CHARLOTTE, NORTH CARLOLINA

Downtown Denver Peer Cities Analysis Report

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This paper is an overview of the city of Charlotte and how it compares to Denver. This paper is organized per the guidelines stipulated in the final project information packet. Population was examined in respect to how gentrification has affected uptown demographics, while paying close attention to the effect that in-migration is having on the downtown within such rural region. Development was viewed in regards to what policies the city has adopted to attract businesses to downtown, specifically how the city has attracted so many fortune 500 companies. Additionally, the growth of activity centers, changes in zoning, and the effect of sports venues on development with respect to retail trends are related in this paper. Policies and politics will be covered with respect to Charlotte's school system and how the city is using education centers as a means of reviving depressed areas, and the effect such policies are having on changing the Charlotte downtown pedestrian environment.

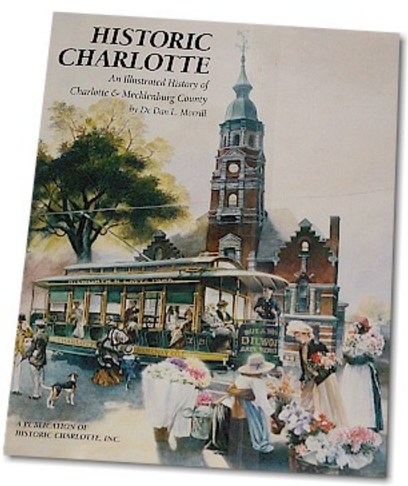
The team used a variety of methodology in retrieving and relating the information presented in the following pages. Entities such as the Chambers of Commerce, the Charlotte Center City Partners, Charlotte Planning offices, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission were contacted with varying degrees of responsiveness. Most other information was collected by way of the Internet and ranged from news articles, home pages and public vision plans generated by the city itself. All information was collected with respect to how it could best serve the interests of the Denver Partnership in respect to helping guide decisions for the future course of Denver.

The trend of downtown revitalization is not an isolated event particular to any one city, but is instead an extension of the anti-suburban sprawl mindset that began to take hold in the late 1990's. Urban renewal is a continually evolving process guided by many factors that are cross-sectional over many municipalities, namely the New Urbanist movement, shifting demographic, and government cash infusions paired with private investments. Our research suggests that planning decisions concerning Uptown Charlotte are being made based on similar principles as the ones mentioned above. Throughout the team's research many area's of Charlotte's uptown planning efforts were identified and gauged as objectively as possible as to the extent of effect the decisions had on making it a more attractive, functional and twenty-four environment. Charlotte was studied by defining the uptown boundary by identifying the I-277 loop as a natural barrier that framed uptown as a regional center despite its 1.5 by 1.2 mile size. In this respect, Charlotte and Denver are similar by being defined, as regional centers for activity, yet are different over the specifics as to why they hold this title. Therefore, the general purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, the research seeks to give as much detail concerning Charlotte demographics, downtown chrematistics and important policies, all of which have helped shape Charlotte into the city it is becoming. Second, the paper will attempt to compare information obtained about Charlotte to information known about Denver in an attempt to distinguish how planning decisions differ between the two cities.

SECTION 2: DOWNTOWN DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Location

Historic Background



In the 16th-century, Catawba Indian traders blazed two trails through the wooded wilderness near present day Irwin Creek; one traveled east-west and the other north-south. Charlotte was founded in 1700s as a trading post at the intersection of those two trails.[1] During the colonial era, the town grew prosperous on trade. Settlers, many of them Scot-Irish or from the northern colonies ensured a growing population. By the Revolutionary War, Charlotte was a regional center of both business and anti-British rebellion. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the city continued to grow and flourish. Although there was hardship during the Civil War, it was spared destruction from Sherman's army. While Charlotte struggled during Reconstruction, it continued to grow again. Like many other cities in the 20th Century, Charlotte has had its difficulties but boomed during both World Wars. When the World War II ended, the city prospered during a period of strong national growth. Eventually, along with the rest of the South, the city moved to end segregation.[2]

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[1] Charlotte Center City Partners, Overview, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=20&subcat=110&subsub=34.

[2] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, History of Mecklenburg County, 24 November 2006

Climate

The climate is comfortable and moderate compared to the humidity and rain of Miami to the south, or the snow and cold of Washington, DC to the north. January highs are 51 °F and July highs of 90 °F.[3] Charlotte has an average of 43 inches of rain annually, 214 days of sunshine, less than 6 inches of winter snow, and humidity at 74%.[4]

Geography

North Carolina is on the eastern seaboard, in the southeast region of the United State, and shares a landscape, culture, and history with other southern states. North Carolina is 52,669 square miles and ranks 29th in the US in area. The state is divided into three regions: the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont Plateau, and the Blue Ridge Appalachian Mountains. Charlotte is located in the central Piedmont area, as are most of North Carolina's population centers. The Piedmont is North Carolina's manufacturing area and mill towns like Charlotte prospered in the rolling hills with plentiful streams, moderate temperatures and adequate rainfall. [5]

Charlotte is the largest city in North Carolina, almost twice the size of the next largest city, the State Capital, Raleigh. It is the county seat of Mecklenburg County, and the city and county lie along the border of South Carolina. Charlotte and Mecklenburg are part of a larger 6-county MSA area that includes Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill located in both North and South Carolina.[6] The MSA includes more than 1.4 million people. Charlotte's and Mecklenburg's metropolitan influence stretches beyond the 6 county MSA to a 16-county metropolitan region.[7]

http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?category_level_id.

[3] Charlotte, North Carolina, 24 November 2006 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte,_North_Carolina.

[4] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Weather and Climate, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?category_level_id=135&content_id=360.

[5] The State Library of North Carolina, Encyclopedia, North Carolina Geography, 24 November 2006http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/NC/GEO/GEO.HTM#Region.

