

Cullowhee SMALL AREA PLAN

PLAN ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all of the stakeholders, residents and property owners that attended meetings to give input and guidance on the Cullowhee Small Area Plan.

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Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**



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1

Introduction

Cullowhee is a unique setting that requires solutions to Western North Carolina and college communities. The uniqueness that binds the community should drive bold endeavors to realize the vision of the community.- Cullowhee Vision Plan

PURPOSE

In 2014, the Cullowhee community undertook an effort to create a Vision Plan establishing goals and strategies to shape the future of the community. The plan was largely undertaken due to the influence of Western Carolina University (WCU) that has changed the character and greatly influenced the residential growth of the area. With latent demand for additional housing products, the need to preserve and protect natural resources which contribute to the health and quality of life enjoyed by residents, and the growing demands for safe non-motorized transportation options a more detailed Small Area Plan was needed. This plan builds upon the Vision Plan and establishes a framework for accommodating growth and development while maintaining the character, environmental quality and livability of the area.

The Jackson County Land Use Plan 2040 adopted in 2017 recommended that Cullowhee prepare a plan to guide future growth and development. The Plan establishes goals and create strategies relevant to land use, economic development, utilities, transportation, natural resources and more.

PLAN PROCESS

The plan process that led to the development of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan was divided into four phases shown in the schedule on page 6. The planning process kicked off in January of 2019 and focused on project initiation including data collection, mapping and analysis. A kickoff meeting and a series of six stakeholder interviews was also held during this period.

Following the initiation of the plan, the project team held a 3-day charrette in May to get direction for the plan and develop initial concepts. The charrette included a walking tour of Old Cullowhee, Visioning Workshop, Framework Plan Presentation and Coffee Talk. An online survey was also conducted during this time and received over 300 responses. From these initial phases and input, themes and concepts emerged that guided the plan's development and draft recommendations. An effort was made to clarify recommendations in the 2014 plan based on additional public engagement and analysis.

Finally, after review and comment, the adoption of the plan occurred in x 2019.





PROJECT TIMELINE

The planning process was organized into the following 9 month schedule:

Phase	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
Project Initiation									
Analysis									
Charrette & Survey									
Plan Development									
Implementation/ Adoption									

Study Area

The study area for this plan consists of the Cullowhee Census Designated Place, the Cullowhee Planning Area and adjacent lands that could experience development pressure in the near future. A map of the study area is shown on page 7.

The study area is centered around Western Carolina University and the Tuckasegee River that flows from the southeast to the northwest. NC 107, a major highway runs north to south. NC 107 was constructed in the early 1980s and bypassed Old Cullowhee, which was once a thriving commercial area on the river.

The area was originally home to a Cherokee town whose name translates to "Judacullah's Place" so named after a mythic giant that the Cherokee believe lives in the area.

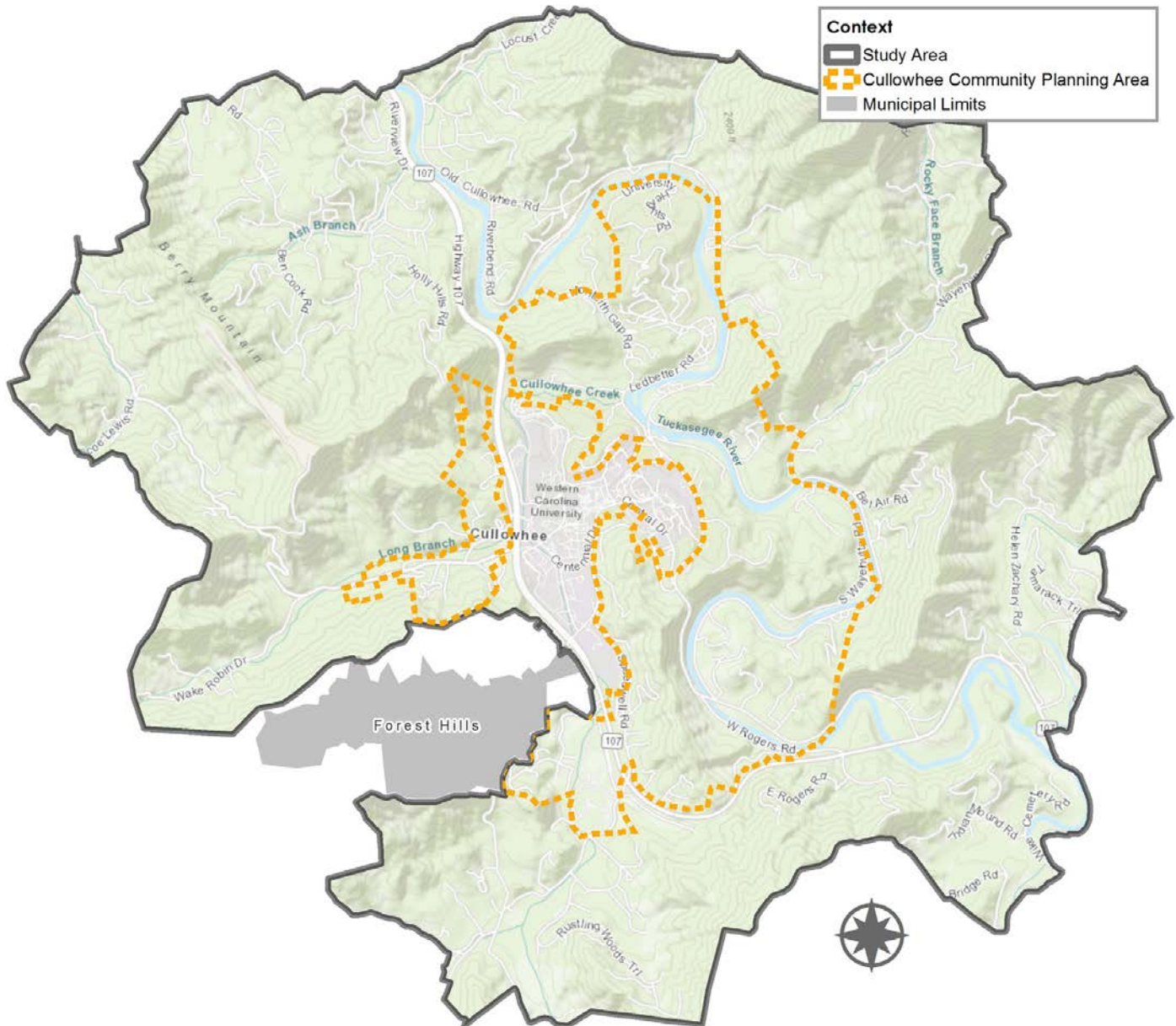
Western Carolina University began as the Cullowhee Normal and Industrial School in 1889 and has since grown into a major regional university and is a member campus of the University of North Carolina.

The study area is located in unincorporated Jackson County, although due to the university and high population growth it is dealing with issues that are atypical of more rural mountain counties. It is located south of the Town of Webster and near the Village of Forest Hills.



Cullowhee in the 1920s (Image Source: Hunter Library Special Collections at WCU)

CULLOWHEE SMALL AREA PLAN STUDY AREA MAP

**THE CULLOWHEE COMMUNITY PLANNING AREA AND THIS PLAN**

Areas within the Cullowhee Community Planning Area (CPA) have enhanced development regulations set by Jackson County that are not applicable in other areas of the county. The study area for this plan included an area that could be impacted by growth associated with Western Carolina University in the future. This plan includes policy recommendations for this area, but does not modify Jackson County development regulations or the extent of the CPA.

FOREST HILLS RELATIONSHIP TO PLAN

Forest Hills is an incorporated area Southwest of Cullowhee formed in 1997. Representatives and residents of Forest Hills participated in this planning process, however the Village maintains a separate zoning ordinance and governmental structure than Jackson County and the Cullowhee Community Planning Area



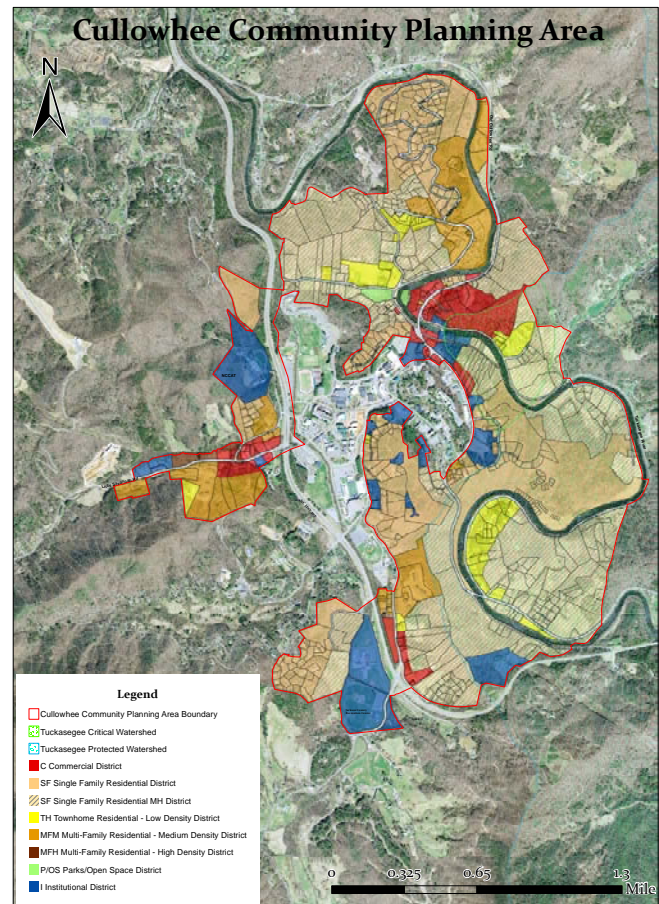
RELEVANT PLANS & STUDIES

Cullowhee's abundant natural resources, meandering waters, and ubiquitous mountain views make it an attractive place to visit and live. As a setting for higher education its scenic nature rivals anywhere else in the state. The areas unique assets have been recognized in recent years and is evident in the county's adopted land use planning documents.

Key plans and projects were reviewed for key linkages to the plan on the following pages. These were reviewed to provide reference and validation for the policy recommendations made within this plan.

Other Existing Plans that were consulted during the plan process include the following:

- ▶ Jackson County Greenways Comprehensive Master Plan (2009)
- ▶ Jackson County Recreation Master Plan Update (2013)
- ▶ Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2017)
- ▶ Cullowhee Creek Master Plan (in Development)
- ▶ 2014 Western Carolina University Campus Master Plan
- ▶ Jackson County UDO (Updated 2019)



The Cullowhee planning area and associated development regulations was adopted in 2015 by Jackson County to manage development and growth in the Cullowhee valley.

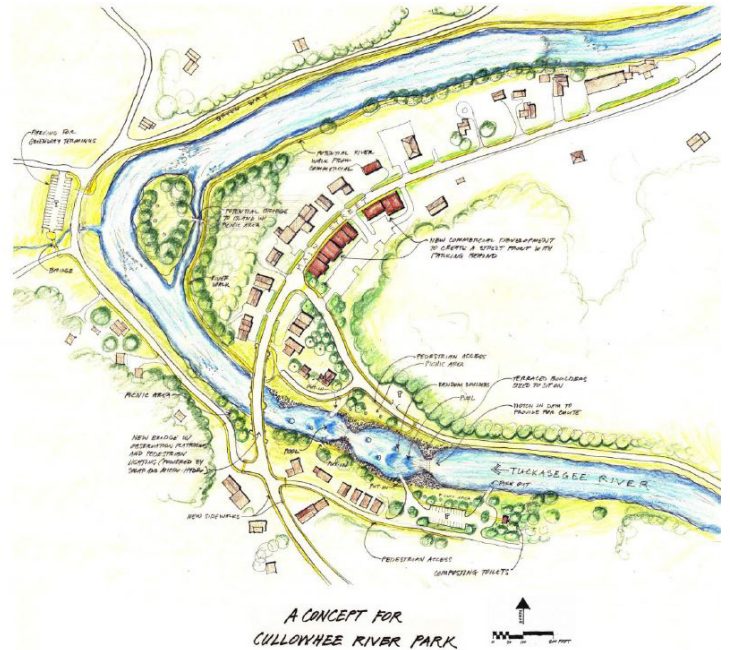
THE CULLOWHEE PLANNING AREA WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2015 TO ADDRESS THE RAPID GROWTH IN STUDENT AND MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING AROUND THE WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS.

- JACKSON COUNTY LAND USE PLAN

This plan focused solely on the areas adjacent to Western Carolina University and creating a community vision. The document was created, in part, to address the residential development pressures within Cullowhee by a growing university. The recommendations within this plan were also utilized in developing the Cullowhee Community Planning Area's development regulations.

▼ Why this is important to this plan

Aside from framing the context of a growing community within Jackson County and involving surrounding residents in the planning process, this plan included a number of goals and recommendations that remain relevant and are elaborated on in this Plan.



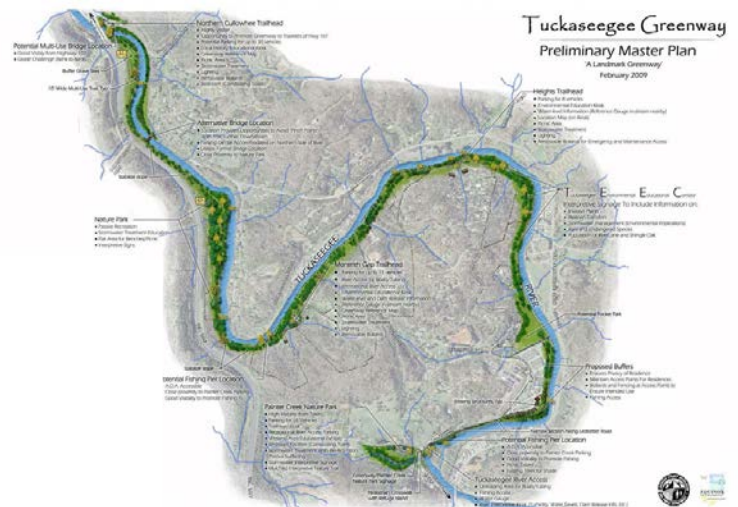
The image above shows a conceptual drawing of the Cullowhee River Park included in the 2014 Vision Plan. The River Park has been studied further by the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE) and Old Cullowhee was re-imagined as part of this Small Area Plan

Tuckasegee River Greenway Preliminary Master Plan (2009)

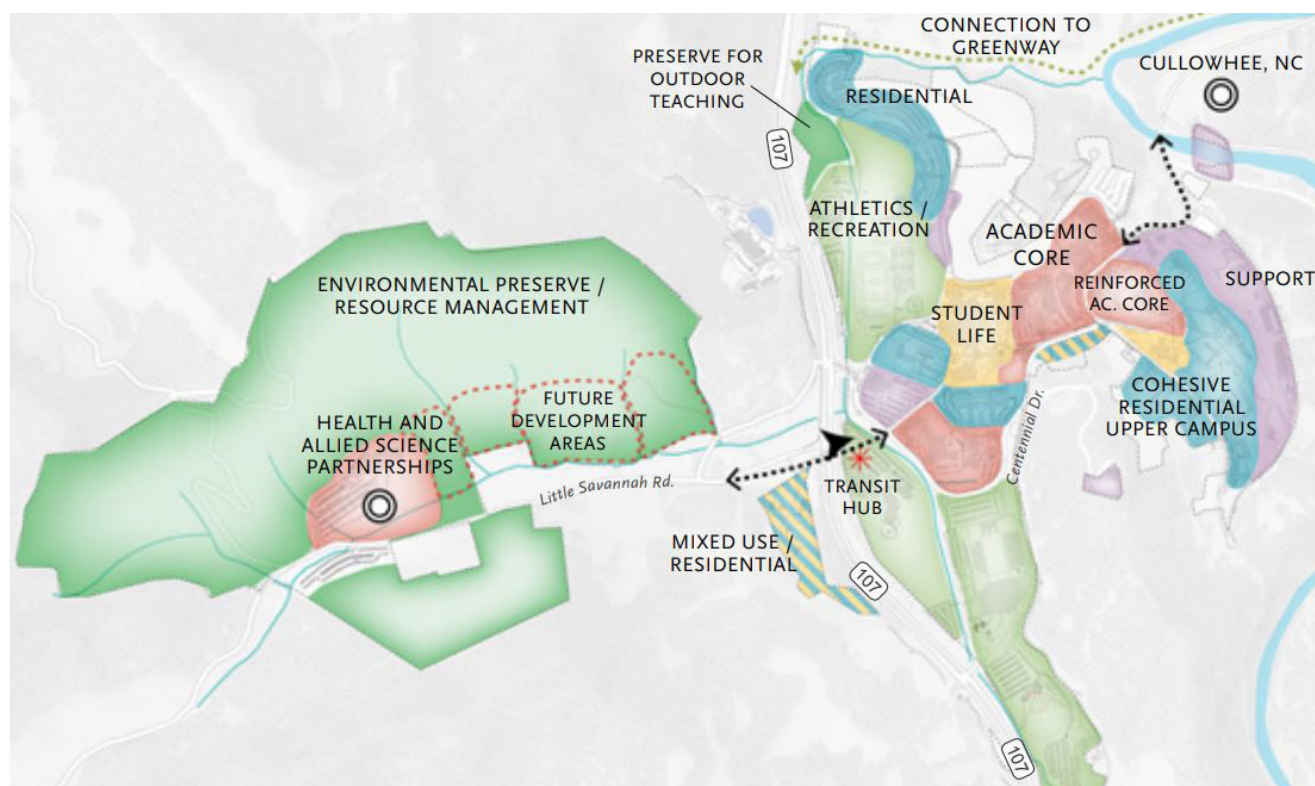
A master plan for a multi-use recreational path along the shores of the Tuckasegee was developed to envision a landmark greenway and ecological corridor with the potential to connect Webster, Sylva, Cullowhee and Western Carolina University. The first 1.2-mile segment was completed in 2016 with a pedestrian bridge across the river with a trail-head at the Locust Creek Access Area.

▼ Why this is important to this plan

Since this master plan, a portion of the Tuckasegee River Greenway has been constructed and has become a destination for Jackson County residents and visitors alike. This plan seeks to build on the greenway master plan and reiterate the need to connect the existing greenway to Old Cullowhee and to the main campus of WCU via Cullowhee Creek. This plan also makes recommendations related to programming and phasing of greenway construction, active transportation connections and other preservation, economic development and redevelopment opportunities on the southern end of the greenway.



The Tuckasegee River Greenway is envisioned to be a place of recreation and environmental education that includes a greenway, educational signage, trailheads and connected open spaces.



Western Carolina University Campus Master Plan (2014)

The master plan projects growth in enrollment and projected space needs for students and faculty. The preferred land use scheme focuses academic development in the existing WCU core to maximize existing infrastructure and proposes phased development of the West Campus to allow for expansion of academic and private partnerships within prime developable land. Future phases of development are proposed along Little Savannah Road and the steeper hillsides and ridges are designated as environmental preserve / resource management.

▼ Why this is important to this plan

Projected enrollment of 11,171 for the plan year 2023 was exceeded in Fall 2018. Bicycle and pedestrian connections are important to all areas that are being developed. All new student housing is primarily being focused off-campus through private development and public-private partnerships. Balancing parking, transportation, housing and natural resource conservation will continue to be a challenge the area as WCU grows. As employment options and non-student housing are limited outside of university functions, the potential for Cullowhee to retain educated residents upon graduation remains limited.

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY'S RELATIONSHIP TO PLAN

Western Carolina University (WCU) serves as a major destination and employer in Cullowhee. It is also the principle driver of growth and development in the area, both on-campus and off-campus due to the need for student and faculty housing. Representatives from WCU were consulted during the development of this plan due to shared issues and interests in the greater Cullowhee Area.



COMMUNITY INPUT

The Small Area Plan was developed through a process that included significant community input and regular communication with staff and steering committee members. Through stakeholder interviews, public meetings, steering committee direction, online and paper surveys, and discussion with staff, this plan was guided by the Cullowhee community and reflects their goals and priorities.

Although the Plan will be adopted by the Cullowhee Planning Council and Jackson County, the input received during the process was representative of the issues and needs of the study area.

Steering Committee

The 7-member Cullowhee Community Planning Council in addition to a student representative selected from Western Carolina University served as the steering committee for the project and met 4 times during the planning process to provide input, verify the direction of the plan, and give feedback.

Stakeholder Interviews

Hour-long interviews were conducted with 6 stakeholder groups consisting of approximately 5-8 people early in the plan process. Stakeholder groups represented a wide-cross section of the Cullowhee community. Attendees included property owners, devel-

opers, real estate professionals, attorneys, health professionals, faith-based organizations, Jackson County Schools, parks and recreation professionals, police and fire, WCU staff and business owners in addition to individuals engaged in economic development and tourism.

Community Survey

A short 14-question online survey was developed to guide the plan and define priorities. Respondents were asked to give input on community values, Cullowhee's biggest challenges, and priorities for the area. Focused questions centered around active transportation, roadway improvements, preservation of open space, quality of residential development and housing. The survey was active and promoted through the project website, charrette events, and Facebook from April 16, 2019 through May 31, 2019.

Three Day Visioning Workshop

A three day "charrette" was held in Cullowhee over a three-day period from April 22 – April 24, 2019 to gather input on and to develop ideas and recommendations for land use, parks, and transportation, economic development and natural resources within the greater Cullowhee planning area and share information on the planning process. The public meetings drop in events and open work sessions were scheduled to maximize the opportunities to engage and give input and

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT MANY LEVELS

- 01 WALKING TOUR OF OLD CULLOWHEE
- 02 PUBLIC VISIONING SESSION
- 03 TABLING AT WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
- 04 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
- 05 PRESENTATION AND PIN-UP
- 06 ONLINE SURVEY



appeal to a wide cross-section of Cullowhee area residents and students. The open house style studio and associated meetings had interactive exercises and gave an opportunity for the public to provide input. Over 115 people signed in and attended the public meetings conducted. These included an Old Cullowhee Walking Tour, Visioning Workshop and a “Coffee Talk” on the future of Cullowhee. In addition to these public meetings, there were open drop-in opportunities during planning team work sessions in addition to a tabling session on campus where the planning team intercepted and engaged with WCU students.

On the last day of the charrette, the planning team presented a series of recommendations and design concepts drafted based on input received. Key themes heard during the planning process were also shared for further development within the plan. Themes from the Visioning Workshop and survey centered around the following topics:

- ▶ Desire for improvements to bicycling and walking
- ▶ Commercial development opportunities (i.e. shopping and restaurants)
- ▶ Revitalization and activation of Old Cullowhee
- ▶ Student housing conflicts (i.e. demand, location and appearance)

- ▶ Increasing supply and variety of housing types for non-student residents
- ▶ Preservation of natural resources and rural character
- ▶ Protection of open space and provision of parks, recreation options and greenways

Plan Open House

A public meeting was held on October 22, 2019. A presentation was given that included an overview of public feedback and recommendations in the draft plan. Attendees asked questions and commented on draft recommendations at stations with poster boards for different topic areas. Comments received are noted and responses are provided in the Appendix.





SURVEY RESULTS

Over 300 responses to the survey were received. The survey participants included a balance between residents of Cullowhee, faculty and staff at WCU, property owners and students. When asked "What do you value about Cullowhee?" themes of responses included scenic beauty and access to nature, community and small town vibe, recreation opportunities, peace and quiet, and opportunity. Feedback on desired housing types and residential design priorities were critical in shaping the direction of plan recommendations.



Cullowhee SMALL AREA PLAN

Your input will shape the community's goals and guide growth, development and services for years to come.

Take the Survey!

