

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

Note: Commissioner Kevin Corbin's pre-ambble/recommendation continues to be posted on Page 97 at the beginning of the Education and Recreation Section as previously requested by the Macon County Commission.

Economic Development and Public Services

Economic Development

Introduction

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

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

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

Public Input

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

The public input was a direct reflection of the declining economy in Macon County. Economic Development was a topic for discussion at each community and special interest group meeting to which the public input committee traveled. Citizens were adamant about bringing new economic development to the area and revitalizing

businesses that were currently in existence. They wanted their children and grandchildren to have the opportunity to remain in Macon County if they desired. Citizens understood however, that this was not possible if there was no place for them to work. Attendees of these public input meetings shared many great ideas for bringing economic development to the area, all of which were considered by the committee assigned to work on this element of the plan.

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

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

Macon County Economic Development Commission

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

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

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

Summary of Community Analysis

Fig. ED1

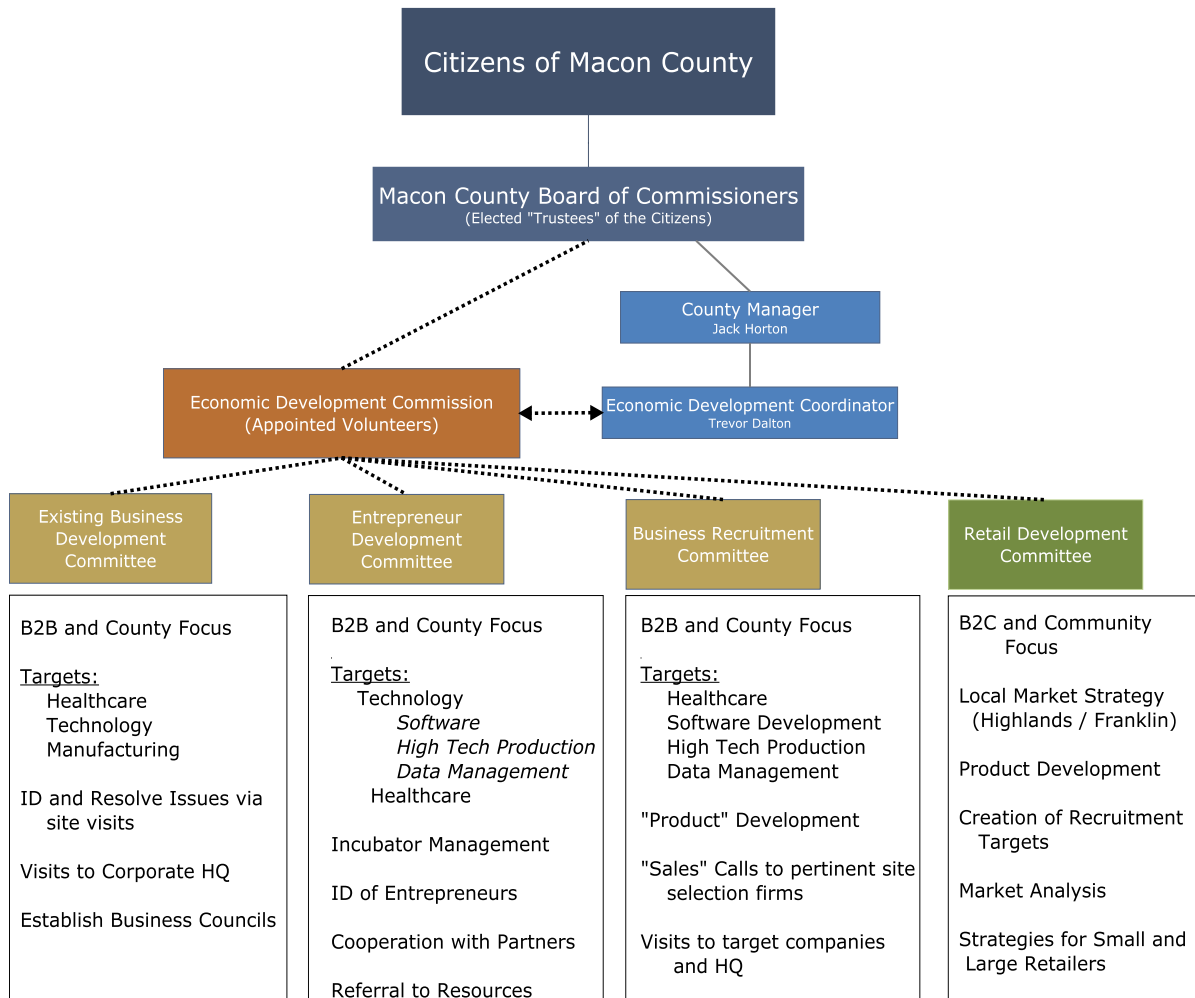
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Leadership	Available Labor Force	Retail Growth Incubator	Neighbors
Outdoors	Underemployment	Entrepreneur Development	Loss of Local Employers
Culture	No “Plan”	Growing Existing Employers	Mismanaged Growth
Natural Beauty	Aging Labor Force	Need for Higher Skills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

Source: Macon County Economic Development Commission Retreat Report

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

Economic Development Commission Sub committee structure

Fig. ED2



Source: Macon County Economic Development Commission Retreat Report

Recommendations

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

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

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

Public Services

Introduction

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

Law Enforcement:

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

Emergency Management:

Warren Cabe- Director of Emergency Services

Public Water and Sewer:

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

Public Input

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

Law Enforcement/Emergency Services

Macon County Sheriffs Department

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

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

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

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

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

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

Macon County Detention Center

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

Fig. PSI

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

Source: Macon County Sheriffs Department

Franklin Police Department

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

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

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

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

heroin and marijuana. Drug abuse plays a major role in the majority of domestic disputes according to Bradley.

