

GASTONIA NRSA

MARIETTA STREET CORRIDOR

JANUARY 2026



PREPARED BY:



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Special Thanks To...

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South Marietta Baptist Church (Pastor Andrew Morrow, Rowdy Daniels, Outreach Director)

Gaston County Public Library

Food Lion

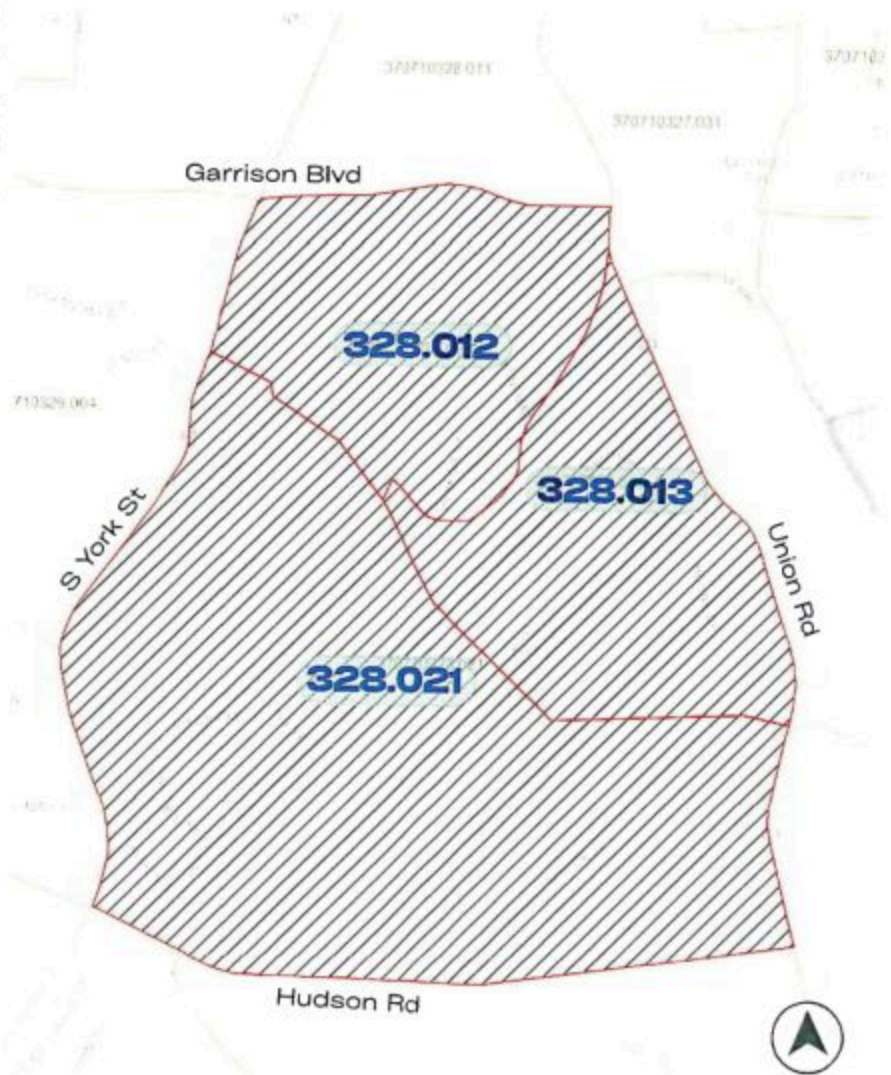
Residents and Communities of City of Gastonia

INTRODUCTION

The Marietta Street Corridor (MSC) occupies an essential position within Gastonia's southeastern urban core. For the City of Gastonia, the historic Marietta Street Corridor connects residential districts and light-commercial or industrial parcels to major transportation routes. Within the larger metropolitan region, this area serves as a gateway between Gastonia's traditional center and the rapidly growing eastern municipalities, such as Charlotte, NC. The study area is situated along U.S. Highway 321, which connects to Interstate 85 and U.S. Highway 74, the principal east-west thoroughfare that links to Lowell, McAdenville, Belmont, and Charlotte. This frames the area's connectivity to the rest of Gaston County and the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia metropolitan region.

BOUNDARY

Gastonia's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area geography includes **three contiguous census block groups — 328.012, 328.013, and 328.021**. This area is anchored by the Marietta Street Corridor (MSC) and extends across older residential blocks characterized by 1940s housing stock, with occasional small infill developments interrupting the landscape. The tract's northern reaches are bordered by Garrison Boulevard, an east-west corridor linking the area to local retail and service destinations, while its western edge is South York Street, US-321. Moving eastward, the study area is bounded by Union Road (NC-274), a north-south connector traversing legacy



neighborhoods dotted with newer multi-family complexes and light-commercial parcels. Continuing southward, East Hudson Road (State Road 1255) completes the study area's perimeter. Most areas within the MSC's boundary exhibit a similar residential pattern, interfaced with natural features and utility corridors associated with the river basin and the city's origin as a textile and manufacturing hub.

HISTORY

The City's proposed area for the NRSA designation is adjacent to priority reinvestment areas, such as the Downtown Redevelopment Area and the FUSE District, to the north. The City of Gastonia and APD Urban discussed the implications for Qualified Census Tract status and NRSA eligibility based on the tracts' poverty and income profiles. Subsequent comparative analyses determined that the combined geography of Block Groups 328.012, 328.013, and 328.021 should be advanced for strategic designation. The area's proximity to Interstate 85, U.S. Highway 321, and the South Fork River positions it as a strategic gateway between Gastonia's historic downtown and the growing eastern municipalities of Lowell and McAdenville.

These neighborhoods developed primarily during the mid-20th century and retain a significant share of aging housing stock, with many structures dating back to the 1940s and 1950s. Historically, these neighborhoods served as working-class residential enclaves, shaped by the textile industry and modest single-family housing patterns. Today, they exhibit demographic and economic characteristics that qualify them as a Qualified Census Tract. The median household income in the combined block groups is substantially below the city and state averages, and renter cost burdens are severe, with nearly two-thirds of households paying more than 30% of their income on housing. Racial and ethnic diversity is a defining feature of the proposed designation area, with higher proportions of Black and Hispanic residents compared to the city of Gastonia overall. These conditions underscore the urgency for targeted reinvestment strategies focused on housing stabilization, economic mobility, and equitable development.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF NRSA DESIGNATION

The designation of the Marietta Street Corridor as an NRSA enables the City of Gastonia to pursue more flexible, comprehensive revitalization strategies that align with public, private, and philanthropic resources. NRSA status removes barriers that normally

limit CDBG-funded economic and housing activities, allowing the City to more effectively address long-term disinvestment, housing quality challenges, workforce barriers, and limited access to economic opportunities.

These key HUD flexibilities of the Marietta Street Corridor, as described in the CDBG regulations at 24 CFR Part 570 and activated by NRSA designation, are described below:

1. **Job creation is treated as a low/moderate area benefit:** Businesses creating jobs within the NRSA may count those jobs as benefiting all LMI residents in the area, eliminating the need for individual income verification.
2. **Aggregation of housing units:** The City may combine multiple scattered-site housing rehabilitation or acquisition/rehab units into a single activity to meet national objectives.
3. **Greater flexibility for Community-Based Development Organizations (CBDOs):** NRSA status enables CBDOs to undertake broader economic and community development activities without counting toward the 15% public service cap.
4. **Streamlined economic development activities:** The City may more easily provide loan/grant assistance to businesses when tied to revitalizing the NRSA.

The City of Gastonia intends to utilize NRSA flexibilities to accelerate small-business revitalization, expand housing investment tools, and strengthen residents' economic mobility.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

NRSA ELIGIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

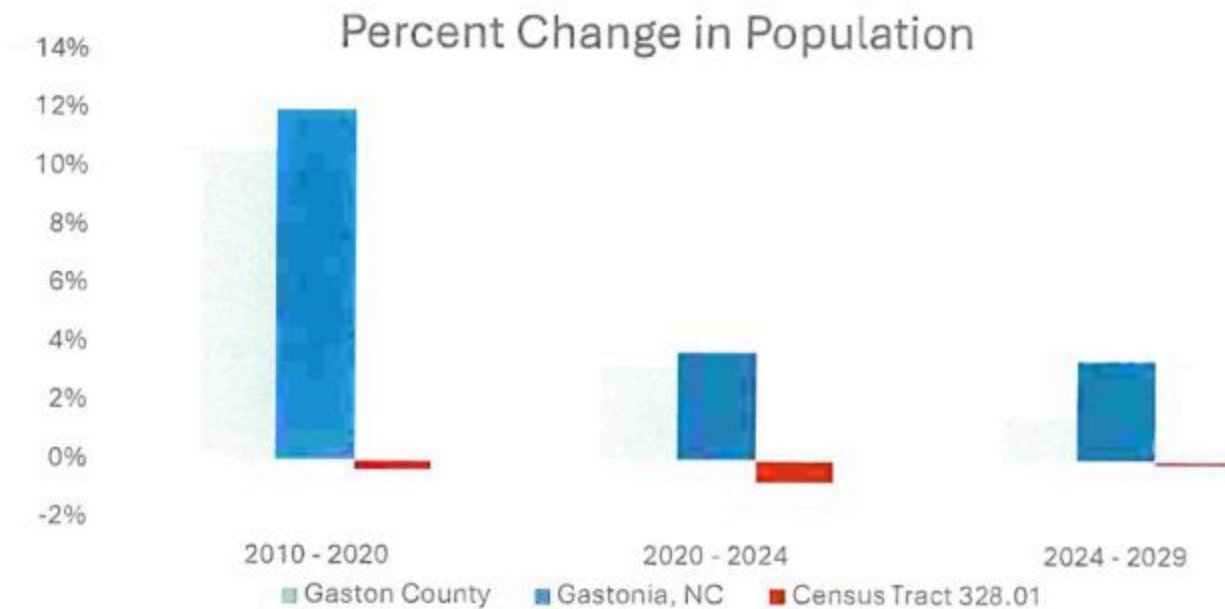
In accordance with HUD regulations, the proposed **MSC NRSA consists of 80% residential properties** and includes a percentage of low- and moderate-income residents that meets the "upper quartile percentage." This percentage is calculated by HUD as outlined in 24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(ii) and is capped at 70 percent, with the minimum set at 51 percent. The following chart illustrates how MSC NRSA area complies with the "upper quartile" requirement.

Percentage Low-Moderate Income Persons	Marietta Street Corridor NRSA			City of Gastonia
	328.012	328.013	328.021	
Total LMI Universe	705	440	2745	75215
Total LMI Persons	385	350	1960	39100
LMI Percent	54.6%	79.5%	71.4%	52.0%
Is the Designated Area Eligible for NRSA based on LMI %	YES	YES	YES	N/A

POPULATION

The proposed NRSA Study Area was identified in collaboration with the City of Gastonia. The following summary synthesizes ESRI Community Analyst 2024 indicators and compares them with benchmarks for the City of Gastonia and the State of North Carolina, derived from ACS 2023/2024 sources. The "**Study Area**" represents the working geography that includes **Census Block Groups 328.012, 328.013, and 328.0212**, as used throughout the NRSA work plan. This area, which includes the Marietta Street Corridor Study Area, experienced a modest decline in **population**, decreasing from 4,008 in 2020 to **3,978** in **2024**, representing approximately 5% of the entire

City of Gastonia's population of 83,639 (as of 2024). This indicates stability with slight softening in occupancy and household formation. Over the same period, Gastonia's population increased from 80,657 in 2020 to 83,639 in 2024, signaling continued citywide growth, while Gaston County's population rose from 227,943 to 235,231. Forward projections to 2029 indicate that the Study Area will have 3,959 residents, suggesting a flat-to-declining trajectory that contrasts with projected growth in the City (to 86,514) and County (to 238,659).



