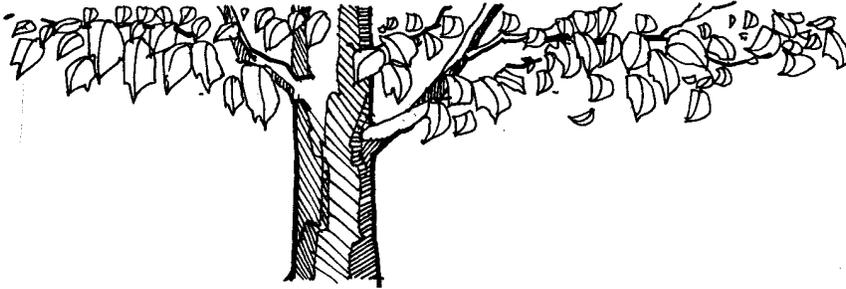


# Street Trees



## Summary of Issues

Issues associated with street trees are primarily related to conflicts of overhead utility lines in older neighborhoods and commercial districts, and the reluctance of some highway engineers to place these "traffic hazards" within striking distance of the automobile. Another issue relates to how we view the purpose of trees today in the urban landscape.

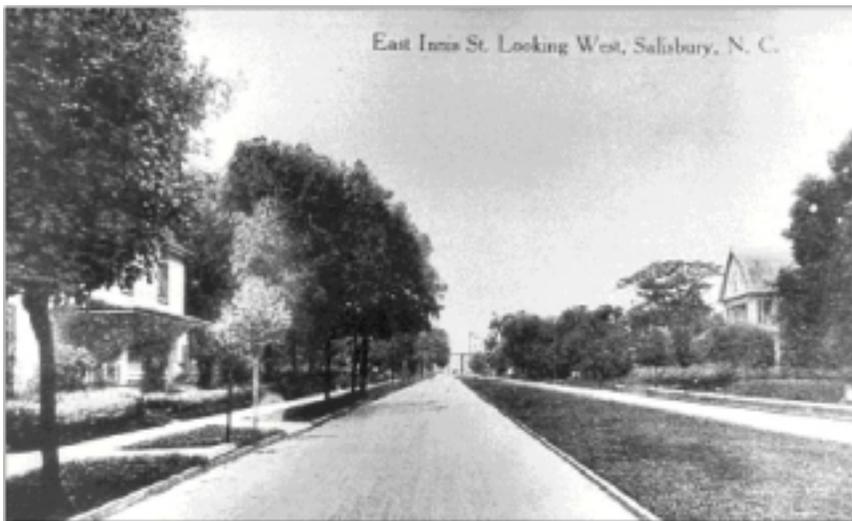


Photo at left shows street trees along East Innes Street during the 1930's.

Before World War II, trees were seen as an integral part of the essential structure of a street. Trees helped define the "room of the street" through which cars and pedestrians traveled. By contrast, in most suburbs today, trees are used largely for ornamental purposes or to provide a "picture frame" for a house. In other instances, the developer may be trying to achieve a maximum "wooded" look, and simply save as many existing trees as possible. Again, the focus is generally on the setting for the house, rather than the setting for the street.

Beyond the changed purpose of trees in the urban landscape, other factors have also worked against the need or desire for traditional street trees. The advent of air conditioning and in-home entertainment, for example, has pulled people into their houses and away from their front porches, if they have one. A redirection of outdoor activity from the front porch, front walk and streetspace to the rear deck or patio have made the provision of shade over the room of the street a low priority in today's suburban subdivisions. Many social experts contend that both of these

*What makes a city special-gives it a feel that is different from any other place? In lucky cities, the answer to that question involves trees. Like other enduring features such as rivers, hills, and massive building centers, trees are in place for the long haul.*

**Sara Ebenreck, 1989**

*Air conditioning has seduced families into retreating into houses with closed doors and windows, reducing the commonality of neighborhood life and all but making obsolete the society whose open, casual folkways were an appealing hallmark of a sweatier America.*

**Frank Trippet  
Time Magazine**

changes are lamentable, in that positive social interaction with one's neighbors has been replaced by a withdrawal to the big screen TV or private rear deck. The "neighborliness" and cohesion of many neighborhoods has suffered as a result. The apparent lack of interest in street trees is but one symptom of much bigger societal changes.

### ***Policies for Street Trees***

***Policy ST-1: The City shall maintain a street tree master plan which shall address: 1) the retrofitting of existing streets, where appropriate, and 2) the planting of future streets.***

Support for street trees in Salisbury is very strong. Area residents at the town meetings held for the comprehensive plan offered a firm consensus for the "greening and beautification of Salisbury". Other comments called for "boulevards lined with trees". Still others simply said, "Plant more trees." Regardless of the exact words chosen, there is little doubt that residents want Salisbury to be a beautiful city and street trees are one of the most effective, least costly ways to do that.



*Trees outstrip most people in the extent and depth of their work for the public good. Twenty-four hours every day, through the spinning cycle of the year, they're on the job creating an environment beneficial to our physical and mental health. They cool the air, break the wind, and intercept the rain. Pollution cleanup goes on noiselessly and without political argument. They cut our fuel bills and increase our property values. Their beauty rivals that of any art gallery. Stress reduction and energy recharge are available at a glance.*

**Sara Ebenreck, 1989**

Salisbury's leaders have been largely sensitive to the wishes of its citizens regarding street trees. Salisbury has much to be proud of in terms of its support for trees. In 1985, for example, Salisbury's City Council appointed a Tree Board. This 7 member board, which meets monthly, has primary responsibilities for the planting, preservation and maintenance of trees on all public properties and in City rights of way.

For the past 14 years in a row, Salisbury has earned the distinction of being a "Tree City USA". To receive this honor, a community must demonstrate commitment to the preservation and advancement of trees through four specific measures:

- (1) The City must enact and enforce a tree ordinance
- (2) The City must have a tree commission (i.e. Tree Board)
- (3) The City must hold an annual Arbor Day Celebration
- (4) The City must spend at least \$2/capita on trees and related support services\*

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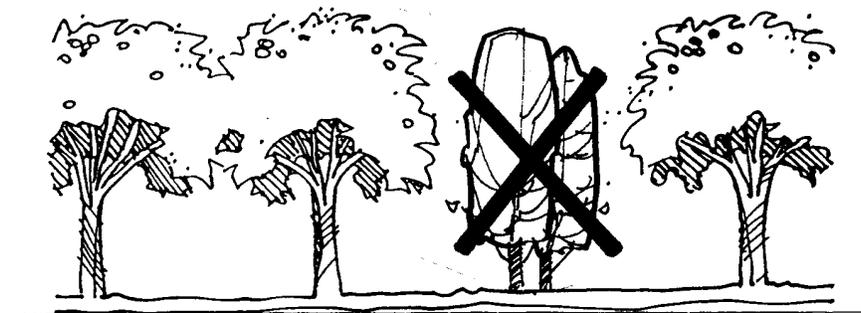
\* According to figures maintained by the Tree Board and City staff, Salisbury has consistently been in the top five communities in the State of North Carolina in terms of its per capita expenditures for trees.

