

# Mountain Home Study Area Report



Prepared by the Johnson City Planning Department, 2010

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The Mountain Home Study Area is located near the center of the city - nestled between the Veteran's Administration Hospital and the downtown. Like many neighborhoods in Johnson City, the study area has undergone some noteworthy changes over the past century; these changes will be identified within this report.

**Purpose of the Study Area Report**

Johnson City is comprised of numerous neighborhoods, each with its own unique set of characteristics, issues, concerns, and opportunities. Some neighborhoods may be considered growth areas, located around the periphery of the city and are experiencing various degrees of development and change. There are also the inner city neighborhoods such as the Mountain Home Study Area, where the development pattern and residential character have been established and the issues that residents face relate to revitalization, re-stabilization, and to redevelopment.

The neighborhood planning process is developed with the intentions of:

1. Involving key stakeholders from the onset so that they have a vested interest and an opportunity to participate;
2. Working with residents to create partnerships, to address common issues, and to identify ways to constructively resolve problems; and
3. Working with existing neighborhood organizations or support the development of new neighborhood organizations in order to give the neighborhood a unified voice.

The health of neighborhoods is an important component in assuring a city's livability and quality of life. Neighborhoods, as basic building blocks of the city, represent significant physical, social, and economic investments made by the city, individuals, and businesses. A declining neighborhood significantly devalues those prior investments. The result of this study will be a report that focuses on the specific and unique needs of the study area and a recommendation of actions to address its needs by utilizing the full-range of public and private resources available. While the report is designed mainly to improve the residential qualities of the area, the study of commercial areas will be included, where appropriate.



Historical Structures

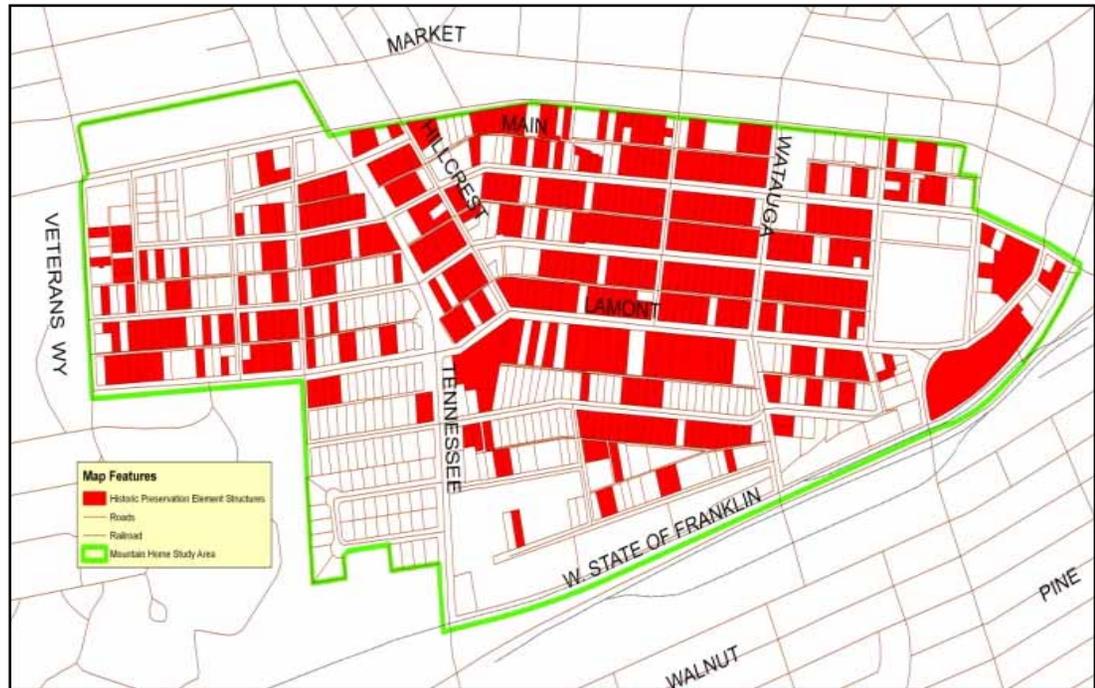
The city of Johnson City maintains an inventory of historically-significant structures and sites, and has established a Historic Zoning Commission in an effort to help preserve the architectural significance of certain structures and areas. Although the study area is not included within any specific historical district, a large percentage of structures contained within it have been identified as being historical in nature.

In 1985, a survey of historic structures over 50 years of age in Washington County was completed. This survey identified over 3,500 historic structures within the city’s Urban Growth Boundary. Over two-thirds of all structures within the study area (711) because of their age are considered to be historically significant structures.

Historical Site

The first cemetery in Johnson City was the Oak Hill Cemetery (established in 1870) located at 205 Whitney Street. Early community leaders buried in the cemetery include Henry Johnson, the city’s first mayor and Colonel LeRoy Reeves, the designer of the Tennessee state flag.

