



2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN Planning Board Briefing

Presented by

Comprehensive Planning Team

February 21, 2022
Virtual via zoom



BUNCOMBE COUNTY



Project Status Update-Planning Process



Progress on Phase 2: Establish the Vision and Goals

- Additional Stakeholder Interviews (virtual)
- Launched Stakeholder Survey
- Launched Community Engagement Window #1
- Factbook Development (update of to Planning Board in April/May)



Community Engagement Window #1 Update

- In-person meetings were postponed and will be re-scheduled when Covid numbers have declined
- This phase has been extended until the end of March
- We held 2 virtual meetings in January; 1 so far in January
- Have 3 more virtual meetings scheduled
 - 1 in February and 2 in March
- We have paper versions of the poll and activities available



Community Engagement Window #1 Participation Stats

- 44 Responses to the Stakeholder Survey
- 82 people have attended a live virtual meeting so far
 - From the 2 meetings in January
- 552 people have participated in the online poll and activities
- 1,173 people have participated in the online vision word cloud



Themes from Stakeholder Interviews



Stakeholder Interviews

- 22 interviews conducted virtually

- **Neighboring Jurisdictions**
- **Regional Partners**
- **School Districts**
- **Economic Agencies**

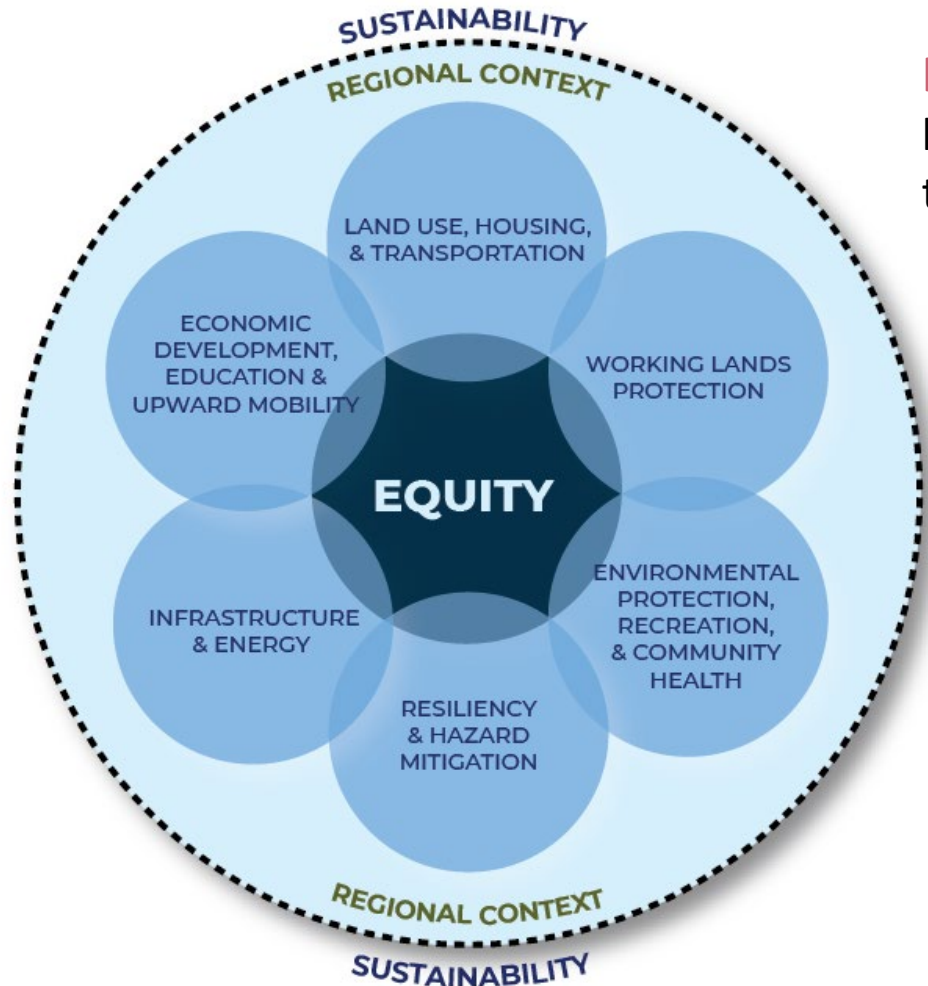
Asheville City Schools
Biltmore Forest
Black Mountain
Buncombe County Board of Adjustment
Buncombe County Planning Board
Buncombe County Public Schools
City of Asheville
Dogwood Health
Explore Asheville
French Broad River MPO
Greater Asheville Chamber of Commerce

Henderson County
Land of Sky Regional Council
NC – Department of Transportation
Town of Fletcher
Town of Marion
Town of Mills River
Town of Waynesville
Town of Weaverville
Town of Woodfin
Tourism Development Authority
Yancey County

Ongoing Stakeholder Survey Engaging Organizations, Businesses, and Community Partners



Organizing Themes/Ideas from Interviews



Interim Planning Topics

being tested with community through CEW #1



Equity Themes

- Lower wages, educational attainment, transit limitations, and affordable housing needs raised by most stakeholders as critical equity challenges to be addressed
- Loss of African American community in Buncombe (particularly Asheville) a growing concern
- Entertainment and cultural offerings are not inclusive of all communities
- Significant racial income disparities and student achievement gaps
- Declining or stagnant public school enrollment due to homeschooling and private schools could exacerbate inequities in educational achievement
- Need more focus on improving conditions for people who have historically lived and worked here (BIPOC)
- Important to track gentrification/displacement, particularly in legacy communities



