

# VOLUME 1 | OPT-IN: THE REGIONAL VISION

CREATED FROM IDEAS AND INSIGHTS CONTRIBUTED BY THE REGION'S RESIDENTS



November 2014

**PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## REGIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Larry Blythe, Vice-Chief, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians  
Phil Carson, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Swain County  
Mark Clasby, Economic Development Director, Haywood County  
Kevin Corbin, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Macon County  
Jack Debnam, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Jackson County  
Phil Drake, founder and CEO, Drake Enterprises  
Mike Edwards, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Graham County  
Dr. Michael Smith, Faculty, Western Carolina University  
Cal Stiles, Board of County Commissioners, Cherokee County  
Sharon Taylor, Deputy Director, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee  
Matt Waldroup, former Economic Development Director, Clay County

## SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION

## APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

## FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

## NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

## THE CHEROKEE PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

## THE TSW TEAM

ACP New York  
Alta Planning + Design  
ARCADIS  
Arnett Muldrow & Associates  
Dr. Todd L. Cherry  
Dr. Chris Cooper  
Equinox Environmental  
Jones & Jones  
PlaceMakers  
Stacey J. Guffey & Assoc.  
TSW  
UNC Asheville's National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC)  
Western Carolina University

**PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.**

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

**Volume 1** of the Opt-In regional vision report sets forth the community vision, with specific policies and actions to bring it to fruition. It is a compilation of feasible steps to inspire the region and to generate voluntary and cooperative action.

**Volume 2**, its companion, organizes under one cover the three reports that were instrumental in creating the regional vision: The **Baseline Vision** (July 2013), the **Draft Regional Vision Framework** (September 2013), and the **Draft Regional Vision – What the Community Wants** (December 2013). Those reports build the case for the vision and document its main components: the region's background, derived from technical analysis, and the policy framework and the vision's goals, derived from public comments.

The two volumes should be reviewed together. Extensive references have been provided throughout **Volume 1** to facilitate linking the two.

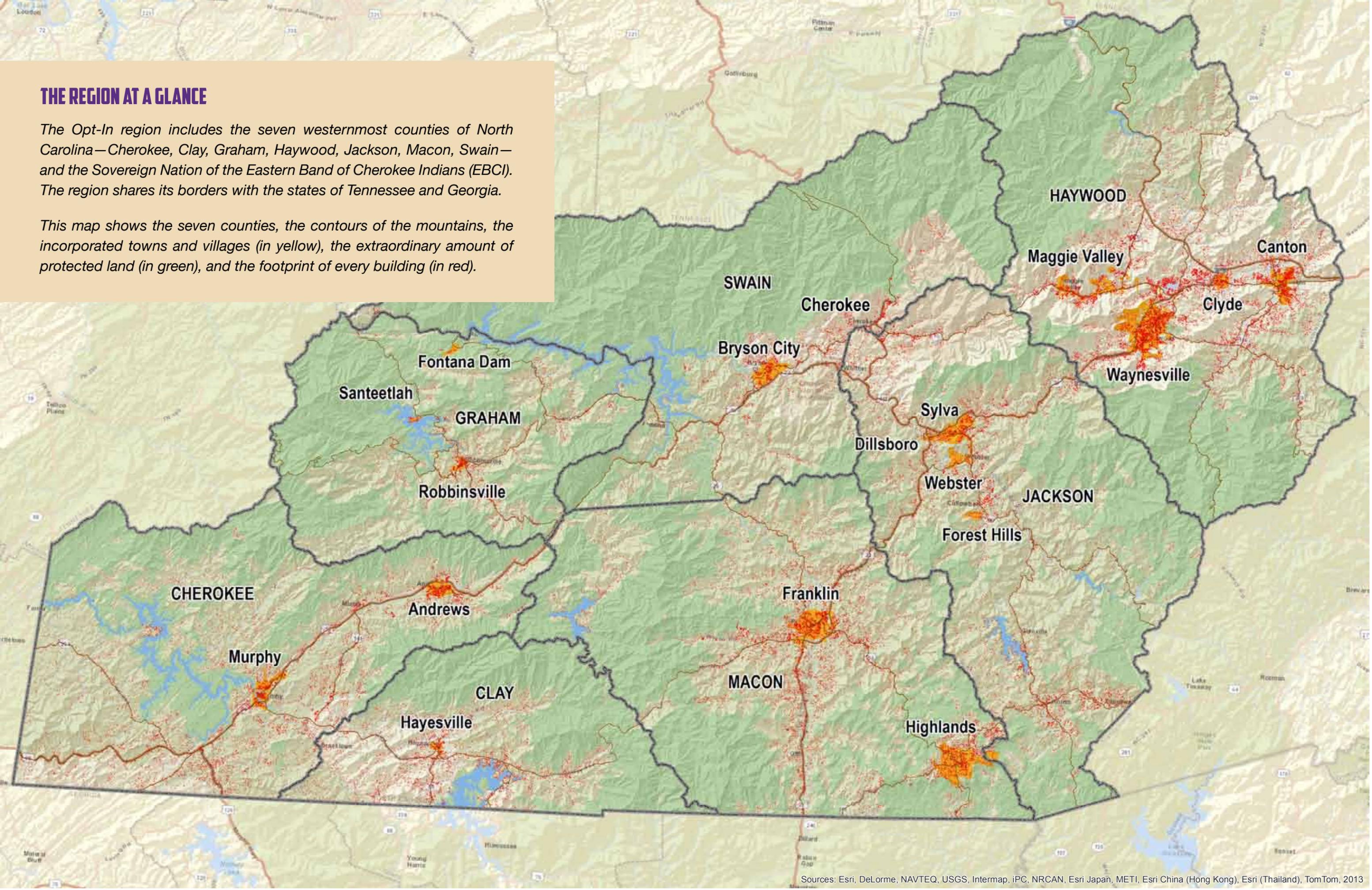
# VOLUME 1: TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
The Opt-In Region: The Place and The Culture .....	2
<b>2. PROCESS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Overview .....	3
<b>3. VISION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
It Is Twenty Years from Now... ..	5
Major Themes and Goals. . . . .	6
<b>4. SCENARIO PLANNING</b> .....	<b>7</b>
A. Process and Methodology. . . . .	7
B. Regional Investment Guide . . . . .	10
C. How Much Land Is There for Investments and Growth? . . . . .	12
D. Demonstration Areas . . . . .	13
E. Preferences . . . . .	18
<b>5. POLICIES AND ACTIONS</b> .....	<b>23</b>
The Ways We Get Things Done: A Vision for Leadership and Implementation . . . . .	23
The Economy We Need: A Vision for Prosperity . . . . .	25
The Place We Are Given: A Vision for Land and Culture . . . . .	29
The Places We Make: A Vision for Place and Investments. . . . .	32
The Ways We Get Around: A Vision for Connectivity. . . . .	35
The Quality of Life We Expect: A Vision for Community . . . . .	39
<b>6. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>7. APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>47</b>
A. Suitability Modeling . . . . .	48
B. Regional Investment Guide by County. . . . .	53
C. Performance Indicators . . . . .	60
D. Community Workshops' Survey Results by County and Region . . . . .	61

## THE REGION AT A GLANCE

The Opt-In region includes the seven westernmost counties of North Carolina—Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain—and the Sovereign Nation of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The region shares its borders with the states of Tennessee and Georgia.

This map shows the seven counties, the contours of the mountains, the incorporated towns and villages (in yellow), the extraordinary amount of protected land (in green), and the footprint of every building (in red).



## STRUCTURE OF VOLUME 1

**Volume 1** is divided into seven chapters.

**1. Introduction**, provides information on the background and management of the Opt-In process.

**2. Process**, explains process and products instrumental in creating the vision.

**3. Vision**, describes the overall vision and introduces and goals and major themes.

**4. Scenario Planning**, describes the methodology and results of evaluating the region's suitability for growth and investments. It also summarizes the public's preferences

**5. Policies and Actions**, outlines policies and actions to implement the vision.

**6. Implementation Matrix**, prioritizes actions and identifies leading agencies for their implementation.

**7. Appendix**, includes various maps and supporting documents.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

**OPT-IN, THE OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE OF SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, WAS A 15-MONTH EFFORT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND INFORM THE RANGE OF CHOICES FACING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND FAMILIES IN THE SEVEN WESTERNMOST COUNTIES OF NORTH CAROLINA AND IN THE EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS. THE OPT-IN REGIONAL VISION IS A ROAD MAP, CREATED BY REGION'S RESIDENTS, ON HOW TO MAKE THOSE CHOICES A REALITY.**

## BACKGROUND

The Opt-In Regional Vision was not a legislative undertaking. None of the policies and actions contained in this report will bind the counties or municipalities to any legislative or governmental mandate. Rather, they identify broad regional agreement on goals for economic development, transportation planning, and environmental stewardship, and suggest ways for regional leaders to realize that vision voluntarily and cooperatively.

The context for the Opt-In Regional Vision was established by recommendations in an April 2011 report from the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution.

The **Mediation Report** was prepared at the request of the Federal Highway Administration, North Carolina Division (FHWA), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The report suggested paths to resolve the “controversy over the design, location, benefits, and environmental impacts” of a proposed highway route through the North Carolina mountain region to complete the Corridor K segment of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS). (The full **Mediation Report** is available online at [optinswnc.org](http://optinswnc.org).)

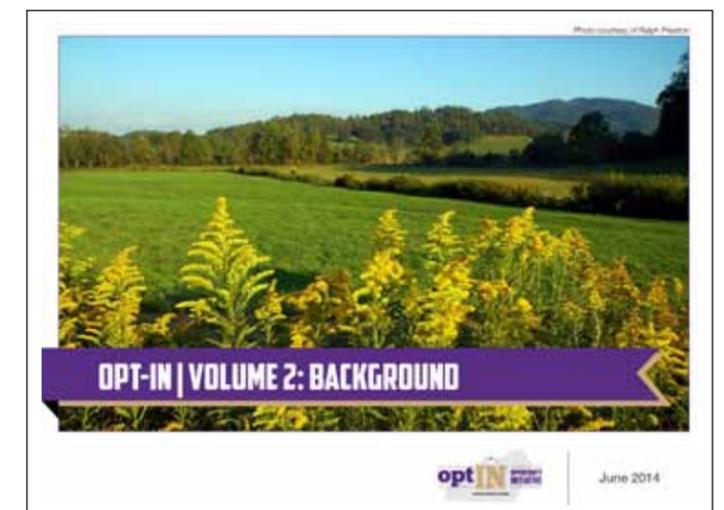
Following the report's recommendations, the Southwestern Commission, the Council of Governments organization

representing the seven westernmost counties in North Carolina, issued a Request for Proposals for a regional vision that “identifies the region's goals and needs and also explores how to integrate regional economic development and environmental protection goals and addresses how transportation options can support those goals.” The Atlanta-based TSW team was selected for the project.

## MANAGEMENT

The Southwestern Commission managed the Opt-In Regional Vision on behalf of the region's counties and municipalities. A Leadership Council of elected officials, business professionals, and nonprofit leaders from the region acted as a steering committee. Funding came from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and was administered through the Southwestern Commission.

Over the course of the 15-month duration of the Opt-In Regional Vision process, the TSW team conducted



**Volume 2: Background**, includes the three reports that were instrumental in creating the regional vision: **The Baseline Vision**, **the Draft Regional Vision Framework**, and **the Draft Regional Vision – What the Community Wants**.

hundreds of one-on-one and group interviews, 16 community workshops, a regional survey with a randomly selected sample, and the Regional Summit. These efforts involved more than a thousand people. It is safe to say that never before in the history of this region have so many citizens and leaders engaged in such an intense and prolonged conversation with one goal: to develop an agreed-upon and feasible vision. The results of that conversation are summarized in this report.

Concurrently with the regional vision, the TSW team completed comprehensive plans for Cherokee and Graham counties and a comprehensive transportation plan for Graham County

## THE OPT-IN REGION: THE PLACE AND THE CULTURE

There are few places in America where landscape has shaped a people and culture more profoundly than the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Southern Highland settlement patterns, farming practices, personal individualism and independence, religious fervor, distinctive music and speech, and local customs all emerged interwoven and rooted in a landscape of rugged mountains, deep valleys, isolated coves and abundant waters.

The seven Opt-In counties are located within the Southern Appalachian Mountains, which are among the oldest mountains on earth. The geology and climate contributes to the region's extraordinary diversity of flora and ecological integrity. The area is mostly rural and forested. Nearly 47% of the region's 3,099 square miles is public land. The Qualla Boundary, comprising 2.7% of the region's land, is a "land trust" supervised by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs and governed by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Geography, with its mountainous terrain, has defined the physical and scenic character of the region's roads and towns. It has created the pattern of small independent towns and villages nestled into fertile valleys. It has

affected the cost of development and road building. A great deal of the land (over 40%) has slopes which are in excess of 40%. Even though development on such slopes is technically possible, it is prohibitively costly.

It is not only the natural amenities that make this region special. It is also its culture. This includes Cherokee and Appalachian customs and traditions, arts, crafts, music, and agriculture. It includes festivals, performances, events, and heritage sites that keep the culture alive and provide insights on how the region has evolved over time.

To protect those natural, scenic, and cultural amenities while improving the region's economy has been the single most consistent priority expressed by region's leaders and residents.



**Top, scenic views of farms and mountains are a major component of the region's appeal. Bottom, downtown Franklin, Macon County.**

## PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS AND TIMELINE

This timeline highlights critical steps and outcomes of the Opt-In public engagement process.

- ★ Project Kick-off (March 2013)
- ★ Baseline Vision (June 2013)
- ★ Stakeholder Interviews (June to September 2013)
- ★ Draft Regional Vision Framework (September 2013)
- ★ Community Workshops, Round One (September 23 to October 10, 2013)
- ★ Draft Regional Vision (October 2013)
- ★ Scenario Planning (November 2013 to February 2014)
- ★ Community Workshops, Round Two (February 2 to March 11, 2014)
- ★ Regional Summit (May 8, 2014)
- ★ Opt-In Regional Vision Report (June 2014)

# 2. PROCESS

**THE OPT-IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS INVOLVED MORE THAN 1,000 OF THE REGION'S RESIDENTS IN HUNDREDS OF MEETINGS, FROM ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS TO THE SUMMIT, ARGUABLY THE LARGEST-EVER GATHERING OF ITS KIND IN THE SEVEN-COUNTY REGION. THIS PROCESS WAS DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT THE VISION REFLECTED WHAT RESIDENTS WANTED. IT WAS ALSO DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT CONDITIONS IN THE REGION WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO INFORM RESIDENTS' DECISIONS.**

## OVERVIEW

### BASELINE VISION

The first step in the Opt-In process was to gather information about the region. The results were compiled in the **Baseline Vision**, a document that provides an at-a-glance snapshot of the seven-county region. It documents existing conditions and trends in the region's physical characteristics, economy, and demographics, and it reveals the extent to which economic development, transportation, land preservation, and growth are interrelated. The **Baseline Vision** is available in **Volume 2**, starting on page 1.

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Concurrently, the Opt-In team conducted more than 300 one-on-one and small-group interviews throughout the region. Individuals and organizations interviewed included, among others: elected and appointed officials, business leaders, concerned citizens, economic development directors, developers, health practitioners and officials, community organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and advocacy groups. The interviews identified with remarkable consistency the economic, environmental, transportation, land use, and quality-of-life issues for the vision to focus on.

## DRAFT REGIONAL VISION FRAMEWORK

The **Draft Regional Vision Framework** integrated the **Baseline Vision's** findings and the results of the interviews. It was used to identify topics and summarize the information that was then presented in the first round of Community Workshops. The **Draft Regional Vision Framework** is available in **Volume 2**, starting on page 123.

## THE SIX OPT-IN PILLARS

The six pillars of the Opt-In Vision were introduced in the **Draft Regional Vision Framework**. They reflect and organize the comments collected through the stakeholder interviews. They are:

- ★ The Way We Get Things Done... About the leadership and strategies required to carry the vision forward;
- ★ The Economy We Need... About tourism, economic development, and job creation;
- ★ The Place We're Given... About the region's exceptional natural and cultural resources;
- ★ The Places We Make... About the built environment;
- ★ The Ways We Get Around... About the full range of transportation modes that connect people and commerce both within and beyond the region; and
- ★ The Quality of Life We Expect... About access to educational opportunities, facilities and programs that support healthy living, and venues and programs that promote regional arts and culture.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, ROUND ONE

From September 23 to October 10, 2013, the Opt-In team conducted the first round of eight Community Workshops in each of the seven counties and in the Qualla Boundary. The purpose of the workshops was to expand the regional conversation and to evaluate whether the findings from the stakeholder interviews resonated with the community at large. Participants were asked to review those findings and, through facilitated small-group activities, to comment.

## MAJOR THEMES AND GOALS

The more than 1,000 comments generated in the first round of Community Workshops were catalogued and posted on the Opt-In website. They were then sorted according to the six vision pillars, and sorted again into major themes. The major themes were used to develop goals. Major themes and goals were introduced for the first time in the Draft Regional Vision: What The Community Wants published and posted in October 2013. The public prioritized the goals in the second round of Community Workshops held in February and March 2014. The **Draft Regional Vision: What The Community Wants** is available in **Volume 2**, starting on page 137.

## SCENARIO PLANNING

The scenario planning phase of Opt-In took place from the end of the first round of Community Workshops (October 2013) to the start of the second round (February 2014). The vision goals and themes were used to create plausible “what if?” scenarios for the future, and see how each scenario impacted each of the six pillars. The scenarios and the scenario planning methodology are explained in detail in **Chapter 4: Scenario Planning**, which starts on page 7.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, ROUND TWO

The purpose of the second round of Community Workshops was to share the findings of the scenario planning phase and to provide an open forum for discussion and comment. An 11-question survey was administered at the end of each workshop.

In Graham and Cherokee Counties the Community Workshops were part of two weeklong planning workshops held as part of the comprehensive plans for the two counties and the comprehensive transportation plan for Graham County. The workshops presented an opportunity to gain additional feedback on the scenarios and the specific elements of the vision in the two counties.

## THE REGIONAL SUMMIT

The Regional Summit was held on May 8, 2014, at the Harrah’s Cherokee Casino Resort Hotel in Cherokee. The Summit was the last public event of the Opt-In Regional Vision. The program was organized into three segments: A Vision for the Economy of the Future, A Vision for Connectivity Through Transportation, and A Vision for the Natural and Cultural Environment. The segments were introduced by Regional Leadership Council members, who gave a brief overview of vision policies related to their topic. The presentations were followed by questions that participants answered using electronic keypads. The results were displayed on a large screen, immediately after each question. The results are summarized in **Chapter 4. Scenario Planning**, starting on page 18.

## DOCUMENTATION

Documentation for all the steps and reports mentioned in this section and throughout the report can be found online at [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org).

## REFERENCES

A key aspect of the Opt-In process was the integration of technical information with the ideas gathered through the public engagement process described in the next chapter.

Three documents provided the necessary data: the **Baseline Vision**, the **Summary of Previous Plans**, and the **Summary of Trends**—available on line at [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org). The **Baseline Vision** summarized existing conditions in the region. They included:

- ★ The region’s physical characteristics and land

development trends through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, see **Volume 2**, page 7;

- ★ The road and transportation system: history, conditions, and trends, see **Volume 2**, page 23;
- ★ An assessment of the benefits of natural and cultural resources, see **Volume 2**, page 36;
- ★ The identification and cataloguing of signature and legacy landscapes, see **Volume 2**, page 40;
- ★ A review of general economic trends comparing the region with the state of North Carolina, see **Volume 2**, page 53;
- ★ Specific economic trends to identify key drivers of economic performance, see **Volume 2**, page 60;
- ★ Demographic trends and forecasts, see **Volume 2**, page 73; and
- ★ The review of more than 50 plans and studies to identify similarities and differences in land use and transportation goals, policies, and priorities throughout the seven counties, see **Volume 2**, page 83.

All plans and studies are also available at [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org).

Participants in the opening session of the weeklong workshop in Andrews, Cherokee County.



## CHAPTER STRUCTURE

This chapter is divided into three sections.

***It Is Twenty Years from Now...*** provides a snapshot of a future in which the policies and actions of the Opt-In vision have been realized. It describes how the region has changed from the vantage point of the year 2035.

***Major Themes*** captures the most distinctive and essential elements of the vision.

***Goals*** lists the ten Opt-In goals created from the ideas and comments generated by the public.

# 3. VISION

**THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA WAS CREATED FROM IDEAS AND INSIGHTS CONTRIBUTED BY HUNDREDS OF PARTICIPANTS. THEIR SHEER NUMBER, DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, AND ORIGINS IN ALL PARTS OF THE REGION GIVE CONFIDENCE THAT THE REGIONAL VISION IS AN ACCURATE SAMPLE OF THE WISHES, DREAMS, AND ASPIRATIONS OF RESIDENTS.**

When implemented, the vision will substantially change the region. The following section, titled ***It Is Twenty Years From Now...***, is written in the present tense, from the vantage point of the year 2035. It visualizes how the region's natural environment, economy, transportation, and quality of life have changed by turning the vision into reality.

## IT IS TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW ...

The region is growing and prospering. The change envisioned by the region's residents in 2014 has improved many things. It has affected the quality of the natural environment, the economy, the way residents get around, and the appearance of our towns and villages.

The region is a beautiful place. The awesome beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina and the irresistible scenic views they create remain what makes this region special. They are even better now, as private property owners have chosen to add major landscapes and notable features and places to the already vast portfolio of protected lands. The beauty of the land has played a major role in the region's economic turnaround.

Tourists come year-round to enjoy the mountains, forests, lakes, and scenic vistas. They bike, kayak, and trout fish in the region's pristine rivers. "Grown Locally" is an attribute found on food and product labels in stores, restaurants, and thriving farmers' markets. Some businesses have located here because they are directly involved in recreation and the outdoors. Others have found that proximity to the outdoors and to vibrant towns has made the area attractive to young, talented employees.

Marketed as one, the region competes globally. A razor-sharp focus on regional cooperation has created a business climate that has attracted entrepreneurs, start-ups, knowledge businesses, and "green" manufacturing, while reestablishing local agriculture. Education has played an important role. A partnership of local businesses and educational institutions has worked together to give residents the skills needed for current and future jobs and has given employers the qualified workforce they require.

There are now more regional transportation choices. The road network is safe and efficient. It minimizes impacts on cultural and scenic resources, and supports the needs of town economies. There are roads in place that

connect the region to the larger surrounding areas and roads that provide access to and from the region for industries and tourists. There are more alternatives to moving around within the region's towns. Many people continue to drive cars, but in many towns, sidewalks, and biking and pedestrian paths have made it easy to get around without a car. Local and regional transit routes have also become more available and frequent.

Villages and towns in this diverse region are leading the way to plan for population and job growth and to create prosperous and vital town centers. They have provided the right blend of fair regulations and incentives to attract housing and commercial developers to existing downtowns and areas well served by infrastructure. This has resulted in vibrant, bustling main streets where businesses thrive, and a variety of housing choices coexist, attracting young and older residents alike. The focus on existing population centers has contained sprawling development and has left intact the rural and independent lifestyles that many in the region prefer.

The region has found its stride. It is different and special. Even as substantial changes have occurred, it has kept its strong individualism and independence, its distinctive towns, its traditional arts and crafts, its music and speech, and its local customs. It has established itself as the authentic and quieter side of the Smokies, steeped in the mountains' culture yet efficient, prosperous, welcoming, connected, and mobile.

## MAJOR THEMES

The major themes, listed below, further define the vision and constitute the framework for the recommendations in **Chapter 5: Policies and Actions**, which starts on page 23. They are the region's call to action.

### The Opt-In vision...

...Establishes the notion that the region is one, a fundamental economic and geographic unit that competes globally and provides residents with economic opportunities and improved quality of life.

...Demands a unified and coordinated economic development strategy to develop and diversify business, create jobs, support agriculture and local food supply, educate the workforce of the future, attract and retain young people, and establish and market a strong regional identity.

...Calls for protecting and enhancing the value of the region's natural and cultural assets and making them central to businesses' decision to locate here.

...Advocates for creating vibrant, lived-in downtowns to manage and control the inevitable growth, maintain the small-town and rural character of the region, balance regulations with the protection of individual liberty, extend the reach of broadband services, and expand and improve water and sewer services.

...Champions connectivity within and outside the region and within existing communities, maintaining and improving existing roads, and exploring alternatives to the private automobile.

...Campaigns for a fair and equitable quality of life, with a focus on health and wellness, education, and a rich cultural life.

These major themes should guide local units of government, private sector leaders, and citizens to think and act regionally.

## GOALS

The depth and breadth of the vision raises the question, How can this vision become a reality? Or, more specifically, How will it affect how children grow, businesses prosper, and residents create fulfilling, happy, and comfortable lives for themselves? The ten goals, listed below, provide the broadest picture of what the region should accomplish over the next 20-plus years.

### THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE

**Leadership**—A region that thinks and acts as one.

### THE PLACE WE'RE GIVEN

**Natural Resources**—The region preserves and protects its natural resources and encourages land stewardship and outdoor-oriented businesses while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life residents and visitors currently enjoy.

### THE ECONOMY WE NEED

**Economic Development**—The region prospers with a diversified economy that supports traditional industries, tourism, small businesses, farming, entrepreneurship, and the wise use of its natural resources.

**Jobs**—The region offers choices of well-paying jobs that match the population's skills and are attractive to young people.

**Identity and Marketing**—A comprehensive branding and marketing campaign highlights the region's assets, attracts new and diverse businesses, and connects visitors to local amenities.

**Infrastructure**—An extensive high-speed broadband network, the availability of energy, water, and sewer, and

the expanded use of local airports make the region a magnet for investment.

### THE PLACES WE MAKE

**Quality Places**—A region of beautiful, clean, vibrant, and walkable downtowns maintains its small-town and rural character and manages future growth through clear and fair plans and regulations.

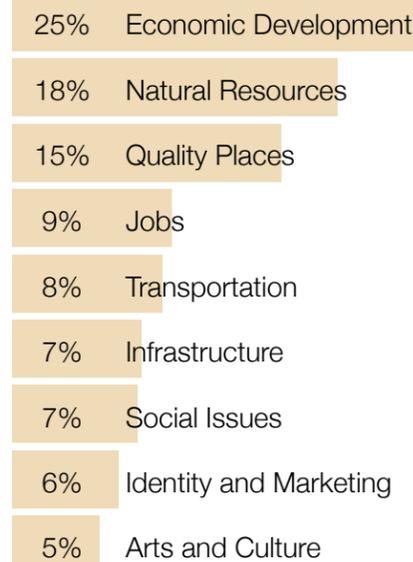
### THE WAYS WE GET AROUND

**Transportation**—A balanced, efficient, and realistic transportation system provides better connectivity within and outside the region, offers mobility alternatives, and creates economic growth opportunities.

### THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT

**Arts and Culture**—A region where art, cultural programs, and strong institutions play a key economic role, motivate artists to move into the region, and keep visitors longer.

**Social Issues**—Strong, well-coordinated local and regional systems are in place to improve healthcare, education, the availability of affordable housing, and services for the region's aging population.



The goals as prioritized in the second round of Community Workshops.

## HOW WERE THE GOALS CREATED?

Goals express a desired outcome described in simple terms. They are broad statements of what the region has the potential to accomplish. They tell how the region can change.

The ten Opt-In goals were created from comments the public made in the first round of Community Workshops. Comments were divided according to the vision's pillars and then further sorted into major themes—recurring ideas that indicate values, recommendations, and preferences. Once major themes were identified they were used to develop goals for each pillar.

The full list of comments can be found in **Volume 2, Draft Regional Vision: What the Community Wants**, starting on page 137. In addition to the verbatim comments, that report lists the major themes, the first draft of provisional goals, a set of principles, and additional comments suggested by participants.

Using electronic keypads, summit attendees express their preferences and see results instantaneously.



## CHAPTER STRUCTURE

This chapter is divided into five sections.

**A. Process and Methodology** explains the scenario planning process.

**B. Regional Investment Guide** shows preferred investment areas throughout the region.

**C. How Much Land Is There for Investments and Growth?** quantifies land available for investments and growth in each town.

**D. Demonstration Projects** shows how future growth can occur.

**E. Preferences** provides a snapshot of the public's preferences.

Additional maps and documents related to this chapter are found in **Chapter 7: Appendix**.

# 4. SCENARIO PLANNING

**THE PURPOSE OF SCENARIO PLANNING IS TO DETERMINE WHERE AND HOW TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE GROWTH, BASED ON TECHNICAL ANALYSIS AND COMMUNITY PREFERENCES. IT IS ALSO TO PUT INTO SHARP FOCUS THE TRADE-OFFS AND CHOICES FACING LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AS THEY STRIVE TO ACHIEVE THE LAND USE, ENVIRONMENTAL, TRANSPORTATION, AND QUALITY OF LIFE GOALS OF THE VISION.**

## A. PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

### SCENARIO PLANNING

Scenarios are sets of assumptions that tell a story about the future and help imagine change. The Opt-In vision scenarios describe what the region would be like if the ideas and goals expressed by the regional community were implemented. Scenario planning was originally used by businesses to identify plausible future economic conditions to better manage risk. Scenario planning has been compared to test-driving several models of a car before choosing one.

Following the first round of Community Workshops, the Opt-In team began the process of developing three alternative scenarios.

**Scenario A – Staying the Course** assumed that the region continues the trends of the past 20 years into the future.

**Scenario B – Targeted Management and Investment** asked: What would happen if the region implements the

goals of the vision with moderate amounts of growth management, investments, and incentives?

**Scenario C – Robust Management and Investment** asked: What would happen if the region implements the goals of the vision with robust amounts of growth management, investments, and incentives?

Each scenario tells a different story based on its impacts on each of the following five categories: land use, employment, demographics, transportation, and infrastructure. A more detailed description of each scenario is on page 8.

### INDICATORS

The performance of each scenario was measured according to 12 indicators and utilized suitability modeling. The indicators suggest that scenarios B and C will have the most dramatic impact on realizing the vision goals of creating vital town centers while protecting the environment, attracting young talent, reducing the amount of time residents will spend commuting, and enabling more people to be served by infrastructure. For

an overview of how each scenario performs according to the 12 indicators, see: **Chapter 7: Appendix**, page 60.



**Participants in the second round of Community Workshops in Macon County.**

SCENARIO A—STAYING THE COURSE	SCENARIO B—TARGETED MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT	SCENARIO C—ROBUST MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT
The region continues to develop following the spread-out growth trends established in the past two decades.	The region counters the trends of the past two decades by implementing a moderate set of incentives, investments, and regulations to achieve the vision's goals.	The region counters the trends of the past two decades by implementing a more robust set of incentives, investments, and regulations to achieve the vision's goals.
<b>LAND USE</b>		
The majority of future population locates away from existing population nodes. Housing choices are limited.	A percentage of future population and jobs locates near existing population nodes. More housing choices become available.	The majority of future population and jobs chooses to locate within existing population nodes. A greater supply of housing choices becomes available, including apartments, live-work units, and reused buildings. Single-family and rural homes remain available.
<b>ECONOMY</b>		
Jobs in manufacturing decline; jobs in service rise.	The coordinated regional implementation of marketing and economic development strategies begins to diversify the economy and expand job choices.	The coordinated regional implementation of marketing and economic development strategies continues to diversify the economy and expand job choices. More jobs are linked to smaller, entrepreneurial firms.
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>		
Population continues to age. Lower-paying jobs fail to retain and attract younger people.	Demographics begin to change. Job choices attract a younger, more educated workforce with the skills to match employer needs.	Demographics continue to change as an increased job diversity attracts and retains young workers to the region.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>		
Investments focus on improving the existing network. Residents rely almost exclusively on cars to get to work, shop, and recreation. No emphasis on freight rail.	Investments focus on implementing connections to the greater region. Residents continue to rely for the most part on cars to get to work, shop, and recreation. The region reestablishes freight rail connections to the greater region.	Investments are shared between network building within population nodes and connectivity among population nodes. Mobility options such as public transportation and active transportation (walking and biking) become available. The region places greater emphasis on extending freight rail service internally.
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		
The spread-out nature of development makes it challenging and costly to extend water and sewer and broadband infrastructure.	Better opportunities exist to extend water and sewer and expand broadband service as a percentage of development, and redevelopment occurs in areas closer to where infrastructure exists.	More compact development patterns further expand opportunities for delivering water, sewer, and broadband services.

## SCENARIO PLANNING ALTERNATIVES

The three alternative scenarios described at left are based on the totality of comments made by participants to the first round of Community Workshops. Following the Community Workshops, the more than 1,000 comments were catalogued and sorted by the six Pillars. They were then sorted again within each Pillar, according to major themes.

The totality of comments, organized by pillars, is available for review in **Volume 2, Draft Regional Vision – What the Community Wants**, starting on page 137. In the report the comments are reported word for word.



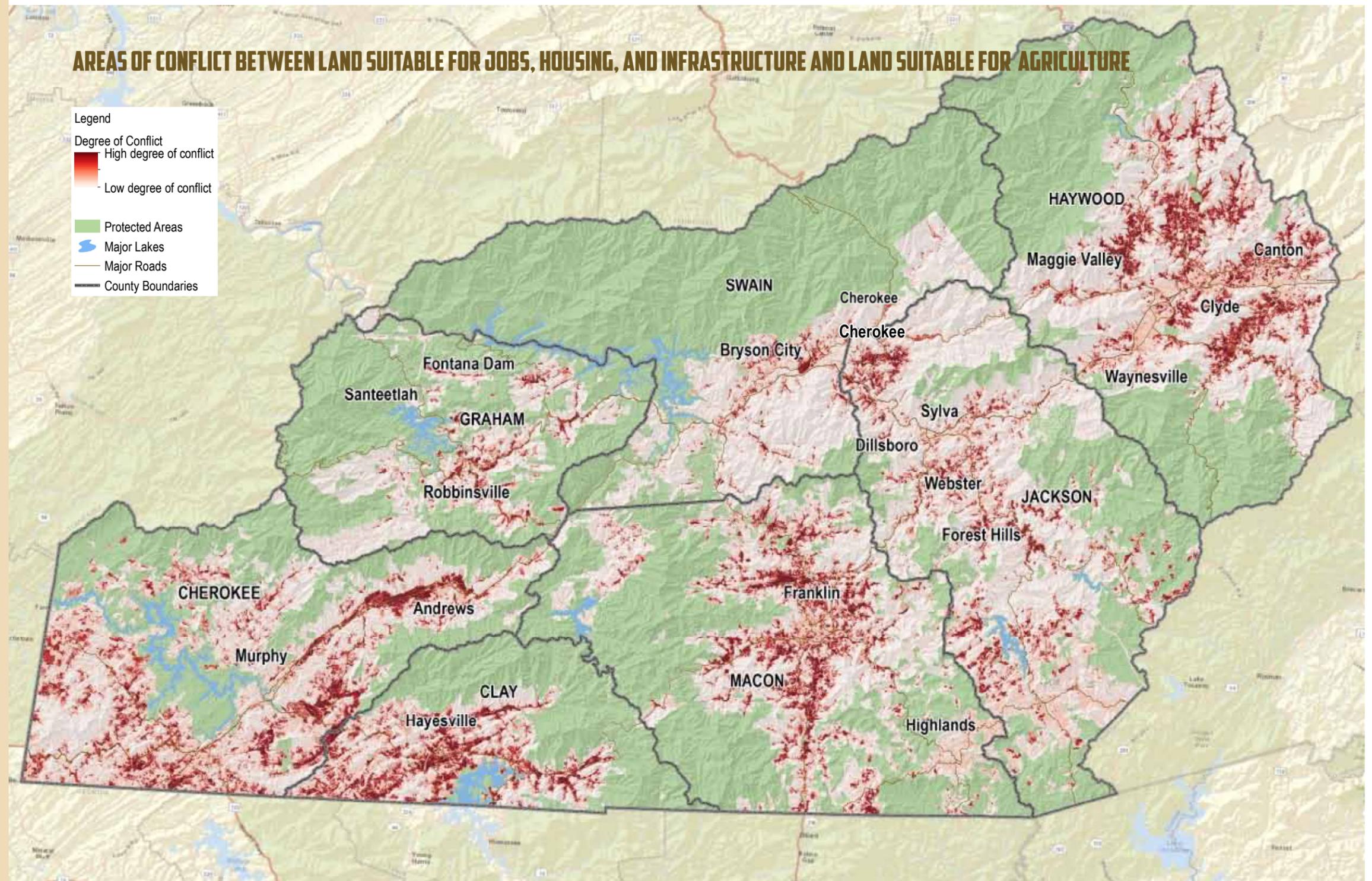
This is a facsimile of the handout given to participants to the second round of Community Workshops. It describes the three alternative scenarios.

## SUITABILITY MODELING

Suitability modeling is a process that determines which land is most suitable for a given use or investment. In the Opt-In region, suitability was determined by looking at three categories: conservation, agriculture, and jobs, housing, and infrastructure.

Once suitability was determined for each category, maps were overlapped to identify conflicts. The areas with the least conflict were designated as most suitable for investment and growth. For example, the map to the right shows the degrees of overlap between the jobs, housing, and infrastructure and the agriculture categories. As expected, much of the overlap between those two is in the region's valleys, where there is relatively flat and open land that is suitable for both uses.

A total of six maps were developed to conduct the suitability analysis. The information gathered was used to create the *Regional Investment Guide* map, shown on page 11. The entire set of suitability and conflict maps is available in *Chapter 7: Appendix*, starting on page 48.



## B. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE

Suitability analysis, combined with the vision's goals, the performance of each scenario, and public comments, was used to create the Regional Investment Guide map shown and described in the following pages.

A typical outcome of scenario planning is a preferred scenario, a map that dictates with great precision where future investment should occur. The suitability analysis revealed that in the Opt-In region there are no compelling geographic or demographic conditions to justify a single preferred scenario. Only a small percentage of the “developable” land in the region has in fact been developed, and jobs and population growth forecasts are moderate.

***The Regional Investment Guide map is, therefore, this region's preferred scenario: a tool driven by choice. A tool to be used, on a voluntary basis, by local jurisdictions when and where they decide it is in their best interest to follow the guidance of this vision.***

### MAP OVERVIEW

Inspired by the vision's goals, the Investment Guide map foreshadows a region where growth (physical, economic, and infrastructure) occurs in a rational way within vibrant towns and along transportation corridors that complement the region's special landscapes.

The map does not mandate what jurisdictions can or cannot do. It is a tool that gives them the choice to decide what is in their best interest to implement, based on local priorities and preferences.

The map describes five general types of investment areas that exist in the region and links them to the goals, policies, and actions of the regional vision. The five types are described below, with references to the vision's relevant goals and policies.

### FIVE TYPES OF INVESTMENT AREAS

The areas in green on the map, ***Protected Areas***, include state and federally managed land and land with permanent easements. Opt-In recommends the continued preservation and enhancement of these areas. (See ***Chapter 5: A Vision for Land and Culture***, page 29.)

The areas in dark green, ***Land Stewardship Areas***, include land that is privately owned and/or that presents challenges to investment. This includes floodplains, wetlands, and slopes steeper than 40 percent. This land currently supports some agriculture and forestry uses. Some of it has notable environmental characteristics. Opt-In recommends ways to facilitate and increase the protection of those lands. (See ***Chapter 5: A Vision for Land and Culture***, Action C1a, page 30.)

The areas in light gray, ***Limited Investment Areas***, include land that has limited potential to sustain new investment because it is not adjacent to major roads, and has limited or no infrastructure capacity in terms of water, sewer, and other utilities. It contains woodlands, farms, and scattered second and rural homes. Opt-In de-emphasizes public investments in this land but does not preclude private ones. (See ***Chapter 5: A Vision for Place and Investments***, Policy D 1, page 32.)

The areas in pink, ***Secondary Investment Areas***, include land adjacent to and approximately within a quarter-mile of major roads. The proximity to major roads makes them likely prospects for new investment. In recent years these corridors have absorbed a great deal of the region's suburban growth, including strip malls, shops, restaurants, hotels, businesses, small manufacturers, crafts outlets, and tourist attractions. They also include traditional, unincorporated places and crossroads communities—the rural communities cherished by residents and tourists alike. Opt-In recommends that future investments in these areas be managed to reflect land suitability and to reinforce the rural and scenic character of the roads. It also recommends that investments and incentives be offered to channel future growth toward the small traditional

communities found along the corridors, if and when they choose to grow. (See ***Chapter 5: A Vision for Place and Investments***, page 32.)

The areas in red, ***Primary Investment Areas***, include: all the land contained within town boundaries; all land within quarter-mile of town boundaries; and all land within quarter-mile of all major roads within one mile of town boundaries. These criteria have been applied to all towns within the region, with an understanding that each town or city can choose to modify them based on local conditions and priorities. A variety of factors, including demographics, life-style preferences, and the vision's goals, make these areas the most likely target for future growth in the region. For the most part, these areas already have water and sewer services, and are served by broadband. Extension of those services when necessary is facilitated by proximity. Opt-In recommends a mixture of regulations, investments, and incentives that favor growth of businesses and retail, redevelopment, infill development, reuse of existing buildings, and provision of housing choices within the Primary Investment Areas, as always, based on the priorities and discretion of local jurisdictions. To begin with, each jurisdiction will have to determine the specific boundaries of its Primary Investment Areas. (See ***Chapter 5: A Vision for Place and Investments***, page 32.)

A high resolution view of the Regional Investment Guide map is available at [optinswnc.nemac.org/gis/regionalinvestmentguide/](http://optinswnc.nemac.org/gis/regionalinvestmentguide/)

### NOT A LAND USE MAP

The Regional Investment Guide map is NOT A LAND USE MAP and does not take precedence over local land use planning authority. The Investment Guide is intended as a tool to be used on a voluntary basis by local communities. It provides a recommendation for regional land, transportation, economic, cultural, quality of life, and infrastructure investments that will ultimately be implemented by county and municipal decision-makers based on their local priorities and goals.

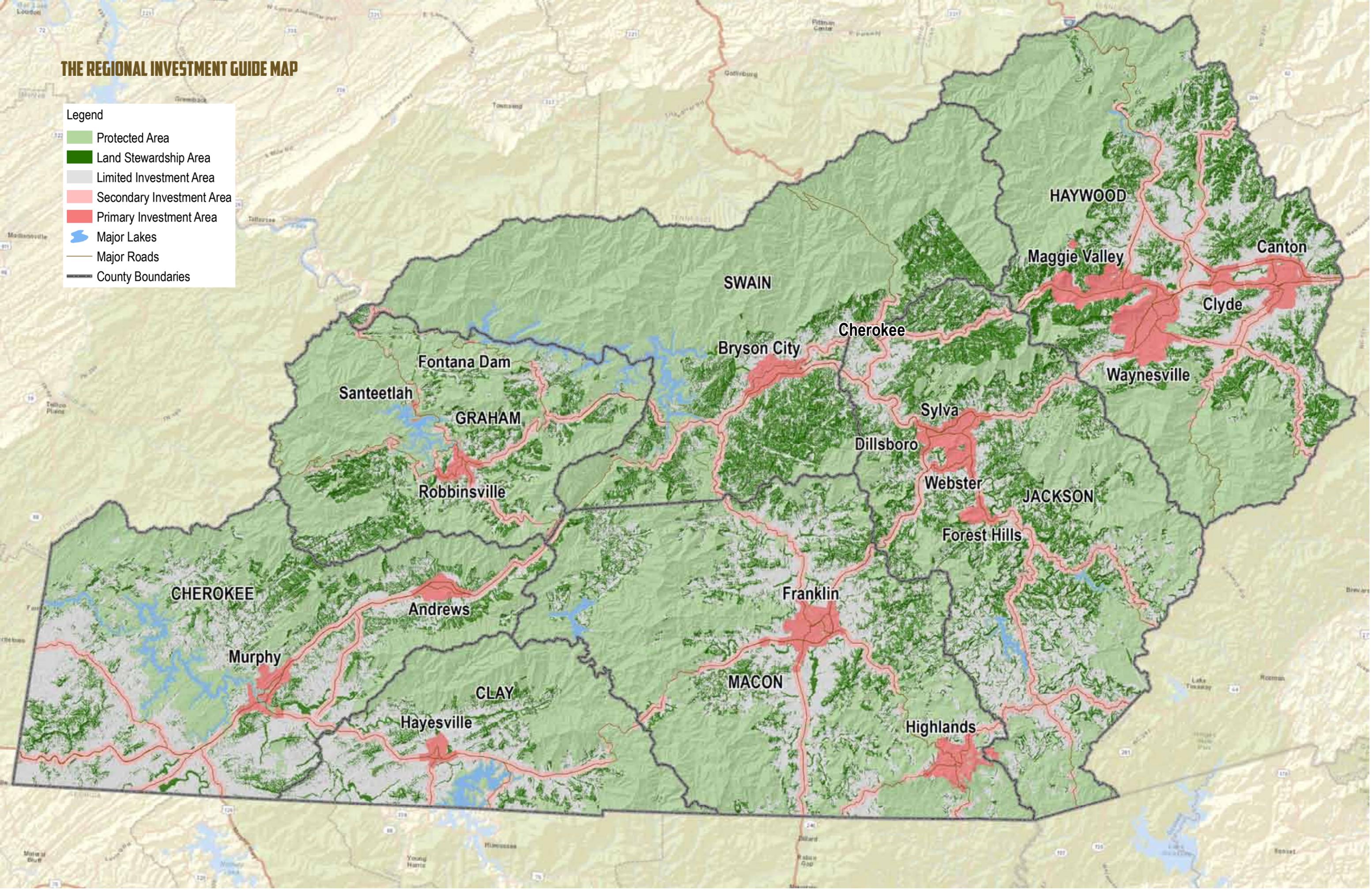
In addition to this region-wide map, a series of maps at the county scale are available in ***Chapter 7: Appendix***, starting on page 53. The county maps provide more specificity and actually show which areas within towns are best suited for investments and growth.

All maps are posted as high-definition versions at [optinswnc.nemac.org/gis/regionalinvestmentguide/](http://optinswnc.nemac.org/gis/regionalinvestmentguide/).

# THE REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE MAP

Legend

- Protected Area
- Land Stewardship Area
- Limited Investment Area
- Secondary Investment Area
- Primary Investment Area
- Major Lakes
- Major Roads
- County Boundaries



### C. HOW MUCH LAND IS THERE FOR INVESTMENT AND GROWTH?

The chart to the right shows, in square miles, how much land exists in the Primary Investment Area of each town. The information is divided into three categories:

- A. Total Land**—The number of square miles of land within each town’s Primary Investment Area.
- B. Investment Land**—How much of that total land is suitable for investment (calculated by subtracting Protected Areas and Land Stewardship Areas from Primary Investment Areas).
- C. Optimal Investment Land**—How much of the developable land has optimal conditions for investment and growth, based on the suitability analysis.

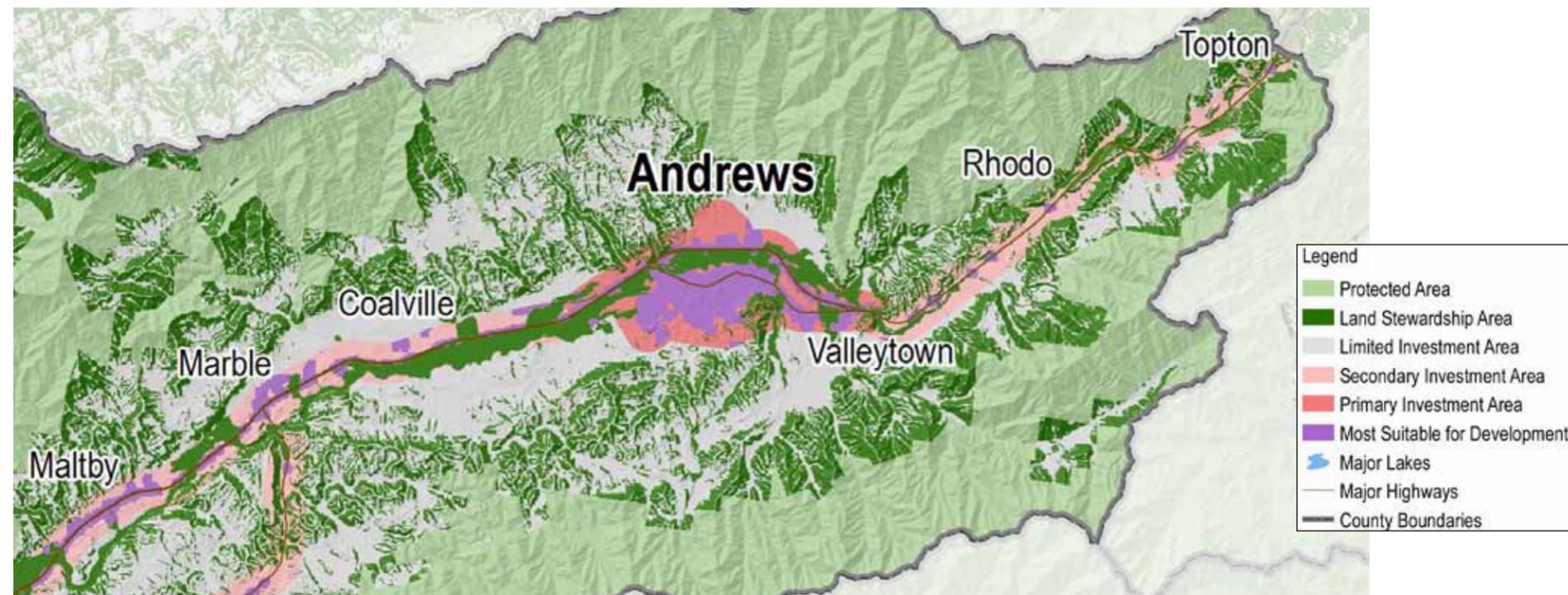
There is a significant amount of land for investment and growth in each town and in the region as a whole. Specifically, the Primary Investment Areas for the whole region contain 76.8 square miles of land suitable for investment, 25.6 square miles of which are optimal to accommodate investment.

How large is the amount of investment land in the region? It is 60% larger than the total city area of Asheville, which encompasses 45 square miles and has a population of 83,000. It is more than enough to satisfy the vision’s goals and to accommodate population and jobs growth to the year 2035.

Towns	A. Total Land	B. Investment Land	C. Optimal Investment Land
Andrews	4.4	3.2	1.8
Bryson City	6.4	4.4	1.7
Canton	9.7	8.0	3.8
Clyde	3.8	3.3	1.2
Dillsboro	2.4	1.7	0.6
Fontana Dam	2.9	0.2	0.04
Forest Hills	2.7	1.6	0.4
Franklin	11.3	9.8	4.0
Hayesville	3.2	2.7	0.7
Highlands	12.5	7.8	1.0
Maggie Valley	11.8	6.6	1.2
Murphy	6.9	4.7	1.6
Robbinsville	4.5	2.9	0.9
Santeetlah	2.1	0.2	0.02
Sylva	6.6	4.8	2.1
Waynesville	17.4	12.5	5.0
Webster	3.5	2.5	0.4



Top, the many farmers’ markets in the region establish the link between towns and the productive farmland surrounding them. Below, a detail of the Primary Investment Area for the town of Andrews, in Cherokee County. It shows, in purple, the most suitable land for development and investments (1.78 square miles). The boundaries of the Primary Investment Area, in red, have been applied following the criteria described on page 10. They should be carefully reviewed by towns and counties to ensure they meet their specific priorities. Detailed maps for each county are available in *Chapter 7: Appendix*, on page 53.



## D. DEMONSTRATION AREAS

During the Graham and Cherokee County weeklong workshops, held as part of the comprehensive plans for the two counties, the Opt-In team developed area plans for specific sites in those counties. Three of these area plans are shown here as a way to communicate potential development choices. All three are located in Primary or Secondary Investment Areas.

The three demonstration areas are:

The **Marble Crossroads**, in Cherokee County, shows a condition very common in the region: a community once thriving, now diminished by generic highway-type development. The concept shows how this type of community can recover sense of place and grow gracefully with careful planning.

The **Rodney Orr Bypass**, in Graham County, shows the transformation, over time, of a strictly functional road into an attractive boulevard. The before-and-after images, on page 15, illustrate the visual impact of the change. Change itself is incremental and the product of guidelines, investments by the public sector in infrastructure, and investments by the private sector.

The **Casino Village Concept**, also in Cherokee County, shows the great potential that can be triggered by a catalytic development. It also shows the efficiency and quality of a compact and well-designed mixed-use development.

## MARBLE CROSSROADS

The Marble community, originally built around the former train station with an economy rooted in quarrying and agriculture, saw its vitality diminished by construction of the four-lane Highway 74, which siphoned traffic and commerce away from its center. The community's compact pattern of streets and uses is still largely intact, however, as in many similar rural communities where the highway "passed them by."

The workshop sketch plan illustrates some possible ways to build on that pattern to reinforce Marble's identity and character as a distinct place. Included is an example of how residential infill development, in scale with the relatively small existing lots nearby, could enhance the community's fabric. These recommendations suggest how new development around the highway crossroads, if done thoughtfully, can add to a sense of place in the way it is oriented to and perceived by passing motorists as part of a rural village. Reactivating the rail line between Murphy and Andrews was an idea that received a lot of support at the workshop. If the Marble station was restored as a stop on this line, it could create significant long-term opportunities for the community in the areas of tourism, industry, and transit.

Note: This plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and it is shown for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur when willing property owners and developers cooperate with the county.



Plan view of the proposed improvements.

## RODNEY ORR BYPASS

Much of the focus of the Graham County weeklong workshop was on how to enhance the appeal of the town of Robbinsville as the county's primary activity center and gateway to its other attractions. When the Rodney Orr bypass was built, it channeled traffic away from the town's original pedestrian-oriented Main Street shopping district in favor of an automobile-oriented strip development with less charm and walkability. Because this strip is now home to most of the town's viable businesses, it functions as the de facto main street.

The proposed improvements suggest ways this strip can be transformed, incrementally, to create a more pleasing setting for both residents and visitors. By consolidating multiple curb cuts into a more coherent system of access streets, the frontage along both sides of the road can be devoted to continuous sidewalks and street trees. As new buildings are built, they can be pulled up closer to the street, with parking in the rear (see the transformation sequence, *above next page*). The centerpiece of this transformation would be the creation of a "new downtown"—including a town square, framed by a new civic building, with sidewalk-oriented shops and a cinema around its perimeter.

Note: This plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and it is shown for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur when willing property owners and developers cooperate with the county.



**A rendering of the revitalized town of Robbinsville as the county's activity center.**



Above, before-and-after renderings of a walkable and vital Rodney Orr Bypass, in Robbinsville. Below, plan view of the proposed boulevard.



## CASINO VILLAGE CONCEPT

The EBCI's new casino will be located one-half mile off of Highway 74, and will not be visible from the highway. All traffic to the casino, however, will pass through the 50 acres of privately owned land at the casino entrance drive, via the bridge currently under construction. This highly visible site, which is expected to be a prime location for new restaurants and hotels, presents a unique opportunity in the region to organize these uses in a walkable, mixed-use "village" format, rather than as a collection of automobile-oriented "pad" sites. The sketch plan, developed during the Cherokee County workshop, proposes an initial phase of development consisting of tourist-oriented retail shops and restaurants, a hotel, and apartments framing a roundabout at the village's main crossroads.

Later phases of development might include an outlet mall and additional housing on the southern portion of the site, as well as hillside housing on higher portions of the site overlooking the village.

The proposed village site is within a quarter mile (5-minute) walk from a possible rail station site across Highway 74. If excursion rail service is reactivated along the corridor between Murphy and Andrews, this station, possibly in conjunction with a shuttle bus, could provide an entertaining way for area residents, casino patrons, and other visitors to access the village and the casino.

Note: This plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and it is shown for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur when willing property owners and developers cooperate with the county and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.



**Above, renderings of the proposed concept for the Casino Village concept. Left, the plan view.**

**Next page, images from the Graham County and the Cherokee County weeklong workshops. From top left: Participants in the opening session of the weeklong workshop; A drawing by an elementary school student; Participants in the Open House (part of the weeklong workshop) reviewing economic development and tourism alternatives; High school students participating in a focus group (also part of the weeklong workshop).**



## E. PREFERENCES

The Opt-In vision is the result of qualitative feedback from the region’s residents. Comments and preferences were collected through interviews and workshops and considered, in their totality, to generate the vision’s goals and policies. Three surveys, however, were fielded to quantify the region’s responses to those goals and policies. This section describes the surveys and their results. It is divided into two parts. The first part describes the surveys; the second summarizes the results.

### COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS SURVEY AND COMMENTARY

During the second round of Community Workshops, public comments were recorded using a survey and written open-ended comment cards. The survey asked questions that focused on possible trade-offs between various elements of the vision. The comment cards probed likes and dislikes related to the scenarios and their performance. With respect to the scenarios, both the survey and the written comments show moderate to strong support for scenarios B and C and little support for scenario A. The text box Scenario Preferences, *at right*, gives a snapshot of the region’s dialogue on the scenarios. The full results of the survey can be found in **Chapter 7: Appendix**, pages 61 and 62.

### SUMMIT ELECTRONIC KEYPAD SURVEY

During the Regional Summit, participants addressed 27 questions probing the strength of their support for the vision’s elements as well as exploring trade-offs and preferences. Questions addressed regional readiness, economic development, transportation, land use, natural resources, quality of life, and implementation. The survey was fielded live during the Regional Summit, using electronic keypads, and the results were shown on a large screen immediately after each question. The keypads provided a highly interactive method to engage the Summit’s participants and to continue the regional conversation started by the Opt-In process.

The full report of the audience responses is available at [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org).

## SURVEY OF REGISTERED VOTERS

The primary goal of the survey of registered voters was to determine whether the findings of the vision are supported by the results of a more systematic sample. A secondary goal was to determine whether there were any obvious divisions in opinion between various groups of respondents.

The survey sample was drawn from a list of registered voters, which ensured that all respondents were above the age of 18 and residents of the region. Potential respondents were sent a copy of the survey questionnaire, and soon thereafter received a follow-up postcard reminding them to respond. The response rate was a respectable 11% a total of 454 respondents. According to most available indicators (including county of origin, gender, and age), those who responded resemble the target population (see table and caption, *below*). The full results can be found at [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org). The next section, **What Did We Learn?**, draws from all three surveys in creating a picture of the region’s preferences.

COUNTY OF ORIGIN	SAMPLE	POPULATION 18+
Cherokee	12%	14%
Clay	6%	6%
Graham	3%	4%
Haywood	32%	30%
Jackson	24%	21%
Macon	17%	17%
Swain	6%	7%

**The table above lists the data on respondents’ county of origin (sample) compared to the target (population 18+). The latter only adds up to 99% due to rounding. The age of respondents ranged from 23 to 96 with an average age of 64. Although 64 is older than the average for the region, it is comparable to registered voters’ age (60).**

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

### SURVEY OF REGISTERED VOTERS

**Results of the survey of registered voters show that, when not faced with trade-offs, registered voters in the Opt-In region tend to see all of the vision’s issues as important.** On the one hand, respondents express the most support for improving the quality of education, providing access to medical care, and preserving and protecting the region’s natural resources. On the other hand, they placed establishing a brand identity, exploring and promoting alternative means of transportation, and providing quick and easy access to all parts of the region near the bottom of the list.

**Results also show that, in every case, respondents displayed the most support for trade-offs that required regional collaboration and management and the least support for those that required more taxpayer investment, with regulations falling in the middle.** Additional questions show that the least popular trade-offs include policies that would make it harder for people to get around by walking, bicycling, or taking public transportation, and policies that would hurt the environment. Likewise, there is little support for strategies that would prioritize public investment within towns, but not promote them in the more rural regions of the county. The three tables on page 19 show the results of the survey of registered voters.

A key, and somewhat surprising, outcome of the random survey is the priority given to quality of life issues. Specifically, improving the quality of education, getting access to quality medical care in all parts of the region, attracting and retaining young people to the region, and providing housing choices in price and type, rank, respectively, first, second, fourth, and fifth among important issues facing the region. This outcome is surprising considering the fact that quality of life issues were among the least mentioned in the interviews and in the two rounds of Community Workshops. **The strong importance given to those issues places them at the top of the vision’s implementation priorities.** (Continued on page 20.)

## SCENARIO PREFERENCES

The open-ended comments summarized below provide a snapshot of the range of sentiments in the region relative to the scenarios. Some comments strongly support the robust management, incentives, and investments proposed by scenario C, while others reject any kind of planning, since it is viewed as interfering with private property rights.

Taken together, the comments show a desire for positive change in the region and support for the future foreshadowed by scenarios B and C. That support, however, is moderated by the trade-offs needed to achieve change. The variety of statements of support and moderation are strongly echoed by the results of the survey of registered voters and by the Summit’s electronic keypad survey.

Below are brief summaries and a sampling of comments on the economy, land use, infrastructure, and transportation.

★ There is strong support for an economy that creates jobs and attracts small businesses and entrepreneurs to the region. *“B and C support economic development and job creation through recruitment of sustainable small employers using skilled labor.”* *“Scenario A is stagnant and does not show much promise.”* *“Increase incentives and infrastructure to encourage businesses and manufacturing to the area.”* When surveyed, participants overwhelmingly supported focusing on tourism and small businesses versus larger employers and even light industry.

- ★ There is strong support for the creation of attractive town centers as a tool to attract and keep young people in the region. There is also strong support for providing housing choices. The open-ended comments show support for creating more compact, lively downtowns that allow safe walking and biking. There are qualifications about how much growth is “right” for the region and questions about “the impacts of concentrated population.” “Revitalize downtowns but keep the small town feel.” “Scenario B: Attract young people without overcrowding.” There are also fears that regulation will bring an end to personal freedom and that forces outside the region are controlling the outcomes of the process. “Liberty, freedom, collaboration at the local level based on locally elected officials, held to account by their constituents.”
- ★ There is unqualified support for improved broadband service. “High-speed broadband—not feasible in all rural areas, good incentive to bring population to city centers.”
- ★ Interestingly, there were very few comments dealing with transportation. There is support, however, for expanding mobility options in the region. “Bike paths for the younger, transit for the older.” “As people age, they need more mobility options[...].” There is also support voiced for expanding passenger and freight rail service tempered by concerns about costs.

## HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ISSUES THAT FACE THE OPT-IN REGION?

Improve the quality of education	89%
Provide access to quality medical care in all parts of the region	89%
Preserve and protect the region's natural resources	86%
Attract and retain young people to the region	79%
Manage the region's future growth	74%
Housing choices (in price and type) in the region	73%
Expand broadband and high-speed internet access in the region	71%
Diversify the region's economy	68%
Celebrate our region's culture and heritage	67%
Explore and promote improvements to existing highways in the region	66%
Promote development with the smallest environmental impact	65%
Create vibrant, lived-in downtowns in the region	59%
Provide incentives for businesses that focus on outdoor recreation	56%
Establish a strong brand identity to market the region	55%
Explore and promote alternative means of transportation	55%
Provide quick and easy access to all parts of the region	49%

The numbers in this table represent the percentage of respondents who answered in the top two categories of importance: very important and somewhat important. Statistical models show that there were minor differences in the preferences based on number of years lived in the region, county of origin, political ideology, age, or education.

## OTHER PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Economic development strategy that would prioritize public investment within established towns in the region, but not promote growth in some of the more rural locations outside established towns	16%
Economic development strategy that would be likely to create good-paying jobs but would hurt the environment	14%
A transportation strategy for the region that would make it easier for people to get around in cars, and trucks, but harder to get around by walking, bicycling, or taking public transportation	8%

The numbers in this table represent the percentage of respondents who answered a 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale for each question, with 7 indicating strong support and 1 indicating no support. Each question suggests a trade-off between two aspects of the vision.

## HOW STRONGLY WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING POLICIES THAT WOULD ADVANCE SOME GOALS AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS?

### THE PLACE WE'RE GIVEN

Advance the goal of protecting and enhancing the region's unique natural and cultural assets but require more regional collaboration and management	40%
Advance the goal of protecting and enhancing the region's unique natural and cultural assets but require more local regulations	30%
Advance the goal of protecting and enhancing the region's unique natural and cultural assets but require more local investment—including taxpayer investment	20%

### THE ECONOMY WE NEED

Advance the goal of a healthier regional economy but require more regional collaboration and management	37%
Advance the goal of a healthier regional economy but require more local regulation	21%
Advance the goal of a healthier regional economy but require more local investment—including taxpayer investment	17%

### THE WAYS WE GET AROUND

Support regional transportation policies that advance the goal of better connecting the places where people work with the places where people live but require more regional collaboration and management	30%
Support regional transportation policies that advance the goal of better connecting the places where people work with the places where people live but require more local regulations	20%
Support regional transportation policies that advance the goal of better connecting the places where people work with the places where people live but require more local investment—including taxpayer investment	17%

The numbers in this table are the percentage of respondents who answered a 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale for each question, with 7 indicating strong support and 1 indicating no support. Here, the results are organized by pillar. For each pillar, the same issue, one that had received broad support by vision participants, is measured against three possible trade-offs. The results clearly indicate that the support for each issue drops once these trade-offs are considered. Here, too, there were insignificant differences in the preferences based on percentage of life in the region, county of origin, political ideology, age, or education.

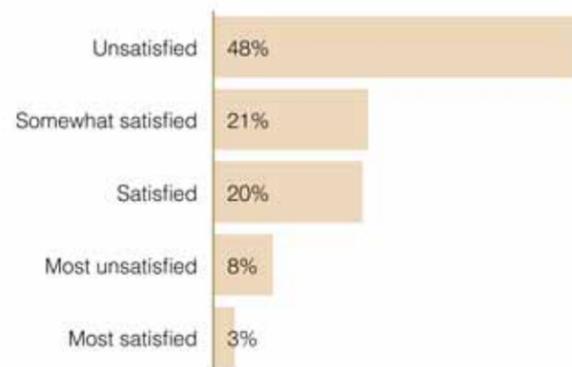
In conclusion, the region's residents tend to think a host of issues are important, but support them less when confronted with trade-offs that may be inherent in these policy decisions. This suggests that building awareness and continuing the regional dialogue started by Opt-In should be a key part of implementation.

Although respondents felt differently on issues, there do not seem to be any large-scale divisions, suggesting that the region may be more united than many often claim.

### SUMMIT ELECTRONIC KEYPAD SURVEY

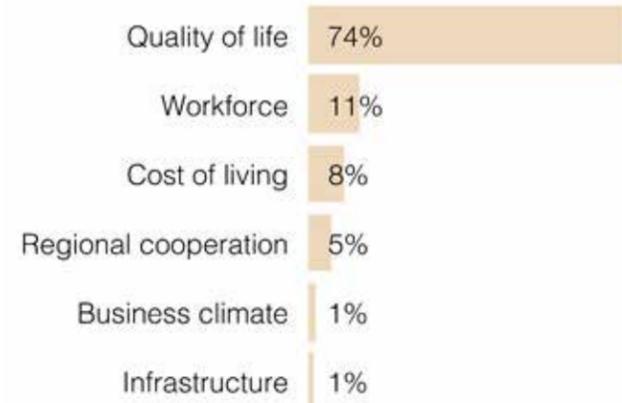
This section highlights results of the major questions answered at the Regional Summit and, when appropriate, compares them with results of the Community Workshops survey and the random survey. Charts in the text provide details of specific answers.

Summit participants want the region to act as one and share opportunities and resources, but are unsatisfied with the current level of governmental cooperation. When asked about the importance for the region to work cooperatively, an overwhelming majority of participants (86%) responded that the topic was very important or somewhat important. When asked about the "level of cooperation among the region's governments," 48% responded that they were unsatisfied with it.



A separate question reveals very strong support, 81%, for cooperative agreements among counties, to share opportunities and resources.

To diversify the economy, participants prefer a better integration of tourism with economic development (27%) over branding and marketing the region (23%) and coordinating economic development activities (21%). They also consider, by a large margin (74%), "quality of life" as the decisive argument to convince businesses to move to the region.

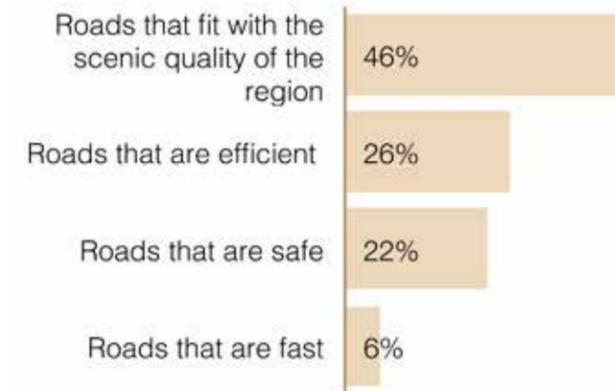


The findings resonate with the Community Workshops survey, where, in two separate questions, participants strongly preferred to focus economic development on tourism and small businesses (76%), and to brand the region and market it together (67%). "Diversify the region's economy" was ranked eighth in the priority list of important issues in the random survey.

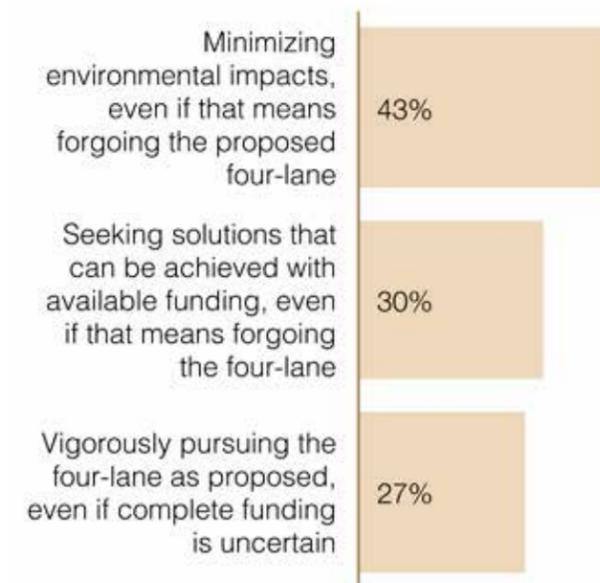
Participants prefer improving existing roads as a way to achieve connectivity within and outside the region.



When asked about the design of future roads, they strongly prefer roads "that fit with the scenic quality of the region."



On completing Corridor K, participants prefer to "minimize environmental impacts."

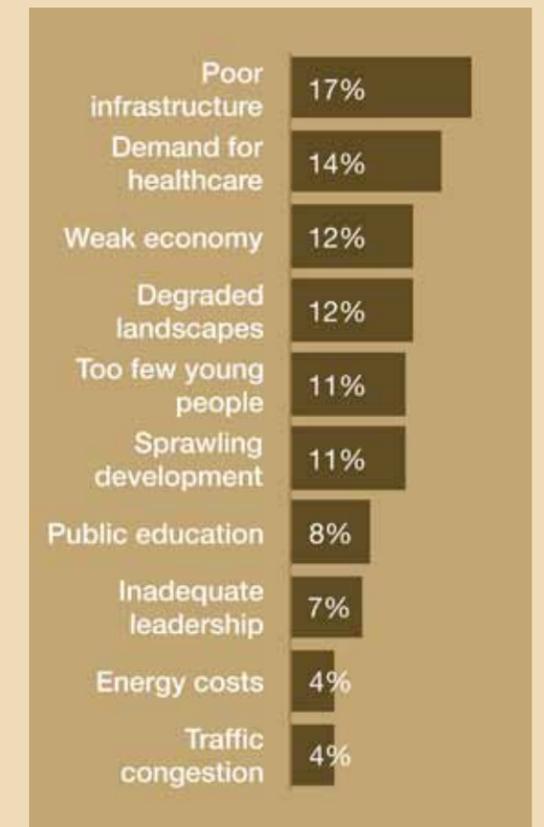


The preference for improving existing roads is consistent with responses from the Community Workshops survey where participants selected "existing highway improvement" (35%) over "high-speed highway connecting towns within the region and beyond" (18%). "Provide quick and easy access to all parts of the region" ranked last among important issues in the random survey.

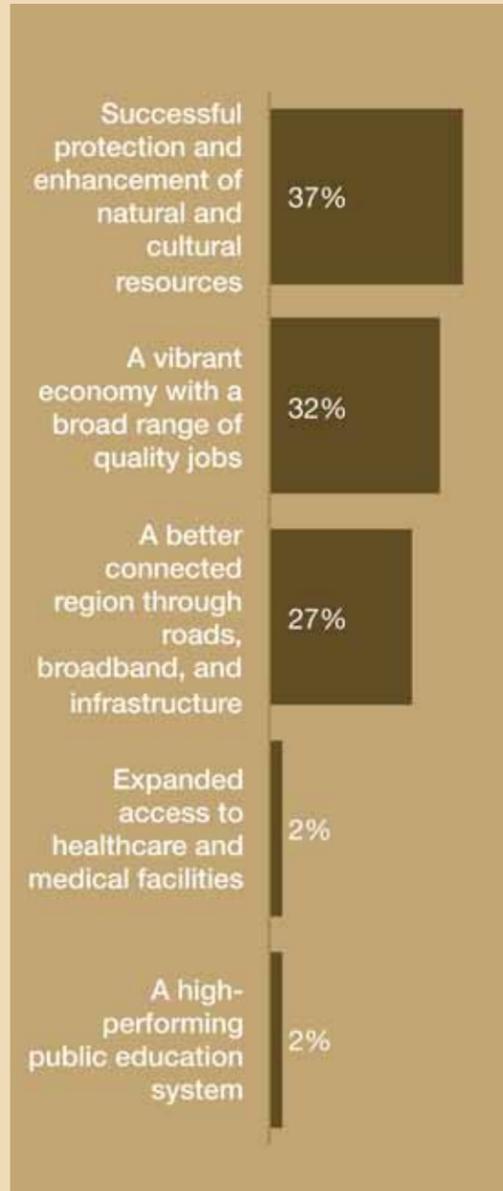
## CONCERNS AND EXPECTATIONS

The summit survey raised two questions designed to probe the region's concerns and expectations about implementing the vision.

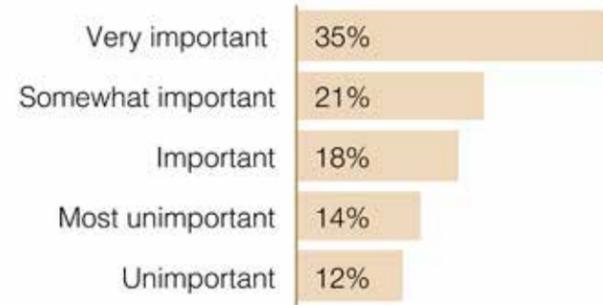
PICTURE OUR REGION 20 YEARS FROM NOW. WHAT IS THE #1 ISSUE OR CHALLENGE IT WILL BE FACING THEN?



**PICTURE OUR REGION 20 YEARS FROM NOW. WHAT IS THE #1 ACCOMPLISHMENT WE WILL BE CELEBRATING?**

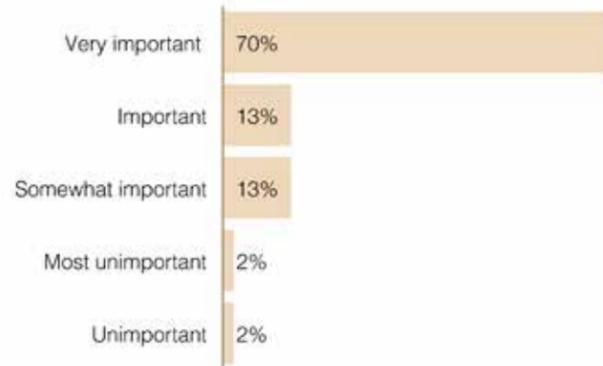


*Summit participants (74%) consider alternatives to driving to be important to very important.*



It should be noted that in the Community Workshops survey a similar percentage of residents, 37%, prioritized “expanded opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.” It should be further noted that in the random survey a policy “that makes it easier for people to get around in cars and trucks but harder to get around by walking, bicycling, or taking public transportation” received only 8% of support, the lowest recorded.

*They strongly believe it is important to create “vibrant and prosperous town centers.”*



Community Workshops participants also considered creating “interesting towns that attract and keep young people” very important (72%), and somewhat important (25%). However, when investments and incentives are introduced, random survey respondents show less support (16%) for economic development strategies that “would prioritize public investment within established towns in the region, but not promote growth in some of the more rural locations outside established towns,” suggesting a preference for more balanced investment policies.

*They support implementing a mix of commercial and residential uses, reusing existing properties, and encouraging growth where there is already sufficient infrastructure.*



*And want to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources with a mixture of regulation and incentives.*



The issue of regulating development is a controversial one, as noted in the text box on page 19. It was also mentioned during the first and second round of Community Workshops as an issue of individual property rights infringement, with concerns that forces outside the region, including the federal government, have too large a say in local decision-making. The question was posed in the Community Workshops survey and participants strongly supported “to manage and regulate future growth” (69%), versus “to prioritize property owners’ rights” (31%). “Manage the region’s future growth” polled strongly in the random survey, ranking fifth in the list of important issues facing the region.



*Above and next page, images from the Regional Summit.*



Keywords  
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion  
Workforce Development

## CHAPTER STRUCTURE

This chapter is divided into six sections:

- ★ The Ways We Get Things Done: A Vision for Leadership and Implementation
- ★ The Economy We Need: A Vision for Prosperity
- ★ The Place We're Given: A Vision for Land and Culture
- ★ The Places We Make: A Vision for Place and Investments
- ★ The Ways We Get Around: A Vision for Connectivity
- ★ The Quality of Life We Expect: A Vision for Community

Each section includes the following parts: Issues, Solutions, Goals, and specific Policies and Actions. The recommended policies and actions support each goal and are based on three sources: input from the regional community, facts about the region from the Baseline Vision, and examples and success stories from communities, both local and national.

# 5. POLICIES AND ACTIONS

**THIS CHAPTER INTRODUCES POLICIES AND ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION'S GOALS. IMPLEMENTING THEM WILL REQUIRE AN UNPRECEDENTED COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION AMONG INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNMENTS, AND BUSINESSES. IT WILL REQUIRE CHAMPIONS AND STEWARDS. IT WILL REQUIRE STEADY COMMUNITY PRESSURE. IT WILL REQUIRE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF WHAT IS PROPOSED. TOGETHER THESE POLICIES AND ACTIONS ARE A CALL TO ACTION AND A ROAD MAP ON HOW TO TURN THE REGIONAL VISION INTO REALITY.**

## THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE: A VISION FOR LEADERSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION

### ISSUES

The task of implementing the Opt-In vision is a challenge that will require all the talent and resources that the region can mobilize.

Issues are complex, and the vision is all-encompassing. Resources, levels of motivation, and expectations are uneven throughout the seven counties. The region's governments dramatically vary in power and size, ranging from small municipalities to a sovereign nation, the EBCI. This complexity is compounded by the absence of a large metropolitan area in the region and the financial assets, political clout, and resources typically associated with such areas.

The Opt-In vision is not a proposal that can be adopted with a simple yes or no vote. In fact, there is not a single unit of government, let alone a specific agency, with the authority to make all of the changes that need to be made.

### SOLUTIONS

Implementation will require an unprecedented level of voluntary cooperation among governments, businesses, and institutions. It will also require widespread acceptance of the notion that acting regionally will produce tangible benefits larger than any individual jurisdiction alone can achieve.

The Southwestern Commission, as a voluntary association of governments, is the one entity that can bring together the diverse parties—public, private, and civic—to address the vision's complexity. Equally important, the

commission is already involved in several of the policies and actions recommended by the vision.

## REFERENCES AND PREFERENCES

Participants in the more than 300 stakeholder interviews and in the first round of Community Workshops made repeated reference to cooperation and collaboration as keys to implement the vision. Comments from the interviews about leadership were summarized in *Volume 2, Draft Regional Vision Framework, The Ways We Get Things Done*, page 136. Comments from the Community Workshops can be found in their entirety in *Volume 2, Draft Regional Vision – What the Community Wants, Section 3*, page 201.

The Summit also asked questions about implementation. When asked about the importance for the region to work cooperatively, an overwhelming majority of participants (86%) responded that the topic was very important or somewhat important. A plurality (48%) expressed disappointment with current “level of cooperation among the region's governments.” They also, very strongly (81%), supported “cooperative agreements among counties to share opportunities and resources.” And, they were very willing (67%) and somewhat willing (24%) “to get involved in implementing the vision,” by “promoting” it (40%), “staying informed” (30%), and “donating time” (27%). Finally, they supported (62%) using county resources to support implementation.

## GOAL

**Leadership**—A region that thinks and acts as one.

### A. POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

#### A1 Form an Implementation Committee.

The Southwestern Commission (SWC) should take on the primary responsibility of coordinating implementation of Opt-In. To do so it should convene and staff an Implementation Committee. The committee should include representatives of local governments, as well as private and civic sector leaders with a strong interest in regionalism. Its purpose is to lead implementation, provide regional perspective, and assist the SWC in prioritizing steps, engaging non-governmental partners, seeking non-governmental funding, educating the region on the benefits of thinking and “planning regionally,” and continuing the regional dialogue initiated by Opt-In. The SWC staff will oversee the day-to-day needs of implementing the vision. The Implementation Committee and the SWC should:

- ★ Organize presentations throughout the region to elected and appointed officials, business leaders, and special interest groups. These presentations should focus on organizations that have local or regional credibility and should be tailored to highlight elements of the vision likely to resonate with the selected group.
- ★ Engage young people in this regional dialogue about the future. This should include high school and college students as well as young professional organizations.
- ★ Engage in a sustained awareness campaign that uses conventional printed and electronic media, as well as electronic tools such as blogs, e-mail blasts, and social media, to give the region periodic progress updates.
- ★ Schedule periodic reports to the community highlighting progress and checking back on the vision.

#### A2 Acknowledge and reward exemplary regional leadership.

Local communities should organize an annual “State of the Vision” event that celebrates progress and recognizes exemplary regional leadership from government bodies, civic organizations, and the private sector.

#### A3 Establish a Regional Rural Leadership Institute.

As the challenges and opportunities in the seven-county region become more complex, there will be an increasing need to develop regional leaders. The SWC, working with the region’s community colleges and Western Carolina University, should initiate a leadership program designed to better prepare government, business, and nonprofit leaders to work together and cooperate. The program should build upon the experience of Coulter Regional Leadership Program, focus on regional issues, teach the benefits of thinking regionally, and prepare participants to address regional issues. The program should continue on an annual or semiannual basis.

#### A4 Identify best practice procedures for the implementation of multi-jurisdictional agreements.

The SWC should research and document multi-jurisdictional agreements in the region, state, and nation. It should showcase these examples to regional leaders on an ongoing basis and should evaluate the applicability of those practices to the seven-county region.

## HOW HAVE OTHER REGIONS IMPLEMENTED THEIR VISIONS?

It turns out, in all kind of ways.

For the past 20 years a multitude of regions have created regional visions and plans and have faced the question of how to implement them in the absence of a direct form of regional governance. Two common trends emerge in the way those regions approached implementation.

Some have placed implementation in the hands of newly formed independent organizations expressly created for that purpose. Typically this has been done in the absence of organizations with the regional reputation, focus, and mission needed to implement the vision. Envision Montgomery, in the five-county Montgomery region, and Envision Utah, in the Salt Lake area, are two successful examples of this approach.

Others have relied on existing organizations with a track record as regional conveners. “Connect,” the regional vision process for the 14-county region surrounding Charlotte, relied on the Centralina and Catawba Councils of Governments to get things done. They applied for and received a \$4.9 million HUD Sustainable Communities Grant and \$3 million in local in-kind public and private matching resources. See more at [www.connectourfuture.org/whatisconnect](http://www.connectourfuture.org/whatisconnect).

In either case, implementation of specific elements of the vision were delegated to *ad hoc* committees and task forces, to spread ownership of implementation.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE?

The early months of implementation are the most important. The momentum created by the Opt-In process and by the Regional Summit must be harnessed and sustained. To do so, implementation must start quickly and the implementation structure (chain of command) must be clear to everyone involved.

The SWC and the Implementation Committee must introduce the vision to the region. Even though events such as the Regional Summit have generated media coverage, the region needs to hear from the entity charged with implementing it. This will be the start of a new dialogue, one informed by the vision and designed to facilitate its implementation.

A common drawback of vision implementation is the reluctance on the part of the leading organization to publicize progress. To do so must be a top priority of the SWC and the Implementation Committee. Opt-In is part of an effort to create a whole new narrative and to tell a new story about the region. A sustained awareness and information campaign will ensure that the Opt-In story is owned, but more important, told by, everyone who lives and works in the region.

These activities need to be orchestrated to keep the flame of the vision alive, to intercept new issues and opportunities as they emerge, and to create accountability in the process of implementing the vision.



## THE ECONOMY WE NEED: A VISION FOR PROSPERITY

### ISSUES

There is strong consensus that the region needs to diversify its economy. Little information, however, is available about which businesses are appropriate and can thrive in the region given current economic and workforce strengths and weaknesses, infrastructure conditions, and natural and cultural resources.

Jobs scarcity continues, and the lack of well-paying jobs compels better-skilled workers to leave, resulting in what some have called “a lost generation” of workers. Transportation costs are high and commutes are long, discouraging potential workers from low-paying jobs. Businesses have trouble locating skilled workers, and when they do, they find it difficult to keep them in the region.

There is limited marketing to help the region move forward and recover from the 2008 economic downturn and address future opportunities. The issue is compounded by structural changes occurring in state and regional economic development organizations, such as Advantage West and the North Carolina Department of Commerce. These changes foreshadow greater regional competition for businesses and resources. At the moment, counties and municipalities are on their own competing for resources and for businesses.

### SOLUTIONS

The vision strongly encourages the seven-county region to coordinate economic development activities, act as one, and speak with one voice. The region is a large and sparsely populated area and it does not have the pull and resources of a central urbanized city. Coordinating economic development activities will maximize the

**Top, small scale agriculture is an important component of the region’s economy. Bottom, manufacturing is in decline, a trend shaped by forces outside the region.**

region’s ability to leverage its wealth of natural and cultural resources, recruit new business and talent, and capitalize on the growing importance of tourism to the state and global economy.

**The 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** (CEDs) report, an effort coordinated by the Southwestern Commission, has begun to address the issue of identifying appropriate businesses for the region with its **Regional Industry Cluster Targets** study. The report also includes lists of policies and projects from all counties and municipalities in the region. These lists need to be aligned with the regional vision and the findings of the clusters study.

### KEY TRENDS AND REFERENCES

The **Baseline Vision** provides a comprehensive summary of socio-economic and demographic conditions and trends in the region. (See **Volume 2**, starting on page 51.) The **Draft Regional Vision Framework** provides summaries of conditions and trends, which are listed below. (See **Volume 2**, starting on page 130.)

**The seven-county regional economy is growing slower than the rest of the state...** Consequently, it accounts for a decreasing share of the state’s overall economy. This trend is consistent with more general urban-rural trends across the country.

**The decline in manufacturing is a general trend...** This trend is being shaped by forces outside the region, and therefore will be difficult to reverse by actions within the region.

**The education and health services sector is important to the region...** With the region’s aging population and the presence of Western Carolina University, this sector should continue to be an economic anchor.

**The rise in leisure and hospitality services is natural...** These services are common in rural areas that possess attractive natural and cultural resources. They

provide an alternative path for economic development in the wake of declining manufacturing activity.

**Data on the economic impacts of natural and cultural resources are limited...** No county or regional level natural and cultural resource economic data was available when the Baseline Vision was prepared.

**Population growth has been strong for a rural area...** Though lagging the state, the population has grown faster than the national rate. However, population growth is projected to slow substantially in the next five years, with Cherokee and Graham counties expected to have negative growth. Towns that are projected to experience substantial declines in population include Robbinsville, Hayesville and Andrews.

## B. POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR PROSPERITY

### B1 Coordinate economic development activities.

Currently, economic development activities in the region are the prerogative of county economic development directors. AdvantageWest is the designated regional economic development entity for the 23 westernmost counties in the state. Local communities should collaborate with a variety of economic development stakeholders, including chambers of commerce and state agencies, to promote the region as an ideal location for economic growth, support existing businesses, and advocate for policies that are advantageous to businesses and workers.

#### B1a Establish an independent regional economic development and marketing entity.

The SWC is currently incubating an economic development and marketing group called the Mountain West Alliance (MWA). The group includes the region's economic development directors, the EBCI, and representatives of Western Carolina University's Millennial Initiative. The SWC should take the next step and formalize the group as an independent economic development and marketing entity for the Opt-In region. The MWA should:

- ★ Identify shared regional priorities and projects.
- ★ Work with the region's Main Street, Small Town Main Street, and HandMade in America communities to look for opportunities to build informational networks and shared marketing efforts.
- ★ Gather data on the economic impact of tourism in the region.
- ★ Align regional strategies with state and federal funding criteria, and communicate that alignment to state and federal agencies and officials.

#### B1b Commission a strategic five-year economic development plan.

The plan should build upon the 2012 CEDS report and complete the process of identifying economic sectors most likely to stimulate business investment and jobs in the region based on comprehensive and up-to-date market research. It should also identify established targets from each county, implementation resources, and benefits for each county.

#### B1c Brand and market the region's assets.

The creation of a regional identity will help Southwest North Carolina market itself on a national and global scale. This action is discussed in the next section, *The Place We're Given: A Vision of Land and Culture*.

### B2 Diversify and expand the economy.

The MWA should work with the region's economic development directors and identified regional partners to begin implementing the recommendations of the strategic economic development plan. It should also focus on efforts to improve the business climate in the region. To this end it should:

- ★ Develop a legislative agenda to create a favorable business climate that can sustain the region's vision and support the development of the industry sectors identified by the plan.
- ★ Mobilize a coalition of the region's chambers of commerce, business leaders, and other economic development entities to pursue the legislative agenda.

## INDUSTRIAL PARKS

**LandsEast Industrial Park** is located in Pitt and Martin Counties in North Carolina. The counties have officially entered into an inter-local agreement concerning LandsEast Industrial Park. The document, signed by the chairmen of the Martin and Pitt County Commissioners, details the terms of revenue and cost sharing between the two counties for the joint park. The agreement specifies that the two counties will evenly share incremental ad valorem tax revenues created by improvements or businesses located within the park. The counties will also equally share expenses for the industrial park. The collaboration to develop a joint industrial park officially began in 2005 as both counties aimed to stimulate jobs and investment in underserved areas. An advisory committee consisting of eight members, four from Pitt and four from Martin County, guides the development of the park. LandsEast spans almost 800 acres and was approved as a North Carolina Certified Site in late 2008 by the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

**Pellissippi Place**, located in Blount County Tennessee, is a community with a business focus on technology research and development and commercialization. It is a collaborative effort of four local governments seeking to further R&D innovations in the Oak Ridge Technology Corridor/Innovation Valley ([www.pellissippiplace.com](http://www.pellissippiplace.com)).

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING RESOURCES

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has announced the creation of **Appalachian Community Capital (ACC)**, a new central bank for development lenders that will increase the availability of capital to small businesses in the 13-state Appalachian Region.

## LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES

The federal JOBS Act makes it possible for businesses to raise up to \$1 million in equity annually from local investors. Individuals can invest \$2,000–\$10,000 annually (depending on their earnings and net worth) in a local business. Investment must take place through a government-accredited portal. The regulatory and organizational landscape for community-based equity investments in locally owned businesses is new, but it seems likely that it will be essential for a local organization or agency such as the SWC to play a central role in vetting entrepreneurs and pairing them with investors. For more information:

- ★ Economic Gardening: [www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/](http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/)
- ★ National Crowdfunding Association: [www.nlcfa.org](http://www.nlcfa.org)
- ★ The JOBS Act: What Startups and Small Businesses Need to Know, [www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2012/09/21/the-jobs-act-what-startups-and-small-businesses-need-to-know-infographic/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2012/09/21/the-jobs-act-what-startups-and-small-businesses-need-to-know-infographic/)

## BRANDING AND MARKETING REGIONS

Various regions throughout the country have pursued branding and marketing strategies. Below are few examples.

**Lane County, Oregon**, is devoted to developing the tourism market throughout the rural areas of the county. The tool to do so is the Rural Tourism Marketing Program (RTMP). The RTMP allocates funds to rural communities for tourism-related projects. The funds that are allocated for the Rural Tourism Marketing Program are from room taxes collected in rural areas of the county and are used to encourage more tourism.

**Milwaukee 7**, launched in September 2005, was formed to create a regional, cooperative economic development platform for the seven counties of southeastern Wisconsin: Its mission is to attract, retain, and grow diverse businesses and talent. For more information: [www.mke7.com](http://www.mke7.com).

**Tacoma, the Wired City** – Tacoma Power, a division of the city's municipally owned Tacoma Public Utilities, took a calculated risk in 1997 that has benefited the residents, businesses, and development of the city of Tacoma and Pierce County ever since. In keeping with its dedication to its customers, Tacoma Power made a \$100 million investment in installing 700 miles of fiber-optic cable within every right-of-way in Tacoma. Tacoma was recognized as the most wired city in the country, a powerful identity that was featured in national newspapers.

- ★ Align the region's communities to maintain a voice in the continued development of North Carolina's new Rural Economic Development Division.

### B3 Be ready for new industry.

The SWC should work with the seven counties, the EBCI, and the WCU Millennial Initiative to identify optimal locations for the creation of regional-scale strategically located industrial sites and to ensure availability of water, sewer, high-speed Internet, natural gas and other energy sources, and appropriate road infrastructure to those locations.

### B4 Facilitate the success of entrepreneurial and small businesses.

In a rural area like the Opt-In region, small businesses and entrepreneurs are likely to be a key component of the region's economic development strategy. Growing entrepreneurship, however, will require strategies that are profoundly different from those needed to recruit larger, more established businesses. It will take a combination of efforts at the regional, local, and grassroots levels.

#### B4a Create an investment capital fund for emerging entrepreneurs.

The SWC should lead this initiative to increase access to capital for businesses at different stages of development. The commission is already involved in the management of the Revolving Loan Fund funded by the Economic Development Administration and by the Appalachian Regional Commission with a \$1.3 million balance and in the development of an Angel Fund with a target of \$2 to \$3 million. The commission should:

- ★ Identify private investors, philanthropic organizations, pension funds, and foundations that have the potential to contribute to a local investment pool.
- ★ Call on these potential investment sources to make the case that a portion of their holdings should be invested in Southwestern North Carolina.

### B4b Streamline regulations and develop incentives.

At a more local level, local jurisdictions should consult with their local attorney and access legal advice from the UNC School of Government to evaluate incentives and regulatory steps currently allowed by state law to facilitate the creation of new jobs. At the regional level, jurisdictions should work with state elected officials to broaden the types and availability of economic development incentives similar to those available in other states. For example, many communities offer property and business equipment tax credits for businesses that locate downtown. Collierville, Tennessee, adopted an ordinance more than 20 years ago that assesses an impact fee on new commercial development that takes place outside the downtown district. Revenue from the impact fees is used for downtown development and management activities. Through zoning overlays that create special development zones, some communities also offer job credits and other benefits. For example, Winchester, Virginia, has created a downtown technology overlay zone, providing an attractive package of incentives for small technology companies that locate downtown and thereby attracting more than 50 new businesses.

#### B4c Network and inform entrepreneurs.

Networking and information sharing are critical. The region should create an internal entrepreneurial network to provide existing and future entrepreneurs with a knowledge base of information learned through successful businesses. It should also establish an entrepreneurial library to provide potential entrepreneurs with accurate and up-to-date market research.

#### B4d Support business incubators.

The SWC, working with local jurisdictions, should support the creation of business incubators. These incubators may be able to offer amenities such as seed capital, business seminars, mentoring relationships, and meeting space to help welcome and nourish entrepreneurial development in the region. If loca-

tion-neutral businesses are most likely to be the ones attracted by the region's amenities, a more flexible approach to small-business support may be considered.

### B5 Train the workforce of the future.

The SWC, through the Southwestern Workforce Development Board, should convene a workforce development consortium of postsecondary education and training institutions to develop and deliver the specific technology skills and talent needed in the emerging workplaces, now and into the future. The process should start at lower grades, as recommend in policy **F3, Start Early; Educate the Future Workforce**, page 40.

