



City of Lenoir

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT MAY 23, 2025



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT & VISION

INTRODUCTION

The Lenoir 2045 Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”) builds on Lenoir’s previous planning efforts and the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. Lenoir (the City) has undergone notable transformations in its demographic and socioeconomic makeup, as well as a reevaluation of its future vision, economic drivers, and priorities, prompting the need for this update.

This chapter provides an overview of the existing conditions in Lenoir, setting the foundation for developing different elements of the Plan. The community snapshot, along with public engagement, market analysis, and future growth, will guide the Plan’s recommendations.

This chapter provides:

- **Historic and Regional Context for Planning**
- **Recent Planning Efforts**
- **Demographics and Growth Trends**
- **Existing Land Use**
- **Opportunities and Constraints**
- **Engagement Process**
- **Vision and Guiding Principles**

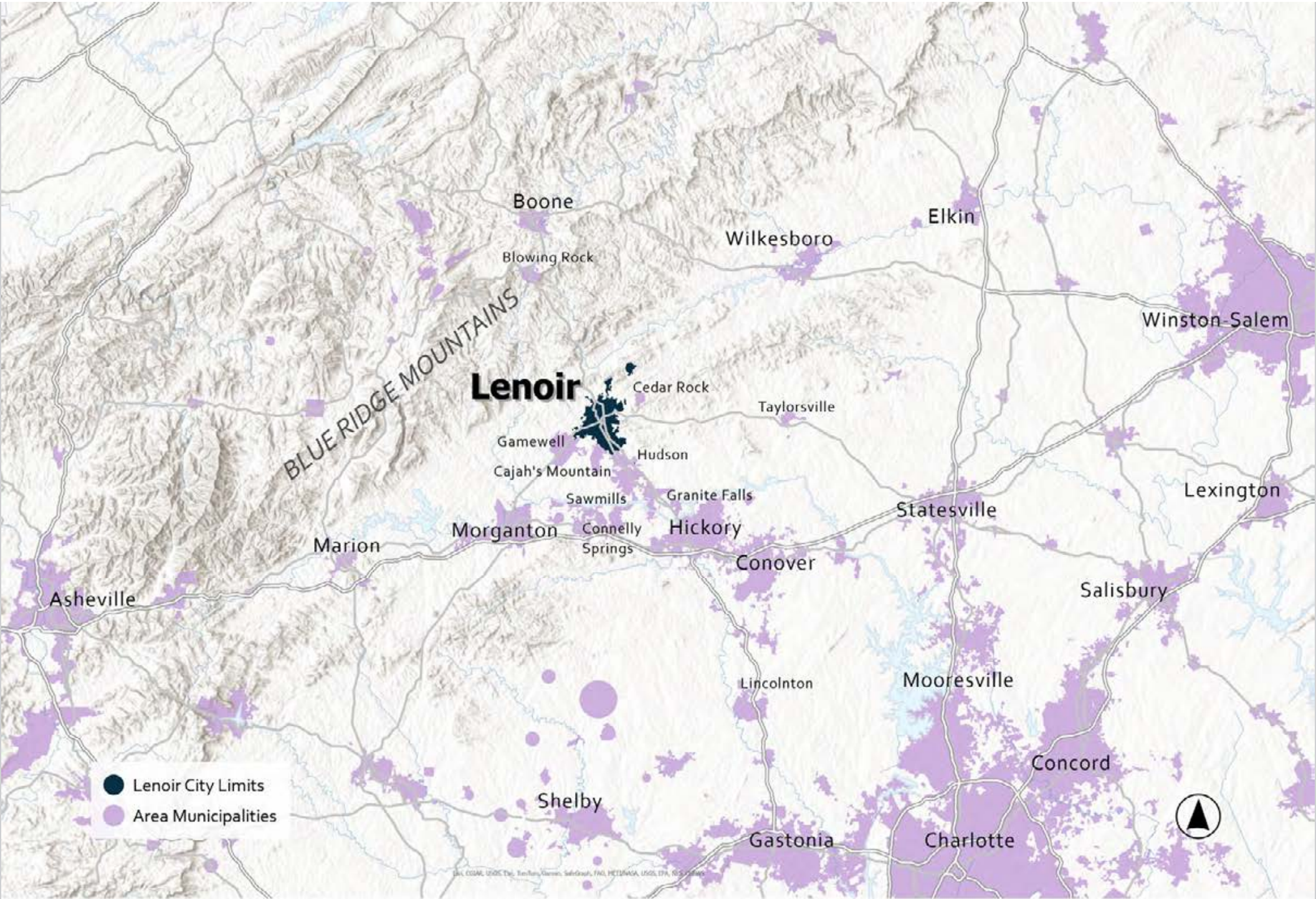
REGIONAL CONTEXT

Located in the central part of Caldwell County, Lenoir is not only the largest municipality in the County, but is also the County seat. The City is part of the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, also known as the Unifour. The City is close to Hickory (to the southeast), Morganton (to the southwest), Wilkesboro (to the northeast), and Boone (to the northwest).

Lenoir is renowned for its mountainous landscape views of the Brushy Mountains, a spur of the Blue Ridge Mountains, prominently visible throughout the community. Pisgah National Forest is also near the City, as is Hibriten Mountain, a popular hiking destination, which is located at the edge of the city limits.

The City is situated at the intersection of US Highway 64 and US Highway 321, providing strong regional connections between Lenoir and its surrounding communities. In addition to general aviation airports that are closer to Lenoir, commercial airline service to the region is provided by Concord-Padgett Regional Airport and Charlotte Douglas International Airport, both of which are within 75 miles of Lenoir. The closest passenger rail station is in Gastonia, NC, approximately 54 miles to the south. These transportation assets provide ease of access to and from Lenoir to the larger region, eastern United States, and internationally.

The Plan aims to guide future developments and enhance the quality of life for the entire Lenoir community. The Plan also focuses on two specific neighborhoods, Whitnel (pronounced “WHIT-null”) and West End, and will evaluate any specific needs of these neighborhoods. By using the efforts undertaken as part of this Plan as a neighborhood outreach guide, the City can expand neighborhood planning efforts to other neighborhoods in the future.



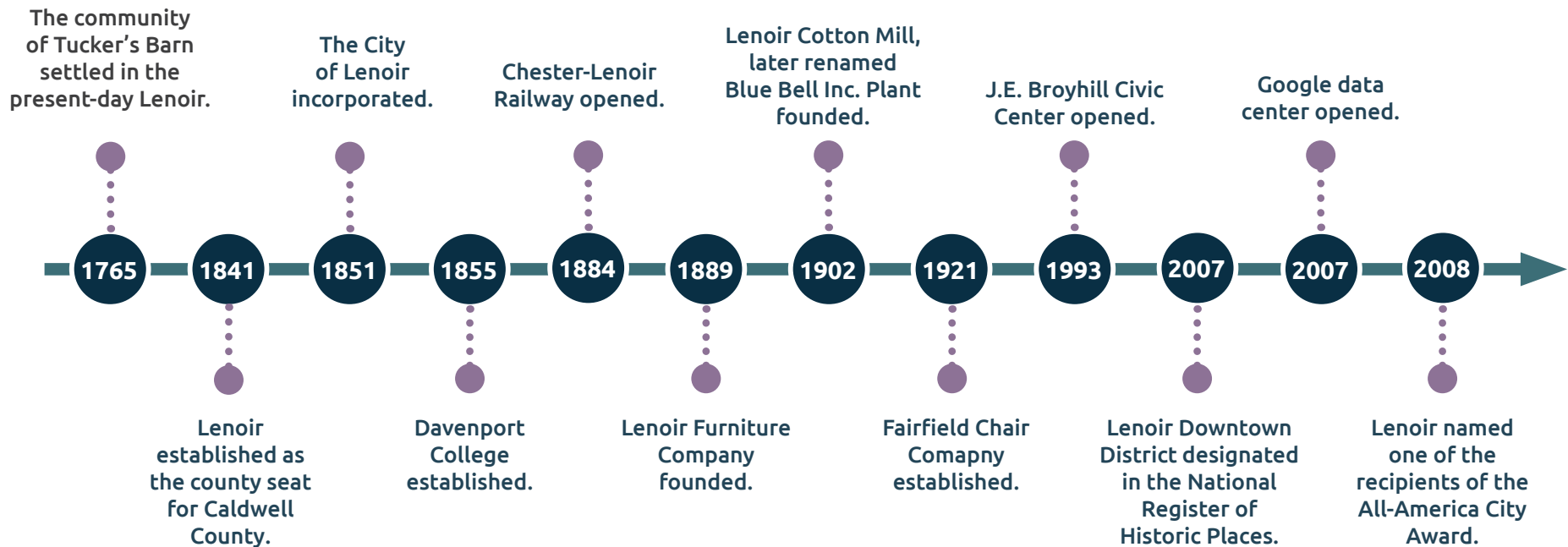
Map 1. Regional Context

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Lenoir has a rich and storied history that is central to the community’s identity. With its long-standing tradition in furniture making and artisan craftsmanship, Lenoir continues to be a major hub for furniture and artisan products today. The City has made a concerted effort to preserve its unique history through a variety of efforts, including the designation of the Lenoir Downtown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places and is studying other areas for potential National Register designation.

The first settlement in present-day Lenoir was the community of Tucker’s Barn around 1765, which consisted of a homestead on the north side of Lower Creek. The homestead slowly became a community gathering place and when Caldwell County was created in 1841, Lenoir was selected as the county seat due to its ease of access to the larger region. Named in honor of the Revolutionary War General William Lenoir, the City of Lenoir has been home to furniture companies since Lenoir Furniture Company opened in 1889. Throughout the years, the furniture industry has brought numerous job opportunities to the region and shaped the City’s identity with Broyhill, Fairfield, Bernhardt, and Kincaid Furniture companies making furniture in Lenoir. Today, Lenoir is still home to furniture manufacturing, with Bernhardt Furniture’s corporate headquarters and manufacturing facilities located throughout the City, but it is also diversifying into medical, technology, and education industries, with facilities for Exela Pharma Sciences, Greer Labs, UNC Health Caldwell, and Blue Ridge Energy (BREMCO) located in the City.

Figure 1. City Timeline





City Hall



Lenoir in 1938



Main Street in 1907

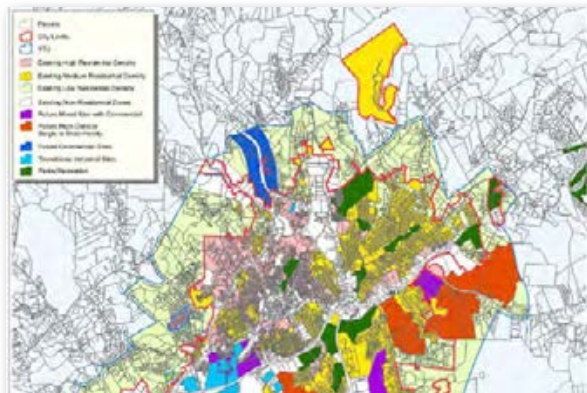


Original Courthouse

RECENT PLANNING EFFORTS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2007)

The Lenoir Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document that guides future developments by outlining land use, transportation, and other policies. The plan was created by the Comprehensive Planning Committee with multiple public engagement opportunities. The plan includes Lenoir's Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and strategies for each land use type. It also discusses specific policies related to transportation, public services, economic development, natural and environmental resources, and historic and cultural resources.



Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan

COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (2010)

The Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan aims to identify current and future needs in Lenoir and guide the prioritization of park upgrades, expansion, and land acquisition. Plan recommendations focus on two important components of Lenoir's park system -- recreation facilities and programming and greenway and trail systems. The City has worked to implement strategies that enhance local and regional greenway and trail system connectivity and make improvements to existing facilities to meet current and future needs.



Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan

COMPREHENSIVE PEDESTRIAN PLAN (2012)

The Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan guides Lenoir's planning, design, financing, implementation, and maintenance of the proposed pedestrian system. The plan seeks to create a "safe, aesthetic, equitable, and well-connected pedestrian system" that enhances the overall quality of life. This plan is expected to increase walkability in Lenoir and improve the City's pedestrian network. A list of policy recommendations is provided, focusing on the pedestrian network, safety and health, crossing safety, traffic signals, and community strengthening. It also suggests implementing education programs to increase public awareness.



Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan

NORTH MAIN STREET SMALL AREA PLAN (2015)

The North Main Street Small Area Plan was created to guide historic preservation efforts and new beautification and infill projects in the North Main Street area, which is the major corridor leading to Downtown Lenoir. The plan also prioritizes protection of existing residents from displacement and enhancing active transportation opportunities.

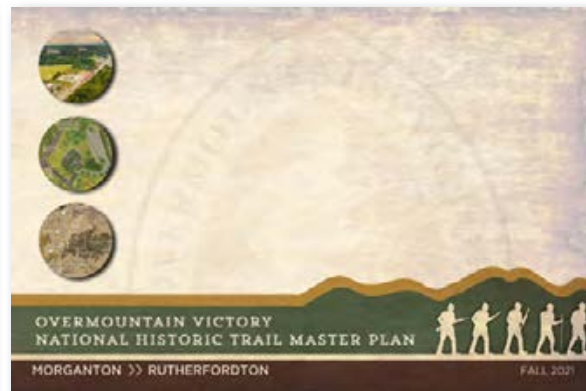
The plan provides detailed recommendations on the streetscape, land use mix, design standards, historic preservation, code enforcement, recreation, and branding and public art. These recommendations are expected to be implemented by both public and private investments.



North Main Street Small Area Plan

OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL LENOIR-TO-MORGANTON MASTER PLAN (2015)

The Master Plan outlines the details for creating a regional, multi-state system of trails following the route in which the Overmountain Men marched in 1780. The segment from Lenoir to Morganton is designed to be a multi-use walking path that follows the congressionally designated corridor. In Lenoir, the National Historic Trail will follow the alignment of the discontinued rail line. The City is partnering with Caldwell County and surrounding municipalities, as well as several organizations, to implement the plan.



Overmountain Victory Trail Master Plan

BICYCLE PLAN (2017)

Lenoir's Bicycle Plan was created based on the recommendation in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. The plan envisions Lenoir as a place where residents and visitors can bike safely and conveniently on a connected and accessible bicycle network. An existing conditions assessment and multiple public engagement opportunities led to a list of recommendations to improve Lenoir's bicycle system. Recommendations focus on balancing the vision for on-street bike lanes and the demand for on-street parking. Twelve priority projects have been identified that could be built over the next 10 years. In addition to these priority projects, the plan also suggests the City implement various programs and policies to achieve its vision, such as adopting a Complete Streets policy, creating a Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Commission, and establishing a local Safe Routes to School program.



Bicycle Plan

COMPREHENSIVE ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY (2018)

The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office worked with the City on the Comprehensive Architectural Survey to locate, document, and evaluate Lenoir's historic resources. The plan identifies the historic themes and events that shaped Lenoir's developments and analyzes their influence on the built environment. This survey documented approximately 400 historic resources in Lenoir. Based on the results, the plan recommends 10 individual properties and two historic districts to be included in the National Register Study List. Further study and documentation of specific areas in Lenoir is also recommended.



Comprehensive Architectural Survey

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (2021)

The Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) aims to summarize the City's efforts in complying with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit and the Clean Water Act. It also aims to address community needs and local water quality issues. The plan describes stormwater flows and receiving water bodies, threatened or endangered species in the area, and sources of pollution. In addition, the City coordinates with Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) to improve stormwater management and program administration. The City implements various programs to detect and minimize illicit discharge, control construction site runoff, prevent pollution, and enhance public awareness.



Stormwater Management Plan

DOWNTOWN LENOIR MASTER PLAN (2024)

The Downtown Lenoir Master Plan serves as a guide to the revitalization and redevelopment efforts in Downtown Lenoir for the next 10 years. The plan evaluates the existing built environment, demographic, and market conditions in Downtown, in particular the Campus (historic Lenoir High School). The plan recommends a number of policies and initiatives to revitalize the downtown area, with a focus on encouraging adaptive reuse and mixed-use developments, as well as community-oriented pavilions. The Campus is identified as a primary initiative for implementing the Downtown Plan. These strategies are created considering the unique characteristics of the four districts within Downtown and are intended to be implemented in phases.



Downtown Lenoir Master Plan

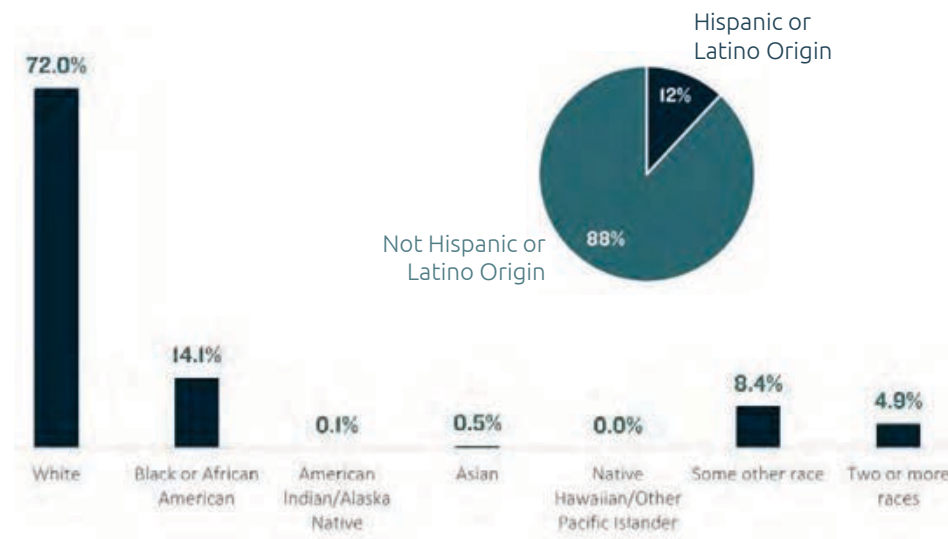
DEMOGRAPHICS AND GROWTH TRENDS

POPULATION

Lenoir houses a total population of 18,301 as per 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Lenoir's population has not seen any major increases since 2010, resulting in a stable population. Through demographic analysis, residents of Lenoir have a relatively even age distribution. 54.9% of residents are female and 45.1% are male.

Race and ethnicity are separate components that make individual groups unique. Race is based on biological factors, such as physical features or hair color, while ethnicity is based on cultural factors, such as language or traditions. The biggest racial group in Lenoir is "White," which accounts for 72% of the total population, followed by "Black or African American" at 14.1%. 12% of Lenoir residents identify themselves as "Hispanic or Latino".

Figure 3. Race and Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022

Figure 2. Population Growth

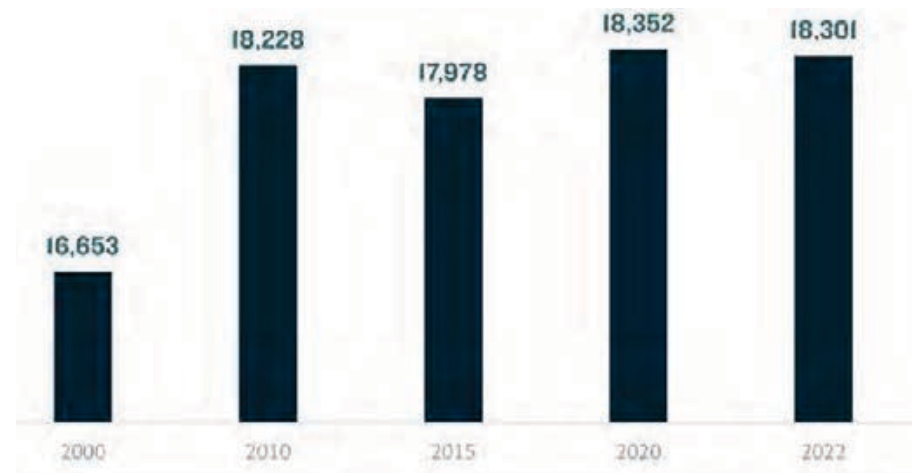
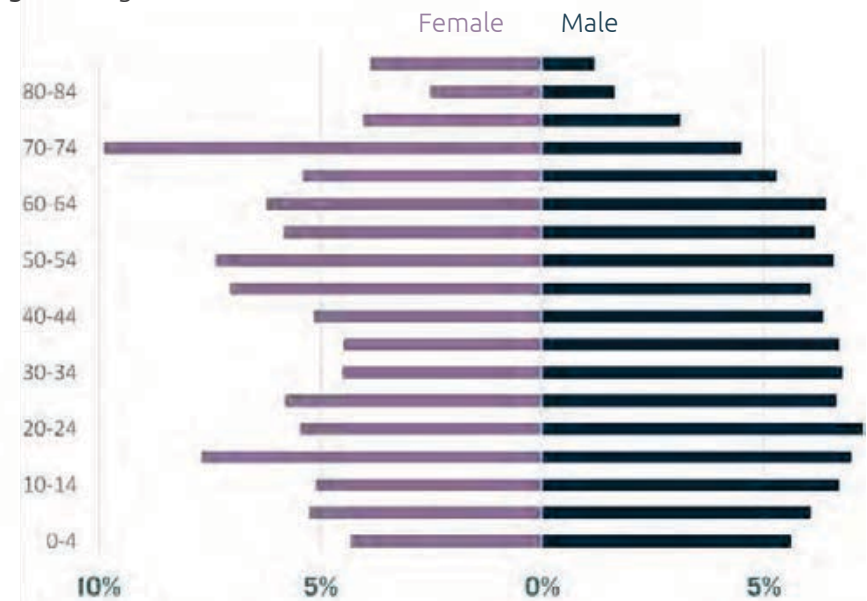


Figure 4. Age and Sex



The median household income in Lenoir is \$44,802, which is lower than median household incomes in North Carolina (\$66,186) and Caldwell County (\$52,362).

In terms of educational attainment, 84.6% of Lenoir residents have at least a high school diploma, 25.5% are college-educated but did not receive a degree, 9.3% have an associate's degree, and 14.3% have at least a bachelor's degree.

Lenoir's economy continues to diversify, providing increasing job opportunities for residents. Management, business, science, and arts occupations currently account for the largest employment sector share in Lenoir with 2,081 employees. Several other occupations (production, transportation, and material moving, sales and office, as well as natural resources, construction, and maintenance) each have more than 1,500 employees. The City is making an effort to create more employment opportunities and retain existing jobs to retain its residents, especially the younger generation. Recent economic growth includes a new Google data center, Exela Pharma Sciences expansions, and Blue Ridge Energy headquarters locating in the City.

Figure 5. Educational Attainment

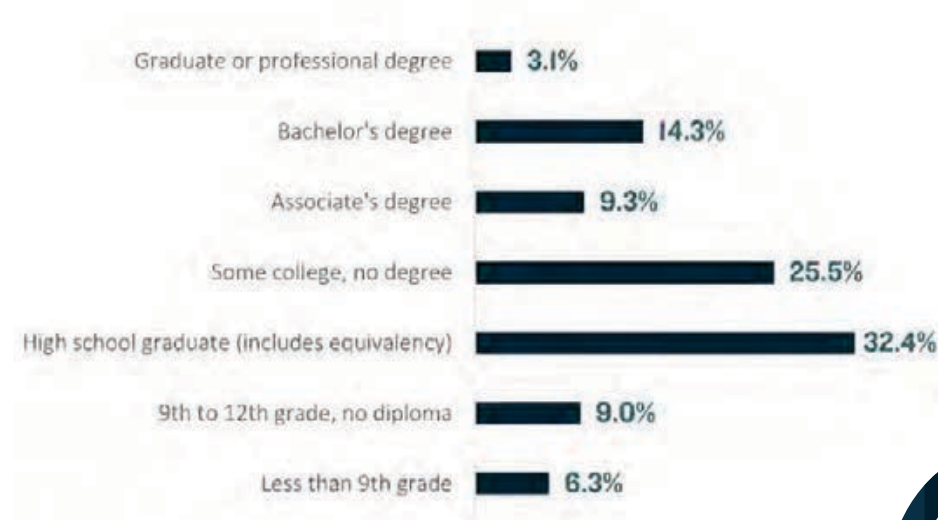


Figure 6. Employment Sectors and Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022

EXISTING LAND USE

The existing land use provides a snapshot of how properties throughout the City are being used at this time. This information is used to help provide context, identify existing adjacent uses that may be in conflict, and pinpoint locations where uses will likely not change in the future. Existing land uses help serve as the basis for developing the Future Land Use Map. Map 2 on page 12 illustrates the existing land uses in the corporate limits and in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Single-family residential land use dominates the majority of developed land, accounting for 32.9% of the land in the city limits and 33.9% of the land in the ETJ. In contrast, multifamily residential only accounts for less than 1% of the land area in the city limits and is absent in the ETJ. A crucial aspect of the Future Land Use Map is to ensure that Lenoir residents are provided with diverse housing options. Vacant land, which might include agricultural land, forests, open fields, etc., is the second largest land use in the City at 26.0%.

