

MINUTES

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF HENDERSON

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2023

The Henderson County Board of Commissioners met for a special called meeting at 1:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room of the Historic Courthouse on Main Street, Hendersonville.

Those present were Chairman Rebecca McCall, Vice-Chair J. Michael Edney, Commissioner William Lapsley, Commissioner Daniel Andreotta, Commissioner David Hill, County Manager John Mitchell, Assistant County Manager Amy Brantley, and Attorney Russ Burrell.

Also present were: Director of Business and Community Development Christopher Todd, Chief Communications Officer Mike Morgan, Planning Director Autumn Radcliff, Senior Planner Janna Bianculli, Assistant County Engineer Deb Johnston, PIO Kathy Finotti – videotaping and Deputy Chris Stepp provided security.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairman McCall called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

INVOCATION

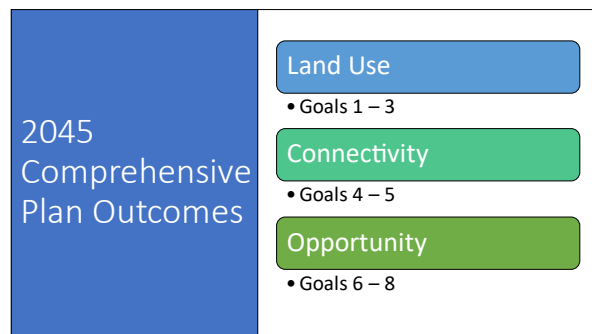
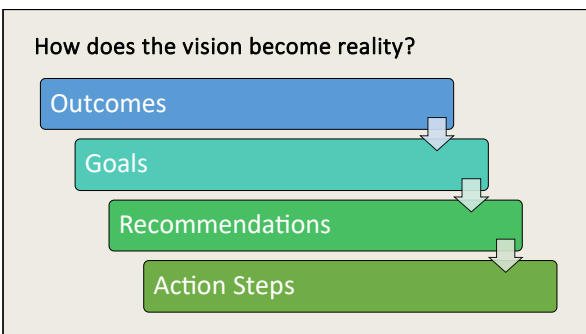
Chairman McCall provided the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman McCall led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Senior Planner Janna Bianculli kicked off meeting with a brief PowerPoint. She reminded the Board that the draft Plan was broken into Outcomes, Goals, Recommendations and Action Steps. The Outcomes then were broken into Land Use, Connectivity and Opportunity with a set of Goals falling within each of the Outcomes.



Goal 4

Enhance transportation safety and mobility.

- This goal focuses on increasing safety, improving traffic, and creating other travel options.
- There are no county roads in the state of North Carolina.
- The state works with local jurisdictions and regional entities to create and prioritize road projects.
- Greenways and other multi-modal infrastructure is the main focus of Goal 4 based on public input, but traditional transportation and transit are also important in planning for life in 2045.

Goal 4

Enhance transportation safety and mobility.

- Considerations for transportation:
 - Currently, the state does not maintain “offroad infrastructure” for County governments.
 - County governments are not eligible for Powell Bill money for multi-modal maintenance.
 - NCDOT’s updated Complete Streets Policy eliminates the costshare for “off-road infrastructure” if the concept is in an **adopted plan** otherwise, a jurisdiction could be on the hook for covering 50% of the construction costs.

At the Board’s last meeting, the review had gone through Recommendation 4.5(D). Discussion resumed at 4.5(E).

Recommendation 4.5: Maintain Apple Country Public Transit’s service levels and invest in infrastructure to support public transit

E: Continue to work with regional partners and explore the concept of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that would focus on regional transit service while preserving local control of existing systems.

F: Explore mechanisms to provide express routes to connect Hendersonville to Asheville and other destinations in Buncombe, Madison, and Haywood County, while focusing on regional mobility management, employee training, maintenance, and funding administration.

G: ~~Create-Explore possible~~ connections between transit and greenways to help reduce traffic and vehicle miles traveled.

H: Continue to improve existing bus stops through amenities like benches and shelters.

I: Explore solutions to solve the garbage collection issue at bus stops.

J: Collaborate with the City of Hendersonville on a joint planning effort for a more robust transfer station in downtown Hendersonville.

