



Franklin
1855 *North Carolina*

DRAFT
*Comprehensive
Land Use Plan*



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Dr. Tom Harris- Town of Franklin Planning Board Chairman
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INTRODUCTION





INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Organization

In 2018, the Town of Franklin embarked on an effort to create a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (Land Use Plan) to bring together the community around a shared vision for the future of the Town. While the Town of Franklin's growth and economic base has been stable, it is understood that a strategy is needed to support the continued success of the Town and provide a roadmap for how to address major issues. This plan builds on prior efforts, such as the Town of Franklin Principles of Growth, the Downtown Franklin Master Plan and BikeWalk Franklin.

The Plan is framed around key goals and strategies related to land use and appearance, downtown, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and transportation and infrastructure. The first chapter of this report provides an introduction of the planning process, subsequent chapters detail background analysis, recommendations and implementation steps.

Process

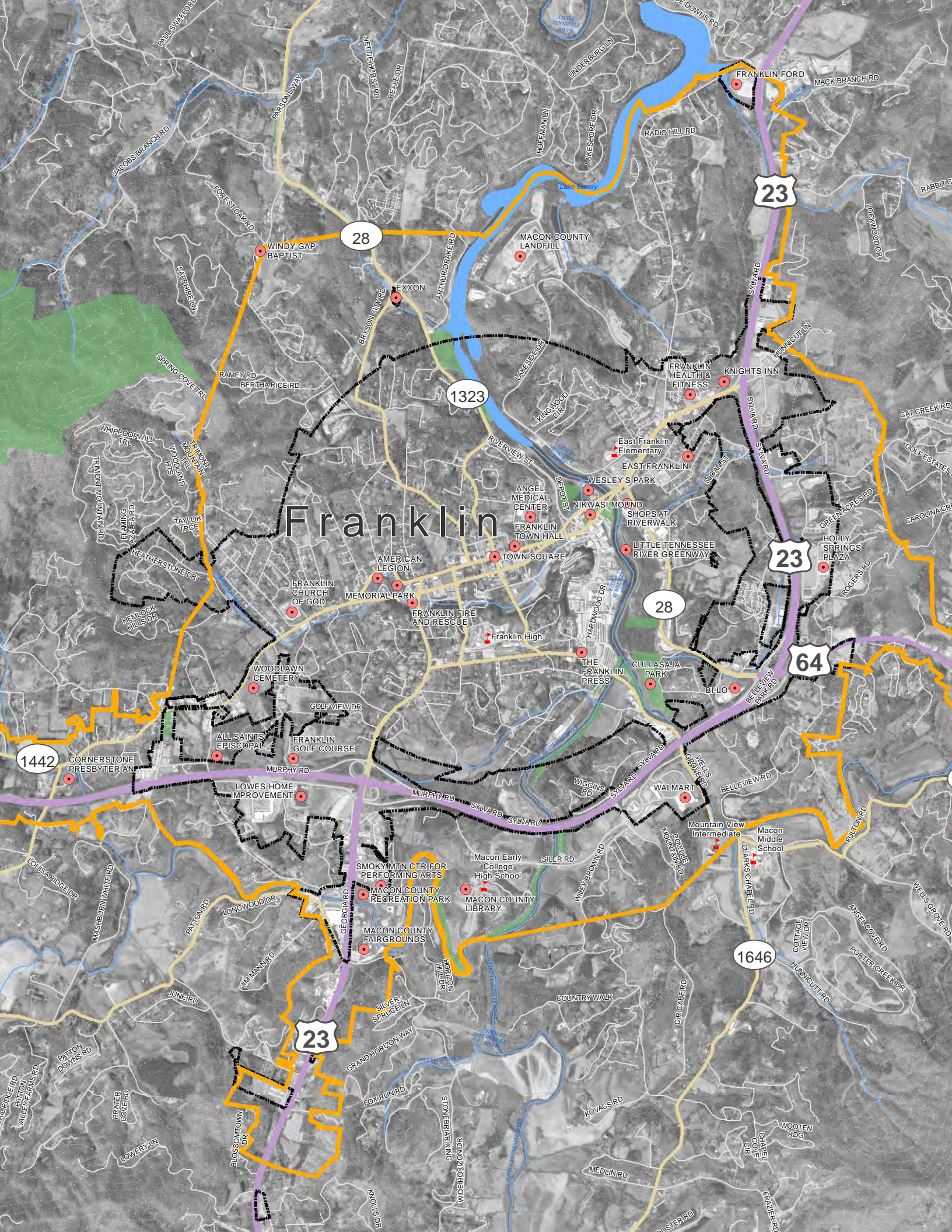
The Franklin Comprehensive Land Use Plan followed a five-phase planning process over the course of 12 months. The initiative began in February of 2019 with the creation of a steering committee and a series of kickoff meetings between Town staff, the consultant team, and the steering committee. In May, a series of stakeholder interviews were conducted, as well as several study area tours, and the second steering committee meeting. The information gathered informed the direction of the Public Charrette which was held in July of 2019 over the course of 4 days. The Charrette was a series of intensive public meetings and involved a public open house, community tours, studio open houses, a coffee talk, and a booth at the Hometown Heritage Festival. An online survey was also conducted as part of this project phase, with an outstanding response rate of over 400 participants. Feedback from the public provided clear direction around common themes and priorities that guided the framework and recommendations in this plan. The Steering Committee continued to meet throughout the phases, providing direction to the project team, and helping to craft the draft plan. A draft plan was available for review in February of 2020 and the adoption of the Land Use Plan occurred in XXXX.

Study Area

The Plan includes recommendations for the entirety of the Town of Franklin, as well as land within the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). There is a tremendous variety of land uses within the study area- from downtown to wooded hillsides, from rural homesteads to multifamily buildings, and industrial and commercial centers- both new and old. The Land Use Plan examines the development patterns of the Franklin community, the transportation, natural features and infrastructure that has and will shape growth, and also acknowledges Franklin’s place within the region as an economic center, its proximity to incredible natural resources, and its location along major transportation routes.

The Planning Process





COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Land Use Plan was developed through a process of significant community input sessions and collaboration with a project team, which included Town staff and the project steering committee. Community members had an active hand in shaping the Plan’s direction and priorities through stakeholder interviews, surveys, open houses, and tours.

Website and Social Media

A website (www.franklintownplan.com) was maintained to track plan milestones and make information available for review. The Town’s website, Facebook and other social media outreach and traditional outreach (i.e. flyers, email distribution list) were used to increase public awareness and involvement.

Steering Committee

Franklin Town Council nominated an 10 person steering committee comprised of residents, business owners, leaders from the education and healthcare industries, and elected officials. The Steering Committee met 5 times throughout the project to provide their valuable perspective on the strengths and needs of the community and steer the direction and content of the plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

A series of hour-long interviews were conducted with five stakeholder groups in the Phase One of the project. These stakeholder groups consisted of 5-10 people and were drawn from a broad slice of the Franklin community. Property and business owners, real estate professionals, nonprofit and community group members, education and transportation members, as well as Town staff were represented. The lively conversations focused on what people valued about the Town of Franklin, what accomplishments have been made and what priority issues should be addressed with this Plan. The meetings provided valuable insight into the unique challenges and opportunities facing the community.

Community Survey

A 15-question online survey was developed to guide the plan and define priorities. The survey was active for during the summer of 2019. Respondents were asked a series of demographic questions to determine their relationship to Franklin, and then gave input on community priorities and challenges both generally and in relation to transportation, open space, business and development. Some questions were multiple choice, while others offered the opportunity for open-ended comment. The survey was promoted through the Town and project website, as well as newsletters, flyers and social media posts. Over 420 people responded to the survey, which is an outstanding response rate relative to the size of the Franklin community. This response rate, in addition to the responses themselves, shows the keen interest that people have in the future success of the Franklin community.

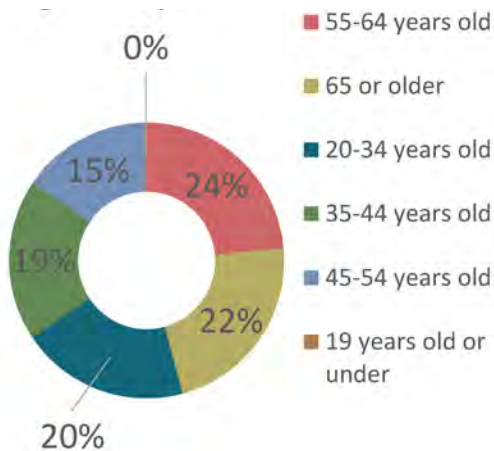
THEMES FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- ◊ Family oriented community
- ◊ Ideal location in region and beautiful surroundings
- ◊ Need for workforce housing and well-paying jobs
- ◊ Continue to improve downtown
- ◊ Substance abuse challenges
- ◊ Mobility needs- sidewalks, transit, connections

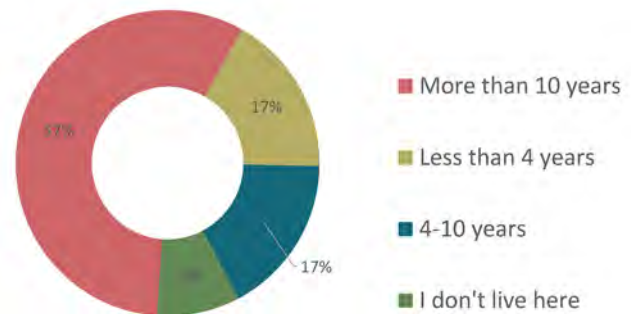
Survey Results

A summary of survey results are included in this chapter. Detailed survey results are available in the digital appendix referenced in the Appendix of this document and available for download from the planning department webpage.

AGE OF RESPONDENTS



HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN FRANKLIN?



WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST ABOUT FRANKLIN?

- Small town character (mentioned 115 times!)
- Scenic beauty - mountains
- Access to nature
- Friendly people and sense of community
- Location - close to nature and cities
- Safety, low traffic
- Festivals and Events
- Family friendly/wholesome

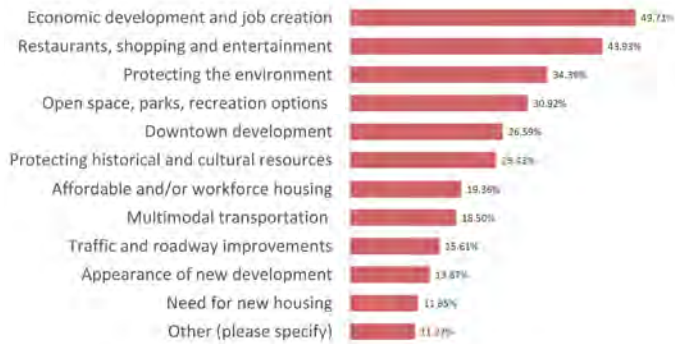
WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE?

- Internet service (35 times!)
- Availability of good jobs
- Appearance and maintenance of the community
- More retail, more restaurants
- Strengthen downtown
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, and greenways
- Drug problem
- Attractions for families/reason to keep young people here
- Vacancies
- Connection to river
- Medical services

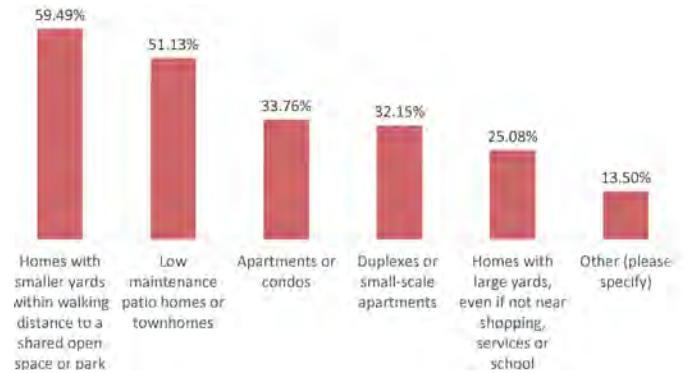
“I value most the beauty of the natural surroundings, the sense of community and all the fun activities that draw us together...”

FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

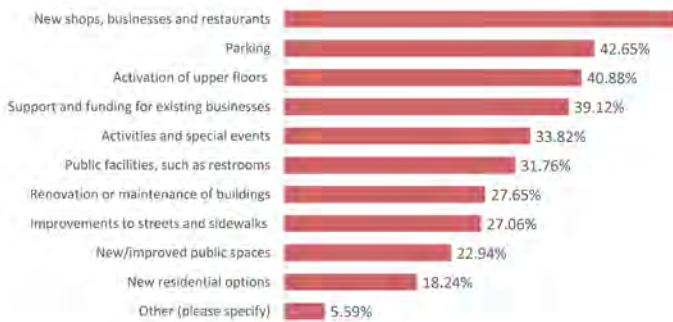
THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS THAT THIS PLAN NEEDS TO ADDRESS ARE:



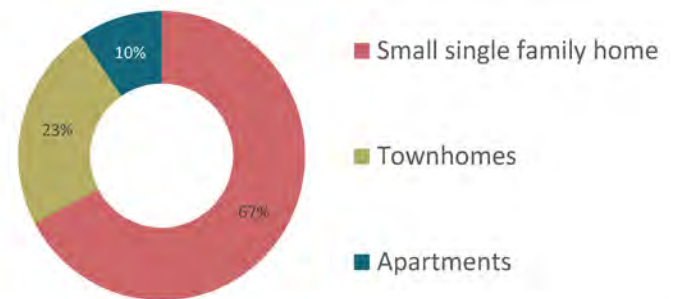
I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE FOLLOWING HOUSING TYPES IN FRANKLIN:



DOWNTOWN PRIORITIES



PREFERRED AFFORDABLE HOUSING TYPE



WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR FRANKLIN?

- Do not lose current identity
- More businesses, dining and entertainment options
- Extend the greenway and improve walkability
- Conserve natural resources (water quality and views)
- Improve parking
- Improve visual appearance and beautification (i.e. Highlands Road)
- Create more of an active destination downtown (extend hours and expand variety of establishments)
- Redevelop empty big box stores
- More activities for families and children
- Take advantage of the river and mountain views
- More senior and affordable housing
- Extension of internet and cell phone service

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

- #1 - Sidewalks
- #2 - Multi-use Paths and Greenways
- #3 - Increased or Expanded Transit
- #4 - Bike Lanes, Bike Parking, Bike Share
- #5 - Better Street Crossings

BARRIERS TO BUSINESS

- Good, affordable internet
- Parking
- People / foot traffic
- Business-friendly regulations and fees
- Quality employees need affordable housing, good schools, good wages
- Commercial space availability

Community Workshop

A four-day community workshop, or “charrette” was held in Franklin from July 17-20. The series of meetings included an open house on Day One where the project team presented a series of existing condition analyses and asked the community to provide their input on what they would want to “Keep-Toss-Create” on a large aerial map of the Town. Additional activities allowed attendees to provide feedback on Town goals, downtown needs, transportation priorities, and preferred residential and commercial development design. Day Two included a walking tour of Downtown, a bus tour of town and a public meeting in the evening. On Day Three a coffee talk was held at the Rathskeller where project team members presented what they heard during the week. On Saturday the 20th town staff had a booth at the Hometown Heritage Festival where they gathered feedback for the plan. Providing multiple times, themes and formats encouraged a broad section of the community to participate in and provide direction on the plan. A summary of feedback received at the workshop is included in the Appendix of this document.

Town of Franklin Comprehensive Land Use Plan

WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

The Town of Franklin is preparing a new Comprehensive Land Use Plan and we want to hear from you! This series of meetings is an opportunity for community members to have a say in the Town's future growth, development, and quality of life.

Multiple Opportunities to Participate:

Most meetings will be held at First Presbyterian Church's Tartan Hall, 26 Church Street. To register for the tours, email jsetser@franklinnc.com to reserve a spot. No registration needed for the public meetings- all are welcome!

Wednesday, July 17th

- **Public Meeting** 4:00-6:00 PM @ Tartan Hall

Thursday, July 18th

- **Downtown Walking Tour** 8:00-9:00 AM depart from Town Hall
- **Open Studio** 10:00 am-Noon @ Tartan Hall
- **Afternoon Community Tour** 1:00-3:00 PM depart from Town Hall
- **Public Meeting** 5:30-7:00 PM @ Tartan Hall

Friday, July 19th

- **Coffee Talk** 8:00-9:00 AM
@ Rathskeller, 58 Stewart St.

Saturday, July 20th

- **Appalachian Heritage Festival**
Find our booth!

Stay Involved!

www.franklintownplan.com

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jsetser@franklinnc.com

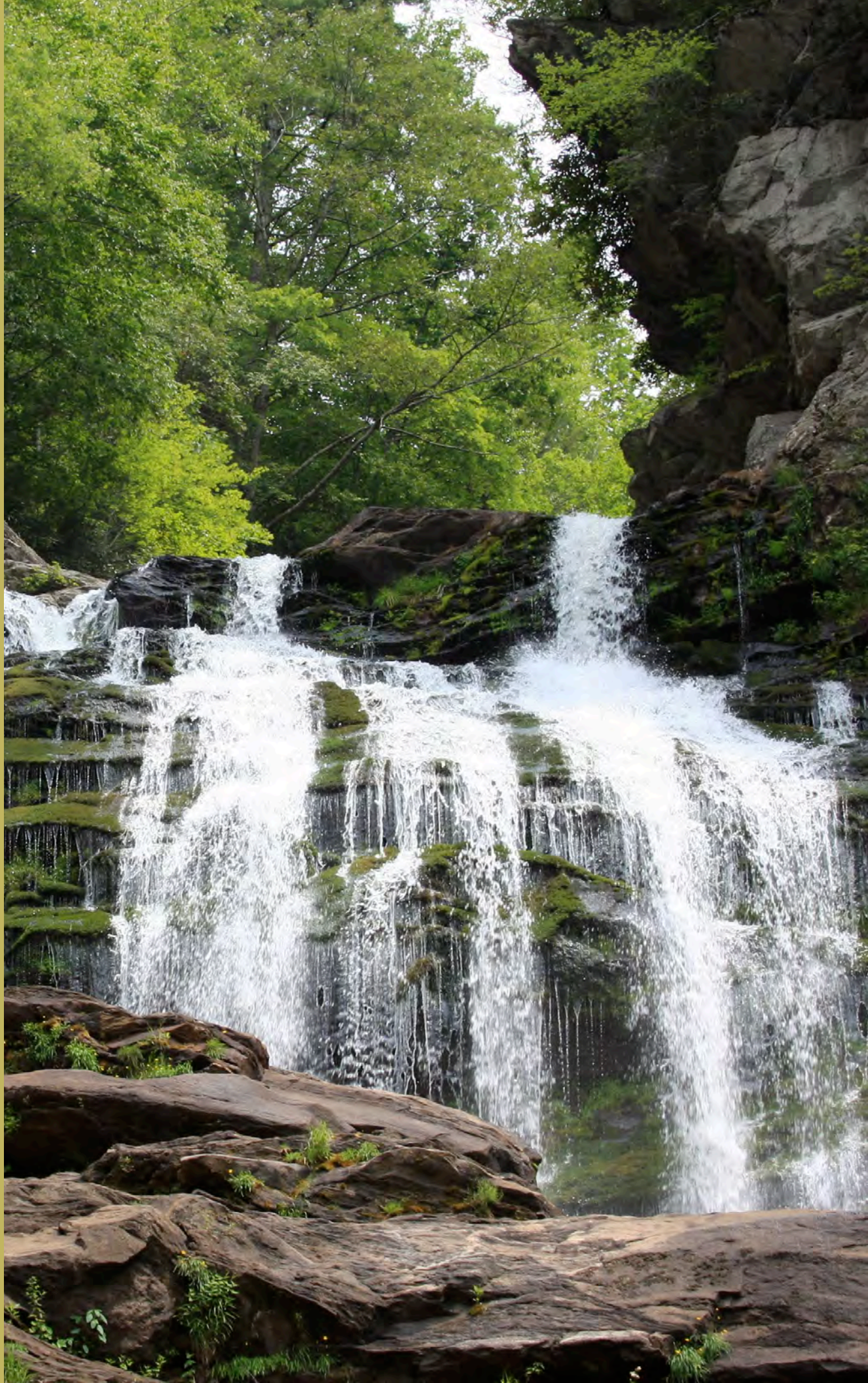


The flyer above was used to advertise a series of meetings that were held to gather feedback on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan



The images above were taken during the community workshop (left) and the downtown walking tour (right)

B A C K G R O U N D



2

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

This chapter provides information on the history of the Town of Franklin and the surrounding area as well as an analysis of demographics, economic statistics, natural resources, cultural assets, and previous planning efforts. The information collected as part of the planning process was presented to the public, steering committee members and elected officials as background information that supports the recommendations in subsequent chapters.

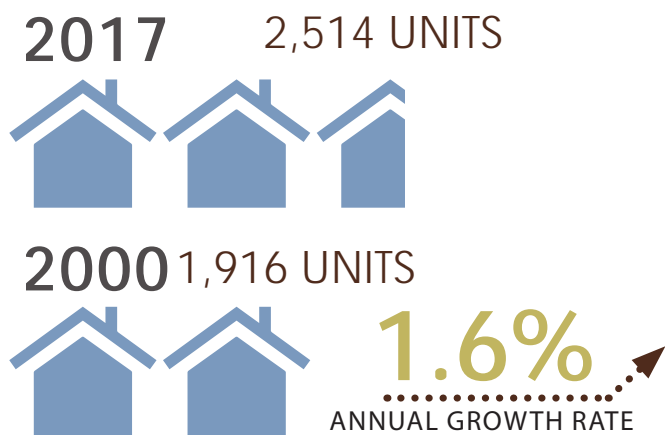
POPULATION AND HOUSING

Population

The Town of Franklin study area (which includes the town limits and ETJ) had an estimated 5,287 persons in 2000. Since then population has grown to 5,804, representing an increase of 9.78%, a little over 500 persons. In regard to age, 34% of the population (within the town limits), are over 60. Veterans represent 9.4% and 22% of persons over 18 years present with a disability. The median age is 42.9 years. Residents of Franklin are generally older than the state average of 38.4 years.

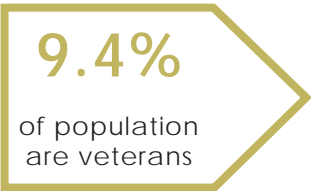
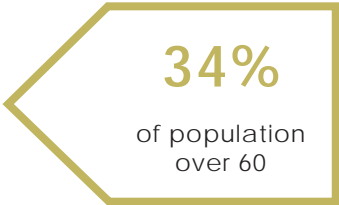
Housing

The Town of Franklin study area (which includes the town limits and ETJ) has an estimated 3,435 housing units, representing a 16.24% increase of 480 units since 2000. Within the town limits there were 1,916 in 2000. According to the American Community Survey, 2,514 housing units were present in 2017, representing a 31.21% increase of almost 600 homes. It is important to note that 23.5% of housing units are classified as vacant. However, a majority of these are believed to be vacation homes which can impact housing growth and vacancy, but not population.

