

**BRIAR CREEK/WOODLAND AND
MERRY OAKS
SMALL AREA PLAN**

Volume 1: Concept Plan

Prepared By
The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission

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This Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks Small Area Plan is a framework developed with area stakeholders to help guide future public and private decision-making toward long-term, agreed upon objectives. This plan provides a vision of what this area could look like in the near future (5-10 years) and contains objectives for achieving that vision.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The boundaries for the *Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks Small Area Plan*, as shown on **Map 1**, include Briar Creek on the west, the Charlotte Country Club and The Park Apartments on the north, Eastway Drive on the east and East Independence Boulevard on the south.

This plan was undertaken in response to a request from the Merry Oaks and Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhoods. It refines the 1993 *Central District Plan* and provides further direction for guiding development within the study area.

The study group consisted of neighborhood representatives, business representatives and apartment management representatives along with City/County staff members. The study group met a total of ten times between February and November, 1997 to set a vision for the future of the study area; to identify, discuss and analyze the important issues; and to formulate objectives and recommendations to address neighborhood concerns. A public meeting was held on December 11, 1997 to present the draft plan and to gather input from neighborhood residents and property owners.

ISSUES

Key issues identified during the plan development process are summarized below into seven categories.

1. *Land Use* – need to limit the amount of future multi-family development and zoning; and, need to identify appropriate future land uses of vacant and underdeveloped land.
2. *Economic Development* - need for development of neighborhood-oriented businesses.
3. *Transportation* – need to address traffic congestion, speeding, cut-through traffic, transit service, and lack of sidewalks and crosswalks.
4. *Parks and Recreation* - lack of open space and active recreational facilities.
5. *Community Safety* - perception of area as a high crime area.
6. *Schools* - quality of area schools and lack of services necessary to address needs of area school children.
7. *Human Services* - diverse population in need of specialized services.

VISION

Reaching consensus on a vision statement early in the planning process helped to guide the development of this small area plan. The vision for the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks neighborhoods is to develop and maintain an area known throughout the region as the center of the international community in Charlotte, characterized by its:

- Diverse cultural mix of people living and working in a safe environment.
- Thriving pedestrian-oriented, international business district along an attractive, prospering Central Avenue.
- Wide variety of stable single family and multi-family housing opportunities.
- Recreational and cultural facilities.
- Good pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This small area plan takes a comprehensive look at the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks neighborhoods and recommends strategies to address a wide range of issues identified during the planning process. Summarized below are the key recommendations that need to be carried out to ensure the future stability and vitality of the study area neighborhoods.

Land Use

- Stabilize and enhance the existing neighborhoods.
- Limit the expansion of apartments.
- Resolve existing land use and zoning conflicts through proposed rezonings.

Economic Development

- Improve the appearance of Central Avenue.
- Stimulate neighborhood oriented business development.

Transportation

- Improve safety and mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motorists.
- Create a vision for Eastway Drive as a tree-lined boulevard with a median and linear park on the eastern side of the corridor.

Parks and Recreation

- Provide more parks, greenways and recreational facilities.
- Preserve existing open space.

Community Safety

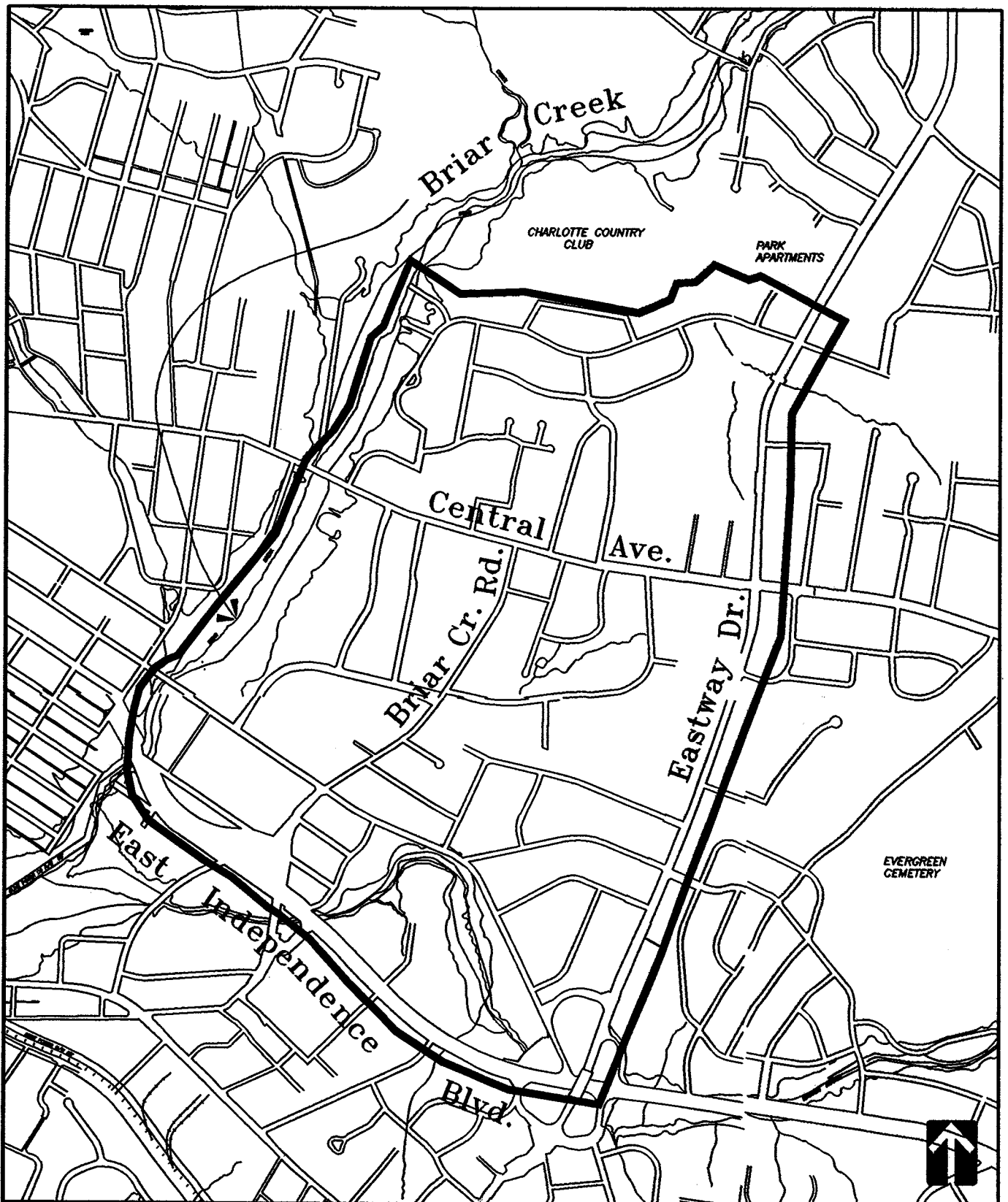
- Establish a greater police presence in key locations and assign more multi-lingual officers in this area.
- Encourage better cooperation between the police, landlords and property managers in sharing police arrest records.

Schools

- Limit the expansion of apartments in the study area so as not to add to the school-overcrowding problem and increase the already high student turnover rate.
- Provide preschool and after school educational and enrichment programs.
- Work with Central Piedmont Community College to provide classes in the study area.
- Work with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System to address concerns relating to Merry Oaks Elementary School, Eastway Middle School and Garinger High School.

Human Services

- Identify human service needs and link residents to programs/services that address these needs.
- Target youth in the study area for summer job programs.
- Establish and expand social, cultural and recreational programs for the youth and the elderly.



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MERRY OAKS
BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND

MAP 1: STUDY AREA FOR
BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND & MERRY OAKS

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This plan refines the *Central District Plan*, which was adopted in 1993, by providing further direction for guiding development in the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks area. It also provides recommendations for addressing human service and other needs identified in these neighborhoods. This plan was initiated in response to concerns relating to future land use and the large number of multi-family units in the area. This plan will not only provide guidance to the governing bodies in future decision making, but will also help set priorities for these neighborhoods and for City and County departments.

LAND USE AND ZONING

The Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks Study Area (Map 1) includes the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks neighborhoods. The Merry Oaks neighborhood is located in Charlotte's Central District just inside Route 4 (Eastway Drive). The boundaries as defined for this small area plan are Briar Creek on the west, the Charlotte Country Club and The Park Apartments on the north, Eastway Drive on the east and Central Avenue on the south (Map 1).

The Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood is adjacent to Merry Oaks. The boundaries as defined for this small area plan are Briar Creek on the west, Central Avenue on the north, Eastway Drive on the east and East Independence Boulevard on the south (Map 1).