K: Encourage diversification of the Henderson County vehicle fleet, including transit buses, for optimum resiliency **and to reduce costs of operations.**

Recommendation 4.6: Complete the trail and greenway network

A: Implement the Greenway Master Plan’s policy to incorporate the use of existing and future sewer utility easements for public use greenways.

B: Work with the ~~City-municipalities~~, employers, nonprofits, and schools to provide additional amenities for existing greenways and trails (i.e. parking, benches, lighting, restrooms, water fountains, bike repair stations, mile markers, and educational signage).

C: Coordinate with partners to advance, complete, and maintain the entire 19 miles of the Ecusta Rail Trail.

D: Coordinate with NCDOT to ensure that all Ecusta Rail Trail roadway crossings follow safety standards for vehicles and pedestrians, are highly visible for drivers, and have appropriate signage.

- E: Coordinate with the Rail Trail Advisory Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), **Planning Board**, and Recreation Advisory Board on priority **greenway** implementation.
- F: Prioritize planning and design for **greenway** segments to connect existing trails.
- G: Incorporate spurs and short connections **where feasible** to hospitals and County-owned properties, like ~~schools and~~ parks, into **greenway** planning.
- H: Update the Henderson County Greenway Master Plan to reflect current progress, new initiatives, updated funding opportunities, and tentative community partners.
- I: ~~Ensure~~ **Prioritize the design** of ~~that~~ new trails ~~are to be~~ adequately designed to be resilient and withstand extreme weather events, as well as design for stormwater best management practices (BMPs), **when cost effective**, and other flood prevention strategies.
- J: Appropriate hydraulic modeling should be performed whenever a **greenway** is to be constructed in a **floodplain**.
- K: Create a user-friendly, online method for people to report maintenance issues on County-maintained **greenways**.
- This could be done via a smart phone application, a specific telephone line, or an email address dedicated to the **greenway** system.

Recommendation 4.7: Support education and encourage activities related to bicycling

- A: Encourage skills clinics that teach novice riders how to ride safely and efficiently when riding alone or in groups.
- B: Encourage bicycle riding ~~along designated rural routes in Henderson County~~ and utilization of the Ecusta Rail Trail and other **greenways**.

GOAL 5: CREATE A RELIABLE, CONNECTED UTILITY AND COMMUNICATION NETWORK.

Recommendation 5.1: Improve communications infrastructure

- A: ~~Strive to improve~~ ~~Improve~~ the County's Broadband Availability Index ranking per the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office.
- B: Pursue the extension of **broadband** Internet, especially trunk-line improvements or extensions between major population centers, including improvements along I-26.
- C: Continue participation in **broadband** planning programs. Work with the State to receive and distribute funding for building **broadband** infrastructure grants, such as the Completing Access to Broadband Grant Program **and others**.
- D: Continue County participation in the BAND-NC grant program to complete the county-wide digital inclusion plan.
- E: ~~Implement~~ **Consider implementation of** the Henderson County Broadband Taskforce's recommendations concerning the most effective and legal role for Henderson County to take in assisting and promoting improvements and growth of **broadband** infrastructure.

Recommendation 5.2: Locate utilities to maximize efficiency of services, minimize cost of service, and minimize impacts on the natural environment.

- A: Initiate and conduct utility planning efforts that align with land use policies and community goals.
- B: Coordinate with local governments and regional entities to address service issues and secure long- term water and sewer capacity.
- C: Coordinate targeted utility and service enhancements within the defined Utility Service Area.
- D: Discuss with Henderson County Schools regarding alignment of future school planning with water and sewer infrastructure planning.

Recommendation 5.3: Use utilities to incentivize economic development and conservation opportunities.

- A: County staff and elected officials should coordinate with partners to plan for effective site readiness for specific economic development projects.
- B: ~~Reserve a percentage of new sewer infrastructure capacity for economic development. Recalculate/reaffirm the percentage on an annual basis based on projection versus actual demand.~~
- C: Encourage conservation subdivision designs for all new major residential subdivision²s ~~residential growth~~ in unincorporated areas tied to sewer infrastructure. (Planning Staff - Revisit wording)

Recommendation 5.4: Take a leadership role in sewer and water planning by helping to foster intergovernmental cooperation.

