PLAN POLICY
(ADOPTED JUNE 21, 2021)
Published July 20, 2021
NEW TERM IN THIS SECTION: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
This is the common reference for the geography in which the City of Charlotte can exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction and where voluntary annexations may occur; utilized as the Planning Area for the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

AREAS VULNERABLE TO DISPLACEMENT

What is Vulnerability to Displacement?
Displacement occurs when an individual, household or business leave a neighborhood or district. Displacement can be voluntary or involuntary. While the Comprehensive Plan’s preference is to minimize voluntary displacement, especially in areas of the community where change is occurring very quickly and the history and culture of a community is being weakened, the primary focus is mitigating involuntary displacement to the extent possible. Involuntary displacement typically results from increased land values, rents, taxes and other household or business expenses. There are certain characteristics that tend to make certain individuals and households more vulnerable to displacement. Unfortunately, the same characteristics – race, income, education level, and age – that make certain populations susceptible to displacement are also used in identifying whether environmental impacts are justly distributed. They are often good indicators, along with low or no car ownership, of transit propensity – the likelihood of using public transit. Mapping these key contributing factors can help us understand how physical conditions, access, costs and benefits impact residents that have suffered from systemic racial and other social discrimination and/or are less likely to be able to adapt to rapid economic and other changes. Four measures have been documented as major contributors to vulnerability to displacement and are used to identify the areas with the most vulnerable populations across Charlotte:1

- Poverty Rate;
- Educational Attainment;
- Race; and
- Age.
The Importance of Mitigating Vulnerability to Displacement

When individuals, households and businesses are displaced from an area they have been a part of for a long time, the unique culture and identity of that area can quickly erode. Charlotte is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own distinct past and social fabric. Unchecked gentrification of an area can result in substantial displacement. And with prices increasing across the entire community, there is a chance that those who are displaced are forced to move out of Charlotte or even the region. In Charlotte, those most vulnerable to displacement are also those who have suffered most and benefited least over decades of growth and development. Additionally, when we help those who are most vulnerable, it benefits the entire community through shared wealth building, economic sustainability, expanding the tax base, attracting investment, and adding local businesses, jobs, and skilled workforce into the system. Thus, it is especially critical that the Comprehensive Plan begin identifying ways in which existing residents and businesses can participate in and benefit from new investments throughout Charlotte.

1 Grid cells that met the “vulnerable” criteria for each of the 3 metrics are scored with a 1, while those that do not meet the criteria receive a 0. Scores are added to create a final Vulnerability to Displacement score. All vulnerability metrics are measured using US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year estimates (2018); data was collected at the Census Block Group level and apportioned to grid cells. County-wide metrics were pulled from the same data source as the point of comparison.
What is Access to Essential Amenities, Goods, and Services?

The community expressed a strong desire for more complete neighborhoods across the entire city. Measuring access to essential amenities, goods and services can help identify areas where residents and businesses may not have access to what they need close to home. The result typically involves having to travel farther and pay more to meet basic daily needs. In extreme cases, the results can be even more dire if the lack of nearby access means simply missing out on essential amenities, goods and services. The following measures are proposed to measure access to essential amenities, goods and services.

Access to essential amenities, goods and services is analyzed using seven measures:

- Proximity to Childcare and Early Childhood Education;
- Proximity to Parks, Open Space and Trails;
- Proximity to Community Facilities;
- Proximity to Fresh Food;
- Proximity to Health Care & Pharmacies;
- Proximity to Financial Services; and
- Access to Internet Service.
The Importance of Improving Access to Essential Amenities, Goods and Services

The lack of access to essential amenities, goods and services can significantly impact the health and well being of an individual or household. A lack of easily accessible childcare may result in substandard care or a parent or guardian passing on employment or other opportunities. A lack of access to parks, trails and community facilities can create a significant barrier to physical, mental and social health. Likewise, a lack of access to fresh, healthy food often results in settling for less healthy options and can contribute to a number of chronic health issues and disease. Lack of access to health care, pharmacies and financial services all pose barriers investing one’s self, property and/or business. A lack of Internet access can be detrimental to learning, working remotely, and communicating with friends and loved ones.

---

2 Grid cells that meet the “opportunity” criteria for each of the 7 metrics are scored with a 1, while those that do not meet the criteria receive a 0. Scores are added to create a final Access to Essential Amenities, Goods, and Services score. The primary housing data source is Mecklenburg County tax parcel data (2019). Data is reported at the parcel level and aggregated to grid cells based on the centroid location of the parcel. The amenities, good and services data is from a variety of sources and is outlined in the data inventory.
What is Access to Housing Opportunity?

The Access to Housing Opportunity metric identifies areas where the housing stock in a particular area of Charlotte does not provide opportunities for all residents to live. Housing Opportunity, for the purposes of this analysis, is defined as the ability for residents of all income, household compositions, and life stages to access housing options that meet their needs and economic conditions.

