CHAPTER 1 - Introduction and Overview of the Plan

The Purpose of the Plan is to provide a vision for the future growth and development of the Town of Siler City, and to help execute that vision through adopted goals and policies. The first land development plan was approved in November of 1968. The 2003 plan is an update of the second land development plan which was approved in 1989. The Plan is designed to assist public officials, citizens and staff with evaluating the appropriateness of land development requests and to manage change. As a guide, the plan is designed to provide direction while allowing for flexibility as the need arises. It is not a rigid ordinance and should be reviewed on a regular basis to remain true to the desires of the Town and its citizens.

The Need for Planning

Siler City in 2002-2003 is a very different community from the town that existed in 1989 when the last Land Development Plan was adopted. While many physical characteristics of the community resemble the town of 1989, Siler City has experienced rapid population growth though in-migration in the 1990’s. The completion of the new US Highway 421 bypass and improvements to US 64, have had a significant effect on residential and commercial growth. Through careful planning, the community can reap the benefits of its strategic location.

Like the 1989 plan, the 2003 Land Development Plan is an attempt to guide future land use and development decisions. As an update, the plan’s Purposes are to:

- Delineate land use and development goals
- Analyze the existing and man made factors affecting land use
- Emphasize the major land use issues facing the community
- Develop a conceptual land use plan
- Create land development policies

The Planning Process

The Siler City Land Development Plan Task Force drafted this document with technical assistance from the Town’s Planning Department and the Division of Community Assistance a unit of the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The planning process started at the end of 2000 with the realization by the planning board and Town staff that changes were occurring quickly in town and a major update to the 1989 land use plan to guide those changes was necessary. In the winter of 2000-2001, the planning board met with the Division of Community Assistance to discuss putting together a community land use plan. A land use committee with membership drawn from the planning board, Town board, Town staff and the general public was proposed by the planning board and appointed by the Town Board of Commissioners. The Land Development Plan Task Force first met in the fall of 2000 to discuss the format of the plan. The committee met throughout 2001 and 2002. A strategic strengths and weaknesses or SWOT analysis was first conducted by staff to determine the major areas of concern for the development of the plan. It was decided by the Task Force that this document should build upon the recommendations of the previous plan. A set of goals and specific action strategies were developed for major land use categories. Categories included: future residential,
industrial, commercial and public institutional land uses. Where a strategy from the 1989 plan had not been implemented it was evaluated and included in the new plan when appropriate. The 2003 plan builds upon the work of previous plans by including new goals and strategies for downtown development, protection of the airport area and recreation and open space.

Separate taskforce meetings were held with both downtown and recreation interests to provide additional insight into the process. At the conclusion of the committee's work, informational meetings were held with the planning board and board of commissioners before the final public hearings were conducted. The 2003 Land Development Plan was adopted in August of 2003.

**Plan Highlights**

The 2003 Land Development Plan is organized into chapters which provide community background information, land development polices, and an accompanying map depicting the land use growth plan for the Town.

As stated in the introduction, a land development plan is not a rigid zoning ordinance, but rather a guide for elected and appointed boards in making land development and permitting decisions. It is a medium to long-range plan. Some of the strategies adopted in this plan may not be feasible for several years, while others can and should be accomplished immediately. This plan as a continuation of the process that was begun in 1989 should be updated on a regular schedule in order to remain effective. Like the 1989 plan, the document provides policies affecting primarily land use decisions. The policies have been consolidated and reorganized to make them easier to use. Two new sections have been added which cover the traditional downtown core and park and recreation needs. These new sections recognize the special nature of the downtown and the need to provide new recreational opportunities for a growing population.

The core of the plan is the land development Goals, Objectives and Strategies. These terms are defined as follows:

**Goal** - A concise statement that describes a desired condition to be achieved. A goal is a target or end which planning is directed. A goal is not quantifiable, time dependent, or suggestive of specific actions for achievement.

**Objective** - A concise statement describing a method of action that addresses a goal, and if pursued and achieved, will ultimately result in attainment of that goal. An objective should be achievable and, when possible, measurable and time specific.

**Policy** - A specific statement that guides decision-making to achieve plan implementation. A policy is clear and unambiguous, and is formulated in response to the goals and objectives, and on the basis of the community assessment of issues, and state and federal mandates.

**Study Boundary**
This plan covers the Town of Siler City and its Extra-Territorial Planning Jurisdiction (ETJ). In the fall of 2002, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners granted the Town’s request to expand the ETJ to 3 miles. The new area is reflected in this plan.