

# PUBLIC INPUT EVENTS SUMMARY

## MEETING INFORMATION

September 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	6pm-8pm	Hendersonville Library, Kaplan Auditorium
September 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	2pm-4pm	Fletcher Library
September 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	6pm-8pm	Edneyville Community Center
September 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	2pm-4pm	Blue Ridge Community College, Thomas Auditorium
October 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022	2pm-4pm	Etowah Lions Club at Etowah Park

## OVERVIEW

There were 5 public meetings held in the fall of 2022. Staff presented the draft Henderson County 2045 Comprehensive Plan and held question and answer sessions.

## QUESTIONS / COMMENTS

### HENDERSONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

- How can we make sure the surveys taken earlier are portrayed in the plan?
  - We want to ensure that every respondent is heard in the plan- The results will be in the appendix. The draft plan is just a draft, and we are putting it back out to you all to make sure you feel like your voice has been heard. These should be reflected in the goals and recommendations.
- Will the Land Development Code change to support the Comprehensive Plan?
  - Possibly- if the Comprehensive Plan recommends changes to the LDC. However, any text amendment would go through the Planning Board and BOC, and the public would be notified and able to voice their opinion on each amendment.
- What input with the Department of Transportation went into creating the Plan?
  - The County works with NCDOT through the Transportation Advisory Committee and at the regional level. Over the last 10 years, Henderson and WNC in general have been able to get more of a voice and their fair share of funds from NCDOT towards projects.
  - NCDOT staff and staff from the French Broad River MPO were also part of the stakeholders that were interviewed during the planning process.
- Given the population growth in the County, what will be the expenditures for water and sewer?
  - MSD is a private sewer company and manage capital expenditures and rates for their system. Asheville and Hendersonville control the other water and sewer in the county, and their priorities and prices are set by them. There is a sewer system planned to serve parts of Edneyville that will be operated by Henderson County.
- What does the color coding on the Future Land Use Map mean?
  - Each color on the Future Land Use Map represents one of eight character areas with different uses and/or densities. It is a high-level map, and not supposed to be parcel specific, but could support or discourage rezonings in some areas.
- Is the Future Land Use Map set in stone?

- No- it is a draft. It could/should change as we gather public feedback. Even after adoption it is subject to amendments that could be adopted by the Board of Commissioners.
- Is the orange dotted line around the map where services will probably have infrastructure in the future or is that already in place?
  - Most of this area already has some utilities in place but it does account for some extensions in targeted areas. In the plan the USA is defined as: “An area intended to be served by utilities and other urban services by 2045. This line also accounts for the existing services as well as the relative feasibility of sewer extension from sewer providers (City of Hendersonville, MSD, Etowah, and proposed Edneyville). This area has the potential to accommodate the majority of growth within the horizon of this plan.”
- Does Henderson County have anything to do with HUD? Do they require certain density requirements etc. to qualify for grants/funding?
  - No. Henderson County does not administer HUD regulations.

#### FLETCHER

- How is the County going to accommodate all the influx of people as far as public utilities? Specifically in Mills River; large swath of land between the airport and Brevard, along 280.
  - Mills River is its own jurisdiction and has land use authority there. They just completed their comp plan process recently. It is also under MSD, a private sewer company.
- What is being done to coordinate with the City of Brevard/Transylvania County on joint ventures?
  - The County currently works with both governments regarding the Ecusta Trail. Transylvania County does not have zoning, so they do not have a comprehensive plan to refer to. Brevard does, but its limits are far from the County line.
- What is the county doing to protect the mountain faces?
  - We currently have a steep slope ordinance that limits the amount of land disturbance on steep slopes and mountain ridge protection regulations that limit tall buildings on ridges that meet defined criteria.
- Why has there not been more inter-County coordination on Planning matters?
  - Henderson County staff communicates regularly with the Land of Sky Regional Council and French Broad River MPO. Staff gets along well.
- Is this the same plan that was presented to the Board of Commissioners?
  - The draft plan was not released prior to the BOC meeting with over 400 attendees. Many attendees were under the wrong impression.
- Was this plan prepared by the County Planning Staff or by the consultant?
  - Both, it was a joint effort that involved county planning staff, consultants and input from citizens, the Planning Board, Board of Commissioners and key stakeholders.
- What is the County paying the Consultants for their services?
  - The contract was for \$145,000 and included optional tasks for additional meetings. There are four consultants working on the plan: Stewart, Syneva Economics, Fernleaf, and JM Teague.
- What were the consultants’ assumptions prior to making the plan?