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

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

Highlands Police Department

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

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

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

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

Macon County Volunteer Fire Departments/ Emergency Services

Volunteer Fire Departments

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

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

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

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

Fig. PS2

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

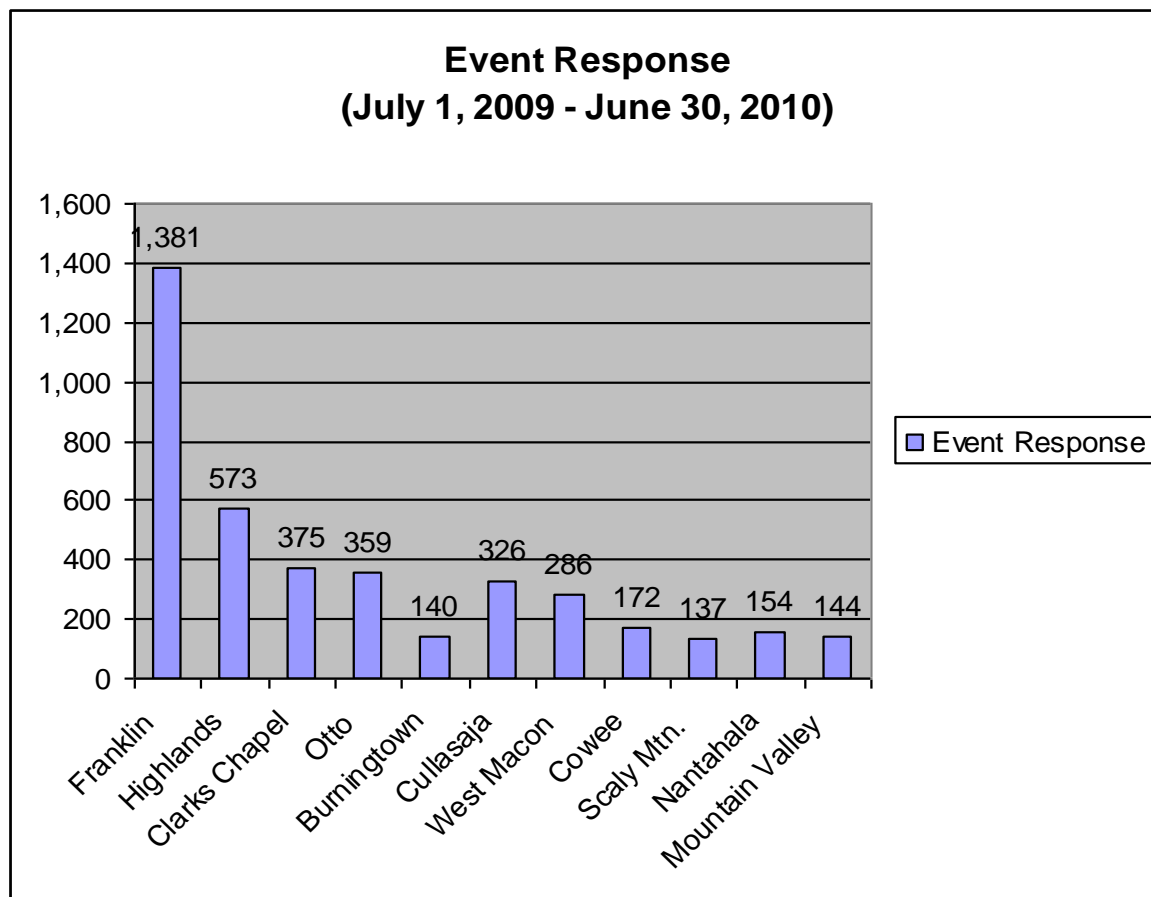
Fire Department	# of Trucks	Members	Paid Personnel	Rating
Franklin	10	27	3 FT	6 (municipal) 9 (elsewhere)

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

Source: Macon County EMS

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

Fig. PS3



Source: Macon County EMS

EMS

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

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

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

Recommendations

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

1. Work to ensure that law enforcement/emergency services grow proportionately with increase in population

- Diversity within agencies should mirror diversity in the community
- As population continues to change, assessment of services offered by the departments and community needs should be evaluated
- See that all departments within law enforcement/emergency services agencies are housed in facilities that increase departmental efficiency
- Explore ways to increase response efficiencies

2. Ensure that salaries for law enforcement agencies are competitive with those in surrounding counties

3. Improve communications coverage throughout Macon County

- Upgrade current 9-1-1 equipment as needed
- Locate new or improve existing telecommunications towers so that no area in the county is without emergency communication capability

4. Support volunteer services in Macon County

- Provide incentives for volunteers
- Increase funding as needed for mandatory training requirements

Sewer and Water

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

Town of Highlands

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

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

Town of Franklin

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

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

Recommendations

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

Public Sewer:

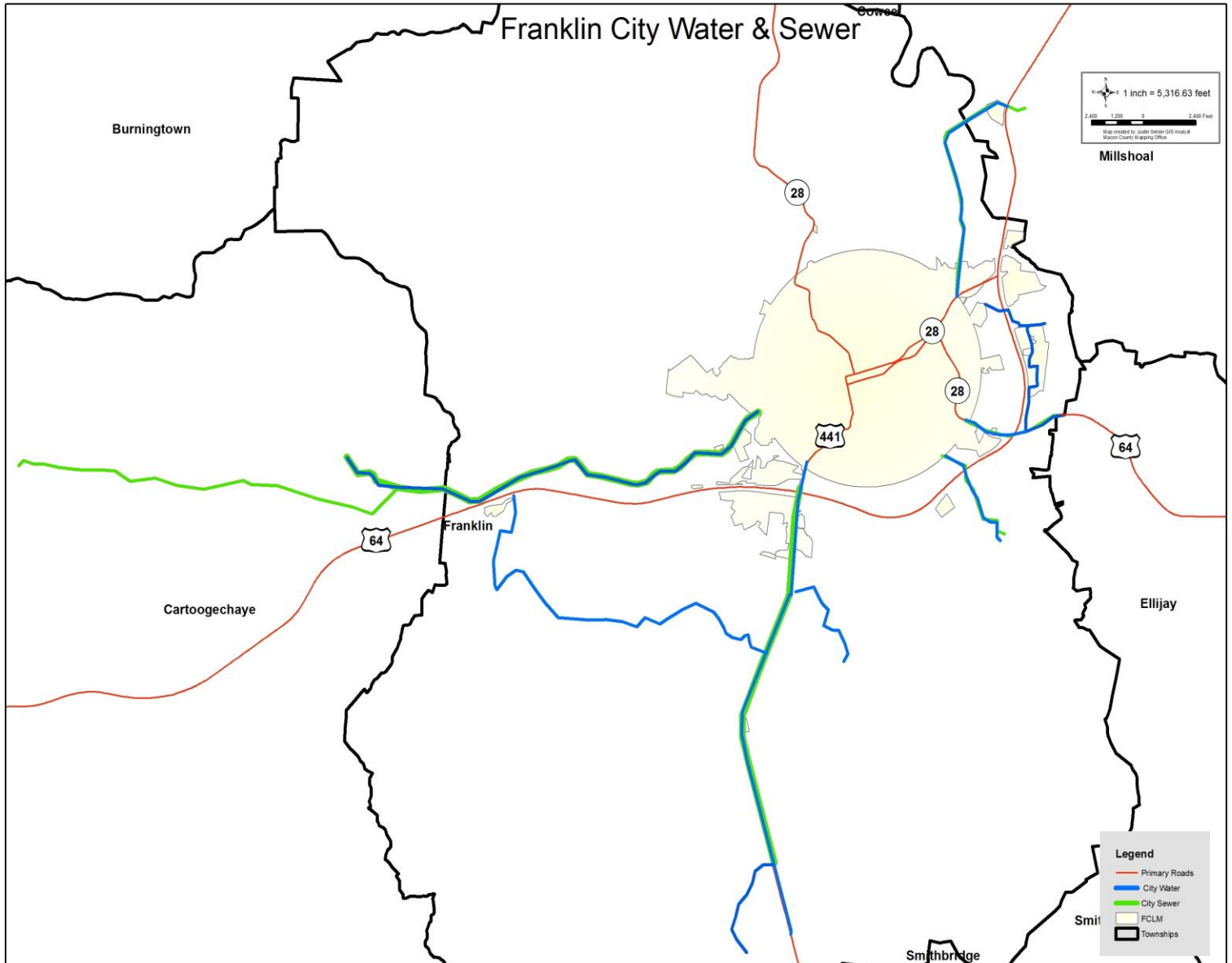
- 1. Take steps to ensure the sewer system is at adequate capacity in advance of need.**
 - At 70% capacity, begin planning for future expansion or construction of new facilities.
 - At 80% to 90% of full capacity, based on the growth rate in effect at the time, begin to secure funding and implement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

Public Water:

- 1. Investigate and pursue establishment of secondary water sources.**
- 2. Take steps to ensure the water system is at adequate capacity in advance of need.**
 - At 70% capacity, begin planning for future expansion or construction of new facilities.
 - At 80% to 90% of full capacity, based on the growth rate in effect at the time, begin to secure funding and implement the expansion plan or construction of new treatment facilities.
- 3. Consider impact that future extensions of the water systems will have on the rural character of Macon County.**

- Extend public water only to those areas capable of supporting commercial or large scale development.

