

VISION & GOALS

VISION

The vision statement is a brief, inspirational description of what the town aspires to achieve in the future. It reflects shared community values that are tied to the goals of this plan. These broad and long-range goals should serve as a guiding light as staff, elected officials, and community groups work towards creating a better community.



Vision Statement:

*Lillington is a welcoming, connected community where **families thrive**, and the **Cape Fear River unites** neighborhoods, nature, and **a vibrant downtown**. The community supports a **healthy, engaged lifestyle** and a **growing local economy**.*



GOAL STATEMENTS

The goal statements were developed from community input gathered from stakeholders, the public survey, and public workshops. They will inform future planning, land use, and policy actions. The eight goal statements serve as the basis for the implementation recommendations of this plan and influence the future land use map.



Goal 1 - Revitalize Downtown

Create a vibrant and energized downtown that serves as a daily destination for retail, services, and entertainment, supported by well-connected parks and green spaces that safely link downtown to the river and surrounding community assets.



Goal 5 - Ensure Balanced Growth

Ensure equitable revitalization and development across all areas of Lillington by promoting a balanced mix of land uses on both sides of the river, with investments that enhance the quality of life for all neighborhoods.



Goal 2 - Improve Traffic Congestion & Safety

Prioritize improved traffic management and implement innovative road designs to reduce congestion and enhance safety for all modes of transportation at key intersections.



Goal 6 - Preserve Community Identity

Preserve and strengthen community identity by revitalizing existing commercial buildings to maintain the town's history, uniqueness, and small-town charm; reinvesting in infrastructure to support infill development near downtown; enhancing key gateways with attractive signage and branding; and creating welcoming spaces for cultural groups to gather and contribute to the town's future.



Goal 3 - Expand the Town's Pedestrian Network

Expand sidewalks, trails, and greenways to connect neighborhoods, natural assets, parks, and downtown, providing the infrastructure to support active, outdoor lifestyles for residents and visitors.



Goal 4 - Prioritize Commercial Development

Support retail and service businesses that generate well-paying local jobs, promote high-quality commercial development, and strengthen the community's tax base.



Goal 7 - Prioritize connectivity to the Cape Fear River

Promote the Cape Fear River as a vital natural asset that connects neighborhoods, attracts visitors, and supports an active, outdoor lifestyle for residents.



Goal 8 - Capturing Residents & Workers

Create a vibrant live, work, and play environment where residents and workers choose to stay in Lillington to meet their shopping, medical, dining, and entertainment needs.

PLAN ELEMENTS



PLAN ELEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

As Lillington continues to grow and evolve, it is essential to recognize that different parts of the community possess distinct physical characteristics, land use patterns, historical context, and opportunities for future development. These differences shape how residents experience their neighborhoods, how businesses operate, and how infrastructure and public services are delivered. To reflect and respond to this diversity, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan introduces a Character Area Framework—a strategic approach to guiding context-sensitive growth, preservation, and investment throughout the town’s jurisdiction and within the broader planning study area, which includes areas anticipated for future expansion.

Character Areas represent geographic areas that share common traits and planning considerations. They help translate community values into land use guidance by accounting for the varying roles, conditions, and needs of different areas. Each Character Area provides direction on appropriate land uses, desired development patterns, transportation improvements, and public investments, ensuring that future growth reinforces Lillington’s identity while enhancing livability, connectivity, and economic opportunity. These areas are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map and form the foundation for policies and implementation strategies throughout this plan.

For planning purposes, Character Areas are classified into four general categories: Residential, Mixed-Use/Commercial, Employment, and Natural. Each classification contains more specific subcategories tailored to Lillington’s development context:



Residential

- Rural Residential
- Neighborhood Residential
- Traditional Neighborhood



Mixed Use/Commercial

- Community Mixed-Use
- Downtown Core
- Commercial & Service



Employment

- Civic & Institutional
- Employment & Light Industrial



Natural

- Parks & Open Space

This Character Area framework serves as a flexible but intentional guide to future decision-making—balancing growth with preservation, supporting infrastructure planning, and ensuring that each part of Lillington develops in a way that reflects its purpose, potential, and place within the broader community.

