



OUR VOICES, OUR VISION
BUNCOMBE COUNTY 2043
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
ADOPTED MAY 16, 2023



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Picture of the Blue Ridge mountains.

Acknowledging Our Past

Buncombe County acknowledges that the land our county occupies is the ancestral territory of many Indigenous peoples, acquired by European settlers through violence, oppression, and coercion, as well as legally and illegally executed treaties.

We acknowledge the many vibrant American Indian communities that continue to call this occupied land home. In Western North Carolina, this includes members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and many others who identify with and belong to other Indigenous cultures and groups. We also acknowledge that Western North Carolina was home to thousands of enslaved Black or African American laborers who suffered at the hands of an oppressive system that exploited their labor, their bodies, and their culture.

Plan Contributors

Buncombe County would like to extend our gratitude to all those who participated in or contributed to the Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan. We would also like to thank everyone who provided a detailed and technical review of the Plan, including:

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Photo of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

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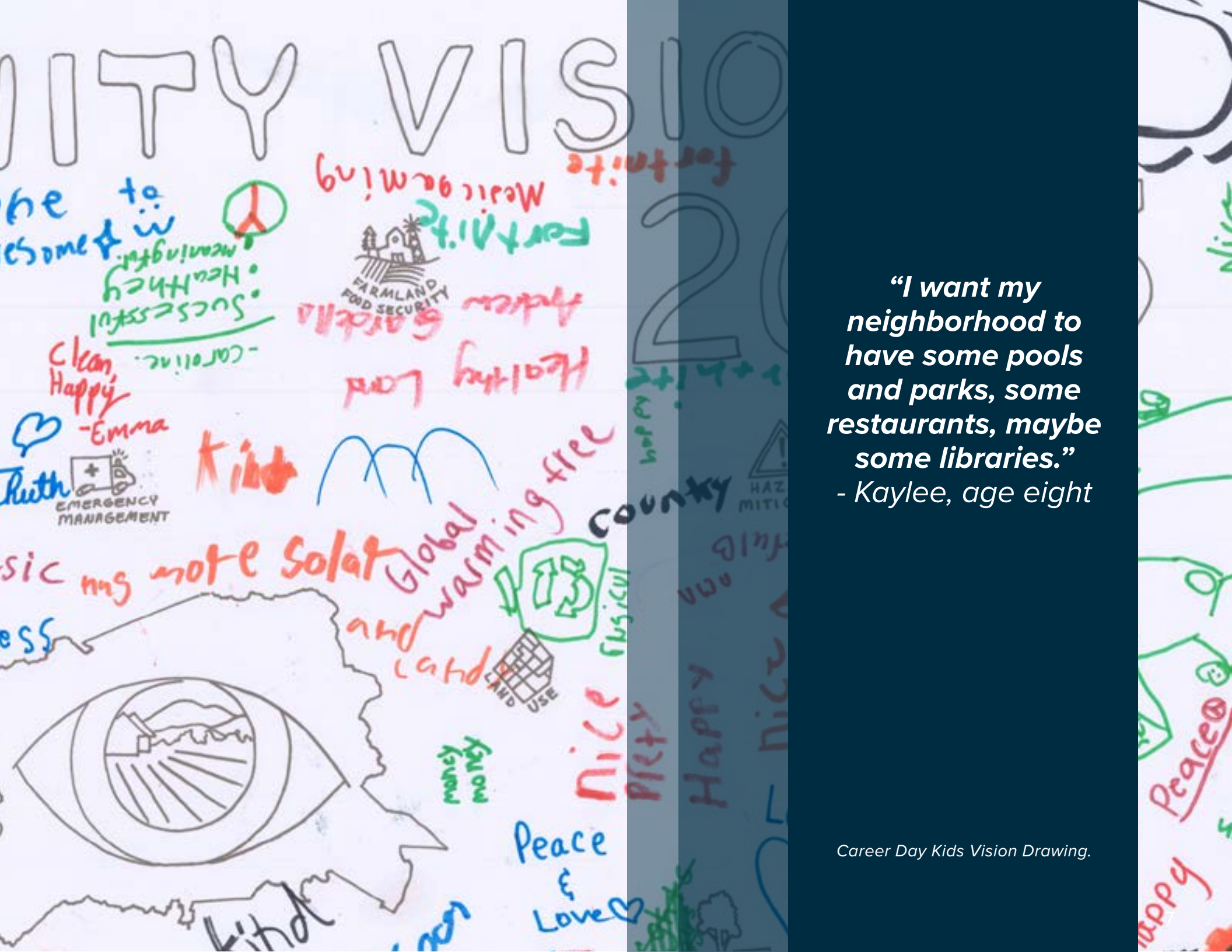
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“I want my neighborhood to have some pools and parks, some restaurants, maybe some libraries.”
- Kaylee, age eight

COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

About Buncombe 2043

“People to match our mountains.”

Buncombe County’s motto addresses our two greatest resources. The county is home to welcoming people; a strong community of artists, creators, growers, producers, and innovators. It boasts picturesque landscapes including farms, mountain views, a national forest, and sections of the iconic Blue Ridge Parkway. It brings together the history and culture of Appalachia’s rich farming communities, with growing opportunities for **nature-based recreation** and tourism, and vibrant urban and municipal centers.

This combination has served our current residents and attracted thousands of new residents each year for decades, making Buncombe County one of the fastest-growing counties in a fast-growing state. Buncombe County experienced a 27% increase in population between 2000 and 2019. This growth has occurred both within the City of Asheville and the county’s other municipalities, as well as the unincorporated areas of the county.

Population projections suggest that this growth will continue, and the county may add an additional 55,000-83,000 residents by 2045.

FUTURE RESIDENTS BY THE NUMBERS

 = 5% OF POPULATION

+20-30%
POTENTIAL POPULATION
INCREASE BY 2045



+25% OF POPULATION

Critical Questions Explored

These were all critical questions to be explored in the County's first comprehensive planning process - Buncombe 2043: Our Voices, Our Vision (hereafter referred to as "the Plan"). Launched by the Buncombe County Planning & Development team, the Plan was crafted with ongoing input from residents during a planning process that occurred fall 2021 through spring 2023.



County staff and a young resident at a public input meeting at the East Asheville Library



Purpose of the Plan

Our Comprehensive Plan is a document created through a collaboration of residents, community stakeholders, government leaders, and staff. We set out to create a shared vision of the community for the next 20 years and define objectives to be achieved during that time. The Plan considers the relationships between land uses, infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.), and community needs, and outlines policy guidance for addressing these objectives.

The Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance to help develop stand-alone plans (such as a Small Area Plan or the Buncombe County Aging Plan), update Buncombe County's **Strategic Plan**, and inform the projects and initiatives undertaken through the annual budget process. The Plan also informs regulatory updates to the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance.

A Comprehensive Plan is a requirement by the state of North Carolina for local governments that use zoning regulations. The plan can be used as a broad tool to help elected officials and County staff identify how they want to prioritize resources and future planning efforts. Adoption is not the end of the comprehensive planning process. Once adopted, Buncombe County will periodically update this Plan to address changing conditions and evaluate new opportunities.



Figure 2: Plan Types

The Planning Cycle

Community planning is a continuous cycle: It begins with identifying a long-range vision and developing policy guidance through the Comprehensive Plan. The community then identifies shorter-term priorities that support the long-range policy direction, often through the County's Strategic Plan and departmental work plans.

Using these plans, the County identifies funding priorities in order to create the County's annual budget and capital improvement plan. The County implements capital projects and operations to enact the community's vision and achieve its goals. The County assesses implementations to measure and evaluate our progress and identify where we are making headway and where we are falling short. And then, we will start the process over again to plan for the next 20 years.

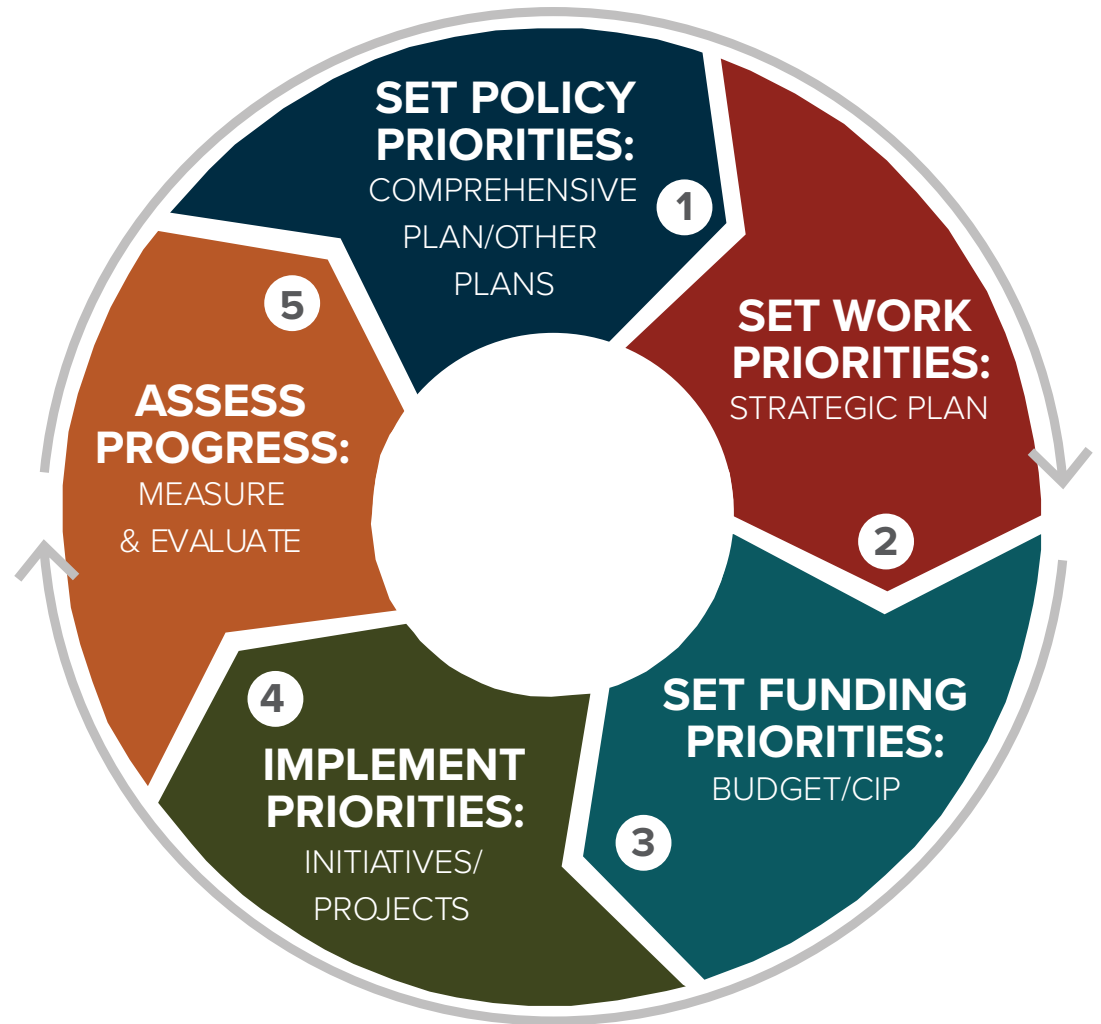


Figure 3: Planning Cycle

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

GLOSSARY TERMS !

If you see a **key term highlighted** in this Plan, check out the Glossary of Planning Terms starting on page 206.

The Plan organizes policy direction into seven planning topics:

- Growth, Equity, and Conservation;
- Transportation and Connectivity;
- Farms, Forests, and Environmental Conservation;
- Health & Recreation;
- Hazards and Resilience;
- Infrastructure and Energy; and
- Economic Development, Education, and Jobs.

The seven planning topics each have their own Goals, Policies, and Actions in the following chapters.

In addition, several key themes are integrated throughout these chapters that were priorities for this planning process:

- Equity
- Sustainability
- Regionalism

A representation of the key themes and planning topics is shown on the right. On page 13, you will find a visual representation of the structure of the Plan.



Figure 1: Buncombe 2043 Focus Areas and Planning Topics
A dark circle in the center is labeled Equity. Circles with the name of each of the seven chapters surround the Equity circle. A dotted line labeled Regionalism on the inside and Sustainability on the outside encircle all of the chapter and Equity bubble.

Where Do I Find...?

INTRODUCTION	You are here! Provides an intro to Vision Themes, key terms, and planning topics.	
GROWTH, EQUITY, AND CONSERVATION	Provides the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework for guiding land use and development decisions, including Small Area Planning.	
TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY	Establishes the County's approach to transportation planning and includes important Actions for enhancing the County's multimodal transportation network.	
FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION	Focuses on the programs and initiatives that the County can undertake or partner on to protect its highly valued natural resources.	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND JOBS	Supports career advancement, increasing the wealth generation of residents, support for economic growth of businesses, small business development, and attracting new businesses.	
HEALTH AND RECREATION	Supports the advancement of recreational opportunities and the improvement of health outcomes.	
HAZARDS AND RESILIENCE	Addresses future steps to safeguard the Buncombe County community from human-made and climate change-related hazards, including floods, landslides, and wildfires.	
INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY	Guides decisions related to public services and facilities, capital investments, and capital improvement planning as well as water and sewer infrastructure investments.	
IMPLEMENTATION	Sets out specific metrics for measuring the outcomes of Plan implementation and Actions for achieving the Plan's vision.	
APPENDIX	Provides the Glossary of Planning Terms with definitions of terms used throughout this document and the Summary of Public Engagement Meetings and Events.	

Plan Framework

The Plan Framework contains the key Plan components: Vision Themes, Goals, Policies, and Actions. The previous chart describes each of these components and where they can be found within this document. Each topic/chapter of the Plan document is organized to show the progression from the aspirational Vision Themes and Goals to the tangible Policies and Actions.

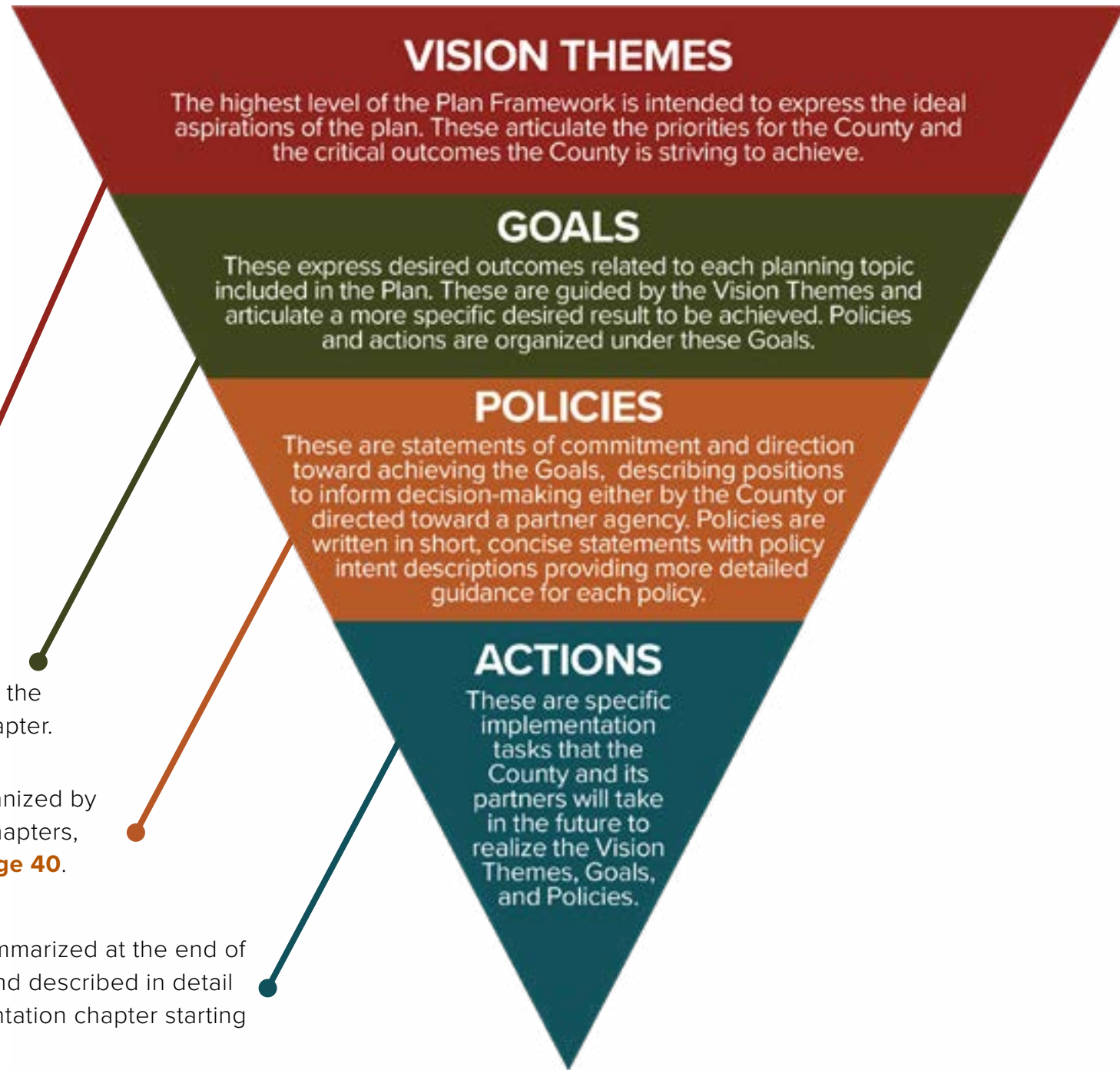
The **Vision Themes** are summarized on **page 16**.

Look for the *Connection to Vision Themes* section at the beginning of each chapter to learn how they apply to that chapter's Policies.

Goals are provided at the beginning of each chapter.




Policies are organized by planning topic chapters, beginning on **page 40**.

Actions are summarized at the end of each chapter and described in detail in the Implementation chapter starting on **page 156**.



Equity in Decision-Making

The Plan prioritizes equity in the decision-making processes and engagement activities. Understanding procedural, distributional, and structural equity is essential to the success of this Plan. The following guidance has been adapted from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network’s Guide¹ to steer how future engagement in Buncombe County should prioritize aspects of equity. This may include the Actions provided in the Implementation chapter along with future planning efforts.

 PROCEDURAL EQUITY	 DISTRIBUTIONAL EQUITY	 STRUCTURAL EQUITY
<p>DEFINITION: <i>Inclusive, accessible, authentic engagement and representation in processes to develop or implement programs and policies</i></p> <p>Ways to implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create processes that are transparent, fair, and inclusive in developing and implementing any program, plan, or policy• Ensure that all people are treated openly and fairly• Increase the civic engagement opportunity of communities that are disproportionately impacted by climate change• Apply the Buncombe County Equity Analysis Tool in implementation of the Comprehensive Plan	<p>DEFINITION: <i>Programs and policies that result in fair distributions of benefits and burdens across all segments of a community, prioritizing those with highest need</i></p> <p>Ways to implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fairly distribute resources, benefits, and burdens• Prioritize resources for communities that experience the greatest inequities, disproportionate impacts, and have the greatest unmet needs	<p>DEFINITION: <i>Decision-makers institutionalize accountability; decisions are made with a recognition of the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that have routinely advantaged privileged groups in society and resulted in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for subordinated groups</i></p> <p>Ways to implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a commitment and investment to correct past harms and prevent future unintended consequences• Address the underlying structural and institutional systems that are the root causes of social and racial inequities

¹ Adapted from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network Guide to Equitable, Community-driven Climate Preparedness Planning: https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn_guide_to_equitable_community-driven_climate_preparedness-high_res.pdf. Icon credit to Eucalyp, Phonlaphat Thongsriphong, and Vectorstall from the Noun Project.

VISION THEMES

Through input from our residents and the Steering Committee, Vision Themes were drafted to provide an overarching direction for the future of our county.

Through our Buncombe County 2043 community vision, we will...

STRIVE TO ACHIEVE EQUITY



Buncombe County will strive to address social, economic, and environmental inequities by repairing and investing in historically disadvantaged communities and replacing inequitable land use and transportation policies and regulations.

COMMIT TO SUSTAINABILITY



Growth and change in the county will be sustainable and achieve resilience to hazards, conversion to renewable energy systems, protection of natural resources, and support a sustainable local economy in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

ACHIEVE LIVABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY



Residents will have safe, accessible, and affordable housing and multi-modal transportation choices to create a more connected, walkable, healthy community that accommodates the diverse needs of residents. Buncombe County will attract quality jobs that support higher wages and enable livability and affordability.

FOCUS ON CONSERVATION



Natural resources, farms, and rural lands provide picturesque landscapes and water systems; local food systems; healthy water, air, and soil quality; and opportunities for nature and recreation-based economic development. The County will prioritize conservation efforts to protect these land, water, and air resources.

ROOT EFFORTS IN COMMUNITY



County decision-making will be rooted in the outcomes of engagement efforts with residents, landowners, and business owners and supported by data. The County will support opportunities for community interaction and will steward public resources in a fiscally efficient and transparent manner.

KEY THEMES & **TERMS DEFINED**



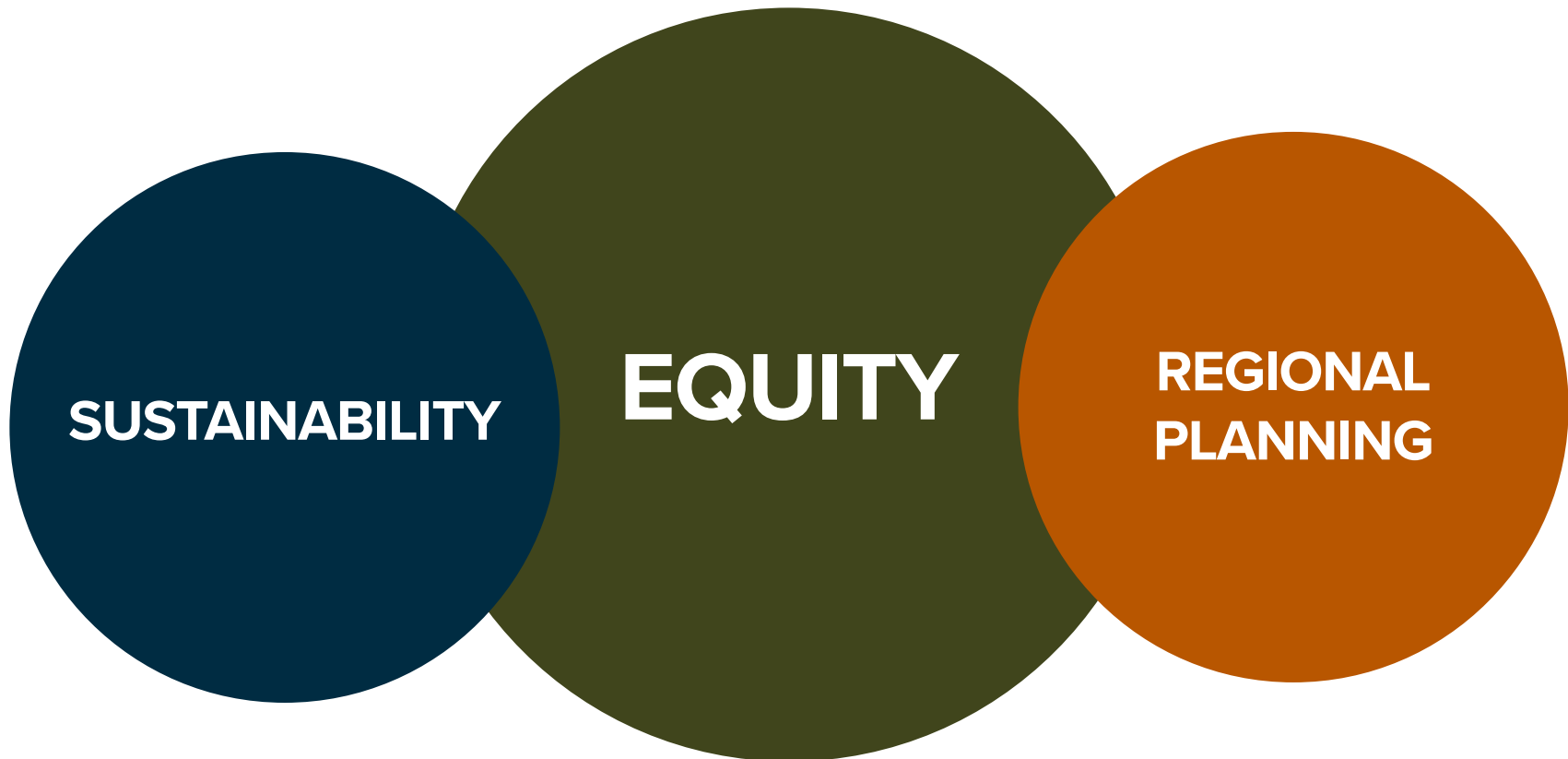
Photo from Hola Carolina Event.

Key Themes

Public input was clear: the community envisions an equitable and sustainable future for Buncombe County that builds on its importance within the region.

An equity lens was used to develop the Plan components. When the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners declared racism a public health and safety crisis in August of 2020, it signaled the connection of meaningful community action and a legislative commitment to dismantling systemic racism within Buncombe County governmental operations. Building upon previous County work like the Racial Equity Action Plan and Strategic Plan, the 2043 Comprehensive Plan is the next step of deliberate and intentional work by the County to achieve equity for everyone in our community.

KEY THEMES FOR THE PLAN



*Early in the process, the three planning themes - **Equity**, **Sustainability**, and **Regional Planning** - were identified as key influences for developing the plan.*

Key Terms

This Plan had a special focus on equity, sustainability, and regional planning both in engagement efforts and the development of the Policies in the Plan. The key terms below are important foundations for the rest of the chapters that follow. This provides a clear and transparent standard for understanding how these concepts are used in the Plan. Additional terms that appear throughout the Plan are defined at the end of the document in the Glossary.

EQUITY

DEFINITION: Equity is “the state of being just, impartial, and fair.” Buncombe County’s Racial Equity Action Plan envisions operationalizing “systems, policies, and practices that support equity for all people and an organizational culture that embraces diversity and inclusion.”

SOURCE: [Buncombe County Strategic Plan](#) (page 31)

HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

DEFINITION: Historically disadvantaged communities are marginalized, underserved, and/or overburdened by pollution and social or societal inequities, including economic disadvantages, environmental injustices, and underinvestment in housing, transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure, and healthcare. The criteria used to identify these communities include environmental, climate, and socioeconomic indicators.

SOURCE: [ILLUME Advising \(March 2022\), State and Federal Environmental Justice, Climate Justice, Disadvantaged, and Vulnerable Community Definitions, Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad \(January 2021\), the White House](#)



VISION THEMES FOR THE PLAN



STRIVE TO
ACHIEVE EQUITY



COMMIT TO
SUSTAINABILITY



ACHIEVE LIVABILITY AND
AFFORDABILITY



FOCUS ON
CONSERVATION



ROOT EFFORTS
IN COMMUNITY

SUSTAINABILITY

DEFINITION: Sustainability is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

SOURCE: [United Nations: Academic Impact, Brundtland Commission Definition of Sustainability](#)

REGIONAL PLANNING

DEFINITION: Regional planning examines the connection of a larger geographical area that encompasses multiple cities and counties. In this Plan, the context of Western North Carolina and the importance of Asheville and Buncombe County as regional hubs, are a prominent focus. In addition, the Plan identifies opportunities to plan in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions on topics of regional impact, such as land use, transportation, hazard mitigation, and the provision of water and sewer infrastructure.

SOURCE: Clarion Associates.
For further reading: Planetizen Planopedia, [“What is Regional Planning?”](#)



New Planning Tools

The Plan includes four new planning tools that are important to recognize: The Growth, Equity, and Conservation (GEC) Framework (including the GEC Map), the Community Index Map, the **Equity Analysis** Tool, and future Small Area Planning. These planning tools, in addition to the numerous Actions located in the Implementation chapter, will be how Buncombe County makes the ideas in this Plan become a reality. These planning tools and Actions each address a specific aspect of community planning that was identified during the process. Below is a brief description of the four new implementation tools and the Plan’s Actions, as well as where to find them in this document.

GROWTH, EQUITY, AND CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK



DESCRIPTION:

The Growth, Equity, and Conservation (GEC) Framework serves as guidance for the types of development and land uses that meet the community’s vision for the County. At a high level, the framework is organized into Growth Areas, **Equity Opportunity Areas** (EOAs), and Conservation Areas. The Growth Areas and Conservation Areas are divided into land use categories that describe the intention for how these areas should evolve or stay the same over time. The EOAs are based on the Community Index Map (described on the next page). This framework can be leveraged to evaluate the appropriateness of infrastructure expansion and to inform decision-making related to proposed development projects. The map and categories are found on page 43.

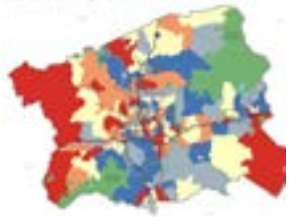
SMALL AREA PLANNING TOOLS



DESCRIPTION:

Small area plans will be developed to guide changes to the built environment for a particular area or corridor. Small area plans are generally prepared for places that need focused attention, community dialogue, or planning guidance. Such areas are often undergoing or on the verge of change due to development, growth, or other factors. The small area planning process is intended to seek community input, provide detailed solutions to growth or other issues, and guide future development in that particular area. An outcome of this Plan’s engagement process and technical analysis, the map on page 80 identifies sites for future small area planning efforts. Future small area planning will not be limited to these areas and will evolve in response to future conditions in Buncombe County.

COMMUNITY INDEX MAP



DESCRIPTION:

The Community Index Map, part of the GEC Framework, helps to identify important opportunities for creating equity in Buncombe County. This map will be updated over time and will serve as a factual guide when making equity-related policy decisions. The map distinguishes areas with a higher Equity Opportunity score, denoting areas where additional efforts are needed to support these communities (many of which have been historically disadvantaged). The map, found starting on page 48, will be used in conjunction with the Equity Analysis Tool.

EQUITY ANALYSIS TOOL

The Equity Analysis Tool is a product of the County's Equity and Human Rights Office. The tool has been adapted to the Comprehensive Plan to be used by County Planning and Development Staff to evaluate new proposed development projects and, specifically, the impact these projects may have on surrounding areas. County Staff can leverage the Equity Analysis Tool and Community Index Map to identify Equity Opportunity Areas. The application of these tools as part of the **legislative public hearing processes** will help identify whether or not a proposed development will advance the County's vision. The tool and map are found starting on page 47.

TAKING ACTION

Specific Actions to implement the Plan (found starting on page 164) fall under several key types of Actions and are identified in the Implementation chapter by the icons on the right side:

REGULATORY

Regulatory and Guideline Updates

These are Actions focused on updating specific legal rules for new development. An example of this is preparing updates to the County's Zoning Ordinance.

FUNDING

Capital Investments and Funding Programs

These Actions focus on funding different operational initiatives and community investments, such as funding for conservation, environmental enhancements, and restoration projects.

PLANNING

Further Planning Efforts and Initiatives

These include more detailed planning efforts, some of which may be undertaken in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions, such as a small area plans.

PARTNERSHIP

Partnership Opportunities The County does not have the full jurisdiction and funding required to implement many of the Actions in the Plan. Partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions, utility providers, regional transportation planning entities, economic development partners, and other types of partnerships are needed to fully implement the Plan.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLAN APPROACH



Buncombe County's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting.

