



# BETHLEHEM

## COMMUNITY PLAN



SEPTEMBER 2019



# BETHLEHEM

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## COMMUNITY PLAN

**ADOPTED BY**  
ALEXANDER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**DATE**  
SEPTEMBER 9, 2019



*Creative Regional Solutions Since 1968*



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A special thanks to the residents and business owners that participated in this process to plan and shape the future of the Bethlehem Community.

## PREPARED BY

Western Piedmont Council of Governments

## PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Brandon Brumley



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# INTRODUCTION

*Wittenburg Access, Lakeside Marina, NC HWY 127 Bridge*





# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

According to North Carolina General Statutes, every local government must base their zoning decisions on a long-range plan, which describes policies for land-use and growth management issues. These decisions range from rezoning decisions to transportation regulations to policies governing the uses and subdivision of land. Bethlehem will be experiencing a great deal of change, due to the widening of NC Highway 127 and its proximity to the City of Hickory, the Catawba River, and Interstate 40. The Alexander County Commissioners and the Alexander County Planning and Development Department set the process of developing a long-range plan for Bethlehem in motion by contracting with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to assist in developing the Bethlehem Community Plan.

The Bethlehem Community Plan will be a fundamental policy document that will help guide the Community's growth and development over the next twenty to thirty years. The Plan provides a vision of how the community should look in the future and clearly defines the steps that should be taken in order to realize that vision. The Plan identifies areas where investments should occur and what type of growth should be encouraged in each defined area. It also establishes what aspects of the community should change or remain the same to strengthen the quality of life experienced in the community. County Commissioners, Planning and Zoning Commission and Staff can use this comprehensive plan as a guide for developing regulations, deciding rezoning cases, developing capital improvement plans, applying for grants, extending water and sewer infrastructure, amending the zoning ordinance, drafting the budget, and planning for parks. By following this Plan, Alexander County will continue to create the conditions that encourage orderly growth and economic development well into the future.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Bethlehem Community Plan was developed by a 12-person committee, consisting of people from the Planning and Zoning Commission, County Commissioners, County Planning Staff and interested citizens-at-large. This committee was titled the Bethlehem Community Plan Advisory Committee. The Committee underwent a 12-month process of education, discussion and strategic thinking to develop a draft plan for presentation to the Bethlehem Community Plan Advisory Committee and the County Commissioners. The Plan analyzes the current conditions of the community and develops a series of recommended growth management strategies in the areas of land use, transportation, public services, economic development, and natural and cultural resources. When the plan is adopted by the County Commissioners, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the County's planning staff will be charged with prioritizing and implementing the strategies proposed in the Bethlehem Community Plan.

The Bethlehem Community Plan Advisory Committee consisted of:

BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS	
<b>Bud Caywood – Chair</b>	Planning Board
<b>Andi Jack – Vice Chair</b>	Citizen
<b>Ryan Mayberry</b>	Board of Commissioners
<b>Ashley Starnes</b>	Citizen
<b>Betty Long</b>	Citizen
<b>Jim Price</b>	Citizen
<b>John Dahlstrom</b>	Citizen
<b>Randy Bock</b>	Citizen
<b>Steve Brown</b>	Citizen
<b>Susan Osborne</b>	Citizen
<b>Jon Pilkenton</b>	Alexander County Planning & Development
<b>Virginia Austin</b>	Alexander County Planning & Development

## CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The process of creating the Bethlehem Community Plan offered several important ways for citizens to be involved in the Plan’s development. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a community meeting was held at Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church. Attendants were asked to list the assets of the community, their concerns and vision for the community. There were approximately sixty-five (65) citizens in attendance. Community input results from this meeting are provided in Appendix A. On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, the final community meeting was held at Bethlehem Elementary School. At this meeting, citizens were given the opportunity to evaluate whether the draft plan accurately represents the concerns, interests, and vision expressed by the citizens.

## THE APPROVAL PROCESS

The Bethlehem Community Plan Advisory Committee reviewed the plan document on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. There was a unanimous decision to approve the document and to send a recommendation for approval by the County Commissioners. Members of the Community Plan Advisory Committee presented the Plan to the Alexander County Board of Commissioners on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the Plan during the September 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## PLANNING STUDY AREA

When a plan is written for a city or county, there are normally defined boundaries that can be made up of the City's corporate limits and/or the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) of an area. With the Bethlehem Community Plan, the committee had to define what area they wanted to influence through the Plan. There are many different ways to define the Bethlehem Community. The area shown in Figure 2-1 is the Census Designated Place (CDP) boundary, which is identified by the United States Census Bureau. There is also a fire district boundary that encompasses the community, which is larger in size than the CDP. For the purposes of this plan, the Advisory Committee designated a "Planning Study Area," which roughly incorporates portions of both the CDP and fire district boundaries (See Figure 1-1: Planning Study Area). The "Planning Study Area" boundary was drawn to represent those areas most affected by land use changes and does not represent an actual boundary for the Bethlehem Community. Therefore, citizens in the area but outside of the "Planning Study Area" can still be representative of the Bethlehem Community.










## NEXT STEPS

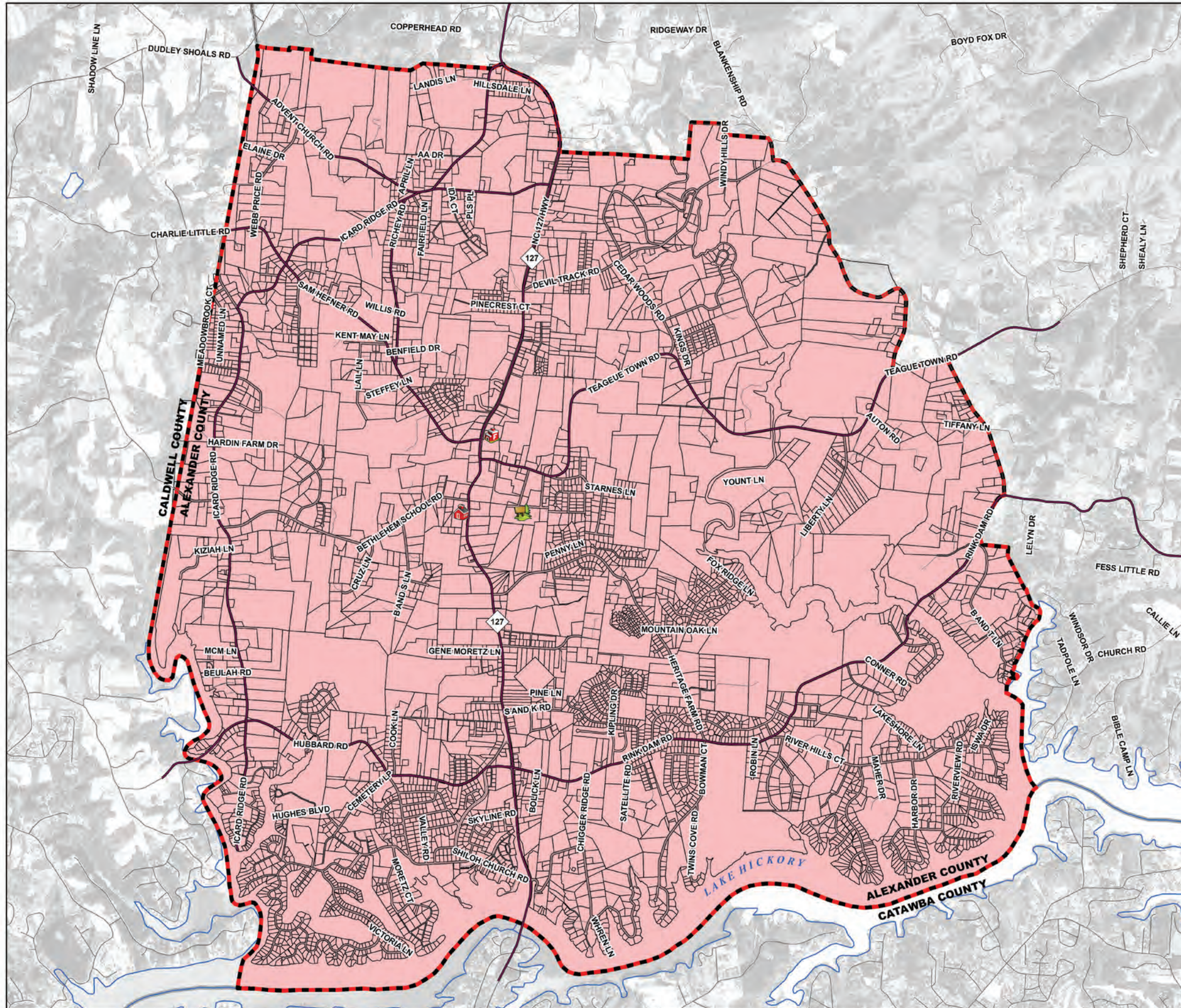
Upon implementation, appropriate changes will be made to the County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. A comprehensive plan is intended to be a living document. Revisions may be necessary based on state law and economic conditions. The Planning and Zoning Commission and planning staff should review the document periodically to determine its effectiveness and the need for revisions to the Plan.



**FIGURE 1-1**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**PLANNING STUDY AREA**

**Legend**

-  Study Area Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Regional Lakes
-  Parcels
-  Bethlehem Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Bethlehem Elementary
-  Bethlehem Fire Department
-  Bethlehem Park



**BETHLEHEM**  
 A SHINING COMMUNITY

This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by WPCOG Planning Department, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.



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 Miles









# DEMOGRAPHICS

*Bethlehem Elementary School*



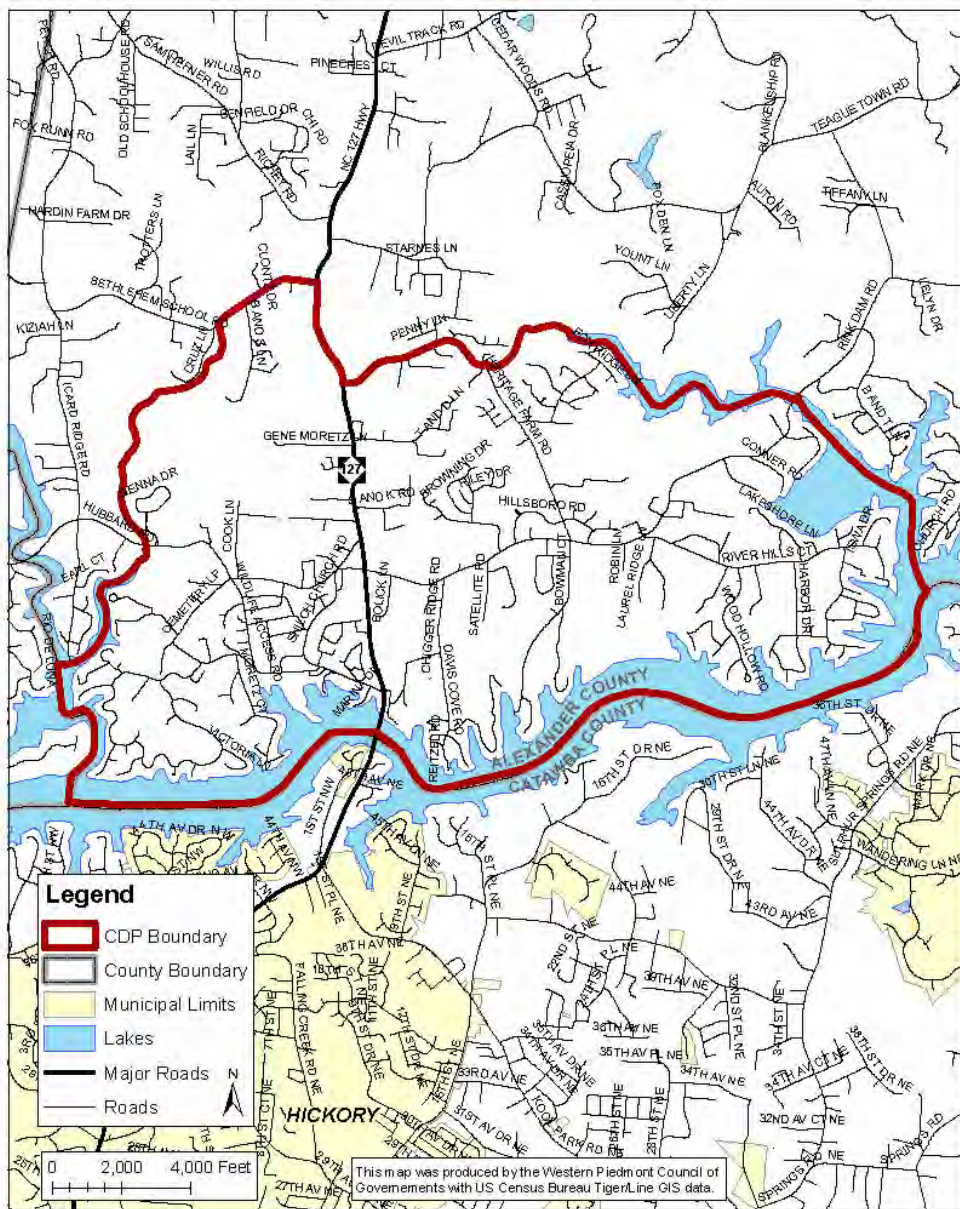


# DEMOGRAPHICS

## BETHLEHEM CDP BOUNDARIES VS. BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

For the Bethlehem Community Demographics section of the report, data for the Bethlehem Census Designated Place (CDP) was used due to availability. The boundaries of the Bethlehem CDP is shown in Figure 2-1. Please note that Bethlehem CDP boundaries are close, but do not exactly match the Advisory committee boundaries of the Bethlehem Community Plan.

**FIGURE 2-1: BETHLEHEM CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACE (CDP) BOUNDARIES**

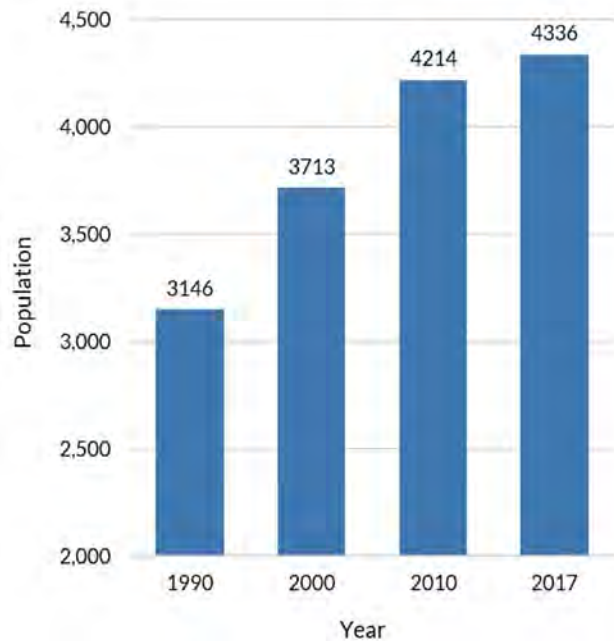


# POPULATION

The Census count in 1990 for the Bethlehem Census Designated Place (CDP) was just 3,146 (Figure 2-2). As of 2017, the North Carolina Office of Management and Budget and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments data center estimates that the population of the Bethlehem CDP is 4,336. Table 2-1 shows population changes between 2000 and 2017 for Bethlehem, Alexander County, the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area or MSA (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties), North Carolina and the United States. Bethlehem added 501 people between 2000 and 2010, an increase of 13.5%. The percentage growth is much higher than the Alexander County (10.7%), Hickory MSA (6.5%) or US (9.7%) population growth rates, but not as high as the North Carolina population growth rate (18.5%). Between 2010 and 2017, Bethlehem experienced a population gain of 477 people, an 11.3% increase. Alexander County gained 3.3% from 2010 to 2017 to 38,452, while the population of the Hickory MSA grew just 0.9% since 2010.

**Figure 2-2.**

**Bethlehem CDP Population, 1990-2017**



Source: 1990-2010 Census, US Census Bureau and NC Office of Management and Budget and WPCOG Data Center, 2018.

TABLE 2-1. POPULATION COMPARISON, 2000-2015							
Location	2000 Census	2010 Census	Change 2000-10	% Inc.	2017 Estimate	Change 2010-17	% Inc.
<b>Bethlehem CDP</b>	<b>3,713</b>	<b>4,214</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>4,961</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>11.3%</b>
Alexander County	33,603	37,198	3,595	10.7%	38,452	1,254	3.3%
Hickory MSA	341,851	365,497	23,646	6.5%	368,950	3,453	0.9%
NC	8,049,313	9,535,483	1,486,170	18.5%	10,272,692	737,209	7.7%
US	281,421,906	308,745,538	27,323,632	9.7%	325,179,168	16,433,630	5.3%

Sources: 2000 and 2010 Census, US Census Bureau; 2015 Estimates from the North Carolina Office of Management and Budget and US Census Bureau, 2017.

Whites are the largest race group in Bethlehem. Over 96% of the Community's population is White (Table 2-2). Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Whites increased by 473 persons to 4,070. Hispanic is the Community's largest minority group (2.0% of Bethlehem's population in 2010). The Community's Hispanic population grew from 66 in 2000 to 83 persons in 2010. Since the 2000 Census, Bethlehem's mixed race population has increased by more than 30 persons to 49 as of 2010.

**TABLE 2-2.  
BETHLEHEM CDP POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNIC GROUP, 2000-2010**

Age Group	2000 Census	% of Population	2010 Census	% of Population	Change 2000-10	% Change 2000-10
White	3,597	96.9%	4,070	96.6%	473	13.1%
African American	19	0.5%	31	0.7%	12	63.2%
American Indian	0	0.0%	8	0.2%	8	N/A
Asian American	52	1.4%	38	0.9%	-14	-26.9%
Two or More Races	18	0.5%	49	1.2%	31	172.2%
Hispanic (Any Race)	66	1.8%	83	2.0%	17	25.8%
White, (Not Hispanic)	3,560	95.9%	4,004	95.0%	444	12.5%

Source: 2000-2010 Census, US Census Bureau.

Age group population data for the Bethlehem CDP from 2000 to 2010 is displayed in Table 2-3. The majority of age groups experienced population growth between 2000 and 2010. The older age groups in the Bethlehem community have increased the most since 2010 due to the aging of the "Baby Boomers." The population of the 60 to 64 age group, for example, more than doubled between 2000 and 2010 to 381 persons. The population of 65 to 74 cohort increased 73.4% from 278 in 2000 to 482 in 2010.

**TABLE 2-3.  
BETHLEHEM CDP POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2000-2010**

Age Group	2000 Census	2010 Census	Change 2000-10	% Change 2000-10
Under 5 Years	230	243	13	5.7%
5 to 9 Years	263	217	-46	-17.5%
10 to 14 Years	243	227	-16	-6.6%
15 to 19 Years	217	255	38	17.5%
20 to 24 Years	158	153	-5	0.1%
25 to 34 Years	478	411	-67	-14.0%
35 to 44 Years	652	569	-83	-12.7%
45 to 54 Years	658	684	26	4.0%
55 to 59 Years	251	336	85	33.9%
60 to 64 Years	181	381	200	110.5%
65 to 74 Years	278	482	204	73.4%
75 to 84 Years	83	215	132	159.0%
85 Years and Over	21	41	20	95.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,713</b>	<b>4,214</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>13.5</b>

Source: 2000-2010 Census, US Census Bureau.

The largest population losses between 2000 and 2010 were in the 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 age groups due to the economic recession causing some younger people to leave the Bethlehem area. The population of the 25 to 34 group fell from 478 in 2000 to 411 in 2010, while the number of persons in the 35 to 44 cohort dropped to 569 in 2010. The loss of population in the age 25 to 34 and 34 to 45 groups led to declines in the age 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 groups. The population age 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 cohorts decreased by 17.5% and 6.6% respectively between 2000 and 2010.

The impacts of the increasing older labor force (age 45 to 64) and elderly (age 65 and older) populations can be seen in Table 2-4. Between 2000 and 2010, the median age in Bethlehem increased by 6.4 years to 45.5. Since 2010, the median age has fallen slightly to 44.0 years as of 2017. Bethlehem’s 2017 median age is more than Alexander County, the Hickory MSA, North Carolina and the United States.

TABLE 2-4. MEDIAN AGE, 2000-2017					
Location	2000	2010	% Change	2017	% Change
<b>Bethlehem CDP</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>-3.2</b>
Alexander County	36.6	40.8	11.5	43.5	6.6
Hickory MSA	36.7	40.5	10.4	42.9	5.9
NC	35.3	37.4	5.9	38.8	3.7
US	35.3	37.2	5.4	38.1	2.4

Source: 2000, 2010 Census, US Census Bureau.

