

Introduction

From 2000 -2030 the population of our county is expected to increase by 56%, rising to approximately 43,356 people (*Southwestern Commission*, 7). This projected growth will place considerable demands on our land, services and natural resources. It is our responsibility as citizens of Macon County to plan for these demands now. By taking the initiative to plan, we ensure that our land is developed responsibly, our precious natural resources are preserved and the services we have in place are adequate for our population.

The comprehensive planning process was undertaken by the Macon County Planning Board beginning in April of 2009. This undertaking came at the direction of the County Commissioners following the January 30, 2009, Planning Board retreat. The article by Colin McCandless of the Franklin Press published in February of 2009 provides an excellent account to the birth of the Macon County Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Board Retreat

Planning board mulls long range vision

By Colin McCandless

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The Macon County planning board discussed the possibility of developing a comprehensive plan for the county at its planning board retreat Jan. 30 in Franklin.

Representatives from various entities including some of the county department heads, the county manager, Towns of Franklin and Highlands, watershed council, the school board and the economic development commission weighed in on the prospect of a long range plan.

Based on their dialogue, the planning board came to a consensus they would work on a framework and outline for a comprehensive plan, while continuing to address other immediate issues facing the county.

As the meeting opened, Commissioner chairman and planning board liaison Ronnie Beale told attendees he felt Macon County is at a cross roads due to current economic hardships and needed to examine what direction they want to go and where they want to be.

“Commissioners believe the planning board needs to become more than just an ordinance-making machine,” Beale said. He said the planning board had worked on long range visions before and perhaps now is the time to restart that process.

Addressing where the planning board is now and where it should be headed, chairman of the planning board Lewis Penland said the board needs to be looking out 20-25 years ahead.

Penland added that they wanted a direction and the support of local leaders to plan for future infrastructure. He emphasized the importance of collaborating with the towns, commissioners, etc., on any long-range plan.

Director of Permitting, Planning and Development Jack Morgan, who has been assisting the planning board during the search for a county planner, also said he felt the county is at a crossroads economically.

“We’re here because we share a common goal,” Morgan said. “That common goal is that we are all residents of Macon County. This is our county. It belongs to us, it belongs to our children. We have to prepare and plan for our children.”

Morgan went on to say that they have a choice to either by design “be a shining gem in Western North Carolina,” or let things evolve on their own.

He said the planning board has put a lot of hard work into developing ordinances and they are now at the point where they need to determine exactly, “Where we are, where we want to go and how do we get there? And that’s why we need your input.”

Retreat facilitator Vicki Greene of the Southwestern Commission (council of government serving the seven westernmost counties asked the representatives of the Towns of Franklin and Highlands to address where they are now and where they are headed in terms of water and sewer projects and planning.

Town of Franklin administrator and planning board liaison Michael Grubermann referenced the Unified Development Ordinance implemented by the town in 2007 that provided a major update from the previous zoning code.

Both Grubermann and Franklin mayor Joe Collins, who spoke later, addressed the preliminary search for an alternate source of water other than Cartoogechaye Creek, currently the sole source of the Town’s water supply.

Grubermann said the Town of Franklin is working on a major sewer improvement to establish equalization basins, which will help avoid further sewer back ups and spills near the Little Tennessee River Greenway.

Despite the slumping economy, commercial development seems to be holding its own, and in residential development news, a 64-unit apartment complex has just been proposed, he said. They also are examining a small annexation to the town.

Highlands mayor Don Mullens told retreat attendees he thought this past year had been a watershed year in cooperation between the towns and Macon County commissioners.

Mullens said Highlands’ major upcoming projects primarily involve tackling infrastructure issues. He said they need to develop their sewer program (only 25 percent of the Town is connected to sewer), they have stormwater problems, particularly in the center of Town and are working on a stormwater program and ordinance, and they are in the process of doing a parking circulation study.

Additionally, one of the other big issues they face is trying to get funding for removing the silt that has been filling their lakes. They are also in the process of developing a Unified Development Ordinance, which they aim to finish by next year.

Asked if the Town of Highlands is anticipating a revenue shortfall like the county, Mullens said they are presently in excellent financial condition. Grubermann said the Town of Franklin is also doing well at this point.

What’s in a Comprehensive Plan?

Retreat participants discussed what a comprehensive plan entails, how it is developed and worked to identify what issues the planning board should address if they were tasked to fashion one.

Greene said a comprehensive plan is the formal document that identifies goals for growth and sets the context for regulation. Once adopted it becomes a policy guide for decision-making or anything that has to do with physical development of a town or county.

In determining the context for development, it covers everything with the geographic area of the county. A comprehensive plan connects multiple concerns including infrastructure decisions (i.e. water, sewer, utilities), long-range economic, environmental and social sustainability, linking

transportation and transit planning to land use, farmland preservation, water quality, emergency management, etc.

Chairman of the Watershed Council Bob Wright said he believed a comprehensive plan would comprise our collective vision of what we wanted Macon County to be 20 years from now.

Planning board member Susan Ervin said if they undertake another future land use plan, they need to have steps towards implementation, something not included in past long-range visions. “We need a comprehensive plan that would lead towards action,” Ervin said.

Barry Clinton, vice chairman of the watershed council, said that there needs to be an overarching goal (i.e. improving quality of life), and the action plan would have component parts that fit into that overall vision.

Planning board member Larry Stenger said when they worked on the “2025 Vision,” it was not successful because people were not sold on the need for a comprehensive land use plan.

With this long-range plan, Stenger suggested they go the public, share their collective vision and ask for the public’s vision. He also emphasized that they present it in a way the public can understand and provide an educational component on a comprehensive plan.

Tax administrator Richard Lightner reminded the group that between 40-50 percent of Macon residents are part-time (the tax office sends out tax bills to all 50 states) and they must consider that in their growth projections.

Stenger added they should also consider that there could be a potential influx of part-time residents who decide to retire and move here permanently, another possibility for which they must plan.

Morgan said they should examine what attracts such a diverse ownership and population to Macon and consider if that’s something we need to maintain.

Watershed review board chairman Jim Waldroop said water and farmland preservation are his main concerns for a long-range vision.

Health director Jim Bruckner said infrastructure is the most important issue in his mind. He explained that Macon County has the highest number of new septic permits in the state and that public health will likely do 400 plus wells this year, which would put them in the top ten percent in the state. Bruckner said thought should be going into technologies for solid waste disposal.

Member Karl Gillespie said they need to protect the area’s natural resources and preserve the beauty that draws tourists and second home residents here.

Clinton added that they should factor in the affects of climate in the comprehensive plan when they examine topics such as water resource planning. He noted that there has been a significant reduction in precipitation the last few years, with 2007 marking the driest year on record.

He commented that the decrease in available water supply enhances the need for additional water sources.

Kuppers said a comprehensive plan should also assess current fire rescue and Emergency Services systems to see what they will need to change, if anything.

Solid Waste Management director Chris Stahl said he would like solid waste disposal to be included in any comprehensive plan.

Penland added that other elements of the plan might entail cultural preservation and identity.

After identifying issues, Greene then went around the room and asked planning board members and others attending the retreat whether they wanted to do a comprehensive plan.

Economic development commission chairman and planning board member Mark West said he thought they should do a comprehensive plan.

Planning board member Al Slagle said while they do need to consider a long-range plan, it is an overwhelming task and they still had pressing issues to address such as a potential steep slope ordinance. He added that he would be in favor of identifying issues for the comprehensive plan but not doing the implementation aspect.

Penland said the planning board ultimately gets its direction from commissioners, but suggested the option of creating a subcommittee to examine the comprehensive plan while the board works on other issues.

Kuppers said he supported the idea of a comprehensive plan, and that if the county continued with a patchwork quilt approach to planning, “we will always be reactive.”

“My history tells me planning comes at a cost—but it usually pays off,” Kuppers said.

Beale said he felt the time is right for the planning board to move forward and suggested its members consider the key components of a comprehensive plan and make recommendations to commissioners.

Asked for his opinion on the comprehensive plan, Bruckner commented, “I think it’s necessary, but it should not ride on the back on the planning board.” He suggested the planning board identify the plan and then have other groups and entities help.

Stenger said they do need a comprehensive plan, but that it must deal with areas such as state mandates and penalties and added that public input and education is critical to the process.

Ervin commented that they need a comprehensive plan to serve as a framework or guideline for other specific actions, but cautioned getting bogged down in generalities. She recommended developing an outline with the help of professional staff direction.

Planning board member Alan Marsh agreed with others that they could potentially work on the priority components of a long-range vision while simultaneously addressing issues such as steep slopes, which he said should be examined on a local level.

Grubermann said a comprehensive plan needs to be done, and suggested that perhaps a consultant could assist the planning board in writing the draft. He also recommended they work on it concurrently with other tasks.

Board member Pierson agreed with Penland’s idea of forming a subcommittee to address the comprehensive plan.

Planning board members Gillespie and Evelyn Owens both said a comprehensive plan is important and necessary, but they should not focus solely on the long-range vision. Gillespie said they should address stormwater and steep slope issues now amidst a climate of decreased development.

Long-Range Plan: What comes next?

When discussing the next steps for a prospective comprehensive plan, Greene said those involved in the process would need to work on gathering information from the Towns and other entities on existing sewer and water capacities, and plans for expansion. They would also need an inventory of community water systems available from the Division of Water Quality.

Wright said he felt the pressing issue was what they want Macon County to be in 20 years. “Until we answer that question we cannot move forward,” Wright said.

Beale commented that until you have the information to know where you are (water, sewer, slide maps, etc.) you cannot determine a vision. He said they needed to examine how much the county can grow with existing infrastructure and explore Macon County’s capacity for growth.

Asked what educational infrastructure information would be helpful for a comprehensive plan, Beale, who serves as one of the school board liaisons, said the school board could provide an update on population projections. He noted that the school population continues to increase, despite the economic decline.

He tasked Kuppers with getting a current enrollment figures and growth projections update from Southwestern Community College, which continues to grow more than expected.

Planning board members and other retreat participants also agreed that farmland preservation and protection would be an integral component of any long-range county vision. They discussed various farmland preservation strategies and possible incentives the county can give to protect farmland and not develop it.

Citing available resources to planning board members as they move forward and consider the prospect of a long-range plan, Greene referenced the Region A ‘Tool Box’ guideline book developed by the Mountain Landscapes Initiative.

Greene said its content, with sections on farmland preservation, sustainability, affordable housing, steep slopes, etc., is designed to give developers, planners and officials the tools to develop responsibly. She said she would provide copies of the ‘Tool Box’ document to planning board members, Morgan and others potentially involved in the comprehensive planning process.

She also provided handouts on workforce data for different sectors of the economy, growth projections and other information that might be of benefit to the planning board as they consider future planning recommendations.

Beale commented that other avenues of information include the Healthy Carolinians of Macon County (completed the 2007 Comprehensive Community Health Assessment).

Ryan Sherby of the Southwestern Commission reminded attendees that the Jackson County’s comprehensive transportation plan is available online at www.regiona.org.

Retreat participants determined that the EDC, watershed council and planning board chairmen would increase communication and reference the agendas and minutes from each other’s meetings.

The planning board decided they will examine the components and structure of a long-range plan and determine what elements to include, while continuing to address issues such as steep slopes.

In closing the meeting, Penland told retreat participants, ‘This is a historical moment to have this many people—from Highlands, Franklin, commissioners and everybody here. I feel a lot better about the planning board and I feel we have direction now.’

General Purpose of the Macon County Comprehensive Plan

This plan is intended to serve as a decision making guide for governing boards now and in the future. The Comprehensive Plan is a living document that acknowledges the balance between facilitating change within our county, while preserving the community traditions and natural beauty that makes us proud to be “Maconians”. The goals and objectives included within this plan are non-regulatory. They serve as a “playbook”. It will be up to elected officials now and in the future to choose which, of the plays they wish to call. This “playbook” establishes the “vision” that citizens of Macon County have for the future and recommendations as to how that “vision” can be upheld.

Mission Statement of the Macon County Comprehensive Plan

The mission statement for the Macon County Comprehensive Plan, as reflected through the public input process is as follows:

“Work together as Maconians to create a dynamic plan that will guide long-term growth and development within the county. Through taking the initiative to plan now, we insure the integrity of our mountain heritage will be preserved, welfare of the citizens will be maximized, our natural environment will continue to flourish, and the economic vitality of Macon County will be sustained, all in ways that benefit the current population as well as generations to come.”

The mission statement, through the following guiding principles, creates the foundation for the Macon County Comprehensive Plan.

1. Preserve our mountain heritage
2. Maximize the welfare of our citizens
3. Allow the natural environment to flourish
4. Sustain economic vitality and allow our economy to grow in way that does not compromise the rural heritage, and pristine natural environment of Macon County.

Preserving our Mountain Heritage

Both natives and newcomers share a common love for Macon County. This common love has become evident as Macon County has continually remained a place that each group is proud to call home. Over the years we have worked together to create a heritage of honor and pride that is unique to our county. The comprehensive plan takes into consideration this priceless heritage. Planning now allows our heritage to be preserved for generations to come, so they too can experience Macon County as we have.

Maximize the welfare of our citizens

Quality of life is determined by how well you live your life. Do you live in clean safe housing? Are you receiving the proper medical attention when you’re sick? Are your children attending good schools? Quality of life issues such as these will be directly affected by population growth. Realizing that land use is not the only aspect of our society that is affected by population growth, the citizens of Macon County felt that questions such as these need to be addressed in the

comprehensive planning process. Education, recreation, healthcare, economic development, childcare, senior citizens, public services and housing are all elements that contribute to our quality of life and have been addressed in this plan aside from land use and transportation. The availability and level of service provided within each of these areas should grow proportionately with the increasing population. The comprehensive plan provides recommendations to ensure this happens, and attempts to address any problems currently being experienced within these elements, that jeopardize the welfare of our citizens.

Allow the natural environment to flourish

The natural environment in Macon County and Western North Carolina is an asset which we cannot replace. Our mountains, rivers, wildlife and fertile lowlands create a landscape that remains unchallenged for beauty anywhere in America. We must work together to ensure that the beauty of our landscape is preserved and the natural assets in Macon County are protected.

Sustain economic vitality and allow our economy to grow in way that does not compromise the rural heritage, and pristine natural environment of Macon County.

Growth and development, while essential for economic sustainability should take place in ways that are respectful of the landscape, sensitive lands and natural resources. Many of our key environmental assets are now threatened by the unintended consequences of attracting a large amount of people and development to the area as fast as possible. Decision makers on every level, from elected officials to developers and individual property-owners, are often perplexed by what seem to be competing demands from long-time landowners, newcomers, farmers, developers, realtors, environmentalists, property rights advocates, builders and contractors. The comprehensive plan will help to provide the effective tools needed for implementing approaches that support a healthy economy, strengthen our mountain community, and assure quality of life for all citizens for generations to come (*Southwestern Commission*,4).

How this plan should be used

The comprehensive plan for Macon County contains recommendations from each of the following elements:

1. Land Use/ Environment
2. Healthcare/Childcare/Senior Citizens
3. Economic Development/Public Services
4. Transportation/Housing
5. Education/Recreation

Public Input Committee

The recommendations included within each element of the plan serve as a guide for local officials to use when making decisions regarding infrastructure, education, transportation and others. Future decisions based on specific recommendations contained within the comprehensive plan will ensure that the vision of the people for Macon County is upheld. Governmental agencies, such as the NCDOT (North Carolina Department of Transportation) are now rewarding comprehensive planning efforts in processes such as the State Transportation Improvement (STIP) program. The comprehensive plan shows agencies like the NCDOT that we, as a county, are thinking progressively and have a vision of where we want to be in the future. In turn, agencies like the DOT will be more willing to invest their time and money in working with the county toward the accomplishment of a common goal, which upholds the overall vision.

The Comprehensive Plan, aside from being a tool for governmental officials, is a guide for the public as well. The comprehensive plan provides the citizens of Macon County with the opportunity to understand the county's long term intentions. Not only does the plan paint a picture for our future, it allows citizens to see where we are now and the road we have taken to arrive at this point, with respect to our population, economy and land utilization.

The Planning Process

The Comprehensive plan was developed following direction given by the Macon County Board of Commissioners to the Planning Board in January of 2009. Upon receiving this critically important task, the Planning Board decided to include the citizens of Macon County from the beginning. Thus, the board began holding their monthly meetings in communities across the county. From Otto to Nantahala, citizens of Macon County watched as the Macon County Planning Board built the Comprehensive Plan from the ground up. In May of 2009 at the Cowee Community Center, a "skeleton" of elements to be included in the plan was introduced. The planning board felt the elements selected for this plan were representative of all areas within our county that future population growth would directly affect. Once the "skeleton" was complete, the Planning Board then decided how to proceed with completing the recommendations to be included within each element.

Sub-committees, one to each element were hand picked by the planning board and tasked with completing these recommendations. These sub-committees were finalized in September of 2009 at the Scaly Mountain Community Center. These committees were made up of individuals felt by the Planning Board to be experts on the elements of the plan for which they were chosen. A planning board member was assigned to each sub-committee as well, to serve as a liaison from the committee to the board. The committees were diverse, made up of both male and female members

of all ages. Members were chosen from all over Macon County, including Nantahala and Highlands. These individuals donated countless hours as they worked together in completing the recommendations for each of their respective elements. Listed below are the committees and the members who served on each. The estimated time each committee spent working on their assigned element has been calculated in work hours (meetings x length of meetings x members).

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Time (hrs.)</u>
Land Use And Environment <i>9 mtgs. @ 2 hrs. x 9 members</i>	Sharon Taylor Jamie Stamey Al Slagle Bob Wiley Jim Waldroop Sue Waldroop John Lupoli Bobby McCollum Joe Cooley	152 work hours
Economic Dev./ Pub. Services <i>9 mtgs. @ 2 hrs. x 9 members</i>	Chris Hanners Mike Grubermann Trevor Dalton Warren Cabe Evelyn Owens David Hubbs Mark West Dan Rogers Nelse Bates	152 work hours
Transportation/ Housing <i>9 mtgs. @ 2 hrs. x 9 members</i>	Kim Angel Pat Muse Tom Ritter Ryan Sherby Karl Gillespie Susan Ervin Emory Crawford Reggie Holland	152 work hours
Education Recreation <i>4 mtgs. @ 2hrs. x 14 members</i>	Bobby Bishop Larry Stenger Jim Breedlove Dr. Dan Brigman Dr. Connie Haire Seth Adams Matt Bullis Gary Shields Terry Bell Terry Bradley Chris Baldwin Julia Waldroop Selwyn Chalker	

Emma Jean Taylor
Bill Van Horn

120 work hours

Healthcare/Childcare/Seniors

6 mtgs. @ 2 hrs. x 9 members

Tim Hubbs
Alan Marsh
Jerry Hermanson
Sheila Jenkins
Rhonda Blanton
Kathy McGaha
Dorothy Crawford
Vince West
Susie McCoy

108 work hours

Public Input

14 mtgs. @ 1.5 hrs x 7 members

Derek Roland
Bobby Koppers
Lewis Penland
Jack Morgan
Lamar Sprinkle
Larry Stenger
Evelyn Owens

147 work hours

831 work hours

The sub committees began meeting in October of 2009, while the Planning Board continued discussing the Comprehensive Plan at their monthly board meetings in Communities across the County.

Public Input

The Public input committee played one of the most important roles in the Comprehensive Planning process. This seven member committee divided into groups and began traveling to community centers and special interest groups throughout the county; beginning in October of 2009 (these meetings were separate from the planning board meetings). At the meetings, the public input committee gave citizens in attendance demographic projections for Macon County's future. Taking into consideration the projected growth, citizens began to realize how important planning for our future was. They shared with the committee aspects of their communities and county which they wanted to see preserved. Input gathered over the course of these meetings served to create an overall "vision" of how the citizens wanted Macon County to develop in the future. Comments taken from the meetings were put into a formalized document and distributed back to the sub committees working on the plan. Input gathered at the community meetings combined with the survey results are the basis for all recommendations contained within the Comprehensive Plan. Listed below are the Special Interest groups and Communities to which the committee traveled.

<u>Group/Community</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Estimated Attendance</u>
Scaly Mountain	10/05/09	16-20
Cowee	10/26/09	20-25
Upper Cartoogechaye	10/27/09	15-20
Pine Grove	11/02/09	12
Otto	11/02/09	10-20
Nantahala	01/04/10	20-25
Burningtown	02/15/10	20-25
Highlands Mountain Top Rotary	10/26/09	15-25
League of Women Voters	11/02/09	25-35
Franklin Daybreak Rotary	11/10/09	40-45
Keller Williams Realty	11/17/09	12-15
Veterans	01/11/10	20-25
Kiwanis Club	02/09/10	40-45
Board of Realtors	02/18/10	30-40

Community Meeting Summary's

SCALY MOUNTAIN/FLATS TOWNSHIP

The Public Input Committee traveled to Scaly Mountain/Flats Township on October 5, 2009. This was the regularly scheduled community meeting for this area. Approximately 16-20 people were in attendance. Citizens of the Flats Township placed high emphasis on preserving the environment and rural character of the area. Box stores and heavy public transportation would take away from the rural character of Flats Township, therefore this type of growth unfavorable. Protecting the water quality in Macon County was an issue the citizens felt would remain important as the future approaches. Citizens acknowledged Macon County has been working to accomplish this through avenues such as watershed protection.

Highway 106 provides major ingress/egress to the Highlands Community and Flats Township. The citizens of Flats Township felt this route needs to be enhanced, as traffic volume will only increase in the future. Citizens notified the input committee that transfer trucks had recently been prohibited from traveling through the Cullasaja Gorge to Highlands. This has put even more pressure on Highway 106.

Citizens of Scaly Mountain/Flats Township wanted to see jobs come to Macon County. Citizens felt that any new industry coming into the county should locate near Franklin where public water and sewer is available. Citizens felt that the EDC should continue to use Macon County's beauty and natural resources as a tool for attracting industry to the area. Education was extremely important to the citizens in attendance. As Macon County continues to grow SCC should grow proportionately and continue to provide the high level of education it currently does according to the citizens. They also felt that WCU should consider a satellite campus in Macon County, due to the hardships created on commuters that travel back and forth numerous times during the week to the main campus.

Services offered to seniors in Macon County are excellent, and the citizens felt they should continue to grow as the population does. The citizens would like to see more readily available information on the services that are currently being offered, so they can take advantage of them. Better cell phone reception for Flats Township and more affordable housing options were topics the citizens of Flats Township felt should be addressed.

COWEE COMMUNITY

The Public Input Committee traveled to Cowee Community on October 26, 2009. This meeting was well attended by community members having 20-25 people. Citizens of Cowee Community wanted to see the environmental, agricultural and historical aspects of Cowee Community preserved. Citizens felt that the Cowee and Oak Grove communities should be protected by some form of designation. If it is not possible for the communities to be protected in their entirety, the historic districts should be preserved via designation of some sort. Cowee School and the West Mills District provide two examples of historic landmarks to Macon County. Preserving the historic district of Cowee Community was the community's number one goal.

Cowee Community does not want to see their rural character compromised. Citizens of Cowee Community feel that Cowee should grow at the level they want it to, rather than letting future growth determine that level for them. The citizens felt that the expansion of Highway 28 is a threat to the rural character of the community. Citizens suggested that the results of the MLI Toolbox

charette be exploited. In viewing these results, it becomes evident how important social culture, landscape, beauty, agriculture and history are to Northern Macon County.

Citizens want measures in place to ensure that growth does not decimate their community. Impact fees, zoning and urban growth boundaries were all avenues citizens suggested for community preservation. Citizens felt that impact fees would maintain the current level of living while also providing infrastructure needed for growth. Zoning allows for projected growth to be controlled, the citizens felt as population density in Macon County increases it will become a viable option for the Cowee Community. Prior to zoning the citizens recommended an extensive public education process be undertaken by the county. An Urban Growth Boundary is basically a circle that denotes where citizens of a county want large scale growth to occur. By establishing an Urban Growth Boundary in Macon County, citizens felt that we could develop economically while preserving the outlying rural areas in the County. Citizens also would like to see strategically positioned land in Macon County should be set aside for parks.

A large majority of the population in Cowee Community is elderly. Cowee community felt these citizens are an asset to Macon County however, they do require a heightened level of public service. As population growth comes to the area, many retirees will want to locate in Cowee Community. By 2029 Cowee Community would like to be a fully operational fire department, having some members on the payroll. Cowee currently has two stations both of which will have men full-time in the future.

Citizens felt that we need to consider prevention of disease rather than curing in terms of healthcare. Medical costs, hospital bills, and other costs associated with healthcare and curing a disease could be decreased dramatically by education citizens on preventative measures. Citizens of Cowee community agreed that farmland, whenever possible should be preserved. One way to accomplish this is through the promotion of local food consumption on a county wide basis. Citizens felt we should stimulate our local markets, produce food for our schools, and take any measures necessary to promote local consumption.

UPPER CARTOOGECHAYE

The Public Input Committee traveled to the Upper Cartoogechaye Community on October 27, 2009. There were 10-20 people in attendance at this meeting. Citizens of this community would like for their rural character and agricultural heritage to be preserved as growth comes to Macon County. Citizens of Upper Cartoogechaye also acknowledged the need for economic development in Macon County.

Citizens felt the majority of growth will occur in Macon County to the North and South along the 441 corridor. Citizens believed this growth would follow the water and sewer. They do not want to see this water and sewer extended, however, until the current systems are exhausted. Citizens want commercial development along existing infrastructure. Upper Cartoogechaye Community wanted to see Main Street revitalized and the fiber optic loop boasted by the Economic Development Commission, in hopes of attracting economic development to the area. The majority of economic development will come in the way of senior citizens, the second home market and technology according to the citizens of Upper Cartoogechaye. Childcare availability and the airport expansion will play important roles in attracting economic development to the area.

Citizens of the Community would like to see development patterns take place on “middle ground” preserving our farmland and ridge tops. Preserving farmland will be a difficult task because no incentive can match up with a developer who is willing to pay top dollar. Citizens wanted to see

local food consumption promoted in Macon County in hopes of stimulating local farms. Like farmland, water too is a precious resource these citizens want to see preserved. Streams around the Upper Cartoogechaye area are becoming more and more polluted with sediment due to irresponsible development. Citizens of this community want to see this issue addressed before it gets worse.

Citizens felt it is extremely important that we continue to hire top notch teachers for our school system at the primary level. In the future Upper Cartoogechaye felt that SCC would become a four year university, as this trend seems to be happening throughout America. If this were to ever become an option for Macon County, citizens think the county should take advantage of it, as this would be a tremendous economic asset. We also need to have options for seniors to utilize the University.

Recreation plays an important role in the type and age group of individuals that we attract to Macon County. It also serves as an avenue for our K-12 youth to stay active and out of trouble. Bringing recreation to Macon County is an important factor in changing the disproportionate population makeup the county is currently experiencing. Citizens feel we have many environmental recreation options that cannot be duplicated like the USFS lands and the Appalachian Trail. The citizens of Upper Cartoogechaye community had ideas for a new movie theatre and a Clay Pigeon Shooting Range.

Citizens wanted to see more specialist care offered in Macon County. Currently, too many elderly people have to travel to Asheville to receive this care. With a high number of senior citizens in the county, the Senior Citizens Center is an excellent resource. Citizens also felt that senior friendly communities are needed in Macon County if this segment of the population continues to grow. These communities need to be located close to services such as the grocery store, fire department, etc. Macon County transit is an asset for everyone in Macon County but especially the seniors. According to the citizens in attendance, this service needs to be expanded.

PINE GROVE COMMUNITY

The Public Input Committee visited Pine Grove Community on November 2, 2009. 10-15 members were in attendance. Comments from the community focused on senior citizens, transportation, child care, economic development, public services and the environment.

In the future, citizens of Pine Grove Community would like to see traffic congestion relieved on Buck Creek and Walnut Creek. According to citizens, these roads become heavily congested in the summer months between workers and tourists. Transfer trucks, dump trucks and logging trucks are contributing to the inconvenience and safety of the Walnut Creek and Buck Creek Roads. This congestion is now causing the roads to become safety hazards as they are “falling apart” according to one citizen. Like Scaly Mountain, Pine Grove has seen an increased volume of transfer trucks since the Cullasaja Gorge Road has been shut off to them. “These roads are not only a growing inconvenience, they are becoming safety hazards.” Citizens are concerned about building new roads and would rather see improvement to the existing ones. Public Transportation is a service that could be expanded to cut down the congestion on these roads. Citizens feel the current system is great especially for senior citizens.

The new Senior Center is a great thing for senior citizens. The center should grow proportionately with the projected increase in population, and continue to provide the high level of service it currently offers. Citizens in attendance went on to say that the seniors in Pine Grove Community are largely self sufficient and look after one another, rather than depending on the senior center.

The citizens of Pine Grove want to maintain the rural character of the community as future population growth comes to the area. They would like to see Cullasaja School turned into a farmers market that promotes locally grown food in Macon County. Citizens felt if this happened the Cullasaja area would be doing their part to promote the utilization of local farmland in Macon County. The Macon County Government purchased land on Peaks Creek following the 2004 landslide. Citizens absolutely do not want anything that draws public attention to be located on this property, as they fear the increased traffic could compromise the rural character of the area.

Citizens want to see businesses come to Macon County that allow people to work and make money. Citizens felt the fiber optic network should be exploited, permit fees decreased, tax incentives offered and anything else that was possible be done to attract businesses to the area. Citizens felt that this growth should take place only in areas where it can be sustained by infrastructure. If growth locates in these areas, our rural areas will remain preserved and beautiful thus, allowing us to take advantage of the tourist industry, according to the citizens. “We must find a balance between economic development and environmental preservation.”

OTTO COMMUNITY

The Public Input Committee traveled to Otto Community on November 2, 2009. 15-20 people attended this meeting. Various topics including education, recreation, healthcare, taxes, transportation, employment, public services and land use were discussed.

In light of Future growth, citizens of the Otto Community felt there would be need for a new high school. The current high school has already grown beyond its means and this problem, if unaddressed will continue to grow. The citizens of Otto Community prefer that small, community based schools remain in place for elementary education. Population growth will affect SCC as well. The citizens posed the question of whether or not this institution would grow to a four year university in the future.

Citizens suggested that Macon County think “out of the box” when planning for future recreation. Ideas proposed by the citizens were heritage farms, botanical gardens, and working with the Forest Service to set aside USFS for horse trails, bike trails etc. The Greenway according to the citizens is an asset to the community. Lastly there was some concern among citizens that the ball field at Otto school is not being utilized.

In the way of healthcare, citizens in Otto Community would like to see better nursing homes, retirement communities and assisted living centers as senior citizens will continue to account for a majority of the population in Macon County. A full-time ambulance at the Otto fire Department and the recruitment of more doctors to the area were other healthcare related requests made by Otto citizens. Healthcare service should grow proportionately with the population on both the county and community level.

Otto would like to see the EDC try to attract various types of industry to Macon County. The tourist industry in Macon County should begin to explore agri-tourism. Data based industry such as call centers and record keeping facilities need to locate in Macon County. Professional businesses such as engineering and architect firms should also be recruited. Citizens suggested that “clean industry” particularly factories that produce diesel from crops be researched. The citizens suggested that Green Park in Jackson County be consulted regarding this process. As the Atlanta area grows north, future opportunities will arise for Macon County to “tap” into this Market. These

opportunities need to be seized. This will result in continual growth of the 441 South Corridor. Zoning should be considered to control future growth along this corridor, and sewer should be extended here as well.

Otto Community wants to see the natural environment, particularly the mountain ridges protected from future development. Measures also need to be taken to protect the streams in Macon County as future growth will pose a threat to them. Citizens voiced concern over the amount of trash currently in the landfill. They feel that Macon County desperately needs more recycling efforts.

NANTAHALA COMMUNITY

10 community members attended the January 4, 2010 public input session at the Nantahala Community Center. Citizens of the Nantahala Community heavily emphasized protecting the environment and felt more services should be provided to them now, and in the future.

The Citizens of Nantahala Community view our mountains as precious. The “build and sell everything we can” attitude should take into consideration what brings people here in the first place. Citizens continuously cited the Wildflower Development as an example of what irresponsible development can do to our mountains. The Citizens of Nantahala Community did not want to see “another Wildflower.” Citizens love the rural character of their community. When asked about possibly locating future retailers or general stores in the area, citizens felt this was neither feasible nor desirable for the community.

Recreation was a major concern among the citizens. Citizens indicated they would like to see a pool and a beach created on the lake shore, both of which would provide safe places for children in the community to go. Citizens felt that each of these amenities would be widely used during the summer months. This is an issue today and with future growth, it will only be compounded.

A volunteer fire fighter in attendance expressed frustration toward the State of North Carolina over the continual regulations being placed on volunteer fire departments. This citizen felt if something was not done, volunteer members would begin to quit. This occupation according to the citizen was coming to be a paid service, and “we need to be ready.” The citizen also informed the committee that despite current regulations in the subdivision ordinance peoples lives are at risk in the Nantahala Community due to limited emergency vehicle access.

Nantahala is currently home to one of two K-12 schools in Macon County. Ingress/egress to this facility is currently becoming a problem according to citizens in attendance. One citizen in particular felt that if there was an emergency at the school, emergency vehicles would have extreme difficulty getting in and out. The citizens suggested that Nantahala School Road be turned into a three lane road to address this problem. This would also help accommodate increased traffic resulting from future growth.

Citizens of Nantahala Community felt that the community was aging. One citizen commented that over half of the residents exceeded 70 years of age. In a recent survey by the citizens of Nantahala there were at least 30 identified households that contained a member over the age of 80. The community would like to see more services offered to this age group. Citizens felt that meals on wheels, in home monitoring for the elderly, and more accessibility to the Health Department and Senior Services Center in Franklin would all work toward accommodating the aging population in

Nantahala Community. Citizens would also like to see an urgent care medical facility located in the Nantahala Community, and numerous sites located for emergency helicopter landing.

BURNINGTOWN COMMUNITY

The 20-25 members in attendance on February 15, 2010 at the Burningtown Community meeting were both skeptical and inquisitive with regards to the Comprehensive Plan. Citizens in attendance wanted to be assured that the plan would not jeopardize people's freedom to use their property. Citizens felt that the plan should only address issues concerning transportation. Attendees felt that the local government should not have a say in land use. The more involved the local government becomes in land use the more strain is placed on personal rights according to the members of Burningtown Community.

The community felt that the Planning Board should take measures to ensure that the citizens of Macon County were involved throughout the entire planning process. People felt that if the government does not start listening to people that people would stop participating in local planning efforts. The citizens were in favor of planning for the future but do not want any new rules or regulations at this time, in fear of further depressing the local economy.

Special Interest Group Meeting Summary's

HIGHLANDS MOUNTAINTOP ROTARY

On October 27, 2009 the Public Input Committee traveled to the Highlands Mountaintop Rotary Club. There were approximately 15-25 members in attendance at this meeting. Due to a limited amount of time following the presentation, many questions revolved around the logistics of the plan and how it was to be implemented. The Highlands Mountaintop Rotary did however; provide the committee with valuable input.

The members in attendance questioned what Macon County was currently doing to address the influx of seasonal population to the area. This information needs to be available and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. Members of Highlands Mountaintop Rotary placed a high level of emphasis on protecting the environment and rural character of Macon County. Future growth will undoubtedly place an enormous strain on our mountains and aquifers that lie beneath them. All citizens were in agreement that the Comprehensive plan should work toward preserving both. One citizen commented saying "the reason I bought a house here was because of the beautiful mountains and mild climate the area had to offer." All citizens that had moved into the area were in agreement that the low tax base of Macon County attracted them to the area.

FRANKLIN DAYBREAK ROTARY

The Public Input Committee visited the Franklin Daybreak Rotary club on November 10, 2009. There were approximately 40-45 members in attendance. Following the presentation there was a limited amount of time for public comment. The majority of the comment from Franklin Daybreak Rotary focused on the logistics of the plan, timeframe it was to be completed in and who was

working on it. Overall the Franklin Daybreak Rotary supported the Planning Board and felt that the Comprehensive Plan would benefit the citizens of Macon County.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

25-35 members attended this input session held on November 12, 2009 at the Tartan Hall. Members in attendance felt that growth until now has caused many problems for Macon County. The 1950's mindset that "growth is good at any cost" needed to be changed. Regulations, according to attendees could largely help determine the kind of growth that comes to Macon County and the affect that the growth has on us.

The League wanted to see the Comprehensive Plan take steps to preserve the character of Macon County. In doing this, we ensure that the character remains an economic driver while preserving the things that "make Macon County special." Public Safety will also be a growing concern as future growth comes to the area.

The League felt that land use will drive the plan. The people of Macon County need to understand that how they use their property affects people's property around them. People come to Macon County because it is beautiful, "we all need to work together to ensure that it remains this way." Citizens suggested the Planning Board use the MLI toolbox throughout the planning process, as it contains ideas as to how we can preserve our Mountains.

Some form of zoning, according to the League of Women Voters, is needed in Macon County. Density controls need to be in place that regulate where business locate and set aside land that needs to be preserved. Establishment of Urban Growth Boundaries was an avenue for preservation the League felt should be explored. The boundaries will designate an area for intensive growth to take place. Within the boundary water, sewer, transportation and dense housing will all coordinate, laying the groundwork for heavy growth. Within this area one could expect more services and higher density. Outside the boundary the infrastructure would not be extended, creating less density and gearing the outlying areas more toward preservation. The League felt the plan should also address preserving the headwaters of the Little Tennessee River, as they are extremely important to us now and in the future.

As the population continues to grow, affordable housing will remain an important issue. Attendees felt that affordable housing should be created in a way that is respectful of surrounding properties, while at the same time addressing the need.

KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY

On November 17, 2009 the Public Input Committee traveled to Keller Williams Realty where 12-14 Macon County realtors voiced their thoughts and suggestions regarding the plan. The realtors felt that people in Macon County deserve better than what they are getting. They suggested that the Comprehensive plan contain some provisions for zoning. Attendees felt that it would be crucial to educate Maconians on the benefits that zoning provides. Communities with deed restrictions in place are popular in Macon County because these communities afford some of the same protections as zoning. Some commented however, that many of their clients had been attracted to Macon county because it did not have zoning.

The realtors felt that junk yards and salvage yards need to be taking measures to reduce impact on the environment now and in the future. Junk yards, and "junky properties" are "deal killers" according to the realtors. Realtors felt that existing ordinances need some teeth in them to make

individual business owners “proud of their businesses.” “As you travel through Macon County it seems as if junk is piled up everywhere” according to one realtor.

The river front property in Macon County needs to be developed, according to the members in attendance, as it would draw many people to Macon County. Lake Emory also needs to be made in to something that Macon County residents can enjoy. “Water is Macon County’s most precious resource, even in developing around it we must take all measures necessary to ensure that its quality is preserved.”

Many comments focused on the fact that there seems to be no jobs currently available in Macon County. They felt that our population is becoming one-sided in the way that people can come here to retire, but the younger people can no longer afford to live. Measures need to be taken not only to make Macon County attractive to retirees, but to businesses that can come, providing young people the chance to live and work here.

If the plan recommends that new ordinances be created, realtors feel that it is crucial we have the capital to support enforcement. Some citizens feel that some county ordinances need to be enforced at a higher level than they currently are. Any federal and state monies available to help enforce regulations should be pursued, according to realtors in attendance.

VETERANS

On January 11, 2010 the Veterans Association hosted the Public Input Committee. 44 veterans attended this meeting. The veterans wanted to see the small town atmosphere preserved at all costs. Some concerns were voiced however, that the plan was another way of describing zoning. Attendees also questioned what was being done to address the lack of jobs available in Macon County. Veterans wanted to see jobs brought into the area that provided their children and grandchildren with the opportunity to remain in Macon County if they chose to do so. It was also acknowledged that there needs to be a balance kept between preserving the environment and bringing economic growth to the area.

One citizen in particular felt that some incentive needs to be in place for retaining our rural lands. If unattended the citizen felt that this land could eventually end up in the hands of people who do not share the same love for it as the residents of Macon County do. In closing, all veterans agreed that more celebrations should be done in Macon County on their behalf.

KIWANIS CLUB

The Public Input Committee visited the Kiwanis Club on February 9, 2010. This meeting was a question and answer session about the plan and no input regarding the plan was provided. The 20-25 members in attendance were however, in favor of the Comprehensive Planning Process.

BOARD OF REALTORS

On February 18, 2010 the Public Input Committee attended the monthly Board of Realtors meeting at the Macon Bank Corporate Center, approximately 30-40 members were in attendance at this meeting. Due to a time constraint, no input was obtained and all questions were geared toward the planning process, rather than the plan itself.

The Survey

The survey was the second part of the two-fold public input process for the Comprehensive Plan. The survey process began in October of 2009 and ended on March 1, 2010. The survey gave Macon County citizens another avenue to voice their concerns and aspirations for Macon County's future. The Macon County Planning Department in conjunction with the Public Input Committee, worked to make sure that all citizens had the opportunity to provide input regarding the plan.

The 14 question survey informed citizens of the projected population increase expected to take place in Macon County over the next 20 years (2009-2029). By responding to the survey, citizens created the foundation for which committees working on the plan could base their recommendations. Survey results, along with input obtained at the various community and special interest group meetings weighed heavily on the recommendations made by each committee.

Hard copies of the survey were widely distributed throughout Macon County. Surveys were made available at the following locations:

1. Macon County Planning Department
2. Highlands Chamber of Commerce
3. Macon County Public Library
4. Southwestern Community College
5. Lakes End Café (Nantahala)
6. Macon County Senior Services Center
7. Franklin High School
8. Surveys were also distributed at each community meeting/special interest group meeting attended by the public input committee.

Aside from being available in hard copy, surveys were also available online:

1. Macon County Website
2. SM Net Homepage
3. Fontana Regional Library Website

Mass emails were distributed to 8 of Macon County's top 25 largest employers. These emails contained a direct link to the survey and allowed citizens to complete the survey online and email it to the Planning Department. The following employers received this email:

1. Macon County Public School System
2. Macon County Government
3. Angel Medical Center
4. Highlands Cashiers Hospital
5. Macon Program for Progress
6. Southwestern Community College
7. Tektone
8. Town of Highlands
9. Town of Franklin

Aside from the various points of distribution, members of the Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan sub-committees, and engaged citizens shared the survey with their families, friends and neighbors. This transparent outreach process re-assured citizens that planning for Macon County's future is

not taking place behind closed doors. The thoughts and concerns of the Macon County citizens were the single most important component of the comprehensive planning process. The citizens were appreciative for the opportunity this survey provided and thankful that it will be their thoughts and concerns that guides the planning for Macon County's future.

