



**The Macon County Comprehensive Plan Originally adopted**

**April 26<sup>th</sup> 2011, Written by Derek Roland**

**Revised 2018, by Macon County Planning Board**



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## Acknowledgements

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## Mission Statement



**Macon County citizens will work together to create and implement a dynamic plan that will guide long-term growth and development within the county. Through taking the initiative to plan now, we insure that 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.**



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

## **1. 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.

## **2. 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 are sick? Do your children attend good schools? Are there employment opportunities that meet your skill set? 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 issues such as these need to be addressed in the comprehensive planning process: Education, Recreation, Transportation, Healthcare, Economic Development, Childcare, Senior Citizens, Public Services, and Housing.

The availability and level of service provided within each of these areas should grow proportionately with an increasing population. The Comprehensive Plan provides recommendations to ensure this happens and attempts to address any issues that could potentially jeopardize the welfare of our citizens.

## **3. Allow the natural environment to flourish:**

The mountains, rivers, wildlife and fertile lowlands of Macon County and Western North Carolina as a whole create a landscape whose beauty rivals any in America. Our natural environment is a treasure and an asset that cannot be replaced. We must work together to ensure that the beauty of our landscape is preserved and the natural assets of Macon County are protected. That being said, land use regulations do not have to come at the cost of economic growth.



**4. Sustain economic vitality and allow our economy to grow in ways that will 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 to our lands and natural resources. Responsible land management does not have to come at the cost of economic development. Instead it ensures that our community will remain a place people want to live, work and invest their resources now and in the future.

Decision makers on every level, from elected officials to developers and individual property-owners are perplexed by what seems to be competing demands from long-time landowners, newcomers, farmers, developers, realtors, environmentalists, property rights advocates, builders and contractors. This 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.



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## Introduction

### *What is a Comprehensive Plan?*

A Comprehensive Plan is a document that provides guidance and a layout for the community. The Comprehensive Plan includes the purpose behind Macon County's programs and regulations, our history, future goals, and basic information about Macon County. A sound Comprehensive Plan will also provide guidance for shaping our community, promoting economic development, and providing an objective factual basis to support future decisions.

### **General Purpose:**

The Comprehensive Plan's most important role is to help establish goals and a direction for our future, as well as to provide the framework on which to make future decisions. The Comprehensive Plan is designed to provide continuity across time and give successive bodies of the Macon County Commissioners a common framework for addressing a variety of issues. Macon County's Comprehensive Plan is a means by which our community can protect our public investments and allow our communities to plan development in a way that protects our valued resources. This plan is intended to serve as a decision making guide for governing boards now and in the future. However, the goals and objectives included within this plan are non-regulatory. They serve only as guides, recommendations, and a shared vision for the future of our county. The Comprehensive Plan is a living document that strives to balance growth and change while preserving Macon County's natural beauty and traditions.

The Comprehensive Plan, aside from being a tool for governmental officials, is a guide for the public as well; it helps bridge the gap between our elected officials and citizens. A Comprehensive Plan, when implemented, shows residents and developers the intentions of our governing body. With our plan in place our community has a better idea of how to address land use regulations, budgeting and capital improvement projects in order to achieve our goals and allow positive growth in Macon County.

### **The Planning Process:**

The Comprehensive Plan was originally developed by the Planning Board at the request of the Macon County Board of Commissioners in January of 2009. In the summer of 2015 the Macon County Board of Commissioners directed the Planning Board to update and revise The Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Board developed subcommittees for each element of the original Comprehensive Plan. Each subcommittee was assigned a planning board member and



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they were tasked with reviewing and revising the original comprehensive plan. Each subcommittee presented summaries back to the planning board and they then developed the revised Comprehensive Plan for Macon County.

The Comprehensive Plan for Macon County contains recommendations from each of the following elements: **Land Use & Environment, Economic Development, Public Services, Education, Recreation, Transportation, Housing, Health Services/Population Health, Children/Youth/Family and Older Adults (age 55 and up).**





## Land Use & Environment



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This Comprehensive Plan provides current land use regulations along with recommendations and planning options that could help preserve our environment for generations to come. These recommendations work to ensure that the citizens of Macon County continue to enjoy a clean natural environment now and in the future. This element of the plan addresses water quality, development in critical areas, agricultural land promotion and preservation tools, along with providing communities and citizens options for preserving their heritage and the rural character of Macon County.

The growth in Macon County is evident, not only from past recorded census data but also through the increasing number of improved properties within the county. As more people move into an area, raw unimproved land is bought and sold to become the location of new businesses and homes. Over the years parcelization and improved properties have driven Macon County's economy, creating jobs in construction, real-estate, and development. The data below does show a slight 1% decrease in parcelization from 2009 to 2017, likely a result of a recession felt throughout Western North Carolina from 2007-2014. Improved properties have continued to increase and with the current economic up-turn parcelization numbers should follow suit.

## **Parcelization (source Macon County Tax Office) 1993-2017**

Year	Improved Properties	# of Parcels
1993	17,980	30,000
2009	25,500	44,000
2017	26,451	43,491

*From 1993-2017 the total number of parcels in Macon County increased by approximately 45%. Improved properties over this 24 year time-span are shown to have increased by 47%. In 1993 improved properties accounted for 60% of the total properties in Macon County. In 2009 we see this percentage fall to 57%. While in 2017, this percentage was once again at 60%.*



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## **Existing Ordinances**

Currently Macon County does not have any zoning regulations outside the municipalities of Franklin and Highlands. There are county ordinances that regulate certain types of development in “critical” areas. Macon County’s current land use regulations and brief explanations are listed below.

- **Subdivision Ordinance**

The purpose of Macon County’s Subdivision Ordinance is to establish procedures and standards for the development and subdivision of land within Macon County. It is designed to promote the orderly growth and development of Macon County, such as coordinating roads and highways within a proposed subdivision 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 future population growth and in projecting revenue and expenditures. So what is a subdivision? Macon County’s Subdivision Ordinance defines a Subdivision as: *“all divisions of a tract or parcel of land into two or more lots, building sites, or other divisions for the purpose of sale or building development and shall include all divisions of land involving the dedication of a new road or a change in existing roads within a subdivision...”*.

*Macon County’s Subdivision Ordinance was originally adopted June 2, 2008.*

*Amended: July 9, 2013*

- **Sedimentation and Erosion Control Ordinance**

The purpose of Macon County’s Sedimentation and Erosion Control is to regulate certain land disturbing activities to control accelerated erosion and sedimentation in order to prevent the pollution of water and other damage to lakes, watercourses and other private and public properties by sedimentation. It will also establish procedures through which these purposes can be fulfilled. A Land Disturbing Activity as defined by Macon County’s Sedimentation and Erosion Control is: *“any use of the land by any person in residential, industrial, educational, institutional or commercial development, highway and road construction and maintenance that results in a change in the natural cover or topography and that may cause or contribute to sedimentation.”*



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*Macon County's Sedimentation and Erosion Control Ordinance was originally adopted November 11, 2001.*

*Amended: November 10, 2008*

- **Building Height Ordinance**

The purpose of Macon County's Building Height Ordinance is to regulate the height of structures in such a manner so as to promote public health, safety and welfare. This purpose is achieved by allowing construction of buildings to reach 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. A Building is defined by Macon County's Building Height Ordinance as: *"any structure built for support, storage, shelter or enclosure for any occupancy."*

*Macon County's Building Height Ordinance was originally adopted June 18, 2007.*

*Amended: March 9, 2009*

- **High Impact Land Use**

The purpose of Macon County's High Impact Land Use Ordinance is 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. Some examples of High Impact Land Use are: *airfields(airstrips), asphalt plants, chip-mills, commercial incinerators, concrete suppliers, helicopter sightseeing operations, motor sports activities, sawmills, solid waste management facilities, slaughtering(processing plants), mining, extraction operations, quarries, bulk inflammables, chemicals, and explosives manufacturers or storage facilities.*

*Macon County's High Impact Land Use Ordinance was originally adopted December 12, 2005.*

- **Sexually Oriented Businesses**

The Macon County Board of Commissioners is committed to protecting the general welfare of the county and its citizens through the enforcement of laws prohibiting obscenity, indecency and sexually oriented businesses while still preserving constitutionally protected forms of expression. The Board of Commissioners finds that sexually oriented businesses in certain locations contribute to neighborhood deterioration and blight through an increase in crime and diminution of property values,



as well as other adverse consequences. The Board of Commissioners 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; 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. Some examples of Sexually Oriented Businesses are: *adult arcades, adult bookstores, adult video stores, adult cabarets, adult motels, adult motion picture theaters, adult theaters, escort agencies, nude model studios and sexual encounter centers.*

*Macon County's Sexually Oriented Businesses Ordinance was originally adopted on July 11, 2005.*

- **Signs**

The purpose of Macon County's Sign Ordinance is to guide and regulate the construction and placement of signs in Macon County. The intent of this ordinance is to preserve and maintain the scenic and aesthetic environment of Macon County in order to protect and promote the tourist industry and the quality of life for residents. Macon County's Sign Ordinance defines a sign as: *"any display of letters, words, numbers, figures, devices, emblems, pictures, logos or any other means whereby the same are made visible for the purpose of making anything known, whether such display be made on, or attached to, or as a part of a structure, surface, or any other object whether natural or man-made. The term **Sign** shall include sign structure."*

*Macon County's Sign Ordinance was originally adopted September 5, 1995.*

*Amended: December 3, 2001*

- **Telecommunication**

The purpose of Macon County's Telecommunication Ordinance is to ensure the safe and efficient integration of facilities necessary for the provision of advanced mobile broadband and wireless services throughout the community and to ensure the availability of reliable wireless services. The intent of this ordinance is to minimize the negative impact of wireless support structures and wireless facilities, establish a fair and efficient process for the reviews and approval of applications, assure an integrated comprehensive review of environmental impacts of such facilities and protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Macon County. Macon County's



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Telecommunication Ordinance defines Telecommunication as: *“technology involving the transmission or reception of wireless signals.”*

*Macon County’s Telecommunication Ordinance was originally passed May 5, 1998.*

*Amended September 13, 2016*

- **Airport Hazard**

Macon County’s Airport Hazard Ordinance regulates and restricts the height of structures and objects of natural growth, and otherwise regulates the use of property in the vicinity of the Macon County Airport. This is accomplished by creating the appropriate zones, boundaries and providing for changes in the restrictions and boundaries of such zones.

*Macon County’s Airport Hazard Ordinance was originally adopted September 2003.*

- **Flood**

The purpose of Macon County’s Flood Ordinance is to promote public health, safety and general welfare and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions in flood prone areas by the following provisions:

1. 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.
2. Require that uses vulnerable to floods, including facilities which serve such uses, be protected against flood damage at the time of initial construction.
3. Control filling, grading, dredging and other development which may increase erosion or flood damage.
4. Prevent or regulate the construction of flood barriers which will unnaturally divert flood waters or which may increase flood hazards to other lands.
5. Control the alteration of natural floodplains, stream channels and natural protective barriers which are involved in the accommodation of flood waters.

Macon County’s Flood Ordinance defines Floodplain and Floodway as follows: *“floodplain is land area susceptible to being inundated by water from any source”,* and a *“floodway is 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.”* Macon County regulates the development occurring within these critical areas through the Flood Ordinance.





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*Macon County's Flood Ordinance was originally adopted August 7, 2000.*

*Amended: June 8, 2009*

- **Watershed Protection:** (See Map Pg. 21)

Macon County's Watershed Protection Ordinance regulates development occurring in the watershed areas that contribute to drainage to the water supply intake for the Town of Franklin and Town of Highlands. Critical areas for watershed purposes are the areas adjacent to a water supply intake or reservoir where risk associated with pollution is greater than from the remaining portions of the watershed. Macon County's Watershed Protection Ordinance defines Watershed as: *"the entire land area contributing to surface drainage to a specific point."*

*Macon County's Watershed Protection Ordinance was originally adopted September 9, 2002.*

*Amended February 11, 2008*

A current copy of these ordinances can be found on the Macon County at [maconc.org](http://maconc.org)

## **Water Quality**

- **Surface Water**

Macon County has four main river systems; the Cullasaja, Cartoogechaye, Nantahala and Little Tennessee River. Each river has 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's potable water treatment and distribution system. Current demands during peak use periods are rapidly approaching maximum withdrawal limits.

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 and impervious 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. Macon County's Environmental Health Department works hard with contractors and the citizens of Macon County to ensure that private/community septic systems are installed properly and that adequate repair and replace areas are available on site to ensure these systems will remain operational for years to come. When municipal sewage systems reach capacity and demand exceeds ability to treat waste a sewage system will discharge untreated waste into the surface water system. This can be avoided by municipalities staying ahead of demand by expanding capacity before demand reaches a critical stage.

- **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 sulfur, 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.





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## **Protecting Rural Character**

Macon County's rural character is very unique and important to the residents. There are many communities in Macon County that contain areas that represent our rural character and small town lifestyle. However, there must be a healthy balance between the preservation of rural character and the promotion of development. Communities that contain areas of rural character should foster a balance between healthy commercial/industrial development and history.

## **Voluntary Agricultural Area** (See Map Pg. 22)

The purpose of Macon County's Voluntary Agriculture District program is to encourage the voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development. Farming has a rich history in Macon County and remains important to the economic and cultural life of our citizens today.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture reports that 326 farms were located in Macon County. These farms had an average size of 70 acres, and accounted for 22,684 acres of land. Agriculture cash receipts from 2014 indicate that the majority of these farms were classified as *Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry* which accounted for \$9,089,811 of the total cash receipts. Agriculture farms had cash receipts of \$2,298,210 and government payments of \$50,992. Total Agricultural cash receipts for 2016 were \$10,893,665.

Currently, there are measures in place on both the county and state levels that assist in protecting and preserving farmland. The Voluntary Agriculture District 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, providing 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.



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MACON COUNTY

Census of Agriculture - 2012

Total Acres in County

329,964

Number of Farms

326

Total Land in Farms, Acres

22,684

Average Farm Size, Acres

70

Harvested Cropland, Acres

4,501

Average Age of Farmers

60.7

Average Value of Farm & Buildings

\$173,104,000

Average Market Value of Machinery & Equipment

\$15,765,000

Average Total Farm Production Expense

\*

Crops - 2016

Acres Harvested

Yield

Production

Rank

Corn for Grain: Bu.

\*

\*

\*

Cotton: Lbs.: Production in 480 Lb. Bales

\*

\*

\*

Hay, Other: Tons

4,000

2.30

9,100

55

Peanuts: Lbs.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Soybeans: Bu.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Sweet Potatoes: Cwt.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Tobacco, Burley: Lbs.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Tobacco, Flue-Cured: Lbs.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Wheat: Bu.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Livestock

Number

Rank

Broilers Produced (2016)

\*

\*

Cattle, All (Jan. 1, 2017)

2,800

58

Beef Cows (Jan. 1, 2017)

1,800

56

Milk Cows (Jan. 1, 2017)

\*

\*

Hogs and Pigs (Dec. 1, 2016)

\*

\*

Layers (Dec. 1, 2016)

1,200

65

Turkeys Raised (2016)

\*

\*

Cash Receipts - 2016

Dollars

Rank

Livestock, Dairy and Poultry

8,510,317

70

Crops

2,248,812

95

Government Payments

134,536

68

Total

10,893,665

89

## Goal & Recommendations

Whether you are a full-time resident or own a vacation home Macon County is a wonderful place to call home. To ensure Macon County continues to be a place we all are proud to call home we have to take care of our natural resources, land, waterways, and scenic views. These are treasures we cannot afford to lose. Macon County's Land Use Ordinances/Regulations strive not to discourage or limit development but to ensure that development is done in a way to minimize the effect it has on the surrounding environment.

