



## Section 3:

# IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT

### Values:

Active Community, Cooperation, Inclusive

### Vision Statement:

Stallings is a community with a small-town spirit that works together towards its future. The town values quality community design and signature elements that make Stallings unique and identifiable. Community culture is supportive and demonstrated through community events and citizens participate, volunteer, and cooperate for the greater good of the community.



# Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

## Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT



### *Introduction*

### *Identity and Involvement Issues*

### *Elements of Identity and Involvement*

### *Key Image Focus Areas/Corridors*

### *Quality Community Design*

### *Community Culture*

### *Goals*

### *Strategies*

## Introduction

A community's identity and culture make it a unique place in the world. Community identity coalesces from a combination of the buildings, land uses, gathering spaces, and aesthetic features. A community's culture is characterized by the people, the sense of community, and the opportunities for gathering, volunteering, and working together. These community traits influence the choice of residents to live and remain in Stallings, entice businesses to locate in the area, and invite visitors to spend time in the community.

Stallings' strives to define, preserve, and enhance its "quality of place" by planning to be successful in identity and culture, and developing specific strategies and tools to attract and retain residents and desirable businesses. The strategies and tools outlined here in this plan will guide future development and transform existing areas, creating functional, aesthetically appealing, cohesive and people-oriented places that foster civic pride.

## Identity and Involvement Issues:

- There are few distinguishing features to let one know they are within the Town of Stallings, and the Town's geography makes it seem that Stallings is a place that one should travel through, rather than stop to enjoy.
- There are minimal community gathering spaces, especially north of U.S. 74.
- Extensive transportation improvements planned for the next decade could positively impact the Town's identity if enhancements (such as unique bridge treatments, streetscape elements, signage, etc.) are planned and implemented.
- Vacant and underutilized commercial buildings and sites do not contribute to the economy or the visual attractiveness of the community.
- There is no identifiable town center.
- There are no coordinated community, site, or building design elements that tie projects together across the community.
- There are very few coordinat-



## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT

#### Elements of Identity and Involvement

Various elements combine to form community identity, from landscaping to building design, to streetscapes, to events and festivals. In using the Comprehensive Plan as a tool to enhance identity, it is important to consider the issues that shape Stallings' image. The following questions help to frame planning as related to image:



ed streetscape and hardscape features in the Town that serve to identify the community from surrounding areas.

- Zoning ordinance site design controls are not in place to allow diversified development, specifically mixed-use development and variations in density, that would positively impact the Town's identity.
- There are minimal opportunities for community involvement, advocacy, and leadership.
- Stallings' history and cultural amenities are not celebrated as a community.
- Access to visual, literary, and performing arts are available regionally, but limited within Stallings. Regional partnerships and marketing efforts are needed to promote what is accessible and encourage visits to Stallings and the surrounding communities.
- U.S. 74 bisects Stallings, creating a mental and physical barrier between the north and south sides of Town.
- How do you know that you are in Stallings?
- Can the primary corridors be improved visually?
- How can the entrances, or gateways, to Stallings be more clearly identified?
- How can the sense of "place" and pride be enhanced?
- What can be done to enhance the marketability and desirability of Stallings?
- What can be done to give residents a shared sense of pride and belonging?
- How can Stallings enhance opportunities for public engagement, involvement, and volunteerism?



## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT

The answers to these questions will help to guide public actions related to community identity and involvement.

#### Open House and Community Preference Survey Results

During two public Open House events, Stallings residents, property and business owners were asked about their favorite places within Stallings, and the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the Town. Community prefer-



ence surveys assessed what participants thought about the appearance of their community and the types of development and public facilities that they valued. The results revealed strong and consistent preferences among the participants. Favorite aspects of the Town included parks and recreation facilities, neighborhoods, schools, and shopping areas. The most frequently cited assets for the community included community safety, small-town feel, a friendly community, easily accessible, quality of schools, and green and open space. Major concerns included the rapid pace of growth and traffic congestion.