### B6 Promote and support agriculture as a viable economic practice.

The nation is undergoing a revolution in agricultural practices and Southwestern North Carolina is a recognized leader in the production of artisanal food products, drinks, and organic farming practices. The vision, however, strongly supports expanding the role of agriculture in the future.

A number of steps are listed to accomplish that vision; some are regulatory, others focus on awareness building and marketing. They include:

- ★ Raising awareness of the economic and health benefits of agriculture.
- ★ Encouraging local jurisdictions to review and update policies and codes to allow for agricultural activities wherever appropriate.
- ★ Uniformly permitting low-impact agricultural activities within viable agricultural areas.
- ★ Developing a coordinated marketing effort and expanding farmers' markets in partnership with the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP).
- ★ Promoting agritourism as a legitimate economic development activity.
- ★ Encouraging closer coordination between small-scale, farm-to-table farming and the region's larger scale commercial farming.

## BEYOND THE SEVEN-COUNTY REGION (ECONOMY)

### DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The Opt-In region lies within a two-hour drive of six major metropolitan markets. Each of these areas competes with the region for economic investment, but also provides a captive population for both workforce and tourism. The Opt-In region has long been a destination for second-home ownership driven by these metro areas and beyond, and will continue to be a receiving area for retirees, empty-nester homeowners, and visitors. As shown at right, each of these urban markets has experienced rapid growth in population and income, with three exceeding the fast growth of the Opt-In region.

The seven-county region's proximity to each metro market varies by county. For example, Cherokee and Graham enjoy a second-home base supported by the Atlanta market, while Haywood has more part-time residents from Charlotte, Raleigh, Ohio, and Florida. Similarly, the most western counties are able to draw workforce from eastern Tennessee and north Georgia, while the eastern counties can pull from Asheville and upstate South Carolina.

Local economic developers should collectively work with regional partners to train and tap workforce that has the skillset needed by employers in the larger region.

### TOURISM

The Opt-In region's biggest opportunity with respect to the larger region is with tourism. The Opt-In area is quite large, and the competitive aspects vary by individual community and county. Neighboring regions have the following assets that compete with assets in the Opt-In region:

- ★ Asheville, NC, Greenville, SC, Knoxville and Chattanooga, TN—urban downtown, arts and culture.
- ★ Hendersonville and Brevard, NC—destination downtown.
- ★ Pisgah National Forest, Chattahoochee National

### REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC AND INCOME COMPARISON

	2010 Population	2000–2010 Growth	2014 Median Household Income	2014 Median Occupied Housing Unit Value
Atlanta Metro Area	5,286,728	24%	\$52,533	\$171,573
Knoxville Metro Area	837,571	12%	\$44,405	\$149,096
Greenville Metro Area	824,112	14%	\$44,677	\$144,257
Chattanooga Metro Area	528,143	11%	\$41,704	\$146,045
Asheville Metro Area	424,858	15%	\$43,318	\$186,523
Spartanburg, Metro Area	313,268	10%	\$40,173	\$121,423
SWNC 7 Counties	194,102	13%	\$35,974	\$140,143

**This table compares statistical information for the six Metro Areas and markets, which are located within a two-hour drive from the Opt-In region.**

Forest, Lake Jocassee, Lake Keowee, Lake Hartwell, and Lake Lanier—outdoor recreation and natural resources.

- ★ Southwest Virginia—Regional outdoor recreation, cultural resources, viticulture, retiree and second homes.

The Opt-In region's biggest competitive advantage likely lies in outdoor recreation and the outdoor experience. The 19 counties of southwest Virginia have similar outdoor offerings, although not likely to the degree of the Opt-In area, particularly with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Nantahala Gorge and its recreation activities.

While southwest Virginia has effectively claimed and marketed its music heritage and artisan roots, it is in its infancy promoting outdoor recreation. The Opt-In region needs to compete in the same arenas.

The seven counties in the Opt-In region are already successful in attracting visitors and investment away from competitor regions. According to the North Carolina Division of Tourism, the top five markets are Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee. Similarly, the top five advertising markets for overnight visitors include:

- ★ Charlotte
- ★ Greenville-Spartanburg
- ★ Atlanta
- ★ Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem
- ★ Raleigh-Durham

It is important that the Opt-In region collectively recognizes its regional impact and, in particular, market itself and its tourism and economic opportunities to these regional competitors.

## TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Opt-In interviews and surveys have underlined the need to do a far better job of leveraging the region's appeal to tourists to broaden and diversify its economic base. Western Carolina University's Steve Morse argues that "Tourism IS economic development." And there's a strong consensus that tourism development agencies and economic development commissions should be talking to one another regularly and collaborating on research and marketing that can bolster the region's success in at least two ways: by extending tourists' experiences and visitor days, and by identifying individuals and small businesses already attracted by the region's amenities who might have the education and skills sought by existing businesses or who might be candidates for moving businesses or establishing new ones in the region.



## THE PLACE WE'RE GIVEN: A VISION FOR LAND AND CULTURE

### ISSUES

Outdoor recreation and tourism, tied as they are to beautiful mountain terrain and healthy forests and waters, have long been an economic mainstay of the region and will remain so. The region's forests are declining, however, compromised by logging and clear-cutting, livestock grazing, invasive species, erosion, and insect or parasitic infestation. Spread out development has also claimed many acres of nature and interrupted areas of continuous forest. State and federal agencies lack funding to improve or better manage public forest lands, and local property owners often lack the information and incentives to improve the condition of their woodlands. Regional competition for recreation and tourism revenues is fierce, with eastern Tennessee, north Georgia, and other areas of western North Carolina, all of which offer competing products.

### SOLUTIONS

A key element of the regional vision is the public's desire to balance protection of the region's natural and scenic resources with improvements to the region's economy. Small-scale industries that don't damage or over-burden lands and resources, managed logging, small-scale sustainable farming that provides food products for locals and nearby big-city residents while generating income for local landowners, and businesses tied to recreation and natural and cultural resources, among others, are likely to play a key role in establishing that balance. Developing a strong identity can differentiate the region from its competitors. Engaging the private sector can offset the decline in public spending.

**Above left, the region's waters are a major natural resource. Below left, trout fishing is an increasingly popular activity with visitors.**

### KEY TRENDS AND REFERENCES

Information about natural and cultural resources in the region is available in the *Regional Character* section of *Volume 2, Baseline Vision*, page 7. This section includes maps and information on: federal and state managed land, slopes, and floodplains and wetlands. It also includes information on the economic benefits of the region's natural and cultural resources and provides an inventory on the region's signature and legacy landscapes. (See *Volume 2*, page 36 and page 40, respectively.) Key trends include:

***The region has an abundance of natural resources...***

It is home to remarkable geological and water features, significant amounts of forestland, important water resources, and prominent natural heritage areas.

***These resources have been the cradle of the area's unique culture...***

The region's settlement patterns, farming practices, personal individualism and independence, religious fervor, distinctive music and speech, and local customs all emerged interwoven and rooted in a landscape of rugged mountains, deep valleys, isolated coves and abundant waters.

***They represent the wealth of this region...***

They attract visitors and part-time residents with an extensive array of outdoor and cultural activities. They have a profound impact on residents' quality of life and help make tourism a key component of the region's economy. Tourism revenues are on the rise in all seven counties with 2011 values ranging from \$11.65 million in Clay County to \$280.50 million in Swain County. (Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce.)

***Even though all counties share those assets, the economic impacts vary...***

Data shows that in 2011 tourism generated \$643 million in revenues for the region. It also shows that Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties generated little more than 10% of those revenues (\$69.3 million), despite their abundance of recreational resources. (Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce.)

## GOALS

**Natural Resources**—The region preserves and protects its natural resources and encourages land stewardship and outdoor-oriented businesses while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life that residents and visitors currently enjoy.

**Identity and Marketing**—A comprehensive branding and marketing campaign highlights the region’s assets, attracts new and diverse businesses, and connects visitors to local amenities.

### C. POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR LAND AND CULTURE

#### C1 Form and coordinate the activities of an ad-hoc Environmental Leadership Forum.

The SWC should form an Environmental Leadership Forum that includes the EBCI, county representatives, large property owners, local watershed organizations, and other nonprofits. The Leadership Forum will assist in implementing the environmental aspects of the vision and expand the regional dialogue on environmental issues.

##### C1a Protect the region’s scenic beauty and unique ecosystem.

The Environmental Leadership Forum should focus on acquiring rights or permanent easements on scenic, environmentally sensitive, and prime agricultural lands. It should consider and prioritize the following steps:

- ★ Promote the benefits of programs such as conservation easements, deed restrictions, “less than fee simple” transactions, and life estates.
- ★ Support the expansion of greenways and trails, especially longer-distance greenways like the Appalachian National Scenic Trail that serve as ecological corridors.
- ★ Work with property owners to evaluate the implementation of Payment for Ecology Services (PES) strategies. PES are transactions between the “buyer” of ecological services and the “seller,” a property owner. Transactions are typically

orchestrated by one of three methods: as public payments directly to service providers; through the purchase/sale of services coordinated by brokers and eco-project developers on behalf of buyers and sellers; and through independent private agreements.

- ★ Advocate for the creation of new tools to improve land stewardship, like Transfer of Development Rights. TDR may require special legislation, as it is not currently permitted in North Carolina.
- ★ Develop programs with local school districts to educate youth on the value of natural resources to the region.

#### C1b Increase dialogue on local and regional environmental issues.

The Environmental Leadership Forum should be the go-to entity to address local and regional issues and act as an interagency convener. A start-up sample of issues that call for public discussion include:

- ★ Increasing opportunities for sustainable community harvesting of timber and other resources on publicly owned lands.
- ★ Expanding efforts to protect and increase local availability of culturally important native and medicinal plants used by Cherokee and mountain artisans.

**Signature landscapes, top, are major large-scale landscape areas that define the identity or “signature” of a region. They possess a combination of exceptional natural and scenic qualities and remain largely unaltered by human activity. They possess high visual quality and figure prominently in locals’ (and visitors’) sense of place, framing and influencing human history and activity throughout the larger landscape.**

**Legacy Landscapes, bottom, are notable features and places where: past and present human activity and development have sustained or strengthened the landscape’s intrinsic (natural, scenic, recreational, historical, or cultural) qualities; human activity and development have established a positive example or legacy for resource management, land use and conservation, recreation, historic preservation, local economic development, etc.; human intervention and development have come about through a collective effort and in the interest of “the greater good;” and local values and heritage are represented.**

For more information see Volume 2, page 40.





Judaculla Rock is an ancient petroglyph located in Jackson County's Caney Fork community. The rock is part of a 15-acre site that once was a prehistoric Native American settlement, soapstone quarry, and sacred place. The Judaculla Rock Preservation Project (JRPP) is a successful collaborative project focused on preserving an ancient, carved soapstone boulder and on interpreting Cherokee history. The petroglyphs, of unknown origin and meaning, are dated to 1,500 BCE. The JRPP is an effort between Jackson County, the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), the U.S. Forest Service, Western Carolina University, the North Carolina Rock Art Survey, and other agencies. Judaculla Rock is one of North Carolina's most visited cultural sites, in a region that is home to countless Native American Indian settlements and trails on some of the most rural and undeveloped land in the Appalachians. Nearly 11,000 visitors per year travel to the rock.

## C2 Make clean air and clean water a priority.

The SWC should lead an effort to inventory environmental data and conditions across the seven-county area and identify management and protective actions. This effort could be coordinated with the Linking Land and Communities Effort by the Land of Sky Regional Council. For more information on that program, see [www.landofsky.org/linkinglands.html](http://www.landofsky.org/linkinglands.html).

## C3 Celebrate the region's Appalachian and Native American heritage.

The SWC should build a partnership with the EBCI, the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, and other heritage organizations to focus on heritage interpretation, heritage tourism opportunities, and marketing strategies. Steps to be considered are:

- ★ Developing a wayfinding system to the region's cultural and historic sites.
- ★ Developing "treasure" maps and "treasure discovery programs" that direct visitors to sites and cultural resources.
- ★ Developing school programs that educate students about cultural resources and expand educational field trips.
- ★ Increasing access to Cherokee language resources.

## C4 Brand and market the region's assets.

The Mountain West Alliance should coordinate the branding and marketing of the region. This requires that they identify the components of the regional brand that match the product and experience the region's consumers want and shape a strategy to market them. The policy and related actions have been deliberately placed in the context of this section to stress the fact that branding and marketing the region should rigorously integrate the attraction of new business with the promotion of the region's natural assets.

### C4a Identify critical regional assets.

There is agreement that the region lacks a recognizable identity and that that is hampering its marketing. A key to marketing the region is to identify those

critical natural and recreational assets that resonate among potential site selectors, business investors, tourists, and retirees and integrate them into a marketing strategy.

### C4b Finalize and fund a multiyear marketing campaign.

The marketing campaign should be carefully coordinated with similar efforts occurring at county and town levels. It should focus on those sectors deemed to be primary in the region, including tourism, education, technology, agriculture, and light manufacturing.

### C4c Integrate resort and hospitality services in the campaign.

Resort and hospitality services are a growing segment of the region's economy. Biking, kayaking, and trout fishing are emerging as priority businesses. The effort should be coordinated with marketing generated by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and with the activities of the Smoky Mountain Host.

### C4d Measure the economic impact of natural and cultural resources on the region's economy.

The SWC should work with state agencies, Western Carolina University, and regional tourism operators to design and commission a study that measures the economic impact of the region's natural and cultural resources, in order to demonstrate their value to the region.

## THE PLACES WE MAKE: A VISION FOR PLACE AND INVESTMENTS

### ISSUES

In the past two decades the region's towns have experienced the typical suburban expansion found in the rest of the country. Growth has primarily occurred away from the traditional downtowns and municipal cores in a random and spread-out fashion. An estimated 30,000 seasonal homes have been scattered throughout farms, forests, and slopes (Source: NEMAC). Businesses left downtowns and moved to suburban locations. As a result of these development patterns, the vitality of the region's downtowns declined and the amount of driving needed to accomplish even the most basic chores increased. Infrastructure became more costly and difficult to justify. Finally, unregulated growth has created bland and generic places the likes of which can be found anywhere in the country's suburbs and seldom reflect the region's character.

### SOLUTIONS

Balancing growth and development with the preservation of natural resources is perhaps the most dominant theme of the vision. The region has always treasured its rural and mountain character, and there is widespread (but not uniform) recognition that to keep that character, growth outside municipalities has to decrease while core communities need to be strengthened and revitalized. Public input has shown that there is a desire for developing moderate to robust regulations to accommodate future growth and maintain the region's character. It has also shown that the debate between those who advocate for fair regulations and those who oppose them on private property rights grounds is not settled. Much public awareness needs to be built to explain the benefits of more efficient growth.

Decisions to regulate remain, of course, the responsibility of local jurisdictions. The *Regional Investment Guide* map, described in detail in *Chapter 4*, page 10, provides the data and a level playing field for making those decisions in a regional context.

### KEY TRENDS AND REFERENCES

Information about the character of the region's man-made places is available in *Volume 2, Baseline Vision, Regional Character* section, page 7. This section includes maps and information on the region's towns, the lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, impervious surfaces, and regional land use. It also includes information on land development trends, on page 17, and an analysis of policy similarities and differences among more than 50 plans and studies, on page 45. The latter maps municipalities that have zoning, regional greenways and trails, recreational trails, and regional bicycle routes. Key trends include:

***The seven-county region does not have a dominant large city...*** It is made up of a variety of small to mid-size towns and villages located in the region's gently sloping valleys.

***All municipalities within the region have some form of zoning...*** With the exception of Bryson City, Fontana Dam, and Robbinsville.

***No county within the region has zoning...*** Some counties have subdivision ordinances, watershed protection laws, noxious use restrictions, and other regulations that serve some of the functions of zoning ordinances.

***Land consumption has been substantial...***In the 30 years between 1976 and 2006 the number of acres converted from natural/rural land to developed land in the region increased over 500%, from 11,188 acres in 1976 to 68,505 in 2006. Conversion took place at a rate of over five acres per day. (Source: Mapping Historical Development Patterns and Forecasting Urban Growth in Western North Carolina 1976-2030," Center for Applied GIScience, UNC Charlotte, in 2010.)

***Land availability is constrained...*** When the land characteristics of Southwestern North Carolina are taken into consideration, nearly 70% of the region's total lands present various degrees of development challenges. This condition is the foundation of the region's strong environmental stewardship goals. Land available for development

remains, however, plentiful. (Source: NEMAC, *Volume 2, Baseline Vision*, page 16.)

### GOALS

**Quality Places**—A region of beautiful, clean, vibrant, and walkable downtowns maintains its small-town and rural character and manages future growth through clear and fair plans and regulations.

**Infrastructure**—An extensive high-speed broadband network, the availability of energy, water, and sewer, and the expanded use of local airports make the region a magnet for investment.

### D. POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR PLACE AND INVESTMENTS

#### D1 Direct growth toward existing communities.

A central theme of the Opt-In vision is to direct new growth in the region's towns and population centers, where development already exists. Locating new housing and employment as well as retail, services, and public institutions in towns and villages will strengthen the local economy, make the region attractive to young talent and to older residents alike, and make it easier to get around without a car.

#### D1a Encourage counties and local jurisdictions to align local land use policies and plans with the vision's goals.

The Regional Investment Guide (RIG) described in the previous chapter provides an orderly tool to align local land use policies with the vision's goal of directing new development to existing towns and villages. The RIG identifies Primary Investment Areas centered on each of the region's jurisdictions. Those areas are intended to be the focus of public investments and incentives because they have fewer conflicts between prime agricultural land, areas suitable for development, and protected natural resources. It will be entirely up to the local jurisdictions to decide when it is in their best interest to activate those Primary Investment Areas.

### REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

A number of factors may contribute to the lack of broad land use policies and regulations within the region. The vast amounts of public land already have limits on land use and other protections that would traditionally be enforced by other means. For this reason, many of the most valuable landscapes within the region are already preserved by land use controls that come from the federal level.

Where public lands do not exist, the terrain is such that it limits development in many areas, either because steep slopes make most types of development infeasible or because the lack of large flat parcels makes development at a significant scale difficult. These natural factors do not prohibit development outright, but effectively limit its location and scope.

Finally, as is reported in a number of previous plans, many citizens within the region are uncomfortable with excessive regulation of individual land use and do not view land use maps or zoning ordinances as compatible with their values. Many residents of areas with high growth pressures, however, recognize that some level of regulation is necessary.



**D1b Develop incentives that direct businesses and residents toward areas already served by infrastructure.**

Local jurisdictions should consider a variety of incentives to direct growth toward their Primary Investment Areas. Incentives from local units of government can include fee waivers or streamlined review processes. They can also include the creation of tax-increment financing (TIF) and similar economic tools. Incentives to promote residential development can include low- or no-interest loans, rent-to-own programs for apartments/condominiums, and loan and down payment forgiveness opportunities. A package of possible incentives is described in the text box on the next page.

**D1c Educate public, private, and civic leaders, developers, and lending institutions on the economic and social benefits of more efficient and compact town centers.**

Efforts to direct growth to existing population centers should go hand in hand with efforts to raise public awareness of the social, economic, and environmental benefits of doing so. The Implementation Committee can play a key role in sustaining the dialogue initiated by the Opt-In process with regard to the character of place the region wants and land use and regulations. The committee could conduct regional public forums on the purpose and benefits of land use regulations, design guidelines, and investments and incentives.

**Images of the region's towns: left, Sylva, below, Highlands, and Franklin.**



**D2 Create vibrant, lived-in, and prosperous town centers.**

Vibrant lived-in centers are a prerequisite for a positive business climate for the individual towns and the region as a whole. Offering quality-of-life amenities in existing communities would also reinforce the strong advantage that the natural and recreational assets already give to the region.

**D2a Encourage local jurisdictions to review their current codes and regulations.**

Current codes and land regulations should facilitate, not hinder, the redevelopment of existing town centers. Local jurisdictions with land use authority should identify where zoning regulations may be unnecessarily rigid, and where amendments can be made to encourage more intensive, mixed-use development through more flexible regulations. At the request of individual jurisdictions, the SWC should assist in the review process with additional assistance from the North Carolina Department of Commerce Rural Development Division's Community Planning program.

### **D2b Support policy and regulations for mixed use, live-work proximity.**

Local jurisdictions should consider eliminating zoning provisions that keep uses completely separate and should favor mixed-use and live-work conditions. Mixed-use provisions allow a wide range of residential and commercial development to co-locate within a building or within a designated area. The presence of residents and workers all day and through the evening creates both vibrancy and security. Affordable and market-rate housing built closer to where people work and shop is possibly the most powerful solution to alleviate traffic and save money on infrastructure investments. Towns should inventory existing ordinances and eliminate barriers to mixed use.

### **D2c Support infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized properties.**

Towns should provide incentives for infill development and the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties, to eliminate conditions that detract from the visual appearance and economic health of the community.

### **D2d Adopt design guidelines for attractive sidewalks, street lighting, trees, traffic calming, and other street landscaping measures.**

Existing roads should be made more pedestrian friendly through the addition of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, crosswalks, good lighting, and other amenities. Traffic calming, tree planting, and landscaping initiatives can also create a safer and more pleasant experience for pedestrians and bicyclists. On-street parking, reduced building setbacks, and sidewalk shops can also improve the pedestrian experience.

More information on creating streets that are pedestrian-friendly is available from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center at [www.pedbikeinfo.org](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org) and from the Alliance for Biking and Walking at [www.bikewalkalliance.org/](http://www.bikewalkalliance.org/).

### **D2e Create a program to recognize communities with successful design efforts.**

The Implementation Committee should undertake a program of public design workshops, awards programs, and other initiatives that highlight regional successes in community design. Emphasis should be placed on a variety of community design issues, including new construction, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects.

### **D3 Expand broadband service.**

High-speed internet access is an important component of infrastructure in the region. The seven counties are already served by broadband infrastructure provided by a variety of private operators (BalsamWest Fibernet, MCNC, ERC). What they lack is “last mile” connectivity—the final leg of the networks, the part that actually reaches the customer. The key reason for last mile weakness in the region is the spread-out, low-density nature of development. Datasets of broadband infrastructure and availability are not publicly available, but websites such as the National Broadband map ([broadbandmap.gov](http://broadbandmap.gov)) provide basic facts.

### **D3a Work with private service providers to partner in the expansion of services in underserved and difficult-to-reach areas.**

The SWC should continue to work with private service providers to: 1) frame the economic case for expansion; 2) Inventory underserved and difficult-to-reach areas; and 3) Identify ways for the public sector and private operators to work together in expanding the network. Declining state and federal funding and a shortage of local financial resources are key obstacles that need to be addressed.

### **D4 Prioritize the maintenance and extension of water and sewer.**

Communities should work with utility providers to prioritize improvements to and extension of current infrastructure consistent with the Opt-In growth and development

objectives. Strategic targeted infrastructure maintenance and extension is essential for attracting a strong local business base, maintaining a good quality of life for residents, and reducing development pressure on farmland and forests.

### **D4a Consider regional solid waste disposal facilities.**

The SWC should work with municipalities to identify sites and opportunities for the creation of regional solid waste facilities and explore the possibility of combustion of solid waste for energy recovery. For more information, see [epa.gov/waste/nonhaz/municipal/wte/](http://epa.gov/waste/nonhaz/municipal/wte/).

## **A PACKAGE OF INCENTIVES**

Incentives designed to facilitate in-town development are varied. What follows is a brief glossary of those mentioned in the text.

**Reduced down-payment requirements within a target district.** Banks could offer reduced down-payment requirements for development in a designated area or street. If necessary, jurisdictions could provide funding to make up the difference.

**Favorable loan repayment terms and/or loan forgiveness opportunities.** The banks could offer loans that accrue little to no interest for a defined number of years, or that can be forgiven after a certain length of time. Again, funding from jurisdictions may be necessary to realize this incentive.

**Federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, as they are available.** The federal government offers a federal income tax credit equal to 20 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenses for redevelopment of historic commercial buildings. (Resource: Guide to Tax-Advantaged Rehabilitation, published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, provides a solid overview of historic rehabilitation tax credits.)



## THE WAYS WE GET AROUND: A VISION FOR CONNECTIVITY

### ISSUES

In the Opt-In region the mountainous terrain defines the character, location, and cost of roads. Few alternative routes are available, and the cost of building new roads is high. The region's transportation system is very vulnerable to disruption due to landslides.

Commuting within and outside the region is extensive, as many live in one county and work in another. Data from the US Census Bureau OnTheMap Application shows that only 30% of the region's population live and work in the same county. These commuting patterns reveal how dependent the economy of the region is on reliable transportation options. Conflicts exist between commuters, shoppers, tourists, and trucks, which all share the same roads at different speeds. These conflicts peak during the summer months. Private vehicles account for most travel done. The population is getting older and less mobile, but transportation alternatives are limited. The completion of the Corridor K segment of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) is a controversial issue.

### SOLUTIONS

A strong consensus emerges from the vision that connectivity both within the region's population centers and beyond to important markets (Asheville to the east, Chattanooga to the west, and Atlanta to the south) is critical. What is clear is that portions of the region have better connectivity and access than other areas. Therefore, a one size fits all approach to improving connectivity may not work. Citizen preference as how to best achieve desired regional connectivity was probed using a community workshop survey, an electronic keypad survey at the Regional Summit (neither of which are scientific surveys),

**Left, above, the mountainous terrain has attracted international motorcycle and sport-car enthusiasts. Below, while current rail service is limited, the vision calls for increased freight rail service and expanded tourism-based passenger rail, pictured.**

and a scientific random-sample survey of registered voters across the region. A variety of approaches were suggested, and the results from these surveys, which are aggregated for the full region, are discussed elsewhere in the vision.

Fortunately, all counties in the area now have fairly current, or soon to be updated, Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP) to address the individual areas' priorities for connectivity. In the particular case of Graham County, and to an extent Cherokee County, adequate connectivity may not be achieved through existing road improvements alone. Through the Comprehensive Transportation Plan process, Graham County developed the following vision for its transportation system: To develop a balanced, long-term, and realistic transportation plan that provides better multi-modal access to and through the county, improved access for emergency services, and economic growth opportunities while protecting the area's natural, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational resources. To that end, Graham County's new Comprehensive Transportation Plan recommends a variety of transportation improvements, including new facilities. For more information refer to the Graham County's CTP at: [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org).

Equally strong is a consensus on increasing walking, biking, and public transportation choices within existing towns. This is seen not only as a quality-of-life issue but also as a way to increase the towns' vitality and their ability to attract younger talent to the region, thus linking transportation with land use and economic priorities. This linking of transportation and land use preferences is a recurring theme of the vision.

During the Opt-In process, the issue of completing the Corridor K project was often raised by community members, especially in the western part of the region, the one most directly affected by its outcome. The result was a renewed sense of urgency to focus the region's efforts on completing the route in some fashion.

## KEY TRENDS AND REFERENCES

Information about transportation is available in *Volume 2, Baseline Vision, Regional Character* section, page 23. This section includes maps that show changes to primary and secondary roads for the period 1976 to 2006, the status of the Appalachia Development Highway System as of 2005, scenic byways, and major roads. It also includes information on historic daily traffic volumes for the period 1999 to 2011. Key trends include:

**The region network of regional and secondary roadways has grown by approximately 230 miles, over the last 30 years...** The region has seen a growth of primary routes from 735 miles in 1976 to 832 miles in 2006—a net increase of almost 100 additional roadway miles in 30 years. Likewise, the secondary road system has grown from 2,436 miles to 2,567 miles.

**Regional primary and secondary roadways have also been improved...** Primary roads have been widened to multilane and higher speed facilities or passing lanes have been added to lower travel times. Lanes have been widened and shoulders have been added to secondary roads to enhance safety.

**The region is relatively isolated...** Which makes travel for residents and visitors alike dependent on a sparse network of routes. Travel between population centers is often characterized by narrow two-lane roads in mountainous conditions, with little to no opportunity for passing and no redundancy in network and route choice. These conditions make travel in the region unpredictable, as an accident or snowstorm that shuts down one route can basically strand travelers where they are. An example is the two-lane NC 107 between Cullowhee and Cashiers. The road carries a mix of resident, visitor, commercial, and university-related traffic on an alignment with very few opportunities for passing due to the terrain and road geometry. If an incident occurs, travelers don't have a viable alternative and can find themselves unable to reach their destination.

**Within towns and villages there has been a push to create more of a “main street”...** The recognition of the importance of walking and bicycling as modes of transport within population centers is reflected in the character of the roadways (sidewalks and street furnishings) and the presence of greenways and trails to connect parks, schools, and neighborhoods. This focus on walking and bicycling as modes of transport within population centers is reflected in the seven Comprehensive Transportation Plans that have been completed or drafted as well as in other regional studies regarding trails and bike facilities.

**Traffic volumes in the region have stabilized or in some cases dropped...** While there has been a growth in roadway network, overall traffic volumes have shown growth in the time period up to the early-mid 2000's, then have stabilized or in some cases dropped. This trend is consistent with national trends of traffic volumes, demonstrating that people are actually driving less, mostly due to the costs associated with operating a motor vehicle and economic conditions. (See chart at right.)

## GOAL

**Mobility**—A balanced, efficient, and realistic transportation system provides better connectivity within and outside the region, offers mobility alternatives, and creates economic growth opportunities.

## E. POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR CONNECTIVITY

### E1 Expand connectivity with a safe and reliable regional road network.

#### E1a Appoint a Corridor K Task Force.

The SWC should appoint a Corridor K Task Force to advocate for the completion of North Carolina's segments of Corridor K. Its job will be to engage state and federal agencies to ensure timely implementation, secure funding, and fast-track environmental review and facility design. The Corridor K Task Force should include local governments, advocacy groups, and civic leaders.

## HISTORIC DAILY TRAFFIC DATA TRENDS

Year	US 19/74	NC 28	US 64	NC 107	US 129	NC 294	US 441
1999	3,900	700	6,800	860	2,100	1,300	10,000
2000	4,500	700	7,000	1,000	2,000	1,300	10,000
2001	3,100	650	6,900	870	2,100	1,500	10,000
2002	4,600	780	7,200	1,100	2,200	1,900	11,000
2003	4,100	790	7,400	1,000	2,000	1,300	11,000
2004	4,100	850	6,600	1,100	2,400	1,100	12,000
2005	3,600	810	7,900	1,000	2,000	1,100	12,000
2006	3,100	780	8,000	1,000	2,100	1,200	10,000
2007	3,700	820	7,500	940	2,700	1,300	9,900
2008	3,500	770	6,800	730	2,200	1,100	8,800
2009	3,700	670	7,000	690	2,400	1,200	8,800
2010	3,500	960	6,900	700	2,500	1,100	9,900
2011	3,800	550	5,800	730	2,100	1,000	7,700

The chart shows historic annual average daily traffic volumes (AADT) on key regional primary routes, showing traffic volume trends in the region. (Source, Alta Planning+Design, Fuss & O'Neill, Inc., NC DOT.)

### E1b Continue improvements to primary and secondary roads.

The SWC and the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) should continue the process of prioritizing improvements to primary and secondary roads in the region following the guidelines of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS), which are reviewed on page 38. They should:

- ★ Emphasize connectivity within the region.
- ★ Prioritize design elements that balance safety, context sensitivity, and efficiency.
- ★ Maintain the scenic quality of the region's roads.
- ★ Promote the adoption of Scenic Byway roadway designation where applicable and appropriate.
- ★ Assist in securing NCDOT support for tourism-related maintenance and improvements to such roads.

## THE CORRIDOR K STORY

Corridor K is part of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS), which was established by Congress in 1965 to reduce isolation and generate economic development throughout Appalachia by building a network of modern highways. Approximately 85% of the network has been built, but a few difficult and controversial corridors, including Corridor K, remain incomplete. Corridor K connects U.S. Highway 23 in Dillsboro, North Carolina with Interstate 75 in Cleveland, Tennessee. Only two segments of the corridor have yet to be improved. The section in Tennessee is currently being studied, in part to lessen potential impacts in the Ocoee Gorge.

The incomplete North Carolina section of Corridor K consists of approximately 20 miles between Andrews and Almond and is intended to improve access to Graham County and Robbinsville. As previously conceived by NCDOT, most of the A-9 project would be built on new right-of-way as a four-lane highway with a median. The proposed route would cross two mountain ridges, numerous streams, National Forest lands, and areas of cultural significance.

NCDOT completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in 1984 for the entire length of Corridor K that remained to be completed. In 1995, the FEIS was reevaluated for the section from Stecoah to Almond, which was subsequently constructed as a four-lane highway. A Supplemental FEIS was begun in 1998 to reevaluate alternative alignments and environmental impacts for the segment from Robbinsville to Stecoah. A Draft Supplemental FEIS was approved in 2008, but approval of a Final Supplemental FEIS and a Record of Decision was delayed due to concerns by federal and state agencies and environmental groups over the potential benefits and environmental impacts of the project. Additionally, the dedicated funding stream to complete the ADHS has become uncertain.



### E2 Develop alternatives to driving within existing communities.

County, city, town, and village governments should take the lead in implementing this policy, which is consistent with the central theme of the Opt-In vision to direct new growth in the region's towns and population centers, where development already exists. When development moves in the direction of existing population centers, conditions improve for walking, biking, and public transportation alternatives, giving residents and visitors true choices about how they move around their communities. Further, doing so reduces energy and resource consumption and helps protect air and water quality. The policy provides mobility to the region's aging population. Importantly, this also saves people money.

#### E2a Plan for the creation of complete streets.

Jurisdictions should incorporate the recent NCDOT Complete Streets Design Guidelines in their transportation plans, if they have not yet done so. Complete Streets is an approach to street design that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable convenient, comfortable, and safe travel and access by those walking, bicycling, driving automobiles, riding public transportation, or delivering goods.

#### E2b Prioritize pedestrian and bikeway projects for funding through the Rural Planning Organization.

Trails and greenways are an emerging and important piece of the transportation network. Ongoing implementation should be a priority to position the region as a leader in recreation and wellness. This strategy should also be coordinated with efforts to improve access to the region's parks. Funding is, however, limited. At 2.2%, the State of North Carolina is 19th among the 50 states for the percentage of federal transportation dollars applied to bicycling and walking. (Source: Bicycling and Walking in the United States, 2014 Benchmarking Report, Alliance for Biking and Walking.) For more information, see [www.bikewalkalliance.org/](http://www.bikewalkalliance.org/).

### E2c Expand transit options and service frequency.

The RPO should initiate a dialogue with transit operators and the EBCI to expand public transportation options in the region. Regional transit has not been fully explored, possibly due to the lack of population density and low ridership potential. There are, however, examples of low-density regions where transit operators have agreed to operate regionally. One of the best known is the Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance, with agencies in four neighboring counties. The alliance created the North by Northwest Connector—a bus route that connects towns in rural Oregon and crosses county borders but doesn't require a transfer. The funding for the service is shared among agencies, and riders can purchase passes for the connector through any of the transit agencies. For more information about the Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance, see [www.nworegontransit.org/](http://www.nworegontransit.org/).

### E3 Expand regional connectivity.

The SWC should take steps to expand connectivity outside the seven-county region. It should focus on a variety of fronts:

- ★ Complete the ongoing Freight Study and implement its recommendations.
- ★ Work with NCDOT and rail operators to increase freight rail service in the region and expand tourism-based passenger rail.
- ★ Identify intermodal truck, air, and rail transfer opportunities.
- ★ Plan for the future of the region's airports.
- ★ Coordinate with Tennessee, South Carolina, and Georgia to identify regional issues and opportunities.

## BEYOND THE SEVEN COUNTIES (TRANSPORTATION)

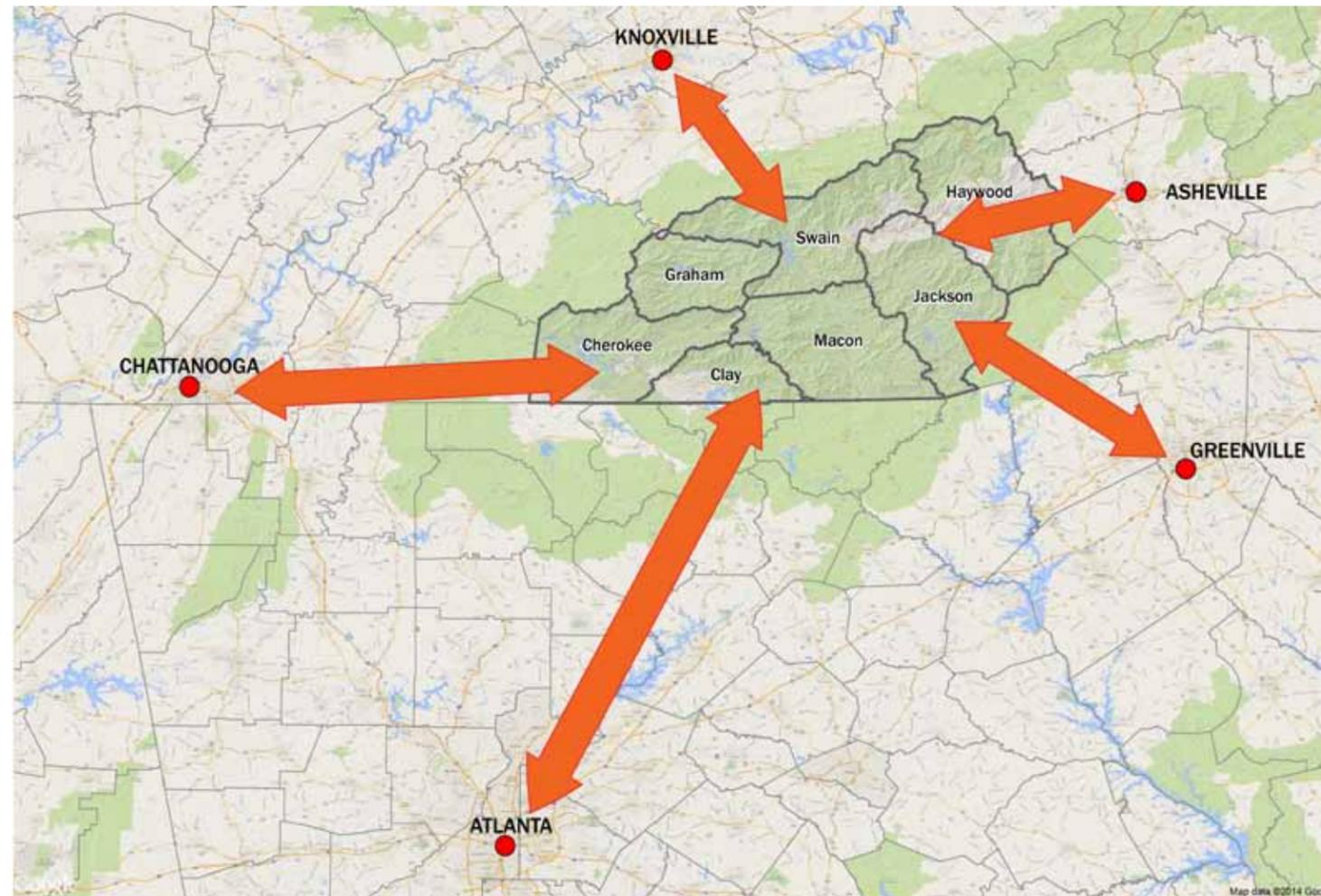
### ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY TO THE LARGER REGION

The Opt-In region is tied to a broader geographic area that spans multiple counties and states, and relies on relationships with larger economic engines such as Atlanta and Chattanooga. A critical part of this reliance is the availability of safe, efficient, and reliable transportation corridors to bring people and goods to and from the region. During the Opt-In process, the team heard repeatedly how aware the region is of its reliance on a broader region—most notably Chattanooga and Atlanta, in addition to Asheville and Greenville.

Several desires were brought forward by the communities of the region during the Opt-In process:

- ★ A desire to enhance road connectivity to the broader region, especially to Atlanta, Chattanooga, and Knoxville, for personal travel as well as commerce, including the completion of Corridor K in some form consistent with the ADHS requirements.
- ★ A desire to enhance existing rail service for excursion tourism within the region, and to study the feasibility of reconnecting the region in the long term to Atlanta by filling the gap between Murphy and Mineral Springs, Georgia, for freight and eventually passenger service.
- ★ A desire to enhance the travel options available to residents and businesses in the region to reduce travel times to destinations such as Atlanta, Chattanooga, Asheville, Knoxville, and Greenville.
- ★ A desire to create redundant network and modal opportunities along specific routes, in order to offer alternatives should inclement weather or other issues make one connection impassable.

By acting on these desires as articulated in the recommendations and priority actions section of this regional vision, the area can achieve the mobility and support needed to realize its future economic vision.



This map shows the region's proximity to, and desired connectivity with, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and the rest of North Carolina.

## CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Many state and local transportation agencies, including the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), are making strides to incorporate a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach to highway planning and design. A CSS approach goes beyond addressing a road's efficiency, safety, and structural design. It encourages a road to fit its setting. CSS stipulates that the highway fit its setting while preserving or improving natural, cultural, and scenic resources, and addressing or enhancing local economies, multimodal travel, and sound land use practices. Additionally, a CSS approach considers the context of the road (physical setting, who will use the road, adjacent buildings, etc.) rather than just engineering concerns. This approach ensures that facilities are built in harmony with both the natural and built environments in which they occur, and that they help enable the overall regional vision.



High school students, in the weeklong Graham County workshop, imagining the future.

## THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT: A VISION FOR COMMUNITY

### ISSUES

Housing choices are limited. The region's spread-out development patterns and the absence of a major urbanized center have limited the type of homes available almost exclusively to single-family and manufactured homes. Comments from the community revealed that availability of townhomes, condos, apartments, and downtown living is very limited, affecting first-time homebuyers and renters as well as older residents. They also revealed that availability of affordable housing is inadequate and that workers find it difficult to find accommodation reasonably close to where jobs are.

Education attainment in the seven-county region lags well behind the rest of the state, due in part to the flight of young people. This needs to be addressed at the appropriate levels; however, as is often the case, there is a disconnect between what young people learn in school and what the job market requires.

Arts and culture, an important component of the region's quality of life and economy, struggle with lack of resources.

Reliable access to quality healthcare is a challenge across all demographic groups. It is particularly acute in Graham County, where healthcare is jeopardized by limited facilities and greater distances to increasingly regionalized specialty care services. The region's residents' median age is 45, which is nearly 8 years above that of the state. As residents grow older, they will place further stress on the availability of health services. Physical wellness is also an issue. The westernmost counties of Cherokee, Swain, and Graham rank respectively 83, 78, and 76 out of the 100 counties in the state in terms of adult and child obesity and diabetes rates, according to the National Institute for Children's Health Quality.

### SOLUTIONS

There is a strong desire to address these issues and to improve quality of life in an equitable way throughout the region. These are, of course, challenging issues that counties, local governments, and boards of education have worked hard to address. Lack of resources, market imperatives, and, in some cases, the geography of the region have been obstacles. The Opt-In vision in its totality already recommends solutions that will address and change those conditions. Improvements in transportation connectivity will make the region's health facilities easier to reach. Policies to direct growth to existing communities will increase housing choices and support active living. Understanding which industries are better suited to the region will enable better coordination of school curricula and workforce needs. Marketing the region will also market the arts and crafts sector and extend tourists' stay.

A regional perspective lends a new sense of urgency to address the quality-of-life issues listed below. They are not only important in themselves but also key to enabling the region to be competitive, attract and retain qualified workers and young families, and prosper.

### KEY TRENDS AND REFERENCES

Information about quality of life issues is available in **Volume 2, Baseline Vision, Regional Trends** section, page 51. This section includes information on: employment and unemployment, income levels, poverty rates, demographic trends, age and age distribution, race, education, and housing. Key trends include:

***The seven-county region has relatively low incomes, which is consistent with broader trends for rural areas...*** The problem of low incomes is mitigated by lower housing costs, but exacerbated by the shift in employment from manufacturing to tourism.

***Regional unemployment has been consistently higher than state and national levels...*** The one exception is after the 2001 recession when regional unemployment dipped below state and national levels. See **Volume 2, Baseline Vision**, page 53.

**Population growth has been strong for a rural area...**

Though lagging the state, the population has grown faster than the national rate. However, population growth is projected to slow substantially in the next five years, with Cherokee and Graham counties expected to have negative growth.

**Education attainment in the seven-county region lags well behind the rest of the state...**

Standardized test scores indicate that low attainment is not due to low performance of students and schools; rather, it is due to the common problem of little opportunity leading people to either forsake education or not to stay in the area after completing a degree.

**The region is overwhelmingly racially homogenous with about 88% being white...**

Swain County is an outlier with about a third of the population being minority and a quarter being American Indian.

**The region's residents are older and aging...**

The median age is 45 years old, which is nearly 8 years older than the state of North Carolina. This follows a broader trend in rural areas, which is exacerbated by the region's relatively high retiree and second home population.

**Access to medical facilities is limited in some parts of the region...**

Rural areas (particularly in Graham and Swain Counties) have fewer facilities and remain more isolated from nearby facilities, due to distance, topography, and road infrastructure.

**GOALS**

**Social Issues**—Strong, well-coordinated local and regional systems are in place to improve healthcare, education, the availability of affordable housing, and services to the region's aging population.

**Arts and Culture**—A region where art, cultural programs, and strong institutions play a key economic role, motivate artists to move into the region, and keep visitors longer.

**F. POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY**

**F1 Promote health and wellness.**

The SWC should form an ad hoc regional coalition of health and educational institutions to address wellness and healthy lifestyles across all age groups. Over a period of 12 months, the coalition should:

- ★ Identify valuable initiatives and programs already in place.
- ★ Identify successful programs from other communities that the region could learn from and adopt.
- ★ Develop a health education curriculum for grades K–12 that teaches exercise, nutrition, and other basic health information.
- ★ Promote access to healthy food and expand farmers' markets.

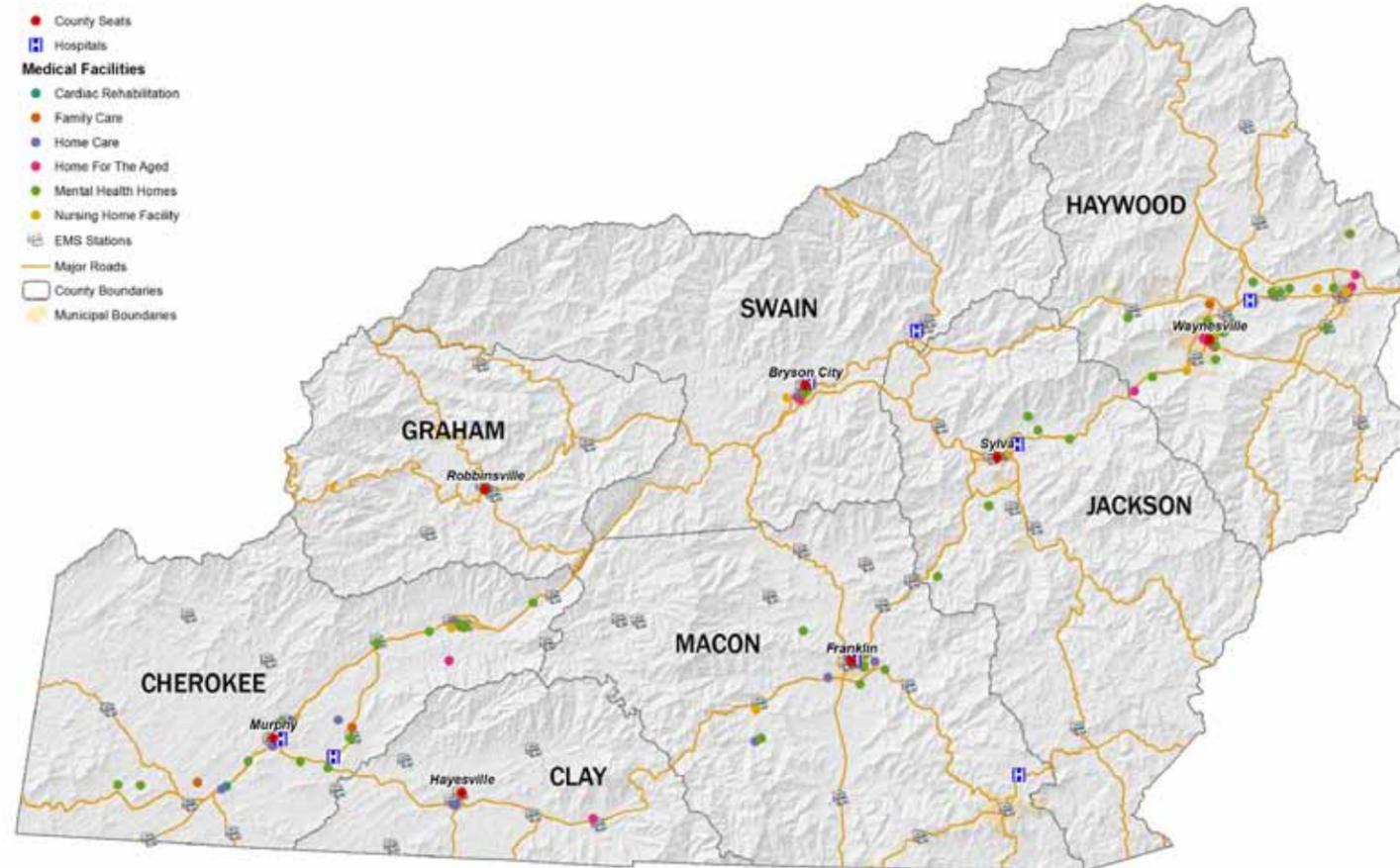
**F2 Achieve a better distribution of healthcare facilities throughout the region.**

The SWC should work with the region's hospitals to identify and address service gaps. See map below.

**F3 Start early; educate the future workforce.**

The SWC, through the Southwestern Workforce Development Board, should focus the workforce development consortium (created with policy **B5, Train the Workforce of the Future**) on early education steps. It should also work with school districts and local community colleges to develop high school curricula that create a seamless transition to the local workforce.

**HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL FACILITIES**



This map shows all existing hospitals, emergency medical services facilities, and other medical facilities within the region.

**THE CHATTANOOGA NEIGHBORHOOD ENTERPRISE**

Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) is a nonprofit housing organization with a mission to “build and sustain livable neighborhoods.” CNE orchestrates a variety of programs and services, including residential and small-business loans, financial counseling, and the development of affordable housing. The organization deliberately targets neighborhoods in historically underserved parts of Chattanooga that are in need of revitalization. For more information, see [www.cneinc.org](http://www.cneinc.org).

CNE was founded in 1986 as a result of a citywide visioning effort known as Vision 2000. At the outset, a significant portion of its funding came from several local banks that collaborated in order to be responsive to the Community Reinvestment Act. Today, many other partners offer funding and other support for CNE's initiatives, including city and county governments, foundations, national and local nonprofits, the Tennessee Housing Development Authority, and private donors.

CNE has been a great success for Chattanooga. Since 1986 it has assisted in more than 3,400 home purchases and provided home improvement assistance through loans and technical assistance to more than 2,800 homeowners. It has built 1,500 housing units, and counseled 1,100 households through a foreclosure prevention program that boasts a 92% success rate. Over the past 25 years, CNE has contributed \$500 million in direct economic impact in Chattanooga.

In 1994 CNE was chartered as the first affiliate member of NeighborWorks America, a national network of more than 235 community-based nonprofit organizations. NeighborWorks provides grants, programmatic support, training, and technical assistance to the members of its network.

In 1998 CNE organized the Chattanooga Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), which is chartered by the U.S. Treasury Department. CDFIs are specialized financial institutions working in niche markets that are often underserved by traditional banks (e.g., mortgage financing for low-income and first-time home buyers, flexible underwriting and risk capital for community facilities, technical assistance and commercial loans for small start-up businesses).

#### **F4 Meet the region's housing needs.**

The SWC should convene a Housing Task Force that includes representatives of business, housing developers, homebuilders, local housing and social service agencies, not-for-profits, and housing advocates. This is a key policy to attract young families to the region. The task force should:

- ★ Look at demographics and jobs trends.
- ★ Review current housing efforts and funding across the region.
- ★ Develop methods to incentivize more housing development, remove barriers to development, and encourage reuse of vacant and tax-delinquent properties—particularly those that are near employment centers—for affordable housing.

#### **F4a Conduct a residential market analysis.**

The task force should commission a residential market analysis to determine the region's for-rent and for-sale existing and anticipated housing needs across income levels. It should also identify the range of housing products needed to satisfy that market and how to best make those products available.

#### **F4b Establish a regional affordable housing home ownership program.**

The task force should review national models, many structured after the Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise or similar affordable housing programs. (See text box, at left.)

#### **F5 Support and expand the region's arts and crafts.**

The SWC should form an ad-hoc Arts and Crafts Working Group to focus on this important component of the region's heritage and economy. This is a field that includes visual and performing arts, crafts, cultural heritage, music and instrument making, and artisanal productions—e.g., craft beer, wine, and cheese. The working group should focus on how to best support the arts and build awareness of the value the arts bring to the region.

#### **F5a Support and promote the arts and crafts.**

The working group should:

- ★ Coordinate promotional activities with HandMade In America and the Southern Highlands Craft Guild, both based in Asheville.
- ★ Support existing cultural facilities and expand their regional reach.
- ★ Include regional arts and crafts as a key part of the regional brand.

#### **F5b Build awareness about the arts and crafts.**

The working group should:

- ★ Educate leaders and residents about the value of creative industries.
- ★ Work with K–12 schools to expand after-school cultural activities and apprenticeship and internship programs.
- ★ Create an online directory of the region's artists, cultural venues, and programs.

#### **F5c Attract artists to the region.**

The working group should:

- ★ Explore the desirability and feasibility of creating a strategically located regional cultural district modeled after the Great Smoky Arts and Crafts Village near Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Paducah, Kentucky, launched its Paducah Artist Relocation Program ([www.paducahalliance.org/](http://www.paducahalliance.org/)) in 2000, to attract artists to a neighborhood adjacent to its downtown. In addition to national marketing to attract artists, the program provides 100% financing to artists interested in rehabilitating an existing building or building a new one, free building lots, grants to cover architectural fees, and other benefits. Since the program was launched, more than 70 artists from throughout the country have moved to Paducah.
- ★ Provide tax incentives to artists and cultural institutions to move to the region.

**PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.**

## CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The vision's key policies and actions have been organized along an implementation timeline according to the following time frames.

**A. Now**, includes the policies and actions that need to start in the next six months.

**B. 18 Months**, includes initiatives that immediately follow those implemented in the Now time frame.

**C. Two to Five Years**, includes longer-range projects.

# 6. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

**THE POLICIES AND ACTIONS LISTED IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER SPELL OUT, IN A COMPREHENSIVE FASHION, WHAT THE REGION WANTS. THE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX PRIORITIZES THEM. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPT-IN VISION NEEDS TO START IN EARNEST TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM THAT THE PROCESS CREATED AND TO LEAD TO EARLY SUCCESSES THAT CAN INSPIRE ADDITIONAL ACTION.**

## BACKGROUND

There are three items to consider in preparation for implementation:

- ★ The vision has a horizon of 20-plus years. Over such a long stretch of time, many of the conditions that affect implementation today may change, so a policy or action that appears fanciful in today's political and economic climate (and therefore easy to dismiss) might become very feasible as a result of changed political and economic conditions.
- ★ The process of implementing the vision in and of itself can begin to change how we perceive things and act on them. The success of one initiative can lead to more. The revitalization of one downtown can become the example others follow. Thus it is important to look for projects that, by their success, can be the source of inspiration and further action.
- ★ Many of the policies and actions recommended are at different stages of being addressed in the region by the Southwestern Commission and by others. This fact indicates that those items are important and that they register as desirable with the community.

The Implementation Matrix presents the information in

chart format. In addition to the column that lists prioritized policies and actions, the matrix includes a column that makes reference to the affected vision pillar, a column that lists the lead agencies for the effort, and a column that identifies specific new entities to assist with implementing the vision.

Each policy or action is listed with the same reference letters and numbers used in **Chapter 5: Policies and Actions**. The capital letters refer to the vision considered:

- A for A Vision for Leadership and Implementation
- B for A Vision for Prosperity
- C for A Vision for Land and Culture
- D for A Vision for Place and Investments
- E for A Vision for Connectivity
- F for A Vision for Community.

The Southwestern Commission will take the leadership role in coordinating the vision's implementation. In doing so, it will bring together public and private entities that already exist and are active in the region. In addition, the vision calls for the formation of eight new entities to lead the implementation of specific aspects of the vision. None

of these new entities is proposed as permanent. They are ad hoc committees, task forces, institutes, and discussion forums that will sunset after their mission is completed.

**NOW**

POLICIES AND ACTIONS	PILLAR	LEAD	NEW ENTITY TO ASSIST WITH IMPLEMENTATION
<p><b>A1 Form an Implementation Committee.</b> The Southwestern Commission should take on the primary responsibility of coordinating implementation of Opt-In. To do so it should convene and staff an Implementation Committee.</p>	The Ways We Get Things Done	Southwestern Commission (SWC)	Implementation Committee to oversee implementation.
<p><b>E1a Appoint a Corridor K Task Force.</b> The SWC should appoint a Corridor K Task Force to advocate for the completion of North Carolina's segments of Corridor K.</p>	The Ways We Get Around	SWC	Corridor K Task Force to facilitate agreement.
<p><b>B1a Establish an independent regional economic development and marketing entity.</b> The SWC is currently incubating an economic development and marketing group called the Mountain West Alliance (MWA). The SWC should take the next step and formalize the group as an independent economic development and marketing entity for the region.</p>	The Economy We Need	SWC, MWA, Western Carolina University (WCU)	Formalize Mountain West Alliance to foster economic development and marketing.
<p><b>A3 Establish a Regional Rural Leadership Institute.</b> The SWC, working with the region's community colleges and Western Carolina University, should initiate the leadership program.</p>	The Way We Get Things Done	WCU, Community Colleges	Rural Leadership Institute to foster regional thinking and leadership.
<p><b>B4 Facilitate the success of entrepreneurial and small businesses. B4a Create an investment capital fund for emerging entrepreneurs.</b> The SWC should lead this initiative to increase access to capital for businesses at different stages of development.</p>	The Economy We Need	SWC, MWA	
<p><b>B5 Train the workforce of the future.</b> The SWC, through the Southwestern Workforce Development Board, should convene a workforce development consortium of postsecondary education and training institutions to develop and deliver the specific technology skills and talent needed in the emerging workplaces. Consider the WCU Annual Conference to initiate the program this fall.</p>	The Economy We Need	Southwestern Workforce Development Board (SWDB), WCU, SWC	

## 18 MONTHS

POLICIES AND ACTIONS	PILLAR	LEAD	NEW ENTITY TO ASSIST WITH IMPLEMENTATION
<b>B1a Commission a strategic five-year economic development plan.</b> The plan should build upon the 2012 CEDS report produced by the SWC and complete the process of identifying economic sectors most likely to stimulate business investment and jobs in the region.	The Economy We Need	SWC, MWA, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Smoky Mountain Host (SMH)	
<b>B1c and E 4 Brand and market the region's assets.</b> The creation of a regional identity will help the region market itself on a national and global scale.	The Economy We Need The Place We're Given	MWA, EBCI, SMH,	
<b>B3 Be ready for new industry.</b> The SWC should work with the seven counties and the WCU Millennial Initiative to identify optimal locations for the creation of regional-scale industrial sites; inventory existing regional capacity; identify optimal locations for the creation of regional-scale industrial sites; ensure availability of water, sewer, high-speed Internet, natural gas and energy, and adequate transportation to those locations.	The Economy We Need	SWC, MWA, WCU Millennial Initiative	
<b>C1 Form and coordinate the activities of an ad hoc Environmental Leadership Forum.</b> The SWC should form an Environmental Leadership Forum to include the EBCI, county representatives, large-property owners, local watershed organizations, and other nonprofits.	The Place We're Given	SWC, Environmental Leadership Forum, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee	Environmental Leadership Forum to assist in implementing the environmental aspects of the vision.
<b>C3 Celebrate the region's Appalachian and Native American heritage.</b> The SWC should build a partnership with EBCI, the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, and other heritage organizations to focus on heritage interpretation, heritage tourism opportunities, and marketing strategies.	The Place We're Given	SWC, EBCI, Cherokee Preservation Foundation	
<b>F2 Achieve a better distribution of health care facilities throughout the region.</b> The SWC should work with the region's hospitals to identify and address service gaps.	The Quality Of Life We Expect	SWC, Hospitals	
<b>E3 Expand regional connectivity.</b> The SWC and the RPO should take steps to expand connectivity outside the seven-county region. Work with NCDOT and rail operators to increase freight rail service in the region and to expand tourism-based passenger rail.	The Ways We Get Around	SWC, Rural Planning Organization (RPO), NCDOT, Rail Operators	
<b>F4 Meet the region's housing needs.</b> The SWC should convene a Housing Task Force that includes representatives of business, housing developers, home builders, local housing and social service agencies, not-for-profits, and housing advocates. Conduct a residential market analysis to determine the region's for-rent and for-sale existing and anticipated housing needs, and the range of housing products needed to satisfy that market.	The Quality Of Life We Expect	Housing Task Force, SWC, Division of Community Planning (DCP)	Housing Task Force to increase the availability of diverse and affordable housing products in the region.
<b>D3a Work with private service providers to partner in the expansion of broadband services.</b> Focus on underserved and difficult-to-reach areas.	The Places We Make	SWC, Jurisdictions, Broadband Providers	
<b>F1. Promote health and wellness.</b> The SWC should form an ad hoc coalition of health and educational institutions to address wellness and healthy lifestyles across all age groups.	The Quality Of Life We Expect	SWC, County Health Directors, Health Advocates	Ad hoc coalition of health and educational institutions to address wellness issues
<b>F3 Start early; educate the future workforce.</b> The SWC, through the Southwestern Workforce Development Board, should focus the workforce development consortium (created with policy B5, Train the Workforce of the Future) on early education steps and work with school districts and local community colleges to develop a high school curriculum that expedites a seamless transition to the local workforce. Coordinate with the Western Region Education Service Alliance (WRESA)	The Economy We Need The Quality Of Life We Expect	Southwestern Workforce Development Board (SWDB), School Districts, WCU, SWC, WRESA	

## TWO TO FIVE YEARS

POLICIES AND ACTIONS	PILLAR	LEAD	NEW ENTITY TO ASSIST WITH IMPLEMENTATION
<p><b>B2 Diversify and expand the economy.</b> The MWA should begin the process of implementing the recommendations of the strategic economic development plan, working with the region’s economic development directors and identified regional partners.</p>	The Economy We Need	MWA, Economic Development Directors	
<p><b>D2 Create vibrant, lived-in, and prosperous town centers.</b> SWC should convene county managers and mayors to discuss how to best align local policies and plans with the vision’s goals. Assist local jurisdictions, if requested, to review their current codes and land development regulations to remove obstacles and introduce amendments that further the creation of vibrant, walkable communities.</p>	The Places We Make	Local Jurisdictions, ARC Division of Community Planning (DCP), SWC	
<p><b>D1b Develop incentives that direct businesses and residents toward areas already served by infrastructure.</b> Local jurisdictions should consider a variety of incentives to direct growth toward their primary investment areas.</p>	The Places We Make	Local Jurisdictions	
<p><b>B6 Promote and support agriculture as a viable economic practice.</b> Raise awareness of the economic and health benefits of agriculture. Encourage local jurisdictions to review and update policies and codes to allow for agricultural practices wherever appropriate. Uniformly permit low-impact agricultural activities within viable agricultural areas. Develop a coordinated marketing effort and expanding farmers market in partnership with the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP).</p>	The Economy We Need	Local Jurisdictions, EBCI, NCDA, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP).	
<p><b>E1c Continue improvements to primary and secondary roads.</b> The SWC and the RPO should continue the process of prioritizing improvements to primary and secondary roads in the region following the guidelines of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).</p>	The Ways We Get Around	SWC, RPO, NCDOT	
<p><b>D4 Prioritize the maintenance and extension of water and sewer.</b> Communities should work with utility providers to prioritize improvements and extension to current infrastructure consistent with the Opt-In growth and development objectives. Consider regional solid waste disposal facilities.</p>	The Places We Make	Local Jurisdictions, Utility Providers	
<p><b>F5 Support and expand the region’s arts and crafts.</b> The SWC should form an ad hoc Arts and Crafts Working Group to focus on this important component of the region’s heritage and economy.</p>	The Quality Of Life We Expect	Arts and Crafts Working Group, Hand Made in America, South ern Highland Craft Guild	Ad hoc Arts and Crafts Working Group to expand their cultural and economic presence in the region.
<p><b>C2 Make clean air and clean water a priority.</b> The SWC should lead an effort to inventory environmental data and conditions across the seven-county area and to identify management and protective actions needed.</p>	The Place We’re Given	WCU, The Canary Coalition, Duke Energy	
<p><b>E2 Develop mobility alternatives within existing communities.</b> Jurisdictions should take the lead in implementing this policy, which is consistent with the central theme of the Opt-In vision to direct new growth in the region’s towns and populated centers. They should prioritize pedestrian and bikeway projects and seek funding through the RPO. The SWC should provide assistance to develop guidelines for the creation of complete streets.</p>	The Ways We Get Around	RPO, Local Jurisdictions, DCA	
<p><b>E2c Expand transit options and service frequency.</b> The RPO should initiate a dialogue with transit operators to expand public transportation options in the region and to encourage service to eliminate the current gaps in service across county lines.</p>	The Ways We Get Around	RPO, Transit Operators, EBCI	

# 7. APPENDIX

The appendix includes:

## A. Suitability Modeling

1. Land Suitable for Jobs, Housing, and Infrastructure Map
2. Land Most Suitable for Agriculture Map
3. Conservation Suitability Map
4. Areas of Conflict between Land Suitable for Jobs, Housing, and Infrastructure and Land Suitable for Agriculture
5. Areas of Conflict between Land Suitable for Jobs, Housing, and Infrastructure and Land Suitable for Conservation

## B. Regional Investment Guide by County

1. Regional Investment Guide: Cherokee County
2. Regional Investment Guide: Clay County
3. Regional Investment Guide: Graham County
4. Regional Investment Guide: Haywood County
5. Regional Investment Guide: Jackson County
6. Regional Investment Guide: Macon County
7. Regional Investment Guide: Swain County

## C. Performance Indicators

## D. Community Workshops Survey Results

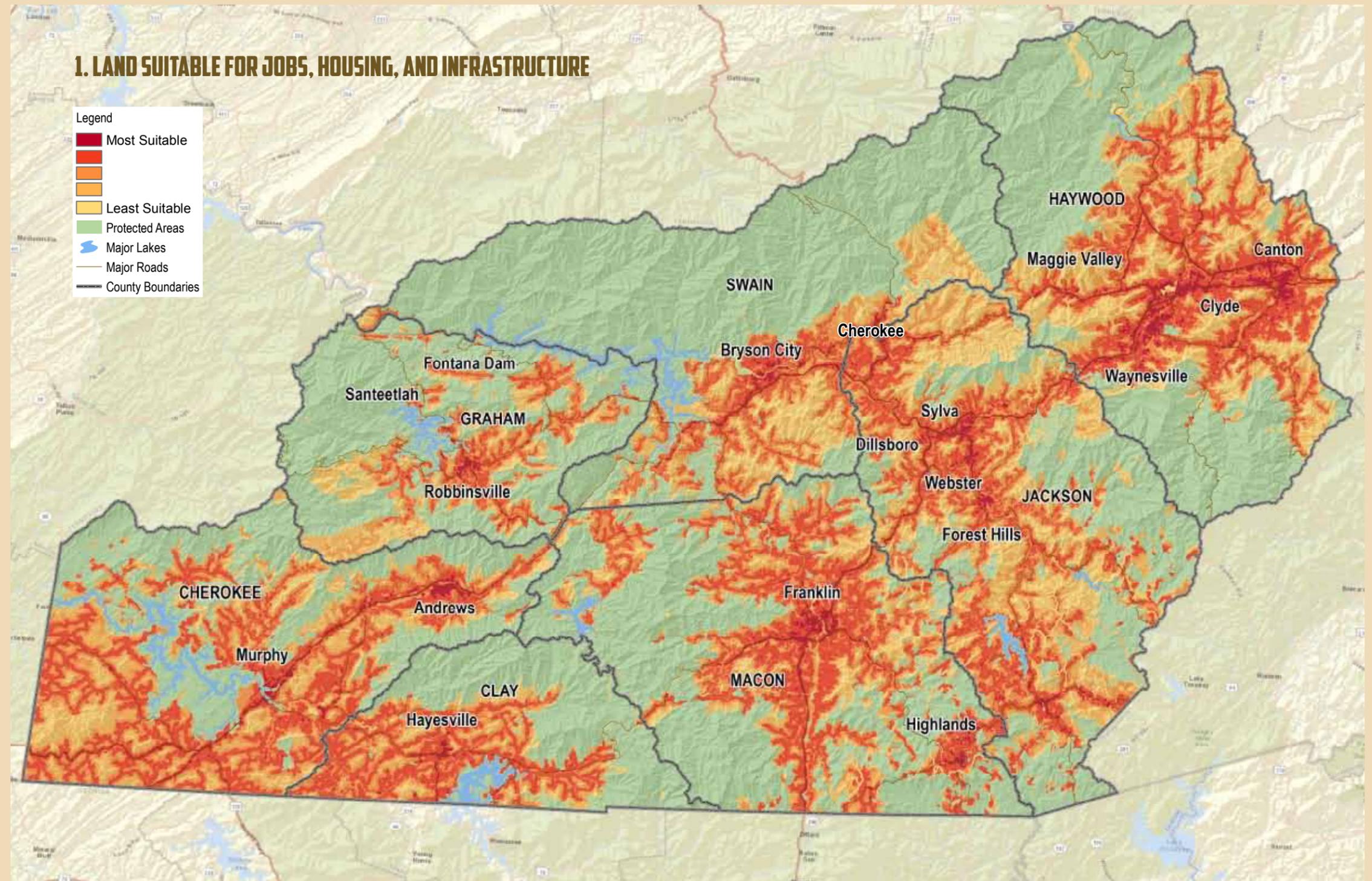
## A. SUITABILITY MODELING

### OVERVIEW

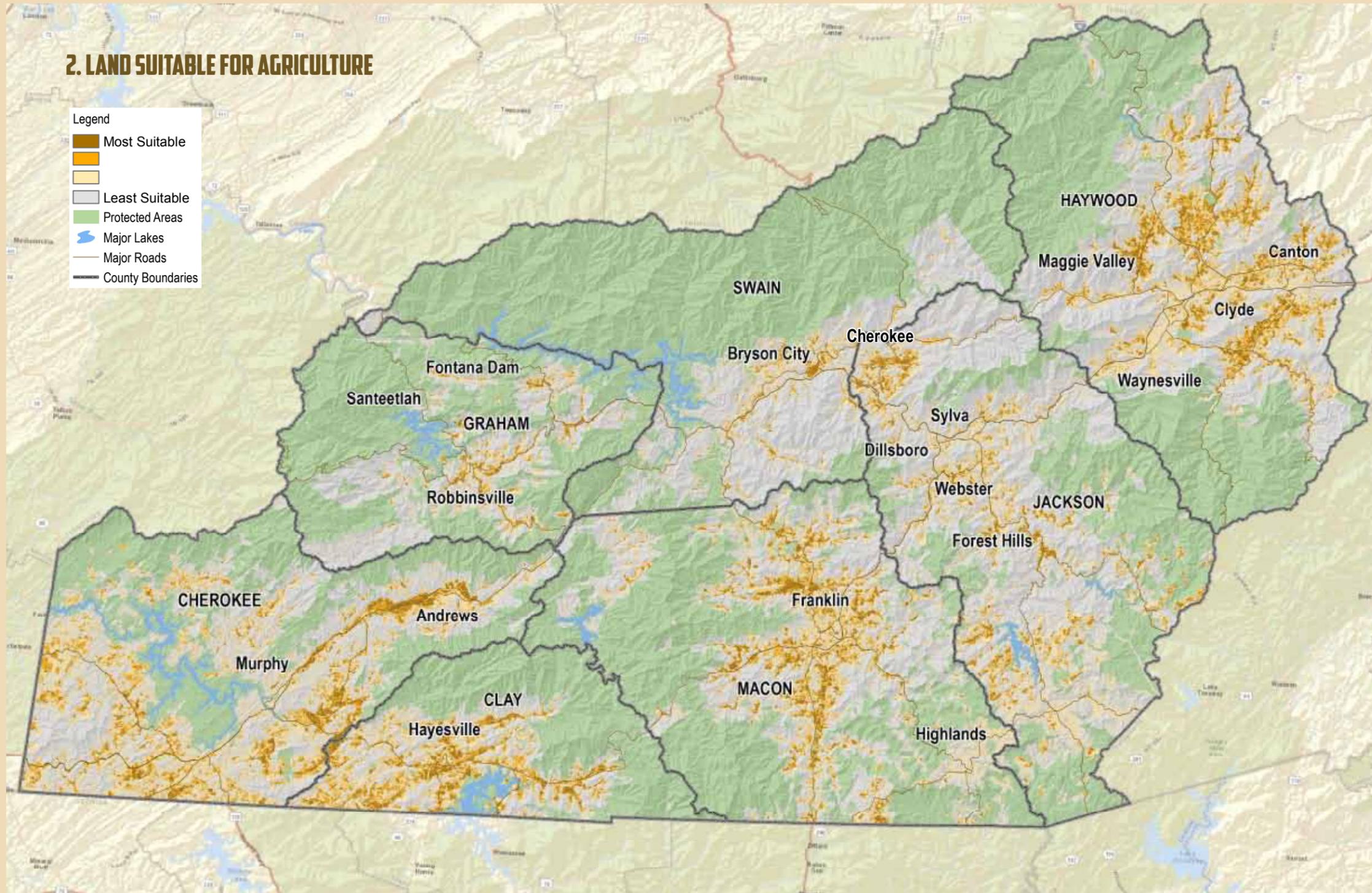
Suitability modeling is a process that determines the fitness of an area of land, ranking from high to low in suitability for a specified use. It can be helpful in answering the question, What is the best location? as it helps one understand limitations and potentials for different land uses and shows areas where future land use conflicts are likely to occur. The four suitability maps displayed here show the results of this modeling.

### LAND SUITABLE FOR JOBS, HOUSING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The jobs, housing, and infrastructure suitability model is based on land already developed (as shown in the 2006 national land-cover dataset), roads, floodplains, and slope. This information was added together to form the model base. The map at right shows land that is suitable for additional jobs, housing, and infrastructure. Shown in red is the most suitable land. Shown in yellow is the least suitable land.



## 2. LAND SUITABLE FOR AGRICULTURE

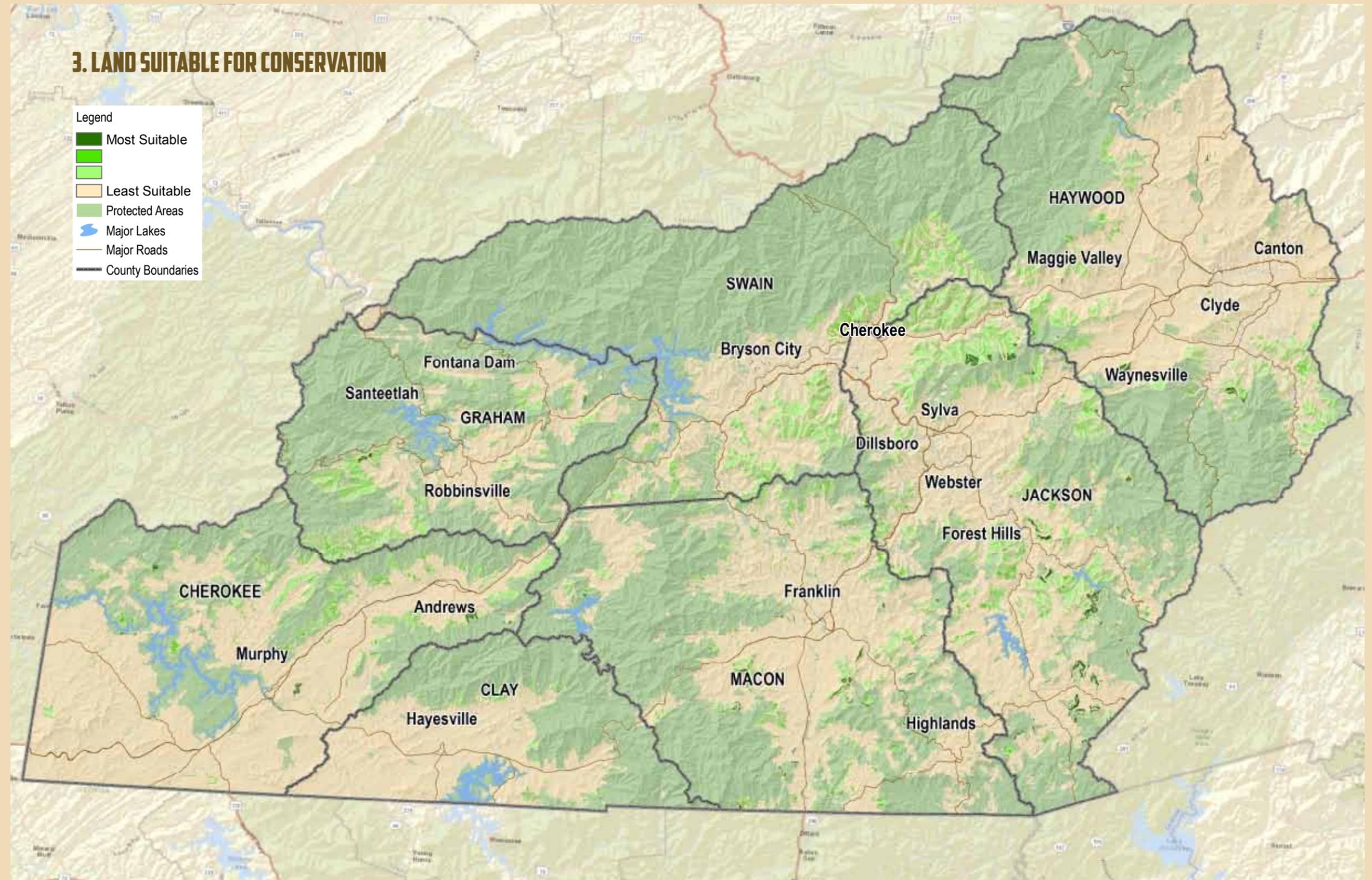


## LAND SUITABLE FOR AGRICULTURE

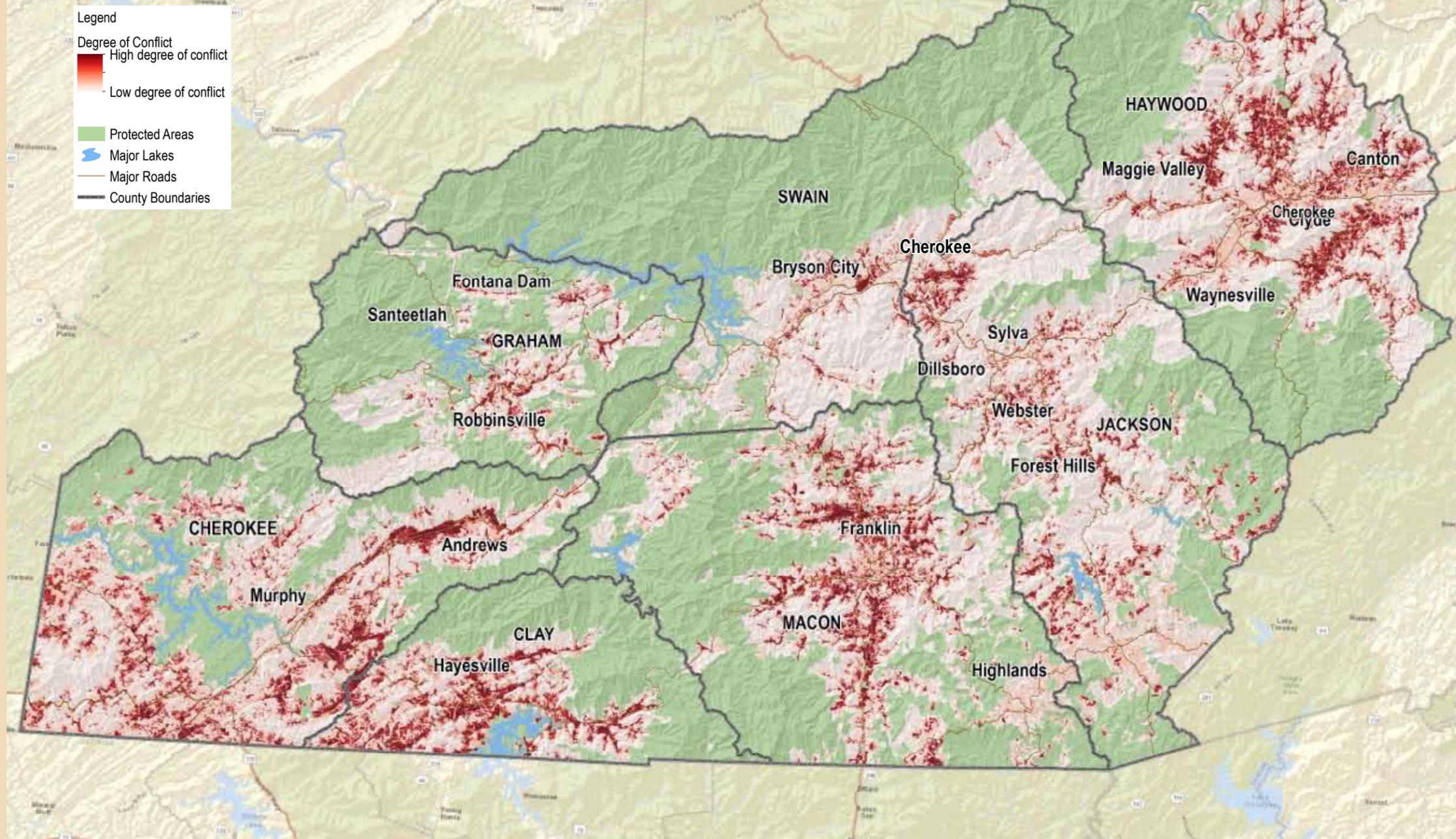
The agriculture suitability model relies on the agriculture land shown in the 2006 national land-cover dataset, lands that have a slope of less than 20 percent, and parcels that are listed as having an agriculture use. This information was added together to form the model base. The map at left shows land suitable for agriculture. Shown in brown is the most suitable land. Shown in yellow is the least suitable.

### LAND SUITABLE FOR CONSERVATION

The conservation suitability model relies on classes 7–10 from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program’s biodiversity and wildlife habitat assessment model, all lands managed for conservation, streams, wetlands, and federal critical habitat. This information is grouped and shown into four categories ranging from high to low suitability for conservation. The low suitability areas, shown in yellow, are largely private lands that have some suitability for conservation. The high suitability areas, shown in dark green, are already protected.



#### 4. AREAS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN LAND SUITABLE FOR JOBS, HOUSING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND SUITABLE FOR AGRICULTURE

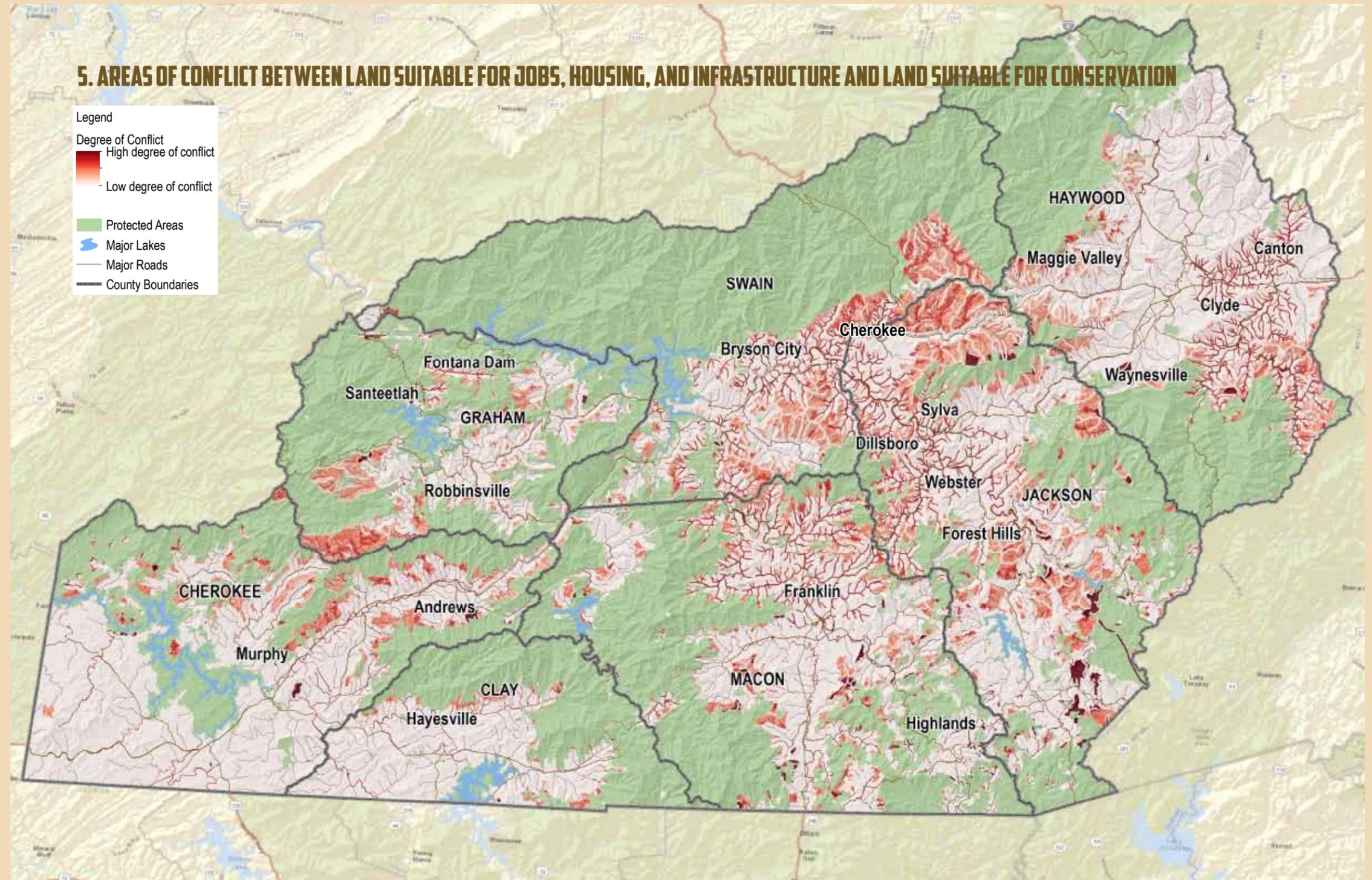


#### CONFLICT MAPS

The two following maps identify potential conflicts between 1) jobs, housing, and infrastructure and agricultural areas and 2) jobs, housing, and infrastructure and conservation areas. When conflict exists, local jurisdictions need to prioritize the use of the land based on community priorities. Both maps show that limited land in the Opt-In region is in true conflict. The map at left shows that most conflict between land suitable for jobs, housing, and infrastructure and land suitable for agriculture can be found in the region's relatively flat land that surrounds existing towns.

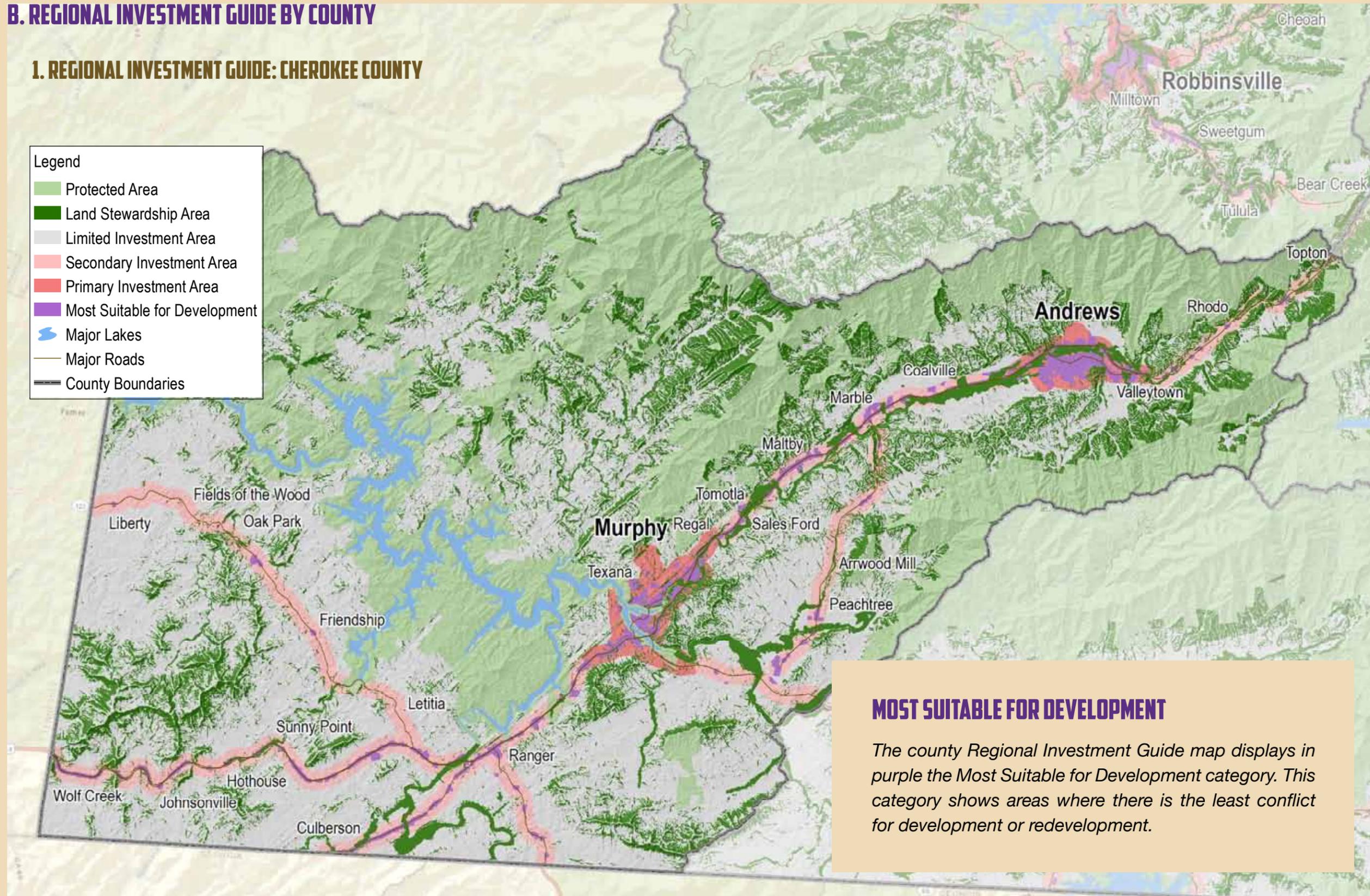
## CONFLICT MAPS (CONTINUED)

The map to the right shows that there is very limited conflict between the jobs, housing, and infrastructure areas and conservation areas. This is due to the fact that most areas well suited for conservation are more isolated and occur along streams, steep slopes, and in wetland areas, none of which are very suitable for investments or development. Pockets of conflict areas are spread equally among the seven counties, with a slightly greater concentration in the vicinity of Forest Hills, Franklin, Bryson City, and Cherokee.



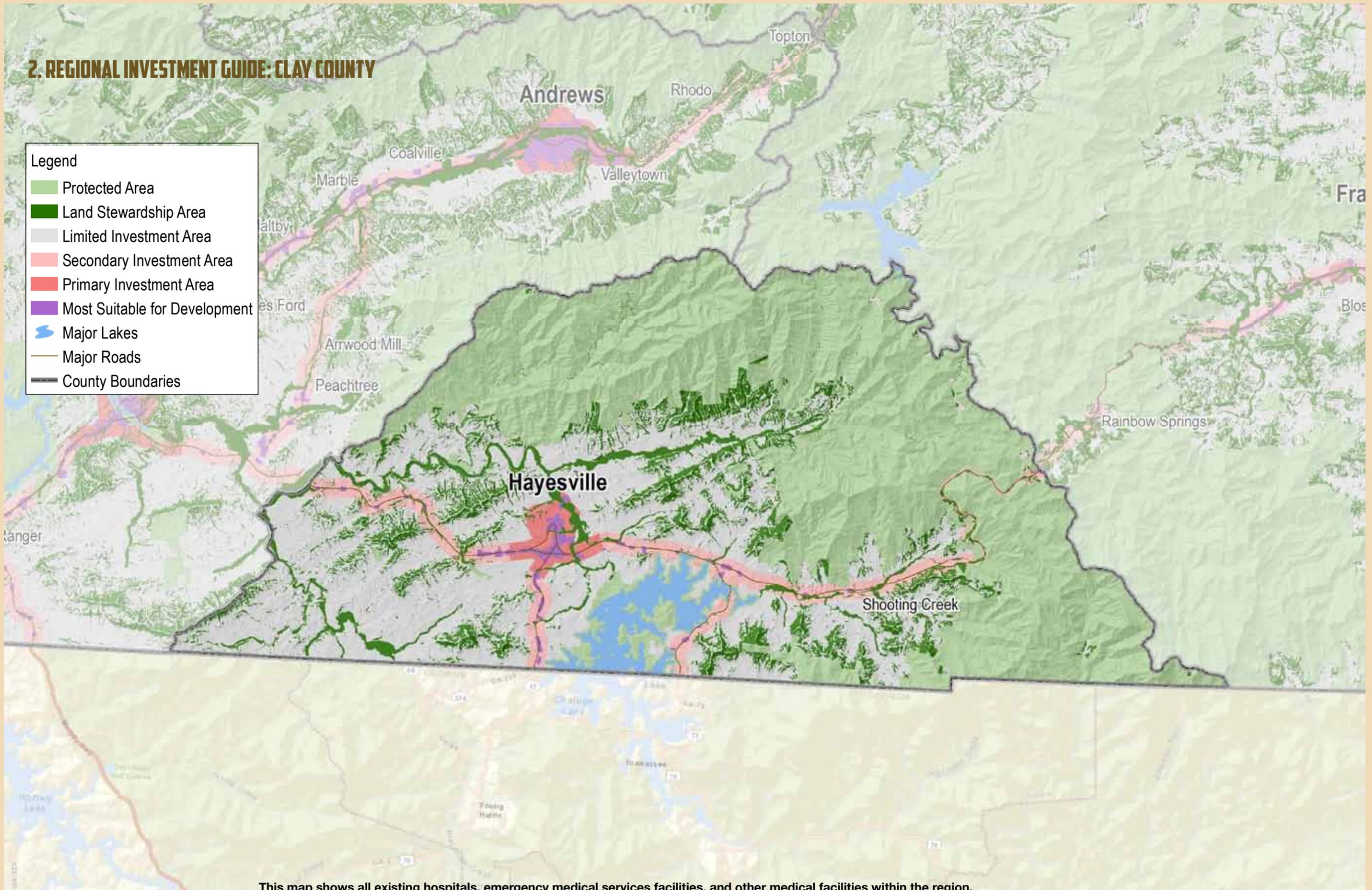
## B. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE BY COUNTY

### 1. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE: CHEROKEE COUNTY



This and the following maps are shown at the same scale and oriented with the North at the top. A high resolution view of the maps is available at [optinswnc.nemac.org/gis/regionalinvestmentguide/](https://optinswnc.nemac.org/gis/regionalinvestmentguide/)

## 2. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE: CLAY COUNTY

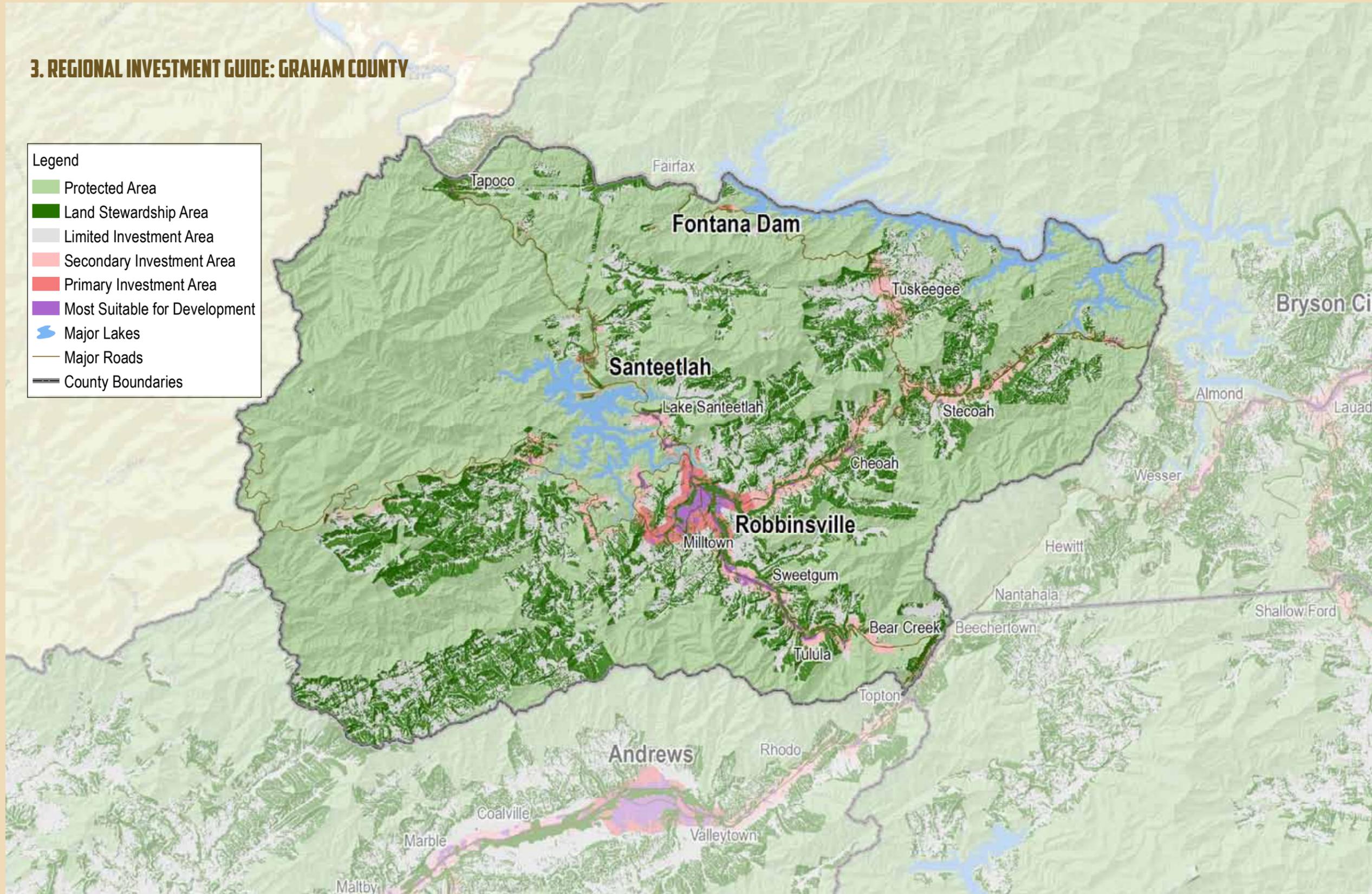


This map shows all existing hospitals, emergency medical services facilities, and other medical facilities within the region.