While age group projections are not available for Bethlehem, the NC Office of State Management and Budget has age group projections for Alexander County (Table 2-5). The population of the 65 to 74, 75 to 84 and 85 years and over age cohorts will continue to grow over the next 20 years as the “baby boomers” grow older. The loss of 25 to 44 year olds in the County from 2000 to 2010 will lead to population declines in the 45 to 54 and 55 to 59 groups through 2035. The population of the 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 age cohorts is anticipated to decrease more than 12% between 2015 and 2035.

**TABLE 2-5.  
ALEXANDER COUNTY POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2015-2035**

Age Group	2015 Estimate	2025 Projection	2035 Projection	Change 2015-35	% Change 2015-35
Under 5 Years	1,804	2,100	296	16.4	1,804
5 to 9 Years	2,092	2,198	106	5.1	2,092
10 to 14 Years	2,410	2,213	-197	-8.2	2,410
15 to 19 Years	2,359	2,064	-295	-12.5	2,359
20 to 24 Years	2,244	1,734	-510	-22.7	2,244
25 to 34 Years	4,406	4,713	307	7.0	4,406
35 to 44 Years	4,646	5,133	487	10.5	4,646
45 to 54 Years	5,684	4,637	-1,047	-18.4	5,684
55 to 59 Years	2,771	2,376	-395	-14.3	2,771
60 to 64 Years	2,573	2,387	-186	-7.2	2,573
65 to 74 Years	4,469	5,281	812	18.2	4,469
75 to 84 Years	2,310	3,759	1,449	62.7	2,310
85 Years and Over	684	1,574	890	130.1	684
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,452</b>	<b>40,169</b>	<b>1,717</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>38,452</b>

Source: NC Office of Management and Budget, 2017.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

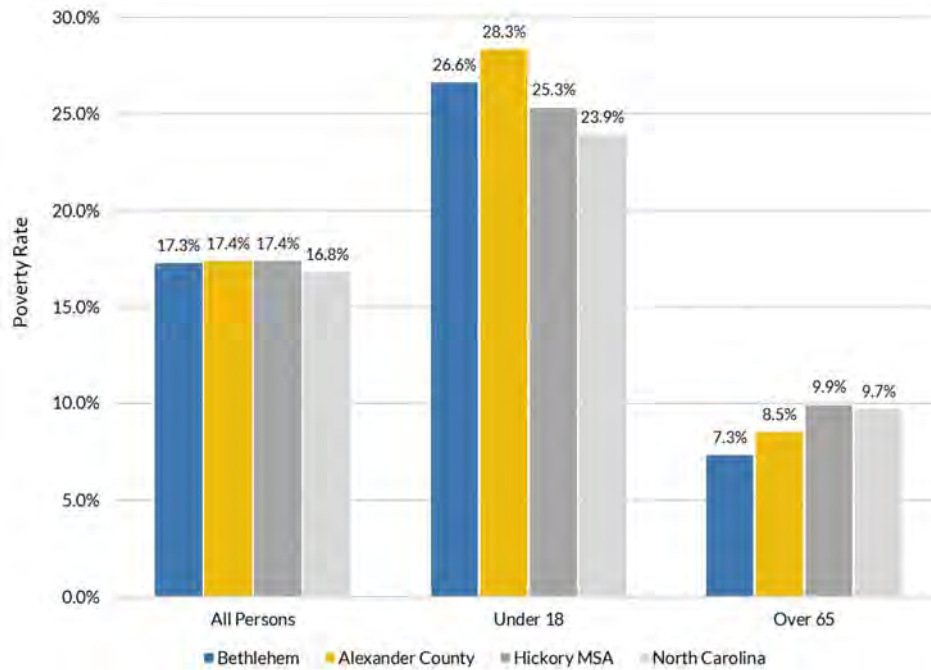
Bethlehem household income data from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) is revealed in Table 2-6. Since 2000, Bethlehem has experienced a 12.1% increase in median household income from \$52,443 to \$58,778 (2012-2016 ACS results). Bethlehem's 2012-2016 median household income is \$18,374 more than the Alexander County median, and is \$17,252 more than the Hickory MSA median. About 21% of Bethlehem households in 2012-2016 earn less than \$25,000 a year. Another 37% of households had incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year. Twenty percent (20%) of Bethlehem households make more than \$100,000 per year.

**TABLE 2-6.  
BETHLEHEM CDP INCOME STATISTICS, 2012-2016 ACS**

Households	2012-2016 ACS	% of Households
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>1,915</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Households Earning Less than \$25,000	407	21.2
Households Earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000	415	21.7
Households Earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000	710	37.1
Households Earning more than \$100,000	383	20.0
Median Household Income	\$58,778	

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

**Figure 2-3.**  
**Poverty Rate Comparison, 2012-2016 ACS**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

According to the Census website, the Bureau “uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty.” Results from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey for Bethlehem show that 858 persons, or 17.3% of the population, were at or below the poverty level (Figure 2-3). The Bethlehem poverty rate for the total population and for children under age 18 was lower than Alexander County, but higher than the Hickory MSA or the North Carolina under age 18 poverty rate. The Bethlehem poverty rate for persons over age 65, however, was lower than Alexander County, the Hickory MSA or North Carolina.

## EMPLOYMENT

Employment by industry of Bethlehem residents from the 2012-2016 ACS is shown in Table 2-7. About 29.9% of total employment in 2012-2016 was in the education and health care industry. Another 21.1% of employed persons worked in the manufacturing industry. About 13.3% of workers were in the retail trade industry.

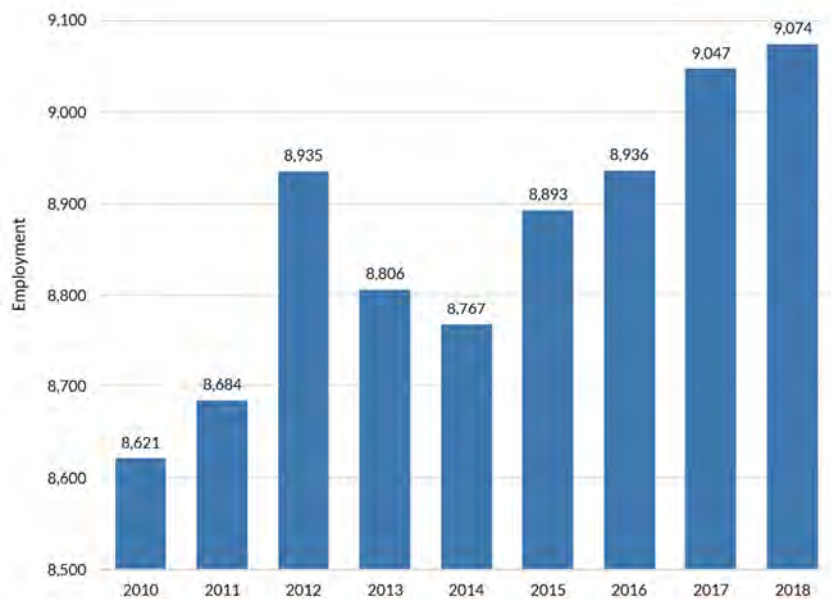


TABLE 2-7. BETHLEHEM CDP EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, 2012-2016 ACS		
Industry	2012-2016 ACS	% of Employed Population
<b>Employed Population</b>	<b>2,103</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Agriculture	16	0.8
Construction	120	5.7
Manufacturing	443	21.1
Wholesale Trade	106	5.0
Retail Trade	279	13.3
Transportation/Warehousing/Utilities	28	1.3
Information	10	0.5
Finance/Insurance/ Real Estate	55	2.6
Professional Services	87	4.1
Education and Health Care	629	29.9
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	101	4.8
Other Services	121	5.8
Public Administration	108	5.1

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

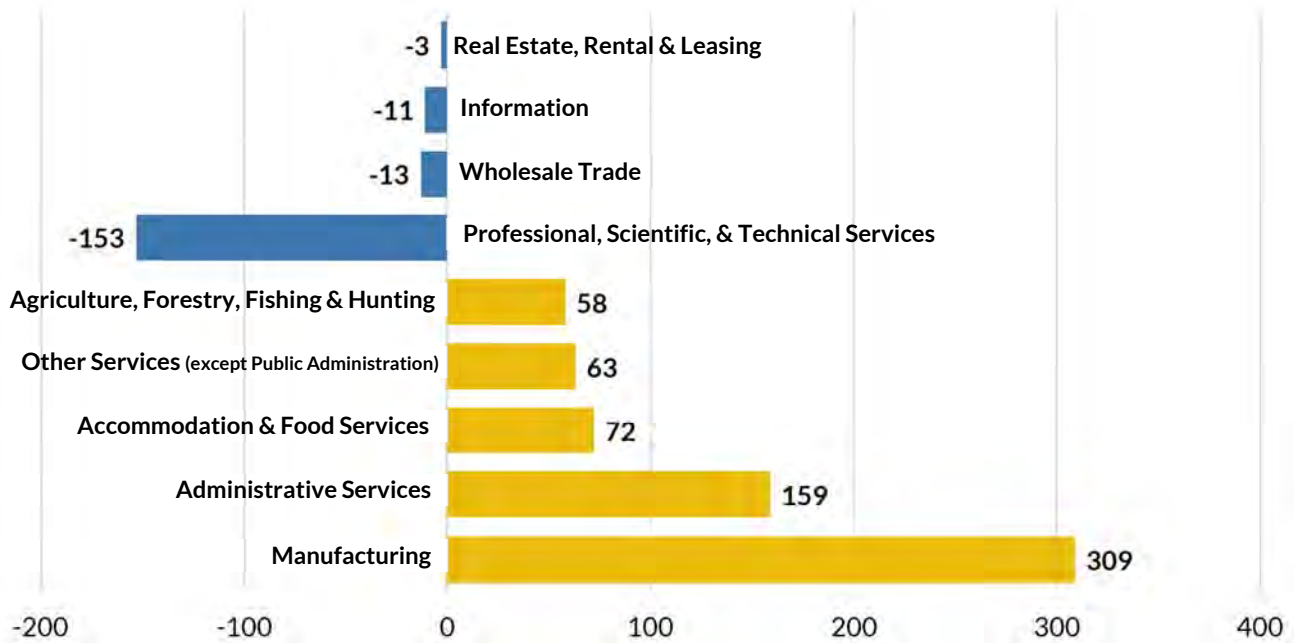
Between first quarter 2010 and second quarter 2018, Alexander County employment grew from 8,621 to 9,074 (Figure 2-4). Between first quarter 2017 and first quarter 2018, 27 jobs were added in Alexander County. Over the past eight years, the biggest employment losses in Alexander County have occurred in professional, scientific and technical services (153) and wholesale trade (13) (Figure 2-5). The largest employment gains occurred in manufacturing (309), administrative and support services (159) and accommodation and food services (72) (Figure 2-5).

**Figure 2-4.**  
**Alexander County Employment**  
**First Quarter 2010-2018**



Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2018.

**Figure 2-5**  
**Alexander Co. Employment Gains and Losses by Industry Sector, 1st Qtr. 2010-2018**

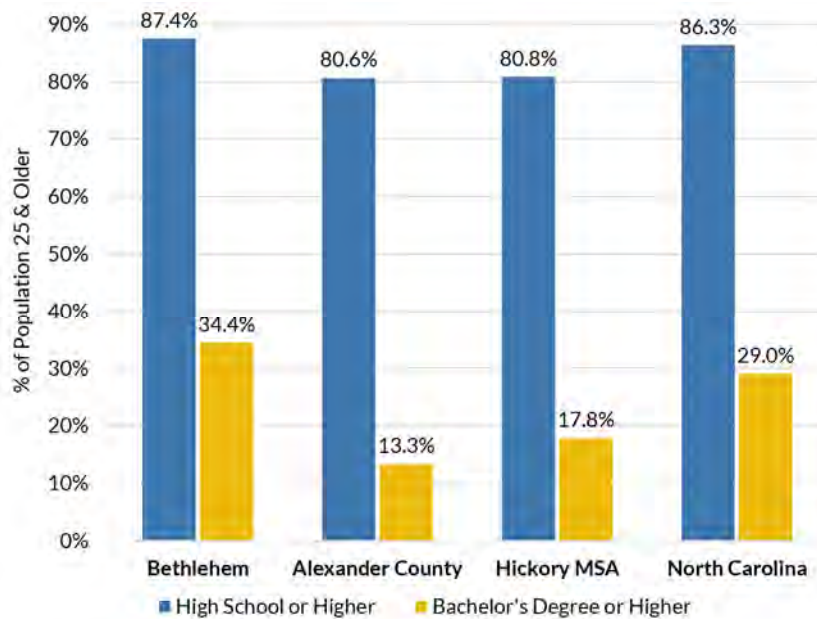


Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2017.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment levels of the population age 25 and over for Bethlehem CDP, Alexander County, the Hickory MSA and North Carolina are shown in Figure 2-6. Data from the 2012-2016 ACS indicates that 87.4% of Bethlehem’s population age 25 and over has an educational attainment level of high school (or equivalent) or higher with 34.4% having a bachelor’s degree or higher. In comparison, about 80.6% of Alexander County’s population age 25 and older has an educational attainment level of high school (or equivalent) or higher while 13.3% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. The Bethlehem Community

**Figure 2-6**  
**Educational Attainment, 2012-2016 ACS**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

also had higher educational attainment rates (over age 25 high school or higher and over age 25 Bachelor’s degree or higher) than the Hickory MSA or North Carolina.

## HOUSING

The number of housing units in the Bethlehem CDP increased from 1,232 in 1990 to 1,454 in 2000 (Table 2-8). Bethlehem’s percentage housing growth between 1990 and 2000 was lower than Alexander County, the Hickory MSA, and the State. Bethlehem added another 463 housing units between the 2000 and 2010 Census. Bethlehem’s housing growth rate between 2000 and 2010 was much higher than Alexander County and the Hickory MSA.

TABLE 2-8. HOUSING UNITS, 1990-2010							
Location	1990	2000	Change 1990-2000	% Inc.	2010	Change 2000-2010	% Inc.
<b>Bethlehem CDP</b>	<b>1,232</b>	<b>1,454</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>31.8</b>
Alexander County	11,197	14,098	2,901	25.9	16,189	2,091	14.8
Hickory MSA	121,418	144,874	23,456	19.3	162,613	17,739	12.2
NC	2,818,193	3,523,944	705,751	25.0	4,327,528	803,584	22.8
US	102,263,678	115,904,641	13,640,963	13.3	131,704,730	15,800,089	13.6

Source: 1990, 2000, 2010 Census, US Census Bureau.

Data in Table 2-9 reveals that the percentage of renter-occupied units in Bethlehem decreased between 2000 and 2010. The percentage of renter-occupied housing in the Community has fallen from 16.4% of occupied units in 2000 to 13.2% in 2010. This is due to the construction of new owner-occupied site built single-family units. As of 2010, Bethlehem had a lower percentage of renter-occupied housing than Alexander County, the Hickory MSA, North Carolina and the United States.

TABLE 2-9. PERCENT RENTER-OCCUPIED UNITS, 1990-2010			
Location	1990	2000	2010
<b>Bethlehem CDP</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>13.2</b>
Alexander Co.	17.7	19.5	22.4
Hickory MSA	25.3	25.7	28.1
NC	28.6	27.2	33.3
US	35.8	33.8	34.9

Source: 1990, 2000, 2010 Census, US Census Bureau.

Table 2-10 shows a significant increase in the median value of owner-occupied housing units in Bethlehem between the 2000 Census and the 2006-2010 ACS (32.4%). Little change in median housing value occurred in Bethlehem between the 2006-2010 and 2012-2016 ACS. Median home values increased by 31.3% and 31.6% in Alexander County and the Hickory MSA, respectively, between the 2000 Census and the 2012-2016 ACS. The 2012-2016 ACS Bethlehem median housing value was more than the Alexander County, the Hickory MSA, and North Carolina average.

**TABLE 2-10.  
MEDIAN VALUE OF OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS, 2000 TO 2012-2016**

Location	2000	2006-2010 ACS	% Change	2012-2016 ACS	% Change
<b>Bethlehem CDP</b>	<b>\$129,300</b>	<b>\$171,200</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>\$172,000</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Alexander County	\$95,600	\$119,400	24.9	\$125,500	5.1
Hickory MSA	\$93,500	\$118,600	26.8	\$123,000	3.7
NC	\$108,300	\$149,100	37.7	\$157,100	5.4
US	\$119,600	\$188,400	57.5	\$184,700	-2.0

Source: 2000 Census, 2006-2010 and 2012-2016 (5-Year) American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.



# TRANSPORTATION

*NC HWY 127 over Lake Hickory*





# TRANSPORTATION

Transportation and connectivity for all modes of transportation have been key to developing the Bethlehem Community Plan. Citizens of Bethlehem have voiced a strong preference for maintaining the community-oriented atmosphere while designing a street network that is efficient, offers a range of route options for emergency access, and promotes a mix of land uses and pedestrian and bicycle options. This chapter analyzes the goals and future vision of the Bethlehem transportation network.

## TRANSPORTATION / STREET DESIGN POLICIES

Transportation policies help guide improvements made to existing roadways and set standards for new transportation projects. Policies are in place that require streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation. These improvements will be planned in conjunction with new development and redevelopment. The general locations of potential improvements are noted in Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2.

**TABLE 3-1: STATE AND REGIONAL POLICIES**

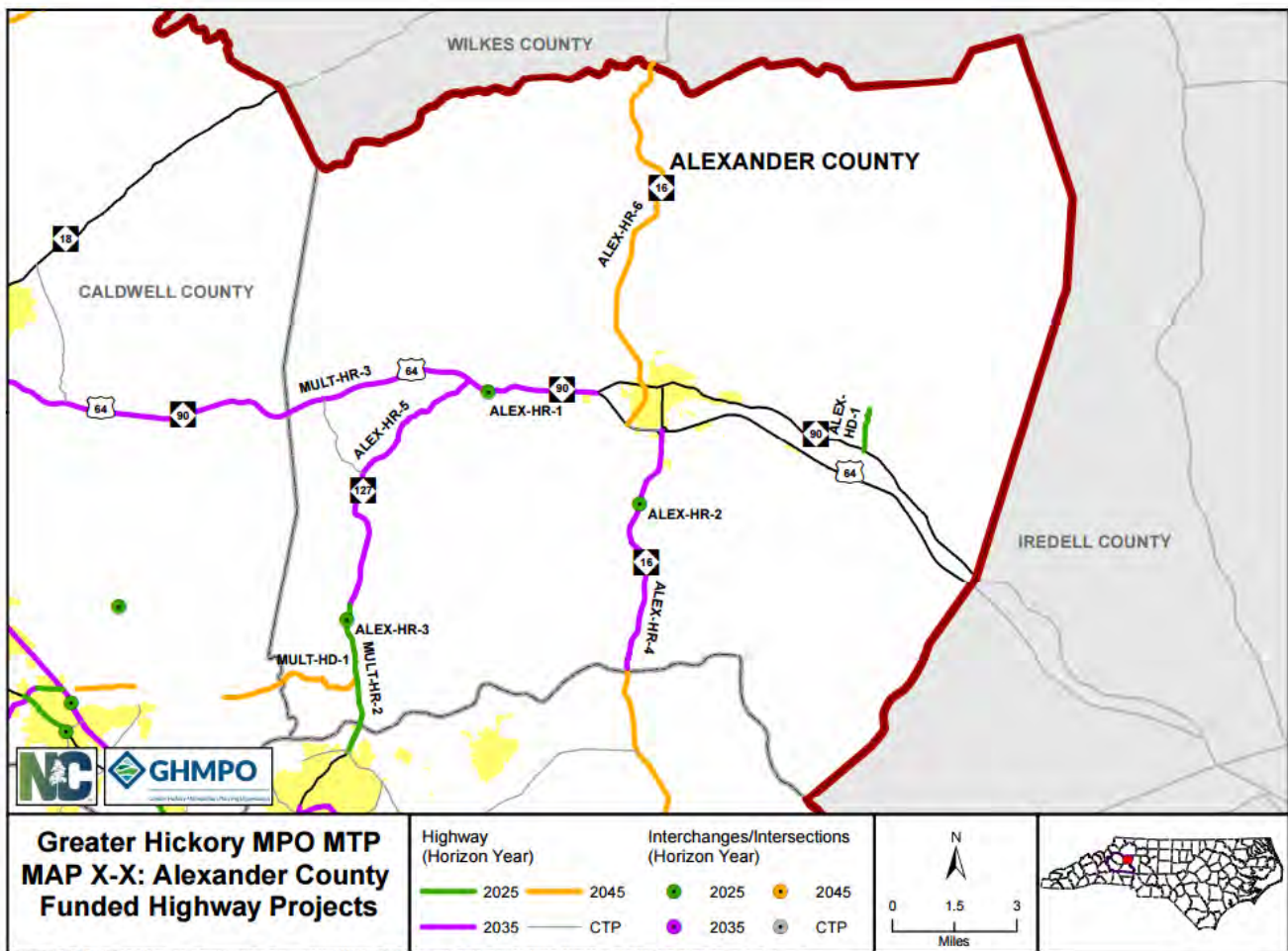
POLICY	POLICY DESCRIPTION
Greenway Accommodations	In 2015, NCDOT approved guidelines for the accommodation of future greenways under bridges. The guidelines include a decision-making approach and cost-sharing recommendations.
Complete Streets	This policy requires planners and designers to include other modes of transportation, including bicycle and pedestrian, in all transportation projects in municipal areas under certain circumstances.
Bicycle Policy	This policy details guidelines for the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of bicycle facilities and accommodations.
Pedestrian Policy Guidelines	These policies allow NCDOT to work with local governments to add sidewalks in coordination with highway improvement projects. State funds are available on a sliding scale to match funds provided by the local government, which will be responsible for maintaining the sidewalk.
Administrative Action to Include Greenway Plans	In 1994, the NCDOT adopted administrative guidelines to consider greenways and greenway crossings during the highway planning process. This policy was incorporated so that critical corridors, which have been adopted by localities for future greenways, will not be severed by highway construction.
Bridge Policy	NCDOT’s Bridge Policy establishes design elements for new and reconstructed bridges on the state road system. It includes requirements for sidewalks and bicycle facilities on bridges, including minimum handrail heights and sidewalk widths.