1. Promote sound development by properly planning the major corridors into town in order to cultivate a positive experience for citizens and tourists and creates a "sense of place that everyone is proud of".
2. Consider impacts on rural character in development decisions regarding public facilities.
3. Support communities in their efforts to preserve their rural, historical and cultural heritage.
4. Implement Storm Water Best Management Practices that require future developments to consider the effects of storm water. Create an Educational



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Program that focuses on the routine maintenance of residential driveways. The recommendations should be based on the **NCDENR Storm Water BMP** Manual and should take into consideration the following:

- Culvert placement and design should be such that erosion and concentrated flows are minimized.
  - The percent of impervious surfaces allowed on lots should be controlled.
  - Requirements for vegetative retention and type of vegetation should be established.
5. Incorporate construction standards into existing ordinances, as well as in future ordinances dealing with land disturbance. Macon County should continue regulating all construction involving land disturbance for residential and commercial construction in the following ways:
- Placement of fill material should meet minimum criteria.
  - A bench should be constructed at the toe of the fill.
  - Fill material should be placed in lifts determined by a North Carolina Engineer.
  - Fill material should be required to meet compaction standards.
6. Ensure that the Economic Development Commission includes agriculture in its economic development plans for Macon County. Research and discuss Franklin Farmers Market Study for Phillips Street Property. Provide economic development incentives to agricultural related businesses.
7. Consider discussing viable options with an organizing agent within the agricultural community to assist in promoting profitable agriculture in order to market and distribute Macon County's agriculture products.
8. Promote Agriculture education by providing a wider variety of agriculture classes in County schools. 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



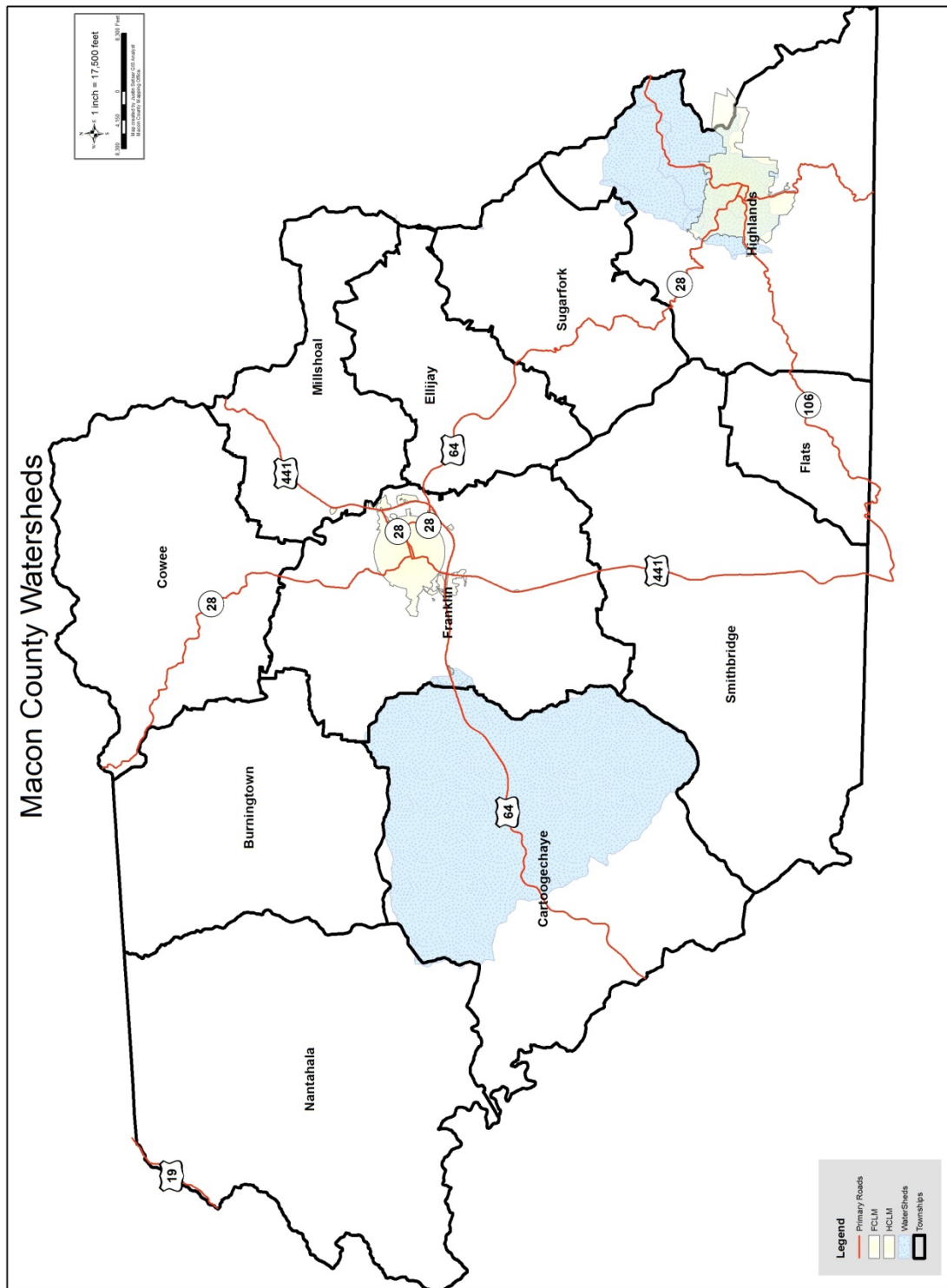
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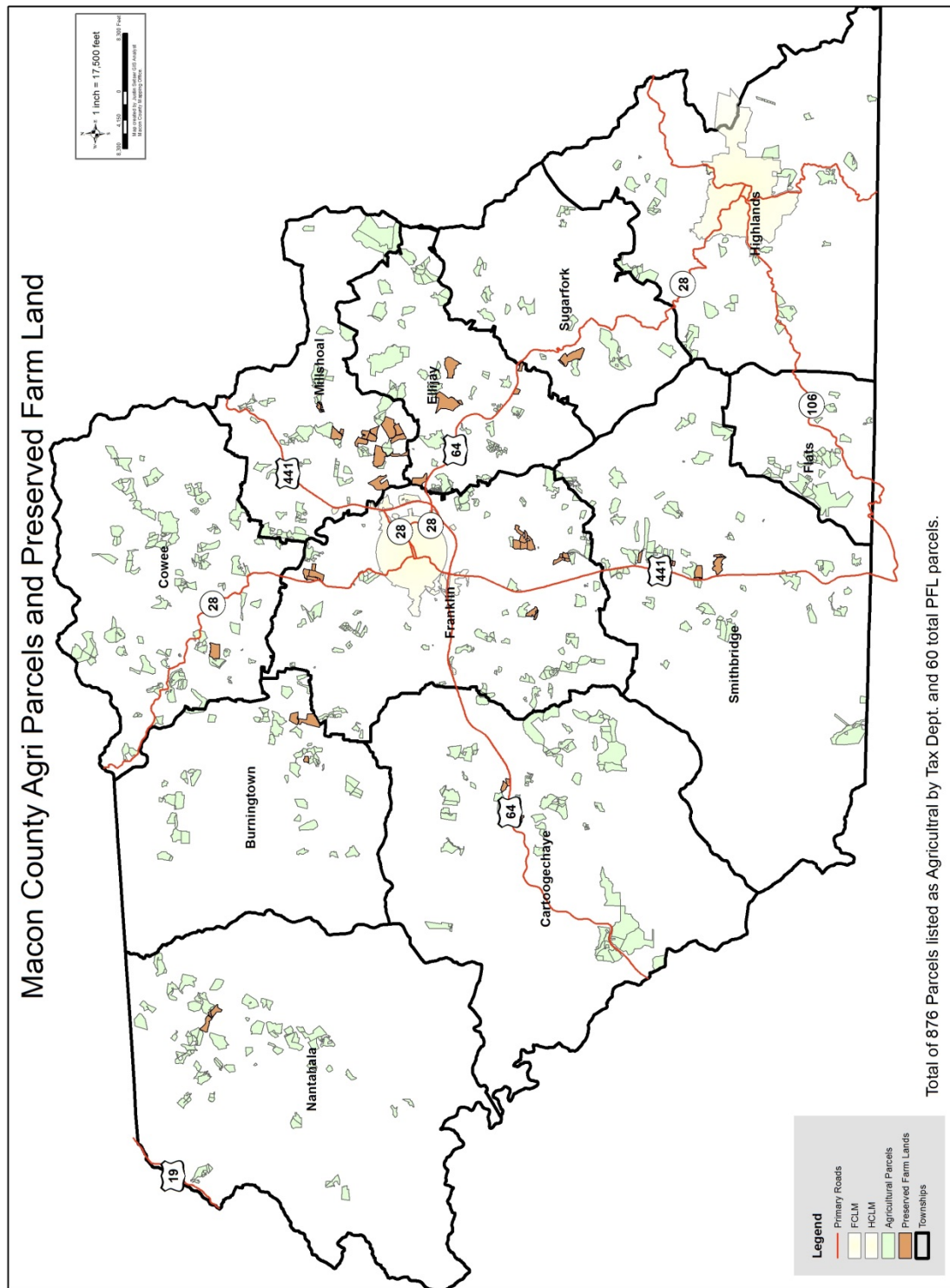
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- Agricultural technical advice including sustainable forest management
9. Promote farmland preservation through voluntary agricultural districts, and consider establishing a farmland protection fund. Ensure that the present use valuation taxation program is fully utilized to best protect farmland.



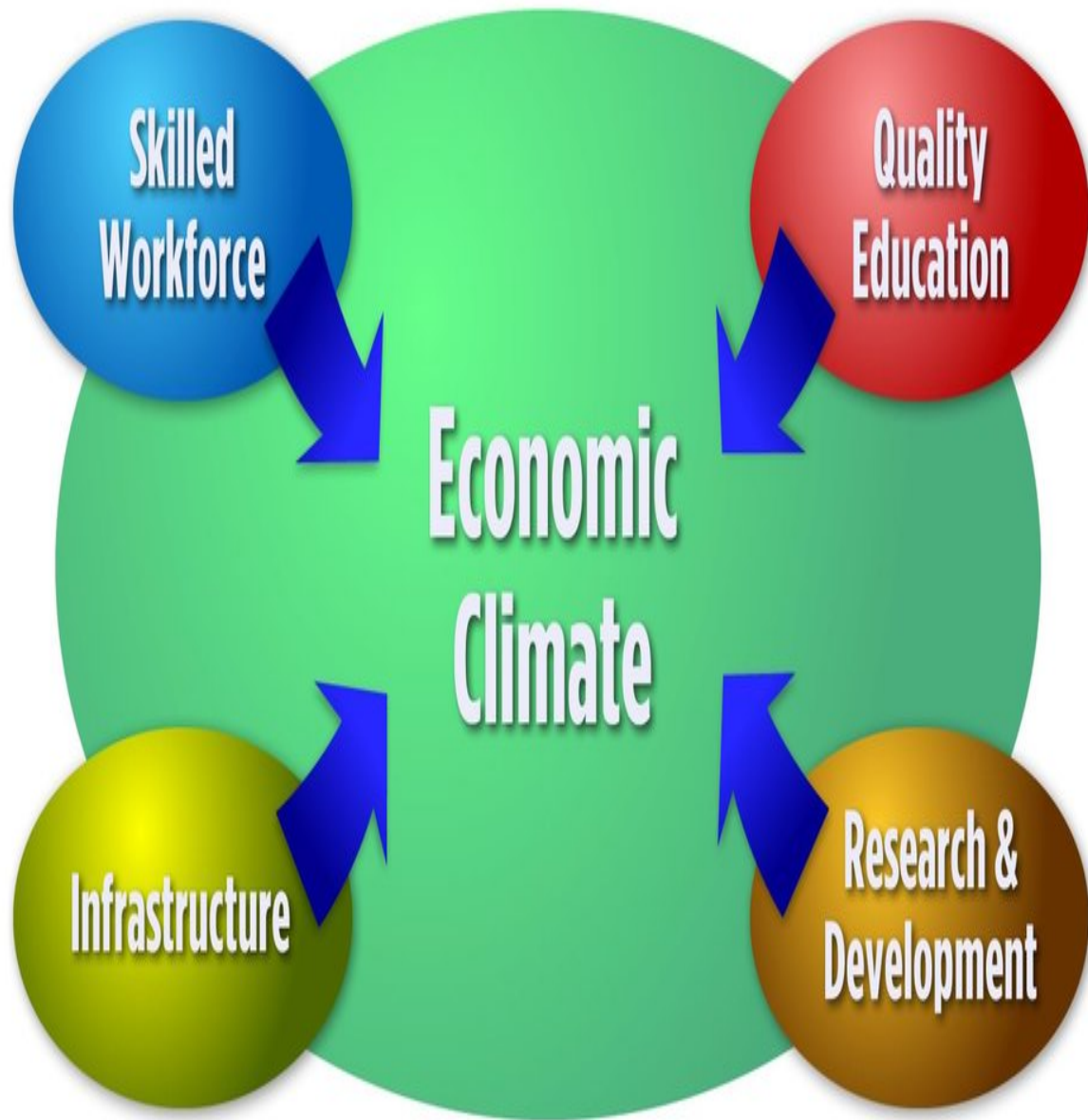
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**Economic Development**



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The Economic Development section of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on the economic status of Macon County, past economic issues and future solutions.

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 businesses employ nearly 50% of the total local labor force.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation. This Tier system is incorporated into various state programs to encourage economic activity in the less prosperous areas of the state. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2 and the 20 least distressed as Tier 3. In November 2018 Macon County moved from Tier 1 to a Tier 2 status.

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 grows as the national economy grows 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 is to briefly discuss the importance of the Economic Development Commission, and to provide citizens with the necessary information to begin discussions regarding economic development. The Macon County Guide for new business is available for download at [maconedc.com](http://maconedc.com).

## **Macon County Economic Development 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."





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The Macon County Economic Development Commission (EDC) was created in 1984 by the Macon County Board of Commissioners. The EDC is comprised of 12 members appointed by the County Commissioners and 2 liaisons from the Macon County Board of Commissioners with the County Manager serving as an ex-officio member. 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.

The Macon Economic Development Commission has created strategic partnerships that promote economic development within Macon County. These partners include:

1. North Carolina Department of Commerce
2. The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina
3. Southwestern Community College
4. Small Business Center-Southwestern Community College
5. Western Carolina University
6. Small Business and Technology Center-WCU
7. Southwestern Commission-Region A Council of Government
8. Business Link of North Carolina
9. The Rural Center of North Carolina
10. North Carolina Military Business Center
11. Franklin Chamber of Commerce
12. Highlands Chamber of Commerce

## **Macon County Stats** *(NC Department of Commerce County Profile July 2018)*

Population	35,047 (26.7% over 65)
Median Household Income	\$48,465
Median Home Value	\$167,500
Labor Force	15,259
Employed	14,691
Unemployed	568
Unemployment Rate	4.7%
NC Unemployment Rate	5.1%
U.S. Unemployment Rate	4.9%



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More recent preliminary data is showing declining unemployment rates for North Carolina (3.8%) as well as Macon County (2.9%).

## **Sectors of Opportunities for Economic Growth**

The Macon County Economic Development Commission has identified several opportunity sectors for economic growth they are as follows:

### **1. Technology**

Software Development

Internet Technology

### **2. Small Advanced Manufacturing**

25-100 employees

### **3. Healthcare**

Developing a regional health-care hub

### **4. Entrepreneurship**

Build a creative, high growth entrepreneurial community

### **5. Green/ECO Tourism**

Hiking, rafting, fishing, hunting, biking, backpacking, etc. According to data compiled by the U.S. Travel Association domestic tourism in Macon County generated an economic impact of \$170.12 million in 2017 (a 3.6% increase from 2016). In 2017 Macon County ranked 31<sup>st</sup> in travel impact among North Carolina's 100 counties. Travel generated a \$31.65 million payroll in 2017, state and local tax revenues were \$21.35 million (which accounted for a \$602.87 tax saving to each county resident). More than 1,360 jobs were directly attributable to travel and tourism.

### **6. Retail**

Promoting Macon County as a regional hub for far-western North Carolina

**Regional Retail Sales:** *(data source North Carolina Department of Revenue)*

<b>County</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>June 2018</b>
Macon	\$45,333,790	\$45,690,702
Jackson	\$42,484,458	\$46,178,966
Cherokee	\$25,720,646	\$27,826,381
Swain	\$10,989,863	\$10,574,308
Graham	\$9,395,138	\$7,072,103
Clay	\$6,054,959	\$6,813,798



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## **Goal and Recommendations**

To achieve economic growth in opportunity sectors, the Macon County Economic Development Commission has identified five avenues for success they are as follows.