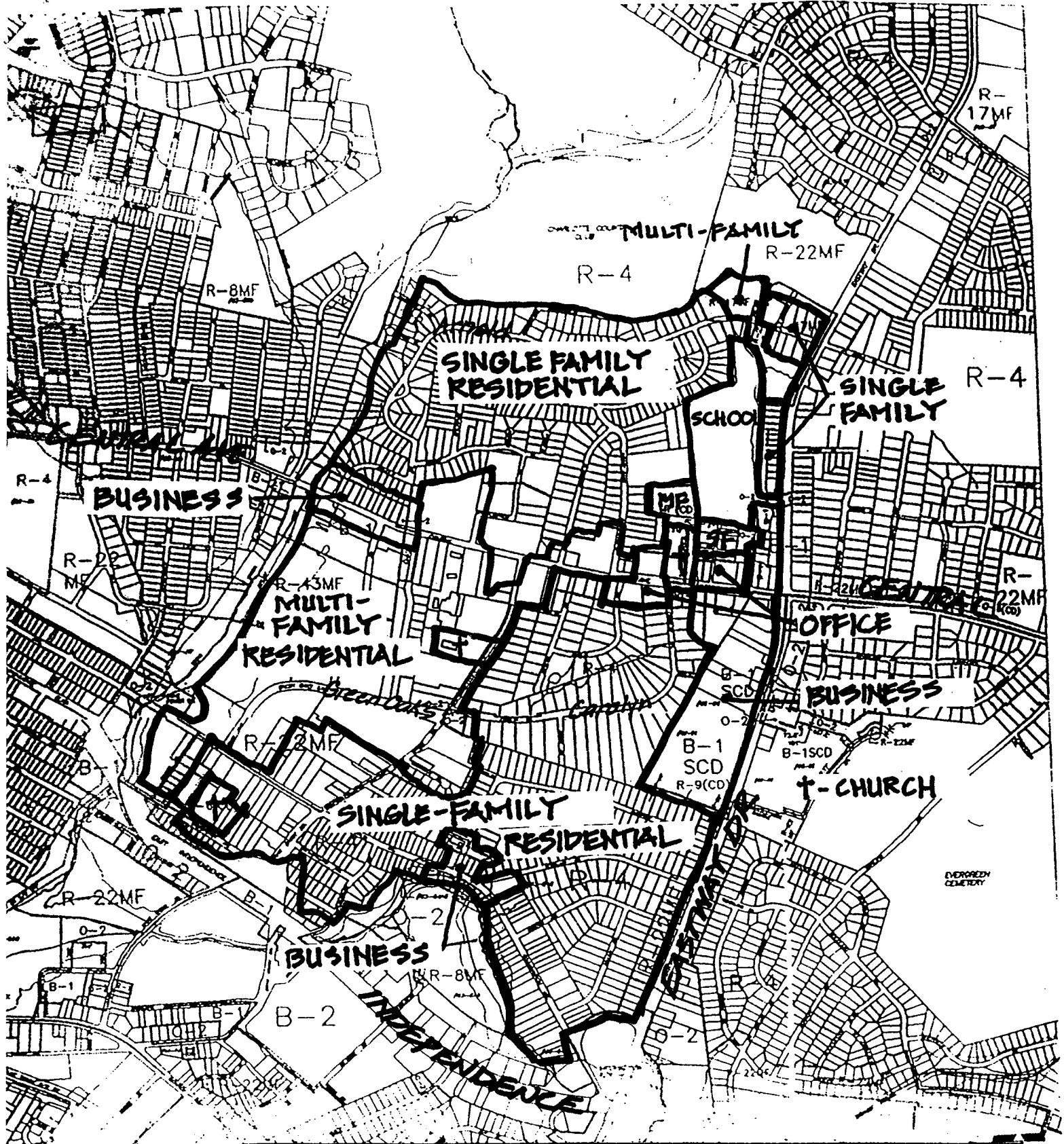
These neighborhoods were built during the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's and contain mostly single family detached homes, with a heavy concentration of multi-family units in a few locations (Map 2). Most of the multi-family areas are high-density apartments that were built during the 1960's in the vicinity of Eastcrest Drive and Green Oaks Lane. Table 1 lists the number of housing units by type for each neighborhood and the study area as a whole.

TABLE 1

Housing Units by Type

Source: 1998 Real Property Tax Information

Housing Type	Merry Oaks		Briar Creek/Woodland		Study Area	
	(# units)	%	(# units)	%	(# units)	%
Single Family	367	46.9	448	22.5	815	29.3
Duplex	16	2.1	24	1.2	40	1.5
Condominium	54	6.9	136	6.8	190	6.8
Apartment	<u>345</u>	44.1	<u>1,388</u>	69.5	<u>1,733</u>	62.4
Total Housing Units	782		1,996		2,778	



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MAP 2: GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE
BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND & MERRY OAKS

As shown in Table 1, approximately 1,900 multi-family units and 815 single-family units are currently contained within the study area. Nearly 78% of the housing units in the Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood are multi-family. Overall, more than 70% of the housing units in the study area are multi-family. **Table 2** provides information on the rental housing in the study area. As shown, nearly 74% of the housing units in the study area are rentals. Most of these are apartments.

TABLE 2

Rental Housing Units by Type

Source: 1998 Real Property Tax Information

Type of Unit	Merry Oaks (# rental units)	Briar Creek/Woodland (# rental units)	Study Area Total Rental
Single Family	63	96	159
Duplex	15	24	39
Condominium	26	96	122
Apartment	<u>345</u>	<u>1,388</u>	<u>1,733</u>
Total Rental Housing Units	449	1,604	2,053
Rental Units as a Percentage of Total Housing Units	57.4%	80.4%	73.9%

As illustrated on Map 2 and listed in **Table 3**, the study area also contains approximately 66 acres of business/commercial uses in three concentrations:

- Along East Independence Boulevard in the vicinity of Briar Creek
- Central Avenue and Eastcrest Drive
- Along Eastway Drive (north and south of Central Avenue)

In addition, the study area contains approximately 310 acres of single family homes, 150 acres of multi-family uses, and approximately 20 acres of office uses. Three churches, four daycare centers and one public school (Merry Oaks Elementary School) account for nearly 30 acres of institutional uses. Vacant land accounts for about 51 acres.

Existing zoning is illustrated on **Map 3**. In comparing the existing zoning to current land use, several inconsistencies become apparent. In the Merry Oaks neighborhood, for example, several existing single family homes are located on land zoned for multi-family development at 17 units per acre (R-17MF). Discrepancies between the current land use and zoning and/or the existing density of development and the present zoning are also found in the Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood. In most cases, the land is zoned for more intensive development than currently exists. Correcting the zoning to be consistent with the existing use could help preserve the delicate balance of land uses within these neighborhoods.

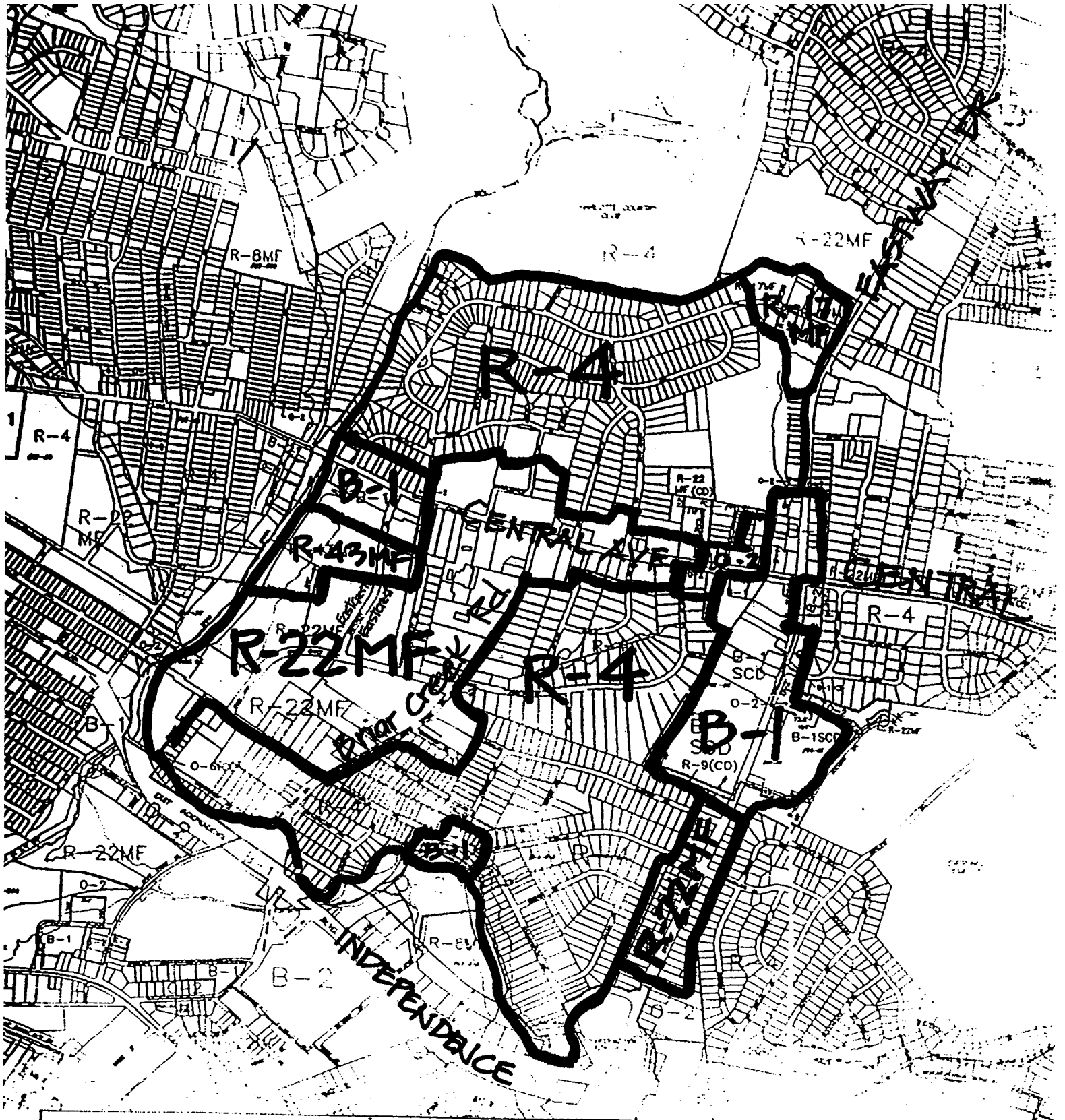
TABLE 3**Land Use by Acreage***Source: 1998 Real Property Tax Information*