The City thus has an outstanding legacy of support for trees upon which to build. The next logical step in moving forward would be the preparation of a city-wide street tree master plan. While this report can suggest general policies for inclusion in such a plan, it is recommended that a more detailed street tree master plan be prepared with considerable public input, careful planning, and implementation over many years.

Alternatively, if undertaking a master street tree plan for the entire city seems overwhelming, the City could approach the plan by addressing only the most critical parts of the community initially. A street tree plan for just the downtown, for example, would be a good place to start. Similarly, master street tree plans might also be incorporated into *corridor improvement plans* for certain major streets and gateways into the community. In addition to street trees, such corridor plans often address many other aspects of land use and development, including street access, parking areas, streetlights, landscaping, signage, etc. Regardless of the approach taken, several suggested policies for street trees are presented in the paragraphs following.

**Policy ST-2: So as to create a unity of design and effect, consistent street tree species shall occur along predetermined sections of streets. (Also see Policy ST-3)**

Many streets in Salisbury are lined with an uncoordinated collection of many different types of trees, shrubbery, grass, or nothing at all. While these items no doubt have been planted in the street plaza with the best of intentions, it is the lack of a consistent whole that detracts from the street appearance. The beauty and comfort of tree-lined streets comes from the consistent rhythm, spacing, and species selected for predetermined sections of streets. It is important that an entire segment of a street be planted with a single street tree species to create a sense of identity, distinction, and pride for that location. Different species may be at their best appearance during different times of the year, thereby encouraging different streets within the city to be “on parade” during their peak times.



To its credit, the City of Salisbury has a suggested list of “Large Trees” included in the appendices to the City’s landscape ordinance. This suggested list is clearly not intended to be all-inclusive, but does provide a good starting point for the identification of suitable tree species which could be selected for specific street segments. Obviously, the selection of a particular species will require careful dialogue with property owners along a given street segment. Further, strategic marketing and implementation of the City’s street tree planting program could be quite effective in carrying out this policy initiative. (See **Policy ST-6**)

*It is necessary to maintain a unity of effect by planting a fair length at a time with one particular tree. The variety which is attained by mixing or alternating the types of tree on any street, is one which loses its interest after about half a dozen trees are passed, and its total effect when carried out over a large area, is only to spread monotony farther than is necessary; but by treating each road differently, planting each with one particular kind of tree and the adjacent roads with a different tree, it is possible to stamp each with some individuality of its own and produce very considerable variety in a district.*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**

***Policy ST-3: No single tree species should comprise more than 10 to 15% of the total street tree population of the city.***

Beginning with the legacy of tree destruction left behind by the notorious Dutch elm disease, there has been understandable concern expressed about the risks involved in overusing a single species of tree in a city. The same can be said with regard to the blight and disease that can set upon dogwoods, destroying beauty achieved only through years of slow growth.

It is out of this concern that many urban foresters suggest that limits be set to curtail the overplanting of a single species. In addition to this gross percentage limitation, it is also recommended that no individual neighborhood planning area of the city be planted out in just one species. Rather, it is suggested that particular street segments (at most, several blocks of a street), be planted with one species. In this manner, if another devastating tree disease should come along, an entire area of the city will not be made suddenly barren.

***Policy ST-4: Regularly spaced street trees should be planted in central medians, frontage street medians, and plaza strips.***

One of the most effective methods of improving the entire city at once, while at the same time unifying its character and historic charm, is to plant street trees in consistent fashion along major thoroughfares. As noted in the "Major Streets" section of this plan, central medians and plaza strips are recommended for most new or redesigned major thoroughfares in the city. It is also worth noting that the medians of *new* streets seldom have overhead utilities, thereby eliminating any potential overhead conflicts with full sized street trees.



Observations of those parts of the city where street trees appear to be most effective and beautiful, reveal consistent tree species planted no more than 30 to 40 feet apart on center. Spacing at this interval eventually provides for the canopy over the street that is so universally admired.

***Policy ST-5: The planting or preservation of street trees of appropriate size shall be required as part of the upfront costs of new development.***

Salisbury's award winning landscape ordinance, adopted in 1996, requires that new commercial and multi-family developments meet specific landscape standards, including the provision of trees, as part of any approved development plans. This ordinance has done much to make Salisbury's commercial and multi-family developments more visually appealing, and the City of Salisbury a greener, more beautiful community. It is yet one more example of how Salisbury has been at the forefront of community planning for cities of its size.

Unfortunately, the landscape ordinance does not address the issue of street trees in single-family neighborhoods. Significantly, single-family neighborhoods consume the vast majority of all developed land in Salisbury. Years ago, traditional single-family neighborhoods had more

street trees than any other part of the City. During the early part of the 20th Century, when the first major push for suburban growth became prevalent, street trees were viewed as a critical element of new neighborhoods. Real estate advertisements of that period proclaimed that "street trees were already in place" waiting for the new residential lots to be filled with houses. At that time, street trees were not viewed simply as optional ornamentation, but rather as an integral part of the foundation of any good neighborhood. After all, weren't people leaving the city to get closer to nature?

Sometime after World War II, the significance of traditional street trees to new subdivisions all but disappeared, perhaps owing to the lack of sidewalks and a re-direction of outdoor activity to the backyard. At the same time, the advent of air conditioning reduced the need to design homes and neighborhoods for natural cooling. Regardless of the cause, it is unfortunate that street trees are no longer a standard element of many of today's new developments.

This plan therefore recommends that development standards for new neighborhoods include the planting or preservation of street trees in accordance with the policies of this plan as well as an overall street tree master plan. Under this arrangement, developers would be required to install street trees just as they are required to protect or install pavement, water and sewer lines, utilities, etc. to meet overall public standards for those systems. To assure compliance with this requirement, the installation of trees could be tied into the issuance of a certificate of occupancy or coordinated with the construction of sidewalks.

*Properly placing trees in new construction (should be) as much part of the cost of buildings as pouring concrete and putting in sewers.*

**Gary Moll, 1989**

***Policy ST-6: The city's street tree planting program shall be targeted to maximize available budget dollars for street tree master plan implementation.***

Just as the City may call upon developers of *new* neighborhoods to provide for street trees, so should the City encourage *existing* neighborhoods and streets to be retrofitted with street trees. In this regard, the City has an existing street tree-planting program, but it is not well known. Under the program, requests from property owners for a street tree are handled on a case-by-case basis. When a request is approved, a tree is provided and planted for the property owner by City crews at a discounted cost\*. At present, there is no written material or brochure describing the street tree program or what the City offers to the typical property owner. Given the very reasonable price of the service, the City might very well be overwhelmed with requests, if the program were to be publicized. Nonetheless, a balance must be sought which would encourage existing neighborhoods and property owners to follow through on the opportunity, without breaking the budget of the City.