**1. Business Retention and Expansion**

Assisting existing businesses and industry with challenges and opportunities of expansion.

**2. Business Recruitment**

Identifying and recruiting new business and industry.

**3. Building an Entrepreneurial Community**

Providing resources and promoting local entrepreneurial development.

**4. Workforce Development**

Working with local employers, Macon County Public Schools, Southwestern Community College and Western Carolina University to provide a prepared workforce.

**5. Product and Infrastructure Development**

Identifying and facilitating products and infrastructure necessary to achieve economic goals. Macon County has many assets needed for successful economic development such as natural gas, water/sewer availability, four lane highway corridors, a business jet accessible airport and high speed broadband availability in some areas.

**Critical needs include broadband expansion to all underserved areas of the county, and developing shovel ready sites for new business and industry growth.**



## Public Services



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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The Public Services portion of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on departments that provide public services to our citizens. Macon County's Public Services segment of the Comprehensive Plan was broken down into 3 categories: *Law Enforcement*, *Emergency Management*, and *Public Water and Sewer*. Through the course of several meetings, the committee consulted with officials who were directly involved with the categories being addressed. These individuals pinpointed strengths and weaknesses, and also gave their opinions as to how population growth would directly affect public services.

## **Law Enforcement**

Within Macon County, there are three law enforcement agencies: Macon County Sheriff's Department (MCSO), Town of Highlands Police Department and Town of Franklin Police Department. The jurisdiction of the Macon County Sheriff's Department lies outside the municipal limits of Franklin and Highlands.

- **Macon County Sheriff Department**

The Macon County Sheriff's Department currently staffs patrol officers, drug investigators, criminal investigators, school resource officers and juvenile detention officers. Within the jail itself there are approximately 20 employees including a full-time nurse.

In 2017 the Macon County Sheriff's Office responded to 16,203 calls through 911 Emergency services. Of those calls 268 were in the Nanthala area and 2,005 calls were in the Highlands area of Macon County. In addition to those emergency calls officers handled 12,450 non-emergency calls that came through the front desk of Macon County Sheriff's Office Detention Center.

The MCSO currently houses inmates in four other detention centers throughout WNC due to Macon County's Detention Center being at capacity and have had to reach out to counties as far away Charlotte due to all the detention centers in WNC being at capacity. Since September 2016 the Macon County Detention Center has been at capacity or over every month. In 2017 the daily average population was 75 males and 21 females. The Macon County Detention Center has had as many as 91 male inmates and 24 female inmates being housed at one time. (See inmate populations chart Appendix 4)



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The number one reason for individuals being incarcerated in the Macon County Detention Center remains crimes committed due to addiction issues, with the opioid epidemic being the greatest factor of addiction. The MCSO remains committed to supporting the need for treatment centers and programs for those facing addiction but our top priority is keeping our community safe. According to the MCSO most individuals do not seek help for their addiction until they have been incarcerated for crimes related to their addiction. This is based on the statements and opinions of 90 of the 91 incarcerated inmates with addiction issues who have taken the Jail Drug Program called “Second Chance”.

The department will continually require qualified officers to accommodate the increasing need. In order to retain qualified officers, officers should be adequately equipped and compensated for their efforts at a rate competitive with surrounding counties. Like staff, facilities should also remain adequate in order to accommodate an increasing number of inmates resulting from population growth.

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

<b>Dormitory Type</b>	<b>Maximum Capacity</b>
General Population	48
Lockdown	12
Female Population	12
Segregation Cells	3

## **Goals & Recommendations**

1. Add at least one officer to each shift within the next 15 years.
2. Invest in a half-way house with step down units to help combat and treat the growing drug problem Macon County faces.
3. Within the next 10 years expand the detention center from a 75 person maximum facility to a 150 person maximum facility. Currently the department has to transfer inmates throughout WNC during times of overcrowding.



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- **Franklin Police Department**

The Franklin Police Department has jurisdiction within the municipal limits of the Town of Franklin.

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 additional patrol officers and detectives.

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.

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. Officers of the Franklin Police Department must continue adapting to the changes in demographics in order to provide the most efficient services possible.

- **Highlands Police Department**

Highlands Police Department has jurisdiction within the municipal limits of the Town of Highlands. The department has eight patrol officers, a three person command staff, one full time civilian office assistant and two part time civilian office assistants. There are at least two officers on duty at all times. Shifts are 12 hours with officers rotating between day and night shifts. A school resource officer is on duty eight hours a day, five days a week at the Highlands School. The Highlands Police Department has a total of fourteen vehicles, which allows each officer to have their own patrol vehicle. The Department handles approximately 3,000 calls per year with an average response time of three minutes.

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.



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The Highlands Police Station was re-modeled in 2010 providing the department with adequate room. Staffing compensation and benefits are competitive with surrounding communities.

## **Fire Departments**

Macon County has 11 Volunteer Fire Departments located in various communities throughout Macon County. All departments within Macon County employ full or part-time staff with the exception of three. Approximately 300 individuals volunteer their time and effort toward protecting the lives and property of Macon County citizens located within their respective jurisdictions.

The Insurance Service Office (ISO) evaluates fire departments in the United States. Based on this evaluation they assign a rating between 1 and 10 for each department, with 1 being the best and 10 the worst. This rating reflects the overall effectiveness of the department and helps determine the fire insurance premiums for property owners in a department's jurisdiction. These ratings are based on three main categories: Fire Department, Water Supply, and Communications.

The North Carolina Department of Insurance Office of State Fire Marshal requires each volunteer to have a minimum of 36 hours of firefighting 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 firefighting 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.

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 State Fire Marshall conducts inspections of fire departments, providing ratings as well as coordination for the improvement of ratings to reduce insurance costs for homeowners. 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 complete pre-planning, testing, training and can supply a set amount of water based on necessary flows. By successfully completing these inspections the fire department will achieve a lower rating.





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Macon County offers no reimbursement for time, gas, food, or lodging 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 reimbursement to cover things such as fuel when responding to calls. These reimbursements range from \$5 to \$10 per call, depending on the department.

Macon County had two new fire houses completed in 2017. In June of 2017 Burningtown/Iotla Volunteer Fire Department moved into a new 6,720 square foot fire house. In July Cowee Volunteer Fire Department moved into a new 10,784 square foot fire house.

Fire Department	# of Trucks	Members	Paid Personnel	ISO Rating
Franklin	10	27	6FT	3(municipal) 4/9E (elsewhere)
Highlands	13	29	2FT	4 5/9E
Clarks Chapel	8	26	2 FT	4/9E
Otto	9	38	2 FT	6/9E
Burningtown	5	27	1FT, 1PT	5/9E
Cullasaja	9	27	1 FT	5/9E
West Macon	9	29	1 FT	4/9E
Cowee	13	38	1 FT, 1PT	5/9E
Scaly Mtn.	4	21	---	6/9E
Nantahala	4	35	1 PT	5/9E
Mountain Valley	12	24	---	5/9E

### Goals & Recommendations

1. In the next five years Highlands Volunteer Fire Department would like to remodel their present fire station, or build a new main fire house. Highlands Volunteer Fire Department currently has 29 volunteer firefighters. While volunteers are the back



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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bone of any fire department, a largely volunteer force can be problematic at times when volunteers are required to leave their homes for night time calls at distant locations. A new fire house would provide living quarters for on duty officers. This would allow for the possible expansion of paid fire fighters. An increase in the number of paid fire fighters would also allow the fire house to be manned at all times.

2. Fire Departments that still have high ISO ratings should make every effort to lower those ratings.

### **Emergency Services**

Macon County Emergency Services (EMS) has 39 full time and 25 part time employees. 9-1-1 dispatch has 11 full time and 4 part time employees. The 911 addressing department has one full time and one part time employee. Emergency management has two full time administrative employees, one fire marshal, one part time fire inspectors and two employees in radio maintenance. Below are call numbers for dispatch for 2017 and the current 12 month period.

Type of Call	Nov.2016-Oct.2017	Nov.2017-Oct.2018
911-Emergency	22,805	23,430
911-Administrative	68,234	70,956
Fire	5,334	5,849
EMS	6,655	6,725
Sheriff	15,533	16,083

### **Goals & Recommendations**

As the population increases, the demand for public services also increases. Responsibility will fall on governing boards now and in the future to continually assess this demand and ensure that the current services 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 increases in population. As population continues to change assessment of services offered by the departments and needs within the community must be



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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evaluated. All departments within law enforcement/emergency services agencies should be housed in facilities that increase departmental efficiency. Exploration of ways to increase efficient response should also be addressed.

2. Ensure that salaries for law enforcement agencies and emergency service personnel remain competitive with surrounding counties.
3. Improve communications coverage throughout Macon County
  - Upgrade current 9-1-1 equipment as needed
  - Revise and Update telecommunication/radio systems in order to guarantee adequate coverage for personnel.
4. Support Volunteer Fire Departments and Volunteer Fire Fighters in Macon County.
  - Create an incentive program for volunteer firefighters in order to promote recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.
  - Create a committee that promotes relationships with county leaders, reviews proposed budget increases and helps produce annual “status reports” of fire departments.

## **Municipal Water and Sewer**

In Macon County the Towns of Franklin and Highlands provide water and sewer inside their city limits. 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.

Lake Sequoyah, located in the Town of Highlands, currently supplies approximately 2,300 customers with water. 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. Currently, there are no major plans for expansion.

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. Approximately 900 customers currently utilize the sewer system at an average of 200,000 gallons per day. The



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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.

The Cartoogechaye Creek serves as the public water source for the Town of Franklin. Approximately 3,528 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 2.1 million gallons per day.

The sewer system for the Town of Franklin recently completed 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 2,500 customers and runs between 48% and 67% of full capacity utilizing 800,000 to 1.1 million gallons per day. It is important to note that the 1.1 million gallons per day figure includes rainfall, indicating that the system is taking in a large amount of storm-water runoff. The Inflow and Infiltration Study provided repair and replacement options for the Town of Franklin.

## **Goals & 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.

- 1. Take steps to ensure the sewer system is at adequate capacity in advance of need.** At 70% capacity begin planning for future expansion of infrastructure. At 80% to 90% of full capacity begin to secure funding and implement the infrastructure expansion plan.
- 2. Consider impacts that future extensions of water and sewer systems will have on the rural character of Macon County.** Extend water and sewer system only to those areas capable of supporting commercial development or large scale residential development.
- 3. Create an accurate GIS database of all public water and sewer infrastructure in Macon County.** Database should include lines, taps, and meters with sizes, hydrants, manholes, pump stations and existing easements or rights of way.



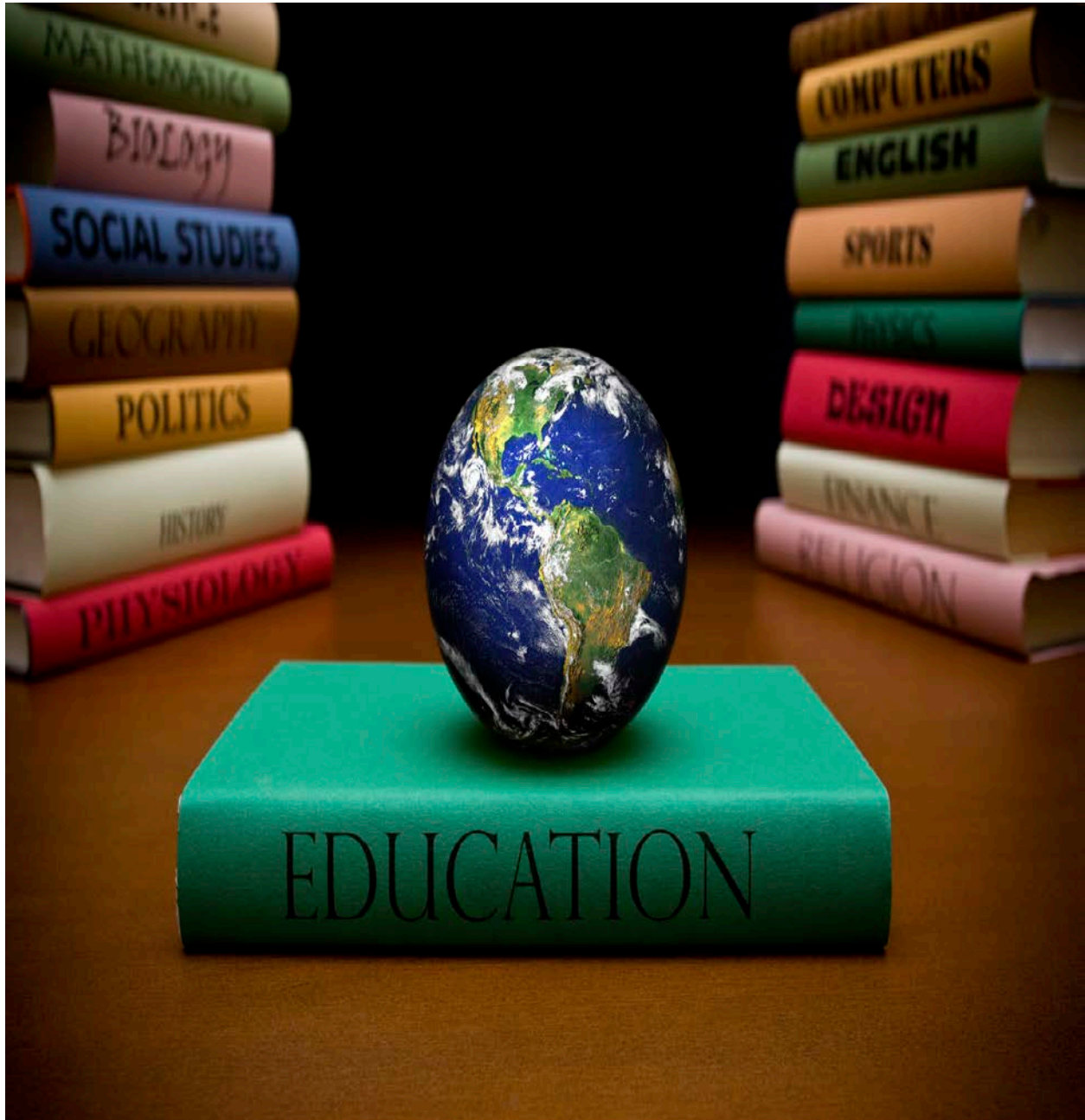
## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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4. For the Town of Franklin current water supply demands during peak use periods are rapidly approaching maximum withdrawal limits. The Town of Franklin is currently in the bid process to expand and update their water plant to a modern facility with a new capacity of 3 million gallons a day. Secondary drinking water source options should also be identified.
5. The Town of Franklin should continue to keep conducting the work and necessary upgrades as described in the sewer infiltration plan.



## Education



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The availability and access to quality education is key, not only to Macon County's economic growth, but also to the quality of life and employment opportunities for the citizens of Macon County. Educational opportunities are a primary consideration when a business contemplates locating or expanding in Macon County. As the economy changes we must also offer opportunities to adults for re-training and new job opportunities as they arise.

Public Schools and Community Colleges in North Carolina receive funding from the State of North Carolina and from their respective counties. State law mandates that local governments fund capital outlay needs and the state funds people, supplies, textbooks, and special programs. However, Macon County has contributed significantly to Macon County School's Current Expense budget to provide needed resources not funded by the state for many years. State funding formulas do not provide the necessary resources to adequately staff and operate schools; therefore the school system must rely on county resources. To promote an educated workforce planning efforts for future education requirements must include Macon County Schools and SCC. Strong, positive planning in the name of education will produce young educated graduates ready to begin careers in Macon County.

Funding and support for life-long learning enrichment programs and events are also vitally important in attracting individuals, families, retirees, and businesses to Macon County. Many are attracted to our county by libraries, museums, and cultural events and the importance of these should not be underestimated.