# BETHLEHEM ROADWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The following thoroughfares are recommended for improvement and are included in the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as well as the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), which were jointly adopted in July, 2018. Figures 3-1 and 3-2 identify the location of the future transportation network projects that have been included in the 2045 MTP and the 2045 CTP. Those projects located within or surrounding the Bethlehem Community are listed below. All projects that have received funding are indicated by including their associated State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) identification number in parentheses.

- NC HWY 127: Cloninger Mill to Richey Road (STIP ID: R-3603A)
- NC HWY 127 right turn lane on Bethlehem School Road (STIP ID: U-6040)
- NC HWY 127: Richey Road to US 64/ NC 90 modernization
- Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road modernization with new location
- Rink Dam Road and Friendship Church Road modernization
- Teague Town Road, Church Road, and Alspaugh Dam Road modernization

**FIGURE 3-1: ALEXANDER COUNTY FUNDED HIGHWAY PROJECTS**  
All transportation projects recommended in the 2045 MTP for Alexander County

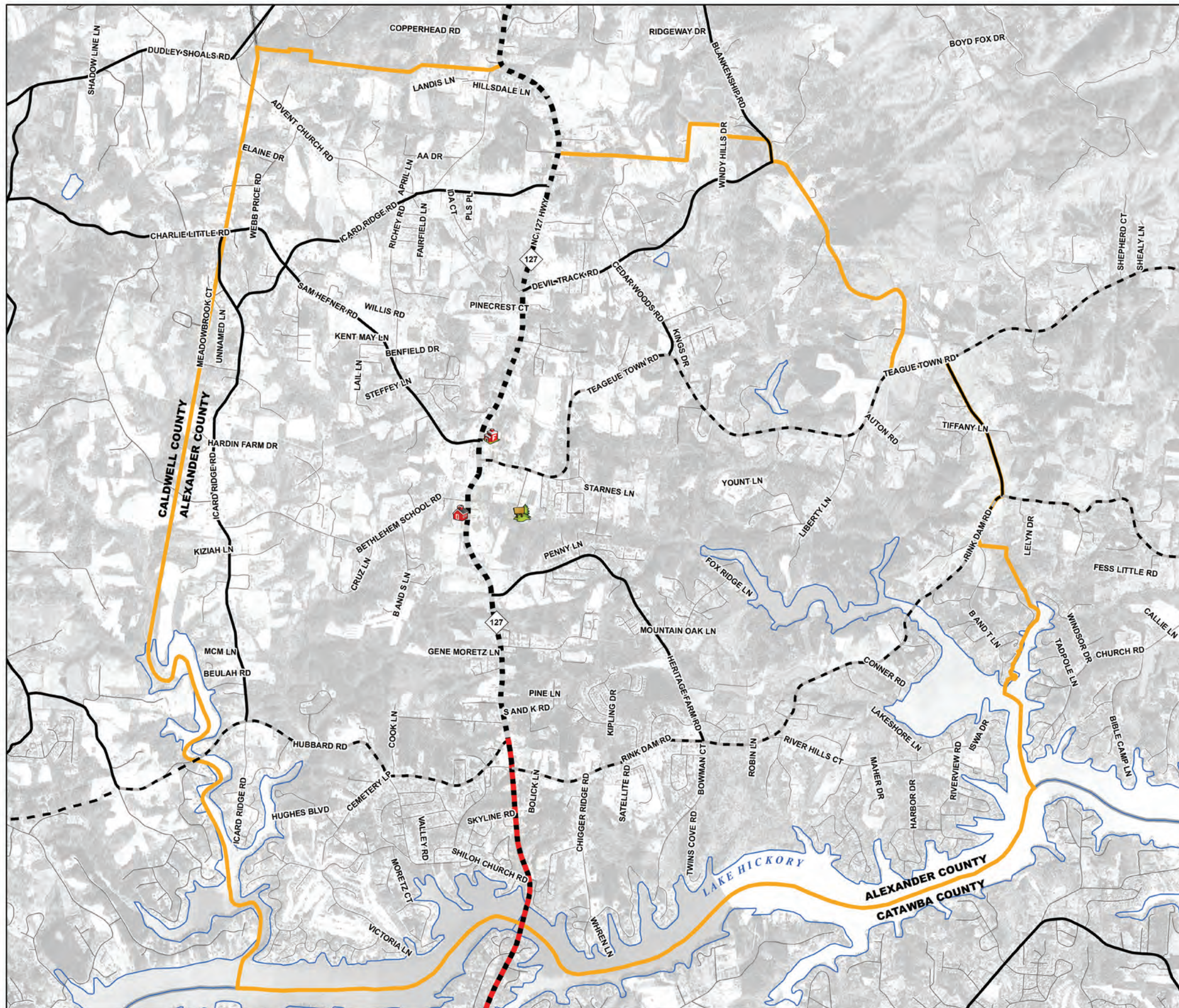




# FIGURE 3-2 Bethlehem Community Plan LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

## Legend

-  Study Area Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Regional Lakes
-  Boulevard Needs Improvement
-  Other Major Thoroughfares Needs Improvement
-  Minor Thoroughfares Existing
-  Minor Thoroughfares Needs Improvement
-  Minor Thoroughfares Recommended
-  Roads
-  Bethlehem Elementary
-  Bethlehem Fire Department
-  Bethlehem Park



**BETHLEHEM**  
A SHINING COMMUNITY

This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by WPCOG Planning Department, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.



Western Piedmont  
Council of Governments  
Community & Regional Planning

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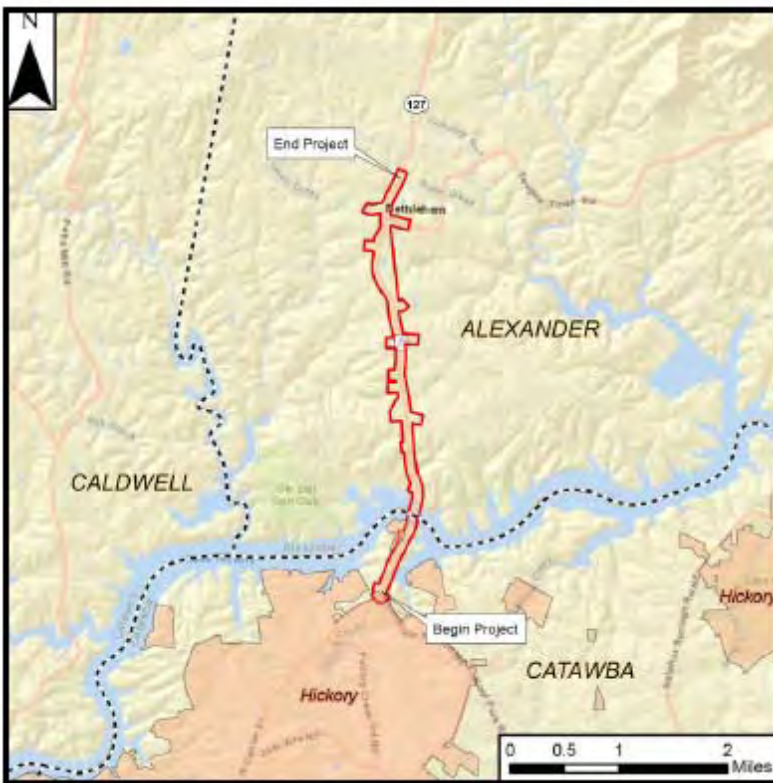




# NC HIGHWAY 127 IMPROVEMENTS

## NC HWY 127: Cloninger Mill to Richey Road (STIP ID: R-3603A)

NC HWY 127 serves as a key route between Alexander and Catawba counties. Recently released 2017 traffic volumes show volumes ranging from 5,700 to 19,000 vehicles per day (VPD) on NC HWY 127 from Cloninger Mill Road (SR 1400) to Richey Road (SR 1156). There are as many as 11,000 VPD up to Telephone Exchange Road. From June 1, 2011 through May 31, 2016, 202 crashes were reported in the project area. NC HWY 127 is projected to be near or overcapacity in Bethlehem by 2045. Upgrading the existing facility to four-lanes divided with bicycle and pedestrian facilities from Cloninger Mill Road to Richey Road is recommended. An additional bridge across Lake Hickory is proposed as part of the project design. R-3603A is a funded project and is included in the State Transportation Improvement Program. Right-of-way funding is programmed for 2021; construction funding is programmed for 2023.



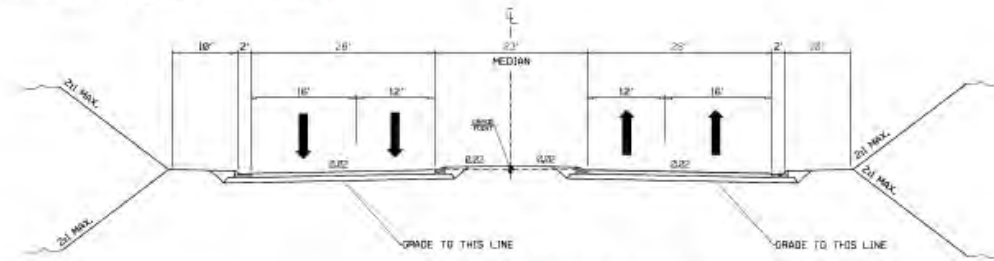
A mix of residential, commercial, and institutional land uses can be found along the route corridor. The widening of NC HWY 127 could promote more development along the corridor in the Bethlehem area. Citizens have voiced the preference to keep the Bethlehem area community oriented; however, the widening of NC HWY 127 could create an increased potential for development along the corridor. Land use planning is necessary to ensure the area stays within Bethlehem’s vision.

### PRELIMINARY DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

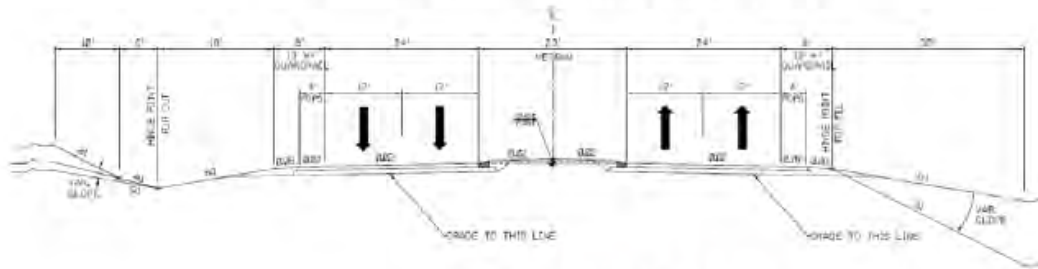
Two alternative design proposals have been considered for the widening and modernization of NC Highway 127.

Design Alternative 1 proposes a four-lane median divided “best fit” widening along the existing NC HWY 127, traversing the existing alignment as necessary to minimize impacts along the project limits. Design Alternative 2 is the same as Alternative 1, except that it will include a new alignment section between SR 1149 (Heritage Farm Road) and SR 1150 (Teague Town Road). This alignment will eliminate potential impacts to Bethlehem Elementary School property as well as assist with traffic storage and queueing issues entering the school during peak school times. The illustrations below are NCDOT’s preliminary design cross sections that may be utilized in Alternatives 1 and 2. These typical sections have not been finalized for the NC Highway 127 widening project, and are subject to change.

## Preliminary Typical Sections



**Typical Section No. 1**  
From Cloninger Mill Road to Shiloh Church



**Typical Section No. 2**  
From Shiloh Church Road to end of project

### NC HWY 127 right turn lane on Bethlehem School Road (STIP ID: U-6040)

NC HWY 127 currently experiences congestion during pick-up and drop-off times at Bethlehem Elementary School. Traffic volumes range from 5,700 to 11,000 VPD. The Advisory Committee voiced safety concerns regarding school traffic. To create safer travel and help assist with traffic storage and queueing issues entering the school during peak school times, a southbound turn-lane on NC HWY 127 is planned for vehicles needing to access Bethlehem School Road. This project is being completed in conjunction with R-3603A. U-6040 is a funded project and is included in the State Transportation Improvement Program. Right-of-way funding is programmed for 2021; construction funding is programmed for 2023.

### NC HWY 127: Richey Road to US 64/ NC 90

R-3603A's potential sister project, NC HWY 127 from Richey Road to US 64/NC 90 is a two-lane facility with dangerous curves. To improve safety, roadway modernization is recommended. Modernization includes safety improvements like realigning sharp curves and turns, as well as, adding shoulders, and rumble strips. Traffic volumes range from 4,000 to 5,700 VPD. This is currently an unfunded project.

## ROADWAY MODERNIZATION

Roadways needing safety improvements are recommended for modernization. Modernization can include safety improvements like realigning sharp curves and turns, as well as adding turn lanes, shoulders, and rumble strips. The type of modernization is contingent upon the roadway needs. The following transportation projects are recommended for modernization.

### Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road modernization with new location

Shiloh Church Road/Hubbard Road/Icard Dam Road provides a connection from NC HWY 127 to Grace Chapel Road in Caldwell County. Due to the connection it provides, traffic volumes range from 1,900 to 3,100 VPD. It is recommended that the two-lane facility be modernized to improve safety. The 2045 MTP also recommends extending Icard Dam Road to connect to Grace Chapel Road to provide a continuous NC HWY 127 connection. Bicycle infrastructure is recommended in the Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan (WPBP) along the corridor. The WPBP identifies this section as a “medium level” priority project. This is currently an unfunded project.

### Rink Dam Road and Friendship Church Road modernization

Rink Dam and Friendship Church roads provide a key connection between NC HWY 127 and NC HWY 16. Due to the connection it provides, traffic volumes range from 2,300 to 7,900 VPD. To improve safety and allow for the continuous flow of traffic, it is recommended to modernize both two-lane thoroughfares. This is currently an unfunded project.

### Teague Town Road, Church Road, and Alspaugh Dam Road modernization

Teague Town, Church, and Alspaugh Dam roads also provide a key connection between NC HWY 127 and NC HWY 16. As a heavily utilized connection, traffic volumes range from 2,700 to 3,500 VPD. To improve safety and allow for the continuous flow of traffic, it is recommended that the two-lane thoroughfares be modernized. This is currently an unfunded project.

## SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Bethlehem’s sidewalk network is sparse. Streets should reflect and support a pedestrian-scaled environment that encourages walking, while also supporting other modes of transportation. The resulting street network will have a direct impact on the community’s quality of life. Residential areas and Bethlehem Elementary School along NC HWY 127 would benefit from additional sidewalks, creating a more walkable community.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities that appear in a state, regional or locally adopted transportation plan will be included as part of the proposed roadway project. NCDOT will fully fund the cost of designing, acquiring right-of-way, and constructing the identified facilities. Bridges will not be included in the total project construction cost for cost-sharing purposes. NCDOT is responsible for the full cost of bridges. NCDOT will require a local government partner to agree to fully cover future maintenance of pedestrian facilities.

The Advisory Committee recommends improved pedestrian crossings at the Rink Dam Road/NC HWY 127 intersection. The Rink Dam Road/NC HWY 127 intersection experiences volumes ranging from 7,900 to 12,000 VPD. Bethlehem’s primary commercial activity is located in close proximity to the intersection. Since pedestrian improvements are recommended along the corridor, it is important to plan facilities in conjunction with high traffic volumes.

The Advisory Committee also recommends adding sidewalk and/ or multi-use path connections to NC HWY 127 via Shiloh Church Road, Wildlife Access Road, Cemetery Loop, and Hubbard Road. This would create a walkable loop connecting residents in the southern section of Bethlehem to the Ole Still Golf Club, Bethlehem Library, and Post Office while also offering a quick connection to other amenities east of NC HWY 127.

In regards to overall facilities on NC HWY 127: Cloninger Mill to Richey Road (STIP ID: R-3603A), the Advisory Committee feels it would be best to construct a multi-use path west of NC HWY 127 from Shiloh Church Road to Rink Dam Road. The Advisory Committee would prefer sidewalks east of NC HWY 127 and north of Rink Dam Road through the commercialized area.



Multi-use paths (pictured above) are separated from the roadway and provide infrastructure for both bicyclists and pedestrians.

## BICYCLE FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The 2045 MTP and Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan recommends bicycle amenities along the following routes:

- NC HWY 127 from Cloninger Mill Road to Richey Road – As mentioned above, the Advisory Committee feels that a multi-use path west of NC HWY 127 from Shiloh Church Road to Rink Dam Road would be the best option for the area. Design options are currently being discussed with NC Department of Transportation.
- Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road
- NC HWY 127, Richey Road/Sam Hefner Road

## FUTURE ROADWAY PROJECTS

Coordinate the land development process to set up a potential space for constructible alignments of Shiloh Church Road/Hubbard Road/Icard Dam Road extension. This is currently an unfunded project; however, it is a recommended improvement for the east-west county connections.

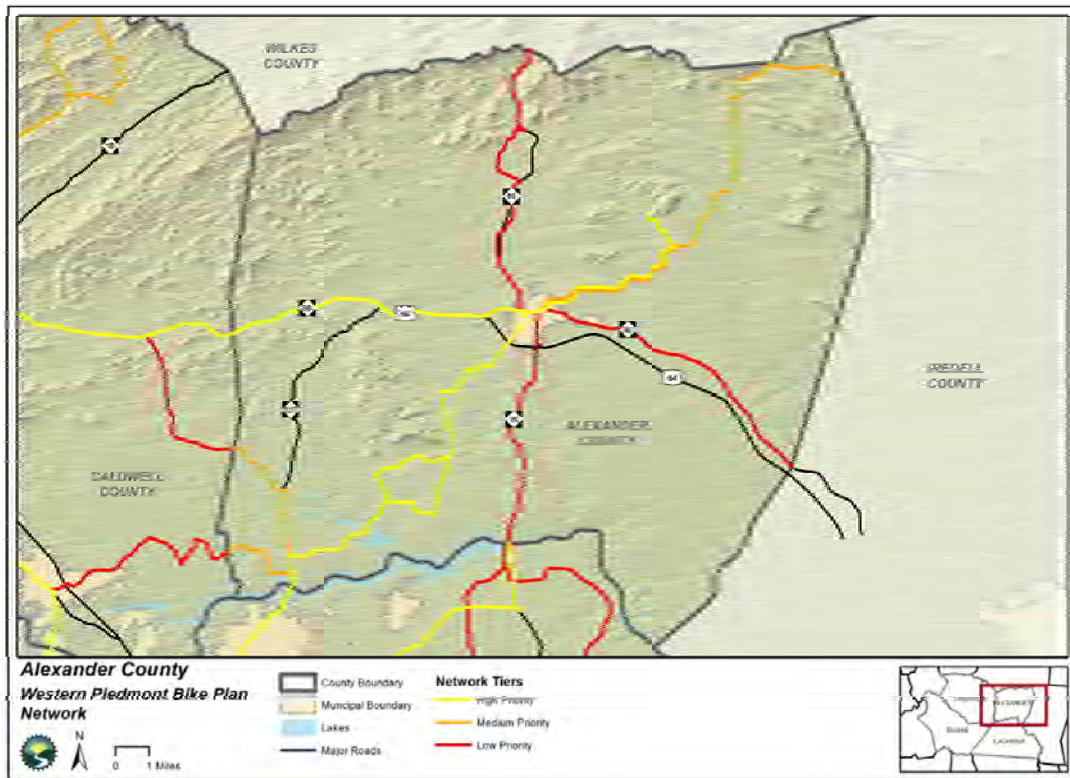
Coordinate the land development process in the coming years to allow sufficient right-of-way for programmed and potential improvements to NC HWY 127. NC HWY 127 from Cloninger Mill Road to Richey Road involves widening to a four-lane divided roadway. This is a programmed project beginning with right-of-way acquisition in 2021. NC HWY 127 from Richey Road to US 64/NC 90 involves the modernization of the existing roadway. Recommendations include realigning select curves. This is currently an unfunded project.