- The project website includes a Community Profile that documents much of the analysis and mapping done as part of the first phase of the plan.
- What percent population increase was assumed between 2020 and 2045?
  - Population forecasts from the NC Office of State Budget & Management and SYNEVA Economics were taken into account. Henderson County's population is forecasted to add slightly more than 36,000 net new residents by the year 2045. An average of 1,450 net new residents each year. These forecasts represent a continuation of residential demand in the county. Actual population growth will vary based on the economy, infrastructure availability and local policies.
- Could you talk about land conservation?
  - There are many recommendations related to land conservation in the plan. Key recommendations include efforts to preserve strategic agricultural land and encourage the conservation of open space in new development.
- What is being done in this plan to address the affordable housing crisis in the County?
  - One of the plan goals is to diversify housing choices and availability. This section of the plan includes many recommendations to address housing in the county.

#### EDNEYVILLE

- What does Agriculture use sewer for?
  - Many agricultural operations include processing that needs water and sewer.
- Where will the wastewater treatment plant be located [within Edneyville]?
  - Edneyville has been somewhat of a misnomer, as it would most likely be centered west of Edneyville near Clear Creek.
- When will the water treatment plant begin construction?
  - Several years from now, as the State has yet to issue a permit
- What type of internet services are going to be provided for these underserved communities? [Fiber optic, wireless, 5G, copper wiring, etc.]
  - The majority of service being installed right now is fiber.
- How can I learn more about the Farmland Preservation Program?
  - Follow along with the plan process, contact staff
  - Also see p. 60 of the plan.
- Is the County planning on getting rid of the tax program for farmers?
  - No, never. Ag can be done anywhere in the County (excluding municipalities)
- What is the land value for farms/agricultural land based on?
  - Typically land for ag is valued lower than for commercial/residential. There are some programs/grants that try to help growers make up the difference in value, in order for them to prevent the sale of their land.
- Is there anything in this plan that restricts development in the floodplain?
  - The Land Development Code (zoning code) sets specific restrictions. This plan does include recommendations to decrease exposure to hazards in future development, with flooding being one of those risks.
- Is the Planning Board planning on changing zoning in the R2 and R2R zoning districts?
  - Not at this time. The comp plan will influence future decisions, but there is no current plan to change these. Any change to zoning will require additional discussion by the planning board and board of commissioners and a public hearing.

- What are you recommending to the Planning Board to change regarding density/character area classifications?
  - The plan does include some preliminary recommendations. The final density for each area has yet to be determined, but they will be addressing it at the upcoming planning board meetings.
- Is the high-density housing most likely to occur along the major roadways in the County?
  - It will be closest to existing services and the municipalities. Many of the major roadways are reserved for more intense uses that require access to the interstate.
- How many units constitutes low-density?
  - As for the character areas, this must be determined by the Planning Board. Everyone has a different definition, but we will work on density that is appropriate for the County.
- Will the Justice Academy have a sewer treatment plant?
  - The Justice Academy will be served by the Edneyville sewer project. The wastewater treatment plant will not be at the Justice Academy.
- What can residents do even sooner to encourage County commissioners to slow development?
  - When a project is going through the approval process, participate in meetings and give public comment.
- How do we do something about the roads in the County? [in relation to communication with NCDOT]
  - Contact the local office, which is a part of NCDOT Division 14. A representative from Division 14 attends the Transportation Advisory Committee. TAC meets once a month and is open to public comment. All meeting information is posted online.

#### BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- Do the character areas include corridors? [For example, The Ecusta Trail]
  - Future land use recommendations were developed for transportation corridors (i.e. US 64 and the future Ecusta Trail corridor). Follow-up studies may be needed for some key corridors.
- Why is there no Crab Creek Community Plan? [pg. 13 of plan]
  - Only five community plans were completed as each one takes at least 18 months to complete. As more plans were completed, the more divided the County became and the plans even became a basis for incorporation. All County residents are part of the overall community, and no plan can outweigh the Comprehensive Plan (legally cannot either). Other planning efforts of specific areas and for specific things have occurred and will continue.
- What does the Urban Services Area mean? And why is Etowah in an USA.
  - Urban Service Areas are areas that are expected to have a critical mass of infrastructure, including access to roads, water, sewer, and broadband. This area has existing water and sewer service and includes some area that could have sewer in 2045 due to the approved permit with the state that could be utilized to expand the system.
- How was Etowah Community Plan factored in? Concerns about all of Etowah being shown as Medium Density.
  - Commercial areas in draft Future Land Use Map were taken from the Etowah Community Plan. The Etowah Horse Shoe plan specifically prioritizes affordable housing, walkable neighborhoods, and encouraging small businesses among other things.