County staff and the project team invite you to collaborate on ideas and recommendations for land use, parks, transportation and more for the Cullowhee Planning Area.



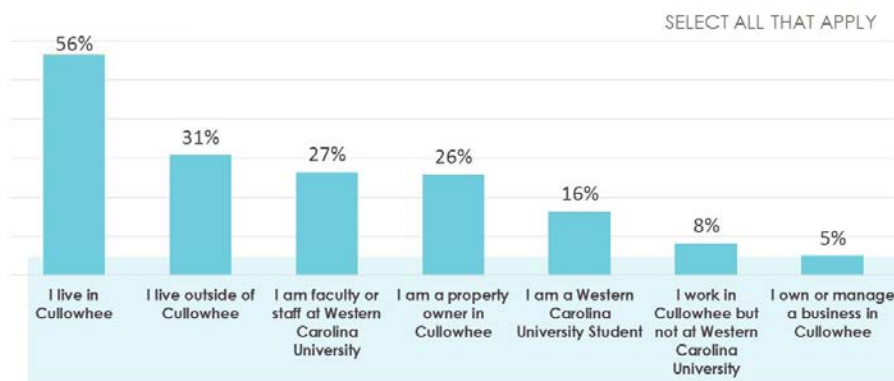
STAY INVOLVED!

More information, updates available at:

www.planning.jacksonnc.org/cullowhee-community-planning-area

A community survey was used to gather feedback on priorities for the Cullowhee area during the spring of 2019.

Relationship to Cullowhee



Respondents to the survey included Cullowhee residents, faculty and staff of WCU, property owners, students and business owners.

What I Would Change

OPEN ENDED QUESTION

Most Common Answers:

- Businesses and Economic Development
- Affordable Housing for full-time residents
- Improve Old Cullowhee Rd
- Revitalized Town Center
- Sidewalks and multi-modal transportation options
- Improved relationship between university and residents (parking, communication, support for improvements)
- Removal of blighted buildings

My Vision or Big Idea for Cullowhee

OPEN ENDED QUESTION

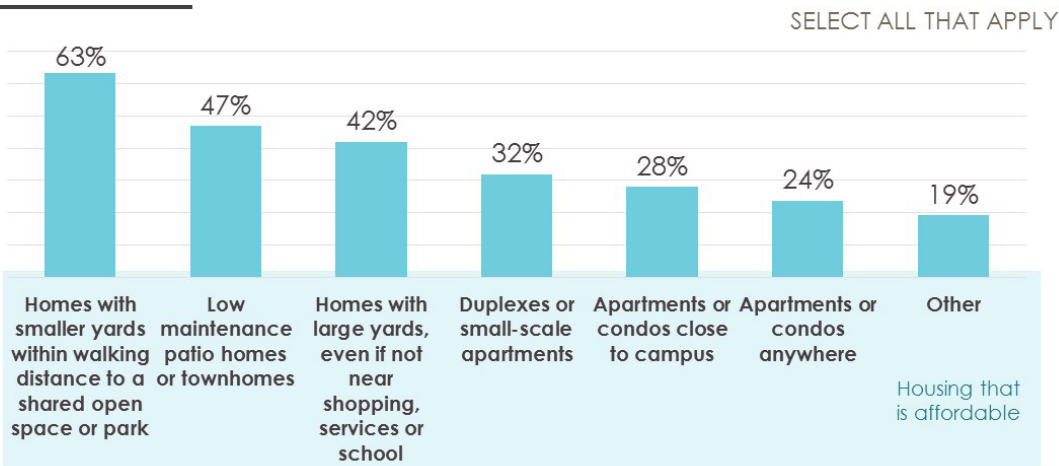
Most Common Answers:

- Redevelopment of Old Cullowhee
- Make Cullowhee its own "Town"
- Create more parks, greenways, trails and river access
- Cultural hub: Amenities, services and activities for all people
- A grocery store
- Balanced, cohesive and connected community
- Build a River park
- Uphold community values

Businesses, housing, transportation options, greenways, river access and revitalization of the historic center of Cullowhee were main themes in responses to open ended questions of the survey.

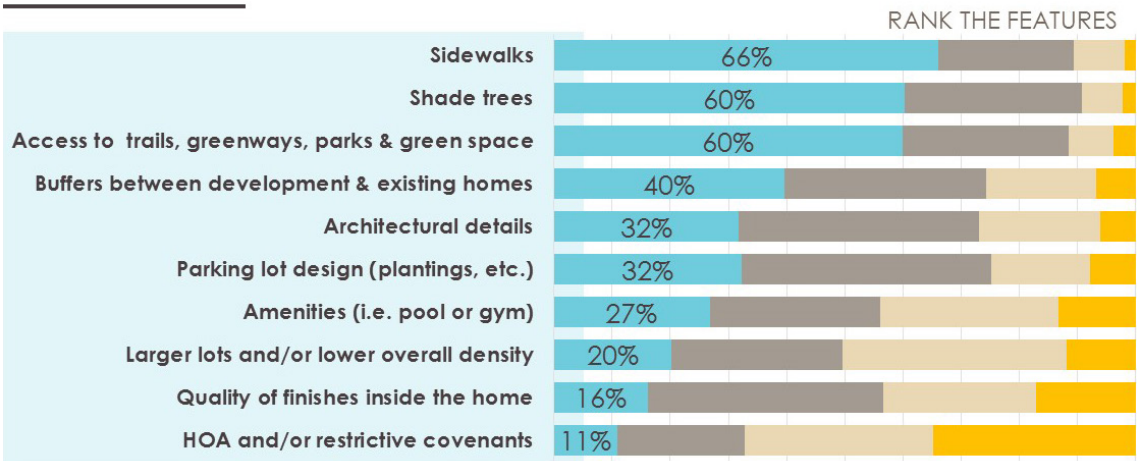
"WE NEED A WALKABLE DOWNTOWN
WITH A FAMILY RIVER PARK".
- SURVEY RESPONSE

Desired Housing Types



According to the survey, homes with smaller yards within walking distance to a park or open space were the most desired housing type followed by patio homes or townhomes.

Quality Residential Development



Sidewalks, shade trees and access to trails, greenways parks and open space were seen as the most important features of quality development.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- Infrastructure, fire services, water and sewer, and the conditions of roadways cannot keep up with current growth and will hinder all future growth if not addressed.
- There is a need for housing that is affordable for faculty, staff, and working individuals. Traditional neighborhoods are desired by families.
- Pedestrians and cyclist travel is important. Increasing the presence and connectivity of sidewalks and bike paths is needed to increase safety.
- Lack of grocery, retail, entertainment, and dining options push residents into neighboring towns and counties for basic amenities.
- Absence of a hotel makes it difficult for business and contractor travel. It also discourages overnight tourism to the area.
- The greenway has the ability to connect the community and provide opportunities for recreation, education, and community involvement
- There are few year-round residents which contributes to the community lacking a true college "town" identity

VISUAL PREFERENCE RESULTS

During the charrette, attendees participated in a visual preference activity by placing a dot next to their preferred image from two broad development categories: Commercial & Mixed Use and Neighborhood Design. The favored selections provided guidance for the recommendations and concepts in Chapter 4. The images below received votes as the most highly preferred:



01



02



03

SUBDIVISION DESIGN & HOUSING PREFERENCE >

- 01 POCKET NEIGHBORHOOD
- 02 SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED
- 03 TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

< COMMERCIAL & MIXED USE PREFERENCE

- 01 ACTIVATED RIVERFRONT
- 02 OUTDOOR DINING
- 03 TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWN



01



02



03

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Steering Committee gave input on the issues facing Cullowhee. The following themes emerged:

Issues

- ▼ *Area Planning & Community Structure*
Advantages and disadvantages to area planning
Lack of political entity as advocate, recipient/giver of funds, voice at the table, provider of services and driver of change
- ▼ *Parking*
Need to manage how it is articulated to make development more palatable
Parking creates a transportation issue as too many are driving short distances
- ▼ *Infrastructure*
Infrastructure at sites within walking distance to campus is lacking
Need safe bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, including sidewalks, bike facilities and lighting
Interim solutions for bicycle and pedestrian safety are needed
- ▼ *Development*
Easiest development sites are farmland away from campus
Need deliberate signal for where commercial and student housing is appropriate
Community character in Cullowhee
- ▼ *Housing*
Students are moving into single-family residential housing; enforcement is difficult
Need to protect neighborhoods from transitioning to student housing
Lack of non-student housing options

Opportunities

- ▼ *Development*
Opportunity in Old Cullowhee for Commercial; review barriers to re-use
Existing zoning may not be the best use moving forward
Predict pedestrian connections
Plan for what happens at the edges
Formalize groundwork laid by CuRvE
- ▼ *River Park*
Blend recreation and economic development
Look at Reedy River Park as precedent (Greenville, SC)
Create opportunities for employment
Create social infrastructure through gathering space
- ▼ *Funding*
Public/Private - blend of campus, county, NCDOT and developers



2

Existing Conditions & Analysis

The Existing conditions analysis includes understanding trends in population, housing stock, the local job market, shopping habits and a variety of other social, economic and physical characteristics in the Cullowhee study area. This section also reviews land use trends, environmental constraints and parks & natural resources as a foundation for recommendations detailed later in the plan.

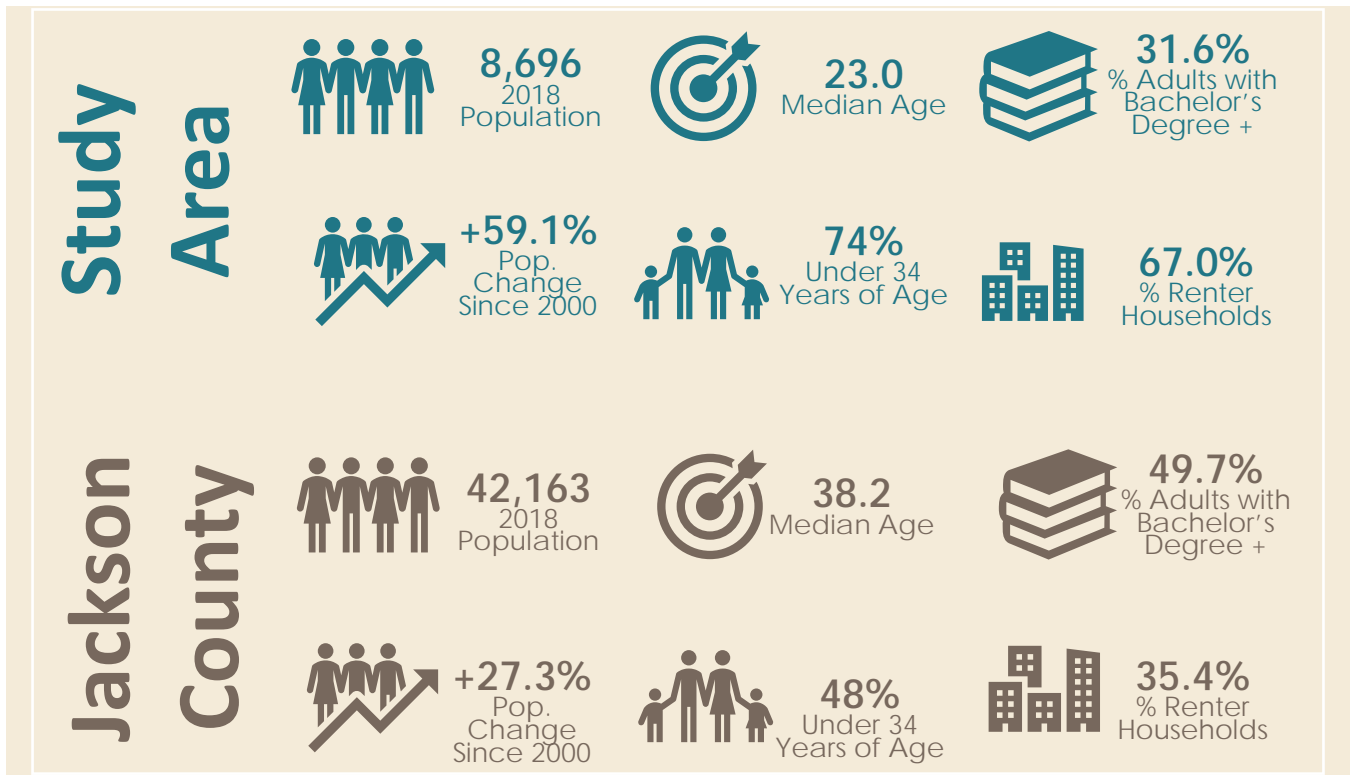
OVERVIEW

Cullowhee is a unique place nestled within a lush green valley in the Appalachian Mountains of Jackson County, North Carolina. Located at the southern end of a large valley formed by Savannah Ridge to the west, Cullowhee Mountain to the south, the Great Balsam Mountains to the east and the Plott Balsams to the north and bisected by the Tuckasegee River. Centered around Western Carolina University, the community has evolved along with the university and feels like a small town, even though there is no municipal government. Many residents and businesses have connections to the university, others have a separate identity and still remember when Old Cullowhee and the campus vied for distinction as the center of commerce and community. Cullowhee's background and recent accomplishments frame its future. Highlights include:

- ▶ Historic roots as an ancient Cherokee town that remains rich with mountain heritage

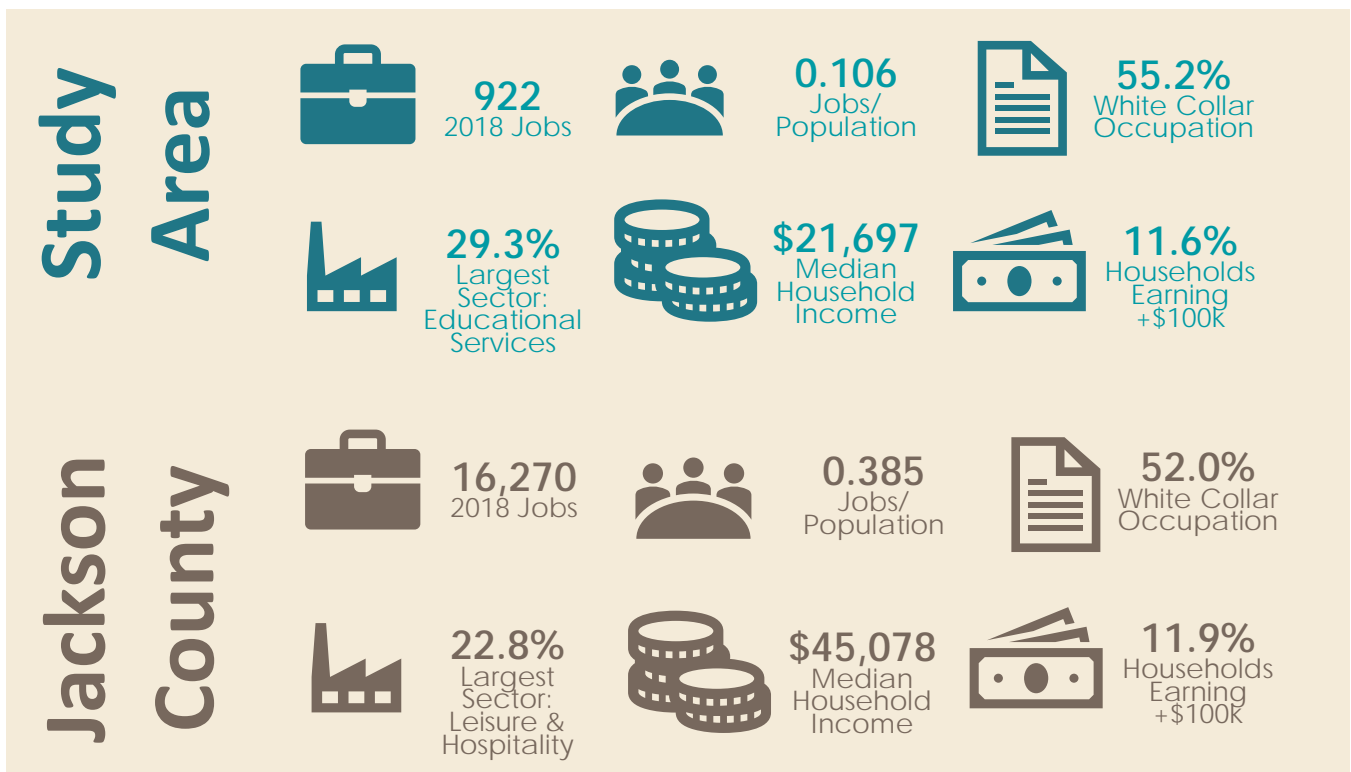
- ▶ Abundant recreation opportunities and access to nature, including paddling, trout fishing, hiking and mountain biking trails
- ▶ An old commercial center along the river that used to serve the general merchandising needs of students and residents alike
- ▶ A greenway and signature bridge project across the Tuckasegee River
- ▶ An area within the Cullowhee Planning Area that operates under zoning regulations to address development pressures related to the growth of WCU
- ▶ An active citizenry, including CuRvE, a non-profit for the redevelopment of Old Cullowhee and the creation of a River Park on the Tuckasegee River

The figures on page 19 show the unique demographic and economic characteristics of the area and are described in detail in this chapter.



DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Source: 2018 ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn



ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

Source: 2018 ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn



DEMOGRAPHICS

The following demographics analyses give insight into the unique make-up of the study area:

Population Growth

The study area population increased by 59.1% since 2000, adding over 3,200 people. The growth in the Study Area represented 35.7% of the total in Jackson County, and is largely influenced by student expansion at WCU. Based on third-party sources, population in the Study Area is expected to continue to grow, reaching approximately 10,865 people by 2038. This growth is consistent with previous trends and with projections for Jackson County as a whole.

Population Characteristics

Students are highly influential in shaping the population characteristics of the Study Area. Residents aged 15-24 represent over 60% of the total, significantly higher than Jackson County (22.4%) and the State (13.9%). This results in a notably lower median age of 23.0 for the Study Area, compared to 38.2 for the County.

Households

There are an estimated 2,772 households in the Study Area, an increase of 1,360 since 2000. It should be noted that household growth has been slower in the Study Area due to the inclusion of population in group quarters (dorms) on campus. In this case, population increases, but individual households are not formed or calculated. The average household size in the Study Area is 1.87 persons, smaller than 2.23 for Jackson County.

According to data from ESRI Business Analyst Online, The median household income in the Study Area is approximately \$26,664. This measure is notably lower than \$40,397 for Jackson County. Again, income is highly

influenced by the concentration of students, which typically do not have a traditional income stream.

In general, the Study Area has higher concentrations of lower-earning households, influenced by the student body, and lower shares of moderate-earners. Household incomes are generally comparable to Jackson County in the highest-earning cohorts.

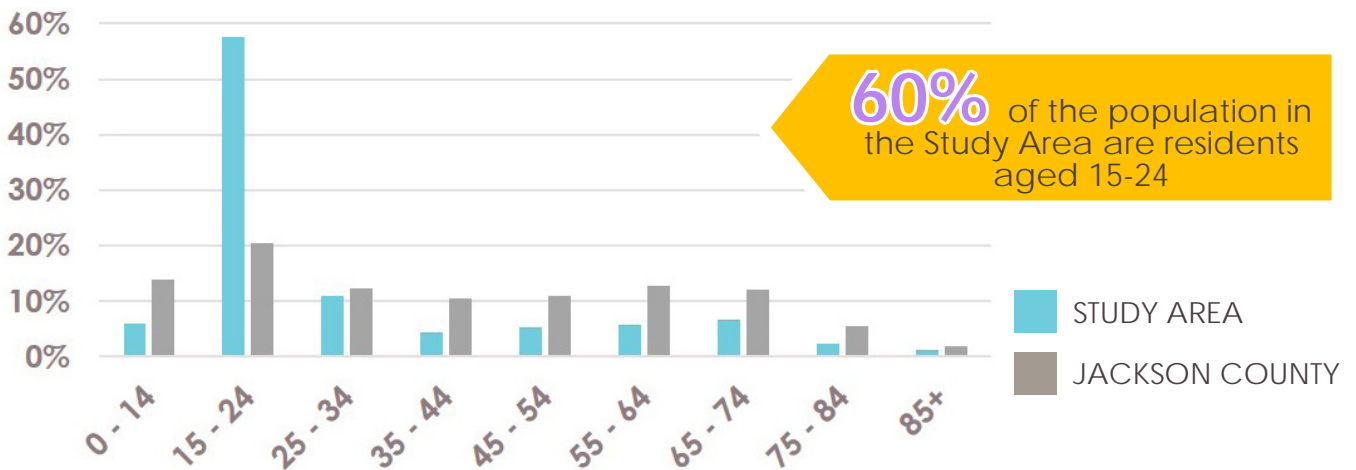
WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Students and staff have a great influence as drivers of the housing market, employment sectors and every facet of the local economy. The median household income and median age are both low. More than 4,500 of WCU students live on campus in Cullowhee representing over half of the residents in the study area (Source: WCU Fast Facts, Accessed 4/2019). Available land is being developed at a rapid rate to build student housing, causing conflicts between older, long-term residents and higher density buildings occupied primarily by college-aged students. These are non-family households, often living with roommates in co-housing with purpose-built floor plans oriented around student life objectives. They are highly dependent on bicycles and walking for mobility.

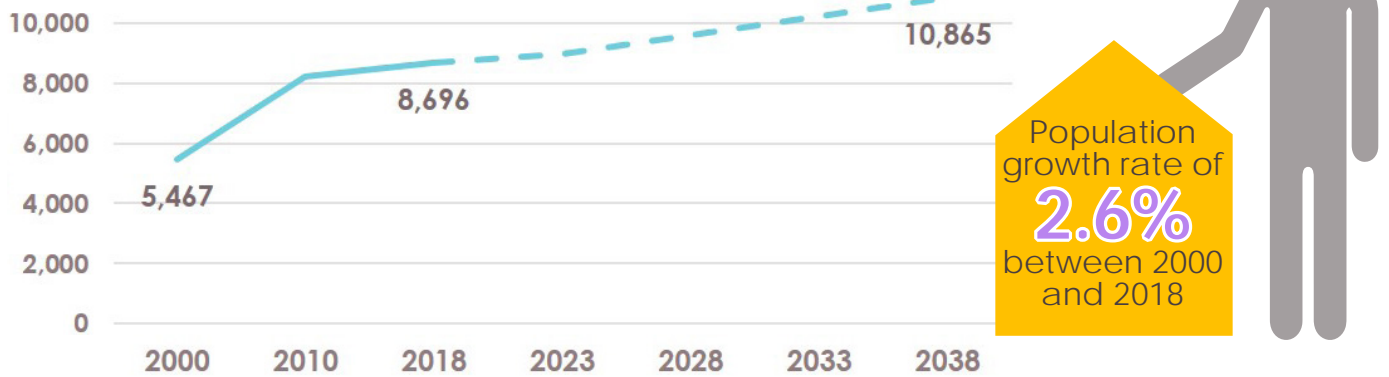
HOUSING

Housing Mix

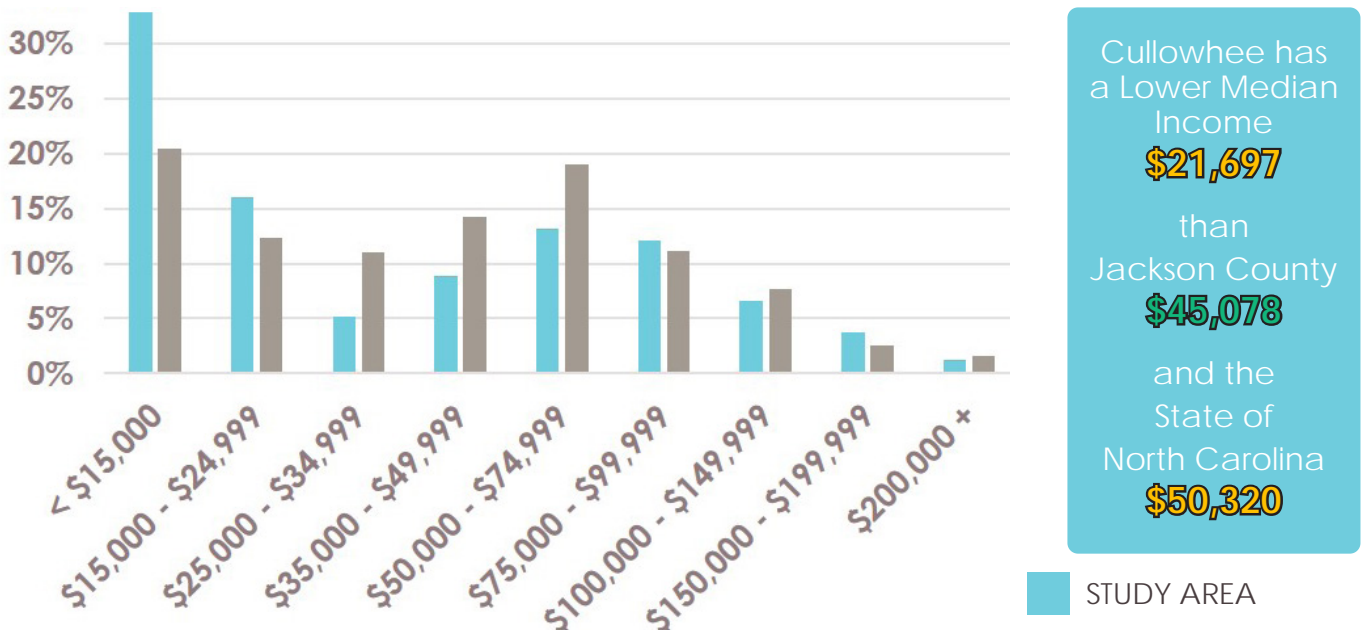
The Cullowhee Study Area has an estimated 3,174 residential units, representing an increase of over 1,500 units since 2000. Single-family, detached units comprise the largest share of the total inventory at nearly 46%, followed by mobile homes (19%), and larger-scale multifamily developments (14%). Multifamily developments have been dominated by properties targeting students attending WCU. Townhouse-style residential projects comprise less than 1% of the total inventory.