Existing Land Use	Merry Oaks		Briar Creek/ Woodland		Study Area	
	<u>(acres)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(acres)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(acres)</u>	<u>%</u>
Single Family	113.88	56.3	196.38	46.3	310.27	49.6
Multi-Family	24.99	12.4	116.06	27.4	141.06	22.5
Town House/Condos	3.13	1.6	5.04	1.2	8.17	1.3
Office	2.69	1.3	17.06	4.0	19.75	3.2
Commercial	8.04	4.0	57.76	13.6	65.81	10.5
Institutional	25.98	12.8	3.61	1.0	29.57	4.7
Vacant	<u>23.48</u>	11.6	<u>27.85</u>	6.5	<u>51.33</u>	8.2
Total	202.19		423.76		625.96	

TRANSPORTATION

Two major thoroughfares, Central Avenue and Eastway Drive, along with a minor thoroughfare, Briar Creek Road, traverse the study area. These roads carry a considerable amount of vehicular traffic and are also high pedestrian traffic areas. In 1996, the annual average weekday traffic volume on Central Avenue was 38,000 vehicles per day. Approximately 33,000 vehicles per day traveled on Eastway Drive.

Between January 1994 and June 1997, 102 traffic accidents occurred at the Central Avenue and Eastcrest Drive intersection. Included in this figure are five accidents involving pedestrians.



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MAP 3: GENERALIZED ZONING

BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND & MERRY OAKS

SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

During the last twenty years, this area of Charlotte has experienced significant changes. *A Profile of Southeast Asian and Hispanic Communities and Neighborhoods of Charlotte-Mecklenburg* (Pierce, June 1996), provides insight into the dynamics of this area. The report indicated that by the 1970's, the Central Avenue corridor was declining. When crack cocaine was introduced to the City, the number of violent crimes in this area increased significantly. The increase in armed robberies forced a number of smaller businesses and many middle-class families to flee the area.

During the 1980's, the Central Avenue corridor area continued to lose population. The crime rate was more than three times that of the City as a whole, there was a significant increase in single-parent families (much greater increase than in the general population) and, there was a significant decline in the number of owner-occupied homes. This corridor became the City's most ethnically mixed area and tensions between different racial groups increased as jobs and housing opportunities declined (Pierce, June 1996).

By 1990, the area had become a magnet for working poor immigrants and refugees (Pierce, June 1996). The introduction of community policing and the rapid growth of small ethnic businesses in the early 1990's helped begin a "turn around" for the corridor. In 1993, a consortium of Vietnamese business interests developed a small shopping center called Saigon Square, starting a commercial revival of the area that continues today with several small businesses located in the area.

Currently, most of the single-family houses are occupied by white, middle income residents. The apartments are occupied, primarily, by African-Americans, Africans, Latinos and Southeast Asians, reflecting Charlotte's growing ethnic diversity. The Williamsburg Townhomes, located on Green Oaks Lane, is one of the apartment complexes that provides housing for newly arrived refugees through the Charlotte-based Refugee Office of Catholic Social Services. Most of the refugees leave Williamsburg within two years, but many remain in the general area.

The 1990 U.S. Census provides a snapshot of the socioeconomic make-up of the study area neighborhoods as shown in **Table 4**. As alluded to above, however, many changes have taken place in this area since 1990 that are not reflected in the Census data.

TABLE 4
Socioeconomic Profile

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

	<u>Merry Oaks</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Briar Creek/ Woodland</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>City of Charlotte %</u>
Population							
Total Population	1,142		3,955		5,097		--
Black Population	80	7	1,461	37	1,541	30	32
Children Under 18	155	14	914	23	1,069	21	24
Elderly, 65 & over	147	13	362	9	509	10	10
Households							
Total Households	563		1,800		2,363		
One-Person Head	197	35	600	33	797	34	28
Married with Children	66	12	285	16	351	15	47
Female Head w. Children	30	5	206	11	236	10	9
Education							
Adults, 25 & over	810		2,325		3,135		
High School Grads	649	80	1,822	78	2,471	79	81
College Grads	176	22	430	18	606	19	28
Occupations							
Adults in Labor Force	736	75	2,001	68	2,737	70	73
White-Collar Jobs	420	57	1,014	51	1,434	52	65
Blue-Collar Jobs	310	42	884	44	1,194	44	35
Unemployed	6	1	103	5	109	4	4
Income							
Total Households	563		1,813		2,376		
\$0-\$14,999	103	18	584	32	687	29	20
\$15,000-\$24,999	190	34	556	31	746	31	18
\$25,000-\$34,999	110	20	335	18	445	19	17
\$35,000 or more	160	28	338	19	498	21	45
Families Below Poverty	0	0	114	13	114	5	8
HH on Public Assistance	24	4	69	4	93	4	11
Female HH Below Poverty	0	0	56	3	56	2	27

NOTE: The Merry Oaks Neighborhood corresponds to Census Tract 12, Block Group 2 and the Briar Creek/Woodland Neighborhood corresponds to Census Tract 17.98, Block Groups 3 and 4 and Census Tract 18.98, Block Group 5.

Note that Census Tract 12, Blocks 111 and 112 (located within the Merry Oaks Neighborhood) are not included in the above table, since socioeconomic data for individual blocks is not published by the Bureau of the Census for reasons of privacy.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Generally, the study area is a safe place to live. As indicated by the crime statistics provided in **Table 5**, some areas have a higher concentration of crime. Crime incidents reported by street for the Merry Oaks neighborhood show Central Avenue, Eastway Drive and Arnold Drive as having higher incidents of criminal activity. In the Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood, Eastway Drive, Eastcrest Drive, Central Avenue and Green Oaks Lane experience higher crime rates. However, statistics show a decrease in number of crimes reported in nearly all of these areas between 1995 and 1997.

Non-aggravated assaults, vandalism, theft from automobiles and shoplifting account for the highest incidence of crime in the study area.

TABLE 5
Crime Statistics

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, 1998

Offense	Frequency of Incidence in Merry Oaks						Frequency of Incidence in Briar Creek/Woodland					
	<u>1995</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Aggravated Assault	73	22.7	60	23.5	40	18.0	173	16.4	158	15.6	172	15.8
Theft from Auto	30	9.3	53	20.8	24	10.8	110	10.4	119	11.7	140	12.8
Vandalism	40	12.4	30	11.8	25	11.3	123	11.6	100	9.8	103	9.4
Shoplifting							105	9.9	111	10.9	121	11.1
Total Offenses	322		255		222		1,056		1,016		1,090	

Name of Street	Incidence of Crime by Street in Merry Oaks						Incidence of Crime by Street in Briar Creek/Woodland					
	<u>1995</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>%</u>
Eastway Drive	94	29.2	52	20.4	52	23.4	305	28.9	296	29.1	288	26.4
Central Avenue	97	30.1	92	36.1	90	40.5	144	13.6	126	12.4	139	12.8
Arnold Drive	70	21.7	66	25.9	40	18.0						
Eastcrest Drive							186	17.6	176	17.3	186	17.1
Green Oaks Lane							115	10.9	107	10.5	107	9.8
Total Incidence Of Crime	322		255		222		1,056		1,016		1,090	

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

The Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks neighborhoods have many positive attributes and strengths that provide excellent opportunities to build on and enhance the character and vitality of the entire study area. Some of the key opportunities identified in the study process are listed below:

- Ethnic diversity produces a more interesting neighborhood.
- Potential for organized sports teams as an outreach to children.
- Proximity to Uptown.
- Affordable housing stock.
- Potential land for parks and greenways and nature preserve along Briar Creek.
- Area is building cohesiveness and a real sense of community.
- Churches are involved in the community.
- Shopping/restaurants in the area.
- Many trees in the area - aesthetically pleasing.
- Quiet neighborhoods.
- Proximity to fire and police stations.
- Public school (Merry Oaks Elementary) in the study area.

The Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood and the Merry Oaks neighborhood (a part of the Country Club neighborhood at the time) were described as stable neighborhoods in the *City Within A City Neighborhood Assessment* (Planning Commission, 1993). The assessment report classified neighborhoods based on their overall health and stability. Although this Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks study area is considered to be stable, issues exist that must be addressed to ensure the area does not become threatened. Addressing concerns in the following seven areas will be critical to ensuring the long-term stability of the study area neighborhoods.

1. Land Use

The number of apartment units located within the study area is a great concern. The apartments tend to be associated with crime and foster a negative image in the area. They also have a negative impact on the neighborhood schools (Merry Oaks Elementary School, Eastway Middle School and Garinger High School) in terms of transient students. In addition to the concern about the large number of apartments, the need to identify appropriate future land uses for vacant parcels and underdeveloped parcels within the study area is also an issue.

2. Economic Development

The appearance and image of Central Avenue (especially from Briar Creek to Briar Creek Road) and Eastway Drive need to be improved. Many people travel Central Avenue everyday (approximately 38,000 vehicles per day). A more favorable impression of the area could be generated by publicizing and marketing the international shops and restaurants, by improving the appearance of some existing stores, and by developing more neighborhood-oriented businesses.

3. Transportation

Speeding, cut through traffic, motorists running stop signs and the lack of traffic signals, bicycle

lanes (along Commonwealth Avenue), transit service, sidewalks and crosswalks are concerns. For the second year in a row, the Central Avenue and Eastcrest Drive intersection ranked number one on the *High Accident Location List* in 1997 (CDOT, CMPD). Traffic volume, total pedestrian accidents, total vehicular accidents and severity of the accidents contribute to the high accident location ranking.

4. Parks and Recreation

Public parks and recreational facilities are lacking both in the study area and in the residential areas along Central Avenue from Briar Creek to Albemarle Road. This area has inadequate park coverage (based upon acreage per population and service area) due to the lack of available vacant land in the area. The multi-family area from Briar Creek to Briar Creek Road has a severe shortage of public parks and recreational facilities. In addition, there is no public greenway in the study area. The closest parks are Veterans on Central Avenue, Sheffield on Tarrington Avenue (south of Evergreen Cemetery) and Kilborne on Kilborne Drive. Veterans Park is approximately twenty acres and is located ½ mile west of Briar Creek. This is the most accessible park for the majority of residents in the study area.

5. Community Safety

Crime statistics indicate that crime is concentrated along the major corridors of Central Avenue, Eastway Drive, and Arnold Drive, and at the apartment complexes at Eastcrest Drive and Green Oaks Lane. Targeting these areas for increased police presence and working with the residents, especially youth in the apartment complexes, could help make these areas safer.

6. Schools

Some study area residents attend public school at Merry Oaks Elementary School, Eastway Middle School and Garinger High School. Although these schools are located within, or in close proximity to the study area, many residents do not send their children to these schools due to their concerns about safety and quality of education. Some elementary school children are bused out of the study area (primarily the Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood) to Crown Point Elementary School, several miles away. Since the study area is well integrated, efforts should be made to allow neighborhood children to attend the closest schools.

In addition to providing nearby educational resources, Merry Oaks Elementary School could become a significant community resource, providing space for neighborhood meetings, recreational activities, and other neighborhood events.

7. Human Services

A Profile of Southeast Asian and Hispanic Communities and Neighborhoods of Charlotte-Mecklenburg (Pierce, June 1996) stated that there are many different nationalities living within the study area. Due to language constraints and/or lack of familiarity with our social service system and health care system, some of these residents are not receiving the support that they need. A coordinated effort is required to determine the various social, medical and other needs of the residents living within the study area - especially those residing in the apartment complexes between Briar Creek and Briar Creek Road.

VISION AND CONCEPT PLAN

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks neighborhoods is develop and maintain an area known throughout the region as the center of the international community in Charlotte, characterized by its:

- Diverse cultural mix of people living and working in a safe environment.
- Thriving pedestrian-oriented, international business district along an attractive, prospering Central Avenue.
- Wide variety of stable single family and multi-family housing opportunities.
- Recreational and cultural facilities.
- Good pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

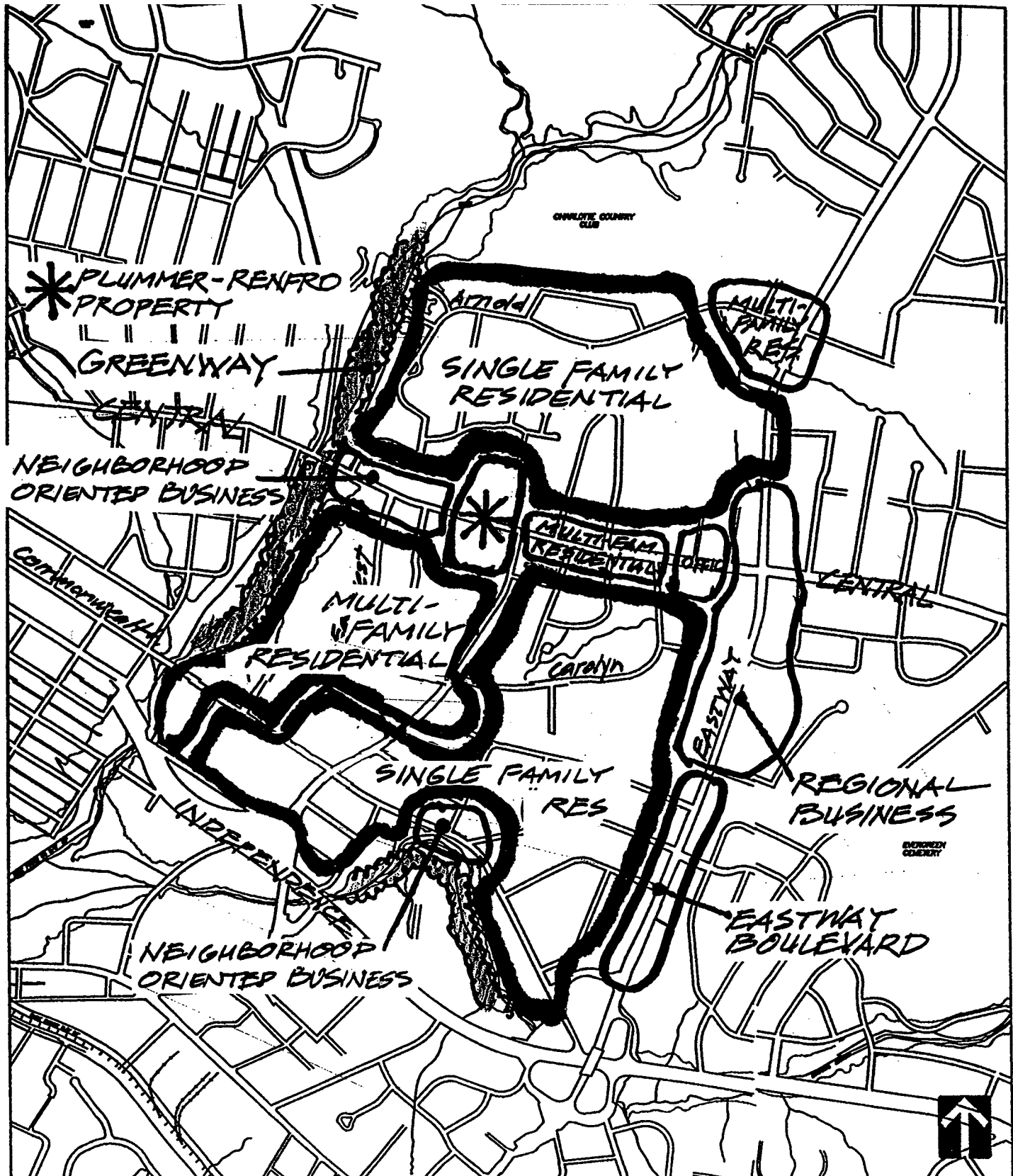
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The attached concept map (**Map 4**) illustrates the proposed major land uses and physical improvements for the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks study area. The primary focus of the concept plan is on maintaining the value and integrity of existing neighborhoods. To that end the plan concept seeks to stabilize the existing neighborhoods, while limiting the expansion of multi-family into areas where it does not currently exist.

The existing business district along Central Avenue at Eastcrest Drive is envisioned as becoming more neighborhood oriented with an emphasis on ethnically owned shops and restaurants that reflect the growing international population in the area. The small business district at Commonwealth and Woodland is envisioned as developing with more neighborhood oriented businesses as well, given its proximity in the center of the Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood.

A coordinated development of the Renfro and Plummer properties, located on opposite sides of Central Avenue at Briar Creek Road, will have a major impact on the future of this area. These tracts are envisioned to be redeveloped with an emphasis on high quality, neighborhood oriented mixed retail, office and residential development that preserves significant trees on both sites. East of Briar Creek Road to the vicinity of Carolyn Drive, the plan envisions a change over time from single family residences and duplexes to townhouse development.

