

2020

Red Cross  
North Carolina



# LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020-2040

*A guide for the growth, development and  
preservation of the Town of Red Cross*

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*The entrance to Town Hall and the site of the future Town Center.*

## **Town Council**

Kelly Brattain, Mayor

J. J. Curlee

Trina Plowman

Vacant

Vacant

## **Planning Board**

Harry Williams, Chairman

Darin Robinson, Vice Chairman

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*The Charts depicted throughout the Plan show the results of the Community Survey which was conducted in January 2010 and July 2020*

*Red Cross gratefully acknowledges the beautiful photography of Meredith Huneycutt used throughout this plan.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Our Vision.

The Town of Red Cross maintains its small town charm by preserving its rural character and respecting its agricultural history. The growth and development of the Town is well planned. Commercial development is clustered around the Town Center in a well connected pattern of local streets and sidewalks. The scale and appearance of non-residential development throughout the Town reinforces a small town character and blends well with adjacent residential areas. Lower density residential development and agricultural uses serve as a buffer between Red Cross and surrounding communities. Higher density residential uses are located towards the center of town where services are provided and increased density makes sense. Through its plans and its actions, the Town protects and preserves its traditional way of life.



## Our Plan.

The Land Development Plan establishes guidelines for growth and development within the Town through the year 2040. These guidelines serve to assist the Town Council, Planning Board, staff, citizens, and land developers in decision making regarding a wide variety of land development related issues. It is a policy document, not a regulation such as a Zoning or Subdivision Ordinance. This plan contains our vision and a map of how to achieve it, but our vision cannot be fully realized unless it is implemented through changes in our regulations, processes, procedures, and approaches that guide land development.

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

*Peter Drucker*

Located in a **potential** high growth corridor, Red Cross is certain to face increased pressure to grow and change **from the effects of the Charlotte Metro area**. How we respond to this pressure will determine what our town will be and the quality of life of our citizens for generations to come. We can wait and react when change is coming, or we can plan for and guide that change to make sure Red Cross remains a town our citizens are proud to call home. This Plan is designed to help us maintain our small town charm and values even as we evolve to address these growth pressures.

Red Cross has always had an agriculture-based economy, but this is changing. Small stores, farm-based business and industry, and



machinery and vehicle repair shops have been joined in recent years by a bakery and a Dollar General. Other lands zoned for commercial use sit unchanged due to the economic recession which began in 2008. Since 2012, the economy started to grow steadily through 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Optimism will show this is just a blip in the growth of the town by 2021. Our town straddles N.C. 24/27 (Red Cross Road), a high growth corridor extending out of Charlotte through Albemarle which has been widened to a four-laned in sections on the way to Fayetteville. We are only thirty miles from downtown Charlotte and twelve miles from Albemarle, which makes us an ideal location for commuters and small commercial businesses. Pressure to allow more housing and commercial uses is inevitable and should be embraced.

The 2008-2012 economic lull has given the Town the opportunity to think carefully through what it wants to be as a town and how it can grow in ways that are consistent with that vision. Throughout the planning process, three questions were used to guide the discussion: 1) *What kind of growth is appropriate in Red Cross and where should it occur?* 2) *What should new development look like?* and, 3) *How can negative impacts of growth be minimized?*

The Land Development Plan answers these questions through a detailed list of land development goals and strategies focused on eleven specific land development topics: economic development, commercial development, residential development, town center, transportation, water and sewer services, agricultural preservation, open space and recreation, environmental quality, community appearance, and planning coordination.

The Land Development Plan revision is the culmination of eleven months of study, discussion and deliberation by the Council, the Planning Board and citizens. In addition to monthly meetings held by the boards to develop this plan, the Town held two public workshops and two public hearings to solicit and consider general public input. Draft documents were displayed for public review on the Town website and at Town Hall. The boards also conducted a public survey to solicit early feedback on issues, which led to the identification of key issues addressed by this Plan.

The Plan is divided into five parts: an introduction, land use and development patterns, action plan, Future Land Use Map, and plan implementation. There is also an appendix containing an executive summary and supporting information. The central part of the Plan is the Future Land Use Map and Action Plan. Both

Red Cross is only  
thirty miles from  
downtown Charlotte  
and  
twelve miles  
from Albemarle.



parts complement each other and should be used together when making decisions. Requests for amendments to Land Development Plan, text amendments, rezoning, utility extensions, road improvement plans and similar actions should be in conformity to this Plan.

### **Our Values.**

This Plan was guided by our vision but driven by our core values. These are the guiding principles that reflect what the Town is and what it wants to become. They define our identity. **Simply stated, our core values are:**

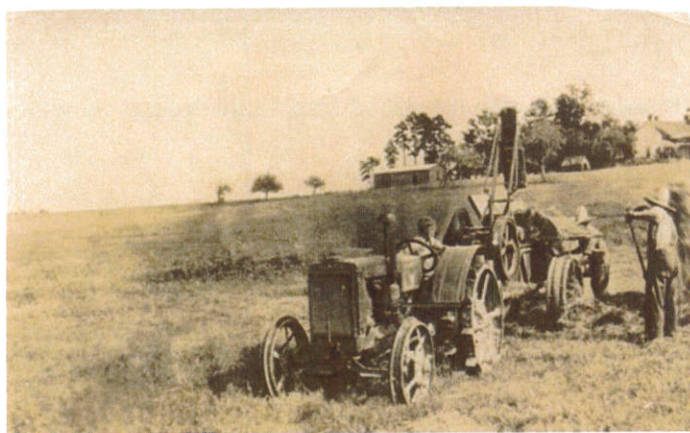
- Development patterns that respect and reflect our desire to remain a small town and which foster a quiet way of life.
- Transportation systems that promote safe travel by pedestrians and cyclists as well the automobile.
- Public water and sewer services that encourage smart growth.
- A continuation of agricultural uses that define our past and reinforce our future.
- A series of open spaces that protect our rural character and recreation areas that provide enjoyment for our citizens.
- Environmental quality that nurtures and sustains a diversity of wildlife and human activity.
- An appearance that conveys our small town charm and reinforces our rural heritage.
- Successful coordination among all governmental entities within and adjacent to our corporate limits to ensure that growth is well planned and implemented.

# LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

## Our History and Our Character.

Although Red Cross was not an incorporated town until 2002, it has been a recognized community in western Stanly County since the late 1700s. Originally called “Red Crossing,” the Town owes its name to the rich red dirt of the Piedmont and the crossroads of N.C. 24/27 and N.C. 205. N.C. 24/27 remained unpaved until 1925. N.C. 205 was not paved until 1941.

For nearly two hundred years, life in Red Cross changed very little. Rolling farmland dotted by farmhouses dominated the landscape. A few small scale farming-related businesses and industries served the area. By the early 1900s, several small stores were built at the crossroads and in 1944 Red



*Farming at the crossroads in the early 1900s. J.D. Hinson is the child on the tractor.*



*The first paving of highway 24/27. Helen Hinson is holding J.D. in front of the store on the right.*

Cross Baptist Church was established. Otherwise, life and land use remained fairly constant until the latter part of the twentieth century.

In 1962 Stanly County constructed a new consolidated high school in Red Cross. Housing developments began popping up in the 1990s. More small businesses were established as growth pushed out of Charlotte and Albemarle into the surrounding region and began creeping closer to town along NC 24/27 (Red Cross Road). The quiet farming community was suddenly faced with being overtaken by unplanned, uncharacteristic growth. In an attempt to control this growth, adjacent municipalities began annexing new lands, coming closer and closer to Red Cross. Their expansions threatened the Town’s very existence as a separate and distinct place. The community of Big Lick, a former municipality, was incorporated into another Municipality as an example.

Incorporation was the first step Red Cross took to address these threats. On August 1, 2002, the North Carolina General Assembly approved the Town Charter. Shortly after incorporation, the Town’s land area

nearly doubled in size as many petitioned the Town for annexation. Years prior to incorporation, older town residents used to gather at Bill Hill's store at the crossing to dream of becoming a town. None of these residents lived long enough to see the Town become official, but their story underscores the importance of vision and long term planning. Residents, Ike and Helen Williams lived in a home near the crossing that today serves as the Town Hall and the nucleus of a future Town Center.

"The future influences the present just as much as the past."

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

### **Recent Trends and Future Directions.**

Once organized, the Town began the task of assuming planning and land use control. The original zoning and subdivision ordinances carved out of the county ordinance by, then County Planning Director, Michael M. Sandy, A.I.C.P. This served as the first town Zoning Ordinance, similar to that which had governed land use in the Town for decades prior. They were modified in 2007 to address more specifically the emerging needs of Red Cross. As part of the amendment process, the future of Red Cross was debated and the seeds for this Plan were planted. Major revisions to the Zoning Ordinance have been made up to and including 2019.

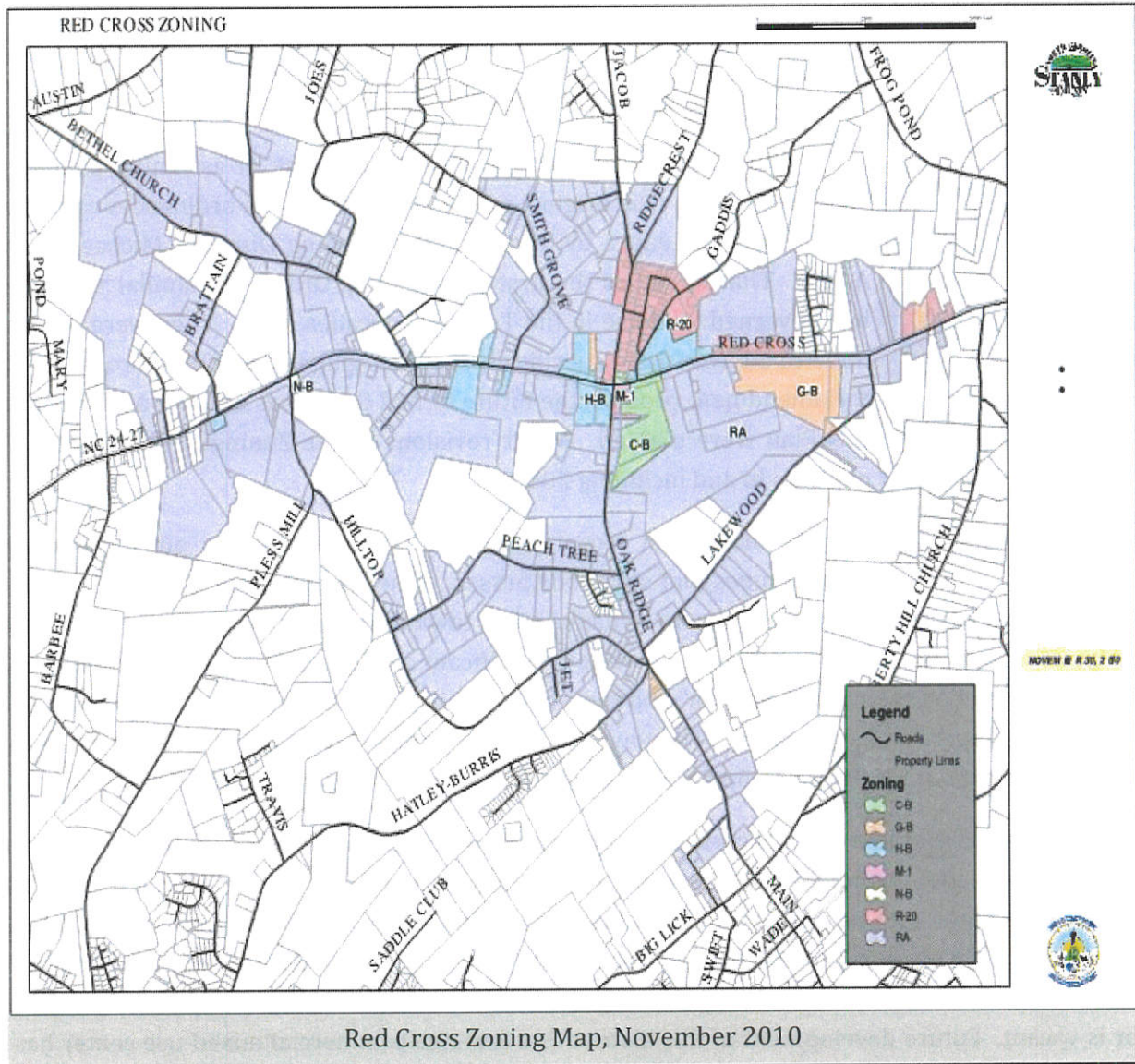
Despite changes in recent years, Red Cross remains a quiet community of farms, homes and small businesses. When surveyed in 2010 and 2020, town residents were resolute in their desire to remain a small town that values its agricultural heritage and its quiet way of life. Yet this vision is not without significant challenge. Change is inevitable as aging farmers cash in on their land "pension" and their heirs not interested in farming sell their inheritance to land developers and speculators. The town can, however, direct how and where it changes and its citizens can encourage if not demand growth that sustains their way of life for the foreseeable future.

Nearly 88% of Red Cross is currently zoned Residential Agriculture and ninety-two acres, or 4%, is zoned R-20, low-medium density residential. Only 8% is zoned for non-residential uses. This pattern is consistent with historic uses within the town, although the number of non-residential parcels has been slowly increasing. Nearly forty acres lying in the center of town are zoned for Central Business, otherwise known as town center development. Most of this land is currently used for agriculture or is vacant. Future development of this district as a low-rise commercial mixed-use center has been the vision of Red Cross for more than twenty years.