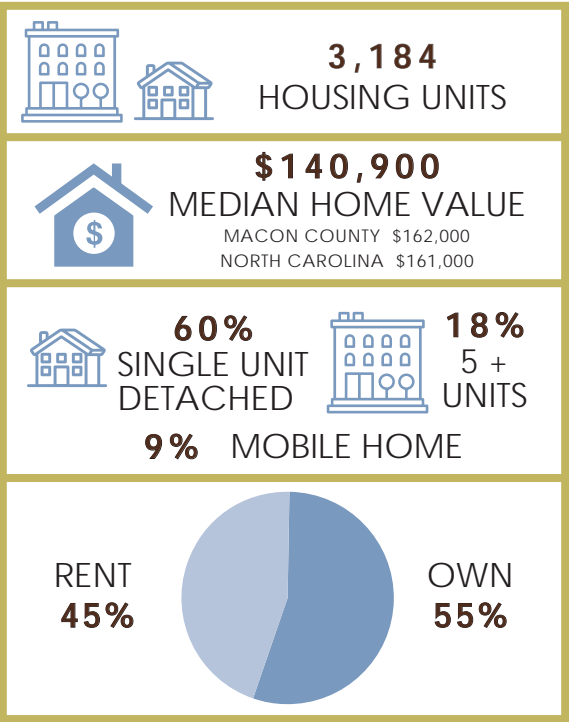


42.9 YEARS MEDIAN AGE

MACON COUNTY 49.3 Years
NORTH CAROLINA 38.4 Years



HOUSING UNIT BREAKDOWN (FRANKLIN TOWN LIMITS AND ETJ)



SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS, 2013-2017 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5 YEAR ESTIMATES, ESRI

IMAGES OF EXISTING HOUSING STOCK



ECONOMY

Employment

There are an estimated 5,318 jobs in the Town of Franklin study area (which includes the town limits and ETJ) representing almost half (48%) of the total jobs in Macon County. Educational services, healthcare and social assistance represent the largest industry at just over 25%. Retail trade came in second at nearly 20%, followed closely by arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services at nearly 15%.

Since 2010, the top 3 industries in Franklin have seen significant increases in workforce (10-18%). The workforce in a few sectors fell since 2010. Employment sectors that have lost jobs include manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical services, and

public administration. Overall since 2010, jobs within the study area are down by 7%. Major employers in the area include Drake Enterprises, Ingles, Wal-Mart, Entegra Bank, Lowes Home Centers, Shaw Industries and Southwestern Community College.

Income

The average wage for persons residing within the Town of Franklin study area is \$30,645 which is just over \$10,000 lower than the average wage for those in Macon County and nearly \$20,000 lower than the State of North Carolina average. Unemployment is a little more than 1% below the State average at 3.3%. However, over 30% of Franklin's residents are at or below the poverty level.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Industry Sector	Total	Percent
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,345	25.29%
Retail Trade	1,004	18.88%
Arts, entertainment, rec, and accommodation and food	791	14.87%
Public administration	500	9.40%
Finance and insurance, and real estate	348	6.54%
Professional, scientific, mgmt, and admin and waste services	297	5.58%
Manufacturing	293	5.51%
Construction	205	3.85%
Other services, except public administration	188	3.54%
Wholesale Trade	156	2.93%
Information	95	1.79%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	71	1.34%
Agriculture, forestry, and mining	25	0.47%
Total Employment by Industry	5,318	100.0%

SOURCE: 2017 CENSUS ON THE MAP

MEDIAN INCOME

Franklin has a lower median income

\$30,645

than Macon County

\$40,659

and the State of North Carolina

\$50,320



Drake Enterprises, a business that specializes in tax software, employs more than 500 people in the Franklin area

UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

30.1%

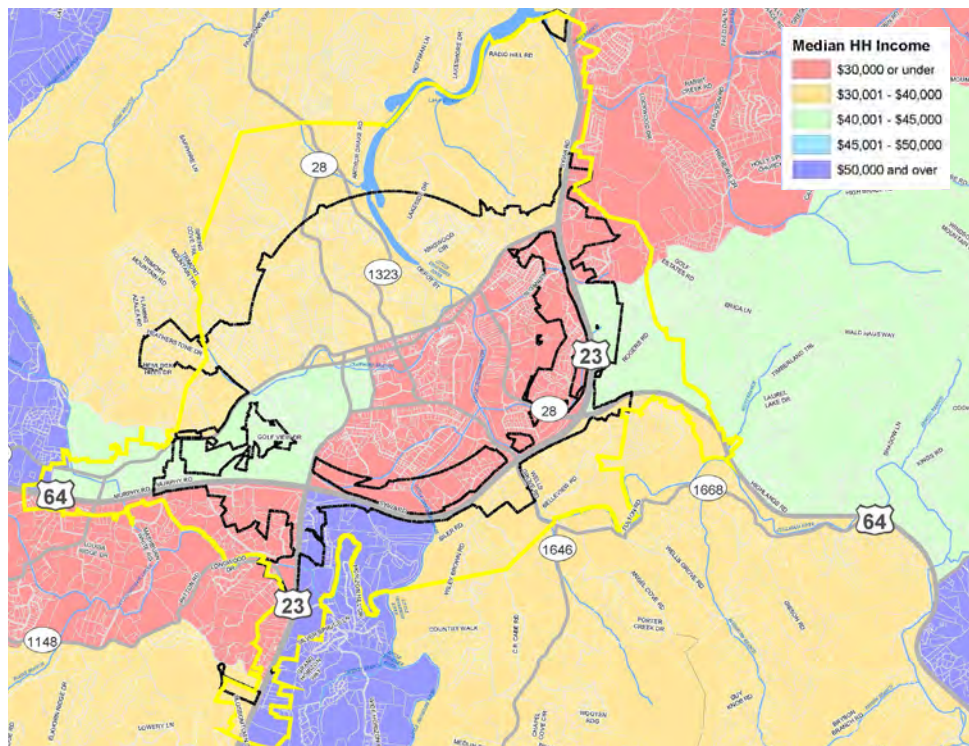
of Franklin residents are experiencing poverty

4.7%

the unemployment rate in Macon County

2%

Macon County's statewide income inequality rank



SOURCES: ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, NC DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2016 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

LAND USE

Existing Land Use

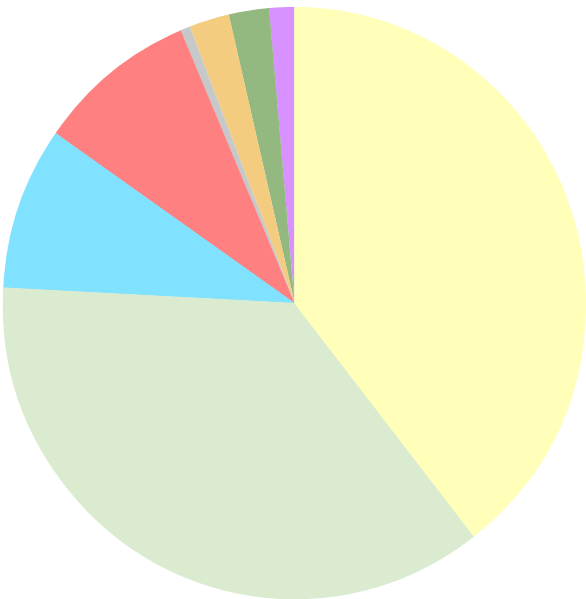
As part of the planning process tax parcel records were queried to determine how land is currently used in the study area which includes the town limits and ETJ.

Approximately 40% of the study area is utilized for single family homes. Homes on properties greater than 1 acre make up 1,750 acres which represents 28% of the land area. Higher density homes, including those on less than a half-acre, townhomes and apartments make up 6.6% of the land area. The Town’s commercial tax base is centered around downtown, Georgia Road, Highlands Road and the US 441 Bypass (US 23).

Other land use trends and issues that were noted as part of the planning process include:

- Larger tracts on gentle slopes in close proximity to downtown are prime infill development opportunities
- Little availability of “missing middle” housing even with high vacancy rate
- Established neighborhoods near downtown in need of reinvestment
- Need to maintain industrial uses that contribute to the local economy and jobs (i.e. Depot Street area)
- Opportunities for redevelopment along the Little Tennessee River, Siler Road

How is land being used?

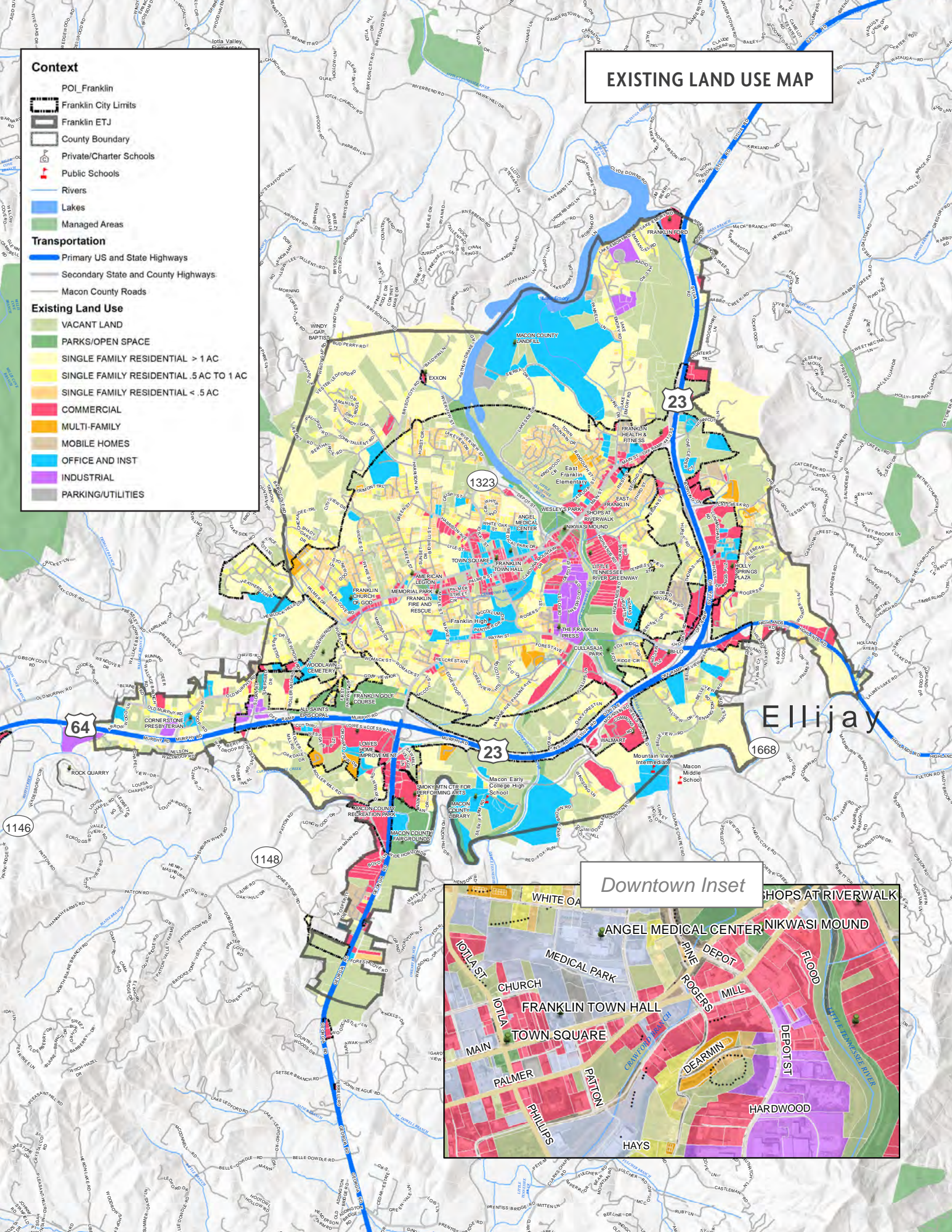


COMMERCIAL	SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
9%	40.3%
OFFICE & INSTITUTIONAL	VACANT
10%	33.3%
PARKING/UTILITIES	MULTI-FAMILY/MOBILE HOME
0.5%	2%
PARKS & OPEN SPACE	INDUSTRIAL
2.6%	1.7%

*DERIVED FROM MACON COUNTY TAX PARCEL DATA

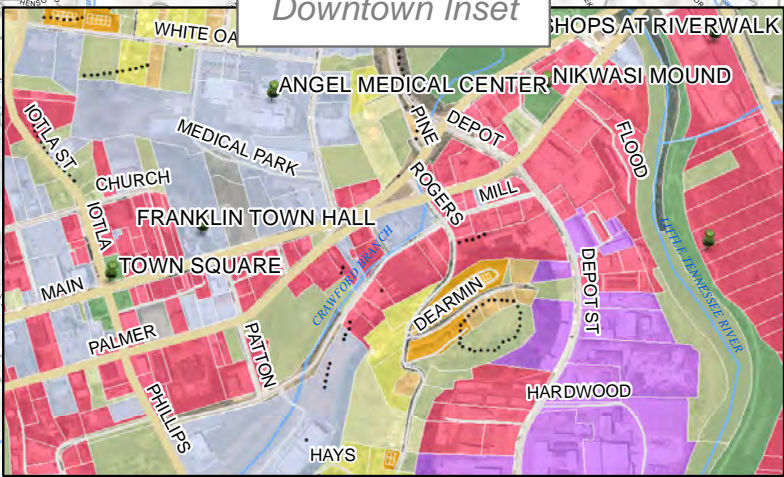
EXISTING LAND USE MAP

- Context**
- POI_Franklin
 - Franklin City Limits
 - Franklin ETJ
 - County Boundary
 - Private/Charter Schools
 - Public Schools
 - Rivers
 - Lakes
 - Managed Areas
- Transportation**
- Primary US and State Highways
 - Secondary State and County Highways
 - Macon County Roads
- Existing Land Use**
- VACANT LAND
 - PARKS/OPEN SPACE
 - SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL > 1 AC
 - SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL .5 AC TO 1 AC
 - SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL < .5 AC
 - COMMERCIAL
 - MULTI-FAMILY
 - MOBILE HOMES
 - OFFICE AND INST
 - INDUSTRIAL
 - PARKING/UTILITIES



Ellijay

Downtown Inset



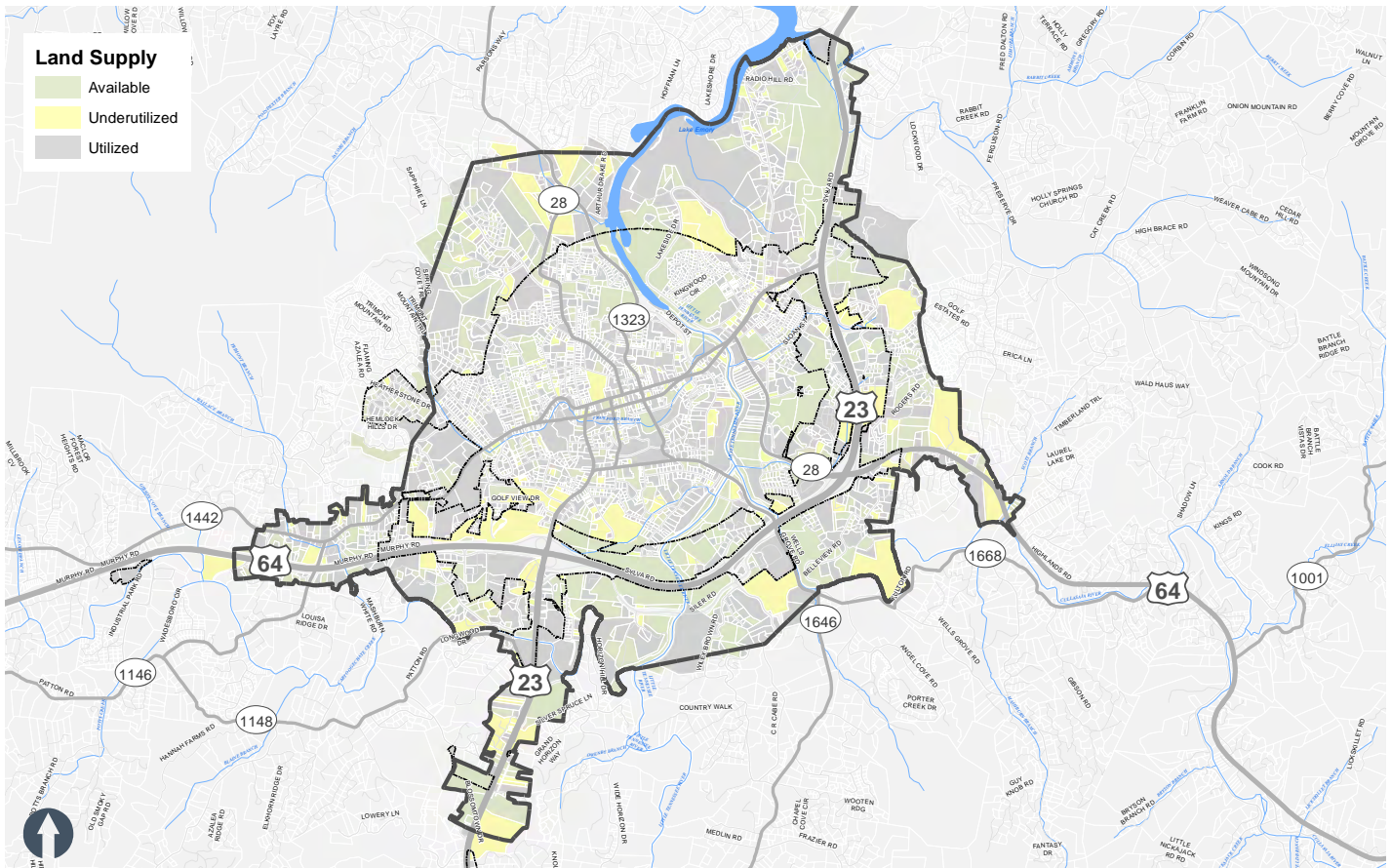
Land Supply

In addition to analyzing the study area's land uses, a land supply study was also conducted to identify areas that were built or "utilized" and those that were vacant or underutilized and could accommodate new development.

Building and land value of tax parcels was analyzed and properties were classified as available, underutilized, or utilized. For the analysis, an improvement ratio of 1.0 or less was considered underutilized. It is estimated that out of the study area of nearly 6,350 acres, nearly 2,070 acres area available. Analysis found that just over 3,450 acres are currently being utilized and just over 820 acres are underutilized.

There are over 900 acres of vacant or underutilized properties within 1 mile of the Town Square in downtown Franklin. This is a significant statistic, as these properties represent opportunities for infill development in locations that are well served by existing infrastructure (i.e. water and sewer). These areas are also conveniently located near downtown and new residents could become patrons to local businesses.

Land Supply Map



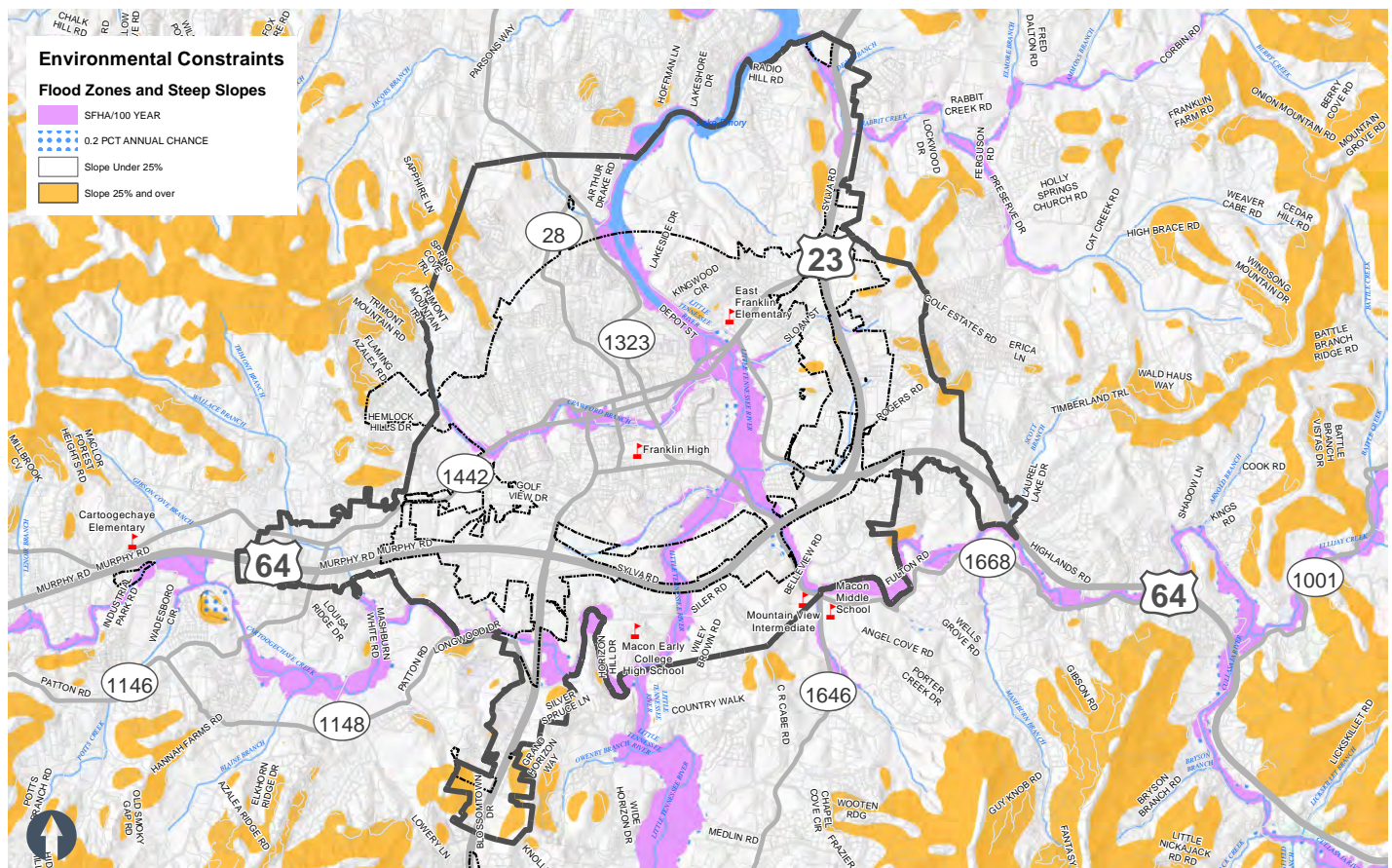
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

There are environmental constraints that may restrict development within the study area. Although a good portion of the study area is located within a valley that follows the Little Tennessee River with little slope restrictions, the area surrounding the “flat land” is often encumbered by steep slopes. Areas with slopes over 25% are shown in orange on the map below. It is estimated that out of a study area of nearly 6,350 acres nearly 1,200 acres are available and not located on steep slopes. In addition to steep slopes, large areas in the valley are located in the floodplain, shown in purple on the map below. Areas prone to flooding include areas on the banks of the Little Tennessee River and along major tributaries such as Crawford Branch and Cartoogechaye Creek.



Steep slopes frame the lower elevations near the Little Tennessee River and tributaries and create vistas from many different vantage points in Franklin

Environmental Constraint Map



PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Town of Franklin and Macon County maintain a system of parks and greenways within the study area. The system includes the following assets:

- ◆ Cullasaja Park
- ◆ Macon County Recreation Park
- ◆ Franklin Town Square
- ◆ Little Tennessee River Greenway
- ◆ Wesley's Park (Big Bear Park)

A level of service analysis was conducted as part of the study to understand areas served by local park and recreational assets. The Town Square and the Tennessee River Greenway were not included in this analysis due to their lack of diverse recreation facilities and limited access points. It is estimated that there is a population of 5,804 persons within the study area occupying 3,435 housing units (Esri, 2018). A half mile buffer around each park was mapped to create a service area. Within this half-mile service area there are 2,757 persons and 1,598 housing units. Based on this statistic 47.5% of the population is served by parks.