**Map 2: Historically Significant Structures**

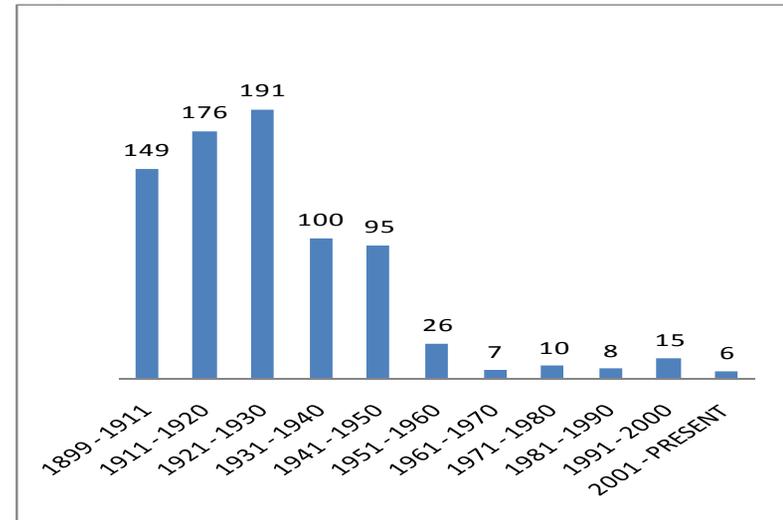


**Oak Hill Cemetery**

Residential Construction

The Mountain Home Study Area is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Johnson City. Approximately 79 percent of the current housing stock was constructed between 1899 and 1940. By contrast, only six percent of the housing was constructed after 1960. This area experienced its greatest residential growth rates during the 1920s, with approximately 25 percent of the housing constructed within this decade. In contrast, less than one percent of the housing stock was constructed after 2000. New construction represented redevelopment or new development on the few remaining vacant parcels.

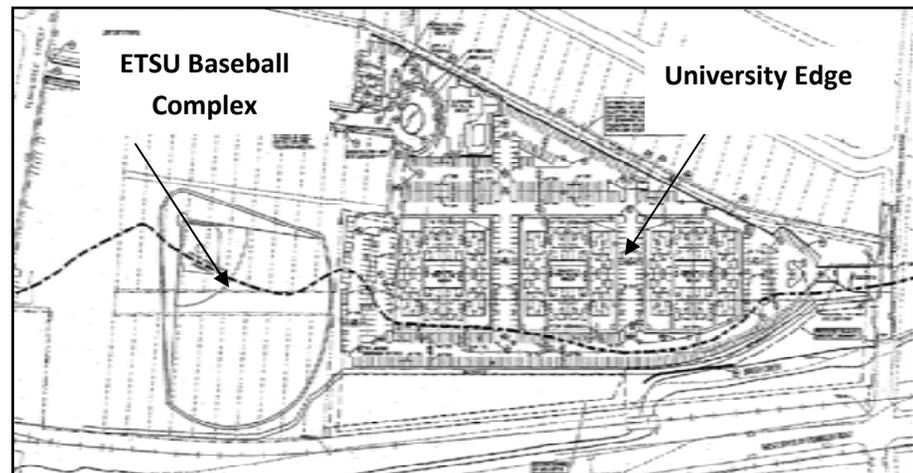
**Figure 1: Period of Residential Construction**



Source: Johnson City Geographic Information System 2009

Residential Development

University Edge Apartments is a 13-acre multi-family project currently under construction at the intersection of West State of Franklin Road and Watauga Avenue. The project includes the construction of 192 dwelling units (624 total bedrooms) located in three, four-story buildings. Being located close to the university, tenancy is aimed at university students. Plans also include a clubhouse, pool facility, and a pedestrian trail for use by residents. This property was previously the site of two abandoned foundries, several small homes, and a small auto repair business (Bud’s Radiator Shop).



The area to the west of the complex will contain a baseball facility to be built, owned, and operated by East Tennessee State University.



Existing Land Use

Residential uses account for 66 percent of the total study area. Single-family uses make up the majority at 53 percent with duplexes and multi-family uses making up the remaining 13 percent. Public/semi-public uses which include parks, churches, and the Oak Hill Cemetery comprise 13 percent. Fourteen percent of the land area is vacant land and the remaining seven percent consists of commercial uses.

**Table 1: Land Use Percentage**

Land Use Type	Percent
Vacant	14
Public/semi-Public	13
Single-Family	53
Duplexes	3
Multi-family	10
Commercial	7

**Map 4: Existing Land Use**



Source: Johnson City Geographic Information Systems, 2009

Existing Zoning Overview

The study area is predominately zoned for single-family detached residential use (over 53 percent). This is largely the result of a neighborhood initiated rezoning which occurred in 2005 that successfully down-zoned approximately 165 acres or 66 percent of the study area from R-4 (Medium Density Residential) and R-5 (High Density Residential) to R-2C (Low Density Residential).

