

buffaloe- new hope

area plan

december, 2014

B-NH
Buffaloe-
New Hope



Planning & Development



buffaloe- new hope area plan

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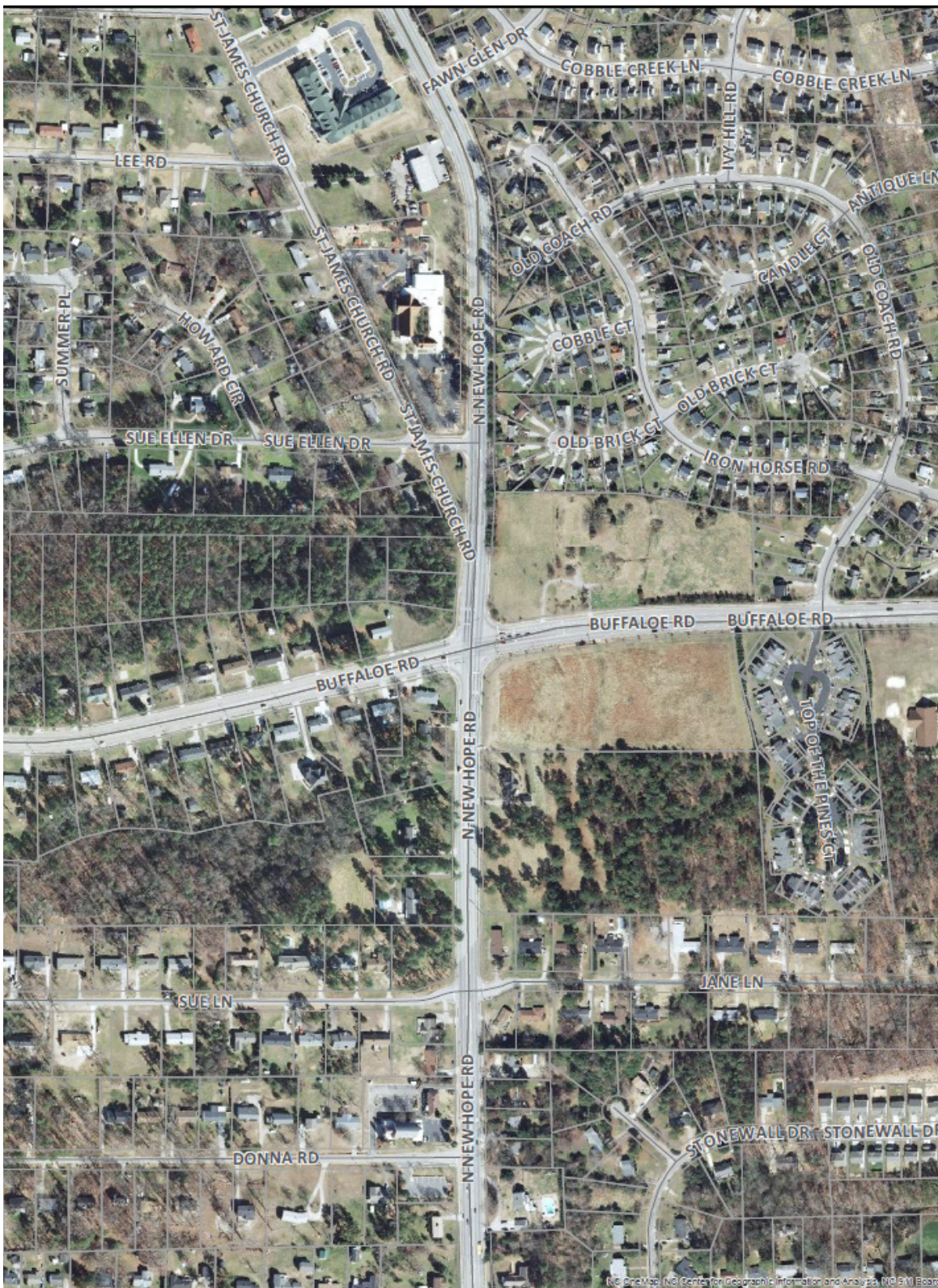
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Figure 1. Buffalo - New Hope Intersection and Area