Fig. PS4



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

Water

Sewer

Source: Macon County Mapping Department.

Land Use and Environment

Introduction

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

Public input

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

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

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

Land Use

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

Increasing parcelization is a result of population growth. As more people move into the area, property owners further divide their parcels of land, allowing newcomers an

opportunity to purchase their own “portion” of Macon County. Over the years parcelization has driven the economy in Macon County creating many jobs in the construction, real-estate, and real-estate development industries. The global economic recession however, has brought significant decline to each of these industries leaving a surplus of unimproved parcels on the market in Macon County.

Fig.E1

Parcelization 1993-2009

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

Source: Macon County Tax Office

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

Regulations

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

Regulated types of development

Subdivisions

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

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

Sedimentation and Erosion Control

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

Building Height

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

High Impact Land Uses

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

Sexually Oriented Businesses

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

Signage

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

Telecommunication Towers

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

Critical Areas

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

Flood areas

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

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

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

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

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

Watersheds

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

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

(See Macon County Watersheds Pg. 94)

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

Protected Ridgelines

A protected mountain ridge is a ridge whose elevation is 3,000 feet and whose elevation is 500 or more feet above the adjacent valley floor.

(See Macon County FS and Protected Ridges Pg. 96)

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

Agricultural Areas

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

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

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

Recommendations

- 1. The County Planning Board should be authorized by the Macon County Board of Commissioners to begin work on an ordinance governing construction and development on slopes.**
 - This ordinance should be based on principles recommended by the Slope Development Strategies Subcommittee of the Macon County Planning Board, which presented recommendations to the planning board at the February 2010 meeting.
 - The Slope Movement Hazard Maps are very valuable tools and should be utilized in county planning and in developing a Slope Development Ordinance to minimize the probability of future development-related slope failures.
- 2. The county should consider developing an ordinance aimed at minimizing the affects of stormwater runoff.**
 - The ordinance should be based on best management practices and should take into consideration the following:
 - Culvert placement and design should be such that erosion and concentrated flows are minimized.
 - Lot sizes should be larger as slope increases.
 - The percent of disturbed area allowed on lots should be controlled.
 - The percent of impervious surfaces allowed on lots should be controlled.
 - Requirements for vegetative retention and type of vegetation should be established.
- 3. The county should regulate all construction involving land disturbance for residential and commercial construction in the following ways:**
 - The County should incorporate construction standards into all existing ordinances, as well as in future ordinances dealing with land disturbance. The standards should regulate cut and fill slopes over a certain vertical height and steepness. All constructed slopes over a certain vertical height should be regulated.
 - Placement of fill material should meet minimum criteria:
 - The area upon which the fill is to be placed should be stripped and grubbed, and all vegetative matter should be removed.
 - A bench should be constructed at the toe of the fill.
 - The fill material should be free of organic material and vegetative matter.
 - Fill material should be placed in lifts
 - Fill material should meet compaction standards

Water Quality

Surface Water

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

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

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

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

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

Ground Water

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

Pollution Sources

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

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

The Future

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

Recommendations:

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

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

2. Discourage development which will have unacceptable effects on water quality.

- Coordinate development with appropriate Federal, State(s) and Metropolitan Agencies to insure minimum impact on ground and surface systems and adequate water and waste water capacity.
- Strictly regulate the location of activities that would adversely impact surface and ground water systems and/or their recreational function, scenic beauty or biological health.

Agriculture

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

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

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

Fig.E2

2008 Cash Receipts

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

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service

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

Fig.E3

Farmland Loss in Region A (2002-2007)

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

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service

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

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

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

Recommendations

- 1. Ensure that the Economic Development Commission includes agriculture in its economic development plans for Macon County.**
 - Consider a central farmer’s market/distribution point for products produced in Macon County
 - Consider making County economic development incentives more readily available to agriculture related businesses.
- 2. Consider hiring a County employee to serve as an organizing agent within the agricultural community to promote profitable agriculture. The agent will help “brand”, market and distribute Macon County agriculture products and develop a “farms to school” program where County schools serve locally produced food in cafeterias.**

3. Promote agriculture education

- 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
 - Agricultural technical advice including sustainable forest management