# INCORPORATE ADOPTED RECREATION AND BICYCLE PLANS

Alexander County does not have a greenway system within the county even though approximately 20 miles of North Carolina bicycle route NC 2 (Mountains-to-Sea) runs through the county.

The Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan, adopted in 2016, identifies high, medium, and low priority bicycle routes identified by the four-county region. The Bethlehem community has both high and medium priority segments as shown in Figure 3-3 below.

**FIGURE 3-3: THE RECOMMENDED WESTERN PIEDMONT BICYCLE PLAN NETWORK**



Route Segment 1, as displayed in yellow on Figure 3-3, connects Catawba County to Taylorsville, Alexander and Catawba counties to the NC Bicycling Highway system (NC 2/Mountains-to-Sea), and to a Catawba County high priority project that extends the Catawba County connection to Hickory. The recommendations for Route Segment 1 consist of 16.36 miles of 4-foot shoulders on NC HWY 127, Rink Dam Rd, Church Rd, Bowmans Cutover Rd, Teague Town Rd, and Liledoun Rd; and 1.1 miles of sharrows on Liledoun Rd.

Medium Priority Segments, as displayed in orange on Figure 3-3, includes NC HWY 127, Richey Road/Sam Hefner Road, and Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road. These segments would increase connectivity between southwest Alexander County and southeast Caldwell County.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation is a lifeline for many citizens in the Western Piedmont region. Transit services connect people to jobs, schools, grocery stores, medical care, recreational areas, and family.

The Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) serves the Greater Hickory MPO planning area, currently operating as Greenway Public Transportation. Greenway Public Transportation provides Flex Route Service in the Town of Taylorsville. Demand Response Van Service is currently offered for areas outside of Taylorsville in Alexander County. Van Service must be scheduled 72 hours in advance at 828-465-7643.



# TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- T-1. Maintain a good working relationship with NCDOT-Division 12 and WPCOG, in order to coordinate land use and transportation planning for new and updated roadway corridors.
1. Promote continued road improvements on unimproved streets and continue to seek dedication of private streets to help improve residential and emergency vehicle access.
  2. Work with NCDOT on the following programmed projects:
    - a. NC HWY 127: Cloninger Mill to Richey Road (STIP ID: R-3603A)
    - b. NC HWY 127 right turn lane on Bethlehem School Road (STIP ID: U-6040).
  3. Consider the following recommended modernizations:
    - a. NC HWY 127: Richey Road to US 64/ NC 90
    - b. Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road modernization with new location
    - c. Rink Dam Road and Friendship Church Road modernization
    - d. Teague Town Road, Church Road, and Alspaugh Dam Road modernization
  4. Require adequate transportation access to all developments in order to provide orderly and efficient traffic flow and maintain current and minimum design standards for new subdivision road construction.
- T-2. Incorporate adopted plans to create a community-oriented environment that encourages walking, while also supporting other modes of transportation.
1. Consider the Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan recommendations for future bicycle facilities to create connection to Mountains to Sea Trail:
    - a. Highest Priority Segments: NC HWY 127. Rink Dam Rd, Church Rd, Bowmans Cutover Rd, Teague Town Rd, and Liledoun Rd; and sharrows on Liledoun Rd.
    - b. Medium Priority: NC HWY 127, Richey Road/Sam Hefner Road, and Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road
  2. Ensure safer pedestrian crossings for the intersection of NC HWY 127 and Rink Dam Road.
  3. Consider adding sidewalk and/or multi-use path connections to NC HWY 127 via Shiloh Church Rd, Wildlife Access Rd, Cemetery Loop, and Hubbard Rd.
  4. Promote sidewalks connecting residential areas to NC HWY 127.
  5. Promote bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the programmed NC HWY 127 improvements from Cloninger Mill Road to Richey Road.
    - a. Steering Committee Vision: Construct a multi-use path west of NC HWY 127 from Shiloh Church Rd to Rink Dam Rd; construct sidewalk east of NC HWY 127 and north of Rink Dam Rd through commercialized area.
  6. Apply for NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant in 2020 to develop a comprehensive sidewalk pedestrian plan working in conjunction with Alexander County.





# RESOURCES & SERVICES

Bethlehem Park





# RESOURCES & SERVICES

## PUBLIC SERVICES

Alexander County provides water and sewer services to the Bethlehem Community. Alexander County owns the infrastructure and contracts with the City of Hickory to provide water and sewer treatment. As the Bethlehem Community develops, the County should ensure that adequate infrastructure is available to support new development. The Advisory Committee discussed areas where water and sewer infrastructure should be expanded.

The Committee recommends that a water line connector be placed along Teague Town Road, which is illustrated in Figure 4-1: Future and Recommended Water/Sewer Improvements. The committee was able to review some of the data during the planning process. Existing sewer lines, new force main and new gravity sewer locations that are already planned for installation are also shown in Figure 4-1. The Committee recommended sewer line extensions along Hubbard Road, Penny Lane and River Hills Court.

## EDUCATION



Bethlehem Elementary School resides within the Community Plan project area, teaching grades K-5. Students from Bethlehem Elementary School will largely feed into West Alexander Middle School, grades 6-8. All Alexander County students will attend Alexander Central High School for grades 9-12, with exception of those students choosing to enroll at Alexander Early College. Students enrolled at Alexander Early College simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an Associate's Degree or transferable college credit. There are also two private Christian Academy's in the area outside of the Planning Study Area, Millersville Christian Academy and Alexander Christian Academy. There are several institutions of higher education in the area that provide excellent opportunities for advanced learning: Catawba Valley Community College, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Wilkes Community College, Appalachian State University, and Lenoir-Rhyne University.

## PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY SERVICES



The Bethlehem Fire Department is a well-established organization located in a new facility on NC Highway 127. This facility provides fire protection for the Bethlehem Community Fire District.

Alexander County EMS and Rescue Squad respond to the Community's emergency medical services (EMS) calls.

The Alexander County Sherriff's Department covers law enforcement needs for the community. The County has adopted ordinances that control issues such as, excessive noise and junked vehicles, which are enforced by the Alexander County Planning Department.

# FIGURE 4-1 Bethlehem Community Plan FUTURE AND RECOMMENDED WATER / SEWER IMPROVEMENTS

## Legend

-  Study Area Boundary
  -  County Boundary
  -  Parcels
  -  Regional Lakes
  -  Existing Sewer Lines\*
  -  Recommended Sewer Lines
  -  Recommended Water Lines
- ### Sewer Expansion and Upgrade Project
-  New Force Main Location\*\*
  -  New Gravity Sewer Location\*\*
  -  Bethlehem Major Roads
  -  Roads
  -  Bethlehem Elementary
  -  Bethlehem Fire Department
  -  Bethlehem Park

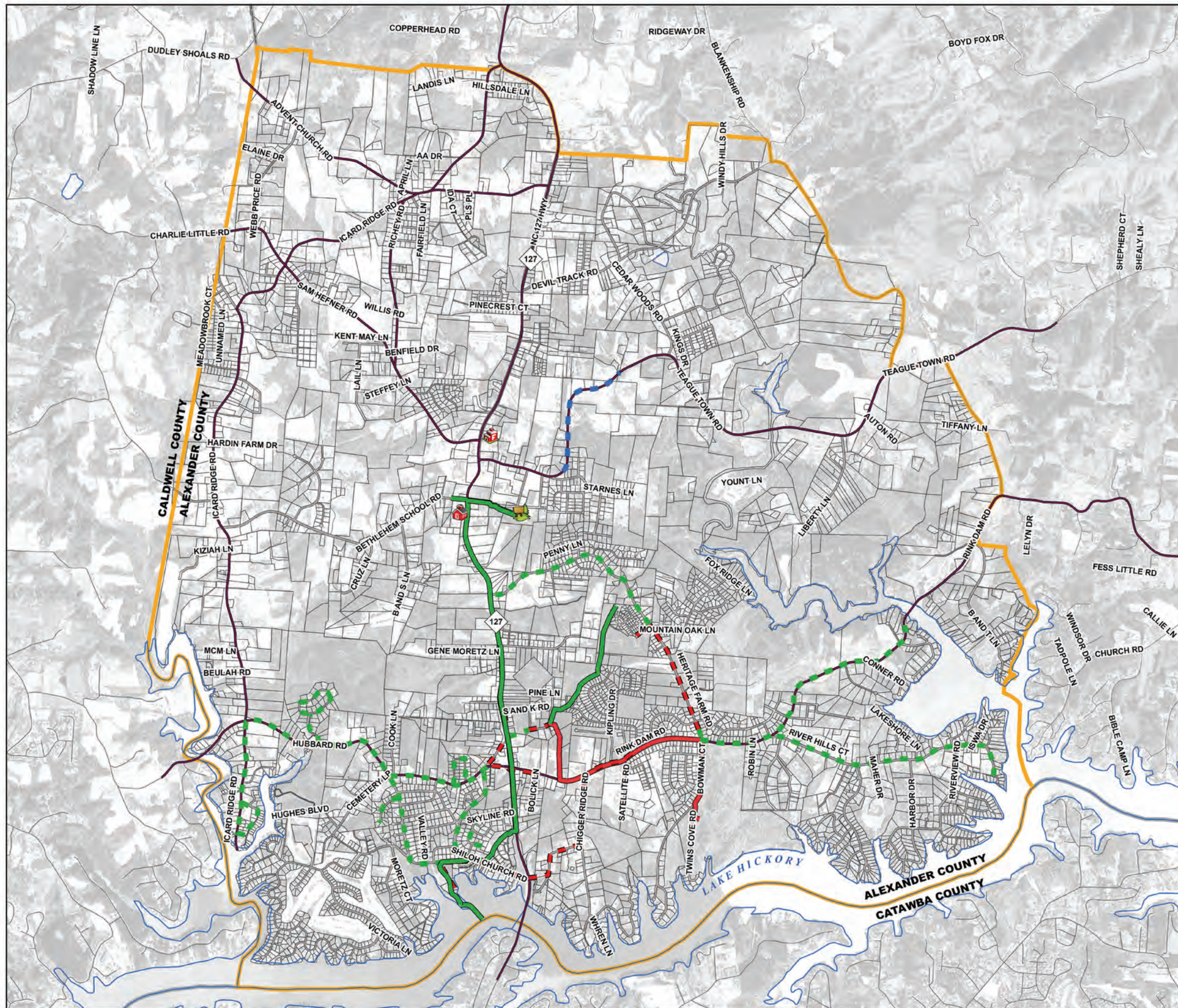
\*Note: Existing sewer line data provided by N.C. Rural Economic Development Center (1998).  
 \*\*Note: Status and location of these lines are subject to change.



This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by WPCOG Planning Department, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.



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Miles







## PARKS AND RECREATION

Although the Community of Bethlehem does not operate its own Parks Department, it does provide ongoing support to recreational opportunities for citizens. Bethlehem Park, located off of Teague Town Road on Bethlehem Park Lane, is under contract with Alexander County Recreation for use and maintenance.

To build on the Alexander County recreational facilities currently located within the Community, the Bethlehem Community needs to participate in the development of the Alexander County Recreational Plan in 2020. This plan can include developing a greenway, with the goal of reconnecting to the existing park, as well as, constructing a senior center or multi-functional youth center, or an all-inclusive recreational center for citizens and the surrounding communities to utilize. Alexander County can apply for a NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant to develop a comprehensive sidewalk pedestrian plan for the Bethlehem Community.

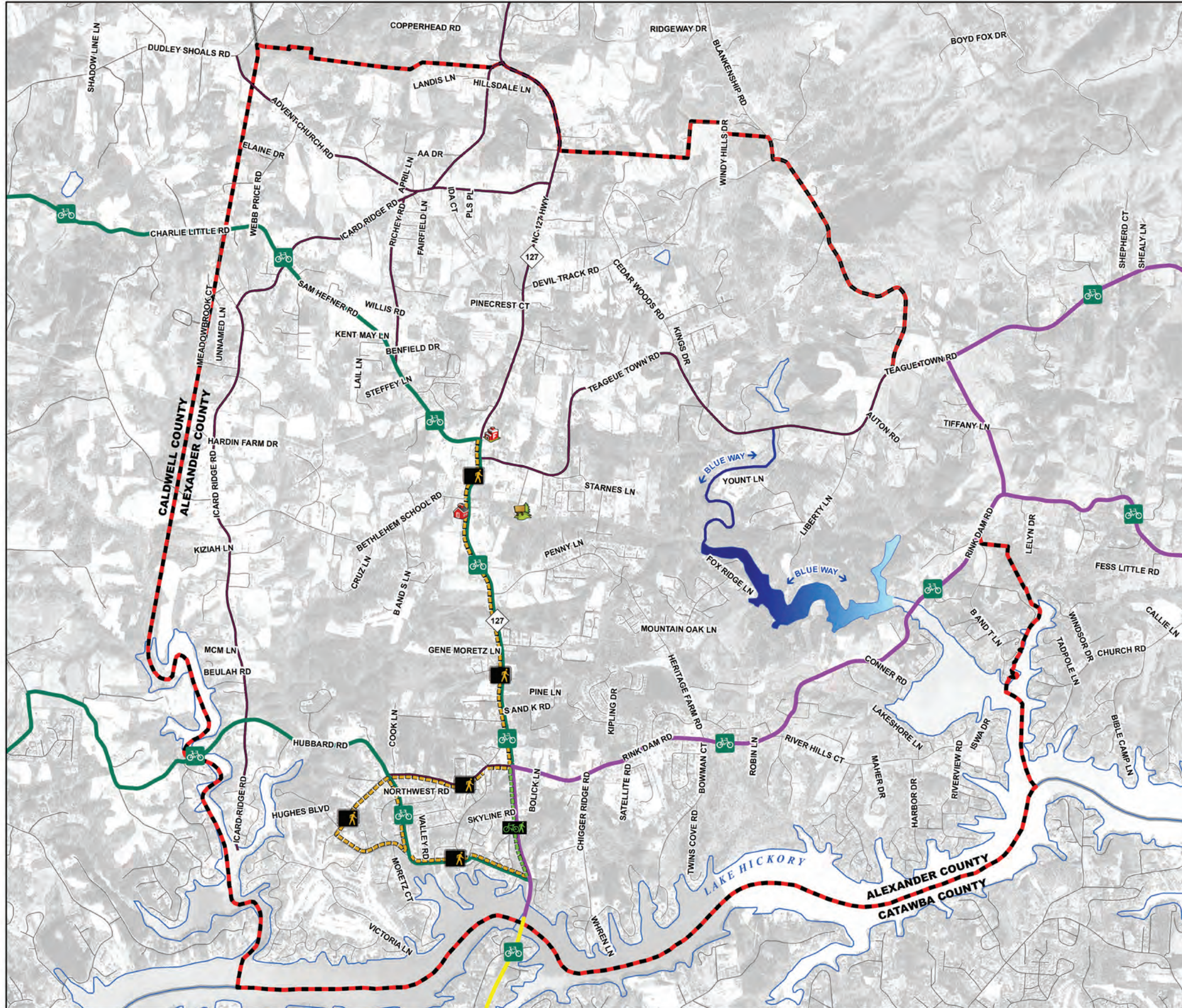
Passive recreation can be a very important asset for a community, whether it be for tourism or for its own citizens. The community and the County should work together to identify and acquire land in strategic locations to encourage open space preservation, greenways, parks and other passive recreation opportunities, as well as, provide a community walking trail using sidewalks, greenways and multi-use paths along NC HWY 127 from the Village Center to the Wittenburg Access. A blueway can also be utilized for recreation along Rink Lake, starting at Teague Town Road and ending at the Rink Dam Road Boat Dock (See Figure 4-2: Recommended Bicycle, Blueway, and Pedestrian Trails). Blueways are marked water trails along waterways, such as rivers and lakes, for recreational use. Blueways allow access to waterways for non-motorized craft.



**FIGURE 4-2**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**RECOMMENDED BICYCLE,**  
**BLUE WAY, AND**  
**PEDESTRIAN TRAILS**

**Legend**

- Study Area Boundary
- County Boundary
- Regional Lakes
- Recommended Blue Way Trail
- Western Piedmont Bike Plan (WPBP) Recommendations**
- Sharrows
- 4-ft Shoulders
- WPBP Commonly Use Bike Roads
- Recommended Sidewalk
- Recommended Multi-Use Path
- Bethlehem Major Roads
- Roads
- Bethlehem Elementary
- Bethlehem Fire Department
- Bethlehem Park



**BETHLEHEM**  
 A SHINING COMMUNITY

This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by WPCOG Planning Department, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.



Western Piedmont  
 Council of Governments  
 Community & Regional Planning

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 Miles





## RESOURCES & SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS:

- RS-1. Explore new recreational opportunities for the Community and its citizens.
  - 1. Participate in the Alexander County Recreational Plan.
  - 2. Explore the possibility of providing a multi-functional youth, senior community center, or an all-inclusive recreation facility.
  
- RS-2. Identify and acquire land in strategic locations to encourage open space preservation, greenways, parks and other passive recreation opportunities
  - 1. Provide a community walking trail using sidewalks, greenways and multi-use paths along NC HWY 127 from the Village Center to the Wittenburg Access. See Figure 4-2: Recommended Bicycle, Blue Way, and Pedestrian Trails.
  - 2. Apply for NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant to develop a comprehensive sidewalk pedestrian plan.
  
- RS-3. Maintain relationships with the City of Hickory and Western Piedmont Council of Governments.
  - 1. Alexander County will continue to work with City of Hickory on the behalf of the Bethlehem Community for future public water and sewer projects as outlined on Figure 4-1: Future and Recommended Water/Sewer Improvements.
  - 2. Continue to support the Volunteer Fire, Sheriff, and EMS Departments.





# NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

*Path at Wittenburg Access*







# NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

## BETHLEHEM NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural topographic features and environmental characteristics strongly influence human settlement patterns. For example, flat terrain may lead to the development of agricultural, residential, or industrial land uses, while low lying areas subject to flooding might be developed into recreational fields or be used for agricultural purposes. This chapter will evaluate the Community's existing natural characteristics and its built environment. This information should be used to help guide future land use decisions. For example, development within floodplain areas should be restricted or not allowed because flooding can have disastrous impacts, both in terms of private property damage and the use of tax dollars for clean-up and debris removal.

Specifically, this chapter will examine the environmental factors related to land use planning including watershed and floodplain development, conservation easements, land donations, natural heritage areas, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

## WATERSHEDS

A watershed is an area of land that drains into a body of water such as a river, lake, or stream. It is separated from other watersheds by high points on the land such as hills or ridges. A water supply watershed is an area where water drains to a point and is collected and held then used as a public drinking water source.

Watershed regulations, which were established by State of North Carolina, protect the Community's drinking water supply by limiting the amount of impervious surface that can be developed within a watershed – which in turn reduces the amount of stormwater runoff that enters streams or lakes. Impervious surfaces prohibit water from reaching and percolating into the ground and also facilitate the flow of pollutants such as oil and road salt into nearby bodies of water. Examples of impervious surfaces include paved roads and parking lots, rooftops, sidewalks, and even gravel parking lots.