## **Macon County Schools**

The two main goals of the Macon County Schools Strategic Plan are as follows:

1. Prepare students for success in college and to be career ready. Individual schools will develop and implement a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that will address the instructional needs of their particular school. This process should be completed by the School Improvement Team. The staff development coordinator or building administrator for each individual school will develop and implement a staff development plan that will support their SIP.
2. Students will be healthy and responsible citizens of their communities. The School Improvement Team for each individual school will develop and implement a school improvement plan that will address learning in a caring environment that promotes a healthy, safe, and responsible student. Building Administrator(s) for each individual school will develop and implement opportunities for parental choice and





## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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involvement. School Improvement Teams and Building Administrators for each individual school will coordinate with *Communities in Schools of North Carolina* and develop and implement a plan to involve local businesses and organizations within their schools.

Due to computer technology, we are no longer just competing with neighboring local markets for job growth. We must be on par or above in the global market. 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 on multiple levels.

Creating a dedicated funding source for education is critical to the future growth and goals of being an above average community.

In 2011 the Macon County Board of Education had multiple issues that were focused upon in the original plan. From 2011-2015 their primary concern was to identify and resolve all past due maintenance requirements. Funding a preventative maintenance program in order to reduce repair costs was also a concern. Renovation plans recommended for Franklin High School are 90% complete; renovations are still needed on the Media/Cafeteria Building. Renovations recommended for Nantahala School are complete. Additional renovations have taken place at Highlands School and Union Academy. A six classroom addition at South Macon Elementary School has been funded and will be ready for occupancy August 1, 2019.

The following information reflects student enrollment, personnel and current expense expenditures for the school years 2007-08 to 2016-17. The student enrollment information was taken from the Statistical Profile published annually by the Public Schools of North Carolina. Macon County School finance office provided funding history for Macon County Schools.





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## Student Enrollment Macon County Schools

2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
4,555	4,603	4,505	4,484	4,512	4,502	4,558	4,603	4,612	4,539

## Macon County School Funding History

	County Appropriation Current Expense	County Appropriation Capital Outlay-General
2007-2008	6,010,000	700,000
2008-2009	6,911,000	700,000
2009-2010	6,705,750	-
2010-2011	6,705,750	250,000
2011-2012	6,911,000	256,000
2013-2014	7,338,330	99,035
2014-2015	7,338,330	199,035
2015-2016	7,338,330	300,000
2016-2017	7,138,330	500,000

## Macon County Schools (1941 to 2018)

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	(Sold)
1942	Cowee	(Historic Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center)
1948	Cullasaja	(Sold)
1950-1951	Cartoogechaye	(Sold)
	Highlands	
	lotla	(Present site of lotla Valley Elementary)
	Nantahala	
	Union	(Present site of Union Academy)
	Franklin High	



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1953-1956	New Additions added for:
	Cartoogechaye 1 classroom
	Cowee 2 classrooms and cafeteria
	(Now Cowee School Art and Heritage Center)
	Cullasaja 2 classrooms (Sold)
	East Franklin 4 classrooms
	Franklin High 7 classrooms and gym
	Highlands 2 classrooms
	Nantahala 4 classrooms and shop
	Otto Cafeteria (Sold)
1963	Franklin High School Gym Annexation (Removed)
1963-1969	Franklin High School Cafeteria extension and Fine Arts Building
1972	Franklin High School Careers Center
1977	Macon Middle School
1984-1989	Major renovations to all Schools
1987-1988	Nantahala Playground
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 Intermediate
2012	Renovation of FHS Gymnasium
	Iotla Valley Elementary
2013	Renovation Union Academy
	Highlands School
2018-2019	Addition/Partial Renovations of South Macon Elementary

### **Southwestern Community College**

Southwestern Community College's (SCC) Board of Trustees approved a Master Plan for Macon County demonstrating the potential to meet the needs for the next (25) years and possibly beyond. The archaeological study on the site located on Siler Road showed a complete absence of artifacts in the proposed buildable area. The Siler Road location was deemed an ideal spot to locate all of SCC's educational offerings in Macon County. The approved Master Plan identifies the phases to be built as funds are made available. Relocating the Jerry Sutton Public Safety Training Center (PSTC) to the Siler Road property and expanding the Cecil L. Groves Center (aka:



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Macon Campus) provides greater access to post-secondary training and education in Macon County and provides a more traditional campus atmosphere through program centralization.

**Phase I:** Would include a new 36,000 square foot (plus or minus) replacement building for the proposed PSTC campus classroom building, which will create the opportunity for program enhancement/growth with Emergency Medical Services, Fire/Rescue and Law Enforcement Training, providing sustained benefit to the surrounding communities and public safety personnel. The facility for public safety training will include classroom space, physical fitness and defensive tactics training space and training scenario space as well as ample storage for mandated equipment for all disciplines also required for accreditation. The space will also include office and meeting space for administration, program directors and support staff. The surrounding property, woodlands, and Greenway will provide realistic environments to train public safety professionals to support public safety training.

**Phase II:** Would include a new 35,000 square foot (plus or minus) science building, housing science classrooms with labs, general purpose classrooms, a small multi-purpose room and faculty offices connected to the current Cecil L. Groves Center. This expansion would allow course offerings in the areas of health science and STEM-increasing transferable course offerings. The multi-purpose room would allow space for guest speakers, local functions, cultural events, and training for Workforce Development and Personal Enrichment classes. This will also expand SCC's ability to increase curriculum courses/programs and provide a venue for job and hiring fairs, local artisans' displays, health and wellness fairs, and many other community events.

**Phase III:** Would include an indoor firing range comprised of a 50 yard range, staging area, bullet trap area and various support rooms. Location is to be determined.

**Current Capital Project:** SCC is currently in the process of relocating the Fire/Rescue Training Facility from its current location in the Franklin Industrial Park to property adjacent to Cecil L. Groves Center on Siler Road. The Driver Training Range located on Industrial Park Road will remain at that location and serve as an off-site facility for SCC.

Southwestern Community College requests that the college's master plan be incorporated into the Macon County Educational Master Plan to promote and support higher education. Funding for such capital projects remains with the county unless a state bond or other monies are made available. Therefore, other sources of funding to support the capital needs of the college may need to be explored in order to achieve the master plan.



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## **Macon County Public Library**

The Macon County Public Library system is made up of three libraries; Macon County Public Library, Hudson Library in Highlands and the Nantahala Community Library. All three are part of the Fontana Regional Library System. All three play a vital role in supplementing education and contributing to life-long learning opportunities for all ages.

The Macon County Public Library is strategically located near Macon Early College and the Macon Campus for SCC and has become the unofficial library for students from both of these campuses. Libraries have always been deeply involved with education. Offering preschool story times that teach literacy skills, summer reading programs, homework assistance, test preparation and proctoring, personal enrichment job training classes, and help with new languages. These are just a few of the ways a community library assists in educating its patrons. Also, the Macon County Library partners with educational agents in the region and supports learning initiatives such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math). It provides educational opportunities as well as resources and support for life-long learning and its impact on education should never be underestimated. In addition, in the fall of 2017 students enrolled in Macon County Schools automatically gained access to library resources with their Student ID as a library card. Regardless of age the libraries of Macon County are valuable assets to the citizens of Macon County.

## **Goals & Recommendations**

### **As Soon As Possible:**

- 1. Adequately fund public schools and SCC in order to prepare students for the workforce and/or higher education.**
  - Create a dedicated funding source for education to assure future success of students in Macon County without supplanting current funding to Current Expense and Capital Outlay.
  - In addition to providing buildings (with the assistance of state monies from the NC Education Lottery and Articles 40 & 42) an adequate capital outlay budget for maintenance and repairs of existing structures must be funded.
  - With the rapid increase in the use of technology, adequate financial support must be adopted and maintained for future technological needs. This includes Current Expense money to provide supplies and technical support as well as Capital Outlay money to provide equipment to meet educational needs.



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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- 2. Develop a well-defined school safety task force that will consider safety needs and develop a school safety program (School Resource Officers, security camera integration, etc.).**

The safety of the students and staff of Macon County's schools is critical to the education process. Unfortunately, school safety task forces are a requirement today and will remain a priority into the future. School Resource Officers are essential in providing security and promoting safety within our schools and community. In addition to our School Resource Officers, more security cameras, controlled access to facilities and improved communication systems need to be considered moving forward.

- 3. Study the viability of relocating Franklin High School versus upgrading at the existing campus.**

The issues faced with relocating, or upgrading FHS in place are challenging, due to the size of the campus and the required acreage needed. It is important that a study begin soon to address the future of Franklin High School.

- 4. Promote and fund Southwestern Community College's master planning efforts and begin construction of Phase I.**

Southwestern Community College has developed a long range plan that must be incorporated into Macon County's decisions to promote higher education.

- 5. Begin comprehensive renovations to Macon Middle School.**

- 6. Expand and renovate Macon Early College (MEC).**

Macon Early College must be expanded in order to handle current and future needs. It must be incorporated into the masterplans developed by SCC or incorporated into future master plans for Macon County Schools. Macon Early College is a great example of forward thinking and should be allowed to maximize its potential.



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## On Going:

### **7. Plan for changing populations, capacities, and overcrowding at Macon County Elementary Schools.**

At this time work is underway on 6 new classrooms at South Macon Elementary School, with a scheduled completion date of August 1, 2019. East Franklin and Cartoogechaye Schools are at capacity and lotla is under capacity. As the population and demographics of our county change we must make efforts to meet these challenges and insure that every student receives a quality education.

### **8. Make every effort to allow the libraries of Macon County to continue to grow, and remain up-to-date resources and educational centers for the citizens of Macon County.**

Preliminary plans are being considered to replace the Nantahala Community Library.



## Recreation





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Recreation can be defined as something people do to relax or have fun. The availability of recreational activities provides citizens and visitors of Macon County with the opportunity to stay healthy and actively engaged no matter what stage of life they are in. Recreation activities are also an important part of Macon County's economy. Our location in the mountains of western North Carolina and the Nantahala National Forest, which comprises approximately 50% of our land area, make Macon County a prime outdoor recreation area.

Recreation is often associated solely with athletics and Macon County provides many athletic opportunities for all ages. Since 2011, Macon County has renovated our public pool and opened the Parker Meadows Recreational Complex. Including Parker Meadows, we have seven recreation venues across the county in addition to our local school facilities and the Jaycees Park in Franklin. These facilities provide opportunities for hundreds of youth and adults to participate in organized athletic events including baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball.

Outdoor recreation activities in Macon County include the following among many others:

- Hiking - Macon County hosts 47 miles of the Appalachian Trail. In 2010 the town of Franklin became the first designated Appalachian Trail Community. Bartram Trail is a two mile trail that connects to the Appalachian Trail. In total Macon County hosts 600 miles of hiking trails.
- Hunting/Fishing/Camping - Game lands are scattered throughout Macon County providing hunters with the opportunity to harvest deer, bear, turkey, wild hogs and various small game. The Cullasaja, Little Tennessee, Nantahala, and Chattooga rivers run through or start in Macon County. These rivers along with Nantahala, Cliffside, Queen and Sequoyah lakes and numerous creeks and streams provide Macon County with some of the best fishing opportunities in Western North Carolina. Camping enjoyment may be found at Standing Indian, Vanhook Glade and several private campgrounds.
- Kayaking/Canoeing/Tubing - From the thrilling rapids of the Nantahala River to a lazy float down the Little Tennessee River the streams of Macon County provide numerous opportunities to enjoy some time on the water.
- Waterfalls - Dry Falls, Bridal Veil Falls and Cullasaja Falls offer visitors and citizens of Macon County the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of our county.



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The Community Building located at Veterans Memorial Park oversees the Senior Games and offers weekly programs including basketball, line dancing and square dancing, as well as shuffleboard. Multiuse rooms in this facility can also be rented out for activities and meetings.

## RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN MACON COUNTY

### Veterans Memorial Recreation Park/Community Building (30.3 Acres)

- **Allman Drive Access:**
  - Little League Baseball Field
  - Senior League Baseball Field
  - Softball Field
  - Pool - Outside (seasonal June - August)
  - Large Shelter - with grills
  - Large Playground
  - 6 Tennis Courts
  - 1 Basketball Court - Outside
- **1288 Georgia Road Access:**
  - Community Facilities Building – Basketball Court, multipurpose rooms
  - Bidley League Softball Field
  - 1 Shelter - no grills
  - Walking Trail
  - 4 Shuffleboard Courts
  - 2 Horseshoe areas
  - Swing Set area
  - Volleyball Court - Outside

### Cullasaja Park: (17.3 Acres)

- Multiuse Field (Football, Soccer, T-ball)

### Cartoogechaye Park: Industrial Park (16.0 Acres)

- Multiuse Field (Soccer and Baseball)

### Parker Meadows Complex (53 Acres)

- 4 Adult League Fields



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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- 4 Youth League Fields
- Batting Cages
- Fitness Trail
- Multi-Use Court/Pavilion
- Parking for all facilities
- Playground Equipment

## **Little Tennessee Greenway (170 Acres *see map Appendix 1*)**

- Playgrounds
- Picnic Shelters
- Walking/Biking Trails
- Water Features
- Dog Park

## **Buck Creek Recreation Complex (6 Acres)**

- Baseball
- Soccer

## **Nantahala Recreation Park (27 Acres)**

- Baseball
- Soccer
- Tennis

## **Franklin Jaycees Park**

- Outdoor Basketball Court
- Multiuse Building
- Playground

There are many other areas of recreation that do not involve athletics or the outdoors in Macon County. The Macon County Recreation Department, Macon County Senior Services Center and Macon County Public Library System (including Macon County Public Library, Hudson Library and Nantahala Community Library) are valuable assets to our county. Not only are the three Macon County Libraries good places to find a book but the mission of these facilities has been expanded. Currently all ages may find programs involving music, drama, movies, philosophy, cooking, gardening, and art. The Macon County Library has partnered with



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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the Nantahala Hiking Club and the Franklin Appalachian Trail Community to present “Walking with Spring”, a series of movies and workshops about the outdoors. The library has also expanded its mission to include “Little Libraries”, kiosks with donated books throughout the county.

The old Cowee School is now an arts and heritage center serving Western North Carolina residents and visitors. In 2018, the school hosted nearly 10,000 unique visits to a variety of events including the Summer Concert Series, the Franklin Folk Festival, Cowee Christmas, Fourth Grader Days and daily classes in the arts, crafts, music and other heritage related subjects. Additionally, the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center serves as a community and recreation center with daily exercise classes, dozens of daily walkers on the outdoor track, basketball courts, baseball field, playground, picnic shelter and outdoor stage. Families from all over Macon County use the facility for family reunions, birthdays and weddings. Community groups, non-profits and businesses use the center for meetings.

## **Goals & Recommendations**

1. **Investigate Mountain Heritage Trout Waters Program.** This is a cooperative effort between the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and local governments to encourage trout fishing as a heritage/ tourism activity in western North Carolina cities that are designated as a “Mountain Heritage Trout Water City.”

In 2014 trout anglers had a total economic output of 383 million dollars in the Public Mountain Trout Waters of North Carolina while attracting 93,000 anglers from across our state and other states. Money spent on Mountain Trout fishing in 2014 supported approximately 3,593 jobs. In 2015 the NC Wildlife Resources Commission stocked the Nantahala River with 20,500 rainbow, brook and brown trout. (Third highest stocking number in the state with Tuckaseegee river in Jackson County being number one.) Macon County has a prime opportunity to promote trout fishing here and begin creating a county wide program called Mountain Heritage Trout Waters. By doing this we will promote tourism and economic development similar to the Towns of Sylva, Dillsboro, Bryson City and Waynesville.

With the Cullasaja, Nantahala, and Little Tennessee Rivers running through Macon County as well as various large creeks such as Cartoogechaye and Burningtown among others the ***Mountain Heritage Trout Waters*** program could have a significant impact on the economy of Macon County. We should look to partner with



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission to begin this program in Macon County.

2. **Maintain quality of facilities.** All facilities require routine maintenance, but as facilities age they need to be updated or remodeled. Yearly evaluations should be made on all county facilities. These evaluations should include lifespan and usability reports.



## Transportation



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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The Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) 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 (NCDOT). 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.

## **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 Roads and Secondary Roads.

- **Primary Roads**

A primary road is defined by the NCDOT as being all Interstates, NC, and US numbered Highways. Roughly 96.96 miles or 14% of the State Highway System in Macon County are Primary Roads. Of the 96.96 miles 12.92 miles of primary roads are located within the municipal limits of Franklin and Highlands. The remaining 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





## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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 2007-2016. It is important to note that the counts were taken from the same locations each year.