Assignment of Character Areas

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan establishes a long-term vision for how areas within Lillington's planning jurisdiction and study area should develop and redevelop. In most locations, the Future Land Use Map is intended to preserve existing development patterns by encouraging new growth that reflects the appearance, character, and function of the district.

In other areas, particularly at key nodes or along highway corridors with available road and utility capacity, the plan supports targeted reinvestment and redevelopment. While the plan does not dictate specific outcomes, it helps reduce barriers to private investment and brings land-use decisions in alignment with market conditions.

Public input shared goals like downtown redevelopment, enhanced commercial options, and balanced growth provided the framework for the character areas.

Character areas also integrate the Cape Fear River, local creeks, and associated floodplains to promote land-use patterns that respect natural resources and help mitigate the impacts of natural hazards. Options for commercial and service uses are needed to support continued commerce, job creation, and a resilient property tax base—critical components of a thriving community.

Overall, the Land Use Plan identifies nine distinct character areas within Lillington's planning area, providing a clear framework for coordinated land-use decisions and sustainable growth.



Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map and associated character areas are meant to guide land use and infrastructure decisions in the Lillington Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction, Town Limits, and future growth areas (study area).

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map on the following page illustrates the desired land use pattern in the Town of Lillington, and its future growth areas. Highlights from the Future Land Use Map include:

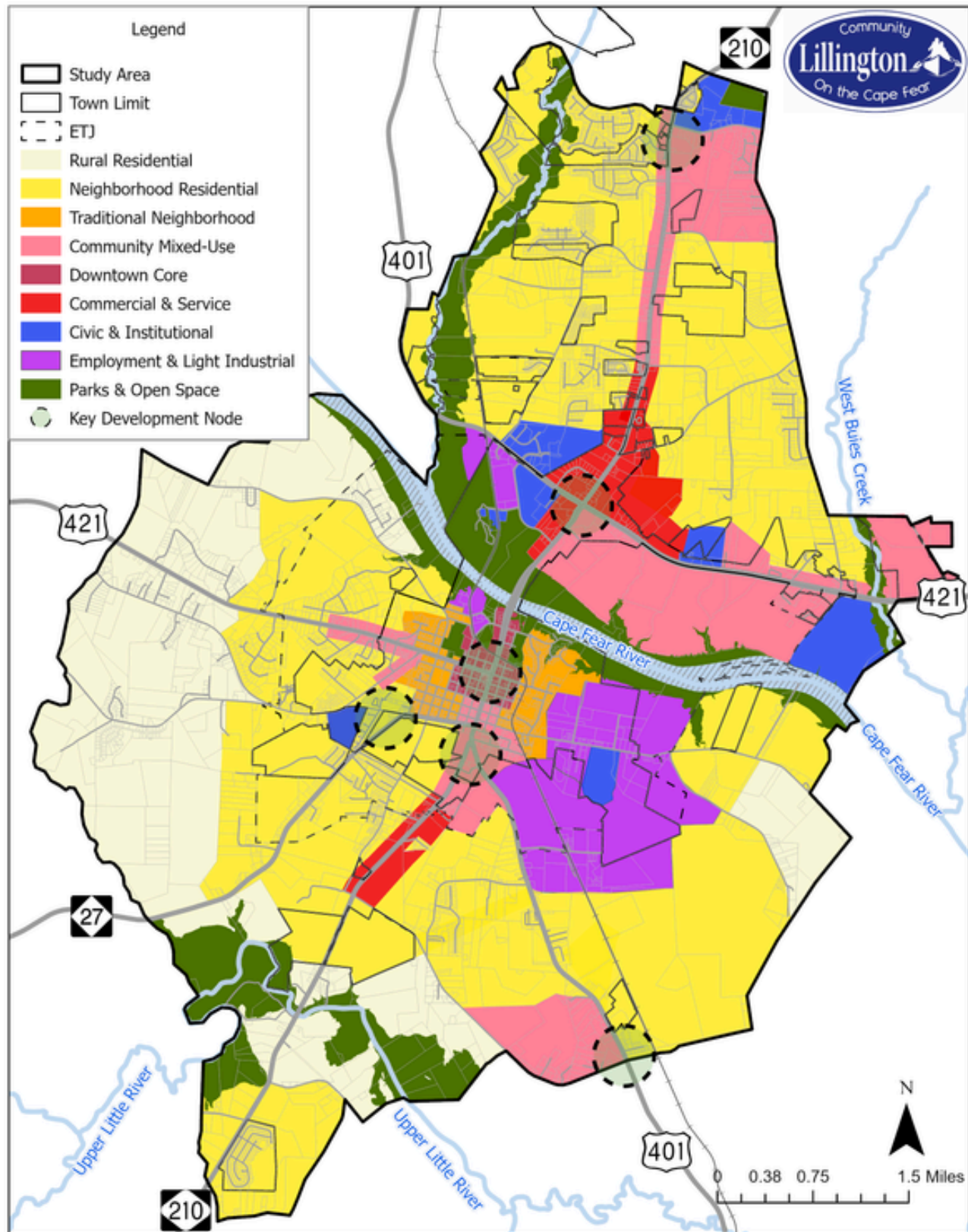
- A defined downtown core area that builds on current downtown revitalization efforts.
- Designated mixed-use types (Traditional Neighborhood, Downtown Core, and Community Mixed-Use) where a mix of land uses, including residential and commercial, is encouraged.
- Industrial and Employment areas where businesses and industry are encouraged.
- Commercial areas along major highways and thoroughfares.
- Areas for new residential development
- Sensitive areas where lower-density development should be integrated with the landscape to reduce impacts on natural resources.

