



DRAFT Plan Framework for Steering Committee Review

Edited: 08-01-2022

This packet of materials is being shared for Steering Committee (SC) review at the August 8, 2022, meeting. This packet includes:

- **Module 2 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.*
 - a. The SC will review this content over the course of the two meetings scheduled for July 12 and August 9. See the table below for the review schedule updated following the July meeting.

Policy Chapter Title	SC Review Module	Date of SC Review
Health and Recreation	Module 2	July 12
Growth, Protection, and Conservation	Module 2	August 9
Farms, Forests, and Environmental Conservation	Module 2	August 9
Economic Development, Education, and Jobs	Module 2	August 9
Transportation and Connectivity	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 August 9th meeting. SC members can also email additional thoughts and reactions after the meeting up until **August 26th** 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: This document 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.

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

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.
 - Strive to provide residents in established growth areas to have access to natural recreation lands, greenways, trails, or parks within a 10-minute drive of their home.

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 private conservation organizations such as land trusts to partner on conservation and nature-based recreation-based projects.
 - These partnerships could present low-cost options for the County. These organizations can leverage private funding for land conservation in the form of monetary donations and foundation grants that are unavailable to the County.
- Expand 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 using the Parks and Recreation Assessment to determine opportunities to expand offerings and improve safety and accessibility.
- Assess unused County-owned land to determine its suitability to create recreation projects that will provide more equitable offerings in underserved areas.
- Implement the construction of a County managed indoor recreation facility.
- Ensure that any recommended implementation steps are both equitable and achievable.

Update the Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Master Plan.

- Coordinate County greenway and trail plans with existing plans and ongoing planning efforts by the City of Asheville and the towns, such as the Asheville Close the GAP Plan, the Black Mountain 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 rural hamlets in communities where centralized hubs don't exist.

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.

HEALTH AND RECREATION

- 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

A comprehensive plan's fundamental focus is directing physical planning, including how and where growth should occur. The policies and actions in this chapter direct this physical planning with a focus on equity, sustainability, and conservation to create more accessible, affordable, and livable communities.

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

The Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework, established by the policies and actions in this chapter, aims to address social equity across all communities. These are grounded in the concerns raised and priorities identified by the community. The policies will strive to achieve equity by protecting historically disadvantaged communities from displacement or gentrification and conserving agricultural and environmental lands from development.

While Buncombe County has a large land acreage, parcels that are highly suitable for development are limited. This chapter's policies support growth on suitable sites using sustainable development patterns, direct growth toward areas that can provide the services and amenities that residents need and support housing options to improve affordability and livability in Buncombe. In this way, Buncombe County can make the most of the remaining lands that are highly suited for residential and employment development, while also supporting the diverse needs of its different communities and residents.

POLICIES

POLICY 1: Guide land use decisions using the Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework Map.

Utilizing the Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework map in land use and development decisions will help Buncombe achieve its growth, protection, and conservation goal.

Policy Intent:

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

- Growth areas that include the most suitable lands for development and should be leveraged to maximize future growth for needed housing and employment development (such as in Complete Communities);
- Rural and conservation areas where development will be limited, agricultural and environmental lands will be preserved, and rural character will be maintained (such as the Conservation Working Lands and Rural Community categories); and
- Neighborhood protection areas where Buncombe needs to partner with historically disadvantaged communities and other neighborhoods at risk of displacement and gentrification to carefully manage change. These areas include places where there is naturally occurring affordable housing and where market changes could cause redevelopment that displaces residents and businesses (such as County Legacy Neighborhoods).¹

¹ **Note for Steering Committee:** “County Legacy Neighborhoods” is a working title for identified areas within unincorporated Buncombe County. We are requesting feedback for a better name that won’t be misconstrued with the already established City of Asheville Legacy Neighborhoods.

“County Legacy Neighborhoods” includes neighborhoods where many residents living in this area are people of color that earn lower-incomes compared to the rest of the county and have been historically disadvantaged due to racist policies, regulations, and financing programs. These communities have a unique, established culture and offer a significant portion of the affordable housing available in the county. The intent is that change within these areas will be carefully managed to reduce the potential for gentrification and displacement of residents and businesses. These areas should be priorities for the development of future small area plans in partnership with neighborhood stakeholders to create a more fine-grained vision for the future in these areas.

POLICY 2: Promote the development and enhancement of communities in identified growth areas.