This down-zoning helps preserve the established, residential character of the area. Over the years, a number of larger single-family homes have been converted into apartments. The down-zoning will prevent this from occurring in the future. The residential districts that allow higher-densities (i.e., R-4 through R-6) are located primarily along the periphery of the area, along

Main Street, University Parkway, and along State of Franklin Road (and the former Love Street). The 7.2-acre Oak Hill Cemetery, located at 205 Whitney Street, is currently zoned R-4 and accounts for three percent of the total land area; when subtracted, only approximately 26 percent of the study area is zoned for multi-family (e.g., apartment) uses. When combined, the total study area is 82 percent residentially-zoned. (see Map 5)

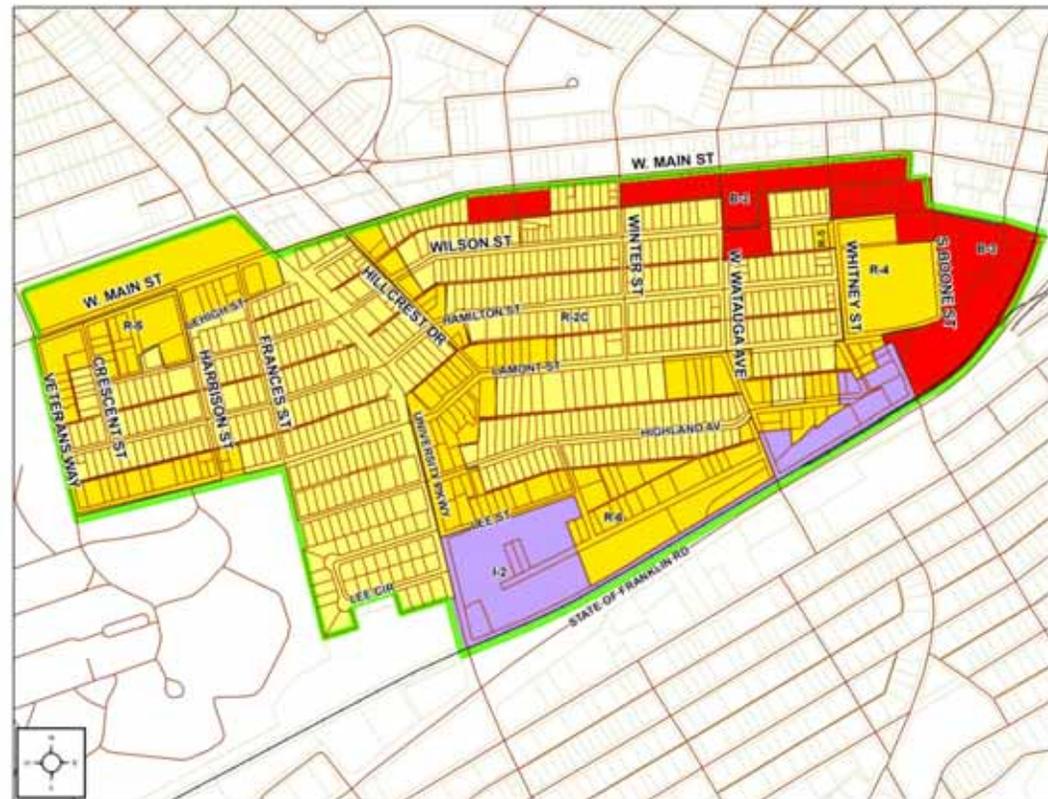


The study area also contains commercial zoning; B-2, Central Business District and the B-3, Supporting Central Business District. They are located along West Main Street

and to the north, east, and to the southeast along Lamont Street. Most of the commercial uses/structures within the study area are considered to be legal nonconforming, due to the visible presence of one or more situations (e.g., setback encroachments, insufficient parking, absence of landscaping, small lot sizes, etc.) within each property.

The study area contains a relatively small percentage of industrially-zoned property (eight percent), and very few existing land uses that are commonly referred to as industrial in nature. The majority of the industrially-zoned land includes the property ETSU is proposing to construct the baseball stadium, Church Brothers Pools, and Kelly’s Wholesale Foods.

**Map 5: Existing Zoning**



Future Land Use Plan

The Johnson City Land Use Plan was adopted by the Board of Commissioners on August 17, 2006, replacing the plan adopted in 1987. The Plan provides policy guidance on land use decisions relating to rezoning requests, annexations, utility needs, and road improvements. The plan divides the city into several major land use categories (e.g., residential, commercial, and industrial), and proposes the implementation of actions to achieve the desired recommendations. The map found below (Map 6) indicates the proposals of the 2020 Land Use Plan as they apply to the study area; Map 4 indicates the current land uses by type found within the study area.

Noteworthy Land Use Trends

1. The existing R-2C zoning, prevalent throughout a large portion of the study area, is a reflection of the area’s single-family environment and complements the 2020 Land Use Plan.
2. The demolishing of the old foundries and commercial uses found along the former Love Street to allow the construction of new University Edge. This multi-family development is an appropriate buffer between State of Franklin Road and the railroad, and the single-family units to the north.

**Map 6: 2020 Land Use Plan**



3. The study area also includes numerous apartment buildings adding to its housing types, diversity, and desirability for various segments of the population. As housing rehabilitation, reconstruction, and infill efforts continue, there will be a corresponding increase in the viability of the area resulting in “neighborhood oriented” commercial uses along West Main Street and State of Franklin Road that support residential uses (e.g., convenience stores).

