

Economic Development

Recommendation # 1: Continue to nurture and support a proactive Economic Development Commission.

- Provide for implementation of recommendations as proposed by Economic Development Commission in June 1, 2010 report (*Appendix i*)
- As other reports are developed ensure they are given full consideration.

and Public Services

- 1. Work to ensure that law enforcement/emergency services grow proportionately with increase in population**
 - Diversity within agencies should mirror diversity in the community
 - As population continues to change, assessment of services offered by the departments and community needs should be evaluated
 - See that all departments within law enforcement/emergency services agencies are housed in facilities that increase departmental efficiency
 - Explore ways to increase response efficiencies
- 2. Ensure that salaries for law enforcement agencies are competitive with those in surrounding counties and municipalities.**
- 3. Improve communications coverage throughout Macon County**
 - Upgrade current 9-1-1 equipment as needed
 - Locate new or improve existing telecommunications towers so that no area in the county is without emergency communication capability
- 4. Support volunteer services in Macon County**
 - Provide incentives for volunteers
 - Increase funding as needed for mandatory training requirements

Public Sewer:

- 1. Take steps to ensure the sewer system is at adequate capacity in advance of need.**
 - At 70% capacity, begin planning for future expansion or construction of new facilities.
 - At 80% to 90% of full capacity, based on the growth rate in effect at the time, begin to secure funding and implement the expansion plan or construction of new treatment facilities.
- 2. Consider impact that future extensions of the sewer system will have on the rural character of Macon County.**
 - Extend sewer system only to those areas capable of supporting commercial or large scale residential development in partnership with municipalities inside the county.

Public Water:

- 1. Investigate and pursue establishment of secondary water sources.**
- 2. Take steps to ensure the water system is at adequate capacity in advance of need.**
 - At 70% capacity, begin planning for future expansion or construction of new facilities.
 - At 80% to 90% of full capacity, based on the growth rate in effect at the time, begin to secure funding and implement the expansion plan or construction of new treatment facilities.
- 3. Consider impact that future extensions of the water systems will have on the rural character of Macon County.**
 - Extend public water only to those areas capable of supporting commercial or large scale development or those existing subdivisions/neighborhoods in jeopardy of losing their potable water supply.

Land Use and Environment

1. The county **may consider developing an ordinance aimed at minimizing the affects of stormwater runoff **in conjunction with existing ordinances.****

- The ordinance should be based on best management practices and **may** take into consideration the following:
 - Culvert placement and design.
 - Lot sizes versus slopes.
 - The percent of disturbed area allowed on lots.
 - The percent of impervious surfaces allowed on lots.
 - Requirements for vegetative retention.

1. The county **may regulate all construction involving land disturbance for residential and commercial construction in the following ways:**

- The County **may** incorporate construction standards into all existing ordinances **as appropriate**, as well as in future ordinances dealing with land disturbance. The standards **may** regulate cut and fill slopes over a certain vertical height and steepness. All constructed slopes over a certain vertical height **may** be regulated.
 - Placement of fill material should meet minimum criteria:
 - The area upon which the fill is to be placed should be stripped and grubbed, and all vegetative matter should be removed.
 - A bench should be constructed at the toe of the fill.
 - The fill material should be free of organic material and vegetative matter.
 - Fill material should be placed in lifts
 - Fill material should meet compaction standards

1. Maintain and improve the quality of surface and ground water in Macon County through proper management of point and non-point pollution sources.

- Meet State and Federal standards for potable and discharge water.
- Protect groundwater by restricting septic tank systems to appropriate land forms and soil types.
- Meet state standards for septic system installation and inspection.
- Steer future development towards “soft” approaches to storm water management.
- Design drinking and waste-water systems to accommodate “worst case” scenarios for supply and demand.
- Encourage participation in State and Federal stream-bank restoration and vegetation retention programs. (NC Watershed Enhancement Program)
- **Consider incorporating** GIS technology to verify and manage wells, onsite wastewater systems, and resources for future planning.

2. Encourage development which will **minimize** unacceptable effects on water quality.

1. Ensure that the Economic Development Commission includes agriculture in its economic development plans for Macon County.

- Consider a central farmer's market/distribution point for products produced in Macon County
- Consider making County economic development incentives more readily available to agriculture related businesses.

2. Consider a County/State employee to serve as an organizing agent within the agricultural community to promote profitable agriculture. The agent would help "brand", market and distribute Macon County agriculture products and develop a "farms to school" program where County schools serve locally produced food in cafeterias.

