



Growth, Protection, and Conservation (GPC) Framework

Updated: August 19, 2022

This document includes the working draft of the Growth, Protection, and Conservation (GPC) Framework land use categories. This is the start of the County's first growth framework that can help guide growth, conservation, and neighborhood protection efforts in the future. It corresponds with the working draft of the GPC map that places a land use designation on all lands within the County's planning and zoning jurisdiction – unincorporated Buncombe County. This map can be used when considering rezoning proposals and community investments. It can also be used to guide joint planning efforts with neighboring municipal jurisdictions and utility providers operating in Buncombe County.

The categories listed in this document correspond to the categories shown on the draft Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework map. These are being provided to the Steering Committee for review and comment at the August 23 meeting. Please note that the categories and map are working drafts and may change based on Steering Committee input, Board of Commissioner guidance, and public input provided in the fall of 2022.

The Growth, Protection, and Conservation Framework is comprised of four main categories:

- **Growth** – These are priority development areas where development currently exists today or is proposed for the future to accommodate projected population and business growth in the county. These are areas that have been selected due to the suitability to support new development and a generally lower risk factor for natural hazards. Land use categories include: Complete Community, Economic Development Hub, Established Neighborhood, Mixed Use Area, and Walkable Destination Center.
- **Protection** – These are currently existing neighborhood areas that are at risk of gentrification and displacement. Included in this category is the County Legacy Neighborhood (Emma). Other Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing areas may be formally designated on the GPC map in the future. At this time, the map identifies locations of existing manufactured housing (mobile home) units.
- **Conservation** – These are lands that are either currently protected through government ownership or private conservation easements, and lands that are intended for agricultural, forestall, or rural land uses. Included within the category are Protected Public Lands, Conservation Working Lands, and Rural Community.
- **Special Areas** – In addition to the three main categories is the Special Areas category that includes the Biltmore Estate and Warren Wilson College.

The individual land use designations described below are organized from least intensive land uses in the Conservation category to the most intensive Growth category. Each land use designation includes a general intent and description of the category, provision of water and wastewater, general residential density, primary and secondary land uses, and photo examples of similar areas that represent the intended scale and pattern of land uses.

Framework Category

Protected Public Lands

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

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic system

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells

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

Primary Land Uses: National Forests, State Parks, Watershed protection areas

Secondary Land Uses: Conservation lands

Visual examples: Pisgah National Forest



Framework Category

Conservation Working Lands

General Character Description: These are lands that are currently working agricultural lands or agricultural homesteads in which extremely limited future development is anticipated, with a preference that the land remain dedicated to agricultural, forestall, or other open space uses. These areas have been identified as Farmland Preservation Priority Communities by Buncombe County and can include small activity centers for rural-scale commercial uses surrounded by rural-scale residential development that is compatible with the surrounding agricultural uses.

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic systems

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells

General Residential Density: Very low density, 1 unit per 10 acres

Primary Land Uses: Working farms, forests, agritourism uses

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

Visual examples: Sandy Mush, Barnardsville



Rural Community

General Character Description: These are lands with a mix of rural uses, including low-density residential, some agricultural and forested working lands, and limited commercial uses to support the rural community. Some areas may be developed as conservation subdivisions, which provide for protection of a certain percentage of a tract of land (generally upwards of 50%; based on site conditions and open space/environmental value of land) in exchange for more residential units on smaller lots and a simpler approval process. A conservation subdivision can serve as a transition between suburban edge development near the municipalities and truly rural areas and can be an effective way to protect important natural lands and cultural spaces.

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

Approach to Potable Water: Private wells (conservation subdivisions may require public water)

General Residential Density: Low Density, 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres (unless using conservation subdivision approach which would allow for higher density in exchange for permanently protecting open spaces)

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

Secondary Land Uses: Limited rural-scale commercial development

Visual examples: Near Beaver Dam Road to the east near Blue Ridge Parkway; Rice Branch Road, Drover's Road Preserve (Fairview)



County Legacy Neighborhood

General Character Description: These are areas that have been identified as Legacy Neighborhoods that are located within unincorporated Buncombe County. 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 and implementation strategy for these areas.

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer

Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

General Residential Density: 1 to 4 dwelling units per acre, with higher densities for manufactured home parks

Primary Land Uses: Manufactured homes, single-family detached, and middle housing (duplex, triplex, etc.)