*The state of existing urban forests is improved when tree planting is part of the capital budget, not just the tree maintenance budget.*

**Gary Moll, 1989**

To maximize the impact of the street tree planting initiative and to properly budget limited program dollars, it may be necessary to make the program available to only certain parts of the City in any given year. This approach should also be effective in creating demand for the program (i.e. Take advantage of this limited time offer!), and in allowing the City to specify the type of tree species for designated neighborhoods in

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\* The City currently charges substantially less than what the property owner would have to pay a private landscaper to provide and install a tree of similar size and value. The amount charged may need to be examined to be brought more in line with the true costs.

accordance with the city's street tree master plan. If a particular neighborhood declined to participate, or if the landscape character of the neighborhood simply did not lend itself to street trees, the City would just move along to the next street or neighborhood.

### **Summary of Policies for Street Trees**

*It costs about one cent to reduce peak-load energy demands one kilowatt-hour by planting trees, whereas savings from improving the efficiency of appliances would cost about 2.5 cents, and improving electrical supply energy would cost 10 cents.*

**Sara Ebenreck, 1989**  
citing research by the Lawrence Berkeley Lab

**Policy ST-1: The City's street tree master plan shall address: 1) the retrofitting of existing streets, where appropriate and 2) the planting of future streets.**

**Policy ST-2: So as to create a unity of design and effect, consistent street tree species shall occur along predetermined sections of streets. (Also see Policy ST-3)**

**Policy ST-3: No single tree species should comprise more than 10 to 15% of the total street tree population of the city.**

**Policy ST-4: Regularly spaced street trees should be planted in central medians, frontage street medians, and plaza strips.**

**Policy ST-5: The planting or preservation of street trees of appropriate size shall be required as part of the upfront costs of new development.**

**Policy ST-6: The city's street tree planting program shall be targeted to maximize available budget dollars for street tree master plan implementation.**

# Street Lights

## Summary of Issues

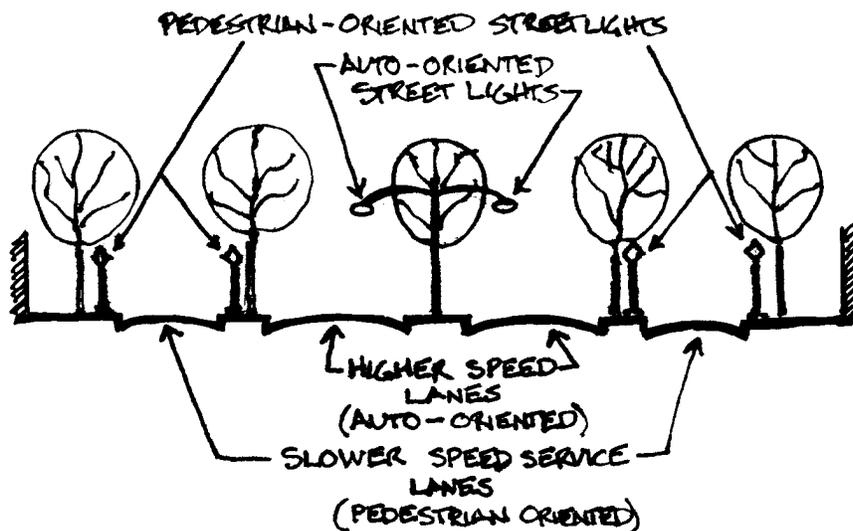
As our modern day subdivisions, commercial properties and street layouts have become more automobile oriented and less pedestrian oriented, so too have our systems of lighting streets. As a result, there is today a predominance of streetlights designed to serve the primarily the automobile, and a far lesser number of those compatible with pedestrian activity. Many factors come into play when discussing the contrasting differences between automobile-oriented streetlights and pedestrian scaled streetlights. These factors include the placement of streetlights relative to the street and sidewalk, the height and distance between streetlights, the type of lamp employed, and the cost of purchasing, installing, maintaining and powering the streetlights. The following policies address each of these issues.

**Policy SL-1: Streetlights shall be selected and installed according to the design speed and/or intended use of the street or area they serve. Where sidewalks are present or anticipated, pedestrian scaled streetlights shall be preferred.**

This policy encompasses several factors:

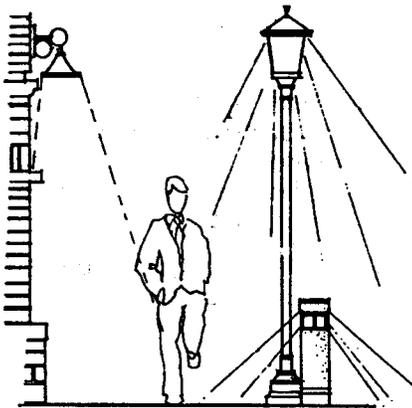
### Placement of Streetlights Relative to the Street and Sidewalk:

Originally, streetlights were intended to benefit both the motor vehicle and the pedestrian in relatively equal priority. Today's streetlights, however, cater first to the needs of the automobile, and only secondarily to the needs of the pedestrian. In fact, while pedestrian scaled streetlights often give equal light to the sidewalk and street, "modern" streetlights hang out over the roadway, giving priority to illuminating the automobile's path. While this may be appropriate for those streets where there is no pedestrian activity along the street margins, it is not acceptable for streets where sidewalks are in place and pedestrians are in need of light.



*Height and Distance Between Streetlights:*

Pressures for greater lighting efficiency have led to fewer streetlights but with brighter bulbs mounted on taller poles. A typical spacing for light fixtures on today's 24' tall poles, for example, would be about 200 to 300 feet apart in a residential area. By way of contrast, a typical spacing for light fixtures on more attractive, pedestrian friendly 12' tall poles would be about 90' to 100' apart. Thus, it usually takes at least twice as many pedestrian scaled streetlights to illuminate the same residential area as the taller automobile oriented streetlights. It is not surprising, therefore, that as our residential areas have become more automobile oriented, most American cities, including Salisbury, have chosen the efficiency of fewer, taller streetlights at the expense of pedestrian comfort and community appearance.



Still, many older parts of Salisbury are not as automobile oriented as the newer suburbs. These older neighborhoods have sidewalks that would be greatly benefited by pedestrian scaled streetlights. They also have mature street trees, which can easily block the light from a taller streetlight, creating many dark voids in the neighborhood. **Policy SL-1** requires that where new or redeveloping neighborhoods or commercial areas have sidewalks or other areas of pedestrian activity, pedestrian scaled streetlights shall be employed.

**Policy SL-2: The selection of streetlight lamps shall give preference to light sources which produce a natural color spectrum, particularly where sidewalks are present.**

In the larger scope of issues, this policy may seem to be quite particular. But few people are aware of the dramatic differences in the types of streetlight lamps employed in our urban areas. Some create a nighttime ambience that is quite attractive to the human eye, while others produce a light that might best be left in a science fiction movie.

As street lighting technologies have changed over the years, and pressures for greater lighting efficiency have escalated, corresponding changes have occurred in the types of light fixtures and lamps used in electric streetlights. Up through the mid-1970's, for example, the most common streetlight fixture in use was the low-pressure *mercury vapor lamp*. This lamp throws off a decidedly bluish light, but has the advantage of imparting mostly natural colors to people and objects. Its main disadvantage is that, as the lamp grows older, it slowly loses its brightness. Thus, an entire street or neighborhood served by mercury vapor lamps can grow gradually darker over time without area residents knowing exactly why.