SHARE OF TOTAL POPULATION BY AGE COHORT, 2018
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn



POPULATION PROJECTION (STUDY AREA), 2000 - 2038
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, US Census, NC Office of State Budget and Management, Kimley-Horn



SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME COHORT, 2018
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn



Housing Tenure

Approximately 60.9% of the housing units in the Cullowhee Study Area are renter-occupied, demonstrating the transient nature of a population with a high concentration of students. Owner-occupied units represent 26.5%, and 12.7% are vacant. When compared to Jackson County, the Study Area demonstrates a higher share of renter units. The elevated share of vacant units in the County is influenced by part-time or vacation residences that are not permanently occupied. This is consistent with other tourism destinations in western North Carolina.

Residential Building Permits

There were over 3,500 residential units permitted in Jackson County since 2006. Buildings with five or more units comprised approximately 22%, largely driven by activity in the Study Area. Building permits fell dramatically during the 2007-2009 Recession, from a peak of nearly 2,700 in 2006 to a period low of 125 permits in 2012 as the area was in recovery. It should be noted that residential permits are still notably lower than pre-Recession levels, although they are demonstrating gradual improvement.



1.87
Average
Household
Size in
Study Area

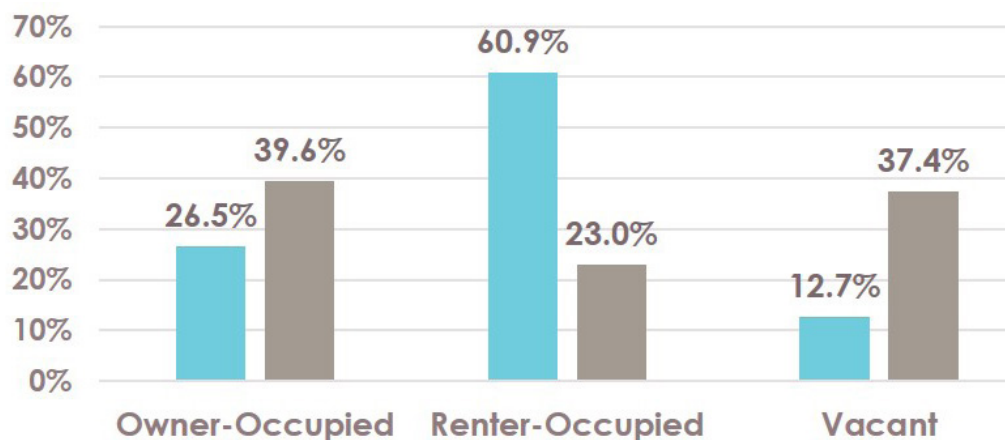


NEW HOUSING IN CULLOWHEE

01 SUMMIT AT CULLOWHEE

02 THE LANDING AT WESTERN

03 RIVER WALK APARTMENTS



STUDY AREA
JACKSON COUNTY

COMPARISON OF HOUSING UNIT TENURE, 2018
Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, Kimley-Horn

"THE CULLOWHEE AREA CONTAINS SOME OF THE TALLEST MOUNTAINS EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI; NATIVE AMERICAN LANDMARKS, AND SEVERAL NOTABLE DESTINATIONS FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING, HIKING AND FLY-FISHING. IT'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS IS DUE IN LARGE PART TO GROWING BUSINESSES AROUND THESE RESOURCES."

- MOST DYNAMIC METROPOLITANS (FEBRUARY 2019, WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION)

Rental Housing

Rental housing, whether in a traditional apartment community or in a single-family housing unit, largely targets Cullowhee's student population. Rental listings for the area are typically quoted by the bedroom, consistent with a student-targeted product.

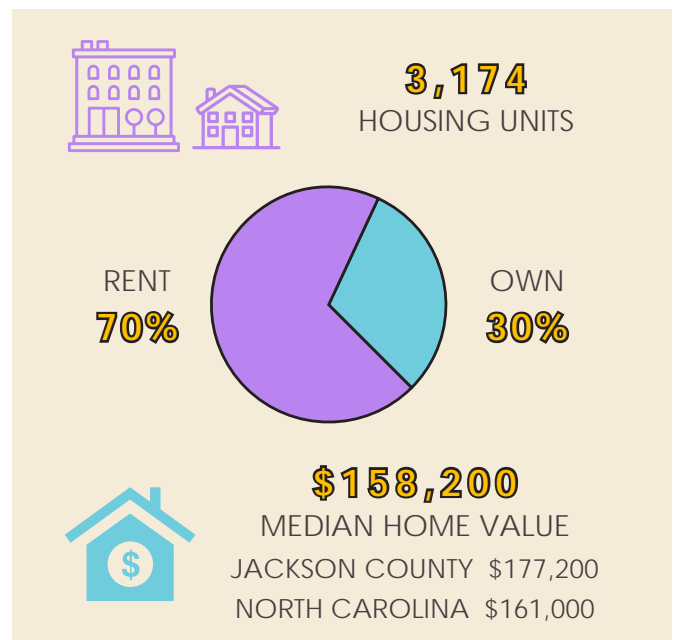
Apartment listings in Cullowhee show extremely limited availability. Typical of a college-anchored community, mid-semester occupancy rates are high, dropping when school is not in session.

As noted, lease rates are primarily by the bedroom with one-bedrooms achieving a premium over larger floor plans. Based on data from WCU, one-bedroom units typically rent for a monthly rate of \$800+, two-bedrooms \$550-\$700 per bedroom, and, larger three or four bedroom units can be \$400-\$500 per bedroom.

For-Sale Housing

Based on data from the US Census, the Cullowhee Study Area has a median owner-occupied housing unit value of \$205,081. That metric is 6.7% higher than the \$191,702 estimate for Jackson County as a whole.

Approximately 25% of the owner-occupied units in the Study Area have a value of \$150k-200k. This is also the most common range in the County. It should be noted that the concentrations of high-value properties in the County is largely driven by vacation homes, most at high elevations, capitalizing on mountain views.



STUDY AREA HOUSING STATISTICS
Source: 2018 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY



WHAT IS RETAIL LEAKAGE?

Retail leakage refers to the difference between the retail expenditures by residents living in a particular area and the retail sales produced by the stores located in the same area.

- If desired products are not available within that area, consumers will travel to other places or use different methods to obtain those products. Consequently, the dollars spent outside of the area are said to be “leaking.”
- If a community is a major retail center with a variety of stores it will be “attracting” rather than “leaking” retail sales.

ECONOMY

Employment

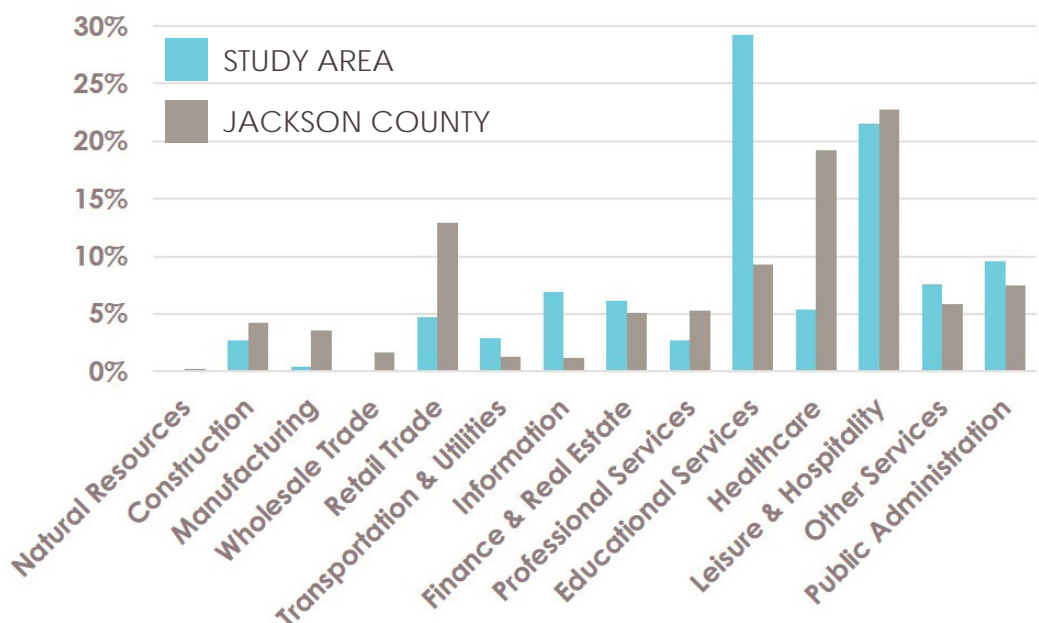
There are an estimated 922 jobs in the Cullowhee Study Area, representing 5.7% of the total in Jackson County. Western Carolina University, anchoring the Study Area, is influential in the high concentration of Educational Services jobs which comprises nearly 30% of employment. The Leisure and Hospitality sector, including food services and lodging, is the second highest industry at 21.5%. The workforce at WCU has grown since 2013 and has reached over 1,500 permanent full-time employees who work for the college as well as 7 Service Centers and Research Institutes.

Jackson County has an employment base that is more typical, with higher shares of Healthcare, Leisure & Hospitality, and Retail Trade. The average wage in Jackson County is \$48,755 annually. The average wage in the Study Area is estimated at \$45,000.

Consistent with national trends, unemployment rates in Jackson County and the State of North Carolina have reached the lowest levels in a decade. The unemployment rate in Jackson County in February 2019 was 4.9%, compared to 4.2% for North Carolina. This represents a drastic improvement from measures reported during and following the 2007-2009 Recession.

Recreation Economy

A 2016 regional economic analysis found recreation was the region’s main source of job growth from 2010 to 2015. Cullowhee is also pushing recreation as an economic driver. In addition to college degree programs in outdoor leadership and recreation, a partnership involving the college, regional economic development agencies, and local financial institutions received a \$940,000 grant to start a program called “Growing Outdoors: A Regional Approach to Expanding WNC Outdoor Industry and Jobs” in 2018. The goal is that this initiative will result in 35 new outdoor businesses.



COMPARISON OF ANNUAL AT-PLACE EMPLOYMENT, 2018
Source: NC Department of Commerce, Kimley-Horn

Retail Leakage

Western Carolina students and staff represent a critical driver of retail demand, particularly for commercial retail and food service. The Cullowhee Study Area had an estimated \$49.3 million in retail leakage over the previous year. The Study Area demonstrates retail leakage in every retail classification, meaning there is more demand than supply across the board, much of it going to neighboring communities.

It is important to note that although there is leakage demonstrated, the population density in the Study Area is unlikely to be attractive enough to bring in new retailers. Additionally, existing retail lease rates are likely prohibitive to the development of new space.

Students and Retail

The large concentration of students in the Study Area is a challenge. Typically, these consumers value convenience and price points, and don't have consistent spending patterns. Students typically spend a higher proportion of their disposable income on purchases from on-line retailers. They

also spend a higher proportion on food and beverage categories, both on- and off-campus.

Due to physical proximity, but restricted time availability and somewhat limited spending power, students are more likely to spend in areas immediately on or adjacent to campus when shopping in brick and mortar locations.



STORES SOLD
\$14.0 MILLION



CONSUMERS SPENT
\$63.4 MILLION



STUDY AREA LEAKED
\$49.3 MILLION

STUDY AREA RETAIL LEAKAGE

A PORTION OF CULLOWHEE IS IN AN OPPORTUNITY ZONE

The census tract to the southwest side of Cullowhee is designated as an 'Opportunity Zone.' Due to potential tax benefits to investors, designated funds have the potential to attract large scale investment.

The program allows investors to defer and potentially exclude capital gains taxes in exchange for investing in designated low-income census tracts. Federal law does not specify how these funds should be used so projects



WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT

Source: Western Carolina university administration & Finance Annual Report (2016-2017)



EXISTING LAND USE

To gather a better understanding of the mixture of land uses found within the Study Area, a detailed analysis of existing land use was performed utilizing county tax parcel data. This data was then verified through a review of aerials and a community tour, and then vetted by staff. The top land uses within the Cullowhee Study Area were:

- ▶ Vacant land (37%)
- ▶ Residences on large tracts (32.4%)
- ▶ Other single-family residential (15.5%)
- ▶ Institutional (8.1%)

Remaining land uses, including parks and open space, parking/utilities, multi-family and mobile homes, and commercial round out the remaining land uses within the study area, representing a collective total of 6.9 percent. Most notably, perhaps, is the lack of commercial land uses (0.2%) to support the study area's population. This may be explained by retail leakage into other communities like Sylva and Franklin, but may also be explained by the campus of Western Carolina University filling basic dining and retail needs of student life. Some recent trends that may impact land use in both the short and long term include:

Growth in Multi-Family Housing

The continued construction of multi-family/student housing in the area's most desirable developable land.

Limited Market Rate Housing

There is limited market rate housing for year-round, non-student residents. Modern student suites being built in Cullowhee cater to multiple roommate scenarios with shared common areas whose layouts are generally not suited for families. They are cost prohibitive because rents are based on a "per bedroom" basis.

Environmental Constraints

There is limited developable land due to steep slopes (on which development is regulated by ordinance), and numerous environmentally sensitive areas. These include the Tuckasegee River floodplain as well as managed areas conservation easements that will remain in a natural state in perpetuity.

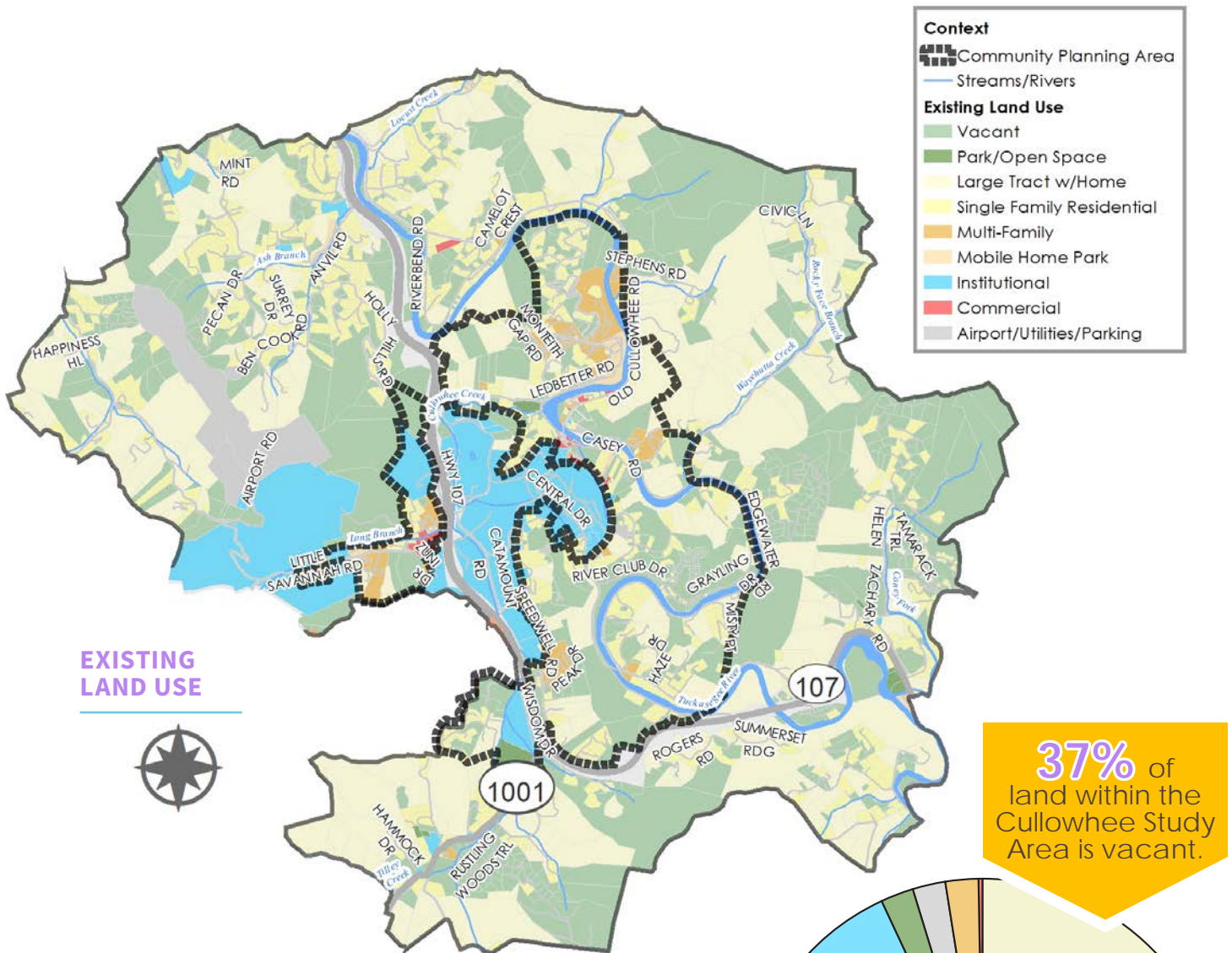
Lack of Commercial Development

There is limited commercial development within the study area. Except for a few offices and businesses, existing commercial areas are limited to a few acres at the intersection of Little Savannah Road and NC 107 and an area along Old Cullowhee Road on the backside of campus. Old Cullowhee Road near the Tuckasegee River used to be a center for commerce, with multiple stores and gas stations. Now this historic center of commerce consists of a few businesses, some student housing, and some older, vacant or declining structures along the frontage of Old Cullowhee Road. Future commercial development elsewhere in the study area is planned as part of a mixed use development in Forest Hills near NC 107.

The potential for additional commercial is affected by WCU's student population and the provision of on-campus shopping and dining opportunities. Lack of dining option off campus and proximity to outdoor recreation destinations like the Tuckasegee River and the Nantahala National Forest represent economic opportunities.

Western Carolina University Expansion

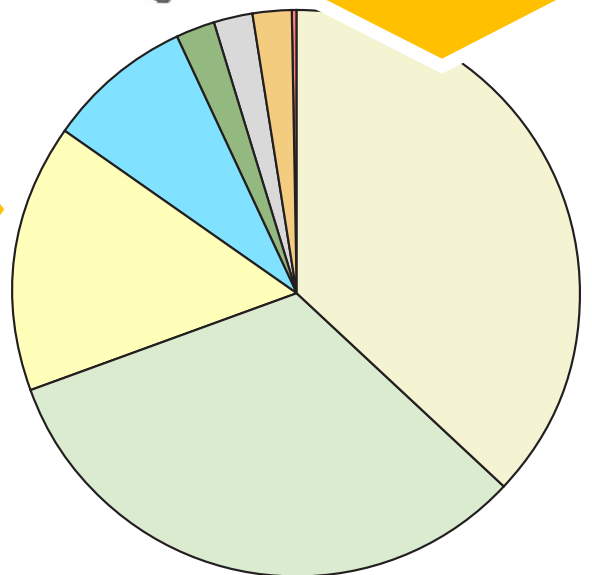
The campus footprint of Western Carolina University is expanding. Although campus development is not subject to land use regulation, it is important to note that WCU's added footprint, along with demand for off-campus student housing construction, will take away many acres of developable land for buildings and parking.



How is land being used?