[6] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001 Metropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC MSA , 24 November 2006 http://www.bls.gov/oes/2001/oes_1520.htm.

[7] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, History of Mecklenburg County, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?category_level_id=321&content_id=1410.

2002 Population North Carolina Cities[8]	
Charlotte	580597
Raleigh (Capital)	306944
Greensboro	228217
Durham	195914
Winston-Salem	188934
Source: www.city-data.com	

Transportation

Charlotte's promoters make much of Charlotte's geographic location and its suitability for business development. Booster brag that Charlotte is located within the center of a 650 mile radius that places it within a one-days drive to 57% of the U.S. population, and within a few hours drive to ocean beaches and mountain skiing.[9]

Today Charlotte has strong connections to the interstate highway system, allowing for quick and inexpensive transportation of both raw materials and finished goods. It is two miles from the Interstate-77 and -85 juncture and seven miles from Charlotte Douglas Airport. The city is served by rail with both CSX freight service and Amtrak commuter service.[10]

Boundaries and Characteristics

Charlotte's original settlement is the site of today's Center City. Uptown Charlotte is a 1×1.5 mile area bounded by Interstates 77 and 277, and is approximately 950 acres. Charlotte's downtown is located on a hill, and thus is referred to as *Uptown*.[11] It is also called Center City or the I-277 Loop because it is geographically contained by the Interstates.

In the 1850s, the growing city divided itself into four wards: First, Second, Third, and Fourth Wards. These have remained the primary neighborhood areas of Center City. Though the entire uptown area is fairly small, each ward has its own characteristics

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[8] North Carolina – Population, 24 November 2006 www.city-data.com/states/North-Carolina-Population.html.

[9]The State Library of North Carolina, Encyclopedia, North Carolina Geography, 24 November 2006 http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/NC/GEO/GEO.HTM.

[10] Maps of the World, North Carolina Rail Network USA, 24 November 2006 http://www.mapsofworld.com/usa/states/north-carolina/north-carolina-railway-map.html.

[11]Stewart Gray, Telephone Interview by Susan Livingston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, October 26, 2006, 704-376-9115.

Characteristics of Charlotte' s Uptown Wards[12]		
Ward	**Predominant Zoning***	**Dominant Building Style**
First (NE Uptown)	UR – Urban Residential	Single & Multi Family
Second (SE Uptown)	UMUD	"Government District"
Third (SW Uptown)	UR & UMUD	Stadiums & Office Towers
Fourth (SE Uptown)	UR & Historic District Overlay	Single Family Homes

Source: Charlotte City Partners ***Refer to following section on Zoning**

The First Ward is a combination of single family and new multi-family infill housing. New building is concentrating on housing and entertainment venues, including a sports arena, museums, a class-A hotel, and "new urbanism" style multi-family residences. The Second Ward was once an African American neighborhood, but was torn down and rebuilt as a government district but with multi-family apartment towers, new institutions such as a public school and NASCAR Hall of Fame, and new office towers. The Third Ward is a combination of historic, "streetcar homes," office towers, universities, townhomes, a proposed baseball park, and a transportation hub. The Fourth Ward is the most historically intact with single family Victorian homes protected by an Historic District Overlay. New residential projects are multifamily and high rise. Residential life is supported by retail and commercial infill development.

All four Wards are benefiting from the city's vision plans to create a vibrant Center City for people to live, work, shop and entertain themselves. No one area is receiving the most attention and all Wards are seen as part of the whole Center City redevelopment, because the total area is a relatively small 950 acres, and because of the clear definition of the Uptown by the surrounding Interstate system.

Zoning

In the 1990s, in order to create a dynamic uptown, the City Council adopted the Center City Charlotte Urban Design Plan that proposed higher density residential and business development inside the I-277 Loop.[13] To implement this new vision, the Council created two new zoning codes and re-designated the land use within the I-277 Loop. There are three

[12] Charlotte Center City Partners, Neighborhoods, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=20&subcat=110&subsub=34.

[13] Charlotte Center City Partners, A Brief History of Center City Development, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org.

distinguishing components to Center City's new zoning: the protection of single-family homes, compatible infill development, and the encouragement of pedestrian activity. The new land uses were Urban Residential Districts (UR) and Uptown Mixed Used Districts (UMUD).[14] These same goals are further expanded upon in Charlotte's newest plan, the 2010 Vision Plan. To add to the residential and business environment, the 2010 Plan adds more guidance for developing pedestrian-friendly streets and businesses that support pedestrian activity, as well as a commitment to a high standard of architecture and development.

The Urban Residential Districts (UR) provide standards and incentives to promote redevelopment of urban areas that are predominantly residential but with a mix of uses. Uptown Mixed Use Districts (UMUD) strengthen the high-density core of Central City by encouraging high-density residential development, retail and wholesale trade, business, offices, and financial services. Though the district promotes high density, Charlotte demands that development encourage pedestrian activities. Pedestrian circulation is supported with urban design, open spaces, signs, and street furniture. While the private car is not eliminated from downtown, Charlotte is welcoming innovations to encourage safe and dense pedestrian circulation.

To further encourage density and pedestrian activity, the Planning Commission instituted three overlay districts: Pedestrian, Historic, and Transit. Overlay districts are applied in conjunction with other zoning codes and grant additional use or development requirements. The result is to have both the underlying zoning use and the overlay use together. The Historic District Overlay encourages preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and conservation of architecturally and historically significant areas, new construction to be compatible with the original historic character, and single-family homes are protected from demolition. The Pedestrian Overlay purpose is to reestablish the urban fabric of Center City by encouraging pedestrian activity. Transit Overlay Districts encourage transit and pedestrian development to supplement Center City's multi-modal development. Public transit lines and pedestrian friendly sidewalks are developed together since their functions are inclusive.

[14]City of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, City Code Book of Ordinances, 24 November 2006 http://www.charmeck.org/Departments/City+Clerk/City+Code/Home.htm.