The town receives electric service from Duke Energy and the local Union Electric Co-op, water service, and sewer service from Stanly County. Nearby gas service is provided by Piedmont Natural Gas. The town owns 0.17 miles streets at the present time. All other public streets are owned and maintained by the state NCDOT. Currently, public sewer and, to a much less degree, public water is limited within the town. Most residents are on private wells and septic tanks.

The provision of streets, water and sewer, especially publicly-owned infrastructure, encourages and enables development patterns that can support as well as destroy the rural character of Red

Cross. Controlling or at least strongly influencing the location and timing of these resources is an important element of growth management and community preservation. Prior to the 2008 economic





Photography by Meredith Huneycutt(2010)



Photography by Meredith Huneycutt(2010)

recession, there was a substantial amount of interest in Red Cross by residential developers. Less pressure following 2012 has garnished some attention up to 2020. Its strategic location in Stanly County and the larger Charlotte metropolitan region make it a prime candidate for bedroom community type growth, which is almost exclusively residential. The town welcomes new growth that supports its goals and respects its history and character. Finding a way to grow that meets these expectations is a challenge. This plan is the first significant step in that direction.

Growth is attracted by and affects other community facilities as well. Schools are one of the most important of such facilities. There are two public schools that serve the Red Cross community, West Stanly High School and West Stanly Middle School. West Stanly has 732 students in grades 9-12 and has been designated a “School of Distinction” by the North Carolina Department of Education. West Stanly Middle has 559 students in grades 6-8. It has been designated a “School of Progress” and has received a *Great Schools* rating of seven out of ten based on performances on state standardized tests. Both schools are currently running under capacity.

# ACTION PLAN

## Purpose.

The Action Plan is the heart of the *Red Cross Land Development Plan*. Each of the eight focus areas identified in the Plan Introduction is covered in detail in the Action Plan. For each focus area there is a goal statement, a detailed discussion of the issues and their relevance to Red Cross, and actions that will help the Town address the issues and advance the goal. The goals and actions set forth in the Action Plan reflect the core values of the Town and are carried forward into the Implementation Plan. They establish policies that will help guide the Town through the next twenty years.

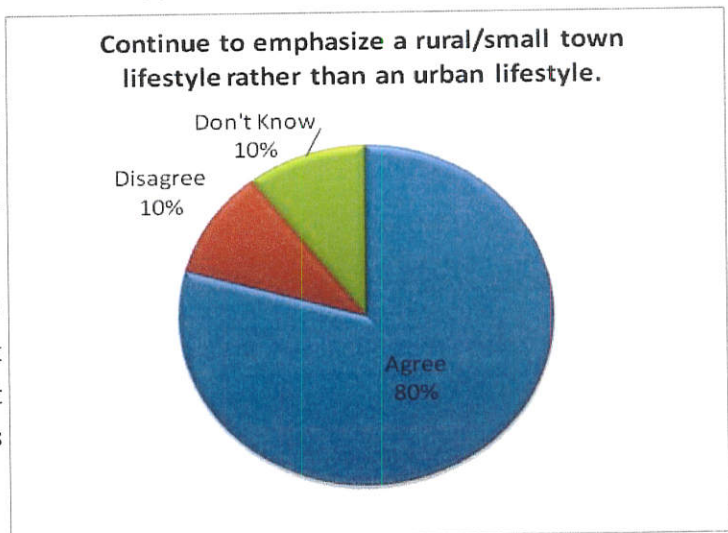


## WHAT kind of growth is appropriate and WHERE should it occur?

Not all growth is appropriate in Red Cross. Larger cities have the land area to host a full range of uses within their borders at scales and intensities that Red Cross cannot support. Heavy industry, large multi-family developments, and commercial sprawl, for example, would completely change the character of the Town. With only 2.4 square miles of land area within the town limits, much of that with frontage on N.C. 24/27 (Red Cross Road) and N.C. 205 (Oak Ridge Road), there is no place for these uses to go that won't affect how the Town looks and feels to its citizens and the public.

Where development occurs is as important as the *type*. Although more residential and commercial development is appropriate for the Town, if it strips out along the highways and collector streets in town or is allowed to swallow all of the forests, farmlands and floodplains, Red Cross would also lose all semblance of its rural character.

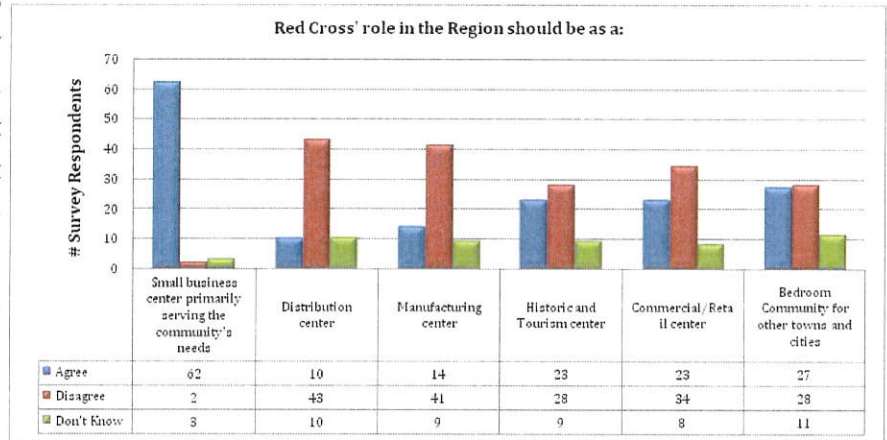
To guide what development occurs and where it goes, the following areas look into these issues in greater detail and list actions the Town can take to protect its character.



## Economic Development

**GOAL:** To foster an environment where a broad range of small businesses and service providers can meet the needs of the citizens of Red Cross and its proximity.

Red Cross has historically played a very small role in the region's economy. As the public survey results indicate, residents do not see that changing. They want Red Cross to remain a quiet town that serves the needs of its residents. As envisioned by the residents, the Town's future is tied to small town business located mainly in a new town center and small, clean industry. The town will not be a significant employment center, but rather continue on its path of developing as a bedroom community and a place that is attractive to all ages.



### Actions.

#### 1-1 Direct commercial and institutional development to areas that complement the agricultural and residential character of the community.



*Dollar General is the newest commercial building in Red Cross. (2010)*

*Photography by Meredith Huneycutt*

Directing growth normally occurs one of three ways. First, economic development recruiters can steer potential developers to areas best suited for the growth they propose. Second, the Future Land Use Map shows where the community desires certain types of growth to occur. This can serve as a guide for prospective developers. And third, the zoning map controls where particular uses may be located currently.

#### 1-2 Minimize the negative impacts of further development of Red Cross by closely managing the type, location, design, and impacts of new business and industry.

Zoning ordinances control the type, location, design and impacts of new development. A thorough review of this regulation should be made to ensure that new business and industry development is occurring where it should and how it should. Impacts beyond the immediate development site need to be considered as well. The community needs to know what types of offsite impacts may occur, such as light, dust, odor, glare, noise,

traffic, and stormwater, and the town should have a plan for mitigating those that are una-

voidable. Another impact that needs to be considered is how the use affects the perception of Red Cross and its character as a rural, agricultural community.

**1-3 Use the Future Land Use Map as a guide for making decisions on development proposals, rezoning requests and other types of development requests.**

If the current zoning map does not permit the type of use desired in the location desired, the first step should be for the developer, staff and boards to consult the Future Land Use Map. If what the developer proposes is consistent with the Map, a rezoning request is logical. If it is not consistent with the Map and the developer still wants to pursue rezoning, the burden should be on the developer to show how the Map is in error or conditions have changed and why the use as and where proposed is right for Red Cross.

**1-4 Recruit only clean industry.**

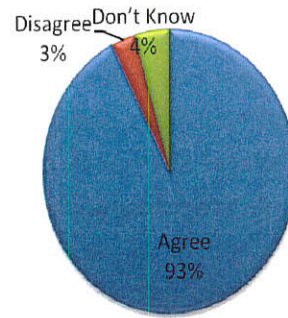
Clean industry has few offsite impacts. It should not generate more than nominal light, dust, odor, noise or vibration that may be observed or affect adjacent properties and public rights-of-way. Typically, the greatest offsite impacts of clean industry are associated with traffic and stormwater. These will need to be examined and addressed through the zoning ordinance.

***Commercial, Office and Institutional Development***

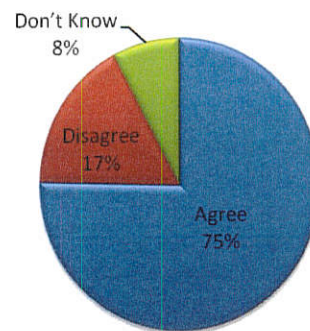
***GOAL: To encourage commercial development that is convenient and attractive.***

Residents of small towns need places to shop, places to worship, services, and schools. Allowing enough business, office and institutional uses to meet these needs within town is critical to reducing the number of trips residents must make outside town and the amount of time it takes for them to take care of their daily and weekly needs. Where these uses go, what they look like, and how they connect to the community is very important to the future of Red Cross.

**Red Cross should be a small business center primarily serving the community's needs.**



**Recruit or encourage clean industry only.**



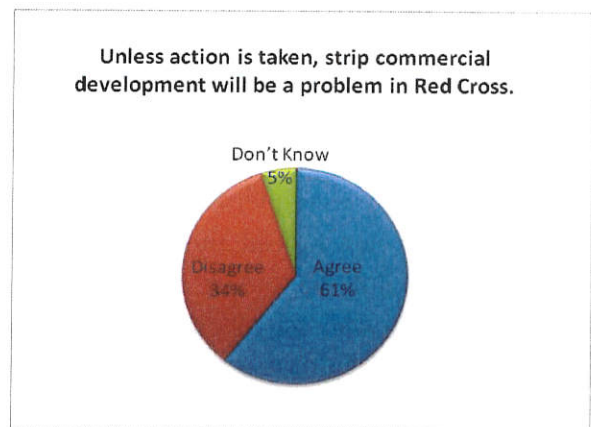
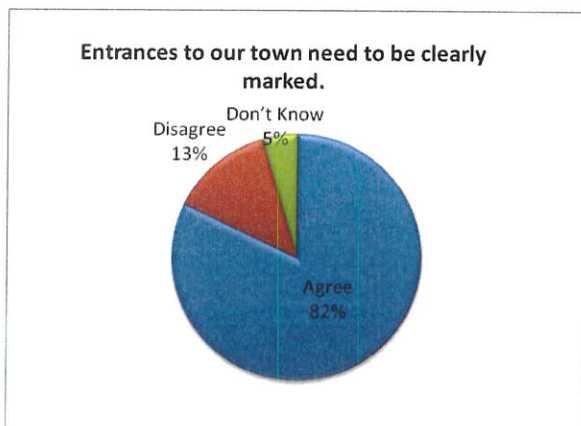


Development that “strips out” along the highways is oriented toward passing motorists. It is not necessarily convenient for town residents. N.C. 24/27 (Red Cross Road) is a major state arterial and is designed to move as much traffic as possible through Red Cross. It is not optimally designed for residents making short local trips. Twenty years from now development that is convenient to most residents of Red Cross will connect to adjacent residential and commercial areas by local streets and sidewalks. It will be clustered and contain a mix of uses. Moreover, this development will fit in with the character of Red Cross by virtue of its scale and appearance. Buildings will not be taller than four stories, they will be located close to local streets and lots will front on public sidewalks.



*Strip commercial development often contains large expanses of asphalt parking and oversized signage between the building and the road. This is not what Red Cross wants its commercial areas to look like.*

Historically in the United States, small scale institutional and office uses have integrated well with residential uses. The corner store, the professional office or barber shop next door, and the small daycare or school down the street are common sights in many historic neighborhoods. Only since the rise of the personal automobile and the Interstate and US highway system in the 1950s did we begin segregating land uses to the degree that many communities do today. This, however, has led to isolated neighborhoods, greater automobile dependency, and more and longer trips to take care of basic needs and services. Red Cross does not have to build this way, though. It can choose to build a more compact community. Uses that create too much traffic or noise should be located on the periphery of neighborhoods and front streets that can handle their needs.





Commercial Strip Development along the major arteries cause congestion and blight. This removes the rural character which the town finds inappropriate.

## Actions.

**2-1 Create zoning districts that permit commercial uses to develop in clusters to prevent a sprawling or “strip” development land use pattern.**

An examination of strip commercial areas in many cities would show long lots with little depth along major arterials and connector roads. In many cases, these lots were carved out of larger lots with dimensions that were tailored to strip development. Once platted and constructed, however, these lots make redevelopment in any way other than a strip fashion very difficult.

The dimensions of strip lots force all parking to the front so that it lies between the building and the public street. The pattern of development directs all attention and importance to major roads so that if you look around the buildings you usually find that they have turned their backs to the adjacent neighborhoods and community reducing or eliminating opportunities for pedestrian connections. The rear entrance of these buildings is also where loading, unloading, garbage collection, waste oil capture and pickup, utilities, and repair normally occur—often very close to property lines. These can create offsite impacts that negatively affect adjacent residential areas. Requiring lots with greater depth and opportunity for building design and location can reduce many of these impacts and lead to a better connected, more sustainable community design.

