



DRAFT Plan Framework for Steering Committee Review

Edited: 07-06-2022

This packet of materials is being shared for Steering Committee (SC) review at the July 12, 2022, meeting. This packet includes two main components:

- Part 1: Revised Vision Themes and Goals.** Steering Committee members provided critical feedback at the June 14th on the first draft of the Vision Themes and Goals. Additional insights were provided by SC members via email post meeting. These inputs have all been reviewed and incorporated into this second draft. Facilitators will highlight the changes made in this revised draft and take additional feedback at the July 12th meeting.
- Part 2: Module 1 of Policies and Actions.** *The collective inputs provided in this process up until this point – through stakeholder interviews, the Stakeholder Survey, the Community Engagement Window #1, and through direct inputs from the Steering Committee – along with the technical findings included in the Factbook and the technical expertise of the project planning team, have been reviewed and organized into a set of policies and actions by planning topic.* To provide a more feasible way to review the content, this information is being broken into two modules. The SC will review this content over the course of the two meetings scheduled for July 12 and August 9. This first module includes the following policy sections: Transportation and Connectivity, Health and Recreation, Hazards and Resilience, and Infrastructure and Energy. See the table below for the review schedule.

Policy Chapter Title	SC Review Module	Date of SC Review
Growth, Protection, and Conservation	Module 2	August 9
Transportation and Connectivity	Module 1	July 12
Farms, Forests, and Environmental Protection	Module 2	August 9
Education and Jobs	Module 2	August 9
Health and Recreation	Module 1	July 12
Hazards and Resilience	Module 1	July 12
Infrastructure and Energy	Module 1	July 12

SC members should review this packet prior to the July 12th meeting. An early question and answer period is available from 4:45-5:30p for any members that would like to talk with the planning team about this material before the meeting starts. The full SC will then discuss the draft material during the formal meeting time. SC members can also email additional thoughts and reactions after the meeting up until July 22 to Gillian Phillips gillian.phillips@buncombecounty.org.

These four components (Vision Themes, Goals, Policies, and Actions) are the fundamental building blocks of what will be the Buncombe 2043 Plan Framework.

- **Vision Themes** – The highest level of the Plan Framework intended to express the ideal aspirations of the plan. These should articulate the priorities for the County and the critical outcomes the County is striving to achieve.
- **Goals** – Express the outcome to achieve related to each planning topic included in the comprehensive plan. These should be guided by the Vision Themes and can articulate a more specific desired result to be achieved. This can include a performance metric, if applicable (e.g., 20% of County protected as permanent open space). Policies and actions will be organized under these goals. The intention is to create one overarching goal for each planning topic to create a concise document.
- **Policies** – These are statements of commitment and direction toward achieving the plan goals. These describe positions to inform decision-making either by the County or directed toward a partner agency. Policies are written in short, succinct statements with policy intent statements providing more detailed guidance for each policy. This structure will allow for drafting of fewer policies that can be leveraged as part of development review and incorporated in future staff reports.
- **Actions** – They are specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the vision themes, goals, and policy direction. These can be prioritized in the implementation plan section or they can be left for prioritization as part of future updates to the Buncombe County Strategic Plan.

Important Note for Steering Committee Members: Part 2 of this document (Module 1: Policies and Actions) includes references to an **Equity Opportunity Map (EOM)** and the **Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework**.

- The purpose of the **EOM** is to identify geographic areas of the County where neighborhoods or communities experience disadvantages due to historic inequities. This map can be leveraged by tying specific policies and actions to areas on the map that experience the greatest inequities in Buncombe. It is a tool for identifying where and to whom the County should focus future efforts to address inequities. This map is currently being developed by Buncombe County Staff and will be made available for viewing by the Steering Committee as soon as possible.
- The **Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework** is being developed by the consultant teams and the Buncombe County Staff. This will be made available in Module 2 Policies and Actions for review.

We thank you for your patience as we prepare these materials for public viewing.

Part 1: Revised Vision Themes and Goals

Vision Themes

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

- Strive to Achieve Equity
- Commit to Sustainability
- Achieve Livability and Affordability
- Focus on Conservation
- Root Efforts in Community

Strive to Achieve Equity¹: Buncombe County will strive to address social, economic, and environmental inequities by repairing and investing in historically disadvantaged communities and removing inequitable land use and transportation policies and regulations.