Center City Zoning and Districts[15]					
Zoning Code	**Land Use**	**Description**	**Max FAR**	**Min Lot Size SF**	**Building Height Feet**
UR-1	Urban Residential Mixed Use	Urban Single Family; Infill	0.25	3000	40
UR-2 Urban Residential	Urban Residential Mixed Use	Moderate Buffer Between Low & Hi Density	1	3000	40
UR-3(CD) Urban Residential Conditional	Urban Residential Mixed Use Conditional	Hi Density Residential Near Employment Core	2	3000	60
UR-C	Urban Residential Commercial	Residential, Retail, Office, Cultural, Neighborhood Centers	3	3000	60
UMUD	Uptown Mixed Use	High Density Core Mixed Use		none	none
MUDD	Mixed Use Development District	Pedestrian Scale Office & Mixed Use			
MUDD-0	Mixed Use Dev. District Optional*	Pedestrian Scale Mixed Use			120
I-1, 2, 2(CD)	Industrial - General	Wholesale; Processing; Distributing	1	8000	40
HD-O	Historic District Overlay	Encourage Preservation, Rehabilitation, Conservation and Restoration;			
TOD	Transit Overlay District	Encourage Transit & Pedestrian Supportive Development			
PED	Pedestrian Overlay	Encourage Pedestrian Activity & Supportive Retail & Commercial			
Source: City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Department of Planning, Zoning Ordinance					

[15]City of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, Zoning Designations, 24 November 2006
http://www.charmeck.org/Departments/Planning/Zoning+Administration/Zoning+Designations.htm

Activities that could clash with sidewalks, such as drive-through banking lanes, are relocated away from streets and sidewalks. The overlay encourages reuse of existing, low-rise buildings.

SECTION 3: POPULATION

Downtown Population Profile

Population Change 1990-2000			
	1990	**2000**	**Difference**
Uptown	6,370	6,327	(43)
Charlotte	395,934	540,828	144,894
MSA (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)	1,162,093	1,499,293	337,200

Source: University of Pennsylvania, Dept. of City and Regional Planning, US Census Bureau1990-2000

The population is presently over 9000 residents and is expected to be 15,000 by 2008.[16] "The growth rate is projected at 3.6% per year."[17] "The number of households in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has increased by about 47 % between 1990 and 2003, reaching a total number of 294,211 households. However, the number of persons per household stayed at about 2.5.

The median value of owner-occupied housing increased by nearly 83% between 1990 and 2003, to $159,097. "Over the past two years $3.6, billion of development activity and more than 4,700 housing units, 500,000 sq. ft. retail space and 2.3 million sq. ft. of office space."[18] The total occupied housing units in Charlotte Downtown was found to be 3,224 along with 973 owner housing occupied units and 30.2% of total share owner occupied housing units.

The median income for a household in the city is $ 46,975, and the median income for a family is $56,517. Males have a median income of $38,767 versus $ 29,218 for females. The per capita income for the city is $ 26,823. 10.6 % of the population and 7.8 % of females are below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 13.8% of those under the age of 18 and 9.7 % of those 65 and older are living below the poverty line. In addition, the median household income

[16] ***Charlotte Center City Partners, http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=21subcat=114***

[17] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Demographics, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?category_level_id=156&content_id=187.

[18] Charlotte Center City Partners, Charlotte Center City Development Report, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=21&subcat=115&subsub=79.

level in 2003 has been estimated at $57,773 which had an increase of nearly 71 % over 1990."[19]

The ratio of Black population is 52.7%, Hispanic 1.5% and Asian are 1.1% according to the 2000 U S Census. The Census also reports that the age Cohort in Downtown Charlotte for 25 to 34 is 27.5% and for 45 to 64 is 31.7%. "The median income (lower tract 2000) was 9,494 and (Highest Tract 2000) 36,711"[20].

Charlotte Center City Population by Race									
Year	**Total**	**Hispanic**	**White**	**Black**	**Amer. Indian**	**Asian Islander**	**Asian**	**Hawaiian**	**Others**
1990	6,370	205	2,309	3,811	28	17	n/a	n/a	n/a -
2000	6,327	97	2,710	3,332	27	n/a	62	10	89

Source: US Census Bureau

Metropolitan centers through the US are attracting domestic migrants among the young, single and college educated. Charlotte experiences about 40,000 people in-migrating. [21] Charlotte receives most of its new population from other eastern and southern states, while out-migrants leave Charlotte for other eastern seaboard states.

SECTION 4: RETAIL

One way that uptown Charlotte is trying to transition to an eighteen to an twenty-four hour center city is by tapping its underutilized retail base. Presently, there is 1,100,000 square feet of retail space within the I-485 loop. Another 1,000,000 square feet is presently under construction.[22] Most of the spaces still in development are slated to be completed between the next two to five years.

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[19] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Related Links, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?content_id=472&category_level_id=134.

[20] Rebacca R. Sohmar and Robert E. Lang, Fannie Mae Foundation and The Brookings Institution 2001, Downtown Rebound, Table: Selected Downtown Population Change, 1990 To 2000, 24 November 2006 http://www.brook.edu/es/urban/census/downtownrebound.pdf#search=population%20in%20downtown%20charlotte.

[21] Charlotte Chamber of Commrce, US Migration Rates to and form Mecklenburg County, NC 1995-2000, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/files/migrationusmap.pdf.

[22]

Downtown Charlotte

The most general way to describe retail in downtown Charlotte is better than it was in 1990, yet still far outpaced in scope by the Charlotte MSA.