Industrial is the next largest land use in Lenoir, accounting for 11.4% of the land area in the City and 3.8% of land in the ETJ. In both the City and ETJ, heavy industrial uses account for greater land area than light industrial uses. These uses are scattered in various locations across the City. Industrial developments have long been integral to Lenoir's history and economy, and they continue to play an important role in supporting a strong economic base. Retail/commercial land use is the next most common, accounting for 7.8% of the total land area, and is generally located along major roadways in the City.

Currently, more than a third of the land in the City and ETJ remains vacant (35.6%). This vacant land represents enormous potential for the City to accommodate future industrial, commercial, and residential growth, while preserving quality open space for residents to enjoy. It should be noted that ETJ zoning typically only allows for single-family home development unless annexed.

Figure 7. Existing Land Use Acreages

Land Use Category	City Limits		ETJ		Total	
	Acreage	%	Acreage	%	Acreage	%
Heavy Industrial	1,066.5	8.4%	192.6	3.0%	1,259.1	6.6%
Light Industrial	380.6	3.0%	49.4	0.8%	429.9	2.3%
Manufactured Home	82.3	0.7%	14.5	0.2%	96.8	0.5%
Multifamily	63.3	0.5%	0.0	0.0%	63.3	0.3%
Office or Institutional	412.6	3.3%	102.7	1.6%	515.3	2.7%
Parks and Open Space	400.7	3.2%	0.8	0.0%	401.5	2.1%
Retail/Commercial	1,447.0	11.4%	38.7	0.6%	1,485.7	7.8%
Right-of-Way	1,371.5	10.8%	321.5	5.1%	1,693.0	8.9%
Single-Family	4,174.2	32.9%	2,146.0	33.9%	6,320.3	33.2%
Vacant	3,303.2	26.0%	3,468.8	54.8%	6,772.0	35.6%
Total	12,702.0	100.0%	6,416.0	100.0%	19,037.0	100.0%

ZONING AND OVERLAY DISTRICTS

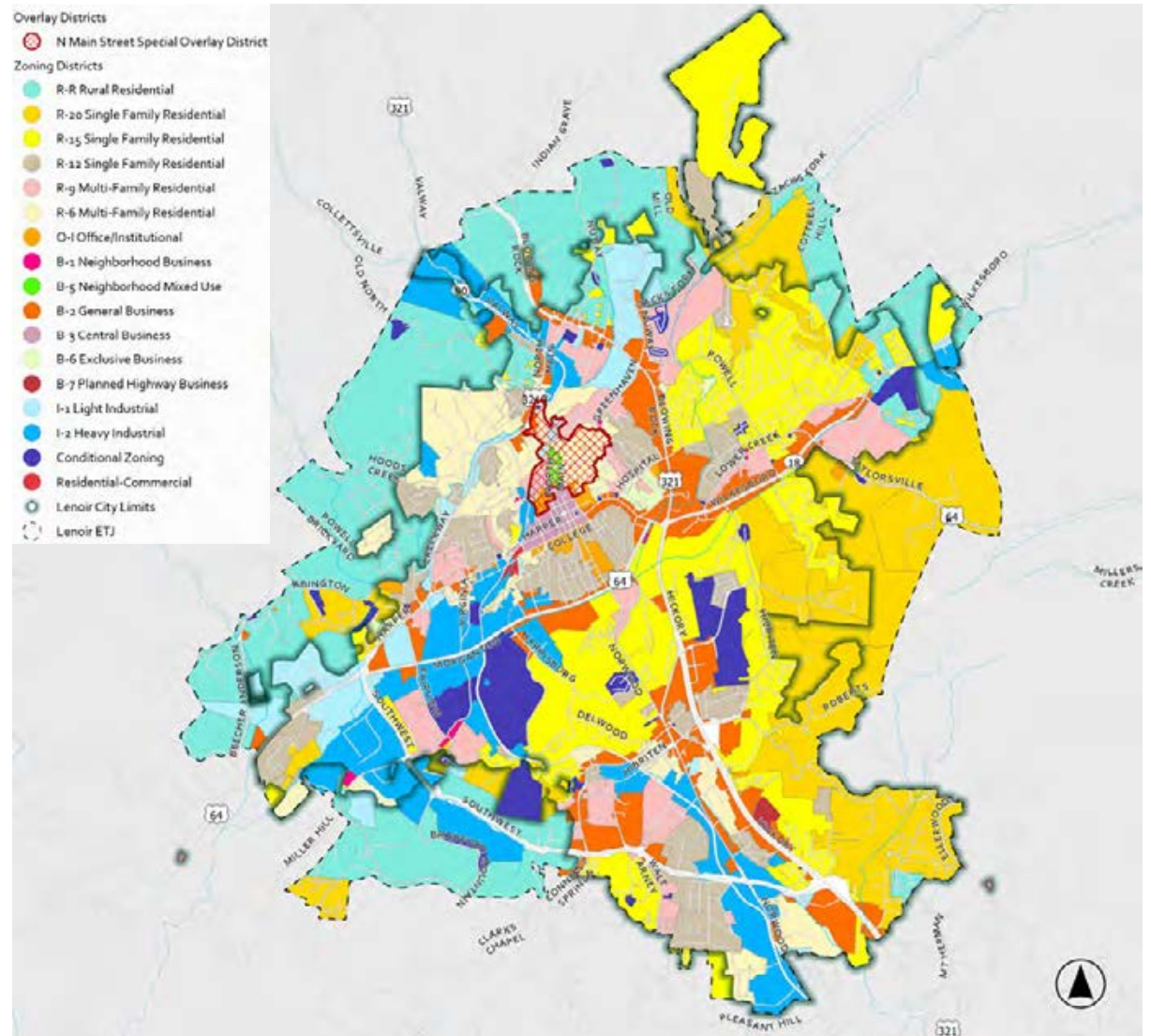
Lenoir currently has 17 zoning districts and one overlay district that allow different types of developments. These districts are grouped into the following categories: residential, business, mixed-use, industrial, and overlay districts. Map 3 illustrates the locations of various zoning and overlay districts in the City.

TRANSITIONAL/MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

Transitional districts include Office/Institutional, Neighborhood Business (B-1), and Neighborhood Mixed Use (B-5). These districts are located along North Main Street, Finley Avenue, and Virginia Street. They act as transitional zones between residential and commercial or industrial districts and promote mixed-use developments.

SPECIAL/OVERLAY DISTRICTS

The North Main Street Special Overlay District (S-2) was created to facilitate the implementation of the North Main Street Small Area Plan, including the design standards and permitted uses. It is intended to enhance the appearance of N. Main Street, encourage appropriate non-residential, neighborhood-serving uses, protect existing residents from displacement, and enhance opportunities for active transportation and recreation. As an overlay district, it is applied in tandem with the underlying zoning district to achieve the overall vision of the Plan while ensuring compatible and orderly development of the community's character.



Map 3. Zoning and Overlay Districts

OPPORTUNITIES

Redevelopment or Reuse of Vacant Properties

Vacant properties in the City are opportunities for future investment through revitalization and redevelopment. These properties can be used to increase residential density where appropriate and provide convenient access to employment centers and daily commercial needs.



Vacant Property in Lenoir

Vacant Land

More than one-third of the land in Lenoir is currently vacant, implying there is enormous potential for future developments. The City can leverage these resources to help meet community needs, such as housing, education, recreation, and new job creation.



Vacant Land in Lenoir

Trail and Greenway Connectivity

Lenoir's greenway system consists of 10 miles of trails, allowing residents the opportunity to walk, run, and bike in areas protected from vehicular traffic. By extending the trail system to additional locations in the City, especially key destinations and community gathering places, as well as repairing and extending existing sidewalk networks, residents and visitors will have better access to these places and can better utilize community resources.



Rick Rash Trail

OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

Vibrant Arts and Culture

Lenoir continues to celebrate its rich history and culture, including customized wayfinding signage, public art and sculptures throughout Downtown, and numerous local festivals, such as the NC Blackberry Festival. The City also has active artisans and artists, with the Caldwell Arts Council located in Downtown. These cultural assets help form the community's identity and support a vibrant, local culture.



Art Exhibit in Downtown Lenoir

Developments along Commercial Corridors

Lenoir's location at a major crossroads provides ample transportation corridors bringing visitors to and from surrounding communities. These corridors have served as locations for commercial development; however, many opportunities exist to further capitalize on these properties to add commercial development in the City.



Existing Commercial Development

Neighborhood-Focused Approach

Neighborhoods are the fabric of a community, and Lenoir is made up of numerous distinct neighborhoods. Each neighborhood is unique and has specific needs that may not apply to other parts of the City. In order to obtain specific insight into neighborhoods and identify what improvements may be needed, this Plan includes a detailed look at two neighborhoods: West End and Whitnel. The City anticipates using this approach for future planning efforts when evaluating other neighborhoods across the City.



West End Community Park

CONSTRAINTS

Limited Local Businesses and Restaurants

Existing businesses and restaurants in Lenoir are primarily chain stores or fast-food restaurants, with limited local business or restaurant options. Lenoir residents hope to see more small-scale, local businesses to allow them to support the local economy and have diverse options.



Fast-food Restaurant along Harper Avenue

Lack of Transportation Options

Driving is the dominant mode of transportation in Lenoir, with a small percentage of residents walking or biking within the City. Active transportation users have also expressed safety concerns when traveling on streets alongside automobiles. This reflects the lack of transportation options, especially for residents who are unable or cannot afford to drive, which may hinder their accessibility to daily needs.



North Main Street

Lack of Housing Diversity

Housing availability is an increasing issue for Lenoir residents. The community expressed concerns about not being able to find housing units in Lenoir even if they work in the City. Not only is there a need for more new housing, there is also a need for increased housing diversity including affordable housing, senior housing, multifamily homes, and single-family homes.



A Single-family House in Lenoir

CONSTRAINTS (CONTINUED)

Difficulty Attracting and Retaining Younger Generation

Currently, employment opportunities in Lenoir vary across several major industries. Together with the challenges in securing affordable housing options, the City may experience difficulties in attracting and retaining younger workers. While the local job market is diversifying, additional government support or initiatives may be needed to provide more employment options for the younger population.



Corporate Headquarters in Lenoir

Slow Population Growth

Over the past decade, the City's population has not grown, which creates challenges for increasing local government revenues, providing a robust workforce, and supporting new investment in the community. A growing population helps support commercial activity and provides a strong tax base for publicly owned property and infrastructure maintenance.



Vacant Commercial Property

Loss of Industry

Lenoir experienced a significant industrial decline, particularly in furniture manufacturing between late 1990s and early 2000s. The industry suffered major setbacks due to increased competition from lower-cost imports. The broader decline in manufacturing across North Carolina from 1990 to 2020 further contributed to this downturn, particularly in the furniture and textile sectors.



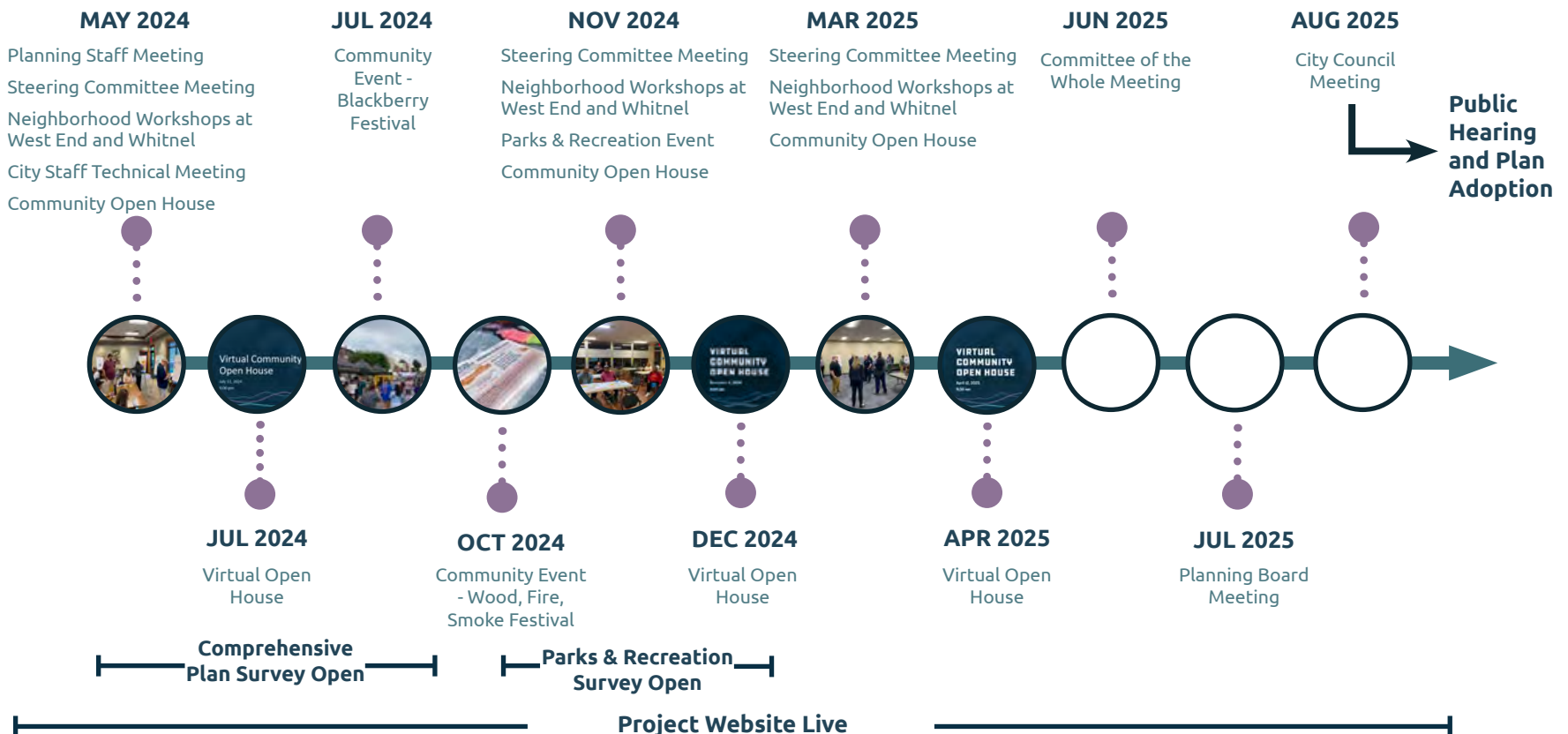
Fairfield Chair Company

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The vision and guiding principles for the Plan were created based on public input obtained during the project. The vision and guiding principles are used as the foundation for the Plan and help consolidate community feedback for Lenoir's future.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engaging the community is vital to creating a successful plan and requires numerous opportunities for public input. The public engagement process was spread across 18 months and utilized multiple engagement tools to develop the Plan. Engagement approaches and tools included in-person and virtual community open houses, community events, neighborhood meetings, technical City staff meetings, Steering Committee meetings, online surveys, and online engagement tools, as well as public meetings for adoption recommendation by the Planning Board and adoption consideration by the City Council. A detailed summary of the feedback received is included in Appendix A.



ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Community engagement is important to develop relationships with the public, hear directly from residents on their community, and enhance trust and support in the decision-making process. City staff, project partners, and the project team utilized various engagement methods and tools throughout the planning process to bring people together, educate them regarding the different elements of the Plan, and gather input in a structured, inclusive, and transparent method. The following public engagement methods and tools were used during the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee includes residents, business owners, and community members who are knowledgeable about Lenoir and are interested in helping guide the City's future growth. The role of committee members is to serve as advocates for the Plan and to guide Plan recommendations. The planning team held three meetings with the Steering Committee.

ONLINE SURVEY AND PROJECT WEBSITE

A project page was created on the City's website where the public could learn about the project and review project materials. An online survey was also used to gather input from the community about the future of Lenoir. The survey also asked questions about existing conditions in the area and the vision for what Lenoir should look like in the future. The survey was available from June 24, 2024 to September 6, 2024.

CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING BOARD

The project team met with the City Council and the Planning Board throughout the planning process to gather input from each group about the future of Lenoir and provide periodic updates. The Planning Board held a public meeting to make a recommendation to the City Council for adoption of the final draft Plan. The City Council held a public hearing for the adoption consideration of the final Plan.

COORDINATION WITH CITY DEPARTMENTS

The project team met with representatives from the Planning and Community Development, Public Services, Downtown Economic Development, City Manager, Communications and Public Information, Fire, Police, Parks and Recreation, and other departments to gather information on specific topics and ensure coordination with upcoming funded projects.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND OUTREACH EVENTS

Various community meetings and outreach events were held to allow the public to learn about the project and provide feedback on the Plan. Outreach events included attending existing community events, such as the North Carolina Blackberry Festival on July 12, 2024 and the Wood, Fire, Smoke Festival on October 19, 2024. The project team also organized three community meetings which included informational and interactive elements. The purpose of these meetings and outreach events was to provide many opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process and provide feedback about the Plan recommendations.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Three neighborhood workshops were held with the West End and Whitnel neighborhoods to provide residents with additional opportunities to be involved in the planning process. This Plan adopts a neighborhood-focused approach and uses input from these events to develop a toolkit for future neighborhood outreach.

WHAT WE HEARD

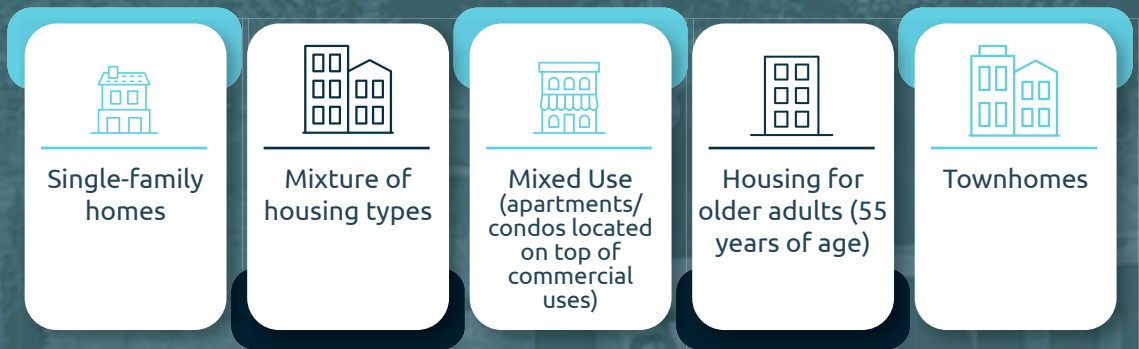
Top 5 areas where the City is doing well

- 1 Fire service
- 2 Police service
- 3 Water, sewer, trash collection
- 4 Creating more opportunities for walking/biking
- 5 Street maintenance

Top 5 areas that need more attention

- 1 Attracting new businesses to the area
- 2 Downtown revitalization
- 3 Providing adequate housing options for all
- 4 Planning for the future
- 5 Parks and recreation

Types of new housing that people would like to see in the City



Types of new commercial businesses that people would like to see in the City



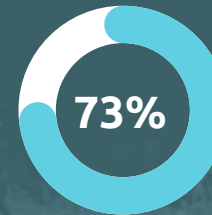
Actions to beautify the City



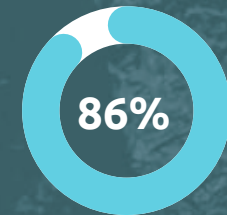
Vision for Lenoir



Survey respondents who would like to see more non-vehicular transportation options in the City, such as walking, biking, and skating



Survey respondents who like the City taking a neighborhood approach to projects and service improvements



Biggest Priorities



Things missing in the neighborhoods

- Sidewalks
- Well-kept properties
- Restaurants/cafe/retail stores
- Public parks
- Recreational opportunities (mini golf, arcade, bowling, etc.)

Favorite things about Lenoir

- Greenways and parks
- Festivals and events
- Community spirit
- Small-town charm
- Historic roots
- Minimal traffic

Vision for West End

More commercial properties
Fewer dilapidated homes
New homes
Beautification
Greenways

Vision for Whitnel

Bring Whitnel "back to life"
More events
Not just a pass-through of Lenoir
Clean it up and make it nice
More entertainment for children and older population

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

VISION

The vision statement sets the groundwork for future growth and development within Lenoir. A community-driven vision is vital for the success of any plan. The vision is supported by the goals and guiding principles outlined in the following section.

The vision was crafted during the Comprehensive Plan process with input from the community and stakeholders throughout the planning process. It reflects the community's aspirations for Lenoir's future.

VISION STATEMENT

Our City is a vibrant, inclusive community where residents take pride in Lenoir's historic past and actively contribute to a thriving, family-friendly environment. We celebrate our artisan roots, fostering creativity and craftsmanship that enrich our cultural fabric. Our neighborhoods are dynamic and flourishing, offering safe and welcoming spaces for all.

We embrace the natural beauty that surrounds us, integrating green spaces and sustainable practices into our urban landscape. As we grow and innovate, we remain committed to diversifying our economic base, ensuring resilience and prosperity for future generations. Together, we build a city that honors its past, cherishes its present, and confidently strides into the future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles are individual elements that support the overall vision. While the vision statement describes the overarching desire for the future, the guiding principles represent the priorities for the community and provide further guidance for growth, development, and decision-making. The guiding principles are influenced by the key themes from the public input. Through this process, the following five guiding principles have been drafted. Each guiding principle is further supported by a number of bullet points to clarify what is encompassed within the statement.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1 Build and Promote Community Pride**
- 2 Enhance Livability**
- 3 Expand Housing Options**
- 4 Support Commercial Opportunities**
- 5 Improve Mobility and Connectivity**

GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles will serve as the basis for developing measurable action items to implement the Plan. The guiding principles are prioritized as follows.

#1 Build and Promote Community Pride

1. Promote diversity and create a sense of inclusivity for all members of the community.
2. Build on the artistic roots of the community to build an identity as a cultural center through museums, local businesses, and festivals.
3. Beautify the City and establish the community identity through the expansion of City branding, historic preservation, supporting local art installations, and providing additional streetscaping.
4. Support high-quality development by enforcing property maintenance and encouraging the redevelopment of underutilized properties.
5. Preserve the small-town charm and friendly feeling that is core to the community, while encouraging growth.

#2 Enhance Livability

1. Improve safety in the community related to both crime and the sense of safety for those walking through the community.
2. Support sustainable growth and protect existing neighborhoods by ensuring adequate infrastructure exists and is maintained that allows for an appropriate mix of new commercial and residential development.
3. Provide more entertainment options for all ages such as playgrounds, splash pads, the Central Theater Downtown, local dining, and other indoor and outdoor recreational facilities to attract and retain young families, as well as support older populations.
4. Encourage historic preservation, especially in Downtown and in study-listed neighborhoods.

#3 Expand Housing Options

1. Support rehabilitation of existing housing and a greater variety of housing types with an emphasis on missing middle housing, as well as housing for seniors.
2. Encourage a variety of new housing options including multifamily, attached residential, and single-family homes.
3. Facilitate infill development and redevelopment of housing to revitalize existing neighborhoods.

#4 Support Commercial Opportunities

1. Capitalize on tourism opportunities within Lenoir and from visitors traveling to surrounding areas.
2. Improve and diversify the local industry and support training opportunities for higher paying jobs.
3. Diversify and enhance the retail and commercial offerings along the primary commercial corridors.
4. Foster redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties.
5. Promote commercial growth, while supporting local business.

#5 Improve Mobility and Connectivity

1. Maintain existing streets and bridge gaps in the current network, where needed, to create better connectivity.
2. Expand the availability of public transportation, particularly to provide access to medical and daily needs.
3. Improve walkability and bikeability by expanding the sidewalk and greenway network and providing safe roadway crossings.



The background is a dark, moody photograph of a historic building with a prominent steeple, possibly a church or schoolhouse. The building has multiple windows and a classic architectural style. In the foreground, there are some trees and a grassy area. At the bottom of the image, there are three decorative wavy lines in shades of purple and teal.

02

LAND USE AND CHARACTER AREAS

INTRODUCTION

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) serves as a guide to direct the community's growth and development in the upcoming years. It seeks to balance the requirements of residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational spaces while maintaining the area's unique character and environmental integrity.

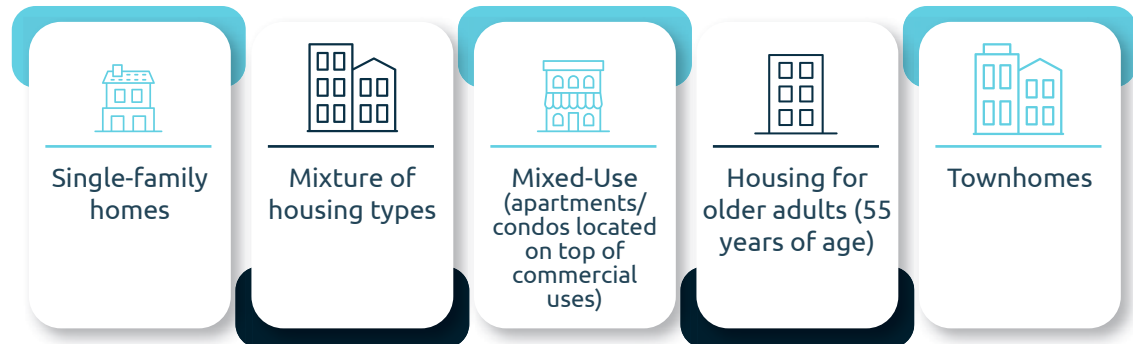
This chapter illustrates the FLUM, provides an overview of land use categories, and establishes a vision for development along the identified commercial corridors.

