ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT SMALL AREA PLAN

Recommended by Planning Board
November 25, 2014
Approved by Board of Commissioners
December 8, 2014

INTRODUCTION

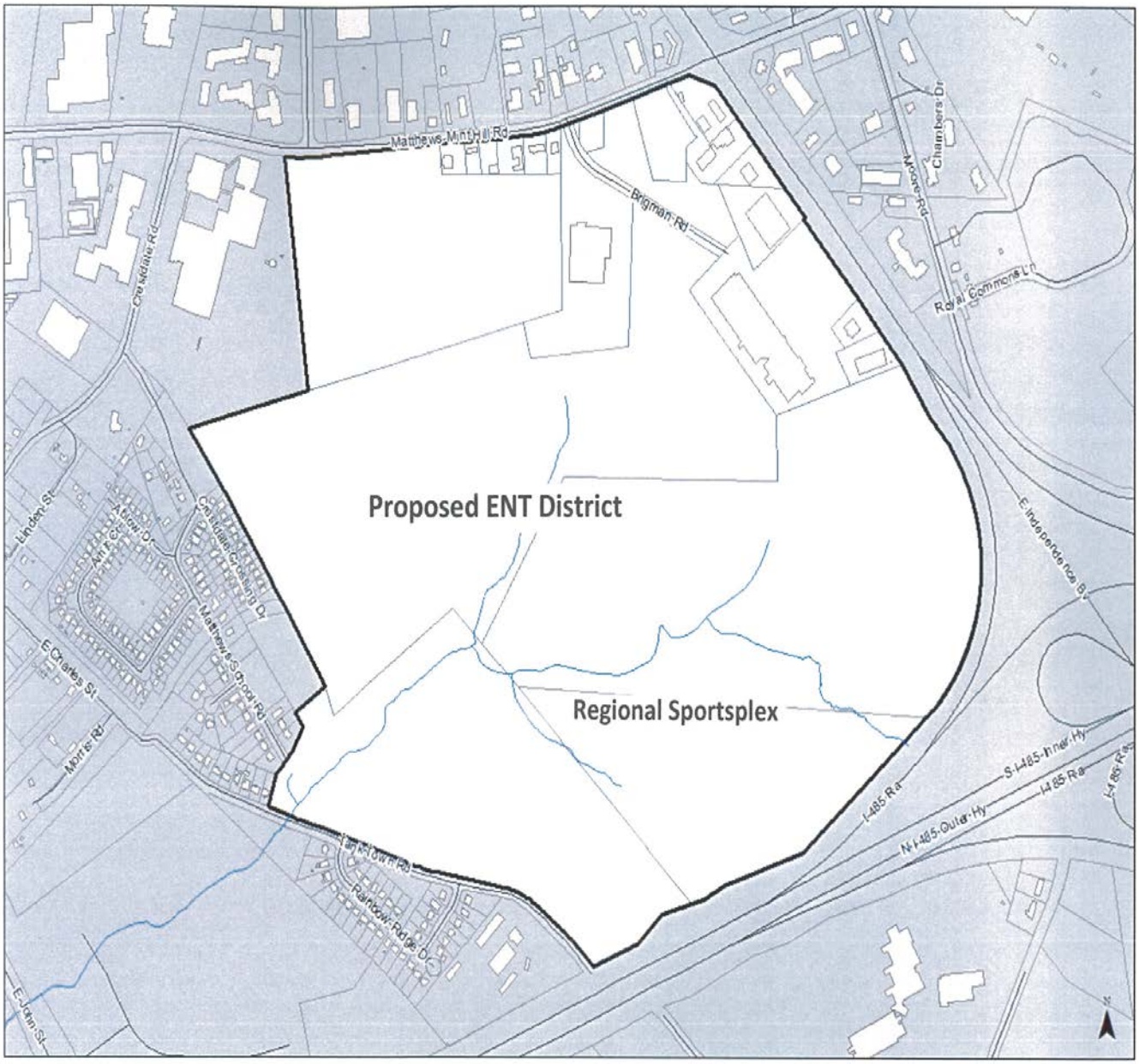
In contrast to other geographical locations within Matthews which may merit further study as a small area plan, the specific boundaries of the Entertainment district have been informally but distinctly delineated for a number of years, and multiple studies to envision build-out have been conducted. Most of the boundaries of the study area are roads encircling an area of approximately 300 acres. The general boundaries are: Matthews-Mint Hill Road, US74/Independence Boulevard, I-485, Tank Town Road, and the Crestdale neighborhood/adjacent industrial complex.

As far back as 1999, when Mecklenburg County released the property they own in Matthews at US74 and I-485 for future landfill needs, the County parcels and adjacent privately-owned property have been the subject of land use study for a possible unified new development. Various build-out scenarios studied in the intervening years included a corporate business park, an industrial complex, a mixed use neighborhood, a major retail complex, and an entertainment-focused complex. In 2007, Mecklenburg County and the Town of Matthews both hired the same consultant group to prepare conceptual build-out plans for the County park property and adjoining vacant land respectively as a single coordinated urban, transit-friendly new mixed use development.

A formal adopted study and land use/policy/design standards plan is necessary at this location, as called for in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The UDO refers to this document as the “general concept plan” for the overall geographic location. The zoning district designation ENT, or Entertainment District, can be applied to any parcel of land within the defined boundaries as soon as the general concept plan is adopted by the Matthews Board of Commissioners as an appendix into the Matthews Land Use Plan.

This Entertainment District Small Area Plan fulfills the requirements of the UDO as the “general concept plan” for the designated geographic location.

The map on the following page shows the overall study area included in this general concept or small area plan. Approximately half of the land are is owned by Mecklenburg County and is being developed as the Sportsplex facility, while the majority of the privately-owned land which is vacant is controlled by two property owner groups. There are also a number of smaller parcels generally fronting either Matthews-Mint Hill Road or Independence Boulevard under separate individual ownership.


Proposed ENT District
Regional Sportsplex
Matthews-Mint Hill Rd
Brigman Rd
Chambers Dr
Moore Rd
Royal Commons Ln
Cresdale Rd
Linden St
Allow Dr
Cresdale Crossing Dr
Matthews School Rd
E Charles St
Morris Rd
Tarrytown Rd
Rainbow Ridge Dr
E Independence Blvd
I-485 Ra
S I-485 Inner Hy
N I-485 Outer Hy
I-485 Ra

While drafting the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), the Town felt it was appropriate to design a unique zoning category for this geographic location. This is seen in the purpose statement for the ENT district, at 155.503.8.A.:

> *"The Entertainment (ENT) District is established to provide a unique set of land uses and design criteria for a defined geographic portion of the community, with a specific emphasis on providing multiple entertainment opportunities for people of all ages, both permanent residents and visitors. The Entertainment District shall incorporate spaces for permanent residences, transitory housing, employment opportunities, indoor and outdoor recreation, shopping, dining, and daily living services in a compact pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. Provision shall be made for various modes of transportation. All construction and uses of land within the Entertainment district shall comply with an approved general concept plan for the District, and no land disturbing activity may take place until compliance with the approved concept plan is documented. . . ."*

The UDO speaks here of a required "general concept plan" for the area within and adjacent to the Mecklenburg County Regional Sportsplex. The intent of the general concept plan, which is this small area plan, is to expand on the regulations provided for the ENT Entertainment zoning category in the UDO, which will be unique only to this geographic locale.

The ENT district description, at 155.503.8, lists a number of specific criteria to be covered by the general concept plan:

- Build-out to be conducted in phases over time
- Initial street and pedestrian primary, or main, networks to be identified to assure interconnectivity through the overall area
- Minimum different types of land uses required to be built in initial phase
- Design/construction of communal storm water detention facilities, when applicable/feasible
- Minimum and/or maximum amount of certain types of land uses to guarantee a full range mix of uses
- Identify at what point(s) initial phase surface parking lots will be converted to shared or structured parking
- Minimum required building heights
- Maximum footprint size of "big box" buildings
- Overall maximum development build-out (optional)
- A neighborhood-wide architectural theme to "brand" the location

(See 155.503.8.A. and G.)