Improving the appearance of Central Avenue is key to establishing a positive image for the study area and for providing an impetus for economic development. From Briar Creek to Briar Creek Road an emphasis on streetscape improvements including consistent tree plantings, widened sidewalks, and improved lighting will enhance this thoroughfare and provide a good environment for the development of neighborhood oriented businesses with strong pedestrian connections to adjacent apartments and other residential areas. As traffic increases along Eastway Drive, it is envisioned that the road would be widened and the adjacent area would redevelop. Further, it is envisioned that Eastway Drive would become a tree-lined boulevard with a planted median.



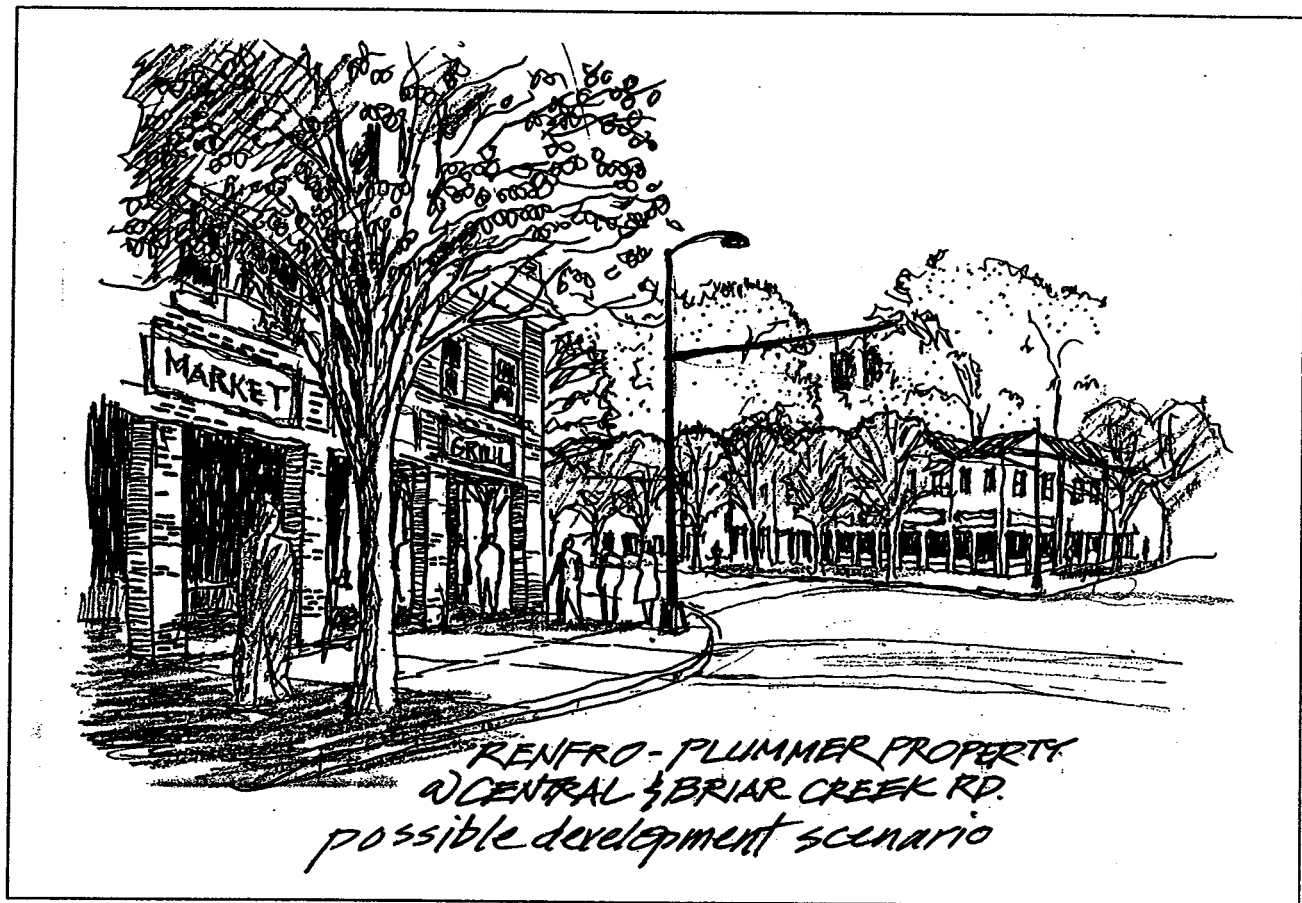
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February 1998

MAP 4: CONCEPT MAP

BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND & MERRY OAKS





The overall transportation concept seeks to improve accessibility within and external to the neighborhood for both pedestrians and vehicles. Additional sidewalks, bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, and increased transit service are envisioned as part of an overall transportation strategy. The plan also envisions the development of a greenway park along Briar Creek and Edwards Branch, with bicycle/pedestrian paths that could become part of a larger network outside of the study area, as well as the development of smaller, neighborhood oriented parks.

PLAN OBJECTIVES

The plan objectives, listed below, provide a more detailed understanding of the key development concepts proposed in this plan: stabilizing the neighborhoods, minimizing the opportunities for more multi-family residential development, adding streetscape improvements, providing an open space and park network, and encouraging pedestrian-oriented business development.

1. Land Use Objectives

- Stabilize and enhance the existing neighborhoods of Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks.
- Limit expansion of multi-family development, while strengthening existing multi-family.
- Resolve inconsistencies between existing land use and zoning.

2. Economic Development/Central Avenue Objectives

- Improve the appearance of the Central Avenue Corridor.
- Provide support for the development of neighborhood oriented, pedestrian scale businesses.

3. Transportation Objectives

- Improve the safety and mobility for all modes of travel - pedestrians, bicycles, transit and motorists.
- Create a vision for Eastway Drive as a tree-lined boulevard with a median and linear park on the eastern side of the corridor.

4. Parks And Recreation Objective

- Provide more parks, open space, greenways, and recreational facilities either in the study area or easily accessible by neighborhood residents.

5. Community Safety Objectives

- Provide an even greater police presence in the study area.
- Establish and maintain better communications with residents, landlords/property managers and business operators.

6. Schools Objectives

- Ensure that neighborhood children are provided access to excellent educational opportunities.
- Work with the school system to decrease the annual turnover rate and poverty rate at Merry Oaks Elementary, Eastway Middle, and Garinger High.

7. Human Services Objectives

- Determine the human service needs in the study area and identify ways to meet these needs.
- Give special emphasis to educational opportunities for the residents in the study area from preschool programs to programs offered by Central Piedmont Community College.

CONCLUSION

The Merry Oaks and Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhoods need special attention over the next several years. Although these neighborhoods contain good, affordable and well-maintained single family houses, condominiums and apartment complexes, the area has been in transition for many years. Along with the single-family residents (mostly white and many elderly) there are numerous ethnic groups living, primarily, in the apartment complexes.

This area has truly become Charlotte's largest international residential area. However, it has not become an international community, since there is very little real communication between the various ethnic groups and nationalities - possibly due to language barriers and the amount of cultural diversity.

The recommendations in this plan support the vision that this area of the City can become a very special, unique place where numerous nationalities can live, work and recreate. However, it will be necessary to improve the image of the area, ensure that future development is compatible with neighborhood objectives, and provide the necessary facilities, infrastructure and programs to create a truly functional international community.

Volume Two of this plan provides more detailed information on possible implementation strategies, such as proposed rezonings, capital investments and other strategies needed to achieve the objectives of this plan.

**BRIAR CREEK/WOODLAND AND
MERRY OAKS
SMALL AREA PLAN**

Volume 2: Implementation Program

Prepared By
The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission

November 1998

IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the steps needed to implement the concept outlined in the accompanying document, the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks Small Area Plan, Volume 1: Concept Plan. This implementation document will not be adopted by City Council, however, many of the actions identified will require future Council approval and will be brought before them for approval on a case by case basis.

REZONINGS

The *Central District Plan*, the adopted land use plan for this area, stresses the importance of developing higher density housing close to Uptown Charlotte to provide affordable housing, to ensure the necessary density for future transit lines, and to shorten home-to-work trips, thus reducing travel time and automobile congestion.