AGE

The **median age** is **41**, indicating that residents near the Marietta Street Corridor are somewhat older than those in Gastonia, at 39.7, and close to the county average of 42.2. This is further evidenced by the fact that **24% of residents are below the age of 18**, compared with 25.5% citywide and 23.7% in the County. Within the Study Area, **21% of the population is over the age of 65**, which is noticeably higher than the 16.5% in the City and aligns with the County's aging profile of 18.5%. These differences reflect the tracts' established, long-tenured households and the area's legacy housing stock.

RACE

The Marietta Street Corridor Study Area is **52.8% White** and **33.4% Black**, with **12.6% Hispanic** and 1.6% describing themselves as Other/Two+ races. Citywide patterns show 50.6% White, 31.3% Black, and 14.2% Hispanic, while Countywide figures are 66.0% White, 18.9% Black, and 10.1% Hispanic. The Study Area, therefore, exhibits a more

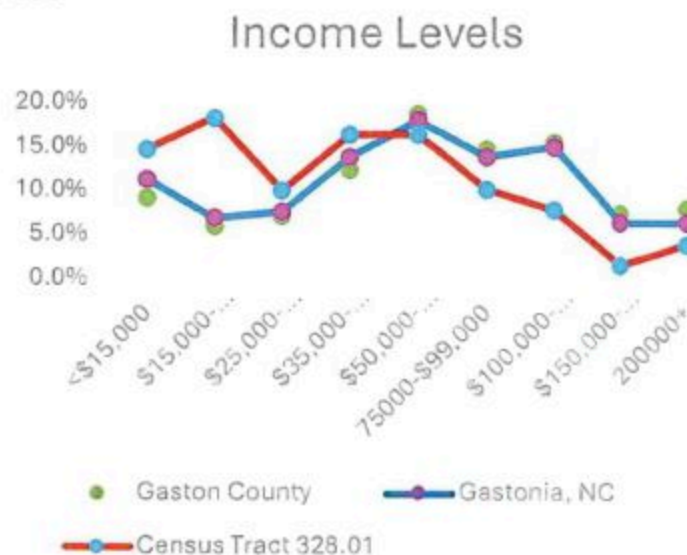
diverse racial composition than the County and a profile similar to the City, with slightly higher Black representation and slightly lower Hispanic share.

HOUSING

While most housing units in greater Gaston County were built between 2000 and 2009, the MSC Study Area consists primarily of housing stock from the 1940s. The age and condition of this housing may be a limiting factor in attracting and retaining professionals in the area. Occupied-owner **median property value** for the study area is **\$260,638**, set between Gastonia's \$212,495 and Gaston County's \$286,032. The higher median value is likely a result of the prevalence of higher-value homes within the York-Chester and Brookwood Historic Districts. Vacancy rates are higher at 7.6%, compared to 7.0% for the city and 7.1% for the county rates, indicating that slack exists but is not substantially higher than elsewhere. With older housing stock more prevalent in the northern portion of the study area, reinvestment strategies focused on rehabilitation and small-scale infill may be necessary to stabilize tenure and moderate rent escalation.

HOUSEHOLDS

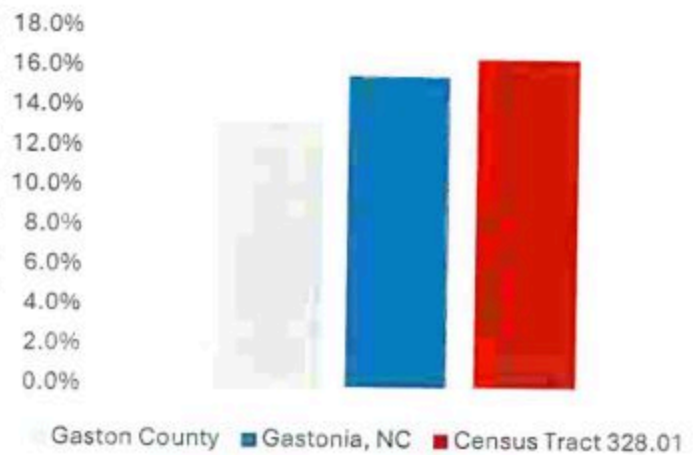
Household sizes in the MSC block groups are generally smaller (2.16) than those in Gastonia (2.44) and Gaston County (2.45), with a higher prevalence of single-person and small households. The median household income in the Marietta Street Corridor study area, \$39,844, is approximately 41% lower than that of the City of Gastonia, and well below Gaston County's \$67,997. The area's poverty rate of 16.5% is slightly higher than Gastonia's 15.6% and above the County's 13.2%. Income distribution skews toward lower brackets: 14.8% of households fall below \$15,000 (City: 11.4%), and 18.4% are in the \$15,000–\$24,999 range (City: 7.0%), underscoring the affordability stress concentrated within these tracts.



Homeownership in the Study Area stands at 35.0%, significantly lower than Gastonia's 53.9% and Gaston County's 63.2%. Rentership is correspondingly higher at 57.1%, compared to 46.1% in the City and 29.7% in the County. The cost burden among renters is pronounced, with 64.5% of renter households paying more than 30% of their income on rent (City: 50.3%; County: 44.2%), and 26.9% paying more than 50% (City: 25.1%;

County: 21.8%). The median gross rent in the area is \$969, which is above Gastonia's \$849 and near the county's \$1,005; rent distributions cluster in the \$800–\$999 range for the tracts, highlighting limited affordability headroom for lower-income households.

Poverty Rate



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT & EMPLOYMENT

Educational attainment differs between the MSC study area and the County geographies. Within the study area, almost 80% of residents have graduated from high school, compared to 87.0% in Gastonia and 87.6% Countywide. Bachelor's degrees reach 18.0% in the Study Area, below 25.7% in the City, and 25.0% in the County. Graduate or professional degrees account for 5.4% of the population, compared to 8.3% in the City and 7.4% in the County. Employment data indicate that 98.8% of residents aged 16 and above are employed, although differences in income and poverty levels may reflect the prevalence of lower-wage jobs in the area. While 98.8% of people over the age of 16 are employed, the poverty rate, median household income, education levels, and high rental rates show a concentration of low-income earners.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

MARIETTA STREET CORRIDOR WINDSHIELD SURVEY

APD-U conducted a windshield survey and examined 1,378 parcels to provide land use and parcel information. Exterior building conditions were assessed through a visual study of the Marietta Street Corridor (MSC) and with Google Street View for other parts of the MRC study area. The parcel-level data for the Marietta Street Corridor NRSA and the City of Gastonia's comprehensive plan should help guide prioritization for redevelopment.

The following analysis organizes the collected **Land Use** information into nine (9) descriptors, shown below.

1. **Single Family Detached** – Parcels containing classic single-family home that stands alone.
2. **Single Family Attached** – Parcels containing single-family homes with shared walls (townhomes/brownstones/row houses).
3. **Multi-family** – Parcels used for multi-family dwellings (two or more units). *Duplexes, Triplexes, Quadplexes, and anything higher are considered multifamily units.
4. **Commercial** – Parcels are used for retail and/or business purposes.
5. **Mixed Use** – Parcels are used for living and working.
6. **Industrial** – Parcels are used for manufacturing or other industrial purposes.
7. **Institutional** – Parcels are used for churches or any governmental services.
8. **Public Space** – Parcels are used for public recreation.
9. **Parking Lot** – Parcels are used for parking automobiles.

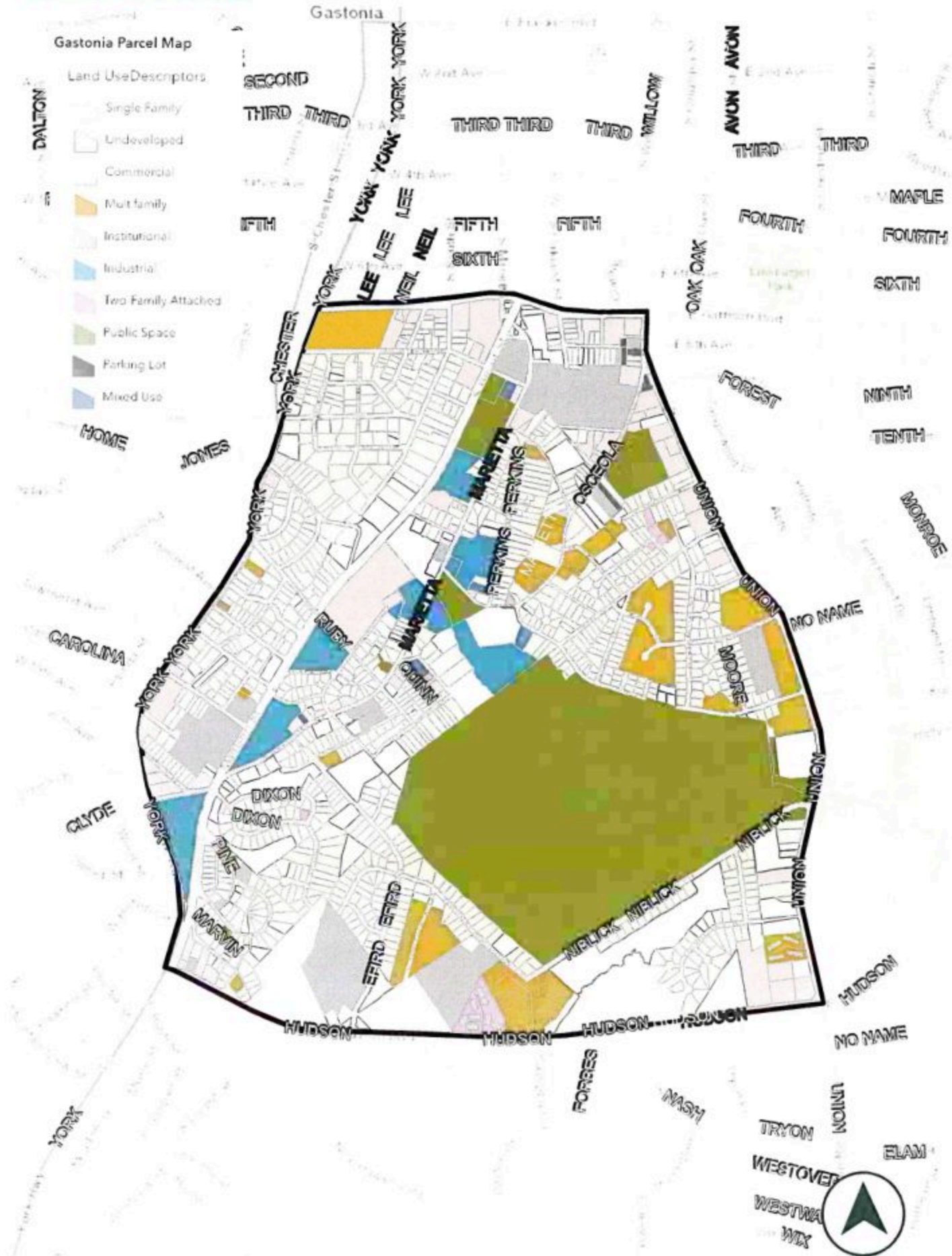
Category	Count	Percentage	Units	Acres	Percent
Undeveloped	147	11%	0	107.41	12%
SF Detached	1034	75%	1044	325.01	36%
SF Attached	43	3%	65	7.44	1%
Multi-Family	27	2%	292	65.34	7%
Commercial	81	6%	77	67.76	8%
Mixed Use	2	0%	2	1.38	0%
Industrial	12	1%	10	41.17	5%
Institutional	17	1%	15	60.32	7%
Public Space	9	1%	4	220.52	25%
Parking Lot	6	0%	1	1.94	0%