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

Policy Intent

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Maximize new development in growth areas to mitigate growth pressures in the protection and conservation areas.
- Increase density in growth areas and utilize mixed-use and clustered development design.
- Promote the development of complete communities where they are supported by infrastructure and utilities. Complete communities provide housing with residential development, support walkability with sidewalks, small block sizes, and greenways; and provide a mix of land uses that support everyday life such as civic spaces, community facilities, and businesses or commercial uses.

POLICY 3: Identify and focus planning efforts on neighborhood protection areas.

Buncombe will identify, protect, and support neighborhoods with naturally occurring affordable housing, places with historically disadvantaged groups of people that are at risk of gentrification or displacement, and communities at risk for loss of cultural identity.

Policy Intent:

The intent of this policy is to set the stage for future area planning work. Buncombe will focus small area planning efforts and technical assistance to the identified communities in need of protection.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Identify Buncombe's places with historically disadvantaged groups of people or businesses that are at risk for gentrification or displacement or neighborhoods at risk for loss of cultural identity.
- Understand the community needs of neighborhood protection areas and coordinate planning efforts.
- Provide technical assistance where necessary.
- Analyze market changes or development influences that can cause gentrification or displacement. Closely monitor and manage neighborhood change within neighborhood protection areas, while providing necessary community services and amenities. This could

GROWTH, PROTECTION, AND CONSERVATION

include exploring planning tools to protect neighborhoods, such as limiting allowed uses or creating maximum lot sizes.

- Identify ways to invest in the livability of these neighborhoods that do not increase the risk of displacement.

POLICY 4: Balance development needs with environmental conservation and rural preservation.

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

Policy Intent

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Align development decisions with the policies and actions of the Farms, Forests, and Environmental Protection chapter.
- Conserve and maintain environmental lands for the ecosystem services, community benefits, and recreation opportunities they provide.
- Preserve rural and agricultural lands for the economic benefits, cultural heritage, and community benefits, and unique character they provide.

POLICY 5: Promote sustainable and resilient development

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

Policy Intent

New developments provide an opportunity for generating more sustainable development patterns and designs and more resilient siting and construction of buildings. Leveraging the local knowledge base of resiliency firms in Buncombe, the county will support private developments in achieving these objectives.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Strongly encourage new development to use existing site conditions (such as topographical constraints, riparian areas, and high hazard areas) as a basis for creating more resilient and sustainable designs.
- Discourage development from occurring on steep slopes and ridgelines.
- Promote the development of renewable energy generation and use within private developments.

GROWTH, PROTECTION, AND CONSERVATION

- Align development decisions with the policies and actions of the Hazards and Resilience chapter, including green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

POLICY 6: Promote multi-jurisdictional planning, collaboration, and information sharing.

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

Policy Intent:

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Identify common growth areas and develop shared land use plans for areas of common interest.
- Facilitate information sharing for review of new developments proposed near the boundary of municipalities.
- Align development with the Infrastructure and Energy chapter policy direction on the provision of utilities across jurisdictions.
- Achieve environmental and agricultural conservation goals by protecting land from development and maximizing growth elsewhere.

POLICY 7: Increase housing options and improve housing affordability for all residents.

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

Policy Intent

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Continue to explore funding and programs that support affordable housing initiatives.
- Enhance partnerships and bolster current efforts underway for affordable housing.
- Maximize development density to increase the type and number of housing units available within the County's growth areas.

POLICY 8: Support development on infill and redevelopment sites.

Buncombe will support development on infill and redevelopment sites designed to acknowledge the surrounding context and conditions.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to balance Buncombe's development and growth pressures with its unique topography by directing growth to infill or redevelopment projects, maximizing growth in already-developed areas.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Support infill and redevelopment projects that avoid conservation areas and minimizes environmental impacts.
- Coordinate infill and redevelopment decisions with small area plans and other local plans prepared jointly with neighboring jurisdictions.

ACTIONS

Implement new development and re-development policies to promote desired community character and design and maximize use of public infrastructure.

- Confirm that the zoning ordinance supports developments in growth areas to implement a mix of uses within walkable developments.
- Evaluate regulatory barriers to redevelopment, including parking, landscaping, and access circulation standards. Consider providing flexibility for achieving these standards to support redevelopment of underutilized sites.

Establish county-directed policies to support neighborhood protection areas.

