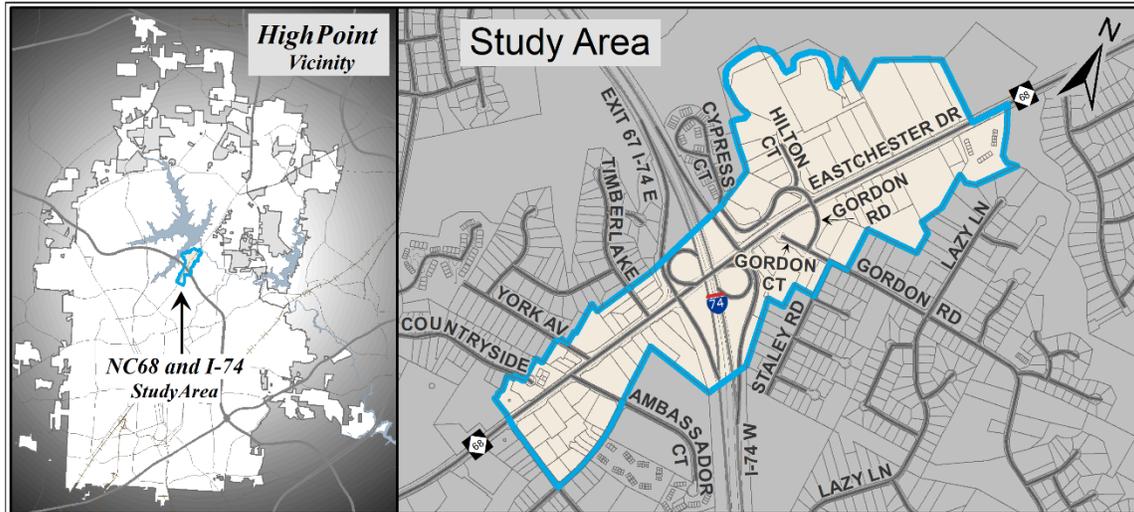


## Eastchester Drive/I-74 Land Use Assessment

In 1997, the western half of the Eastchester Drive/I-74 interchange was opened when the US 311 Bypass (I-74) was built between US 311 (Main St.) and Eastchester Drive. In 2004, the eastern half of the interchange was opened when the Bypass was extended to Business I-85. In 2020, the interchange is being expanded to alleviate congestion along Eastchester Drive and on the exit ramps of I-74. The expansion includes the addition of exit loops in the southwest and northeast quadrants of the interchange and the elimination of left turns on the Eastchester Drive overpass to access the interstate. When changes like this are made to the transportation network, there are impacts on adjacent land uses. Due to all these changes, the City has conducted a land use assessment of a 148-acre area along an approximately 1-mile section of Eastchester Drive, from the entrance to Festival Park on the northern end, to Lassiter Drive on the southern end to review the impacts and to evaluate the current land use policies for this portion of the corridor.



### Objectives

There four main objectives of the assessment are as follows:

- Protect the City's water supply (Oak Hollow Lake);
- Maintain the safe and efficient transportation functionality of the corridor;
- Protect adjacent neighborhoods from incompatible development; and
- Protect the gateway corridor entrance into the city.

### Existing Plan Policies

The study area is the subject of two planning documents that have shaped policy recommendations for the area – the Land Use Plan and the Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan.

## Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan is a policy document that covers the entire city (58 square miles), plus an area outside the city called the planning area (an additional 36 square miles). This is an area that the city anticipates growing into in the future. It portrays future land use and it is used by staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council to help guide decisions on future growth and development. The Land Use Plan shows the assessment study area as having an Office designation along the corridor with mostly Low-Density Residential designations to the west and east. There is a small pocket designated as Medium-Density Residential in the southeast quadrant of the interchange [See Map 1: Land Use Plan].

The following are the definitions of the land use classifications that are within the assessment area:

- **Low-Density Residential:** These areas include primarily single-family detached dwellings on individual lots. Development densities in these areas shall not exceed five dwelling units per gross acre.
- **Medium-Density Residential:** This classification includes a variety of attached dwellings, generally including higher density townhouses and less land-intensive multi-family housing such as garden apartments. Development densities shall range from eight to sixteen dwellings units per gross acre.
- **Office:** This classification includes professional, personal and business service uses.
- **Local/Convenience Commercial:** This classification includes moderate-intensity convenience retail or service uses, generally serving small, local neighborhoods.
- **Recreation/Open Space:** Lands for recreation or open space are included in this classification, offering either active use or passive enjoyment and environmental protection.