Following the March 1, 2010 submission deadline, the Macon County Planning Department compiled and summarized a total of 423 surveys, which were submitted over the six month process.

DRAFT

Comprehensive Plan Survey Summary Report

Survey Respondent Composition

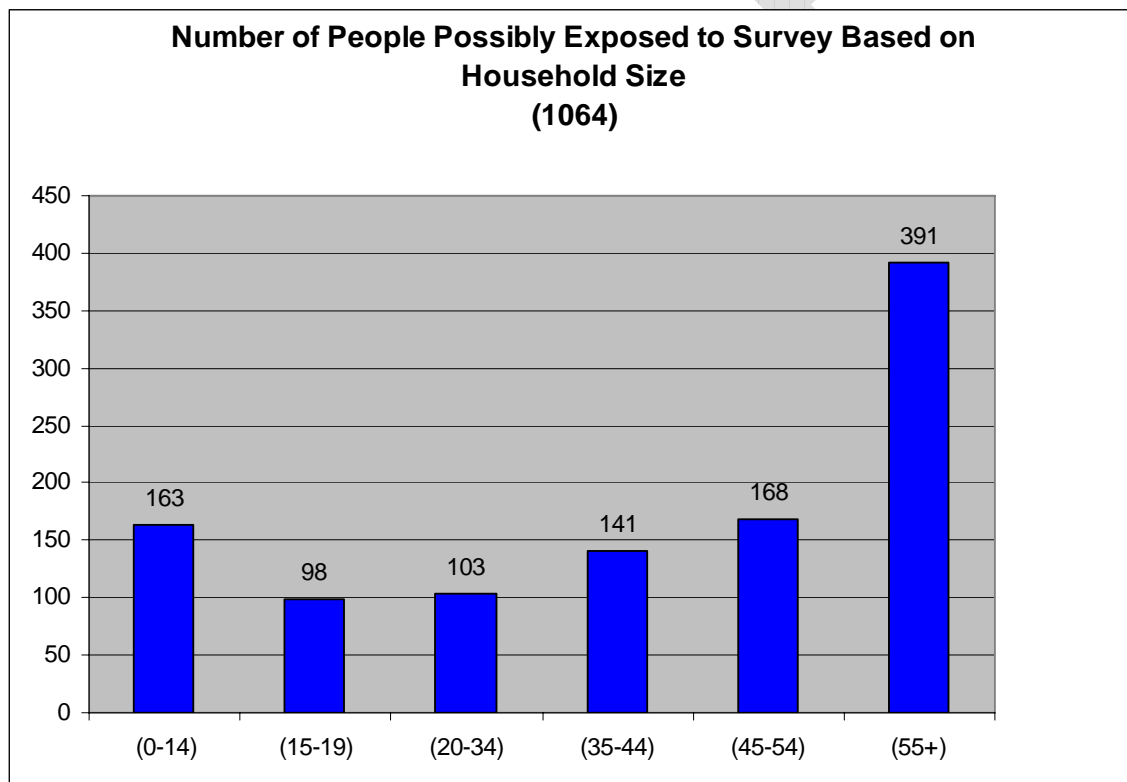
Mean Age

On March 1, 2010 **423** surveys were received and processed in the Macon County Planning Department. The mean age of the survey respondents was **50.12**. This mean (or average age) is inclusive of ages ranging from 17 to 85. This escalated mean age could be attributable to the fact that the median age in Macon County as of 2009 was approximately 44.08. Having a median age of 44.08 means that half the people residing in Macon County are over that age, while the other half are under. Surveys were distributed to the Franklin High School, SCC and the Fontana Regional Library in attempts to reach all age segments of the local population.

Possible # of people reached by survey (Households Alone)

Respondents were asked to fill out how many people within selected age ranges made up their home. The selected age ranges were as follows: 0-14, 15-19, 20-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+. By assuming the 423 respondents to the survey shared the survey with people residing in their home, we can infer that **1064** people from the following age groups helped shape the responses included in each survey.

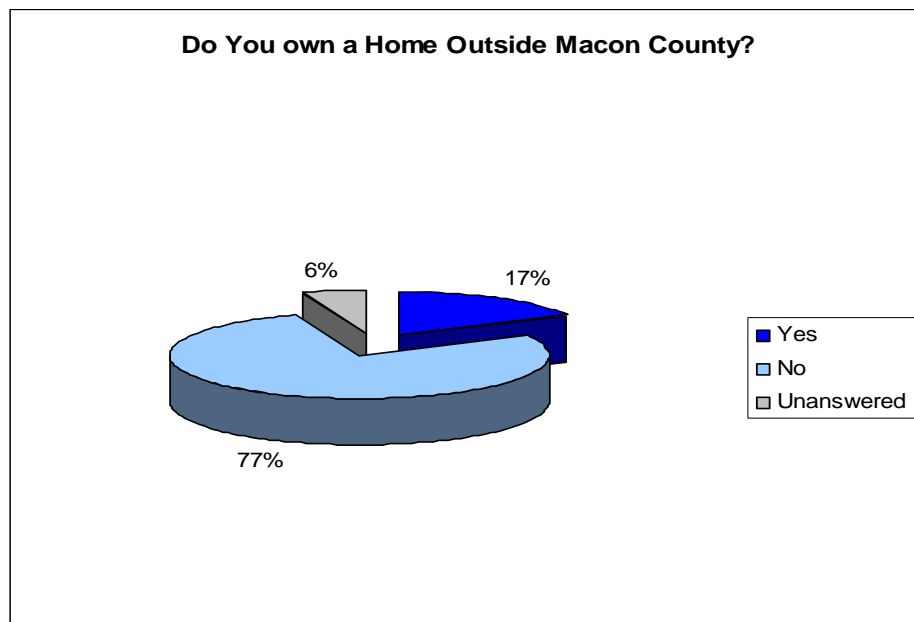
Fig. 1



Owning a home outside Macon County

It is a historically known fact that Macon County is a retirement or second home community. According to the tax office 55%-60% of all properties within Macon County are owned by non-resident property owners. Concerning improved properties, it is estimated that 35% of those tax bills leave Macon County. When surveyed, 74 out of 423 respondents acknowledged owning a home outside of Macon County. This equates to approximately 17%. 6% of respondents chose not to answer this question, while 77% said they did not own a home outside Macon County

Fig. 2



What do people like best about Macon County?

By taking the time and initiative to respond to this survey, 423 people have shown that they are concerned about the future of Macon County. Respondents to this survey can be grouped into three categories. Some were born and raised in Macon County, this is their home and their heritage dates back, in some cases, for centuries. Others while not originally from Macon County have decided to make it their home. Whether it be the natural beauty, friendly people, or laid back lifestyle, Macon County has appealed to them in a way which they could not resist. A small portion of respondents came to Macon County only to work, but still cared about the future of this great county enough to complete a survey.

In the survey, respondents were given 3 opportunities to share what they liked best about Macon County (Like Best 1, Like Best 2, Like Best 3). With 423 people taking the survey, this leaves 1269 total possibilities of comments regarding what citizens “liked” about Macon County (**423 respondents x 3 comments each = 1269**). For purposes of uniformity, all comments could be grouped into 6 different categories. 1) Small Town Feel 2) Environmental, 3) People, 4) Location, 5) Quality of Life, 6) Unanswered.

“Small Town Feel” comments were those centered on the rural, small town atmosphere in Macon County. This atmosphere, unique to our county, accounted for 21% of all comments in this survey question. The following are examples of comments that were grouped into this category: “Downtown areas and events”, “volunteer spirit”, “my hometown”, “friends and family”, “community atmosphere”, “downtown character”, “history”, “heritage”, “laid back”, etc.
270 comments representative of “small town feel” /1269 total Comments= 21%

31% or 393 out of 1269 comments focused on the environment. This category received the highest number of comments. Examples of comments grouped into this category are as follows: “Farms”, “natural beauty”, “rural character”, “views”, “weather/climate”, “scenery”, “USFS”, “wildlife”, “streams”, etc.

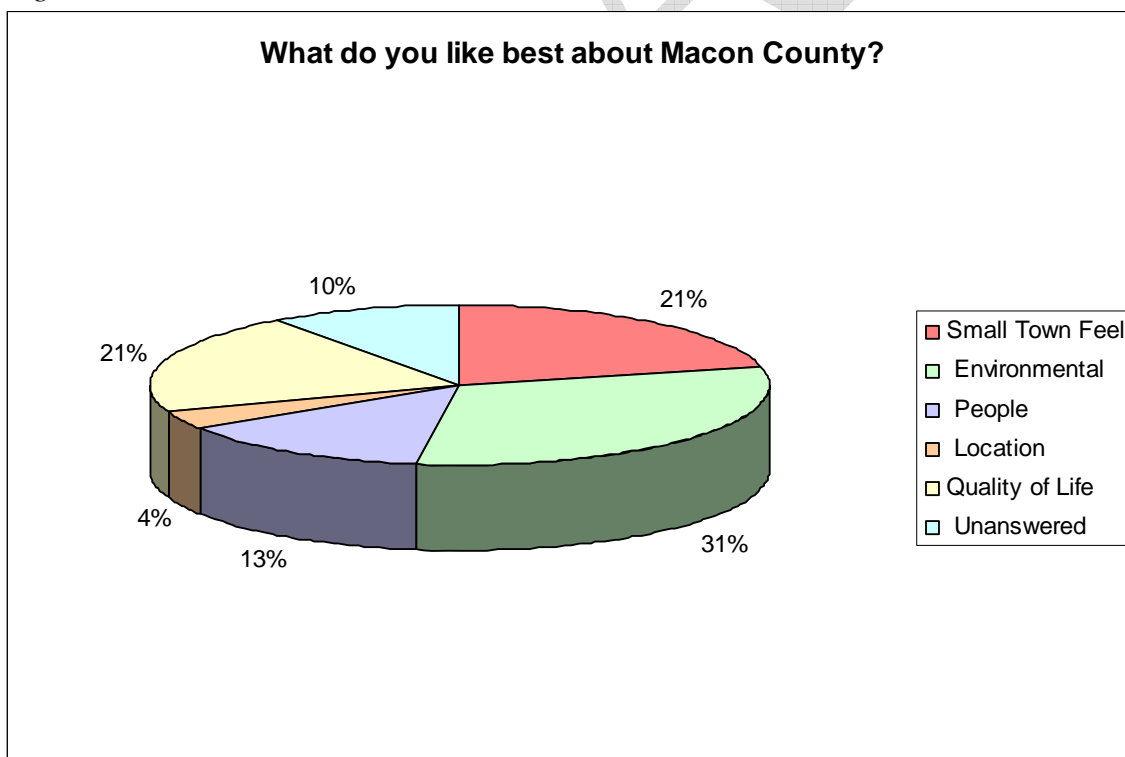
The people of Macon County are an asset that cannot be replaced. Their generosity, friendliness, kindness, and willingness to co-operate are all qualities used to describe them by respondents. 13% of respondent comments (171 out of 1269) reflected that the people of Macon County were one of its best qualities.

Macon County’s close proximity to surrounding states and cities such as Asheville, Knoxville Tn., and Atlanta Ga., while still remaining in the mountains of Western NC, is an amenity only Macon County can provide. 4% of respondents acknowledged this in their comments. These comments are reflected in the “Location” category.

Quality of life is determined by how well you live your life. It is not the amount of money you have it is your quality of life. Do you live in clean, safe housing? Do you have access to the things you need such as transportation, doctors, etc? Quality of life comments accounted for 21% of the total comments in this section. Examples of comments included in this category are as follows: “Outdoor Rec.”, “school system”, “low traffic congestion”, “healthcare,” “privacy”, “amenities”, “safe”, “services”, “low cost of living”, “churches”, “Christian values”, “local business”, etc.

78 comments out of 900 were left blank, bringing the “unanswered” category total to 10%.

Fig.3



What do People like Least about Macon County?

No county in the United States of America is perfect. Macon County is no different. In the survey, respondents were given 3 opportunities to share what they liked least about Macon County (Like least 1, Like least 2, Like least 3). With 423 people taking the survey, this leaves 1269 total possibilities of comments regarding what citizens “liked least” about Macon County (**423 respondents x 3 comments each = 1269**). For purposes of uniformity, all comments were grouped into 10 different categories. 1) Compromising Environment. / Character, 2) Cost of Living, 3) Lack of Employment opportunities, 4) Lack of shopping/ Entertainment. 5) Local Government, 6) Lack of human services, 7) people, 8) unanswered, 9) infrastructure, 10) aesthetic issues.

10% or 130 out of 1269 comments came from citizens who felt the environment and rural character of Macon County was being compromised. “Sprawl development”, “destruction of mountains”, “irresponsible development”, “losing small town feel”, “overcrowding”, and “excessive cutting of trees” are all examples of comments included in this category.

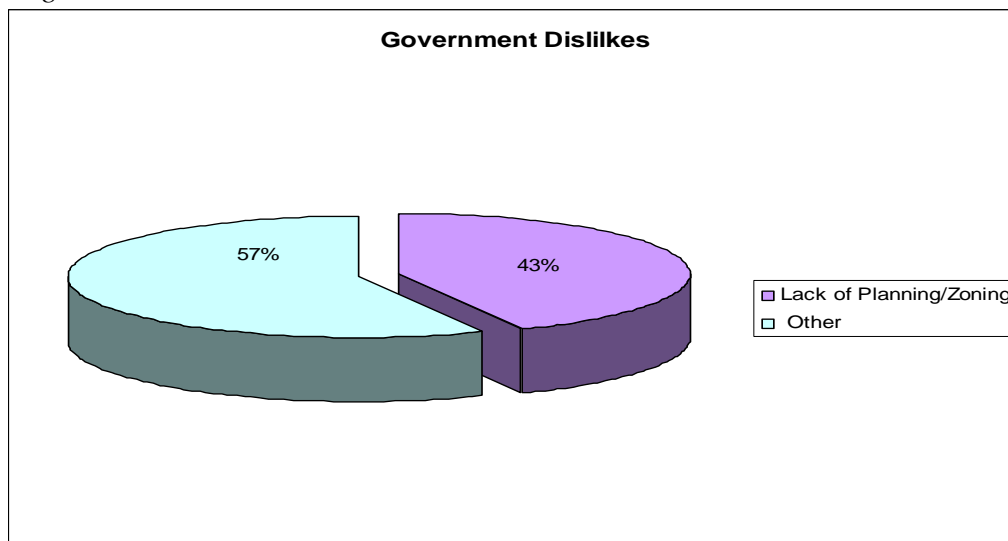
The cost of living in Macon County is often viewed as an attractant by newcomers moving in to the area. 3% of comments in the survey however, reflect that some citizens feel the cost of living is becoming too high. Comments such as: “Earnings not supporting property values”, “bloated property taxes”, “out of control evaluations”, “land values”, “cost of real estate”, “high gas prices” and “high cost of groceries”, were all areas that 34 out of 1269 comments centered on. People must understand that many of these things are beyond our control, as they are controlled by the free market.

In the recent economic downturn, unemployment is a problem not only in Macon County, but nation wide. The survey results reflect this fact. “Not enough jobs”, “too dependant on tourism”, “lack of industrial development”, “nothing to keep citizens here” and “franchises taking local jobs” were all concerns voiced in the lack of employment category. 101 out of 1269 comments focused on lack of employment as a problem in Macon County. This accounted for 8% of the total comments in this section

15% or 184 out of 1269 comments came from people expressing disdain for the lack of shopping and entertainment in Macon County. Comments within this category came from three major areas 1) shopping, 2) dining, 3) recreation. “Lack of diversity in supermarkets”, “dead Main Street”, “too many fast food restaurants”, “not enough healthy restaurants”, “lack of restaurants like Olive Garden and Cracker Barrel” were all comments coming from categories 1) & 2). Comments regarding recreation were centered mainly on the lack of new facilities and overcrowding of the existing ones. From a new Swimming pool for the Franklin High School to the overcrowding of existing ball fields, citizens felt that young people and adults alike had “nothing to do”.

13% or 159 out of 1269 comments is representative of respondents’ frustration with County Government (*Fig. 3a*). “Small town politics”, “no noise ordinance”, “too conservative”, “disconnect from people in Nantahala and Highlands”, “poor coordination between offices” and the fact that we are not bringing in jobs were all comments that fell into this category. It is important to note however, that within this 13%, 43% of the comments centered on the fact that Macon County has historically neglected to plan for the future, and at this time has no zoning regulations in place. This is illustrated in the chart on the following page.

Fig. S4a



The Lack of Human Services section exposes areas of service where respondents feel Macon County is falling short. Comments from this category can be broken down into 5 main sub-sections, based on frequency: 1) Healthcare, 2) Affordable Housing, 3) Education, 4) Crime/Law Enforcement, 5) Other. Below are examples of comments that came from within each of these sub-sections. (In no particular order)

- 1) Healthcare- “high cancer rate”, “poor care in nursing homes”, “lack of good doctors”, “lack of quality mental health care”.
- 2) Affordable Housing- “lack of affordable housing”
- 3) Education- “consolidation of schools”, “childcare”, “existing schools inadequate”, “high school drop out rate”, “more \$ for teachers”, “not enough \$ spent on education”.
- 4) Crime/Law Enforcement- “Drugs”, “influx of methamphetamines”, “increasing crime rate”, “Highlands Police Department in need of improvement”.
- 5) Other- “public transportation”, “inadequate humane society”, “recycling not easy enough”.

The Lack of Human Services section accounted for approximately 9 % or 110 out of 1269 total comments.

103 out of 1269 or 8% of comments were centered on people. It is no surprise that when people live, work and interact together in society, problems will occur, especially in a small town. The majority of comments are reflective of personal grievances, and have not been addressed in the comprehensive plan.

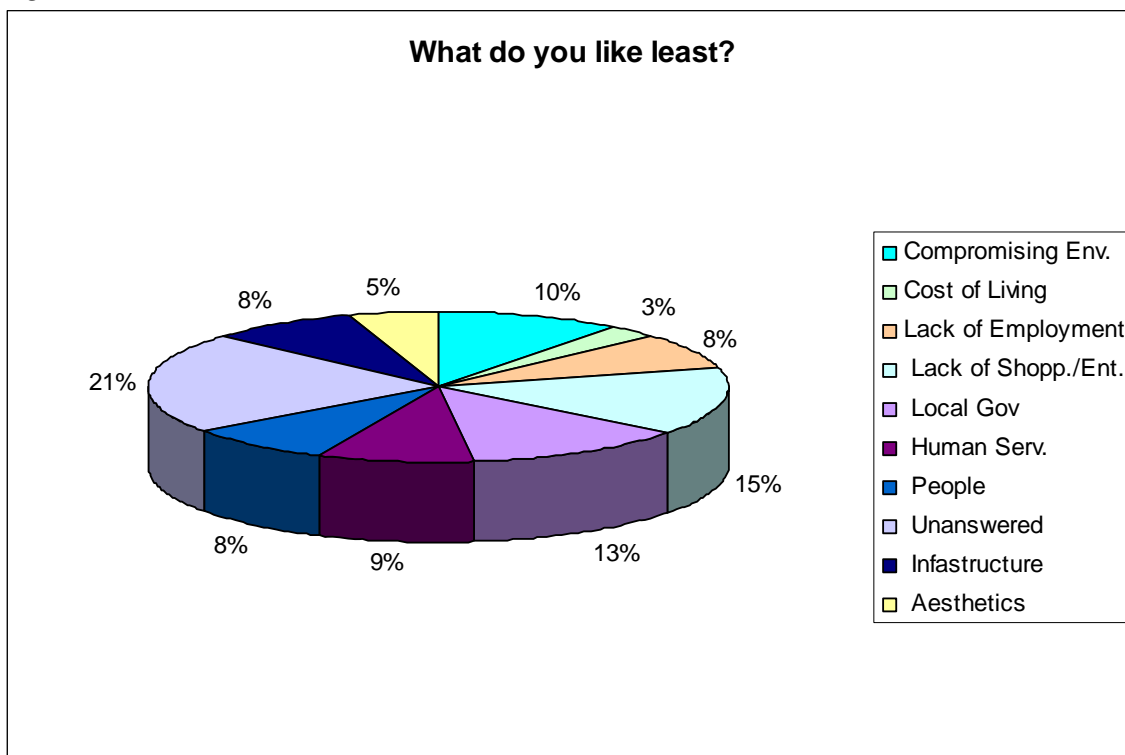
274 out of 1269 or 21% of the total comments were left blank. The unanswered section was largest for the “What do you like least about Macon County” category. This could have occurred for a number of reasons. One possible reason however, is that survey respondents could not find enough fault with Macon County, to fill out all three comment boxes.

Infrastructure is defined as the fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or area such as; transportation, communication systems and power plants. 105 out of 1269 or 8% of people felt the infrastructure in Macon County was inadequate or in need of repair. Comments from this section include the following: “Roads need maintenance”, “sewer not keeping up with

growth”, “roads cant handle traffic in peak seasons”, “parking issues on Main Street”, “public facilities aging” (schools, courthouse), “sidewalks need repair/extension”, “landfill”, “streets need facelift”, “lack of cell service”, “lack of high speed internet”.

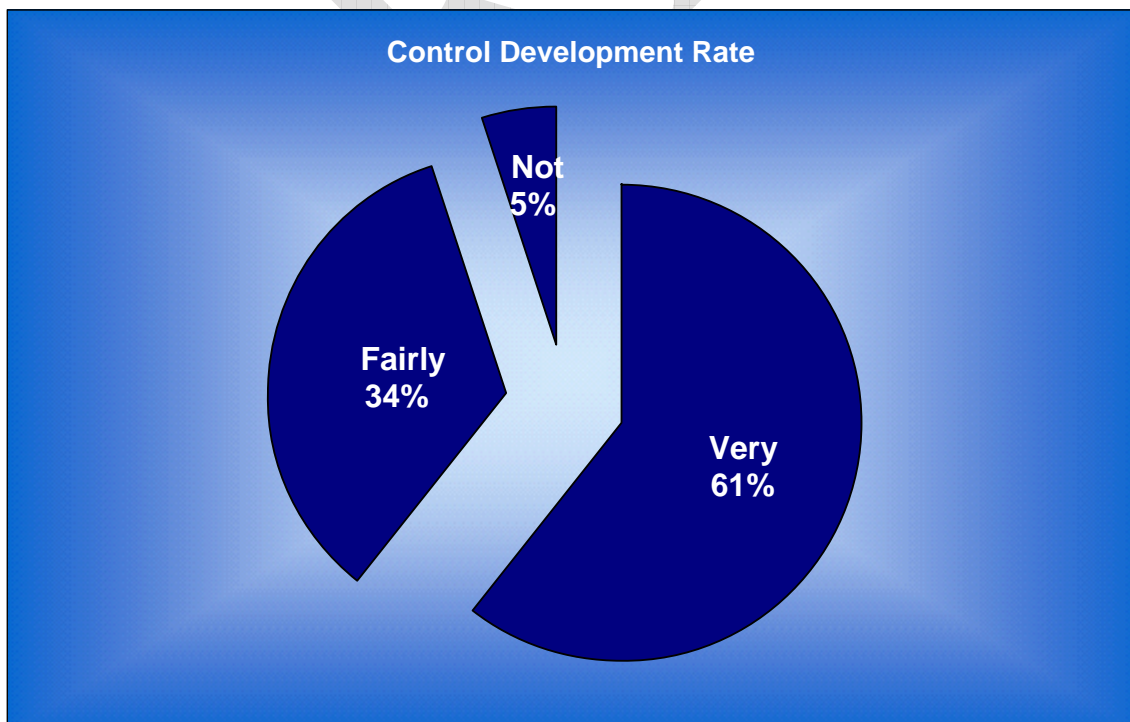
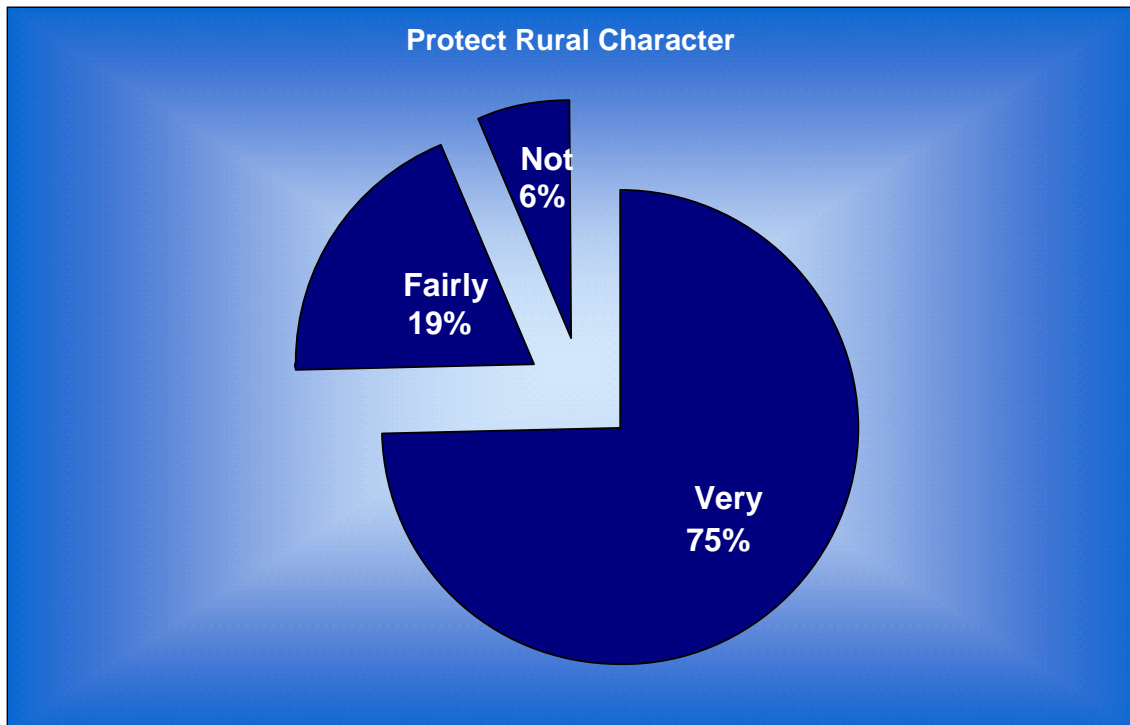
The remaining 5% of comments or 64 out of 1269 came from respondents who feel some areas of Macon County are becoming “aesthetically unpleasing”. “Excessive signs”, “junk piles”, “commercial buildings in residential areas”, “litter, and “roaming, barking dogs” are a few of the comments from this section that highlight this concern.

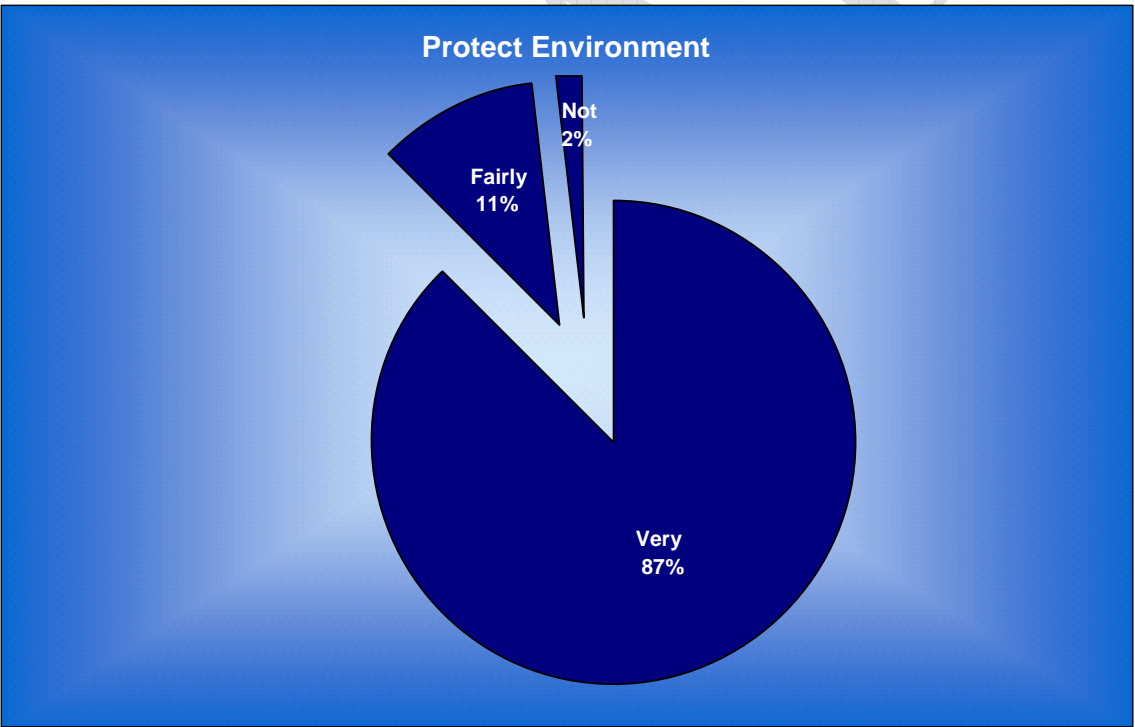
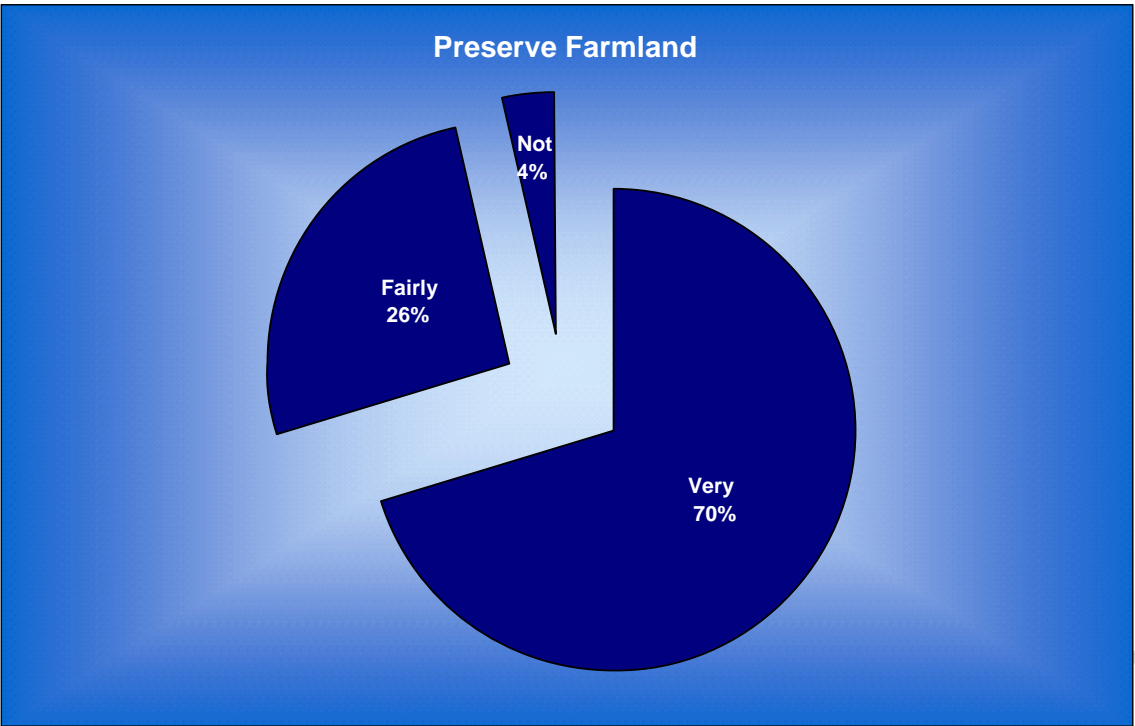
Fig. S4b

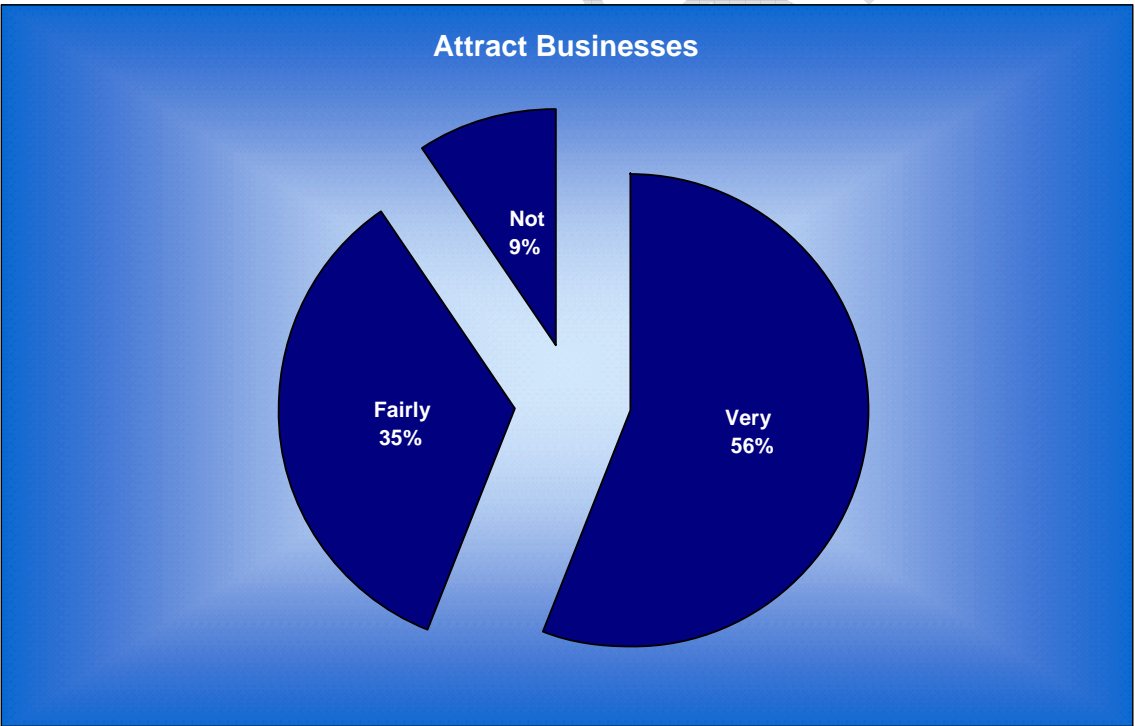


How important are the following issues over the next 20 years?

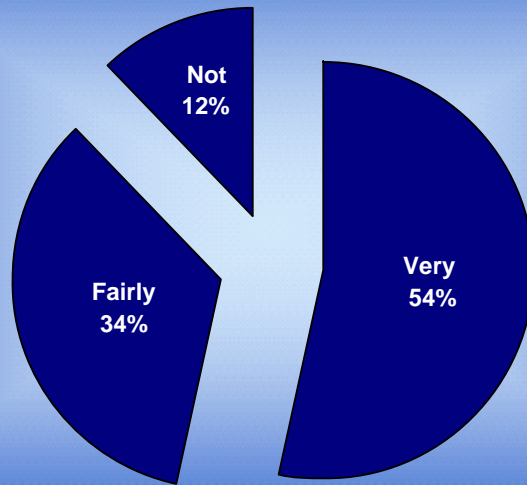
Question 3 asked respondents to indicate how important they felt 16 pre-determined issues would become in Macon County over the next 20 years. These issues ranged from Maintaining the Rural Character of the County to Healthcare. Respondents had the option of choosing very, fairly, or not important for each of the 16 pre-determined issues. Pages 28-35 contain the results to this question.



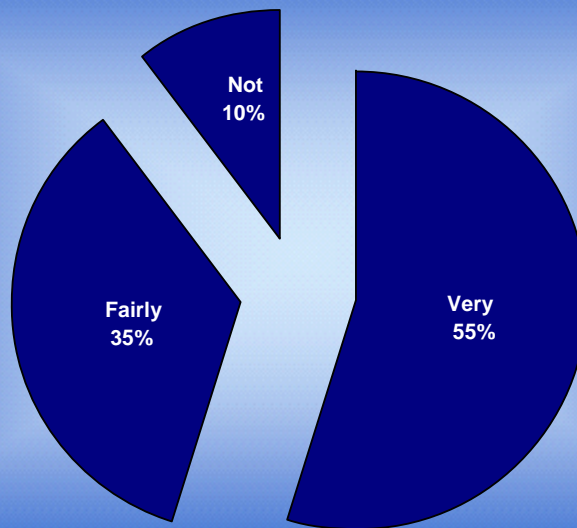




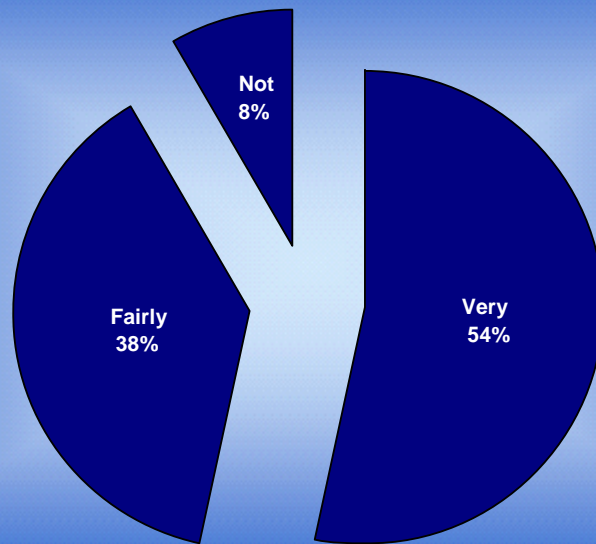
Affordable Housing



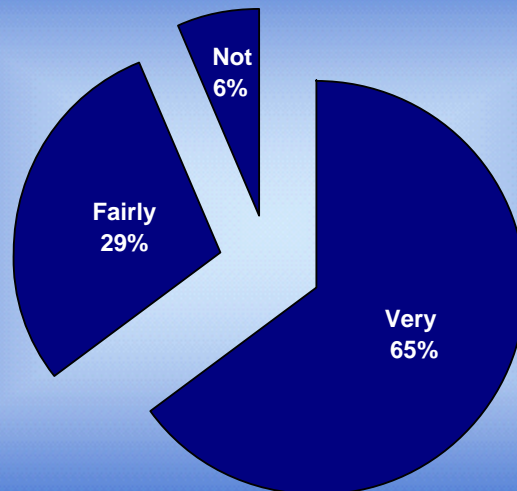
Improve traffic flow and safety



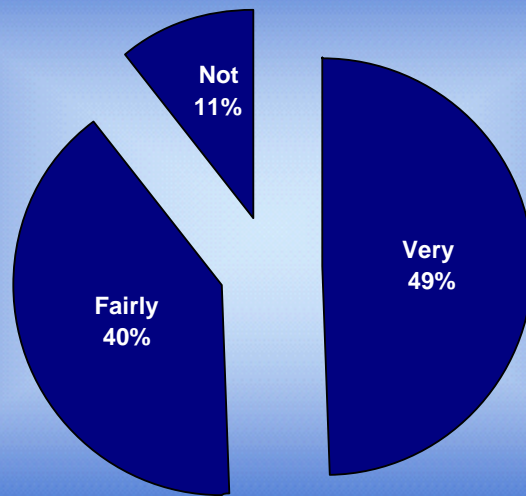
Improve local Roads



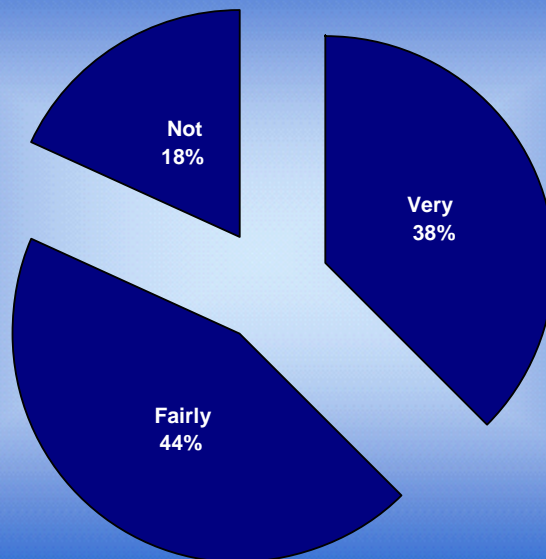
Protect Historic Structures

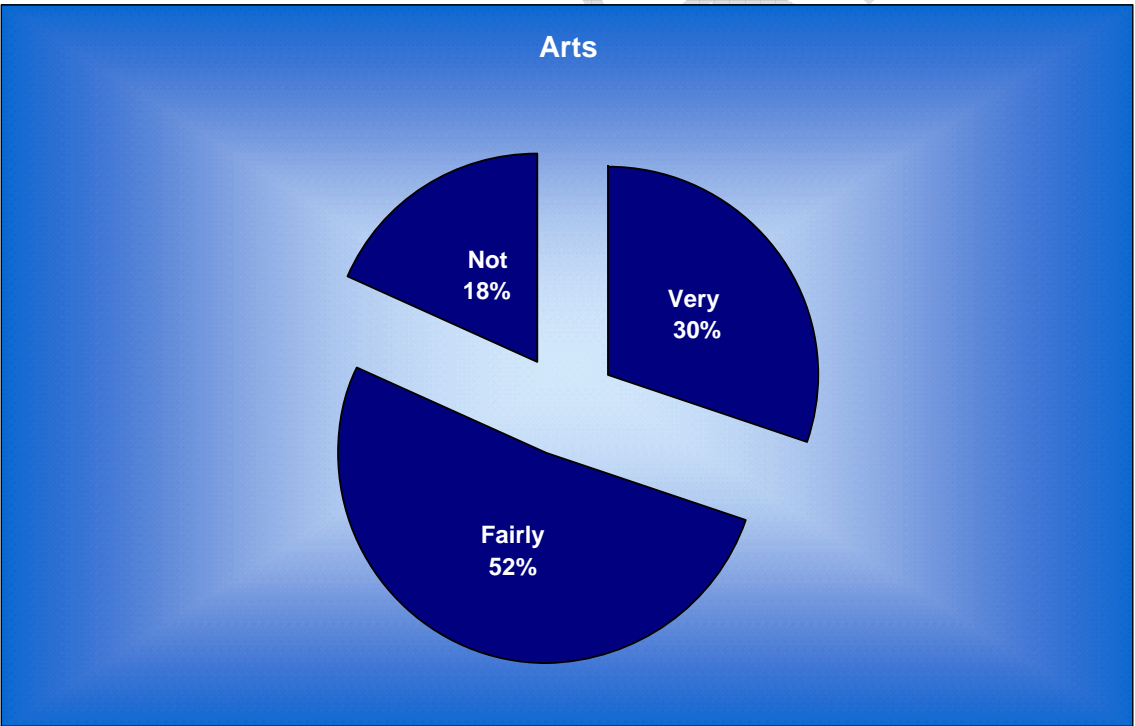
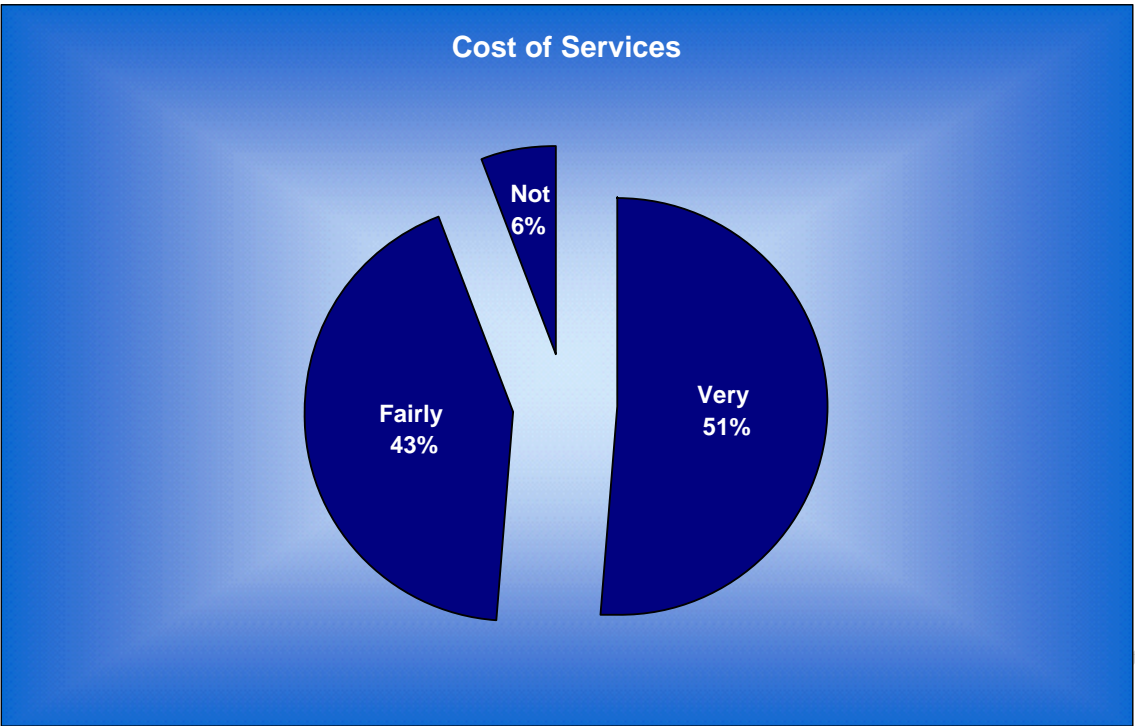