- A: Recommend a water and sewer management structure including County and municipal participation to ~~guide~~ **manage** growth within the entire County.
- B: ~~Conduct interchange studies~~ Coordinate transportation matters with the City to evaluate and prioritize development potential ~~of key interchanges~~ for future commercial and/or industrial development.
- C: ~~Begin the development of a three, five or ten year~~ Encourage the development of a capital improvement program and capital reserve fund to help implement planned investments in sewer infrastructure and other services.
- D: ~~The Environmental Health Department should identify areas of septic failure, areas where future septic systems may fail, and address these through existing remediation programs and by leveraging state and federal grants.~~

GOAL 6: STIMULATE INNOVATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES, ENTRENEURSHIP, AND LOCAL BUSINESS

Recommendation 6.1: Increase high-wage employment and foster growth in the local tax base.

- A: Using the Future Land Use Map, identify and publicize key sites for diverse industrial development in cooperation with The Partnership.

B: Encourage rezonings to commercial and industrial zoning districts in areas identified as Employment and Industry on the Future Land Use Map.

C: ~~Allow for~~ Consider small scale businesses ~~es to easily~~ development in the Neighborhood Anchors to promote local spending.

Recommendation 6.2: Coordinate workforce education.

A: Leverage partnership with Blue Ridge Community College to advance workforce development assets and respond to specific industry needs via curriculum updates and employer partnerships.

B: Support Blue Ridge Community College in their mission to educate students for direct, local employment ~~including new industry like greenhouses and other high skilled work.~~

Recommendation 6.3: Advance small businesses and entrepreneurs.

A: Encourage development of office, retail and light industrial space through land use and zoning decisions.

B: Prioritize expansion of small business infrastructure needs such as high-speed broadband.

C: ~~Apply~~ Support the assets of Blue Ridge Community College ~~assets~~ to respond to industry, consumer trends, and emerging opportunities.

Recommendation 6.4: Facilitate placemaking efforts to reinforce community character and attract businesses and investment.

A: Work with the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to develop a uniform signage style and place directional, gateway and/or historical signage within established community centers.

B: Encourage NCDOT to improve the safety of intersections for pedestrians.

C: ~~Encourage TDA and the City of Hendersonville to locate an outdoor amphitheater space.~~

D: ~~Create a permanent shelter/farmers market space.~~

GOAL 7: DIVERSIFY HOUSING CHOICES AND INCREASE AVAILABILITY

Recommendation 7.1: Increase housing in the Utility Service Area (USA).

A: Encourage rezonings ~~to~~ for high density housing and mixed-use development within the USA.

- Areas within the USA have access to transportation, utilities, and services. In addition, growth in these areas is less likely to create conflicts with agriculture and natural resources.

B: To avoid conflict with agricultural areas and natural resources, major subdivisions should be located near defined centers and within the Infill and Transitional Areas as defined on the Future Land Use Map. (To be revisited)

- C: Allow for a variety of housing types, including condos, townhomes, ~~and~~ multi-family complexes, ~~and manufactured housing~~, in the defined Utility Service Area.
- D: Re-evaluate standards for intermediate and maximum residential density within all zoning districts.
- E: Consider allowance for small-scale multi-family units (3-4 units) without a Special Use Permit if ~~supplemental requirements are~~ ~~design criteria is~~ met.
- F: Eliminate the requirement of a Special Use Permit for developments with attached residential units within the USA and keep the existing Special Use Permit for areas outside the USA.
- G: ~~Encourage subdivision design to aesthetically mirror rural surroundings by developing~~ Develop a rural cluster option in the Land Development Code (LDC) that allows for smaller setbacks, building spacing, and innovative layout design ~~in exchange for preservation of open space and views.~~
- H: Continue to provide a density bonus for conservation subdivisions.
- I: Consider administrative approval for conservation subdivisions.