Plan Phases

The creation of a long-range Comprehensive Plan requires broad community engagement to be successful. The project included four Phases from fall 2021 until spring 2023. See Figure 4 on page 26 to see the plan process. Phase 1 launched the project in the fall of 2021. This included the kickoff with the Buncombe County staff and consultant team, website and branding development, and creation of the project management and engagement plans. The Project Team conducted County and stakeholder interviews as part of Phase 1 to gather foundational knowledge about the community.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Phase 2 was extended from the original dates; it occurred from winter 2021 to spring 2022. Phase 2 focused on assessing existing conditions, identifying future planning influences, and developing the Plan Framework, Vision Themes, and Goals. Phase 2 included the first Public Input Window activities.

Phase 3 began in late spring 2022 and was finalized in fall 2022. This Phase included assessing future growth alternatives; developing the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework and Map; and drafting the Policies and Actions. It also included the second Public Input Window, which asked for community feedback on the Vision Themes, Goals, Policies, and Actions, and helped set priorities for implementation.

During Phase 4, from fall 2022 until spring 2023, the Project Team focused on adopting the plan. This included updating the plan based on the final public input opportunity in the third Public Input Window and taking the Plan to public adoption meetings and hearings.

Engaging the Community

Accessibility is key to gathering broad, high-quality public input. Staff were committed to addressing barriers to participation in their engagement plan. That included being mindful of barriers such as: transportation, technology, language, work schedules, making events family friendly and more. Here's how the Project Team worked to address some of these limitations during the project:

Transportation

- In-person meetings were held in urban and rural areas throughout the county.
- Drop-in style meetings made it easier for bus riders to come at convenient times.
- Online options meant residents with internet access could provide input from home or work without having to travel.
- Staff reached out to hundreds of local agencies, stakeholder groups, and service providers, offering to drop off paper activities.

Technology

- Paper activities were available at County libraries and other locations for people without internet access.
- Paper activities were also handed out at community events, in food boxes, and by Steering Committee members.

Language and Accessibility

- Activities and advertising were available in English and Spanish.
- Live Spanish language interpreters were available at a number of in-person and virtual meetings.
- Staff created documents accessible for those using screen readers for the visually impaired.
- Staff reached out to organizations that assist individuals with development disabilities.
- Staff provided one-on-one assistance completing the activities for individuals that needed extra assistance.

Family-Friendly

- Children were invited to attend meetings, allowing caregivers more flexibility.
- Child-friendly planning activities were provided, with staff available to assist. Activities allowed children to share their input about their communities.
- Drop-in style meetings helped parents with younger children navigate the activities at their own pace, and leave when needed.

Scheduling

- Meetings were scheduled for a range of weekdays, weekends, and evening times to accommodate different schedules.
- Drop-in meetings provided greater flexibility, allowing residents to come any time during the meeting window, and stay as long as they wanted.
- Online and self-paced activities meant residents could provide their input without having to attend a meeting.

Plan Process



Figure 4: Plan Process by Phases

Public Input Themes

Across the first two Public Input Windows, several themes emerged.

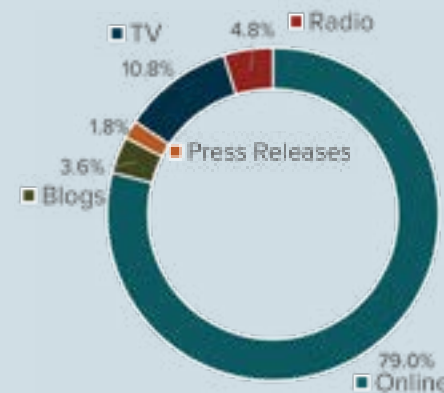
- Participants expressed that they wanted to protect the county’s environment, including: air, water, and soil.
- Participants agreed that areas with access to sewer, city water, and broadband internet that are away from environmentally sensitive areas should be prioritized for growth.
- Participants were concerned about cost of living and wanted to see affordable housing options.
- The community desires more safe and affordable ways to travel to places, including biking, walking, and riding a bus or taking public transit.

These insights established the foundation for the Policies and Actions of the Plan. Across the three Public Input Windows, the community had many opportunities to participate. Summaries of the participation and public engagement across the planning process is provided on the following pages.

IN THE NEWS: MEDIA COVERAGE SUMMARY

Buncombe County tracked the media coverage of the 2043 Comprehensive Plan from January until December 2022 in order to understand the media impact at a high level. The coverage summary, summarized below, shows that the majority of media coverage of the Plan came from online sources (79%) and TV (10.8%).

COVERAGE BY MEDIA TYPE



BY THE NUMBERS

167

Total Mentions

\$25.4 MILLION

Advertising Value Equivalency
(USD)

1 BILLION

Impressions

The Plan was mentioned 167 total times by media sources with 1 billion impressions across this time frame. Impressions are the number of times content is displayed, no matter if it was clicked or not. This coverage translates into \$25.4M in advertising value equivalency, meaning that is an estimation of what Buncombe County might have to pay for an advertising campaign to achieve the same reach.

Community Perspectives

Public Input Window #1 Outcomes

During the first Public Input Window, Buncombe County experienced delays in the planning process due to COVID-19 shutdowns and limits on social gatherings. Despite those setbacks, staff was able to reach many residents through online meetings and public input activities. Once the shutdowns lifted, staff held in-person and intercept meetings around the county in both urban and rural areas. This first round of public input reached many people from varying backgrounds, with five community meetings, five drop-in meetings, and four virtual meetings. A total of 1,243 people participated in the online activities. In addition, 347 people attended an in-person, virtual, or hybrid meeting.

The Word Cloud on the right summarizes themes from the first Public Input Window. Residents could share up to four words or short phrases to describe their desired vision for the future. A total of 1,321 people added their vision words to the Word Cloud, which were categorized into general themes to show the areas most mentioned by participants.

In this first round of input, many questions were asked across the seven planning topics. A few topics emerged that guided the Plan development process:

- Participants greatly value the natural environment (mountains, rivers, creeks, wildlife, etc.) and the people in Buncombe County, expressing that they wanted both the environment and their communities to be protected.

PUBLIC INPUT WINDOW #1 BY THE NUMBERS

- Participants expressed concern about the rising cost of living such as housing, transportation, and food costs, and want to see more affordable housing options.
- Participants desire safer and more affordable transportation options, including biking, walking, and riding a bus or taking public transit.





1,243

people participated in the online activities.



347

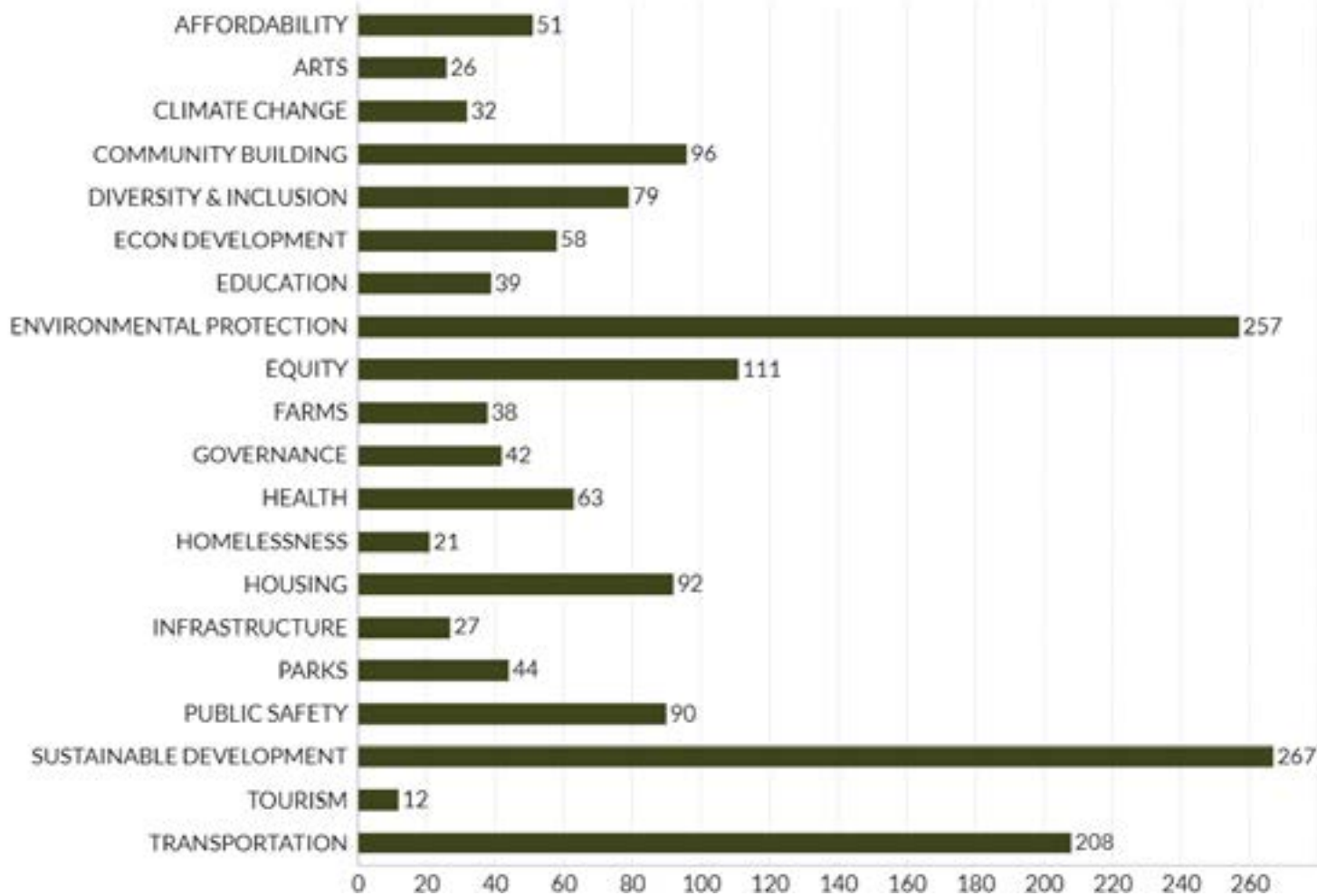
people attended an in-person, virtual, or hybrid meeting.



1,321

people added their vision words to the Word Cloud.

COMMUNITY PLANNING THEMES BY INSTANCE



Weaverville meeting during Public Input Window #1

Public Input Window #2 Outcomes

During the second Public Input Window, staff endeavored to improve their outreach methods to connect with as many community members as possible. This involved a different approach to engagement, focusing less on the traditional meeting structure and involving more informal events. From June until September 2022, staff hosted information tables at 15 intercept events, six festivals, and 18 community markets. A total of 2,699 people participated in this public input opportunity; approximately 60% of this group were participating in the planning process for the first time.

The online activities for this Phase built upon the foundation from previous public input activities. They provided more specific policy direction for the development of the Plan. The second Public Input Window demonstrated overwhelming public support for the Plan's draft policy direction. Policy direction from this Phase would evolve into the current planning topics and chapters and may be seen below:

- Protect neighborhoods with existing affordable housing from redevelopment and protect rural and farmland areas from new development.
- Locate future development in areas that are served by infrastructure (public water, sewer, and broadband) and away from environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains and steep slopes.
- Develop a safer and more balanced transportation system, including walking and biking options, for the purposes of recreation, health, and/or commuting.
- Extend transit service, expand trails, and develop sidewalks in areas with new development or redevelopment.

PUBLIC INPUT WINDOW #2 BY THE NUMBERS

- Remove barriers to entering the workforce and enable Buncombe County workers to earn higher wages by partnering with regional institutions and providing support services like affordable and quality childcare, transit access, and training opportunities.
- Expand or improve access to healthy and affordable foods, parks and recreation opportunities (trails, greenways, etc.), and healthcare services.
- Expand energy efficiency in new construction and renewable energy resources across the county.



Photos from a community event in Ledgewood.



2,669 people participated in this public input opportunity



60% of people were participating in the planning process for the first time.



39 events, including 15 intercept events, six festivals, and 18 community markets.

JOIN US TO CREATE A VISION AND GOALS FOR THE BUNCOMBE 2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

AS WE START OUR WORK ON THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, we are focused on three main things:

- Learning more about changes and issues that will impact residents now and in the future
- Identifying potential solutions and actions, and getting feedback from the community about the options
- Creating a community vision and priorities

January 10 (10am-12pm) Emma United Methodist	January 14 (4-6pm) Enka Middle School	February 7 (6-8pm) Erwin High School
January 11 (6-8pm) Fairview Comm. Center	January 15 (10am-4pm) East Asheville Library Drop-in Event	February 16 (4:30-6:30pm) Sandy Mush Comm. Center
January 12 (6-8pm) Weaverville Comm. Center w/ Virtual Option	January 20 (6-8pm) Virtual	February 17 (4-6pm) Black Mountain Library
January 13 (6-8pm) Skyland Library w/ Virtual Option	January 25 (12-2pm) Virtual	February 22 (4:30-8:30pm) Leicester Comm. Center

Learn more and sign up for updates at:
www.buncombecounty.org/plan2043

828.250.4830 • planninginfo@buncombecounty.org

SCAN ME

Flyer advertising upcoming public meetings.

JOIN US TO BUILD THE VISION AND GOALS FOR THE 2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

- Jan. 10 (10am-12pm) • Emma
- Jan. 14 (4-6pm) • Enka
- Jan. 15 (10am-4pm) • Weaverville
- Jan. 17 (6-8pm) • Skyland
- Jan. 20 (6-8pm) • Virtual
- Jan. 25 (12-2pm) • Virtual

BUNCOMBE 2043

engage.buncombecounty.org

JOIN US TO BUILD THE VISION AND GOALS FOR THE 2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

- Jan. 10 (10am-12pm) • Emma
- Jan. 14 (4-6pm) • Enka
- Jan. 15 (10am-4pm) • Weaverville
- Jan. 17 (6-8pm) • Skyland
- Jan. 20 (6-8pm) • Virtual
- Jan. 25 (12-2pm) • Virtual

BUNCOMBE 2043

engage.buncombecounty.org

JOIN US TO BUILD THE VISION AND GOALS FOR THE 2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

HYBRID & VIRTUAL MEETINGS:

- Jan. 12 (6-8pm) • Hybrid
- Jan. 15 (10-4pm) • Hybrid
- Jan. 20 (6-8pm) • Virtual
- Jan. 25 (12-2pm) • Virtual

BUNCOMBE 2043

engage.buncombecounty.org

Social media campaign post.

LAND USE AND HOUSING POLL

1. Most people who responded to the first poll said that future development should be located in areas that are served by infrastructure (public water, sewer, and broadband) and away from environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains and steep slopes. Do you support the county taking steps to encourage development in areas served by infrastructure and away from environmentally sensitive areas?

Yes

No

Maybe/need more time

2. In the first poll, most people said they were concerned about the rising cost of living, particularly housing affordability for residents and workers. Which of the following strategies should the county take to provide affordable housing? (Select all that apply.)

Encourage development in environmentally sensitive areas

Allow for higher density development in specific areas where both public and private are available and outside of environmentally sensitive areas

Encourage development of more housing options (apartments, duplexes, etc.) in areas that are served by public water and sewer and are located outside of environmentally sensitive areas

Use both incentives (density) and/or zoning development of housing affordable in our areas.

Other

Please fill in the following information:

ABOUT THE RESPONDENT

Do you live, work, own property, or go to school in Buncombe County? (Check all that apply.)

I live in Buncombe County

I work in Buncombe County

I go to school in Buncombe County

I own property in Buncombe County

Other

What is your age?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75+

Prefer not to answer

Did you participate in the first Buncombe 2043 polling activity?

Yes

No

No record

What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply.)

White

Black or African American

Hispanic/Latino or Spanish

Asian

American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Other

Prefer not to answer

What is the zip code where you live?

Community polls.

Public Input Window #3 Outcomes

During the third and final Public Input Window, the community was able to review and provide feedback on the draft Plan document. From December 2022 until February 2023, staff hosted information tables at 18 events and offered ongoing, self-guided drop-in exhibits, focusing on locations at libraries. The self-guided exhibit provided detailed information about the process from start to finish, including education about the purpose of a comprehensive plan, previous poll results, the overall timeline, and more. These efforts also included discussing the Plan on Buncombe County’s “Tapped In” Podcast and creating an advertising video to spread the word. A total of 287 people attended the in-person exhibits. In addition to the in-person opportunities, community members could view the Virtual Exhibit at any time that offered the same information as the in-person exhibits. In addition, 390 people experienced the virtual exhibits.

Staff worked diligently to ensure Buncombe County community members were informed about this project’s third and final phase. According to some BIPOC community members, they felt informed and could give feedback on a process they have never been involved in before when discussing land use. These efforts were effective, as staff raised and then met their increased goals for receiving input from the diverse Buncombe community.

In the online activities for this Phase, community members were asked to provide their level of support for the Vision Themes and Goals, provide feedback to refine the GEC Framework and Map, the Plan, and prioritize Actions for implementation. A total of 1,291 people participated in this final input opportunity; approximately 69% of this group were participating in the planning process for the first time. The third Public Input Window demonstrated public support for the Plan’s Vision Themes and Goals, visualized on the next page. Community members also ranked which Actions they want to see Buncombe County prioritize in the next 20 years.

PUBLIC INPUT WINDOW #3 BY THE NUMBERS

The ten Actions were organized by policy topics, identified by the community in the previous Public Input Windows. These topics were abbreviated from the full public poll. Participants were asked to order the Actions from 1 being the highest priority and 10 being the least priority. The top four most highly ranked Actions were:

- **Environmental Conservation:** Implement new policies that support the protection of agricultural and forest lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural communities. *(Average rank: 4.05)*
- **Housing:** Expand and protect affordable and accessible housing choices and implement equity-oriented housing policies that address historically disadvantaged groups and other neighborhoods at-risk of **gentrification** and displacement. *(Average rank: 4.71)*
- **Economic Development, Education, and Jobs:** Focus **economic development** activities on growing businesses and jobs that can employ local workers, support skill building and training of the local workforce, and ultimately increase the wealth generation of residents. *(Average rank: 5.16)*
- **Health and Recreation:** Develop long-term plans for the expansion and development of parks, recreation, greenways, and trails and to provide equitable access to health services and healthy lifestyle choices to all residents. *(Average rank: 5.30)*



1,291

people participated in the online activities.



287

people attended an in-person, virtual, or hybrid meeting.



390

people attended the Virtual Exhibits

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR VISION THEMES

AVERAGE RESPONSE

59/100

DO NOT SUPPORT

STRONGLY SUPPORT

STRIVE TO ACHIEVE EQUITY



71/100

COMMIT TO SUSTAINABILITY



70/100

ACHIEVE LIVABILITY & AFFORDABILITY



80/100

FOCUS ON CONSERVATION



75/100

ROOT EFFORTS IN COMMUNITY



Steering Committee

Throughout the process, the Buncombe County 2043 Steering Committee guided the Plan’s development. The Steering Committee was made up of 23 Buncombe County residents who applied to serve on the Committee and were appointed by the County Commissioners in 2021. As a representative group of Buncombe County residents, Steering Committee members provided perspective on the information gathered and submitted feedback on draft Policies and Actions. Many Steering Committee members also advocated for the Plan in their neighborhoods and communities.

Youth Voices

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, Buncombe County created opportunities for kids and youth to participate and provide input. County leaders recognize that decisions made today will impact youth growing up in the community over the next two decades. Youth voices helped shape this plan in many different ways. For example, the Kids’ Postcard Project has been part of every Phase of engagement in the Plan. Kids were asked, “What do you want the future to look like in your town or neighborhood?” Some of their amazing answers, in the form of drawings and written descriptions, are available throughout this Plan. Examples of other activities directed at kids and youth included:

Elementary, Middle, and High School Activity Kits

Teachers and parents were provided with age-appropriate activities to introduce planning concepts to children. The kits were used to gather their input on a variety of topics about the Plan. A sample of the planning activity for youth is on the following page.

Kids Polls and Vision Boards

Kids were asked age-appropriate planning questions at events, and their answers were included in overall poll data and the Word Cloud.

Kids Patch Project

Buncombe County residents under the age of 18 could complete an activity to earn a patch with the Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan logo.

All in-person meetings provided an activity section for children and youth. Buncombe County staff also attended a series of youth-focused events. These events included:

- Careers on Wheels (2021 and 2022)
- Comprehensive Plan Presentation at Hanger Hall
- Carolina Day 8th grade sustainability event
- Hall Fletcher Elementary STEAM Tech Fair
- United Way Youth Block Party
- Career Day at Glenn Arden

For Further Reading

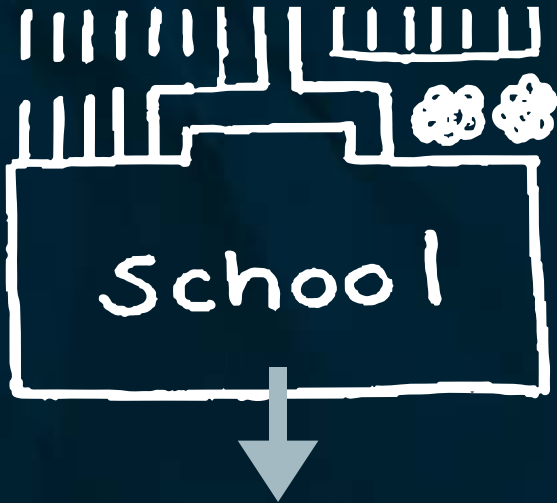
To see more detailed outcomes from the public input windows, please visit the Buncombe County Comprehensive Plan 2043 at this link: www.buncombecounty.org/comprehensive-plan-2043/

You can also view detailed reports from Phase 2, Phase 3, and Phase 4 at the links below:

- **[Stakeholder Organizations Survey Final Report](#)**
- **[Public Input Window #1](#)**
- **[Public Input Window #2](#)**
- **[Public Input Window #3](#)**

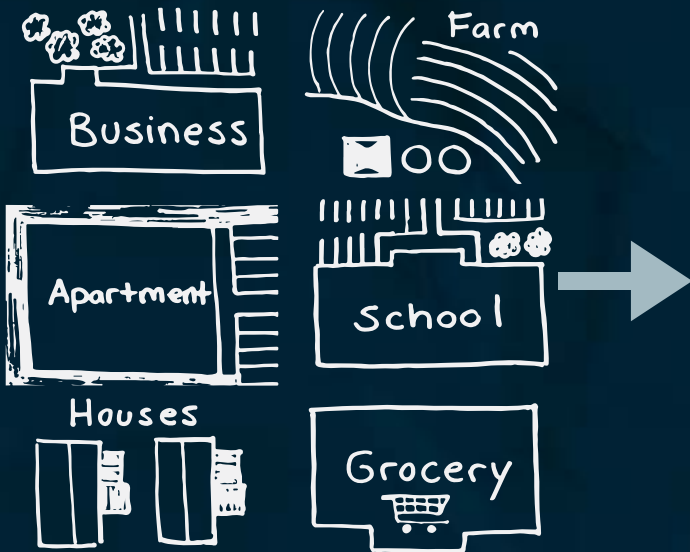
BUILDING OR FEATURE

(individually)



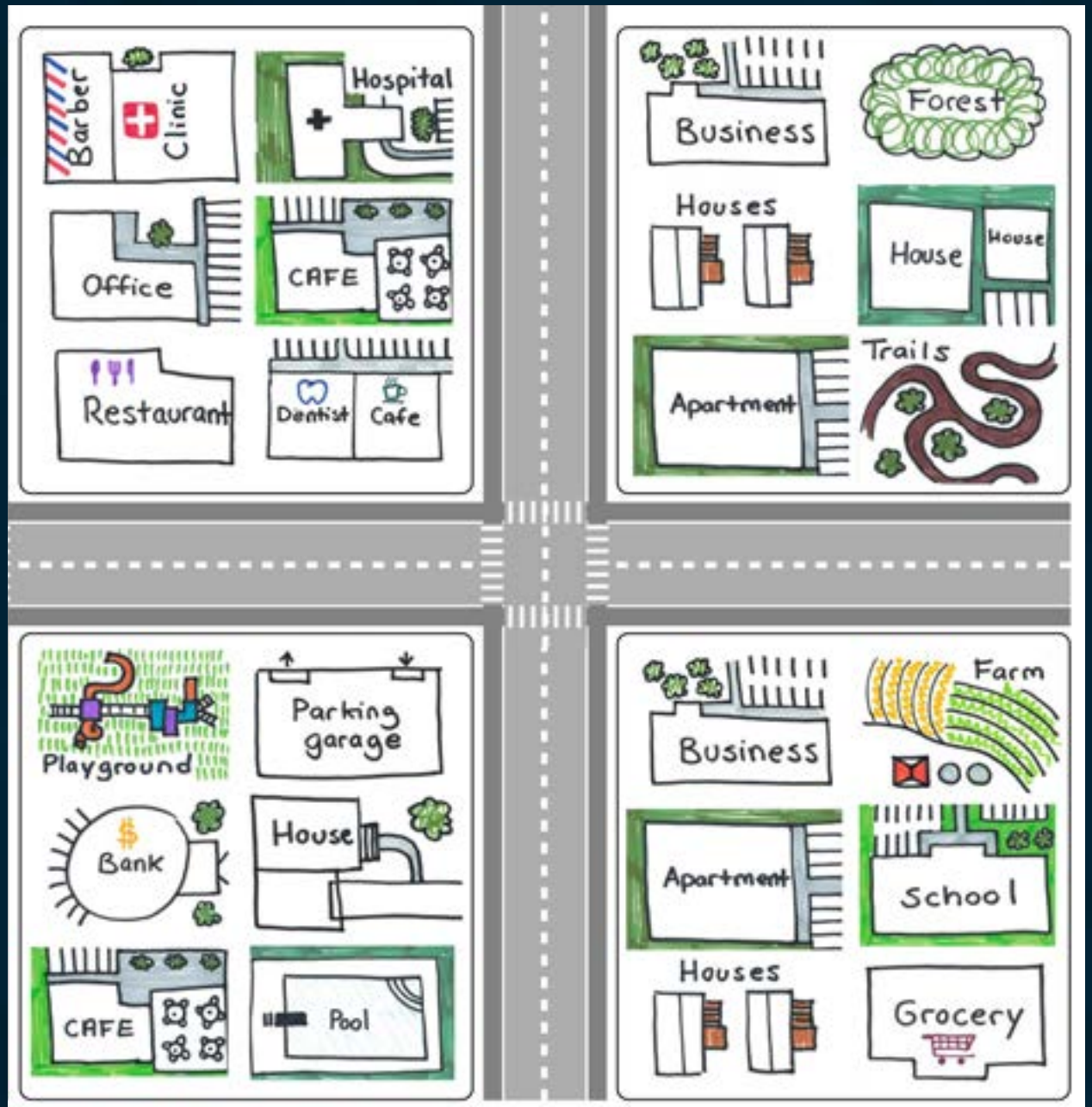
TOWN BLOCK

(small group)



COMMUNITY

(entire class)



COMMUNITY INPUT

ONE SHOULD BE ABLE
TO LIVE WHERE THEY
WORK AND ENJOY
THEIR COMMUNITY

I would like for
people who live in
apartment complexes
and condos to have
a place to plug
in an electric car.





In the neighborhood
there is a park in the
Middle.

In the place there is
a drive way to the Zoo!

Continuing to promote
and protect farms &
Woodlands is important.
What we have here is
beautiful, but only if
we can continue to
maintain the rural
elements.

NEIGHBORHOOD



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS



18 total in-person, drop-in, or virtual meetings

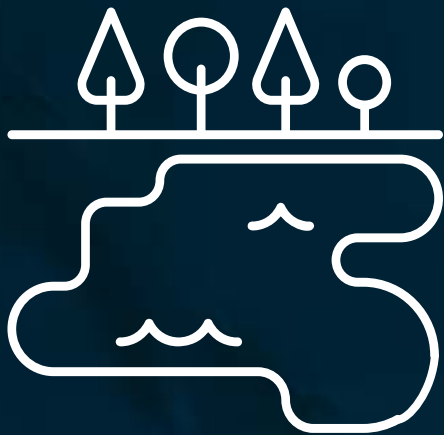
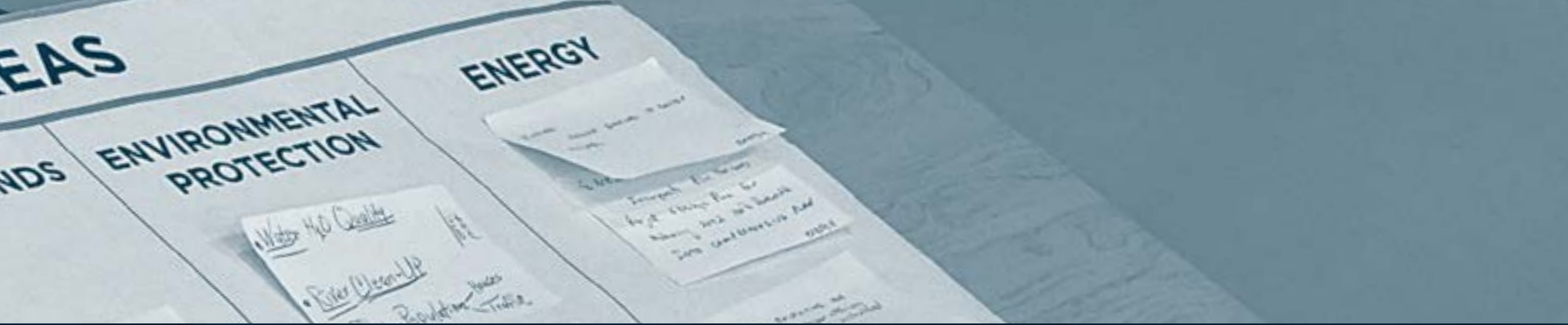
157,673 inputs were submitted

5,233 people participated



95 intercept events at places such as schools or universities, festivals, and community markets

81 board and committee meetings



50% of participants identified losing natural areas and agricultural lands to new development as one of their biggest concerns for the future of the County

80% of participants said that what they like the most about Buncombe is the natural environment, such as mountains, rivers, creeks, and wildlife



76% of participants expressed that housing is not affordable to many families and households (renter or owner-occupied)

47% of participants in the first round have lived in Buncombe County for over 10 years

Chapter 02

GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION

GOAL:

Growth will result in sustainable development patterns that expand affordable and middle income housing options for residents and job opportunities for the local workforce, protect historically disadvantaged neighborhoods and businesses from displacement and gentrification, and create centers for shopping, dining, and recreating.

New development will maximize developable lands in key growth areas and transportation corridors through mixed-use and clustered development designs that lessen climate and environmental impacts and are more resilient to hazards. Growth will be directed away from priority conservation areas using a variety of public and private tools.





***“Economic sustainability
demands more
affordable housing
options.”***
*- Community
participant*

Photo from Erwin Public Meeting.

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. The Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and Categories, established by the Policies and Actions in this chapter, aim to address equity across all communities. These are based on the concerns raised and priorities identified by the community. The Policies will strive to achieve equity by protecting historically disadvantaged communities from displacement or **gentrification** and conserving agricultural and environmental lands from development.