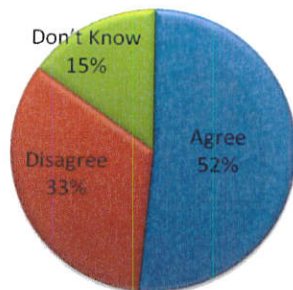
**2-2 Review and revise town policies that address new commercial development to ensure that design, scale and orientation reflect Red Cross’ rural small town character.**

Design, scale and orientation of buildings greatly affect community character, walkability, and compatibility of adjacent sites. Small towns, for example, normally have buildings that do not exceed three or four stories in height and the tallest are reserved for the Town Center. An all glass building as well as an all metal building would be out of character for Red Cross, where historically homes and



*Traditional construction in small town commercial areas within the central Piedmont region.*

Provide for a town center that concentrates commercial development in a Central Business zoning district.



Photography by Mark Tucker

businesses have been made of wood and brick. Large parking lots and strip development are also out of character for a small town. The zoning ordinance can regulate design, scale and orientation to help ensure that the development that occurs in Red Cross is appropriate.

### 2-3 Direct commercial development to the Town Center.

Historically, cities and towns grew from the center outward. The greatest density of development, the tallest buildings, most stores and jobs were concentrated in the Town Center. The further away from Town Center you moved, the less development occurred until you reached the agricultural areas that rimmed the city. In more modern times, this pattern has collapsed through a series of decisions that have allowed strip development, fairly dense suburban development, and exurban commercial and industrial centers. Where communities occur close together, this pattern has created a landscape where communities blend into each other. As you travel the main roadways, the only indication you have that you left one town and entered another is a town limits sign, if you are fortunate enough to pick it out of all the other signs along the road. Red Cross residents can look at their neighbors in the Charlotte region to find many examples of this development pattern and that is not how they want to grow. Red Cross wants to go back to the historic pattern of development of a progression of uses, densities and intensities from the town limits to the center that preserves our agricultural areas and our identity as a separate and distinct community.

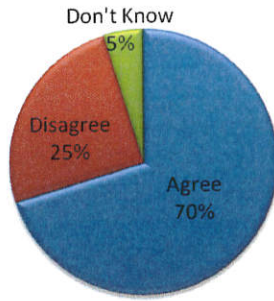
### *Residential Development*

**GOAL:** To encourage well planned, attractive and well maintained neighborhoods.

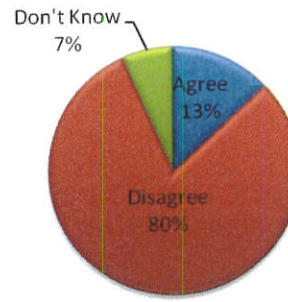


A typical small town center in North Carolina as seen from the air.

To better meet the housing needs of Red Cross, we should encourage more middle-income housing.



To better meet the housing needs of Red Cross, we should encourage more manufactured/mobile homes.



Residential development in Red Cross is largely single-family detached homes located on farmland or in suburban style neighborhoods. This pattern of development has worked well so far, but the pressure to build more homes as Red Cross transforms into a bedroom community threatens our rural character. Suburban style neighborhoods built in subdivisions that divide every inch of land into private lots eliminates the openness that defines Red Cross today. While some of these lots may be large and wooded giving the illusion of open space, real open space is lost forever. There is a solution. Clustered subdivisions that permit the same number of homes on smaller lots, requiring a minimum amount of open space to be permanently preserved, helps preserve our character as well. This is especially true if the required open space promotes and helps to protect agricultural lands, view corridors, environmentally important areas, and parkland.

**Actions.**

**3-1 Prohibit the encroachment of incompatible land uses into existing neighborhoods.**

Some land uses just do not belong in predominately residential areas. These include uses that generate lots of traffic, make lots of noise, promote or deal in adult media and entertainment, and those that require large amounts of night lighting. Some types of non-residential uses have co-existed quite well with adjacent residential development in historic cities and small towns. These include small professional offices, such as doctors, attorneys, and accountants, as well as home daycares. In more rural areas certain repair and small scale assembly operations are also commonplace on large lots well away from



*This large dance studio located in a metal building behind the home is out of place in its residential neighborhood.*

compact neighborhoods. Communities often strictly separate residential uses from all other uses, but this can create islands of homes that are cut off and largely inaccessible to all other uses except by automobile. Zoning ordinances establish the what, where, how, and when of uses within a town. A thorough review of the Town's ordinance and continual monitoring of its effectiveness is needed to ensure that our neighborhoods are not wrongly impacted or unnecessarily isolated.

**3-2 Encourage mixed use developments that include residential, commercial and institutional uses.**

An alternative to strict segregation of uses is allowing a mix of compatible uses. Compatibility is determined by the scale, intensity, timing, and offsite impacts of uses. For example, small professional offices can go well with all types of residential uses and can be an excellent buffer between residential and more intense commercial uses.



*Smart town construction accommodates a range of uses and building types.*

**3-3 Create policies for development of neighborhoods that minimize traffic congestion, promote walkability, bicycling, golf cart access retain open spaces and contribute to the rural small town character of Red Cross.**



*Cul-du-sac neighborhoods like those pictured above restrict access for residents and funnel all traffic to only one or two roads creating unnecessary congestion.*

Neighborhoods should be places where residents can walk in safety and comfort. This can only be achieved if automobile traffic moves predictably and slowly and pedestrians have a safe route along and across roads. Traffic congestion is normally a sign of an insufficient number of connections between local neighborhood roads and major collector and arterial roads that border the neighborhood. The relatively modern phenomenon of cul-du-sac street design has contributed greatly to congestion within residential areas. Cul-du-sac streets should be allowed only where topography requires them and should serve no more than ten homes. Neighborhoods with more than twenty homes should have more than one connection to adjoining neighborhoods, collectors, or arterials. Moderate to low density neighborhoods should also contain permanent open space that provides green views and preserves our rural, agricultural character.

### 3-4 Require new residential development to connect via street and pedestrian pathways to adjacent residential and commercial areas.

Many modern residential neighborhoods are isolated islands connected by only one street to the outside world. This isolation has increased the number and length of automobile trips and reduced pedestrian opportunities. New neighborhoods within Red Cross should have streets that connect to adjacent neighborhoods and sidewalks or trails that connect residences to adjacent commercial areas.

## ***Town Center Development***

**GOAL:** *To create a traditional town center that serves as an anchor and focal point for Red Cross.*

Uptown, downtown, central business district or town center, whatever you call it the center of town is the heart of the community. It should be the seat of town government, the location of most restaurants, shops, and offices, and a place where the public can gather to celebrate important events. This is what Red Cross hopes for its Town Center.

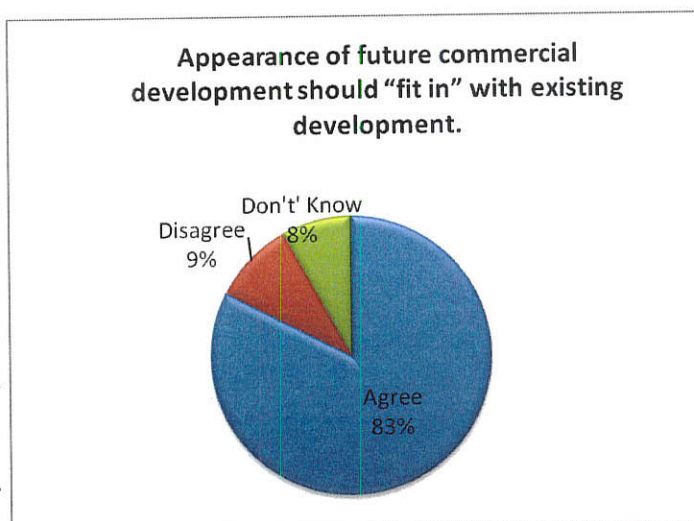
### **Actions.**

#### 4-1 Encourage small businesses that primarily serve the community's needs.

Red Cross does not want to be a regional destination. Instead, it wants stores and businesses that cater to the needs of our residents. These will be small in scale, not typical "big box" retail uses or large employment centers. Such uses can irrevocably affect our community character and take away our small town rural charm.

#### 4-2 Ensure that design standards respect and foster small town appearance and function.

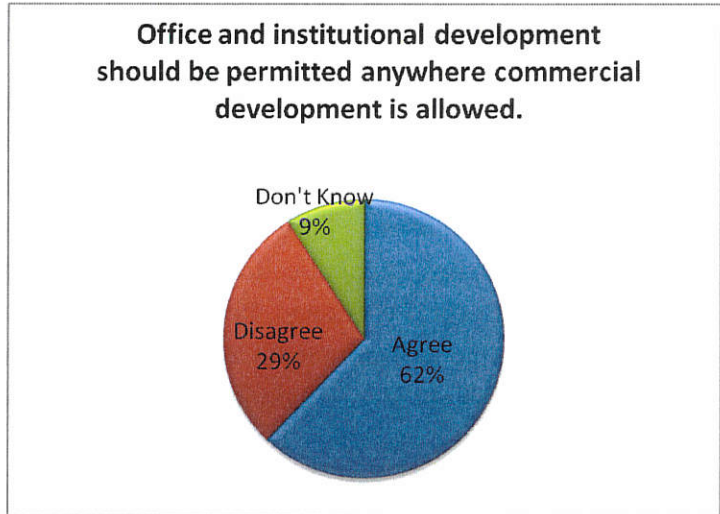
A Town Center composed mainly of buildings with metal siding, concrete block, featureless walls, little pedestrian interest or accommodation, large parking areas, street front parking lots, and few if any sidewalks will not be a place where residents want to spend much time. It will not serve as the heart of Red Cross. Design is very important to how uses function and how residents feel about their Town Center.



**4-3 Make pedestrian access to and within the Town Center a priority for all new development and public improvements.**

An important characteristic of traditional town centers is the ability to move about freely on foot: morning coffee, window shopping, moving from store to store, sharing ice cream with the kids, or making a quick stop at the bank before joining friends for lunch at the res-

taurant next door. The pedestrian is the lifeblood of healthy downtowns. Making sure they can reasonably and safely move about Town Center important to Red Cross. Sidewalks that are too narrow will not allow the pedestrian activity that is the lifeblood of successful town centers. Sidewalks should accommodate two way travel by people walking two abreast and enough width to permit sidewalk sales, outdoor cafes, and seating areas.



**4-4 Plan for and create a network of streets within the Town Center that connect with each other and adjacent streets.**

Red Cross cannot create its Town Center using NC 24/27 (Red Cross Road) or NC 205 (Oak Ridge Road) as its main street. These roads are major state arterials that act as a barrier to pedestrian activity and will not allow the level of access a healthy downtown needs. Therefore, Red Cross needs to establish a network of new streets and service roads to serve the Town Center, which connect to adjacent streets and neighborhoods. Block lengths should be short, preferably no more than 400-600 feet long and include parallel sidewalks.

**4-5 Allow for a variety of business, institution, office, residential, recreation and commercial uses in the Town Center.**

Traditional town centers include a variety of uses and many classes of uses. It is common to see government, business, institution, office and retail uses adjacent to each other, and historically common to find residential apartments above private non-residential uses. Most well planned towns such as Savannah, Charleston, and Washington D.C. also include public parks and recreation—areas that can be focal points for community gatherings and play an important role in maintaining human scale.

“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.”

*George Bernard Shaw*

## What should new growth LOOK like?

How development looks and fits in with the community is as important as what the use is and where it is located. In fact, use and location often dictate form. Standard land use policies rarely address more than the height and bulk of buildings. Newer form-based codes focus almost entirely on form, treating actual uses as far less important elements of community development. Red Cross feels that form and use are of equal concern, especially in predominately commercial and non-residential areas of town. Several years ago, Red Cross adopted form-based standards within the Zoning Ordinance as a first step in beginning to address the look and feel of future development. In 2019, the NC State Legislators adopted “Conditional Zoning” which is not in place. Perhaps we could do more.

### *Community Appearance*

**GOAL:** *To create and maintain an attractive community.*

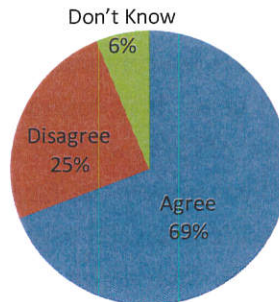
Defining what is meant by “an attractive community” is not an easy task. Everyone has an opinion on the subject. To a large degree, attractiveness depends on setting and context. For example, the beloved pastel buildings of many Caribbean islands would be as much out of character in Red Cross as old west buildings associated with the Southwestern U.S. The same is true for the skyscrapers of Charlotte, the French quadruplexes of Badin, and the chalets of mountain ski resorts. While each of these styles of development is attractive where it is located, it is not appropriate for Red Cross.

Other design aspects important to appearance include lighting, landscaping and signage. Well designed and located, each of these can add tremendously to the appearance of the community. When poorly designed and located, they can take much away.