The Town initially undertook a study of three options for build-out in 1999. The consultant team was requested to provide scenarios for: a) an office/employment park; b) an industrial complex; and c) a mixed use neighborhood adjacent to a significantly-sized sports facility. One of the major private property owners in the area then had a fourth scenario studied as a regional retail facility. The Town continued to consider options for the overall build-out over several years as the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County pursued options for mass transit and a regional park, respectively. When Mecklenburg County allowed applications for park funding, the Town of Matthews and a private development partner

submitted plans for a series of soccer-sized fields that could become a significant economic draw for the larger region. Mecklenburg County pursued the idea of a sports field complex at this location, recognizing the prime location at US74 and I-485, linking this site to other existing and planned parks with multiple soccer fields near other I-485 interchanges, creating coordinated tournament venues not available elsewhere in the Charlotte metro area. The alignment of future Independence Pointe Parkway, the US74 parallel collector road for local traffic use, was in flux while it was proposed to also be the parallel guideway for the Southeast Transit Corridor, and a major transit station was proposed within this future neighborhood.

In 2007, the Town of Matthews contracted with Woolpert, a local design firm, to prepare a small area plan for the desired urban neighborhood, and Mecklenburg County contracted with the same firm to prepare site plans for the Sportsplex. The intent was to be sure that the two development pods interconnected and had an obvious flow between the two distinct elements.

Over the years that this geographic vicinity has been studied, a series of inter-related principles have emerged:

- Urban scale neighborhood: Because this location is physically separated from almost all other residential neighborhoods in Matthews, and because it is a large area of mostly undeveloped land within close proximity to both the downtown and to major highway corridors, this is a unique opportunity to create a cohesive development site that can be substantially different from existing development elsewhere in Matthews. The prospect of including a major transit station here as well as a regional draw for sports and entertainment events also support development here at a substantially denser scale than has been attempted elsewhere in Matthews.
- Mixed use: Matthews has been careful to incorporate a diverse mix of land uses within its municipal boundaries, although each primary type of land use – residential, office/service, retail and commercial, medical, institutional – are generally sequestered in their own zones. In order to maximize the opportunity to encourage economic spin-off growth beside the Sportsplex – to provide the assortment of activities, amenities, and services necessary for visitors to the area – multiple types of land uses must be coordinated in close proximity. Likewise, to encourage new residents to live, shop, eat, work, and play all within this contained geographic space, then the needed activities must all be located in close association to each other.
- Transit-supportive/Future Transit station/hub: Although the Southeast Transit Corridor is currently being reassessed as to location and mode, the previously-designated alignment on Independence Pointe Parkway remains a strong and logical placement all through Matthews' jurisdiction. While Independence Pointe Parkway is not yet a continuous roadway through town, and while the ability to get it across I-485 is still under review, a mixed use neighborhood here can draw pressure for CATS to provide local bus access into the neighborhood. As more development builds out, more bus connections may be justified, and a bus stop may progress to a station location, which in future can become a mass transit station similar to what has been envisioned all along.
- Walkable, pedestrian-friendly: The Sportsplex has sidewalk, multi-modal trails, and/or greenways paralleling the main street through the park property. This same pedestrian system extends into the privately-owned portion of the development site. As more streets are added to reinforce the urban block character, and public plazas and small green spaces are added around higher density buildings, residents and visitors alike can enjoy the ease of access to various businesses and activity sites. The goal is to have this area develop as a "park-once" environment, so that using a personal vehicle internally becomes a choice rather than a necessity.
- Economic engine for surrounding region: The Sportsplex and the adjacent urban mixed use neighborhood can take advantage of each other's appeal to people. Households searching for a location where they can walk to most daily needs may find this area an idea new "home". Occasional visitors and regular field sports enthusiasts from the surrounding area may find that while at the Sportsplex for recreational activities, the adjacent mixed use neighborhood is a convenient and pleasant experience for dining, daily needs, and other options for recreation.
- Unique identity to be created: Because this geographic location is so ideally situated at the interchange of two highways, and because it is visually and physically separated from all other existing residential neighborhoods, and because the area can be branded as "active living", "high energy", "24-hour lifestyle", and similar concepts, this neighborhood should take on a separate ambiance and appearance than elsewhere in Matthews. The architecture of buildings, the streetlights, benches, street trees, signs and related public infrastructure, and the physical layout of streets and public spaces can all interact in creating a one-of-a-kind atmosphere.
- Energy efficient design: Ideally, the new development location should encourage and extoll the virtues of energy efficiency and sustainability -- in buildings, site plan layout, public amenities, overall cohesion of development, and long-term conversion of parking. Construction materials can be procured locally to the greatest extent possible. These materials should be reviewed for their low carbon footprints during manufacture and once installed on-site. Building designs may take advantage of solar orientation. New buildings may utilize rooftops for solar collector installations, gardens, or outdoor gathering spaces. Alternative energy-conserving or energy generating methods are encouraged to be employed here.

When the Town of Matthews and a private developer collaborated on a grant application to Mecklenburg County for park bond funding in 2006, some economic expectations were developed. At that time, approximately 120 acres of the County-owned property was proposed to be developed into 12 regulation-sized fields and a stadium, leaving the remainder of the County land to be developed for complementary supporting uses by private developers. While outdated, the statistics reported then and listed below today give us a general understanding of the economic draw the Sportsplex can create once it is built out:

"The following are examples of the economic rewards of holding regional soccer tournaments:

CASL Shootout and Showcase Tournaments (Cary, NC)

- *Overall economic impact of $9 million*
- *900 teams from 43 states compete in three tournaments*
- *Events brought over 20,000 visitors to Wake County*
- *Generated 15,000 total hotel room nights*

US Youth Soccer Region 1 Championships (Virginia Beach, VA)

- *$6 million in economic impact to the Hampton Roads area*
- *10,000 players, coaches, teams and tournament officials attended*
- *Generated over 40,000 hotel room nights*

Warrior Soccer Classic Tournament (Dayton, OH)

- *Generated over $7.4 million in economic impact*
- *Billed as the third largest soccer tournament in the US*
- *Includes 7,500 players (550 teams) from 11 states*

Red Diamond Vulcan Cup (Birmingham, AL)

- *Economic impact of over $3.7 million*
- *One of Birmingham's Top 5 tourism events*
- *Over 6,000 people (226 teams) from 14 states*

"In addition to tournaments, residents and youth athletes in Mecklenburg County alike will experience and enjoy this amenity. The continual use of the complex and the adjacent family entertainment district will not only benefit the restaurants, shops, and other local businesses but also increase sales tax revenue to Mecklenburg County. For example, in 2005 over 250,000 people attended the SAS Soccer Park in Cary, NC. If each person only spent $20 that equals $5,000,000 spent during the year just from people visiting a soccer park. The advantage that this proposed

complex has that no other facility in the Southeast [US] offers is an adjacent Family Entertainment District. The combination of one of the best soccer facilities in the United States and adjacent destination development will drive people to the district and ultimately increase direct revenue and tax impact for Mecklenburg County."

Field Sportsplex and Family Entertainment District Proposal, Keith Corp and Town of Matthews, 2006

This 2006 proposal suggested a variety of potential funding sources that together could provide the necessary amounts to complete the overall combined project. It assumed implementing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding to assist in developing the public infrastructure. The proposed private partner was anticipating to spend over $30 million for design and construction of the adjacent Family Entertainment District. Corporate sponsorships and/or naming rights of the stadium and each field were offered as ways to raise several million dollars.

The Strategic Economic Development Plan for Matthews, completed by Warren Associates in late 2007, indicated that the Town's tax base is relatively broad and stable, because there are substantial different markets in town, although to reduce the Town's reliance on retail property taxes, the Strategic Plan encourages expanding market share of nonretail commercial uses. Two of the targeted growth sectors listed are "Arts, Entertainment and Recreation", and "Accommodation and Food Services".

