

Town of Woodfin, NC Comprehensive Plan

Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting Summary

January 18, 2023
Woodfin Town Hall
90 Elk Mountain Rd
Woodfin, NC 28804

Planning Team Facilitators: Ricky Hurley, Town of Woodfin, Planning Director
 Nate Baker, Quantum Consultants
 Kristy Carter, Traffic Planning and Design

The purpose of this kickoff Steering Committee meeting was to discuss the Woodfin Together comprehensive planning process, schedule, and the Steering Committee's role over the course of the process. The Steering Committee also participated in a facilitated discussion on the town's key challenges, opportunities, big ideas, and how to best engage with Woodfin residents during this process.

- 1. Welcome & Introductions** **5:00 – 5:10pm**
Ricky Hurley and Nate Baker welcomed participants and provided an introduction to the comprehensive plan process. Introductions were made for the planning team.

- 2. Background** **5:10 – 5:20pm**
Nate Baker provided a background on the comprehensive plan: A document containing the town's highest-level policy guidance created through a highly participatory and community-centered process. He explained why the Town of Woodfin had embarked on the comprehensive plan process, and what kinds of topics are included in comprehensive plans.

- 3. Approach** **5:20 – 5:35pm**
Nate Baker provided an overview of the project's anticipated timeline, including project phases and the general focus of each phase; key community engagement touchpoints; and general months for the future Steering Committee meetings. He also discussed the Steering Committee's roles and responsibilities and highlighted other key roles in the planning process.

- 4. Discussion** **5:35 – 6:50pm**
Kristy Carter facilitated a discussion on four topics: (1) introductions and backgrounds of each of the present Steering Committee members and what they're excited about, (2) making sure everyone in Woodfin can engage in this planning process, (3) identification of key challenges facing Woodfin today and over the next 20 years, and (4) identification of key opportunities for Woodfin to explore during this comprehensive plan process. Notes were taken on a large notepad during the discussion so that group members could observe and confirm that statements were accurately reflected. A summary of these notes is as follows:
 - a. Why are you here?**
 1. *I have longtime roots in Woodfin and want to be a part of shaping its future*
 2. *We are starting to see growth and more resources; we need a plan for growth*

3. *Woodfin is poised for greatness; now is a unique opportunity*
4. *Woodfin is not Asheville; it is a unique small town*
5. *I want to be a part of Woodfin's change*

b. What are you most excited about as part of this project?

1. *More sidewalks!*
2. *Smart growth*
3. *Incorporating best practices into our town*
4. *Riverfront development*
5. *Being a part of positive growth and change*

c. How can we make sure everyone in Woodfin can engage in this process?

1. *Booth at Woodfin 5K*
2. *Farmers' Market*
3. *Need educational component to engagement*
4. *HOAs, such as Riverwalk and Reynolds Mountain*
5. *Events at Community Center*
6. *Digital/Diverse media – ie Instagram, facebook, email, mailing lists*
7. *Word Clouds*
8. *Visioning*
9. *Find out where events are taking place*
10. *Work through community partners*
11. *School – student perspectives*
12. *Engage with adjoining towns*
13. *Tap into Facebook/social media groups*
14. *Newspaper and local news*
15. *Need bilingual translations*
16. *Need to push folks toward project webpage*
17. *Have a presence at Town Hall and in parks*
18. *Consider merchandise*

d. What challenges does Woodfin face today and over the next 10-20 years?

1. *Lack of workforce housing and affordable housing*
2. *Fear of change*
3. *No strong history of having a walkable downtown or walkable centers of activity*
4. *Future of the Reynolds development*
5. *Short-term rentals – balance*
6. *“boxed-in” geographic constraints*
7. *Transportation safety*
8. *MSD odor*
9. *Gentrification and displacement*

e. What opportunities are there as part of this comprehensive plan?