Code Enforcement Issues

Code enforcement concerns expressed by residents who participated in the Mountain Home Study Area Citizen Survey included: overgrown lots, trash in the alleys, junk in yards, unregistered vehicles, and dilapidated homes. In an effort to address these concerns, during the week of May 12-16, 2010, the Code Enforcement Division completed a comprehensive sweep of the neighborhood looking for code violations. In total, 86 properties were cited for various violations.

Stormwater and Drainage

During major storm events Brush Creek which runs parallel to State of Franklin Road experiences flooding. The stream leaves its banks flooding the Downtown, portions of State of Franklin Road and West Watauga Avenue.

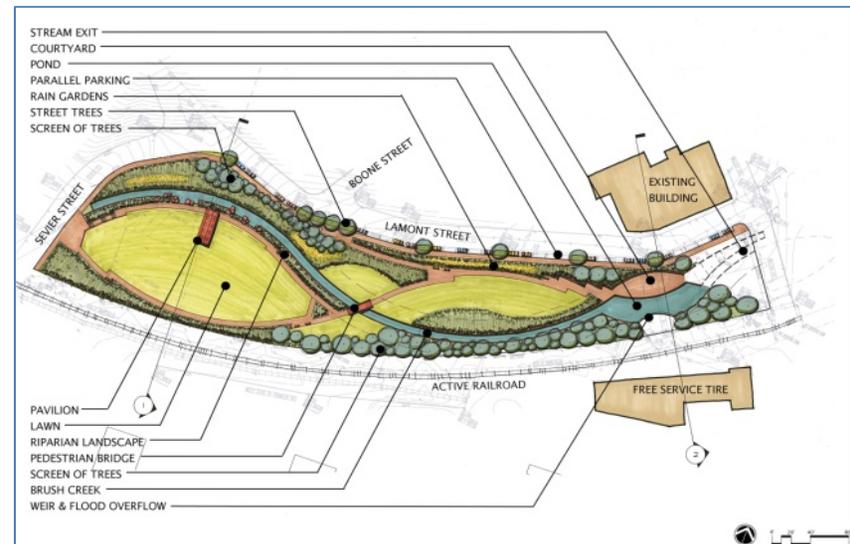
To address this flooding, a stormwater study of the Brush Creek and King Creek watersheds was prepared. A recommendation of the study was to develop a greenway along West State of Franklin Road and create storage areas to detain the stormwater before it can reach the Downtown.

The city purchased the former White’s Distribution Center at 125 Lamont Street and demolished the structure. The proposed plan is to reestablish the Brush Creek watershed to create a walking trail with a passive recreational park. This effort will ultimately increase the storage area for a portion of this creek, and will positively affect the properties located downstream through the alleviation of flooding.

Also, as properties develop and/or expand, buildings are required to be located out of the FIRM 100-year floodplain. Further, stormwater that is produced as a result of that development is required to be contained within on-site detention basins at the expense of the developer. This effort helps to offset the negative impacts caused by the continuous proliferation of stormwater runoff that is the result of the increases in impervious surface area.



**Flooding at the intersection of State of Franklin Road and West Watauga Avenue during a major storm event.**



**Warehouse Park, a city-initiated Brush Creek stormwater management project.**

**Utility Services**Water Service

The city operates two water treatment plants (Watauga WTP and Unicoi WTP) which have a total production capacity of 28 million gallons per day (MGD). The average daily flow of these plants is 16.5 MGD. Since this neighborhood is primarily built-out, there is sufficient capacity for any redevelopment that may occur. Because the Mountain Home Study Area is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city, it also has one of the oldest water distribution systems. Five percent of the water lines were constructed in 1900. Another 24 percent were added at the time the National Soldiers Home was constructed. However, the largest portion of the water system (56 percent) was constructed by 1947.

Sewer Service

This area is served by the Brush Creek Waste Water Treatment Facility. This facility was constructed in 1956, expanded in 1985 and has a capacity of 16 million gallons per day. This regional facility is operating at approximately 50 percent of its capacity and is more than adequate to meet the neighborhood's redevelopment needs for the foreseeable future. The majority of the sanitary sewer collection system (95 percent) was constructed prior to 1965. A third of the system is over 100 years old having been constructed in 1903.

**Public Safety**

Fire Protection

The Mountain Home Study Area receives fire protection from Fire Station #4, which is located at 800 West Main Street. This facility was constructed in 1971, and is manned with an average of five firefighters per shift, one engine truck, and one ladder truck. The fire station covers a zone of 2,976 acres (4.65 square miles), protects 11.5 percent of the city, and has a maximum response distance of 3.9 miles. The Fire Department is dispatched by the Washington County Emergency Communications District (WCECD). For single-family residential structural fires, the average response time is currently documented as 3 minutes and 24 seconds. Long-term there are conceptual plans to relocate the fire station to another site within the fire zone. These plans also include a proposal to remodel the existing station into a recreational facility to be made available to area residents.



**Fire Station #4**

Study Area Fire Calls

The study area was the source of 352 calls to the Fire Department in the span of the past 12 months. The majority (2/3) of these calls were EMS non motor vehicle related calls. This is reflective of the Department’s recent policy to respond to all emergency medical calls. There were also four building fires, one grass fire, and four trash and rubbish calls. The remaining calls cover a wide range of calls including: gas leaks, carbon monoxide, electrical problems, and false alarms.