Commit To Sustainability. Growth and change in the county will be sustainable in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. New and existing developments provide an opportunity for generating more sustainable development patterns and designs and more resilient siting and green construction of buildings. Policies and Actions in this chapter also promote the development of renewable energy generation and leverage local knowledge base of resilience firms in Buncombe.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. Policies and Actions in this chapter support housing options, infrastructure, and services and amenities that residents need to improve affordability and livability. The Policies in this chapter support development in areas highly suited for residential and employment development to support the diverse needs of its different communities and residents.



Focus On Conservation. While Buncombe County has a large amount of land, parcels that are highly suitable for development are limited. This chapter's Policies support growth on suitable sites using sustainable development patterns and directing growth away from areas prioritized for environmental or agricultural protection.



Root Efforts In Community. During the community engagement windows, residents identified concerns about the rising cost of living (including housing, transportation, and food), losing natural areas and agricultural lands to new development, and tourism development changing the character of Buncombe County. The public identified their priorities for a successful and healthy life which included more safe and affordable ways to travel (including biking, walking, or using public transit), more affordable housing options, and improved access to jobs, healthcare, and social services.

GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

The Growth, Equity, and Conservation (GEC) Framework is comprised of four main categories:

- **Growth** – These are priority development areas where development currently exists today or is proposed for the future to accommodate projected population growth and new businesses in the county. These are areas that have been selected due to the suitability to support new development and a generally lower risk factor for natural hazards.
- **Equity** – Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs) are defined as areas that may be at risk of **gentrification** and displacement or need assistance in some form. Some of these areas may have higher percentages of historically disadvantaged populations. EOAs provide opportunities for small area planning to manage growth and change that reduces displacement, protects established cultural heritage, addresses rural poverty, and maintains existing affordable housing. These areas will be identified by utilizing the Community Index Map (page 48) as part of **legislatively reviewed development proposals** in Buncombe County’s planning and zoning jurisdiction. Staff reports for these projects will identify any proximate EOAs using the Community Index Map and will include an evaluation of the potential impact the proposed project may have on EOAs using the County’s Equity Analysis Tool.
- **Conservation** – These are lands that are either currently protected through government ownership or private **conservation easements**, and lands that are intended for agricultural, forest, or rural land uses.
- **Other Areas** – In addition to the three main categories is the Other Areas category that includes the Institutional and Municipal land use classifications. The Institutional classification includes the Biltmore Estate, Warren Wilson College, and smaller resorts and conference centers. The Municipal classification identifies the areas where the municipalities in Buncombe County have planning and zoning jurisdiction.

The individual land use designations described on the following pages are organized from least intensive land uses in the Conservation category to the most intensive Growth category. Each land use designation includes a general intent and description of the category, provision of water and wastewater, general residential density, primary and secondary land uses, and photo examples of similar areas that represent the intended scale and pattern of land uses. The general residential density represents overall gross density for the land use category and does not represent the density anticipated on individually owned parcels of land.



The general residential category does not represent changes to zoning. Instead, the characteristics for each category are meant to guide decision-making for development proposals, such as rezoning requests and future text amendments, to better manage growth in alignment with the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework.

Please note that the mapped information for future extension of water and sewer utilities in Buncombe County that was used to guide development of the GEC Map is not precise at the parcel scale. Care has been given to accommodate all future service areas included on the map to the best abilities given data limitations.

This framework is intended to be used as policy guidance and does not have the same force of law as the County’s zoning ordinance. However, it can be used to help make changes to the existing land use ordinances.

Future Updates to the GEC Framework

The Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan represents a long-term vision for the future. It is meant to guide policy decisions for Buncombe County over the next 20 years. The county will likely experience much growth and change during this time period. The Comprehensive Plan should remain a relevant, living document that should continue to represent the priorities of the community. In order to accomplish this, the Plan should be continually updated and amended over time.

The Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework can also evolve over time as the Plan is implemented and progress on its goals are evaluated. The Policies and Actions of this Plan

have called out opportunities to identify joint planning areas with municipal and county neighbors as well as other agencies. These efforts should prioritize joint planning efforts with the City of Asheville and the Town of Weaverville, where significant growth pressure is occurring. The Land of Sky Regional Council Regional Council is conducting an effort to support **transit-oriented development** in the region and within Buncombe County. Implementation of the GEC Framework should include coordination with this effort as well.

Finally, small area and **corridor plans** will be conducted as part of the implementation of this plan. Small area and corridor plans can be generated to provide more specific guidance for unique areas in the county that are high priorities for managing change. Examples may include the Emma neighborhood, the two Rural Centers identified on the GEC Map, the Beacon redevelopment site, the Swannanoa and US-70 corridor, the Candler and I-40 corridor, among others.



A public input meeting at the Weaverville Community Center.

GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION CATEGORIES



EQUITY

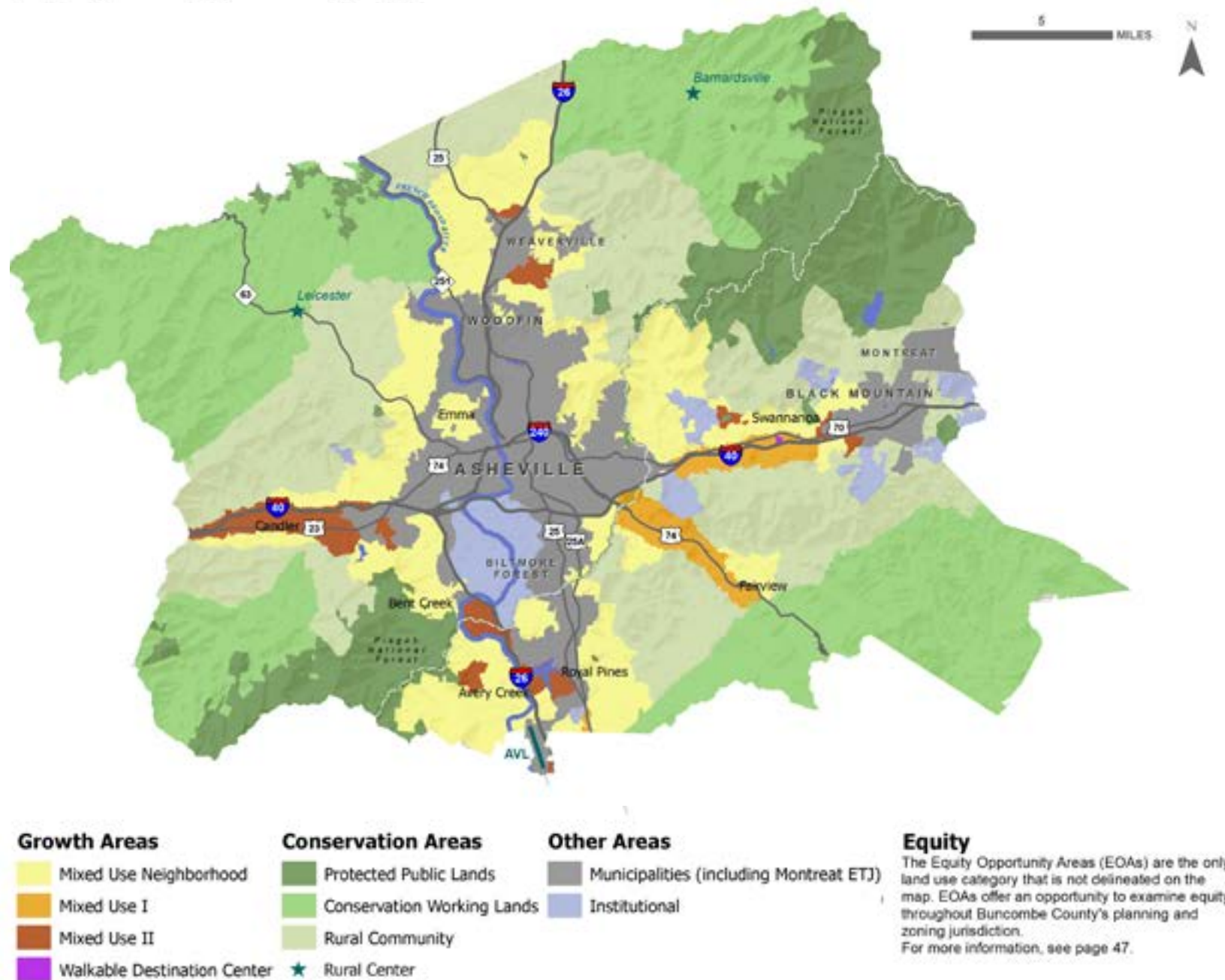
GROWTH-ORIENTED LAND USES

- Mixed Use Neighborhood
- Mixed Use Area I
- Mixed Use Area II
- Walkable Destination Center

CONSERVATION LAND USES

- Protected Public Lands
- Conservation Working Lands
- Rural Community
- Rural Center

GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK MAP



EQUITY



Residents shared their input and met Buncombe County Sheriff's Office therapy dog, Kora, at a public input meeting.

IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING EQUITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

General Character Description: Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs) are the only land use category that are not delineated on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map. The intention is that EOAs represent places where BIPOC and other historically disadvantaged communities live and/or work. BIPOC is defined per the Buncombe Racial Equity Action Plan as 'Black, Indigenous, People of Color,' and it is meant to unite all people of color in the work for liberation while intentionally acknowledging that not all people of color face the same levels of injustice. Many BIPOC individuals have historically been disadvantaged, and/or bear a disproportionate burden due to the impact of racist policies, regulations, and financing programs.

Many of these communities have a unique, established culture and offer a significant portion of the naturally occurring affordable housing available in the county. The intent is that change within these areas will be carefully managed to reduce the potential for gentrification and displacement of residents and businesses. These areas may be priorities for the development of future small area plans in partnership with neighborhood stakeholders to create a more fine-grained vision and implementation strategy.

The process for identifying EOAs offers an opportunity to examine equity throughout Buncombe County’s planning and zoning jurisdiction and consider the impacts of proposed developments on EOAs. These areas are intended to be identified on a case by case basis as part of development review of proposed projects and evaluated based on existing local conditions. The process for identifying and evaluating EOAs is triggered by County Planning and Development Staff review of development proposals in the County’s jurisdiction that are approved through a legislative process, such as a rezoning. This includes two main steps:

1. Using the Community Index Map (page 49), County Planning and Development Staff will identify any potential EOAs that are on or proximate to the proposed development site. Proximate can be defined to be within a ¼ mile radius of the proposed project site, or a larger radius if the proposed project is anticipated to have a significant impact on an area. The Staff Report may include the specific factors (i.e., presence of high poverty rates, households that are food insecure, etc.) that are identified through the Community Index Map and the magnitude of the factor ranking (i.e., orange and red identify areas that represent greater opportunities for creating equity).

2. Using the Equity Analysis Tool (page 50), County Planning and Development Staff will evaluate the impacts of the proposed project on any EOAs identified in the first step. Staff Reports will respond to each of the questions included in the Equity Analysis Tool and will help inform the County’s Planning Board and Board of Commissioners of potential impacts on or benefits to EOAs likely to be created by the proposed project.

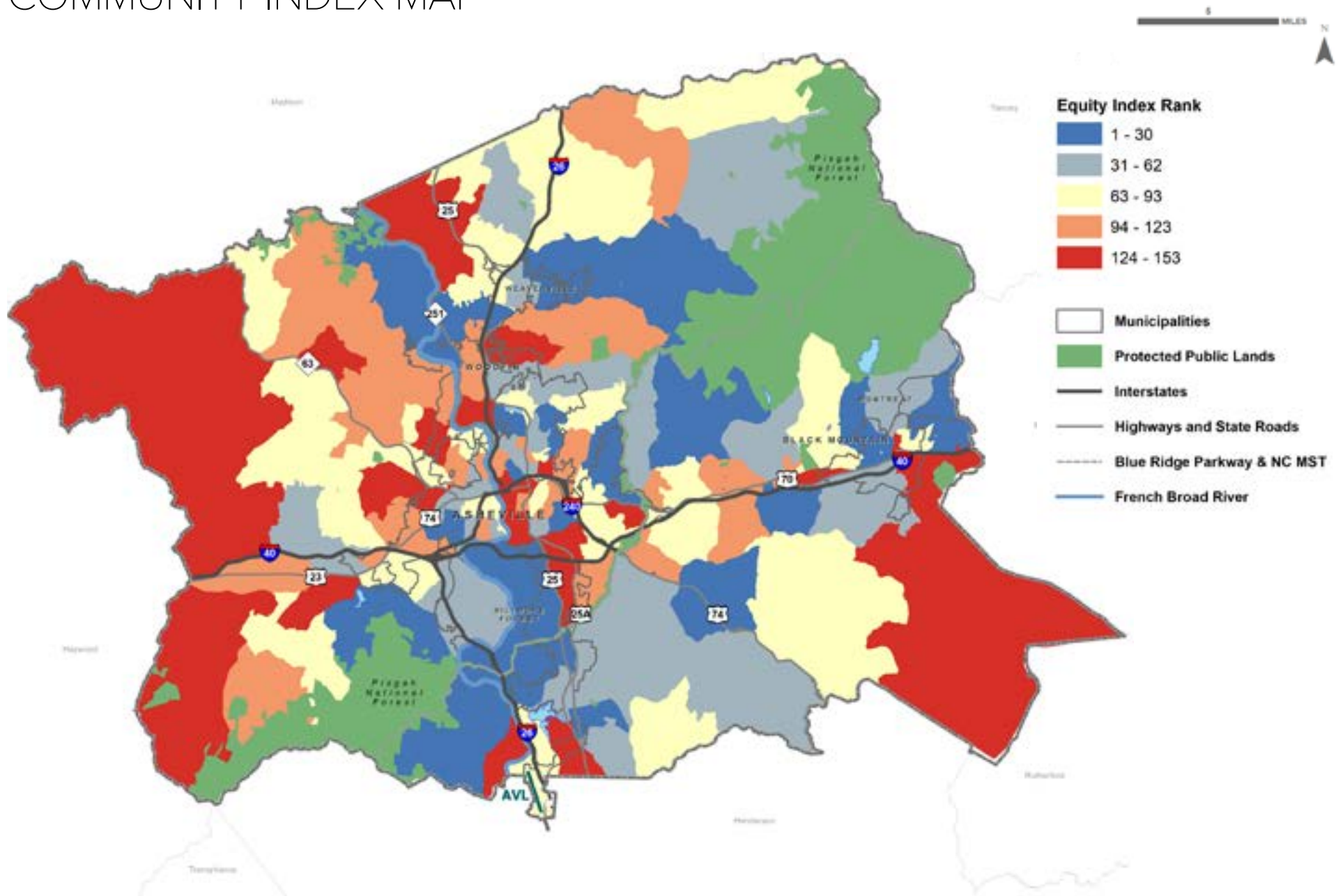
COMMUNITY INDEX MAP

The Community Index Map is a reference map that is cited in many Policies and included as part of the Equity assessment identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map. This map helps to identify areas that are important opportunities for creating equity in Buncombe County. The Community Index Map evaluates the presence of several factors in U.S. Census block group areas. These factors include:

- **Presence of high poverty rates**
- **Median household income for area**
- **Households that are food insecure**
- **Population without a high school diploma**
- **Housing cost-burdened households**
- **Households lacking health insurance**

This map, shown on the following page, will be updated over time as updated data becomes available and will serve as a factual guide when making equity related policy decisions. The analysis to prepare this map was created by the Buncombe County Equity and Inclusion Working Group. Dark red areas on the map identify areas with the highest equity index score and orange areas identify the next lower tier. Both of these denote areas where additional efforts may be needed to support these communities, many of which have been historically disadvantaged.

COMMUNITY INDEX MAP



EQUITY ANALYSIS TOOL

This map can be used as part of legislative development review processes, such as rezonings, to identify potential Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs) that may be impacted by proposed projects.

Buncombe County is committed to advancing equity for all those who live, work, play, and learn in Buncombe County. Through data-informed decision-making, program design, and careful consideration of the compounded effects of historical and systematic inequity, County departments and offices should make policy, budgetary, and programmatic decisions that align with the County's values and meet departmental and shared goals. As Buncombe County continues to move forward in implementing equity goals that uplift our County values, the Buncombe County Office of Equity and Human Rights developed the Equity Analysis Tool. The tool has been adapted to the Comprehensive Plan with the purpose of being used by County Planning and Development Staff to evaluate new proposed development projects and, specifically, the impact these projects may have on surrounding Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs).

Some parts of the county have been historically disadvantaged through regulations, policies, investment decisions, and other means. County Staff can leverage the Equity Analysis Tool to evaluate future impacts that proposed developments may have on existing communities. Specifically, County Staff will evaluate development projects that are required to go through a legislative process for County approval using the following questions and will


incorporate this analysis into Staff Reports provided to the Buncombe County Planning Board and the Board of County Commissioners.

- ***What is being proposed and what does it seek to address?***
- ***Who does the project affect and to what degree? Are historically marginalized groups consulted and involved from the early stages of the development of this project?***
- ***Which plan goal(s) or policies does this project advance and how?***
- ***What are the anticipated positive outcomes of the project and how will success be measured?***
- ***What negative consequences would persist if this were not implemented?***
- ***Are there sufficient population-level data to understand whether this would positively address or create any disparities?***
- ***Are there other counties or jurisdictions that have reviewed similar development projects and created similar solutions? How do they address the issue? Were their actions made utilizing an equity lens?***

Finally, all planning efforts will be guided by equity in decision-making procedures, distribution, and structure. For more information, please see page 47.

GEC LAND USE MATRIX

*Individual property densities vary.

	Character Description	Wastewater & Potable Water	General Residential Density	Primary Land Uses	Secondary Land Uses
Protected Public Lands	No or extremely limited development is anticipated. Includes federal, state, or county government-owned land that is maintained in a natural state, and lands with a publicly owned conservation easement.	Private septic Private wells	No new residential development	National forests, state parks, watersheds	Conservation lands
Conservation Working Lands	Working agricultural lands or homesteads where extremely limited development is anticipated. Preference that the land remain dedicated to agricultural, forest, or other open space uses.	Private septic Private wells	Very low density: 1 unit per 10 acres gross density for the area.*	Working farms, forests, and agritourism uses	Small, rural activity centers and low density, rural residential
Rural Community	Mix of rural uses, including low-density residential, some agricultural and forested working lands, and limited commercial to support the rural community. Can include conservation subdivisions, which protect land in exchange for more residential units on smaller lots.	Private septic Private wells Community system	Low Density: 1 unit per 2 acres gross density for the area (unless using conservation subdivision).*	Rural residential, conservation subdivisions, and working farms and forests	Limited rural-scale commercial development, and solar farms
 Rural Center	Rural areas located in the crossroads of low density rural development or along major rural roads that serve as small activity centers. Opportunities for place-based economic development that creates rural-scale businesses.	Private septic Private wells	Very low density: 1 unit per 2 acres gross density for the area.*	Rural-scale commercial retail and offices and institutional uses such as community centers	Rural residential and heavy commercial uses that support agricultural industries
Mixed Use Neighborhood	Existing residential neighborhoods and undeveloped areas for medium- to high density residential. Infill and redevelopment opportunities for additional housing. Increased density through renovations or new middle housing types. New high-density developments should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.	Public sewer Public water Private septic Community system	4 to 18 units per acre. Up to 30 dwelling units per acre with a percentage of affordable units.	Single-family detached, cottage-style, middle housing, manufactured housing and manufactured home parks, and multi-family residential	Neighborhood commercial, retail and offices, civic uses, and public amenities
Mixed Use Area 1	Lands along partially developed corridors with a mix of residential and commercial or retail developments. Intended to support further planned development and to encourage the full range of services and amenities to the surrounding neighborhoods. Envisioned to be compact, walkable, and well-connected and include mixed uses.	Public sewer Public water	10 to 20 units per acre. Up to 30 units per acre with a percentage of affordable units	Community commercial, retail, and offices; limited intensity manufacturing, some flexibility for larger footprint business or industrial parks	Middle housing and civic and public uses
Mixed Use Area 2	Large-scale, intensive economic development such as industrial or office/ industrial flex. Flexibility for commercial and medium-density housing to allow workers to live nearby. Focus on campus-style development that promotes internal and adjacent property connectivity, and is compact, walkable, well-connected, and includes mixed land uses.	Public sewer Public water	10 to 18 units per acre. Up to 30 units per acre with a percentage of affordable units.	Industrial parks, large commercial or business campuses, and manufacturing centers	Multi-family residential, limited retail to support surrounding uses, recreational uses
Walkable Destination Center	Higher intensity, mixed-use centers. Areas with good road or transit access, and on land well-suited for development. Accommodates medium- and higher-density residential uses, as well as a variety of commercial, office, and retail uses.	Public sewer Public water	16 to 24 units per acre. Up to 40 units per acre with a percentage of affordable units.	Multi-family residential, office, retail, and commercial development	Civic and public uses
Institutional	Large, private land holdings held in single ownership or held collectively by related entities for the purposes of tourist facilities, conference or resort centers, and other uses.	Public sewer Public water	Low density; development evaluated with Small Area Planning	Large tourist-related facilities, summer/ day camp properties, conference centers, historical institutions, universities or educational campuses	Residential uses, lodging, and retail and office that support the site uses

PROTECTED PUBLIC LANDS



General Character Description: These are lands where no development or extremely limited development is anticipated. This category includes lands owned by the federal, state, or county governments and is maintained in a natural state (e.g., Pisgah National Forest), as well as lands for which a publicly owned conservation easement applies that significantly restricts future development.

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic system

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells

General Residential Density: Some residential properties currently exist: no new residential development is anticipated.

Primary Land Uses: National forests, state parks, watershed protection areas

Secondary Land Uses: Conservation lands

Visual examples: Pisgah National Forest



Pisgah National Forest comprises the majority of Protected Public Lands in Buncombe County.



LOCATION OF PROTECTED PUBLIC LANDS



EXAMPLE LAND USES

***“Continuing to protect farms and woodlands is important.
What we have here is beautiful.”***
- Community participant

CONSERVATION WORKING LANDS



General Character Description: These are lands that are currently working agricultural lands or agricultural homesteads in which extremely limited future development is anticipated, with a preference that the land remain dedicated to agricultural, forest, or other open space uses. These areas have been identified as Conservation Focus Areas by Buncombe County and can include small activity centers for rural-scale commercial uses surrounded by rural-scale residential development that is compatible with the surrounding agricultural uses. The Conservation Working Lands present an opportunity to support rural land owners by increasing opportunities for viable farms and rural businesses, while also providing opportunities for **rural-scale subdivisions**.



The County could consider providing an agricultural use zoning district for willing landowners to protect the viability of agricultural uses through the limitation of future development opportunities. This category should also be a focus for public conservation efforts, which primarily includes purchasing conservation easements from willing landowners.

The lack of public water and sewer significantly limit the scale and type of development that can occur in the Conservation Working Lands. However, it should be noted that these limitations may not halt development entirely. Land use changes in Conservation Working Lands should be monitored over time to ensure that development in this area is meeting community vision and goals.

Sandy Mush and Barnardsville are two examples of communities in Conservation Working Lands.

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic system

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells

General Residential Density: Very low density, 1 unit per 10 acres gross density for all areas within this category; densities on individual properties will vary based on site conditions

Primary Land Uses: Working farms, forests, agritourism uses

Secondary Land Uses: Small, rural activity centers and low-density, rural residential



EXAMPLE LAND USES



LOCATION OF CONSERVATION WORKING LANDS

RURAL COMMUNITY



General Character Description: These are lands with a mix of rural uses, including low-density residential, some agricultural and forested working lands, and limited commercial uses to support the rural community. Some areas may be developed as **conservation subdivisions**, which provide for protection of a certain percentage of a tract of land (generally upwards of 30%; based on site conditions and open space/environmental value of land) in exchange for more residential units on smaller lots and a simpler approval process. A conservation subdivision should not be confused with a conservation easement, which is defined in the Glossary of Planning Terms on page 207 as a “voluntary legal agreement applying to a specific parcel of land between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits the uses allowed on the land in order to protect natural areas from development disturbance.” A conservation subdivision can serve as a transition between suburban edge development near the municipalities and truly rural areas and can be an effective way to protect important natural lands and cultural spaces.

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic systems (conservation subdivisions may require community systems)

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells (conservation subdivisions may require community systems)



Communities near Upper Hominy and the Blue Ridge Parkway are designated as a Rural Community.

General Residential Density: Low density, 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres gross density for all areas within this category (unless using conservation subdivision approach which would allow for higher density in exchange for permanently protecting open spaces), densities on individual properties will vary based on site conditions

Primary Land Uses: Rural residential, conservation subdivisions, working farms and forests

Secondary Land Uses: Limited rural-scale commercial development, solar farms

“Please protect all the beautiful farms in this rural community.”
- *Community participant*



EXAMPLE LAND USES



LOCATION OF RURAL COMMUNITY

RURAL CENTER



General Character Description: These are lands in rural areas that are located in the crossroads of lower density rural development or along major rural roads that can or do serve as small activity centers for rural communities. These are opportunities for place-based economic development that creates rural-scale businesses that use development designs and support land uses that fit within the context of the rural community. Ideally, these uses are located in close proximity allowing for customers to park once and walk to adjacent businesses and community centers.

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic system

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells

General Residential Density: Very low density, 1 unit per 2 acres gross density for all areas within this category, densities on individual properties will vary based on site conditions

Primary Land Uses: Rural-scale commercial retail and offices and institutional uses such as community centers

Secondary Land Uses: Heavy commercial uses that support agricultural industries, rural residential



Barnardsville is an example of an area that has existing Rural Centers in Buncombe County.



EXAMPLE LAND USES



LOCATION OF RURAL CENTER

MIXED USE NEIGHBORHOOD



General Character Description: These are lands that include currently developed residential neighborhoods and new undeveloped areas intended for medium- to higher-density residential development within a traditional neighborhood layout. Existing neighborhoods provide infill and redevelopment opportunities to support additional housing development. In some cases, increased density may be achieved through parcel-specific renovations or the additions of middle income housing, such as small-lot single family, **cottage homes**, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), townhomes, or duplexes. New higher-density units should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.



New neighborhoods should be developed to support walkability with sidewalks, small block sizes, and greenways and are opportunities for developing new affordable housing. These areas largely comprise the former Extraterritorial Jurisdiction of Asheville and Weaverville as well as growth areas on the edges of municipalities. They provide opportunities to coordinate planning with the municipalities to support well-planned neighborhoods. Extensions of utilities are planned in coordination with the adjacent municipalities and MSD.

Mixed Use Neighborhoods will be served by a mixture of wastewater and water approaches, including public sanitary sewer and wastewater, private wells, private septic, and community systems. Some areas in the GEC Map may not be served with public sanitary sewer and public potable water for some time depending on environmental, development, or other feasibility constraints.

Enka Village, above, and the Emma Community, below, are examples of Mixed Use Neighborhoods in Buncombe County.

The intent is that these areas could support more intensive growth at some point in the future, including beyond the 2043 horizon of this Plan. Some areas will receive development pressure without public sanitary sewer and public potable water service and therefore will not be able to maximize density.

For areas that can support higher density, opportunities for vertical mixed use is supported and ideal. An example of vertical mixed land uses include residential units over office or commercial spaces. Vertical mixed use opportunities maximize the live, work, and play opportunities for residents in Buncombe County.

Approach for Wastewater: Mixture of service types (public sanitary sewer, private septic systems, and community systems)

Approach to Potable Water: Mixture of service types (public potable water, private wells, and community systems)

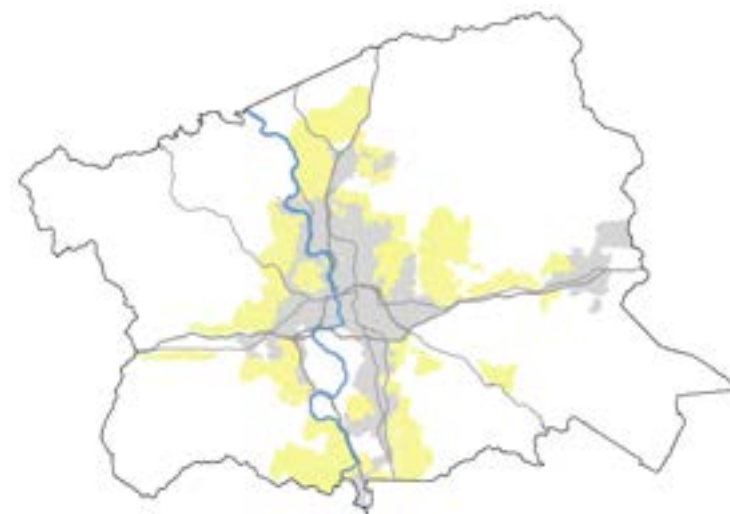
General Residential Density: 4 to 18 dwelling units per acre; up to 30 dwelling units per acre for projects that include a certain percentage or more of affordable housing units (to be determined as ordinance is updated to include this requirement)

Primary Land Uses: Single-family detached, cottage-style single family, middle income housing (townhomes, duplex, triplex, quadplex), manufactured housing and manufactured home parks, and multi-family residential development (apartments and condominiums)

Secondary Land Uses: Neighborhood serving commercial, retail and office operations, as well as **civic uses and public amenities**



EXAMPLE LAND USES



LOCATION OF MIXED USE NEIGHBORHOOD

MIXED USE AREA 1



General Character Description: These lands exist along partially developed corridors that have an existing mix of residential and commercial or retail developments. They are intended to support further planned development and to facilitate providing the full range of services and amenities to the surrounding neighborhoods. Developments in this category are envisioned to be compact, walkable, and well-connected and include mixed land uses. Some design considerations in Mixed Use Area 1 development include:

- Encouraging connectivity to adjacent properties
- Developing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- Incorporating design for transit access
- Encouraging activated storefronts
- Improving flexibility around parking locations and implementing shared parking solutions to reduce impervious surface area
- Encourage mixing of land uses

Approach for Wastewater: Public sewer systems

Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

General Residential Density: 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre, up to 30 dwelling units per acre for projects that include a certain percentage or more of affordable housing units (to be determined as ordinance is updated to include this requirement)



Mixed use development corridors in Wake County and Durham, NC are examples of Mixed Use Area 1.

Primary Land Uses: Community serving commercial, retail, and office operations; limited-intensity manufacturing uses with some flexibility for larger footprint business or industrial park uses.

Secondary Land Uses: Middle housing (cottage style single-family, townhomes, duplex, triplex, quadplex, and apartments and condominiums), **civic and public uses**, such as parks, schools, government service buildings, etc.

***“One should be able to live
where they work.”***

- Community participant



EXAMPLE LAND USES



LOCATION OF MIXED USE AREA 1

MIXED USE AREA 2



Parts of Winston Salem, like the area pictured above, are similar to Mixed Use Area 2.

General Character Description: These are lands intended to serve large-scale and more intensive economic development such as industrial (manufacturing or warehousing) or office/industrial flex uses. Some flexibility for commercial and medium-density housing is also appropriate to support the employment uses and allow workers to live close to work. Development in these areas will focus on campus-style development that promotes internal connectivity and connectivity to adjacent properties. Developments in this category are envisioned to be compact, walkable, and well-connected and include mixed land uses.

Some design considerations in Mixed Use Area 2 development include:

- Encouraging connectivity to adjacent properties
- Developing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- Incorporating design for transit access
- Encouraging and activating storefronts
- Improving flexibility around parking locations and implementing shared parking solutions to reduce impervious surface area
- Encourage mixing of land uses

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer

Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

General Residential Density: 10 to 18 dwelling units per acre, up to 30 dwelling units per acre for projects that include a certain percentage or more of affordable housing units (to be determined as ordinance is updated to include this requirement)

Primary Land Uses: Industrial parks, large commercial or business campuses, and manufacturing centers

Secondary Land Uses: Multi-family residential, limited retail that supports surrounding employment and residential uses, recreational uses



EXAMPLE LAND USES

“Invest in high-quality affordable housing near job opportunities and other development to reduce pressure on infrastructure and natural resources.”

