June 2022

Comprehensive Plan

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Plan Adoption
Ashe County Board of Commissioners – June 20, 2022
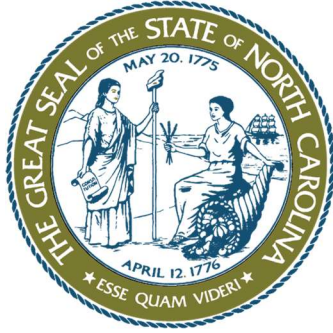
This report was completed with assistance from the North Carolina Department of Commerce Appalachian Regional Commission program and the Main Street & Rural Planning program.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this document is to design a future for Ashe County in which its people can anticipate growth, plan for change, and preserve the rural charm that makes the County a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

The Ashe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan should be a tool used to better the lives of all citizens by offering a blueprint for growth that maintains the rural character, protects the natural environment and resources, and fosters a collaborative culture in which economic development can occur.

Executive Summary

Situated in the far northwest corner of North Carolina, the geographic location of Ashe County is both a strength and a challenge for the community. While the widening of US 221 in the southern end of the County has made some areas more accessible than ever, the County still enjoys the rural character that is a source of pride and attraction for locals and visitors alike. The natural scenery and recreation opportunities have been enjoyed by residents for generations and have attracted many visitors – some of whom have become full- or part-time residents. Protecting this rural landscape and mountain charm is a top priority for Ashe County residents.

This Comprehensive Plan was drafted using input from the Ashe County Planning Board and other members of the local work group, feedback from Ashe County residents and workers, a variety of community stakeholders, the UNC-Chapel Hill Department of City and Regional Planning, and staff of the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

The plan makes a total of 44 recommendations related to land use and future development under 7 priority areas. These priority areas, identified by the Planning Board and local work group, include:
1. Housing
2. Quality of Life
3. Economic Development
4. Transportation
5. Tourism
6. Natural Environment
7. Administrative

These recommendations should serve as guideposts for Ashe County as it considers future development efforts and should work in collaboration with other planning efforts undertaken by the County and related jurisdictions.

Background

Demographics

2021 Population: 29,058 people
Land Area: 426.14 mi^2

Location

Ashe County lies at the northwestern most point of North Carolina. The northern border of the county is part of the state boundary of North Carolina and Virginia, while the western border forms the boundary of North Carolina and Tennessee. Within the state, Ashe is bordered by Watauga, Wilkes, and Alleghany Counties. The County is rural with three incorporated municipalities: Lansing, Jefferson, and West Jefferson.
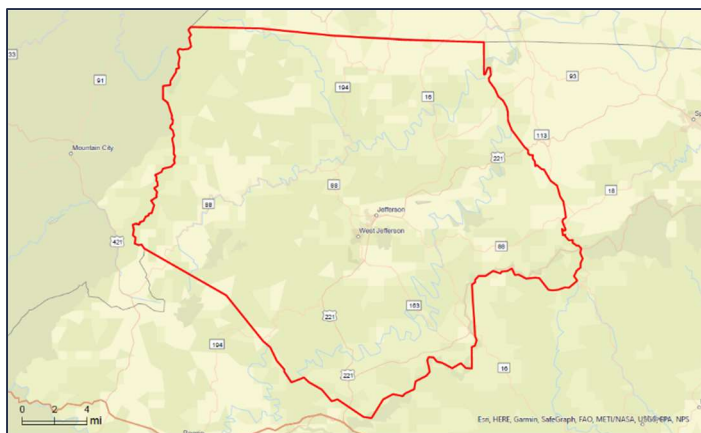
Figure 1: Ashe County, NC

US 221 divides the County southeast by northwest. The highway runs four-lanes from its connection to US 421 in Watauga County to the Towns of West Jefferson and Jefferson. These two communities are the commercial centers of Ashe County. A number of other state routes crisscross the County, including NC 16, NC 194, and NC 88, along with a network of local roads.

Population

The population of Ashe County saw slowing growth over the previous two decades. From 2000 to 2010, the County saw a 1.06% annual growth rate with the population rising from 24,384 to 27,281. From 2010 to 2021, another 1,777 people were added for a total of 29,058 and an annual growth rate of 0.56%. Estimates from the US Census Bureau show the growth rate for the County declining further over the next five years to 0.50% for an estimated population of 29,809 in 2026.

Figure 2: U.S. Census Bureau

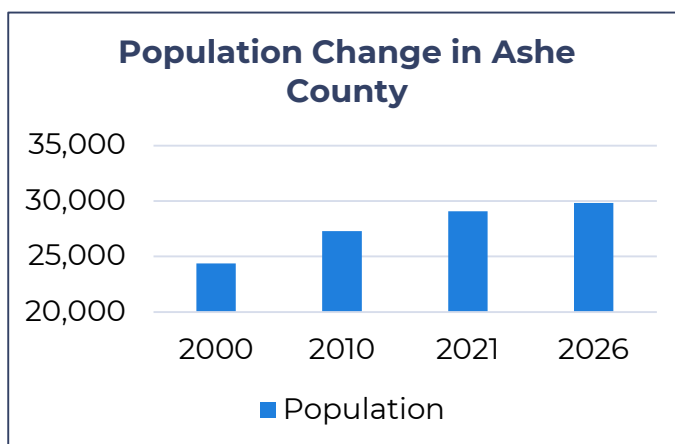Approximately 11% of the County's population reside in one of the three municipalities of Lansing, Jefferson, and West Jefferson with the remaining 89% living in unincorporated areas in the County. While this is still a relatively small percentage living in municipal boundaries, it is a slight increase from 9.7% in 2013.
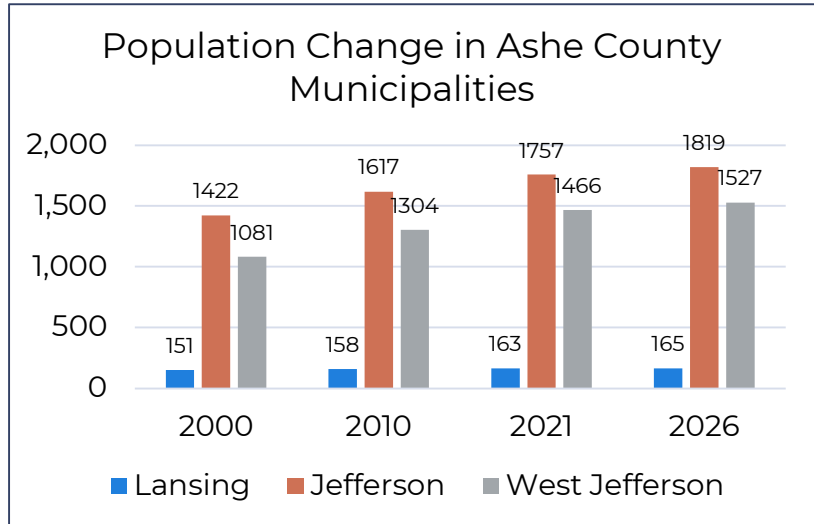
Of the three incorporated municipalities in Ashe County, the Town of Jefferson saw growth of 8.6% between 2010 and 2021 while West Jefferson saw growth of 12.4% for the same period. The Town of Lansing saw an increase of just over 3%.

Figure 3: ESRI

	Other	Multiple	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	Asian	American Indian	Black	White
2010	1.0%	2.2%	4.8%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.6%	95.5%
2021	2.5%	1.3%	5.2%	0.0%	0.5%	0.4%	0.8%	94.5%
2026 (projected)	2.8%	1.5%	5.8%	0.0%	0.6%	0.4%	0.9%	93.7%

Figure 4: ESRI

As of 2021, the population of the County was 94.5% white with the next largest racial groups being "some other race" and "two or more races" at 2.5% and 1.8% respectively. Individuals of Hispanic origin made up 5.2% of the population.

Of the population in Ashe County 19.5% were age 19 or younger in 2021, while 25.9% were over 65 years old. The median age in the County in 2021 was 48.2 years.

According to EMSI, Ashe County's Millennial population is lower than the average for a community of its size in the United States and its number of persons close to retirement is above average.

Figure 5: EMSI

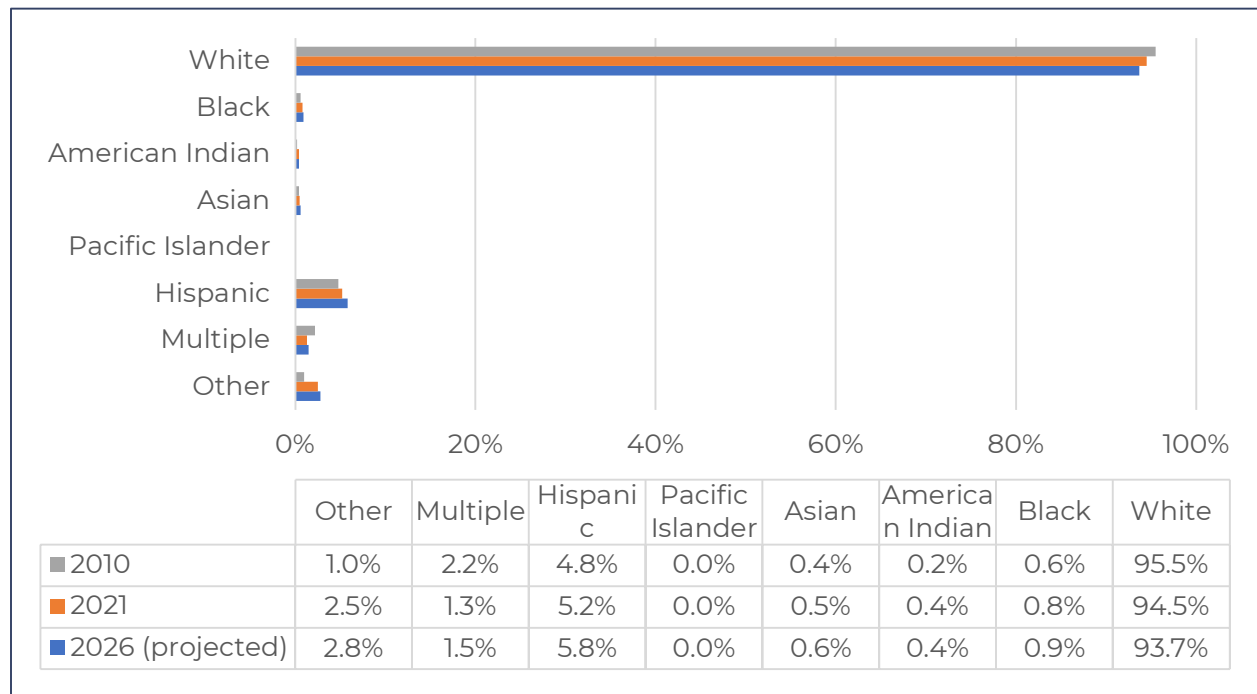Ashe County saw growth of 6.12% between 2010-2021. This is lower than growth seen in the neighboring counties of Watauga and Alleghany.

Ashe County Population Comparison with Neighboring Counties			
	2010	**2021**	**% Change**
Ashe	27,281	29,058	6.12%
Alleghany	11,155	12,019	7.19%
Watauga	51,079	57,249	10.78%
Wilkes	69,340	70,556	1.72%

Figure 6: ESRI

Education

Educational attainment is highly correlated with measures of regional economic prosperity. Rural counties with higher levels of educational attainment face fewer instances of poverty, child poverty, unemployment, and population loss than other rural counties. In addition to lower poverty rates, rural counties with higher levels of educational attainment tend to have lower unemployment rates.
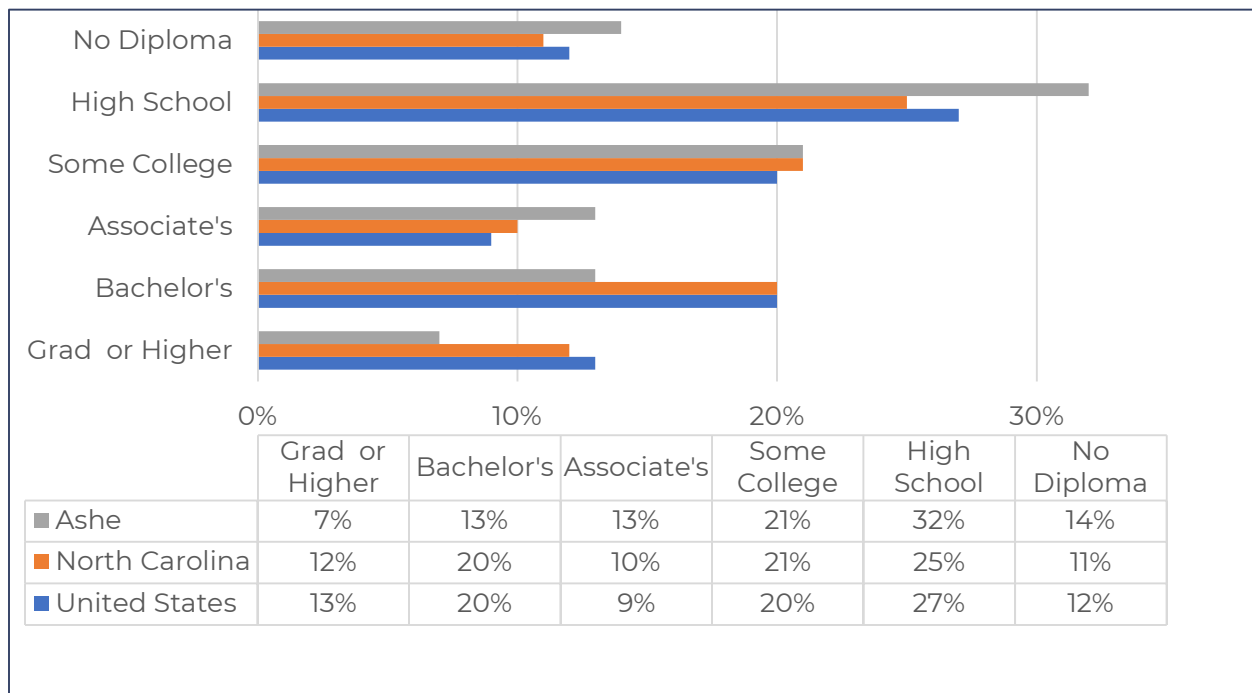
	Grad or Higher	Bachelor's	Associate's	Some College	High School	No Diploma
■ Ashe	7%	13%	13%	21%	32%	14%
■ North Carolina	12%	20%	10%	21%	25%	11%
■ United States	13%	20%	9%	20%	27%	12%

Figure 7: ESRI

Just over one-third of working age adults in Ashe County have achieved an associate's degree or at least some college education which is 3% and 5% higher than state and national averages, respectively. Another 20% of Ashe County residents have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher which is considerably lower than state and national averages. Additionally, 32% of working age adults in the County have received a high school diploma or equivalent compared to only 25% for the state and 27% nationally. Of Ashe County residents 14% have less than a high school diploma while that number for the state is 11% and 12% nationally.