This chapter provides:

- Future Land Use Map
- Future Land Use Dashboards
- Neighborhood Focus Areas
- Commercial Corridors

WHAT WE HEARD

Types of new housing that people would like to see in the City



Are there things that your neighborhood is missing that could make it better?

- 1 Restaurants/café/retail stores
- 2 Public parks
- 3 Recreational opportunities (bowling, arcade, mini golf)
- 4 Grocery stores
- 5 Playgrounds

Other Comments

The current future land use map is not very informative, which has made zoning recommendations difficult

Need development in areas other than on the 321 corridor

Vacant commercial buildings need to be renovated to become mixed-use properties

Need a variety of housing types

Need more neighborhood-scale commercial uses in Whitnel and West End

WHAT IS A FUTURE LAND USE MAP?

The FLUM is a key component of the Comprehensive Plan. The FLUM provides a roadmap for future development in the community. The FLUM is developed by considering recent socio-economic and demographic changes, gathering community input on issues and priorities, and making informed predictions about future growth. Moreover, the topography and existing development patterns play a crucial role in determining future land use as the City of Lenoir continues to expand.

The FLUM illustrated in this Plan shows the desired growth pattern for the City of Lenoir and the ETJ. The FLUM is not regulatory in nature. Instead, it acts as a guiding tool for the City when making decisions about zoning changes and amendments presented to the City Council. Figure 8 provides an overview of the key differences between future land use and zoning.

Figure 8. FLUM v/s Zoning Map

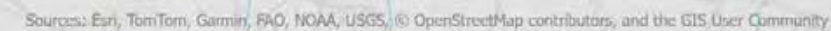
Future Land Use Map		Zoning Map	
Purpose			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recommended use of land and the character of development in the community to achieve long-range goals▪ High-level, general development plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Basis for applying unique land use regulations and development standards▪ Micro-level, site-specific focus	
Use			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Guidance for rezonings, special use permits, and other decisions▪ Identifies common goals for residents and business owners		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Regulates development▪ Dictates what is allowed where and specifics for land development▪ Is the law	
Input and Consideration			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Inventory of existing land uses▪ Elected and appointed officials▪ Community input and ideas▪ Data and best practices▪ NC state law: Plans are advisory in nature		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ FLUM is referred to for general guidance▪ Other community objectives, such as economic development, redevelopment, flood prevention, etc.▪ Rezoning that are not consistent with the FLUM automatically update the FLUM	

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The FLUM for Lenoir identifies twelve land use categories and three commercial corridor overlays ranging from low-intensity rural residential uses to high-intensity industrial uses. The percentage breakup of each of the future land use categories is listed in Figure 9.

Land Use Category		City Limits		ETJ		Total	
		Acreage	%	Acreage	%	Acreage	%
	Rural Residential	115.9	0.9%	3,932.7	62.1%	4,048.6	21.3%
	Low-Density Residential	5,747.7	45.3%	1,797.0	28.4%	7,544.7	39.6%
	Medium-Density Residential	1,893.7	14.9%	33.0	0.5%	1,926.7	10.1%
	High-Density Residential	127.0	1.0%	0	0.0%	127.0	0.7%
	Downtown	62.2	0.5%	0	0.0%	62.2	0.3%
	Neighborhood Mixed-Use	230.4	1.8%	3.0	0.0%	233.4	1.2%
	Mixed-Use	1,052.1	8.3%	81.3	1.3%	1,133.4	6.0%
	Corridor Commercial	377.0	3.0%	0	0.0%	377.0	2.0%
	Light Industrial	765.6	6.0%	139.6	2.2%	905.2	4.8%
	Heavy Industrial	1,391.0	11.0%	332.8	5.3%	1,723.8	9.1%
	Public Institutional	336.0	2.6%	0.5	0.0%	336.5	1.8%
	Parks and Open Space	603.4	4.8%	15.1	0.2%	618.5	3.2%
Total		12,702.0	100.0%	6,335.0	100.0%	19,037.0	100.0%

Figure 9. Future Land Use Acreages



FUTURE LAND USE DASHBOARDS

Land Use Dashboards provide staff, appointed officials, and elected representatives with a one-stop location for information related to the future land use categories established in the FLUM. The components of each dashboard are described below. Numbers assigned to each component may be referenced with the corresponding dashboard example.

1 INTENT AND CHARACTER

Each category section begins with a general description of the land use category, providing narrative details about the overall intent and land use make up of each category. The descriptions are a framework for how each area is expected to develop or redevelop in the future.

Descriptions are accompanied by sample imagery to help visually demonstrate the look and feel of the category. Each category will vary in development type, mix, intensity, and scale, as noted in the dashboards and appropriateness tables following the description.

2 APPROPRIATENESS TABLE

The appropriateness tables show the ratio of residential and non-residential uses expected for that category as well as the expected mix of development types present under each of those. These uses can take the form of several different development types; for example, an office use could appear in a complete neighborhood, an employment center, a shopping center, or an activity center, depending on its scale, form, and context.

The appropriateness of each development type within a land use category is illustrated using a scale of 0-3 shaded dots.

- **0 shaded dots:** Not appropriate
- **1-2 shaded dots:** Appropriate under given conditions
- **3 shaded dots:** Overall appropriate

Parks, open space and civic uses are considered appropriate across all Land Use Categories and are considered appropriate in both residential and non-residential developments, and are therefore not called out separately in the development ratios.

1

DASHBOARD EXAMPLE

Intent and Character

2

Appropriateness	Conditions
● ● ●	
● ● ○	
● ○ ○	
○ ○ ○	
○ ○ ○	
● ● ●	
● ● ●	

3

4

Density	Intensity	Scale

5

Development Type

3 PHOTO EXAMPLES

Photo examples are provided for each land use to provide visual illustration of the type of development appropriate for the land use.

4 DENSITY, INTENSITY, AND SCALE

Density

A housing or dwelling unit is defined as a self-contained space that meets all basic living requirements, including designated sleeping and living areas, along with at least one bathroom and kitchen. A 4-bedroom house is one dwelling unit and a studio apartment is also one dwelling unit.

The term density refers to the number of dwelling units or jobs located in a specific area, noted as an amount per acre. This Plan uses dwelling units per acre (DUA) to measure residential density and jobs per acre (JA) to measure employment density. Each category will have a target range of densities appropriate for that land use.

Intensity

Intensity refers to how much of a property or lot is built on, with either buildings or associated development such as driveways and parking areas. For the purpose of this Plan, intensity is defined as:

- **Low:** lot coverage of 50% or less
- **Medium:** >50% to <75% lot coverage
- **High:** 75-100% lot coverage

Scale

Scale refers to the height of the buildings on a property or lot. For the purpose of this Plan, scale is defined as

- **Low-Rise:** 1 to 2 stories
- **Low/Mid-Rise:** 3 to 4 stories
- **Mid-Rise:** 5 to 6 stories
- **High-Rise:** 7+ stories



Downtown Lenoir

5 DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Each category also includes a set of identified development types and will have a primary or most desirable development type, accompanied by secondary types with varying levels of appropriateness. This strategy allows the City to be flexible with market demands that may change from time to time. Although primary types should remain consistent throughout the life of the Plan, secondary types have the flexibility to change so long as they complement the primary type.



Single-Family Detached Homes

A single-family detached home contains one dwelling unit on a lot in a single stand-alone building. Generally, they are the largest lots of all residential development types with low density, scale, and intensity. Single-family detached homes may include an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) that is clearly secondary to the main property unit. ADUs are often above a garage of the primary unit, or at ground level either attached or detached from the primary unit. ADUs are encouraged to support diversity of housing choice and affordability, for both the people who rent the ADU and the people who own the primary unit, as this rental income can help offset mortgage payments.



Duplex, Triplex, and Quadplex Homes and Townhomes

This development type is two to four multifamily units in a stacked or otherwise connected configuration. This development type also includes townhomes, which are single-family attached units and typically have up to about eight units per building group.



Multifamily

Multifamily is five or more units contained within a single building, with units usually stacked on top of each other. Usually, the individual units are for rent (apartments), but may be for sale (condos). A higher-density multifamily development may include multiple buildings on the lot, creating a complex.



Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial is less intense commercial development, such as local retail, offices, restaurants, and services to serve residents at a neighborhood scale. These uses promote walkability and 10-minute neighborhoods, which are neighborhoods that provide residents with access to essential amenities and services within a 10-minute walk from their homes.



General Commercial

General Commercial is more intense and large scale commercial development such as big box stores, chain restaurants, offices, and hotels usually located along major thoroughfares. General Commercial uses provide needed services for the regional population, as well as travelers passing through the area.



Light Industrial

Light Industrial is manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehouse, and similar uses that do not generate nuisances (noise, odor, dust, etc.) and are able to house the entire operation inside the building, meaning there are no materials/products being stored or work happening outdoors. They may also produce less heavy truck traffic than “heavier” industry. This may include buildings that can adapt to and house a variety of tenants and/or uses, such as offices, warehouses, and production or research space.



Heavy Industrial

Heavy Industrial includes industrial uses (manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehousing and similar) that do not fit under Light Industrial above and include more intensive operations on site. This may include outdoor activity and storage. These uses are usually located away from residential areas due to noise, emissions, and traffic.



Parks and Open Space

This development type consists of parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces. Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all land use categories. Park design should be contextually sensitive and provide the types of amenities appropriate for the surrounding land uses. This means parks and open spaces in residential versus non-residential areas may be very different.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Intent and Character

The Rural Residential future land use category is intended to preserve the rural residential environment and support complementary uses such as farming and forestry. This land use category includes single-family detached homes with large front and side yards. These areas likely do not have public utilities. This land use category should be buffered from high-intensity uses by Low-Density and Medium-Density uses.

Appropriate Land Use

Single-Family Detached Homes, Agriculture, Forestry, Parks and Green Space, Accessory Dwelling Units, Home-based Businesses, Agriculture-related Businesses

Considerations

- New non-residential development is appropriate when it is designed to reflect the rural character.
- Consider using aggregate measures for housing density to allow for the clustering of housing and the preservation of open space.

Density	Intensity	Scale
0-1 DUA	Low	Low-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	●●●	Large lot single-family detached housing appropriate in this land use category. Lot and site design may accommodate an ADU to the side or rear.
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	○○○	
Multifamily Homes	○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○○○	
General Commercial	○○○	
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Intent and Character

The Low-Density Residential future land use category is intended for suburban-style single-family detached homes in a traditional neighborhood pattern. Housing within this designation can consist of a range of housing types and densities, including duplexes. Multifamily development is not appropriate. Different housing types may be integrated to encourage various ownership opportunities. Neighborhoods are encouraged to create a distinct feel from one another to strengthen community identity.

Appropriate Land Use

Single-Family Detached Homes, Duplexes, Accessory Dwelling Units, Parks and Open Spaces, Schools

Considerations

- Stormwater detention should be integrated into designed neighborhoods to act as an amenity.
- Subdivision should ensure connections to surrounding areas through enhanced sidewalks, multi-use sidepaths/ greenways, and roads.

Density	Intensity	Scale
1-4 DUA	Low	Low-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	● ● ●	Large lot single-family detached housing appropriate in this land use category. Lot and site design may accommodate an ADU to the side or rear.
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	● ● ○	Considered appropriate if similar in character and lot standards to single-family detached.
Multifamily Homes	○ ○ ○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○ ○ ○	
General Commercial	○ ○ ○	
Light Industrial	○ ○ ○	
Heavy Industrial	○ ○ ○	
Open Space	● ● ●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

MEDIUM-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Intent and Character

The Medium-Density Residential future land use category is intended to promote housing diversity and affordability to serve a range of local employment types, income levels, and age brackets. It also includes “Missing Middle” housing (duplexes, triplexes, townhomes) with varying densities. This category can serve as a transition between lower-density and higher-density residential uses, as well as higher-intensity commercial uses.

Appropriate Land Use

Duplex, Quadplexes, Single-Family Detached Homes, Single-Family Attached Homes, Patio Homes, Parks and Open Spaces, Schools, Public Facilities

Considerations

- New non-residential development is appropriate when it is designed to reflect the existing character.
- Consider using aggregate measures for housing density to allow for the clustering of housing and the preservation of open space.

Density	Intensity	Scale
4-9 DUA	Medium	Low-Rise to Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	● ● ●	Small lot single-family detached housing appropriate in this land use category. Lot and site design may accommodate an ADU to the side or rear.
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	● ● ●	Overall appropriate.
Multifamily Homes	● ○ ○	May be considered appropriate if the development is neighborhood scale and located in transition zones to buffer lower density residential uses from more intense uses.
Neighborhood Commercial	● ● ○	Generally appropriate with site design compatible with adjacent lower density uses. Appropriate in that it provides for retail, office, and services at a scale compatible with and supportive of surrounding neighborhoods. Promotes walkability and 10-minute neighborhoods.
General Commercial	○ ○ ○	
Light Industrial	○ ○ ○	
Heavy Industrial	○ ○ ○	
Open Space	● ● ●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

HIGH-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Intent and Character

The High-Density Residential future land use category is intended to provide multifamily housing with a varied density range based on location and context of development. This category can serve as a transition between lower-density and higher-density residential uses, as well as higher-intensity commercial uses. High-density developments should promote walkability to encourage pedestrian interaction with the surrounding areas.

Appropriate Land Use

Townhomes, Multifamily residential, Limited Commercial/Mixed-Use Development, Parks and Green Spaces, Schools, Public Facilities

Considerations

- New High-Density Residential development should be integrated into or complemented by the surrounding development.
- Non-residential mixed-uses should be allowed provided it is part of a planned development and does not constitute more than 25% of the development.
- High-Density Residential should be used as a buffer between low- and medium-density residential development and more intense uses.

Density	Intensity	Scale
9+ DUA	Medium to High	Low-Rise to Mid-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	●○○	Considered appropriate with character and lot standards compatible with the surrounding development.
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	●●○	Generally considered appropriate with higher-density multifamily housing.
Multifamily Homes	●●●	Overall appropriate.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●	Appropriate in that it provides for retail and office at a scale compatible with and supportive of surrounding neighborhoods. Promotes walkability and 10-minute neighborhoods.
General Commercial	○○○	
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

DOWNTOWN

Intent and Character

The Downtown future land use category is intended to promote and preserve the City's central business district through the encouragement of mixed-use development with a varied density range based on location and context of development. Integration of public spaces within Downtown should encourage passive and active pedestrian activity. Downtown should consist of a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, and public/semi-public. New and existing uses should prioritize pedestrian-oriented streetscape elements such as lighting, street trees, and benches to create a more welcoming environment.

Appropriate Land Use

Single-Family Detached Homes, Townhomes, Patio Homes, Duplex, Quadplexes, Parks and Green Spaces, Office, Retail, Entertainment, Restaurants, Public Facilities

(Secondary uses include bed and breakfast lodging, live-work buildings, places of assembly, event venues, and home-based businesses.)

Considerations

- Downtown development should be encouraged and supported by on-street parking or public parking lots.
- New development should encourage building to the street at a pedestrian scale, with no off-street parking between the front building facade and the street.
- Pedestrian enhancements such as wide sidewalks, pedestrian furnishings, and street trees should be emphasized.



Density	Intensity	Scale
9+ DUA	High	Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	●○○	Considered appropriate with character and lot standards compatible with the Downtown.
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	●●○	Considered appropriate with character and lot standards compatible with the Downtown.
Multifamily Homes	●●●	May be considered appropriate as vertical mixed-use with character and lot standards compatible with the Downtown.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●	Generally considered appropriate as vertical mixed-use with character and lot standards compatible with the Downtown. Local retail and services should be encouraged in this land use category.
General Commercial	●●●	Generally considered appropriate as vertical mixed-use with character and lot standards compatible with the Downtown. Local retail and services should be encouraged in this land use category.
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED-USE

Intent and Character

The Neighborhood Mixed-Use future land use category is intended to provide a mix of residential and non-residential uses at a neighborhood scale. Commercial uses should be small-scale and centered on local thoroughfare intersections to offer day-to-day services, such as restaurants, retail, and personal services, for surrounding residents. These areas are intended to be accessible by both vehicles and pedestrians.

Appropriate Land Use

Flexible housing types, Senior Housing, Retail, Hotels, Restaurants, Personal Services, Offices

Considerations

- Neighborhood commercial development should be located either at a significant intersection or along a collector or higher street.

Density	Intensity	Scale
4-9 DUA	Medium	Low-Rise to Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	●○○	Considered appropriate with character and lot standards compatible with the surrounding development.
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	●●○	Appropriate with higher density missing middle housing.
Multifamily Homes	●●●	Overall appropriate.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●	Generally appropriate with site design compatible with adjacent lower density uses.
General Commercial	●○○	Generally considered appropriate to provide essential commercial and retail options with site design compatible with adjacent lower density uses.
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

MIXED-USE

Intent and Character

The Mixed-Use future land use category is intended to provide a mix of residential and non-residential uses to locate housing closer to jobs and services, ideally within walking distance. Similar to Neighborhood Commercial, pedestrian and active transportation should be prioritized in these areas to provide convenient access to destinations.

Appropriate Land Use

Townhomes, Quadplexes, Patio Homes, Parks and Green Spaces, Office, Retail, Entertainment, Restaurants, Public Facilities

(Secondary uses include bed and breakfast lodging, live-work buildings, places of assembly or event venues and home-based business.)

Considerations

- New development should encourage building to the street at a pedestrian scale, with no off-street parking between the front building facade and the street.
- Pedestrian enhancements such as wide sidewalks, pedestrian furnishings, and street trees should be emphasized.
- New development should fit with the character of adjacent areas.

Density	Intensity	Scale
9+ DUA	Medium	Low/Mid-Rise to High-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	○○○	
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	●●○	Appropriate with higher density missing middle housing.
Multifamily Homes	●●●	Overall appropriate.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●	Generally appropriate with site design compatible with adjacent lower density uses.
General Commercial	●●●	Generally considered appropriate to provide essential commercial and retail options to serve adjacent uses.
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL

Intent and Character

The Corridor Commercial future land use category is intended for predominantly non-residential uses along high-traffic, regionally serving thoroughfares. The land uses are typically comprised of varying lot sizes and intensities, predominately serving the customers arriving via automobile. While these areas will always be auto-oriented, there is opportunity to improve bicycle accommodations and to create a pleasing environment that leaves a lasting impression on residents and visitors.

Appropriate Land Use

Retail, Hotels, Restaurants, Personal Services, Offices, Multifamily

Considerations

- Development should gain primary access from an arterial street.
- Pedestrian enhancements should be a focus with comfort and safety taking priority.
- New development should include improved standards for building form and architecture, buffering, landscaping, and signage.

Density	Intensity	Scale
9+ DUA	High	Mid-Rise to High-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	○○○	
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	●○○	Considered appropriate to encourage mixed-use development.
Multifamily Homes	●●○	Considered appropriate to encourage mixed-use development.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●	Overall appropriate.
General Commercial	●●●	Overall appropriate.
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

Intent and Character

The Light Industrial future land use category is intended to create employment opportunities. This area is intended to be located near adequate thoroughfares which provide convenient access for vehicular traffic including freight. These areas may require more intensive screening and buffering from surrounding development.

Appropriate Land Use

Wholesaling, Indoor Warehouse, Industrial Business Park, Retail, Office, Manufacturing (with only indoor activity) adjacent to high-intensity commercial uses or Warehouse/Storage

Considerations

- New development should include a landscape buffer between incompatible land uses (such as between residential and manufacturing).
- Outdoor storage should be designed in a manner that screens materials and equipment from public rights-of-way and only allowed in areas surrounded by other industrial land uses.
- New business park and industrial development should be designed in a manner which orients loading docks and bays away from the front property line or public rights-of-way.

Density	Intensity	Scale
N/A	High	Low/Mid-Rise to High-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	○○○	
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	○○○	
Multifamily Homes	○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○	Overall appropriate; retail and services such as restaurants, lodging, etc. that cater to the needs of the workers in this area should be encouraged.
General Commercial	●●●	Overall appropriate; retail and services such as restaurants, lodging, etc. that cater to the needs of the workers in this area should be encouraged.
Light Industrial	●●●	Considered appropriate with high-quality design standards.
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

HEAVY INDUSTRIAL

Intent and Character

The Heavy Industrial future land use category is intended to create employment opportunities and provide locations for major manufacturing activity to occur. This area is intended to be located near adequate thoroughfares which provide convenient access for vehicular traffic including freight. These areas may require more intensive screening and buffering from surrounding development.

Appropriate Land Use

Wholesaling, Manufacturing (with no outdoor activity if located adjacent to lower-intensity residential uses), Indoor Warehouse, Industrial Business Park, Retail, Office, Manufacturing (with indoor or outdoor activity), Warehouse/Storage

Considerations

- New development should include a landscape buffer between these uses and any property that is a less intense use.
- Outdoor storage should be designed in a manner that screens materials and equipment from public rights-of-way to the extent practicable.

Density	Intensity	Scale
N/A	High	Mid-Rise to High-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	○○○	
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	○○○	
Multifamily Homes	○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○	Overall appropriate; retail and services such as restaurants, lodging, etc. that cater to the needs of the workers in this area should be encouraged.
General Commercial	●●●	Overall appropriate; retail and services such as restaurants, lodging, etc. that cater to the needs of the workers in this area should be encouraged.
Light Industrial	●●●	Overall appropriate.
Heavy Industrial	●●●	Appropriate when the intended development is not toxic to adjacent uses.
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL

Intent and Character

The Public Institutional future land use category is intended for areas that are for public and semi-public uses such as schools, government facilities, and services, etc. Uses and buildings do not have dominant character; however, they should embody the character of the broader area (i.e., rural, suburban, or urban).

Appropriate Land Use

Public Facilities, Government Offices, Schools

Considerations

- New public and institutional uses should be located along a collector or higher street.
- New public, institutional, and civic uses should demonstrate a high standard of quality, including building form, architecture, materials, landscaping, and signage.

Density	Intensity	Scale
N/A	Medium	Low-Rise to Mid-Rise



Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	○○○	
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	●○○	Workforce housing considered appropriate.
Multifamily Homes	○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○	Overall appropriate; retail and services that cater to the needs of the workers in this area should be encouraged.
General Commercial	●●●	Overall appropriate; retail and services that cater to the needs of the workers in this area should be encouraged.
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Intent and Character

The Parks and Open Space future land use category is defined by its connection to natural or recreation-related purposes that limit the development potential. This includes places dominated by floodplains, stormwater facilities, both passive and active recreation areas, areas of natural interest, and recreational facilities. This type of land use category should be located throughout the community and in close proximity to residential areas.

Appropriate Land Use

Active or Passive Recreation, Playgrounds, Trails, Recreational Facilities

Considerations

- Any development, public or private within this designation should protect sensitive natural resources (e.g., stream corridors, floodplains, wetlands).
- New parks should be located in areas lacking in parks and open space.

Density	Intensity	Scale
N/A	Low	Low-Rise



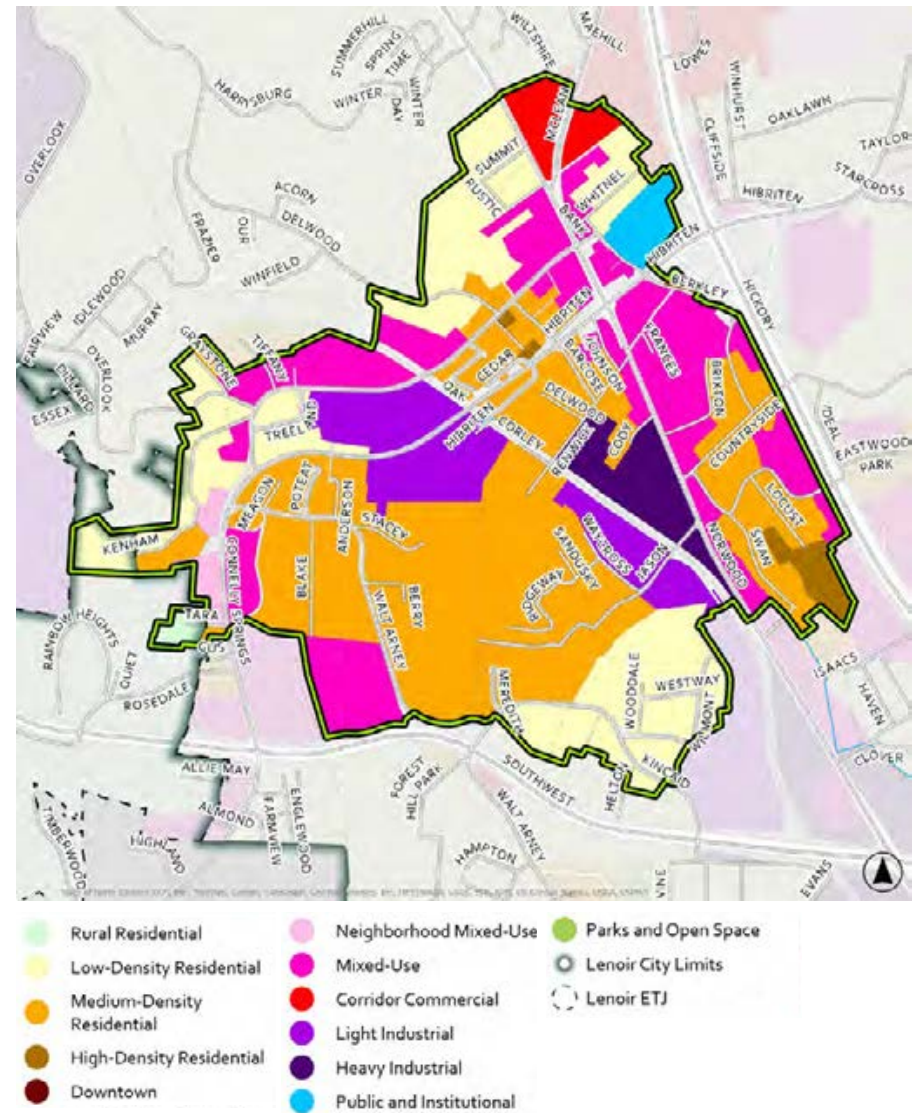
Development Type	Appropriateness	Conditions
Single-Family Homes	○○○	
Duplex Homes and Townhomes	○○○	
Multifamily Homes	○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○○○	
General Commercial	○○○	
Light Industrial	○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○	
Open Space	●●●	Generally considered appropriate or compatible within all Land Use Categories.