### 3. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE: GRAHAM COUNTY

**Legend**

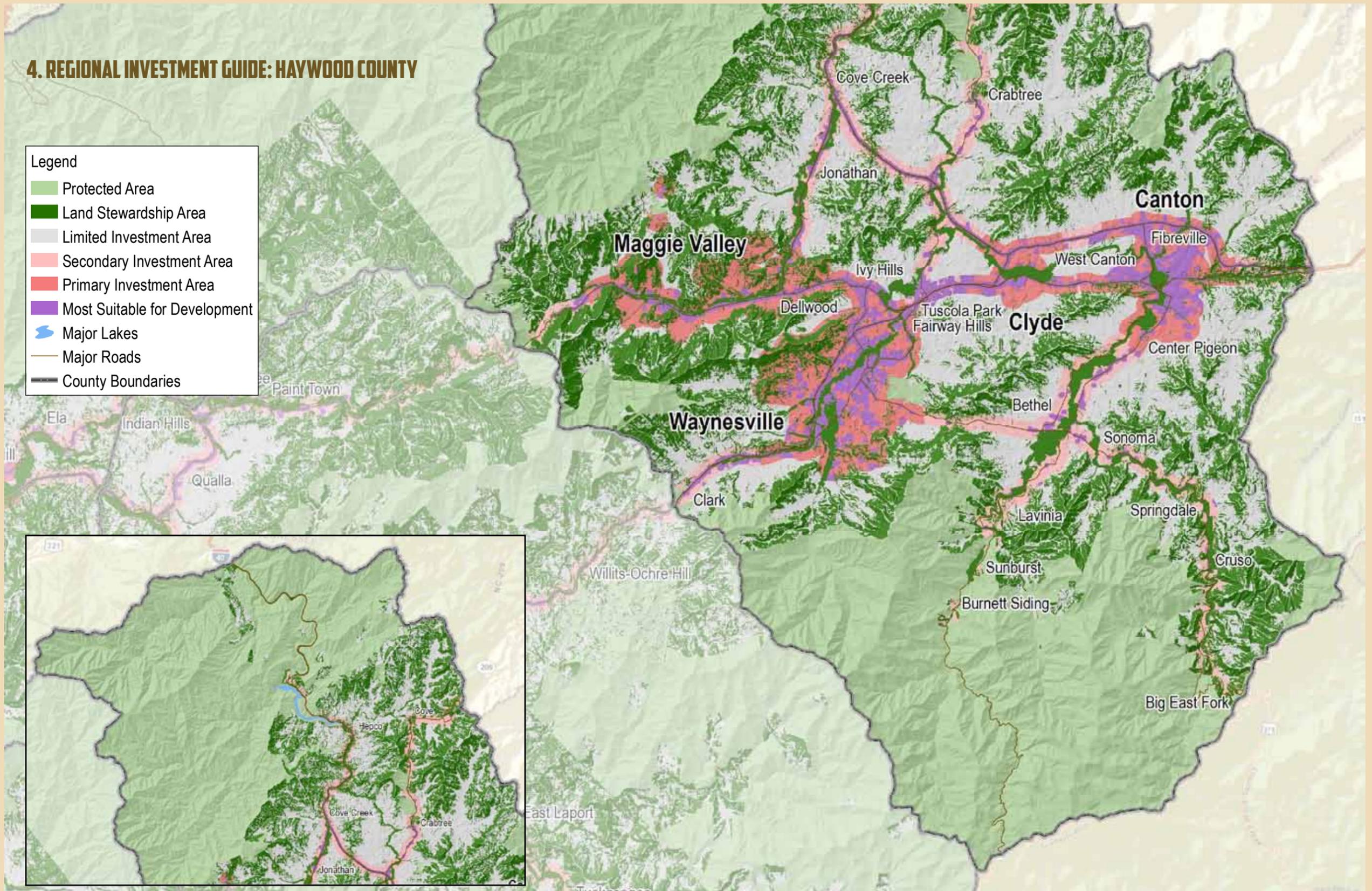
- Protected Area
- Land Stewardship Area
- Limited Investment Area
- Secondary Investment Area
- Primary Investment Area
- Most Suitable for Development
- Major Lakes
- Major Roads
- County Boundaries



#### 4. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE: HAYWOOD COUNTY

**Legend**

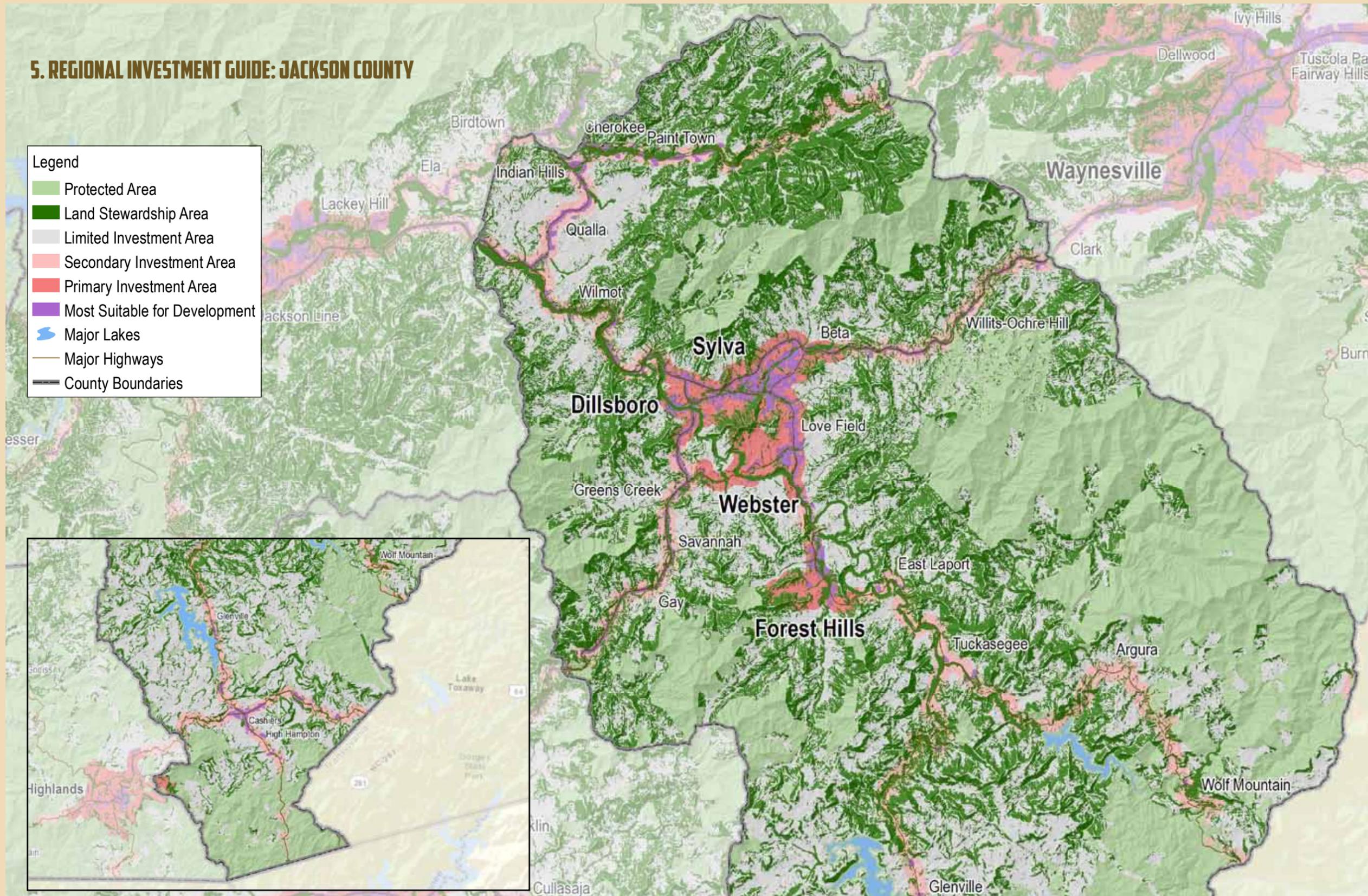
- Protected Area
- Land Stewardship Area
- Limited Investment Area
- Secondary Investment Area
- Primary Investment Area
- Most Suitable for Development
- Major Lakes
- Major Roads
- County Boundaries

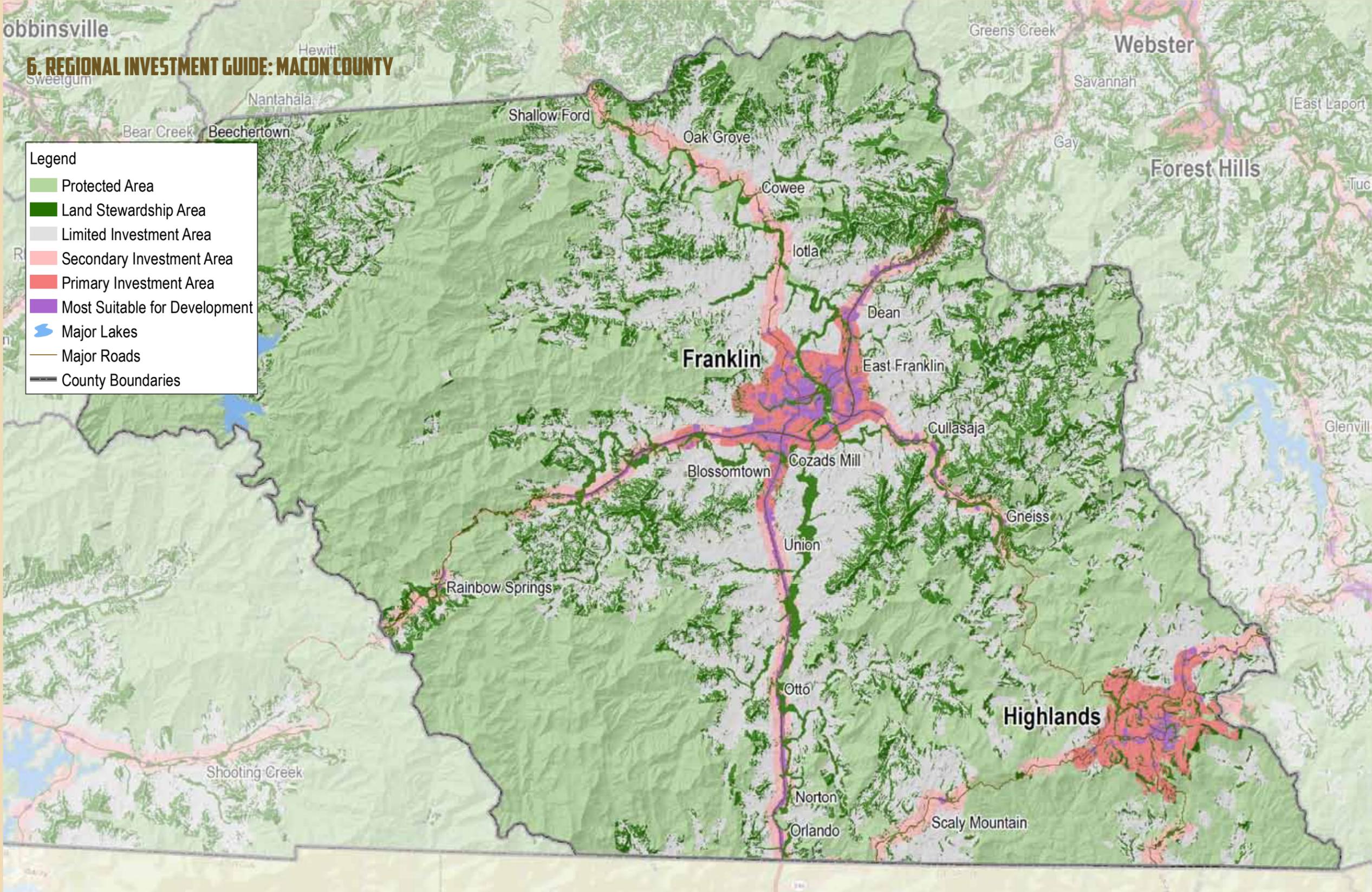


## 5. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE: JACKSON COUNTY

**Legend**

- Protected Area
- Land Stewardship Area
- Limited Investment Area
- Secondary Investment Area
- Primary Investment Area
- Most Suitable for Development
- Major Lakes
- Major Highways
- County Boundaries

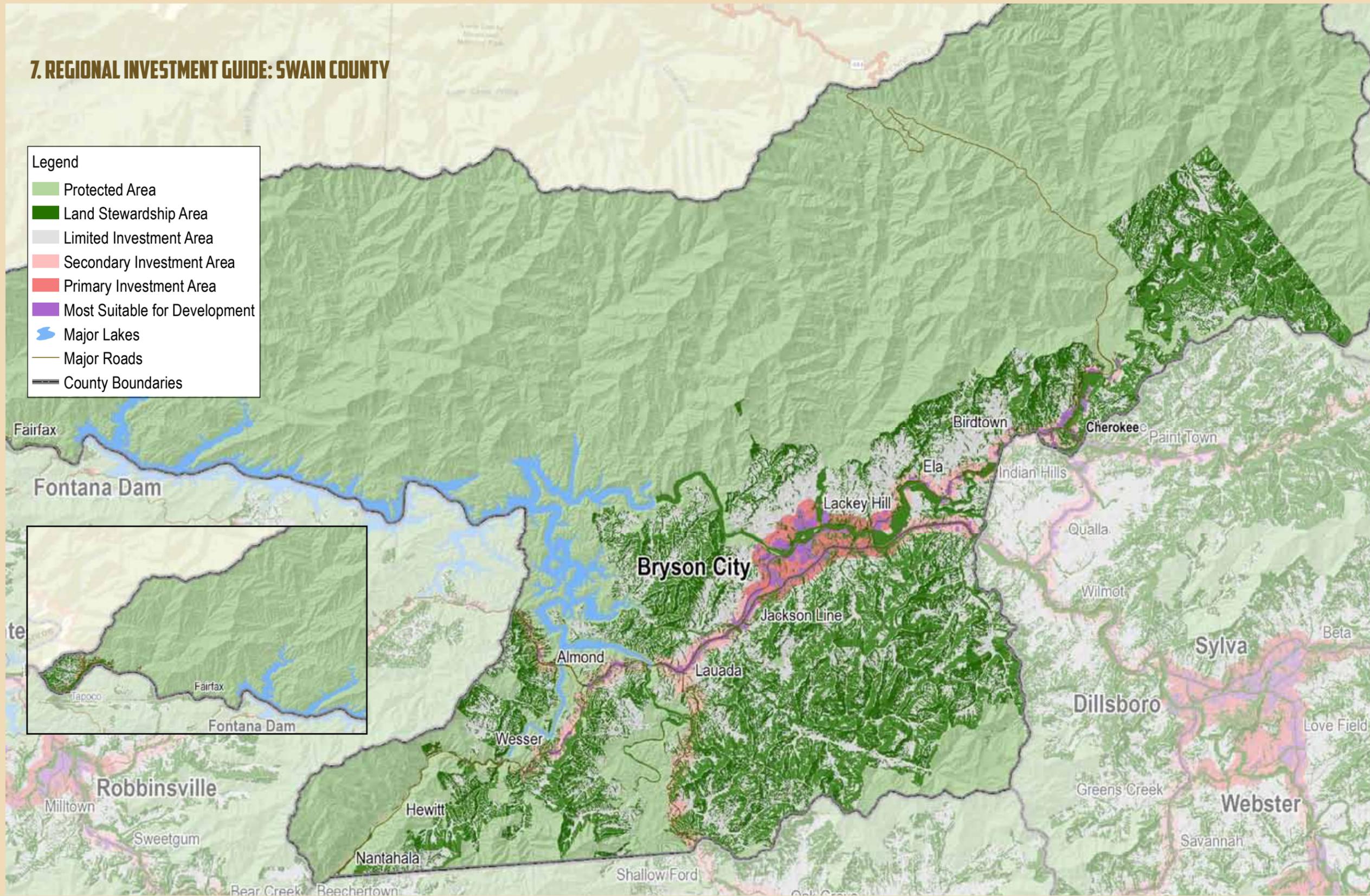




## 7. REGIONAL INVESTMENT GUIDE: SWAIN COUNTY

**Legend**

- Protected Area
- Land Stewardship Area
- Limited Investment Area
- Secondary Investment Area
- Primary Investment Area
- Most Suitable for Development
- Major Lakes
- Major Roads
- County Boundaries



## C. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	SCENARIO A: STAYING THE COURSE	SCENARIO B: TARGETED MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT	SCENARIO C: ROBUST MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT
<b>PILLAR: THE PLACE WE'RE GIVEN</b>			
Forest land converted for new residential and commercial development	25 square miles of forested land converted	18 square miles of forest land converted	10 square miles of forest land converted
Amount of development on steep slopes; impact on views	Some impact on steep slopes and views	Less impact on steep slopes and views as some residents choose to live closer to existing towns	Little impact on steep slopes and views as a majority of new residents choose to live closer to existing towns
Water quality and wildlife habitat	Some decrease in water quality; habitat becomes more fragmented	Less decrease in water quality; habitat is not as fragmented	Little decrease in water quality; little habitat becomes fragmented
<b>PILLAR: THE ECONOMY WE NEED</b>			
Attracting and retaining young people	Population continues to age; young people continue to leave the region	Some young people are attracted to stay in or move to the region by the availability of skilled jobs for which they qualify	A significant number of young people are attracted to stay in or move to the region by the availability of skilled jobs for which they qualify
Farmland converted for new residential and commercial development	9 square miles of farmland converted	6 square miles of farmland converted	4 square miles of farmland converted
<b>PILLAR: THE PLACES WE MAKE</b>			
Total land area used for new residential and commercial development	40 new square miles of land used	28 new square miles of land used	17 new square miles of land used
Vibrant and walkable downtowns	Downtowns continue slow revitalization	Downtowns become more vibrant and walkable	Significant revitalization of downtowns
<b>PILLAR: THE WAYS WE GET AROUND</b>			
Annual gasoline cost for typical individual commuter	\$1,980 per year	\$1,630 per year	\$1,280 per year
Amount of driving required outside your town or community	Increase in having to drive outside your local community for goods and services	Slight decrease in having to drive outside your community as more goods and services are available nearby	Significant decrease in having to drive outside your community as more goods and services are available nearby
Amount of freight traffic (roads and rail)	No increase in freight traffic	Slight increase in freight traffic	Moderate increase in freight traffic
<b>PILLAR: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT</b>			
Access to high-speed Internet service	Continued limited accessibility to high-speed Internet	More people have access to high speed Internet	Significantly more people have access to high-speed Internet
New residents within one mile of towns and population centers	3,000 new residents live near towns and closer to goods and services, but most live farther away	16,000 new residents live near towns and closer to goods and services, but some still live farther away	24,000 new residents live near towns and closer to goods and services, and few live farther away

This summary of the performance indicators was used by participants to comment on their preferences and comments.

## D. COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS SURVEY RESULTS BY COUNTY AND REGION

	GRAHAM	MACON	SWAIN	CLAY	CHEROKEE	HAYWOOD	JACKSON	REGION
<b>A. Which is preferable to you:</b>								
1. To brand the region and market it together	60%	86%	91%	53%	51%	96%	67%	67%
2. Or to continue to compete for tourism and business at county and town levels	40%	14%	9%	47%	49%	4%	33%	33%
<b>B. When attracting and locating new businesses, which is preferable to you:</b>								
1. To develop shared regional business parks	42%	48%	70%	22%	29%	58%	33%	41%
2. Or to develop local ones	58%	52%	30%	78%	71%	42%	67%	59%
<b>C. Which is preferable to you:</b>								
1. Focusing on tourism and small businesses	85%	77%	50%	89%	80%	55%	83%	76%
2. Or attracting large employers such as light industry	15%	23%	50%	11%	20%	45%	17%	24%
<b>D. How important is it to create interesting towns that attract and keep young people?</b>								
1. Very Important	80%	63%	100%	58%	64%	83%	83%	72%
2. Somewhat Important	20%	30%	0%	42%	30%	17%	17%	25%
3. Not Important	0%	7%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	3%
<b>E. How important is it to you and your family to have housing choices in the region?</b>								
1. Very Important	74%	59%	64%	65%	52%	79%	33%	63%
2. Somewhat Important	24%	31%	27%	25%	31%	13%	50%	27%
3. Not Important	2%	10%	9%	10%	17%	8%	17%	10%
<b>F. Which is preferable to you:</b>								
1. To manage and regulate future growth	71%	82%	60%	47%	56%	100%	67%	69%
2. Or to prioritize property owners' rights	29%	18%	40%	53%	44%	0%	33%	31%

This chart, continued on the next page, shows the results of the 203 surveys fielded at the second round of Community Workshops. It provides results by county and for the region as a whole.

## D. COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS' SURVEY RESULTS (CONTINUED)

	GRAHAM	MACON	SWAIN	CLAY	CHEROKEE	HAYWOOD	JACKSON	REGION
<b>G. With limited transportation funding, which of the following is more important to you:</b>								
1. High-speed highways connecting towns within the region and beyond	38%	4%	36%	11%	2%	34%	0%	18%
2. Existing highway improvements	38%	26%	18%	61%	49%	4%	17%	35%
3. Expanded opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit	24%	63%	46%	28%	24%	54%	50%	36%
4. Rail connections to move freight and passengers	0%	7%	0%	0%	25%	8%	33%	11%
<b>H. Rank these four destinations in terms of their priority for the region to connect with? (Use 1 for the highest and 4 for the lowest priority)</b>								
1. Asheville, NC	#1	#1	#2	#1	#2	#1	#1	#1
2. Atlanta, GA	#2	#1	#1	#2	#3	#3	#2	#2
3. Chattanooga, TN	#3	#4	#3	#3	#1	#4	#4	#3
4. Greenville/Spartanburg, SC	#4	#3	#4	#4	#4	#2	#3	#4
<b>I. Given the limited funds for water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, which is more important to you:</b>								
1. To extend water and sewer for development beyond town limits	54%	47%	64%	56%	40%	58%	17%	49%
2. Or to support in-town development	46%	53%	36%	44%	60%	42%	83%	51%
<b>J. To Implement the regional vision, which is more important to you:</b>								
1. To create and support an independent implementation entity to carry forth the regional vision	43%	81%	82%	26%	25%	77%	33%	48%
2. Or to keep all implementation responsibilities at county and town levels	57%	19%	27%	74%	75%	23%	67%	52%
<b>K. If we create an independent entity to implement the vision, should it be:</b>								
1. An alliance of governments	33%	48%	18%	31%	36%	64%	75%	39%
2. A private-sector organization	31%	16%	46%	31%	33%	0%	0%	26%
3. A nonprofit institution	36%	36%	36%	38%	31%	36%	25%	35%

**Note: The responses to Question H in Macon County yielded a tie between Asheville and Atlanta as the highest ranked regional destinations to connect with.**

Photo courtesy of Ralph Preston



# OPT-IN | VOLUME 2: BACKGROUND



November 2014

Page left intentionally blank.

Page left intentionally blank.

## ★ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ★

### **REGIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Larry Blythe, Vice-Chief, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Phil Carson, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Swain County

Mark Clasby, Economic Development Director, Haywood County

Kevin Corbin, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Macon County

Jack Debnam, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Jackson County

Phil Drake, founder and CEO, Drake Enterprises

Mike Edwards, Chair, Board of County Commissioners, Graham County

Dr. Michael Smith, Faculty, Western Carolina University

Cal Stiles, Board of County Commissioners, Cherokee County

Sharon Taylor, Deputy Director, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee

Matt Waldroup, former Economic Development Director, Clay County

### **SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION**

### **APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION**

### **FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**

### **NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **THE CHEROKEE PRESERVATION FOUNDATION**

## **THE TSW TEAM**

ACP New York

Alta Planning + Design

ARCADIS

Arnett Muldrow & Associates

Dr. Todd L. Cherry

Dr. Chris Cooper

Equinox Environmental

Jones & Jones

PlaceMakers

Stacey J. Guffey & Assoc.

TSW

UNC Asheville's National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC)

Western Carolina University

# ★ TABLE OF CONTENTS ★

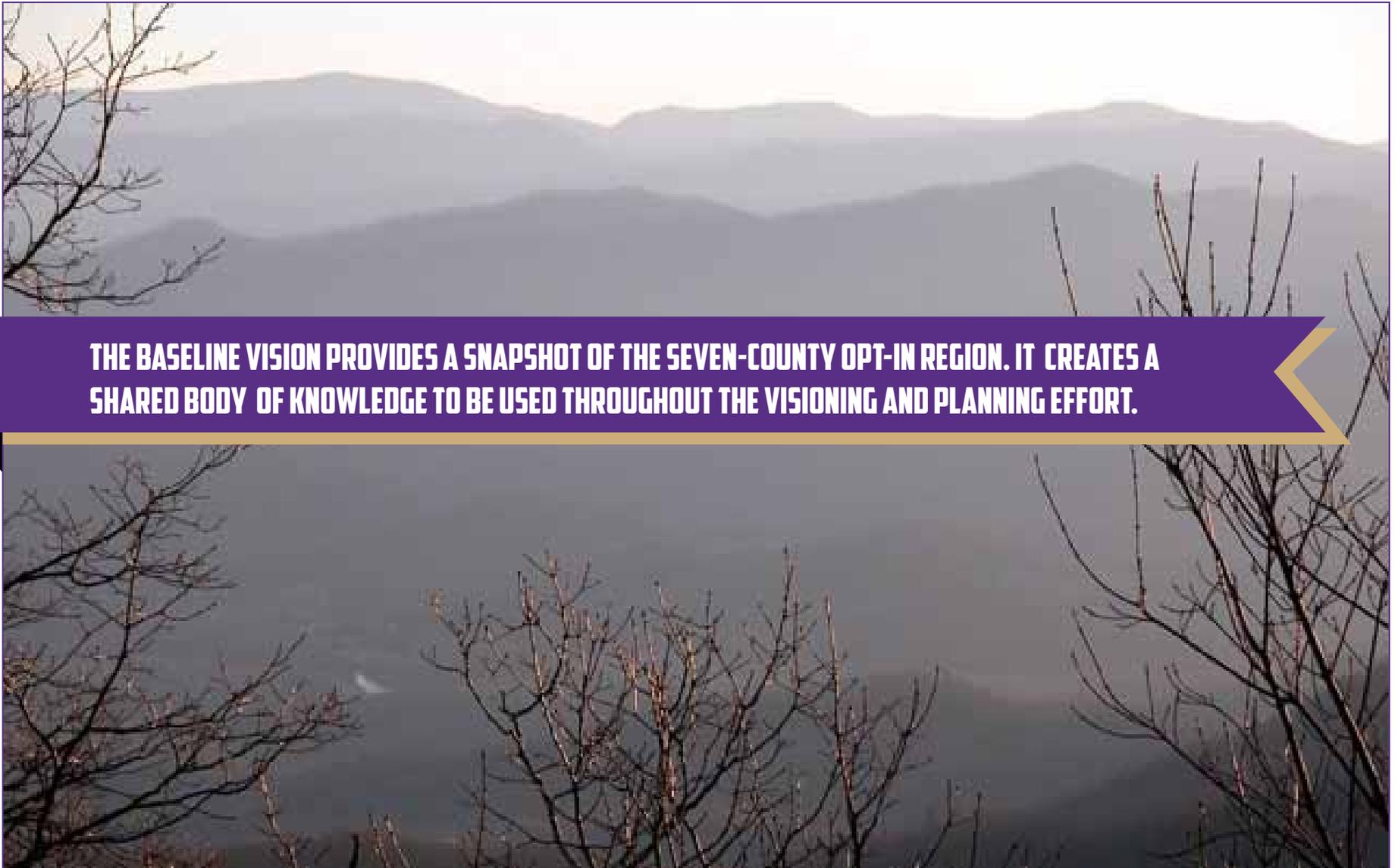
<b>BASELINE VISION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>REGIONAL CHARACTER</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1. Physical Characteristics . . . . .	7
2. Land Development Trends . . . . .	17
3. Transportation Conditions and Trends. . . . .	23
4. Natural Resources . . . . .	35
5. Natural and Cultural Resource Benefit Assessment. . . . .	36
6. Signature Landscapes and Legacy Landscapes . . . . .	40
7. Policy: Similarities and Differences . . . . .	45
<b>REGIONAL TRENDS</b> .....	<b>51</b>
1. General Trends: The Region’s Relative Performance . . . . .	53
2. Sector-specific Trends: The Drivers of Performance . . . . .	60
3. Demographic Trends: The Changing Population . . . . .	73
<b>SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>CHEROKEE COUNTY</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>CLAY COUNTY</b> .....	<b>90</b>
<b>GRAHAM COUNTY</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>HAYWOOD COUNTY</b> .....	<b>95</b>

<b>JACKSON COUNTY</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>MACON COUNTY</b> .....	<b>100</b>
<b>SWAIN COUNTY</b> .....	<b>102</b>
<b>REGIONAL PLANS</b> .....	<b>104</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION PLANS (VARIOUS COUNTIES)</b> .....	<b>107</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION PLANS (REGIONAL)</b> .....	<b>119</b>
<b>DRAFT REGIONAL VISION FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>123</b>
<b>WHAT IS OPT-IN?</b> .....	<b>126</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>127</b>
<b>PILLAR #1: THE PLACE WE ARE GIVEN</b> .....	<b>128</b>
<b>PILLAR #2: THE ECONOMY WE NEED</b> .....	<b>130</b>
<b>PILLAR #3: THE PLACES WE MAKE</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<b>PILLAR #4: THE WAYS WE GET AROUND</b> .....	<b>133</b>
<b>PILLAR #5: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT</b> .....	<b>135</b>
<b>THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE</b> .....	<b>136</b>
<b>DRAFT REGIONAL VISION: WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS</b> .....	<b>137</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>141</b>
Report Structure .....	141
What is Opt-In? .....	142
<b>SECTION 1 – GOALS AND PRINCIPLES</b> .....	<b>145</b>

<b>SECTION 2 – THE FIVE PILLARS</b> .....	<b>147</b>
Pillar #1: The Place We’re Given . . . . .	.148
Related Ideas . . . . .	.149
Pillar #2: The Economy We Need. . . . .	.156
Related Ideas . . . . .	.157
Pillar #3: The Places We Make . . . . .	.173
Related Ideas . . . . .	.174
Pillar #4: The Ways We Get Around . . . . .	.181
Related Ideas . . . . .	.182
Pillar #5: The Quality Of Life We Expect . . . . .	.192
Related Ideas . . . . .	.193
<b>SECTION 3 – PILLAR #6: THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE.</b> .....	<b>201</b>
<b>SECTION 4 – GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	

Page left intentionally blank.

## VOLUME 2 | OPT-IN REGIONAL VISION: BASELINE VISION



**THE BASELINE VISION PROVIDES A SNAPSHOT OF THE SEVEN-COUNTY OPT-IN REGION. IT CREATES A SHARED BODY OF KNOWLEDGE TO BE USED THROUGHOUT THE VISIONING AND PLANNING EFFORT.**

Page left intentionally blank.

# ★ TABLE OF CONTENTS ★

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>REGIONAL CHARACTER</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1. Physical Characteristics . . . . .	7
2. Land Development Trends . . . . .	17
3. Transportation Conditions and Trends. . . . .	23
4. Natural Resources . . . . .	35
5. Natural and Cultural Resource Benefit Assessment. . . . .	36
6. Signature Landscapes and Legacy Landscapes . . . . .	40
7. Policy: Similarities and Differences . . . . .	45
<b>REGIONAL TRENDS</b> .....	<b>51</b>
1. General Trends: The Region’s Relative Performance . . . . .	53
2. Sector-specific Trends: The Drivers of Performance . . . . .	60
3. Demographic Trends: The Changing Population . . . . .	73

Page left intentionally blank.

## ★ INTRODUCTION ★

The Baseline Vision provides an at-a-glance snapshot of the seven-county Opt-In region. It is designed to create a shared body of knowledge that will be used throughout the regional visioning and planning process.

The report is divided in two sections. Following this introduction, they include:

★ **Regional Character** – Focusing on the natural and man-made environments and including reports on physical characteristics, land development trends, transportation, natural resources, resource benefit assessment, signature landscapes, and land use and transportation policy similarities and differences.

★ **Regional Trends** – Focusing on economic and demographic conditions and trends and including reports on general economic trends, sector specific trends, and demographic trends.

The two sections present a distillation of the key findings to date. In both sections, information is presented using charts, maps, and photographs for easy communication. Information is drawn from existing sources such as the US Census, Landsat imagery, GIS information, and from data from a variety of services such as the NC Security Employment Commission and Nielsen Claritas, to name a few. Those sources are listed throughout the report.

In addition to hard data, the Baseline Vision presents an summary of existing plans and studies: some officially adopted, some in

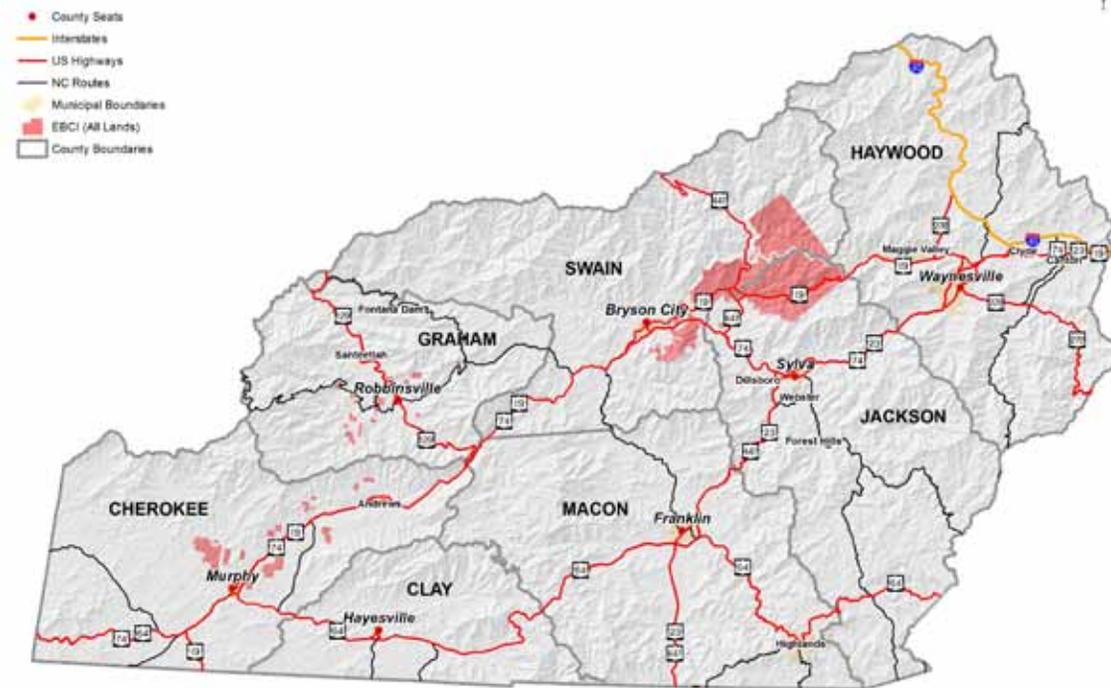
progress, and others advisory in nature. The purpose of that review is to determine whether those plans and studies express common values, themes, and policy similarities that, when taken together, can form the nucleus of initial regional agreements. The full report on those plans and studies can be found in the attached appendix.

The Baseline Vision is not cast in stone. Its blend of quantitative information and qualitative insights creates the needed

starting point to engage the region. It is a live document that will be revised, updated and refined throughout the Opt-In project.

By design, the Baseline Vision does not draw conclusions from the data, rather it raises questions to be addressed and probed throughout the planning process. To begin with, the Baseline Vision will be used as a discussion tool in the one-on-one and small group meetings and community workshops that will take place in the months of July

**FIGURE 1: THE OPT-IN SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION**



*The Opt-In region includes the North Carolina counties of Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain, and the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation.*

through October, 2013. Following that, it will be used as the foundation to draft the preliminary regional vision and to formulate and test alternative development scenarios. Finally, the scenarios will be reviewed and confirmed through additional interviews, small meetings, and community workshops in early 2014.

Figure 1, on the right, shows key future tasks of the Opt-In process during which the Baseline Vision will be used, reviewed, and modified.

**General Limitations**

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the data used in this report is timely and accurate. Given the great deal of information presented, however, there could be errors and omissions. As these are identified, they will be addressed and corrected.

**FIGURE 2: BASELINE VISION BENCHMARKS**

**Phase 3: July to September**

- *Leadership Council Meeting*
- *One-on-One Meetings*  
*Small Group Meetings*
- 
- 

**Phase 4: September to December**

- *Community Workshops to Refine Baseline Vision*
- *Draft Regional Vision*
- *One-on-One Meetings*  
*Small Group Meetings to Confirm Regional Vision*
- 

**Phase 5: December to March**

- *Scenario Development and Testing*
- *Community Workshops to Test Scenarios*
- *Comprehensive Plan Charrettes*  
*Transportation Charrette in Graham County*
- 

**Phase 6: April and May**

- *Community Workshops to Confirm Regional Vision*
- 
- 
-

## ★ REGIONAL CHARACTER ★

The Regional Character section of the Baseline Vision is divided in the following seven parts:

1. Physical Characteristics
2. Land Development Trends
3. Transportation Conditions and Trends
4. Natural Resources
5. Natural and Cultural Resource Benefit Assessment
6. Signature Landscapes
7. Policy: Similarities and Differences

Each part is presented in the following pages using charts, maps, and descriptive language.

### 1. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

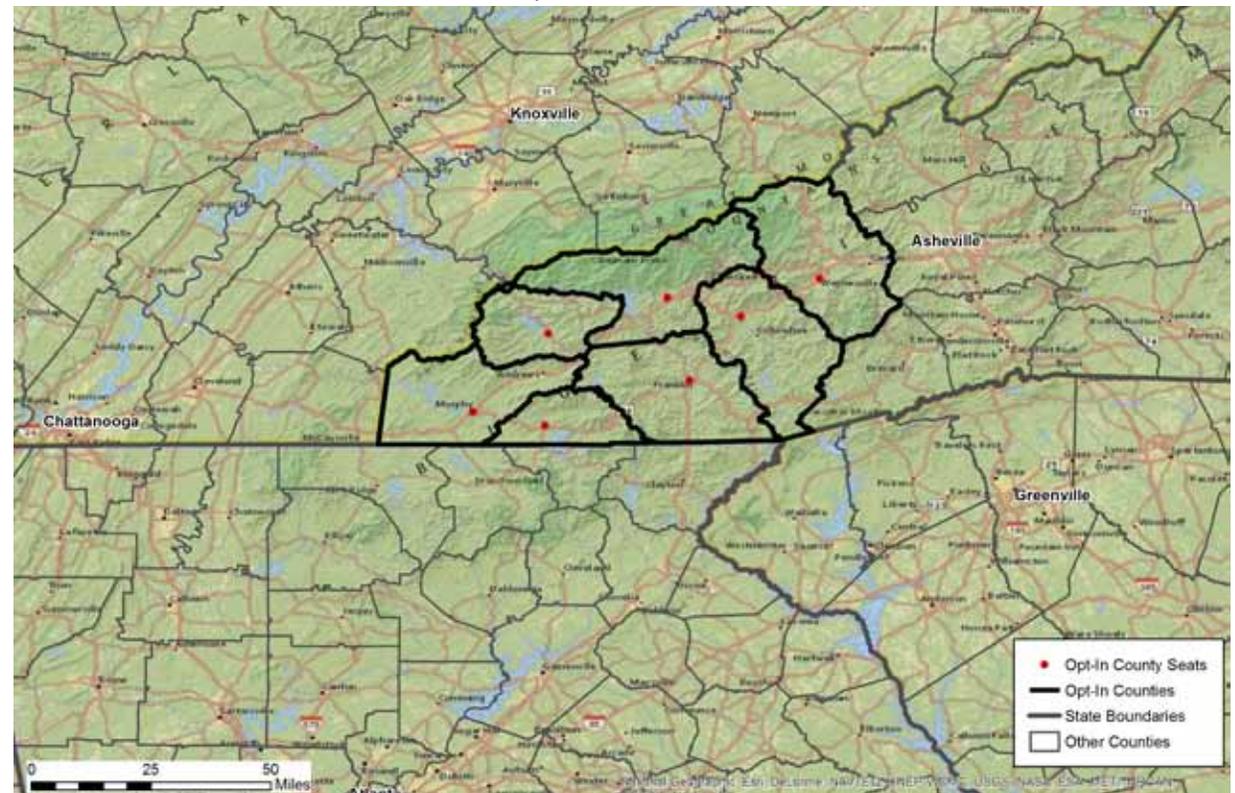
This part uses maps to describe how the region's land is used (populated places, lands managed by the federal and state governments, developed areas and roads, and the lands belonging to the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians) as well as natural features (slopes, floodplains and wetlands).

Together these characteristics explain the unique physical and macro land use make-up of the Southwestern North Carolina region. Managing these characteristics will affect how the region grows and prospers in the future.

Following the maps, *Figure 1.10 Land Use Summary*, on page 12, provides a breakdown of those characteristics for each of the seven counties.

Critical questions about conditions, trends and possible trade-offs are listed when appropriate. These questions will be addressed in the coming months.

**FIGURE 1.1: SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, THE CONTEXT**



The Southwestern North Carolina region shares its borders with Tennessee and Georgia and it is within a short driving distance from Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Atlanta.

## FIGURE 1.2: POPULATED PLACES

- Communities
- Cherokee Townships
- County Seats
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundaries

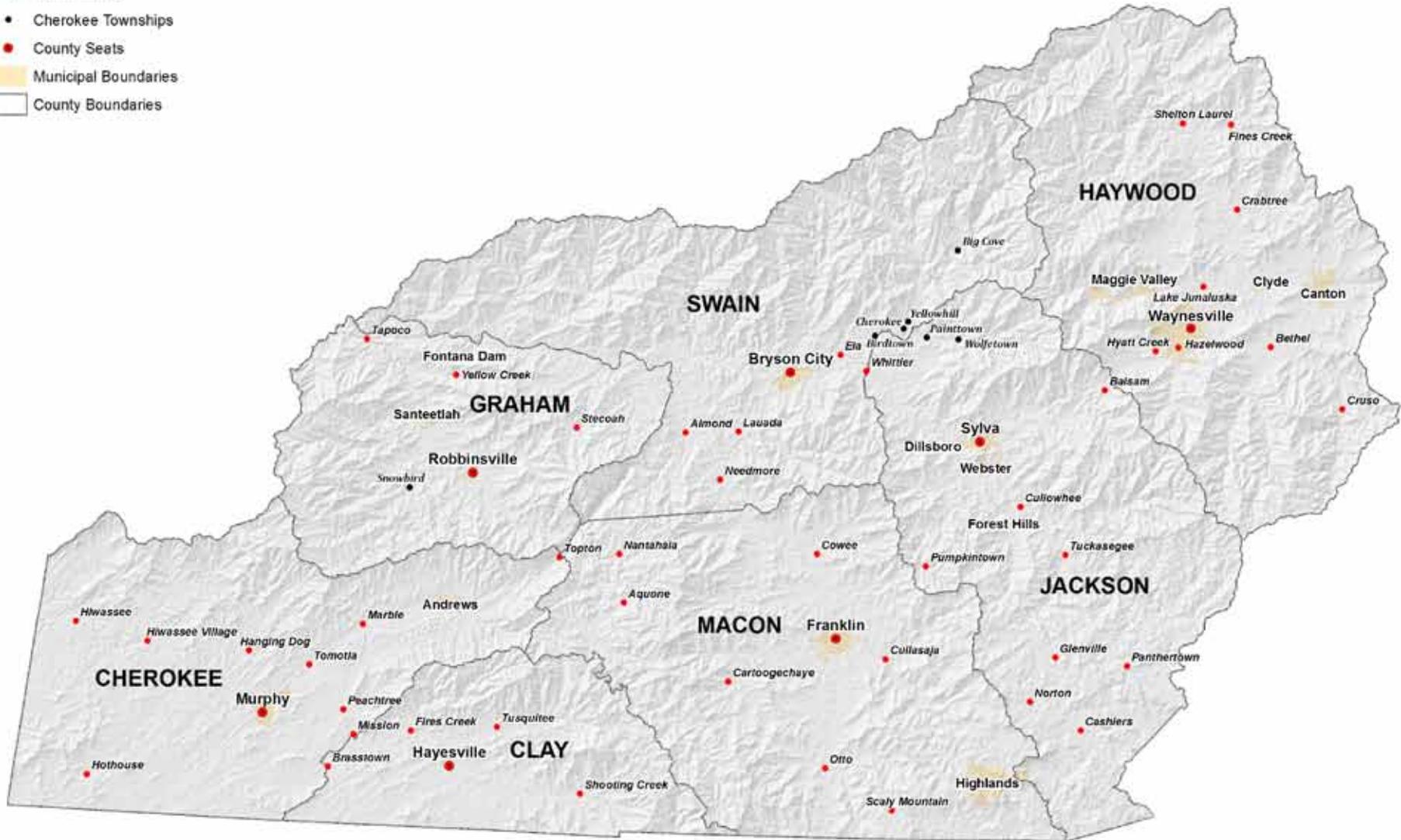


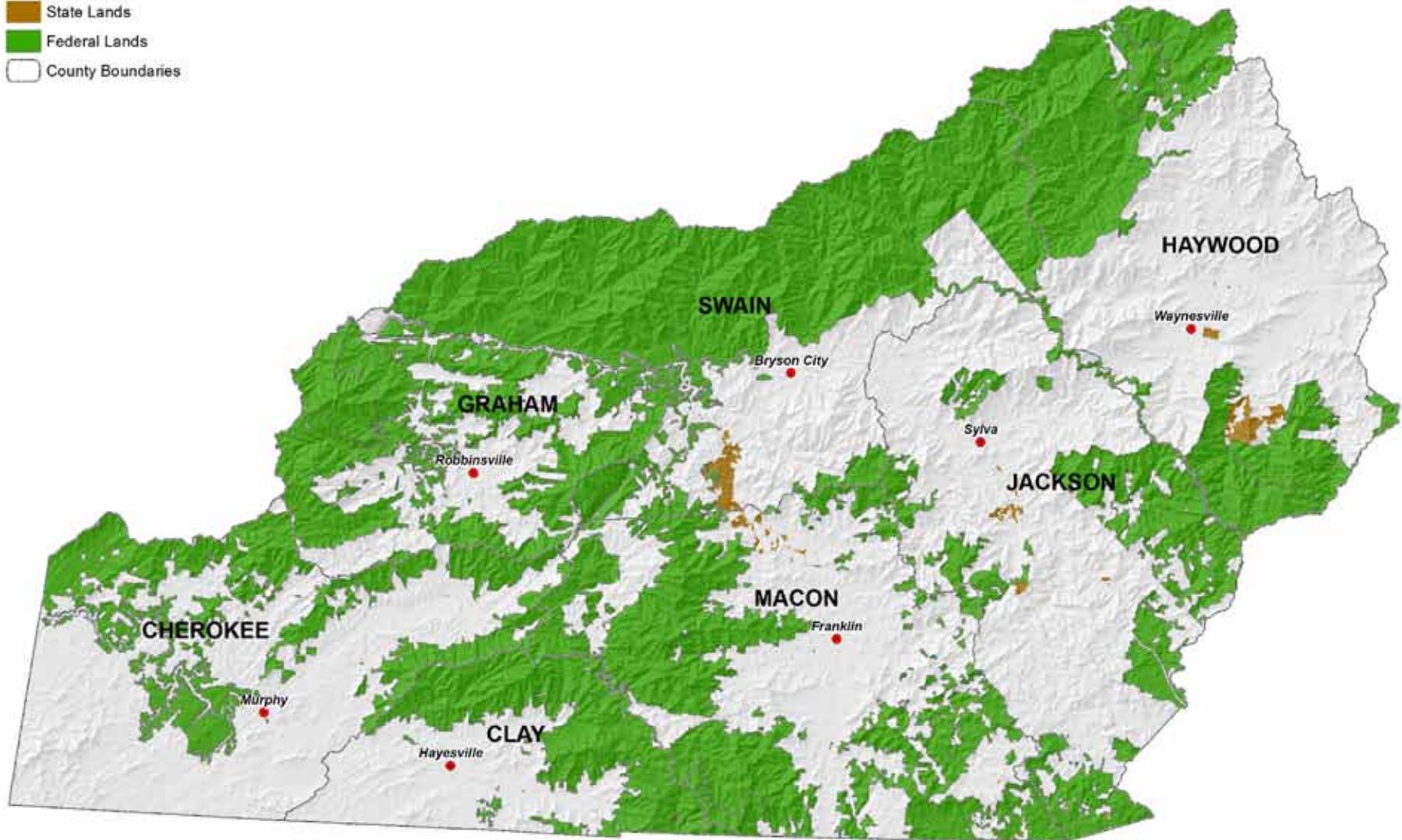
Figure 1.2 shows the populated places of the Southwestern North Carolina region, including county seats, municipal boundaries, communities, and Cherokee townships.

The total land in the region is 3,098.22 square miles. Haywood is the largest of the seven counties measuring 554.25 square miles while Clay County is the smallest measuring 220.83 square miles.

Sources include: NOneMap, Esri, NCDOT, and Stacy J. Guffey. No date available.

## FIGURE 1.3: FEDERAL AND STATE MANAGED LAND

- County Seats
- State Lands
- Federal Lands
- County Boundaries

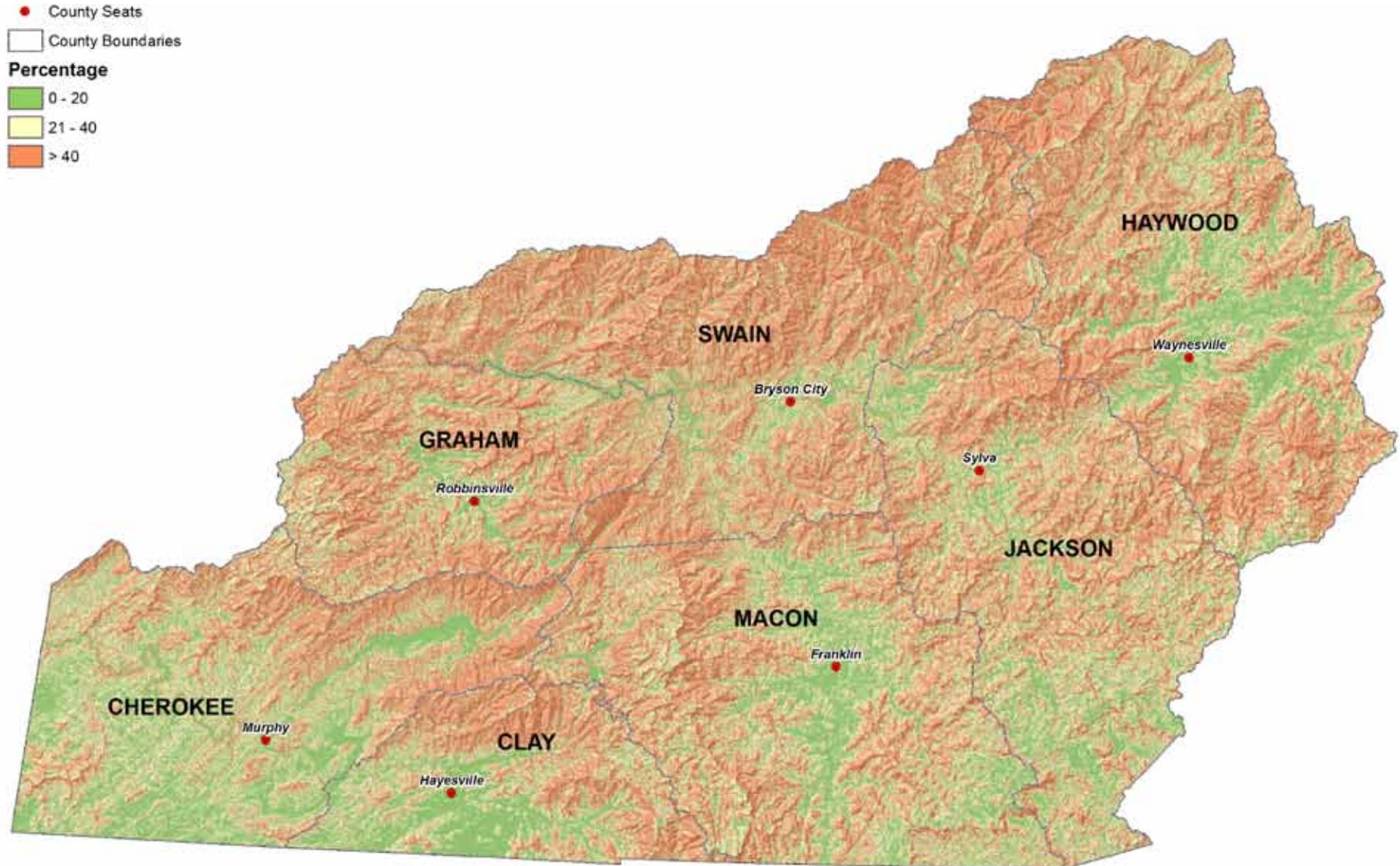


The map shows all lands held by the federal and state governments. The total area managed by Federal and State government entities is 1,447.55 square miles or 46.7 percent of the region's total. Swain County has the largest amount of managed lands

with 383.63 square miles or 71.1% of its total. Jackson County has the smallest amount of managed lands with 147.6 square miles or 29.8% of its total.

Source: NCOneMap, dated 2013.

## FIGURE 1.4: SLOPES



This figure shows slopes divided into 3 classes across the SWNC region. The 21-40% class should be considered a transition area where building becomes more challenging and often requires permits. A total of 1,257.63 square miles fall into

this class. For most counties this class of slopes accounts for more than 30% of their land area. The only exception is Cherokee County with 25.6%. The highest percentage of slopes, which are equal to or steeper than

40% occur in Graham County where they account for 49% of the county's total land.

Source: NCFMP. The slope data was generated from LIDAR elevation information with a spatial resolution of 20ft.

## FIGURE 1.5: IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

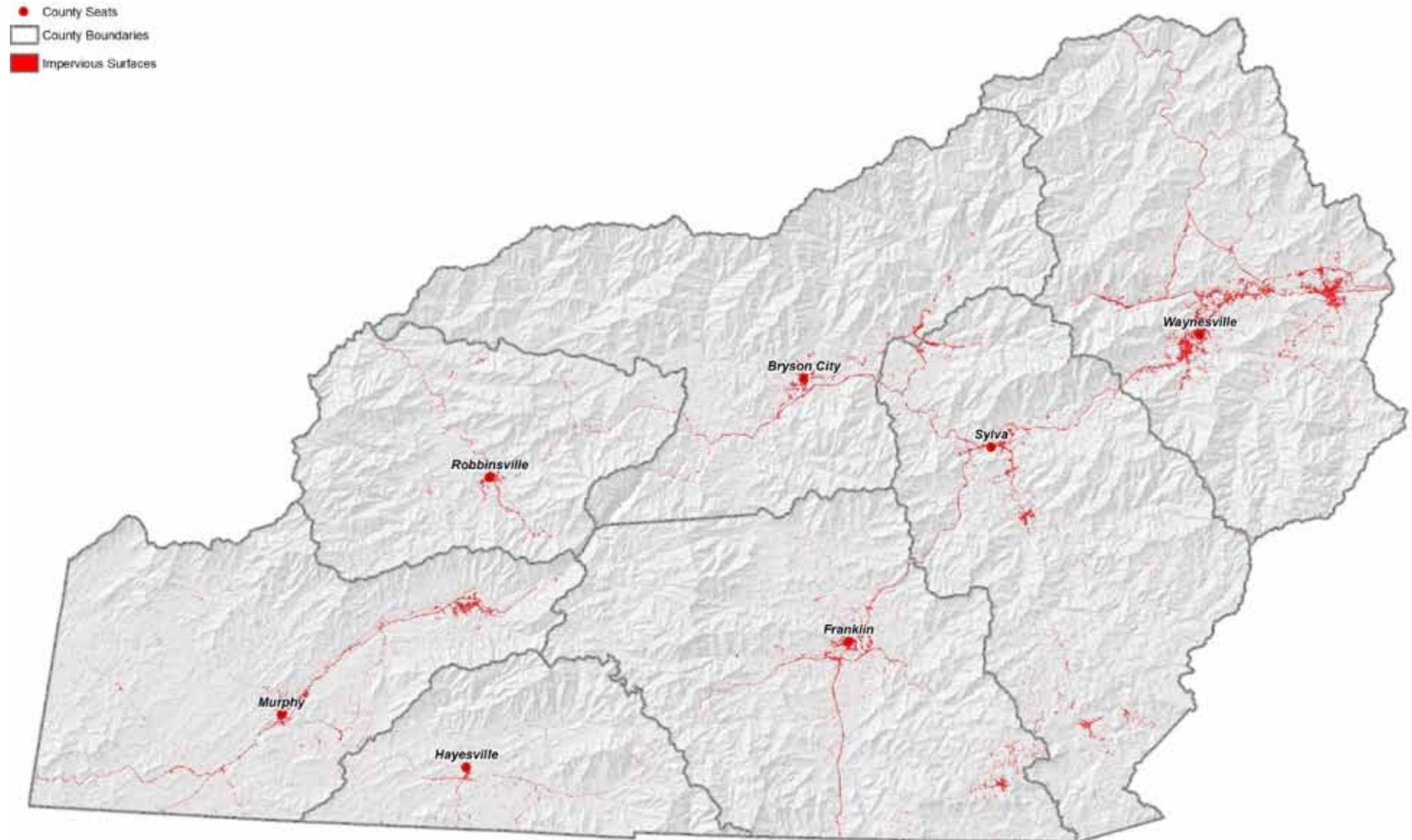


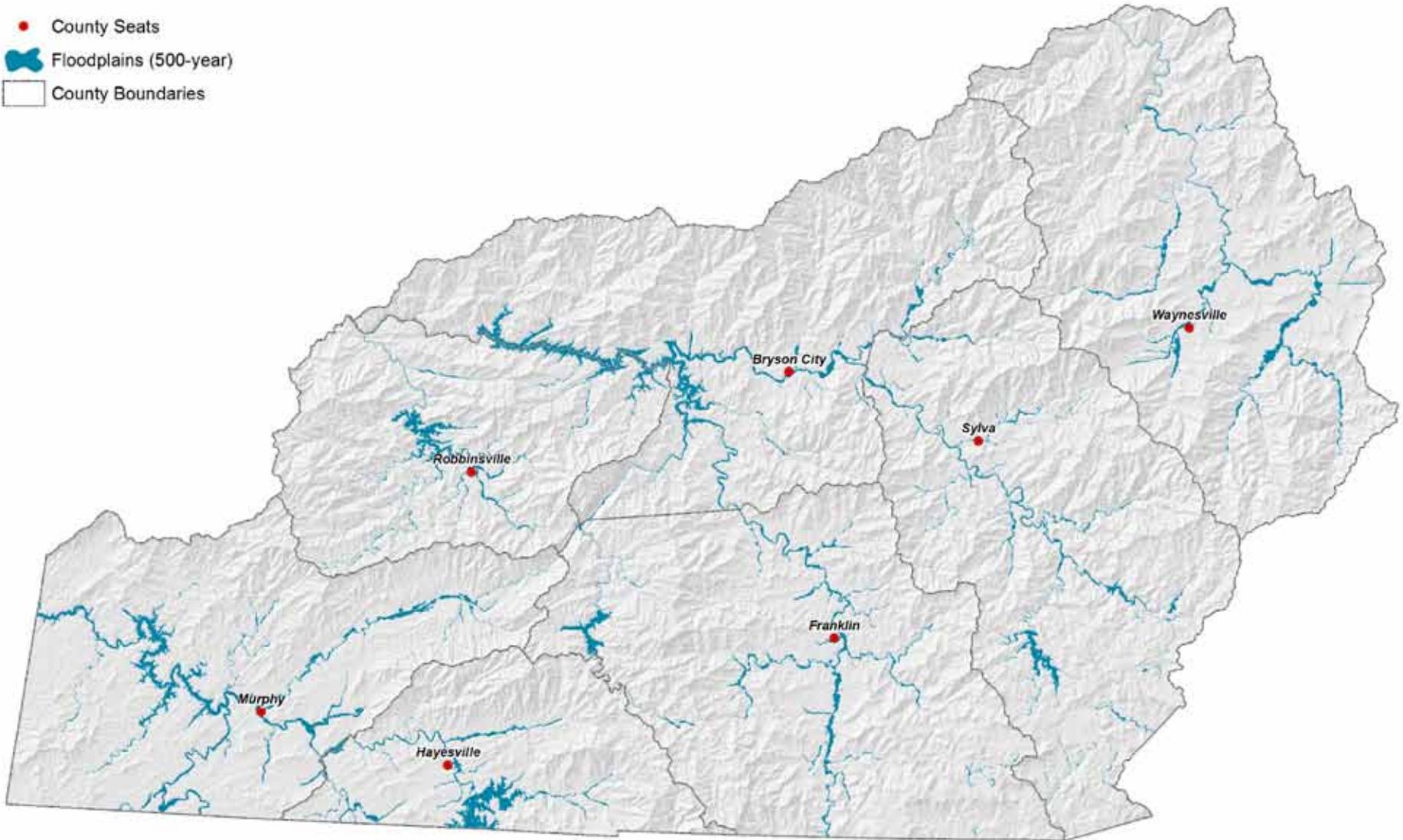
Figure 1.5 shows impervious surfaces (lands converted from natural or rural to developed). They account for 165.62 square miles or 5.3% of the region's total land. The largest percentage of developed land is found in Haywood County with 8.0% of its total.

The lowest percentage is found in Graham County with 3.4% of its total.

Source: National Land Cover dataset. Date: 2006.

## FIGURE 1.6: FLOODPLAINS

- County Seats
- 🌊 Floodplains (500-year)
- ▭ County Boundaries



Figures 1.6 and 1.7 respectively show the 500-year floodplains and wetlands in the SWNC region.

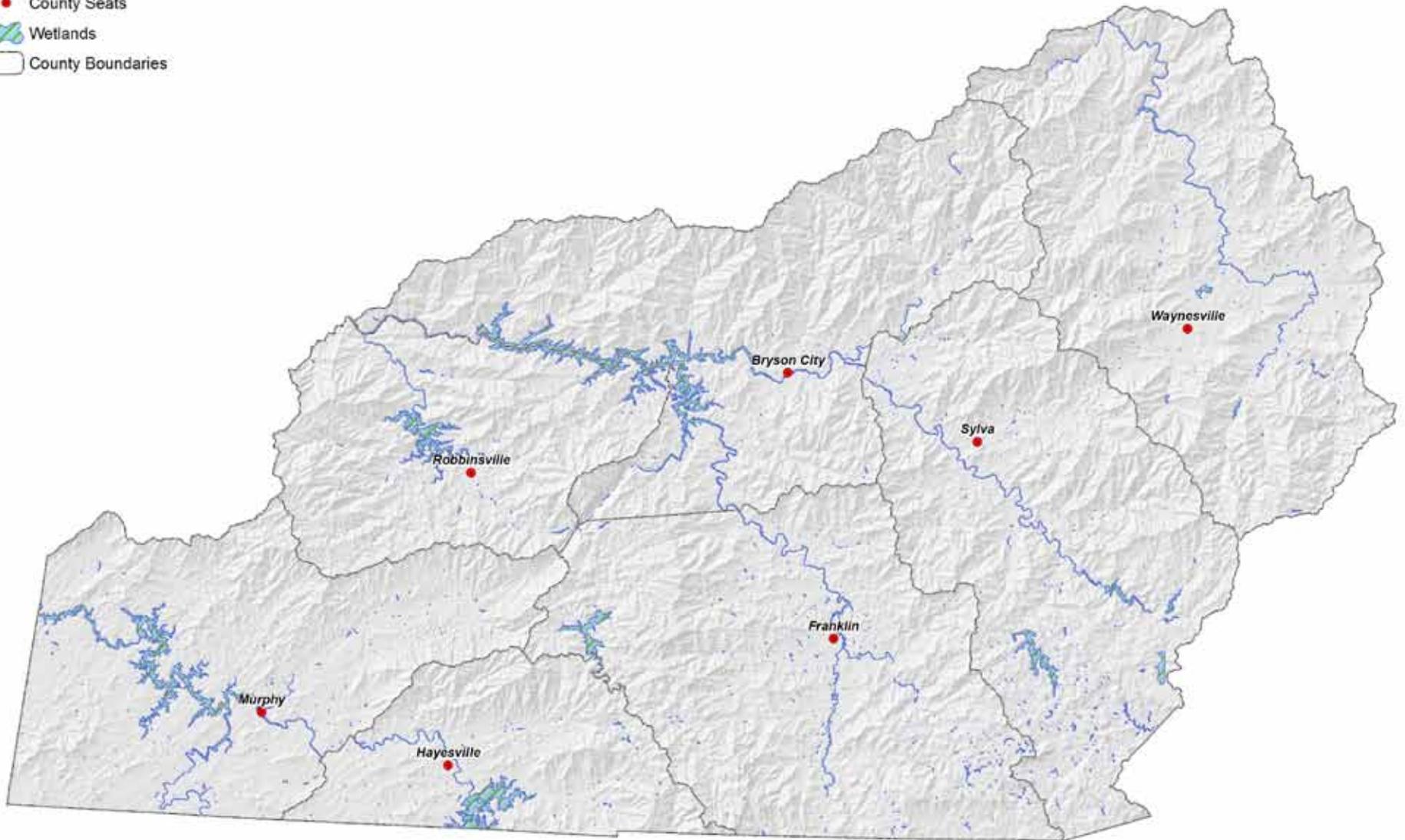
Floodplains and wetlands account for 107.55 square miles or 3.5% of the seven

counties' total area. The highest percentage of floodplains and wetlands are found in Clay County accounting for 5.3% of its land. Cherokee and Graham Counties follow with 4.8% and 4.7% of their respective land.

Source: NC Floodplain Mapping Program. Date not available.

## FIGURE 1.7: WETLANDS

- County Seats
- ▨ Wetlands
- County Boundaries



Source: the US Fish and Wildlife Service.  
Date not available.

## FIGURE 1.8: EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS LANDS

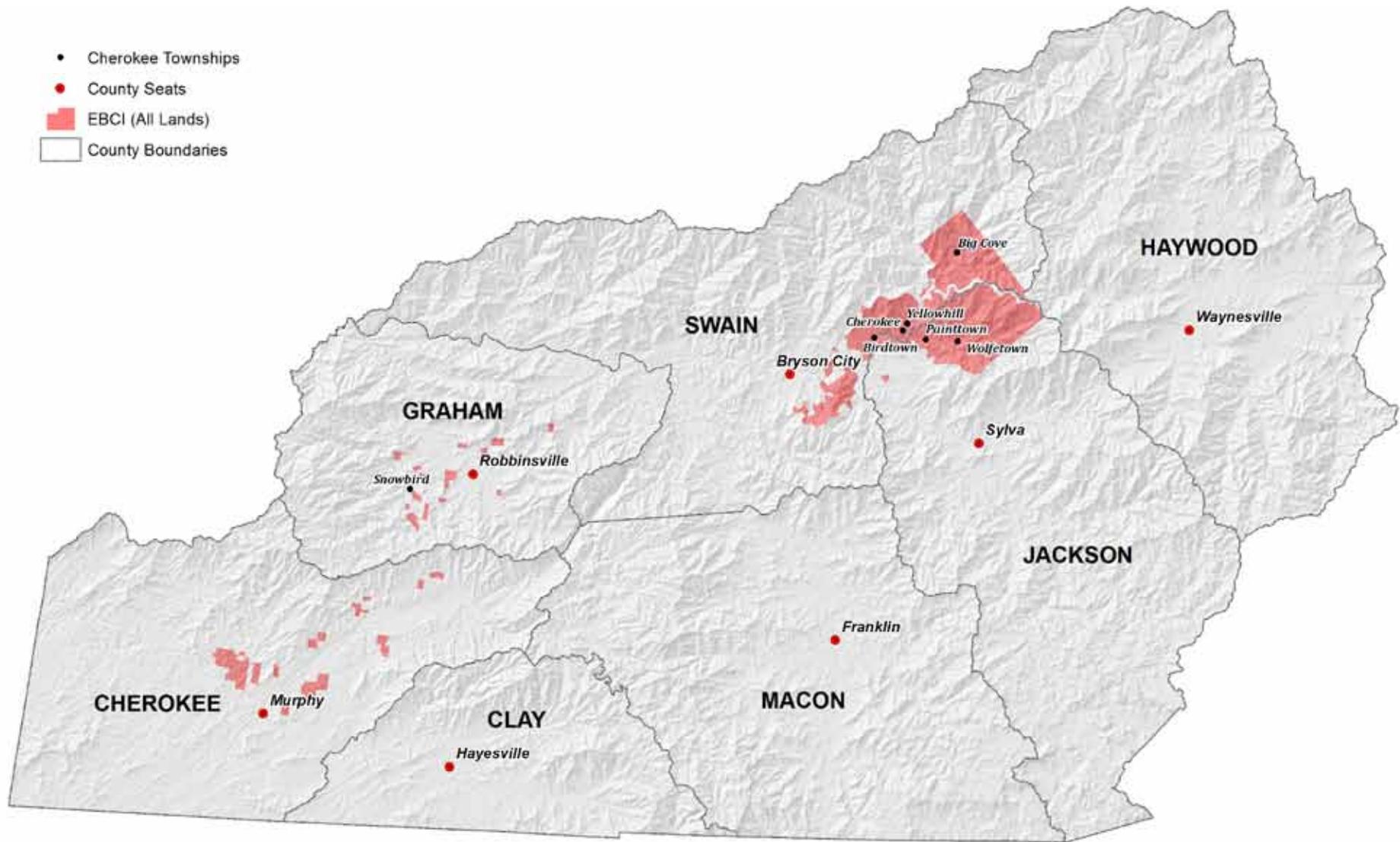


Figure 1.8 shows the territory of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in western North Carolina. The main part of the Qualla Boundary lies in eastern Swain County (7.2% of its land) and northern Jackson County (6.2% of its land just south of Great Smoky

Mountains National Park). There are many smaller non-contiguous sections to the southwest in Cherokee County and Graham County in North Carolina. A small part of the main reservation extends eastward into Haywood County.

Source: ESRI, NEMAC.

## FIGURE 1.9: LAND USE OVERVIEW

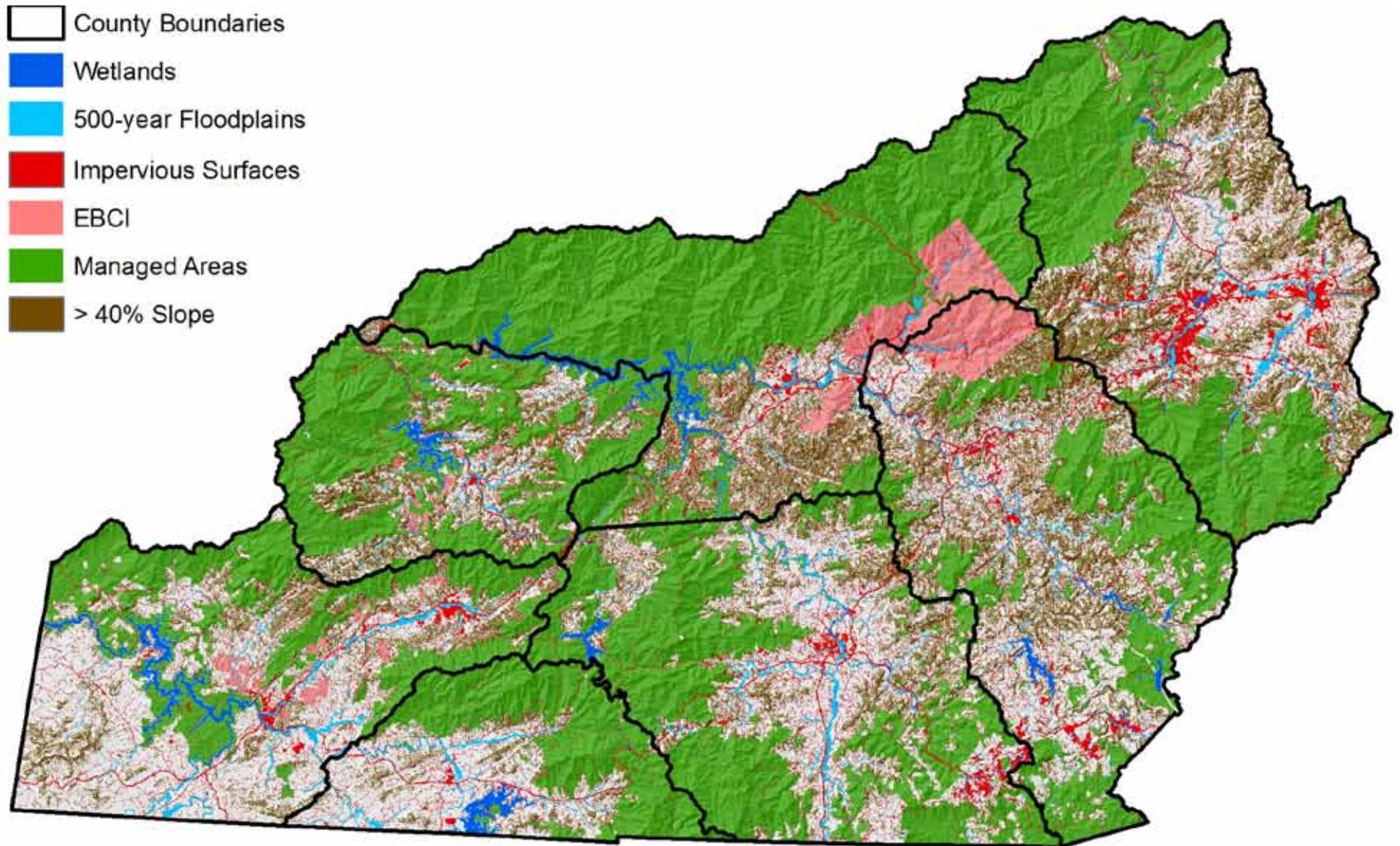


Figure 1.9 provides an at-a-glance view of the macro land use characteristics described in figures 1.2 to 1.8.

Source: NEMAC.

## In Summary

The Southwestern North Carolina region is mostly rural and forested. Nearly 47% of the region is public land. This public land includes two National Parks (The Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge Parkway), two National Forests (Nantahala and Pisgah), and four TVA lakes (Appalachia, Chatuge, Fontana, and Hiwassee). A great deal of the land (over 40%) has slopes which are in excess of 40%. Even though development on such slopes is technically possible, it is prohibitively costly. The Qualla Boundary, measuring 2.7% of the region's land, is a "land trust" supervised by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs and governed by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Figure 1.10 provides a breakdown of land use for the region as a whole and for the individual counties. When the land characteristics of Southwestern North Carolina are taken into consideration, nearly 70% of the region's total land (a considerable amount when compared to other areas in the eastern US) present various degrees of development challenges.



### Question:

**How can the region accommodate desirable growth while maintaining and enhancing the qualities which makes it desirable in the first place?**

**FIGURE 1.10: LAND USE SUMMARY**

	Total Land Area (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Managed Lands	% Area of Slope >= 40%	% Imperious Surface	% Flood-plains and Wetlands	% EBCI Lands
7-County	3098.22	46.7%	40.6%	5.3%	3.5%	2.7%
Cherokee	466.93	31.7%	25.6%	5.2%	4.8%	1.8%
Clay	220.83	47.3%	33.6%	4.4%	5.3%	-
Graham	301.11	59.9%	49.0%	3.4%	4.7%	1.3%
Haywood	554.25	42.7%	44.8%	8.0%	2.3%	0.6%
Jackson	494.87	29.8%	36.8%	6.3%	2.8%	6.2%
Macon	519.64	47.4%	33.2%	5.7%	2.8%	-
Swain	539.66	71.1%	57.9%	3.0%	3.3%	7.3%

Source: NEMAC.



Fontana Lake in Graham and Swain counties forms part of the southern border of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the northern border of part of the Nantahala National Forest

## 2. LAND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

This part of the Baseline Vision summarizes development patterns in the Southwestern North Carolina region. The information is extracted from the document *“Mapping Historical Development Patterns and Forecasting Urban Growth in Western North Carolina 1976-2030”* produced by the Center for Applied GIScience at UNC Charlotte in 2010. This summary and the maps that follow are derived from that report.

The study mapped historical patterns of development at four-decade time steps (1976, 1985, 1995, and 2006). The mapped information was based on Landsat satellite imagery distributed by the US Geological Survey’s Earth Resource Observation and Science Center (USGS-EROS) for 10-year intervals corresponding to years 1976, 1985, 1995, and 2006 and during “leaf-on” conditions ranging between May to September. This approach allowed the capture of significant landscape features such as, for example, parking lots, utility corridors, and the clearing of private lands. Calibrated and normalized Landsat satellite images from 1976, 1985, 1995 and 2006, helped to classify the imagery into developed and undeveloped categories. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show historic maps for the years 1976 and 2006.

The forecasting methodology used to project growth to the year 2030 is complex. To develop a statistical understanding of factors associated with conversion of natural and rural agricultural lands to developed lands, the study looked specifically at locations that developed between 1995 and 2006 and asked why these areas converted. The study then used a logistic regression model (more

complex and accurate than linear projections) and a suite of thirty-seven geographic, socioeconomic, and environmental data sets as possible predictors of development. For the Southwestern North Carolina region the model used six, highly significant predictor variables: development pressure; employment attraction; distance to nearest highway interchange; road density; topographic slope; and travel time to nearest urban center. This was done at 5-year intervals. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the location and extent of forecast growth for the years 2015 and 2030.

By analyzing these historical and forecast patterns of development the study also determined the rates (acres / day) at which natural and rural agricultural lands converted to developed lands through time. When combined with historical population data and population projections, that information helped estimate land consumption ratios in the region. That is, how much developed land was required for each additional individual moving or born into the region. This land consumption ratio was calculated by dividing the total number of acres of developed land for a particular area (county, region) and year by the total population for that same area and year.

A summary of the report findings for each of the seven counties follows.

### In Cherokee County

- ★ The number of acres converted from natural/rural land to developed land, increased 835 percent between 1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 0.94 acres per day.

- ★ Total developed acres increased from 1,305 acres in 1976 to 12,203 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Cherokee County outpaced population growth 18-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Cherokee County was 0.07 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.46 acres per person.

### In Clay County

- ★ The number of acres converted from natural/rural land to developed land, increased 830 percent between 1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 0.27 acres per day.
- ★ Total developed acres increased from 378 acres in 1976 to 3,521 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Clay County outpaced population growth nearly 11-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Clay County was 0.07 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.35 acres per person.

### In Graham County

- ★ The number of acres converted from natural/rural land to developed land, increased nearly 435 percent between

1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 0.21 acres per day.

- ★ Total developed acres increased from 569 acres in 1976 to 3,047 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Graham County outpaced population growth nearly 22-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Graham County was 0.08 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.38 acres per person.

#### **In Haywood County**

- ★ The number of acres converted from natural/ rural land to developed land, increased nearly 467 percent between 1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 1.21 acres per day.
- ★ Total developed acres increased from 2,969 acres in 1976 to 16,822 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Haywood County outpaced population growth 18-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Haywood County was 0.07 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.30 acres per person.

#### **In Jackson County**

- ★ The number of acres converted from natural/rural land to developed land,

increased nearly 670 percent between 1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 1.1 acres per day.

- ★ Total developed acres increased from 1,936 acres in 1976 to 14,836 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Jackson County outpaced population growth nearly 14-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Jackson County was 0.08 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.41 acres per person.

#### **In Macon County**

- ★ The number of acres converted from natural/rural land to developed land, increased 287 percent between 1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 0.8 acres per day.
- ★ Total developed acres increased from 3,204 acres in 1976 to 12,389 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Macon County outpaced population growth nearly 4-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Macon County was 0.18 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.38 acres per person.

#### **In Swain County**

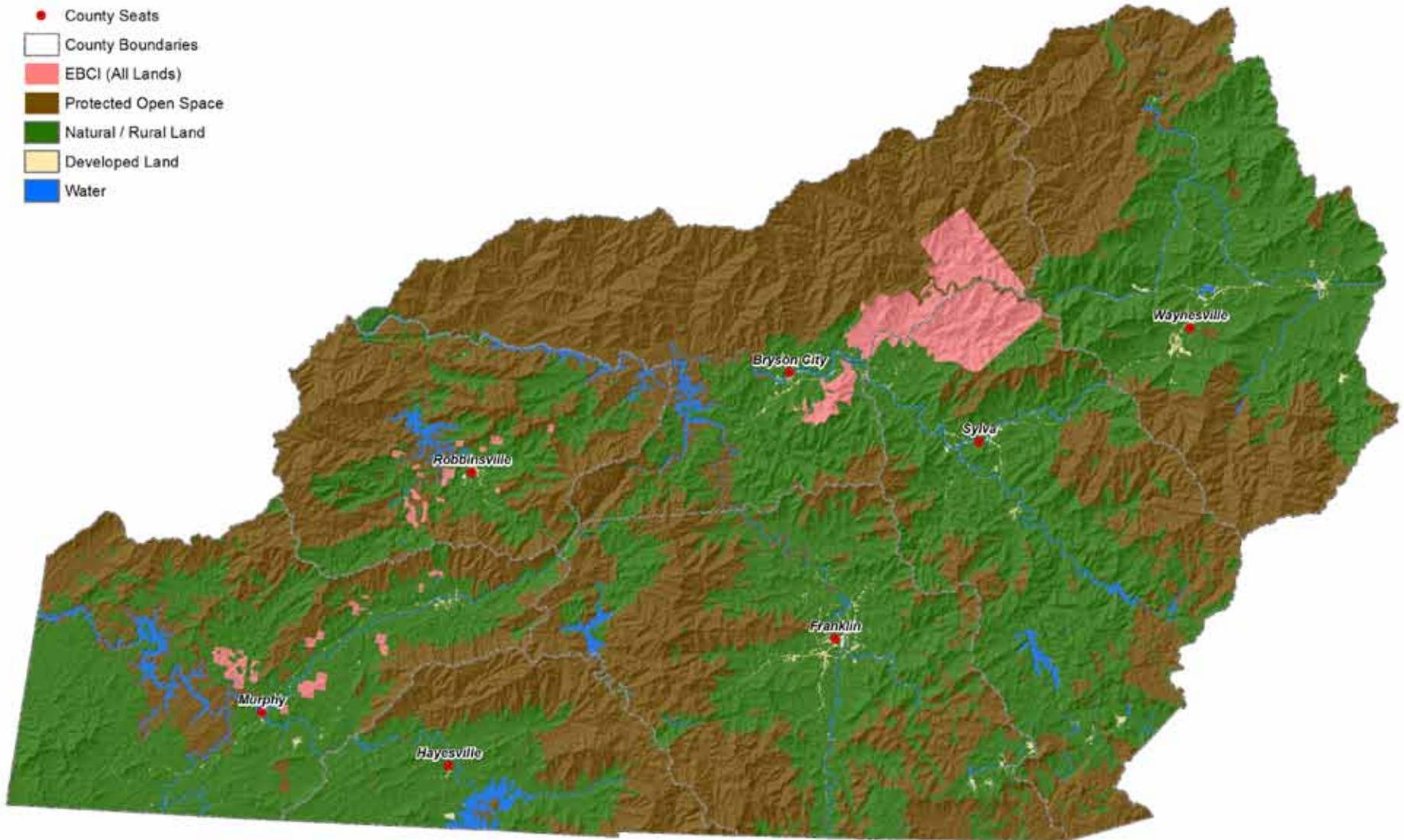
- ★ The number of acres converted from natural / rural land to developed land, increased 418 percent between 1976 and 2006, at an average rate of 0.4 acres per day.
- ★ Total developed acres increased from 1,097 acres in 1976 to 5,687 acres in 2006.
- ★ Development in Swain County outpaced population growth 11-to-one between 1976 and 2006.
- ★ In 1976, the ratio between developed land and resident population in Swain County was 0.11 acres per person.
- ★ In 2006, the ratio between developed land and resident population had increased to 0.41 acres per person.

★ ★ ★  
**The analysis of development patterns provides an overview of where development has occurred historically and where development may occur in the future, if historic patterns continue.**

**Question:**

**How desirable is it for the region to continue its historic development patterns in the future?**

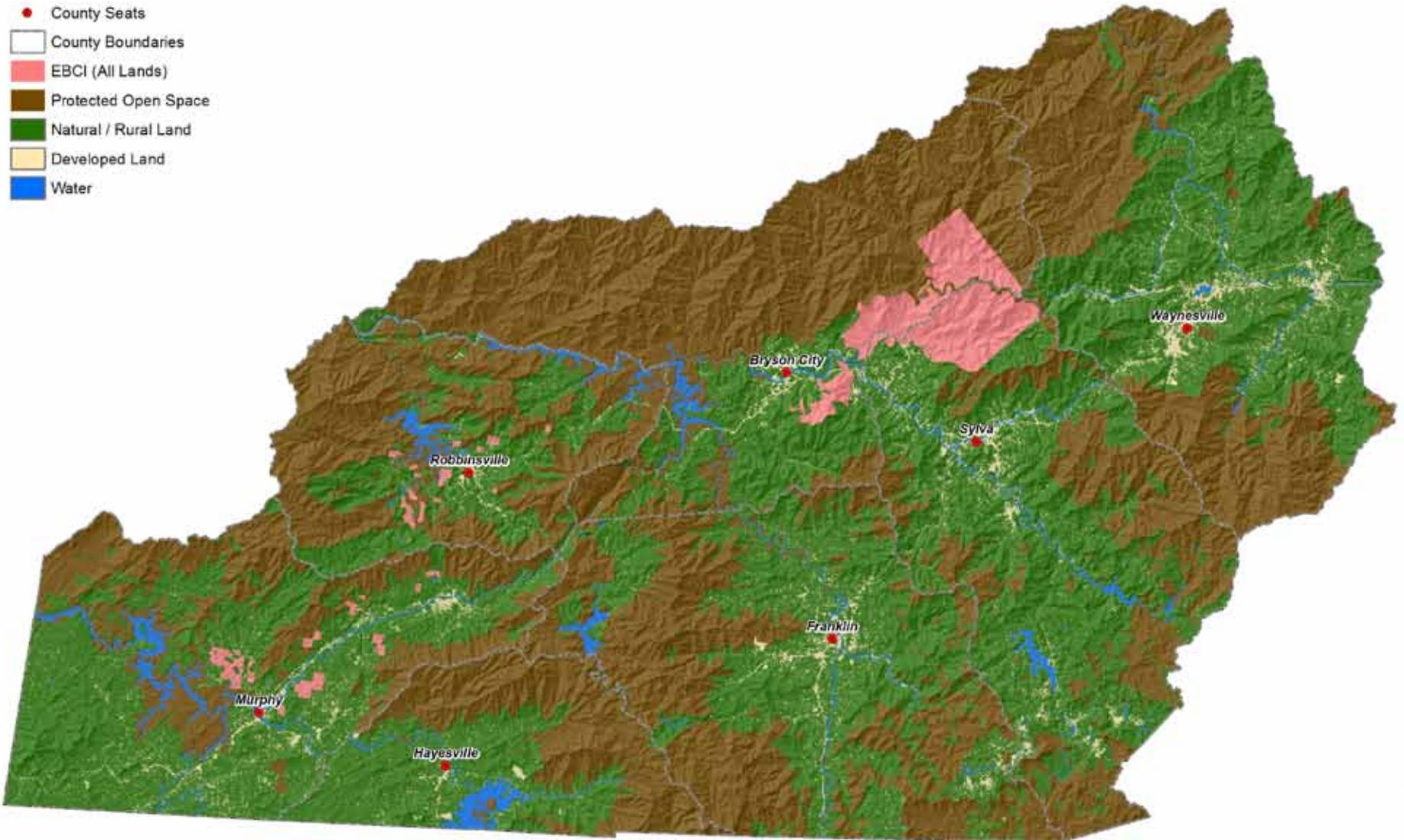
## FIGURE 2.1: LAND USE – 1976



Figures 2.1 to 2.4 show historic and forecast growth patterns in the region based on the “Mapping Historical Development Patterns and Forecasting Urban Growth in Western North Carolina 1976-2030” report.

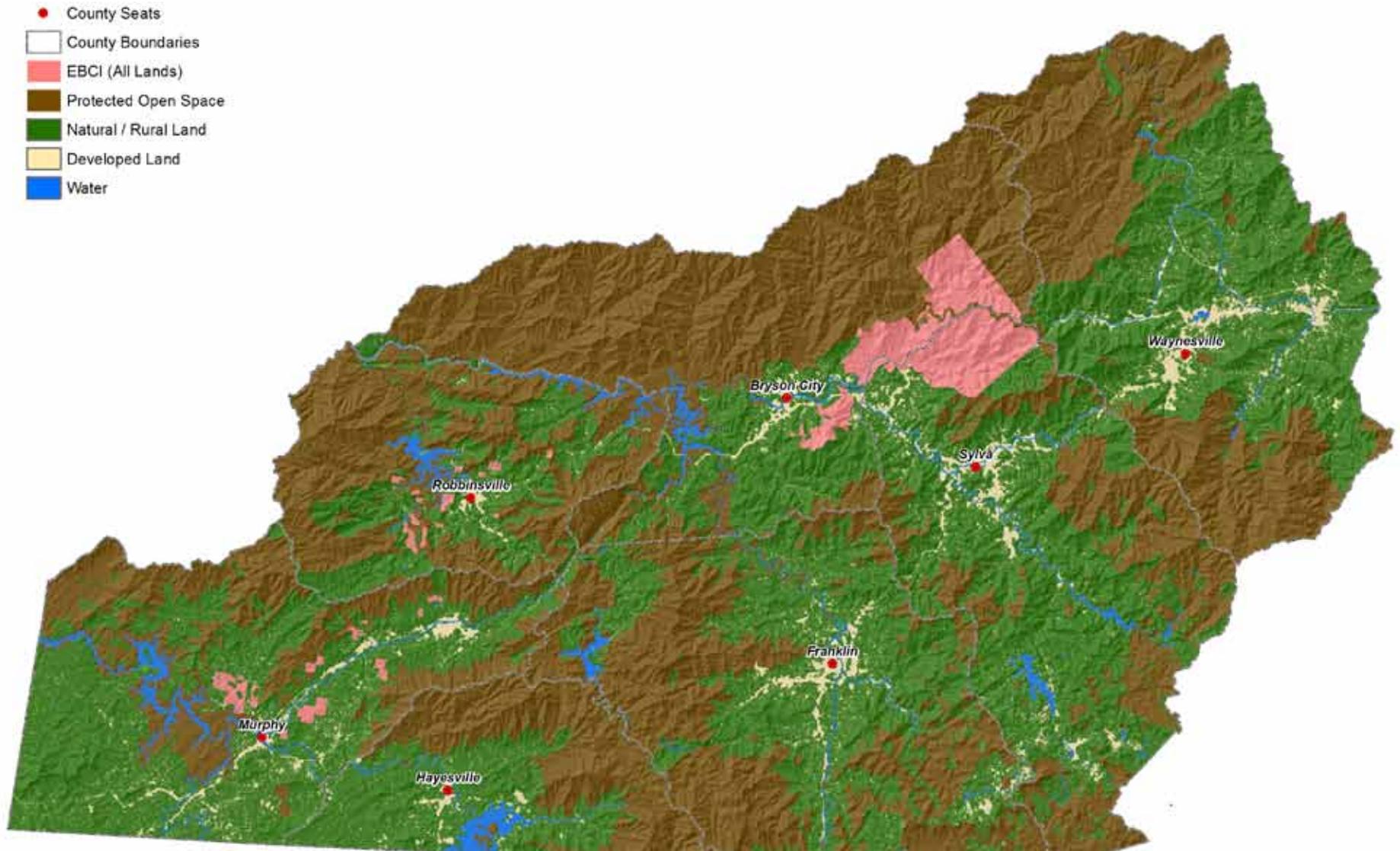
Source: UNCC, NEMAC.