From the Strategic Plan, Matthews' tax base has maintained a ratio of around 65% residential, 25% commercial, and 10% exempt. The study indicated shopping centers may initially be favorably valued higher than other business uses but they tend to fluctuate and depreciate more easily, especially compared to multi-story office buildings. This was re-emphasized in Joe Minicozzi's research of the Matthews tax base in 2013, which showed how smaller multi-story buildings in the downtown area held higher per acre valuations than big box retail along Independence Boulevard. That study concluded the Town should require minimum 2 story construction in the downtown – and by assumption in other geographic locations, such as the ENT district, where higher density and mixed use development are proposed to be concentrated. This study also recommends focusing higher density growth along the future rapid transit alignment, which has been proposed to parallel Independence Pointe Parkway in past transit plans.

Throughout the years the Town of Matthews has considered what could be the best general plan for development in this area it has been understood that this is one of the Town's largest concentration of yet-undeveloped or under-developed land adjacent to a regional economic driver, the Sportsplex, which is ripe for a unified approach. Whatever is first built here will likely flavor the next development site, and that may alter plans for the next site, etc. Therefore, it is imperative that the Town clearly identify its intent for development here and then construct the parameters to guarantee that intent is understood and followed by property owners and their development partners.

Done properly, the synergy of the County park facility and the abutting privately-owned acreage, with a primary street and pedestrian network that establish cross connections within the area and to other roads and activity centers like the downtown, can create a sustainable new community within Matthews.

Past small area plans identified specific locations for specific types of uses. While this general concept plan does not state what uses must be located where, it calls for logical pairings, where appropriate. Multi-family residential develop, for example, should be within an easy walking distance of daily services like delis, coffee shops, salons, dry cleaners, and child day care facilities. These nonresidential uses may become repeat stops for local residents but they likely also need visibility for more occasional visitors as customers as well.

Residential development at a higher density than found elsewhere in Matthews and located within a new mixed use neighborhood may allow those residents to navigate many of their daily routines via bicycle or walking, but these residents will still likely choose to have access to a personal vehicle. That vehicle will need a place to be stored until needed, so parking for multi-family residential will still be essential for a successful neighborhood. The daily services and shops these residents may frequent will still want convenient and easily found parking spaces for more occasional customers. An appropriate amount of parking, therefore, will be assumed, although the location and dispersal of spaces both on-street and behind buildings will look different than elsewhere in commercial areas of Matthews. As called for in the ENT district standards in the UDO, parking will not be allowed between public streets and buildings. Instead, buildings will face the public streets and be placed close to them, to encourage a pedestrian-friendly ambiance.

This general concept plan establishes a primary street network, which shows approximate location of connecting "main" streets. These "main" streets are expected to have some of the most intensively used buildings, whether containing vertically mixed uses (commercial on first floor, office above and/or residential on top floors) or a horizontal mix of uses (one building may contain a major business and the next entry door opens to a different type of use). Additional secondary streets are anticipated to be added as development occurs. These secondary streets will create urban scale

blocks, and shared parking and loading/service areas may be centered behind buildings that front the various public streets. A map illustrating the primary or "main" street network is located in the Urban Design section of this plan.

Similar to the main street network, this general concept plan identifies a primary pedestrian network, both through the use of sidewalks or multi-modal pathways running within the public right-of-way adjacent to the vehicular travel lanes, or a separate pathway or greenway creating mid-block connections or paralleling small creeks. Because the secondary street network and the locations that may benefit from a mid-block pedestrian path are not known at this time, they are not shown at any specific required placement within the area.

The UDO assigns a wide variety of land uses to the ENT zoning category, consistent with the intent to have a mixed use urban neighborhood built out over time. Land uses allowed here, as identified by the UDO when it was initially enacted in 2014, are:

	Use Allowed By-Right	**Allowed Under Prescribed Conditions**	**Accessory Use Only**
RESIDENTIAL USES			
	Single-family dwelling, attached		
	Multi-family dwellings, single building on a lot or multiple building complex		
	Dormitory for sr high and post secondary schools on same site as institution		
		Ecological housing development	
		Home-based business	
		Food & beverage sales in neighborhood common facilities (with MF housing)	
		Subdivision sales office	
			Accessory residential use/structure clearly incidental to principal residential use

	Use Allowed By-Right	Allowed Under Prescribed Conditions	Accessory Use Only
			Propane/home fuel storage
INSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNMENTAL USES			
	Adult day care facility		
	Church/place of worship of any size		
	College/University w/ or w/out stadium		
	Cultural community center		
	Fire/EMS station, police station		
	Heliport (medically related)		
	Hospital		
	Public library		
	School, K-12, public & private		
OFFICE & SERVICE USES			
	Bank, credit union, financial service		
	Barber, beauty salon, nail salon, & similar personal service		
	Civic, fraternal, social club		
	Contractor's office w/out accessory storage		
	General & professional office		
	Laboratory, research facility		
	Medical, dental, optical office/clinic		
	Office with interior display only of sample merchandise		

	Use Allowed By-Right	Allowed Under Prescribed Conditions	Accessory Use Only
	Spa, massage service		
		Child day care facility	
GENERAL COMMERCIAL USES			
	Bakery w/ on-site manufacture & retail		
	Ballroom, banquet or catering hall		
	Boat/watercraft sales		
	Call center		
	Car wash		
	Coin operated laundry		
	Commercial/trade school		
	Copy, printing, photo processing		
	Exterminator		
	Florist		
	Heliport		
	Laundry/dry cleaning establishment		
	Live-work unit		
	Mini storage facility		
	Motel and hotel		
	Motor vehicle quick service (oil change, tires)		
	Museum, art gallery		
	Nursery w/ or w/out greenhouse		
	Parking lot, parking garage		
	Post Office		
	Professional, financial, personal recreational service		
	Radio, TV station		

	Use Allowed By-Right	Allowed Under Prescribed Conditions	Accessory Use Only
	Repair & servicing of items permitted to be sold		
	Restaurant, lounge, nightclub w/out drive-in or drive-thru service		
	Retail sales, general merchandise		
	Second-hand goods retail sales		
	Sign printing		
	Studio for gymnast, artist, musician, etc.		
	Upholstering under 1500 sq ft workroom		
		Solar collector installation	Solar collector installation
		Specialty retail (butcher, confectionery, etc.) w/ limited processing	
		Specialty Sales w/ substantial assembly/processing	
	.	Alcoholic beverage, wine, beer production & sales	
		Animal grooming	
		Brewpub	
		Communications tower & antenna	
		Farmers market	
		Gas station	
		Animal day care kennel	
		Microbrewery	
		Mobile vendor	
		Outdoor sales w/ permanent business	
		Pushcart vending	
		Veterinary clinic or hospital	

	Use Allowed By-Right	Allowed Under Prescribed Conditions	Accessory Use Only
			Drive-up service window (for pharmacy, bank, etc.)
RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT USES			
	Arcade, game room		
	Athletic or sports fields, ballfields, 3 or more		
	Bowling alley		
	Community rec center		
	Ice or roller rink		
	Indoor commercial recreation		
	Parks & playgrounds		
	Stadium, outdoor assembly facility		
	Swimming pool		
	Tennis or racket club or sports court, commercial		
	Theater, drive-in		
	Theater, indoor		
	Theater, outdoor stage		
		Amusement, commercial outdoor (mini golf, rides, paintball, etc.)	
		Archery or firearms range, indoor	
		Riding stable, commercial	
		Skateboard facility	
INDUSTRIAL & MANUFACTURING USES			
	Blacksmith shop		

	Use Allowed By-Right	Allowed Under Prescribed Conditions	Accessory Use Only
	Manufacturing, processing, assembling of components into craft or custom made items, under 3000 sq ft		
	Recycled material, collection, processing, & packaging indoors		
	Wholesale sales		
MISCELLANEOUS USES			
	Transit station		
	Vending machine outside front setback / under building overhang		
		Electric, gas substation and similar	
		Farm, urban	
		Short-term temporary use or festival, of civic or nonprofit nature	
		Temporary business use	
		Transit stop shelter	
			Auction sale, liquidating on-site assets
			Accessory use clearly incidental to principal use
			Donation drop-off facility
			Garage, yard sales
			Propane or fuel storage for principal use
			Temporary self-contained storage unit
			Utility equipment & parking for principal use

Other land uses may in the future be determined to be appropriate and be added to the allowed uses in the ENT district. Similarly, some uses now listed may later be determined to be removed from placement, or may be restricted by applying new prescribed conditions.