1. *Placemaking – Create activity centers*
2. *Clear demarkations of Woodfin's boundaries (some potential outward growth)*
3. *Magical Riverfront*
4. *Greenways*
5. *River as a focal point*
6. *Railroad*
7. *Scooters*

8. *Addressing odor*

f. **What are some of your big ideas to make Woodfin great?**

1. *Exploring richness of Woodfin's diverse history, including people of color*
2. *Historic mill town identity*
3. *Riverfront town center*
4. *Restore river*
5. *Bus/trolley loop connected to bus stop with bike racks (there used to be buses)*
6. *Slow, measured growth*
7. *Revitalization of abandoned and empty buildings*

5. **Next Steps**

6:50 – 7:05pm

Nate Baker discussed next steps in the planning process, including future public engagement touch points, the next Steering Committee meetings.

Attachment 1: Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting PowerPoint Presentation



WOODFIN TOGETHER

Comprehensive
Plan Overview

Steering Committee
January 18, 2023

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Background
3. Approach
4. Discussion
5. Next Steps



The Consultant team



*Project Management, Land Use and Zoning,
Growth Management, Public Engagement
Strategies*



Public Engagement & Transportation Lead

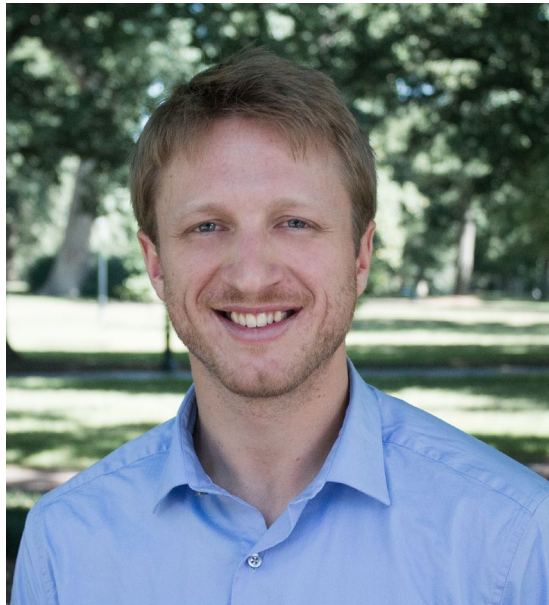
Team Professionals

Quantum Consultants



Fred Lopez, FAICP

Director & Project Advisor



Nate Baker, AICP, CNU-A

Planning & Project Manager



Kristy Carter, AICP

Senior Project Consultant



Teresa Buckwalter, PLA

Project Planner

Traffic Planning and Design

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A community-driven process and document

- 1. Where are we now?** Analysis of trends & conditions
- 2. Where are we going?** Community vision and goals
- 3. How do we get there?** Policies and implementation actions



What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The highest-level expression of a community's future

- 1. Blueprint** for the community's future
- 2. Compass** that guides decision-making
- 3. Playbook** for capital investments
- 4. Messaging tool** articulating the community's vision

What topics does the plan cover?