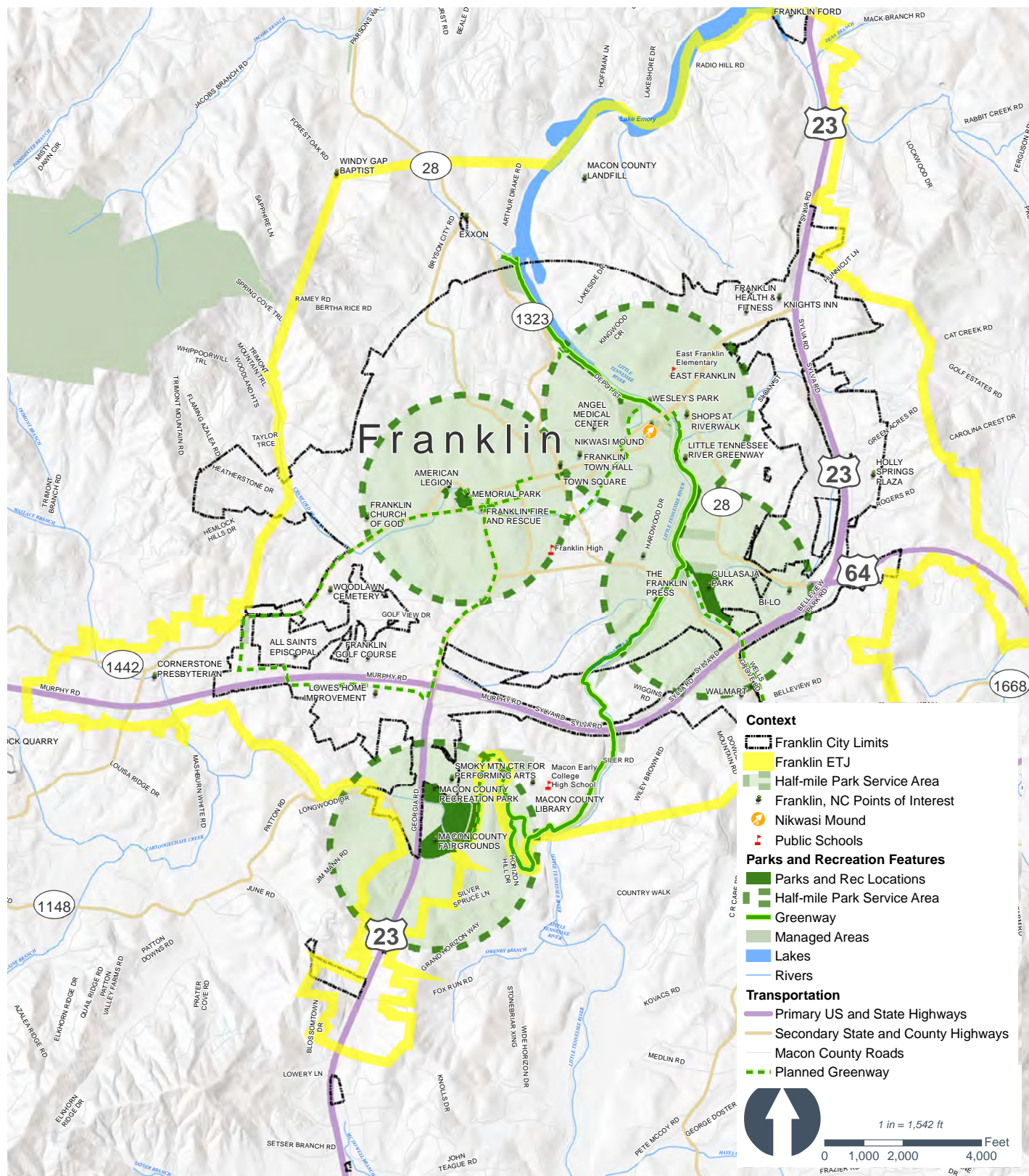
The Little Tennessee River originates in Rabun County, Georgia. It flows northward through southern Macon County before flowing through Franklin, where it is joined by two major tributaries, The Cullasaja River and Cartoogechaye Creek. The Little Tennessee is a 135 mile tributary of the Tennessee River that flows into Lake Emory and then northwest through the Cowee valley to Fontana Dam. The Little Tennessee Greenway follows the bank of the river from the Suli Marsh south to behind Southwestern Community College. It is currently 4.7 miles long and has major access points at Suli Marsh, Big Bear Park, Cullasaja Park (Salali Lane), Tasse Park Greenway Entrance, and the Macon County Public Library. A new bridge was recently built over the river connecting east and west Franklin. Future segments could improve the connection under NE Main Street to the bridge across the river and extend the greenway west from its current terminus to the Macon County Recreation Park.



The playground at Wesley's Park



The Little Tennessee River Greenway is the result of a cooperative effort between Macon County, the Town of Franklin and the Friends of the Greenway, Inc. (FROGS)



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Public Land & Tourism

Franklin benefits from its location amidst plentiful natural amenities: mountains, rivers, and protected lands are located in and around the town. The Appalachian Trail, Bartram Trail, Little Tennessee River, and Nantahala National Forest and River, all contribute to the diverse public outdoor recreation opportunities in the area.

Popular activities include paddling, trout fishing, and hiking to the many waterfalls and vistas in the area. Wayah Bald Lookout Tower Trail and Wesser Bald Lookout Tower are popular vista hikes west of Franklin. Cullusaja Falls and Bust Your Butt Falls can be accessed in the Cullusaja Gorge along the Waterfall Byway just south of Franklin. Canoeing and rafting for all skill levels can be found on the Nantahala, Ocoee, and Little Tennessee Rivers. Wild and stocked trout streams provide fishermen with plenty of options. The greater Franklin area also caters to all interests with horse trails, golf courses, and ziplining tours.

Nearby Highlands has long been a destination for tourists and seasonal residents, but tourism and second home ownership is playing a larger role in the economy of Franklin and the rest of Macon County. Tourism expenditures have risen year after year in Macon County from \$122 million in 2010 to \$178 million in 2018.

Appalachian Trail

Approximately 58 miles of the Appalachian Trail are located within Macon County, and Franklin enjoys its status as an Appalachian Gateway Community. Services for hikers include an affordable shuttle running from the trail to downtown Franklin for hikers to restock on supplies. This shuttle runs from late February through the end of May, which covers the time of the year the majority of hikers completing the trail will pass through the area. The Town hosts Franklin Trail Days March through April. During this time special events are held to celebrate the trail and support hikers.

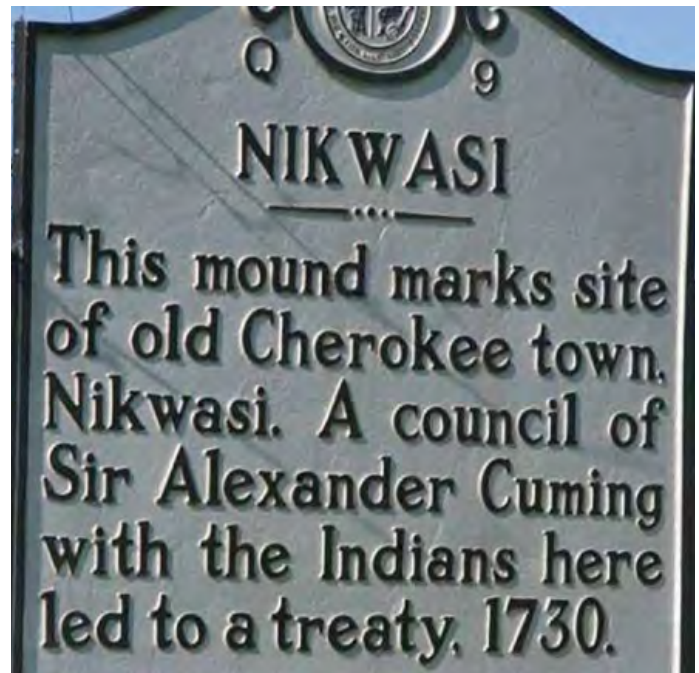


CULTURAL RESOURCES

Nikwasi Mound

The Nikwasi Indian Mound is a sacred Cherokee site dating back an estimated 1,000 years. It is the last remnant of a Cherokee town that once stood on the banks of the Little Tennessee river. It was the spiritual center of the area and used for councils and ceremonies. It stands intact and has never been excavated for any reason, adding to the mystery surrounding this special place.

In May 2019, Franklin Town Council voted to deed the mound to Nikwasi Initiative, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the region's important cultural sites. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee have studied the potential for a cultural center or museum near the mound site. There is also interest in creating a park or public space that connects the mound to the river.



Nikwasi Indian Mound

Town History

Incorporated in 1855, the town of Franklin was named for the twentieth Governor of North Carolina, Jesse Franklin. The land it stands on was once owned by the Cherokee Tribe, whose sacred mound still stands in town. The town has strong Civil War ties and a mountain heritage that is celebrated by residents.

Franklin grew in part because of its rich gem mining resources, particularly for rubies and sapphires. Mining began in the town in 1870, with two prominent mining companies in the area, American Prospecting & Mining Co. and the US Ruby Mining Co. employing many men. Though commercial mining is no longer active, gem mining is a large tourism draw at the Gem and Mineral Museum of Franklin, local gem mines around the town and the gem shows hosted downtown and at satellite locations during the year.



"HERITAGE IS THE LIVING PART OF US. MORE THAN JUST READING OR LEARNING, IT IS A PART OF WHO WE ARE."
– SHIRLEY RIDGE, MACON COUNTY RESIDENT



Downtown Franklin Today

Downtown Franklin is the historical and cultural heart of the area. It is home to festivals and museums celebrating the town's heritage. These include the annual Franklin Folk Festival and the Scottish Tartans Museum. Main Street is a classic mountain town street, with a number of intact historical buildings and views of mountains all around. It remains a destination thanks to its independent shops where visitors can dine and shop for outdoor gear and local crafts such as quilts, hand blown glass, and traditional woodworking products.

Part of the rich history includes the history of women featured in the recently opened Women's History Trail. There are fifteen sites on the Trail where visitors can learn how women from all walks of life influenced the history of Franklin.

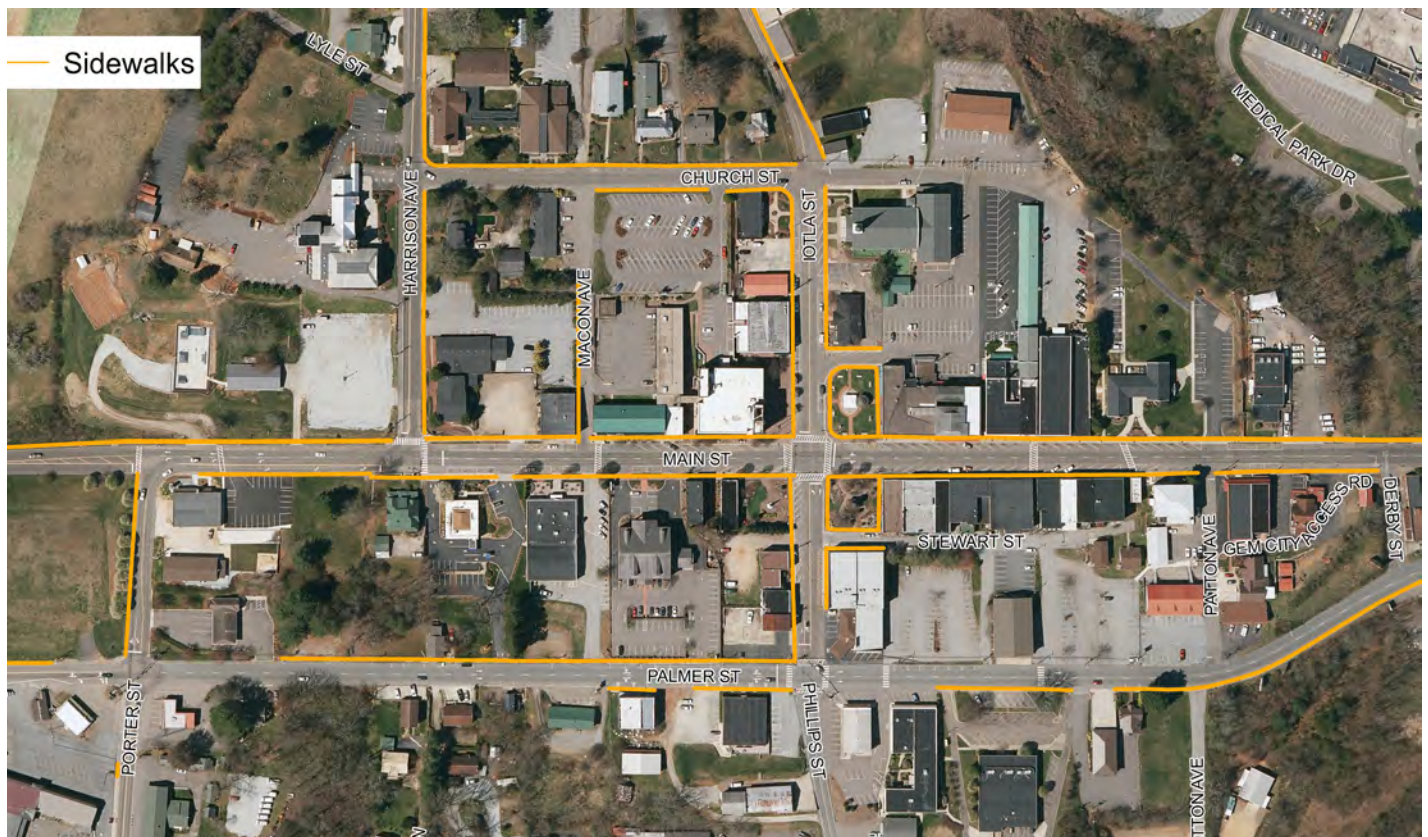


Issues and Opportunities

Downtown Franklin is the center of most daily life for the community and visitors alike. Its buildings are aligned along the two prominent streets, Main and Phillips that intersect at the center of town. The Town Square is a set of three green spaces that make up three of the corners to this intersection. Many of the buildings framing the streetscape along Main Street are multiple stories in height and due to their age, are historical in nature. Palmer Street serves as the “B side” of downtown and has a less consistent feel. Alleyways for vehicles and pedestrians between buildings and at midblock locations connect to rear parking lots. Sidewalks are located along most streets in downtown with pedestrian crossings at intersections and in key locations. Improved pedestrian crossings may help calm the speeds of the two-lane one-way traffic on Main Street and Palmer. Although much of the parking is one block from Main Street, restriping has been added parking from town hall to Harrison Avenue.

Currently, there are many challenges and opportunities for Franklin’s downtown. While many of the ground floors are in use along Main Street, the buildings’ upper stories are vacant providing both challenges in upfitting due to their repair costs but also serve as unused supply for potential apartment, condo, or office uses. Also proving a challenge in downtown are the footprints institutional uses occupy. Both church and municipal buildings have large surface parking lots providing valuable access but also opportunities for infill and redevelopment.

There is an opportunity to create more pedestrian friendly streets downtown. Efforts could include adding streetscape furnishings, street trees, signage and wayfinding, public green spaces and more pedestrian connectivity through improved sidewalks and bike lanes. Extending activity away from the defined core, farther down Main Street and to Palmer Street could also grow the downtown.



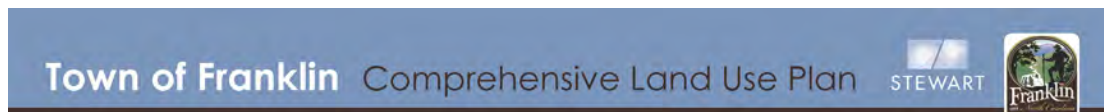
Downtown Franklin has active edges identified in orange focusing on pedestrian connectivity and high intensity uses to help foster an active streetscape

Input on Downtown

Throughout our process, we have received wonderful feedback from attendees at the public meetings, the survey and discussions with staff.

Highest rated needs from the public meeting include:

- Utilizing 2nd Floor Uses
- Converted/Improved Alley Connections
- Wider Sidewalks with Plantings and Public Art
- Improved Crosswalks
- Green Infrastructure



downtown needs

INSTRUCTIONS: Place a **GREEN** dot next to your preferred downtown improvements. Use a **RED** dot to note downtown components you do not like.



Franklin Public Meeting - July 17 - 20, 2019

TRANSPORTATION

Motorized Vehicle Roadway Network Existing Conditions

Compared to other areas of Western North Carolina, reaching Macon County and the Town of Franklin is relatively easy; US 23 from Jackson County to the northeast, US 441 between Franklin and Georgia, and US 64 heading west toward Clay County can carry high volumes of traffic. US 64 from Highlands and NC 28 are lower volume roads with topographic constraints, yet do not have current capacity concerns.

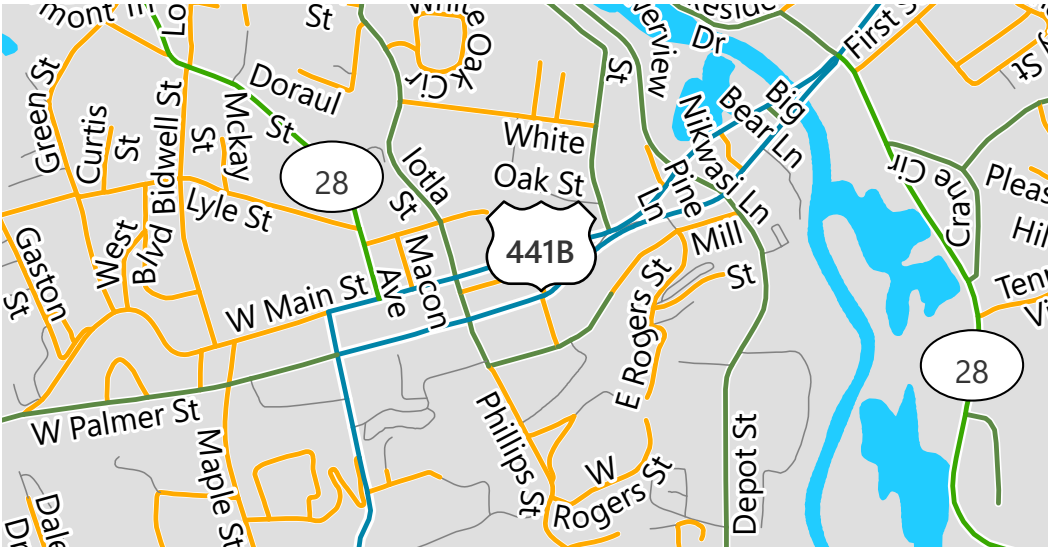
According to Macon County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, which is in the update process, East Main and US 441 Business in downtown Franklin, the segments of Georgia Road/Wayah Street, and Depot Street were at or near capacity. Since completing the CTP, Macon County, the Town of Franklin, and NCDOT have completed roadway projects to mitigate congestion and improve safety. Completed projects include the Town Bridge replacement project and new roundabouts such as the one at Porter and Wayah. Other projects are in the development process, such as the Georgia Road improvements.

Based on information gathered during the comprehensive planning process, which included a variety of NCDOT data sources, stakeholder interviews, and previous plan

review, the need for significant roadway improvements for motorized traffic is minimal. improvements.

Roadways are classified based on which level of government owns and has jurisdiction over them. In the case of Franklin, roadways are under the jurisdiction of NCDOT, the Town of Franklin, or homeowner’s associations/private landowners. Understanding who has jurisdiction over a roadway is important when it comes to planning for roadway improvement projects. For example, the Town of Franklin can improve an intersection with a shorter planning process, whereas NCDOT improvements would need to be planned, programmed, and constructed – a process that can take years.

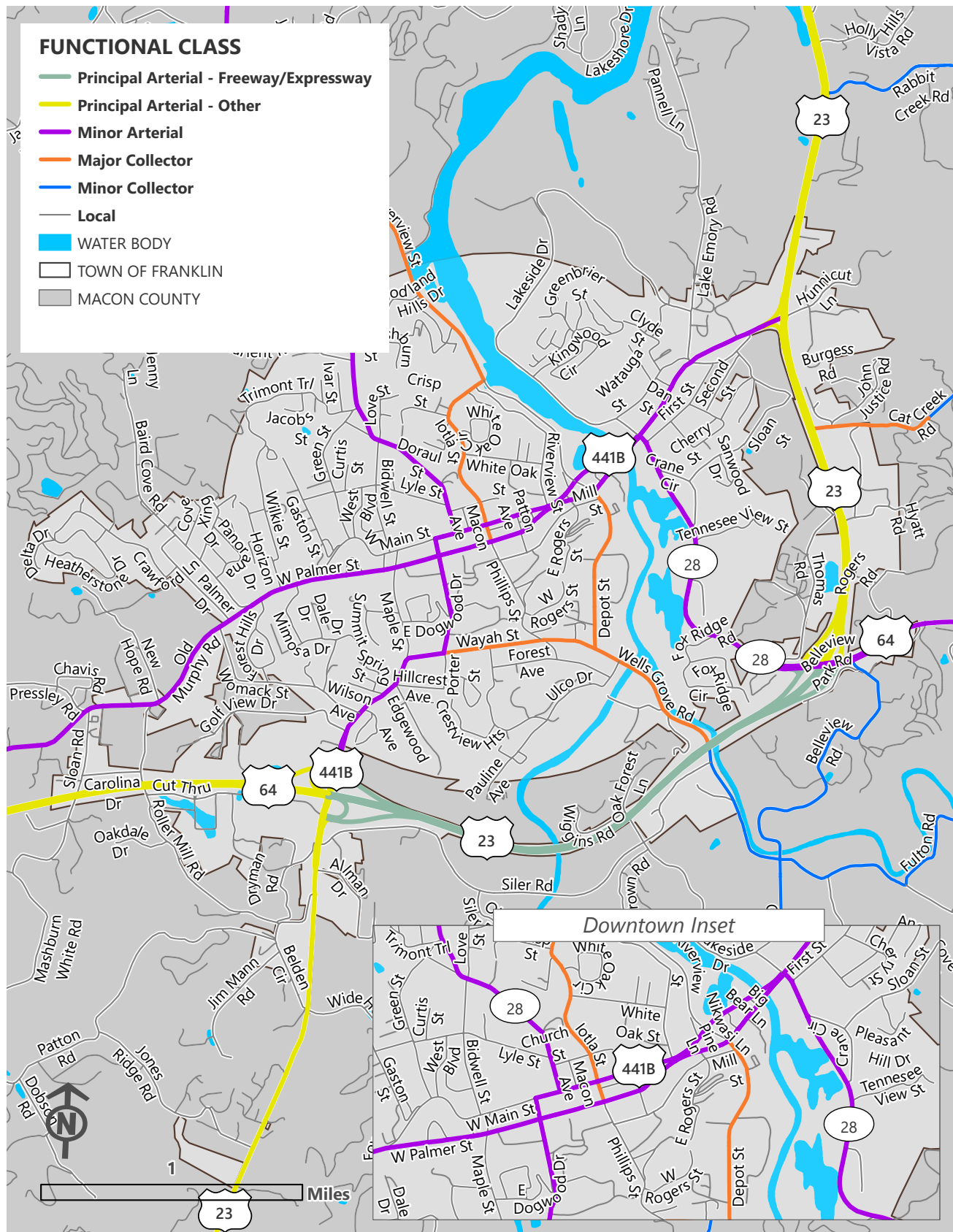
The functional classification system is a roadway network that distributes motorized traffic from neighborhood streets to collector roadways, then to minor arterials, and ultimately the regional highway system. Roads are categorized based on the degree to which they provide access to adjacent land uses and lower level roadways versus providing higher –speed mobility for through traffic. A well-designed roadway system has a mix of roadway types. While Franklin has a mix of roadway types, there are areas where the roadway’s classification conflicts with how people need to use the roadway. For example, the Georgia Road is a major and minor arterial which are roads that are designed to connect urban areas and often have limited land access and high speeds. Georgia Road provides access to common community



ROADWAY CLASS MAP

- US Highway
- Ramp
- NC Highway
- NC Secondary Road
- Municipal Road
- Private Road
- WATER BODY
- TOWN OF FRANKLIN
- MACON COUNTY

FUNCTIONAL CLASS MAP



FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

destinations such as grocery stores, restaurants, and entertainment centers. The community-oriented land uses conflict with the wide lanes and high speeds.