- Community participant



LOCATION OF MIXED USE AREA 2

WALKABLE DESTINATION CENTER



General Character Description: These are lands intended to serve as higher intensity, mixed-use centers that serve areas of the county outside the immediate areas of the municipalities. They are located in areas with good road or transit access, land that is well-suited for development (flat, limited flooding issues), and can be served by proximate public infrastructure (public potable water and public sanitary sewer). This category accommodates medium- and higher-density residential uses, as well as a variety of commercial, office, and retail uses.

The Beacon redevelopment site could serve as a catalyst project or model for Walkable Destination Centers in the county. In the future, additional areas will be identified that are appropriate for Walkable Destination Centers.

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer

Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

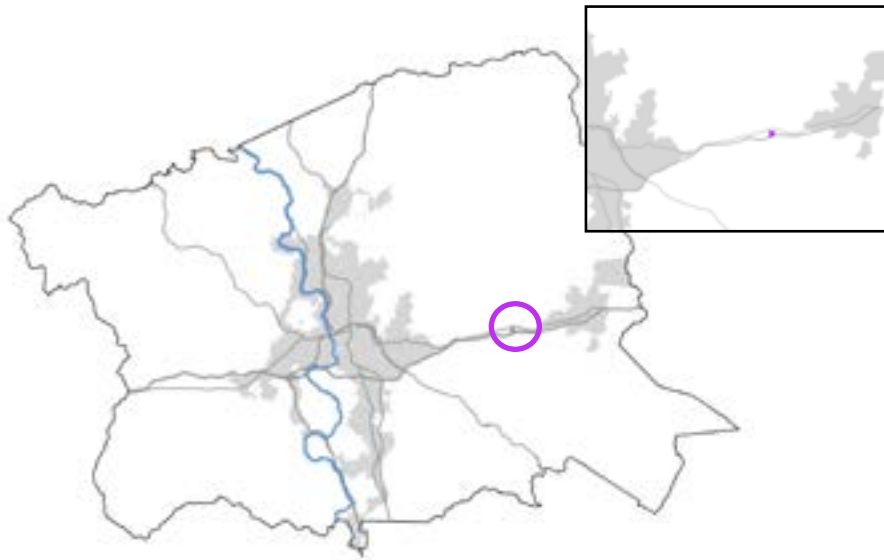
General Residential Density: 16 to 24 dwelling units per acre, up to 40 dwelling units per acre for projects that include a certain percentage or more of affordable housing units (to be determined as ordinance is updated to include this requirement)

Primary Land Uses: Multi-family residential, office, retail, and commercial development

Secondary Land Uses: Civic and public amenities such as parks, libraries, schools, etc.



Southern Village in Chapel Hill, NC is an example of a Walkable Destination Center.



LOCATION OF WALKABLE DESTINATION CENTER



EXAMPLE LAND USES

“Sidewalks and pedestrian oriented infrastructure are not viewed as traditional recreation. But they are key in fostering community and in creating public space that feels like an outdoor livable area where people can gather and co-mingle.”

- Community participant

INSTITUTIONAL



Warren Wilson College, above, and Windy Gap Young Life Camp, below, are examples of Institutional land uses.

General Character Description: The Institutional category is a unique land use planning designation on the GEC Map. It represents large, private land holdings in single ownership or held collectively by related entities. Example uses include, but are not limited to, large tourist-related facilities, conference centers, historical institutions, universities or educational campuses, and camps. A few examples include the Biltmore Estate, Warren Wilson College, and camps in Buncombe County like Ridgecrest, The Cove, the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, Lutheridge, and Windygap. For many but not all of these properties, the current zoning is Conference Center/Resort District (CR).

If the ownership of these properties changes or development/redevelopment is proposed, it will be important for the County to work closely with the property owner to plan for the evolution of the site and consider equity-related and other impacts. As such, Institutional areas are an ideal opportunity for Small Area Planning or **conditional zoning** processes.

As part of future efforts to plan and zone for changes to Institutional areas, Buncombe County staff can evaluate the impacts of the proposed development on:

- Potential Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs) within ¼ mile of the site
- Adjacent properties and surrounding areas not identified as EOAs
- Natural areas or environmentally sensitive lands on or adjacent to the site and potential stormwater management changes
- Transportation (including but not limited to roads, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and transit access)

- Wastewater and potable water capacity and distribution
- In addition, these efforts should evaluate how the proposed changes will support the policy direction included within this Plan.

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer or private system

Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water or private system

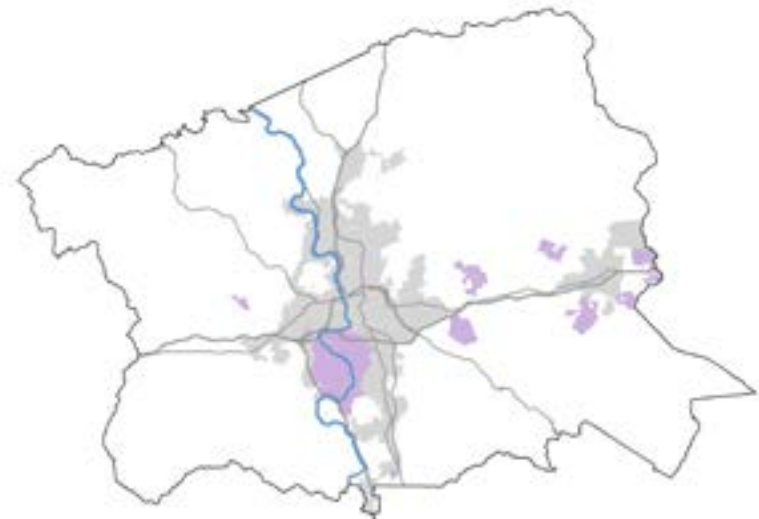
General Residential Density: Varies by property

Primary Land Uses: Tourist-related facilities, faith-based institutions, historical and cultural resources, public and educational institutions, camps or resorts, conference centers, and resorts

Secondary Land Uses: Residential uses (including single-family and multifamily), lodging, and retail and office that supports the site uses



EXAMPLE LAND USES



LOCATION OF INSTITUTIONAL USE

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 82 for more info.

POLICY 1

Guide land use decisions using the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and future small area plans.

POLICY 2

Promote the development and enhancement of communities in identified growth areas.

POLICY 3

Develop small area plans that provide more detailed guidance for Equity Opportunity Areas, Rural Centers, growth corridors, and potentially other areas.

POLICY 4

Balance development needs with environmental conservation and rural preservation.

POLICY 5

Promote sustainable and resilient development.

POLICY 6

Promote multi-jurisdictional planning, collaboration, and information sharing.

POLICY 7

Increase housing options and improve housing affordability for all residents.

POLICY 8

Support development on infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse sites.

POLICY 1

Guide land use decisions using the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and future small area plans.

Utilizing the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and small area plans in land use and development decisions will help Buncombe to achieve this Plan's Goals.

Policy Intent

This policy is built upon Buncombe 2043 community engagement and technical analysis efforts that identified key growth areas and future land use categories for the county. The Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and related categories identify:

- Growth areas that include the most suitable lands for development and should be leveraged to maximize future growth for needed housing and employment development (such as in Mixed Use Neighborhoods).
- Rural and Conservation areas where development will be limited, agricultural and environmental lands that will be preserved, and rural character that will be maintained (such as the Conservation Working Lands and Rural Community categories).
- Equity Opportunity Areas where Buncombe will partner with historically disadvantaged communities and other neighborhoods at risk of displacement and gentrification to carefully manage change. These areas include places where there is naturally occurring

affordable housing and where market changes could cause redevelopment that displaces residents and businesses.

- In the future, the County will be preparing small area plans to prepare site-level guidance for Equity Opportunity Areas, growth corridors, and other identified places where site level planning analysis is needed.



View of downtown Asheville and the surrounding communities.

POLICY 2

Promote the development and enhancement of communities in identified growth areas.

Buncombe will direct development away from conservation areas and toward growth areas, where mixed use neighborhoods, walkable destination centers, employment hubs, rural centers, and commercial areas will offer the services, amenities, and infrastructure to meet the needs of all residents.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to enhance the livability of Buncombe County by promoting the development of housing, transportation, and other services in Mixed Use Neighborhoods and other growth categories. Higher density development in some areas means that other lands can be safeguarded from development, preserving rural communities, and conserving agricultural and environmental lands.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Maximize new development in growth areas to mitigate growth pressures in the protection and conservation areas.
- Increase density and mix of housing types in growth areas and utilize mixed-use and clustered development design.

- Promote the development of Mixed Use Neighborhoods where they are supported by infrastructure and utilities. Mixed Use Neighborhoods provide a mix of housing types, support walkability with sidewalks, small block sizes, and greenways; and provide a mix of land uses that support everyday life such as **civic spaces**, community facilities, and businesses or commercial uses.



Soccer fields under construction at the Buncombe County Sports Park.

POLICY 3

Develop small area plans that provide more detailed guidance for Equity Opportunity Areas, Rural Centers, growth corridors, and potentially other areas.

Buncombe will develop small area plans to provide the community with an opportunity to engage in localized planning efforts for key areas experiencing growth pressure or that have a significant potential for change that needs to be managed through site level planning analyses and policies.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to set the stage for future small area planning work in partnership with residents, business owners, landowners, and neighboring municipalities. Buncombe will focus small area planning efforts and technical assistance on areas that are experiencing significant growth pressures or change that will benefit from detailed, site-level planning guidance. Initial priority areas for small area plan work are identified on the map located on page 80.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Continue to identify places where historically disadvantaged groups of people or businesses are located that are at risk for gentrification or displacement or are at risk for loss of cultural identity. The County will work with these communities to co-create a vision for these neighborhood areas and solutions to achieve the vision. This includes the Emma community and may also include other neighborhoods identified through the evaluation and identification of Equity Opportunity Areas (See page 47 for more on information on EOAs).
- Work with rural communities to develop localized plans for Rural Centers in Leicester and Barnardsville with the objective of supporting rural-scale economic development that is designed to complement existing rural character and serve area residents and businesses.
- Small area plans will be created for the county's key growth corridors in Candler, Fairview, and Swannanoa to provide more specific land planning guidance on the mix of uses, densities of development, design standards, transportation designs, and other planning topics.
- Other small area plan locations not identified on the map on page 80 may become priorities for small area planning efforts as conditions in the community change over time.

POLICY 4

Balance development needs with environmental conservation and rural preservation.

Buncombe will conserve environmentally sensitive lands and preserve rural or agricultural lands from suburban-style development, directing more intensive development toward growth areas.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to balance Buncombe’s development and growth pressures, its unique topography and conditions, and the need to lessen climate impacts and increase resilience to hazards.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Align development decisions with the Policies and Actions of the Farms, Forests, and Environmental Conservation chapter.
- Conserve and maintain environmental lands for ecosystem services, community benefits, and the recreation opportunities they provide.
- Preserve rural and agricultural lands for economic benefits, historic and cultural heritage, community benefits, and the unique landscape they provide.



A corn field in Buncombe County.

POLICY 5

Promote sustainable and resilient development.

Buncombe County will encourage the use of sustainable and resilient designs in all future development and retrofits for existing development, with a focus on areas that are at high risk for hazards.

Policy Intent

New and existing developments provide an opportunity for generating more sustainable development patterns and designs and more resilient siting and construction of buildings. The County will support private developments in achieving these objectives.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Strongly encourage developments to be designed to use existing site conditions (such as topographical constraints, riparian areas, and high hazard areas) as a basis for creating more resilient and sustainable designs.
- Promote the development of renewable energy generation and use within private developments through regulatory incentives or other tools. Promote the construction of all-electric, fossil fuel-free commercial, residential, and industrial buildings through regulations and incentives.
- Align development decisions with the Policies and Actions of the Hazards and Resilience chapter, including **green infrastructure** and **nature-based solutions**.
- Continue to limit development on steep slopes, high elevations and ridge lines. Discourage development from occurring on steep slopes and ridge lines.
- Explore green and resilient infrastructure specifications for new development, potentially aligning with North Carolina Department of Transportation standards for resilient transportation facilities.

POLICY 6

Promote multi-jurisdictional planning, collaboration, and information sharing.

Buncombe will aim to coordinate planning efforts with its municipalities, MSD and other utility providers, and neighboring counties for joint efforts to direct and manage growth in areas of common interest at the edge of jurisdictional boundaries.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to facilitate edge area coordination in the areas outside of municipalities and along the edges of the county boundary. Buncombe will accomplish this by coordinating policy direction and development values with the leadership of municipalities, adjacent counties, local agencies, and other stakeholders.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Identify common growth areas and develop shared small area land use plans for areas of common interest, such as those close to Fletcher, Mills Gap, Candler, along Highway 70 in Swannanoa, and surrounding Weaverville.
- Facilitate information sharing for review of new developments proposed near the boundary of municipalities.
- Align development with the Infrastructure and Energy chapter policy direction on the provision of utilities across jurisdictions.
- Achieve environmental and agricultural conservation goals by protecting Conservation lands from development and maximizing growth elsewhere.

POLICY 7

Increase housing options and improve housing affordability for all residents.

Buncombe will work to support the development of a variety of housing types that meet the needs of all households and families, prioritizing the affordability and accessibility of housing for the county's local workforce.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to create better housing options for current residents living in Buncombe and workers employed in the county that are currently unable to afford housing, with particular emphasis on addressing historical inequities related to housing needs.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Continue to explore funding and programs that support affordable housing initiatives and incentives such as **Community-Oriented Development**.
- Explore the possibility of inclusionary zoning if changes in state law occur to make this legally feasible.
- Enhance partnerships and bolster current efforts underway for affordable housing.
- Maximize development density and housing types to increase the number of housing units available within growth areas.
- Explore protections for existing affordable housing, with a particular emphasis on manufactured housing parks and supporting at-risk populations such as residents that are aging in place.
- Consider partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions and other organizations to support the development and protection of affordable housing. This could include partnerships with organizations like the Asheville Buncombe Community **Land Trust** to support development of affordable housing in unincorporated Buncombe County.

POLICY 8

Support development on infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse sites.

Buncombe will support development on infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse sites in growth areas designed to acknowledge the surrounding context and conditions.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to balance Buncombe’s development and growth pressures with its unique topography by directing growth to infill or redevelopment sites, maximizing growth in already-developed areas that are served by infrastructure.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Increase the return on public investments in infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, roads, etc.) by focusing development in areas with existing service capacity.
- Support infill and redevelopment projects that avoid conservation areas, minimize environmental impacts, and promote adaptive reuse.
- Coordinate infill and redevelopment decisions with small area plans and other local plans prepared jointly with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Create incentives and flexible development standards to promote sustainable and resilient development on infill, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse sites.

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 156.

1 Implement new development and re-development policies and prepare small area plans to promote desired land use patterns and designs and maximize the use of public infrastructure.

2 Implement County-directed policies to support Equity Opportunity Areas.

3 Implement equity-oriented housing policies that address historically disadvantaged groups and other neighborhoods at risk of gentrification and displacement.

4 Expand and protect affordable and accessible housing choices.

5 Implement regulatory actions to promote the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Goal.

6 Support the protection of agricultural and forest lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural communities.

7 Coordinate information sharing and joint decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions.

8 Develop new tools to protect steep slopes.

9 Inventory and encourage protection of cultural and historic resources.

SMALL AREA PLANNING

This Plan provides countywide land use planning guidance for all areas in Buncombe. Some smaller geographic areas have an elevated need for more detailed, site-specific planning efforts that will guide change expected to occur in the near future. Building off the foundations of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework, Buncombe County will undertake development of small area plans in partnership with community residents, businesses, landowners, and municipal partners with the intent of providing a more detailed vision and strategies that address the needs of individual areas in the county.

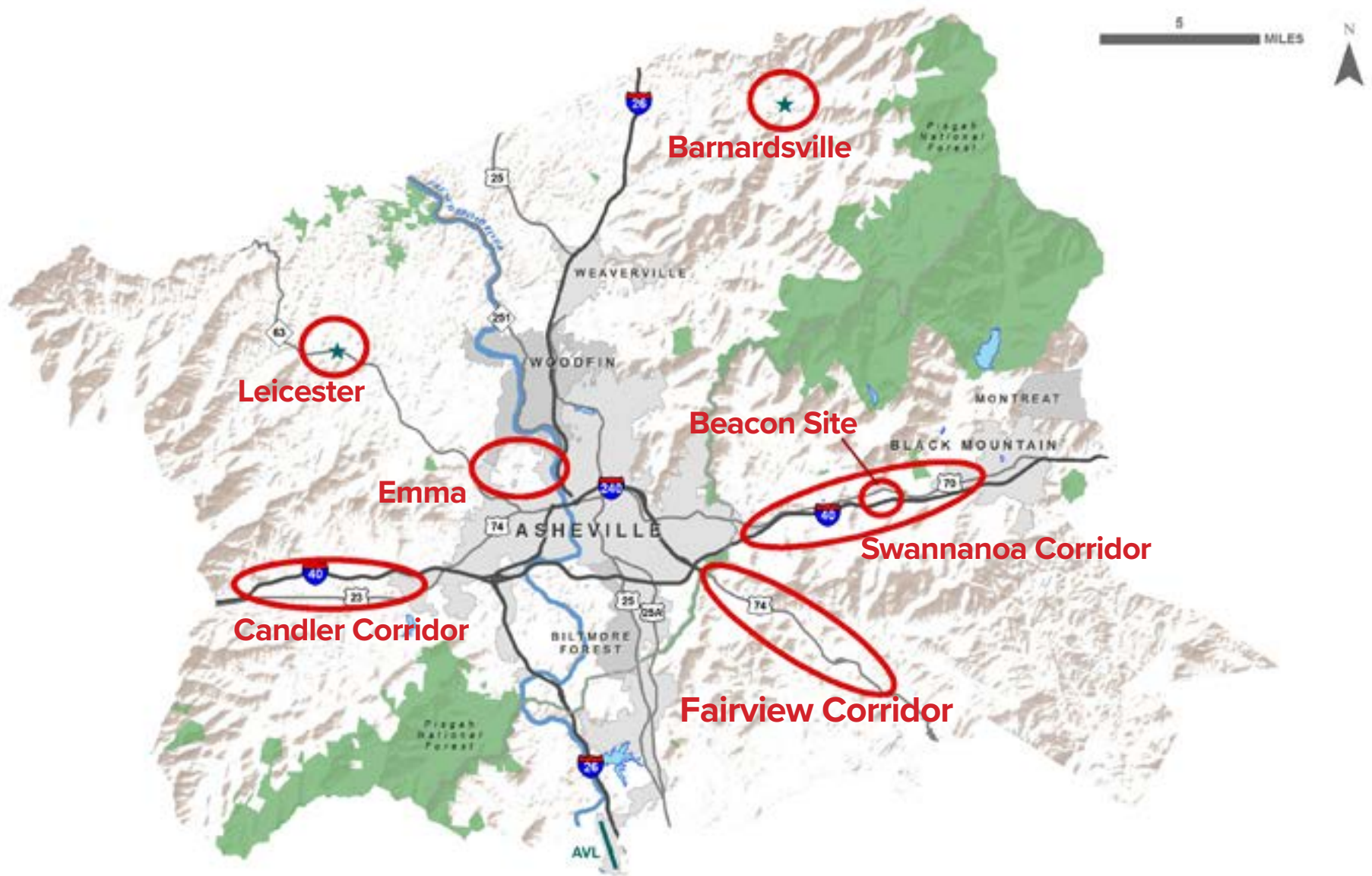
Each small area plan will be based on the outcomes of an equitable public engagement process that identifies a vision and goals for the area; policies to guide growth, preservation, and investment; and implementation actions to support achievement of the vision. The final recommendations of each plan will be uniquely guided by the identified vision and goals. These plans may include land use planning policies and actions related to built form, mix of land uses, preservation, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, parks, recreation, open space, community health, and other planning topics.


The map on the following page identifies the sites for future small area planning efforts. These areas include but are not limited to:

- ***Beacon redevelopment site***
- ***Candler corridor***
- ***Emma neighborhood***
- ***Fairview corridor***
- ***Rural Centers (identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map)***
- ***Swannanoa corridor***

The sequencing of small area plan development will be determined through the implementation process of the Plan. Future small area planning will not be limited to these identified areas. New small area plan locations can be added in response to changing conditions in the county.

SMALL AREA PLAN MAP



 General Location of Future Small Area Plan

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



The fishing pier and view of the marina at Lake Julian park.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

Racial Equity Action Plan (2021)

Buncombe County Sustainability Plan (2017)

Land of Sky Regional Council Area Plan on Aging (2016)

Buncombe County Strategic Plan (2020)

Ferry Road Land Use Plan (2021)

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Name Kaylee

Age 8

Write what your picture is about below:

I WANT MY neighborhood To
have some Pools and Parks some
restaurants maybe some libraries



First Name Juliette

Age 11

Write what your picture is about below:

What the future will look like in my neighborhood.

Chapter 03

TRANSPORTATION & CONNECTIVITY

GOAL:

Sustainable growth patterns - those that result in safer travel and less single occupancy vehicle (SOV) traffic - will be supported through expansion of equitable, affordable, and more varied transportation choices (walking, biking, taking transit, and driving) that prioritize safety for users, reduce climate and environmental impacts, and provide greater access to travel between live, work and play destinations, especially for those with limited vehicle access and who have historically been underserved by the transportation network.

Buncombe County will leverage regional partnerships to improve the transportation system and reduce single-passenger vehicle miles traveled through enhanced transit service, provide greater connectivity between current and future destinations, support non-motorized transportation options, and expand infrastructure for renewable fuel vehicles; all of which results in a network that is safer and experiences fewer impacts from traffic growth.





“I really want a sidewalk in my neighborhood so I can ride my bike or skate. And a treehouse.”
- Ayona, age 10

Photo: Multi-modal transportation options along Haywood Road in Asheville’s River Arts District.

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. An equitable transportation system is one that ensures that Buncombe County residents, especially those who cannot or choose not to drive a car, have effective, efficient, and reliable mobility choices. Success lies in providing a balanced and safe system with multiple modes of travel, including cars, transit, walking, and biking.



Commit To Sustainability. Shifting from single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to multi-modal options for transportation furthers sustainability goals, including fewer SOVs on the roadway; reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions; reducing household costs; and increasing levels of physical activity.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. Having access to mobility options can provide opportunities for employment, education, food, and essential services. Additionally, multimodal transportation is a way to reduce household costs.



Focus On Conservation. Transportation and connectivity objectives include reducing traffic, managing growth, developing sustainable land use patterns, and addressing community connection.



Root Efforts In Community. Public engagement revealed that the community desires more safe and affordable ways to travel to places, including biking, walking, and riding a bus or taking public transit.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 92 for more info.

POLICY 1

Increase access to multimodal and emerging transportation options.

POLICY 2

Enhance transportation planning capabilities to plan for and develop a balanced and safe transportation network.

POLICY 3

Coordinate land development and transportation policies to manage the impacts of growth and increased traffic.

POLICY 1

Increase access to multimodal and emerging transportation options.

Buncombe will increase access to and support development of infrastructure for multimodal and emerging transportation options, including walking, bicycling, micro-mobility choices, transit, and electric or renewable fuel vehicles.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to create a multimodal transportation system that prioritizes connectivity and transportation options. Community sentiment gathered during comprehensive plan development indicates a strong demand for increased multimodal and emerging transportation options that connect people who walk, bike, take transit, or use electric/renewable fuel vehicles to access housing, jobs, services, and recreation.

Easily accessible multimodal and emerging transportation options can reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles (SOV) and have a variety of personal and community benefits, such as improved physical and mental health, reduced personal costs, and reduced traffic and emissions.

This policy aims to achieve this by promoting the following options:

- Walking as a viable mode of transportation meets many Buncombe County goals, including health, sustainability, creating thriving commercial centers, reducing transportation costs, and equity. It serves as a viable mode of travel when communities have a pedestrian network that is connected, convenient, safe, and inviting.
- Bicycling and micro-mobility options (bike share, scooters, etc.) are viable modes of transportation for short to medium trips within and between developed areas. Like pedestrian mobility, bicycling for transportation promotes health, sustainability, and equity, and has the potential to reduce the cost of living. Bicycling is a viable mode when the community contains a connected and safe bicycle network that prioritizes facilities designed for less-confident people who bike (e.g., buffered bike lanes, multiuse paths, greenways).
- Transit is a key component of Buncombe's transportation strategy to manage traffic, maintain the community's character, reduce our environmental footprint, and decrease the cost of living. Transit is a viable mode choice when the transit system(s) provide reliable and frequent travel to the places people need to go.
- Allow for flexibility in the future as new and innovative modes of transportation for moving people and goods are developed.

POLICY 2

Enhance transportation planning capabilities to plan for and develop a balanced and safe transportation network.

Buncombe will develop the necessary capabilities to invest in a balanced and safe transportation network for all residents, which will require increasing capacity to re-imagine the county's role in transportation planning and project development, take action, and growing established partnerships.

Policy Intent

A balanced transportation network requires projects that provide sidewalks, bike lanes, complete streets, connected roadway projects, and widespread electric vehicle charging stations. In order to deliver this balanced and safe transportation network, Buncombe will need to build internal capacity.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Implement new policies (e.g., updated traffic impact analysis standards)
- Strengthen relationships with external partners that have transportation project responsibilities (e.g., French Broad River MPO, NCDOT, other municipalities, the development community).

- Advocate at the state level to improve existing and implement new transportation planning tools. Examples include changes related to bicycle and pedestrian investment; support for transportation planning policies, such as use of transportation impact fees; road design standards; and other issues.



Bike lanes and sidewalks near a redevelopment site in Asheville.

POLICY 3

Coordinate land development and transportation policies to manage the impacts of growth and increased traffic.

Buncombe will guide development to manage the impacts of growth and increased traffic by focusing on a sustainable approach, including prioritizing multimodal options.

Policy Intent

New growth in Buncombe County has the potential to increase traffic. Historically, efforts to address traffic have focused solely on adding capacity for motor vehicles through widening existing roads and building new roads. These types of projects are costly, can have negative impacts on the natural environment, change the community character along widened roadways, and often take years or even decades to complete, if they are ever undertaken at all. This approach to addressing traffic growth is not sustainable.

Buncombe County's approach should coordinate land use and transportation policies to manage traffic through more sustainable methods.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Focus on a combination of smaller, more feasible roadway projects.
- Shift trips away from single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to other modes (transit, walking, and biking)
- Reduce trip demand by focusing housing near jobs, schools, services, and recreation.

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 156.

1

Complete the Buncombe County Multimodal Plan.

2

Partner with other local, regional, and federal organizations and agencies to support a balanced and safe transportation network.

3

Develop Buncombe County's policies that support a balanced and safe transportation network.

4

Coordinate land development and transportation policies to manage the impacts of growth and increased traffic.

5

Enhance the County's Traffic Impact Study Standards.

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Picture of fall foliage in the mountains.

*Denotes technical report reviewed for general information but most do not contain policy guidance.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

[French Broad River Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(2020\)](#)

[French Broad River Regional Transit Feasibility Study \(2021\)*](#)

[Buncombe County Community Transportation Service Plan \(2015\)*](#)

[Regional Airport Master Plan \(2013\)*](#)

[NCDOT Highway Maintenance Improvement Plans \(HMIP\) \(Updated Annually\)](#)

[NCDOT Crash Data and Maps \(Continually Updated\)](#)

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



First Name: Elana Age: 7
We can help to keep this community better for the future.



First Name: Levi Age: 6
Write what your picture is about below:
Sidewalks to ride bikes near school and home

Nombre Jamileth
Edad 12 años
Escribe aquí acerca de tu dibujo:
I want to have more place or spaces to play or soccer fields because I really like to play soccer and there's not many soccer fields around here and more side walks to be able to walk to school

Chapter 04

FARMS, FORESTS, & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

GOAL:

A minimum of 20% of the county's open lands will be protected from development. Priority natural environments that support clean water, provide habitat for wildlife, offer nature-based recreation, and provide picturesque rural views will be conserved. Priority farms, forests and other working lands will be encouraged to be maintained for the benefit of current and future generations.





***“I want to live
and play on grass
and grow food in
gardens.”***
*- Julianna, age
four*

*Photo: Farmland in Buncombe
County.*

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. These Policies and Actions contribute to the equity of all people by protecting the land, air, water, viewsheds, and productive soils and forests within the county, ensuring that locally sourced healthy food remains abundant and accessible to all residents regardless of their income or the location of their community.



Commit To Sustainability. Protecting natural resources and promoting a resilient agricultural economy will support Buncombe’s sustainability efforts.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. Protecting its watersheds and promoting forest management best practices on private and public lands shows the commitment of the County to support the health and safety of all residents.



Focus On Conservation. This plan recognizes the County’s accomplishments in protecting its farms, forests, and environmentally sensitive lands from development through its partnerships with private and public entities that share conservation goals. The County’s goal to conserve additional priority land will continue this vision and ensure that its natural assets will benefit all county residents in the future.



Root Efforts In Community. Agricultural and other working lands support the community roots and economy of Buncombe. The county’s rich natural heritage provides immeasurable services to all people through its natural assets and beauty, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 104 for more info.

POLICY 1

Preserve Buncombe County's working farms and forests.

POLICY 2

Preserve Buncombe County's natural heritage.

POLICY 3

Promote ecosystem enhancement and restoration projects across public and private lands.

POLICY 1

Preserve Buncombe County's working farms and forests.

Buncombe will ensure that the county's highest quality farmland and forestland will be conserved for the benefit of future generations. This will be achieved by ensuring that priority working lands are protected from development using the appropriate conservation tools. Working farms and forests should be prioritized for conservation using the best available data.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to support the County's vision of a focus on conservation and to achieve its goals related to farms and forests, environmental conservation, climate resilience, and health. In addition, the preservation of lands that provide fertile soils for productive farmland or healthy forests are important to the county's economy. These lands contribute to jobs, a sense of community, human health, the natural environment, water quality, and the tourism industry.

Land use planning is important to maintain the county's agricultural opportunities. In addition, proactive conservation projects that protect land in perpetuity from development or incompatible uses are essential. By safeguarding the existence of farmland within the county, residents have access to locally-sourced, healthy, and affordable options for food across both the rural and urban landscape.

Buncombe County is motivated to maintain and enhance existing funding for farmland preservation. This can be accomplished through identifying new public-revenue sources for the purchase of conservation easements and leveraging funds from state, federal, and private foundation sources. Partnerships, both private-public and between public agencies, are very important in promoting this policy.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure Buncombe County has land available that can provide agriculture and forestry products to support the local economy through sustainably produced goods and agriculture and forestry-based jobs.
- Expand education programs that communicate the benefits of land, soil, and water conservation.

- Strengthen partnerships with conservation organizations and other public entities such as federal agencies, municipalities, and other counties to achieve mutual conservation goals.
- Preserve land for **agriculture-based education**.
- Provide locally-sourced, healthy, affordable, and accessible options for food for all residents.
- Simultaneously achieve conservation, recreation, and health goals.



A vineyard in Buncombe County.