INTRODUCTION

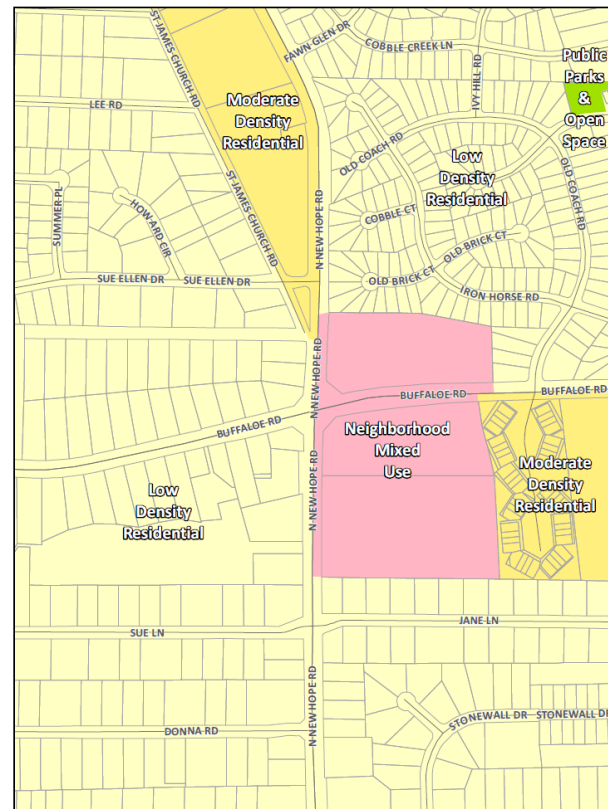
In 2013, the northeast corner of Buffalo and New Hope Road was the subject of a controversial rezoning petition that stirred significant community interest in the future development of the area. While that petition was eventually denied by the City Council, the physical attributes that attracted the petitioner's interest remain in place: 22 acres of undeveloped land occupying two quadrants of an intersection that sees over 28,000 cars passing by each day. Such a location is sufficiently compelling to commercial developers that future requests for some flavor of mixed-use zoning can be anticipated.

To give the community the ability to get out in front of future requests, in January 2014 area residents brought a citizen's petition to City Council requesting an Area Plan for the intersection and vicinity. After meeting with the neighborhood group in March 2014, staff recommended a half-day workshop be conducted to address the core issues.

The study area is focused on the intersection but included the adjacent neighborhoods. The surrounding development is mostly a mix of single-family homes and townhouses built at low to moderate densities, along with some institutional uses such as houses of worship. The parcels of interest on the corner are currently zoned R-6, but are designated for Neighborhood Mixed Use on the Future Land Use

Map, and are identified as a future Mixed Use Community Center on the Growth Framework Map. These designations contemplate a wide variety of future uses, not all of which are supported by the adjacent neighbors. The workshop focused on generating a constructive vision for future development that would address concerns regarding community impacts while still resulting in viable development opportunities. In addition, improvements to the transportation facilities in the area were discussed.

Figure 2. Future Land Use



PROCESS AND PARTICIPATION

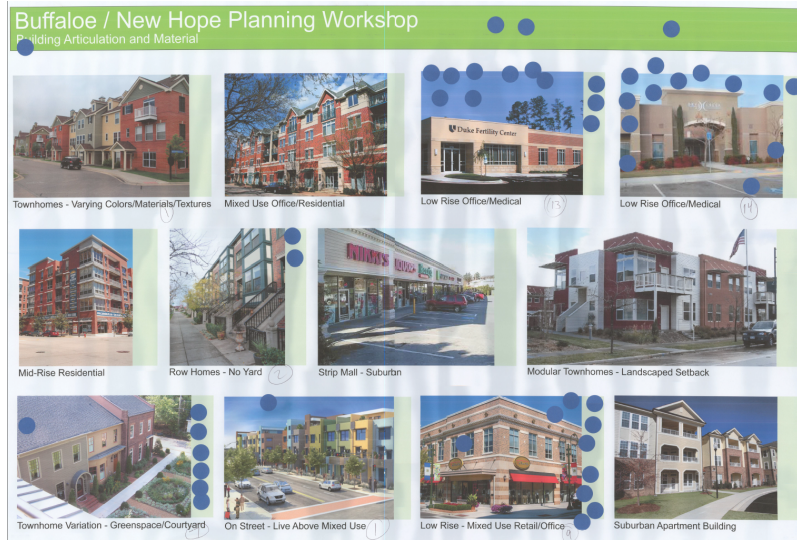
Staff from City Planning, Office of Transportation Planning, and Public Works Department met with neighborhood residents and property owners on Tuesday, September 30, 2014, at St. James United Methodist Church for a workshop to address development, zoning, and transportation issues for vacant parcels surrounding the Buffaloe Road - New Hope Road intersection. The purpose of the workshop was to brainstorm ideas for the future development of the parcels, as well as possible options for improving the intersection for all users. Workshop participants consisted of city staff, as well as 57 community members, property owners, and interested parties.