**Table 2: Study Area Fire Calls 7/09 – 6/10**

Call Type	Calls
Building fire	4
Cooking fire	2
Vehicle fire	1
Outside rubbish, trash fire	4
Excessive heat no ignition	2
Rescue, EMS incident, other	5
Medical assist, assist crew	33
Motor vehicle accident (MVA) with no injuries	3
EMS call, excluding MVA with injuries	248
MVA pedestrian accident	1
Gas leak (natural gas or LPG)	2
Carbon monoxide	1
Power line down	2
Heat from short circuit	1
Service call	3
Water problem, other	1
Heat from short circuit (wiring)	1
Arcing, shorted electrical equipment	1
Cancelled calls	6
Public service	4
Building or structural weakened/collapsed	1
Attempt to burn	1
Smoke scare, odor of smoke	5
Grass fire	1
Hazmat	1
False Alarm	9
Smoke Detector Activation	3
No incident found on arrival	2
System malfunction, other	2
Assist Invalid	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>352</b>

Source: Johnson City Fire Department, 2010

Police Protection

In citizen surveys and at neighborhood meetings, residents expressed that their main concerns were personal safety related. Several residents had significant concerns regarding crime in the neighborhood, primarily drug and prostitution-related crimes.

Over the years, this neighborhood has developed a negative reputation for being a place to buy and sell drugs. However, due to stepped-up law enforcement, this area has seen a significant reduction in drug-related crimes. Even with the reduction, however, drug possession and drug paraphernalia crimes were still slightly over the city’s average.

Prostitution still remains a significant problem in the study area. One-third of all the prostitution-related crimes citywide occurred within the study area.

One of the two homicides committed in the city occurred in the study area. Aggravated assault, robbery, arson, and public intoxication also occur at a higher rate in the study area than the city as a whole. However, theft and vehicle theft in the study area were both lower than the city’s overall average.

Following meetings with the reorganized Mountain Home Neighborhood Association in May 2010, the Police Department conducted stepped-up visibility and enforcement within the area. These patrols focused on several quality-of-life concerns documented in the community surveys, including prostitution. Uniformed and plain-clothes officers conducted both high visibility and undercover enforcement to address these activities and field interviews were conducted, intelligence was gathered, and several arrests were made.

Operation Weed and Seed

**Table 3: 2009-10 Crime Statistics (June 1, 2009 – May 31, 2010)**

Type of Police Call	Mountain Home Study Area	City	Area/ City Crime Ratio
Aggravated Assault	8	152	1.72
Homicide	1	2	16.37
Rape	1	16	2.05
Robbery	7	70	3.27
Theft	42	2,100	0.65
Arson	2	16	4.09
Burglary	17	567	.98
Vehicle Theft	1	94	0.35
Prostitution	5	14	11.7
Vandalism	13	504	0.84
Firearms Offences	3	52	1.89
Public Intoxication	56	842	2.18
Trespassing	10	205	1.6
Drug Possession	12	331	1.19
Drug Paraphernalia	8	172	1.52

Source: Johnson City Police Department, 2010

Operation Weed and Seed is a program to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in high-crime neighborhoods by "weeding" out the most violent crimes from a designated neighborhood while "seeding" the area through social and economic revitalization. Weed and Seed programs help neighborhoods help themselves, enabling them to develop solutions to public safety problems and to strengthen leadership to implement and sustain those solutions.

In the past, the Mountain Home Neighborhood Association has been very active in this program and has worked closely with the city's Weed and Seed Coordinator. In order for the Weed and Seed Program to be successful, local leadership is critical. However, during the time of the neighborhood association's inactivity, involvement in the program has consisted more of working with individual residents as opposed to an organized association. Beginning on May 13, 2010, the city held a series of neighborhood meetings to discuss the neighborhood planning process and to present other programs offered by the Police Department. Approximately 15 to 25 people attended each of these meetings where they shared their concerns and thoughts. The outcome of these meetings was the reorganization of the Mountain Home Neighborhood Association. With a new leadership, this would be a good opportunity to reinitiate the organization's participation in Weed and Seed Program.

Neighborhood Watch Program

The Neighborhood Watch Program is administrated through the Police Department. The program teaches citizens how to help themselves by identifying and reporting suspicious activity in their neighborhoods. In addition, it provides citizens with the opportunity to make their neighborhoods safer and improve the quality of life. Neighborhood Watch groups typically focus on observation and awareness as a means of preventing crime and employ strategies that range from simply promoting social interaction and "watching out for each other" to active patrols by groups.



Kiwanis Park

Kiwanis Park, established in 1949, is a nine-acre neighborhood park located at the intersection of West Market Street and Veterans Way. The park facility is primarily used for softball and Little League baseball league play and numerous summer recreation programs.



