



OUR VOICES OUR VISION

June 2022: Phase 2 Activities Update

BUNCOMBE COUNTY 2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BUNCOMBE COUNTY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The creation of a long-range Comprehensive Plan requires broad community engagement to be successful. During Phase 2, Buncombe County experienced delays to the planning process due to COVID-19 shutdowns and limits on social gatherings. This increased the amount of time needed for the completion of Phase 2. Despite those setbacks, staff were able to reach many residents through online public engagement activities, and later held in-person and intercept meetings all around the county in both urban and rural areas. Data from that phase shows that the first round of public engagement reached a large number of people from varying backgrounds.

Phase 2 of the Planning Process

This document summarizes the main activities completed during Phase 2 of the planning process for the County's Comprehensive Plan. This phase included:

- Gathering information about the existing conditions in the county, including its historical context,
- Identifying ways the county could change or grow over time using projection models, and
- Beginning the public engagement process to gather input from residents about their vision for the future.

PRESENTATIONS

Staff gave presentations to the following local groups:

- Fairview Business Assoc.
- CIBO
- Connect Buncombe
- Explore Asheville
- Emma PODER
- Air Quality Board

2022 ACTIVITIES

January

- Virtual Public Input meeting
- Virtual Public Input meeting

February

- Steering Committee meeting
- Virtual Public Input meeting
- Virtual Public Input meeting

March

- Virtual Public Input meeting
- Emma PODER meeting
- Enka Middle School meeting
- Weaverville Comm. Ctr. meeting
- Fairview Comm. Ctr. meeting
- Intercept table at UNCA campus
- Intercept table at Community Market
- Skyland Library meeting
- Erwin High School meeting
- East Asheville Library meeting

April

- Creation of the draft 2022 Factbook
- Leicester Comm. Ctr. meeting
- Sandy Mush Comm. Ctr. meeting
- Black Mountain Library meeting
- Intercept table at Warren Wilson
- Steering Committee meeting
- Carolina Day Student event
- Career Day at Glenn Arden
- Hall Fletcher Elementary STEAM event

May, June, July

- Steering Committee meetings
- Analysis of data and input received
- Drafting of Vision, themes, and goals
- Review by the Board of Commissioners

Phase 2 Focus:
Identify the
community's
Vision and Goals
to prioritize
over the next 20
years.



WEAVERVILLE MEETING

Prioritizing Access

Accessibility is key to getting broad, high quality public input. Staff were committed to addressing barriers to participation in their engagement plan. That included being mindful of limits to transportation, technology, language, work schedules, childcare, and more. Here's how we worked to address some of these limitations during Phase 2:

Transportation

- In-person meetings were held in urban and rural areas throughout the county so residents did not have to travel far.
- 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 polls.

Technology

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

Language

- Online activities, paper polls, and flyers were available in English and Spanish.
- Live spanish language interpreters were available at a number of in-person and virtual meetings.



KIDS ACTIVITY AT MEETING

Childcare

- Children were invited to attend meetings, allowing caregivers more flexibility.
- Child-friendly planning activities were available, with staff on hand 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 weekday, weekend, 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.

PHASES

PHASE 1 - LAUNCH COMPLETE

- Create resident Steering Committee
- Interview boards, departments, & stakeholders
- Develop a public engagement plan

PHASE 2 - VISION & GOALS IN PROGRESS

- Gather information about the County
- Identify ways the County could change or grow
- Begin public engagement process
- Draft the vision and goals for The Plan *(This is being completed by the Steering Committee, and the Board of Commissioners will review.)*

PHASE 3 - POLICIES & STRATEGIES IN PROGRESS

- Explore options for addressing change
- Identify how land could be used
- Develop policies, strategies, and actions
- Continue public engagement process

PHASE 4 - ADOPTION

- Draft The Plan document
- Present draft to community
- Incorporate resident feedback or changes
- Planning Board public hearing review
- Commissioners review, hearing, and adoption
- Suggest changes to County ordinances



STAFF AT THE SKYLAND MEETING

PHASE 2 PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

During Phase 2, County residents of all ages were asked to identify their vision for the future of Buncombe and what broad goals the county should prioritize over the next 20 years. Through a mixture of online activities, staff presentations, intercept events, printed polls, and in-person meetings, residents had many ways to provide input during this first phase of public engagement.

