SWANNANOA SMALL AREA PLAN UPDATE

Gillian Phillips, AICP and Shannon Capezzali, AICP

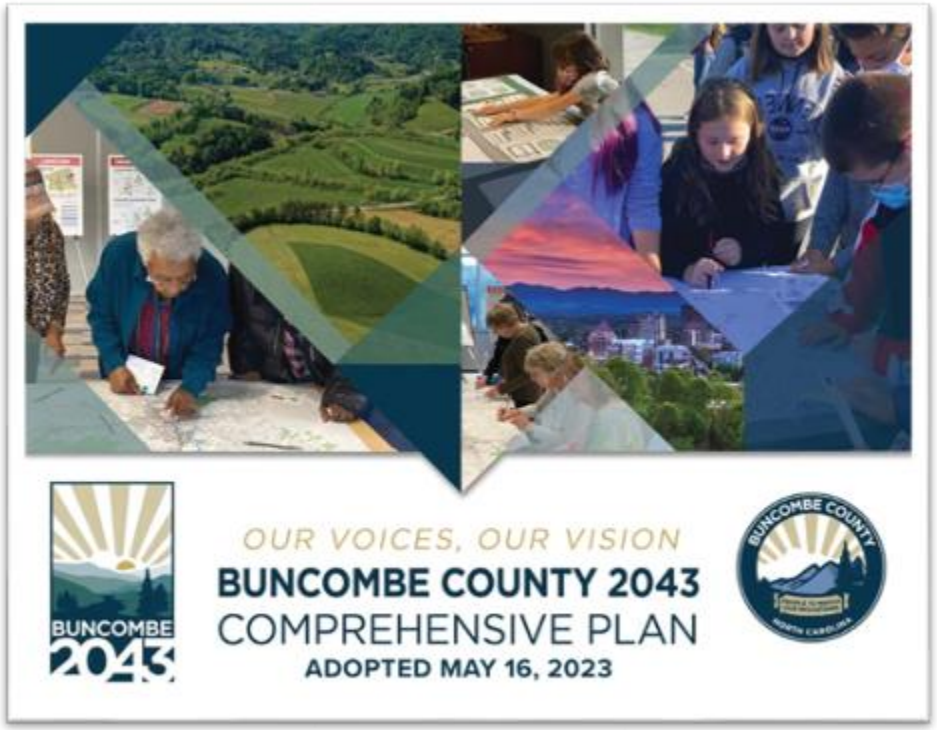
October 20, 2026

Board of Commissioners Briefing

Agenda

- Comprehensive Plan Vision for the Future
- The Planning Cycle and Small Area Plans
- Helene and Swannanoa
- Engagement
- Vision for Swannanoa
- Policies and Actions in the Plan
- Implementation
- Alignment with Other Plans
- Remaining Timeline
- Future Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Comprehensive Plan Vision for the Future