Regional Context Themes

- Buncombe County in unique position to serve as regional convenor
- Need to identify shared values for region to leverage regional support
- Opportunity for partnerships across all six interim planning topics (housing, infrastructure, transportation, land use, broadband, etc.)
- Asheville Region in top #10 for remote working locations, and growing influx of new residents from outside region happening in Buncombe as well as other neighboring counties
- 2045 Growth Plan for Region can serve as starting point for considering regional growth factors
- Regional Transit Study recommendations an important input into land planning for region/County
- Housing costs in Buncombe are creating incentive for housing development in neighboring Counties
- Regional transportation corridor improvements will create new growth opportunities and need coordinated and cross-jurisdictional planning (joint small area planning opportunities)



Sustainability Themes

- Scarcest resource in Buncombe is land – need to be very strategic about how it is developed/protected
- Pushing development outside of County will not resolve transportation or climate impact issues
- Need planned growth in targeted areas that leverages land suitable for development: flatter topography, served with water/sewer, transportation and potentially transit access
- Conservation Subdivisions could be good model for non-targeted growth areas
- AVL 5X5 Plan focused on economic sustainability through diversity of industries
- Opportunity for regional efforts to use more energy efficient vehicle fleets for public agencies, reduce waste, and water conservation efforts



Land Use, Housing, Transportation Themes

Land Use

- High growth areas to focus on in plan: South Asheville, Enka / Candler, Fairview, Swannanoa
- Land use planning for areas that cross jurisdictions needs to be consistent, particularly with respect to density, uses, and design standards
- Given limited land for development, infill and redevelopment becoming more important
- Development review processes need to be evaluated and possibly amended to better utilize legislative process (policy choices) versus quasi-judicial process (interpretation of standards)
- Regulations could be improved by clarifying provisions, incentivizing development that is supported within the community, and improving standards (such as parking requirements for different uses)
- Character-based, “gentle density” may be appropriate for smaller communities receiving growth pressures
- Need to consider long range implications of Open Use Zoning District
- Need to embrace that application of zoning brought about nonconforming challenges in County



Land Use, Housing, Transportation Themes

Housing

- Housing affordability issue is prevalent across towns too and starting to be issue in neighboring counties
- Concerns about seasonal rentals and 2nd homes inflating the market with few tools available
- Housing “filtering” not occurring normally, people staying in starter homes longer because few affordable options to move into
- Need to focus on creative/innovative AH strategies that address broad spectrum of housing needs
- Opportunities for coordination on regional land trust model to create affordable housing across the region

Transportation

- County should prioritize transportation improvements and coordinate with regional partners to assist with securing funding
- Not enough resources to build roads needed to address transportation challenges; roadway connectivity is important solution to transportation congestion
- More transit needed to reduce congestion and support growth of regional workforce and address access and safety concerns for those without vehicles
- Opportunities to leverage recent corridor studies in new comp plan (Henderson Road, Tunnel road, Biltmore Ave)



Economic Development, Education, Upward Mobility Themes

- County has strong economic foundations, including in-migration of workforce, but with vulnerabilities (wages)
- Key issues that challenge recruitment of new businesses and upward mobility of local workers: affordable housing, transit, childcare, education
- Need to continue to diversify economy, especially targeted industries (climate science, advanced manufacturing, outdoor recreation products) and support expansion of existing industries
- Limited land for industry / employment and land prices may be driving some industries to neighboring communities
- Change in focus to redevelopment and infill and adaptive reuse for new businesses; securing land for new ED is important
- Opportunity to provide more character-based and resident-centric establishments in smaller established communities
- Partnership efforts are critical for improving educational achievement and making it a priority
- Opportunity for more focus on small business incubation and building entrepreneurship from within community



Working Lands Themes

- County farmland preservation efforts can serve as model for neighboring communities
- Importance of protecting not just agriculture but also forestlands
- Rural / agricultural areas may be opportunities for limited, rural-scale commercial uses in keeping with character of area



Environmental Protection, Recreation, Community Health Themes

- Opportunity for more consistent visual and environmental protection for developments backing up to Blue Ridge Parkway and potentially other areas
- Opportunities for regional greenway connections across jurisdictional boundaries
- Opportunities for joint recreational facilities (already occurring with public schools)
- Gap in healthcare services for region; limited population to support specialty services
- Need for behavioral health services for all ages and available within schools
- Need for adult daycare and senior centers for aging



Resiliency and Hazard Mitigation Themes

- Need a stronger focus on these issues at the local level
- Topographical challenges and hazard risks are critical to be addressing regionally
- Increased population and weather events could have long-term effects on source water; need to plan ahead
- Hazards can pose significant challenges to public facilities, such as schools
- May need “stop gap” changes sooner rather than later (life safety and property protection related to hazards)



Infrastructure & Energy Themes

- Limited development opportunities for prime developable areas (flat land) served by infrastructure
- Opportunity for coordinated growth plans among jurisdictions to help steer infrastructure planning
- Opportunity to support additional clean energy development in County



Next Steps

- Community Engagement Window #1
 - (Dec. 2021 – March 2022)
- Completing Phase 2 Analyses
 - Policy analysis summary
 - Factbook: Existing conditions and future planning influences analysis
- Drafting Plan Vision and Goals Framework