Commit to Sustainability²: Growth and change in the County will be sustainable and achieve resiliency 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.

Focus on Conservation: Natural resources, farms, and rural lands will continue to provide picturesque landscapes; healthy water, air, and soil quality; and opportunities for nature and recreation-based economic development.

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

¹ For a definition of “equity” please refer to the Buncombe County Strategic Plan (page 31) located at <https://www.buncombecounty.org/common/commissioners/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-2025.pdf>

² See the United Nation’s Brundtland Commission definition for “sustainability” at <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability#:~:text=In%201987%2C%20the%20United%20Nations,development%20needs%2C%20but%20with%20the>

Goals

Growth, Protection, and Conservation Goal

Growth will result in sustainable development patterns that expand affordable 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 through mixed-use and clustered development designs that lessen climate impacts and are more resilient to hazards. Growth will be directed away from priority conservation areas using a variety of public and private tools.

Transportation and Connectivity Goal

Sustainable growth patterns will be supported through expansion of equitable and affordable transportation choices (walking, biking, taking transit, and driving) that prioritize safety for users, reduce climate impacts, and provide greater access to travel between live, work and play destinations, especially for those with limited vehicle access and have historically been underserved by the transportation network. Buncombe County will leverage regional partnerships to improve the transportation system through enhanced transit service, provide greater connectivity between current and future destinations, and expand infrastructure for renewable fuel vehicles.

Farms, Forests, and Environmental Protection 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 maintained for the benefit of future generations.

Economic Development, Education, and Jobs Goal

Buncombe County will be home to a diverse economy of industries that employ local workers, support equitable access to employment, and help meet quality of life needs of residents. It will strive to address inequities within the local workforce through collaborations with economic development partners to build capacity for entrepreneurship and business development in historically disadvantaged communities, including addressing any land use policy and regulatory barriers to business development. The County will partner with Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools to support more sustainable and resilient school campuses. The County will also coordinate and support the school districts in efforts to enhance academic achievement and reduce the achievement gap between BIPOC and white students with a broad spectrum of abilities through new programs, such as vocational or living skills courses.

Health and Recreation Goal

Residents living within the County's growth areas will have proximate access to natural recreation lands, greenways, trails, or parks, and will prioritize access to historically disadvantaged communities. Residents will have equitable access to mental health, substance abuse, and general healthcare services that support

improved health outcomes across the County.

Hazards and Resiliency Goal

In partnership with private landowners, Buncombe will protect important resources and assets (food, housing, businesses, energy systems) from the impacts of natural and manmade 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 efforts and reduced response times of first responders.

Infrastructure and Energy Goal

The County will achieve carbon neutrality by converting Buncombe County’s operations (by 2030) and energy use of the larger 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 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.

[Part 2: Draft Policies and Actions](#)

The Module 1 Policies and Actions are provided on the following pages.

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES AND GOALS

The policies and actions described here create space and opportunity for progress toward enhanced emergency preparedness, development choices, and increased protections for resources and community assets. 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.

By focusing on conservation and committing to sustainability, Buncombe County will develop and implement policies and actions supporting resilience. In particular, the policies below recommend protecting natural resources, improving access to renewable energy, and designing neighborhoods sustainably during new development, infill projects, and redevelopment. 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.

Successful resilience and hazard mitigation actions also address inequities. The Equity Opportunity Maps (EOM)¹ are one set of metrics that are used to ensure policies and actions will also address equity-related challenges. A major consideration should be that these equity challenges often have layers of complexity and can be informed by community input and background information collected on existing social stressors, such as lack of affordable housing and the legacy of environmental injustice. While each policy contains suggestions for leveraging the information in the EOM, it should be noted that decision-making will need to be multi-layered because of locality. For example, when considering growth and land use within the County, higher scores may coincide with both potentially developable areas identified and existing hazards. In addition to the EOM, a multi-dimensional approach (in the table below) can be used to ensure that efforts and outcomes address equity issues and do not perpetuate these historic and current inequities. As the County puts these actions and policies in place, following the guidance below for how to address procedural, distributional, and structural inequities will result in a more resilient future for the whole community.