Stricter development regulations are imposed in the WS-IV Protected Area. The density, or amount, of proposed development is governed by these watershed regulations. Developers may apply for the right to develop more property if they install engineered controls to mitigate stormwater runoff. These laws are designed to protect drinking water from the polluted stormwater runoff that rapidly flows into streams, lakes, and rivers from impervious surfaces (paved driveways, roads, parking lots, rooftops, etc.). In general, development will be more restricted to lands that are closer to drinking water sources.

The entirety of the Bethlehem study area is located in the drainage area for the Catawba River watershed. The Community's streams and creeks drain into the Catawba River, then into Lake Hickory and the Catawba River Basin. About half of the planning jurisdiction of the Community of Bethlehem is subject to the WS-IV Catawba River Protected Area (See Figure 5-1: Water Resources). The lake is a major source of drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people throughout the region.

## FLOODPLAIN

Floodplain regulations are another example of locally enforced, state-mandated laws. Both the County and the State have an interest in discouraging development in the floodplain for public safety reasons. In Bethlehem, floodplain areas can be found along the Lake Hickory tributaries within the Planning Study Area (See Figure 5-1: Water Resources). There are two types of designated flood zones with distinct sets of rules located within the Bethlehem Community, the Floodway and the Flood Hazard-AE Zone.


The Community is fortunate not to have a large amount of designated floodplain. The County participates in the FEMA's Flood Damage Prevention and Insurance Program as outlined in the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. Floodplain management is generally defined as a comprehensive program of preventative and corrective measures to reduce losses associated with flooding. Floodplain management measures may include, but are not limited to, land use regulations (including new development and construction policy), construction of flood control projects, flood-proofing, floodplain preservation, acquisition of flood-prone properties, education, and implementation of early warning systems.

The floodway is the channel of a river, or any waterway, and the adjacent land that must be reserved in order to pass the base flood discharge without increasing the identified base flood elevation (BFE). To avoid the risk of sediment, construction, or plant debris being swept downstream, the floodway is classified as a "non-encroachment area" (NEA), meaning that no land-disturbing activity should occur there without the completion of a detailed hydrologic study, which proves that the activity will not affect downstream water levels. As a general rule, no structures, other than public bridges, are allowed in the floodway.










The Flood Hazard-AE Zone denotes areas that have a one percent probability of flooding annually. New structures are allowed within the AE Zone if a floodplain permit is obtained. A floodplain permit requires all new construction to meet certain standards. The basement and/or foundation (the lowest floor level) must be elevated to or above the BFE. Many property owners choose to build outside of the floodplain to avoid carrying the necessary flood insurance.

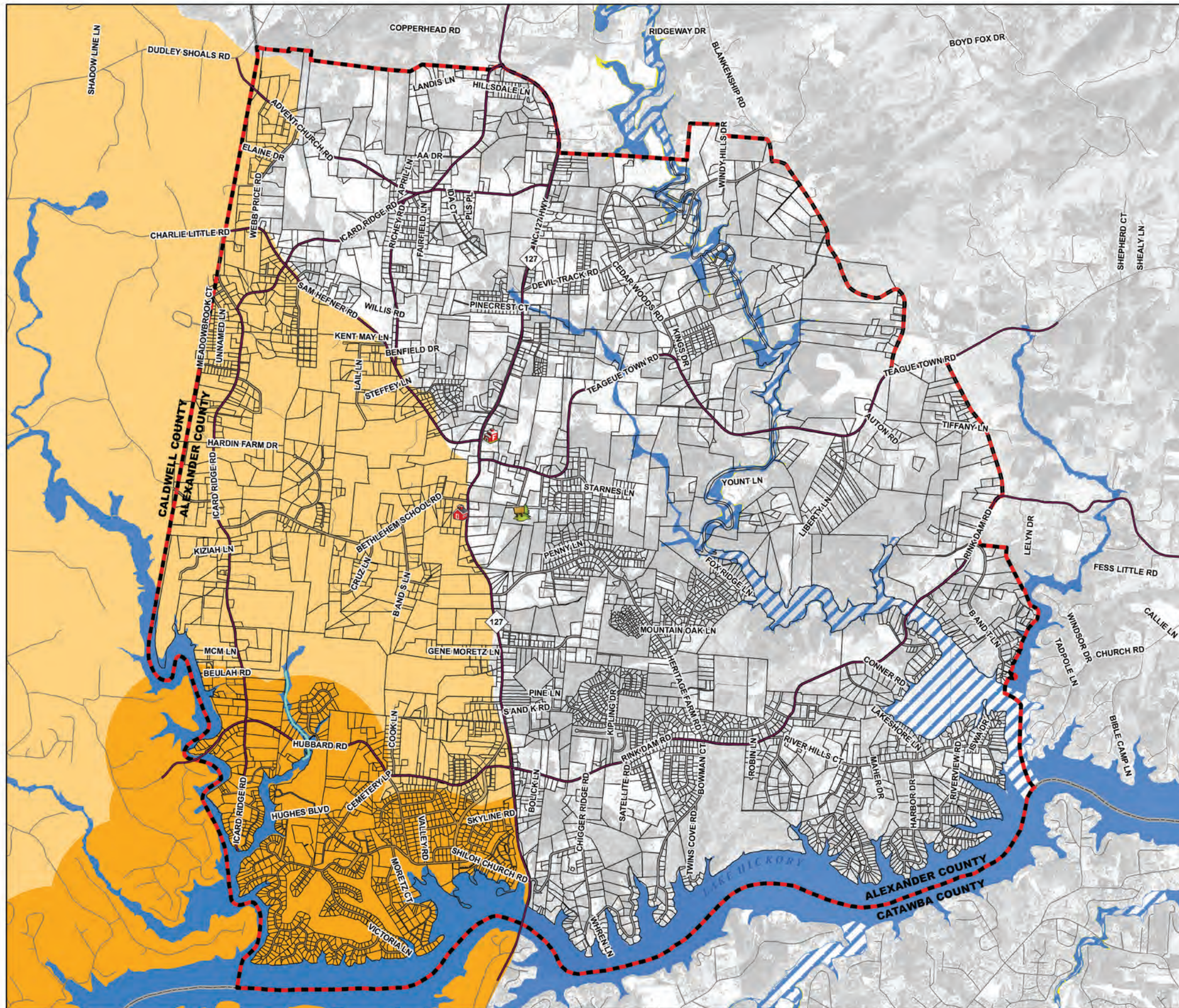
**FIGURE 5-1**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**WATER RESOURCES**

**Legend**

-  Study Area Boundary
-  Parcels
-  County Boundary
-  Water Supply Watershed Critical Area (WS-IV, Lake Hickory)
-  Water Supply Watershed Protected Area (WS-IV, Lake Hickory)

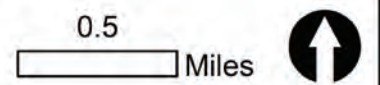
**Flood Hazards**

-  0.2% Chance Annual Flood Hazard
-  AE
-  Floodway (AE)
-  Isaac Creek (303(d) Listed Stream)
-  Bethlehem Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Bethlehem Elementary
-  Bethlehem Fire Department
-  Bethlehem Park



**BETHLEHEM**  
 A SHINING COMMUNITY

This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by NC Dept. of Environmental Quality, Div. of Water Resources; NC Dept. of Environmental Quality, Div. of Water Quality; NC Floodplain Mapping, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.





## CONSERVATION / AGRICULTURE / ENVIRONMENT

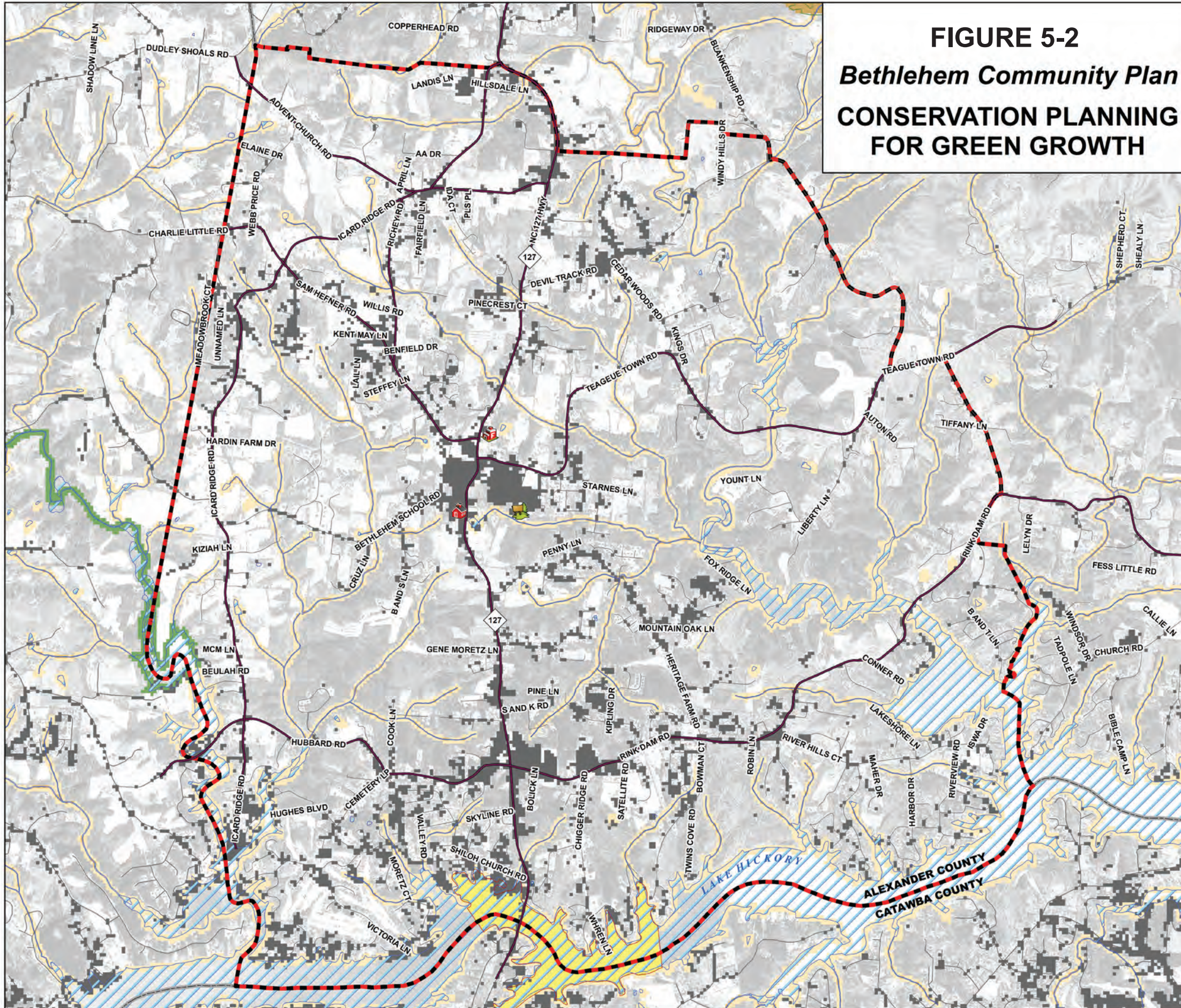
While the initial appearance of Bethlehem is small and rural there are still multiple large heavily wooded tracts that can be designated for conservation or agricultural development. Roughly half of Bethlehem is located in the Lake Hickory WS-IV watershed protected area (See Figure 5-1: Water Resources). The County could allow for a limited amount of low-density residential development and associated uses in order to provide adequate protection for environmental area and wildlife habitat, protect viable working farms, maintain the integrity of rural viewsheds, and limit the amount of potential property damage associated with existing natural hazards. That area along with other wooded tracts can follow the more conservation approach to residential development by identifying sensitive areas for wildlife and timber before the development begins.

Figure 5-2: Conservation Planning for Green Growth displays information that can be used when determining a plan for water and ecological conservation by showing those areas that are protected by conservation easement, or by other means. The map also displays wetlands and flood plain, which gives you a bigger picture of those ecologically sensitive areas in the planning jurisdiction of Bethlehem. The Green Growth map also displays impervious surface, which means those areas that do not allow for water to penetrate and soak into the ground. As development in the Community occurs, the amount of impervious surface will increase. An increase in the impervious surface area causes the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff to increase significantly. This can result in severe flooding, erosion, and adverse impacts to drinking water supplies and recreational water activities such as fishing and swimming. Importantly, water quality degradation from polluted stormwater runoff can contaminate both surface and groundwater (i.e. wells) sources. The County currently enforces a floodplain ordinance, as well as, a Water Supply Watershed Ordinance to help remedy many of the effects of increased impervious surface.

The assessment is based on the best science and expertise from multiple sources. Areas with more rare, abundant and diverse species and habitats are rated as a higher conservation value on a scale of 10 to 1 in this map layer. The areas with a relative conservation value of maximum (10) to very high (7) are the most sensitive with the rarest species and habitats. These are the most important areas to conserve, buffer and connect for wildlife purposes. Areas with a rank of 6 to 1 are of high (6) to moderate (1) conservation priority. They play an important role in maintaining habitat connectivity and biodiversity but may not be as sensitive or rare as the higher ranked areas. The areas that appear as grey have at least 20 percent impervious surface and likely have the least habitat value. They have been assigned the value of -1. White areas are of unknown value and most have not been inventoried.



**FIGURE 5-2**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**CONSERVATION PLANNING**  
**FOR GREEN GROWTH**



- Legend**
- Study Area Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Plant Element Occurrence
  - Animal Element Occurrence
  - Natural Community
  - National Wetlands Inventory
- Relative Conservation Value**
- 9-10 (Maximum)
  - 8
  - 7
  - 6
  - 5
  - 2-4
  - 1 (Moderate)
  - 0 (Unrated)
  - Impervious surface >20%
  - Bethlehem Major Roads
  - Roads
  - Bethlehem Elementary
  - Bethlehem Fire Department
  - Bethlehem Park

**BETHLEHEM**  
A SHINING COMMUNITY

Western Piedmont  
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0.5  
Miles

This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NC Natural Heritage Program, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.





# LAND DONATIONS FOR NATURAL RESOURCE & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) provides grants to local governments for the acquisition of land to be used for public recreational use. Additionally, PARTF grants can be used to protect natural and scenic resources or renovate older park facilities.

Because landowners occasionally approach local governments with proposals to sell their land, Bethlehem should be aware of the PARTF program and how it can be used to help the Community achieve its natural resource, recreation, and environmental planning goals. PARTF provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants up to \$500,000. Importantly, the appraised value of land to be donated to an applicant can be used as part of the Community’s matching fund requirement. Property acquired with PARTF funding must be dedicated forever for public recreational use.

Similarly, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) provides grants to local governments for projects that specifically address water pollution problems. CWMTF may fund projects to acquire land that “represents the ecological diversity of North Carolina”. Bethlehem should also be aware of the CWMTF program and how it can be used to help the Community achieve its natural resource and environmental planning goals.

## BETHLEHEM CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

According to the State Historic Preservation Office, there are eleven (11) sites that have been surveyed to be on the list of State Historic Preservation Sites. Figure 5-3: Historic Sites illustrates where those places are and the Table 5-1 below provides a description and status in being deemed a state recognized historically registered place.

TABLE 5-1: HISTORIC SITES – DESCRIPTION AND STATUS	
Site Name	Status
Adolfus Bowman House – near intersection of Teague Town Rd & Bowmans Cutover Rd	Surveyed Only
Rink Dam Bridge #104 (Replaced) – over Little River	Surveyed Gone
Bridge #99 (Gone) – Hubbard Rd over Upper Little River	Surveyed Gone
Bridge # 91 – NC HWY 127 over Lake Hickory	Surveyed Only
House - 93 Telephone Exchange Rd	Determined Eligible
House - 7031 NC Highway 127	Surveyed Only
House - 7625 NC Highway 127	Surveyed Only
House and Outbuildings - 225 Richey Rd	Surveyed Only
House - 8290 NC Highway 127	Surveyed Only
Mount Bethel United Methodist Church	Surveyed Only
Shiloh Lutheran Church	Surveyed Only






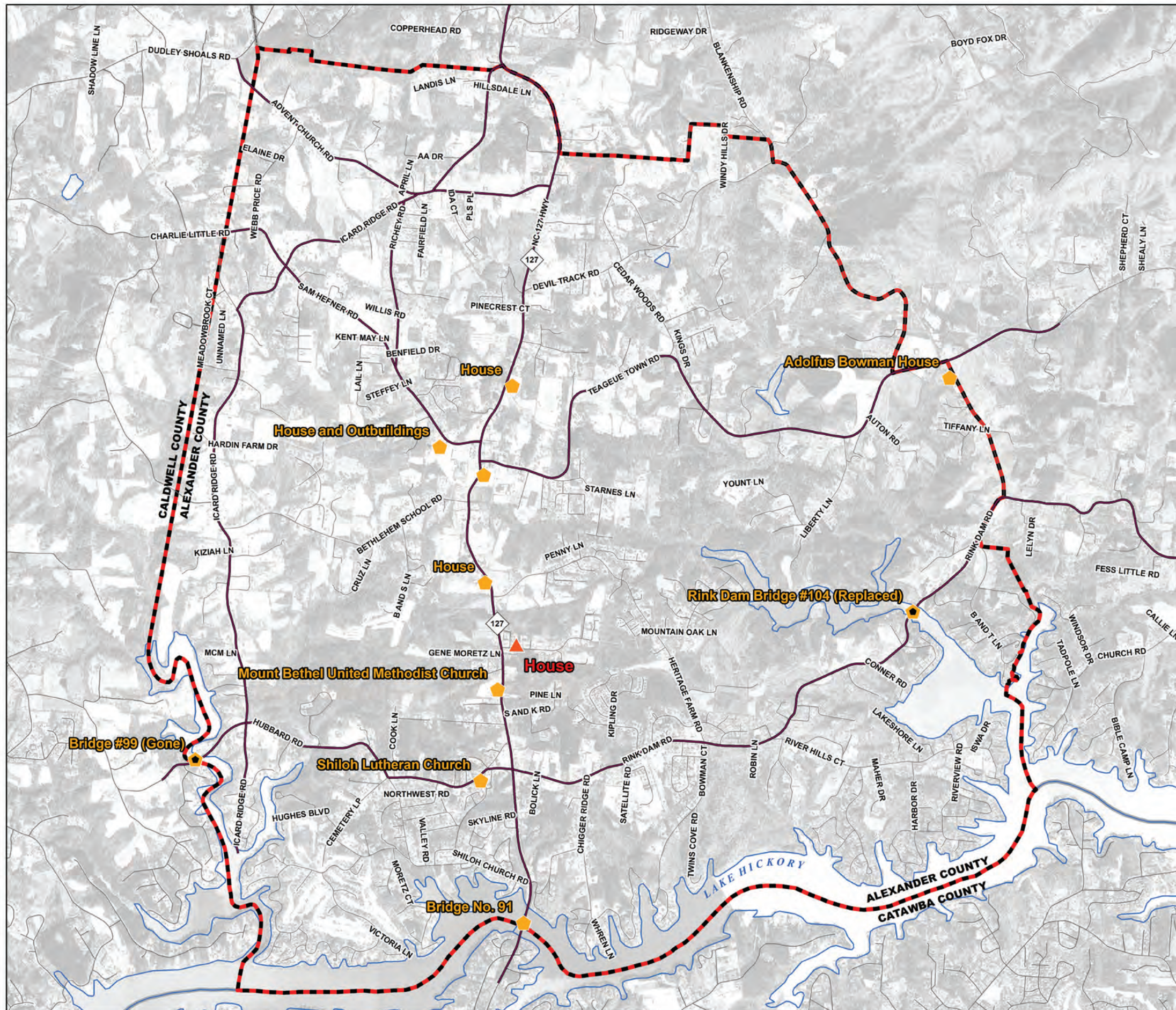
**FIGURE 5-3**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**HISTORIC SITES**

**Legend**

-  Study Area Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Regional Lakes
-  Bethlehem Major Roads
-  Roads


**State Historic Preservation Office Point Status**


-  Determined Eligible (DOE)
-  Surveyed Only
-  Surveyed, Gone



**BETHLEHEM**  
A SHINING COMMUNITY

This map is a graphic representation and should only be used for illustrative purposes. Map created with data provided by North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Alexander County GIS, and ESRI.