- What avenues would you take to improve recreation and enrichment in the County?
  - Parks system is underfunded.
  - Some parks have not been updated in 20 years.
  - Maintenance is an issue.
  - A recreation master plan is recommended in the draft plan but need to follow through with funding for maintenance and construction.
  - Inclusive parks are needed.
  - County should coordinate with municipalities to address recreation. Some parks that need maintenance the most are in municipalities.
- What does this plan do to give people a voice?
  - The plan is meant to capture feedback and clarify where development should occur.
  - The plan also discusses adjusting approval processes for certain types of development. This could include converting some Special Use Permits to conditional zonings that would allow for more interaction between boards, developers, and citizens.
- Comments on public meetings/engagement.
  - Staff discussed outreach efforts that involved High School and Blue Ridge Community College students as they are not well represented in the survey results.
  - Could add call out box on what outreach efforts were done or feedback that was heard from young people in the plan.
- Affordable housing
  - Many areas identified as MDR, NA, CC, and even EI could be appropriate for affordable housing.
- Big idea to create an “emerald necklace” around the whole county by applying low density zoning.
  - Staff responded that this can only be accomplished through ensuring density within the USAs, which is what is shown in the plan. The Plan is not necessarily prescriptive for zoning but gives a lot of ideas for implementation including creating options for farmers in order to protect farmland.
- Will the plan indicate where agricultural and rural land should remain over time?
  - Agricultural/Rural areas on the Future Land Use Map show areas of strategic importance to the county’s agricultural system. These could be areas where allowable densities are reduced or where voluntary purchase of development rights program is focused. More discussion would be needed on these topics to implement the plan.
- Question about East Flat Rock, near NC 25/I26 connector. Why is it labeled “Industry” instead of “Commercial” on the Future Land Use Map?
  - Industry includes a mixture of uses including agriculture. Zoning would be decided after the plan is adopted and would include a public input process.

## ETOWAH

- Is there anything in the Plan to get internet to the more rural parts of Etowah/the County?
  - There is a need to increase competition between private providers, grant opportunities, and federal funding. The County’s taskforce is working with providers and the state.
- Will NCDOT be involved [in the potential golf course development]?

- Yes – if certain number of units are proposed then a traffic impact analysis will need to be done. The developer is required to bear the cost of all additional processes, not public tax money.
- Is there a plan to change zoning in Etowah?
  - Every rezoning has at least three public meetings; staff meeting, Planning Board meeting, and a public hearing.
- Who regulates the [Etowah] sewer?
  - The NC Department of Environmental Quality regulates all sewer systems.
- Where does the sewer line discharge?
  - Currently discharges into Gash Creek and then into the French Broad River. The approved state permit is for it to flow directly into the French Broad. We have zero control over Etowah Sewer.
- Etowah residents have concerns over the age of the sewer system with anticipated population growth
  - The current sewer would have to be repaired and expanded to accommodate growth.
- People really want to know specific zoning/density numbers (i.e., 1 unit/acre)
  - Planning Board will work on deciding those numbers, but it will still be a range since character areas are not the same as zoning.
- Resident suggested to use studies from other places/Counties to determine density numbers
- People suggest to not use the word “urban” when describing the Urban Services Area
  - The Planning Board can discuss changing the name.
- Strongly favor shrinking the USA, specifically around Etowah
  - Planning Board will discuss this.

## GOALS EXERCISE RESULTS

Attendees also voted on their support for the draft goals on display boards, by indicating whether they supported, didn’t support, or were neutral about the proposed goals. Takeaways from this exercise include:

- **Most supported goals:**
  - Coordinate development near existing community centers.
  - Protect and conserve rural character and agriculture.
  - Promote healthy living, public safety, and access to education.
- **Goals that received less support:**
  - Stimulate innovative economic development initiatives, entrepreneurship, and local business.
  - Diversity housing choices and availability.
- **Neutral votes:**
  - Prioritize multi-modal transportation options & connectivity.
- **Commentary:**
  - Strong support for coordinating development near existing centers and protecting rural character and agriculture. This is in-line with the survey results from earlier in the planning process.
  - Some concern over economic development and housing goals. This is likely tied to potential concerns over impacts of new development.