POLICY 2

Preserve Buncombe County's natural heritage.

Buncombe County will ensure the county's highest quality connected natural environments will be conserved to the benefit of future generations to support clean water, provide habitat for wildlife, offer nature-based recreation, and provide picturesque rural views. This will be achieved by ensuring that priority natural lands are protected from development using the appropriate conservation tools. Environmentally sensitive tracts should be prioritized for conservation using the best available data.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to support the County's vision of a focus on conservation and to achieve its goals related to environmental conservation and climate resilience, health, and recreation.

The County should work to maintain and restore connections between the various natural communities of the region, preserving a network of forests, streams, Appalachian balds, wetlands, agricultural areas, and other open spaces.

Buncombe County's unique natural heritage, including biodiversity and wildlife habitat, provides numerous benefits and supports climate resilience and water quality protection. These lands are most valuable when they remain physically connected and allow wildlife migration.¹ The primary threat to these connections today is the destruction of critical habitats by development. Buncombe County will remain proactive in its commitment to its natural environment by supporting smart conservation strategies. Partnerships, both private-public and between public agencies, are very important in promoting this policy.

1. Connecting corridors provide spaces for wildlife migration routes and are critical to maintaining vital ecological processes and the health and biodiversity of wildlife populations. In our region, corridors primarily follow the ridgelines and streams.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Protect connections between natural landscapes and avoid fragmentation of large forest hubs in order to benefit wildlife migration.
- Expand education programs that communicate the benefits of land conservation and public access for the protection of biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
- Strengthen partnerships with conservation organizations and other public entities such as federal agencies, municipalities, and other counties to achieve mutual conservation goals.
- Preserve land for nature-based recreation.
- Simultaneously achieve conservation, recreation, and health goals.

POLICY 3

Promote ecosystem enhancement and restoration projects across public and private lands.

Buncombe will manage, enhance, and restore its network of healthy natural systems at a countywide scale. This includes water resource management, stream restoration and stabilization, flood mitigation, and invasive or non-native vegetation control.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to promote the County's commitment to sustainability, which includes the protection of land and water resources and increased resilience to hazards such as wildfires, landslides, and flooding. Degraded streams with significant erosion contribute to pollution of the waterways in Buncombe County. While state funds are sometimes available for enhancements, these funds can be limited and competitive. A countywide program and incentive to restore damaged landscapes on private land would have a positive benefit for the county.

Conservation easements and public ownership are tools that can be used to conserve forests and prevent poor management, but privately owned forested land that is managed for timber production should also be stewarded with best management practices to ensure a healthy and connected system of forests. Willing landowners should be educated about their options to enroll their land into designations that provide carbon services to county residents and improve public water quality.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage forest management solutions for healthy forests, carbon capture, and water quality.
 - Educate the public on the importance of proper forest management and established **riparian buffers**.
 - Explore opportunities to promote local **carbon sequestration** programs using non-profit partners.
- Evaluate the potential to develop a countywide stormwater credit trading program.¹
 - This program could fund the installation of nature-based stormwater control measures for residential and commercial projects for water quality benefits.
 - A feasibility study can be developed to assess the structure, costs, and benefits of such a program.

¹ American Rivers, <https://www.americanrivers.org/2019/12/how-to-guide-for-stormwater-credit-trading/>

- Evaluate the potential to develop a countywide stream and wetland enhancement program to help landowners or land managers pay for ecological improvements on private and public land.
- Continue protection of watersheds through conservation easements, watershed action plans, implementation of riparian buffers and stream improvements, and ordinances that regulate stormwater runoff and promote groundwater recharge.
 - Conduct an evaluation of failing septic systems and sewer discharge or overflows.
- Promote the creation of and protection of pollinator habitats alongside transportation corridors and on residential properties throughout the county by coordinating with Buncombe County, homeowners, landowners, and NCDOT.
- Conduct an assessment and accompanying management plan for invasive non-native vegetation on County-owned properties.
- Provide educational literature, workshops, and technical guidance for private landowners interested in controlling invasive non-native vegetation.



A stream bank restoration project along the Biltmore Estate property.

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 156.

1 Explore additional funding opportunities for conservation, environmental enhancement, and restoration projects.

2 Implement recommendations aligned with the Buncombe County Farmland Protection Plan.

3 Continue efforts to meet the conservation of 20% of the county's total acres by 2030.

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Farmers planting crops in Buncombe County.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

Farmland Protection Plan (2020)

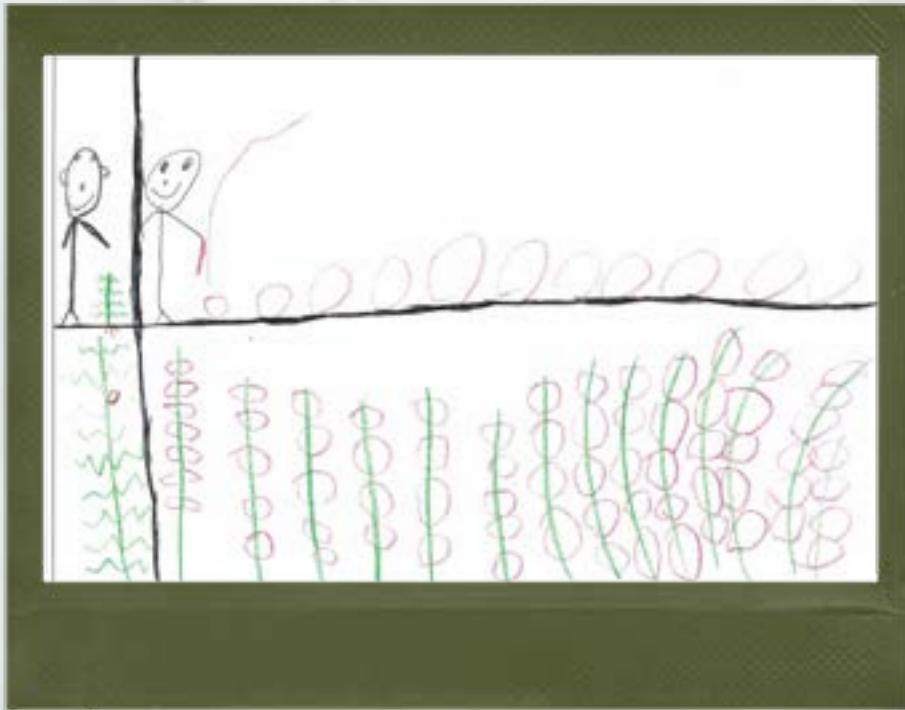
French Broad River Basin Restoration Priorities (2009)

Grow Western North Carolina (GroWNC) Regional Plan (2013)

Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future (2022)*

*Denotes technical report reviewed for general information but most do not contain policy guidance.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



First Name HOLENKA

Age 7

Write what your picture is about below:

Plant more trees for creatures that
don't have homes and make houses.
Stop cutting down trees!



First Name Julianna

Age 4

Write what your picture is about below:

I want to live and play on grass and grow
food in gardens.

Chapter 05

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, & JOBS

GOAL:

Buncombe County will be home to a diverse and adaptable economy of living wage industries that employ local workers, support equitable access to employment, and help meet quality of life needs of residents, such as access to childcare. It will strive to address inequities within the local workforce through collaboration with economic development partners; building capacity for entrepreneurship, business development, and worker-ownership models in historically disadvantaged communities; and promoting living wage or higher wage opportunities for residents.

The County will evaluate land use policies to identify and revise regulatory barriers to business development. The County will partner with Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, and other educational partners like A-B Tech to support more sustainable and resilient school campuses. The County will also coordinate and support school districts in efforts to enhance academic achievement and reduce the racial achievement gap with a broad spectrum of abilities through new programs, such as vocational or living skills courses.





***“Sustain well
paying jobs so
residents can
afford to live and
work here.”
- Community
participant***

*Photo: Elder Abuse
Prevention Event.*

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. Buncombe’s economy will strive to address inequities in economic opportunities by establishing key partnerships and investing in historically disadvantaged communities.



Commit To Sustainability. Economic development efforts will plan for emerging and new manufacturing and industrial uses that minimize environmental impacts and support sustainability goals. Policies in this Plan encourage the development of sustainability-oriented businesses in Mixed-Use Areas and Walkable Destination Centers identified in the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. Buncombe’s Vision Themes include the idea of an equitable community where all residents have better access to quality education and benefit from county-wide strategies that result in economic advancement and wealth creation.



Focus On Conservation. Buncombe’s future economic development must also support the protection of sensitive environmental lands and the conservation of agricultural lands. Economic opportunities can be supported by the redevelopment of existing or brownfield sites and adaptive re-use projects.



Root Efforts In Community. Buncombe’s vision is for a robust, diverse, adaptable, and sustainable regional economy. Place-based economic development builds on homegrown industries, supports the development of local talent, and promotes living wage jobs.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 118 for more info.

POLICY 1

Build opportunities to provide more jobs and higher than average wages.

POLICY 2

Provide adequate housing options for all income levels to meet the needs of economic development opportunities.

POLICY 3

Address socioeconomic disparities and economic mobility through economic development.

POLICY 4

Promote place-based economic development.

POLICY 5

Develop and implement strategies to maintain and strengthen the economic viability of agriculture and other components of the rural economy.

POLICY 6

Plan for emerging and new manufacturing and industrial uses that minimize environmental impacts and support sustainability goals.

POLICY 7

Support high-quality educational opportunities.

POLICY 1

Build opportunities to provide more jobs and higher than average wages.

Buncombe County will recruit and expand industry opportunities while supporting workforce needs in order to create higher wages and career opportunities.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to build a diverse workforce with career growth opportunities that pay more than the county's average wage and support a high quality of living in Buncombe County.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Identify and preserve land for job creation and specifically higher-than-average wage employers in the region's targeted industries (e.g., advanced manufacturing, life sciences, climate technology, outdoor products, professional offices, and information technology).
- Provide job opportunities available to a wide range of educational levels and professional interests through recruitment and expansion of targeted industries.
- Balance competing needs for housing, commercial, and recreation amenities, while securing important lands for economic development.
- Build upon the region's natural resources or environmentally centered job talents (such as climate-focused work and outdoor recreation) and expand in other higher-wage industries, such as advanced manufacturing and healthcare.
- Create spaces for small-batch manufacturing businesses, aligned with redevelopment or infill goals of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation chapter.
- Identify sites suitable for the expansion needs of workforce development partners (such as NCWorks, ABTech, and other organizations).
- Provide support for employee-owned small businesses as an economic driver for our community and focus on supporting and expanding existing small businesses.

POLICY 2

Provide adequate housing options for all income levels to meet the needs of economic development opportunities.

In order to meet the housing needs of the current and future workforce, Buncombe County will prioritize housing access in alignment with economic development changes in target industries.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to support development of housing choices and an adequate supply of housing units for employees working at local businesses so that they move and live closer to their employment locations and have affordable and safe living options.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Offer a diversity of housing options to meet the needs of all income levels in Buncombe County.
- Prioritize accessibility of housing closer to employment hubs for those who live and work in Buncombe County.
- Forecast housing needs with large-scale economic development changes, such as manufacturing or industrial employment centers. Protect naturally occurring affordable housing in Equity Opportunity Areas to avoid displacement or gentrification stemming from economic changes.



Construction of an ADA ramp through a local repair program.

POLICY 3

Address socioeconomic disparities and economic mobility through economic development.

Buncombe will align economic development policies and actions with the Racial Equity Action Plan and other initiatives to promote equitable opportunities for all residents.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to advance Buncombe’s equity vision in economic development through increasing annual incomes, providing a high quality of life for Buncombe residents, and addressing historical inequities.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Evaluate economic opportunities with an equity lens and build on other goals included in this plan.
- Encourage economic development activities that result in housing and commercial developments that provide a full range of services and amenities to residents.
- Identify neighborhoods or communities that could benefit from economic development projects and those that may be at risk of displacement through small area planning efforts and through assessment of Equity Opportunity Areas identified by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Support minority- and/or women-owned businesses (MBE/WBE) by setting standards for County procurement from these organizations.

POLICY 4

Promote place-based economic development.

Place-based economic development focuses on the existing natural and social resources of a community and encourages economic community partnerships. Buncombe will explore homegrown opportunities to help build a vibrant economy that is aligned with the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and land use categories.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to balance Buncombe's future economic development with its unique landscape and culture.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Capitalize on community assets to increase economic resilience and create economic opportunities. Community assets include Buncombe County's local culture, history, agriculture, and natural resources and can include facilities like libraries.
- Create connections between jurisdictions for economic development. An example would be the recreation-based economic activities like the Hellbender Trail that support and celebrate local resources.
- Align economic development efforts with the interests of established communities, such as Leicester, Fairview, and Barnardsville. Where feasible, coordinate economic development efforts with small area plans to ensure commercial development is supporting the goals of each unique community.
- Support development of Rural Centers as identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map to grow local rural commercial uses and support development of tourism uses (restaurants, local artisan shops, breweries, outdoor outfitters, etc.) that are scaled to fit the surrounding development context.
- Support development of small businesses through the elimination of regulatory or land use barriers and for small scale manufacturing where appropriate.

POLICY 5

Develop and implement strategies to maintain and strengthen the economic viability of agriculture and other components of the rural economy.

The preservation of lands that provide fertile soils for productive farmland or healthy forests are important to the county's economy, including its tourism industry, jobs, sense of community, human health, natural environment, and water quality. Buncombe County will support economic development that is based on rural or agricultural opportunities.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to capitalize on Buncombe County's unique and abundant agricultural and rural community resources to contribute to its economic development goals.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Support and strengthen existing programs that are built to support local agricultural and rural resources.
- Explore new opportunities, whether small scale or large scale, for economic development based on Buncombe County's agricultural and rural resources.
- Support farmers and other agricultural-dependent local businesses.
- Align economic development projects or initiatives with the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework to conserve environmental lands and preserve rural communities and lands.



A sign marking a farm along the Farm Heritage Trail.

POLICY 6

Plan for emerging and new manufacturing and industrial uses that minimize environmental impacts and support sustainability goals.

Buncombe will prioritize economic development opportunities, especially those in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, which minimize harm to environmental systems and advance the County's sustainability goals.

Policy Intent

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage development of sustainability-oriented businesses in Mixed-Use Areas, and Walkable Destination Centers identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Incentivize sustainability practices among new employers and businesses in the county.
- Support re-purposing of existing structures for new manufacturing and industrial uses.
- Discourage major polluting industries in order to support the health of residents.



New Belgium Brewing's manufacturing facility on a redevelopment site.

POLICY 7

Support high-quality educational opportunities.

Buncombe will foster connections and establish partnerships to support high-quality education at all levels in the county.

Policy Intent

High levels of educational attainment that advance economic mobility and quality of education are priorities for the County. The intent of this policy is to align Comprehensive Plan Goals with education goals for Buncombe County.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Create opportunities for Buncombe County to work with Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, and A-B Tech to support sustainable and resilient school campuses over time.
- Support school districts and their work to create equitable access to high-quality education and to address historic inequities.
- Support capital needs that align with economic development goals like higher wages and diversification of industry through facilities that focus on STEM education, innovation, and advanced manufacturing. Accomplish this through partnerships with school districts, universities, and community or technical colleges.
- Support statewide efforts to increase the number of high school seniors applying for postsecondary education through the “myFutureNC” program.
- Support partner organizations such as A-B Tech and NCWorks Career Centers that provide job training and job readiness skills to support advancing economic mobility for historically disadvantaged populations.
- Support efforts to advance early childhood education and support working parents, including pre-kindergarten and childcare services.

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 130.

1 Utilize the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map to guide land use decisions.

2 Identify the available inventory of suitable sites and buildings within Buncombe for economic development.

3 Implement place-based policies that make Buncombe's economy more resilient and successful.

4 Support the economic advancement of historically disadvantaged communities.

5 Improve educational attainment and reduce education achievement gaps.

6 Explore funding mechanisms to achieve economic development goals.

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



County staff sharing information at Warren Wilson College's community day event.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

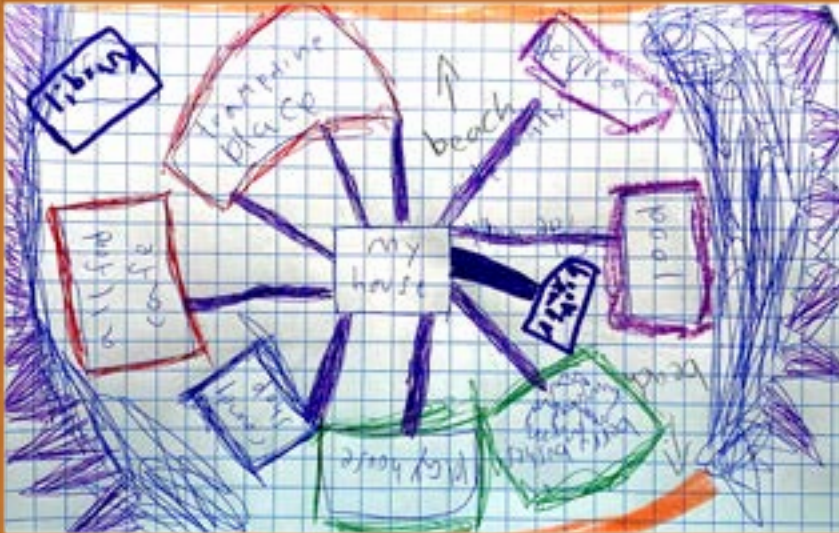
Land of Sky Regional Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2020)

Mountain Area Workforce Development Local Area Plan*

Asheville Greater (2019)*

*Denotes technical report reviewed for general information but most do not contain policy guidance.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Name Olivia

Age 8-9

Write what your picture is about below:

I want my neighborhood to have
all my favorite places like
look here for my favorite places.



Leo, age 9

I want my neighborhood like this because I think it would be efficient

Chapter 06

HEALTH & RECREATION

GOAL:

Residents living within the county's growth areas will have proximate access to natural recreation lands, greenways, trails, libraries, and/or parks, and the County will prioritize access to historically disadvantaged communities.

Residents will have equitable access to services for mental health, substance abuse, and general healthcare that support improved health outcomes and the social determinants of health across the county. Buncombe County will promote development patterns that support aging in place and the health of all residents.





“I want more spaces for kids. With things like wide open spaces and grass, playgrounds, statues, and pools.”
- Ben, age seven

Photo: Fishing at Charles D. Owen Park

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. Buncombe County will also utilize physical planning mechanisms to promote the health and safety of all residents. Social determinants of health drive the majority of health outcomes and are influenced by environmental and socioeconomic factors. These Policies aim to create more equitable conditions for all people at all stages of life, including aging seniors, in Buncombe County.



Commit To Sustainability. Many of this chapter's Policies are aligned with sustainability goals. For example, promoting more ways to walk and bike to destinations in Buncombe County also contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from car trips.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. The Policies and Actions described in this chapter will help Buncombe County achieve its goals of creating an equitable, livable, and community-oriented place. Access to recreation, the outdoors, and health-related facilities will promote livability and affordability in Buncombe.



Focus On Conservation. Buncombe County's vision is to appreciate and celebrate its natural assets and natural beauty by providing public access to natural lands and top-quality recreation facilities.



Root Efforts In Community. Improved access to healthcare, social services, mental health services, and drug treatment care and services were high priorities identified during public engagement. Other health-related concerns were also identified, including opportunities to walk or bike close to home, access to recreation and the outdoors, and affordable housing options.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 130 for more info.

POLICY 1

Focus on improving recreational opportunities in underserved areas.

POLICY 2

Support equitable access to health services and healthy lifestyle choices for residents.

POLICY 3

Merge recreational project goals with transportation and connectivity goals.

POLICY 4

Explore expansion of accessibility for recreation facilities and programs.

POLICY 5

Utilize environmental protection and land conservation to expand passive nature-based recreation and promote health.

POLICY 1

Focus on improving recreational opportunities in underserved areas.

Buncombe County will focus on equitable recreation investments by filling geographic gaps in recreational opportunities for underserved areas of the county. This also includes improving opportunities for community connectivity in rural areas via greenways and trails.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to recognize that residents in some areas of the county may not have the same level of public recreational services available to them as others, and some may have limited access or no access to public open space or green space. This may lead to health disparities between populations that can be measured and addressed.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Address health disparities that may result from limited access to recreation facilities, services, or programming for residents that live furthest away from the City of Asheville and towns with existing facilities.
- Maximize recreation investments by focusing on the highest need areas and places where targeted investments will yield significant benefits.
- Use the Community Index Map to determine the areas of social need.
- Additionally, the County should complete a level of service assessment to reveal which areas of the county are least served by public recreation facilities. The level of service assessment should be utilized to implement the location of new County facilities.
- Strive to provide residents in established growth areas with access to natural recreation lands, greenways, trails, or parks within a 10-minute drive of their homes.
- Explore options like pocket parks or splash pads to provide public open space or green space on a smaller scale in communities with the highest need.
- Develop more recreational programs for youth from historically disadvantaged populations, specifically for outdoor recreation.

POLICY 2

Support equitable access to health services and healthy lifestyle choices for residents.

The County will improve the social determinants of health for all residents by evaluating inequities in the built environment that pose health challenges and identifying solutions that reverse health inequities.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to recognize the importance of inequity and health disparities and to understand how the built and natural environment can improve these conditions. Access to health services, the ability to make healthy lifestyle choices, and rectifying environmental justice concerns are included in this policy.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide equitable access to high-quality health services, including the transportation to reach these providers and their proximity to home and work locations.
- Enhance health services to support the aging population to ensure resident well-being.
- Provide equitable access to safe and enjoyable forms of activity that improve mental and physical health, such as nature-based recreation.
- Evaluate policies related to the built and natural environment that impact the social determinants of health.
- Support local farms, other businesses that make up the local food system, and community gardens that offer healthy locally grown food choices to residents.
- Develop an understanding of need: places that have been underserved in terms of health services, healthy lifestyle choices, and access to recreation, and communities that have faced environmental justice disparities. Take steps to improve the built and natural environment conditions in these communities.
- Support policies and development that allow residents to age in place based on the Buncombe County Aging Plan prepared by the Land of Sky Regional Council (2017).

POLICY 3

Merge recreational project goals with transportation and connectivity goals.

Ensure that expansion of the transportation system includes infrastructure for walking, biking, and other forms of non-motorized transportation to align goals between recreation and transportation planning efforts.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to realize the shared transportation, recreation, and health goals between County departments. The expansion and connectivity of greenways and trails throughout the county are a highly supported public priority revealed in the first public engagement period. These amenities can create connections across homes, recreation destinations, businesses, and communities and can also work towards meeting the County’s sustainability goals by reducing the number of trips taken in single-occupancy vehicles.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Leverage County resources by merging planning efforts between departments for projects that can provide both transportation and **active recreation** options, such as the construction of connected greenways.
- Work with NC DOT and the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to determine opportunities to link these goals. This may include collaborating with the French Board River MPO to achieve the vision of the Hellbender Regional Trail.
- Prioritize projects in areas that are high-ranking on the Community Index Map, to reveal areas with higher concentrations of households that do not have a vehicle to provide for non-motorized options.
- Improve equity, sustainability, and livability in the county, and help to achieve health, recreation, transportation, and connectivity goals.
- Coordinate recreational goals to transportation and connectivity plans of other municipalities.

POLICY 4

Explore expansion of accessibility for recreation facilities and programs.

Expand accessibility and inclusiveness in all existing recreation facilities and implement ADA standards where possible in future projects to reach more people and broaden facility-use demographics.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to ensure that County recreation offerings are more inclusive, both for people with disabilities and for non-white populations who may have historically been excluded from programming. Federal lands surrounding the county such as Pisgah National Forest may provide popular **passive recreation** options for those who can access them. To increase their reach, the County can provide more equitable options which are welcoming to all and rooted in community needs.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Expand recreational programming to be more inclusive and welcoming of diverse populations, particularly youth from historically disadvantaged populations.
- Increase the number of public recreation amenities that provide ADA-compliant features.
- Make parks, greenways, and indoor recreation facilities more accessible, which will broaden the population of people who are able to use them and make the amenities provided by them more equitable.

POLICY 5

Utilize environmental protection and land conservation to expand passive nature-based recreation and promote health.

The County should seek to create nature-based recreation opportunities (trails, greenways, blueways, etc.) as part of environmental protection and land conservation efforts. By providing nature-based recreation and protecting natural resources, the County will prioritize the health and well-being of residents.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to conserve and celebrate the county's unique natural assets while promoting recreation and health. The County's focus on the conservation of its natural resources and water systems can be capitalized on to expand its recreational network with potentially large returns on small budget investments. Partnerships, both private-public and between public agencies, are very important in promoting this policy.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Simultaneously achieve conservation, recreation, and health goals.
- Utilize the County Land Conservation Advisory Board, which can recommend projects and conservation tools and provide funding, to achieve recreation goals.
- Engage private conservation organizations such as land trusts to partner on nature and recreation-based projects. These partnerships could present low-cost options for the County. These organizations can leverage private funding for land conservation in the form of monetary donations and foundation grants that are unavailable to the County.
- Expand education programs that communicate the benefits, management considerations, legality, and process of land conservation and public access.

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 156.

1 Develop a County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

2 Update the Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Master Plan.

3 Promote larger County parks as community hubs, especially in rural areas of the county that are lacking community gathering areas.

4 Use the updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan to evaluate expanding County recreation programming and events.

5 Plan for and conduct adequate maintenance and upkeep of existing and new facilities.

6 Develop a plan to proactively work with landowners to implement County recreational goals and expand private-public partnerships.

7 Develop a plan to provide equitable access to health services and healthy lifestyle choices.

8 Increase accessibility of healthy food sources to communities in need.

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



People kayaking and paddle boarding down the French Broad River in Asheville.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

Racial Equity Action Plan (2021)

Buncombe County Sustainability Plan (2017)

Buncombe County Aging Plan (Prepared by Land of Sky Regional Council, 2017)

Buncombe County Strategic Plan (2020)

Buncombe County Greenways & Trails Master Plan (2012)

Chapter 07

HAZARDS & RESILIENCE

GOAL:

In partnership with private landowners, Buncombe will protect important resources and assets (food, housing, businesses, energy systems) from the impacts of natural and human-made hazards. The County will manage existing and future environmental impacts by implementing green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Development will be limited in high hazard areas prone to floods, wildfires, and landslides. The County will be ready to respond to future events through enhanced emergency preparedness planning, public safety expansion, and reduced response times of first responders.





***I think we should
have more small
ponds and places
for rain water to
go.”
- Elliott, age eight***

Photo: stormwater rain garden.

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. Successful resilience and hazard mitigation Actions also address inequities in the community, such as affordable housing and the legacy of environmental injustice. Incorporating an equity lens into this process is an opportunity to identify priority projects that can both improve resilience and hazard mitigation with special attention on highly vulnerable populations.



Commit To Sustainability. Policies aimed at resilience also support sustainability, including improving access to renewable energy, and designing neighborhoods sustainably during new development, infill projects, and redevelopment.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. When considering growth and land use in the county, the risk of hazards will be considered in coordination with identifying developable areas. A more resilient Buncombe also means a livable and affordable place.



Focus On Conservation. Buncombe will also support conservation goals through addressing hazards and resilience, by protecting natural resources.



Root Efforts In Community. Buncombe residents are concerned about the increasing risk of hazards, such as flooding, landslides, and drought. The use of partnerships in capacity building can improve community resilience and preparedness and will also support Buncombe County's vision for resilience efforts rooted in community.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 142 for more info.

POLICY 1

Manage existing and future environmental impacts by implementing green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

POLICY 2

Align emergency response with the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Hazard Vulnerability Assessment.

POLICY 3

Use the Hazard Vulnerability Assessment to guide future growth and land use decisions.

POLICY 4

Employ design standards to increase **adaptive capacity** and reduce exposure to hazards.

POLICY 5

Invest in building capacity to ensure long-term community resilience, risk reduction, and preparedness.

POLICY 1

Manage existing and future environmental impacts by implementing green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Buncombe County will implement green infrastructure and nature-based projects that build resilience to multiple hazards, including flooding, wildfire, and landslides.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to manage environmental impacts by implementing as much green infrastructure as feasible. Older engineered infrastructure can be retrofitted to include green infrastructure. This is not limited to stormwater infrastructure but also considers other climate-, development-, and growth-related impacts, such as green infrastructure solutions to urban heat islands.

Some objectives of this policy are:

- Instead of relying solely on “gray” engineered infrastructure options, Buncombe County can implement both green infrastructure and nature-based solutions as standalone solutions or in combination with gray infrastructure. These solutions also have multiple benefits to both human and natural communities throughout the county and region.
- The very young (younger than 5) and elderly (older than 65) populations are shown to have higher vulnerability to environmental impacts, such as heat waves. Areas within the county that score highly in this theme can be prioritized to address this vulnerability.
- Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions can also perpetuate and/or exacerbate equity issues. For example, increased green space can result in neighborhood gentrification. Decision-making under this policy should be done carefully and guided by the community’s vision, aligned with the Policies and Actions of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation chapter.

POLICY 2

Align emergency response with the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Hazard Vulnerability Assessment.

Buncombe will leverage existing plans and assessments in the region to improve overall emergency response and target highly vulnerable areas to increase response capacity.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to use available information to inform response planning efforts throughout the county that consider individual hazards and combined hazards. This policy should be coordinated with efforts to support the long-range sustainability of public services (see the Infrastructure and Energy chapter).

Some objectives of this policy are:

- Address geographic-based disparities.
- Understand where the most vulnerable populations are located and, therefore, should be considered a higher priority within response efforts.
- Continue to measure emergency response time for Fire, EMS, & Law Enforcement at the department level and at the County level. This will increase the visibility of communities with disproportionate levels of service.



First Responders practicing rescue operations at the Buncombe County Emergency Services Training Center in Woodfin.

POLICY 3

Use the Hazard Vulnerability Assessment to guide future growth and land use decisions.

Buncombe County will use existing hazard maps and the hazard vulnerability assessment to understand limits to growth and land use in specific areas. Buncombe will consider the influence that land use changes have on existing hazards and new challenges they will create, such as stress on transportation systems, water quality, and socioeconomic challenges.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to recognize the interplay between the need for growth and conservation within the county.

Some objectives of this policy are:

- Recognize the need for integrating hazard assessments into County and regional planning.
- Consider the crucial impacts of growth and land use changes on vulnerable populations, whether by the increased or altered hazard potential and additional socioeconomic burden of hazards.
- Encourage maximizing development investments in low-risk hazard areas.
- Evaluate geographic areas with higher scores on the Community Index Map that may coincide with both potentially developable areas and hazards within the county.



Damage to a road and bridge in Candler following a flooding event.

POLICY 4

Employ design standards to increase adaptive capacity and reduce exposure to hazards.

Buncombe County will identify opportunities to revise and strengthen design standards—including building codes and the use of low-impact development and infrastructure improvements—to increase adaptive capacity to current and future hazards. This includes floodplain development ordinances, fuel management for wildfire, and the County’s Steep Slope/High Elevation Overlay and Protected Ridge Overlay within the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to recognize the need for strengthened ordinances and standards that better match the existing hazard vulnerabilities within the county and consider other goals of the Comprehensive Plan, such as the Growth, Equity, and Conservation chapter. The strengthening of design standards and ordinances is intended to increase the adaptive capacity of structures and reduce the exposure of individuals and communities to hazards.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Identify types of structures that may typically be considered highly susceptible to hazards such as multi-family homes and manufactured homes.
- Evaluate climate risks to buildings, structures, and support services, and develop defensible estimates of increased risks associated with changes in climate patterns for infrastructure in the floodplain.⁶
- Address the location and design of buildings and development. Using the Hazard Vulnerability Assessment, the locations of these types of properties and their vulnerability to hazards can be better understood and prioritized for action.
- Collaborate with the State to identify appropriate methods to update local building codes to create more resilient developments.