The ENT provisions within the UDO require certain elements to be included in this small area plan, such as the “minimum different types of land uses required to be built in the first phase”. This is called for in order to assure a balance of uses within the study area as it develops. If the first phase development here is not in keeping with the overall guiding principles and vision for the new neighborhood, it may become extremely difficult to realize the vision as further development matches the initial growth instead.

To protect against unintended deviation from the overall goals for this area, Town Board should adopt a policy on maximum limits of any one category of land use until complementary uses are also in place. For example, Town Board may wish to state no more than 600 dwelling units should be permitted and built here until at least 40,000 square feet of commercial is under construction or completed. This “commercial” allocation should include an assortment of small shops, restaurants, services, and employment sites, rather than a single business, so that the loss of one establishment will not create a total loss of commercial activity. Similarly, Town Board may adopt a policy that no more than 120,000 square feet of commercial should be permitted until at least 240 dwelling units are under construction. To prevent big box retail (merchandise sales as sole or primary activity) from locating here, Town Board may choose to adopt a policy that no single retail establishment should be greater than 70,000 square feet. By adopting these types of policies separate from this small area plan, Town Board can review their policies and revise them whenever they see a need to do so, without amending this small area plan. Any initial policies should be discussed and adopted around the time this small area plan is adopted, so that property owners and potential developers will know what is expected.

This geographical area is the Town of Matthews' first opportunity to see a mixed use area grow up and out over time, with purpose, to become a full-service neighborhood. To increase the ability of this area to embody the ambiance of an urban scale community, it is critical that the area as a whole gives off a feeling of cohesiveness and uniqueness. Each phase of development should carefully asses that it balances a comfortable repetition of certain features with one of a kind custom elements.

The ENT zoning district already includes some minimum and maximum dimensional standards, such as block lengths, building setbacks, and building heights, which will create a basic level of consistency within the area as it builds out. These are intended to create that sense of rhythm that someone walking, biking, or driving by can automatically appreciate without consciously thinking about it. Street design standards are discussed in more detail later in this section. The ENT district also gives requirements for public infrastructure and public realm spaces, again to reinforce the consistent ebb and flow of an urban district.

Urban design, however, is more than meeting dimensional standards. The twin key here is to create a unique built environment – placemaking. This may employ the repetitive use of a specific style of light pole or street bench not used elsewhere in Matthews, or the use of architectural features that allow pedestrians to be comfortable strolling beside them. While this area encourages the use of a wider variety of architectural styles, design, and materials than have been found elsewhere in Matthews, buildings and structures need to include some features that create symmetry too. For example, a building with an angled corner entranceway may have a custom canopy or turret feature, but the street level floor can still utilize windows and doors in orderly sequence and dimensions that are repeated in other buildings in the vicinity.

Landscaping should be included from earliest planning stages of any development. This applies primarily within the public street rights-of-way and in the semi-public areas in front or to the side of buildings, generally called the public use realm in the ENT district provisions of the UDO. This public use realm may take many different forms, including but not limited to a public plaza at the entrance to a building, a pocket park that creates a small green space oasis surrounded by buildings and hard-surfaced pavements, an outdoor display of merchandise in front of a retail merchant, or a group of dining tables and chairs alongside a restaurant. A water feature would be a favorite element within the public realm for those choosing to slow down and take in the sound of moving water, or to watch children playing there. The public realm is a space where people are expected to "people-watch".

> Great public spaces are the living room of the city - the place where people come together to enjoy the city and each other. . . . The combination of beautiful architecture with great public space creates the most beautiful places to live - places that express a life of richness and tradition, and act as a setting for life to happen.
>
> Center for Design Excellence at urbandesign.org

Street trees are a desired element within the district. In order to encourage a canopy effect over the streets, the following varieties are primarily to be used throughout the ENT district: Slippery Elm (similar to the traditional American elm), London Plane Tree, Ginkgo, and Hackberry. They may be supplemented by other species when there is a clear purpose for alternatives.

Creating and enhancing the public use realm through the use of elements pleasing to the senses is essential to "placemaking". This may occur within linear pedestrian spaces between shop fronts and building entrances and the street curb, or areas out of active walking pathways and beside buildings forming plazas or pocket parks. Interspersing living greenery wherever possible, from small doses such as flower boxes in windows or baskets hanging from posts, to spreading shade trees and lawns, are especially important as the density of pavement and multi-story buildings increase.

Civic art or public art also should be incorporated from the beginning stages of planning any site within the area. Not every individual building site may have an appropriate place to showcase a piece of public art. Public art may be a sculpture composed of durable media capable of withstanding the ravages of extreme weather conditions. It may also be designed to be temporary, and may be intended to be interactive – to invite people to do something to change how it looks, sounds, or moves. More recently, the concept of public art has been expanded to include buskers or performance artists using their own bodies, or voices, to create the specific art form. Any form of public art is intended to draw people close to it and to respond mentally or emotionally to it. While public are may be controversial at times as to how "artistic" it is, any public art incorporated into the Entertainment district should meet local community standards of decency. This is especially important given the expectation that families with children will populate the public realm as they visit the area while enjoying recreational activities or participating in sporting events at the County Sportsplex.

This new neighborhood will need to determine exact placement of new streets as development proceeds. The primary street system has been identified and additional streets will be necessary to create the desired urban character and to conform to the standards of the ENT zoning district. New streets will be expected to adhere to the cross sections provided here based on the expected use level of each street segment.