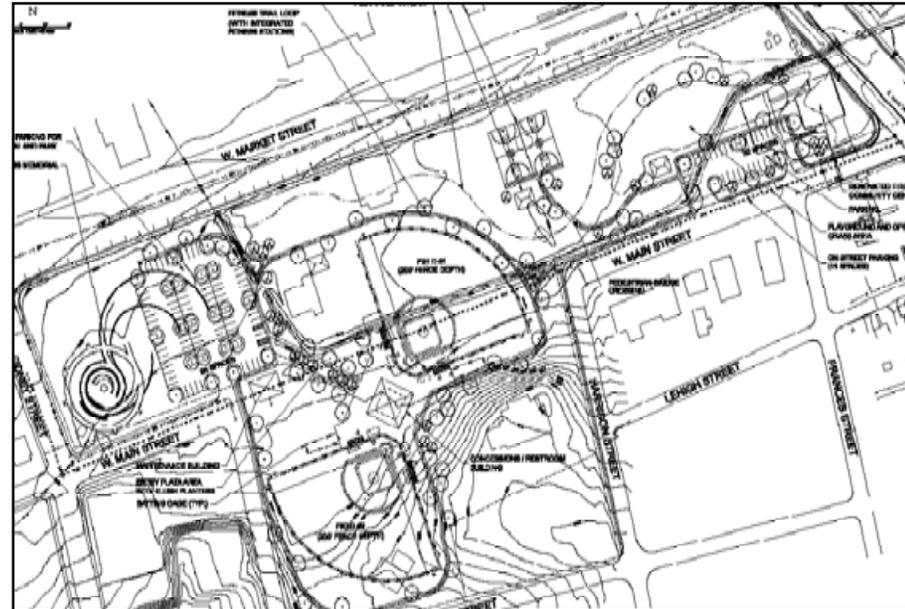
**Table 4: Kiwanis Park Equipment Inventory, 2009**

<b>1</b>	Band shell (1) with restrooms
<b>2</b>	Baseball field (1) with bleachers and dugouts, lighted
<b>3</b>	Basketball courts (2) with basketball goals (4), lighted
<b>4</b>	Batting cages (2)
<b>5</b>	Bullpen (1)
<b>6</b>	Off-street parking spaces (approximately 83)
<b>7</b>	Picnic shelter (1)
<b>8</b>	Picnic tables (5)
<b>9</b>	Playground area (1)
<b>10</b>	Press box (1) with concession area and restrooms
<b>11</b>	Recreation center with restrooms and concession area
<b>12</b>	Softball field (1) with bleachers and dugouts, lighted
<b>13</b>	Trash receptacles (18)
<b>14</b>	Volleyball court (1), sand
<b>15</b>	Water fountain (1)

Source: Johnson City Parks and Recreation

Proposed Improvements

The proposed conceptual plan (right) illustrates the future redevelopment of Kiwanis Park. When completed, the park will contain updated new equipment and facilities. These plans depict the construction of new baseball and softball fields, new parking areas, new concession areas, new basketball courts, and new walking trails. Other planned improvements will be discussed later in this report. The proposed facilities will be constructed as funding becomes available.



**Conceptual Redevelopment Plan for Kiwanis Park**

Beeson Hall

Beeson Hall is a 5,000 square-foot recreation facility that is operated by the Johnson City Housing Authority as the Johnson City Athletic Club. The facility is located at 403 Harrison Street, adjacent to Kiwanis Park. The facility provides structured sporting options and programs such as boxing, weight training, and other fitness programs to Johnson City youth (both boys and girls), and has been in operation in one form or another since 1942. Beeson Hall receives funding from local, state, and federal sources as well as from private citizen donations. The boxing program is one of the primary activities, and boxing scholarships are periodically awarded to youth who excel in this program.

Veterans’ Memorial

The city in conjunction with the Johnson City/ Washington County Veterans’ Memorial Committee plan to construct a new memorial to veterans in the northwestern corner of Kiwanis Park at the intersection of West Market Street and Sidney Street (renamed Veterans’ Way). This two-acre memorial is designed so that visitors can walk along a series of walls that have the names of veterans inscribed on them who have either died in combat or who are missing in action. The centerpiece is a curved wall made of red granite that reads “Freedom is Not Free.”



Road Conditions

Overall, the streets in the Mountain Home Study Area are in good condition. According to a Public Works Department Street Survey, the majority of the streets are listed as new or in good condition.

Major Roadway Project

The extension of University Parkway (former Tennessee Street) which runs from West Market Street to the intersection of Lamont Street was completed in 2010. The four-lane divided roadway now provides a direct connection from State of Franklin Road to West Market Street.

A continuous median was installed along the entire new segment length, preventing any left hand turns except at Lamont Street and West Market Street. This was done at the request of neighborhood residents who expressed concern that with these new road improvements, this roadway would transition into a commercial corridor. The continuous median was an attempt to discourage this type of activity.

New traffic signals were also installed at West Market Street and Lamont Street to aid in the directional movement and flow of traffic, and to increase safety at these major intersections.