Figure 3. Pedestrian Environment Visual Preference Survey Results



During the workshop, staff first presented a brief overview of the planning context and characteristics of the area. Following the presentation, workshop participants were asked to participate in a brief visual preference survey.

Figure 4. Building Form Visual Preference Survey Results



Workshop participants placed blue dots on images of streetscapes and building types/forms that they liked. In terms of building form and material, the images that received the highest preference were of one- and two-story office style buildings or mixed use buildings. An image of townhomes with greenspace was also a top choice. In terms of streetscape images,

pedestrian-focused sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled plantings, pedestrian signals, and pedestrian lighting were all highly preferred.

Following the visual preference survey, there was a series of small group breakout discussions that addressed these three topics:

1. Identify Community Vision.
2. Identify Constraints and Issues.
3. Identify Opportunities.

The next section outlines the questions posed during the small group discussions and summarizes the comments made by community members.

Figure 5. View of Intersection Looking South on N. New Hope Road



WORKSHOP DISCUSSION RESULTS

1. Identify Community Vision

Specific questions presented were:

- What do you love about your community?
- What do you want to protect/preserve?
- What do you want to see that is not there now?

The first discussion topic generated quite a bit of consensus, especially with regard to the things that community members love about the area. Major themes expressed by workshop participants included an appreciation of the rural, single family character of the neighborhood, a love of the quiet, safe nature of the community, and their relatively close proximity to many amenities.

In terms of things that residents would like to see that are not there now, there was a mix of both general and specific comments for future development as well as support for infrastructure improvements. The more general comments focused on support for neighborhood-scale development that would be an amenity to the community. There was also support for mixed-use development, again, if it was something that seemed useful and walkable for the surrounding community. A number of commenters also mentioned a desire to have some kind of park area (pocket park, playground, places to walk or sit) or green space (community garden) at the intersection.

Infrastructure improvements mentioned during this discussion included a pedestrian connection to the Neuse River Greenway and Buffalo Road Park, a turn lane from New Hope to Buffalo, and pedestrian and bicycle focused improvements to the intersection.

Figure 6. September Workshop at St. James Church



2. Identify Constraints & Issues

Specific question presented was:

- Are there any issues at the intersection and surrounding area in terms of traffic, bicycle/pedestrian access and/or safety?

The second discussion topic looked at constraints and issues as well as suggestions for improvements at the intersection and in the surrounding area. Many of the comments focused on the need for an enhanced pedestrian and bicyclist experience. There were several specific suggestions on how to improve the intersection for these modes, including crosswalks at the intersection, sidewalk repairs, bicycle lanes, landscape maintenance near sidewalks, and more/better lighting. In terms of vehicular-focused concerns, several groups mentioned speeding and traffic back-ups at the intersection as issues. Some workshop participants also referenced several serious vehicular crashes that recently occurred near the intersection and the need to improve safety.

Figure 7. September Workshop at St. James Church



3. Identify Opportunities

Specific questions presented were:

- What do you see as the opportunities for the intersection and area?
- What are appropriate land uses?
- How tall should buildings be?
- Should buildings be set up to the street, or set back behind parking lots? A mixture of the two? What types of frontages should be used where?
- Buffalo and New Hope Roads are classified as Avenue 4-lane, Divided. New streets might be part of future development – what type should they be?

The last discussion topic had the most varied and wide-ranging set of responses. Looking specifically at possible future development on the vacant parcels abutting the intersection, workshop participants expressed ideas related to uses and zoning, building height, frontage, and the relationship to surrounding single-family neighborhoods.