## FIGURE 2.2: LAND USE – 2006



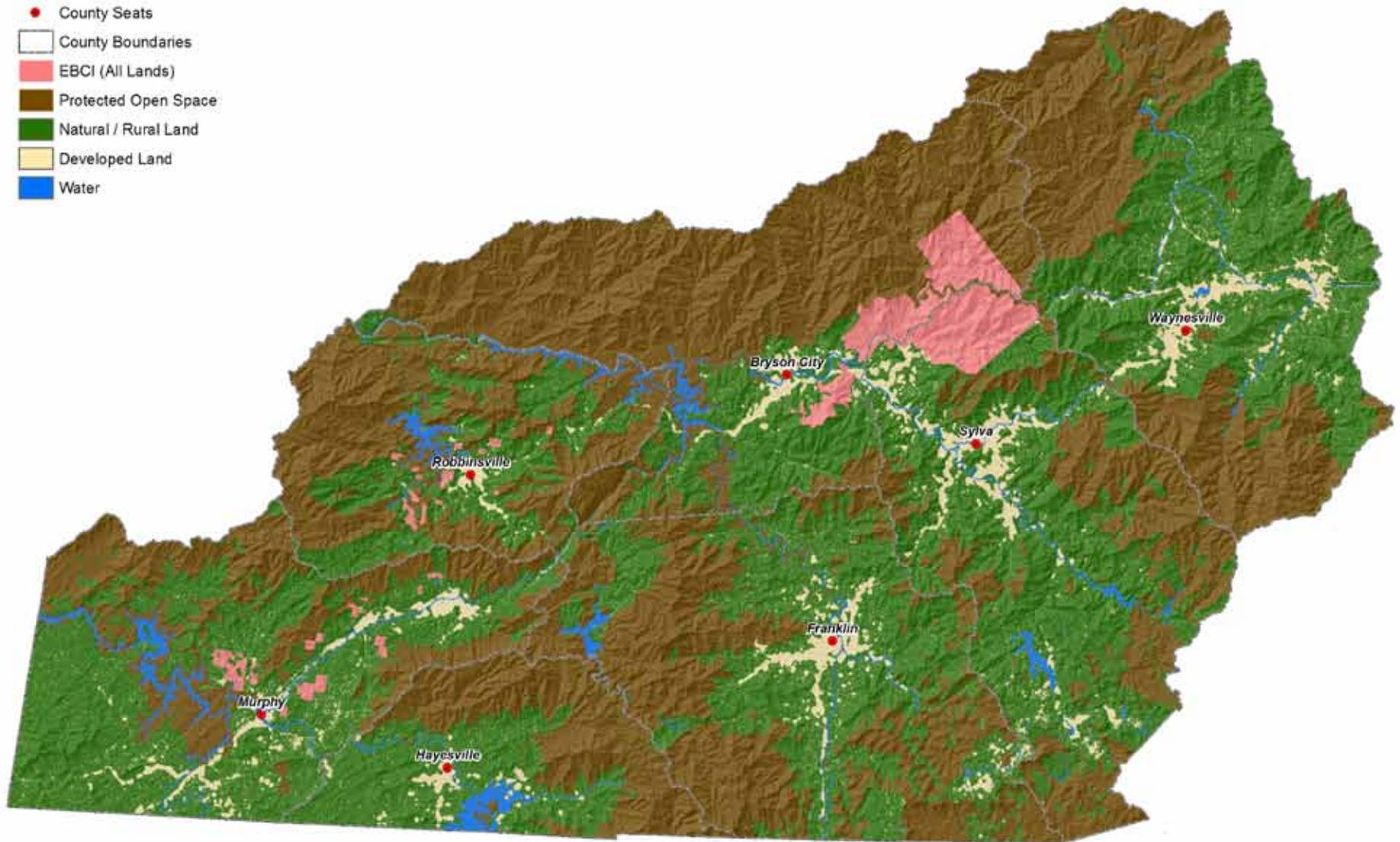
Source: UNCC, NEMAC.

## FIGURE 2.3: PROJECTED LAND USE – 2015



Source: UNCC, NEMAC.

**FIGURE 2.4: PROJECTED LAND USE – 2030**



Source: UNCC, NEMAC.

### 3. TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

From a transportation perspective, the region is connected by a network of regional and secondary roadways, with many falling under NCDOT's jurisdiction. Some higher-speed multilane facilities have been constructed over time, such as portions of US 19/74 connecting I-40 near Waynesville to NC 28 and the segment between Andrews and Murphy, US 441, and NC 28 from the intersection of US 19/74 to Almond. However, the bulk of the system is two lane facilities that connect these higher speed and capacity facilities. Within the towns and villages in the area, there has been a push to create more of a "main street" feel with many of the state facilities as they pass through towns. Additionally, recognition of the importance of walking and bicycling as modes of transport within these population centers is reflected in the character of the roadways (sidewalks and street furnishings) and the presence of greenways and trails to connect parks, schools, and neighborhoods. This growing trend is reflected in the six CTP's that have been completed or drafted as well as other regional studies regarding trails and bike facilities such as the Blue Ridge Bike Plan and local plans such as the Waynesville Pedestrian Plan. Importance of moving non-motorized and alternate transportation such as transit was also articulated on a regional scale in the Mountain Landscapes Initiative Toolbox, and the Village of Cashiers has implemented a significant portion of the pathways initiative included in that planning effort.

The region still has a character of isolation, though, due to the relative lack of redundant

roadway network between destinations. The lack of passing lanes often constrains car traffic behind trucks or RV's, and travel times may often seem excessive to residents of the area who are trying to move from population center to population center. This section evaluates the growth of the regional roadway network over time, documents the traffic growth trend, and quantifies travel times between key destinations for various average travel speeds.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2, in the following pages illustrate the changes to the region's primary and secondary road systems from 1976 to 2006.



*Valley River Valley, Cherokee County, NC*

★ ★ ★  
**Question: How do we take into account changing trends in car travel when we're planning transportation infrastructure 20 years in the future?**

### FIGURE 3.1: CHANGES TO PRIMARY ROADS – 1976 TO 2006

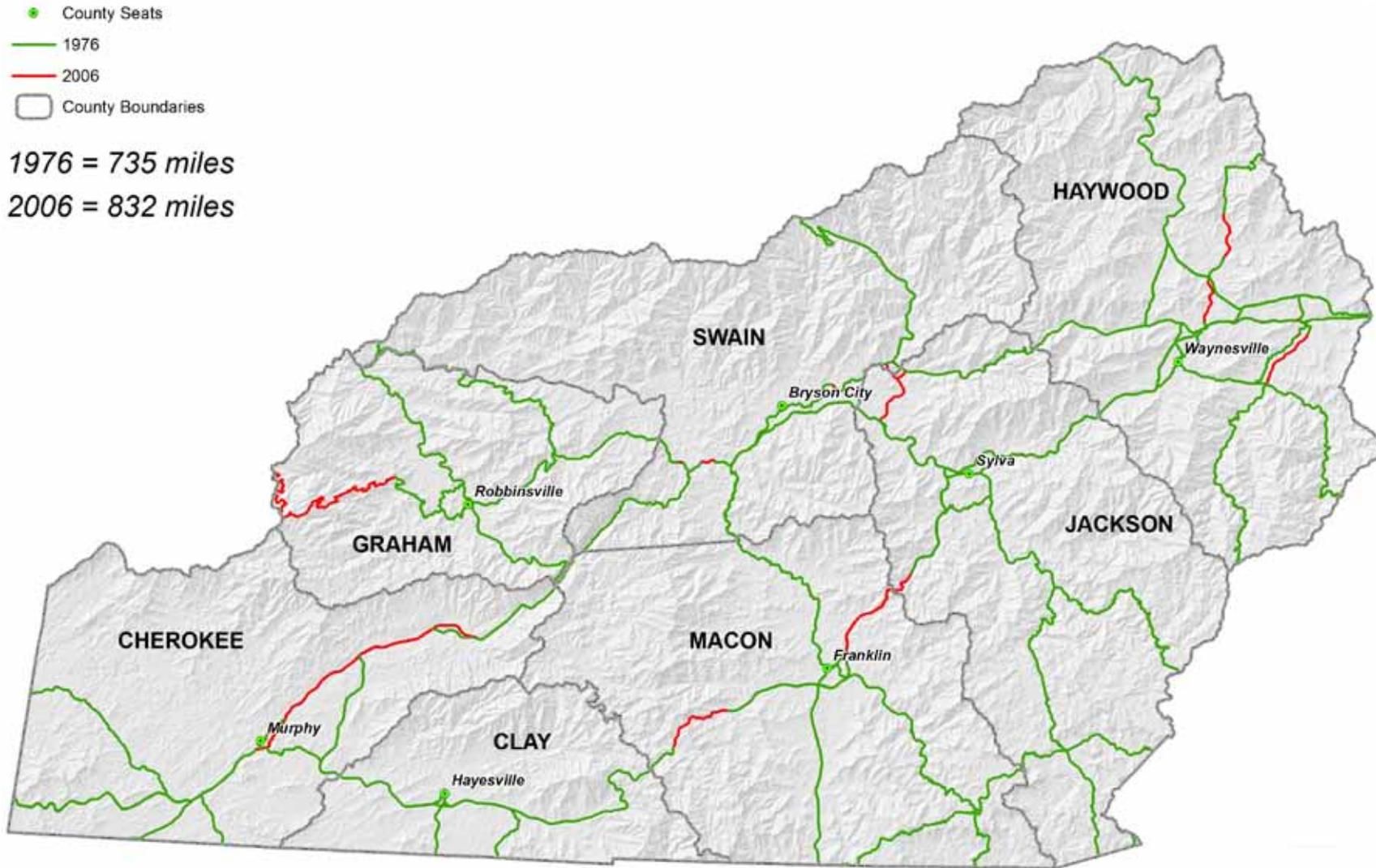


Figure 3.1 shows how the primary road system has grown. The region has seen a growth of primary state routes from 735 miles in 1976 to 832 miles in 2006; a net increase of almost 100 additional roadway miles in 30 years.

Source: NEMAC, UNC Charlotte.

## FIGURE 3.2: CHANGES TO SECONDARY ROADS – 1976 TO 2006

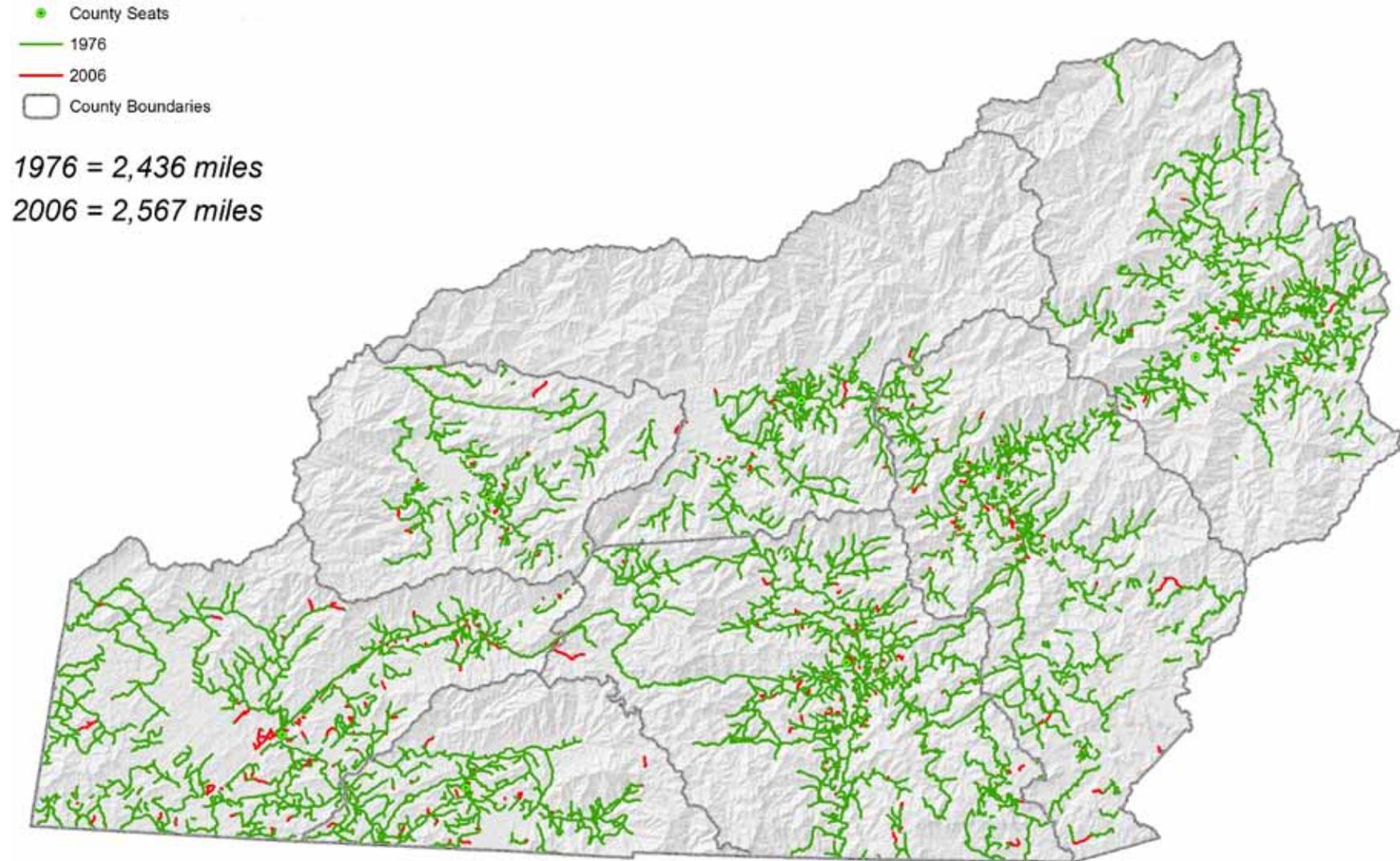


Figure 3.2 shows how the secondary road system has grown in the region from 2,436 miles to 2,567 miles during the same period (1976 to 2006). Finally, many regional, primary roadways were either widened to multilane, higher speed facilities or passing lanes were

added to lower travel times. Meanwhile, lanes were widened and shoulders have been added to some secondary roads to enhance safety.

Source: NEMAC, UNC Charlotte.

### Appalachian Development Highway System

In addition to the primary and secondary facilities and networks, many of the County CTP's and regional and state plans include additional primary roadway improvement geared toward decreasing travel times; the completion of Corridor K segments (State TIP Project A-9), which aim to cut travel time through the Nantahala Gorge while completing an important link in the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) is one such project. Figure 3.3 shows the Appalachian Development Highway System. Corridor K is highlighted in yellow.

Finally, local and state plans recommend improvements to secondary roads and intersections geared toward enhancing safety and including projects such as widening lanes from a narrow as 9 feet to 10-12 feet and adding shoulders for vehicle runoff and recovery that don't exist today.

**FIGURE 3.3: THE APPALACHIAN DEVELOPMENT HIGHWAY SYSTEM – 2005**

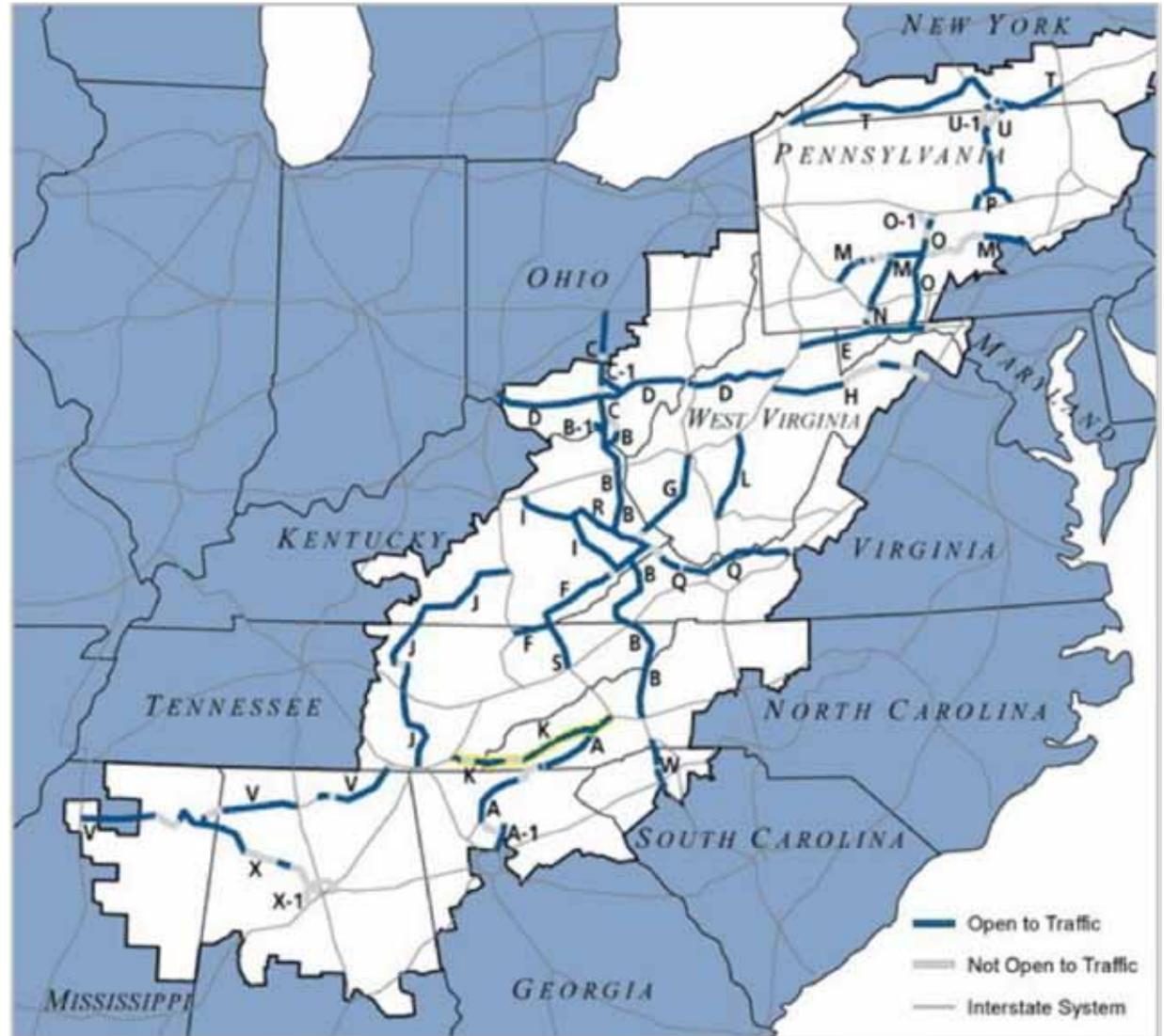
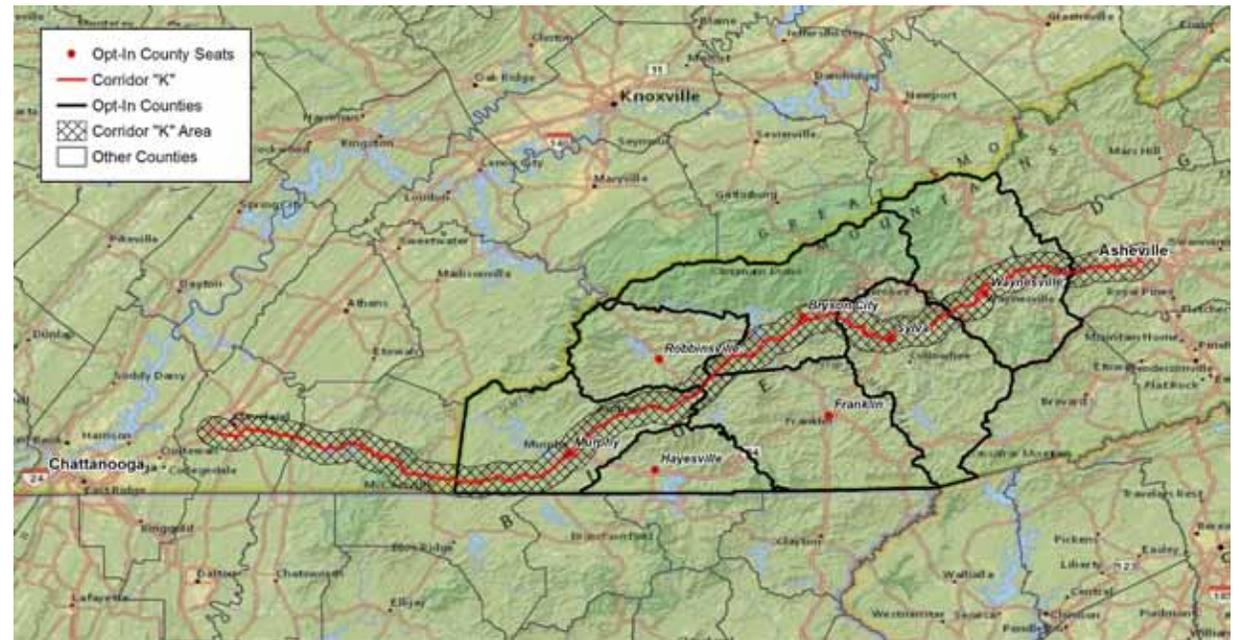


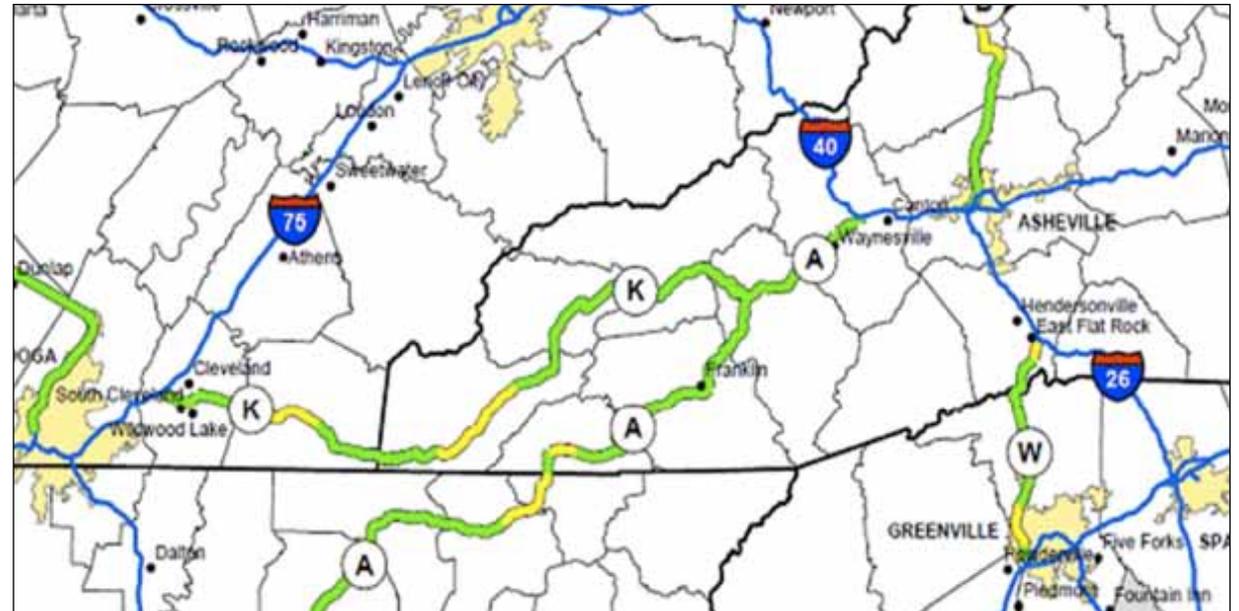
Figure 3.4 shows the Appalachian Development Highway System in its regional context. Figure 3.5 shows the nexus of corridors A and K as they cross the seven-county study area.

Note the difference in alignments for Corridor K on the two maps. Figure 3.4 shows it passing through Nantahala Gorge while figure 3.5 shows the alignment as proposed by the NCDOT.

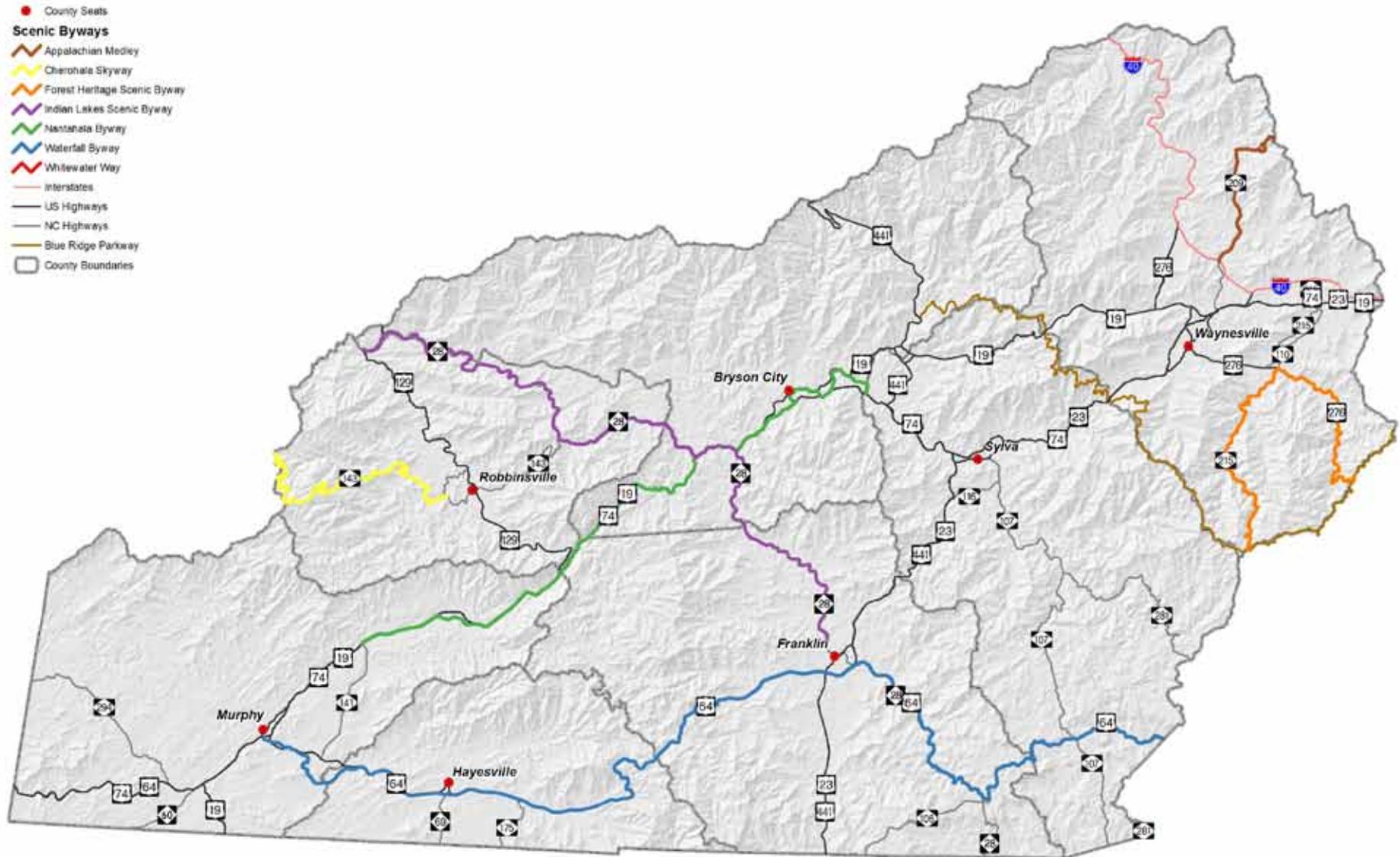
**FIGURE 3.4: CORRIDOR K IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT**



**FIGURE 3.5: CORRIDOR A AND CORRIDOR K IN THE SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION**



## FIGURE 3.6: SCENIC BYWAYS



The North Carolina Department of Transportation has designated 21 state scenic byways in the region. In addition, three of the highways in the region are designated as National Scenic Byways: Blue

Ridge Parkway, Cherokee Skyway, and Forest Heritage Scenic Byway. In addition, the Blue Ridge Parkway is designated as an All American Road. Figure 3.6 shows the

NCDOT designated Scenic Byways in the region.

Source: NCDOT.

While there has been a growth in roadway network, overall traffic volumes showed growth in the time period up to the early-mid 2000's, then have stabilized or in some cases dropped. Figure 3.7 shows historic daily traffic volumes on key regional primary routes demonstrating this characteristic. Plotted on a trend line, one can see the stable traffic growth on such facilities as US 441, US 19/74, and US 64.

This trend is consistent with national trends of traffic volumes, demonstrating that people are actually driving less mostly due to the costs associated with operating a motor vehicle and economic conditions.

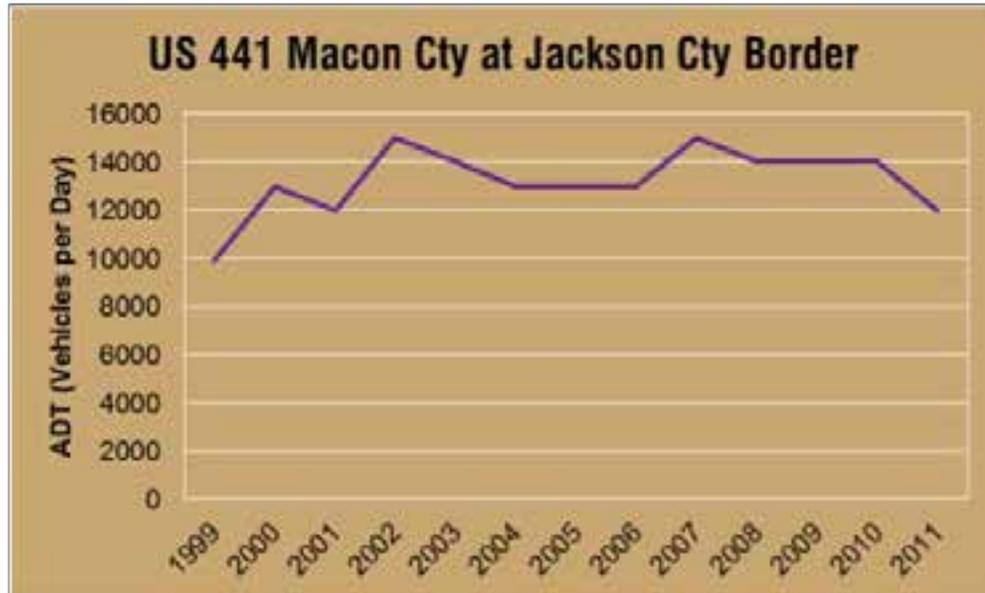
Figures 3.8, to the right, and figures 3.9 and 3.10, on the following page, show daily traffic volumes for major routes in the region, 1999-2011.

Source: All figures, Fuss & O'Neill, Inc, NC DOT.

**FIGURE 3.7: HISTORIC DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES**

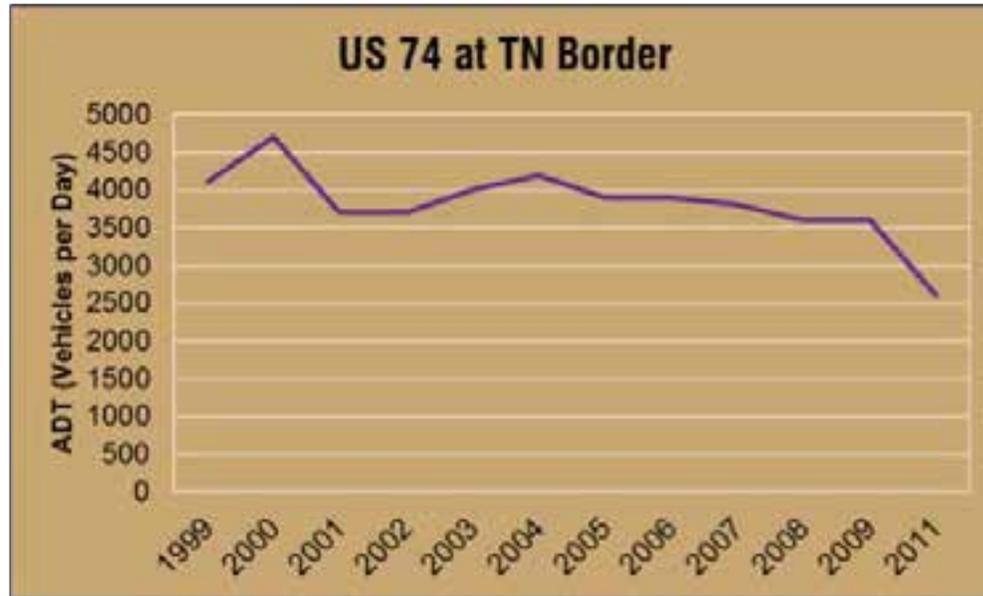
Year	US 19/74	NC 28	US 64	NC 107	US 129	NC 294	US 441
1999	3900	700	6800	860	2100	1300	10000
2000	4500	700	7000	1000	2000	1300	10000
2001	3100	650	6900	870	2100	1500	10000
2002	4600	780	7200	1100	2200	1900	11000
2003	4100	790	7400	1000	2000	1300	11000
2004	4100	850	6600	1100	2400	1100	12000
2005	3600	810	7900	1000	2000	1100	12000
2006	3100	780	8000	1000	2100	1200	10000
2007	3700	820	7500	940	2700	1300	9900
2008	3500	770	6800	730	2200	1100	8800
2009	3700	670	7000	690	2400	1200	8800
2010	3500	960	6900	700	2500	1100	9900
2011	3800	550	5800	730	2100	1000	7700

**FIGURE 3.8: DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES, US ROUTE 441**



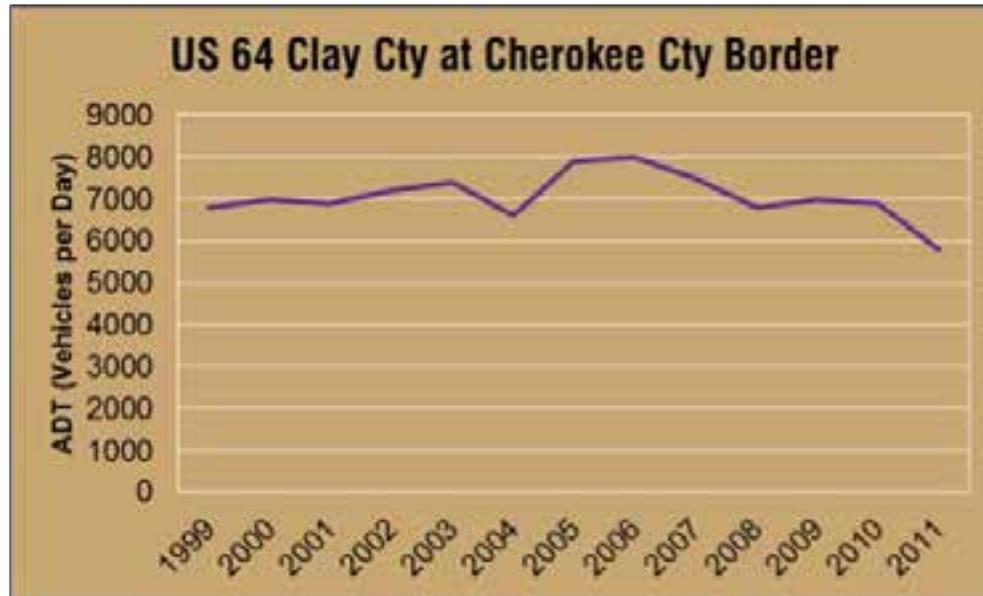
Source: Fuss & O'Neill from NC DOT traffic volume mapping.

**FIGURE 3.9: DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES, US ROUTE 74**

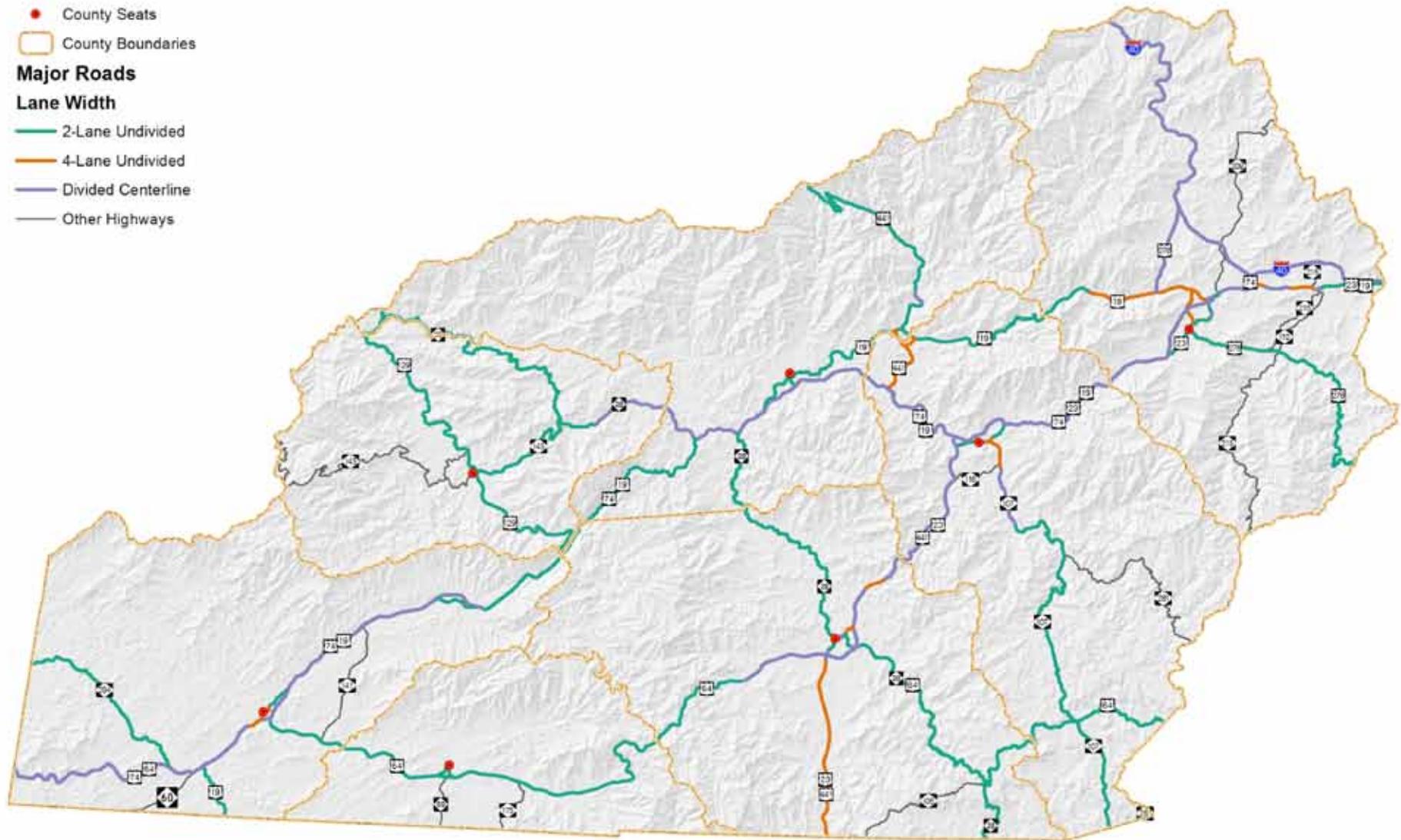


Source: Fuss & O'Neill from NC DOT traffic volume mapping.

**FIGURE 3.10: DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES, US ROUTE 64**



**FIGURE 3.11: SELECTED MAJOR ROADS – NUMBER OF LANES**

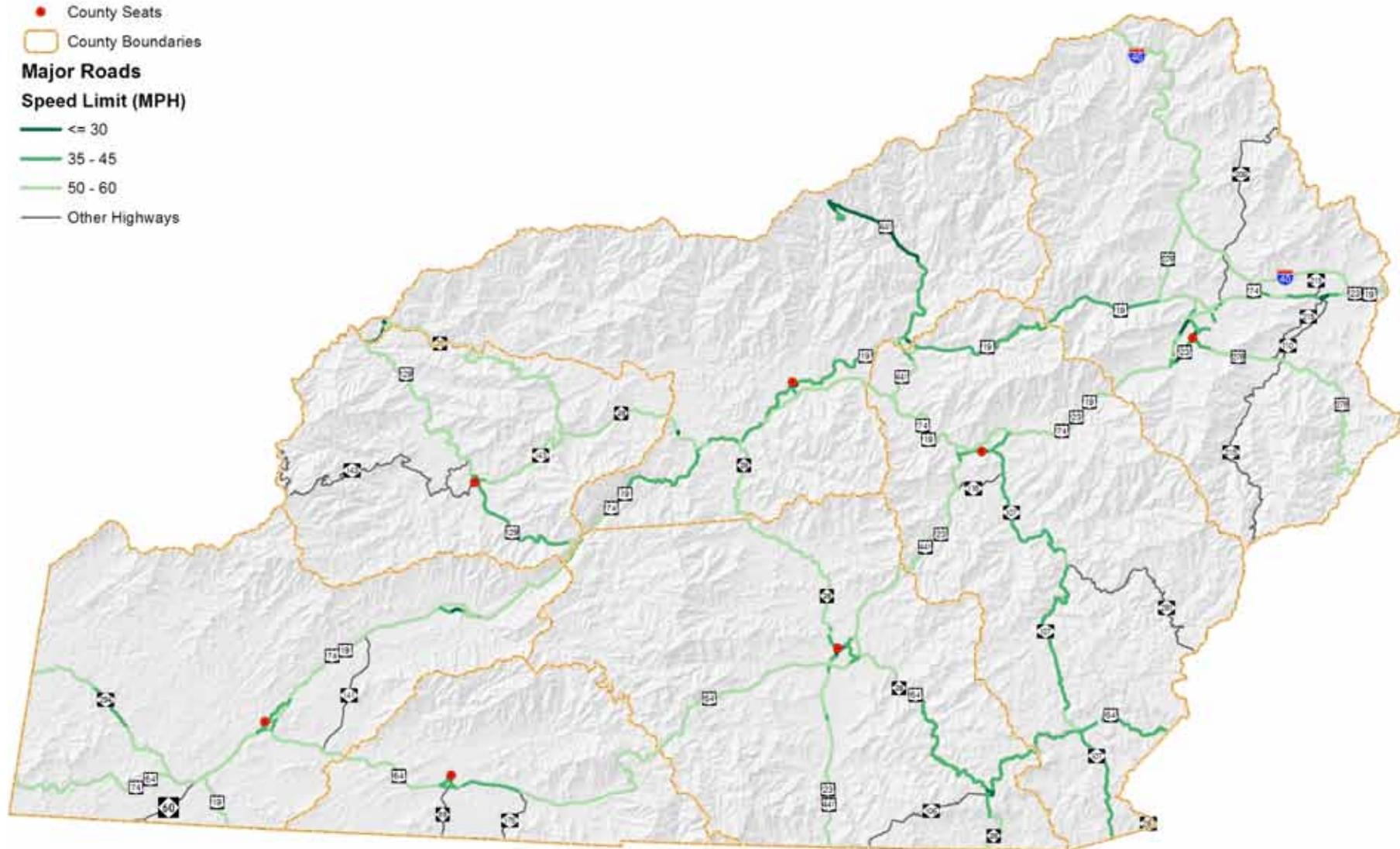


One characteristic of the region is the sense of disconnect from the major population centers of North Carolina and surrounding states. To address this disconnect, many roadway projects have focused to date on reducing travel time by creating higher-speed

facilities, through the addition of passing lanes in selected locations or conversion to multilane, higher speed facilities. Figure 3.11 shows the lane geometry of the major routes within the region.

Source: NC DOT.

## FIGURE 3.12: SELECTED MAJOR ROADS – SPEED LIMITS



Due to the challenging terrain and topography as well as environmental constraints, the continued development of higher-speed facilities is distinctly challenging. However, increases in speed and reduction in travel time appear to have only incremental

impacts when weighed against the relative costs associated with some of the larger projects. Figure 3.13, next page, shows existing distance, travel time, and average speed between key regional destinations. It then shows the increase or decrease in

that travel time resulting from an increase or decrease of average travel speed on the routes.

Source: NC DOT.

**FIGURE 3.13: TRAVEL TIMES BETWEEN KEY DESTINATION AND CENTERS BASED ON AVERAGE SPEED**

Route	Distance (miles)	Existing Average Speed	Existing Travel Time (min.)*	Average Speed 50 MPH	Average Speed 55 MPH	Average Speed 60 MPH
Waynesville to Sylva	18.4	42	26	22	20	18
Waynesville to Cherokee	32.6	47	42	39	36	33
Sylva to Bryson City	18.4	44	25	22	20	18
Sylva to Franklin	19.1	42	27	23	21	19
Andrews to Murphy	16.3	47	21	20	18	16
Andrews to Robbinsville	20.4	42	29	24	22	20

In conclusion, the analysis suggest that an increase in travel speed between Robbinsville and Bryson City for instance yields an 11 minute savings over the current travel time while the percentage decrease is in the range of 30%. This piece of information weighs into one of the critical questions for the region: What are the options for decreasing travel times between key destinations in the region?

Source: Fuss & O’Neill, Inc.

\* Existing travel times from Google Maps. Existing speeds interpreted from travel times.



### Questions:

What is the land use vision for this region, and what transportation network best serves that regional vision? A transportation network to serve industry may look much different than one geared toward serving tourism.

Is there a perception that goods and services are too far away from where people live in this region? How can that be remedied?

What are the options for decreasing travel times between key destinations in the region?

How important is it to have a choice of travel modes within this region?

At what point does the region become “connected enough” to the rest of North Carolina and the Southeast to overcome the economic disadvantage of its isolation?



Main Street, Franklin, Macon County, NC



Hwy 129 and Hwy 143, Graham County, NC

## 4. NATURAL RESOURCES

The following is an overview of natural and cultural resources within the seven county region (including the Qualla Boundary). The uniqueness of the region and its significant heritage resources, both natural and cultural, can provide insight into its most unique attributes, including environmental, historical, educational, artistic, and inspirational resources. The seven county region is located in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, which are among the oldest mountains on earth. The geology and climate contributes to the region's extraordinary diversity of flora and ecological integrity.

Within the region are five designated wilderness areas that include the Shining Rock Wilderness Area in the Pisgah National Forest and the old growth forests of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area in the Nantahala National Forest. Close to 50% of the region is protected within the two national forests and National Park. A portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway also passes through the region, which is the most visited unit of the National Park system. Another highly visited destination is the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which is one of the most important natural areas in the eastern U.S. and is of global importance as an example of temperate deciduous hardwood forest. A combination of natural and cultural resources provides for scenic landscapes, healthy environments, rich biological diversity, and connections to the past.

When we focus in on the region more closely, we see that natural resources are composed of prominent geological and water features, significant amounts of forest land; important

water resources; and significant natural heritage areas that contain critical habitat and species of conservation importance. These resources provide a broad array of outdoor recreational opportunities, including fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, and scenic byways. These natural resources are of major importance to recreation as an attraction, and also provide ecosystem services such as clean drinking water.

All counties in the region contain a variety of natural resources. For example, Swain County and the Qualla Boundary contain 137 significant resource waters and 41 critical habitats and species of conservation importance; Jackson County is home to 63 significant Natural Heritage Areas; Macon County has 11 National Forest, State Forest, and/or parkland areas; and Haywood County has 16 prominent geological features.

The cultural resources of the region are also significant. The Cherokee Indian Museum contains the largest collection of artifacts of the Cherokee culture. The cultural resources within the area of study are composed of: Cherokee Heritage Sites; Cherokee Heritage Festivals and Events; Craft Institutions and Museums; Craft Artisans; Craft Heritage Festivals and Events; Musicians and Performers; Music Heritage Festivals, Events, and Jam Sessions; Agricultural Communities; Agricultural Heritage Festivals and Events; Historic and Century Farms; General Heritage Festivals and Events; and Historic Military Campaigns.

All counties within the region have an abundance of cultural resources of varying types. For example, Swain County and Qualla Boundary are known to have 37 Craft Artisans, 27 Musicians and Performers,

and 8 Agricultural Heritage Festivals and Events; Haywood County has 6 Historic Military Campaigns; and Macon County with 21 Historic and Century Farms and 21 Cherokee Heritage Sites.

When determining the value of natural resources, it is possible to identify the resource and its value based on data that can be collected. For example, the value of trout waters can be quantified by calculating the value of fishing permits sold. This is considered use value.

What is more complex and often difficult to quantify are those resources that provide ecosystem services that support the food chain, scenic viewsheds, carbon sequestration, clean water and clean air. Economists measure the value of ecosystem services by estimating the amount people are willing to pay to preserve or enhance the service. Some ecosystem services are not actually used but the existence of the resource is what has value. For instance, some people may not hike the trails around the Blue Ridge Parkway, but they value the scenery or value the fact it exists.

Consideration of ecosystem function and determining an economic value can help resource managers and other decision makers set priorities for programs, policies, or actions that protect, enhance or restore ecosystems and their services. Due to the complex nature of determining the value of ecosystem services and that this study assesses available data quantifying resource benefits, this is outside the scope of this process. It is however an important piece for determining a complete picture of the economic value of an area's natural resources.

## 5. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

### Introduction

Tourism is the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd largest economic engine in every state in the nation, including North Carolina (Civic Tourism, 2010). Western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee contain significant natural and cultural resources and their tourism values are a major contributor to local economies (BRNHA 2008). As part of the Opt-In regional visioning project existing natural and cultural resource economic data were assessed and compiled. These data will be considered for assimilation into the regional visioning document as a way to determine the potential for additional economic benefits to be derived from promotion of these resources.

Many feel that natural resources such as rivers, lakes, waterfalls, vistas, trees, plants, fish, and animals in and of themselves have little economic value, yet the recreational opportunities and products they provide are highly valued or used by most Americans. The same is true, although to a lesser degree, for cultural resources mainly because those resources are tied to human activities or tangible items such as historic sites, crafts, museums, and music festivals. To assess the economic potential of these resources as part of the visioning process, it was necessary to compile existing data from readily available sources. These data will be used in the visioning process as a basis for determining the additional economic potential that could be accrued from these resources.

This report summarizes findings about the available economic measures of natural and cultural resources, references the data sources, and identifies data gaps that are necessary to plan and market these resources for the economic benefit to the local economies, without diminishing the user experience.

### Methods

The original inventory of natural and cultural resources used in the assessment was based on existing data sets, mainly those compiled by Equinox for the Blue Ridge Natural Heritage Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (Figure 5.1; BRNHA 2008). That resource category list served as the basis for researching existing economic data, both on file at Equinox and readily available on the internet. No new data were generated for this assessment. Each report was reviewed and relevant data extracted. Where possible, data were summarized by resource category for the seven-county region. Where resource category, county, or regional economic data could not be obtained from the reports, broader economic measures were documented to provide insights into the magnitude of economic values of an individual resource category.

Because limited natural and cultural resource category economic values were found, Equinox also compiled recent tourism economic data as a way to reveal the magnitude of tourism by county in the region.

Economic data was presented in the same context in which they were estimated (statewide, region, etc.) to provide clarity to the reader in interpreting the data and for

use in the visioning process. Discussion of the data is limited to that necessary to explain the economic value of the various resources and to describe potential threats to increased resource uses. Data gaps or needs that would provide a more complete picture of the economic benefits of the natural and cultural resources over time are identified, but were not obtained as part of this project

The following agency and organization web sites were searched for economic data related to outdoor recreation and cultural resources:

- ★ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ★ U.S. Forest Service
- ★ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
- ★ Outdoor Industry Association
- ★ America Outdoors Association

General tourism economic data was obtained from North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Tourism, Film, and Sports Development. County economic development directors in each county and the Eastern Band Cherokee Indians were contacted to determine if any local natural and cultural resource data were available as well as to survey them about data needs.

### Findings

In general, no county or regional level natural and cultural resource economic data had been compiled. Where such data were located, estimates were made at either the State level or at a regional level covering all of western North Carolina (Figure 5.2). Due

to the methodologies used, county level data could not be parsed out from those reports. Even where data were available, it was not broken out by resource category. The exception to this was where specific economic surveys had been conducted for freshwater fishing, mountain trout fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation.

Despite the fact that limited county or regional data are available, the economic values of natural resources of the seven-county region have to be considered significant. For example, Mountain Trout fishing was valued at \$174 million (NCWRC 2009) with Haywood, Cherokee, and Jackson counties being among the most popular of the 24 counties where trout fishing occurs. Similarly in 2009, whitewater boating on the Nantahala River was valued at \$80.3 million (WCU 2009). Extrapolation of these estimates across the region's counties would reveal these resources are important to the local economies.

At an 18-county regional scale, forest timber products were estimated to have a \$207 million delivered value (USFS 2011) of which the seven-county region contributed \$1.8 million (NCDA&CS 2011). In the same 18-county region non-timber products such as ginseng, galax, and ramps were valued at \$13-31 million (USFS 2011).

Data on the economic value of cultural resources was virtually non-existent, but as with natural resources the available data indicate they too have significant economic value. For example, the professional craft industry within the 18 western North Carolina counties was estimated to have a value of \$206 million (USFS 2011).

Statewide data confirms that natural and cultural resources are an important component of North Carolina's economy. The Outdoor Industry Association (OIS 2012) estimated the total value of outdoor recreation in North Carolina in 2012 at \$19.2 billion; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 2011) estimated the value of wildlife watching in 2011 at \$929.7 million. If only a fraction of this could be attributed to the seven counties, it reveals that natural and cultural resources play a major role in their economies.

Data compiled by the North Carolina Department of Commerce confirms that tourism revenues are on the rise in all seven counties (Figure 5.3) with 2011 values ranging from \$11.65 million in Clay County to \$280.50 million in Swain County. Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties were ranked in the bottom third of tourism revenues of North Carolina's 100 counties, despite their abundance of recreational resources.

The lack of natural and economic data was confirmed in conversations with the county economic development directors. As a whole, the economic value of tourism is tracked at the county level using occupancy tax revenues as an indicator of expenditures. Virtually all economic development directors voiced a need to obtain economic valuations of specific natural and cultural resources so they can target market development and marketing schemes. Any such research should include efforts to determine the capacity of the resources to absorb increased uses without degrading the resource or user experience, i.e. determine the cap on how much use a particular resource can support in a given area. The regional vision should address this data need as it would be most

cost effective to conduct the research at the regional level rather than at the county level. Results of the research would aid in the planning and marketing of the natural and cultural resources of the region.



★ ★ ★

**Question:**

**What do we need to know to better understand the economic contributions of the region's cultural and natural heritage?**

Figure 5.1 lists the inventory of natural and cultural resources used in conducting the natural and cultural resource benefit assessment. It was based on existing data sets, mainly those compiled by Equinox for the Blue Ridge Natural Heritage Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. (2008)

There are significant economic benefits derived from natural and cultural resources in the seven-county region. Figure 5.2, next page, summarizes them.

Figure 5.3, also next page, summarizes tourism revenue state-wide ranks for the seven counties. It also shows tourism revenues by county for the 2009 to 2011 period.

Sources: Various, discussed in the text.

**TABLE 5.1: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY BY CATEGORY (BRNHA 2008).**

Features	Source	Date
<b>Natural Resources</b>		
Geologic Features	Equinox Environmental	2008
Outstanding Resource Waters	N.C. Division of Water Quality	2008
Wild and Scenic Rivers	N.C. Division of Water Quality	2008
Trout Waters	N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission	2008
Managed Areas	N.C. Natural Heritage Program	2013
Significant Natural Heritage Areas	N.C. Natural Heritage Program	2013
Natural Heritage Element Occurrences	N.C. Natural Heritage Program	2013
Critical Habitats	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	2012
International Biosphere Reserves	Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere	2008
Public Fishing Access	N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission	2008
Recreational Trails	Equinox Environmental	2008
<b>Cultural Resources</b>		
NC Scenic Byways	N.C. Department of Transportation	2008
Cherokee Heritage Sites	Equinox Environmental	2008
Trail of Tears	Equinox Environmental	2008
Craft Institutions	Equinox Environmental	2008
Craft Artisan Locations	Equinox Environmental	2008
Music Institutions	Equinox Environmental	2008
Musician and Performer Locations	Equinox Environmental	2008
Heritage Festivals	Equinox Environmental	2008
Agricultural Regions	Equinox Environmental	2008
Farmers Markets	N.C. Dept. Agriculture & Consumer Services	2008
Prime Agricultural Soils	Natural Resource Conservation Service	2008
Century Farms	N.C. Dept. Agriculture & Consumer Services	2008
Historic Military Routes	Equinox Environmental	2008

**TABLE 5.2: SUMMARY FINDINGS OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ECONOMIC VALUES**

Resource	Economic Value	Data Constraint	Year	References
<b>Natural</b>				
Fishing – freshwater only	\$574.0 million	Statewide estimate only	2011	USFWS 2011
Fishing – mountain trout	\$174.0 million	Statewide estimate only	2009	NCWRC 2009
Fishing – freshwater	\$750.0 million	Statewide estimate only	2011	Southwick 2013
Hunting – all types	\$525.3 million	Statewide estimate only	2011	USFWS 2011
Wildlife Watching	\$929.7 million	Statewide estimate only	2011	USFWS 2011
Total Outdoor Recreation	\$19.2 billion	Statewide estimate only	2012	OIA 2012
Forest Products	\$1.33 million delivered	Region A	2011	NCDA&CS 2011
Forest Products	\$207 million delivered	18 WNC counties	2007	USFS 2011
Recreational Fees	\$1.8 million	Pisgah/Nantahala N.F.	2010	USFS 2011
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	\$4.4 million	Pisgah/Nantahala N.F.	2010	USFS 2011
Non-Timber Forest Products	\$73,000 (permit value)	Pisgah/Nantahala N.F.	2010	USFS 2011
	\$13-31 million (product value)			
Whitewater boating – Nantahala River	\$80.3 million	County/regional data	2009	WCU 2009
<b>Cultural</b>				
Professional Craft Industry	\$206 million	18 WNC counties; county data?	2011	USFS 2011

**TABLE 5.3: TOURISM REVENUES (IN MILLIONS) AND STATEWIDE RANK BY COUNTY AND YEAR**

Year	Cherokee	Clay	Graham	Haywood	Jackson	Macon	Swain (including Qualla Boundary)	Statewide County Average
2011	\$33.92	\$11.65	\$23.73	\$120.40	\$66.79	\$126.15	\$280.50	\$184.21
2010	\$31.64	\$11.23	\$22.82	\$116.31	\$62.58	\$122.08	\$256.35	\$170.15
2009	\$30.73	\$10.77	\$21.38	\$108.88	\$60.90	\$114.46	\$237.29	\$156.23
State Rank - 2011	67	92	77	33	49	30	13	n/a

## 6. SIGNATURE LANDSCAPES AND LEGACY LANDSCAPES

*“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains from whence cometh my help.” – Psalm 121*

There are few places in America where landscape has shaped a people and culture more profoundly than the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Southern Highland settlement patterns, farming practices, personal individualism and independence, religious fervor, distinctive music and speech, and local customs all emerged interwoven and rooted in a landscape of rugged mountains, deep valleys, isolated coves and abundant waters.

Although the human-land relationship has changed significantly through generations, the landscapes of western North Carolina still exert considerable power and influence over people’s lives and culture. Acknowledging and understanding this landscape is therefore important, and it can be done through various means ranging from preparing or reviewing detailed resource inventories and maps to reading guidebooks and experiencing places first-hand. The landscape assessment here is based on a little bit of all these and it focuses on identifying what could be considered the most noteworthy, character-defining “Signature” and “Legacy” Landscapes of the region.

Signature Landscapes are major large-scale landscape areas that:

- ★ Define the identity or “signature” of a region; they’re regionally significant.

- ★ Possess a combination of exceptional natural and scenic qualities, as well as perhaps recreational and cultural qualities, and remain largely unaltered by human activity.
- ★ Possess high visual quality: strong vividness (memorable), intactness and unity (compositional harmony).
- ★ Figure prominently in locals’ (and visitors’) sense of place, framing and influencing human history and activity throughout the larger landscape.
- ★ Could be considered the quintessential or most perfect representation of a regional landscape feature or area.

Legacy Landscapes are notable features and places where:

- ★ Past and present human activity and development have sustained or strengthened the landscape’s intrinsic (natural, scenic, recreational, historical, or cultural) qualities.
- ★ Human activity and development have established a positive example or legacy for resource management, land use and conservation, recreation, historic preservation, local economic development, etc.
- ★ Human intervention and development have come about through a collective effort and in the interest of “the greater good”.
- ★ Local values and heritage are represented, and all can find inspiration and enjoyment.

Most of the Signature Landscapes and Legacy Landscapes identified here

encompass fairly large geographical areas. Each Landscape thus may include a number of smaller-scale resources and features that are special or prominent such as a group of high mountain peaks, stands of old-growth forest, stretches of wild and scenic river, or a series of lovely secluded lake coves. As suggested here, all of these individual features are part of a larger spatial continuum and correspondingly grouped they constitute a collection of noteworthy and remarkable regionally significant large-scale landscape areas.

In no small way the wonderful landscapes of western North Carolina have made us who we are, and they will continue to shape who or what we choose to become. The map and list on pages 40 and 41 identify the Signature Landscapes and the Legacy Landscapes of the seven county Opt-In study area

★ ★ ★

**Questions:**

**Are these landscapes worthy of special consideration and treatment in the visioning and planning of the seven county region?**

**How can we better understand the potential impacts of climate trends on the region’s forests, rivers, and other natural environments?**

## SIGNATURE LANDSCAPES



*Great Smoky Mountains*



*Panthertown Valley*

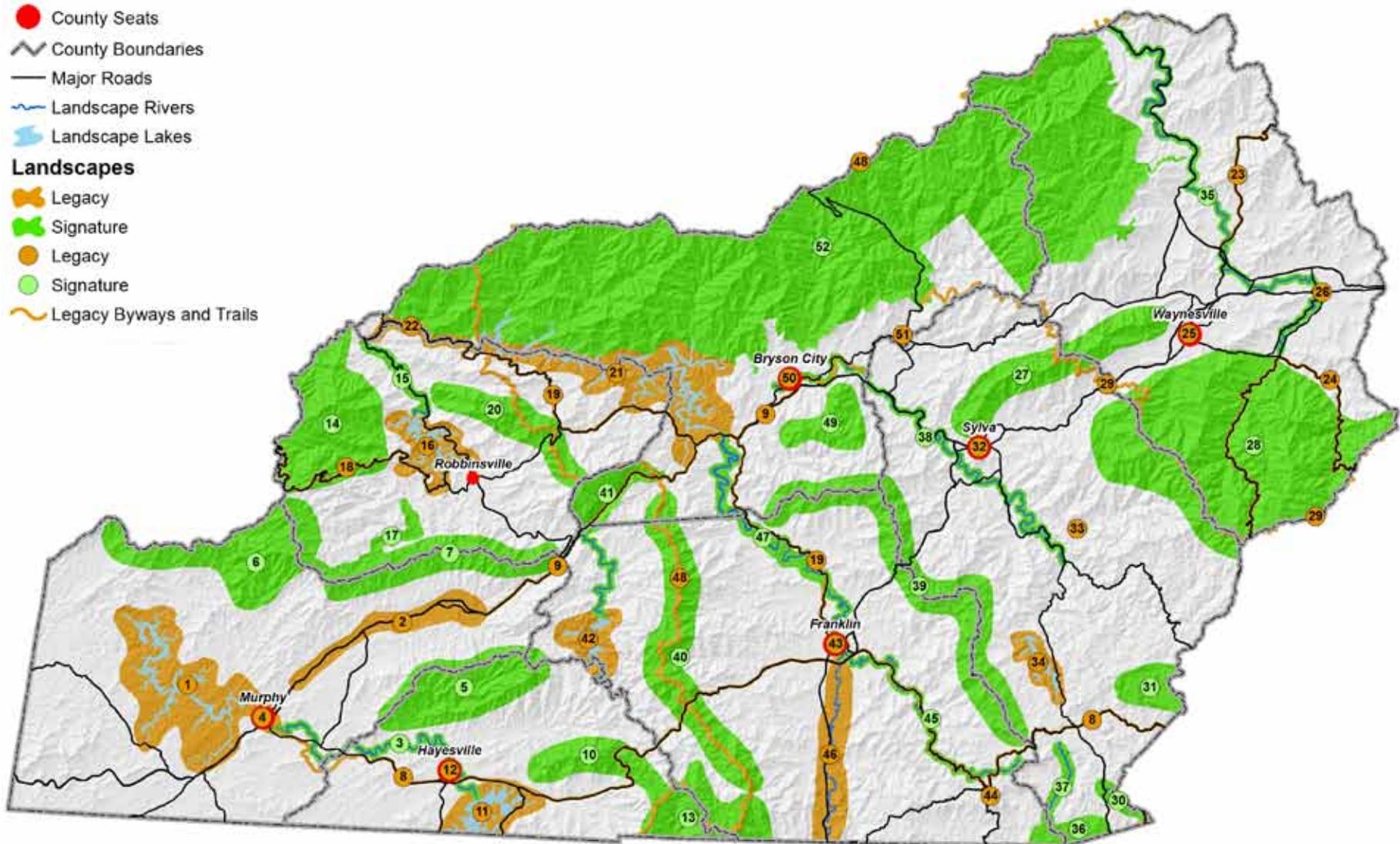


*Nantahala River Gorge*



*Great Balsam Mountains*

## FIGURE 6.1: SIGNATURE AND LEGACY LANDSCAPES



This map shows the wide distribution and variety of Signature Landscapes and Legacy Landscapes across the seven county region. These landscapes make the region distinctive and compelling. On the

following page each landscape is identified by number, name, type, and location. The numbers correspond to the numbers on the map.

Source: Jones and Jones, NEMAC, and Equinox Environmental.

ID	Name	Type	County
1	Hiwassee Lake	Legacy	Cherokee
2	Valley River Valley	Legacy	Cherokee
3	Hiwassee River	Signature	Cherokee and Clay
4	Murphy	Legacy	Cherokee
5	Fires Creek Basin	Signature	Cherokee and Clay
6	Unicoi Mountains	Signature	Cherokee and Graham
7	Snowbird Mountains	Signature	Cherokee and Graham
8	Waterfall Byway	Legacy	Cherokee, Clay, Macon, Jackson
9	Nantahala Byway	Legacy	Cherokee, Macon, Swain
10	Chunky Gal Mountains	Signature	Clay
11	Chatuge Lake	Legacy	Clay
12	Hayesville Town Core	Legacy	Clay
13	Southern Nanatahala Wilderness	Signature	Clay and Macon
14	Kilmer-Slickrock / Santeetlah Creek Basin	Signature	Graham
15	Cheoah River	Signature	Graham
16	Santeetlah Lake	Legacy	Graham
17	Little Snowbird Creek	Signature	Graham
18	Cherohala Skyway	Legacy	Graham
19	Indian Lakes Scenic Byway	Legacy	Graham
20	Cheoah Mountains	Signature	Graham and Swain
21	Fontana Lake	Legacy	Graham and Swain
22	Cheoah Lake	Legacy	Graham and Swain
23	Appalachian Medley Byway	Legacy	Haywood
24	Forest Heritage Scenic Byway	Legacy	Haywood
25	Waynesville	Legacy	Haywood
26	Canton	Legacy	Haywood

ID	Name	Type	County
27	Plott Balsams	Signature	Haywood and Jackson
28	Great Balsams/Pisgah Ledge/MiddleProng/	Signature	Haywood and Jackson
29	Blue Ridge Parkway	Legacy	Haywood, Jackson, and Swain
30	Whitewater River and Falls	Signature	Jackson
31	Panthertown Valley	Signature	Jackson
32	Sylva	Legacy	Jackson
33	Judaculla Rock	Legacy	Jackson
34	Glennville Lake	Legacy	Jackson
35	Pigeon River	Signature	Jackson
36	Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area	Signature	Jackson and Macon
37	Upper Chattooga River	Signature	Jackson and Macon
38	Tuckeseigee River	Signature	Jackson and Swain
39	Cowee Mountains	Signature	Jackson, Macon, Swain
40	Nantahala Mountains	Signature	Macon
41	Nantahala River and Gorge	Signature	Macon
42	Nantahala Lake	Legacy	Macon
43	Franklin	Legacy	Macon
44	Highlands	Legacy	Macon
45	Cullasaja River	Signature	Macon
46	Upper Little Tennessee River	Legacy	Macon
47	Lower Little Tennessee River	Signature	Macon and Swain
48	Appalachian Trail	Legacy	Macon, Swain, and Graham
49	Alarka Mountains	Signature	Swain
50	Bryson City	Legacy	Swain
51	Cherokee Town Core	Legacy	Swain
52	Great Smoky Mountains National Park	Signature	Swain and Haywood

## LEGACY LANDSCAPES



*Santeetlah Lake*



*Valley River Valley*



*Blue Ridge Parkway*



*Sylva Town Core*

## 7 POLICY: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The following two pages summarize findings from the review of comprehensive plans and studies from jurisdictions throughout the region. The findings focus on similarities and differences among those plans and studies.

All municipalities within the region have some form of zoning, with the exception of Bryson City, Fontana Dam, and Robbinsville. Because most of the land within the region is within unincorporated counties and no counties within the region have zoning ordinances, most of the land remains without zoning. Some counties have subdivision ordinances, watershed protection laws, noxious use restrictions, and other regulations that serve some of the functions of zoning ordinances.

There are no county land use plans or other significant land use plans within the region. While a number of county comprehensive plans exist, these do not contain maps showing future land use designations for every parcel of land. Where they do include maps, land use categories are often vague and not related to land uses. Specific county land use plans are summarized as follows:

- ★ Cherokee County's last land use plan dates from 1974, but it only shows land use categories (high/medium density residential, commercial, and industrial) in a few areas. Most of the county was shown as a single category for agriculture, open space, and low-density residential.
- ★ Clay County's 2010 Comprehensive Plan does not include a comprehensive land use map, but does include a map showing "future economic development areas."

No specific definition is provided for this term.

- ★ Graham County does not have a county comprehensive plan or land use plan.
- ★ Haywood County does not have a county comprehensive plan or land use plan.
- ★ Jackson County's 2006 Land Development plan does not include a comprehensive land use map, but does include a map showing potential commercial growth areas.
- ★ Macon County's 2011 Comprehensive Plan, still in its draft form, does not include any recommendations specific to land uses.
- ★ Swain County's Land Use Plan Update dates from 2010 and includes only a few policy statements about land use, without a guiding map.

What many plans provide instead of land use maps are a list of general policies. These tend to focus on preserving natural resources and landscapes, limiting inappropriate types of development, improving aesthetics, and ensuring compatibility with existing development. These policies and more are common across most communities and are evidence of the desire to improve and enhance the local landscape, even if land use maps and zoning ordinances are not deemed an appropriate tool.

A number of factors may contribute to the lack of broad land use policies and regulations within the region. The vast amounts of public land already have limits on land use and other protections that would traditionally be enforced by other means.

For this reason, many of the most valuable landscapes within the region are already preserved by land use controls that come from the federal level.

Where public lands do not exist, the terrain is such that it limits development in many areas, either because steep slopes are infeasible for development at all, or because the lack of large flat parcels makes development at a significant scale difficult. These natural factors do not prohibit development outright, but effectively limit its location and scope.

Finally, as is reported in a number of previous plans, many citizens within the region are uncomfortable with excessive regulation of individual land use and do not view land use maps or zoning ordinances as compatible with their values. Many municipalities and areas with high growth pressures, however, do feel that an appropriate level of regulation is necessary.

The diversity of communities within the region makes a broad summary difficult, but a number of themes emerge regarding land use policy within the region, including a number of similarities and differences.

### Similarities

- ★ Lack of future land use maps
- ★ Lack of need for regulation for lands under public control
- ★ Use of policies rather than land use maps or zoning ordinances
- ★ Flexible policy frameworks with freedom for local decision makers

- ★ Preserve mountain landscapes and natural beauty
- ★ Protect streams and other water bodies
- ★ Enhance downtowns and commercial corridors with appropriate ordinances

#### Differences

- ★ Level of regulation that is perceived to be appropriate
- ★ Balance between individual property rights and community objectives
- ★ Local-serving land uses vs. those that serve vacationers
- ★ Steep slope ordinances
- ★ Amount of manufactured homes and managed affordable housing
- ★ Emphasis on growth and economic development versus open space preservation

## TRANSPORTATION SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

#### Similarities

The directions of the counties' CTPs and state Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) seem to be well-aligned from the document and policy review. A TIP is an agreed upon list of priority transportation projects, as required by federal law.

Similarities among the built trends and policy documents are as follows:

- ★ There are recommendations to upgrade segments of the regional primary roadway system to decrease travel times between

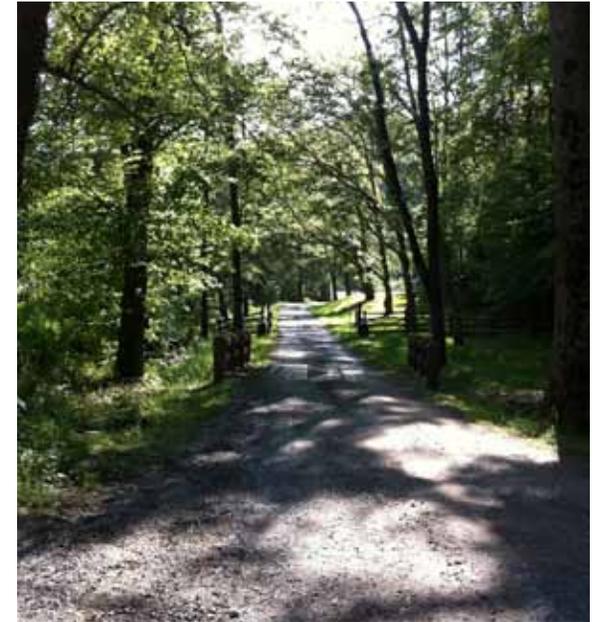
key destinations and increase regional connectedness;

- ★ Many of the widening projects completed to date have allowed the goal of reduced travel times to be realized;
- ★ Walkability and street character is important for roadways in the built-up areas of the region;
- ★ Trails and greenways are an emerging important piece of the transportation network;

#### Differences

Key differences with regard to transportation in the region include the following:

- ★ The trend has been toward widening existing roadways to decrease travel time and enhance the connectedness of the region; options such as additional network additions and secondary roadway connections have not been explored fully;
- ★ There is much disagreement in the region as to the future of the A-9 project, and it is anticipated that the regional Vision that comes out of this effort will help inform the direction of that project as well as the overall future transportation network serving the region;
- ★ Regional transit has not been fully explored, possibly due to the lack of population density and low ridership potential;
- ★ Traffic forecasts within the existing planning efforts predict a significant amount of traffic growth in the region, which is not reflected with the analysis



*Entry drive off Hwy 74, High Grove subdivision, Whittier, Jackson County, NC*

of traffic volumes from the early 2000's through today; and

- ★ Roadway plans have not yet incorporated the recent NCDOT Complete Streets Design Guidelines.
- ★ Figure 7.1, to the right, shows municipalities which have adopted zoning. Figures 7.2 and 7.3, on the following pages, show regional greenways and trails and regional bicycle routes.

## FIGURE 7.1: ZONING

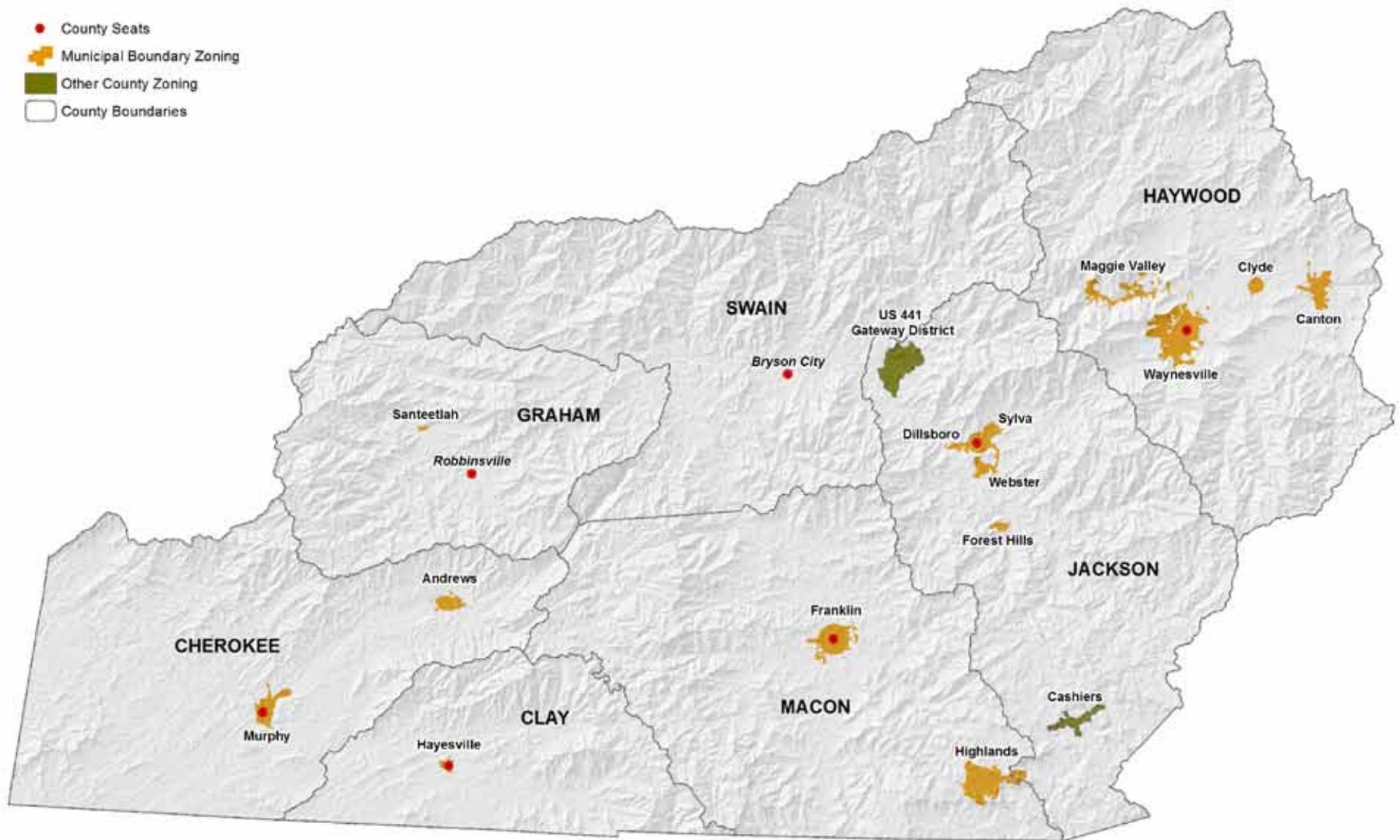
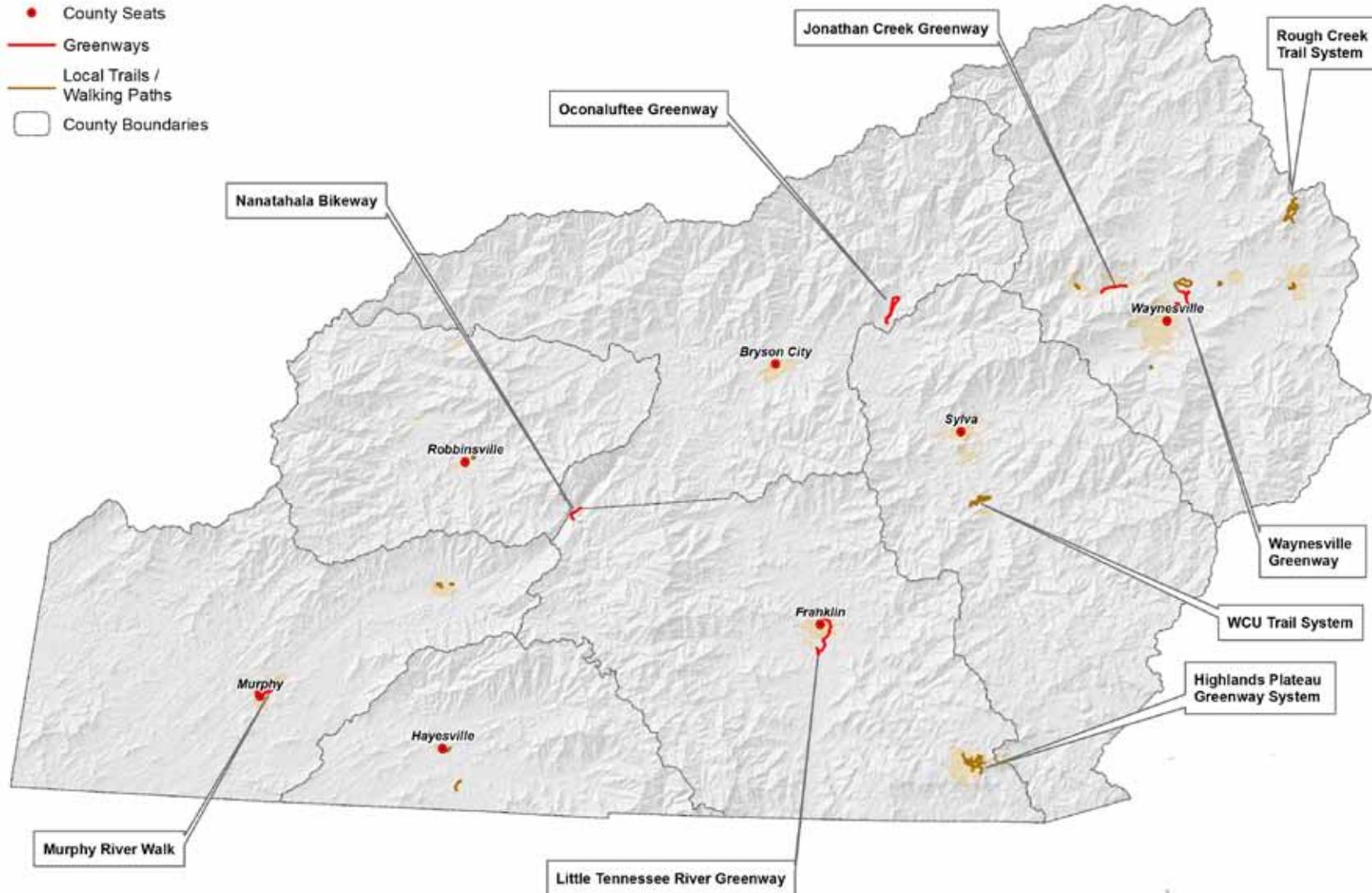


Figure 7.1 shows areas where some form of municipal or county zoning is in place.

Source: TSW, NEMAC.

## FIGURE 7.2: REGIONAL GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

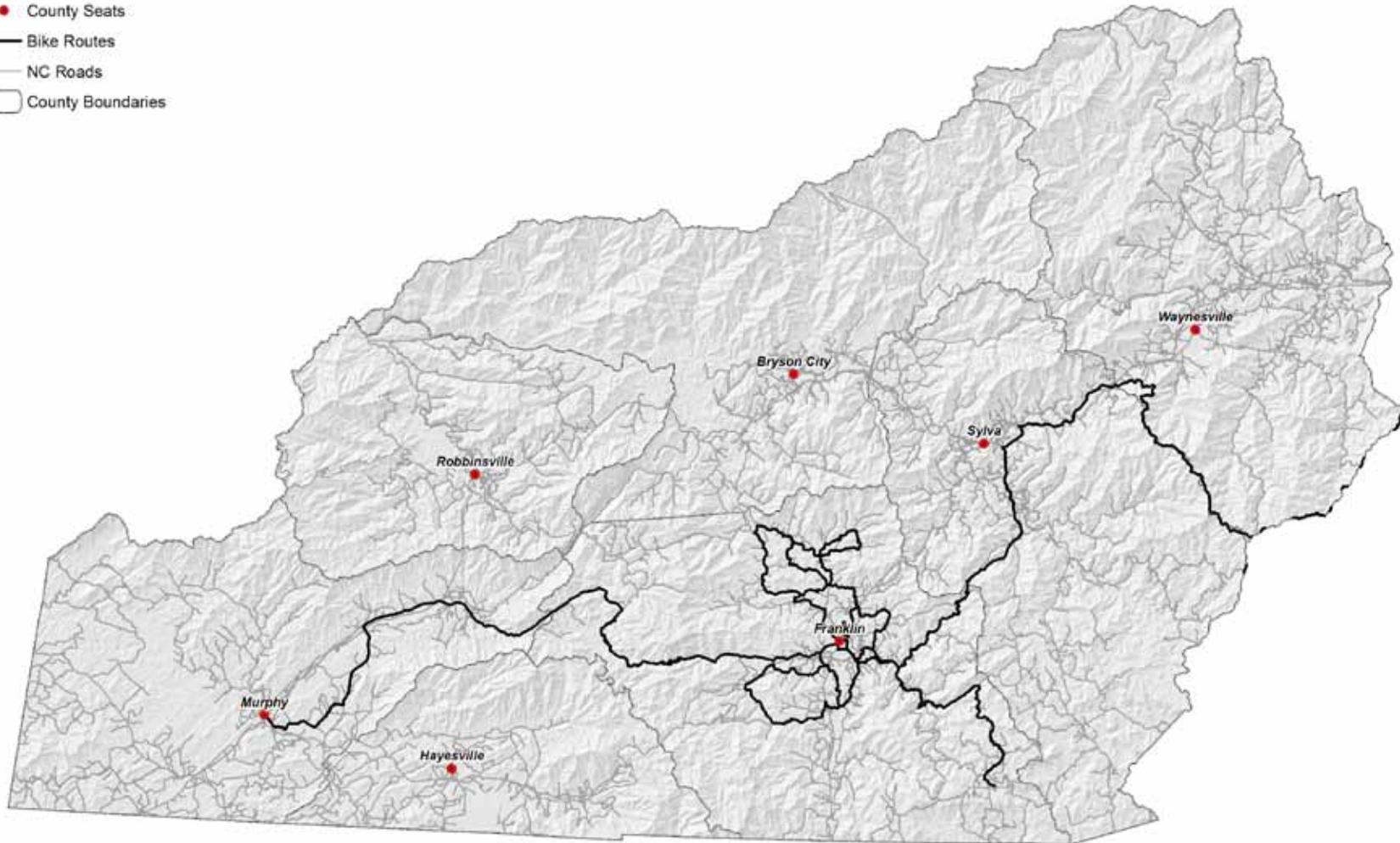


Figures 7.2 and 7.3, next page, show greenways and recreational trails including local walking paths at community parks and schools.

Source: Data is from the SWNC Commission, Haywood County, and digitized from local maps. There may be other local trails and walking paths not shown on the map.

## FIGURE 7.3: RECREATIONAL TRAILS

- County Seats
- Bike Routes
- NC Roads
- County Boundaries



## FIGURE 7.4: REGIONAL BICYCLE ROUTES

- County Seats
- Bike Routes
- NC Roads
- County Boundaries

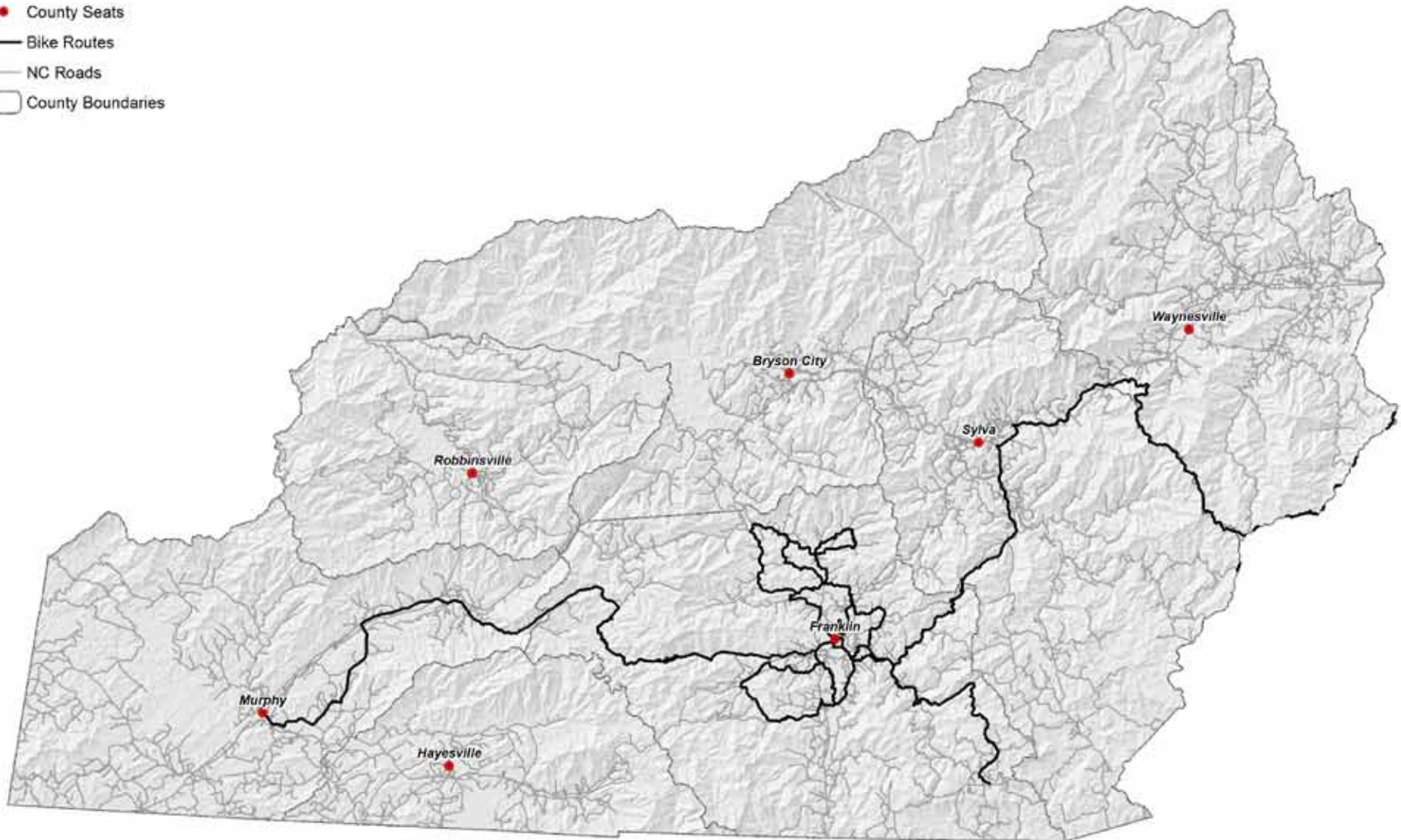


Figure 7.4 shows the official NC DOT bike routes (bicycles, not motorcycles).

Source: NC DOT.

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section of the Baseline Vision is to provide a comprehensive summary of socio-economic conditions and trends for the seven-county region. The report therefore serves as a baseline portrait that places the region's socio-economic performance and prospects in context. The report consists of three parts:

1. General Trends: The Region's Relative Performance
2. Sector-specific Trends: The Drivers of Performance
3. Demographic Trends: The Changing Population

The general trends section describes the current and past standing of the seven-county region relative to state and national outcomes. The intent is to reveal instances in which the region exceeds or lags broader trends.

The sector-specific trends disaggregate the general trends to examine county and regional performances across industries and sectors. The section should help identify the economic drivers that lead to relatively strong or weak economic outcomes.

A demographic section provides a general portrait of the people living in the seven-county region. The information is put in context by comparing them to state and national numbers. Throughout the report, information is presented to reveal general

and local trends. The distinction between these two types of trends is important.

General trends can be characterized as the changes that are common to the region and state and emerge from forces outside the region.

Localized trends are the forces that are more specific to the region and counties and therefore more determined by local conditions and actions. While both general and localized trends impact the region's

economy, regional leaders and policies have far more influence on the localized trends than the general trends. Therefore, it tends to be ineffective and inefficient to spend limited local resources fighting against a larger general trend.



*Farm stand, Highway 64, Macon County, NC*

## KEY TRENDS

1. The seven-county regional economy is growing slower than the rest of the state and consequently accounting for a decreasing share of the state's overall economy. This trend is shared by most of western North Carolina and is consistent with more general urban-rural trends across the country.

2. The decline in manufacturing is a general trend. This trend is being shaped by forces outside the region, and therefore will be difficult to reverse by actions within the region. The decline in manufacturing had disparate impacts across the seven-county region, with Haywood and Cherokee being hit particularly hard.

3. The education and health services sector is important to the region. It is the largest source of employment in six of the seven counties, with Macon County being particularly reliant on this sector for employment. With the region's aging population and the presence of Western Carolina University, this sector should continue to be an anchor of economic activity.

4. The rise in leisure and hospitality services is natural. The rise in this sector is common among rural areas that possess attractive natural and cultural resources, and has provided an alternative path for economic development in the wake of losing manufacturing activity. This highlights the need to properly protect and manage the natural and cultural resources that provide a foundation for this increasingly important sector.

5. The seven-county region has relatively low incomes, which is consistent with broader trends for rural areas. The problem of low incomes is mitigated by lower housing costs, but exacerbated by the shift in employment from manufacturing to tourism. (Note, with the general decline in manufacturing, the likely alternative to tourism is not regaining manufacturing levels but rather not having either as a primary base).

6. Population growth has been strong for a rural area. Though lagging the state, the population has grown faster than the national rate. However, population growth is projected to slow substantially in the next five years, with Cherokee and Graham counties expected to have negative growth. Towns that are projected to experience substantial declines in population include Robbinsville, Hayesville and Andrews. This is not atypical for such rural areas due to general urban-rural trends.

7. Education attainment in the seven-county region lags well behind the rest of the state. While Jackson County has similar education attainment as the state, the other six counties have much lower levels of attainment. Standardized test scores indicate the low attainment is not due to low performance of students and schools; rather, the common problem of little opportunity leading people to either choose not to pursue education or not to stay in the area after completing a degree.

8. The region is overwhelmingly racially homogenous with about 88% being white. Swain County is an outlier with about a third of the population being minority and a quarter being American Indian.

9. The region's age distribution is older and aging. The median age is 45 years old, which is nearly 8 years older than the state of North Carolina. This follows a broader trend in rural areas, which is exacerbated by the region's relatively high retiree and second home population. Due to the presence of Western Carolina University, Cullowhee is an outlier with a low median age (21).



### Questions:

**What should the priorities be for better aligning emerging job opportunities and workforce preparedness?**

**What do we need to know to better understand the potential impacts of an aging population?**

**Of immigration?**

**Of public health concerns like obesity and lifestyle-related chronic disease?**

# 1. GENERAL TRENDS: THE REGION'S RELATIVE PERFORMANCE

## 1.1. REGIONAL PERFORMANCE

This section describes the relative performance of the region by reviewing employment and unemployment levels.

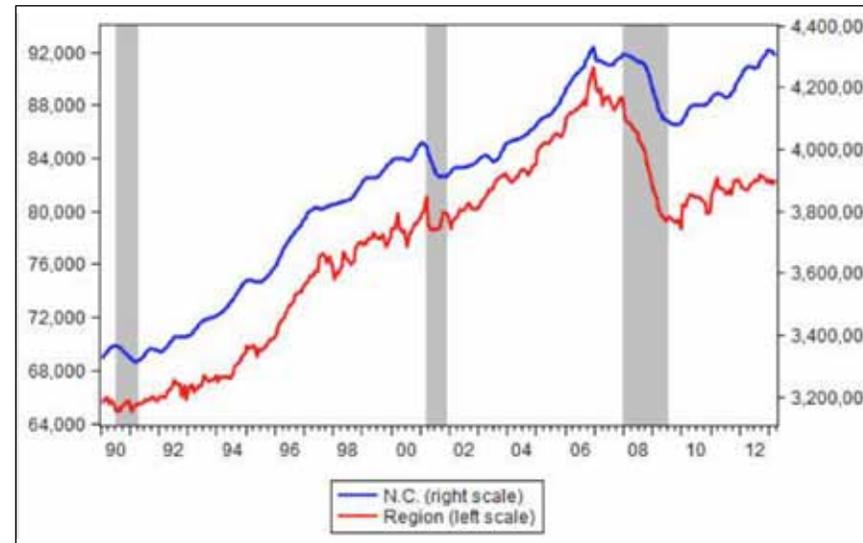
### Total Employment

Figure 1.1.1 compares total employment for the region and state from 1990 to 2013. As the figure illustrates, regional and state employment trends match closely with a few deviations worth noting. The recovery after the 2001 recession was stronger for the region than the state, but the subsequent 2007-09 recession hit the region considerably harder than the state. Since the recession, employment has grown more slowly in the region relative to the state.