VACANT	CEMETERY/PARK/WATER
37.0%	2.3%
LARGE TRACTS W/ HOMES	PARKING/UTILITIES/ AIRPORT
32.4%	2.3%
SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	MULTI-FAMILY/ MOBILE HOME
15.5%	2.1%
INSTITUTIONAL	COMMERCIAL
8.1%	0.2%

PERCENTAGE OF LAND BY LAND USE CATEGORY





LAND SUPPLY

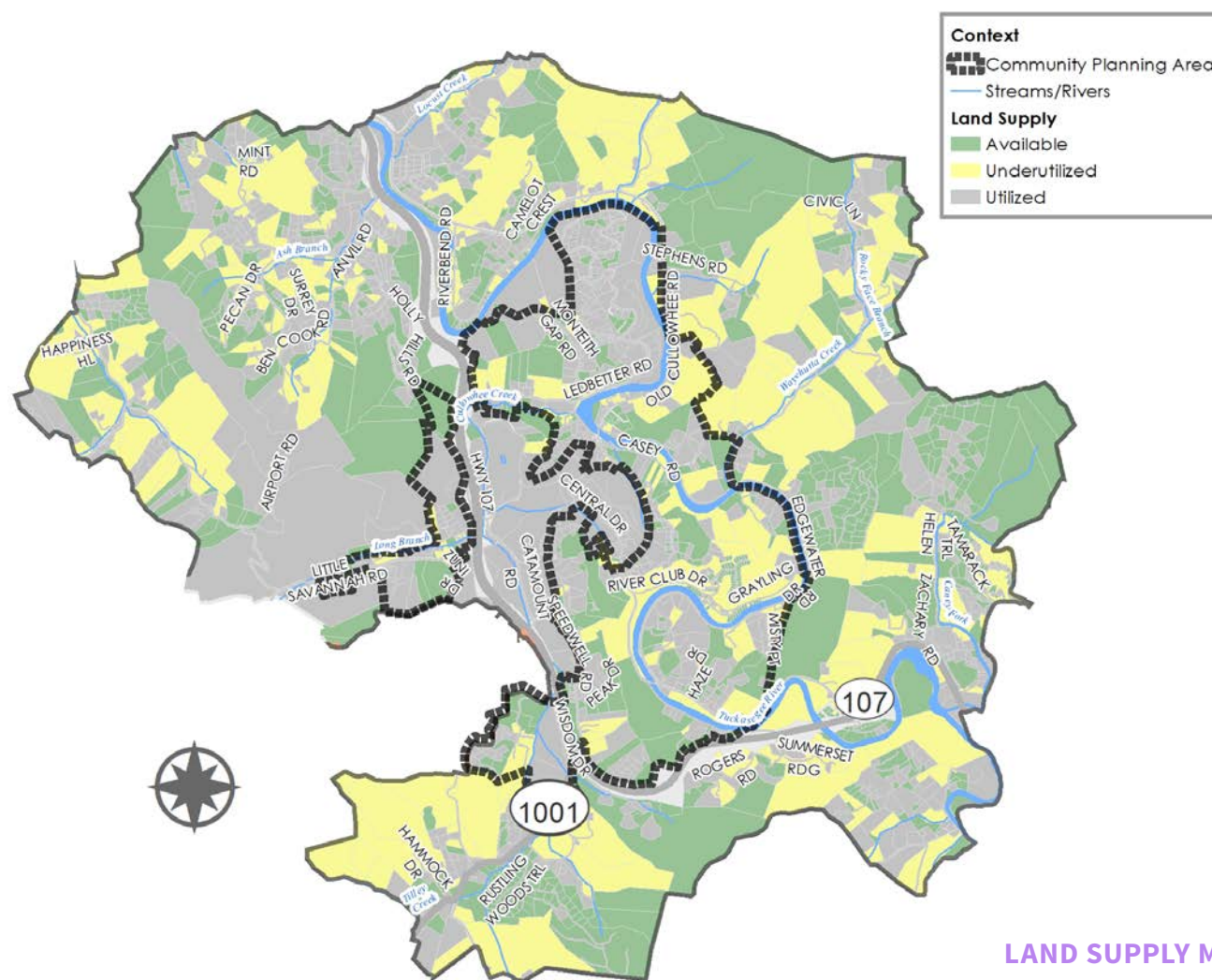
In addition to analyzing the study area's land uses, a land supply was also conducted to identify areas that were built or "utilized" and those that were vacant or underutilized and could accommodate new development. Building and land value of tax parcels were analyzed and properties were classified as available, underutilized, or utilized. For the analysis, an improvement value ratio of 1.0 or less was considered underutilized.

LAND SUPPLY DEFINITIONS

AVAILABLE LAND - Land that is vacant land or land that may be farmed with minimal on-site structures

UNDERUTILIZED LAND - Property with a low building to land value ratio. Areas considered underutilized could mean that there may be opportunities for reinvestment and may include older homes on large tracts of land or marginal commercial development.

UTILIZED LAND - Areas with a high building to land value ratio and are lands not considered to be candidates for reinvestment. Utilized land will also include any institutional/governmental lands (such as WCU), managed lands, cemeteries, and dedicated parks and open space.

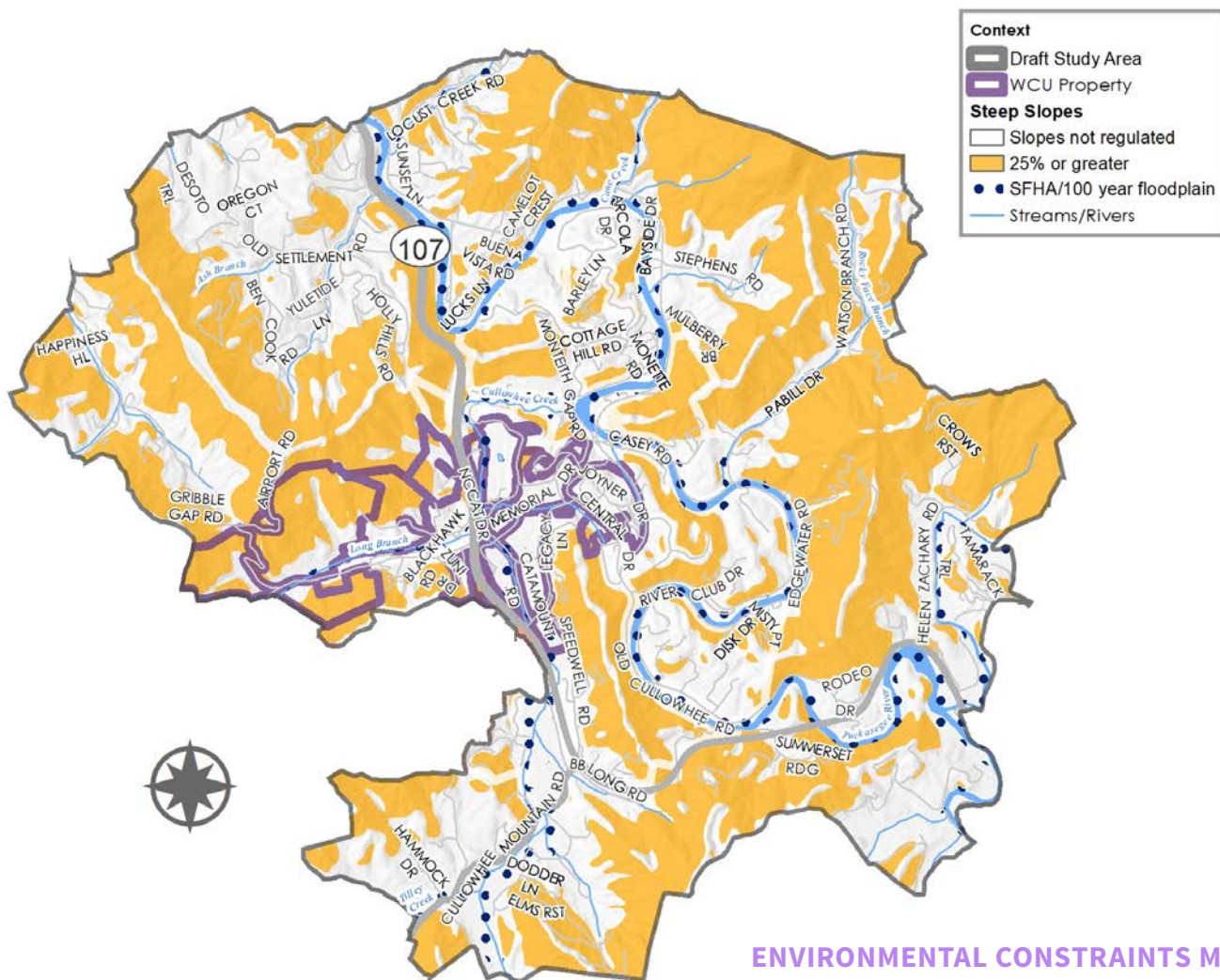


LAND SUPPLY MAP

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

As discussed in the introduction, there are environmental constraints that may restrict development in and around Cullowhee. Although a good portion of the study area is located within a valley that follows the Tuckasegee River with little slope restrictions, the area surrounding the “flat land” is often encumbered by steep slopes. Land adjacent to the river and major tributaries is prone to flooding. It is estimated that out of a study area of 8,500 acres only 1,330 acres of the study area are available or underutilized and not located on steep slopes or in the flood-plain.

There are 7 designated Natural Heritage Natural Areas within 1 mile of the study area. The majority of lands in the study area are considered high value for biodiversity and wildlife by the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Tuckasegee is also considered a valuable natural resource due to its high quality waters, and its ranking as one of the most productive trout fisheries in Western North Carolina.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS MAP



PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

As Cullowhee is not incorporated, it does not have a typical municipal recreation system, however, fortunately, Jackson County has been proactive in providing recreation options for Cullowhee. The Cullowhee Recreation Center has sports fields, walking trails and a 28,000 square foot indoor recreation facility. The county has also led the development of the greenway system for the area. There are over 2 miles of paved trail in the area, which includes the Tuckasegee River Greenway and additional trails located at Cullowhee Valley School. Trailheads with parking and greenway access were recently completed along with a bicycle and pedestrian bridge that spans the Tuckasegee River at the Locust Creek Access. System-wide, there are an additional 11.2 miles of proposed greenway in addition to a proposed trail that will connect portions of Western Carolina University along Cullowhee Creek and NC 107.

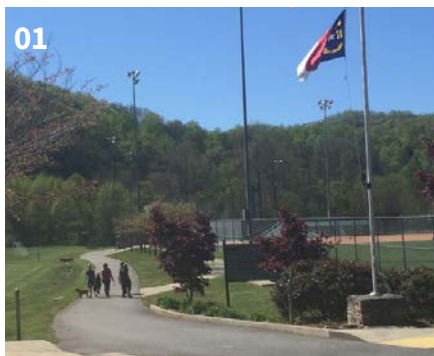
CULTURAL RESOURCES

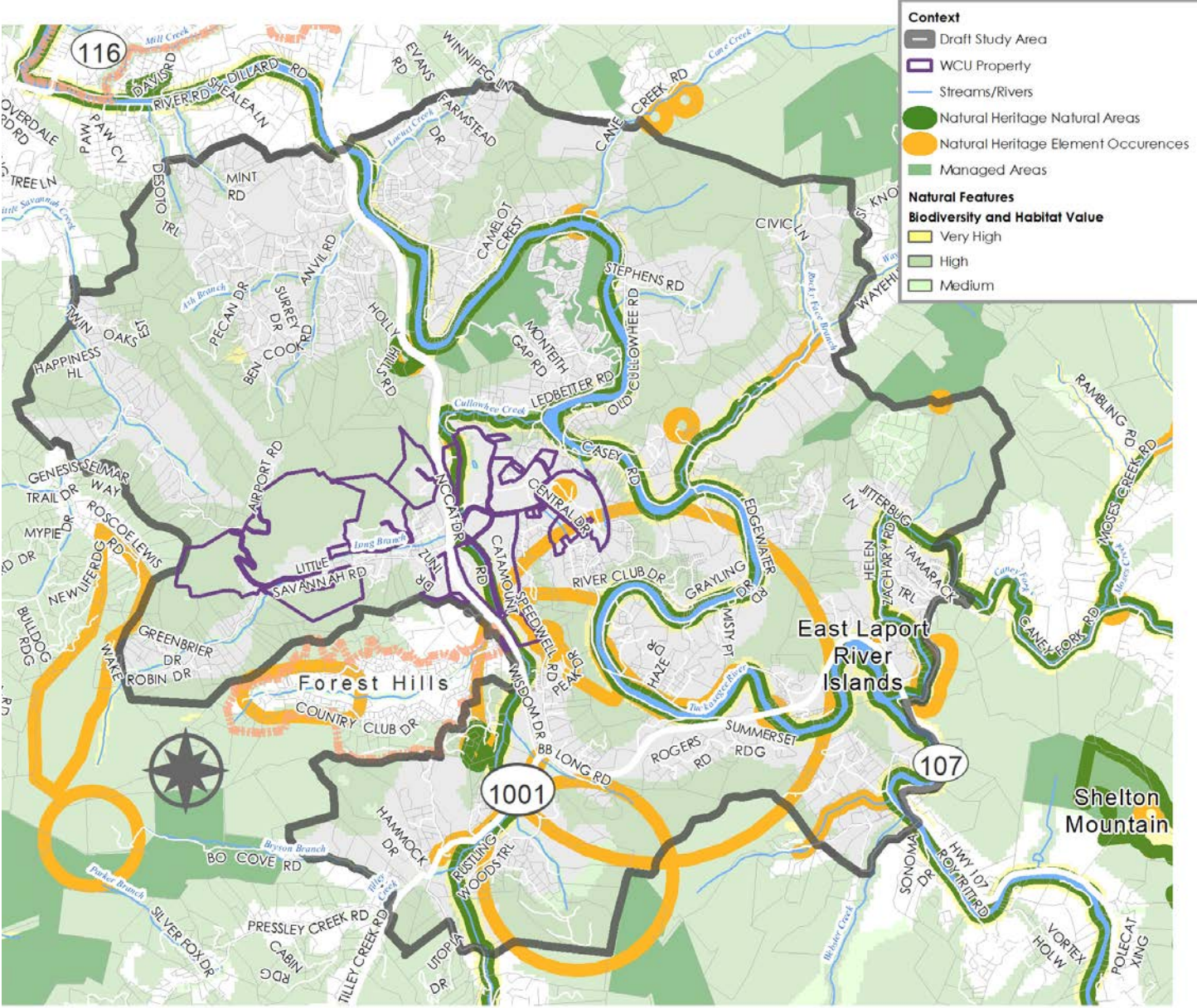
The valley along Cullowhee Creek and the Tuckasegee River in this area was extensively occupied prehistorically and these waterways are dotted with stone fishing weirs built by Native Americans. A large Cherokee settlement with several mounds was situated in the broad flood plain of the Tuckasegee River. One of these mound was once located on the present-day campus of Western Carolina University. It was common for a tribal Cherokee council house — a community structure that could fit several hundred people — to be built on top of these sacred mounds. The ancestral mound was bulldozed in the 1956 during site preparation for construction of Western Carolina University's Killian building. Artifacts are found in this area that reflect occupation by Native Americans. The Judaculla Rock, an ancient boulder carved with over 1,500 petroglyphs, and located just southeast of the study area is one of several petroglyph boulders within a 15-acre area of archaeological significance representing the Cherokee people who formerly inhabited this area.

"THE OUTDOORS
ARE OUR CORE
ASSET BASE."
-NOAH WILSON,
GROWING OUTDOORS

RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 01 JACKSON COUNTY REC CENTER
- 02 TUCKASEGEE RIVER GREENWAY
BRIDGE AT LOCUST CREEK ACCESS
- 03 MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS AT
WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
- 04 PETROGLYPHS AT JUDACULLA ROCK
- 05 CULLOWHEE CREEK





NATURAL RESOURCES MAP





3

Vision & Goals

A vision is a description of a community's desired future. During the development of a Cullowhee Small Area Plan, the public was engaged throughout the process to identify their core values, which were used to form a shared vision of the future and goals for the community.

PURPOSE

To inform activities, direct limited bandwidth and to make informed land use decisions regarding sensitive community resources, the Cullowhee Small Area Plan defines a vision and set of goals. The Cullowhee Community Planning Council and Jackson County can use the vision, goals and strategic recommendations in this plan to provide decision-making and budgetary direction.

The Cullowhee community grows and changes with every freshman class, but its roots run deep and some things remain the same. The vision and goals were updated from those included in the Cullowhee Vision Plan (2014).

VISION

The Cullowhee community will grow and prosper for existing and future residents as well as businesses by continuing cooperative relationships with WCU, creating a more inclusive sense of community, identifying partnerships to help manage, fund and improve existing infrastructure to respond to growth, and implementing practices that reflect the values of the community and honors its history.

The vision for Cullowhee includes more diverse housing, accommodating growth while reducing conflict, protecting and enhancing the Tuckasegee River and other natural resources, improving outdoor recreation options, revitalizing Old Cullowhee, and improving active transportation coming years.

" I WANT CULLOWHEE TO BECOME A PLACE
WHERE CAMPUS AND LOCAL CULTURES
CAN MINGLE AND BE MUTUALLY ENRICHED "
- SURVEY QUOTE

My priority for Cullowhee is . . .

BECOME
A REAL
COLLEGE
"TOWN"

CREATE A
RIVER
PARK

LESS
DEVELOPMENT.
OUR NATURAL
RESOURCES
ARE
PRICELESS

QUOTES FROM VISIONING WORKSHOP



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives for the plan were modified from the 2014 Vision Plan based on input received from the Steering Committee and public during the development of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan.

1-BUILD CULLOWHEE'S IMAGE AND IDENTITY AND PROMOTE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Create a sense of place and reinforce Cullowhee's identity.**
- Partner on the revitalization of the older part of Cullowhee near the river.
- Support permanent and seasonal residents and diversity the types of businesses in Cullowhee.
- Utilize infrastructure to support economic development and guide growth and development.

2-GROW IN A PREDICTABLE, CONTEXT APPROPRIATE MANNER

- **Encourage a development pattern that is consistent with the Future Land Use Map.**
- Encourage design that reduces conflict between new development, existing residents and the natural environment.
- Remove regulatory barriers and incentivize desired development types.
- Promote a mix of uses and a walkable environment near the Western Carolina University Campus.

THE CULLOWHEE COMMUNITY CARES DEEPLY ABOUT

01 WATER QUALITY AND ACCESS TO RIVERS AND STREAMS

02 GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

03 OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

04 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

05 SCENIC MOUNTAIN VIEWS



3-INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS

- **Accommodate new student housing where appropriate while mitigating impact on existing residents and property values.**
- Encourage more diverse housing options, including those that appeal to graduate students, faculty, staff, young families and seniors.

4-PROVIDE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROTECT, ENHANCE AND RESPECT THE AREA'S NATURAL BEAUTY

- **Extend the Tuckasegee River Greenway and create more recreational options including the Cullowhee River Park and additional programming along the river.**
- Encourage environmentally sensitive design. Protect water quality, valuable habitats, ridges and views.
- Support the growth of the ecotourism and adventure sports industry.
- Support environmental education and the preservation of cultural heritage.

5-ENHANCE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- **Increase biking, walking and transit options.**
- Coordinate county and university actions and policies to reduce traffic and dependence on vehicular transportation.





4

Recommendations

This chapter includes a future land use map, character area descriptions, policies and recommendations by topic area that describe intended development patterns, programs, and key physical improvements to balance the needs of Cullowhee now and into the future.

SETTING THE STAGE

The future land use plan, associated policies and recommendations within this chapter are tailored to address community input gathered during the planning process through a series of stakeholder interviews, steering committee meetings, a three-day multi-event charrette and an online survey.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Areas within the Cullowhee Community Planning Area (CPA) have development regulations set by Jackson County that are not applicable in other areas of the county. The study area and future land use map in this plan provides policy direction for areas within and outside of the defined CPA. This policy direction should influence development design and county decisions related to land use and infrastructure and services. This plan does not modify Jackson County development regulations or the extent of the CPA. Additional discussions and public input would be necessary to modify development regulations and implement some recommendations in this Plan.

**To create a bright
future for Cullowhee
we need to focus on:**

BIKING
&
WALKING

NATURAL
RESOURCES
&
RECREATION

OLD
CULLOWHEE

HOUSING

RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS



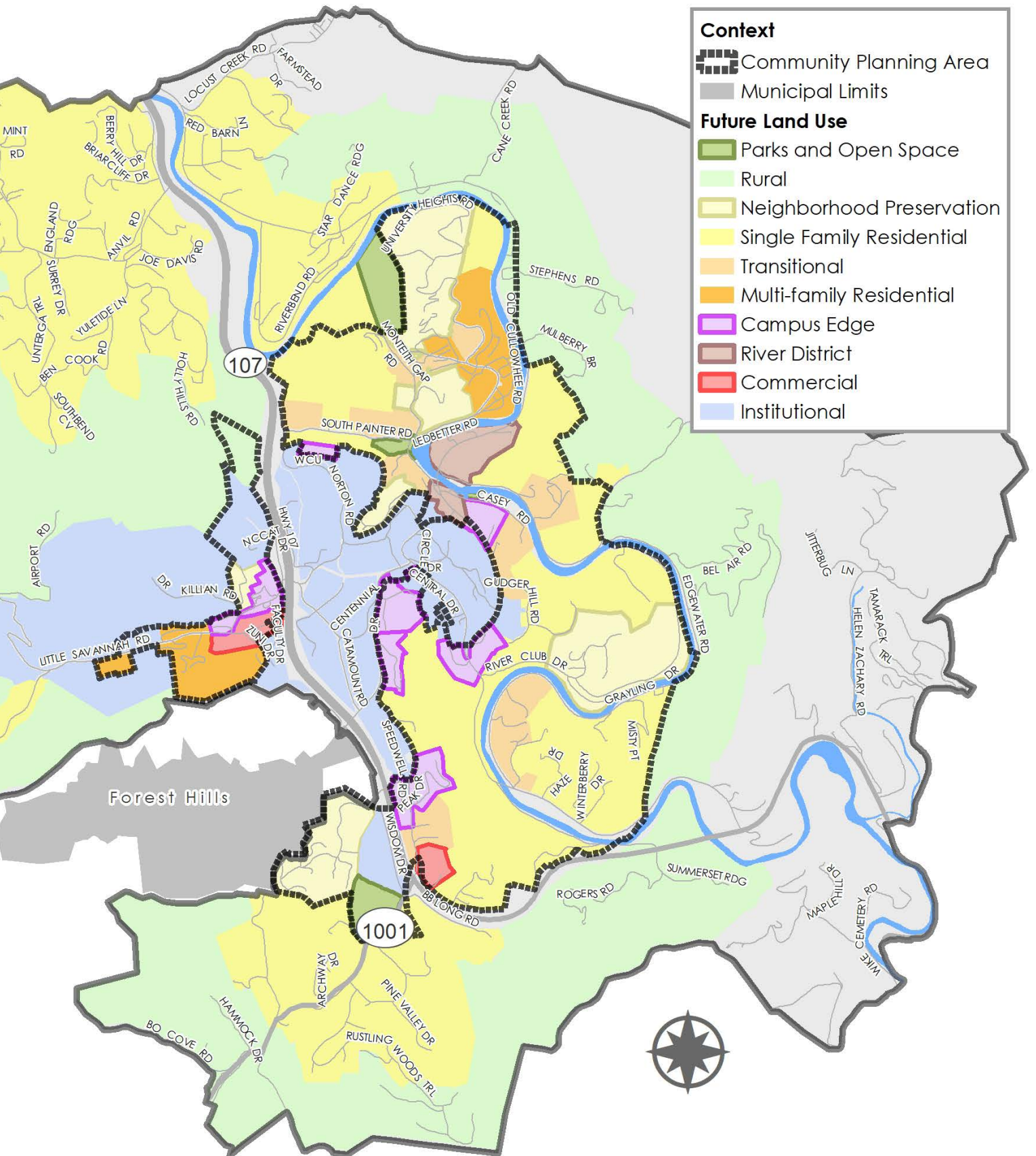
DRAFT FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map shows the intended land use pattern in the Cullowhee Area. The intent of the map is to create a logical framework for growth and development surrounding Western Carolina University, along the Tuckasegee River and in surrounding areas. Color coded categories each represent a character area with associated allowable uses, design and density recommendations. Land use character areas have been drawn based on existing land uses, desired development patterns expressed during the public involvement process, environmental features, and property lines.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

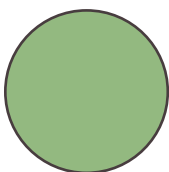
- **Redevelopment in the River District:** The Future Land Use Map encourages infill and redevelopment along Old Cullowhee road in a pedestrian oriented, mixed use area along the Tuckasegee River near the eastern gateway of Western Carolina University. Policies include design guidance related to location of buildings and parking and incentives for redevelopment including flexibility in setbacks and parking requirements.
- **A Walkable Campus Edge:** Areas for higher density residential uses are located near campus along existing or planned pedestrian corridors.
- **Single Family and Neighborhood Preservation Areas:** The plan designates areas for new single family homes to help address shortage of non-student housing. Neighborhood Preservation areas are identified to protect in-tact neighborhoods.
- **Environmental Conservation:** Areas with steep slopes and sensitive natural features are identified on a separate map. Development in these Conservation Design Overlay areas should be designed in a way that minimizes impact to natural resources and view sheds.





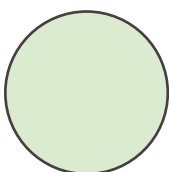
FUTURE LAND USE CHARACTER AREAS

The Future Land Use Map provides a generalized guide for land use decisions in the Cullowhee Area. The character areas on the map are defined below and describe intended uses, density and scale and design features of new development. These descriptions and the associated map should be utilized to guide private investment, infrastructure decisions and rezoning decisions.