LAND USE SURVEY

Gastonia Parcel Map

Land Use Descriptors

-  Single Family
-  Undeveloped
-  Commercial
-  Multi family
-  Institutional
-  Industrial
-  Two Family Attached
-  Public Space
-  Parking Lot
-  Mixed Use



The **Condition of Buildings** on each parcel was also surveyed. Current exterior building conditions were collected from the street via an external visual survey and Google Street View. Some updated external conditions and all internal building conditions were not collected, due to limitations inherent in the survey methodology. A map was created to visualize the location of the structures and their corresponding condition.

Of the 1,378 parcels surveyed, **68% are in good or fair condition**. Approximately 16% of parcels are in poor (4%), deteriorated (1%), and dilapidated (1%) condition. **Undeveloped parcels** account for **11% of all parcels** in the neighborhood. Of the 1,034 single-family detached homes in the MSC study area, 342 are in good condition, and 444 are in fair condition.

Parcels with Deteriorated or Dilapidated Structures

- **Buildings Rated “Deteriorated” or “Dilapidated”:** Twenty percent (20%) or 240 properties are in poor, deteriorated, dilapidated, or demolition conditions. **These properties, especially vacant ones, are at risk of blight and can be repositioned for new uses aligned with community and city goals, supporting neighborhood stabilization and safety.**

Sidewalk and Connectivity Opportunities

- **Parcels Adjacent to Sidewalk Gaps:** A significant number of parcels in the study area lack sidewalks. **Properties where sidewalk installation or extension would connect residential areas to jobs, schools, or retail should be prioritized for redevelopment or public infrastructure investment, leveraging sidewalk expansion as both a mobility and economic development tool.**

Criteria	Count	Percentage	Acreage	Percentage
Undeveloped	155	11.2%	113.7	13%
Demolition	5	0.4%	6.3	1%
Dilapidated	5	0.4%	0.9	0%
Deteriorated	50	3.6%	16.1	2%
Poor	215	15.6%	72.85	8%
Fair	516	37.4%	258.2	29%
Good	423	30.7%	425.2	47%
Under Construction	7	0.5%	4.3	0%
Rehabilitation	2	0.1%	0.7	0%
Total	1378	100%	897.6	100%

Building Tenure identifies parcels with occupied structures, vacant structures, or no structures, as illustrated. Parcels were examined for signs of activity (presence of cars, mail, or trash cans) or lack of activity (absence of cars or trash cans, significant overgrowth, or an open entry).

Vacant and Underutilized Parcels

- **Undeveloped or Underutilized Sites:** 11% of parcels are designated as undeveloped, and 5% of properties surveyed had vacant structures. **Parcels with significant acreage and minimal improvements (low improvement value relative to land value) are prime candidates for strategic redevelopment, especially near intersections or Neighborhood Centers designated in the City’s updated Comprehensive Plan.**

- **Vacant Commercial and Industrial Parcels:** Ninety-three (93) parcels, or approximately seven percent (7%), represent properties with commercial or industrial use. Six (6) parcels, accounting for approximately twenty-three (23) acres, contain undeveloped or vacant buildings that are immediate opportunities for infill development. **Parcels coded as “Vacant Lot” or “Vacant Building,” with no active use, should be prioritized for adaptive reuse or new construction.**

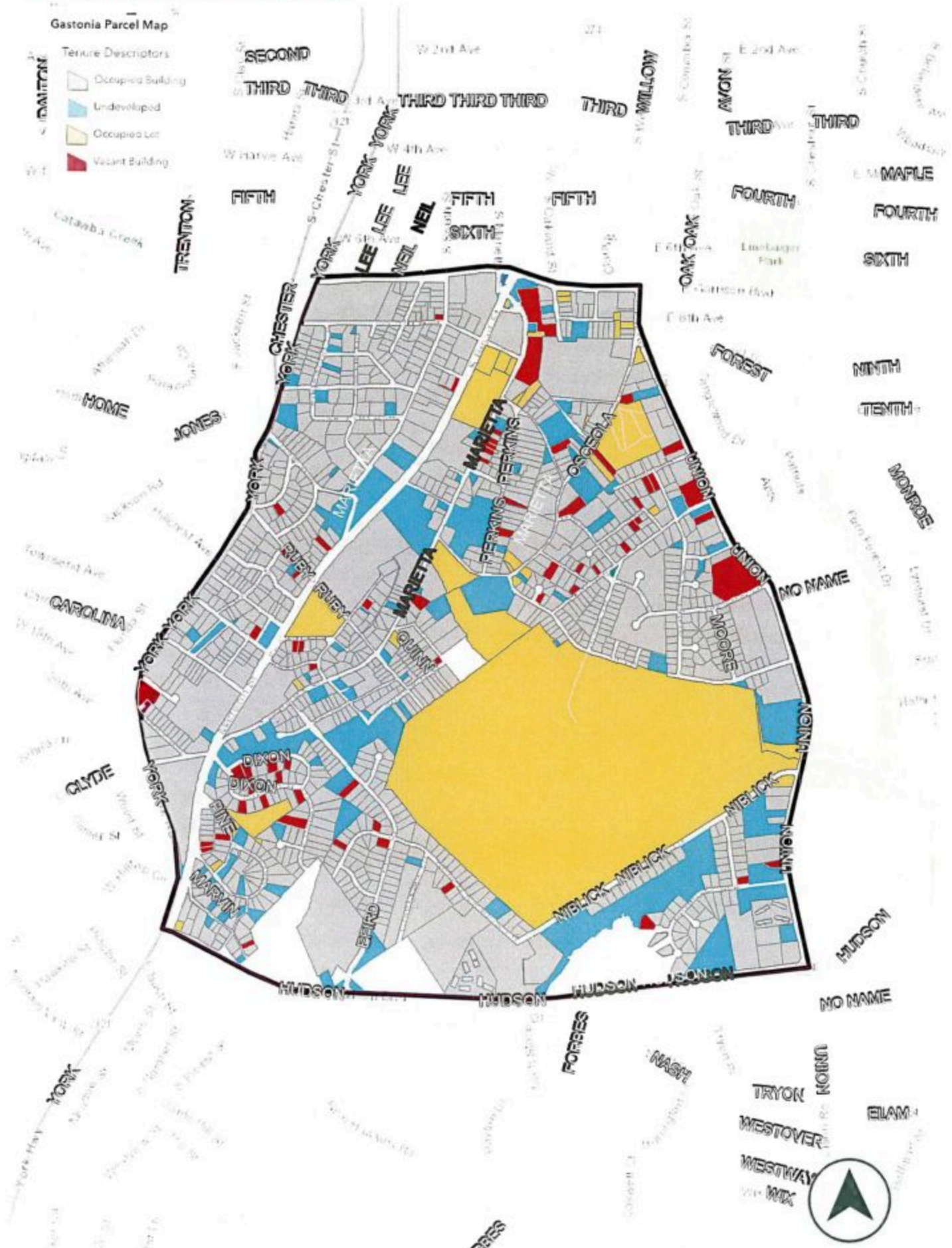
Criteria	Count	Percentage	Acreage	Percentage
Vacant Lot	146	11%	108.7	12%
Occupied Lot	39	3%	242.3	27%
Vacant Building	65	5%	30.5	3%
Occupied Building	1128	82%	516.7	58%
Total	1378	100%	898.9	100%

EXISTING TENURE SURVEY

Gastonia Parcel Map

Tenure Descriptors

-  Occupied Building
-  Undeveloped
-  Occupied Lot
-  Vacant Building



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City of Gastonia's NRSA planning process was anchored by a robust Community Outreach and Engagement Plan that fostered meaningful relationships with residents, stakeholders, and community organizations. The plan's purpose was to ensure open communication, inclusivity, and collaboration, resulting in a revitalization strategy that reflects the community's priorities and lived experiences.

OUTREACH METHODS AND IMPACT

Outreach was facilitated at strategic locations throughout the NRSA, including the Food Lion, local churches, and the Gaston County Library. The City utilized a variety of outreach channels, including flyers, email updates, social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Nextdoor), as well as partnerships with small businesses and faith-based organizations.

Community engagement activities included twenty-five (25) stakeholder interviews, five (5) focus group interviews, four (4) community open house/public engagement events, a meeting with the Community Steering Committee, and community surveys. Attendance across all events, discussions, and focus groups was tracked, and social media exposure was measured to ensure broad participation. The total number of people engaged throughout the planning process is as follows:

Event Type	# of Events Held	Total Attendance
Community Wide Open House	3	25
Stakeholder 1-on-1 Interviews	21	29
Focus Group Interviews	5	8
Community Steering Committee Meeting	1	5
Pop-up Canvassing at Food Lion	2	52
Community Surveys Completed	1	15

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The Community Needs Assessment, conducted through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, revealed several recurring themes. Residents consistently identified the need for improved transportation access, affordable housing, enhanced public safety, and expanded economic opportunities. Older adults and individuals with disabilities

emphasized barriers related to mobility and access to services. Low-income working families and households without personal vehicles highlighted the importance of reliable transit (such as GoGastonia). At the same time, parents and caregivers stressed the need for affordable childcare and after-school programs. Literacy gaps, low digital literacy, irregular work schedules, and limited awareness of engagement opportunities were also cited as significant barriers to participation.

COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMITTEE (CPC) SUMMARY

The Community Planning Committee played a central role in interpreting findings to shape the plan's proposals. The CPC reviewed community input, prioritized needs, and provided recommendations on project selection and resource allocation. Their guidance emphasized the importance of equity, transparency, and measurable outcomes. The committee emphasized the importance of maintaining ongoing engagement and establishing effective feedback loops throughout the implementation process.

The CPC emphasized equity, transparency, and measurable outcomes, and advocated for:

- Prioritizing affordable housing preservation and production.
- Supporting small business growth and workforce development.
- Investing in sidewalks, lighting, and public spaces.
- Ensuring ongoing, inclusive community engagement.
- Monitoring displacement risks and implementing anti-displacement strategies.