Traffic Volumes

The most most basic characteristic of a given roadway is the volume of traffic it carries. The map to the right presents existing traffic volumes on roadways within the Town of Franklin. AADT is an estimate of the average daily traffic along a defined segment of roadway. NCDOT's highest recorded traffic volumes in 2018 are along US 23/64 near the Highlands Road (25,500 AADT) interchange and at the Georgia Road intersection (24,500 AADT).

Crash Data

The highest volume of crashes in the Town are US 441-B near to and in downtown, the Georgia Road, and US 23/64. Through its Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), NCDOT has identified intersection improvement projects at Roller Mill Road and Westgate Plaza, US 23 (Georgia Road) at Wide Horizon Drive, US 23 (Georgia Road) at Allman Drive, US 23 (Georgia Road) at US 441-BUS, Depot Street at Mill Street, and US 64 at Mashburn White Road. Learn More about NCDOT's HSIP Program: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/safety/Pages/NC-Highway-Safety-Program-and-Projects.aspx>

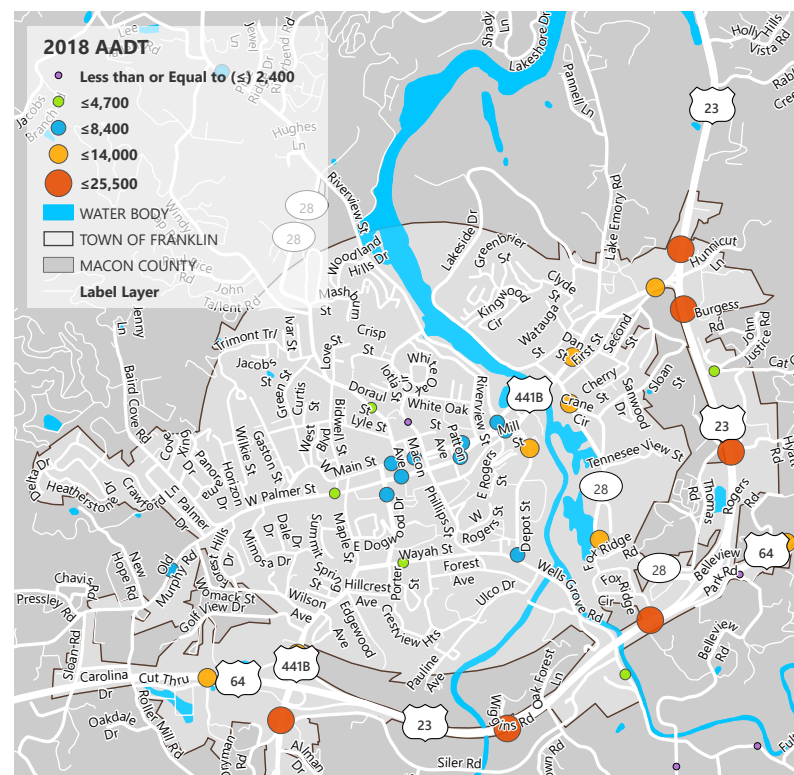
Multi-modal Network Existing Conditions

While a primary function of Franklin's roadways has been to accommodate the private auto, Franklin's residents now want more from its street network. During the comprehensive planning process, many residents consistently expressed support for greater transit, bicycling, and walking options. Therefore, this plan and builds on the 2017 BikeWalk Franklin Plan and places an emphasis on roadway improvements that improve aesthetics and transportation options.

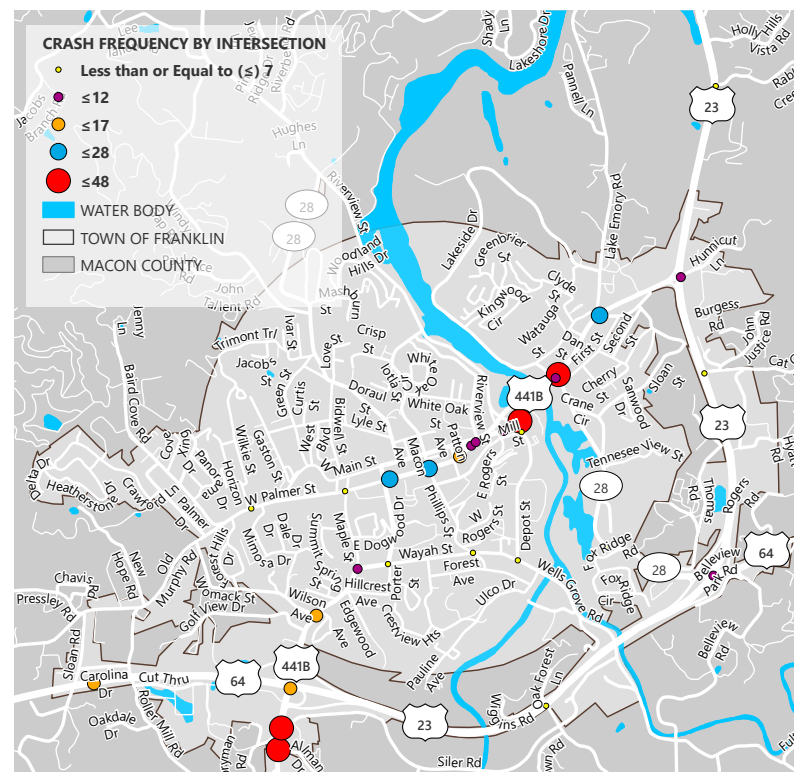
Transit

Transit service is an important element of a multimodal network in a developed community like Franklin. Transit access provides an alternative to driving for a range of potential riders, including commuters, youth, seniors,

AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC MAP



HIGH FREQUENCY CRASH LOCATIONS MAP



people with disabilities, and others. It also helps reduce traffic congestion and emissions generated by single occupant vehicles, by replacing some automobile trips with transit trips. Furthermore, it supports the development of higher intensity mixed use districts within walking distance of transit stops and, particularly along fixed route transit service. Macon County Transit offers one fixed bus route, the Mountain Gem Route, which runs Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. The route makes 8 stops twice an hour. Other ride options include scheduled rides inside and outside of the Franklin area.

Bicycling and Walking

A well-developed bicycle and pedestrian network provides a way for people of all ages and abilities to travel in a way that is safe, comfortable, accessible, and active. It connects people to community destinations, improves bicycle and pedestrian safety, multimodal opportunities, encourages active living, and provides a community amenity.

The Town of Franklin adopted BikeWalk Franklin in February 2017. The intent of the plan is to guide development of bicycle and pedestrian network and serve as a blueprint for transforming Franklin into a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community. The document outlines a plan to improve connectivity with a comprehensive toolbox of facility types that are appropriate for specific corridors and intersections. This plan also establishes priorities for facility improvements, highlights high-priority projects and those that provide unique opportunities to address bicycle and pedestrian safety, and provides policy recommendations to help sustain improvements in bicycle and pedestrian conditions. BikeWalk Franklin should be considered as a companion document to Franklin's Comprehensive Plan.

Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian travel provides an alternative to driving for short distance trips, and safe connections between other transportation modes and final destinations for longer ones. It also can serve as an amenity for residents and visitors who are looking for a safe and active means of recreation. Pedestrian facilities also enhance and enliven

business districts like Downtown Franklin. Dedicated pedestrian facilities also help prevent fatalities resulting from pedestrians mixing with vehicle traffic.

The Town currently has a 12.2 mile sidewalk system that serves residents. There were 5.2 miles of new sidewalk connectors proposed in BikeWalk Franklin to extend and enhance the overall pedestrian network. Real progress in the effort to close sidewalk gaps will come through the redevelopment efforts proposed in this plan, as the Town of Franklin's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) requires sidewalks at least a five-foot sidewalk in most redevelopment scenarios.

Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle facilities provide opportunities for non-motorized connectivity and travel. Bicycle trips can be longer than pedestrian trips which expands possibilities of both replacing auto trips and connecting to a regional network. As traffic volumes grow, having an alternative means of travel can ease pressure on roads with limited capacity. The bicycle network can also be developed as a system that is similar to road functional class – with different facility types for different travel needs. Additionally, bicycle tourism has become increasingly popular in many communities as a low-impact way to enjoy area attractions and support local businesses.

The only existing bicycle facility in Franklin is the 4.7 mile Little Tennessee River Greenway. A variety of on- and off-street bicycle connectors are proposed in BikeWalk Franklin. The most important bicycling connections confirmed during the comprehensive planning process are closing current greenway gap under the Main Street bridges (which is in the planning stages), creating the Crawford Branch greenway from Wesley's Park along Crawford's Branch on the south side of Downtown Franklin to the planned dog park eastward to the Ingles west of downtown.

PREVIOUS PLANS

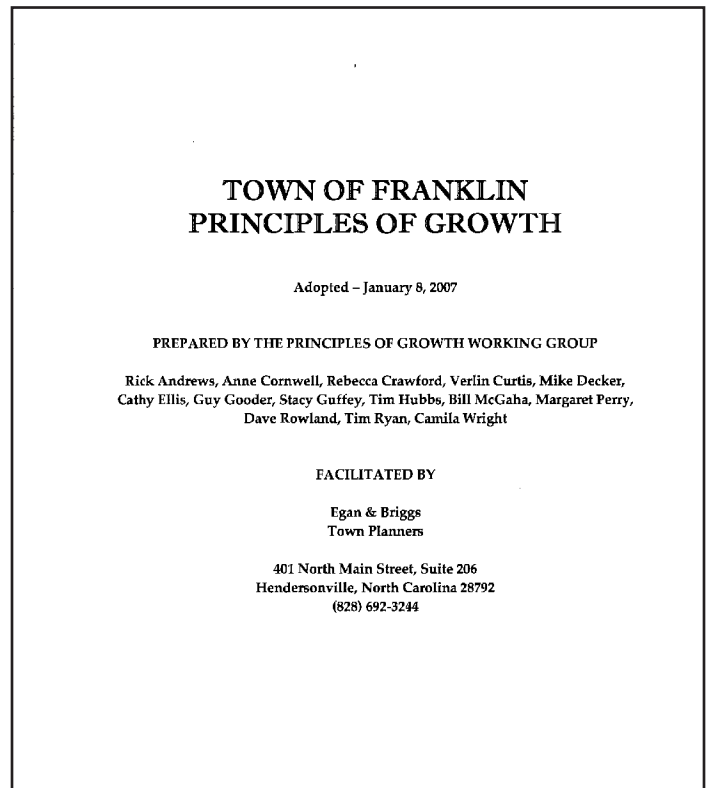
Principles of Growth

This 2007 plan, which functions as current Franklin's Comprehensive Plan, presented Smart Growth Principles tailored to fit Franklin. It is a very ambitious plan that recommends policies for managing Franklin's growth for the next several decades, organized by Smart Growth policies. It has helped guide growth since its adoption, but can be improved upon by incorporating more map-based policy recommendations and updating implementation strategies for core ideas. The Principles, many of which are still applicable, were:

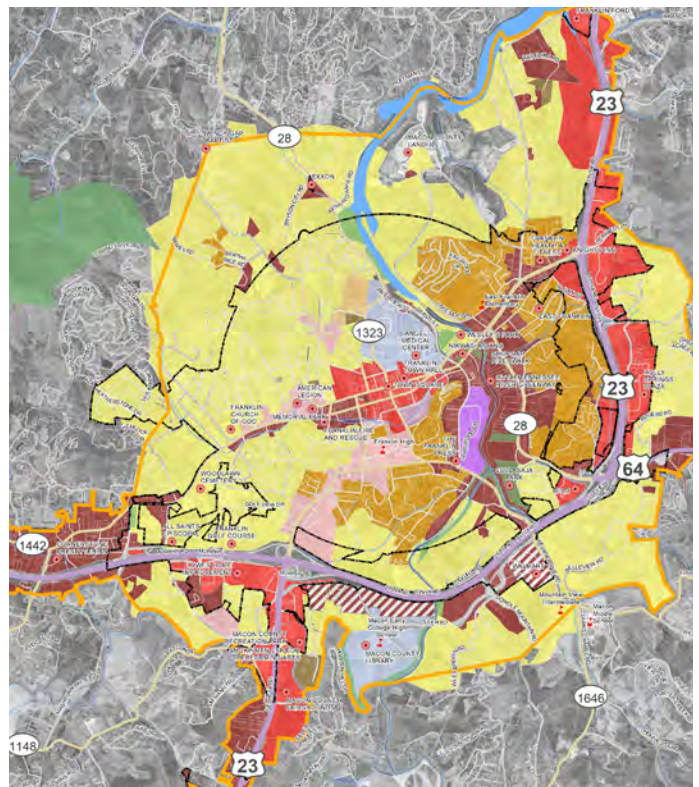
- Mix Land Uses
- Encourage Compact Building Design
- Create a Range of Housing Opportunities
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Foster Communities with a Sense of Place
- Preserve Open Space and the Environment
- Direct Development Toward Existing Communities
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Make Development Decisions Predictable
- Encourage Community Collaboration

Unified Development Ordinance

Franklin's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), includes zoning and development standards. As with any such document, the majority of districts and standards were created a number of years ago and have been amended periodically. The UDO's strengths are its designated downtown district, highway corridor overlay opportunities, mixed-use village district, and its Traditional Neighborhood District zoning option. The downsides of the code include districts that have never been used and some vagueness in code requirements in certain districts. It could be improved by updating some sections to reflect the goals of the community, tailoring open space requirements and encouraging infill in some well-located sites. Specific recommendations for updating the UDO are included in Chapter 4.



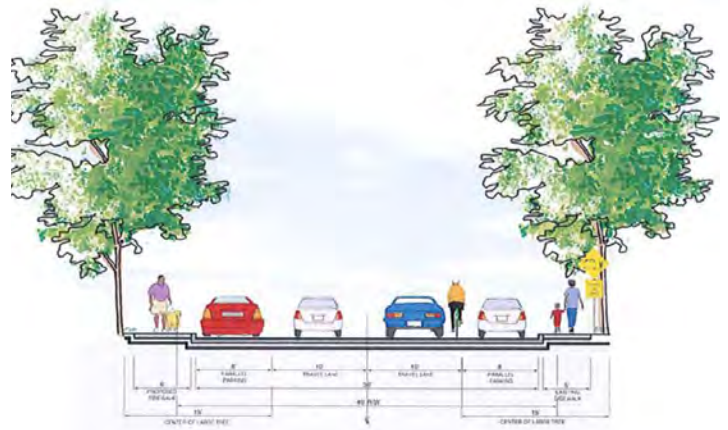
Franklin Principles of Growth



Franklin Existing Zoning Map

Downtown Franklin Master Plan

The Downtown Franklin Master Plan (2008) focused on the public realm and how to make Franklin's streets work better for the community. It was very design-forward and included right-of-way recommendations, network and streetscape improvements, and ideas for public space. Many of the recommendations are still applicable, but it could use updates to account for current priorities, property access needs and implementation opportunities.



Proposed downtown street cross-section from Franklin Downtown Master Plan (2008)

Bike Walk Plan

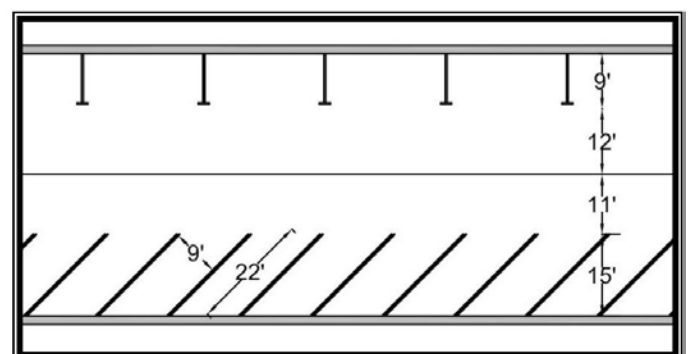
BikeWalk Franklin is the town's first bicycle and pedestrian focused plan, and its suggestions are referenced in this plan and are consistent with feedback received during the community engagement of this project. It contains a variety of project, program, and policy recommendations to help increase mobility for non-automobile users. The plan was very comprehensive and if implemented strategically, will help improve safety, provide transportation options, make travel more equitable, and foster healthy habits.



Franklin BikeWalk Plan

Macon County Parks and Recreation Plan

The Macon County Recreation Plan (2005) stands in for a Town recreation plan for Franklin. It contains a comprehensive inventory of the county's park facilities, schools, and private recreation facilities and identifies town and county recreation needs. The County has been successful in implementing portions of the plan. The Macon County Recreation Park was a high priority in the plan and is now complete. Cullasaja Park improvements and greenway extensions were also priorities identified in the plan. The plan, if followed, will continue to direct the growth of recreation facilities, programs, and staff.



Parking has been reconfigured on Main Street recently based on recommendations from a 2013 report.

Franklin Parking Report

A study in 2013 recommended to increase the amount of on-street parking available by changing 30-degree parking to 45-degree front-angled parking on the southside of Main Street and parallel parking on the north side. The study also recommended reducing vehicle speeds and pedestrian friendly bulb-out crossings.

VISION & GOALS





VISION

The vision for Franklin acknowledges what many people love about Franklin, the need to build on our assets while preserving our heritage.

Franklin is a vibrant town nestled in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Little Tennessee River, and historic downtown serve as the gems of Franklin, cherished by long-time residents, new families and visitors alike.

Franklin's homegrown economy is built on its location as a regional center, inspired by innovative entrepreneurship, and outdoor recreation. As Franklin grows it seeks to preserve its natural and cultural heritage, investing in town infrastructure and services that support liveability and improve quality of life.

Goals

The Goals in this section serve as guideposts for the public and private sectors. They support the vision and are clarified through policies and recommendations found later in this planning document.

Goal 1: Create walkable, mixed-use districts and neighborhoods with a distinct sense of place

Franklin should continue to grow in a way that encourages the integration of land uses. Mixing land uses in key areas can reinforce Franklin's identity as a quintessential mountain town. Making sure these diverse cores are connected and walkable can support community life by creating inviting places for people to live, work and play.

Goal 2: Preserve our natural and cultural heritage

Franklin's cultural heritage and the beautiful natural environment are two of the Town's greatest treasures. Our history, clean air and water, forested mountain views, and access to open space and greenways benefit the quality of life of our community. Preservation and celebration of these assets is essential to our future.



OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Goal 1:

- ◇ Allow a mix of uses in most zoning classifications.
- ◇ Provide incentives for new development to be located near downtown and in mixed-use areas and track progress.
- ◇ Support compact building design and a mix of housing types.
- ◇ Support a distinct sense of place in private development and through public investment.

Goal 2:

- ◇ Reinvestment and improvements to downtown and the area surrounding the Nikwasi Mound.
- ◇ Improve access to the Little Tennessee River, greenways and parks.
- ◇ Open space and forest preserved as part of new development.
- ◇ Cultural heritage activities supported.

Goal 3: Build on economic strengths and investments in infrastructure

Franklin serves as a regional economic hub for Macon County and the surrounding area. Supporting this identity as a business destination and cultural center while growing a reputation as a great place to live, raise a family and recreate will help diversify the Town's economic future.

3

Goal 4: Create a range of housing opportunities

A range of housing opportunities and choices will help the town grow and prosper. Housing that is affordable for the Town's workforce, appeals to young families and seniors and is attractive to second home buyers can help support a growing economy.

4

Goal 5: Provide a variety of transportation choices

Franklin's transportation network should provide connectivity between businesses, neighborhoods and to the region. Improving sidewalks, extending the greenway, increasing access to transit and enhancing roadways can help beautify parts of town and make walking and biking safer and more enjoyable.

5

OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Goal 3:

- ◇ Support and retain local businesses.
- ◇ Improve access to well-paying jobs and job training initiatives.
- ◇ Improve access to affordable high-speed internet.
- ◇ Improve marketing for the Town.

Goal 4:

- ◇ Encourage and track diversity of new housing projects within the town limits
- ◇ Encourage and track new housing units within walking distance of downtown
- ◇ Secure funds for rehabilitation of housing in distressed areas.

Goal 5:

- ◇ Linear feet of sidewalks rehabilitated or constructed.
- ◇ Linear of feet of greenway constructed.
- ◇ Address ADA issues in town.
- ◇ Investments in transit.
- ◇ Key roadways upgraded.

PLAN ELEMENTS



Image Source: Franklin Chamber of Commerce



PLAN ELEMENTS

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan includes three key components:

- ◆ Future Land Use
- ◆ Policies & Strategies
- ◆ Design Concepts

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map identifies the intended land use pattern in the Town and surrounding areas. Each color on the map corresponds with a Character Area that is explained in detail in this section and describes the predominant land uses and scale of development allowed. This section is meant to guide land use design and infrastructure decisions in the coming years.

Policies & Strategies

The policies and strategy recommendations in this section support the Future Land Use map and elaborate on steps public and private entities can take toward supporting the Vision and Goals defined in Chapter 3. The recommendations are divided into the following categories:

- ◆ Land Use & Appearance
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Economic Development & Infrastructure
- ◆ Natural & Cultural Resources
- ◆ Transportation

Concepts

This chapter includes conceptual designs of potential redevelopment areas that include public space enhancements, streetscape improvements, and the intended form of private development.

FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Map and associated character areas are meant to guide land use and infrastructure decisions in the Franklin Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction and Town Limits.

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map on the following page illustrates the desired land use pattern in the Town of Franklin. The character areas are described on the following pages and should serve as a guide for the types of land uses, intensity of uses and the design and character of new development and redevelopment.