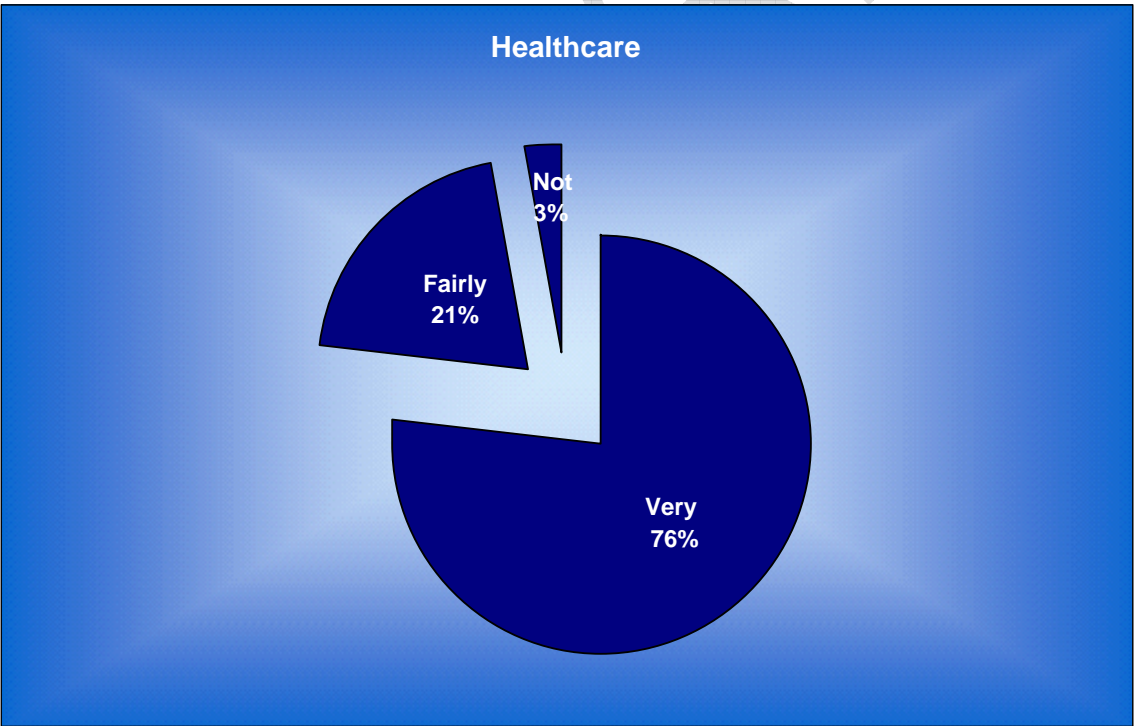
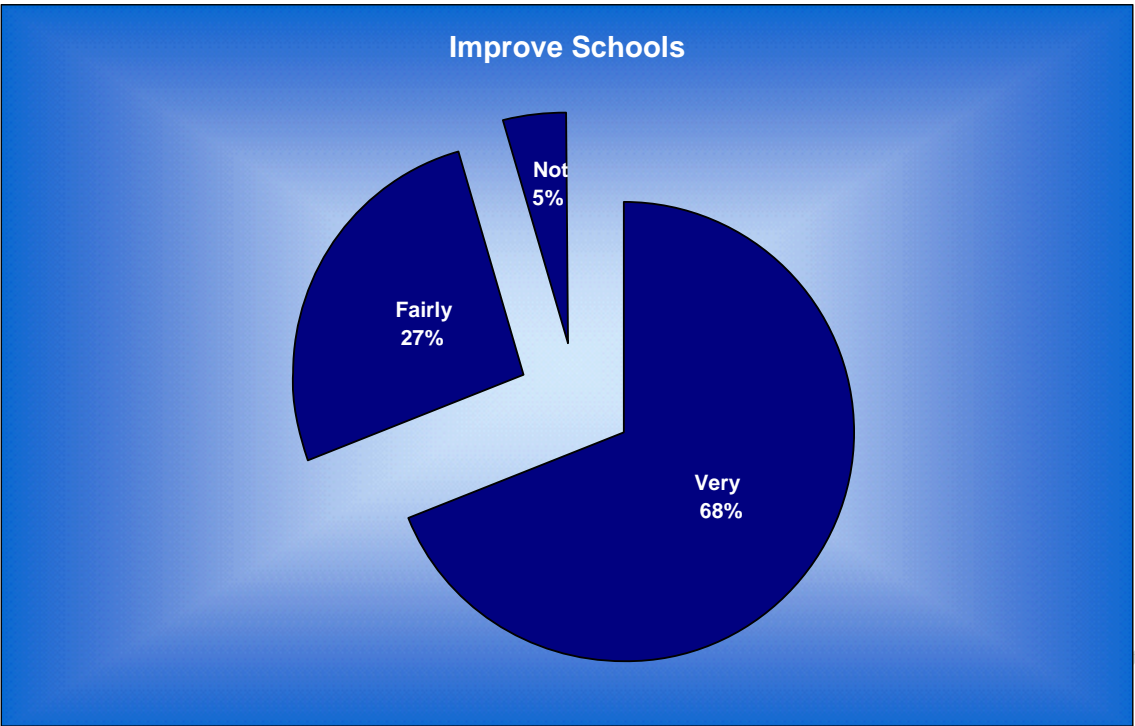
Develop Recreation Facilities



Public Transportation







Where would you like to see Macon County 20 years from now?

Question 4 asked respondents to indicate where they would like to see Macon County 20 years from now and what kind of county they want to pass on to the next generation. Responses to this question provided the foundation for the “Mission Statement” that will guide the Comprehensive Plan. The mission statement is as follows:

“Work together as “Maconians” to create a dynamic plan that will guide long-term growth and development within the county. Through taking the initiative to plan now, we ensure the integrity of our mountain heritage will be preserved, welfare of the citizens will be maximized, our natural environment will continue to flourish, and the economic vitality of Macon County will be sustained, all in ways that benefit the current population as well as generations to come.”

Within this mission statement lie the following guiding principles:

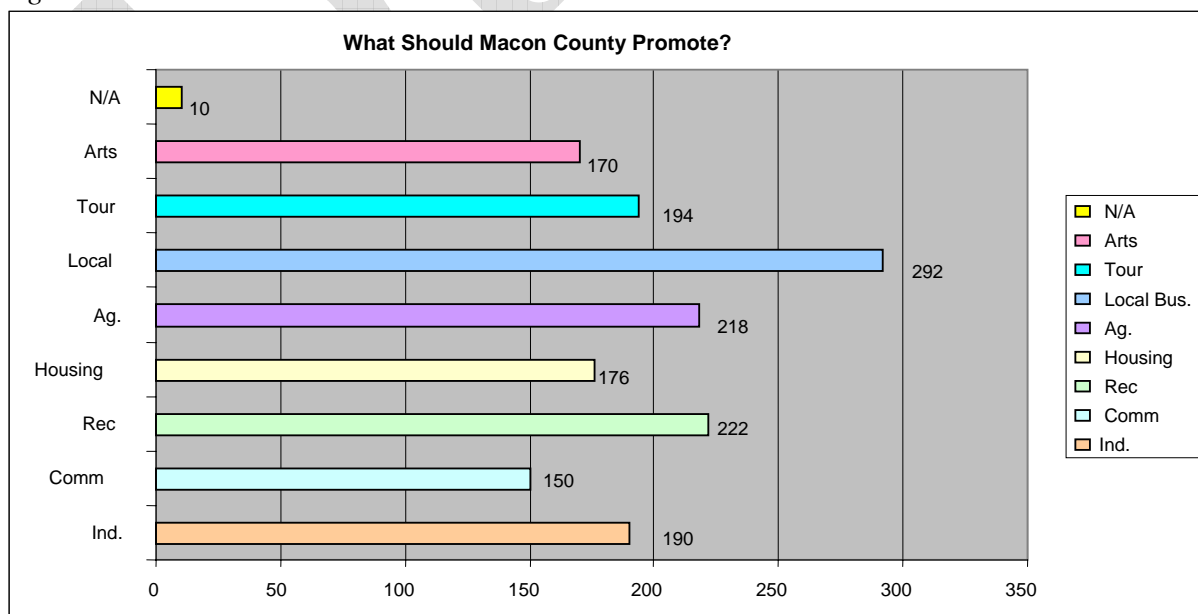
1. Preserve our Mountain Heritage
2. Maximize the Welfare of our citizens
3. Allow the natural environment to flourish
4. Sustain economic vitality and allow it to grow in a way that does not compromise the rural heritage, and pristine natural environment of Macon County.

Question 4 gives us excellent insight as to what the people of Macon County want over the next 20 years.

What should Macon County Promote?

Question 5 asked respondents to indicate what they thought Macon County should promote in the future. Industrial Development, Commercial Development, Recreational Facilities, Housing, Agricultural Production, Tourism, Arts, and Locally owned business were the choices provided. Respondents had the option of choosing more than one answer for this question. Below are the results as of March 1, 2010.

Fig.S5



What is 1 place in Macon County you wish to see remain the same?

This question was unique. The pride held in the hearts of Macon County citizens is second to none. We are proud of our county but often times even more proud of the community we come from within the county. For natives, these communities are where grandfathers raised cattle, and mothers once played in the creek together as little girls. Roots run deep in these communities, years and years of families and friendships have been built in them. For new-comers something stood out in the community which they chose to live above all others. Native or new-comer, each of us has an abundance of pride for the community in which we reside or have connections to, and rightfully so. A significant amount of respondents expressed this pride by choosing their specific community as the area they wanted to see remain the same. With 423 respondents coming from many communities within the county, each choosing the community in which they reside to remain the same, we were seeing small percentages for a lot of communities. For this reason, all responses indicating individual communities to be preserved were grouped into the “Communities” category. This category provides an excellent example as to just how important the small rural communities of Macon County are to the citizens. Aside from the “Communities” category, the remaining responses were grouped into the following categories:

The city limits of Franklin and Highlands made up a category. Many times these comments related to specific areas in Franklin and Highlands city limits such as Main Street, or Town Square.

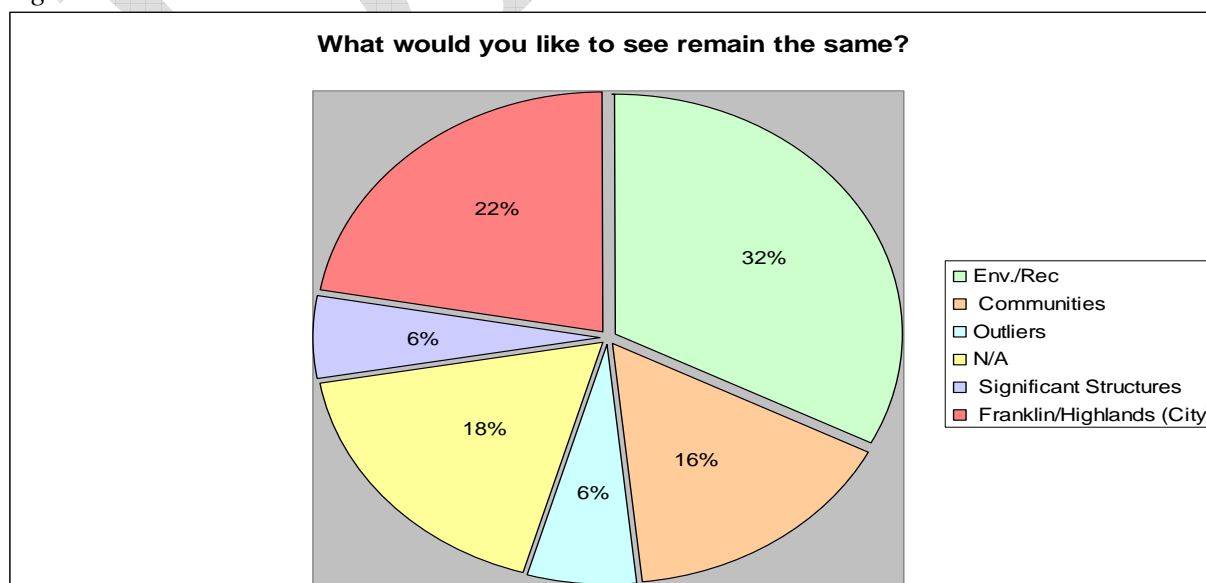
Environmental and Recreation areas were inclusive of the following: USFS, AT, mountains, rural areas, fairgrounds, Recreation Park, farmland, greenway, Little Tennessee River and Nantahala National Forest.

The Significant Structures category was comprised of the following responses: Historic structures, Old Jail, Indian Mound, Airport, Clock Tower, Fun Factory etc. These were all specific areas that respondents wished to remain the same for years to come.

Outliers are inclusive of Comments such as: my house, whole county, etc. These responses were unclear and not feasible to document into any other category.

“Unanswered” made up the last category.

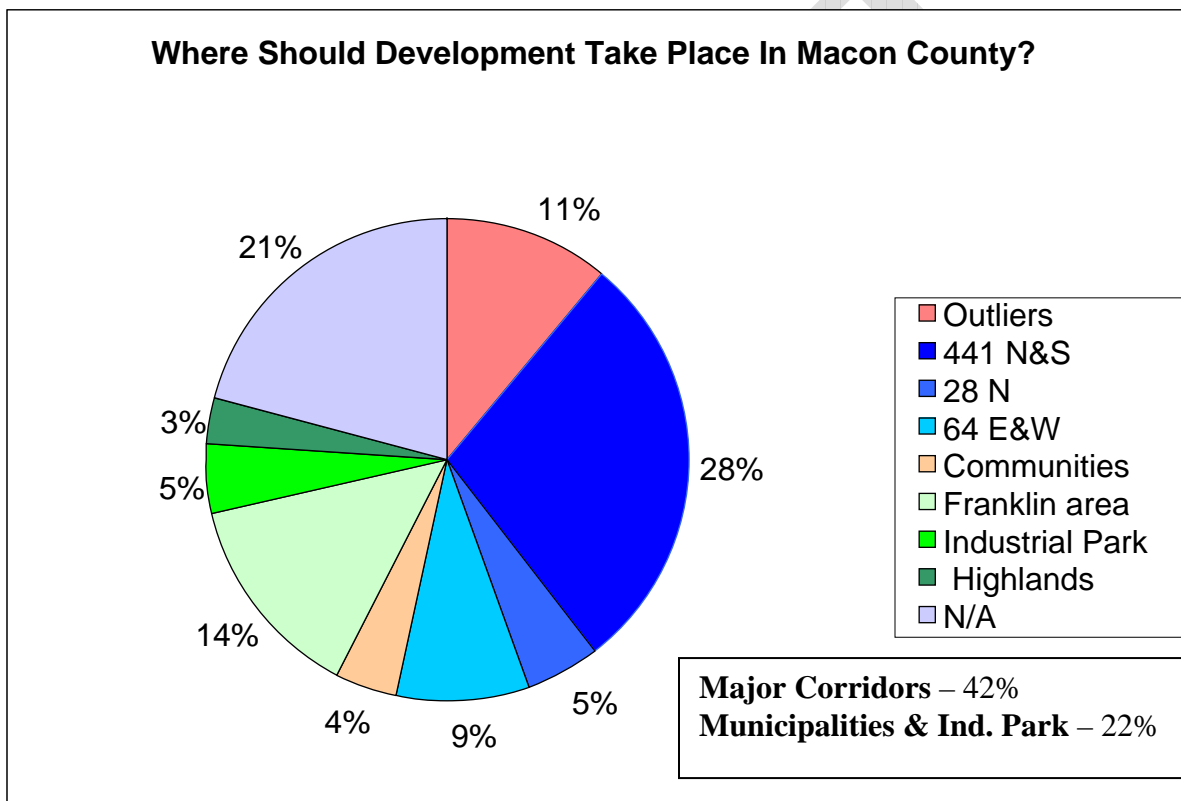
Fig.S6



What is 1 place in Macon County that is appropriate for development?

This question asked respondents to name one place in Macon County they felt would be appropriate for development. After 423 surveys it is evident that citizens feel development should occur along the main thoroughfares, in and around our city limits and at the industrial park. It is important to note that a high percentage of respondents wanted areas within the city limits to remain the same. Location and infrastructure in and around these areas will undoubtedly foster future growth, making it impossible for them to remain as they are. As growth does come to these areas though, we can make sure that it upholds the rural character and “small town feel” of our county that so many of our citizens cherish.

Fig.S7



History of Macon County

The history of Macon County dates back for centuries. To this day, the remnants of our Native American predecessors can be found throughout the county. Sites such as the Nikwasi Indian Mound, dating back over 1,000 years have remained preserved and today stand at the heart of the Town of Franklin. Franklin also has unique ties to the Civil War. The last Confederate surrender east of the Mississippi took place on Main Street at Dixie Hall which was located at the site of the present Macon County Courthouse. Over the years, unduplicated places and events such as these have helped shape our county, making it the place we as “Maconians” are proud to call home.

The Macon County Historical Society is housed in the over 100 yr. old Pendergrass Store. The store is one of the oldest, most historical buildings in Macon County and can be found on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum contains a wide variety of items related to the settlement and development of Macon County. The changing displays feature many items which date to the early 1800’s when the county was formed. The Macon County Historical Society has worked in correlation with the Planning Department on this section of the Comprehensive Plan. Below is a timeline dating back to 600 BCE (Before the Common Era) that provides a snapshot of historical highlights that have shaped Macon County’s past.

MACON COUNTY HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

600 – 200 BCE Swannanoa phase occupation, introduction of ceramics

900 End of Mound Builder Era

1560 Spanish Explorer Lunady Arellano passes through Macon County in search of gold.

1600 Cherokee population of North Carolina estimated at 6,000

1737 Sir Alexander Cummings holds council with Cherokee at Nikwasi Mound.

1760 Montgomery's 77th Highlanders travel through Macon County.

- 480 Cherokees live at Nikwasi Village
- Several battles with Cherokee occur in local villages

1767 Thomas Griffith travels from London to the West Mills section of Macon County

in search of kaolin – the fine clay used to produce Wedgewood pottery.

1775 Naturalist William Bartram travels through area and writes of the Cherokee.

1819 The first permanent settler, Jacob Siler, arrives in what is now Macon County. He is accompanied by William Brittain. Cherokee Treaty signed

1820 Franklin is settled, and 400 acres is set aside for the town.

1828 County formation introduced in Congressional session

- legislation passes on March 25, 1829. Named for Nathaniel Macon from Warren County, member of Congress for 37 years

1829 Macon County formed from Haywood County, contract awarded for court house

1840 US Census lists 4,878 people living in Macon County, including 373 slaves.

1855 Franklin incorporated as town on February 10

1861 NC last state to secede from Union on May 20

1867 Hiram Crisp discovers corundum in Cullasaja area.

1875 The town of Highlands is established. Franklin's first public school opens.

1889 Franklin receives Charter; named for Jessie Franklin, Revolutionary War

Statesman and Governor of NC 1820 and 1821

1899 First telephone introduced

1904 J.R. Pendegrass builds his dry-goods store on Main Street, now the Historical Museum.

1907 Tallulah Falls Railroad makes its first run to Franklin.

1908 The first car, a white steamer, comes to Franklin. It has to be pulled in by a team of horses because the roads are so muddy.

1910 August 24 – Electricity is supplied to Franklin.

1921 First plane lands in county on J. Thomas Field on the Highlands Road.

1928 Route 28 from Franklin to Highlands opens.

1946 The Historical Society begins. It grows out of an effort to preserve Nikwasi Indian Mound.

1955 New County Health Center.

1957 First broadcast by WFSC AM and WRFR FM.

1975 Sky City opens, Franklins first discount store

1983 1st Issue of Macon County News and Shopping Guide.

2005 Construction begins on satellite campus of South-Western Community College.

2010 Mountain View 5-6 School opens.

Timeline Courtesy of Macon County Historical Society

DRAFT

Population Trends

Macon County's population is continually growing. Today it is estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau that Macon County is home to approximately 33,233 people. According to U.S. Census figures in 2000, the population of Macon County was 29,811. This equates to an 11.7% increase in population over the past 9 years. As 2010 Census data becomes available, we hope to have a more concrete understanding of the growth we have realized during the time period spanning from 2000 to 2010.

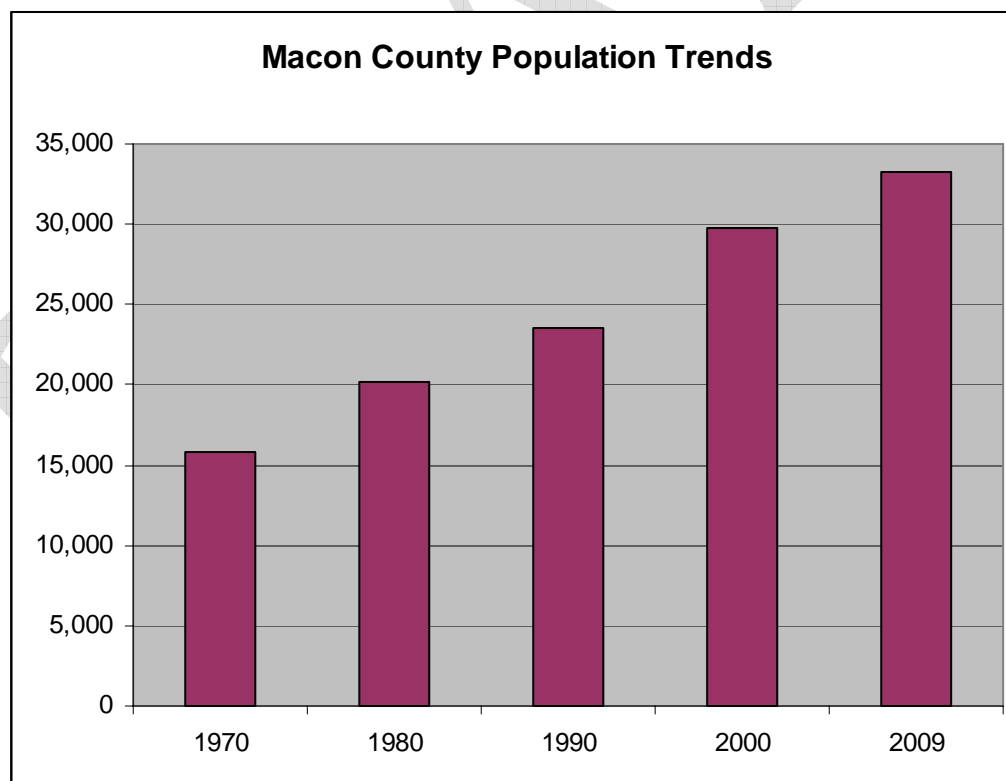
Growth is not new to Macon County. In 1990 the population of Macon County was 23,499 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2000 we see this figure rise by 6,312 persons or 26.9% to 29,811. Further, and even more dramatic, in the 30 year span from 1970-2000 Macon County's population has grown by 89%. If the July 1, 2009 estimation for Macon County's population is correct our county has grown by 110% over the past four decades.

Fig. P1

MACON COUNTY POPULATION
(1970-2000)

1970	1980	1990	2000	2009
15,788	20,178	23,499	29,811	33,233

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

During the 1990-2000 census period the 26.9% growth realized in Macon County far exceeded that of our six neighboring counties in Region A. Within our region, four of the seven counties, including Macon grew at a rate over 20%. During this time period, North Carolina had grown by 21.4%, having a population that exceeded 8,000,000 people. (*Southwestern Commission*).

Fig. P2

**Regional Comparison of Population Increase
(1990-2000)**

Jurisdiction	Percentage Increase
Macon County	26.9%
Clay County	22.6%
Cherokee County	20.5%
Graham County	11.1%
Swain County	15.1%
Jackson County	23.4%
Haywood County	15.1%
State of North Carolina	21.4%

Source: Southwestern Commission

We must keep in mind that Macon County's region leading growth rate does not take into account the thousands of part-time residents who visit seasonally, while maintaining a "permanent" residence elsewhere. According to some estimates Macon County's population can increase by as much as 18,000 residents in peak tourist seasons.

Migration

According to the Office of State Budget Management, there were approximately 566 more deaths than births in Macon County from 1990-2000. This fact is extremely important in that it indicates all of Macon County's population growth during this time period was attributable to the migration of new residents into the county. The Office of State Budget Management also offers projections for migration ranging all the way out to 2029, broken into ten year segments. During the 2000-2010 time frame it is projected that Macon County will have 478 more deaths than births, again leaving us with negative natural growth and a net migration rate of 20.6%. From 1990-2029 the Office of State Budget Management predicts Macon County will realize a population increase of 22,687 people. Of this amount, only 291 will be attributable to natural growth while 98.7% or 22,396 people are projected to migrate in. These projections are depicted in the chart on the next page.

Fig. P3

**County Population with Growth and Migration
(1990-2029)**

Year	Beg. Pop	End. Pop	Growth	%Growth	Births	Deaths	Nat. Growth	Net. Migration
90'-00'	23,504	29,806	6,302	26.8%	2,698	3,264	-566	6,868 (29.2%)
00'-10'	29,806	35,464	5,658	19%	3,647	4,125	-478	6,136 (20.6%)
10'-20'	35,464	41,333	5,869	16.5%	4,932	4,397	545	5,324 (15%)
20'-29'	41,333	46,191	4,858	11.8%	5,156	4,366	790	4,068 (9.8%)

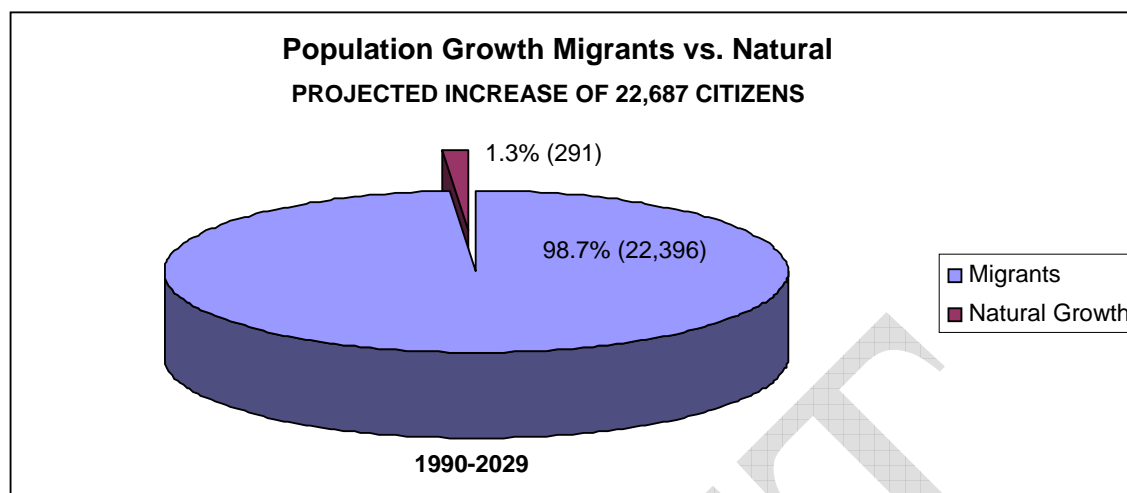
Source: Office of State Budget Management

Beg. Pop- End. Pop= Growth

Births-Deaths= Nat. Growth

Growth – Nat. Growth = Net Migration

Fig. P4



Source: Office of State Budget Management

Municipality Populations

Not only has Macon County experienced growth over the past decades in the unincorporated areas, but the municipalities have grown as well. It is important to take into consideration the growth of these areas as we plan for our future. Macon County has two municipalities the Town of Highlands, and Town of Franklin which serves as our county seat. Both the chart and graph on the following page provide illustrations for the growth realized in these areas from 1970-2000 using figures attained from the United States Census Bureau. The 2008 estimate was taken from the North Carolina Office of State Budget Management. It is important to note that the Office of State Budget Management used the 2000 census figures when making their projections.

Fig. P5

Municipality Populations (1970-2008)

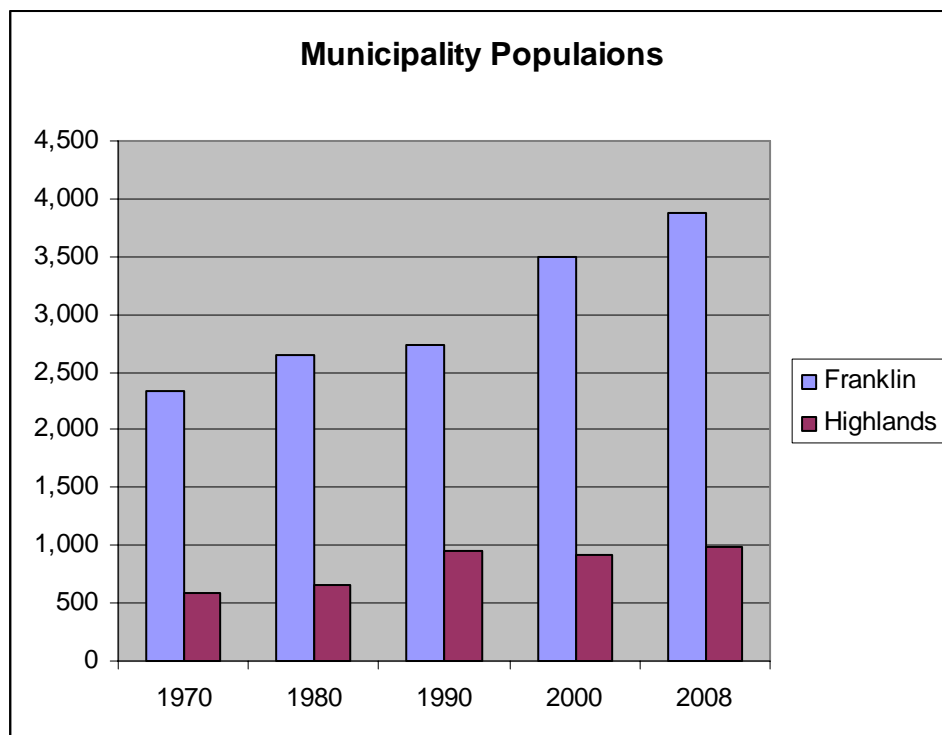
Municipality	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008
Franklin	2,336	2,640	2,735	3,490	3,882
Highlands	583	653	948	909	983

Source: US Census Bureau/ Office of State Budget Management

In the nearly 4 decade time span ranging from 1970-2008 the Town of Franklin has grown by approximately 66% as 1,546 people were added to the population (64 per year). The more recent growth especially that from 1990 to 2008 is attributable to the fact that the Town of Franklin had many vacant tracts of land which were subdivided and built upon.

The Town of Highlands has grown approximately 66% from 1970-2008 in total population. In the ten year time span from 1990 through 2000 the population decreased by 4.11%. This figure is somewhat shocking considering the town grew by 45% over the ten years preceding 1990. The growth trend is reported to have continued however from 2000-2008 as the town has added an estimated 74 additional people to the population.

Fig. P6



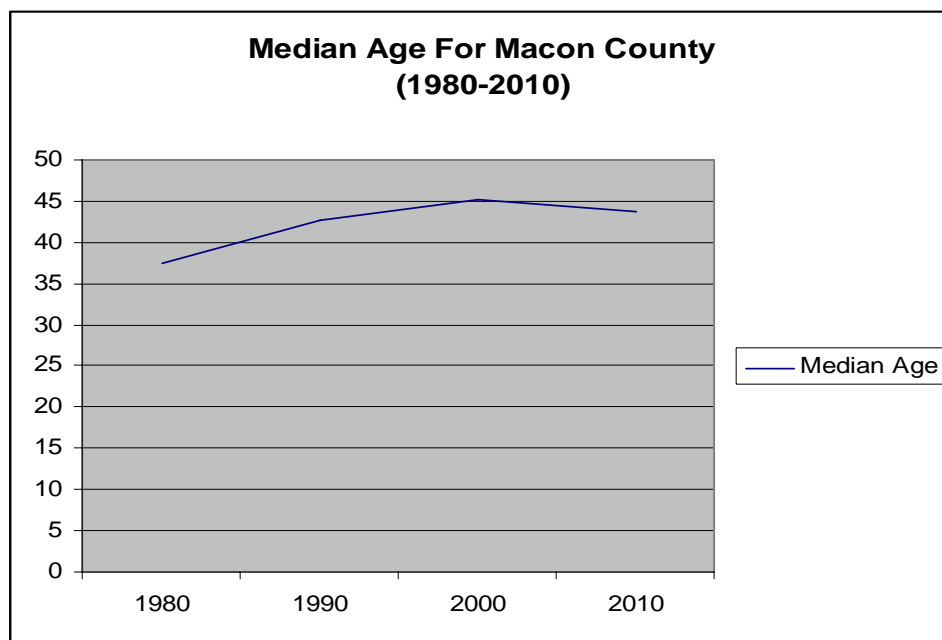
Source: US Census Bureau/ Office of State Budget Management

Age Composition

The age composition of a population can have a significant impact on the needs and trends that occur within a community. On a national level, our population is aging. In a report released by the United States Census Bureau on August 14, 2008 it is reported that nearly one in five U.S. residents will be 65 or older by 2030. At this time all baby boomers will be at or over the age of 65. By 2050 it is reported that the 65+ population will increase to 88.5 million in the United States more than doubling the 2008 estimation for this age group of 37.8 million. Similarly, the 85+ population is expected to more than triple from 2008 to 2050, rising from 5.4 million to 19 million. At the state level, the United States Census Bureau reports that North Carolina will realize a 124% increase in the number of people age 65 and over from 2000-2030.

From 1980 to 1990, the median age of the county's residents increased from 37.4 to 42.7. The median age continued to rise through 2000 reaching 45.2. This means that in Macon County exactly half the population was over 45.2 in 2000. (Figures taken from US Census Bureau).

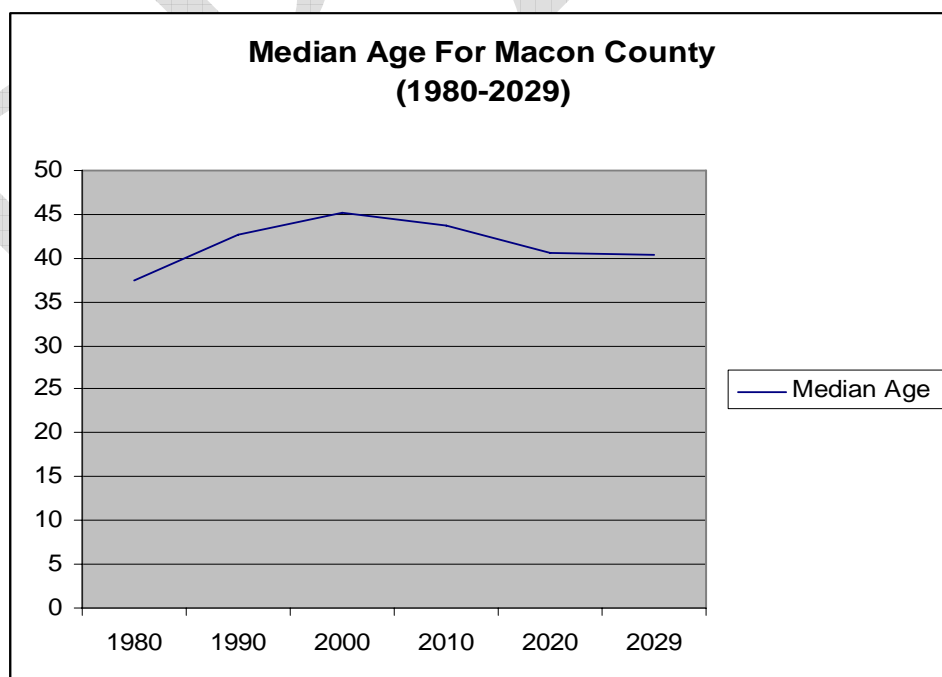
Fig.P7



Source: United States Census Bureau/State Office of Budget Management

The significant increase in median age from 1980 through 2000 would indicate that the population in Macon County is projected to continue aging. The Office of State Budget Management however, has projected otherwise. As of 2010 the OSBM estimates that our median age has fallen to 43.81 (Fig. P7). This decline is a trend that is expected to continue for quite sometime according to the OSBM. In 2020 the declining median age is projected to reach 40.64 and by 2029 fall to 40.34. This decline, as indicated by figures from the US Census Bureau combined with those from the Office of State Budget Management can be viewed in Figure P8.

Fig. P8



Source: US Census Bureau/Office of State Budget Management

Although the median age is projected to drop in Macon County over the next twenty years, we must keep in mind the graying of America that is projected to take place on a national level. Furthermore we must remember that although the median age is declining 20% of our population is projected to be over the age of 65 in 2029 and our 55+ population is never expected to fall below 30% from 2010-2029. Figures P9-P12 illustrates the projected population makeup of Macon County at different points in time from 2009-2029.

Fig. P9

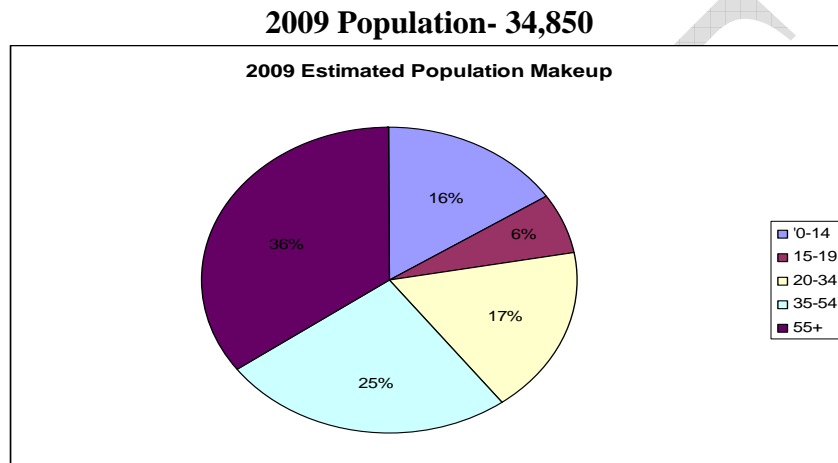


Fig. P10

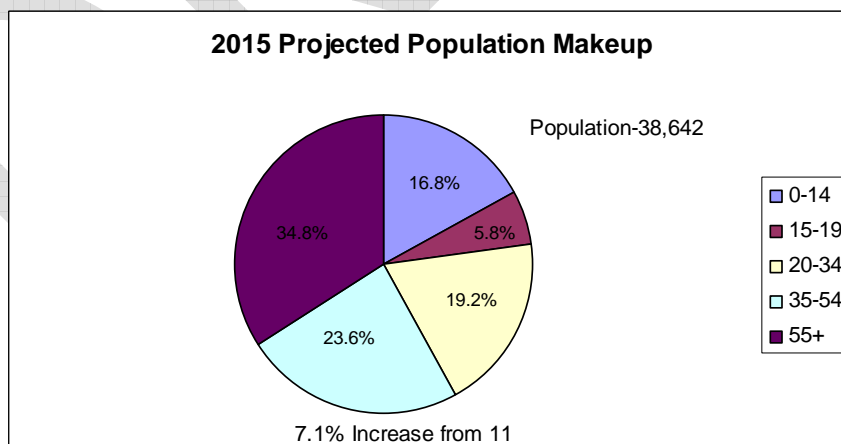


Fig. P11

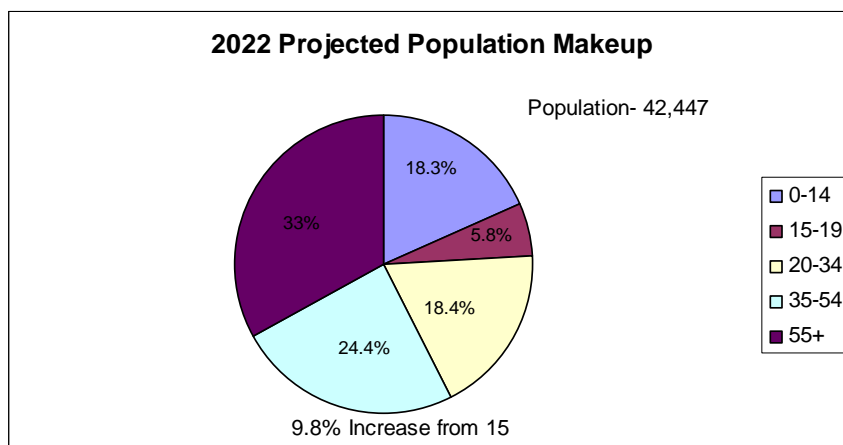
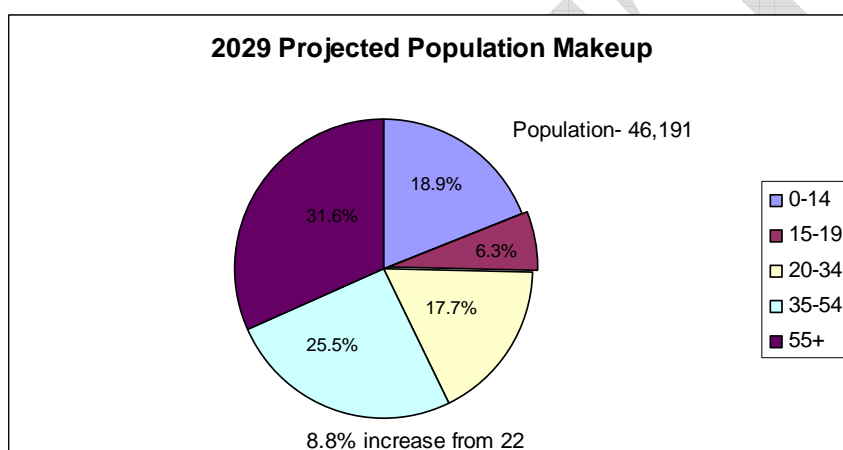


Fig. P12



Source: Office of State Budget Management

Although there is some change within the different age groups during this twenty year time span, these statistics show that the percentages for each of the age ranges remain fairly similar.