**Map 7: Road Conditions**



Traffic Calming

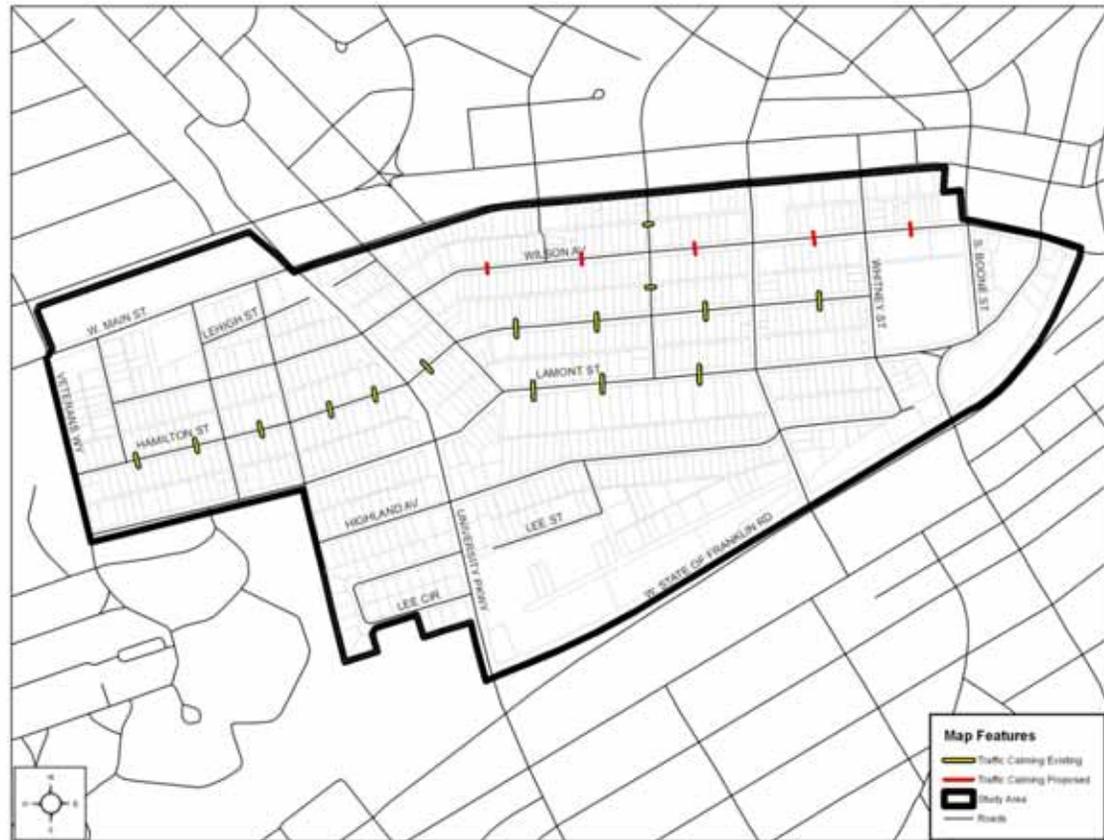
In the Mountain Home Study Area Citizen Survey over one-half of the respondents expressed the need to reduce speeding in the neighborhood. Traffic calming is one method used to slow vehicles on local streets within residential areas.

The city recently constructed traffic calming along Lamont Street between Hillcrest Drive and Watauga Avenue and along Hamilton Street between Crescent Street and Whitney Street.

At a recent neighborhood meeting, several residents expressed a concern about speeding along Wilson Avenue and a desire to install traffic calming on Wilson Avenue. There have been previous discussions with neighborhood residents about traffic calming along Wilson Avenue; however it was decided to wait until after the University Parkway project was completed to see if the problem was alleviated by the new construction.

Now that University Parkway has been open for six months, it may be time to revisit this issue. Additionally, the Police Department has conducted direct traffic enforcement to help alleviate this concern.

