

In the early 2000s the Winston-Salem City Council recognized the problems and issues associated with declining urban commercial areas and their economic impact on the health of our City and neighborhoods by including the revitalization of such areas in its Strategic Plan. The Council noted underutilized, unutilized, and blighted properties are in need of assistance to change the disinvestment trend.

In 2006 City Council established the Revitalizing Urban Commercial Areas (RUCA) Program to help revitalize some of the city's declining urban commercial areas. Reasons for developing strategies to improve the existing urban commercial areas were cited as:

- RUCAs are accessible. As suburban shopping areas move further and further out, the hardship increases on those people who do not drive due to age, economic position, or choice. This affects their ability to find goods and services or reach employment destinations. Our transit system has difficulty providing routes to ever expanding, auto-dominated development.
- RUCAs can be a symbol of neighborhood health and history. Healthy older commercial areas provide a stronger tax base, jobs for neighborhood residents, the preservation of historic buildings, and may even become tourist attractions. Urban Activity Centers provide a sense of community and a location for public gatherings where neighbors can congregate and hold community events.
- RUCAs reduce suburban sprawl by concentrating businesses in developed areas where infrastructure already is in place. Smaller commercial areas also have more local/family businesses, which support community projects and provide a stable economic base due to a greater tendency to recycle revenues within the community.
- RUCAs are part of a walkable community. By providing the option of walking to services we also promote the health benefits of activity, social interaction, and better air quality through reduced vehicle miles traveled.

When the RUCA tiers were created in the mid-2000s, staff looked at vacancy levels, as well as general property conditions such as broken or boarded up windows and doors; holes or cracks in walls and foundations; decaying facades; leaking or collapsed roofs; broken signage or fencing; overgrown vegetation, junked cars, and/or trash on the property.