Racial Composition

The Comprehensive Plan for Macon County will break up the racial composition into three categories. White, Black or African American, and Other are the categories into which the population will be divided. In 1990, Macon County had a population of 23,499 people. Of this amount 22,919 were White, 385 were Black or African American leaving the remaining 195 persons to be included in the “Other” category. 2000 did not bring about much change as far as the racial composition of Macon County. Out of 29,811 people it was reported 29,134 of these individuals were white, 398 were Black or African American and 297 were included in the “Other” category. The 2006-2008 American Community Survey shows the White population in Macon County beginning to decline from 2000. The “Other” population however, has risen to nearly 4% since 2000 according to the American Community Survey.

Fig. P13

Year/Population	White	Black	Other
1990/ 23,499	22,919 (97.5%)	385 (1.6%)	195 (.9%)
2000/ 29,811	29,134 (97.7%)	398 (1.3%)	279 (1%)
06'-08'/32,586	30,769 (94.4%)	623 (1.9%)	1,194 (3.7%)

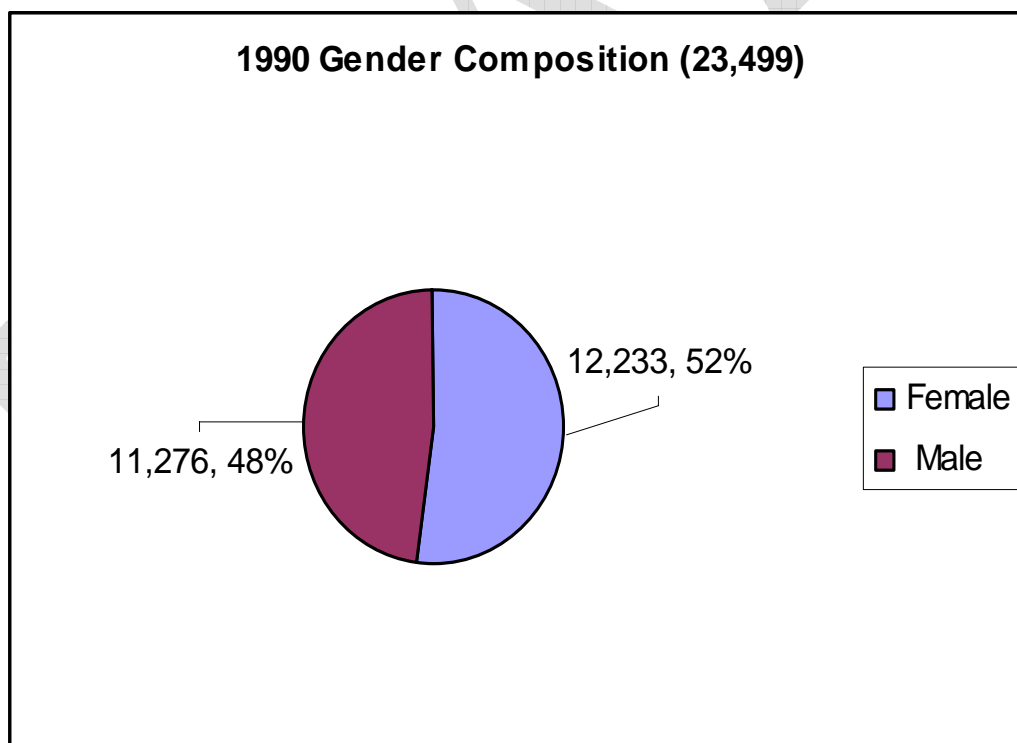
Source: US Census Bureau/2006-2008 American Community Survey

The decline experienced by the White population in Macon County does not come as a surprise. According to a report released by the US Census Bureau we will be an ethnically diverse nation by mid-century. On a national level, minorities are now projected to make up roughly one-third of the United States Population. In 2042, the minority population is projected to rise to 54%, thus making what we now call a minority a majority at this time. We can make the assumption that we are already seeing this change on a local level due to the decline in the White population experienced from 2000 through the 2006-2008 American Community Survey.

Gender Composition

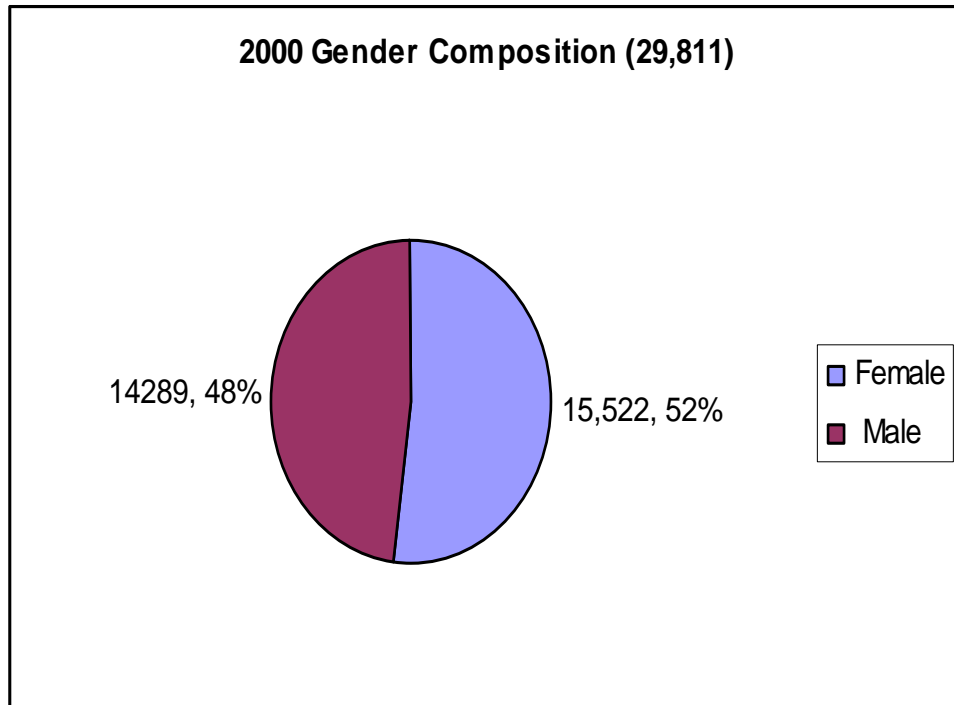
Gender Composition has remained largely unchanged in Macon County over the past two decades. In 1990 according to the US Census Bureau it was reported that 12,223 or 52% of residents living in Macon County were female. The remaining 11,276 or approximate 48% were male. The 2000 Census shows these percentages to be largely unchanged as 15,522 or 52.1% of residents were female and 14,289 or 47.9% were male. The 2006-2008 American Community Survey estimates that of the 32,586 people living in Macon County during this time 51.8% were female and 48.2% were male. In analyzing these figures from the United States Census Bureau it becomes evident that Macon County has not experienced much change regarding gender composition during the last 28 years.

Fig. P14



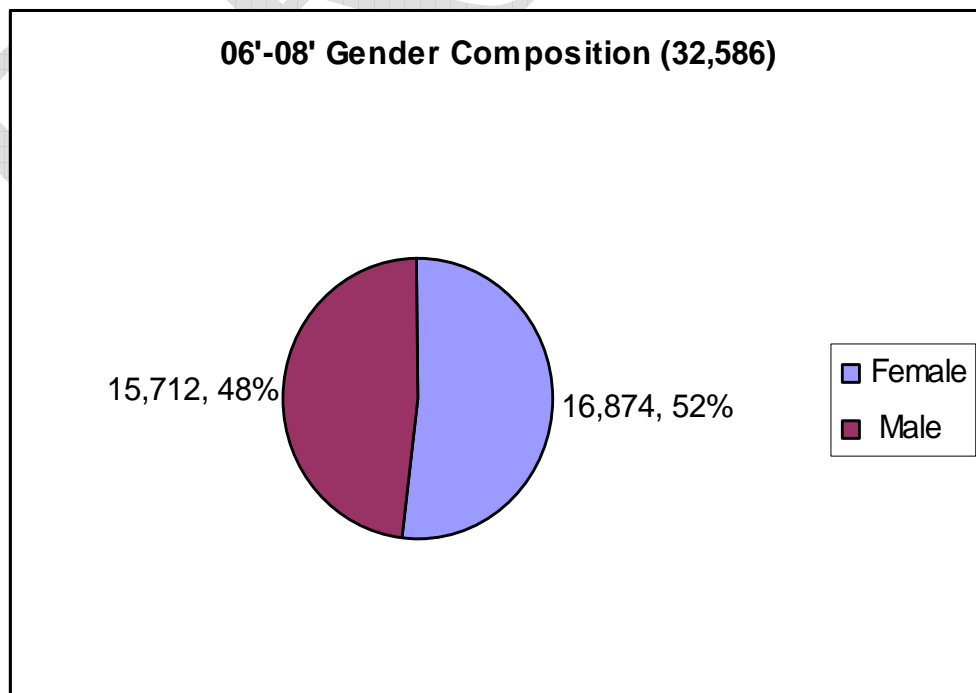
Source: US Census Bureau

Fig. P15



Source: US Census Bureau

Fig. P16



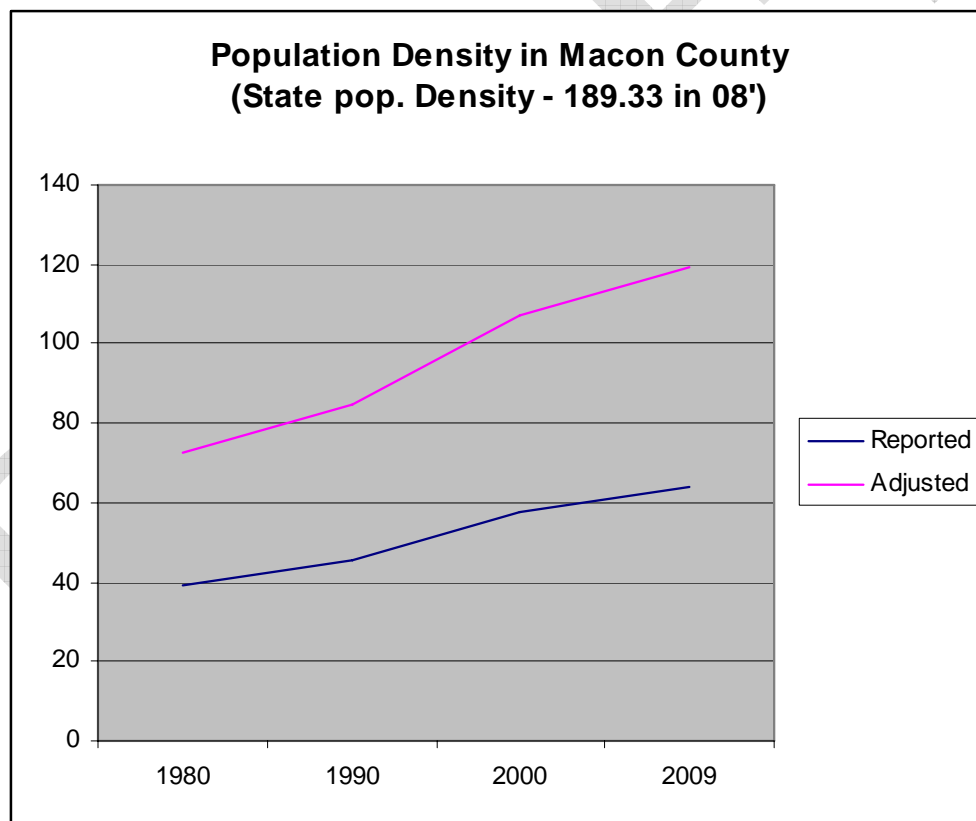
Source: US Census Bureau

Population Density

Macon County has 517 square miles of land area. Taking the most current population estimate by the US Census Bureau of 33,233 as of July 1, 2009, this would mean that Macon County currently has a population density of 64.2 people per square mile. Population density, like population has continued to escalate. In 1990 it is estimated that Macon County had a density of 45.5 people per square mile, which was up 16.7 percent from the 39 people per square mile indicated by the 1980 Census.

A recent 2008 estimate from the US Census Bureau ranks North Carolina 15th for population density in the US, having approximately 189.33 people per square mile. This seems like a far cry from the 64.2 people per square mile indicated in the 2009 estimate for Macon County. However, out of 517 square miles it is estimated that 46.2% or 238.8 square miles of this is forest service land. Given the fact that no one is allowed to live on U.S. Forest Service land, a more realistic density figure can be achieved by dividing the population (33,233) by the amount of what could be termed “inhabitable square miles” (278.2), resulting in a population density of 119.5 people per square mile.

Fig. P17



Source: U.S. Census Bureau/1992 Macon County Land Use Plan

Population Projections 2000-2030

Macon County has grown considerably over the past three decades. This trend is expected to continue in the decades to come. Not only are we projected to grow as a county, we are projected to grow as a region, state and nation. Although population trends are uncertain, they are of great assistance when planning for the future. Organizations like the United States Census Bureau, State Office of Budget Management and the MLI toolbox provide excellent information regarding recent and projected population trends.

In 2005 the US Census Bureau released population projections for the nation that extended from 2000 through 2030. Over the course of this three decade time span the United States is expected to grow by 82,162,529 people to 363,584,535, an increase of 29%. During the same time span, North Carolina is expected to rise from its current ranking of 11th in terms of overall population in the US to 7th as it realizes a 4,178,426 person or 52% increase in population rising to 12,227,739. (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Interim State Population Projections, 2005)

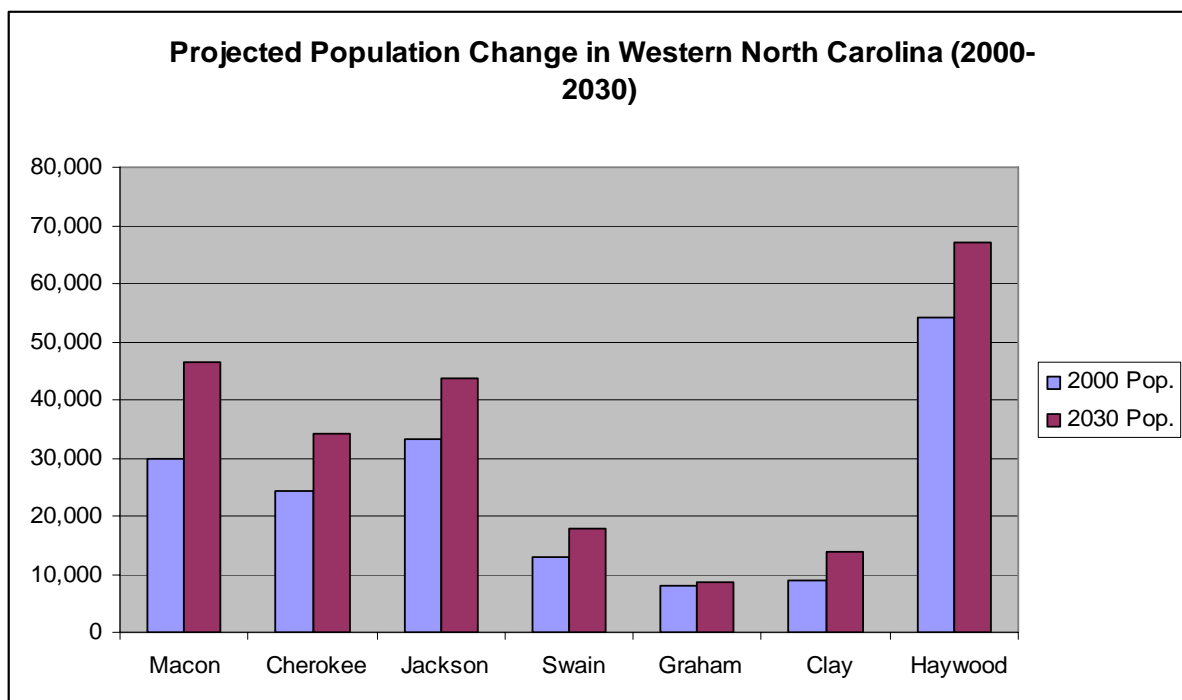
Our seven county mountain region is expected to follow suit with the nation and state, as it is expected to grow significantly. Projected Growth numbers for this region from 2000-2030 are astonishing. Macon County is projected to grow by nearly 56%. This translates to an increase of 16,545 people over the course of thirty years, as our population grows to a projected 46,356 people in 2030. (*Southwestern Commission*) This equals a population density of 89.6 people per square mile or more realistically 166.6 after United States Forest Service Land has been removed from the equation. Our neighboring counties are no different, as they too are on the docket for astonishing growth during the next thirty years.

Fig. P18

County	2000	2030	% Change
Macon	29,811	46,356	55.5%
Cherokee	24,298	34,187	40.7%
Jackson	33,121	43,687	31.9%
Swain	12,968	17,870	37.8%
Graham	7,993	8,696	8.8%
Clay	8,775	13,707	56.2%
Haywood	54,033	67,163	24.3%
United States	281,422,006	363,584,535	29%
North Carolina	8,049,313	12,227,739	52%

Source: US Census Bureau/ Southwestern Commission

Fig. P19



Source: US Census Bureau/ Southwestern Commission

Economic Trends

Macon County has historically led Western North Carolina in the growth and development of businesses. In the 1950's agriculture dominated the local economy in Macon County. By the 1960's Macon County had become home to several manufacturing companies. This economic growth continued into the 1970's as infrastructure development made Macon County attractive to new industries and more employers. An economic shift during the 1980's caused the economy in Macon County to begin leaning more toward the second home and tourism markets. Since the mid-1990's the second home market and natural/cultural tourism have become increasingly important parts of the local economy. Approximately 25% of the labor force is employed in either the construction business or leisure/tourism industry. An important segment of the retail/trade industry is also significantly impacted by tourism.

Macon County has been successful at keeping a relatively diverse local economy in an area dominated by tourism. The strength of business-friendly leadership, strong schools, low taxes and labor force all serve to promote the strong economic position our county has maintained. Healthcare, software development and manufacturing companies compose half of the top 10 employers in Macon County. Health Services, Business Services and Retail/Trade businesses employ nearly 50% of the total local labor force. (*Community Analysis- Macon County EDC May 19, 2009*)

Income Structure

Per Capita income- As defined by the US Census Bureau refers to the average income achieved through dividing aggregate income by total population of an area. In 1990 Macon County had a Income per capita of \$11,017 dollars. Over the last two decades the US Census Bureau shows this figure growing by more than 126% in our county, rising to \$25,002. (American Community Survey 2006-2008 estimates) This figure as of 2006-2008 is only \$13 below the State of North Carolina (25,015) whose per capita income increased by 94% over the same time period.

Family income- A family, according to the US Census Bureau is a group of two or more people residing together who are related by birth, marriage or adoption. 82% is representative of the growth regarding median family income in Macon County from 1990-2008. "Median" refers in all cases, to half of the figures being above and half below the number listed. The 82% increase in family income for Macon County tops that of North Carolina who grew by only 79% in this category during the years of 1990-2008.

Household income- Unlike family, a household is defined as simply; all the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. Like both per capita and median family income numbers, median household income has increased dramatically in Macon County as well. From 1990-2008 it is estimated that median household income grew by 96% in our county, as it rose to over \$40,000. 73% represents the growth realized by the State of North Carolina in the same category, over the same time span as it grew to \$46,107.

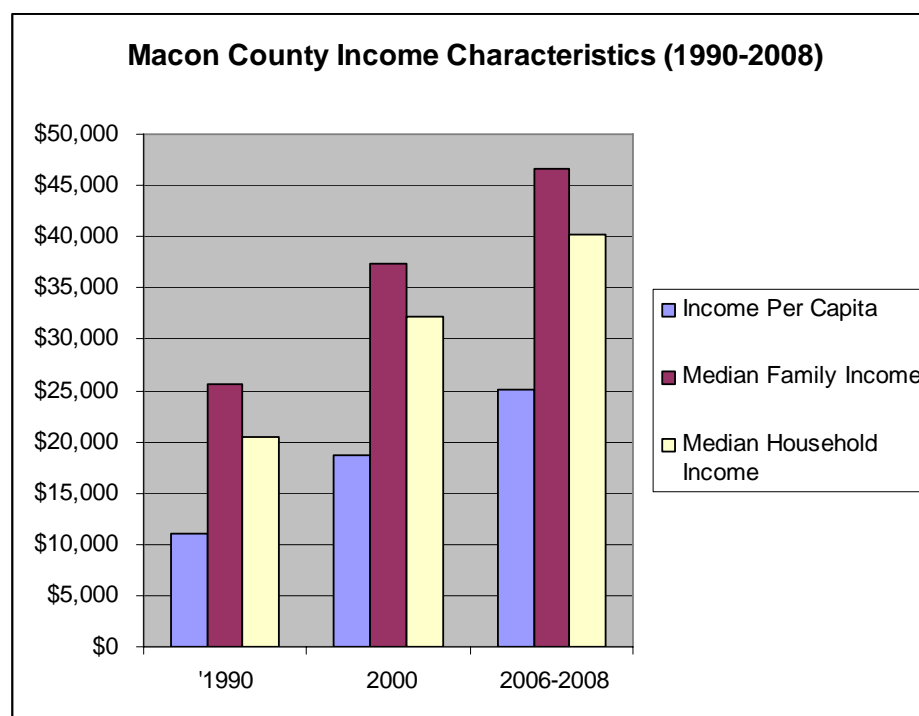
While the 2006-2008 Income Characteristics for Macon County are below the state average, the growth we have experienced in each of these categories has been substantial. In Income Per Capita, Median Family Income and Median Household income Macon County exceeded the growth of the state by 32%, 3% and 23% respectively from 1990-2008. Analyzing these figures makes it clear that the economy in Macon County has grown at a healthy rate over the past 18 years. (*Figure(s) ET1/ET2*)

Fig. ET1

Macon County Income Characteristics 1990-2008

Macon County	1990	2000	2006-2008
Income Per Capita	\$11,017	\$18,642	\$25,002
Median Family Income	\$25,655	\$37,381	\$46,627
Median household Income	\$20,450	\$32,139	\$40,164

Source: US Census Bureau/ American Community Survey



Source: US Census Bureau/American Community Survey

Fig. ET2

North Carolina Income Characteristics 1990-2008

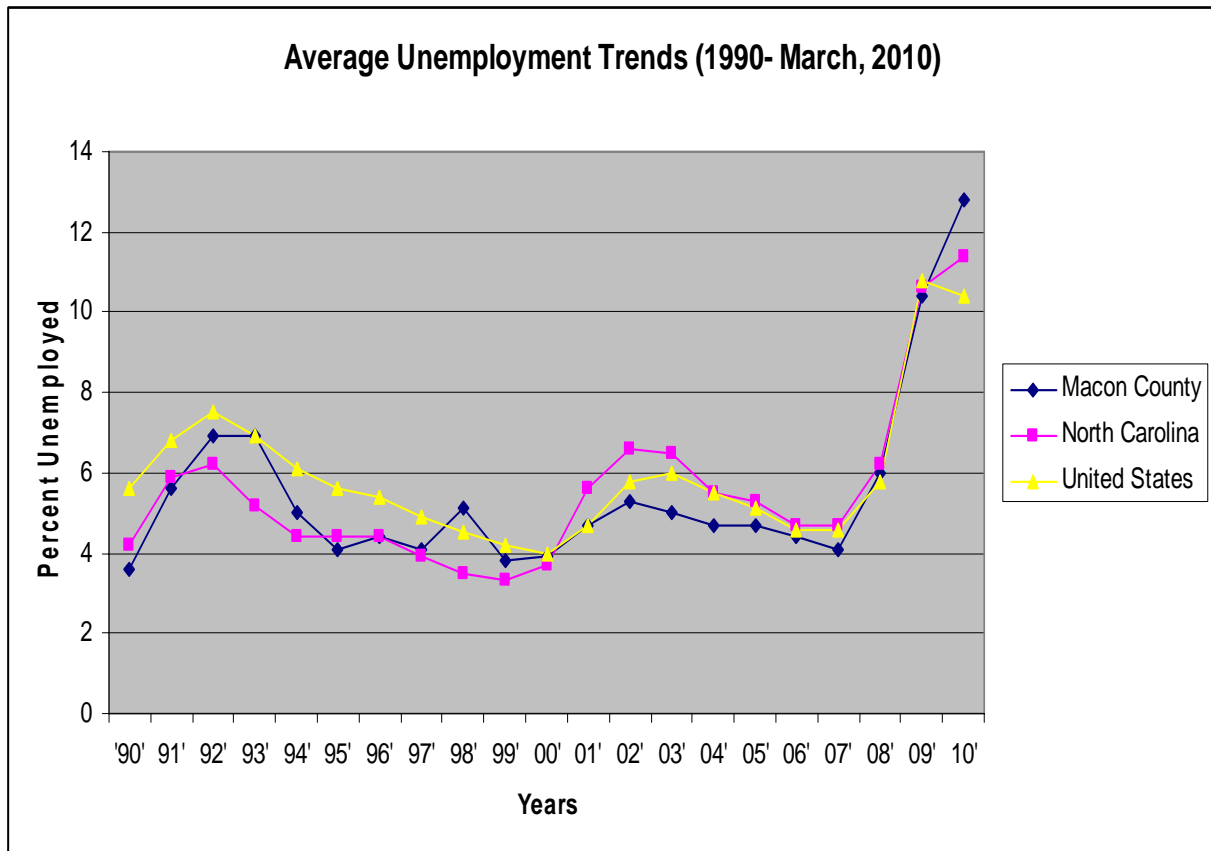
North Carolina	1990	2000	2006-2008
Income Per Capita	\$12,885	\$20,307	\$25,015
Median Family Income	\$31,548	\$46,335	\$56,558
Median household Income	\$26,647	\$39,184	\$46,107

Source: US Census Bureau/American Community Survey

Employment Status

Over the past two decades Macon County's unemployment rate has remained consistent with that of the state and country. During this twenty year time span, there are nine years where the average annual unemployment rate in Macon County fell below that of North Carolina and the United States. Looking at figure ET3, the recent economic downturn becomes evident as we notice unemployment rates sky-rocketing after 2007 on the local, state and national levels.

Fig. ET3



*Source: Employment Security Commission
(2010 %'s have been averaged through March)*

The United States Census Bureau defines labor force as all persons who are able to work and are 16 years of age or older. This figure is representative of both employed and unemployed persons. According to the 2006-2008 Community Survey released by the US Census Bureau 57.3% of Macon County's population was in the labor force at this time. Figure ET4 contains figures from the North Carolina Employment Security Commission. From 1990-2000 the county's labor force increased by 26.1%. The net migration rate for our county over this same time period was estimated by the Office of State Budget Management to be 29.2%. As you can see these two numbers are in close correlation with one another. 2009 is the last year that average annual employment characteristics are available for Macon County. In the chart below 19.1% is representative of the increase in Macon County's labor force from 2000-2009. The Office of State Budget Management estimates the net migration rate for Macon County from 2000-2010 to be 20.6%. Again, the increase in labor force and net migration rate appear to be consistent. Over the last two decades Macon County's labor force has increased consistently.

Fig. ET4

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
1990	11,185	10,783	402	3.6%
1991	11,603	10,956	647	5.6%
1992	11,898	11,079	819	6.9%
1993	12,148	11,311	837	6.9%
1994	12,218	11,613	605	5%
1995	12,630	12,117	513	4.1%
1996	13,272	12,690	582	4.4%
1997	14,037	13,456	581	4.1%
1998	14,128	13,414	714	5.1%
1999	14,297	13,760	537	3.8%
2000	14,114	13,562	552	3.9%
2001	14,410	13,739	671	4.7%
2002	15,088	14,281	807	5.3%
2003	15,374	14,610	764	5%
2004	15,443	14,270	723	4.7%
2005	15,703	14,967	736	4.7%
2006	16,173	15,464	709	4.4%
2007	16,617	15,935	682	4.1%
2008	16,316	15,343	973	6%
2009	16,822	15,070	1,752	10.4%
2010 (March)	15,895	13,971	1,924	12.1%

Source: Employment Security Commission

Employment by Industry

According to the United States Census Bureau in 1990, 10,077 people over the age of 16 were employed in Macon County. Industries employing these individuals ranged from agriculture, forestry and fisheries to health, educational and personal services. (Figure ET5)

Fig. ET5

1990 Employment by Industry

Industry	Employed Persons (10,077)	%
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries	476	4.7%
Mining	24	.5%
Construction	1,630	16%
Manufacturing	1,633	16.2%
Transportation	224	2.2%
Communications, Public utilities	340	3.4%
Wholesale Trade	167	1.7%
Retail Trade	2,143	21.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real estate	447	4.4%
Business, Repair Services	406	4%
Health, Education, Personal serv.	1,614	16%
Entertainment, Recreation serv.	224	2.2%
Other Services	483	4.8%
Public Administration	266	2.6%

Source: US Census Bureau

Out of the 14 industries listed, we can clearly see that Construction, Manufacturing, Retail trade, and Health/Educational/Personal Services dominated the workforce in Macon County as of 1990. Combined these 4 industries employed approximately 70% of the people in Macon County's workforce at this time.

In 2000, figures from the US Census Bureau indicate that Macon County had 12,865 people over the age of 16 in the labor force. Of the industries housed in Macon County at this time Construction, Manufacturing, Retail trade and Health/Educational/Social services are the only industries that show double digit percentages in terms of employment. It is important to note however, that the Construction, Manufacturing and Retail trade industries all declined over this ten year period. Below are the 13 industry classifications listed for Macon County in 2000 along with the number of workers they employed. (*Fig. ET6*)

Fig. ET6

2000 Employment by Industry

Industry	Employed Persons (12,865)	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	338	2.6%
Construction	1,870	14.5%
Manufacturing	1,482	11.5%
Wholesale trade	174	1.4%
Retail trade	1,912	14.9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	379	2.9%
Information	236	1.8%
Finance, real estate, rental,	652	5.1%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste management	932	7.2%
Educational, health, social serv.	2,359	18.3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation food serv.	1,243	9.7%
Other	821	6.4%
Public administration	467	3.6%

Source: US Census Bureau

The 2006-2008 estimates from the United States Census Bureau show 15,026 people over the age of 16 in Macon County's workforce. Viewing these statistics from 1990 until this time, we notice a continual decrease in both the manufacturing and retail trade industries in Macon County. Over this same time the construction industry appears to have dipped slightly in 2000, while making a strong comeback in 2006- 2008. Both real estate and tourist based industries (arts/entertainment/recreation accommodation/food services) grow steadily over this nearly three decade time period, while the agriculture industry declines to roughly 1%. Educational/Healthcare/Social assistance seems to be a very reliable industry as it continues to rise, eventually reaching number 1 in terms of employment by industry as of the 2006-2008 estimates. (*Figure(s) ET7/ET8*)

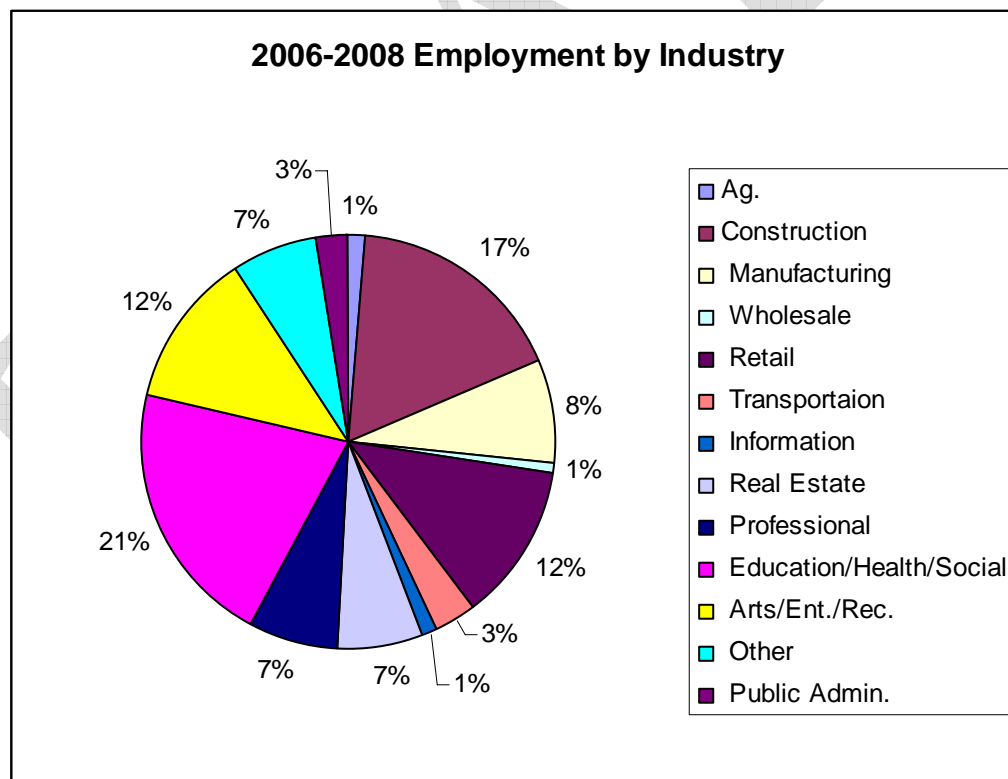
Fig. ET7

2006-2008 Employment by Industry

Industry	Employed Persons (15,026)	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	208	1.4%
Construction	2,604	17.3%
Manufacturing	1,192	7.9%
Wholesale trade	129	.9%
Retail trade	1,841	12.3%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	491	3.3%
Information	181	1.2%
Finance, insurance, real estate	994	6.6%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative	1,055	7.0%
Educational, health, social serv.	3,114	20.7%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food serv.	1,826	12.2%
Other	1,012	6.7%
Public administration	379	2.5%

Source: United States Census Bureau

Fig. ET8



Source: US Census Bureau (See chart above)

Fig. ET9

Macon County's Top 20 Employers

Company Name	Industry Description	Employment
Macon County Public Schools	Education & Health Services	500-999
Drake Enterprises LTD (A Corp)	Professional & Business Services	500-999
Macon County	Public Administration	250-499
Angel Medical Center	Education & Health Services	250-499
Highlands Cashiers Hospital Inc.	Education & Health Services	250-499
Wal Mart Associates Inc.	Trade, Transportation, Utilities	100-249
Ingles Markets Inc.	Trade, Transportation, Utilities	100-249
Shaw Industries Group Inc.	Manufacturing	100-249
Caterpillar Inc.	Manufacturing	100-249
Britthaven Inc.	Education & Health Services	100-249
Macon Program for Progress	Other	100-249
Lowes Home Centers Inc.	Trade, Transportation, Utilities	100-249
Macon Bank Inc.	Financial	100-249
Highlands Golf Club Inc.	Leisure & Hospitality	100-249
McDonald Restaurants of NC Inc.	Leisure & Hospitality	100-249
Whitley Products	Manufacturing	100-249
Town of Highlands	Public Administration	50-99
US Department of Agriculture	Public Administration	50-99
K Mart Corporation Intl Hdq	Trade Transportation, Utilities	50-99
Bi Lo LLC	Trade, Transportation, Utilities	50-99

Source: Workforce In Depth (Employment Security Commission)

Figure ET9 represents the top 20 employers within Macon County. This information was gathered from the Workforce in Depth summary report for Macon County published January 5, 2010. In viewing the chart, it becomes evident the major role that education and health services play in our local economy, as this industry accounts for four of the top ten employers. The chart also shows us firsthand that Macon County's economy is relatively diverse and not solely reliant upon the tourist industry, unlike many areas in our region.

Tourism

Tourism has played an integral role in both Macon County and the Mountain Region. Visitors, then and now have traveled to the Mountain Region seeking to enjoy our scenic beauty, mild climate and seemingly endless natural resources. The North Carolina Department of Commerce defines the Mountain Region as the 23 westernmost counties in the State.

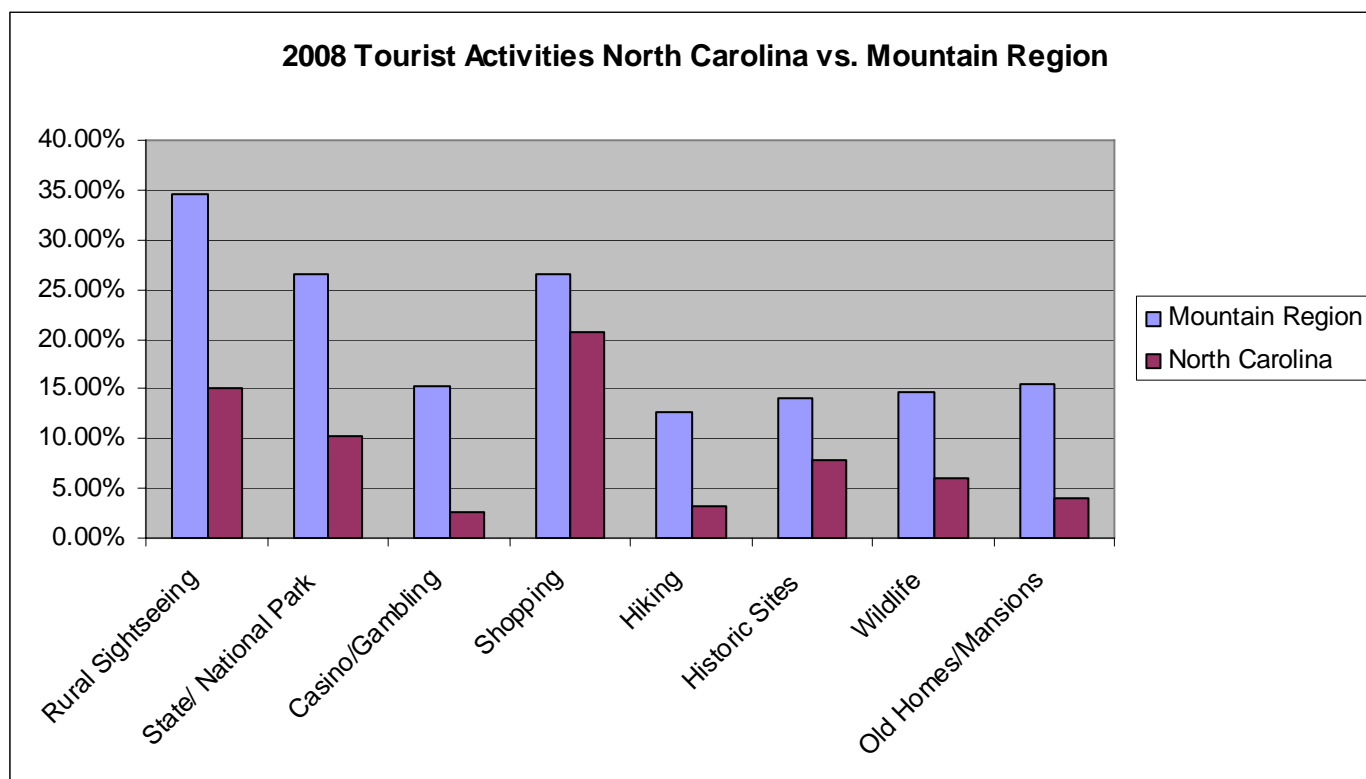
The following are highlights from the 2008 Mountain Region Travel Summary conducted by the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

- 18% of North Carolina's visitors traveled to the Mountain Region.
- 86% of domestic visitors came to the mountain region for pleasure purposes, while 9% of visitors came to conduct business. The remaining 5% reported personal business or "other" as the purpose for their visit.
- Travel to the mountain region is heaviest during the summer and fall. Fall (September-November) had the highest proportion of visitors, with 34% of all 2008 Mountain Region Visitors. Summer (June-August) followed with 33% of visitors, (March-May) 23%, and winter (December-February) 13%.

- The top states of origin for overnight visitors to the Mountain Region were: North Carolina (31%), Georgia (13.5%), Florida (10.2%), South Carolina (9.3%), and Virginia (6.6%).
- 61% of the households that traveled to the Mountain Region in 2008 had a household income of over \$50,000.

Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce

Fig. ET10



Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce

Macon County specifically, has benefited tremendously from tourism during the past decades. In 1991, the North Carolina Department of Commerce reported that Macon County received \$58.6 million in expenditures related to tourism. Nine years later in 2000 the tourism expenditures figure for Macon County had risen to \$89.68 million, realizing a 53% increase. As of 2008, according to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, this figure had risen again by approximately 34% to \$120.56 million. Figure ET11 shows the 2008 Tourism Statistics for Macon County and the 23 westernmost counties.