1: Vision & Goals Poll



WHAT IS IT?

A poll for anyone who lives, works, or goes to school in Buncombe, containing the following activity sections:

1. *Public input questions:* Poll asking questions about resident values and opinions on county priorities.
2. *Priorities & Actions Identification:* List of key topic areas, where residents provide input about what focus and actions the county should take for each topic.
3. *Mapping:* Map activity where residents identify areas of the county that they want to protect, change, replicate, or add more housing or jobs.

1,243
people took
the Poll

347
people
attended a
meeting

354
kids
participated
in the student
polls

2: Word Cloud



WHAT IS IT?

Residents could share up to 4 words or short phrases to describe their desired vision for the future.

The information will help develop The Plan's Vision statement.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Anyone who lives, works, or goes to school in Buncombe County.

1,321 people added
their vision words to
the Word Cloud

3: Kids Postcard Project

WHAT IS IT?

Residents were asked to draw a picture of what they love about their community, or what they want it to be like in the future.

The information will be used to identify the priorities and actions in The Plan.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Children who live or go to school in Buncombe County.

91 children
drew a picture of their
vision for the future



POOLS & PARKS, AGE 6

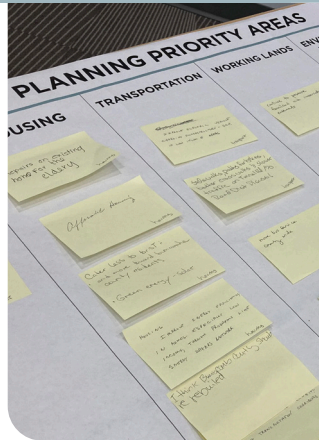
4: Stakeholder Poll

WHAT IS IT?

Stakeholder groups were interviewed and asked to take a poll. Groups shared what issues need to be addressed, and what ‘big ideas’ they want the county to support to improve the community.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Local businesses, neighborhood organizations, community non-profits, advocacy groups, educational institutions, and Commissioners that have an interest in the future of the County.



127 groups
took the poll

6: Public Input Meetings

WHAT IS IT?

Virtual and in-person public input meetings were held at libraries, schools, and community centers around the county.

Residents interacted with staff and the consultants, learned about the planning process, and participated in the Vision & Goals activities.

5 community meetings
5 drop-in meetings
4 virtual meetings

WHO IS IT FOR?

Anyone who lives, works, or goes to school in Buncombe County.



5: Student Activity Kits

WHAT IS IT?

Elementary students provided input through a community-building activity and short poll. Middle and High school, and College-age students engaged in a facilitated activity and took the full length poll to share their input.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Students in Buncombe County. Public and private schools, homeschool groups, and youth programs were contacted.

One class from Fairview Elementary won an ice cream party for completing the activity together.



147 students
interacted with the
activity kits

6: Intercept Event

WHAT IS IT?

County staff set up information tables and handed out polls at dozens of locations, including food distribution markets, community centers, churches, colleges, and more. They also facilitated activities with school groups to expand youth involvement.

6 schools
participated in
events

32 food markets
distributed
information to low-
income residents



REACHING THE PUBLIC

Outreach

One important task for creating The Plan is ensuring that residents know about the process and how to participate. How do you reach everyone in a county of 260,000+ people?

Tax Insert

We started by collaborating with the Tax Department to include Comp Plan information in every tax bill mailed to property owners. Approximately 21,000 mailers were sent inviting them to share their input.