There was quite a range of possible uses mentioned, including single family homes, drug store, fitness center, office, townhouses, bakery/coffee shop, library, and park. There was a general consensus that a one- to two-story development would be ideal; some participants mentioned that three stories as a maximum height would be acceptable. A three-story height limit is the most restrictive option available in Raleigh's general use zoning districts.

In terms of how new development would address the street, there were divergent views: some groups expressed a desire to see parking between the building and the street, while others preferred to have buildings close to the street with parking in the rear. Despite this split, there was general agreement that any new development adjacent to existing single family neighborhoods needed to be adequately buffered to prevent possible negative impacts from light, noise, and pollution.

Figure 8. September Workshop at St. James Church



FINDINGS

The following sections discuss the findings from the September workshop and outline planning recommendations and next steps.

AREA PLAN DESIGNATION

Although the Buffalo-New Hope workshop was not envisioned as an area planning exercise, due to strong community participation and the need for clear guidance for property owners and decision-makers, staff recommends that this report be adopted by City Council as an Area Plan. To meet basic plan requirements, the following sections lay out a road map that includes:

- A draft vision statement that expresses the community's desires for the future.
- A set of policies that support this community vision.
- A set of action items that work to implement these policies.

With this framework in place, the plan will serve as a key policy guide if rezoning or development plans come forward for the vacant parcels at the intersection.

DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

Based on the discussions and comments during the September workshop, the following statement expresses the community's vision for the intersection and the surrounding area:

The Buffalo-New Hope area will remain a neighborhood with a high quality of life. While the single-family character of the area will continue to be an important defining characteristic, new development at the intersection that brings neighborhood-scale commercial, office, and/or residential uses will add to the vitality of the area. Any redevelopment at the intersection that results in higher-intensity uses will respect the surrounding single-family areas by limiting light and noise impacts and by providing adequate buffers and transitions.

POLICIES

The following policies support the community's vision for the intersection and the area in terms of building form, the relationship between more intense development and single family uses, and improvements to the public realm. These policy statements should be taken into consideration for any rezoning and development plans at the intersection.

BUILDING HEIGHT

Buildings that are part of new development on the vacant parcels at the Buffalo-New Hope intersection should be limited to three-stories and 50 feet in height.

NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITIONS

If redevelopment to a more intense use occurs at the Buffalo-New Hope intersection, buffering and transition areas between these higher intensity uses and adjacent single family residential areas should exceed standards in Article 3.5 of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

MITIGATING LIGHT AND NOISE IMPACTS

If redevelopment to a more intense use occurs at the Buffalo-New Hope intersection, light and noise impacts should be mitigated. This could include prohibiting uses that are associated with late-night activity, limiting hours of operation, and/or altering the height, placement, or type of lighting that will be utilized.

FRONTAGE

If redevelopment occurs at the Buffalo-New Hope intersection, a Parking Limited frontage should be implemented to accommodate pedestrian activity.

IMPROVING SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL TRANSPORTATION MODES

Any transportation projects implemented at the Buffalo-New Hope intersection and in its vicinity should take into consideration the needs of all transportation modes, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. It is important to note the trade-offs involved in this policy. Making the intersection more pedestrian-friendly will likely impact traffic congestion.

ACTION ITEMS

To move from policy to implementation, this section identifies key action items. The matrix that appears on pages 18-19 categorizes the actions by type and identifies the responsible agency, a time frame, and any relevant policy documents. Short-term action items have a time frame of one to two years; long-term action items have a time frame of six to 10 years. All of these actions are designed to support implementation of the community's vision. The first set of actions focuses on policy, land use, and building form issues; the second set focuses on transportation and streetscape improvements.

AREA PLAN ADOPTION

Staff will present this report to City Council for adoption as an Area Plan. As such, this document will be a strong guide for property owners and decision-makers if rezoning and/or development proposals are brought forward.

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION

The Future Land Use designation for the vacant parcels at the Buffaloe-New Hope intersection should remain Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU). The Growth Framework Map in the city's 2030 Comprehensive Plan designates these vacant parcels as a future Mixed Use Community Center. Furthermore, many of the workshop participants voiced support for uses that would fall into the Neighborhood Mixed Use category, such as small-scale retail (coffee shop, café, drug store), personal services (fitness center), and offices (urgent care, veterinarian, other medical).