Recommendation 7.2: Encourage development of ~~workforce affordable and inclusive housing.~~

- A: ~~Encourage developers to offer at least two lot size options and/or varied housing product types in major residential subdivisions.~~
- B: Consider creating incentives ~~for the inclusion of affordable or workforce housing in new developments.~~ to encourage the creation of workforce housing developments.
- Incentives could include a density bonus or reductions in site design requirements (i.e. amount of required open space)
- C: ~~Allow for cottage clusters (pocket neighborhoods) and for multi-family developments that meet affordability standards in certain zoning districts.~~
- D: Allow for a variety of housing types and mixed- use development at appropriate key locations along the Ecusta Rail Trail ~~within the potential overlay district.~~
- E. Support affordable housing developments within rural, agricultural areas and residential zoning districts.

Recommendation 7.3: Support the ability to age in place

- A: Encourage age-sensitive design in all residential developments to appeal to a variety of residents.
- B: Consider adjustments to the Land Development Code to allow for assisted living residences that meet supplemental standards and have water and sewer connections within the USA without a special use permit.

- C: Provide option for administrative provision of a percent reduction in parking space requirements for retirement and/or age-targeted housing developments.
- D: Consider accessibility for seniors when creating new recreation spaces.
- E: Promote the “Village Network” model, similar to that of Saluda, among older populations.
- Saluda (SLIPNC) provides a model of a “Village Network” where neighbors help each other age in place.
- F: Continue to allow for accessory dwelling units.
- G: Partner with municipalities to study housing needs, disseminate information on housing options, and increase supply of affordable, [workforce housing](#).

Recommendation 7.4: Locate workforce housing near jobs

- A: In accordance with guidance from the Future Land Use Map, support residential development near employment areas and in and around commercial centers.
- B: Coordinate with municipalities to jointly plan for areas near new employment areas that share municipal and County jurisdiction.
- ~~C: Educate the community regarding the North Carolina Migrant Housing Act that requires standards for living quarters.~~
- D: Increase awareness of USDA Farm Labor Housing Direct Loans and Grants.
- E: Support innovative housing solutions that serve seasonal and year-round farm workers.

Mark Williams, Executive Director with Agribusiness Henderson County, gave the following presentation related to the agricultural sections of the draft plan. Additional speakers representing the agriculture community included Kenny Barnwell, Christen Nix, Cole Revis and Kirby Johnson.

Following the presentation, Chairman McCall asked the Board to revisit Recommendation 2.2, Action Step B, and change “Consider the creation of” to “Formulate a plan to create a” Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program to purchase farmland development rights and establish agricultural conservation easements.” It was the consensus of the Board to make that revision.

There was some additional discussion about where the funding for a program might come from. Chairman McCall asked about the percentage of taxes that are received from agriculture, and requested additional discussion at the next meeting. It was also suggested that a portion of roll-back taxes could be utilized, since it was hard to know when properties might be sold and that revenue generated.



HENDERSON COUNTY Agribusiness Economic Impact

Total "Farm Gate" Receipts **\$130M**
Agribusiness (Value-Added) **\$655M**
Agri-Tourism **\$ 90M**
TOTAL INCOME **\$875 Million**
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT **5,400 Jobs**
 (Multiplier Affect of 2.8 = 15,000 Additional Jobs)

* Data Compiled by Agribusiness Henderson County 2023

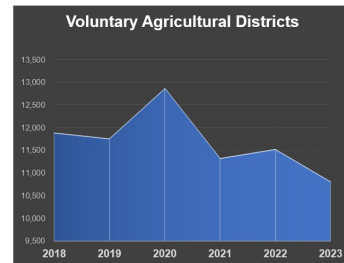


PRESENT USE VALUE (PUV) ACREAGE

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
AGRICULTURE	7,894
HORTICULTURE	8,269
FORESTRY	38,126
WILDLIFE	1,459
Total	55,747



Year	Acres	Change
2018	11,893	
2019	11,762	(131)
2020	12,875	1,113
2021	11,332	(1,543)
2022	11,525	193
2023	10,817	(708)



LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND SINCE 2020 (LAST 2 YEARS)

2058 ACRES

16% of Ag District Totals

* Estimated based on change in VAD enrollment



Farmland Preservation efforts

- Present Use Value (PUV)
- Land Development Code (LDC)- 2007
- Farmland Preservation Plan- 2007
- Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD)
- Enhanced Voluntary Ag Districts (EVAD)
- AgHC formed - 2011



AgHC Efforts

- Preservation through improved profitability
- Projects and efforts to grow agriculture *(property tax added covers funding)*
- Economic benefits of agribusiness grown to nearly **\$1 Billion**
- Land kept from going out of Ag Use **1029 acres**



