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Durham Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 6
Economic Development Element

Durham City-County Planning Department

The Durham Comprehensive Plan

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Economic Development Element

Summary of Issues Goal 1, Economic Development

Durham's economic development goals, objectives and policies will help shape how the City and County will grow in the future. Economic development policies determine where governmental funds will be spent and where job growth will be encouraged. Economic development choices must also be coordinated with Durham's education, transportation, and land use goals to retain a healthy economy. Although many groups contribute to Durham's economic vitality, the lead City agency guiding Durham's economic policies is the Office of Economic and Employment Development. This agency works in partnership with other public and private agencies to provide assistance to individuals and businesses, to monitor Durham's economic needs, and to coordinate economic development programs.

The Durham economic profile shows positive characteristics. Durham has outperformed the national economy in terms of income and job growth. Durham provides an employment base for the region in large part due to the location of educational institutions and Research Triangle Park within its borders. Despite this optimistic setting, a proactive economic development program is important in maintaining Durham's economic health.

Summary of Issues

1. **Coordinating Economic Development and Other Land Use Goals.** Economic growth enhances Durham's overall quality of life. Economic policy choices must be supportive of other adopted City and County goals. The benefits of a healthy economy accrue to Durham's citizens when the economic programs, among other things, revitalize neighborhoods, bring jobs closer to downtown, and support transit use and walkable communities.

2. **Poverty Reduction and Job Growth.** While the Durham economy is strong by national standards, not all citizens share in the prosperity. Integrating community development activities with job training programs in Durham's lower income areas will assist in eradicating poverty, improving underdeveloped areas, and ensuring that all residents participate in the economic growth of the region.

3. **Community Infrastructure.** Economic developers have found that companies prefer to locate in communities that provide a high quality living environment for their work force. Communities that are distinctive and attractive tend to retain their economic vitality over time. Local universities and distinctive neighborhoods enable Durham to enjoy high levels of technology related employment. This employment sector is knowledge based and typically demands first class educational facilities at all levels.

Goal 6.1, Economic Development

Increase citizen access to high quality jobs and reduce poverty while increasing Durham's tax base.

Objective 6.1.1. Balanced Economic Growth

Encourage new business location and existing business expansion that are compatible with Durham's land use plans and policies.

Policy 6.1.1a. Business Development and Retention. The Chamber of Commerce or other Durham County designated agent and the City Office of Economic and Employment Development shall work with other agencies to actively develop and retain businesses for various areas of Durham consistent with land use and transportation plans and infrastructure availability.

Policy 6.1.1b. Neighborhood and Environmental Impact. In evaluating economic development proposals, the City and County shall consider the impacts on neighborhoods and environmental protection as well as job and tax base growth.

Policy 6.1.1c. Economic Base Growth. The City Office of Economic and Employment Development and the Chamber of Commerce (or other Durham County designated agent) shall concentrate business development efforts on industries that enhance the existing economy and provide diversity to that economic base.

Policy 6.1.1d. Convention and Tourism Activities. The City and County shall support and encourage the efforts of the Convention and Visitors Bureau to expand convention and tourism activities.

Policy 6.1.1e. Targeted Redevelopment. The City Office of Economic and Employment Development and the Chamber of Commerce (or other Durham County designated agent) shall promote and create financial and other incentives for the redevelopment of the Downtown and Compact Neighborhood Tiers, community development areas, and existing commercial areas, considering in particular opportunities for adaptive reuse and for small businesses on infill sites. See Map 6-1, Economic Development Target Areas.

Policy 6.1.1f. Brownfields Development. The City Office of Economic and Employment Development shall assist groups in using and understanding the Brownfields Redevelopment Program to encourage redevelopment of areas with real and/or perceived environmental contamination.

Policy 6.1.1g. Agricultural Preservation. The Cooperative Extension Service, the Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Farmland Preservation Board shall work with neighboring jurisdictions to explore opportunities for agricultural preservation and niche farming.

Policy 6.1.1h. Target Area Evaluation. The City Office of Economic and Employee Development and the City-County Planning Department shall reassess at least every five years the established community development target areas for purposes of targeting economic development incentives.

Objective 6.1.2. Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises

Increase support for minority- and women-owned businesses.

Policy 6.1.2a. Plan to Nurture Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses. The City Office of Economic and Employment Development and the City Department of Equal Opportunity/Equity Assurance shall work with minority and women entrepreneurs to ensure that they are aware of economic development programs offered through the City by developing and implementing a plan to nurture minority and women business enterprises in the City.

Objective 6.1.3. Poverty Reduction

Encourage capital investment, public improvements, and job training in low-income areas.

Policy 6.1.3a. Financial Incentives. The City Office of Economic and Employment Development shall continue economic investment activities that provide financial incentives for business expansion and development that creates livable wage jobs in low-income neighborhoods. See Map 6-1, Community Development Areas.

Objective 6.1.4. Education and Training

Work with local educational institutions to ensure that Durham has a well-educated work force available to meet the needs of a growing economy.

Policy 6.1.4a. Vocational Education and Customized Training. The City and County shall work with Durham Technical Community College and Durham Public Schools to provide appropriate vocational education and customized training to enable citizens to take advantage of opportunities for employment.

Policy 6.1.4b. Local Employers Training Needs. The Workforce Development Board and City Office of Economic and Employment Development shall work with local employers to identify their needs and assist in the communication of those needs to educational institutions to ensure a better-prepared workforce.