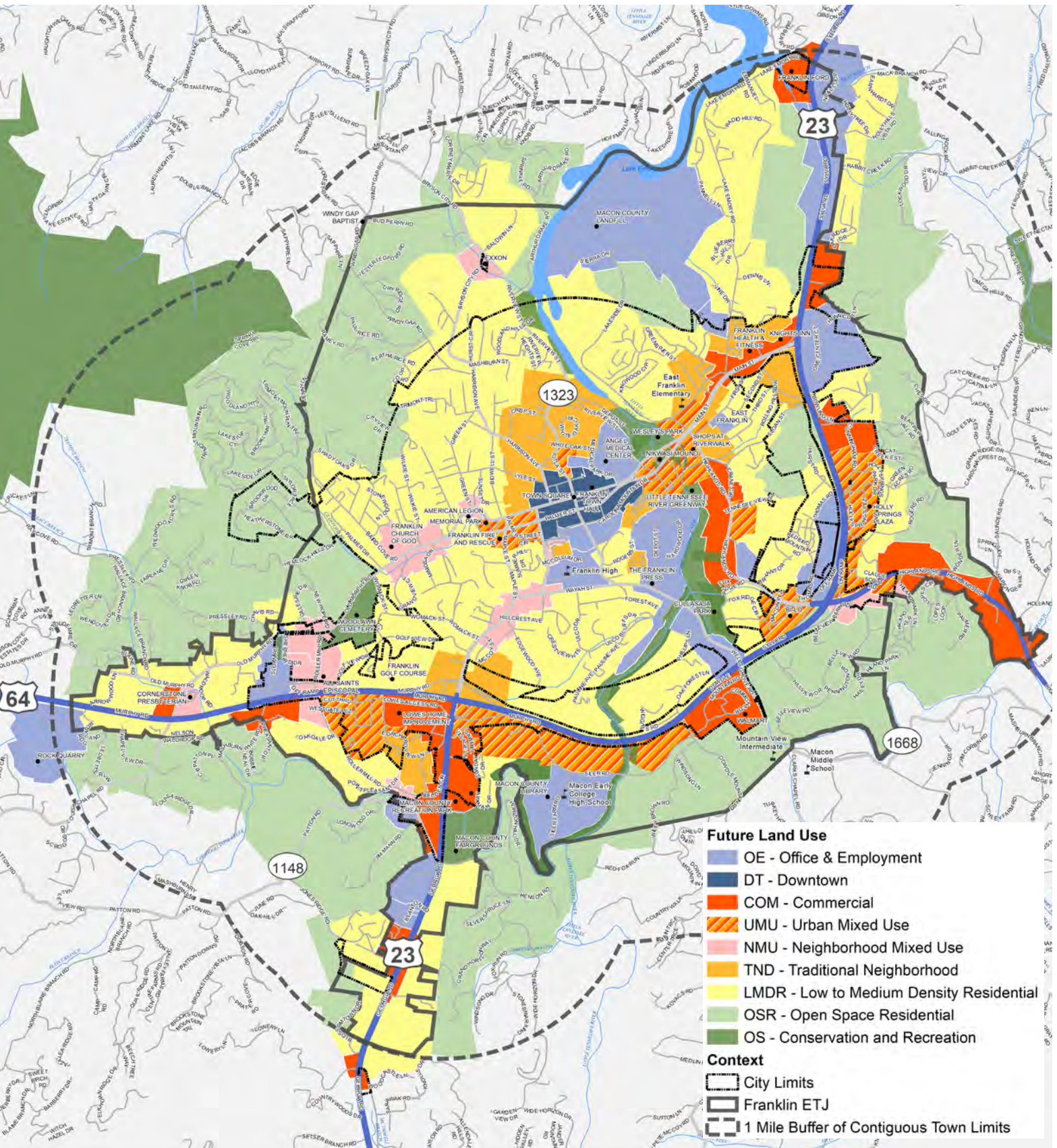
Highlights from the Future Land Use Map include:

- ◆ A defined Downtown area that builds on the historic downtown and accomodates expansion to key street frontages.
- ◆ Three designated mixed use types (Downtown, Urban Mixed Use, and Neighborhood Mixed Use) where a mix of land uses including residential and commercial will be encouraged.
- ◆ Office and Employment areas where businesses and industry is encouraged.
- ◆ Commercial areas along major highways and thoroughfares
- ◆ Areas for new residential development
- ◆ Sensitive areas where lower density development should be integrated with the landscape to reduce impacts on natural resources.

The Future Land Use Map and Character Areas are meant to guide land use and infrastructure decisions in the Town of Franklin

PLAN ELEMENTS

Future Land Use



Future Land Use Character Areas

The Future Land Use Map is a conceptual representation of the desired development pattern in the Town of Franklin. Each color on the map corresponds to a character area described below. The character areas are descriptive, not prescriptive and indicate a predominant land use or set of uses, intensity and shared design details. The descriptions do not propose a change to existing development, but a direction moving forward that describes the qualities of new development and redevelopment.



Conservation and Recreation

These areas include parks and conservation easements as well as sensitive lands that are inappropriate for development due to environmental constraints such as high flood risk or very steep slopes. Passive or active recreation facilities such as trails, greenways, sports fields and associated support infrastructure are appropriate.



Open Space Residential

These areas are located farther away from major roads and utility services. Residential development at lower overall densities is appropriate. Areas without sewer should have a density of less than 1 dwelling unit per acre. Areas with access to sewer should have a gross density of less than 2 dwelling units per acre. Development should be clustered away from sensitive natural resources such as steep slopes, valuable wildlife habitat and views and vistas.



Low-Medium Density Residential

Generally 2-5 Dwelling units per acre. Some development with medium-density detached and attached residential units such as duplexes and/or small-scale townhome projects on well-located sites with gentle topography and good access.



Traditional Neighborhood

Opportunities for medium to higher-density residential housing types including traditional neighborhood development (TND), cottage homes, townhomes, and apartments. Small-scale office uses and some low-impact services may also appropriate in some locations.



Neighborhood Mixed Use

Potential for small-scale commercial that is sensitive to existing residential development if Neighborhood serving commercial and office uses including restaurants, retail and professional offices. Policies that encourage smaller-scale buildings and appropriately designed sites to reduce impacts on existing residential neighbors.



Urban Mixed Use

Concentrations of community and regional scale commercial uses, offices, and a variety of residential types. Some light industrial uses are also allowed in certain areas. Some design policies for new buildings, including recommendations for streetscapes, frontages and building and parking location.



Downtown

The Downtown Franklin land use character area is focused along the Main Street and Palmer Street frontages. This area contains horizontal and vertical mix of uses including retail, restaurants, service, office and residential uses. Multi-story buildings with minimal setbacks are encouraged. On-site parking is limited, if present. Large sidewalks, street trees and parallel parking are principle components of the streetscape and public realm. Architectural design criteria including building design, location and access are most stringent to encourage a vibrant, walkable environment.



Commercial

These areas are home to larger-scale highway oriented commercial uses, offices and light industrial and flex spaces. Higher density residential uses may be integrated into these areas as well but are less common.



Office & Employment

These areas contain employment-generating industrial uses including manufacturing, warehouse, storage and distribution uses. Supporting commercial uses are also allowed in these areas.

Land Use and Appearance

The previous Town Plan, Franklin Principles of Growth (2007) included policy recommendations that reinforced smart growth principles including mixing land uses, compact building design, housing choices, walkable neighborhoods, a sense of place and preservation of the natural environment. This Plan builds on the fundamental principles of smart growth and town planning while responding to new trends and opportunities.

Policy 1: Encourage Smart Growth through town policies, incentives and regulations.

Policy 2: Encourage a mix of land uses and housing types in strategic locations.

Strategy 2.1: Encourage a mix of land uses (including different residential types, service, office and commercial uses) in Downtown, Urban Mixed Use and Neighborhood Mixed Use areas identified on the Future Land Use Map.

- Design criteria for mixed use development should include:
 - ◊ Short block lengths (i.e. < 600 ft)
 - ◊ Buildings accessed from and oriented to a public road with parking to the side or behind
 - ◊ Other architectural standards including materials, minimum transparency / glazing and variation

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GOALS

Primary Goal

- Create walkable mixed-use districts and neighborhoods with a distinct sense of place

Secondary Goals

- Preserve our natural and cultural heritage
- Build on economic strengths and investments in infrastructure
- Create a range of housing opportunities

SMART GROWTH DEFINED

Smart growth is an approach to development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and preservation of open space and environmental areas.



Smart growth principles focus on creating communities that are attractive, convenient, safe and healthy while balancing environmental protection with economic growth.

Strategy 2.2: Encourage a mix of housing types on sites with good transportation access and limited environmental constraints, and on sites that could serve as a transition from commercial to single family residential development.

- These areas include properties zoned as commercial (C-2, C-3) and Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU).
- Consider allowances for small-scale attached housing including townhomes, duplexes or quadraplexes in single family subdivisions on corner lots with access to a collector street.
- Allow for a mix of single-family lot sizes and small-scale attached residential units in areas noted as Traditional Neighborhoods on the Future Land Use Map.
 - ◊ Design criteria for Traditional Neighborhoods could include:
 - Allow for a mix of single-family lot sizes and small-scale attached residential units
 - Require alleys to be utilized as the principle means of access
 - Require or encourage integrated public and/or green spaces, such as plazas, mews or greens
 - Require or encourage front porches and other architectural details that mimic the historic vernacular of nearby structures

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT (TND)

Currently there are a number of underutilized and vacant properties near Downtown Franklin. Encouraging residential development on these properties could be an opportunity to increase the number of people living within walking distance of Downtown. The majority (over 80%) of available and underutilized properties within 1/4 mile of downtown are on parcels under an acre in size. The Town could consider steps to allow for smaller lots and higher density housing to encourage infill on these properties. Creating a new district or modifying the existing TN Overlay District to reduce minimum size of property would allow for this district to be applied to smaller infill opportunities.



Front porches and alley loaded homes are some design details in Traditional neighborhood development (TND)

Policy 3: Encourage infill and redevelopment in areas well-served by infrastructure and services

Strategy 3.1: Provide incentives for live-work units

- Consider exemption of live-work units from density calculations.
 - ◊ This can be done town-wide or in certain areas where walkable development is desired (i.e. Downtown, Urban Mixed Use areas and Neighborhood Mixed Use areas.

Strategy 3.2: Address surplus commercial zoning by encouraging infill and redevelopment

- Encourage new commercial development on vacant or underutilized commercially zoned land.
- Review and revise parking regulations to promote compact development.
- Consider an incentive to place larger buildings on properties that meet certain

characteristics (i.e. are located with access on at least two thoroughfares, are already zoned highway commercial (C-3), etc.)

- ◊ Update UDO to clarify locations where larger buildings need to get a Special Use Permit and where they are allowed by right. This could be accomplished through an amendment to existing districts, a new district or an overlay.

Strategy 3.3: Allow medium and high density residential and mixed use development as part of development or redevelopment of underutilized commercial lands.

Strategy 3.4: Discourage future rezonings for commercial businesses in locations with poor transportation access and/or development constraints.

REDEVELOPMENT OF UNDERUTILIZED COMMERCIAL AREAS

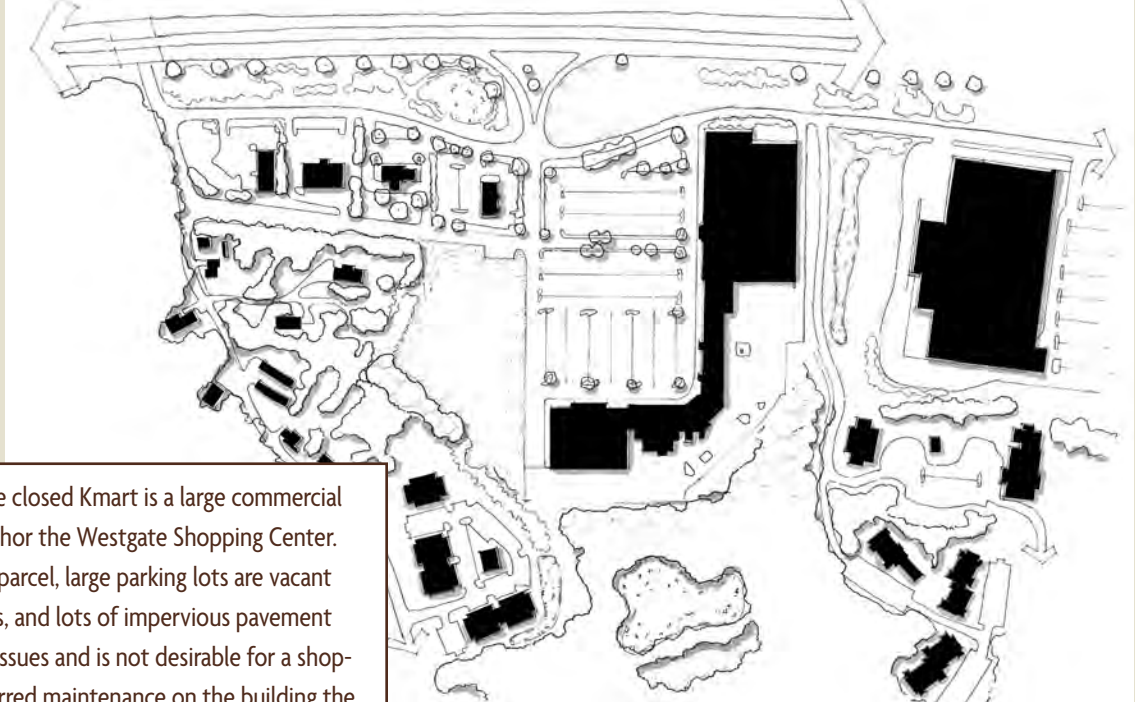
The loss of large big box retailers in suburban towns similar to Franklin is not an uncommon occurrence. Due to their prime locations, towns and cities across the U.S. have found new ways to redevelop these suburban automobile-focused centers turning them into destinations for a variety of uses and livability.

Currently, Franklin has two large vacant buildings (the old Walmart site in Holly Springs Plaza and the Kmart building in Westgate Plaza). Retrofitting these centers with new tenant concepts and different uses can bring new revenue to a community.

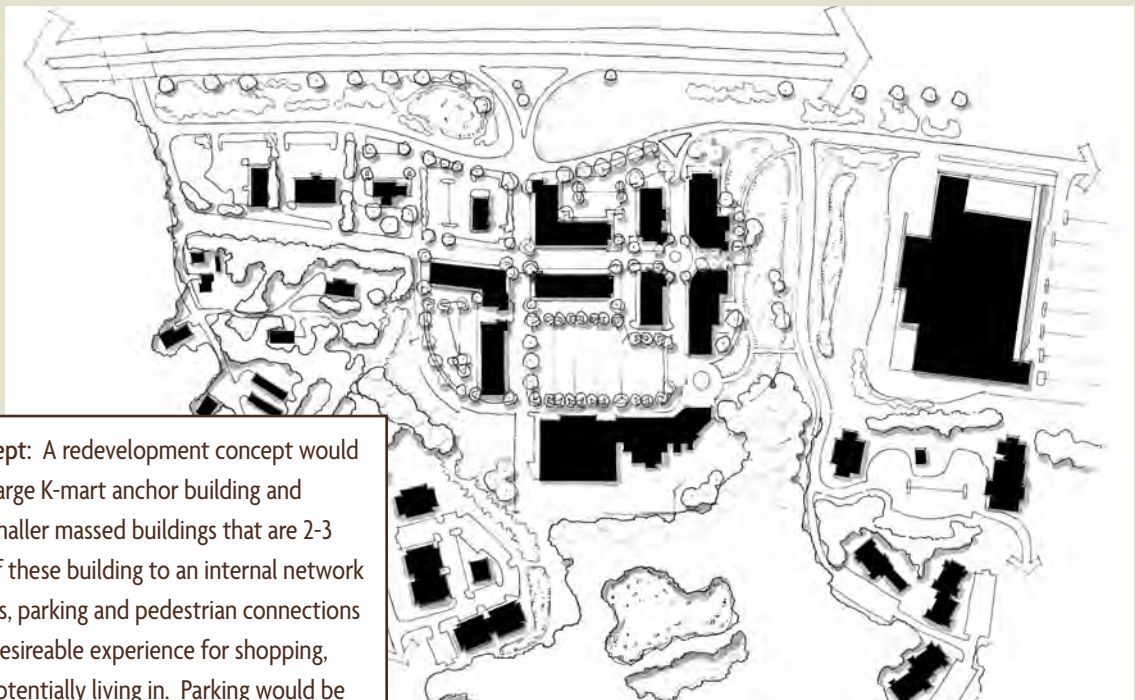


The old Kmart building in Westgate Plaza and another vacant big-box in Holly Springs Plaza are opportunities for redevelopment

WESTGATE PLAZA SUBURBAN RETROFIT



Existing Condition: The closed Kmart is a large commercial space that used to anchor the Westgate Shopping Center. Now an underutilized parcel, large parking lots are vacant in front, with few trees, and lots of impervious pavement create environmental issues and is not desirable for a shopping experience. Deferred maintenance on the building the parking lots, utilities, and signage challenge the success for the remaining tenants in the shopping center.



Redevelopment Concept: A redevelopment concept would look at removing the large K-mart anchor building and parking lot out with smaller massed buildings that are 2-3 stories. Orientation of these building to an internal network of streets, bicycle lanes, parking and pedestrian connections would create a more desirable experience for shopping, working, eating, and potentially living in. Parking would be located in smaller parking lots at the rear of the buildings.

FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Policy 4: Support a distinct sense of place in downtown Franklin

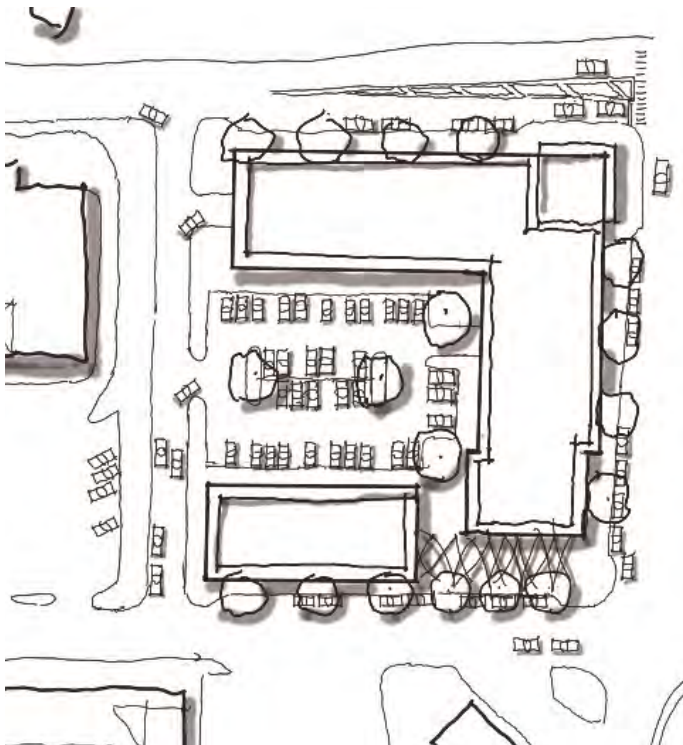
Strategy 4.1: Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures

- See Economic Development recommendations on page 55 for specifics.

Strategy 4.2: Ensure new buildings and renovations downtown reinforce historic character.

- Update the Unified Development Ordinance to require new development in the Downtown area on the Future Land Use Map to match the historic character of Franklin's downtown.
 - ◊ Consider the establishment of a maximum setback for buildings along major streets.

- ◊ Require parking to be located behind buildings
- ◊ Encourage or require 2+ story buildings
- ◊ Continue to require transparency, screening of trash, loading and storage areas
- ◊ Establish standards for sidewalks and street trees in the downtown area to improve the pedestrian experience.
 - Select approved street trees that have downward growing roots to minimize maintenance costs.



New development in the downtown area should have buildings close to the street and parking in the rear.



Transparent windows and wide sidewalks, with furniture, planters and street lights add to the character of downtown.

Strategy 4.3: Encourage improvements to and activation of the public realm

- Improve pedestrian facilities and crossings downtown
- Encourage sidewalk dining
 - ◊ Establish parameters and a process for utilization of town-owned sidewalks and rights-of-way
- Prioritize maintenance and updates to Town Square
 - ◊ Coordinate with the Franklin Garden Club to maintain landscaping in the square
 - ◊ Maintain the clock tower
 - ◊ Consider upgrades to the northeast quadrant of the square such as a

permanent canopy for concerts.

- ◊ Consider the addition of a kiosk or map for informational purposes.
- Consider improvements to sidewalks and alleys.
- Encourage murals in key locations
- Consider a program to consolidate trash receptacles and pick-up in the downtown area.

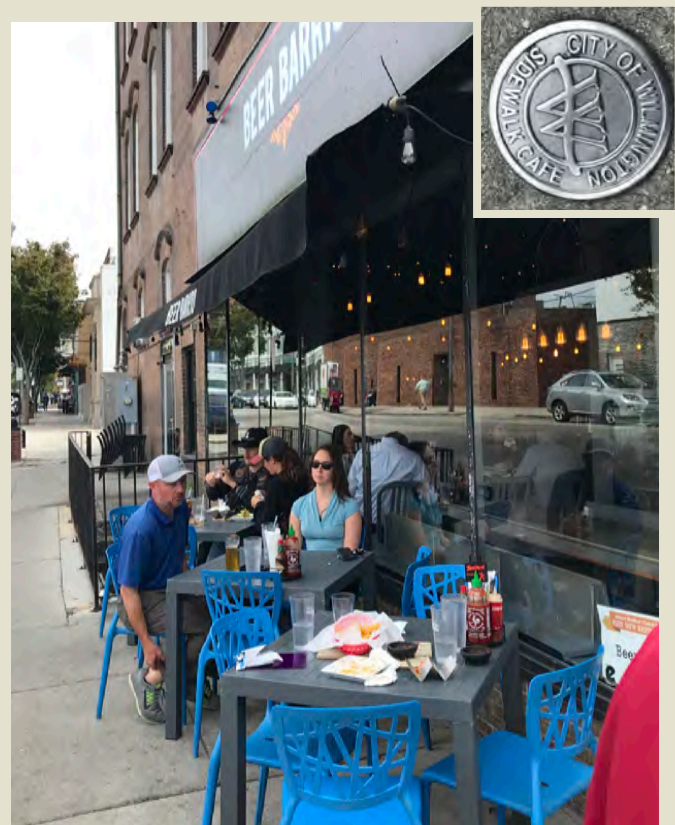
Strategy 4.4: Study opportunities to increase parking downtown

- Consider street improvements that include restriping and upgrades to increase on-street parking.
- Study shared parking arrangements and partnerships for creating structured parking.

OUTDOOR DINING

In 2013, State statute G.S. 136-27.4(b)(1) was enacted to permit municipalities to regulate outdoor dining in NCDOT rights of way. An encroachment agreement with NCDOT is needed for streets maintained by NCDOT. After that the Town may establish a program to permit outdoor dining on state rights of way. The Town may proceed in permitting sidewalk dining on local streets without prior authorization from NCDOT. Regulatory requirements for sidewalk dining could include:

- ◊ Minimum clear pedestrian passageway and dimensional requirements (only locate in front of restaurant)
- ◊ Delineation of outdoor dining areas, especially if alcohol is served
- ◊ Standards for design and maintenance of outdoor dining space
- ◊ Noise and hours of operation limitations
- ◊ Insurance and indemnity requirements
- ◊ Permit fee or annual fee



The City of Wilmington allows sidewalk dining downtown and delineates areas where dining is allowed via unobtrusive pavement markers.