4. Promote farmland preservation

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

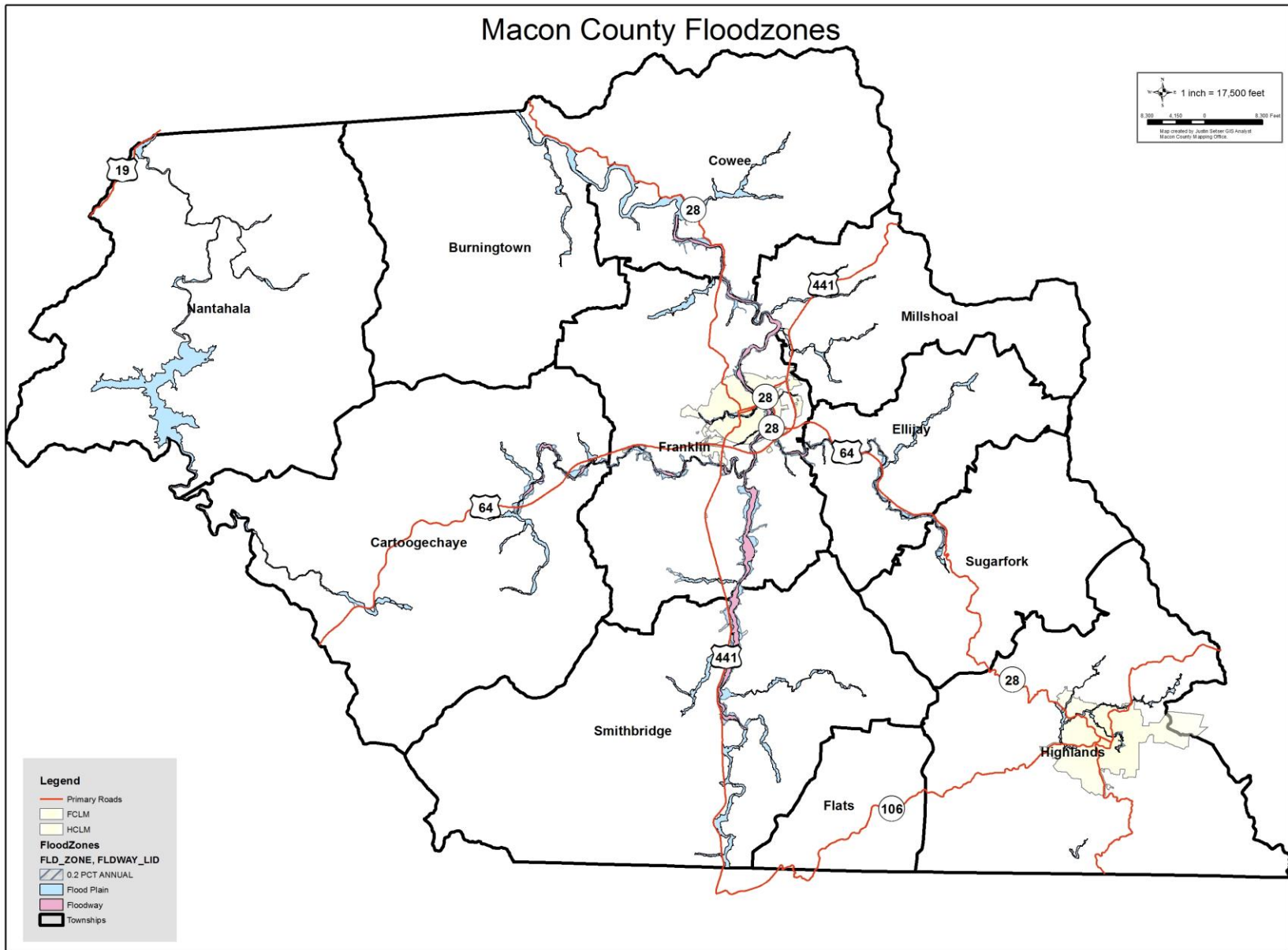
Protecting Rural Character

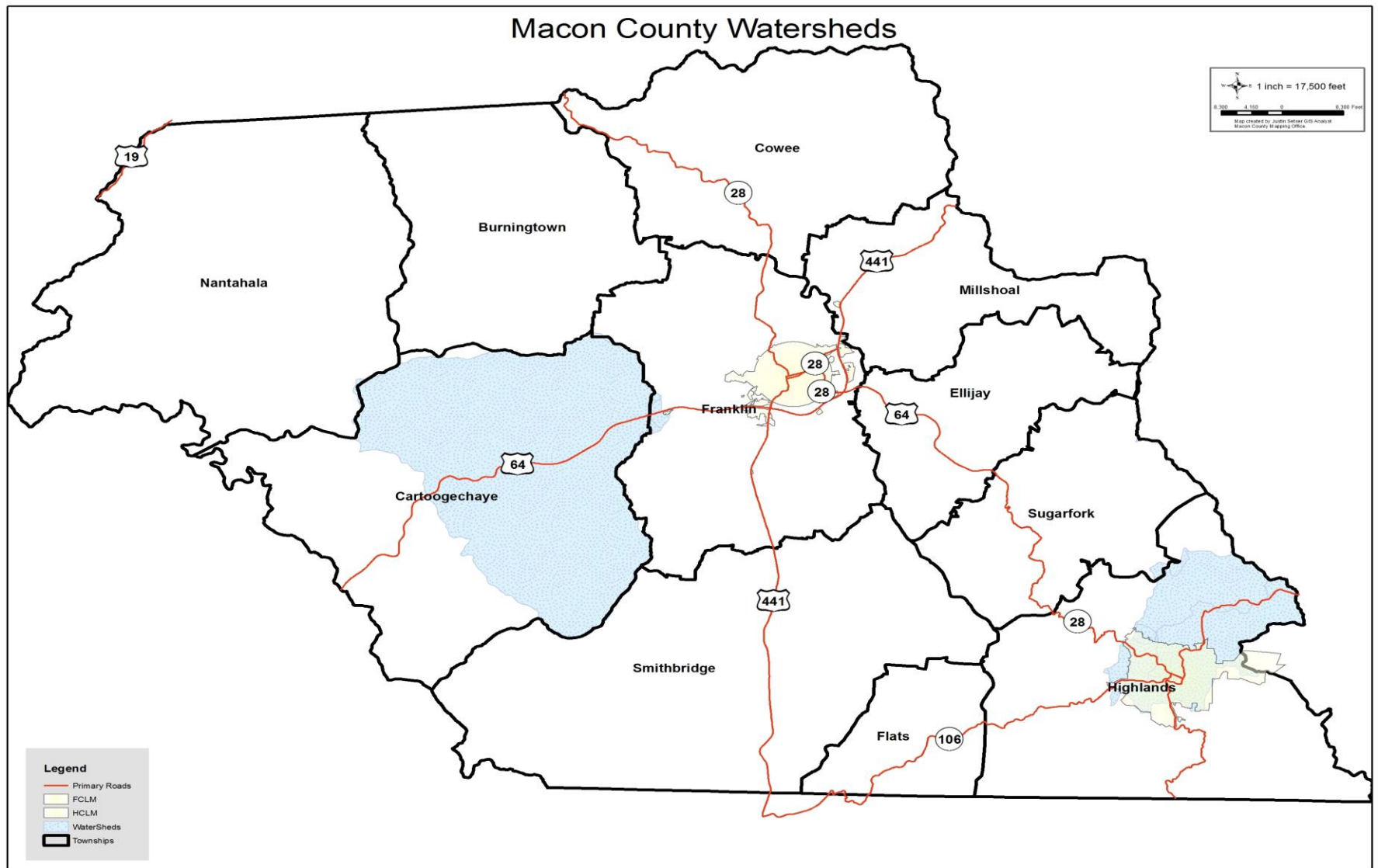
Throughout the public input process, it became evident that each community in Macon County is unique. In Cowee community for instance, citizens were adamant about preserving environmental assets such as Huckleberry Creek, and historical landmarks like the Cowee Elementary School. Citizens of this community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