In the mid-1970's, a second major type of street light fixture entered the market. The *high-pressure sodium vapor lamp* has the advantage of being extremely bright and quite cost effective. It also maintains a consistent level of brightness until it burns out, thus avoiding the diminishing brightness problems associated with the mercury vapor lamp. Its chief disadvantage is the objectionable light it casts, causing people and objects to take on unnatural colors that have been described as stark, almost eerie. This is the lamp that has been most commonly in use in Salisbury for the past fifteen years.

The third type of streetlight fixture to enter the market has been the *metal halide lamp*. The principal advantage of this lamp is that it has a very

pure, white light and therefore produces an excellent color spectrum in people and objects. Not surprisingly, several automobile dealerships on Jake Alexander Boulevard have employed metal halide lamps to show off their car inventory in the most favorable light. This is the type of light, currently on the market, that is most consistent with **Policy SL-2**.

***Policy SL-3: The City, in cooperation with streetlight service providers within its jurisdiction, shall maintain a streetlight inventory and master plan, to include an approved list of manufacturers of streetlights for use in Salisbury.***

At present, Duke Power operates and maintains the vast majority of streetlights in Salisbury. To do this with some degree of standardization and efficiency, the power company maintains its own list of approved manufacturers of streetlights. For streetlights not on the approved list, Duke Power assesses a one-time surcharge for initial installation, and applies a higher monthly rate for the operation and maintenance of “non-standard” streetlights.

With deregulation of the electric utility industry on the horizon, it is probable that changes will be forthcoming in terms of who and how streetlights are provided. An example of such change occurred recently regarding the provision of streetlights in a section of downtown Salisbury. The City had occasion to look deeper into the streetlight issue when considering new pedestrian-scaled streetlights for the 200 block of East Council Street. Initially, the City approached Duke Power with a request for a certain type of pedestrian scaled streetlight with a metal halide lamp. Duke responded with a proposal for an “equivalent” streetlight (from within its own inventory) for an initial surcharge of about \$5000 per streetlight.

Project managers for the City found that they could purchase a better quality street light elsewhere for about \$1800 per streetlight. As a result, the City elected to purchase and install its own streetlights. Further, Duke had proposed to charge the City \$7.50 per streetlight for operation and maintenance of the pedestrian scaled streetlights, compared to \$6.60 for the standard 24 foot pole. As a result, the City decided to install electric meters and reimburse Duke Power only for the actual cost of electricity. The City has determined that actual electric consumption amounts to about \$2 per month per streetlight. While this amount does not include maintenance and replacement costs, it does contrast rather strongly with the \$7.50 per month charge that Duke Power had proposed. It is reasonable to believe that some portion of Duke Power's monthly charge reflects its bias against streetlights other than their “standard issue” 24-foot fixture.

Thus, if the City or some other electric utility should begin providing streetlights within the City on a broader scale, it too would have some incentive to limit the number of different types of streetlights operating in the community. Just as Duke Power seeks to maintain some control over the number of different types of streetlights which it must maintain, it is equally reasonable to assume that the City of Salisbury would also wish to see streetlights of an approved type and quality placed within the City limits. This is analogous to State and City minimum construction standards for streets that seek to be accepted into the State or municipal road maintenance system. Both the State and the City would prefer not to take on responsibility for maintaining a road that has an inferior sub-base



or other problems that would create a maintenance headache. Similarly, if Salisbury were ever to become a major player in the operation, maintenance and replacement of streetlights, the City would want some assurance as to the quality of the streetlights for which it would be accepting responsibility.

Policy SL-3 requires that the City and Duke Power come together to agree upon an approved list of manufacturers of streetlights for use in Salisbury's planning jurisdiction. It implies that Duke Power should be determining its approved list of streetlights in accordance with the City of Salisbury's wishes, rather than the other way around.

***Policy SL-4: Initial purchase and installation costs for streetlights shall be the responsibility of the developer in new developments and the property owner(s) in existing developed areas. The City's pricing policy for the operation and maintenance of approved streetlights, however, shall not penalize pedestrian scaled streetlights.***

*Duke Power Influences*

The current pricing scheme from Duke Power, and thus the City of Salisbury, favors taller, automobile-oriented lights over shorter, pedestrian-scaled lights. Consider a small neighborhood, for example, requiring 10 automobile oriented (24' tall) streetlights. This same neighborhood may require 20 pedestrian scaled (12' tall) streetlights. Compare the following costs charged to the City of Salisbury by Duke Power for automobile oriented versus pedestrian scaled streetlights in this hypothetical neighborhood:

Initial Purchase/Installation Charges from Duke Power (as of 6/00)

Auto-oriented, standard 24' pole	
10 streetlights @ \$0	No charge
Pedestrian-scaled, basic 12' pole	
20 streetlights @ \$400 min/pole surcharge	\$8,000

Monthly Operation, Maintenance and Replacement Charges by Duke Power (as of 6/00)

Auto-oriented, standard 24' pole	
10 streetlights @ \$6.60/pole	\$66
Pedestrian-scaled, basic 12' pole	
20 streetlights @ \$7.50/pole	\$150

The current City policy is to pass any difference in the costs of decorative, pedestrian oriented streetlights on to the property owners along the involved street. The initial surcharge for pedestrian scaled streetlights is handled in one of two ways depending upon whether the street is new or established. If the streetlights are placed in a new subdivision, for example, the initial purchase and installation costs are borne by the developer (and passed on to the homebuyer). If the pedestrian scaled streetlights are to be placed in an existing neighborhood, the City first requires that 2/3 of the property owners on the street sign a petition agreeing to pay the extra costs for the new streetlights. And regardless of whether the street is new or existing, each property owner is required to pay any difference in cost of purchasing and installing decorative streetlights, for any amount over and above the

purchase and installation costs associated with the standard 24 foot streetlights. This system of charges would not change under **Policy SL-4**.

However, as noted in the narrative for Policy SL-3 above, Duke Power and thus the City also apply surcharges to the monthly operation, maintenance and replacement (OMR) charges for non-standard streetlights. These extra charges are assessed by adding a surcharge to each property owner's utility bill on the "benefited street". **Policy SL-4** suggests that the true differences in cost between standard 24-foot poles and pedestrian scaled 12-foot poles are not significant enough to warrant two or more different monthly rates. Rather, if the property owner(s) or developer are willing to install streetlights of a better quality or appearance, they should not be penalized with a higher monthly OMR service charge.

#### *Institutionalized Safety and Liability Factors*

In addition to Duke Power's pricing scheme, there are other "institutionalized" factors that tend to work against pedestrian scaled streetlights and in favor of automobile-oriented streetlights. Nationally recognized streetlighting illumination norms, for example, have as their primary objective the safe movement of vehicular traffic (rather than the comfort and safety of the pedestrian). Standards set by the Illuminating Engineering Society have become the minimum criteria for municipal street lighting, and are employed by cities, in part, to avoid liability claims of negligence for inadequate street lighting. **Policy SL-4** takes the position that pedestrian scaled streetlights, when properly spaced, should have no adverse impact on liability, and provide for improved pedestrian safety and comfort.

