

## **REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

### **HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**MEETING DATE:** March 6, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Henderson County 2045 Comprehensive Plan

**PRESENTER:** Chris Todd, Business and Community Development Director

**ATTACHMENTS:** Yes

1. 2045 Comprehensive Plan Outcome 1: Goals 1-3

#### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

Starting in July of 2021, the County embarked on developing its new comprehensive plan. Over the course of 19 months, thousands of community members actively participated in the planning process to shape the plan's vision for 2045. The December 5<sup>th</sup> draft plan was formally recommended by the Planning Board (pursuant to NCGS) and was presented to the Board of Commissioner's at their December meeting.

The Board began review of Plan Outcome 1, containing Goals 1-3 at their February 15, 2023 meeting. The Board is requested to continue discussion of Outcome 1.

#### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

Board is requested to continue discussion of the of Plan Outcome 1, and provide Planning Staff feedback and direction.

#### **Suggested Motion:**

*No motion suggested.*

# GOAL 1: COORDINATE DEVELOPMENT NEAR EXISTING COMMUNITY ANCHORS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Rec 1.1: Grow **intentionally** where infrastructure and services exist, in and around municipalities, community investments, and anchors.

- A: Coordinate with municipalities and other service providers to update the Utility Service Area (USA) and utility service agreements to best fit the Future Land Use Map and municipal land use plans.
- B: Encourage high-density residential developments to be located within the USA.
- C: Locate commercial and residential growth near community anchors (i.e. Neighborhood Anchors and Community Centers on the FLU Map).
- D: Utilize **appropriate** tools ~~such as utility provision, increased density or other incentives, zoning overlays, and FLU consistency statements~~ to encourage growth in-line with the Future Land Use Map.
- ~~E: Continue density bonuses for conservation subdivisions with access to water and sewer and evaluate additional density bonuses for the incorporation of workforce housing in new developments.~~

~~F: Develop an overlay district within the Edneyville Sewer service area prior to construction. This overlay would limit uses that are incompatible with the existing rural, agricultural area.~~

~~G: Preserve a portion of Edneyville Sewer capacity for industrial and agriculture uses.~~

H: Develop a mechanism that could ~~joint overlay district with the Town of Laurel Park and the City of Hendersonville for the Ecusta Rail Trail.~~  
• ~~This overlay could~~ expand allowable uses that are compatible with the Ecusta Rail Trail. ~~It may also include additional design criteria for properties adjacent to the trail.~~

I: Ensure zoning districts around Neighborhood Anchors and Community Centers allow, by right, consistent land uses.

### Rec 1.2: Use available zoning tools to encourage context-appropriate rural businesses.

- A: Continue to allow for administrative approval for small to medium-scale uses that meet basic standards in rural areas (e.g. AG on FLU).
- B: Modify thresholds for administrative approval ~~versus conditional zoning or special use permit~~ requirements for certain types or sizes of new nonresidential uses.
- C: Collaborate with the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development to encourage **redevelopment** of underutilized industrial and/or commercial properties.
- D: The size and intensity of uses in Neighborhood Anchors should be evaluated to maintain the local business economy.

# GOAL 2: PROTECT AND CONSERVE RURAL CHARACTER AND AGRICULTURE

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Rec 2.1: Support agriculture as an economic driver.

- A: Continue to collaborate with Agribusiness Henderson County (AgHC) on supporting existing agriculture ~~and land use planning—efforts related to agriculture, economic development and land use.~~
- B: Recruit and prepare the next generation of farmers through the 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) program ~~and in~~ coordination with Henderson County Schools and Blue Ridge Community College.
- ~~• Build on middle school farm field trips and exposure to careers in agriculture~~
  - ~~• Support and improve FFA programs in high schools~~
  - ~~• Support Blue Ridge Community College programs including internships~~
  - ~~• Connect young farmers to jobs and agricultural leases~~
- C: Leverage partnership with Blue Ridge Community College to advance workforce development assets and respond to specific agri-business needs.
- D: Assist the three government-supported agricultural entities (AgHC, Henderson County Soil & Water Conservation District, and NC Cooperative Extension) on joint issues and encourage collaboration.
- E: Continue to allow for a flexible approach to rural business ~~development.~~
- ~~• Encouraging small businesses in rural areas can indirectly support agriculture by allowing non farm income~~
- F: ~~Reduce~~ Identify and address barriers to integration, extension, and diversification of agribusiness and agritourism (i.e. packing facilities, processing, value-added production, distribution, retail).
- G: Study the creation of an Agricultural Visitor Center and incorporated offices for agricultural related agencies.
- ~~• This could include a visitors center with public restrooms, a place for events, or community meetings. Potentially could allow for the relocation of the Cooperative Extension Office or other agricultural related agencies.~~
- H: Collaborate with the NC Cooperative Extension and other organizations to connect current and future farmers to federal ~~and State~~ agricultural funding programs ~~like the USDA's Farm Service Agency and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. A full list of potential grant and loan programs are listed within the Supplemental Information Document.~~
- ~~I: Work with the NC cooperative Extension and other organizations to help farmers to negotiate lease agreements that include the right of first refusal.~~

## Rec 2.2: Preserve existing farmland.

A: Encourage enrollment in Present Use Value (PUV) and Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) programs.

B: Consider the creation of a Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program to purchase farmland development rights and establish agricultural conservation easements.