URBAN FORM MAP AMENDMENT

Staff will pursue an amendment to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Urban Form Map. This involves designating Buffaloe Road and New Hope Road as Urban Thoroughfares along the vacant, non-residential parcels at the intersection. This designation results in policy guidance that supports the implementation of a building frontage. Staff recommends Parking Limited as the most appropriate frontage for this context. The Parking Limited frontage provides flexibility if development occurs (parking could be located in the front or the back), but also has requirements that support walkability.

UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (UDO) TEXT CHANGE

Staff will continue to pursue a text change to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to make vehicle fuel sales a limited use in the Neighborhood Mixed Use (NX) zoning district, as well as study additional requirements for retail uses in the NX category.

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS AT THE BUFFALOE-NEW HOPE INTERSECTION

Perhaps the strongest feedback received at the workshop was the need for pedestrian-focused improvements at the Buffalo - New Hope Road intersection. Although these roads are maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), City staff will recommend to NCDOT the installation of pedestrian signals and crosswalks at the intersection.

BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

Staff will evaluate ridership counts for bus stops in the study area to determine the need for bus stop amenities (bench or shelter).

LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS

Staff will pursue the installation and upgrade of LED street lights in the vicinity of the intersection of Buffalo Road and New Hope Road.

SIDEWALK REPAIR

Staff will repair existing sidewalk damage along Buffalo Road and New Hope Road.

LANDSCAPING MAINTENANCE

Staff will evaluate existing landscaping for sidewalk obstruction and perform maintenance if required.

SAFETY ANALYSIS FOR BUFFALOE-NEW HOPE INTERSECTION

Staff will partner with NCDOT to conduct a safety analysis of the intersection of Buffalo Road and New Hope Road, as well as determine if improvements are needed.

SAFETY EVALUATION FOR TOP OF THE PINES COURT

Staff will complete a safety evaluation of Top of the Pines Court for any needed improvements.

BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Staff will evaluate Buffalo Road for designation as a high priority bicycle route during the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan update in 2015.

ACTION MATRIX

| Action | Type | Responsible Agency | Time Frame | Document |
|---|----------------|------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| Present report to City Council for adoption as an area plan | Use and Form | City Planning | Short-term | Buffaloe-New Hope Area Plan |
| Maintain current Future Land Use designation for vacant parcels at Buffaloe-New Hope intersection | Use and Form | City Planning | Short-term | 2030 Comprehensive Plan |
| Amend the Urban Form Map to designate Buffaloe Road and New Hope Road as Urban Thoroughfares along the vacant non-residential parcels at the intersection; recommend a Parking Limited frontage | Use and Form | City Planning | Short-term | Urban Form Map |
| Pursue text change to make fuel sales a limited use in the Neighborhood Mixed Use zoning district and study additional requirements for retail uses in the NX district | Use and Form | City Planning | Short-term | Unified Development Ordinance |
| Recommend to NCDOT the installation of pedestrian signals and crosswalks at the intersection of Buffaloe Road and New Hope Road | Transportation | Public Works/ NCDOT | Short-term | 2013 Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan |

ACTION MATRIX

| Action | Type | Responsible Agency | Time Frame | Document |
|---|----------------|---|------------|---------------------------------|
| Evaluate ridership counts for bus stops in the study area to determine the need for amenities (bench or shelter) | Transportation | Capital Area Transit | Short-term | n/a |
| Pursue the installation and upgrade of LED street lights in the vicinity of the intersection of Buffaloe Road and New Hope Road | Transportation | Public Works | Short-term | n/a |
| Repair existing sidewalk damage along Buffaloe Road and New Hope Road | Transportation | Public Works | Short-term | n/a |
| Evaluate existing landscaping for sidewalk obstruction and perform maintenance if required | Transportation | Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources | Short-term | n/a |
| Partner with NCDOT to conduct a safety analysis of the intersection of Buffaloe Road and New Hope Road, as well as determine if improvements are needed | Transportation | Public Works/ NCDOT | Long-term | n/a |
| Complete a safety evaluation of Top of the Pines Court for any needed improvements | Transportation | Public Works | Short-term | n/a |
| Evaluate Buffaloe Road for designation as a high priority bicycle route during the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan update in 2015 | Transportation | Transportation Planning | Short-term | 2009 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan |

APPENDIX: WORKSHOP DISCUSSION NOTES

1. Identify Community Vision

- Love, Protect/Preserve
 - Quiet, safe and friendly community.
 - Rural character (like the darkness), wildlife still exists.
 - Single family residential character.
 - Walkable during the day, easy transit by car or bicycle, amenities within reasonable distance, multiple convenience stores close by.
 - Maintain a safe friendly community, keeping mostly single family-scale development and minimizing rentals.
 - A neighborhood center that improves the area and is used by neighbors, walkable and something that people will use.
 - Preserve greenery and sense of rural history.
 - Not a lot of traffic in the neighborhood.
 - Established and varied landscape.
 - Take care of/preserve Buffalo Family Cemetery at edge of New Hope and Jane Lane.
- New/What You Want to See
 - Mixed use to be “true” mixed use. Not all of one thing, like only apartments. 70/30 or 60/40 mix seems right.
 - Senior community living – patio home.
 - Development that is an amenity. Maybe playground or cemetery
 - More pedestrian and bike-friendly; diagonal crossing?
 - A walkable destination that neighbors will use – café, community garden, fitness center, pocket park; mixed use is okay but not apartments and not 24-hour businesses.
 - Greenway connector to Neuse River Greenway/ Buffalo Road Park.
 - Park area for walking/sitting. Nearby Marsh Creek and Buffalo Road Parks are activity-oriented. Would like something more passive (like Spring Forest Park).
 - Community garden.
 - Turn lane (right) from New Hope to Buffalo.

2. Identify Constraints and Issues

- Crosswalks needed; safety of pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles is an issue. One motorcyclist killed at the intersection.
- Need for more sidewalks – there are some gaps. Some sidewalks on New Hope are broken due to tree roots.
- Need to upgrade pedestrian facilities.
- Maintenance of corridor (public and private properties). Tree/greenery overgrowth is an issue (block sidewalks and can hinder sight lines).
- Bike lanes needed.
- Better bus amenities (shelters, benches).
- Sidewalk is too close to the road; buffer/protect better from vehicle traffic.
- More/better lighting needed.
- Traffic too fast - reduce speed limits on Buffalo Rd to 35 mph.
- Traffic backs up at New Hope turning right onto Buffalo.
- Need turn lanes at intersection.
- Afraid of Capital Blvd-like sprawl spreading to this intersection.
- Minimize semi-truck traffic (traveling between Capital and New Bern).
- Worry about falling real estate values and transition to rental.
- Top of Pines Court – hard for children getting off bus to cross street. Also hard for people to make a left turn onto Buffalo.

3. Identify Opportunities

- Uses/Zoning
 - Single-family.
 - Something that fills the needs of the neighborhood.
 - NX – conditional.
 - Drug store.
 - Urgent care or vet.
 - Fitness center.
 - One- and two-story office.
 - Townhouses.
 - Bakery/coffee shop with no drive-thru.
 - Small grocery.
 - Country small town center community center for family and pets to visit and meet.
 - Public library.
 - Offices and medical buildings okay.
 - Active adult center (like at Five Points).
 - Dog park.
 - Café-type business.
 - Park or walking trails.
 - Don't want 24 hour use/business; no pawn shops, no large restaurants or stores, no service stations or drug stores; no liquor store; no high traffic uses.
 - Don't want rental units/apartments.
 - There is already a lot of vacant retail space in this area; don't want the same thing to happen at this intersection.
- Relationship to surrounding neighborhood
 - Deep setbacks from residential uses to shield noise and pollution from traffic; also wooden fences and dense shrubbery.
 - Need adequate buffers.
- Height
 - Max three stories.
 - One- to two-story.
 - Low-rise/one-story retail.
 - Relatively, not much taller than adjacent houses.
 - Two-stories okay.
- Materials
 - Durable and well-articulated (not a big box).
 - Frontage.
 - Buildings close to street with parking behind (2 groups).
 - Large setbacks and parking in front (2 groups).

For more information about the public process or to view the [presentation](#), visit the City of Raleigh website at www.raleighnc.gov and use the search term 'Buffaloe New Hope Rd.'

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