Secondary Land Uses: Small scale commercial, and other community-supporting developments (such as grocery stores, community center, etc.) and local businesses that can employ workers living in neighborhoods

Visual examples: Emma, Candler



Established Neighborhood

General Character Description: These are currently developed residential neighborhoods with single-family homes on ½-1 acre suburban-style lots. In general, little to no undeveloped land exists in these neighborhoods, and any significant development or redevelopment is not expected in these places. In some cases, increased density may be achieved through parcel-specific renovations or the additions of accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Approach for Wastewater: Private septic systems

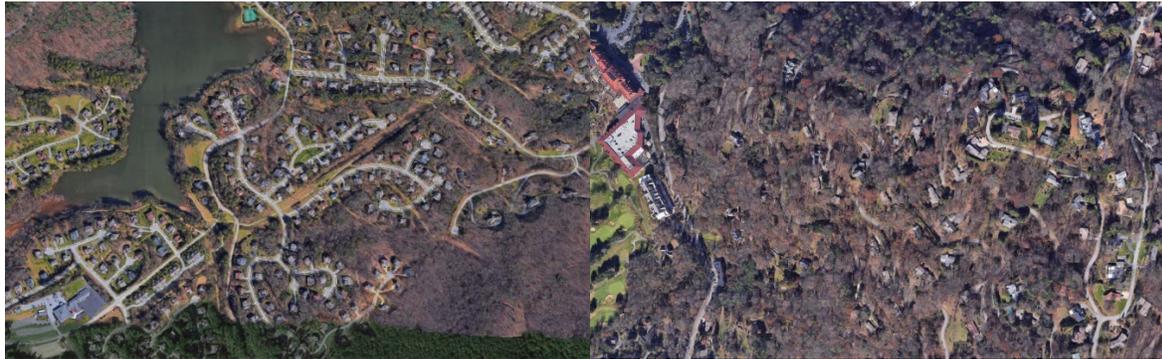
Approach to Potable Water: Private wells

General Residential Density: 1 to 3 dwelling units per acre

Primary Land Uses: Single-family detached neighborhoods

Secondary Land Uses: Neighborhood-supporting commercial uses on main roads near neighborhoods, home-based businesses, accessory dwelling units (ADUs)

Visual examples: Enka Village, community near Town Mountain Road



Complete Community

General Character Description: These are lands intended for medium- to higher-density residential development with a traditional neighborhood layout. These new neighborhoods should be developed to support walkability with sidewalks, small block sizes, and greenways and are opportunities for developing new affordable housing. These areas largely comprise the former Extraterritorial Jurisdiction of Asheville and Weaverville as well as growth areas on the edges of municipalities. They provide opportunities to coordinate planning with the municipalities to support well-planned neighborhoods. Extensions of utilities are planned in coordination with the adjacent municipalities and MSD.

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer

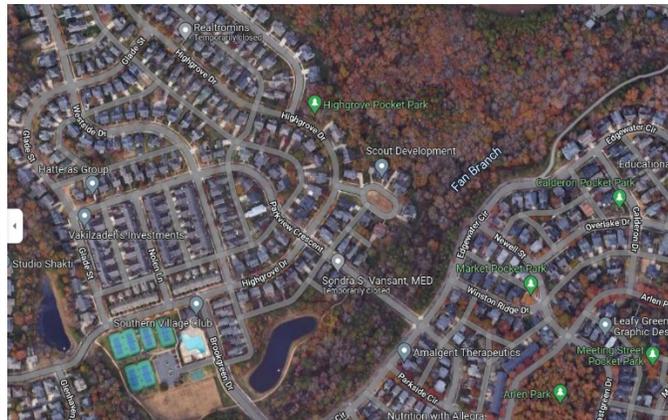
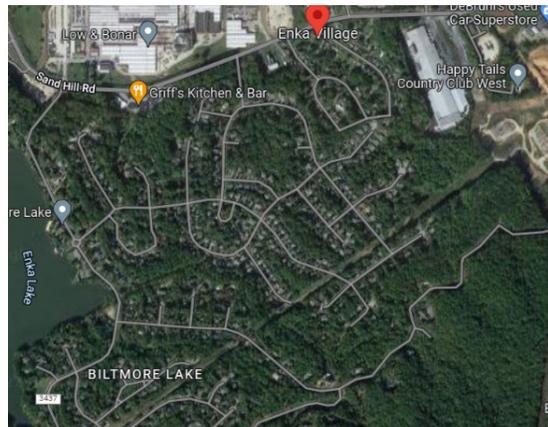
Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

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

Primary Land Uses: Cottage-style single family, middle housing (townhomes, duplex, triplex, quadplex) and multi-family residential development (apartments and condominiums)