- Partner with community organizations representing neighborhood protection areas to develop small area plans and provide planning technical assistance.
- As part of small area plans, consider the use of zoning tools to minimize impacts of market changes or development.
- Explore financial and other governmental tools, such as land acquisition or land trust partnerships, to protect areas from displacement.
- Monitor change in neighborhood protection areas by developing metrics that signify change, such as property ownership changes or baseline changes from the Equity Opportunity Map.

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

- Review the County's affordable housing strategy in light of changing housing needs to address household needs across all age groups, types of abilities, race/ethnicity, and income levels.
- Consider providing BIPOC populations with improved access to the following programs: affordable home repair, energy efficiency services, and property tax relief for low-income homeowners.
- Consider creation of strategies to address gaps in service in meeting the needs of the chronically homeless and those experiencing mental health conditions.

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

- Where water and sewer utilities are available or feasible to implement, evaluate and change zoning ordinances to encourage the highest density units per acre as appropriate within each growth area category.
- Consider development and adoption of Conditional Zoning that can result in development approaches tailored to support site conditions, site context, and the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan, strategic plans, and area plans.
- Evaluate and implement available tools to halt the loss of year-round housing to short-term rentals, including defining short-term rentals as a distinct and specific use in the ordinance; restricting short-term rentals to certain zoning districts; and establishing use-specific standards

GROWTH, PROTECTION, AND CONSERVATION

for parking, limits on large events, trash management standards, insurance requirements, safety requirements, and other standards supported by the State Statute. The County could also consider requiring registration of units with prior violations that meet the criteria of G.S. 160D-1207.

- Implement development regulations that are a disincentive to development in the floodplain or on steep slopes.
- Conduct an audit of development regulations to determine changes that would support sustainable growth patterns in growth areas, partnering with local agencies and organizations as needed.
- Encourage small-scale density by crafting a Cottage Development option to allow for denser residential development on infill lots.
- Consider zoning changes to provide incentives for renewable energy investments during development, such as infrastructure for electric vehicles and solar panel installation.
- Update zoning and other regulations to promote uses or remove any regulatory barriers to uses such as urban agriculture and community gardens.
- Review the county's zoning definitions for "family" and "household" to ensure the code allows for a wide range of living arrangements engaged in household living.
- Create partnerships with developers and other organizations to educate county stakeholders and develop a clear understanding and transparency of the zoning and development process. The Charlotte Citizens Academy is one model to consider.
- Consider process changes to make development review more transparent, clear, and efficient, such as procedural changes to timeline requirements to ensure decision-makers have adequate time to review all development proposal documents submitted .

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

- Determine a goal of a minimal decrease in acreage available for farmland.
- Continue to utilize Buncombe County's Farmland Preservation Ordinance. Explore ways to update and enhance the ordinance, which was originally adopted in 1989.
- Accommodate high density in areas that have been targeted as growth areas to direct development away from working lands or to integrate in a way that does not deplete working lands.
- Develop land use planning policies to minimize impact to areas of the county designated for conservation.
- Promote and increase the use of zoning provisions that encourage responsible development and conservation of environmentally sensitive land, including the Community Oriented Development program, Conservation Subdivisions, and Alternative Path Hillside Development.
- Explore utilizing density incentive programs including Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) to protect rural and agricultural lands.
- Explore ways to increase the success of Buncombe County's conservation development plan, including new incentives for developers to work with the County to increase density and conserve more land within developable tracts.

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

- Establish an Assembly of Governments and organize quarterly meetings for the purpose of coordinating planning efforts of common interest, such as the development of schools, development proposals on the edges of jurisdictional boundaries, and coordinating utility expansion plans.
- In accordance with the Infrastructure and Energy chapter policies, develop an agreement with MSD to identify the boundary of its future sewer service area.
- In the long term, work to establish jointly developed and adopted area plans by coordinating with jurisdictions and local authorities, such as MSD, especially in the identified growth areas.
- Establish Courtesy Review of Information Sharing protocols in growth areas surrounding the municipalities to support interjurisdictional coordination for development projects of common interest.

Develop new tools to protect steep slopes.