NEIGHBORHOOD FOCUS AREAS

WHITNEL

The majority of land in Whitnel is proposed to be developed as medium-density residential (39.1%), followed by mixed-use (21.2%) and low-density residential (20.6%). During neighborhood workshops, Whitnel residents expressed a need for more entertainment options for children and the older population, as well as more community events. This feedback led to the strategic placement of mixed-use areas within the neighborhood to encourage family-friendly commercial development, where appropriate. Proposing medium-density residential areas will also allow for the development of a variety of housing types while maintaining the neighborhood's character. Although there are no parks proposed within the neighborhood, the T.H. Broyhill Walking Park is located about 1.7 miles north of the area. Additionally, parks can be appropriately developed within any of the designated land uses. The City should encourage the development of parks in the mixed-use areas as part of private development.

Land Use Category	Acreage	%
Rural Residential	4.5	0.6%
Low-Density Residential	159.4	21.3%
Medium-Density Residential	292.5	39.1%
High-Density Residential	12.7	1.7%
Downtown	0.0	0.0%
Neighborhood Mixed-Use	8.1	1.1%
Mixed-Use	147.8	19.7%
Corridor Commercial	17.1	2.3%
Light Industrial	66.2	8.8%
Heavy Industrial	27.9	3.7%
Public Institutional	12.5	1.7%
Parks and Open Space	0.0	0.0%
Total	748.7	100.0%

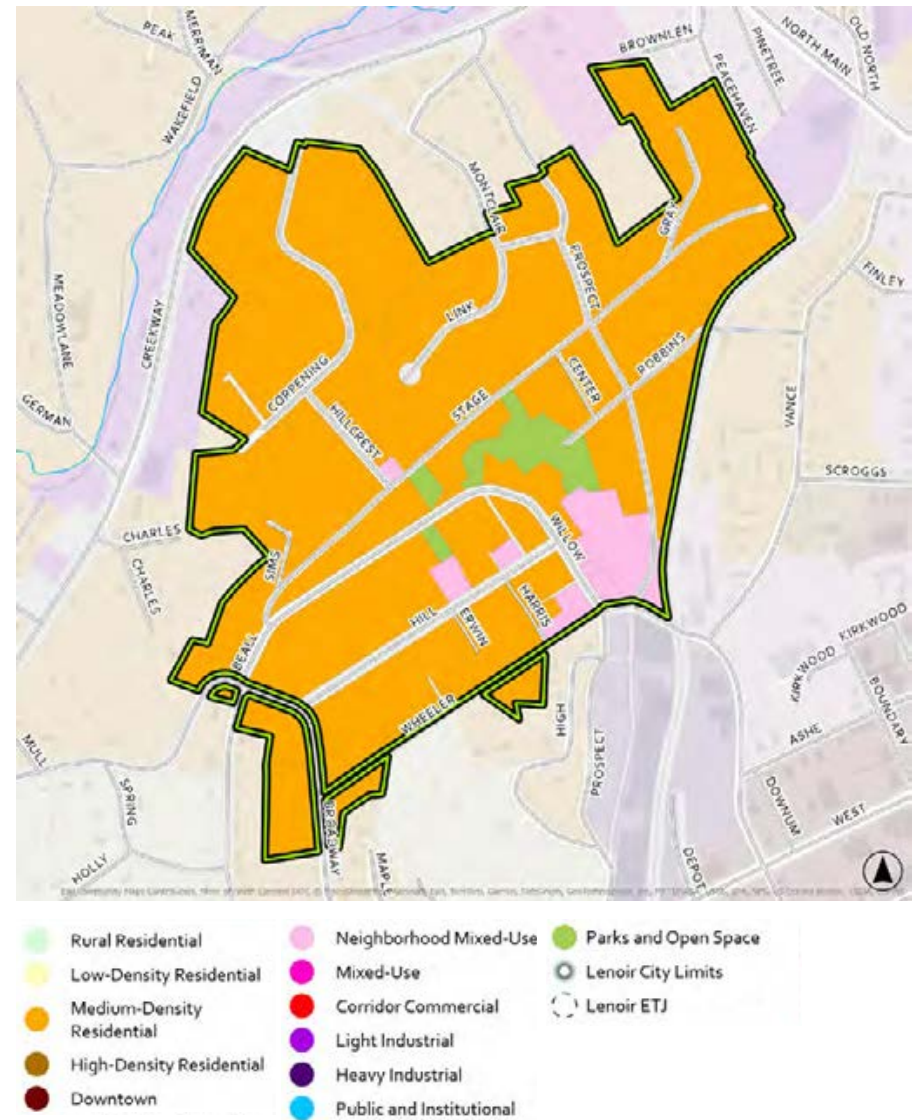


Map 5. Whitnel Future Land Use

WEST END

During the neighborhood workshop, West End residents emphasized the need for new housing, beautification efforts, green spaces, and additional commercial properties. The proposed FLUM outlines that 92.1% of the land in West End will be developed as medium-density residential. Additionally, 4.8% of the land is designated for neighborhood mixed-use to offer neighborhood-scale retail services to local residents. Meanwhile, 3.1% of the land is set aside for parks and open spaces, including the existing West End Neighborhood Park. The City should seek resources to enhance these parks and encourage mixed-use opportunities.

Land Use Category	Acreage	%
Rural Residential	0	0.0%
Low-Density Residential	0	0.0%
Medium-Density Residential	110.9	92.1%
High-Density Residential	0	0.0%
Downtown	0	0.0%
Neighborhood Mixed-Use	5.8	4.8%
Mixed-Use	0	0.0%
Corridor Commercial	0	0.0%
Light Industrial	0	0.0%
Heavy Industrial	0	0.0%
Public Institutional	0	0.0%
Parks and Open Space	3.7	3.1%
Total	120.5	100.0%



Map 6. West End Future Land Use

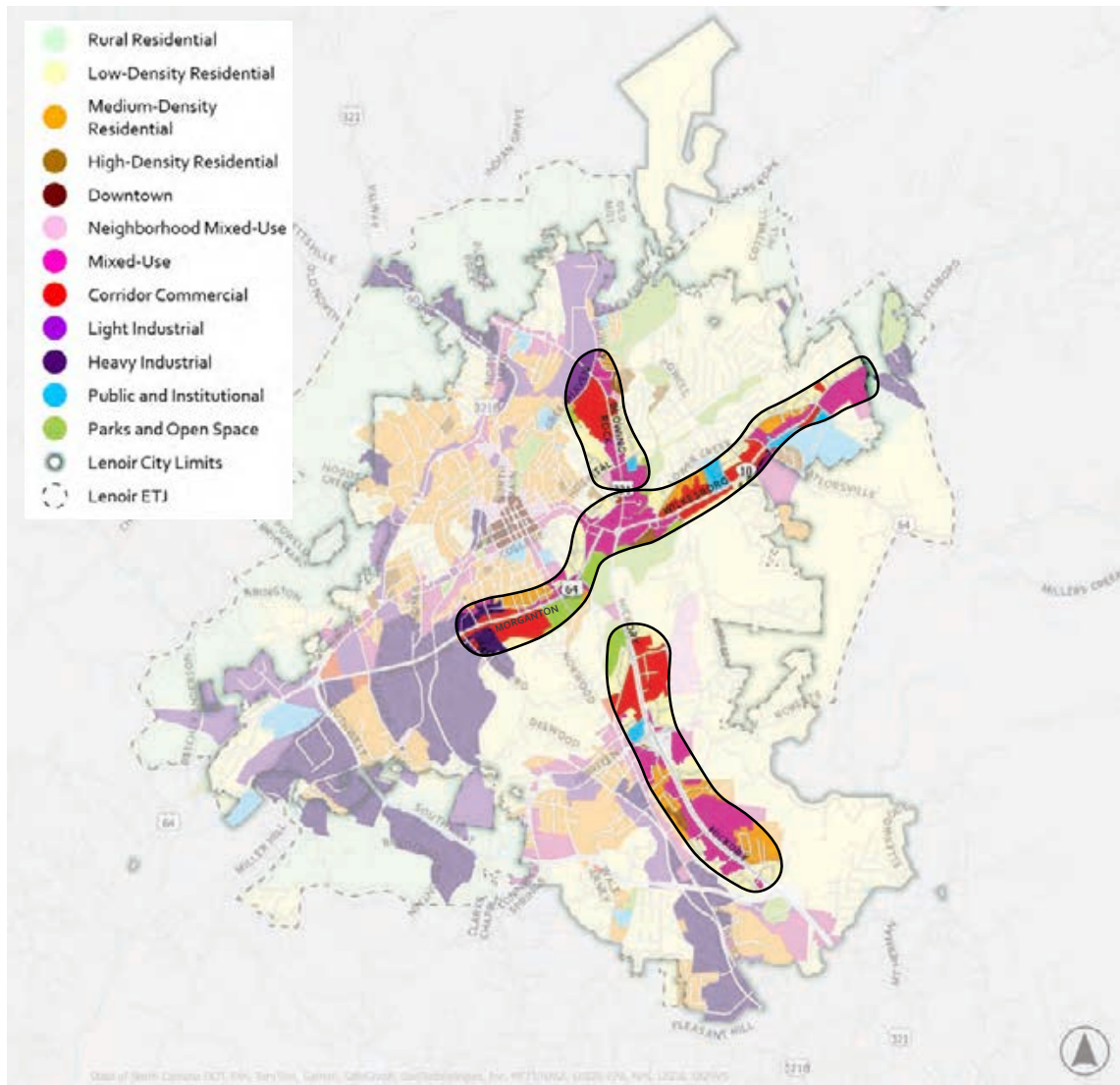
COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Commercial corridors are pivotal to the urban framework of Lenoir. Acting as linear connectors, they link people to various destinations within the community. Users most often view a city while moving along these linear connectors, and therefore the visual and physical experience of moving along these paths shape one's image of a community. Enhancing the corridor and streetscape experience within Lenoir will promote the high-quality experience and help anchor the community.

The major commercial corridors in Lenoir, as shown in Map 7, include:

- East-West Corridor: Wilkesboro Boulevard and Morganton Boulevard
- North Corridor: Blowing Rock Boulevard
- South Corridor: Hickory Boulevard

This section of the Plan assesses the current state of commercial corridors in the City and suggests strategies the City can employ to rethink, improve their performance, and encourage redevelopment where necessary.



Map 7. Commercial Corridors

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Commercial corridors play a vital role in boosting a municipality's economic health through property and sales tax revenue. Ensuring harmony between existing and planned land use, development patterns, and market demand is crucial to maintaining and enhancing the economic vitality of these corridors. This includes a balanced approach to development that leverages the City's unique attributes and strategic location to attract passing traffic while supporting the community's needs.

Given Lenoir's location along key travel routes, the corridors can capitalize on passing traffic. Enhancements to signage, infrastructure, and accessibility can make it easier for travelers to stop, explore, and enjoy local amenities. By creating a traveler-friendly environment, the corridor can drive economic activity from through-traffic.

The Plan acknowledges the importance of an auto-centric design, reflecting the needs of both commuters and local residents. This includes ample parking, efficient traffic flow, and easy access to businesses from major roads.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS AS GATEWAYS

One of the key aspects of development along the corridors is to ensure that people know when they have entered Lenoir. This can be achieved through well-designed and prominent signage at key entry points, coupled with landscaping that reflects the local character. Additionally, incorporating public art, sculptures, and community markers can provide a sense of place and pride, instantly signaling to visitors that they have arrived in Lenoir.

Corridors help define districts and neighborhood edges by emphasizing unique elements that reflect the character of their surroundings. They support existing commercial areas and enhance neighborhoods. When planning these linear connectors, design elements should fit into an overarching design framework that serves as the community's common thread. Design should be tailored to scale and context, with strategically placed vertical features punctuating the linear landscape rather than being uniformly distributed. Existing medians, unique intersections, and adjacent land uses can serve as the foundation for corridor planning. Components like utilities, drainage, sidewalks, bike lanes, and other mobility forms can provide the basis for spatial organization and integration of design elements.

CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT

A comprehensive approach to corridor redevelopment that enhances aesthetics and form while considering market and community demands will lead to more successful outcomes. Lenoir's commercial areas are primarily situated along major arterial corridors, with inconsistent signage and large parking lots in front of the commercial buildings. These corridors host a mix of chain retail and local businesses, with significant vacant areas offering opportunities for desired commercial uses.

The FLUM proposes commercial and mixed-use development along these corridors, underscoring the importance of ensuring they develop into aesthetically pleasing and economically vibrant spaces.

The next section identifies compatible zoning districts to promote planned development in the designated corridors. Zoning should emphasize the desire to allow property redevelopment and infill to enhance the corridors.

EAST-WEST CORRIDOR: WILKESBORO BOULEVARD AND MORGANTON BOULEVARD

Existing Conditions

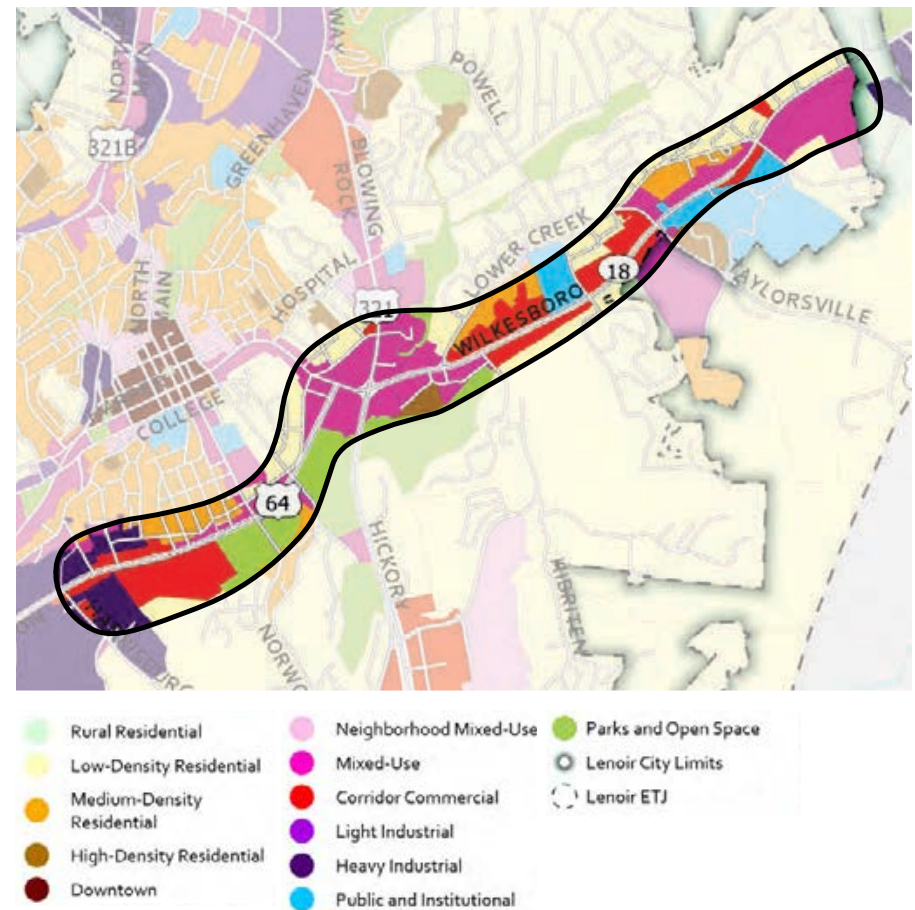
Wilkesboro Boulevard and Morganton Boulevard are critical commercial corridors serving as gateways and major entrances to the City of Lenoir. This corridor connects the City to Wilkesboro and Morganton and primarily serves commuter traffic. The commercial corridor transitions into industrial development toward the western boundary of the City.

The majority of the uses located along the corridor include general commercial types of uses including, chain food outlets, grocery stores, banks, car washes, and other retail. While these uses contribute to the economic vitality of the uses, efforts can be put into beautifying the corridor so that it serves as an entryway to the community and reflects the unique identity and aesthetic of Lenoir.

A significant part of the corridor's development strategy involves redevelopment and infill. Redevelopment will transform underutilized or outdated properties into modern, functional spaces that contribute to the overall vitality of the corridor. Infill development uses vacant or underutilized parcels of land within the existing urban framework to help achieve efficient land use and foster sustainable growth.

Vision

The proposed development envisions transforming the corridor into a smaller scale highway commercial zone. This proposal aims to create a balanced blend of local commercial uses and retail establishments that cater to the needs of both commuters and local residents.



Map 8. East-West Corridor Future Land Use

COMPATIBLE ZONING DISTRICTS

B-7 Highway Business, R-6 High Density Residential, R-9 Mixed Density Residential

NORTH CORRIDOR: BLOWING ROCK BOULEVARD

Existing Conditions

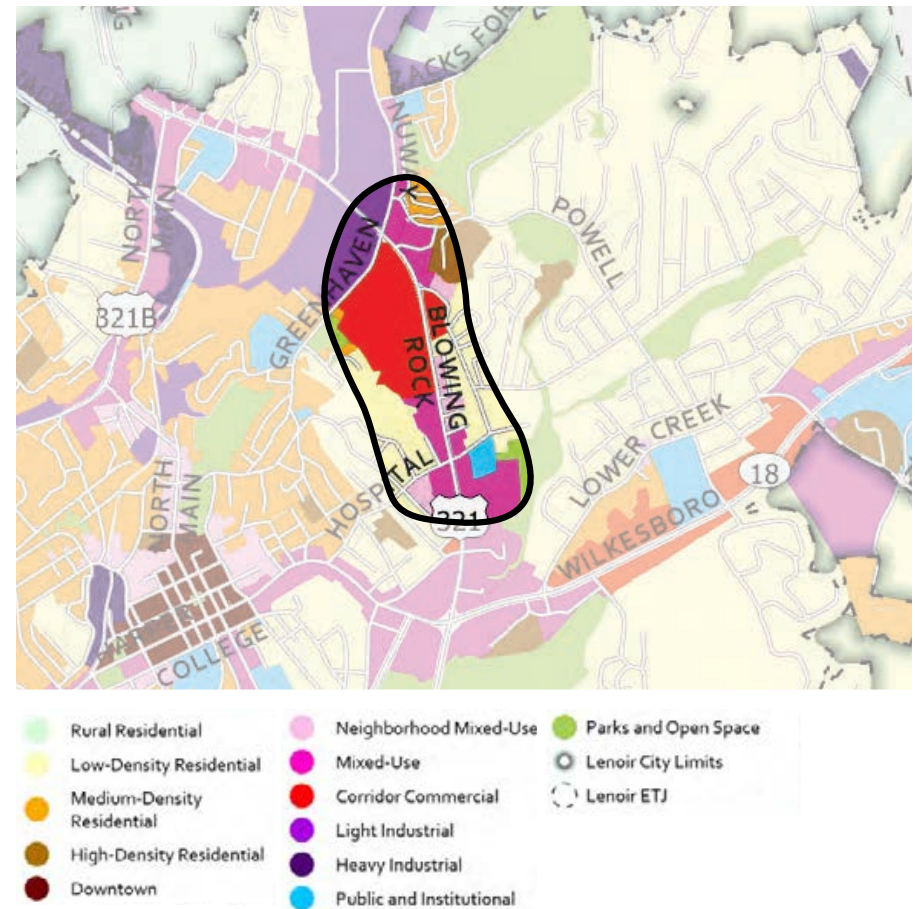
The North Corridor encompasses land uses abutting Blowing Rock Boulevard and connects to Blowing Rock and Boone. This corridor primarily caters to tourist traffic, offering a significant opportunity to capitalize on the inflow of visitors. To maximize the potential of this area, development efforts can focus on creating an attractive and functional environment.

With companies like Exela and Blue Ridge Energy located on the north end of the area and multiple businesses along the corridor, this area can be transformed into a bustling hub of employment, catering to a diverse range of industries and providing ample job opportunities for local residents. There is potential for redevelopment and infill development in several locations. Promoting infill development and the redevelopment of underutilized spaces can help in making the most of the available land. This strategy not only improves the aesthetic appeal but also helps with efficient land use, fostering a more vibrant and dynamic community.

Establishing another gateway at the northern end of the corridor can enhance accessibility and serve as a welcoming entrance for tourists and locals alike. This gateway can be a strategic point for branding and informational displays about the attractions and services available in the area.

Vision

The North Corridor is envisioned to become a vibrant employment center by focusing on strategic redevelopment and infill development. This approach is aimed at revitalizing the area, making it a prime location for business and industry.



COMPATIBLE ZONING DISTRICTS

B-7 Highway Business, R-6 High Density Residential, R-9 Mixed Density Residential

SOUTH CORRIDOR: HICKORY BOULEVARD

Existing Conditions

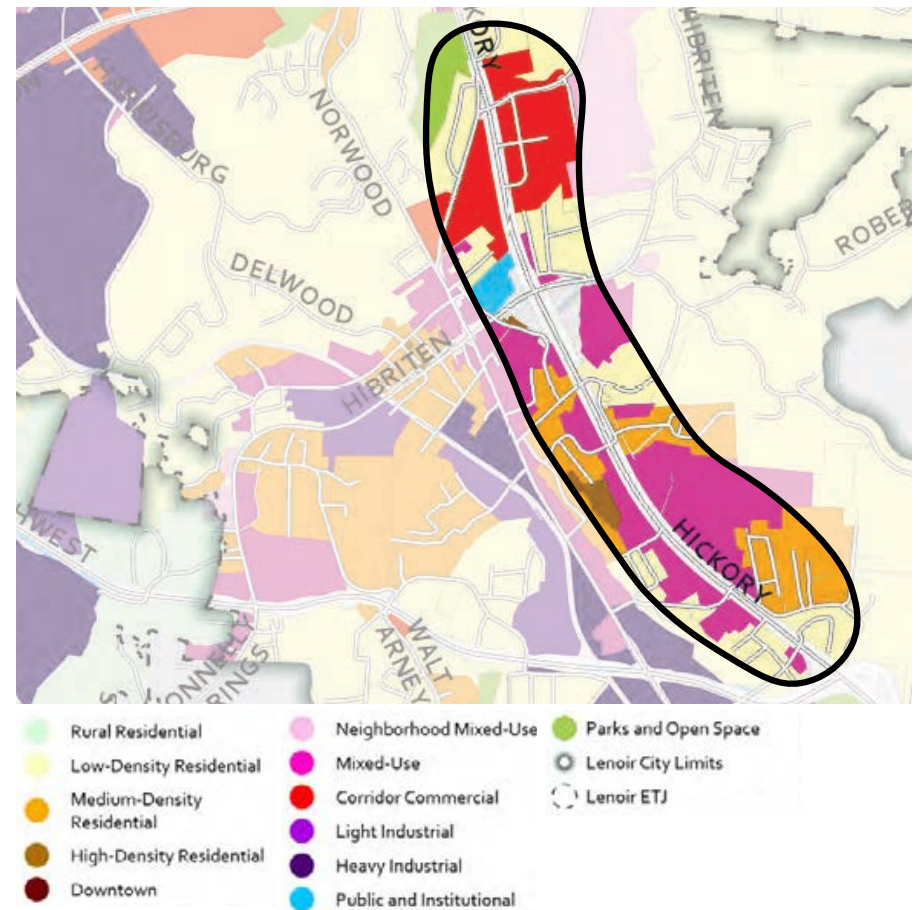
The South Corridor encompasses land uses abutting Hickory Boulevard. The South Corridor primarily caters to tourist traffic and acts as a gateway to Lenoir for visitors coming from communities located south of Lenoir such as Hickory. Enhancing this area with well-designed signage, landscaping, and infrastructure can create a welcoming atmosphere that reflects the community's identity and values.