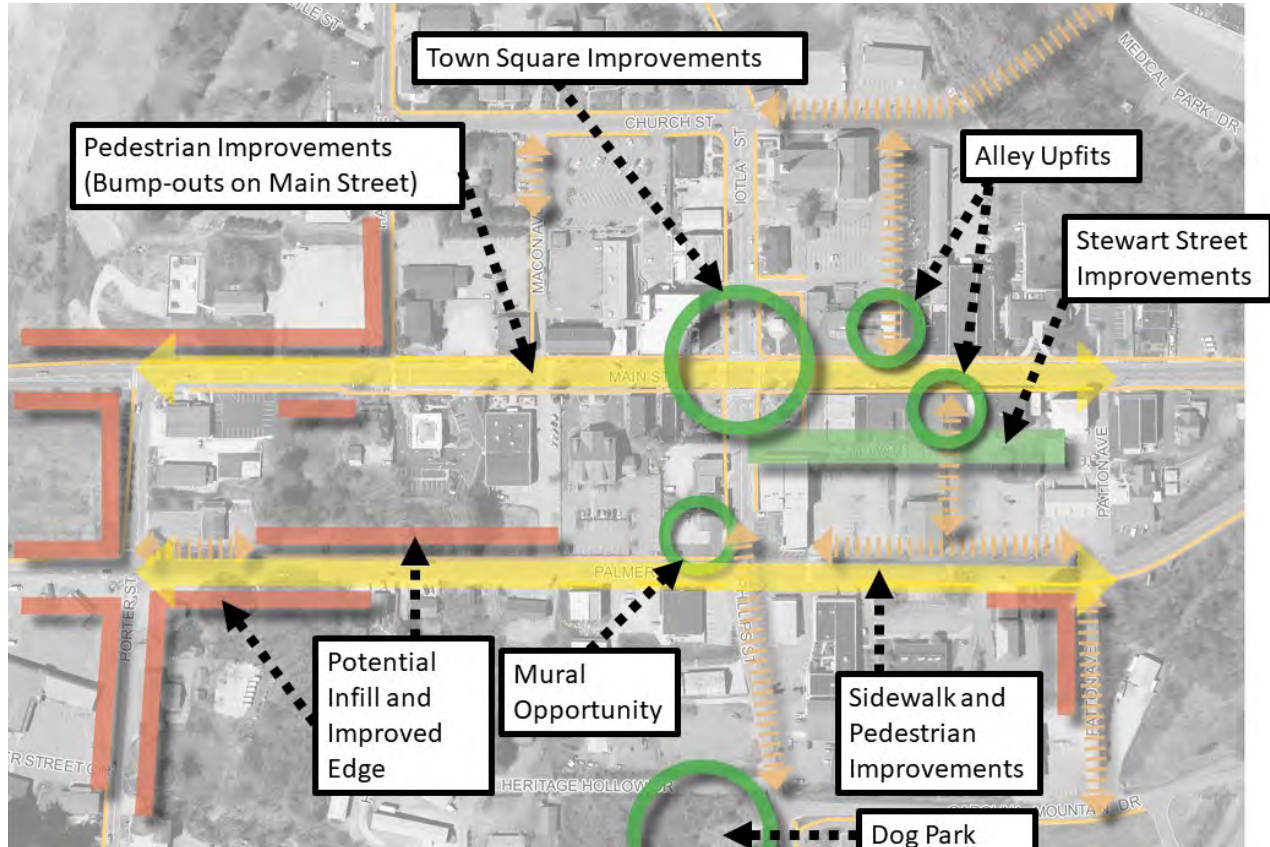
Policy 5: Extend the downtown

Strategy 5.1: Consider upgrades to public rights of way to improve conditions for pedestrians and support local businesses

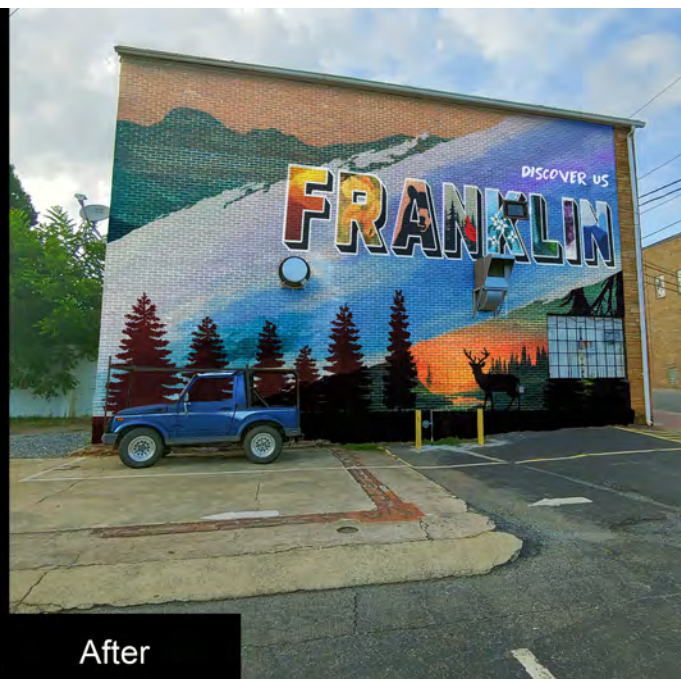
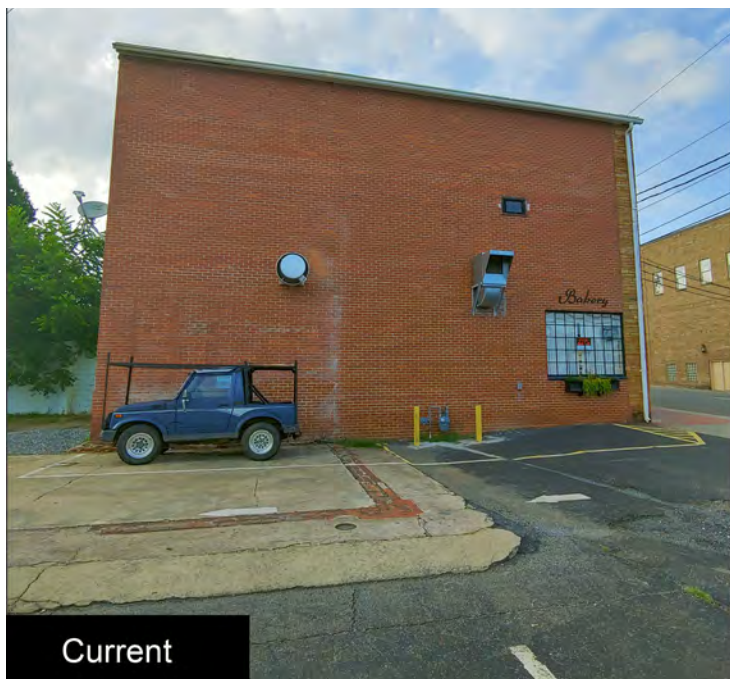
- ◊ Study potential upgrades to Stewart Street
- Upgrades could include the formalization of parking, landscaping and designated patio dining areas.
- Offering facade grants for buildings fronting Stewart Street and other alleys could help extend the downtown.

Strategy 5.2: Establish transition areas on the edges of downtown that allow for a mix of uses and walkable, pedestrian-friendly site design

- New buildings should be located close to the street with the majority of parking located to the side or rear of the structures.
- Study potential upgrades to Palmer Street, East Main Street and other streets to increase parallel parking and improve sidewalk conditions.



Improvements to the public realm and infill and redevelopment could help activate parts of downtown that are located off of the principle block of Main Street.



The above image was submitted as an idea during the public workshop. It depicts a potential opportunity for a mural on a blank building facade fronting Palmer Street.



Stewart Street is town owned alley parallel to Main Street. Improvements to buildings and public rights-of-way could be made to extend the downtown and provide more options for patio dining.

Policy 6: Encourage public and private investment in East Franklin

Strategy 6.1: Work toward the creation of a Nikwasi Cultural Arts District.

- Encourage a new walkable, mixed use district surrounding the Nikwasi mound
 - ◊ This district could include a variety of uses including commercial, mixed use and residential development near the Nikwasi Mound.
 - ◊ Allow for flexibility in use and reuse of buildings.
- Update regulations to incentivize redevelopment and new buildings that improve the frontage along Main Street.
 - ◊ Consider reducing setbacks and parking requirements due to proximity to downtown and potential for walk

and bike trips.

- Work with landowners, business owners and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee to study opportunities for public art and park improvements in the vicinity of the Nikwasi mound.

Strategy 6.2: Study the potential for a public private partnership for the development of a park and housing on the Whitmire Property.

- *See detailed recommendations on page 79.*



Conceptual design of public improvements and private redevelopment in the Nikwasi Mound area and East Franklin.

Strategy 6.3: Improve Highlands Road as a gateway corridor.

- *Existing landscaping requirements for vehicular use areas may incrementally improve many older commercial areas. Additional or customized requirements may be needed for certain areas.*
 - Consider updating and applying the existing Entry Corridor Overlay zoning district to incrementally improve key entry corridors.
 - Create custom landscaping and screening requirements for key gateway corridors. These could include a minimum amount of landscaping for new development and significant renovations of existing commercial areas along key corridors
 - The minimum amount of landscaping could be 10-20% of upland portions of properties or frontage of buildings.
 - At least 50% of the required on-site landscaping should be located in the designated front yard. A layered landscaping approach should be taken that includes trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses.
 - A landscaping area should be required between the commercial establishment and the parking lot (i.e. Blowing Rock requires 4ft between the development and the parking lot).
- Consider public investments to improve the corridor.
 - ◊ Screen public facilities (i.e. truck turn around, waste and recycling center)
 - ◊ Work with private entities to potentially include a greenway access as part of new development or redevelopment near the intersection of Highlands Road and Crane Circle.
 - ◊ Study an improved pedestrian crossing and potentially a median with a pedestrian refuge and the the realignment of Crane Circle to provide access to the Whitmire Property



Existing landscaping requirements for vehicular use areas may incrementally improve many older commercial areas. Additional or customized requirements may be needed for certain areas.

Housing

Stakeholder interviews and the community survey indicated that quality housing options are needed to attract young families and employees. A high percentage of new homes are being utilized as seasonal and vacation homes. The Town can work with the private sector to increase the number and types of housing options located within the town limits.

Policy 1: Support the creation of a range of new housing opportunities in the Town of Franklin

Strategy 1.1: Encourage a variety of housing types as part of mixed use areas, traditional neighborhoods and on well located sites.

Strategy 1.2: Encourage a variety of housing types in and near downtown

- Encourage residential on second floors along main streets downtown.
- Consider allowing for alley loaded bungalows, quadplexes and townhomes on smaller lots on the edges of downtown.

Strategy 1.3: Encourage attached and multi-family housing in Urban Mixed Use areas and Traditional Neighborhood areas shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Strategy 1.4: Establish design criteria for higher density and manufactured housing types that preserve community character.

- Clarify the scale of attached and multi-family housing development in NMU and TND areas on the Future Land Use Map
 - ◊ Currently maximum building height in the NMU Zoning District is 25ft. Slightly higher buildings could be allowed if they include live/work units and/or meet other design criteria.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GOALS

Primary Goal

- Create a range of housing opportunities

Secondary Goals

- Build on economic strengths and investments in infrastructure
- Preserve our natural and cultural heritage

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING IN FRANKLIN

There has been very limited new housing built in Franklin in the last ten years. Most of the new housing that has been built is second homes and multi-family dwellings. Entry level homes for young families and options for seniors have been limited.



Harrison Oaks is an example of quality missing middle housing that appeals to a variety of people at different stages of their life.

- Clarify areas where manufactured housing is allowed.
 - ◊ Currently allowances for manufactured housing and requirements for traditional wood-frame homes do not adequately reflect the predominate character of neighborhoods.

Strategy 1.5: Consider reducing barriers to accessory dwelling units (ADU).

- Currently ADUs have a maximum size of 800 square feet and minimum lot size is governed by the underlying zoning district.
 - ◊ Increasing the allowable size of ADUs could allow for additional density in certain areas while preserving the character of neighborhoods.
 - ◊ Considerations for allowing ADUs should be part of increasing the number of people that could live within walking distance to downtown.

- ◊ Access to existing public roads and could easily be served by existing water and sewer infrastructure
- ◊ Have limited environmental constraints including steep slopes

Strategy 2.2: Improve housing stock in aging neighborhoods

- Study conditions of housing in older neighborhoods.
- Seek sources of funding and customize programs to encourage the rehabilitation and construction of housing.

Policy 2: Reduce barriers to new housing while balancing the need to preserve key natural features.

Strategy 2.1: Update zoning to encourage new housing in areas served by water and sewer.

- Consider reducing minimum open space requirement in areas within the town limits that meet certain criteria. Criteria could include:



Encouraging reinvestment in older neighborhoods can help preserve history and provide housing options.

Economic Development and Infrastructure

Situated an hour and a half north of Atlanta, Franklin's accessibility to a major metro area combined with its small-town charm and scenic natural beauty continue to drive the town's growth as a tourist destination, second home market, and regional business hub.

In addition to its location and surrounding environment, Franklin has had some significant recent accomplishments that bode well for the future of its economy. Among those accomplishments are retention and expansion of a large software company, designation as an Appalachian Trail community, a new partnership with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that could lead to millions in investment, and a renaissance of downtown business activity. The town should build on those successes while addressing challenges such as the relocation of the hospital, access to broadband, and reuse of historic buildings along Main Street.

Policy 1: Provide affordable, reliable high-speed broadband inside the city limits

Strategy 1.1: Identify and map existing broadband infrastructure and available speeds

- Create a hot spot map based on infrastructure location and available speeds combined with cost of service (see below)

Strategy 1.2: Determine the cost of existing broadband and the cost for extension of service

- Map the cost based on location to determine if there is available affordable service

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GOALS

Primary Goal

- Build on economic strengths and investments in infrastructure

Secondary Goals

- Preserve our natural and cultural heritage
- Create a range of housing opportunities



Technology companies such as Drake Software need access to high speed broadband and would benefit from additional tech firms in the area.

Strategy 1.3: Explore the town developing broadband infrastructure

- Define minimum desired broadband goals including quality, speeds and eligible geographic areas
- Inventory public assets which could be leveraged to offset infrastructure deployment costs. This would include existing conduits, fiber, poles (street lights), and real estate/structures
- Explore grant opportunities to reduce capital costs (Suggestions are NC Dept. of Commerce, Dogwood Health Trust, Nantahala Health Trust)
- Explore partnerships with service providers and non-profit organizations to expand their existing service in town utilizing the inventory of public assets.
- Explore partnerships with service providers and non-profit organizations to operate and maintain infrastructure owned by the Town of Franklin.

Policy 2: Retain and expand existing and recruit new tech-based businesses

Strategy 2.1: Determine the barriers to expansion of existing businesses and develop strategies to address those barriers

- Develop a regular survey process to determine the needs of existing tech-based businesses

Strategy 2.2: Work with Drake Software to develop a recruitment strategy for new tech-based businesses

Policy 3: Support and retain remaining manufacturing businesses

Strategy 3.1: Work with the Macon County Economic Commission (EDC) to develop strategies to retain existing in-town manufacturing

- Develop a regular survey process to determine the needs of local manufacturing companies

Policy 4: Support the growth of the construction, services, and trades sector

Strategy 4.1: Work with the Macon County Economic Commission to develop strategies to expand the construction, services, and trades sector

Strategy 4.2: Partner with the Community College for jobs training in construction, services, and trades

Policy 5: Ensure town residents have adequate access to healthcare

Strategy 5.1: Develop a strategy to influence state lawmakers on matters that affect healthcare services in rural areas

Strategy 5.2: Play an active role in Health Equity WNC

Strategy 5.3: Position the town to benefit from the distribution of funds from the Dogwood Health Trust



A new state-of-the-art Angel Medical Center will be constructed on Macon Center Drive at the intersection of US 441 and Main St.

Policy 6: Support the growth of heritage tourism

Strategy 6.1: Identify Franklin's cultural/heritage assets

Strategy 6.2: Use planning policies to preserve cultural assets

Strategy 6.3: Partner with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) to access resources for heritage tourism development

Strategy 6.4: Partner with local cultural/cultural heritage groups, the EDC, and the Chamber of Commerce to promote heritage tourism

- The Macon County Historical Society, the Women's History Trail, Nikwasi Initiative, Scottish Tartan's Museum, Gem and Mineral Society, Mainspring, and Cowee School
- Convene the above groups in a heritage tourism summit (Cowee School could convene and host)

Strategy 6.5: Continue to promote Franklin as an Appalachian Trail Community

Policy 7: Focus on improving livability infrastructure

Strategy 7.1: Increase walkability through implementation of the sidewalk priorities in the Bike/Ped plan

Strategy 7.2: Increase connectivity of recreation areas

- Connect the Little Tennessee River Greenway under town bridge
- Implement the Crawford Branch Greenway spur plan
- Develop the connections in the Greenway Connectivity plan
- Partner with Macon County to connect the Greenway to the Recreation Park
- Partner with the county to connect the sidewalk network to the Bartram Trail and the Appalachian trail

Strategy 7.3: Expand the footprint of traditional downtown development

Strategy 7.4: Advocate for and incentivize keeping public services downtown



Each spring hikers from the Appalachian Trail descend into Franklin for provisions.



The Little Tennessee Greenway is a great asset for residents and visitors alike.

Policy 8: Promote Franklin's downtown

Strategy 8.1: Work with the Streets of Franklin Heritage Association and local businesses to:

- Encourage a wide variety of downtown businesses
- Encourage expanded and consistent hours for downtown businesses
- Coordinate with the Streets of Franklin Heritage Association to promote events and businesses

Strategy 8.2: Consider hiring a Main Street coordinator

- This position could be shared with one or more "sister" towns nearby. A focus of this position could be to pursue grants for downtown.

Policy 9: Encourage reuse and renovation in the downtown area

Strategy 9.1: Consider enhanced façade grants / renovation grants to encourage renovation of building facades and upper floors

Strategy 9.2: Build education and awareness of historic / redevelopment building codes

- Education landowners and building inspection officials about the North Carolina Rehab Code & flexibility in the American Disabilities Act.
 - ◊ The Rehab Code and ADA requires one accessible route into the building, one accessible toilet when toilet facilities are provided and access to all public areas on the main floor only.
 - ◊ Resource: www.presnc.org/get-help/building-codes-accessibility/

Strategy 9.3: Get People Downtown

- Use land use policies to encourage redevelopment of the existing downtown while expanding traditional downtown development to adjacent blocks

UTILIZATION OF UPPER FLOORS

Currently the majority of 2nd and 3rd floor spaces downtown are not occupied. Many upper floors of buildings are unfinished or have dated plumbing or electrical. Encouraging renovation of these buildings and additional retail, office or residential units in these spaces could increase the tax value of the buildings and create a more vibrant downtown.



Natural and Cultural Resources

The Town of Franklin is situated in a picturesque mountain valley. Preserving natural resources including forested mountain ridges and water quality in the Little Tennessee River and celebrating the unique cultural resources of the area will be key to maintaining a high quality of life for current and future residents and businesses.

Policy 1: Preserve open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas

Strategy 1.1: Discourage intense uses and higher density development on steep slopes and ridges.

- Natural resources, including mountain views were noted as one of Franklin's primary strengths and assets. Currently a number of ridges that rise hundreds of feet above the valley floor (around 2,000 ft) are not protected from development in any way.
- Development regulations that discourage intense uses and require enhanced design criteria to be met could help protect signature mountain views while allowing for context-sensitive development. Target areas include ridges that are above 2,275 feet in elevation within the ETJ.

Strategy 1.2: Continue to require minimum open space requirements for specific types of residential, multi-family and mixed-use developments.

Strategy 1.3: Encourage open space reservation and clustering of development away from sensitive features

- Continue to require significant amounts of open space reserved in new developments in areas shown as Open Space Residential on the Future Land Use Map.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GOALS

Primary Goal

- **Preserve our natural and cultural heritage**

Secondary Goals

- Build on economic strengths and investments in infrastructure
- Create a range of housing opportunities

- ◊ These areas have steep slopes and sensitive environmental resources. Conservation subdivisions, defined as residential developments with higher amounts of open space and new development clustered away from valuable natural resources, should be encouraged in these areas.



The Southwestern Commission's Region A Toolbox recommended a number of ways to incentivize alternatives to conventional subdivisions and encourage open space preservation in new development (Image Source: Mountain Landscapes Initiative).

Policy 2: Embrace the river

Strategy 2.1: Encourage new development to take advantage of the proximity to the Little Tennessee River and greenway

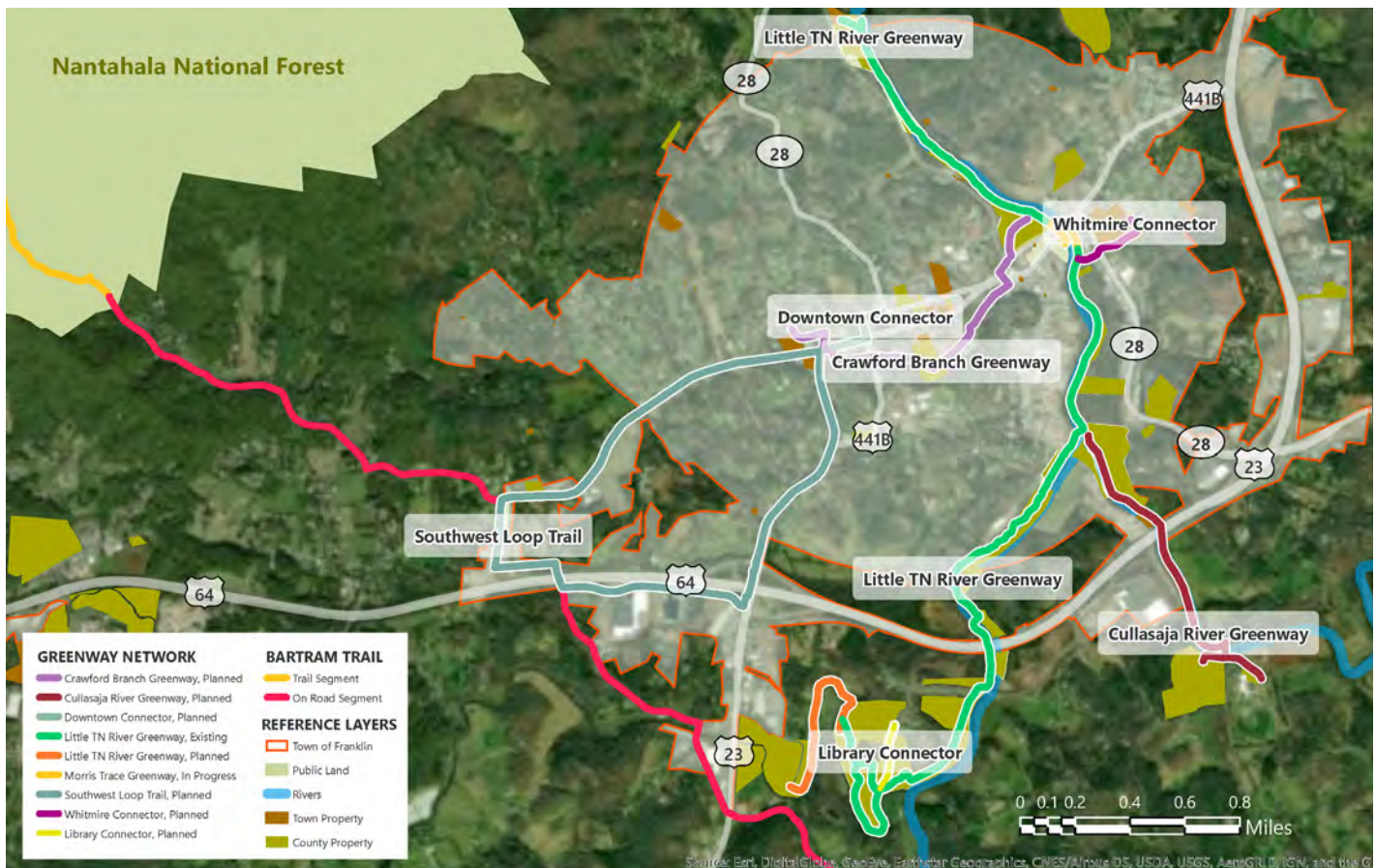
- Prioritize pedestrian connections and open space to connect to existing and planned greenway.
- Improve screening of storage and service areas within view of the river and greenway.