1. US441S location- south of the Intersection at Franklin Plaza Shopping Center
2. US441N location- north of Watauga Road at the base of Cowee Mtn.
3. US64W location- immediately east of Mill Creek Road
4. US64E location- immediately west of Ellijay Road
5. NC106 location- at Georgia line
6. NC 28 location- immediately southeast of River Bend Road
7. US 19/74 location- Only a small portion of this road lies in Macon County, 1 count site present.

Location	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
441S	23000	21000	25000	26000	25000	23000	----	19000	23000	----
441N	16000	15000	14000	14000	13000	14000	15000	----	15000	15000
64W	7200	6300	6200	5800	5900	6000	----	5900	6800	7000
64E	7300	7100	6800	6500	7000	5200	----	6900	7700	7600
19/74	3600	3200	3300	3300	4000	4100	5200	----	4000	3900
106	2900	2600	3700	3500	3400	3200	----	----	4100	4100
28N	7000	6600	6200	----	----	----	7000	----	6300	6200

Fig. TH1 Source: NCDOT AADT maps

Note: ---- count unavailable at location

- **Secondary Roads**

A secondary road 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.



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Secondary roads account for 86% or 576.41 miles of state roads in Macon County. Only 21.78 miles lie inside the municipal limits of Highlands and Franklin. Of the 576.41 miles of secondary roads 115.17 miles remain unpaved.

## **Alternate Modes of Transportation**

- **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” (FROGS) was formed. The FROGS headquarters is located alongside the Greenway where they continue to assist in the fundraising and management of the trail system.

Since its introduction, 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 1)



- **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 of the small town, rural heritage that is unique to the Town of Franklin and Town of Highlands. (see sidewalk plans Appendix 2)

- **Macon County Transit**

Planning for future public transportation helps to reduce the number of vehicles traveling on roads, thus reducing congestion and providing alternative transportation for underserved populations.

Public transit in Macon County is provided by Macon County Transit (MCT) and operates primarily on a demand-response basis. It is a fully coordinated public transportation system. It provides transportation for the general public, human service agencies, the elderly and people with disabilities. Demand response is a direct pick up from an individual’s home and a drop-off at their destination via a reservation. Demand response services are currently provided 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (except County observed holidays).

There are two deviated fixed route services operated by MCT. A deviated fixed-route system is a hybrid of fixed route and demand-response systems. Transit vehicles follow a fixed route but are permitted to deviate from the route up to one quarter of a mile for demand-response type pick-ups and drop-offs. Both routes follow the same travel pattern and serve citizens, residents, and visitors of The Town of Franklin. The current deviated fixed service, known locally as The Mountain Gem (See Map pg. 59), has nine fixed bus stops along the route with additional stops available upon call-in requests. Mountain Gem services are available Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (except County observed holidays).

Macon County Transit uses a fleet of sixteen vehicles ranging from 6-passenger minivans to 15-passenger Light Transit Vehicles. Fourteen of these vehicles including one minivan are wheelchair accessible and are equipped to run on propane. In fiscal year 2018 MCT



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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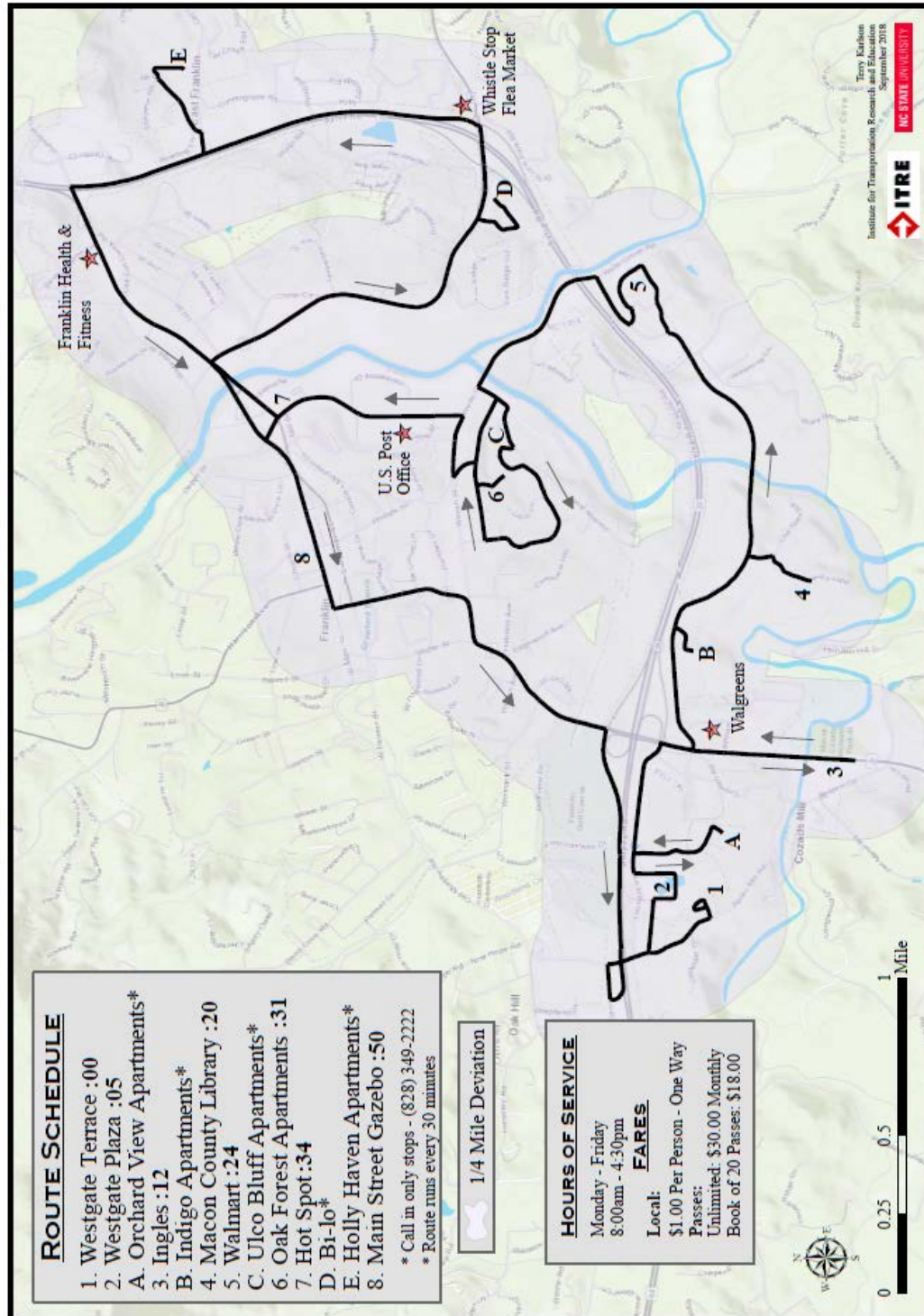
transported 47,284 passengers while traveling 386,368 miles. Macon County Transit partners with other transit systems in Western North Carolina to coordinate transportation for citizens who need to travel to long distance destinations, primarily Asheville.

A variety of transportation services are offered to all citizens of Macon County for many purposes. Services for the following purposes are available; however this list is not all inclusive and changes with growing needs in Macon County:

- Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
- Medicaid transportation
- Vocational Rehabilitation Transportation
- All activities at Macon County Senior Services
- Dialysis Treatments
- Sheltered Workshops (in Franklin and Webster)
- Transportation for Nursing homes
- Employment Transportation
- General Transportation
- Education Transportation to and from SCC (Macon and Jackson) and WCU
- Veterans Transports to Asheville VA
- Transportation to Sylva, Waynesville/Clyde, Asheville, Clayton, Bryson City and Cashiers



# MOUNTAIN GEM ROUTE



- **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 then Fixed Based Operator 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 firefighting.

In 2016 The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) approved \$4.5 million for an expansion project that will extend the runway from 5,000 feet to 6,000 feet. Increasing the runway by 1000 feet would allow the airport to better accommodate larger private jets, allowing them to land safely without wearing out their brakes.

The runway extension will also provide an economic benefit to Macon County by:

- Providing existing and potential businesses with the ability to operate out of Macon County while still being able to provide services throughout the country.
- Providing a gateway to our county, travelers landing at Macon County airport will provide added revenue to local businesses.

- **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 3)





# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## **Goals & 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. Implement Corridor Planning 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 and retain rural character.
2. Recognize that development and communities influence roads and vice versa. Coordinate planning for roads with planning for appropriate development.
  - 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.
  - Provide adequate access to all institutions.
3. Promote growth and development patterns that reduce trip length, emissions and congestion.
  - Utilize multi-modal transportation planning.
  - Integrate development review with transportation planning. Review and implement subdivision ordinance for pedestrian friendly transportation (bike, transit, walking).
  - Encourage growth of local and regional public transportation. Support locally developed plans.





## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

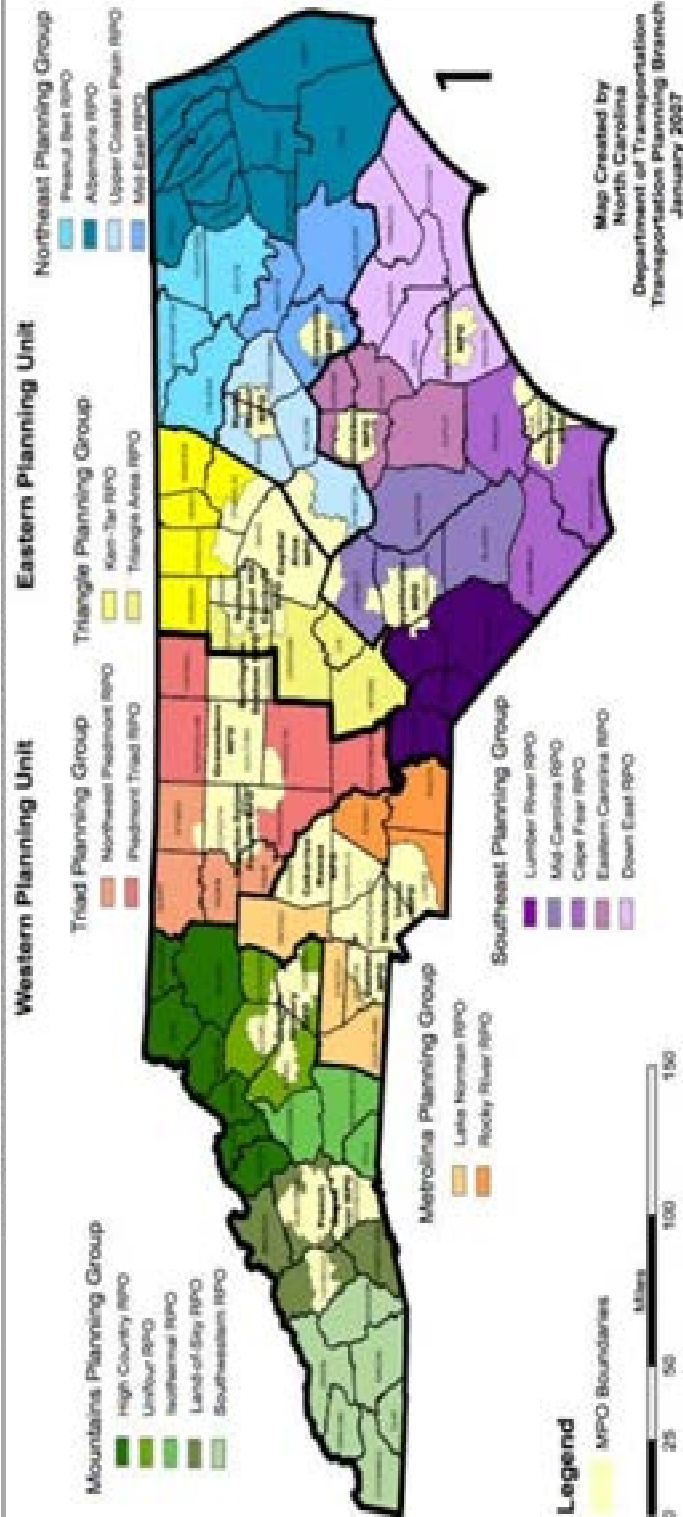
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- Build streets and roads for connectivity i.e. eliminate cul-de-sac concept, keep transportation moving.
  - Improve mobility options for aging and disabled populations.
  - Establish funding sources to aid NCDOT in funding of sidewalks and other enhancements.
  - Provide incentives for development closer to existing commercial centers around Franklin and Highlands. Eliminate sprawl on main thoroughfares.
  - Encourage and promote mixed use development.
  - Create Greenway Master Plan. Explore Rails to Trails, a conservancy which is working to create a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people. This program could provide the citizens of Macon County with an alternate means of transportation, as well as bring tourist into our County to enjoy a scenic bike ride or hike.
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.
6. Continue to support the growth and expansion of the Macon County Airport.



# NCDOT: METRO & RURAL PLANNING ORGS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BRANCH

## North Carolina Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Rural Planning Organizations



## Housing



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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

### **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 chart below provides an illustration of how the general housing characteristics in Macon County have changed from 2012-2016.

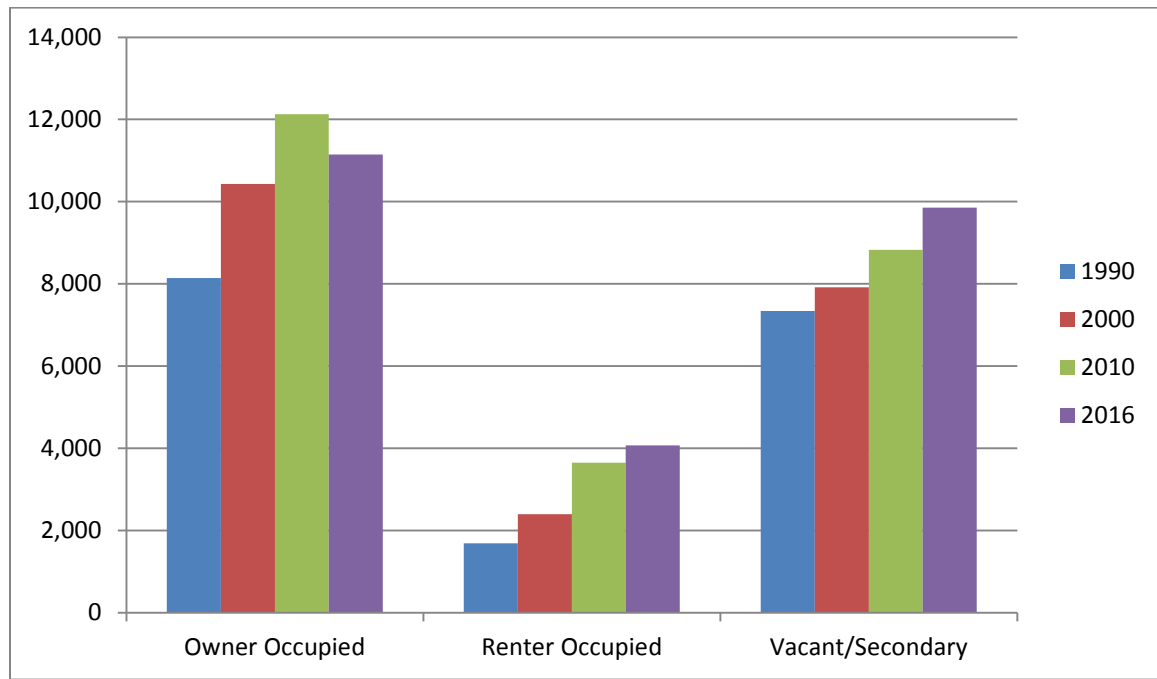
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>Total Housing</b>	25,122	25,195	25,275	25,303	25,334
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	11,758 (47%)	11,352 (45%)	11,370 (45%)	11,258 (44%)	11,145 (44%)
<b>Renter Occupied</b>	4,085 (16%)	3,988 (16%)	4,134 (16%)	4,278 (17%)	4,070 (16%)
<b>Vacant/Secondary</b>	9,279 (37%)	9,855 (39%)	9,771 (39%)	9,767 (39%)	10,119 (40%)
<b>Average Household</b>	2.125	2.225	2.2	2.205	2.255



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The chart below provides an illustration of how the general housing characteristics in Macon County changed from 1990-2016.