Policy 6.1.4c. Bilingual Education and Training. The Workforce Development Board and City Office of Economic and Employment Development shall encourage bilingual education and training in recognition of the increased influence of Durham's Hispanic and Latino community.

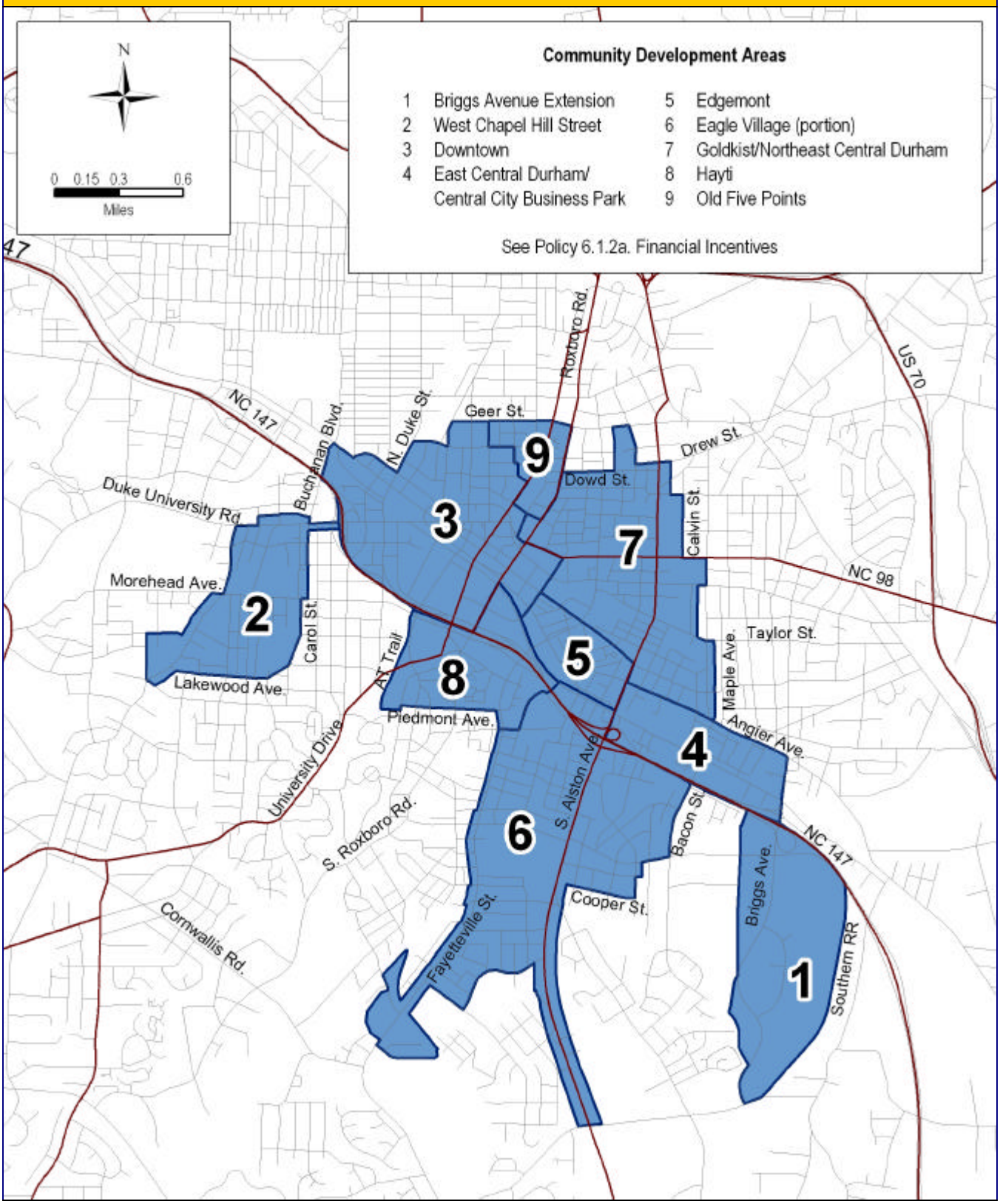
Policy 6.1.4d. State of the Durham Economy. The City Office of Economic and Employment Development shall continue to sponsor the Annual State of the Durham Economy presentation to educate the citizens and the business community about Durham's economic development opportunities.

Objective 6.1.5. Planning for Economic Development

Provide land use plans and development review processes that maintain a quality community and sustain economic growth.

Policy 6.1.5a. Infrastructure Maintenance and Expansion. All appropriate City and County Departments shall program funding for the maintenance and expansion of infrastructure necessary for business attraction in all areas of the community. See Chapter 16, Capital Improvements Element.

Policy 6.1.5b. Development Review Procedures. The City-County Planning Department and all other development-related departments shall regularly evaluate development review procedures to ensure that they are efficient. Inefficient programs and procedures shall be modified consistent with Smart Growth principles to provide certainty in the process with review and approval at the lowest possible level.

Policy 6.1.5c. Land Use Location and Availability. The City-County Planning Department, in conjunction with the City Office of Economic and Employment Development and the Chamber of Commerce, shall regularly evaluate the demand for land designated for economic activity, and the availability and location of land suited for economic development activities, and opportunities for revitalization and reuse.

Map 6-1, Community Development Areas