6. North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, June 2020, pp.5H-1 – 5h-11. Accessed July 5, 2022. An additional resource for building codes and standards is the National Institute of Standards and Technology, “Community Resilience Planning Guide for Buildings and Infrastructure Systems.”

POLICY 5

Invest in building capacity to ensure long-term community resilience, risk reduction, and preparedness.

Buncombe County will invest in growing the capacity to identify, assess, and implement actions for adaptation and building resilience. Buncombe County will implement policies to ensure people are prepared when disruptions and minimal disruptions occur to core services. Socially vulnerable populations and communities are most affected by disruptions caused by hazards; therefore, outreach and engagement are important aspects of preparedness.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to recognize the need for partnerships and collaboration within County departments and between the County and other stakeholders to build capacity.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Focus efforts on building capacity within neighborhoods where the overall Equity Opportunity score is high and hazard vulnerability is also high.
- Address the need for resilient infrastructure that builds capacity, such as microgrids and emergency cell tower coverage for emergency services.
- Build upon existing and create new partnerships with communities in Buncombe County already working on **resilience hubs**, including rural, low-income, and immigrant and historically disadvantaged communities.
- Assess and learn about the threats to resilience on a community level to identify top priorities and encourage engagement in the creation of solutions.⁷

7. To learn more, see the Climate Change Adaptation Resource Center (ARC-x) for interactive resources, geographic information on risks and relevant adaptation strategies, case studies, and funding opportunities. <https://www.epa.gov/arc-x>

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 156.

1 Implement green infrastructure & nature-based solutions.

2 Employ design standards to increase adaptive capacity and reduce exposure to hazards.

3 Build capacity for community resilience and preparedness.

4 Align emergency response with the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Hazard Vulnerability Assessment.

5 Use Hazard Vulnerability Assessment to guide future growth and land use decisions.

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Children in Halloween costumes share their vision for the future at the Fall Festival.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

Buncombe Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2021)

Mountain and Steep Slope Protection Strategies (2008)*

*Denotes technical report reviewed for general information but most do not contain policy guidance.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Elliott, age 8
I think we should have more small ponds,
and places for rain water to go.

Chapter 08

INFRASTRUCTURE & ENERGY

GOAL:

Buncombe County has committed to converting its internal operations (by 2030) and energy use of the entire Buncombe community (by 2042) to 100% renewable energy. Infrastructure will be expanded across the county to support renewable fuel vehicles, broadband access, and renewable energy use.

Rebuilding of aging infrastructure and decarbonizing utility structures to support these renewable energy targets will be prioritized. The County will coordinate with partner utilities to encourage development in growth areas and away from priority conservation areas and important water resources. Long range public facilities and services planning will ensure appropriate levels of service to support future growth and promote public safety.





***“I want in 20
years every
powered house to
be solar powered!
It will save trees
but still power!”
-Oscar, age 10***

*Photo: Solar panels installed on
New Belgium Brewery in Asheville.*

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES



Strive To Achieve Equity. All Infrastructure and Energy Policies are designed with an equity lens. Critical services like broadband and cellular service can improve equity in access to education, jobs, and healthcare. Equity in public utility provision is also considered by encouraging consistent levels of service within suburban and rural areas.



Commit To Sustainability. Infrastructure and sustainability will be supported by advancing renewable energy goals for both County operations and for private sector developments.



Achieve Livability & Affordability. Improving infrastructure and energy systems are the foundation for enhancing livability and affordability for those who live and work in Buncombe. These natural and built systems include potable water and wastewater systems; telecommunications and broadband infrastructure; and energy systems fueled by natural gas/oil, nuclear, solar, hydropower, and other sources.



Focus On Conservation. Guiding development toward areas with adequate infrastructure and development potential will support the needs of communities and promote conservation in areas prioritized for environmental or agricultural protection.



Root Efforts In Community. Public input showed that Buncombe residents are interested in locating future development in areas that are served by infrastructure (public water, sewer, and broadband) and away from environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains and steep slopes. Residents are also passionate about expanding energy efficiency in new construction and renewable energy resources across the county.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Looking for more info on these Policies? Check out the plans on page 154 for more info.

POLICY 1

Coordinate public water and wastewater services with plans for growth.

POLICY 2

Plan for the long-term sustainability of public services.

POLICY 3

Expand and support broadband access and cell phone service coverage for all residents of Buncombe County.

POLICY 4

Advance sustainability and decarbonization goals.

POLICY 1

Coordinate public water and wastewater services with plans for growth.

Buncombe County will incentivize and guide development toward areas with adequate infrastructure and development potential. To achieve this goal, the County will coordinate infrastructure planning with municipal and utility partners and utilize the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework as a guide.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to collaborate with utility providers like Metropolitan Sewerage District (MSD), City of Asheville Water, and other municipal water providers (including utilities provided by Hendersonville) to prioritize water and wastewater investments toward desired growth areas and away from areas identified for conservation.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Consider where water and sewer provision are feasible and supported by county and municipal growth plans. This high-level coordination will allow the County to balance sustainable development, health, and safety objectives with existing infrastructure and expansion plans.
- Coordinate infrastructure improvements with the Policies and Actions of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework to avoid accelerating displacement or having unintended negative consequences.
- Coordinate joint planning in areas of common interest on the edges of municipalities.
- When Buncombe County Planning & Development prepares staff reports that evaluate development projects, they will identify existing or planned infrastructure capacity that would support the project.
- Ensure there is adequate water infrastructure to support Fire Services for ISO-1.

POLICY 2

Plan for the long-term sustainability of public services.

In order to provide for the health and safety of those who work and live in Buncombe County today and in the future, the County will measure, manage, and plan for the long-term sustainability of public services.

Policy Intent

Buncombe County provides public services to support the health and safety of all those who work, live, or visit the county. County-funded and County-managed public services encompass public safety, emergency services, stormwater management, and solid waste. Buncombe County provides public safety services from the Sheriff's Office and emergency services such as emergency communications (911 call center), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), fire and life safety from the Fire Marshal's Office, and disaster coordination in the Emergency Management Division. Solid waste services require overseeing landfill capacity and recycling.

As the county continues to develop and change, it will need to provide exemplary and timely services in a manner that balances needs with available fiscal resources. As growth occurs, services like fire, EMS, law enforcement, and solid waste will encounter challenges in response and capacity.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Coordinate services with planned growth to allow for the appropriate resources, personnel, and facilities to be established across the county. For example, an area that experiences a population increase will result in a higher emergency call volume, necessitating more ambulance bays and vehicles to respond.
- Buncombe County's solid waste landfill, located in Alexander, will reach capacity in approximately 20-25 years. Solid waste expansion requirements will need to be considered, and sustainability efforts like composting and recycling could reduce solid waste outflows. Landfills rank as the third-largest source of methane emissions in the United States;⁴ promoting sustainable development practices and scaling up recycling could divert more waste from landfills.

4. Bradley Adams, Composting in Residential, Agricultural, and Commercial Districts, Sustainable Development Code (n.d).

- Supporting public services while managing growth will allow for a sustainable provision of health and safety in the county. Levels of service should align with the needs of the community based on population density. This will result in higher levels of service in the urban/suburban areas, and a lower level of service in rural areas where residents and businesses are more dispersed. Criteria for these levels of service can provide parameters that trigger the need for public service expansions or improvements, such as building a new EMS station when a certain area experiences population growth.
- Consider land banking as a way to reserve land for future public service needs such as EMS, fire, and/or law enforcement stations that will be needed by future populations. Coordinate this with plans for mobile integrated healthcare services.



Buncombe County's active landfill.

POLICY 3

Expand and support broadband access and cell phone service coverage for all residents of Buncombe County.

The County will support the maintenance and expansion of broadband (high-speed internet access) and cell phone service coverage to enrich the livelihoods of all residents and businesses in Buncombe.

Policy Intent

Digital connectivity, including broadband access, internet, and cell phone service coverage, are vital for improving the quality of education in schools, supporting social and civic connections in communities, and providing high-quality and reliable health services. Improving connectivity is also important for addressing inequities in unserved or underserved communities.

While Buncombe County does not govern broadband access, there are opportunities for partnerships or funding that can be leveraged to expand access. The Land of Sky Regional Council Regional Council's "Buncombe County Broadband Community Profile" has identified concerns with broadband issues, specifically highlighting the digital inclusion or homework gap for students, public safety communications for emergency management teams, promoting technology-driven economic development, and providing high-quality and accessible healthcare and telehealth options.⁵ Buncombe County's current ordinances can be changed to better facilitate cell service expansion. The County will seek to address these service needs for residents and businesses.

5. Land of Sky Regional Council Regional Council, Buncombe County Broadband Community Profile (June 2019). http://www.landofsky.org/pdf/LGS/Broadband/BuncombeCounty_CommunityProfile2019.pdf



County staff working with the public to record their ideas during a public meeting.

POLICY 4

Advance sustainability and decarbonization goals.

The County will support efforts to implement decarbonization, energy efficiency, and renewable energy generation programs and policies that support Buncombe County’s sustainability goals.

Policy Intent

Advancing decarbonization, energy efficiency, and sustainability in Buncombe County will support the public’s interests in building resilience and reducing its carbon footprint. Buncombe County has passed a resolution that sets a goal of reaching 100% renewable energy within County operations by 2030, and 100% use of renewable energy for the entire community by 2042.

The County, with the City of Asheville and other partners, is implementing measures to integrate solar power into municipal-owned facilities. The County is also working with the community to increase energy efficiency and build partnerships to increase renewable energy use. Incentivizing and supporting the development of other forms of sustainable energy sources will allow for additional progress in this area. Investing in renewable energy infrastructure, such as green buildings and construction, electric vehicle charging, renewable fuels, and home and business energy retrofits can also support this policy. This policy should be coordinated with electric vehicle and renewable fuel actions detailed in the Transportation and Connectivity chapter.



A Mountain Mobility driver refueling a public transit bus using propane.

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Looking for more detail on the Actions listed here? Check out the Implementation chapter on page 156.

1 Partner with utility providers to coordinate growth and infrastructure plans.

2 Implement policies around new development and re-development that advance decarbonization and sustainability goals.

3 Develop a long-term planning process for solid waste operations that prioritizes sustainability.

4 Improve and build upon the capital improvement planning (CIP) process to manage, integrate equity goals, and prepare for expansion and maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure.

5 Explore partnerships and identify barriers to address broadband access and cell service expansion

RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



The East Haven Apartments, an affordable housing project, in Buncombe County.

The plans and other documents listed below were used as reference and guidance in developing the Policies and Actions in this chapter.

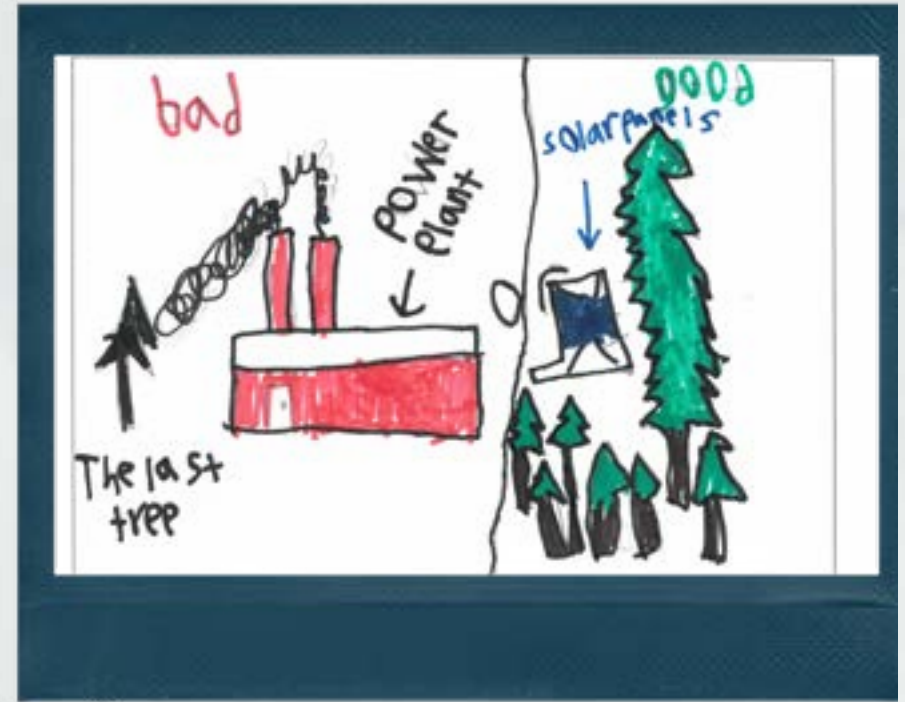
Buncombe County Sustainability Plan (2017)

Buncombe County Broadband Community Profile (2019)*

Moving to 100 Percent: Renewable Energy Transition Pathways Analysis for Buncombe County and the City of Asheville (2019)*

*Denotes technical report reviewed for general information but most do not contain policy guidance.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Name LUCY
Age 8
Write what your picture is about below: I want there to be more
RECYCLING

Oscar, age 10
I want in 20 years every power house to be solar power! It will save trees but still power!

Chapter 09

IMPLEMENTATION

The true value of planning lies ultimately in the implementation of community-supported ideas.

This chapter establishes the relationship between the Comprehensive Plan and other County planning efforts, such as the Strategic Plan, that are instrumental in achieving Plan implementation. It details the Actions the County will take to implement the Plan's Policies and achieve the Plan's Vision Themes and Goals. Actions are organized by planning topic and their respective chapter.





***“I want to live in
a neighborhood
that is clean
and has good
neighbors”
-Erik, age 11***

*Photo: East Asheville Library
public meeting.*

IMPLEMENTATION INTRODUCTION



Children shared their vision for the future at a public input meeting.

Guided by Public Input

A concerted effort was made during the Buncombe 2043 planning process to continuously reflect on and incorporate input from community members of Buncombe County into the Plan. Throughout all four Phases of the planning process, the Steering Committee, Planning Board, Board of Commissioners, and Project team carefully considered cumulative feedback from the community when making decisions about the Vision Themes, Goals, Policies, and Actions in this Plan. This chapter identifies priorities for implementation identified from public input and how the Actions can be coordinated with other Buncombe County efforts.

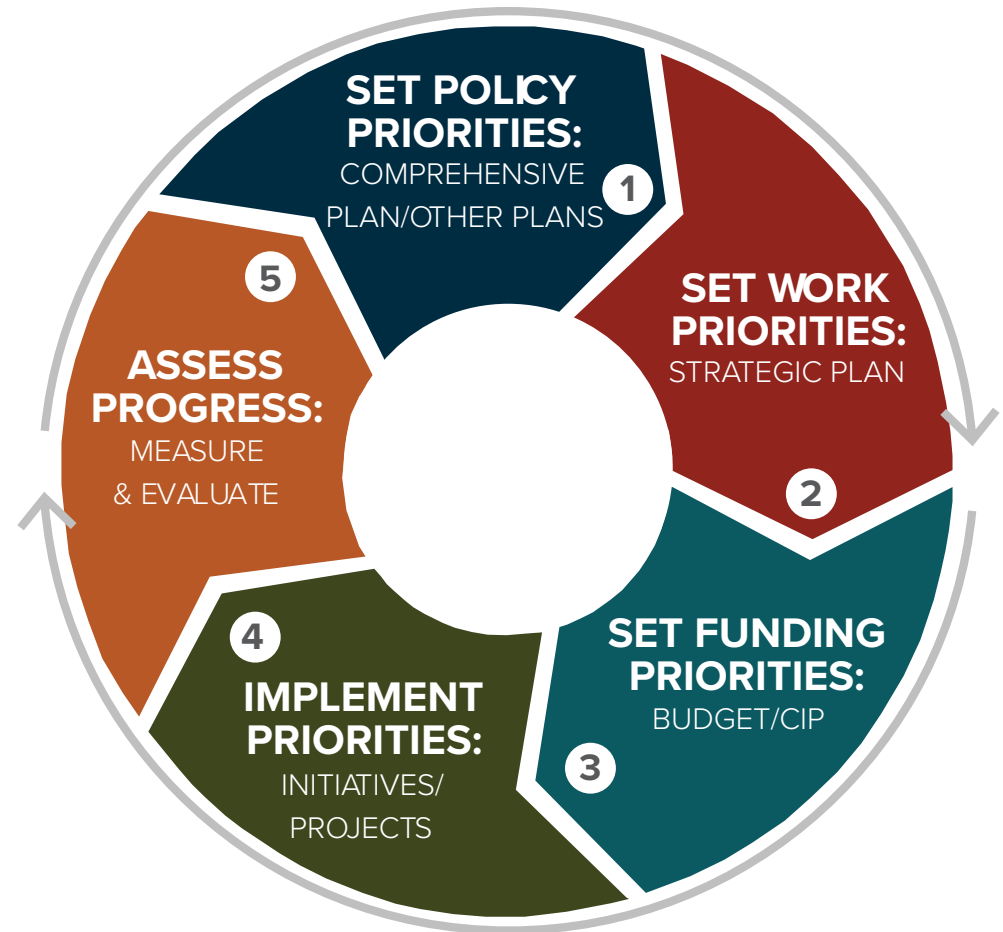
Linkage to the Strategic Plan

The Buncombe County Strategic Plan guides County operations and sets a course for implementing Policies and Actions through operations and budget decisions. The currently adopted Strategic Plan was developed in 2019 and adopted in May of 2020. The Strategic Plan 2025 vision is, “A caring community in harmony with its environment where residents succeed, thrive, and realize their potential.” The Strategic Plan Focus Areas include:

- Educated and Capable Community
- Environmental and Energy Stewardship
- Resident Well Being
- Vibrant Economy

To view departmental dashboards for the Strategic Plan or to read more about the planning process, visit: www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/strategic-plan/

The Buncombe County Strategic Plan 2020-2025 acknowledged the need for comprehensive planning and initiated the process for Buncombe 2043. The Strategic Plan is updated every five years and can support the implementation of the Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan through several key implementation efforts: regulatory updates, capital investments, operational initiatives, and budget decisions.



Taking Action

The implementation matrices and corresponding Actions are organized by Plan chapter. The Actions within these chapters are then organized by four categories of implementation, which can be identified by the icons below:

Regulatory and Guideline Updates – These are Actions focused on updating specific legal rules for new development. An example of this is preparing updates to the County’s Zoning Ordinance.

Capital Investments and Funding Programs – These Actions focus on funding different operational initiatives and community investments, such as funding for conservation, environmental enhancements, and restoration projects.

Further Planning Efforts and Initiatives – These include more detailed planning efforts, some of which may be undertaken in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions, such as a small area plans.

Partnership Opportunities – The County does not have the full jurisdiction and funding required to implement many of the Actions in the Plan. Partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions, utility providers, regional transportation planning entities, economic development partners, and other types of partnerships are needed to fully implement the Plan.

REGULATORY

FUNDING

PLANNING

PARTNERSHIP



A bus shelter installed in Buncombe County.

UPDATING & AMENDING

The Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan represents a long-term vision for the future. It is meant to guide policy decisions for Buncombe County over the next 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan should remain a relevant, living document that continues to represent the priorities of the community over time. In order to accomplish this, the Plan should be regularly updated and amended.

In North Carolina, the municipal and county planning and zoning enabling statute (G.S. 160D) requires that local governments adopt a comprehensive plan or land use plan if they have an adopted zoning ordinance. Per the statute, these plans “set goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction” and these plans are to be “reasonably maintained” with occasional updates.

This statute also requires that zoning be “in accordance with a comprehensive plan” and that local governments make statements of consistency when making rezoning decisions on a development application. If a local government approves a rezoning request that is not consistent with the comprehensive plan resulting in a zoning map amendment being adopted, and the action was deemed inconsistent with the adopted plan, the zoning amendment shall have the effect of also

Who are the Buncombe County Commissioners?

The seven-member Board of County Commissioners is the governing body of Buncombe County. The Buncombe County Board of Commissioners serve staggered four-year terms through partisan elections. Commissioner Meetings take place on the first and third Tuesdays of each month.

To learn more about the Commissioners, visit the Buncombe County website:

<https://www.buncombecounty.org/commissioners>

amending any **future land use map** (e.g., the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map) in the approved plan, and no additional request or application for a plan amendment shall be required per the statute.

The Buncombe County Commissioners and the Planning Board are responsible for adopting the Plan. Following adoption, it is good planning practice to review the Plan approximately every five years. Regular reviews can include monitoring changes to the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map and prioritizing the recommended Actions from Buncombe 2043 with other processes, such as the Strategic Plan updates and capital improvement plans.

The GEC Map should also be monitored to identify trends that may justify changes to the Plan’s policy direction and map guidance. It is recommended that Buncombe County establish specified pre-determined intervals (such as on an annual basis) for plan amendments to be presented to the Commissioners, resulting in the formal amendment of all inconsistencies that have been created through the rezoning process.

MONITORING & **REPORTING**

Monitoring and reporting on the Plan should be an ongoing process that includes status reports on Plan implementation to the public at regular intervals. It is good planning practice to report on implementation every two years and it is the intent that an implementation report will be delivered on a regular schedule to the Buncombe County Commissioners. This report will measure progress toward achieving the Plan’s goals and track performance metrics over time.

Performance Metrics

Performance metrics, shown in the table on the next page, are an important method of tracking the implementation of the priorities set out in the Buncombe 2043 Plan. Evaluating these performance metrics will provide a measurable way to understand how effectively the Plan is achieving the community’s desired outcomes.

The metrics were developed by Buncombe County staff with an emphasis on alignment with current County goal tracking, other initiatives, and strategic planning efforts. Asterisks denote the performance metrics that are already being tracked by Buncombe County, whether by Planning & Development, another department, or through a County-wide process.



A stream in Barnardsville in winter.

PLANNING TOPIC	PERFORMANCE METRIC
GROWTH, EQUITY, AND CONSERVATION	<p>The majority of new development shall occur within growth areas as defined by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework and Map.</p> <p>Increase the number of ownership units and rental units affordable to households earning less than 80% Average Median Income (AMI).*</p>
TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY	<p>Increase the number of linear feet of sidewalks, bike paths, and greenways.</p>
FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	<p>Increase the number of acres in permanent conservation status.**</p>
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND JOBS	<p>Increase the number of new jobs with earnings above \$50,000.***</p>
HEALTH AND RECREATION	<p>Increase the percentage of the Buncombe County population that lives within three miles of recreation, greenways, trails, or parks.</p>
HAZARDS AND RESILIENCE	<p>Decrease allowable impervious surfaces on all newly developed lots.</p>
INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY	<p>Increase in the number of renewable energy projects built in Buncombe County.</p>
<p>*Adopted metric for the Buncombe County Community Development Department</p> <p>**Currently tracked by Buncombe County Planning & Development</p> <p>***Currently tracked by the Chamber of Commerce data. This performance metric may be updated based on inflation.</p>	

GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION

ACTIONS

ACTION 1

REGULATORY

Implement new development and re-development policies and prepare small area plans to promote desired land use patterns and designs and maximize the use of public infrastructure.

- Conduct small area planning in areas that would benefit from additional policy development and planning guidance, such as in Equity Opportunity Areas, growth corridors, and other places in need of site-level analysis.
- Confirm that the zoning ordinance allows for walkable, mixed-use, and higher-density development to occur in growth areas as defined by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map.
- Evaluate regulatory barriers to infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse sites including parking, dimensional requirements, density, and access circulation standards. Consider providing flexibility for achieving these standards to support the redevelopment of underutilized sites.
- Continue to develop standards and programs that incentivize affordable housing, cluster development, and green building techniques.
- Assess underutilized properties for infill and redevelopment potential or County acquisition for public use of other goals, such as recreation.
- Conduct an analysis of publicly owned parcels or parcels owned by nonprofits/nongovernmental organizations to identify partners for collaborating on infill and redevelopment projects that are focused on providing affordable housing.

ACTION 2

FUNDING

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Implement County-directed policies to support Equity Opportunity Areas.

- Partner with residents and property owners in identifying Equity Opportunity Areas to develop small area plans that identify specific threats that may lead to displacement and gentrification, community benefits that are needed to support the neighborhood, and solutions to support managed change that improves the quality of life for residents and businesses without displacing them.
- As part of small area plans, consider the use of zoning tools to minimize the impacts of market changes or development. An example may include a manufactured housing overlay to protect existing affordable housing assets.
- For Equity Opportunity Areas that are not formally organized, provide technical assistance to support capacity and leadership building. Partner with non-governmental organizations to support these efforts.
- Explore financial and other governmental tools, such as land acquisition or land trust partnerships, to protect areas from displacement. Other tools may include cooperatives between land acquisition organizations and land trusts, operational incentives to landlords for maintaining affordable units, or deed restrictions to protect naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Monitor change in Equity Opportunity Areas by developing metrics that signify change, such as property ownership changes or baseline changes resulting from updates to the Community Index Map.
- When a development project requires a public hearing for a land use decision, explore a requirement for community meetings, particularly for Equity Opportunity Areas impacted by the development project.

ACTION 3

PLANNING

Implement equity-oriented housing policies that address historically disadvantaged groups and other neighborhoods at risk of gentrification and displacement.

- Review the County’s affordable housing strategy in light of changing housing needs to address household needs across all age groups, types of abilities, race/ethnicity, nationality or citizenship status, and income levels.
- Provide historically disadvantaged populations with improved access to the following programs: Affordable Housing Services Program, affordable home repair, energy efficiency services, and property tax relief programs such as the Homeowners Grant for Low Income Individuals and Families.
- Consider the creation of strategies that address gaps in service when meeting the needs of the chronically homeless and those experiencing mental health conditions and potentially partnering with the City of Asheville to accomplish this.

ACTION 4

FUNDING

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Expand and protect affordable and accessible housing choices.

- Support a mix of housing types within growth areas to accommodate the projected demand for long-term rental and owner-occupied housing for Buncombe County and the expected continuation of demand for smaller housing units identified in the 2021 Bowen National Research’s Housing Needs Assessment.
- Request the Affordable Housing Committee to review the recommendations of the Reparations Commission to analyze housing affordability and accessibility options. This may also include coordination with economic development initiatives to understand middle income housing needs of targeted industries.
- Consider opportunities for regional coordination and partnership for the development of affordable housing. This can include a **housing land trust model** and other affordable housing partners.
- Evaluate and implement strategies to protect and enhance manufactured housing parks that function as naturally occurring affordable housing, including a zoning overlay that protects

these units.

- Research and evaluate other funding models and incentives to support the construction or maintenance of affordable housing.
- Continue evaluating County-owned lands for the development of affordable housing.
- Consider other zoning tools which incentivize a developer to generate permanently affordable housing units by allowing for higher density development and a higher dwelling unit yield than allowed under the base zoning.
- Consider allowing every residential lot in every zoning district to have at least two homes provided the lot or parcel has adequate infrastructure.
- Consider incentivizing the development of affordable housing units as part of commercial developments through reductions or waivers of development standards or fees. This could come in the form of live/work units or apartments built on top of ground floor commercial uses.

ACTION 5

REGULATORY

Implement regulatory actions to promote the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Goal.

- Where water and sewer utilities are available or feasible to implement, evaluate and change zoning ordinances to encourage a variety of housing types and the highest density units per acre as appropriate within each growth area category identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Consider the development and adoption of conditional zoning that can result in development approaches tailored to support site conditions, site context, and the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the County's Strategic Plan, and future small area plans.
- In tandem with Special Use Permits and conditional zoning entitlements, the County will evaluate and consider a series of exactions that are specifically related to development proposals in order to manage future growth and to assure that County goals are fulfilled.
- Improve the existing Community-Oriented Development option in the Zoning Ordinance to incentivize sustainable, resilient, and affordable housing developments. The point system could be improved to support increases in density, waiving of certain fees, or a reduction of development standards in trade for the development earning points through specific design concepts discussed below. Ongoing management of these systems would need to be defined for each project. In addition to these being voluntary, the County could consider requiring some

or all of the following provisions. Additional components could include:

- Electric vehicle infrastructure;
- Creation of needed community benefits as identified in small area plans;
- Water and energy efficient features and designs; and
- Other sustainable development approaches.

It is recommended to maintain the following categories currently in the ordinance:

- Community: Affordable housing, middle income housing, period of affordability, accessibility, and Safe Routes to School
 - Environment/Transit: Conserve riparian buffers and wetlands, conserve open space, promote low impact development (LID), utilize best management practices and the exclusion of development inside special flood hazard areas and steep slopes greater than 25%, encourage participation in Energystar program, alternative energy sources, rainwater and greywater collection, proximity to public transit routes, and construction of roads built to NCDOT standards and dedicated to NCDOT
 - Economy: Mixed use housing, mixed use development (residential and non-residential), preservation of active farmland, and community building
 - Added Amenities: Provision of community facilities, non-motorized passive recreation, street trees, sidewalks, and greenway connections.
- Consider the utilization of available tools to mitigate the loss of year-round housing to short-term rentals. These tools may include but are not limited to restricting short-term rentals to certain zoning districts; establishing design and operation standards such as parking, limits on large events, trash management standards, insurance and safety requirements, and other operational standards supported by the State Statute(s).
 - Implement development regulations that are a disincentive to development in the floodplain or on steep slopes, in accordance with the Hazards and Resilience chapter.
 - Conduct an audit of development regulations to determine changes that would support sustainable growth patterns in growth areas, partnering with local agencies and organizations as needed.
 - Encourage small-scale density by crafting a cottage development option to allow for denser residential development on infill lots as a use by right.
 - Support the development of affordable housing through the following development code adjustments for projects that construct a certain threshold of deed-restricted affordable housing units:
 - Reduced parking requirements
 - Reduced lot sizes (reduction of side yard setbacks for flexibility for smaller lots)
 - Increased density through Community-Oriented Development process
 - By-right zoning for middle income housing (duplexes/townhomes/tri/quadplexes) reducing the need for the conditional zoning process for these unit types

- Update development regulations to remove any regulatory barriers to uses such as urban agriculture and community gardens.
- Review the County’s zoning definitions for “family” and “household” to ensure the code allows for a wide range of living arrangements.
- Consider process changes to make development review more transparent, clear, and efficient, such as procedural changes to timeline requirements to ensure decision-makers have adequate time to review all development proposal documents submitted.
- Create partnerships with developers and other organizations to educate county stakeholders and develop a clear understanding and transparency of the development process. The Charlotte Citizens Academy is one model to consider.

ACTION 6

FUNDING

PLANNING

Support the protection of agricultural and forest lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural communities.

- Identify a threshold for the maximum decrease in acreage available for agricultural use. Track viable farmland properties over time.
- Continue to utilize Buncombe County’s Farmland Preservation Ordinance. Explore ways to update and enhance the ordinance, which was originally adopted in 1989 and updated in 2016.
- Promote and increase the use of zoning provisions that encourage responsible development and conservation of environmentally sensitive land, including the **Community Oriented Development** program, Conservation Subdivisions, and **Alternative Path Hillside Development Subdivision**.
- Continue funding of private conservation easements to protect rural and agricultural lands.
- Explore ways to increase the success of Buncombe County’s Conservation Development Subdivision Option, including new incentives for developers to work with the County to increase density and conserve more land within developable tracts.