As development progresses, it is crucial to preserve and enhance green spaces along the corridor and toward the northern end of the corridor. These areas not only provide aesthetic and environmental benefits but also offer recreational spaces for residents and visitors. Strategic planning should ensure that green spaces are protected and incorporated into the overall development vision, especially in areas designated for mixed-use development.

Encouraging new development in the South Corridor is essential for its revitalization. This can be achieved by having focused development regulations, streamlining the approval process, and ensuring that the new developments align with the community's vision. Mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial, and recreational spaces can create a vibrant and sustainable urban environment.

Vision

The vision for this corridor involves a balanced approach that encourages new commercial and mixed-use development, while also preserving green spaces, ensuring that it serves as a welcoming gateway to the community.



Map 10. South Corridor Future Land Use

COMPATIBLE ZONING DISTRICTS

B-7 Highway Business, R-6 High Density Residential, R-9 Mixed Density Residential







03

**HOUSING,
INFILL, &
REDEVELOPMENT**

INTRODUCTION

A sufficient supply of quality and affordable housing greatly influences the quality of life for community residents. This chapter assesses the current housing stock in Lenoir and provides an overview of community character. It also outlines housing programs and strategies that the City can utilize to meet both current and future housing demands, along with strategies for enhancing neighborhoods.

This chapter provides:

- Housing Assessment
- Revitalization
- Infill and Redevelopment
- New Housing Development

WHAT WE HEARD

Biggest priorities for the future of development

Affordable housing

New housing development

Maintain good quality of life

Other Comments

The cost of living is lower than the surrounding areas – Lenoir can capture people for quality of life ... This can also help bring people back to Lenoir.

Lenoir needs more housing, including a variety of new housing and rehabilitating older properties.



CALDWELL COUNTY HOUSING PLAN

The Caldwell County Housing Plan (2025) assesses the demographics and housing preferences of potential homebuyers and renters, and provides an evaluation of the real estate market in Lenoir. The Housing Plan provides information that would encourage private investment in housing throughout Caldwell County. This Comprehensive Plan incorporates the relevant recommendations and analysis from the Caldwell County Housing Plan. This alignment will help in streamlining efforts, ensuring that both plans work in tandem to achieve cohesive and effective outcomes for the community.

The Caldwell County Housing Plan includes information on:

- Analyzing the relationship between housing density and job opportunities
- Exploring various housing types that can enhance housing diversity in the County
- Examining the balance between rental and ownership opportunities within the County
- Listing resources for homeowners and developers to maintain existing housing stock and develop new housing options



CALDWELL COUNTY HOUSING PLAN

Prepared for Caldwell County and the City of Lenoir



HOUSING ASSESSMENT

Residents of Lenoir benefit from a cost of living that is lower than neighboring areas. Affordable living not only attracts new members into the community, it also helps current residents stay in the community. Maintaining lower housing costs while increasing housing choice and diversity are important components of high-quality living.

EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

Lenoir has a total of 8,660 housing units of which 12.1% are vacant (ACS 5-year estimates). About 36% of the total occupied housing units are renter-occupied. The median home value increased by 40% in Lenoir from \$103,800 in 2012 to \$145,200 in 2022 (ACS 5-year estimates) which is slightly less than the change in Caldwell County, where home values increased by 48% between 2012 and 2022.

Cost-burden and renting

Households are considered cost-burdened when they spend more than 30% of their income on rent, mortgage payments, and other housing costs, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Out of the total owner-occupied units with a mortgage in Lenoir, 31% are cost-burdened and 46% of the occupied units paying rent are cost-burdened.

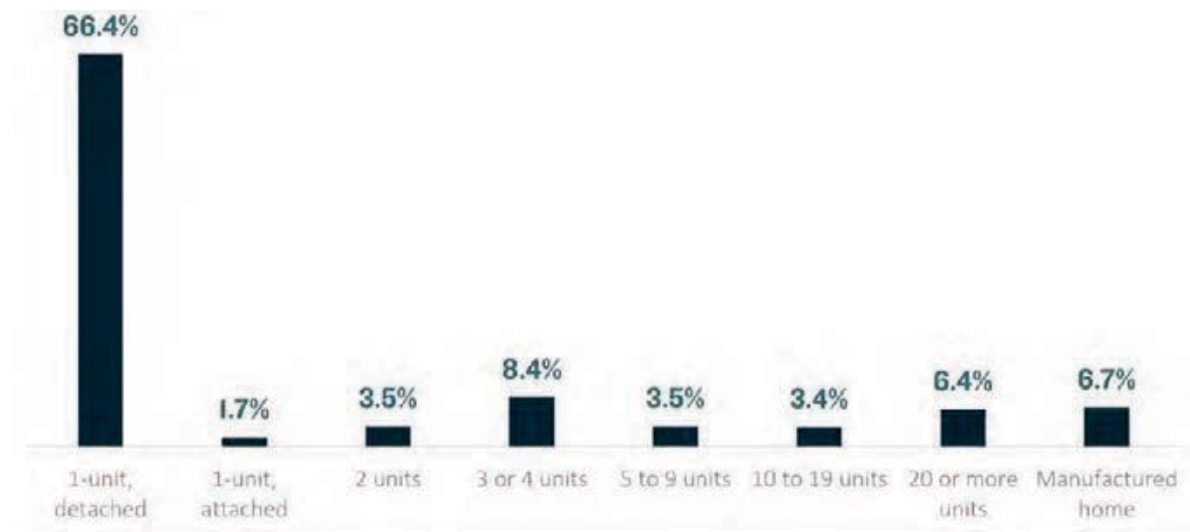
Housing Typology

The existing housing stock in Lenoir is predominantly comprised of single-family detached homes, accounting for 66.4% of the existing housing stock. Other types of housing, such as triplexes, fourplexes, apartments, and manufactured homes, make up a much smaller portion. The community expressed a need for more diverse housing options to cater to the needs of different age groups and income cohorts. By expanding the range of housing types, Lenoir aims to ensure that adequate and

attainable housing is available at different price points. This will not only attract more young families and individuals to the area but also provide the necessary housing and amenities for residents to age in place comfortably.

Approximately 18% of the population in Lenoir falls under the 20 to 35 years age cohort highlighting a need for housing options for young professionals and families. About 28% of the population is at least 60 years old, indicating that there is a need for housing for retirees and older adults.

Figure 10. Housing Typology



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022



Age of Housing

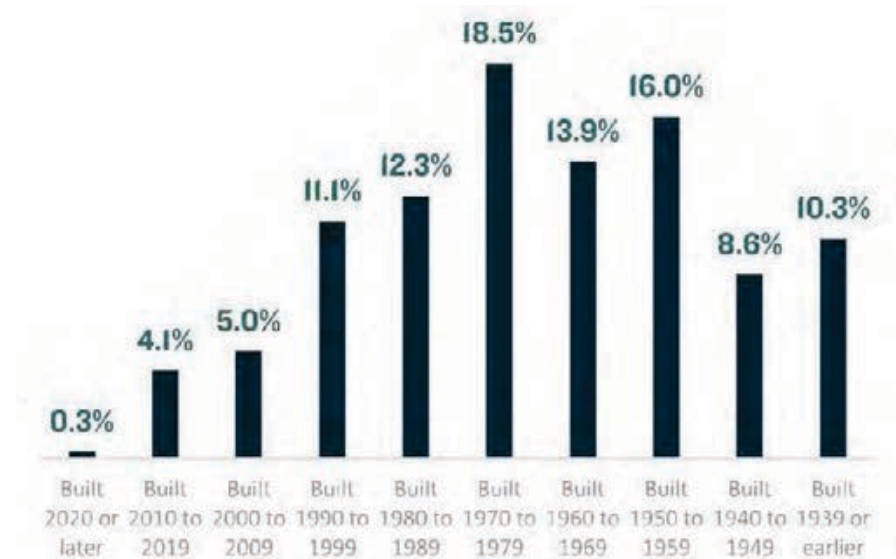
Historic preservation is important for community revitalization and sustainable development. In Lenoir, a significant portion (67.3%) of the existing housing stock was built in 1979 or earlier, making these structures roughly 50 years old or more. Buildings of this age are generally considered older due to their reflection of the architectural styles, construction materials, and building techniques of their time, and they hold significant historic and cultural value, showcasing past craftsmanship and design principles.

An analysis at the census block group level was conducted. The analysis aimed to identify areas with the highest percentage of older structures. Map 11 illustrates the distribution of structures built in 1979 or earlier across various census block groups in Lenoir. The majority of these older structures are concentrated in and around Downtown.

Given that such a high percentage of structures in Lenoir were built in 1979 or earlier, historic preservation should be central to the City's housing strategy. Lenoir can employ several strategies to meet housing demand, while ensuring that older properties are maintained and rehabilitated, as outlined in the next section.

In general, this means that much of the housing is in need of repairs, many major repairs are expensive, and some community members may not be interested in this type of housing. With only 4.4% of housing units built within the past 14 years, residents seeking newer homes will have limited options in the City.

Figure 11. Year Structure Built



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022





ENCOURAGING HOUSING DIVERSITY

Small-Lot Detached Housing

Allowing small-lot detached housing options (single-family homes built on smaller-than-average lots to that increase housing density while still offering homeowners the benefits of a detached residence) can help promote infill development, especially in the older areas of Lenoir, and provide more housing options.

Additionally, allowing small-lot detached homes will provide affordable options for young families and professionals. Updating the zoning regulations, as needed, could enable detached housing on smaller lots while maintaining balance with larger or estate-sized lots, particularly in regions outside the core areas, where topography is steep or utility access is challenging.

Missing Middle Housing

Another way to meet Lenoir's housing needs while reducing reliance on greenfield development for new growth includes allowing appropriate Missing Middle Housing types. "Missing Middle Housing" is a term that describes a range of housing types, including small single-family residential, duplexes, and small-scale multi-unit buildings that complement single-family neighborhoods. These housing types help provide more affordable housing options for people in different phases of the housing cycle, including young families, young professionals, empty-nesters, and the elderly. Each of these housing types can vary in price point and model. It is possible to have a

mixture of affordable and premium price points for each type and they can be for rent or sale.

Missing middle housing products provide an easier path to embracing the small-town character emphasized by so many in Lenoir, while simultaneously meeting Lenoir's changing housing needs. Integrating missing middle into existing neighborhoods offers incremental growth that respects the fabric of existing neighborhoods, including historic areas, while potentially increasing homeownership opportunities.

In addition to stabilizing the increase in housing price by increasing supply and giving people market access across the socioeconomic spectrum, missing middle housing can include the massing and architectural detailing that provide character to a neighborhood. Missing middle housing also keeps the market competitive and accessible to a variety of small local builders. Many of these missing middle housing types are fee simple, which allows residents to build equity and makes housing more attainable. This could help maintain the renter-owner balance in the community and increase overall community wealth generation.

Missing middle products are also a good transition between land uses or land uses of higher to lower scale, in that they can act as a buffer between lower- and higher-density residential, mixed-use, or commercial developments. This practice also puts more residential units closer to goods and services within those mixed-use or commercial areas, improving access within established areas, and benefiting local businesses. Missing middle housing also usually takes advantage of existing infrastructure, generating additional tax revenue that provides support for future public projects.



Missing Middle Housing Types

Aging in Place

Encouraging housing diversity can help the community's older residents age in place. Missing middle housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes, offers more affordable options compared to single-family homes. This can be crucial for seniors on fixed incomes.

Lenoir Housing Authority, a HUD funded public housing agency, serves the City of Lenoir and Caldwell County to provide housing assistance through the Public Housing program. Lenoir Housing Authority's Public Housing program is designed to provide safe, decent, and sanitary housing conditions for very low-income families and to manage resources efficiently. The Authority promotes personal, economic, and social upward mobility to provide families the opportunity to make the transition from subsidized to non-subsidized housing. The agency also lists resources that can be utilized to build senior housing for low-income residents.

While the Lenoir Housing Authority provides a valuable service to the City, the overall market needs to provide aging in place options to support residents of all income levels. Aging in place can also be supported through city-led or community organization-led initiatives that include housing retrofits or other modifications that allow residents to stay in their houses for a longer period of time. The City of Lenoir allows Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). These units, also known as granny flats or in-law suites, can provide additional housing options in all residential zoning districts.

Property owners and developers can make various modifications to existing homes, such as installing grab bars, ramps, and wider doorways to accommodate aging-in-place needs. Additionally, they can include aging-in-place friendly elements in new housing developments, such as single-level living spaces, non-slip flooring, and smart home technologies that enhance safety and accessibility for elderly residents.



REVITALIZATION

While Lenoir has numerous well-kept areas and high-quality housing, there are many properties that could use improvements and sections of neighborhoods that would benefit from revitalization. Many of these properties consist of older housing stock that may need costly repairs. Although some improvements may be simply cosmetic (e.g., trimming bushes or painting the exterior), there are others that are significantly more expensive (e.g., replacing a roof or fixing structural issues). Preserving and enhancing the existing housing stock is a critical element of maintaining housing diversity, attracting new residents, and maintaining existing residents.

It is important to consider that these properties are an integral part of any housing efforts and encourage residents and property owners to make improvements. For property owners who are unable to make repairs, there are programs that some non-profits offer that may aid in improving the appearance and functionality of these properties.



STRATEGIES FOR HOUSING REVITALIZATION

Promote Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is a vital tool for redevelopment and historic preservation. Update codes and standards related to adaptive reuse to facilitate the reuse of older and historic properties for residential uses.

Permit and Facilitate Commercial-to-Residential Conversions

Lenoir has several vacant buildings, especially in Downtown, that can be converted to residential units to meet the housing demand.

Community Beautification Programs

Many needed improvements to housing are cosmetic in nature and could be addressed through partnerships with local non-profits and community groups. Two such programs offered by Habitat for Humanity are the Critical Home Repair Program and the Home Preservation Program. There are other similar programs that provide assistance with weatherization, energy efficiency, and other repairs and maintenance.

INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

PROMOTING INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

Residential infill refers to the development of a single lot within an existing neighborhood. Where the market is viable, Lenoir's vacant lots present an opportunity for new development that fills vacant areas, continues to enhance existing neighborhoods, and takes advantage of existing utilities and road infrastructure. Desirable residential infill locations are those areas with available lots, access to existing city infrastructure, and within the city limits.

In addition to annexation and outward growth, infill and redevelopment opportunities can allow the City to grow more efficiently. Stabilizing and reinvigorating the central part of the City will help all of Lenoir grow and prosper. Infill development and development on previously undeveloped land, also known as greenfields, are equally important for overall community health, stability, and economic success.

Housing redevelopment involves renovating, replacing, or improving residential structures to meet the needs of current and future residents. This process can include updating old buildings, constructing new housing units, and enhancing infrastructure and public spaces. Redevelopment can revitalize communities, improve living conditions, and create more inclusive neighborhoods. However, it requires careful planning, community involvement, and a commitment to preserving the neighborhood's unique character and affordability. Redevelopment within existing developed areas of the City requires a completely different approach than development on greenfield sites. It is only through public and policy support that revitalization of these areas can be achieved.



NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY

Lenoir is home to several neighborhoods, each with its own distinct and unique characteristics. Infill development in Lenoir should be context-sensitive, preserving the existing character of each neighborhood while incorporating designs that seamlessly blend into the urban fabric. There are also equity concerns relating to infill development. Context-sensitive infill development should make an effort to limit housing pricing increases to the extent that existing residents are displaced.

In addition, enforcement plays a crucial role in supporting neighborhood compatibility of infill development. Providing incentives for developers who go above and beyond in meeting design and sustainability standards can encourage adherence to guidelines. This can include expedited permitting processes, density bonuses, and other incentives to encourage desired construction practices.

Context-Sensitive Design

To achieve successful infill development, new products should adhere to the following design criteria:

Character

The new development should enhance and reflect the unique identity and character of the neighborhood. It is essential to consider the cultural and historic context and ensure that the design resonates with the local community's essence.

Scale

The size and proportions of the new structures should be harmonious with the existing buildings in the area. Matching the height, width, and general massing helps maintain a coherent streetscape and protect against new development from overshadowing its surroundings. The Future Land Use Plan presented in Chapter 2 identifies appropriate uses, densities, intensities, and scales that should be considered when making decisions on zoning cases.

Form

The shape and structure of new buildings should complement the existing urban form. This includes aspects like building footprints and overall geometry. The form should contribute to a balanced and pleasing aesthetic.

Siting

Any new development should take into account the existing spatial arrangement. This involves considering setbacks, orientation, and alignment with surrounding buildings to maintain a sense of continuity and coherence.

Materials and Color

Using materials and colors that are consistent with or complement the local palette is important for maintaining neighborhood compatibility. This does not mean replicating old styles, but rather finding a balance that respects the existing aesthetic while introducing a fresh, contemporary feel.

Detailing

The finer details, such as window styles, door placements, and decorative elements, should be thoughtfully designed to echo the neighborhood's characteristics. Well-considered detailing can bridge the old and new, creating a seamless blend between different eras and styles.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE INFILL HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT

- Implement fast-track review and approval procedures
- Allow staff technical support for submittals
- Create a land bank program that acquires and packages residential land for sale to developers. Offer infrastructure upgrades for infill projects over a certain value or number of units – if needed
- Partner with a specific developer(s) for construction of desired development on city-owned land (public-private partnership)
- Explore community land trust as a means of preserving affordability while ensuring that new development matches the character of the existing neighborhood
- Continue to upgrade and maintain existing infrastructure to encourage development
- Encourage developers to enter into development agreements with the City to create opportunities for larger-scale projects
- Provide density bonuses or reduced development standards for certain locations or zoning districts to encourage redevelopment and infill, particularly with medium and high density projects
- Increase marketing and utilization of the affordable housing programs that support low to moderate income residents through down payment assistance, home repairs, rental assistance, and housing construction

The infill programs available should be strategically marketed to inform local and regional builders of the opportunities that are available in Lenoir.



Case Study: Infill Overlay Districts

Designating an Infill Overlay District can accommodate and encourage compatible development in existing residential neighborhoods. The main objectives of these districts are to promote compatible development and reinvestment in established neighborhoods, address growing housing demands and revitalize underused urban areas. Several cities within North Carolina, including Raleigh and Charlotte, as well as other states, have adopted Infill Overlay Districts to promote infill development and meet housing demand.

The City of Yuma, Arizona, implemented an Infill Overlay District along with an Infill Incentive Plan outlining incentives related to development within the district. This plan, developed through collaboration among city departments, establishes the Infill Overlay District (IO) and offers incentives to encourage development within this zone. The plan includes the Infill Incentive Toolkit, which equips developers with resources to address regulatory challenges and financial barriers. This toolkit offers various incentives to invest in infill properties, including financial benefits and regulatory flexibility.

Source: <https://www.yumaaz.gov/government/community-development/community-planning/infill-yuma>

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

There is a need for additional housing of all types to meet the existing and future housing demand in the community. A variety of housing options at different price points should be made available to meet community needs. The need for additional housing was underscored during various community engagement events.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE APPROPRIATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- Update zoning districts to promote housing supply and diversify housing options
- Consolidate residential zoning districts
- Establish mixed-use zoning districts
- Evaluate and establish new or existing zoning districts that allow a wide variety of residential use types
- Allow flexibility for residential use on land owned by non-profit organizations
- Be creative in approaches to address needed housing, such as working with the local school district to create housing on school-owned property for school district employees
- Work with non-profits to establish a cooperative network of providers and supportive services that can work together to provide housing assistance
- Pursue grants and funding opportunities to build new affordable housing

COMPONENTS OF GOOD DESIGN

In addition to context-specific design guidelines, the following elements should be considered for new housing development.

Resilience and Durability

Build homes that can withstand natural disasters, climate change, and wear and tear over time includes robust construction techniques and materials, as well as disaster-preparedness features. Durable construction also helps reduce energy costs and lowers long-term maintenance expenses.

Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of available land through thoughtful site planning and high-density development, when appropriate, while creating private spaces and reducing urban sprawl. The zoning decisions should be based on the proposed FLUM illustrated in Map 4 on page 29.

Transportation and Connectivity

Provide easy access to public transportation, bike lanes, and connected sidewalks and greenways to reduce dependency on cars and promote sustainable mobility.

Community Spaces

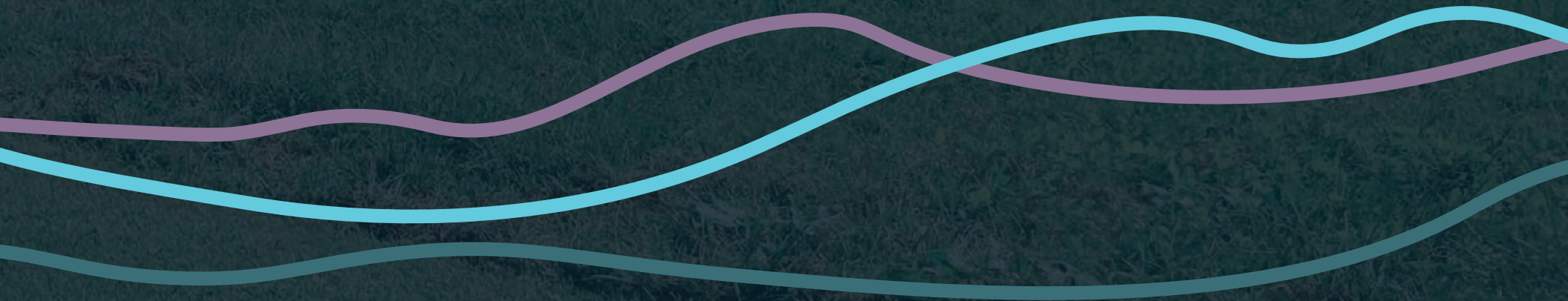
Incorporate community spaces in new housing developments can significantly enhance residents' quality of life. Include shared spaces such as gardens, parks, playgrounds, and community centers to foster a sense of community and encourage social interaction. This can be achieved by promoting mixed-use development, updating zoning regulations, and encouraging flexible design where appropriate.





04

CITY
RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION

The City of Lenoir contains many resources that benefit residents and business owners. From historic properties that add character and charm to the Downtown to streams flowing down from the surrounding mountains, Lenoir has many assets and resources that should be preserved, enhanced, and celebrated. In addition to these wonderful assets, the City owns and maintains public infrastructure and provides numerous services that benefit the community. These resources help provide a high quality of life for residents and support the local business economy. By continuing to maintain and expand existing resources and services, Lenoir can achieve the Comprehensive Plan goals by 2045.

This chapter provides:

- City Departments
- Historic Resources
- Environmental Resources
- Transportation Infrastructure
- Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

WHAT WE HEARD

Initiatives that should be encouraged to beautify the City



Areas where the City is doing well



Other Comments

"Our town should have safe alternatives to driving that include a real sidewalk system, a bus system, and bike lanes."

CITY DEPARTMENTS

The City of Lenoir is managed by a Council-Manager form of government. The City Council is made up of the Mayor and seven Council Members. The City Council is elected at-large, meaning that council members are chosen by voters from the entire city rather than from specific districts. This ensures broader representation and increased accountability. The City Council appoints members to several boards and authorities, which serve in an advisory capacity for the Council. These boards and authorities include the Board of Adjustment, Board of Alcohol Control, Foothills Regional Airport Authority, Historic Preservation Commission, Lenoir Business Advisory Board, Lenoir Housing Authority, Lenoir Tourism Development Authority, Planning Board, and Recreation Advisory Board. The City Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the City and for managing City staff.

Lenoir provides high-quality services while managing to keep taxes and service fees/rates lower than many other communities in the region. Lenoir has and maintains the proud tradition of providing efficient and cost-effective services for residents and businesses. This has supported a lower cost of living, while still providing quality services that provide for a good quality of life.



The City is organized into several departments, as follows:

COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Communication and Public Information Department handles internal and external communications for the City of Lenoir. The Department serves as the primary point of contact for questions about City programs and services and is also responsible for managing the City's digital presence and for promoting City services and events.

DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Economic Development Department administers the City's Main Street Program and promotes Downtown revitalization through retail and small commercial development programs, grants, and incentives. The Department also organizes local events and promotes downtown businesses.

FINANCE

The Finance Department assists the City Manager in preparing the annual budget and manages the City's financial accounts. The Department also manages accounts payable, payroll, billing collections and purchasing, while providing risk management and IT services to all City departments.

FIRE

The Fire Department provides a mix of traditional and progressive firefighting. The department has nearly 60 full-time personnel staff; three fire stations; and provides fire suppression, fire code enforcement, and fire education.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources Department handles all hiring for the City and manages all benefit programs for employees, maintains personnel records, and distributes W-2s.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Parks and Recreation Department enhances the quality of life of residents through the provision of innovative, enjoyable, and safe recreational opportunities for all residents.

PLANNING

The Planning and Community Development Department oversees development, mapping, minimum housing, planning, and zoning. Department staff review residential, commercial, and industrial development and work to facilitate new development that is consistent with the Lenoir Comprehensive Plan.