Charlotte Center City Retail Activity (1995 - 2001)[23]			
	1995	**2001**	**% Change**
Median Household EBI	$16,091.00	$20,977.00	30.4
Retail Sales	$215,545.00	$249,658.00	15.8

As the graph diagrams, retail growth has been half that of growth in downtown Median incomes. This suggests that people are leaving by car (the only feasible means for transit out of City Center) for retail destinations outside of the loop. However, infill projects have become very popular despite elevated constructions costs for developers as can be surmised by the statistic that developers in Charlotte delivered 792,000 square feet" between 2004-2005, "and retailers absorbed 854,000 square feet" during the same period.[24] As such, the vacancy rate for class 'A' retailers is around five percent, while class 'B' retailer vacancies stand at five and a half percent, both well below the national average.[25] Therefore, the market for downtown retail is present, but developers have been slow to act due to many factors including in-fill costs.

[23] Roberts, Cheryl. "The Heart of Charlotte." Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, p. 3, http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?content_id=1200&category_level_id=137

[24] Legge, Troy. "Charlotte Retail" Lighthouse Commercial Realty, 12-16-05.

[25] Conversation with Robert Ferrin of the Charlotte Regional Partnership, 11/12/06 (704) 332 9581

The main reason retail square footage in the uptown area is miniscule when compared to the study area's size comes largely from a court decision in 2000. The building boom the area witnessed during the 1990s might have gone on indefinitely, but opponents of a shopping center project took Charlotte and the developer to court and won. In the decision handed down, a judge ruled that the city must change how it makes about 80 percent of its zoning decisions. The judge said that Charlotte's fast-track zoning process, under which approvals were made without a hearing, did violate state laws. The decision impacted at least fifty projects that ranged from multimillion-dollar shopping center expansions to apartment buildings. The South Park Mall, which was at the center of the controversy and geared to expand by fifty-percent, which would have likely lure anchor stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and Nordstrom, was greatly curtailed by the ruling that resulted in a limitation on square footage and delayed those retailers from setting up shop.[26]

Because of the limitations on gross and individual vendor square footage and the land constraints brought about by the I-277 loop, development has been pushed away from the city center core. Due to both the court ruling and market trends, destination retail within the uptown area has been very limited, while street level retail outlets are still dispersed and serve only local residences needs. Of the estimated four-hundred individual retail spots in the downtown area, roughly half of those businesses are eating and drinking establishments. This figure breaks down into one-hundred and two sit-down restaurants, and seventy-five drive-thru oriented eateries. Additionally, approximately nine-percent of the four-hundred retail outlets in the uptown area are geared toward dry cleaning and laundry services.[27] It should also be mentioned that almost none of the nearly two-hundred eateries included street level kiosks. Although such outlets may not serve to increase the regional attractiveness of the downtown region, they can serve as a limited pedestrian stimulator.

One-quarter of the 1,100,000 total retail square footage in uptown Charlotte can be attributed to one site, namely the Overstreet Mall. As the name would suggest, the foundation was laid above grade and serves as a natural focal point for the numerous skywalks that connect many

[26] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Department. http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-South/Charlotte-Economy.html

[27] Conversation with Robert Ferrin of the Charlotte Regional Partnership, 11/12/06 (704) 332 9581

of the otherwise disconnected Uptown's office buildings. Incidentally, these skywalks were designed similar to those of Milwaukee's standards, despite the mild North Carolina winters; yet such skywalks served to segregate what was once a predominantly black inner city from the Caucasian white collar workers.[28] The consensus remains that what retail Overstreet brings to the uptown area is far outweighed by the greatly diminished street activity since it was build in the 1980's.[29] Overstreet is devoid of major anchor stores and has seen a decrease in 'A' & 'B' class tenants and a move toward stores like Dillards (one of the largest Downtown Charlotte department stores) or Belks (a local discount clothing chain,) surrounded by a disproportional food court that serves office workers almost exclusively. Fundamentally, Overstreet Mall is not the cause of Charlotte's weak retail, but is instead emblematic of the larger problems of integrated street level activity and effective retail frontage.[30]

In attempting to create a twenty-four hour place and stimulate retail activity, Downtown Charlotte embraced the relatively unique strategy of using sports stadiums as a means of revitalizing the individual inner-city wards. Instead of centralizing the city's arenas in a confined space like Denver, Charlotte permitted dispersed stadium construction built solely by private investment resulting in the Bank of America Stadium, which effectively anchored Uptown to the southwest end and the cities 3rd ward. Additionally, Charlotte (Bobcat) Arena, has served as the catalyst for expanded 1st ward development which includes Courtside, a 17-story condominium complex that offers 7,500 square feet of retail for the local 1st ward residence. The University of N. Carolina is also planning a one-billion dollar urban village in the first ward, including classrooms along with entertainment and retail options. Tryon and Trade streets have become the centers of pedestrian activity due largely to the construction of the new arena's that have both framed the road within the downtown streetscape and ushered in new opportunities for destination entertainment-education along the two thoroughfares. Some developments that have occurred since the stadiums were built include Discovery Place science museum, Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library and the forty million dollars ImagineOn project which includes classrooms, childhood care and reading centers, performance stages and a technology

[28] This info was obtained by the gentlemen that came to the presentation late 11/14/06 (the FACT CHECK guy)

[29] Roberts, Cheryl. The Heart of Charlotte. Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, p. 1-2

[30]

center.[31]

SECTION 5: PARKING

In the interest of reinforcing a central theme in the arguments set forth in this paper, Downtown Charlotte's parking situation is itself a representation of the present being built over the past. There is overwhelming necessity to provide parking spaces for the fifty-five thousand daily office workers that commute to uptown in vehicles. As a matter of statistics, seventy-eight percent of these workers drive vehicles to work; this outpaces the national average which states that twenty-nine percent of the American working public relies on public transit.[32] Specifically, there are forty to forty-five thousand structured parking spaces in the uptown area. Additionally there are one thousand four hundred street level parking spaces that the city is attempting to expand to heighten pedestrian activity.[33]

As the above information suggests, much of Charlotte's city center structured parking is privately owned. By some accounts, single occupancy driving behavior is in many cases reinforced by bottom-rate pricing. While on-street and at-grade parking may be comparable to Denver's (six to seven dollars for the day, but can go up to fifteen dollars). Monthly rates at structures such as those owned by Bank of America may be as low as fifty-five dollars monthly.[34] Considering eighty-five percent of Charlotte's public parking is located in the Government District, which is located in the third ward, densification of work-force housing is a priority in this area of downtown. However, the city has taken small steps to improve weekend retail appeal of the uptown area by making the relatively small amount of city operated on-street parking free between Saturday and Sunday which in turn has made parking much more scarce.[35]

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[31] Prudential Carolinas Realty, http://www.charlottefinehomes.net/Charlotte_Information/page_1363265.html

[32] North Carolina Department of Transportation Rail Division, Multi-Modal Feasibility Study, 24 November 2006 http://www.bytrain.org/istation/charlottemm/cmmexecsum702.pdf.