- Utilize new and updated tools or technology to make evidence-based decisions, such as the [NC Geological Survey Landslide Hazard Mapping program](#).
- Collaborate and coordinate with the National Park Service to prioritize viewshed protection along the section of Blue Ridge Parkway that passes through Buncombe County.
- Analyze and evaluate expansion of the Steep Slope/High Elevation Overlay in terms of slope and elevation.
- Create illustrations to support and clarify the zoning ordinances for the Steep Slope/High Elevation and Protected Ridge Overlay.
- Consider development standards that are more stringent to reduce ridgetop development in Buncombe County.
- Evaluate the height, disturbance, and impervious surface limitations within the Protected Ridge Overlay and Steep Slope/High Elevation Overlay.
- There currently is not a minimum standard for geotechnical reporting in the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance for the Overlay District. A standard should be developed that identifies the minimum standard for geotechnical reporting including a minimum standard for global stability analysis for Protected Ridges and for Steep/High Elevation Slopes. A standard of care should be developed for geotechnical reports to ensure consistency among all professionals, developers, and Buncombe County.

Expand and protect affordable and accessible housing choices.

- Support a mix of housing types within growth areas to accommodate the projected demand for rental and owner-occupied housing for Buncombe County and the expected continuation of demand for smaller housing units identified in the 2021 Bowen National Research's Housing Needs Assessment.

GROWTH, PROTECTION, AND CONSERVATION

- Have the Affordable Housing Committee integrate the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee and Reparations Committee to analyze housing affordability and accessibility options. This may also include coordination with economic development initiatives to understand middle-income housing requirements.
- Consider opportunities for regional coordination and partnership for the development of affordable housing.
- Evaluate and implement strategies to protect and enhance mobile home parks that are naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Research and evaluate other funding models and sources for affordable housing..
- Consider voluntary inclusionary zoning to utilize economic gains from rising real estate values to create affordable housing.
- Consider allowing every residential lot in every zoning district to have at least two homes provided the lot or parcel has adequate infrastructure.

FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES AND GOALS

The policies and actions described in this chapter will help Buncombe County focus on its conservation efforts and commitment to sustainability, through resiliency to hazards, protection of natural resources, and a sustainable local economy. Agricultural and other working lands support the community roots and economy of Buncombe. The county's rich natural heritage provides immeasurable services to all people through its natural assets and beauty, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities. These policies and actions can help the County achieve its goals of environmental conservation and protection, economic development, education, jobs, health, and recreation.

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 and promoting a resilient agricultural economy. These policies and actions contribute to the equity of all people by protecting the land, air, water, viewsheds, and productive soils and forests within the county, ensuring that locally sourced healthy food remains abundant and accessible to all residents regardless of their income or the location of their community. Protecting its watersheds and promoting forest management best practices on private and public lands shows the commitment of the County to support the health and safety of all residents.

This plan recognizes the County's accomplishments in protecting its farms, forests, and environmentally sensitive lands from development through its partnerships with private and public entities that share conservation goals. To date, 18% of the county's land is permanently protected. This includes public and private lands protected using conservation tools established by federal, state, and municipal entities including the Buncombe County government. The County's goal to conserve additional priority land will continue this vision and ensure that its natural assets will benefit all county residents in the future.

POLICIES

POLICY 1: Preserve Buncombe County's working farms and forests.

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

Policy Intent

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

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

Buncombe County is well-positioned to maintain and enhance its existing funding for farmland preservation. This can be accomplished through the continuance of its present-use value (PUV) taxation policies; identifying new public-revenue sources for the purchase of conservation easements; and leveraging funds from state, federal, and private foundation sources. Partnerships, both private-public and between public agencies, are very important in promoting this policy.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure Buncombe County has land available that can provide agriculture and forestry products to support the local economy through sustainably produced goods and agriculture and forestry-based jobs.
- Expand landowner education programs that communicate the benefits of land, soil, and water conservation.
- Strengthen partnerships with conservation organizations and other public entities such as federal agencies, municipalities, and other counties to achieve mutual conservation goals.
- Preserve land for agriculture-based education.
- Provide locally sourced healthy and accessible options for food for all residents.
- Simultaneously achieve conservation, recreation, and health goals.

POLICY 2: Preserve Buncombe County's natural heritage.

Buncombe will ensure the county's highest quality connected natural environments will be conserved to the benefit of future generations to support clean water, provide habitat for wildlife, offer nature-based recreation, and provide picturesque rural views. This will be achieved by ensuring that priority natural

FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

lands are protected from development using the appropriate conservation tools. Environmentally sensitive tracts should be prioritized for conservation using the best available data.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to support the County's vision of a focus on conservation and to achieve its goals related to environmental conservation and climate resilience, health, and recreation. The County should work to maintain and restore connections between the various natural communities of the region, preserving a network of forests, streams, Appalachian balds,¹ wetlands, agricultural areas, and other open spaces.