Wilkes Community College (WCC) has a satellite campus in Ashe County and the community is less than 30 miles from the nearest public university, Appalachian State University in Boone. In addition, Ashe County is home to an early learning center, three public elementary schools, a public middle school, a public high school, and an early college.

Approximately 30% of workers in Ashe County are potentially underemployed, meaning they are in positions which require less education than they have attained. Nearly half of all jobs in the County require a High School Diploma or Equivalent while more than half of the population have attended at least Some College. This means that these workers are required to either work in jobs that require less education or pursue work outside of the County.

Ashe County Underemployment (2021)			
Education Level	**Jobs Requiring Education Level**	**Population at Education Level**	**Difference**
No Formal Education Required	22%	14%	8%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	48%	32%	16%
Some College, Non-Degree Award	8%	21%	(12%)
Associate's Degree	2%	13%	(12%)
Bachelor's Degree	18%	13%	6%
Graduate Degree and Higher	2%	8%	(6%)

Figure 8: EMSI

Economic Conditions

Income

Income levels in Ashe County are generally lower than state and national figures. This is true for all measurements; however, the largest discrepancy is seen in average household incomes where Ashe residents make more than $10,000 and $20,000 less than state and national averages.

Ashe County Comparison with State and National (2021)			
	Ashe County	**North Carolina**	**United States**
Population	29,058	10,273,419	325,719,178
Households	12,583	4,031,256	123,158,887
Median Household Income	$44,318	$48,918	$56,124
Average Household Income	$58,906	$69,520	$80,675
Per Capita Income	$25,523	$26,779	$31,128

Figure 9: ESRI

Labor Force

An analysis of Ashe County's labor force for November 2021 indicates that there are 13,334 people in the labor force. In November 2021, there was a participation rate of 58%, compared to North Carolina's labor force participation rate of 59%, and a national participation rate of 62% over the same period.

Ashe County Labor Force (2021)	
Level	**Population**
Population	29,058
Total Working Age Population	23,072
Not in Labor Force (16+)	9,738
Labor Force	13,334
Employed	12,992
Unemployed	342
Under 16, Military, and Institutionalized	4,271

Figure 10: EMSI

Local labor force participation in the county did see a slight drop during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic but by late-2021 the rate had rebounded and even surpassed the pre-pandemic high of 2019.

Ashe County Labor Force Participation Rate (2016-2021)	
Timeframe	**Labor Force Participation Rate**
2016	56.29%
2017	56.48%
2018	56.02%
2019	56.77%
2020	55.40%
January-August 2021	55.81%
September 2021	58.12%
October 2021	58.07%
November 2021	57.79%

Figure 11: EMSI

Unemployment

Unemployment rates in Ashe County were 2.56% in November 2021, compared to North Carolina's rate of 3.9% and the national rate of 4.2%. The table below indicates that the county unemployment rate reached a high of 6.3% in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing protection measures. By early 2021 the rate was steadily declining and by September 2021 had fallen below pre-pandemic levels.

Ashe County Unemployment Rate Trends (2016-2021)	
Timeframe	**Unemployment Rate**
2016	4.80%
2017	4.12%
2018	3.67%
2019	3.58%
2020	6.30%
January-August 2021	4.09%
September 2021	2.89%
October 2021	2.77%
November 2021	2.56%

Figure 12: EMSI

Business Size

As in many communities, the vast majority of businesses in Ashe County have fewer than 20 employees. This illustrates the importance that small businesses play on the County's economy.

Ashe County Business Size (2021)	
Number of Employees	**Percentage**
1 to 4 employees	36.1%
5 to 9 employees	32.7%
10 to 19 employees	19.0%
20 to 49 employees	9.3%
50 to 99 employees	1.6%
100 to 249 employees	1.1%
250 to 499 employees	0.2%

Figure 13: EMSI

Largest Industries

The labor force of Ashe County is employed in the following North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sectors. The three largest employment industries in the area include Retail Trade, Government, and Construction. These three largest industries account for 3,492 jobs in the area, or 39.7% of the local workforce. While Construction grew by 8% over the previous 5 years, Government jobs decreased by 5%. These two sectors also represent two of the highest paying job types in the County.

Ashe County Largest Industries by Jobs (2021)				
Industry	**2016 Jobs**	**2021 Jobs**	**% Change in Jobs**	**2021 Earnings Per Worker**
Retail Trade	1,221	1,240	2%	$32,372
Government	1,207	1,152	(5%)	$53,840
Construction	1,017	1,100	8%	$58,953
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,104	1,060	(4%)	$45,100
Manufacturing	811	960	18%	$49,613
Accommodation and Food Services	687	744	8%	$18,458
Other Services (except Public Admin)	524	466	(11%)	$24,520
Wholesale Trade	402	405	1%	$62,018
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	486	400	(18%)	$33,698
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	281	306	9%	$30,235

Figure 14: EMSI

Largest Employers

The largest employers in Ashe County as of the third quarter 2021 are listed below. These employers represent a mixture of industries ranging from education, health care, and social assistance to retail and management to manufacturing and construction. These employers also represent a combination of public, non-profit, and private sector organizations.

Ashe County Largest Employers by Jobs (2021)	
Company Name	**Total Employees**
Ashe County Board of Education	250-499
American Emergency Vehicles	250-499
James R Vannoy and Sons Construction	250-499
County of Ashe	250-499
Ashe Memorial Hospital, Inc.	250-499
General Electric Company	250-499
Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.	250-499
Ingles Markets, Inc.	100-249
United Chemi-Con, Inc.	100-249
Skyline Telephone Membership Corporation	100-249
Lowe's Home Centers, Inc.	100-249
Ashe Services for Aging, Inc.	100-249

Figure 15: AccessNC

Gross Regional Product

Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a monetary measure of the market value of all final goods and services produced in a region over a period of time. A county's GRP is one of several measures of the size of its economy. The chart below shows Ashe County's GRP in Real Dollars from 2001 to 2020.

Ashe County's GRP has seen some fluctuation over the previous two decades. GRP reached a high of nearly $771,619,000 in 2010 and fell to a low of $663,437,000 in 2015.
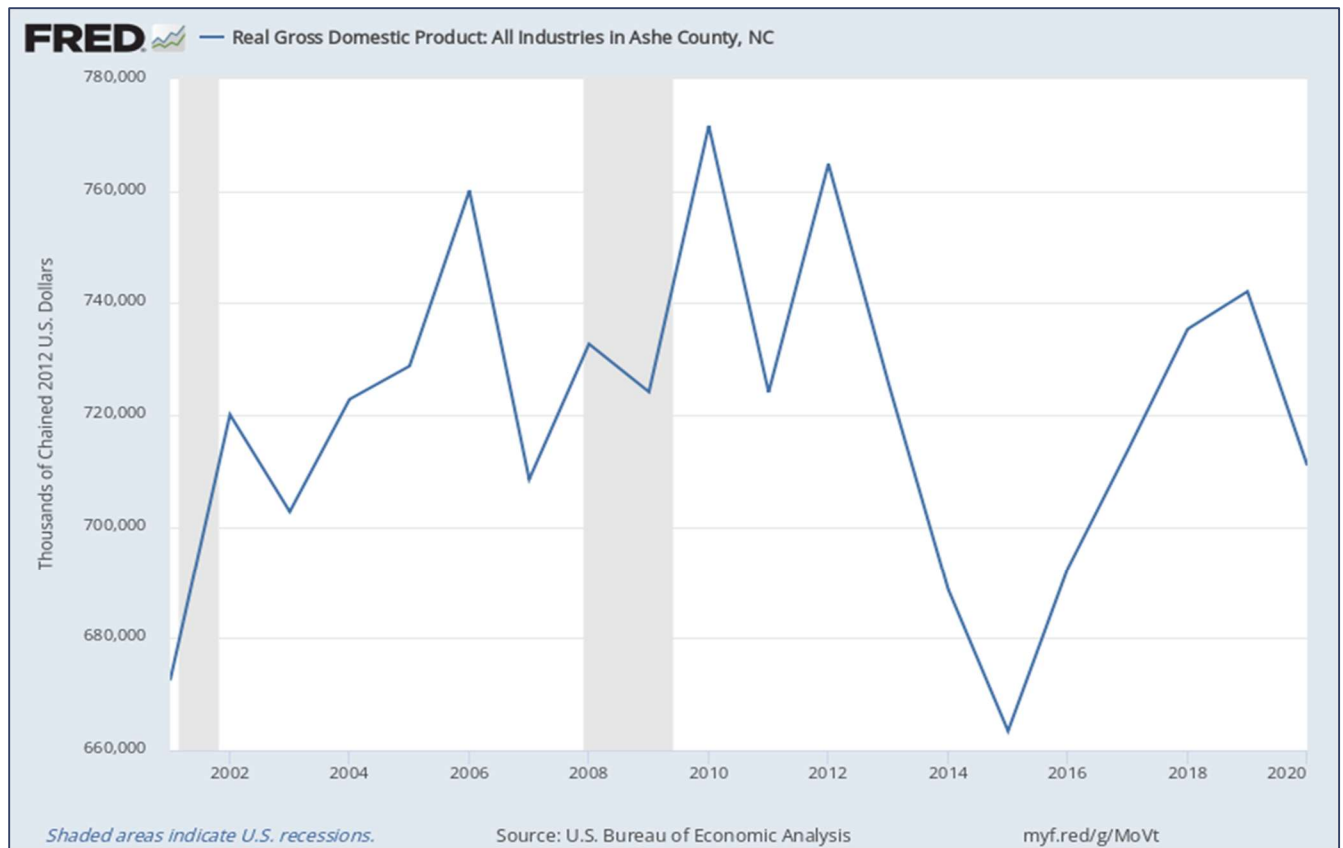
Figure 16: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

The largest industries in Ashe County, along with the earnings per worker, and Gross Regional Product, are found in Figure 17. The Manufacturing and Construction sectors make up the largest shares of GRP at around 14% each. The Construction sector also shows the third highest number of jobs in the County and is among the highest paying per worker. The Retail Trade, Government, and Wholesale Trade sectors also hold a sizable portion of GRP. Retail Trade has the highest total number of jobs in the County but is on the lower end of the spectrum for earnings per worker.

Ashe County Largest Industries and Gross Regional Product (2021)			
Industry	Jobs	Earnings Per Worker	Industry GRP
Retail Trade	1,240	$32,372	$75,734,705
Government	1,152	$53,840	$70,171,862
Construction	1,100	$58,953	$103,026,381
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,060	$45,100	$55,927,354
Manufacturing	960	$49,613	$107,315,109
Accommodation and Food Services	744	$18,458	$22,280,107
Other Services (except Public Administration)	466	$24,520	$18,807,898
Wholesale Trade	405	$62,018	$65,321,534
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	400	$33,698	$50,648,393
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	306	$30,235	$13,183,920
Finance and Insurance	205	$75,932	$44,694,826
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	187	$56,375	$17,613,307
Management of Companies and Enterprises	126	$74,250	$10,702,311
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	112	$42,031	$26,264,120
Transportation and Warehousing	98	$51,355	$10,929,678
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	83	$32,295	$4,096,345

Figure 17: EMSI

The fastest growing occupations in Ashe County between 2016 and 2021 by percentage were Computer and Mathematical (60%), Life, Physical, and Social Science (27%), Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media (18%), and Business and Financial Operations (17%). Sectors with the largest real change in number of jobs were Construction and Extraction (+82) and Production (+62). Occupations which saw the largest decrease in jobs by percentage during this period were Farming, Fishing, and Forestry (-17%) and Community and Social Service (-16%). In terms of real change in number of jobs, Office and Administrative Support (-70) and Farming, Fishing, and Forestry (-48) saw the largest decrease.