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

Visual examples: Enka Village, Southern Village (Chapel Hill, NC)



Walkable Destination Center

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

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer

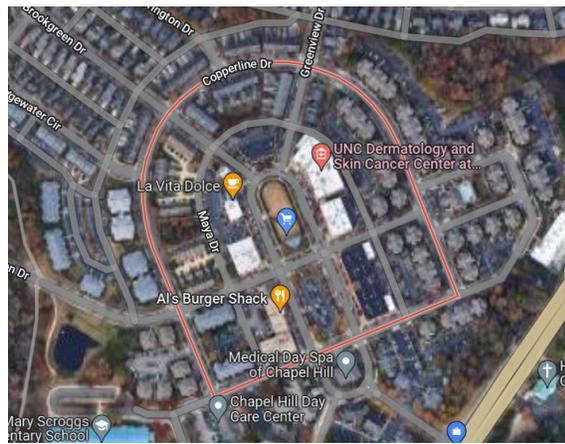
Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

General Residential Density: 16 to 40 dwelling units per acre

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

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

Visual examples: Southern Village (Chapel Hill, NC)



Economic Development Hub

General Character Description: These are lands intended to serve large-scale and more intensive economic development such as industrial (manufacturing or warehousing) or office/industrial flex uses. Some flexibility for commercial and medium-density housing is also appropriate to support the employment uses and allow workers to live close to work.

Approach for Wastewater: Public sanitary sewer

Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

General Residential Density: 10 to 18 dwelling units per acre

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

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

Visual examples: Winston Salem, Durham NC



Mixed Use Area

General Character Description: These lands exist along partially developed corridors that have an existing mix of residential and commercial or retail developments. They are intended to support further planned development, and to facilitate providing the full range of services and amenities to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Approach for Wastewater: Public sewer systems

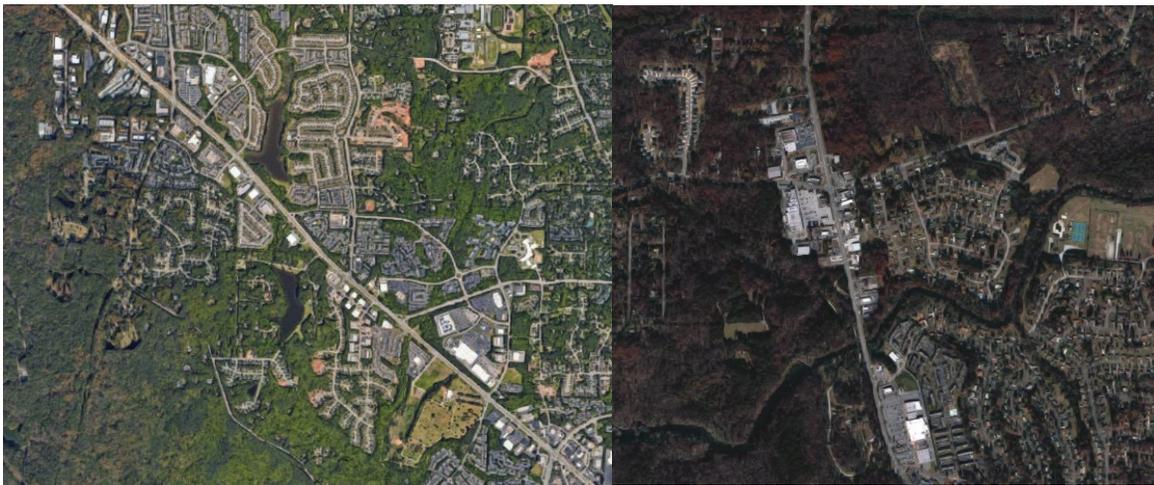
Approach to Potable Water: Public potable water

General Residential Density: 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre

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

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

Visual examples: Wake County, NC and Durham, NC



Note to Steering Committee: There are additional categories we may add or areas where a designation may change based on your feedback and discussions with County Staff and the Board of Commissioners. In particular, the following may be added/changed:

- Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) Protection Areas – This potential designation could include existing manufactured home parks or communities with a higher than average poverty rate that need focused planning assistance to protect residents and businesses from displacement and gentrification.
- The three circled areas on the GPC map identify areas that may be changing based on ongoing discussions with County Staff, the Board of Commissioners, and MSD regarding future sewer infrastructure extensions within unincorporated Buncombe. Generally, these three areas include Candler, Fairview, and Leicester.

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.