31731.44	49.58	-	-
1996	451.61	31731.44	49.58	7	41,795
1997 <sup>3</sup>	680.29	32411.73	50.64	0	45,168
1998 <sup>3</sup>	67.50	32479.23	50.75	0	46,253
1999 <sup>3</sup>	635.20	33111.73	51.374	234	46,488
2000 <sup>3</sup>	101.33	33213.06	51.89	0	50,564
Jun '01 <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	-	55,977
2001 <sup>3</sup>	392.36	33605.42	52.5	303	56,663
2002 <sup>3</sup>	589.90	34145.02	53.35	0	58,710
2003 <sup>3</sup>	159.58	34537.76	53.96	0	59,791
2004 <sup>3</sup>	415.37	34952.14	54.61	0	61,070
2005	1174.56	36126.70	56.45	0	62,291
2006 <sup>5</sup>	317.22	36126.70	56.94	0	62,291
<b>Totals</b>	<b>29637.67</b>	<b>36126.70</b>	<b>56.45</b>	<b>18635</b>	<b>62291</b>

(Source: City of Concord 2006)

<sup>1</sup> 1985 Annexations from January 1, 1985

<sup>2</sup> Adjustment per US Census population estimate, 1990 & 2000

<sup>3</sup> Adjustment per NC Municipal Population Estimates

<sup>4</sup> GIS Corrections

<sup>5</sup> 2006 annexations as of July 1, 2006

#### 4. Future Service Area Boundaries

The Land Use Plan for Concord also examines the adopted Service Area Boundary outside of the City Limits of Concord established in conjunction with Cabarrus County and neighboring municipalities. This area contains 36,741 acres of land. Figure V-A-3 illustrates the Service Area Boundary.