*Signs can clutter the landscape and create hazards for the motorist and the pedestrian.*

**To better plan for our transportation needs, Red Cross should widen and improve existing streets rather than build new ones.**



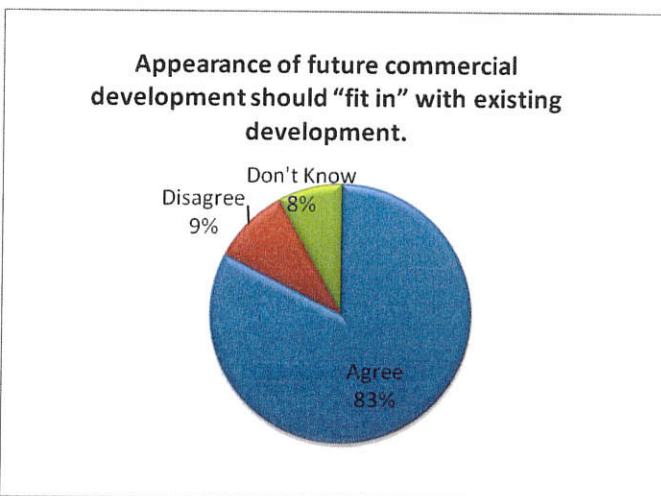


While rural at its edges with lower density single-family housing in most areas, Red Cross wants to remain a small town despite expected growth. Through well designed and placed signage, motorists will be welcomed to the community and with well designed land use transitions they will be able to appreciate its rural heritage and small town charm. Town Center is the heart of the community and will contain small shops and businesses that serve town residents and visitors. Mixed use areas will grow and evolve to embrace a range of compatible uses that provide residents a place to live, work, shop, learn, play and obtain services that support their daily lives. Buildings will remain largely small in scale and height and will reflect the Town's piedmont location in design and materials. Sidewalks will be essential to the character and function of the Town Center and mixed use areas. Other amenities such as bicycle lanes and trails will provide citizens with new recreational opportunities, connect areas of Red Cross, and connect Red Cross to neighboring communities and the region.

### **Actions.**

#### **5-1 Create attractive, well-marked entrances into Red Cross.**

First impressions are important. Unmarked entrances require the motorist to assume or guess when they have arrived in town. People may not be aware they have arrived until they see the Town Center. A well-marked and designed entrance not only welcomes travelers and visitors, it lets them know when they have arrived and it can communicate a lot about the quality and style of the community. These four entrances should be designated on Red Cross and Oak Ridge Roads



#### **5-2 Ensure that the appearance and function of new development fits in with the rural, agricultural and small town character of Red Cross.**

In order to fit in with the character of Red Cross, new development must be appropriately designed and located. The scale and appearance of development must add to and not detract from our ability to function as a small town. Building materials, heights, location, access, and land use should support our goal to remain a small town and should take into consideration traditional small town development and design as seen in this area of the Piedmont when developing within our town.

### 5-3 Create a set of recommended design guidelines for the Town.

Land use ordinances can mandate certain aspects of design. In 2016, the General Assembly removed the local governments ability to regulate the appearance of one and two family structures. Commercial and other non-one and two family residential structures can still be regulated. Recommended design guidelines can fill in the gap between what Red Cross would like to see regarding new development design and what it is capable and comfortable with enforcing. Such guidelines have been inserted into the current Zoning Ordinance.



Photography by Meredith Huneycutt (2010)

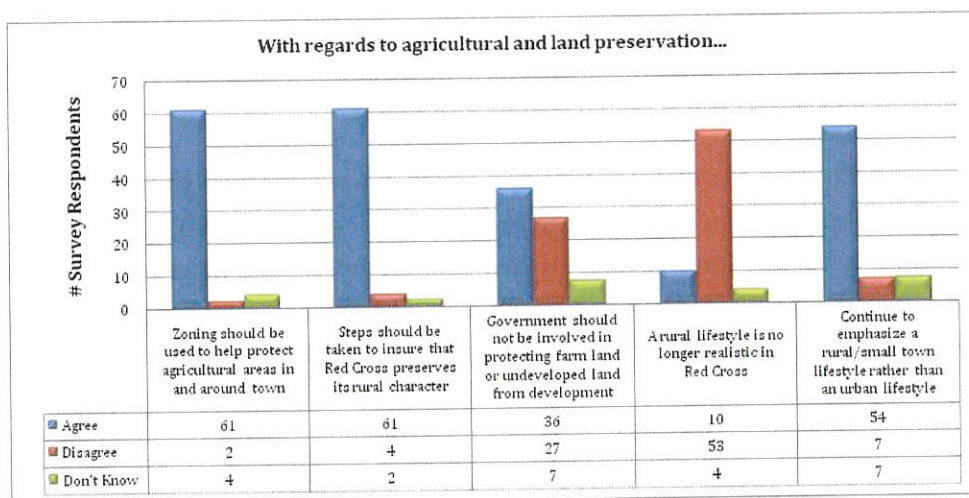
### How should negative impacts of growth be MINIMIZED?

Growth means change. Change can be difficult and messy but it can also be good providing new life and vitality to a community as well as opportunity for its residents. Good planning is all about managing change and in Red Cross we want to make sure that change benefits the Town. To do that we have to make sure we know and understand the negative impacts that growth can have and that we take every step to reduce or eliminate them.

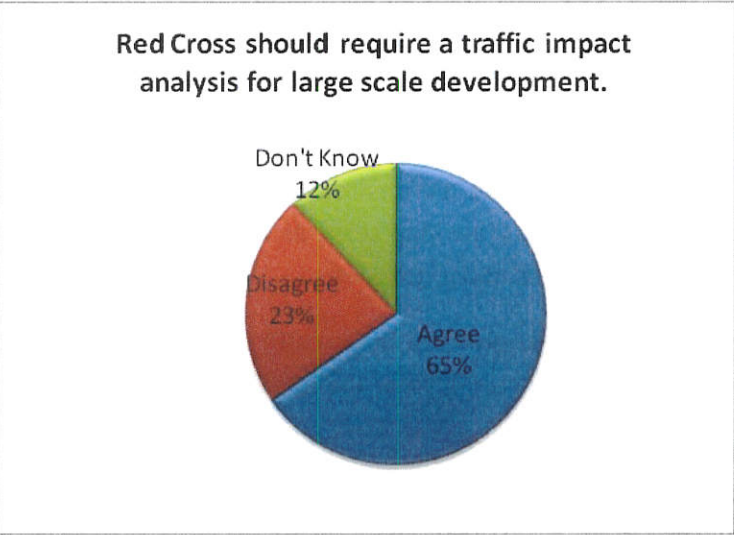
Infrastructure is needed to support growth, but growth also follows infrastructure. Public water and sewer extensions, road improvements and even new schools attract growth and higher intensity development. There are many examples where towns have failed to take this into account only to be faced with unplanned growth and unwanted impacts. Red Cross does not want to be such a town. That means we will have to build good relationships with providers, developers and work together to establish where, when and how infrastructure improvements come to Red Cross.



Photography by Meredith Huneycutt (2010)



While new infrastructure such as roads and utilities is required in order to support growth, growth impacts existing infrastructure as well. These impacts can decrease levels of service and in some instances create hazards. Some of these impacts can be eliminated or substantially decreased by relatively simple changes in development standards such as limitations on driveway access and requiring development proposals to include impact assessments. The best way to minimize impacts is to make sure that Red Cross' development ordinances and plans address these impacts and that our development review process includes our infrastructure partners. Planning for infrastructure impacts requires us to look well into the future, to work cooperatively with infrastructure providers and developers to evaluate development proposals, and to partner with other municipalities, the county and the state.



Other potential negative impacts of growth include a loss of open space, a loss of our agricultural heritage, and damage to the environment. If we want to hold on to our rural character we have to find a way to lessen these impacts of growth. This will require us to think differently than we have in the past and to move forward in a deliberate way to preserve our assets.

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## Transportation

**GOAL:** *To ensure a safe, efficient and convenient transportation system that promotes sustainable land development practices and contributes to residents' overall quality of life.*

To ensure that development and growth is complementary to Red Cross's ideal of preserving its small town rural heritage, it is of paramount importance that roadways and thoroughfares are planned for as soon as possible. When asked about transportation and its relationship to the desired vision for Red Cross, citizens preferred a proactive approach to planning for roadways and thoroughfares. Survey respondents said that in general they would like to see the Town improve existing streets rather than build new ones; however, a new Town Center will require a new street network to support it. There was considerable interest in managing access in and out of commercial areas especially to prevent the negative effects of strip commercial development. For large scale development proposals citizens agreed that they would like to see traffic impact analysis as part of the decision making process. Finally, many citizens expressed interest in the Town encouraging alternative modes of transportation such as bikeways and pedestrian ways.





*Driveways should be limited and well defined.*

**Actions.**

**6-1 Work with NCDOT and the RRRPO to develop a transportation plan for the Town.**

In developing a transportation plan the Town will have the opportunity to determine where existing and new roads can be extended as well as how roads can be designed to prevent congestion, and to preserve Red Cross’s rural small town atmosphere. The transportation planning process will also allow the town to determine where service roads might be located. Insuring that roadways in and around Red Cross are adequate in size and

design capacity is of paramount importance to realize the desired vision of the Town. The completed Land Development Plan and Future Land Use Map serve as an excellent reference guide to inform decisions on future roadway routes and expansions.

**6-2 Ensure safety and convenience of local thoroughfares by requiring common access points and limiting frequent curb cuts.**

By requiring common access points and limiting curbs cuts Red Cross can ensure that new development occurs in a manner that minimizes congestion, creates orderly entrances and exits into businesses, and allows for pedestrian friendly development.

A traffic impact analysis is a study that determines the effects that the traffic generated by a particular development will have on the transportation network in the town.

**6-3 Review and revise town policy to include access provisions for new commercial development.**

Zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances define how traffic enters and exits new commercial development. In keeping with the Red Cross vision for future land development these ordinances should be revised so that new development is required to provide for common access points, shared driveways, internally connected parking areas, pedestrian circulation between developments, frontage roads and similar transportation features. In developing access provisions best practices from other communities should be followed.

**6-4 Require a traffic impact analysis for large scale development proposals.**

The true impact of large scale development is often not realized until it is too late. Increased traffic congestion and the creation of unsafe conditions, can be prevented through careful consideration of where large scale development occurs and how access is designed. Traffic impact analyses can provide valuable information on the likely impacts of large scale developments proposals and mitigation measures to address those impacts, both of which should

be used to inform decisions makers, citizens and developers.

## ***Water and Sewer Services***

***GOAL:*** *To ensure that water and sewer services are delivered in a safe, efficient and effective manner that benefits the residents of Red Cross.*

The provision of public water and sewer services in coming years will provide unprecedented opportunities for growth and development in the town of Red Cross. A clear vision for future growth and development articulated in this Land Development Plan will be extremely useful as the Town makes decisions on how best to handle these opportunities. The town will be able to implement its



Photo of a modern sewer treatment plant

Land Development Plan through its zoning authority. However, it should be noted that management and policies related to utilities extension will not likely be under the direct jurisdiction of the Town but rather the County or others municipalities.

### **Actions.**

#### **7-1 Work closely with water and sewer service providers to ensure that extension policies are consistent with the Town's growth policies.**

Red Cross and its service providers have a common interest in developing extension policies that are efficient and effective. The town is motivated by its vision to encourage compact small town and rural development patterns. Knowing where and how development will occur in the next twenty years helps utilities plan efficient and cost effective service extensions and improvements. The Land Development Plan and future Land Development Map articulate this vision and illustrate where and at what scale development should occur in the future.



The town should meet periodically with water and sewer providers to ensure that extension policies and plans reflect and reinforce Red Cross' vision of future growth.

#### **7-2 Discourage major extensions of water and sewer services that could result in scattered, inefficient development and costly provision of other infrastructure and services.**

Discouraging extension of water and sewer services in scattered inefficient development is in the best interests of

both the Town and the utility provider. The town's interests are expressed in its goals to encourage orderly development, preserve open space, maintain a rural environment and provide efficient services to its citizens. The utility provider also needs to provide efficient services at a reasonable cost. To address these shared interests the Town and utility provider must work cooperatively to develop extension policies and future service plans.

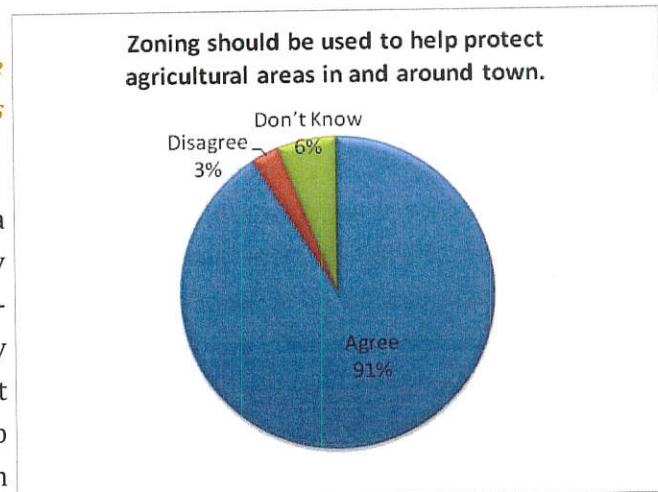
## ***Agricultural Preservation***

***GOAL: To respect our rural, agrarian heritage by continuing to value agricultural operations as an integral use of land.***

The Town of Red Cross possesses a rural landscape that is disappearing in many parts of the country. In the last several decades many communities have seen family farms and fields graded over for development of residential subdivisions, commercial strip centers and other types of development. Often times, the loss of farmland is simply viewed as the *inevitable* consequence of changing economic conditions or as “the farmers last crop”. Over time a series of small decisions by land owners, local officials, developers, and others can have a cumulative effect that results in widespread loss of farmland and loss of rural character.

Loss of farmland and community character at the expense of the conveniences of new development does not have to be inevitable. Nor does there have to be a “either/or” scenario, where a community is forced to choose between new development or agricultural preservation. In fact, new development and agricultural preservation can be complementary to ensure the maintenance of a communities’ rural character. The Land Development Plan sets out a proactive approach for how this partnership can become a reality. Actions can be taken to begin the process of balancing the pressures of new development with the goal of preserving a rural community. One such action is clustering some development while leaving the balance in a Farming Land Trust for future generations.

Much of what makes Red Cross a desirable place for its citizens is found in the pristine open lands in and around town. When asked, Red Cross residents overwhelmingly agreed that a rural lifestyle is very important for their community and that steps should be taken to preserve this lifestyle.



