

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE PLANNING AREA

Purpose

County officials, local organizations, and the community at large developed the Henderson County 2020 Comprehensive Plan (hereinafter “Comprehensive Plan”) adopted July 6, 2004 (as amended through April 7, 2008). A principal recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan is the detailed study of individual communities within the County. The Dana Community Plan is a community-specific comprehensive plan that outlines future goals related to Land Use and Development, Community Character and Design, Natural and Cultural Resources, Agriculture, Housing, Community Facilities and Public Services, Transportation, and Economic Development.

Process

The plan development process began with the adoption of the Dana Community Plan Advisory Committee Charter by the Board of Commissioners on May 4, 2009 and appointment of the committee on July 15, 2009. The Committee consisted of nine (9) community residents and three (3) ex-officio members representing the Henderson County Planning Board (serving as a liaison to the Board), Blue Ridge Community College, and City of Hendersonville. The Committee’s purposes were to advise the Board of Commissioners by recommending policies specific to the Dana Planning Area. The Committee met for the first time on September 1, 2009.

The Committee gathered public input through two (2) public input sessions, mailed survey and an online survey. The County held the initial public input session on November 9, 2009 at Dana Elementary School. Approximately 60 community residents participated in the meeting by discussing the strengths of, concerns for, and 15-year vision for the community. To solicit additional input the County also provided an online survey available from October 1, 2009 through December 15, 2009.

The Committee held 16 successive meetings following the initial public input session during which the Committee reviewed each of the Plan’s elements. The Committee formed recommendations and action strategies for the Plan elements based on input from the public, County staff, and relevant experts.

The County held a second public input session on November 8, 2010 to allow residents to comment on the Plan. The Committee then held its final meeting to review the public input and finalize the Plan on November 15, 2010. The Committee presented the Plan to the Planning Board at a joint meeting held December 16, 2010. With Planning Board support, the Committee presented the Plan to the Board of Commissioners on March 16, 2011. At its March 16, 2011 meeting, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Dana Community Plan.

Planning Area Boundary

The Planning Area is located in the eastern portion of Henderson County and includes 20,796 acres of land (8.66% of the County acreage and 10.17% of the County’s jurisdictional acreage). The Planning Area’s northern boundary falls between Sugarloaf Road and US Highway 64 East. The eastern boundary follows the border shared by Polk and Henderson Counties. The City of Hendersonville and its Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) define the western boundary. The southern boundary is defined by the following features: Airport Road, South Allen Road, Upward Road, Interstate 26, and Green River (See Map 1, Planning Area Boundary (Pg. 60)).

Historical Overview, Community Beginnings

Howard Gap Road, which traverses the Dana Community Plan area, follows perhaps the oldest traveled route leading into Western North Carolina. Originally blazed by migrating herds of bison, elk and deer, the Cherokee began following the game and using the surrounding areas as hunting grounds. The route developed as the Cherokee and other Native Americans began to follow it for trade. Captain Thomas Howard, for whom the Howard Gap Road is named, is memorialized for leading the militia into a victorious battle against the Cherokee in the “gap of the mountain” above Tryon in 1776. Settlers quickly thereafter began using Howard Gap Road as the principal route to enter Western North Carolina. Most of the 65 miles of this historical road leading from Fletcher, NC into Union, SC remains intact; the exception being a steep portion of the road removed during the construction of Peter Guice Bridge (across Green River) on Interstate 26.



Howard Gap Road brought along it many of the Western North Carolina’s earliest colonial settlers. Conflicts became inevitable with settlers entering Cherokee territory. The State of North Carolina and Cherokee, in an attempt to reduce conflict between the groups, entered into an agreement known as the Hopewell Treaty (1785). The treaty attempted to establish a western boundary of colonial settlement, which passed through what are today the communities of Dana, Flat Rock, and Fruitland. Early colonial settlers’ landholdings in the Dana area did not go unchallenged. In 1793 the State officially recognized the boundary of the Hopewell Treaty through its granting of lands in the Dana area to Mr. John McMinn.

The earliest settlers within the Dana area included Gibbs, Hill, Jones, Justice, Justus, McCraw, Tabor, and Stepp families. These pioneer families settled largely east of “the Ridge” and along the Little Hungry River. The Ridge, as the area is still known to some today, follows the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains along Upward/Ridge Road.

Mr. James Dyer Justice moved into the Dana portion of the Ridge in the late 1790s to early 1800s. The Justice family’s American history can be traced back to his grandfather John Justice. John Justice and his brother James (Welsh) originally settled in Virginia in 1760, neighboring President Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. John’s son Thomas Justice married Mary Dyer and moved to the area that is now Polk County, NC where the couple had their son James D. Justice. It was probably the proximity of his parents' home to the Dana area that first led James D. Justice to the area. It was here in 1806 that James D. Justice married his wife Anthonit Thomas (daughter of a landholder in the western portion of Hendersonville) in 1806. The couple had 14 children and the family has remained prominent in the community to this day.

Mr. John Jones (1764-1860) was another early settler of the Dana area. Jones is noted for not only building one of the first grist mills but also for, in the early 1800s, building the first water-power operated saw mill in Henderson County. Both mills were located below Oleta Falls, at the foot of Golden Hill. The name Oleta reflects Native American naming of the site prior to colonization. Mr. Benjamin Merrell and his wife Alice Stepp Merrell later (1908) located “Aleeta Post Office” in the area.