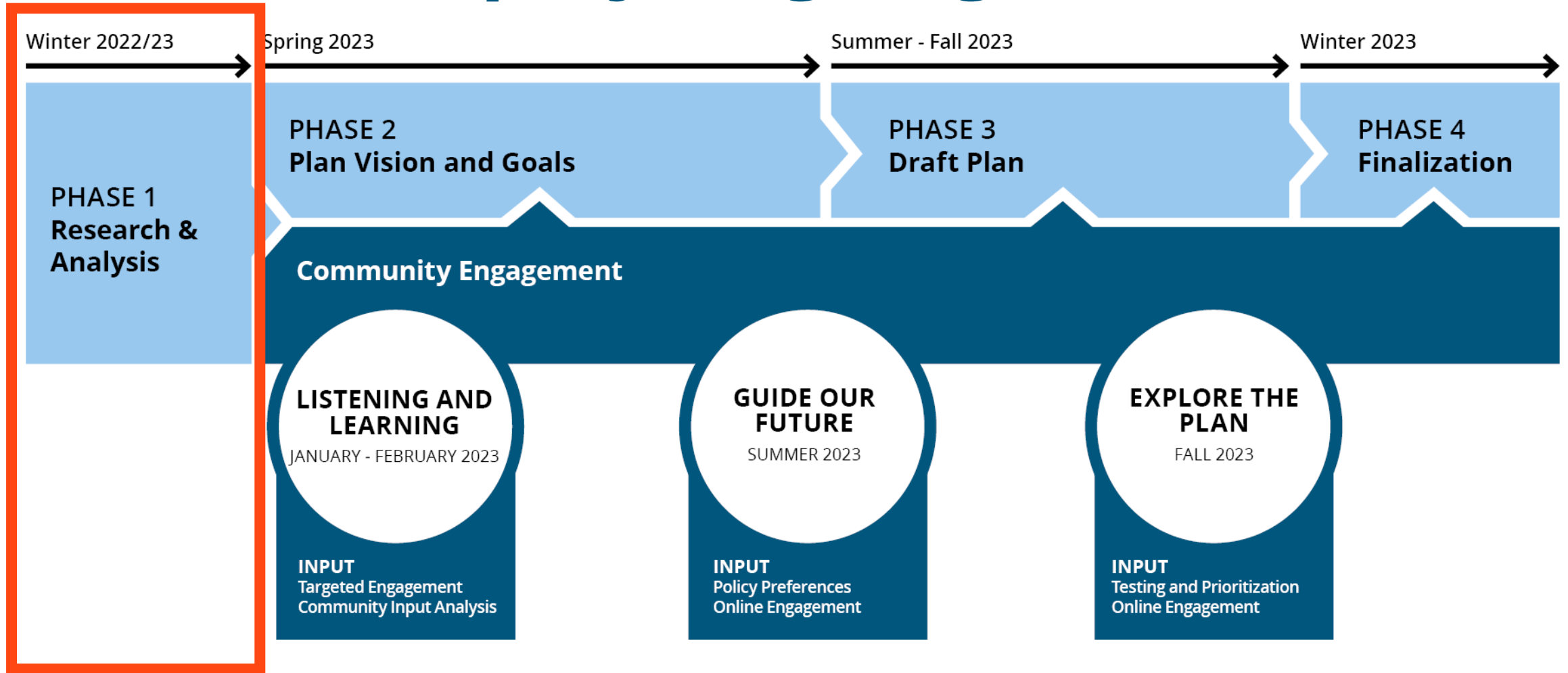
Why is the town doing this?

- 1. Growth pressures in the Buncombe County region**
- 2. Chance to revisit the current Comprehensive Plan**
- 3. Opportunity for genuine communitywide dialogue about Woodfin's future**

How will community input from the previous effort fold into this one?

- 1. Synthesis, analysis, and incorporation of community input**
- 2. Listening and Learning: Supplemental targeted engagement of underreached groups**

How is the project going to work?



WE ARE HERE

An effective steering committee is...

- 1. the first step in inclusive engagement**
- 2. representative of the larger community**
- 3. mindful of underrepresented groups**
- 4. open-minded to others' ideas**
- 5. helpful in carrying out the process**
- 6. hopeful about the future**

Roles and Responsibilities

Steering Committee

Process guidance

Stakeholders

Targeted input

Public

Input and feedback

Elected officials

Participate, champion, adopt, implement

Town staff

Coordination

Consultant team

Process leadership, expertise

Initial Questions to Explore



Woodfin is experiencing new development pressures. What tools does the town need to manage growth, leverage investment, and improve quality-of-life?



Growth pressure is bringing changes to Woodfin. How can the town grow without displacing existing residents?



Woodfin abuts Asheville but has its own unique identity. What placemaking initiatives does the Town wish to pursue while protecting and enhancing what's already special?