Also, participants expressed concern for the following:

- Lack of street connectivity
- Lack of office and employment opportunities
- Lack of restaurants
- Lack of business landscaping
- The need for sidewalks and trails

As part of the community preference survey, participants also showed preferences for:

- Well-designed, walkable mixed-use centers, with green space, gathering areas, adequate parking, and good lighting (to add to the tax base and appeal to mixed-generations)





## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT



- Mid-rise office and retail employment centers
- Larger lot residential development
- Single-story, smaller housing choices for seniors and young professionals
- Attached housing that looks like single family detached, with green space, privacy, and amenities

These sentiments or preferences help to define the community's values regarding design. They provide the basis for creating policies that will be supported and embraced by the community to help develop a sense of place and community pride.

#### The Public Realm

Much of the Town's image and identity depends on the character of the public realm. The public realm includes the Town's streets, sidewalks and trails, parks, and other outdoor spaces. It comprises a large portion of Stallings land and represents a substantial public investment. The design of the public realm plays a major role in defining the character, identity and aesthetic quality of the Town and individual neighborhoods. Features within the public realm serve a variety of

important functions: transportation, passive and active recreation, gathering places, opportunities to connect to nature and each other, and mitigation of urban heat island effects (urban areas that are hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the loss of tree canopy and changes made to the surface such as poured asphalt or concrete).

Coordinating the individual elements within the public realm can have a unifying affect and serve to identify the Town of Stallings as a separate and distinct entity, enhance corridors, and boldly proclaim that you have arrived in Stallings. The appearance of these components has a great impact on the impression that visitors and residents have of the Town. A synchronized approach to community furniture, signage, lighting, etc. can be implemented through public and private development. Through the continued improvement and enhancement of the public realm, the Town's desire to create a positive identity will continue to develop.

#### Street Trees and Landscaping

Streetscape landscaping can play an important role in forming the visual image of Stallings, and is an important element in forming the Town's identity. Just as streets, sidewalks,

and recreational facilities are a part of a community's infrastructure, so are publicly owned trees and landscaping. They enhance the street environment by providing shade and reducing the pavement temperature in the summer. They also serve to reduce glare, provide a buffer between cars and pedestrians and enhance views.

Streetscaping can impart a unifying look and feel that will help define the Town, especially when applied to primary corridors, such as Stallings Road and Stevens Mill Road. Street trees and landscaping in the public right-of-way must be planned carefully to maintain safety for all users, reduce conflicts with overhead and underground utilities, and mitigate excess debris on sidewalks and within the roadway. A consistent planting plan for medians and street side landscaping within the public right-of-way is critical to reducing future conflicts.

#### Street Signage

Distinctive street signage should be used along major streets to show visitors that they have arrived in Stallings. A distinctive signage template should be developed that would incorporate the Stallings logo or other branding elements. These would be used for new street signs and updating existing street





## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT

signs as resources allow, to unify the appearance along the major streets. In addition to street signs, a uniform post should be identified that would be used for street signs and traffic control signs. Alternatively, the Stallings logo could be used as a marker at major intersections.



#### Street Furniture

All street furniture and fixtures - benches, trash receptacles, lighting, bollards, bike racks, planters, and tree grates - should be a consistent color and style to provide a harmonized appearance. These fixtures should be located along sidewalks, major streets, at public facilities, such as parks, and public gathering spaces within larger private developments (such as mixed-use and town center projects). Street furniture should be incorporated into site plans and new development as it occurs. Community banners also

provide a unifying affect and can be changed seasonally.

#### Wayfinding

As the Town continues to grow and provide additional public facilities, the need for directional signage will increase. To enhance the visual appearance of the Town, a “wayfinding” signage master plan should be created. Wayfinding signs will unify street signage and serve as a positive identifying feature for the Town. The master plan should create a standard sign style for all public signage, including size, lettering, colors, symbols, and logos.



#### Traffic Signals

Decorative mast arm moncurve traffic signals with mounted street name signs should be used where feasible to unify this important traffic element. Developing a list of prioritized intersections approved by the Town will as-

sist in working with NCDOT on new installations.

#### Town Gateways

The enhancement of the gateways, or entrance points, to the Town of Stallings will quickly accomplish the objective to enhance the Town's identity. Through the development of gateway features, visitors, shoppers, and residents will be able to immediately recognize that they are entering the Town and get a sense of the Town's character. Gateways should be designed with distinctive features such as decorative signs, landscaping, lighting, or other features that set the tone for the Town's commitment to high-quality development.

Both Primary and Secondary Gateways have been established and mapped for Stallings, through the work of the Steering Committee. The Primary Gateways include Town entry points along major streets and/or intersections. These areas should include a major identification sign with distinctive landscaping welcoming people to the Town.