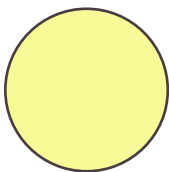
Parks and Open Space

This character area includes publicly owned parks and protected open space in the form of privately owned land and conservation easements.



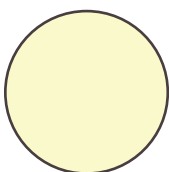
Rural

Rural areas have limited road access, limited access to utilities, working farms and environmental constraints. New development should primarily be very low density residential, agriculture and recreation uses only.



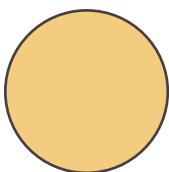
Single Family

Areas appropriate for low density, single-family homes and neighborhoods. Primarily non-student, market rate homes. Conservation subdivisions are encouraged in areas with environmental constraints or sensitive natural resources and access to utilities.



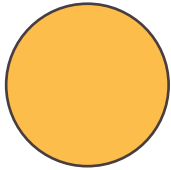
Neighborhood Preservation

Established neighborhoods near campus and in potential growth areas. Policies that encourage compatible housing types, densities and site design.

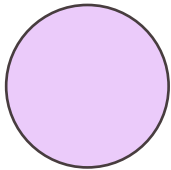


Transition

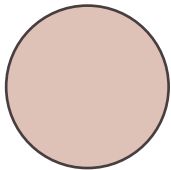
These areas are located near campus gateways (generally within 1/2 mile) and existing or future pedestrian connections and not in conflict with established single-family residential areas. A mix of residential housing types are appropriate including single family homes, patio homes, townhomes, quadplexes and duplexes. These areas should be designed to provide a transition between high-density residential areas adjacent to Western Carolina and lower density areas farther away.

**Multifamily Residential**

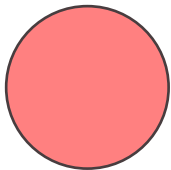
These areas include clusters of multifamily residential that could be served by future transit. Uses include multi-family residential including apartments and condos, attached residential including townhomes, duplexes and quadplexes.

**Campus Edge**

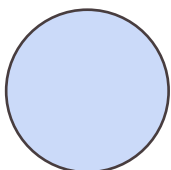
Multi-family residential in the form of apartments and condos are planned in these areas that are within 1/4 mile of campus gateways connected via existing or planned pedestrian paths. New development should be pedestrian-oriented and include a connected system of pathways, formal public spaces and architectural details.

**River District**

A pedestrian oriented, mixed use area along the Tuckasegee River near the eastern gateway of Western Carolina University. Uses may include retail, restaurants, offices, hotels, and higher density residential housing. Policies for this area include design guidance related to location of buildings and parking and incentives for redevelopment including flexibility in height, setbacks and parking requirements.

**Commercial**

Commercial areas include highway oriented businesses, retail, restaurants, and offices. Second floor residential and attached residential may be included as these areas develop.

**Institutional**

This area includes the Western Carolina University campus and other institutions including large church campuses and government services and offices.



LAND USE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

LU-1 Encourage a development pattern that is consistent with the Small Area Plan and Future Land Use Map.

- **Strategy LU-1.A Base zoning decisions on consistency with this plan and require development design to adhere to recommendations for the applicable future land use character areas.**
 - ▶ Regularly reference this plan in consistency statements in support of or as reason for denial for zoning decisions in the Cullowhee Planning Area.
- **Strategy LU-1.B Regularly update the Future Land Use Map.**
 - ▶ Amend the Future Land Use Map to reflect rezonings that are not consistent with the plan.
 - ▶ Consider an update of the Future Land Use Map and other relevant policy recommendations in the plan every 5 years or as significant changes occur that will influence land uses.

LU-2 Improve the design of new housing development to reduce conflict and improve compatibility with existing neighborhoods.

- **Strategy LU-2.A • Protect the character of existing neighborhoods near campus and in potential growth areas.**
 - ▶ Encourage only compatible housing types and lower densities within established single family residential areas, particularly those designated as Neighborhood Preservation Areas on the Future Land Use Map.
- **Strategy LU-2.B • Encourage high quality student housing that complements existing neighborhoods.**
 - ▶ Improve design standards that could help increase the compatibility of new medium- to high-density residential, especially in Transitional areas include:

SIDEWALKS, SHADE TREES AND ACCESS TO TRAILS, GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE WAS CONSIDERED VERY IMPORTANT BY OVER 60% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

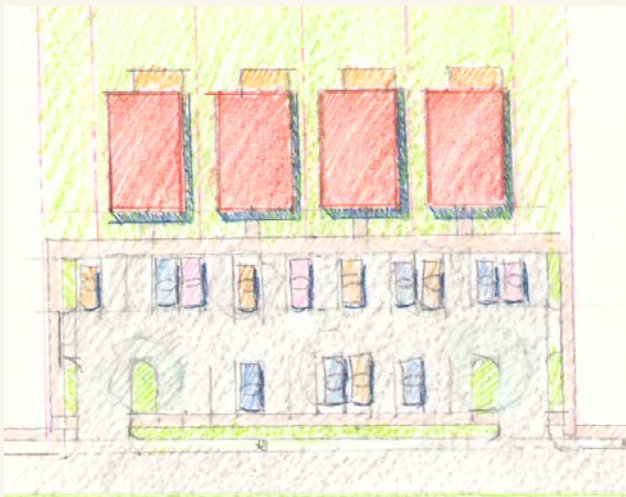
ACCORDING TO THE CULLOWHEE SMALL AREA PLAN SURVEY

- ❑ Improve landscaping and buffer requirements that encourage tree preservation, native trees, wider buffers, and layered planting schemes.
- ❑ Increase minimum standards and prioritize features for open space and amenities. Require usable open space and protection of natural features.
- ❑ Minimize visual impact of parking lots through design standards and/or incentives.
 - ❑ Limit parking in front of residences to one (1) parking bay deep
 - ❑ Provide a 10% reduction in parking minimums if located behind buildings
 - ❑ Encourage distributed parking (require planting islands for every 10 spaces or 100 linear feet of parking).

• **Strategy LU-2.C Evaluate current approval processes in the Cullowhee Planning Area to increase community dialog and improve design of new development.**

SITE DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

Site layout, including the arrangement of buildings and parking lot design can have a tremendous affect on the visual impact of new development. Recent student housing off-campus have been designed with minimal amounts of open space reservation and large parking lots in front of homes and small-format apartments. This is an efficient way to provide the parking that is currently required but it results in the site resembling a commercial development. Improving open space requirements, breaking up parking lots and adding additional landscaping and shade trees can make student housing, even multi-plexes appear more like single family neighborhoods. This type of site design can make housing more attractive and appeal to a broader demographic.



Typical layout of new student housing includes a large parking lot in front of the residences.



An alternative layout includes residences that front on a shared greenspace and distributed parking with canopy trees.

LU-3 Encourage market-rate housing that is designed to appeal to a broad demographic including student, graduate students and non-students.

- **Strategy LU-3.A Encourage a greater mix of housing types close to the WCU campus, major roadways and transit.**

- ▶ Encourage or require a mix of housing types in Transitional and Multi-Family Residential areas, especially as part of Planned Developments.
- ▶ Housing types including single-family homes, patio homes, townhomes, quadplexes and duplexes should be allowed in areas with greater access to campus and transportation infrastructure.
- ▶ Consider allowing single-family homes with smaller lot widths and setbacks in appropriate zoning districts to encourage these housing types.
 - Smaller lot homes may be appropriate in Low and Medium Multi-Family Residential zoning districts as well as via Planned Developments with increased design requirements.
 - Currently lot width minimums for single-family homes in Multi-family Medium (MFM) and Multi-family Low (MFL) zoning districts are 50 feet, front setbacks are 20-35 feet and side setbacks are 15-25 feet. Narrower



Pocket neighborhoods such as the above image with 35ft lots facing a shared greenspace was among the housing types most preferred in the visual preference activity conducted during the Cullowhee Small Area Plan public meetings. This type of housing could appeal to broad demographic including graduate students, WCU staff and retirees if they are appropriately designed. Currently lot widths under 50ft are prohibited except in Planned Developments.

lots are allowed only in Planned Developments. This could be a disincentive to single-family homes.

- Narrower lot widths and smaller setbacks could be allowed as a by-right use for some districts if primary vehicular access is off of main roads, units are alley-loaded (accessed from the rear of property) and accessible community open space is provided.
- ▶ Apartments, condos and other larger scale multi-family should be limited to Campus Edge areas, Commercial areas, the River District and Multi-family Residential areas.
- **Strategy LU-3.B Coordinate with Jackson County Departments, area non-profits and nearby municipalities to encourage workforce housing.**
 - ▶ Coordinate with developers and encourage policies and programs at the County level that incentivize non-student housing.
 - Policies, programs and incentives should encourage new housing types that appeal to seniors, grad students, faculty and young families

LU-4 Encourage a walkable campus edge.

- **Strategy LU-4.A Focus higher density student housing in areas within walking distance to campus**
 - ▶ Focus higher density student housing along primary pedestrian corridors (existing & planned)
 - ▶ Areas on the Future Land Use Map designated as Campus Edge and the River District are candidate locations
- **Strategy LU-4.B Implement site design and scale policies to encourage walkable, pedestrian-oriented development near campus gateways and existing or future connections to Western Carolina University**
 - ▶ Consider modifications to the Multi-family Residential Zoning District (MFH), other districts and/or the creation of a new zoning district that could include:
 - Additional architectural standards, i.e. increases in percentage of transparency



Student housing should be focused around key pedestrian connections to campus such as the pedestrian overpass at NC 107 and Little Savannah Rd



- Enhanced public space requirements with locational and design criteria
- Allowances for front porches, balconies and certain types of public spaces within a reduced setback
- Require parking to be located to the side or behind structures
- Provide incentives for reduced parking with the presence of transportation alternatives to limit increases in car trips

LU-5 Revitalize Old Cullowhee

• Strategy LU-5.A Encourage pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development, including higher density housing in the portion of Old Cullowhee identified as the River District on the Future Land Use Map

- ▶ Incentivize redevelopment through flexible requirements for height, setbacks, and parking
- ▶ Modifications to the existing Cullowhee Regulated District (land use regulations) may be needed. Currently many of the properties in the Old Cullowhee area are zoned Commercial. Modifications could include:
 - Revising the Commercial district to create a more walkable mixed use district or the creation of a River District zoning category to encourage the type of new development envisioned in the Old Cullowhee Design Concept. Revised district regulations could include:
 - Design guidance for location of buildings and parking. Parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings.
 - Reduce setbacks. Current setback requirements are 10-15'. Reducing minimums to 0-5' if additional architectural design requirements are met could help create a more active streetfront.
 - Increase allowable building height. Current height limits in the Commercial zoning district are 40'.
 - Encourage patio dining and connections to the river in the form of publicly accessible or private open space.
 - Allow off-site and shared parking arrangements

• Strategy LU-5.B Encourage / pursue streetscape improvements along Old Cullowhee in the River District

- ▶ Work with NCDOT, WCU, area businesses and private development on the addition of on street parking and the extension of a sidewalk along the east

side of Old Cullowhee

- **Strategy LU-5.C** Work with partners to improve the appearance of the Old Cullowhee area

- ▶ Pursue grants to aid in the clean up of brownfield sites along Old Cullowhee Road
 - A number of old gas station sites exist in Old Cullowhee. Pursuing Brownfields Grants for assessments and/or clean up of sites may help reduce barriers to redevelopment.
- ▶ Encourage building and landscape maintenance

REDEVELOPMENT IN THE RIVER DISTRICT

Old Cullowhee Road near the Tuckasegee River was a focus of public and stakeholder input during the development of the Small Area Plan. A conceptual design that illustrates potential redevelopment and the design of new structures and public space improvements is included in Chapter 5 of the plan (see page 62).



THE REVITALIZATION
OF OLD CULLOWHEE
WAS THE #1 MOST
IMPORTANT ITEM TO
ADDRESS ACCORDING
TO THE CULLOWHEE SMALL
AREA PLAN SURVEY





- ▶ Encourage the renovation and reuse of dilapidated buildings
- ▶ Consider partnerships to acquire and demolish abandoned structures

LU-6 Encourage economic development in the greater Cullowhee area.

- **Strategy LU-6.A Continue current efforts to support economic development and jobs in the Cullowhee area and Jackson County.**

- ▶ Coordinate with Jackson County Economic Development to support a unified approach to growth and development in the Study Area.

- **Strategy LU-6.B Encourage new retail, restaurants and commercial businesses in appropriate areas.**

- ▶ Institutional, Commercial Areas and the River District on the Future Land Use Map are locations where new commercial should be encouraged.
- ▶ Continue to work with Western Carolina University to provide visitor parking near on-campus commercial establishments.

- **Strategy LU-6.C Encourage investment in the designated Opportunity Zone within the Cullowhee Area**

- ▶ Recently passed federal tax legislation created the Opportunity Zone program, which allows qualified investors access to tax benefits when investing in designated census tracts. There is one designated Opportunity Zone in Jackson County, which covers the portion of the Study Area west of Tuckasegee River.
- ▶ While Opportunity Zone benefits alone typically do not make a poorly performing project successful, Jackson County could consider enhancing these benefits local incentives to increase attractiveness of developing in key areas.

- **Strategy LU-6.D Encourage communication and cooperation with Western Carolina to accommodate building space needs off campus**

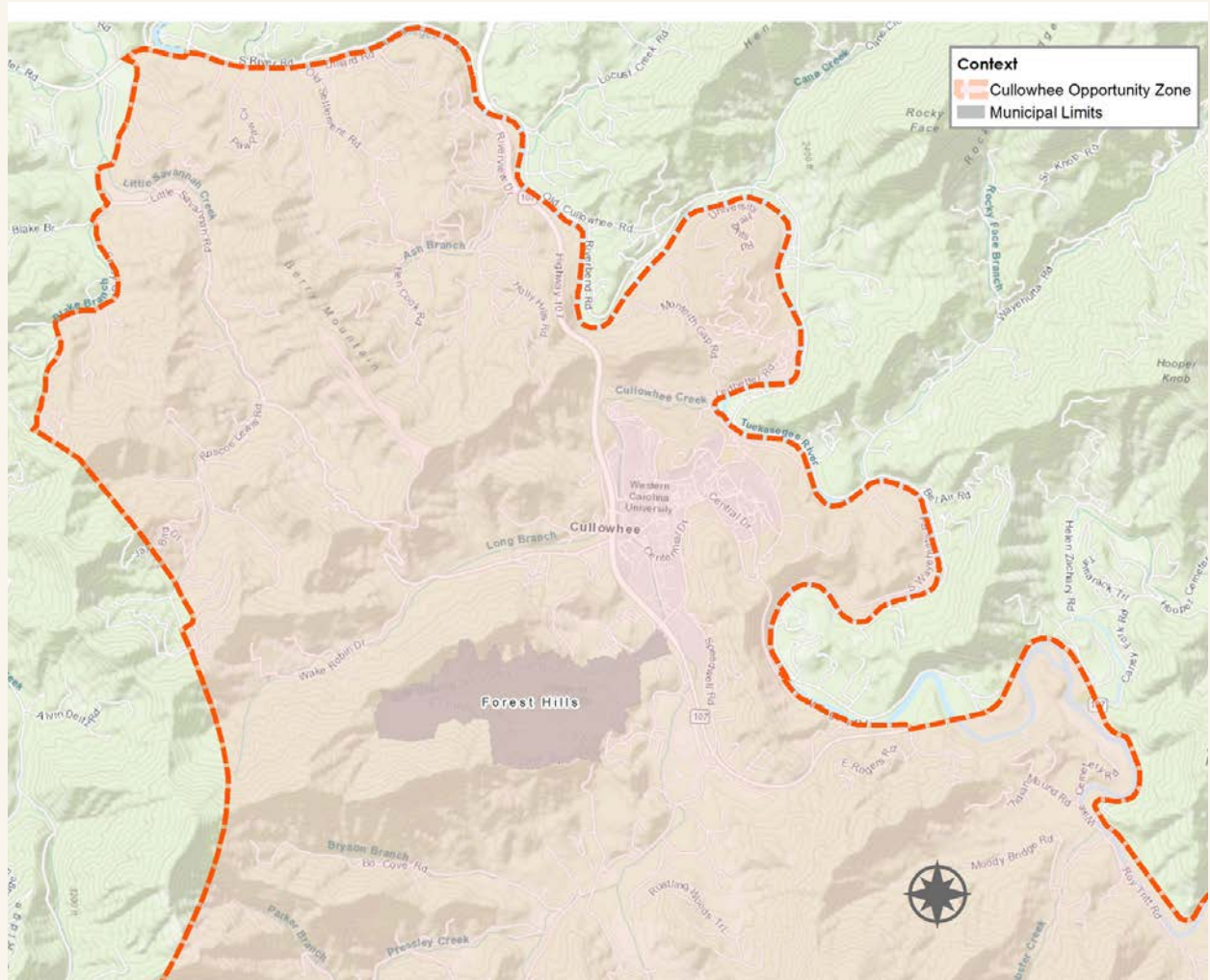
- ▶ As Western Carolina University continues to grow, additional space for residential units to accommodate students and administrative and research space could need to be located off-site.
- ▶ Work with Western Carolina to leverage the development of off-site space as anchoring uses in key development areas, including Old Cullowhee.

- **Strategy LU-6.E Support growth in tourism.**

- ▶ Leverage the location, timing, and scale of entertainment and cultural events to support the growth in the local tourism economy.
- ▶ Consider land use decisions and investments in infrastructure and services to capture and enhance the momentum and activity generated by tourism.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The below map shows the extent of the Opportunity Zone in Jackson County, which covers the portion of the Study Area west of the Tuckasegee River. The federal Opportunity Zone program allows qualified investors to access tax benefits when investing in certain designated census tracts.



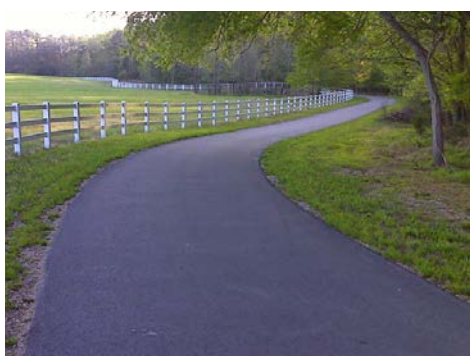


INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

I-1 Partner on key bicycle and pedestrian connections

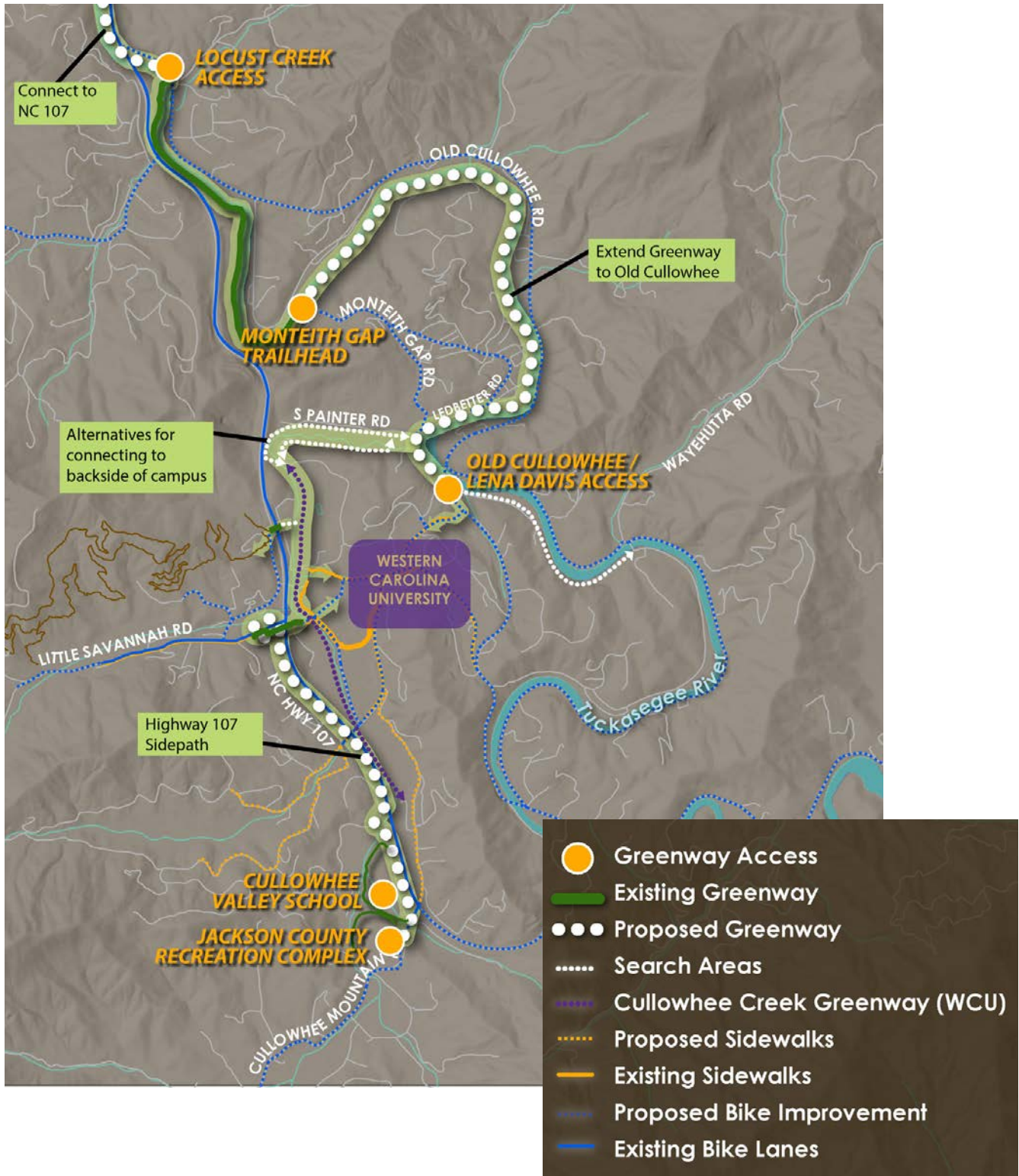
- **Strategy I-1.A Extend the Tuckasegee Greenway**

- ▶ Extend the greenway from current terminus at the Monteith Gap Trailhead to Old Cullowhee
 - Phase 1: Current greenway terminus along the Tuckasegee River to the intersection of River Park Drive and Ledbetter Road
 - Phase 2: Construct a greenway or multi-use path from the Lena Davis River Access south of Old Cullowhee Road north to South Painter Road
 - Phase 3: Complete a connection between Phase 1 and Phase 2 from River Park Drive to South Painter Road along Ledbetter Road
 - The Tuckasegee River Greenway Master Plan recommends an at-grade facility
 - More study is needed to determine recommended design of greenway or bicycle and pedestrian connection for the 1300 ft section between existing mobile home park (River Park Drive) and Painter Creek Park (Proposed). Existing Ledbetter Road in this area is a narrow 20 foot road section with a steep hill on west side and limited shoulder between the road and the river.
 - Additional consideration should be given to reduction in speed limit to 25 mph.
 - Biking and walking counts and/or resident surveys may be needed to justify any improvements.
- ▶ Extend greenway/MUP from pedestrian overpass at Little Savannah Road south along NC 107 to Cullowhee Valley School and the Jackson County Recreational Complex.
 - The greenway adjacent to Highway 107 could be a multi-use path



A combination of paved asphalt greenway and crushed gravel could be used to create additional connections along Cullowhee Creek through campus. The multi-use path connection along NC 107 could have vertical separation to increase safety.