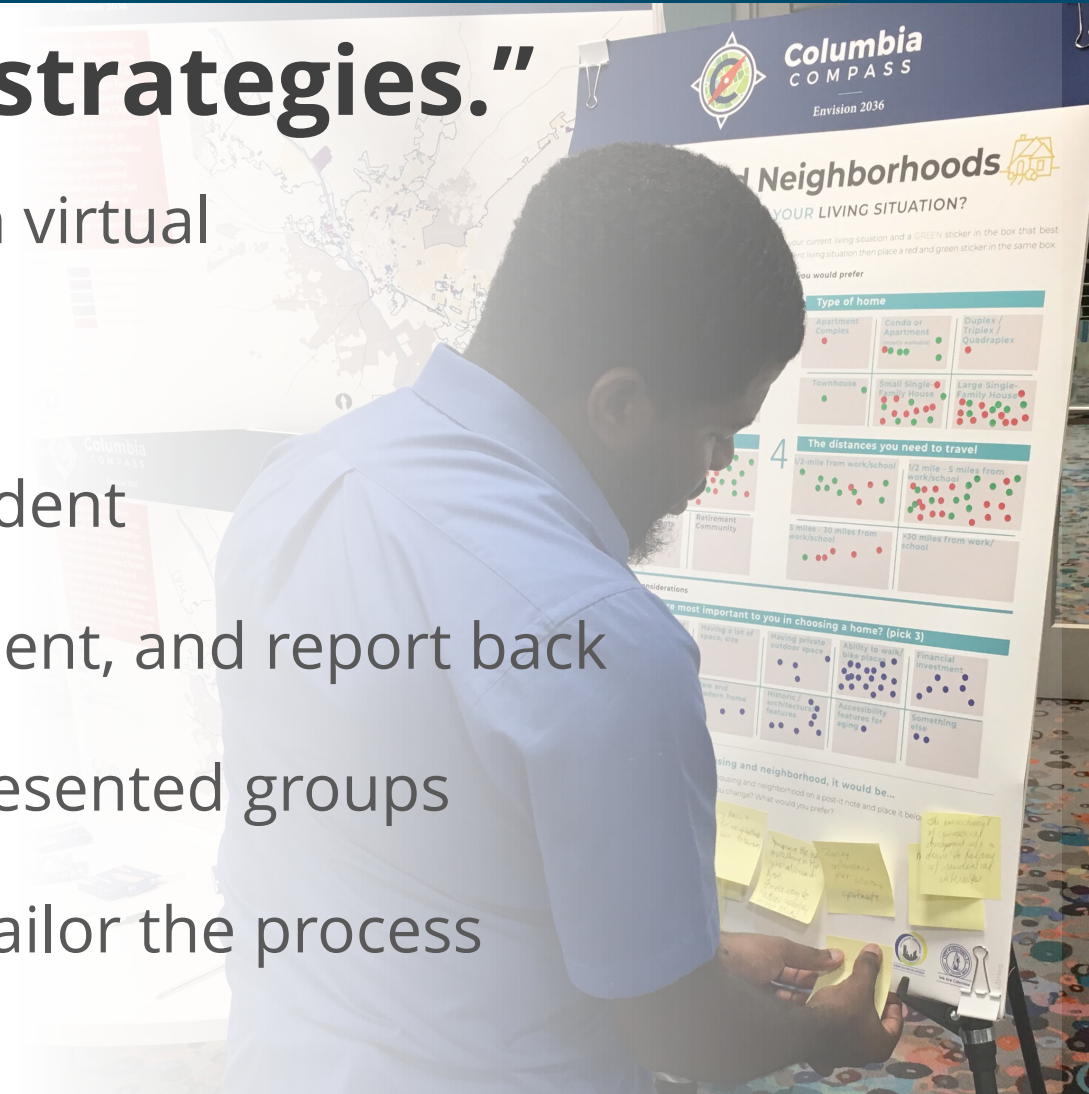


Woodfin's economic history faces onto the French Broad. How can the town re-envision its relationship with the river?

impactful Public Engagement

“Exciting, inclusive, useful strategies.”