As these illustrations show renter occupied housing is on the increase. As the population of Macon County continues to grow it is critical that affordable quality housing is available not only for citizens who wish to own, but also for those who wish to rent.

## **Goals & Recommendations**

### **1. Improve sub-standard housing for betterment of health, safety and community**

- Study existing health codes and assess for adequate and proper enforcement
- Continue and expand programs that provide for proper disposal of abandoned and unused mobile homes.
- Create a minimum housing standards ordinance as set forth by NCGS 160A-441.



**2. Promote high density and cluster housing in areas where this development can best be accommodated.**

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

**3. Promote a variety of housing opportunities for all ages and income levels.**

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

**4. Create a standard for manufactured housing requirements that reduces the amount of antiquated manufactured houses permitted in Macon County.**

- Manufactured homes should have an age cap in order to prevent dilapidated mobile homes from being permitted and creating a minimum housing issue.





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## Health Services and Population Health





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Macon County strives to provide quality healthcare to 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 wide variety of medical and dental practices are located throughout Macon County, including two Urgent Care Centers and two free clinics in the Franklin and Highlands areas.

Quality healthcare is important to all residents and being healthy is the largest contributing factor to quality of life. During public input and listening sessions, associated with the Community Health Assessment Process, all residents wanted Macon County to continue to provide its residents with the highest level of healthcare possible.

## **Hospitals**

- **Angel Medical Center /Mission Health**

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, six are in the Intensive Care Unit, 14 are classified as medical/surgery, and five 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 four days. Angel Medical Center houses an emergency department with specially equipped rooms to manage behavioral health, substance abuse patients, and domestic violence and sexual assault victims.

Angel Medical Center has earned designation and certification as an Acute Ready Hospital from the Joint Commission (the accrediting organization for hospitals), The American Heart Association and The American Stroke Association. Its outpatient services include a wound clinic, chemotherapy services, a full laboratory, digital mammography, CT, MRI, nuclear medicine, rehab therapy, as well as surgical and endoscopy services. The hospital also operates Mission My Care Now Angel and Care Partners Hospice/ Palliative Care. The Mountain Area Mobile Air ambulance (MAMA) currently also operates from the campus of Angel Medical Center.

However, in July 2017 Mission Hospital discontinued its prenatal and delivery services (obstetrics) at Angel Medical Center.



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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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 specialty doctors has been an issue for Angel Medical Center in the past. Often times, patients are forced to leave Macon County to receive specialist treatment. Aside from recruitment of specialists, issues revolving around mental/behavioral health patients continue to present problems for Angel Medical Center.

- **Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH)**

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.

Currently Hospital Corporation of America is in negotiations with Mission Hospital to purchase the hospital in Asheville and its five rural affiliates including Angel Medical Center and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital.

### **Community Health Assessment**

Macon County Public Health (MCPH), in conjunction with Mission Health System released in January 2016 its Community Health Assessment which identified needed partnerships, strategies and health specific targets as they related to existing health conditions within the County. Macon County Public Health reorganized and revived the Healthy Carolinians Partnership renaming it “MountainWise of Macon County” to organize, facilitate and assist in implementation of identified priority areas.

The Macon County Community Health Assessment (CHA) is an extensive community survey and data collection process. The purpose of the CHA is to provide insight on health trends of Macon County residents and prioritize future intervention efforts. The CHA found that overall health measures for Macon County residents are largely in line with regional and state figures. When asked how they felt about their own health, 20.1% of residents responded with experiencing “fair or poor” overall health. Respondents’ feelings toward their own overall health were higher than WNC, state and national averages.



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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The top health priorities identified during the 2015 Community Health Assessment are:

- Health Priority 1: “Chronic Heart Disease Prevention”
- Health Priority 2: “Domestic Violence”
- Health Priority 3: “Economy, Food Security and Transportation”
- Health Priority 4: “Mental Health”
- Health Priority 5: “Substance Use”

## **Priority 1: Chronic Heart Disease Prevention**

Heart disease was a factor in prior CHA’s but has not been a stand-alone specific priority in Macon County. However, heart disease presented as the leading cause of overall death in Macon County for the time period 2009-2013 and therefore was selected as a priority area. It is also worth noting that heart disease is one of the three leading cause of death by age for the groups 40-64, 65-84 and 85+.

The percentage of the population of Older Adults (age 65+) in Macon County is estimated at 19.1%. Most cardiovascular disease affects older adults. It is estimated that 90% of cardiovascular disease is preventable. Prevention of atherosclerosis is achieved by decreasing risk factors through: healthy eating, exercise, avoidance of tobacco smoke and limiting alcohol intake. Treating high blood pressure and diabetes is also beneficial.

Information gathered through the data collection process indicated a need to create a countywide agenda on health and wellness to help prevent chronic diseases such as cardiovascular/heart disease by lowering obesity rates because it is a common risk factor that leads to cardiovascular/heart disease. As we move forward in addressing the heart disease priority, increasing availability to health education services and access to awareness initiatives will be incorporated into the interventions that MountainWise of Macon County plans. Additionally, there is an increased need for targeted efforts focused on access to physical activity and resources in specific areas of the county, (portions of the County southwest of Highlands in the Scaly Mountain and Otto communities).

## **Priority 2: Domestic Violence**

Domestic Violence has not been a priority in prior Community Health Assessment (CHA) initiatives in Macon County. However, Domestic Violence remains a concern as indicated in the recent CHA which prompted the MountainWise of Macon County group to select it as a priority area of interest.



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Domestic violence includes spousal abuse, intimate partner violence, battering, or family violence. It is a pattern of behavior which involves violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting.

Sexual assault must be included in discussions about domestic violence. Sexual assault is any involuntary sexual act in which a person is coerced or physically forced to engage in against their will, or any non-consensual sexual touching of a person. In Macon County FY 2013-2014, 94 persons were identified as victims of sexual assault. The single most frequent specific type of sexual assault during the period was child sexual offense (21%).

In addressing the domestic violence priority, there is a need for increased resources (staffing) for both MountainWise of Macon County and R.E.A.C.H. targeting awareness education, prevention, intervention, response, and recovery activities and services. Working in partnership, MountainWise of Macon County and R.E.A.C.H. will ensure non-duplication of efforts and a streamlined approach with the aim of making a difference in the community.

In addition KIDS Place exists to make the investigative and judicial process easier for children and to ensure that all child abuse victims in Macon County have access to evidence-based therapy at no cost to the family. KIDS Place provides hope and healing for abused children and their families through coordinated services in a child friendly place.

## **Priority 3: Economy, Food Security and Transportation**

The health of the community and its workforce is directly related to health of the economy and economic development. Healthy communities are more economically vibrant and have the potential to be more appealing to business/industry and attract more tourism.

The link between a community's health and the economic success of a community is well established and documented. Investing time and funding to improve the public's health has never really been considered a desirable endeavor at the federal, state or community level. As federal, state and private grant dollars to support community health level efforts continue to wane it places a greater burden on the communities and on local government leaders to find ways to invest in the health of their residents.

Healthy eating and access to healthy food emerged as a primary area of concern across many stakeholders and agencies engaged in the 2015 Community Health Assessment process. Health and food are inextricably linked. Much of WNC is food insecure for the simple reason residents cannot easily access healthy foods. The rate of poverty and unemployment in the region compounds the issue. In Macon County Schools 50% - 69% of children receive a subsidized or



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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free lunch. This is often an indicator of food insecurity at home, which can have significant impacts on childhood development.

Community food planning involves local and regional land-use, economic development, public health, and environmental goals to:

- Preserve existing and support new opportunities for local and regional urban and rural agriculture
- Promote sustainable agriculture and food production practices
- Support local and regional food value chains and related infrastructure involved in the processing, packaging, and distribution of food
- Facilitate community food security or equitable physical and economic access to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate and sustainably grown food at all times across a community, especially among vulnerable populations
- Support and promote good nutrition and health
- Facilitate the reduction of solid food-related waste and develop a reuse, recovery, recycling, and disposal system for food waste and related packaging

There are two primary, communitywide desired outcomes in food planning:

- Increasing the local food system – Increase the amount of food supply generated and then sold locally to decrease reliance on the national and global food systems and increase investments locally
- Increasing food security – Ensure everyone has access to food that is nutritional, environmentally sustainable, and accessible by all economic classes. Food system planning can also address the need for emergency food planning and creating food reserves for times of crisis.

Local food system planning is a collaborative effort involving farmers, local governments, non-profits, for profits, faith-based organizations and others. Local food system growth is dependent on complex and dynamic systems.

Transportation is a problem for those seeking care in Macon County. Community Care Clinics have purchased transportation tickets for their patients to get to the lab for blood work, while other medical providers do not have funding to provide vouchers. Even so, Macon Transit operating hours are a barrier because the routes are not operable before 8:00 a.m. and after 5:30p.m. and a high number of patients miss appointments due to the lack of transportation. Increasing the hours that Macon Transit operates to allow patients to seek medical care during



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the operating hours of providers who serve the high risk populations could increase health status of those residents and the county.

## **Priority 4: Mental Health**

Access to mental health services was identified as an area of concern in the last six Community Health Assessments conducted by the Macon County Public Health and MountainWise of Macon County. Barriers identified during this survey included: stigma, income/poverty, lack of integration of mental and physical health services, shortage of mental health professionals, need for funding of community based prescription medications and psychological service programs, regional disparities and cultural diversity.

The burden of mental illness on health and productivity has long been underestimated. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 4 Macon County residents suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Of those who suffer with mental disorders, approximately 6 percent, 1 in 17, suffer from a serious mental illness. Nearly half (45%) of people who suffer from mental disorders meet criteria for two or more disorders, with illness severity strongly related to comorbidity. One of the most prevalent comorbid or dual diagnoses is substance abuse. The national prevalence estimate for North Carolina, as determined by the 2016 National Survey of Drug Use and Health, is that 18.2% of adults ages 18 and above have a substance abuse problem in any given year (approximately 5,525 Macon County residents).

Resources currently available in Macon County for those suffer from mental health issues include:

- Appalachian Community Services
- Meridian Behavioral Health Services
- Macon County Public Health
- Macon County Detention Center
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Appalachian South
- VAYA
- REACH of Macon County
- Veterans Administration Community Based Outpatient Clinic



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## Priority 5: Substance Use

Substance abuse is a national crisis and in Macon County this issue is having a powerful effect on the health of individuals, their families and their neighbors. Preventing substance use disorders and related problems in children, adolescents and young adults is critical to every community's behavioral and physical health. Early intervention following the first episode of a serious mental illness can have a significant impact on outcomes related to an individual's future behavioral and physical health. A comprehensive approach to behavioral health means seeing prevention as integral to the overall range of care. Focus should be on environmental prevention strategies. Tailoring strategic objectives to local community characteristics and targeting the root cause of risky behaviors by creating environments that make it easier to act in healthy ways is essential. For a community to be successful, state lawmakers, and local elected officials, mental health providers, physicians, and other community stakeholders including leaders in the business, faith, and school sectors must work together to formulate and carry out prevention and treatment strategies.

Factors impacting health that are connected to the **opioid epidemic** in NC and **more specifically in Macon County include:**

- Provider Prescribing Practices
- Use/Abuse of Prescription Drugs
- Illicit drug abuse (i.e. Heroin, Methadone, synthetic narcotics, etc.).

Opioid addiction is considered the new chronic disease "Opioid Abuse Disorder" and is only now being considered a public health priority for state and federal legislature and funders. However, very little has been set aside to deal with these issues at the local level. For many years local public health and other small grass root organizations have been informing state and federal legislators and other potential funders regarding this issue and asking for funding to combat it at the local level with very little success...until recently. Universal awareness of this issue is compelling elected officials and others to focus their attention toward solving the opioid abuse problem. The Federal Government through US Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Disease Control and NC State Public Health officials have now recognized the scale of this epidemic and now are taking action. **(These actions include campaigns targeting opioid use/abuse of prescription drug, opioid prescribing practices, prescription drug overdose prevention, heroin and other narcotic use.)**





## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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In the U.S. more than 200,000 people have died from overdoses related to prescription opioids between 1999 and 2016. In approximately 1 in 5 drug overdose deaths no specific drug is listed on the death certificate. Hospital Emergency Department (ED) visits for opioid overdose in the United States, and more specifically NC, have risen sharply with preliminary data for 2017 indicating more than 5,700 visits. **(This is a nearly 40 percent increase in opioid overdose ED visits compared to 2016.)** The 2017 increase represents a doubling of the number recorded in 2009. It is estimated that 65 percent of heroin users report that they used prescription opioids first and then made the switch to heroin. Current estimates are that 4% - 20% of all opioid pills prescribed in the United States actually are taken for nonmedical reasons. Since 2013 the North Carolina General Assembly has passed several laws hoping to counteract the prescription opioid epidemic.

**Number of Opioid Pills Dispensed Macon County 2011-2016**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
<b>Macon</b>	<b>3,419,914</b>	<b>3,403,058</b>	<b>3,271,884</b>	<b>3,974,248</b>	<b>5,354,209</b>	<b>5,222,900</b>	<b>24,646,213</b>
<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>443,944,396</b>	<b>463,800,112</b>	<b>471,979,252</b>	<b>524,621,208</b>	<b>703,194,548</b>	<b>675,315,375</b>	<b>3,282,854,891</b>

Macon County's work force, economy, family life, schools, law enforcement and healthcare providers are all feeling the impacts of the growing mental health and substance abuse issues faced by the citizens of Macon County. Mental health and substance abuse are serious issues that are having real, immediate and lasting impacts on the lives of the citizens of Macon County. The time to act is now. In February 2018 a meeting was held. The purpose of this meeting was to reduce barriers, enhance support and explore future opportunities regarding the access to mental health and substance abuse services in Macon County. The **"No Wrong Door"** initiative was born out of this meeting.

The **"No Wrong Door"** initiative is a collaboration between Macon County Government, MCPH, Appalachian Community Services (ACS) and East Carolina University (ECU). The **"No Wrong Door"** initiative will seek to improve access to services and coordination of care and to reduce hospitalization and emergency room visits for mental health and substance abuse related issues.

Mental health and substance abuse issues affect almost every citizen of Macon County in some way. Streamlining the treatment process through the **"No Wrong Door"** initiative is a step toward a healthier more productive Macon County.



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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The proposed timeline for the “No Wrong Door” initiative is as follows:

## **July 1, 2018 – December 31, 2018**

- Secure funding resources for implementation
- Implement tele-psychiatry services in partnership with ECU

## **January 1, 2019 – Forward**

- Seek sustainability funding from Macon County
- Converse with Vaya Health regarding access to additional funding streams for uninsured clients using behavioral health and tele-psychiatry services
- Continue relationship with ACS and ECU for tele-psychiatry

## **Goals & Recommendations**

1. Promote the Seven Dimensions of Wellness. Each of these seven dimensions act and interact in a way that contributes to our own quality of life.
  - Social Wellness
  - Emotional Wellness
  - Spiritual Wellness
  - Environmental Wellness
  - Occupational Wellness
  - Intellectual Wellness
  - Physical Wellness
2. Utilize the Health Assessment completed by MountainWise as part of Macon County Health Department.
3. Utilize the three year priorities developed as part of the Community Health Assessment completed by Macon County Health Department.
4. Create a Healthier Environment in Macon County focused on:
  - Active Living
  - Healthy Living
  - Tobacco Free Living
  - Access to Healthy Foods
  - Safety from Violence



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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5. Expand Macon Transit System:
  - Extend operating hours to allow patients to seek medical care during the operating hours of providers.
  - Increase availability of transportation to recreational spaces after 5:00 p.m. and on the weekends.
6. Develop funding source and implement mental/behavioral health programs targeting substance use disorders.
7. Develop and Implement a jail diversion program.
  - Many people with substance abuse problems would benefit more from drug treatment or rehabilitation programs rather than jail.
8. Fund training for forensics nurses to conduct interviews and exams with domestic violence and sexual assault victims.
9. Expand or create new recreation spaces geared toward older adults and handicapped individuals in the Scaly Mountain and Otto regions of Macon County.
  - Improve access to walkable recreation (sidewalks)
10. Develop a source of sustainable funding of the free clinic programs of Highlands and Franklin.
  - Currently 21% of Macon County residents are uninsured or under insured. With free clinics struggling to attain stable funding, a permanent funding solution needs to be developed.
  - Procure a community based Electronic Health Record (HER) for use by free clinics.
11. Develop a permanent funding source for the Community Medication Assistance Program.
12. Develop and fund a locally sponsored voucher program for farmers markets.
  - Improve access to healthy foods.
  - Improve food security for the county's most vulnerable populations.
  - Support local farmers.