The Land Use Plan includes 5 goals and 11 objectives of which the following are applicable to this assessment:

- Goal 1: Ensure that development respects the natural environment;
- Goal 2: Encourage development that enhances and preserves established neighborhoods;
- Goal 3: Provide a wide range of housing opportunities for families of all income levels;
- Objective 4. Protect the City's older, established neighborhoods, and promote their revitalization through needed infrastructure improvements and new residential investment;
- Objective 9. Where feasible and appropriate, provide a transition in land uses between more and less intensive land uses;
- Objective 11. Enhance the aesthetic appearance of High Point by preserving the scenic quality of its major gateway streets and travel corridors and by providing appropriate landscaped buffers and transitional uses between low and high-intensity land uses.

## Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan

The Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan Phase II (Between Lassiter Drive and Penny Road) was first adopted in 1986 and updated in 1994. The purpose of the plan was to evaluate the corridor and make policy recommendations for the future growth of the area. The proposed interchange of Eastchester Drive and I-74 was evaluated as part of this plan. The policy recommendations fall into three basic groups: aesthetics, transportation, and land use. The following is a summarization of the policy recommendations that are relevant to this assessment:

### Aesthetics:

- Develop appearance standards for all new or renovated non single-family residential buildings within the Eastchester Gateway Corridor Overlay district (formally known as Eastchester Scenic Overlay).
- Discourage conversion of homes to office use, except for smaller sites in close proximity to large residential subdivisions.

### Transportation:

- Implement a deceleration lane policy to conserve the capacity of Eastchester Drive.
- Limit nonresidential zoning changes only to sites with a minimum of 200-foot frontage on Eastchester Drive.
- Require driveways for corner lots to be from side streets.

### Land Use:

- Limit commercial uses to well separated clusters located at major intersections such as the Skeet Club Road/Eastchester Drive/Wendover Avenue intersection. Support a mix of commercial, service, high rise office, and high density residential.
- I-74 Interchange – retain the Office land use designation because of concern that commercial uses would hinder the efficiency of the interchange and possibly lead to the spread of commercial uses in the area.

## **Zoning**

The intent of zoning is to support plan policies, therefore, the majority of the Eastchester Drive corridor within the study area is zoned in an office or residential district [See Map 2: Zoning]. In addition, the office zoning districts were approved as conditional use districts where the owners offered higher development standards in return for zoning approval, which ensured the policies of the Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan were met.

**Table 1: Existing Zoning**

<b>District Name</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Office Institutional (OI)	58	39%
Transitional Office (TO)	4	3%
Planned Development Limited (PDL)	3	2%
Residential Multi-Family 16 (RM-16)	3	2%
Residential Single Family–3 (R-3)	80	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Watershed

The watershed regulations have an impact on the developability of this area. The study area is split between the Oak Hollow Lake Watershed Critical Area (WCA) Tiers 1, 2 and 3 and City Lake General Watershed Area (GWA) [See Map 3: Watershed]. To protect the Oak Hollow Lake and City Lake public water supplies, these watershed areas allow development of property at limited intensities and densities, dependent upon the property's location to the lakes.

Generally, with limited exceptions, the Oak Hollow Lake Watershed Tier 1 does not allow for any new development except public water dependent structures, Tier 2 only allows new residential uses at 1 dwelling unit per acre, and Tier 3 allows new development at two dwelling units per acre or 35% built-upon area. The City Lake GWA restricts new development to not exceed 70% built-upon area. Higher densities and built upon areas may be allowed if it can be demonstrated that sites can be graded to drain out of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA and into the City Lake GWA.

## Transportation

In order to maintain the safe and efficient transportation functionality of the corridor, direct access points need to be limited. Whenever possible, access should always be taken from side streets, therefore, lot consolidation is encouraged. When additional or direct access to Eastchester Drive is necessary, then a lot frontage of 350 feet will be needed to accommodate a driveway, the side yard offset and distance from intersection, or deceleration lane, whichever is applicable. If additional driveways are needed, then additional lot frontage will be required.