FUTURE GREENWAYS MAP





parallel to the roadway. In constrained sections, the two-way path could be separated from traffic by vertical barriers.

- ▶ Create a back-door connection to campus & make Cullowhee Creek trail improvements

- The 2019 Cullowhee Creek Greenway Master Plan calls for Cullowhee Creek Greenway from S Painter Road to Childress Field as a 10' wide crushed stone aggregate path
 - Two alternatives are shown in the plan. One alternative is located near S. Painter Road, the other stays south of the creek
 - A combination of trail surfaces could be used on main trail and side trails (i.e. asphalt, gravel screenings, and edge treatments)

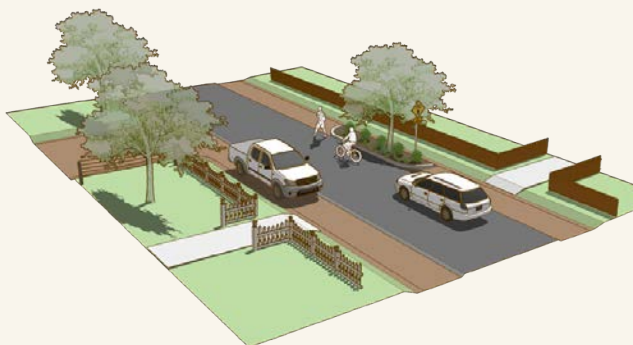
- ▶ Future connections from the existing Tuckasegee River Greenway north to Webster and/or Southwestern Community College

• Strategy I-1.B Work with partners to improve key bicycle and pedestrian linkages along local roads

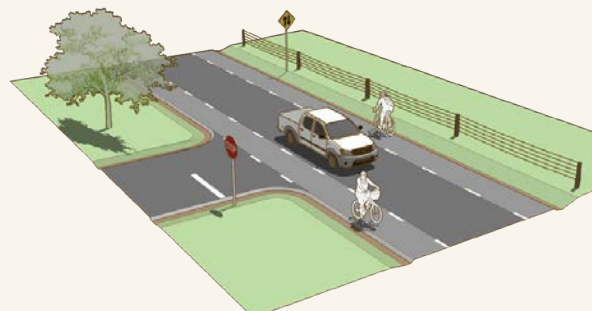
- ▶ Key connections should be improved along Ledbetter Road, Little Savannah Road, Speedwell Road, and Old Cullowhee Road.
- ▶ Roadways without sidewalks should be evaluated for potential additions of sidewalks, multi-use paths, bike lanes or advisory lanes.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS ON CONSTRAINED FACILITIES

Improving conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians on roadways with constrained right-of-ways and/or topography issues can be difficult. New facility types recently included in **FHWA's Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks** guide (see images below) should be considered for very low volume roads serving local traffic with constrained widths. Yield Roadways are designed to serve pedestrians and bicyclists in the same slow-speed travel area without lane markings. Advisory Shoulders or Advisory Bike/Walk Lanes create usable shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians on a roadway that is too narrow for traditional sidewalks and bike lanes.



Yield Roadway



Advisory Shoulders

- ❑ Separation of bicycle and pedestrians should be encouraged along routes with available right-of-way and expected high volumes of use.
- ▶ Intersections on the edges of campus should be evaluated for potential pedestrian improvements including crosswalks and pedestrian refuges.
 - ❑ Priority intersections include: Central Dr. / Old Cullowhee Rd., Old Cullowhee Rd. / Wayehutta Rd, Monteith Gap Rd / South Painter Rd., Cullowhee Mountain Rd / NC 107, and Little Savannah Rd / Blackhawk Rd.

I-2 Improve the link between land use patterns, site design and transportation infrastructure

• Strategy I-2.A Continue to require sidewalks for commercial areas, mixed use developments and residential developments with over 12 lots/homes.

- ▶ For commercial and multi-family development pedestrian walkways should be required from rights-of-way, parking areas and existing and planned sidewalks to buildings

• Strategy I-2.B Consider and incorporate Complete Streets principles and design standards for street projects and improvements in the public right-of-ways

• Strategy I-2.C Coordinate parking provision, management and incentives

- ▶ Coordinate with Western Carolina on parking pricing, location and policies
- ▶ Consider design guidelines for new development that encourages on-street parking in designated areas only and parking enforcement measures to prevent parking on shoulders and sides of roads
- ▶ Consider reductions in parking requirements in Campus Edge and River District areas to encourage more biking and walking
- ▶ Consider additional parking reductions



Local governments and universities should coordinate to reduce traffic by providing adequate biking and walking options too and from campus and other key destinations. The bridge above was constructed by the Town of Chapel Hill to provide a biking and walking alternative to and from apartments near the University of Chapel Hill.



with the funding or construction of off-site pedestrian facilities or transit service

- Examples of potential reductions:
 - Reduced to 0.5 spaces per bedroom in Campus Edge area if funds contributed to off-site connection or transit service
 - Reduced to 0.75 spaces per bedroom in Multi-family Residential Area or Transitional area if funds contributed to off-site connection or transit service
- This may require the creation of a county fund for sidewalks and/or a third party maintenance agreement

• **Strategy I-2.D Develop a multi-modal infrastructure sufficiency standard for larger-scale and higher density residential developments.**

- ▶ Consider a multi-modal Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) or similar standard for large-scale multi-family developments.
 - A multi-modal TIA could require additional bicycle, pedestrian or transit improvements for large-scale multi-family developments. This



CATTRAN buses serve the Western Carolina University campus, including stops along Little Savannah Road on Millennial Campus. At one time buses served apartment complexes off campus. Partnerships between WCU and other private or public entities could help extend transit service and reduce traffic and demand for on-campus parking.

could help to address site-specific pedestrian, bicycle and transit access issues.

- An alternative could include a standard for rezonings that includes criteria for approval of developments over a certain density or number of bedrooms.

I-3 Develop programs and initiatives to encourage biking and walking and enhance mobility options

- **Strategy I-3.A Gather data and track trends related to biking and walking**

- ▶ Conduct a survey to understand barriers to biking and walking near the university
- ▶ Conduct bike and pedestrian counts at key locations

- **Strategy I-3.B Consider enhanced education and encouragement activities related to biking and walking**

- ▶ Study wayfinding enhancements as the Tuckasegee Greenway is extended and other priority bicycle and pedestrian connections are made
- ▶ Partner on education and encouragement activities
- ▶ Consider implementing a bike rack program and/or bike share on or near campus

I-4 Plan for adequate public safety services in the Cullowhee Area

- **Strategy I-4.A Facilitate coordinate between the Fire Marshal, Emergency Management, the Sheriff's Office and Western Carolina University to ensure adequate public safety coverage in the Cullowhee Area**

- ▶ A new fire house is currently being constructed in Little Savannah Road which will help address space needs
- ▶ The county and the state contribute funding for the fire department
- ▶ Additional funding for equipment, personnel and operations may be necessary to keep up with demand
- ▶ Other communities in Jackson County, including Cashiers and Glenville, have a fire tax that is utilized to augment county funds for coverage in certain areas



PARKS, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PN-1 Extend the Tuckasegee River Greenway and increase public access opportunities along the river.

- **Strategy PN-1.A Extend the Tuckasegee River Greenway to Old Cullowhee and beyond.**

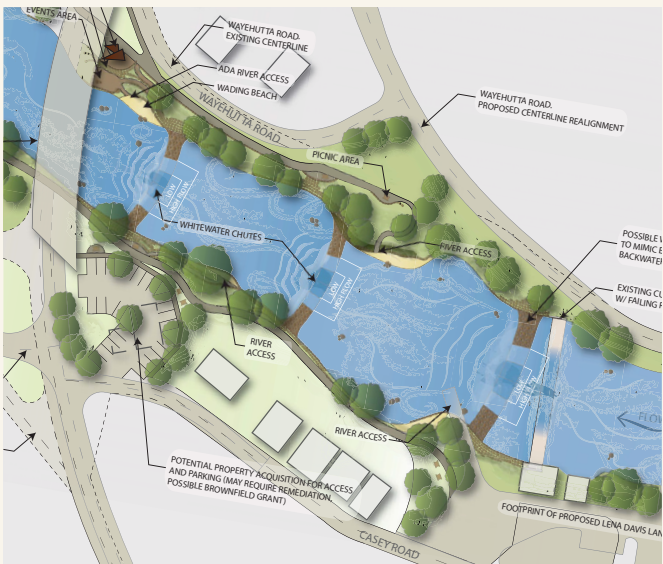
- ▶ For details and phasing recommendations see Transportation recommendations on page 50-52.

- **Strategy PN-1.B Work with partners on public space improvements near Old Cullowhee**

- ▶ Work with the Jackson County Government, Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE), Western Carolina University, landowners and other potential partners to implement the Tuckasegee River Park.
 - Determine appropriate phasing for public space improvements on publicly owned land.
 - Include River Park improvements on the next update of the County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
 - Coordinate with private landowners to engage the planned park and river in new development plans.
 - Consider opportunities for voluntary land acquisition to support the vision for long-term improvements.
- ▶ Study potential improvements for a pocket park near Cullowhee Creek and S. Painter Road along the river (Painter Park).
 - Planned road improvements to Monteith Gap Road, include a new bridge over Cullowhee Creek and a roundabout for the intersection of S. Painter Road, Ledbetter Road and Monteith Gap Road. The realignment of Monteith Gap Road will create an opportunity for a riverside greenway and pocket park near Cullowhee Creek.
 - Next steps include developing a conceptual design that includes more detailed programming recommendations and cost estimates for this area.

CULLOWHEE RIVER PARK

The Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE) supports the creation of a Family River Park in and near the Tuckasegee River adjacent to the historic center of Cullowhee. A conceptual design, funded by a grant from the Blue Ridge Natural Heritage Partners, by S2O Design indicated that there is adequate drop and flow to create a series of three rapids that would maintain flows for whitewater kayaking and canoeing. Improvements to nearby river banks would improve access to the river and support the revitalization of the area. An economic impact study has also been completed that shows that the River Park would have a significant positive impact on the local economy. Annual economic benefits of the River Park were estimated at over \$1,000,000.



Top-Left: An in-stream whitewater park has been proposed by the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE) for the Tuck near the dam (Image Source: S2O Design) . Bottom: Rendering of the Family River Park (Image Source: Clegg LA + Design). Top-Right: Confluence Park Precedent in Denver, Colorado



PN-2 Study preservation, environmental education and restoration opportunities along the Tuckasegee River and Cullowhee Creek.

• Strategy PN-2.A Stream and riverbank restoration

- ▶ Pursue grants for riparian vegetation restoration including rivercane plantings and removal of invasive species
- ▶ Study potential in-stream and near-stream features that promote fishing and wildlife along Cullowhee Creek (including addition of structure, thermal refuges, lunger bunkers)

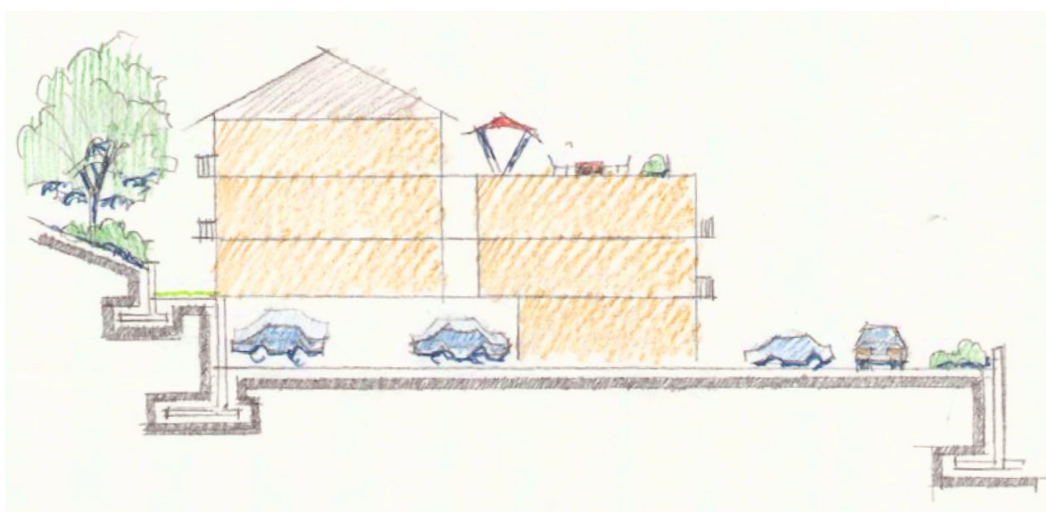
• Strategy PN-2.B Maintain and enhance the Cullowhee Community Garden.

- ▶ Encourage coordination between the Jackson County Department of Public Health, volunteers and the community to maintain and improve the Cullowhee Community Garden.
- ▶ Plan for a greenway connection along Cullowhee Creek through or along the edge of the garden to the Tuckasegee River.

PN-3 Encourage environmentally sensitive design

• Strategy PN-3.A Incentivize site design that minimizes grading and efficiently uses slope and topography

- ▶ Provide flexibility in height to encourage reduced grading (ie: for tuck-under parking)

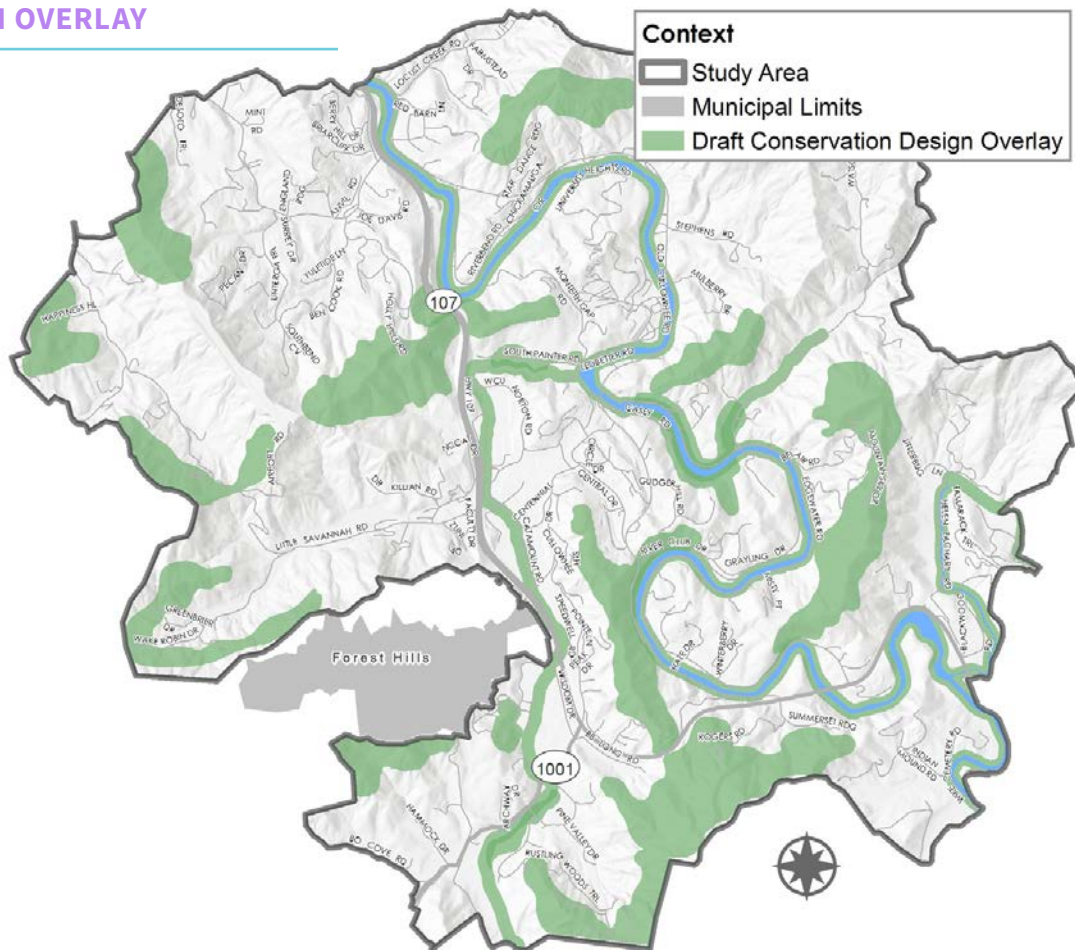


Currently the Planned Development option in the Cullowhee Planning Area regulations incentivize reduced grading. Modifications to regulations related to building height, calculation methods for height and building depth should be explored to encourage minimizing grading and surface parking. Changes should be targeted at the Campus Edge area and associated zoning districts near campus where there should be greater flexibility in building height and parking requirements.

• Strategy PN-3.B Encourage the reservation of sensitive natural resources as open space in new development

- ▶ Consider Increasing stream buffer requirements
- ▶ Prioritize the reservation of high value natural assets such as native, mature trees, riparian vegetation, and unique natural habitats as open space in new development.
- ▶ Consider a Conservation Design Overlay for the most sensitive natural features including primary and secondary ridges, steep slopes, designated Natural Heritage Natural Areas and key habitat corridors.
 - This overlay could decrease overall density allowed (i.e. by 50%) for these areas or incentivize preservation through allowances for clustering.

POTENTIAL CONSERVATION DESIGN OVERLAY



State regulations limit development on some steep slopes and ridgelines over 2,900 feet in elevation. Many secondary ridges and other environmental features such as Natural Heritage Natural Areas exist in the study area that are not protected by state regulations. Creating a local, county overlay that designates sensitive natural resource areas could be a way to ensure these assets are protected while accommodating development.



- **Strategy PN-3.C Encourage site design that maintains tree canopy and reducing stormwater impacts.**

- ▶ Continue to provide credits for tree preservation in new development.
- ▶ Consider enhancing requirements for street trees and parking lot plantings for medium to higher density residential developments.
- ▶ Continue to require stormwater measures to be designed and maintained by new development.
- ▶ Encourage low impact development techniques including pervious pavements, green parking lots, green roofs, disconnected downspouts, rainwater harvesting, bioswales and rain gardens.
- ▶ Coordinate with Western Carolina University on methods to reduce sedimentation and stormwater runoff from construction activities and new development on and near campus.

PN-4 Protect cultural resources in the Cullowhee area.

- **Strategy PN-4.A Coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or the Eastern Band of the Cherokee or their designee to identify and protect important archaeological sites.**

- ▶ Consider a requirement for screening for large public or private development and/or infrastructure projects in areas where settlements were likely.
- ▶ Consider opportunities for educational signage in parks and along greenways.



The image above shows artifacts from an ongoing archeological dig on the campus of Western Carolina University. The best sites for development have not changed in the area in thousands of years. Valley bottoms in Cullowhee are likely home to more archaeological sites.

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5

Design Concepts

This chapter includes design concepts that show potential redevelopment and public space enhancements near Old Cullowhee Road and the Tuckasegee River.

ENVISIONING A RIVER DISTRICT

Once the focus of residents dining and general business needs, the Old Cullowhee Road area has aged and is marked by an aging building stock and underutilized properties. With targeted redevelopment, this area of Cullowhee can again be an activity center with shops, restaurants, recreational opportunities and living options for residents and visitors of all ages.

A new conceptual plan illustrates a long-term vision for the area that establishes a revitalized riverside mixed-use district with expanded uses and a number of potential amenities. **Painter Park** on the west bank of the Tuckasegee River is a community park with river access and greenway connections to the university as well as the river trail system. The **Old Cullowhee River District** is designed as a pedestrian oriented district with a mix of commercial and housing options. The **River Park** is the redesign of the Tuckasegee River and banks upstream of Old Cullowhee Road into a recreation destination.

The **Campus Gateway** is a newly developed intersection at Old Cullowhee Road and Central Drive where new buildings could frame an entrance to Western Carolina University.

The image on the following page provides an overview to the concept plan to four focus areas within and near Old Cullowhee. Subsequent pages in the Plan provide more detailed design and programming recommendations for what this area could look like and how it could function as an attraction and economic development tool for revitalization in the future.



Highlights from design concepts



DESIGN FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREA 1: PAINTER PARK

Painter Park is a key opportunity for a new community park on the west bank of the Tuckasegee River. Nestled in the valley at the confluence of Cullowhee Creek and the river, the park could offer an expanded community garden and play area along with a set of outdoor picnicking areas and a pavilion for entertainment and gathering. This park provides a near-term opportunity to improve public access along the Tuckasegee River corridor for nearby residents to enjoy and connect with the river and the cultural history of the valley.

FOCUS AREA 2: RIVER DISTRICT

The Tuckasegee or Old Cullowhee River District could be a walkable mixed-use district reminiscent of mountain town streetscapes dotting the high country of North Carolina. Pedestrian in focus, the street will have wide sidewalks for people and cyclists to feel safe walking along. Outdoor dining and recreation would be paired with, offices and residential options. Incremental redevelopment could convert underutilized properties into multi-story buildings that are brought close to the street. On-street parking, outdoor dining, and window shopping help activate the street and take advantage of connections to the river.

FOCUS AREA 3: RIVER PARK

River's Edge park is a re-purposed boating area and river access point. Already located with a new parking lot on the west side of the Tuckasegee River, this park looks to expand along both river banks with pedestrian viewing areas, a set of whitewater rapids, greenway trail, parking lot, and additional park areas. Boating access to man-made rapids are a principal draw, park edges along both sides of the river include new programming that appeals to a variety of users and ages, a building for businesses or a non-profit, and a series of bike and pedestrian trails connecting to the larger greenway system and district.

FOCUS AREA 4: CAMPUS GATEWAY

The Campus Gateway is the eastern entry to Cullowhee University. This gateway is centered around an upgraded intersection with a series of buildings that can support the university such as a hotel with meeting space, condos for students or faculty and/or businesses capitalizing on the proximity to the university, the river and a revitalized Old Cullowhee.

PRECEDENTS & INSPIRATION

01. Charles City Whitewater Park, IA
02. Biltmore Park, Asheville
03. Outdoor River Dining
04. Downtown Brevard, NC
05. Confluence Park, Denver CO



OLD CULLOWHEE FOCUS AREAS



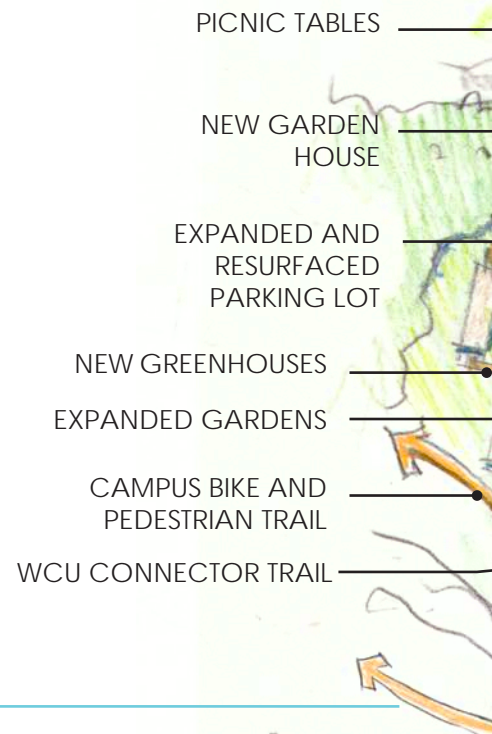


PAINTER ROAD PARK

Painter Road Park is an expansion of the existing gardens and nature walk on South Painter Road to the Tuckasegee River across Monteith Gap Road. Adjacent to the gardens, the expanded park could have a new “nature play” playground area, increased parking, a garden house and potential restroom facility. Signage could detail cultural history of the valley or note restoration activities. Across Monteith Gap Road, the park could have a new pocket park with a green, boat take-out and launch, parking, and picnic area. A bike and pedestrian trail could connect south to Old Cullowhee and to the west to WCU campus.