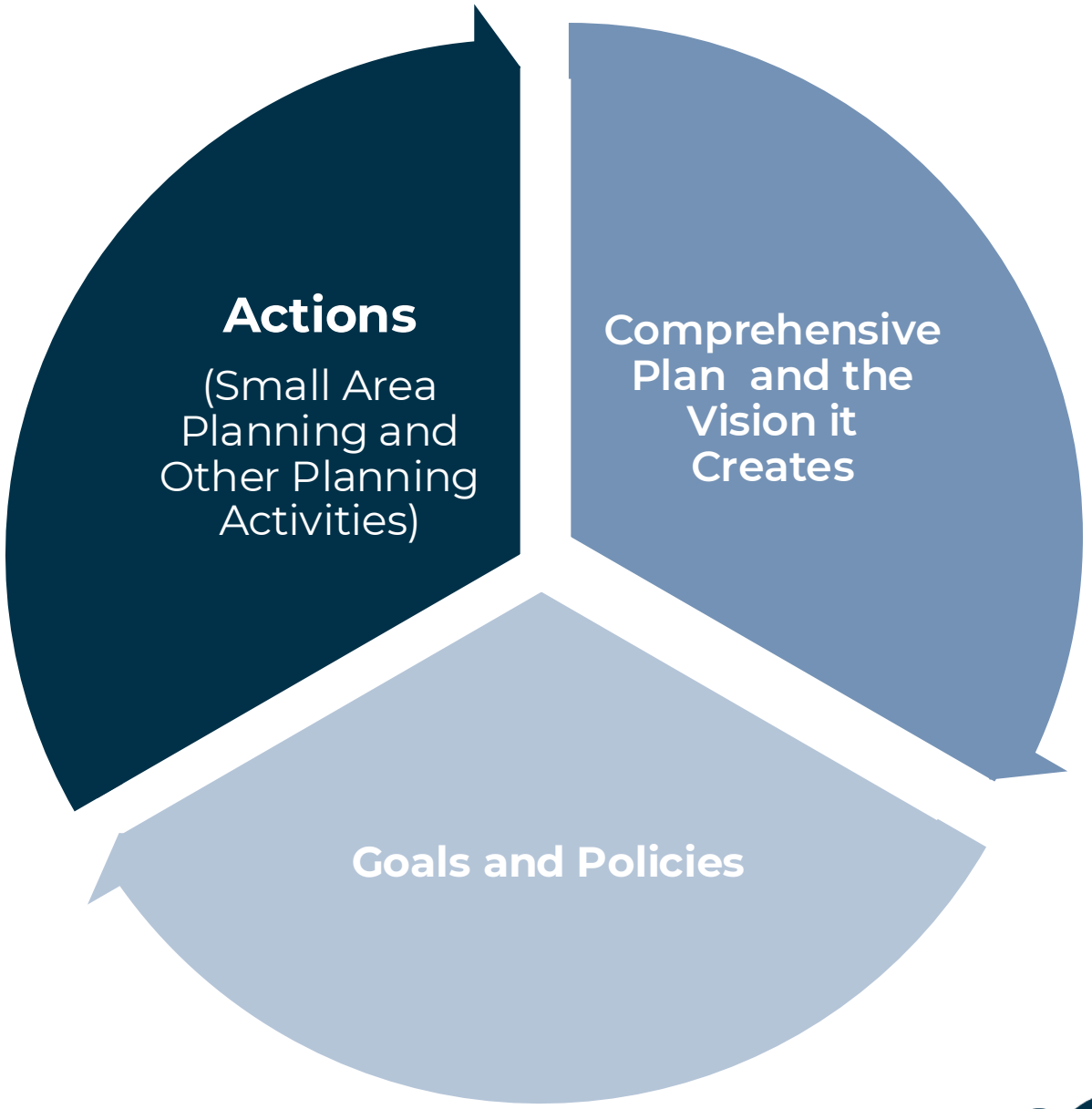


Vision Themes express the ideal aspirations of the Plan

and

the priorities and critical outcomes the County is striving to achieve.

The Planning Cycle





Helene, resilience, and a focus on Swannanoa


2023
1st Comprehensive Plan adopted
2024
T.S. Helene hits Extreme damage in Swannanoa
2025
Swannanoa Small Area Plan Process begins
2026
Swannanoa Plan Adoption and Update Comprehensive Plan
2027 & beyond
Implementation & Other Small Area Plans

Engagement Overview

1,862 community member responses

24 Technical Expertise Committee members

38 local groups and organizations engaged

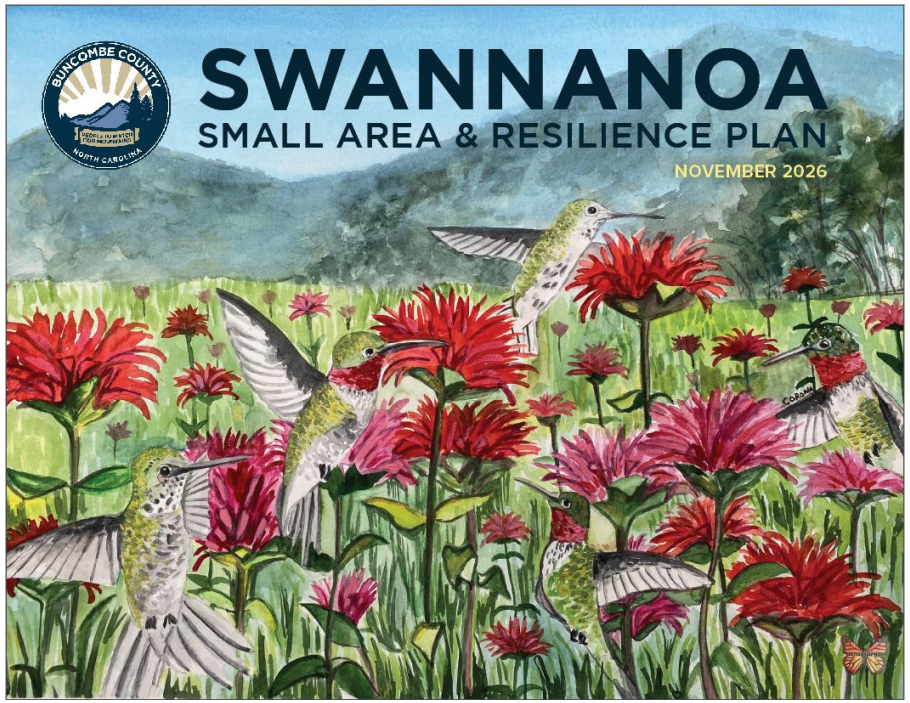
6 phases of public engagement

- Boundary Poll – May 2025
- S.W.O.T Analysis – Aug 2025
- Design Workshops – Dec 2025
- Vision poll – Jan 2026
- Maps, policies, actions poll – May 2026
- Draft Plan Exhibits – Aug 2026