Equitable Resilience²	
Procedural Equity	<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

¹ The purpose of this map is to identify geographic areas of the County where neighborhoods or communities experience disadvantages due to historic inequities. This map can be leveraged by tying specific policies and actions to areas on the map that experience the greatest inequities in Buncombe. It is a tool for identifying where and to whom the County should focus future efforts to address inequities. This map is currently being developed by Buncombe County Staff and will be made available for viewing by the Steering Committee as soon as possible. We thank you for your patience as we prepare this map for public viewing.

² Urban Sustainability Directors Network Guide to Equitable, Community-driven Climate Preparedness Planning

HAZARDS AND RESILIENCE

Distributional Equity	<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
Structural Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a commitment 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

POLICIES

Policy 1: Manage existing and future environmental impacts by implementing green infrastructure and nature-based solutions³.

Buncombe will implement green infrastructure and nature-based projects that build resilience to multiple hazards, including flooding, wildfire, and landslides. Instead of relying solely on hard infrastructure options, Buncombe can implement both green infrastructure and nature-based solutions as standalone solutions or in combination with gray infrastructure. These actions also have multiple benefits to both human and natural communities throughout the County and region.

Policy Intent:

The intent of this policy is to manage environmental impacts by implementing as much green infrastructure as feasible. Old 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 urban heat.

The EOM highlights the very young (younger than 5) and elderly (older than 65) populations that 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; however, it should also be noted that 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.

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

Buncombe 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 Growth and Conservation. The strengthening of design standards and

³ *Green infrastructure* has been 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 U.S. EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). 2021. What is Green Infrastructure. Washington, DC: U.S. EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>). *Nature-based solutions* are 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 (Cohen-Shacham, E., G. Walters, C. Janzen, and S. Maginnis (eds.) 2016. Nature-based Solutions to Address Global Societal Challenges. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN).

ordinances is intended to increase the adaptive capacity of structures and reduce the exposure of individuals and communities to hazards.

The EOM can help identify types of structures that may typically be considered highly critical such as multi-family homes and manufactured homes. This policy is intended to 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.

With regard to state control of building codes and ordinances, the North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan is quick to point out that, “North Carolina will need to work with local governments to evaluate climate risks to their buildings, structures and support services,” and, “for infrastructure components that have to be placed within the floodplain, evaluate implications of defensible estimates of increased risks associated with changes in climate patterns.”⁴ Building codes are established and codified by the State of North Carolina. In the future, Buncombe County can work with the State to identify appropriate methods to update local building codes to create more resilient developments.

Policy 3: Invest in building capacity to ensure long-term community resilience and preparedness.

Buncombe will invest in growing the capacity to identify, assess, and implement actions for adaptation and building resilience. Buncombe will implement policies to ensure people are prepared for 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. This policy also addresses the need for infrastructure that builds capacity, such as microgrids.

In general, this policy may address many aspects of the EOM. Attention can be focused on building capacity within neighborhoods where the overall score is high and hazard vulnerability is also high.

Policy 4: 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

⁴ [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.”](#)

with efforts to support the long-range sustainability of public services (see the *Infrastructure and Energy* chapter).

This policy may also be used to generally address multiple aspects of the EOM. Depending on the emergency response strategy, individual metrics or themes from the EOM can be used to understand where the most vulnerable populations are located and, therefore, should be considered a higher priority within response efforts.

Policy 5: Use the Hazards Vulnerability Assessment to guide future growth and land use decisions.

Buncombe 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. This policy encourages maximizing development investments in low-risk hazard areas and recognizes the need for integrating hazard assessments into County and regional planning.

In addition to the influence that growth and land use changes may have on the frequency or severity of hazards, other crucial considerations are the potential impacts on vulnerable populations, whether by the increased or altered hazard potential and additional socioeconomic burden of hazards. Of particular note are the higher scores in the overall SVI and within each individual theme that may coincide with both potentially developable areas and hazards within the County.

ACTIONS

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.
- Increase implementation of bridges/multiple culvert/floodplain culvert instead of single culverts when possible to increase 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).

Employ design standards to increase adaptive capacity⁵ and reduce exposure to hazards.