Fig. ET11

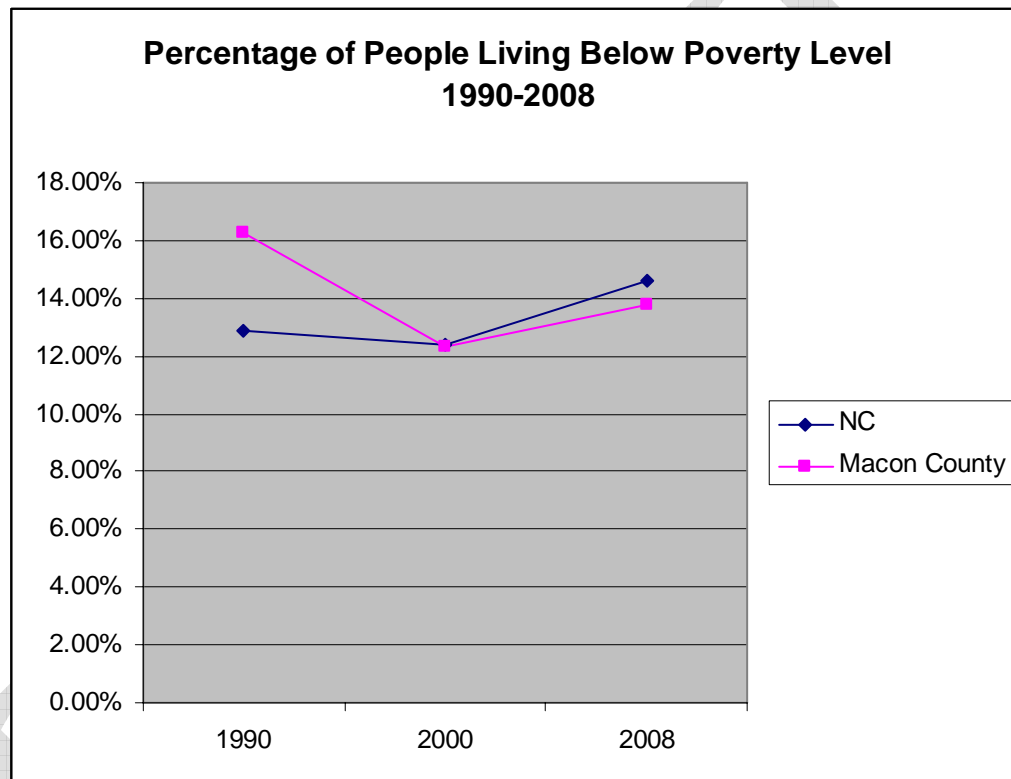
Location	2008 Expenditures (\$ millions)	Percent Change (07-08)	2008 Payroll (\$ millions)	2008 Employment (Thousands)	2008 State Tax Receipts (\$millions)	2008 Local Tax Receipts (\$millions)
Macon	120.56	4.5%	22.38	1.16	5.43	10.25
Region	1,595.88	1.4%	320.05	18	79.8	63.6

Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce

Poverty

In 1990, according to the US Census Bureau, the percentage of people below the poverty level in Macon County was approximately 16.3%, or roughly 3,900 people. This percentage was well above the state average of 12.9%. From 1990-2000, we see the percentage of people living below the poverty level in Macon County decline significantly to 12.4%. The state of North Carolina reported that 12.3% of the state population was living below the poverty level in 2000. According to 2008 estimates from the US Census Bureau, the percentage of people living below the poverty level in both Macon County and North Carolina has risen. From 2000-2008 North Carolina experienced a 2.3% increase to 14.6%, while Macon County's percentage increased by only 1.4% to 13.8%. (See Figure ET12)

Fig. ET12



Source: US Census Bureau (quick facts)

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

DRAFT

Economic Development and Public Services

Economic Development

Introduction

Macon County has a long history as a progressive and thoughtful leader of Western North Carolina in the growth and development of businesses. While the economies of neighboring communities have become dominated by the tourism industry, Macon County has remained successful at keeping a relatively diverse local economy. Healthcare, software development, and manufacturing companies compose half of the top ten employers in Macon County. Health Services, Business Services and Retail/Trade business employ nearly 50% of the total local labor force.

The primary economic challenge facing Macon County is the ability to retain and recruit professional talent. While there are typically job opportunities with local employers, they may not be competitive with opportunities in other areas where wages are higher and the cost of living is lower. Existing employers are consistently looking for a labor force with more technical skills and they are looking for them in large numbers. Assuming demand in key areas grow as the national economy recovers, opportunities may be missed because the County and surrounding areas are not well positioned to supply the necessary labor. (*Community Analysis-Macon County EDC May 19, 2009*)

The purpose of the Economic Development Element of the Macon County Comprehensive Plan is to make Recommendations necessary to maintain a healthy, vibrant and sustainable economy. Recommendations contained within this element of the plan will echo the efforts of a proactive Economic Development Commission that attempts to put Macon County in a position to accommodate future economic growth in a recovering economy.

Public Input

The recent economic recession has dramatically impacted economic development in the United States. It has become increasingly difficult for people to find employment regardless of prior experience or educational background. “Small Town America” was perhaps hit the hardest. Unemployment rates when viewed on the National, State and Local levels clearly support this statement. (*see economic trends fig. ET3*)

The public input was a direct reflection of the declining economy in Macon County. Economic Development was a topic for discussion at each community and special interest group meeting to which the public input committee traveled. Citizens were adamant about bringing new economic development to the area and revitalizing businesses that were currently in existence. They wanted their children and grandchildren to have the opportunity to remain in Macon County if they desired.

Citizens understood however, that this was not possible if there was no place for them to work. Attendees of these public input meetings shared many great ideas for bringing economic development to the area, all of which were considered by the committee assigned to work on this element of the plan.

Respondents to the survey also placed a high degree of emphasis on economic development. 91% of respondents felt that attracting new businesses to Macon County was important to some degree. When asked “What should Macon County Promote?” Local Businesses received the highest degree of support. To view the complete public input process and results, please refer to the *Public Input Section Pgs. 11-38* of this plan.

The Economic Development Element of the plan is unique. Citizens of Macon County want to preserve the rural character of the area, while also bringing in Economic Development. Economic Development means increased infrastructure, affordable housing, and tracts of land capable of accommodating this development. For this reason it is crucial that we find a balance between fostering economic development and preserving our rural character.

Macon County Economic Development Commission

The Macon County Economic Development Commission was created in 1984 by the Macon County Commission. The Mission Statement of The Economic Development Commission is as follows: “To improve the economic health and quality of life of the citizens of the Macon County Community, through the creation of capital investment and job opportunities; through the attraction of new business and industry to Macon County, and through assistance to existing businesses and industry in proposed expansion.

Currently there are 12 participants in the Economic Development Commission. The participants are as follows: Ed Shatley, Gary Drake, Mark West, Connie Haire, David Hubbs, Steve Chenoweth, Thomas Craig, Roger Plemens, Johnny Mira-Knippel, Donnie Bishop, Trevor Dalton (Economic Development Coordinator), James McCoy (consultant)

Recently the Economic Development Commission conducted a Community Analysis. This analysis contained input from over 70 community stakeholders including elected officials and business leaders. The analysis contains information regarding; the local industry makeup, labor pool/draw area, income levels, demographics, commuting patterns, historic and future trends. Resulting from this analysis, the EDC outlined the overall opportunities and challenges facing economic development in Macon County. Below is a summary of their findings.

Summary of Community Analysis

Fig. ED1

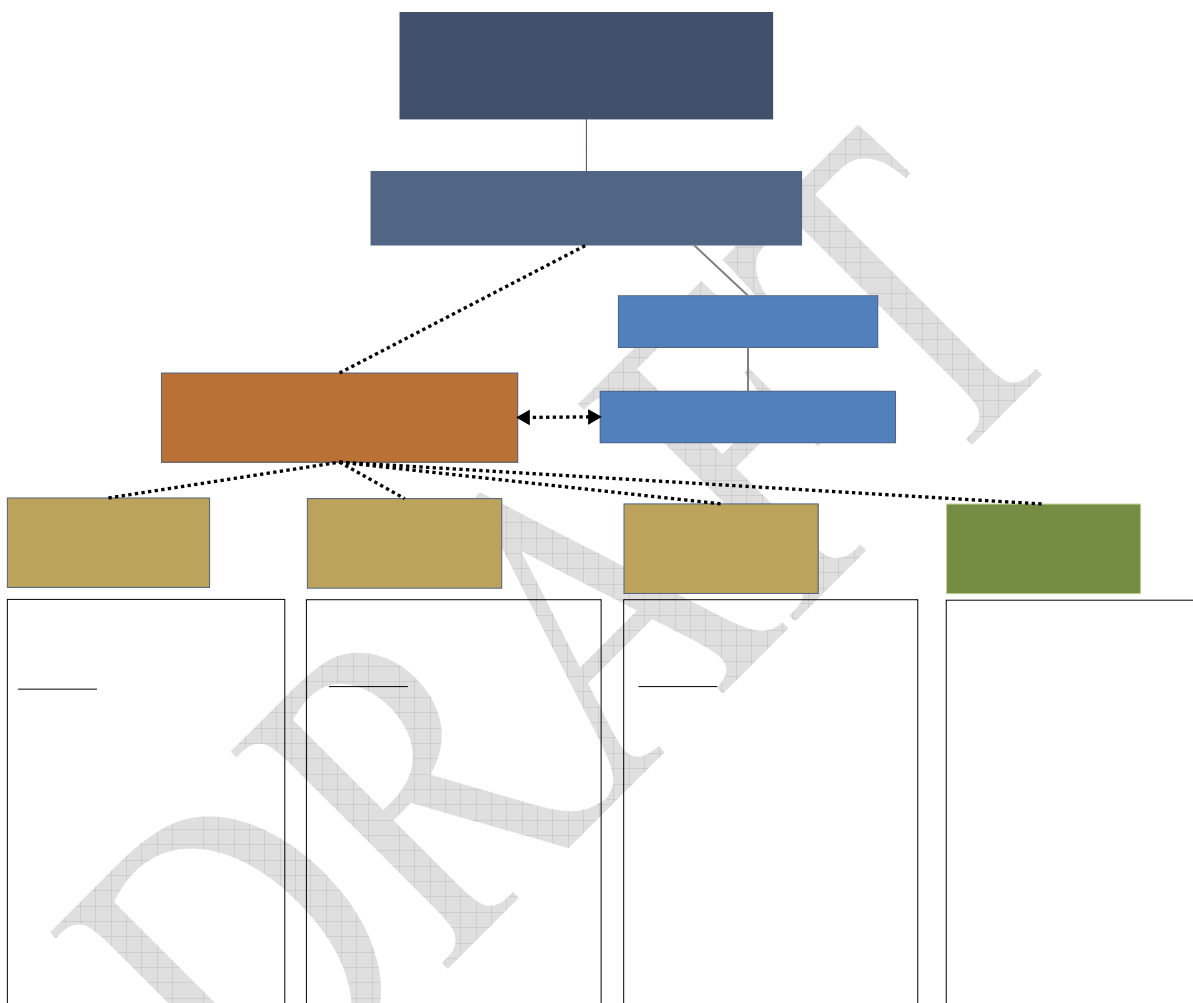
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Leadership	Available Labor Force	Retail Growth Incubator	Neighbors
Outdoors	Underemployment	Entrepreneur Development	Loss of Local Employers
Culture	No “Plan”	Growing Existing Employers	Mismanaged Growth
Natural Beauty	Aging Labor Force	Need for Higher Skills	Reactive rather than Proactive Infrastructure
Sense of Place	Sentiment of Undervalue	Software and Data Management	
Location	Differentiation	ED Program	
Partners	Cost of Living	Redevelopment of Downtowns	
Schools		Healthcare	
Balsam West		Economic Diversity	
Diverse Economy		ID Product	
Low Taxes			

Source: Macon County Economic Development Commission Retreat Report

Upon Completion of the Community Analysis, the Economic Development Commission has continued working to capitalize on strengths and address weaknesses, all in hopes of putting Macon County in a position to embrace economic development opportunities that will arise in the future. One way the Economic Development Commission is working to accomplish this is through the development of sub-committees. The committees are comprised of members on the Economic Development Commission. There are 4 sub-committees, each of which is dedicated to a different aspect of economic development in Macon County. The sub-committees are as follows: Existing Business Development, Entrepreneur Development, Business Recruitment, and Retail Development. This sub-committee structure better enables the EDC to focus their efforts, resulting in quicker and more efficient action. (See sub-committee structure fig ED2)

*Economic Development Commission
Sub committee structure*

Fig. ED2



Source: Macon County Economic Development Commission Retreat Report

Recommendations

The Economic Development and Public Services Committee for the Macon County Comprehensive Plan discussed in great detail, Economic Development in Macon County. Over the course of this discussion however, it became evident the amount of work being done to address this topic by the Economic Development Commission. The Commission, as of 2009 has an Economic Development Consultant, as well as a full-time Economic Development Coordinator. These two individuals, along with the qualified business leaders of the Economic Development Commission continually focus their efforts toward the economic health and well-being of Macon County. In light of this, the Economic Development and Public Services Committee for the Macon County Comprehensive Plan recommend that the Economic Development Commission receive the highest degree of support in all future endeavors.

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.

Public Services

Introduction

The Macon County Public Services segment of the Comprehensive Plan was broken down into 3 categories: Law Enforcement, Emergency Management, and Public Water and Sewer. Throughout the course of the meetings, the committee consulted with officials who were directly involved with the categories being addressed. This strategy proved to be most beneficial, as these individuals were able to give the committee a better idea of where Macon County currently stood with respect to each of the three categories. These individuals pinpointed inadequacies and gave their opinions as to how population growth would directly affect the category with which they were involved. This valuable information, combined with the public input from the citizens of Macon County gave the committee an excellent foundation on which they were able to base their recommendations. The officials consulted were as follows:

Law Enforcement:

Robert Holland- Macon County Sheriff
Terry Bradley- Franklin Chief of Police
Bill Harrell- Highlands Chief of Police

Emergency Management:

Warren Cabe- Director of Emergency Services

Public Water and Sewer:

Jay Gibson- Town of Franklin
Mike Gruberman- Town of Franklin
Joe Cooley- Town of Highlands

Public Input

Public Services are extremely important to the citizens of Macon County. Throughout the public input process many citizens said the feeling of safety and the “volunteer spirit” of Macon County were the two things they liked best. Aside from “safety services”, citizens acknowledged the benefits provided by public water and sewer, but also saw it as a mechanism for controlling future growth in the County.

Law Enforcement/Emergency Services

Macon County Sheriffs Department

Within Macon County, there are three law enforcement agencies: Macon County Sheriffs Department, Town of Highlands Police Department and Town of Franklin Police Department. The jurisdiction of the Macon County Sheriffs Department lies outside the municipal limits of Franklin and Highlands.

The Macon County Sheriffs Department currently has 68 employees. Of these 68 employees, 22 are patrol officers. Aside from patrol officers the Sheriffs Department has officers specializing in drug investigation, criminal investigation, school resources and juvenile detention. Within the jail itself, there are roughly 20 employees including a full-time nurse.

According to Sheriff Robert Holland, the department receives approximately 12,000 calls per year. Of the 12,000 calls received, it is estimated that 2,000 to 2,500 come from within the Highlands area. The average response time to these calls tends to vary. The approximate annual number of calls received by the department does not include individuals who come into the Sheriffs Department to file a complaint.

Patrol officers within the Sheriffs Department operate in shifts. A shift is comprised of 5 officers. Of the five officers on a shift, 2 are supervisors. Each shift has two officers that are designated for the Nantahala and Highlands areas. Sub-stations are located in both Nantahala and Highlands although the Sheriff reported that the Nantahala station was not currently being used.

Drug abuse, particularly that dealing with prescription drugs is on the rise in Macon County. Drug abuse not only affects the health of the user, it leads to a series of other crimes as well. Domestic issues and breaking and entering, according to Sheriff Holland can often times be tied to drug abuse. The Sheriff estimates that as much as 98% of all break-ins are related to drug use. The Detention Center seems to be a “revolving door” for drug users, as the same people constantly come in and out, unable to receive extended sentences due to legislative constraints.

As the population increases, so will the demand for services offered by the Sheriffs Department. The department will continually need qualified officers to accommodate an increasing need. These officers should be adequately equipped and compensated for their efforts at a rate competitive with surrounding counties in order to retain them. Like staff, facilities should also remain adequate in order to accommodate an increasing number of inmates resulting from population growth.

Macon County Detention Center

The Macon County Detention Center is comprised of 4 dormitories capable of housing a total of 75 inmates.

Fig. PSI

Dormitory	Maximum Capacity	Purpose
General Population	24	Work release, non-threat, etc.
General Population	24	Pre-trial
Lockdown	12	All male dorm containing problem inmates, inmates with medical conditions, etc.
Female	12	Dorm for female inmates
Segregation Cells	3	Solitary Confinement

Source: Macon County Sheriffs Department

Franklin Police Department

The Franklin Police Department has jurisdiction within the municipal limits of the Town of Franklin. Currently, the department has a total of 18 officers, all equipped with a vehicle. Like the Sheriffs Department, these officers operate in shifts. A shift consists of 3 officers, with 2 focusing primarily on service calls and 1 in charge of traffic enforcement.

The Franklin Police Department, according to Chief Terry Bradley, receives approximately 670-880 calls per month. Bradley reported an average call response time for a service call is 4-5 minutes. This call response time has the potential to increase, as the city limits continue to expand.

In 2010 the Franklin Police Department relocated to their new facility, which has adequate room for expansion. The facility, located on West Palmer Street, is capable of staffing an additional 4 patrol officers and 2 detectives. Bradley reports there has been no growth within the department over the past decade, which leads him to believe the new facility will remain adequate for at least 25 years.

As the town's population continues to increase, problems such as drug abuse and domestic disputes will increase as well. Growth within the police department should keep pace with the increasing number of residents to ensure that the law is adequately enforced. Bradley reported that the department has seen a gradual decline in the number of methamphetamine users. This decline however, has given way to a rise in cocaine, heroin and marijuana. Drug abuse plays a major role in the majority of domestic disputes according to Bradley.

Other problems on the horizon for the Department include; an inadequate amount of Spanish speaking officers and the continually escalating median age of the population, which demands more services. Currently, the Franklin Police Department is not equipped with Spanish speaking officers. This is a problem now that will continue to grow with an increasing Hispanic Population. Officers of the Franklin Police Department must continue adapting to the changes in demographics in order to provide the most efficient services possible.

Police Officer salaries continue “hovering lower” according to Chief Bradley. The salaries are not “enticing” which often results in competent, well trained officers locating elsewhere. Like the Sheriffs Department, it is crucial that Police Department salaries remain competitive with surrounding areas in order to retain qualified officers.

Highlands Police Department

Highlands Police Department has jurisdiction within the municipal limits of the Town of Highlands. The department has 8 patrol officers, 2 office administrators and 1 un-sworn office assistant. Shifts are broken up into day and night, each being 12 hours. 2 patrol officers are on duty for both the day and night shifts. Office administration for the day shift is on duty 5 days a week for 8 hours per day. When School begins, a school resource officer is on duty 5 days a week for 8 hours per day at the Highlands School. The department has a total of 13 vehicles, leaving all officers vehicle-equipped.

From January through July 26, 2010 the Highlands Police Department received a total of 734 calls. The average response time for a service call is 5-7 minutes according to Highlands Chief of Police Mr. Bill Harrell. It is important to note however, that not all calls to the department are service calls. In May for instance the department received 129 calls 45 of which were “service calls”.

According to Chief Harrell, the drug problem in the Highlands area continues to grow. This problem seems to be county wide, as all departments recognize it as a major issue. Lack of Spanish speaking officers is also becoming a problem for the Highlands Police Department due to an increase in the Hispanic population.

Budgeting, inadequate facility size, inadequate personnel and low wages are all problems currently being faced by the Highlands Police Department. As the annual call volume continues to rise, more officers will be needed to adequately fulfill the growing need. One must keep in mind however, that additional personnel will further burden the already out-grown facility

Macon County Volunteer Fire Departments/ Emergency Services

Volunteer Fire Departments

Macon County has 11 Volunteer Fire Departments. All departments within Macon County employ full or part-time staff with the exception of 3. Approximately 297 individuals volunteer their time and effort toward protecting the lives and property of Macon County Citizens located within their respective jurisdictions.

Volunteers are both competent and well trained. The North Carolina Department of Insurance Office of State Fire Marshal requires each volunteer to have 36 hours of fire fighting training each year. To be a medical responder, volunteers must complete 12 hours of annual medical education as specified by Macon County. The medical education can be included in the 36 hours of fire fighting training, or taken in addition to this training. The decision as to how this education is completed lies with the chief of each volunteer fire department.

Macon County offers no reimbursement to volunteers for attending the required training. The North Carolina Community College system allows volunteers to receive the training fee exempt. This provision however, has almost been eliminated over the past two years by the State Legislature. Some departments however, do pay a stipend to cover things such as fuel, etc. when responding to calls. These stipends range from around \$5 to \$10 per call, depending on the department.

The delivery capabilities of a fire department are measured and upgraded by providing initial insurance ratings for the department. To accomplish this, the Office of the State Fire Marshall conducts annual inspections of fire departments, providing ratings as well as coordination for the improvement of ratings to reduce insurance costs for homeowners. (NCDOI) To receive a rating of 9, the department must have minimal equipment and manpower to pass a basic inspection. In order to score an 8 or lower, the department must prove during a four day inspection they have done pre-planning, testing, training and can supply a set amount of water based on what their needed fire flows are. The more water compared to the required fire flow, allows the department to achieve a lower rating.

Fig. PS2

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

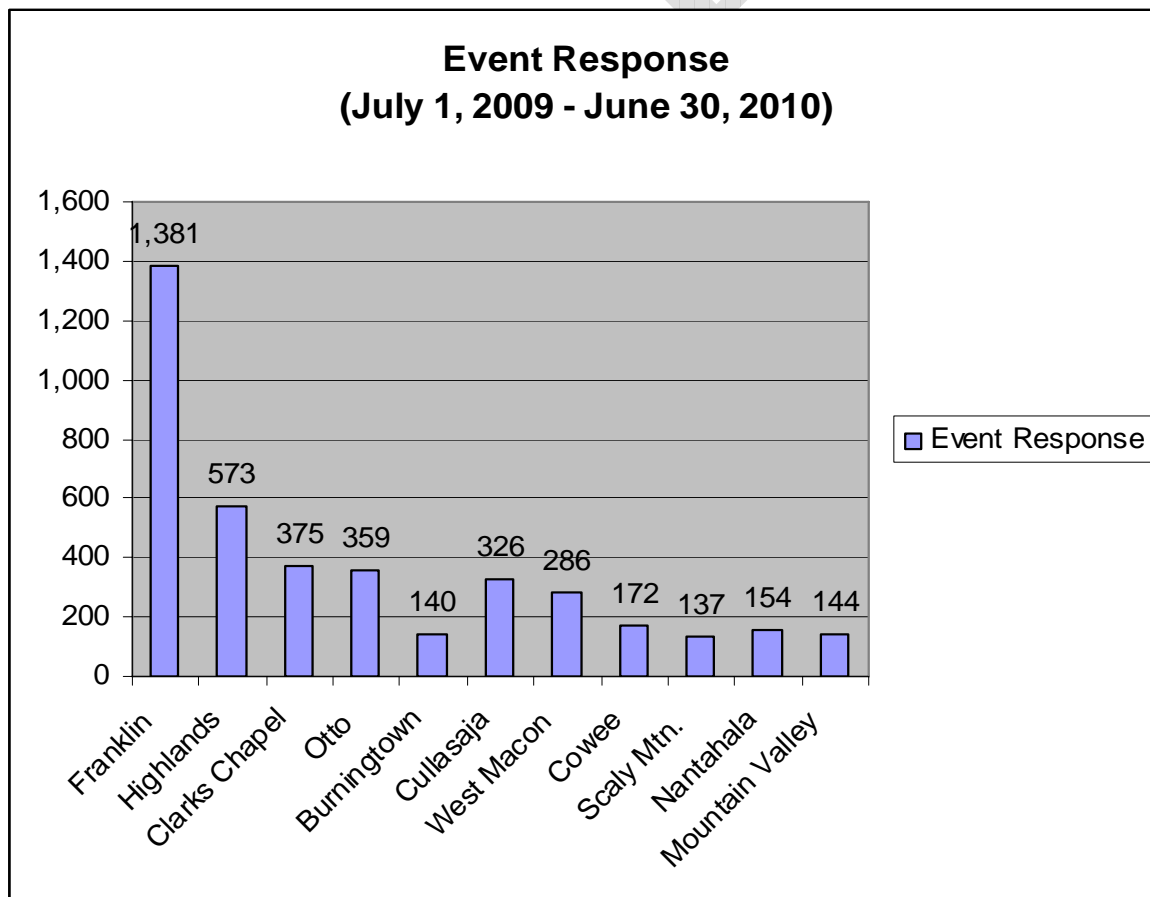
Fire Department	# of Trucks	Members	Paid Personnel	Rating
Franklin	10	27	3 FT	6 (municipal) 9 (elsewhere)
Highlands	13	29	1 FT, 1PT	5 (municipal) 9 (elsewhere)

Clarks Chapel	8	26	1 FT	6
Otto	9	38	1 FT	6
Burningtown	5	27	---	9
Cullasaja	9	27	1 FT	9
West Macon	9	29	2 PT	7
Cowee	13	38	1 FT	7
Scaly Mtn.	4	21	---	9
Nantahala	4	35	1 PT	9
Mountain Valley	12	24	---	9

Source: Macon County EMS

The amount of Calls received by each volunteer fire department varies. Figure PS3 contains the number of events each volunteer fire department responded during the period of July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010.

Fig. PS3



Source: Macon County EMS

EMS

Macon County Emergency Services is under the direction of Mr. Warren Cabe. EMS employs 59 people with 35 being full-time. 9-1-1 Dispatch contains 9 full-time and 3 part-time staff. During 2009-2010 9-1-1 dispatch received 33,323 calls.

9-1-1 Addressing is charged with maintaining the county database, field address work, GIS mapping and sign installation and replacement. 9-1-1 Addressing currently operates with 3 full-time staff. Due to budget constraints, 9-1-1 Addressing will soon replace a full-time staff position with part time leaving 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff in this area of the department. Also included in Emergency Services are 1 full-time Fire inspector, 3 full-time positions dealing in Emergency Management and 2 full-time Communications Technicians.

In 2009-2010 EMS received 4,810 calls. The bulk of the calls came from within the Franklin area, as Highlands usually averages 500 calls annually and Nantahala around 160 according to Cabe. Macon County has a total of 5 ambulances-3 in Franklin, 1 in Nantahala and 1 in Highlands.

Recommendations

As the population increases, the demand for public services will rise. Responsibility will fall on governing boards now and in the future to continually assess this demand and ensure that the services in place accommodate the needs of the citizens. The following recommendations from the Economic Development and Public Services committee will serve as a guideline for governing boards to use as they see fit to help accomplish this task.

- 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

Sewer and Water

Water and sewer infrastructure and services are fundamental to the county's ability to accommodate future growth and development. Currently, water and sewer services within Macon County are controlled by the municipalities. It is crucial that clear policies are established to serve as a guide for future decision making regarding water and sewer in Macon County.

Town of Highlands

Lake Sequoyah, located in the Town of Highlands currently supplies 2,263 customers with water. Of the 2,263 customers served; 2,054 are residential and 209 are commercial. The facility is capable of producing 1.77 million gallons of water per day. Typically a customer must be located within the town limits and served by existing distribution lines. According to Town Planner Joe Cooley, there are no plans in place for upgrades to this system.

The Town of Highlands Sewage Treatment Facility is located at 1184 Arnold Road. Like the water system, all customers typically must be located in the town limits. 864 customers currently utilize the sewer system at an average of 200K gallons per day. The maximum capacity of the system is 1.5 million gallons per day. With only 13% of the maximum capacity being utilized, no plans are currently in place for upgrades on this facility.

Town of Franklin

The Cartoogechaye Creek serves as the public water source for the Town of Franklin. Approximately 3,400 customers both residential and commercial are served by public water utilizing 1.1 to 1.2 million gallons per day. The current facility has a maximum capacity of 4 million gallons per day.

The sewer system for the Town of Franklin is currently undergoing an Inflow and Infiltration Study. The study detects areas within the current system that are subject to storm-water infiltration. Repairing the damaged areas will result in increased plant capacity. The sewer system has a maximum capacity of 1.65 million gallons per day. Today the system serves less than 3,000 customers and runs between 48% and 67% of full capacity utilizing 800K-1.1 million gallons per day. It is important to note that the 1.1 million gallons per day figure accompanies rainfall, indicating that the system is taking in a large amount of storm-water runoff. The Inflow and Infiltration Study will work toward resolving this problem.

Recommendations

The Economic Development and Public Services Committee acknowledge the excellent service that the Public Water and Sewer Systems provide to the citizens of Macon County. As Macon County experiences future growth, it is imperative that each of the systems remain capable of supporting the population. The committee makes the following recommendations to ensure that these systems remain adequate in the future.

Public Sewer:

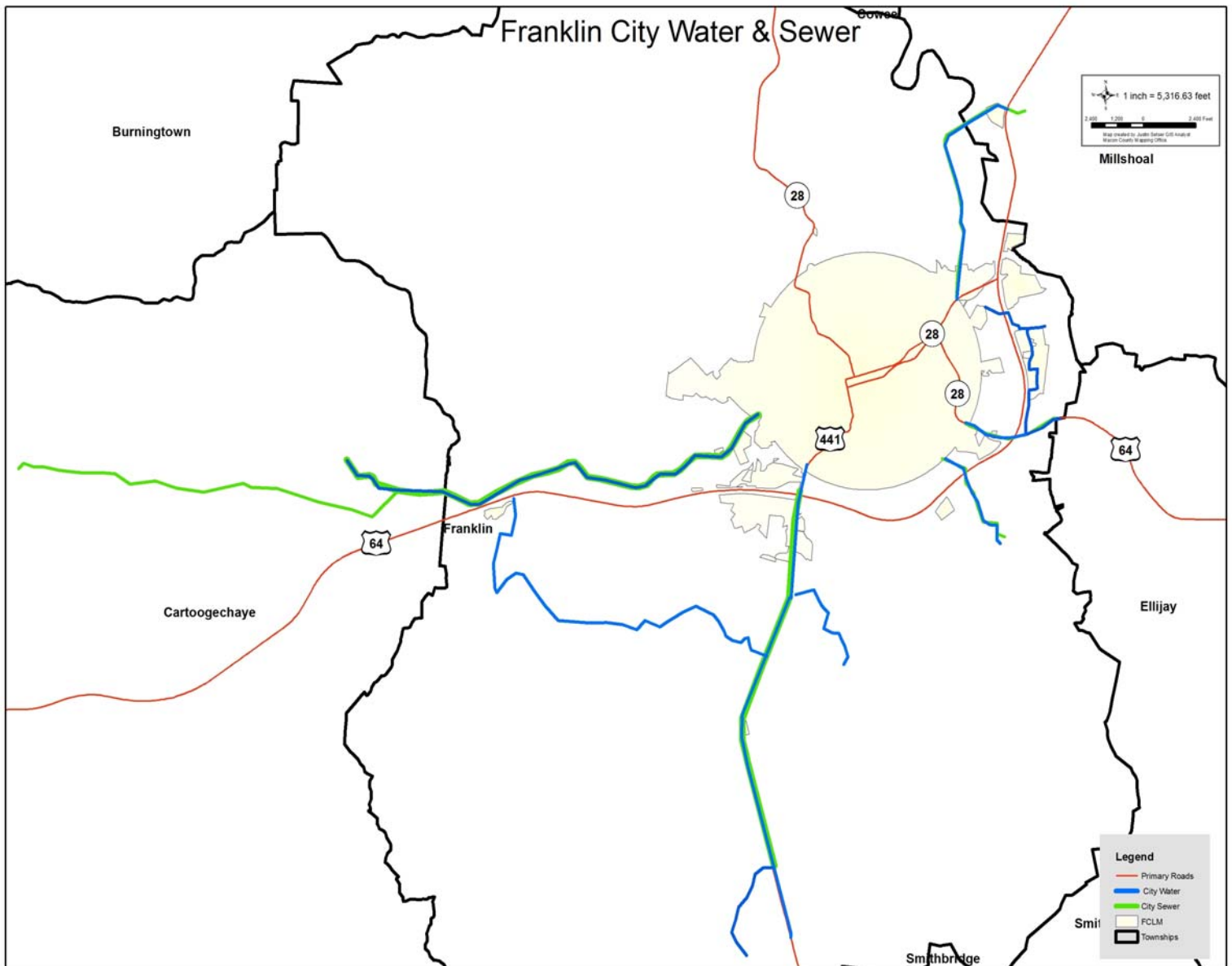
- 1. Take steps to ensure the sewer system is at adequate capacity in advance of need.**
 - At 70% capacity, begin planning for future expansion or construction of new facilities.
 - At 80% to 90% of full capacity, based on the growth rate in effect at the time, begin to secure funding and implement 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.

Fig. PS4



Approximate boundaries of water and sewer outside city limits of Franklin.

Water

Sewer

Source: Macon County Mapping Department.

Land Use and Environment

Introduction

The Land Use and Environment element of the comprehensive plan creates natural resource related recommendations. These recommendations work to ensure that the citizens of Macon County continue to enjoy a clean natural environment now and in the years that follow. This element of the plan addresses water quality, critical areas for development, agricultural land promotion/preservation tools, and lastly gives communities and specific areas within the county options for preserving their heritage and rural character for years to come.

Public input

Throughout the public input process, it became evident that the citizens of Macon County highly valued a clean natural environment. Citizens participating in the public input process were also adamant about preserving farmland and protecting the rural character and historic structures that make our county unique. Listed below are results taken from the survey that illustrate the importance of the aforementioned topics. To view the complete public input process and results, please refer to the *Public Input* section of this plan pgs.11-38.

How important are the following issues over the next 20 years?

How Important?	Very	Fairly	Not
Protect Rural Character	75%	19%	6%
Control Development Rate	61%	34%	5%
Preserve Farmland	70%	26%	4%
Protect Environment	87%	11%	2%
Protect Historic Structures	65%	29%	6%

Land Use

The growth of Macon County is evident, not only from past recorded census data but through the increasing amount of parcelization occurring within the county. An individual “parcel” or “tract” of land is a portion of land. If someone owns a piece of property in Macon County, that particular “parcel” is their portion of the land located inside the county’s boundaries.

Increasing parcelization is a result of population growth. As more people move into the area, property owners further divide their parcels of land, allowing newcomers an opportunity to purchase their own “portion” of Macon County. Over the years parcelization has driven the economy in Macon County creating many jobs in the

construction, real-estate, and real-estate development industries. The global economic recession however, has brought significant decline to each of these industries leaving a surplus of unimproved parcels on the market in Macon County.

Fig.E1

Parcelization 1993-2009

Year	Improved Properties	# of Parcels
1993	17,980	30,000
2009	25,500	44,000

Source: Macon County Tax Office

From 1993-2009 the total number of parcels in Macon County increased by approximately 47%. Improved Properties over this 16 year time-span are shown to have increased by 42%. In 1993, improved properties accounted for 67% of the total properties in Macon County. In 2009, we see this percentage fall to 57%. (*See figure E1*)

Regulations

Macon County has no zoning outside the municipalities of Franklin and Highlands. There are rules in place however, that regulate certain types of development and the extent to which development can occur in certain “critical” areas. Listed below are the land use regulations currently in place for Macon County.

Regulated types of development

Subdivisions

Macon County Subdivision Ordinance- To establish procedures and standards for the development and subdivision of land within Macon County. It is further designed to promote the orderly growth and development of Macon County; for coordination of roads and highways within proposed subdivisions with existing or planned roads and highways and with other public facilities. It is also designed to provide the County Commissioners, Planning Board, Planning Department, Tax Assessor, Land Records Office, Code Enforcement and other local government agencies and officials with information regarding land development taking place in Macon County. This information will assist county officials in projecting the need for various public programs and facilities, in estimating population growth, and in projecting revenue and expenditures.

The amended Macon County Subdivision Ordinance passed on January 25, 2009

Sedimentation and Erosion Control

Sedimentation and Erosion Control Ordinance- Regulating certain land disturbing activity to control accelerated erosion and sedimentation in order to prevent the pollution of water and other damage to lakes, watercourses and other public and private property by sedimentation; and establishing procedures through which these purposes can be fulfilled. The Macon county Sedimentation and Erosion Control Ordinance was adopted on November 11, 2001.

Building Height

Building Height Ordinance- Regulate the height of structures in such manner as to promote the public health, safety and welfare. This purpose is achieved by allowing construction of buildings to a maximum height of 48 feet to the eave or four stories above the foundation, whichever is less, with no habitable space located above the 48 feet maximum height. The Macon County Building Height Ordinance was amended on March 9, 2009

High Impact Land Uses

High Impact Land Use Ordinance- To promote the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of Macon County by diminishing the impacts of certain land uses which, by their nature, produce noise, odors, vibrations, fumes, light, smoke, dust and other impacts which interfere with the quiet enjoyment of adjacent lands and disturb the peace and dignity of the county. The Macon County High Impact Land Uses Ordinance was adopted on December 12, 2005.

Sexually Oriented Businesses

Sexually Oriented Business Ordinance- The Macon County Board of Commissioners is committed to protecting the general welfare of the county through the enforcement of laws prohibiting obscenity, indecency and sexual oriented businesses while preserving constitutionally protected forms of expression. The Board of Commissioners finds that sexually oriented business in certain locations contribute to neighborhood deterioration and blight through an increase in crime and diminution of property values, among other adverse consequences finds that such effects are contrary to the general welfare of the citizens of the county. The Board of Commissioners recognizes that important and substantial governmental interests provide a constitutional basis for reasonable regulation of the time, place and manner under which sexually oriented businesses operate; and therefore, the Board of Commissioners has determined that persons seeking to operate sexually oriented businesses shall be required to observe specific location requirements before they commence business. The Macon County Sexually Oriented Businesses Ordinance was adopted on July 11, 2005.

Signage

Sign Control Ordinance- To guide and regulate the construction and placement of signs in Macon County. It is the intent of this chapter to preserve and maintain the scenic and aesthetic environment of the county in order to protect and promote the tourist industry and the quality of life of the county's residents and visitors; to improve safety for local and visiting motorists and pedestrians in Macon County by reducing the distracting influence of uncontrolled signs; to minimize the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property; and enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these regulations. The amended Macon County Sign Control Ordinance was passed on December 3, 2001.

Telecommunication Towers

Telecommunication Towers Ordinance- Regulate wireless telecommunications facilities in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Macon County. The amended Telecommunications Towers Ordinance was passed on December 3, 2001.

Critical Areas

The "critical" areas in Macon County to which regulations apply are; floodplains, watersheds, protected ridgelines and agricultural lands.

Flood areas

A *floodplain* is defined as any land area susceptible to being inundated by water from any source. (Flood Ordinance) Furthermore, a *floodway* is referred to as the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than (1) foot. (Flood Ordinance) Macon County regulates development occurring within each of these "critical areas" through the Flood Ordinance of Macon County. (See *Macon County Flood zones Pg. 93*)

Flood Ordinance of Macon County- To promote the public health, safety and general welfare and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions in flood prone areas by provisions designed to:

- (A) Restrict or prohibit uses which are dangerous to health, safety and property due to water or erosion hazards, or which result in damaging increases in erosion or in flood heights or velocities.
- (B) Require that uses vulnerable to floods, including facilities which serve such uses, be protected against flood damage at the time of initial construction.
- (C) Control the alteration of natural floodplains, stream channels and natural protective barriers which are involved in the accommodation of flood waters.
- (D) Control filling, grading, dredging and other development which may increase erosion or flood damage; and,

- (E) Prevent or regulate the construction of flood barriers which will unnaturally divert flood waters or which may increase flood hazards to other lands.

The amended Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance was adopted on April 27, 2009.

Watersheds

A *watershed* is defined in the Macon County Watershed Protection Ordinance as the entire land area contributing surface drainage to a specific point. Macon County, through this ordinance regulates development occurring in the watershed areas that contribute drainage to the water supply intake for the Town of Franklin and Town of Highlands.

A *critical area* for watershed purposes is defined as the areas adjacent to a water supply intake or reservoir where risk associated with pollution is greater than from remaining portions of the watershed. The critical area is defined as extending either .5 mile from the normal pool elevation of the reservoir in which the intake is located or to the ridge line of the watershed (whichever comes first); or .5 mile upstream from the intake located directly in the stream or river (run-of-the-river), or the ridge line of the watershed (whichever comes first). Critical watershed areas in Macon County are located primarily in the Cartoogechaye and Town of Highlands areas.
(See *Macon County Watersheds Pg. 94*)

Watershed Protection Ordinance- To protect the critical watersheds of Macon County. The amended Watershed Protection Ordinance was passed on September 9, 2002.

Protected Ridgelines

A protected mountain ridge is a ridge whose elevation is 3,000 feet and whose elevation is 500 or more feet above the adjacent valley floor.
(See *Macon County FS and Protected Ridges Pg. 96*)

This ordinance regulates the construction of tall buildings or structures on protected mountain ridges by any person.

Agricultural Areas

Farmland has historically remained important to the economic and cultural life of Macon County. The Voluntary Farmland Preservation Ordinance was passed on February 4, 1997 by the Macon County Board of Commissioners. The purpose of this ordinance is to encourage the voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development in Macon County. (See *Agri Parcels and Preserved Farmland Pg. 95*)

These regulations which are currently in place for Macon County help to protect the environment and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens.

The Land Use and Environment committee recommends that future regulations be considered for the following critical areas and types of development in Macon County.

Recommendations

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.
2. 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

Water Quality

Surface Water

Macon County's four river systems, the Cullasaja, Cartoogechaye, Nantahala and Little Tennessee, have their origins in high quality first and second order streams flowing off of state and federally managed forest lands. The impacts of erosion and sedimentation downstream from these managed areas increases with population density and business/industrial development.

The Cartoogechaye Creek is the only source of surface water supplying the Town of Franklin potable water treatment and distribution system. Current demands during peak use periods are rapidly approaching maximum withdrawal limits and secondary drinking water sources will need to be identified.

The Town of Highlands drinking water supply currently comes from the Big Creek arm of Lake Sequoyah. Siltation from upstream development is an increasing problem and plans are being formulated to move the water intake site to an area with greater water depth.

Storm water runoff, from both pervious (soft) and impervious (hard) surfaces, is having the greatest impact on Macon County surface water quality. The disturbance of any land area that results in reduced water infiltration capability causes immediate downstream effects of both environmental and economic concern. As surface runoff increases in both volume and velocity, the potential for downstream erosion, exposure to chemical/industrial pollutants, property damage due to flash flooding and the resulting liability issues, also increase. Much of the existing drainage infrastructure in the high density areas of the county is at or near maximum carrying capacity and will require replacement/expansion.