September 1 – Draft Plan completed



Community Focused Engagement and Involvement



Cover: Carolina Corona



Back: Craggy Bald, Jerald Pope

Engagement Key Takeaways

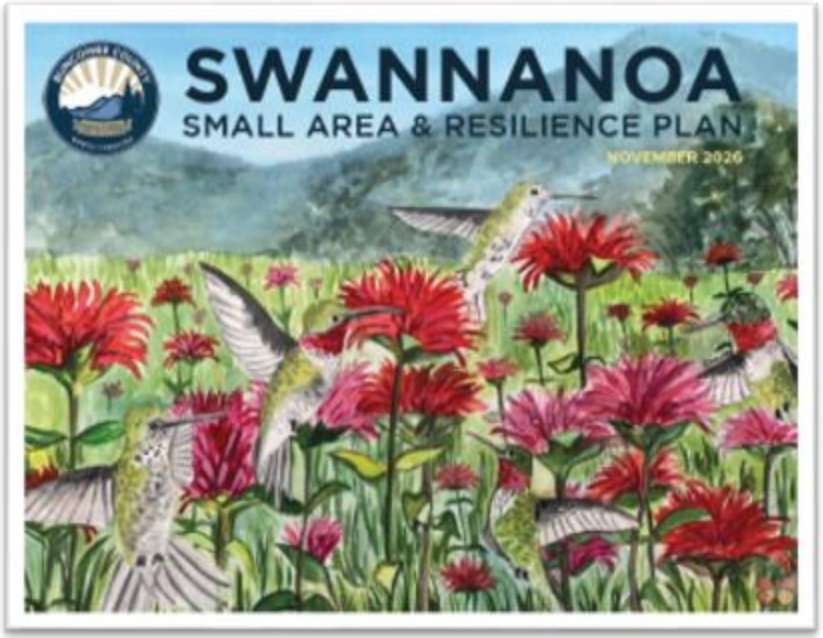
2% MINOR	26% MODERATE	72% WANT MAJOR CHANGES

1. The community wants MAJOR changes to development regulations to focus on disaster mitigation
2. Nature, walkability, parks, and affordability are top themes.
3. Downtown Swannanoa infrastructure should be people-oriented
4. Sidewalks are a major need
5. Greenways are strongly supported


Nature
Walkable
Parks
Community
Vibrant
Affordable
Green
Bikable
Sports Fields
Skating
Quiet
Equality
Thriving
Inclusive
Trees
Connected
Hip
Rural
Peace
Homey
Resilient
Recreation
Antiques
Art
Library
Sustainable
Greenville
Bookstore
Gta
Family Friendly
For Locals
Liquor
Central
Welcoming
Small Town
Robust
Crisis Center
Nature
Ymca
Shops
Sidewalks
Friendly
Free
Quaint
Fun
Dynamic
Post Office
Beautiful
Buildings
Inspirational
Fewer Houses
Housing
Clean Rivers
Slow Down
Flourishing
Party Spaces
Better Roads
Local Business
Accessible
Library
Better Transportation
Homeless Shelters
Main Street Vibes
Green
Housing
Food Security
Connected People And Nature
Appalachian Culture
Multi-modal
Parks
Clean
Homey
Small Brewery
Thriving Outdoor Community
Stronger Community Visions
Welcoming
Healthy Environment
Connected
Empowered
Automatic Technology
Sustainable
Community
Affordable
Festivals
Skating
Hiking
Visibility
Equality
Comfortable
Bikable
Library
Sustainable
Growing
The Same
Old Community
Beacon Of Hope
Community Garden
Free Expression
Therapy Dogs
Adventure
Greenways
Art
Thriving
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Main Street Vibes
Homeless Shelters
Better Transportation
Local Business
Accessible
Party Spaces
Better Roads
Farmers Market
Sidewalks
Walkable
Sports Fields
Pedestrian Friendly
Inclusive
Central
Family Friendly
Homeless Support
Entertainment
Incorporated
Grassroots
Purpose
Together
Road Landscaping
Balanced
Civic Amenities
Art
Beautiful
Post Office
Multi-cultural
School Supports
Dynamic
Fun
Quaint
Authentic
Better Restaurants
Vibrant
Buildings
Quiet
Walkable
Skating
Gta
Safe
Parks
Bookstore
Trees
Inclusive
Enjoyable
Safe
Thriving
Progressive
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Automatic Technology
Sustainable
Community
Free
Welcoming