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

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

POLICY 3: Promote ecosystem enhancement and restoration projects across public and private lands.

Buncombe will manage, enhance, and restore its network of healthy natural systems at a countywide scale. This includes water resource management, and stream restoration and mitigation.

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to promote the county's commitment to sustainability, which includes the protection of land and water resources and increased resiliency to hazards such as wildfires, landslides, and flooding. Degraded streams with significant erosion contribute to pollution of the waterways in Buncombe County. While state funds are sometimes available for enhancements, these funds can be

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

FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

limited and competitive. A countywide program and incentive for private landowners to restore damaged landscapes will have a positive benefit for the county.

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage forest management solutions for healthy forests, carbon capture, and water quality.
 - Educate landowners on the importance of proper forest management and established riparian buffers.²
 - Explore opportunities to promote local carbon sequestration programs³ using non-profit partners.
- Evaluate the potential to develop a countywide stormwater mitigation program that is funded by impacts to stormwater systems or when developers do not implement nature-based stormwater solutions.
 - This program could fund installation of nature-based stormwater control measures for residential and commercial projects for water quality benefits.
 - A feasibility study can be developed to assess the structure, costs, and benefits of such a program.
- Evaluate the potential to develop a countywide stream and wetland enhancement program to help landowners or land managers pay for ecological improvements on private and public land.
- Continue protection of watersheds through conservation easements, watershed action plans, implementation of riparian buffers and stream improvements, and ordinances which regulate stormwater runoff and promote groundwater recharge.

² Riparian buffers are areas within a certain distance from streams and other waterways that are left naturally vegetated to reduce runoff that lowers water quality.

³ Carbon sequestration is the process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils. Sequestration programs explore opportunities for climate change mitigation using forest management. (<https://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices/carbon.shtml>)

ACTIONS

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

- Maintain current County budget for conservation projects and evaluate the increase of county budget for conservation easements. There are a considerable number of landowners interested in purchased easements but there is a lack of funding to implement the County's conservation goals.
- Explore ways for the County to leverage conservation investment using private funding by partnering with local land trusts, who can accept monetary and land donations and cover closing costs for some projects.
- Increase incentives to increase donation of easements versus purchased easements, which would greatly increase the speed at which land is conserved.
- Explore mechanisms to accept private funding for conservation.
- Utilize U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) grant funding programs for conservation projects and explore other grant opportunities.

Implement recommendations aligned with the Buncombe County Farmland Protection Plan.⁴

- Continue to support farmland protection through existing policies including present-use value (PUV) taxation, voluntary agriculture districts (VAD), and enhanced voluntary agriculture districts (EVAD).
- Promote and implement outreach and education on land taxation, estate planning, farm-transition planning, conservation easements, and development planning.
- Bolster funding for conservation easements.
 - Increase county-level funding to support transaction costs for the purchase of conservation easements.
 - Leverage county funding for conservation easements and other projects in partnership with state, federal, and private resources.
- Design and implement outreach programs, such as the Farm Heritage Trail to educate and inform visitors, new residents, and residents living in urban areas of the importance of farmland to the region's culture, identity, and quality of life.
- Support marketing and production training and facilitate greater diversity in agricultural enterprises.

⁴ Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District and Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board, *Farmland Protection Plan for Buncombe County, North Carolina*, June 2020
<https://www.ncagr.gov/Farmlandpreservation/VAD/documents/ag-development-protection-plan-buncombe-county.pdf>

FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

- Continue promotion of best management practices for conservation of land and natural resources.
- Strengthen support for agricultural economic development and supporting programs.
- Promote Buncombe County's working lands for their value to tourism and the local economy. Explore partnership opportunities with the County Tourism Development Authority (TDA).