Future Land Use Character Area Legend

Each color on the Future Land Use Map corresponds to a character area described below. The character areas are descriptive, not prescriptive, and indicate a predominant land use or set of uses, intensity, and shared design details. The descriptions do not propose a change to existing development, but a direction moving forward for new development and redevelopment.

 <i>Rural Residential</i>	 <i>Neighborhood Residential</i>	 <i>Traditional Neighborhood</i>
 <i>Community Mixed-Use</i>	 <i>Downtown Core</i>	 <i>Commercial & Service</i>
 <i>Civic & Institutional</i>	 <i>Employment & Light Industrial</i>	 <i>Parks & Open Space</i>

Future Land Use Map



CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Rural Residential

Character Area Description & Intent

The Rural Residential character area includes open space, large-lot residential uses, and master-planned conservation subdivisions designed to maintain the area's rural character and protect sensitive environmental features. These neighborhoods are thoughtfully integrated into the landscape using context-sensitive rural design principles that conserve natural areas, such as wetlands, stream corridors, and contiguous forest lands.

Conservation subdivisions are encouraged in this area to cluster homes on smaller lots while preserving significant portions of land as permanent open space. This approach supports environmental stewardship, rural aesthetics, and long-term sustainability. New development should reinforce a low-density, open character and avoid fragmentation of farmland or wildlife corridors.

These areas are primarily located outside of existing sewer service areas and likely rely on private septic systems for wastewater treatment. The transportation network is limited, consisting primarily of NCDOT-maintained secondary roads with minimal local street connectivity.

While internal pedestrian networks are encouraged within master-planned developments, pedestrian and multimodal infrastructure is generally limited beyond subdivision boundaries. Planned growth in this area should respect the natural landscape, promote rural visual continuity, and avoid sprawling, uncoordinated development patterns. Infrastructure extensions should be carefully evaluated to ensure alignment with conservation goals and cost-effective service delivery.



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Residential, Parks, and Agriculture-related uses
Residential Density	1 dwelling unit/acre (large lot) 1-3 dwelling units/acre (conservation subdivision)
Non-Residential Density	Occasional grandfathered service business
Building Height	1-2 stories
Open Space Elements	Gateway corridors, greenways, stream corridors, regional parks, and agriculture
Street Pattern	Modified grid
Typical Street Spacing	600 – 1,200 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Rural condition (rural locals, collectors, arterials)

Neighborhood Residential

Character Area Description & Intent

The Neighborhood Residential character area represents the suburban neighborhoods being developed in and around the Town of Lillington. These areas are primarily composed of single-family detached homes on a variety of lot sizes, including small-lot subdivisions and patio home communities. Compared to Traditional Neighborhood areas, the overall density is lower and the development pattern is more auto-oriented, yet still focused on providing a cohesive and well-connected neighborhood structure.