Swannanoa Small Area Plan Vision

- Engaged and welcoming community
- Honors its heritage and character
- Safe, connected community where people can live, work, and play in harmony with the surrounding mountains and river valley.
- Working together, protect our natural resources and waterways for future generations, strengthen our infrastructure
- Ensure opportunity and belonging for all who call Swannanoa home



Action Table Format

CHALLENGE: The issue facing the community.
POLICY: The principles, or procedures that the government will use to guide decision-making.
ACTION: The specific step or activity to help address the challenge and make the Plan's Vision a reality.

ACTION	TYPE	TIME	RESOURCE	LEAD/ PARTNER	IMPACT
Action 1.1.1	REGULATORY	Medium	Low	Planning Dept.	Low
Action 1.1.2	PARTNERSHIP	Long	Medium	Emergency Mgt.	High
Action 1.1.3	FUNDING		High	Permits Dept.	Medium

Find it on page 17

Actions in the Plan

31 Hazard & Resilience

11 Farm, Forest, & Conservation

22 Growth & Redevelopment

8 Transportation & Connectivity

10 Future Land Uses

13 Economic Development

4 Health & Recreation

10 Infrastructure & Energy

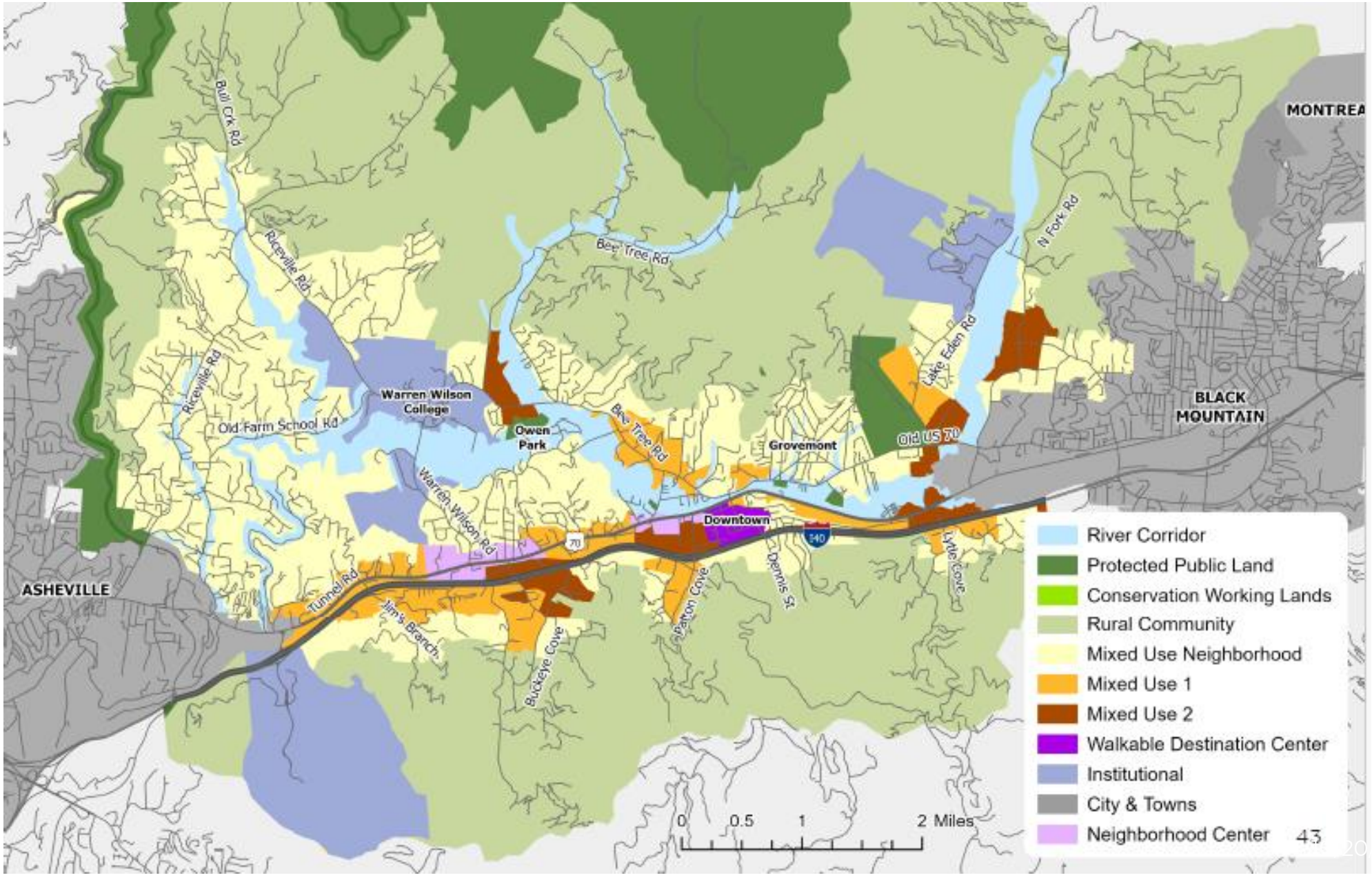
EXAMPLES

H. Action 1.2.1 Strengthen regulations in the Special Flood Hazard Area,

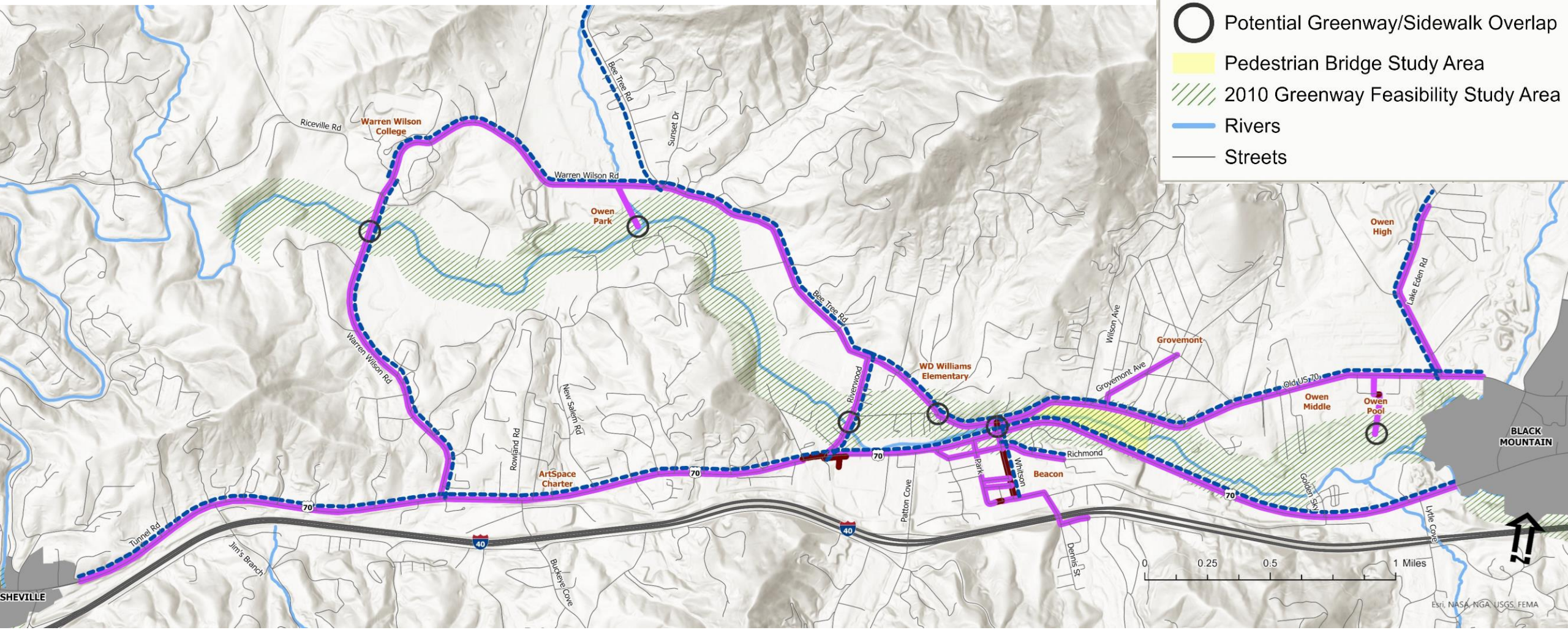
G. Action 1.3.4 Increase the maximum allowed density in the R-1 zoning district to encourage infill development