#### **Policy SL-5: Streetlights shall be installed on both sides of a street.**

Given a requirement for streetlights, it would not be surprising that proposals would soon be forthcoming requesting permission to install streetlights on only one side of the street. This is particularly true in new developments where the developer may be able to reduce his infrastructure costs by installing underground wiring on one side of the street only. This is somewhat akin to proposals for installing sidewalks on one side of the street only. Several arguments against the one-sided treatment of streets have already been presented in the narrative for Policy SW-4 on Sidewalks. Here, it might be added that street lighting on one side only, particularly when involving more frequently spaced pedestrian-scaled lights, creates a visual imbalance in the street corridor. Further, such lighting has a tendency to illuminate one sidewalk quite well while leaving the opposite sidewalk in the dark.



**Summary of Policies for Streetlights**

***Policy SL-1: Streetlights shall be selected and installed according to the design speed and/or intended use of the street or area they serve. Where sidewalks are present or anticipated, pedestrian scaled streetlights shall be preferred.***

***Policy SL-2: The selection of streetlight lamps shall give preference to light sources which produce a natural color spectrum, particularly where sidewalks are present.***

***Policy SL-3: The City, in cooperation with streetlight service providers within its jurisdiction, shall maintain a streetlight inventory and master plan, to include an approved list of manufacturers of streetlights for use in Salisbury.***

***Policy SL-4: Initial purchase and installation costs for streetlights shall be the responsibility of the developer in new developments and the property owner(s) in existing developed areas. The City's pricing policy for the operation and maintenance of approved streetlights, however, shall not penalize pedestrian scaled streetlights.***

***Policy SL-5: Streetlights shall be installed on both sides of a street.***

# Utility Poles and Wires

## *Summary of Issues*

Most citizens of Salisbury, if asked about whether they would prefer that utility wires be above ground or below, would undoubtedly prefer the latter. This perspective is certainly recognized by most developers and homebuilders in Salisbury, who routinely place utilities underground in new subdivisions. Even so, much of Salisbury was developed before the undergrounding of utilities was the common practice, so a very large part of the city is criss crossed with overhead utilities.

Despite an intuitive sense that underground utilities are preferred by most people, the overhead utility issue received only modest attention at the town meetings held for the comprehensive plan. Clearly, in the minds of most citizens, there are other more pressing issues facing Salisbury than the desire to relocate overhead utilities underground. This may be just as well, given the level of complexity and cost involved in putting existing overhead wires underground. Complicating factors during conversion are many and include:

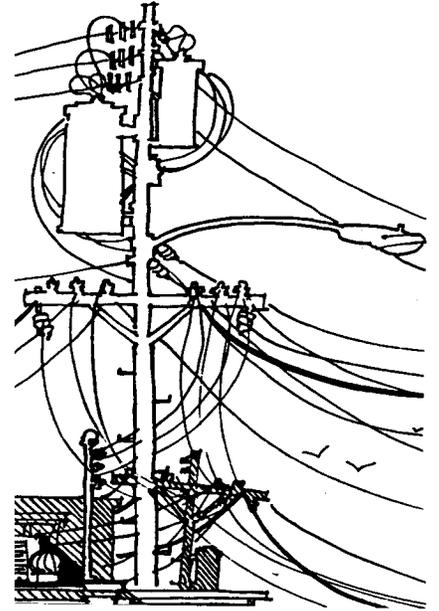
- utility service interruptions must be minimized,
- traffic holdups must be avoided while streets, driveways, sidewalks and curbs are broken up and replaced,
- yards with existing trees and other landscaping must be trenched,
- existing water and sewer lines may need relocation, etc.
- several utility companies may share the same poles, requiring multiple services to be undergrounded at the same time.

Since the costs of converting the entire community from overhead to underground utilities are prohibitive (barring some major technological advancement), the following policy recommendations suggest that priority areas be identified in advance, further, that three criteria might be employed to facilitate gradual or partial conversion, consistent with those priorities.

## *Policies for Utility Poles and Wires*

***Policy U-1: The City shall maintain a master plan for the undergrounding of utilities, with priority given to pre-determined areas.***

Since undergrounding of existing overhead utilities is so expensive, and there is so much area affected, a *master plan for undergrounding* is recommended to identify specific areas with special priorities. Priority areas deserving of undergrounding might include critical scenic spots, historic streets of particular significance, visitor oriented commercial districts, and locations involving important views. And, as in the case for street trees, plans for undergrounding of utilities may be incorporated into master streetscape or highway corridor plans, where applicable. While this need not be an elaborate plan, the relative costs of undergrounding could be estimated for each priority area, along with some notion of the benefits and merits.



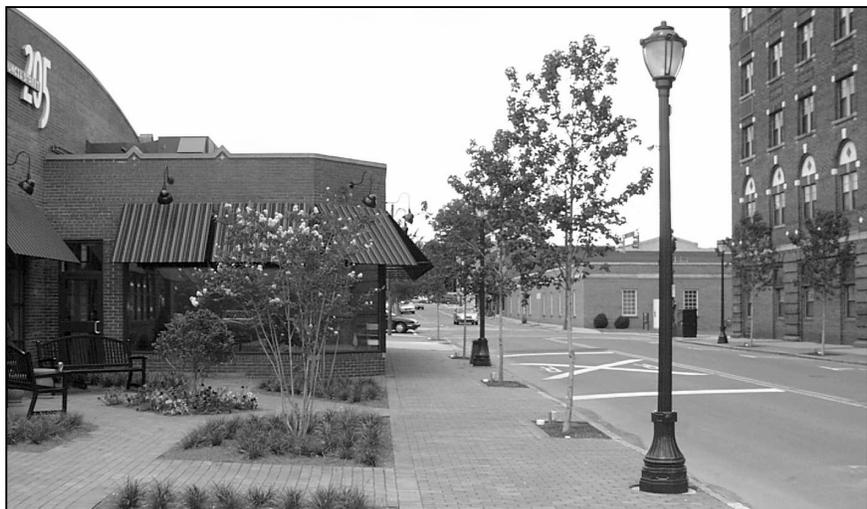
The preparation of such a plan would not require widespread community involvement early on, but could take the form of a more general, technical document. This would be similar in nature to the priority setting systems that many cities use to determine repaving schedules for city streets. Implementation of any component of the plan, however, would require intensive involvement to coordinate service interruptions, ground disturbances, potential traffic reroutings, etc. Such participation during implementation would require the full cross-section of the interests involved, including utility companies; residential, commercial and industrial property owners; the City of Salisbury; the State Department of Transportation, and others.

***Policy U-2: Major city entrances and gateway corridors shall receive first priority for the undergrounding of overhead utilities.***

As noted in the major streets section, Salisbury's major streets are the community's windows to the world. In addition to visitors and prospective business interests seeing the community for the first time, residents of Salisbury would be benefited by enhancements to what are often regarded as some of the least attractive aspects of the city. If the City is to embark on a commitment to street tree planting along its major thoroughfares, then every consideration should be given to the relocation of overhead utilities from these same thoroughfares. Specifically, as existing thoroughfares are widened or redesigned, provision should be included in the construction plans for the undergrounding or relocations of overhead wires.