ACTION 7

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Coordinate information sharing and joint decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions.

- Establish an Assembly of Governments or utilize the Land of Sky Regional Council/Southwest Commission to convene neighboring jurisdictions. Organize quarterly meetings for the purpose of coordinating planning efforts of common interest, such as the development of schools, development proposals on the edges of jurisdictional boundaries, and coordinating utility expansion plans.
- In accordance with the Infrastructure and Energy chapter Policies, develop an agreement with MSD to identify the boundary of its future sewer service area.
- In the long term, work to establish jointly developed and adopted small area plans by coordinating with jurisdictions and local authorities, such as MSD, especially in the identified growth areas denoted on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Establish Courtesy Review and Information Sharing protocols in growth areas surrounding the municipalities to support inter-jurisdictional coordination for development projects of common interest.

ACTION 8

PARTNERSHIP

REGULATORY

Develop new tools to protect steep slopes.

- Utilize new and updated tools or technology to make evidence-based decisions, such as the NC Geological Survey Landslide Hazard Mapping program.
- Collaborate and coordinate with the National Park Service to evaluate historic viewshed protection opportunities along the section of Blue Ridge Parkway that passes through Buncombe County. (See also the Farms, Forests, and Environmental Conservation chapter.)
- Analyze and evaluate expansion of the Steep Slope/High Elevation Overlay to provide greater protection for steep slopes and elevation areas.
- Enhance current slope and soil evaluation requirements for lots containing steep slopes, to limit slope disturbance and encourage avoidance of landslide-prone soils.
- Create illustrations to support and clarify the zoning ordinances for the Steep Slope/High Elevation and Protected Ridge Overlay.
- Create and carry out continuing education regarding the steep slope/high elevation and

protected ridge overlay for the development community.

- Consider development standards that are more stringent to reduce ridgetop development in Buncombe County.
- Evaluate the height, disturbance, and impervious surface limitations within the Protected Ridge Overlay and Steep Slope/High Elevation Overlay and enhance standards as feasible.
- Develop minimum standards for geotechnical reporting including global stability analysis for Protected Ridges and for Steep/High Elevation Slopes. A standard of care should be developed for geotechnical reports to ensure consistency among all professionals, developers, and Buncombe County.
- Revise, reorganize and consolidate the steep slope regulations and add other metrics beyond elevation and slope, such as reducing density, land disturbance, and further limiting tree removal.

ACTION 9

PLANNING

Inventory and encourage protection of cultural and historic resources.

- Inventory and document culturally significant and historic properties and structures within unincorporated Buncombe County. Provide technical assistance to private landowners to support the preservation efforts of these special sites and buildings.

TRANSPORTATION & CONNECTIVITY

ACTIONS

ACTION 1

PLANNING

Complete the Buncombe County Multimodal Plan.

Complete Actions related to the road network.

- Develop a Buncombe County Complete Streets Policy to promote complete street development in appropriate locations throughout the county. Rural roadways on the edges of the county may not be priorities for complete street designs.
- Develop a standards and specifications manual to improve roadway development throughout the county that includes improved pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and other access standards.
- Evaluate future capacity of the road network and identify needed projects to support mobility and connectivity.
- Develop a priority evaluation process to identify and advocate for priority multimodal capacity projects. Prioritize and incentivize transportation projects that advance opportunity, such as economic development expansion, improved access to education, jobs, and services, or greater accessibility for people with disabilities, the aging population, children, or others who cannot or choose not to drive.
- Develop modern street cross-sections that support the character of different areas of the county as guided by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Facilitate the cultural shift from single-occupancy vehicles to multimodal transportation through outreach and education campaigns that share the benefits of mode shift, such as personal cost savings, market preference for walkable/bikeable communities, the link between transportation and climate change, and between health and transportation.

Complete Actions related to bicycling and micro-mobility.

- Work with partners, such as NCDOT, the development community, and other municipalities to identify opportunities to build a continuous bicycling network that promotes safe and comfortable bicycle travel.
- Incorporate bicycle parking requirements and standards into Buncombe County's Zoning Ordinance.
- Strengthen support for bicycle safety and education programs in collaboration with community partners such as the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization's (FBRMPO) Transportation Demand Management programming, Asheville on Bikes, or the Blue Ridge Bike Club.
- Allow for and encourage the use of micro-mobility options in growth areas of the county.
- Continue to advocate for changes in state policy which could include more investment in bicycling, micro-mobility, transit, and pedestrian investments.

Complete Actions related to transit.

- Support transit-oriented development in Buncombe's edge areas near municipalities as identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Continue to support transit service in Buncombe County by supporting Mountain Mobility's varying services, including the Trailblazer lines that serve the urban areas of the county.
- Continue to identify and evaluate strategies to expand Mountain Mobility's capacity to provide frequent and reliable service for rural residents. Target specific eligible participants and geographically proximate service areas for Mountain Mobility.
- Lead regional transit discussions to identify transit opportunities that link neighboring counties. Based on data provided in the French Broad River MPO's Regional Transit Feasibility Study, focus initially on coordination with Henderson, Madison, and Haywood counties.
- Explore the feasibility of linking the City of Asheville bus system with other transit opportunities in Buncombe County.
- Develop context-appropriate requirements and design standards for transit stops in the county.
- Increase ridership through community outreach campaigns and marketing.
- Evaluate demand or feasibility of other options, like Park and Ride stations and metro or light rail, in the future.
- Evaluate options for decreasing the cost and increasing number of installed bus shelters and covered stops, especially in underserved or rural areas.

ACTION 2

PARTNERSHIP

Partner with other local, regional, and federal organizations and agencies to support a balanced and safe transportation network.

Increase coordination efforts.

- Engage in deliberate collaboration with the French Broad River MPO and NCDOT to incorporate Buncombe County's comprehensive plan vision in transportation project planning, scoping, design, funding, and construction. This includes identifying strategies that integrate Buncombe County's preferred land development pattern in NCDOT's long- and short-range projects.
- Form a Buncombe County Transportation Coordinating Committee as a working group with representatives from Buncombe County Planning and Development Staff, other departments, FBRMPO, NCDOT, the City of Asheville, and other municipalities. For example, Henderson County has a local Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) to collaborate on Henderson County's transportation concerns.
- Engage in early communication with NCDOT to identify opportunities for pedestrian improvements that can be incorporated with planned resurfacing projects.
- Collaborate with NCDOT to meet infrastructure and energy goals by providing greenhouse gas (GHG) analyses to the County Commission on NCDOT projects. The GHG analysis should demonstrate the travel impacts of their transportation plans using travel demand models, with a subsequent GHG analysis of these plans through EPA's Motor Vehicle Emission Simulator.

Increase coordination on planned projects.

- Monitor NCDOT's Highway Maintenance Improvement Program (HMIP) to work with NCDOT to consider and incorporate roadway improvements for all modes at the time of roadway resurfacing.
- Work with NCDOT to encourage the repair, maintenance, and improvement of existing roads over the construction of new, and widening of, existing roads in growth areas defined by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map. For example, focus on spot improvements and intersection modifications to manage congestion prior to considering corridor-long, multi-lane widening projects.

Coordinate to increase roadway safety for all users.

- Work with NCDOT to implement suitable traffic calming measures on streets in Buncombe County's urban and suburban areas. "Traffic calming" is an important strategy to slow down traffic to the desired speed on selected streets. A variety of traffic calming treatments can be used to reduce speeds and encourage mode shifts.
- Work with NCDOT and others to identify and audit safety issues for all types of users, and prioritize safety improvements near schools, parks, and areas/corridors where crashes are prevalent.
- Work with NCDOT to improve pedestrian crossings on NCDOT-maintained roads through planned roadway projects and identify opportunities to improve crossings during land development projects.

Begin to incorporate Travel Demand Management (TDM) strategies.

- Actively support and participate in the French Broad River MPO'S TDM efforts.
- Create partnerships and/or incentives to encourage employers to support travel demand management systems or provide transportation to employees.

ACTION 3

FUNDING

PLANNING

Develop Buncombe County's policies that support a balanced and safe transportation network.

- Consider establishing a Capital Projects Division to establish the capacity to accept, construct, and maintain sidewalks, trails, and greenways.
- Fund transportation improvements through a locally dedicated source and identify and actively seek non-County revenue sources (federal, state, and private) to supplement County funding of the transportation network.
- Revise and strengthen the County's sidewalk/greenway acceptance policies to ensure that only high-quality sidewalks/greenways are accepted.
- Conduct outreach and education campaigns to share Buncombe's multimodal transportation network focus with the development community.

- Evaluate and revise the County’s development ordinance standards to maximize network connectivity in private development projects (e.g., standards to address cross-parcel connectivity).
- Evaluate and plan for the connection of existing sidewalk segments, especially in former ETJs and in areas targeted for small area planning.
- Market trail and greenway projects as commuting options.

ACTION 4

PLANNING

REGULATORY

Coordinate land development and transportation policies to manage the impacts of growth and increased traffic.

- Audit the County’s development ordinance standards and develop policies to further promote development/redevelopment in areas supported by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map that:
 - Have access to utility and transportation infrastructure.
 - Support higher-density residential development near job centers and amenities.
 - Result in development patterns where new homes are within walking distance of parks, schools, jobs, and services.
 - Create quality pedestrian facilities that are ADA compliant to the maximum extent feasible and follow the most current national standards and guidelines.
 - Support the development of walkable communities by requiring the development of sidewalks or other pedestrian facilities as part of new developments.
- Use future small area plans as an opportunity to create detailed planning of roadway, transit, bike, and pedestrian facilities, and transportation needs to support community stabilization and protection in areas where gentrification and displacement are a concern, particularly for Equity Opportunity Areas identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Establish transportation facility design standards for different land use contexts (e.g., mixed-use developments, suburban neighborhoods, rural centers, conservation areas) as designated in the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map and future small area plans. These facility design standards should consider the intended character of the area, safety, system preservation, opportunities for multimodal travel, economic development/community access, congestion management, stormwater management needs, environmental and cultural impacts,

and other factors.

- Consider implementing a Buncombe County Government Transportation Demand Management Pilot Program for Buncombe County workers who live/work in areas served by transit or in areas where walking and biking to work is feasible. Consider staggered work hours and incentives to encourage commuting by modes other than SOVs. Continue providing free bus passes for workers.
- Focus pedestrian investments in the following areas: near schools and parks, areas where pedestrian investment supports vibrant, walkable community centers with essential services (such as grocery stores and other uses that provide daily service needs), and locations with a history of attention to safety concerns.
- Consider existing and expected future development patterns when assigning facilities for people who walk and bike. For example, in low-speed, low-volume areas, cars, bikes, and pedestrians may be able to share the road. In other areas, such as municipal edges, a higher level of pedestrian infrastructure is needed for greater pedestrian safety.

ACTION 5

REGULATORY

Enhance the County's Traffic Impact Study Standards.

- Strengthen overall Traffic Impact Study standards and criteria and require that transportation impact analysis reports and other traffic studies address a project's potential to encourage mode shift.

FARMS, FORESTS, & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION **ACTIONS**

ACTION 1

FUNDING

PARTNERSHIP

Explore additional funding opportunities for conservation, environmental enhancement, and restoration projects.

- Continue funding conservation projects in the current County budget.
- Continue partnering with local land trusts, which can accept monetary and land donations and cover closing costs for some projects.
- Increase incentives to increase donation of easements versus purchased easements, which would greatly increase the speed at which land is conserved.
- Explore mechanisms to accept private funding for conservation.
- Continue to utilize the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDCA&CS) grant funding programs for conservation projects and explore other grant opportunities.
- Evaluate and implement stream stabilization and restoration projects to improve water quality of impaired streams. This may require coordinating across County departments, securing external grant funding, and implementing pilot projects.

ACTION 2

PARTNERSHIP

REGULATORY

Implement recommendations aligned with the Buncombe County Farmland Protection Plan.⁹

- Continue to support farmland protection through existing policies including present-use value (PUV) taxation, voluntary agriculture districts (VAD), and enhanced voluntary agriculture districts (EVAD).
- Promote and implement outreach and education on land taxation, estate planning, farm-transition planning, conservation easements, and development planning.
- Design and implement outreach programs, such as the Farm Heritage Trail and the Visit NC Farms app, to educate and inform visitors, new residents, and residents living in urban areas of the importance of farmland to the region's culture, identity, and quality of life.
- Support marketing and production training and facilitate greater diversity in agricultural enterprises.
- Continue promotion of best management practices for conservation of land and natural resources.
- Strengthen support for agricultural economic development and supporting programs.
- Promote Buncombe County's working lands for their value to tourism and the local economy. Explore partnership opportunities with the County Tourism Development Authority (TDA).

ACTION 3

FUNDING

PLANNING

Continue efforts to meet the conservation goal of 20% of the county's total acres by 2030.¹⁰

- To prioritize regions and communities for farmland preservation, use the criteria established by Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District staff to identify priority communities and regions within the county:
 - Proximity to protected lands
 - Soil Classification – prioritize prime agricultural soils
 - Parcel size
 - Proximity to Voluntary Ag Districts (VAD) and Enhanced VAD (EVAD)
 - Present-use value (PUV) taxation status

9. Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District and Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board, Farmland Protection Plan for Buncombe County, North Carolina, June 2020 <https://www.ncagr.gov/Farmlandpreservation/VAD/documents/ag-development-protection-plan-buncombe-county.pdf>
10. This includes private lands permanently protected through conservation easements and public lands like the Pisgah National Forest and Sandy Mush Game Land.

- Watershed protection
- Focus available conservation funding and grants funding on the highest priority lands first.
- Establish and augment conservation easements.
 - Partner with other public agencies such as the National Forest Service, National Park Service (Blue Ridge Parkway), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the municipalities within the county for landowner outreach and establish conservation agreements that have mutual benefits to the public entities.
- Work with the National Park to develop guidelines for Buncombe County to assess and protect the viewshed along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Buncombe County. Some examples of this could include:
 - A County zoning overlay that limits development within the established Parkway viewshed. Impacts to potential economic development sites should be considered and evaluated when using this strategy.
 - Design guidelines that avoid or minimize impacts to the viewshed, such as roof material and color selection, building height limits, and vegetative screening standards.
- Prioritize environmental conservation of other natural lands (such as intact forest lands, wetlands, and other unique habitats) to protect and increase the capacity to sustain the county’s existing biodiversity.
 - Utilize existing data to inform priorities, such as NC Natural Heritage data, and planning efforts, such as the Land of Sky Regional Council Regional Council’s Linking Lands and Communities Project, which identify intact landscapes with the highest ecological value.
- Prioritize the conservation of physical connections between natural landscapes to avoid fragmentation of large forest blocks in order to benefit wildlife migration.
- Continue to utilize the County Land Conservation Advisory Board and Agriculture Advisory Board to make informed decisions on how funding and conservation tools should be allocated for projects.
- Continue to maintain a County-managed database of all permanently conserved lands within the county; make this data available to local conservation organizations and the public, where appropriate.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, & JOBS

ACTIONS

ACTION 1

PLANNING

REGULATORY

Utilize the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map to guide land use decisions.

Coordinate economic development activities with the development of communities that provide a full range of services and amenities to residents.

- Use the Community Index Map to identify areas that could benefit from economic development projects while protecting neighborhoods from change or displacement, in accordance with the Policies of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation chapter.
- Encourage businesses to be accessible by walking, biking, or supporting access to public transit in accordance with the Policies of the Transportation and Connectivity chapter.
- Adopt land use regulations to allow for the development of larger economic development projects over several years and update the development regulations to allow for the use of development agreements.
- Consider raising thresholds for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in commercial and manufacturing areas.
- Consider creating a “floating zone” that allows for flexibility in siting and sizes of major facilities while retaining important development standards. Floating zones are not defined on the County’s Zoning Map but instead are zoning districts that development applicants can request through rezoning to apply to their parcel.
- Allow Planning staff to approve minor modifications, as allowed by statute, for any project. Adjust the development procedures in the County’s ordinances to set these thresholds for administrative approvals.
- In tandem with Special Use Permits and conditional zoning entitlements, the County will evaluate and consider a series of exactions that are specifically related to development proposals in order to manage future growth and to assure that County goals are fulfilled.

ACTION 2

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Identify the available inventory of suitable sites and buildings within Buncombe for economic development.

Actions identified in the AVL 5X5 Plan and recommended as part of the implementation of this Plan include:

- Build a real-time inventory of all land suitable for future economic development in alignment with the goals of the comprehensive plan and the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.
- Partner with stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive study of lands in the county and identify the top 10 most promising sites for future industrial development and/or commerce parks to attract employers of targeted industries.
- Partner with stakeholders of Buncombe County, Asheville, and other municipalities to undertake a study of urban and riverfront lands and identify the top five most promising sites for infill, redevelopment, or new development necessary to attract employers.
- Using the guidance of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map, work with private development partners to bring new sites to market that have promising transportation access, proximity to current and future economic corridors, a robust utility service, labor draw, community synergies, etc.

ACTION 3

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Implement place-based policies that make Buncombe's economy more resilient and successful.

- Create an inventory that identifies Buncombe's cultural, historic, community, and environmental assets.
- Create partnerships with local organizations, community members, and business owners to understand current risks in the local economy.
- Educate local business owners on pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster recovery plans to make their businesses more resilient.
- Establish permanent farmer's market locations to promote food access and support agricultural businesses year-round.
- Establish training programs that build the capacity of farm businesses through market

development like the Blue Ridge Food Ventures through A-B Tech.

- Establish liquor-by-the-drink for unincorporated Buncombe County to help small businesses located there to compete.
- Support the creation of place-based community gathering destinations at Walkable Destination Centers, Mixed Use Areas, and Rural Centers identified on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map.

ACTION 4

PARTNERSHIP

Support the economic advancement of historically disadvantaged communities.

- Implement economic development policies and establish partnerships that integrate the recommendations from the Racial Equity Action Plan or other equity plans as developed. Examples from the Racial Equity Action Plan include:
 - Expand Black business ownership in the community.
 - Support workforce development initiatives that address the earnings and wealth gap.
 - Strengthen educational partnerships to reduce college and career readiness gaps.
- Improve economic advancement by fostering partnerships between Buncombe County departments and organizations whose goals include education, job training or workforce development improvement initiatives, in accordance with the AVL 5X5 plan. Examples from the AVL 5X5 Plan include:
 - Develop programs for registered apprenticeships and youth apprenticeships.
 - Strengthen and expand work-based learning opportunities for high school, community college and regional university students for exposure to sustainable local employment.
 - Establish a robust re-skilling system for middle-skill jobs that leverage the customized training capabilities of the North Carolina Community College System and others.
 - Implement strategic investment in curriculum and certifications responding to the State of our Workforce Study (2018) and Target Cluster Gap Analysis (2019) developed by Riverbird Research.
 - Establish a purpose-built community pilot program to increase workforce participation of housing authority residents.
- Work/invest in the capacity-building of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) led by

historically disadvantaged populations to build economic opportunity through business development, technical assistance, apprenticeship and job training, and affordable housing.

- Support local businesses owned by historically disadvantaged populations through the following:
 - Create a “Buy Local” program to support MBE/WBE businesses to create resilience and sustainability of local supply chains.
 - Continue to maintain working data base which can track financial expenditures with MBE/WBE firms by Buncombe County.
 - Expand scale/capabilities of businesses owned by historically disadvantaged populations by contracting with competent, outcomes-based NGO’s which provide technical assistance and training to local MBE firms. Track these non-profits which compete for County tax dollars and provide technical assistance to firms which are owned/operated by MBE.
 - Work with Asheville and large local/regional anchor institutions to create a Minority Supplier Development Council for WNC to develop the scale and capacity of MBE firms. Use Carolinas/Virginia Supplier Development Council as model.
 - Explore the use of “community benefits agreements” to fund investments in historically disadvantaged communities. Investments could include early childhood development, home repair, weatherization, and affordable housing.

ACTION 5

PARTNERSHIP

Improve educational attainment and reduce education achievement gaps.

- Support the school districts in creating developmental programs that increase graduation rates.
- Expand enrollment opportunities and participation in early childhood education. Explore public/private partnerships to build centers to expand early childhood education enrollment opportunities.
 - Partner with Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools to determine if there are facilities needed to address historic inequities in education.

ACTION 6

FUNDING

Explore funding mechanisms to achieve economic development goals.

- Explore tools (like special assessments) to fund improvements or expansion of utility infrastructure, transportation (roads, sidewalks), community institutions (early childhood daycare centers), and infrastructure related to affordable housing.
- Dedicate funding based on the evaluation of these tools.



Employees at East Fork Pottery's manufacturing facility.

HEALTH & RECREATION

ACTIONS

ACTION 1

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Develop a County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Explore opportunities for new types of County recreational programs and facilities, such as facilities for sports or active group activities and/or passive recreation previously not offered in the county, by analyzing national trends and creating implementation goals. This may include evaluating underutilized sports facilities for adaptation to other recreational uses.
- Analyze geographic and programming gaps throughout the county.
- Utilize the Community Index Map, as well as existing County assessments, to determine locations with the greatest social need for new recreation facilities. This should focus on recreational opportunities for youth from historically disadvantaged populations to improve health and wellness outcomes.
- Invest in the access to and management of natural open space.
- Audit and assess the condition of existing County recreation facilities using the Parks and Recreation Assessment to determine opportunities to expand offerings and improve safety and accessibility.
- Assess unused County-owned land to determine its suitability to create recreation projects that will provide more equitable offerings in underserved areas.
- Plan for and implement the construction of a County-managed indoor recreation facility.
- Coordinate development and implementation of this plan with the park and recreation plans of other municipalities.

ACTION 2

PLANNING

Update the Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Master Plan.

- Coordinate County greenway and trail plans with existing plans and ongoing planning efforts by the City of Asheville and the towns, such as the Asheville Close the GAP Plan, the Black Mountain Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the Woodfin Greenway and Blueway Plan.
- Support the development of regional trails, such as the Fonta Flora State Trail and the Hellbender Regional Trail, which connect Asheville and the towns to rural communities, regional parks, and destinations outside of the county borders.
- Continue to support and expand the French Broad Blueway, especially where County river park facilities are seeing overuse during the peak boating season.
- Ensure that priority greenway alignments are clearly mapped to assist in the acquisition of easements and coordinate with the Buncombe County Planning Department to identify opportunities for partnerships with private developers.
- Align the Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Master Plan with local community interests by coordinating with Comprehensive Plan implementation efforts, such as small area plans.

ACTION 3

PLANNING

Promote larger County parks as community hubs, especially in rural areas of the county that are lacking community gathering areas.

- Educate residents about the public services provided through County parks and their benefits to the community. Collaborate with the library systems in these efforts.
- Hold events in County parks that promote a sense of community, sense of place, and community pride.
- Use County parks to create new rural hamlets in communities where centralized hubs are not currently established.
- Collaborate with school systems to establish joint use agreements for recreation facilities in underserved areas that can also serve as community hubs.

ACTION 4

PLANNING

Use the updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan to evaluate expanding County recreation programming and events.

- Offer programming that reaches new demographics that have historically participated less than others.
- Evaluate the expansion of youth sports programs and identify land where new youth sports fields can be constructed.
- Ensure programming is equitable and accessible to all who want to participate.

ACTION 5

PLANNING

FUNDING

Plan for and conduct adequate maintenance and upkeep of existing and new facilities.

- Evaluate the condition of existing parks and recreational facilities (including greenways) and identify any maintenance needs.
- Through Capital Improvement Planning, create a funding strategy for addressing maintenance needs over time. (See Infrastructure and Energy chapter.)

ACTION 6

PARTNERSHIP

REGULATORY

Develop a plan to proactively work with landowners to implement County recreational goals and expand private-public partnerships.

- Enhance incentives and explore requirements for private developers to provide more public recreation facilities within community developments.
- Consider conditional zoning as an approach to work with landowners to acquire greenway easements, develop recreation facilities within new developments, and encourage public-private partnerships for recreation projects. Long-term administration and maintenance of these facilities will need to be determined.

ACTION 7

PLANNING

Develop a plan to provide equitable access to health services and healthy lifestyle choices.

- Collaborate with community partners to identify ways in which health can be improved for people living and working in Buncombe County. This may include:
 - Conducting health impact assessments for major development projects to minimize community impacts.
 - Conducting health-oriented needs assessments and environmental justice evaluations in conjunction with small area plans.
 - Identifying environmental justice projects for key issues that disproportionately affect historically disadvantaged communities, such as urban heat island effects, flooding, and asthma.
- Identify and utilize a vulnerability index that integrates multiple dimensions, such as racial or disability equity and the Community Index Map.
 - Equity considerations can also utilize tools like redlining maps of Asheville or other municipalities and EPA's Environmental Justice Screening Tool.
 - Prioritize projects that improve air, water, and land quality for areas or populations identified with the vulnerability index.
- Integrate equity considerations into projects that improve air, water, and land quality by utilizing tools including redlining maps of Asheville and other municipalities and EPA's Environmental Justice Screening Tool.
- A new Community Health Assessment (CHA) is in progress for Buncombe County. Integrate health priorities and other information from the latest CHA into future updates of the Comprehensive Plan and any changes to zoning or development regulations.
- Evaluate the accessibility of community health resources, such as accessibility between neighborhoods and health providers, county and municipal health departments, food sources, and other health-related services. Take steps to address accessibility needs, consider as part of small area plans, and collaborate with County departments. Focus on the highest ranked equity opportunity areas.
- Continue to prioritize the protection of clean air, water resources, and other environmental resources, in coordination with the Policies of the Farms, Forests, and Environmental Protection chapter.

- Consider reviewing county and municipal ordinances with the aim of identifying opportunities to enhance clean air and water resources.

ACTION 8

PARTNERSHIP

Increase accessibility of healthy food sources to communities in need.

- Support the development of community gardens in rural areas and in Equity Opportunity Areas that are more than a mile from a local grocery store. This should include the development of ongoing administration and management plans that support the identification of program manager(s) that oversee community gardens. Consider partnering with non-profit organizations to develop these assets.
- Encourage development of local grocery stores and purveyors of healthy food options in equity opportunity areas that don't have proximate access to healthy food. Consider providing incentives through reduced parking, development standards, or fee waivers to develop groceries or other healthy food retailers in these areas.



Fresh vegetables at a tailgate market in Buncombe County.

HAZARDS & RESILIENCE

ACTIONS

ACTION 1

FUNDING

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Implement green infrastructure & nature-based solutions.

- Increase public education and awareness around green infrastructure; promote outreach around the implementation of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.
- Build partnerships and opportunities for increasing green infrastructure projects and/or voluntary incentives. In particular, leverage public projects for green infrastructure implementation.
- When gray infrastructure solutions are required, increase implementation of bridges/multiple culvert/floodplain culverts instead of single culverts, when possible, to increase the flow rate and enhance riparian areas.
- Install solar on emergency service stations and emergency response shelters with battery backup and/or emergency power inverters to provide at least minimal electrical power in the event of a long-term outage (similar to resilience hubs).
- Explore providing additional services to improve stormwater and air quality management, such as providing curbside leaf and brush collection to help minimize debris and air pollution. Use the collected leaf and brush debris as mulch for other sustainable solutions.

ACTION 2

REGULATORY

Employ design standards to increase adaptive capacity and reduce exposure to hazards.

- Align the County's design standards and decision-making with the recommendations from the North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan.¹²

12. North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, June 2020, pp.5H-1 – 5h-11. Accessed July 5, 2022. An additional resource for building codes and standards is the National Institute of Standards and Technology, "Community Resilience Planning Guide for Buildings and Infrastructure Systems."

- Utilize hazard mitigation design requirements that exceed minimum standards for critical facilities and/or require that any new critical facility be built outside of high-hazard areas.
- Increase freeboard requirements above Base Flood Elevation to one foot above current regulations for all new and substantially improved structures to address future flood impacts resulting from climate change. The North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan recommends that “the Department of Insurance’s Building Code Council should reestablish the two-foot freeboard requirement for new or substantially improved buildings within the regulatory floodplain.”¹³
- Revise the County’s Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to prohibit the use of fill within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).¹⁴ To the extent possible, evaluate flood risk beyond the measure of the 100-year floodplain to address flash flooding outside of the mapped SFHA.
- Promote greater utilization of development processes that allow for the conservation of steep slopes and the clustering of home sites. Retain existing processes, but reorganize, consolidate, and expand conservation and cluster development options across the Zoning and Subdivision ordinances.
- Evaluate best practice changes to the Stormwater Ordinance water quantity requirements for stormwater controls to reduce downstream impacts.
- Establish design standards and incentives to assist vulnerable populations in reducing risks from environmental hazards through design. This may include elevated homes in flood areas, fire retardant materials in fire areas, and stormwater mitigation solutions like rain gardens, water management solutions, rain barrels, etc.
- Harden energy infrastructure systems¹⁵ against damage from flooding, landslides, wildfire, and extreme heat, and expand redundancy in the energy network.
- Consider regulations that require burying electrical lines for new developments.
- Establish Buncombe County as a participating member of the National Flood Insurance Program’s (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS).
- Modify current floodplain development procedures and standards to limit the size and/or density of new developments within the floodplain and require more extensive engineering analysis for new developments in flood-prone areas. This will ensure that fill and other modifications to the floodplain do not elevate the risk of loss of life and property damage to nearby properties.

13. North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, June 2020, p. 5H-6. Accessed July 7, 2022.

14. Buncombe County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance is detailed here. Accessed July 7, 2022. <https://www.buncombecounty.org/common/planning/ordinance-flood-damage-prevention.pdf>

15. Hardening infrastructure systems, or grid hardening, can be defined as “a combined system of actions that create a strong infrastructure to better protect utility customers from weather-related outages.” (Jeffrey Richard, 2017: “The Keys to Grid Hardening: How to Implement an Effective Solution.” Leidos. <https://www.leidos.com/insights/keys-grid-hardening-how-implement-effective-solution#:~:text=Grid%20hardening%20is%20a%20combined,customers%20from%20weather%2Drelated%20outages>).

ACTION 3

PARTNERSHIP

Build capacity for community resilience and preparedness.

- Collaborate with community-based organizations to develop or expand urban and suburban tree planting, sustainable agriculture programs, fuel management, weatherization programs for highly vulnerable populations, and hazard awareness.
- Grow partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to provide critical services to vulnerable populations in times of crisis. For example:
 - Expand partnership agreements with rideshare and transit systems to pick up residents from vulnerable areas.
 - Develop resilience hubs (using alternative energy sources) in high-risk neighborhoods and in partnership with schools. Develop resilience hubs that can be managed by community members and retrofitted to withstand and stay online during any emergency event, support emergency response efforts, and enhance long-term community resilience.
 - Establish cooling centers in the most vulnerable areas of the county; work with Asheville and other municipalities to add splash pads to community parks or neighborhoods. An example could be retrofitting an existing fire station to be a cooling center during high heat temperature events.
 - Partner with Land of Sky Regional Council Regional Council and/or FEMA to reduce flood and drought risk through integrated watershed management and to share hazard information with the community.
 - Improve coordination between regional fire station locations to serve key areas outside of reasonable response time.
- Increase capacity to recognize the need for resilience planning, preparedness efforts, and community-based recovery. For example:
 - Expand employer and worker training in industries with outdoor work, including assurance of adequate water, shade, rest breaks, protection from poor air quality, and training on heat impacts.
 - Increase capability for remote working during flooding and other measures that make economic activity and critical services less vulnerable to disruption by flooding.

