

Section VI: Moving Forward



Moving Forward

Promoting Growth and Quality of Life

The visioning process provides leaders and residents of Mineral Springs with a blueprint for the future. The process yielded multiple benefits. Through data collection and analysis, Mineral Springs has a full understanding of current conditions and future goals. The key for local leaders is to implement a strategy for making the vision a reality. As Mineral Springs moves forward, it is important to keep in mind the following four themes:

- Rural Heritage and Preservation go hand-in-hand
- Small town life and small government cannot be maintained in a context of rapid growth and development, without strong and innovative zoning controls
- Community Participation is vital to the overall success of the plan
- Strict zoning guidelines are needed to insure that approved development conforms to the vision

The various housing typologies proposed in the vision are a first step in preserving rural heritage. Whenever possible, efforts should be made to develop with nature, not to conquer it. Throughout Union County, productive agricultural land, beautiful tree stands, rolling hills and clear streams are being despoiled and lost in the battle against the bulldozer. In Mineral Springs, efforts need to be taken to insure that development complements its environment, is shielded from the street and does not contribute to the decline of water quality and community health.

One strategy to both preserve the environment and promote active participation in the community is developing a greenway network. The proposed greenway system provides a recreational and alternative transport system around the town. The greenway runs along protected stream corridors whenever possible. To make a complete loop, a section of the greenway will need to parallel the main highway 75 in the form of a wide multi-use path. The greenway system is the least expensive way to



build a park infrastructure in Mineral Springs. The alternative is to buy large tracts of land to set aside for parks.

Community Participation

The visioning process would have been a failure without the buy-in and active role of the local citizenry. Planning tends to fail when it imposes ideas and projects on a community. To date, both the leadership and the residents of Mineral Springs have worked to insure broad participation among both the private and public sectors. As the project moves into its next phases, participation will be vital to its success. Thus, we encourage leaders in Mineral Springs to continue a lively community dialogue about the future of Mineral Springs.

Small-town life and Small Government

While growth can bring benefits in many contexts, it can also radically change the existing culture. Mineral Spring residents clearly expressed a desire for a rural lifestyle. An influx of formerly urban residents can bring new challenges to a small town. Often times, they bring certain expectations for city services like garbage collection, recycling, street lights, schools, etc. None of these services are free. Consequently in

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communities experiencing rapid growth, taxes and public indebtedness increase to cover the costs associated with growth. In addition, new growth can encroach upon local traditions and lifestyles. In some cases, this plays out in “snob zoning” where newcomers’ disdain for manufactured housing and older business establishments lead to community conflict.

Regulatory Context:

In Section 2 of this report, the results of a SWOT analysis of existing planning and zoning ordinances were presented. Without a stronger regulatory mechanism, the vision contained herein is useless. In order for the vision to become reality, precise regulations and tools need to be developed and implemented to reflect community sentiments.



Fig. 69

Conclusion

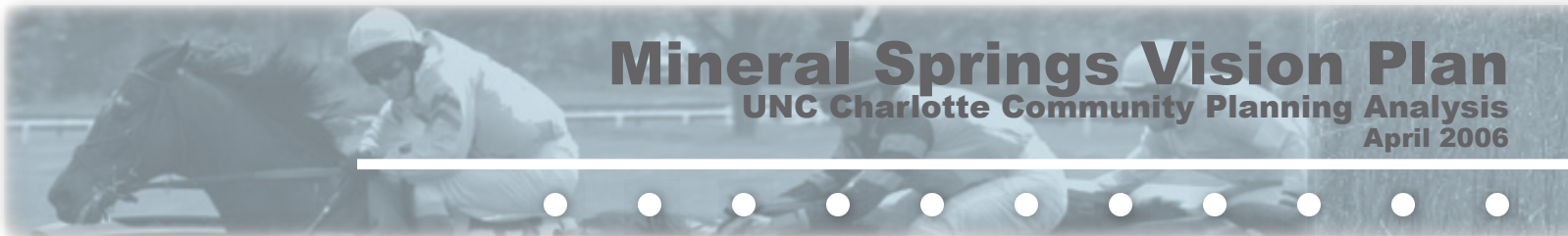
This planning study is the result of a partnership between Mineral Springs’ residents, elected officials and the interdisciplinary consultancy team from UNC Charlotte comprising graduate architecture and community planning students under the direction of professors Ken Chilton and David Walters. The consultancy team has consciously tried to reflect accurately the wishes of Mineral Springs’ citizens, and where these wishes are in conflict with each other (e.g. wanting to maintain rural character while wishing to extend sewer service), or where a predilection has been expressed for a policy that is known not to work well (e.g. universal 1-acre lot zoning as a means of preserving rural character) the team has provided a rationale for alternative or preferred courses of action to achieve important elements of the town’s vision of itself.

To implement this vision is relatively easy from a technical viewpoint of planning and urban design: appropriate policies and precedents exist in our region and in other small towns nationwide. The difficulty lies in the political realm where the necessary policies will be debated and where the pressures for the kind of easy, standardized development that is engulfing Union County will test the resolve of the community to hold to its unique vision. These pressures can be expected to come both from outside the community and from within as citizens explore what these policies they may support in principle mean to each of them individually.

The consultancy team has been privileged to work with the community of Mineral Springs, and wishes the elected officials and citizens good fortune and strength of purpose in their future endeavors to manage their growth. If they are successful in this difficult enterprise, they can become a beacon of progressive, balanced growth for the whole region, the state of North Carolina and for small towns all across America.



Please help protect our community by limiting the growth!



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