The area where the grist mill, saw mill, and Aleeta Falls Post Office were located is now accessed by “Oleta Mill Trail” in the gated community of Oleta Falls. Mr. John Jones is buried in Jones Cemetery ((See See Dana Community Plan Supplemental Materials Cultural and Historic Sites Map, Site C14).

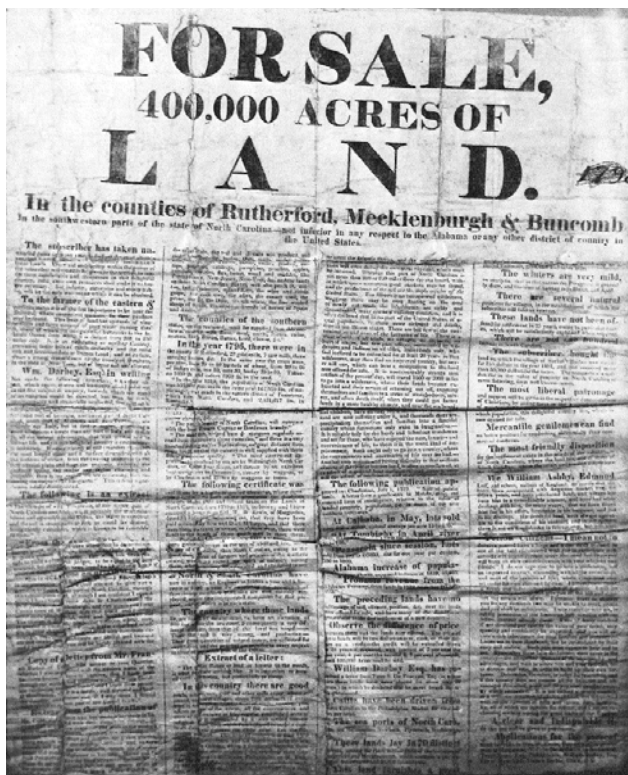


Oleta Falls today and yesterday. The photo at right, courtesy of “From the Banks of the Oklawaha Vol. II”, is of the original Aleeta/Oleta Falls Post Office and Saw Mills. Given the structures shown, the photo may have been taken as early as 100 years ago.

Other settlers of the early 1800s included Baptist Preacher Andy Gibbs and his wife Sally Dimsdale Gibbs. Preacher Gibbs came with his wife from what is now Polk County soon after the Revolutionary War and settled on the unnamed tributary of Saconon Creek which flows behind Refuge Baptist Church in Dana.

The Dana Area was, during the period from 1790 to 1840, located in the heart of United States gold mining. The US supply of gold came from mines in North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina, with what is now Henderson, Polk and Rutherford Counties, serving as the center of the activity. The area

located between Oleta Falls and Little Hungry River would, by the 1930s be commonly known as Golden Hill. Gold was being panned in the Hungry and Little Hungry Rivers even during the Depression when money and employment opportunities were scarce.



Speculation Lands handbill courtesy of “From the Banks of the Oklawaha Vol. III”.

The combination of these circumstances—the establishment of the Hopewell Treaty, the arrival of these early settlers, the location of gold among other valuable resources, and the natural beauty of the area—lead to the first mass marketing of American real estate (including lands in the Dana area). Properties within the Dana area were part of the “Speculation Lands”. The 400,000 acres of these lands covered all or parts of what is today Buncombe, Henderson, Polk, Rutherford, Gaston, McDowell, Mecklenburg and Union Counties. Mr. Tench Coxe (who held appointed positions under Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson) was the original owner of these lands, receiving them through both a grant from the State of North Carolina and through the purchase of other properties granted by the State to other Revolutionary War Officers. In 1819 Augustus Sackett purchased the “Speculation Lands”. It was Mr. Sackett who advertised the lands for sale by

distributing handbills (24 by 19 inches) in 1820 to all parts of the eastern seaboard of the United States, England, and parts of Europe. The lands were marketed for as little as \$2 per acre. James D. Justice (one of the original settlers) was hired as the commissioner, sales agent and supervisor of the Speculation Lands. He was succeeded by four (4) other Justices, including Rev. T Butler, C. Baylus, S.D., and George W. Justice (1919). Shortly thereafter the ownership of the remaining lands was settled.

Dana only received its placename at the turn of the century. In 1890 Mr. D.G. Hadley, of New Hampshire, brought his wife, son and daughter to Henderson County on the advice of their physician who recommended the pure mountain air and the wonderful year round climate. Mr. Hadley purchased property just off Ridge Road where he built the Summit Hotel and observation tower. Mr. Hadley requested and received the promise of a post office, to be located in the Summitt Hotel, when a name for the area was given. Hotel guests were invited to suggest names for the new post office. A guest recommended to Mrs. Hadley that they name the area after their son, Dana Hadley. The “Dana” name was submitted to the Federal Government and approved. The family which had given the area its name left Dana after their hotel burned. Many years later the observation tower was blown down by a storm.

The Ridge, Dana and Upward areas that comprise the Dana Community Plan have a significant past which will continue to impact this area and Henderson County in the future.