POLICE

The Police Department works in partnership with the community to anticipate, define, and meet community needs with respect to public safety, community well-being, and law enforcement.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

The Public Utilities Department manages the City of Lenoir's water and wastewater (sewer) systems. The department operates and maintains a water treatment facility, two wastewater treatment facilities, more than 400 miles of water and sewer lines, and 16 sewer pump stations.

PUBLIC WORKS

The Public Works Department provides sanitation services, maintains City streets, manages the City cemeteries and stormwater system, and provides engineering services for various construction projects.

CALDWELL COUNTY

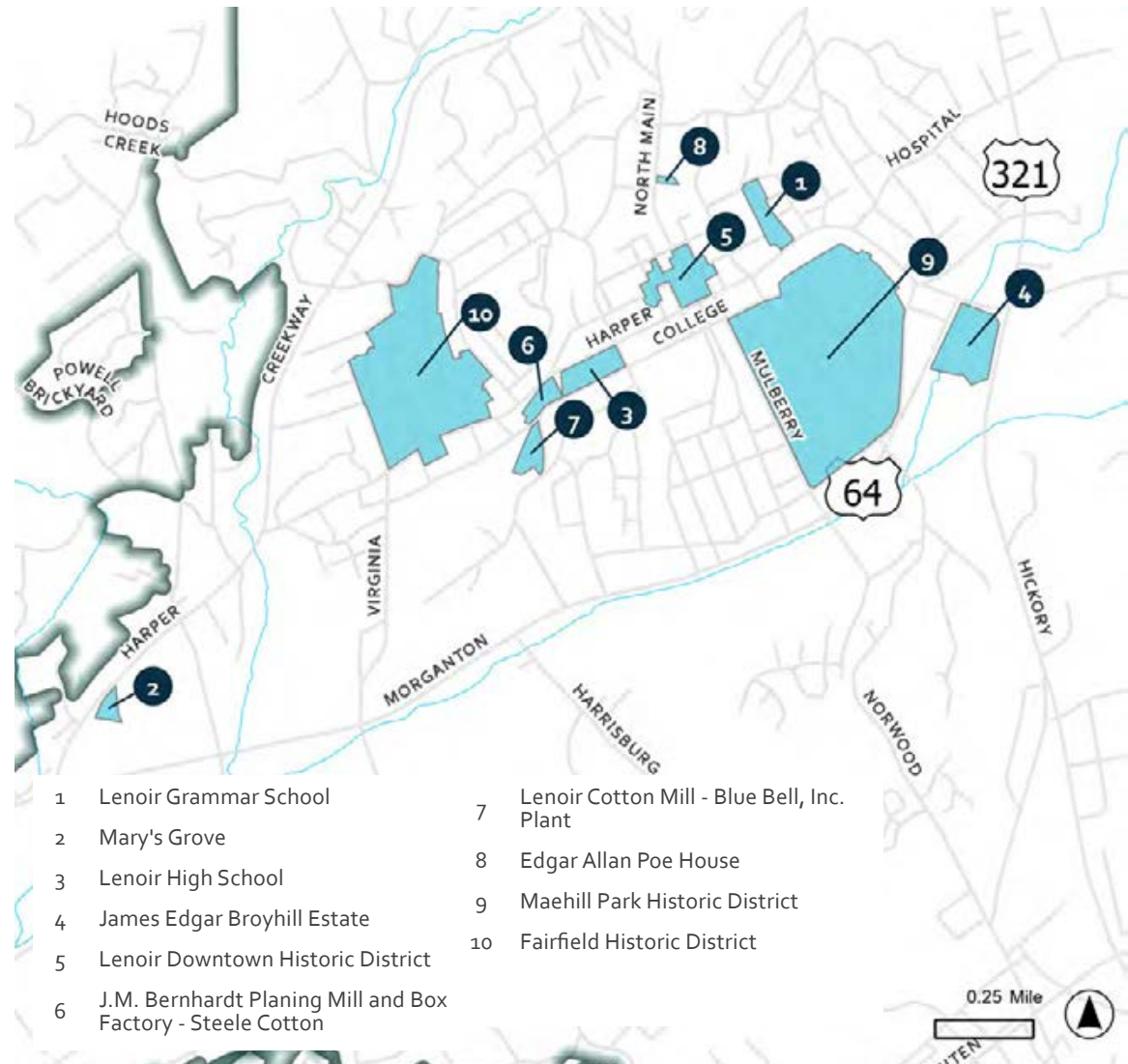
While Lenoir provides many services to residents, Caldwell County also provides services to businesses and residents in Lenoir, including building permitting, public schools, social services, and other typical county-level services. The City and County have a close relationship in providing high-quality services to residents and business owners.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Lenoir's historic properties are vital to the community because they serve as a tangible link to the past and foster a sense of identity among residents. In addition to its historic resources, Lenoir boasts a vibrant cultural footprint that adds a unique charm to the City. The City showcases numerous public art installations and boasts a rich musical heritage. This blend of art and music creates a dynamic cultural landscape that enhances the quality of life for residents and attracts visitors to experience Lenoir's artistic and musical offerings.

By maintaining significant landmarks, historic architecture, and cultural sites, the City can celebrate its unique heritage. This connection to the past not only enriches the community's cultural fabric but also enhances its visual interest and educational value, offering residents and visitors alike a deeper understanding of local history. This supports educational opportunities and also encourages heritage tourism that can bring visitors and revenue to the City. Furthermore, preserving historic sites can bolster community pride and cohesion, as these properties stand as symbols of collective memory and shared experiences, reinforcing the City's unique identity.

In addition to supporting community identity and providing educational opportunities, preserving historic buildings also provides opportunities for unique adaptive reuse projects (such as converting a former mill into apartments or a mixed-use project) and unique ownership opportunities for people seeking an older property.



Map 12. Historic and Cultural Resources

EXISTING HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION INITIATIVES

The City currently has several historic preservation initiatives:

- The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has the authority to recommend to the City of Lenoir City Council that individual buildings, structures, sites, areas, or objects within its zoning jurisdiction be designated as "historic landmarks" and that areas within its zoning jurisdiction be designated as "historic districts." The City Council has the authority to adopt or repeal an ordinance designating a historic district.
- An architectural survey commissioned by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office in 2017 has documented over 350 resources, representing a diverse collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century building styles and forms.
- The Downtown Lenoir Main Street Program focuses on revitalizing the Downtown through historic preservation, economic development, and community engagement.
- The Lenoir Arts Council promotes the arts and cultural heritage of the community through various programs, events, and exhibitions.

In addition, the NC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) provides support, resources, and grant funding.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND HOUSING

Approaches for aligning historic preservation initiatives with housing needs

- Identify and implement zoning code changes that support increasing density and expanding housing options in existing neighborhoods – including historic neighborhoods and historic districts. This could include:
 - Allowing the conversion of historic single-family dwellings to multifamily dwellings where appropriate
 - Creating accessory dwelling units, either in rehabilitated historic structures or through new construction
 - Identifying development standards that may unnecessarily impose modern requirements that are inappropriate for historic properties
 - Adopting procedures and permitting incentives to facilitate the reuse of existing buildings
 - Constructing compatible infill multifamily housing on vacant parcels in historic districts
- Consider the adoption of performance-based rehabilitation building codes to allow for needed flexibility to rehabilitate historic buildings.
- Use Community Land Trust (CLT) model to preserve historic structures: CLTs can be used to effectively preserve at-risk historic structures in areas facing growing redevelopment pressure. Deed restrictions or a conservation easement can be included by the CLT to preserve the historic character of the building while ensuring long-term affordability.

Adaptive reuse for old residential properties in Downtown and other neighborhoods

The City can utilize several tools to preserve and rehabilitate historic residential buildings in Downtown and other historic neighborhoods. One effective tool is adaptive reuse, which involves repurposing buildings that have exceeded their original function to accommodate new uses. Adaptive reuse not only revitalizes these structures but also stimulates reinvestment in neighboring properties that may have long been vacant.

However, it is important to recognize that adaptive reuse may not be suitable for every historic building. The City should collaborate with local officials to identify any regulatory and market challenges and work closely with property owners to determine the appropriateness of adaptive reuse for each property.

Local regulations can present hurdles to changing the use of existing properties. Zoning regulations, for instance, might prohibit certain new uses if they do not align with the property's current zoning designation. Alternatively, zoning requirements could demand additional features such as parking spaces or open areas that may not be feasible on the property. Moreover, modern building codes often pose compatibility issues with older structures. The City should conduct a thorough assessment to identify any regulatory barriers to adaptive reuse and consider updating regulations accordingly. Some potential updates could include:

- Creating a separate adaptive reuse overlay district to encourage planned reuse of structure in historic neighborhoods.
- Treating adaptive reuse projects as a distinct land-use or development type to facilitate reuse without requiring rezoning.
- Revising the building code standards to protect public health and safety without requiring cost-prohibitive structural modifications or building material replacements.

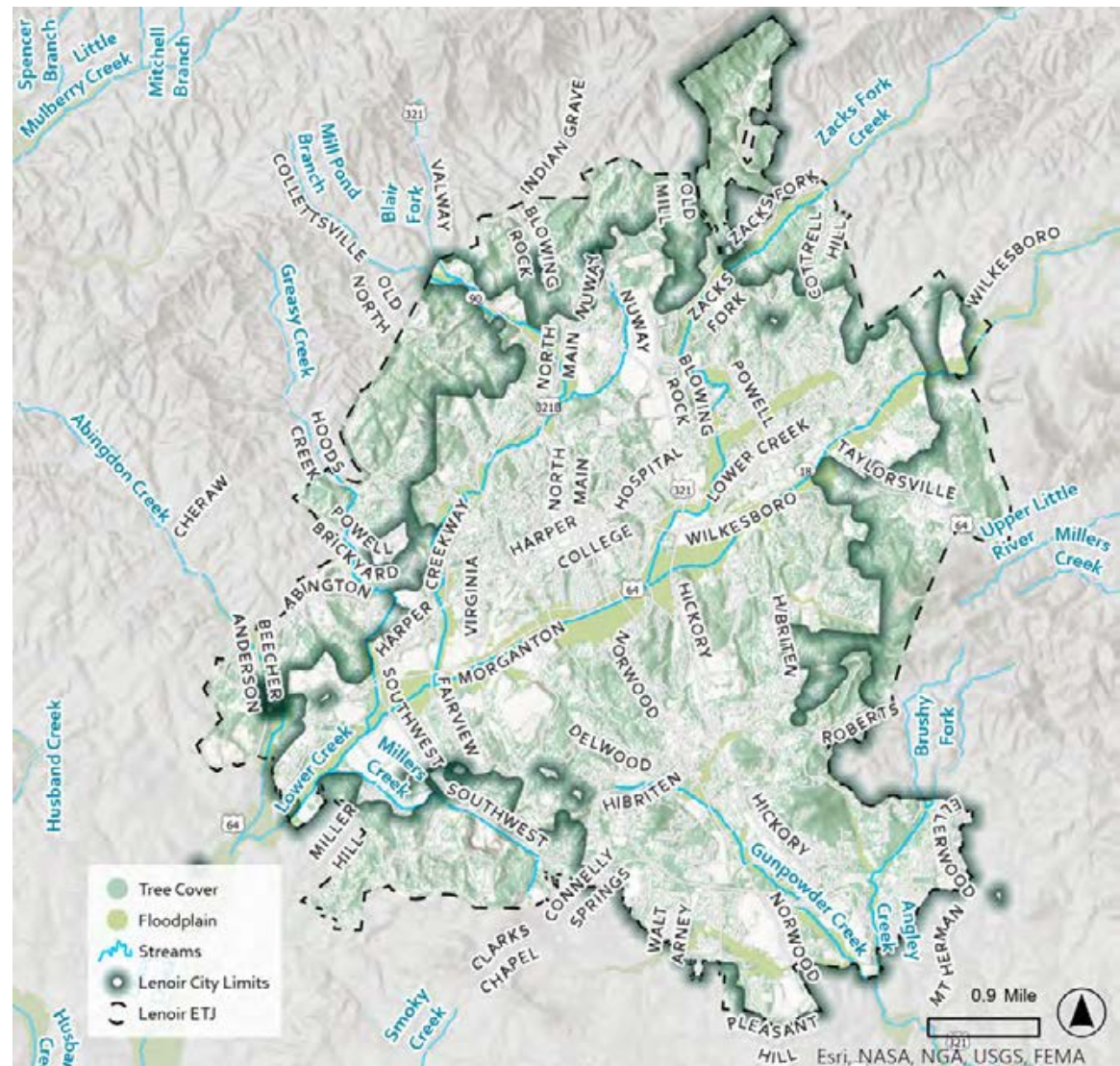
Source: American Planning Association | PAS QuickNotes No. 80

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Environmental protection and sustainability practices are vital for a community located near the mountains and offering outdoor recreational opportunities. These measures assist in the preservation of natural landscapes, which are fundamental to the community's identity and the well-being of its residents. By safeguarding these natural assets, the community protects the scenic beauty and biodiversity that attract both residents and visitors, fostering a deeper connection to the environment. Sustainable practices also help preserve recreational activities, such as hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife observation, which are essential for physical health, mental well-being, and social interaction. Furthermore, prioritizing environmental sustainability reinforces the community's commitment to future generations, maintaining the natural splendor and recreational opportunities provided by the mountains for their enjoyment and benefit.

Environmental resources significantly impact land use mapping by influencing how land is utilized and managed. Map 13 shows the tree cover, floodplain, and streams in the city limits and ETJ. The current tree canopy within the city limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) extends over approximately 44% of the total area.

Development should align with the natural environment by not taking place in a floodplain or floodway, by limiting development on steep slopes, maintaining vegetated buffers along surface waters, preserving forestland, and preserving tree cover.



Map 13. Environmental Resources

SCENIC VIEW PROTECTION

Located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Lenoir is surrounded by natural beauty, including rolling hills, lush forests, and stunning mountain views. These landscapes are a key part of the City's identity and heritage, and they are a source of local pride. Protecting these scenic views is essential to maintaining Lenoir's charm, attracting tourists, and contributing to a high quality of life for residents.

The City can work on creating an inventory of its scenic resources and prioritize viewsheds that need to be protected. Many cities and counties use zoning overlays to protect scenic views by limiting development within viewsheds. These overlays must define which views to protect from specific vantage points. Since protecting an entire viewshed is often impractical, overlays usually focus on foreground, mid-ground, or distant views, depending on the scenic resources. Foreground view protections might involve development setbacks, while mid-ground and distant view protections often require maps and mathematical formulas for clarity.

In addition to zoning, some cities and counties protect scenic views by purchasing or accepting donations of land or development rights, educating the community, and partnering with private entities like non-profits, homeowner groups, and business owners.



TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The City of Lenoir recognizes the importance of developing a balanced and efficient multimodal transportation system that meets the needs of all residents and businesses in the City. Lenoir works closely with NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) to plan, fund, maintain, and construct transportation projects.

The City's transportation system consists of roadways owned and maintained by NCDOT (as shown in Map 14) and the City of Lenoir. The City also owns and maintains the Lenoir Greenway network. Maintaining a high quality road network is critical to continued economic development success. The City of Lenoir should focus on maintaining the current level of service while also enhancing roadways that need improvements.

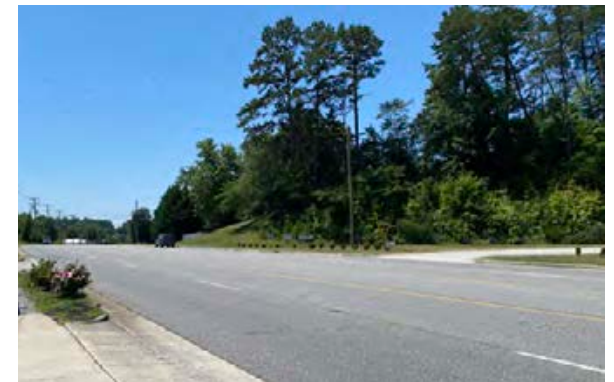
By 2045, the City's roadway network will provide better multimodal connections and opportunities, while still providing efficient and effective levels of service for vehicular traffic.



MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING ROADWAYS IN LENOIR

Some of the strategies that the City can incorporate to maintain and enhance its roadways include:

- **Streetscape Projects for Beautification:** Identify and carry out streetscape projects that aim to make the streets and intersections more visually appealing. This can include adding decorative elements, lighting, benches, public art, and landscaping to enhance the overall aesthetic of the City and create a more welcoming environment.
- **Innovative Stormwater Management:** Incorporate techniques such as permeable pavements, rain gardens, and bioswales to manage stormwater effectively. These solutions not only help with water management but also create connections with nature by incorporating street trees and roadside plantings, improving the urban ecosystem.
- **Innovative Maintenance Techniques:** Explore and implement new maintenance techniques to extend the lifespan of the transportation network. This can involve using advanced materials, such as high-performance asphalt and concrete, or implementing predictive maintenance technologies to address issues before they become significant problems.
- **Coordination with Transportation Partners:** Maintain ongoing collaboration with local, regional, and state transportation partners to support the continuous improvement and maintenance of roadways. This coordination can help streamline projects, share resources, and implement best practices.
- **Leverage Grant Funding:** Actively seek and apply for available grant funding from federal, state, and private sources to support roadway improvement and maintenance projects. By leveraging these funds, the City can enhance its transportation infrastructure without solely relying on local budgets.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Providing access to different transportation options, like walking and biking, can boost public health and promote transportation equity. The City aims to make neighborhoods more walkable and bike-friendly, with easy-to-use pedestrian paths and trails. Elements like ped-bike facilities, land use, and traffic safety affect how people choose to get around. Therefore, it is essential to create safe shared streets for both residents and visitors to encourage these alternative transportation methods. Sidewalks and trails were highlighted as the most significant missing feature in Lenoir neighborhoods by the public.

Sidewalks

Pedestrian infrastructure characteristics such as connectivity, continuity, width, barriers, and overall condition can impact walkability and physical activity. Improved, connected, and safe sidewalks can positively impact people's decision to walk more and create active and vibrant neighborhoods in Lenoir.

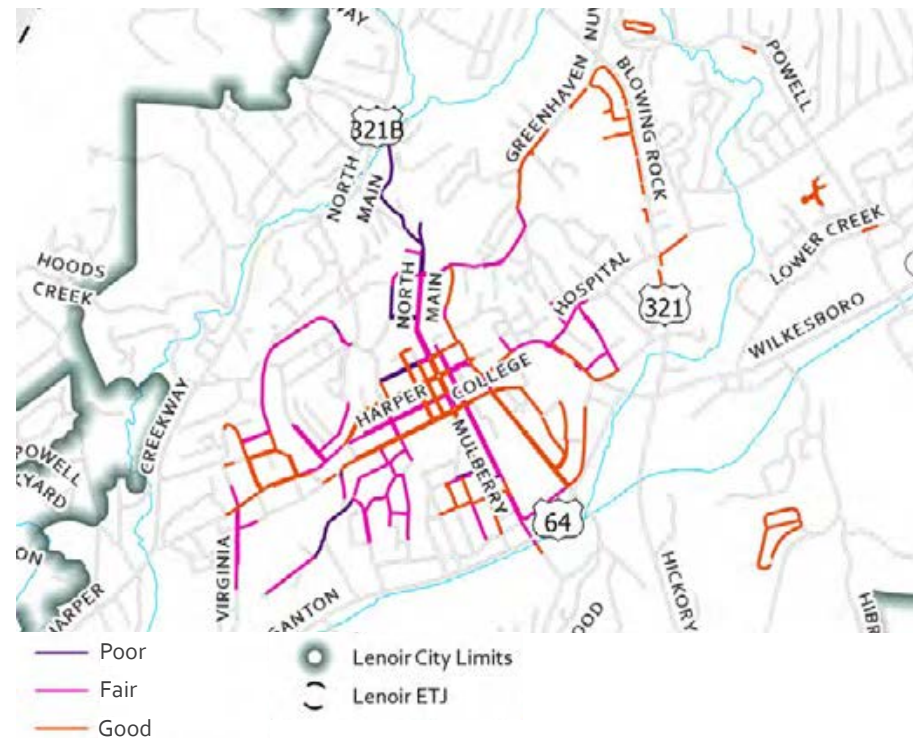
Map 15 shows the existing sidewalk infrastructure and conditions in the City. The existing sidewalk network is concentrated in and around the Downtown. The sidewalks connect the Downtown to other parts of the City through trails as seen on Map 16. The City should plan to fill in the gaps in the sidewalk infrastructure to create a more walkable environment. This can be aided by requiring new developments to include pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, making neighborhoods more walkable and accessible for everyone.

Trail Connections

Map 16 shows the existing and planned trails in the city limits. The City has a robust trail network with many trails under construction and proposals to expand the network to connect several areas of the City. The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVT) is an important component of the historic fabric of the City. The trail offers scenic and historic routes for biking, walking, and outdoor activities. It connects various key areas, such as parks, greenways, and commercial areas, making it easier for residents and visitors to travel actively and enjoy the natural beauty of the region. The OVT is planned to tie into Downtown Lenoir and provide a connection to the larger 330-mile trail network that stretches through four states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia). The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan (included in [Appendix X](#)) includes recommendations for expanding the trail network to link residential areas, parks, and community destinations.

Bike Infrastructure

The community engagement process highlighted the need for safe and convenient bike infrastructure. Many residents rely on bicycles for their daily commutes within the City. Creating a network of connected bike infrastructure that link residential areas with key destinations can promote a more efficient and safe use of this mode of transportation.



Map 15. Sidewalk Conditions

WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Integrating water and wastewater planning with land use planning is crucial to support sustainable development. By actively considering the water supply in planning and development processes, the City can manage resources efficiently and support growth. This can be achieved through a combination of incentives to encourage developers to adopt water-efficient practices, regulatory changes to enforce water conservation measures, and educational initiatives to raise awareness among residents and stakeholders about the importance of water management. By aligning these efforts, the City can create a more resilient infrastructure, minimize environmental impacts, and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

Some of the strategies to integrate water/wastewater planning and land use planning can include:

- Offering incentives to developers who install water monitoring systems.
- Maintaining updated System Development Fees that align with increased maintenance costs from new development.
- Including density bonus and other incentives for environmentally sustainable developments that included reduce water consumption.

Continued funding for capital projects and the replacement of aging water and wastewater infrastructure is essential to maintaining a reliable and efficient system. Investing in modernizing these systems helps prevent service disruptions, reduce maintenance costs, and protect public health by providing clean water and effective wastewater treatment. Upgrading infrastructure also supports future growth and development, as well-maintained systems can handle increased demand.

WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEM CAPACITY

- The City owns and maintains a large water distribution and wastewater collection system through 219 miles of water lines and 209 miles of sewer lines, plus 11,000 service lines and 1,100 fire hydrants.
- The City has two wastewater treatment plants: the Lower Creek Facility and the Gunpowder Creek Facility. Between the two facilities, approximately 1.5 billion gallons of wastewater are treated every year.
- The George L. Bernhardt, Sr. Lake Rhodhiss Water Treatment Plant can treat up to 12 million gallons per day. Most recently, upgrades to the treatment plant were made in 2019.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The City adopted a Stormwater Management Plan in 2021. The purpose of this Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) is to establish and define the means by which the City of Lenoir will comply with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit, and the applicable provisions of the Clean Water Act to meet the federal standard of reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff to the maximum extent practicable.

PAST AND ONGOING EFFORTS

- Recently completed the multi-year Advanced Metering Infrastructure project to replace older water meters with new technology-imbedded water meters that lead to a more efficient provision of water services and leak detection.
- In 2022, updated standards called the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) were released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ). These new standards require all localities to verify if lead pipes are part of the water distribution system to protect communities from the risks of lead exposure. While the City of Lenoir does not have any record of any lead service lines, the City is working diligently to meet the new requirements and guidelines in the LCRR, which includes doing a full inventory of all pipes in the City's water system.
- The City works to ensure drinking water is available and of high-quality and adopted the Water Shortage Response Plan in 2023 to outline how the City can respond to drought and other water shortage conditions.
- Ongoing Stormwater Criticality Assessment Project with FNI.

UPCOMING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN (CIP) PROJECTS

Projects from the next fiscal year CIP to be added here as per staff comments.





05

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

As a city grows, its neighborhoods play a vital role in shaping the City's overall character. Over time, these neighborhoods evolve, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Some areas of the City that were once thriving commercial hubs have declined due to shifts in market trends, while others have vacant properties that, with thoughtful planning, could be transformed to provide benefits to the local residents it serves. Addressing the challenges that arise from change is essential, but it also opens the door for future development inspired by each neighborhood's unique environment.

To tackle these issues, a neighborhood planning framework can be used to systematically focus on each of Lenoir's unique neighborhoods and create a plan for future revitalization. This intentional approach aims to identify specific challenges and develop tailored strategies to address them for sustainable revitalization.

The Neighborhood Planning process introduces a formalized strategy for revitalizing neighborhoods that aligns with the City's overall Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the program supports the creation of new neighborhood plans, monitors the implementation of existing ones, and establishes a sustainable mechanism for continuous neighborhood revitalization over time.