▼ Painter Park Programming

- Community Gardens
- University Bike Trail and Greenway Connection
- Picnic Area & Event Lawn
- Boat and Visitor Parking
- Community Playground
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections
- Boat Launch and Take-out
- Pedestrian River Access
- Nature Trail and Interpretive Signage
- Restroom Facilities



PRECEDENT IMAGERY

01. Community Gardens

04. Converted Bike & Pedestrian Bridge



02. Nature Playground

05. Native Plantings w/seating



03. Wetland Restoration / Educational Signage

06. Boat Launch Area





FOCUS AREA 1: PAINTER PARK



RIVER DISTRICT

The Old Cullowhee Road area could be a walkable mixed-use district with pedestrian scale buildings and streetscape improvements. Outdoor dining and recreation would be paired with offices and residential options. Incremental redevelopment could convert underutilized properties into multi-story buildings that are brought close to the street.

▼ River District Programming

- Parallel Parking
- Bike Lanes
- Cross Walks
- Rear and Tuck-Under Parking
- 2-4 Story Buildings
- Streetscape Seating
- Planted Tree Wells
- Bicycle Parking
- Art or Signage
- Tourism, Ext. Offices on Non-Profit Businesses
- Restaurants, Window Shopping, Coffee House, Businesses

EASTERN TRAIL —

RESTROOMS OR
SHELTER —

PARKING & TRAIL
HEAD —

TUCK-UNDER
PARKING —

PRECEDENT IMAGERY

01. Restaurant Patio
04. Streetscape Post.



02. Art or Signage
05. Riverside Trail



03. Village Interior
06. 2-3-Story Buildings w/ Alcoves





FOCUS AREA 2: RIVER DISTRICT



RIVER PARK

River's Edge park is a re-purposed boating area and river access point. Already located with a new parking lot on the west side of the Tuckasegee River, this park looks to expand along both river banks with pedestrian viewing areas, a set of whitewater rapids, greenway trail, parking lot, and additional park areas. Boating access to man-made rapids are a principal draw, park edges along both sides of the river include new programming that appeals to a variety of users and ages, a building for businesses or a non-profit, and a series of bike and pedestrian trails connecting to the larger greenway system and district.

▼ River Park Programming

- Part of Dam Removed
- White Water Rapids
- Bike and Pedestrian
- Restroom Facilities
- Pavilion/Picnicking
- Beach
- Boat Launches
- Community Park
- Restaurant/Paddle Shop
- Waters Edge, Play Area



CULLOWHEE PARK

RIVER
GREENWAY
TRAIL

RIVER RESTAURANT OR
PADDLE SHOP

BEACH AREA

BOAT LAUNCH

GREENWAY TRAIL



PRECEDENTS & INSPIRATION

01. Existing Bridge
02. Rapids and River Edge Park
03. Restaurant or Paddle Shop
04. Community Park w/Pavilion
05. Commercial Offices or Conference Space
06. River Edge Seating



FOCUS AREA 3: RIVER PARK



CAMPUS GATEWAY

The Campus Gateway is the eastern entry to Western Carolina University. A potential new roundabout and art installation welcomes students and visitors. This gateway is centered around a series of buildings that can support the university such as a hotel, condos for students or faculty and/or businesses capitalizing on the proximity to the university and connections to the river and a revitalized Old Cullowhee River District.

▼ Gateway Programming

- University Welcome Sign or Sculpture
- Village Streetscape Feel
- Student-Oriented Businesses
- Mixed-Use Buildings
- University and Alumni Hotel
- Streetscape Seating
- Rear and Tuck-Under Parking
- Bike Lanes and/or Wide Sidewalk
- Bicycle Parking
- 2-3 Story Buildings (Except Hotel)
- Planter Tree Wells
- Cross Walks

BIKE LANES OR WIDE
SIDEWALK

PARALLEL PARKING

POTENTIAL HOTEL OR
APARTMENT

PRECEDENT IMAGERY

01. Hotel or Apartment

04. Bike Lanes



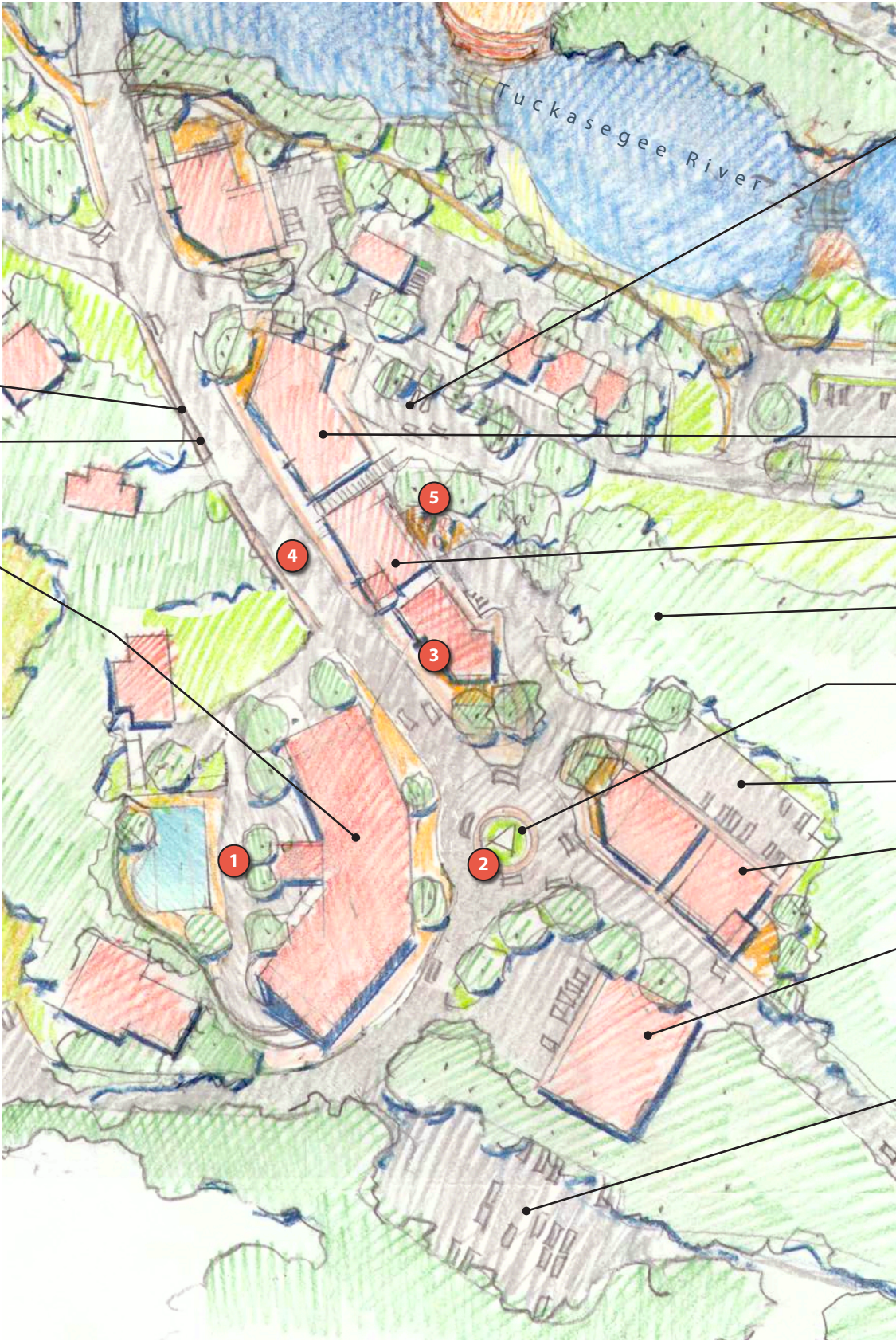
02. University Welcome Sign / Art

05. Patio Terrace



03. Streetscape / Frontage





LOWER LEVEL
PARKING

NEW MULTISTORY
COMMERCIAL
BUILDING

TERRACED
RESTAURANT PATIO

STEEP SLOPES

UNIVERSITY SIGN OR
SCULPTURE

REAR PKG.

NEW MIXED-USE
BLDGS.

EXISTING BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY PARKING
(EXISTING)



FOCUS AREA 4: CAMPUS GATEWAY



6

Action Plan

This plan document is meant to guide policies and decision making in order to advance the vision and goals for the Cullowhee area documented in Chapter 3 of this plan. The following is a list of preliminary implementation steps that address priority issues identified during the planning process.

1. Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance Updates

- a. **Revise regulations to allow for single-family homes with smaller lot widths and setbacks in Low and Medium Multi-Family Residential zoning districts with increased design requirements including internal access.**
 - *Currently new single-family lots must have a minimum width of 50ft except for those in a Planned Development. Allowing narrower lots in certain locations may help encourage more housing that appeals to*
- b. **Improve design standards that could help increase the compatibility of new medium- to high-density residential, especially in Transitional areas.**
 - *Improve landscaping and buffer requirements that encourage tree preservation, native trees, wider buffers, and layered planting schemes.*
 - *Increase minimum standards and prioritize features for open space and amenities. Require usable open space and protection of natural features.*
 - *Minimize visual impact of parking lots through design standards and/or incentives.*

Measures of Success

Tracking implementation of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan should be a priority. The Cullowhee Planning Council and Jackson County staff should evaluate progress toward these action items and the goals of the plan on an annual basis. Quantitative statistics and a qualitative discussion of progress on 1.a and 1.b should include:

- Number of new single-family homes approved
- Neighbor input on proposed residential projects
- Amount of open space in new residential development

c. Revise the existing Commercial district to create a more walkable mixed use district or the create a new River District zoning category to encourage the type of new development envisioned in the Old Cullowhee Design Concept.

- *This could be implemented through modifying an existing district, creating a new district or an overlay district. Reducing the required setback, increasing maximum height of buildings and requiring parking in the rear of structures are priorities. Recommendations for modifications and/or a new district are included on page 46.*

d. Encourage a more walkable campus edge through modifications to the Multifamily Residential Zoning District (MFH), other districts and/or the creation of a new zoning district.

- *Architectural standards and other design requirements may be implemented in exchange for reductions in parking. Recommendations for modifications and/or a new district are included on page 45.*

e. Review parking requirements in each of the districts in the Cullowhee Planning Area.

- *This could be done on a few key districts initially. Provisions for private parking in new development should be coordinated with pedestrian access improvements on the edges of campus and on-campus parking infrastructure and policies.*

f. Consider the development of regulations for multi-family development outside of regulated districts.

2. Greenways and Pedestrian Connections

a. Extend the Tuckasegee Greenway

- *See page 50 for detailed segments and phasing recommendations.*

b. Study the feasibility of the Multi-use Path parallel to NC 107 between Country Club Rd and Cullowhee School

- *Coordinate with the Southwestern RPO to score and prioritize this project*
- *Study potential funding sources include RTP Funds, due to transportation component*

Measures of Success

Tracking implementation of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan should be a priority. The Cullowhee Planning Council and Jackson County staff should evaluate progress toward these action items and the goals of the plan on an annual basis. Quantitative statistics and a qualitative discussion of progress on 1.c-e and 2a-c should include:

- Building permits and redevelopment in Old Cullowhee
- Number of percentage of new multi-family units located with walk access to campus
- Mode split and trends for commuters and students to and from the WCU campus
- Linear feet of available right-of-way for the Tuckasegee Greenway
- Linear feet of greenway and multi-use paths in the Cullowhee Area



3. Coordination, Public Services and Infrastructure

- a. Continue Western Carolina University's representation on the Cullowhee Community Planning Council
- b. Facilitate regular staff coordination between Jackson County staff and Western Carolina University staff on public services and transportation issues
- c. Study potential public-private or public-public partnership through collaboration, between Jackson County, Western Carolina University and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) on priority transportation projects.
 - Potential projects include:
 - Road and intersection improvements
 - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements
 - Streetscape improvements in the eastern gateway / Old Cullowhee Area

4. Parks and Open Space

- a. Continue working with the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE) on the Tuckasegee Family River Park
 - Include River Park improvements in the County next update of the Jackson County Park and Recreation Master Plan
 - Pursue funding through the county's Capital Project Fund
 - Pursue grant and state funding
- b. Painter Road / Monteith Gap Pocket Park
 - Include improvements in the next update of the Jackson County Park and Recreation Master Plan
 - Pursue funding through the county's Capital Project Fund
 - Pursue grant and state funding

Measures of Success

Tracking implementation of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan should be a priority. The Cullowhee Planning Council and Jackson County staff should evaluate progress toward these action items and the goals of the plan on an annual basis. Quantitative statistics and a qualitative discussion of progress on 3.a-c and 4a-b should include:

- Western Carolina University's participation on the Cullowhee Community Planning Council
- Number of annual coordination meetings between staff at WCU and Jackson County
- Partnership agreements underway or approved
- Acres of preserved green-space along the Tuckasegee River
- Number of access points along the Tuckasegee River
- Number of recreational programming facilities/activities available in the Cullowhee Area

5. Protect Water Quality in the Tuckasegee and its Tributaries

- a. **Prioritize staff collaboration with other departments to research and implement best practices for water quality protection along the Tuckasegee and its tributaries.**
 - *Develop recommendations for implementing a minimum riparian buffer in the Cullowhee Planning Area*
 - *Preserving undisturbed riparian vegetation along a stream can have many benefits including capturing sediment and pollutants, providing shade to keep waters cool, providing habitat for trout and aquatic insects, stabilizing banks and preventing erosion.*
 - *A two zone buffer could be implemented with minimal impact on overall developable area.*
 - *Each buffer zone should have a limited number of uses and exemptions with Zone One (0-30ft) being more restrictive than Zone Two (30-50ft)*
 - *Reduce erosion potential adjacent to streams by requiring dispersion of concentrated flow (diffuse flow) prior to its entry into the buffer*
- b. **Coordinate with Western Carolina University on methods to reduce sedimentation and stormwater runoff from construction activities and new development on and near campus.**
- c. **Pursue grants for riparian vegetation and stream restoration along Cullowhee Creek including river-cane plantings, removal of invasive species and in-stream work**

Measures of Success

Tracking implementation of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan should be a priority. The Cullowhee Planning Council and Jackson County staff should evaluate progress toward these action items and the goals of the plan on an annual basis. Quantitative statistics and a qualitative discussion of progress on 5.a should include:

- Average width of vegetated riparian buffer on the Tuckasegee River and/or key tributaries
- Linear feet of impacted riparian buffer in new development
- Turbidity measured in Cullowhee Creek
- Area or linear feet of restoration activities



6

Appendix

Materials and detailed information that supplement and support the material in the main body of the plan.

APPENDIX CONTENTS

- ▶ Public Meeting #1 Summary
- ▶ Survey Results
- ▶ Public Meeting #2 Summary and Responses
- ▶ Changes to Draft Plan

PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

► Keep, Toss, Create Exercise Results

□ *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources*

□ Create

- Greenway from Western Carolina University to Southwestern Community College
- Designate additional greenspace, natural areas and parks along Cullowhee Creek and Long Branch Creek. (Opportunities along Little Savannah Rd)
- Designate additional greenspace , natural areas and parks behind Cullowhee Valley School
- Create a "Nature Health" trail either on WCU, NCCAT Campus or adjacent
- I want the pool that was planned when my daughter was an infant, please. She is 28. (x4)
- Olympic sized pool at Recreation Center (x4)
- Public dog park (comment placed near Jackson County Rec Center)
- More hiking trails/areas (x2)
- Complete the greenway (x6)
- New bike trails (x2)
- Greenway to River Park
- More greenways
- Extend greenway; Create large dog park
- Greenway extension to NC 107; Connection between NC 107 bike lanes to downtown Sylva (x3)
- Create a larger Community Garden with more publicity for more involvement
- Greenway connection from Recreation Center in Cullowhee to WCU and Cullowhee Community Gardens (x2)
- Community Arts Center (x2)
- Keep mountain spirit and focus on Indian heritage (x2)
- Skateboard park
- Pump track at East LaPorte River Park (x3)
- Create an adventure playground at East LaPorte or other "Pocket Parks"
- Park on Bear Lake



- ☐ Missing greenway link between existing greenway and Highway 107 bike lane (x2)
- ☐ Outdoor trail at Fairview Elementary School and Smoky Mountain High School like the trail at Jackson County Rec Center and Cullowhee Valley School
- ☐ Keep
 - ☐ Love the Jackson County Rec Center
 - ☐ Love the greenway
 - ☐ The greenway
 - ☐ Keep and expand the Community Garden
- ☐ **Natural Resources / Land Use**
 - ☐ Toss
 - ☐ Steep slope development
 - ☐ Keep
 - ☐ Keep recycling center where it is currently located
 - ☐ Keep same zoning. (Comment placed along Edgewater Rd near intersection with Old Cullowhee Rd)
 - ☐ Preserve rural character through use of cluster Development, CID (Comment placed south of Cullowhee Mountain Rd near Utopia Dr)
 - ☐ Keep delayed harvest (DH) section of the Tuckasegee River.
 - ☐ Need restroom, trash cans and formalized parking for delayed harvest section of the Tuckasegee River (Comment placed near bridge over Tuckasegee on Webster Rd, Informal parking also located in this area)
 - ☐ Create
 - ☐ More shrubs/plants on hill/slope behind Hillside Grind – along Centennial Dr.
 - ☐ More plants on edge of cemetery (Central Dr) between the road and stone wall
 - ☐ Maintain this area S of Country Club Dr as a wetland (Comment placed in Forest Hills)
 - ☐ Create a natural area/nature trail here for Cullowhee Valley School and the public to use. No development here (comment placed near the end of Speedwell Baptist Church Rd)
 - ☐ Development that blends in with natural surroundings
 - ☐ Zoning / land use that forestalls destructive industry and outside development

- Locally owned businesses
 - Need a grocery store (x5)
 - Publix
 - Development with state of the art green energy
 - Add more food options
- **Active Transportation**
 - Create
 - Bicycle lanes and sidewalks along Little Savannah Rd to the WCU Health Sciences building (x3)
 - Bike path from campus to river along Cullowhee Creek / S Painter Rd.
 - For someone going from Speedwell Rd to University Heights, need road not going through campus
 - Walking connection between Derby Rd and Speedwell, cross-walk (x2)
 - Walking and biking to campus (x6)
 - Widen Speedwell Rd and add sidewalks (x3)
 - Widen Cullowhee Mountain Rd (x3)
 - Safe pedestrian and bike route for students living on Speedwell Rd (x2)
 - Bike path along old railroad right of way between Lena Davis Access and Cullowhee River Club area
 - Sidewalk from Gudger Hill to Chancellor's Dr
 - Widen/create walk and bike paths or AT minimum; shoulders along flat roads; there are no safe ways to use Wayehutta but folks do
 - Speedwell Rd pedestrian connection through neighborhood (x2)
 - Wide shoulders or sidewalks on Speedwell Rd south of Highway 107
 - Sidewalk and road widening on Ledbetter Rd (x3)
- **Old Cullowhee**
 - Create
 - Revitalize "old" Downtown Cullowhee
 - Create a "college town" atmosphere – make it fun! (x4)
 - River Park with inclusive access
 - Unique restaurants; not chains (x2)



- ☐ Move farmers market to Old Cullowhee to generate activity and interest
- ☐ Façade grants and WCU service projects in Old Cullowhee
- ☐ Food truck plaza and commercial kitchen to support food truck operations
- ☐ River park (x5)
- ☐ Restaurants that are accessible to the public; Parking; more besides Sazón
- ☐ Unique small stores and restaurants in Old Cullowhee (x2)
- ☐ Toss
 - ☐ Clapped out and abandoned Moss Store across the street from Tuck's/9 Lives as well as apartments there
 - ☐ Eyesores along Tuackasegee River
 - ☐ Old run down vacant buildings (x2)
 - ☐ Revitalize Old Cullowhee; Remove all rundown buildings
- ☐ Keep
 - ☐ Fix up businesses on Old Cullowhee Rd; less run-down => more business? (More students / walk-in traffic?)
 - ☐ Cullowhee Cafe
- ☐ **Housing**
 - ☐ Create
 - ☐ Retirement homes like Givens Highland Farms (x2)
 - ☐ Retirement community for those 55+, Carolina Arbors
 - ☐ Finish old Alpine Apartment to higher quality standard; 1 building done 2 to go (Comment placed near Mountain Heritage Center)
 - ☐ Toss
 - ☐ No student; limit apartments; leave low density (Comment placed in Forest Hills)
 - ☐ No development around neighborhoods (not student)
 - ☐ Trailer park along University Heights Rd; Replace with Faculty/ Staff housing (x3)
 - ☐ Additional apartment buildings
- ☐ **Relationships / WCU Campus**
 - ☐ Short term WCU Parking for visitors/residents of the area
 - ☐ Flashing beacons at crosswalks on campus next to Noble Hall (x2)

- New Main entrance into campus at Little Savannah Rd / Ped bridge on Highway 107
- Create new connection to campus and/or Hwy 107; Look at Ridge (Comment placed along Hwy 107 between Riverbend Rd and Painter Rd)

► Visioning Workshop

- ***My Priority for Cullowhee is:***
 - Revitalize Old Cullowhee (x2)
 - Locally owned businesses
 - Arts and cultural spaces
 - Embrace mountain spirit and Indian heritage
 - Official leadership voice for Cullowhee (mayor/council)
 - Preservation of rural nature of county which attracts tourists; preserve unique natural resources. Undeveloped areas!
 - River Park
 - Complete Greenway from Locust Creek Access to River Park
 - More free park space
 - Safer roads with sidewalks and shoulders
 - Affordable housing with garage space
 - Expansion of Tuckasegee River Greenway
 - Way to safely travel to WCU without a car
 - Locally owned shopping and restaurants off campus
 - Pool as planned at recreation center
 - More ways to travel through campus
 - More biking and walking facilities everywhere (x2)
 - Ability to pass through from one side of Cullowhee to the other without having to go through campus
 - To become a College Town – Revitalize Old Cullowhee to serve as downtown (x2)
 - More restaurants in Cullowhee for the general public
 - Less development. Our natural resources are priceless and should not be up for sale (x3)



► Western Carolina Tabling Results

□ *My Priority for Cullowhee is:*

- Better dining options
- Ways to get through campus
- More parking on North side of campus
- Nightlife options
- Ridesharing options (Uber/Lyft)
- Arcade/movies
- Sit-down restaurants
- Outdoor activities
- Things to do in Cullowhee vs. Sylva
- Bring McAllisters back! (More sit down options like a deli/sandwich shop)
- More commuter parking
- More sidewalks (Little Savannah Road) and crosswalks to walk to campus
- Visitor parking
- Safely walking to campus on pedestrian facilities
- Resident parking
- More housing on campus
- Bike lanes on campus for safety and separation
- Convenient recycling options
- Litter clean up
- Public park and green space for picnics, hanging hammocks, walking trails, off campus
- Transit service off campus


► Coffee Talk

□ *Cullowhee Needs:*

- Target
- Restaurants within walking distance
- Small grocery store (x2)
- Protection of creeks & riparian areas
- Native plantings
- Extended greenway to River Park
- River Park
- Parking
- Sidewalks and Bike Lanes
- Mixed Use / Smart development
- Native plant ordinance – rules against planting invasives
- Activities: ropes course, ice skate rink, obstacle park, free things
- Community center
- Recreational art center
- Cooking classes
- Gas station
- E-scooters / bike share
- Housing
- Diversity of people, culture, food
- Farmer's Market