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

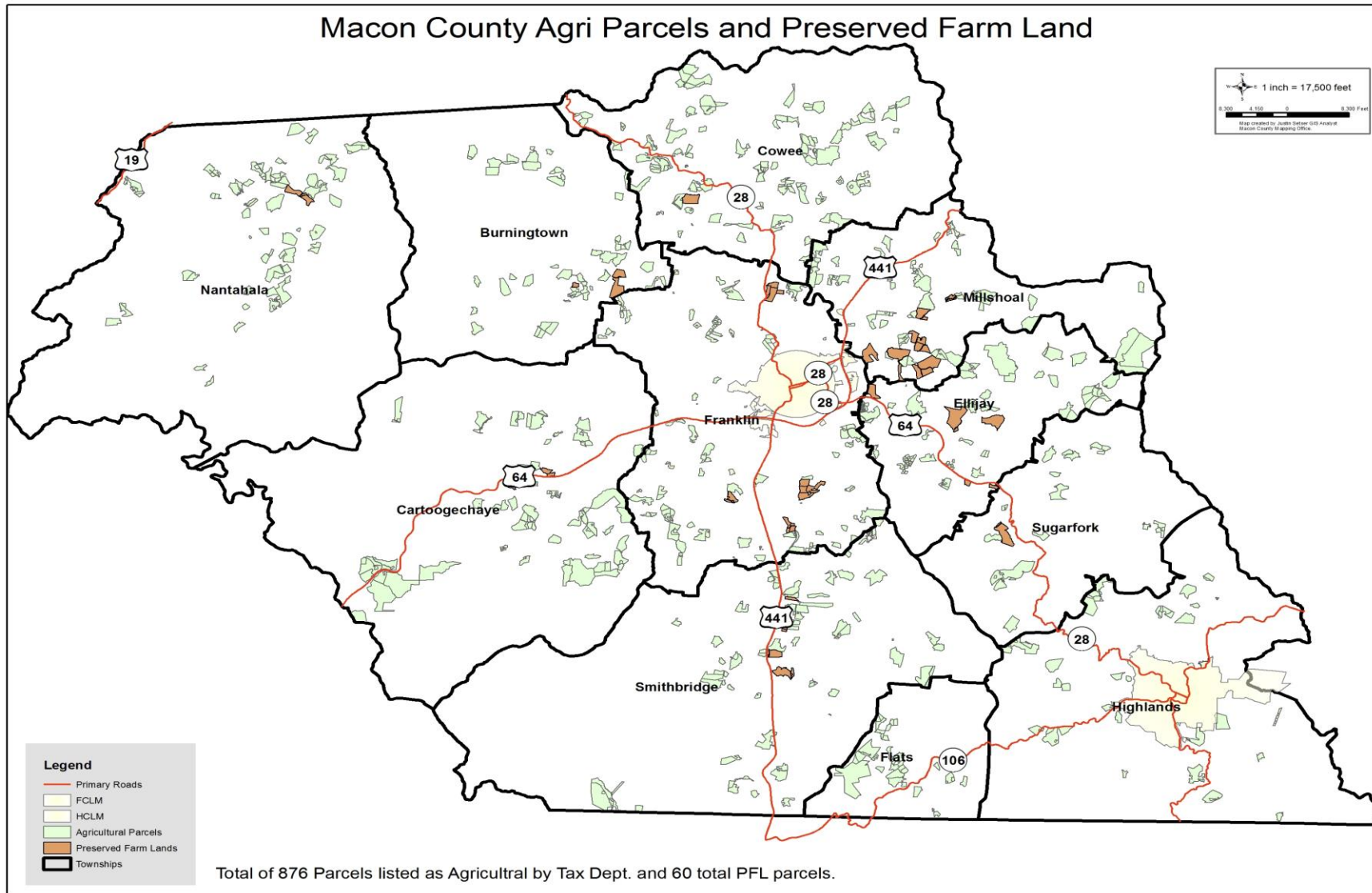
Recommendations

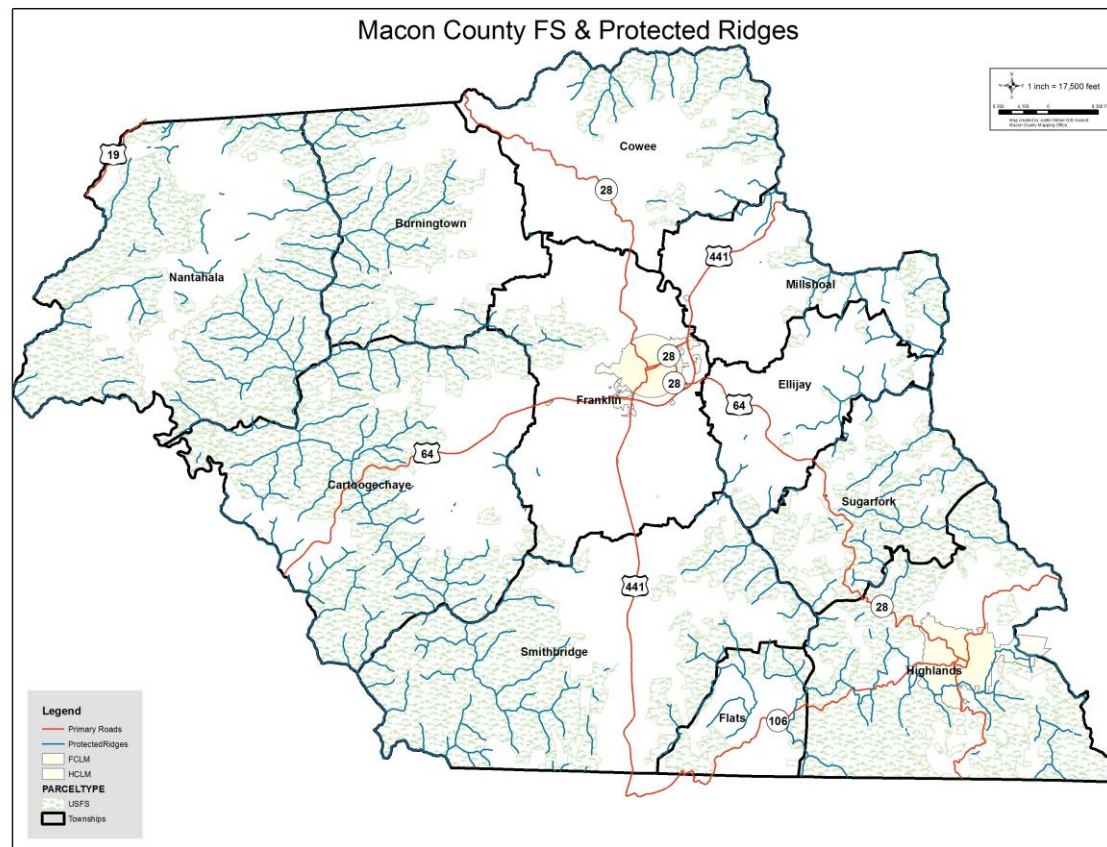
- 1. Allow communities to petition the Board of Commissioners for the establishment of a local planning area.**
- 2. Consider Impact on rural character in all development decisions—of roads and bridges, of schools and other public facilities; commercial and residential.**
- 3. Support communities in their efforts to preserve their rural, historical, and cultural heritage.**





Macon County Agri Parcels and Preserved Farm Land





Education and Recreation

Introduction

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

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

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

Creating a dedicated funding source for education is also critical to the future growth and goals of being an above average community. Education is too critical not to have reasonable consistent operational income.

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

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

Public Input

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

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

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

MACON COUNTY SCHOOLS (1941 to 2010)

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

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

1941	Otto (Now closed and sold)
1942	Cowee (Closing in 2012, converting into Community use)
1948	Cullasaja (Closing in the Fall of 2010, no decision on use yet)
1950-51	Cartoogechaye (Closed)
	East Franklin
	Highlands
	Iotla (Site of new North Macon School 2012)
	Nantahala
	Union (Now called Union Academy)
	Franklin High School
1953-56	New Additions added for:
	Cartoogechaye- 1 classroom
	Cowee- 2 classrooms + cafeteria
	Cullasaja-2 classrooms
	East Franklin- 4 classrooms
	Franklin High School- 7 classrooms + gym
	Highlands- 2 classrooms
	Nantahala-4 classrooms + shop
	Otto- Cafeteria
1963	Franklin High School Gym Annexation
1963-69	Franklin High School- Cafeteria extension and Fine Arts Building
1972	Franklin High School- Careers Center
1977	Macon Middle School
1984-89	Renovations to all schools
1987-88	Nantahala Play Ground

Page 4

1992	Franklin High School Vocational Building
2000	Franklin High School English Building
2001	South Macon Elementary
2002	Cartoogechaye Elementary
2009	Macon Early College
2010	Mountain View 5-6 School (opens Fall 2010)

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN MACON COUNTY

(Note: Most Recreational fields are in flood plains)

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRITICAL FACTORS

Background and Trends:

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

The natural beauty of Macon County continues to be its main asset. This beauty helps drive Macon County's main economic engines which are tourism and construction followed by health care, agriculture and other service industries. The type and quantity of its population mix tends to be white mature citizens followed by younger families seeking employment and a lower cost of living. One of the long term concerns for Macon County will be its aging population. Without a private four year college or university to attract younger people and the companies who will partner with these types of learning institutions, the trend toward aging will not be reversed and job creation will be mainly in the health care and tourism industries followed by construction. It should be

noted that Southwestern Community College can partner with a 4 year institution to help reduce overhead.

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

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

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

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

Mega Issues

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

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

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

2.- Energy Crisis- The rapid growth and modernization of China and India with a combined population of over 2.6 Billion people means that there will be a huge demand for energy. The United States Military is projecting that by the year 2015 (less than 5 years from now) the amount of oil being available to pump versus the demand will cross. When there is more demand than supply, prices will rise which will create inflation and possible conflicts. For Macon County this means that long term planning must take into account much higher energy costs, what types of buses it should buy (better fuel mileage needed), locations of schools and mass transportation issues. The energy issue could also

affect tourism and hence our economy and the number of new students we may experience.