- Make meetings **inspiring**, especially when virtual
- **Ask** the right questions
- Make participation a choice for **every** resident
- Provide **transparency**, synthesize, document, and report back
- **Track** participation and **target** underrepresented groups
- **Empower residents** as idea generators, tailor the process



Land Use Policy and Mapping

Vision, Goals, Policies, Growth Criteria

GOAL 2.2

A NETWORK OF NATURAL AREAS AND OPEN SPACE

Recognizing the importance of the natural environment, Davidson will create and protect an integrated network of green corridors, parks, and open spaces, along with meaningful rural and agricultural uses.

Policy 2.2.1: Protect Ecologically Valuable Areas and Corridors

Through regulations and development decisions, protect, restore, and connect ecologically valuable areas such as critical watersheds, stream buffers, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and hardwood forests. Additionally, prioritize conservation of similar lands adjacent to these areas.

Policy 2.2.2: Integrate Green Space Throughout the Built Environment

Being cognizant of the importance of green space to human health, continue to thread green space throughout the built environment by growing, enhancing, and protecting the urban tree canopy, and providing natural green public spaces, neighborhood gardens, and greenways. To the extent possible, encourage native landscaping.

Policy 2.2.3: Protect Active Farmland

Protect and support active farmland, recognizing the economic, environmental, and social importance of farmland protection and local foods production.

Policy 2.2.4: Promote Environmental Education

Promote environmental stewardship through educational outreach programs that enhance knowledge and understanding of environmental systems. Outreach may take the form of classes, signage, or public art, among other methods.

Policy 2.2.5: Protect Valued Rural Viewsheds

Recognizing Davidson's rural history, as well as the present-day importance of rural viewsheds, protect those viewsheds deemed most important by the Davidson community.

Policy 2.2.6: Expand Use of Low Impact Development Techniques

Use low impact development systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat and reduce the impact of built areas. Examples may include, but are not limited to, rain gardens and bioswales that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater.



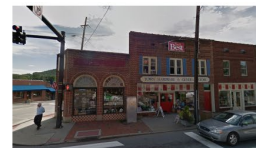
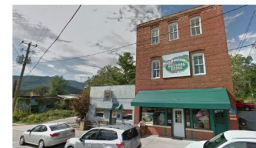
Local governments may use Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs as one tool to preserve farmland and open space. PDR programs pay willing landowners for not developing their land, placing protected land in a conservation easement while still affording landowners a range of specified uses and flexibility in stewarding their property. To learn more, see Purchase of Development Rights: Preserving Farmland and Open Space, Planning Commissioners Journal (2004).

Land Use Policies

Downtown

DESCRIPTION

Downtown is the historic, cultural, and civic heart of Black Mountain. Development includes historic buildings, as well as buildings from the past several decades, and supports a mix of retail, restaurants, employment, and some residential. Buildings are located up to the sidewalk, are short in width, and include ample windows and doors along first floors.



OPPORTUNITIES

- » Retain historic character through preservation and adaptive reuse of buildings
- » Ensure new development is contextually compatible, high quality architecture
- » Enhance streetscapes with street trees, wider sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, and burying overhead wires
- » Economic development through events and placemaking