## Street Naming

Due to the expansion of the interchange, some adjacent roads had to be realigned and some road names have been impacted. The following is a description of the impacts and some recommended road names changes:

- Cypress Court and Hilton Court – Cypress Court no longer has a direct connection to Eastchester Drive. There is a new road that has been built to run parallel to Eastchester Drive, and it connects further to the north from the I-74 interchange at a new signalized intersection where Hilton Court used to intersect Eastchester Drive. Hilton Court now intersects with this new road. Due to these changes it is recommended that the newly aligned road be officially named "Cypress Court" from



Eastchester Drive to the end where it meets the Waterfront Townhomes development and becomes a private drive. This new section of roadway is approximately 640 feet in length. The remainder of Hilton Court should retain that name from the new Cypress Court to its dead-end. Hilton Court is approximately 165 feet in length.

- Gordon Road – Similarly, Gordon Road no longer has a direct connection to Eastchester Drive. There is now a new roadway that intersects Eastchester Drive further north from the I-74 interchange with a signalized intersection directly across from where the new Cypress Court intersects with Eastchester Drive. This new alignment on the east side of Eastchester Drive should be named “Gordon Road” through the traffic circle to where it meets the current Gordon Road. This road segment is approximately 450 feet in length.
- Gordon Court - Also, in this area is a new cul-de-sac off of the traffic circle. This road segment is about 310 feet in length and serves two homes that face Eastchester Drive but do not have access to it. It is recommended that this new section of road be named “Gordon Court”.

Due to the roads being open to traffic, these recommended name changes were processed ahead of the adoption of this assessment. The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and approved the recommended name changes in January 2021.

### **Commercial Development**

Since the 1986 Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan, this corridor has been supported as an important gateway into the city. The corridor stretches from the northern city limits at Gallimore Dairy Road to North Main Street. Along the corridor there are opportunities for almost all different land use types, except for heavy industrial. However, there has been a continued desire to limit commercial uses to well separated clusters located at major intersections to maintain an attractive gateway into the city. Since the adoption of the Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan, there has been fairly significant growth of commercial uses along the corridor at the Eastchester Drive and Wendover Avenue/Skeet Club Road intersection; at Hartley Drive with the development of the Oak Hollow Mall; and most recently new commercial development has been developed in and around the Palladium shopping center and at Mendenhall Oaks Parkway. All the while, commercial development has continued to flourish at the intersection with North Main Street. There has also been some less intense neighborhood serving commercial development at Lassiter Drive. In order to continue to preserve areas in between these large commercial nodes for other uses, to manage traffic, and to protect the gateway qualities of the corridor, it is important not to allow commercial uses to expand along the entire corridor. While the interchange at I-74 may seem like a good location for commercial development to occur, there are constraints and concerns that should be considered. The area in and around the interchange is narrow, so it does not offer large areas for development; it is constrained by the lake to the west and by established neighborhoods to the east; and it is impacted by the development restrictions of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA.

## Recommendations

Based on a review of existing policy, and an analysis of existing conditions and existing land uses, the following are recommendations for the future growth of the area.

### General Recommendations

- When new development occurs, lots should be consolidated to maximize the size of the development and limit access points along Eastchester Drive. The Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan recommends having a minimum of 200 linear feet along Eastchester Drive to minimize curb cuts. However, based on transportation safety recommendations of the City's Transportation Department for access and driveway spacing this distance should be increased to a minimum of 350 feet for this area. Also, as recommended in the Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan, access should continue to be encouraged from side streets, whenever possible.
- The Land Use Plan designation for a majority of the study area is recommended to remain as Office with some minor changes [See Map 4: Land Use Recommendations]. There is an opportunity to add a small area of Local/Convenience Commercial at the southeast quadrant of the interchange (Area 6) to accommodate some limited commercial uses. The Local/Convenience Commercial land use classification supports moderate intensity convenience retail or service uses, generally serving small, local neighborhoods. Ambassador Court is at the southern end of Area 6 and it is being realigned with York Ave, on the west side of Eastchester Drive, to remove the offset and a new traffic signal will be installed. This will provide better access to Area 6 and provide an opportunity for some limited commercial uses. For development to happen in this area, it will require land assembly to manage impacts, coordinate access, and maximize development potential under the watershed development restrictions. If these requirements can be achieved, then a policy change can be considered to accommodate low to moderate intensity retail and personal service uses that are typically allowed in the Limited Business (LB) district, such as a convenience store with fuel sales.
- High intensity commercial uses traditionally found in the Community/Regional Commercial land use category, such as drive-through restaurants and large commercial shopping centers, are not supported within the study area due to continued policy concerns about the protection of the city's water supply; the safe and efficient transportation functionality of the Eastchester Drive corridor; the protection of adjacent neighborhoods; and the protection of the scenic corridor gateway into the city.
- The Office land use classification supports professional, personal and business service uses. Currently, most of the corridor is zoned Office and Institutional (OI). This district supports a wide variety of moderate and high intensity office, institutional and residential uses including townhomes and multi-family dwellings, as well as minor personal service and retail uses with a maximum of 4,000 square feet, and restaurants

without a drive-through. In 2017, the current Development Ordinance was adopted, and it allows the OI district to have a wider variety of uses that offer additional development opportunities along this corridor while still adhering to the long-standing land use policies of this gateway corridor.