This plan encourages some new townhouse development and some new mixed-use development (which would include residential uses) along the Central Avenue Corridor. However, with approximately 1,900 existing multi-family units already located within the study area, this area may be unable to support any increase in density at this time, especially given the problems the area is currently experiencing with rental properties. Therefore, the following rezonings (**Maps 5a and 5b**) are proposed to make the zoning more consistent with the existing land use and to help achieve the land use vision as proposed in the plan:

Merry Oaks

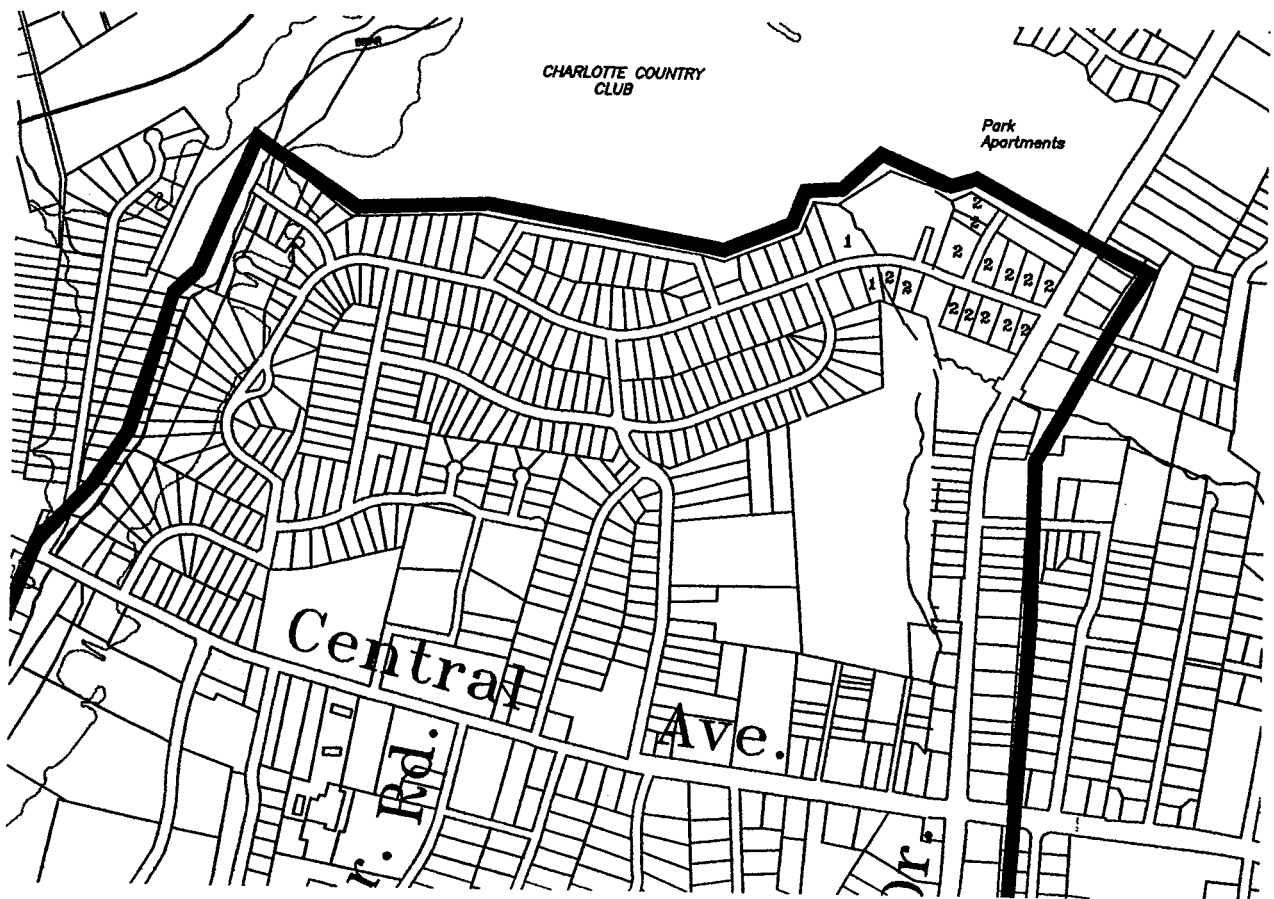
1. R-17MF to R-4 - 2 single family lots on both sides of Arnold Drive west of the Hillcrest Apartments. This proposed rezoning would reflect the existing land use and density and would preserve good, solid, affordable housing stock.
2. R-17MF to R-8 - 11 single family lots, 1 duplex lot and 2 vacant lots on both sides of Arnold Drive from the Hillcrest Apartments to Eastway Drive. This proposed rezoning would reflect the primarily single family character of this area while also providing an option for developing compatible duplexes, triplexes or quadraplexes.

Briar Creek/Woodland

3. B-1 to R-22MF - Shadowood Apartments, 1719 Eastcrest Drive. This proposed rezoning would reflect the existing density of this complex and the surrounding apartment complexes and would keep business development from encroaching into the neighborhood.

Proposed Rezonings for the Merry Oaks Neighborhood

1. R-17MF to R-4
2. R-17MF to R-8



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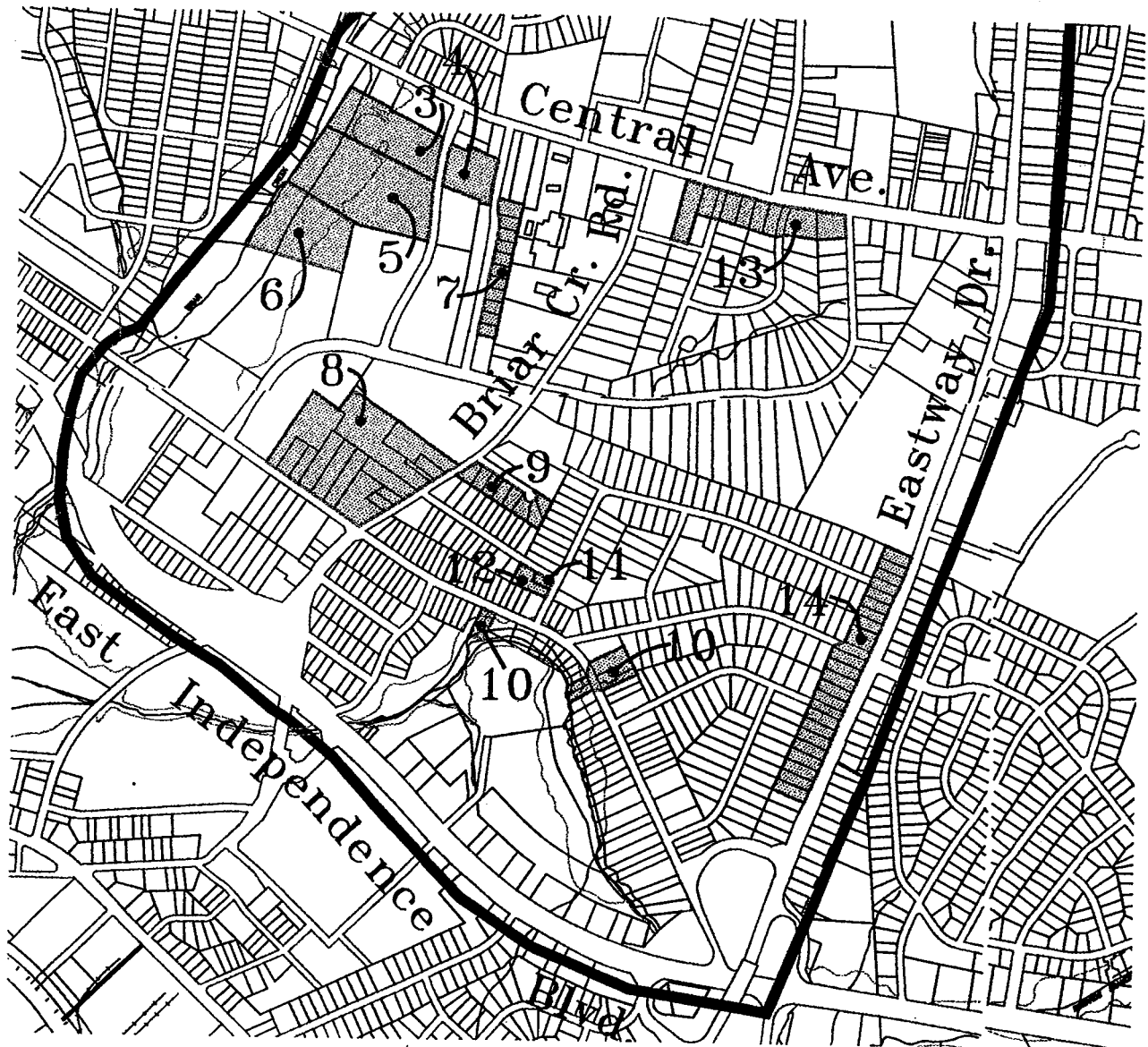
MAP 5a: PROPOSED REZONINGS

BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND & MERRY OAKS

Proposed Rezoning for the Briar Creek/Woodland Neighborhood

 Proposed rezonings

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 3. B-1 to R-22MF | 9. R-22MF to R-8 |
| 4. B-1 to R-22MF | 10. B-1 to R-4 |
| 5. R-43MF to R-22MF | 11. O-2 to R-4 |
| 6. R-43MF to R-22MF | 12. O-2 to R-22MF |
| 7. R-22MF to R-12MF | 13. R-22MF to R-12MF |
| 8. R-22MF to R-8 | 14. R-22MF to R-12MF |