COMMUNITY-WIDE/PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Four (4) community-wide, public engagement events were held to gather widespread local input on economic mobility, housing, infrastructure, and public safety within the proposed NRSA boundary. These included a pop-up canvassing event at Food Lion and a public Open House. There were also two (2) community coffee conversations, facilitated to gather input and raise awareness among different segments of the City's population, ensuring that all residents were afforded an opportunity to provide input on neighborhood revitalization priorities. The Gaston Business Association organized a Downtown Gastonia Caffeine and Conversation for members of the local business community, and the City Community Engagement Department sponsored a "coffee break" session with residents of the Fairhaven multifamily community to connect with city staff before their day began. Residents shared candid insights on housing needs, community safety, transportation challenges, and economic mobility. The session demonstrated the City's commitment to engaging underrepresented voices in the planning effort.

Community-Wide/Public Engagement Events	Dates (in 2025)
Pop Up at The Park	Friday, April 25
1 st Food Lion Pop Up Canvassing Event	Tuesday, June 3
Gastonia NRSA Community Listening and Visioning Session	Thursday, June 5
2nd Food Lion Pop Up Canvassing Event	Wednesday, August 6
Gastonia Business Association - Downtown Gastonia Caffeine and Coffee Conversation	Wednesday, August 6
Gastonia NRSA Public Meeting	Thursday, August 7
Community Planning Committee Meeting	Thursday, August 7
Small Business Focus Group Meeting	Thursday, August 7
Educators, Arts and Faith Based Focus Group Meeting	Thursday, August 7
Funders/Lenders/Developers Focus Group Meeting	Thursday, August 7
Fairhaven Community "Coffee Break" session (sponsored by City's Community Engagement Department)	Friday, August 8



FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

Focus groups and interviews with elected officials, municipal departments, quasi-governmental organizations, and other entities revealed several key discussion themes. Participants expressed a desire to develop more walkable neighborhoods, implement better lighting and safety infrastructure, and increase support for small businesses. Intradepartmental meetings with City staff highlighted the need for improved coordination across departments, particularly in areas such as housing rehabilitation, code enforcement, and public space activation. Focus groups also discussed the importance of leveraging partnerships with local employers, schools, and non-profits to address workforce development and economic mobility.

MAYOR RICHARD FRANKS

Discussed the city's evolution and challenges with "regentrification." Stressed the lack of affordable housing and the need for quality options, especially for working poor and middle-income tenants. Supports façade grants and incentives for developers, but expressed concern about blight and absentee landlords. Advocated for walkable communities and strategic investments.

CITY COUNCIL WARD 6 - DONYEL BARBER

Described the area as having potential, with opportunities for mixed-use development and walkability. Supports higher density and improved connectivity. Highlighted community health challenges and the need for public art and branding. Supports the idea of food truck parks and vendor rows near community gathering spaces such as Walker E. Reid III Park.

CITY COUNCIL WARD 3 - JAMES GALLAGHER

Identified urgent needs for homeless beds, renovation of dilapidated commercial structures, and new housing. Emphasized mixed-use development and the importance of trails connecting to job centers. Noted philanthropic efforts and church-led shelter projects. Highlighted historic mill town character and ongoing redevelopment of mills.

CITY COUNCIL WARD 2 - DAVE KIRLIN (FORMER)

Focused on balancing land use and quality of life, elevating housing stock without excessive gentrification, and improving code enforcement. Noted strengths in local infrastructure and attracting international companies. Highlighted blighted housing and the need for multimodal transportation. Warned of Charlotte's influence and the need for more white-collar jobs.

CITY COUNCIL WARD 1 - DEMETRIOS KOUTSOPIAS

Wanted to ensure the project progressed and had input from strategic partners. Interested in creating safe, accessible greenways and trails implementation for youth and residents. Advocated for sidewalks on both sides of Union Rd.

CITY COUNCIL WARD 5 - JENNIFER STEPP

Represents the study area and characterizes it as having a range of challenges, including substandard housing, elevated poverty rates, and limited educational opportunities. Advocated for the development of workforce housing to enhance community safety and attract young families. Supports initiatives such as wayfinding, branding, and strategic partnerships to promote a diverse array of businesses in the region. Noted the ongoing challenges related to affordable homeownership and the need for timely progress on infrastructure projects.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER - QUENTIN MCPHATTER

Noted lack of designated revitalization areas and encouraged collaboration with schools. Supported use of federal funds for senior housing and open to new funding sources. Emphasized council adoption of NRSA for effectiveness and suggested tracking where residents originate.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

Outlined upcoming infrastructure projects, including road widening, greenways, and intersection improvements. Noted challenges with aging stormwater pipes and historic tree preservation. Emphasized the need for quality food options and walkability, and described funding mechanisms for improvements.

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Prioritizes pedestrian walkways, trailheads, and park connections. Supports frequent maintenance and upgrades to parks, youth-friendly complexes, and community gardens. Emphasized beautification, walkability, and increased access as measures of success.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Focused on place-based planning, neighborhood centers, and infill development. Supported flexibility in zoning and mixed-use overlays. Noted missing sidewalks and street lights, and the need for larger-scale investment. Emphasized active historic districts and outreach at local grocery stores.

TRANSPORTATION - DEPT. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING / GCLMPO

The meeting was attended by staff from the local Transportation Planning Office and the Gaston-Cleveland-Linclon Metropolitan Planning Organization. Participants highlighted the transition to microtransit (GoGastonia), its increased ridership, and its plan to expand coverage. Noted ongoing and planned projects for road widening, greenways, and multimodal access. Recognized funding challenges and opportunities for federal support.

BANKS, INVESTORS, AND DEVELOPERS

The meeting was attended by staff from the local Transportation Planning Office and the Gaston-Cleveland-Linclon Metropolitan Planning Organization. Participants highlighted the transition to microtransit (GoGastonia), its increased ridership, and its plan to expand coverage. Noted ongoing and planned projects for road widening, greenways, and multimodal access. Recognized funding challenges and opportunities for federal support.

BUSINESSES

Highlighted small-town connections as a positive attribute to doing business in Gastonia. Described challenges with commercial space, staffing, and housing. Expressed interest in coffee shops, book stores, and arts projects. Noted traffic and parking concerns, and supported forming a neighborhood business association.

EDUCATION & ARTS

Highlighted diversity, youth programs, mental health needs, and lack of inclusive community centers. Supported partnerships for arts and youth engagement.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Throughout the planning process for the Marietta Street Corridor NRSA, a series of stakeholder interviews was conducted with residents, business owners, nonprofit leaders, and institutional partners. The interviews were designed to surface local perspectives on neighborhood conditions, challenges, and opportunities, and to ensure that the NRSA plan reflects the lived experience and aspirations of the community.

Housing Affordability and Stability: Stakeholders consistently expressed concern about rising housing costs and the risk of displacement for both low- and middle-income families. Many interviewees noted that new housing developments often do not meet the needs of existing residents, particularly those at the lower end of the income spectrum. There was a strong desire to preserve existing affordable housing and to make the permitting process easier for homeowners and small-scale developers. The importance of homeownership as a source of neighborhood pride and stability was a recurring theme, with several stakeholders linking homeownership to wealth-building and community resilience.

Economic Opportunity and Small Business Support: Interviewees emphasized the need for increased local job opportunities, workforce training, and support for small businesses. Many felt that the corridor lacks a diverse mix of retail and service businesses, and that vacant commercial properties represent untapped potential for entrepreneurship and job creation. Stakeholders called for affordable housing for employees, technical assistance, access to capital, and incentives for minority- and women-owned businesses. There was also interest in business incubators and co-working spaces to foster innovation and fill market gaps.

Community Engagement and Trust: A central theme was the need for authentic, ongoing community engagement. Stakeholders expressed skepticism about previous planning efforts, citing a lack of transparency and follow-through. Many emphasized the importance of meeting people where they are—through in-person events, partnerships with trusted local organizations, and accessible communication channels. There was a call for the City to ensure that engagement efforts are inclusive of renters, non-English speakers, and those without internet access.

Infrastructure and Public Realm: Stakeholders frequently mentioned the poor condition of sidewalks, lighting, and public spaces. Gaps in pedestrian infrastructure were seen as barriers to accessing jobs, retail, and community amenities. There was strong support for sidewalk expansion, park programming, and placemaking initiatives to improve safety, walkability, and neighborhood identity.

Impact on Plan Proposals

Stakeholder feedback directly informed several key NRSA initiatives:

- The sidewalk expansion and pedestrian placemaking projects were prioritized to address concerns about walkability and safety.
- The recommendation to create a small-business incubator and to provide technical assistance programs was driven by calls for economic opportunity and entrepreneurship.
- Homeownership counseling, rental rehabilitation, and mixed-income housing initiatives were included to address housing stability and affordability.
- Park and art programming events were added to activate public spaces and foster community pride.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

BASELINE OVERVIEW OF LOCAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) in Gastonia is characterized by economic conditions that reflect both the legacy of the city's industrial past and the challenges of transitioning to a diversified, knowledge-based economy. According to the 2023 5-year estimates of the American Community Survey (ACS), the unemployment rate in the NRSA is estimated at approximately 6.2%, which is higher than the citywide rate of 4.8% and the Gaston County rate of 4.3%. ACS 2025 1-year estimates, statistically less accurate than the 5-year, report unemployment at 1.2%. Underemployment remains a concern, as many residents are employed in part-time or low-wage positions that do not fully utilize their skills or provide economic security.

Major industry sectors represented in Gastonia include manufacturing, healthcare, retail trade, and educational services. Manufacturing, once the dominant industry, has declined in recent decades but still accounts for nearly 16% of local jobs. Healthcare and social assistance have grown to represent over 18% of employment, reflecting regional trends. Retail trade and accommodation/food services together comprise about 22% of jobs, with a significant share in small, locally owned businesses. The top employers in the broader Gastonia area include CaroMont Health, Gaston County Schools, and manufacturing firms such as Daimler Trucks and Stabilus.

The workforce in the NRSA is marked by lower educational attainment compared to the city and county. Only 23% of adults in the NRSA hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to over 27% in Gastonia and 39% in the Charlotte MSA. Skill gaps are evident in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology, where employers report difficulty filling positions requiring technical certifications or postsecondary credentials. The most common occupations are in production, sales, food service, and personal care, with fewer residents employed in management or professional roles.

HOUSING

The built environment in the NRSA reflects a mix of aging single-family homes, small apartment complexes, and commercial corridors with varying levels of investment. Many structures date to the mid-20th century, and deferred maintenance is common. Sidewalk coverage is inconsistent, and several commercial properties are vacant or underutilized, particularly along older corridors. According to the windshield survey conducted for this study and the 2023 5-year ACS data from HUD, housing quality is a significant concern, as over 40% of units are rated as fair or poor (see the chart on page 11). Median gross rents in the area average \$969, and home prices remain modest. However, stagnant incomes and high cost burdens indicate that more than 60% of renters pay over 30% of their income on housing.