Initiate the conservation of 20% of the county's total acres by 2030.⁵

- To prioritize regions and communities for farmland preservation, use the criteria established by Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District staff to identify priority communities and regions within the county:
 - Proximity to protected lands
 - Soil Classification – prioritize prime agricultural soils
 - Parcel size
 - Proximity to Voluntary Ag Districts (VAD) and Enhanced VAD (EVAD)
 - Present-use value (PUV) Taxation status
 - Watershed protection
- Focus available conservation funding on the highest priority lands first.
- Establish and augment conservation easements.
 - Partner with private conservation organizations such as local land trusts for landowner outreach and establishing conservation agreements that have mutual benefits to the County and the organization.
 - Partner with other public agencies such as the National Forest Service, National Park Service (Blue Ridge Parkway), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the municipalities within the county for landowner outreach and establishing conservation agreements that have mutual benefits to the public entities.
- Work with the National Park to develop guidelines for Buncombe County to assess and protect the viewshed along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Buncombe County. Some examples of this could include:
 - A County zoning overlay that limits development within the established Parkway viewshed.
 - Design guidelines that avoid or minimize impacts to the viewshed, such as roof material and color selection, building height limits, and vegetative screening standards.
- Prioritize conservation of intact forest lands, wetlands, and other unique habitats to protect and increase the capacity to sustain the county's existing biodiversity.
 - Utilize existing data to inform priorities, such as NC Natural Heritage data, and planning efforts, such as the Land of Sky Regional Council's Linking Lands and Communities Project, that identify intact landscapes with the highest ecological value.
- Prioritize the conservation of physical connections between natural landscapes to avoid fragmentation of large forest blocks in order to benefit wildlife migration.
- Utilize the County Land Conservation Advisory Board and Agriculture Advisory Board to make informed decisions on how funding and conservation tools should be allocated for projects.

⁵ This includes private lands permanently protected through conservation easements and public lands like the Pisgah National Forest and Sandy Mush Game Land.

FARMS, FORESTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

- Maintain a County-managed database of all permanently conserved lands within the county; make this data available to local conservation organizations and the public, where appropriate.

CONNECTION TO VISION THEMES AND GOALS

Buncombe’s vision includes an equitable community where all residents have better access to quality education and benefit from county-wide strategies that result in economic advancement and wealth creation. Land use planning can support the County’s economic development goal by aligning growth area identification and accessible workforce development. Economic and educational opportunities will prioritize living wage opportunities to reduce the income gap for residents, as well as meet sustainability and conservation goals, as outlined in other chapters.

Buncombe’s vision is for a robust and sustainable regional economy that builds on homegrown industries, supports the development of local talent, and encourages development of targeted industries identified for the region, like manufacturing. Buncombe’s economy will strive to address inequities in economic opportunities by establishing key partnerships and investing in historically disadvantaged communities. The county’s productive farmlands and healthy forests are vital to the County’s vibrant economy, which includes the tourism industry, local jobs, and sense of community. Buncombe’s future economic development must also support the protection of sensitive environmental lands and the conservation of agricultural lands.

Buncombe will lend support to Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools as opportunities arise for sustainable and resilient development or renovation of school campuses. Buncombe will also partner with the school districts to address historical inequities in education.

POLICIES

POLICY 1: Build opportunities to provide more jobs and higher wages.

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

Policy Intent:

The intent of this policy is to build a diverse workforce paid living wages and supported by a high quality of living in Buncombe County.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide job opportunities available to a wide range of educational levels and professional interests through recruitment and expansion of targeted industries.
- Develop land use policies that encourage appropriate external economic drivers.
- Balance competing needs for housing, commercial and recreation amenities, while securing important lands for economic development.
- Build upon the region's natural resource or environmentally-centered job talents (such as climate-focused work and outdoor recreation) and expand in other economic areas, such as advanced manufacturing and healthcare.
- Identify sites suitable for workforce development partners (such as NCWorks, ABTech, or other other organizations).

POLICY 2: Provide adequate housing options for all income levels to meet the needs of economic development opportunities.

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

Policy Intent

The intent of this policy is to ensure that the employees working at local businesses have adequate housing choices, close to their employment locations, that are affordable and offer a safe and accommodating quality of life.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

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

POLICY 3: Address socioeconomic disparities through economic development.

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

Policy Intent:

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Align economic opportunities with an equity lens and build on other goals, including housing, transportation, health, and resilience.
- Encourage economic development activities that result in housing and commercial developments that provide a full range of services and amenities to residents.
- Identify neighborhoods or communities that could benefit from economic development projects and those that may be at risk of change or displacement as a result.

Assessing impacts of new development related to economic changes on communities, such as changing community character.

POLICY 4: Promote place-based economic development.

Place-based economic development focuses on the existing natural and social resources of a community, while also welcoming external economic forces or drivers that become community partners. Buncombe will explore homegrown opportunities to help build a vibrant economy that is aligned with the Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework..