***Policy U-3: High visibility, pedestrian-oriented areas shall receive second priority for the undergrounding of overhead utilities.***

Of all streetscape elements in the city's older commercial areas, overhead utilities are among the most visually damaging to an attractive, pedestrian-scaled environment. In this regard, the City has worked slowly but steadily to underground the utilities in the heart of the downtown area. Former conglomerations of overhead electronic gear have now been replaced by turn-of-the-century pedestrian-scaled streetlights. This is clearly befitting of the significance attributed to Salisbury's downtown area by both residents and visitors to the City.



This same commitment to undergrounding should be extended to other strategic areas of the downtown that have a clear pedestrian orientation. Also in this regard, as Salisbury's other older commercial areas seek higher levels of visibility through economic development, they would be logical candidates for such action.

***Policy U-4: Overhead utilities in other priority areas shall be placed underground or relocated as opportunities arise.***

An "opportunity program" for conversion is suggested to take advantage of situations as they arise when existing overhead utilities must be altered, changed, or relocated. Periodically, utilities must change their overhead facilities to increase capacity, update obsolete equipment, or replace it when it is worn out. These are the opportunities to look for, and plan ahead for, as changes occur. Other opportunities for conversion present themselves when a street is improved or relocated, when major building renovations occur, and when a low-density residential area is planned for conversion to commercial or more intensive residential uses.

#### ***Summary of Policies for Utility Poles and Wires***

***Policy U-1: The City shall maintain a master plan for the undergrounding of utilities, with priority given to pre-determined areas.***

***Policy U-2: Major city entrances and gateway corridors shall receive first priority for the undergrounding of overhead utilities.***

***Policy U-3: High visibility, pedestrian-oriented areas shall receive second priority for the undergrounding of overhead utilities.***

***Policy U-4: Overhead utilities in other priority areas shall be placed underground or relocated as opportunities arise.***



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# City Entrances

## Summary of the Issues

In a perfect world, no city would have more than about 30,000 residents, and would be surrounded by a permanently dedicated green belt or open space buffer.\* As a result, natural breaks would occur between city and country. Since we do not live in a perfect world, however, American cities, including Salisbury, have simply spilled out further and further into the countryside as they have grown. The problem and challenge, then, is to create some form of identity and sense of entry from amidst the blurred urban/rural interface.

*In any case, we should secure some orderly line up to which the country and town may each extend and stop definitely, so avoiding the irregular margin of rubbish-heaps and derelict building land which spoils the approach to almost all our towns to-day.*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**

## Policies for City Entrances

**Policy CE-1: Noticeable streetscape improvements shall be employed to clearly announce a city entrance, and to enhance gateway corridors.**

Cities, by their very nature, should be more urbane and more formal in their treatment of streetscapes, than would be found along a rural highway. The City should therefore employ a variety of streetscape improvements to let the traveler know that he or she is entering a different and special place. These improvements may include the following:

*Towns and villages...did not welcome the traveler with signs announcing name and population; after all, the distinction between city and country was still sharp, and the local folk knew where they lived.*

**Kenneth T. Jackson, 1985**  
on entryways into small towns in the 1920's

1) *Introduce carefully selected streetlights and street light standards.* In Great Britain, for example, the onset of streetlights along a major thoroughfare is an unmistakable announcement that the motorist is leaving the country and entering the city. So deliberate are the British in using this technique, that legal speed limits are understood to drop immediately upon the sighting of streetlights. (Also see **Streetlight Policies SL-1 to SL-5**)

2) *Introduce sidewalks and bikeways.* At least theoretically, areas inside the city limits should be developed at a higher, walkable level of intensity than the surrounding countryside. Higher density development, in turn, calls for sidewalks and bikeways. The presence of a sidewalk is a natural indicator of an urban setting, while the introduction of bikeways along either an extra wide outside lane or as a separate parallel path, connotes a commitment to alternative forms of transportation. (Also see **Sidewalk Policies SW-1 to SW-5** and **Bikeway Policies B-1 to B-6**)

3) *Introduce median strips, planting plazas, street trees and supplemental landscaping.* The contribution of each of these elements to the appearance of the major street system has already been discussed in previous sections. However, it is important to note that there is perhaps

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\* This 30,000 population standard is in keeping with the utopian ideals of many urban theorists of the past century. This threshold is based upon both physical attributes (roads, water and sewer utilities, parks, schools, access to the countryside, etc.) as well as political considerations (voter interest, access to political leaders, ability to participate in local government, ability to influence education/schools, a feeling of belonging, etc.).

no single item that can radically alter the appearance of a street than the introduction of consistently spaced, canopy-creating street trees. In much the same way that a new coat of paint can hide a world of defects, street trees can make up for much of the visual blight associated with commercial strip development. (Also see **Major Street Policies** and **Street Tree Policies**)

4) *Introduce curb and gutter.* Curb and gutter has historically been associated with city streets. In addition to its engineering and traffic containment advantages in the urban setting, the installation of curb and gutter renders a clean and definitive shape to the street and the sense of formality desired in a city. (Also see **Street Policy S-13**)

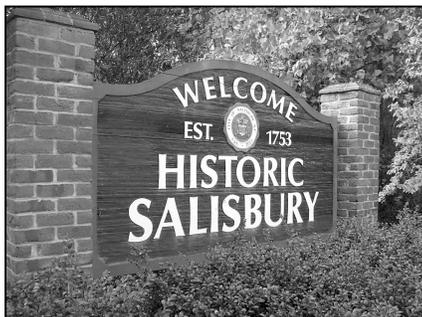


5) *Show contrast in signage through enhanced sign controls.* Commercial signage is second only to the visual quality of parking areas in establishing the image of a commercial strip. A sudden change in the character of signage, therefore, from the garish mish mash of overdone, competing, pole mounted signs and billboards, to low-key, monument style or building-mounted signage can have a startling, positive impact on new arrivals to a city. (Also see **Commercial Policies C-11 and C-13**)

6) *Put overhead utilities underground.* While the Utility Poles and Wires section of this report deals exclusively with this item, it is worth remembering that the *absence* of utility poles and overhead wires makes a noticeable statement to the motorist first entering a city. (Also see **Utility Poles and Wires Policies U-1 to U-4**)

7) *Bring buildings up to the street and put parking behind.* This item was previously discussed under the Commercial Areas section of the plan. The point to be made here is that by pulling buildings up to the street, a sense of street enclosure and space is created *through which* the motorist then travels. This technique, used in combination with street trees, is in stark contrast with the sea of asphalt perspective seen along several of Salisbury's major thoroughfares today. (Also see **Policies on Newer, Existing Commercial Areas**)

8) *Use welcome signs only where a distinguishable change in the streetscape is apparent.* Historically, welcome signs have been the method of choice to announce a point of entry into a community. Where there is a distinguishable change in the character of the streetscape, such signs can be appropriate; where there is no distinguishable change, a welcome sign can appear trivial and may be best avoided.