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

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

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

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

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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

On the local level, leaders should be willing to embrace more flexibility and new ideas that will provide for more efficiency in the way things are being done. Providing quality education and recreational opportunities should be one of the highest priorities of Macon

County because they create partnership opportunities with the business community which in turn create and sustain jobs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recommendations

First 5 years (2011-2015)

- 1. Identify and resolve all past due maintenance requirements that create safety and/or major repair issues if not done in a timely manner. (See Appendix(s) ii&iii)**
- 2. Fund preventive maintenance programs to reduce the cost of repairs.**
- 3. Identify, create and fund a publicity entity that will provide clear information to the public on why and how taxpayer investment dollars are needed and spent for education and recreation projects.**
- 4. Start looking now for possible land sites in the Nantahala area for a new school that may be needed within the next decade.**
- 5. Upgrade Franklin High School to bring it into the 21st Century as part of a longer range plan to expand the facility to accommodate projected growth over the next 20 years. (See detailed recommendations on two options and the estimated cost impact in Appendix ii).**

6. Create a dedicated funding source for Education and Recreation. A sales tax dedicated for these quality of life programs will be the less costly way to fund them since the population of Macon County around the Franklin area doubles each summer and the population in Highlands increases by 8 times due to tourists and second home buyers. Therefore the costs to the year round citizens of Macon County will be lower than if the funding was to come from an increase in real estate taxes.

7. Begin lobbying for State and Federal changes in educational programs to allow more local flexibility in planning the school year, method of teaching and technologies used.

8. Create a technology review committee that will update the sub committee, the School Board and Commissioners annually on changes, opportunities and effectiveness for utilizing virtual teaching technology and methods at the lower grade levels (K-12 and below).

9. Obtain funding for the new building at Southwestern Community College.

Second 5 Years (2016-2020)

1. Identify methods for expanding Highlands K-12 school and/or enhancing its capacity by using a hybrid virtual learning program. Both Nantahala and Highlands could benefit from utilizing for example, an English teacher at Franklin High School who could teach via virtual technology to all three schools at the same time.

2. Depending upon the demographics in the Nantahala area, begin the planning to build a new K-12 school there or review how a hybrid virtual learning program can enhance the effective capacity of the current school.

3. Either begin the planning for a new High School for the Franklin area or expand the existing facility along with enhancing the effective capacity by using virtual learning technologies and methods.

4. Begin construction of a new recreational center which can become a convention center/basketball courts/community meeting center/indoor swimming pool complex preferably in cooperation with a business partnership.

5. Continue to have a standing sub committee review demographics and trends and make planning modifications for the master plan.

Third and Fourth 5 Year Segments (2020-2030)

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

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

Transportation and Housing

Transportation

Introduction

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

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

Public Input

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

Macon County Roadways

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

Primary Roads

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

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

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

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

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

US64W location- immediately east of Mill Creek Road

US64E location- immediately west of Ellijay Road

NC106 location- at Georgia line

NC 28 location- immediately southeast of River Bend Road

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

Macon County Traffic Counts on Primary Roads 1999-2008

Fig. TH1

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

Source: NCDOT AADT maps

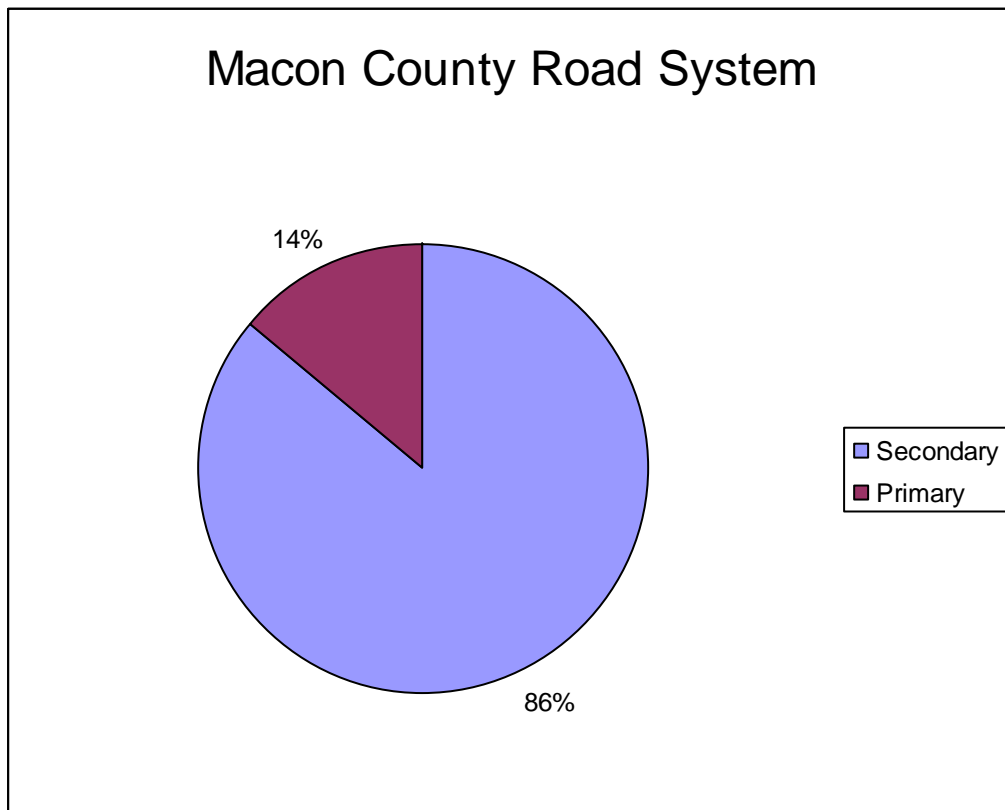
Note: ---- count unavailable at location

Secondary Roads

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

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

Fig. TH2



Alternate Modes of Transportation in Macon County

Greenway

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

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

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

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

Municipal Sidewalk Systems

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

Macon County Airport

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

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

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

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

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

Macon County Transit

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

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

MCT offers a variety of services to all citizens.

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

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

Macon County Bike Routes

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

Recommendations

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

1. Provide safe roads while minimizing impact on the mountain landscape, environment, cultural/historical sites, and prime agricultural land.

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

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

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

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

- Develop multi-modal transportation planning.
- Integrate development review with transportation planning. Review subdivision ordinance for pedestrian friendly transportation (bike, transit, walking) and consider implementing.
- Encourage growth of local and regional public transportation. Support locally developed plans.
- Build streets and roads for connectivity (eliminate cul-de-sac concept, keep transportation moving).
- Improve mobility options for aging and disabled populations.
- Establish funding sources to aid DOT in funding of sidewalks and other enhancements.
- 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).
- Promote sustainability through making transportation choices readily available.