Policy Intent

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Capitalize on community assets to increase economic resilience and create economic opportunities. Community assets include Buncombe's local culture, history, agriculture, and natural resources.
- Create connections between jurisdictions for economic development. An example would be the recreation-based economic activities like the Farm Heritage Trail that support and celebrate local resources.
- Align economic development with local interests in a way that upholds community character.

POLICY 5: Develop and implement strategies to maintain and strengthen the economic viability of agriculture and other components of the rural economy.

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

Policy Intent

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

Some objectives of this policy are to:

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

POLICY 7: Plan for emerging and new manufacturing and industrial uses that minimize environmental impacts or support sustainability goals.

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

Policy Intent:

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Explore innovative options like creating eco-industrial parks¹ to bring sustainability-oriented businesses to Buncombe.
- Guide economic development in the interests of the community, as public engagement revealed that much of the community is interested in jobs related to sustainability and climate .

¹ An eco-industrial park is "a cluster of businesses that collaborate to improve economic and environmental performance through practices that share and reuse resources and reduce waste." Rouse and Piro (2022): The Comprehensive Plan: Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Communities for the 21st Century.

POLICY 7: Support high-quality educational opportunities.

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

Policy Intent:

High levels of educational attainment and quality of education are priorities for the county. The intent of this policy is to align Comprehensive Plan goals with education goals for Buncombe.

Some objectives of this policy are to:

- Create opportunities for Buncombe to work with Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools to support sustainable and resilient school campuses over time.
- Support school districts and their work to create equitable access to high-quality education and to address historic inequities.
- Community and Technical Colleges and NCWorks Centers
- Universities/colleges

ACTIONS

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

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

- Use the Equity Opportunity Map to identify areas that could benefit from economic development projects while protecting neighborhoods from change or displacement, in accordance with the policies of the Growth, Protection, and Conservation chapter.
- Ensure that new jobs or businesses are accessible by walking, biking, or using public transit in accordance with the policies of the Transportation and Connectivity chapter.

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

The AVL 5X5 Plan recommends the following actions:

- Partner with stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive study of lands in the county and identify the top 10 most promising sites for future industrial development and/or commerce parks to attract advanced manufacturing employers.
- Partner with stakeholders of Buncombe County and Asheville to undertake a study of urban and riverfront lands and identify the top 5 most promising sites for infill, redevelopment, or new development necessary to attract employers.
- Build a real-time inventory of all land suitable for future development in alignment with existing plans and future government planning objectives.
- Develop a broad public/private strategy that will bring new sites to market that have promising transportation access, proximity to current and future economic corridors, robust utility service, labor draw, community synergies, etc.
- Incorporate these sites into the Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework map.

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

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND JOBS

- Establish training programs that build the capacity of farm businesses through market development.
- Redevelop public-owned properties in neighborhood protection areas to increase minority homeownership and business ownership.

Integrate recommendations and policy direction from the Comprehensive Plan and other plans into the next Strategic Plan update.

Implement economic development policies and establish partnerships that integrate the recommendations from the Racial Equity Plan or other equity plans as developed.

Examples from the Racial Equity Action Plan include:

- Expand Black business ownership in the community.
- Support workforce development initiatives that address earnings and wealth gap.
- Strengthen educational partnerships to reduce college and career readiness gaps.

Improve economic advancement by partnering with other Buncombe County departments and organizations whose goals include education, job training, or workforce development improvement initiatives, in accordance with the AVL 5X5 plan.

Examples from the AVL 5X5 Plan include:

- Develop programs for registered apprenticeships and youth apprenticeships.
- Strengthen and expand work-based learning opportunities for high school, community college and regional university students for exposure to sustainable local employment.
- Establish a robust re-skilling system for middle-skill jobs that leverage the customized training capabilities of the North Carolina Community College System and others.
- Implement strategic investment in curriculum and certifications responding to the State of our Workforce Study (2018) and Target Cluster Gap Analysis (2019) developed by Riverbird Research.
- Establish a purpose-built community pilot program to increase workforce participation for housing authority residents.

Improve educational attainment and reduce education achievement gaps.

- Support the school districts in creating developmental programs that increase graduation rates.
- Expand enrollment opportunities and participation in early childhood education.
- Establish new partnerships with Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools to address historic inequities in education.

Explore funding mechanisms to achieve economic development goals.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND JOBS

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