Ashe County Largest Occupations (2021)					
Occupation	2016 Jobs	2021 Jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change in Jobs	2020 Median Hourly Earnings
Sales and Related	1,047	1,032	(15)	(1%)	$11.88
Office and Administrative Support	907	837	(70)	(8%)	$15.34
Production	749	811	62	8%	$15.22
Construction and Extraction	716	799	82	11%	$17.10
Food Preparation and Serving Related	739	779	40	5%	$9.29
Transportation and Material Moving	620	656	37	6%	$14.35
Management	485	516	31	6%	$31.68
Educational Instruction and Library	482	483	1	0%	$19.44
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	380	393	12	3%	$18.11
Healthcare Support	362	386	24	7%	$11.34
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	351	368	17	5%	$28.12
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	392	356	(36)	(9%)	$11.99
Personal Care and Service	300	273	(27)	(9%)	$11.78
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	283	235	(48)	(17%)	$11.48
Business and Financial Operations	197	232	34	17%	$24.14
Community and Social Service	176	149	(27)	(16%)	$19.40
Protective Service	132	123	(9)	(7%)	$16.66
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	98	116	18	18%	$17.40
Computer and Mathematical	55	88	33	60%	$25.07
Architecture and Engineering	75	73	(2)	(2%)	$32.52

Figure 18: EMSI

Location Quotient

A location quotient (LQ) is an analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit (usually the nation). An LQ is computed as an industry's share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, Gross Regional Product, employment, and similar measures) divided by the

industry's share of the national total for the same statistic. For example, an LQ of 1.0 in farming means that the region and the nation are equally specialized in farming; while an LQ of 1.8 means that the region has a higher concentration in farming than the nation. Location quotients can reveal what makes an area unique.

As shown below, the following three Occupations have a higher concentration in Ashe County than the rest of the nation:
- Farming, Fishing, and Forestry – LQ of 3.53
- Construction and Extraction – LQ of 1.95
- Production – LQ of 1.65

Conversely, there are several occupations that are underrepresented in Ashe County, as opposed to the nation. These occupations can be identified by their LQ numbers that are significantly lower than 1.0:
- Life, Physical, and Social Science – LQ of 0.47
- Architecture and Engineering – LQ of 0.49
- Military-only – LQ of 0.55

Ashe County Top Occupation Quotients (2021)			
Occupation	2021 Jobs	2021 LQ	2020 Median Hourly Earnings
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	235	3.53	$11.48
Construction and Extraction	799	1.95	$17.10
Production	811	1.65	$15.22
Sales and Related	1,032	1.25	$11.88
Food Preparation and Serving Related	779	1.23	$9.29
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	356	1.17	$11.99
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	393	1.15	$18.11
Personal Care and Service	273	1.12	$11.78
Healthcare Support	386	0.96	$11.34
Community and Social Service	149	0.95	$19.40
Educational Instruction and Library	483	0.94	$19.44
Management	516	0.93	$31.68
Transportation and Material Moving	656	0.88	$14.35
Office and Administrative Support	837	0.77	$15.34
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	368	0.73	$28.12
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	116	0.72	$17.40
Protective Service	123	0.65	$16.66
Military-only	30	0.55	$13.41
Architecture and Engineering	73	0.49	$32.52
Life, Physical, and Social Science	39	0.47	$26.07

Figure 19: EMSI

The table below shows the LQ of occupations in Ashe County sorted by the highest median hourly earnings for each. Many of the top occupations in Ashe County in terms of LQ and total number of jobs are in the lower spectrum of median hourly earnings for the area.

Ashe County Top Occupation Quotients by Earnings (2021)			
Occupation	2021 Jobs	2021 LQ	2020 Median Hourly Earnings
Architecture and Engineering	73	0.49	$32.52
Management	516	0.93	$31.68
Legal	28	0.36	$30.16
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	368	0.73	$28.12
Life, Physical, and Social Science	39	0.47	$26.07
Computer and Mathematical	88	0.32	$25.07
Business and Financial Operations	232	0.44	$24.14
Educational Instruction and Library	483	0.94	$19.44
Community and Social Service	149	0.95	$19.40
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	393	1.15	$18.11
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	116	0.72	$17.40
Construction and Extraction	799	1.95	$17.10
Protective Service	123	0.65	$16.66
Office and Administrative Support	837	0.77	$15.34
Production	811	1.65	$15.22
Transportation and Material Moving	656	0.88	$14.35
Military-only	30	0.55	$13.41
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	356	1.17	$11.99
Sales and Related	1,032	1.25	$11.88
Personal Care and Service	273	1.12	$11.78
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	235	3.53	$11.48

Figure 20: EMSI

Industry Clusters

Creating and using industry clusters as well as occupation clusters adds an additional dimension for analyzing and describing a regional economy. Identification of industry clusters involves tracing value-chain relationships between industries and businesses. That is, businesses that buy and sell things to each other that they need to process and produce products. The charts below measure industry and occupation shares in Ashe County against the typical county in the United States.
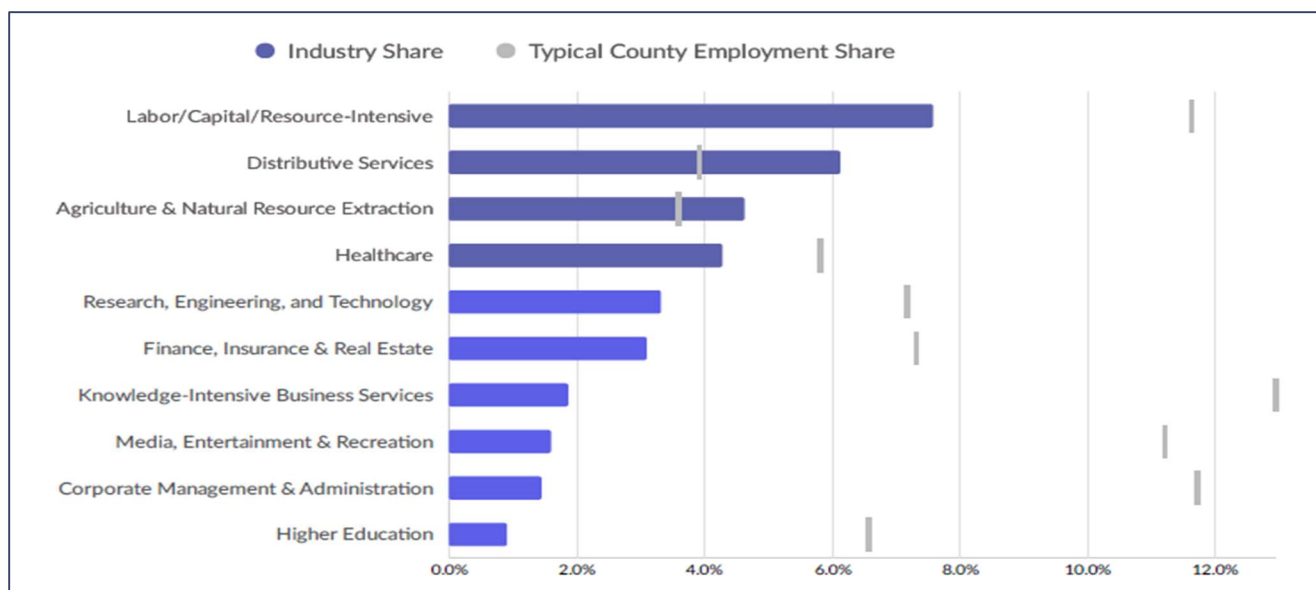
Figure 21: EMSI

Analysis of industry clusters shows us that Ashe County has greater employment shares in the Distributive Services and Agriculture & Natural Resource Extraction clusters than other typical county employment shares (as depicted by the gray line in Figure 21). Industry diversity is high in Ashe County signaling economic stability and the capacity to withstand economic turmoil more easily.
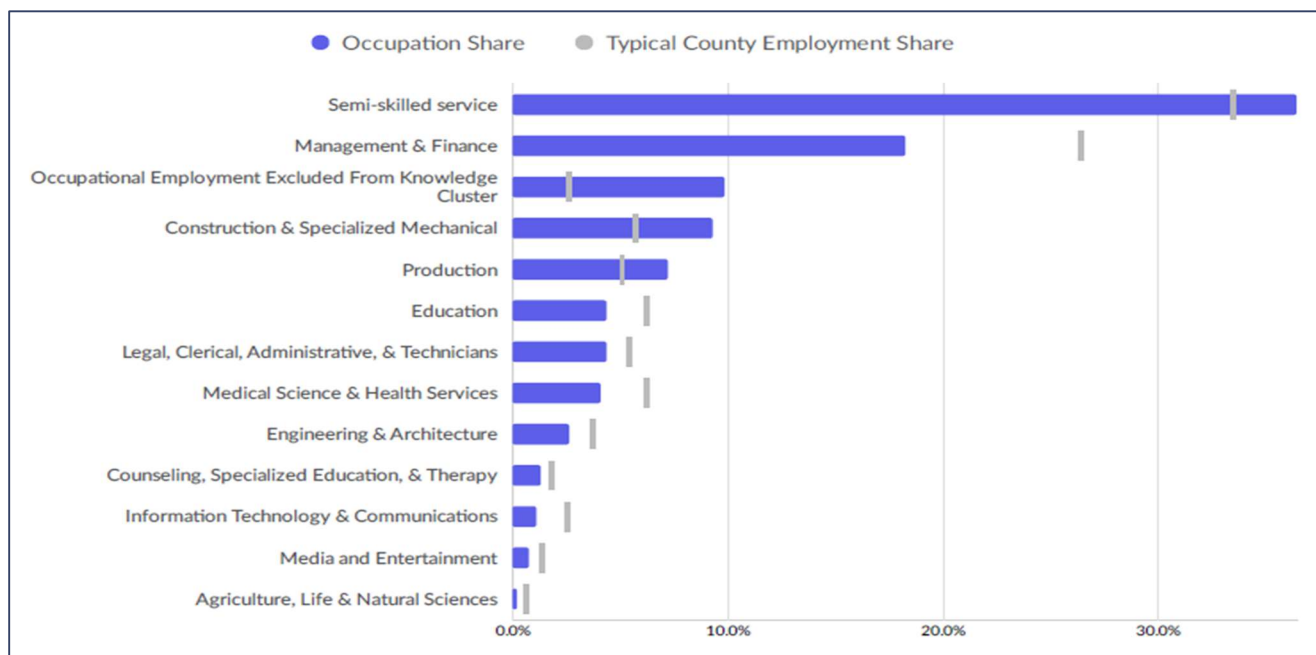

Figure 22: EMSI

A study of occupation clusters shows that Ashe County has a larger than average employment share in several categories including Semi-skilled service, Occupational Employment, Construction & Specialized Mechanical, and Production. Occupation diversity in the County is low which signals the potential for economic instability.

Agriculture

Agriculture is an important industry in Ashe County and is seen as a priority by local leaders. This document should work in conjunction with the Ashe County Farmland Preservation Plan.[1]

According to the USDA agricultural census, there were 864 farms in Ashe County as of 2017. The average size of the farms in Ashe County is 127 acres. Nearly 9 out of 10 farms in the County are owned by families or individuals. Of these farms, 74% reported having adequate internet access on their properties.
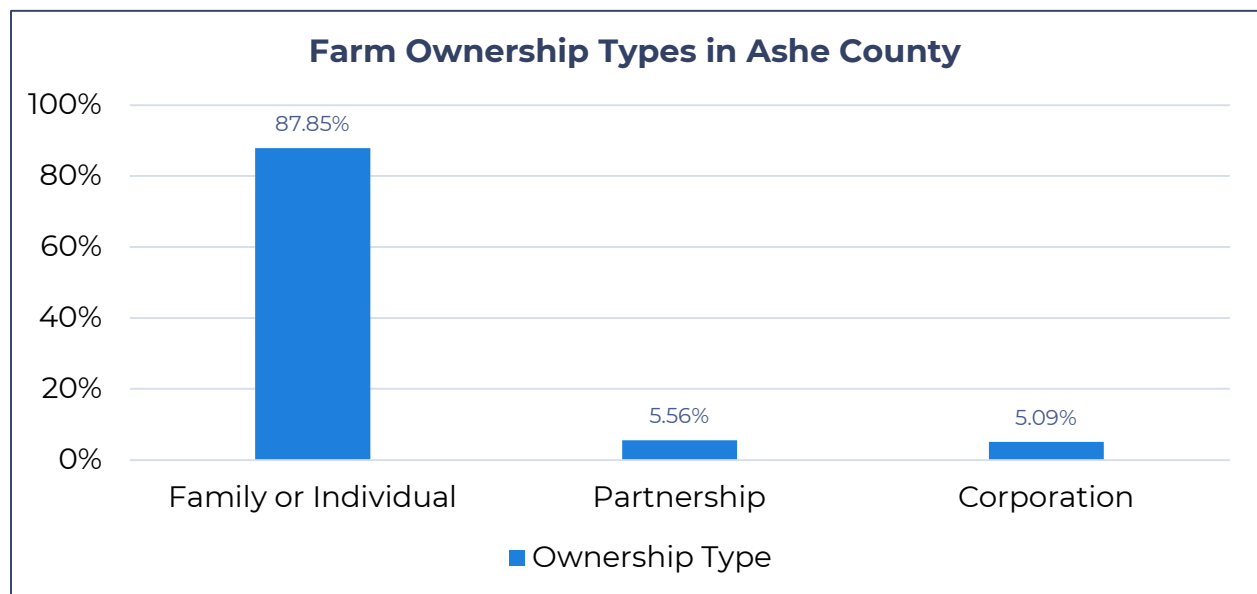

Figure 23: USDA

Nearly two thirds of farms in the County are very small in nature, producing less than $10,000 in sales per year on average. Approximately one third report sales ranging from $10,000 to $249,000 while only 5.44% report sales above $250,000 annually.