**Figure V-A-3**  
**City of Concord Service Area Boundary**

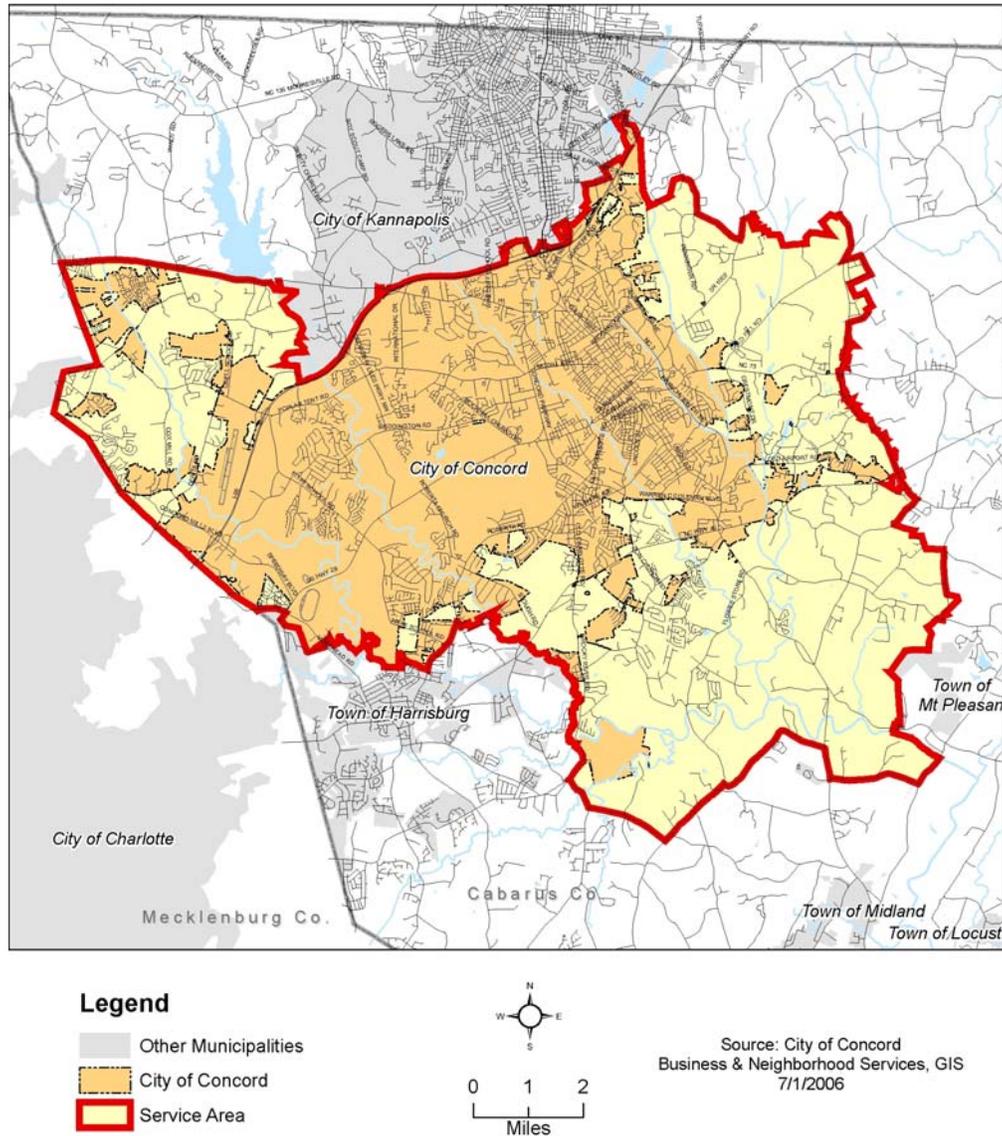


Table V-A-4 shows the breakdown of land use by category, and its percentage of the Service Area.

**Table V-A-1, Existing Land Uses by Category, 7/1/2006**

Land Use	Parcels	Acreage	%
Commercial	35	376.1	1.0%
Government/Utilities	11	1,113.6	3.0%
Industrial	118	773.4	2.1%
Institutional	22	109.4	0.3%
Recreation	5	165.0	0.4%
Residential	6,074	5,745.3	15.6%
Rural Acreage	630	11,399.5	31.0%
Vacant	2,387	14,991.5	40.8%
Right of Way	0	2,067.2	5.6%
Totals	9,282	36,741.0	

(Source: City of Concord 2006)

Assessing the land use for this area was done from windshield surveys as well as from the land use codes utilized by the Cabarrus County Tax Department. The categories were generalized in to nine categories. Below is a brief explanation of the land use categories.

**Commercial** – businesses, primarily retail establishments

**Government/Utilities** – Schools, The Stonewall Jackson Training School (juvenile detention center), Water treatment plant, sewer pump stations, electric substations.

**Industrial** – business parks, manufacturing, stone quarries

**Institutional** – Churches, private clubs

**Recreation** – parks, public and private golf courses

**Residential** – Single family residential (on 3 acres or less), mobile homes, apartments and townhouses.

**Rural Acreage** – Land that is not vacant (has a building tax value), can be agricultural or is not being actively utilized

**Vacant** – Land that contains no buildings

**Right of Way** – area that is dedicated as public right of way, primarily for roads in the service area.

The categories of Rural Acreage and Vacant land are areas that need further explanation. When assessing land use outside of the incorporated city limits it is very difficult to make a decision of the correct land use. It can be difficult to ascertain if land should be categorized as agricultural, vacant, or if there is a dwelling somewhere on the property present, residential. For example a large piece of land can have a portion that is being farmed, and another portion that is wooded, so some of the land is agricultural and some is vacant or undeveloped. Another example could