3. Promote agriculture education

- **Support Macon County Schools' efforts in their agriculture education services.**
- Encourage SCC, NC Cooperative Extension Service and NC Agricultural Department to offer classes in:
 - Identifying new products and marketing strategies
 - Business planning and management
 - Grant writing
 - Estate planning and other legal issues relevant to farmers
 - Agricultural technical advice including sustainable forest management

4. Promote farmland preservation

- Consider establishing a farmland protection fund
- Promote voluntary agricultural districts
- Ensure that the Present Use Valuation taxation program is fully utilized to best protect farmland.

1. Consider Impact on rural character in all development decisions—of roads and bridges, of schools and other public facilities; commercial and residential.

2. Support communities in their efforts to preserve their rural, historical, and cultural heritage, where feasible.

Education and Recreation

First 5 years (2011-2015)

- *1. Identify and resolve all past due maintenance requirements that create safety and/or major repair issues if not done in a timely manner. (See Appendix(s) ii&iii)**
- *2. Fund preventive maintenance programs to reduce the cost of repairs.**
- *3. Upgrade Franklin High School to bring it into the 21st Century as part of a longer range plan to expand the facility to accommodate projected growth over the next 20 years. (See detailed recommendations on two options and the estimated cost impact in Appendix ii).**
- *4. Begin lobbying for State and Federal changes in educational programs to allow more local flexibility in planning the school year, method of teaching and technologies used.**
- *5. Consider creating a technology review committee that will update the sub committee and the School Board annually on changes, opportunities and effectiveness for utilizing virtual teaching technology and methods at the lower grade levels (K-12 and below).**
- 6. Seek to obtain funding for the new building at Southwestern Community College.**

Second 5 Years (2016-2020)

- *1. Identify methods for expanding Highlands K-12 school and/or enhancing its capacity by using a hybrid virtual learning program. Both Nantahala and Highlands could benefit from utilizing for example, an English teacher at Franklin High School who could teach via virtual technology to all three schools at the same time.**
- *2. Depending upon the demographics in the Nantahala area, begin the planning to build a new K-12 school there or review how a hybrid virtual learning program can enhance the effective capacity of the current school.**
- *3. Either begin the planning for a new High School for the Franklin area or expand the existing facility along with enhancing the effective capacity by using virtual learning technologies and methods.**

4. **Determine the need for and consider** construction of a new recreational center which **could include** basketball courts/community meeting center/indoor swimming pool complex, preferably **constructed** in cooperation with a business partnership.
5. Continue to have a standing sub committee review demographics and trends and make planning modifications for the master plan.

Third and Fourth 5 Year Segments (2020-2030)

***1. Continue to look demographic, trends and virtual technology to identify needs for expansion and/or acquisitions to create new capacities or efficiencies for schools and recreation.**

With all the uncertainty, it would be difficult to plan beyond a 5 to 10 year range at the current time.

Transportation and Housing

1. Provide input to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to encourage safe roads while minimizing impact on the mountain landscape, environment, cultural/historical sites, and prime agricultural land.

- Design so the natural landscape is dominant
- Use diverse means to achieve safety, including access management, traffic calming, accepting of slower speeds, turn lanes - not just standard widening and realignment.
- Identify problem areas and correct using the diverse methods above
- Provide for pedestrian and bike safety.
- Design to avoid sprawling development, encourage development around existing commercial corridors. Retain rural character.
- Preserve sense of place.

2. Recognize that development and communities, influence roads and vice versa. Coordinate planning for roads with planning for appropriate development.

- Include communities in decision making and respect their wishes.
- Coordinate road design and improvements with planned and existing land use.
- Access management needs to be implemented on commercial corridors that will experience growth in the future to preserve mobility.
- Adequate access should be provided to all institutions.

3. Promote growth and development patterns that reduce trip length, emissions and congestion

- **Consider development of** multi-modal transportation planning.
- Integrate development review with transportation planning. Review subdivision ordinance for pedestrian friendly transportation (bike, transit, walking) and consider implementing.
- Encourage growth of local and regional public transportation. Support locally developed plans.
- **Encourage construction of** streets and roads for connectivity (eliminate cul-de-sac concept, keep transportation moving).
- Improve mobility options for aging and disabled populations.
- **Consider** incentives for development closer to existing commercial centers around Franklin and Highlands. Eliminate sprawl on main thoroughfares.
- Encourage and promote mixed use development.
- **Encourage the creation of a** Greenway Master Plan. (explore Rails to Trails).
- Promote sustainability through making transportation choices readily available.