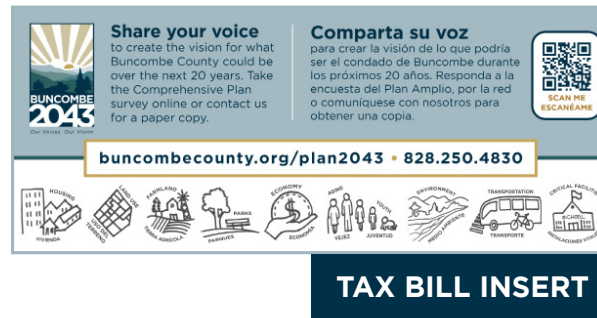
**21,000
people
received
information
by mail.**

Targeted Outreach

Staff reached out directly to different groups around the county to encourage participation:

- 79 local public and private schools, colleges, and youth groups.
- 194 stakeholder organizations
- 126 faith-based leaders
- 17 community groups
- Dozens of neighborhood associations, local minority businesses, low-income housing communities, and more.

Staff also reached out to organizations serving typically underrepresented groups to ask how their clients could best be reached. Groups included those assisting homeless populations, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, those lacking technology or needing assistance to take the poll, and non-english speakers.



Awareness Kit

An Awareness Kit was created to allow anyone in the community to share information about The Plan, and even host their own input meeting with their friends or networks.

The kit contained an introduction video, presentation to use with their group, sample email, social media graphics, and flyers. This tool was intended to empower individuals and small groups to increase representation from within their communities.

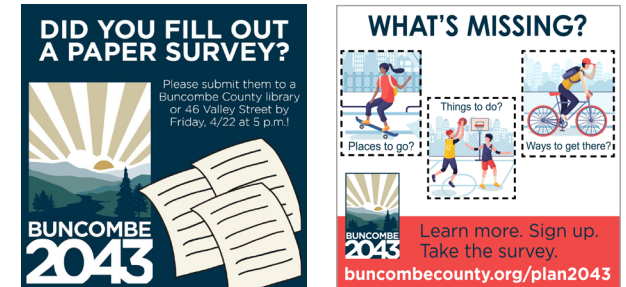


Department Collaboration

County Departments were instrumental in spreading the word about The Plan. Community Engagement staff handed out flyers at events, and encouraged people to attend meetings and take the poll.

Outward-facing departments, such as Health and Human Services, the Register of Deeds, and the Library placed information in high-traffic areas of their buildings. Communication staff shared meeting notices and updates through social media and news channels.

County Commissioners, Steering Committee members, and other Board members also spread the word through their networks.



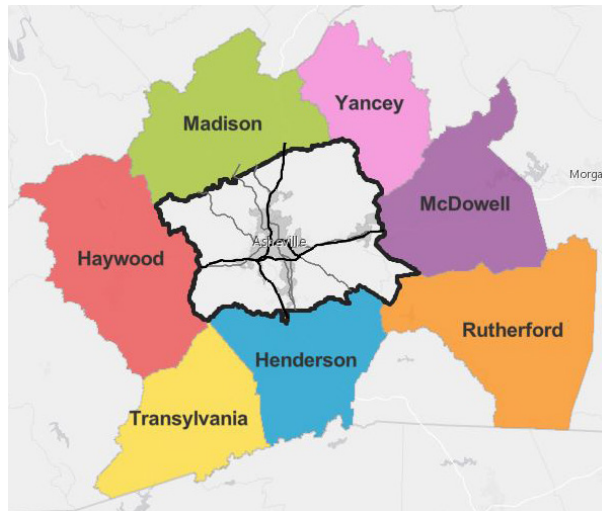
SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES

Advertising

Residents could see and hear advertisements for the Comprehensive Plan in many places around town. From the bulletin board at their local grocery store, on the radio, yard signs placed outside of libraries and community centers, and even flyers handed out at kids soccer games.