### Unemployment

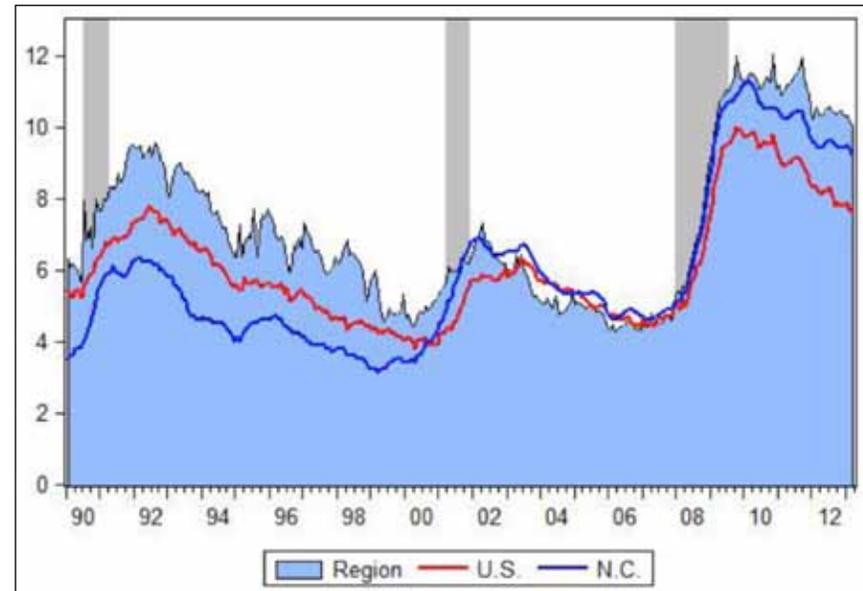
Figure 1.1.2 illustrates regional, state and national unemployment trends. Unemployment rates across areas track closely over time, but regional unemployment has been consistently higher than state and national levels. The one exception is after the 2001 recession when regional unemployment dipped below state and national levels. For state unemployment, rates have been higher than national levels in recent years, which is in contrast to the 1990s when state rates were significantly lower than national rates.

**FIGURE 1.1.1: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT FOR THE REGION AND NORTH CAROLINA**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**FIGURE 1.1.2: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR THE REGION AND NORTH CAROLINA**



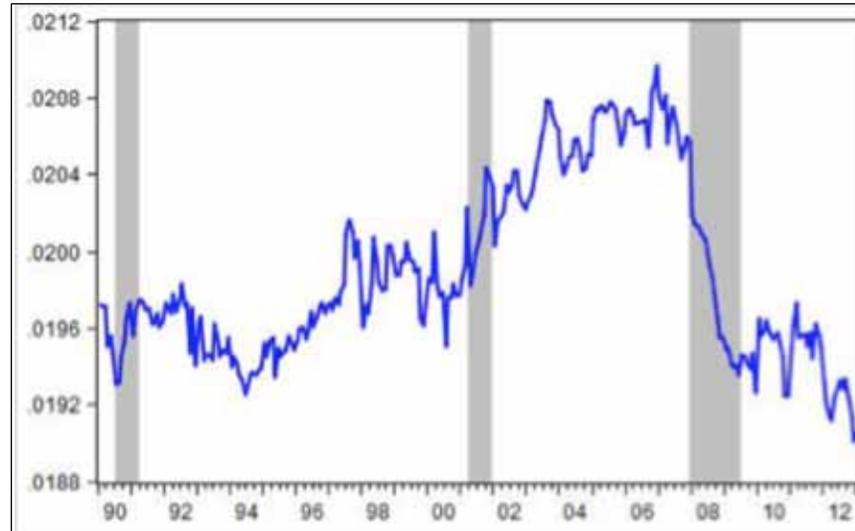
Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

## Employment Ratios

To more clearly illustrate the relative performance of the region, the figures to the right present the region's employment as a percent of North Carolina employment (figure 1.1.3 A) and Western North Carolina (figure 1.1.3 B). The employment ratios show that, after consistently growing relative to the state, the region has experienced a steep decline since the start of the 2007-09 recession. This indicates that the recession was particularly hard for the region, and further, the recovery has been slower for the region.

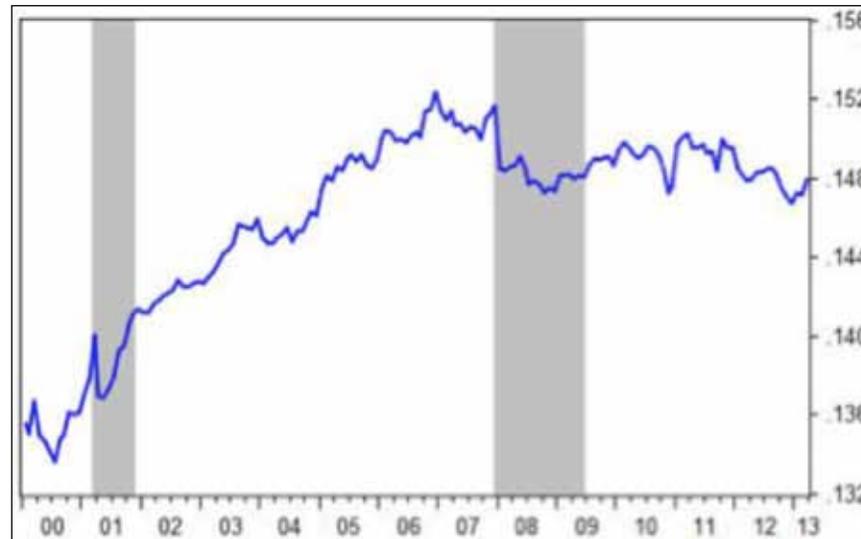
The second employment ratio shows that regional employment grew faster than the larger WNC region (AdvantageWest). Thus, the region's strong economic growth during the 1990s outperformed both the WNC and NC. The figure also indicates that region experienced greater job losses than the WNC region at the start of the 2007-09 recession, but since that point, regional employment has maintained pace with the WNC region.

**FIGURE 1.1.3.A: REGION EMPLOYMENT AS A PERCENT OF NORTH CAROLINA EMPLOYMENT**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission

**TABLE 1.1.3.B: REGION EMPLOYMENT AS A PERCENT OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission

## 1.2. COUNTY-SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE

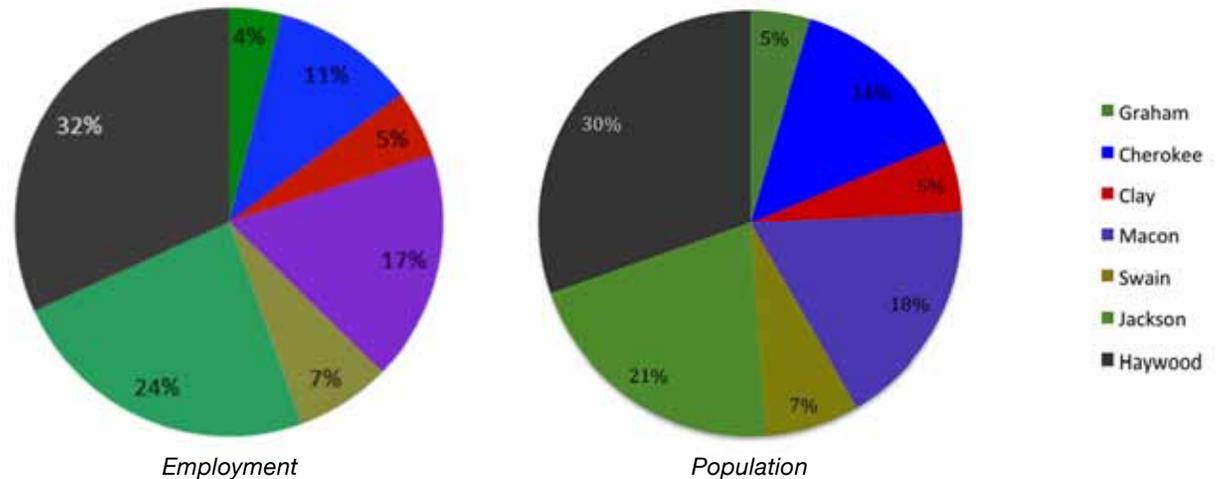
The purpose of the section is to review the relative position of individual counties by reviewing employment shares, business locations, retail activity, income and poverty rates.

### County Employment Shares

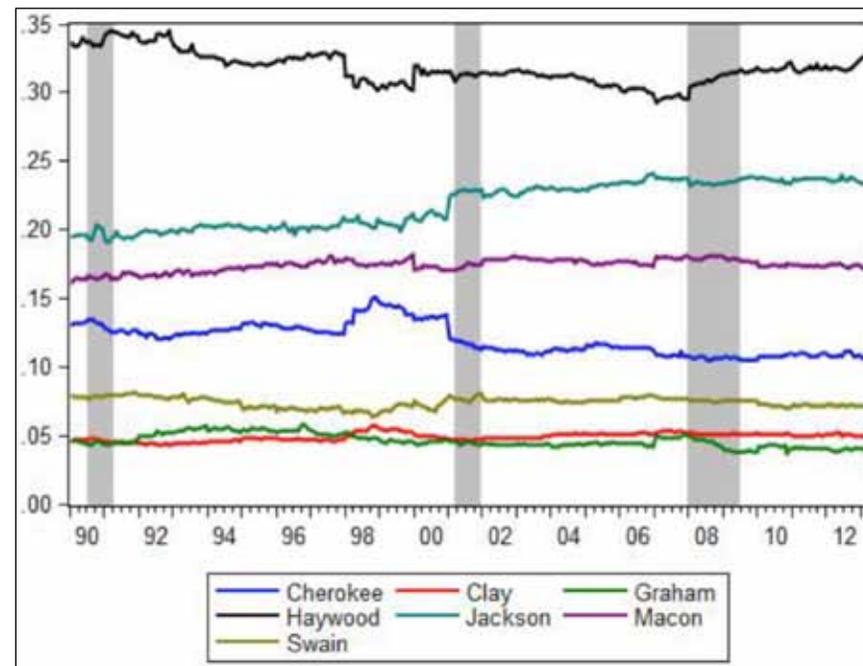
Before turning to the relative performance of each county, it is instructive to review the relative size of each economy. Figure 1.2.1 provides some insight on this issue by showing each county's employment as a percentage of the region's total employment. As shown, over half of the region's jobs are located in Haywood and Jackson counties (32 and 24 percent, respectively). Macon County has 17 percent of the region's jobs, while the remaining four counties share the remaining 27 percent. This breakdown is similar to the percentage of population in each county, as also shown in Figure 1.2.1.

Figure 1.2.2 provides a review of how the relative size of each county's economy, as measured by total employment, has changed over time. Generally, the ranking of each county has remained unchanged since 1990. One exception is Clay and Graham counties, which have alternated being ranked 6th and 7th in total employment. More telling are the differences between rankings. As the figure illustrates, Jackson County has held an increasing share of regional employment since the start of the recession. Cherokee County has experienced a steady decline in its share of regional employment. Haywood County remains the largest employer in the region. It experienced a decline in relative employment between 1990 and 2007, but has since increased its share of regional employment.

**FIGURE 1.2.1: COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND POPULATION AS A PERCENT OF REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND POPULATION, 2012** Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission, US Census, Nielsen Claritas.



**FIGURE 1.2.2: COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AS A PERCENT OF REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT OVER TIME**

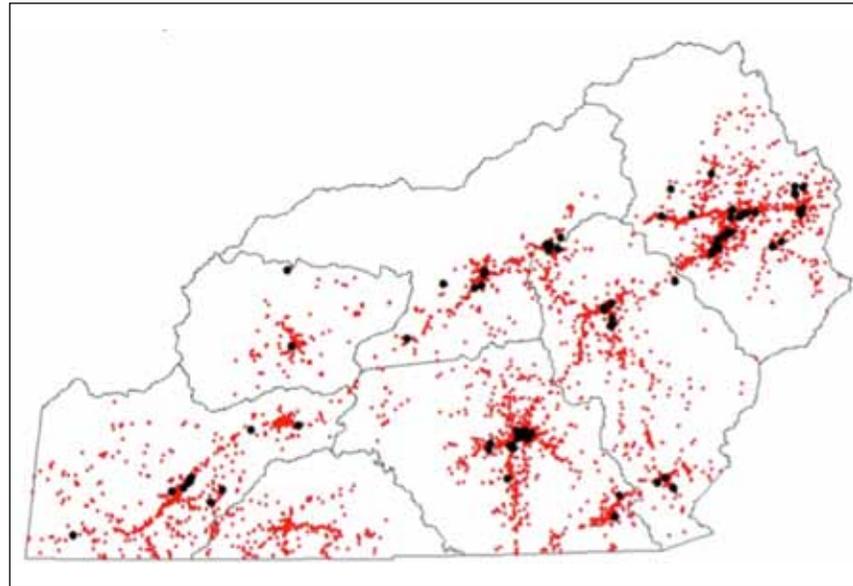


Source: Nielsen Claritas.

### Business Locations

Figure 1.2.3 provides a spatial representation of the location of each business in the region. Each red dot represents a business establishment with black dots indicating the business employs more than 100 people. Naturally, the illustration of business locations corresponds to population centers and existing transportation corridors. The largest concentration of businesses is in Haywood County, particularly in Waynesville and the connected corridors. Another relatively large concentration of businesses is located in the Town of Franklin in Macon County, extending along the 441 and 64 corridors. Other concentrations of businesses is in Sylva (Jackson), Cherokee and Bryson City (Swain), Murphy (Cherokee), and Robbinsville (Graham).

**FIGURE 1.2.3: SPATIAL LOCATION OF BUSINESSES IN REGION**



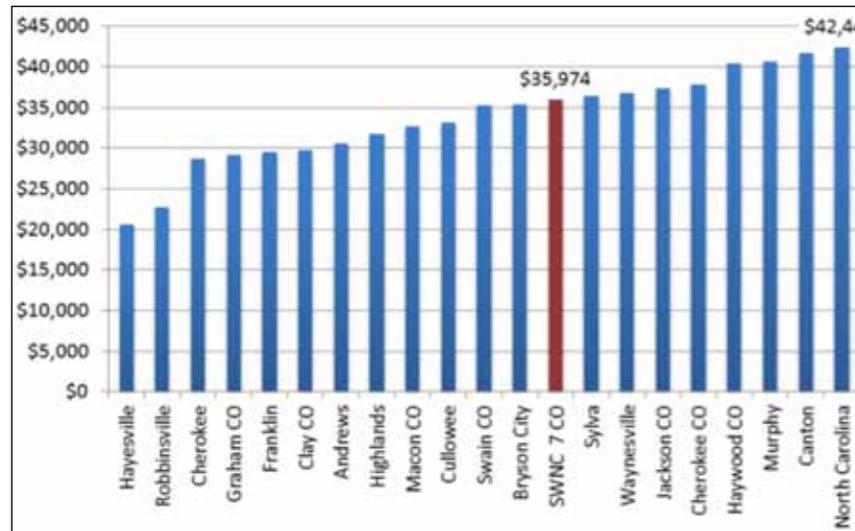
There are 9,072 business locations in the seven-county region. Of those, 86 have more than 100 employees.

Source: Info USA

### Income Levels

Figure 1.2.4 illustrates the median household income for local areas, counties, region and the state. The seven-county region lags the state in median household income at \$35,974 compared to \$42,443 for North Carolina. Hayesville (\$20,577) and Robbinsville (\$22,656) are the only areas in the region with incomes less than \$25,000. Haywood County (\$40,460), Murphy (\$40,656), and Canton (\$41,652) have the highest median incomes.

**FIGURE 1.2.4: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2013**



Source: Nielsen Claritas.

### **Opportunity Gap: Retail Stores**

Retail leakage compares sales within a region to residents' buying power within the same region. If consumers that live in an area are purchasing more goods than stores in that area are selling, dollars are "leaking" outside the area to other areas. This leakage translates directly to demand. Conversely, if stores are selling more than residents are buying, then they are attracting consumers from outside the region.

The numbers indicate the seven-county region is a retail attractor, having gained \$669 million dollars in total retail sales in the previous year. Of this gain, approximately \$425 million alone is restaurants and dining establishments. Communities with a visitor economy tend to have significant gain in destination-based businesses such as restaurants and specialty shopping. This appears to be the case within the region as categories including gift shops, antiques, furniture and home furnishings, among other show significant gain.

Similarly, the category of Building Materials, Supply, & Garden gained nearly \$330 million in the previous year. This category represents both consumer sales (home improvement warehouse or garden centers), as well as business-to-business sales (contractors purchasing building materials at lumber yards, home centers). This is a significant gain and suggests that while the number of new home starts has declined, the construction industry is still active with new home building, improvements, etc.

While there is gain overall, some categories show demand for new business within the region. These include health & personal

care, apparel, sporting goods & hobby, etc. Interestingly, general merchandising also shows demand throughout the region. The leakage numbers vary by county of course. For example, virtually all of the seven-county region's gain in restaurant sales occurs in Swain County. Swain has Cherokee and Harrah's Casino, and is one of the largest visitor destinations in the state. Each county has demand for new business in numerous categories, but only Graham and Jackson have a net demand (leakage) overall.

Figure 1.2.5, next page, provides retail leakage data by category for each county in the region.

Source: Nielsen Claritas.

**FIGURE 1.2.5: REGIONAL RETAIL LEAKAGE, 2012**

	7 County	Cherokee County	Clay County	Graham County	Haywood County	Jackson County	Macon County	Swain County
Opportunity Gap Retail Stores	Leakage (Demand)							
Total Retail Sales	(668,736,094)	(27,876,118)	(74,603,229)	34,453,768	(218,251,462)	112,864,863	(94,344,687)	(400,979,229)
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	(80,598,452)	(29,676,772)	(47,418,975)	(3,375,722)	(29,554,811)	30,518,238	(15,080,521)	13,990,111
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	(43,104,037)	(2,971,346)	(218,961)	1,850,625	(39,499,418)	4,309,686	(8,908,895)	2,334,272
Electronics and Appliance Stores	(46,599)	741,954	1,960,887	2,074,086	(12,652,567)	9,359,052	1,485,158	(3,015,169)
Building Material, Garden Equip Stores	(329,278,679)	(41,826,872)	(109,264,075)	8,035,043	(50,233,355)	(71,798,543)	(61,622,875)	(2,568,002)
Food and Beverage Stores	(128,534,655)	(9,827,330)	8,772,899	14,678,821	(69,506,418)	(29,741,787)	(30,664,350)	(12,246,490)
Health and Personal Care Stores	40,426,705	(194,454)	3,905,369	6,836,608	578,417	8,564,068	11,141,655	9,595,042
Gasoline Stations	(78,662,915)	(656,733)	13,728,749	(14,516,775)	(60,548,095)	2,142,906	(7,093,897)	(11,719,070)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	51,292,844	5,365,046	5,706,197	4,957,306	31,297,972	17,544,495	(17,262,860)	3,684,688
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music	28,495,764	6,424,214	2,354,977	1,655,884	246,119	11,655,203	3,914,832	2,244,535
General Merchandise Stores	137,097,858	34,332,591	20,075,792	15,405,003	(47,348,635)	64,491,978	40,136,559	10,004,570
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	21,853,191	10,534,278	1,050,188	(5,923,828)	(3,524,236)	20,486,814	2,221,179	(2,991,204)
Non-Store Retailers	108,795,500	(3,714,194)	11,554,185	(4,416,705)	46,858,894	34,850,338	9,573,484	14,089,498
Food Service & Drinking Places	(396,472,619)	3,593,500	13,189,539	7,193,422	15,634,671	10,482,415	(22,184,156)	(424,382,010)

Source: Nielsen Claritas.

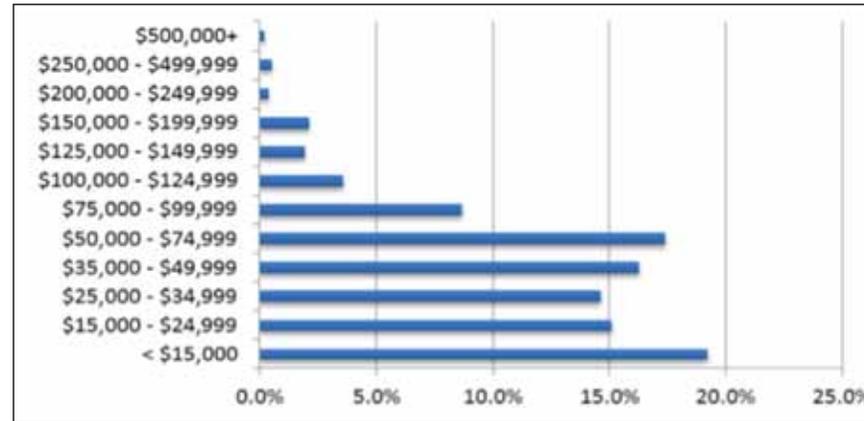
### Income Levels

Figure 1.2.6 shows the percentage of households in each income bracket. The seven-county region has its highest percent of household incomes (19.2%) making less than \$15,000 per year. The second highest are households making \$50,000-\$74,999 (17.4%). Just 5% of households make greater than \$125,000.

### County Poverty Rates

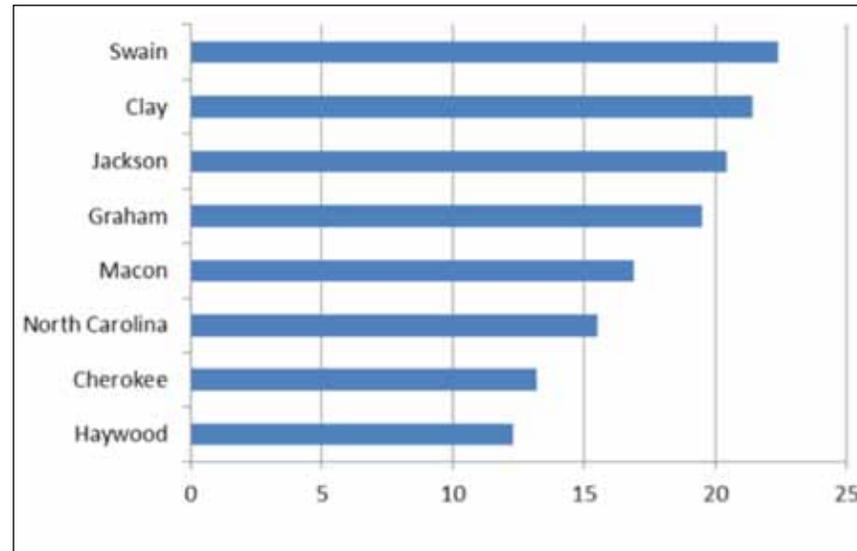
Figure 1.2.7 provides the poverty rates for each county, along with the state rate serving as a benchmark. As shown, five of the seven counties have poverty rates higher than the state rate of 15.5 percent. Only Cherokee and Haywood have lower rates—13.2 and 12.3 percent, respectively. Swain, Clay and Jackson counties have considerable levels of poverty, with rates above 20 percent.

**FIGURE 1.2.6: PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN REGION BY INCOME BRACKET, 2013**



Source: Nielsen Claritas.

**FIGURE 1.2.7: POVERTY RATES FOR COUNTIES AND NC**



Source: US Census.

## 2. SECTOR-SPECIFIC TRENDS: THE DRIVERS OF PERFORMANCE

### 2.1 REGION AND STATE TRENDS

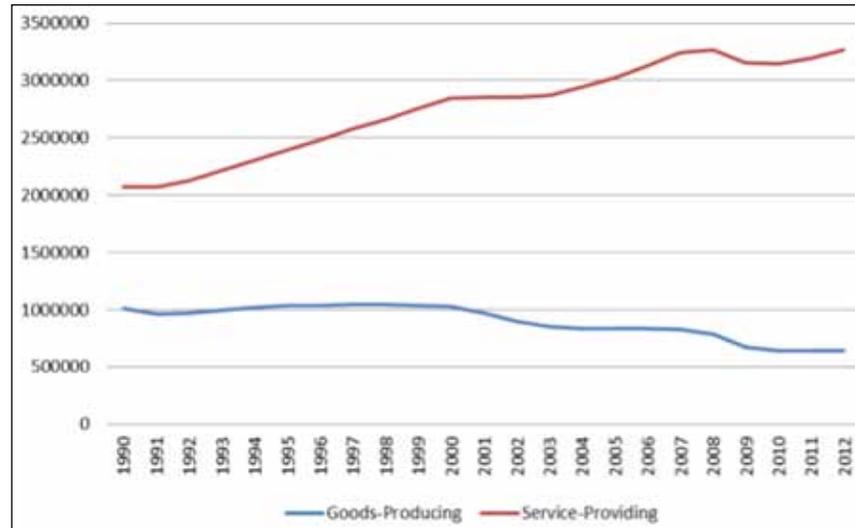
This section presents a review of sector-specific performance with a broader perspective, in particular exploring industry-specific and sector-specific trends at the regional and state levels. At these aggregate levels, it compares employment and wage trends between the goods-producing and service-providing industry groups, while also breaking each of these two groups into individual sectors. The data will illustrate which sectors are expanding and declining at the region level and reveal general and localized trends.

#### 2.1.1 GOODS AND SERVICES

##### Employment

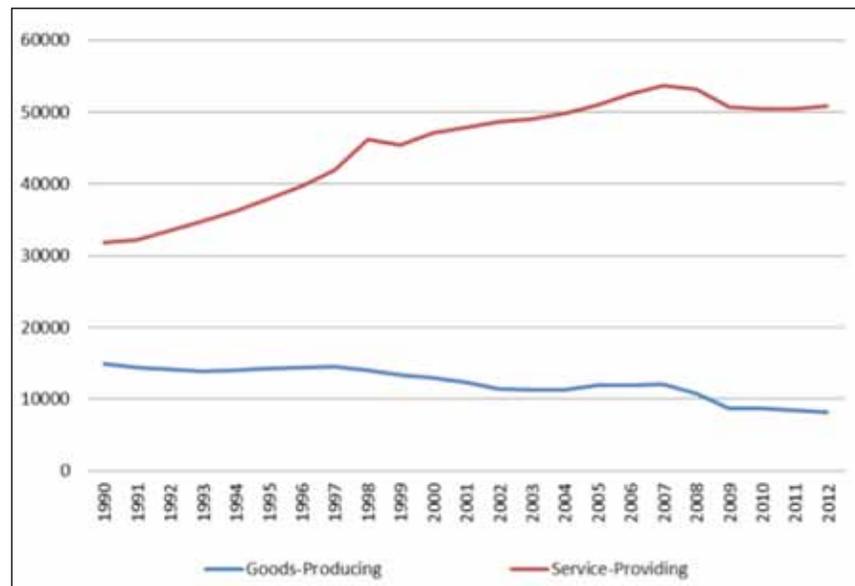
Figures 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 illustrate the employment trends in the goods and services industries for the state and region. The state and region time-series graphs are strikingly similar and tell the same story for both economies: Economic activity has shifted from goods producing to service providing. This common trend indicates that this shift, and the factors causing it, is larger than localized issues and action.

**FIGURE 2.1.1: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN GOODS & SERVICES INDUSTRIES FOR NORTH CAROLINA**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**FIGURE 2.1.2: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN GOODS & SERVICES INDUSTRIES FOR THE REGION**

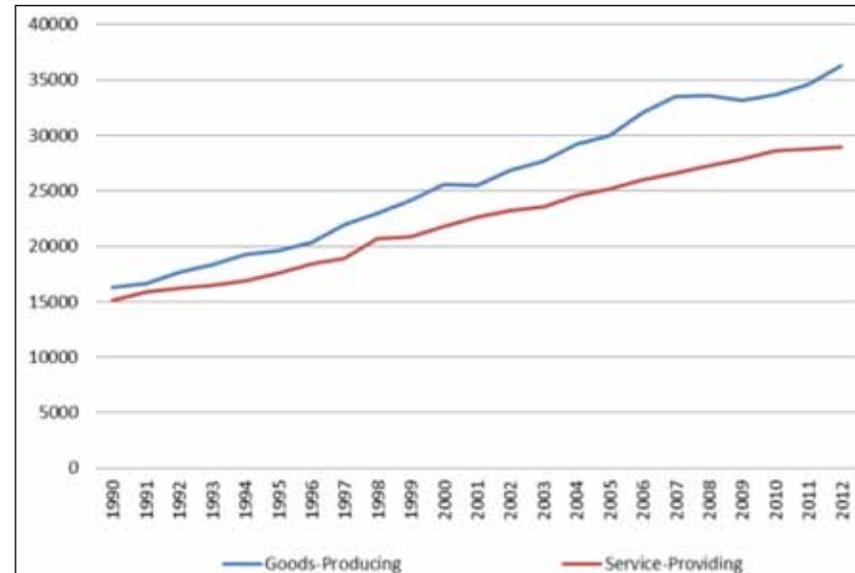


Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

### Average Wage

Figure 2.1.3 provides the region's average annual wage per worker trends in the goods and service industries. While wages have increased over time in both industries, the wage growth in the service-providing industries is considerably lower than experienced in the goods-providing industries. The difference is large enough to make significant differences to workers over time.

**FIGURE 2.1.3: AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE PER EMPLOYEE IN GOODS & SERVICES INDUSTRIES FOR THE REGION**



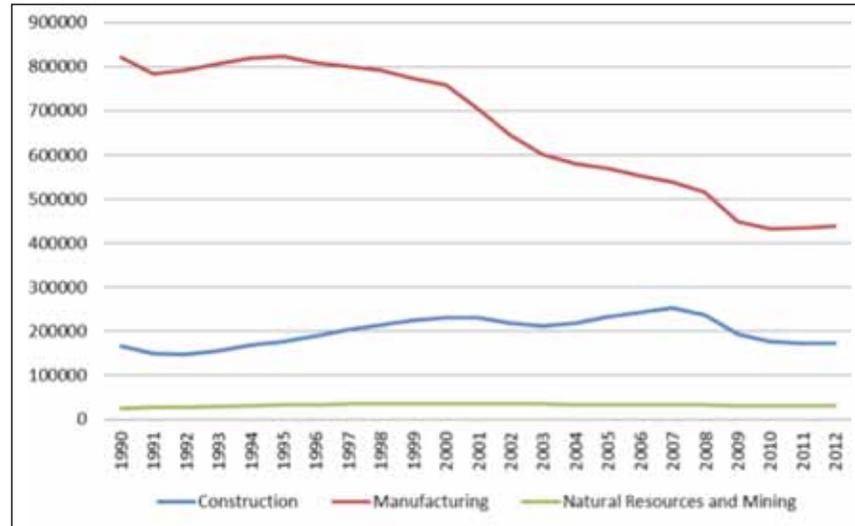
Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

## 2.1.2 GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRY TRENDS

### Employment

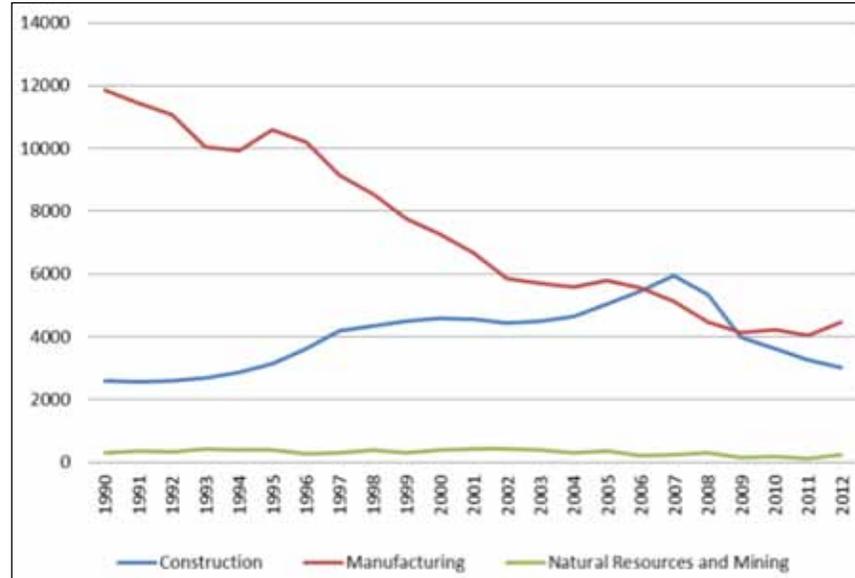
Separating out the shift to service-providing from good-producing reveals additional general trends. First, the decline in goods-producing industries is broken out by sector for the state and region in Figures 2.1.4 and 2.1.5. Again the graphs paint a similar picture for both region and state economies, the decline in goods-producing activity is due to a decline in manufacturing. In both economies, construction provided a marginal offsetting trend with slight increases while natural resources and mining remained a relatively small component of both economies. Efforts to reverse the decline in manufacturing in the region face an uphill battle because they must overcome not only local issues but also the larger, and arguably more significant, forces that exist outside the region.

**FIGURE 2.1.4: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY GOODS SECTORS FOR NC**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**FIGURE 2.1.5: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY GOODS SECTORS FOR REGION**



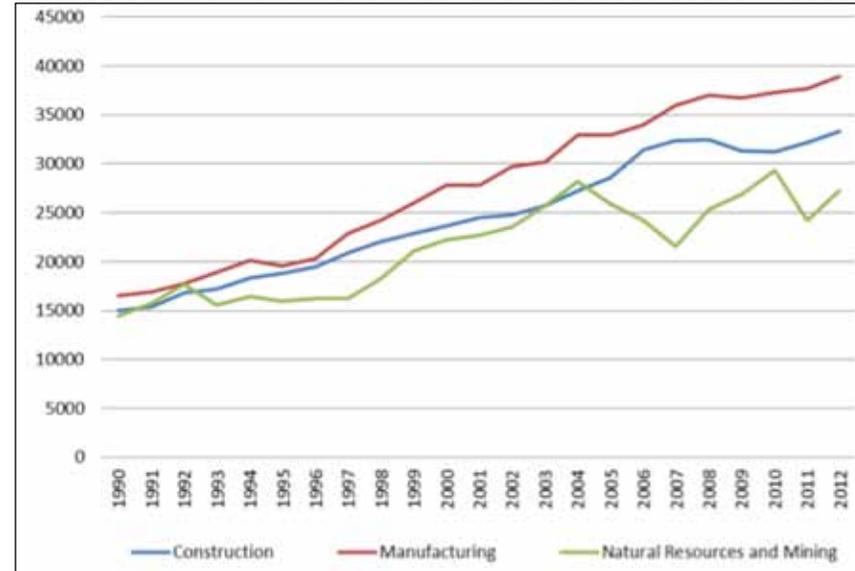
Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

### Average Wage

Historical trends for the average annual wage per employee for the three goods-producing sectors are provided in Figure 2.1.6. Wages have increased across all three sectors, but wage growth in construction and natural resources and mining have lagged behind the growth experienced in manufacturing. It is worth noting the strongest gains in wages have occurred in the sector that has simultaneously experienced steep job losses.

**FIGURE 2.1.6: AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE PER EMPLOYEE BY GOODS-PRODUCING SECTOR FOR REGION**

Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

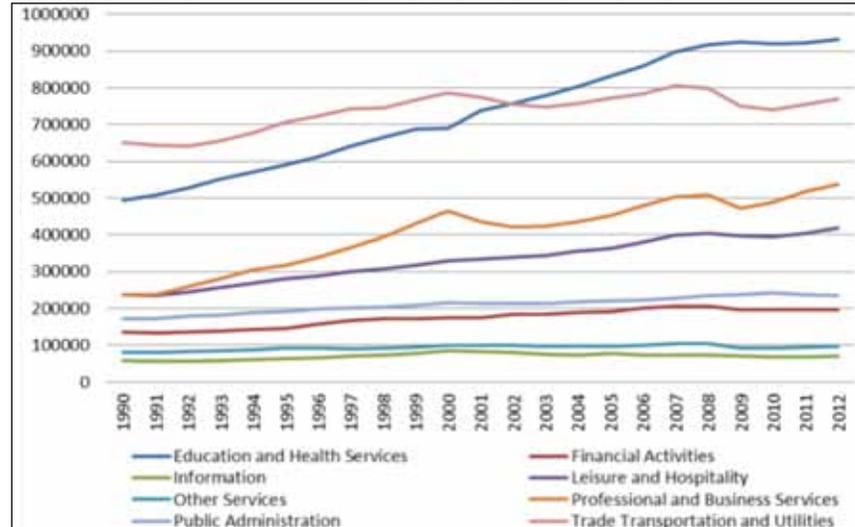


### 2.1.3 SERVICE PROVIDING INDUSTRY TRENDS

#### Employment

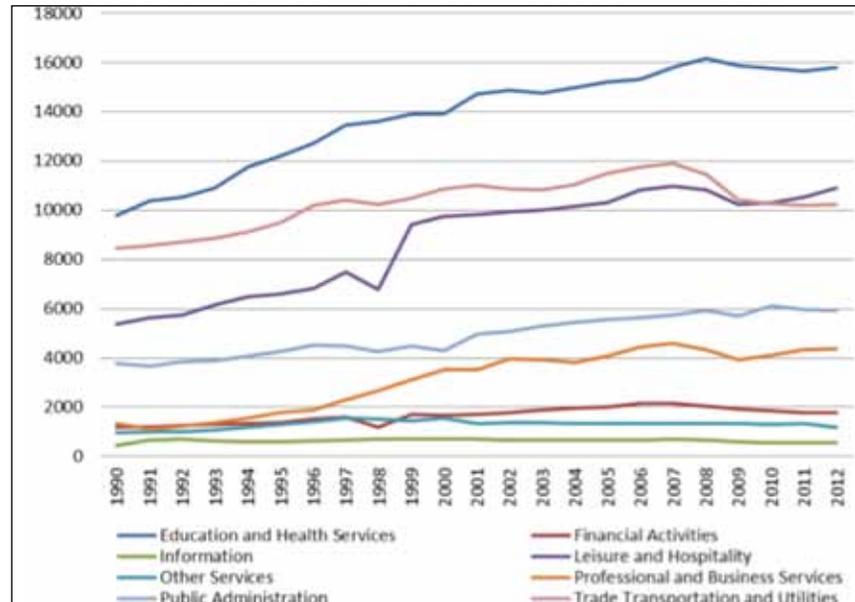
Figures 2.1.7 and 2.1.8 provide sector-specific employment trends for the service-providing industries. The trends indicate the sectors driving the increase in the goods-producing industries are common across the region and state—education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and professional and business services. However, job growth in two sectors is greater in the region than the state—leisure and hospitality and public administration. The figures also illustrate some differences in the relevance of the service-providing sectors. The leisure and hospitality and education and health services sectors play a relatively larger role in the regional economy than the statewide economy, while professional and business services played a relatively smaller role.

**FIGURE 2.1.7: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SERVICES SECTOR FOR NC**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**FIGURE 2.1.8: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SERVICES SECTOR FOR REGION**

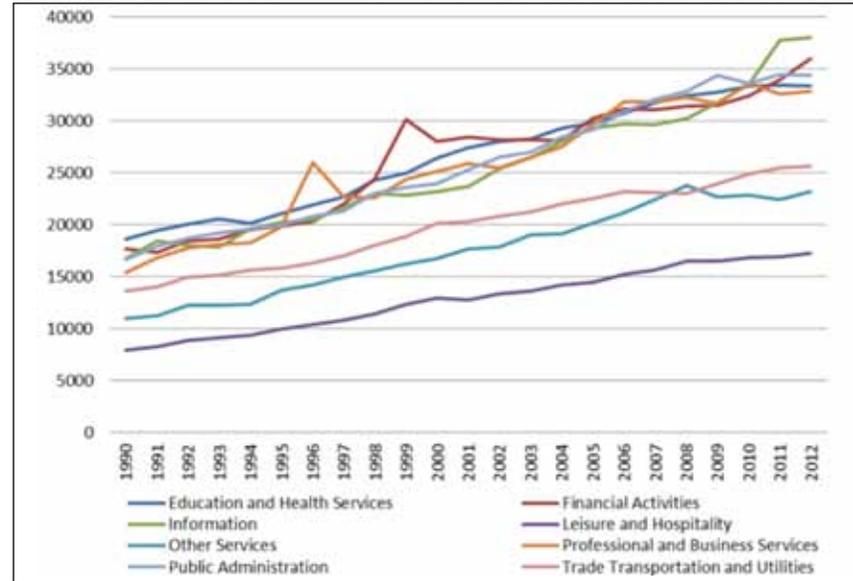


Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

### Average Wage

Figure 2.1.9 illustrates the average annual wage per employee in the region for each service sector. Five of the eight sectors exhibit similar wage levels and growth between 1990 and 2012. Wages in three sectors are noticeably lower—trade transportation and utilities, leisure and hospitality, and other services (which includes auto/machine repair, computer/electronics repair, personal care and laundry, etc.). Of particular interest is the relatively low wages in the leisure and hospitality sector, which is a particularly relevant sector for some counties in the region.

**FIGURE 2.1.9: AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE PER EMPLOYEE BY SERVICE-PROVIDING SECTOR FOR REGION**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

## 2.2 COUNTY-SPECIFIC TRENDS FOR SELECTED SECTORS

This section provides a disaggregated review of sector-specific trends by examining individual counties. Three sectors receive additional attention due to their relative importance in defining the trends: manufacturing, education and health services and leisure and hospitality services. The data will illustrate which sectors are expanding and declining at the county level and reveal general and localized trends.

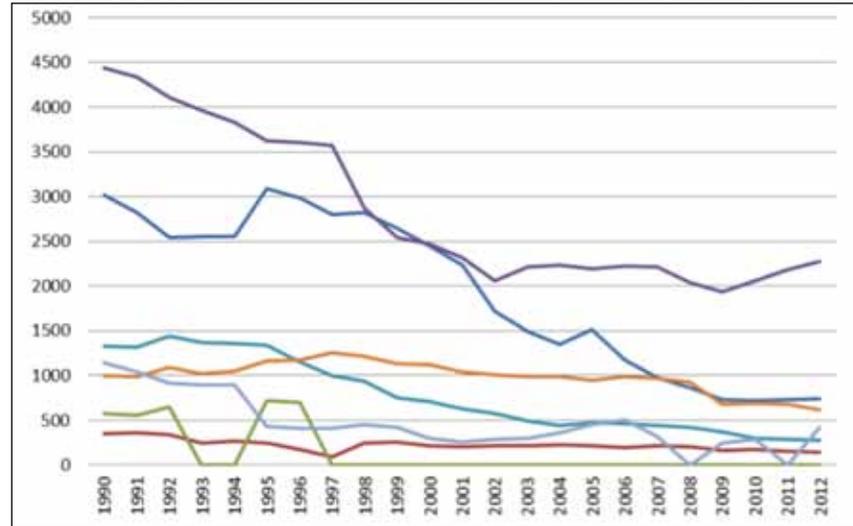
### Manufacturing

Figure 2.2.1 illustrates the levels and trends of manufacturing employment for the seven counties in the region. As the figure shows, Cherokee and Haywood counties had more manufacturing employment than the rest of the region, and therefore have experienced a relatively large number of jobs losses from the general decline in manufacturing. Jackson County, though smaller in absolute numbers, has also experienced considerable losses in manufacturing employment.

### Education and Health Services

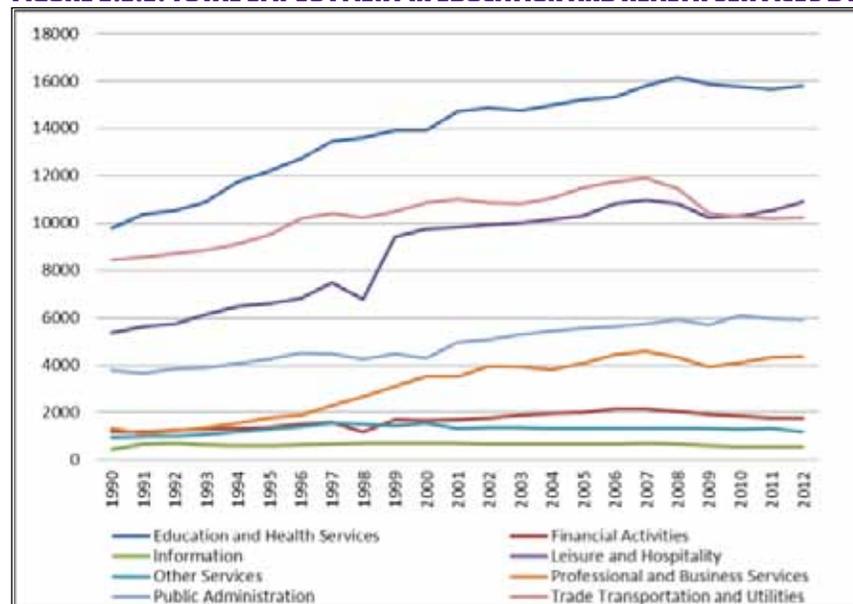
County-specific employment trends in the education and health services sector is illustrated in Table 2.2.2. Jackson and Haywood counties have the largest employment in the education and health services sector. Cherokee and Macon have smaller, though still significant, employment in this sector. For these four counties, job growth has been strong in the education and health services sector.

**FIGURE 2.2.1: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING BY COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**FIGURE 2.2.2: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES BY COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

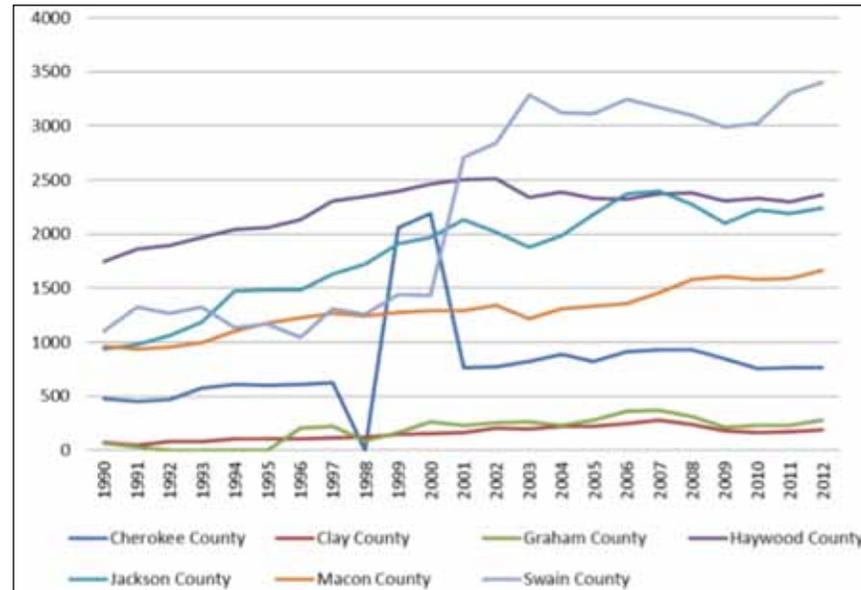
## Leisure and Hospitality

Figure 2.2.3 shows that employment in the leisure and hospitality sector is relatively large in Swain, Haywood, Jackson and Macon counties. For Swain, employment in this sector increased dramatically in 2000-03 with the level remaining steady in subsequent years. Jackson County experienced consistently strong job growth in this sector—more than doubling between 1990 and 2012. Over this time, Haywood and Macon counties have experienced steady growth in leisure and hospitality employment. Contrary to the general trends, Graham and Clay counties have not experienced job growth in this sector.

Figure 2.2.4 reports tourism-related spending for each county and confirms the importance of this sector to Swain, Macon and Haywood counties.

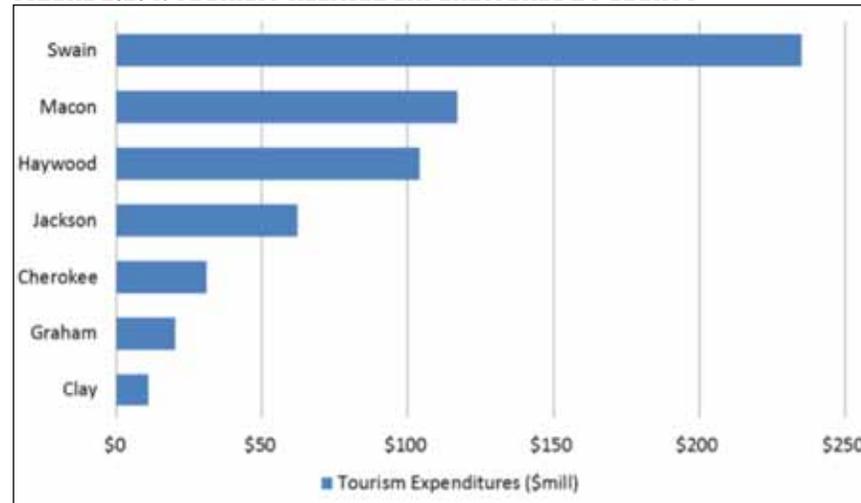
Expenditures within the casino in Jackson County are likely not included within this data due to sales tax reporting. Swain County has many restaurants and other businesses that capture casino visitors' spending. This explains the fact that Swain County's tourism-related expenditures are significantly larger than those in Jackson County.

**FIGURE 2.2.3: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY BY COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**FIGURE 2.2.4: TOURISM-RELATED EXPENDITURES BY COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

### 2.3. SECTOR-SPECIFIC TRENDS FOR EACH COUNTY

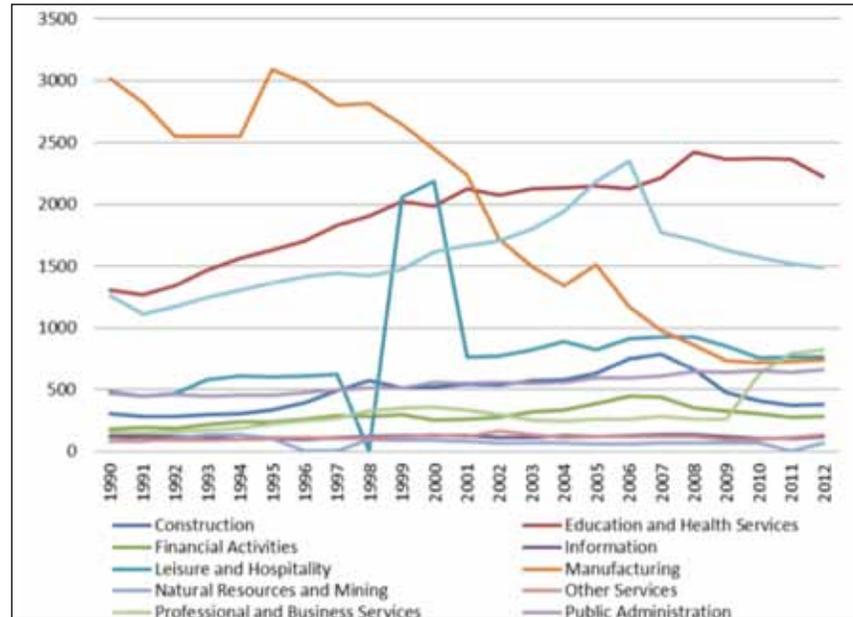
The following seven figures (Figures 2.3.1 - 2.3.7) provide sector-specific employment trends for the region's seven counties between 1990 and 2012. The time-series plots reveal considerable variation in the relative rankings of the sectors in each county. However, there are many common trends across counties.

One common theme from the data is the relative importance of the education and health services sector. It is the largest source of employment in six of the seven counties—the exception being Swain County. In relative terms, Macon County is particularly reliant on this sector for employment. Note the education and health services sector has long been a relatively important employer in the region; generally being among the top three employers since 1990.

The decline in manufacturing is also evident in the graphs. In 1990, manufacturing was the largest employer in five of the region's seven counties, and it was the second and third largest employer in the other two counties. In 2012, the highest position manufacturing had in any county was fourth in Haywood County.

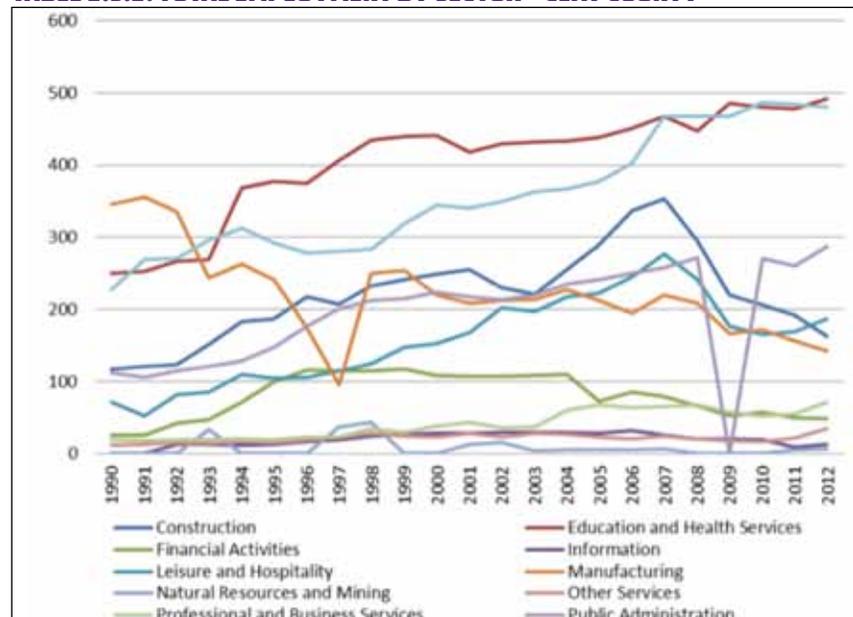
The figures illustrate the impact of the 2007-09 recession on the construction sector. In every county, employment in the construction sector dropped significantly during this period. In six of the seven counties, construction employment continued decline through 2012. Only Graham County has seen construction employment rebound, though it still remains far below pre-recession levels.

**TABLE 2.3.1: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—CHEROKEE COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

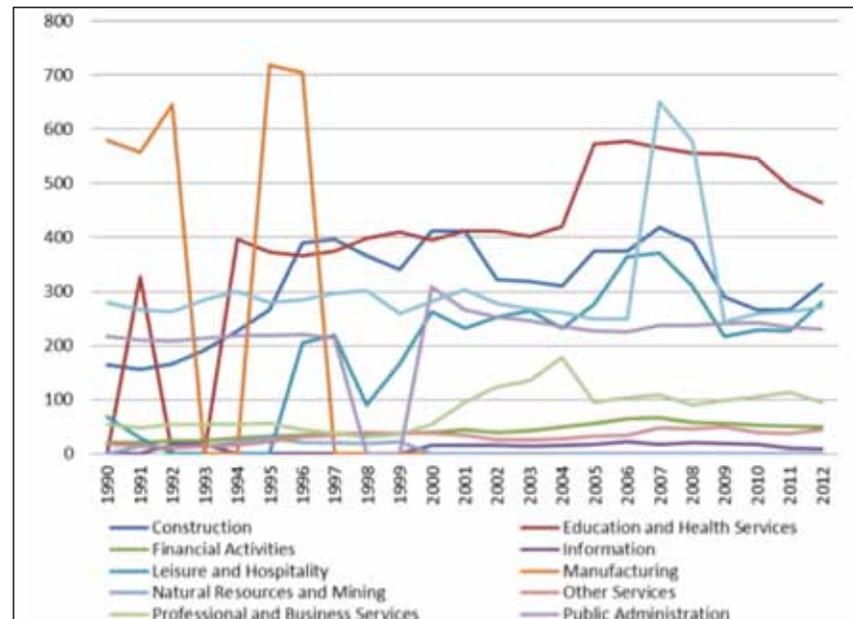
**TABLE 2.3.2: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—CLAY COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

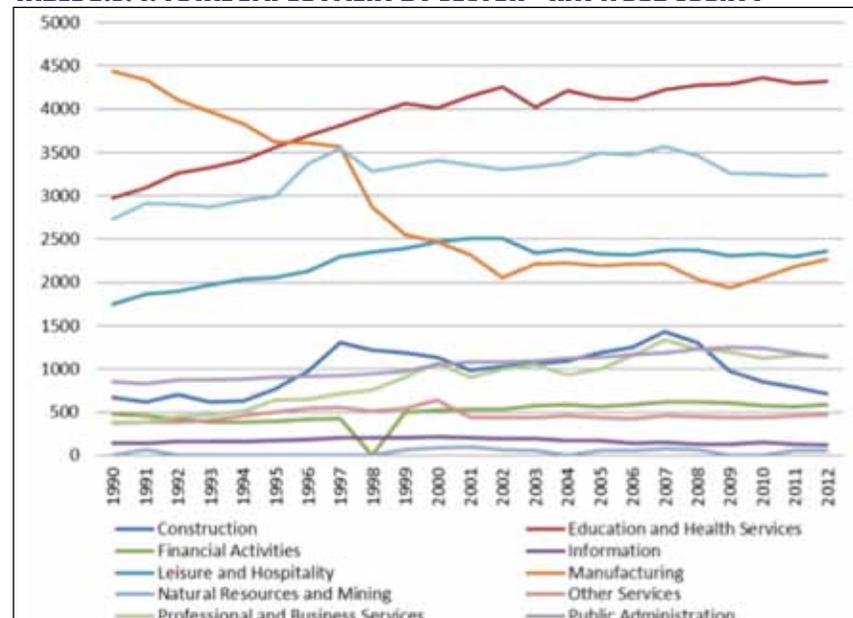
The sector-specific employment trends indicate that Cherokee, Haywood and Swain counties have experiences the largest shifts in the local economic portfolio, while Jackson and Macon counties have experienced relatively small shifts.

**TABLE 2.3.3: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—GRAHAM COUNTY**



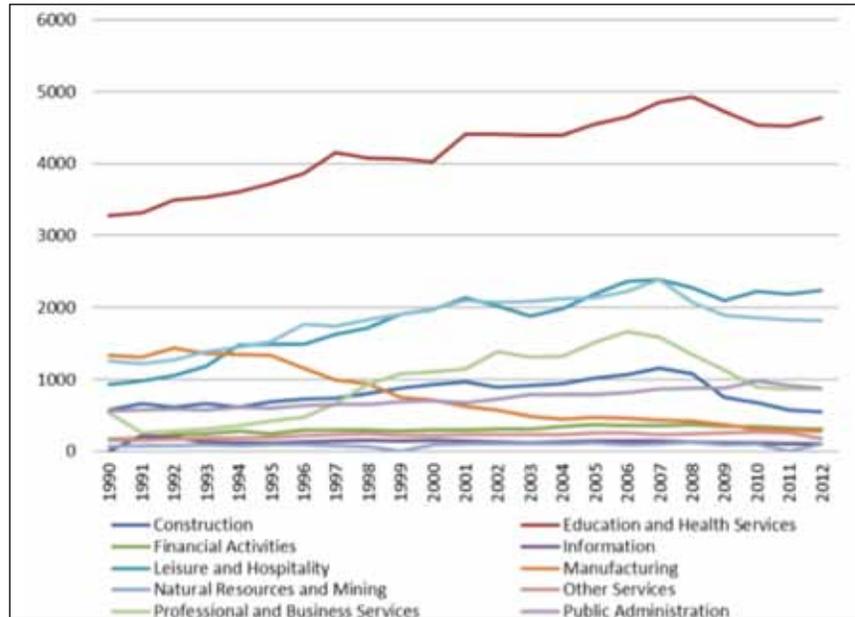
Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**TABLE 2.3.4: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—HAYWOOD COUNTY**



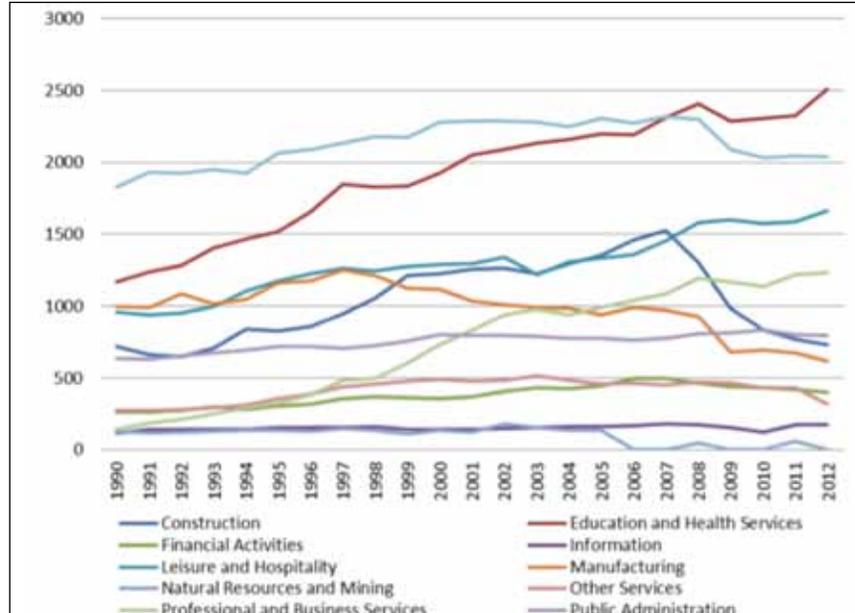
Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**TABLE 2.3.5: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—JACKSON COUNTY**



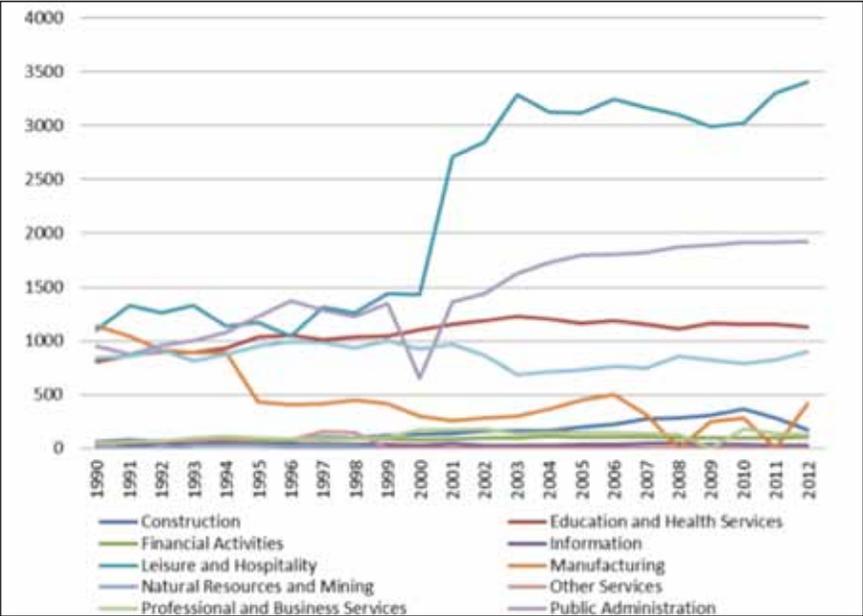
Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**TABLE 2.3.6: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—MACON COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

**TABLE 2.3.7: TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR—SWAIN COUNTY**



Source: BEA—NC Security Employment Commission.

Page left intentionally blank.

### 3. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS: THE CHANGING POPULATION

The purpose of this section is to provide a demographic portrait of the seven-county region, its primary cities and towns, and their respective trade areas. The section reports on population, age, race, education and housing.

#### 3.1 POPULATION

For all levels of jurisdiction, Figure 3.1.1 (next page) provides total population and population growth for the census years of 1990, 2000 and 2010. The figure also provides projected population numbers for the years 2013 to 2018.



*Pumpkinfest in Franklin has grown to be one of the most popular events in Western North Carolina*



*Deals Gap is a popular and internationally famous destination for driving enthusiasts (of motorcycles and sports cars), as it is located in Swain County along a stretch of two-lane road known as "The Dragon"*

**FIGURE 3.1.1. POPULATION TOTALS, GROWTH AND PROJECTIONS**

Population								
	Total Population			Percent Growth		Projected Growth		
	1990	2000	2010	1990-2000	2000-2010	2013	2018	2013-2018
US	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	13.15%	9.71%	313,095,504	325,256,835	3.88%
N. Carolina	6,628,637	8,049,331	9,535,483	21.43%	18.46%	9,796,936	10,251,127	4.64%
Andrews	2,551	1,602	1,781	-37.20%	11.17%	1,805	1,740	-3.60%
Bryson City	1,145	1,411	1,424	23.23%	0.92%	1,367	1,374	0.51%
Canton	3,790	4,029	4,227	6.31%	4.91%	4,412	4,409	-0.07%
Cherokee	n/a	1,925	2,138	n/a	11.06%	2,091	2,089	-0.10%
Cullowee	3,906	3,579	6,228	-8.37%	74.02%	6,618	7,054	6.59%
Franklin	2,873	3,490	3,845	21.48%	10.17%	4,037	4,094	1.41%
Hayesville	279	297	311	6.45%	4.71%	306	295	-3.59%
Highlands	948	909	924	-4.11%	1.65%	854	851	-0.35%
Murphy	948	909	924	-4.11%	1.65%	854	851	-0.35%
Robbinsville	709	747	620	5.36%	-17.00%	618	564	-8.74%
Sylva	1,809	2,435	2,588	34.60%	6.28%	2,729	2,680	-1.80%
Waynesville	8,438	9,232	9,869	9.41%	6.90%	9,991	9,852	-1.39%
Cherokee CO	20,170	24,300	27,444	20.48%	12.94%	26,884	26,429	-1.69%
Clay CO	7,155	8,775	10,587	22.64%	20.65%	10,530	10,572	0.40%
Graham CO	7,196	7,993	8,861	11.08%	10.86%	8,727	8,646	-0.93%
Haywood CO	46,954	54,033	59,036	15.08%	9.26%	58,610	58,702	0.16%
Jackson CO	26,834	33,123	40,271	23.44%	21.58%	40,282	40,763	1.19%
Macon CO	23,499	29,813	33,922	26.87%	13.78%	34,240	35,072	2.43%
Swain CO	11,268	12,965	13,981	15.06%	7.84%	14,111	14,451	2.41%
SWNC 7 CO	143,076	171,002	194,102	19.52%	13.51%	193,384	194,635	0.65%

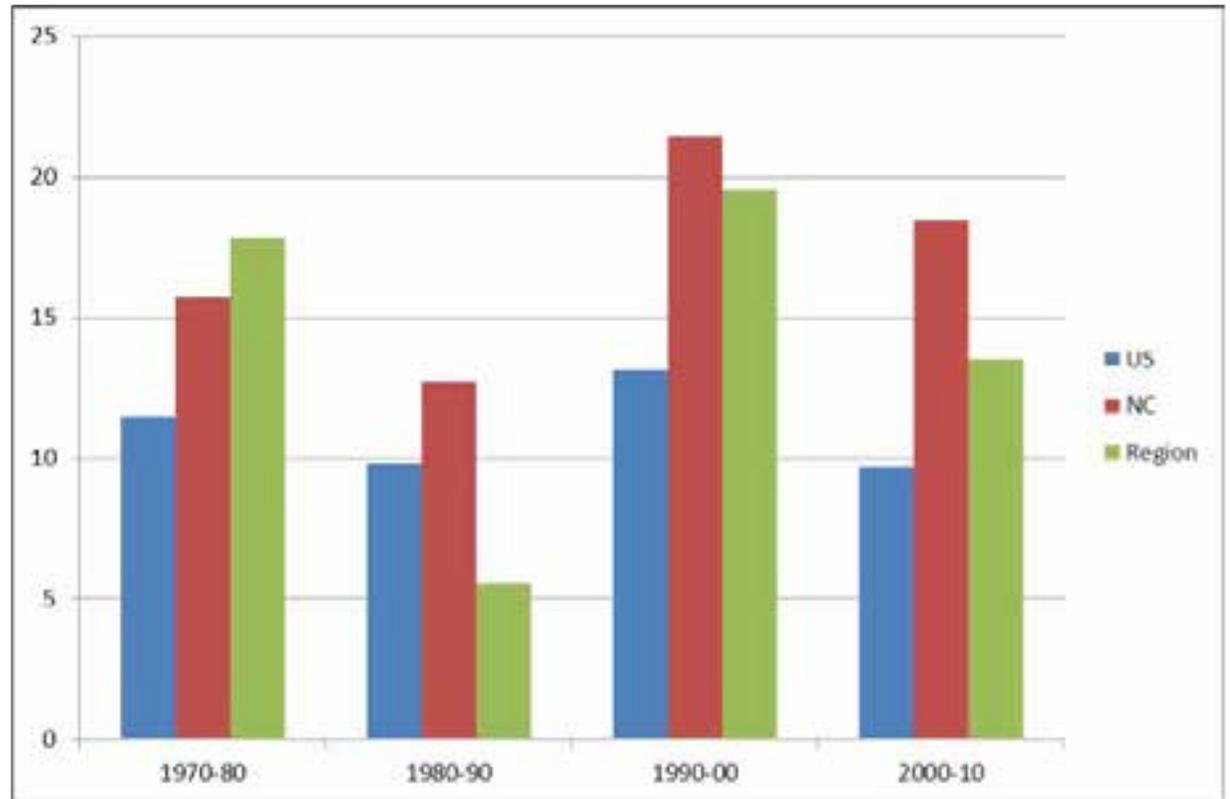
Source: US Census Bureau, Nielsen Claritas, and ESRI.

## Regional Change

Population changes occur as people migrate to and from locations and reflect relative opportunities. More specifically, a growing population is indicative of a growing economy with expanding economic opportunities, while a declining population corresponds with a stagnant or contracting economy with shrinking opportunities. For many years, North Carolina was considered a growth state that ranked fifth among states in population growth in 2012 (behind Texas, California, Florida and Georgia).

Figure 3.1.2 shows that the seven-county region has tended to have faster population growth than the national rate, but slower than the state rate. The one exception that stands out is the slow population growth during the 1980-90 period.

**TABLE 3.1.2: TOTAL REGIONAL POPULATION CHANGE BY DECADE (%)**



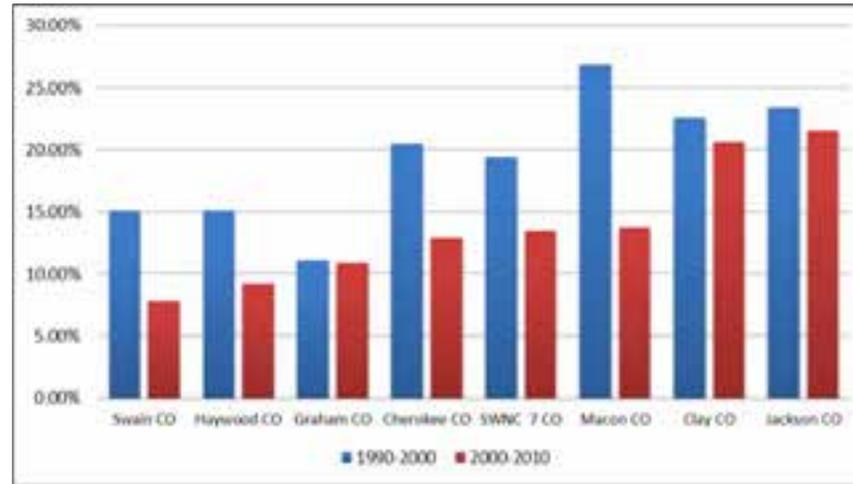
Source: US Census.

### County Population

Figures 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 illustrate county-level population changes for the region. The following items emerge. The seven-county region experienced significant population growth between 1990 and 2000 (19.52%). This growth slowed to 13.51% between 2000 and 2010. The fastest growing counties between 2000 and 2010 were Jackson (21.58%) and Clay (20.65%). Swain (7.84%) and Haywood (9.26%) were the slowest. Projected population change shows the region growing at a slow rate over the next five years (.65%). Macon (2.43%) and Swain (2.41%) will see the fastest growth, while both Cherokee (-1.69%) and Graham (-.93%) will see population decline.

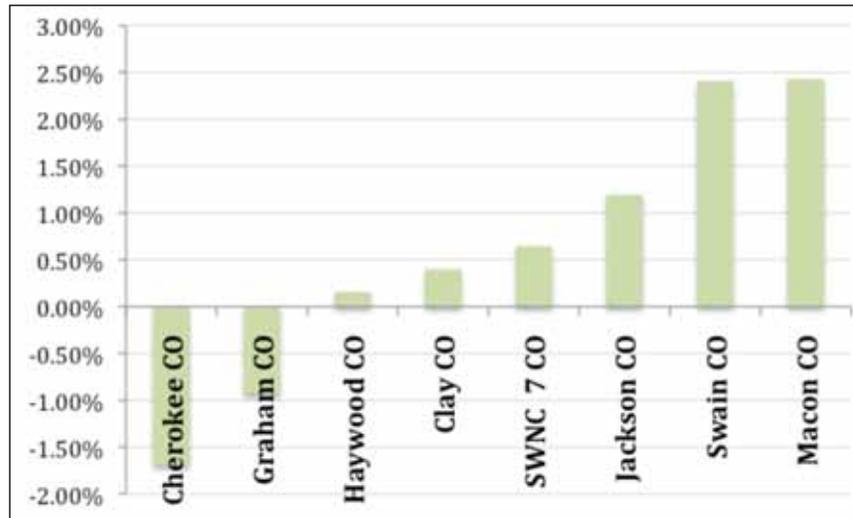
**Note:** The population projection data presented here comes from Nielsen Claritas, a national leader in market research used by demographers and Fortune 500 companies for targeted marketing and site selection decisions. These projections are based on US Census trends, as well as annual market changes in the local geography. While these projections should be received with a level of confidence, it should be noted that any projection will have a certain margin of error. These projections for both population growth and decline are not destiny. This is particularly the case in rural communities like we find in Region A, where any change such as recruitment of new industry(ies), enhanced infrastructure, and improved economy can have a significant impact resulting in alternative projected growth patterns.

**FIGURE 3.1.3: POPULATION CHANGE BY COUNTY, 1990-2010**



Source: US Census.

**FIGURE 3.1.4: PROJECTED POPULATION CHANGE BY COUNTY, 2013-2018**

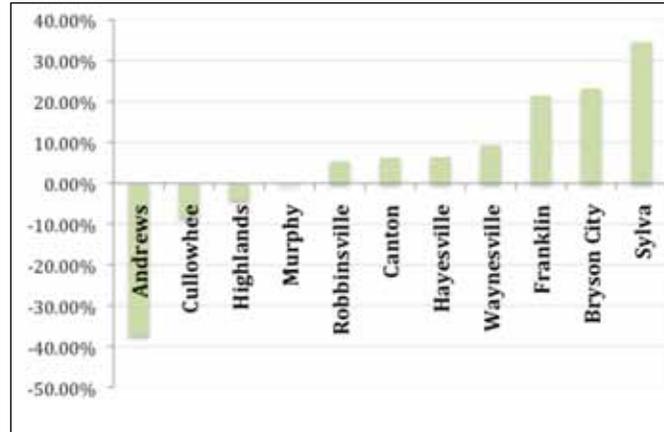


Source: Nielsen Claritas.

### Town Population

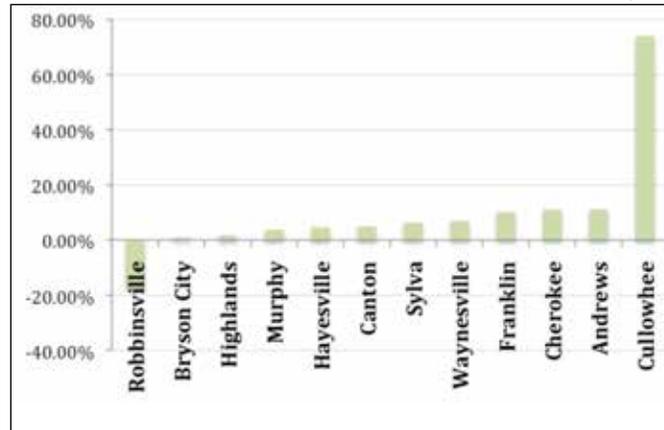
As with the counties, the towns in the region experienced mostly positive and significant growth between 1990 and 2000. As shown by Figure 3.1.5.a and 3.1.5.b, three communities (Franklin, Bryson City, and Sylva) grew by greater than 20%. This growth slowed significantly between 2000 and 2010. Cullowhee was an outlier during this time with a 74% growth rate. It should be noted that the decrease in Andrews population from 1990-2000 is largely due to a contraction in its town limits, not a decrease in the area population.

**TABLE 3.1.5.A: . CITY AND TOWN POPULATION CHANGE, 1990-2000**



Source: US Census.

**FIGURE 3.1.5.B: . CITY AND TOWN POPULATION CHANGE, 2000-2010**



Source: US Census.

### Projected Population Growth

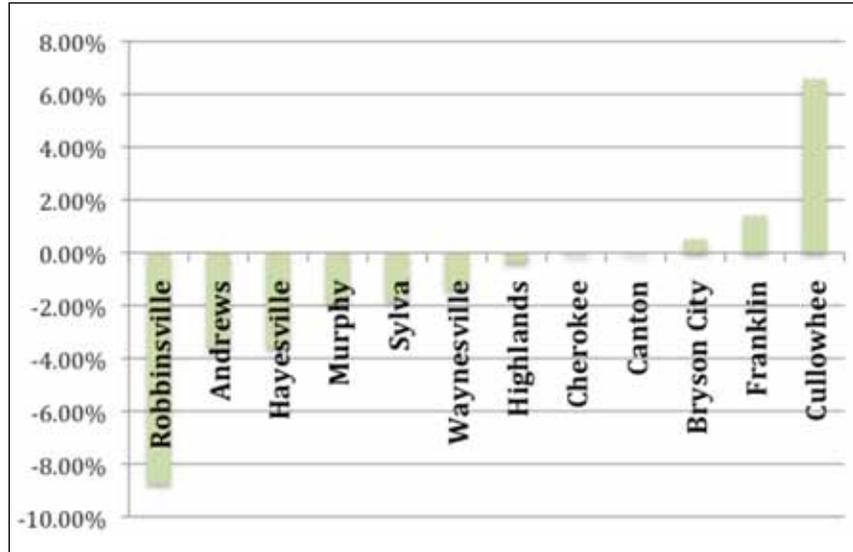
Projected population growth is provided in Figure 3.1.6. The towns are projected to begin to lose population between 2013 and 2018 with all but Bryson City, Franklin, and Cullowhee set to experience any growth. Robbinsville shows the largest projected decline at 8.74%.

The projections shown here come from Nielsen Claritas, a national leader in market research. These projections are based on US Census trends, as well as annual market changes. While these projections should be received with a level of confidence, it should be noted that any projection will have a certain margin of error. The projections for both population growth and decline are not destiny. This is particularly the case in rural communities like those in Region A, where any change such as recruitment of new industries, enhanced infrastructure, and improved economy can have a significant impact on growth projections.

### Trade Area Population

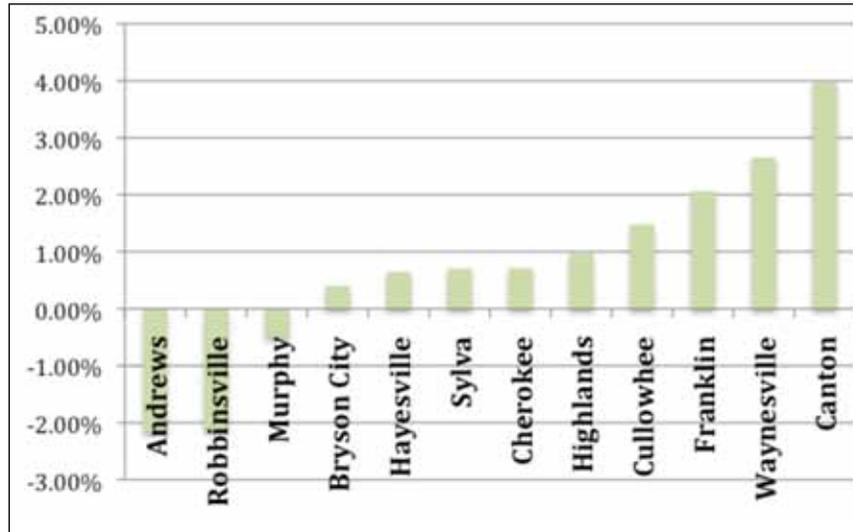
Figure 3.1.7 presents the projected population growth for the trade areas in the region. Each town's trade area is defined as the area that is within a 30 minute drive. Note that while the municipalities are projected to decline, the trade areas that they are relevant to are generally projected to grow. The chart above shows that within a 30-minute drive time from the center of each town, population will generally increase. Significantly, only those areas relevant to Andrews, Robbinsville, and Murphy show population decline.

**FIGURE 3.1.6. PROJECTED CITY AND TOWN POPULATION CHANGE, 2013-2018**



Source: Nielsen Claritas.

**FIGURE 3.1.7. PROJECTED POPULATION CHANGE FOR EACH TOWN'S TRADE AREA, 2013-2018**



Each town's trade area is defined as a 30 minutes drive time.

Source: Nielsen Claritas.

### 3.2 AGE

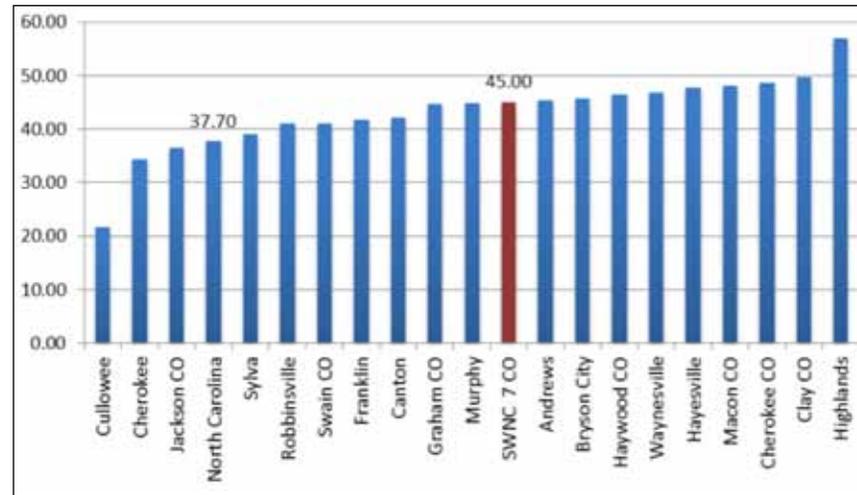
#### Median Age

Figure 3.2.1 compares the median age of the towns and counties in the seven-county region. At 45 years old, the median age of the population in the seven-county region is nearly 8 years older than that of the state of North Carolina. This is typical of rural regions, as well as those that have higher retiree and second home markets. Highlands has the highest median age at 57 years, while Cullowhee has the lowest at 21. Cullowhee is the home of Western Carolina University, the reason for its low median age.

#### Age Distribution

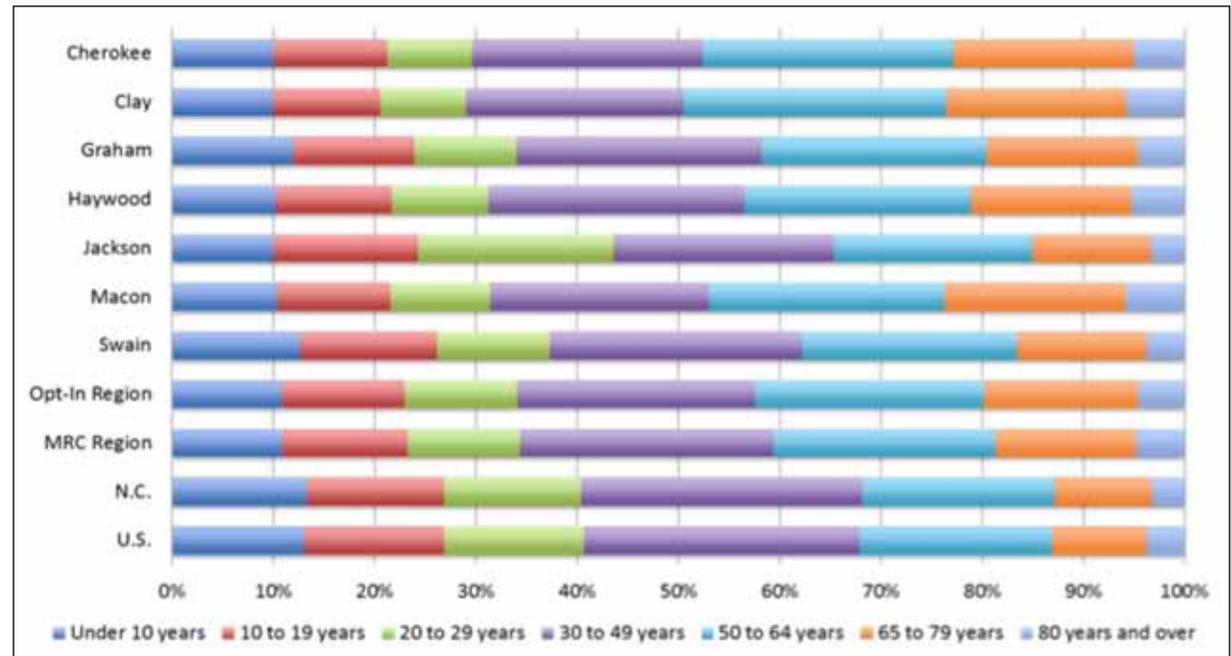
Figure 3.2.2 provides the distribution of population by age. It illustrates the breadth of the relatively older population in the seven-county region. Relative to the state and nation, the region has a larger proportion of the population in the older age brackets and a smaller proportion in the younger brackets. The figure corresponds with the median age comparisons by showing that Clay, Cherokee and Macon counties have particularly high age distributions.

**FIGURE 3.2.1. MEDIAN AGE, 2013**



Source: Nielsen Claritas.

**FIGURE 3.2.2. AGE DISTRIBUTION, 2010**



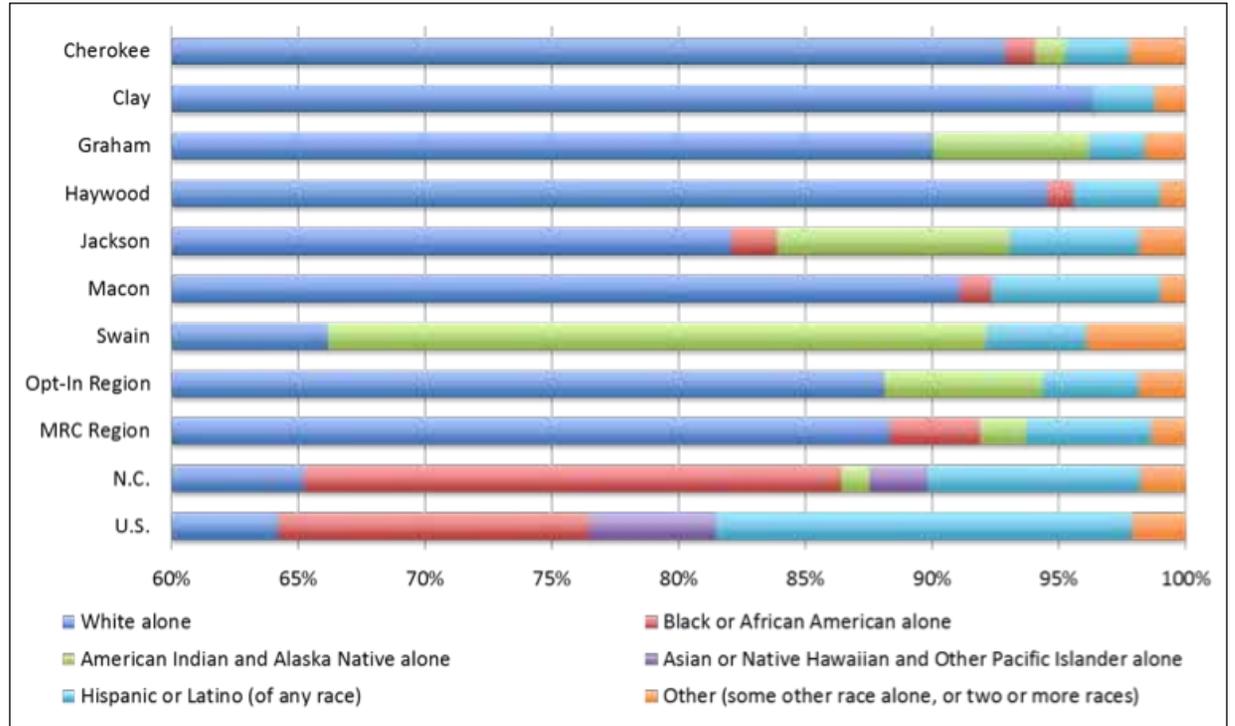
Source: US Census.

### 3.3 RACE

The distribution of population by different races is presented in Figure 3.3.1. Relative to the state and nation, the seven-county region is overwhelmingly homogeneous regarding race with 88% of the population being white. American Indian is the largest minority race representing about 5% of the population, though about 4% has Hispanic roots.

The region's high percentage of American Indian is concentrated in Swain County having by far the largest proportion of American Indian, at about 25%. Swain is the location of the primary portion of the Qualla Boundary, home to the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. The remaining portion of the Qualla Boundary is in Jackson County, where 9.4% of the population reports being American Indian alone.

**FIGURE 3.3.1. COUNTY POPULATION BY RACE (%)**



Source: US Census ACS Survey 2005-2009.

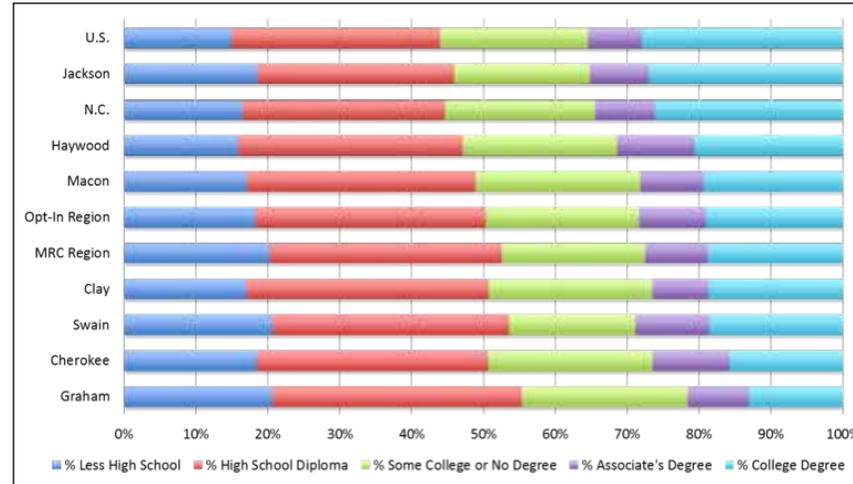
### 3.4 EDUCATION

Figure 3.4.1 illustrates the percent of the population (25 years old and older) by educational attainment. For the seven-county region, just under 30% of residents age 25 or older have an Associates or higher degree and about 18% have less than a high school degree. Graham County has both the lowest percentage of residents having an Associates or higher, as well as the highest percentage of residents not having a high school degree. Jackson County has the highest percentage of college graduates, at about 35%.

#### Mean SAT Scores

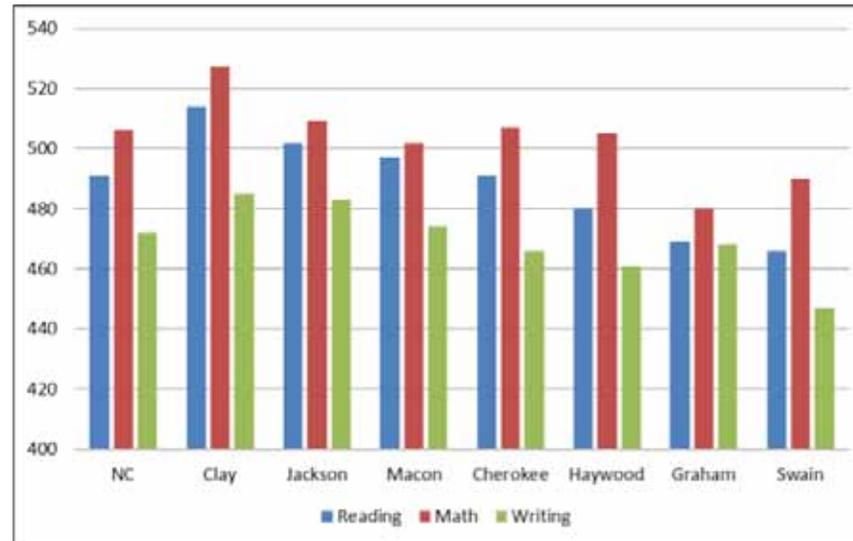
Figure 3.4.2 provides the mean SAT scores by subject for each county, along with the state numbers that serve as a benchmark. Test scores in Clay and Jackson counties are above the state average, while scores in Graham and Swain counties fall below the state average. The remaining counties match the state average closely.

**FIGURE 3.4.1. PERCENT OF POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2010 (25+ YRS)**



Source: US Census.

**FIGURE 3.4.2: MEAN SAT SCORES BY COUNTY AND NC, 2012**



Source: US Census.

### 3.5 HOUSING

#### Building Permits

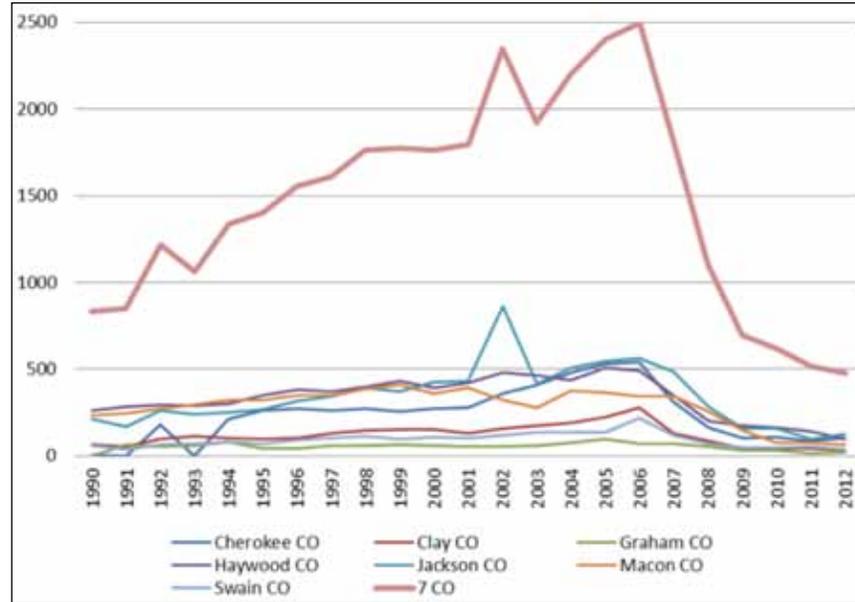
Figure 3.5.1 presents the number of single family building permits for each county and the region between 1990 and 2012. The region's single-family home growth over the past twenty-two years mirrors national trends to some extent. Growth was sustained through the 1990s and began more substantial increases during the early 2000s. Growth peaked in 2006 followed by a rapid decline due to the national housing crisis.

Unlike national trends, the seven-county region continued to experience declines through 2012. In fact, at just 478 building permits for the region, 2012 represents the lowest number since before 1990. This is compared to nearly 2,500 permits in 2006. This continued downward trend could be the result of the decline of the second home and retiree market in Western North Carolina. Since 2006, Jackson and Haywood Counties have the greatest amount of new housing starts, followed closely by Macon. Graham County has seen the smallest growth overall.

#### Housing Value

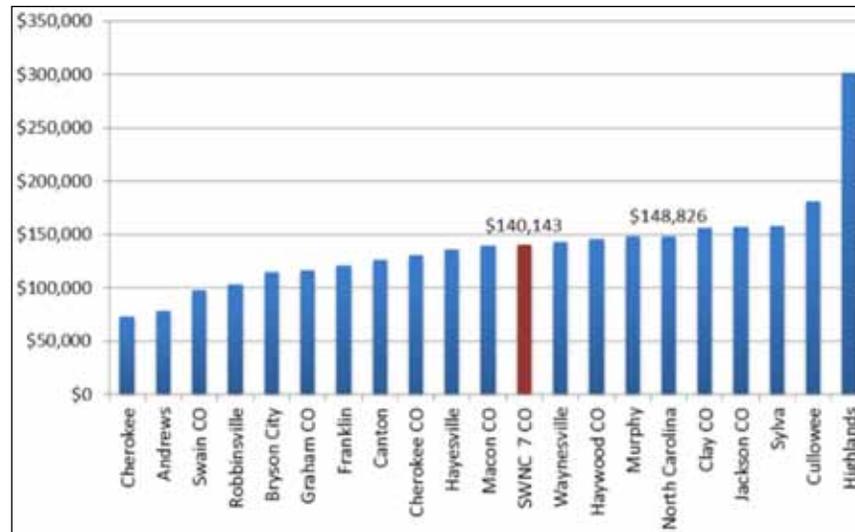
Figure 3.5.2 illustrates median occupied housing values for towns, counties, the region and state. Median occupied housing unit value is \$140,143 in the seven-county region, compared to \$148,826 for the state. At over \$301,000, Highlands has the most valuable homes while Cherokee (\$73,585) and Andrews (78,929) have the lowest. With counties, Jackson has the most valuable homes at \$157,297 and Swain has the lowest at \$97,857.