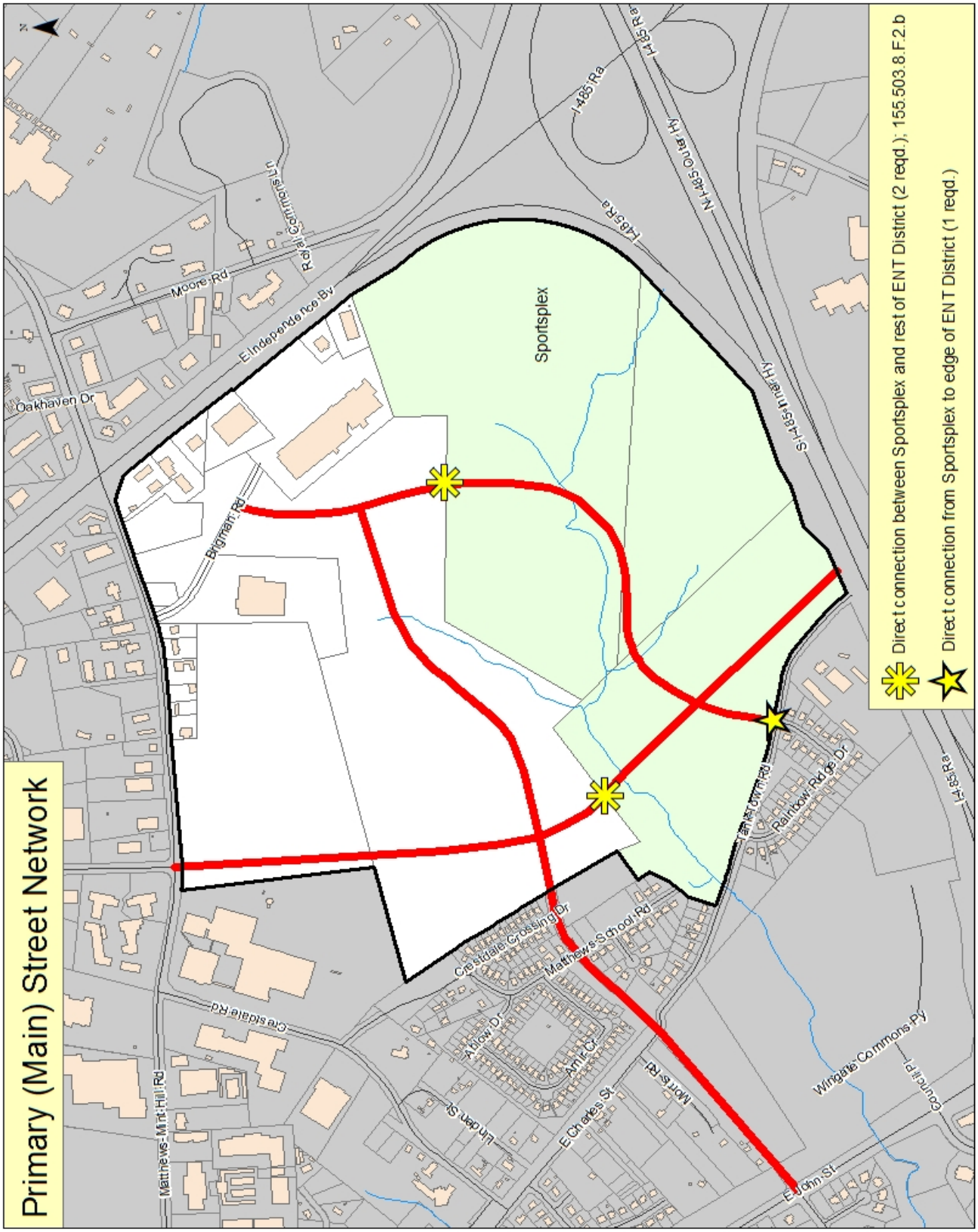
The collector road through the Sportsplex and connecting to Brigman Road has its own adopted cross sections, which change from a more rural feel within the park site to an urban design once entering yet-to-be developed privately-owned land.

Independence Pointe Parkway should be designed to allow for a future transit guideway separate from general vehicular traffic. To accomplish this, sufficient right-of-way should be retained, and the street may be shifted to one side rather than utilizing a typical center line for general purpose traffic.

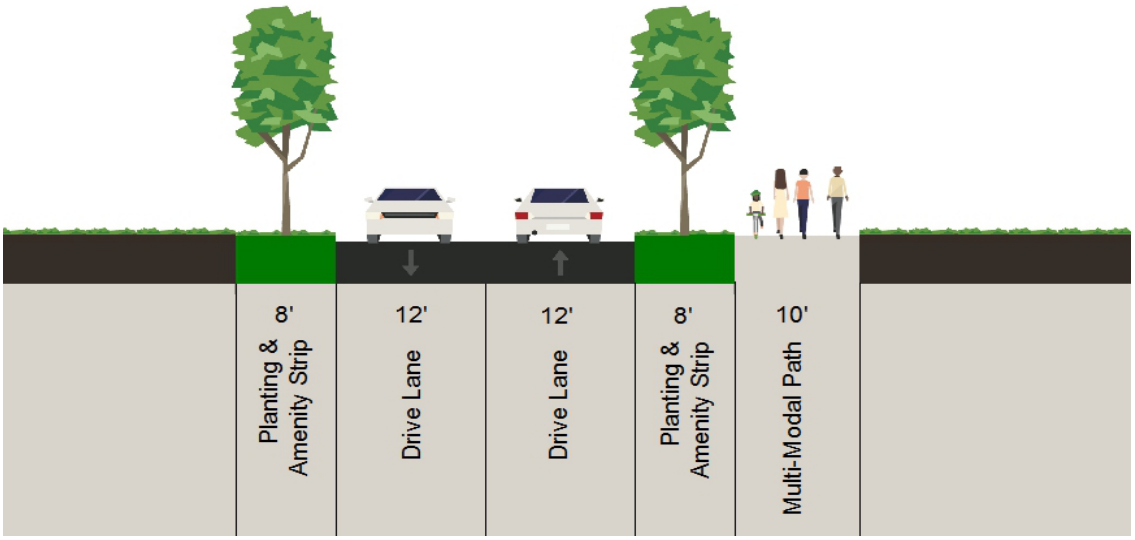
The "main" or primary street to be built generally parallel to Matthew-Mint Hill Road within the privately-owned portion of

the study area is expected to carry higher levels of general traffic than shorter streets that may become part of an urban grid. This “main” street should follow the cross section provided for it here.

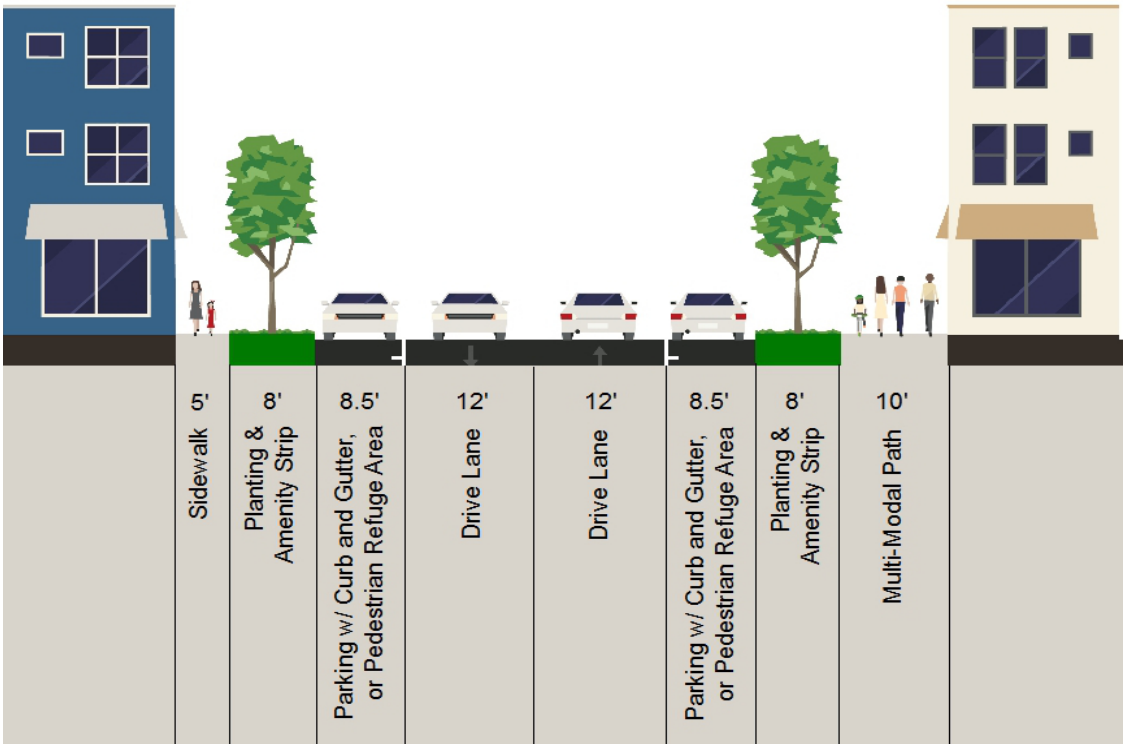
New street segments other than those shown on the “main” or primary street network that may be built over time will generally carry lower speed and lower number of vehicles. These streets can follow the street cross section for commercial urban streets as provided here.