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[1] (High Country Council of Governments, 2018)

Farm Size by Sales in Ashe County

61.34%
33.22%
5.44%

Less than $10,000 — $10,000 to $249,000 — $250,000 or more
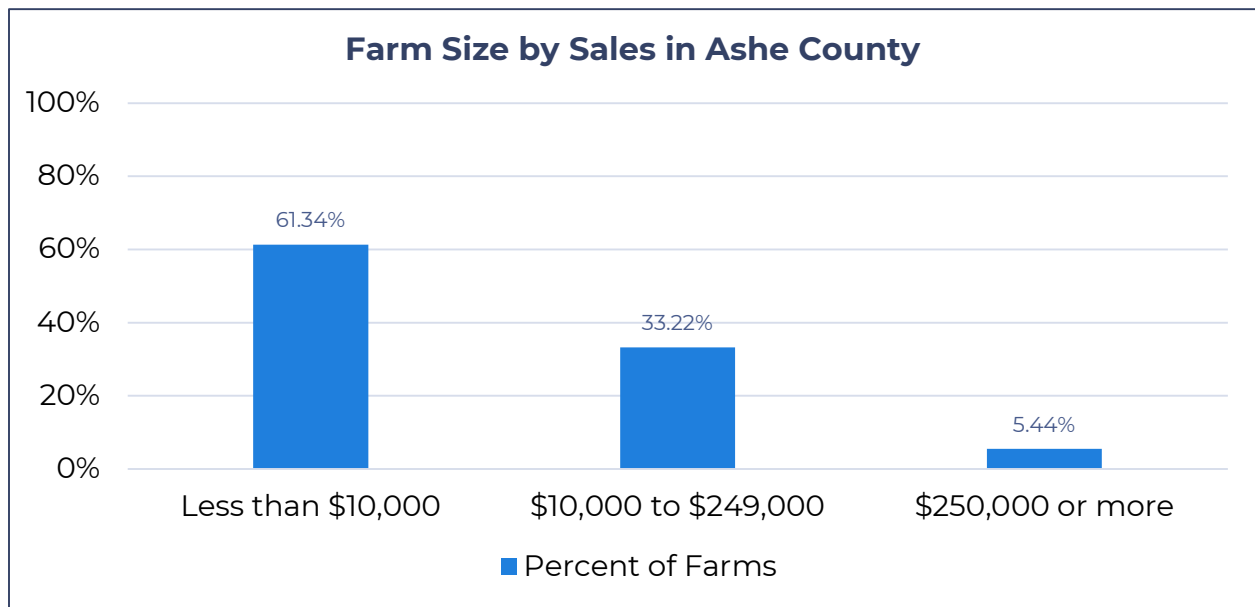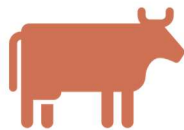
■ Percent of Farms

Figure 24: USDA

The two products that make up the largest shares of the County's farm economy are cultivated Christmas trees and cattle and calves. These categories make up 64.92% and 22.43% of the total market value of agricultural products sold in the County, respectively.

Transportation

This document supports the Ashe County Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Land Use Patterns are guided by current and planned transportation networks with more intensive land uses being situated with sufficient access to primary transportation routes.

Photo 1: US 221 entering Ashe County

Inflow/Outflow

Figure 25 represents a 2019 jobs analysis with inflow and outflow. This analysis shows that 2,746 people are employed in Ashe County but live in another county; 5,297 people live in the County but commute out for work; and 4,430 people live and work in the County. The net flow of people that stayed within the County, left the County, and commuted to the County yielded a gain of 1,879. This means that 1,879 more people entered or remained in the County for work than commuted out.
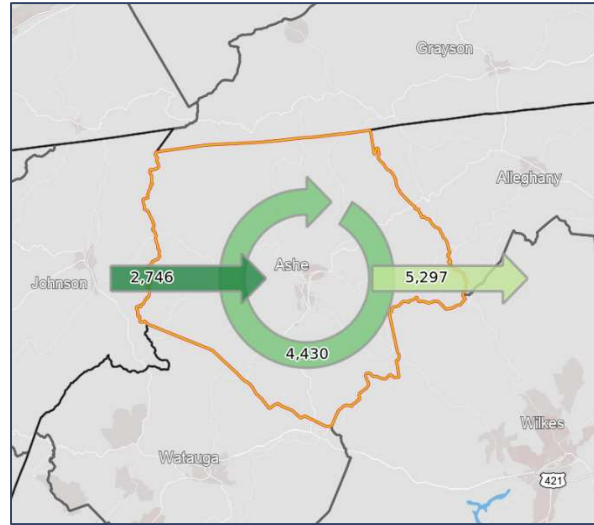
Figure 25: U.S. Census Bureau

Figures 26, 27, and 28 show worker inflow, resident worker, and resident outflow statistics including earnings, age group, and industry group.

Ashe County Commuting Flow Analysis by Earning (2019)							
Earnings Group	Worker Inflow	% of Total	Resident Worker	% of Total	Resident Outflow	% of Total	Net Flow
Jobs earning $1,250 per month or less	661	24.1%	1,071	24.2%	1,250	23.6%	482
Jobs earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	1,056	38.5%	2,069	46.7%	2,096	39.6%	1,029
Jobs earning more than $3,333 per month	1,029	37.5%	1,290	29.1%	1,951	36.8%	368

Figure 26: U.S. Census Bureau

Ashe County Commuting Flow Analysis by Age Group (2019)							
Age Group	Worker Inflow	% of Total	Resident Worker	% of Total	Resident Outflow	% of Total	Net Flow
Jobs of workers aged 29 or younger	620	22.6%	838	18.9%	1,226	23.1%	232
Jobs of workers aged 30 to 54	1,378	50.2%	2,208	49.8%	2,638	49.8%	948
Jobs of workers aged 55 or older	748	27.2%	1,384	31.2%	1,433	27.1%	699

Figure 27: U.S. Census Bureau

Ashe County Commuting Flow Analysis by Industry Group (2018)							
Industry Group	Worker Inflow	% of Total	Resident Worker	% of Total	Resident Outflow	% of Total	Net Flow
Jobs in Goods Producing Industries	566	20.6%	1,160	26.2%	675	12.7%	1,051
Jobs in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities Industries	793	28.9%	695	15.7%	1,233	23.3%	255
Jobs in All Other Services Industries	1,387	50.5%	2,575	58.1%	3,389	64.0%	573

Figure 28: U.S. Census Bureau

As of 2019, the most popular destinations for workers in Ashe County were destinations in Ashe County, primarily the Towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson. Of those leaving the County, Watauga County saw the most workers.

Ashe County Worker Destination (2019)		
Work Location	**Count**	**Share**
Ashe County	4,430	45.5%
Watauga County	1,451	14.9%
Mecklenberg County	385	4.0%
Wilkes County	362	3.7%
Buncombe County	311	3.2%
Wake County	295	3.0%
Catawba County	186	1.9%
Burke County	134	1.4%
Caldwell County	130	1.3%
Forsyth County	130	1.3%
All Other Locations	1,913	19.7%

Figure 29: U.S. Census Bureau

Of those individuals working in Ashe County, the most common home destinations were again the Towns of West Jefferson and Jefferson and other locations in Ashe County, followed by locations in Watauga and Wilkes Counties.

Ashe County Home Destination (2019)		
Work Location	**Count**	**Share**
Ashe County	4,430	61.7%
Watauga County	369	5.1%
Wilkes County	312	4.3%
Grayson County, VA	185	2.6%
Alleghany County	180	2.5%
Buncombe County	103	1.4%
Mecklenberg County	98	1.4%
Caldwell County	93	1.3%
Burke County	86	1.2%
Surry County	80	1.1%
All Other Locations	1,240	17.3%

Figure 30: U.S. Census Bureau

Traffic Count

A traffic count is defined as the two-way Average Daily Traffic (ADT) that passes that location. The figure below shows traffic count numbers for the most travelled streets in Ashe County from 2018 and 2019. Not surprisingly, the most travelled streets in the County include the US Highway 221 corridor and areas around the Towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson.

Ashe County Traffic Count (2018-19)		
Street Name	**Cross-Street**	**Daily Traffic Volume**
US Highway 221 South		16,500
US Highway 221 Bypass	Highway 221	14,000
US Highway 221 South	Mount Jefferson Road	13,000
South Jefferson Avenue	E Buck Mountain Road	10,500
US Highway 221 Business	Claybank Road	9,500
US Highway 221 Business	Freedom Drive	8,500
South Main Street	Blackburn Street	8,400
North Jefferson Avenue		7,300
East Main Street	Worth Street	7,300
North Jefferson Avenue	E 1st Street	7,100
East Main Street		6,900
North Jefferson Avenue	E 4th Street	6,400
South Main Street	South Street	6,100
South Main Street		5,600
Doggett Road	Von Turner Road	5,600
West Main Street	Colvard Street	5,300
East 2nd Street	4th Avenue	5,100
Doggett Road	Doggett Road	5,200

Figure 31: ESRI

US 221

Construction by the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to widen US 221 from US 421 in Watauga County to the Town of Jefferson has been ongoing for several years and the majority of this work is complete. According to State Transportation Improvement Plan updates from 2021, Sections A, B, and D of the project have been completed. Section C is under construction and progress is underway to acquire right-of-way for Section E. The widening of US 221 was a goal that was identified in previous Ashe County Land Use Planning efforts.
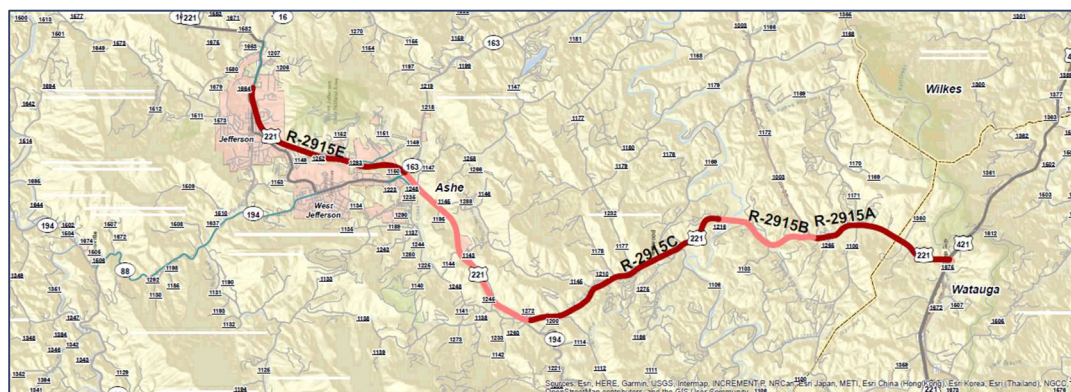

Figure 32: NC DOT

Other Projects

In addition to the US 221 widening project, the State Transportation Improvement Plan identifies several other projects targeted to begin in Ashe County.

Construction of a superstreet intersection is planned at the intersection of Beaver Creek School Road (SR 1248) and NC 194. Acquisition of right-of-way for this project is scheduled for 2027.

Upgrades to the roadway along NC 88 between Smethport and Warrensville are scheduled to begin construction in 2024. Right-of-way acquisition should begin in 2022.

At the Ashe County Airport, acquisition of land and existing hangars north of Runway 10 and adjacent to the airport property is currently underway. Construction of apron expansions were scheduled to take place in 2021.

Housing

Housing Availability

The availability of housing options in a community is crucial for economic growth. In 2021 there were 19,060 total housing units in Ashe County. Sixty-six percent of all units were occupied with half of those being owner occupied. Just over a third of all housing units were classified as vacant which includes all domiciles not occupied by permanent residents of the County. This signals that a high number of housing units in the County are classified under seasonal or recreational use. While 2021 figures are currently unavailable, the 2010 Census showed that about 4,268 (76.4%) vacant housing units in the County were classified under this use.

Ashe County Housing Units by Occupancy (2021)		
Occupancy Status	**Number**	**Percent**
Total Housing Units	19,060	100%
Occupied	12,583	66%
Owner	9,458	49.6%
Renter	3,125	16.5%
Vacant	6,477	34%

Figure 33: ESRI

Approximately 39,400 parcels exist in Ashe County and property owners must use their permanent residential address for property tax billing. Of the total parcels, 20,926 property owners receive their real property tax bill at an address inside the County while 18,474 receive their bill at an address outside of the County. Of those out of the County, 6,802 receive their bill outside of North Carolina. Therefore, about 47% of property owners in Ashe County list a permanent address outside of the County. While these numbers reflect all parcels, not only residential, they seem to confirm the relatively high number of seasonal or recreational use housing in the County.

Housing Affordability

"Esri's housing affordability index measures the financial ability of a typical household to purchase an existing home in an area. A HAI of 100 represents an area that on average has sufficient household income to qualify for a loan on a home valued at the median home price. An index greater than 100 suggests homes are easily afforded by the average area resident. A HAI less than 100 suggests that homes are less affordable."[2]

Esri indicates a HAI of 136 for Ashe County with the average household spending 17.9% of income on their mortgage. Roughly three-quarters of owner occupied housing units in the County were valued at under $200,000. These factors speak to the relative affordability of housing in the community.

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[2] (ArcGIS, 2022)

Ashe County Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value (2021)		
Value	Number	Percent
<$50,000	817	4.8%
$50,000-$99,999	1,061	24.9%
$100,000-$149,999	1,841	20.1%
$150,000-$199,999	1,307	26.7%
$200,000-$249,999	1,425	7.7%
$250,000-$299,999	776	6.7%
$300,000-$399,999	935	8.0%
$400,000-$499,999	742	0.6%
$500,000-$749,999	445	0.5%
$750,000-$999,999	9	0.1%
$1,000,000-1,499,999	59	0.6%
$1,500,000-$1,999,999	9	0.1%
$2,000,000 and up	32	0.3%

Figure 34: ESRI

Median home values in Ashe County are rising at a similar pace to the three bordering counties. In the four county region, home values in Ashe County are a distant second to prices in Watauga County.