Secondary Gateways are generally the point(s) along a minor street where the official corporate limits of Stallings begin. By marking these locations with decorative landscaping, lighting, banners, etc., the Town can make a more

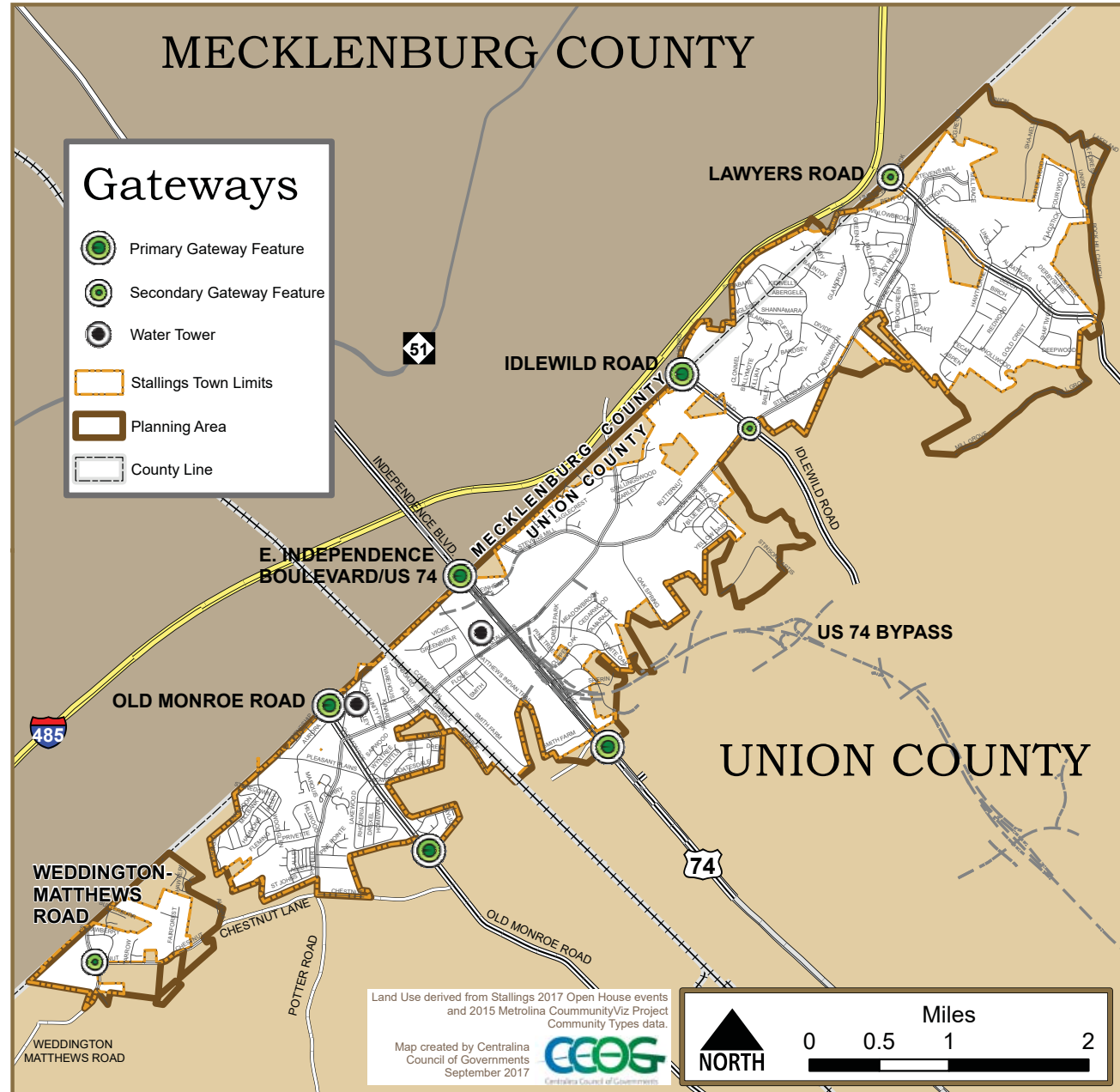




## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT

# Land Use





## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT



subtle statement regarding the goal to create a distinctive Town image.