Waste water treatment facilities, both private and municipal, also impact surface and ground water quality and can pose serious human health concerns. Private and community septic systems which are either improperly installed or installed on provisionally suitable soil types, can introduce intestinal bacteria(s) and household chemical pollutants directly into surface and groundwater systems. This can pose a serious health risk to humans and aquatic organisms. The same is true when the capacity of a municipal sewage system is exceeded resulting in the discharge of untreated waste directly into the surface water system.

Ground Water

Ground water wells are the primary source of drinking water outside of the Franklin and Highlands distribution systems. While some wells experience high concentrations of sulphur, iron or copper, the overall quality of available ground water is very good. The underlying geology of the region is complex and fractured making estimates of water depth and yield highly unpredictable. The recharge areas for ground water aquifers are also unpredictable and can be many miles from the well site. As ongoing geologic and hydrologic research develops a better understanding of the ground water systems in the mountain region, particular attention will need to be given to protecting sensitive recharge areas and regulating well density.

Pollution Sources

The two sources of surface and groundwater pollution are point and non-point. Point sources are characterized by concentrated contributions of pollution from high intensity land uses such as industrial process water and municipal sewage. Point source pollution can be minimized by considering potential threats to water quality before locating industrial development and directing growth so that the carrying capacity of sewage systems is not exceeded.

Non-point source pollution is spatially diffuse and emanates from large land areas with pollution entering waterways via overland flow and ground water exchange. The two primary sources of non-point source pollution in Macon County are development drainage and agricultural run-off. While agriculture has declined significantly the current practice of intensive vegetable farming is still a major contributor to soil erosion, sedimentation, and the introduction of pesticides and herbicides to surface systems. Non-point sources can be dealt with by regulating site selection criteria for new development, minimizing impervious surfaces, construction and maintenance of sedimentation control fences and ponds, and by maintaining vegetation buffer zones adjacent to waterways.

The Future

This community is fortunate to be in a mountainous headwaters region where high quality ground and surface water are in good supply. However, this community is also in a region that has seen dramatic climate influences on these water resources. In recent history we have seen severe drought years followed by record rainfall years. When these dramatic fluctuations occur they are intensified by an increasing population and the associated development and demands for water. Development and infrastructure planning will need to accommodate “worst case” scenarios to insure the future health and welfare of the people, the integrity of our environment, and the quality of the water we will use and then pass downstream to our neighbors.

Recommendations:

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.**

Agriculture

For centuries, agriculture has been a way of life for many Maconians. Not only does farmland create a livelihood for some, it adds to the rural character of Macon County creating an undisturbed landscape for all residents to enjoy. The topic of farmland preservation was discussed at numerous community/special interest group meetings where citizens were adamant about seeing farmland in the county preserved. 96% of respondents to the survey felt that the issue of farmland preservation was very or fairly important.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture reports that 346 farms were located in Macon County. The farms had an average of size of 61 acres, and accounted for 21,133 acres of land. Agriculture Cash receipts from 2008 indicate that the majority of these farms were classified as *Livestock, Dairy and Poultry* which accounted for \$3,842,000 or 58% of the total cash receipts. Macon County ranked 80th out of 100 counties in the *Livestock, Dairy and Poultry* category. Crops and Government Payments accounted for the remaining 2008 Agriculture Cash Receipts in Macon County.

Note: Cash Receipts are revenue generated in the county for agricultural products/crops.

Fig.E2

2008 Cash Receipts

Cash Receipts	Dollars	State Rank
Livestock, Dairy, Poultry	\$3,842,000	80
Crops	\$2,543,000	94
Government Payments	\$284,954	88
Total	\$6,669,954	95

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service

From 2002-2007 Macon County realized a 6% loss in farmland. This equates to a loss of 1,362 total acres. During this time period, each county in Region A has experienced a loss in Farmland.

Fig.E3

Farmland Loss in Region A (2002-2007)

County	Acres lost	% of loss
Macon	1,362	-6%
Jackson	3,061	-19%
Swain	1,534	-22%
Haywood	8,399	-13%
Cherokee	1,718	-8%
Clay	3,774	-28%
Graham	872	-11%

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service

Currently, there are measures in place on both the county and state levels that assist in protecting and preserving farmland. The Voluntary Farmland Protection Ordinance currently protects 60 parcels of land from non-farm development in Macon County. On the state level, North Carolina General Statute 105-277.3 states that Agricultural, horticultural and forestland are special classes of property and must be appraised, assessed and taxed differently than other lands, barring they meet the requirements set forth in the Statute. Macon County has 876 parcels that are currently classified as “Agricultural” by the Macon County Tax Office.

(See Macon County Agri Parcels and Preserved Farmland Pg. 95)

Throughout the public input process, it is evident the people of Macon County highly value local agriculture and farmland. The Land Use and Environment Committee make the following recommendations for maintaining agriculture and promoting the rural character of Macon County through farmland preservation.

Recommendations

- 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.

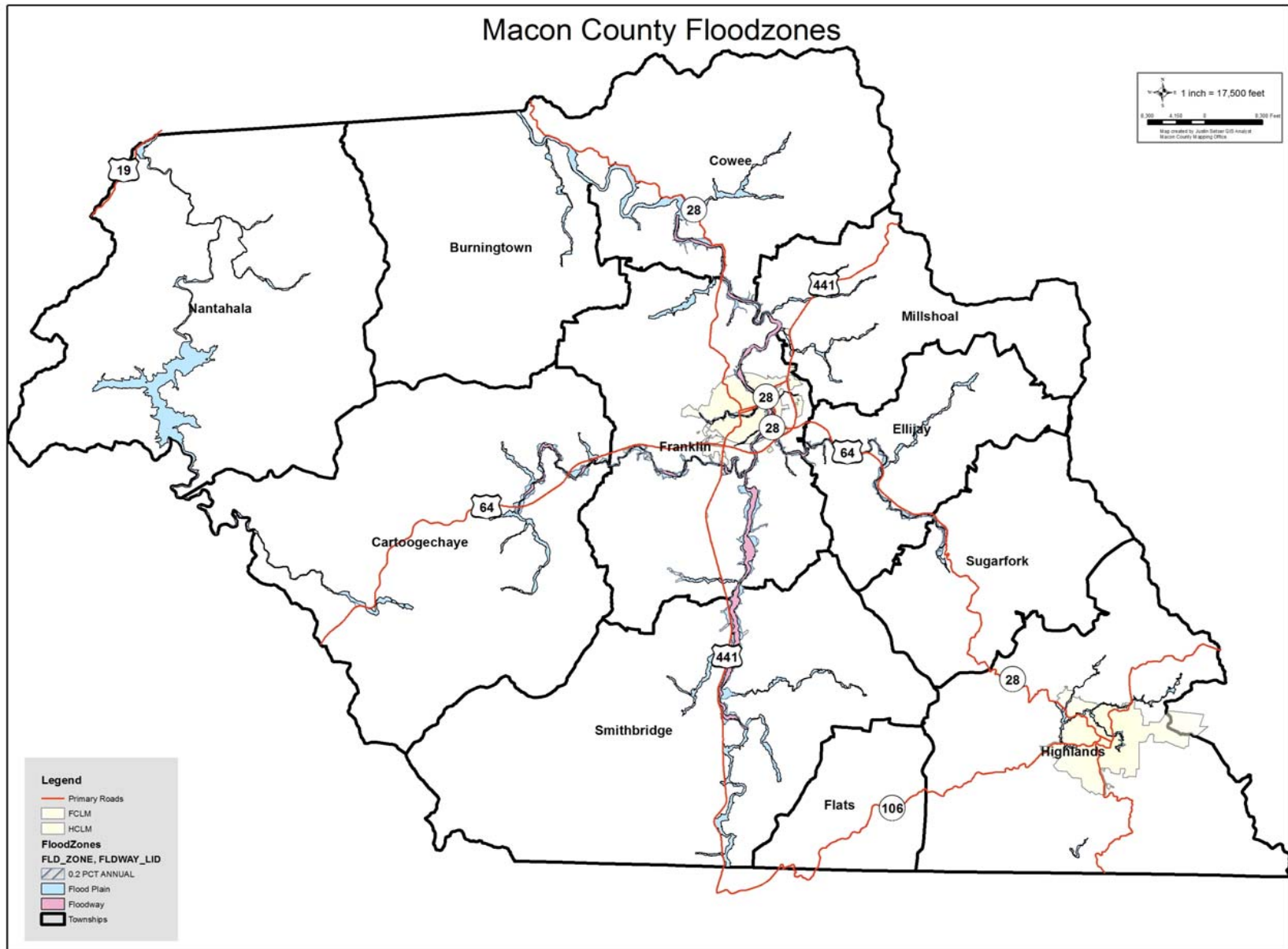
Protecting Rural Character

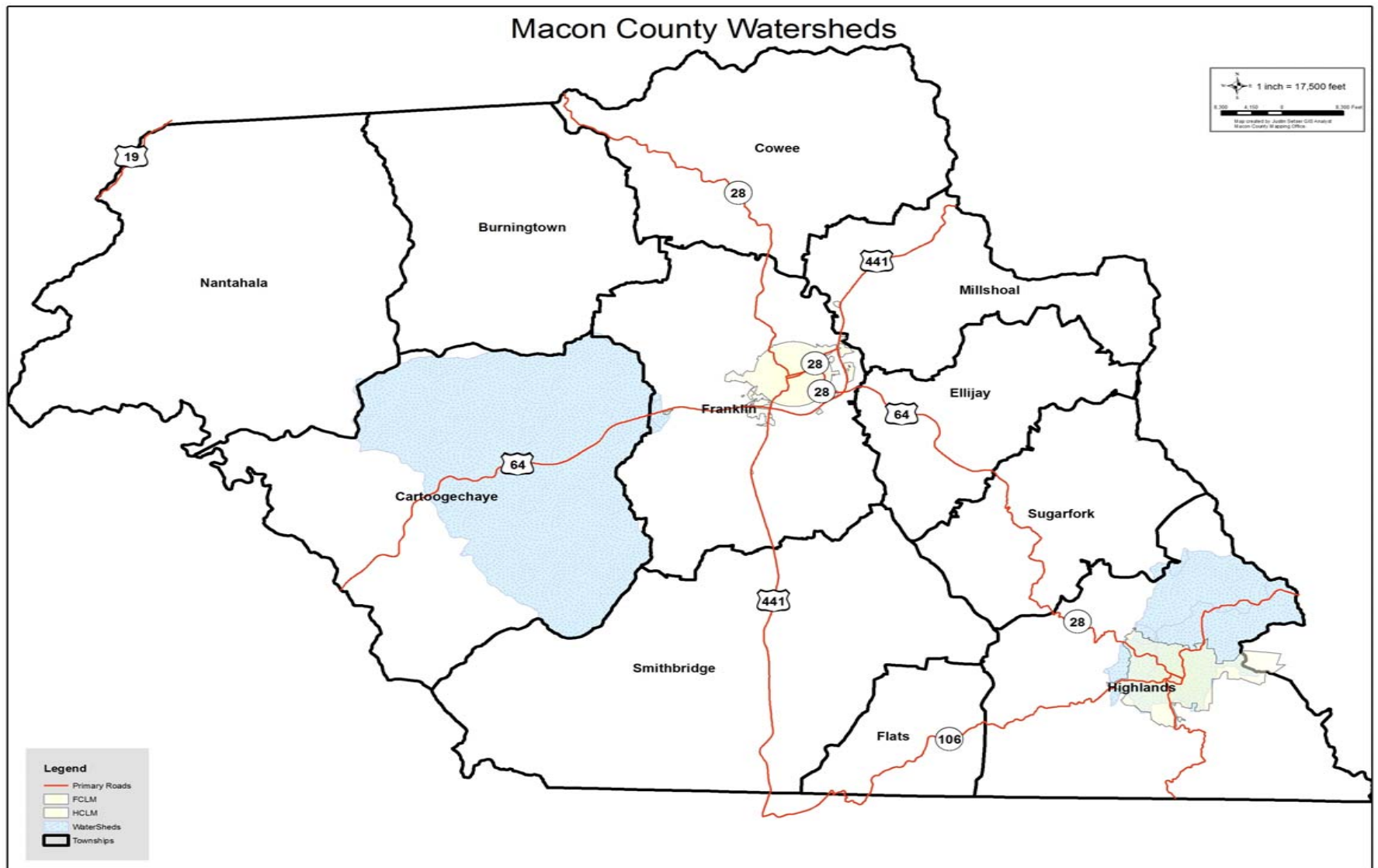
Throughout the public input process, it became evident that each community in Macon County is unique. In Cowee community for instance, citizens were adamant about preserving environmental assets such as Huckleberry Creek, and historical landmarks like the Cowee Elementary School. Citizens of this community were concerned that development pressures from a growing population would compromise these areas which reflect their unique character and local values. Citizens of Cowee Community felt the community should “grow at the level they wanted it too.”

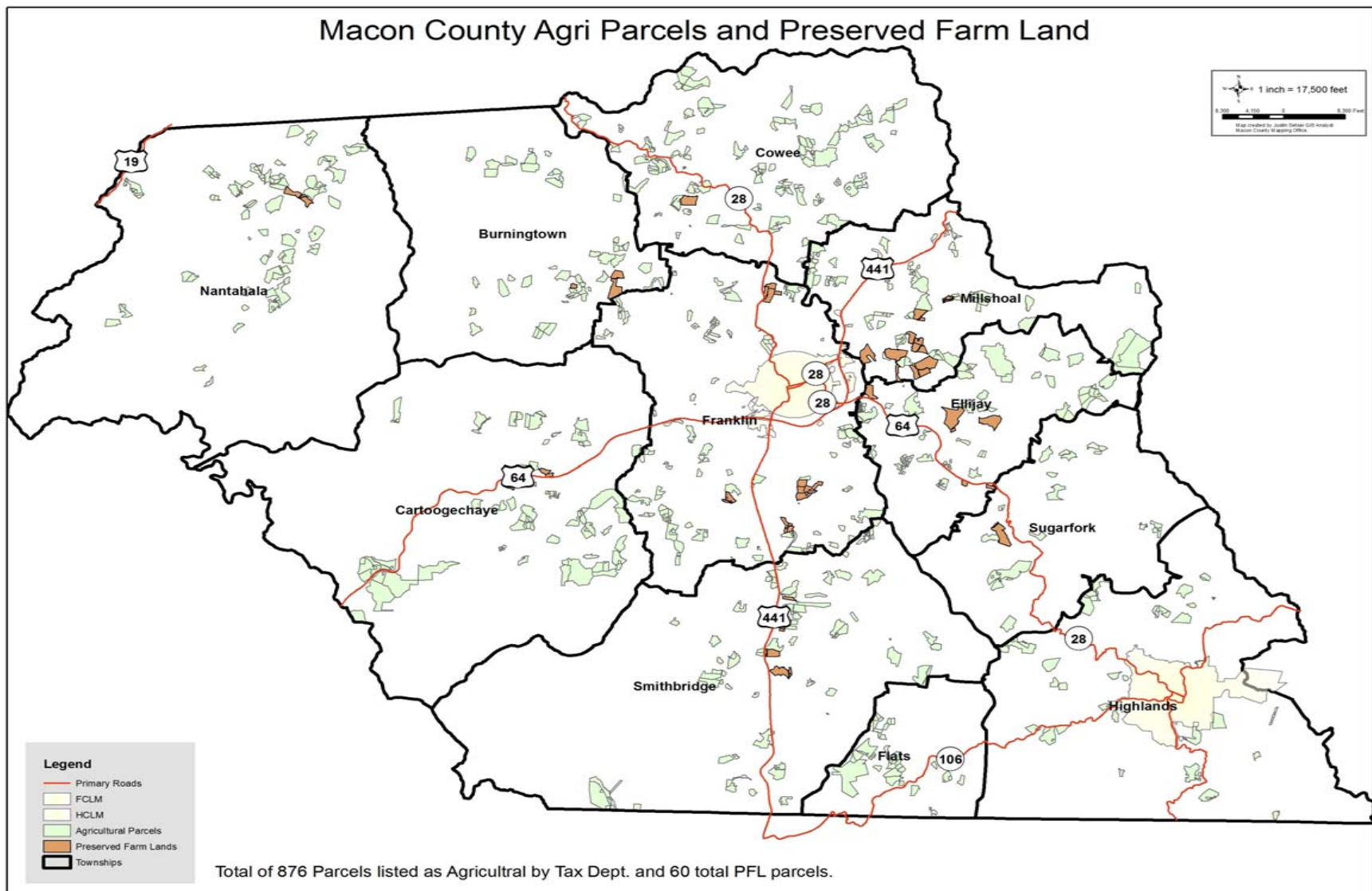
Like Cowee, there are many communities in Macon County that contain areas directly representative of our rural character and small town way of life. These areas, whether environmentally sensitive or historical are an asset to both the communities and the County as a whole. Aside from preservation areas, some communities contain areas that are crucial to the economic prosperity of Macon County. Adequate infrastructure and favorable location make these areas prime candidates for economic development. Communities containing these areas should seek to find a balance between fostering healthy commercial/industrial development, while preserving the environmental and historical assets that are dear to them.

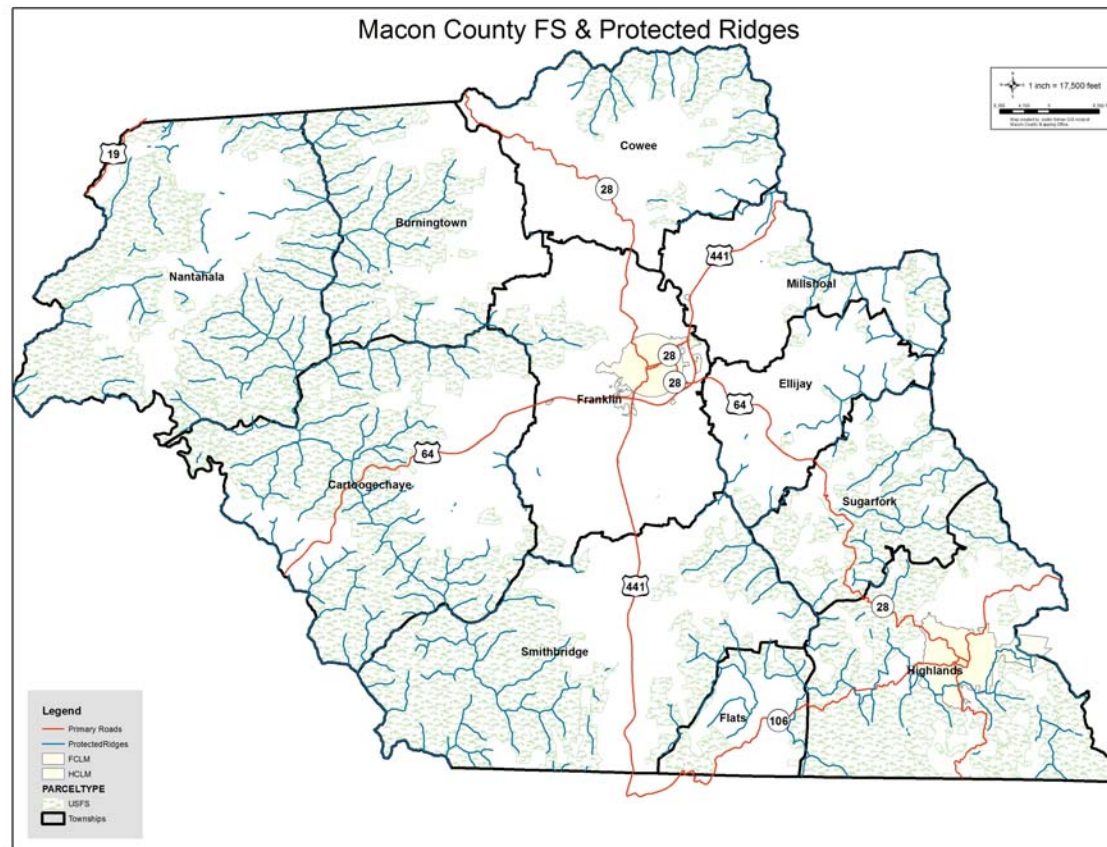
Recommendations

- 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

“The education section of this plan is included for completeness and to display the county’s commitment to education in Macon County. Any recommendations with regard to educational services will only be implemented at the discretion of Macon County Schools.” (Macon County Board of Commissioners statement – May 31, 2011)

Introduction

“No man is an island”. The same can be said of Education and Recreation. Both are critical to the essence of who we are and how much prosperity we want to enjoy. Many of the leaders in Macon County (both volunteer and paid) were not educated in Macon County yet they are providing guidance to the citizens of this County. The same can be said of the students who are being educated in this County. Many will not stay here but will go on to benefit the communities that they live in. When we educate, we are benefiting not only our local communities but our State and our Country as well, which is why tax money comes in from local, state and federal governments to help fund these programs. Both education and recreation are quality of life issues and can make or break a decision for a business to locate or expand here. If we do not adequately fund and provide above average quality of life enrichment programs then prospective businesses and citizens may decide not to invest their money here which then limits job opportunities for the students we educate.

Due to computer technology, we no longer are competing in local markets for job growth. We must be on par or above, in the global market places. America is declining in its test scores and motivation to be the number one nation in the world in technological innovations, patents and manufacturing capabilities. The challenge facing us is that we must do better at educating and motivating our students.

The ideology that we all must aspire to be is to give our young people the best education, the best tools, the best motivation possible and this means that our teachers must be paid competitively and trained properly to perform exceptionally well or we will not be above average. We must make the right long term decisions that maximize the tax money that our citizens provide as an investment in the future of our country, state and local communities. We must also maximize the quality of life programs that attract businesses to want to expand or locate within Macon County. Educational quality and recreational opportunities are necessary to attract jobs for our citizens. If we want to compete for these jobs we need to make the investment.

As citizens and students become more and more E-Technology oriented, the need for recreational opportunities becomes important. Not only for social interface, but for creating competitive sportsmanship like behavior, and toward providing an outlet for youthful energy.

The aging of our population and the concerns for creating proactive health care will put a larger demand on recreational activities and can have a great impact on folks deciding to invest in a new or second home which then impacts our economy.

Public Input

The survey results echo the high level of emphasis that Macon County citizens feel should be placed on Education and Recreation in our county. To view the complete public input process and results, please refer to the *Public Input Section Pgs. 11-38* of the plan.

How important are the following issues over the next 20 years?

How Important?	Very	Fairly	Not
Improve Schools	68%	27%	5%
Develop Rec. Facilities	49%	40%	11%

MACON COUNTY SCHOOLS (1941 to 2010)

Prior to 1941 Macon County was using one room school houses located within each community.

Consolidation of these one room school houses to improve efficiency and safety began in OTTO.

1941	Otto (Now closed and sold)
1942	Cowee (Closing in 2012, converting into Community use)
1948	Cullasaja (Closing in the Fall of 2010, no decision on use yet)
1950-51	Cartoogechaye (Closed)
	East Franklin
	Highlands
	Iotla (Site of new North Macon School 2012)
	Nantahala
	Union (Now called Union Academy)
	Franklin High School
1953-56	New Additions added for:
	Cartoogechaye- 1 classroom
	Cowee- 2 classrooms + cafeteria
	Cullasaja-2 classrooms
	East Franklin- 4 classrooms
	Franklin High School- 7 classrooms + gym
	Highlands- 2 classrooms
	Nantahala-4 classrooms + shop
	Otto- Cafeteria
1963	Franklin High School Gym Annexation
1963-69	Franklin High School- Cafeteria extension and Fine Arts Building
1972	Franklin High School- Careers Center
1977	Macon Middle School
1984-89	Renovations to all schools

1987-88	Nantahala Play Ground
Page 4	
1992	Franklin High School Vocational Building
2000	Franklin High School English Building
2001	South Macon Elementary
2002	Cartoogechaye Elementary
2009	Macon Early College
2010	Mountain View 5-6 School (opens Fall 2010)

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN MACON COUNTY

(Note: Most Recreational fields are in flood plains)

Macon County Veterans Memorial Recreation Park (30.3 acres) with a 40+ year old 18,000 sq. ft. Community building, an outdoor swimming pool, tennis courts, baseball, softball, volleyball, etc.

Industrial Park Recreational Facility (16.0 acres) for soccer and baseball.

Cullasaja Park (17.3 acres) for football and soccer practice.

Buck Creek Recreation Complex (6.0 acres) for baseball and soccer.

Nantahala Recreation Park (27.0 acres) for baseball, soccer and tennis.

Little Tennessee Greenway (170 acres) Playground, picnic shelters and walking/biking trails.

CRITICAL FACTORS

Background and Trends:

According to the North Carolina State Office of Budget Management, Macon County is projected to grow by about 10,000 citizens by the year 2030. Historically this would mean that about 1,340 new students will be entering the school system or an average of about 67 students per year, over the next 20 years. During the past 20 years (1990 to 2010) the public school system saw a gain of 878 new students (3,541 in 1990 to 4,419 in 2010). Typically, this many new students would require adding three new teachers and adding the equivalent space of two new schools.

The natural beauty of Macon County continues to be its main asset. This beauty helps drive Macon County's main economic engines which are tourism and construction followed by health care, agriculture and other service industries. The type and quantity of its population mix tends to be white mature citizens followed by younger families seeking employment and a lower cost of living. One of the long term concerns for Macon County will be its aging population. Without a private four year college or university to attract younger people and the companies who will partner with these types

of learning institutions, the trend toward aging will not be reversed and job creation will be mainly in the health care and tourism industries followed by construction. It should be noted that Southwestern Community College can partner with a 4 year institution to help reduce overhead.

The current severe economic conditions have contributed to a slight reversal in student enrollment due to the loss of job opportunities within Macon County and the surrounding areas. The baby boomer generation who can retire and plan to move here will have an impact on the age group demographics entering Macon County in coming years. Since there are many factors that Macon County and its Educational and Recreational programs cannot control relating to the general or global economy it must plan for various contingencies and have the mind set for flexibility, economic efficiencies and sound business principles as it plans for the future.

This proposed plan is not designed to replace a more comprehensive educational or recreational plan but to provide an overview of trends and suggestions that can mesh with the Planning Department's Master Plan elements to give Macon County leaders an opportunity to see a bigger picture and plan accordingly.

When looking long term (beyond 5 years) it becomes difficult to ascertain how demographics and mega trends will impact planning programs. Therefore one of the first recommendations is to have annual reviews by the education/recreation sub-committee to modify planning policy based on more relevant data and trends.

One of the more critical factors in long term planning is land acquisitions. There are limited suitable sites available which meet the needs for Educational and Recreational usage. Using purchase option agreements with selected land owners is one economical way to bank land sites for long term future use.

Mega Issues

There are five mega issues that will impact long term planning for education and recreation.

These are: The USA economy, the pending Energy Crisis, the coming Inflation, Taxpayer Resistance and Virtual Learning Technologies.

1.- USA Economy- Even so called experts are having a difficult time trying to figure out when the USA will come out of its economic slump. Global competition by China and India for raw materials and energy will cause shortages and inflation. Lower wages in China and India will continue to siphon away USA jobs as manufacturers seek better profits. Computer technology is allowing less educated work forces in foreign countries to produce goods and services that normally would be created in the developed countries. The overall impact is that the GNP growth in the USA will be coming more and more from a local service oriented economy instead of a global manufacturing economy. This will create lower paying jobs and less of them. This means that our economy may take longer to recover than in past recessions.

2.- Energy Crisis- The rapid growth and modernization of China and India with a combined population of over 2.6 Billion people means that there will be a huge demand for energy. The United States Military is projecting that by the year 2015 (less than 5 years from now) the amount of oil being available to pump versus the demand will cross. When there is more demand than supply, prices will rise which will create inflation and possible conflicts. For Macon County this means that long term planning must take into

account much higher energy costs, what types of buses it should buy (better fuel mileage needed), locations of schools and mass transportation issues. The energy issue could also affect tourism and hence our economy and the number of new students we may experience.

3.- Pending Inflation- The emerging global demand for raw materials and energy will drive up prices. In addition the massive debt burden that the USA has will force either a tax increase and/or a shift in tax burden to the states and local governments. Medicare, Social Security and Health Care depend on a healthy economy that creates large job opportunities which in turn fund these programs. The cost of funding two wars and their after war social redevelopment will continue to burden the treasury. The bottom line for Macon County and the rest of America is that interest rates will rise so that Treasury Bonds can be sold to pay for the interest debt burden. This in turn will slow down construction and the building of new infrastructure for schools and recreation.

4.- Taxpayer Resistance- The average inflationary cost for building a new high school during the years 1998 through 2008 was 10% a year. If a decision was made to build a new high school in 10 years the cost could double. Currently the cost to build is dropping due to the severe economic conditions in the construction industry. But this decline is also causing economic hardship on the citizens of the USA and when inflation returns, the buying power of its people will also decline unless wages increase faster than the inflation, which is doubtful. The bottom line is that there is resistance from taxpayers to incur any new taxes which makes funding new construction for Education and Recreation infrastructure more difficult.

5.- Virtual Learning Technologies- New colleges and universities are springing up without the overhead costs of having a brick and mortar campus. These institutions live inside a computer and its programs and have worldwide students who never travel to a class but they can learn 24/7. A professor can hold real time classes with the aid of a camera and audio with all or just one student for tutoring or teaching purposes. Almost all traditional brick and mortar colleges in the USA are using a hybrid virtual learning approach to supplement their learning experience while reducing costs and increasing the student capacity of their institutions which reduces the need for new construction. As this technology becomes more acceptable it will be used more and more at the high school level and then at the lower levels. Some high schools are using this approach in some of their classes.

The first four mega trends will force school and government officials to find a way to reduce costs and increase student capacity without using the same brick and mortar formula of old when trying to accommodate student population growth rates.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Macon County will continue to grow long term due to its position as a gate way community to the Smoky Mountains from the south. However, the coming decades will be a time of great uncertainty as global economies try to normalize their relationships with each other while scarce resources drive up inflation.

On the local level, leaders should be willing to embrace more flexibility and new ideas that will provide for more efficiency in the way things are being done. Providing quality

education and recreational opportunities should be one of the highest priorities of Macon County because they create partnership opportunities with the business community which in turn create and sustain jobs.

Investing taxpayer money into these two areas is critical if we are to improve our ability to compete. Improving communications to our investors (the taxpayers) will be extremely important so that they understand how and why their tax dollars are needed. They too need education when being asked to make a decision to support capital spending.

The current and past County Commissioners have been remarkably supportive of the need for quality education and quality of life issues that make Macon County a great place to live.

Public Schools: Given the projected demographics over the next 5 years there should be NO need for additional class room capacity for students in the K-6 level once the North Macon (Iotla) School is completed (2012). Current projections are that we will have a 30% available capacity at Macon Middle School and an average 17% available capacity for all the K-4 schools after Cowee and Cullasaja are closed down.

Southwestern Community College: At the community college level there is an immediate need to fund a new 60,000 sq. ft building for the campus, the cost to the County would be in the range of \$6 to 8 million to match the money provided by the State. A State College construction fund, per se, does not exist; state higher education bond referenda have provided funds in the past and will probably do so in the future [maybe as early as 2012 or 2014]. SCC has a long range facility plan that projects four additional buildings over the next 25-30 years; these buildings can come on line as funds are available and as educational need indicate. The County's purchase of the property for SCC in 1999 or 2000 positions the college for this growth.

The Public Safety Training Center is in immediate need of expansion to accommodate growth in training law enforcement, emergency services, fire training and increasing demand for federal law enforcement training classes. Planning is underway to figure out how to expand at the Industrial Park Site. In addition, the driver training range needs to be improved to accommodate commercial driving training for fire trucks and emergency vehicles. There is also a need for a residential facility to accommodate trainees from all over the USA for periods of a weekend or up to four months. These needs can create job opportunities and investments for the right companies or individuals.

Nantahala School: Due to an anticipated increase in population around that lake area and the current capacity of the existing K-12 school there is a need to locate a new site for a new school before all the level land areas become too expensive. The existing school has no room to expand.

Franklin High School: The Franklin High School needs to be repaired and renovated ASAP to bring it into the 21st century and to allow it to accommodate an increase in the number of students expected over the next 20 years. This school has the potential of extending its capacity by utilizing virtual learning methods which will reduce the capital costs normally associated with brick and mortar expansions. (See additional discussions under strategic planning). Virtual learning technology is rapidly changing the way educational platforms are running. The future will see more and more opportunities for lowering the costs of education and for motivating students to learn through texting and computer tools.

Repairs/Maintenance: The most critical needs in the first 5 years of planning for many of the older public schools in Macon County are in the area of repairs and preventive maintenance. Failure to do proper maintenance will only cost the taxpayer investors more money in repairs and in some cases expose students and faculty to safety issues.

Educational and Recreational Partnering: Economic considerations will require that close partnering between education and recreation be a fact of life. Future land acquisitions should be viewed for both programs. There is a need for an indoor swimming pool that can be used for swim teams, recreational swimming for health issues, rehabilitation needs for patients and learning to swim programs to protect children from drowning. Partnering with Angel Medical Center, education and recreation and other business entities such as the EDC should be explored.

There is also a need for a recreational complex center about 30,000 to 35,000 sq. ft. that could house 4 basketball courts which could also serve as a convention center and a place for the high school prom and graduation to be held.

Communications for shared use and development of sports complexes should be enhanced. Making greater use of Federal park and State lands should be encouraged to help market this quality of life asset without adding a greater expense to the Macon County tax payer.

Standing Sub Committee: Because of the complexities and uncertainties that the world, the country as a whole and Macon County will face in the coming decades, it is important that standing sub-committees continue to monitor and adjust their specific visions for the Comprehensive Plan so that it becomes a living 20 year document for current and future County leaders to refer to.

Recommendations

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

Transportation

Introduction

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan is North Carolina's new multi-modal transportation plan format and process. A CTP is a mutually adopted legal document between the state and a local area partner. When adopted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation it represents the state's concurrence with locally identified transportation needs. A CTP replaces thoroughfare plans that have been in place since the 1950's. Both the process and product of a CTP are different than the thoroughfare plan. Unlike the traditional thoroughfare plan, the CTP is a multi modal plan that identifies the entire existing and future transportation system, including highways, public transportation, rail, bicycle and pedestrian facilities needed to serve the anticipated travel demand. The plan strengthens the connections between an areas transportation plan, adopted local land development plan and community vision.

The local Comprehensive Plan is a key player in the CTP process. It is required that a county have in place a locally-endorsed land development plan prior to adoption of a CTP by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The Transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan illustrates to the NCDOT that Macon County has a vision for the future. The recommendations proposed in this element of the plan will serve as a guide for the NCDOT when planning for future transportation needs in our area.

Public Input

Over 50% of respondents to the Survey felt that improving local roads, with regards to things such as traffic flow and safety was a "very important issue" (*Public Input Section Pgs. 11-38 of plan*). In traveling to the community centers throughout the county, comments seemed to echo the results of the survey. It is difficult to understand problems occurring on roads within certain communities unless you see them. Citizens belonging to these communities depend on these roads. They use them every day, whether going to work, the grocery store or to pick up their children at day care. Problems occurring on these roads, while they may not create hardships for all of Macon County, do affect the particular communities in which they are in. In Scaly Mountain for instance, citizens felt that NC 106 needed to be enhanced. Citizens of this community were concerned about the increased volume of transfer trucks using this road. Citizens felt that passing capabilities on this road need to be extended, as their commute was becoming increasingly difficult.

Macon County Roadways

Macon County accounts for 673.37 miles of the Total State Highway System in North Carolina. These roads are divided into two separate categories; Primary and Secondary.

Primary Roads

A primary road is defined by the NCDOT as being all Interstate, NC, and US numbered Highways. 96.96 miles or roughly 14% of the State Highway System in Macon County is Primary Roads. Of the 96.96 miles 12.92 miles of primary roads are located within the municipal limits of Franklin and Highlands. 84.04 miles of primary roads in Macon County are considered “non-municipal”. The Primary Roads that run through Macon County are as follows:

1. US 441
2. US 64
3. US 19/74
4. NC 28
5. NC 106

Traffic counts on these primary roads have fluctuated over the past decade. To illustrate this fluctuation, location counts were chosen from the NCDOT Traffic Count Maps and compared on an annual basis from 1999-2008. It is important to note that the counts were taken from the same locations each year.

US441S location- south of the Intersection at Franklin Plaza Shopping Center

US441N location- north of Watauga Road at the base of Cowee Mtn.

US64W location- immediately east of Mill Creek Road

US64E location- immediately west of Ellijay Road

NC106 location- at Georgia line

NC 28 location- immediately southeast of River Bend Road

US 19/74 location- Only a small portion of this road lies in Macon County, 1 count site present.

Macon County Traffic Counts on Primary Roads 1999-2008

Fig. TH1

Location	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
441S	23,000	26,000	24,000	23,000	27,000	22,000	26,000	24,000	23,000	21,000
441N	13,000	18,000	14,000	17,000	17,000	16,000	16,000	14,000	16,000	15,000
64W	5,700	6,100	7,300	6,100	5,500	5,700	5,300	6,200	7,200	6,300
64E	7,200	8,000	8,400	8,800	8,200	8,000	8,400	6,700	7,300	7,100
19/74	-----	-----	-----	-----	3,600	-----	3,500	3,600	3,600	3,200
106	4,200	4,300	3,900	5,300	4,700	5,100	-----	4,300	2,900	2,600
28N	5,700	5,500	5,800	5,900	5,600	5,900	6,300	6,500	7,000	6,600

Source: NCDOT AADT maps

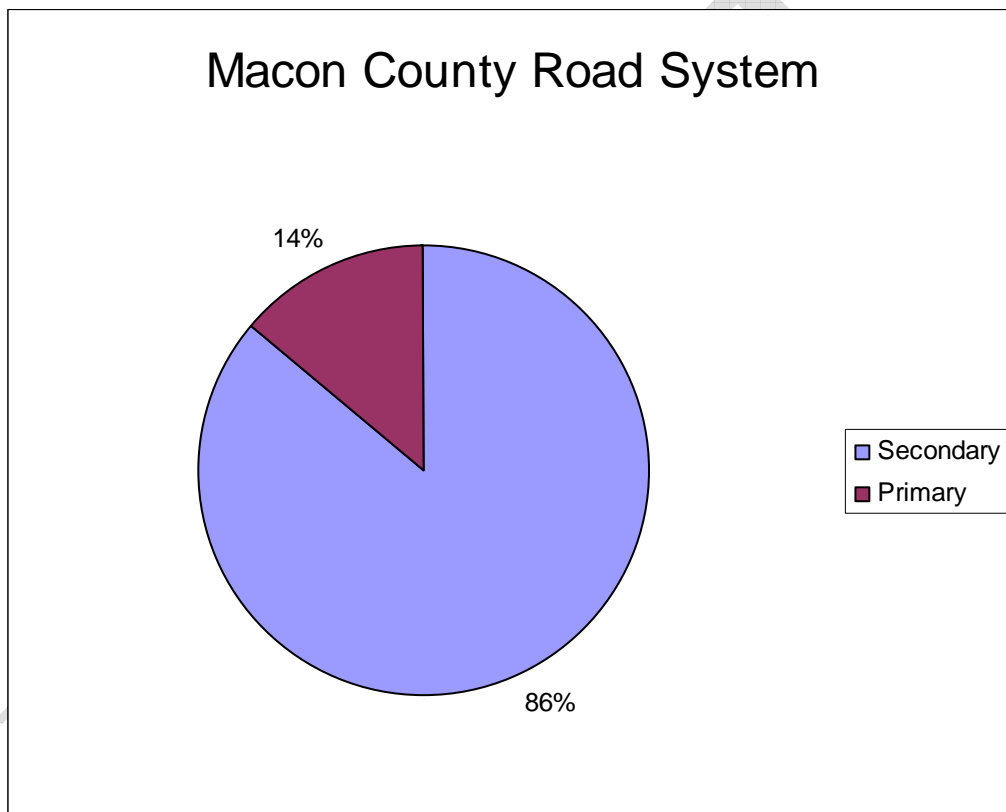
Note: ---- count unavailable at location

Secondary Roads

A secondary is defined by the NCDOT as being any state-maintained road, other than those in the state primary system. Unnumbered roads, such as school driveways, state university campus roads, or rural fire department drives are not included.

86% of state roads in Macon County belong to the secondary road system. Secondary roads account for 576.41 miles in Macon County. 554.63 miles of secondary roads lie outside the municipal limits of Franklin and Highlands. Of the 576.41 miles of secondary roads 115.17 miles remain unpaved.

Fig. TH2



Alternate Modes of Transportation in Macon County

Greenway

In 1997 Duke Power Company acquired land located in the floodplain along the Little Tennessee River to construct a power line through Franklin. Upon completion of the power line project Duke Power Company deeded this land to Macon County. The acquisition of this land by Macon County marked the beginning of the Greenway. Today almost 50% of the Greenway lies within this transmission line easement.

In 2001 “Friends of the Greenway” was formed. “FROGS” is classified as a 501(c) 3 tax-free organization. “FROGS” operates from an amphitheater built alongside the Greenway where they continue to assist in the fundraising and management of the trail.

Since its completion, the Greenway has been an asset to the citizens of Macon County. The trail offers recreation opportunities for people of all ages. The 13 ft. wide trail is approximately 5 miles long beginning at Arthur Drake Road and reaching almost to the Macon County Recreation Park. Located along the trail are recreation areas, picnic shelters, exercise equipment, fishing piers, gardens, and other amenities for all to enjoy.

Not only does the greenway offer entertainment and recreation for Macon County Citizens, it serves as an alternate mode of transportation throughout the Town of Franklin. Using the Greenway one can access areas including but not limited to; East Franklin Shopping Center, Southwestern Community College, and the Macon County Public Library. As the population continues to grow, means of “environmentally friendly” transportation will become increasingly important. Alternate modes such as the Greenway serve as a prime example of this type of transportation and should continue being considered in future transportation planning. (*see map of Greenway Appendix iv*)

Municipal Sidewalk Systems

Both the Town of Franklin and Town of Highlands have sidewalk master plans in place. Sidewalks offer connectivity within the municipalities that affords citizens with yet another option of “environmentally friendly” transportation. Sidewalks while providing an alternate means of transportation within the municipalities, also serve as a way to boast the small town, rural heritage that is unique to the Town of Franklin and Town of Highlands. (*see sidewalk plans Appendix(s) v&vi*)

Macon County Airport

The Macon County Airport encompasses 122 acres in the Iotla Valley. Initially the airport consisted of a single terminal and hanger building. In 1980, the county subsidized three rows of additional T-Hangers. The FBO, Neil Hoppe and Peggy Milton financed another set of ten T-Hangers on the far end of the property. In 2002 a new Terminal

Building was constructed. The new facility is approximately 5,000 square feet. The Old Terminal Building is currently occupied by a limited Forest Service Staff that is responsible for a single helicopter used in fire fighting.