PRIMARY USES

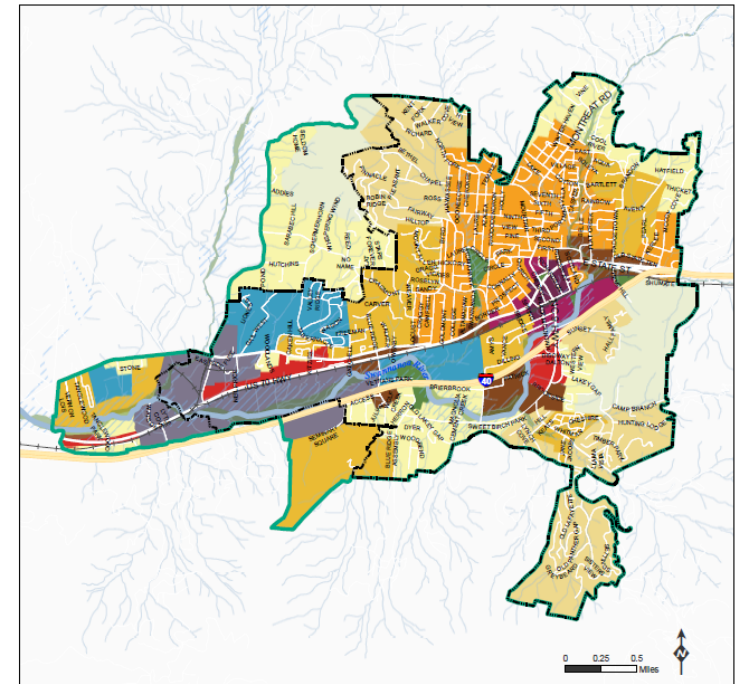
- » Commercial/Mixed Use
- » Office
- » Civic

SECONDARY USES

- » Mixed Use Residential

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Building Height	2 stories (up to 3 with incentives)
Building Setback	0-10 ft
Lot Width	15-75 ft
Block Length	300-500 ft
Parking	Shared parking behind buildings, on-street parking



Activity and Employment

- Downtown
- Downtown Edge
- Commercial
- Walkable Mixed Use
- Heavy Industry and Warehousing
- Institutional Campus

Neighborhoods

- Core Neighborhood
- Complete Neighborhood
- Mountain Residential
- Valley Residential
- Conservation Residential

Boundaries

- Black Mountain Town Boundary
- Planning Area

Implementation Blueprint



Walkable and Livable

Black Mountain is a distinct mountain town that is affordable, livable, human-scale, and grounded in its historic character.

ACTIONS

- A.2.1 Conduct a Comprehensive Rewrite of the LUC**
 To implement the recommendations of this comprehensive plan, the town's land use code (LUC) should be rewritten. Key elements to adjust include:
- » Establish infill and redevelopment context sensitive standards that allow flexibility and enhance character
 - » Update form and design standards to reinforce walkable, compact development objectives
 - » Modernize zoning districts to align with the vision for new nodes of activity; consider form-based zones
 - » Revise block length and connectivity standards to be consistent with this plan
 - » Establish a UDO with conditional zoning; improve multifamily housing provisions
 - » Consider requiring centrally-located dedication of park or civic spaces in master planned communities
 - » Consider ways of incorporating public art into new projects
 - » Create incentives (including but not limited to height and density) for green and sustainable building practices; consider sustainable building standards for certain types of development
 - » Consider formalizing the Utility and Annexation Criteria
 - » Revise parking requirements to include a maximum parking allowance, and location in the rear of the building in areas intended for more walkable mixed use development
 - » Remove barriers, create incentives, and streamline development review for infill development
 - » Consider initiating zoning map changes to targeted areas in Black Mountain

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	H	2 Yrs	Awaiting Action

- A.2.2 Prioritize and conduct small area, corridor, and neighborhood plans**
- » Use the Opportunity Areas Map to identify key small area, corridor, and neighborhood planning projects
 - » In downtown, consider strategies for creating a four-sided outdoor room of the Black Mountain Town Square. If public safety were to be relocated, retain ownership and consider active uses within an iconic building
 - » In downtown, consider strategies for burying of overhead wires, widening of sidewalks, and planting of street trees
 - » Consider new development standards along Broadway Avenue that create a mixed-use walkable corridor and gateway into downtown
 - » Ensure large sites accommodate small walkable blocks and civic space

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	H	1.5 Yrs Each	Awaiting Action

- A.2.3 Create a Community Design Handbook**
- » Create a community design handbook that considers Black Mountain's cherished built pattern for new development and redevelopment
 - » Incorporate design criteria into the LUC