Ashe County Median Home Value Comparison with Neighboring Counties			
	2021	2026 Estimate	% Change
Ashe	$188,638	$204,533	9.2%
Alleghany	$160,836	$177,369	9.1%
Watauga	$272,764	$298,144	9.1%
Wilkes	$152,923	$172,689	8.9%

Figure 35: ESRI

Housing Inventory

Ashe County has seen a steady rise in new home construction over the last five years. If this trend continues, this additional inventory could help to alleviate some of the concern over rising home prices.

Ashe County Building Permits Issued				
	New Construction	Modular	Manufactured	Total
2013	68	2	18	88
2014	43	7	25	75
2015	51	5	21	77
2016	59	4	21	84
2017	64	5	26	95
2018	51	4	35	90
2019	78	5	20	103
2020	96	4	18	118
2021	106	4	21	131

Figure 36: Ashe County Government

Tourism

Visitor Summary

VisitNC reports that in 2020 about 11.3 million visitors came to the [Mountain Region](#) and 82% of those visitors stayed at least one night. More than 90% of these visitors traveled for leisure while 6% visited for business. Most visitors to the Mountain Region came during the summer or fall months. Nearly all visitors to the region reported they were extremely or very satisfied with their visit.

Photo 2: New River from US 221 Bridge

The average party size for Mountain Region visitors was 2.9 with about one third of these parties including children. The average spending by party was $642 in 2020. Parties that stayed overnight spent an average of six times more than parties visiting only for the day. The average length of stay in the region was 2.6 nights. The most common accommodations used were hotels and motels at almost half of all stays, followed by private homes and shared economy properties.

Nearly 9 out of 10 overnight visitors to the Mountain Region in 2020 were repeat visitors, meaning they had previously visited their destination. Almost one third of

overnight visitors were in-state residents. The next most common visitor origin locations in order were Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, and Tennessee. Mountain Region visitors were more likely to use search engines to plan their travel experiences than visitors to other regions.

The most common activities participated in by overnight visitors in the Mountain Region were Hiking/Backpacking/Canyoneering (31.4%), Visiting Friends/Relatives (29%), Rural Sightseeing (24.4%), Shopping (22.4%), and visiting Historic Sites (22.3%). Other common activities could be categorized by outdoor recreation or nature viewing, enjoying local food and beverage establishments, and visiting cultural amenities such as art galleries or museums.[3]

Ashe County Visitor Spending (2020)	
	Annual Visitor Spending (millions)
Lodging (including 2nd home spending)	$20.34
Food & Beverage	$27.61
Recreation	$10.29
Retail	$7.81
Transportation (including ground and air)	$16.10
Total	$82.15

Figure 37: VisitNC

Ashe County has seen a steady increase in visitor spending over the previous five years. Total spending grew by about $15 million between 2016 and 2020 for a total of over $82 million.

Historic Ashe County Visitor Spending, in millions					
	2016	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Annual Visitor Spending (millions)	$66.96	$69.81	$73.09	$77.48	$82.15

Figure 38: VisitNC

Between 2019 and 2020, Ashe County saw more growth in visitor spending than the three bordering North Carolina counties and remained the second highest in terms of total visitor spending.

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[3] (Visit North Carolina, 2020)

Ashe County Visitor Spending Comparison with Neighboring Counties (2020)		
	Annual Spending Total (millions)	**Growth Rate (2020/2019)**
Ashe	$82.15	6.0%
Alleghany	$35.73	4.1%
Watauga	$320.88	-8.6%
Wilkes	$73.96	-12.2%

Figure 39: VisitNC

Tourism in Ashe County supported a total of 552 jobs in the County in 2020 and contributed to more than $20 million in labor income. Visitor spending also contributed to $3.3 million in state taxes and $4.4 million in local taxes which resulted in an average tax savings of $270.13 for Ashe County residents.

Ashe County Visitor Impacts (2020)	
	Total
Jobs Supported	552
Labor Income (millions)	$20.2
State Taxes (millions)	$3.3
Local Taxes (millions)	$4.4
State/Local Tax Savings Per Residents	$270.13

Figure 40: VisitNC

Natural Environment

Natural Scenery

Ashe County is well known for its natural environment including long range vistas that showcase the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. These undisturbed viewsheds are a source of great pride to the local community as well as a powerful draw for many tourists and seasonal residents. Conversations with the local work group, area stakeholders, and the community survey showed strong support for protecting the natural beauty of the County.

Topography

Terrain in Ashe County is mountainous with elevations ranging from approximately 2,160 feet above sea level to roughly 5,200 feet. The County's highest elevations lie in the southwestern and northwestern borders with additional outcroppings in the central areas. Steeper areas generally represent a limited capacity for development.

Photo 3: View from Sunset Overlook at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area

Slope characteristics in the County are moderately diverse and are mostly rated Strongly Sloping (6°-10°) up to Very Steep (31°-90°). There are some areas rated Flat to Gently Sloping (0°-5°) scattered throughout, however, these areas are primarily

located in the southern and eastern portions of the County. The slope of an area directly relates to the stability of the land and the types of development possible in the area.

Ashe County's subdivision ordinance notes that land with a "slope of 50% or more is considered unfeasible for residential subdivision development." This restriction applies only to subdivisions and does not forbid construction or improvements on areas of steep slope.

Maps showing topography, slope characteristics, and elevation can be found in the appendices of this document.

Photo 4: View from Jefferson Overlook at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area

Protected Ridges

The Mountain Ridge Protection Act was adopted by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1983 in order to guard against the "construction of tall or major buildings and structures on the ridges and higher elevations of North Carolina's mountains in

an inappropriate or badly designed manner [which] can cause unusual problems and hazards to the residents of and to visitors to the mountains."[4]

According to the legislation, ""protected mountain ridges" are all mountain ridges whose elevation is 3,000 feet and whose elevation is 500 or more feet above the elevation of an adjacent valley floor.""[5]

A map of protected mountain ridges in Ashe County can be found in the appendices of this document.

Public Lands

There is a significant amount of publicly-owned land in Ashe County with the State of North Carolina being the largest stakeholder. Some of the more significant areas owned by the State include Pond Mountain and Three Top Mountain Game Lands, managed by the NC Wildlife Resource Commission, and Mount Jefferson, Elk Knob, and New River State Parks, managed by NC State Parks.

Running along the southern end of the County is the Blue Ridge Parkway with adjacent lands owned by the federal government. Additionally, a 317 acre parcel of Cherokee National Forest lies in the northwest corner of the County along the border with the State of Tennessee.

The Ashe County and local municipal governments own an additional 267 acres. This number will soon increase significantly with the transfer of the 150 acre Paddy Mountain property from Blue Ridge Conservancy to be managed jointly by Ashe County and the Town of West Jefferson.

Ashe County Public & Conservancy Lands (approximate)	
	Acreage
Local	267
State	33,214
Federal	2,796
Conservancy	10,044

Figure 41: NC Commerce

A map of public lands in Ashe County can be found in the appendices of this document.

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[4] (NC General Assembly, 2022)
[5] (NC General Assembly, 2022)

Natural Areas

Along with the sizeable number of public lands, there are also several conservation organizations working in Ashe County that own or manage property. The largest conservancy property in the County is the Bluff Mountain Preserve at approximately 3,200 acres. Most conservancy lands are much smaller tracts and are scattered throughout the County.

Some of the more prominent agencies working in the County are the Nature Conservancy in North Carolina, the New River Conservancy, and Blue Ridge Conservancy. There are approximately 10,044 acres of conservancy owned properties in Ashe County. It is important to note that a small number of these acres overlap with public lands such as with Pond Mountain Game Lands and Bluff Mountain Preserve. This is illustrated in the accompanying maps.

A map of conservancy lands in Ashe County can be found in the appendices of this document.

Recreation Opportunities

The number of public lands and natural areas in Ashe County provide for a significant opportunity for recreation activities for both residents and visitors. All of Western North Carolina has seen a growing interest in outdoor recreation in recent years that was encouraged further by the COVID-19 pandemic which led many people to look for safe, outdoor activities.

Ashe County has been no exception to this trend and has seen economic benefits from this growing interest. Planning efforts and guided growth in this sector will help the County to continue to capitalize on tourism potential while maintaining a quality of life that has long been enjoyed by Ashe County residents.

The Ashe County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan that was completed in November 2021 and adopted by the County provides a thorough analysis of current recreation assets and recommendations for future actions that can be taken to maximize recreation benefits. A future strategic planning effort focusing on less traditional recreation opportunities and strengthening the outdoor economy may also be a useful undertaking for the County.

A map of recreation areas in Ashe County can be found in the appendices of this document.

Farmland Soils

Prime Farmland soils are those "best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops." These soils require little in terms of economic or energy inputs to return high yields. Agricultural uses on these soils also contribute less ecological damage than on other soil types. The most recent soil survey of Ashe

County shows approximately 3 percent of the County, or about 9,000 acres, under this classification.[6]

Approximately 32 percent, or about 87,600 acres, of Ashe County are classified as Additional Farmland of State and Local Importance. Though this classification is similar to that of Prime Farmland, soils in this category do not meet all of the characteristic requirements of Prime Farmland soils. Nevertheless, soils in this category are "currently producing food or fiber or [are] available for this use."[7]

Mapping of these soil types shows that the majority of ideal farmland is concentrated in the south and eastern portions of Ashe County. While the USDA does not offer recommendations for specific land uses based on the locations of these soil types, some attention should be given to these areas of ideal farmland due to the significant importance of agriculture to the culture and economy of the County.

Photo 5: Farmland along the New River from US 221 Bridge

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[6] (USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1985)
[7] (USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1985)

A map of Prime and Other Farmland soils can be found in the appendices of this document.

Hydrology

Major hydrology in Ashe County includes the North and South Forks of the New River and its subsidiaries. Both forks flow northeastward across the length of the County where they merge at the Alleghany County line and continue into Virginia. One of the oldest rivers in the world, the New River is a great asset to the County and provides the primary sources for drinking water as well as a variety of scenic and recreation opportunities.

A map of Hydrology and Flood Hazard Areas can be found in the appendices of this document.

Watersheds

Three drinking water supply watersheds lie either fully or partially within Ashe County. Two of these watersheds lie along the Southfork of the New River and are classified as Water Supply IV Critical Areas. Under state law, certain land uses are not permitted in these areas that include new landfills, new permitted residual land applications, new permitted petroleum contaminated soils, sewage, industrial waste, and other wastes.

The Reddies River watershed lies primarily in Wilkes County with a small portion in Ashe County. This area is classified as Water Supply II Balance of Watershed. All of the land uses listed above are also not permitted under this classification as well as domestic and industrial wastewater discharge and non-process industrial waste.[8]

A map of water supply watershed areas in Ashe County can be found in the appendices of this document along with the Water Supply Watershed Protection Factsheet created by the NC Department of Environmental Quality.

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[8] (NC Department of Environmental Quality, 2022)

Land Use

This document may be used to guide future updates, or amendments to Ashe County's current land use ordinances. Likewise, these local land use ordinances are the tools that should be used to incorporate the findings and recommendations of the comprehensive plan. Below is a list of current land use ordinances enacted in Ashe County.

Current Land Use Ordinances
- Flood Damage Prevention
- Manufactured Homes Planning
- Recreational Vehicle Parks
- Watershed Protection
- Residential Subdivisions
- Racetracks and Motorsport events
- Communication Towers
- High Impact Land Uses
- Adult Businesses and Sexually Oriented Businesses
- Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program
- Airport Height
- Wind Energy Systems
- Sign Control
- Control of Junk Materials, Junkyards, and Abandoned Motor Vehicles

All Ashe County regulations can be found online at the [American Legal Publishing Website](#).

The Ashe County Planning Department also works closely with the Administration to make several projects possible. Among these are progressing work at the Ashe County Airport, the 1904 Courthouse Preservation Organization, the Ashe Partnership for Children, the e-NC Digital Literacy Program, and other community-oriented initiatives important to community welfare.[9]

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[9] (Ashe County Government, 2022)

Planning Process

History of Land Use Planning in Ashe County

Ashe County has been involved in land use planning for over 40 years. Many of the recommendations developed in these planning efforts have resulted in meaningful regulation including the adoption of the state building code and a subdivision ordinance. There are common themes like transportation that have changed through the years. During the 1974 plan the railroad was being abandoned and in 1999 the widening of US 221 was on the minds of planners.

Today a new plan is created to address the needs and concerns of a changing community.