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0.5 Miles 



## NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS:

- NR-1. Protect Bethlehem's natural environment through orderly growth management techniques that preserve the rural areas of the Community and safeguard its natural resources.
1. Identify and acquire land in strategic locations to encourage appropriate development, including open space preservation, greenways, parks and other passive recreation opportunities.
  2. Work with planners at Western Piedmont Council of Governments to evaluate land acquisition proposals that may be eligible for Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) or Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) grant funding.





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

*Bethlehem Village Shopping Center*







# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development is the process by which the local economy and the socio-economic well-being of the citizens are improved. Local governments can work with the private sector to create the kind of conditions that lead to economic growth. For example, local governments can recruit major employers to locate in suitable locations, work with existing businesses to encourage growth, or create opportunities for entrepreneurial development.

When surveyed for this plan, Bethlehem citizens and committee members said that they wanted more restaurants, doctors' offices, and grocery stores. These types of amenities are often associated with a commuter community, or a "bedroom community".

A primary goal of this plan is to evaluate the community's economic climate by examining local economic trends, while also assessing other key aspects that contribute to its economic success (infrastructure, commercial/industrial building stock, land use, zoning, transportation, and environment). In doing so, the plan can address the community's overall goal of strengthening and diversifying its industrial, manufacturing, commercial, and retail sectors.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The Alexander County Economic Development Corporation has collaborated with many different programs and agencies to further Economic Development in the County.

The State of North Carolina operates eight administrative regions known as Prosperity Zones. Each Zone features a one-stop, physical location, providing citizens and businesses the ability to interact with representatives from multiple state agencies. The state deploys subject matter experts in each Zone, from transportation and environmental topics to workforce development, community planning and liaisons to existing businesses in the Zones.

The Charlotte Regional Business Alliance is a membership-based organization that resulted from a merger between the former Charlotte Regional Partnership and the former Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. There are currently 10 member counties in North Carolina and four in South Carolina, along with numerous private investors.

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) is a statewide organization dedicated to bringing companies to NC. There is no cost to the counties and no membership requirements. There is some overlap with EDPNC and the Charlotte Business Alliance.

## LOCATION

The Alexander County Economic Development Corporation uses Bethlehem's proximity to Charlotte and other large cities as a major selling point when recruiting prospective industries (See Figure 6-1).

- 64.4 miles north of Charlotte
- 73.1 miles west of Winston-Salem
- 87.5 miles east of Asheville

**FIGURE 6-1: PROXIMITY TO BETHLEHEM**



The NC Highway 127 widening project, which is to begin in 2021, may make the Bethlehem Community more attractive to retail and restaurant establishments. The flow of goods to Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and Asheville will become even easier as the road is expanded from two lanes to four. As the Community becomes more accessible, it is reasonable to conclude that Bethlehem will experience growth in other sectors, including housing and services. Transportation corridors that are within proximity or within the County include:

- Interstate 40 -- 20 minutes
- Interstate 77 -- 20 minutes
- US Highway 64
- NC Highway 16
- NC Highway 90
- NC Highway 127

The County also has three regional airports within 30 miles including Hickory Regional Airport (26.1 miles), Statesville Airport (16.9 miles) and Wilkes County Airport Runway (29.3 miles). The Charlotte-Douglas International Airport is 64 miles away.

## EXISTING INDUSTRY

The Alexander County Economic Development Corporation's primary focus is to promote industry within Alexander County through workforce, programs and incentives. Training and educational opportunities are available at the Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) and the CVCC Alexander Applied Technologies Industrial Training Center.

Alexander County has created a local property tax incentive policy, wherein grants are awarded based on investment over and above the current tax value of a site or building, the number of full time jobs created, and the average weekly pay.

Alexander County has approximately 40 percent of the workforce in manufacturing jobs, and has one of the highest manufacturing workforce percentages in the state. Existing industries in the County include Schneider Mills, Composite Fabrics of America, Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, Huntington House, Paragon Films, Craftmaster Furniture, Borealis Compounds, and Hancock and Moore.

## BETHLEHEM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Advisory Committee expressed a desire to create a Village Commons or "Crossroads", where development can then disperse from the center. Currently, the intersection of NC Highway 127, Rink Dam Road and Hubbard Road has amenities that include a grocery store, restaurants, a library, and a post office. The Committee expressed a desire to see certain aesthetics at this location and along NC Highway 127 which could be called the Village Commons District (See Chapter 7). To the north, Bethlehem has a fire station, and to the west, a golf course. All of the amenities create a good foundation upon which the Community may build.

The Bethlehem Community has the highest property values, the highest education level, and highest household income within Alexander County. This will attract more residents and more boutique business, which in turn, attract more industry. During Advisory Committee Meetings and Community Meetings, Bethlehem citizens and committee members said that they wanted more restaurants, doctors' offices, and grocery stores. There are currently six commercial properties available in Bethlehem to house this type of development.

Within the Bethlehem Community, Alexander County provides water and sewer infrastructure while the City of Hickory distributes and treats water and wastewater. Water and sewer systems provide the Community's residents with access to safe drinking water and a sanitary means to treat wastewater. The availability of water and sewer infrastructure is vital to the Community's overall economic development. The expansion of the wastewater system will open up development along NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Road.

Additionally the Bethlehem Community has some wonderful recreational opportunities to attract residents and visitors, including Lake Hickory and the Catawba River, the Wittenburg public access to the river, Bethlehem Park, and the Ole Still Golf Club.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: POTENTIAL GRANT FUNDING SOURCES

Alexander County should apply for different types of grants to attract future economic development within the Bethlehem Community. These funding agencies are subject to change, and in many cases, matching funds are required.

- North Carolina Department of Commerce – Rural Development Division:
  - Economic Infrastructure Program
  - Building Reuse Program
- North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):
  - Brownfields Redevelopment Program
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):
  - Brownfields Redevelopment Program
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ED-1. Provide economic development information and local assistance to help recruit viable businesses and service industry activities.
  1. Create commercial marketing materials to promote available commercial sites.
  2. Support and partner with Alexander County Economic Development Corporation in bringing additional employment opportunities in, or close to Bethlehem.
  3. Form a committee to create a community identity for marketing purposes.
  4. Identify methods and strengths to market Bethlehem as a destination.
  5. Create and maintain a Village of Bethlehem Facebook/Social Media platform.
- ED-2. Work to attract young adults, new residents, and tourism.
  1. Increase the number of parks, open spaces, and walking trails/sidewalks/greenways.
  2. Attract boutique businesses by encouraging development that enhances its role as a destination.
- ED-3. Evaluate available properties throughout the Community and encourage commercial development projects in appropriate areas.
  1. Work with Alexander County to expand water and wastewater extension to areas with high economic development potential.
  2. Inventory vacant commercial sites and buildings and make the information available to interested parties through printed materials or websites.



# LAND USE & GROWTH MANAGEMENT

*Rink Dam Road*





# LAND USE & GROWTH MANAGEMENT

## LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The core component of the Bethlehem Community Plan is land use. The manner in which the land is currently being used, the availability of land suitable for future development or redevelopment, and Alexander County’s land use regulations are all taken into consideration to determine land uses per zoning designation. The County’s responsibility is to ensure that the land is developed in the most effective and appropriate way in order to promote the health, welfare and public interest of Bethlehem’s residents and stakeholders. A certain degree of accountability is also placed on Alexander County to make sure that the physical environment is developed in a way that is not detrimental to the natural environment.

## ZONING DISTRICTS

Alexander County has planning jurisdiction over the Bethlehem Area, which consists of approximately 11,964.67 acres. Land use in Bethlehem is predominantly residential, accounting for approximately 91.14% percent of the area’s zoning jurisdiction. The remaining 8.86% percent of the area’s jurisdiction is zoned for either industrial or commercial use, which is almost an equal split with highway commercial (4.35%) and light industrial (3.49%) The majority of land in Bethlehem’s commercial, industrial, and office/service uses tend to be clustered along NC Highway 127.

**TABLE 7-1: BETHLEHEM ZONING**

Zoning	Number of Parcels	Total Area (Acres)	% Total Area (Acres)	Min. Parcel Size	Max. Parcel Size	Average Parcel Size
C-R	1	122.56	1.02%	122.56	122.56	122.56
H-C	215	520.8	4.35%	0.09	48.46	2.42
L-I	58	417.14	3.49%	0.43	95.84	7.19
R-20	2,227	2,389.21	19.97%	< 0.1	49.69	1.07
R-SF	88	99.1	0.83%	< 0.1	31.24	1.13
RA-20	2,476	8,415.88	70.34%	< 0.1	182.6	3.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,065</b>	<b>11,964.67</b>	<b>100%</b>			

















Most of the residential land parcels in Bethlehem are greater than 1 acre. The average parcel zoned for residential is approximately 1.87 acres, indicating relatively low development density (See Figure 7-1: Zoning Districts).

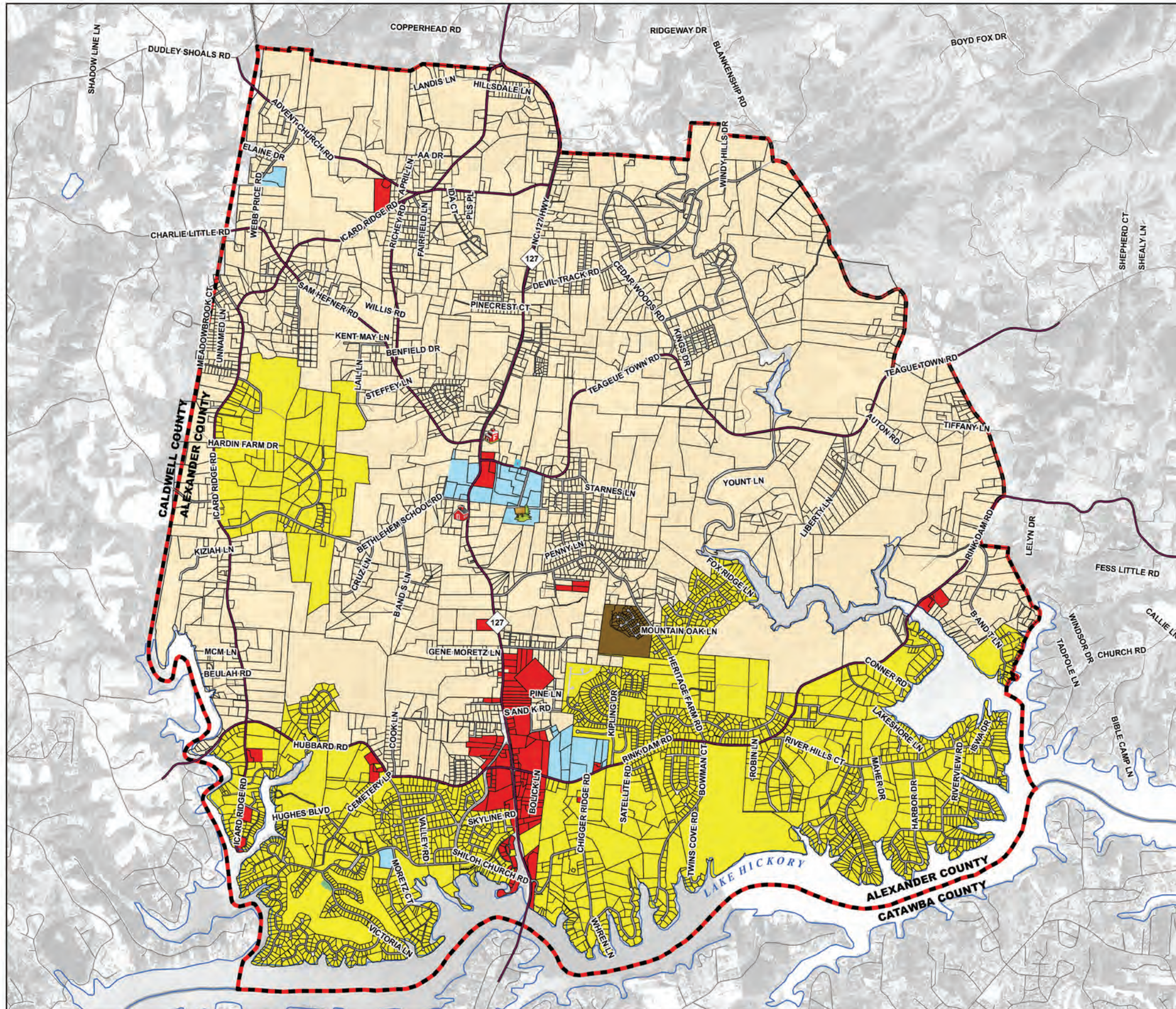




**FIGURE 7-1**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**ZONING DISTRICTS**

**Legend**

-  Study Area Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Regional Lakes
-  Parcels
- Alexander County Zoning**
-  Commercial Recreation (C-R)
-  Highway Commercial (H-C)
-  Light Industrial (L-I)
-  Neighborhood Business (N-B)
-  Residential (R-20)
-  Residential Single Family (R-SF)
-  Residential-Agricultural (RA-20)
-  Bethlehem Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Bethlehem Elementary
-  Bethlehem Fire Department
-  Bethlehem Park



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0.5  
 Miles





## EXISTING LAND USE

Bethlehem has a mixture of land uses ranging from agricultural to residential to industrial. A land use survey of all properties in Bethlehem was completed in 2019. Land uses were categorized according to the following primary uses:

<b>Residential:</b>	Any parcel containing a single-family or multi-family residence.
<b>Institutional and School:</b>	Any parcel containing any type of medical uses concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and care of human beings. This category also includes public services, and may be operated by a federal, state, or local governments, public or private utilities, public or private schools or colleges, churches, public agencies, or tax-exempt organizations.
<b>Commercial:</b>	Any parcel containing any type of activity involving the sale of goods or services for financial gain (commercial activity), but does not include parcels containing home occupations or medical offices.
<b>Light Industrial:</b>	Any parcel containing any type of business use or activity at a scale greater than home industry involving manufacturing, fabrication, assembly, warehousing, and/or storage.
<b>Open Space/Park:</b>	Any parcel designated for recreation or deemed open space.
<b>Undeveloped:</b>	Any parcel not in use or containing agriculture and/or abandoned buildings.

Table 7-2 summarizes these land uses by acreage and number of parcels. These land use patterns are readily apparent on “Figure 7-2: Existing Land Use.”




**TABLE 7-2: EXISTING LAND USE**

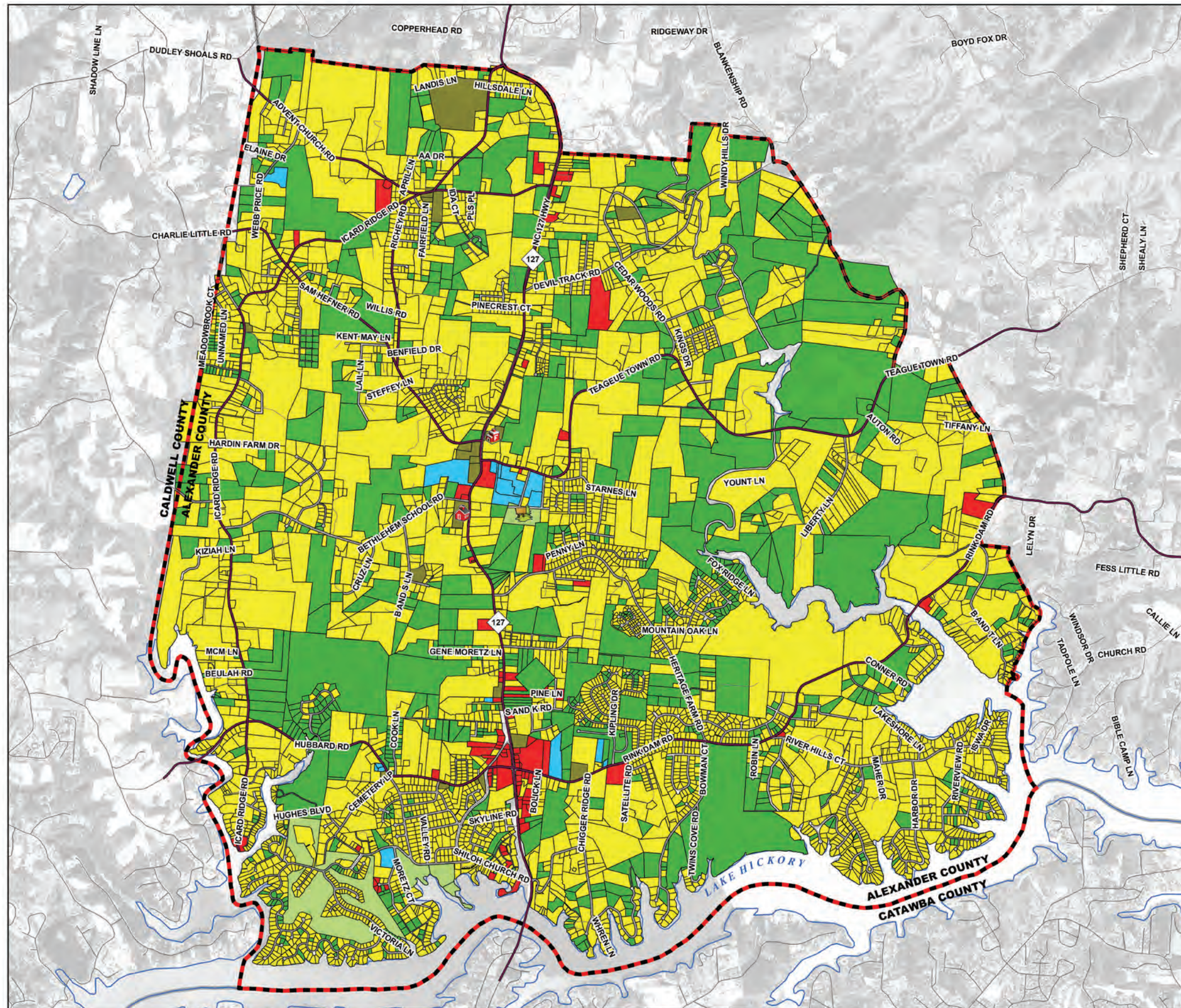
Land Use	Number of Parcels	Total Area (Acres)	% Total Area (Acres)	Min (Acres)	Max (Acres)	Average (Acres)
Commercial	89	180.32	1.51%	0.25	22.29	2.03
Industrial	18	85.7	0.72%	0.42	20.98	4.76
Institutional & Schools	21	121.71	1.02%	0.43	55.39	5.80
Open Space or Park	4	149.18	1.25%	3.94	122.56	37.30
Residential	4073	7,564.7	63.22%	.01	182.64	1.86
Undeveloped	860	3,863.13	32.29%	.01	179.3	4.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,065</b>	<b>11,964.67</b>	<b>100.00%</b>			



**FIGURE 7-2**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**EXISTING LAND USE**


**Legend**

-  Study Area Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Regional Lakes
-  Parcels
- Existing Land Use**
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Institutional & Schools
-  Open Space or Park
-  Residential
-  Undeveloped
-  Bethlehem Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Bethlehem Elementary
-  Bethlehem Fire Department
-  Bethlehem Park




**BETHLEHEM**  
A SHINING COMMUNITY

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Miles





## CURRENT DEVELOPMENT

Residential development in Bethlehem is primarily clustered together, rather than sprawled apart. Areas of clustered residential development are located along Heritage Farm Road and within the lakeside developments. Single-family homes make up the large majority of residential construction in the community. There have been 133 new single-family homes and one multi-family structure constructed between 2010 and 2018. In Alexander County, 27.13% of all residential development from 2010 to 2018 has occurred within the Bethlehem Study Area.

**TABLE 7-3: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, 2010 -2018**

Residential	Alexander County	Bethlehem Study Area	% Residential Development in Bethlehem Study Area
Multi-Family Residential	14	1	7.14%
Single-Family Residential	480	133	27.71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>27.13%</b>

Nonresidential Development primarily occurred along NC Highway 127 (See Figure 7-3: Nonresidential Development, 2010-2018). The majority of this construction has been new, rather than additions to existing structures. There were 8 total new permits, 5 of which were new construction and 3 were additions. In Alexander County, 12.12% of all Nonresidential Development from 2010 to 2018 was in the Bethlehem Study Area.