LOSS OF AG LAND INTENSIFIED

- Outpaced by appreciating property values **48% increase in 4 years**
- Residential & industrial development
- Expanding utility services and municipality growth
- High growth/pressure areas: Mills River, Upward/Dana, Edneyville



REPLACING FARMS WITH HOMES COSTS TAXPAYERS

RETURN ON EVERY \$1.00 TAXES SPENT

Residential	Commercial & Industrial	Farm & Forestland
\$0.86	\$2.52	\$1.03



TOP REASONS AGRICULTURE IS WORTH SAVING IN HENDERSON COUNTY

- Economic Benefits
- Quality of Life
- Food Security
- Our Future Generation



FARMER PERSPECTIVES

(Presenters are all Henderson County natives from Farm Families)

- **Kenny Barnwell** – KB Orchards, HC Ag Advisory Board Chairman, AgHC Chairman, NC Apple Growers Association Board
Importance of a local food supply & the need for residential setbacks
- **Christen Nix** – Apple Wedge Packers & Cider, AgHC Board
Concerns for the future generation in agriculture in Henderson County
- **Cole Revis** – Revis Farms (Produce, Apples, Beef Cattle), Flat Rock Fresh (Brokerage, Storage), AgHC Member
A young man's desire to farm and perspective on keeping land in production now and in years to come
- **Kirby Johnson** – Flavor 1st Growers & Packers / Mountain Bean Growers, Johnson Family Farms, FSA Board, AgHC Board
Example and benefits of an agricultural easement program & why a farmer sometimes sells land



What can be done to preserve ag land for the next generation?


- Controlled expansion of sewer/water services
- Maintain Sensible Zoning
- Safeguard against municipal expansion (Ag Easements, limit Urban Service Areas)
- Maintain and strengthen setbacks for residential developments
- Support elimination of business personal property tax for ag (Rep. Balkcom's bill)
- Create a County level Agricultural Conservation Easement Program



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program


Agricultural Preservation & Protection of Land & Economy ("APPLE")

- Voluntary – not for everyone
- New Tool – not a "Silver Bullet"
- Land Owner only sells rights to develop, but maintains rights to continue farming and it passes to future land owner(s)
- Structure/Steward – Qualified Conservation Organization (QCO)
 - Soil & Water
 - Land conservancy groups such as:
 - Conserving Carolina
 - Greater Saluda Community Land Trust
 - Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
 - River Link
- Program models across the country (to be evaluated/customized)




Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs and Funding Sources

- FEDERAL**
 - ACEP - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
 - NRCS – Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - "Billions" being budgeted in the coming cycle
- STATE**
 - ADFP – Agricultural Development & Farmland Preservation
 - \$9,530,010** Awarded last cycle; **4377** Acres
 - \$250 Million** increase proposed by Ag Commissioner Troxler
 - \$250 Million** reoccurring – proposed in bill by Sen. Moffitt
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT**
 - Buncombe – Started at \$150K, now \$750K reoccurring in addition to a \$30,000,000 bond referendum (1/3 devoted to ag land), goal of protecting 20% of farmland by easement
 - Wake - \$6,000,000 reoccurring
 - Other NC Counties: Polk, Haywood, Transylvania, Alamance, Cabarrus
 - Town of Mills River - \$500K approved from ARPA funds
- PRIVATE** (Trusts, etc.)