- The City should consider purchasing land adjacent to Oak Hollow Lake in Tier 1 as it becomes available to enhance water quality protection.

### Area Specific Recommendations

The following are land use recommendations for the specific areas shown on Map 4: Land Use Recommendations. The map shows the recommendation areas with a red bubble outline, and the color coding on individual properties throughout the study area shows where there is common ownership of 2 or more properties. The white properties within the study area denote single ownership.

- **Area 1** has multiple constraints that may hinder the ability for it to be developed. The lots on the west side of the newly aligned Cypress Court are split between Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA and the area consists of approximately 3.25 acres. The lot in between Cypress Court and Eastchester Drive is irregularly shaped and it is just under an acre with depths ranging from approximately 150 feet to 50. NCDOT owns a small strip of land along a portion of Cypress Court at the corner of Eastchester Drive and there is controlled access along the 340-foot Eastchester Drive frontage which prevents driveway connections.

Due to the constraints of this area, the lots on the west side of Cypress Court (Area 1A) are recommended to remain Low-Density Residential. The non-NCDOT lot between Cypress Court and Eastchester Drive (Area 1B) is in Tier 3 and it is recommended to remain designated as Office. Due to the roadway changes this lot may be developed to drain into the City Lake GWA. However, the access restrictions, irregular shape and watershed requirements, along with its small size, significantly limit the lot's development potential. The current zoning for Area 1 (A&B) is Residential Single Family-3 (R-3) and it should remain until the development of Area 1B is proposed.

- **Area 2** is located immediately adjacent to Oak Hollow Lake and it is even more constrained than Area 1. It is in Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA and contains approximately 19 acres. The current land uses in this area are single-family residential. As a general policy, as properties around the lake in Tier 1 become available, the City should consider purchasing them to protect the city's drinking water supply. The land use designation is recommended to change from Low-Density Residential to Recreation/Open Space to reflect this desire [See Map 5: Land Use Amendments]. The current zoning for Area 2 is R-3 and it should remain.

- Area 3** is located on the northwest corner of Eastchester Drive and Cypress Court and consists of approximately 6 acres that are split between Oak Hollow Lake WCA Tiers 2 and 3 and City Lake GWA. The current land uses in the area are single-family residential and a fitness center. Some of this area could be graded so that it drains out of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA and into the City Lake GWA. This could increase its development potential and allow for this area to be developed with office and higher density residential uses. If the area remains in the critical area, then smaller office uses along the Eastchester Drive frontage would likely be the extent of its development potential. High intensity commercial uses are not supported in this area due to continued policy concerns about the protection of the city's water supply; the safe and efficient transportation functionality of the Eastchester Drive corridor; the protection of adjacent neighborhoods; and the protection of the scenic corridor gateway into the city. While the development potential of Area 3 increases if property is graded so that it is subject to the City Lake GWA standards, the surrounding area is more significantly constrained with stringent watershed restrictions, topographic constraints, controlled access and a classified stream that makes it infeasible for commercial development in the surrounding area. Therefore, in order to maintain the consistency in character of this section of the gateway corridor, Area 3 should remain in the Office land use category. As previously stated, the OI district now allows for a wider variety of uses that offer additional development opportunities along this corridor while still adhering to the long-standing land use policies of this gateway corridor. The current zoning is R-3 and Conditional Use Office Institutional (CU-OI).
- Area 4** consists of the lots that front along the east side of Eastchester Drive between the newly aligned Gordon Road and the West Fork of the Deep River. This area is in the City Lake GWA and it consist of 12 parcels that total approximately 22 acres. This area backs up to an existing residential neighborhood and it is impacted by steep slopes and a classified stream. Current land uses are offices, single-family residences and a few undeveloped parcels. Potential land uses for the undeveloped parcels and single-family residential parcels are office and higher density residential use, but the topography and stream may make development difficult. Protection of the existing adjacent neighborhoods to the east is important to maintain their stability. The Office land use designation should remain to support those options. Most of this area is zoned CU-OI with some R-3 on the southern end.
- Area 5** consists of 4 lots, some of which have frontage on Eastchester Drive, but can only be accessed off the new cul-de-sac west of the traffic circle (Gordon Court). Most of this area is within the City Lake GWA, except for a small portion at the intersection of Eastchester Drive and the I-74 exit ramp that is in the Oak Hollow Lake WCA. The area consists of approximately 4 acres and the current use is single-family detached