**FIGURE 3.5.1: ANNUAL SINGLE FAMILY BUILDING PERMITS, 1990-2012**



Source: US Census

**FIGURE 3.5.2: MEDIAN OCCUPIED HOUSING UNIT VALUE, 2013**



Source: Nielsen Claritas

# VOLUME 2 | OPT-IN REGIONAL VISION: SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS



**THE SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN THE REGION. IT HIGHLIGHTS THE PLANS' COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES.**



# ★ TABLE OF CONTENTS ★

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>CHEROKEE COUNTY</b> .....	<b>88</b>
Cherokee County Heritage Development Initiative (2005) .....	88
Cherokee County Farmland Preservation Plan (2009) .....	88
Cherokee County Golden Leaf Assessment (2013) .....	88
Andrews NC STEP Community Profile (2008) .....	89
Murphy NC STEP Community Profile (2012) .....	89
<b>CLAY COUNTY</b> .....	<b>90</b>
Clay County Heritage Development Plan (2008) .....	90
Clay County Comprehensive Plan (2010) .....	90
Clay County Community Health Assessment (2012) .....	91
Clay County Farmland Protection Plan (2010) .....	91
Historic Hayesville Market Analysis (2010) .....	92
Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan (2007) .....	92
<b>GRAHAM COUNTY</b> .....	<b>93</b>
Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (GREAT) Strategic Plan (2013) .....	93
Reimagining Robbinsville (2012) .....	93
<b>HAYWOOD COUNTY</b> .....	<b>95</b>
Haywood County Heritage Development Plan (2007) .....	95
Haywood County Comprehensive System-Wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2007) .....	95
Retail Market Analysis and Marketing Strategy for Canton (2007) .....	95
Town of Clyde Land Use Plan (2012) .....	95

Maggie Valley Land Use Plan (2007) . . . . .	96
Maggie Valley Revitalization Plan (2013) . . . . .	96
Waynesville: Our Heritage, Our Future 2020 Land Development Plan (1999) . . . . .	96
Retail Market Analysis and Marketing Strategy for Waynesville, North Carolina (2007) . . . . .	97
<b>JACKSON COUNTY . . . . .</b>	<b>98</b>
Jackson County Heritage Development Plan (2008) . . . . .	98
Jackson County Land Development Plan (2006). . . . .	98
U.S. Highway 441 Small Area Plan (2008) . . . . .	98
<b>MACON COUNTY . . . . .</b>	<b>100</b>
Macon County Heritage Development Plan (2008). . . . .	100
Macon County Comprehensive Plan (2011) . . . . .	100
Town of Franklin Principles of Growth (2006). . . . .	100
Retail Market Analysis for Downtown Franklin (2011). . . . .	100
Town of Highlands Land Use Plan Update (2005) . . . . .	101
Downtown Highlands Marketplace Study (2011) . . . . .	101
Swain County Heritage Development Plan (2008) . . . . .	101
<b>SWAIN COUNTY . . . . .</b>	<b>102</b>
Swain County Land Use Plan Update (2010). . . . .	102
Swain County Golden Leaf Assessment (2013) . . . . .	102
Bryson City Land Development Plan (2007) . . . . .	103
Bryson City Community Assessment Report (2011) . . . . .	103

<b>REGIONAL PLANS</b> .....	<b>104</b>
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Southwestern North Carolina (2012) . . .	104
Growing Local: Expanding the Western North Carolina Food and Farm Economy (2007). . . . .	105
Region A Toolbox: Mountain Landscapes Initiative (2009). . . . .	105
Qualla Boundary Heritage Development Plan (2008). . . . .	105
West North Carolina Clean Energy Cluster Analysis (2011) . . . . .	105
Other Plans Reviewed But Not Summarized . . . . .	106
<b>TRANSPORTATION PLANS (VARIOUS COUNTIES)</b> .....	<b>107</b>
Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2011) . . . . .	107
Clay County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2012). . . . .	108
Haywood County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2008). . . . .	110
Waynesville Pedestrian Plan (2010). . . . .	112
Haywood County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2007). . . . .	113
Haywood County Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2011) . . . . .	113
Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2010) . . . . .	113
Macon County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2011) . . . . .	114
Swain County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2012). . . . .	116
<b>TRANSPORTATION PLANS (REGIONAL)</b> .....	<b>119</b>
Region A Toolbox/Mountain Landscapes Initiative (2009) . . . . .	119
Blue Ridge Bike Plan (2013) . . . . .	119
Corridor K Documents . . . . .	120

## ★ INTRODUCTION ★

The following pages summarize more than 50 plans previously prepared for communities within the seven counties that are part of Opt-In: The Opportunity Initiative of Southwestern North Carolina. The intent of these summaries is to provide a broad snapshot of the goals and priorities of these plans in order to form a baseline understanding of previous planning efforts in the region. Plan summaries are grouped by county, with transportation-specific and regional plans in separate sections at the document.

Most of these plans reflect the input and hard work of many local citizens and are therefore important for understanding their vision for their communities' future. As several of the plans make evident, however, there is not perfect agreement about each community's future vision. For this reason, this summary is intended to capture broader goals and priorities rather than specific recommendations. Priorities change over time, and recommendations reproduced here are not necessarily endorsed by the Opt-In effort.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (2005)**

This plan, produced for the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area by the National Park Service, includes general background information on the county. Its goals are to encourage economic viability, develop recreational and educational opportunities, protect/preserve/promote resources, enhance downtown areas, and encourage collaboration. Challenges identified include finding adequate funding, development relationships among partner organizations, educating the public to gain support for plan recommendations, and develop youth/future leaders.

Priority recommendations of the plan are as follows. These and other projects each have a description and cost estimate provided.

- ★ Develop a Regional Heritage Visitor Welcome Center
- ★ Develop a series of greenways and trails to connect multiple counties (locations not specified)
- ★ Develop a heritage complex to provide education, performing arts, museum, festival space, etc.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN (2009)**

This plan, funded by the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, including historical information on farming in the County, and

recommendations to preserve farmland and support existing farms. Farmland in mountainous areas is more vulnerable to development pressures because there is less flat, non-publically owned land for any use, and because economics make farming difficult compared to development. The plan also dedicates significant space to details of individual farms, including their products, finances, and strategy.

The plan lists examples of actions in other communities that have been successful, including shared processing facilities, farmers markets, and easement purchases.

Recommendations seek to preserve farmland within the existing context of a lack of land use regulation. Key recommendations are:

- ★ Reconstitute and strengthen the Agricultural Advisory Board to harness a broad range of skills and resources to preserve and support farms and farmland in the County.
- ★ Incorporate agriculture as an explicit element in economic development planning.
- ★ Refocus efforts of the Cooperative Extension Service to support innovative economic development strategies and help with farm transition issues.
- ★ Strengthen multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional collaboration to preserve farmland.

- ★ Begin the process of investigating land management policies that will strike a balance between preservation of prime farmland and the natural growth needs of the County.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY GOLDEN LEAF ASSESSMENT (2013)**

The Golden Leaf Assessment for Cherokee County is a general overview of demographic, health, economic, and other indicators, as well as emerging issues and priorities for the county. Key findings include:

- ★ Cherokee has experience nearly 13% growth in population over the past decade.
- ★ As often the case in rural communities, certain health indicators (heart disease mortality, teen pregnancy, uninsured, Medicaid recipients, etc.) in Cherokee lag those of the State.
- ★ Similarly, percent of population with high school diplomas, bachelor's degree or higher, and SAT scores lag that of North Carolina as a whole.
- ★ In September of 2012, Cherokee's unemployment rate was 11.9%, compared to 9.6% for NC.
- ★ Median Household Income 2006-2010 was \$38,144 in Cherokee compared to \$45,570 for the state.
- ★ Private sector jobs have decreased by 5.6% from 2005-2010, while government

employment increased by 6.9% in Cherokee County.

- ★ Top employment sectors in Cherokee include Retail Trade (13.6% in 2010), Local Government (9%), and Real Estate (8.2%).
- ★ While the manufacturing and retail sectors have shown significant decline, professional and scientific as well as real estate have seen positive jobs growth.

Key issues in Cherokee County include:

- ★ Challenges in attracting new business due to lack of sites suitable for manufacturing, lack of natural gas infrastructure, etc.
- ★ Demand for space is greatest for facilities between 50,000 and 80,000 square feet.
- ★ Similar to other rural communities, Cherokee is challenged with retaining young professionals with the perception that there is limited opportunity within the County.

### **ANDREWS NC STEP COMMUNITY PROFILE (2008)**

The Town of Andrews was designated an NC STEP Community in 2008. Andrews' economy was historically built on mining, logging, agriculture, and in turn the railroad. Industry ultimately shifted to textiles, but today only agriculture still remains strong as an industry in Andrews. Corn, strawberries, llamas, and trout-processing are all flourishing or being developed in the community. The fate of the textile industry has seen Andrews' population decline significantly to just over 1,700 people. More concerning is that around twenty percent of the residents in Andrews live in poverty. This as well as the proximity to Murphy as a

business magnet has resulted in a struggling downtown for Andrews.

As a participant in NC STEP's Western Cluster (Andrews, Chimney Rock, Hayesville, Bryson City, Mars Hill), Andrews and its partners are focusing on building a place-based economy from growing and promoting cultural and ecotourism destinations. Andrews in particular is looking to capitalize on providing for the needs and activities of the second home market.

### **MURPHY NC STEP COMMUNITY PROFILE (2012)**

The North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center facilitates the NC Small Towns Economic Prosperity Program (STEP) for rural communities throughout the State. Murphy was designated in 2012 and has recently completed its first STEP task, creating a Community Profile. The Community Profile is the beginning of a strategic planning exercise that is completed by citizens and community leadership, with coaching from the Rural Center. In Murphy, the mission of the NC STEP group is "to utilize existing resources to promote economic growth, foster positive change through education, nurture our cultural heritage, and increase the quality of life for all of those who live, work and visit the greater Murphy community."

With a history that has its foundations in Native American and Cherokee culture, Murphy's growth has been characterized by a number of economic booms - early agriculture history, expansion of railroad and improved access of the 1880s, the TVA and construction of the Hiwassee Dam in the 1930s and 40s, and the real estate boom seeing population and retiree growth that

peaked in 2007. Today, Murphy has quality healthcare, a sustained heritage tourism market, and burgeoning arts community. On the other hand it has high unemployment, limited jobs, and high vacancy in downtown buildings, while it is still reeling from the lack of investment and construction from the once robust housing market.

Murphy's NC STEP profile begins to build a foundation for future prosperity, realizing some key needs opportunities to foster economic growth. This includes a high-speed Internet network, reliable cell phone coverage, and the recruitment of new jobs and industry. Opportunities continue to lie in growing the heritage tourism market, yet recent years have seen a decline in revenues from lodging stays.

### **CLAY COUNTY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2008)**

This very short plan lists eight priority projects. The largest of these are the renovation of the historic courthouse and the creation of the Nelson Heritage Park.

### **CLAY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2010)**

This plan, prepared by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, identifies the following quality of life values: family and faith oriented, the people (community care and pride, volunteerism), sense of safety, public education, small town feel, rural character, natural beauty.

Clay County's population between 2000 and 2009 grew faster than the state or the region. Several population forecasts are provided, which forecast growth of 1-2% annually. Clay County has and is projected to have a higher percentage of aging population compared to the rest of the state.

The plan discusses how to grow economically without compromising its rural character and quality of life, with a focus on restoring industries such as agriculture and building new industries such as warehousing. Regional assets include proximity to several metropolitan areas, major highways, universities, airports, and recreation assets.

Significant reductions in the number of farms and the total value of farm products have occurred, particularly because of drops in tobacco, poultry, and livestock farming. The plan identifies prime farmland, most of

which is located in valleys along waterways, but identifies significant challenges to agriculture. Programs and incentives such as those outlined in the Clay County Farmland Protection Plan are recommended. A more detailed analysis of undeveloped prime farmlands is also recommended.

Natural resources summarized in the plan include landscape, water, floodplains, wetlands, endangered species, the Nantahala National Forest, wildfires, erosion, steep slopes, and landslides. Protecting and enhancing the diverse natural resources is a key recommendation, and could occur with better coordination rather than more regulation, although steep slope development may be a public safety issues. Other communities could be models.

Historic, cultural, and recreation resources described in the plan include the historic courthouse and other historic buildings, several community organizations and institutions, parks, and other recreation facilities. Renovation of the courthouse is a key recommendation to revitalize downtown Hayesville.

Land stewardship is also addressed by the plan, which examines existing land use; residential building permit trends; seasonal housing, manufactured housing, and multi-family housing; housing affordability; property values; and land supply. The future land use map shows future economic development areas, as well as a series of scenic paths to connect them. Land use patterns should reflect the rural nature of

the community, bolstered by goals and incentives, including improvements to the existing subdivision ordinance.

Existing transportation plans in the county include widening of NC 69 to four/five lanes divided, a number of safety improvements and bridge replacements, sidewalk improvements in downtown Hayesville, and signage for Blue Ridge National Heritage sites. The plan looks at the existing transportation system, including roads, public transportation, and scenic by-ways. The plan recommends widening NC 64 to four lanes, prioritizing access to industrial areas, and including bicycle and pedestrian amenities with transportation improvements.

Community facilities of all types are addressed in the plan. It is noted that all drinking water comes from ground water and there is a need for a surface water course and more capacity. The drinking water system is connected to Towns County, Georgia via an agreement. A new drinking water master plan is recommended. The existing wastewater system is listed as being at capacity, because some of its capacity is assigned to lots that will likely remain unbuilt. There is a recommended sewer extension to the industrial park and recommended sewer rehabilitation downtown. There is also a lack of health inspectors to meet demand for new wells.

The solid waste system is adequate but needs to accommodate more recycling. There is also a lack of broadband Internet access, especially given the importance

of technology-based education. Crime rates are low in Clay County compared to the region. Fire and emergency services are catalogued, as are higher education, healthcare, and child care. It is noted that enrollment growth at local primary and secondary schools is straining resources.

Most residents work in county, unemployment was very low but increased during the recession, largely due to the housing industry. The decline in employment and wages in most sectors is noted, and wages in Clay County are lower than the regional average. More non-employer income is generated in Clay County compared to the region and state. Incomes in 2000 were lower in Clay County than in the region, but were higher in 2009 and expected to grow. The school system and county government are the largest employers. The plan also discusses workforce and economic development, with focus on a number of strategies to grow the local economy.

**Economic development portion of plan:** The economic section is quite comprehensive in and of itself as it outlines the existing economic framework, as well as economic development strategies based on the vision of the County. It also compares Clay County's employment with a region that includes both Southwest North Carolina and Northern Georgia.

Between 2000 and 2009, Clay County's primary employment growth sectors include Accommodation and Food, Education, Health Care, Public Administration, and Retail Trade. On the other hand, only the Accommodation and Food, and Public Administration sectors showed a positive trend with wage growth. Of course, the

study qualifies these data with the fact that the economic downturn of 2007 dramatically shifts the employment data for Clay in that, while there was growth in certain sectors overall during the decade, the more immediate trend had been jobs lost. Other data presented includes employment projects, educational attainment, income, and largest employers.

The plan lays the foundation for an economic implementation strategy by detailing all of the various economic development resources, their respective roles, and characteristics. In the interest of building a framework to coordinate economic development efforts, a key recommendation of the comprehensive plan is to create a formal and independent Economic Development Commission with decision making power and funding. The recommended economic development concept would include formally establishing the Clay County EDC and its responsibilities, hiring an executive director, and build a business development and recruitment program. It would then create an economic development identify for the county including a marketing strategy to promote itself as the region's hub of economic activity. The EDC would build capacity by coordinating and engaging regional economic development resource providers to focus on common goals. Finally, the EDC and Clay County would facilitate its plan through implementation of an economic development building block program that strengthens the economic infrastructure, grows existing industry through business development and access to capital, capitalizes on regional economic opportunities as well as emerging industries, and promoting small business and entrepreneurial development. These building blocks would include enhancing the

county's quality of life as well as focusing on downtown, community revitalization, and recreational development.

### **CLAY COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT (2012)**

This assessment details a number of statistics about health in Clay County, including smokers, obesity, economics, pollutants, drug use, education, pregnancy, mortality, physical activity, diet, health care, air quality, and more. The top three priorities for the community are to: decrease all forms of tobacco use, chronic disease control and prevention, and increase access to healthier food options.

### **CLAY COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN (2010)**

The decline in agriculture in Clay County has been significant, with the almost complete loss of tobacco growing and dairy farming in the 13 years prior to 2010. The value of agricultural goods has dropped significantly. The number of farms, amount of farm land, and number of farms have also plummeted.

Challenges identified include increasing land values, steep slopes unsuitable for farming, shrinking farm sizes, a scarcity of farm labor, and various restraints to marketing agricultural products both locally and for export to larger consumer markets. The plan recommends the following to protect agriculture and improve its viability:

- ★ Public promotion of agriculture locally as an engine of economic growth and regionally or nationally as a reason to invest in Clay County.

- ★ Promotion and facilitation of farmland protection through Voluntary Agriculture Districts, Present Use Value taxation, estate planning, easements, development ordinances, and development planning.
- ★ Promotion of leases and other multiple use agreements to bring farmland owned by nonfarmers into productive use.
- ★ Marketing and processing development to support greater variety and profitability in agricultural enterprises.
- ★ Promotion, training, and support for “grass farming” and other production techniques to lower costs, reduce capital requirements, increase margins, and meet the environmental and aesthetic requirements of a healthy rural landscape.
- ★ Support for developing and carrying out the forestry plans required for PUV tax assessments
- ★ The plan also dedicates space to a significant number of interviews with local farmers to showcase different types of agriculture and personal experiences of trends.

### **HISTORIC HAYESVILLE MARKET ANALYSIS (2010)**

This plan focused on economic restructuring strategies for the Historic Hayesville Business District. The plan is quite comprehensive in its data collection, analysis, and strategic recommendations. The study addressed the market conditions in downtown Hayesville, existing retail mix, availability and condition of developable property, physical infrastructure and amenities, access to capital, and business development assistance. The findings of

the study were based on demographics, demand data, market segmentation, as well as consumer and business owner surveys.

Among other items, the study determined that there is a demand of \$8.5 million in additional retail sales within a five-mile trade area from downtown Hayesville. Not all of this demand could be recaptured in downtown, but through economic development, marketing and recruitment, Hayesville can target specific retail businesses that are demanded within the community. Key opportunities include restaurants, convenience, electronics, apparel, and health & personal care, among others. In all, the study projects a potential of over 26,000 square feet of additional retail capture for downtown. The study also looked at office and residential development in downtown, both as an expansion opportunity as well as a potential market for downtown businesses.

The market analysis report ended with strategic recommendations for downtown Hayesville based on the Main Street Four-Point model of Economic Restructuring, Design, Promotion, and Organization. Key action items included creating a Business Development Task Force to focus on business recruitment and retention, developing recruitment packages and incentives, engaging successful business owners from nearby communities, and compiling and managing market data. It also suggested Historic Hayesville create a brand identity and marketing strategy to expand downtown’s customer base, promote downtown events, recruit new investment, etc. Design recommendations focused on improving downtown’s marketability through enhancing the pedestrian environment and general downtown appearance. Finally,

organizational recommendations included seeking additional training for merchants, building capacity through volunteer growth, and generally coordinating efforts for downtown revitalization.

### **LAKE CHATUGE WATERSHED ACTION PLAN (2007)**

The plan for this watershed, part of which is in Clay County and part of which is in Towns County, Georgia, discusses the poor ecological health rating of Lake Chatuge. This is due to excess nutrients that come from stormwater runoff, erosion, and chemical application on landscaping and pasture. The plan identifies goals to reduce phosphorus from the Hiawassee wastewater treatment plant, reduce livestock access to waterways, improve pastures, and reduce phosphorus from commercial and residential areas. Dozens of recommendations are provided for a variety of entities to meet these goals.

**GRAHAM REVITALIZATION ECONOMIC ACTION TEAM (GREAT) STRATEGIC PLAN (2013)**

**Economic development portions of plan:** The GREAT organization is a 501(c)(3) community leadership group that is charged with addressing the civic, economic, social, and physical challenges facing the Graham County Community. The 2013 Strategic Plan outlines the objectives and actions to achieve ongoing revitalization, including a chapter dedicated to Economic Development, Business and Industry. Specifically, the strategic plan calls for the leadership in Graham to more actively support business recruitment, work with the EDC to provide more business support and networking, grow creative entrepreneurial opportunities, and build an up-to-date infrastructure that will make Graham more competitive for investment.

Other sections detail strategies for planning for and growing tourism and cultural opportunities for economic development, as well as pursuing downtown and community revitalization to improve resident’s quality of life. The process resulted in the creation of seven committees that mirrored the seven “economic drivers” identified in the plan. Each committee has an individual work plan that collectively work to achieve the vision of a Graham County where “traditional Appalachian culture lives, people flourish, and businesses thrive.”

**REIMAGINING ROBBINSVILLE (2012)**

Funded by the Golden LEAF Foundation, this plan looks at the lack of investment in Robbinsville and recommends a number of measures: promoting tourism, developing greenways/parks, revitalizing downtown, improving the appearance/design of the bypass, promoting local economic development, and initiating community dialogue on sensitive issues.

The plan includes a community profile with information on history, demographics, housing, infrastructure, employment, tourism, and natural/recreational/cultural resources. Tourism based on natural assets is key to local identity and economy, but unfortunately the town of Robbinsville does not attract tourists.

A robust public involvement plan allowed residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to contribute significantly to the formation of the plan. The plan puts forth a significant number of recommendations, some of which are listed as follows:

- ★ Implement wayfinding signage
- ★ Connect the Junaluska Museum/Memorial to downtown
- ★ Create a branding campaign
- ★ Redesign the visitor’s center
- ★ Develop a greenway system

- ★ Revitalize downtown by purchasing key properties, retaining public facilities, and creatively reusing buildings
- ★ Main street streetscape
- ★ Land use ordinance for downtown
- ★ Downtown farmers market
- ★ Median and sidewalk improvements on bypass
- ★ Ford Street housing development
- ★ Local economic development

**Economic development portions of plan:** While the plan was more physical in nature, it did address key economic development issues and projects. Key recommendations included expanding Robbinsville’s tourism product by recruiting and developing more local attractions, businesses, and activities to support tourism as an economic driver. Similarly, the plan called for a more active approach to downtown revitalization including the acquisition and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties, as well as creating an incentive program to assist the private sector in improving and developing their properties. Similarly, the plan calls for an effort to grow jobs from within by creating an environment where local entrepreneurs can invest and thrive.

The document also provides limited demographic and economic data, while recognizing that Robbinsville’s and Graham County’s key limitation to economic

development is a lack of dedicated staff or planning to pursue it effectively. Of note is the declining population over the last decade, high unemployment rates for Graham County, declining household incomes with increasing vacancy and poverty rates. A key opportunity for Robbinsville and Graham is to capitalize on regional tourism destinations such as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Qualla Boundary and Cherokee culture, Tail of the Dragon, Nantahala National Forest, Appalachian Trail, among others. Similarly, growing cultural arts (such as local artisans and craftsmen) as both a tourism and economic development opportunity was noted. The plan concludes with a comprehensive implementation matrix with projects, timeframes, lead agencies, and potential funding streams.

### **HAYWOOD COUNTY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2007)**

This very short plan lists a dozen recommended projects. The largest of these are the revitalization of the historic Frog Level business district in Waynesville (including depot improvements and flood control), a public art trail, and creation of a Folkmoot of the Americas ten-day festival celebrating indigenous American cultures.

### **HAYWOOD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM-WIDE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (2007)**

This plan catalogues existing parks and recreation facilities within Haywood County and their general benefits. It also puts forth a number of recommendations for maintenance, accessibility, partnerships, seniors, and consolidation. Specific recommendations include a number of improvements to existing parks, and the creation of two sports complexes, a senior center, and a swimming pool. A greenway between Canton and Clyde is also recommended.

### **RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS AND MARKETING STRATEGY FOR CANTON (2007)**

This project was prepared for the Haywood County Economic Development Commission in association with the Town of Canton. It is a companion to the project identified above for Waynesville. The project included a comprehensive market analysis for Canton comprising a market definition,

retail market analysis, and assessment of the second home market's impact to downtown Canton and its businesses. The process was identical to the plan for Waynesville, and ultimately showed a much more locally oriented market base for Canton businesses, including a marginal impact to local businesses from the second home market.

The more community-based assets included the paper mill, Colonial Theatre, community events such as the Mater Festival and Pickin' in the Park, as well as the recreational activity afforded by the French Broad River. The community had shown significant success in its public improvements and community development. Recognizing Canton's competitor markets of Waynesville and Asheville, the plan focused its economic development strategies on shoring up the needs and demand of business from those living within the Canton community, while promoting its unique recreational assets to an external, regional market.

Economic development recommendations were centered on a local market demand of over 75,000 square feet of commercial space, much of which was in the more "local-based" needs of grocery, health and personal care, clothing, and general merchandising. Marketing and economic development strategies focused on creating a local loyalty campaign, targeting regional consumers from Haywood and West Buncombe Counties, as well as building recruitment efforts on incentives, growing

business skills, and working with community development agencies.

### **TOWN OF CLYDE LAND USE PLAN (2012)**

This plan, essentially a comprehensive plan for the town, provides a thorough catalogue of existing conditions, including history, demographics, infrastructure, environment and flooding, steep slopes, and community facilities. The plan also includes a significant number of recommendations, most of which are policy level. Specific recommendations include streetscape improvements to Carolina Boulevard (including a median), expanding bicycle and pedestrian facilities, several amendments to the zoning code, and a variety of ideas to revitalize downtown.

**Economic development portion of plan:** Clyde's plan is also a typical comprehensive land use plan. While it inventories the community's various local, infrastructure, cultural, and natural resources, it also provides background and strategies for downtown revitalization and economic development. The plan recognizes that Clyde is more a rural and localized market rather than a visitor destination. It also realizes Clyde's limited resources, and looks to agencies at the county and regional level to facilitate economic development. The document details demographic, income, workforce, and educational statistics for the community. It also details other plans and agencies responsible for economic development in Haywood County. It recommends the revitalization of downtown Clyde, encouraging a more balanced and

complementary mix of small businesses. One of its key recommendations is that Clyde establish its own focused economic development plan.

### **MAGGIE VALLEY LAND USE PLAN (2007)**

This comprehensive plan for the town of Maggie Valley (population approximately 7,000) provides a brief catalogue of existing conditions, including demographics, steep slopes, and transportation. The plan includes a recommended future land use map and a number of recommendations for changes to the zoning ordinance, including simplifications, adding use permits, steep slope restrictions, design standards, screening, and proactive rezonings. The plan also recommends annexation and policy improvements.

**Economic development portion of plan:** Maggie Valley’s land use plan is more simplistic than the others. It presents demographic and economic trends for the town, and focuses more on inventory and analysis rather than strategic recommendations for economic development. It does, however, offer some specific recommendations for the town center and Ghost Town in the Sky property. Most importantly, the plan recognizes Maggie’s lack of economic diversity, as shown through the closing of Ghost Town in 2003, and the town’s dependence on tourism and service industries. Key recommendations look to promote a critical mass of year-round businesses to support a localized market, as well as extending the length of the seasonal calendar. Diversification of business is particularly noted to compete with nearby towns such as Waynesville.

### **MAGGIE VALLEY REVITALIZATION PLAN (2013)**

This plan summarizes a number of demographic factors in the town of Maggie Valley. It also lists existing assets and challenges, including the favorable local climate, 2012 reopening of the Ghost Town theme park, motorcycle museum, loss of manufacturing jobs, a declining tax base, competition among local public entities, and lack of harmony and positive attitudes.

Recommendations of the plan are framed around premises including the following:

- ★ Developing a mall mentality for downtown (consistent hours, sense of place, retail anchors, etc.)
- ★ “Driving tourism” to embrace the market for motorcycle riders, bicyclists, and car drivers
- ★ Improving curbside appeal and aesthetics
- ★ Expanding the tourist season with a winter carnival
- ★ Changing attitudes and behaviors
- ★ Positioning the town as an outdoor adventure destination
- ★ Improving marketing
- ★ Increasing productivity of festival grounds
- ★ Promoting Ghost Town

### **WAYNESVILLE: OUR HERITAGE, OUR FUTURE 2020 LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN (1999)**

This comprehensive plan was developed in response to sprawling development, tourism growth, aging population, and rising

land costs. Assets identified include natural beauty and climate, community amenities, highway system, and small town feel. Challenges include development on steep slopes, pressure to develop farmland, traffic on major roads, lack of large industry, lack of parks, and lack of zoning in the county. Community values include local history, the small town atmosphere, health, education, the arts, residential neighborhoods, safety, pedestrian-friendliness, diversity, natural beauty, and a sense of community.

The plan includes a summary of existing conditions in the areas of demographics, economics, land use, infrastructure, transportation, community facilities, and environment. Recommendations include zoning updates, reserving industrial land, concentrating development along corridors, expanding the fiber optic network, relocating utilities underground, improving and expanding parks, adopting an urban service area, providing infill development incentives, protecting farmland and areas with steep slopes, exploring the use of transfer of development rights (TDR), revitalizing downtown Waynesville and other commercial nodes, designating historic areas, incentivize affordable housing, and creating codes to address manufactured homes, signage, light pollution, and screening. Transportation recommendations include connectivity recommendations and improvements at entrances into downtown, as well as traffic calming and access management in several locations, bicycle paths and sidewalks, the restoration of passenger rail service, and the creation of a circulator trolley.

**Economic development portion of plan:** This plan is a traditional land use plan for the City of Waynesville but does offer some

insight on economic development efforts for the community. The plan includes demographic, income, and economic data for Waynesville, as well as goals and action strategies for economic vitality. The plan recognizes the challenges of sprawling growth in the rural community, as well as the economic growth of construction, service, retail and health care industries. Like most plans in this region, the impact of tourism as an economic force for Waynesville is duly acknowledged. Waynesville did however see a decrease in manufacturing through 2000, with a shift towards tourism, service, and health care. The plan saw significant projected growth in construction, service, retail, health care, and professional services, but it should be noted that this was pre-recession, and most of these figures would have had a correction.

Economic vitality objectives focused on designating land areas appropriate to support demand in the various growth sectors including clean industrial development, downtown revitalization, reusing vacant and underutilized industrial sites, and preserving farmland and open space. It also looked for Waynesville to cooperate with Haywood County and institutions of higher education on planning, recruitment, and workforce development. Finally, the plan called for expanding and upgrading existing infrastructure systems to support development, including fiber optic, rail service, etc.

### **RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS AND MARKETING STRATEGY FOR WAYNESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA (2007)**

This project was prepared for the Haywood County Economic Development

Commission in association with the Town of Waynesville and the Downtown Waynesville Association. It is a companion to a similar project for Canton. The project included a comprehensive market analysis for Waynesville comprising a market definition, retail market analysis, and assessment of the second home market's impact to Waynesville and its businesses. The plan engaged local stakeholders and business owners including a zip code survey of customers to businesses in Downtown, Frog Level, Hazelwood and West Waynesville, and Russ Avenue.

Upon establishing primary and secondary trade areas for each district and Waynesville as a whole, the analysis included a retail leakage study, retail shares analysis, and second home market assessment. The analysis showed at the time that while Waynesville's primary trade area was a regional retail attractor (gain of \$200 million in 2006), certain categories and the secondary trade area showed an immediate opportunity to capture nearly 50,000 square feet of additional space in downtown districts. The zip code survey also differentiated between local, second home, and tourist consumer traffic, identifying not only where second home owners reside within Haywood County, but also their primary state of residence (FL – 60%, NC – 10%, GA- 8.5%, etc.). The plan established that second home owners are a significant market to local businesses, both in population as well as buying capacity.

Building off of market research, the plan detailed a work plan for marketing and economic development for Waynesville focusing on:

- ★ Market Positioning – Promoting Waynesville through a consistent and connected branding and marketing strategy.
- ★ Connecting the Districts – Expanding by connecting key character districts such as Downtown, Frog Level, and Hazelwood through physical improvements, marketing, and private investment.
- ★ Building the Market – Economic development efforts focused on business recruitment and support, filling in demanded activity such as restaurants, nighttime entertainment, specialty retail, and residential.
- ★ Organization – Implementation strategy focused on building partnerships to promote, recruit, and enhance the community through a cooperative effort.

The plan included a strategy board showing a vision for each strategic area, with short, middle, and long-term implementation tasks to achieve each goal. It also included a marketing strategy, brand development, and identity style guide for Waynesville and downtown.

### **JACKSON COUNTY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2008)**

This very short plan lists more than a dozen recommended projects. The largest of these are the creation of a Jackson County greenway system, a Cashiers Village cultural center, Monteith development (a community center in Dillsboro to include an outdoor theater, museum, and park), and improvements to downtown Sylva centered around Mill Street and including streetscapes and a new park and pedestrian bridge.

### **JACKSON COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2006)**

This comprehensive plan was developed in response to the rapidly and growing economy and challenges with maintaining its unique mountain identity. Educational (SW Community College and WCU), health care, and residential growth were all significant, and slope development was a particular challenge. Traffic was increasing and services were being strained. Manufacturing and agriculture jobs were decreasing and the county was becoming more dependent on tourism and educational jobs. The plan takes a detailed look at demographics and population growth, as well as the goals of each town within the county, the two colleges, and the hospital.

Recommendations include recruiting new businesses and high-tech businesses, expanding broadband infrastructure, supporting the colleges and hospital, expanding infrastructure, creating a

county land use plan, promote alternative transportation, improve roads between Sylva and Cullowhee, implement access management along highways, and develop steep slope development guidelines.

**Economic development portion of plan:** The Jackson County Land Development Plan presents demographic, economic, educational, and civic characteristics of the county and its towns. It is also strategic in nature as it provides a vision for growth and development for Jackson, including goals and objectives to achieve the larger vision.

Jackson County had historically had a diverse economy founded on manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and education. Like other communities in this region, industry and agriculture have declined significantly, and the County now relies on tourism development and services. As an example, the total number of manufacturing jobs in the county decrease by over 31% between 1990 and 2000. Most of these job losses were in the apparel industry. Overall jobs increased over this time period, with significant increases in construction, education and health services, and accommodation. Of course, this report is somewhat dated in the sense that the current economic downturn generally began in 2006, particularly affecting this region with the construction and home building industry, among others. The plan identifies a number of constraints to future development, including steep topography, flood hazard areas, and amount of publicly owned and protected lands. At the time of

the report, about one-third of the County was identified as a protected watershed.

Economic goals and objectives outline in the Land Development Plan include recruiting high-tech enterprises, actively identifying land for new investment, expanding the technological infrastructure, as well as programming and facilities for institutions of higher education.

### **U.S. HIGHWAY 441 SMALL AREA PLAN (2008)**

This Jackson County plan was created in response to development pressures created by the extension of sewer service. It puts forth a blueprint for preferred settlement patterns and design qualities that will prevent quality of life from being lost with sprawling development patterns. Rural character, scenic areas, and picturesque views are a source of local pride, as well as an economic asset for visitors, but development has a negative impact on these. It can also create pollution and landslides. The issues of planning and regulation became important because certain landowners' decisions were negatively affecting other landowners use of their land, and could lead to outmigration because of the loss of reasons people value the area. Strong public disagreements over regulation, locals vs. outsiders, local vs. large businesses, and rural vs. development may lead to the community's demise. Assets within or near the study area include the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Qualla Boundary, and the Cherokee Hotel and Casino (North Carolina's largest tourist attraction).

The plan included significant public involvement, including a charrette, stakeholder committee, and youth involvement. It catalogues existing conditions, including natural environment and viewsheds, land use, transportation, utilities, and billboards. Public comments on existing conditions touch on billboards, lack of design guidelines, bicyclist safety, preserving vistas, improvements to 441, protecting farmland, preventing big box retail, and others. The plan also includes a market analysis.

A framework plan shows the desired character of each portion of the study area, along with supporting roads and infrastructure. Recommendations include the use of voluntary agricultural districts, stream buffer regulations, a development ordinance for the corridor, and the creation of greenways. Recommendations for U.S. 441 itself include the creation of a planted median, wide lanes for vehicles to share with bicyclists, sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, and signage. The plan also outlines a number of placemaking principles, including branding, architecture, and signage, with special focus on conservation techniques. Specific plans are also shown for a number of nodes.

**MACON COUNTY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2008)**

This short plan recommends a dozen or so improvements. The largest of these are a six-mile extension of the Little Tennessee Greenway and the creation of a Macon County Heritage Center.

**MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2011)**

This plan, technically still in its draft form, provides existing conditions and recommendations in several functional areas. Macon County’s economy is more diverse than some others in the region, with healthcare, software, and manufacturing jobs, but attracting employees may be difficult because of low wages and high cost of living. Stakeholders expressed a desire to remain in the county and find work, especially by attracting new businesses.

The plan recommends a number of service and infrastructure improvements. Protecting the natural environment and farmland are also key goals. While no zoning exists, there are a number of regulations for subdivisions, building height, adult businesses, signage, telecommunication towers, floodplains, ridgelines, and farmland. The plan recommends additional regulations. The plan also recommends upgrades to schools and recreation facilities. Transportation policies include encouraging roads that are safe and minimize impact on the landscape, coordinating road and planning, and promoting development patterns that reduce driving. The plan also includes a

discussion of and recommendations for housing, seniors, and childcare.

**Economic development portion of plan:** The Macon County Comprehensive Plan includes a chapter on Economic Development and Public Services. The economic development element makes recommendations for a healthy, vibrant and sustainable economy. In its introduction, the section recognizes that while Macon County has sustained a diverse economy with healthcare, software development, manufacturing, and retail services, its biggest challenge is the lack of competitive opportunities to recruit and maintain professional talent.

The Macon County Economic Development Commission conducted a SWOT analysis engaging community leaders and the public. This study showed key challenges stemming from labor force issues to competition with neighboring communities, to a lack of proactive infrastructure. The comprehensive plan itself has limited recommendations for the Economic Development Commission except that the EDC receive more significant support for its work from the County, with the intent of being more proactive in its economic development efforts.

**TOWN OF FRANKLIN PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH (2006)**

This short policy document lists a number of policies and strategies. Among these are:

- ★ Allow mixed use and provide incentives for mixed use.
- ★ Ensure that zoning allows compact design and parking.
- ★ Seek funding for affordable housing and supporting zoning amendments.
- ★ Adopt walkability standards, develop plans to improve gateways, adopt a pedestrian master plan.
- ★ Ensure that regulations encourage buildings that will last and create a sense of place.
- ★ Inventory historic resources.
- ★ Develop downtown design standards.
- ★ Protect the natural environment.
- ★ Expand the greenway system and preserve open space.
- ★ Ensure that utility extensions are consistent with good growth, prioritize downtown development.
- ★ Provide for multiple modes of transportation.
- ★ Make sure land use regulation is understandable and fair.

**RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS FOR DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN (2011)**

Similar to Waynesville and Canton, a retail market analysis was conducted for Franklin

in Macon County. In Franklin, the focus was specifically on Downtown and the Franklin Main Street Program. Similar to Waynesville, Franklin's downtown has mirrored the more recent growth in the region geared towards tourism and service industries. Franklin is a participant in the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center's Small Town Economic Prosperity (STEP) program, which alongside Franklin Main Street has guided the community through a strategic plan to foster economic development in downtown.

Much like Waynesville's, Franklin's second home market is substantial but also showed challenges as this study was conducted during the recent recession. On the other hand, Franklin is more strategically positioned to capitalize on its geographic location between Atlanta and Asheville, Charlotte, Greenville, and the North Carolina Mountains. In fact, visitor traffic accounted for over 30% of all customers in downtown Franklin, which is both significant in scale as well as showing opportunities for expansion. For example, 14% of all downtown Franklin's traffic came from Florida alone.

Overall, the retail market research showed opportunities for recruitment and expansion in specialty foods, clothing, sporting goods, full service restaurants, and specialty retail. In order to achieve this, Franklin needs a cohesive and coordinated marketing message. Economic Development recommendations focused on three core areas including Messaging and Marketing, Retail Recruitment, and Preparing for Investment.

### **TOWN OF HIGHLANDS LAND USE PLAN UPDATE (2005)**

This brief update of the 1989 Land Use Plan envisions "an attractive mountain community, which is founded on the beauty of the plateau's natural environment, the uniqueness of Highlands' village character, and the richness of the area's culture and history." It recommends a number of strategies to achieve this vision.

Residential strategies address steep slope and ridge top development, house size relative to lot size, impact fees, buffers and setbacks, multifamily opportunities, and rezonings. They also address road width and grade, housing upkeep standards, development guidelines, a tree ordinance, landscaping, utilities, screening, open space, and trails.

Commercial strategies address building and sign codes, buffers, parking, impact criteria, big box development, tree ordinance, and historic buildings. They also address sidewalks, streetscapes, and open spaces. Environment strategies address stream buffers, easements, greenways, green space, and development control.

### **DOWNTOWN HIGHLANDS MARKETPLACE STUDY (2011)**

The marketplace study for downtown Highlands was completed by North Carolina Small Town program Main Street in conjunction with the Town of Highlands. The study inventories and analyzes downtown Highlands including the overall consumer and retail market, physical environment, financial and business development

framework, and organizational needs for continued downtown revitalization.

In general, the report finds that Highlands' downtown is a strong attractor, and more than adequately serves the needs of residents within the local market. The visitor and part-time markets are also quite strong, and the retail mix dominated by restaurants and specialty shopping is a testament to this. It does, however, recognize that Highlands Downtown market is seasonal with the primary activity occurring in July-October. Still, it is quite successful, as downtown has very limited vacancy rates, coupled with rental rates that are higher and more sustained than Highlands' peer communities. Market recommendations include pursuing Highlands' boomer population as the key target for activities and business, expanding eco-tourism as an economic driver for downtown, more consistently branding and promoting downtown Highlands, and providing more robust business support services including market research, incentives, training, and mentoring.

The report concludes with a recommendation that Highlands create a formal and stand-alone downtown organization to manage the development, marketing, and physical improvements to downtown.

### **SWAIN COUNTY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2008)**

This short plan recommends a dozen or so improvements. The largest of these are the construction of two parking decks in downtown Bryson City, an expansion of streetscapes in downtown Bryson City, the creation of a Swain County Heritage

Museum, and the construction of an Oconaluftee Visitor Center.

### SWAIN COUNTY LAND USE PLAN UPDATE (2010)

This plan, an update of the 1994 plan funded through the Mountain Area Planning Program, was developed in the context of community skepticism regarding planning efforts and land use regulations. Small town values and mountain heritage are key values. The plan states that 2 million of the annual visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park pass through Swain County. It also states that the Corridor K project could provide better access regionally as well as increasing jobs and commerce, even though it is not in Swain County.

Swain County has experienced enormous population growth since 1970, a trend that is expected to continue. Recent economic boons include the relocation of the Smoky Mountain Railroad to Bryson City and the Cherokee Casino, the largest employer in the county. The Appalachian Regional Commission, however, has designated Swain County as “at risk” based on income, poverty, and unemployment rates. Only 25% of land within Swain County contributes to the tax base because of the large amount of public land and Cherokee land. The plan includes a brief catalogue of schools, infrastructure, and other public facilities, as well as land use, flooding, agriculture, and other issues.

**Economic development portion of plan:**  
The Swain County Land Use Plan presents

general demographic and economic trends through 2010. Swain has seen positive population growth since 1970, and is projected to reach 17,354 persons by the year 2030. While this population is growing, it is also aging with a median age of 40.59 by 2030. Swain County has seen unemployment rates that are high when compared to the region and state. In 2005, Swain’s unemployment was 6.6%. On the other hand, this represents a decrease from a high of 13% just five years previously. Harrah’s in Cherokee is likely the primary reason for this decrease in unemployment, as referenced in a 2007 impact study that showed it was responsible for over 4,800 jobs in 2003. This reality has shown a marked shift in employment from industrial employment to tourism, entertainment, retail and hospitality. Still, the Appalachian Regional Commission designates Swain’s economic status as “at-risk” based on per capita income, poverty, and unemployment. Another key economic indicator is the dramatic drop off in residential building permits since a peak in 2006.

The land use plan details economic development strategies specific to Swain County that have been included and represented in the Region A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Key economic projects and initiatives for Swain include:

- ★ Implement Swain’s Heritage Tourism plan including the development of a heritage museum.

- ★ Upgrade high technology training infrastructure including the Swain County Center of the Southwestern Community College.

- ★ Pursue and implement smart growth strategies.

- ★ Build and market an IT spec building.

- ★ Continue to grow and develop recreational facilities, including greenways and trails.

### SWAIN COUNTY GOLDEN LEAF ASSESSMENT (2013)

The Golden Leaf Assessment for Swain County is a general overview of demographic, health, economic and other indicators, as well as emerging issues and priorities. Key findings include:

- ★ The county has experience nearly 7.8% growth in population over the past decade.

- ★ Several health indicators (heart disease mortality, teen pregnancy, uninsured, Medicaid recipients, etc.) in Swain lag those of North Carolina.

- ★ Swain has a higher percentage than NC of residents that have a bachelor’s degree or higher, and its per child education expenditure for public schools is much higher than the state (\$10,421 v. \$8,521).

- ★ In September of 2012, Swain’s unemployment rate was 11.6%, compared to 9.6% for NC.

- ★ Similarly, the poverty rate in Swain in 2010 was 22.4% compared to 15.5% for the state.
- ★ Median Household Income 2006-2010 was \$35,071 in Swain compared to \$45,570 for the state.
- ★ Employment in general has increased in Swain, with a 9.2% increase in private employment from 2005-2010, and a 4.8% increase in government jobs.
- ★ There were significant increases in construction (20%) and real estate jobs (55%) from 2005 to 2010, suggesting that Swain may not have seen the housing bust that most places across the country have during this period.

Key issues in Swain County include:

- ★ The mountain geography creates challenges for development including land availability, expansion of infrastructure, and construction costs.
- ★ Swain has limited resources to focus on business recruitment.
- ★ With the entire Eastern Band of the Cherokee population being reported for Swain, demographic, income, and employment figures can be skewed having an impact on Swain's access to federal and state resources.

### **BRYSON CITY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2007)**

This plan provides a substantial analysis of existing conditions, much of it similar to that summarized above in the Swain County Land Use Plan Update (2010). Recommendations include the following: encourage affordable

housing, rehabilitate existing housing, retain small-town character, explore design guidelines, practice growth management and open space preservation, identify locations for new industry, expand sewer service, pave roads, and promote new mixed-use/high density development.

### **BRYSON CITY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (2011)**

Assets of Bryson City include the mountains, culture with strong ties to the land, and a great downtown with a river. The Chamber of Commerce is also very active. Parking is a challenge downtown. The plan recommends creating an asset-development organization, an economic restructuring committee, and a marketing committee. The focus throughout is on enhancing assets, using volunteer labor, and leveraging resources. Recommendations discuss how to strengthen existing business and attract new ones, reuse buildings, capitalize on natural resources, and develop a farmers market. Recommended physical improvements would enhance aesthetics, install signage, create branding and a web site, highlight local history, make the best use of events, open up the riverfront, and build a pedestrian bridge to Island Park.

#### **Economic development portion of plan:**

This collaborative effort looked at economic restructuring, marketing and promotion, design and preservation, and organization. The plan focuses on the downtown core of the community, and looks to enhance and solidify Bryson City's place as the cultural, economic, and civic hub of Swain County. Economic development strategies focused specifically on strengthening the business environment in downtown, diversifying the

economic base by expanding target markets, growing entrepreneurs, and focusing on the tourism industry as an economic driver.

In doing so the study provided a snapshot of the economic health of Bryson City and downtown, including a retail leakage study to determine local demand within the immediate market. Like often found in courthouse towns, Bryson City is a retail and business magnet, and pulls in more sales than the residents of the community have the capacity to buy. This means that Bryson City is relevant to a larger, more regional trade area, and providing businesses and activities for residents in those areas is an immediate opportunity. A key recommendation is recruiting non-seasonal businesses to provide employment opportunities for local residents during the off-season. Similarly, it calls for expanding non-tourism based entrepreneurship by recruiting green businesses, developing a farmers' market for local growers, and growing its creative economy by creating a stronger presence and network for the community's artisans and craftsmen.

### COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA (2012)

The CEDS is the latest in a continuing effort within the seven county region to outline strategies for economic development within Region A. The 2012 document is an update to the original 2000 CEDS which itself was a product of an evolving economic development initiative that began in the mid 1960s. Ultimately, the 2012 CEDS is intended to develop a regional strategy for competitiveness, one that identifies competitive advantages, prioritizes public and private investment, resulting in a true regional collaborative economic development effort. Most importantly, the CEDS outlines common ground between the seven counties and multiple communities from which to create a comprehensive effort for the region.

The plan is the result of a collaboration of multiple government entities, agencies, and employers, which first established broad goals for economic development and growth in the region. These goals created a framework for the planning process, beginning with an economic profile of the region that:

- ★ Outlined the economic history of the region beginning with natural resources (timber, agriculture, paper, etc.), shifting to tourism development (destinations, retail, service) to subsectors within the tourism market (gambling, entertainment).

- ★ Identified growth sectors within the region including knowledge-based jobs, green infrastructure, second home market, and construction (residential).
- ★ Described the desire for managed growth, resulting in the establishment of the Mountain Landscape initiative and its economic development toolbox.
- ★ Created a regional profile describing demographics, workforce development, economic development targets, emerging clusters, and infrastructure.
- ★ Facilitated a SWOT exercise for the region focusing on infrastructures, communities, and workforce.
- ★ Specified regional economic development partners and initiatives, including ongoing goals and projects of each county and community.

The final result is a strategic action plan for the region that outlines common goals, actions, partners, and costs for four key strategic areas:

1. Build on the Region's Competitive Advantages & Leverage the Marketplace
  - ★ Identify the region's clusters of economic development that offer competitive advantages
  - ★ Develop a regional plan to leverage the region's competitive advantages
  - ★ Identify new adaptive capabilities in the regional economy

#### 2. Establish & Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure

- ★ Identify the region's infrastructure assets (transportation, workforce, water/sewer/gas, broadband, housing, education, healthcare, green space, access to capital, and energy assets)
- ★ Develop multi-modal transportation plans that address existing and future year capacity deficiencies
- ★ Identify whether water, sewer, and natural gas infrastructure can accommodate future growth
- ★ Develop plans for the expansion of telecommunications and broadband infrastructure growth or identify their capacity is sufficient
- ★ Develop plans for equitable and affordable housing choices

#### 3. Create Revitalized & Vibrant Communities

- ★ Promote environmentally sustainable development patterns
- ★ Ensure that underserved and distressed communities are engaged in the planning process
- ★ Develop a plan for accelerating investments in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods

- ★ Develop a plan to promote the restoration and preservation of urban and town centers

#### 4. Develop Healthy and Innovative People

- ★ Foster development, recruitment, and retention of skilled workforce
- ★ Identify and analyze all educational resources and conduct gap analysis if needed
- ★ Develop ways to create an environment that fosters entrepreneurial development and growth

### **GROWING LOCAL: EXPANDING THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA FOOD AND FARM ECONOMY (2007)**

This plan, funded by the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), looks at what food and farm products are currently being produced in 23 western North Carolina counties, how much of that is being consumed locally, the potential for increasing consumption of local goods to stimulate the economy, and what investments or actions could help achieve that. While a significant decline in agriculture has happened, there is a strong demand for local agricultural products. Specific recommendations to capture this demand are as follows:

- ★ Improve outreach efforts for larger scale markets
- ★ Improve the labeling of local food
- ★ Provide information and support to growers

- ★ Advocate for policies that favor local food distribution and sale

- ★ Help maintain working farmland in the region

- ★ Identify points of intervention in food distribution and infrastructure systems

- ★ Expand public education and awareness about local food

- ★ Expand the Local Food Campaign more fully throughout the region

- ★ Integrate efforts to promote agriculture with efforts to promote tourism

- ★ Expand direct market channels

- ★ Strengthen partnerships among regional organizations

### **REGION A TOOLBOX: MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES INITIATIVE (2009)**

This comprehensive toolbox was created to help western North Carolina harness its growth and provide opportunities for its citizens, yet still be the place that has inspired residents and visitors for generations. Through a robust public involvement process, it addresses regional trends, community planning principles, site and building design, environmental protection, transportation, preserving landscapes and open space, affordable housing, farmland preservation, and economic development. A significant amount of analysis, public input, and ideas are compiled in this document that are relevant to the Opt-In effort. (Also see summary of transportation component, page A-37.)

### **QUALLA BOUNDARY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2008)**

This plan provides brief summary of the Cherokee tribe in North Carolina. It also identifies a number of challenges in the Qualla Boundary, including: attitudes of local citizens, inconsistent signage, needing tourists to stay longer, attracting more heritage tourists, and downtown renewal. The plan recommends a youth environmental camp, Kituwah Interpretive Center study, crafts resource development, Cherokee children's garden, arts school study, Cherokee cultural village study, and downtown revitalization.

### **WEST NORTH CAROLINA CLEAN ENERGY CLUSTER ANALYSIS (2011)**

This plan, in light of the national high growth in the clean energy industry, looks at opportunities in western North Carolina. The plan's primary focus is on counties that are not a part of the Opt-In study area, but its findings are relevant. Solar, wind, and biomass are examined. The industry could be bolstered by the region's strong manufacturing heritage and competitive wages. A number of goals and strategies are recommended.

## **OTHER PLANS REVIEWED BUT NOT SUMMARIZED**

- ★ Andrews Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan (1965)
- ★ Clay County Water and Sewer Plan (2001)
- ★ Hazard Mitigation Plan for Clay County and the Municipality of Hayesville Executive Summary (2009)
- ★ Macon County Recreation Master Plan (2005)
- ★ Town of Highlands Land Use Plan (1989)
- ★ Swain County Mountain Area Planning Program (1994)
- ★ Swain County Economic Development Strategy (1992)
- ★ Robbinsville Handmade in America Small Town Revitalization Project (1997)
- ★ Andrews Handmade in America Rural Main Street Project (1996)
- ★ Cherokee County Land Use Plan (1974)
- ★ Graham County Land Use Plan (1993)
- ★ Cherokee County Situational Analysis Report (2001)
- ★ Haywood County Land Use Study (1992)
- ★ Expanding the Natural Products Economy in Western North Carolina (2006)

## ★ TRANSPORTATION PLANS (VARIOUS COUNTIES) ★

### CHEROKEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2011)

Cherokee County CTP – Initiated in June of 2011, the Cherokee County CTP is nearing completion. The visioning and analysis were completed in March of 2012, and the draft CTP has been adopted by the local jurisdictions, and is under consideration for adoption by NCDOT. Recommendations by element and mode are as follows:

#### 1. Roadway

- A. Convert the current five lane undivided section of US 19/64/74/129 into a four lane median-divided facility between Hiwassee Street in Murphy west to the existing four lane section to address future volume and safety issues;
- B. Add climbing lanes for trucks on the segment of US 19/74/129 between Macon County and the existing four lane section in Andrews to facilitate truck traffic movement through the Nantahala Gorge;
- C. Move toward converting US 19/74/129 into an expressway section from US 19 Business in Andrews to Hiwassee Street in Murphy consistent with the goals of NCDOT's Strategic Highway Corridor Vision;
- D. Move toward converting US 19/74/129 into an expressway from just west of Murphy to the Tennessee State Line

consistent with the goals of NCDOT's Strategic Highway Corridor Vision;

- E. Construct passing lanes as appropriate on the two lane section of US 19/129 from US 64/74 to the Georgia State Line;
- F. Advance Future US 74/Corridor K/ Project A-0009 consistent with the results of the Southwestern North Carolina Regional Vision Plan;
- G. Convert US 64 from Old US 64 to NC 141 from a two lane undivided roadway to a four lane boulevard consistent with North Carolina's Strategic Highway Vision;
- H. Convert NC 60 from a five lane undivided section to a four lane divided boulevard from the Georgia State Line to US 64/74 consistent with the North Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor Vision Plan;
- I. Widen lanes on NC 294 from 9 feet to 12 feet and make minor alignment changes between the Tennessee State Line and US 64/74; and
- J. Widen lanes to a minimum of 10 feet and add shoulders where appropriate on several minor roadways within the County.

#### 2. Public Transportation and Rail

- A. Establish fixed-route service with passenger vans between Beal Circle in Murphy and the Wal-Mart parking lot;
- B. Establish a park-n-ride route between designated park-n-ride lots at the Ranger Community Center and Fred's Department Store in Andrews; and
- C. Establish fixed-route service with passenger vans between the Park-n-Ride lot at the Fred's Department Store in Andrews and Downtown Andrews.

#### 3. Bicycle

- D. Establish bike routes on and upgrade facilities on the following facilities:
- E. US 19 (Andrews Road)/Pleasant Valley Road (SR 1368)/Regal Road
- F. (SR 1366) from Peachtree Street (SR 1326) to Airport Road (SR 1428)
- G. US 64 from Old US 64 to NC 141
- H. NC 141 from Old US 64 to Hendrix Road (SR 1531)
- I. Harshaw Road (SR 1558) from US 64 to US 64
- J. Old US 64 from Clay County to NC 141
- K. Extend the existing multi-use path less than 0.1miles from existing pathway in Andrews, across Valley River to the rest area

#### 4. Pedestrian

- A. US 19 from Hiwassee Street (SR 1556) west to the existing four lane section – add sidewalk on both sides
- B. US 19 Business (Main Street) from Aquone Road (SR 1508) to Andrews Middle School – add sidewalk on both sides
- C. 3rd Street from Fairview Road (SR 1515) to Walnut Street – add sidewalk on north side
- D. Aquone Road (SR 1508) from the end of the existing sidewalk to US 19 Business (Main Street) – add sidewalk on north side
- E. Beaver Creek Road (SR 1388) from the end of the existing sidewalk to the rest area – add sidewalk to east side
- F. Beaver Creek Road (SR 1388) from 6th Street to the Andrews town limits – add sidewalk on west side
- G. Colvard Avenue (SR 1513) from the end of the existing sidewalk to
- H. 3rd Street – add sidewalk on west side
- I. Connaheeta Avenue from Fairview Road (SR 1515) to Fairview Road
- J. (SR 1515) – add sidewalk on both sides
- K. Fairview Road (SR 1515) from Kent Street (SR 1616) to the existing sidewalk – add sidewalk on north side
- L. Junaluska Road (SR 1505) from US 19 Business (Main Street) to Robinson Road (SR 1502) – add sidewalk on both sides
- M. Kent Street (SR 1616) from Fairview Road (SR 1515) to US 19
- N. Business (Main Street) – add sidewalk on the east/south side
- O. Konaheeta Street (SR 1424) from the end of the existing sidewalk to
- P. Texana Road (SR 1424) – add sidewalk on south side
- Q. Konaheeta Street (SR 1424) from the end of the existing sidewalk to Bulldog Drive (SR 1649) – add sidewalk on south side
- R. Old Ranger Road (SR 1398) from US 19 Business (Andrews Street) to Murphy town limit – add sidewalk on south side
- S. Old US 64 from Peachtree Athletic & Rehabilitation Center (PARC) to 300 feet south of Family Church Road (SR 1685) – add sidewalks on both sides
- T. Peachtree Street (SR 1326) from the end of existing sidewalk to
- U. Thompson Hollow Street (SR 1552) – add sidewalk on east side
- V. Robbinsville Road (SR 1390) from US 19 Business (Main Street) to the town park – add sidewalk on east side
- W. Robinson Road (SR 1502) from Junaluska Road (SR 1505) to White
- X. Road (SR 1504) – add sidewalks on both sides
- Y. Texana Road (SR 1363) from the end of the existing sidewalk to
- Z. Reservoir Road (SR 1365) – add sidewalks on both sides
- AA. Wakefield Road (SR 1394) from Junaluska Road (SR 1505) to
- AB. Andrews Middle School – add sidewalks on both sides
- AC. Walker Street from Connaheeta Avenue to Colvard Avenue (SR1513) – add sidewalk on north side
- AD. Whitaker Lane (SR 1618) from US 19 Business (Main Street) to the existing sidewalk – add sidewalk on west side
- AE. Whitaker Lane (SR 1618) from end of the existing sidewalk to Fairview Rd. (SR 1515) – add sidewalk on west side
- AF. White Road (SR 1504) from Robinson Road (SR 1502) to Wakefield Road (SR 1394) – add sidewalks on both sides

## **CLAY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2012)**

Clay County CTP – Adopted by NCDOT in June of 2012, the Clay County CTP outlines needs for the transportation system (motorized and non-motorized) in Clay County and Hayesville through the year 2035. Recommendations are summarized by mode below:

### 1. Roadway

- A. Widen US 64 to a four-lane boulevard from Cherokee County to Macon County to address future mobility and connectivity needs associated with the facility being designated as a

- Strategic Highway Corridor connecting Tennessee to Hendersonville.
- B. Widen NC 69 to a four-lane boulevard from US 64 in Hayesville south to the Georgia State Line, as it is anticipated to be over capacity by 2035. This project is included in the STIP as TIP No. A-0011C.
  - C. Widen the lanes on Myers Chapel Road (SR 1140) from 9 feet to 10 feet and replace four functionally obsolete bridges.
  - D. Minor lane widening projects to bring lane widths up to 10 feet minimum with paved shoulders are recommended for NC 175, Downings Creek Road (SR 1325), Fires Creek Road (SR 1300), Old US 64, Qualla Road (SR 1305), Settawig Road (SR 1135), and Tusquittee Road (SR 1307)
2. Public Transportation and Rail
- C. Construct Park n Ride lot at the intersection of US 64 and US 64 Business, between NC 69 and Myers Chapel Road. The Park n Ride lot would be served by Clay County Transportation.
3. Bicycle
- A. Incorporate wide paved shoulders on the proposed US 64 widening project between NC 69 and NC 175
  - B. Construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities on US 64 Business in Hayesville
- C. Add wide paved shoulders to NC 69 between Myers Chapel Road and US 64
  - D. Add wide paved shoulders to NC 175 between US 64 and Jack Rabbit Road
  - E. Add wide paved shoulders along Chatuge Dam Road (1146) from Myers Chapel Road to the recreational area on Chatuge Lake
  - F. Construct multi-use path the length of Jack Rabbit Road (SR 1155) to access Chatuge Lake
  - G. Incorporate bike lanes as part of the widening project on Myers Chapel Road (SR 1140) between NC 69 and US 64
  - H. Add bicycle lanes to Myers Chapel Road from US 64 north to the existing multi-use path at Veterans Park
  - I. Extend existing multi-use path at Veterans Park from the school to US 64 Business to afford access to the school.
4. Pedestrian
- A. Include sidewalks as part of the recommended US 64 widening project between NC 69 and Myers Chapel Road
  - B. Construct sidewalks on US 64 Business in Hayesville from May Street south to the government complex
  - C. Construct sidewalks on US 64 Business from US 64 to School Drive to better afford pedestrian accessibility
- in this fast growing commercial area of the County
- D. Construct sidewalks on NC 69 from US 64 north to Yellow Jacket Drive (SR 1373) to afford pedestrian accessibility in this fast growing commercial area of the County
  - E. Construct multi-use path the length of Jack Rabbit Road (SR 1155) to access Chatuge Lake
  - F. School area sidewalks – A goal of the CTP was to connect Downtown Hayesville to residential and commercial areas and schools with sidewalks and multi-use paths. Specific improvements are as follows:
    1. Add sidewalks along Elementary School Drive (SR 1204) to the existing sidewalk on Myers Chapel Road
    2. Add sidewalks along Myers Chapel Road (SR 1140) from the end of the existing sidewalk on Yellow Jacket Drive
    3. Add sidewalks along School Drive (SR 1312) from the end of the existing sidewalk to Yellow Jacket Drive
    4. Add sidewalks along Yellow Jacket Drive (SR 1313/1373) from Myers Chapel Road to the roundabout on US 64
  - E. Hayesville Pedestrian Connectors – In an effort to provide better connectivity and access for pedestrian facilities in Hayesville, and to fill gaps in the

existing network, it is recommended that sidewalks be constructed in the following locations:

1. Church Street, from Pass Street to the end of the road.
2. Hiwassee Street (SR 1309), closing the gap between Sullivan Street and Main Street.
3. Jones Street, from Arlington Street to Eagle Street.
4. Main Street, closing the gap between Church Street and Hiwassee Street (SR 1309).
5. Mill Street, from Myers Chapel Road (SR 1140) to the end of the road.
6. Ritter Road (SR 1308), from Hiwassee Street (SR 1309) to Tusquittee Road (SR 1307).
7. Sanderson Street (SR 1365), closing the gap between Tusquittee Road (SR 1307) to Church Street.
8. Tusquittee Road (SR 1307), from Sanderson Street (SR 1365) to Main Street and from north of Riverside Drive to Qualla Road (SR 1305).

## **HAYWOOD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2008)**

Haywood County CTP – Adopted by NCDOT in January of 2008, the Haywood County CTP outlines needs for the transportation system (motorized and non-motorized) in Haywood County through the year 2035. Recommendations are summarized by mode below:

### 1. Roadway

- A. Widen I-40 westward to the US 74 interchange, with a basic cross-section of 6-lanes, and possible climbing lanes.
- B. Widen US 19/23/74 from NC 209 to US 19 (Dellwood Rd.) to 6 lanes, and consider possible improvements at the US 19 split.
- C. Upgrade US 19/23 from Williams St to NC 151 (in Buncombe County) to a 4-lane expressway.
- D. Convert the continuous center turn lane on US 19 (Dellwood Rd) to a median from Lakeshore Dr to US 276 (Johnathan Creek Rd). Provide access management, geometric improvements, and deployment of an effective traffic signal system.
- E. Provide access management on US 23 Business from US 19/23/74 to East Street. Convert some center turn lanes to medians, as well as spot intersection and signal system improvements.
- F. Additional turn lanes and geometric improvements to US 23 Business from

US 23/74 to Ninevah Rd. Ultimately, a four-lane cross-section (ideally, with a median and/or center turn lanes) may be required.

- G. Widen NC 209 to four lanes, with median and turn lanes, from US 19/23/74 to County Rd (SR 1375).
- H. Widen US 19 to four lanes with median or turn lanes from Main St to Williams St., as necessary and feasible.
- I. Widen Dellwood Rd along the existing alignment to Depot Street from US 276 (Russ Ave) to Miller Street where a new connection with Smathers Street would be constructed.
- J. Provide spot intersection improvements on US 23 Business (North Main St), from US 276 (Walnut St) to East Street, including turn lanes, intersection reconstruction, elimination of certain turning movements, and a sophisticated traffic signal system.
- K. Provide access management, spot intersection improvements and signal system improvements on US 276 (Russ Ave) from US 23 Business (North Main St) to US 19 (Dellwood Rd).
- L. Upgrade intersections through reconfiguration or movement restrictions on NC 215 from Fiberville Rd (SR 1643) to NC 215 (Champion Rd).
- M. Add turn lanes and improve intersection geometrics where appropriate on NC 110 from US 19/23 to Henson Cove Rd (SR 1863).

- Widen lanes/shoulders, and improve alignment.
- N. Add turn lanes and improve intersection geometrics where appropriate on NC 215 from US 19/23 to Stamey Cove Rd (SR 1823). Widen lanes/shoulders, and improve alignment.
- O. Add turn lanes, widen lanes/shoulders, and improve alignment and intersection geometrics as warranted on NC 209 from County Rd (SR 1375) to Foxwood Dr.
- P. Improvements to horizontal and vertical alignment, widening of lanes/shoulders, intersection improvements, turn lanes, access management, addition of climbing/passing lanes and turn-outs on US 19 from US 276 (Johnathan Creek Rd) to Jackson County line.
- Q. Manage driveway access and upgrade roadway with spot intersection and signal improvements, as needed on Walnut St from US 276 (Russ Ave) to US 23 Business (North Main St).
- R. Divert a significant number of trips out of the intersection of South Main and Pigeon Streets using a combination of signing, turn lanes, and modified intersection design/traffic control on Legion Drive from US 23 Business (South Main St) to US 276 Pigeon St.
- S. Add turn lanes and improve intersection geometrics and signalization on Hazelwood Ave (SR 1173)/Plott Creek Rd from US 23/74 to US 23 Business (South Main St).
- T. Add turn lanes and improve intersection geometrics and traffic control as appropriate on Sulphur Springs Rd (SR 1176)/Smathers St from Hazelwood Ave (SR 1173) to Miller St.
- U. Add turn lanes, widen shoulder, and improve intersection geometrics and traffic control as appropriate on Eagle Nest Rd (SR 1176)/Elsynia Ave from Hazelwood Ave (SR 1173) to Miller St.
- V. Addition of turn lanes and/or the improvement of intersection geometrics and traffic control at critical locations on Brown Ave from Belle Meade Dr to Hazelwood Ave (SR 1173).
- W. Add turn lanes and improve intersection geometrics where appropriate on Howell Mill Rd (SR 1184) from US 276 (Russ Ave) to US 23 Business. Widen lanes/shoulders and improve vertical/horizontal alignment where necessary. Provide grade separation at railroad crossing.
- X. Add turn lanes, widen lanes/shoulders, and improve alignment and intersection geometrics on Old Clyde Rd (SR 1523) from NC 209 to Walnut Ford Rd (SR 1524).
- Y. Add turn lanes, widen lanes/shoulders, and improve alignment and intersection geometrics on Locust St (and connections) from NC 110 to US 19/23. Alternatively, a policy decision may be made to discourage cut-through traffic. In such a case, geometric changes and restrictions of certain turning movements (traffic calming measures) could be employed to make these routes less attractive as a shortcut.
- Z. Add turn lanes, widen lanes/shoulders, and improve alignment and intersection geometrics on Ninevah Rd/Country Club Dr/Crymes Cove Rd (SR 1134) from US 23 Bus (S Main St) to US 276 (Pigeon St).
2. Public Transportation and Rail
- A. Express bus service between downtown Asheville and Waynesville.
- B. Proposed park and ride lot at interchange of I-40 and NC 215 in Canton
- C. Proposed park and ride lot at interchange US 23/74 and US 276 in Waynesville
3. Bicycle
- A. Extend bike route to downtown Clyde on Poison Cove Rd (SR 1818)/Charles Street from Ratliff Cove Rd (SR 1818) to Pigeon River and connect to the future Pigeon River Greenway.
- B. Extend bike route to downtown Clyde on Old Clyde Rd (SR 1523) from NC 209 to Charles St (Clyde) and connect to the future Pigeon River Greenway.
- C. Construct bike facility on Dellwood Rd Extension from Depot Street to Smathers Street in coordination with Dellwood Rd widening and extension roadway project.
- D. Construct bike facility on Legion Drive from US 19/23 Bus (S Main St) to US

276 (Pigeon St) in coordination with Legion Drive roadway project.

- E. Extend bike route to downtown Canton and the existing greenway on Newfound Rd (SR 1004)/Main St from Buncombe County Line to US 19/23.
- F. Extend bike route on US 19/23 to downtown Canton from Buncombe County Line to NC 215.
- G. Extend bike route on Champion Dr (SR 1643) from Main St to NC 215 to future Pigeon River Greenway.
- H. Construct the Pigeon River Greenway along the river from NC 215/existing greenway to Clyde per the Haywood County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- I. Complete construction of the Richland Creek Greenway from South of US 23/74 to US 23 Bus (Hyatt Creek Rd) along creek per the Waynesville Bike Plan.
- J. Construct the Raccoon Creek Greenway along creek from US 276 to North of US 23 Bus (Old Asheville Hwy) per the Waynesville Bike Plan.
- K. Upgrade NC 215 from US 19/23 to US 276 with wide shoulders or striped lanes and appropriate signage.
- L. Upgrade NC 110 from US 19/23 to US 276 with wide shoulders or striped lanes and appropriate signage.
- M. Improve various on- and off-road facilities per the Waynesville Bike Plan.

## WAYNESVILLE PEDESTRIAN PLAN (2010)

An NCDOT-sponsored Comprehensive Pedestrian Master Plan was completed for the Town of Waynesville in 2010. The Plan focused on enhancing the pedestrian-friendliness of Waynesville and affording pedestrian connectivity between the Town's destinations such as parks, the CBD, neighborhoods, and schools. Waynesville currently has a well-connected sidewalk network in the CBD and also has one of Haywood County's only greenways, the Richland Creek Greenway that connects Vance Street Park to the Waynesville Recreation Center in the northern part of the Town. The recommendations center around three areas: programs for developing a more pedestrian-friendly community; policies such as design guidelines and ordinances to insure that pedestrian facilities are constructed with new and redevelopment as well as with other roadway projects; and facilities, which specifies new expansions and connections of facilities to enhance the overall walkability in the Town. Specific recommendations for facilitates are as follows:

### Greenways

- ★ Extend the greenway system along Richland Creek and Raccoon Creek as indicated in Figure 3.1 of the report;
- ★ Acquire ownership interest in properties, especially those within floodways, along corridors designated for greenway expansion as shown in Figure 3.1;
- ★ Post highly visible signage along the greenway and surrounding roads to inform residents and visitors of greenway access points; and

- ★ Provide for more distinguished wayfinding signage along the greenway system.

### Sidewalks

- ★ Improve existing sidewalks by removing obstructions, repairing damage, and providing wheel chair ramps at intersections throughout the town;
- ★ Work with NCDOT on new projects to insure the provision of pedestrian facilities as recommended by this plan, including on Howell Mill Road, Plott Creek Road, South Main Street and all bridge replacement projects;
- ★ Provide for pedestrian facilities in corridor plans in accordance with the standards of this plan;
- ★ Complete sidewalk construction, especially the missing links, along the "backbone" of the pedestrian system: Main Street (US Business 23) and Russ Avenue / Pigeon Street (US 276) for their entire length within the town's planning jurisdiction;
- ★ Complete the sidewalk systems, especially the missing links, within the two primary nodes of the pedestrian system: the CBD and downtown Hazelwood;
- ★ Complete missing links within existing neighborhood sidewalk systems;
- ★ Develop new sidewalks along residential collector streets and thoroughfares linking neighborhoods with the existing pedestrian transportation system and
- ★ Develop new linkages between the greenway system and the existing sidewalk system.

## Crosswalk and Pedestrian Crossings

- ★ Provide marked crosswalks at all “sidewalk connector” road crossings as shown on the Greenway Plan, Figure 1.3;
- ★ Extend sidewalks across the railroad tracks at all railroad crossings where sidewalks are present;
- ★ Provide well-marked and signed pedestrian crossings and pedestrian refuge islands, where appropriate, in the vicinity of Hazelwood Elementary School, Junaluska Elementary School, Waynesville Middle School and Central Elementary School; and
- ★ Provide pedestrian crossing pavement marking, signage and other facilities at all pedestrian crossings along and across major and minor thoroughfares such as Russ Avenue at Frazier Street, Barber Boulevard, Dellwood Road/Howell Mill Road, Waynesville Plaza driveway, and Walnut Street and along South Main Street at Brown Avenue, Riverbend Street, Virginia Street/Country Club Drive, Legion Drive, Hazelwood Avenue, and Pigeon Street (US 276).

Projects were broken into priorities contingent on funding and timing.

## HAYWOOD COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (2007)

A study was completed in 2007 that evaluated parks conditions and needs for Haywood County and the towns of Waynesville, Clyde, Canton, and Maggie Valley. A priority in that plan was to expand upon greenways; at the time of the study, the only developed greenway was the 3.5

mile long Richland Creek Greenway in Waynesville, with another 3.5 mile segment planned. The study recommended the development of a comprehensive greenway plan and also identified several potential new greenways within the County in Figure 5.1. Additionally, the study recommended developing a system of bike trails, bike lanes, and shared roadways to better connect parks to residences and schools, and that any future roadway construction project within the County accommodate facilities for bicycles and pedestrians. Finally, it was recommended that bike racks be installed at all public facilities within the County.

## HAYWOOD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE BICYCLE PLAN (2011)

Haywood County (2011) – The Haywood County Comprehensive Bicycle Plan was completed in late 2011 and focuses on the five “E’s” of a comprehensive bicycle plan: Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation. To those typical “E’s” the Haywood County added Environment and Economics: both of these metrics are consistent with the goals and intent of the Visioning process that is underway for the Region. Additionally, the Plan reiterates the importance of NCDOT’s Complete Streets Guidelines in providing facilities for bicyclists. Chapter 5 outlines specific corridor and intersection recommendations, and the following chapters highlight education, enforcement, and environment and economic consideration and benefits. The plan builds on and supports other efforts in Haywood County such as the CTP, Comprehensive Plan, Waynesville Pedestrian Plan, and Blue Ridge Bike Plan.

## JACKSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2010)

Jackson County CTP – Adopted by NCDOT in April of 2010, the Jackson County CTP outlines needs for the transportation system (motorized and non-motorized) in Jackson County through the year 2035. Though adopted by NCDOT, the draft CTP is not available for review. Recommendations are summarized by mode below:

1. Roadway
2. Public Transportation and Rail
3. Bicycle
4. Pedestrian
  - A. Extend the greenway system along Richland Creek and Raccoon Creek
  - B. Acquire ownership interest in properties, especially those within floodways, along corridors designated for greenway expansion.
  - C. Post highly visible signage along the greenway and surrounding roads to inform residents and visitors of greenway access points.
  - D. Provide for more distinguished wayfinding signage along the greenway system.
  - E. Improve existing sidewalks by removing obstructions, repairing damage, and providing wheel chair ramps at intersections throughout the town.
  - F. Work with NCDOT on new projects to insure the provision of pedestrian

facilities as recommended by this plan, including on Howell Mill Road, Plott Creek Road, South Main Street and all bridge replacement projects.

- G. Provide for pedestrian facilities in corridor plans in accordance with the standards of this plan.
- H. Complete sidewalk construction, especially the missing links, along the “backbone” of the pedestrian system: Main Street (US Business 23) and Russ Avenue / Pigeon Street (US 276) for their entire length within the town’s planning jurisdiction.
- I. Complete the sidewalk systems, especially the missing links, within the two primary nodes of the pedestrian system: the CBD and downtown Hazelwood.
- J. Complete missing links within existing neighborhood sidewalk systems.
- K. Develop new sidewalks along residential collector streets and thoroughfares linking neighborhoods with the existing pedestrian transportation system.
- L. Develop new linkages between the greenway system and the existing sidewalk system.
- M. Provide marked crosswalks at all “sidewalk connector” road crossings.
- N. Extend sidewalks across the railroad tracks at all railroad crossings where sidewalks are present.
- O. Provide well-marked and signed pedestrian crossings and pedestrian

refuge islands, where appropriate, in the vicinity of Hazelwood Elementary School, Junaluska Elementary School, Waynesville Middle School and Central Elementary School.

- P. Provide pedestrian crossing pavement marking, signage and other facilities at all pedestrian crossings along and across major and minor thoroughfares such as Russ Avenue at Frazier Street, Barber Boulevard, Dellwood Road/ Howell Mill Road, Waynesville Plaza driveway, and Walnut Street and along South Main Street at Brown Avenue, Riverbend Street, Virginia Street/ Country Club Drive, Legion Drive, Hazelwood Avenue, and Pigeon Street (US 276).

### **MACON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2011)**

Macon County CTP – Adopted by NCDOT in November of 2011, the Macon County CTP outlines needs for the transportation system (motorized and non-motorized) in Macon County through the year 2035. Recommendations are summarized by mode below:

#### **1. Roadway**

- A. Improve US 23-441 (Georgia Road) from US 64 to Prentiss Bridge Road (SR 1649) to a boulevard by removing the center turn lane and installing a median. Replace some or all of the signals.
- B. Improve US 64 to 12-foot lanes with 4-foot paved shoulders from the US

23-64 bypass of Franklin to Buck Creek Road (SR 1536).

- C. Intersection improvements on US 441 BUS from US 23-441 to Porter Street. Improvements should be made at the intersections with Womak Street, Maple Street and Porter Street-Wayah Street. Implement a roundabout at the Porter Street intersection.
- D. Widen NC 28 to a four-lane divided boulevard with limited control of access from US 23-441 to US 441 BUS.
- E. Improve Buck Creek Road (SR 1538) to 10-foot lanes with a 4 to 6-foot unpaved shoulder from US 64 – NC 28 to US 64.
- F. Widen the existing Depot Street (SR 1729) to three lanes with 14-foot travel lanes from US 441 BUS to Wayah Street (SR 1667). This will require expanding NCDOT right-of-way (ROW) from 60 feet to 80 feet.
- G. Widen Wells Grove Road (SR 1667) to 12-foot lanes with accommodations for bicyclists from Wayah Street (SR 1667) to Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1665). Intersection improvements at Dowdle Mountain Road, Clarks Chapel Road and Wayah Street/Depot Street.
- H. Widen US 19 to 12-foot lanes with a 4-foot paved shoulder. Consideration should also be given to truck climbing lanes as US 19 is a designated truck route.
- I. The section of US 23-441 north of US 64 is a four-lane divided facility

with 12-foot lanes, and the section south of Prentiss Bridge Road (SR 1649) is a five-lane facility with 12-foot lanes. All sections are proposed to be upgraded to an expressway. As development occurs along this corridor every effort should be made to limit access in order to maintain mobility and connectivity.

- J. US 64 from Clay County to West Old Murphy Road (SR 1448), the existing facility is a major thoroughfare and is proposed to be upgraded to a boulevard. From Buck Creek Road (SR 1538) to Jackson County, the existing facility is a major thoroughfare and is proposed to remain as a major thoroughfare with future improvements as needed.
- K. Improve NC 28 to 12-foot lanes with a 4-foot shoulder.
- L. Improve NC 106 to 12-foot lane widths with 4-foot paved shoulders where possible.
- M. Widen Cat Creek Road (SR 1513) to a 10-foot lane width with paved shoulders.
- N. Widen Hicks Road (SR 1545) to a 10-foot lane width with paved shoulders.
- O. Widen Iotla Church Road (SR 1372) to a 10-foot lane width with paved shoulders.
- P. Improve Old Murphy Road (SR 1442) to 12-foot lane widths with 4-foot paved shoulders.

- Q. Extend Siler Road (SR 1660) approx.. 4,000 feet to Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659). The new facility is proposed to have 12-foot lane widths.
- R. Improve the existing section of Siler Road to 12-foot lane widths.
- S. Improve Sloan Road (SR 1175) to 12-foot lane widths and 4-foot shoulders.
- T. Wayah Street (SR 1667) from US 441 BUS to Wells Grove Road (SR 1667) widen to 11-foot lanes.
- U. Womack Street (SR 1156) from US 441 BUS to Old Murphy Road (SR 1442) widen to 10-foot lanes.
- V. Main Street and Palmer Street from Porter Street to Depot Street restripe as 11-foot lanes.
- W. Lakeside Drive (SR 1324) from US 441 BUS to Lake Emory Road (SR 1325) widen to 10-foot lanes.
- X. Lake Emory Road (SR 1325) from US 441 BUS to Lakeside Drive (SR 1324) widen to 10-foot lanes.
- Y. Porter Street from Wayah Street (SR 1667) to Palmer Street widen to 12-foot lanes.
- Z. Depot Street Extension from Depot Street (SR 1729) to US 23-64-441 opposite Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659).
- AA. Belleview Park Road Extension from Belleview Park Road (SR 1703) to Wells Grove Road (SR 1667).

- AB. Wayah Street Extension from Wayah Street (SR 1667) to NC 28 (Highlands Road).
- AC. Wayah Street Extension from NC 28 (Highlands Road) to US 23-441.
- AD. Iotla Street Extension from NC 28-Riverview Street to Lakeside Drive (SR 1324).
- AE. Church Street Extension from Iotla Street (SR 1323) opposite Church Street to US 441 BUS (Main Street).
- AF. Harrison Avenue from Main Street to Palmer Street opposite Windy Gap Rd (SR 1321)/Harrison Avenue.

## 2. Public Transportation and Rail

- A. New bus route between Franklin and Highlands utilizing US 64 - NC 28 and Buck Creek Road (SR 1536).
- B. New bus route between Franklin and the Nantahala community utilizing Wayah Road (SR 1310).
- C. NC 28 and Sanderstown Road (SR 1335)
- D. Park and Ride lot at US 23-441 and Coweeta Church Road (SR 1115)
- E. Park and Ride lot at Wayah Road (SR 1310) and Junaluska Road (SR 1401)
- F. Park and Ride lot at Ellijay Road (SR 1001) and US 64 - NC 28, possibly on the old Cullasaja Elementary School property

## 3. Bicycle

- A. New facility on Siler Road (SR 1660) from Macon Early College to Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659).
- B. Improvements to the following roadways:
- C. US 19 from Cherokee County to Swain County
- D. US 23-441 from Wide Horizon Road (SR 1652) to Siler Road (SR 1660)
- E. US 64 – NC 28 from US 23-441 to Buck Creek Road (SR 1538)
- F. US 64 – NC 28 from Buck Creek Road (SR 1538) to Hicks Road (SR 1545)
- G. US 441 BUS from Lakeside Drive (SR 1324) to Wayah Road (SR 1667) Both Directions
- H. NC 28 from US 441 BUS – Main Street to Swain County
- I. NC 28 from US 441 BUS – Main Street to US 23-441
- J. NC 106 from Georgia to US 64
- K. Addington Branch Road (SR 1122) from Coweeta Church Road (SR 1115) to South Skeenah Road (SR 1127)
- L. Bates Branch Road from Pine Road (SR 1123) to Addington Branch Road (SR 1122)
- M. Bell Road (SR 1121) from Coweeta Church Road (SR 1115) to Pine Road (SR 1123)
- N. Belle Dondle Road (SR 1135) from Middle Skeenah Road to US 23-441
- O. Brown Road (SR 1633) from US 23-441 to Joe Bradley Road (SR 1632)
- P. Cabe Road (SR 1661) from Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659) to Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659) Loop
- Q. Cart Slagle Road (SR 1309) from Wayah Road (SR 1310) to US 64
- R. Cat Creek Road (SR 1513) from US 23-441 to Saunders Road (SR 1516)
- S. Cheney Lane (SR 1543) from Buck Creek Road (SR 1538) to Flat Mountain Road (SR 1544)
- T. Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) from Hickory Knoll Road (SR 1653) to Prentiss Bridge Road (SR 1649)
- U. Coweeta Church Road (SR 1115) from Coweeta Lab Road (SR 1659) to US 23-441
- V. Coweeta Lab Road (SR 1659) from US 23-441 to Ball Creek Road
- W. Depot Street (SR 1729) from US 441 BUS to Wayah Street (SR 1667)
- X. Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659) from Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) to Wells Grove Road (SR 1667)
- Y. Ferguson Road (SR 1507) from Rabbit Creek Road (SR 1504) to Saunders Road (SR 1516)
- Z. Fifth Street from Horse Cover Road (SR 1603) to Highlands School
- AA. Flat Mountain Road (SR 1544) from Cheney Lane (SR 1543) to US 64
- AB. Frazier Road (SR 1656) from Fulcher Road (SR 1655) to Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653)
- AC. Fulcher Road (SR 1655) from Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) to Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) Loop
- AD. Harrison Ave from US 441 BUS to Wind Gap Road (SR 1321)
- AE. Hickory Knoll Road (SR 1653) from Tessentee Road (SR 1636) to Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653)
- AF. Horse Cover Road (SR 1603) from Fith Street to US 64
- AG. Joe Bradley Road (SR 1632) from Perryman Cabe Road (SR 1629) to US 23-441
- AH. John Teague Road from Wide Horizon Drive (SR 1652) to US 64
- AI. Little Ellijay Road (SR 1528) from Walnut Creek Road (SR 1533) to Ellijay Road (SR 1001)
- AJ. Middle Burningtown Road from Olive Hill Road (SR 1387) to Burningtown Road (SR 1372)
- AK. Middle Creek Road (SR 1635) from US 23-441 to Perryman Cabe Road (SR 1629)
- AL. Middle Skeenah Road from Belle Dondle Road (SR 1135) to Addington Branch Road (SR 1122)
- AM. Mullbery (SR 1104) from the Georgia State Line to US 23-441

- AN. Olive Hill Road (SR 1387) from Airport Road (SR 1434) to Middle Burningtown Road
- AO. Onion Mountain Road (SR 1521) from Rabbit Creek Road (SR 1504) to Ellijay Road (SR 1001)
- AP. Pete McCoy Road (SR 1653) from Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) to Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) Loop
- AQ. Pine Road (SR 1123) from Bell Road (SR 1121) to Bates Branch Road
- AR. Prentiss Bridge Road (SR 1649) from Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653) to Wide Horizon Drive (SR 1652)
- AS. River Road (SR 1672) from US 64 – NC 28 to US 64 – NC 28 Loop
- AT. Riverside Road (SR 1644) from Hickory Knoll Road (SR 1653) to US 23-441
- AU. Salder Mountain Road (SR 1372) from Burningtown Road (SR 1372) to Rose Creek Road (SR 1372)
- AV. Siler Road (SR 1660) from US 23-441 to Macon Early College
- AW. Skeenah Road (SR 1128) from Addington Branch Road (SR 1122) to South Skeenah Road (SR 1127)
- AX. Southards Road (SR 1133) from Skeenah Road (SR 1128) to US 64, also known as Alison Creek Road.
- AY. S.R 1629 (Sam Corn Road - Perryman Cabe Road - River Valley

Road) from Georgia to Middle Creek Road (SR 1635)

- AZ. Stamey Mountain Road (SR 1134) from South Skeenah Road (SR 1127) to Belle Dondle Road (SR 1135)
- BA. Tessentee Road (SR 1636) from US 23-441 to end of pavement
- BB. Union School Road (SR 1136) from Middle Skeenah Road to Addington Branch Road (SR 1122)
- BC. W Old Murphy Road (SR 1448) from Southards Road (SR 1133) to Skeenah Road (SR 1128).
- BD. Walnut Creek Road (SR 1533) from Little Ellijay Road (SR 1528) to US 64 – NC 28.
- BE. West Dills Creek Road (SR 1303) from Southards Road (SR 1133) to W Old Murphy Road (SR 1448).
- BF. Windy Ridge Road (SR 1684) from Perryman Cabe Road SR 1629) to Tessentee Rd (SR 1636)

#### Dedicated Facility

- BG. Little Tennessee Greenway - the Little Tennessee Greenway runs from Suli March at the intersection of Riverview Street (1462) and Arthur Drake Road in the north 4.7 miles to the Cartoogachaye Creek in the south. Currently, the greenway must cross the Little Tennessee River at US 421 BUS. The crossing includes a temporary trail, ramp, and two road crossings. Bridge replacement project B-5125 will address the issues directly related to it, but additional

improvements will be needed from the south end of Morris Trace to the north end of the Old Airport Trail to maintain and improve connectivity and mobility.

#### 4. Pedestrian

##### New Connections:

- A. US 23-441 from Belden Circle (SR 1152) to Wide Horizon Road (SR 1652)
- B. Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659) from Wells Grove Road (SR 1667) to Wiley Brown Road (SR 1662)
- C. Lakeside Drive (SR 1324) from US 441 BUS to Lake Emory Road (SR 1324) and Lake Emory Road from Lakeside Drive to US 441 BUS.
- D. Oak Street from US 64 – NC 28 to First Street
- E. Siler Road (SR 1660) from US 23-441 to Macon Early College
- F. Siler Road (SR 1660) from Macon Early College to Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659)
- G. Watauga Street and Dan Street from Lakeside Drive (SR 1324) to US 421 BUS.
- H. Wells Grove Road (SR 1667) from Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659) to Clarks Chapel Road (SR 1653)
- I. A western loop including West Palmer Street (SR 1442), Old Murphy Road (SR 1442), Sloan Road (SR 1153), Carolina Drive (SR 1463), Roller Mill Road (SR 1154), and Orchard View Drive.

- J. An extension of sidewalks along US 62-NC 28-Main Street in Highlands to the bridge providing access to The Bascom: Center for the Visual Arts.

Improvements to existing facilities:

- E. US 23-441 from US 441 BUS to Belden Circle (SR 1152). This facility is shown on the CTP maps as Needs Improvement, but new sidewalk facilities are recommended on both sides of the road.
- F. US 441 BUS from NC 28 – Highlands Road to Dan Street
- G. US 441 BUS from Womack Street (SR 1156) to US 23-441
- H. Wells Grove Road (SR 1667) from Depot Street (SR 1729) to Dowdle Mountain Road (SR 1659)

Macon County Recreation Master Plan (2005) – Many recommendations of this study focus on the provision of new and enhanced park and community facilities in Macon County. One goal of this study was to “link parks together by a multiuse greenway system.” Recommendations to accomplish that goal included the preparation of a comprehensive greenway master plan for the County, and to seek land acquisition opportunities to preserve greenway corridors. The Greenway Master Plan was scheduled to be initiated in the short term goals, and would build on the success of the Little Tennessee River Greenway, a five mile long multi-use trail running along the Little Tennessee River through Franklin and affording access to several parks and trails.

## SWAIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2012)

- 9. Swain County CTP – Adopted by NCDOT in September of 2012, the Swain County CTP outlines needs for the transportation system (motorized and non-motorized) in Swain County through the year 2035. Recommendations are summarized by mode below:

### A. Roadway

1. Convert the existing US 19/74/ NC 28, a 5 lane undivided cross section, to a four lane divided facility with bicycle accommodations.
2. Convert/widen the existing US 441 facility to a four lane divided boulevard.

### J. Public Transportation and Rail

1. Construct a new, paved park and ride lot at the intersection of SR 1168 (Hyatt Creek Road) and US 74 to serve locals and commuters.

### K. Bicycle

1. US 19/US 74 from Macon County to US 74/US 19/NC 28
2. US 74/US 19/NC 28 from NC 28 to 1700 feet east of the Little Tennessee River
3. US 19 from 1700 feet east of the Little Tennessee River to Slope Street (SR 1323)

4. US 19 from 2100 feet west of Shuler Road (SR 1354) to Jackson County
5. East Deep Creek Road (SR 1339) from SR 1336 (Depot Street) to Great Smoky Mountains National Park
6. Fontana Road (SR 1364) from SR 1336 (Depot Street) to end of road
7. Laurel Branch Road (SR 1311) from US 19 to US 19

### L. Pedestrian

1. Off-road facility along US 19 from Spring Street (SR 1159) to Hughes Branch Road (SR 1152)
2. Multi-use path along Bryson Walk and Depot Street, Mitchell Street and along the north and south sides of the Tuckasegee River.

## ★ TRANSPORTATION PLANS (REGIONAL) ★

### REGION A TOOLBOX/MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES INITIATIVE (2009)

The Region A Toolbox was developed in 2009 for the seven-county area of Southwestern North Carolina; the same study area as Opt In. The study proposed a set of best development practices to be used as the communities in the seven county area continued to experience growth pressure; practices that allowed growth to occur without impacting the very beauty that made the area so attractive for growth to occur. Best practices were developed to guide these elements: community planning, site and building design, environmental protection, sustainable transportation, preservation of landscape and culture, conservation of open space, affordable housing, farmland preservation, and economic development.

Five guiding principles were developed as part of the transportation planning element:

- ★ Reinforce and Support the Natural and Built Environments;
- ★ Reinforce Historically and Culturally Significant Elements;
- ★ Create Safe and Attractive Roads;
- ★ Support Multiple Uses and Users of the Roadway; and
- ★ Enhance Quality of Life through Facility Design

To illustrate the tools in the toolbox, five case studies of various areas were undertaken. Two case studies that were completed included transportation recommendations that have been partially accomplished since the adoption of the MLI document: Cashiers and Cowee. The status of the recommended initiatives is summarized below.

**Cashiers** – The Village of Cashiers centers around the crossroads of US 64 and NC 107. In addition to being the center of the community, these two roads move a significant amount of traffic into and out of Cashiers while forming links for regional travel among the communities of Highlands, Rosman, Sylva, and Walhalla. Due to the mountain geography and lack of regional network alternates, this intersection sees a lot of traffic use, which competes against the goal of creating a walkable area within the Village.