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MAP 5b: PROPOSED REZONINGS

BRIAR CREEK / WOODLAND & MERRY OAKS

4. B-1 to R-22MF - Wembley Arms Apartments, 1310 Wembley Drive. This proposed rezoning would reflect the existing density of this complex and the surrounding apartment complexes and would keep business development from encroaching into the neighborhood.
5. R-43MF to R-22MF - Middle Plantation Apartments, 1601 Eastcrest Drive. This proposed rezoning would more closely reflect the existing density (13+ dwelling units/acre) of this complex and the surrounding apartment complexes. If the existing zoning remains, it may make it easier for adjacent multi-family properties to rezone to higher densities or for the existing complex to expand on adjacent floodplain land.
6. R-43MF to R-22MF - Oak Valley Apartments, 2700 Oak Valley Lane. This property should be rezoned from R-43MF to R-22MF, to coincide with the zoning for the rest of this complex and to reflect the zoning of surrounding apartment complexes. If the existing zoning remains, it may make it easier for adjacent multi-family properties to rezone to higher densities or for the existing complex to expand on adjacent flood plain land after it is filled.
7. R-22MF to R-12MF - 10 duplex lots and 1 vacant lot east of Wembley Drive. This proposed rezoning would more closely reflect their existing density (9 dwelling units per acre) and would preserve good, solid, affordable housing stock.
8. R-22MF to R-8 - 12 single family lots and 1 duplex lot at Commonwealth Avenue and Briar Creek Road. This proposed rezoning would more closely reflect their existing land use and density. There are approximately 1,900 multi-family units located within the study area. If these 13 properties were assembled and redeveloped at R-22MF, the additional cars it would generate would further impact the area and add to the traffic congestion. The R-8 zoning classification allows the development of single family, duplex, triplex and quadraplex dwellings. This R-8 zoning classification allows a maximum of eight units per acre but no more than four units in a single building. The properties in this area should be designated as a floodway to allow for open, natural drainage instead of the installation of culverts. There are existing stormwater runoff problems resulting from the massive amount of surrounding impervious area, such as parking lots and apartments, that would be worsened by dense development.
9. R-22MF to R-8 - 8 duplex lots along Creighton Drive. This proposed rezoning would reflect their existing density (7.8 dwelling units per acre) and would preserve good, solid, affordable housing stock.
10. B-1 to R-4 - 6 single family lots and 1 vacant lot on Commonwealth Avenue. These properties should be rezoned from B-1 to R-4 to reflect their existing land use and density, to insure future land use which is most compatible with the single family neighborhood and to preserve good, solid, affordable housing stock. These rezonings would still leave enough B-1 zoned land along Commonwealth Avenue to support a neighborhood business center. It should be noted that there are several abandoned businesses along Commonwealth Avenue. In addition, many of the existing businesses

do not seem appropriate for the neighborhood. There is a need to provide infrastructure and streetscape improvements. Such improvements may serve as a catalyst for improving the appearance of existing businesses and attracting more neighborhood oriented businesses.

11. O-2 to R-4 - single family lot on Pinecrest Avenue. This proposed rezoning would reflect the current land use and density and would preserve a good, solid, affordable house.
12. O-2 to R-22MF - apartment complex on Barnhill Drive. This proposed rezoning would reflect the current land use and density and would preserve good, solid, affordable housing stock.

Central Avenue

13. R-22MF to R-12MF - 5 single family lots, 2 daycare lots and 1 office lot from west of Crystal Road to Carolyn Drive. Rezoning these 8 parcels fronting on the south side of Central Avenue would permit the two to three story townhouses proposed in the plan while also being sensitive to the adjacent single family homes in terms of density and traffic volume.

Eastway Drive

14. R-22MF to R-12MF - 18 single family lots, 2 duplex lots and 1 vacant lot from south of Wal-Mart to just north of the U.S. 74 interchange. Rezoning these 21 parcels on the west side of Eastway Drive would permit the construction of townhouses, which would have access off of existing side streets, with parking behind the buildings and with no driveways on Eastway Drive. This rezoning would permit the townhouses proposed in this plan, while also being sensitive to the adjacent single family homes in terms of density and traffic volume.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/CENTRAL AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

1. Intersection of Wembley Drive and Central Avenue: This area includes two sites on opposite corners of Wembley Drive. The southwestern site is .42 acre, and the southeastern site (consisting of three vacant parcels) is approximately 2.5 acres. Both sites are generally flat and contain some significant trees.

Strategy: Prior to any redevelopment of this property at Wembley Drive and Central Avenue, the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks Neighborhood Associations should work with the property owners to encourage redevelopment consistent with the intent of this small area plan. A rezoning to Neighborhood Services (NS) District to allow a mixed use, pedestrian oriented development would be most consistent with the intent of this plan.

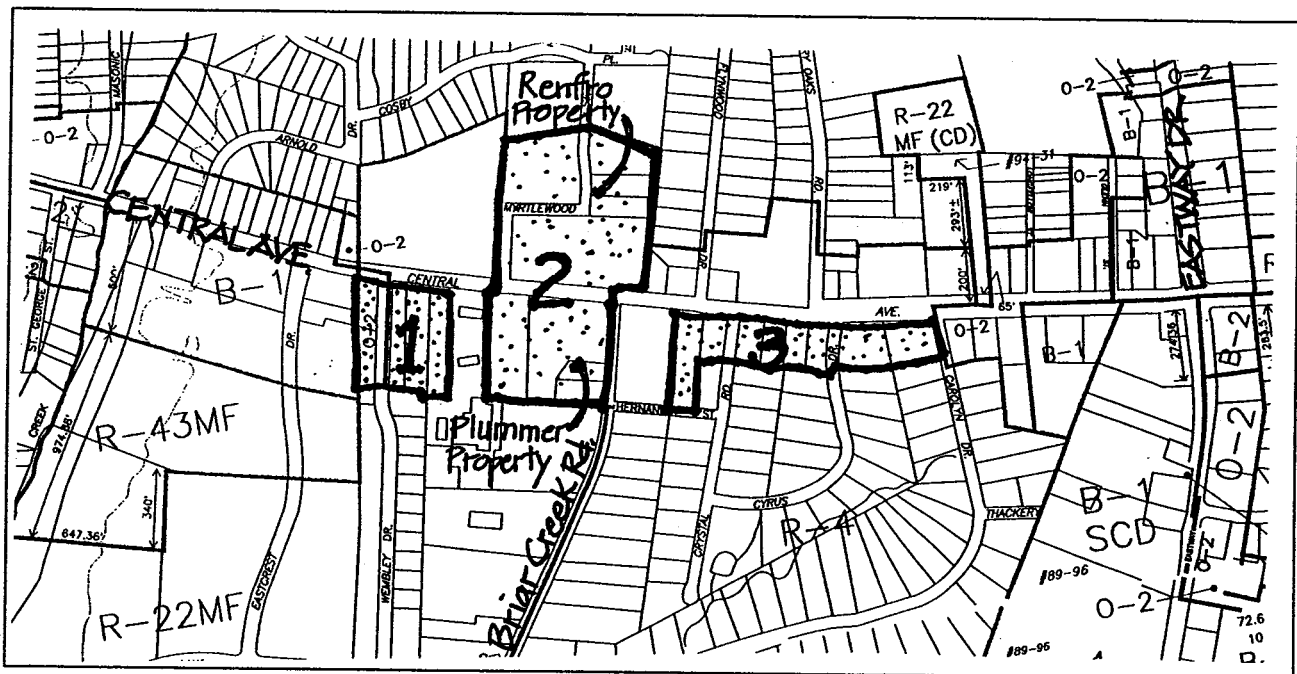
2. Intersection of Central Avenue and Briar Creek Road: A unique opportunity exists at the intersection of Central Avenue and Briar Creek Road, where the Plummer and Renfro properties are located across Central Avenue from each other. The coordination of the planning

and development of these two parcels with regard to building massing and circulation would ensure the development of a unique place, a landmark for this area.

Strategy: Prior to any redevelopment of this property, the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks Neighborhood Associations should work with the property owners to encourage redevelopment consistent with the intent of this small area plan. A rezoning to Neighborhood Services (NS) District to allow a mixed use, pedestrian oriented development would be most consistent with the intent of this plan.

Development Guidelines:

- New development, both retail and residential should orient the buildings to the street, with parking placed behind, giving the pedestrian the opportunity to enter directly from the street.
- Commercial buildings of two or three stories are encouraged, with ground floor retail and upper floor office and/or residential.
- New development should be sensitive to existing site features including mature trees and steep topography.
- Development of the Renfro and Plummer properties should include an extension of Briar Creek Road into the property to utilize the existing traffic signal for safe vehicular and pedestrian access.



Location of key economic development opportunities on Central Avenue

3. Area along Central Avenue between west of Crystal Road and Carolyn Drive:

This area contains eight parcels of land fronting on the southern side of Central Avenue. The existing land uses include five single-family houses, two daycare facilities and a vacant office building. These sites are generally flat and contain some significant trees.