AGRICULTURAL EASEMENT EXAMPLES - DATA PROVIDED BY CONSERVING CAROLINA

Date of Closing	12/23/2020	1/24/2022	12/9/2009	1/7/2022	12/20/2013	12/31/2013
County	Hend./Bunc.	Polk	Transylvania	Henderson	Transylvania	Buncombe
Acres in easement	74	18.52	66.51	22.69	25.252	120.97
Appraised Value Before	\$1,575,000	\$435,000	\$725,000	\$231,000	\$461,000	\$1,670,000
Per Acre Value	\$21,284	\$23,488	\$10,901	\$10,181	\$18,256	\$13,805
Appraised Value After	\$245,000	\$140,000	\$298,000	\$106,000	\$144,000	\$880,000
Per Acre Value	\$3,311	\$7,559	\$4,481	\$4,672	\$5,703	\$7,275
Easement Value	\$1,330,000	\$295,000	\$427,000	\$125,000	\$317,000	\$790,000
Per Acre Value	\$17,973	\$15,929	\$6,420	\$5,509	\$12,553	\$6,531
Total \$\$\$ to Owner	\$978,750	\$221,250	\$279,900	\$93,750	\$68,500	\$50,000
Per Acre \$\$\$ to Owner	\$13,226	\$11,947	\$4,208	\$4,132	\$2,713	\$413
Payment % of Easement Value	74%	75%	66%	75%	22%	6%
Compensation/Funding Source						
Federal (ACEP, other)	\$665,000	\$73,750	\$0	\$62,500	\$0	\$0
State (ADFP)	\$313,750	\$147,500	\$279,900	\$31,250	\$68,500	\$0
Local Gov't (acquisition cost)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Local Gov't (transaction costs)	\$19,000	\$0	\$4,240	\$0	\$0	\$19,300
Private/other (Trusts, etc.)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Owner's donated portion	\$351,250	\$73,750	\$147,100	\$31,250	\$248,500	\$740,000




What? Local "ACEP" or "APPLE" combined with other protections

Why? Economic, Environmental and Security Benefits
Leverage federal and state funds for preservation
Other NC Counties are already doing it and we are behind
Citizen survey shows strong desire to protect farmland


How? TBD – To Be Determined
Structure – Soil & Water, Land Conservancy, combination
Criteria – Location, size, farm type, soils, threat level, etc.
Funding – Important to start budgeting at some level

When? Sooner than later (before it's too late)



OUR ASK

- Add to the toolbox** for preserving farmland and our valuable ag industry
- Move from "Consider" to "Create a Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program"** (A commitment to the concept of a program, not to the details, which will require time)
- Budget Seed Money** for agricultural easements and a future program (other NC counties have started with \$150K - \$750K)
- Maintain setback rules** for developments adjoining a farm and apply them to subdivisions of 10 homes or greater
- Keep municipalities firmly in check** to prevent further encroachment into concentrated areas of farmland
- Continue support of County ag-related organizations:** AgHC, Cooperative Extension, and Soil & Water
- Act on responses from the County survey**




AGRIBUSINESS HENDERSON COUNTY

www.AgriHC.org

Mark Williams, Executive Director
Mark@AgriHC.org
 240 2nd Avenue East, Hendersonville, NC 28792
 828.697.4543

Kieran Roe, CEO of Conserving Carolina, noted that generally, more people wanted to conserve their land, than there were resources available to be able to afford it. He stated he was in favor of the step Mr. Williams had laid out, and believed that might allow for additional matching funds to leverage local dollars.

Christen Nix stated that a balance between the farms, and the people the farms feed, is really the ultimate desire.

Goal 8

تعزيز الصحة المجتمعية من خلال توفير مساحات ترفيهية للجميع من الشباب إلى كبار السن.

- Encourage a healthy community by creating ways for everyone to be active – from the young to the elderly.
 - Recreational areas can also be ways to help reduce pollution and keep the air we breathe clean.
 - Recreational areas also can educate people about the environment like the Oklawaha Greenway’s pollinator gardens.
- Expand access to healthy food by ensuring the collaboration of various departments and taking advantage of grant opportunities.
- Provide high-quality emergency services.

GOAL 8: PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Recommendation 8.1: Encourage healthy living by expanding access to parks, greenways, and other recreational amenities.

- A: Plan for the recreational needs of the communities in Henderson County.
- B: Address facilities and programming priorities, document ongoing maintenance needs, and provide benchmarking related to facilities and staffing within a master plan.
- C: Develop a multi-year capital improvement plan for park facilities that includes planning for major maintenance expenditures.
- D: Continue to support the development of all-inclusive playgrounds in the County.
- E: Develop a master plan for Jackson Park. The master plan should address connectivity, parking issues, facility enhancements, and involve a variety of user groups.
- F: Pursue grant funding and other funding sources for the replacement of playgrounds ~~at Etowah and East Flat Rock Park.~~
- G: Consider additional county-owned parks, including pocket parks, in areas of the County with underserved populations.
- H: Enhance recreational programming to address the needs of senior and disabled populations.
- I: Improve access to rivers for recreational purposes ~~through partnerships with RiverLink and other stakeholders.~~
- J: Coordinate with municipalities, **Conserving Carolina**, the US Forest Service, the North Carolina Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission,

et al. to improve and increase access to existing hiking, camping, fishing, and additional recreational opportunities.