Neighborhood Residential areas are served by public water and sewer, and typically feature curbed streets, sidewalks, and internal open spaces. These amenities are designed to support community interaction and active living while maintaining a suburban scale. Townhomes or other attached housing types may be appropriate when thoughtfully integrated into the development—particularly when they are clustered around a central green space, amenity area, or neighborhood entryway, and when meaningful open space is preserved elsewhere in the site design.

While the area is intended to remain primarily residential, small-scale commercial or service uses (such as a neighborhood café, daycare, or corner store) may be appropriate within larger, master-planned developments where such uses serve nearby residents and are designed to blend with the surrounding neighborhood character. New development in this character area should emphasize connectivity, walkability within subdivisions, architectural variety, and context-sensitive transitions to adjacent land uses. Integration with greenways, trails, and nearby parks is strongly encouraged.



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Primary residential
Residential Density	3-5 dwelling units/acre (single-family)
Non-Residential Density	Limited small-scale commercial if part of a planned development
Building Height	2-3 stories
Open Space Elements	Neighborhood playgrounds, pocket parks, stream corridors, greenways, sidewalk connectivity
Street Pattern	Modified grid and curvilinear to meet topography.
Typical Street Spacing	300-900 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Suburban and urban conditions (neighborhood, suburban streets, some alleys.

Traditional Residential

Character Area Description & Intent

The Traditional Neighborhood character area reflects the walkable, human-scaled residential fabric found near Downtown Lillington and is encouraged around future planned Mixed-Use Nodes. These neighborhoods are characterized by a connected street grid, pedestrian-oriented design, and a mix of housing types that support both long-term residents and newcomers. While the area is primarily made up of single-family homes and duplexes, higher-density housing options—including townhomes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and small-scale apartment buildings—are appropriate, particularly when located near commercial corridors or civic spaces and served by pedestrian infrastructure.

Development in the Traditional Neighborhood area should prioritize context-sensitive infill, allowing for the adaptive reuse of existing structures and compatible new construction that reflects the scale, setbacks, and architectural character of the surrounding neighborhood. The intent is to support housing diversity and neighborhood revitalization without compromising the area's historic identity and walkability.

Key design features should include:

- Front porches, narrow lot widths, and short front setbacks
- Tree-lined sidewalks and alleys for rear access
- Connections to parks, schools, and nearby commercial centers

The Traditional Neighborhood designation encourages reinvestment in older neighborhoods, supports gentle density increases, and ensures that redevelopment aligns with the Town's goals for inclusivity, mobility, and preservation of community character.



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Mixture of residential dwelling types, infill development
Residential Density	4-8 dwelling units/acre (single-family); 8-14 dwelling units/acre (townhomes)
Non-Residential Density	0.5 - 1.00 floor area ratio (FAR)
Building Height	1-3 stories
Open Space Elements	Neighborhood playgrounds, pocket parks, stream corridors, greenways, sidewalk connectivity
Street Pattern	Traditional grid
Typical Street Spacing	300-600 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Urban conditions (compact/pedestrian-friendly streets with alleys).

Community Mixed-Use

Character Area Description & Intent

The Community Mixed-Use character area is composed of master-planned developments that thoughtfully integrate a variety of residential housing types with complementary commercial and service uses. These areas are designed to promote a walkable, neighborhood-scale environment where residents can live, work, and shop within a cohesive, well-connected community. Residential uses typically include townhomes, duplexes, small-lot single-family homes, and low-scale multifamily buildings. Commercial uses may be concentrated in a central node or strategically embedded throughout the development as corner stores, offices, or small service providers that serve daily neighborhood needs.

Key features of this character area include:

- **Connectivity:** All components of the development should be linked by a comprehensive road network and a safe, continuous pedestrian system of sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails.
- **Design Intent:** Neighborhood design should foster a sense of place with community green spaces, civic gathering spots, and attention to the relationship between buildings and public streets.
- **Location Criteria:** These areas are typically located at or near major thoroughfares and key intersections, providing visibility and accessibility while reducing development pressure on rural or environmentally sensitive areas.