In addition, water towers present an opportunity for branding and town identity. The Town's new branding elements (colors, logo, etc.) can be used on the water towers to coordinate with other Town signage and banners.

#### Community Landscaping

Landscaping is one of the key elements of a quality built environment and the creation of a desired place. In combination with good design, landscaping can mitigate impacts of incompatible land uses and reduce visual differences between developments with varying levels of density.

The difference that good landscaping makes cannot be overstated. Trees and other landscape features can enhance businesses by improving front door image and presentation.

Strong landscaping requirements for residential and non-residential development signify community pride and the desire to create desirable places. Through enhanced landscaping codes, the community, over time, will develop an enhanced tree canopy which projects a positive community image.

#### Quality Site Design

Quality site design is another community standard that improves the quality of the built environment and coordinates development features throughout the Town. The size and placement of buildings, the location of parking areas, the planting of trees and the design and placement of signs all have an effect on the perceived impact of new development. Good site design for multi-family and attached housing can reduce the perceived density of those developments and encourage greater community-wide acceptance. A well thought out site design is essential to mixed use and higher density developments, especially when situated in proximity to traditional single-family neighborhoods. Good site and building design allows limited land to be used more ef-

ficiently, without degrading the character of the new or adjacent development. Mixed-use and higher density developments without quality site and building design will not create the results that Stallings desires, and will negatively impact community image. To achieve desired results, Stallings must have a higher level of expectation for high quality site planning and design.

Enhancing site design when properties are already developed creates additional challenges. In order to achieve momentum in this area, strategies for addressing existing development will be needed, ranging from code enforcement priorities to clearly defining site elements that must be upgraded when sites change use or when buildings expand.

#### Community Anchors

Community anchors are institutions, places, and developments that identify a community and work together to provide an external community image. Currently, it could be argued that Stallings has several community anchors, including the elementary school, Stallings Park, Blair Mill Park, and the Town Hall. Adding identifiable community anchors as Stallings grows will be important to its culture and identity.

### Potential Future Community Anchors:

- Walkable Town Center
- Major Park
- Satellite Library
- Civic Center
- Medical Center





## Town of Stallings Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### Section 3: IDENTITY & INVOLVEMENT

# Community Culture



Potential, future community anchors for Stallings include:

- A defined town center or “down-town” with walkable streets, gathering spaces, and day and evening activities to serve as a popular destination for visitors and residents.
- A major park facility (fully realized vision for Blair Mill Park) north of U.S. 74.
- A satellite library facility to serve as a community resource for children and adults, including providing gathering space, access to job information, and providing computers for homework and/or communicating with family.
- A civic center for public engagement, a meeting space for local clubs, and/or a venue for community events, weddings, and private parties.

- A professional, small-scale medical center, where public health and medical services and related businesses are grouped.

These community spaces, will work in concert to improve the marketability, sense of place, and belonging for the Town and its residents.

### Community Culture

Stallings is an active community and offers multiple community events throughout the year, such as bike rodeos, food truck rallies, and festivals in the Town park, which draw residents from adjoining counties and beyond. The Parks and Recreation Department offers seasonal programming for sports, courses that introduce children to nature, summer camps, and more general environmental education.

Volunteerism is a critical backbone of any successful community and in Stallings, volunteers serve on community

planning and park boards and commissions and the Town Board. Volunteer opportunities are also available to residents through a program called “the Power of One”, which highlights the power that one person or one family can make on their community through one hour a year of their time. Through this program, residents have the option of volunteering to teach community courses on science, history, outdoor skills, art, and other various topics. This unique program allows neighbors to share their knowledge and give back to their own community.

Building a large and diverse group of community advocates and volunteers who understand local government and Stallings’ assets is another way to build on the Town’s success. Creating a citizen’s academy or other program to introduce residents to Town government would be beneficial and could grow the volunteer pool for municipal boards.



## Goals and Strategies

### Goal I-1

Develop organizational structure for Town beautification and community involvement.



#### Strategy I-1.1

Promote the many benefits of good community appearance and the importance of aesthetics to quality of life and economic development by developing a standard for landscape, streetscape and architecture.

#### Strategy I-1.2

Create an entity responsible for beautification and community identity, such as a “Keep Stallings Beautiful” committee that has staff support.