K: Encourage new development to incorporate recreational needs into the **open space** design of new subdivisions.

L: Encourage major subdivisions to provide pedestrian connections or provide easements to immediately adjacent greenway facilities.

M: Work with the **Henderson County Tourism Development Authority** to provide support for safe and sustainable recreational tourism.

N: Consider investment of a county-owned indoor and outdoor sports complex.

Recommendation 8.2: Improve and coordinate access to health services

A: Coordinate with the County Health Department and non-profit partners to promote physical and emotional resiliency through the utilization of existing parks for physical and mental health programs.

B: When expanding public transit and **paratransit** services, consider connecting areas with medical services to residential areas for easier access.

C: Address substance misuse and mental health by utilizing the opioid litigation settlement funds to support programs and spread awareness of Strategy-Specific Resources for addiction recovery.

D: Consider creating a collaborative “Recovery Court” (also known as drug diversion court) in Henderson County for low-level offenses.

Recommendation 8.3: Expand access to healthy food

A: Review zoning ordinances to facilitate grocery stores, farm stands and other commercial food retail establishments ~~in rural food deserts~~.

B: Increase local retailers’ awareness of the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Designation Program.

C: Study the creation of a farm-to-foodshare program, a farm-to-school program, or similar programs to connect local farms with **food insecure** residents and students.

D: Support and expand farmers markets in rural areas, either by introducing new traditional farmers markets or creating a mobile version.

E: Identify and work with partners ~~to establish an organization~~ that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of local food products from a variety of sources including new and urban farms.

Recommendation 8.4: Provide high-quality public and emergency services

- A: Plan for expansion of public services, capital projects, and personnel, in proportion to increasing demand.
- B: Incorporate emergency service access into planning decisions.
- C: ~~Discourage~~ Encourage high-density growth in areas ~~not currently~~ closest to emergency services such as ~~served by~~ fire, police, and emergency services. ~~Substations should be considered for areas that have suburban densities.~~
- D: Plan for mental health needs and encourage best practices during healthcare, public safety, and emergency response interactions.
- E: Ensure efficient ~~and equitable~~ public service by providing information in other languages. Consider contracting an on-call interpreter firm to better serve non-English speaking community members.

Recommendation 8.5: Coordinate and support the school system

- A: Collaborate with the School Board to plan for capital needs as the County grows.
- B: Partner with nonprofits and other organizations to expand services for early childhood education including Head Start.
- C: Support programs that help ~~underserved~~ students stay in school.
- D: Assist Blue Ridge Community College to maintain low tuition costs for all students.
- E: Support Blue Ridge Community College to provide a variety of training courses focused on workforce readiness.

Recommendation 8.6: Increase access to education for every community member.

- A: Support nonprofits in their endeavor to assist non-English speaking community members with government services including student applications to Blue Ridge Community College.
- B: ~~Offer courses for technological literacy and educate the public on internet safety.~~
- C: Ensure public libraries are adequately equipped for future growth and are placed in multiple locations around the County to increase access.
- D: Support the County libraries in their programming and outreach efforts.

Following discussion of the goals, Commissioner Andreotta requested the Board revisit Section 7.4, and add ~~F: Encourage opportunities for homeownership by continued partnership with the Housing Assistance Corporation and other agencies that help renters become homeowners.~~

- ~~Support efforts for property acquisition by the Housing Assistance Corporation and others by engaging the business community and the public at large.~~

The next steps for the draft 2045 Comprehensive Plan will be review of the Utility Service Area Maps. Staff will work toward the best time and method to present those, since the mid-month May meeting will be dedicated to the FY24 Recommended Budget.

Vice-Chair Edney made the motion to adjourn at 4:55 p.m. All voted in favor, and the motion carried.

ADJOURN

Amy Brantley, Assistant County Manager

Rebecca McCall, Chairman