residences. This area backs up to the Breckenridge residential neighborhood and protection of this neighborhood is important to maintain its stability. Due to the lack of direct access, possible land uses for this area are office and higher density residential uses such as townhomes, condominiums, or apartments. Due to the impacts of traffic noise and light glare, this area may no longer be viable for single-family detached residences. The Office land use designation should be expanded to include all the properties in Area 5. The current zoning for Area 5 is R-3.

- **Area 6** is located south of I-74 on the east side of Eastchester Drive and it contains 7 lots that all have frontage on Eastchester Drive. Most of the lots are within Tier 3 of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA, except for the small easternmost portion of the area along I-74, which is in the City Lake GWA. There is a ridge line running through the area that creates the boundary between the two watershed areas. This area currently includes a mix of offices, single-family residences, and a religious institution. Ambassador Court is at the southern end of the area and it is being realigned with York Ave, on the west side of Eastchester Drive, to remove the offset and a new traffic signal will be installed. The realignment will take some land from the religious institution and remove the house on the southwest corner of York Avenue and Eastchester Drive. This area contains approximately 8 acres and backs up to an apartment complex to the east, I-74 to the north, and a fire station and offices to the south across Ambassador Court. As previously mentioned, there may be an opportunity to reclassify this area to the Local/Convenience Commercial classification to accommodate some low to moderate intensity retail and personal service uses. For development to happen in this area, it will require land assembly to manage impacts, coordinate access, and maximize development potential under the watershed development restrictions. Transportation efficiency could be maintained by gaining access to Ambassador Court and allowing limited access to Eastchester Drive. Conditional zoning will be needed to ensure that land use policies are supported. The land use classification for this area will remain as Office and Medium Density Residential. When a development proposal meeting the requirements of this assessment is submitted, a change in policy can be considered to accommodate low to moderate intensity retail and personal service uses that are typically allowed in the Limited Business (LB) district, such as a convenience store with fuel sales. The current zoning for Area 6 is CU-OI and R-3.
- **Area 7** consists of approximately 13 lots on the west side of Eastchester Drive. All the lots are within Tier 3 of the Oak Hollow Lake WCA. This area contains approximately 7 acres and currently includes a mix of single-family residential and office uses. It abuts the Timberlake neighborhood immediately to the west and the protection of this neighborhood is important to maintain its stability. This neighborhood is already being impacted by the interchange expansion, the installation of a median on Eastchester

drive that will restrict Timberlake Drive to right-in and right-out only, and the realignment of York Avenue. Due to the limited lot depth and adjacency to the Timberlake neighborhood, potential land uses for this area are single-family residences and small-scale office as are allowed in the Transitional Office (TO) District. The Office land use designation should remain to support those options.

### **Summary of Recommended Changes**

This section consolidates the recommended changes that are proposed in the assessment.

- **Street Name Changes**

As described above, the following street name changes were approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in January 2021:

- Cypress Court – It is recommended that the newly aligned road on the west side of Eastchester Drive be officially named “Cypress Court” from Eastchester Drive to the end where it meets the Waterfront Townhomes development and becomes a private drive.
- Gordon Road – Similarly, the new alignment on the east side of Eastchester Drive should be named “Gordon Road” through the traffic circle to where it meets the current Gordon Road.
- Gordon Court - Also, the new cul-de-sac off of the traffic circle should be named “Gordon Court”.

- **Transportation**

When additional or direct access to Eastchester Drive is necessary, then a lot frontage of 350 feet will be needed to accommodate a driveway, the side yard offset and distance from intersection, or deceleration lane, whichever is applicable. If additional driveways are needed, then additional lot frontage will be required.

- **Land Use Plan Amendments** [See Map 5: Land Use Plan Amendments]

As described above, the following two Land Use Plan amendments are recommended for consideration at a future date by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council following public hearings:

- Area 2 - The Land Use Plan designation is recommended to change from Low-Density Residential to Recreation/Open Space to reflect the desire to protect the drinking water supply.
- Area 5 - The Office Land Use Plan designation should be expanded to include all the properties in Area 5.