[33] Robert Ferrin, Telephone Interview by Ryan Poole, Charlotte City Center Partnership, 11/2/06, (704) 332 9581.

[34] Christine Vincent, Telephone Interview by Ryan Poole, Charlotte City Center Partnership, 10/28/06 (704) 332 9581.

[35] Amy Baldwin, Free Parking Scarce in Uptown, *Charlotte Observer*, Jan, 26 2006, http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/CharlotteObserver/2006/01/22/1212123?extID=10037&oliID=229.

At-grade, privately operated parking lots, comprise roughly twelve thousand individual spaces. These lots are operated by numerous entities, the two largest of which are Carolina Parking and Central Parking.[36] Many privately operated lots have been successfully relocated away from pedestrian thoroughfares by way of the pedestrian improvement overlay zone set about in the Center City Charlotte Urban Design Plan of 1992 for streets such as Tryon and Trade.[37] Below-grade parking is a rarity in the uptown area considering that the composition of the soil is bedrock and makes construction prohibitively expensive. Because of this, roof-access parking is becoming more common considering the benefits to the public landscape and tax credits or partial reimbursement that can help offset elevated construction costs to private owners.

Entities such as the Center City Partnership fear that continued uptown gentrification over the next five years will reduce surface lot spaces from twelve thousand to six thousand.[38] Because of this, the Partnership has collaborated with private enterprise to form a "way-finding" commission to recommend zoning and retention strategies to help preserve at-grade parking. The collaboration has yielded closer involvement in providing unique parking ideas as well as helping form agreements that have yielded results such as shared parking, co-funding of structured parking developments and general place making.

SECTION 6: DEVELOPMENT

Broad based site development in Charlotte's uptown has been a driving factor behind the cities recent retail revitalization. Break-neck paced construction is altering the Charlotte skyline at a rate unprecedented, even when compared to most other cities in the region. Considering Uptowns goal to densify resident population to 24,000 by 2012, Current statistics from Charlotte City Center Partners reveal that there are twenty-seven new residential projects totaling three billion in investment currently underway. Of these developments, there are fourteen new towers under construction of between twenty and forty stories, eight of which are completely residential in zoning accept on the ground level. Despite condo prices still being at a premium because of

[36] Charlotte City Center Partners, Where Can I Park, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=19&subcat=108&subsub=27.

[37] Charlotte City Center Partners, A Brief History of Center City Development, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav800.cfm?cat=21&subcat=112.

[38] Robert Ferrin, Telephone Interview by Ryan Poole, Charlotte City Center Partnership, 11/10/06 (704) 332 9581.

tight supply, some of the mentioned developments still are above 80% pre-leased despite prices that can reach $400 per square foot.[39]

As a means of sparking development in particularly troubled wards, or improve elements that may be missing in the city streetscape, Charlotte has employed two different mechanisms. In an effort to revitalize the slum portions of First Ward, Charlotte employed usage of HOPE VI federal grants to help purchase, demolish and ultimately restore existing public housing in order to try to restore the main street feel that had been missing from the area.[40] The improved public housing stock has also come to anchor the culture and arts district that include the Carolina Theater, the new Children's Learning Center and the African-American history museum.[41] Developments such as Earle Village have attracted a vibrant and truly mixed-income neighborhood with half its residence receiving federal housing aid and a near fifty-fifty mix of single-family and apartment housing.

Downtown Charlotte has also used local zoning policies as a means to control retail development and as a means to ultimately add to the street level environment. In 2004 the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission enacted the UMUD (Uptown Multi-Use District) zoning category. This ordinance dictates that all new developments, infill or otherwise within the CBD, must have some element of retail activity comprising a percentage of the buildings first floor.[42] The percentage is prudent to the buildings overall footprint. As an offshoot to the 1990's Plan, UMUD's indirect effect on pedestrian activity is to create a boulevard feel along North Tyron Street and can be seen when Tryon pedestrian counts are compared to the counts of other parallel streets.[43]

When comparing vacancy rates to other cities of its size such as Denver, Charlotte has a far better office leasing environment as is related below:

> For 2005, Class 'A' vacancy decreased to 11.8% while Class 'B' vacancy was down to 16.7%. Similarly, the vacancy rate for

[39] Conversation with Robert Ferrin, 11/2/06,
[40] US HUD, http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/
[41] Husock, Howard. "How Charlotte is Revitalizing Public Housing," Spring, 2000. http://www.city-journal.org/html/10_2_how_charlotte.html
[42] Conversation with Robert Ferrin, 11/2/06.
[43] ibid

> downtown Charlotte office space is down to 5.5% and the overall suburban rate were reduced to 17.0% from 18.5% at the end of 2004. Vacant sublease space in Charlotte stood 608,563 square feet, which was relatively unchanged from the beginning of the year.[44]

When downtown is compared to the Charlotte MSA, it is obvious that Charlotte's inner-city loop serves as a regional employment destination for specific industries, especially the financial sector. This growth in downtown development and drop in overall vacancy rates is of course indicative of the higher than national average job growth of Charlotte, which stood at roughly 5.2% in 2005. Below is a graphical representation of the Overall Charlotte development climate.[45]