~~C: Study potential mechanisms for transfer of development rights program to allow for transfer of density away from agricultural and natural resource areas to designated receiving areas.~~

D: Study the creation of a County-wide Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program. (Term listed in Glossary)

~~E: Consider applying the County Voluntary Agricultural District to all Present Use Value enrolled farms to further protect farmland from development pressure.~~

## Rec 2.3: Reduce conflict between existing agriculture and new residential development.

A: Discourage rezonings for higher density residential subdivisions outside the defined Utility Service Area (USA) and in the Agricultural/Rural (AR) area identified on the Future Land Use Map.

B: Continue to require and enforce the Farmland Preservation District Setback.

- This requires a 100 foot setback for all buildings from any Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)

C: Consider zoning updates to reduce development pressure in agricultural areas.

- This could include implementing a new district that reduces residential density and / or the creation of a rural cluster option in the Land Development Code (LDC) that allows for smaller setbacks, building spacing, and innovative design.

## Rec 2.4: Incentivize non-farm development outside of agricultural areas.

A: Provide incentives for revitalizing existing commercial and industrial sites.

B: Focus on higher density housing closer to the city to reduce sprawl, provide affordable housing for workforce and relieve pressure on roads.

C: Encourage industrial growth in areas away from large concentrations of farmland and agricultural operations.

D: Carefully evaluate potential utility extensions that could impact large concentrations of productive farmland.

- Hold community meetings with targeted input from farmers and landowners when planning for future growth and utility provision. Modify plans for water and sewer line locations, size and access policies accordingly

## Rec 2.5: Utilize zoning tools to help conserve rural character.

A: Study existing rural character and identify defining elements that can be modeled.

B: Require lighting mitigation standards for all new commercial and industrial developments within proximity to an existing residential area.

- C: Work with developers to strategically locate required **open space** to increase visual compatibility.
- D: Consider requiring robust buffers or “green belts” between commercial development and residential and between residential development and farmland.

- E: Study the creation of a Conservation Overlay District for all County public lands.
- F: Consider increasing the **open space** requirements when developing within a Farmland Preservation District.
- G: Consider incentivizing **open space** conservation in new **industrial** developments of a certain size and where appropriate.
- H: Consolidate steep slope requirements within the **Land Development Code** for transparency.

# GOAL 3: IMPROVE RESILIENCY OF THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Rec 3.1: Protect and conserve sensitive environmental habitats, steep slopes, and ridge tops.

- A: Strengthen conservation subdivision design in areas with sensitive environmental resources.
- B: Consider allowing for administrative approval for **conservation subdivisions** that meet certain criteria.
- C: Implement minimum **open space** requirements and prioritize the reservation of sensitive natural resources as **open space** in new development.
- D: Limit development on steep slopes and mountain ridges by lowering the slope threshold for density reductions and consider requiring geotechnical review of developments with slope greater than 40%.

### Rec 3.2: Improve the resiliency of natural areas and critical assets against hazards.

- A: Collaborate with existing organizations to protect sensitive habitats, farmland, and land adjacent to creeks and rivers throughout Henderson County.
- B: Coordinate efforts between Emergency Services and the Planning Department regarding emergency response and critical infrastructure.
- C: Regularly review implementation progress and update the **Hazard Mitigation Plan** to strengthen emergency management and response in the County.
- D: Ensure federally required emergency service regulations are reflected in the **Land Development Code**.
- E: Consider lowering the threshold for required additional ingress/egress for developments and requiring reasonable connection between developments.
- F: Protect critical infrastructure facilities, especially utility and emergency facilities through facility upgrades and site design.

- G: Develop ingress/egress emergency plans for areas that may become inaccessible if landslides occur.
- H: Develop a flood early warning system for areas that may become inaccessible if roadways are flooded.
- I: Work with local, state, and federal land managers to develop plans for wildfire management, especially in interface areas. (See also Rec 3.3 F)
- J: Work with the community to increase emergency preparedness awareness and educate the community regarding existing response plans.

### **Rec 3.3: Decrease the potential exposure to hazards by managing future development**

- A: Within new subdivisions consider the reservation of **open space** and **conservation areas** in and around areas with a high potential for landslides.
  - Maps of past debris flow and area of potential debris flow pathways are maintained by the NC dEQ. See [landslidesncgs.com](http://landslidesncgs.com) for more information
- B: Use existing vulnerability and risk assessments (such as the regional Land of Sky vulnerability and risk assessment) to guide development design and **rezoning** decisions.
- C: Discourage the amount of land disturbed in steep slope developments, including construction of roads, as well as decrease density.
- D: Continue to limit fill in **floodplains** unless additional standards are met.
- E: Utilize the fire, building, and land development codes to mitigate risk of fire hazards in areas with limited access.

- F: Encourage wildfire mitigation principles in new developments located in the **Wildland Urban interface** including:
  - design recreation space and access roads to double as firebreaks
  - design each home site to have defined defensible space
  - Encourage fire resistant building design and provide defensible space around clustered development
- G: Encourage best practice design standards for new construction within the **Wildland Urban Interface**.
- H: Encourage additional street trees within new developments to enhance the environmental benefits of the requirement.

### **Rec 3.4: Improve stormwater management strategies and water quality protections.**

- A: Limit built-upon area within the watersupply watersheds and provide standards for **stormwater management**.
- B: Monitor water quality trends to determine effectiveness of existing regulations and other trends.
- C: Consider additional site development standards to reduce stormwater and erosion impacts of new minor and major subdivisions.
  - These could include changes to minimum disturbance thresholds that require stormwater devices or adjusting impervious surface lot coverage maximums
- D: Identify regulatory barriers and consider incentives for green infrastructure projects, which can lessen stress on natural systems.