When towns are small, young, and relatively well defined, the traditional monument style, landscaped welcome sign is quite appropriate to announce an entry into a different and distinct place. This technique breaks down entirely, however, when such a welcome sign is placed at the edge of a busy highway where the city's political jurisdiction ends, but where the character of development continues unabated. Such a sign becomes easily lost amid the chaos of businesses, parking lots, and competing commercial signage oftentimes found in such locations. Therefore, welcome signs should generally not be employed to announce an entry point in the midst of continuous, urban strip development. (At best, a standard "Salisbury City Limits" sign may be all that is warranted.) On the other hand, if the specific point of entry corresponds to a creek, bridge, or definitive limit of development or break in the landscape, the traditional welcome sign can contribute positively to the image of the community.

***Policy CE-2: As the city limits expand, streetscape improvements shall be extended accordingly.***

This recommendation points out the inherent advantage and flexibility of using streetscape improvements to announce city entrances. The ability to extend streetscape improvements, however, is oftentimes not as simple as it might seem. Differing development controls for the area outside the city and its extraterritorial jurisdiction will, over time, create a development pattern that may not be conducive to the established pattern of streetscape improvements inside the city limits. It may even be necessary to have different styles of streetscape improvements for various sections of major thoroughfares based upon the predominant development pattern in place for that particular section of street. (A master streetscape plan may be helpful in addressing this need. See **Major Street Policy S-7**)

Alternatively, the establishment of coordinated city/county development controls for major thoroughfares, the appropriate expansion of extraterritorial jurisdiction, or the timely annexation of new areas while still in their development infancy, would all be helpful.

***Policy CE-3: Where a bridge is located at a city entry point or along a gateway corridor, special “gateway” treatment of the bridge shall be considered to enhance the sense of arrival in Salisbury.***

This technique, dating back to medieval Europe, is no less valid today than it was centuries ago. Gates and special gateway treatments can be dramatic visual reminders that the traveler is entering a special place. In Salisbury, several of the city's most prominent gateway corridors include bridges. (These bridges represent gateway structures that have survived for many years, and are not apt to change for many years to come.)

To fully understand this recommendation, one must have a clear idea of what is meant by an architectural gate, however. First, what gates are *not*. Architectural gates are not obstructions. They do not cause traffic to stop, or even inhibit traffic movement for that matter. Nor do they swing closed, or even have elements capable of being closed. These are the differences between the modern entry gate of the late 19th/early 20th century and medieval gate designed to close out unwanted intruders. (Interestingly, today, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, many new suburban subdivisions and planned unit developments have adopted a new form of the medieval-type gate- electronically controlled gates which are intended to lock out all but residents and their invited guests. This form of exclusive isolationism at the neighborhood level is not encouraged by this plan.)

As to what an appropriate gateway treatment might be, there are a multitude of options, ranging from modest aesthetic improvements to major building forms or columns pulled close to the edge of the street pavement. Such columns may or may not include an overhead arch bridging the distance between the two columns. Architectural interest in such structures could be enhanced through the effective use of voids and solids, building materials, roof forms, exterior lighting, flags, and other forms of tasteful ornamentation. Also, for important community festivals

*Though we shall not copy the fortified wall of the old city, we may take from it a most pregnant suggestion of the value of defining and limiting towns, suburbs, and new areas generally.*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**



or arts events, special announcement banners might be placed across the gateway.

***Summary of Policies for City Entrances***

***Policy CE-1: Noticeable streetscape improvements shall be employed to clearly announce a city entrance, and to enhance gateway corridors.***

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# Community Character, Landmarks and Vistas

## Summary of the Issues

As revealed at the town meetings for this plan, most city residents point to East Innes Street and the recently developed sections of Statesville Boulevard and Jake Alexander Boulevard as having some of the most objectionable forms of development in Salisbury. Salisbury is not alone in this regard, as hundreds of cities across the country are struggling with the same plight of automobile oriented strip commercial development.

As is the case with most issues of this magnitude, the problem is multi-faceted. Since the turn of the century, building materials and techniques have been becoming increasingly homogenized throughout the United States. At the same time, the real estate development world has grown small, with development techniques and formulas being adopted by most of the major retail chains. Evidence of this can be readily seen in formula-based discount stores, motel chains, video rental outlets, fast food restaurants, freestanding drug stores, and many other types of buildings.

Development regulations, emphasizing separation of land uses above all else, and with little or no concern for building architecture or scale, have done little to prevent the spread of "Anywhere USA" along commercial strips throughout the country. Meanwhile, the banking industry and real estate finance community have, over the years, also become entrenched in real estate formulas for commercial success. Occasional upheavals in the real estate and banking industries merely add fuel to the fire of conservatism in development (i.e. doing only what has been done successfully in the recent past).



These factors are especially discouraging to report in a community with the rich history and significant architectural resources of Salisbury. If the substantial loss of the city's identity and character is to be prevented, both the public and private sectors will need to reconsider the methods and priorities of the present system of development. The following recommendations are an attempt to create some inroads in this regard.



*There's no there, there.*

**Gertrude Stein**

*As no two individuals should be alike, neither should any two places be alike. Yet, for the last 50 years there has been a steady homogenization of our communities, and a steady rise in dissatisfaction with our quality of life. What can we do to manage change so as to prevent our communities from becoming ANYPLACE!*

Introduction to a community planning workshop entitled, "**Avoiding the Anyplace Syndrome**", February 1992  
Boulder, CO

*But what folly it is, surely, that we should allow our cheap transit to reduce all our towns to one dead level of characterless jumble instead of preserving in each its natural characteristic, which for ages has lent an interest and variety to our towns and villages. . .*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**

## **Policies for Community Character**

*Either America is a shopping center or the one shopping center in existence is moving around the country at the speed of light.*

**Russell Baker, 1985**

*...There is no doubt that in this advertising age some little sacrifice of individual interest might be involved in (designing buildings to be compatible with their surroundings). The business man at any rate believes that he must shout if he is to live, and naturally desires his architect to help him to make his building do some of the shouting for him. The young and original architect, too, must become known if he is to secure commissions, and a little shouting in his earlier buildings may greatly aid him. But, if we are to have beauty of surroundings-and for what does the profession of architecture exist if it is not to produce beautiful surroundings?-we must set our faces against the development of such incongruities in our buildings as completely destroy the harmony of our street pictures. Harmony does not require monotony, but a proper relation between the different colours and parts.*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**



**Policy CC-1: New and expanding businesses shall employ architectural standards consistent with Salisbury's architectural character and shall avoid standard prototype designs otherwise employed in "Anywhere USA".**

Experience from cities around the country reveals that if the community does not specify what it wants, it will normally receive whatever the minimal chain store development or franchise formula specifies. Today, most national chain stores and franchise-operated businesses have more than one "model" for their stores. And, if a chain store wants to do business in a community where the demographics and disposable incomes match their locational criteria, most will alter the design the exterior of the building and parking areas to better fit the context of the community. Examples of such custom designed chain stores and franchise buildings were rare fifteen years ago, but are quite common today.