Primary (Main) Street Network
Sportsplex
Direct connection between Sportsplex and rest of ENT District (2 reqd.); 155.503.8.F.2.b
Direct connection from Sportsplex to edge of ENT District (1 reqd.)
Matthews Mint Hill Rd
Crestdale Rd
Crestdale Crossing Dr
Matthews School Rd
Allow Dr
Amit Cir
Lindan St
E Charles St
Morris Rd
E John St
Wingate Commons Py
Council Pl
Rainbow Ridge Dr
Lamar Commons Rd
S I-485 Inner Hy
N I-485 Outer Hy
I-485 Ra
Bigman Rd
Independence By
Moore Rd
Oakhaven Dr
Commons Ln

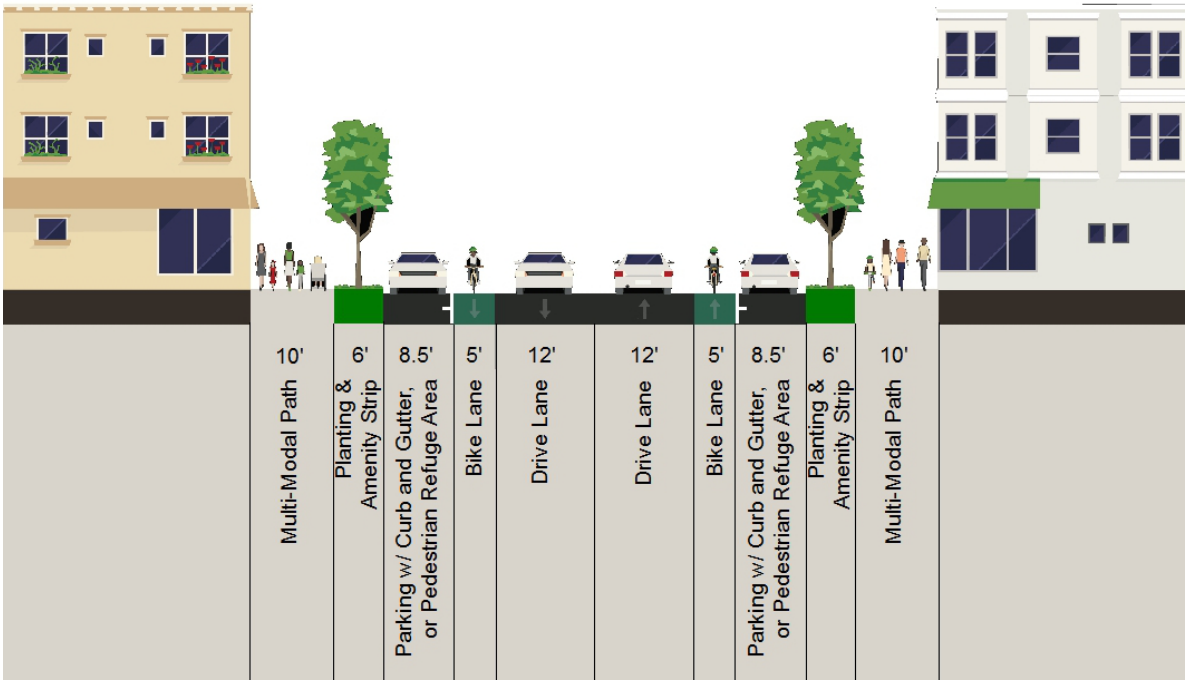
Sports Park Drive in Sportsplex



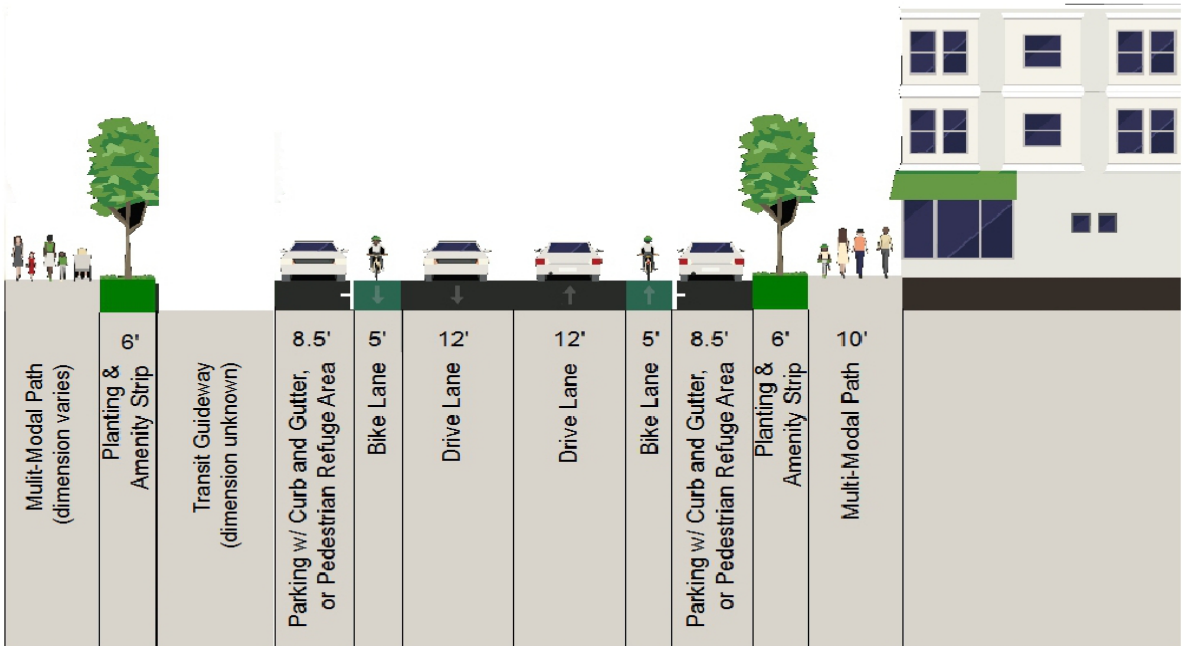
Sports Park Drive outside of Sportsplex



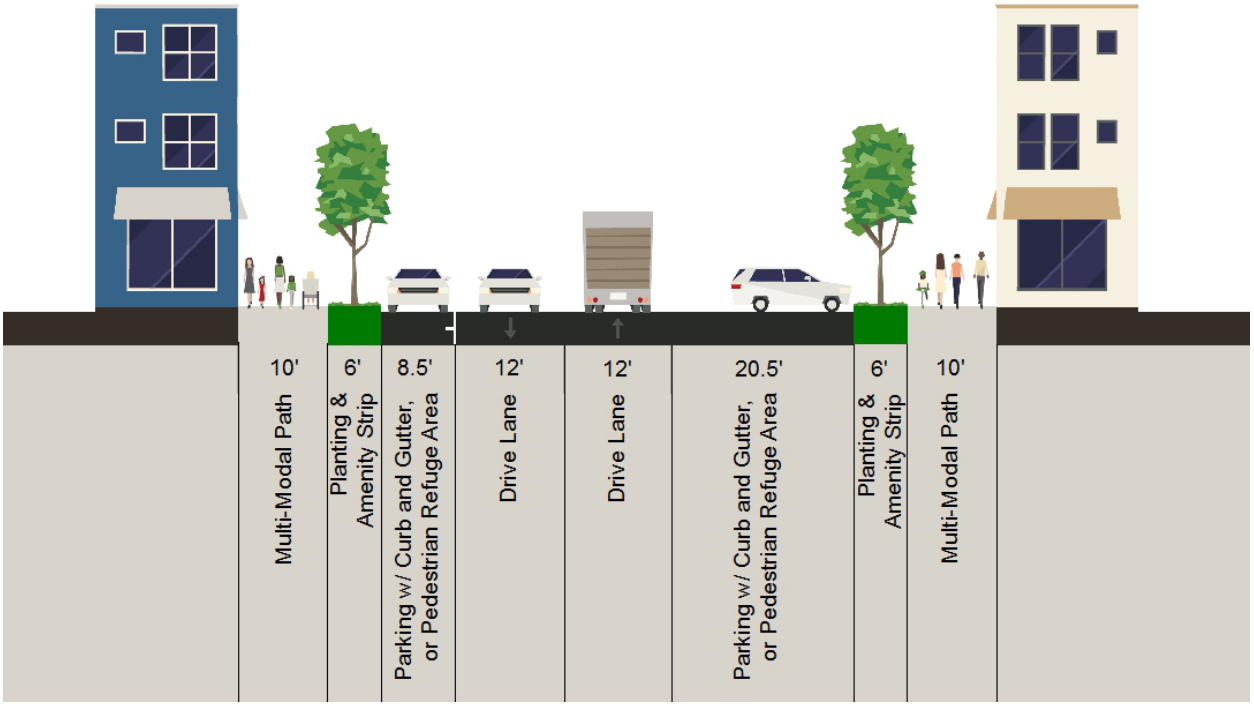
Primary North-South Street



Independence Pointe Parkway



Non “Main” Streets



An urban, mixed use environment will encourage and allow residents and visitors alike to explore site around them on foot or by bicycle, Segway, scooter, skates, or other options than getting in a car. The intent of this development is to offer everyone within the district improved options for getting around. The Center for Design Excellence says that the "best cities are the ones that elevate the experience of the pedestrian while minimizing the dominance of the private automobile". Since this district is in the midst of a suburban location, cars will still be a major influence here, but there can be a new balance between modes of movement.