Strategy 2.2: Extend the Little Tennessee Greenway

- Complete the greenway Connection under Main Street and ramp up to existing bridge.
 - ◊ This connection will allow for users to

cross travel from Wesley's Park to East Franklin without having to cross Main Street.

- Continue efforts to extend the Little Tennessee Greenway to the south and west.
 - ◊ The current terminus of the greenway is the Macon County Public Library south of Siler Road on Cartoogechaye Creek. Extending the greenway to the Macon County Recreation Park and potentially beyond under Georgia Road will increase access and add new destinations to the Town's signature recreation facility.



Map of Planned Greenway Network

FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Policy 3: Improve access to parks and greenways

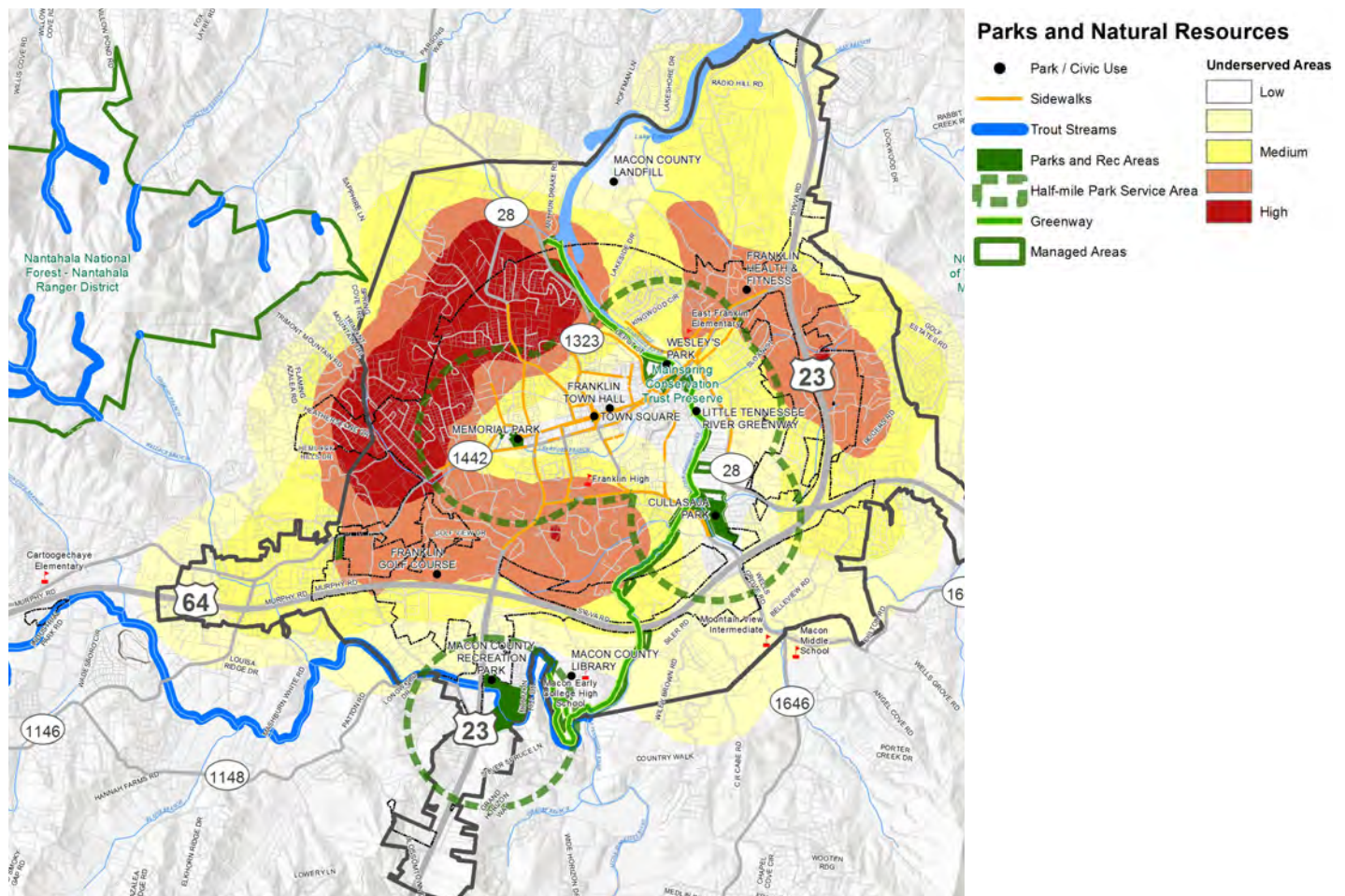
Strategy 3.1: Study the potential for a neighborhood park in East Franklin

- There may be an opportunity for a public private partnership for the development of a park and housing on the Whitmire Property.
- This would improve access to recreation for a large area of East Franklin.

Strategy 3.2: Study the potential for trailheads and additional connections to the Little Tennessee Greenway

- Additional connections to the greenway could include:
 - ◊ Crawford Branch Greenway
 - ◊ Cullusaga River Trail
 - ◊ Neighborhood Connections
 - Greenway connection to Whitmire Property & trailhead
 - Greenway connection from existing greenway to the Macon County Public Library and Southwestern Community College (SWCC)

Strategy 3.3: Study potential location for a skate park and/or mountain bike trails



A parks level of service analysis conducted as part of this plan indicates that there are areas in East Franklin, northwest Franklin and southwest Franklin that are underserved by parks.

Strategy 3.4: Study potential pocket parks that could be planned in tandem with neighborhood greenway connections and trailheads.

- Pocket parks could include recreation facilities such as exercise equipment or multi-purpose greens, historical or ecological signage.
- Enhancements to the community garden near SWCC could also be planned as part of a new pocket park.

Strategy 3.5: Improve access to the Bartram Trail and the Nantahala National Forest in the northwestern part of Franklin.

- Work with partners to reroute the Bartram Trail along the Little Tennessee River Greenway, into downtown Franklin and to Trimont Ridge.
 - ◊ Study using a portion of the County Prison Camp property as parking area. The trail could be routed along an old road bed to the National Forest.
- Improve walking conditions and signage along the section of the trail that passes

through Franklin. Study opportunities for improved sidewalks, greenways, signage and/or trailheads.

Policy 4: Support outdoor recreation in the Greater Franklin Area

- Coordinate with the Franklin Tourism Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and Macon County to market the town of Franklin and the surrounding area as an outdoor recreation destination.
- Continue to support Appalachian Trail users with facilities and programs.
 - ◊ Support the Macon County Transit shuttle to and from town for Appalachian Trail hikers
 - ◊ Support and encourage outdoor recreation oriented businesses in town
- Support outdoor recreation on Cartoogechaye Creek, Little Tennessee River and Cullusaja River
 - ◊ Fishing and paddling access points
 - ◊ Trout stocking in Cartoogechaye Creek and the Cullusaja River

THE BARTRAM TRAIL

In addition to the Appalachian Trail which passes 11 miles west of Franklin, the area is also home to another signature regional hiking trail. The Bartram Trail is a 110 mile hiking trail in North Georgia and Southwest North Carolina. The Trail traverses some of the South's best ridge-top views and follows the approximate route of 18th-century naturalist William Bartram's southern journey from March 1773 to January 1777. It passes through western Franklin. An on-road section exists between the Buckeye Branch Trailhead and the Wallace Branch Trailhead.



FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Franklin Tourism Map

Things to Do

1 Cullasaja Falls (Height: 250 ft.)

Accessible by foot trail, a half-mile through the steep Cullasaja Gorge.

2 Dry Falls (Height: 75 ft.)

Falls that flow over a cliff, allowing access from behind. Accessible by paved walkway from parking area.

3 Bridal Veil Falls (Height: 120 ft.)

Visible from US 64, falls can be viewed from behind via footpath.

4 Bartram Trail (Day Hike)

The 115-mile route of naturalist William Bartram runs through the heart of Franklin. Full trail runs 110 miles. Day hike: Jones Gap to Whiterock Mountain - 4.5 miles.

5 Lake Emory and the Little Tennessee River

This very popular fishing destination features bass, bream, catfish, and carp.

6 Wayah Bald (Lookout)

A stone lookout tower with stunning panoramic views at 5,300 feet is most popular in late spring, it is reachable from a parking area or by hiking.

7 Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts

This 1,500 -seat venue offers year around performances featuring theater, dance, and concerts.

8 Highlands Historic Village

Tour three historic homes, including the oldest house in the Highlands.

9 Nantahala Lake

Nantahala Lake offers boating, fishing, and other outdoor activities

as well as whitewater rafting nearby.

10 Rufus Morgan Trail (Day Hike)

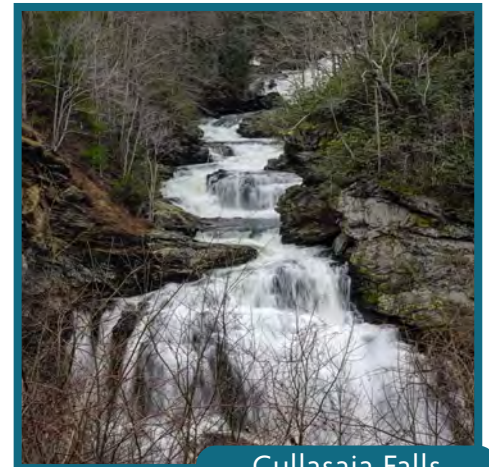
This 1 mile loop takes you through a mature cove forest and past a waterfall.

11 Bust-Yer-Butt Falls (Height: 80 ft.)

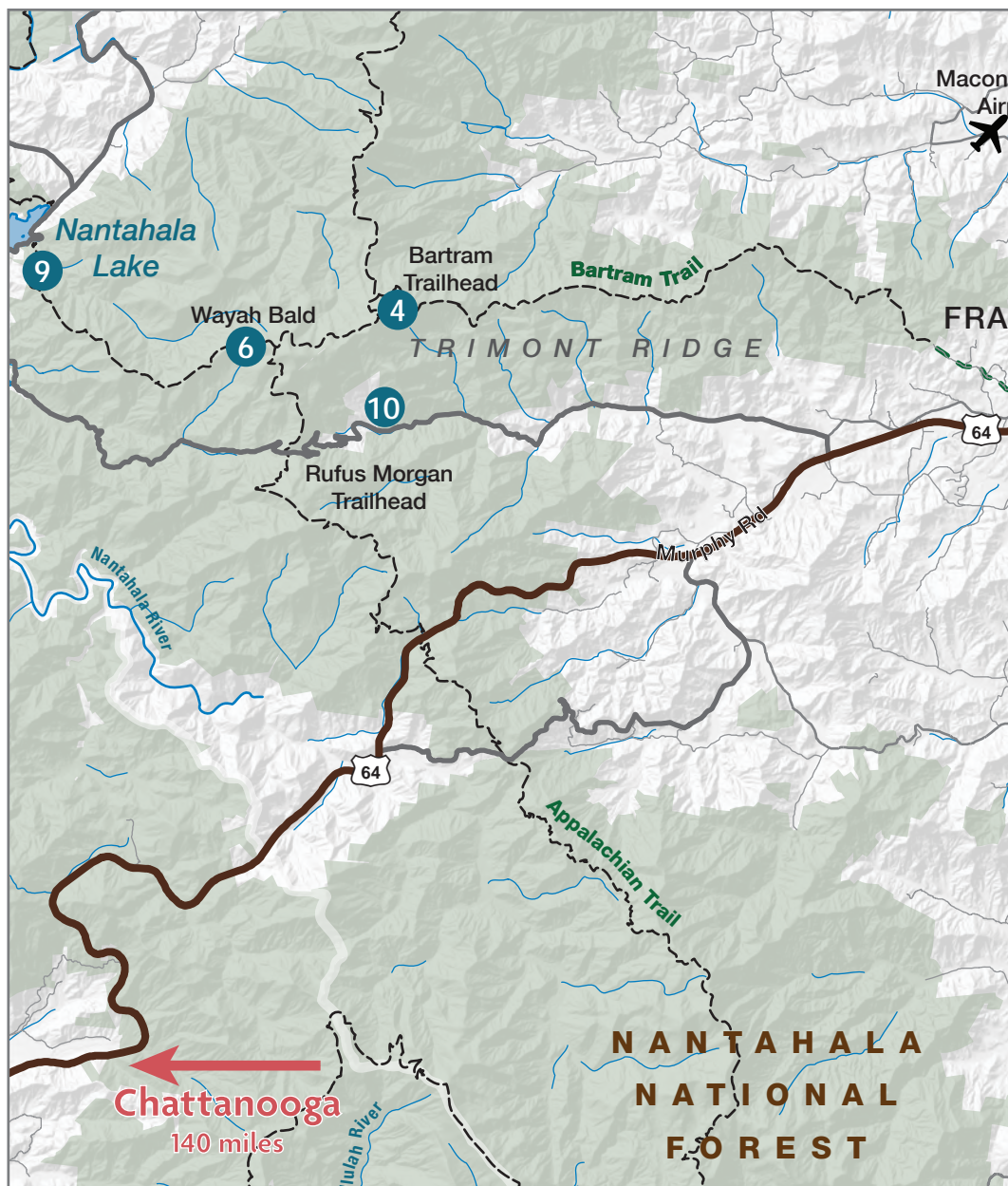
Popular swimming hole and natural slide on the Cullasaja River right off US 64.

12 Smoky Mountain Visitor Center

Start your adventure here. This large, well staffed visitor center offers a wide variety of information on where to stay, eat, and play so you can make the most of your visit to the mountains.



Cullasaja Falls



Wayah Bald Tower



Little Tennessee River Greenway

Downtown Franklin

The historical and cultural heart of the area. Main Street is a classic mountain town street, with a number of intact historical buildings and views of mountains all around. It remains a destination thanks to its independent shops where visitors can dine and shop for outdoor gear and local crafts such as quilts, hand blown glass, and traditional woodworking products.

1 Scottish Tartan Museum

Discover goods from local artisans such as glass, leather, and pottery. Also find museums and restaurants.

2 Macon County Historical Museum

Home of the Women's Trail. This 12+ site tour educates visitors on how women contributed the history of Franklin and the country.

3 Gem & Mineral Museum

Located in the historic old jail in Franklin, this museum features the area's most comprehensive collection of native gems and minerals plus displays from all across the US.

4 Little Tennessee River Greenway

A meandering 5 mile path that passes through downtown Franklin, wetlands, old railroad cuts, and forest. Features picnic shelters, a playground, and canoe launches.

5 Nikwasi Mound

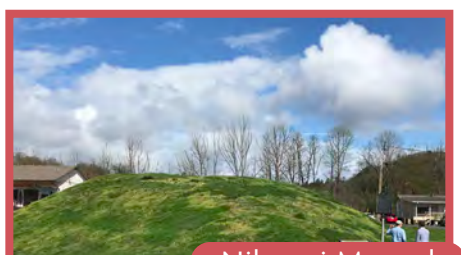
An untouched sacred Cherokee mound. This site serves as a reminder of the great Cherokee town that existed here centuries ago.

Other

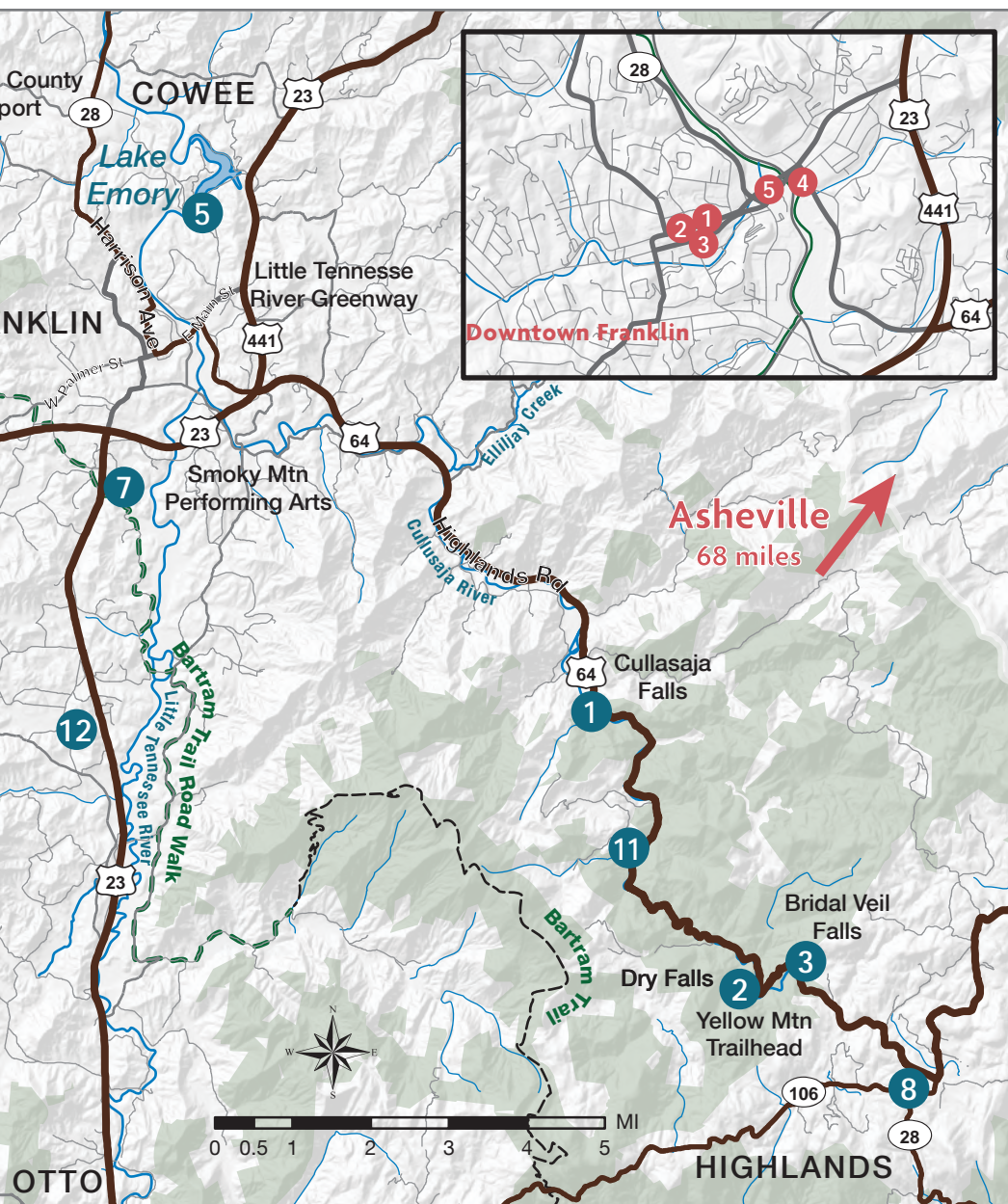
In addition to the sites included on the map, the Franklin area offers other attractions, including

Mountain Heritage Center Exhibits, programs, and demonstrations show the rich traditions of the mountains

Zachary-Tolbert House 150-year-old Greek Revival style home in remarkably original condition with furniture. 11-3 PM Fri. - Sat., mid-May through mid-October.



Nikwasi Mound



Transportation

INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance for the development and maintenance of a multimodal transportation system to serve the Town of Franklin's existing and planned growth through 2040.

MULTIMODAL MOBILITY VISION

- Franklin is connected to the region and beyond with local and regional access to the Town's businesses, neighborhoods, and resources. Franklin's residents have access to a multimodal mobility network that allows people, regardless of ability, can reach their destination by their modes of choice: walking, biking, riding transit, or using a vehicle

WHAT THIS PLAN DOES

- This plan integrates land use planning with transportation planning and investments. It emphasizes that the transportation system supports the town's land use vision and livability outcomes by providing options for people to get to the town as well as travel within the town.
- This vision promotes connections to Downtown Franklin to activity areas along the Little Tennessee River, commercial and employment corridors (Highlands, 441 Bypass, Siler Road, Georgia Road), and in-town neighborhoods. The transportation system is designed and scaled to meet the future travel demand and to reflect or enhance the character of the community. Mobility options consider and accommodate the needs of underserved populations, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, the young, and low-income households.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GOALS

Primary Goal

- Provide a variety of transportation choices

Secondary Goals

- Create walkable, mixed-use districts and neighborhoods with a distinct sense of place
- Build on economic strengths and investments in infrastructure

WHAT IS MULTIMODAL MOBILITY?

- A multimodal mobility strategy addressed more than one mode (or method) of transportation for people to get to/from and within Franklin. The town's multimodal mobility strategy incorporates policies for all mobility options, including walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving.

KEY MOBILITY CHALLENGES

- While Franklin had decent connectivity for a mountain town, some connections to fully developed connected network of facilities is challenging due to topography.
- Although Franklin has 12 miles of sidewalks concentrated near Downtown Franklin and some commercial areas, residential areas have many gaps. This limits the mobility of pedestrians between major destinations. Additionally, a bicycling network is nonexistent. These gaps in infrastructure, along with topography, create challenges for pedestrian and bicycle travel in the town.
- With limited transit access, the existing service must be reliable and marketed to make an impact on mobility options. The structure of the current system makes it difficult for transit dependent riders to conveniently reach their destination.
- Downtown Franklin could benefit from significant pedestrian and bicycling investment. Current conditions are challenges (e.g. narrow sidewalks in poor condition), particularly for those with mobility challenges.

MOBILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy 1: Prioritize transportation projects that move people rather than vehicles.

- *Franklin's small town feel and walkable downtown are amenities that residents prize. The projects and strategies identified in this plan should enhance and complement the character of Franklin's neighborhoods and prioritize projects that make the system more comfortable, convenient, and safe.*

Strategy 1.1: During private development review and public project development, evaluate and assess transportation projects (or components of a larger plan) to make mobility and safety top priorities in planning and design.

- Roadways and associated structures should be designed to provide the most safe and comfortable facility possible under the physical and financial constraints of each project.

Strategy 1.2: Maintain and improve the present road and trail system and continue to make surface improvements in conjunction with the NC Department of Transportation.

Strategy 1.3: Continue to cooperate with and support the efforts of NCDOT to improve the function of roads under NCDOT's jurisdiction for the benefit of all roadway users.

Strategy 1.4: Strengthen, to the degree feasible, the Town of Franklin's access management guidelines of when reviewing plats or site development proposals adjacent to roads in Franklin's jurisdiction.

- Example from UDO: (b) Access analysis. The design, number, and location of

access points to collector and arterial roadways must be fully analyzed. The number of access points shall be kept to a minimum and be designed to be consistent with the type of roadway facility. Access analysis shall include a strip crash, intersection crash analysis and bicycle/ pedestrian analysis.

Policy 2: Build a transportation network that links with Franklin's land use goals.

- *The Town is projected to grow about 1% per year over the next 20 years, as well as attract jobs that will add growth to the town. The Land Use element of this Comprehensive Plan lays out where this growth will occur. This Transportation Element seeks to build a transportation system that accommodates the Town's future land use vision.*

Strategy 2.1: Ensure consistency between land use and the associated transportation system.