The housing needs of residents are acute: many households struggle to afford quality housing, and the aging stock often fails to meet modern standards for safety and accessibility. Opportunities exist to increase housing diversity and access for low- to moderate-income households, particularly through infill development on vacant lots, rehabilitation of existing units, and the introduction of new housing types, such as duplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). However, implementation faces several challenges. Attracting new and existing qualified households is complicated by cost barriers, credit constraints, and limited access to mortgage products. Many residents cannot qualify for traditional financing, and the area's modest home values and high rates of cost-burdened renters make it challenging to attract qualified developers without public incentives or gap financing. Additionally, the need to balance revitalization with the risk of displacement and gentrification requires careful planning and ongoing community engagement.

Housing	Gaston County	Gastonia, NC	NRSA Geography
Median Homeowner Property Value	\$ 286,032	\$ 212,495	\$260,638
Median Household Gross Rent	\$ 1,005	\$ 849	\$ 969
Renters paying more than 30% Of Income in rent	44.20%	50.3%	64.5%
Renters paying more than 50% Of Income in rent	21.80%	25.1%	26.9%
Ownership Rate	63.2%	53.9%	35.0%
Rentership Rate	29.7%	46.1%	57.1%

LOCAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

Within the NRSA, there are numerous active businesses, ranging from convenience stores and auto repair shops to small restaurants and service providers. The business mix is heavily weighted toward small, locally owned enterprises, with only a handful of national chains present. This concentration of small businesses is higher than in other parts of Gastonia, where larger retailers and franchises are more prevalent.

Vacancy rates for commercial and retail properties in the NRSA are estimated at 14%, higher than the citywide average of 9%. Several former retail and service buildings remain empty, reflecting both economic disinvestment and shifting retail patterns. However, there are also signs of entrepreneurial activity, with new business licenses issued for food trucks, personal services, and home-based businesses in the past five years.

BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Barriers to economic growth in the NRSA are both structural and systemic in nature. Infrastructure gaps include aging water and sewer lines, as well as inadequate pedestrian connectivity. Access to capital remains a persistent challenge for small business owners, who often lack sufficient collateral or a strong credit history, making it difficult for them to secure traditional loans. Limited public transportation options constrain workforce mobility. Gastonia's public transportation option has changed to an on-demand model called Gastonia Go. This improvement enhances access compared to prior bus routes, which did not always align with service industry work schedules or connect efficiently to major employment centers.

Qualitative data from community engagement sessions highlight concerns about crime, property maintenance, and the lack of visible investment in public spaces. Business support services are available through the Gaston Business Association, the Gaston College Small Business Center, and the City's Economic Development Department; however, awareness and utilization of these resources remain limited among NRSA residents.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: NRSA VS. CITY AND COUNTY

Income disparities are pronounced: median household income in the NRSA is \$39,844, compared to \$56,358 in Gastonia and \$67,997 in Gaston County (ACS 2023). The unemployment rate in the NRSA is higher than both city and county averages, and business density is lower, with fewer establishments per 1,000 residents. The NRSA faces unique challenges, including a higher proportion of cost-burdened renters, older housing stock, and a legacy of industrial decline. However, opportunities exist in the form of available land, proximity to downtown and major highways, and a strong sense of community identity.

SUMMARY AND RATIONALE FOR NRSA DESIGNATION

The economic conditions in Gastonia's NRSA—marked by elevated unemployment, underemployment, income disparities, and a high concentration of small businesses facing infrastructure and capital barriers—provide a compelling rationale for targeted revitalization. An aging-built environment, commercial vacancies, and limited access to workforce development resources compound the area's challenges. However, the NRSA's assets, including its location, community cohesion, and entrepreneurial spirit, offer a foundation for renewal.

NRSA designation will enable Gastonia to leverage HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) flexibility, focus investment in job creation, housing, and public infrastructure, and coordinate efforts to empower residents and local businesses. This approach aligns with HUD guidance and the city's adopted plans for equitable growth and economic opportunity.

NRSA ECONOMIC STRATEGY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Gastonia's NRSA will leverage robust partnerships with local employers, training centers, and educational institutions, such as Gaston College, to align workforce development with the needs of the area's key industries. The City will formalize collaborations with the Gaston Business Association, the Carolina Small Business Development Fund, and the Gaston Community Foundation to ensure that training programs are responsive to employer demand and accessible to residents. Targeted sectors include education, healthcare, manufacturing, and retail, reflecting both the city's economic base and projected growth areas. Apprenticeship and youth employment programs will be expanded through direct engagement with local businesses and the Gaston County Schools, providing hands-on experience and early career pathways for young residents.

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT

The NRSA strategy prioritizes technical assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs, including business planning, accounting, marketing, and regulatory compliance. The City will partner with vocational schools, non-profit organizations, and the Small Business Training Center to deliver workshops and one-on-one support. Access to microloans, start-up funds, and incentives for minority- and women-owned businesses will be facilitated through partnerships with local lenders and community development financial institutions. The City should explore the creation of a small business incubator or co-working space in underutilized mill sites, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. The establishment of a Marietta Street Business Association or Business Improvement District (BID) is a key recommendation aimed at strengthening the local business ecosystem and supporting sustained small business growth.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Gastonia's NRSA can promote homeownership counseling and financial literacy through partnerships with local mortgage companies, credit unions, and banks. These initiatives will help residents build credit, understand mortgage processes, and prepare for long-term housing stability. Workforce income growth will be directly linked to

stable housing opportunities, with homeownership strategies ensuring that, as incomes rise, residents can access improved housing options within the NRSA. Initiatives should be designed to increase homeownership rates, promote wealth-building, and stabilize long-term residents, especially those currently renting or at risk of displacement.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In addition to prioritizing homeownership and wealth-building programs, Gastonia's NRSA will enable the development of diverse housing types to address the needs of potential homeowners and renters. The City and its partners should develop a Rental Rehabilitation Program to partner with landlords and upgrade at least existing rental units. This initiative aims to enhance the quality of housing, mitigate displacement, and ensure that commitments to affordability are incorporated into each rehabilitated property. The development of new affordable and mixed-income rental units on vacant parcels identified in the existing condition survey could potentially produce 30–40 new homes, including duplexes and small multifamily buildings. Zoning enhancements could incentivize the creation of diverse housing types, such as ADUs and missing middle housing, broadening the range of attainable options for families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

To overcome implementation challenges, the City can explore streamlining permitting, aligning public and private investment, and coordinating with community partners such as Habitat for Humanity, DreamKey Partners, and other local nonprofits. Financial incentives, gap financing, and technical assistance should be leveraged to attract qualified developers and support resident access to newly developed and rehabilitated housing. These strategies can maximize the impact of CDBG and other federal resources, ensure compliance with HUD's area benefit standards, and align with the City's comprehensive plan goals for equitable, sustainable revitalization. By connecting opportunities for infill development, rehabilitation, and new construction to the specific needs and market realities of the NRSA, Gastonia can deliver measurable improvements in housing stability, affordability, and community well-being.

SOURCES OF LEVERAGE

The City of Gastonia has access to its Community Development Block Grant funds for the next five (5) years to finance concentrated activities in the NRSA as well as Affordable Housing Program Funds. However, these funds are limited in nature. In order to carry out the recommended activities in the NRSA, it will be critical to leverage other available potential funding sources and partnerships.

CITY OF GASTONIA GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

Residents of the City of Gastonia approved a General Obligation bond in the amount of \$75 million for various transportation improvements. These funds could be leveraged for the sidewalk expansion project activities, the GoGastonia stations, or any of the other transportation-related activities recommended in the NRSA Plan.

COMMUNITY PROJECT FUNDING

The City of Gastonia received \$500,000 in a Community Project Funding grant from former Congressman Jeff Jackson for the City's housing rehab program. These funds could be leveraged for owner-occupied repair activities in the Housing Solutions Activities.

NEW MARKET TAX CREDITS

A portion of the NRSA area is eligible for New Market Tax Credits. New Market Tax Credits attracts private capital into low-income communities by permitting investors to receive tax credits in exchange for their equity investment. The credit totals 39% of the original investment and can be claimed over 7 years. The map here shows the eligible area of the NRSA.



HUD LEAD HAZARD REDUCTION GRANT

The City staff intends to apply for the HUD Lead Hazard Reduction Grant, then partner with CaroMont Health for lead testing in children. The City would also utilize these funds to do lead remediation work in the rental occupied and owner-occupied rehab activities.

2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN / UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

The 2050 City of Gastonia Comprehensive Plan identifies place-based planning initiatives, including an update to the Unified Development Ordinance that will be leveraged for the various NRSA-recommended activities.

HUD FUNDED HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The City of Gastonia receives annual development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program to support affordable housing activities throughout the community. HOME funds may be leveraged within the NRSA to support owner-occupied rehabilitation, down payment assistance, acquisition and rehabilitation of existing housing, infill housing development on vacant lots, and the construction of new affordable rental and homeownership units. By combining HOME funds with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) resources, private financing, nonprofit partnerships, and other funding sources, the City can expand housing opportunities, preserve existing affordable housing stock, promote homeownership, and encourage mixed-income neighborhood revitalization within the NRSA. These investments can help address housing affordability challenges, reduce displacement pressures, and support long-term neighborhood stabilization and wealth-building opportunities for residents. timely and accurate

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Several challenges may impact the implementation of NRSA strategies. Data collection and validation require timely and accurate information, and the City will assign staff to track initiatives and outcomes. Community engagement and buy-in are critical; the City will publish annual NRSA reports and maintain a data-sharing platform to ensure transparency and inclusive participation. Financial and resource constraints, including funding limitations and the need for sustainable financing, will be addressed through public-private partnerships and innovative funding solutions. Regulatory and political hurdles, such as zoning reforms and interdepartmental coordination, will require intentional leadership and alignment across City departments. Finally, performance measurement and accountability will be ensured through clear, measurable indicators and robust data collection methods.

SUMMARY

Gastonia's NRSA Economic Empowerment Strategy is a comprehensive, data-driven plan that integrates workforce development, small business support, and housing stability to drive inclusive economic growth. By leveraging partnerships, regulatory flexibility, and targeted investments, the City aims to create measurable improvements in employment, income, and community well-being. The plan's logic-model approach ensures accountability and continuous improvement, positioning Gastonia's NRSA as a model for sustainable neighborhood revitalization.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

HUD-ALIGNED OUTCOME CATEGORIES

Gastonia's NRSA performance measurement framework is structured around HUD-aligned outcome categories, ensuring accountability and tracking progress toward community revitalization. The primary outcome categories are: job creation and retention, small business growth, income growth, housing stability (including homeownership and reduced cost burden), and resident participation in programs.

Measurable Indicators

To operationalize these outcomes, the following measurable indicators should be tracked:

- Number of partnerships formed/leveraged
- Number of jobs created or retained within the NRSA.
- Number of residents trained or placed in employment programs.
- Number of businesses receiving technical or financial assistance.
- Percent change in homeownership rate.
- Percent change in median household income.
- Percent of residents below the poverty line (measured before and after interventions).
- Resident participation rates in NRSA-supported programs and events.