This chapter provides:

- Neighborhood Planning Framework
- Public Engagement Toolbox
- Implementation Toolbox
- Whitnel Neighborhood Plan
- West End Neighborhood Plan

WHAT WE HEARD

What do you think should be encouraged to help beautify the City?

- 1 Building Repair/Demolition
- 2 Property Maintenance Enforcement
- 3 Landscaping at Intersections
- 4 New Trees
- 5 Public Art

Things That Could Make Your Neighborhood Better



Other Comments

Further greenway connectivity to neighborhoods and retail.

Encourage others to maintain properties and pick up litter.

Need to bring jobs that the younger generations want to make a living wage, not fast food for young families can thrive here.

Focus on all small or large local businesses in the area and not on just Downtown Lenoir.

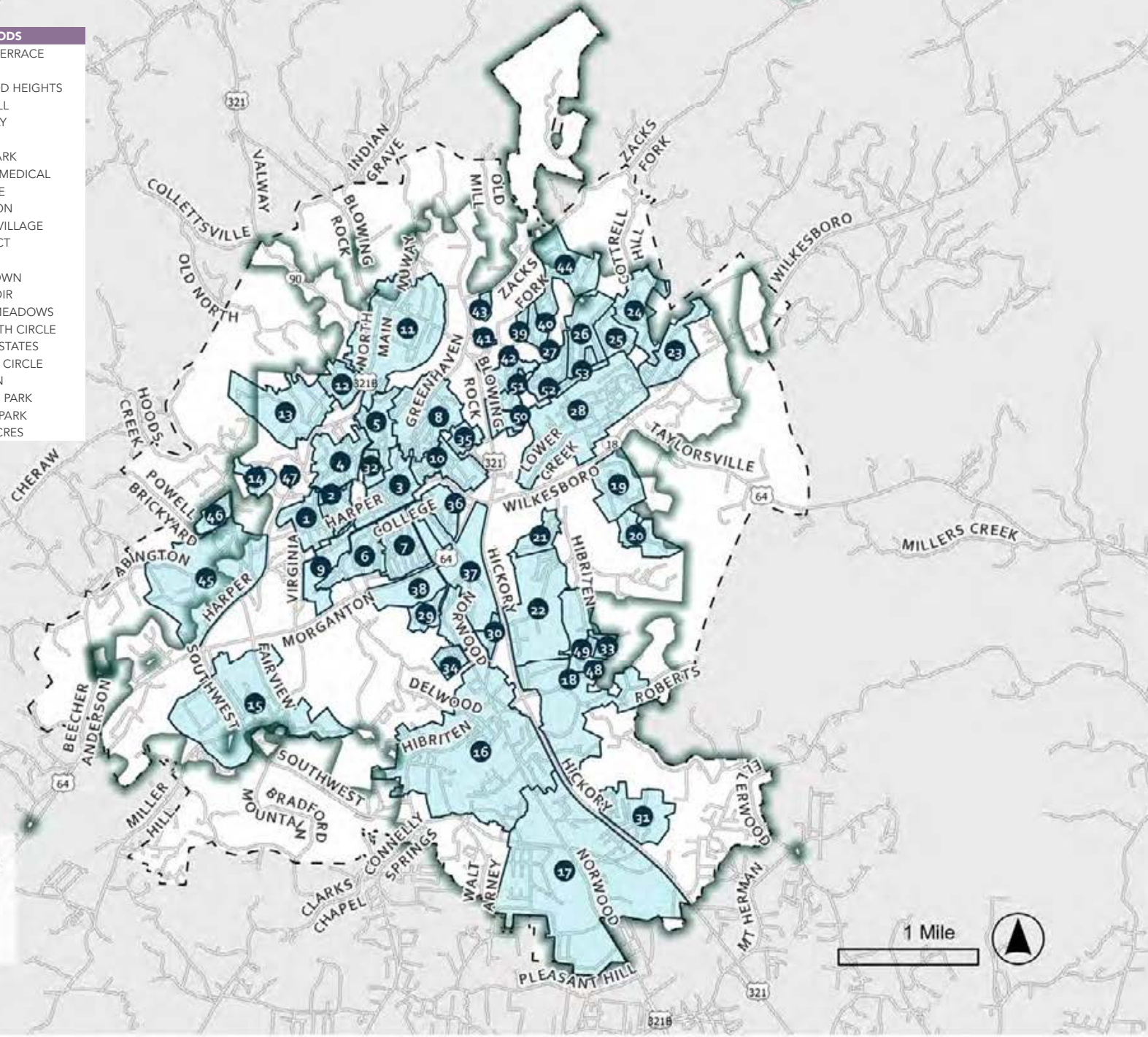
NEIGHBORHOODS

- 1 FAIRFIELD
- 2 LENOIR HEIGHTS
- 3 DOWNTOWN
- 4 WEST END
- 5 CHERRY HILL
- 6 LERINCO
- 7 KENTWOOD
- 8 FREEDMAN
- 9 FAIRFIELD SOUTH
- 10 EAST HARPER
- 11 VALMEAD
- 12 BUSHTOWN
- 13 WAKEFIELD
- 14 HONEY HILL
- 15 MILLER HILL
- 16 WHITNEL
- 17 JOYCETON
- 18 HIBRITEN
- 19 TREMONT PARK
- 20 STONECROFT
- 21 WOODRIDGE ESTATES
- 22 HUNTINGTON
- 23 WILDWOOD
- 24 COTTRELL HILL
- 25 BARRINGTON GLEN
- 26 CHARLES MONT ESTATES
- 27 SEEHORN
- 28 LOWER CREEK
- 29 BRITISH WOODS
- 30 NED JONES HILL

NEIGHBORHOODS

- 31 LAKESIDE TERRACE
- 32 KIRKWOOD
- 33 PRESTWOOD HEIGHTS
- 34 SUMMERHILL
- 35 WOODSWAY
- 36 OAK VIEW
- 37 MAEHILL PARK
- 38 MULBERRY MEDICAL
- 39 CAMBRIDGE
- 40 WELLINGTON
- 41 WEXFORD VILLAGE
- 42 CAMELOT CT
- 43 PARKVIEW
- 44 GEORGETOWN
- 45 WEST LENOIR
- 46 FAIRVIEW MEADOWS
- 47 WENTWORTH CIRCLE
- 48 HIBRITEN ESTATES
- 49 RANDOLPH CIRCLE
- 50 THOMPSON
- 51 OAKWOOD PARK
- 52 BRADNELL PARK
- 53 QUEENS ACRES

- Lenoir Neighborhoods
- Lenoir City Limits
- Lenoir ETJ



Map 17. Neighborhood Map

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This Neighborhood Planning Framework enables the City to develop multiple neighborhood plans simultaneously, while also creating individual plans tailored to each area. The objective is to comprehensively evaluate each neighborhood and identify implementation strategies that can be incorporated into the overall Citywide Comprehensive Plan. Map 17 shows the designated neighborhoods within Lenoir. This Comprehensive Plan includes two neighborhood plans—for the Whitnel and West End neighborhoods—that serve as templates for future neighborhood planning efforts.

Time Frame

A time frame should be established for conducting each round of neighborhood plans. It is recommended that neighborhood plans be initiated on an annual or similar timeframe, allowing sufficient time for public engagement, neighborhood analysis, and plan drafting. Multiple plans can be initiated at a time. Consideration should be made for the size, location, and needs of the neighborhoods to determine how many should be conducted at a time. In some cases, it may be appropriate to combine neighborhood areas that are smaller in size, have similar needs, or have other characteristics.

Public Engagement

Stakeholder involvement is a crucial part of the neighborhood planning process. It allows those who live and work in the neighborhood to contribute to the creation of the plan and have a sense of ownership of their community. Meetings and engagement events should be held throughout the planning process to compile public input and create plan recommendations that align with the community's goals.

Recognizing that not all engagement tools are equally effective across neighborhoods, efforts should be tailored to the unique needs of each area considering how information is distributed, where meetings are held, and how events are formatted. The Public Engagement Toolbox provides various outreach methods that can be customized for each neighborhood plan.

Plan Elements

For each neighborhood, assess existing conditions, define a vision, determine the character and attributes of the neighborhood, and draft implementation strategies to realize the vision. Collectively, these elements serve as a guide for future development and policy decisions. The following are descriptions of the different plan elements:

- **Existing Conditions:** Analyze land use, connectivity, demographics, and other relevant details specific to the neighborhood. Utilize this information to identify the needs of the neighborhood and guide future recommendations.
- **Vision:** Reflect the public input received during community engagement and illustrate the desired future development of the neighborhood establishing a unifying vision for the future.
- **Neighborhood Attributes:** Identify key elements that define the character of the community, such as physical enhancements, programmatic needs, or capital improvements. These will further support the vision and shape different recommendation strategies.
- **Implementation Strategies:** Develop specific strategies to achieve the vision. These may include approaches from the implementation toolbox or new strategies unique to the neighborhood.

Implementation

Once a neighborhood plan is completed, its implementation strategies should be incorporated into an annual review to monitor progress. A report should be created to evaluate the effectiveness of active plans, outline completed tasks and identify new tasks to be initiated. This review should occur during the annual budget planning process to integrate relevant recommendations into the capital improvements plan for the following year. While the City holds primary responsibility for implementation, forming partnerships with residents and external organizations can enhance the process and foster a sense of community ownership.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY TOOLBOX

The key to a successful plan is public engagement and community buy-in. All neighborhood planning efforts should include a variety of engagement methods to create a transparent process and align the vision for the neighborhood with the community's aspirations. While every engagement method may not suit every neighborhood, the methods implemented should be tailored to best connect with residents and stakeholders. Below are examples of engagement methods that can be implemented for future neighborhood plans.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

Neighborhood meetings should be scheduled at key stages throughout the planning process, including the beginning, middle, and end so that residents are involved at important milestones. Considerations should be made regarding the format and location of the meetings. They can be conducted as open-house sessions, formal presentations, or hands-on workshops. Whenever possible, meetings should be held within the neighborhood in question. If this is not feasible, they should be hosted in a central, easily accessible location.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The City can create an online hub on the City website where residents can access information about neighborhood planning progress. This hub can provide resources for all neighborhood plans, with individual pages dedicated to active projects. An online source enables residents to learn about the project, receive updates, and view draft materials. Additionally, the City may consider investing in a city-wide engagement program to create a central hub to support all future engagement initiatives.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

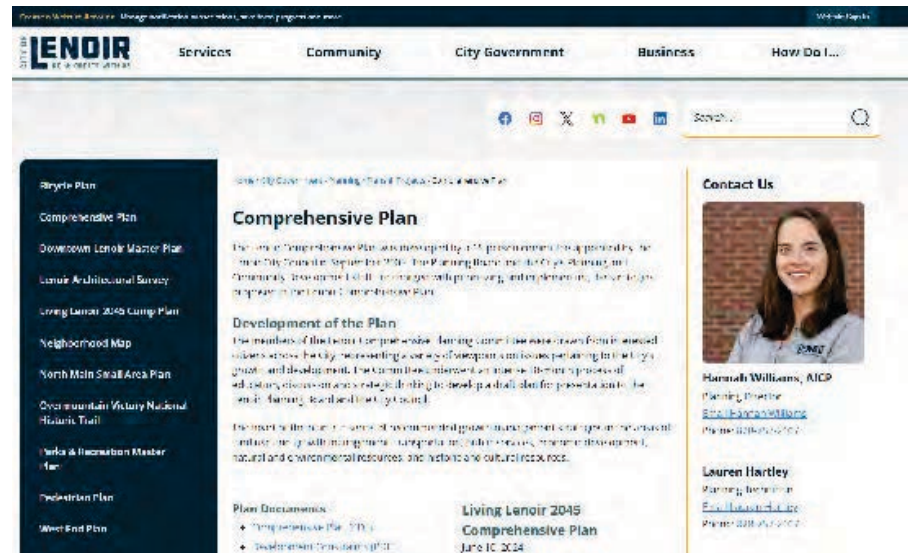
Community surveys allow the City to gather quantitative and qualitative data from residents about their neighborhood's future. Surveys can be conducted online or on paper, offering multiple avenues for input. Materials should be available in multiple languages to create accessibility for all residents.



West End Neighborhood Meeting



Whitnel Neighborhood Meeting



Comprehensive Plan Web Page

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews are a targeted engagement method that invites residents, property owners, business owners, and other key individuals to participate in intentional conversations. These interviews help the City identify community issues and opportunities. Based on stakeholder preferences, they can be conducted online or in person.

POP-UP EVENTS

The City can participate in existing events or set up booths at various locations within the neighborhood to interact with local residents. This method allows City staff to meet residents where they are and engage them at events they are already attending. Pop-up events also enable broader outreach, reaching more residents, including those outside the neighborhood boundaries.

AMBASSADORS

Community ambassadors are neighborhood representatives who promote the plan and connect with residents. As stakeholders, ambassadors have insight into the community and can communicate effectively with their neighbors. They can attend local events to distribute flyers or present information about the plan. Ambassadors can also be paired with other engagement methods to enhance outreach efforts.

MEETINGS-IN-A-BOX

Meetings-in-a-Box are self-contained kits that empower residents and ambassadors to host their own meetings. These kits may include a presentation, flyers, discussion guides, and other relevant materials needed for anyone to host their own meeting. Meeting hosts collect feedback and submit it to City staff for incorporation into the plan. This approach amplifies engagement efforts by enabling residents to reach their neighbors directly.



Pop-Up Event - Wood, Fire, Smoke Festival



Pop-up Event - Blackberry Festival



Pop-up Event - Blackberry Festival

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT TOOLBOX

A variety of strategies can be implemented to encourage revitalization. These strategies may be regulatory, programmatic, or physical in nature. Revitalized development, community programs, and capital improvements can enhance the overall appearance, functionality, and value of the community, positively impacting neighborhoods. The following programs and techniques are recommended for inclusion in neighborhood plans to promote improvements within existing neighborhoods. The strategies listed are not exhaustive; additional approaches not listed here may also prove effective. These strategies are intended to serve as a resource for common, effective, and appropriate solutions.

PROGRAMS

Facade Improvement Program

A facade improvement program provides funds to assist businesses with repairs, touch-ups, and changes to commercial building facades. The program encourages property and business owners to proactively renovate the facade of their business and improve the overall aesthetic of retail areas. Under this program, the City could match private investment up to a certain dollar amount and target certain retail areas or districts.

Commercial Landscaping Program

Landscaping has the potential to significantly impact the overall appearance of commercial centers. Many existing retail and commercial centers within the corridor have minimal landscaping and local businesses may not have the funding to make exterior improvements. Therefore, offering a landscaping incentive may entice business owners to perform minor improvements to their property.

Neighborhood Association

Develop neighborhood associations to implement improvements within the neighborhoods. Neighborhood associations create a forum for residents to take ownership of their neighborhood and lobby City leadership to implement recommended improvements. Associations can also serve as partners in implementing the recommendations of the neighborhood plans.

Commercial Rehabilitation Program

To encourage redevelopment of existing retail centers, the City could consider offering low-interest loans, matching funds, or even grants in exchange for significant rehabilitation. Significant rehabilitation would include an improvement where both the exterior and interior of an existing structure are improved and modernized. This would lead to a new, attractive exterior and more functional and desirable interior spaces, likely increasing property values. These incentives should be used for more expensive rehabilitation projects and would likely require a higher degree of public participation in order to make such investments feasible.

Opportunity Zone

The NC Opportunity Zones Program is designed to encourage job creation, economic activity, housing and other community investments throughout North Carolina. An Opportunity Zone is an economically-distressed community where new, long-term investment in property or businesses may qualify to receive tax incentives. U.S. Congress created the Opportunity Zone program in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Several census tracts in Lenoir are eligible for funding.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Incentives for Enhanced Exterior Improvements

Incentives in the form of waived fees, expedited approval, or leniency on other development requirements not related to health and safety can be offered in exchange for developers who provide exterior improvements beyond the minimum requirements for parking, lighting, landscaping, and other elements of development.

Lighting

Improve lighting to increase pedestrian safety in both commercial and residential areas. Consideration should be made to avoid any adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods; lighting facilities in commercial areas should be reflected away from adjacent residential areas.

Landscaping

Landscaping is particularly important along major corridors to project a positive image at neighborhood entries. Incentives should be provided for landscaping beyond the minimum requirement for commercial developments. Creative stormwater management techniques such as bioswales and rain gardens along with native plant materials should also be encouraged within major corridors.

Increase Pedestrian Amenities

To create a more walkable environment, provide increase sidewalk connectivity and improve pedestrian amenities such as lighting, sidewalks, benches, landscaping, and trash receptacles. Widened sidewalks and improved pedestrian crossings also foster walkability by providing safer facilities.

Clear Blighted Buildings and Clean Up Vacant Lots

Continue efforts to acquire and demolish any blighted buildings and clean up any trash or invasive plants on vacant lots. This serves two purposes. First, it shows the residents and visitors that the City is investing in the area and is encouraging a safe, clean environment. Second, it prepares the land for future development.

Establish Aesthetics and Maintenance Standards

The City should establish aesthetics and maintenance standards for commercial areas. The City may consider engaging in partnerships with either community organizations or private businesses to help properties meet these standards. Well-maintained properties will drive interest and patrons to the area, and the businesses will profit from the increased business.

Branding

Create a brand for neighborhoods and commercial areas to establish an identity for the area. This will help with advertising and incorporate the character choices for the district. Branding can be furthered by the City, private businesses or neighborhood associations.

Historic Preservation

In places of historic significance, the preservation of existing structures should be initiated to preserve the character of the community, and signage should be provided to celebrate the significance of the community.

Facade Maintenance Loan Program

This program provides funding for commercial property owners or tenants to cooperatively update and improve their commercial properties. Businesses are encouraged to apply for these programs, which help draw and retain both customers and quality tenants to properties.

FUNDING SOURCES

General Funds

Set aside funds within the general fund specifically to use for projects within neighborhoods.

Sales Tax Sharing

A sales tax sharing is an arrangement made by the City to share or rebate a portion of retailers' occupation taxes generated by retail sales with retailers, developers, consultants, or other local governments or taxing jurisdictions. This is done by incentivizing businesses to reinvest the reimbursed funds back into the local economy through improvements to their own business. These agreements benefit both the local government and the businesses taking part, as well as the people of the community.

Low Interest Loans/Subordination

The City may issue low interest loans for the purpose of encouraging investment within neighborhoods. Loans are typically granted to small businesses that may have a harder time qualifying for affordable financing.

Bonds

Bonds are debt securities issued by the City to fund projects. In this case, funds could be used to fund capital projects. Money is lent to the bond issuer in exchange for a promise of regular interest payments and the return of the original investment.

Tax Increment Financing District (TIF)

A TIF is a special district where any increase in tax revenues caused by new development and higher property values is paid into a special fund to finance improvements. The purpose of a TIF is to finance new public improvements in the area in which the funds originated. Potential improvements include wider sidewalks, utilities, public landscaping, lighting, environmental remediation, demolition, and historic facades, etc.

Municipal Service District (MSD)

An MSD is a special district in which owners pay a supplemental assessment with their taxes, which the MSD uses for additional services such as marketing, landscaping, lighting, street cleaning, and recreational improvements.

Incentives for Small Business Owners

Small business owners promote the local economy by providing local goods and services and creating a sense of place. Incentives may be small business loans, technical assistance, and/or expedited permitting.

Federal Transit Administration Grants

The Federal Transit Administration provides grants to local public transit systems to promote public transportation. Multiple grants are available annually for a variety of improvements.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) Section 108 Loan Debt Program

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides CDBG funds through the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program. The program provides financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and other physical development projects. Project costs can be spread over time and borrowers can take advantage of lower interest rates. Loans are typically large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects capable of revitalizing entire neighborhoods.

Develop Land Banking Program

A land banking program allows the City to acquire vacant, abandoned, or tax delinquent property and assemble them into developable parcels of land. Once acquired, the City can execute requests for proposals (RFPs) for signature public-private projects or sell the property to responsible property owners for development. If possible, the City should consolidate properties owned by multiple public agencies into a single ownership, allowing for an expedited property transfer process. This benefits the City by increasing the tax value of the property, increasing the opportunities for mixed development, and improving community image.

WHITNEL NEIGHBORHOOD

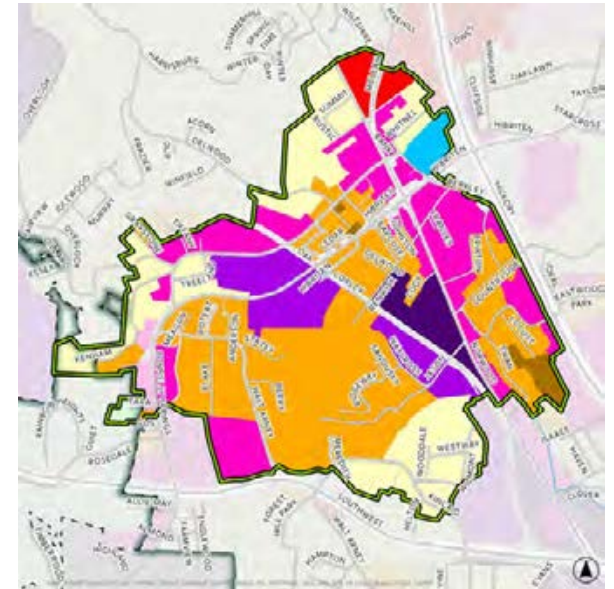
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Whitnel neighborhood is located west of US 321, primarily along Hibriten Drive and Norwood Street. The area features a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, creating a well-rounded neighborhood design. It is served by Whitnel Elementary School, and residents take great pride in their community. Residential development within the neighborhood is diverse, including large family lots, traditional subdivisions, and medium-density housing in older areas. The location also offers clear views of Hibriten Mountain and opportunities for outdoor activities.

Historically, the area has been known for its industrial businesses, which provided employment opportunities in the City. However, over the years, industrial and commercial development has declined, leading to numerous vacant buildings and commercial sites. This has raised community concerns about safety due to a perceived increase in crime associated with underutilized properties.

Residents have expressed a strong desire to revitalize the area by attracting industry and businesses to create thriving commercial corridors once again. There is a need to develop strategies to incentivize investment from business and property owners. Enhancements to streetscaping and branding could help establish a cohesive neighborhood design and create a welcoming entrance to the area. Additionally, improved pedestrian facilities and trail connections to surrounding areas would increase accessibility and reduce reliance on cars.

There are several proposed residential developments in the surrounding neighborhoods that could help expand housing options for the community. These include a new 136-unit apartment complex, The Palisades, along with a new subdivision called Summerhill and the J. Baker Project. Additionally, ongoing investments continue with the latest land purchase for the Lenoir/Caldwell County Transload Facility.



VISION

Whitnel is a community with a rich industrial heritage, and we envision transforming vacant spaces into vibrant areas for retail, mixed-use developments, restaurants, and breathing new life into our community. While we honor our past, we eagerly look forward to creating new local employment opportunities by repurposing underutilized industrial properties and enhancing local housing. Whitnel is on a path to becoming a welcoming and prosperous neighborhood where residents take pride in their community and work together toward a safe, family-friendly, and inclusive future for all.



Streetscaping Example

NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES

- **Family-Friendly:** Whitnel is a safe, family-friendly environment that encourages inclusion and cooperation.
- **Affordable Housing:** Housing options in Whitnel are diverse and available at a range of prices to be affordable for all residents.
- **Recreation and Gathering Areas:** Whitnel provides areas for the community to gather and come together, such as new or connecting to existing recreation areas or community centers.
- **Beautification and Pride:** The area's history and pride are shown through clean, aesthetic corridors and the incorporation of streetscaping.
- **Local Business Revitalization:** The revitalization of the primary commercial corridors incorporates strong local businesses and small start-ups to reinvigorate vacant or underutilized properties and create a more vibrant commercial center.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Utilize grants and other funding opportunities to fund neighborhood improvements.
- Provide incentives for diverse businesses to set up in Whitnel, such as technical assistance, economic development incentives, and industry recruitment assistance.
- Invest in infrastructure to improve greenway links, making the area more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly.
- Enhance street lighting, increase police presence, and improve public amenities to make Whitnel safer and more attractive.
- Launch a revitalization program focusing on beautification, infrastructure improvements, and community engagement.
- Work with developers to create new and diverse affordable housing options.