**Map 8: Traffic Calming**



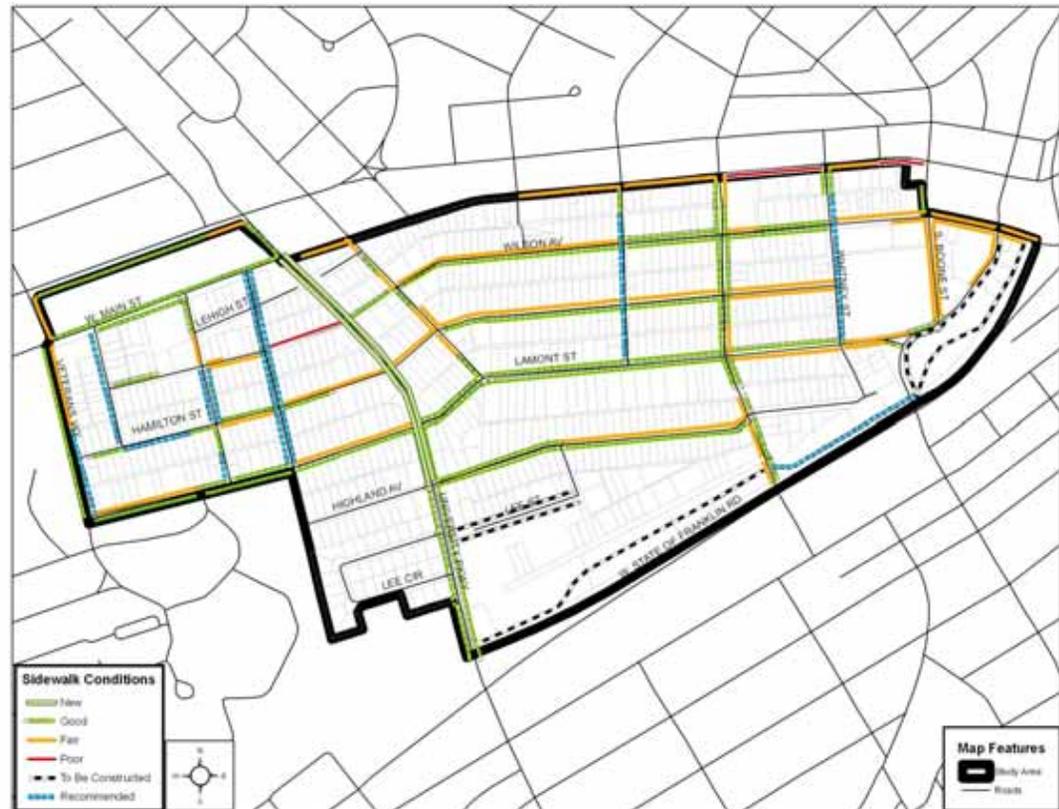
Sidewalks and Walking Trails

In both the neighborhood citizen survey and the neighborhood meeting, the lack of sidewalks was stated to be a major concern. In addition, to repair broken sidewalks and to provide a continuous network was seen as a priority.

The condition of all the sidewalks was assessed by the city in the summer of 2005. The Transportation Element adopted in 2007, reflects that the sidewalks are primarily in fair to good condition. Ideally, there would be sidewalks along all public streets; however that would be cost prohibitive. Therefore, staff has identified a list of segment priorities (Map 9) based on connectivity, proximity to parks and schools, traffic volumes, and residential density. This list will be used by the Public Works Department to determine the priority of sidewalk construction as opportunities and resources become available.

Projects which are currently under construction that include sidewalks/walking trails are: University Edge and the Warehouse Park. The University Edge Apartments project will include sidewalks along both sides of Lee Street from University Parkway to Taylor Street and a walking trail along State of Franklin Road. The Warehouse Park Stormwater Project will include sidewalks along Lamont Street from Wilson Avenue to Sevier Street and along Sevier Street to State of Franklin Road. It also includes a walking trail along State of Franklin Road.

**Map 9: Sidewalk Conditions**



Public Transportation

The city of Johnson City Transit Department (JCT) began operations in 1979 as the first new municipal transit system in Tennessee since World War II. JCT operates fixed-route services, paratransit services for individuals with disabilities, and various demand-response call-in services.

The transit system accommodates 1,355 passengers per day. JCT provides bus services within the city to all major commercial and institutional facilities including: East Tennessee State University, the Mountain Home Veterans Administration Center, hospitals, shopping malls and centers, and government offices. In addition, the major residential neighborhoods and group housing complexes are also served. The study area is served by three, separate public transit routes. The Purple Route runs along West State of Franklin Road and Boone Street; the Green Route runs along Wilson Avenue, West Watauga Road, and Lamont Street; and the Red Route runs along West Main and Street. No single residence or business within the study area is located further than 600 feet from at least two, separate transit lines. The Johnson City Transit Department is also responsible for the provision of school bus service for students of the Johnson City School System.



Johnson City Transit Building, 137 W. Market Street

**Map 10: Transit Routes**



In order to protect this neighborhood area and to promote its revitalization, staff recommends the following:

- 1) Provide technical assistance to the newly revived Mountain Home Neighborhood Association;
- 2) Work with the residents and the neighborhood association in implementation of the Weed and Seed program;
- 3) Investigate and meet with neighbors concerning the need for traffic calming along Wilson Avenue;
- 4) Work with the residents and the neighborhood association to develop a Neighborhood Watch program;
- 5) Construct sidewalks identified on Map 9: Sidewalks Conditions as financial resources permit; and
- 6) The study area has over the years undergone a number of rezonings. While a majority of these rezoning efforts have been aimed at reducing residential density allowances, some have produced opposite effects. This report is intended to recognize those changes, and ascertain whether additional changes are necessary to help preserve the predominately single-family quality of the area. To aid in this effort, the following are areas where possible zoning changes might occur in the years that follow this report
  - A. REZONE the areas along West State of Franklin that are currently I-2, Heavy Industrial District, to B-3, Supporting Central Business District in an effort to offset future negative impacts to nearby residents caused by manufacturing uses;
  - B. REZONE certain properties along Lamont Street that contain single-family structures on individual parcels to R-2C, Low Density Residential District in an effort to protect single-family ownership;
  - C. REZONE the Kiwanis Park property and the Oak Hill Cemetery property R-2, Low Density Residential District in an effort to possibly thwart the further expansion of high-density residential zoning among contiguous properties; and
  - D. REZONE B-3, Supporting Central Business District properties to B-2 Central Business District to bring many of the properties in conformance with the Zoning Code (setback and parking) and to encourage their redevelopment.