1974 – Past Land Use Plan

Recommendations:
- Subdivision Ordinance
- Enforcement of State Building Code/Environmental Health
- Sedimentation Control Ordinance
- Promote Industrial Development
- Blue Ridge Dam Project
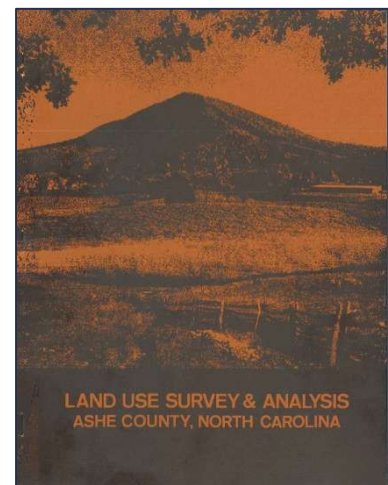
1983 – Resident Survey

Recommendations:
- This document was a statistical survey of resident attitudes towards land use planning
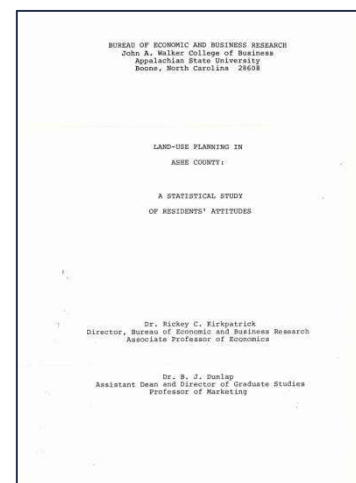
1999 – Past Land Use Plan

Recommendations:
- Development of 221 corridor
- Maintain a strong agricultural industry
- Develop trails and parks
- Environmental stewardship
- Extensive ordinance rewrite
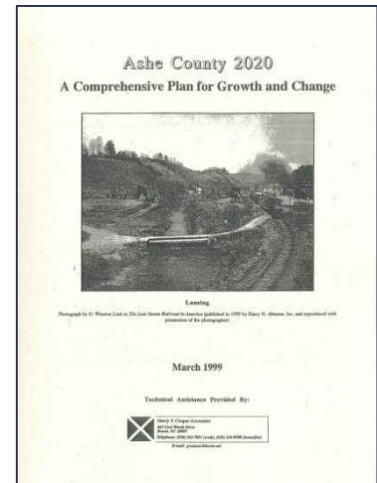
2007 – Land Use Advisory Board

Recommendations:
- Create a new land use plan for the County that:
  o Maintains the rural nature of the county
  o Is mindful of future growth
  o Forms a transparent process

2013 – Draft Land Use Plan (Not Adopted)

Recommendations:
- Addressed development policy goals of:
  o Housing
  o Employment
  o Utilities/Infrastructure
  o Quality of Life
  o Transportation
  o US 221 Corridor
  o Future Growth

North Carolina General Statutes

Chapter 160D

The 160D proposal passed the NC General Assembly in early 2019 and was signed into law as S.L. 2019-111 on July 11 the same year by Governor Roy Cooper and made effective on June 19, 2020. The purpose of Chapter 160D of the North Carolina General Statutes is to consolidate city- and county-enabling statutes for development regulations (formerly in Chapters 153A and 160A) into a single, unified chapter. The new law provided clarifying amendments and consensus reforms. All city and county subdivision and other development regulations should be updated to conform to the new law.[10]

The statute states that "the provisions of this Article shall apply to all development regulations and programs adopted pursuant to this Chapter or applicable or related local acts. To the extent there are contrary provisions in local charters or acts, G.S. 160D-111 is applicable unless this Chapter expressly provides otherwise. The provisions of this Article also apply to any other local ordinance that substantially affects land use and development."[11]

In addition, Article 5 of Chapter 160D requires local governments to have in place an updated comprehensive plan in order to impose subdivision or other development regulations. The comprehensive plan should set forth "goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction" and must be "officially adopted by the governing board."[12] The deadline for all communities to have an updated comprehensive plan in place is July 1, 2022.

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[10] (UNC School of Government, 2022)
[11] (NC General Assembly, 2022)
[12] (NC General Assembly, 2022)

Planning Committee & Meetings

In the fall of 2021, Ashe County engaged a team of graduate students in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) to begin work on updating the County's Land Use plan. Under guidance from instructors, Richard Hails and Roger Bardsley, students during the fall semester completed an assessment of current conditions in the County that can be found in its entirety in the appendices of this report.

On February 03, 2022, Kyle Case, ARC Community Economic Development Planner with the NC Department of Commerce (NC Commerce), met with the Ashe County Planning Board to discuss potential assistance for completing the Land Use Plan updates. Mr. Case presented a scope of work and memorandum of understanding to the Planning Board for review. Upon approval by the Planning Board, Mr. Case presented the same documents to the Ashe County Board of Commissioners on February 07, 2022. Upon approval by the Board of Commissioners, Mr. Case began working with Ashe County staff to coordinate a local work group and meeting times for the project.

Under the direction of Mr. Hails and Mr. Bardsley, two students from UNC's Department of City and Regional Planning, Samuel Stites and Jennifern Hickey, assisted the NC Commerce and Ashe County staff during their spring semester.

A full schedule of work group meetings and summary of each can be found in the table below.

Meeting Date	Topic(s)
February 17, 2022	• Review of Previous Planning Efforts • Identification of Priority Areas
March 03, 2022	• Review of Preliminary Community Survey Results • Presentation of Demographic and Economic Data • Development of Purpose Statement
March 17, 2022	• Review of Final Community Survey Results • Review of Community Stakeholder Interviews • Approval of Purpose Statement • Review of Draft Workplan Goals
April 21, 2022	• Review of Supporting Maps • Approval of Workplan Goals • Development of Workplan Strategies and Actions
May 5, 2022	• Development of Workplan Strategies and Actions • Review of Prior Future Land Use Maps
May 19, 2022	• Review of Draft of Land Use Plan w/ Attachments

Data Gathering

Work Group

      The local work group was made up of all members of the Ashe County Planning Board as well as several additional local stakeholders and community representatives. A full list of the local work group can be found on the Acknowledgements page of this document.

      This group met numerous times throughout the project to review relevant data, discuss community priorities, and guide the planning process at all stages. The work group identified priority areas for this project and developed strategies and recommendations based on these areas.

      The notes from work group meetings can be found in the appendices of this document.

Photo 6: Intersection of NC 88 & 194 in Warrensville

Community Survey

A survey was created by the technical team and approved by the work group to be distributed broadly to all citizens, workers, and stakeholders in Ashe County to provide input to the planning process. The survey was created and primarily distributed digitally, however; paper copies were made available at some key locations in the County.

Ashe County staff and UNC students worked to distribute the survey as widely as possible by placing fliers around the County, placing an advertisement in the local newspaper, advertising on the local radio station, collaborating with the local chamber of commerce for an email blast, and sharing the survey online through social media channels and the County website. Through these efforts the survey returned a total of 632 responses.

Of these respondents, 91% were year-round residents of the county while another 7% were seasonal homeowners. Roughly two-thirds (64%) of those responding said they worked in Ashe County with another 18% owning a business in the County and 17% owning a farm.

It was clear from the survey results that the people of Ashe County strongly value the natural assets and scenery of the area. The New River was seen as one of the most important of these assets and respondents felt that preservation of these natural assets was vital to the County's continued success.

A consistent theme throughout the survey responses was a concern about the rising cost of housing and the lack of housing inventory in the County. Many saw the rapid development of second homes and short-term rental properties as a major cause of rising home prices.

Survey respondents saw potential for residential development throughout the County but with a focus on the US 221 corridor between Watauga County and the towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson. Priority for commercial development was identified as within or directly adjacent to those same municipalities.

The full results and analysis of the Community Survey can be found in the appendices of this document.

Stakeholder Interviews

County staff, working with the Planning Board, supplied the Technical Team with a list of community stakeholders that they believed could provide additional perspectives that would be helpful to this project. The Technical Team was able to conduct interviews with 11 of these individuals and summarized their findings in a presentation to the local work group.

The stakeholders interviewed represented a variety of organizations within the county. They had diverse backgrounds in fields including the arts, agriculture, parks

and recreation, health and wellness, education, economic development, and more. All of these interviews were conducted one-on-one over the telephone.

In many ways, stakeholder responses were in line with the community survey. Stakeholders saw opportunity for residential growth throughout the County, though they said that the majority was occurring along the US 221 corridor near the Watauga County line. They saw a need for a variety of housing types in the County including single and multi-family and homes for purchase and for rent.

Photo 7: Ashe County Courthouse

Stakeholders saw the prime area for commercial and industrial growth around the towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson, primarily due to the existing infrastructure and the concentration of residents.

Like those in the community survey, stakeholders placed a high value on the natural beauty and amenities of the County and wanted to see future efforts to preserve those assets.

Stakeholders saw the people and culture of the County as one of the major strengths in the region. This included a strong work ethic, strong leadership, and a collaborative spirit. They also saw value in both long-term residents and newcomers to the area and felt that both perspectives should be considered.

Some weaknesses cited were the lack of water and sewer infrastructure outside of the municipalities, the availability and cost of housing, employment opportunities, and an aging population. Most stakeholders also stated that, though it is more accessible than ever via the US 221 widening project, the remoteness of the County is still a weakness for traditional economic development.

The availability of high speed broadband service throughout the County was widely viewed as a major opportunity to attract new residents and industry. Many saw this elevated further due to the work-from-home trend stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some also stated that the significant number of second homeowners in the County were extending their season longer due to the ability to work remotely.

Many also saw tourism and, specifically, outdoor recreation as a major attraction for the County and a future growth opportunity. Some cited specific projects like Paddy Mountain and the river access point at the Hwy 163 bridge as successes that they would like to see used as examples for future projects. Some did state that they would like to see more guided growth around tourism. They felt that unguided growth could be alienating to locals.

The most significant threat to the County according to stakeholders was the rising cost and low inventory of housing stock. Some cited second homeowners and short-term rentals as part of the problem driving up prices. They feared that these costs would ultimately drive out long-time residents like they have seen in some neighboring counties. Housing is also a concern for the migrant workers who are vital to the economically significant agriculture industry in the County.

As with the community survey, some stakeholders shared that they would like to see more planning efforts undertaken by the County. They felt that much of the growth in the County in recent years has been unguided and that the community was unprepared for the changes that came with it. They would like to see the County take a more long-term approach to planning.

Mapping

The Technical Team worked with the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center's GIS Specialist to create a variety of maps to be used in this planning project. These maps were used by the local workgroup to help guide the development of the plan recommendations and the Future Land Use Map included below.

All reference maps can be found in the appendices of this document.

Additional Research

Along with the methods listed above, the technical team identified and reviewed community data from a variety of sources including from the United States Census, US Department of Agriculture, NC Department of Commerce, and Ashe County government. Much of this data was presented to the local work group at their regular meetings for review.

A comprehensive list of these resources is included in the appendices of this document.


Photo 8: Tree Farm in southern Ashe County

Development of Recommendations

After reviewing relevant data and community input about the current conditions and future desires for land use planning in Ashe County, the local workgroup identified the following priorities for this project:

- Housing
- Quality of Life
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Tourism
- Natural Environment

Under each of these priority areas, the workgroup developed specific goals and objectives. The workgroup then made recommendations for actions that can be taken by the Ashe County government to accomplish these goals and meet the needs of Ashe County residents, workers, visitors, and businesses.

Additionally, the Technical Team created another goal for administrative recommendations. These tasks are specific to complying with the 160D requirements and general review of existing ordinances.
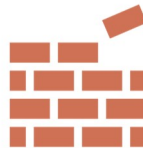
Plan Review & Adoption

A draft of this document was produced in May 2022 and shared with the local work group for review and comment. Following approval, the draft was then shared with the Ashe County Board of Commissioners and was formally adopted by the County on June 20, 2022.

Future Land Use

Goals & Strategies

Goal 1 – Housing

Encourage an adequate and reasonably priced housing stock and plan for residential needs.

Objective 1.1
Maintain an understanding of changing conditions and communicate these changes to policy makers.

Recommendation 1.1.1: Track areas of development and monitor the location of new home construction and subdivisions.

Recommendation 1.1.2: Provide data to elected officials to help guide policy decisions.

Objective 1.2
Encourage a variety of new housing types to meet the needs of all.

Recommendation 1.2.1: Encourage housing in areas where public utilities are available to achieve higher densities and lower development cost.

Recommendation 1.2.2: Track housing costs and communicate changes with policy makers.

Objective 1.3
Review and modernize ordinances if necessary to keep up with current development trends and provide consistent enforcement.

Recommendation 1.3.1: Review development standards and fees with adjoining jurisdictions to insure reasonableness of development cost.

Recommendation 1.3.2: Allow for flexibility and innovation in any ordinance updates to encourage housing affordability and respond to the demand for residential housing.

Recommendation 1.3.3: Review and update if necessary the permitting process for new development.

Recommendation 1.3.4: Educate the public on what ordinances exist, any changes, and how they can communicate with the County to report any concerns.

Objective 1.4

Foster relationships with community partners and develop cooperative strategies for addressing housing concerns.

Recommendation 1.4.1: Instate a local housing task force made up of County officials and community partners to meet regularly and discuss strategies for addressing these concerns.

Goal 2 – Quality of Life

Continue to promote and improve upon the rural character and quality of life amenities that make the County a great place to live and work.

Objective 2.1

Balance the protection of the natural environment and desire for further economic growth with the prioritization of individual property rights.

Objective 2.2

Continue working with partners to provide greater cell service and broadband throughout the County.

Recommendation 2.2.1: Research areas in the County where additional cell and broadband service are needed.

Recommendation 2.2.2: Collaborate with municipalities and community partners on closing the broadband gaps in the County.

Recommendation 2.2.3: Collaborate with municipalities and community partners to pursue improved cell service in that area.

Objective 2.3

Follow through on recommendations from the Ashe County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Goal 3 – Economic Development

Foster an environment that promotes economic development through collaboration and plan for sustainable retail, commercial, and industrial needs for businesses of all sizes.

Objective 3.1

Create an environment that is conducive for business and industrial location and for expansion of existing business and industry.

Recommendation 3.1.1: Maintain a database of industrial buildings and developable sites in the County.

Recommendation 3.1.2: Maintain relationships with existing industry partners to understand their needs and communicate those needs with policy makers.

Objective 3.2
Promote Ashe County as a home for remote workers.

Recommendation 3.2.1: Develop a strategy for marketing the community's high speed broadband to potential new residents who are able to work remotely.

Recommendation 3.2.2: Collaborate with Wilkes Community College on the NC Tech Paths project where applicable.

Recommendation 3.2.3: Research viability of a co-working space in the County that could be utilized by remote workers.