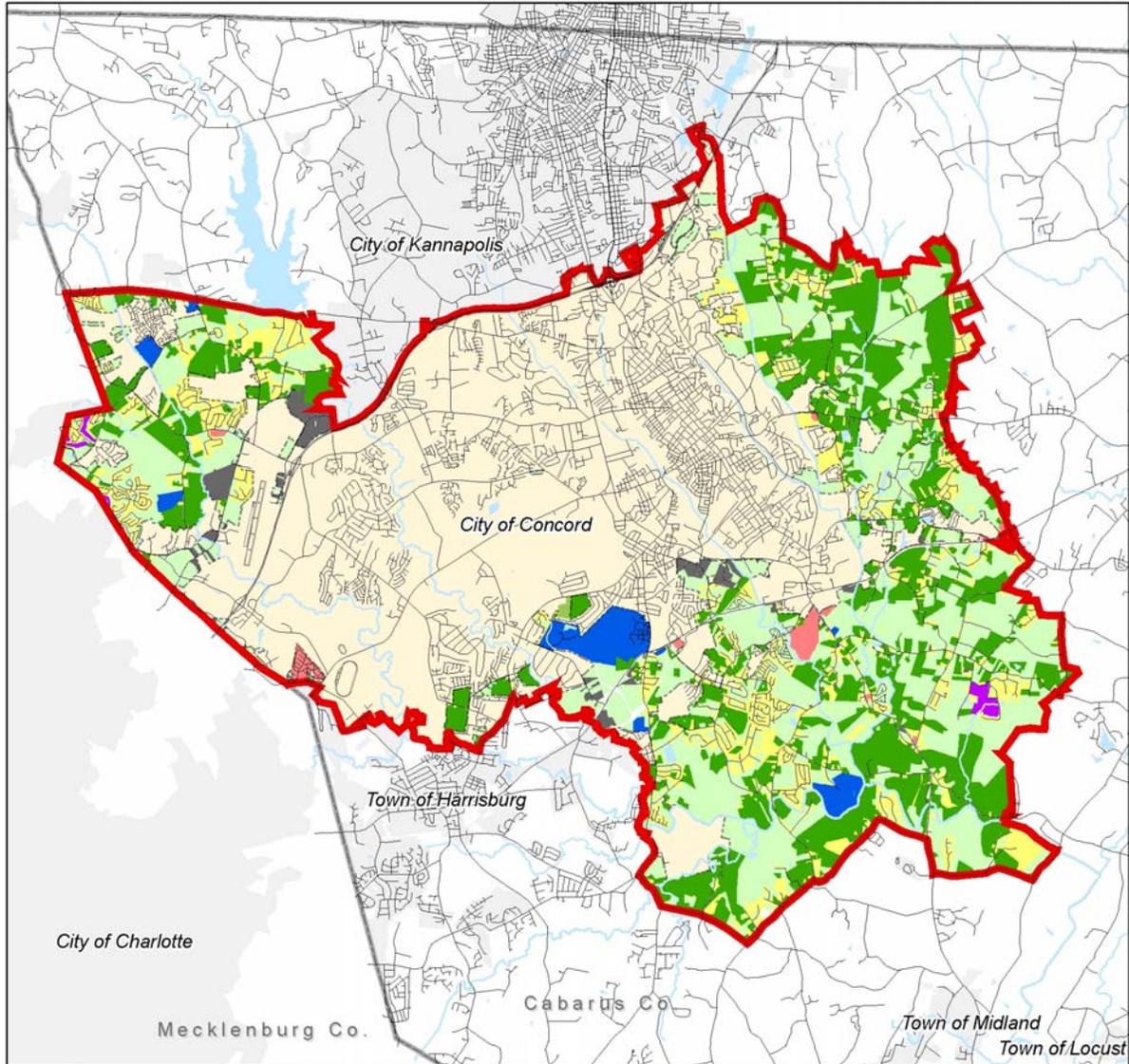
be a 10 acre piece of land that contains a house or mobile home, certainly the majority of that land could be further developed, but it is not considered to be vacant.

Because categorizing rural land can be somewhat ambiguous, the coding system was set so that any land of 3 acres or less with a residence located on it would be considered residential. It was felt that this land had less chance of being subdivided or further developed. Land with a residence that was 3 acres or larger, or land that was agricultural either entirely or partially was coded as Rural Acreage. Rural Acreages therefore is land that is being utilized for some activity but also has high redevelopment potential. This redevelopment potential would make this land viable in the future for acquisition and development, and so should be considered in estimating potential future growth. Vacant land was land that was not being utilized for any visible activity and also had no building tax value. Vacant land naturally has high development potential as well. When assessing the future development potential of the service area boundary, both Rural Acreage and Vacant land will be considered as “developable”.