- 13.** Provide public Wi-Fi access at several community locations
- 14.** Include new Public Health/Health Department facility in capital improvement plan.
  - Additional space is needed for exams, interview, storage, classroom and offices.
- 15.** Expand School Health Nursing Program
  - Existing needs require the addition of two school health nurses to improve the current student to nurse ratio.
- 16.** Establish a teen pregnancy prevention program-support
  - Prevention activities
  - Provide additional resources for those teens that become pregnant.



**Children/Youth/Family**



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## **Child Care**

Quality child care, whether in the home or in licensed child care center, 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. Macon County should explore all means necessary to ensure that quality childcare is available to accommodate a growing population.

## **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.

The Childcare Issues Committee (CIC) interim Report found the following benefits to early childhood education:

1. Macon County Childcare industry generates approximately \$4.8 million in annual revenues and provides 178 jobs in the local economy.
2. A Cornell University study found that every \$1 spent for childcare services generated \$1.84 in local sales and service industries.
3. Children with early childhood education are better prepared for the school system.
4. Employees with adequate childcare are more likely to be on time for work, with lower absenteeism and less distracted on the job.



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Access to affordable, quality childcare provides businesses with considerable benefits increasing the bottom line. These include lower employee turnover, reduced tardiness and absenteeism, increased employee performance, higher employee morale and commitment and lower training and recruiting costs.

## **Childcare Issues in Macon County**

The CIC Interim Report sheds light on 8 issues currently being faced by the citizens of Macon County 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 0-5 years of age population of 2,161 and a child care industry capacity of only 678 children (31%).
- Capacity shortfall in infant-toddler care 0-2 years old is more acute.
- For the 2018-2019 fiscal year 19 licensed childcare centers operated in Macon County. Fourteen serve children ages 0-5 and five licensed centers are located in and are operated by Macon County Schools for the express purpose of serving the after school needs of school aged children.

### **2. Coverage**

Few Macon County Child Care Programs provide full-time hours matching the parents work schedules. Most faith based and private centers mirror the public school schedules. This makes it difficult for those parents working outside of the period between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m..

### **3. 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 a family of three must earn below \$40,176. According to the NC Department of Commerce County Profile in July 2016 the median house for Macon County is \$48,465.





# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## 4. Cost of Quality Childcare is expensive

Program/License Rating	Home Cost	Center Cost
5 star infant/toddler	\$547/month	\$784/month
2 star infant/toddler	\$398/month	\$445/month
5 star care – 3 year old	\$421/month	\$590/month
1 star care – 3 year old	\$335/month	\$368/month
Private pay Rates – under 2	\$473/month	\$756/month

## 5. 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. According to data provided by Macon County Environmental Health, Macon County has 8 – 5 star centers, 3 – 4 star centers, 4 – 3 star centers, 2 – 2 star centers and one center with a temporary license and one center with a notice of compliance.

## 6. Quality incentives are available but do not equal the loss of tuition resulting from having to reduce enrollment or add staff to achieve the higher star ratings **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. From 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 will need care where none will be available.



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## **7. 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.

### **Access to School Health Nursing Services**

School health services are provided on site at all 11 Macon County Public Schools including students enrolled in Macon Early College. School Health Nurses provide care for acute illness, case management/care coordination services, development of care plans, medication and immunization reviews, support for communicable disease control and promotion of school staff wellness.

Macon County Public Health provides five school health nurses to the Macon County School System. Half of the positions are funded by the state and half by Macon County government. The current student to nurse ratio is one school nurse per 920 students. The state recommends one school nurse per 750 students. Because of Macon County’s unique geography and the fact that there are two outlying K-12 schools in the county, Macon County’s ratio needs to be closer to one nurse per every 600 students. In the first five months of the 2017/2018 school year school health nurses provided 5,762 student health contacts including health assessments, school nurse office visits; immunizations and general health and vision screenings. That equates to 1,152 student health contacts per nurse.

### **Goals & 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 Health Services/Population Health, Children/Youth/Family, Older Adults (55 and up) committee makes the following recommendations to help ensure that childcare availability remains adequate now and in the future.

1. Encourage the local government to provide on-going support and assistance as needed for the Childcare industry in Macon County.



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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2. Ensure that the EDC makes childcare a top priority when recruiting new businesses into Macon County.
  - Develop 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.
  - Work with surrounding counties that have incorporated childcare mechanisms into their economic development efforts.
3. Provide on-going support for the Childcare industry in Macon County.
  - Create 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.
  - Use annual endowment income for purposes such as training for private childcare providers, creating new or upgrading existing facilities to create financial grants for new providers during the first three years of operation.
4. Expand after school programs for at risk children/youth.



**Older Adults (55 and up)**



## AGE IN COMMUNITY



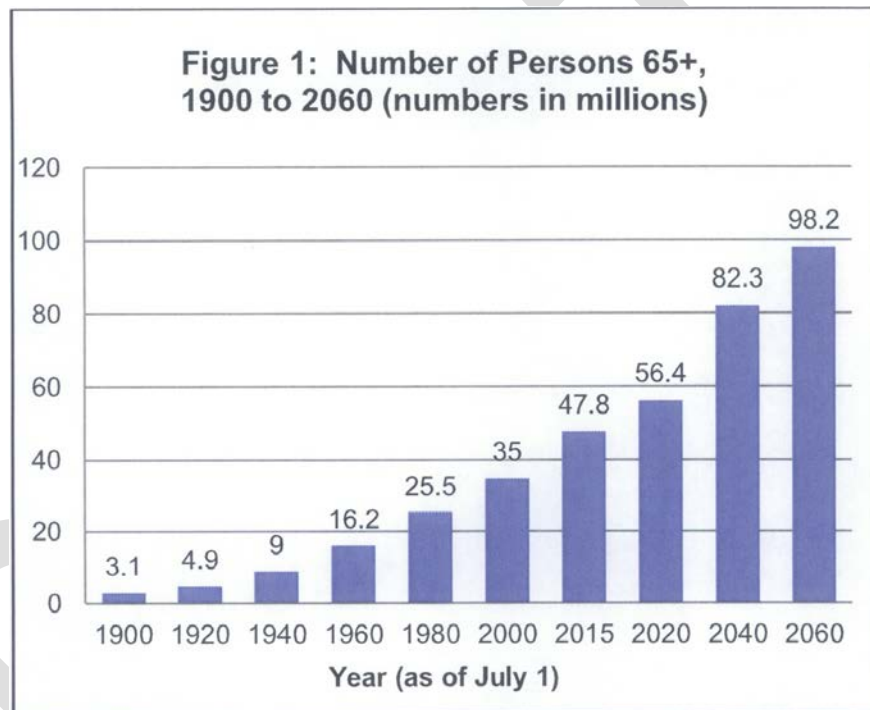
# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## Age In Community

In 2016 the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released “A Profile of Older Americans: 2016.” Among the Highlights of the report:

1. The population age 65 and over has increased from 36.6 million in 2005 to 47.8 million in 2015 (a 30% increase) and is projected to more than double to 98 million in 2060.
2. People 65+ represented 14.9% of the population in the year 2015 but are expected to grow to be 21.7% of the population by 2040.



*Source: US Department of Health and Human Services*

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



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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workforce in Macon County is over the age of 45. Of this number, 20% 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.

## **Nursing/Assisted Living Facilities**

Macon County currently has three 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. Assisted living facilities, unlike skilled nursing facilities do not staff registered nurses or doctors. Therefore, these assisted living facilities do not house patients who are dependent 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**

#### **Macon Valley Nursing and Rehabilitation Center**

Macon Valley Nursing and Rehabilitation Center is a Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Facility that has been operating in Macon County for over two decades. Macon Valley has a total of 200 rooms in the facility.

#### **The Fidelia Eckerd Living Center (FELC)**

The Fidelia Eckerd Living Center is an 84 bed facility with 4 private and 40 semi-private rooms. It 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.

It 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.



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## **Assisted Living Facilities**

### **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 population at Grandview Manor, according to the 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.

### **The Franklin House**

The Franklin House was constructed in 2014 and is devoted to senior living. The Franklin House offers companion and private room accommodations, on-site beauty salon & barber shop, private spa, full service housekeeping, on call physicians, social programs, etc. The Franklin House also has a wing of the facility dedicated to Alzheimer patients.

## **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





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## **Macon County Senior Services**

The mission statement of the Macon Senior Services Department is “Partnering to promote, protect and strengthen our community.”

The Macon County Senior Services Center or Crawford Center offers a variety of services to seniors in Macon County. Located at 108 Wayah Street, The Crawford Center provides a spacious, open environment for all seniors to enjoy. The facility operates Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m.. Below are services this facility provides:

### **1. 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.

### **2. Congregate Meals and Other Services**

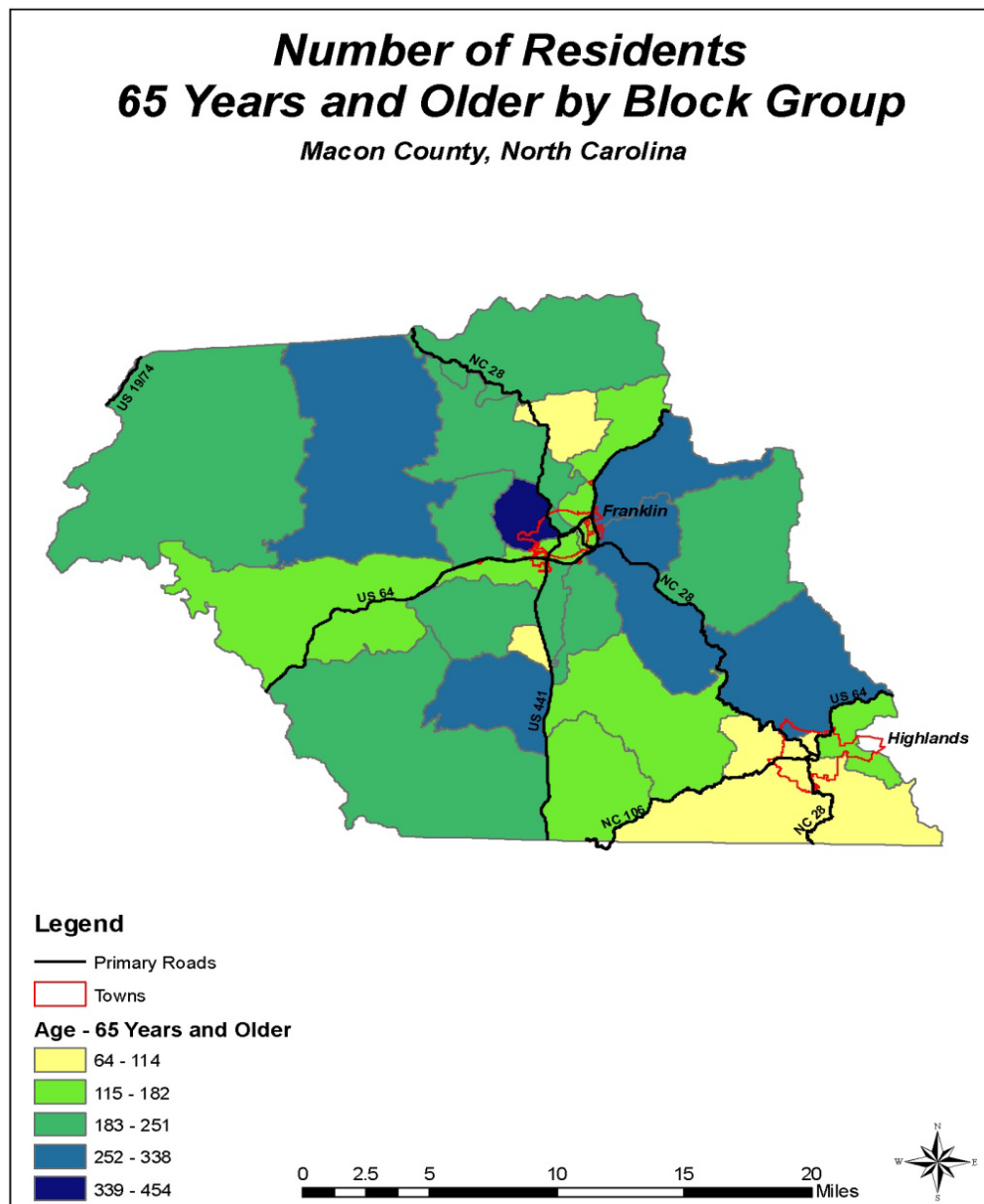
Nutritionally balanced meals are served Monday - Friday. Socialization, activities, speakers and special occasion events are all part of the Congregate Meals Program.

- 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 Dependent 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.



## 3. Activities

- A variety of health education and physical interactive classes including: Zumba, Tai Chi, Yoga, National Council on Aging's Matter of Balance, art, monthly field trips, story writing, and classic movies are just a few offerings hosted at the Crawford Senior Center.



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## **Activities for Macon County Seniors**

Macon County offers a variety of activities for senior citizens. 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 older. 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 addition to the Macon County Senior Games, active seniors in the Franklin, North Carolina area are involved year around in sporting events, classes, fundraisers and local events like the Halloween Carnival and Christmas Parade.

## **Goal & Recommendations**

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 of these two elements. Recommendations for the Healthcare and Senior Citizens elements of the Comprehensive Plan are listed below.

1. Create a Healthy Active Environment in Macon County by building active living communities
  - Add more Sidewalks as roads are upgraded
  - Add Bike Trails as roads are upgraded
  - Emphasize fitness whenever possible
2. Emphasize Worksite Wellness
  - Encourage employers to encourage employees to be active.
  - Encourage employers to facilitate fitness activities prior to work, after work, and during breaks.
3. Consider seniors when developing fitness centers and when coordinating activities that will facilitate healthier and longer lives for our residents.
  - Continue to support senior games



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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- Plan for seniors at all levels, including field trips, activities and events for Alzheimer's patients, etc.
  - Work with existing recreation facilities to promote senior health, i.e. reduced rates for seniors such as The Silver Sneakers Program.
  - Encourage new facilities to be senior friendly and affordable.
4. Support the Free Care Clinics, the Medication Assistance Program, the local hospitals, 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.
  - Commit to provide some fixed amount of dollars each year that can be used to provide services in any of these areas at times when other sources are insufficient to meet the needs.
5. Work with community providers to improve quality of care by implementing management tools that ensure the use of best practices, manage high-risk patients and high-cost services, and incorporates accountability.
6. Promote livable, senior friendly communities. The vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age.
- Work to make Macon County a "Livable & Senior Friendly" Community.
  - Work with developers, realtors and contractors to 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.
  - Conduct a feasibility study for appropriate and affordable senior housing options in Macon County.



## MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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7. Cooperate fully with acceptable entities that are trying to add assisted living or independent living facilities in Macon County.
  - Encourage the accommodation of water and sewer needs for these entities.
  - Provide tax break incentives to encourage investment by these entities into Macon County.
8. Devote more time and hours to senior recreation in Nantahala.
9. Coordinate events in Nantahala and Highlands with Senior Center in Macon County.
10. Make someone from Macon County Senior Center available 2 days a month in Nantahala and Highlands.
11. Include a new Senior Center Facility in the Capital Improvement Plan. Crawford Center is at capacity with no room for expansion. A new facility large enough to meet current needs and flexible enough to meet the growing needs of Macon County's senior population is needed.