Community Mixed-Use is intended to support compact, complete neighborhoods that meet local housing demand, reduce reliance on vehicle trips, and create opportunities for economic growth in a format that reinforces Lillington's small-town character.



Development Considerations:

Development Pattern	Mixture of uses
Residential Density	4-18 dwelling units/acre
Non-Residential Density	0.5 - 1.5 floor area ratio (FAR)
Building Height	1-5 stories
Open Space Elements	Centralized amenities, greens, plazas, wider sidewalks, greenways, stream corridors.
Street Pattern	Traditional grid
Typical Street Spacing	200-500 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Urban conditions (neighborhood streets, collectors, arterials).

Downtown Core

Character Area Description & Intent

The Downtown Core is the traditional heart of Lillington, designed to foster vibrancy, small business opportunities, and a strong sense of community identity and culture. This area features a rich mix of historic buildings that house commercial, office, government, and civic uses, as well as upper-story residential units and office spaces that contribute to a 24/7 activity level. New mixed-use development is both appropriate and encouraged, particularly along the downtown edges, provided that setbacks, building height, and architectural massing respect and reflect the character of the existing historic fabric. Design standards should emphasize pedestrian orientation and complement the visual identity of the district.

Key priorities for the Downtown Core include:

- **Community Gathering Places:** Create and enhance plazas, pocket parks, and flexible event spaces for cultural programming and public events.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Design:** Expand and maintain wide sidewalks, install pedestrian-scale lighting, and improve landscaping to enhance the walkable experience.
- **Traffic Safety & Accessibility:** Incorporate safe pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures, and ADA improvements to ensure equitable and safe mobility.
- **Support for Small Businesses:** Encourage entrepreneurship and local retail by promoting storefront activation, façade enhancements, and business-friendly policies.

This area encompasses the traditional central business district and adjacent blocks, including E. Harnett Street, E. Front St., S. Main St., and S. 8th St., which form the core of Lillington's historic and economic identity.



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Mixture of uses
Residential Density	6-18 dwelling units/acre
Non-Residential Density	N/A
Building Height	1-4 stories
Open Space Elements	Public gathering areas (formal & non-formal), pocket parks, wider sidewalks, greenways.
Street Pattern	Traditional grid
Typical Street Spacing	200-500 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Urban conditions (downtown streets, on-street parking, landscaping, decorative street lighting).

Commercial & Service

Character Area Description & Intent

The Commercial & Service character area is designed to accommodate large-scale, automobile-oriented commercial uses that serve both the local community and a broader regional market. Typical uses in these areas include grocery stores, shopping centers, restaurants, gas stations, lodging, and other highway-oriented services.

These commercial nodes are strategically located along high-traffic corridors such as U.S. 401, U.S. 421, and S. Main Street, where high visibility, accessibility, and vehicle capacity support sustained commercial activity.

To improve aesthetics and mitigate impacts associated with larger format development, the Town encourages:

- Generous landscaping and buffering along road frontages and around parking lots to soften visual impacts, reduce heat islands, and provide stormwater benefits.
- Unified signage and cohesive building design to enhance corridor identity and avoid visual clutter.
- Pedestrian connections within larger sites to improve walkability between buildings and outparcel developments.

Future development in this area should balance economic opportunity with thoughtful site planning and corridor design, ensuring that key gateways into Lillington reflect the Town's commitment to quality, functionality, and long-term sustainability.



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Primarily commercial, retail, offices & services.
Residential Density	N/A
Non-Residential Density	N/A
Building Height	1-3 stories
Open Space Elements	Buffers, stream corridors, sidewalks, greenways.
Street Pattern	Modified grid
Typical Street Spacing	600-1,200 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Urban conditions (internal sidewalks, collectors, and arterial streets).

Civic & Institutional

Character Area Description & Intent

The Civic & Institutional character area encompasses a variety of public and semi-public uses that serve critical governmental, educational, and health-related functions. This includes local government buildings, county and state facilities, public schools, higher education campuses, medical centers, and professional offices such as legal, financial, and medical service providers. These areas often take the form of campus-style developments that accommodate multiple buildings, parking areas, internal circulation systems, and public access points. Notable examples in Lillington include the Harnett County Government Complex and the Harnett Health campus.