## Actions.

### 8-1 Ensure that the zoning ordinance allows a variety of primary and accessory agricultural uses that are compatible with small town land use patterns.

As development pressure increases the Town must cultivate an environment where agricultural operations can thrive in and around Red Cross. Although the feasibility of agricultural operations are to a large degree dictated by national economic conditions, local governments can play an important role in encouraging the success of local agriculture by making sure local regulations do not create barriers and unnecessary cost to continued operation and expansion.



### 8-2 Consider establishing voluntary agricultural districts as authorized by NCGS 106-738 et.seq. for the purpose of promoting farm uses and to protect farm uses from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

Agricultural districts allow local governments and farmers to establish agricultural districts, areas where it is clear that one is entering a part of the county where farming activities are occurring. This is typically accomplished through signage and other types of notification. Inclusion in an agricultural district is strictly voluntary. Some of the benefits of establishing agricultural districts include recognizing farming operations as an essential part of the local and state economy and promoting the rural environment as a critical component of the community's quality of life. On a more practical level, voluntary agricultural districts alert new residents, real estate agents, developers and others to the fact that they are in an areas where farming operations are established and all of the noises, odors, equipment and activity associated with day to day operations should be expected. As development occurs in established agricultural communities, the district can serve as a "buyer beware" clause to potential new residents. Stanly County adopted this in 2002 with over 13,600 acres established as of 2020 with 64 farms participating.

### 8-3 Use agriculture as an effective transitional land use at Town edges.

Urban sprawl (unmanaged development) happens when areas on the outer edges of town are allowed to develop in a leap frog or haphazard fashion. Often times this is not by a deliberate plan but

"The future is no more uncertain than the present."

*Walt Whitman*

more as a result of the lack of planning and forethought by the local government. The Land Development Plan identifies areas where development should occur and encourages continued agricultural production near the outer edges of town. By actively using this plan and the Future Land Use Map, the Town can make informed decisions on where development should occur and where agricultural uses should be encouraged to flourish.



Photography by Meredith Huneycutt

#### **8-4 Allow agriculture, particularly pasture and crop acreage, to serve as open space and view corridors along major roadways.**

One of the most valuable amenities cited by residents of Red Cross is open space or open land. As one drives in and around Red Cross it is obvious that there is an abundance of open space. Some of this is in active farming operation while other lands are fallow and forested. Most people view these lands from the roadways and thus the unique image and feel of Red Cross as a rural community is created by what can be seen from the public road. The areas from which people can view the rural lands that make Red Cross unique are called view corridors. As growth occurs in coming years steps can be taken to prevent view corridors from being lost by poorly cited structures. Zoning and subdivision ordinances should be revised as soon as possible to ensure that development occurs in a manner that preserves the rural character of Red Cross by protecting these corridors.

### ***Open Space and Recreation***

***GOAL: To develop and maintain a system of public and private open space and recreation areas that help Red Cross preserve its rural character and provide needed outdoor recreation opportunities for our residents.***

The term *Open Space and Recreation* has varied meanings depending on the community. In urban areas it may be defined as large parks, ball fields, and networks of greenways. Or it may be defined as recreation programs like sports leagues and planned activities. In Red Cross the rural small town character that is so highly valued by the citizens helps to shape the perceptions of what type of open space and recreation is most appropriate.



Photography by Meredith Huneycutt (2010)

Results from the citizen survey indicate that people would like to see a network of trails and greenways for walking and biking as well as dedicated open areas. Also, significant interest was indicated for the development of a major park for the



Town as it grows and develops.

Open space is essential to the rural character of Red Cross. This is especially true along our major public roads where most people develop their opinions of who and what we are as a town. If we completely develop out along these roads, we will lose our image as a small, rural town. That is true even if we remain completely open and agricultural in other areas not visible to the road. We must work hard to preserve our image, which is integral to our character. Using open space to protect view corridors and preventing strip commercial development are examples of what we can do.



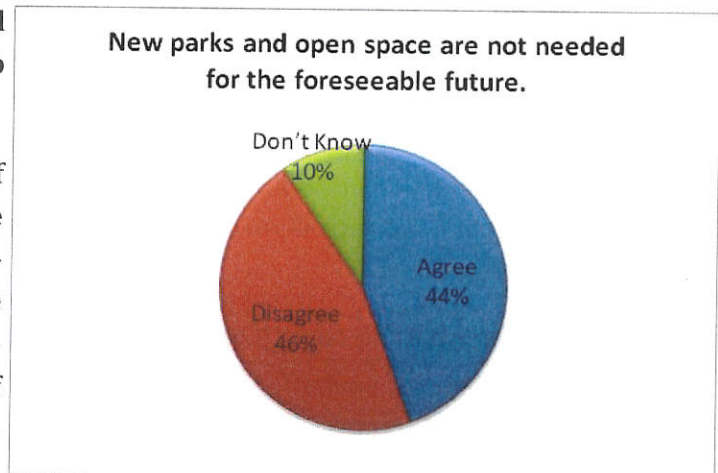
### **Actions.**

#### **9-1 Encourage clustering in all new residential developments.**

Red Cross wants to preserve open space as it develops in the future. To make this happen the zoning and subdivision ordinances must be revised to encourage, if not require, clustering of new residential subdivisions. Clustering allows residential units to be built on smaller lots in exchange for the permanent preservation of the open space that remains in the development tract. Clustering not only preserves open space it reduces infrastructure costs for the developer and may increase recreational opportunities for the community.

#### **9-2 Require a minimum amount of open space for new subdivisions, which is held in common or by a legally constituted non-profit agency acceptable to the Town.**

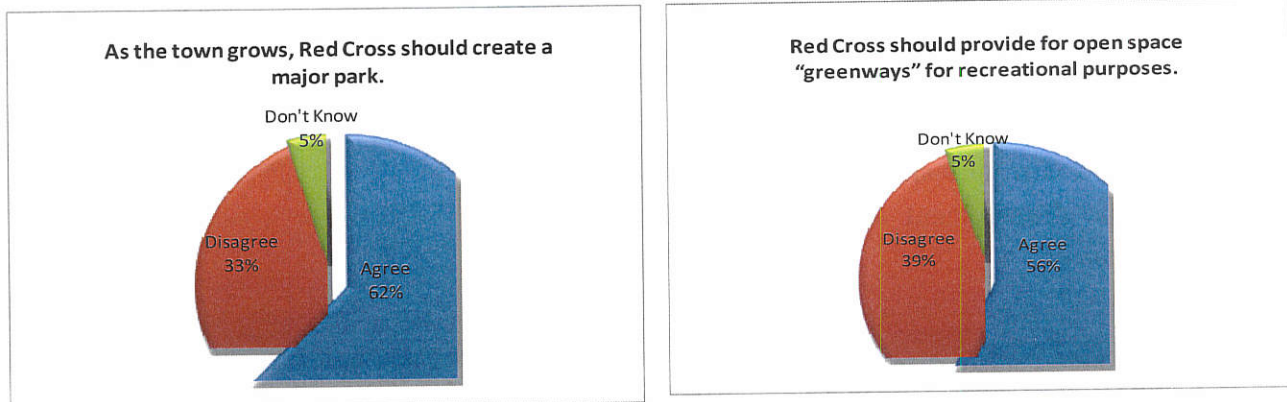
In order to balance the impacts of future residential growth with the desire to preserve the rural environment, Red Cross should revise its zoning and subdivision ordinances to require the provision of open space as residential development occurs.



#### **9-3 Use required and voluntary open space areas to protect rural character, promote agriculture, preserve sensitive environmental areas, and to serve as buffers between de-**

## velopment sites.

Coordination of open space and new development is vital to protecting rural character. The town should partner with a land conservancy or land trust to develop a map of all sensitive environmental areas in Red Cross. When considering development proposals the Town could use the map as a tool to ensure that such development is located so that it does not encroach on environmentally sensitive areas. Also, privately held homeowners associations



can be created to manage permanent open space not held by a conservancy or governmental entity. Town ordinances should allow a range of options for managing open space and should require that permanent open space fulfill one of the stated public purposes.

- 9-4 Create a park in Town Center that: 1) serves as a village green; 2) provides opportunities for families and the community to gather; 3) includes a walking trail, picnic areas and a playground; and 4) that connects to adjacent development sites and streets.**

The future Land Development Map identifies a general area where the Town would like to develop a Town Center as a focal point for the community. Along with a mix of commercial and residential land uses, this plan also envisions recreation and leisure components in the Town Center. A first step in implementing this vision is to develop a *master plan* that would show in detailed fashion where various land uses would be located within the Town Center, where park and recreation components would be located, and how the two will connect with each other.

- 9-5 Partner with the county to create a future county park that will serve the residents of Red Cross.**

The County recently completed the *Park, Recreation and Trail Master Plan*. The plan includes a community park to be built in Red Cross sometime after 2013. According to the Plan a community park is designed for "organized or intensive recreational activities and sports, although passive components such as pathways, picnic areas and natural areas are highly encouraged and complementary to active use facilities". Red Cross and Stanly County should



*This aerial view of Red Cross illustrates the large amount of forest and agricultural land still existing within the town. (2010)*



*This 2020 aerial view of Red Cross illustrates the changes since 2008*

work  
to-

gether on a park plan for the Town that addresses the needs of town residents.

**9-6 Create bicycle paths to serve children and recreational cyclists.**

The county recently completed *Park, Recreation and Trail Master Plan* also includes shared-use bicycle and pedestrian trails as possible amenities for the community park planned for Red Cross. The town should work with the county to ensure that these amenities are a top priority in developing such a park. Also, the Town should include trails and paths in future master planning efforts and ensure that all such facilities connect with adjacent neighborhoods and trail systems.



*Falls Park in downtown Greenville, S.C.*

**9-7 Work with NCDOT to create and designate a system of bicycle lanes to serve as alternative transportation routes through Red Cross.**

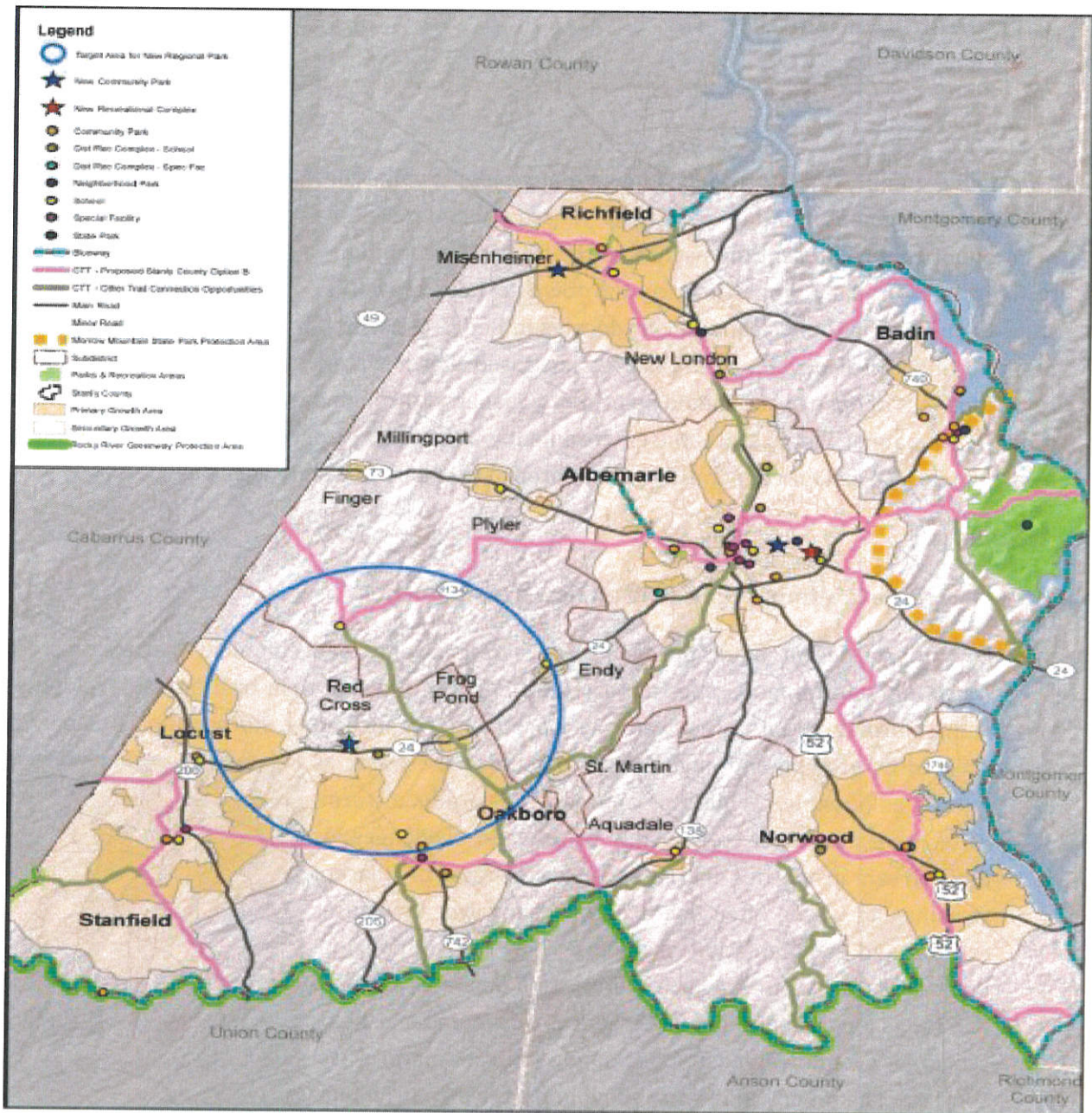
According to the *Stanly County Park, Recreation and Trail Master Plan* NCDOT has identified a 187-mile bikeway system in Stanly County consisting of bike routes along existing roads. These bike routes are primarily bicycle routes designated along existing low-volume roadways with no new on-road or off-road bicycle facilities planned. “Share the Ride” signs will be posted along the route alerting motorist to watch for cyclists and to recognize their right to use the public road.