Objective 3.3
Collaborate with other jurisdictions on economic development projects.

Recommendation 3.3.1: Map and monitor nearby infrastructure projects to evaluate their benefits on economic development in the County.

Objective 3.4
Continue to encourage growth in the agriculture industry in the County.

Recommendation 3.4.1: Encourage the preservation of active farmlands in the County.

Recommendation 3.4.2: Work with the NC Cooperative Extension, local landowners, farmers, land trusts, and other stakeholders to determine needs and communicate them to policy makers.

Goal 4 – Transportation

Maintain and promote transportation options for efficient movement of residents, guests, and commercial goods and products.

Objective 4.1
Maintain and improve transportation corridors for the efficient movement of goods and people.

Recommendation 4.1.1: Continue to communicate community needs with the NC Department of Transportation during Comprehensive Transportation Planning process.

Objective 4.2
Consult with neighboring jurisdictions to improve regional cooperation and development consistency.

Recommendation 4.2.1: Continue to meet and discuss ongoing transportation concerns with County-wide stakeholders and communicate with relevant agencies and partners.

Goal 5 – Tourism

Create a welcoming environment for short and long-term visitors and foster guided growth for tourism in the County.

Objective 5.1
Implement strategies to strategically develop tourism in the County.

Recommendation 5.1.1: Utilize natural assets to draw in new visitors.

Recommendation 5.1.2: Develop and market scenic rides for cyclists, motorcycle enthusiasts, and other motorists.

Recommendation 5.1.3: Collaborate with community partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, municipalities, and others to strategically plan for growth in the tourism sector.

Recommendation 5.1.4: Create uniform promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities in the County by working with community partners to develop a marketing strategy and materials.

Objective 5.2
Encourage the growing agritourism industry in the County.

Recommendation 5.2.1: Further encourage and promote agricultural activities such as choose-and-cut Christmas tree, you-pick pumpkin and blueberry experiences, and others.

Recommendation 5.2.2: Encourage farms engaged in agritourism uses to participate in the Farmland Preservation Plan.

Goal 6 – Natural Environment

Protect natural areas and provide accessible recreation opportunities throughout the County.

Objective 6.1
Utilize the natural environment as a community and economic resource.

Recommendation 6.6.1: Ensure equitable access to public lands for all residents and visitors by collaborating with land management organizations.

Recommendation 6.6.2: Continue to partner with NC State Parks, NC Wildlife Resource Commission, and other agencies to further develop the trail systems and blueways along the New River, Mount Jefferson Natural Area, and game lands in the County.

Recommendation 6.6.3: Explore the creation of an outdoor recreation strategic plan to guide development and protect natural assets while capturing the full potential of the economic impacts.

Recommendation 6.6.4: Research a potential route for greenways or multi-use trails in the County.

Recommendation 6.6.5: Work with municipalities and community partners to make logical trail and greenway connections between towns, parks, and places of business.

Recommendation 6.6.6: Research, plan for, and support the development of the future Northern Peaks Trail.

Recommendation 6.6.7: Consider updates to ordinances to support the Northern Peaks Trail and other trails and greenways throughout the County. (For example, encourage dedicated easements for identified trail routes in proposed sub-divisions.)

Objective 6.2
Prioritize protection of the County's natural assets when considering future development efforts.

Recommendation 6.2.1: Promote natural resource conservation through County land use ordinances.

Goal 7 – Administrative

Maintain reasonable and up-to-date land use ordinances that accurately reflect the needs and desires of the citizens of Ashe County.

Objective 7.1
Meet all legal requirements and applicable recommendations set forth by the NC General Assembly in Chapter 160D.[13]

Recommendation 7.1.1: Update any references to provisions in G.S. Chapter 160A or 153A to indicate relevant provisions in Chapter 160D.

Recommendation 7.1.2: Align ordinance terminology with Chapter 160D terminology.

Recommendation 7.1.3: Adopt broadened conflict-of-interest standards for governing and advisory boards and incorporate new staff conflict-of-interest standards into ordinance or policy.

Recommendation 7.1.4: Adopt a comprehensive plan by July 1, 2022 following the procedures for a legislative decision and reasonably maintain the plan.

Recommendation 7.1.5: Coordinate a comprehensive plan with other required plans, such as Comprehensive Transportation Plans, and coordinate with other local governments, state agencies, or regional agencies on planning processes.

Recommendation 7.1.6: Consult with the County attorney and staff to further review Chapter 160D along with any advisory materials such as the UNC-School of Government's *G.S. Chapter 160D Checklist of Changes to Local Ordinances, Policies, and Practices* to ensure all County practices are in compliance.

Objective 7.2
Update existing land use ordinances as necessary.

Recommendation 7.2.1: Continually review and update land use ordinances to ensure they are up to date and in line with County priorities.

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[13] (UNC-School of Government, 2019)

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map offers a visual representation of the data and community input indicated in this report and specifies areas in Ashe County that are most likely to see commercial and residential growth in the coming years.

This map identifies the southern section of the County as a Moderate Growth Area (orange). This area is deemed the most likely portion of the County to see growth in the coming years due to a number of factors including existing transportation corridors and topography. The existing population and commerce centers of Jefferson and West Jefferson are also the primary sources for water and sewer utilities in the County.

Within the Moderate Growth Area, there are two identified Growth Corridors. The Primary Growth Corridor (green) follows US 221 from the Watauga County line through the municipalities of Jefferson and West Jefferson. This is the most travelled corridor in the County and, with the nearing completion of the widening project, areas along this route are attractive to both residents and businesses for ease of access to jobs and major transportation routes outside of the County.

The Secondary Growth Area (blue) follows sections of NC 194 and NC 88 as they converge north of Jefferson and West Jefferson and lead into the community of Warrensville. Though Warrensville is an unincorporated community, many stakeholders felt that its location at the crossroads made it a likely area for future growth. Additionally, planned improvements to this section of highway by NCDOT could make this an attractive area, especially for future residential growth.

The northern section of the County is identified as the Low Growth Area (pink) on the map. The topography and secondary road routes that are less well suited for higher traffic volume in this area make it less likely for significant residential or commercial growth. With the exception of the small municipality of Lansing, there are no public utilities available in this area. Additionally, many of the publicly owned or conservancy protected parcels and protected ridges lie within this area.

Future Land Use

Legend:
- Ashe County Airport
- Primary Growth Corridor (US 221)
- Secondary Growth Corridor (NC 88)
- Moderate Growth Area
- Low Growth Area
- Major Hydrology
- Town of West Jefferson
- Town of Jefferson
- Town of Lansing
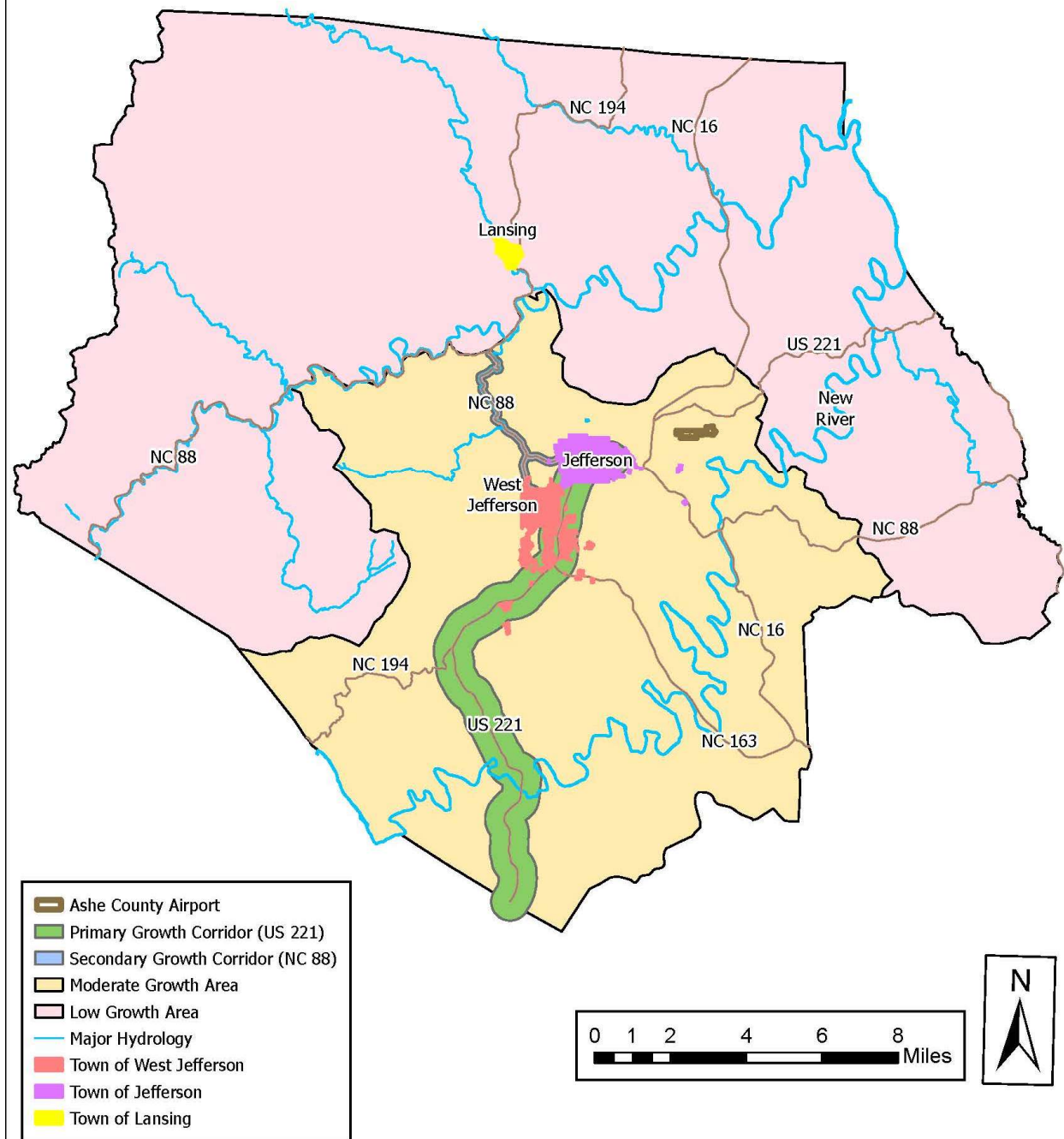
Appendices

Appendix I : Supporting Maps

Hill Shade Map

The Hill Shade Map is a base layer that provides a view of the County and municipal boundaries, some significant landmarks, community names, and mountains and valleys.
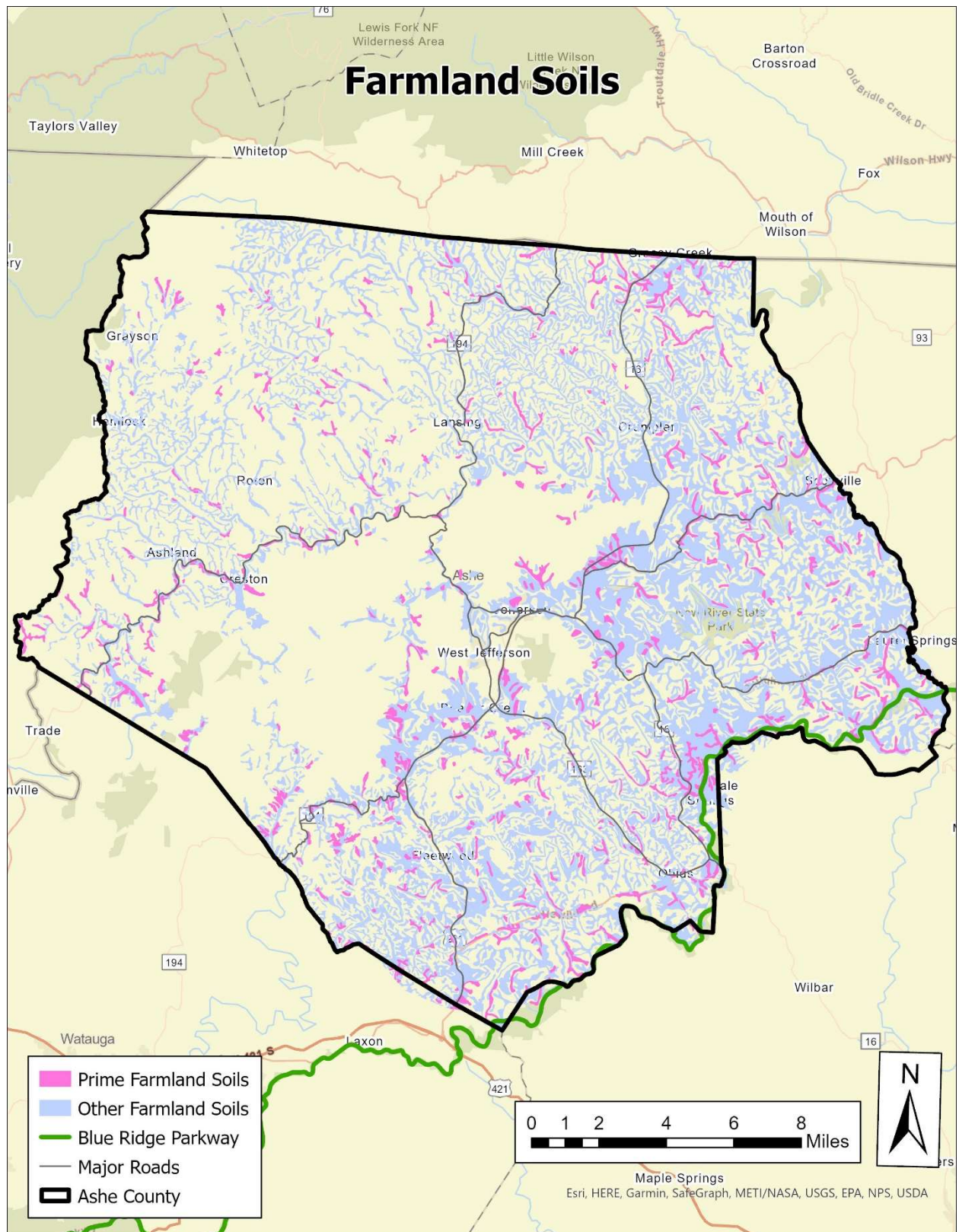
Hill Shade