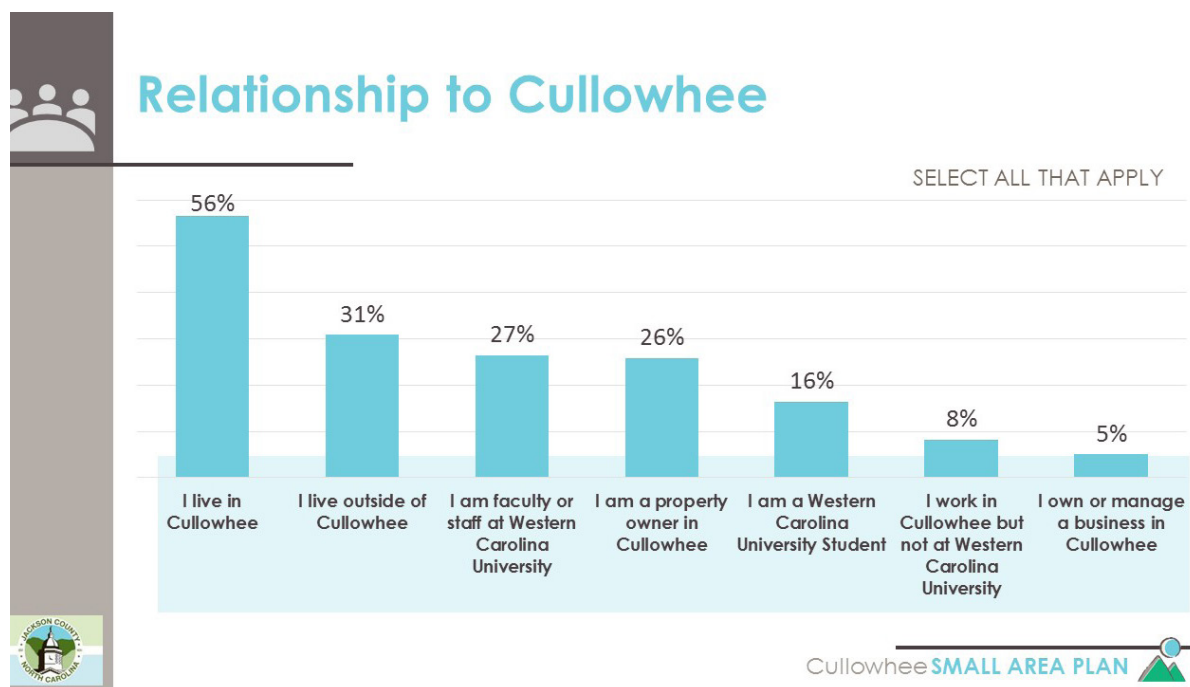
COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY



Cullowhee SMALL AREA PLAN

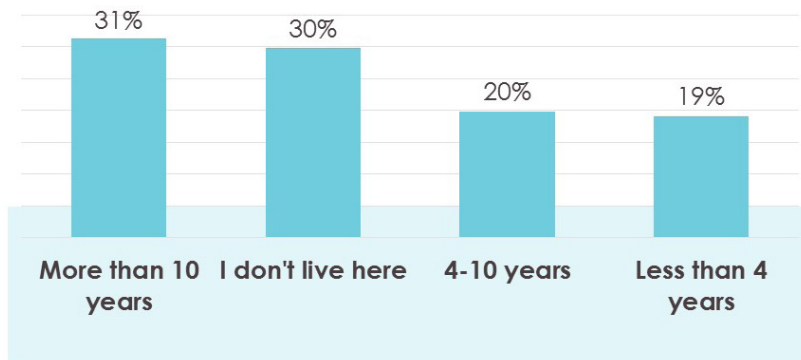
Community Survey

317 Responses
14 Questions
Average time ~ 7 Minutes
Survey Open: April 16 – June 5, 2019





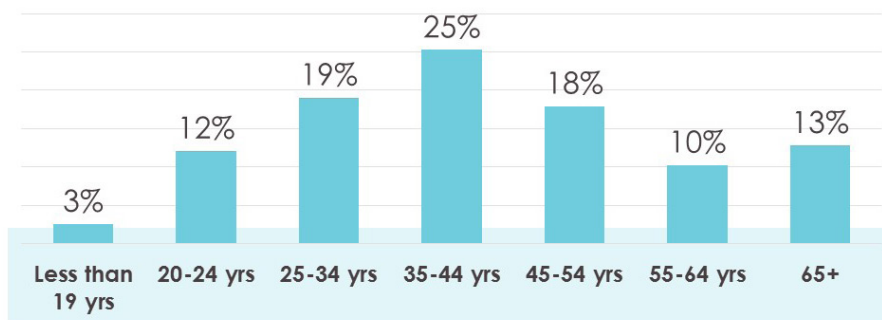
Tenure in Cullowhee



Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**



Age of Respondent



Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**



PUBLIC MEETING #2 COMMENTS AND RESPONSES



What do you value about Cullowhee?

OPEN ENDED QUESTION

Themes:

- Scenic beauty
- University community, events, activities
- Abundance of nature
- Recreation opportunities (trails and greenway)
- Small-town vibe
- River and mountain views
- Peace and quiet
- Opportunities / optimism

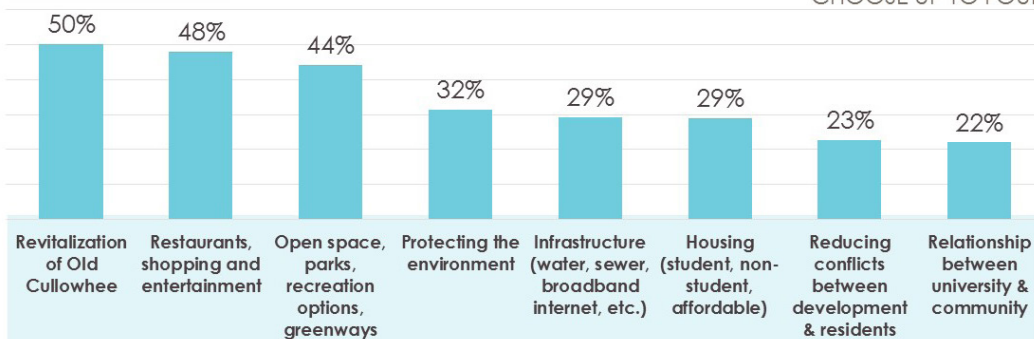


Cullowhee SMALL AREA PLAN



Most Important Items to Address

CHOOSE UP TO FOUR



Other:

18%

Multimodal transportation
Economic development, jobs
Traffic and roadway congestion

11%

Protecting historical and cultural resources
Lack of parking
Appearance of new development



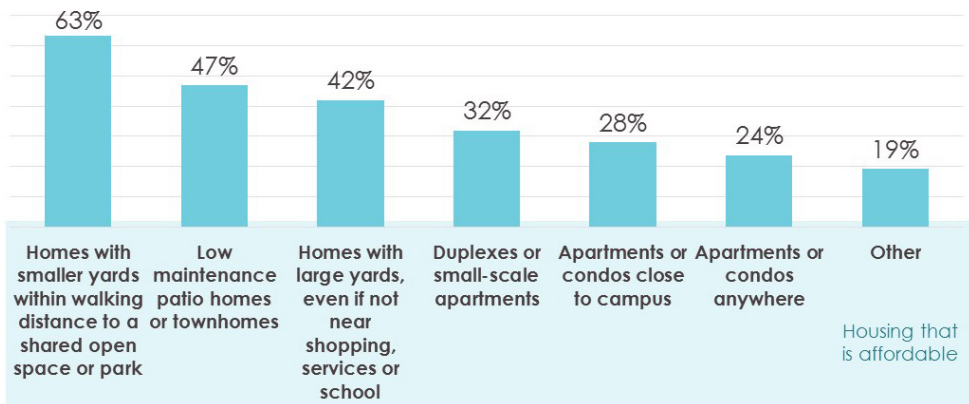
Cullowhee SMALL AREA PLAN





Desired Housing Types

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

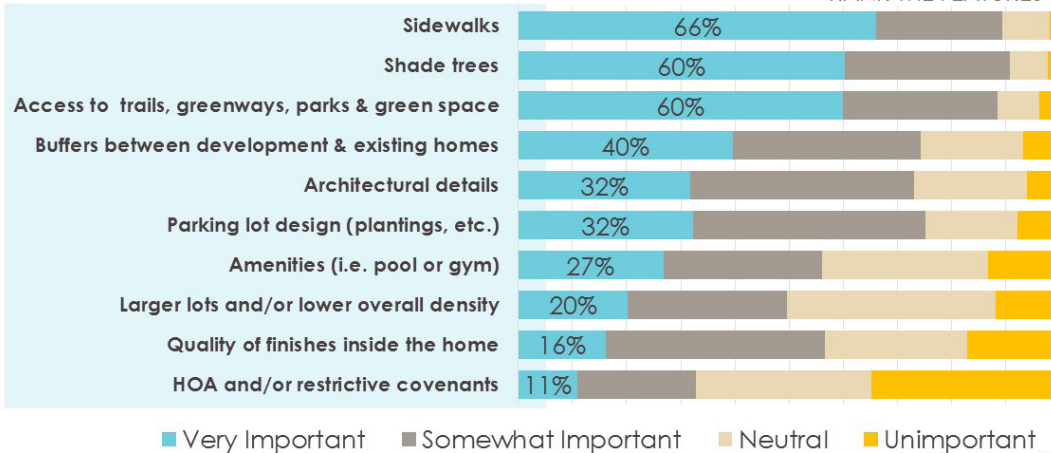


Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**



Quality Residential Development

RANK THE FEATURES



Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**

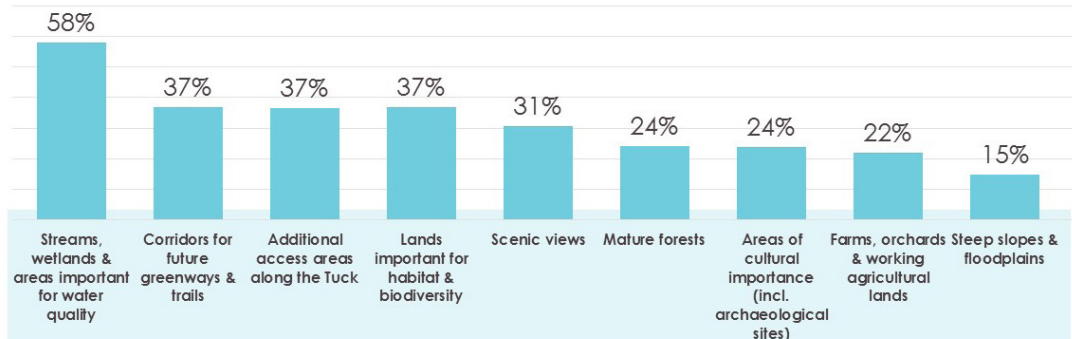


CHANGES TO DRAFT PLAN



Preservation of Open Space

SELECT UP TO THREE



Road / Intersection Improvements

OPEN ENDED QUESTION

Most Common Answers:

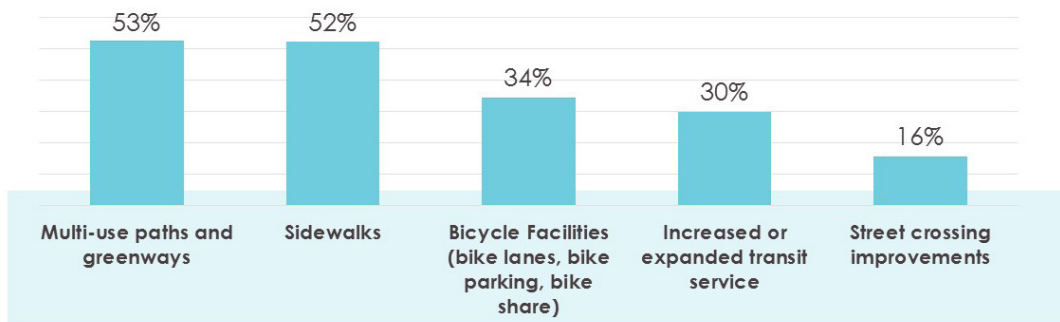
- **Old Cullowhee Rd / Back Entrance to WCU**
- Speedwell Rd
- Ledbetter Rd
- Little Savannah Rd
- Monteith Gap Rd
- Wayhutta Rd
- Improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians





Active Transportation Facilities

CHOOSE TOP TWO



Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**



What I Would Change

OPEN ENDED QUESTION

Most Common Answers:

- Businesses and Economic Development
- Affordable Housing for full-time residents
- Improve Old Cullowhee Rd
- Revitalized Town Center
- Sidewalks and multi-modal transportation options
- Improved relationship between university and residents (parking, communication, support for improvements)
- Removal of blighted buildings



Cullowhee **SMALL AREA PLAN**



My Vision or Big Idea for Cullowhee

OPEN ENDED QUESTION

Most Common Answers:

- Redevelopment of Old Cullowhee
- Make Cullowhee its own "Town"
- Create more parks, greenways, trails and river access
- Cultural hub: Amenities, services and activities for all people
- A grocery store
- Balanced, cohesive and connected community
- Build a River park
- Uphold community values



Cullowhee SMALL AREA PLAN



DETAILED COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

For detailed survey results visit the Cullowhee Small Area Plan website at:

www.planning.jacksonnc.org/cullowhee-small-area-plan

PUBLIC MEETING #2 COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

A public meeting was held on October 22, 2019. A presentation was given and attendees commented on draft recommendations at stations with poster boards for different topic areas. Comments received were noted and responses are provided.

► Natural and Cultural Resources Board

- Comment posted next to, Coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or the Eastern Band of the Cherokee or their designee to identify and protect important archaeological site: "Great way to honor heritage + also attract cultural tourism/ economic benefits"
- Response to comment: The Cullowhee Small Area plan speaks to Parks, Natural and Cultural Resources in Recommendation PN-4: Protect cultural resources in the Cullowhee area.
 - Strategy- PN-4.A Coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians or their designee to identify and protect important archaeological sites.
 - Consider a requirement for screening for large public or private development and/or infrastructure projects in areas where settlements were likely.
 - Consider opportunities for educational signage in parks and along greenways.

► Goals & Action Plan Board

- Comment posted on the Cullowhee Small Area Plan Goals side of the board next to, 1- Build Cullowhee's image and identity and promote business and economic development: "How do we (future small business owners) afford property"
- Response to comment: Goal 1, Objective 2 states "Support permanent and seasonal residents and diversity of businesses in Cullowhee. Also Goal 2: Grow in a predictable, context appropriate manner, Objective 2 states "Remove regulatory barriers and incentivize desired development types" which could be helpful for small business owners.
- Comment posted next to the multi-use path photo representative of a facility proposed by NC 107: "02- Looks Safer!"
 - Response to comment: Infrastructure recommendation I-1 A. Extend the Tuckasegee Greenway. Goal: Extend greenway/ multi-use path from pedestrian overpass at Little Savannah Road south along NC 1-7 to Cullowhee Valley School and the Jackson

County Recreational Complex. Objective: The greenway adjacent to Highway 107 could be a multi-use path parallel to the roadway. In constrained sections, the two-way path could be separated from traffic by vertical barriers.

- Comment posted on the Action Plan side of the board under 4. Parks and Open Space- Continue working with the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE) on the Tuckasegee Family River Park and the Painter Road Park: "Looks Great!"

► Open-ended Comments Board

- Environmental preservation + ecological function are not all about how a development LOOKS. We need corridors of entirely undeveloped land and waterways to maintain biodiversity- no one seems to be talking about that.
 - Response to comment: The Cullowhee Small Area Plan Parks and Natural Resources Goal 3 is to "encourage environmentally sensitive design.: Strategy PN-3. An objective states: Incentivize site design that minimizes grading and efficiently uses slope and topography. Also, Strategy PN-3.B states: Encourage the reservation of sensitive natural resources as open space in new development.
- WCU claims to have no influence over how student housing development proceeds or is planned... but when we talk to the developers, we hear that WCU is actively encouraging destructive and non – sustainable development which leads to ecological destruction. What's the truth here?
 - Response to comment: Western Carolina University has been actively engaged in the process of developing this Cullowhee Small Area Plan. As mentioned above, there are goals and objectives that speak to environmentally sensitive designs as well as the reservation of sensitive natural resources in new developments. Western Carolina University has been supportive of these goals and objectives.
- Flexibility for infill single family home development needed in Neighborhood Preservation Area
 - Response to comment: Plan welcomes infill development in well located sites. Subdivision would be governed by zoning district regulations. The Plan recommends some flexibility in lot width in certain zoning districts that are not in conflict with existing neighborhoods. A 50ft min lot width would apply in the Single Family Residential Zoning District, a rezoning may be necessary depending on proposal.

- It looks like a lot of rules need to be introduced to force developers to build the types of buildings that we would like in the plan
 - Response to comment: The Cullowhee Small Area Plan: Land Use, Housing and Economic Development recommendations “Base zoning decisions on consistency with the Cullowhee Small Area Plan and require development design to adhere to recommendations for the applicable future land use character areas”. Updates to the current development regulations in the Cullowhee Community Planning Area may be needed to implement the plan. These updates could include design recommendations based on density and building types that are proposed.
- There is such a need for community gathering spaces in this community- parks, arts, culture performance + centers, etc. I think there is a lot of isolation in this community and challenges with mental health. I think the more to encourage walking, biking, parks, cultural shift, etc. is all excellent and important. Thank you!
 - Response to comment: The Cullowhee Small Area Plan recommends extending the Tuckasegee River Greenway and increasing public access opportunities along the river.



CHANGES TO DRAFT PLAN

The following documents changes made to the draft plan between the version presented at the September 5, 2019 steering committee meeting and the final draft. Changes were made based on comments from the steering committee and review by Jackson County staff.

Changes to the Draft Cullowhee Small Area Plan since 9/5/19 Steering Committee meeting

- ▶ **Cover:** Top images substituted.
- ▶ **P. 3:** Page numbers on TOC filled out
- ▶ **P. 7:** Cullowhee Community Planning Area added to map and call out on relationship between Cullowhee Community Planning Area and the study area and plan added
- ▶ **P. 11:** Removed reference to historical flooding as cause for the decline of Old Cullowhee per comment from Rick. Changed caption of image source. Per Anna Fariello: This photo is courtesy of Hunter Library Special Collections at WCU. Digitalheritage.org published this photo but it should be credited to Special Collections.
- ▶ **P. 11:** Changed wording related to CuRvE. Changed Cullowhee Revitalization Effort to Endeavor. Formed in 2007, not 2008. Referenced as a non-profit instead of a committee.
- ▶ **P. 14-15:** Survey result images. Comment received that text was difficult to read. Changed color of text to be darker.
 - Also added captions to the graphics on pages 14-15.
- ▶ **P. 19:** Comment was that Diversity Index was odd and that Avg. Annual Wage for Jackson County was too high.
 - Replaced Diversity Index statistic with statistic of people below 34 years of age
 - Changed Avg. Annual Wage stats to Median Household Income for study area and county (\$21,697 / \$45,078)
- ▶ **P. 21:** Updated median income to match updated data on p. 19.
- ▶ **P. 23:** Comment was that rent/own statistic (70/30%) do not match graph on previous page. Graph on previous page is based on status of units, the 70/30 statistics is based on percentage of residents.
- ▶ **P. 26:** Removed Webster from mention of retail leakage since there are limited businesses there.
 - Changed reference to "Old Cullowhee" in a few places to the "historic center of commerce" in Cullowhee and other descriptors, such as the "river district" in response to a comment about the negative connotation of the name "Old Cullowhee."
- ▶ **P. 32:** Added reference to the Tuckasegee River in the vision: "protecting

and enhancing the Tuckasegee River and other natural resources” per comment from CuRvE

- ▶ **P. 36: Added call out box on the “Relationship between the Future Land Use Map and Development Regulations”**
- ▶ **P. 38: Under Redevelopment in the River District. Changed western to eastern gateway to campus.**
- ▶ **P. 43: Removed orange background on call out box. Changed impact to affect.**
- ▶ **P. 45: Strategy changes**
 - Clarified access requirements for narrow lots. Must be access off of main roads and alley loaded.
 - Reworded bullet under Strategy LU-3.B to be: “Policies, programs and incentives should encourage new housing types that appeal to seniors, grad students, faculty and young families”
- ▶ **P. 49: Created new opportunity zone map.**
- ▶ **P. 50-51: Updated explanation of phasing for greenways to more closely match landmarks on the map on page 51. Added two alternatives for greenway along S. Painter Road, one on northside of creek, one on south side to reflect options shown in the Cullowhee Creek Greenway Master Plan.**
- ▶ **P. 52: Added description of two alternatives for connecting campus to Monteith Gap Road, north and south of the creek.**
- ▶ **P. 53: Added strategy for complete streets: “Consider and incorporate Complete Streets principles and design standards for street projects and improvements in the public right-of-ways”. Updated caption for greenway image.**
- ▶ **P. 55: Added policies related to programs and initiatives to encourage biking and walking and adequate public safety services:**
 - *Policy I-3: Develop programs and initiatives to encourage biking and walking and enhance mobility options*
 - Strategy I-3.A: Gather data and track trends related to biking and walking
 - Conduct a survey to understand barriers to biking and walking near the university
 - Conduct bike and pedestrian counts at key locations
 - Strategy I-3.B: Consider enhanced education and encouragement activities related to biking and walking
 - Study wayfinding enhancements as the Tuckasegee Greenway is extended and other priority bicycle and pedestrian connections are made
 - Partner on education and encouragement activities



- ☐ Consider implementing a bike rack program and/or bike share on or near campus
- ☐ **Policy I-4: Plan for adequate public safety services in the Cullowhee Area**
 - ☐ Strategy I-4.A: Facilitate coordinate between the Fire Marshal, Emergency Management, the Sheriff's Office and Western Carolina University to ensure adequate public safety coverage in the Cullowhee Area
 - ☐ A new fire house is currently being constructed in Little Savannah Road which will help address space needs
 - ☐ The county and the state contribute funding for the fire department
 - ☐ Additional funding for equipment, personnel and operations may be necessary to keep up with demand
 - ☐ Other communities in Jackson County, including Cashiers and Glenville, have a fire tax that is utilized to augment county funds for coverage in certain areas
- ▶ **P. 63: Edited graphic to say Eastern gateway to WCU campus (was incorrectly shown as western).**
 - ☐ Image Changes
- ▶ **P. 2: There was a request to include an image of the Cullowhee Welcome Sign in the report. An image of the sign was included on page 2 of the report.**
- ▶ **P. 60: There was a request to substitute out the Judaculla rock image for image of artifacts found locally in Cullowhee. An image of artifacts from an archeological dig on campus was provided by the Mountain Heritage Center.**

Changes per Staff and SC Comments (10/21)

- ▶ **P. 6: Revised sentence describing location. Changed from bordering Webster to south of the town of Webster.**
- ▶ **P. 9-11: Changed "Why it's important to this plan" to "Why this is important to this plan" for all plan review paragraphs per comment from steering committee.**
- ▶ **P. 41: Reference to the River District as the western gateway to campus changed to eastern gateway.**
- ▶ **P. 57: Caption changed from River Park to Family River Park per request from CuRvE.**
- ▶ **P. 59: Strategy PN-3.B: Encourage the reservation of sensitive natural resources as open space in new development. Added recommendation:**

“Consider increasing stream buffer requirements”

- ▶ **Action Plan:** Implementation steps for key goals added based on coordination with Jackson County staff.
- ▶ **Other Discussion**
 - Council comment about Opportunity Zone program winding down. KHA checked on the program and to receive the full benefits, projects need to be started by December 2019, but the program will continue after this. No change recommended in the plan.