OFFICE MARKET OVERVIEW

	CBD	Suburban	Total
Total Inventory	20,138,353	40,076,544	60,214,897
Direct Vacant SF	995,185	6,306,793	7,301,978
Sublet SF Available	115,894	492,669	608,563
Vacancy Rate	4.9%	15.7%	12.1%
Vacancy Rate (w/sublet)	5.5%	17.0%	13.1%
New Product (YTD)	0	614,867	614,867
Net Absorption (YTD)	318,067	990,709	1,308,776
SF Under Construction	40,601	791,155	831,756
Average Rental Rates (Class A)	$21.33	$19.43	$17.97

The 53 story development being built on the site of Charlotte's old convention center is known as EpiCenter and may be the single best representation of the direction Charlotte is attempting to move its development projects. The project site has carefully been chosen so as to enhance the pedestrian environment east of The Square across Trade Street and anchor itself more closely to the NBA arena, while being located near the historic trolley and a future light-rail stop. Most real estate experts agree that the Charlotte's skyline will be shaped through the remainder

[44] Colliers Pinkard, "Charlotte Market Report," http://www.colliers.com/Content/Repositories/Base/Markets/Charlotte/English/Market_Report/PDFs/3rd_qtr_2005_off_report.pdf

[45] ibid

of this decade by residential towers rather than office skyscrapers. [46] This is the developmental direction that Charlotte has begun to emphasis over the past ten years.

Charlotte City Center bureaucracies have also re-organized themselves to into entities that are better suited for guiding private developments and monitoring the business climate in order to chart trends. By way of the City Within the City initiative,

> City leaders made a conscious choice to reach by presenting equity goals and an organizational structure of the business community, particularly the banking sector. In 1993, 26 city departments were reorganized into nine key and four support “businesses,” and agency heads were re-titled as “key business executives.” The city’s annual assessment of all governmental programs and functions is known as a “corporate scorecard.” Partly as a result, business leaders have come to consider the agenda one of Charlotte’s main economic development strategies.[47]

Within the context of neighborhood development, the city has innovated by developing an analytical tool to measure quality of life in 73 neighborhoods, using 20 social, physical, crime and economic variables to classify those neighborhoods as stable, threatened, or fragile. In 1995, the City Council replaced the “threatened” and “fragile” terms with the categories of “transitioning” and “challenged.” Charlotte leaders have refined this tool over time, and now the city uses a baseline neighborhood quality of life index to both track overall progress and allocate resources in a timely fashion.

Charlotte has managed to win bids and beat out other cities on destination attractions such as the NASCAR Hall of fame with its projected $62 million yearly in revenue and over 400,000 visitors. [48] One reason for Charlotte’s explosion of development projects that have moved away from solely office focused development can be reflected in the cities relatively low construction cost index, especially when compared to sites of similar size.

[46] Smith, Doug “Uptown Living at its Highest,” http://www.skyscrapercity.com/archive/index.php/index.php?t-187072.html
[47] Cities of the United States, Charlotte Economy. http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-South/Charlotte-Economy.html
[48] Charlotte City Center Partners, http://new.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=21&subcat=115&subsub=0

Construction Cost Index (per square foot)			
Charlotte	**75.3**	Kansas City	103.4
Dallas	84.3	Portland	104
Houston	87.2	Seattle	105
Memphis	87.8	Los Angeles	106.8
Atlanta	89.8	Detroit	107
Baltimore	92.7	Newark	111.1
Cincinnati	93.6	Chicago	111.6
Denver	95.8	Minneapolis	112.6
Washington, DC	96.9	Boston	115.4
Pittsburgh	99.9	San Francisco	122.2
Cleveland	102	New York City	132.4

Means Construction Data, 2005 (cost indexes-weighted average)[49]

Additionally, Charlotte's national context and the fact it is the 2nd largest banking sector within the US makes the cities access to venture capital second to none. Six of the nation's top 10 commercial and industrial loan banks operate in Charlotte. A volume of approximately $139 billion in commercial and industrial loans and $31 billion in construction and land development loans are accounted for by Charlotte headquartered banks.[50] Therefore, the financial resources available to the downtown area provided by a combination of Charlotte's 21 venture capital firms, 18 credit unions and the fact of it being home to 7 of the nations top 10 lenders to small businesses lenders give's Charlotte a development advantage when compared to almost any other city of any size in the nation.

SECTION 7: POLICIES AND POLITICS

Government

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the six other municipalities within the County operate with a Council/Commission/Manager form of government[51] Citizens rejected merging the city and county government, but efforts are made to not duplicate services.[52]

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[49] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?category_level_id=137&content_id=180

[50] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?content_id=127&category_level_id=132

[51] City of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, Government In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 24 November 2006 http://www.charmeck.org/Governing/home.htm.

[52] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, History of Mecklenburg County, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?category_level_id=321&content_id=1410.

Fiscal Policies

According to the state constitution, all levels of state and local government must operate with a balanced budget. Annual expenditures cannot exceed the revenues. This sound fiscal management assures a high level of public services at a reasonable tax rate. The best municipal bond credit ratings possible are consistently attained by the city, county, and state by both major bond-rating agencies. "Charlotte presently operates with a $1.4 billion budget and has not had property tax rate increase in the past 16 years."[53] The extremely favorable tax structure includes low per capita state and local taxes, and the state does not access inventory or intangibles. Recent legislation mandated a reduction in the state corporate income tax rate and created tax credits for a variety of business investments.

Planning and Design History

Charlotte's Uptown has been torn down twice, once before World War II, as a form of slum clearing, and again in the 1960s as part of urban renewal.[54] Since the 1960s, there have been five distinct plans for Uptown Charlotte.[55] The original plan focused on automobiles and the need to move traffic quickly. The second, third and fourth plans outlined concentrated development. The last plan introduced pedestrian-friendly streets as well as mixed-use.