#### Strategy I-1.3

Create a citizens’ academy to teach future volunteers and board members local government functions and processes.

#### Strategy I-1.4

Develop a comprehensive list of volunteer opportunities and share with citizens at least annually.

### Goal I-2

Enhance community pride and identity by improving the public realm.



#### Strategy I-2.1

Develop a streetscape cross-section for primary corridors and subdivision streets to ensure consistent median plantings, street trees, and setbacks. Development of the planting plan should be done in coordination with utility providers and agreed upon cross-sections should be incorporated into the zoning ordinance to ensure that private development adheres to the identified streetscape.

#### Strategy I-2.2

Develop consistent community furniture theming for community identification and incorporate elements into both public and private development projects.

#### Strategy I-2.3

Require developers to design streetscaping oriented to the pedestrian, such as sidewalks, lighting, street furniture and trees.

#### Strategy I-2.5

Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage program that directs residents and visitors to public facilities, parks, and other important community facilities.

#### Strategy I-2.6

Work with NCDOT to ensure that new traffic signal mast arms are consistent in design. Develop a phasing plan to incorporate mast arms at key intersections.

# Goals & Strategies



## Goals and Strategies

### Goal I-3

Community gateways should incorporate design elements that greet and direct the public and evoke a sense of place.



#### Strategy I-3.1

Incorporate approved welcome signage and landscaping at primary gateways.

#### Strategy I-3.2

Incorporate street furniture (benches, banners, etc.) and landscaping at secondary gateways.

#### Strategy I-3.3

Encourage developments adjacent to community gateways to use similar design elements that reflect the character of the Town.

### Goal I-4

Coordinated, thoughtful design should be incorporated in all projects to enhance community image, connectedness, and identity.



#### Strategy I-4.1

Encourage continuity of significant site and/or design elements (architecture, scale, landscaping) when considering a proposed development in relation to the community and neighboring properties.

### Strategy I-4.2

Connect existing neighborhoods to each other and to places of interest with greenways, sidewalks, or walking paths.

### Strategy I-4.3

Promote the concept of individually planned developments, but maintain a sense of connection and belonging to Stallings through signage, landscaping, street furniture, etc.

### Strategy I-4.4

Provide a connected Town transportation framework through automobile, pedestrian, and bicycle linkages between residential developments, business areas, and recreational activity centers.

### Goal I-5

Utilize existing and planned public spaces, facilities, and projects to create community anchors that highlight “place”, community appearance, and identity.



#### Strategy I-5.1

Encourage the development of civic spaces and community anchors, such as a library, park space, civic space, etc. as part of private development proposals.

# Goals & Strategies

## Goals and Strategies

### Strategy I-5.2

Create additional public gathering spaces and park facilities, especially north of I-74. Blair Mill Park should be further developed to provide additional amenities and programs and be connected by greenways and sidewalks to surrounding neighborhoods.

### Strategy I-5.3

Promote the development of a mixed-use, walkable town center, with community gathering spaces.

### Strategy I-5.4

Encourage medical and health services and businesses to locate in proximity to one another to create a medical anchor.

### Strategy I-5.5

Connect community facilities to each other and to neighborhoods through sidewalks, trails, and/or bike paths.

### Strategy I-5.6

Promote the creation of town anchors through small area planning.

### Goal I-6

Foster a sense of community by promoting the importance of community heritage and a mix of cultural opportunities.



### Strategy I-6.1

Encourage community oriented events and festivals to celebrate the history of Stallings and foster tourism.

### Strategy I-6.2

Promote community education and awareness of the heritage of western Union County and Stallings.

### Strategy I-6.3

Increase access to the arts (music, literature, visual and performing arts, etc.) in Stallings through partnerships with public and private organizations and agencies.

### Goal I-7

Ensure that Town codes allow the high-quality development that is expected and desired.



### Strategy I-7.1

Amend Town codes to allow and encourage planned, mixed-use developments with density levels to support business activity.

### Strategy I-7.2

Strengthen non-residential landscaping requirements for both streetscapes and buffering.

### Strategy I-7.3

Adjust Town codes to provide density bonuses for projects that incorporate a designated community anchor within their project. Community anchors will be further defined in the code.

### Strategy I-7.4

Develop a checklist of site improvements required based on a threshold of redevelopment or change of use. Incorporate requirements into the Town code.

# Goals & Strategies