Access to housing opportunity is analyzed using six measures:

- Housing Unit Diversity;
- Housing Cost;
- Housing Size;
- Subsidized Housing;
- Tenure; and
- Level of (Re)Investment.
The Importance of Improving Access to Housing Opportunity

Neighborhoods should include unique compositions of housing types, but they should also include some diversity of housing stock to help promote diversity, inclusion, and economic stability throughout the entire community. It can also be difficult for a family or household to stay within a neighborhood they desire as circumstances change if all the housing units that are available are of the same size and type. Different life circumstances can result in the need for owning or renting, a yard requiring lots of maintenance versus a relatively maintenance free attached unit, and one or two bedrooms as opposed to three or more. This variety helps support young families as well as seniors who want to age within their neighborhood. Access to housing opportunity in a neighborhood also results in access to the amenities, goods, services, and employment opportunities nearby. A variety of housing opportunities may reduce the barriers to entry into an area with the job of choice or right mix of opportunities nearby. Housing diversity is also an important aspect of creating an economically resilient community, with studies showing that neighborhoods with diverse housing choices have lower foreclosure and sales rates.

Grid cells that meet the “opportunity” criteria for each of the 6 metrics are scored with a 1, while those that do not meet the criteria receive a 0. Scores are added to create a final Access to Housing Opportunity score. The primary housing data source is Mecklenburg County tax parcel data (2019). Additional data includes building permits (Mecklenburg County, 2017-2019), rental housing (apartment) properties (City of Charlotte, 2020), subsidized housing units (units with development-based rental assistance, Quality of Life Explorer, 2017), and household income (US Census, 2018).
What is Access to Employment Opportunity?

The access to employment opportunity metric identifies areas with a lack of employment opportunities for residents. Employment Opportunity is defined as the ability for residents to live proximate to jobs that are attainable for a variety of residents and provide a family sustaining wage. For the sake of measuring access to employment opportunity, a commute shed is defined as a 20-minute (2.5 mile) radius from a residence.

Access to Employment Opportunity is analyzed using five measures:

• Proximity to Employment;
• Employment in Commute Shed;
• Wage Levels;
• Middle Skill Jobs; and
• Knowledge Based Jobs.
The Importance of Improving Access to Employment Opportunity

The financial stress and wellbeing in a household is largely driven by the balance – or lack of balance in many cases – of income and household expenses. The two largest household expenses are housing and transportation. And the largest driver of both income and transportation costs is related to employment opportunity. It can be challenging to find a good paying job that matches a person’s skills close to an area they can afford to live. In most cases, the individual will compromise and take a lower paying job that may not be as good of a fit or have to spend a good portion or all of the higher pay they receive on getting to and from work. Thus, Access to Employment Opportunity is largely related to Access to Housing Opportunity. In addition, it should be noted that education and training are an important component in promoting upward mobility and aligning individual skills and expertise with employment opportunities.

*Grid cells that meet the “opportunity” criteria for each of the 5 metrics are scored with a 1, while those that do not meet the criteria receive a 0. Scores are added to create a final Access to Employment Opportunity score. All employment metrics are measured using US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) employment data (2017). Data is reported at the Census Block level, and aggregated to grid cells based on the centroid location of each Block.*
What is Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice seeks to minimize and equalize effects of environmental hazards among the entire community regardless of income, race, education level and age. Issues of environmental justice often arise from geographic or procedural inequities. Geographic inequities occur when neighborhoods with high percentages of low-income residents, minority residents, and/or immigrant communities take more than their share of the worst environmental hazards, nuisance impacts, and resulting health problems from exposure to these hazards. Procedural inequities occur when the same neighborhoods face obstacles to participate in the decision-making process for projects that directly affect their neighborhoods.

Many factors contribute to these geographic and procedural inequalities. These include a development pattern that concentrates undesirable or unhealthy land uses in certain areas, the placement of desirable public amenities outside of disadvantaged communities and limited or non-existing political influence among certain demographic groups. The following measures – coupled with sociodemographic characteristics captured in the Populations Vulnerable to Displacement metric – are used to measure environmental justice (or injustices as the case may be).

Environmental Justice is analyzed using five measures:

- Tree Canopy;
- Impervious Surface;
- Proximity to Heavy Industrial Uses (including extraction operations (i.e., quarries));
- Proximity to Major Transportation Infrastructure; and
- Floodplain.
The Importance of Improving Access to Environmental Justice

As previously stated, the costs and benefits of growth and change in Charlotte have been distributed inequitably throughout the community for decades, if not centuries. Some of the major costs of development include nuisance and health impacts of large land use and infrastructure decisions. Health impacts include acute and chronic conditions as well as shortened life expectancy. Highways and other disruptive infrastructure divided neighborhoods and now focus pollutants and noise generated on those facilities in the neighborhoods that remain nearby. Similarly, land use decisions have often resulted in a lack of trees and greenspace in neighborhoods that are lower income and communities of color. Flooding risk is increasing with climate change and many lower income neighborhoods are most susceptible. Along with enhanced standards and regulations addressing many of these issues for the entire community, decisions regarding land use, new development and infrastructure investments should be made with these disparities and new consequences in mind.

Grid cells that meet the environmental justice criteria for each of the 5 metrics are scored with a 1, while those that do not meet the criteria receive a 0. Scores are added to create a final Environmental Justice score. Environmental justice data sources include a tree canopy study (Mecklenburg County, 2016), impervious surfaces (Mecklenburg County, 2020), zoning (heavy industrial zoning districts, City of Charlotte, 2020), major transportation infrastructure (freeways, expressways, railroads and the airport, Mecklenburg County, 2020), and FEMA Existing 100 Year Floodplain (Mecklenburg County, 2020).
OUR CITY. OUR PLAN. OUR FUTURE.