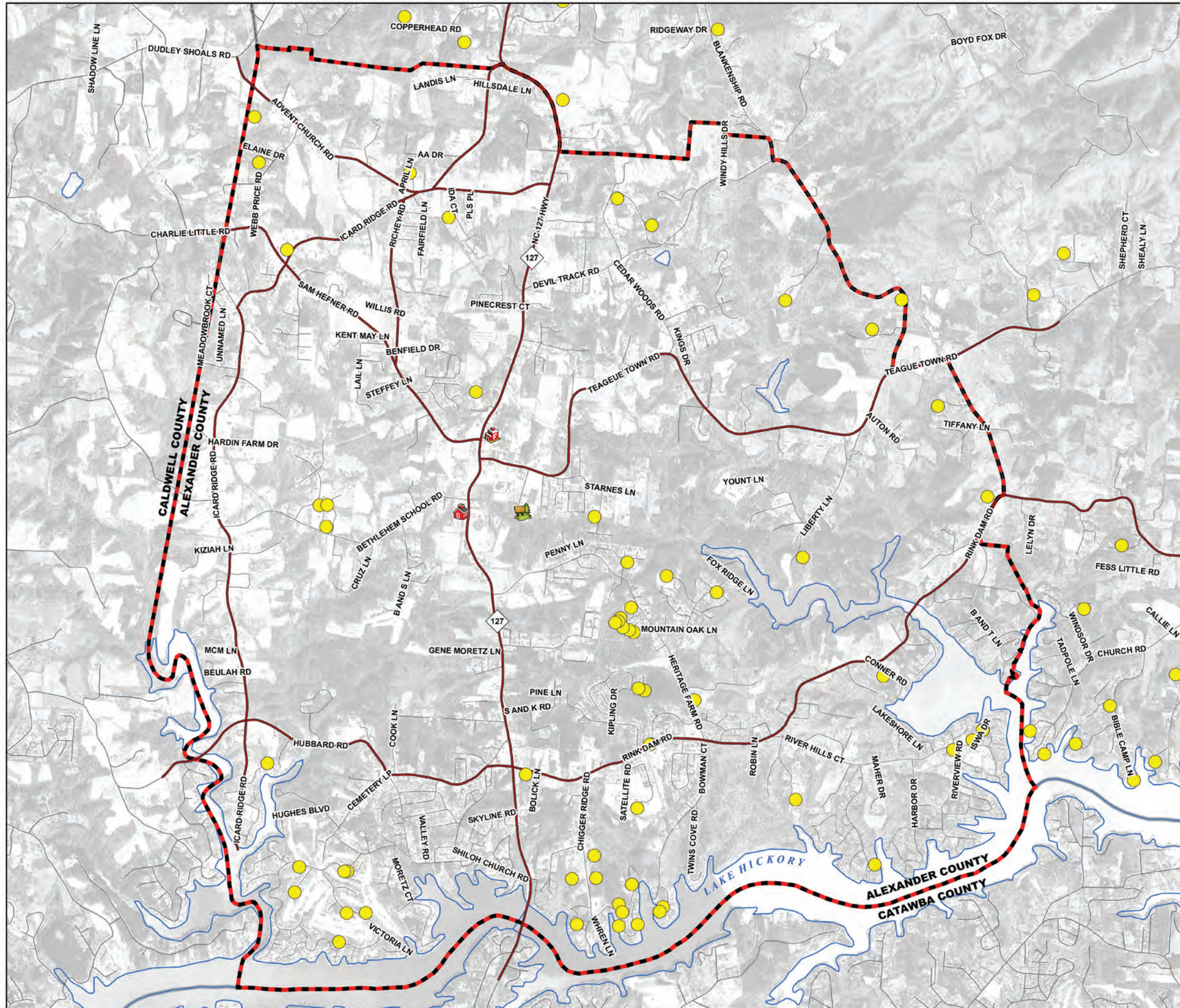
**TABLE 7-4: NONRESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, 2010 -2018**

Non Residential	Alexander County	Bethlehem Study Area	% Commercial Development in Bethlehem Study Area
Commercial Addition	5	2	40.00%
Commercial New	29	3	10.34%
Industrial Addition	7	0	0.00%
Industrial New	1	0	0.00%
Institutional Addition	8	1	12.50%
Institutional New	16	2	12.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12.12%</b>





**FIGURE 7-3**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**RESIDENTIAL**  
**DEVELOPMENT, 2010 TO 2018**



**Legend**

- Study Area Boundary
- County Boundary
- Regional Lakes
- Bethlehem Major Roads
- Roads
- Residential Development**
- Multi-family Residential
- Single-family Residential
- Bethlehem Elementary
- Bethlehem Fire Department
- Bethlehem Park

**BETHLEHEM**  
 A SHINING COMMUNITY

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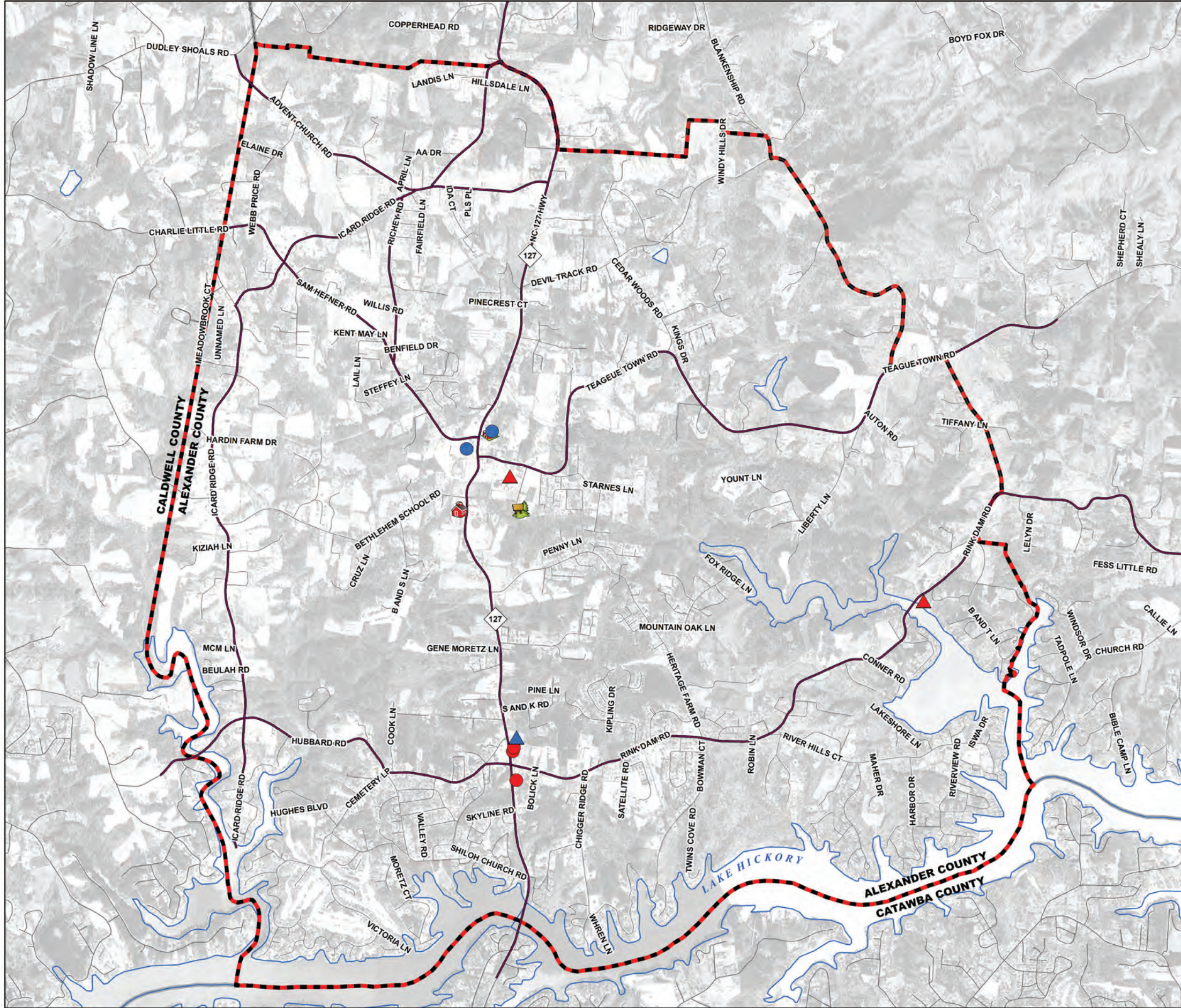
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 Miles





**FIGURE 7-4**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**NONRESIDENTIAL**  
**DEVELOPMENT, 2010 TO 2018**



- Legend**
- Study Area Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Regional Lakes
  - Bethlehem Major Roads
  - Roads
- Nonresidential Development**
- Commercial Addition
  - Commercial New
  - Institutional Addition
  - Institutional New
  - Bethlehem Elementary
  - Bethlehem Fire Department
  - Bethlehem Park

**BETHLEHEM**  
 A SHINING COMMUNITY

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 Community & Regional Planning

0.5  
 Miles





## FUTURE LAND USE & GROWTH

An analysis of land availability, current land use activities, forecasted population changes, and residential development patterns reveals areas within the County's Bethlehem planning jurisdiction that are potentially poised for future growth. Members of the Community Plan Advisory Committee were asked to help determine what types of future development would be appropriate for Bethlehem, where that development should take place, and what it should look like.

The Future Land Use Map was developed to show the County's vision. The Alexander County Planning and Zoning Commission and County Commissioners rely on the Future Land Use Map, Figure 7-4, to guide policy making related to zoning, watershed regulations, and infrastructure needs. Land use will change over time. Encouraging a more centralized development pattern will allow the Bethlehem area to avoid the high costs associated with extending water and sewer infrastructure to areas lacking service.

Using the Future Land Use map, Alexander County Planning staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission should review and update land use regulations to ensure it is compatible for desired types of development outlined as recommended by the Bethlehem Advisory Committee and approved by the Alexander County Board of Commissioners. Through working with the Committee and engaging the public through stakeholder meetings, it was evident that the Community wants more commercial development within the Community, specifically retail and boutique establishments, restaurants, grocery stores, medical offices and recreational opportunities. The committee thought that they should encourage the use of multi-family housing as an affordable housing option to attract younger residents along the business corridor on NC Highway 127. There is very little manufacturing located in the Community. The Advisory Committee expressed that the community does not need additional manufacturing areas, and that new manufacturing should be encouraged in appropriate existing manufacturing areas in the county.

The Advisory Committee felt that there was a need to establish a cohesive, identifiable commercial center in the Community and create a destination that encourages recreation and economic development. To accomplish this there would be a new zoning district added called the Village Commons District to include architectural features such as additional sidewalks, structural aesthetics, and façade development.

As new development occurs along NC Highway 127, new sidewalks should be required to be constructed, following adopted streetscape standards. The Village Commons District, which would extend from the Alexander County line in the South to the intersection of NC Highway 127, Teague Town Road, and Richey Road, is where the streetscape standards would be. Within this district, commercial and multi-family residential would be allowed. An Architectural Review Board could be formed to review new commercial and multi-family development in this district.

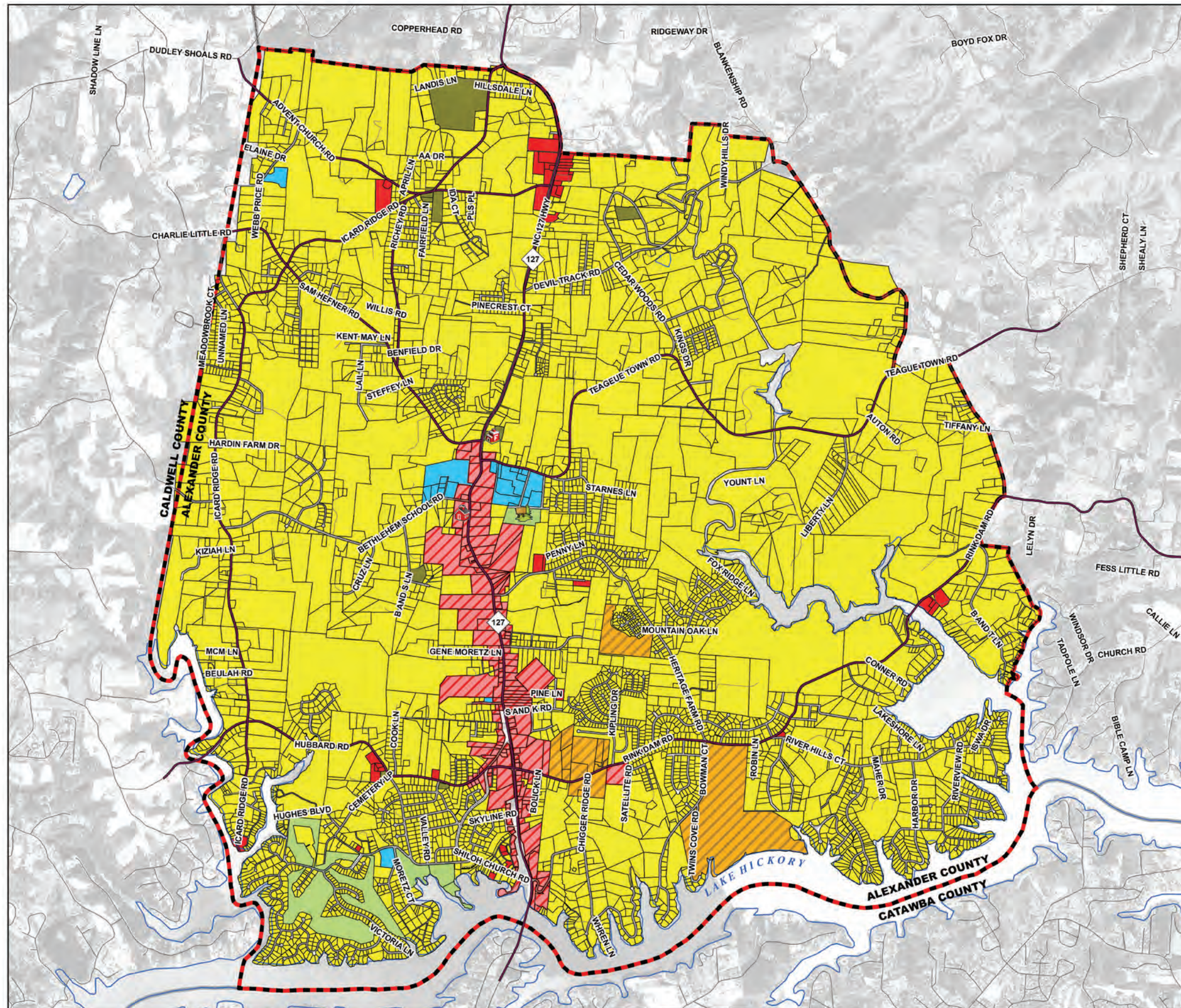
Within the Village Center, at the intersection of NC Highway 127, Rink Dam Road and Hubbard Road, the committee recommended that the County seek public/private opportunities to create civic plazas, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and street furniture as elements throughout the Village Center. These will serve as meeting and gathering places for the community. Figures 7-5 through 7-12 are representative of what the Village Center could look like with these amenities. The Committee also recommended a Mixed-Density Residential District in some areas that represents areas where single-family and multi-family housing can exist together. These areas are good for future Planned Unit Development.



**FIGURE 7-5**  
**Bethlehem Community Plan**  
**FUTURE LAND USE**

**Legend**

-  Study Area Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Regional Lakes
- Future Land Use**
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Institutional & Schools
-  Village Commons District
-  Mixed-Density Residential
-  Open Space or Park
-  Residential
-  Bethlehem Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Bethlehem Elementary
-  Bethlehem Fire Department
-  Bethlehem Park




**BETHLEHEM**  
 A SHINING COMMUNITY

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Western Piedmont  
 Council of Governments  
 Community & Regional Planning

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 Miles







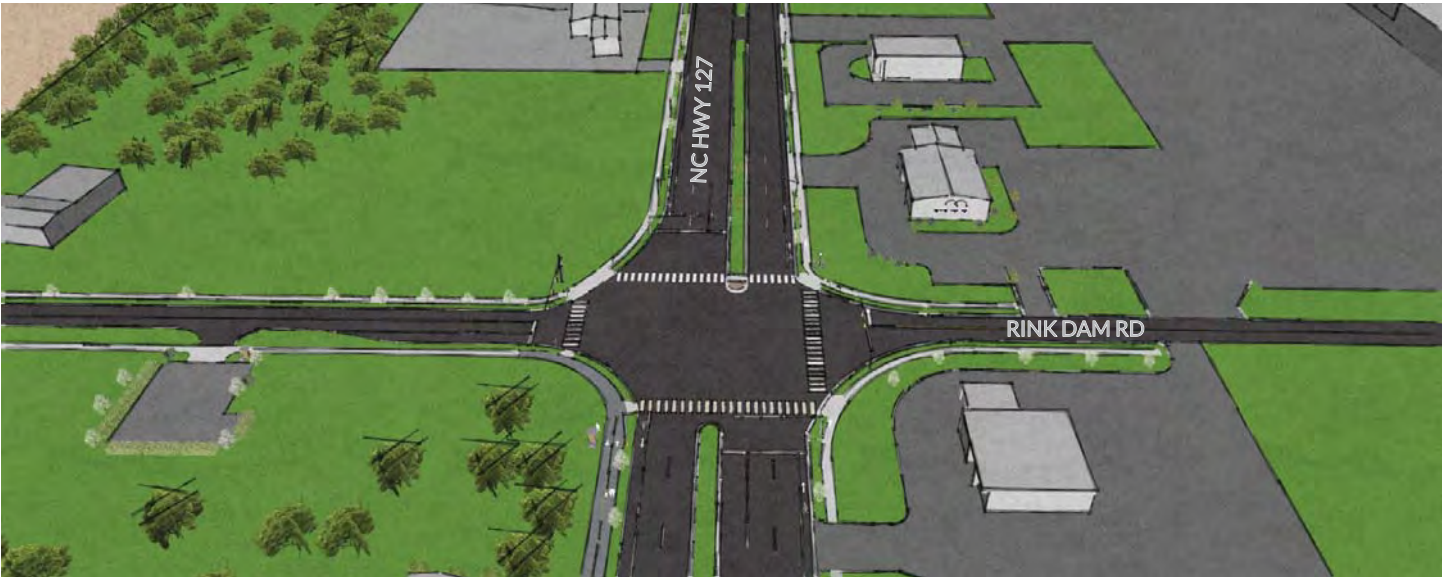


**FIGURE 7-6**

Intersection of NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Rd, facing east toward Bethlehem Village shopping center.

**Proposed Features:** sidewalks, multi-use path, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian crossing island, pedestrian signalization, wayfinding, landscaping, community identification element, street trees, street lighting, single mast-arm traffic signals, public parking for multi-use path access, etc.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



**FIGURE 7-7**

Intersection of NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Rd, facing north toward Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church.