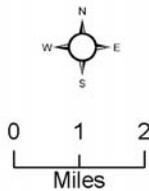
To summarize the current land use situation in the service area; Vacant land and Rural Acreage combined make up 71.8% of the total area. The next largest category, Residential, is 15.6%, this leaves the other land use categories at only 6.8% of the total area excluding Right of Way.

Figure V-A-4 illustrates the current land use composition of the areas included in the growth areas outside of Concord plan.

**Figure V-A-4  
Existing Land Use  
Concord Service Area Boundary**



- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Land Use</b>    | Service Area         |
| Commercial         | Other Municipalities |
| Government/Utility | City of Concord      |
| Industrial         |                      |
| Institutional      |                      |
| Recreation         |                      |
| Residential        |                      |
| Rural Acreage      |                      |
| Vacant             |                      |



Source: City of Concord  
Business & Neighborhood Services, GIS  
7/1/2006

Zoning for undeveloped properties can be a valuable tool for guiding future land use of undeveloped properties. Table V-A-5 shows the acreage of land in both the Vacant and Rural Acreage categories by the current zoning. Both Vacant and Rural Acreage were considered because they are the most likely to be developed or redeveloped in the future. The vast majority (92.5%) of the vacant and rural acreage land in the Service Area is zoned for residential use. This leaves only 7.5% to the remaining zoning jurisdictions. The current zoning corresponds closely to the Land Use Plan designation of the most of the service area as residential use. However the land use plan does call for some Village Center developments at major intersections that may contain some commercial or office uses.

**Table V-A-5  
Current Zoning of Vacant Land by Study Area**

Vacant			Rural Acreage			Combined (Vacant + Rural Acreage)		
Land Use	Acres	%	Land Use	Acres	%	Land Use	Acres	%
Agricultural	193.9	1.3%	Agricultural	80.1	0.7%	Agricultural	274.0	1.1%
Commercial	55.0	0.4%	Commercial	0.9	0.0%	Commercial	55.9	0.2%
Industrial	1,062.5	7.2%	Industrial	36.3	0.3%	Industrial	1,098.7	4.3%
Office	247.3	1.7%	Office	252.2	2.3%	Office	499.5	1.9%
Residential	13,182.1	89.4%	Residential	10,615.2	96.6%	Residential	23,797.3	92.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,740.8</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>10,984.7</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>25,725.5</b>	

*(Source: City of Concord, July 2006)*

The current zoning and land use classification of vacant properties can be used to develop an estimate of the residential capacity (and possible future population) of these areas. Based on the 2000 Census the population of the Service Area is 12,039. To estimate the future population the development potential of the land must be considered. A density of 3 units per acre is the rate decided on to use for the standards when estimating the future build out potential. Naturally there will be development at lower density rates than this, but the estimate is a “maximum” growth projection. To estimate the population per dwelling unit a rate of 2.61 persons per housing unit is used and a vacancy rate of 6.8% is factored in (rates for City of Concord in 2000 Census). Using this estimation method the maximum build out potential for the vacant residential zoned land is 4,394 housing units, factoring the vacancy rate the additional population would be 10,689 people. The same calculation for the Rural Acreage category adds another 8,607 people. Therefore, if all the Vacant and Rural Acreage land were to be developed a potential future population of 19,296 more people could live in the Service Area.

## **5. Jobs to Housing Balance: The Economic Development Future**

This amount of growth points to a more pressing issue for Concord. The balance of land uses in Concord is one of the most important issues to community citizens and to the future health of the local economy. As is evidenced above, residential zoning points to a massive growth in population without compensatory growth in employment and commercial growth. Many communities are exploring ways to create a sustainable balance of jobs to housing. Unfortunately, there is no “magic formula” for jobs and housing balance but there are goals that can be set and policies that are geared toward achieving those goals. There are four types of jobs to housing correlations:

- ❑ Jobs rich/low wage housing needed
- ❑ Jobs rich/high wage housing needed
- ❑ Housing rich/high wage jobs needed
- ❑ Housing rich/low wage jobs needed

Concord falls within the last of the two categories and more likely in the third category of housing rich/high wage jobs needed because of the relatively high incomes in the County and high end housing units in the City and surrounding areas.