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

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

Housing

Introduction

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

Public Input

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

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

General Housing Characteristics in Macon County

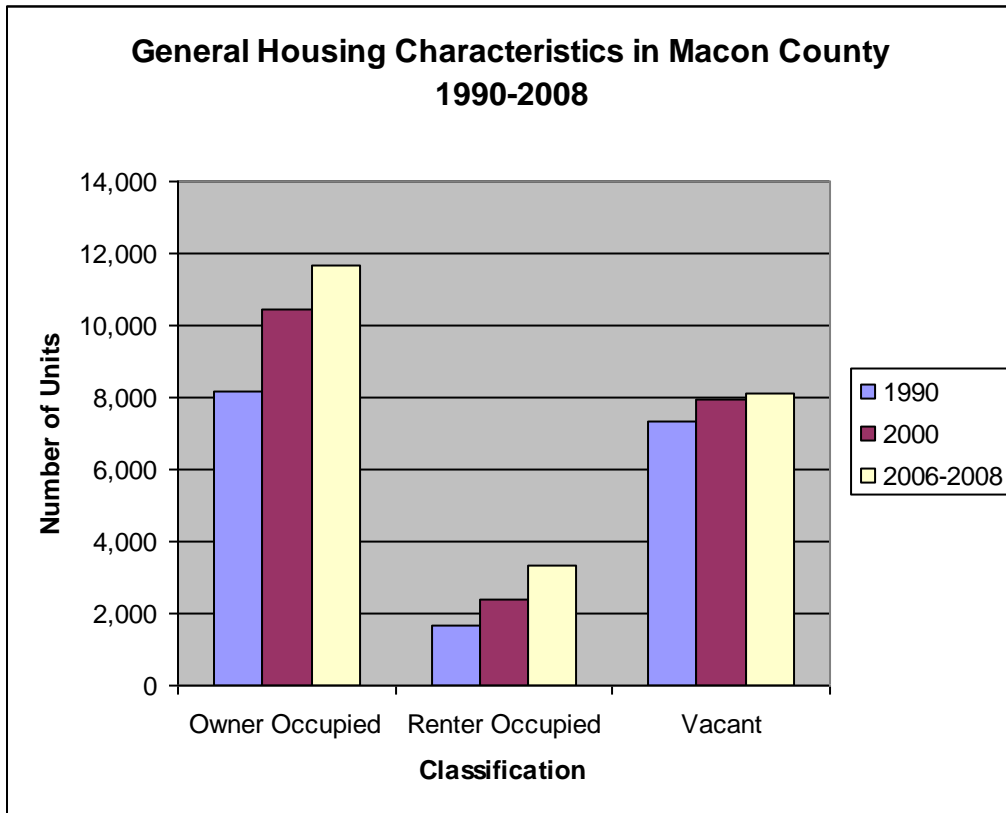
An occupied housing unit is defined by the Census Bureau as any housing unit that is the usual place of residence of the person or people living in it at the time of enumeration, even if the occupants are only temporarily absent; for example, away on vacation. Occupied housing units can further be broken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

Fig. TH2

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

Source: US Census Bureau

Fig. TH2



Source: US Census Bureau

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

Recommendations

1. 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.
- Assess the feasibility of a minimum housing standards ordinance as set forth by NCGS 160A-441.

§ 160A-441. Exercise of police power authorized.

It is hereby found and declared that the existence and occupation of dwellings in this State that are unfit for human habitation are inimical to the welfare and dangerous and injurious to the health, safety and morals of the people of this State, and that a public necessity exists for the repair, closing or demolition of such dwellings. Whenever any city or county of this State finds that there exists in the city or county dwellings that are unfit for human habitation due to dilapidation, defects increasing the hazards of fire, accidents or other calamities, lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities, or due to other conditions rendering the dwellings unsafe or unsanitary, or dangerous or detrimental to the health, safety, morals, or otherwise inimical to the welfare of the residents of the city or county, power is hereby conferred upon the city or county to exercise its police powers to repair, close or demolish the dwellings in the manner herein provided. No ordinance enacted by the governing body of a county pursuant to this Part shall be applicable within the corporate limits of any city unless the city council of the city has by resolution expressly given its approval thereto.

In addition to the exercise of police power authorized herein, any city may by ordinance provide for the repair, closing or demolition of any abandoned structure which the city council finds to be a health or safety hazard as a result of the attraction of insects or rodents, conditions creating a fire hazard, dangerous conditions constituting a threat to children or frequent use by vagrants as living quarters in the absence of sanitary facilities. Such ordinance, if adopted, may provide for the repair, closing or demolition of such structure pursuant to the same provisions and procedures as are prescribed herein for the repair, closing or demolition of dwellings found to be unfit for human habitation. (1939, c. 287, s. 1; 1969, c. 913, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 60; 1975, c. 664, s. 15.)