Communities that are depressed economically and fighting a hard battle for new investment may feel that asking for a higher standard of design might prevent new businesses and development from coming in. While this argument may have some merit in economically depressed communities, it is clearly not the case in Salisbury, where demand for new residential and commercial development continues to be strong, and promises to become even greater as pressures for growth reach out from the rapidly expanding Charlotte metropolitan area.

Design guidelines that establish some minimal level of character can be very simple. Such standards may address nothing more than a "build to" line, roof form, building proportions, and windows facing the street. These minimum criteria can be highly effective in creating compatibility among seemingly diverse architectural designs. If these few elements are specified, other items such building materials, architectural style, and even colors pale in significance, and need not be specified unless a higher standard of compatibility is justified by historic significance or exceptionally high visibility (Also see **Policies for Commercial Areas**).

**Policy CC-2: Exceptional locations in the city shall receive exceptional treatment in design and development.**

In every community, there are normally a number of especially significant locations that have a high degree of visibility or strategic importance. These locations may include major intersections, individual buildings of historic significance or, in the case of Salisbury, special areas such as the West Square Historic District, Livingstone College, and North Main Street.

Salisbury has been a leader statewide for many years regarding the special protection given to historic areas of the city. However, some strategic *individual* locations in the city have yet to receive the special consideration or protection they deserve. Examples include points of arrival in the city, including major street intersections with I-85 (While Innes Street has been the subject of much attention and proposed corrective actions to date, Jake Alexander Boulevard at I-85 could benefit from a higher degree of preventative protection. (Correction is much more costly than prevention.)

Due to the outstanding significance of these locations to the overall economic and aesthetic value of the city, special development standards are warranted. This may include standards regarding minimum lot size, land use, building form, parking areas, exterior lighting, signage, landscaping, public spaces, and the like.

***Policy CC-3: Important views and vistas shall be preserved.***

For reasons similar to the above recommendation, the city should also identify a limited number of important views and vistas for special protection. Examples might include views of the intersection of Innes and Main Streets to and from various directions, and views from the downtown to the surrounding landscape to the east. In the latter case, buildings should not be allowed to be constructed which would destroy such scenic and historic vistas.

*The views out of a town into the country beyond have always a special charm, and it may be well worthwhile to secure these distant views of sea and mountain, and even to bring into the heart of the town glimpses of sunset glory, where openings to the west can be secured.*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**

***Policy CC-4: Noteworthy buildings, important outdoor spaces, objects of historic merit, important monuments, and significant works of art shall be placed in positions of visibility and prominence. Their placement shall be coordinated with street design.***

Over the last 40 to 50 years, the practice of placing significant structures, outdoor places, and objects in the context of their site, has given way largely to the real estate forces of minimum cost/ maximum profit and (in the short term) optimum traffic flow.

In the public sector arena, for example, new schools and parks are often relegated to whatever land might be donated or acquired most cheaply. Post offices and other government buildings, once the proud anchors of strategic central locations, are today sentenced to suburban highway locations, often buried among the malaise of commercial strip development (e.g. the East Innes Street Post Office). Fire halls, which



once embodied the pride of a particular district in the community, are now assigned a similar fate. It is unfortunate that the costs of maintaining the sprawling suburban infrastructure of streets and water and sewer lines are bankrupting public coffers. How much better off our communities would be if these same monies could be used for public buildings and outdoor spaces of more lasting and inspirational significance.

*The first thing required is that both architects and the public should consider their buildings more from the point of view of their effect on the whole town. So long as the architect and each client thinks only of his own building, how individual and how noticeable he can make it, little progress in the total effect can be expected. . .*

**Raymond Unwin, 1909**

The private sector has also largely abandoned a commitment to "community" in favor of commitment to the individual property. Site plans cater mostly to the convenient circulation of the automobile, with building placement dictated more by site circulation and parking than by building placement for community appearance.

This plan recommends that as street layouts for new neighborhood planning areas are designed, the termination points of some streets (normally "t" or "y" intersections) be reserved for buildings, outdoor spaces and objects of significant community value. Such uses might include schools, libraries, churches, public squares, etc. Similarly, private sector buildings of unusual merit or purpose should be placed in locations that anchor a street end or vista, and give bearing and direction to citizens and newcomers alike.

***Policy CC-5: Significant natural and existing man-made elements should be incorporated into the thematic design of new developments.***

Normally, this can be accomplished by one of two methods: *physical design* and *name recognition*. Physical design can mean saving a significant tree, small pond, brook, rock outcropping, etc. and incorporating these items into the design of the development. It can also mean saving an historic structure and creating a thematic design around it. Such a design might include architecturally compatible buildings, coordinated business and informational signage, thematic streetlights and benches, etc.

Name recognition means picking up on some historic person, event, or other colloquialism unique to the area of the development. The entire development can be named accordingly, as well as its individual streets, park sites, etc.



***Policy CC-6: Large trees, ponds, creeks, or other natural features of the landscape should be saved when locating new streets, buildings, parking lots, etc.***

This recommendation simply means to work with the land and its natural assets rather than fighting them. Economic as well as environmental savings can be gained, for example, by curving an occasional street to save a large tree or pond. Most developers in the Salisbury area have become savvy enough to realize that the preservation of a significant tree or other natural feature may become one of the most important items in showing off the entryway or focal point of a new development. At other times, however, trees are cleared simply because they are an inconvenience to a particular chain store's development formula or style.

These are the situations where deliberate and conscientious public policy must step in to prevent wholesale destruction of a site's natural features.



**Policy CC-7: Architectural lighting shall be encouraged, where appropriate, on important public and private buildings, bridges, large trees, public spaces, etc.**

In many respects, Salisbury has been blessed with a richness of natural and architectural resources unmatched by any city of its size in North Carolina. Nowhere is this more evident than among the many significant structures of the historic downtown area. Obvious choices include the Salisbury Community Building, Rowan County Court House, the Old U.S. Post Office, St. Lukes Episcopal Church, Salisbury Train Station, and the Grubb-

Wallace Building. Where appropriate, tasteful architectural lighting can bring such structures to life, illuminate the nighttime city, and enhance downtown area security and safety. Also, in some instances, certain sizeable residential structures may be candidates for architectural lighting.

In addition, the grandeur of large street trees can be capitalized upon with tasteful lighting. Not only is such lighting attractive, but it, too, can supplement street lighting in deterrence of crime and the promotion of public safety.

Finally, the city's bridges and overpasses, offer an outstanding opportunity to create a year-round visual impact unmatched in the nighttime city. Salisbury can take its cues from major cities as markedly different as San Francisco, Cleveland, and London, which have found architectural bridge lighting to be popular sources of pride among permanent residents and of considerable interest to visitors from cities not so blessed.

#### **Summary of Policies for Community Character, Landmarks, and Vistas**

**Policy CC-1: New and expanding businesses shall employ architectural standards consistent with Salisbury's architectural character and shall avoid standard prototype designs otherwise employed in "Anywhere USA".**

**Policy CC-2: Exceptional locations in the city shall receive exceptional treatment in design and development.**

**Policy CC-3: Important views and vistas shall be preserved.**



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