The national model for the balance of jobs to housing is somewhere between 1.4 and 1.7 jobs to houses with many communities settling on 1.5 jobs for every housing unit. The most recent jobs data is available from the 2002 US Economic Census, which estimates that Cabarrus County has approximately 40,766 jobs. The County has a jobs to housing ratio of .65 (40,766 jobs divided by 62,620 households) far below the targets typically used.

There are substantial growth opportunities for employment uses in Concord.

- ❑ The Concord Regional Airport, strategically located off I-85, is surrounded by prime vacant land offering sound industrial development potential.
- ❑ Undeveloped tracts along Highway 49
- ❑ International Business Park (IBP) located adjacent to I-85 provides excellent access and several available tracts.
- ❑ The eventual migration of an office market to Concord from Charlotte, where a current surplus of office space focused both downtown and in the University Area will eventually be absorbed. Concord would be the target for this growth.

An additional opportunity to accommodate the growing demand for office and retail space, lie in large part with the rehabilitation and reuse of older buildings primarily in and near the Center City area. The development of office and commercial uses on scattered infill sites utilizes existing infrastructure and maximizes the compact use of land in the urbanized area.

## **6. Balancing Land Use**

With nearly 7,500 acres of vacant land in the City of Concord – and more than 6,000 acres located outside the Center City – there remains untapped possibility for obtaining a sustainable balance of land uses. Much of the vacant land is within close proximity of I-85 and other major transportation routes, making the likelihood for industrial and commercial development very promising. This presents a window of opportunity to reserve undeveloped properties that present the best potential for new industrial or commercial development. Protection of such properties can be accomplished through appropriate zoning designation of identified properties and by working closely with economic developers to target appropriate properties for non-residential development.

Close proximity to I-85, the I-485 Outerbelt, and other major transportation routes make vacant properties in the western area of the City attractive for residential development, particularly as an increasing number of residents in the Charlotte metro area look outward in search of a less urban lifestyle. In addition to large vacant tracts in the western area of the City, there are many vacant parcels within the more urbanized central area of the City that offer prime locations for residential infill development.

Land development in the future will be closely linked with water supply. Concord is located in the Yadkin River basin and together with other municipalities is trying gain approval from the North Carolina Management Commission to allow an interbasin water transfer from the Catawba watershed to the Yadkin. Approval of the transfer would ensure adequate water supply to the year 2048, at which time alternatives may again need to be investigated. If the measure is not approved, studies indicated that shortfalls may become serious by year 2035. If the transfer is not approved, development patterns would likely be affected. In January, 2007 the Commission is expected to render a decision.

## **7. Quality of Life and Open Space**

The substantial new residential development likely to occur in Concord over the next ten years presents a timely opportunity to encourage or require new developments to include connecting sidewalks, pathways and open space. To further promote pedestrian and bicycle travel, connections should be encouraged between subdivisions, recreation facilities, schools, employment and commercial centers. New developments should incorporate vehicular connectivity as well, by connecting interior streets with neighboring developments, recreation, schools, employment and commercial centers.

One of Concord's most attractive features is the natural beauty of its land. Large undeveloped tracts and agricultural lands in the western area of the City provide scenic corridors into the heart of the City. However, agricultural lands are quickly becoming islands surrounded by residential development. Now is the time, before these lands are developed, to provide incentives for landowners to protect their land and continue farming operations without fear of encroachment by incompatible uses.

Likewise, strong support should be given to the recommendations provided in the *Livable Community Blueprint*, which suggests developing a citywide greenway system and nature-based parks while there is still an abundant supply of undeveloped land. In addition, the preservation and enhancement of major corridors into the City can be accomplished through the development of landscaping and buffering incentives or regulations. These scenic “green” corridors can include pedestrian and bike pathways, which can provide linkages to the planned greenway network.

## **8. Conclusion**

Land use represents the focal point of a community's comprehensive planning effort. Population growth, housing opportunity, economic development, public infrastructure, and environmental constraints influence land use patterns and needs. Emerging from the careful and detailed analysis of existing and projected conditions, the Land Use Plan serves as a guide for the future sustainable development of Concord with respect to the timing, location, intensity of new development and the compatibility of such development with the existing fabric of the community.