Initiatives recommended during the case study included creating alternate network around the Crossroads to allow for a diffusion of traffic to facilities other than through the central intersection. Roundabouts were proposed to tie the four quadrant network together to create a set of alternate routes, and a character change on US 64 and NC 107 inside the roundabouts to more of a Village context roadway was recommended to reinforce the contrast to the rural areas on these roads. In addition, plans were developed to extend the pathway network that had been started throughout the Village. The Village of Cashiers constructed Frank Allan Road in the southwest quadrant

of the intersection to fulfill one of the four network connectors, and completed a number of the pathway expansion projects as well. In 2011, the Cashiers Village Council revisited the recommended initiatives to understand how to move them forward and if any modifications were necessary due to changes that had occurred in the time since the MLI charrette. Slight modifications to roundabout locations and some additional policy considerations were developed and adopted as part of that revisioning effort.

**Cowee Valley** – The goal of the Cowee Valley case study was to balance the historic rural character of the area but permit enough development to support needed community services. Rich in history, the Cowee Valley is home to the Cowee Mound and is bisected by the Little Tennessee River. Served by NC 28, a two lane rural highway which connects the community of Franklin to the Cowee Valley and north to US 74, the Cowee Valley is a visually stunning area with the mountains as a backdrop. Transportation recommendations included designation of NC 28 as a State and National Scenic Byway; increasing pedestrian and bicycle accessibility within the Valley to serve the settlement as well as the Cowee Mound and other historic sites; and creating community gateways. As of 2012, NC 28 had been designated as a State Scenic Byway.

### BLUE RIDGE BIKE PLAN (2013)

Land of Sky Regional Council and the Southwestern RPO have teamed to develop a Regional Bicycle Plan study to be

completed by June 2013. The study focuses on regional bicycle facilities for seven counties (Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Madison, Swain and Transylvania) in Western North Carolina, focusing on the development of a bicycle system comprised of on- and off-road facilities to encourage both recreational and commuting bicycle use in the region. Initially, priority corridors were established through a community input process; the priority corridors identified are as follows:

- ★ Henderson County - NC 280 from Brickyard to NC 191
- ★ Swain County - US 19 (Cherokee) to Blue Ridge Parkway
- ★ Jackson County - Sylva to Cherokee to Whittier
- ★ Haywood County - US 19/23 Wiggins Rd Candler -- N. Main St Waynesville
- ★ Swain County - US 19 from Bryson City to Andrews or Murphy (greenway or separated corridor)
- ★ Jackson County - NC 107 from Sylva to Western Carolina University (unimproved sections)
- ★ Jackson County - Cullowhee Mtn. Rd to Tilley Creek Rd to Highlands Rd to Ellijay Rd to Cullowhee Mountain Rd
- ★ Jackson County - SR 1002 (Old NC 107) from south of Sylva to Western Carolina University

As of April 2013, recommendations were available for Haywood, Jackson and Swain counties and included proposals to add bike

lanes, wide shoulders, and climbing routes within the Opt In study area.

## **CORRIDOR K DOCUMENTS**

The project known as Corridor K, a segment of the Appalachian Development Highway System, aims to connect a geographically isolated region with other areas of the state, stimulating the local economy. The proposed corridor stretches from Asheville, North Carolina west to Chattanooga, Tennessee and was divided into four segments for design purposes. Segment D between Almond and Stecoah has been completed, and Segment A between Robbinsville and Andrews remains under consideration. The project comprising segments B and C, referred to as TIP Project A-0009 and which remains under review, stretches from US 129 in Robbinsville to NC 28 in Stecoah, in Graham County. As reflected in the Cherokee County CTP, the project is currently on hold pending the outcome of the Southwestern North Carolina Regional Vision Study.

### **Corridor K/TIP Project A-0009 EIS**

An EIS was completed in 1984 and a supplemental EIS was drafted in 2008. Two alignment alternatives X and Y identified, with the preferred alternative, YX being a combination of the two. Alternative YX follows the alternative Y alignment from US 129 to NC 143 and the Alternative X alignment from NC 143 to NC 28. An environmental impact statement was prepared to document the potential impacts of constructing segments B and C of the Corridor K alignment.

Total project cost for the preferred alternative was estimated in the range of \$383 million.

The need and purpose for the project as identified in the EIS are as follows:

- ★ Improve economic development of Graham County;
- ★ Reduce geographic isolation of the population in Graham County;
- ★ Improve the safety of the traveling public in Graham County due to the majority of the roadway network consisting of two lane roads with no shoulders;
- ★ Improve system linkage to other major facilities in North Carolina and also further the goals of the Appalachian Highway Development System;
- ★ Improve economic and social development in the region;
- ★ Improve traffic capacity to Robbinsville and Graham County; and
- ★ Improve safety by providing a roadway that meets current design standards.

### **Additional Corridor K/Project A-0009 Information**

In 2011, the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution issued an Assessment of the Potential for Interagency Collaboration at the request of the North Carolina Division of FHWA to resolve the current impasse on the Corridor K project. The assessment outlined the following areas of agreement and disagreement among parties with regard to the Corridor K project:

“The assessment identified the following areas of agreement, which are summarized as follows:

- ★ There is a desire by all governmental entities to see the current impasse resolved and an interagency collaborative process to address the barriers.
- ★ This is a good point to take a read on the feasibility of the current plans for the project.
- ★ The project will seriously impact very valuable natural areas which are important to the economy and ecology of the local area.
- ★ NC Route 74 through Nantahala Gorge is a bottleneck with safety and traffic congestion issues, especially during tourist season from March to October.
- ★ Graham and Cherokee counties need economic development. Local officials are mostly supportive of the road, with a few exceptions which are based in differing assumptions about the expectations of economic benefits.

The primary areas of disagreement identified in the assessment include the following points:

- ★ There are different perspectives on whether the recognized environmental impacts are acceptable, particularly given the fact that there are many questions about whether the expectations of economic benefits from the road are realistic and whether other, nontransportation-related, economic benefits are available.
- ★ There are disagreements among the agencies about whether the project is really needed or is driven by the availability of Appalachian Development Highway System funding, whether the stated

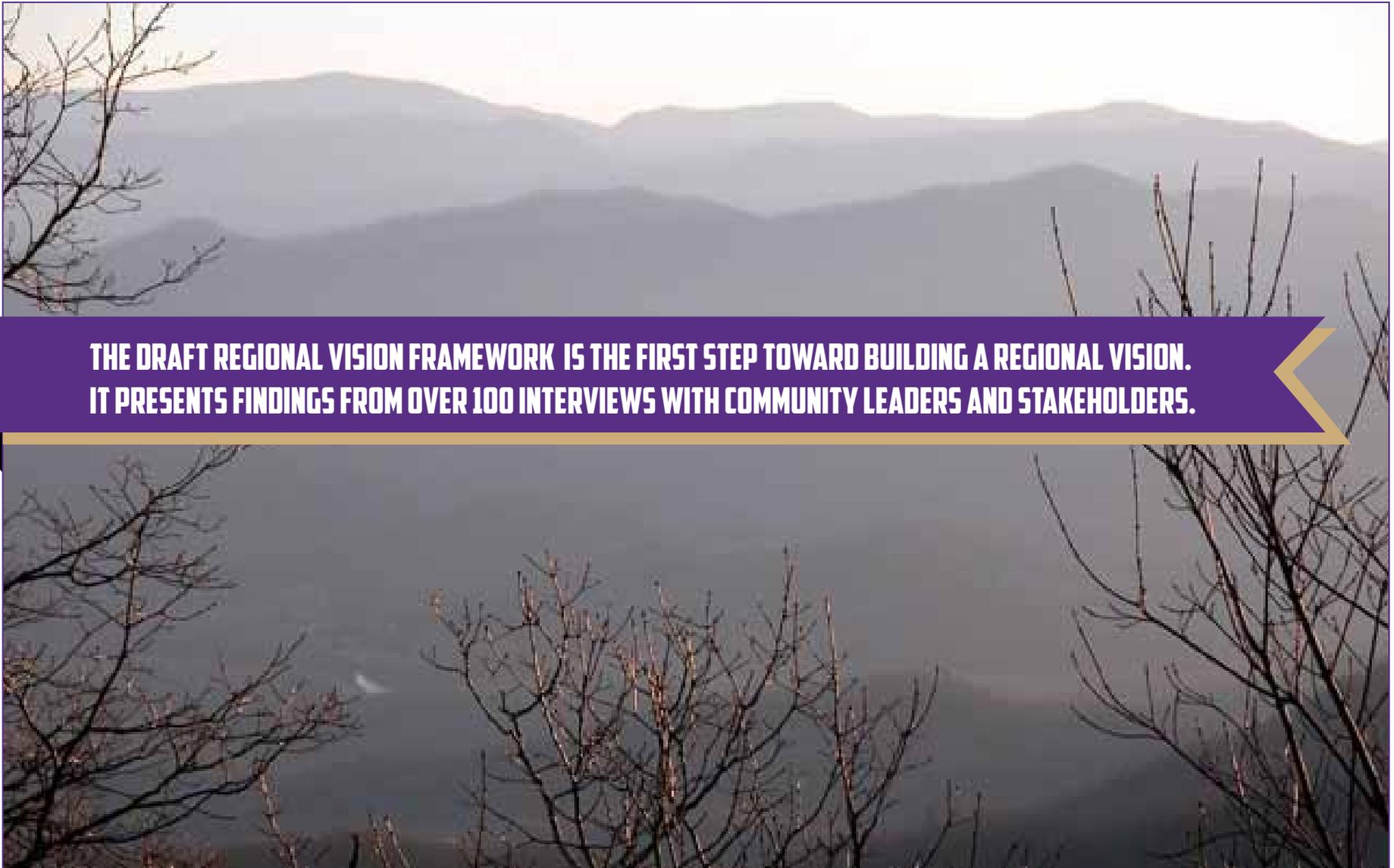
Purpose and Need is still applicable, and whether the current preferred alternative will meet the requirements of the Purpose and Need of the Draft Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement.

- ★ There is disagreement about the feasibility of and plans for mitigating the environmental impacts, especially related to the disposal of acidic rock and acidic rock impacts on streams.
- ★ The feasibility, cost and desirability of the tunnel is a concern.
- ★ There are several disagreements about separating Segment B-C from A, rather than looking at A and B-C together. The disagreements involve the following questions and concerns:
  - Whether Section A will be built at all and if B-C are built, whether there is a forgone conclusion that A will be built;
  - Whether A should be built;
  - The availability of an accurate estimation of the real cumulative effects for all three sections;
  - Whether building Section B-C without Section A will fulfill the Purpose and Need for a connected highway system.
- ★ Some local officials accept the environmental impacts that will occur as section B-C is constructed. Others feel those impacts will damage what they see as their fastest growing business: eco-tourism.”

The Opt-In effort is one of the recommended initiatives from this mediation to assist in resolving the impasse.

Page left intentionally blank.

## VOLUME 2 | OPT-IN REGIONAL VISION: DRAFT REGIONAL VISION FRAMEWORK



**THE DRAFT REGIONAL VISION FRAMEWORK IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD BUILDING A REGIONAL VISION. IT PRESENTS FINDINGS FROM OVER 100 INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS AND STAKEHOLDERS.**

Page left intentionally blank.

## ★ TABLE OF CONTENTS ★

<b>WHAT IS OPT-IN?</b> .....	<b>126</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>127</b>
<b>PILLAR #1: THE PLACE WE ARE GIVEN</b> .....	<b>128</b>
<b>PILLAR #2: THE ECONOMY WE NEED</b> .....	<b>130</b>
<b>PILLAR #3: THE PLACES WE MAKE</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<b>PILLAR #4: THE WAYS WE GET AROUND</b> .....	<b>133</b>
<b>PILLAR #5: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT</b> .....	<b>135</b>
<b>THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE</b> .....	<b>136</b>

## WHAT IS OPT-IN?

Opt-In is a year-long effort to fill in research gaps, identify opportunities, and test alternative strategies to inform decision-making about economic development, transportation planning, and the environment. Opt-In will deliver: a Regional Vision, Comprehensive Plans for Cherokee and Graham Counties and a Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Graham County.

This document is the first step toward the development of the regional vision. Several activities will follow. Those activities and outcomes will ensure that the regional vision will reflect a collaboration of citizens and leaders to clarify goals and identify successful strategies for the future.

Figure 1 (to the right) shows the geographic area of the effort. Figure 2 (on page 4) gives an at-a-glance view of the regional vision activities and outcomes.

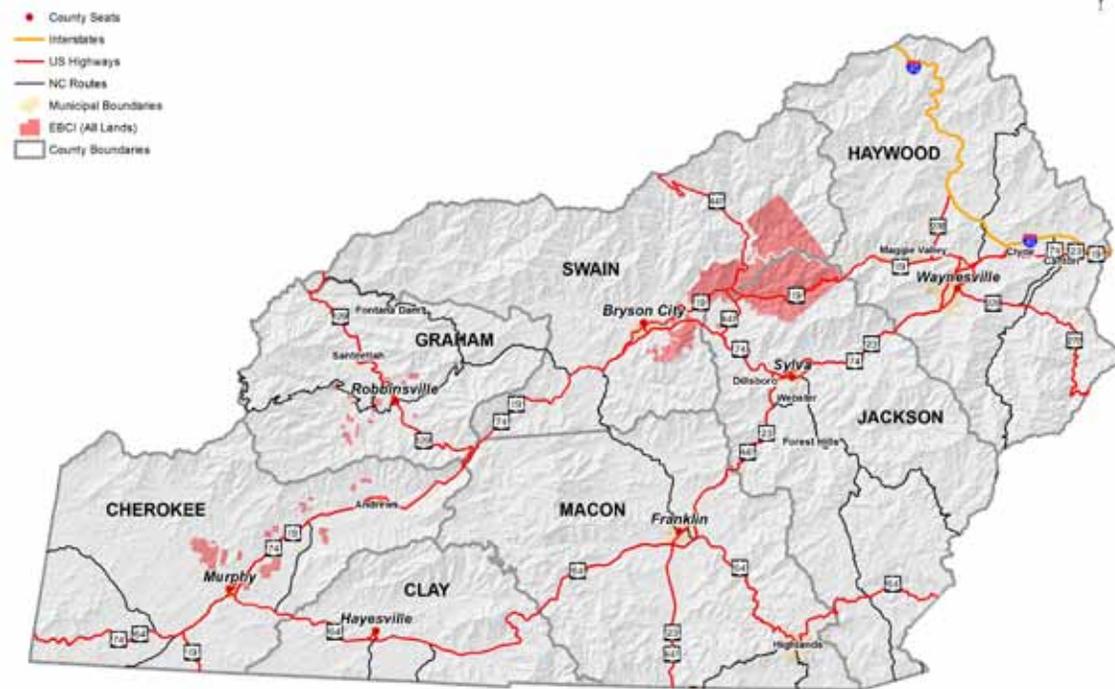
Opt-In is managed by the Southwestern Commission on behalf of the region's seven counties and the 16 municipalities within the counties. A Leadership Council of elected officials, business professionals and non-profit leaders from the region will act as a steering committee.

Funding comes from the Southwestern Commission, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

For more information:

[www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org)

**FIGURE 1: THE OPT-IN SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION**



*The Opt-In region includes the North Carolina counties of Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain, and the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation.*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Draft Regional Vision Framework is to organize ideas, themes, and recommendations suggested by regional leaders and stakeholders into a coherent document. These ideas were collected in over 100 one-on-one and small group interviews conducted in each of the seven counties and the Qualla Boundary.

Individuals and organizations interviewed include, among others: elected and appointed officials, business leaders, downtown businesses, economic development directors, developers, health practitioners and officials, community organizations, not for profit organizations, and advocacy groups.

The Draft Regional Vision Framework will be presented at the Opt-In Community Workshops scheduled from September 23 to October 10. The Workshops are open to the public. An extensive outreach effort is underway to ensure diverse participation.

## FIVE PILLARS

The information is organized into five pillars that represent the basic focus areas of the seven-county regional vision. The five pillars are:

- ★ ***The Place We're Given...*** About the region's exceptional natural resources;
- ★ ***The Economy We Need...*** About economic development and job creation;
- ★ ***The Places We Make...*** About the man-made environment and the development patterns found throughout the region;

★ ***The Ways We Get Around...*** About issues of regional mobility;

★ ***The Quality of Life We Expect...*** About access to education, health care, and the advantages of small town life.

The information for each pillar is organized into four sections:

★ ***What We Know...*** Highlights key points from the Baseline Vision, which are relevant to each pillar. The Baseline Vision provides information on the specific sources of the data presented and is available on line at:

<http://www.optinswnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Baseline-Vision-Web.pdf>.

★ ***What We Heard...*** Lists, often verbatim, key points made by interview participants.

★ ***How: Preliminary Recommendations...*** Suggests preliminary recommendations drawn from suggestions made by interview participants.

★ ***Questions for the regional vision to address...*** Identifies preliminary technical or specialized questions.

## THE WAY WE GET THINGS DONE

The interviews collected a number of comments on how to implement the regional vision. These comments have been grouped in a separate section titled *The Way We Get Things Done*. In the following months, as a Regional Vision Draft is developed this section will be expanded into a full "implementation" pillar.

## A LIVING DOCUMENT

The Draft Regional Vision Framework is a work in progress. It is a living document. Contents will continue to be modified as comments from Community Workshops participants and the results of additional interviews are added. They will continue to evolve in the coming months.

## NEXT STEPS

Following the Community Workshops, the Regional Vision Framework will be used in the development of alternative scenarios for the region. The scenarios and their impacts on the region and on individual counties will be measured and reviewed through additional interviews, small meetings, and community workshops in early 2014.

## VOICES

"There are such tremendous assets in WNC, from the forests to the rivers to the special small towns that we have and the character of the region. My hope is that the vision will capitalize on all those things and build on and use those things as assets – to build jobs around those things, to build infrastructure around those things and to really complement all the wonderful things we have in this region."

*Interview Participant*

**FIGURE 2: THE REGIONAL VISION PROCESS AT-A-GLANCE**

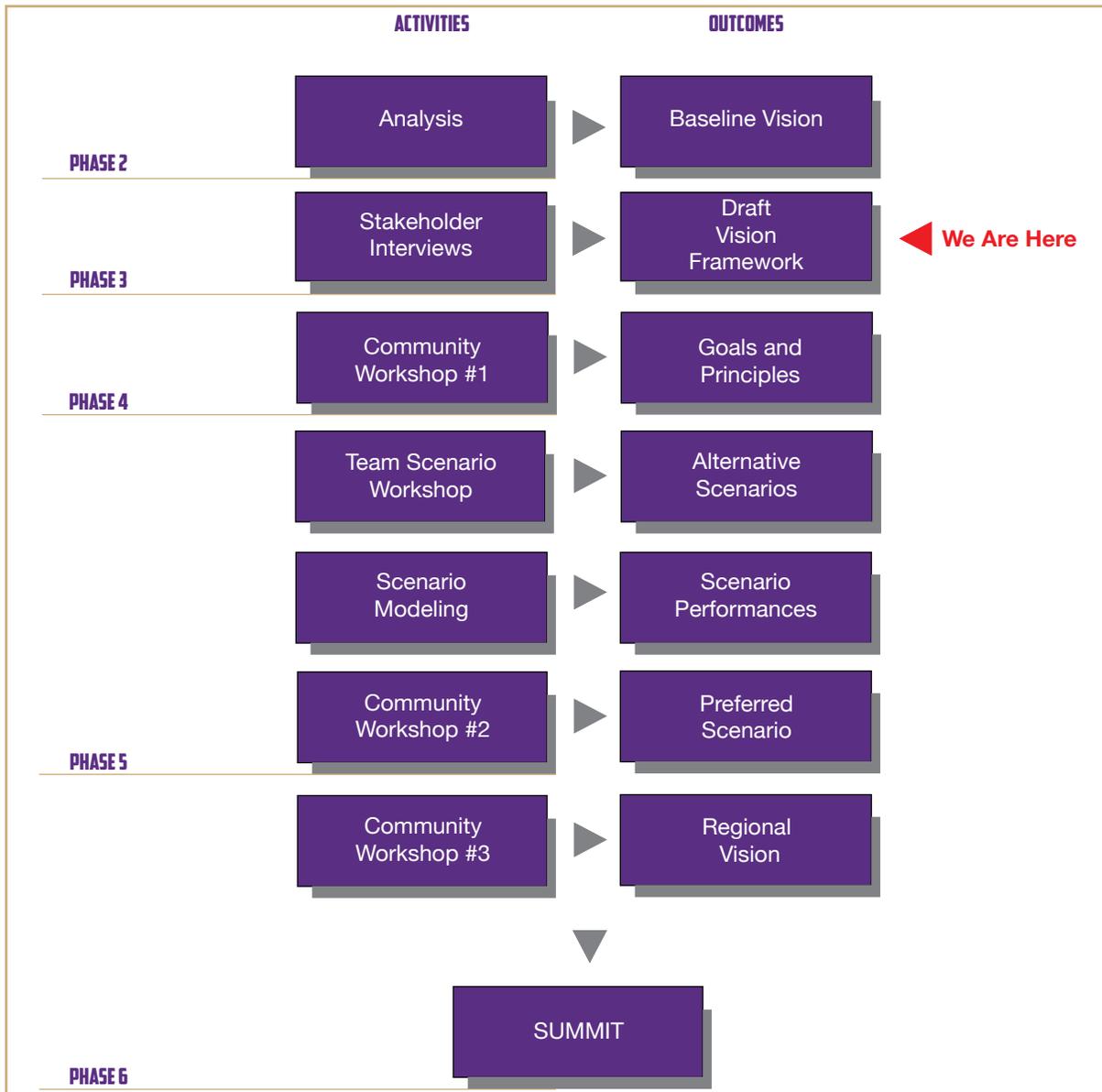


Figure 1 describes activities and outcomes in the process of developing the regional vision.

## PILLAR #1: THE PLACE WE ARE GIVEN

### WHAT WE KNOW

**The region has an abundance of natural resources...** It is home to remarkable geological and water features, significant amounts of forestland, important water resources, and prominent natural heritage areas.

**These resources have been the cradle of the area's unique culture...** The region's settlement patterns, farming practices, personal individualism and independence, religious fervor, distinctive music and speech, and local customs all emerged interwoven and rooted in a landscape of rugged mountains, deep valleys, isolated coves and abundant waters.

**They represent the wealth of this region...** They attract visitors and part-time residents with an unlimited array of outdoor and cultural activities. They have a profound impact on residents' quality of life and help make tourism a key component of the region's economy. Tourism revenues are on the rise in all seven counties with 2011 values ranging from \$11.65 million in Clay County to \$280.50 million in Swain County.

Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce.

**Even though all counties share those assets, the economic impacts vary...** Data shows that in 2011 tourism generated \$643 million in revenues for the region. It also shows, that Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties generated little more than 10% of those revenues (\$69.3 million), despite their abundance of recreational resources.

Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce, *Baseline Vision*, Pages 31 to 40.

## WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ There is a close relationship between the natural beauty of the region and the arts.
- ★ The beauty of the region attracts creative people both as residents and visitors.
- ★ Protecting those natural resources is therefore important to the future prosperity of the arts.
- ★ Arts are a vital component of the region's economy and have the potential of creating destinations within the region that complement outdoor activities and extend visitors' stay.
- ★ Too much federal land means a weak tax base.
- ★ Complacency may be a factor given the amount of federally and state managed lands already protected.
- ★ Natural resources drive the regional economy.
- ★ We need to support our farmers and promote local agriculture.
- ★ We should market the authenticity of the region. We're "the real thing" unlike Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg.
- ★ We should be known as the "Outdoor Mecca" of the south.
- ★ There is a growing interest in Southern Appalachian and Native American Heritage.

- ★ We are the "Central Park" of the urban southeast.
- ★ Our natural area is "the size of Delaware." It's a huge asset that no other place in the eastern US has.
- ★ Region needs to capitalize on assets such as Appalachian Trail, Bartram Trail, Cherokee, Nantahala Outdoor Center, Western Carolina University, John C. Campbell Folk School, Stecoah Arts Center, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team, National Park, Clay County Community Revitalization Organization, forest service lands and small towns.

## HOW: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Identify the appropriate balance between growth and economic development versus open space preservation.
- ★ Recommend regional strategies to protect and enhance those existing assets and to further the conservation of agriculturally, culturally, scenic and environmentally significant properties.
- ★ Recommend tools and techniques to balance future growth and the protection of the natural and cultural resources.
- ★ Strengthen those institutions that support the arts and include the arts in the marketing of the region.
- ★ Identify, evaluate, and address obstacles that prevent Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties to benefit from their natural resources.

- ★ Identify players and resources to develop a coherent marketing strategy for the region's natural and cultural assets.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL VISION TO ADDRESS

- ★ Are natural resources worthy of special consideration and treatment in the visioning and planning of the seven county region?
- ★ How can the vision better align the region's assets with economic growth and development to create better opportunities and more durable growth?
- ★ What are the tools to accomplish that balance?
- ★ What benefits will each county accrue?
- ★ What are acceptable trade-offs?

## VOICES

**"Protect our mountains, protect the natural beauty, protect the water, and diversify our economy to be more balanced."**

*Interview Participant*

## PILLAR #2: THE ECONOMY WE NEED

### WHAT WE KNOW

#### ***The seven-county regional economy is growing slower than the rest of the state...***

Consequently, it accounts for a decreasing share of the state's overall economy. This trend is consistent with more general urban-rural trends across the country.

***The decline in manufacturing is a general trend...*** This trend is being shaped by forces outside the region, and therefore will be difficult to reverse by actions within the region.

***The education and health services sector is important to the region...*** With the region's aging population and the presence of Western Carolina University, this sector should continue to be an anchor of economic activity.

***The rise in leisure and hospitality services is natural...*** These services are common in rural areas that possess attractive natural and cultural resources. They provide an alternative path for economic development in the wake of declining manufacturing activity.

***Data on the economic impacts of natural and cultural resources are limited...*** No county or regional level natural and cultural resource economic data had been compiled.

***Population growth has been strong for a rural area...*** Though lagging the state, the population has grown faster than the national rate. However, population growth is projected to slow substantially in the next five years, with Cherokee and Graham counties

expected to have negative growth. Towns that are projected to experience substantial declines in population include Robbinsville, Hayesville and Andrews.

Source: *Baseline Vision, Pages 48 and 69 to 78.*

### WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ Changing market dynamics and slower economic growth may leave Western North Carolina with a weaker voice at the state level.
- ★ There is no cohesive regional identity.
- ★ Development of a regional identity should be a key priority of the regional vision.
- ★ We need to market as a region.
- ★ There is little understanding within the region of how big an impact our natural resources have on our economy.
- ★ Employees commute into our area not only from other counties, but from other states.
- ★ We need to rely less on the state and cooperate on a regional level.
- ★ The region should have a coordinated marketing effort similar to Advantage West, but at the scale of the seven counties.
- ★ We need to concentrate on what we're good at instead of using the "birdshot" approach.
- ★ We need better infrastructure including: access to natural gas, which would boost economic development throughout the region; expansion of water and sewer

services at the municipal level, and better broadband and cell phone service.

- ★ The Airports are under utilized and should be improved, opening the possibility of commercial passenger air service to the area.
- ★ We need better data so we can make more informed, fact-based decisions.
- ★ We need a better-trained, better-prepared workforce.
- ★ We need natural gas.
- ★ We suffer from brain drain. Jobs remain scarce and young people are leaving.
- ★ We need more amenities so people have a reason to come to Western North Carolina.
- ★ If a junk recycling business wants to move into downtown, then I'm all for it. A job is a job.
- ★ We have to diversify. We can't rely on tourism alone.
- ★ Economic development should focus on advanced manufacturing, entrepreneurship, agribusiness, in addition to tourism.
- ★ We have to develop the creative economy. It's the only sector that can't be commodified and outsourced.
- ★ Preservation, redevelopment, and strengthening small towns are key to economic development.

- ★ Towns should do economic development as opposed to always depending on the counties.

## HOW: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Develop a regional economic development strategy that identifies: the businesses that can thrive in the region; specific growth engines for each county; resources needed to implement it; and specific benefit for each county.
- ★ Recommend governance structure, tools, and resources for marketing the region and diversify its economy, including developing a cohesive regional identity and branding.
- ★ Develop recommendations for job creation including: recommendations for the development of a regional workforce; workforce education and preparation; and support for entrepreneurship and “creative class” businesses, which capitalize on the region’s quality of life.
- ★ Identify the proper role for hi-tech companies and the opportunities in supporting advanced manufacturing.
- ★ Highlight the need to properly protect and manage the natural and cultural resources that provide a foundation for leisure and hospitality, an increasingly important sectors of the regional economy.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL VISION TO ADDRESS

- ★ How do we develop an adaptive set of strategies for aligning jobs and workforce so that desirable high-paying, high skill jobs can be filled?

- ★ What are the economic implications for those areas of the region that are more engaged culturally and economically with North Georgia and East Tennessee than with points east?

### VOICES

“Not many young people stay here because there are no jobs and not enough to do.”

“We’d like to see Cherokee County’s assets utilized, Macon County’s assets utilized, Graham County’s assets utilized so that we’re not all going after the same carrot.”

“We want to base our economies on things that are the right fit for each of our communities. A lot of times we seem to all go after the same thing. That’s not necessarily best.”

“I think every county’s focus is different in terms of economic development, so I see them at the table, asking what role they have that would help the region.”

*Interview Participants*

## PILLAR #3: THE PLACES WE MAKE

### WHAT WE KNOW

**The seven-county region does not have a dominant large city...** It is made-up of a variety of small to mid-size towns and villages located in the region’s gently sloping valleys.

**All municipalities within the region have some form of zoning...** With the exception of Bryson City, Fontana Dam, and Robbinsville.

**No county within the region has zoning...** Some counties have subdivision ordinances, watershed protection laws, noxious use restrictions, and other regulations that serve some of the functions of zoning ordinances.

*Source: Baseline Vision, Pages 41 to 43.*

**Land consumption has been substantial...** In the 30 years between 1976 and 2006 the number of acres converted from natural/ rural land to developed land in the region increased over 500%, from 11,188 acres in 1976 to 68,505 in 2006. Conversion took place at a daily rate of over five acres.

*Source: Mapping Historical Development Patterns and Forecasting Urban Growth in Western North Carolina 1976-2030,” Center for Applied GIScience, UNC Charlotte, in 2010. Baseline Vision, Pages 13 to 18.*

**Land availability is constrained...** When the land characteristics of Southwestern North Carolina are taken into consideration, nearly 70% of the region’s total lands (a considerable amount when compared to other areas in the eastern US) present various degrees of development challenges.

*Source: Baseline Vision, Page 12.*

## WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ Growth is likely to occur and the region needs to implement steps to maintain its character.
- ★ Growth is expected and should be managed to keep the small mountain character of the towns in the region.
- ★ We have the advantage of offering the quiet side of the Smokies. We're very different from Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. We should take advantage of that difference.
- ★ The proposed casino in Murphy will have a major impact on the region's economy and mobility.
- ★ We need to strengthen and improve our downtowns so we can capture the "pass through" tourists.
- ★ We need to re-use our downtown buildings by developing residential space in the upper floors and targeting businesses that make a working downtown.
- ★ From a development standpoint the lack of regulations is a negative trend. It does not create a level investment playing field.
- ★ Lack of contiguous EBCI lands in Snowbird is a challenge.
- ★ We don't need all the "crap" that every other town in the country has.
- ★ We need more chain restaurants and big stores.
- ★ Lake Santeetlah needs water and sewer capacity, broadband access, and easier access to healthcare.

- ★ We need better hospitality infrastructure.

## HOW: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Present a clear argument linking growth management, regulations, and the preservation of natural resources with direct economic benefits for each county.
- ★ Recommend steps to accommodate future growth in ways that make the best use of the available land resources.
- ★ Provide applicable examples of communities and regions that have successfully grown while protecting their natural resources.
- ★ Maintain the village character of many of the area towns.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL VISION TO ADDRESS

- ★ How can the region accommodate desirable growth while maintaining and enhancing the qualities which makes it desirable in the first place?
- ★ What is the appropriate balance between land uses that serve residents and those that serve visitors?
- ★ Is there an appropriate and acceptable level of regulations?
- ★ Should steep-slope regulations be on the table and why?
- ★ What is an acceptable balance between growth and economic development and open space preservation?
- ★ How desirable is it for the region to continue its current development patterns in the future?

- ★ Are there acceptable trade-offs?

## VOICES

**"Growth is great, but make sure it keeps the small mountain town character that is family friendly."**

**"The new casino by the EBCI is an opportunity. It should start a discussion on growth management. It will only be realized if the town and county proactively take advantage of that opportunity."**

**"A lot of young people and retirees are looking for downtown or slightly more dense nodal areas where they can walk, live, eat and play all within a central area. And none of these things are dependent upon a large road."**

*Interview Participants*

## PILLAR #4: THE WAYS WE GET AROUND

### WHAT WE KNOW

**The region network of regional and secondary roadways has grown...** The region has seen a growth of primary routes from 735 miles in 1976 to 832 miles in 2006; a net increase of almost 100 additional roadway miles in 30 years. Likewise, the secondary road system has grown from 2,436 miles to 2,567 miles during the same 30-year period.

**Regional primary and secondary roadways have also been improved...** Primary roads have been either widened to multilane, higher speed facilities or passing lanes were added to lower travel times. Meanwhile, lanes were widened and shoulders have been added to some secondary roads to enhance safety.

**Within towns and villages there has been a push to create more of a “main street”...** The recognition of the importance of walking and bicycling as modes of transport within population centers is reflected in the character of the roadways (sidewalks and street furnishings) and the presence of greenways and trails to connect parks, schools, and neighborhoods.

**Traffic volumes in the region have stabilized or in some cases dropped...** While there has been a growth in roadway network, overall traffic volumes have shown growth in the time period up to the early-mid 2000's, then have stabilized or in some cases dropped. This trend is consistent with national trends of traffic volumes, demonstrating that people are actually driving less, mostly due to the costs

associated with operating a motor vehicle and economic conditions.

*Baseline Vision, Pages 19 to 30.*

### WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ We must balance the need to protect “the goose that laid the golden egg” (our natural environment) with the need for better road access.
- ★ We need to maintain our existing roads, protect the vistas, and offer more roadside amenities.
- ★ Options for improvements in Corridor K presents both pros and cons. The Corridor could help in marketing the region and to breakdown the boundaries that exist within the region. There are strong environmental concerns, however, and one should be careful to protect the natural resources of the area.
- ★ There has been little discussion about the “kind” of road Corridor K could be.
- ★ The upkeep of existing roads is important with an emphasis on maintaining vistas, view sheds, and tourist amenities such as picnic tables.
- ★ Better infrastructure is needed to handle volume from increased tourism.
- ★ Base road improvements on actual traffic data.
- ★ Opportunities can be created with a connection to East Tennessee.

- ★ Local farmers need better access to larger markets like Asheville, Atlanta, and Chatanooga.
- ★ Need quicker access to health care.
- ★ It’s hard to organize tours and fairs with limited road connectivity.
- ★ The region’s airports need to be improved.
- ★ The railroad is an asset that shouldn’t be overlooked.
- ★ Travel by automobile is going to be the primary means of getting around for the foreseeable future.
- ★ Build the four-lane highway.
- ★ If you look at the regional “worksheds” – the ways in which workers commute across county boundaries – you can see how dependent economies are on reliable transportation options.

### HOW: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Place transportation investments, including Corridor K, but not exclusively, in the context of the region as a whole.
- ★ Establish what the goal for transportation in the region are: Are they to serve industry, to serve tourism, to improve access to remote areas of the region, to provide reasonable access to goods and services, other?
- ★ Recommend viable transportation alternatives and spell out the environmental, mobility, and economic benefits of those alternatives.

- ★ Include in the deliberations improved connectivity with the larger region and better access to markets in Tennessee, Western North Carolina, and Georgia.
- ★ Give residents clear and objective criteria to make an informed decision.

### QUESTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL VISION TO ADDRESS

- ★ How do we take into account changing trends in car travel when we're planning transportation infrastructure 20 years in the future?
- ★ How will changes in the transportation infrastructure affect where in the region people will choose to live and where businesses will choose to locate?
- ★ What are the options for decreasing travel times between key destinations in the region?
- ★ What is the land use vision for this region, and what transportation network best serves that regional vision?
- ★ Is there a perception that goods and services are too far away from where people live in this region? How can that be remedied?
- ★ What are the options for decreasing travel times between key destinations in the region?
- ★ How important is it to have a choice of travel modes within this region?
- ★ At what point does the region become "connected enough" to the rest of North Carolina and the Southeast to overcome the economic disadvantage of its isolation?

### VOICES

"I am completely opposed to building roads to nowhere for which there is no perceived cost-benefit analysis."

"Too many times in the past I feel like we have just built the roads without much thought about the surrounding infrastructure and the effects on communities. I think it would be a whole new, nice approach to go about it the exact opposite way – to think about the vision we have about where we want to go and let the road take us there."

We need this (Corridor K construction). We have to have this for our children's and grandchildren's future."

The 4-lane may be the best solution, but I don't think we need to go into this study and say the 4-lane is the only option."

"If you made me choose between getting a highway and getting natural gas, I'd choose natural gas."

"There is an economic need for this Corridor. We need transportation improvements that will enhance this economic stability."

"(Corridor K) is a crucial link to both sustaining existing businesses and to attracting new business opportunities."

*Interview Participants*

## PILLAR #5: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT

### WHAT WE KNOW

**The seven-county region has relatively low incomes, which is consistent with broader trends for rural areas...** The problem of low incomes is mitigated by lower housing costs, but exacerbated by the shift in employment from manufacturing to tourism.

**Regional unemployment has been consistently higher than state and national levels...** The one exception is after the 2001 recession when regional unemployment dipped below state and national levels.

**Population growth has been strong for a rural area...** Though lagging the state, the population has grown faster than the national rate. However, population growth is projected to slow substantially in the next five years, with Cherokee and Graham counties expected to have negative growth.

**Education attainment in the seven-county region lags well behind the rest of the state...** Standardized test scores indicate that low attainment is not due to low performance of students and schools; rather, it is due to the common problem of little opportunity leading people to either forsake education or not to stay in the area after completing a degree.

**The region is overwhelmingly racially homogenous with about 88% being white...** Swain County is an outlier with about a third of the population being minority and a quarter being American Indian.

**The region's residents are older and aging...** The median age is 45 years old, which is nearly 8 years older than the state of North Carolina. This follows a broader trend in rural areas, which is exacerbated by the region's relatively high retiree and second home population.

Source: *Baseline Vision*, Pages 48 and 69 to 78.

### WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ Housing is an important need that the Graham County Comprehensive Plan must address.
- ★ We need policies to protect our small mountain town character.
- ★ A lot of younger folks want to farm but can't afford the land.
- ★ Reliable access to quality health care is a challenge across all demographic segments.
- ★ Health issues are big in the western-most counties. It is difficult for rural hospitals to succeed.
- ★ There is a health crisis in Graham County that impacts the county's ability to attract retirees and that leads to a population loss, as older residents relocate with family in other parts of the region and outside the state.
- ★ An aging population is going to require more services – and, therefore, more outlays from county and town budgets.
- ★ The area is not retirement friendly: lack of urgent care facilities, limited public transportation options, and limited social infrastructure.

- ★ No hospital in Graham County. The hospital in Andrews is closed and there is a hospital in Murphy, the one in Bryson City has no surgeon. Most people travel to Sylva for emergency care over one hour away.
- ★ The Talullah Clinic in Robbinsville offers limited services but no longer offers emergency services. Its services are provided to a regional population.
- ★ There is an increased need for mental and dental services, the former resulting from an increase in substance abuse.
- ★ The remoteness of Graham County does not attract qualified physicians.
- ★ Lack of amenities and things to do in Graham County makes it hard to attract needed physicians, who must satisfy their spouses' and families' expectations as well as their own career needs.

### HOW: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Focus on job creation.
- ★ Expand access to higher education and community colleges to academically qualified high school graduates.
- ★ Engage businesses and education leaders to better align curricula and job availability in the region.
- ★ Address immediate workforce training and retraining needs and support and promote workforce training and retraining educational opportunities.
- ★ Address the health issues that affect the most rural areas of the region. Include

reduced travel time to emergency care destinations throughout the region among the transportation priorities.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL VISION TO ADDRESS

- ★ How can economic development, job creation, transportation and education goals and recommendations be integrated to serve the needs of the most rural areas of the region?
- ★ What quality of life strategies would benefit the region the most?
- ★ What do we need to know to better understand the potential impacts of an aging population, of immigration, and of public health concerns like obesity and lifestyle-related chronic disease?

## VOICES

**“We should market the authenticity of the region”**

**“Increased accessibility to medical facilities is badly needed in Graham County, as a lot of our patients have to be air-lifted to the nearest hospitals due to the remoteness and 2-lane roads.”**

*Interview Participant*

## THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE

This section lists comments related to how to implement the regional vision.

### WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ We lack a common vision, an agreement on our assets, and we don't understand our customers well enough.
- ★ We suffer from lack of long-range planning.
- ★ We sell our selves short, undersell ourselves, and have a history of just letting things happen to us.
- ★ The regional vision must include a plan for job creation and recommend ways for the region to work together. It should also point out to the role natural resources can have on the region future prosperity.
- ★ Youth need to feel like they can make a difference and not be ignored.
- ★ Leadership is too fractured. They're working on political and personal agendas instead of what's best for the region.
- ★ We need better-trained leaders.
- ★ We have to have regional co-operation.
- ★ We need a nonpolitical regional entity to bring us together as a region.
- ★ There are sub-sets of smaller regions within the larger region.
- ★ We need to convene the towns.
- ★ The region also includes areas in other states such as north Georgia

- ★ The Southwest Commission is vital to organizing the region.
- ★ The EBCI is a real economic force in the region and wants to make strong partnerships with neighboring towns and counties.
- ★ Counties, towns, agencies, business leaders, non-profits need to convene more regularly.
- ★ We have to reach out to those who normally don't show up at the table.
- ★ We need common-sense rules.
- ★ We need policies in place to protect our natural assets and quality of life.
- ★ We don't need zoning and we need to avoid too many regulations.
- ★ We should look outside the region to what's working and use those examples as models.

# VOLUME 2 | OPT-IN REGIONAL VISION : DRAFT REGIONAL VISION – WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS



**THE OPT-IN DRAFT REGIONAL VISION IS A COMPENDIUM OF THE IDEAS COLLECTED AT THE FIRST ROUND OF COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS. IT PRESENTS WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS IN THE PARTICIPANTS' OWN WORDS.**

Page left intentionally blank.

## ★ TABLE OF CONTENTS ★

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>141</b>
Report Structure .....	141
What is Opt-In? .....	142
<b>SECTION 1 – GOALS AND PRINCIPLES</b> .....	<b>145</b>
<b>SECTION 2 – THE FIVE PILLARS</b> .....	<b>147</b>
Pillar #1: The Place We’re Given .....	148
Related Ideas .....	149
Pillar #2: The Economy We Need .....	156
Related Ideas .....	157
Pillar #3: The Places We Make .....	173
Related Ideas .....	174
Pillar #4: The Ways We Get Around .....	181
Related Ideas .....	182
Pillar #5: The Quality Of Life We Expect .....	192
Related Ideas .....	193
<b>SECTION 3 – PILLAR #6: THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE</b> .....	<b>201</b>
<b>SECTION 4 – GENERAL COMMENTS</b> .....	<b>203</b>



## ★ INTRODUCTION ★

The *Opt-In Draft Regional Vision* is the third regional vision report. It is based on the analysis of over 1,000 distinct comments made by participants in the eight Community Workshops conducted in the region from September 23 to October 10. It comes after the *Baseline Vision*, released in July, which summarizes the result of data collection, and the *Regional Vision Framework* released in September, which summarizes the results of one-on-one and group interviews.

The *Opt-In Draft Regional Vision* presents the first snapshot of what the regional community wants in the form of goals and principles. Following the Community Workshops, all ideas were catalogued and posted on the Opt-In website. All ideas were tagged with an individual sequential number. They were then sorted into five topic areas, the Pillars, and sorted again within each Pillar according to major themes. The major themes were then used to develop provisional goals and principles.

The *Draft Regional Vision* will be used to formulate plausible alternative scenarios and the indicators to measure their impacts. In the course of the next few months it will undergo changes: duplications and redundancies will be eliminated; major themes will be further developed; and technical findings and the results of scenarios modeling will be integrated. Finally, the public will have an opportunity to weigh in again in the second round of Community Workshops scheduled for February 2014.

### REPORT STRUCTURE

Following this introduction, the report is divided in the following sections:

**Section 1 – Goals and Principles** – Includes preliminary goals and principles for each of the five Pillars.

**Section 2 – The Five Pillars** – Provides an overview of the comments made by workshop participants and lists all their ideas and comments for each Pillar.

**Section 3 – Pillar #6: The Way We Get Things Done** – Introduces preliminary ideas about how the regional vision can be implemented.

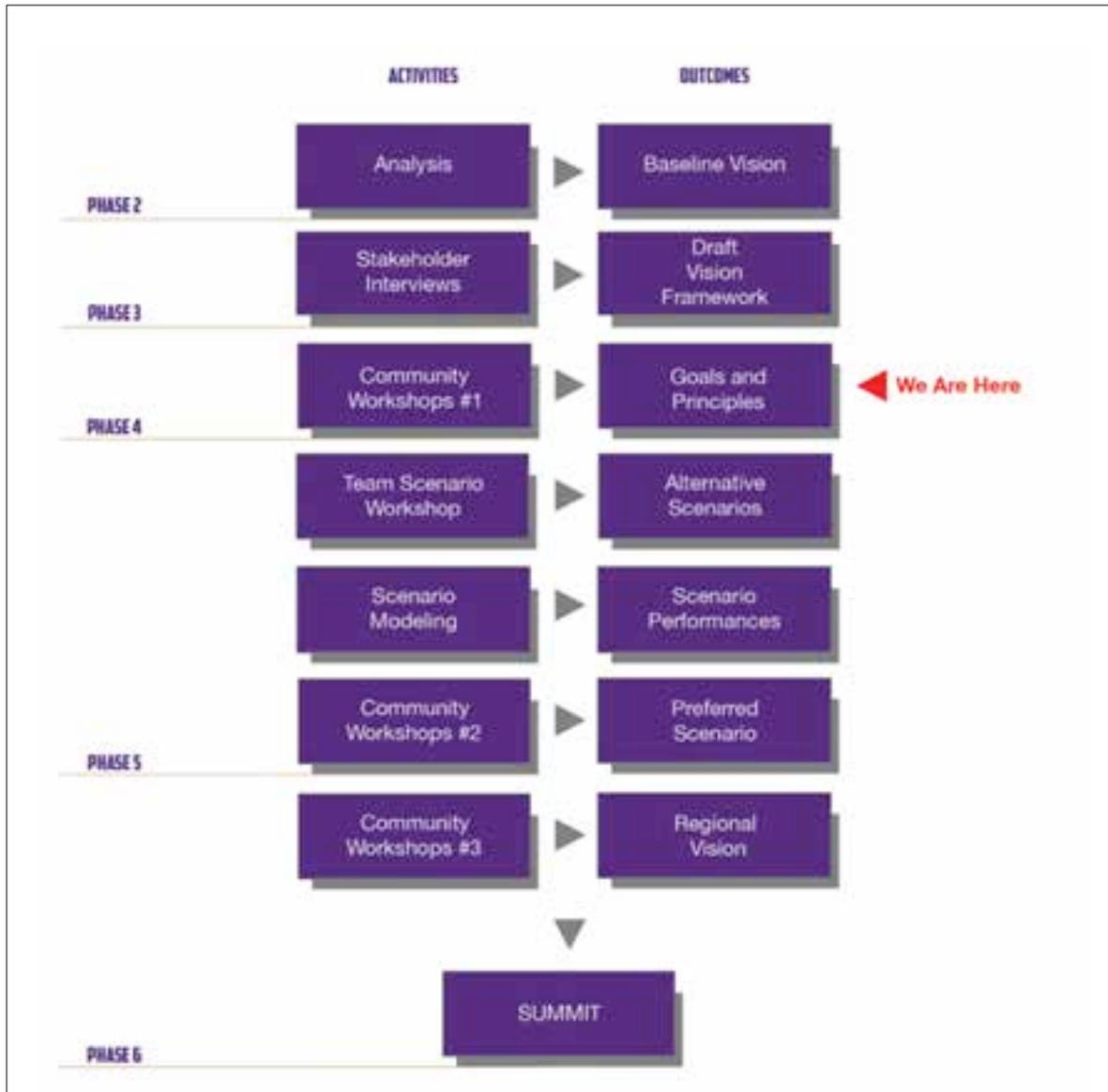
**Section 4 – General Comments** – Presents comments made by participants about the information presented at the workshops, about government, property rights and leadership, and about the process itself.

A timeline of tasks and outcomes and a description of the Opt-In program are included in the following pages. For more information and updates on the Opt-In process visit the website: [www.optinswnc.org](http://www.optinswnc.org)

The reader should note that the participants' ideas listed under the heading "Related Ideas" are transcribed verbatim from the workshop forms. Minor punctuation and capitalization edits were made for consistency.

Finally, all photographs through this report show the people and activities of the first round of Opt-In Community Workshops.

## THE REGIONAL VISION PROCESS AT-A-GLANCE



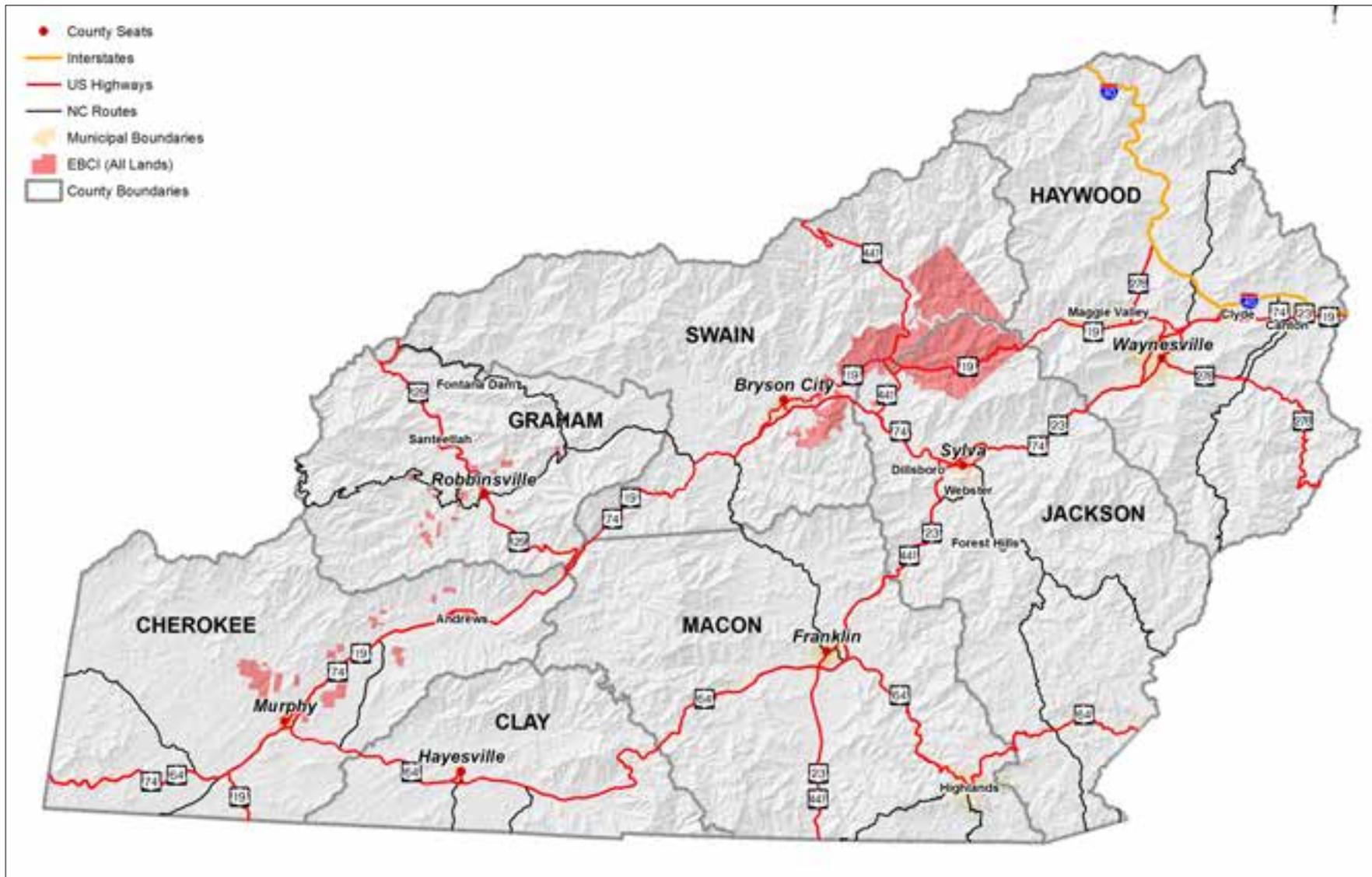
## WHAT IS OPT-IN?

Opt-In is a year-long effort to fill in research gaps, identify opportunities, and test alternative strategies to inform decision-making about economic development, transportation planning, and the environment. Opt-In will deliver: a Regional Vision, Comprehensive Plans for Cherokee and Graham Counties and a Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Graham County.

This document is the first step toward the development of the regional vision. Several activities will follow. Those activities and outcomes will ensure that the regional vision will reflect a collaboration of citizens and leaders to clarify goals and identify successful strategies for the future.

The Southwestern Commission on behalf of the region's seven counties and the 16 municipalities within the counties manages Opt-In. A Leadership Council of elected officials, business professionals and non-profit leaders from the region acts as a steering committee. Funding comes from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and is administered through the Southwestern Commission.

## THE OPT-IN SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION



The Opt-In region includes the North Carolina Counties of Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain, and the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians.



## ★ SECTION 1 – GOALS AND PRINCIPLES ★

The following goals and principles were developed using major themes from the ideas collected at the Community Workshops. Note that in some cases there is more than one goal per Pillar to better reflect the totality of ideas collected.

Goals express a desired outcome presented in simple terms. They are the broadest statement of what the region wants to accomplish. They describe how the community can change.

Principles express the intent of the community. They do not say what needs to be done but how to approach relevant aspects of the vision, consistent with the community's ideas and values.

### **PILLAR #1: THE PLACE WE'RE GIVEN**

#### **Provisional Goal**

The region preserves and protects its natural resources and encourages land stewardship and outdoors oriented businesses while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life it currently enjoys.

#### **Principles**

Development should preserve important environmentally sensitive and scenic lands.

Development should be compatible with and respect the quality of life the region already enjoys.

### **PILLAR #2: THE ECONOMY WE NEED**

#### **Provisional Goals**

**Economic Development** – The region prospers with a diversified economy that supports small businesses, farming, entrepreneurship, and the wise use of its natural resources.

**Jobs** – The region's workforce is able to choose from a variety of well-paying jobs that match the population's skills and are attractive to young people.

**Identity and Marketing** – A comprehensive publicity and marketing campaign highlights the region's assets, attracts new and diverse businesses, and connects visitors to local amenities.

**Infrastructure** – An extensive high-speed Internet network, the availability of energy, water, and sewer, and the expanded use of local airports make the region a magnet for investments.

#### **Principles**

All elements of the vision should generate economic benefits to all parts of the region.

Economic development efforts should recognize the important role the quality of life, natural beauty, and the uniqueness of the region play in attracting and keeping businesses and employees.

### **PILLAR #3: THE PLACES WE MAKE**

#### **Provisional Goal**

A region of beautiful, clean, vibrant, and walkable downtowns maintains its small-town and rural character and manages future growth through clear and fair plans and regulations.

#### **Principles**

Conversion of land from rural to urban should be orderly and take into account the region's unique character.

Rural lands should be protected from incompatible uses.

Regulations should provide for the type of development residents want and should be implemented consistently and fairly.

## **PILLAR#4: THE WAYS WE GET AROUND**

### **Provisional Goal**

A balanced, efficient, and realistic transportation system provides better connectivity within and outside the region, offers mobility alternatives, and creates economic growth opportunities.

### **Principles**

Roads should ensure safe and efficient travel.

Transportation improvements should respect the unique environmental and geographical features of the region.

Towns and communities should be served by a variety of transportation options, walking, biking, and public transit in addition to the use of the automobile.

## **PILLAR #5: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT**

### **Provisional Goals**

**Arts and Culture** – A region where art and cultural programs and strong institutions play a key economic role, motivate artists to move into the region, and keep visitors longer.

**Social Issues** – Strong, well-coordinated local and regional systems are in place to improve health care, education, the

availability of affordable housing, and services to the region’s aging population.

### **Principles**

The Vision should support culture, arts, and heritage as essential elements of the region’s prosperity.

The Vision should facilitate equitable access to health services, housing, and education.



## ★ SECTION 2 – THE FIVE PILLARS ★

This section includes an analysis of the nearly 1,000 individual ideas gathered at the Community Workshops. The analysis is by necessity reductive and does not fully reflect the diversity, specificity, and subtlety of those ideas.

In the next few months, the Regional Vision will progress from a statement of broad goals to the identification of specific recommendations on how to implement those goals. The nuances in the ideas gathered will help shape those specific recommendations.

For each Pillar, this section includes the following parts:

**Major Themes** – These are recurring ideas found within each Pillar. They indicate values, recommendations, and preferences. They are used to develop shared goals and principles.

**Provisional Goals** – These express a desired outcome presented in simple terms.

**Principles** – These express the intent of the community.

**Additional Action Areas Suggested by Participants' Comments** – These indicate elements of the vision that need to be strategically developed.

**Related Ideas** – These are all the ideas for each Pillar sorted by Major Themes. The ideas are organized to show the county and the original Pillar in which they were generated, and the ideas themselves as presented at the workshops.

Each idea has also an individual idea number. The numbers 1 to 1000 were given sequentially to all responses to the question: “Do these comments reflect what you believe are the important issues for the regional vision to address in this pillar?” The numbers 1001 to 1999 were given sequentially to all responses to the question: “Are there additional issues that you would like

the regional vision to address?” The numbers preceded by the letter A were given sequentially to all additional recommendations given by participants. The numbers preceded by the letter C were given sequentially to comments provided in the General Comments card made available at the workshops. In those cases where participants compounded ideas, those ideas were separated in their individual components, maintaining the original numbers for reference. In all, nearly 1,000 individual ideas and comments were generated through the workshops. The reader can find each idea by reviewing the raw results posted on the Opt-In website at the following address: <http://www.optinswnc.org/documents/>. Ideas are grouped by county under the heading: Responses to Questions.

The reader should note that the participants' ideas are transcribed verbatim from the workshop forms. Minor punctuation and capitalization edits were made for consistency.

## **PILLAR #1: THE PLACE WE'RE GIVEN**

### **MAJOR THEMES**

Maintain the region's natural assets.

Preserve and protect natural resources.

Balance protection and development.

Encourage the development of businesses that focus on recreation and outdoor resources.

Support clean development.

### **PROVISIONAL GOAL**

The region preserves and protects its natural resources and encourages land stewardship and outdoors oriented businesses while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life it currently enjoys.

### **PRINCIPLES**

Development should preserve important environmentally sensitive and scenic lands.

Development should be compatible with and respect the quality of life the region already enjoys.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTION AREAS SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

Foster land stewardship, the smart use of resources, and clean energy.

Focus economic development and diversification on outdoor and recreational activities that capitalize on the region assets.

Protect native plants and encourage their use.



## RELATED IDEAS

### MAINTAIN THE REGION'S NATURAL ASSETS

County	Original Pillar	Idea #	Ideas
Macon	The Place We're...	46	Natural resources are greatest asset – strike balance between improving the economy and job creation – preserve and protect.
Swain	The Place We're...	199	Not explicit enough on the natural resources. Views, mountains, clean dry air, creeks and rivers, forests, diverse life.
Swain	The Place We're...	210	Quietude quality of life. Water quality – We have ways to go on this. Balance must be obtained. Define “Natural Resources vs. Noise Pollution.” Can we regulate what already exists?
Graham	The Place We're...	6	The thoughts about this County being an outdoor magnet are absolutely correct and need to be the main emphasis of the future plans.
Graham	The Place We're...	7	Natural resources are one of our greatest assets. However, recent tourism studies show “the people” are also an asset. Locals and tourists see our people as an asset.
Clay	The Place We're...	230	Natural resources – Federal land should stay.
Clay	The Place We're...	231	Most the comments I agree with – except Federal lands should stay.
Clay	The Place We're...	238	Truth is our natural resources are a blessing and a curse. They expand our view of nature but constrict our ability to expand or economy.
Haywood	The Place We're...	285	We have to play the cards we are dealt. Our natural resources probably give us a “full house”.
Jackson	The Places We...	116	Use natural resources as much as possible.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1143	Preservation of environmental quality- clear water, intact ecosystem, large tracts of undeveloped land with low human impact.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1140	Natural resources – hunting, fishing, biking.
Graham	The Economy...	13	Critical to have outdoor environment.
Cherokee	The Economy...	197	Our natural resources are at risk. We have many things that other areas need and want.
Haywood	The Ways We ...	A76	Don't screw up the environment.

## PRESERVE AND PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

Jackson	The Economy...	1112	Preserve the natural resources and historical aspects of the region (buildings included).
Graham	The Place We're...	42	Issues of preservation of the place we're given were not addressed, as well as basic active daily needs.
Macon	The Place We're...	79	Protect beauty and heritage - important.
Swain	The Place We're...	201	Natural resources must be managed along with man-made resources.
Jackson	The Place We're...	95	As a general rule, protecting natural resources. Mountain and water quality has to be foremost to area economy. There is a reason people come to this region to relocate and vacation. I basically concur with area addressed.
Jackson	The Place We're...	99	Protecting natural resources is important to future prosperity of more than just the arts.
Clay	The Place We're...	225	Protecting natural resources and natural beauty including farmland and farms as part of our heritage. Growing interest in Appalachian and native history.
Clay	The Place We're...	226	We need to capitalize on assets but also need to protect them.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	137	Preserving our natural resources is important to everyone. We have a lot of opportunity and ideas to expand and utilize our area.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	138	Protecting our natural resources and increasing access, and providing funds to maintain and develop new resources are what is most important. We have a treasure trove of assets that are being underutilized and under advertised.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	140	I believe natural resources and maintaining the natural aspect are essential, with the casino coming and possibly quickly expanding commercial establishments.
Haywood	The Place We're...	287	Mainly yes. Need to consider /address the following it in the context of our "natural gifts". Support for ongoing /additional conservancy initiatives.
Haywood	The Place We're...	289	The natural resources of the County are the draw for tourism and must be maintained. Preserve protect, develop without degrading resources.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1099	We should work to improve our lakes and streams and keep them clean.
Clay	The Place We're...	223	I like having lots of protected Federal land, and would like to see support of arts, culture of Appalachia.
Jackson	The Places We...	116	Preserve the beauty of the mountains and rivers and find way to advertise so we can attract more tourists. How about accommodations and transportation for tourists?
Macon	The Places We...	1074	Little Tennessee river should be revived for economical purposes.

Clay	The Quality of Life...	1272	Natural resource protection our beauty and clean water - Forests, etc. are the bases of our quality of life.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1274	I want to protect the nature of our community as it is today while continuing to grow.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1040	Keeping the environment cleaner than it is now.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1151	Protecting the natural resources.
Graham	The Economy...	9	I do believe if a road project threatens "native plants" they should be relocated and not destroyed whenever possible.
Graham	The Economy...	15	Road projects relocate native plants.
Cherokee	The Economy...	146	Our Natural Resources should be protected.
Cherokee	The Economy...	194	We have natural resources that are exceptional, however, the attitudes need to change aesthetically. There has been little done to make over or enhance the resources we have, i.e. we have buildings and that make our County look horrible. Too many metal buildings.
Swain	The Place We're...	A15	Maintain what already exists.
Haywood	The Places We...	A44	Preservation of natural resources, control future growth, work with young people.
Clay	The Ways We ...	1259	How to keep the environment from being damaged by more roads.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1085	Clean air and preserving resources.

## BALANCE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

		C5	Balance economy, environment and education that complement each other. All of high quality.
		C15	I think to have a good transportation system to and through Graham County. Giving better connection to the region is vital to any economic growth. At the same time we need to balance this with our environmental assets.
Haywood	The Place We're...	1297	Balance may be the optimal word: Balance the need to be the quiet side with the need for development. Be it residential, entertainment, hospitality. Jobs that support out of poverty families, fluid transportation, walking and biking.
Swain	The Place We're...	A16	Balanced economy, environment and education and the quality for each.
Clay	The Place We're...	A22	Balance in any approach is important. We need to promote growth and preserve the sanctity of the mountains.
Jackson	The Places We...	A28	Preserve natural beauty while growing economy.
	The Place We're...	C48	The idea that there is too much Federal land is wrong thinking. To exchange beauty and natural resources for a few tax dollars is a bad trade.

Haywood	The Ways We...	307	Balancing our natural environment protection and better road access are certainly an area to focus on. (Retaining our character.)
Haywood	The Ways We...	308	Balancing access and efficiency with protecting our small towns from being completely by-passed.
Haywood	The Ways We...	318	I believe some of the issues have been identified but other things such as high-speed internet, high-speed rail and protecting our small towns are very important. This region has some special characteristics that need to be considered. For example its high volumes during summer and fall and it low volumes during the winter months. So the one size fits all solution does not fit this region.
Jackson	The Ways We...	124	Today's roads are important for access. Healthcare, jobs, shopping, etc. as well as tourism. Any additional roads must be built carefully not to harm the environment.

### **ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESSES THAT FOCUS ON RECREATION AND OUTDOOR RESOURCES**

Swain	The Place We're...	200	Not comprehensive on how we enjoy our natural resources, hunting, fishing, plus adventure sports of boating, off road biking, camping and hiking.
Macon	The Place We're...	45	Capitalization on the heritage of the region, Nantahala Outdoor Center is a good example; attract those who can give to the community not those whose interest is what they can get.
Macon	The Place We're...	80	Disagree with too much federal land- that's our greatest asset and should be protected. Stress outdoor activities greenway, rivers, waterfalls, etc.
Macon	The Place We're...	82	Lacking enough emphasis on outdoor recreation and the preservation of environment/culture (beyond the prosperity of the arts).
Jackson	The Place We're...	93	Specific natural and recreational resources. Include all activities that are associated - Hiking, natural fauna and flora, bird watching, hunting and fishing.
Jackson	The Place We're...	100	Additional emphasis needs to be made regarding the importance of outdoor recreation and it's impacts in many areas.
Jackson	The Places We...	1132	Preserving the natural mountain environment, while attracting tourists to new attractions that are built off of the natural beauty and resources.
Clay	The Places We...	261	Need to emphasis our natural landscape/ recreational tourism - greenway / paths - plan these now and don't pave and asphalt.
Jackson	The Places We...	115	Outdoor tourism increased businesses. Kayaking, fly-fishing, zip lining, snowboarding.

Clay	The Places We...	264	I do not want Clay County to look or feed like Orlando, Atlanta, Pigeon or Gatlinburg. The area does need to have additional businesses but they need to be recreation based.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1145	Regional vision should embrace and enhance the outdoor, rural, remote areas and steer away from urbanization of the area.
Graham	The Ways We ...	1031	Have local upkeep of our tourist attractions with forest service.
Graham	The Economy...	1015	Increased Cheoah River release to support rafting/water sports.
Graham	The Economy...	1016	Emphasis on outdoor recreational business.
Clay	The Economy...	1239	County Fairgrounds for all groups.
Jackson	The Place We're...	90	I believe that these comments reflect the important issues of the regional vision. Natural resources help to drive the regional economy, especially our beautiful rivers and creeks. The watercourses bring in fisherman and hikers, which help to boost the economy. I also believe we should support our local farmers.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	138	The arts are an important part of our culture, but I disagree that it is a vital part of the economy. The arts should be focused in conjunction with the outdoor activities such as rafting, hiking, biking, etc. Drawing the outdoor activist, increasing tax occupancy revenues, and business opportunities.
Clay	The Place We're...	1223	Natural resources are the best asset here. How do we promote that?
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1154	Inclusion of outdoor activities and opportunities.
Jackson	The Places We...	1125	Boost tourism, utilizing beautiful, natural resources that this area has. Enhancing outdoor activities and their accessibilities.
Jackson	The Places We...	1126	We say we want to bring in outdoor recreation businesses, but how? We should make this a place for businesses we want to take and boost our tourism economy.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1272	Outdoor recreation opportunities, festivals, libraries, farmers markets, playhouse arts and history.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1143	Access amenities to enjoy our great natural resources through outdoor recreation. This includes trail heads, greenways, trail systems, river and lake accesses etc.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1145	Ecotourism, outdoors, diverse characteristics of the region should be protected.
Graham	The Economy...	10	We should recruit businesses related to our wealth of activities: Fishing, hunting, biking, motor cycling, outfitters, boating, camping, sport car clubs, etc.

Graham	The Economy...	19	Increased focus on business associated with outdoor recreation – Outfitter shop for hiking, fishing, camping, bicycle repair/retail, motorcycle.
Macon	The Economy...	54	Maximize public lands and recreation.
Macon	The Economy...	83	Current attraction is environment. Capitalize on that.
Jackson	The Economy...	105	I think we need to make sure that tourism business is fully operated in the west most counties. When I visited the lake in Swain County I could hardly find a place to rent supplies to enjoy the lake. Things need to be better organized and properly placed.
Jackson	The Economy...	106	Somewhere it was suggested that we do not want our region to be like Gatlinburg. Yet, Gatlinburg is quite prosperous. That being said if we have more development educational opportunities and target younger people, money will come. More people means more money, which means more jobs. There is not a lack in trained work force. “Economic development should focus on entrepreneurship and small business.”
Clay	The Ways We...	1255	With our river / lakes we could have more water recreation – Rafting, tubing, kayaking, sailing, fishing. – Promote this for economic boost.
Clay	The Ways We...	1257	Developing recreational opportunities through free enterprise.

## SUPPORT CLEAN DEVELOPMENT

		C13	What we know. One of the changes is in storm runoff and flood frequency. With implication to erosion and water quality.
Swain	The Economy...	1211	Start addressing smart/ environmental use of our regions products, buildings, agriculture, cattle, roads, water, and air.
Haywood	The Economy...	1285	The clean energy opportunity (fits our culture, values and quality of life).
Swain	The Place We're...	1204	Garbage, litter recycle. Land steward.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1098	The impacts of and adaptations to climate change must be addressed in name. Local effect will have cascading impacts on our bioregion, economically, socially, and ecologically. From refuges escaping heat droughts, rising seas, to loss of diversity which could negatively impact our trout and waterways.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1105	Address pollution, use of landfill gases (methane).
Jackson	The Place We're...	1107	Protect water resources.
Swain	The Place We're...	1198	How do we learn and appreciate bio-diversity?
Jackson	The Places We...	115	Environmentally friendly development or "Green Development".

Macon	The Place We're...	A11	Recognize importance of water, not only for drinking, but also for biodiversity and recreation.
Jackson	The Ways We ...	1139	Alternative fuels, biomass to fuels, clean vehicles is a huge opportunity for a "triple bottom line" play.

## PILLAR # 2: THE ECONOMY WE NEED

### MAJOR THEMES

Establish economic development strategies to develop and diversify business and create jobs.

Support agriculture and local food supply.

Work with educational institutions.

Attract and retain young people.

Establish a strong regional identity and market it.

Extend broadband and high speed Internet to the whole region.

Address the supply of natural gas and other energy sources.

Address infrastructure needs.

Expand and improve water and sewer systems.

Explore the expanded use of the region's airports.

### PROVISIONAL GOALS

**Economic Development** – The region prospers with a diversified economy that supports small businesses, farming, entrepreneurship, and the wise use of its natural resources.

**Jobs** – The region's workforce is able to choose from a variety of well-paying jobs that match the population's skills and are attractive to young people.

**Identity and Marketing** – A comprehensive publicity and marketing campaign highlights the region's assets, attracts

new and diverse businesses, and connects visitors to local amenities.

**Infrastructure** – An extensive high-speed Internet network, the availability of energy, water, and sewer, and the expanded use of local airports make the region a magnet for investments.

### PRINCIPLES

All elements of the vision should generate economic benefits to all parts of the region.

Economic development efforts should recognize the important role the quality of life, natural beauty, and the uniqueness of the region play in attracting and keeping businesses and employees.

### ADDITIONAL ACTION AREAS SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

Engage the region's universities and colleges in workforce training and education.

Balance economic growth with the preservation of natural resources.

Align job training with the needs of the business of the future.

Explore the possibility of creating a business start-up fund for the region.

## RELATED IDEAS

### ESTABLISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP AND DIVERSIFY BUSINESS AND CREATE JOBS

County	Original Pillar	Idea #	Ideas
		C34	I think a low impact industry like a resort that specializes in weddings and a large variety garden would be beneficial for the gardening industry and keeping the area in its beautiful state. Have the restaurants and cafes be “pick and serve” where a large part of what they serves is grown and produced in the area. California has had a high yield of repeat business doing such simple changes.
		C1	A comment was made that Vocational Education classes are not as available as they should be. I am the director of Vocational Education in Macon County CET and they are a big part of our education in Macon County. Especially carpentry, agriculture and welding. Come see our house the carpentry students built from the ground up.
		C3	Is an educated workforce the issue or the issue is keeping educated workers locally.
		C7	No. Tourism is a dead end for works. Nobody with ambition wants to spend their life working for meager wages and benefits.
		C8	Nobody; No County, Not WCU, Not SCC has a viable plan to bring in a top-notch high tech company.
		C16	Better hotel and hospitals.
Graham	The Economy...	1013	In Robbinsville, expand dining and lodging options for locals and tourists.
Graham	The Economy...	1020	This topic (alcohol) is very difficult for out of town tourists. Don't serve in the restaurants, especial for tourists. I used to have a restaurants and lost costumers for not serving wine with the food.
Macon	The Economy...	1064	Identify specific economic needs of each county then on a regional level. Economic growth has to be organic.
Macon	The Economy...	1065	Aging population moves here. Industry/jobs specific to their needs to help foster the economy.
Macon	The Economy...	1066	Encourage economic development without destroying mountaintops, polluting water, etc.
Macon	The Economy...	1068	Did not address the economic opportunity/impact/challenge of the aging population in coming two decades.

Macon	The Economy...	1069	Land use planning wasn't addressed. Both impact the economy significantly. A multi county initiative to attract business as a major employer benefits surrounding counties.
Macon	The Economy...	1093	Lack of central vision for Macon/Franklin; preserve main attractions while developing resources to attract; organize retired business executives to support small business; publicize regional/local educational opportunities.
Macon	The Economy...	1094	Maintain, support, create small business opportunities; less regulation.
Macon	The Economy...	1096	More inter-regional brainstorming; better communication; education.
Macon	The Economy...	1097	A way to stimulate further education; get people to question and think for themselves.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1161	So many outside factors affect our local economy – not sure we can improve here till other issues are solved – we have to look to Tennessee and South Carolina and be creative to get Businesses here.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1191	It has to address the quality of life issues (healthcare, education, mental health, issues, etc.) to be attractive to business and Identity.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1194	Recognize the “new” economy.
Clay	The Economy...	1238	Critical for our area – Hotel and resort accommodations needed.
Clay	The Economy...	1242	Also I like comment re “develop the creative economy”.
Haywood	The Economy...	1281	Over emphasis on tourism in Haywood County.
Graham	The Place We're...	43	But there is more federal and state owned property that it hurts any small business a connection to Robbinsville. We have no hospital close and we want all jobs no matter size we can get but lack of 4-lane is our major hold back.
Macon	The Place We're...	77	Economic development must be promoted in a sustainable way.
Macon	The Place We're...	79	Yes. Supporting local businesses, helping residents have a decent living/job for their family and future.
Jackson	The Place We're...	100	Efforts need to be made to not only “support” local farmers, but to create additional opportunities for future farmers. Western North Carolina is geographically and historically very different from the rest of the state.
Clay	The Place We're...	221	For the most part they do reflect the wishes I have for the area. I think more emphasis on agriculture and forestry would make it more accurate.

Clay	The Place We're...	224	I don't want us to look like Pigeon Forge or Gatlinburg or Murphy corridor. Yuck! The development towards Ranger. Ugly. Hope we will find a way to protect our culture and natural assets. Capitalization of all of these great assets – will give us job opportunities. Think Lake vs. Farmland. TVA Beautiful Lakes vs. Agriculture Prime Land. Hard choice to make.
Clay	The Place We're...	227	Natural resources do drive the regional economy.
Clay	The Place We're...	229	No opportunity for employment – industry is not an opportunity.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	181	Regionalism acts both ways - some see it as beneficial as in regional monies for organically farming.
Haywood	The Place We're...	286	Yes. We have beautiful natural beauty. I agree that we need to support our farmers and local agriculture, but I wonder if we need to explore different crop options.
Haywood	The Place We're...	287	Allow for /enable responsible development – Business re-growth.
Haywood	The Place We're...	291	Yes for the most part. Perhaps we should put a little more emphasis on manufacturing and less on tourist issues. We need to be concerned with the question as to why we have not prospered given the many positives of the area.
Graham	The Place We're...	1054	A more sustainable local economy and the programs that help support these issues.
Graham	The Place We're...	1056	Need place for additional businesses for additional seasons.
Macon	The Place We're...	1089	Green industry!
Macon	The Place We're...	1090	Green industry, more green development.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1101	Economic opportunity and support – allowing businesses to operate freely.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1103	We need jobs that can be done here.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1108	Jobs that provide prosperous wages.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1110	Create opportunities in all of these areas to attract and retain talent. Creating a diverse and substantial economy capable of supporting residents while safe grading the natural environment.
Swain	The Place We're...	1195	Tourism.
Swain	The Place We're...	1197	What are the opportunities for men who want to work with their hands? Most men who work out doors operate excavation equipment and build structures and infrastructures.

Swain	The Place We're...	1201	Yes. We need to focus on developing a "Balanced Economy" that develops a "Tourism Economy" with a "Consumptive Economy" that utilizes the raw natural resources for product development. This must be done with "Stewardship of Natural and Cultural Resources." Example – "Timber to furniture."
Swain	The Place We're...	1202	We have to develop the market, can't wait for industry to come. Global economies are good, regional economics might be more sustainable, long term.
Swain	The Place We're...	1203	Balance of industry/tourism for a more stable economy.
Clay	The Place We're...	1218	Protecting family farms and agriculture.
Clay	The Place We're...	1222	Local farmers and local agriculture – should be a priority to support and preserve.
Clay	The Place We're...	1226	If your prevailing attitude is to accept 'poor,' than you will remain 'poor'. No longer can a community depend on being enabled by someone else's money! We must turn to the people of our area. To motivate, survive, but to grow. If your economic base is not growing – you are dying. There is no such thing as maintaining. Progressive leadership is paramount.
Clay	The Place We're...	1228	#2 Having business / industrial development in restricted locations to encourage jobs while preserving natural beauty i.e. solar farm by the lake.
Haywood	The Place We're...	1276	Regional assets include community colleges (Tri-County, Southwestern and Haywood).
Clay	The Place We're...	232	What are the young professionals saying? That they wish they could make a living in this area. We must embrace the reality of the current economic times in planning for the future when once again the banks free up money for economic growth among businesses that create jobs that provide the products and services. It costs to protect our heritage, culture and, quality of life.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	140	I agree that the arts are important but not the main driver of tourism. More extensive publicity of our natural areas is needed as well as better access to them.
Jackson	The Places We...	116	Preserve the beauty of the mountains and rivers and find way to advertise so we can attract more tourists. How about accommodations and transportation for tourists?
Clay	The Places We...	255	We need to determine what businesses are desired so that our young people can grow up and continue to live here. That may require attracting businesses that employ 50 employees.
Clay	The Places We...	257	Jobs need small clean environmentally sound businesses.

Clay	The Places We...	267	Work with what we have, strengthen tourism and agriculture. Yes, regional character and managed growth.
Cherokee	The Places We...	149	These are very important issues. Towns near new road will thrive but we cant by-pass the small businesses off the side road that need support. Example we can't put out the mom and pop diner with a Friendly or Outback.
Haywood	The Places We...	304	Generally Yes. Priority is to maintain quality of Waynesville with increase in "mom and pop" services such as grocery, pharmacy, etc. To appeal to residents. Waynesville has a variety of restaurants, etc.
Haywood	The Places We...	305	How to entice one night stays within the region by conducting events.
Jackson	The Places We...	1123	Have economic summits, leadership from County Commissioners.
Jackson	The Places We...	1124	Environmentally friendly development, ecotourism.
Jackson	The Places We...	1133	Strengthen mom and pop businesses, helping local people and businesses grow thus benefiting the mountain economy.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1168	Lower standard of living for the working class due to tourism driven low wage jobs.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1170	People live here because they want to, not because they have to. Bring in Businesses without changing the charm.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1187	Identify our workforce and opportunities.
Clay	The Places We...	1252	Need some hotels or motels to keep people in the County instead of them staying in other areas.
Clay	The Places We...	1254	Attract investment for small clean businesses.
Haywood	The Places We...	1293	Haywood County needs pedestrian and biking infrastructure and dense municipal development in order to encourage more economic development activity inside existing municipalities, in order to protect the natural/ rural resources. Character of the County. Western North Carolina is more Asheville and Smokey Mountain Park. How do we emphasis/ characterize/ attract everything in between?
Jackson	The Places We...	116	Preserve the beauty of the mountains and rivers and find way to advertise so we can attract more tourists. How about accommodations and transportation for tourists?
Jackson	The Places We...	115	We need better hospitality infrastructure.
Jackson	The Places We...	118	We need to fully embrace the travel and tourism industry as our number one industry.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	172	Jobs are scarce – Urgently need more industry.

Macon	The Quality of Life...	74	Jobs! Without jobs/income there is no need for housing, amenities. Protect quality of life; foster entrepreneurship for young business owners.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	75	Jobs first so that the educated will stay and attract others to live here.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	133	Who was addressed and where on the terms that young folk want to farm but cannot afford the land.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	133	I disagree that the lack of amenities in this area push people away, look for different types of people who will be more prone to the area via background.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1180	Problems associated with poverty, mental health and drug abuse associated crime. Economic and educational opportunities.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1181	Economic free enterprise opportunity and mfg. + tourist protection for private property rights.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1271	A little more emphasis towards tourism since I believe that is what our area provides in the area of beauty and serenity. Pleasant way of life.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1274	Need to attract technology jobs and other low impact jobs.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1037	Alcohol sales.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1082	Support of new businesses, where to go for funding, how to start, recruiting quality businesses to employ residents.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1083	Work to attract more businesses, more amenities.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1084	Employment opportunities, continued improvement of internet capability, incentives for new business.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1086	Jobs to attract young people to live here.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1088	Jobs that are competitive in salary.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1148	Recruit high-tech and environmentally compatible job opportunities. Provide and develop more small business incentives.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1150	What are we doing as far as tourism for the area? Is this for the entire region or Graham County? Where are the farmlands?
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1151	Providing employment opportunities, while maintaining our rural character.
Macon	The Economy...	51	Most points address issues with Macon and region; diversity will allow sustainability; jobs; foster entrepreneurs; agriculture/tourism.
Macon	The Economy...	54	Regulation to guide economic development, but preserve.
Macon	The Economy...	54	Jobs.
Macon	The Economy...	56	Amenities need to be clarified. Better-trained workforce is a priority. Not all jobs are created equal.
Macon	The Economy...	56	Airports improved.

Macon	The Economy...	87	Activities for various age groups, and the ability for small businesses to thrive.
Jackson	The Economy...	104	Economical development should focus on entrepreneurship, small business, advanced manufacturing, and agricultural business, along with tourism.
Jackson	The Economy...	109	These comments do, for the most part, reflect what I believe the important issues for the regional vision. I feel the strongest about the point that was talked about that included economic development, entrepreneurship and small business.
Jackson	The Economy...	110	Yes, I do think the comments are the important issues. Although, I feel we should take more advantage of the trained workforce we have coming from our colleges. We need business to want to come to Western North Carolina and I believe education is the way.
Cherokee	The Economy...	189	Capture the pass-through tourists.
Cherokee	The Economy...	191	Continue to grow economic development.
Swain	The Economy...	213	Infrastructure and economic development require each other.
Swain	The Economy...	218	Focus on the types of businesses we would like to attract to the region. Electronics, industry – manufacture’s – textiles - I don’t like - I personally would like to see more diverse electronics.
Swain	The Economy...	220	I disagree with the statement about junk recycling, I also think a better-trained work force is needed.
Clay	The Economy...	240	#2 Priority – Towns should do economic development as opposed to always depending on the counties.
Haywood	The Economy...	298	Given our roads, population and demographics, is it realistic to try and recruit manufacturing? Is tourism a viable future economic driver and what tourism? Is there a viable way to take greater economic advantage of the natural resources?
Swain	The Economy...	217	Attract business need better infrastructure. I.e. more direct travel path into and out of mountains.
Jackson	The Economy...	108	I do believe economical development needs to focus on small town revitalization for the large demographic of baby boomers that won’t or can’t drive anymore. As well as younger people who do not want to live in the suburbs.
Macon	The Place We’re...	A13	Regulation nullification for local business.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A36	Utilize and improve the region higher education institution.
Haywood	The Places We...	A44	Preservation of natural resources, control future growth, work with young people.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	A50	Jobs, jobs, jobs!

Macon	The Ways We...	A67	Make the whole area a park and charge admission of \$100 to benefit the actual residents.
Clay	The Ways We...	274	Clay County has tried two industries to little avail. We have good schools and colleges but nothing here to keep our young adults here.
Graham	The Ways We...	1027	I think we need to realize it is about more than only more jobs, jobs or more people; It is about what makes this place uniquely special and that is the area's natural landscape which will turn into a series of strip malls along any 4-lane. People should value and capitalize on the natural landscape's draw to tourists and make that its central economic focus.
Graham	The Ways We...	1029	Incentives to get small businesses here to boost revenue.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1135	Yes – how to reconcile the economic strengths and different parts of the County.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1135	Look at other ways to lower unemployment.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	1174	Given that so much textile industry is moving outside the US - all over the US - should we build roads focused on that? Or are those industries a lost opportunity and we should focus on tourism?

### **SUPPORT AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY**

		C2	Push for locally sourced food, building materials etc. For use at local businesses shops and restaurants.
		C26	Support of agriculture critically important and valuable.
		C46	Promoting and sustaining our agriculture base is important. Institutions are increasing opportunities. For young farmers to start up. North Georgia has a number of poultry operations as Clay County once did. They are not land intrusive. Why not now?
Cherokee	The Economy...	1192	Agriculture- better markets -aging population -assisted living facilities.
Graham	The Place We're...	1	Promote Made in the USA. Grown locally.
Jackson	The Place We're...	94	Promote agricultural and Farming by developing a “local food economy”. Specifically including varieties of plants and animals that will thrive here yet, still keeping diversity.
Clay	The Place We're...	223	Agritourism, outdoor adventures, and high tech light industrial jobs (not small manufacturing.)
Clay	The Place We're...	235	#2 We need to support farmers and support local agriculture.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	184	Yes, farming and tourism.

Macon	The Place We're...	1058	Emphasize local food. Have to have products to ship out of the region. Rail to Atlanta.
Macon	The Place We're...	1059	More focus on farming in the region.
Macon	The Place We're...	1061	Support small farm growth, local food. More support for local businesses, integrated with place.
Clay	The Place We're...	1216	Rebuild our rural agriculture. Do a lot to provide computer geeks, small artists, farmers, and businesses with positive government.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1185	Discussion at the table about organic gardening (large production). No matter what the vision is at the local or regional level will make no difference due to federal regulation.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1267	Farm to table is becoming more important.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1273	Access to fresh produce.
Macon	The Economy...	53	Emphasis on agriculture, entrepreneurship and fostering a creative economy; jobs!
Clay	The Place We're...	A26	As a past President of Clay County Master Gardeners and past member of the Extension Advisory Board, I feel that you have spent a lot of time talking to those involved in the arts, and no time getting input from the agricultural "Movers and Shakers". You need to correct this, as both areas are equally important. With the current emphasis growing nationally on healthy foods, local foods. We have much to offer that can drive the economic prospects for our citizens.
Macon	The Ways We...	A67	Put an emphasis on boutique farms with organic farming, unusual, exotic food, like truffles, Chinese vegetables for city markets.

## WORK WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Jackson	The Economy...	1116	Working with community colleges and WCU to address economic challenges.
Jackson	The Economy...	1119	We should also work more with Western Carolina University to address economic development.
Jackson	The Economy...	1120	Quality of the business in Cullowhee. Working with other colleges to meet economic challenges.
Graham	The Place We're...	1042	Where is the nexus between the job development programs, the community colleges and the school system? Are we creating skills that fill a need?
Macon	The Economy...	53	Training.

## ATTRACT AND RETAIN YOUNG PEOPLE

Jackson	The Economy...	1119	I feel the region should focus on the economic development. And bring jobs to the region. I feel that this will keep young people in the area and attract more people to the area.
Haywood	The Place We're...	288	Yes, including identifying the region as an attractive place for younger people besides Asheville. Work on image of aged population vs. Asheville innovative youth culture, maybe a middle ground image.
Jackson	The Places We...	116	Long-term development for this region. We need to develop this region in economical ways to be a little more urbanized. Offer more jobs for young people, have more restaurants, facilities like movie theater.
		C45	Tourism is fine but the jobs do not pay well and young people with any future leave (my own included).
Macon	The Economy...	1095	Better method for broad communication; education and jobs to encourage retention of young people and for them start businesses.
Jackson	The Economy...	1115	Targeting a younger crowd is essential. There are no activities around our area. We have seen the success with 'Tucks bar' and 'Cullowings around campus.' It brings money to the region and we need development targeting students.
Jackson	The Economy...	1118	I am concerned for the lack of hope some people have for the future, which can lead to unhealthy choices like teen pregnancy, alcohol, and drug use.
Graham	The Place We're...	1009	There needs to be some emphasis also on developing a working environment especially for the younger segment.
Clay	The Place We're...	1220	Need to attract low impact industries to attract back young workers (technology type businesses).
Jackson	The Places We...	112	Create more jobs for the youth - that should be added. Incredibly generalized.
Jackson	The Places We...	1124	College students (we're an asset).
Cherokee	The Places We...	1187	Trends that appeal to younger generations How to attract our youth to stay local. Higher education, better jobs.
Haywood	The Places We...	1292	We believe sidewalks, bikes lanes, need to be added in municipalities to talk to young people (all ages high school to 30) to see what would attract them. What entertainment they would like. More attention to a central visitors center.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	176	Primarily. Yes, with the exception of the additions of cultural amenities, railroads, and educational opportunities. 'Brain Drain' was also voiced as a concern. How to keep our young and brightest around?
Graham	The Quality of Life...	33	For me the most important issue is: 1. Keeping our youth here.

Graham	The Quality of Life...	35	Partly. More applicable to retirees. Nothing for youth to keep them here.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1182	Things for young people to do.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1038	Youth to have work. Focus on youth community involvement.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1041	Youth activities beyond organized sports.
Haywood	The Places We...	A43	Educate, cultural resources with public youth informative.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	A48	Keep youth here.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A53	Provide better job opportunities. To keep our young people.
Clay	The Ways We...	1258	Create opportunities for kids - intern as farmers - food nutrition - health, exercise. Experimental opportunities for local businesses.

### **ESTABLISH A STRONG REGIONAL IDENTITY AND MARKET IT**

Jackson	The Places We...	1121	Better marketing, which could mean that better infrastructure (hotels, conference center, make vacation cabins more visible, etc.).
		C4	Think educating people on what is available will help a lot. Heard many comments of services lacking in this area that are present and available.
Graham	The Economy...	1023	Icon development for Graham County.
Macon	The Economy...	1067	Regional marketing strategy, local public transportation, tourism entities town/county/region need to work together better.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1190	Market the region.
Swain	The Economy...	1213	Marketing the natural resources.
Clay	The Economy...	1236	We need media coverage.
Clay	The Economy...	1237	NC Media – Not Georgia TV stations currently assigned to Atlanta as our metropolitan area.
Clay	The Economy...	1241	More information and identification in the TV for North Carolina. More marketing for the County motel chain small 50 to 80 rooms.
Macon	The Place We're...	49	Sort of. Marketing is important but should include areas of beauty, culture and resources.
Clay	The Place We're...	228	Keeping the authenticity of the region – good.
Graham	The Place We're...	1043	Change “Mecca” to something like “paradise.”
Graham	The Place We're...	1044	Why aren't the Cherokee lands and the Tail of the Dragon mentioned as assets?
Graham	The Place We're...	1045	Authenticity and outdoor Mecca is us.
Macon	The Place We're...	1062	Use of social media to promote the area.
Macon	The Place We're...	1092	Outdoor recreation, environmental preservation, cultural heritage, local foods/skills/background.

Clay	The Place We're...	1219	Not an urban area, not a central park.
Clay	The Place We're...	1230	Don't want to be 'Central Park' or a downtown Mecca. Visitors welcome, but respect our culture and traditions. With 60% of Clay County natural forest, How does it drive regional economy? Hikers do not spend a lot of dollars. Locals don't want to hear from Floridians about what we can do. Why use Atlanta and NY consultants and pay 1.3 million in tax project funds?
Haywood	The Place We're...	1275	Who is Haywood County? Do we look east or west?
Haywood	The Places We...	1295	It is possible to develop a tag for the region that helps tourists know what to do throughout the region.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	73	Remoteness is an attraction and a deterrent.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1268	We need better marketing for our best assets. (Our scenic beauty, environments, art, culture.
Graham	The Economy...	14	Regional identity connected to the Great Smoky Mt. National Park or Southwestern Planning Commission.
Jackson	The Economy...	101	We need a cohesive regional identity and that identity needs to be marketed by the region as a whole.
Jackson	The Economy...	108	I'm not sure "regional identity" is key. Perhaps if there more discussions on what that actually means, exactly, I would feel differently.
Jackson	The Economy...	109	The next most important thing is regional Identity.
Cherokee	The Economy...	142	Not necessarily. The region identity is WNC: 1 has been, 2 should be in the future; therefore, regional identity is already established.
Swain	The Economy...	211	Towns, counties should collaborate when marketing and developing their economics.
Clay	The Economy...	249	We have amenities we just need to let the world know about them. But we need a hotel.
Haywood	The Economy...	293	I don't see how seven diverse counties could ever come to a single common identity. Haywood probably has a greater identity with Buncombe County due to the geography separating us. It will be difficult to create / manufacture a quaint small town atmosphere.
Haywood	The Economy...	294	For the most part, but how do we engender a sense of regional unity. Especially given that we (Haywood County) are part of a different region and tend, I believe, to identify more with Buncombe County than the other western Counties.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1134	Building our "regional reputation" on our phenomenal natural resources and rural feel, rather than trying to model ourselves to look like other places.

Haywood	The Ways We...	1306	Regional branding effort. To promote natural resources “the greater side of the Smokies”. Promote trails outdoors – possibly in a different way.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1307	Celebrate market our rural-ness.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1308	Capitalize on our natural beauty and proximity to the ‘Smokey Mountain National Park’.