**9-8 Ensure that, where appropriate, public utility easements include the right to use the easement for public trails and greenways.**

Public trails and greenways have a variety of benefits for the community. Some of these include connecting people, communities and countryside as well as providing opportunities for hiking, strolling and biking. Trails and greenways provide important open space resources and alternative transportation



*Avon/Catawba Creek Greenway in Gastonia, N.C.*



**Composite Park, Recreation and Trails Master Plan 2010-2019**

Stanly County  
 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Master Plan  
 Source: Data obtained from Stanly County, NC  
 Author: Roy Harju  
 Date: 5/24/10



0 1.5 3 Miles



routes. The positive impacts of trails and greenways on the environment and overall quality of life are consistent with the goals and vision of the Red Cross community. Trails and greenways are most effectively developed through public private partnerships. Allowing for public utility easements to be used for trails and greenways will encourage partnerships and will allow for more efficient construction of trails and greenways in Red Cross.

## Environmental Quality

**GOAL:** *To protect the environment from inappropriate growth and development.*

The Community Survey results showed that residents value the pristine environment found in Red Cross. As growth and development opportunities present themselves in the future the community indicated that they would like for the town to take proactive steps to ensure that only clean industry locates in Red Cross. Also, negative impacts of development such as increased storm water runoff and loss of open space should be properly managed through development policy. Managing growth in a manner that protects the environment will not only require initiative at the municipal level but will also call for cooperation with appropriate county and state agencies.

### Low impact design (LID) elements include:

- Rain barrels
- Bioretention
- Permeable pavers
- Swales, and
- Rain gardens

### Actions.

#### 10-1 Encourage low impact design in all new developments.

Low impact design is an approach to development and redevelopment that treats stormwater and natural landscapes as resources. This is different than traditional development, which normally treats stormwater as a problem. On such sites, stormwater is usually addressed by grading and engineering to remove the water as quickly as possible. While this approach does reduce stormwater issues onsite, it creates new stormwater challenges for downstream properties, increases peak flow rates in adjacent streams and rivers, often floods public roadways, and causes erosion and sedimentation problems. Low impact development seeks to retain as much stormwater onsite as possible and for as long as possible. This reduces offsite impacts, helps recharge groundwater supplies, and protects natural resources. The town will integrate low impact design principles into existing development ordinances and guidelines.



*An erosion gully in a pasture.*

#### 10-2 Encourage energy conservation in all new building design (e.g., LEED certified construction).

LEED (*Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design*) certified construction encourages resources conservation and reduces waste generated by construction projects. This can also increase energy efficiency. All of these goals are consistent with the vision of the Red Cross Land Development Plan. “Best practices” for encouraging conservation design should be incorporated into local development policies.

### 10-3 Recruit only clean industry.

Towns used to be the center of industry. Early in the twentieth century the segregation of uses, especially the separation of industry from homes and businesses, became popular as a means of addressing the negative impacts of an increasingly industrialized nation. Before and since that time, however, there have existed a number of clean industries that are compatible with small town life. Clean industry is defined as an enterprise engaged in manufacturing which emits little to no noise, light, odor or vibration, generates minimal traffic, and is harmonious to the surrounding environment and adjacent land uses. Clean industry of this type could enhance the Town's tax base and provide employment opportunities without negatively impacting its quality of life.

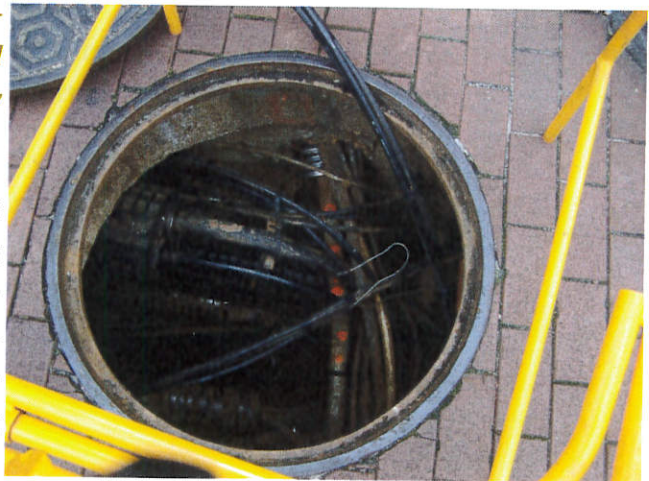
### 10-4 Work with Stanly County and the state to better control stormwater runoff on new development sites.

The Stanly County land use plan recommends use of conservation development as a tool to promote rural conservation of land and preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. This is consistent with Red Cross's goals to protect its environment from inappropriate development. The Town will work with appropriate County departments (i.e. planning, environmental health) and state agencies (i.e. NC DENR, water resources, etc.) to identify potential stormwater issues in Red Cross and determine the most effective means of addressing these.

## ***Planning Coordination***

***GOAL:*** To work cooperatively with adjacent municipalities, the county, and other governmental entities to ensure that Red Cross and Stanly County grow and prosper together.

The County Land Use Plan which was adopted in 2002 and updated in 2011 states that "cooperation between the county, communities, and other entities offers the best solution to future land use planning in Stanly County". Red Cross supports this view. In coming years implementation of the Town's vision for its future will depend on a fierce determination to ensure that change occurs in a manner that does not erase Red Cross's unique rural heritage, but rather builds upon and celebrates it. This can only be accomplished through local community based planning and cooperation in a variety of regional initiatives such as strategic planning, economic development, and utility planning.



## **Actions.**

### **11-1 Coordinate with the county and other towns as needed to provide adequate public water and sewer service to meet future needs of Red Cross.**

A critical element in mapping out a community's future is planning for water and sewer services delivery and coordinating delivery of these services with the community's plans for growth. In answering the questions relative to future land development in Red Cross; *1) What kind of growth is appropriate and where should it occur? 2) What should new development look like? and, 3) How can negative impacts of growth be minimized?* the Town will need to work consistently with the various water and sewer providers to ensure that adequate services are available for development, and extension of utility lines and increases in capacity are consistent with the planned location and density of development.

### **11-2 Work with Stanly County to develop a business and industry base that is appropriate in scale and location to support the Town's goals for community appearance, agricultural preservation and environmental quality.**

Results from the comprehensive community survey conducted as part of the Land Development Plan process revealed that residents would like for Red Cross to be a place where small businesses primarily serve the community's needs and have a small town appearance. Also survey responses indicated that people would not like for Red Cross to become a manufacturing center. Town officials will need to work with County and State economic development officials to ensure that all parties involved in recruitment of business and industry are on the same page.

### **11-3 Participate in the development of the County Thoroughfare Plan as needed to ensure that state-funded transportation needs in Red Cross are addressed.**

The County Thoroughfare Plan was last updated in 2003 and updated in 2013. Since that time, conditions relative to transportation and traffic generation have changed considerably in and around Red Cross. In order to respond to these changes and to ensure that the Town's needs are met, the Town should be involved in the upcoming plan update. In addition, the Town should make sure that the values of the Land Development Plan are reflected in the updated transportation plan.



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# FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Land Development Plan Map depicts proposed land use within the Town of Red Cross through the year 2040. The current zoning map for the Town will be changed through the years to accommodate new growth. Developers should consult the Land Development Plan Map for guidance prior to submitting a rezoning request. The Planning Board and the Town Council should use the map along with the goals in this plan to determine which requests they approve and when.

## Land Development Plan Map District Descriptions

- AGR — Agriculture Residential (439 acres).** This district is intended to serve primarily agricultural uses but may include single family detached residential dwellings on individual lots and in small developments with lots averaging one acre or more in size. Clustering of residential developments is encouraged to protect view corridors along NC 24/27 and NC 205. Preservation of agricultural uses is emphasized. Conflicts regarding land uses are weighted in favor of agriculture.
- CMU — Commercial Mixed Use (145 acres).** This district is intended to serve primarily commercial uses with secondary residential, office and institutional uses. Residential uses are likely to be small multifamily uses and clustered single-family lots served by public water and sewer. A coordinated sidewalk network is provided throughout this district for all uses. Non-residential uses are small to medium scale facilities that serve the Town, adjacent areas, and motorists along arterials. Large parking areas located between buildings and roads are discouraged if not prohibited. Buildings are designed to provide visual interest as well as functionality. They use materials and forms that are common to historic small town development in the central piedmont of North Carolina.
- IMU — Institutional Mixed Use (157 acres).** This district is intended to serve primarily institutional uses such as schools with a secondary focus on commercial and office uses that support or are compatible with institutional uses. A coordinated sidewalk network is required throughout this district for all uses. Uses are small to medium scale facilities that serve the Town, adjacent areas, and motorists along arterials. Large parking areas located between buildings and roads are discouraged if not prohibited. Buildings are designed to provide visual interest as well as functionality. They use materials and forms that are common in the central piedmont of North Carolina.
- LDR — Low Density Residential (1,074 acres).** This district is intended to serve primarily residential developments with lots averaging one acre or more in size. Clustering of residential developments is encouraged to protect view corridors along NC 24/27 and NC 205, floodplains and environmentally sensitive areas. Sidewalks are not required. Trail systems may run through this area providing recreational opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists.

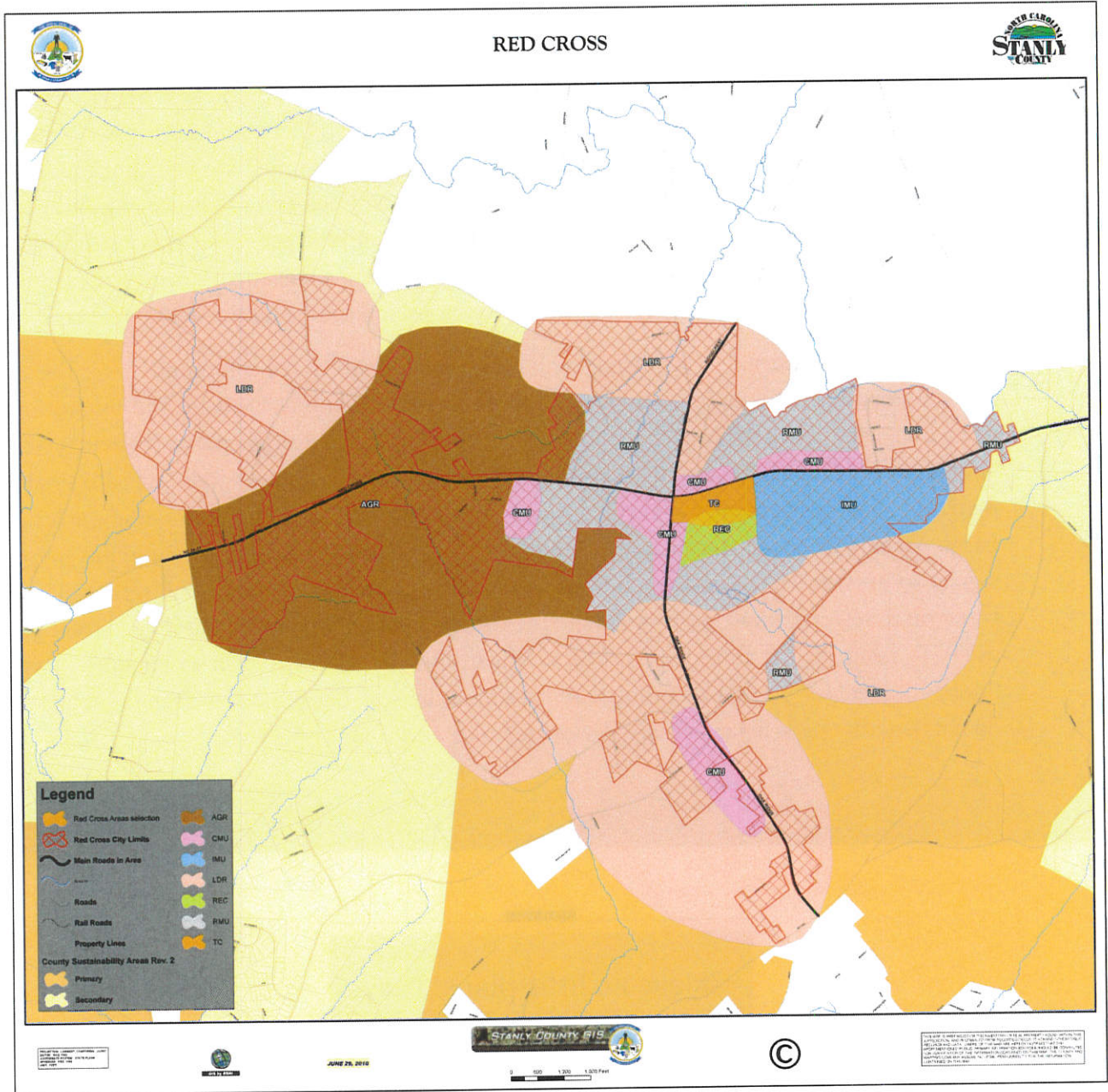
**REC — Recreational (34 acres).** This district is reserved for a large Town Center park and recreational area. This park is immediately adjacent to the Town Center, provides recreational opportunities for citizens, and serves as a gathering place for town events.