E. Action 1.2.1 Reduce regulatory barriers to development in key growth areas by....

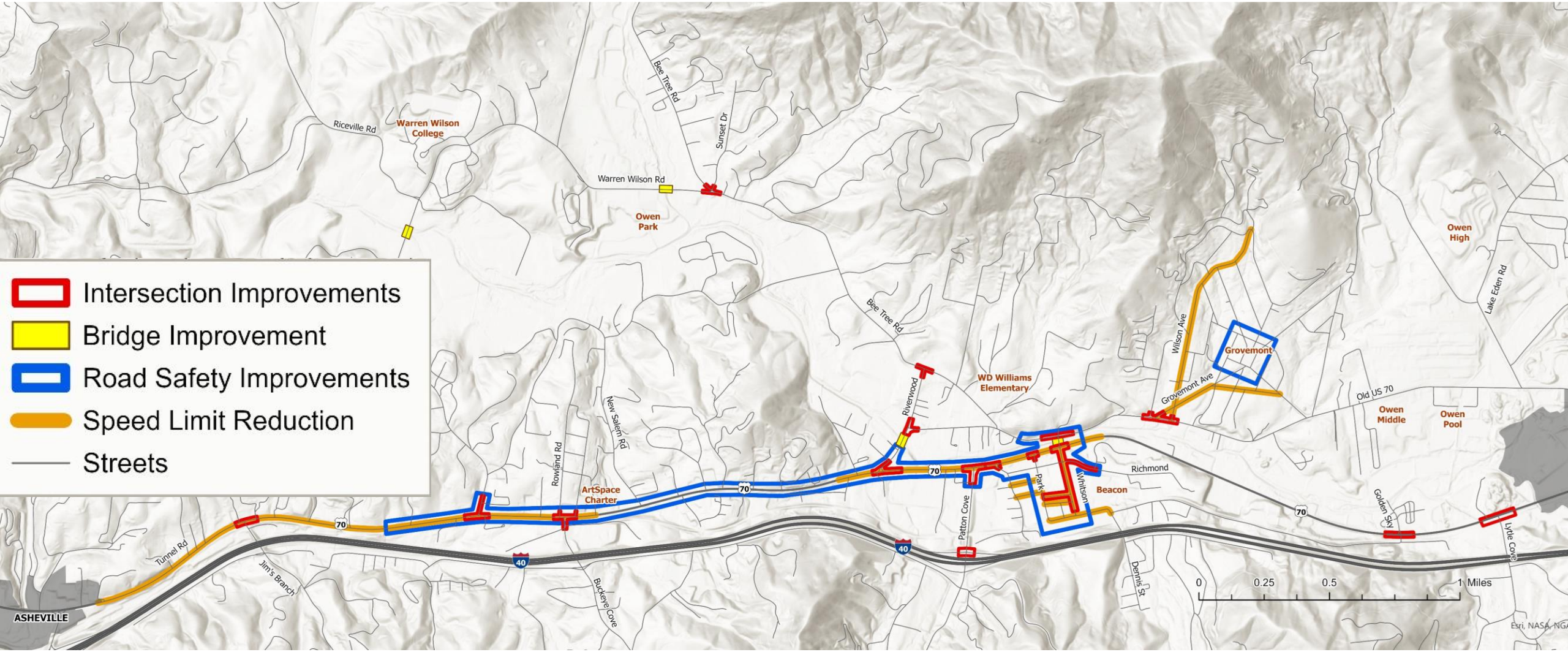
Future Land Use Map



Sidewalk & Bike Priority map



Transportation Improvement Recommendations



Action Overview

- 70% of Swannanoa Plan actions will have a county-wide impact
- Actions implement Goals, Policies, and Actions from the Comprehensive Plan
- 39% of all actions are near-term (5-year) actions

Action Type	Swannanoa Action	County-wide Action
Partnership	23	7
Planning	4	6
Regulatory	6	36
Funding	0	14
Outreach	0	13
TOTAL	**33** *(30%)*	**76** *(70%)*