The following Performance Measurements table addresses the specific economic mobility and housing solutions metrics proposed for the next five (5) years of the NRSA. The proposed metrics may be adjusted annually and will be identified in the Annual Action Plan each fiscal year. The actual performance metrics will be reported in the City's Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Economic Mobility						
Sidewalk Expansion and/or Repair Projects	0	1 block	1 block	1 block	1 block	5 blocks
Creation of a Marietta Street Business Association or BID	0	0	Business Improvement District Created	0	0	1
Small Business Incubator / Microenterprise Assistance	0	1 training per year 2 small businesses participated 1 financial institution as sponsor	1 training per year 3 small businesses participated 1 financial institution as sponsor	1 training per year 3 small businesses participated 2 financial institution as sponsor	1 training per year 3 small businesses participated 2 financial institution as sponsor	4 trainings 11 small businesses participated 4 financial institution as sponsor (unduplicated number)
Park Programming Events	0	1	1	1	1	4
Art Programming Events	0	1	1	1	1	4
Pedestrian Placemaking & Wayfinding Signage Solutions	0	1 new/ redesigned pedestrian pathways, trails, and/or intersections, or signage	1 new/ redesigned pedestrian pathways, trails, and/or intersections, or signage	1 new/ redesigned pedestrian pathways, trails, and/or intersections, or signage	1 new/ redesigned pedestrian pathways, trails, and/or intersections, or signage	4 new/ redesigned pedestrian pathways, trails, and/or intersections, or signage
Housing Solutions						
Homeownership Program	3	3	4	4	3	16
Rental Rehabilitation Program	0	0	3	4	5	12
Support the Creation of New Rental Units	0	0	5	5	5	15
Repair Owner-Occupied Homes	3	5	5	5	4	22
Enhance zoning to allow the development of a diverse housing stock	0	UDO Updates put in place based on the new City of Gastonia Strategic Plan	0	0	0	1

Data Collection Methodology Outline

A robust data collection methodology will ensure reliable measurement and facilitate annual reporting:

- City permitting data will be used to track new business licenses, housing permits, and occupancy certificates issued within the NRSA.
- Workforce development partners, including training centers, community colleges, and employer partners, will provide quarterly and annual reports on job placements and training completions.
- Business license and vacancy tracking will be maintained through city records and periodic field verification, capturing both new startups and changes in commercial occupancy.
- Poverty and income data will be monitored using American Community Survey (ACS) and HUD datasets at the tract/block group level.
- Event and program attendance logs will record participation at all NRSA-sponsored events, workshops, and counseling sessions.

Reporting of Accomplishments and Accountability

All housing and economic development accomplishments will be reported on an annual basis for the respective HUD funding sources (CDBG, HOME, NRSA) in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

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Windshield Survey Guidelines

Project: 25001 City of Gastonia Windshield Survey
 Date: Summer 2025
 Area: Marietta Street Corridor

Appendix A: Complete Windshield Survey Categories and Descriptors

Land Use Descriptors

Category	Description
1 SF Detached	Single family dwelling with no shared walls
2 SF Attached	Single family dwelling with shared walls
3 Multi Family	Multi-family dwelling (2 or more units)
4 Commercial	Used for retail/business
5 Mixed Use	Used for living and working
6 Industrial	Used for manufacturing
7 Institutional	Used for Church or Government
8 Public Space	Used for public recreation
9 Parking Lot	Used to park vehicles
10 Vacant Lot	No Use / No Structure

Building Conditions Descriptors

Category	Description
1 Demolition	Burned/missing roof/collapsing
2 Dilapidated	Extensive rehab
3 Deteriorated	Major repairs needed (roof, foundation, siding, windows)
4 Poor	Deferred maintenance, requires general repairs
5 Fair	Minor repairs (painting, landscaping)
6 Good	Sound condition
7 Under Construction	NEW structure in progress
8 Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation of existing structure
9 Vacant Lot	No structure on parcel

Building Tenure Descriptors

Category	Description
1 Occupied	Signs of activity (car, mail, trashcan)
2 Vacant	Signs of no activity (includes squatters)

Grounds Descriptors - Public Sidewalks

Category	Description
1 Severe	Severely deteriorated, complete replacement needed
2 Serious	Lots of cracks, complete replacement needed
3 Poor	Some cracks, partial replacement needed
4 Good	Few cracks, some patching
5 Excellent	No cracks present, good shape
6 None	No sidewalk exists on parcel

Number of Stories

Category	Description
# Stories	Number of Stories/Floors

Number of Units

Category	Description
# Units	Number of Units

Code Violation / Other Conditions

Category	Description
1 Overgrowth	Grass/weeds exceeding 1 foot
2 Junk/trash/debris	Premise/yard not clear of junk/garbage
3 Junk car(s)	Dismantled/junked/wrecked car
4 Parking on yard	Cars parked on property yard
5 Unsecured dwelling	Vacant dwelling unsecured
6 Graffiti	Visible graffiti on building/property
7 Signage	Poorly maintained signage
8 Other Hazard	Overhead lines/wires/utility poles dangling; on street; exposed; damaged
9 Hazardous roof/floors/support	Show 33% or more damage / deterioration / safety hazard
10 Hazardous exterior walls/coverings	Enclosing/ outside walls show 50% or more of damage

Grounds Descriptors - Private Sidewalks and/or Driveways

Category	Description
1 Severe	Severely deteriorated, complete replacement needed
2 Serious	Lots of cracks, complete replacement needed
3 Poor	Some cracks, partial replacement needed
4 Good	Few cracks, some patching
5 Excellent	No cracks present, good shape
6 Pervious	Intended gravel surface

Appendix B: Complete Windshield Survey Categories and Descriptors explanations

Land Use Descriptors

1. Single Family Detached – Classic single family home which stands alone.
2. Single Family Attached – Single family homes with shared walls (townhomes/brownstones).
3. Multi Family – parcel is used for a multi-family dwelling (two or more units).
*Duplexes, Triplexes, Quadplexes, and anything higher are multifamily units.
4. Commercial – parcel is used for retail and/or business purposes.
5. Mixed Use – parcel is used for living and working.
6. Industrial – parcel is used for manufacturing or other industrial uses.
7. Institutional – parcel is used for a church or any governmental services.
8. Public Space – parcel is used for public recreation.
9. Parking Lot – parcel is used to park automobiles.
10. Vacant Lot – No use and/or no structure on the parcel.

BUILDING CONDITIONS DESCRIPTORS

1. Demolition – Building or structure is a candidate for demolition. The building or structure is burnt, missing the roof, or is collapsing.
2. Dilapidated - Building or structure requires extensive rehab or remodeling to reactivate. The building or structure is questionable whether it should be saved.
3. Deteriorated – Building or structure requires major repairs such as a new roof, foundation, siding or windows. Building or structure can be rehabbed and repaired for a substantial amount of funds.
4. Poor – Building or structure indicating deferred maintenance, requiring some level of general repair. Will require repairs with more than \$1,000 in repairs.
5. Fair - Building or structure requires only minor repairs such as painting and landscaping. Minor repairs can be completed within a day/weekend and will cost less than \$1,000 in repairs.
6. Good – Building is in sound condition.
7. Under construction – A new structure is currently under construction.
8. Rehabilitation – Previous structure is under renovation and/or rehabilitation.
9. Vacant Lot – No use and/or no structure on the parcel.

BUILDING TENURE DESCRIPTORS

1. Occupied – The building or structure is occupied. Signs of activity are visible, including usage of mailbox, an operational car parked on parcel, trash can in usage, maintained plants, and/or running meter.
2. Vacant – The building or structure is vacant. There are no signs of life. If squatters are present, then the property is classified as vacant.

NUMBER OF STORIES

- X. Number of Stories – The number of stories or floors of the parcel's structure or building.

NUMBER OF UNITS

- X. Number of Units – The number of units in the parcel's structure or building.

Windshield Survey Guidelines

GROUNDS DESCRIPTORS

Private Sidewalks and/or Driveways

***Rating for Private Sidewalks AND/OR Private Driveways. Select lowest rating out of both.**

1. Severe - The sidewalk and/or driveway is severely deteriorated and broken OR there is no sidewalk (grass/gravel). Sidewalk and driveway has tripping hazards and/or sections missing. Severely deteriorated pavement and does not prevent the tracking of mud into the street.
2. Serious - The sidewalk and/or driveway contains numerous cracks over ½ inch wide and breaks and/or was originally paved by has severe scaling, cracking, or other signs or deterioration. The full surface needs to be re-paved.
3. Poor - The sidewalk and/or driveway contain some cracks over ½ inch wide and roughly 50% of the surface needs to be repaved.
4. Good - The sidewalk and/or driveway contain only a few cracks over ½ inch wide, but some patching or sealing of cracks is all that is needed.
5. Excellent – The sidewalk and/or driveway contain no cracks wider than 1/2 inch.
6. Pervious – The sidewalk and/or driveway is intended to be filled with gravel. The owner and/or property manager actively installed gravel for environmental and/or costs savings reasons.

Public Sidewalks

1. Severe - The sidewalk is severely deteriorated and broken; gravel and/or grass is present. Sidewalk has tripping hazards and/or sections missing. Severely deteriorated pavement and does not prevent the tracking of mud into the street.
2. Serious - The sidewalk contains numerous cracks over ½ inch wide and breaks and/or was originally paved by has severe scaling, cracking, or other signs or deterioration. The full surface needs to be re-paved.
3. Poor - The sidewalk contains some cracks over ½ inch wide and roughly 50% of the surface needs to be repaved.
4. Good - The sidewalk contains only a few cracks over ½ inch wide, but some patching or sealing of cracks is all that is needed.
5. Excellent – The sidewalk contains no cracks wider than 1/2 inch.
6. None – There was never any public sidewalks installed on the property.

CODE VIOLATIONS

1. Overgrowth* - It shall be unlawful for the owner and tenant to permit grass/weeds to reach a height exceeding twelve (12) inches on their property.
* If property received 3/2/1 for the “Ground Descriptors – Lawn & Shrubs” category, the parcel receives an automatic code violation. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 32, (a))
2. Junk/trash/debris* - Interiors and exteriors, including premise yards, lawns, courts and alleys which are not clean, not clear and not free of any public or attractive nuisance, accumulation of dirt, junk, junk vehicles, rubbish, garbage, debris, combustible materials, or similar matter conducive to rodent, vermin or insect infestation and to ensure all vehicles are parked on all-weather surfaces at all times. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 32, (a))

Windshield Survey Guidelines

- * If property received 3/2/1 for the “Ground Descriptors - Litter” category, the parcel receives an automatic code violation.
- 3. Junk car(s) - To have, permit or allow any junk vehicles to be parked, et or maintained thereon; and for any person to cause, have, let, maintain or place such a junk vehicles on the real property of another. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 19, (d))
- 4. Parking on yard – Responsibility of the owner includes to ensure all vehicles are parked on all-weather surfaces at all times. Parking of vehicles on the property or premise yard indicates failure of owner responsibility. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 25, (a))
- 5. Unsecured dwelling - Vacant Dwellings which are open and unsecured against unforced entry. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 19, (b))
- 6. Graffiti* – Inscription, words, figures, paintings, or other defacements that are written, marked, etched, drawn, painted, etc on or affixed to any surface of real property/improvements without prior authorization of owner of occupant of property. (Atlanta COO, Chapter 74, Article V, Section 74-174)
 - * This should not include any tactical urbanism techniques used on a building/structure
- 7. Signage – Unmaintained, unused, and/or felled/fallen signage.
- 8. Other hazards – This section includes other hazardous which contribute to visual blight, including downed transmission poles, dangling and/or downed overhead power lines, exposed transmission boxes, and/or felled/fallen trees.
- 9. Hazardous roof/floors/support* - Hazardous roof/floor/support – Roofs, floors, or supporting members, including, but not limited to, girders, sills, joists and studs, which show thirty-three percent (33%) or more damage or deterioration or which are of sufficient size or strength to safety support imposed loads. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 19, (a))
 - * If property received a 3/2/1 for the “Building Condition” category, the parcel receives an automatic code violation (surveyor required to visually verify if roof/floor/support triggered code violation).
- 10. Hazardous exterior/walls/coverings* - Hazardous exterior walls/covering – Non-supporting enclosing or outside walls or coverings which show fifty percent (50%) or more damage or deterioration. (Atlanta COO, Part III, Appendix E, Article I, Section 19, (b))
 - * If property received a 3/2/1 for the “Building Condition” category, the parcel receives an automatic code violation (surveyor required to visually verify if exterior walls triggered code violation).



