



CITY OF DURHAM | DURHAM COUNTY  
NORTH CAROLINA



**Date:** March 21, 2013

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager

**Through:** Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager

**From:** Steven L. Medlin, AICP, Planning Director  
Laura D. Woods, AICP, Senior Planner

**Subject:** Durham Industrial Land Study

**Summary.** Staff has completed a land suitability analysis of industrial land in Durham, utilizing well-accepted industry and land use planning standards. This report was developed with input from the City Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce. Based on staff's analysis, Durham has sufficient industrial land to accommodate projected demand through 2035. However, an absence of vacant, very large parcels of land (over 100 acres) may limit Durham's ability to attract some industrial employers. This report was presented to the Joint City-County Planning Committee on February 6, 2013 and to the Durham Planning Commission on February 12, 2013.

**Recommendation.** This report is provided for information only. No action is required at this time.

**Background.** Policy 6.1.5c of the *Durham Comprehensive Plan* directs Planning staff, in conjunction with the City's Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, to conduct a study to determine the appropriate location, size, and qualities of industrial land in Durham. The Industrial Land Study addresses the following:

- 1) A comparison of acres of land designated "Industrial" and "Research/Research Applications" on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and land zoned as Industrial (I), Industrial Light (IL), Industrial Park (IP) and Science Research Park (SRP), with updated projected demand for industrial land to be used for those purposes;
- 2) An evaluation of the feasibility of land designated "Industrial" and "Research/Research Applications," utilizing nationally recognized industry standards;
- 3) Analysis of Future Land Use Map and zoning designations to determine if they meet current and future needs and vision with regard to industrial land; and

- 4) Consideration of other issues, as appropriate, identified through coordination with partner agencies.

Staff identified the following defining criteria for marketable industrial land:

- 1) Proximity to major roadways;
- 2) Access to public water and sewer services;
- 3) Sufficient acreage to accommodate the proposed use;
- 4) Lack of environmental constraints; and
- 5) Appropriate distance from residential uses.

Staff determined that a small number of industrial uses are not subject to the criteria above. For that reason, the following industrial uses were excluded from this analysis: mining, quarries, and salvage yards. The analysis focused on certain industrial, high-employment generators:

- 1) Manufacturing/processing;
- 2) Environmental science;
- 3) Materials science;
- 4) Information technology/Communications;
- 5) Microelectronics;
- 6) Pharmaceutical science;
- 7) Biological technology/biological pharmacology; and
- 8) Miscellaneous research.

**Issues.** Approximately 17,200 acres in Durham County are zoned for industrial uses. Currently, 5,300 acres of land designated for industrial uses are utilized for those purposes. Therefore, approximately 12,000 acres of land designated for industrial uses were either vacant or used for other purposes in 2012.

Staff projects that, by 2035, 1,400 acres will be needed to accommodate anticipated growth. However, not all land zoned for industrial uses is marketable for those purposes. The analysis indicates that approximately 1,600 acres of vacant industrial land meet all criteria of the study. Therefore, there is sufficient designated, marketable industrial land to meet projected need.

The analysis indicates that, while preservation of some vacant industrial lands may be crucial to accommodate demand, some properties may not be marketable for industrial purposes and could be converted to other uses without diminishing Durham's capacity for new industrial development.

The analysis also revealed a lack of marketable industrial properties that were 100 or more acres in size. An evaluation of vacant or minimally utilized properties that could serve to meet Durham's need for very large industrial properties may be worthwhile.

**Staff Contact**

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**Attachments**

Attachment 1: Durham Industrial Land Study, March 2013

Attachment 2: Presentation Slides, Durham Industrial Land Study