- Utilize hazard mitigation design requirements that exceed minimum standards for critical facilities and/or require that any new critical facilities 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.”⁶
- Revise the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance in the County to prohibit the use of fill within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).⁷
- Promote greater utilization of development processes that allow for the conservation of steeply sloping land 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.
 - Revise, reorganize and consolidate the steep slope regulations and add other metrics beyond elevation and slope, such as reduce density, land disturbance, and further limit tree removal.
 - Enhance current slope and soil evaluation requirements for lots containing steep slopes, to limit slope disturbance and encourage avoidance of landslide-prone soils.
- Establish design standards and incentives to assist vulnerable populations in reducing risks from environmental hazards through design (e.g., elevated homes in flood areas, fire retardant materials in fire areas).
- Harden energy infrastructure systems⁸ against damage from flooding, landslides, wildfire and extreme heat and expand redundancy in the energy network.
- 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, to ensure that fill and other modifications

⁵ *Adaptive Capacity* is defined as, “the ability of a person, asset, or system to adjust to a hazard, take advantage of new opportunities, or cope with change.” (U.S. Federal Government, 2016: “Glossary.” U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit. <https://toolkit.climate.gov/content/glossary>. Accessed July 1, 2022.)

⁶ [North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan](#), June 2020, p. 5H-6. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁷ Buncombe County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance is detailed [here](#). Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁸ “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,customer%20from%20weather%2Drelated%20outages>).

to the floodplain do not elevate the risk of loss of life and property damage upon nearby properties.

- Promote greater utilization of development processes that allow for the conservation of flood-prone land and the clustering of home sites outside of the floodplain. Retain existing processes, but reorganize, consolidate, and expand conservation and cluster development options across the Zoning and Subdivision ordinances.

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 bus system to pick up residents from vulnerable areas.
 - Develop resilience hubs (using alternative energy sources) in high-risk neighborhoods 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 things like 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 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 County staff capacity to recognize the need for resilience planning, preparedness efforts. For example:
 - Hire staff that are responsible for implementing resilience solutions centered around floodplain management, training, stormwater, community partnerships, etc.
 - 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 of 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 citizens 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: (a) Physically accessible (near public transport); (b) Safe for all members; (c) Located in places that the community values as gathering spaces (e.g., community centers and cultural centers); (d) Led in, or translated into, the primary language(s) of the community; (e) 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.
- 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).

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

- Investigate use of backup water supply sources (e.g., well vs 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 (manpower) to respond to areas where there are shared mutual aid agreements by increasing staffed hours required in fire stations in key areas.
- 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.
- 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.

- Integrate relevant elements of the Buncombe-Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan into the Comprehensive Plan and vice versa.

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

- Protect land for specific values (i.e., agriculture and local food, transportation, affordable housing, alternative energy sites, etc.) in accordance with the Growth and Conservation Framework. For example:
 - Revise land use plans to accommodate changes in types of agricultural activities, and to allow for shifts in agriculturally viable areas.
 - Evaluate land use and zoning codes to mitigate development patterns that concentrate poverty.
 - Concentrated poverty is defined as census tracts where the federal poverty rate is 40% or more. These neighborhoods lack resources to provide quality schools, job opportunities, safe streets, and access to quality healthcare. Exclusionary zoning is a 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.⁹
- Work with neighboring counties on buildout plans along primary transportation corridors, especially close to Fletcher, Mills Gap, Candler, and north of Weaverville.
- 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 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 Resilience Planning effort. This project maps all high risk areas for flooding, landslides, and wildfire. 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.

⁹ There are numerous resources about the impacts of zoning practices and concentrated poverty; [this article provides excellent context](#). See also this paper entitled, [“The Impact of Zoning on Housing Affordability” \(Glaeser & Gyourko 2002\)](#).

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES AND GOALS

The policies and actions described in this chapter will help Buncombe County achieve its goals of creating an equitable, livable, and community-oriented place. 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.

Buncombe County will also utilize physical planning mechanisms to promote the health and safety of all residents. 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. The 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 in Buncombe County.

The health and recreation goals of the County are achievable through targeted planning efforts that are inclusive and bridge existing gaps. These goals can be achieved simultaneously with the County's goals of growth, conservation, connectivity, jobs, and economic development.

This plan recognizes the County's previous accomplishments through its partnerships with city and town governments and offerings of recreation facilities, greenways, blueways, trails, and various other forms of nature-based recreation. There remain underserved areas and communities within the county that do not benefit from the same levels of publicly provided recreation, access to health-related offerings, or lifestyle choices. These communities can be reached by careful identification and by the expansion of programming, improvement of amenities, and equitable investment.

