

## ***SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION***

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### ***Purpose***

Community planning in Henderson County has traditionally begun as a “grassroots” effort in response to a specific need or problem. These efforts usually result in identifying areas of the County which may be in need of zoning changes. Zoning changes may occur after much time has been spent studying, compiling information about, and examining individual issues unique to an identified small area. The most recent study of an area resulting in a rezoning was the US Highway 25 North Area Zoning Study, a small area zoning study adopted by the Henderson County Board of Commissioners in June 2005.

Henderson County adopted the Henderson County 2020 Comprehensive Plan (CCP) on July 6, 2004 (as amended through April 7, 2008). The Comprehensive Plan is the result of efforts by the community, local organizations and County Officials. The Comprehensive Plan recommends the detailed study of small areas of the County to address a range of issues including, but not limited to, zoning. The Comprehensive Plan prioritized the community planning areas based on anticipated growth and each area’s relation to the growth management strategy. The Comprehensive Plan recommends the County undertake the Etowah and Horse Shoe Community Plan first due to the marked residential and nonresidential growth in the area.

The community plan will also help implement the recommendations of the Henderson County 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The plan will be a communities-specific comprehensive plan for the Etowah and Horse Shoe Communities that outlines the future goals related to Land Use and Development, Community Facilities and Public Services, Agriculture, Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, Community Character and Design, and Natural and Cultural Resources.

### ***Process***

The process for developing the Etowah and Horse Shoe Communities Plan began with the adoption of a Communities Plan Charter by the Board of Commissioners on August 14, 2007. On September 4, 2007 the Board of Commissioners appointed the Community Advisory Committee. The Committee consisted of nine (9) community residents four (4) from the Etowah Community and four (4) from the Horse Shoe Community and one (1) liaison from the Henderson County Planning Board. The purpose of the Committee was to serve as an advisory role to the Board of Commissioners whereby it recommends policies specific to the Planning Area.

The Committee met for the first time on October 16, 2007. On November 13, 2007, the first public input session was held at Etowah Elementary School (see Supplemental Materials). The Committee met regularly thereafter for a total of 16 meetings over a 14 month period. At each meeting the Committee reviewed different elements of the plan and made recommendations. Various guest speakers attended the Committee meetings to inform them on issues related to

topic of discussion. On December 2, 2008, a second public input session was held at Etowah Elementary School to allow residents to comment on the Draft Plan.

On February 19, 2009, the Henderson County Planning Board held a joint meeting with the Etowah and Horse Shoe Advisory Committee. The Planning Board voted unanimously to send forth a favorable recommendation on the Etowah and Horse Shoe Communities Plan.

On March, 26, 2009 the Etowah and Horse Shoe Communities Advisory Committee presented the Plan to the Board of Commissioners highlighting each section and recommendation. On May 7, 2009, the Board held a public hearing on the Etowah and Horse Shoe Communities Plan. On September 16, 2009, the Board of Commissioners voted to move forward with implementing the Etowah and Horse Shoe Communities Plan recommendations.

### ***Historical Overview***

Etowah possibly gained its name from the Cherokee word, “itawa”, meaning city and Horse Shoe was name for the bend in the French Broad River. The obvious influence of the French Broad River, as the name of Horse Shoe indicates, also is reflected in the agricultural lands historically found in the bottomlands along the edges of the river.

Such agricultural lands likely invited the first white settlers known to have inhabited this area shortly after the Revolutionary War. Two (2) of the earliest recorded settlers to this area are James Johnson, a revolutionary war soldier, and his wife, Ann, who secured a land grant in 1798. Both were buried in the 1850s in the Shaw Creek Methodist Campground Cemetery.

Bowman’s Bluff, now known as Big Willow, is another settlement influenced by the French Broad (See Appendix 1, Map 4). First purchased by Elijah Williamson, a former soldier in the Continental Army, this area near Big Willow and Little Willow Creek in the vicinity of French Willow Farms overlooks the river. In this area, a post office known as “Bowman’s Bluff, N.C.” operated until 1856. Beulah Cemetery marks the location of the former Gethsemane Church of England, which was dismantled in 1923 and moved to Upward Road, where it was renamed St. John Episcopal Church.