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	M	2 Yrs	Awaiting Action

- A.2.4 Implement the Blue Ridge Road Small Area Plan**
- » Evaluate and track progress on the plan implementation

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	H	10 Yrs	Started

- A.2.5 Conduct a housing plan**
- » Partner with Buncombe County to conduct a housing study and plan
 - » Prioritize strategies for building and permanently protecting low income housing
 - » Consider adopting an affordable housing ordinance, similar to Davidson, NC
 - » Consider an affordable/workforce housing nexus study
 - » Consider support for a community land trust and a housing trust fund
 - » Evaluate the LUC and zoning map for ways to diversify the town's housing types while maintaining town character; ensure there are no barriers to construction of affordable housing
 - » Study impacts of short-term rentals and opportunities to adopt modern regulations to address them
 - » Conduct build-out analysis

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	H	2 Yrs	Awaiting Action



Vibrant Economy

The Town's vibrant, innovative, and diverse economy provides dignified jobs with living wages.

ACTIONS

- A.4.1 Create a downtown business strategy**
- » Consider a variety of financial investments and assessments to finance improvements, like special taxing districts, special assessments, bonds, or other strategies, in the downtown district and other commercial districts

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	H	4 Yrs	Awaiting Action

- A.4.2 Develop an economic development strategic plan**
- » Consider opportunities to build on and find synergies between Black Mountain's current assets: outdoor economy, art and culture, food, small-scale manufacturing
 - » Expand the town's professional staff for economic development, such as hiring an economic programs coordinator
 - » Develop programs to support small business owners through capacity building and promotion activities
 - » Consider expanding and diversifying grocery store and market options
 - » Find strategies to fund workforce housing; consider conducting a housing nexus study
 - » Find more opportunities to hold events that draw spending from throughout the region; consider artist night outs
 - » Find opportunities to enhance connection to high quality, affordable internet
 - » Consider overhauling or updating Black Mountain's branding, to make it more consistent with the town's green, active, and inclusive values
 - » Ensure sustainable balance between housing and jobs; protect and design space for employment uses

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	M	3 Yrs	Awaiting Action

- A.4.3 Establish an incubation and cooperative working space**
- » Consider development of incubation spaces to help seed homegrown business development

Responsible Department	Priority (H, M, L)	Time Horizon	Status
Planning	M	5 Yrs	Awaiting Action

The Planning Continuum



Discussion

Who have we been talking to?

1. Town staff
2. Town Council
3. Planning Board
4. Board of Adjustment
5. Parks and Greenways Advisory Commission
6. Stakeholder groups:
 1. Affordable housing
 2. Business owners
 3. Recreation and mobility partners
 4. Local developers
 5. Design community
 6. PODER Emma

Who will we talk to tomorrow?

1. Stakeholder groups:

1. Government and utilities
2. Education partners
3. Human services
4. Environmental partners

Introductions

- 1. What is your name?**
- 2. What is your connection to Woodfin?**
- 3. How long have you lived or worked here?**
- 4. Why are you here?**
- 5. What are you most excited about regarding this project?**

Discussion Questions

- 1. How can we make sure everyone in Woodfin can engage in this process if they want to?**
- 2. What are Woodfin's biggest challenges?**
- 3. What are opportunities for making Woodfin even better?**

Next Steps

1. January-February Community engagement (*Listening and Learning*)

- Interview community stakeholders
- Finalize the first round of community engagement (targeted)
- Synthesize and analyze all community input to date

2. Analyze Planning Influences

3. Steering Committee Meetings

- **Spring (Date TBD)** – Outcomes from *Listening and Learning* and Planning Influences, Test Vision and Goals, ideas and activities for *Guide Our Future*
- **Summer (Date TBD)** – Findings from *Guide Our Future*, Explore policy direction
- **Summer/Fall (Dates TBD)** – Two more steering committee meetings

4. Develop Vision and Goals