- o Coordinate land use and transportation plans and policies to ensure they are mutually supportive.
 - ◊ For example, in mixed use areas such as downtown or in certain mixed use activity centers it may be beneficial to reduce parking requirements to encourage more walking and biking trips.
- o Implement transportation projects that reflect the intensity of the surrounding land uses and the classification of the associated roadway

Strategy 2.2: Create development policies to ensure that the transportation system that maintains or achieves the following levels of service metrics:

o Vehicular Level of Service (LOS):

- ◇ Maintain standards that promote growth where appropriate while preserving and maintaining the existing transportation system. Set LOS D (meaning a high level of congestion is acceptable) as the standard for PM peak hour intersection performance. When evaluating projects to relieve congestion, balance driver experience with other considerations, such as cost, right of way, and other modes.

• Pedestrian LOS:

- ◇ Provision of sidewalks, trails, and/or separated paths will be prioritized as defined in BikeWalk Franklin
- ◇ Standards related to the provision of sidewalks, trails, and/or separated paths Franklin's UDO should be reviewed to ensure that the facilities required match the density.

• Bicycle LOS: Provision of bike lanes, separated paths, protected facilities, and other facilities, as defined in BikeWalk Franklin.

• Transit LOS: Provide transit stop amenities and safe access to transit at transit stops.



High intensity uses such as hotels, commercial centers and multi-family developments should pedestrian, bicycle and transit access during site development and should improve access and amenities.

Strategy 2.3: Improve the transportation system concurrently as Franklin grows.

- Monitor and evaluate the transportation network with development to ensure that infrastructure can accommodate growth and maintain level of service standards.
- Strengthen UDO language to require developers to perform a transportation impact analysis at the discretion of the Town Planner/Engineer. Set standards that require developers to consider the impact on all modes of transportation.

Policy 3: Continue to improve facilities for walking, bicycling, and transit.

- *While many Franklin residents choose to travel by car for nearby trips and to go elsewhere, the community supports providing options for people to get around by more active transportation modes. By creating a safe and welcoming transportation system for all users, the town can support vibrant commercial centers that are accessible by multiple modes. Franklin's geographic size makes walking, bicycling, and transit attractive options for getting around with proper facilities in place.*

Strategy 3.1: Focus on implementation of the community's high priority projects.

- Extending the greenway, closing the gap under the Main Street bridges, building the Crawford Branch Greenway, and sidewalk connections from downtown Franklin to areas "off the hill" are existing priorities.

Strategy 3.2: Continue to build the effort to create a network of concrete sidewalks, asphalt off-road paths, and paved or buffered shoulders along the major streets of the community.

Strategy 3.3: Continue to build the effort to connect Town parks, schools, and other destinations with multimodal facilities.

Strategy 3.4: Work with NCDOT to implement multimodal improvements on existing state roads, which may or may not be associated with a roadway improvement project.

Strategy 3.5: Monitor NCDOT's pavement resurfacing to identify multimodal opportunities. Coordinate efforts far in advance of resurfacing execution.

Strategy 3.6: Update UDO to require bike rack installation with all new development and high-value redevelopment.

Strategy 3.7: Work with Macon Transit to develop a marketing strategy that increased community's awareness of transit as an option. Also work with Macon Transit to install bike racks on its Mountain Gem busses.

Strategy 3.8: Work with the Franklin Police Department to expand existing education and enforcement of safe walking, bicycling and driving behaviors. Consider applying to become a Watch for Me partner, which provides resources to Town and Police officials

Policy 4: Strengthen the transportation system through long-range capital planning.

- *As a small town, Franklin's efforts to build a complete mobility network will take long range planning and financing. Franklin can make progress by establishing plans and policies that support systematic project development, and by having projects ready if outside funding opportunities arise.*

Strategy 4.1: Evaluate and assess the condition of the Town of Franklin's roadway network to update (develop) the Town of Franklin's Roadway Resurfacing Plan.

- Add easement and right-of-way acquisition standards (or guidance) to the Town of Franklin's code of ordinances to acquire land for mobility projects.
- Coordinate with all departments and partners to ensure that mobility goals are met when roads are resurfaced.

Strategy 4.2: Identify and prioritize transportation related capital projects and work with Town leadership to develop and secure annual funding for a capital improvement plan.

- Building on the Town's new Sidewalk Condition Inventory, develop a sidewalk improvement plan as a subset of the capital improvement plan.
- Also building on the Town's new Sidewalk Condition Inventory, develop an ADA Transition Plan to ensure that facilities in the public right of way are accessible.

Strategy 4.3: With partners such as Macon County, the Tourism Development Authority (TDA), Macon County Economic Development, identify sources to "bank" dollars that will allow the community to quickly respond to project opportunities.

- For example, the Henderson County TDA has been setting aside funds to purchase the Ecusta Rail Line. Jackson County has a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to match grants for recreation projects.



Safety improvements downtown and "off the hill" were some of the priorities identified during the planning process.

Policy 5: Effectively partner with regional players to ensure that the local and regional transportation projects (of all types) complement one another.

- *The Town of Franklin is not the only body that has a stake in the future transportation system. Macon County and neighboring counties, NCDOT, and other agencies such as the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization play a role in getting around Franklin. Town of Franklin leaders should coordinate with others to understand how local and regional plans and projects can complement one another.*

Strategy 5.1: Promote cooperative inter-jurisdictional transportation planning.

- Coordinate planning, construction, and operation of transportation facilities with those of other agencies and jurisdictions, including the NC Department of Transportation.
- Seek opportunities to coordinate planning, construction, and operation of mobility studies and roadway improvement projects with other agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to address regional transportation and economic development efforts.
- Develop policies and incentives that encourage members of the public and the private sector to accomplish shared transportation goals, particularly as they relate to Franklin's planned bicycle and pedestrian projects

FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

PROPOSED STREET CROSS SECTIONS

A theme of the transportation recommendations in the plan is that the design of existing roadways could be customized to accomplish many of the goals of this plan. The proposed streets cross sections below are provided to show how various functions and elements within the Right-of-Way (ROW) could be organized. These recommendations are derived from previous planning efforts and through tailoring street design to recommended land uses and may be a consideration as this Plan is implemented. As indicated, bike lanes have been added with various conditions of separation between the two or some cases shared with vehicles also called a sharrow. Center medians are shown to be either grass planted or potentially with canopy trees. On-street parking is shown to be angled or parallel depending on the street location and traffic speeds.

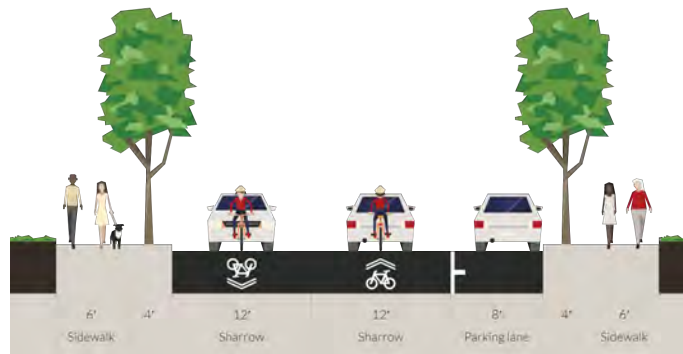
Palmer Street

FLUM: Downtown, office & employment, urban mixed use, low-med density residential

Bike Walk Franklin: Parts along the downtown SW loop connector trail

Downtown Master Plan: Sidewalks and sharrow

Recommendations: Sharrow and detached sidewalk



Siler Road

FLUM: Traditional neighborhood, commercial, urban mixed use

Recommendations: Bike lanes to create a loop system; sidewalks for future residential



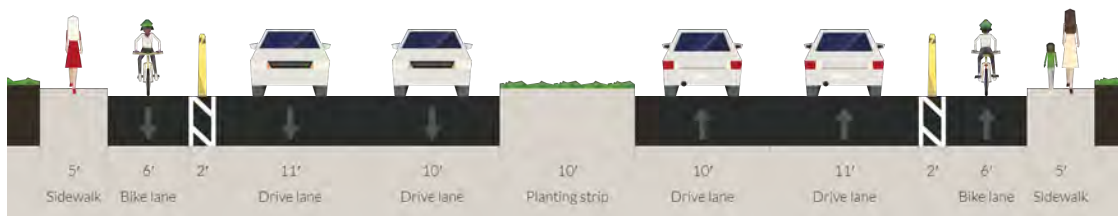
Georgia Road

Bike Walk Franklin: Sidewalks and bike lanes

NCDOT: Plans in section to the south include widening, enhanced U-turns, median

FLUM: Commercial, Traditional neighborhood

Recommendations: Protected bike lanes and attached sidewalk



Highlands Road

FLUM: urban mixed use, traditional neighborhood, commercial, office and employment, low-med density residential

Draft Land Use Plan: Pedestrian oriented with landscaped medians and on-street parallel parking

Bike Walk Franklin: detached sidewalk

Downtown Master Plan: detached sidewalk

Recommendations: detached sidewalk, on-street parking and landscaped median



FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Palmer Street (West of Downtown)

FLUM: open space residential, neighborhood mixed use, low-med density residential

Recommendations: Bike lanes and sidewalks as this is an alternative route into downtown

Roller Mill Road (South of U.S. 64)

FLUM: Low-medium density residential, urban mixed-use

Recommendations: Bike lanes and sidewalks as this is an alternative route into downtown – lower volume than Georgia Road.

Roller Mill Road (North of U.S. 64)

FLUM: Neighborhood mixed use, low-med density residential

Recommendations: Bike lanes and sidewalks as this is an alternative route into downtown – lower volume than Georgia Road



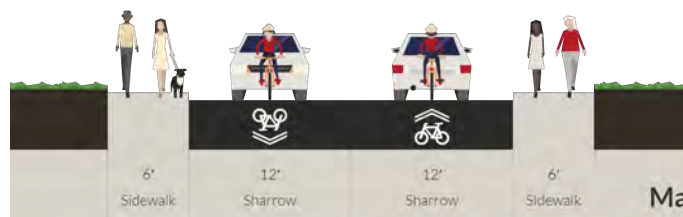
Iolta Street

FLUM: Downtown, urban mixed use, traditional neighborhood

Bike Walk Franklin: Attached sidewalk

Downtown Master Plan: Proposed bike route, sharrows

Recommendations: Sharrows and attached sidewalk connections to greenway, downtown and neighborhoods



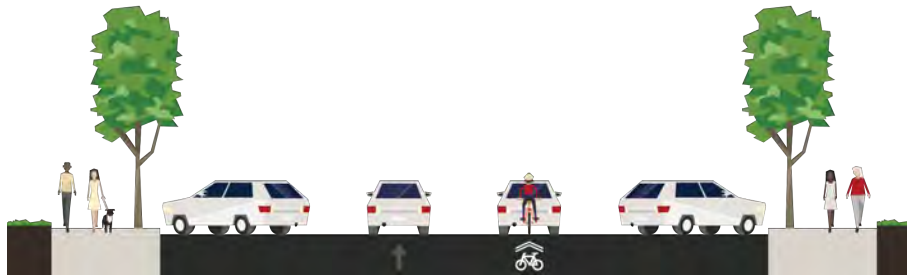
West Main Street

FLUM: Downtown, office & employment, urban mixed use, low-med density residential

Bike Walk Franklin: Parts along the downtown SW loop connector trail

Downtown Master Plan: Sidewalks and sharrow

Recommendations: Sharrow and detached sidewalk



DESIGN CONCEPTS

This chapter includes conceptual designs of potential redevelopment areas that include public space enhancements, streetscape improvements, private development supported by public partneships.



A New Gateway

Franklin's eastern town fabric is a mix of residential and commercial streetscapes and industrial brownfields created generations of incremental development. East Main Street serves as the thoroughfare leading into downtown Franklin for residents and visitors traveling south on NC 441. Nearing the Little Tennessee River, this gateway intersection with Twin Bridge Plaza will serve as an arrival point for people traveling to Franklin. The River Market District and the Whitmire Property will extend activity south from this intersection along Highland Road. This district is comprised of a neighborhood

commercial center with a neighborhood showcasing a mix of residential types for various incomes.

Continuing past this district and across the Little Tennessee River, travelers will enter into the Nikwasi Cultural Arts District anchored by the Nikwasi Mound and Cherokee Cultural Center. This space between NE. Main Street and E. Main Street could be focal point of the district with a monument plaza as a gateway feature near the river. Surrounding the historical grounds, is a potential redeveloped urban fabric activated by infill with 2-3 story buildings and industrial flex space closer to Depot Street. Residential product types are positioned along the river and open space with a small residential cluster bordering the western edge along Carolina Mountain Drive. This district is characterized by walkable streets, cultural prominence and a traditional mountain aesthetic supporting a diverse economic hub of western North Carolina.



WHITMIRE PROPERTY & RIVER DISTRICT



FRANKLIN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Nikwasi Cultural Arts District

The Nikwasi Cultural Arts District is proposed as a cultural focal point for Franklin and the greater region. As a cultural heritage site for the Cherokee people, the Nikwasi Mound and immediate grounds are to be restored and managed in a way that respects their historical significance. Adjacent to the grounds is a cultural arts and visitor center that has been discussed by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Open space could extend from the mound to the Little Tennessee River. At the east end of the grounds between Franklin's two bridges there is potential for an iconic gateway monument serving as focal entry to the town and the cultural district.

The area surrounding the Nikwasi Mound site and future park is envisioned to be an eclectic mixed-use district that includes existing light industrial and commercial tenants along with occasional redevelopment that takes advantage of the location that is easy walking distance to Downtown Franklin and the river.

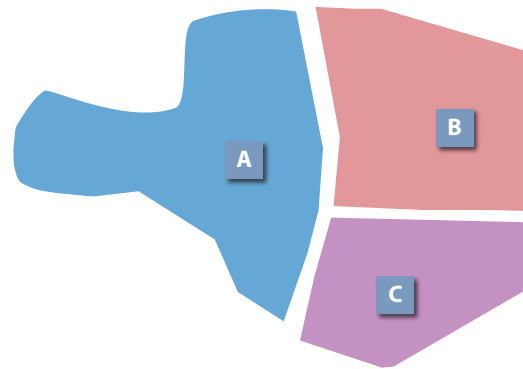
Infill development and redevelopment could include various commercial buildings housing small businesses, restaurants, and offices serving the district and helping to frame walkable streets. There is a rare opportunity for riverside redevelopment in this area that could be flanked by the greenway and connected to the mound area by walking paths that meander through a pocket park or green around new art installations and preserved relics of past industrial uses.

To the southwest portion of the district is a mixed-use part of the district providing for office or commercial use, multi-story mixed-use buildings and potential infill housing. The land use pattern transitions to flex-space, commercial and light industrial buildings to the south along Depot Street.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- >> Incremental improvement and reinvestment adjacent to the Nikwasi Mound and cultural site.
- >> Focus on public and private improvements along NE. Main Street and E. Main Street.
- >> Walkable Streets with two to three story commercial buildings
- >> Greenway connections from the Little Tennessee River into the district through public spaces, trail easements, and private development connections
- >> Transition from commercial to office, flex space and light industrial farther south on Depot St.

DISTRICT DIAGRAM



- A** Downtown Transition
- B** Nikwasi Cultural Arts District
- C** Depot Street Business District



PRECEDENTS & INSPIRATION

01. Industrial Flex-space
02. Cherokee Indian Museum
03. Mural Idea for Old Oil Drums
04. Gateway Monument
05. Potential Riverside Patio Dining



PLAN ELEMENTS

Design Concepts



River Market & The Whitmire Property

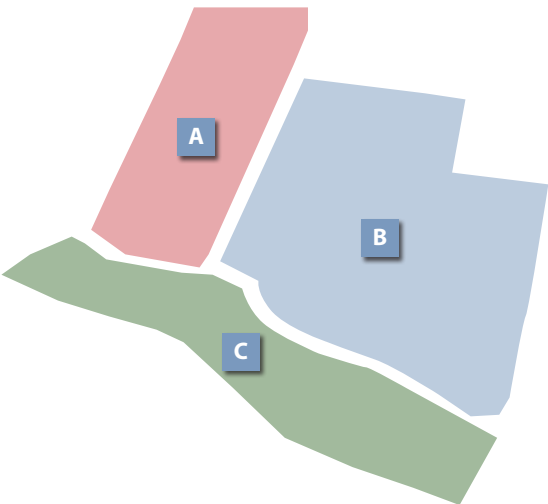
The Whitmire Property and the River Market District are two distinct opportunities on the eastside of Franklin. The River Market is the redevelopment of the Riverwalk shopping center where a mix of uses could be introduced for more living, shopping, and walkability. Buildings could be two to three stories with parking adjacent or underneath depending on the density and suite of outdoor amenities. Across Highlands road is the Whitmire property. The Town of Franklin currently owns this property. It was originally envisioned that this area would house government services. One option for this property would be to pursue a public-private partnership that would further the Town’s goals of improving park access and having new housing at a range of incomes on the east side of town. The concept on the next page shows a small neighborhood district with a mix of housing types and a set of retail shops at the northwest corner. Highlands Road could be improved as a pedestrian oriented streetscape with on-street parallel parking and a planted median to help slow traffic. Front terraces for the townhomes would help define the street and add additional plantings to soften the streetscape. Sidewalks in front of the retail shops on both sides of Highlands Road could accomodate street-tree plantings and outdoor dining.

To the south of both areas is an open park setting that would provide recreational opportunities to the existing east Franklin community and new residents in the area. This could be a more passive park utilizing the terrain for views and various pathways connecting the East Franklin neighborhood and the Little Tennessee River Greenway. Stream restoration and a realignment of Crane Circle are optional projects that could improve the connection.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- >> Protect and enhance the shoreline with a greenway trail and access points
- >> Improve appearance along Highlands Rd with building frontage of multi-story commercial or mixed-use buildings
- >> Mix of housing types including single-family, townhome and multi-family product types
- >> Walkable streets including Highlands Road
- >> Improve access to parks and open space with new neighborhood park and gardens
- >> Preservation of historically significant sites

DISTRICT DIAGRAM



- A River Market Redevelopment
- B Whitmire Property
- C Whitmire Park

PRECEDENTS & INSPIRATION

- 01. River Greenway Trail
- 02. Neighborhood Mixed-Use
- 03. Bungalow Court
- 04. Community Gardens
- 05. Hillside Park



PLAN ELEMENTS

Design Concepts



IMPLEMENTATION



5

IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan includes specific steps that are meant to help the town move forward on the vision and goals identified during the planning process. Each action will involve a coordinated effort involving town staff, appointed and elected officials, community leaders, citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations. The action items are divided into the following topic areas:

- ◆ Land Use & Appearance
- ◆ Downtown
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Economic Development & Infrastructure
- ◆ Natural and Cultural Resources
- ◆ Transportation

Priority Implementation Steps

Land Use & Appearance

- **Action Item #1: Allow for a mix of single-family lot sizes and small-scale attached residential units closer to downtown.**
 - ◇ Update the Traditional Neighborhood (TN) Overlay Zoning District standards could be updated to allow for this on smaller properties close to downtown and potentially near other commercial or mixed use areas.
 - ◇ Encourage rezonings to this district in the Neighborhood Mixed Use, Urban Mixed Use and Traditional Neighborhood areas identified on the Future Land Use Map.
- **Action Item #2: Update UDO to include design requirements to match historic character of downtown and improve pedestrian experience.**
 - ◇ Design requirements and standards should address the following:
 - Setbacks of buildings
 - Parking location
 - Building height
 - Screening of service areas
 - Standards for sidewalks and street trees

Housing

- **Action Item #3: Clarify areas where manufactured housing is allowed.**
 - ◇ Currently allowances for manufactured housing and requirements for traditional

woodframe homes do not adequately reflect the predominate character of neighborhoods.

- ◇ Ensure compliance with state law (160D)
- **Action Item #4: Update zoning to encourage new housing in areas served by water and sewer.**
 - ◇ Consider reducing minimum open space requirement in areas within the town limits that meet certain criteria. Criteria could include:
 - Access to existing public roads and could easily be served by existing water and sewer infrastructure
 - Have limited environmental constraints including steep slopes
 - ◇ Candidate locations for this change include areas shown as Low to Medium Density Residential on the Future Land Use Map. Higher open space requirements should remain in areas shown as Open Space Residential on the FLU map.
- **Action Item #5: Study housing conditions in distressed neighborhoods and seek funding for programs to address needs.**

Downtown

- **Action Item #6: Study projects and programs to improve and activate the public realm.**
 - Improve pedestrian facilities and crossings downtown
 - Establish parameters for sidewalk dining
 - Study improvements to Town

Square, sidewalk and alley upgrades (i.e. lighting), and potential mural locations

- Consider a program to consolidate trash storage and pick-up in the downtown area

- **Action Item #7: Encourage public and private investment in and near downtown**

- ◊ Study potential upgrades to Stewart Street
- ◊ Consider enhanced facade grants for building upfits by private property owners
- ◊ Study potential upgrades to Palmer Street and other downtown streets to increase parallel parking and improve sidewalk conditions.
- ◊ Study opportunities to increase parking downtown through restriping, street improvements, shared parking and partnerships for structured parking.

Economic Development & Infrastructure

- **Action Item #8: Encourage public and private investment in East Franklin**

- ◊ Update regulations and provide incentives to create a new, walkable mixed use district surrounding the Nikwasi mound.
- ◊ Work with stakeholders to identify opportunities for public art and park improvements in the vicinity of the Nikwasi mound.
- ◊ Study project and code updates to incrementally improve key entry corridors.

- **Action Item #9: Develop and expand of broadband infrastructure**

- ◊ Inventory public assets and explore grant opportunities and partnerships to expand service to the town

- **Action Item #10: Develop a survey to determine the needs for existing tech businesses**

- **Action Item #11: Increase walkability through implementation of sidewalk priorities**

- ◊ These include priorities identified in the Bike/Walk Plan and “off the hill” connections from downtown
- ◊ Older, existings sidewalks also are in need of maintenance.

- **Action Item #12: Work with the Streets of Franklin Heritage Association to promote events and encourage expanded consistent hours for downtown businesses.**

Natural and Cultural Resources

- **Action Item #13: Consider a public-private partnership to develop the Whitmire Property**

- ◊ Development should include a public park and a variety of housing types.
- ◊ The Town should define goals for property and seek assistance creating a request for proposals.

- **Action Item #14: Improve walking conditions and signage along the section of the Bartram Trail that passes through western Franklin.**
 - ◊ Study opportunities for improved sidewalks, greenways, signage and/or trailheads.

Transportation

- **Action Item #15: Extend the Little Tennessee Greenway and close gaps.**
 - ◊ Close the gap under the Main Street bridges
 - ◊ Extend the greenway from its current terminus behind the community college to the Macon County Recreation Park
- **Action Item #16: Study, design and build the Crawford Branch Greenway**
 - ◊ Fund a feasibility study for the Crawford Branch Greenway between the Macon County dog park and the Little Tennessee River Greenway
- **Action Item #18: Update development policies and regulations to meet vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit level of service (LOS) standards.**
- **Action Item #19: Work with partners such as Macon County, the Tourism Development Authority (TDA), Macon County Economic Development to fund projects with an impact on tourism**
 - ◊ Increase regional marketing efforts
 - ◊ Identify priority projects
 - ◊ Identify sources to “bank” dollars that will allow the community to quickly respond to park, trail and greenway project opportunities.
- **Action Item #20: Encourage new development to take advantage of the proximity to the Little Tennessee River and greenway**
 - ◊ Prioritize pedestrian connections and open space to connect to existing and planned greenway.
 - ◊ Improve screening of storage and service areas within view of the river and greenway.