The Macon County Airport is expected to undergo a runway extension in 2011. The increase in business jet traffic, along with other aircraft performance factors necessitates a longer runway at the airport to increase the airport's safety, utility and accessibility. The runway extension involves an additional 600 ft., feet as well as improvement to the Runway Safety Area. The current runway has deficient Runway Safety Areas. A RSA is a prepared surface designed as a safety overrun for aircraft unable to stop on the available runway pavement following an arrival to the airport or upon aborting a takeoff attempt for emergency reasons.

The main reason for the runway extension is safety, according to the Macon County Airport Authority. Currently, Federal Aviation Design Standards indicate that the runway is too short for the design aircraft currently operating on it. Aside from safety, the runway extension will provide better access to the area, increasing future industry consideration as well as retaining any employer currently located here.

The Macon County Airport is administered by an Airport Authority consisting of the following: Miles Gregory- Chairman, Harold Corbin- Vice Chairman, Pete Haithcock- Secretary/Treasurer, Tommy Jenkins, Gary Schmitt

Macon County Transit

Survey results concerning public transportation in Macon County varied. 38% of respondents to the survey felt that this type of transportation was "very important" to the citizens of Macon County. 44% felt public transportation was "fairly important" and the remaining 18% of respondents felt it was "not important" at all (*see Public Input Pgs. 11-38 of Plan.*)

Macon County Transit uses a fleet of 12 vehicles ranging from 6 passenger minivans to 16 passenger Light Transit Vehicles. 8 of these vehicles as of 2010 are lift equipped. The MCT Staff consists of a Director, Office Manager, Dispatcher, Operations Supervisor, 4 full time drivers and 10 part time drivers (one of which covers the Nantahala area).

MCT offers a variety of services to all citizens.

- Medical Transportation (Local & Out of County)
- Adult Day Care (Macon County Senior Services)
- Congregate Nutrition Meals (Macon County Senior Services)
- Dialysis (Sylvia Davita Dialysis)
- Sheltered Workshop (MCH & Webster Enterprises)
- Medical Transports for Nursing Homes
- Employment Transportation – limited availability based on space and times
- General Transportation (shopping, etc.)

Typical operating hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with exceptions being made for surgery appointments.

Macon County Bike Routes

Macon County is home to countless miles of designated bike routes. The bike routes stretch to all ends of the county, offering natives and newcomers an opportunity to experience the beauty of Macon County while exercising. Aside from a means of exercise, bicycles are an energy efficient, environmentally friendly transportation option. As the population continues to rise, with more Americans becoming environmentally and health conscious, this option could become more viable in the future. *(See bike Routes Appendix vii)*

Recommendations

By planning for and creating a multi-modal transportation system we are ensuring that our mountain heritage is preserved, the natural environment will continue to flourish and the economic vitality and social welfare of our citizens is maintained. As the population increases, so will demands on the current transportation system. Recommendations contained within this section of the Comprehensive Plan work toward satisfying the needs of Macon County citizens now and in the future by providing, safe accessible and environmentally friendly transportation.

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

Introduction

The purpose of the Housing Element in the Macon County Comprehensive Plan is to make recommendations necessary to maintain a diverse range of housing opportunities for all Macon County residents.

Public Input

54% of respondents to the survey felt that affordable housing was “very important” to the future of Macon County. (*see Public Input Pgs. 11-38 of plan*) When traveling to community centers and special interest groups throughout the county, the issue of affordable housing did not seem to arise as frequently as indicated by survey results. It should be noted however, that attendees of the community center and special interest group meetings were primarily in the 50+ age range with the majority being retired or currently in the workforce.

One aspect of housing that remained consistent throughout the public meetings however, was that most citizens wanted to continue seeing a rural pattern of development within their respective communities. Citizens attending these meetings understood that future growth to the area was inevitable. The citizens felt however, that high density development/housing should locate in areas where infrastructure was best in place to accommodate it, leaving the outlying rural areas of the county for low density residential development.

General Housing Characteristics in Macon County

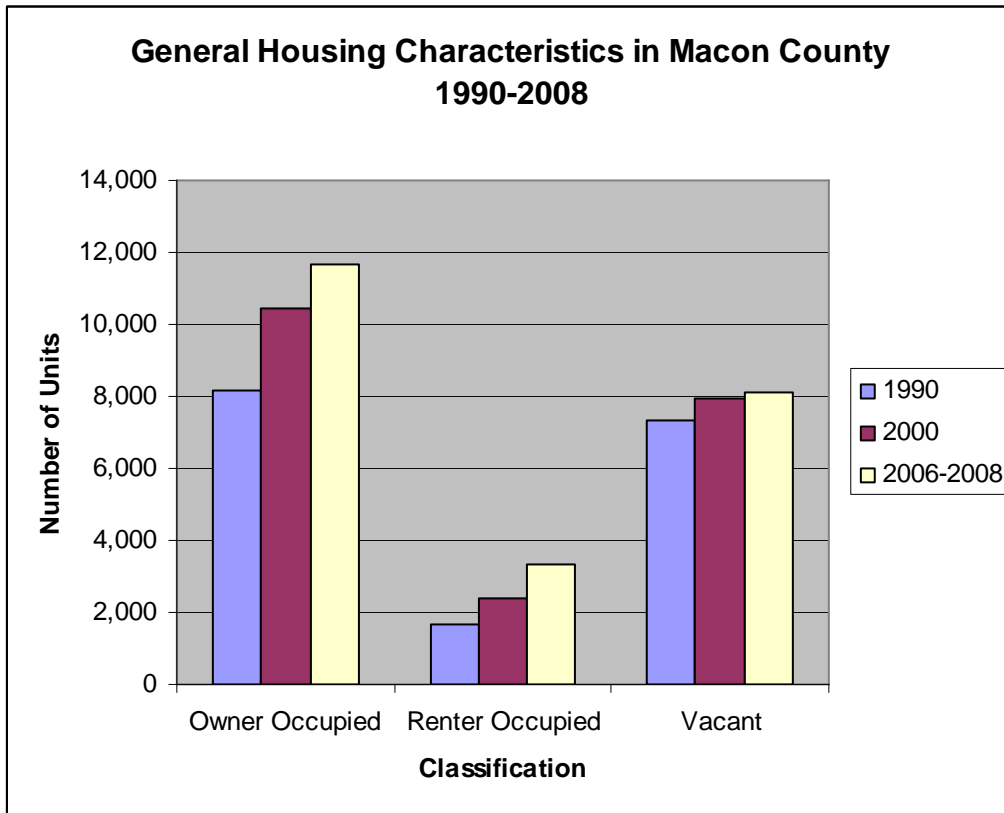
An occupied housing unit is defined by the Census Bureau as any housing unit that is the usual place of residence of the person or people living in it at the time of enumeration, even if the occupants are only temporarily absent; for example, away on vacation. Occupied housing units can further be broken down into two categories; Owner-occupied and Renter-occupied. Housing units that are not occupied are considered vacant. The diagrams below provide an illustration of how the general housing characteristics in Macon County have changed from 1990-2008.

Fig. TH2

	1990	2000	2006-2008
Total	17,174	20,746	23,121
Owner Occupied	8,143 (47%)	10,432 (50%)	11,666 (50%)
Renter Occupied	1,691 (10%)	2,396 (12%)	3,361 (15%)
Vacant	7,340 (43%)	7,918 (38%)	8,094 (35%)
Average Household Size	2.11	2.28	2.05

Source: US Census Bureau

Fig. TH2



Source: US Census Bureau

From 1990-2008 the total number of housing units in Macon County increases by approximately 35%. From 1990-2009 the population of Macon County, according to the U.S. Census Bureau increased by 41% (*see population trends, figure P1*). By comparing these two numbers it becomes clear that growth in housing units has generally kept pace with that of the population.

Recommendations

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

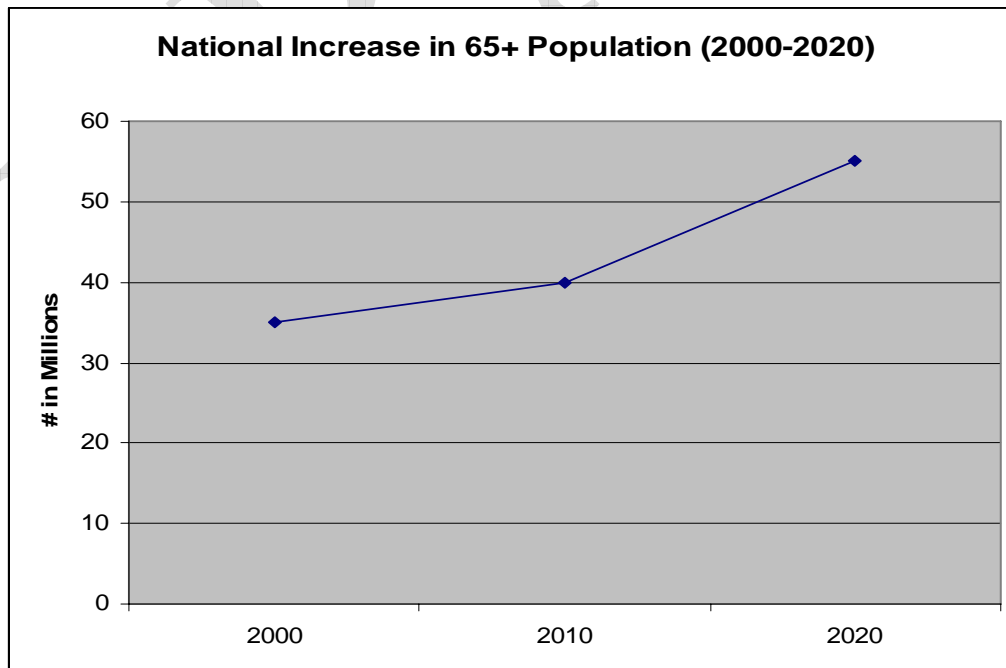
Introduction

The older population will continue to grow significantly in the future. According to a recent CBS news report, beginning in 2011, 10,000 Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) will turn 65 every day. As the older population rises so will the demand for housing alternatives, transportation assistance, medical services etc.

In 2009 the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released “A Profile of Older Americans: 2009.” Among the Highlights of the report:

- Nationally, the older age group will triple in number by 2050. During the next decade, one American will turn 60 years old every seven seconds.
- Nationally, over one in every eight people is considered to be an “older American.”
- The population 65 and over will increase from 35 million in 2000 to 40 million in 2010 and then to 55 million in 2020.

Fig. HCS1



Source: A Report on Healthy Aging in Macon County, North Carolina

Macon County has historically remained an attractive location for retirees. The mild climate, distinct seasons and “small town” atmosphere undoubtedly appeal to the older population. In 2029 20% of Macon County’s population is expected to be over the age of 65. Furthermore, the 55+ population is expected to make up approximately 32% of the total population.

The age of the workforce in Macon County is also indicative of the aging population. A *Report on Healthy Aging in Macon County, North Carolina* shows that approximately 45% of the workforce in Macon County is over the age of 45. 20% of this number is projected to be over the age of 55 according to the report.

The 55+ age group is never expected to fall below 30% of the total population over the next 20 years. It is imperative that this age group be considered in all future planning endeavors.

Public Input

The mean age of the Comprehensive Plan Survey was 50.12. Survey age, combined with the escalated mean age in public meeting attendance, provides a first hand example of just how important planning for this age group is. Senior citizens were appreciative of the services and opportunities afforded to them in Macon County. They wanted to see these services and opportunities grow in proportion with the need that would be brought on by future population growth.

Nursing/Assisted Living Facilities

Macon County currently has two Skilled Nursing Facilities and two Assisted Living Facilities. A Skilled Nursing Facility is a place of residence for individuals who require constant nursing care and have significant deficiencies with activities of daily living. Residents in a skilled nursing facility may also receive physical, occupational, and other rehabilitative therapies following an accident or illness. (Site other than Wikipedia) Assisted Living Facilities, unlike Skilled Nursing Facilities do not staff registered nurses or doctors. Therefore, these facilities do not house patients who are dependant on intra-venous drugs, feeding tubes, ventilators etc. While each of these facilities provide a high level of care and supervision to aging adults, the Skilled Nursing Facilities often carry a higher price tags, as they provide on-site professional medical care.

Skilled Nursing Facilities

Britthaven of Franklin

Britthaven of Franklin is a Skilled Nursing Facility that has been operating in Macon County for over two decades. The facility is divided into seven sections:

1. SPARKS unit- specializing in care for Alzheimer's patients.
2. Sub-acute- specializing in therapy and providing care for short-term patients.
3. 5 remaining sections of the Facility are devoted to patients who are staying in the facility long-term.

Britthaven has a total of 200 rooms in the facility. According to Britthaven administration only 118 of these rooms are full at this time, which has resulted in the closing of some sections. The base monthly tuition for this facility is \$4,700 per month.

Fidelia Eckerd Living Center

The Fidelia Eckerd Living Center is an 84 bed facility with 4 private and 40 semi-private rooms. FELC accommodates the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of every resident. The facility actively seeks to be accredited by the same rating agency that rates hospitals throughout the state, even though it is purely voluntary.

FELC is connected to the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital so that emergency and acute care is readily available. Each resident is assigned a primary care physician who recommends a plan of medical treatment, supervises diagnostic as well as therapeutic procedures, and personally prescribes required medication.

Assisted Living Facilities

Assisted Living Facilities are rated on a star system. A rating of 4 stars is the highest rating an Assisted Living Facility can receive. At this time, Grandview Manor has a rating of 3 stars, and the Chestnut Hill Senior Living Community has a rating of 4 stars.

Grandview Manor

Grandview Manor has been in operation for 53 years in Macon County. The facility has a capacity of 52 and generally has approximately 49-51 occupants. The facility will be expanding in the near future to accommodate 30 more occupants, increasing the capacity to 82. The population at Grandview Manor, according to administration, is comprised mainly of elderly people suffering from simple physical injuries and Alzheimer's. The base monthly tuition for this facility is \$1,900 per month.

Chestnut Hill Senior Living Community

The Chestnut Hill Senior Living Community is a facility for individuals over the age of 55. The facility is divided into a 26 unit assisted living wing, a 20 unit independent

lodge, containing 1, 2 and 3 bedroom facilities, and 36 independent cottages that are spread throughout the 34 acre site. The marketing director estimates that Chestnut Hill is currently operating at 60% of full capacity. The Chestnut Hill Senior Living Community operates on a monthly rental program with tuition ranging from \$2,900 to \$5,000 per month. This tuition is inclusive of meal programs.

Homecare

Homecare agencies provide in-home care to senior citizens who are in need. Currently, there are 4 agencies within Macon County that provide homecare. The agencies are as follows:

1. Grandview Assisted Living Services
2. Companion Home Health
3. Angel Home Health
4. Western Home Health

Macon County Senior Services

“Partnering to promote, protect and strengthen our community.”- Mission Statement of Macon County Senior Services.

The Macon County Senior Services Center offers a variety of services to seniors in Macon County. The new center located at 108 Wayah Street provides a spacious, open environment for all seniors to enjoy. The facility operates Monday-Friday from 8:00 am. to 5:00 pm. Below are services this facility provides.

- Community Resource Center- A single point of access for information and assistance on services offered in the county. The CRC serves not only seniors but young adults, families and people with disabilities as well.
- Congregate Meals- Nutritionally balanced meals served Monday- Friday. Socialization, activities, speakers and special occasion events are all part of the Congregate Meals Program.
- Home Delivered Meals- Meals are delivered to homebound individuals who need assistance with nutritional health. A dedicated volunteer will deliver noon time meals Monday-Friday.
- In Home Services: Personal care, grocery pick-up, medicine pick-up, light housekeeping, paying bills and caregiver relief.
- STARR- A registry for high risk individuals in the county that shares important information with emergency responders.
- Project Lifesaver- A radio transmitter that can help aide in the location of individuals prone to wander.

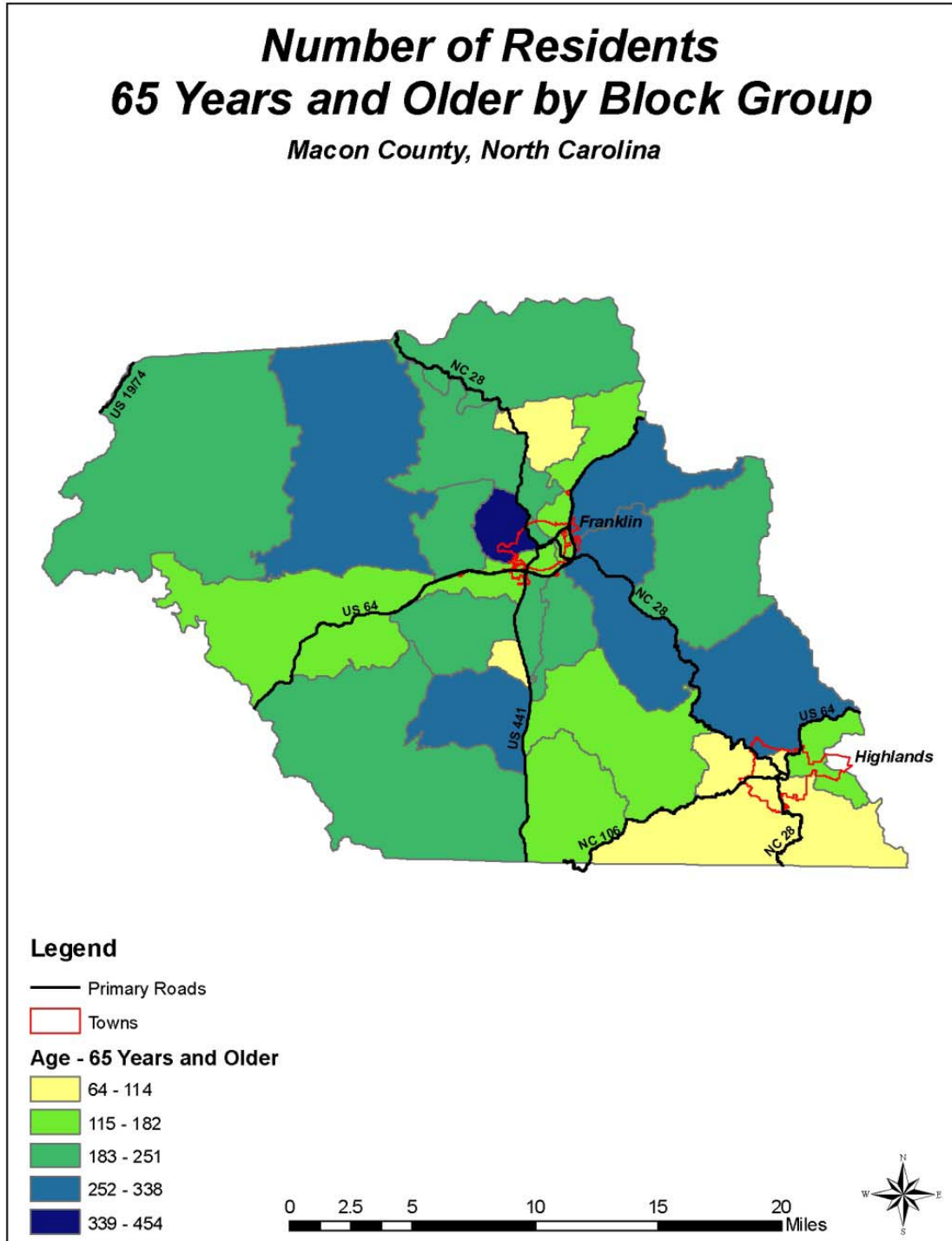
- Care Dependant Sheltering Registry- A registry that identifies individuals in the county that may require special needs during a disaster.
- SHIIP Services- Senior Health Insurance Information Program offers objective information about Medicare.
- Caregiver Support Group- A group meeting that offers support, education and community resources to caregivers.
- Caregiver Connection- Adult Day Care program designed to relieve the caregivers of disabled adults and our older population to enable individuals to remain in their home.

Activities for Macon County Seniors

Macon County offers a variety of activities for senior citizens to participate in. **The Macon County Senior Games** is sanctioned by the North Carolina Senior Games Inc. This organization was established in 1990 to create a year round health promotion and education program for adults 55 years of age or better. Every spring, over 60,000 participants in North Carolina are active in local Senior Games Competitions. Macon County operates one of the 54 sanctioned local Senior Games Programs. Athletes and artists who qualify at local games are invited to attend the State Finals in the fall. Every two years, State Final winners who qualify can represent North Carolina in the National Senior Games. In 2009, over 300 seniors participated in the Senior Games.

In addition to the Macon County Senior Games, active seniors in the Franklin, North Carolina area are **involved year 'round** in sporting events, classes, fundraisers and local events like the Halloween Carnival and Christmas Parade.

Fig. HCS2



Healthcare

Introduction

Macon County provides quality healthcare not only to seniors, but all citizens residing in the county. Two hospitals serve Macon County as well as a locally based Air Ambulance service that supports regional medical facilities. Specialists covering all medical disciplines are available in the county. A full range of supporting medical and dental practices are located throughout Macon County, including an Urgent Care Center and 2 free clinics in the Franklin and Highlands areas.

Public Input

Quality healthcare is important to all citizens. Being healthy is the largest contributing factor to quality of life. During the public input gathering process, all citizens wanted to be reassured that Macon County would continue to provide its residents with the highest level of healthcare possible.

Hospitals

Angel Medical Center

Angel Medical Center is located in Franklin North Carolina. The hospital is licensed for 59 beds but currently operates as a Critical Access Facility, having 25 beds available. Of the 25 beds, 6 are in the Intensive Care Unit, 14 are classified as medical/surgery, and 5 are reserved for women and children. According to hospital administration, 70% is the average occupancy rate for the 25 available beds. The average length of stay for patients in Angel Medical Center is 4 days.

Angel Medical Center employs roughly 425 people. Approximately 61 doctors are affiliated with the facility. Unaffiliated doctors can however, refer patients to Angel Medical Center.

The recruitment of doctors specializing in OBGYN care, Urology, Orthopedics, etc. is a growing issue for Angel Medical Center. Often times, patients are forced to leave Macon County to receive specialist treatment. Aside from recruitment of specialists, issues revolving around mental health patients continue to present problems for Angel Medical Center.

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital strives to be an integral part of the community. The facility provides premier healthcare for all who enter. The staff at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital seeks to treat anyone who is need of help without regard for their ability to pay.

Recommendations *(Healthcare and Senior Citizens)*

The accessibility of quality, affordable healthcare is extremely important to all individuals. As individuals age more healthcare services are generally required, making the topics of Healthcare and senior citizens closely related. For this reason, it was difficult to separate the recommendations from these two elements. Recommendations for the Healthcare and Senior Citizens elements of the Comprehensive Plan are listed below. This particular set of recommendations is unique from others in the plan as a situation expressing a deficiency precedes each set of recommendations for that particular deficiency.

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

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Childcare

Introduction

Quality child care, whether in the home or in licensed child care centers, provides a positive nurturing environment and age-appropriate development activities and education for the children of working parents long before the child enters the public or private school systems. Affordable and available child care for Macon County's working parents is on the same level of importance as affordable housing and affordable health care. The benefits of quality childcare are realized not only by the children and their parents, but by employers of the parents as well. (*Childcare Issues Committee report*) Macon County should explore all means necessary to ensure that quality childcare is available to accommodate a growing population.

Public Input

Childcare was an issue that came up repeatedly in community and special interest group meetings across the county. The challenges of finding childcare are enormous for young families everywhere, and Macon County seems to be no exception. When a young woman becomes pregnant, major decisions must be made about how to care for the infant and maintain the family's standard of living. Often, it is not feasible for one of the parents, or a single parent to become a full-time caregiver for the child in the home. The other choices are (1) family members provide childcare so the parent(s) can go back to work; (2) the parents are able to obtain affordable childcare in the community; or (3) the parents must find some form of government financial support. (*Childcare Issues Committee report*) Often times, due to finances, absence of alternate childcare options (i.e. grandparents) and lack of available childcare facilities, working parents are left with no option for childcare. This directly affects not only the children but the parents and employers of the parents as well.

Childcare Issues Committee

The Macon County Childcare Issues Committee was appointed in February 2009, and has worked to fully explore the issues involving child care. The committee involved every type of expert, resource, and related stakeholder to gain information, make conclusions and offer recommendations.

The committee gathered and consolidated information for public review, developed conclusions based on research and offered specific recommendations to address the issues identified. The work of the committee was compiled into a report and presented to the Commission on January 25, 2010. The report suggests a short-term solution of a new infant/toddler center and identifies the need for long-term incentives to grow the child care capacity in Macon County at a rate consistent with the projected growth in the population and workforce.

Acknowledging the amount of expertise and work that went into the creation of this document, the Healthcare/Childcare/Senior Citizens Committee of the Macon County

Comprehensive plan relied heavily on this report as a resource in their recommendation making process.

Benefits of Early Childhood Education
(Childcare Issues Committee interim Report)

- Childcare industry generates \$1.77 billion annually and provides over 47,000 jobs in NC.
- Macon County Childcare industry generates approximately \$4.8 million in annual revenues and provides 178 jobs in local economy.
- Cornell University study found that every \$1 spent for childcare services generated \$1.84 in local sales and service industries
- Children with early childhood education are better prepared for school system.
- Children having quality preschool and early learning experiences are well prepared for school system.
- Employees with adequate childcare are more likely to be on time for work, lower absenteeism and less distracted on the job.
- Access to affordable, quality childcare provides businesses with considerable benefits, increasing the bottom line including: Lower employee turnover, reduced tardiness and absenteeism, increased employee performance, higher employee morale and commitment, lower training and recruiting costs.

For a more complete description of the benefits provided by Early Childhood Education, please refer to the Childcare Issues Committee Interim Report (Available at Macon County Planning Department.)

Childcare Issues in Macon County
(Childcare Issues Committee Interim Report)

The CIC Interim Report sheds light on 8 issues currently being faced by “Maconians” with regards to Childcare. The issues are as follows:

1. Availability

- Throughout the child care industry, the accepted rule of thumb is that adequate capacity is defined as having child care slots available to one-half (50%) of the child population.
- Macon County is estimated to have a 0-5 yr. old population of 2,161 and a child care industry capacity of only 678 children (31%).
- Capacity shortfall in infant-toddler care 0-2 yr. old is more acute.
- In 2008 0-2 population was 1,147 with only 210 child care slots available (173% shortfall).

2. Cost

- Quality Childcare is expensive

Fig. HCS3

Program License Rating (Subsidized Rates)	Home	Center
5 Star Infant/Toddler Care	\$465/ mo.	\$686/ mo.
2 Star Infant/ Toddler Care	\$398/ mo.	\$445/ mo.
5 Star Care- 3 year old	\$402/ mo.	\$552/ mo.
1 Star Care- 3 year old	\$335/ mo.	\$368/ mo.
Private Pay Rates- Under 2	\$520/ mo.	\$672/ mo.

3. Coverage

- Few Macon County Child Care Programs provide full-time hours matching the parents work schedules. Most church and private centers mirror the public school schedules. This makes it difficult for those parents working 9-5.

4. Financial Support

- Federal tuition support is available for low-income families in Macon County
- The State of North Carolina Department of Human Services also provides subsidized support for low income families.
- The problem lies for those families earning above the guidelines. To qualify for tuition support from the Department of Human Services for instance a family of three must earn below \$37,476. The NC Dept. of Housing and Urban Development reported the 2008 median household income for a family of three in Macon County to be \$44,000

5. Provider Turnover

- Since 2005, seven home centers and four childcare centers have gone out of business in Macon County. During this same time period, only 5 new centers have started.
- Net capacity losses were 27 infant/toddler and 33 preschool slots.

6. Quality (Ratings range from 1 to 5 stars)

- State Agencies stress quality ratings, encouraging centers to earn the rating of 4 and 5 stars. Additional quality carries a significant price tag for providers.
- Quality incentives while in existence, do not equal the loss of tuition resulting from having to reduce enrollment or add staff to achieve the higher star ratings.
- Macon County Centers are rated as follows:
 - 5 Star Centers- 2
 - 4 Star Centers- 2
 - 3 Star Centers- 2
 - 2 Star Centers- 6
 - 1 Star Centers- 4

16 + 3 exempted religious programs

There are 16 licensed childcare centers in Macon County and 3 religious programs that are exempted. Of these programs nine (9) are home centers operated with a regulated limit of 8 children total (only 1 of which can be an infant and 3 must be school age children)

7. Projected Growth

- The Economic Opportunity Institute projects that in the next ten years, 85% of the workforce will be working parents, spending more time on the job than compared to 20 years ago.
- 2007 - 2029 the (0-14) population is projected to increase by 3%. It is reasonable to assume that the infant/toddler population will grow at the same rate. Should a younger workforce be successfully attracted to the county, the infant/toddler population will grow even faster.
- Based on population projections and without significant new initiatives by Macon County to encourage a similar rate of growth in the local child care industry, the current shortage in infant/toddler child care capacity will grow to 750 children and families needing care where none will be available.

8. The “Squeeze” on Parents

- Many Macon county families with preschool children have incomes greater than those required to qualify for either Free or DHHS subsidized child care.
- Non-working parents, other than full-time students, receive no financial help from either subsidy program.

For a further description of the issues being faced by parents regarding childcare in Macon County, please refer to the Childcare Issues Committee Interim Report (Available at the Macon County Planning Department)

Recommendations

There are many issues currently facing the childcare industry in Macon County. As indicated in the Childcare Issues Committee Interim Report, our county is already experiencing a drastic shortfall in terms of childcare availability. We must work together as citizens of Macon County to ensure that this shortfall does not continue to spiral out of control. The Healthcare/Childcare/Senior Citizens committee makes the following recommendations to help ensure that childcare availability remains adequate now and in the future.

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.

Appendix i
(EDC Report, June 1, 2010)

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Macon County Economic Development Commission

**Report to Planning Board Committee for EDC
June 1, 2010**

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Purpose and Mission

“To improve the economic health and quality of life of the citizens of the Macon County community, through the creation of capital investment and job opportunities; through the attraction of new business and industry to Macon County, and through assistance to existing businesses and industry in proposed expansion.”

“To develop, mentor and promote public policy to create an atmosphere conducive to the creation, growth and development of economic prosperity while preserving the natural environment for the benefit of current residents and future generations.”

Community Analysis

Macon County Economic Development Commission

May 19, 2009

Macon County has a long history as a progressive and thoughtful leader of Western North Carolina in the growth and development of businesses. The local economy was dominated by agriculture until the 1950's. Beginning in the 1960's, Macon County became home to several manufacturing companies. As infrastructure development took place in the 1970's, Macon County became home to new industries and more employers. During the 1980's the economic shift began to move toward second homes and tourism. Since the mid-1990's, the second home market and natural / cultural tourism have become an increasingly important part of the local economy. Approximately 25% of the labor force is employed in either the construction business or leisure/tourism industry. An important segment of the retail / trade industry is also significantly impacted by tourism.

While the economies of neighboring communities have become dominated by the tourism industry, Macon County has been successful at keeping a relatively diverse local economy. Given the strength of business-friendly leadership, strong schools, low taxes and labor force, it is not surprising that Macon County has maintained a position of strength. Healthcare, software development, and manufacturing companies compose half of the top 10 employers in Macon County. Health Services, Business Services and Retail / Trade businesses employ nearly 50% of the total local labor force. Conventional wisdom may be that Macon County is completely reliant upon tourism and the second home market, but there is little evidence to support the idea of “over reliance.” Maintaining a diverse local economy is an important strength for Macon County's long term future and all economic development strategies should remain focused on creating a more diverse economy.

The primary economic challenge facing Macon County is the ability to retain and recruit professional talent. Most employers are completely reliant upon their ability to find employees with the skills and talents needed to make their business venture a success. While the current labor force is of good quality, the pool of labor is limited given the number of available jobs. Due to the current national recession, unemployment spiked to 13%. However, Macon County has had an average unemployment rate of 5.2% since 2000. (Most statistics show the labor force to be approximately 16,000.) While there are typically job opportunities with local employers, they may not be competitive with opportunities in other

areas where wages / salaries are higher and the cost of living is lower. Employers recruit higher level positions by seeking talent in other markets. This is expensive and challenging for employers and poses as significant challenge for expansion opportunities.

Per capita personal income in Macon County is \$24,284 while it is \$32,247 for the rest of North Carolina and \$36,714 for the United States. Macon County is not only competing with neighbors in North Georgia and Western North Carolina, we are competing for talent in Charlotte (per capita personal income of \$39,231), Greenville/Spartanburg (per capita personal income of \$32,478) and Atlanta (per capita personal income of \$37,294). This is particularly true of more highly skilled labor needs.

Existing employers are consistently looking for a labor force with more technical skills and they are looking for them in larger numbers. A recent Regional Labor Availability study conducted by AdvantageWest indicates that even when mixed with the labor force in neighboring counties the talent pool is not large enough to accommodate significant growth in the business sector. Assuming demand in key areas grow as the national economy recovers, opportunities may be missed because the County and surrounding areas are not well positioned to supply the necessary labor.

Site selection firms are predicting the greatest job growth coming in healthcare (3 million new jobs by 2016). Computer and mathematical science occupations will add 822,000 new jobs. Data processing, hosting and software publishing make up rapidly growing sectors. With the presence of BalsamWest, Angel Medical Center, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and access to outdoor sporting activities (and many other quality of life factors), targeting growth in the computer science, data processing, software development and healthcare segments will be an important strategy for growth. Further development of wireless communication systems and high speed internet access for both residential and commercial interests is critical to creating a more fertile economic environment for these business segments.

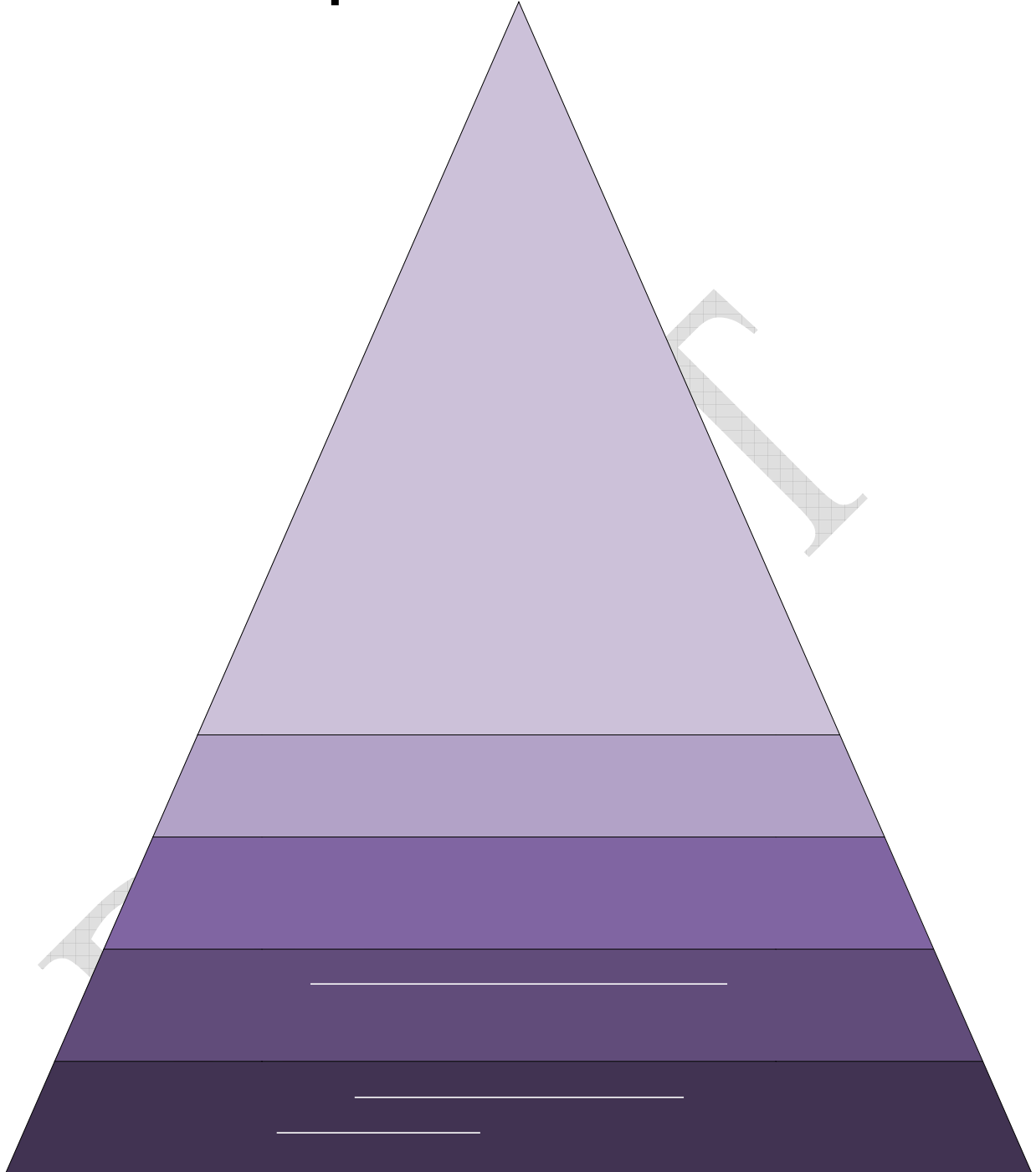
The labor force needed to create a sustainable economy are ages 20 to 50. This population segment currently only composes about 32% of Macon County. In comparison, this group composes approximately 55% of North Carolina. The labor force will need more technical and business management skills requiring higher levels of education (associate to master level degrees). Increased opportunities in the fields of software development, data management, healthcare, high-tech manufacturing, retail and entrepreneurial development are attractive to this segment of the labor force and expanding opportunities in these business segments will ensure a long-term, sustainable economic future for Macon County.

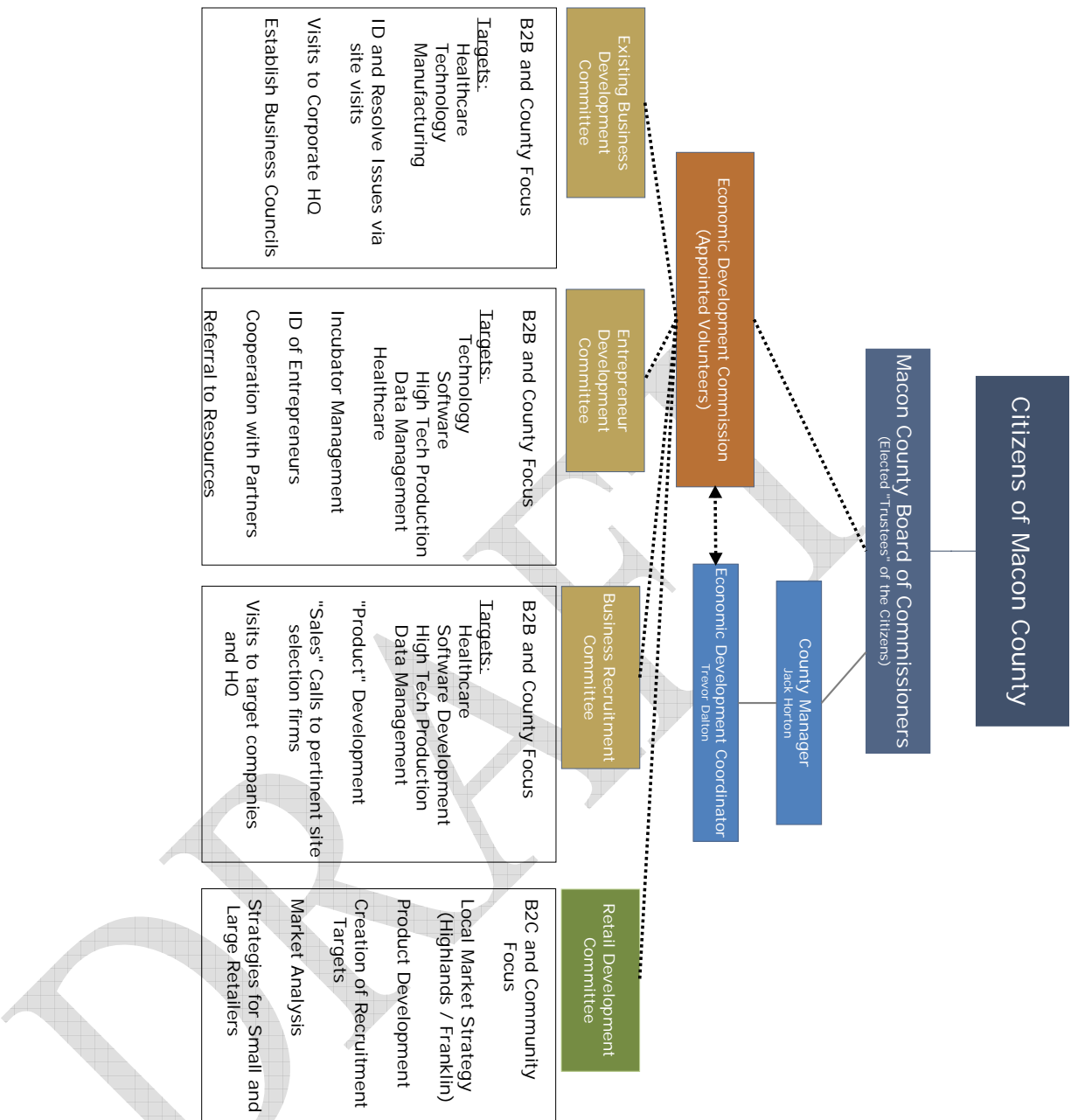
The importance of downtown initiatives, outdoor activities, cultural preservation projects, and historic preservation are all critical to maintaining and building the quality of life for those in the target labor force. Smaller, rural communities that have thriving economies also have a strong sense of “place” and can clearly articulate their identity. It also nicely compliments much of the work being done in the areas of tourism development. In fact, this is the area where collaboration among the tourism development entities and Economic Development Commission can be beneficial. Perhaps the strongest area for partnership is in the area of retail development. There is an opportunity to work more closely with retail businesses to help them become more efficient, identify quality labor and improve their marketing. New retail businesses relocating and opening in the community should be considered in creating of a recruitment plan.