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

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

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

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

Healthcare/Childcare/Senior Citizens

Senior Citizens

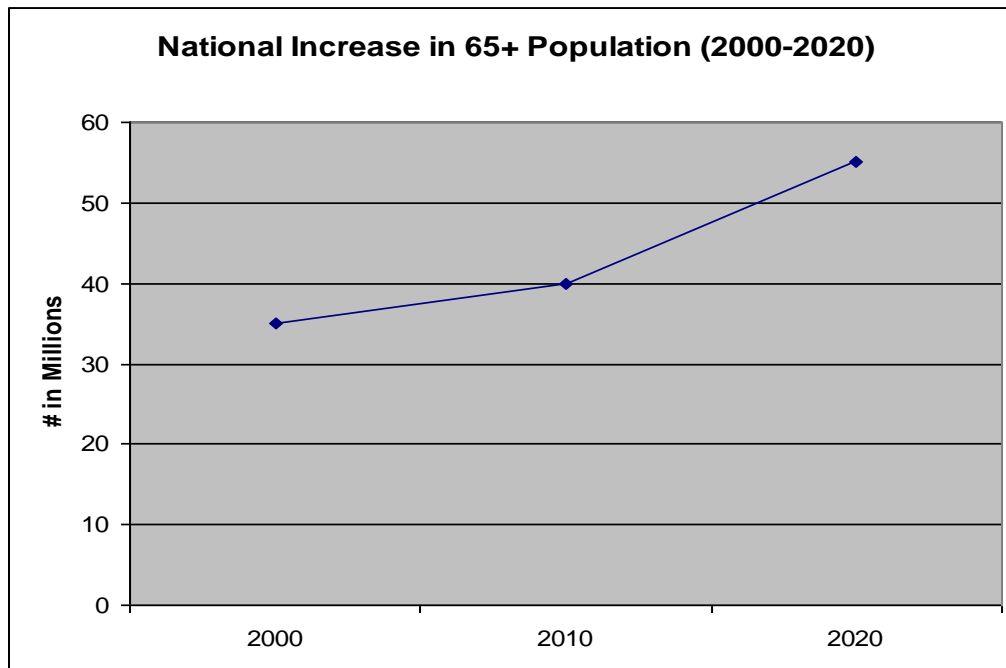
Introduction

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

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

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

Fig. HCS1



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

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

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

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

Public Input

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

Nursing/Assisted Living Facilities

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

Skilled Nursing Facilities

Britthaven of Franklin

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

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

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

Fidelia Eckerd Living Center

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

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

Assisted Living Facilities

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

Grandview Manor

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

Chestnut Hill Senior Living Community

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

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

Homecare

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

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

Macon County Senior Services

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

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

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

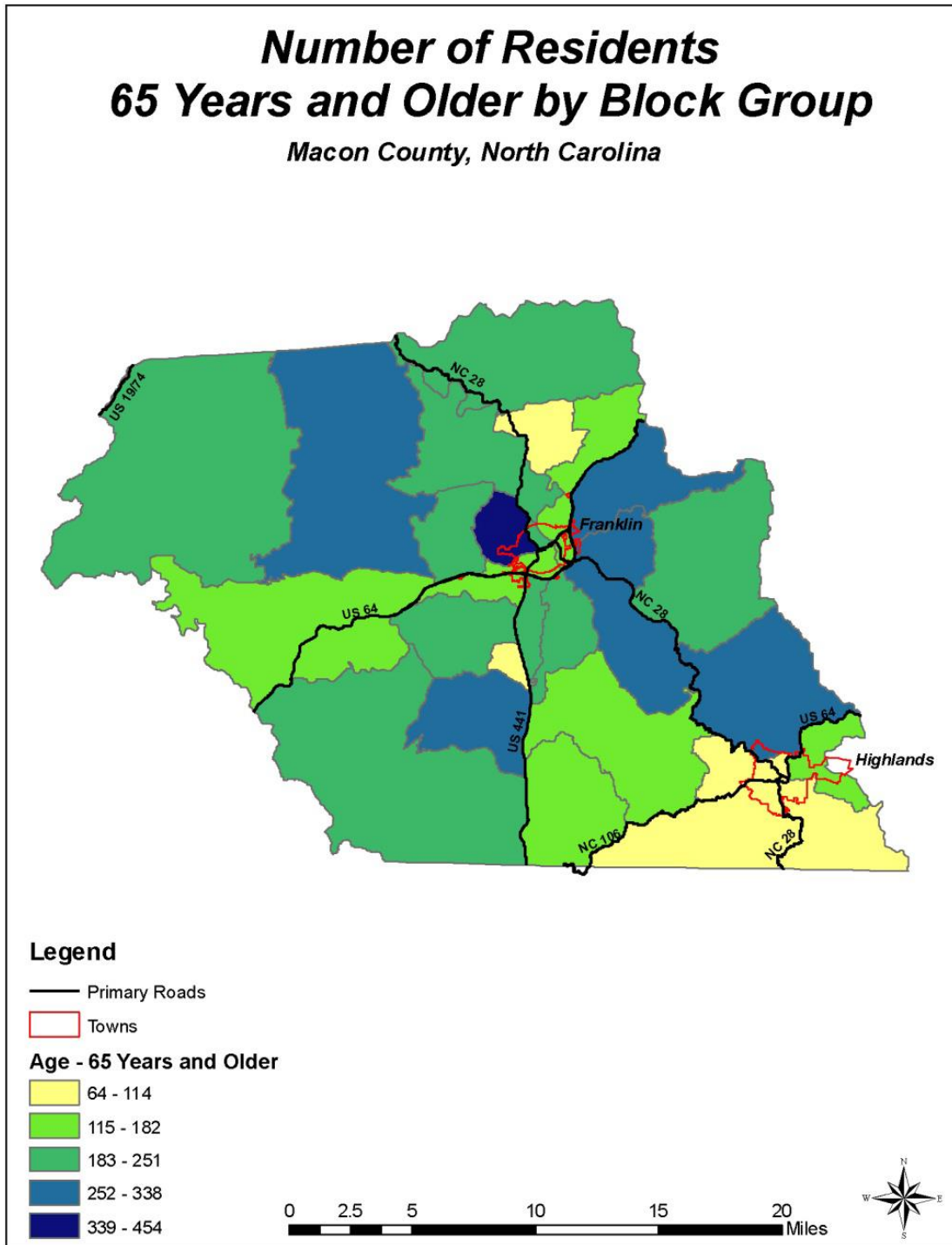
- Care Dependant Sheltering Registry- A registry that identifies individuals in the county that may require special needs during a disaster.
- SHIIP Services- Senior Health Insurance Information Program offers objective information about Medicare.
- Caregiver Support Group- A group meeting that offers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

Activities for Macon County Seniors

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

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

Fig. HCS2



Healthcare

Introduction

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

Public Input

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

Hospitals

Angel Medical Center

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

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

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

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital

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

Recommendations ***(Healthcare and Senior Citizens)***

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

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

Recommendations:

1. 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 with new construction

2. Work with Chamber of Commerce on Worksite Wellness

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

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

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

***Situation:** There are currently many people that are underserved medically in Macon County, even with programs provided by the Free Care Clinics, the Medication*

Assistance Program, the Angel Medical Center Emergency Department, Ladies Night Out and the Macon County Public Health Center.

Recommendations:

- 4. Support the Free Care Clinics, the Medication Assistance Program, the local hospitals, Ladies Night Out 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 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.**

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

Recommendations:

- 6. Support local hospitals as they apply for grants and evaluate whether there is any way to financially support any recruitment efforts or other efforts they may initiate for the good of the community.**
- 7. Reduce property taxes on medical office building space used for new physicians as a way to incent recruitment of physicians.**

Overall Comments related to Seniors in Macon County:

A large group of seniors lie in the “gray area” between being “wealthy” and qualifying for Medicaid. This group of individuals is underserved.

Not all seniors in Macon County are in the “second home” income bracket. Seniors, like so many others in Macon County are feeling the effects of the recent economic downturn.

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

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

Recommendations:

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

Situation:

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

Recommendations:

- 11. Devote more time and hours to senior recreation in Nantahala.**
- 12. Coordinate events in Nantahala and Highlands with Senior Center in Macon County.**
- 13. Make someone from Macon County Senior Center available 2 days a month in Nantahala and Highlands.**
 - Advertise upcoming events
 - Assess needs

Childcare

Introduction

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

Public Input

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

Childcare Issues Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Availability

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

2. Cost

- Quality Childcare is expensive

Fig. HCS3

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

3. Coverage

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

4. Financial Support

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

5. Provider Turnover

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

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

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

16 + 3 exempted religious programs

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

7. Projected Growth

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

8. The “Squeeze” on Parents

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

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

Recommendations

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

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

- 1. Strongly consider implementing recommendations set forth in the “Childcare in Macon County” Interim report (Jan 2010). These recommendations represent the minimum requirements for addressing the current shortage of child care capacity in Macon County.**
- 2. Ensure that the EDC makes childcare a top priority when recruiting new business into Macon County.**
 - Work with surrounding counties that have incorporated childcare mechanisms into their economic development efforts.
 - 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.
- 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, and to create financial grants for new providers during the first three years of operation.
- 4. Explore the implementation of a central intake for childcare providers.**
 - Work with surrounding counties, finding out who currently uses the central intake system for childcare.

5. Ensure the continuation of the Childcare Issues committee

- Childcare Issues Committee will hold meetings periodically to assess and monitor the progress of the childcare industry in Macon County, while creating public awareness of childcare issues as the county grows.

6. Macon County Government should work in co-operation with MPP to address future expansion needs.

- Assist MPP in expansion needs such as adequate property location.
- This process should be accompanied by a public education process to private childcare providers, notifying them that MPP has a niche in the childcare market, as they provide childcare to those who could not afford services in the private childcare sector.

7. Work to subsidize education for Private Childcare Providers in small business.

- Many childcare providers quit not because they have lost their love for children, but for reasons directly related to their lack of knowledge in small business operations.
- Explore Grant opportunities
- Partner with SCC or nonprofit organization, to create and fund an educational program designed to help local childcare providers understand the financial and management aspects of running a small business, and also to understand the complex requirements of the NC child care agency requirements. Provide local grants or financial support for the child care providers who successfully complete the educational program. A part of this program will be a resource center for local providers to obtain information and technical assistance for specific business challenges for their childcare operations.

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

8. Work with state Legislators in developing suitable alternatives to the Star Rating and temporary child care licensure systems that currently apply to a new business.

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