**RMU — Residential Mixed Use (421 acres).** This district is intended to serve primarily single family residential uses on public water and sewer. It may contain small clusters of duplex and multi-family uses and small commercial and institutional uses that support and are compatible with residential uses. A coordinated sidewalk network is provided throughout this district for all uses. Non-residential uses are small scale facilities that serve immediate neighborhoods and town residents. Large parking areas located between buildings and roads are discouraged if not prohibited. Buildings are designed to provide visual interest as well as functionality. They use materials and forms that are common to historic small town development in the central piedmont of North Carolina and are encouraged to use residential design features.

**TC — Town Center (35 acres).** This district will serve as the heart of the community. It is the seat of local government and contains a compatible mix of commercial, office, and institutional uses, and very small scale clean industry. A coordinated sidewalk network that is wide enough to support significant pedestrian activity and amenities is essential. Uses are small to medium scale facilities that serve the Town, adjacent areas, and motorists along arterials. Large parking areas located between buildings and roads are prohibited. Buildings are designed to provide visual interest as well as functionality using materials and forms that are common to historic small town centers in the central piedmont of North Carolina. Street level uses are reserved for storefront, office, and institutional activities such as banking. Upper floors are ideal for office, institutional and residential uses. Uses, such as clean industry, that do not generate pedestrian activity are located on side streets and alleys.

"Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not themselves be realized."

*Daniel Burnham*



**Developing the Future—Our Land Development Plan Map**

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# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

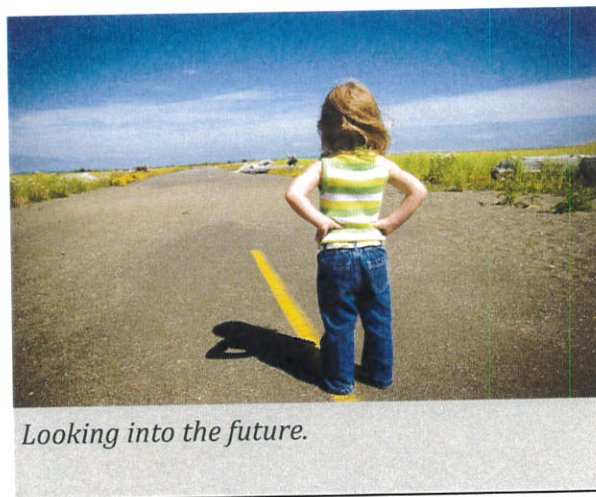
This plan is our map for the future. It's vision is our destination. Implementing the plan will be our journey. It's time to get started.

A good implementation plan contains at least three elements: 1) *a list of actions*, 2) *a time frame for accomplishing the actions*, and 3) *a list of potential partners to assist with implementation*. The implementation table for the Land Development Plan contains these elements plus a list of outcomes that will be required for implementation.

The actions listed in the previous section are carried forward into the Implementation Plan. Each action is then assessed for when, within the overall schedule of this Plan, it should take place. Actions are marked as "short term" (0-5 years), "medium term" (5-10 yrs), "long term" (10-20 years) or "ongoing" depending upon when the action should be started and how long it should take to see results. The time frame also acknowledges that some actions build on others and cannot occur simultaneously if they are to be effective. Therefore, actions listed as medium or long term are not *less* important, they just require other actions to occur first in order to be effective or necessary. This is reflected in their priority rating.

The list of potential partners provided in the plan is an attempt to identify those individuals, groups, or organizations that can or should be involved in implementing the action. It should not be viewed as exclusive or comprehensive in that others who have not been listed may have an interest, skill, or responsibility for assisting with the action. New partners are always welcome!

The intent of this Implementation Plan is that it will be incorporated into and chiefly implemented through the actions of the Town Council and their appointed boards. These actions may and should include ordinance amendments, budget approvals, capital improvements programs, and similar activities and products. However, it will take the entire Town of Red Cross, and those in proximity, working together and supporting this Land Development Plan for it to be fully implemented as proposed.



*Looking into the future.*

| Strategy #  | Action Statement   | Outcomes   | Time Frame | Potential Partners   |
|---|--|--|------------|--|
| <b>Economic Development</b>                             |  |  |            |  |
| 1-1   | Direct commercial and institutional development to areas that complement the agricultural and residential character of the community.  | Zoning ordinance and map review/ amendment                           | Short      | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 1-2   | Minimize the negative impacts of further development of Red Cross by closely managing the type, location, design, and impacts of new and expansion of business and industry. | Zoning ordinance and map review/ amendment                           | Ongoing    | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Economic Development Commission; Stanly County Planning and Zoning |
| 1-3   | Use the Future Land Use Map as a guide for making decisions on development proposals, rezoning requests and other types of development requests.                             | Incorporation of land use priorities as justification for decisions  | Ongoing    | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Planning and Zoning; Stanly County Economic Development Commission |
| 1-4   | Recruit only clean industry.   | Clean industry   | Ongoing    | Town Council; Stanly County Economic Development Commission; NCDOC   |
| <b>Commercial, Office and Institutional Development</b> |  |  |            |  |
| 2-1   | Create zoning districts that permit commercial uses to develop in clusters to prevent a sprawling or "strip" development land use pattern.                                   | Zoning ordinance and map review/ amendment                           | Short      | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 2-2   | Review and revise town policies that address new commercial development to ensure that design, scale and orientation reflect Red Cross' rural small town character.          | Zoning ordinance & map and subdivision regulations review/ amendment | Short      | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 2-3   | Direct desirable commercial development to the Town Center to all extent possible.   | Zoning ordinance and map review/ amendment                           | Ongoing    | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Economic Development Commission                                    |
| <b>Residential Development</b>                          |  |  |            |  |
| 3-1   | Prohibit the encroachment of incompatible land uses into existing neighborhoods.   | Zoning ordinance review/ amendment                                   | Short      | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 3-2   | Encourage mixed use developments that include residential, commercial and institutional uses.  | Zoning ordinance review/ amendment                                   | Short      | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 3-3   | Create policies for development of neighborhoods that minimize traffic congestion, promote walkability, retain open spaces and contribute to the rural                       | Zoning ordinance review/ amendment                                   | Short      | Planning Board; Town Council   |

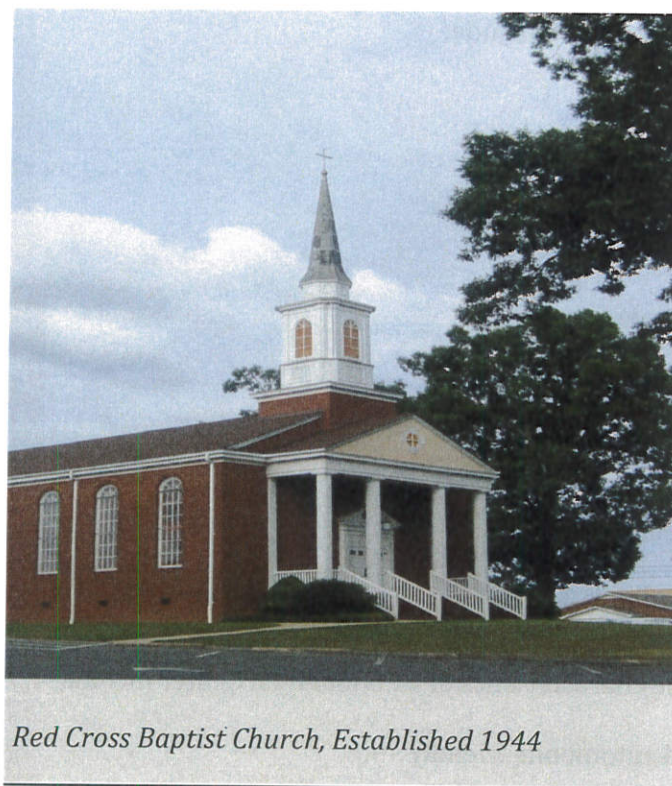
|                                |  |  |                |   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|----------------|---|
| 3-4                            | Require new residential development to connect via street and pedestrian pathways to adjacent residential and commercial areas.        | Zoning ordinance review/amendment  | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council  |
| <b>Town Center Development</b> |  |  |                |   |
| 4-1                            | Encourage small businesses that primarily serve the community's needs.   | Small business creation; Zoning ordinance review/amendment                                     | Ongoing        | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Economic Development Commission             |
| 4-2                            | Ensure that design standards respect and foster small town appearance and function.  | Design that fits in with small town appearance and function; zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Planning and Zoning                         |
| 4-3                            | Make pedestrian access to and within the Town Center a priority for all new development and public improvements.                       | Zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations review/amendment                                  | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council  |
| 4-4                            | Plan for and create a network of streets within the Town Center that connect with each other and adjacent streets.                     | Town Center plan showing streets and connections   | Medium/Long    | Planning Board; Town Council; Rocky River RPO   |
| 4-5                            | Allow for a variety of business, institution, office, residential, recreation and commercial uses in the Town Center.                  | Zoning ordinance review/amendment  | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council  |
| <b>Community Appearance</b>    |  |  |                |   |
| 5-1                            | Create attractive, well-marked entrances into Red Cross.   | Attractive well-marked entrances   | Short          | Town Council  |
| 5-2                            | Ensure that the appearance and function of new development fits in with the rural, agricultural and small town character of Red Cross. | New development that is appropriate for the Town; Zoning ordinance review/Amendment            | Short; ongoing | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Planning and Zoning                         |
| 5-3                            | Create a set of recommended design guidelines for the Town.  | Design Guidelines  | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council  |
| <b>Transportation</b>          |  |  |                |   |
| 6-1                            | Work with NCDOT and the RPO to develop a transportation plan for the Town.   | Creation of a Town transportation plan   | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council; NCDOT; Rocky River RPO; Stanly County Planning and Zoning |
| 6-2                            | Ensure safety and convenience of local thoroughfares by requiring common access points and limiting frequent curb cuts.                | Zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations review/amendment                                  | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council; NCDOT;  |
| 6-3                            | Review and revise town policy to include access provisions for new commercial development.   | Zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations review/   | Short          | Planning Board; Town Council  |



|                                  |   |                                   |       |  |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------|--|
| 6-4                              | Require a traffic impact analysis for large scale development proposals.  | Zoning ordinance review/          | Short | Planning Board; Town Council; NCDOT                                      |
| <b>Water and Sewer Services</b>  |   |                                   |       |  |
| 7-1                              | Work closely with water and sewer service providers to ensure that extension policies are consistent with the Town's growth policies.   | Interlocal agreement              | Short | Town Council; Stanly County; Town of Oakboro                             |
| 7-2                              | Discourage major extensions of water and sewer services that could result in scattered, inefficient development and costly provision of other infrastructure and services.  | Interlocal agreement              | Short | Town Council; Stanly County; Town of Oakboro                             |
| <b>Agricultural Preservation</b> |   |                                   |       |  |
| 8-1                              | Ensure that the zoning ordinance allows a variety of primary and accessory agricultural uses that are compatible with small town land use patterns.   | Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 8-2                              | Continue support of the voluntary agricultural districts as authorized by NCGS 106-738 et.seq. and establishing the EVAD to continue promoting farm uses and to protect farm uses from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms. | Agricultural District ordinance   | Short | Town Council; Stanly County Agricultural extension office; Stanly County |
| 8-3                              | Use agriculture as an effective transitional land use at Town edges.  | Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 8-4                              | Allow agriculture, particularly pasture and crop acreage, to serve as open space and view corridors along major roadways.   | Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| <b>Open Space and Recreation</b> |   |                                   |       |  |
| 9-1                              | Encourage clustering in all new residential developments.   | Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 9-2                              | Require a minimum amount of open space for new subdivisions, which is held in common or by a legally constituted non-profit agency acceptable to the Town.  | Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short | Planning Board; Town Council   |
| 9-3                              | Use required and voluntary open space areas to protect rural character, promote agriculture, preserve sensitive environmental areas, and to serve as buffers between development sites.   | Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short | Planning Board; Town Council   |

|                              |  |  |               |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|---------------|--|
| 9-4                          | Create a park in Town Center that: 1) serves as a village green; 2) provides opportunities for families and the community to gather; 3) includes a walking trail, picnic areas and a playground; and 4) that connects to adjacent development sites and streets. | Town park  | Medium        | Town Council   |
| 9-5                          | Partner with the county to create a future county park that will serve the residents of Red Cross.   | Interlocal agreement and/or cooperative planning process   | Medium        | Town Council; Stanly County  |
| 9-6                          | Create bicycle paths to serve children and recreational cyclists.  | Bicycle path creation                                      | Medium        | Planning Board; Town Council                                       |
| 9-7                          | Work with NCDOT to create and designate a system of bicycle lanes to serve as alternative transportation routes through Red Cross.   | Bicycle lane creation/designation                          | Medium        | Town Council; NCDOT; Rocky River RPO                               |
| 9-8                          | Ensure that, where appropriate, public utility easements include the right to use the easement for public trails and greenways.  | Easement designation and/or interlocal agreement           | Ongoing       | Town Council; Stanly County; Town of Oakboro                       |
| <b>Environmental Quality</b> |  |  |               |  |
| 10-1                         | Encourage low impact design in all new developments.   | LID projects; Zoning ordinance review/amendment            | Short/ongoing | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Planning and Zoning    |
| 10-2                         | Encourage energy conservation in all new building design (e.g., LEED certified construction).  | Green building projects; Zoning ordinance review/amendment | Short/ongoing | Planning Board; Town Council; Stanly County Planning and Zoning    |
| 10-3                         | Recruit only clean industry.   | Clean industry   | Ongoing       | Town Council; Stanly County Economic Development Commission; NCDOC |
| 10-4                         | Work with Stanly County and the state to better control stormwater runoff on new development sites.  | Fewer stormwater problems                                  | Ongoing       | Town Council; Stanly County Planning and Zoning; NCDENR            |
| <b>Planning Coordination</b> |  |  |               |  |
| 11-1                         | Coordinate with the county and other towns as needed to provide adequate public water and sewer service to meet future needs of Red Cross.   | Interlocal agreements; interjurisdictional plans           | Short/Medium  | Town Council; Stanly County; Town of Oakboro                       |

|      |   |  |         |   |
|------|---|--|---------|---|
| 11-2 | Work with Stanly County to develop a business and industry base that is appropriate in scale and location to support the Town's goals for community appearance, agricultural preservation | Appropriately scaled and located business and industry             | Ongoing | Town Council; Stanly County Economic Development Commission; NCDOT                      |
| 11-3 | Participate in the development of the County Thoroughfare Plan as needed to ensure that state-funded transportation needs in Red Cross are addressed.                                     | Stanly County Thoroughfare Plan that includes Red Cross priorities | Ongoing | Planning Board; Town Council; NCDOT; Rocky River RPO; Stanly County Planning and Zoning |



# APPENDIX 1

## COMPARISON OF DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The Red Cross Land Development Plan provides a new vision for the development of the Town and surrounding area. The vision includes several types of development patterns. This section provides a general explanation of the differences between the developmental approach followed in many communities and the desired development type for the Red Cross community. In making future land use decisions, the following illustrations (commercial center, road network, mixed use and open space development) should be referenced along with the policy section and applied where appropriate to ensure desired development patterns.