POLICIES

POLICY 1: Focus on improving recreational opportunities in underserved areas.

Buncombe 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 Equity Opportunity Map (EOM) 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.

POLICY 2: 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 merge 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 MPO to determine opportunities to link these goals.

- Prioritize projects in areas that are high-ranking on the Equity Opportunity 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 achieve health, recreation, transportation, and connectivity goals.

POLICY 3: 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:

- 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.
- Expand recreational programming to be more inclusive and welcoming of diverse populations.
- Increase the number of public recreation amenities that provide ADA-compliant features.
- Improve the public perception and understanding of the accessibility of County recreation services.

POLICY 4: 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:

- Utilize the County Land Conservation Advisory Board, which can recommend projects and conservation tools and provide funding, to achieve recreation goals.
- Engage conservation organizations such as land trusts to partner on conservation and recreation-based projects that are low-cost options for the County.
- Expand landowner education programs that communicate the benefits of land conservation and public access.
- Simultaneously achieve conservation, recreation, and health goals.

POLICY 5: 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.
- Provide equitable access to safe and enjoyable forms of activity that improve mental and physical health, such as nature-based recreation.
- Support local farms and other businesses that make up the local food system and offer healthy locally grown food choices to residents.
- Understand the places that have been underserved in terms of health services, healthy lifestyle choices, and access to recreation and seek solutions to resolve inequities.
- Develop an understanding of communities that have faced environmental justice disparities and take steps to improve the built and natural environment conditions in these communities.

ACTIONS

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.
- Analyze geographic and programming gaps throughout the county.
- Utilize the Equity Opportunity Map, as well as existing County assessments, to determine locations with the greatest social need for new recreation facilities.
- Invest in the access to and management of natural open space. This is a national trend of counties that have determined a greater cost-benefit analysis than investment in active recreational facilities.
- Audit and assess the condition of existing County recreation facilities to determine opportunities to expand offerings and improve safety and accessibility.
- Assess unused land in the county to determine suitability for recreation projects to provide for more equitable offerings to underserved areas.
- Implement the construction of a County managed indoor recreation facility.
- Ensure that any recommended implementation steps are both equitable and achievable.

Update the County Greenway 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 Recreation and Parks 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, that 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.

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 importance in the community.
- Hold events in County parks that promote a sense of community, sense of place, and community pride.
- Use County parks to create new community centers or rural hamlets in communities where it is needed.

Expand County recreation programming and events.

- Increase staffing to offer daily programming and explore opportunities for additional recreational events.
- Offer programming that reaches new demographics that have historically participated less than others.
- Expand youth sports programs and identify land where new youth sports fields can be constructed.
- Hire dedicated staff to facilitate the Special Olympics as an ongoing County program.
- Ensure programming is equitable and accessible to all who want to participate.

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 working with landowners to acquire greenway easements, development of recreation facilities within new development, and encourage public-private partnerships for recreation projects.

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:
 - Conduct health impact assessments for major development projects to minimize community impacts.
 - Conduct health-oriented needs assessments and environmental justice evaluations in conjunction with Small Area Plans.
 - Identify environmental justice projects for key issues that disproportionality affect BIPOC 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 Equity Opportunity Map.
- 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 the 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 the connectivity from neighborhoods to health providers, county and municipal health departments, food sources, and other health-related services.
- 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.

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

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES AND GOALS

The County's infrastructure and energy systems provide the foundation for businesses, homes, schools, community centers, and more. 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. The policies in this section support the goals of encouraging sustainable growth patterns, supporting county-wide economic development goals, managing resources, and creating opportunities for sustainable and renewable energy.

In order to continue to support the communities of Buncombe County, these systems must be maintained and coordinated with new growth. 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. Infrastructure and sustainability will be supported by advancing renewable energy goals for both County operations and for private sector developments. Finally, all infrastructure and energy policies are designed with an equity lens. Issues like broadband access have equity concerns for education, jobs, and health. Equity in public services is also considered by encouraging consistent levels of service within suburban and rural areas. Infrastructure and energy systems are the foundation for enhancing livability for those who live and work in Buncombe.