Strategy: Prior to any redevelopment of this property, the Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry

Oaks Neighborhood Associations should work with the various owners of these eight parcel in formulating a site plan for the two to three story townhouses, which are recommended in the plan for this area.

4. Area along Central Avenue from Briar Creek to Briar Creek Road:

Strategy: The business owners/operators of the businesses located along this segment of Central Avenue should establish a merchants' association to address important, "common interest" issues relating to the corridor, such as land use, zoning, security, safety, transportation, design and other relevant concerns. In addition, the geography/responsibility of the City's business corridor liaison established for the Plaza-Central area should be extended to encompass the businesses in the study area.

5. Request the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission to develop a streetscape plan for Central Avenue (from Briar Creek to Eastway Drive) that would address the following:

- ▶ Neighborhood gateway feature at Briar Creek, utilizing the bridge as a gateway element, enhanced with new guard rails, lighting, signage and flags representing the international community.
- ▶ Pedestrian scale lighting from Briar Creek to Briar Creek Road.
- ▶ Relocation of existing sidewalks (where there is room) so they are separated from Central Avenue by a minimum five-foot wide planting strip in which street trees are planted,
- ▶ Consolidation of driveways where appropriate.
- ▶ Placement of utility poles outside of the sidewalk to avoid pedestrian conflict.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

- If Eastway Drive is widened, the following streetscape elements should be incorporated into the design:
 - ▶ All of the widening should be done on the east side and should take all residences on that side, so that the remaining area becomes a green buffer to the adjacent single family residential neighborhood and/or a linear park with bicycle paths, picnic tables and benches.
 - ▶ A landscaped center median should be constructed for aesthetic reasons as well as providing a pedestrian safety refuge for those wishing to cross the street.
 - ▶ The entire roadway alignment should be shifted to the east, allowing the existing west side curb to be moved, resulting in deeper, more developable lots on the west side of Eastway Drive.
 - ▶ Minimum six-foot wide planting strips containing continuous rows of trees (planted 25-40 feet apart) should be provided on both sides of Eastway Drive.
- Request the CDOT to consider placing more speed humps (such as the one on Carolyn Drive) throughout the study area and installing a traffic-calming device at Commonwealth Avenue

and Woodland Drive.

- Request the CDOT to expedite the construction of the left turn lane from Central Avenue onto Briar Creek Road.
- Request the CDOT to provide good pedestrian access from Independence Boulevard to Briar Creek Road.
- Request the CDOT to provide pedestrian and bicycle connections from the Merry Oaks neighborhood to the surrounding neighborhoods of Country Club and Plaza-Midwood.
- Request the CDOT to expedite the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Central Avenue and Eastcrest Drive.
- Request the CDOT to determine whether there is justification for the installation of a traffic signal at Central Avenue and Arnold Drive.
- Request the CDOT to consider the construction of a median along portions of Central Avenue (especially in the vicinity of Eastcrest Drive) to aid pedestrians in crossing this busy corridor.
- Request the CDOT to consider construction of a median along Eastway Drive, north of Central Avenue in the vicinity of Arnold Drive, to provide protection for school children and apartment residents crossing Eastway Drive.
- Request the CDOT to expedite the installation of bicycle lanes along Commonwealth Avenue to Pecan Avenue; and, encourage the CDOT (Transit Division) to initiate E-Z Rider service for the residents (mostly apartment dwellers) living on Eastcrest Drive, Wembley Drive and Green Oaks Lane. The CDOT should also consider rerouting Charlotte Transit Service buses through this area from Briar Creek to Briar Creek Road.
- Request the Police Department to spend more time monitoring the speed limit (enforcing the 35 mph speed limit on Central Avenue), cut through traffic and the violation of stop signs and begin aggressively ticketing the offending drivers.

PARK AND RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Request the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department to begin acquiring land for the Briar Creek Greenway within the study area and to consider extending it to the northwest to tie into Veterans Park.
- Request the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department to find a suitable site, preferably in the vicinity of the Eastcrest/Green Oaks apartment community, and construct a recreation center that would provide a wide variety of services including: child care/after school care, medical services, meeting rooms, recreational facilities, educational programs,

summer camps and refugee services. The possibility of a joint public/private venture should be explored.

- Request the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department to develop neighborhood parks in the Merry Oaks neighborhood, possibly in conjunction with the Merry Oaks Elementary School, and in the Briar Creek/Woodland neighborhood.
- Include Edwards Branch in the Mecklenburg County Master Plan for Parks and Greenways and pursue funding options to acquire the land.
- Request the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department to develop a detailed master plan of the Briar Creek Greenway, using an open, public process involving surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.



- Request NCDOT to donate the 1.142 acre tract of land at the end of Commonwealth Avenue to be used as a neighborhood park.
- As new development occurs, the neighborhood associations and City/County staff should work with developers and property owners to save the existing vegetation.
- Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department representatives and other City/County staff should meet with area churches and schools to develop joint-use programs that would benefit the neighborhoods in the area.
- Request the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department to organize private sector

sponsorship of organized sports activities and teams such as volleyball, basketball, softball, soccer, boxing, and track.

- The neighborhood associations should work with the Police Athletic League to broaden the range of activities it sponsors.

COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

- Establish a greater police presence (especially between midnight and 7:00 a.m.) in the multi-family area between Briar Creek and Briar Creek Road and along Central Avenue and Eastway Drive where the majority of crimes occur within the study area. Hopefully, this presence will reduce violent crimes, drug dealing, vandalism, loitering and other crimes.
- Assign more multi-lingual police officers (particularly proficient in Spanish and Vietnamese) to the multi-family area between Briar Creek and Briar Creek Road.
- Encourage the police officers to hold meetings with the residents living in the multi-family area between Briar Creek and Briar Creek Road to address local, state and federal laws, cultural differences, the role of law enforcement officials, the courts system, unacceptable behavior and the reporting of crimes.
- Encourage police, landlords and property managers to share police arrest records on a regular basis.
- Reduce crime by concentrating on the special needs of youth by initiating a comprehensive public education program to do the following:
 - a) Increase parents' awareness of childrens' needs.
 - b) Indicate what services are available.
 - c) Teach parenting skills.
- Provide increased security for the businesses along Central Avenue - especially the ones that are open in the evening.

SCHOOL/EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

The neighborhood associations should actively pursue the following strategies:

- Stress to the school board members and county commission members, in their consideration of neighborhood schools, that inner city schools experience a different set of issues/problems than do the suburban schools.
- Lobby school board members to provide financial incentives to teachers who remain at schools which have a high percentage of at risk students.
- Support some corrective rezonings, within the study area, which would prohibit the

construction of additional high density apartment complexes – thus, potentially, not adding to school overcrowding and the high student turnover rate at Merry Oaks Elementary School, Eastway Middle School and Garinger High School.

- Work with public and private agencies/organizations/institutions to :
 - a) Provide preschool educational opportunities within the study area.
 - b) Create after school enrichment programs within the study area.
 - c) Expand after school tutoring and homework programs within the study area.
- Work with Central Piedmont Community College to provide classes within the study area.
- Encourage the school board to rethink its policy concerning the definition of minority students (presently only black students are considered as minority) as it relates to Merry Oaks Elementary School, Eastway Middle School and Garinger High School, especially with the rapid migration of Asians and Latinos into the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.
- Encourage the principals of Merry Oaks, Eastway and Garinger to continue offering the use of their facilities to the residents of Briar Creek/Woodland and Merry Oaks neighborhoods during after school hours.

HUMAN SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- Encourage the social service agencies to survey the residents of the study area, with particular emphasis given to those residents living in apartment complexes, to determine the human service needs in the study area. This survey (which could be conducted in conjunction with the Urban Institute, International House, the Department of Social Services, United Way, the Hispanic Health Alliance, the Hispanic-Latino Community Resource Center, the Refugee Office of Catholic Social Services, Briar Creek Road Baptist Church, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, the apartment managers etc.) will provide basic data on all ethnic groups (which is especially needed for the non-white and non-black populations) living within the study area.
- Request the social services agencies to develop and distribute a directory of programs and services that addresses the human service needs identified in the above survey.
- The neighborhood associations should organize an International Fair in the study area (once a year) to provide information about the availability of human service programs, celebrate various cultures and promote interaction among the various ethnic groups.
- The neighborhood associations and the social service agencies should encourage potential leaders in the study area to attend leadership development training classes through Central Piedmont Community College, the City of Charlotte's Neighborhood Development Department and other related programs.
- The neighborhood associations and City/County staff should develop relationships with

private companies and public agencies through partnerships and mentoring programs.

- City/County staff and neighborhood associations should target youth in the study area for various summer job programs.
- City/County staff and neighborhood associations should encourage public and private service agencies to hire some bi-lingual personnel in addition to providing cultural diversity training for their staff members.

If the above survey supports these needs then City/County staff and the private sector should work to provide the following:

- 1) Better transportation to job opportunities located outside of the study area.
- 2) Social, cultural and recreational programs for the youth and the elderly.
- 3) Quality/affordable daycare opportunities within the study area.

APPENDIX

(Cost Information To Be Provided)

3413

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