**Proposed Features:** sidewalks, multi-use path, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian crossing island, pedestrian signalization, wayfinding, landscaping, community identification element, street trees, street lighting, single mast-arm traffic signals, public parking for multi-use path access, etc.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*





**FIGURE 7-8**

View along NC Highway 127 northbound approaching the intersection of Rink Dam Rd from Lake Hickory. (Right Lane)

Proposed Features: sidewalks, multi-use path, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian signalization, wayfinding, landscaping, street trees, street lighting, single mast-arm traffic signals, etc.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



**FIGURE 7-9**

View along NC Highway 127 northbound approaching the intersection of Rink Dam Rd from Lake Hickory. (Left Lane)

Proposed Features: multi-use path, wayfinding, landscaping, street trees, street lighting, etc.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



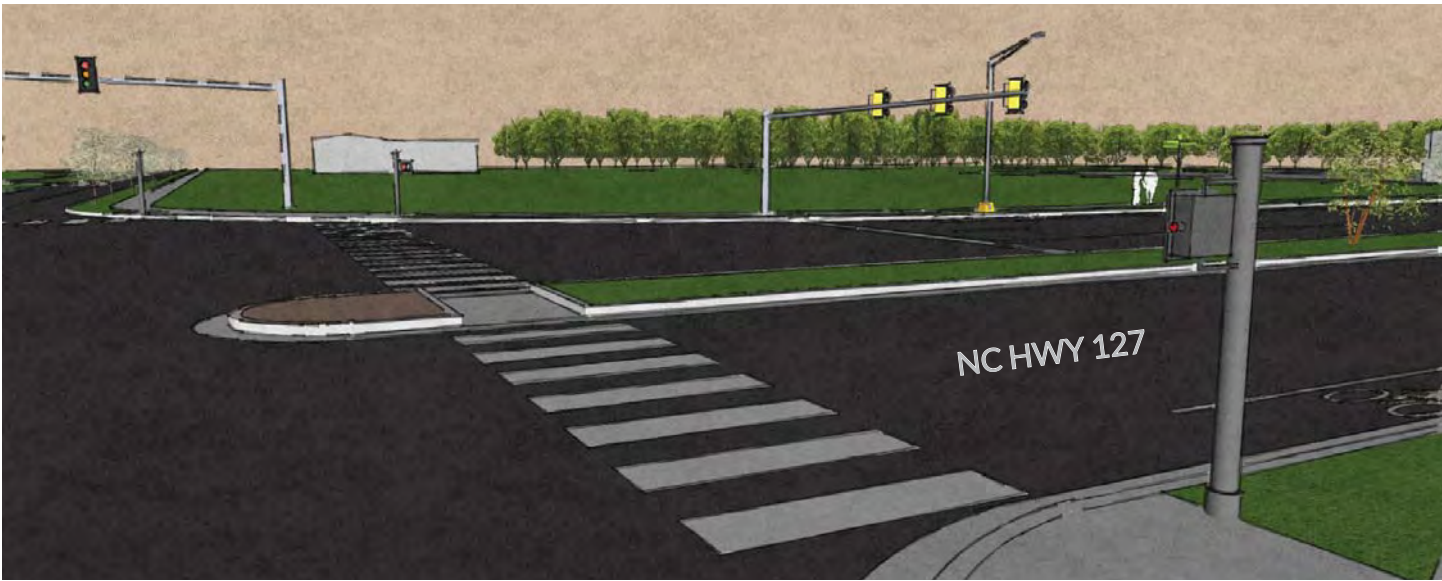


**FIGURE 7-10**

Intersection of NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Rd, facing east toward Bethlehem Village shopping center.

Proposed Features: sidewalks, multi-use path, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian signalization, landscaping, street trees, street lighting, single mast-arm traffic signals, etc.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



**FIGURE 7-11**

Intersection of NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Rd, northern side of intersection.

Proposed Features: sidewalks, multi-use path, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian signalization, pedestrian island, crosswalk signal detail, bike lanes, landscaping, street trees, street lighting, single mast-arm traffic signals, etc.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



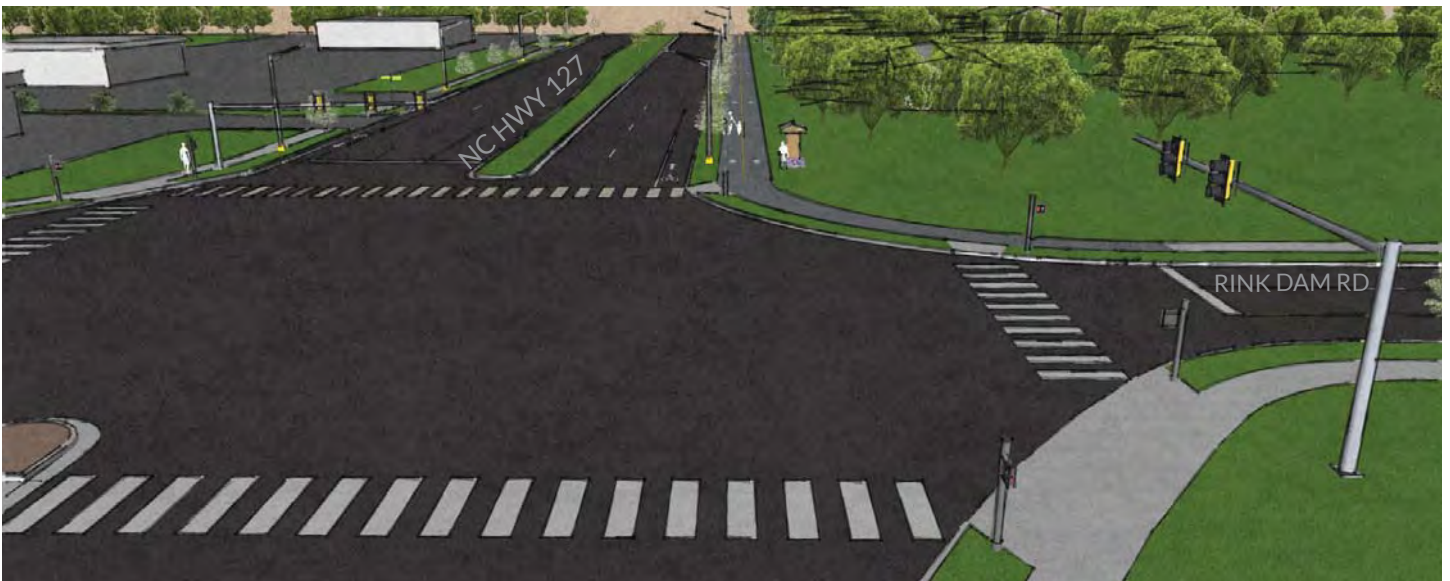


**FIGURE 7-12**

Intersection of NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Rd, northern side of intersection.

Proposed Features: Detail of sidewalk, crosswalk, pedestrian island, bike lane and an example of decorative landscaping and community identification elements.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



**FIGURE 7-13**

Intersection of NC Highway 127 and Rink Dam Rd, southern side of intersection.

Proposed Features: Detail of sidewalk, crosswalk, multi-use path bike lane and wayfinding kiosk.

*Red Arrow indicates the directional view shown in the adjacent image*



## LAND USE & GROWTH MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- LU-1. Review and update land use regulations to ensure it is compatible for desired types of development outlined in this plan.
  - 1. Develop innovative strategies and incentives to encourage commercial development within the Community, specifically retail and boutique establishments, restaurants, grocery stores, medical offices and recreational opportunities.
  - 2. Encourage the use of multi-family housing as an affordable housing option to attract younger residents along the business corridor on NC Highway 127.
  - 3. Encourage continued use of existing manufacturing facilities, and encourage new manufacturing to appropriate places.
  - 4. Ensure that future land use decisions are compatible with the Future Land Use Map.
  
- LU-2. Establish a cohesive, identifiable commercial center in the Community and create a destination that encourages recreation and economic development.
  - 1. Add a new Village Commons District to include architectural features such as additional sidewalks, structural aesthetics, and façade development.
  - 2. Prioritize sidewalks along thoroughfares. As development occurs, new sidewalks should be required to be constructed along existing thoroughfares, following adopted streetscape standards.
  - 3. Maintain and enhance the “streetscape” along the Village Commons District, as well as pedestrian access across NC HWY 127.
  - 4. Seek public/private opportunities to create civic plazas, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and street furniture as elements throughout the Village Center. These will serve as meeting and gathering places for the community.
  - 5. Form an architectural review board to review new commercial and multi-family development in the commercial district along NC HWY 127.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

*Wittenburg Access Boat Ramps*







# RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bethlehem Community Plan is intended to be an ever-changing document. The Plan should be evaluated to ensure it stays relevant to the activities of the Community. The Plan’s essential guiding principles, goals and policies, should remain largely unchanged to prevent undermining the overall intentions and integrity of the long range planning process. Any changes to the Community Plan should be facilitated through the Advisory Committee or Planning and Zoning Commission and recommended to the County Commissioners.

## TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>T-1</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Maintain a good working relationship with NCDOT-Division 12 and WPCOG, in order to coordinate land use and transportation planning for new and updated roadway corridors.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote continued road improvements on unimproved streets and continue to seek dedication of private streets to help improve residential and emergency vehicle access.</li> <li>2. Work with NCDOT on the following programmed projects:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. NC HWY 127: Cloninger Mill to Richey Road (STIP ID: R-3603A)</li> <li>b. NC HWY 127 right turn lane on Bethlehem School Road (STIP ID: U-6040).</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Consider the following recommended modernizations:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. NC HWY 127: Richey Road to US 64/ NC 90</li> <li>b. Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road modernization with new location</li> <li>c. Rink Dam Road and Friendship Church Road modernization</li> <li>d. Teague Town Road, Church Road, and Alspaugh Dam Road modernization</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Require adequate transportation access to all developments in order to provide orderly and efficient traffic flow and maintain current and minimum design standards for new subdivision road construction.</li> </ol>		<p>Those serving on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) for Alexander County</p> <p>WPCOG</p>
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCDOT</li> <li>• WPCOG</li> <li>• County Planning Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• GIS/Mapping</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>	Updated streets, new streets	

<b>T-2</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Incorporate adopted plans to create a community-oriented environment that encourages walking, while also supporting other modes of transportation.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan recommendations for future bicycle facilities to create connection to Mountains to Sea Trail: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Highest Priority Segments: NC HWY 127. Rink Dam Rd, Church Rd, Bowmans Cutover Rd, Teague Town Rd, and Liledoun Rd; and sharrows on Liledoun Rd.</li> <li>b. Medium Priority: NC HWY 127, Richey Road/Sam Hefner Road, and Hubbard Road/Shiloh Church Road/Icard Dam Road</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ensure safer pedestrian crossings for the intersection of NC HWY 127 and Rink Dam Road.</li> <li>3. Consider adding sidewalk and/or multi-use path connections to NC HWY 127 via Shiloh Church Rd, Wildlife Access Rd, Cemetery Loop, and Hubbard Rd.</li> <li>4. Promote sidewalks connecting residential areas to NC HWY 127.</li> <li>5. Promote bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the programmed NC HWY 127 improvements from Cloninger Mill Road to Richey Road. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Steering Committee Vision: Construct a multi-use path west of NC HWY 127 from Shiloh Church Rd to Rink Dam Rd; construct sidewalk east of NC HWY 127 and north of Rink Dam Rd through commercialized area.</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. Apply for NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant in 2020 to develop a comprehensive sidewalk pedestrian plan working in conjunction with Alexander County.</li> </ol>		<p>Those serving on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) for Alexander County</p> <p>WPCOG</p>
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCDOT</li> <li>• WPCOG</li> <li>• County Planning Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• GIS/Mapping</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		New bicycle and pedestrian facilities as recommended by adopted plans

## RESOURCES & SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>RS-1</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Explore new recreational opportunities for the Community and its citizens.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participate in the Alexander County Recreational Plan.</li> <li>2. Explore the possibility of providing a multi-functional youth and/or senior community center facility.</li> </ol>		County Commissioners Planning Board County Manager Planning Staff WPCOG
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)</li> <li>• CDBG</li> <li>• WPCOG</li> <li>• PARTF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant Writing</li> <li>• Mapping</li> <li>• Engineering</li> </ul>	3-5 years
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Recreational center/Participation in Recreational Planning Process

<b>RS-2</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Identify and acquire land in strategic locations to encourage open space preservation, greenways, parks and other passive recreation opportunities.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a community walking trail using sidewalks, greenways and multi-use paths along NC HWY 127 from the Village Center to the Wittenburg Access (See Figure 4-2: Recommended Bicycle, Blue Way, and Pedestrian Trails).</li> <li>2. Apply for NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant to develop a comprehensive sidewalk pedestrian plan .</li> </ol>		County Commissioners WPCOG Planning Board Planning Staff
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PARTF</li> <li>• CWMTF</li> <li>• Conservancy Groups</li> <li>• WPCOG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant Writing</li> <li>• Mapping</li> <li>• Engineering</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Number of open space preservations, greenways, parks and other passive recreation opportunities.

<b>RS-3</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Maintain relationships with the City of Hickory and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexander County will continue to work with the City of Hickory on future public water and sewer projects outlined on Figure 4-1: Future &amp; Recommended Water / Sewer Improvements</li> <li>Continue to support the Volunteer Fire, Sheriff, and EMS Departments.</li> </ol>		County Commissioners Bethlehem leadership City of Hickory
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WPCOG</li> <li>County Departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning/County staff</li> <li>GIS/Mapping</li> <li>Alexander County / City of Hickory</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Water and sewer extensions. Relationships with Volunteer Fire, Sheriff, and EMS Departments

# NATURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>NR-1</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Protect Bethlehem’s natural environment through orderly growth management techniques that preserve the rural areas of the Community and safeguard its natural resources.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and acquire land in strategic locations to encourage appropriate development, including open space preservation, greenways, parks and other passive recreation opportunities.</li> <li>2. Work with planners at Western Piedmont Council of Governments to evaluate land acquisition proposals that may be eligible for Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) or Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) grant funding.</li> </ol>		County Commissioners County Manager County Planning WPCOG
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PARTF</li> <li>• CWMTF</li> <li>• Conservancy Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• WPCOG grant writing assistance</li> </ul>	1-5 years
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications submitted to PARTF and CWMTF</li> <li>• Measures put in place to protect natural resources</li> <li>• Properties under conservation easement</li> </ul>

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>ED-1</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Provide economic development information and local assistance to help recruit viable businesses and service industry activities.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create commercial marketing materials to promote available commercial sites.</li> <li>2. Support and partner with Alexander County Economic Development Corporation in bringing additional employment opportunities in, or close to Bethlehem.</li> <li>3. Form a committee to create a community identity for marketing purposes.</li> <li>4. Identify methods and strengths to market Bethlehem as a destination.</li> <li>5. Create and maintain a Village of Bethlehem Facebook/Social Media platform.</li> </ol>		Alexander County EDC County Planning Staff
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander County EDC</li> <li>• Planning Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• Outreach/Marketing programs</li> <li>• Facebook/Website coordinator</li> </ul>	3-5 years
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Marketing materials produced/new businesses/Facebook and/or website marketing

<b>ED-2</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Work to attract young adults, new residents, and tourism.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number of parks, open spaces, and walking trails/sidewalks/greenways.</li> <li>2. Attract boutique businesses by encouraging development that enhances its role as a destination.</li> </ol>		Alexander County EDC County Planning Staff
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander County EDC</li> <li>• Planning Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• Outreach/Marketing programs</li> <li>• Facebook/Website coordinator</li> </ul>	3-5 years
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Rise in population in younger age bracket/increase in parks, open spaces, and walking/increase in boutique businesses

<b>ED-3</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Evaluate available properties throughout the Community and encourage commercial development projects in appropriate areas.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the City of Hickory to expand water and wastewater extension to areas with high economic development potential.</li> <li>2. Inventory vacant commercial sites and buildings and make the information available to interested parties through printed materials or websites.</li> </ol>		Alexander County EDC County Manager County Planning Staff
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander County EDC</li> <li>• Planning Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• Outreach/Marketing programs</li> <li>• Facebook/Website coordinator</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		The addition of local community-based economic development

# LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>LU - 1</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Review and update land use regulations to ensure it is compatible for desired types of development outlined in this plan.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop innovative strategies and incentives to encourage commercial development within the Community, specifically retail and boutique establishments, restaurants, grocery stores, medical offices and recreational opportunities.</li> <li>2. Encourage the use of multi-family housing as an affordable housing option to attract younger residents along the business corridor on NC Highway 127.</li> <li>3. Encourage continued use of existing manufacturing facilities, and encourage new manufacturing to appropriate places.</li> <li>4. Ensure that future land use decisions are compatible with the Future Land Use Map.</li> </ol>		County Commissioners County Manager County Planning Board County Planning Staff
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bethlehem Community Leadership</li> <li>• Alexander County EDC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• GIS/Mapping</li> </ul>	3-5 years
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Attracting small businesses/new ordinances adopted/multi-family housing.



<b>LU-2</b>		
<b>STRATEGY NARRATIVE:</b>	Establish a cohesive, identifiable commercial center in the Community and create a destination that encourages recreation and economic development.	
<b>KEY ACTIONS:</b>		<b>PROJECT INITIATOR(S):</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add a new Village Commons District to include architectural features such as additional sidewalks, structural aesthetics, and façade development.</li> <li>2. Prioritize sidewalks along thoroughfares. As development occurs, new sidewalks should be required to be constructed along existing thoroughfares, following adopted streetscape standards.</li> <li>3. Maintain and enhance the “streetscape” along the Village Commons District, as well as pedestrian access across NC HWY 127.</li> <li>4. Seek public/private opportunities to create civic plazas, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and street furniture as elements throughout the Village Center. These will serve as meeting and gathering places for the community.</li> <li>5. Form an architectural review board to review new commercial and multi-family development in the commercial district along NC HWY 127.</li> </ol>		County Commissioners County Manager County Planning Board County Planning Staff
<b>POTENTIAL PARTNERS:</b>	<b>RESOURCES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED:</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bethlehem Community Leadership</li> <li>• NCDOT</li> <li>• MPO</li> <li>• Alexander County EDC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff</li> <li>• GIS/Mapping</li> </ul>	3-5 years
<b>MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:</b>		Implementation of Village Commons District with new aesthetic requirements



# APPENDIX A

*Bethlehem Library*





# APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY MEETING SUMMARY

A community meeting was held on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church. About 65 Bethlehem residents were in attendance. Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) staff led the meeting and compiled resident input regarding the Community’s perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The results of the meeting were taken into consideration while drafting the Bethlehem Community Plan.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was conducted to identify how residents perceive their community. Strengths are internal and supportive characteristics that are the foundation of community. Weaknesses are internal and harmful characteristics to community stability. Opportunities are external and helpful characteristics for continued growth. Threats are external and harmful characteristics that weaken community stability.

Below are the SWOT results. Attendees voted on which topics they felt were most important.

STRENGTHS			
Votes	Strengths	Votes	Strengths
10	In the country/Rural small town feel	0	Recreational opportunities
9	Proximity to Lake Hickory	0	Low crime rate
7	Pride in community	0	Commercial corridor (future)
5	Proximity to I-40 and Hickory	0	Fire department
4	Easy access to amenities	0	Faith community
4	Alcohol sales	0	Good schools
3	Hardware Store	0	Library
2	Good veterans service office	0	Climate
2	Safe Community	0	Government transparency
1	Low taxes	0	Strong Volunteer Fire department
1	Room to grow	0	EMS food for size
1	Post office	0	Few doctors
1	Good communication	0	Restaurants
1	Good business cross section	0	Churches
1	Medical services	0	Supportive Community
1	Marina	0	Senior center
0	Highly educated population	0	Educational system
0	Close knit community		

WEAKNESSES			
Votes	Weaknesses	Votes	Weaknesses
14	Lack of restaurants/diversity	2	Hickory zip code
13	Lack of recreation opportunities/parks	2	No police presence
11	Business diversity	1	Infrastructure – sewer/water/natural gas
10	Library extension/community room	1	Update EMS training
7	Lack of new business/Weak economic base	1	Road width
6	Lack of retail	1	Dangerous curve at West Middle School
5	Banks keep closing	1	Miscellaneous signage/zoning
5	Sheriff's substation	1	Rural roads not paved
5	Lack of other modes of transportation/no bike or pedestrian	1	Availability of land/Potential mismanagement of development
5	Lack of technology service/choices	0	Proximity to Hickory
5	No ABC store	0	Retention of young people/ aging demographics
4	Proximity to hospital/ Lack of good healthcare	0	Lack of municipal structure
4	Vacant Buildings	0	No highway patrol
3	Emergency radio communications	0	Lack of lighting in rural areas
3	Lack of available jobs	0	No community pool
2	Lack of youth activities	0	Lack of aesthetics in architecture
2	Increased littering	0	Lack of childcare
2	Nuisance issues	0	One grocery store

OPPORTUNITIES			
Votes	Opportunities	Votes	Opportunities
20	Urgent Care Center	3	Keeping younger generation in area
10	Market potential is here	3	Smart Growth
9	Sewer infrastructure	3	Alcohol
5	127 widening project	2	Geographic location
5	Community center	1	Infrastructure improvements
5	Transportation planning to include all types of transportation	1	Gateway to community
5	Public waterfront area	0	Vacant land
4	Branding/destination	0	Vacant buildings
4	Retail and housing	0	Highly educated population
3	Park/recreation opportunities	0	Shooting range
3	Splash Park	0	Blank canvas-plan opportunities accordingly

THREATS			
Votes	Threats	Votes	Threats
19	Annexed by Hickory	1	Loss of young population
11	Proximity to Hickory	1	Drug trafficking/prostitution
11	Opioid Crisis	1	Business leaving
8	Bridge closing during 127 project	1	Lack of effort on business owners' part
6	Land rights	0	Big box retail
6	Increased traffic	0	Declining workforce
3	Older population	0	Consolidation of school system
3	Government intervention	0	Water pollution on Lake Hickory
3	Increased traffic on narrow roads	0	Aging population
2	Safety and security	0	Sustainable tax base
2	127 project	0	Wildlife access
2	Lake erosion		



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