The ENT district requires a well-designed and integrated system of pedestrian paths, including typical streetside sidewalks, wider multi-modal pathways that may or may not parallel a street, mid-block walkways on longer block faces, and greenways to the side of small creeks. These may allow shared use with bicyclists, family members with baby strollers and pets on a leash, area employees on a work break, joggers and exercise-seekers, window-shoppers enjoying a slowed-down pace, and more. Long-term expectations are for a transit station for some mode of rapid transit to be located along Independence Pointe Parkway within this neighborhood, but even before that becomes a reality it is likely that CATS may run one or more local bus routes into this neighborhood, offering another transportation choice other than a private passenger vehicle.

The ENT district concept plan has a base network of pedestrian and multi-modal pathways that meshes with the "main street" required network. These pathways must continue outside of the district as well, in order to connect this area to other existing development sites in Matthews. This neighborhood is less than a mile from downtown Matthews along Matthews-Mint Hill Road, and a continuous and safe connection must be built as early as possible. The Crestdale Heritage Trail is planned, and pieces will be built in the coming year, that will connect the Sportsplex and downtown through the historic Crestdale community, and will offer a glimpse into the past along the way.

Although at the edge of the ENT district, the CSX rail line will make itself felt and heard by visitors and residents within the ENT district. This railroad carries freight past the area multiple times a day. Today Charles Street/Tank Town Road makes an "S" curve as it crosses the tracks, and the future Greylock Ridge Road will cross the rail line in essentially the same location. The Crestdale Heritage Trail between Crestdale Road and downtown will parallel the rail line.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department is the primary provider of public potable water and sanitary sewer. The study area is located within the section of Mecklenburg County designated as the “960 pressure zone”. Treated drinking water comes from the Franklin and Vest plants, and is distributed throughout this pressure zone from booster pump stations at Sardis Road and Idlewild sites, as well as from the Wilgrove elevated tank. Because so much of the acreage within the overall area is not yet developed, or was developed before CMUD utilities were extended to this edge of the county, there is little public water infrastructure in place today. One 12 inch water main is located along Matthews-Mint Hill Road, and a main extends from there down Brigman Road. Water systems must be looped in order to maintain proper pressure and to keep water flowing so it does not stagnate in dead end pipes. Any new development is anticipated to extend water lines as necessary to provide that development’s needs, and all extensions should anticipate further extensions. New mains and supply lines should be sized from the first development to assume urban build-out of the overall area. This may mean that a 10 inch line may be necessary from current main to a new development site even if it only would require an 8 inch line if no additional development activity were anticipated beyond it.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities also provides sanitary sewer service here, but little infrastructure exist today. An existing sewer main built to service Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) Levine Campus on the far side of I-485 crosses the Sportsplex property, exiting the study area to cross under Tank Town Road and the CSX rail line and heading toward East John Street, all while paralleling a tributary of Four Mile Creek. Because sanitary sewer primarily depends on gravity flow to its treatment plant, sewer mains are usually located along creeks and low-lying depressions. This new neighborhood location forms a portion of the headwaters for Four Mile Creek, which means it should be at a relatively high ground elevation in relation to the eventual treatment facility – McAlpine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant in Pineville. Sewer mains can be anticipated to be constructed within this new neighborhood to follow the small “fingers” of creeks. Similar to water main extensions, each development site will need to extend sewer lines not only sized for that individual facility but to allow for it to become part of a new overall sewer system.

Some existing developed sites along Independence Boulevard and Matthews-Mint Hill Road may have individual access to existing CMUD water and/or sewer mains. The Matthews Plaza shopping center has a privately-owned sewer lift facility at the northwestern edge of their site where Brigman Road dead ends into a private drive for the retail center.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities Department has a Donated Projects program for the extension of both water and sewer mains, which is available to new developments. This program would be the vehicle for infrastructure extensions throughout this new neighborhood.

Storm sewer also would need to be designed and built as individual parcels within the overall study area begin to develop, and it too must be sized from the start for full urban build-out. In an area expected to have substantial impervious surfaces – streets, sidewalks, public plazas, rooftops, etc. – capturing, cleaning, and slowing the flow of released storm water is a critical design consideration. Federal, state, and local regulations today call for designing new development to not allow release of storm water from typical rainfalls at a rate greater than the pre-development rate. The ENT zoning district encourages the use of “green roofs”, which can mean an alternative method of utilizing the surface area of a rooftop to collect storm water for growing plants. Public plazas and other small pockets of living plant materials can be designed to receive initial storm water from a rainstorm, filter it for impurities as the plant roots take up nutrients, and then release the excess water to the downward drainage system. Storm water collection facilities can be designed to only have water in them for a brief period after a rainfall, or can be intended to maintain a certain level of water, and can often become a positive visual and recreation amenity for the immediate surrounding residents and visitors. Fountains may be installed in a “wet” pond situation, or a low seating wall can be built along the edge, or a pier may be built out over the water surface, or other methods to utilize the water surface for more activity than just storm water collection and storage.

COSTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Following the small area plan completed by Woolpert Inc in 2007, the consultants provided the Town with infrastructure cost estimates in April 2008. These assumed build-out of streets, utilities and pedestrian facilities matching the street network which was associated with their proposed site layout, but allowed for extrapolation of unit costs as alternative build-out scenarios were considered.

Costs were provided for Independence Pointe Parkway as either a 2 lane or a 6 lane divided median cross section. Other internal streets were priced in the following cross sections: two travel lanes with one on-street parking lane; two travel lanes with one on-street parking lane and center median; and four travel lanes with on-street parking and median. Cost estimates were also provided for utility main extensions, manholes, hydrants, and related items typically placed within the public right-of-way. For comparison to this concept plan layout's "main street" required network, the 2008 cost estimates for "Situation #1" public infrastructure totaled $1,228,950. This assumed a 2-lane configuration for Independence Pointe Parkway from Matthews-Mint Hill Road to Greylock Ridge Road, Greylock Ridge Road within the ENT district boundaries only, Sports Street from the County's park site to existing Brigman Road, and one street connecting Independence Pointe Parkway to Sports Street.

Two years later, in 2010, while effects of the recession were still limiting access to financing, the Town received estimated values for build-out here. Seven Oaks Company used the 2007 Woolpert build-out concept, which suggested just over 4 million square feet of mixed use buildings and 7,800 parking spaces to arrive at construction costs of $494,790,000, not including land acquisition, financing or related "soft" development costs. This involved $272,857 in land costs per acre, and had the potential to create an average of $353,421 in increased value per acre.

The Town requires dedication of all public street rights-of-way as, or before, improvements are made to the private parcels adjacent to them. The Town does not anticipate or intend to acquire right-of-way for streets internal to the family entertainment mixed use development portion of the ENT district. The Town has considered participating financially in the acquisition of right-of-way for portions of Greylock Ridge Road extension from East John Street to the ENT district, and has received CDBG funding for the Crestdale Heritage Trail which overlaps the alignment of the future connector roadway. The CDBG funds may assist in achieving some remaining portions of the right-of-way not yet obtained.