5-Year Action Plan

= *Already working on it*

= *Impact is countywide*

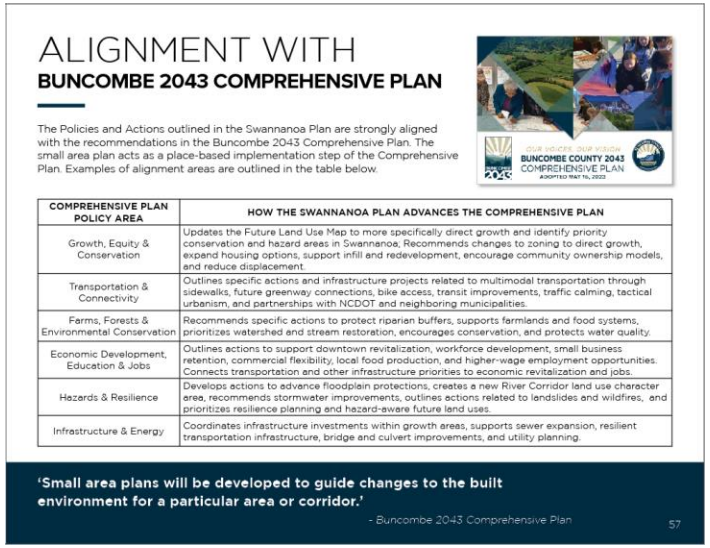


	ACTION GROUP	ACTION CHAPTER & NUMBER
A	Update the Flood Development Ordinance	Hazards 1.2.5 and 1.2.6 Farms 1.1.1 and 1.1.2
B	Join the Community Rating System (CRS)	Hazards 1.2.2
C	Increase public awareness of infill development options, hazard risks, and the bona-fide farm agriculture exemption	Growth 1.3.2 and 1.4.2 Hazards 1.3.5 Farms 2.1.3
D	Update the Zoning & Subdivision Ordinances: FLUM alignment	Growth 1.3.4 Land Use 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 2.1.1 3.1.1, and 3.1.5 Econ. Dev. 1.2.1
E	Update the Comprehensive Plan GEC map and character descriptions to match the Swannanoa Plan FLUM map	Econ. Dev. 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 4.1.1, and 4.1.2 Land Use 1.1.1 Hazards 1.5.1
F	Create River Corridor standards	Hazards 1.1.1, 1.1.3, and 1.5.2
G	Update transportation infrastructure standards in the Zoning Ordinance	Transportation 1.1.1 Infrastructure 1.1.2 and 1.1.4
H	Update Steep Slope & Flood standards in the Zoning Ordinance	Hazards 1.1.2, 1.3.1, 1.3.4, 2.2.4, 2.2.5, and 2.2.6
I	Work with NCDOT and other partners to implement Swannanoa Plan goals	Transportation 1.1.2 and 1.1.3. Infrastructure 3.1.2
J	Support wayfinding	Econ. Dev. 1.1.1
K	Develop a MHP Owner Awareness Campaign	Land Use 3.1.2
L	Support Health & Recreation Goals	Health & Rec. 1.1.1 and 1.1.4.

Alignment and Working with Other Plans

BUNCOMBE COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION

BUNCOMBE COUNTY
PEDESTRIAN PLAN



ALIGNMENT WITH
BUNCOMBE 2043 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

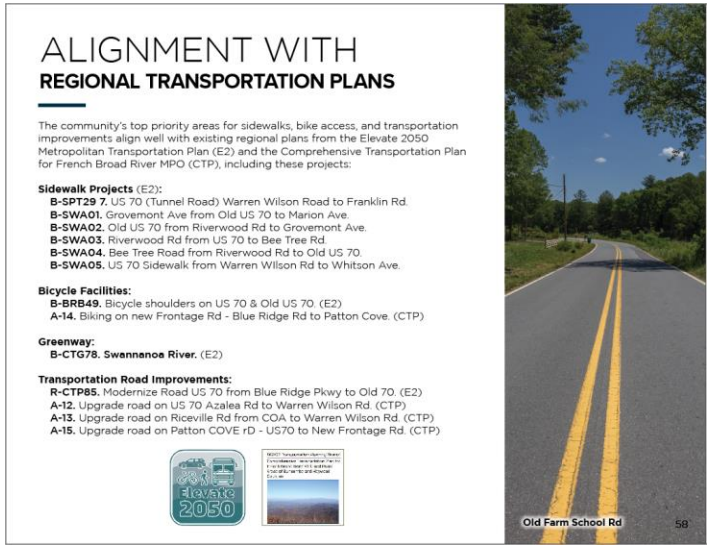
The Policies and Actions outlined in the Swannanoa Plan are strongly aligned with the recommendations in the Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan. The small area plan acts as a place-based implementation step of the Comprehensive Plan. Examples of alignment areas are outlined in the table below.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICY AREA	HOW THE SWANNANOA PLAN ADVANCES THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Growth, Equity & Conservation	Updates the Future Land Use Map to more specifically direct growth and identify priority conservation and hazard areas in Swannanoa; Recommends changes to zoning to direct growth, expand housing options, support infill and redevelopment, encourage community ownership models, and reduce displacement.
Transportation & Connectivity	Outlines specific actions and infrastructure projects related to multimodal transportation through sidewalks, future greenway connections, bike access, transit improvements, traffic calming, tactical urbanism, and partnerships with NCDOT and neighboring municipalities.
Farms, Forests & Environmental Conservation	Recommends specific actions to protect riparian buffers, supports farmlands and food systems, prioritizes watershed and stream restoration, encourages conservation, and protects water quality.
Economic Development, Education & Jobs	Outlines actions to support downtown revitalization, workforce development, small business retention, commercial flexibility, local food production, and higher-wage employment opportunities. Connects transportation and other infrastructure priorities to economic revitalization and jobs.
Hazards & Resilience	Develops actions to advance floodplain protections, creates a new River Corridor land use character area, recommends stormwater improvements, outlines actions related to landslides and wildfires, and prioritizes resilience planning and hazard-aware future land uses.
Infrastructure & Energy	Coordinates infrastructure investments within growth areas, supports sewer expansion, resilient transportation infrastructure, bridge and culvert improvements, and utility planning.