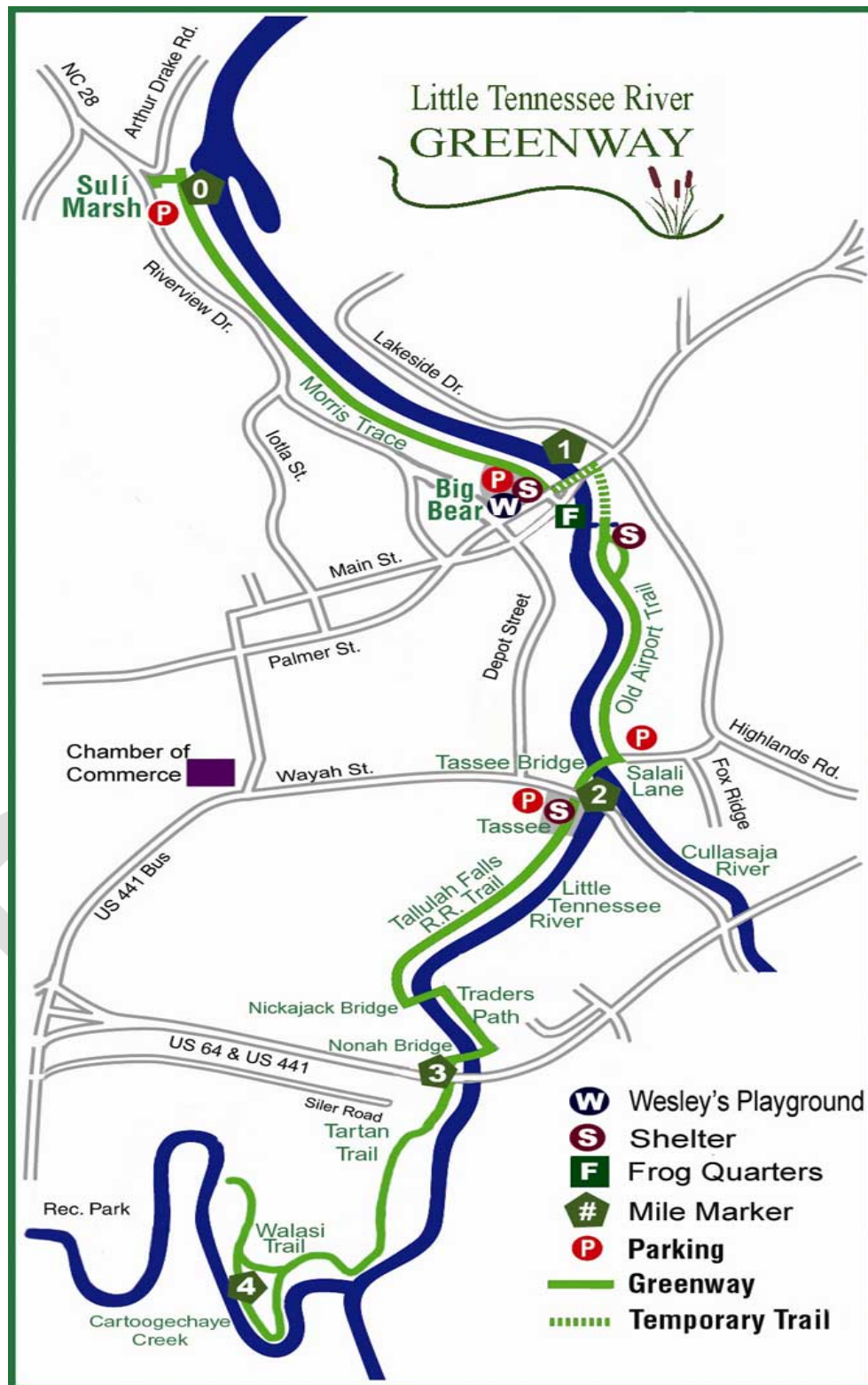
## Conclusion

In conclusion this document should be used as a planning tool, designed to guide the future actions of community leaders and elected officials. The Comprehensive Plan for Macon County is not an all-inclusive Plan, nor is it intended to be. It is a glimpse at where we are now and where we would like to be in the future.



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Appendix 1: Little Tennessee River Greenway Plan



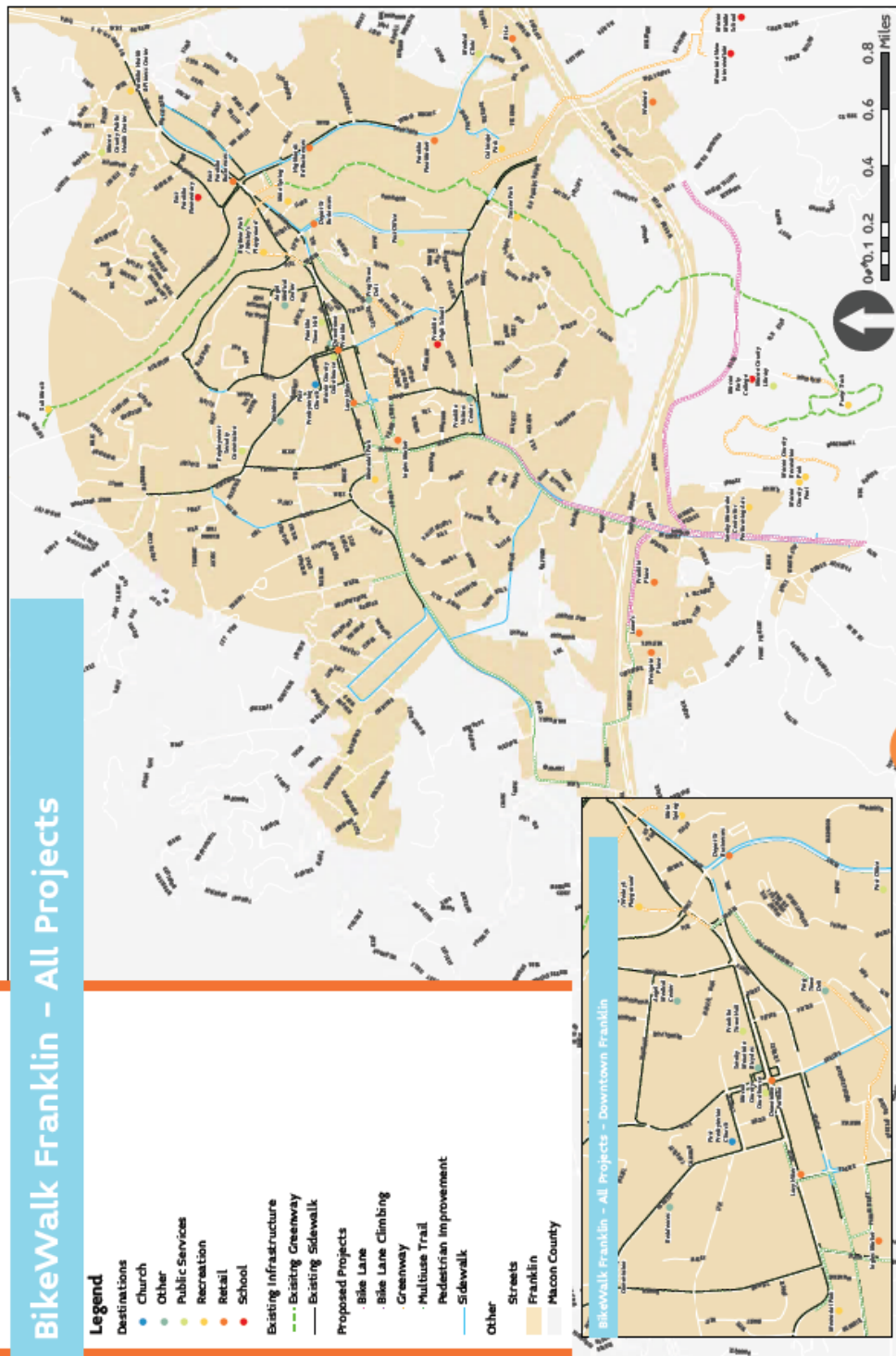


## Appendix 2: Town of Franklin Sidewalk Plan

Exhibit 4-6: Map of Proposed Projects

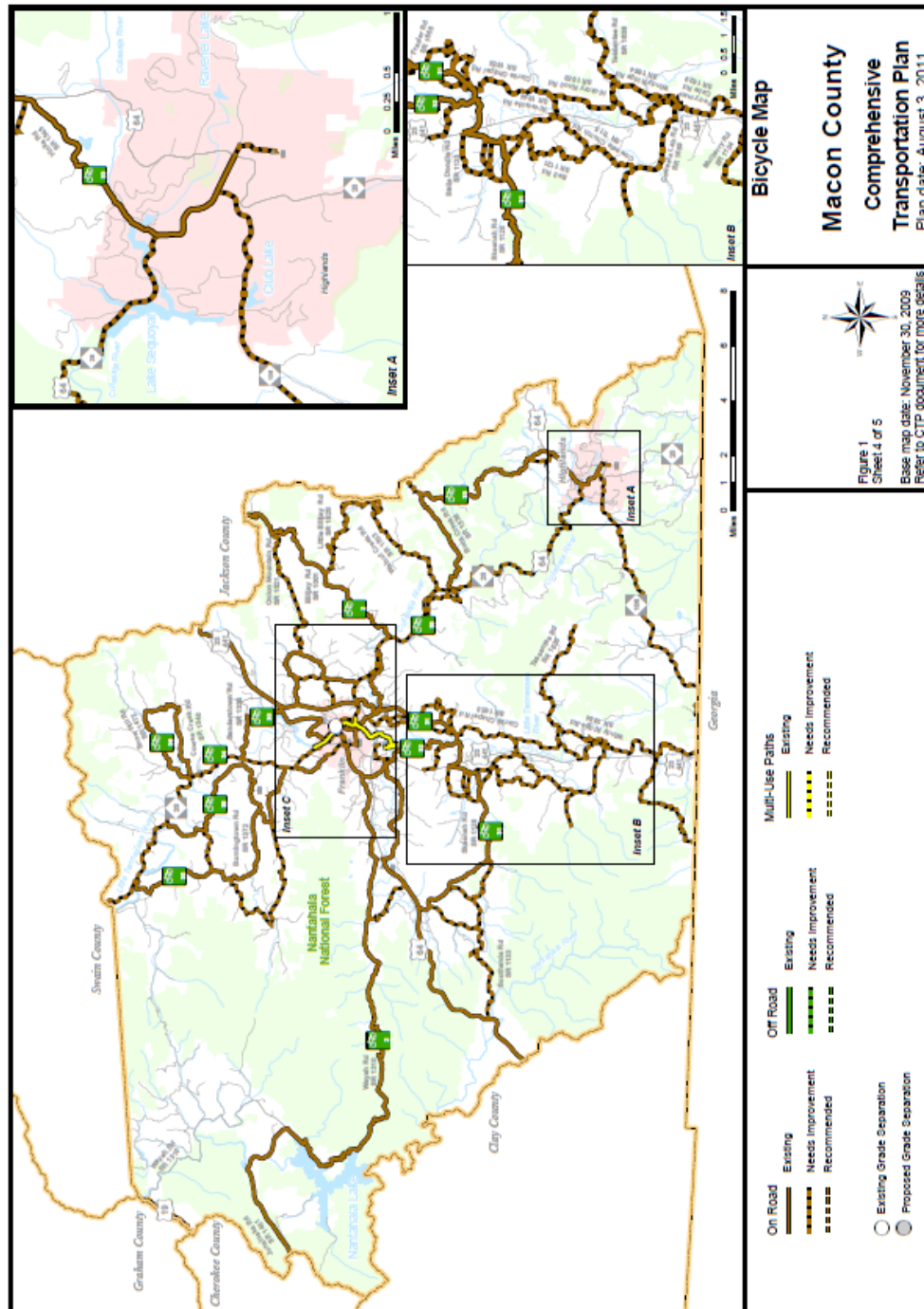
### BikeWalk Franklin - All Projects

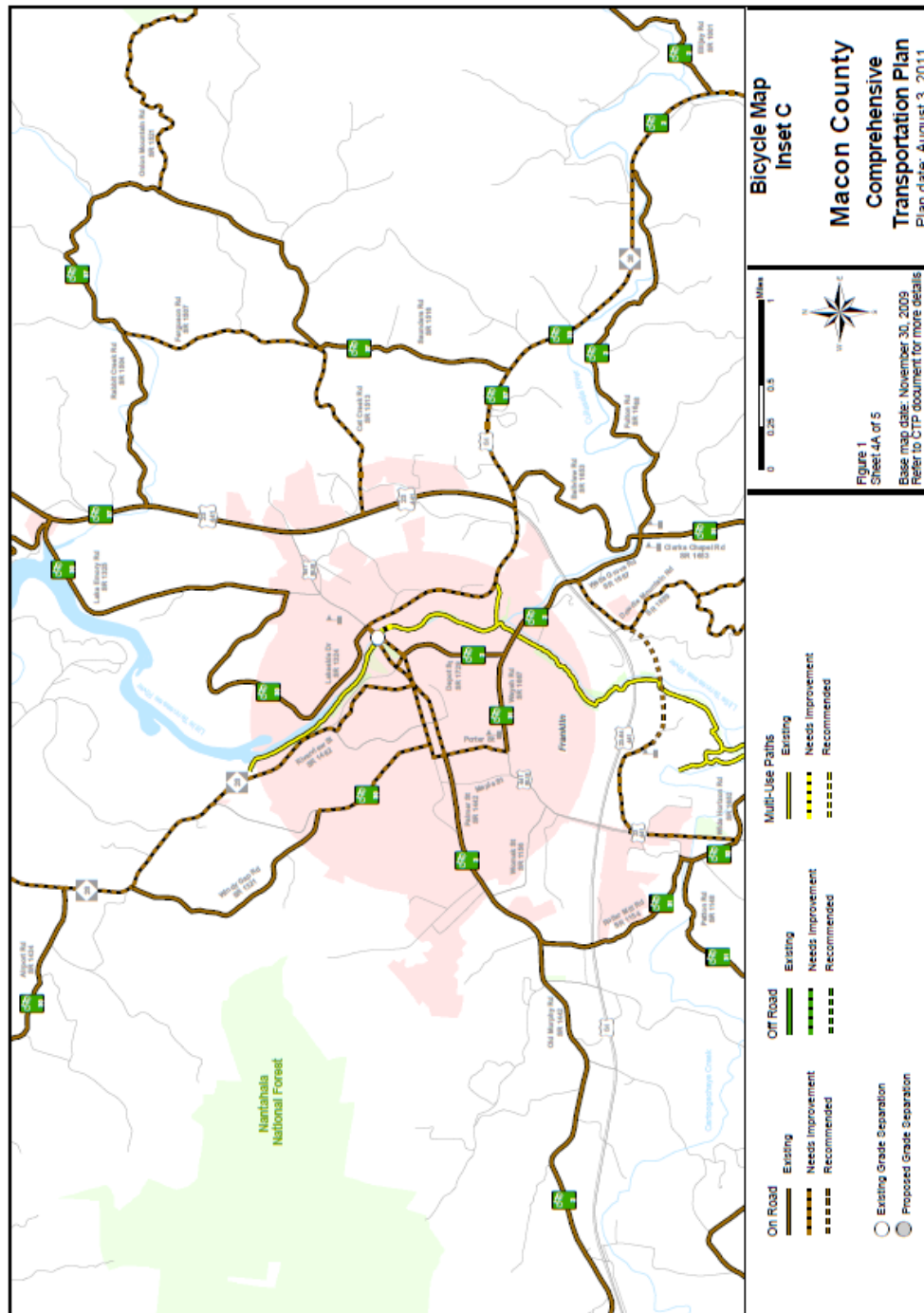
- Legend**
- Destinations
    - Church
    - Other
    - Public Services
    - Recreation
    - Retail
    - School
  - Existing Infrastructure
    - Existing Greenway
    - Existing Sidewalk
  - Proposed Projects
    - Bike Lane
    - Bike Lane Climbing
    - Greenway
    - Multituse Trail
    - Pedestrian Improvement
    - Sidewalk
  - Other
    - Streets
    - Franklin
    - Macon County



# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Appendix 3: Macon County Bike Routes





# MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Appendix 3: Macon County Detention Center Inmate Populations Charts