Natural Resources and Open Space

The Sportsplex is a County community-wide park that includes greenways, cross country paths, undisturbed wooded natural area, picnic shelters, and playgrounds. While the largest groups of participants at the Sportsplex will be there for organized team field sports, it is clearly intended to be used by the public for many different recreational and leisure activities.

This geographic location forms part of the headwaters for Four Mile Creek. Small streams wander through the site like individual fingers, making their way toward each other to form a single larger flowing stream, the palm of the “hand”, as it exits the area to the southwest. Each of these “fingers” and “palm” may be suitable for a greenway trail that can extend a line of nature into the predominately urban built environment.

Funding:

Since the first concept plans were drawn up for this geographical area, its overall size and need for internal consistency and coordination has automatically compelled the Town to understand the need for a master build-out plan and preferably one, or a small number, of master developers. The Town has also understood the potential for a public-private shared effort to fund some portion of improvements. Mecklenburg County, of course, is a major public player as it develops the regional Sportsplex. The County has provided park bond funding of $5 million in Phase 1, and $25 million for Phase 2 of the park. The Town of Matthews has committed to $2 million toward the County park project, which may be used within the County property or for improvements leading to the park site (i.e., Greylock Ridge Road).

In July 2010 the NC General Assembly approved local legislation authorizing the Town of Matthews to participate financially in a public-private development partnership outside of the downtown area which can be expected to result in significant economic benefit to the overall community. This act only applies to one project within the corporate limits "that includes a sports facility and a family entertainment complex and the extension of Greylock Ridge Road". Town funds cannot exceed one half of the total project costs. This is similar to the process used by the Town and its private developer partner in building Matthews Station Street and its adjacent parcels.

The Town has explored the possibility of implementing a version of a tax increment financing (TIF) process similar to how the City of Charlotte has applied it to certain projects, but recognizes that the Town alone will not be sufficient to make it worthwhile. In order for a synthetic TIF or similar program to be economically feasible, the County would need to simultaneously participate. This, however, may be an option for some district-wide infrastructure improvements, such as major street gateways, greenway/multi-modal pathways not adjacent to streets, or a district-wide water quality feature.

Urban Design and Placemaking:

By using a specific set of street trees, architectural elements, street lights/posts, street sign brackets, gateway signage, benches, and related outdoor furniture and amenities, the area can achieve a sense of cohesiveness, or "branding". While not all the items that may be repeated throughout the district, it should include the following. Where no specific is provided below, it was not determined prior to adoption of this small area plan, which means that category will need Town Board approval before installation anywhere within the district.

- Street trees: slippery elm, London plane, ginkgo, and hackberry
- Street lights: simple, clean lines; may combine street lighting and pedestrian scale lighting on same posts when appropriate
- Street pedestrian-scale light posts: low-level bollards, simple in design
- Sign name sign brackets: simple, clean lines, but OK to create a logo or topper unique to the new neighborhood
- Benches: must have backrest, prefer slatted or contoured for comfort
- Trash containers and tree grates: color and style consistent with other street furnishings
- Gateway entrance sign structures: opportunity to display unique neighborhood logo and name (if/when selected)
- Internal wayfinding (directory and directional) signage: must be consistent and must use selected name and/or logo, should match/complement color and character of light posts
- Public parking signage: must be consistent and must use selected name and/or logo, should match/complement color and character of light posts
- Cross walk pavement marking: preference to have pedestrian use crossings clearly delineated by contrasting color or pavement marking/stamping, as long as stamping process does not cause potential tripping
- Architectural thematic elements: simple, clean lines, but sufficient use of color, different exterior materials, changes of plane, door and window openings, and other decorative features to create visual interest and to make walking beside a wall a comfortable and appealing activity; upper floor balcony or rooftop space desirable to increase the sense of life and activity on the street; traditional architectural design not necessary, allowing more contemporary themes OK if they do not become too severe or devoid of visual and textural interest
- Pavement within public realm area other than street-side walkways: preference to use an assortment of pavement colors, textures, stamping, etc. in order to create visual contrast to adjacent building walls; greenery essential in as many places as possible to break up the appearance of impervious surfaces; use of outdoor furnishings to encourage people to come and stay, whether to sit and people-watch, or to play an oversized game of checkers, or to relax with a book by a water feature
- Public art: art features should have visual and textural interest, and as often as possible be pieces that people can touch or climb or otherwise experience; preference for understandable and identifiable pieces – may have pleasing curves and smooth surfaces, encouraging people to sit and climb, or may create a recognizable shape of a human, vehicle, flower, etc.
- Outdoor plazas and open spaces: surrounding development should use building walls, trees, or other features to surround the open area in order to create a sense of an outdoor “room”; some sense of enclosure, being protected or separated from adjacent streets even if the street is close by

Matthews Town Board may wish to take a lead in selecting a specific name and logo to “brand” this new neighborhood. This would ideally be created with input from all property owners and may also request the involvement of existing businesses and employers within the area today. This name and this logo, if designated, can then be used when selecting specific design criteria for street furnishings, light poles, etc. As the area begins to have new development of both public infrastructure and new buildings for residential and business use, new gateway entrance signs may also be approved using this neighborhood name and logo.

As stated at the end of the Land Use section above, Town Board is encouraged to establish some policies on maximum amounts of specific land use categories as the neighborhood is being built out, in order to maintain a balance of uses. Town Board has requested similar balancing provisions through conditional zoning of other mixed use proposals, to assure that the area actually develops into the blended activity location it is envisioned to become. Initial policies might include:

* no more than 600 dwelling units should be permitted and built here until at least 40,000 square feet of commercial is under construction or completed.

* no more than 120,000 square feet of commercial should be permitted until at least 240 dwelling units are under construction.

* no single retail establishment should be greater than 70,000 square feet.

These policies can be revisited at any time at Council's discretion or on request of a proposed new development. They can be revised on a motion by Town Board and will not require amendment to this small area plan.

The ENT zoning district provisions talk about creating both short-term and long-range parking plans as each site within the overall neighborhood develops. As any portion of the neighborhood meets a density level sufficient to warrant structured shared parking and therefore opens land area where surface parking has been located to further urban-scale development, designated sites can convert to the new structured parking facility. There are many ways a threshold could be defined, but one possibility is to base it on the maximum build-out suggested by the 2007 conceptual plan. Since these amounts may be considered more intense than expected to be developed in today's market, they would be conservative levels for conversion. The 2007 concept plan projected up to 1,875,000 square feet of mixed commercial and nonresidential buildings, 1,450 dwelling units, and 475 hotel rooms. The 2007 design layout proposed ultimately converting surface parking into two structured parking facilities of 600 parking spaces each. These structured facilities would be able to accommodate 2 to 3 times as many parking spaces as the underlying ground surface. One parking deck was designed to be shared by a mix of uses within the new neighborhood and the Sportsplex stadium, so it would be located on privately owned land close to the stadium. The other was envisioned to be utilized by businesses and residents in the immediate vicinity of the future transit station so that it could also function as a park and ride lot during the day. Other locations may also be identified throughout the neighborhood as future structured parking.

Surface to structured parking conversion could be triggered within a segment of the overall new neighborhood when the land within a 350 foot radius of an identified future structured parking site meets one of the following:

1) When CATS approves extension of a mass transit mode other than local or express bus to the proposed transit station location within the new neighborhood;

2) When Mecklenburg County approves an ongoing joint-use agreement for at least 200 parking spaces within a structured parking facility for stadium use on adjacent privately-owned land; or

3) When at least 400,000 square feet of nonresidential development, at least 500 dwelling units, or a mix of residential, overnight lodging, and/or nonresidential uses totaling at least 500,000 square feet have permits issued for construction.

This can be accomplished either by separate Town Board policy or included within this small area plan.