Additional sites for retail and business growth must be identified in the next 8 to 10 months. Currently, the Department of Commerce lists only three available sites in Macon County. Interest in site development is far from dead. Activity and interest continues. Macon County should not ignore this opportunity. Identification of “product” is an immediate need to be addressed by the staff person. These new sites should be listed with the Department of Commerce and commercial realtors as needed. As these sites are identified, further analysis and consideration of infrastructure needs should be addressed on a site by site basis. Overall, Macon County is well positioned today in regard to infrastructure development and should be proud of their strength in this area. However, a clearly defined plan for future growth and development of all infrastructure (water/sewer, wireless, fiber, transportation) must be put in place to accommodate future growth.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Leadership Outdoors Culture Natural Beauty Sense of Place Proximity to Metro Areas Partners Schools BalsamWest Diverse Economy Low Taxes	Available Labor Force Underemployment No “Plan” Aging Labor Force Sentiment of Undervalue Differentiation Cost of Living	Retail Growth Incubator Entrepreneur Development Growing Existing Employers Need for Higher Skills Software and Data Management ED Program Redevelopment of Downtowns Healthcare Economic Diversity ID Product	Neighbors Loss of Local Employers Mismanaged Growth Infrastructure Following Growth Rather Than Leading It

Model Community for Economic Development





Existing Business

Targeting Employers – “Large” Employers (75+ Employees) – 2 Visits Annually
Medium Sized Employers (15 to 74 Employees – 1 Visit Annually
Small Employers (1 to 14 Employees) – Every Other Year

Develop the “Sales Pitch” for visits to existing businesses

- What is in it for me?

Coordinate initiatives with local Chambers of Commerce

Investigate Opportunity to Resurrecting “Leadership Macon County”

Entrepreneur Development

Completion of Certified Entrepreneurial Community

Identify potential private incubator spaces

Resurrect “Leadership Macon County”

Establish a future EDC Board Meeting to include Leadership Highlands

Business Recruitment

Complete inventory of available, attractive “product”

Participation in site selection / site selector’s event with Advantage West

Focus on target industries – what are they looking for?

Presentation of community economic development department to Advantage West

Target corporate conference in Macon County to get economic development information to decision makers – Old Edwards Inn and Smokey Mountain Center for the Performing Arts

Retail Committee

Execute Retail Marketing Survey

Disseminate data to individuals and businesses in order to strengthen business decisions.

Appendix ii
(Franklin High School renovation needs)

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Franklin High School

Option #1 This school is operating near its capacity and is handicapped by being a structure that is basically over 50 years old and was designed for the blackboard and chalk era. It is mostly land locked and surrounded by residential neighborhoods. However, it does have some extra land which is currently being used as practice fields for the school's outdoor sports programs.

From an economic standpoint it will be cheaper to utilize these two fields to expand the High School then it would be to find another 35 to 50 acres of land and build a new facility. This suggestion will need more in depth study but from an overview look it seems to make sense and can be accomplished by Astro turfing the existing football field which means that practice sessions do not need to be held in another field to protect the grass. The cost of watering, fertilizing, seeding, cutting, weeding and labor associated with the existing method would also disappear if you went with Astro turf.

Demographics are suggesting that there will be about 300 to 400 new students seeking to go to high school within 20 years or an average of 15 to 20 new students per year providing that the economy does not limit the pace of growth.

There is not enough land available even with building on the two practice fields to handle that many new students but a combination of virtual education technology and the expansion should be able to handle the next 20 year growth issues. Virtual learning could allow a 20 to 40% increase in capacity using the same brick and mortar facility since students would not have to be in class to learn but would do so using home computers, lap tops or library computers. The cost of lap tops in 5 to 10 years will be even less expensive and could even be provided by the school like they do books today since it would be cheaper than building a traditional school building.

It becomes even more attractive when you look at the costs. New Construction for a high school in 2020 would run around \$60 million while an upgrade to the existing Franklin High School to bring it into the 21st century would run about \$17 million today. Add on the cost of two new structures and you may be in the \$29 million range and you would get the added benefit of reduced faculty/staff overhead.

Option #2 Find a 35 to 50 acre site suitable for a new High School and hope that there are no major Indian artifacts to contend with. Bring in water and sewer. Find funding for about \$60 Million with a reasonable interest rate and then convince the taxpayer to support it. You will also have to staff the school with more people than if you improved the existing high school.

Note: Many of the items listed in this appendix have been taken care of since the initial discussions last year. Any issues relating to safety needs should be promptly addressed.

Franklin High Renovation Needs

Main Building

- Electrical upgrade
- Window replacement
- Restroom Renovations
- Science Lab
- White/bulletin boards
- Replace floor covering where needed
- Replace ceiling grid & tiles
- Replace exterior doors where needed
- Locker renovation with sloped tops
- Radiator covers replacement
- Paint

Careers Building

- Replace HVAC
- Replace roof
- Window replacement where needed
- Restroom renovations
- Replace floor covering where needed
- Restroom renovations
- Replace floor covering where needed
- Replace exterior/interior doors
- Electrical upgrade
- Paint

Media/Cafeteria

- HVAC replacement
- Electrical upgrade
- Flooring replacement where needed
- Breaker boxes in boys restroom (problem)
- Paint
- Kitchen Freezer (walk-in)
- Exterior/interior door replacement
- Hot water boiler replacement
- Restroom renovations
- Locker renovations

Fine Arts

- Electrical upgrade
- Replace stage lighting
- Sound system repair
- Replace front stage curtains

- Auditorium seating
- Auditorium ceiling repair/replacement
- Bring building up to handicap code
 - Elevator
 - Stage lift
- Restroom renovations
- Replace flooring where needed
- Replace exterior/interior doors

Gymnasium *gym lobby excluded

- Air conditioning
- Replace all windows
- Replace exterior/interior doors
- Dressing room renovations
- Paint
- Bleacher replacement
- Public address system

Vocational

- HVAC
- Roof replacement
- Replace exterior/interior doors
- Paint

Agriculture

- Classroom flooring

Other

- Replace all lighting with energy efficient fixtures
- Replace all covered walkways
- Field House renovations
- Track replacement
- Improvements to communications
- Network switch upgrade (campus wide)

Appendix iii
(Nantahala School renovation needs)

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Scope of work for Nantahala School Renovation

Gymnasium Renovations

- Light replacement
- Renovate bleachers
- Hot water heater
- Sound system
- Mechanical system
- ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Compliant
- Replace gym floor
- Bleachers on stage
- Replace goals
- Remove unit heaters

General Building Renovations

- Remove flooring & install new
- New ceiling tiles
- New interior doors
- New lights and install motion sensors in entire classroom
- Provide and install individual Bard Units in each classroom
- Remove existing radiator heaters in classrooms
- Lower lights in media center
- Repaint school
- Remove and replace all single-hung windows
- Remove radiator heating in lobby and corridor of classroom wing
- Paint roof
- Provide lighted school sign on gym wall at main entrance
- Provide and install new windows in gym locker room
- Replace existing ceiling insulation
- Provide and install new interior signage
- Make bathrooms in the K-3 classrooms ADA accessible
- Provide marker boards for classrooms
- Provide tack boards for classrooms
- Demolish chimney
- Renovate science lab

Exterior Building Renovations

- Provide and install bus drop-off canopy
- Water repellant sprayed onto building
- Replace exterior doors
- Repair metal sun shade

Kitchen and Cafeteria Renovations

- Take existing hot water heater from mechanical room and install in the boiler room of kitchen
- Provide and install tempering valve on HWH for the hand-wash sink in kitchen
- Replace lights in kitchen
- Remove and replace all VCT, base, ceiling grid, ceiling tile and paint

Work Shop Renovations

- Install commercial grade sink
- Install commercial grade eye wash station
- Repaint entire shop
- Replace light fixtures

Toilet Renovations

- Remove existing boys and girls toilet rooms including slab
- New toilet rooms made ADA accessible

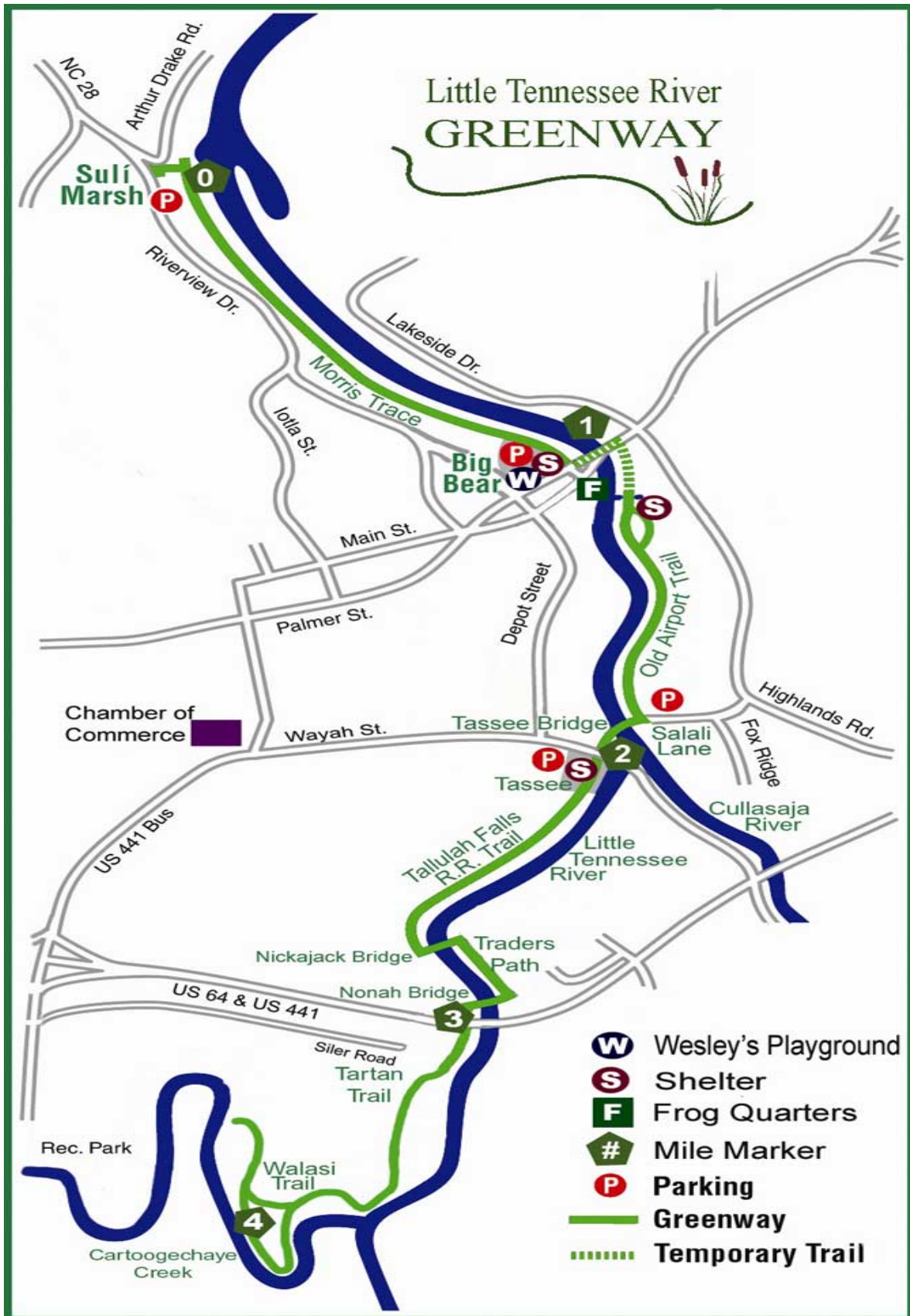
Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing Renovations

(Some items may be mentioned above)

- Two new circuits for each classroom
- Provide and install individual Bard Units in each classroom
- Provide new lights throughout entire school and install motion sensors in classrooms
- Remove existing radiator heaters in classrooms and along exterior walls
- Use CSI to remove and replace active boards and equipment during renovations
- Provide new intercom and phone systems for each classroom
- Provide and install new Cat6E cable to all locations and classrooms
- Provide new speakers and system in corridors, gym and classrooms
- Install Hot Water Heater in mechanical room
- Provide and install tempering valve on HWH for the hand wash sink in kitchen
- Replace lights in kitchen
- Install commercial hand wash sink in Mechanical Room
- Install commercial eye wash station in Mechanical Room
- Install new fixtures in teachers bathrooms
- Replace water coolers with new units
- Install new heating units in the new ceiling grid at the lobby and at the entrance of the corridor of the classroom wing
- Provide circuit to the new school sign at the gym wall and main entrance
- Update receptacles as needed
- Install new plumbing fixtures and plumbing in the boys and girls bathrooms
- Install new lighting, heat and exhaust in boys and girls bathrooms
- Install new fixtures in K-3 classrooms
- Replace boiler

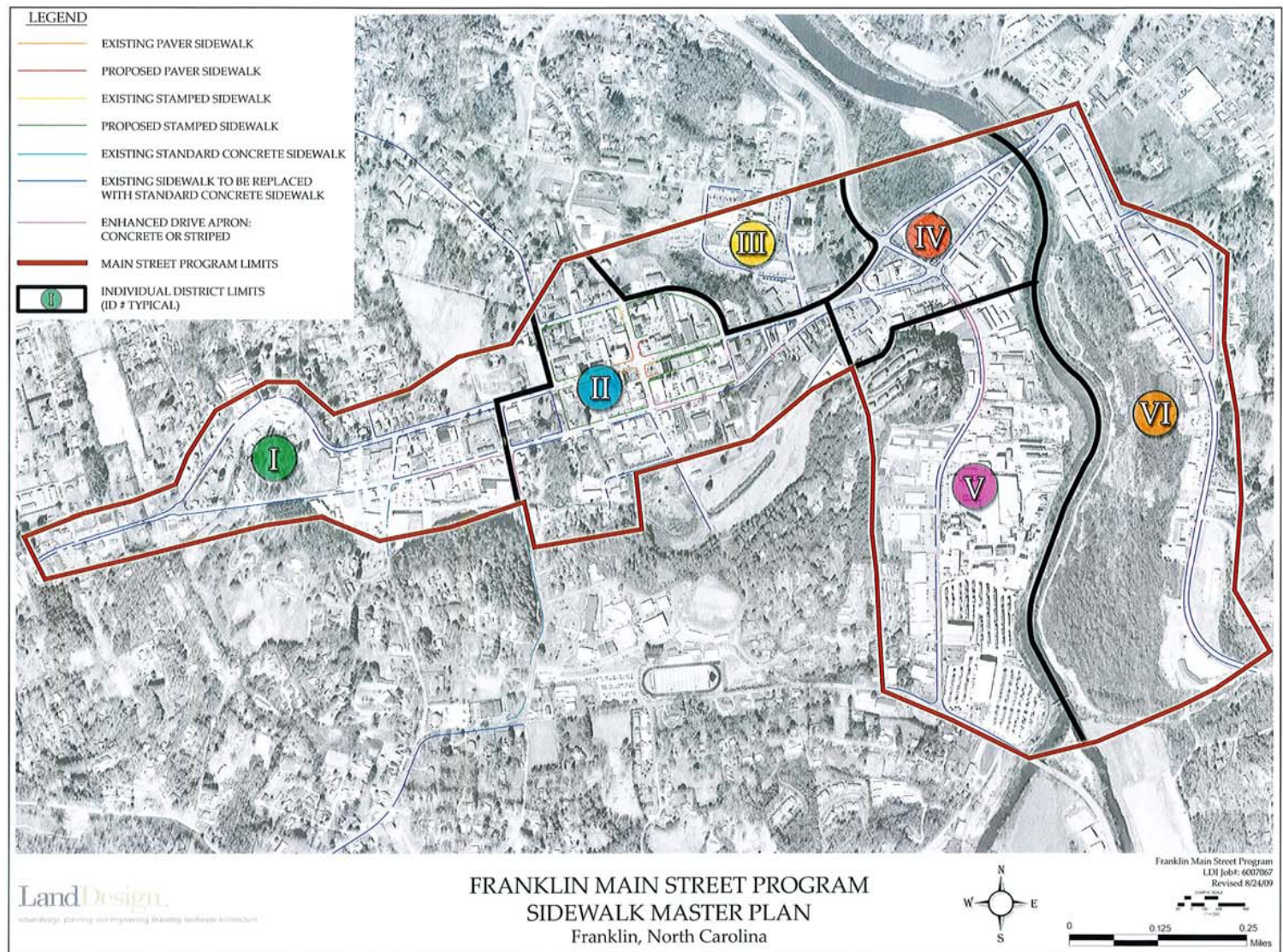
Appendix iv
(Macon County Greenway Plan)

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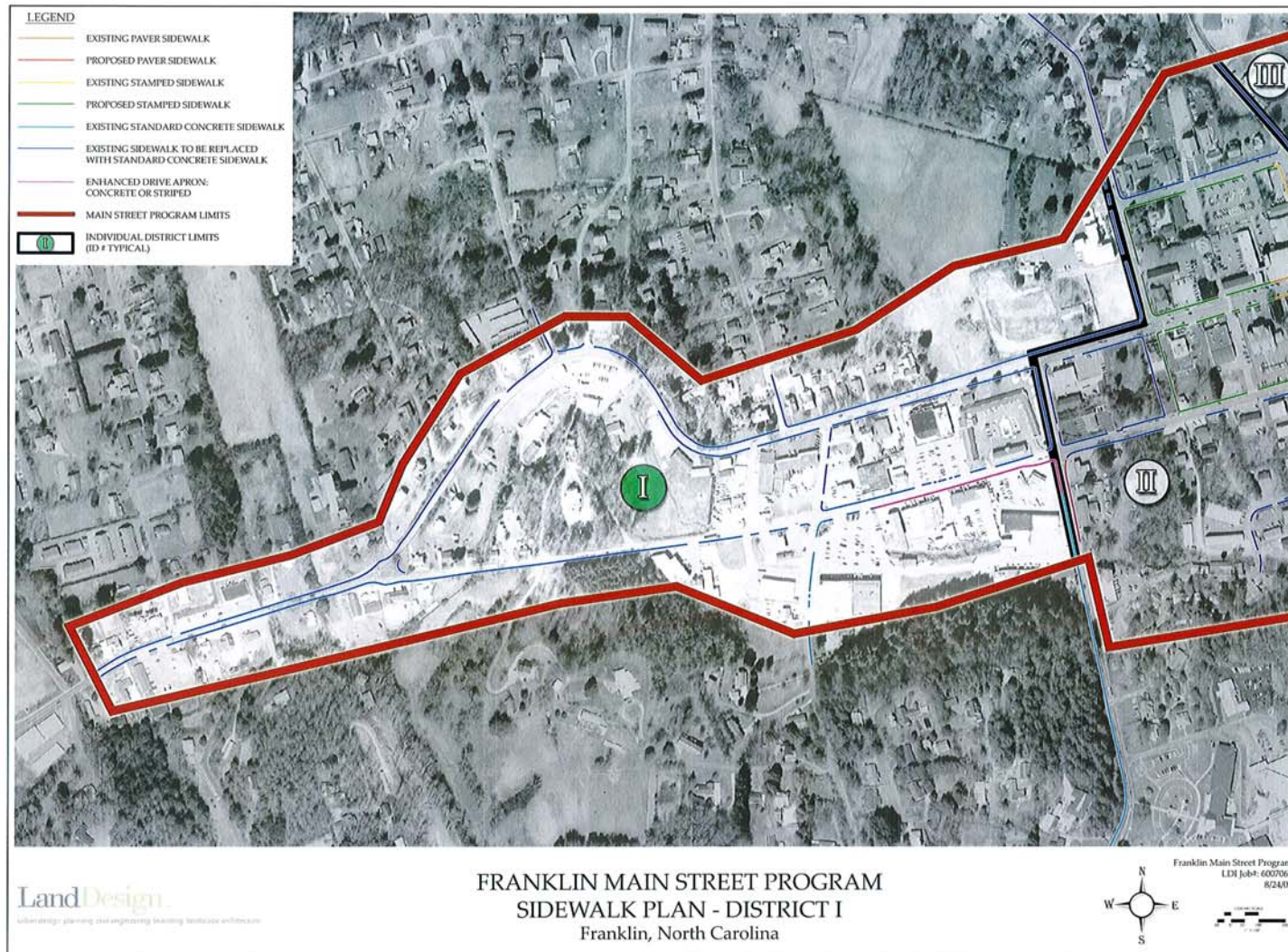


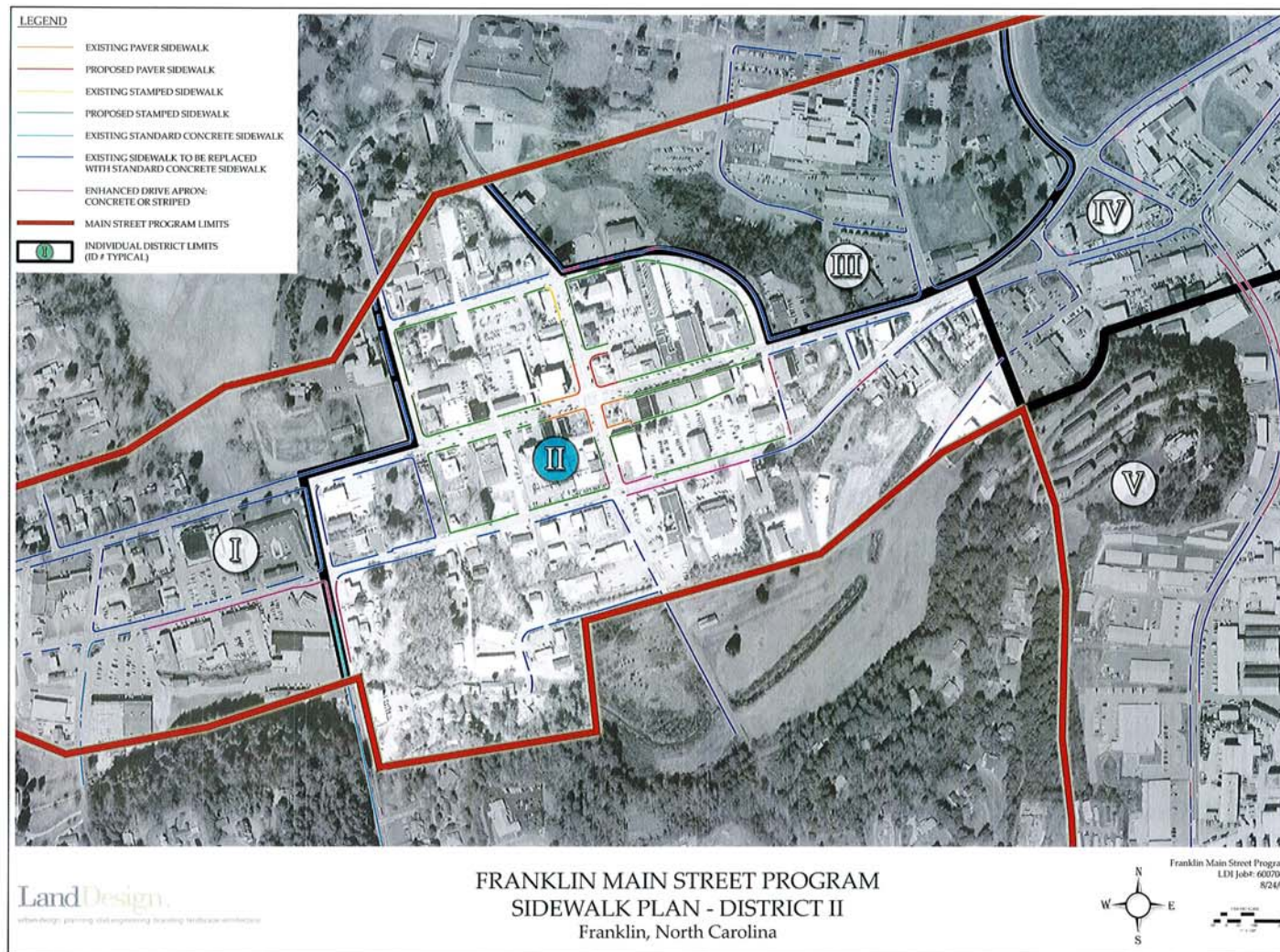
Appendix v
(Town of Franklin Sidewalk Plan)

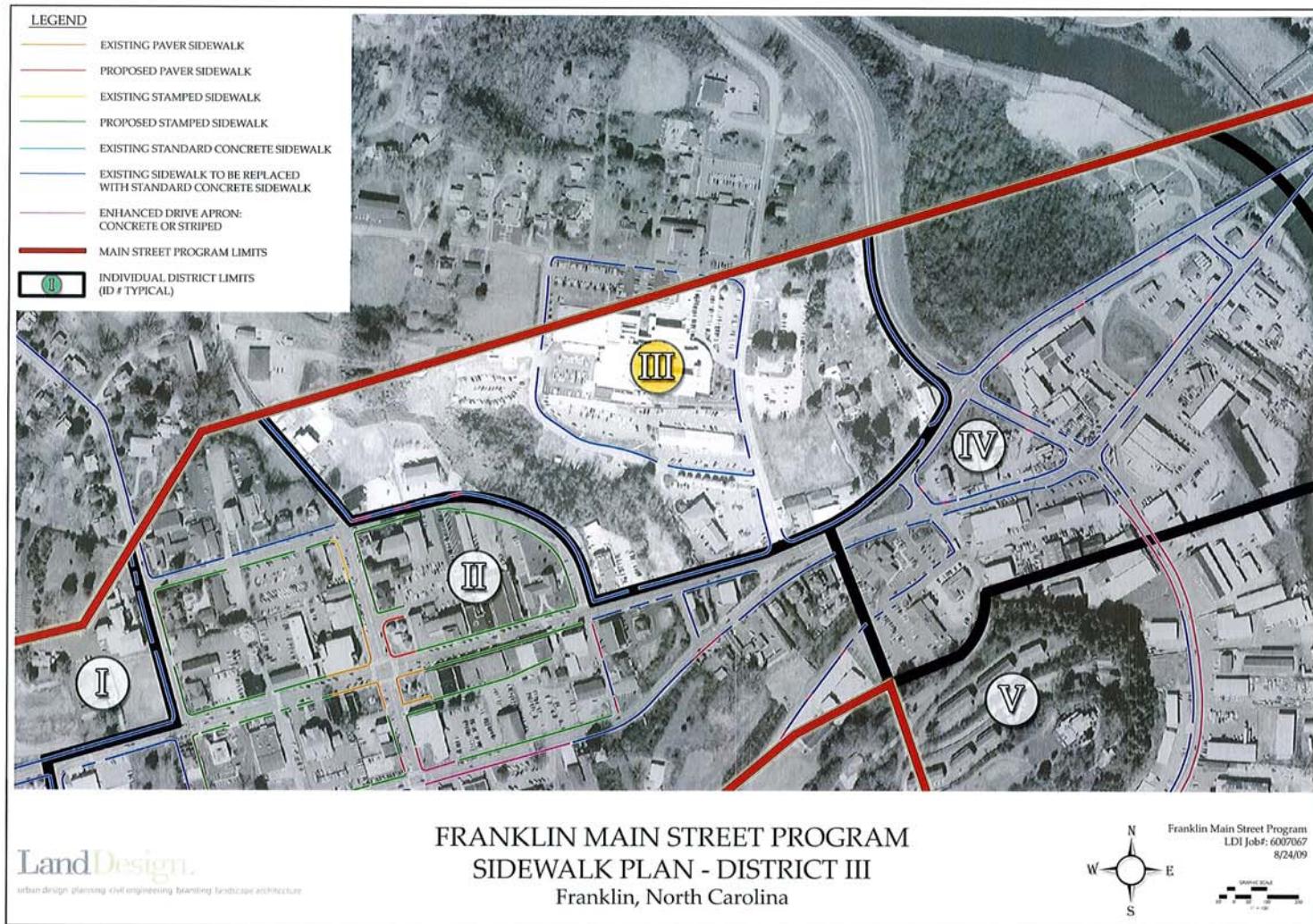
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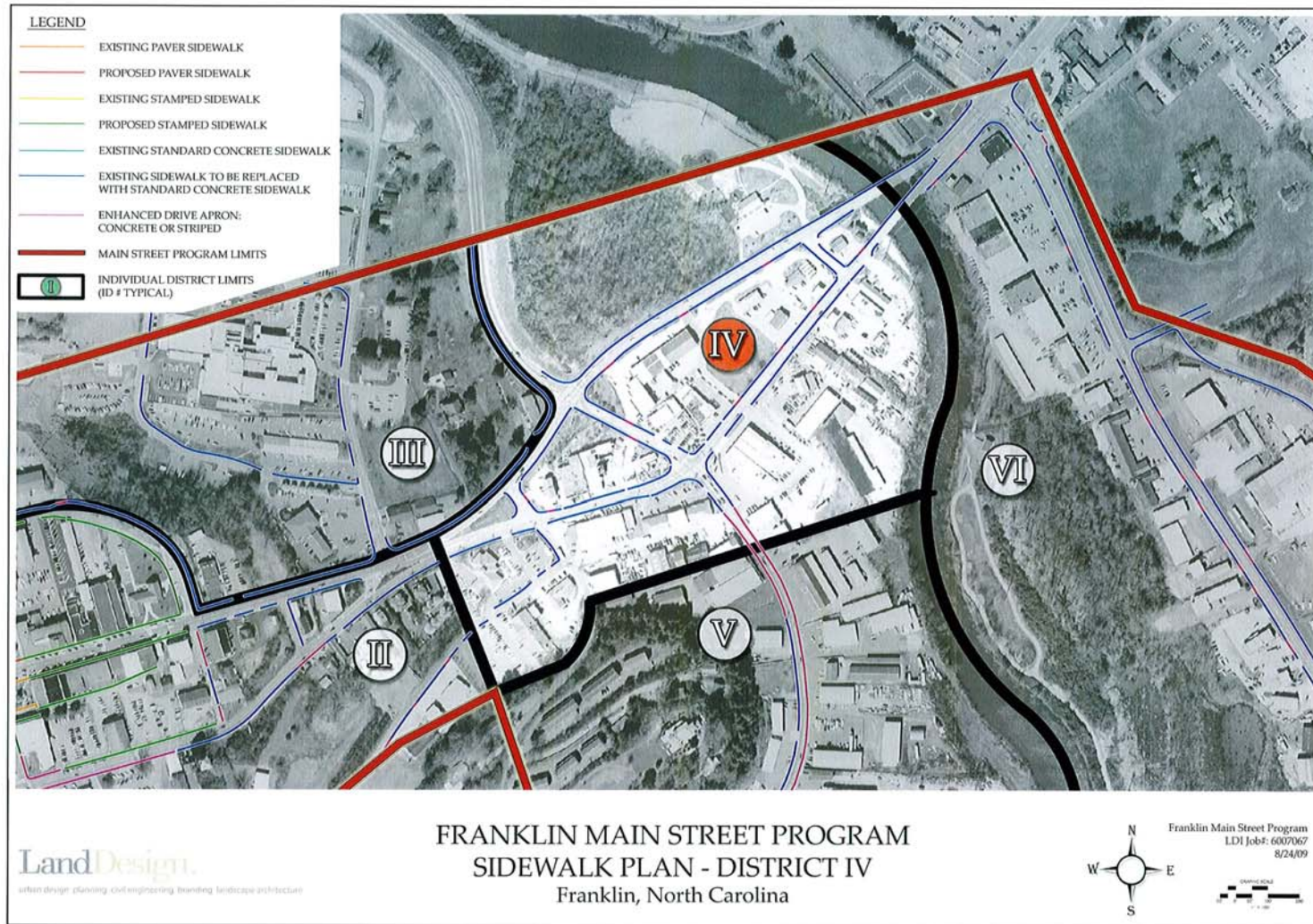


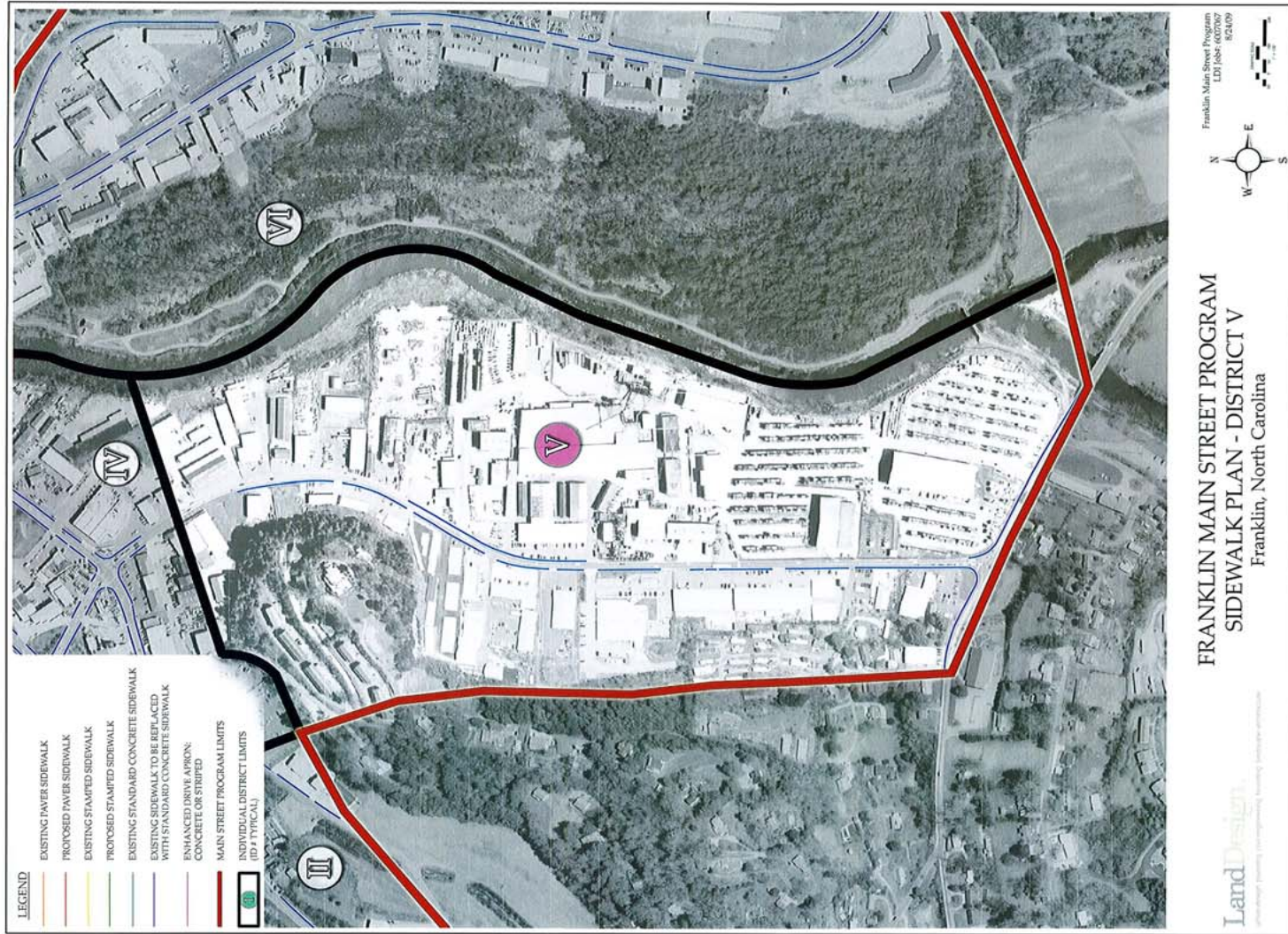
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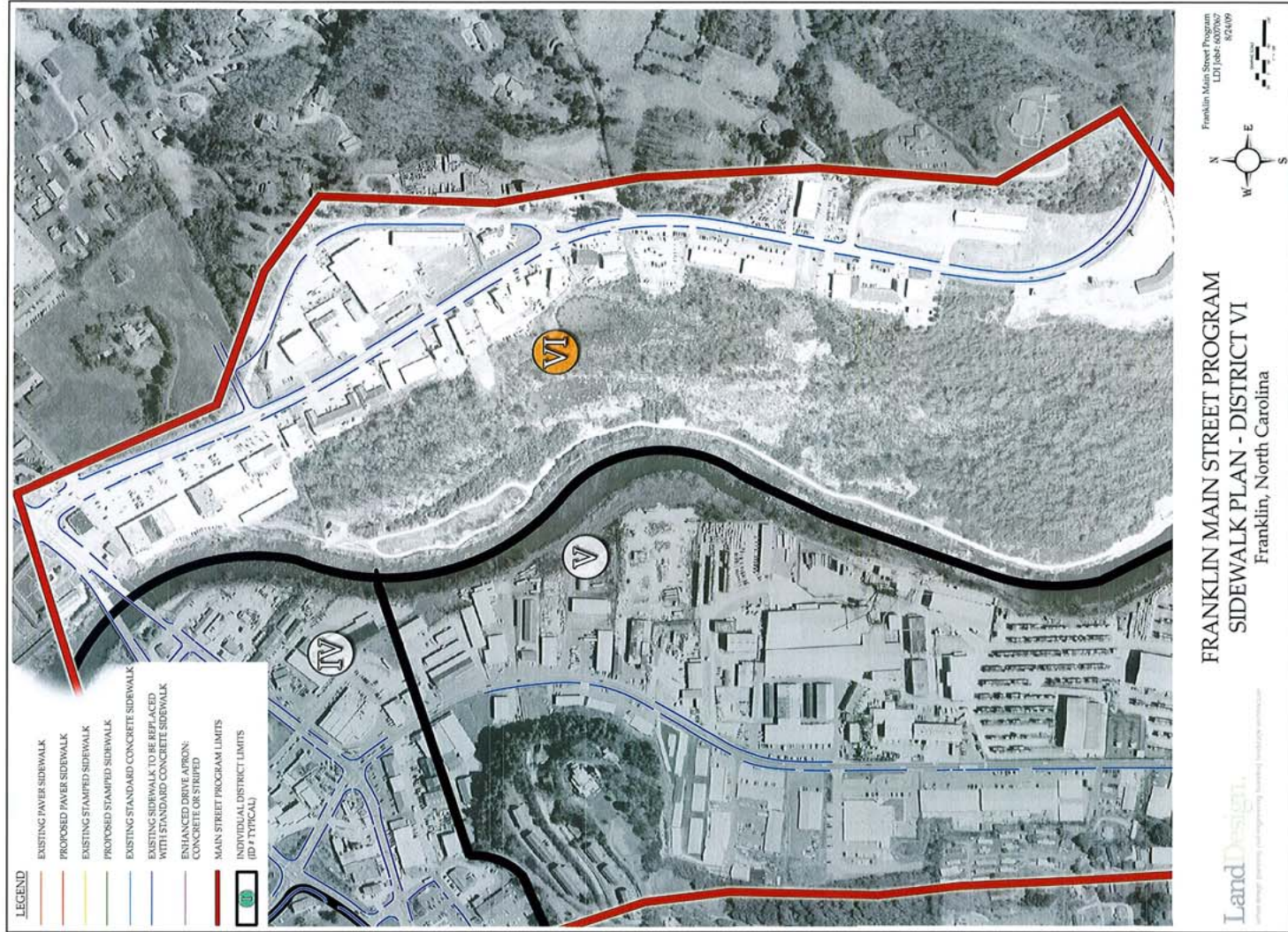










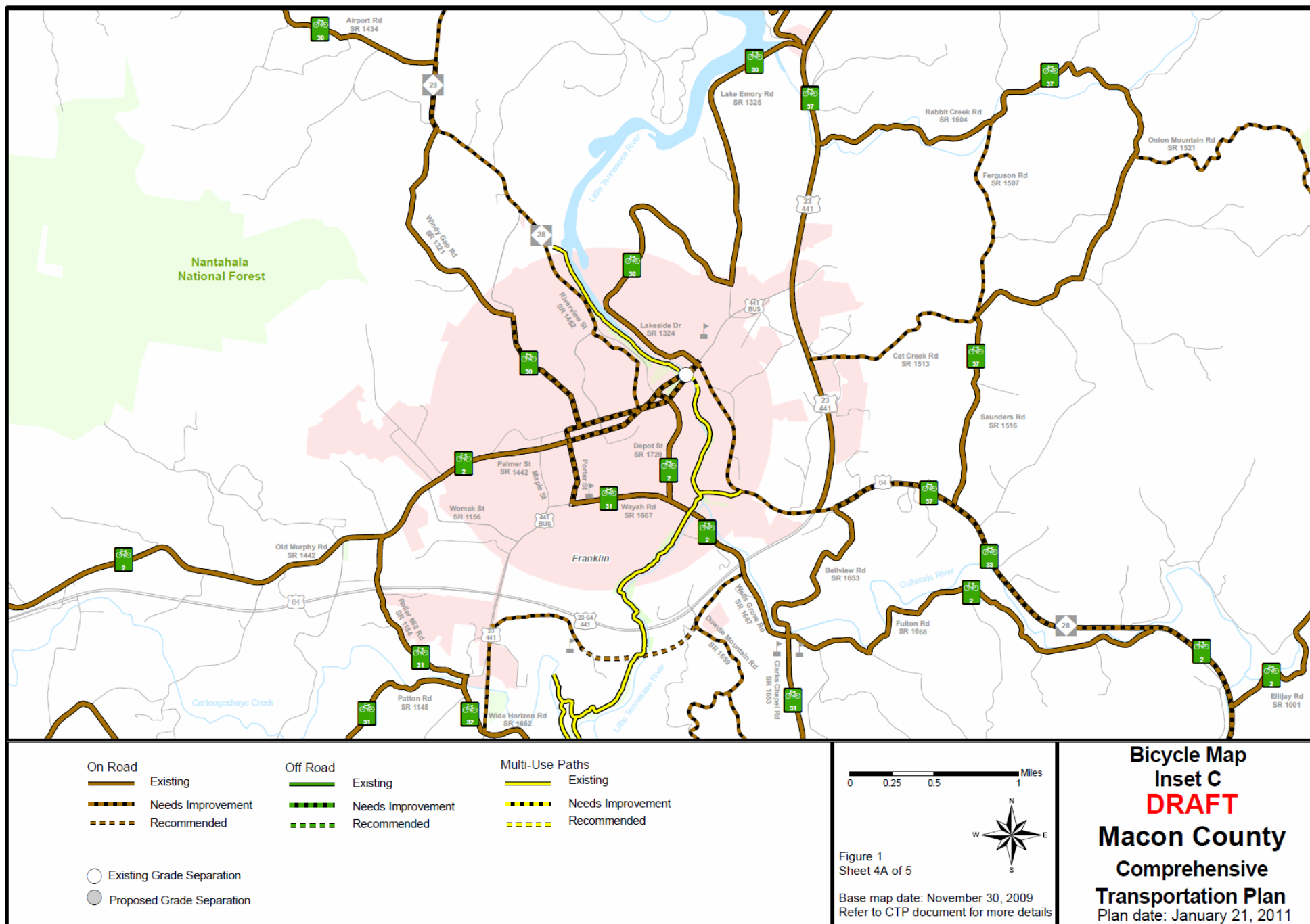


Appendix vi
(Town of Highlands Sidewalk Plan)

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Appendix vii
(Macon County Bike Routes, CTP Draft)

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