### **EXTEND BROADBAND AND HIGH SPEED INTERNET TO THE WHOLE REGION**

Haywood	The Place We’re...	1277	Broadband - the final mile. To provide the necessary connectivity and infrastructure to attract the small creative entrepreneur/ artist that adds / creates higher paying jobs without harming compromising our “natural gifts”.
		C24	Must have high-speed broadband access in the county and cell phone service.
Clay	The Economy...	1233	We need NC Broadcasting and we need universal broadband.
Clay	The Economy...	1244	We need to be able to get coverage from North Carolina not Atlanta Georgia.
Haywood	The Economy...	1286	Rural areas need to take advantage of technology that allows you to work globally from anywhere.
Macon	The Place We’re...	1062	Better broadband service for rural and business so we can add that to advertisement and attract business (jobs).
Jackson	The Place We’re...	1100	Broadband availability. Using the internet to promote the area not only to tourists but potential residents as well.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	1105	Expand broadband.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	1106	Technology infrastructure, access to home and business to support all facts of regional economy.
Swain	The Place We’re...	1195	Cell phone towers – communication.
Clay	The Place We’re...	1227	#1 Reliable high speed internet for all needs to be sought.
Clay	The Place We’re...	1229	High speed internet.
Haywood	The Place We’re...	1276	We need broadband access.
Haywood	The Place We’re...	1278	Adding better broadband.
Haywood	The Place We’re...	1279	Broadband needs to be improved.
Clay	The Places We...	263	Similar in that we need more broadband fiber networking.
Macon	The Places We...	1075	Also broadband services, as the internet plays a vital role in education.
Clay	The Places We...	1246	Need N.C.T.V in Clay County to feel part of the region.
Clay	The Places We...	1249	Cannot get state TV Stations.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1270	High speed internet.

Graham	The Quality of Life...	1034	Broadband access. It has economic development and employment benefits. Students need it to be competitive.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1035	Internet access improvements.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1082	Infrastructure to attract telecommute businesses – faster, quality internet.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1086	High speed internet.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1140	Improving hi speed internet and cell service, electricity and heat.
Graham	The Economy...	12	Broadband, computer access.
Graham	The Economy...	13	Critical to have broadband and cell phone service across County, enhanced technology.
Graham	The Economy...	18	I think one of the keys for Graham County is to capture the role that enhanced technology (broadband) could impact our community.
Macon	The Economy...	85	More emphasis on technology. If we had better internet access we could emphasize data type jobs, teach the skills in schools and attract more businesses of this type.
Clay	The Economy...	244	NC television access, broadband, better water and sewer. We need a hotel.
Clay	The Economy...	246	But, items such as broadband and cell phone are key.
Clay	The Economy...	247	We need infrastructure – Internet and cell service.
Haywood	The Ways We...	A75	High-speed internet. Integrative economic, health, environmental and social issues.
Haywood	The Ways We...	319	Add broadband as a way to get around.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1304	Addressing connectivity in the form of internet. Access is very important to the vitality of these communities.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1307	High-speed internet,
Haywood	The Ways We...	1308	High-speed internet through the western counties.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1310	Broadband width, high-speed internet.

### **ADDRESS THE SUPPLY OF NATURAL GAS AND OTHER ENERGY SOURCES**

Swain	The Economy...	216	I don't agree that we need natural gas in this region, unless there is no other option for incoming businesses. I do not feel that it would be the case. We have many rivers in the area and could look back towards hydroelectric if needed. I also do not agree with "a job is a job". We need to be selective as to not drive out potential and more sustainable businesses that is more attractive in the area. We really need to work on our infrastructure for better living conditions and future focus and additional industry in addition to tourism.
-------	----------------	-----	--

		C44	Natural gas is mentioned. Availability of piped in gas (not propane) would enhance our ability to attract industry.
Swain	The Economy...	1209	No- to natural gas.
Clay	The Place We're...	1224	Energy, natural gas, and fast access to the internet should be improved and expanded.
Clay	The Place We're...	1231	Energy –electric is available, where is our prospect for natural gas? Digital access.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1156	Try to bring natural gas to county since many industries rely on it.
Cherokee	The Economy...	143	Yes on natural gas and many other natural alternatives.
Cherokee	The Economy...	146	Natural gas is the one to attract new industry rather than new highways.
Swain	The Economy...	216	I don't agree that we need natural gas in this region, unless there is no other option for incoming businesses. I do not feel that it would be the case. We have many rivers in the area and could look back towards hydroelectric if needed. I also do not agree with "a job is a job". We need to be selective as to not drive out potential and more sustainable businesses that is more attractive in the area. We really need to work on our infrastructure for better living conditions and future focus and additional industry in addition to tourism.
Haywood	The Economy...	293	Well it is hard not to agree with the listed issues. The most important need is adequate supply of natural gas and improved access to broadband.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1308	Natural gas needs to be developed.

## ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Haywood	The Economy...	1289	Keep fighting for infrastructure, highways, electricity (Duke), natural gas, and broadband technology).
Graham	The Place We're...	1047	Connecting all counties by infrastructure.
Macon	The Place We're...	1060	Appropriate size infrastructure. Better digital infrastructure that supports robust communication and digital economics.
Macon	The Places We...	1070	Infrastructure.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1146	Infrastructure improvements (water, roads, sewer, internet).
Swain	The Economy...	219	We're in need of a better infrastructure. It's better than 20 years ago – but we are still limited.
Swain	The Economy...	220	Also a better infrastructure is much needed.
Clay	The Economy...	243	We need more of an infrastructure.
Clay	The Economy...	244	Main Comment - Infrastructure is key to growth, economic development, and creates jobs.

Jackson	The Ways We...	1137	No new road should be built without internet fiber being put in along side.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1140	Basic needs/ Infrastructure. Protecting drinking water supplies and not taking them for granted.
Haywood	The Economy...	296	To infrastructure – need to broaden definition to include all clean energy, anticipating need for energy independence (solar, bio fuels, geothermal, etc.) not just natural gas.

### **EXPAND AND IMPROVE WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS**

Swain	The Place We're...	1204	Update water, sewer.
Clay	The Places We...	263	Similar in that we need more city sewage, and more robust infrastructure in the area to cope with additional population.
Cherokee	The Places We...	153	For the most part. In order to provide the outlining areas with water and sewer, etc. We must increase capability from the core of the community, which calls for a greater impact on the infrastructure, which exists.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	135	Abundant natural resources provide exceptional recreational opportunities. The region needs adequate infrastructure including water, sewer, electricity and high speed internet access.
Swain	The Economy...	215	Upgrade infrastructure - broadband, water and sewer. Transportation both traffic and pedestrian. Quality of life improvements.

### **EXPLORE THE EXPANDED USE OF THE REGION'S AIRPORTS**

Clay	The Place We're...	1218	Expand airport for more transportation not highways.
Cherokee	The Economy...	145	No on more airport improvements. We are a diversified economy in Cherokee, not simply tourism.
Clay	The Economy...	241	We do not need an international airport. Is natural gas available in this area?
Clay	The Economy...	252	Commercial aviation transport is a pipe dream we are hoping.
Clay	The Place We're...	A18	The transportation table only addresses roads... They did not consider the benefits of aviation and or rail services. The Murphy-Andrews Airport needs to be expanded for commercial use. Perhaps look into a small fix base airport within the Clay County lines.

## **PILLAR #3: THE PLACES WE MAKE**

### **MAJOR THEMES**

Manage and control the inevitable growth.

Explore the use of additional regulations.

Create vibrant lived-in downtowns.

Maintain the small town and rural character of the region.

Measure the implication of growth on the economy, taxes, and individual liberty.

### **PROVISIONAL GOAL**

A region of beautiful, clean, vibrant, and walkable downtowns maintains its small-town and rural character and manages future growth through clear and fair plans and regulations.

### **PRINCIPLES**

Conversion of land from rural to urban should be orderly and take into account the region's unique character.

Rural lands should be protected from incompatible uses.

Regulations should provide for the type of development residents want and should be implemented consistently and fairly.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTION AREAS SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

Identify and recommend the most suitable growth patterns for the region.

Evaluate the extent and type of needed regulations.

Revitalize downtowns and re-use buildings.

Embrace environmentally friendly development.

Explore housing development downtown.



## RELATED IDEAS

### MANAGE AND CONTROL THE INEVITABLE GROWTH

County	Original Pillar	Idea #	Ideas
Jackson	The Places We...	111	Yeah, I am torn between the types of growth and the regions “needs”. Generic, popular growth (shopping malls and bright lights), and the type of culture or environment we currently use to draw residents and tourists. I think these comments capture our region’s struggles well. Sylva and other Jackson County towns have great opportunities, especially with downtown housing problems downtown. Lack of hotels in Jackson County and a conference center.
Jackson	The Places We...	118	Growth and change in Southwestern North Carolina is inevitable. We should not stubbornly resist change. We should embrace it, but, channel it and direct it to be consistent with our values and goals. The key is effective leadership and vision.
Jackson	The Places We...	113	Develop greenways. Store and restaurant architecture and signage need to be controlled. Clear rules and zoning.
Jackson	The Economy...	1117	Place more emphasis on development – need for walkable, working, useable communities.
Clay	The Economy...	1243	Focus on the inverse – What happens if we stay how we are? I.e. very individualist and strong property rights. How can independent NC mitigate the downsides of this into strength?
Macon	The Place We’re...	82	Places that attract locals aren’t places that attract tourists. Smart, planned growth while protecting our natural resources.
Cherokee	The Place We’re...	1153	Control of Growth with casino coming to protect our natural resources.
Cherokee	The Place We’re...	1154	Control or channeling of growth especially with the casino coming so that natural resources can be protected.
Graham	The Place We’re...	3	There are a lot of needs in the County but the progress needs to be controlled
Graham	The Place We’re...	40	We have much to capitalize on but we must take steps to make our County/region a more desirable place to live and work.
Macon	The Place We’re...	48	Need for planning before development or too risky; protect heritage and way of life; involve local people in growing their knowledge of the region.
Macon	The Place We’re...	77	No, these comments do not address the need for planning (have to avoid the word ‘zoning’ to protect our natural resources.

Macon	The Place We're...	81	They reflect some but not many. Don't overemphasize natural resources and not future development. Protect but promote intelligent planned development.
Graham	The Place We're...	1048	Long range planning and development management.
Clay	The Place We're...	1216	I dread the fight we will have to limit degrading natural resources preventing ugly. Those words of "Growth Zone Management" and "Land Planning" will be a challenge.
Jackson	The Places We...	119	Growth needs a plan. Gatlinburg has nice features, which Pigeon Forge does not. It's walkable, more organic infrastructure. People visiting are not pass through tourists but destination tourists. Development needs regulations and Form-based codes.
Clay	The Places We...	254	Growth will occur, period. How we manage this growth is all-important. Tourism is all-important and yet, we are missing specifics to Clay County. We need a hotel.
Graham	The Places We...	24	Need more multi-use of government property; growth has to occur to create a sustainable community; more community effort toward growing tourism.
Macon	The Places We...	59	Big, unchecked, growth can have negative consequences and unforeseen impacts (Casino).
Macon	The Places We...	61	Managing growth is a must. Who wants it, who doesn't? Does having a low tax rate benefit or hinder the economy?
Macon	The Places We...	62	Manage growth. Need to utilize existing buildings first.
Jackson	The Places We...	117	We should concentrate development in hubs.
Haywood	The Places We...	302	Murphy development – how to make it a positive impact. "Crap" statement, define the word.
Jackson	The Places We...	1122	Cut down on ordinances – you are scaring businesses away! Elaborate more specific environmentally friendly development. Save our mountains while making a unique characteristic to the area economically and appearance wise.
Macon	Q of Life	75	Managed growth – not a fourth Dollar General or a third McDonald's.
Jackson	Q of Life	133	We have to have politics to protect our character because we don't want to become Gatlinburg or Charlotte.
Macon	Q of Life	1087	Planned quality growth; bike paths; preservation and fill the shops we have.
Macon	The Economy...	57	Growth needs to be addressed because it will happen. The game is to direct the growth for the communities well being.
Macon	The Economy...	58	Growth, but controlled growth.

Cherokee	The Economy...	192	Growth is expected and should be planned/ managed. It is important to maintain the communities identity. Character within the region.
----------	----------------	-----	---

## EXPLORE THE USE OF ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS

Swain	The Economy...	1208	Limited regulations. Affordable housing (apartments, condos, etc. Not income based) senior living facilities.
Swain	The Economy...	1210	Some safeguards need to be put in place before we allow junk recycling businesses.
Graham	The Place We're...	1	Change zoning to "Development Guidelines."
Macon	The Place We're...	80	Lack of zoning to protect land is a big risk.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	140	Some type of light zoning could preserve beauty of County. Possibly outlining an area where commercial should be located.
Graham	The Place We're...	1004	Need zoning.
Macon	The Place We're...	1057	Land usage (zoning).
Macon	The Place We're...	1092	Zoning and development.
Clay	The Place We're...	1221	Limit lot size development along waterways.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1155	Less regulation on natural areas (rivers, trails). More access to forests lands. More restrictions to commercial areas.
Haywood	The Place We're...	1278	Protection of the resources we have by reducing sprawl.
Jackson	The Places We...	119	Development needs regulations and Form-based codes.
Jackson	The Places We...	117	When we talk about "Mountain Character", the "Crap" in other places, and "chain restaurants", I think: Are we really trying to keep authenticity? If we want to invite chains and big boxes here to get jobs, we need rules. And zoning to make sure they don't take advantage of the invitation in a way that causes us to loose that authenticity. We do not need to give them an unfair advantage. We need to protect local businesses. We cannot let new development detract from scenic values. We should concentrate development in hubs.
Jackson	The Places We...	120	I have strong opinions, both good and bad about the comments listed on the paper. I strongly disagree with the comment about brining in chain restaurants and big stores. Although they are essential, they should be done in a controlled manner.
Cherokee	The Places We...	150	New regulation due to growth and more businesses can swallow the small guy.
Cherokee	The Places We...	152	I believe that we do need to have some regulations with regards to zoning.

Cherokee	The Places We...	156	Yes, they are important. I do think too much stock is being placed on the Casino. I do not feel a lack of zoning and regulations is a negative. Over regulation is a burden on development both economically and socially. We don't fill in the hospitality infrastructure we currently have. Closing off Tellico road had a negative impact on the entire County as well as the hospitality infrastructure.
Cherokee	The Places We...	157	Yes, except be very careful with regulations – must provide broad restrictions. Must address as neighborly instead of restrictive.
Haywood	The Places We...	303	Consistent – Zoning – Amenities for living. Hotel downtown. Bike paths, sidewalks.
Jackson	The Places We...	1123	More scenic byways, less billboards, more zoning (we need it badly), no houses on ridgelines.
Jackson	The Places We...	1128	Keep stringent steep slope development standards.
Macon	The Places We...	1070	Zoning.
Clay	The Places We...	1247	Zoning so that larger business firms and unsightly structures would be placed away from view so that we can continue to enjoy the natural beauty of the mountains.
Clay	The Places We...	1251	Growth needs to be zoned. Eyesores such as solar farms need to be zoned as well.
Clay	The Places We...	1253	Some regulation on real estate development.
Haywood	The Places We...	1291	Haywood County needs to improve land standards. The Murphy Casino project could have positive impact with careful planning for the other 6 counties. All counties could encourage their residential living and with that more living necessities.
Haywood	The Places We...	1296	Zoning.
Haywood	The Places We...	1301	Given that there is no “zoning” in Haywood County, this might be a task for the Planning Board.
Cherokee	Q of Life	174	Cherokee County needs zoning to improve potential appearance for potential investors and visitors.
Cherokee	Q of Life	1182	Zoning to improve appearance.
Clay	Q of Life	1262	Ambient light reduction, appropriate signage, bike trails, “Green” (tree) requirements for buildings, land use plan implemented.
Clay	Q of Life	1270	Community appearance and zoning to keep it green, clean and screened.
Clay	Q of Life	1273	Farmland protection.

Macon	Q of Life	1086	Zoning, slope/floodplain.
Graham	The Economy...	20	The underlying issue factor on the junk recycling business is land-use. Mountain thinking is: this is my land and I can do what I want with it. A hard nut to crack is this issue.
Swain	The Economy...	214	Need limited land use and regulations.
	The Economy...	C52	The idea of no planning + zoning is bad. A junkyard in downtown would kill tourism and their Jobs.
Swain	The Place We're...	A14	Swain County zoning regulations.
Jackson	The Places We...	A29	Manage use of land and resources - > "zoning."
Cherokee	The Ways We...	A70	The County needs to have basic requirements for steepness and width on subdivision roads.

## CREATE VIBRANT LIVED-IN DOWNTOWNS

Graham	The Place We're...	1003	Develop downtowns as centers for the arts and business. Spreading growth out along big highways kills towns and landscapes.
Clay	The Place We're...	1217	Rejuvenate the Clay County Courthouse to serve the community and tourists.
Clay	The Places We...	261	In regards to need for planning growth, managed - revitalized downtown for shops. Residential restaurants. We don't want to look like every other town in USA with chain restaurants. Need to give incentives for more "mom and pop's".
Jackson	The Places We...	112	If you don't want to be like Pigeon Forge then what should it be? Model after what? "We need to reuse our downtown buildings." Expand - Could be great.
Graham	The Places We...	21	Housing development downtown does not apply.
Cherokee	The Places We...	187	I am in developing the downtown area - buildings - riverfront - tourist. We can make the town interesting without changing the small town character feel.
Jackson	The Places We...	1121	Downtown housing possibilities and a retirement community.
Macon	Q of Life	1083	A more vibrant walkable downtown area.
Macon	The Economy...	55	Vibrant downtown areas must stay vibrant and active.
Macon	The Economy...	58	Make downtown a destination. Would like to see apartments over downtown businesses and a retirement communities for seniors.
Jackson	The Economy...	103	The region needs residential development in downtown and adjacent areas for both baby boomers and the millennial generations to thrive.
Jackson	The Economy...	106	We should develop the areas downtown.
Cherokee	The Economy...	190	Re-use of downtown buildings.

Swain	The Economy...	212	Chain restaurants and big box stores won't solve any problems; they take breaks and often shutter.
-------	----------------	-----	--

### **MAINTAIN THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE REGION**

Jackson	The Economy...	1113	Emphasize the role of a small town.
Clay	The Places We...	268	We need to keep our County's small town life. We do not need Atlanta news.
Graham	The Places We...	21	Small town feeling will not change.
Cherokee	The Places We...	186	Our table a group discussion of "Place" and our appreciation for maintaining and enhancing our character of rural life.
Cherokee	Q of Life	175	And preserving the "small town" quality of life is important to me.
Macon	Q of Life	70	Protect small town character.
Jackson	Q of Life	131	Keeping the small town, rural atmosphere while providing employment opportunities is one of the most crucial items. Protecting what is without changing the small town character is important.
Cherokee	Q of Life	1182	Preserve the small town atmosphere
Jackson	The Economy...	107	We must support our small towns in their efforts to address the challenges and offer unities of the future.
Jackson	The Economy...	108	If we have walkable communities with local restaurants, stores and small business with a variety downtown and nearby housing, people will want to live and visit and relocate here. Our lovely environment is a magnet already.
Clay	The Economy...	239	#1 priority - Preservation, redevelopment, and strengthening towns are key to economic development.
Clay	The Economy...	243	We need to preserve and grow of small town economic development.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1305	Greenways, incorporation of arts and culture and walkability of small rural towns.
Jackson	The Places We...	115	Growth is likely to occur, region needs steps to maintain its character. We don't need all the other crap every other town has.
Clay	The Places We...	256	Maintain rural atmosphere. Manage growth.
Clay	The Places We...	260	We need growth, but, the development needs to maintain the character of our small towns - nature and hiking trails etc.
Jackson	The Places We...	120	Mom and pop businesses are the heart of mountain culture and should remain strong. However, growing economically is important, I feel it can be achieved through creating more mountain friendly tourist attraction and businesses.

Cherokee	The Economy...	188	Yes, growth is expected, but it is important that the region maintain its character.
Graham	The Economy...	1021	Make a park with native plants.
Graham	The Place We're...	1006	Upkeep and preservation of improved areas.
Swain	The Place We're...	1195	County wide clean up, beatification.
Clay	The Places We...	1248	Bad example would be the solar panels adjacent to the Hwy 64 east of Hayesville.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	33	We need to clean up around business etc.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1036	Cleaning up clutter (signage, industrial equipment, etc.).
Graham	The Quality of Life...	1039	The amounts of clutter/junk people have to look at.

### **MEASURE THE IMPLICATIONS OF GROWTH ON THE ECONOMY, TAXES, AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES**

		C54	People not wanting growth because of problems arising from it.
Macon	The Places We...	1073	Grow or not grow? Which is more equitable to the taxpayers?
Cherokee	The Places We...	1169	Increase cost to services due to growth that will be paid by taxpayer.
Clay	The Place We're...	A21	We love our town and want to keep the quality of life but understand we need proper growth. However we as the community do not want to loose control of our personal choices.
	The Places We...	C56	How will "managing growth effect personal property rights.

## **PILLAR #4: THE WAYS WE GET AROUND**

### **MAJOR THEMES**

Improve east-west connectivity and mobility.

Explore alternative transportation modes: rail, bus, pedestrians, and bicycles.

Provide more information about Corridor K alternatives.

Maintain and improve existing roads.

### **PROVISIONAL GOAL**

A balanced, efficient, and realistic transportation system provides better connectivity within and outside the region, offers mobility alternatives, and creates economic growth opportunities.

### **PRINCIPLES**

Roads should ensure safe and efficient travel.

Transportation improvements should respect the unique environmental and geographical features of the region.

Towns and communities should be served by a variety of transportation options, walking, biking, and public transit in addition to the use of the automobile.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTION AREAS SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS**

Identify east-west and Corridor K design alternatives.

Evaluate the impact of those alternatives on trip times and transportation costs.

Evaluate development patterns best suited to transportation alternatives.



## RELATED IDEAS

### IMPROVE EAST-WEST CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY

County	Original Pillar	Idea #	Ideas
		C10	Somewhat the element here, I believe is lack of commerce, traffic. The mountains while very nice are themselves an impediment to commerce. "Take - the end of 74/19 converting back into 19W@ junction of 28...
		C11	I would like to see commercial spur/fast traffic in place between said named junctions... (Maybe a tunnel bypass to facilitate this.) Yes this will be labor intensive (maybe create more jobs) and will require training in mine operations. But I believe a quick path to the far end of 74 W, is in order... like the alps...nothing short-range I fear.
		C25	Must have stable roads that do not fall off the mountain.
		C28	Our County will be helped through another choice. To buy groceries when prices are cheaper and choices are given. Travel is expensive to buy groceries at cheaper prices.
		C51	Outlet from Robbinsville to Andrews. I am against a bypass of Robbinsville. We need people coming in here.
		C58	No bypass of town of Robbinsville, want tourists to go through town.
Graham	The Economy...	1017	Signage with miles to location.
Macon	The Economy...	1063	The foundation of this project began with transportation and it has been vastly under-emphasized.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1160	Improve roads for east, west, south and north.
Swain	The Economy...	1209	No - Most employees do not commute into Swain from other areas.
Haywood	The Economy...	1290	In general they do, but they also represent strategy specific views that have existed for years. Unless transportation access improves manufacturing and other heavy commercial endeavors are not going to be attracted to us so we must market with the larger region.
Swain	The Place We're...	209	To a certain extent, I know without good access our County would not have the visitors to this area. We have welcomed visitors and made them become residents. Some come for a visit and stay for a lifetime. I am concerned about other counties, having access to critical care and emergency hospitals.
Swain	The Place We're...	210	Can we regulate what already exists? Safe highways? Proper speed limits to wide roads.

Graham	The Place We're...	1049	How much a road would bust our economy.
Graham	The Place We're...	1050	How much road we miss by not having a road?
Macon	The Place We're...	1057	Transportation advantages and disadvantages should be included because of the environmental impact.
Macon	The Place We're...	1091	Transportation of both residents and products.
Swain	The Place We're...	1195	Transportation.
Swain	The Place We're...	1196	Hopscotch technology and bring driverless Google cars to the mountains.
Swain	The Place We're...	1204	Adjust speed to mountain roads.
Swain	The Place We're...	1205	Transportation is a deficit in the region. Residential/ business traffic has needs separate to tourism.
Macon	The Place We're...	1070	Roadways.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1165	Things we need (ex clothing) will be less than 2 hours away!
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1173	Management of huge trucks on roads.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1189	Traffic flow that comes with growth.
Clay	The Place We're...	1250	No larger roads as it will not improve our economy one iota.
Clay	The Place We're...	1254	No interstate 3 through Clay County.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1187	Infrastructure i.e. roads - ability to connect to major regional cities supporting services, housing/ hotel.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	169	Better transportation issues into the counties.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	170	To have the ability to get in a place and travel without having to drive 2 or 3 hours to get to that place.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	173	Transportation is inadequate - need 4-lane connections to Atlanta, Asheville and Chattanooga.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	175	Improving transportation to the area.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1179	Having more accessibility through things like a commercial airport or some type of mass transit system can improve moving around within this area as well as getting from here to other areas. It makes things like accessing health care and educational opportunities, jobs and cultural activities feasible.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1145	Don't conform to an outside idea. Less is more. Fewer roads but better route /accesses.
Graham	The Economy...	11	Better connectivity.
Graham	The Economy...	13	Critical to have Stable roads that do not fall off the mountain. This will support job creation and new business.
Cherokee	The Economy...	144	Yes on improved transportation need corridor to the west.

Clay	The Economy...	250	We do not want a super highway.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	A9	Road from Andrews to Robbinsville.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	165	Traffic data needs to include long-range forecasts. Otherwise comments are a good base to start.
Graham	The Ways We...	25	We should acknowledge that yes; even here in Graham County the roads already here are world class – some of the best roads for mountainous regions you could find in the world. Also roads don't equal prosperity or health. Plenty of places with big roads are still impoverished and unhealthy, as well as undereducated.
Graham	The Ways We...	27	Improve regional connectivity would help improve economic development as well as social welfare. Create a network of road improvements.
Graham	The Ways We...	28	Yes. Besides rail, converting old rails to hiking trails provides a chance to boost tourism while building and improving roads for industry.
Graham	The Ways We...	29	I agree with portions of comments. We need a good access road through our County. We need more opportunities for our kids, better access to the outside world. Particularly agree with 5, 8, 10, and 11.
Macon	The Ways We...	68	Transportation is an important issue in two respects. Tourists cause delays; locals need efficient means of fast travel. Rail access within region is needed.
Jackson	The Ways We...	122	I think we need to focus more on maintaining existing roads and on other modes of transportation. We do not have traffic problems out here.
Jackson	The Ways We...	125	Yes - for the most part. How to evaluate regional vision for different types of communities (i.e. Cashiers, vs. Bryson City for example). What purpose would better highways serve to meeting our goals?
Cherokee	The Ways We...	161	Travel by auto will remain primary.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	163	Balance environment with transportation access.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	166	Incorporate master corridor plans to guide development along major corridors.
Clay	The Ways We...	270	We need to keep the area free from large traffic. Big roads take away from the beauty of rural areas.
Clay	The Ways We...	273	Need the roads if industry is to be attracted to our area, maybe even railroad if heavy industry is to come. Disadvantage is level ground to run on.
Clay	The Ways We...	277	No, these comments do not address the needs rather than the wants. Transportation is adequate for the area. Natural resources, farming, roads meet our needs.

Haywood	The Ways We...	306	Yes increased transportation efficiency balanced with the needs of small communities to benefit from the dollars that pass through our region. Mass transit should be a priority. Utilize the railroads.
Haywood	The Ways We...	310	Basing road improvements on actual traffic data will continue to be detrimental to rural communities.
Haywood	The Ways We...	311	Yes. Protect the natural environment and better infrastructure is needed but there is a need to use existing roads as not to create bypasses around small towns. Balance the access to towns and tourists destinations. Reliable well-connected efficient roads for commuters are important. Automobile transportation doesn't need to be the primary means of getting around.
Haywood	The Ways We...	325	Yes except "basing road improvements on traffic data" which does not address issues of rural transportation and economic development.
Macon	The Ways We...	1076	Too many strip roads with so many on-off ramps for commercial use. This is poor planning.
Macon	The Ways We...	1078	Increase DOT funding due to expenses incurred with mountain terrain (rockslides, ground movement, etc); repaving costs more; trains are more than simply transportation but integrate with the heritage too.
Macon	The Ways We...	1079	Provide more monies to better maintain existing roads.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1135	Define if there is really a need for new roads.
		C62	Infrastructure and education = opportunity. Andrews is a lot like Blue Ridge, GA - The 4-lane cut the town off like Andrews. But, the train goes across McCayesville. Brought "RR" Back - We need road a road to Robbinsville – the two towns are uniquely connected.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	1176	Passing lanes and left turn lanes on existing roads.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1302	Affordable transportation for tourist and locals. Tunnels are okay. Improve access for bicycles.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1307	Multiple small improvements that are strategic and not just one big road.

### **EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES: RAIL, BUS, PEDESTRIANS, AND BICYCLES**

		C34	The railway could be reconnected to allow visitors to see what is in the area in comfort without more congestion on roads and parking. All they have to worry about is losing their money. We should be for thinking enough to assess the needs of our local areas so vacationers don't have to think.
Graham	The Economy...	1022	Rail transportation for Graham County.

Jackson	The Economy...	1111	Reliable public transportation.
Jackson	The Economy...	1114	I know that most Americans have their own car but, for someone who doesn't have one, it would be better if there were a public transportation that connected the counties.
Jackson	The Economy...	1119	We should also consider public transportation.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1193	Rails to trails. Don't ruin the landscaping / scenery.
Swain	The Place We're...	1204	Public transportation.
Macon	The Place We're...	1059	Rail development following the old Tallulah line.
Swain	The Place We're...	1203	Bike lanes.
Swain	The Place We're...	1204	Bicycle lanes everywhere. Public transportation.
Swain	The Place We're...	1205	We need to utilize train and air, not junk cars.
Clay	The Place We're...	1216	So will future transportation issues. I would love bike trails, trains! How about a built train system?
Clay	The Place We're...	1221	Bike trails throughout the country.
Haywood	The Place We're...	1278	Greenways, bike and pedestrian trails.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1131	Need better bicycle, walking and bus transportation.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1172	Need Walking/ Biking trails so visitors and residents can safely visit our assets.
Haywood	The Place We're...	1293	Haywood County needs pedestrian and biking infrastructure and dense municipal development in order to encourage more economic development activity inside existing municipalities, in order to protect the natural/ rural resources Character of the County. Western North Carolina is more Ashville and Smokey Mountain Park. How do we emphasis/ characterize/ attract everything in between?
Haywood	The Place We're...	1299	We need access to lanes for bicycles along streets and roads.
Haywood	The Place We're...	1300	As well as wheelchairs and walker "lanes" along city areas.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1273	Alternative transportation options like sidewalks, bike paths, and high-speed rail/ if feasible.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1144	Transportation options for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. We bike and walk and do not want to be forced to drive cars.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A31	This is not a big city. Mass transit will/ would never work here. There is simply not the needed population density to support it. Urbanization will not work everywhere.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	A46	Larger transportation modes (railroad, city transit, etc.)
Graham	The Ways We...	A66	In town and to other communities, transportation for those of low income.
Macon	The Ways We...	68	Rail access within region is needed.

Jackson	The Ways We...	126	Public transit, bike lanes and alternative transportation means should be optimized.
Jackson	The Ways We...	128	Generally yes, they are accurate and reasonable. The answer comes from not doing new expansions in areas unless they are extremely congested or extreme isolation cases. Instead the challenge is to create various alternatives to meet the variety of economic and social needs with a strong sense of environmental protection and asset preservation.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	162	Railroad holds great tourism opportunity.
Clay	The Ways We...	272	No. Fossil fuels are not helping us. We need bicycle trails; hiking trails more local farms and Businesses to get small and more ecological conscious. Local foods, local businesses etc.
Haywood	The Ways We...	309	Consider railroads mass transit investment. Bike and walking transportation needs to be focus (wellness).
Haywood	The Ways We...	313	Why there is no “active transportation”? Bike/ pedestrian Haywood County bike plan. Need to capitalize on quality of life. Blue Ridge Bike plan. (Ex. Creeper Trail.)
Haywood	The Ways We...	314	Need to develop the small towns as “walkable” livable communities.
Haywood	The Ways We...	317	Internet, bike, pedestrian – missing
Haywood	The Ways We...	323	Careful not to romanticize rail potential. Lots of devils in the details especially in the mountains.
Macon	The Ways We...	1077	Mass transportation options.
Macon	The Ways We...	1080	We have transit buses in each county. How popular are they?
Macon	The Ways We...	1081	Car and motorcycle enthusiasts equal \$\$\$\$. Need train and bus transportation.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1135	Look at transportation options in small communities. Roundabouts, walking and biking.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1136	Regionalized Mass Transit especially for low income and the possible workforce.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1307	Multi-modal “bike/ pedestrian.”
Haywood	The Ways We...	1308	High-speed rail through the region.
Jackson	The Ways We...	1137	A dead end railroad line is not a transportation solution.

### PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CORRIDOR K ALTERNATIVES

Jackson	The Ways We...	1138	What is the impact on any developments on redundant capacity? The challenge we have is not so much the capacity as alternative routes and modes. Corridor K. represents an alternative route. So does rail service.
---------	----------------	------	---

Haywood	The Ways We...	1310	Improving feeder roads to insure highways such as Corridor K don't by-pass and hurt municipals.
Swain	The Place We're...	1204	1965 apply highway system K -> I -3 WNC.
	The Ways We...	C57	Yes, we definitely need better transportation in our area, particularly in Graham County. However, we don't want to severely damage our natural resources and Mountain beauty with an over built highway. Corridor K does not need to be a 4-lane road with a 30-foot median thru the steep mountains. Scale it back and hold cost down.
Graham	The Ways We...	26	Covered major transportation down to local around town. Dealt with Corridor K down to overlooks for tourists.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	279	Clean water, fishing, outdoors, means no Corridor K.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1264	Don't need Corridor K.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	280	Too much leaning towards Corridor K and that is not on my radar.
Clay	The Place We're...	A24	No to Corridor K.
Clay	The Place We're...	A25	No to thru-traffic 4-lane.
Jackson	The Ways We...	A69	How can we set Corridor K money to use for other purposes? Consider those experiencing poverty when considering motor transportation.
Graham	The Place We're...	1	No Corridor K. Improve existing.
		C49	Complete Corridor K
Cherokee	The Economy...	1158	Corridor to the west.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1159	Highways are not the solution for all problems, but could create a bigger problem.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1162	Corridor to the west.
Clay	The Economy...	1232	Let's talk about Corridor A and Corridor K.
Clay	The Economy...	1234	Agenda 21 and after effects. Crime if new highways are built.
Clay	The Economy...	1245	Clay County wants more communication about Corridor A and less about Corridor K.
Graham	The Economy...	1014	Safe roads. Third lanes, passing lanes, pull-offs, straighten curves, when possible, signage. Build Corridor K.
Graham	The Place We're...	36	How will the 4-lane crossing on US-129 to the downtown area be developed to avoid [unclear]?

Clay	The Place We're...	1214	We need to all keep in mind that the era of cheap petroleum is coming to an end. This will impact dependence on tourism as a base for economy. More regional self-sufficiency and a stronger local food supply will help us survive. We will need bicycle friendly roads and trains and intelligent land planning. One accident with radioactive materials could make the area inhabitable. For this reason I rank to oppose Interstate 3 and I am against Corridor K. The nuclear power industry and the nuclear weapons view this place as a place to transport waste and weapons materials from Tennessee to South Carolina without going through Atlanta or Charlotte. Stopping threats from radioactive transport is a matter of biological survival.
Clay	The Place We're...	262	We don't want 4-lane roads that keep tourists away instead of directing them to our small town.
Clay	The Place We're...	1215	Also very important the construction of the remaining section of Corridor K would have devastating impact on local water quality because of the chemistry in the bedrock in those areas.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1156	Infrastructure - Finish Corridor K.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1265	Tourism emphasis on high quality plans to keep/make our area attractive. High quality tourism does not mean Corridor K. Look at the people who are returning because of the natural beauty and friendly people, not because of Corridor K.
Cherokee	The Economy...	198	Yes. I am for Corridor K. The project to bring more opportunity to Cherokee County economic development and growth.
Macon	The Ways We...	63	Don't know anything about Corridor K. Keep current roads, important. Don't see the need for new 4 lane highways. Would like to see railroad revived here to get to big cities.
Jackson	The Ways We...	121	People need to talk about/ hear about what type of road Corridor K would be. Want to see options for minor improvements.
Jackson	The Ways We...	127	Corridor K needs to be improved, but the kind/ level road needs to be considered. Connections to Tennessee will be important, but beyond that it is about creative options and alternatives. We shall also consider additional modes (i.e. Railroad).
Clay	The Ways We...	269	Agree with balanced consideration of natural resources with roads. I think the need for "better roads" is over stated. Resent system is adequate. Millions of dollars to reduce travel time 20 minutes is not necessary. How many farmers do we have in Clay County? How would a better road network help them?

Clay	The Ways We...	275	Concerned that more roads will raise our taxes even higher. North Carolina already has a higher gas tax than Georgia. We live in the mountains. Electric cars are not going to be an option, even if you don't agree with fossil fuels. I have lived here all my life and I love Clay County just like it is. No large roads.
Clay	The Ways We...	276	Keep the 4-lane out!!!! 4-Lanes kill small businesses.
Haywood	The Ways We...	320	Not "build a 4-lane highway" - assuming that is referring to Corridor K.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1303	The infusion of arts, culture and heritage into design elements would greatly enhance Corridor K projects.
Clay	The Ways We...	271	Funding is an issue for road, building and maintenance. Already high taxes for roads, and there are roads already to east Tennessee, Chattanooga and Asheville etc. Time to most or any metro area does not exceed the average of 2 hours. Slides are the problem on large and small roads, so it doesn't matter how large the road is. Expanding the existing road into a 4-lane will cause many existing businesses hardship in an already depressed economy. Allowing more roads for tourism will damage why tourists come. I agree that railroads shouldn't be overlooked.
Graham	The Ways We...	30	Tourists are drawn to us due to not a lot of highways. In addition residents born in Robbinsville who have had to seek work outside the area are more inclined to retire back to Robbinsville due to the serenity of the area. A four-lane road is not needed. Instead a road with a passing lane that runs with the existing highway would suffice.

## MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING ROADS

Macon	The Ways We...	64	Maintain balance. Maintenance of roadways.
Macon	The Ways We...	65	Maintain existing roads; regional approach is necessary as is rail to region; alternative transport – buses for those who don't have vehicles.
Macon	The Ways We...	69	Yes. Roads are a major reason car enthusiasts visit our area. New roads are not necessary. Fix the old ones.
Jackson	The Ways We...	123	Yes, these are essential points. Especially the need to maintain current roads. Many local roads are in poor condition. Also the need for new roads to facilitate easier access to hard to reach areas.
Jackson	The Ways We...	126	Improvements, not new construction should be the driving issue.
Haywood	The Ways We...	315	Need to maintain existing roads. Plan roads to maximize small towns.

Haywood	The Ways We...	316	Mostly - but they need to be prioritized "Protect golden egg" Maintain, enhance existing roads structure. Integrate vision of region/ transportation "where and how do people travel".
Haywood	The Ways We...	321	Do make improvements to the road between Bryson City and Andrews. 3-lane passing areas make turning safer.

## PILLAR #5: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT

### MAJOR THEMES

Focus on the Arts, Crafts, and Culture including Appalachian and Native American Heritage both as a component of the local economy and as a regional attraction.

Address the lack of access to medical facilities in the most rural areas of the region and improve health services.

Improve the quality of education and increase funding.

Address issues of poverty, affordable housing, and aging population.

### PROVISIONAL GOALS

**Arts and Culture** – A region where art and cultural programs and strong institutions play a key economic role, motivate artists to move into the region, and keep visitors longer.

**Social Issues** – Strong, well-coordinated local and regional systems are in place to improve health care and education and to provide affordable housing and services to the region’s aging population.

### PRINCIPLES

The Vision should support culture, arts, and heritage as essential elements of the region’s prosperity.

The Vision should facilitate equitable access to health services, housing, and education.

### ADDITIONAL ACTION AREAS SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS’ COMMENTS

Measure the impact of transportation alternatives on travel time to emergency care destinations.

Market the region’s quality of life, arts and crafts, culture, and heritage.

Identify regional partners to address poverty issues.

Identify regional partners to healthcare solutions.

Address the needs of an aging population.



## RELATED IDEAS

### FOCUS ON THE ARTS, CRAFTS, AND CULTURE INCLUDING APPALACHIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE

County	Original Pillar	Idea #	Ideas
		C50	Presenting and promoting the areas history.
		C51	Yes. Yes. Advancing own history to be preserved.
Graham	The Economy...	1018	Cherokee language signage to attractions.
Haywood	The Economy...	1283	Develop an art economy and promote.
Graham	The Economy...	1018	Cherokee language signage to attractions.
Haywood	The Economy...	1283	Develop an art economy and promote.
Swain	The Place We're...	202	For the most part. Culture should be added to the arts the region needs to collectively decide on a course of action or time will direct the region.
Swain	The Place We're...	206	Arts should be more clearly defined as culture and craft.
Graham	The Place We're...	2	Most definitively! Natural, cultural, and artistic resources are the key to our future.
Jackson	The Place We're...	89	Southern Appalachian Heritage and Native American Heritage are presented as a historical view. Both are current and are moving into the future with continuity and changes of this heritage should be reflected.
Clay	The Place We're...	234	#1 The "authenticity" statement is excellent. The interest in Native American culture is valid and important to Clay County.
Clay	The Place We're...	236	Traditional arts can provide employment opportunities and attract people (retirees) who want the small town ambiance.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	180	Yes. Because Native American Heritage reflects on our natural beauty and local arts.
Graham	The Place We're...	1010	History. Need to promote, preserve, and compile local history.
Graham	The Place We're...	1011	The people. Mountain culture.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1102	Regional marketing with a 'Handmade in America' label.
Clay	The Place We're...	1220	Not sure art is here because of the beauty but because of our asset such as John C. Campbell.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1184	Museums and Local Artist Colonies Trail of Tear Development.
Clay	The Place We're...	225	Growing interest in Appalachian and native history.
Clay	The Place We're...	223	I like having lots of protected Federal land, and would like to see support of arts, culture of Appalachia.

Swain	The Place We're...	202	For the most part. Culture should be added to the arts the region needs to collectively decide on a course of action or time will direct the region.
Swain	The Place We're...	206	Arts should be more clearly defined as culture and craft.
Graham	The Place We're...	2	Most definitively! Natural, cultural, and artistic resources are the key to our future.
Jackson	The Place We're...	89	Southern Appalachian Heritage and Native American Heritage are presented as a historical view. Both are current and are moving into the future with continuity and changes of this heritage should be reflected.
Clay	The Place We're...	234	#1 The "authenticity" statement is excellent. The interest in Native American culture is valid and important to Clay County.
Clay	The Place We're...	236	Traditional arts can provide employment opportunities and attract people (retirees) who want the small town ambiance.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	180	Yes. Because Native American Heritage reflects on our natural beauty and local arts.
Graham	The Place We're...	1010	History. Need to promote, preserve, and compile local history.
Graham	The Place We're...	1011	The people. Mountain culture.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1102	Regional marketing with a 'Handmade in America' label.
Clay	The Place We're...	1220	Not sure art is here because of the beauty but because of our asset such as John C. Campbell.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	1184	Museums and Local Artist Colonies Trail of Tear Development.
Clay	The Place We're...	225	Growing interest in Appalachian and native history.
Clay	The Place We're...	223	I like having lots of protected Federal land, and would like to see support of arts, culture of Appalachia.
Macon	The Places We...	1072	Heritage tourism should or could be developed all across the seven counties by linking communities in a heritage trail corridor. Literary, cultural, and natural resource amenities could be better utilized through linkages and promotion.
Clay	The Places We...	1253	Increased cultural opportunities.
Haywood	The Places We...	1298	Planned festivals schedule, regional advertising combined.
Macon	The Places We...	1072	Heritage tourism should or could be developed all across the seven counties by linking communities in a heritage trail corridor. Literary, cultural, and natural resource amenities could be better utilized through linkages and promotion.
Clay	The Places We...	1253	Increased cultural opportunities.
Haywood	The Places We...	1298	Planned festivals schedule, regional advertising combined.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	171	Arts, music and live theater are needed.

Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	175	The issues of improving and expanding the arts.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1182	Arts in schools and community.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1270	Bring back the art tour in Cherokee and Clay Counties. More music festivals.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	171	Arts, music and live theater are needed.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	175	The issues of improving and expanding the arts.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1182	Arts in schools and community.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1270	Bring back the art tour in Cherokee and Clay Counties. More music festivals.
Jackson	The Economy...	102	The region needs to take advantage of the cultural history of the Eastern Band of Cherokee.
Jackson	The Economy...	102	The region needs to take advantage of the cultural history of the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

### ADDRESS THE LACK OF ACCESS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES

		C12	Healthcare. Keep me from transportation returning to the area.
		C17	More hospitals, clinics, and special doctors.
		C29	Hospitals are a distance away maybe we could address this.
		C23	No one has mentioned our growing drug abuse problem happening regionally, including prescription drug use. Education needs to begin in school at an early age.
		C61	Another grocery store in Robbinsville. Health care access is critical to quality of life for citizens, especial seniors.
Graham	The Economy...	1019	Improve the health services.
Jackson	The Economy...	1118	I am concerned for the lack of hope some people have for the future, which can lead to unhealthy choices like teen pregnancy, alcohol, and drug use. I am also concerned with the growing rate of diabetes and obesity and other chronic diseases that will affect our health and our ability to live with joy and fulfillment.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1193	Healthcare.
Swain	The Economy...	1206	This region has no serious healthcare – another high-tech industry. My private irritant: workers need to smile and provide great customer service.
Haywood	The Economy...	1282	We need to resolve the issue of the small town hospitals and use that for a drawl. It meets our demographics. Create an environment and marketing for health, healthcare, and prevention care.

Swain	The Place We're...	209	I am concerned about other counties, having access to critical care and emergency hospitals.
Graham	The Place We're...	1002	Health care (urgent care).
Graham	The Place We're...	1052	Access to health care (affordable and timely).
Graham	The Place We're...	1055	Need of a close hospital.
Swain	The Place We're...	1195	Healthcare.
Clay	The Places We...	266	Better and increase health care opportunity for local expansion of home health care.
Macon	The Places We...	1075	We need to work as a region to provide equal access to healthcare.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	170	The ability to provide doctors to stay in the communities by having better higher education for their children.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	175	Healthcare is an important and growing issue.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	283	Partly, it feels like we are pretty good in the health care area.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	284	There is a need for more mental health care/ services but we have good hospital access in Clay County.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	31	Yes. Seems access to health care is a major issue. Perhaps a local facility could help address this and the employment concern.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	130	The comments are very centered on health areas as a primary aspect of Quality of Life. I wanted to point out there is a growing number of younger healthier active people that choose to live here because of the quality of life who do not have health care as a priority. I am one of those. Right now it meets my healthcare needs because they are low. I might decide to live somewhere else if that were a priority to me. Quality of life is about what is available to me to support my active life, work and leisure activities.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	133	I do think the Graham County health care availability is a large issue because Graham County is a long way away from any major hospital.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	134	Region is retirement friendly overall. (There are always exceptions.) Health care exists but is not coordinated within the region. Recent negative publicity about partnership between Haywood and Jackson Counties may be impacting responses. ECU is contemplating a dental clinic in Jackson County to serve the entire region.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1182	Attract doctors and medical personnel so they will want to stay in this area.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1264	Healthcare coordination.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1082	Mental health.

Macon	The Quality of Life...	1083	Improve healthcare access, maybe a regional health center for cancer.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1147	Develop a regional medical unit (hospital) more independent from Mission.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	70	Lack of amenities makes it hard to attract physicians.
Clay	The Economy...	253	Lack of medical facilities is an issue some road money to build a hospital and support facilities in Graham County for example.
Graham	The Ways We...	1030	Improve access for medical assistance.
Haywood	The Ways We...	1309	Address healthcare in the region, Now, as our local hospitals are not working.

## IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

		C53	The top of the class (A/B Students Leave after high school). We need program(s) to empower the “average” student to be innovative / creative supplemental income for their families while providing needed services that will never/ or long time be full time work but still needed. Engage the B student/ support income.
Macon	The Place We're...	1090	Expansion of educational resources.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1104	Develop classes for high school students where they can use their cognitive aspect and put it to practical use in the economy.
Clay	The Places We...	259	Improve schools and recreation.
Clay	The Places We...	265	Maintaining and improving public school system.
Macon	The Places We...	1070	Education.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1166	We need more opportunities, but done correctly.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	171	Education opportunities are inadequate.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	175	Expanding higher education opportunities.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	136	Healthcare is important, but there should also be a shift to education. Education is what molds today's children and they need to know they are going in a good direction. As a future teacher, I am terrified of where education is going. So no, there is not enough variety.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1263	More appropriate education at all levels.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1266	Education is a key resource – Need better funding.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	1270	Bring back the art tour in Cherokee and Clay counties. More music festivals.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1084	Education, childcare.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1141	Education – Affordable quality pretty good but lacking in early childcare and pre-K options.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1151	Pre-K and day care facilities. (Access, quality and affordability).

Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1152	Education – Learning about where you live.
Macon	The Economy...	52	Views are different by county and even within our County; regional education resources must be utilized.
Macon	The Economy...	53	Education.
Macon	The Economy...	56	Collaboration on educational issues.
Macon	The Economy...	83	Enhance education.
Macon	The Economy...	87	These comments absolutely reflect what I believe. Education.
Jackson	The Economy...	106	Educational opportunities to target a younger crowd.
Macon	The Place We're...	A12	Young people need to know this place in order to value it.

### **ADDRESS ISSUES OF POVERTY, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, AND AGING POPULATION**

		C32	I question whether housing costs are hugely lower, at least in Macon County. Employers have told me of having trouble attracting workers from other areas like Central Tennessee because housing is so much higher here.
Swain	The Economy...	1207	Better affordable housing and marketing.
Swain	The Place We're...	1203	Housing for low to moderate income.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	75	Affordable housing but not low income;
Macon	The Quality of Life...	1088	Housing that is affordable not just subsidized.
	The Quality of Life...	C59	No. Housing / Real Estate costs are not lower if you look at income.
Haywood	The Place We're...	A39	Establish a comprehensive "Quality of Life" environment including preventive health, lower taxes, and natural beauty.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	A49	Availability of churches to allow new residents to attend the church of their choice.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A55	Please don't leave out those of us who live here. For the quality of life. We see good here, small towns, natural resources, lots of opportunity for outdoor including with our natural resources and alternative modes of transportation. Lot's of us have good jobs and choose to live here even if we telecommute or work from home. We choose to live here because of the amenities to support our hobbies.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1192	Aging population -assisted living facilities.
Clay	The Places We...	258	Aging population.
Clay	The Places We...	265	Aging population.
Jackson	The Places We...	1129	Start new residential - retirement - nursing home type developments (like Deerfield) Givens/ Brevard College walk "progressive" life care.

Macon	The Places We...	1074	Home for the aging, assisted living complex.
Macon	The Places We...	1075	Retirement living.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1187	Senior healthcare needs and extended care.
Haywood	The Places We...	1294	How, with the changing demographics - older residents - impact the environment, health needs and transportation.
		C14	No one has mentioned our growing drug abuse problem happening regionally, including prescription drug use. Education needs to begin in school at an early age.
		C55	Yes, Economic must address poverty and its related issues like hunger and domestic violence. Ensure data is collaborated from legitimate sources.
		C60	Yes. Hunger, food stamp program does not work. Our citizens and children need more access to healthy food.
Graham	The Place We're...	1053	Access to food.
Haywood	The Place We're...	290	Utilize the proximity of GSMNP to INC.
Macon	The Places We...	1070	Child care.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1183	Transportation, Education, Arts, Job creation, healthcare.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1142	Job opportunities, community, culture, small town, lack of congestion, healthcare, wellness, mobility and obesity.
Graham	The Ways We...	1032	Food insecurity and form-to-form economic planning.
Graham	The Ways We...	1033	Before deciding on a mass transportation system, what decisions are needed to establish how poverty can be removed and quality of life improved.

## PILLAR 5: THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE EXPECT

COMMENT CARDS

### WHAT WE KNOW

- ★ The seven-county region has relatively low incomes, which is consistent with broader trends for rural areas. The problem of low incomes is mitigated by lower housing costs, but exacerbated by the shift in employment opportunities from manufacturing to tourism.
- ★ Population growth is outpacing the region's ability to support it, leading the region to lag behind national rates. Substantial investments were made in the County...
- ★ Economic development has been a challenge for the region, and the region's reputation for tourism is not enough to support the region's growth.
- ★ The region's aging population is a challenge, and the region's health care system is not equipped to meet the needs of an aging population.

### WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ Access to quality affordable housing is an issue that should be addressed.
- ★ We need policies to protect our mountain, small town character.
- ★ A lot of younger folks want to farm but can't afford the land.
- ★ Reliable access to quality health care is a challenge across demographic segments. With the low population density, it's difficult for rural hospitals to succeed.
- ★ An aging population is going to require more services, including more housing and mobility options and expanded out-of-county health care.



### HOW

...think the success of this plan would...  
...highlight the existing assets...  
...natural assets, the culture...  
...assets, the small town...  
...the new people to...  
...with those assets...  
...that the bus...  
...ability to...  
...in place...

## ★ SECTION 3 – PILLAR #6: THE WAYS WE GET THINGS DONE ★

This chapter includes preliminary ideas on how to implement the regional vision. These ideas will be revisited and added to during

the second round of Opt-In Community Workshops scheduled for February 2014.

### IDEAS ABOUT REGIONAL COOPERATION

		C33	How can we establish regional vision without giving up local authority to implement it? What region has gone through this process and come out of it with a more desirable region.
Swain	The Economy...	1212	A regional community to oversee certain activities. Natural advertising for the area.
Clay	The Economy...	1240	Better-coordinated efforts by City, County, and property owners in our downtown area to attract businesses.
Haywood	The Economy...	1284	How to make it happen? In a sense, I don't see much new here. What's missing is the above. (Being separated from the other 7 counties and belonging to a different bioregion).
Haywood	The Economy...	1287	"Think Regionally " "Act Locally"
Jackson	The Place We're...	1109	Regional leadership void.
Clay	The Place We're...	1225	Local cooperation among local government and the businesses that create jobs.
Clay	The Places We...	265	Promote better co-operation and communities with surrounding counties.
Jackson	The Places We...	1127	Better communications between jurisdictions and entities. Counties and the tribe need to take regular summits for leaders to share ideas, solutions and ways to collaborate. Leadership needs to put parochial interests aside and work for regional consistency and progress. Southwestern North Carolina needs to be marketed as a tourists and business area.
Macon	The Places We...	1071	Having the towns get-together occasionally to get new ideas; water, sewer, town & county.
Cherokee	The Places We...	1188	The tribe's chance to be the agent of economic recovery, where they were they are forcibly removed is an ironic, greatly sensitive matter.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	282	Regional Organization, (like southwestern Commission) only add complexities to problems that need to be addressed. The county government should be the group (leadership) to address the problems at our table.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1151	Remove silos and work more as a region.
Macon	The Economy...	50	Points are valid but more long range (airports) or narrow (natural gas); identity, cooperation and strong towns are accurate for good starting point.
Macon	The Economy...	53	Coordination between towns/counties.

Macon	The Economy...	55	Towns and counties must work together for planned economic development; jobs.
Cherokee	The Economy...	193	If regional cooperation is feasible, then should be strengths is a regional collaboration. First the group would need to gain some consensus on the regions strength and needs relative to economical development.
Haywood	The Economy...	295	Yes generally, junkyard comment not fit for Haywood municipalities. There is a cohesive regional identity but it has not been fully developed branded and marketed. Need to move from competition inside the region to competition with other regions, states and globally.
Macon	The Economy...	A2	Communication between County and locals regarding regional needs, both directions.
Haywood	The Economy...	A7	I am glad that this is being done, however, I am dubious that the seven counties can identify and implement a unified marketing plan. Don't stop just knowing this is difficult.
Clay	The Place We're...	A23	I have been Clay County Small Farm Facilitator and found it imperative for our County to hook up to the bigger world and other regions.
Haywood	The Ways We...	322	Add improved coordination between County public transportation. Affects passenger volume in cars (E.g. RideNC.org).
Cherokee	The Ways We...	1175	Region goes beyond 7 counties and issues should be considered as such (i.e.. Georgia and Tennessee Corridors)

## ★ SECTION 4 – GENERAL COMMENTS ★

The comments grouped in this section are divided into three categories: comments related to the “What We Heard” handout for each Pillar, comments related to government, property rights, and leadership, and comments about the process itself.

### COMMENTS ON THE “WHAT WE HEARD HANDOUT”

		C27	Re: Graham County CTP Vision: Goal statements. The questions were too “generic”. If I agreed with “multi-modal transportation” being important, and place a green sticker, you may take it that I support Corridor K when I was really only agreeing with pedestrian or bike transportation. Lumped the questions together – Make them leading questions. I ended up keeping my stickers.
		C36	These ideas I hope will be listened to.
Cherokee	The Economy...	1158	No mountain of data regarding demographic changes. Corridor to the west.
Haywood	The Economy...	1288	We know this, “Knowledge into action”.
Graham	The Place We’re...	5	I do believe the collective comments are key component of this pillar. The issues covered were direct and covered the needed areas.
Swain	The Place We’re...	204	The Central Park statement should be reworded to reflect the fact – a million can reach Bryson city in 3-8 hours time.
Swain	The Place We’re...	207	I do not agree with the “complacency” statement.
Graham	The Place We’re...	38	What does “real thing” mean in the last bullet in the left column?
Macon	The Place We’re...	47	There are value judgments in the comments that distort the discussion.
Macon	The Place We’re...	78	They touch on what we as permanent residents want or we wouldn’t be here; second home residents do not impact the economy for a boost.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	88	The above comments provide a general framework to build upon, however, an omission would be a high biodiversity of plant and animal life.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	91	Culture needs to be added to the arts. No mention of biodiversity of natural life and how disturbing it could be bad. Realize how capitalization of assets means different things to different people.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	92	I believe the mentioned items are related to Quality of Life are existing and in good form. We also need to address the issues that allow people to live here.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	96	They reflect impossible issues and need to be more specific. I.e. Add recreation, define culture (historical and cultural).
Jackson	The Place We’re...	97	Add Community College and Blue Ridge Parkway to assets.
Jackson	The Place We’re...	98	Better define “complacency” statement.

Clay	The Place We're...	233	Some do and some don't. Deep six the "central park" analogy immediately. This is not just about arts, yet, almost 1/3 of your statements are focused on arts.
Swain	The Place We're...	1200	I found most issues that concern me to be represented. I understand the other table was working on the future "wish list" but I would like to ask for broadband access. Employee training, affordable housing, quality land management.
Graham	The Place We're...	37	Why isn't downtown Robbinsville mentioned as an asset in the last bullet?
Graham	The Place We're...	39	These aren't Graham County concerns. This is the region but not us.
Cherokee	The Places We...	151	Yes Important issues but they DO NOT reflect the opinions of the population.
Graham	The Places We...	22	This is a mixed bag. Some of these are on target and others completely off base. We have discussed those differences and out table leader should have noted them.
Graham	The Places We...	23	Some of these statements reflect the important issues for a regional vision. Those that are not important to me are listed below: "From a development standpoint the lack of regulations..." "We don't need all that crap..." "We need more restaurants and big stores..."
Macon	The Places We...	60	Don't really agree. Regional issues are more complicated due to geography and in differences of opinion/cultures, i.e. Wal-Mart.
Cherokee	The Places We...	155	Yes it also reflects the whole vision of the North Carolina Step Process.
Haywood	The Places We...	299	Agree with all except the conflicting statements. "We don't want cookie cutter crap" but "we need more chain stores and restaurants". Such extreme statements are mutually exclusive. One or the other statement needs to be in plan, or we need to refocus that statement to say something about balance between crap and uniqueness.
Haywood	The Places We...	301	They're a reasonable start but hardly comprehensive. There are a couple that are not even present in Haywood County.
Clay	The Places We...	254	Cannot address specifics to snowbird and or Santeetlah + I am surprised they are listed as we are to consider the region. That said, they are general statement I concur with.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	178	There were other issues that could be addressed.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	179	I think comments represent a narrow vision or description of quality of life, representative of a small demographic (relocated retirees) and do not address the needs of young or working people.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	278	No. I feel the natural beauty and gentle minded communities contribute greatly to our quality of life. (Good schools, farm fresh food, clean air, clean water, and livable wage jobs).

Clay	The Quality of Life...	280	Very little, we don't have the same issues as Graham County. We have closer medical centers and more choices. Clay County is more retirement friendly.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	281	These mostly concern Graham County not Clay County or TEA – unused land is provided for young emerging farmers. Community gardens for poor and retired.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	284	Not really too much emphasis on healthcare. Quality of life includes schools/education, access to enrichment and recreation activities, small town atmosphere, clean water and air.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	32	Mostly agree. Other focus needs to be placed on other issues besides healthcare and transportation.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	34	Partly. The issue of medical service is a question that is too wide for a quick answer. There were not enough issues dealing with our natural resources.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	71	No, Graham County is more isolated than Macon. We have better healthcare access, transportation and education, amenities.
Macon	The Quality of Life...	76	Many items are implemented in this County; lack of things to do in this County for residents; cost of living in comparison to wages paid, land/housing is not an option; mental health care is an issue if you need treatment, one must leave the County and create a burden on the family.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	129	They are very focused on Graham County and Healthcare. Not broad enough or inclusive. No – They do not reflect the issues. Subjective depending on age. Diversity of age important.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	132	I think most of these comments were site specific to Graham County as one might expect. Other counties will have their own unique issues. From a regional perspective we need to look more broadly. Issues such as environment and land use, opportunities for young people (jobs that pay a decent wage), Cultural, shopping, and restaurants.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1177	All of the points on this pillar fundamental to a better quality of life in any county of any region or area in the US.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	1178	Many issues I feel are very important were not addressed.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	1149	How is it not retirement friendly? I find all comments false with my experience with retirees.
Macon	The Economy...	84	The discussion was too broad and non-specific. Vague. Still valuable and needed.
Macon	The Economy...	85	This does not reflect what I believe. More emphasis on technology.
Macon	The Economy...	86	A good beginning – economic growth – communication/community centered vision, not reinventing the wheel.

Cherokee	The Economy...	141	Agree with some comments, but our unique area creates questions about most and individual viewpoints that are not really listed.
Cherokee	The Economy...	195	Most but not all. Some need better definitions.
Cherokee	The Economy...	197	It may leave us with a weaker voice. There is no collaboration. It depends on what we are changing the dynamic to.
Clay	The Economy...	245	I am divided between most issues. I do not agree on ¾ths of the issues. Our community is made up of people who have moved here for the safety, friendliness and quiet tranquility of the mountains, lake, and rural nature.
Graham	The Economy...	A1	There are too many concepts in each statement. Please simplify... Maybe bullet the points under each major point.
Clay	The Economy...	A5	It was very informative.
Haywood	The Place We're...	A10	I think you can combine 1 + 5 and 3 + 4.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A30	The 3 <sup>rd</sup> down has strong standing with me. Learn from other counties. The trial terror that was done by others should be taken into consideration.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	A54	Hard to narrow this down to four options.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A51	Go back to step one. Define a broad vision of Quality of Life that encompasses the major categories of everyone here.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A52	Don't forget the basics that we have now and take for granted (like safe water and low crime). If we didn't have them people would think of them more in terms of Quality of Life.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A54	What is the quality of life? What are the specifics? To the areas that we are ranking? 1,3and 4 are the same category on the ranking list or not? I do not find many of the issues relevant to the present day Jackson County.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A59	These might be important to some counties, but they are not important to our County!
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	A63	More of a focus on a working definition of quality of life to allow more discussion.
Clay	The Quality of Life...	A64	Job creation and healthcare are not the only two issues related to quality of life.
Jackson	The Ways We...	A68	You need more information to make informed decisions.
Clay	The Ways We...	A71	Don't like any but the last.
Clay	The Ways We...	A72	Leave it as it is.
Macon	The Ways We...	67	All comments are good and most would help the region.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	160	I am not familiar to adequately to intelligently discuss this issue.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	164	Yes. Not sure about east Tennessee opportunities.
Cherokee	The Ways We...	167	Include "wish list" of improvements to not miss other opportunities.

Haywood	The Ways We...	312	Active transportation was not mentioned.
---------	----------------	-----	--

### COMMENTS RELATED TO GOVERNMENT, PROPERTY RIGHTS, AND LEADERSHIP

		C6	State politics guarantee that WNC cannot compete with Charlotte, Raleigh, and RTP. The help they give is partly designed to keep us out of the competition.
		C30	Can the Appalachian Hwy funds in reserve be committed to roadway improvements within the 7 counties if corridor K is not built?
Clay	The Economy...	1235	Protect property rights. Too much government intervention. Have citizens of Clay County vote. No regional governance.
Haywood	The Economy...	1280	Taxes - State. Taxes Fuel (high). Gasoline.
Clay	The Place We're...	222	The comment on the Federal lands weakening the tax base is simplistic. County commissioners with vision could create means to use taxes for useful purpose, as Union County has done with the special local option sales tax enabling the creation of a farmers market. The Federal acquisition of land in the 1930's defined the environment we live in, protecting the forest in the uplands and taking out the low land farms when the lakes were created.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	182	Others see it as a loss of local control so outsiders can implement their vision on the region.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	183	Concerned about the regionalism - decisions being made by unelected representatives with no accountability to the citizens.
Graham	The Place We're...	1005	Property usage on government lands.
Graham	The Place We're...	1007	How to increase tax base.
Graham	The Place We're...	1008	Local logging on forestland.
Graham	The Place We're...	1051	How can we use our resources when the "Federal Government" has so many restrictions we can't even cut a tree in Graham County? We have timber dying that could be used and can't be used.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1101	Maintaining private property - Equal treatment by government.
Jackson	The Place We're...	1105	Leasing of federal land for farming.
Jackson	The Places We...	112	Our counties have the funds. Use them wisely. No more "dog parks".
Cherokee	The Places We...	1186	17 trillion in debt there is NO free money.
Haywood	The Places We...	300	How do you make some of these ideas come into reality? For example, how do Haywood County and other Counties and EBCI capture the passing through tourists? Or get reasonable development rules and regulations.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	33	We need to find a way to let the whole County have a part in these decisions.

Cherokee	The Economy...	197	So all plans must go through our commissioners and the people of Cherokee County.
Clay	The Economy...	242	A lot of what was written is totally off. People come here to live in a peaceful quiet area. Many of us do not want the Southwestern Commission in our lives. It is out of Agenda 21 and unacceptable.
Haywood	The Economy...	292	Yes - General agreement - Action. Regional Commission, Mayors, and Town Managers.
Clay	The Place We're...	A19	Concerned about regional governance and an unelected board making decisions for us without any say from us.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A38	Keep all control within the County.
Clay	The Ways We...	A73	I realize people want bike trails - if tax money is used - no. Our tax money being used for special interest is wrong.
Clay	The Ways We...	A74	No more taxes - no more government. Yes liberty and individual rights.
Graham	The Ways We...	1028	US Forest Service owns very high percentage of our County regarding roads, forests, land use, etc.
Clay	The Ways We...	1256	I don't want regional governance for regional vision. I don't object to local government representatives. Being in tune with the vision of neighbors. But want to keep control at home.
Clay	The Ways We...	1260	I feel jobs are an important issue, roads are fine. If this is a project being recommended by the government, we don't need this. They are in control too much.

## COMMENTS RELATED TO THE PROCESS

		C9	Any mention of property rights should be paired with property responsibilities. These responsibilities should be the starting point for discussion!
		C20	Each of the pillars discussed via your power point presentation should reflect pictures from each unique county. I.e. Graham County should have Graham County images.
		C21	Need to improve your publicity effort for next meetings.
		C22	Improve publicity: 1) Please consider having the draft Vision Framework printed in the Graham Star Newspaper. 70% of the people here do not have computers, and 2) With next meetings publicize with newspaper ads and posters weeks before the event. We do a mailing to Farmers (60) at the end of the month, re calendar of events.

		C31	Facilitator told us what all "we want" at our set of meeting - but shouldn't have. He instead should ask before making statements. He also seemed biased in automatic favor of the road from these statements. The statements were poorly veiled biased statements. No anti- corridor K statements. All pro corridor -K. He may not have intended to be bias but NCDOT seems to be reflexively jumping toward building a new road. At every opportunity. The meetings, which always seem to look at the same ole things, need to be more innovative. People need to realize the spiritual resources of this area and that they are what brings people to this area. People find the soaring trees and Mountains and roaring streams inviting and a big road would damage such assets. The area should capitalize on its natural landscape, make tourists jobs based on it not destroy it as corridor K would.
		C35	This process asks us to rank in order things we specifically disagree with.
		C37	Meeting should last no more than 90 minutes.
		C38	This meeting lasted longer than it needed. I feel it would have been completed in less time.
		C39	This presentation was way longer then necessary. It could have easily been made in 1 hour yet, It was drowned out dramatically.
		C40	Figure out a way to do this in 1.5. Hours.
		C41	Very Interesting workshop. Need to do more of these types of meetings.
		C42	You did not have the "movers and shakers" of the community - Some were there, but not enough.
		C43	Concerned about an Atlanta firm grounded in the principles of New urbanism (from their website). This is a rural area. We want to keep the small town rural feel. We are 17 trillion in debt. Why are we spending \$1.3 million on a "study"?
		C47	I feel the point of this meeting and future results have been poorly explained. What will happen after there is a regional vision?
Cherokee	The Economy...	1157	More demographics and statistics.
Swain	The Place We're...	208	Stewardship. Poverty and education must also be major issues addressed. Issues are somewhat "narrow in focus". Good ones but need to be broader in scope.
Macon	The Place We're...	44	For the most part - these comments should be evaluated, researched, and comprehensive plans made as to what is emphasized, mix of preservation and economic growth.

Clay	The Place We're...	237	If we don't do it, someone else will do it for us? Atlanta consulting firm? Consultant for Vision from NY? Many of us moved here from the big city for the quiet, small community feel. Leave us alone!
Clay	The Place We're...	238	I believe the vision of the group was too constricted. Most of the people were transplants who wanted to focus on why they came here.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	139	In general these ideas reflect the feelings of the peoples values that live here. Which are the only visions for progress that should be considered in the regional plan. Not someone can remake us into his or her idea of progress.
Graham	The Place We're...	1012	There are only a few native Graham countians at the meeting. Most participants have moved here.
Swain	The Place We're...	1199	How will success be measured
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A56	This information does not give you the information you seek. Not the right choices. Any information you get from this is going to be skewed and not accurate.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A57	You cannot rank these. You have 3 categories (jobs, health and travel) you need to subgroup and rank. This section needs to be focused on Broad areas - What comprises quality of life.
Jackson	The Quality of Life...	A58	The ranking system you used does not give you accurate information. When you ask questions you cant support at all. - You have invalid information.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	A60	I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process. It makes it truly a democratic process to the stakeholders in this region.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	A61	Confusing format for the ranking.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	A62	Ranking system was not very clear.
Clay	The Ways We...	1261	No charges without consideration. Individual rights! What makes a rural area is the individual not a collective.
Cherokee	The Places We...	159	Number the comments.
Cherokee	The Quality of Life...	177	Not sure I'm in favor of the whole project. The ideas I saw/ read make sense, however I have a strong concern that a Federal program that will/could eventually corral us (sustainable) into small planned groups/ community. It reminds me a bit of Agenda 21. Also It would also be great to have a popular vote on its implementation.
Cherokee	The Economy...	146	The time spend on this workshop is too short.
Cherokee	The Economy...	148	Found this process a waste of time. 22 items to cover, covered just 3. Do you really want our feedback and input?

Clay	The Economy...	246	I think of a representative group of Clay County residents polled, the +'s an -'s of each comment, you would find many who do not believe these comments reflect their views. But, items such as broadband and cell phone are key.
Clay	The Economy...	251	Comments are scattered. Several could be combined. Is this a regional identity? We WNC people who live here like the way it is. So, what ever is over heard, keep this in mind.
Clay	The Economy...	A3	Allow time for decisions. Use less time defending. Have more perspective of problems.
Clay	The Economy...	A4	We came here for the peace and property rights that exist now and would like to leave it that way.
Clay	The Economy...	A6	Please clarify by way of introduction a "Who Is Who" of the facilitators present at the meeting, and clarify what a "pillar" is.
Cherokee	The Place We're...	A8	Totally opposed to the regional plan. Let the citizens decide in their own community.
Clay	The Place We're...	A20	Prefer strategies and visions to be from the local area, not outside consultants.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A33	It seems the outcomes of this meeting were determined before the meeting took place.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A34	I felt as if the questions were leading.
Cherokee	The Places We...	A37	Better publicize the next meeting.
Haywood	The Places We...	A40	We need to get the youth and low-income locals via church meetings, and get their input.
Haywood	The Places We...	A41	What's unfortunate about these type sessions is that participants are not complete representatives of our communities. We have not heard from the youth, from the hard scrabbled natives who are in most need of the benefits of planned economic development.
Haywood	The Places We...	A42	These sessions are visited by reasonably well informed and highly educated, generally socio-economically well-off individuals who do not always represent the views needs or understandings of those who most need the benefits of economical development.
Graham	The Quality of Life...	A47	Involve every one.



# APPENDIX: CORRIDOR K



## CORRIDOR K HISTORY

Corridor K is part of the Appalachian Development Highway System, created by Congress in 1965 to establish a network of modern highways throughout Appalachia. Approximately 85% of the proposed highways have been built, with only a few difficult corridors like Corridor K that remain incomplete. Corridor K connects Cleveland, Tennessee and I-75 with Dillsboro, North Carolina and U.S. Hwy. 23.

The 20-mile stretch of Corridor K between Andrews and Almond is intended to relocate a segment of U.S. Highway 74 out of the Nantahala Gorge and improve access to Graham County and Robbinsville. This segment is about 20 miles long. NCDOT previously proposed that much of these improvements consist of a four-lane highway with a median on new right-of-way. The proposed route crosses two mountain ridges, numerous streams, National Forest lands, and areas of cultural significance.

NCDOT completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in 1984 for the entire 20-mile stretch of Corridor K that remained to be completed. In 1995, the FEIS was reevaluated for the section from Stecoah to Almond, which was subsequently constructed as a four-lane highway.

A Supplemental FEIS was begun in 1998 to reevaluate alternative alignments and environmental impacts for the segment from Robbinsville to Stecoah. A Draft Supplemental FEIS was approved in 2008, but approval of a Final Supplemental FEIS and a Record of Decision was delayed due to concerns by federal and state agencies and environmental groups over the potential benefits and environmental impacts of the project. Additionally, the dedicated funding stream to complete the ADHS system has become uncertain.

DRAFT

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Recommendation 44 of this plan is to “Complete Corridor K improvements from Stecoah to the county line (and beyond to Andrews) as described in the Graham County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.” The Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) document provides greater detail about Corridor K recommendations, but this appendix describes a number of details that were discussed and explored at the weeklong Community Workshop that were not able to be documented in the CTP. Many of these discussions occurred at the Transportation Focus Group meeting on February 4, 2014.

Participants in the Focus Group restated concerns about the proposed Corridor K improvements, including its estimated high cost, impacts to important natural and cultural resources, and bypassing of Robbinsville and Stecoah. Community members and NCDOT representatives agreed that it would be necessary to balance the goals of connectivity, access, and safety while preserving the landscapes and environment that are so important. To achieve this balance, participants explored several alternatives.

A number of challenges with the existing roads along the route designated as Corridor K were identified, as shown in the map on page 87. Two alternative



*Participants at the February 4, 2014 Transportation Focus Group discuss Corridor K*

routes were discussed during the Focus Group and are shown in the map on page 88. The Tatham Gap route shows the route previously proposed by NCDOT and would include more miles of new road and have more impact on natural and cultural resources, in particular the Trail of Tears. The Jutts Creek route was proposed as an alternative to lessen the potential construction costs as well as impacts to environmental and cultural resources. Near Stecoah, a number of concerns were identified with the previously proposed route, including a costly tunnel, impact to wetlands, bypassing of Stecoah, and impact to the Appalachian Trail. Improvements to the existing route were discussed as a less impactful alternative and could still meet the ADHS goal of 50 mph average travel speed between destinations. Some of the pros and cons of each route are shown in the table on the following page. Also shown is a table comparing estimated distances, travel times, and speeds on each route.

A number of context-sensitive design considerations were reviewed during the workshop, examples of which are shown on page 89. Participants agreed that these considerations could be applied to any of the Corridor K options to lessen or avoid adverse environmental impacts, reduce costs, highlight cultural and scenic resources, and improve highway operation and safety.

A set of Corridor K guiding principles, created based on public comments, emphasizes a balanced and context-sensitive approach. Needs for highway access, connectivity, safety, and multi-modal travel should be met by solutions that protect and respect natural and cultural resources, while also enhancing and showcasing the county's special qualities and assets. The guiding principles are as follows:

**TRAVEL TIME: ROBBINSVILLE TO ANDREWS**

	<b>Existing Route</b>	<b>Jutts Creek Route</b>	<b>Tatham Gap Route</b>
TOTAL DISTANCE	20 miles	15 miles	10 miles
TRAVEL TIME	28 minutes	18 minutes	12 minutes
AVERAGE SPEED	44 mph	49 mph	50 mph

**TRAVEL TIME: STECOAH TO ROBBINSVILLE**

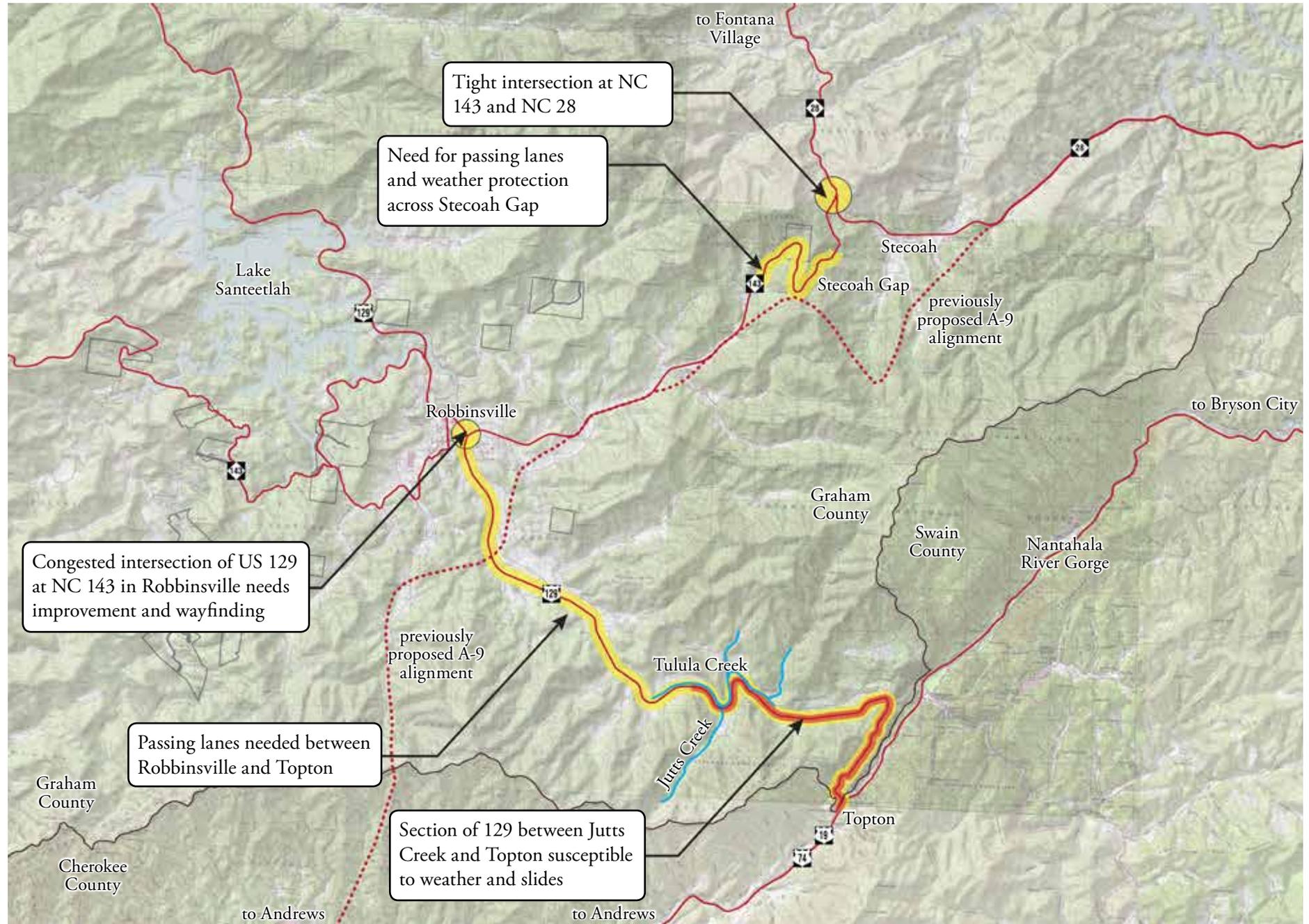
	<b>Existing Route</b>	<b>Improvements to Existing Route</b>	<b>Proposed New Route</b>
TOTAL DISTANCE	11 miles	11 miles	10 miles
TRAVEL TIME	14 minutes	14 minutes	12 minutes
AVERAGE SPEED	48 mph	49 mph	52 mph

- ◆ Meet purpose and need, but avoid excessive or over-designed highways.
- ◆ Comply with design guidelines and criteria, but remain flexible.
- ◆ Provide adequate service and safety for motor vehicles while also supporting other highway users.
- ◆ Avoid adverse impacts to natural and cultural resources. Lay lightly on the land.
- ◆ Celebrate the setting, history and culture of place through amenities (like scenic turnouts). Maintain a high level of visual quality.

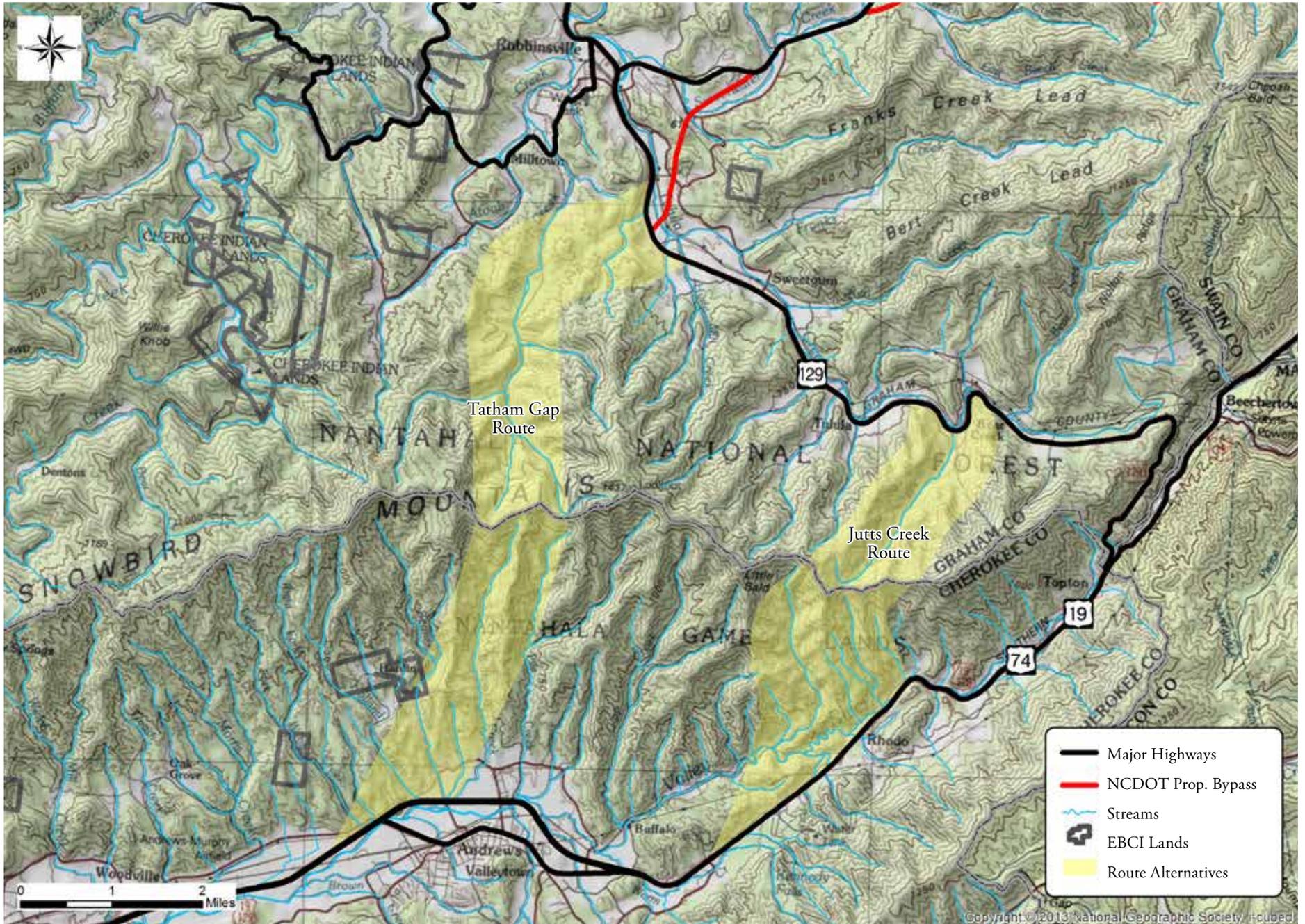
**PROS & CONS OF ROBBINSVILLE TO ANDREWS ROUTES**

<b>Improve Existing Route</b>
NO ADDITIONAL ROUTES (CON)
SUSCEPTIBLE TO WEATHER/LANDSLIDES (CON)
LOWEST COSTS/IMPACTS (PRO)
SHORTER TERM FOR IMPLEMENTATION (PRO)
<b>Tatham Gap Route</b>
CREATES ADDITIONAL ROUTES (PRO)
HIGHEST IMPROVEMENT IN TRAVEL TIME (PRO)
HIGHEST COSTS & IMPACTS (CON)
LONGEST TERM FOR IMPLEMENTATION (CON)
<b>Jutts Creek Route</b>
MODERATE ROUTE CHOICE IMPROVEMENTS (PRO/CON)
MODERATE TO HIGH IMPROVEMENT IN TRAVEL TIME (PRO/CON)
MODERATE COSTS & IMPACTS (PRO)
SHORTER TERM FOR IMPLEMENTATION (PRO)

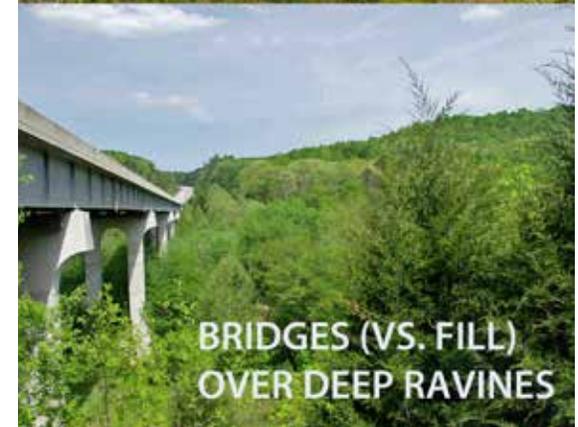
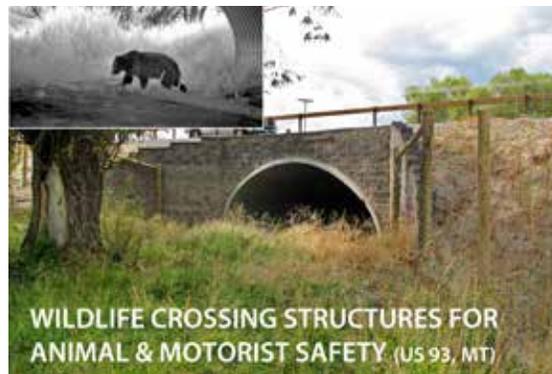
# CORRIDOR K ROUTE CHALLENGES

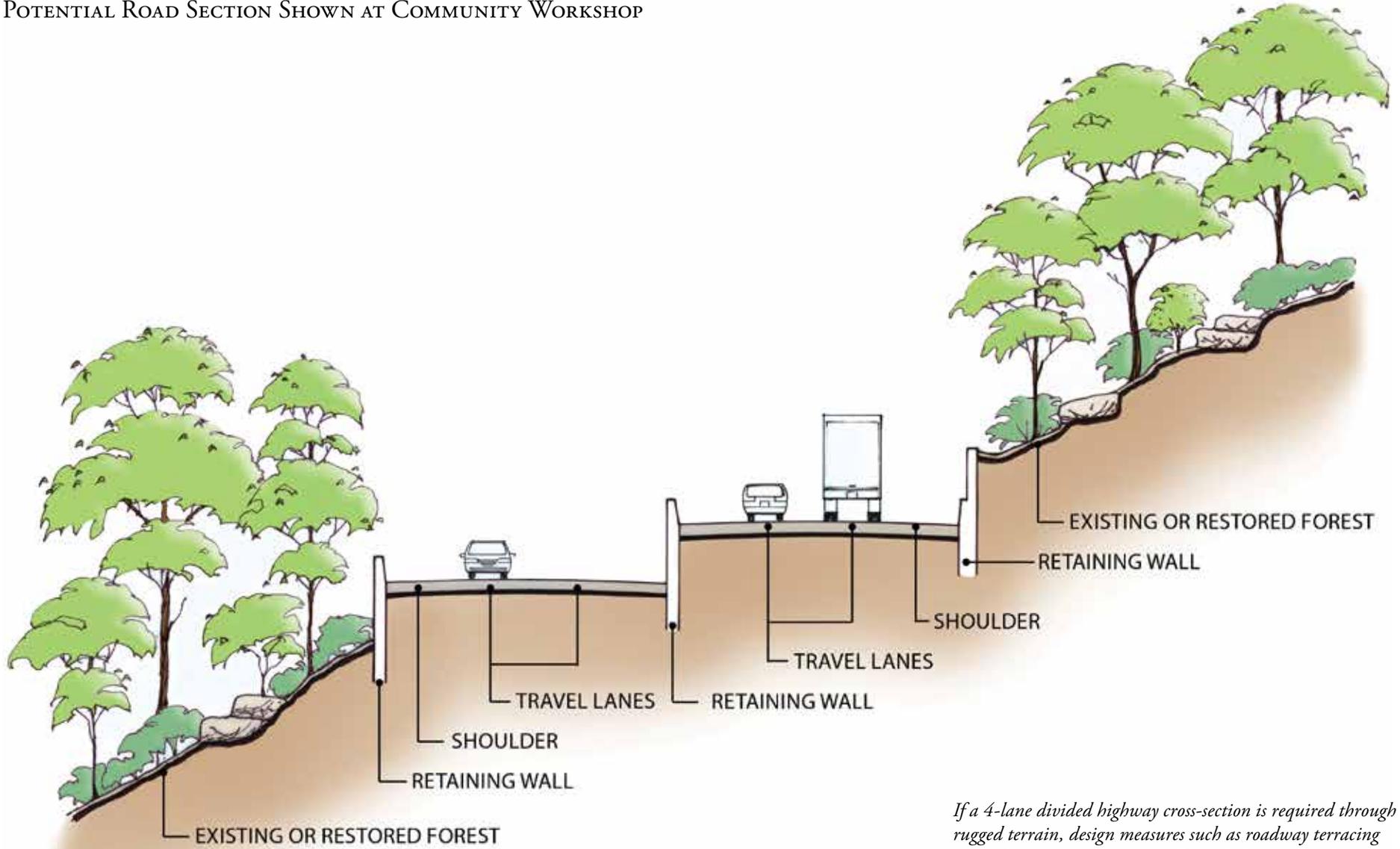


CORRIDOR K ROUTE ALTERNATIVES: ROBBINSVILLE TO ANDREWS



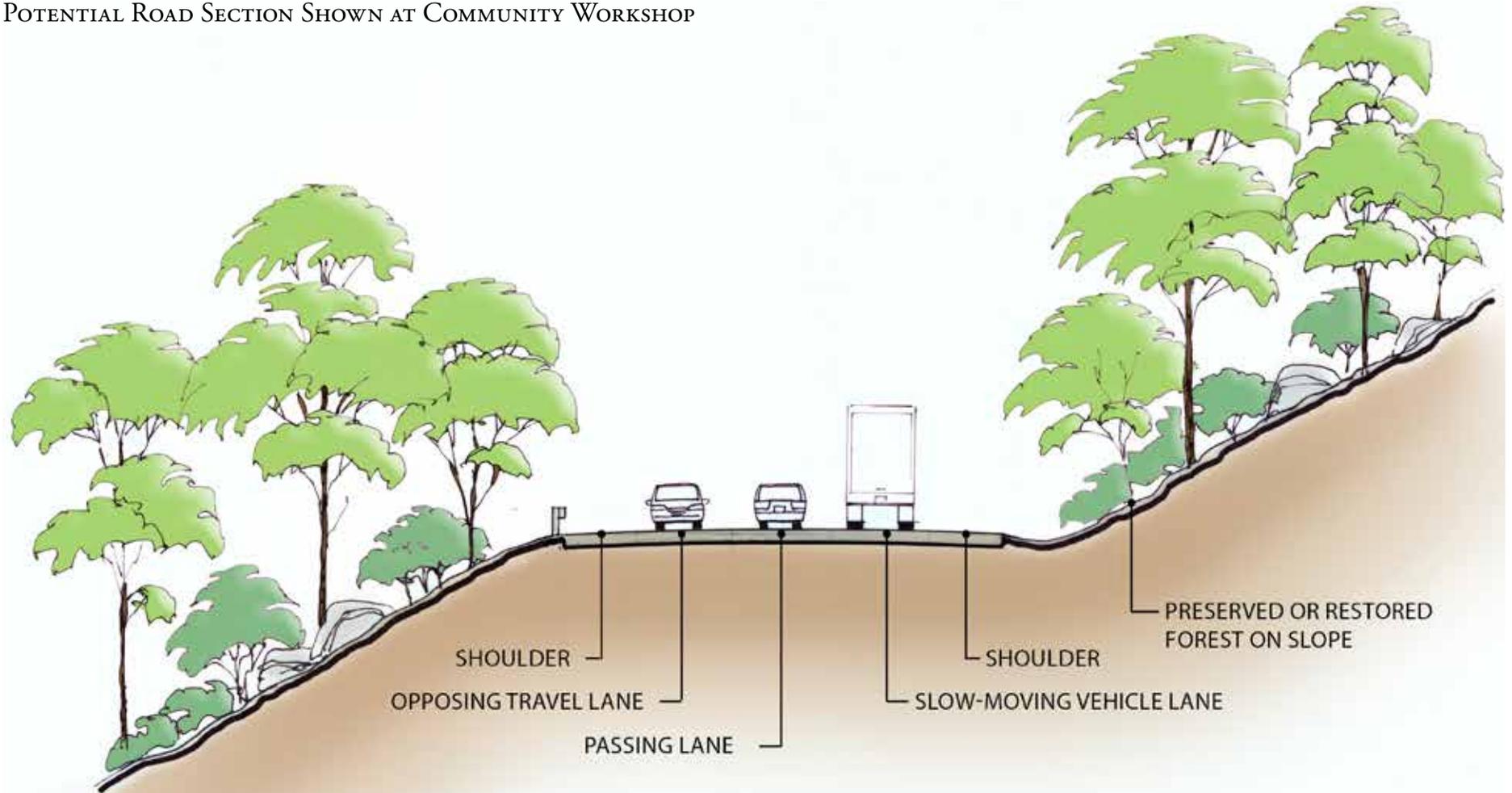
CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN EXAMPLES SHOWN AT COMMUNITY WORKSHOP





### 4-LANE HIGHWAY TERRACED INTO STEEP SLOPE

*If a 4-lane divided highway cross-section is required through rugged terrain, design measures such as roadway terracing and bifurcation, retaining walls, and eliminating the conventional wide grassy median strip can reduce damage to adjacent forests, streams, cultural sites and other resources. The restoration and maintenance of native forest plants on highway cut and fill slopes can also play a significant role in lessening the adverse impacts of road cuts.*



## EXISTING HIGHWAY IMPROVED WITH PASSING LANES & SHOULDERS

*Modest improvements to an existing 2-lane highway (such as US 129 and NC 143) could significantly improve connectivity, operation and safety without incurring the high costs and adverse environmental impacts of a new 4-lane median divided highway on a new alignment. Improvements such as passing lanes, widened shoulders, guardrail, wildlife crossing structures, access control, and slide stabilization can increase a 2-lane highway's performance.*