Key design considerations for Civic & Institutional areas include:

- Prominent, well-landscaped entryways with clear monument or directional signage.
- Pedestrian-friendly internal circulation, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and safe access between buildings and parking areas.
- Cohesive architecture and site design that reflects civic pride and contributes positively to the surrounding community character.
- Stormwater management features such as bioretention areas, permeable pavement, and tree canopy coverage to enhance sustainability.

These areas often act as employment centers and community anchors, drawing residents, workers, and visitors throughout the week. As such, they should be thoughtfully integrated into the broader transportation and pedestrian network, and designed to accommodate future expansion, public access, and public safety.



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Institutional, government, office
Residential Density	N/A
Non-Residential Density	N/A
Building Height	1-4 stories
Open Space Elements	Central green, plaza, wider sidewalks, greenway, stream corridors.
Street Pattern	Modified grid
Typical Street Spacing	600-1,200 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Urban conditions (internal sidewalks, collectors, and arterial streets).

Employment & Light Industrial

Character Area Description & Intent

The Employment & Light Industrial character area is intended to support job-generating uses such as light manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, telecommunications infrastructure, recycling operations, and other similar employment-based activities. These areas are essential to Lillington's economic base—offering opportunities for local employment, business expansion, and long-term tax revenue growth. These uses are typically located near major transportation corridors such as highways or rail lines, and are dependent on the availability of planned or existing public utilities, including water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Development in this area requires careful planning to mitigate impacts on nearby residential or commercial areas. As such, sites should:

- Consist of large parcels that accommodate appropriate setbacks, loading areas, and buffering.
- Incorporate landscaping, fencing, and screening to minimize visual and noise impacts.
- Provide internal circulation systems that can safely handle employee vehicles, delivery trucks, and service access.
- Be located in areas that minimize conflicts with pedestrian activity or non-industrial land uses.

Design and layout should prioritize functionality, safety, and site efficiency, while also considering aesthetics and environmental impact. Where feasible, green infrastructure strategies and sustainable site design should be incorporated into stormwater management and energy use. This character area plays a key role in supporting the regional economy, attracting investment, and creating demand for nearby services.



Development Considerations:

Development Pattern	Industrial, manufacturing, operation centers
Residential Density	N/A
Non-Residential Density	N/A
Building Height	1-4 stories
Open Space Elements	Buffers, stream corridors
Street Pattern	Modified grid
Typical Street Spacing	600-1,600 ft.
Typical Street Cross Section	Collectors and arterial streets with interconnections.

Parks & Open Space

Character Area Description & Intent

The Parks and Open Space character area includes land designated for active and passive recreation, natural resource conservation, and floodplain protection. These areas serve as essential components of Lillington's community identity, environmental health, and quality of life. This district encompasses a variety of open space types, including:

- Town and county parks
- Public greenways and trails
- Natural preserves and wildlife corridors
- Floodplains and riparian buffers along the Cape Fear River and other waterways

These areas provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental education, and tourism, while also serving important ecological functions such as stormwater filtration, habitat protection, and flood mitigation. Supportive structures and uses, such as picnic shelters, public restrooms, trailheads, boat launches, rental kiosks, and outdoor dining facilities, are appropriate where compatible with the natural character and provided they comply with the Town's Flood Damage Prevention and other environmental regulations. Key planning priorities include:

- Enhancing access to the Cape Fear River and regional trail systems
- Preserving environmentally sensitive lands
- Integrating green infrastructure into new development
- Expanding recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities



Development Considerations:	
Development Pattern	Natural areas, floodplains, parks, greenways
Residential Density	N/A
Non-Residential Density	Limited recreational support facilities.
Building Height	N/A
Open Space Elements	Regional & neighborhood parks, greenways, open spaces, flood protection, stream corridors.
Street Pattern	N/A
Typical Street Spacing	N/A
Typical Street Cross Section	Rural conditions

POLICIES & ACTION PLAN