City of Gastonia NRSA Plan

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

June 6, 2025

In-Person Meeting



45 YEARS OF APD URBAN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

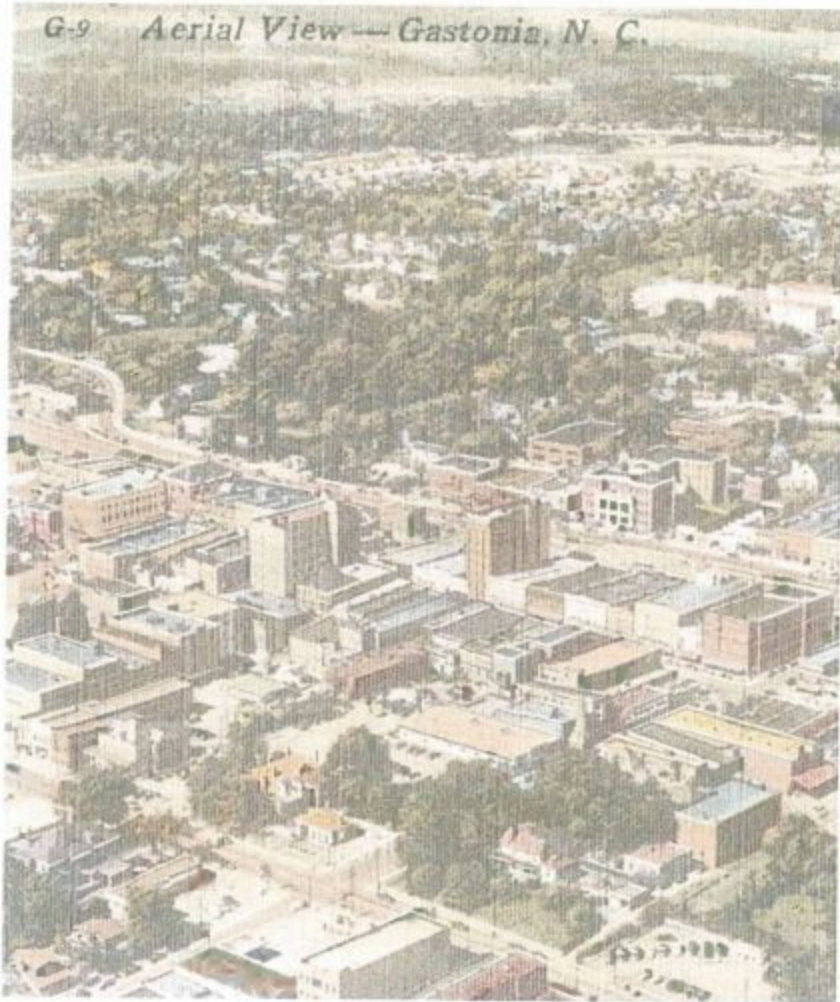


Our deep understanding of the policy and regulatory issues related to community development financing, combined with our experience as planners and real estate developers, gives us a unique perspective on how sustainable housing and economic development influence neighborhood growth and expand housing options.

Our firm is widely recognized for its expertise in analyzing neighborhoods' historical life cycles, identifying disinvestment patterns, and designing comprehensive reinvestment strategies that include long-time residents and community stakeholders.



G-9 Aerial View — Gastonia, N. C.



OVERVIEW

- > Introduction
- > Target Audiences
- > Barriers to Outreach
- > Outreach Methods
- > Outreach Channels
- > Community Engagement Activities
- > Implementation Framework
- > Measurement and Evaluation of Outreach
- > Appendix



PURPOSE

This Plan outlines a thoughtful approach to building meaningful relationships with community members by fostering open communication, inclusivity, and collaboration.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

	Gaston County	Gastonia, NC	Refined Geography
<i>Housing</i>			
Median Homeowner Property Value	\$ 286,032	\$ 212,495	\$ 260,638
Median Household Gross Rent	\$ 1,005	\$ 849	\$ 969
Renters paying more than 30% Of Income in rent	44.20%	50.3%	64.5%
Renters paying more than 50% Of Income in rent	21.80%	25.1%	26.9%
Ownership Rate	63.2%	53.9%	35.0%
Rentership Rate	29.7%	46.1%	57.1%
Vacancy Rate	7.10%	7.0%	7.6%

<i>Households by Disability Status</i>	
	Refined Geography
With 1+ Persons w/Disability	54.20%
With No Person w/Disability	45.80%

	Gaston County	Gastonia, NC	Refined Geography
<i>Population Characteristics</i>			
Median Age	42.2	39.7	41.4
Below 18 Years of Age	23.7	25.5%	24.4%
Above 65 Years of Age	18.5	16.5%	21.1%
Average Household size	2.45	2.44	2.16

	Gaston County	Gastonia, NC	Refined Geography
<i>Education and Employment</i>			
At least High School Diploma	87.6%	87.0%	79.2%
At least Bachelor's Degree	25.0%	25.7%	18.0%
At least Graduate / Professional Degree	7.4%	8.3%	5.4%
Unemployment Rate	4.1%	4.4%	1.2%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022. Population Summary



TARGET AUDIENCES

Older Adults (60+)

Disabled Individuals

Low-income Working Families

Households without Personal Vehicles
(GastoniaGo users)

Individuals Cost Burdened with
Housing Expenses

Parents and Caregivers



BARRIERS TO OUTREACH

Limited Access to Personal Transportation

Caregiving Responsibilities
(Lack of Child/Eldercare)

Literacy Gaps

Low Digital Literacy

Irregular or Inflexible Work Schedules

Limited Awareness of Engagement
Opportunities



OUTREACH METHODS

Facilitate Outreach at Strategic Locations:

Gastonia Transit Center

Food Lion (1),

Local laundromats (2),

Gas stations (8),

Beauty salons (2),

Other grocery stores (3)

Churches & community centers (12)



OUTREACH CHANNELS

Pop-Up Canvassing

Flyers

Email Updates

Social Media

Small Business /
Church Partnerships





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Stakeholder Interviews

Focus Group Interviews

Public Engagement Events

Resident Planning Committee

Community Surveys



IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Meeting Locations
Scheduling Recommendations



MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION OF OUTREACH

Community Feedback Loop

Data Collection Methods

Key Performance Indicators



APPENDIX

Community Survey Template (Done)

Stakeholder Interview Guide

Public Meeting Agendas & Scripts

Resident Planning Committee Members



QUESTIONS?





**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR TIME**



Stakeholder Engagement Agenda

- Introduction
- APD-U's Role/Scope
- Purpose of Meeting

Leading Questions

1. Describe your or your organization's role/history in the community.
2. What is your or your organization's goal/vision for the community?
3. How can our work further inform your involvement in the Paterson Court?
4. What, in your opinion, should be preserved within the Lee-Harvard/Lee-Miles community?
 - a. Are there any historic structures or events that we should be aware of?
5. What should be changed/addressed as part of our work?
6. Are you aware of any projects that are upcoming projects for the neighborhood? (Project name, geography, type, developer, timeline, map if possible). Or recently completed?
7. What funding sources are you aware of that could be used for neighborhood redevelopment?
8. How would you measure success for the community? Our engagement?
9. What are some opportunities that we should be considering?
10. Name threats for the project that we should consider.
11. What are the 2 or 3 things you would not like to see as part of redeveloping this neighborhood?

Next Steps

- Continued Engagement
- Team's Next Steps
- Follow Up from Team

Stakeholder Specific Questions

Property Owner

- History of property
- Description of properties owned/# of units/recent renovations or construction
- What is your long-term goal/objective for your property?
- If wanting to redevelop, what are the plans, and what stage is it in the development process?
- Do you have development partners? Would you consider development partners?
- What funding sources are you utilizing?

Housing Authority

- Does the HA own property/properties within the project area? Description of property – acreage/#units.
- Are there any plans to redevelop the property?
- What resources does the housing authority currently have to redevelop its properties?
- Has the HA partnered with developers and additional funding sources within their portfolio?
- What is the structure of those deals?

Housing CDCs/ Nonprofits

- History of organization, what type of work you have done and what project(s) are you currently on, services, population, etc.
- What properties are owned by the organization?
- What is the goal for said properties?
- What type of funding does the organization use for development?
- What type of partnerships are involved in their projects?

Local Nonprofits

- Services provided?
- What is the population served? Age/Race/Geographical location
- Resources/Funding
- Other nonprofits that they partner with.
- Interest in increasing capacity? Barriers to doing so.

Local Funders/Philanthropy

- History of giving within the Lee-Harvard/Lee-Miles community.
- Focus areas for the organization
- How would they want to get involved? In what capacity? Leading or following someone else's lead?
- How do their funding allocations work?

Cleveland City Government

- Recent capital projects completed within the neighborhood.
- How do we structure our plan for projects to be a priority for the city?
 - Will City Council adopt this plan?
- What funding sources is your department using to implement projects (outside the city's capital funds)?
- How are priorities established?

Business Owners

- How long have you been in the community?
- Do you own or lease your space?
- Plans for Growth – impediments and needs
- How do you see the neighborhood changes (past and future) affecting your business?
- Are resources available for growth?

Churches

- History in the community
- Size of congregation, geographic pull.
- Assets (property owned) – plans for future
- Growth?
- Services provided

Realtors/Developers

- In your opinion, what are the market strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood?
- Recent real estate/sales activity in the area?
- Price ranges for rental/for sale products for the neighborhood and areas surrounding it (i.e., downtown)
- Why is there a lack of development interest in this area?
- What market groups would be interested in living in the community?
- What funding sources are usually used for Lee-Harvard/Lee-Miles neighborhood development projects? Do many need subsidies?
- Does the city have a history of partnering with developers in projects?

Political Leaders

- Interest in the community? Goals?
- Is there sizeable political support for community development and the city's involvement in neighborhood redevelopment?
- What type of projects are you interested in seeing within the community?
- What type of partnership is the city/state interested in pursuing for community redevelopment?
- What excites you about these neighborhoods?
- What is a good outcome of these plans? What is a negative outcome?
- What characteristics of the neighborhood are vital to the overall community?