Center City Charlotte's Planning Visions		
Year	**Plan Name**	**Points of Focus**
1960s	Greater Charlotte Central Area Plan	Widen Streets Build Government Center Identify Center City Needs
1970s	Central Area Development Guidelines	Concentrated Development Diversify Activities Establish Parking Systems
1980s	Charlotte Center City Area Plan	Transit Mall Streetscape Transportation Improvements
1990s	The Center City Charlotte Urban Design Plan	Linking Center City with Areas Outside of I-277 Loop

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[53] America's Most Livable, 24 November 2006 http:www.mostlivable.org/cities/charlotte/finance_char.html.
[54] Stewart Gray, Telephone Interview by Susan Livingston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, October 26, 2006. 704-376-9115.
[55] Charlotte Center City Partners, A Brief History of Centre City Development, 25 November 2006 http://www.charlottecentercity.org/nav.cfm?cat=21&subcat=112

		Distinct Planning Principles for Each Ward
2000	Charlotte 2010 Vision Plan	Pedestrian Oriented Design Mixed Use High Architectural Standards

Source: Charlotte Center City Partners

Capitalizing on Transportation Efficiencies

Charlotte's well known pro-business environment is evident in its ability to move people and products efficiently and conveniently throughout the world. The city is one of the major transportation centers and the distribution hub for the fifth largest urban region in the United States. Service is available by air, rail, land, inland port, and direct water access. Factor in geographic location, amenable climate, convenience to major US markets, a foreign trade zone, US Custom and Inland Port Status- the result is advantages which can make a business easier to conduct and more profitable.

Charlotte has capitalized on its assets of being a transportation hub at the center of the largest consolidated rail system in the U.S., with two major interstates and an International Airport with 538 daily departures and 23 million passengers. "Because of these assets and Charlotte's strong business climate and quality of life amenities, the city has risen to the top five in the number of Fortune 500 headquarters, with seven Fortune 500 companies selecting Charlotte for their headquarter operations."

Financial Center and Investment Capital

Charlotte has become a major U.S financial center, and is home to the US's second largest (Bank of America) and fourth largest (Wachovia) financial institutions. Businesses thinking of relocating to Charlotte can find a source of venture capital within Charlotte itself.

Companies Headquartered in Charlotte 2006		
Rank	**Company**	**Revenue ($ billions)**
18	Bank of America	63.3
43	Lowe's	36.5

65	Wachovia	28.1
86	Duke Energy	22.8
189	Nucor Corporation	11.4
272	Sonic Automotive	7.9
345	SPX	5.8
373	Family Dollar	5.3
408	Goodrich Corporation	4.7

Source: http://www.charlottechamber.com

SECTION 8: COMPARE/CONTRAST TO DOWTOWN DENVER

Charlotte and Denver Population & Area Comparisons			
North Carolina	8,683,242	Colorado	4,301,261
Charlotte	584,658	Denver	554,636
Charlotte MSA	1,330,448	Denver MSA	2,179,240
Uptown Population	6327	Downtown Population	9000
Uptown Acreage	960	Downtown Acreage	950

Source: US Census Bureau

Charlotte is the 19th largest city in the country and is thriving with a strong quality of life, a diverse, vibrant economy, and a very favorable climate. Charlotte is a blend of new and traditional, conservative and innovative. Charlotte has demonstrated that it can build off the strength of the past to grow, evolve, and adapt to be a positive place for business as well as to raise a family.

Charlotte is a major center in the American motor sports industry. Approximately 75% of the industry's employees and drivers are based within two hours of Downtown Charlotte. Charlotte is also the future home of the NASCAR Hall of Fame, expected to be completed in 2009. (source)

New Business 2000-2005				
Year	**Business Firms**	**New Employment**	**Sq. Ft (Millions)**	**Investment ($ Millions)**
2005	562	5,667	7.2	$ 853.3
2004	632	5,547	13.1	$703.3
2003	862	9,719	7.7	$904.8
2002	692	5,612	9.2	$1441.4
2001	676	4,709	10.6	$881.2
2000	855	8,593	8.4	$1,303.2

Source: http://www.charlottechamber.com

Factors Contributing to Charlotte's Economic Success[56]

Well Distributed Employment

According to 2003 US Department of Commerce figures, employment in Mecklenburg County is well distributed among all major business sectors. Of the 522,978 persons employed in the county, there are 82, 676 in finance and insurance, 48,628 in retail trade, and 41,887 in wholesale trade, 34,927 in manufacturing, and 21,388 in information. Mecklenburg County has 63% of total employment in the Charlotte region. The Charlotte MSA claims 789,928 jobs with more than 63,015 of those created since 1998.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is a key element of Charlotte economy. Textiles led the way early this century when the cotton industry moved south from New England to establish Charlotte as a textiles center, today, Charlotte manufacturers work in many fields including non electrical and electrical machinery, metal working and chemicals.

[56] Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, The Latest, 24 November 2006 http://www.charlottechamber.com/content.cfm?catagory_level_id=155&content_id-140.

Low Labor Cost

Manufacturing firms which locate operation in Charlotte Mecklenburg has the availability of low cost labor. According to the US Department of Labor, the MSA's earning of production workers in January 2006 was $ 14.83 per hour-lower than the national average. The state has the lowest unionization rate in the nation; less than 4 percent of Charlotte's work force is unionized. Studies show that North Carolina workers produce more output per wage dollar than their counterparts do nationally.

Distribution and Transportation

Due to the prime location at the intersection of 1-77 and 1-85, as well as its manufacturing strength, Charlotte Mecklenburg is one of the nation's leading distribution centers. The city's extensive transportation network facilities distribution has made its economy more strengthen.