4. Continue to support the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) by delegating staff to the two committees, the Transportation Advisory Committee and the Technical Coordinating Committee, which sets the regional transportation priorities for Macon, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Swain and Jackson Counties.

5. Update the NCDOT Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) as the Macon County Comprehensive Plan is updated, or following any major land use changes within the municipalities or the County.

Housing

1. **Consider ways to improve sub-standard housing for betterment of health, safety and community**

2. **In partnership with municipalities, promote high density and cluster housing in areas where this development can best be accommodated.**

- Encourage public and private partnerships to expand water and sewer.
- Encourage mixed use development that integrates residential and commercial facilities to meet the daily needs of residents and reduce the need for travel.

3. Encourage and promote a variety of housing opportunities for all ages and income levels.

- First time home buyers
- Rental home choices
- Retiree
- Assisted Living
- Affordable Housing Options
- Walkable/Livable Communities
- Custom/Luxury Homes
- Vacation Home

Healthcare/Childcare/Senior Citizens

Senior Citizens/Healthcare

***Situation:** The health of our County Residents is less than ideal. There currently is not a lot of funding for Prevention / Wellness. Additionally, a large group of seniors within the county want more activities than just Senior Games.*

Recommendations:

1. Encourage creation of a Healthy Active Environment in Macon County by building Active Living Communities

- Add more Sidewalks as roads are upgraded, as feasible.
- Add Bike Trails as roads are upgraded, as feasible.

2. Work with Chamber of Commerce on Worksite Wellness

- Encourage employers to encourage employees to be active
- Encourage employers to facilitate fitness activities prior to work, after work, and at meal breaks

3. Consider seniors when developing fitness centers and activities to facilitate healthier and longer lives for our residents

- Continue to support senior games
- Plan for seniors at all levels, including field trips, activities and events for Alzheimer's, etc.
- Work with existing recreation facilities to promote senior health, i.e. reduced rates for seniors, etc.
- Encourage new facilities to be senior friendly, affordable and have adequate room for expansion

***Situation:** There are currently many people that are underserved medically in Macon County, even with programs provided by the Free Care Clinics, the Medication Assistance Program, the Angel Medical Center Emergency Department, Ladies Night Out and the Macon County Public Health Center.*

Recommendations:

- 4. Support the Free Care Clinics, the Medication Assistance Program, the local hospitals, Ladies Night Out** *(a partnership between Macon County Public Health and Angel Medical Center to provide free monthly programs on a variety of health topics for women with an emphasis on the importance of regular health screenings)* **and the Macon County Public Health Center**
 - Support the development of a Collaborative Network to coordinate the services being provided to the low-income, uninsured county residents by the safety net providers that currently exist or that may be developed in the future.
 - Assist in writing grants and providing letters of support for any grants that are available for these services and other services that can assist the underserved medical needs of our residents.
 - **Provide financial support as feasible** that can be used to provide services in any of these areas, at times when other sources are insufficient to meet the needs.
- 5. Continue to support the Macon County Health Department as it strives to improve quality of care by implementing management tools that ensure the use of best practices; manage high-risk patients and high-cost services that incorporates accountability in accordance with General Statutes.**

***Situation:** Currently there are several specialists that are routinely needed by Macon County residents that are not available in Macon County in sufficient quantity to meet those needs. These include Orthopedic Surgeons, Urologists and Rheumatologists. The need for these specialists is heightened by the current age of our residents. Angel Medical Center and Highlands Cashiers Hospital are the primary recruiters of physicians to Macon County, but many times the first year recruitment costs for a specialty can be \$400,000 or more, which is a very big commitment for anyone, but especially small hospitals.*

Recommendations:

- 6. Support local hospitals as they apply for grants and evaluate whether there is any way to financially support any recruitment efforts or other efforts they may initiate for the good of the community.**

Overall Comments related to Seniors in Macon County:

A large group of seniors lie in the “gray area” between being “wealthy” and qualifying for Medicaid. This group of individuals is underserved. Not all seniors in Macon County are in the “second home” income bracket. Seniors, like so many others in Macon County are feeling the effects of the recent economic downturn.

Seniors (55+) account for approximately 35% of the population in Macon County. This segment of the population is significant to our county. On a national level, the senior citizen population is expected to grow significantly. By 2020 we are expected to realize a 36% population increase in people 65+ in America. (Report on Aging) We must be ready for this “silver tsunami” and realize the effects it will have on the future of our county.