POLICIES

POLICY 1: Coordinate public water and wastewater services with plans for growth.

Buncombe 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 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 environmental or agricultural protection. This coordination should come in the form of joint planning in areas of common interest on the edges of municipalities. Joint planning efforts will need to consider where water and sewer provision is 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.

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. Solid waste services require overseeing landfill capacity and recycling and compost operations. Buncombe County provides public safety services from the Sheriff's Office and emergency services such as emergency communications (911 call center), paramedic Emergency Medical Services (EMS), fire and life safety from the Fire Marshal's Office, and disaster coordination in the Emergency Management Division.

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, and solid waste will encounter challenges in response and capacity. Coordinating services with planned growth will 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. In addition, 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 States¹; promoting sustainable development practices and scaling up recycling and composting operations could divert more waste from landfills.

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 fire station when a certain area experiences population growth.

POLICY 3: Expand and support broadband access for all residents of Buncombe County.

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

Policy Intent:

Internet connectivity is 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'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.²

POLICY 4: Advance energy conservation and sustainability.

The county will direct funding toward, and implement energy conservation and renewable energy generation policies, that support Buncombe County's sustainability goals.

Policy Intent:

Advancing energy conservation 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 (such as wind and solar) will allow for additional progress in this area. Investing in renewable energy infrastructure, such as green buildings and construction, electric vehicle charging,

¹ Bradley Adams, *Composting in Residential, Agricultural, and Commercial Districts*, Sustainable Development Code (n.d).

² Land of Sky Regional Council, *Buncombe County Broadband Community Profile* (June 2019). http://www.landofsky.org/pdf/LGS/Broadband/BuncombeCounty_CommunityProfile2019.pdf

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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.

ACTIONS

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 interjurisdictional 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.

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

- Support efforts to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure and renewable fuels for the County fleet.
- Incorporate electric vehicle charging station standards and/or incentives in the zoning ordinance.
- 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 zoning changes to provide incentives for renewable energy investments during development, such as infrastructure for electric vehicles and solar panel installation.
- Consider developing a policy to require solar installation on all new County-led construction or retrofits located within the City or County.
- Continue to support bulk purchasing programs for renewable energy, which would involve working with many different community partners to procure solar equipment.
- Consider establishing a revolving investment fund for renewable energy projects.
- 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 nonutility 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.

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

- Conduct an assessment to understand solid waste needs and solutions (for example, more land needs to be acquired for a landfill, purchasing agreements for waste services, LOS maintenance).
- Consider funding expansion of solid waste sites to accommodate landfill capacity needs, which may require land acquisition.
- Build partnerships with other public or private entities that could implement large-scale recycling and composting operations.
- Update the county's development ordinances to include sustainable development³ 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.

Develop a capital improvement planning (CIP) process to manage and prepare for growth and maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure.

- Develop a regularly occurring county planning process to identify future county infrastructure expansion and maintenance needs, and plan for the financing of those investments over time.
- Consider the development of a 6-year or 10-year CIP interval updated annually or every two years to plan ahead for future needs.
- Develop a long-range facilities master plan for all county facilities and infrastructure and leverage this master plan in the CIP process.

³ The Sustainable Development Code can be used as a resource in updating ordinances with sustainable development provisions. For more information, see: <https://sustainablecitycode.org/>.

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES AND GOALS

The following transportation and connectivity policies offer a course of action for the future sustainability and reliability of Buncombe County's transportation network. Transportation and connectivity objectives include reducing congestion, managing growth, developing sustainable land use patterns, and addressing community connection. Success lies in providing a balanced system with multiple modes of travel, including cars, transit, walking, and biking.

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. Having access to mobility options equates to having opportunities for employment, education, food access, and essential services. Additionally, multimodal transportation modes are an affordable way to travel. The average household spends over \$700 per month on vehicle ownership expenses. When a car is not a necessity and multimodal options are available, households can spend more on housing and other living expenses.

In addition to affordability, shifting from single-occupancy vehicles to multi-modal modes of transportation furthers other comprehensive plan objectives. Some examples are improving opportunities to access education, jobs, healthy food, services, and recreation; reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions; reducing household costs; and increasing levels of physical activity.