International Businesses

The presence of foreign owned firms in Mecklenburg County has a major impact over the flourishment of international businesses. Foreign owned companies with operation in Charlotte County in 2005 represent 37 nations in which Germany (111), Great Britain (49), Japan (48), Italy (34), Switzerland (32), and Canada (25).

Financial Services

Financial services may be the most widely recognized sector of Charlotte's economy. Of the 82,676 employees in finance and insurance, 46,361 are employed in commercial banking and insurance carrier employs 17,377. The abundance of financial resources in Charlotte is certainly an advantage for companies who seek a ready source of capital, money management, investment advice, and other financial services.

Long Term Growth

The city of Charlotte has enjoyed extraordinary growth for the past decade in terms of new business development. From 1996 to 2005, according to Chamber Statistics, 8,076 new businesses created more than 74,898 jobs and absorbed 103.8 million square feet of floor area, representing a total investment of 9.9 billion.

Policies

The business leaders and civic leaders have actively contributed for establishing the foundations for economic success. Presently, the Charlotte leadership is busy in the process of shaping the city future again. For this, they are studying that where the city needs to head in order to be successful in the 21st century. The Charlotte Chamber has taken a leading role in the effort for a strategic planning process designed to maintain and expand the balanced economy. The goal of this process is to develop initiatives that will support existing businesses as they expand and mature, as well as attract new businesses.

State official are sensitive to taxpayer's desire for sound fiscal policy, the laws and regulations they develop help to maintain the state's fiscal health. The State maintains a legislatively mandated balanced budget. The favorable tax structure includes low per capita state and local taxes, and the state does not assess inventory or intangibles. Recent legislation mandated a reduction in the state corporate income tax rate and created tax credits for a variety of business investments.

c. *Changes that have occurred or are expected to occur this decade in other Downtown populations such as employees, tourists, and students, and the impact of these changes on Downtown.*

The workforce in Denver has a high percentage of college degrees. Of the Metro adult population, 38.6 % are college graduates and 89.1 % have graduated high school. Being a hub of outdoor recreation, Denver receives a large number of tourists every year. "The year 2005 was the best year for Denver with 10.4 million visitors spending $2.43 billion in Denver Downtown."[57] "Downtown Denver is both diverse in environment and residents. The growth of Downtown Neighborhood continues to increase as compared to City Center Charlotte. This is evident from Downtown Denver housing investment, which has accumulated to $1.3 billion over the past 15 years"[58].

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[57] Downtown Denver Partnership, Inc., Tourism Market, 24 November 2006 http:www.downtowndenver.com/Economic/EDVisitors.htm.

[58] Downtown Denver Partnership, Downtown Denver, compiled on Jan.2006.

Downtown Denver Resident Profile	
Number of Residents	9000
Average Household Size	1.34
Male Residents	59%
Female Residents	41%
Average Age	41.3
Family Households	13%
Family with Children	5%
Average Household Income	$ 44,423

Source: US Census Bureau

Downtown Denver has a reasonable price tag with a number of affordable housing options throughout the center city area. The unemployment rate in Denver Downtown is 5.5% (Compiled by Denver Downtown Partnership 4/2006) as compared to Charlotte City Center which is 4.9% (N.C. Employment Securities Commission). Downtown Denver has enjoyed a considerable boom in the number of residents with the last 30 years and the population in Downtown Denver grew as a faster rate over these years by climbing up to 35.6%.[59]

Denver is a city with a 600 mile-radius. The Downtown Denver has a population of 9000 people with a diverse ethnic population including 70% American; 31.7% Hispanic; 2.8% Asian and 1.3% Native American. Metro Denver has average of 5 % Black; 18% Hispanic; 3% Asian; 1% Native American and 3% multi racial[60]. Denver is the most educated city in the US. 92.1 % of the metro area has high school diplomas and 35 % has a bachelor degree. Denver is the nation's baby boomer capital city and one-third population is in between 35 and 54. The Center city Charlotte has 6,327 numbers of people and the ratio of American is seen less in number as compared to Denver Downtown. Center city Charlotte has more ethnic population as compared to Denver Downtown.

The Downtown Denver partnership is a non profit organization which has all the active members from different profession working in Downtown where as Charlotte Center City Partnership

[59]Denver Business Journal, http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2005/11/14/daily18.html

includes Charlotte Center City Partners, The City of Charlotte, and Mecklenburg county including the Planning Commission. This Charlotte City Center partnership in collaboration with the official inclusion would work smoothly to achieve its goal for 2010 Plan.

Demographics Statistics	
Median Age	31.7
Median House Hold Income	$ 39,910
% Male	50.4%
% Female	49.6%
White	70%
African American	5%
Native American	1%
Asian Pacific Islander	3%
Hispanic	18%
Other	3%

SECTION 9: SUMMARY

In summation, there are obvious similarities between Denver, Colorado and Charlotte, North Carolina as well as some glairing differences. Foremost, this research group sees both cities' downtowns as regional destination points, the former for its lack of nearby sizeable market competition, the latter because of its national accessibility by way of vehicle, aircraft or seaway. Charlotte's location that makes it a mere 24 hour drive for over 50% of the American population and its continuing strong agricultural base has made the downtown both a stop-gate for larger east coast cities because of its COLA standards, as well as a destination point for seasonal immigration. Our research has identified some steps that both state and local agencies have taken so as to attempt to set ordinance standards that require more low-income housing in the wards, even though gentrification of the CBD is continuing at an unabated rate.

This report has attempted to identify the strong connection between pedestrian activity and street-level retail. Charlotte's unique position as pertains to its relatively compact development patterns within the I-277 loop, reliance on its original skywalk design and lack of green space in order to frame the public space has defiantly been a deterrent in establishing any destination retail center. Parking has also been an issue. The overwhelming privatization of parking structures, the sheer number of spaces available and the pace of development becoming a threat to on street and surface parking is forcing downtown governments to partner more with private companies to find manageable solutions to Charlotte’s parking needs within the broader transit blueprints.

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