Example of Affordable Housing Options



Example of Commercial Development

WEST END NEIGHBORHOOD

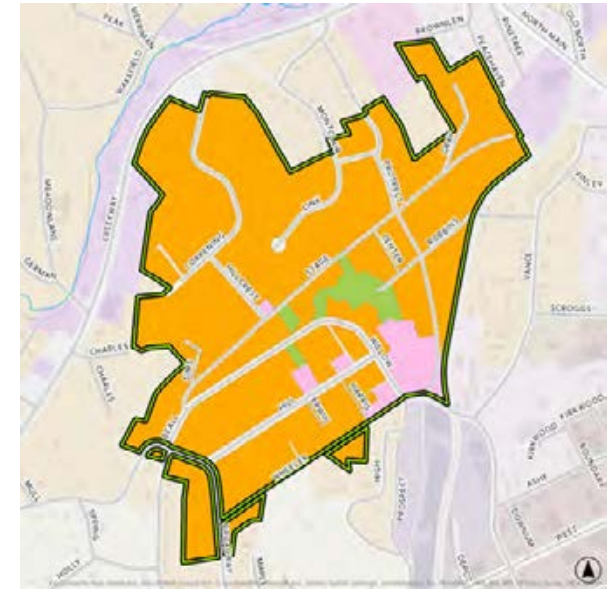
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The West End Neighborhood is primarily a residential area, featuring a mix of single-family homes and medium-density housing types. Located northwest of the downtown area, it is one of the highest points in the City and offers some of the best views in Lenoir. The neighborhood includes limited non-residential spaces, such as churches and commercial retail establishments. Due to its topography and previous development patterns, roadways are generally narrow and have limited connectivity. Sidewalks are scarce, and residents have expressed concerns about safety when navigating the neighborhood on foot.

A significant challenge to revitalizing the neighborhood is the prevalence of vacant, underutilized, or poorly maintained properties. Stakeholders have identified property maintenance as a persistent issue, hindering opportunities for reinvestment. West End Park, situated at the heart of the neighborhood, features open play areas, a basketball court, and a gathering space at the pavilion. While the park serves as a key location for recreation and community gatherings in the heart of the neighborhood, upgrades are needed to improve the condition of its existing facilities.

Residents have expressed a desire to restore local businesses to the West End Neighborhood, create more recreational and gathering spaces for all ages, and rehabilitate existing housing while providing new housing options at various

density levels. Revitalization opportunities include utilizing vacant or underutilized buildings for local businesses and constructing additional housing options, particularly to meet the needs of aging residents. There is evidence of recent investment in the community through the rehabilitation of existing homes. Further community pride can be enhanced through the incorporation of beautification projects that bring color to the neighborhood and celebrate the role West End serves in the history of Lenoir.



VISION

West End is a vibrant and thriving neighborhood that celebrates its rich history and fosters a strong sense of community. We take pride in our heritage, showcasing it through art, gardens, and streetscaping that reflect our unique story. Our connected streets and safe sidewalks create a welcoming environment for all residents. Local businesses flourish, serving the needs of our community and contributing to our economic vitality.

NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES

- **Colorful Murals and Landscaping:** The neighborhood and streetscapes are enhanced through the use of vibrant artwork and landscaping along streets and at neighborhood entrances.
- **Celebrate History:** West End residents and contributions to the community are highlighted through historic markers, tours, and beautification projects, as well as events that celebrate the diverse culture of the West End Neighborhood.
- **Central Activity Centers:** Existing or proposed locations provide hubs of activity and engagement for all ages, such as community or recreation centers.
- **Recreational Spaces:** Existing facilities are enhanced or new parks are created to provide areas for children and families to enjoy.
- **Community Investment:** Encourage investment in local businesses to serve West End residents.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Partner with local artists and art organizations to commission murals that celebrate West End history.
- Launch a community beautification program for neighborhood cleanups to increase community pride.
- Explore potential locations for gateway signage and develop a plan for future installation.
- Work with local historians to identify significant sites and develop plans to design and install informative plaques and markers throughout the neighborhood.
- Form a neighborhood association to guide implementation recommendations and coordination of neighborhood events.
- Identify and assess vacant or underutilized sites for a potential neighborhood gathering space and add local businesses.
- Conduct a needs assessment to evaluate West End Park and determine the best way to redesign the park to increase usability.
- Explore opportunities to expand trail connections within or near the West End neighborhood.
- Explore funding such as CDBG funding, community fundraising, grants, and sponsorships for neighborhood improvements.
- Continue to work with property owners to address vacant or abandoned housing.



Mural Example



Mural Example



Neighborhood Gateway Example



Landscaping Example



A group of people are seated around a long table in a meeting room. In the background, a large presentation screen displays a list of bullet points. The room has a blue wall with a framed seal and a poster. The text '06 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES' is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, white font. The number '06' is in a light purple color. The background image is dimmed and has a dark blue overlay.

06 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

The implementation plan is a crucial component of the Comprehensive Plan, as it translates strategic goals into actionable steps. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee expressed a need for an actionable and feasible implementation plan.

This chapter presents a detailed list of implementation strategies, clearly outlining the specific actions required, assigning roles and responsibilities, and establishing a timeline for achieving the desired results. This thorough approach details what needs to be done, who is responsible for each task, and when each step should be completed, ultimately facilitating the successful execution of the Comprehensive Plan's goals.

This chapter provides:

- Implementation Best Practices
- Implementation Action Plan



IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES

PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE STRATEGIES

Plan implementation is often achieved through one of two methods: proactive and reactive implementation strategies. While both are effective in putting the recommendations of this Plan into action, using a balance of both approaches will better set the City up for success in achieving these goals. Examples of proactive and reactive strategies are provided below.

Proactive Strategies

Proactive strategies are those that the City leads in seeking implementation of the Plan's recommendations and actions. City-initiated efforts are effective because they may occur immediately but may prove costly regarding staff time and City resources. Examples include:

- Updating policies, such as Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs), thoroughfare plans, and development codes to achieve the recommendations identified within this Plan
- Initiating zoning changes within target areas to encourage development that is compatible with the land use designations within this Plan
- Acquiring property from private individuals and entities in strategic locations to support responsible development, design, and engineering practices

Reactive Strategies

Reactive strategies involve opportunities brought to the City on a case-by-case basis rather than those the City seeks out independently. These strategies rely on elected and appointed officials to act with the recommendations of this Plan in mind, placing further emphasis on the continuing updates and communication of the Plan suggested in this chapter. Examples include:

- Assessing rezoning requests against the intent and purpose of the future land use categories established in this Plan
- Reviewing development applications for compliance with the adopted development standards and the intent of this Plan
- Updating the recommendations and actions of this Plan based on public feedback and initiatives
- Considering economic development projects and incentive options that expand the City's tax base and employment opportunities

IMPLEMENTATION EDUCATION

An essential part of implementation is education about the role and significance of the Comprehensive Plan. Public education about the Comprehensive Plan builds consensus on the initiatives in the Plan and gains buy-in from the community. When the community supports the Plan for the future development of Lenoir, the Plan receives the consensus it needs to successfully implement these initiatives.

Regular education and training should be offered to City Council, Planning Board, City staff, and other individuals with a direct role in the implementation of the Plan. Training is intended to update or educate participants so that those involved with the Plan are always informed about the current status of the Comprehensive Plan. Training initiatives should include:

- A review of the goals and guiding principles that guide the Plan's recommendations
- An overview of segments of the Plan that most directly relate to their responsibilities and purposes
- Discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each individual entity and its function regarding Plan implementation
- Implementation tasking and priority setting that allows each group to establish their own short- and long-term agendas.
- A review of current Plan initiatives and status updates on the progress of recommended implementation strategies.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

No single individual or entity is responsible for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. There are multiple aspects of the Plan that require participation by various parties, such as the adoption of regulations, administration of the development code, and partnering with different public and private organizations. Each individual or group involved with the Comprehensive Plan has a vital role to play in its implementation based on their authority or expense.

City Council

The key responsibilities of the City Council are to establish priorities, set time frames for when actions should be initiated and completed, and determine the financial resources to be made available for implementation efforts. The City Council works with outside entities or provides direction for City staff and Planning Board to implement the initiatives of the Plan.

Planning Board

The Planning Board is charged with making recommendations to the City Council regarding zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. In this role, the Planning Board acts as the connection between City staff and City Council. It is important for the Planning Board to remain knowledgeable about the Comprehensive Plan and to make sound recommendations in the best interest of the City.

City Staff

City staff is involved in the most direct application of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff is responsible for administering the Plan through the zoning ordinance, subdivision codes, and other regulations directly influenced by the Comprehensive Plan.

Partners

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is not solely dependent on the City's resources. Entities like private developers, boards and commissions, federal agencies, and local non-profit organizations are useful partners to implement specific recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. These entities can provide resources and support for elements of the Plan to assist the City in completing particular tasks. Partnerships can take the form of public-private partnerships (PPP), grant funding, establishment of programs, and other various methods. The following list of partners is not exhaustive, but provides examples of outside entities that can be beneficial to the success of this plan:

- Caldwell County
- North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)
- Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO)
- Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG)
- Caldwell Chamber of Commerce
- Adjacent local communities (on projects with mutual benefits)
- Additional affected agencies and entities
- Area property and business owners and the development community
- Home Owner Associations
- Lenoir Business Advisory Board
- Lenoir Housing Authority
- Lenoir Tourism Development Authority
- Planning Board/ Historic Preservation Commission
- Recreation Advisory Committee

UPDATING THE PLAN

This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for policy decisions and to reflect the community's vision for the future. As such, the Plan is not a rigid document but a living tool that should be revisited and revised, if necessary, depending on the City's changing economic, physical, and social composition. The Plan should be reviewed for accuracy as the City grows to maintain alignment with the vision and guiding principles.

Annual Progress Reporting

Following adoption, the City should assign a responsible body, such as the Planning Board or another citizen committee to provide an annual progress report on the status of the Comprehensive Plan to City leadership. This annual review will help verify if the Plan's relevance of content and the appropriateness of the Plan's recommendations and actions are still applicable. With assistance from City staff and involved departments, the responsible body could present an annual report on the City's implementation from the year prior to the City Council. This report should be coordinated with the annual budget and can be used as an opportunity to celebrate the City's achievements and reflect on opportunities in the coming year.

Annual Updates

Following the annual progress reporting, the implementation action plan should be reviewed and updated as part of an annual plan amendment. This annual amendment will allow the City to update the implementation plan and identify near-term actions for the coming year. Annual Plan amendments also provide opportunities for relatively minor Plan updates and revisions as needed.

Five-Year Audit Diagnostic

In addition to the annual reviews, the City should conduct a thorough audit of the Plan's outcomes and content every five years following the Plan's original adoption. Such reviews should be a joint effort between all involved departments and officials and should include an analysis of the Plan's successes and shortcomings as it relates to implementing the community's vision for the City. During this process, staff should work to identify any necessary revisions, either minor or comprehensive, to organize potential revisions to the document. Topics of interest should include any shifts in demographic composition, economic factors, and societal factors that may impact the trajectory of the City.

10-Year Update

The Plan sets the stage for subsequent implementation actions in the 10-year planning horizon. Environmental conditions, population composition and City trends and concerns change over time. To help the Plan continue to provide the best and most appropriate direction possible, it should be taken through a full update process every 10 years.



IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

One of the most important elements of a comprehensive plan is having actionable recommendations that clearly outline the initial steps that a city must take to begin implementing the Plan. The following implementation table provides individual actions that will help achieve the vision established by the community. The table is organized by the five goals identified in the Plan and includes several action items related to the goal. For each action, an associated time frame for implementation, involved entities, and action type are identified to assist with planning and completing the action.

1 ACTION ITEMS

The action items include recommended strategies paired with corresponding action keys. They are developed based on assessments and community input across various topics outlined in this Plan. These action items represent practical strategies that the City can implement to achieve the vision set forth in this Plan.

1

Action #	Action Items
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2 IMPLEMENTATION TIME FRAME

This Plan provides a phased approach to implementation to help the City identify achievable actions in the near future and distinguish them from long-term actions that might need extensive studies and preparation. The recommended actions are categorized into the following time frames.

Ongoing

Recommendations that are continuously being implemented or should be revisited regularly throughout the life of the recommendation or implementation of the Plan.

Short-Term (1-3 years)

Actions that are typically “low-hanging fruit” or easier to achieve because they do not require a large amount of capital.

Mid-Term (4-6 years)

Actions that may require more planning and capital than the short-term 3-year horizon.

Long-Term (7+ years)

Actions that generally need a large amount of capital, require significant planning and coordination for completion or other steps must take place before implementation. In some cases, there may be opportunities to make some initial progress in the short- or mid-term.

2

Implementation Time Frame
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3 RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES

Assigning the key entities responsible for following through on an action is essential to implementing the suggested recommendation. This portion of the table identifies the departments, groups within the City, and potential partnerships that may assist with completing the action. Communication with these individuals and groups is essential to explain their roles and expectations when implementing this Plan. Please note that the entities mentioned below do not constitute an exhaustive list of partners.

City Entities

Downtown Economic Development, Fire, Parks & Recreation, Planning, Police, Public Utilities, Public Works

Partner Entities

Caldwell County, NCDOT, GHMPO, Caldwell Chamber of Commerce, Historic Preservation Commission, Lenoir Business Advisory Board, Lenoir Housing Authority, Lenoir Tourism Development Authority, Planning Board, Recreation Advisory Committee, WPCOG

3

Implementation Time Frame

4 ACTION TYPE(S)

Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will take coordination on the part of the City and area partners. The various actions in the table have been identified by one of eight action types. This distinction assists the City in identifying the individuals or groups responsible for carrying out the action and plan for proper resources and staffing. The action types are listed below:

- Project
- Partnership
- Plan
- Policy
- Financial Investment
- Study
- Regulation
- Operational Change

4

Action Type(s)

5 CORRESPONDING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The recommendations in this Plan reflect Lenoir's vision for its future, with the goals serving as the foundation for every recommendation throughout the document. The table in the following pages highlights the alignment between these goals and the recommended implementation strategies, offering a clear framework for translating the Plan's vision into action. Each goal is represented by its respective icon, as seen below. Every recommended strategy will correspond with an applicable goal, providing a clear and visually organized way to identify how the goals are integrated into the recommended actions.

- 1 Build and Promote Community Pride
- 2 Enhance Livability
- 3 Expand Housing Options
- 4 Support Commercial Opportunities
- 5 Improve Mobility and Connectivity

5

Corresponding Guiding Principle
4
2 4

Land Use and Character Areas					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
LU-1	Consider updates to the development ordinance to encourage growth in appropriate zoning districts.	Ongoing	Planning	Regulation	2
LU-2	Update regulations to allow modern uses, such as renewable energy systems.	Ongoing	Planning	Regulation	2
LU-3	Create gateway branding plans for identified Commercial Corridors.	Ongoing	Planning	Plan	2 5
LU-4	Implement the recommendations of the City of Lenoir Downtown Master Plan.	Ongoing	Planning, Downtown Economic Development, Public Works, Parks & Recreation	Plan	1 2 4 5
LU-5	Update the development ordinance to encourage smaller-scale commercial and mixed-use development in various neighborhood locations.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3 4
LU-6	Streamline the approval process for developing sites for commercial and industrial development.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	2 4 5
LU-7	Update the Land Use table in the Zoning Ordinance to realign zoning districts spatially.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	2 3
LU-8	Update signage regulations to support commercial development along the Commercial Corridors by providing more flexibility for business owners.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	4
LU-9	Adopt a Commercial Corridor Overlay District that encourages appropriate commercial development along the various Commercial Corridors.	Mid-term	Planning	Regulation	4
LU-10	Create a voluntary incentive program for commercial redevelopment along the Commercial Corridors, affordable housing development, and neighborhood commercial projects.	Mid-term	Planning, Lenoir Business Advisory Board	Financial Investment, Policy	4

- 1 Build and Promote Community Pride
 2 Enhance Livability
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 5 Improve Mobility and Connectivity

Land Use and Character Areas					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
LU-11	Create a Unified Development Ordinance that combines the various land development ordinances into one organized and updated document.	Mid-term	Planning	Regulation	1 2 3
LU-12	Continue efforts to attract new companies to diversify the local economy through an economic development program.	Mid-term	Planning, Lenoir Business Advisory Board	Plan, Partnership	2 4

1

Build and Promote Community Pride

2

Enhance Livability

3

Expand Housing Options

4

Support Commercial Opportunities

5

Improve Mobility and Connectivity

Housing, Infill, and Development Opportunities					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
H-1	Work with local non-profits and neighborhood organizations to focus on neighborhood revitalization efforts.	Ongoing	Planning, Downtown Economic Development	Partnership	2 3
H-2	Partner with community organizations to organize home maintenance workshops and provide technical assistance to support property beautification efforts.	Ongoing	Planning	Partnership	2 3
H-3	Work with master gardeners, agriculture extension, and other interested parties to assist with landscaping improvements on private properties for qualified homeowners.	Ongoing	Planning	Partnership	2
H-4	Work with the County Building Department for condemnation efforts to secure or demolish unsafe structures.	Ongoing	Planning, Caldwell County	Partnership	2
H-5	Partner with community organizations and the Lenoir Housing Authority to spearhead housing initiatives focused on retrofits and modifications, enabling individuals to age in place comfortably and safely.	Ongoing	Planning, Downtown Economic Development, Lenoir Housing Authority, WPCOG	Partnership, Financial Investment	2 3
H-6	Pursue grants and funding opportunities to expand affordable housing access and programs, including programs such as building new homes, rental assistance, and downpayment assistance.	Ongoing	Planning, Lenoir Housing Authority, WPCOG	Project	2 3
H-7	Work with non-profits to establish a cooperative network of providers and supportive services that can work together to provide housing assistance.	Ongoing	Planning, Lenoir Housing Authority, WPCOG	Partnership	3
H-8	Update the City Code, as needed, to appropriately address junk cars, tall grass, and trash on private property.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	2

- 1 Build and Promote Community Pride
 2 Enhance Livability
 3 Expand Housing Options
 4 Support Commercial Opportunities
 5 Improve Mobility and Connectivity

Housing, Infill, and Development Opportunities					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
H-9	Encourage a wide variety of housing types by updating the zoning ordinance to include more missing middle housing types to the permitted use chart for by-right development in the zoning ordinance.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3
H-10	Eliminate the use of Special Use Permit for various housing types and allow residential uses by-right.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3
H-11	Consider allowing duplexes in every district where single-family homes are allowed.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3
H-12	Allow Planned Residential Development without Special Use Permit.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3
H-13	Expand where manufactured homes are allowed.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3
H-14	Increase allowed density to encourage a wider variety of housing types and mixed-use development.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	3
H-15	Increase code enforcement efforts to bring properties into better repair and cleanliness.	Mid-term	Planning	Regulation	1 3
H-16	Create an incentive program and incorporate in the development ordinance for infill and redevelopment efforts by allowing for more by-right uses and more flexibility.	Mid-term	Planning	Financial Investment, Policy	3
H-17	Update codes and standards related to adaptive reuse to facilitate the reuse of older and historic properties for residential uses.	Mid-term	Planning	Regulation	1 3
H-18	Support expanded rehabilitation tax credits and other financial incentives to promote the reuse of historic buildings for housing.	Mid-term	Planning, Lenoir Housing Authority	Financial Investment, Policy	1 3

Housing, Infill, and Development Opportunities					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
H-19	Explore community land trust as a means of preserving affordability while ensuring that new development matches the character of the existing neighborhood.	Mid-term	Planning, WPCOG	Project	2 3
H-20	Utilize the affordable housing program offered by WPCOG.	Long-term	Planning, WPCOG	Policy, Financial Investment	2 3

1

Build and Promote
Community Pride

2

Enhance Livability

3

Expand Housing Options

4

Support Commercial
Opportunities

5

Improve Mobility and
Connectivity

City Resources					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
CR-1	Pursue National Register Designation for the historic study listed neighborhoods and expand the Downtown designation.	Short-term	Planning, Downtown Economic Development	Policy	1 2
CR-2	Create a local historic district and expand historic landmark designations to protect historic resources.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	1 2
CR-3	Implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Architectural Survey of the City of Lenoir.	Long-term	Planning, Public Works, Downtown Economic Development	Plan	2
CR-4	Continue to preserve floodplain lands from development, with a particular emphasis on keeping the floodway clear.	Ongoing	Planning, Public Works	Plan	2
CR-5	Pursue opportunities for stream restoration to restore natural functionality of waterways, in particular in conjunction with greenway development.	Mid-term	Planning, Public Works	Policy	2
CR-6	Increase street tree planting and maintenance throughout the City, with a specific focus on public trees.	Short-term	Planning, Public Works, Public Utilities	Plan, Financial Investment	1 2
CR-7	Adopt a tree preservation ordinance to establish standards for planting, maintenance, and removal of trees.	Short-term	Planning	Policy	1 2
CR-8	Partner with master gardeners, agriculture extension, and other interested parties to create demonstration and beautification gardens throughout the City with an emphasis on neighborhoods and public spaces.	Ongoing	Planning, Parks & Recreation	Partnership	1 2
CR-9	Update landscaping regulations to encourage wildlife corridors, planting of native plants, increase the permitted tree list, preservation of tree groups, and protection of sensitive natural habitat.	Mid-term	Planning, Parks & Recreation	Regulation	2

- 1 Build and Promote Community Pride
 2 Enhance Livability
 3 Expand Housing Options
 4 Support Commercial Opportunities
 5 Improve Mobility and Connectivity

City Resources					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
CR-10	Update lighting regulations to include Dark Sky approaches to limit nighttime light pollution.	Mid-term	Planning	Regulation	2
CR-11	Encourage local agriculture by allowing backyard chickens, bee keeping, and other activities throughout the City.	Ongoing	Planning	Regulation	2 4
CR-12	Continue investing in maintenance and repair of existing capital infrastructure through the Capital Improvement Program to help maintain high-quality service provision for residents and business owners.	Ongoing	Public Utilities, Public Works	Financial Investment	1 2
CR-13	Focus efforts on making sidewalk connections and adding crosswalks in needed locations to create a better connected pedestrian network.	Mid-term	Planning, Public Works, GHMPO, NCDOT	Plan, Financial Investment	1 2 5
CR-14	Pursue grant opportunities to fund complete street, non-motorized transportation improvements, and other recommendations in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.	Ongoing	Planning, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, GHMPO	Plan	2 5
CR-15	Continue to expand the use of public art and sculptures throughout the City and in all City projects.	Ongoing	Planning, Downtown Economic Development	Plan, Partnership	2
CR-16	Expand efforts to leverage tourism as an economic driver, including supporting the completion of the Overmountain Victory Trail.	Mid-term	Planning, Downtown Economic Development, Lenoir Tourism Development Authority	Plan, Partnership	4
CR-17	Increase police presence in areas perceived to have higher crime activity to build community trust.	Mid-term	Police	Plan, Financial Investment	2
CR-18	Explore options for expanding public transit through strategic partnerships.	Mid-term	Planning, Public Works, GHMPO	Plan, Partnership	2 5
CR-19	Implement a scenic viewshed protection overlay district to protect scenic mountain vistas.	Short-term	Planning	Regulation	1 2

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Neighborhood Planning					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
NP-1	Support the creation of neighborhood associations and other groups that can support neighborhood activities and organize volunteer efforts.	Ongoing	Planning	Partnership	1
NP-2	Invest in projects that directly benefit specific neighborhoods throughout the City on a rolling basis (e.g., set aside funding this fiscal year for improvements to a certain neighborhood, then next fiscal year pick a different neighborhood).	Ongoing	Planning	Financial Investment	1 2
NP-3	Develop a revitalization program to implement beautification improvements and clean-up efforts in neighborhoods.	Ongoing	Public Works, Planning	Policy	1 2
NP-4	Provide incentives for diverse businesses to set up in Whitnel, such as technical assistance and industry recruitment.	Ongoing	Planning	Financial Investment	4
NP-5	Partner with local artists and art organizations to commission murals that celebrate West End history at appropriate locations within the neighborhood.	Ongoing	Planning, Historic Preservation Commission	Project, Partnership	1
NP-6	Continue to work with property owners to address vacant or abandoned housing in the West End Neighborhood and throughout the City.	Ongoing	Planning	Partnership	1 2 4
NP-7	Increase property maintenance enforcement and efforts to cleanup vacant commercial and industrial properties in the Whitnel Neighborhood and throughout the City.	Ongoing	Planning	Partnership	1 2 4
NP-8	Identify and apply for grants or other funding opportunities to fund applicable neighborhood improvement projects recommended in this Comprehensive Plan.	Short-Term	Planning	Financial Investment	1

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Neighborhood Planning					
#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Responsible Entities	Action Type(s)	Corresponding Guiding Principles
NP-9	Conduct a needs assessment to evaluate West End Park and determine the best way to redesign it to increase usability, based on the recommendations of the Parks Master Plan.	Short-Term	Parks & Recreation, Planning	Study	1 2
NP-10	Implement the recommended trail and greenway improvements from the Parks and Trails Master Plan to increase pedestrian and cyclist connectivity to the Whitnel and West End Neighborhoods.	Mid-Term	Parks & Recreation, Planning	Project	2 5
NP-11	Explore potential locations for gateway signage and develop a plan for future installation in the West End Neighborhood.	Mid-Term	Planning, Public Works	Project	1 2 5
NP-12	Work with local historians to identify significant sites and develop plans to design and install informative plaques and markers throughout the West End neighborhood.	Mid-Term	Historic Preservation Commission	Project, Partnership	1
NP-13	Identify and assess vacant or underutilized sites in the West End Neighborhood for a potential neighborhood gathering space and add local businesses.	Mid-Term	Planning	Study	1 2 4

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