**7 press releases
143 radio spots**

Education



Our Region Storymap

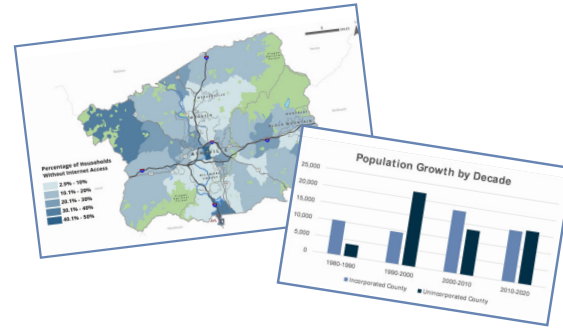
Comprehensive Plans require that you think in broad terms, and with a regional focus in mind. The Plan should consider impacts from neighboring counties and beyond, to identify opportunities and risks.

To help residents better understand the geography of the county, staff created a Storymap, which is an online tool that allows users to scroll through a series of narratives, graphics, and maps to learn more about a topic. It can help summarize large amounts of complex information in a more accessible way.

The 'Our Region' Storymap provides basic information to orient viewers to surrounding counties, and the city and towns within its borders. It provides links to Comprehensive Plans in progress or adopted by local municipalities to show the full spectrum of planning activities happening in our area.

2022 Factbook

Created by the consultant Clarion and their team, the 2022 Factbook is the technical report that provides important data, trends, and information on planning influences that should be considered when developing new policy direction and implementation actions for Buncombe County.

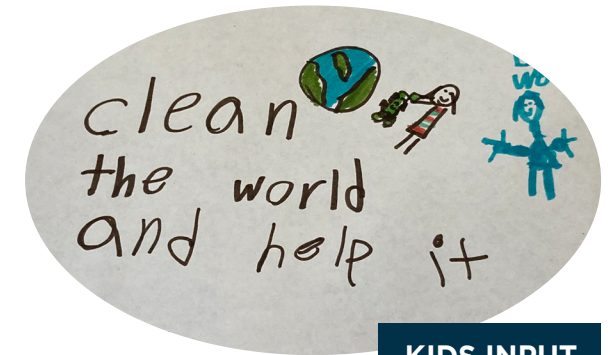


The Factbook looks at current and projected trends in sociodemographics, the built environment, working lands, the natural environment, climate-related vulnerabilities and causes, tourism opportunities and challenges, transportation, public facilities, services, and more.



EAST ASHEVILLE MEETING

The Factbook will be used by residents, stakeholders, and leaders to sift through a large amount of information and gather insights on the key trends that are affecting the county, its municipalities, and the greater Asheville region. It is one of the first steps in understanding where we are now, and where we may be headed. The Factbook is scheduled to be completed in Phase 3 of the planning process.



KIDS INPUT

E-Newsletter

Staff released 12 newsletters this phase, to 693 subscribers. Readers were kept up to date on some of the day-to-day Planning Department tasks, updates about the process, upcoming meetings, activities, photos, and links to relevant planning books and articles.

693 subscribers received the weekly newsletters

Residents were also introduced to planning documents from other important regional projects, and articles about the different focus areas. The goal was to provide more context through existing plans, best practices, and research into issues that may affect the County.

Next step...Phase 3

Phase 2 will close out when the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Board of Commissioners have finalized the Vision & Goals.

Phase 3 of the planning process focuses on analyzing the information received so far, and developing more specific policies, strategies, and actions. Residents will be asked what policy choices the county should make for each focus area, and gauge their reactions to different options. Draft policies and implementation strategies will be created based on the Phase 3 public input.

Staff will continue to work to identify any groups, communities, or stakeholders that were not well represented in the first round of engagement, and will seek to address barriers to gather their input. Phase 3 also includes the creation of a first draft of a proposed Land Use and Character Map, and categories to help guide future development within the county.

In Phase 3, the Steering Committee will take on a larger role in reviewing input, brainstorming options for how best to address the community's vision and goals, and drafting the specific chapters to be included in the final Plan document.

During the next round of public engagement, staff will continue to deploy a mix of virtual and in-person activities, drop-in style meetings, polls, and other live and self-paced options to make it easier than ever to provide input.

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CLARION



EQUINOX
balance through proper planning



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