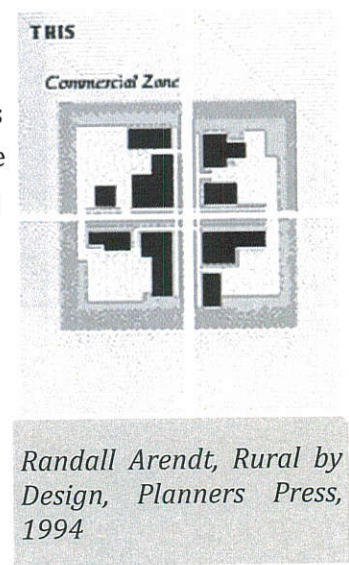
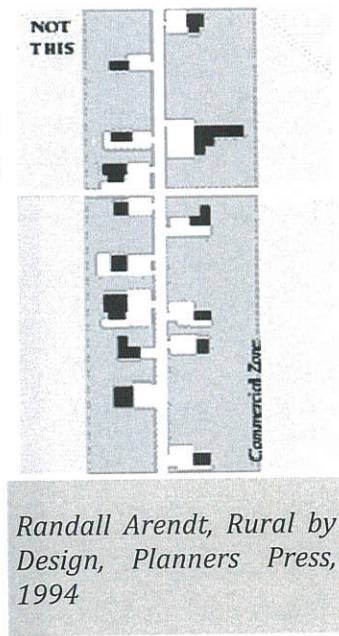
### STRIP DEVELOPMENT vs. COMMERCIAL CENTERS

*Strip Development:* Currently in many communities, commercial development has occurred in linear strips along major thoroughfares. The characteristics of strip development include:

- Automobile oriented
- Large parking lots
- Large front yard setbacks
- Single use (i.e. only commercial)
- Numerous curb cuts
- No interconnectivity between uses
- Poor design characteristics

*Commercial Center (or Town Center):* The Commercial Center is based on applying the attributes of a traditional downtown to a new site that is smaller in scale. The characteristics of a Commercial Center include:

- Pedestrian and automobile friendly
- Few curb cuts or limited access
- Buildings built to a pedestrian scale
- Building closer to the road
- Interconnectivity between uses and shared parking



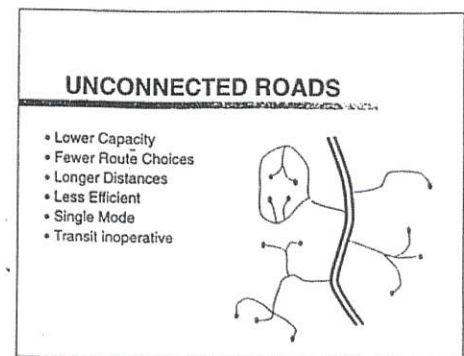
- Mixed use (i.e. commercial, office, multi-family residential)
- High quality design characteristic

***The Red Cross Land Development Plan incorporates the principles of Commercial Centers as a viable alternative to the current Strip Development.***

## **UNCONNECTED ROADS vs. ROAD NETWORK**

*Unconnected Roads:* In many communities, the proliferation of cul-de-sac subdivisions has resulted in a transportation network that limits the number of ways through town. In addition to the residential subdivision, commercial development has also been guilty of providing no connectivity between uses. The characteristics of Unconnected Roads include:

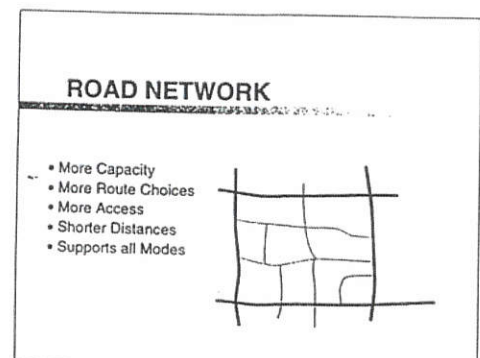
- Lower capacity
- Fewer route choices
- Longer driving distances
- Less efficiency
- Single mode of transportation



*Illustrations from Pilot Mountain Land Use Plan*

*Road Network:* A transportation system based on a Road Network will help aid in the avoidance of traffic congestion, which may otherwise result on some of Town's major thoroughfares. Increasing the number of thoroughfare choices will help to disperse traffic throughout the Town. The utilization of a Road Network will result in:

- More capacity
- More route choices
- More access
- Shorter distances
- Support for all modes of transportation



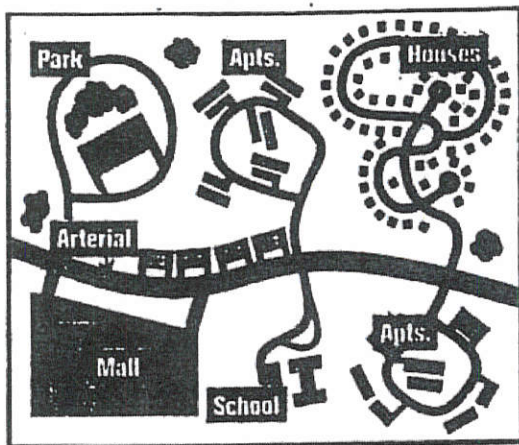
*Illustrations from Pilot Mountain Land Use Plan*

***The Red Cross Land Development Plan supports the use of Road Networks within new residential and com-***

mercial areas to provide Red Cross with more transportation options throughout the Town.

## SEPARATION OF USES vs. MIXED USE

*Separation of Uses:* The standard zoning ordinance has created a situation in which all uses must be segregated from one another. This has the potential to result in the destruction of lively neighborhoods that may include a neighborhood store for example. In addition, this outmoded form of development may result in the removal of residences from a Central Business District in many communities. While some uses need to be separated from one another, many others would work well together if designed properly. For example, the construction of five three-story multi-family apartment buildings in the middle of a single-family residential district would not work. However, a multi-family townhouse development that is designed to complement the surrounding neighborhood could fit in.



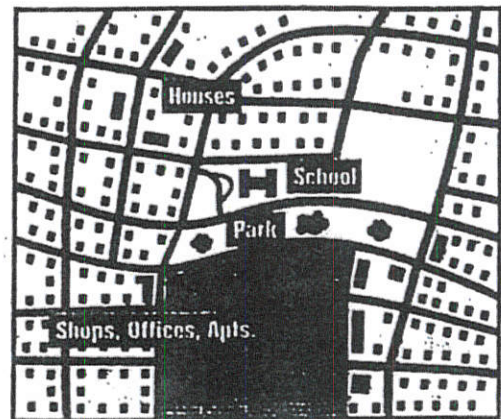
Randall Arendt, *Conservation Design for Subdivisions*, Island Press, 1996

In Red Cross Separation of Uses has not occurred due to lack of development pressure, however in years to come this could change. In many communities, Separation of uses has resulted in the creation of “pods” of development. The diagram highlights the current problem with separation of uses: all traffic must get out onto the main road to go anywhere.

*Mixed Use:* The concept of Mixed Use goes back to the time before zoning when many uses were found in a neighborhood. The historic part of many downtowns contains examples of commercial, multi-family and single-family uses working together within the same development. By encouraging a mix of uses a community can decrease traffic,

allow people opportunities to walk from store to store, and promote commercial development that has a residential market built into the development. Central Business Districts are an excellent example of mixed-use development that intertwines offices, retail establishments, and residences to serve multiple needs.

*The Red Cross Land Development Plan encourages mixed-use developments especially within and around the part of the Town designated for Town Center.*

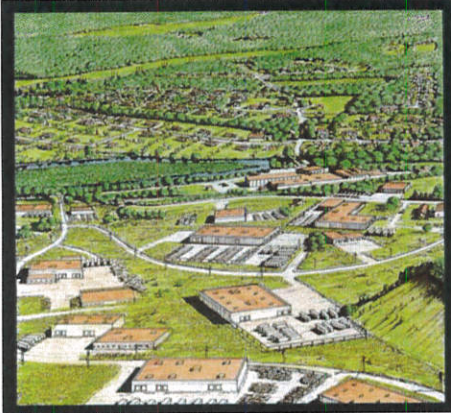


Randall Arendt, *Conservation Design for Subdivisions*, Island Press, 1996

## CONVENTIONAL DEVELOPMENT vs. OPEN SPACE

## DEVELOPMENT

**Conventional Development:** Conventional Development maximizes the number of lots that can be created out of any piece of land. This method of development often pays little attention to environmental factors, small town atmosphere, neighborhood design or preservation of open space. The goal of the development is to place as many houses or businesses on the site as allowed under the current zoning ordinance. As a result, land that could be preserved due to environmental conditions or topography gets turned into a backyard or graded for parking.



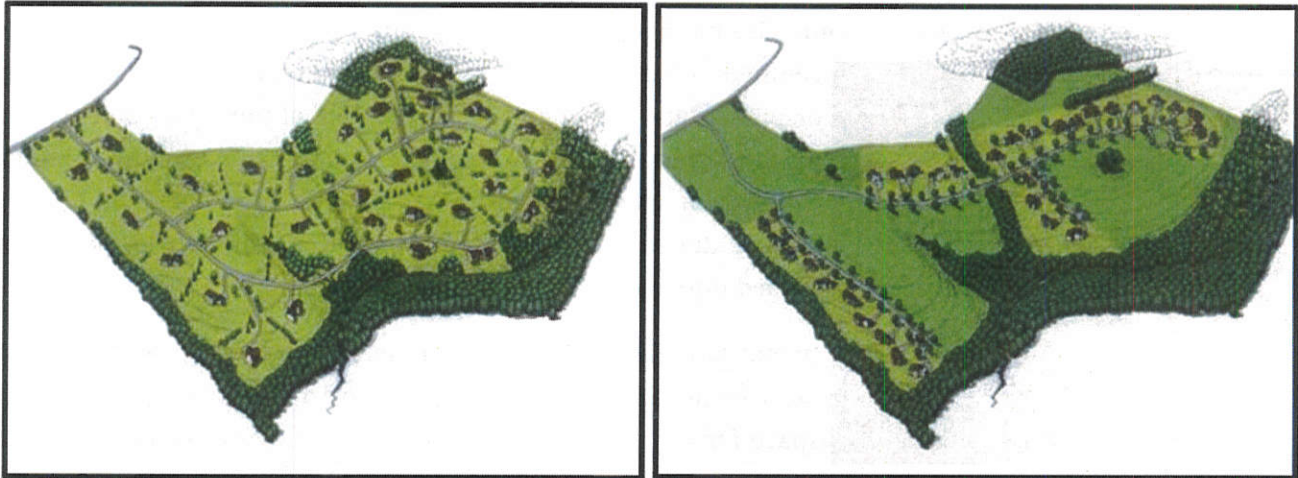
*Illustration from Rural By Design, Randall Arendt*

In addition, this type of development can place a greater burden on a community because it does not provide any recreational space for the residents and may result in overcrowding at parks and other recreational facilities. In many communities, conventional business development can be aesthetically unpleasing, and may result in increased runoff to other properties, and increases traffic.

**Open Space Development:** Open Space Development seeks to provide a designated area as open space within the development. This land is permanently protected from development and in many cases can be used by the neighborhood or community as a recreation amenity. The developer that chooses to develop in this manner can still build the same number of units, As a result of this clustering onto smaller lots less infrastructure is needed. By encouraging Open Space Development, the Town can preserve open space, increase the recreational opportunities for its residents, decrease the amount of infrastructure that needs to be maintained, and increase the attractiveness of the overall community.



*Illustration from Rural By Design, Randall Arendt*



*Illustration from Rural By Design, Randall Arendt*

### **CONVENTIONAL VS. OPEN SPACE SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT**

*The Red Cross Land Development Plan supports the concept of open space development in order to maintain Red Cross's small town atmosphere and protect surrounding rural areas.*