- Leverage opportunities for public outreach and communication activities that contribute to increased capacity and address procedural inequities. For example:
 - Encourage the involvement of residents in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts. Address procedural inequities by working with underserved neighborhoods to understand concerns and needs regarding hazards.
 - Host regional public meetings about climate threats that are easily accessible to vulnerable populations:
 - Physically accessible (near public transit);
 - Safe for all members;
 - Located in places that the community values as gathering spaces (e.g., community centers and cultural centers);
 - Led in, or translated into, the primary language(s) of the community;
 - Scheduled at various times to accommodate different schedules.
 - Include water efficient strategies (i.e., efficient landscapes, sprinkler systems, xeriscape, cooling tower systems) in public awareness campaigns.
 - Hold events where residents can interact with local experts to develop an emergency preparedness kit to take home.
 - Expand opportunities for Firewise USA learning and urban interface and community risk reduction for residents to reduce wildfire risk in residential development areas.¹⁶
 - Implement a network of community groups to proactively reach out to vulnerable people before and during extreme weather. Create a network with redundancies so that communications can continue while networks are challenged during storm events and emergencies.
 - Reframe the resilience conversation with specific stakeholders in a way in which they may be more receptive (e.g., Community Rating System, avoided losses, and recreational benefits).

16. National Fire Protection Association: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Online-learning-opportunities>



Photo from Erwin High School visit.

ACTION 4

PARTNERSHIP

Align emergency response with the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Hazard Vulnerability Assessment.

- Investigate the use of backup water supply sources (e.g., well versus surface water) in areas outside municipal water supply.
- Based on the success of the early warning system in the Upper Swannanoa, develop “flood early warning systems” in other parts of the county that have gauges in strategic locations to monitor water levels at culverts and provide alerts when roads may be flooding to let people know when to evacuate. Develop a plan to target vulnerable populations in early warning systems.
- Reduce response time and increase capacity (person power) to respond to areas where there are shared mutual aid agreements.
- Establish partnerships between community fire departments, NC Forest Service, and US Forest Service, and private landowners to apply prescribed burns in priority areas and manage forests at an ecologically meaningful scale. A local example of this coordination is the prescribed burn in the North Fork Watershed, where the County, City, Water Authority, and NC Forest Service partnered on this effort.
- Develop a notification system for natural hazards that is responsive to community needs.
- Require that developments that exceed a defined set of thresholds (square feet of commercial space, number of dwellings, or similar), provide more than one point of access.
- To the extent possible, require that larger residential developments include at least one primary street that is designed and constructed to North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) standards and dedicated to NCDOT as a public street.
- When possible, encourage that a minimum number of streets within new developments, including a public street as referenced above, be designed to connect to adjacent properties for which future development potential is high, and/or adjacent to, existing developments.
- As plan updates are made, integrate relevant new elements of the Buncombe-Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan into the Comprehensive Plan and vice versa.
- To the extent possible, support updates to the NC Geodetic Survey for landslide mapping in western North Carolina to use in hazard mitigation efforts.

ACTION 5

PLANNING

Use Hazard Vulnerability Assessment to guide future growth and land use decisions.

- Protect land in accordance with the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework Map (i.e., for protecting agriculture and local food sources, transportation, affordable housing, alternative energy sites, etc.) For example:
 - Accommodate changes in types of agricultural activities to allow for shifts in agriculturally viable areas.
 - Evaluate land use and zoning codes to mitigate development patterns that **concentrate poverty**.
- Decrease existing exposure to hazards and limit the creation of new exposure resulting from growth and land use changes. For example:
 - Consider relocation of facilities that provide critical emergency and public services. Critical facilities should be considered for relocation to unexposed areas over time, in line with their expansion/refurbishment cycles.
 - Consult with the agricultural sector to determine cross-sector objectives for **drought planning**. Share information about the current and projected future state of water supply (to inform priority development). Support incorporation of adaptation — to increase resilience and minimize impacts — in drought planning (not just drought response).
 - Facilitate managed retreat from, or upgrade of, the most at-risk areas identified through the ongoing Land of Sky Regional Council Regional Council Resilience Planning effort. This project maps all high-risk areas for flooding, landslides, and wildfire (located in the Plan Factbook). As climate and non-climate stressors take their toll on the landscape, some areas of the county may be repeatedly impacted and one solution to this may be facilitating a form of managed retreat within the county.

INFRASTRUCTURE & ENERGY

ACTIONS

ACTION 1

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

Partner with utility providers to coordinate growth and infrastructure plans.

- Conduct an assessment to evaluate current and projected long-range, county-wide service capacity for water and wastewater services.
- Encourage partner utility providers to develop long-range infrastructure maintenance plans. Connect these plans to current resilience-related ordinances; see Hazards and Resilience Policies for more information.
- Develop inter-jurisdictional agreements between municipal, county, and partner utility providers to determine potable water service areas that align with the county's growth areas. Define service areas through maps with service area boundaries.
- Develop definitions for suburban and rural levels of service for fire, sheriff, EMS, stormwater, and other public services to measure service function and expansion needs over time.
- Engage with MSD and water providers to evaluate policy changes to expand utilities in growth areas ripe for infrastructure expansion.

ACTION 2

FUNDING

PARTNERSHIP

PLANNING

REGULATORY

Implement policies around new development and re-development that advance decarbonization and sustainability goals.

- Support existing and emerging technologies for Energy Storage Systems (ESS), such as battery storage and microgrid technologies, to maximize effectiveness of renewable energy installations, reduce peak energy demand costs, and provide increased reliability and resilience due to grid disturbances.
- Support efforts to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure and renewable fuels for the

County’s vehicle fleet.

- Incorporate electric vehicle charging station standards in the Zoning Ordinance, including standards that incentivize building solar panels over parking lots. See also the Hazards and Resilience chapter, as this provides protection from the elements.
- Work with local and regional partners (including tourism partners) to support the expansion of electric vehicle charging station infrastructure at strategically accessible locations along highways and other major thoroughfares.
- Consider changes to development regulations that provide incentives for renewable energy investments during development, such as infrastructure for electric vehicles and solar panel installation.
- Continue to implement the Green Building Policy that requires solar installation on all new County-led construction or retrofits located within the City or County.
- Consider developing a policy to incentivize solar installation on all new construction or retrofits located within the County.
- Continue to support bulk purchasing programs for renewable energy, which would involve working with many different community partners to procure solar equipment.
- Continue to advocate for changes in state policy, which could include:
 - new renewable energy mandates,
 - an allowance for power purchase agreements—or energy sold from non-utility partners,
 - an increase in the renewable energy portfolio standard,
 - implementing a “state green bank,” and
 - enabling community-shared solar.
- Work with funding partners to develop a mechanism for low-cost financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects for homes and businesses.

ACTION 3

PLANNING

Develop a long-term planning process for solid waste operations that prioritizes sustainability.¹¹

- Build partnerships with other public or private entities that could implement large-scale recycling and composting operations.
- Implement findings from the 2022 Waste Audit to increase diversion from the land fill.

11. The Sustainable Development Code can be used as a resource in updating ordinances with sustainable development provisions. For more information, see: <https://sustainablecitycode.org/>.

- Update the County’s development ordinances to include sustainable development provisions regarding the permissible size, location, and scale of composting operations.
- Implement a diversion rate ordinance, which requires construction and/or demolition projects to divert a minimum percentage of total waste from landfills.
- Provide curbside collection of compostable waste and sell the resulting compost to the public for use in landscaping, gardening, and farming.

ACTION 4

FUNDING

PLANNING

Improve and build upon the capital improvement planning (CIP) process to manage, integrate equity goals, and prepare for expansion and maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure.

- Continue the regularly occurring planning process to identify future County infrastructure expansion and maintenance needs, and plan for the financing of those investments over time through the annual budget process.
- Update the CIP annually based on a 5-year interval.
- Move forward and continue to update the long-range facilities master plan for all County facilities and infrastructure and leverage this master plan alongside the CIP process. Coordinate amongst County departments, such as the library system, General Services, and Emergency Services, to achieve this.
- Complete an updated disparity study to set legally defensible goals for minority business enterprise engagement and participation in solicitation events for County contracts for capital projects. The study and goals should comply with state and federal law, including known constitutional limits based on court decisions.
- All infrastructure improvements should be coordinated with the Policies and Actions of the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Framework; infrastructure improvements should be coordinated with housing stability for vulnerable residents to avoid accelerating displacement or having unintended negative consequences.
- Evaluate capital improvements as they relate to election infrastructure. This could include planning for improvements to existing community centers or building new community centers

that meet voting place requirements in order to meet early voting volume/demand. This evaluation could include other County-owned locations such as libraries, parks, recreation facilities or sites, and EMS and fire community centers.

ACTION 5

PARTNERSHIP

REGULATORY

Explore partnerships and identify barriers to address broadband access and cell service expansion.

- Evaluate current ordinances and development requirements regarding broadband expansion. Identify improvements that will modernize the ordinance to allow cell service expansion. Evaluate what type and locations where cell towers can be permitted.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships or funding to expand broadband access and improve internet connectivity.



Children participating in Buncombe County's Special Olympics.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY IDEAS

Comprehensive plans cover a wide variety of planning topics that interact with physical planning in the community. From addressing the types of businesses that will be supported through land use planning, addressing the shortage of housing options for resident households, creating more sustainable and resilient communities that protect the natural environment, and planning for future infrastructure needs, this Plan covers a wide variety of planning issues.

During the planning process, additional community ideas were identified that are peripheral to the Plan, but no less important to the community. Some of these issues may be under the jurisdiction of another entity, such as Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, and the City of Asheville. The list provided below is a summary of ideas raised during this process that are more appropriately addressed through other community planning efforts. These ideas can serve as important feedback for the County and its community partners as they create new policies and make community investments.

Additional Community Ideas

- **Education** – improve the quality of the public education system, make sure it is equitable for all students, and increase vocational opportunities
- **Daycare and Early Childhood Education** – create additional publicly supported early childhood education options and affordable daycare, increase wages for teachers working in these fields
- **Healthcare** – improve the overall healthcare system in this region of the state
- **Homelessness** – identify strategies to address homelessness
- **Mental Health Services** – find additional ways to meet the mental health needs of residents facing severe challenges, such as those suffering from addiction and homelessness
- **Public Safety** – Address perceived crime increases in the community and ensure public safety staffing is adequate
- **Universal Basic Income** – Increase the safety net of residents by providing a basic universal income for all residents
- **Voting Holiday** – create a holiday on election day to support residents exercising their right to vote

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

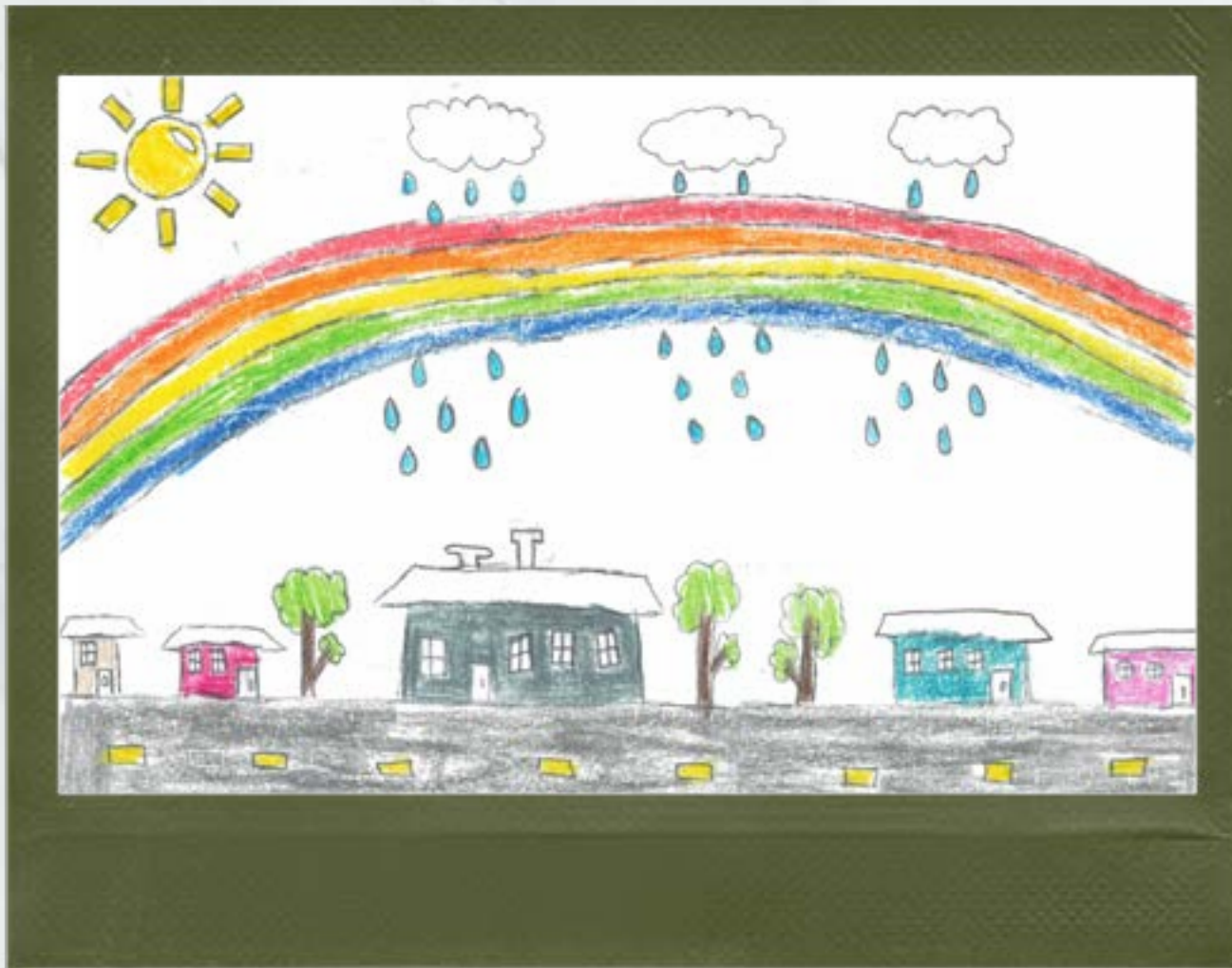


Name Eileen

Age 22

Write what your picture is about below:

It is a community where children can play safely near
the road, where dogs and cats are safe, where people can
have a peaceful life, and we all know each other.



Nombre Erik Marcos Varillas -Varillas

Edad 11

Escribe aquí acerca de tu dibujo:

I want to live in a neighborhood
that is clam and have
good neighbors.

Chapter 10

APPENDIX

CONTENTS:

- Glossary of Planning Terms
- Summary of Public Engagement Meetings and Events
- Links to Public Engagement Reporting





***“In 20 years
I want the
buildings of
Asheville to
all be rainbow
colored. I love the
restaurants and
wish there were
more parks!”
- Bennett, age four***

*Public engagement at the Lake
Julian Fall Festival.*

GLOSSARY OF PLANNING TERMS

Active recreation: Recreational activities that require the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment. Some examples of active recreation include, but aren't limited to, baseball, football, soccer, golf, hockey, tennis, skateboarding, or using exercise equipment or a playground.¹

Adaptive capacity: The ability of a person, asset, or system to adjust to a hazard, take advantage of new opportunities, or cope with change.²

Agriculture-based education: Programming or instruction for those desiring to learn about the science, business, and technology of plant and animal production and/or about the environmental and natural resources systems.³

Alternative Path Hillside Development Subdivision: Alternative path hillside development subdivision is an option for subdividing properties set out in Section 70-68 of the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance⁴ and is included as part of subdivision plan review. These development standards can be applied to properties with an average slope of 25 percent or greater, or properties with an average slope less than 25 percent for which 30 percent of the tract is greater than 35 percent slope based on the submitted slope analysis.

Carbon sequestration: The process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils. Sequestration programs explore opportunities for climate change mitigation using forest management.⁵

Community-Oriented Development: Community-oriented development is a type of development permitted through the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance as set out in Section 78-650.⁶ According to the ordinance, the purpose of this development form is “to facilitate the creation of affordable and workforce housing and to afford substantial advantages for greater flexibility and improved marketability through the benefits of efficiency which permit flexibility in building siting and mixtures of housing types.”

Conditional zoning: A legislative zoning map amendment with site-specific conditions incorporated into the zoning map amendment.⁷ Conditional zoning is a voluntary development regulation tool authorized by state zoning statutes (160D-703). Conditional zoning districts can include standards specific to property that address concerns of neighbors or government. Conditions must be agreed to in writing by landowner/applicant and the local government. Approval is a legislative decision which, unlike a special use permit, is enacted by the County Commission and can include the full range of public input.⁸

Concentrated poverty: Census tracts where the federal poverty rate is 40% or more. These neighborhoods lack the resources to provide quality schools, job opportunities, safe streets, and access to quality healthcare.⁹

Conservation easement: A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement applying to a specific parcel of land between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits the uses allowed on the land in order to protect natural areas from development disturbance.¹⁰

Conservation subdivision: Also referred to as a Conservation Development, Buncombe County defines this as a “The conservation development is a subdivision option for major and minor subdivisions providing design flexibility that will allow for preservation of conserved open space and dedicated farmland. Conservation development is intended to limit disturbed areas and preserve ridge tops, woodlands, open spaces, floodplain, moderate and high risk landslide hazard areas, agricultural land and other environmentally sensitive areas. Conservations developments must contain 10 acres and must conserve 50% percent of the tract as conserved open space. Bonuses are provided for conserved land that remains in active agricultural use.”¹¹

Corridor plan: Corridor plans are small area land use plans that are specific to a certain linear geography within a community. They often center around transportation infrastructure such as streets, highways, and public transit, but can also center around historic sites, habitats, rivers, or other natural features.¹²

Cottage development: A cottage development, sometimes also referred to as cottage court, is a low-density residential

community with small individual dwellings. Cottage developments typically include shared spaces, such as open space, gardening areas, community buildings, or parking.

Civic and public uses: Land uses that provide public function and services. Examples can include parks, schools, government service buildings, etc.

Drought planning: A process that typically involves a vulnerability assessment, identification of steps that can be taken to mitigate drought risk, and public education about the local water supply and drought vulnerability. Local governments can also monitor for drought and develop an early warning system that identifies actions that should be taken at the onset of drought.¹³

Economic development: Buncombe County’s 2025 Strategic Plan identifies the purpose of economic development to be: “Create a robust and sustainable regional economy that builds on our homegrown industries and talent and provides economic mobility for residents.”¹⁴

Equity Analysis Tool: The Buncombe County Office of Equity and Human Rights developed the Equity Analysis Tool to move forward in implementing equity goals that uplift our County values. The Equity Analysis Tool will inform decision-making as Buncombe County implements the Policies and Actions presented in the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, planning staff will analyze development projects that are required to go through a legislative process for approval using a series of questions. The Equity Analysis Tool emphasizes data-informed decision-making, program design, and careful consideration of the compounded effects of historical and systematic inequity.

Equity Opportunity Areas: The Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs) are the only land use category that is not delineated on the Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map. EOAs offer an opportunity to examine equity throughout Buncombe County’s Planning and Zoning jurisdiction. Equity Opportunity Areas score higher on the indicators evaluated in the Equity Opportunity Index, presented in the Community Index Map.

Exclusionary zoning: a legal practice that can, and often does, result in concentrated poverty. It typically looks like minimum lot size requirements, single residence per lot requirements, or minimum square footage requirements.¹⁵

Future Land Use Map (FLUM): A future land use map, or FLUM, is a map included within a local government’s comprehensive plan or land use plan that identifies geographically where different land use categories are applied. These land use categories specify the intended character, use, and development density for a particular area. In North Carolina, FLUM are considered to be policy guidance and do not carry the force of law like a zoning map.¹⁶

Gentrification: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Healthy Places, gentrification is the transformation of neighborhoods from low value to high value which has the potential to cause the displacement of long-time residents and businesses due to higher rents, mortgages, and property taxes. Gentrification is a housing, economic, and health issue that affects a community’s history and culture and reduces social capital, and it often shifts a neighborhood’s characteristics (e.g. racial/ethnic composition and household income). To read more, see the “Health Effects of Gentrification” from the CDC Healthy Places.¹⁷

Green infrastructure: Used to refer to the value and role of open space and ecosystem services broadly but is now often used in a narrower sense focusing on nature-based approaches to stormwater management.¹⁸

Housing land trust model: Also referred to as **community land trusts**, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy defines housing land trust models as nonprofit, community-based organizations providing affordable housing in perpetuity by owning land and leasing it to those who live in houses built on that land. Often, land trusts are governed by a board of trustees that balance the interest of the present homeowners with the long-term goals of the community land trust to continue providing affordable housing.¹⁹

Legislatively reviewed development proposals: Legislative development decisions are the political decisions by a governing board to set or amend a local government’s development ordinances. These decisions set broad policy for a community. Examples of legislative development decisions can include adopting a new unified development ordinance, rezoning a piece of property (including conditional zoning), adopting the comprehensive plan, making changes to the community’s zoning map, amending the standards in the subdivision ordinance, and adopting a development agreement.²⁰

Micromobility: Small, lightweight devices operating at speeds typically below 15 miles/hour that are ideal for trips up to six miles, including bicycles, E-bikes, electric scooters, electric skateboards, shared bicycles and electric pedal assisted bicycles.²¹

Middle housing: A range of house-scale buildings with multiple units, compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes, located in a walkable neighborhood. Types of middle housing include cottage style single-family, townhomes, duplex, triplex, quadplex, apartments, and condominiums, etc. For additional visual examples of middle housing, see the Missing Middle Housing site.²²

Multimodal: Transportation that involves different “modes” or types of transportation, including aviation, ferries, ports, highways, trains, public transit, bicycles and pedestrians.²³

Nature-based recreation: A more specific form of passive recreation that includes outdoor activities in natural settings or otherwise involving, in some direct way, elements of nature — terrain, plants, wildlife, or water bodies. Some examples of nature-based recreation include, but aren’t limited to, bird watching or other wildlife viewing, kayaking, fishing, and hiking in nature.²⁴ Nature-based recreation can be considered a type of **passive recreation**. However, it is specific in its inclusion of nature being used to define the activity. Walking in a neighborhood can be generally considered passive recreation, whereas hiking and bird watching in a state park can be considered nature-based recreation.²⁵

Nature-based solutions: Actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, to provide both human well-being and biodiversity benefits.²⁶

Passive recreation: Recreational activities that may be unorganized and noncompetitive that generally occur in undeveloped spaces that do not require prepared facilities.

Some examples of passive recreation include, but aren’t limited to, picnicking, kite flying, bicycling, running, walking, and swimming.²⁷ These can occur in a park or open field but can also occur in an urban setting or neighborhood street.²⁸

Resilience hubs: Community centers in high-hazard risk neighborhoods that use alternative energy sources retrofitted to withstand and stay online during any emergency event, support emergency response efforts, and enhance long-term community resilience. These hubs are managed by community members.²⁹

Resilient transportation systems: The North Carolina Department of Transportation is committed to building a transportation system designed around resilience and the ability to adapt and recover from a wide array of disruptions. This includes maintaining open roads, clear rail lines, multi-modal transportation options, functioning airports, and other methods. Resilience affects all aspects of transportation, from the designing and constructing infrastructure to withstand hurricanes or rock slides, to traffic operations during emergency events, to regular inspection and maintenance of existing networks.

Riparian buffers: Areas within a certain distance from streams and other waterways that are left naturally vegetated to reduce runoff that lowers water quality.³⁰

Rural-scale subdivisions: Rural-scale subdivisions or neighborhoods are intended to be rural in scale and design. In Buncombe County, this means that these properties do not have public water or wastewater service; have lot sizes that are larger than suburban areas (generally greater than one acre); depending on the natural terrain, houses are sited near the middle or rear of a property and set back from the street that

provides access to the property; and tree canopy and natural vegetation is maintained to the extent possible with particular emphasis along the road frontage and near environmental features like a creek. These are different from conservation or cluster subdivisions, which are intended to allow for smaller lot sizes in exchange for protected common open space.³¹

Strategic Plan: The Buncombe 2025 Strategic Plan is a formal plan adopted by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners. This plan is used to guide County operations and sets a course of action for moving forward that drives future policy and budget decisions.³²

Transit-oriented development: Development that maximizes the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transportation.³³

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SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS & EVENTS

PHASE 1: LAUNCH PROJECT

Board of Commissioners meeting
 RFP Pre-Submittal Conference
 Leadership Asheville #1
 BC Judicial Bar
 CIBO
 Creation of Steering Committee
 Connect Buncombe #1
 Board of Commissioners
 Planning Board Meeting #1
 MSD Planning Committee
 Roadshows - Transportation
 Board of Commissioners
 Roadshows - Environmental Health
 Creation of Plan website
 Roadshows - Parks & Recreation
 Rotary Club
 Steering Committee meeting
 Launch weekly e-newsletter
 Leadership Asheville #2
 Roadshows - Ag. & Land Resources
 LOTS Association of Realtors
 Roadshows - Elections & Tax
 Roadshows - HHS & Justice Dept.
 Careers on Wheels - ABTech

Intercept event - BC Fall Festival
 Intercept event - BC Sports Park
 Roadshows - Library & General Svcs.
 Kickoff week events
 Kids' Postcard Activity
 Planning Board meeting #2
 Roadshows - Strategic Partnerships
 Steering Committee meeting
 Roadshows - Emergency Mgmt.
 Legacy Neighborhoods Coalition #1
 Roadshows - Register of Deeds
 Explore Asheville
 Roadshows - Strategy & Innovation
 Tourism Development Authority
 Asheville Holiday Parade
 Mailing of Comp. Plan tax inserts
 Launch of Vision Word Cloud
 "What is a Comp Plan" video
 Roadshows - Solid Waste
 Roadshows - Air Quality, Sustainability
 Friends of Fonta Flora Trail
 Faith Leaders #1
 NC Farm Bureau

PHASE 2: IDENTIFY VISION & GOALS

Stakeholder interviews
 Student Activity Kits
 Planning Board Meeting #3
 Board of Commissioners
 Duke NC Leadership
 Leadership Asheville #3
 Friends of Fonta Flora Trail
 Launch of Awareness Kit
 Launch of Stakeholder Survey
 Phase 1 Activity Report
 Board of Adjustment meeting
 WRES Radio spot #1
 Connect Buncombe #2
 Virtual public meeting
 Planning Board meeting #4
 Virtual public meeting
 Community Transport. Board
 Steering Committee meeting
 AVL Rgnl. Housing Consortium
 Virtual public meeting
 Fire Chiefs meeting
 Planning Board meeting #5

DHS Board
 Leadership Asheville #4
 Virtual public meeting - Youth
 Fairview Business Association
 Air Quality Board
 Virtual public meeting
 Givens Estate
 Emma PODER meeting
 Enka Middle School meeting
 Weaverville Community Ctr.
 Fairview Community Ctr.
 Skyland Library meeting
 Erwin High School meeting
 East Asheville Library meeting
 Leicester Community Ctr.
 Sandy Mush Community Ctr.
 Black Mountain Library meeting
 Warren Wilson College Intercept
 Steering Committee meeting
 Carolina Day School event
 Glenn Arden Career Day
 Hall Fletcher STEAM event

PHASE 3: DEVELOP POLICIES & ACTIONS

Steering Committee meeting
Planning Board meeting #6
Community Markets - Asheville Middle School
Community Markets - Aston Park Towers
Community Markets - Bartlett Arms
Community Markets - Deaverview
Community Markets - Klondyke Apartments
Community Markets - Maple Crest
Community Markets - Pisgah View Apartments
Community Markets - Senior Opportunity Center
Community Markets - Shiloh
Community Markets - Big Ivy Community Center
Community Markets - Woodfin Community Center
Community Markets - ABCCM Enka
Community Markets - Enka Middle School
Community Markets - Erwin Middle School
Staff review of draft Vision & Goals
East Asheville Library Festival
BC Public Engagement Alliance
Asheville Buncombe Black Elders Committee
Village Roundtable
Phase 2 Activity Report
Intercept event - HOLA Carolinas
Steering Committee meeting
MSD & Emergency Services Meeting
Ukrainian Community outreach
Elder Abuse Prevention Event
Black Professionals Luncheon
Juneteenth Festival
Hispanic Restaurants outreach
BC Lake Julian Campout
Wellington Park outreach
Creation of the draft 2022 Factbook
Intercept event - My Daddy Taught Me That
BC Public Engagement Alliance
Enka Candler Library meeting
Weaverville Farmers Market
Legacy Neighborhoods Coalition #2
Virtual public meeting
Stumptown Neighborhood Assoc. Meeting
Intercept event - Enka Farmers Market
Emma Community Association
Shiloh Neighborhood Assoc. meeting
Comp. Plan tax inserts mailed #2
East Asheville Library meeting
Leicester Farmers Market
LatinX Health Fair
Intercept event - Asheville City Market
Steering Committee meeting
East End Valley Neighborhood Assoc. Meeting
Asheville Buncombe Black Elders Committee
County Employee Input Events
Planning Board meeting #7
Mt. Zion CWA Teen meeting
Burton Street Neighborhood Assoc. meeting
Faith Leaders #2
United Way Youth Block Party
Intercept event - Downtown After Five
BC Public Engagement Alliance
Virtual public meeting
Steering Committee meeting
Ledgewood Back to School event
WRES Radio spot #2
Maple Crest Community Neighborhood Fair
UNCA Student Union
Iglesia Soplo del Espiritu Santo
Western Carolina University
Warren Wilson College Community Day
Goombay Festival
Steering Committee meeting
Staff review of draft Plan
East End Valley St. Neighborhood Assoc. #2



SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT **MEETINGS & EVENTS**, *continued*

PHASE 4: Adopt the Plan

Intercept event - Big Crafty
Weaverville Library Exhibit
Skyland Library Exhibit
HHS Exhibit
West Asheville Library Exhibit
Leicester Library Exhibit
Enka Library Exhibit
Fairview Library Exhibit
East Asheville Library Exhibit
CIBO
North Asheville Library Exhibit
South Asheville Commissioners
Town Hall
Black Mountain Library Exhibit
Erwin High School public meeting
Board of Adjustment Meeting
Intercept event - Festival of Lights
Launch of Poll #3 - Phase 4
Presentation - Shiloh Community
Association
Presentation - Emma Community
Association
Presentation - Elite Group
Outreach to Black community
groups

Outreach to faith leader groups
Deaverview Apartments outreach
Bartlett Arms Apartments outreach
Aston Park Apartments outreach
Big Ivy Food Market outreach
Community Connectors outreach
Manna Food Bank Food Box out-
reach
YWCA Board Outreach
Different Strokes Board Outreach
Middle and High School outreach
(Nesbitt High, Avl Middle, SILSA)
Intercept events - Aldi grocery store
Outreach to community email lists
(ABBA, BCPEA)

ALL PHASES: Public Engagement Reporting Links

To see more detailed outcomes from the public input windows, please visit the Buncombe County Comprehensive Plan 2043 at this link: www.buncombecounty.org/comprehensive-plan-2043/

You can also view detailed reports from Phase 2, Phase 3, and Phase 4 at the links below:

- **[Stakeholder Organizations Survey Final Report](#)**
- **[Public Input Window #1](#)**
- **[Public Input Window #2](#)**
- **[Public Input Window #3](#)**

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