Situation: *In Macon County, there is adequate nursing home space today, but there is a shortage of assisted living facilities and independent living facilities. There are currently two or more entities evaluating Franklin as a potential site for an independent living facility. Additionally, Grandview is evaluating the possible expansion of its assisted living facility. With the shortage of independent living and assisted living facilities, many of our residents and part-time residents look to other areas of the state and nation for their home. This is a negative for both our residents as well as economically for our county.*

Recommendations:

- 7. Promote livable, senior friendly communities - the vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age (report on aging). This in turn saves them and “us”, being taxpayer’s, money in the long run.**
 - Work to make Macon County a “Livable & Senior Friendly” Community.
 - Work with developers, realtors and contractors - educate them on senior friendly housing communities.
 - Educate businesses on avenues they can explore to become “Senior Friendly.”
 - Develop appropriate housing options for seniors - Macon County’s workforce has a high number of senior citizens. This group of citizens needs appropriate housing options that are affordable.
 - i. Conduct a feasibility study for appropriate and affordable senior housing options in Macon County.
- 8. Encourage assisted living or independent living facilities in Macon County.**
- 9. On at least an annual basis, the Elder Care Committee should devote a meeting to address the adequacy of senior facilities within the County.**

Situation:

Seniors in the Nantahala community would like to be more involved with the senior services that Macon County has to offer.

Recommendations:

- 10. Encourage enhancement of senior recreation in Nantahala.**
- 11. Coordinate events in Nantahala and Highlands with Senior Center in Macon County.**
- 12. Investigate methods to include Nantahala and Highlands residents in Macon County Senior Center activities.**
 - Advertise upcoming events
 - Assess needs

Childcare

Encourage the local government to provide on-going support and assistance as feasible for the Childcare industry in Macon County, now and in the future.

- 1. Strongly consider implementing recommendations set forth in the “Childcare in Macon County” Interim report (Jan 2010). These recommendations represent the minimum requirements for addressing the current shortage of child care capacity in Macon County.**
- 2. Ensure that the EDC makes childcare a top priority when recruiting new business into Macon County.**
 - Work with surrounding counties that have incorporated childcare mechanisms into their economic development efforts.
 - **Consider developing** financial incentives for providing childcare
 - Financial incentives are also needed to sustain the small home centers currently serving the county, to encourage the growth of new child care centers in Macon County, and to encourage individuals and businesses to become child care providers. The goal is to eliminate the current shortages in preschool child care capacity and to stimulate and maintain a healthy local childcare growth rate.
- 3. Provide on-going support for the Childcare industry in Macon County**
 - **Consider** an endowment fund for the Macon County childcare industry in the future. Solicit public and private financial support, as well as grants to build a community endowment **within the constraints of existing law.**
 - Use annual endowment income for purposes such as training for private childcare providers, creating new or upgrading existing facilities, and to create financial grants for new providers during the first three years of operation.

- 4. Explore the implementation of a central intake for childcare providers.**
 - Work with surrounding counties, finding out who currently uses the central intake system for childcare.
- 5. Ensure the continuation of the Childcare Issues committee**
 - Childcare Issues Committee will hold meetings periodically to assess and monitor the progress of the childcare industry in Macon County, while creating public awareness of childcare issues as the county grows.
- 6. Macon County Government should work in co-operation with MPP to address future expansion needs.**
 - Assist MPP in expansion needs such as adequate property location.
 - This process should be accompanied by a public education process to private childcare providers, notifying them that MPP has a niche in the childcare market, as they provide childcare to those who could not afford services in the private childcare sector.
- 7. Consider subsidizing education for Private Childcare Providers in small business.**
 - Many childcare providers quit not because they have lost their love for children, but for reasons directly related to their lack of knowledge in small business operations.
 - Explore Grant opportunities
 - Partner with SCC or nonprofit organization, to create and fund an educational program designed to help local childcare providers understand the financial and management aspects of running a small business, and also to understand the complex requirements of the NC child care agency requirements. Consider providing local grants or financial support for the child care providers who successfully complete the educational program. A part of this program will be a resource center for local providers to obtain information and technical assistance for specific business challenges for their childcare operations.

Work with State Legislators in finding suitable alternatives to current childcare licensure requirements.

- 8. Work with state Legislators in developing suitable alternatives to the Star Rating and temporary child care licensure systems that currently apply to a new business.**
 - Send a formal request to our State Representatives, Senator, and the State Legislature as soon as possible requesting action to reduce the time required for a new center to obtain a temporary license and to base the provisional Star Rating for a new child care center's temporary license on the Star Rating for which it is applying instead of the lowest One Star rating currently assigned that penalizes new center's financial support under the NC Child Care Subsidy Program.

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