'Small area plans will be developed to guide changes to the built environment for a particular area or corridor.'

- Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan

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ALIGNMENT WITH
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The community's top priority areas for sidewalks, bike access, and transportation improvements align well with existing regional plans from the Elevate 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (E2) and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan for French Broad River MPO (CTP), including these projects:

Sidewalk Projects (E2):
- **B-SPT29 7.** US 70 (Tunnel Road) Warren Wilson Road to Franklin Rd.
- **B-SWA01.** Grovemont Ave from Old US 70 to Marion Ave.
- **B-SWA02.** Old US 70 from Riverwood Rd to Grovemont Ave.
- **B-SWA03.** Riverwood Rd from US 70 to Bee Tree Rd.
- **B-SWA04.** Bee Tree Road from Riverwood Rd to Old US 70.
- **B-SWA05.** US 70 Sidewalk from Warren Wilson Rd to Whitson Ave.

Bicycle Facilities:
- **B-BRB49.** Bicycle shoulders on US 70 & Old US 70. (E2)
- **A-14.** Biking on new Frontage Rd - Blue Ridge Rd to Patton Cove. (CTP)

Greenway:
- **B-CTG78. Swannanoa River.** (E2)

Transportation Road Improvements:
- **R-CTP85.** Modernize Road US 70 from Blue Ridge Pkwy to Old 70. (E2)
- **A-12.** Upgrade road on US 70 Azalea Rd to Warren Wilson Rd. (CTP)
- **A-13.** Upgrade road on Riceville Rd from COA to Warren Wilson Rd. (CTP)
- **A-15.** Upgrade road on Patton COVE rD - US70 to New Frontage Rd. (CTP)

Old Farm School Rd

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Purpose of small area plan is to do more detailed land use planning in a specific area, including transportation, economic dev., and future land uses.

Timeline

- July 13 – Final Steering Committee Meeting
- September 1 – Draft completed
- October 19 – Planning Board Review
- October 20 – Commissioner Briefing
- November 16 – Planning Board Public Hearing
- November 17 – Commissioner Public Hearing

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

- Flood Ordinance Revisions (in process) – *(1st Phase Completed)*
- E-911 Addressing Ordinance – *(completed)*
- Watershed Ordinance – Working On
- Stormwater – Working On
- Erosion Control
- Hillside Development Standards

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Development review efficiency changes (BOA)
- Increase by-right options to reduce regulatory barriers
- Modernize Standards (lighting, buffering, parking) – *Working On*

HOUSING

- End mandatory single-family zoning (completed)
- Incentivize missing middle housing
- Reduce regulatory barriers to housing construction – *Working On*

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

1. **Stormwater Ordinance Text Amendments:** RFQ for consultant submitted to Procurement
   - Scope: Research, analyzing stakeholder feedback, and draft ordinance
   - RFQ Process ≈ 4 months
   - Consultant Work ≈ 12-15 months
2. **Watershed Ordinance Text Amendments:** Current Draft Version 3
   - NCDEQ Review/Approval required once final draft complete
3. **Parking/Statement of District Intent, Transportation/Road Standards, Lighting, Manufactured Home Park Ordinance**
   - Worked with Legal Department given legal framework of Downzoning bill

PROCESS OVERVIEW



PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS:

- 5 Step process covering research through implementation
- Inter-departmental and agency technical feedback, Stakeholder Impact
- Incorporation of an Impact Analysis
- Planning Board work sessions
- Commissioner briefing

Future Small Area Plans

	Process Planning	Existing Conditions Study	Plan Development	Manage-ment & Board Review	Implement
RURAL CENTER	3 months	3+ months	6-8 months *(Rural center)*	3+ months	Existing staff cannot develop and implement plans at the same time
SMALL AREA PLAN CORRIDOR PLAN	3 months	3+ months	12-18 months *(Small area and Corridor plans)*	3+ months	

QUESTIONS