POLICIES

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:

More than half of all trips in the United States are within a 20-minute bike ride or less, and more than one in four trips are within a 20-minute walk or less.¹ 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 congestion and emissions.

Walking as a viable mode of transportation meets many Buncombe County goals, including health, sustainability, creating thriving commercial centers, reducing transportation costs, and equity. Walking is a viable mode 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 congestion, 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.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2017 National Household Travel Survey.

What Does it Cost to Own and Operate a Car? <https://www.aaa.com/autorepair/articles/what-does-it-cost-to-own-and-operate-a-car>

POLICY 2: Enhance transportation planning capabilities to plan for and develop a balanced transportation network.

Buncombe will develop the necessary capabilities to invest in a balanced transportation network for all residents, which will require increasing capacity to 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 transportation network, Buncombe will need to build internal capacity.

Examples of building capacity include increased staffing, new policies (e.g., updated traffic impact analysis standards), and strengthened relationships with external partners that have transportation project responsibilities (e.g., French Broad River MPO, NCDOT, other municipalities, the development community).

This can also include state level policy advocacy for new tools to support transportation planning policies, such as use of transportation impact fees, jurisdictional issues related to not owning or maintaining roads, road design standards, and other issues.

POLICY 3: Coordinate land development and transportation policies to manage the impacts of growth and congestion.

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

Policy Intent:

New growth in Buncombe County has the potential to increase congestion. Historically, efforts to address congestion 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 congestion is not sustainable.

Buncombe County's approach is one that coordinates land use and transportation policies to manage congestion through more sustainable methods. For example, a combination of smaller, more feasible roadway projects, shifting trips away from single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to other modes (transit, walking, and biking), and reducing trip demand by focusing housing near jobs, schools, services, and recreation.

ACTIONS

Complete the Buncombe County Multimodal Plan.

Road Network Actions

- 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 chose not to drive.
- Develop modern street cross-sections that support the character of different areas of the county as guided by the Growth 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, link between transportation and climate change, and between health and transportation.

Bicycling & Micro-Mobility Actions

- 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.

Transit Actions

- Support transit-oriented development in Buncombe's edge areas near municipalities as identified on the Growth and Conservation Framework map.
- Continue to collaborate with Asheville Rides Transit to provide paratransit service and identify funding for Asheville Rides Transit to expand the geographic service area and to increase existing route frequency and reliability.

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- 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.
- Develop context-appropriate requirements and design standards for transit stops in the County.
- Increase ridership through community outreach campaigns and marketing.

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

- 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, 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.
- When feasible, to minimize additional costs, 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 areas defined by the Growth 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.
- Work with NCDOT to implement suitable traffic calming measures on streets in Buncombe County’s urban 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 shift.
- Work with NCDOT and others to audit safety issues, and identify 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.
- Engage in early communication with NCDOT to identify opportunities for pedestrian improvements that can be incorporated with planned resurfacing projects.

Develop Buncombe County’s internal capacity and policies that support a balanced transportation network.

- Allocate funding to form a county public works department to establish the capacity to accept 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 zoning and subdivision standards to maximize network connectivity in private development projects (e.g., standards to address cross parcel connectivity).

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

- 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 is a concern and to support revitalization and redevelopment in other areas that are more appropriate for reinvestment.
- Establish development evaluation criteria for transportation-related projects that consider safety, system preservation, economic development/community access, support of growth areas as designated in the Growth and Conservation Framework map and small area plans, congestion management, environmental and cultural impacts, etc.
- 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, free bus passes, incentive to encourage commuting by modes other than SOVs.
- Adopt land use standards and incentives that result in:
 - Higher density residential development near job centers and amenities. Strongly discourage any new employment development that will require large numbers of residents to commute via automobile to jobs in other areas of the County.
 - Development patterns where new homes are within walking distance of parks, schools, jobs, and services.
 - Quality pedestrian facilities that are ADA compliant to the maximum extent feasible and follow the most current national standards and guidance.
 - Support development of walkable communities by requiring development of sidewalks or other pedestrian facilities as part of new developments.
- 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 safety concerns.
- Consider community character 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

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road. In other areas, such as municipal edges, a higher level of pedestrian infrastructure is needed for greater pedestrian safety.

- Audit development regulations and develop policies to further promote development / redevelopment in areas that have access to utility and transportation infrastructure.

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.