- What are the top concerns you have heard from constituents?
- What are the sticky issues that the Council is aware of that this project must be mindful of?

Is Possible Additional Questions

- *How do we bring the whole Council along, what information do they need, and how do we deliver it*
- *What funding resources have the city/state allocated to community development?*

You're Invited to Join the City of Gastonia's
Community Planning Committee (CPC)

Study Area



Total Population: 3,978

Median HH Income: \$39,844

Average HH Income: \$61,268

The City of Gastonia is developing a **Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) Plan** to guide investments in economic mobility, public safety, infrastructure, and housing within the study area. This plan will use existing federal funding and flexibility to support targeted projects that improve quality of life for residents.

The Community Planning Committee (CPC) will work closely with the Planning Consultant to help shape the plan and ensure it reflects the community's priorities. The CPC will provide guidance, feedback, and local insight throughout the planning process.

Note: An NRSA Plan is not a traditional Small Area Plan. Instead, it focuses on identifying and implementing specific projects that make a meaningful impact in the neighborhood.

You're Invited to Join the City of Gastonia's
Special Interest Focus Group

Study Area



Total Population: 3,978

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As part of the **Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) Plan**, the City of Gastonia is hosting topic-specific focus groups to hear directly from residents, business owners, parents, and local organizations about their needs and ideas.

Small, focus group conversations will help shape proposed projects that support housing, safety, infrastructure, and economic opportunity in the neighborhood.

Your input will directly influence the plan's priorities and actions.

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Marietta Street Corridor

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA)

Community Visioning Session

Thurs., June 5th, 2025 at 5:00 pm
South Marietta Baptist Church
911 S. Marietta Street Gastonia, NC
28052

What is a NRSA?

A Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area or NRSA is a designated community or area targeted for revitalization.

How does it work?

Once a city identifies a community with deteriorating conditions, the city develops a plan that must be approved by HUD. Once approved, the City is allowed to target its federal CDBG dollars for community improvements.

What are the next steps?

Gastonia will work with the community, staff and a consultant to better understand the community, identify community needs, and establish a plan.



<https://gastonianc.gov>

(704) 866-6745

(704) 866-6758



**JOIN US TO DISCUSS
THE MARIETTA
STREET CORRIDOR**

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE



THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2025

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

**SOUTH MARIETTA BAPTIST CHURCH
911 S. MARIETTA STREET
GASTONIA, NC 28052**

About Our Event!

A Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area or NRSA is a designated community or area targeted for revitalization. The Marietta Street Corridor has the opportunity to be reimagined for the entire community. With your input, the City of Gastonia can invest where it matters most.

Event Highlights

Snack and Water ◀

Light refreshments will be available for participants to enjoy.

Short Presentation ◀

Most of the time will be spent engaging in visioning activities with community members.

Flexible Program ◀

Can't be there at 5 PM? No problem. This informal event is centered around sharing feedback about your neighborhood.

Stay Involved ◀

Place your bids on thrilling items and join our raffle for an opportunity to win amazing prizes!

www.gastonianc.gov

(704) 866-6745 | (704) 866-6758



Scan to Share Your Thoughts!

The City of Gastonia is developing a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) Plan for the Marietta Street Corridor to guide investments in housing, safety, infrastructure, and economic opportunity. Your voice matters—take a few minutes to complete our survey and help identify the improvements that matter most to you. Your input will directly influence the priorities and actions in this community-driven plan.

Your feedback matters! Take a moment to let us know your thoughts by scanning the QR code below.

**SCAN
ME**



1

Scan the
QR Code

2

Answer a Few
Quick Questions

3

Submit
Feedback

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/iRS7WZZIHB>



Survey is open until August 25, 2025

Marietta Street Corridor NRSA

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

What's this about?

Improving Gastonia, specifically the Marietta Street Corridor. You're invited to share your input and ideas.

Why is this important?

Your voice helps shape the future. The Marietta Street Corridor has the opportunity to be reimagined for the entire community. With your input, Gastonia can invest where it matters most.

How can I help?

Get involved and share your ideas.
Your ideas helps shape the strategy that guides real change.



THURSDAY, JUNE 5TH FROM 5:00 TO 7:00 P.M.



SOUTH MARIETTA STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
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Marietta Street Corridor NRSA

**Scan the QR Code to
complete a short survey.**



Thank You!



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Thank You!



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STATION 2: Housing Typology



Exercise: Housing Typology-Take your stickers numbered 1-6 and select 6 housing options from below, ranking them 1st (most preferred) through 6th (least preferred).

Single Family



Duplex



Townhomes



Multifamily



Mixed Use



Less
renters
more
owners



STATION 3: Commercial Uses



EXERCISE: CHOOSE COMMERCIAL - Take your stickers numbered 1-6 and select 6 commercial options from below, ranking them 1st (most preferred) through 6th (least preferred).

<p>Local Food Hall/ Creative Space</p>		<p>1 1 1 1 4 2 3 4</p>	<p>Neighborhood Services (Laundry, Salon, etc.)</p>		<p>6 4 5 6</p>
<p>Office Space</p>		<p>3 2</p>	<p>Bank</p>		
<p>Coffee Shop</p>		<p>2 1 6 2 3 1 5</p>	<p>Health Facility</p>		
<p>Sit-down Restaurant</p>		<p>2 2 2 4 4 2 2 3 6 5</p>	<p>Family Entertainment</p>		<p>3 3 3 4 1 1 1</p>
			<p>OTHER?</p>		

STATION 4: PARKS, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS



PARKS



Passive Park: A park for relaxation and enjoying nature. Often used as an informal gathering space, for dog walks or for meeting friends and neighbors.



Active Park: A park with a purpose. This could be sports related, such as basketball or volleyball.



Nature Park: A park filled with native plants to control storm water and attract insects and birds, a butterfly garden, a cardinal habitat, an owl nest box area.



Children Focused: Greenspace focused on providing recreation opportunities for children.



Special Events: A park with a gazebo, bandstand, sheltered picnic tables or barbecues and fire pits.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Green Street: Green Street featuring trees, and ground-level plants.



Green Parking Infrastructure: Green infrastructure designed to increase tree canopy for large parking lots and decrease stormwater runoff.



Protected Green Crosswalks: Protected crosswalks that feature greenery.



Rain Garden: Vegetated or landscaped depressions designed with an engineered soil layer that promote infiltration of stormwater runoff into the underlying soil.



Street Trees: Street Trees that enhance the walking experience by providing shade and decreasing high temperature in the surrounding area.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS



Crosswalk Art: Indicates where to safely cross the street and alerts drivers to look out for pedestrians.



Lighting: Pedestrian scaled lighting increases safety, discourages criminal activity and improves visibility.



Signage & Graphics: Artwork and signage convey neighborhood identity, tell a story, and help pedestrians navigate to key destinations. Bus shelters, banners and free standing signs can be used.



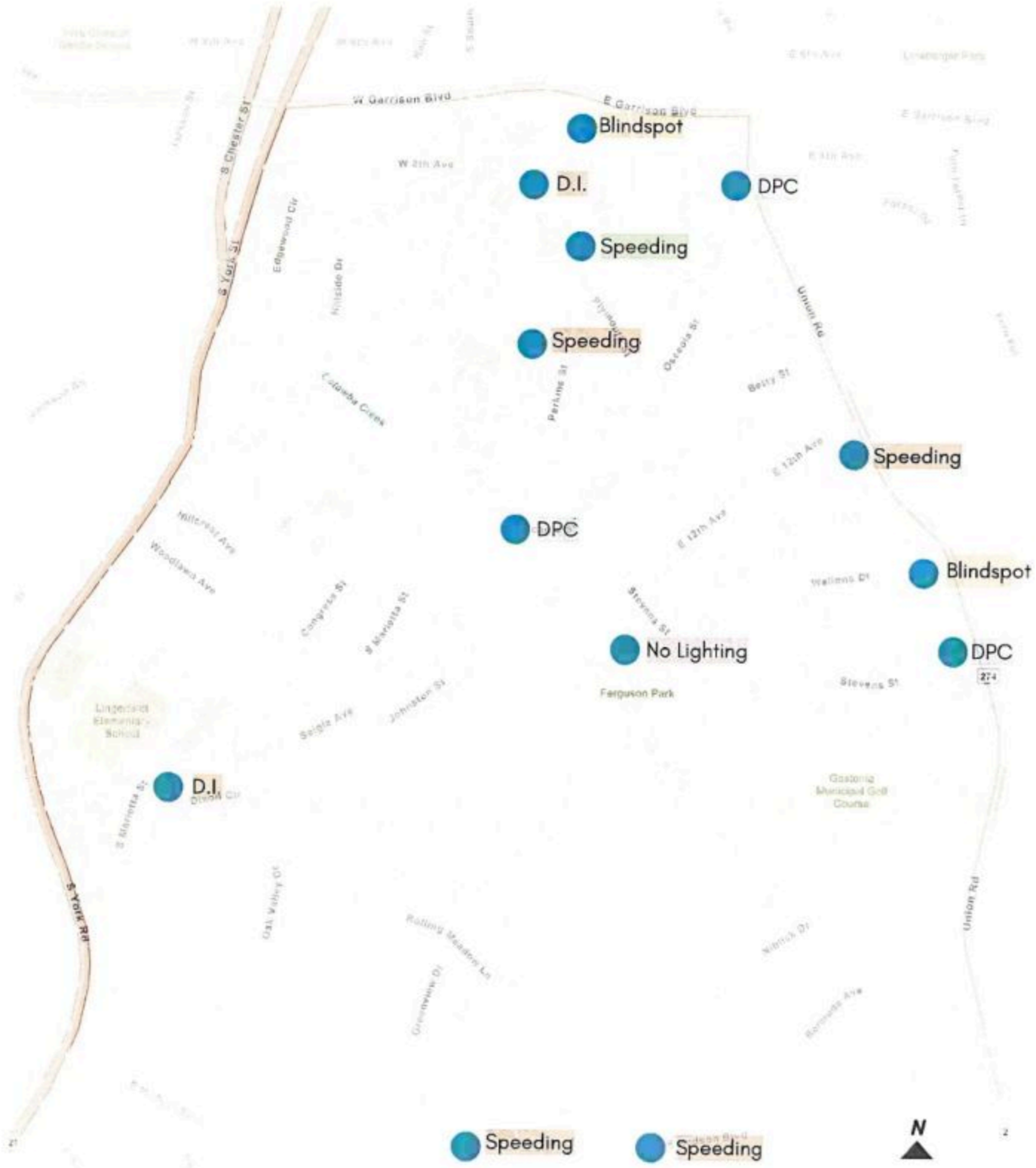
Public Art: Artwork tells stories about neighborhood identity and help pedestrians navigate to key destinations.



ADA Improvements: Adapt sidewalks to improve mobility for people with disabilities, children and the elderly.

STATION 5: Transportation Concerns

EXERCISE: IDENTIFY SAFETY ISSUES - On the map below, place your labeled sticker on a location that you know has safety issues for drivers or pedestrians. You can also place sticky notes for other important concerns..



LEGEND

-  = Speeding
-  = Dangerous Pedestrian Crossing
-  = Blindspot
-  = Dangerous Intersection
-  = Other