Legend:
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Ashe County
- Municipal Limits
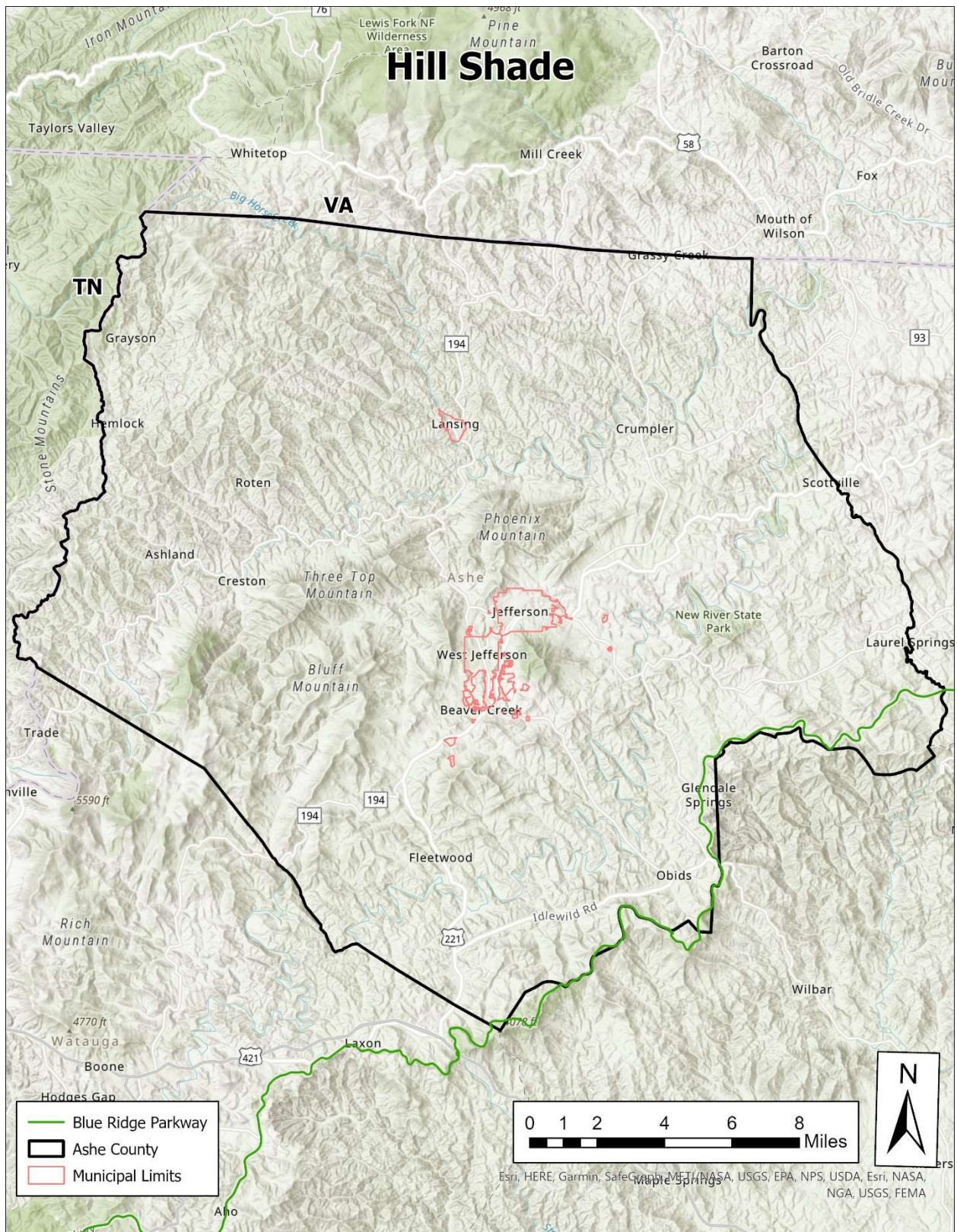
Farmland Soils Map

The Farmland Soils Map identifies soil types that are considered Prime Farmland and Additional Farmland of State and Local Importance (Other Farmland Soils) by the US Department of Agriculture.

More information can be found on Page 38.

Farmland Soils

Legend:
- Prime Farmland Soils
- Other Farmland Soils
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Major Roads
- Ashe County

Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA

Hydrology and Flood Hazard Map

The Hydrology and Flood Hazard Map identifies major rivers and streams in the County along with identified flood hazard areas.

More information can be found on Page 40.

Hydrology and Flood Hazard

Legend:
- Major Roads
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Major Hydrology
- Flood Hazard Area
- Ashe County
- Upper New River Basin

0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles

N

Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA
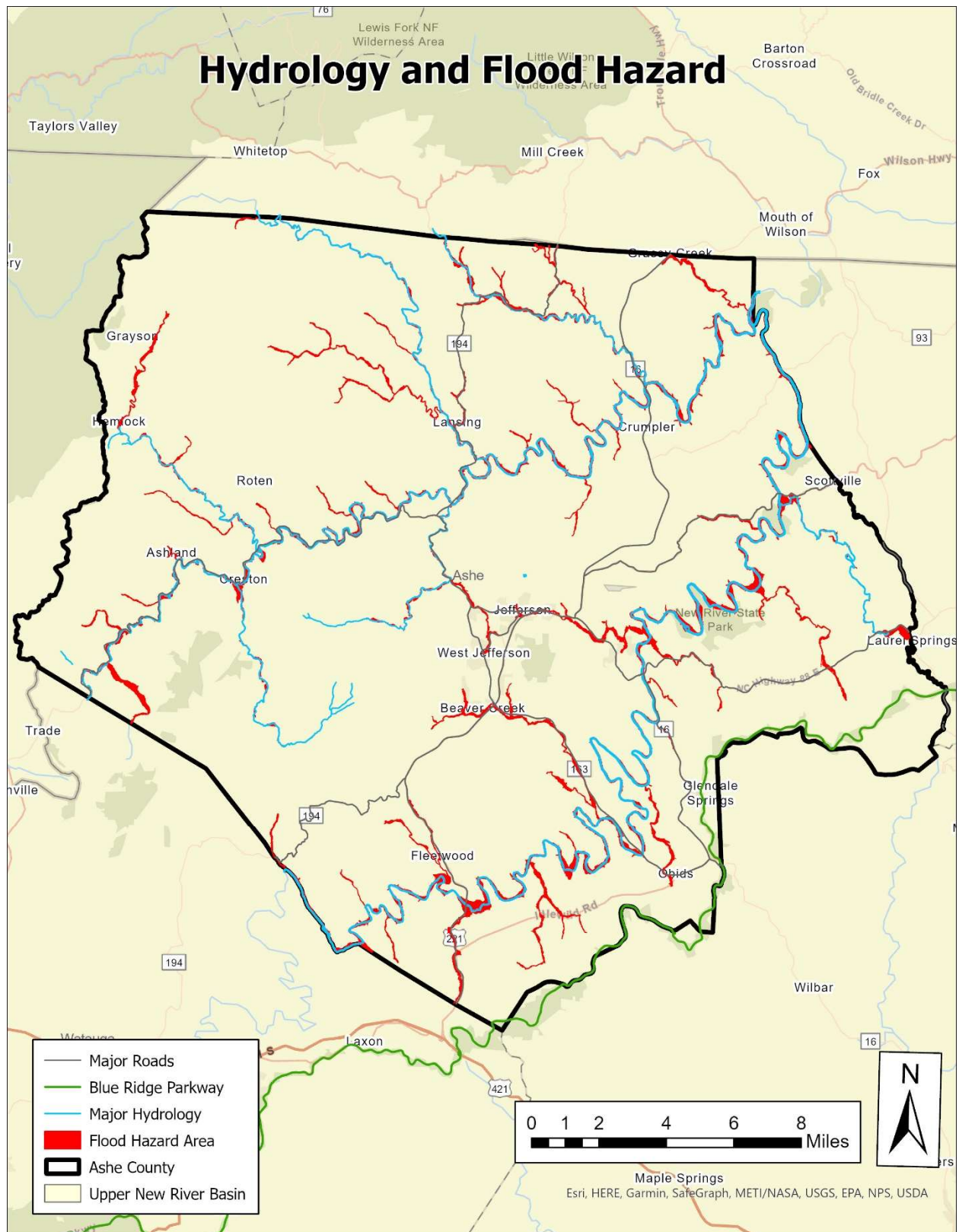
Natural Areas Map

The Natural Areas Map identifies parcels in the County owned or managed by conservancy organizations. Major conservancies operating in the County include Blue Ridge Conservancy, New River Conservancy, and the Nature Conservancy of North Carolina. Some natural areas do overlap with public lands.

Natural Areas

Legend:
- Conservancy Lands
- Municipal Limits
- Major Roads
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Ashe County

Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA
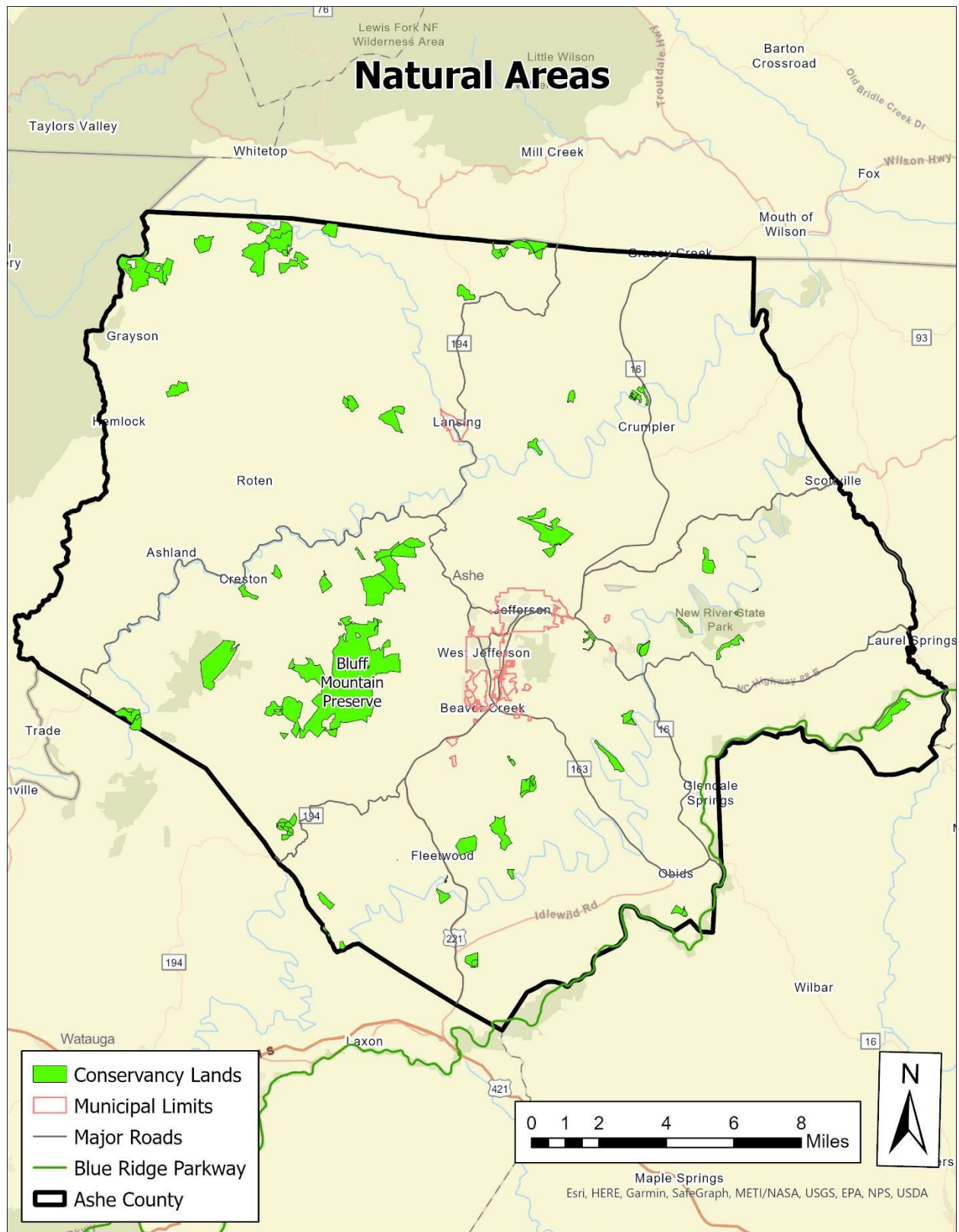
Public Lands Map

The Public Lands Maps identifies parcels in the County that are owned and managed by units of government. This includes Federal and State government agencies as well as the local governments of Ashe County, Town of Jefferson, Town of West Jefferson, and Town of Lansing.

More information can be found on Page 37.

Public Lands

Legend:
- Major Roads
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Local Government Owned Land
- State Owned Land
- Federally Owned Land
- Ashe County

Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA
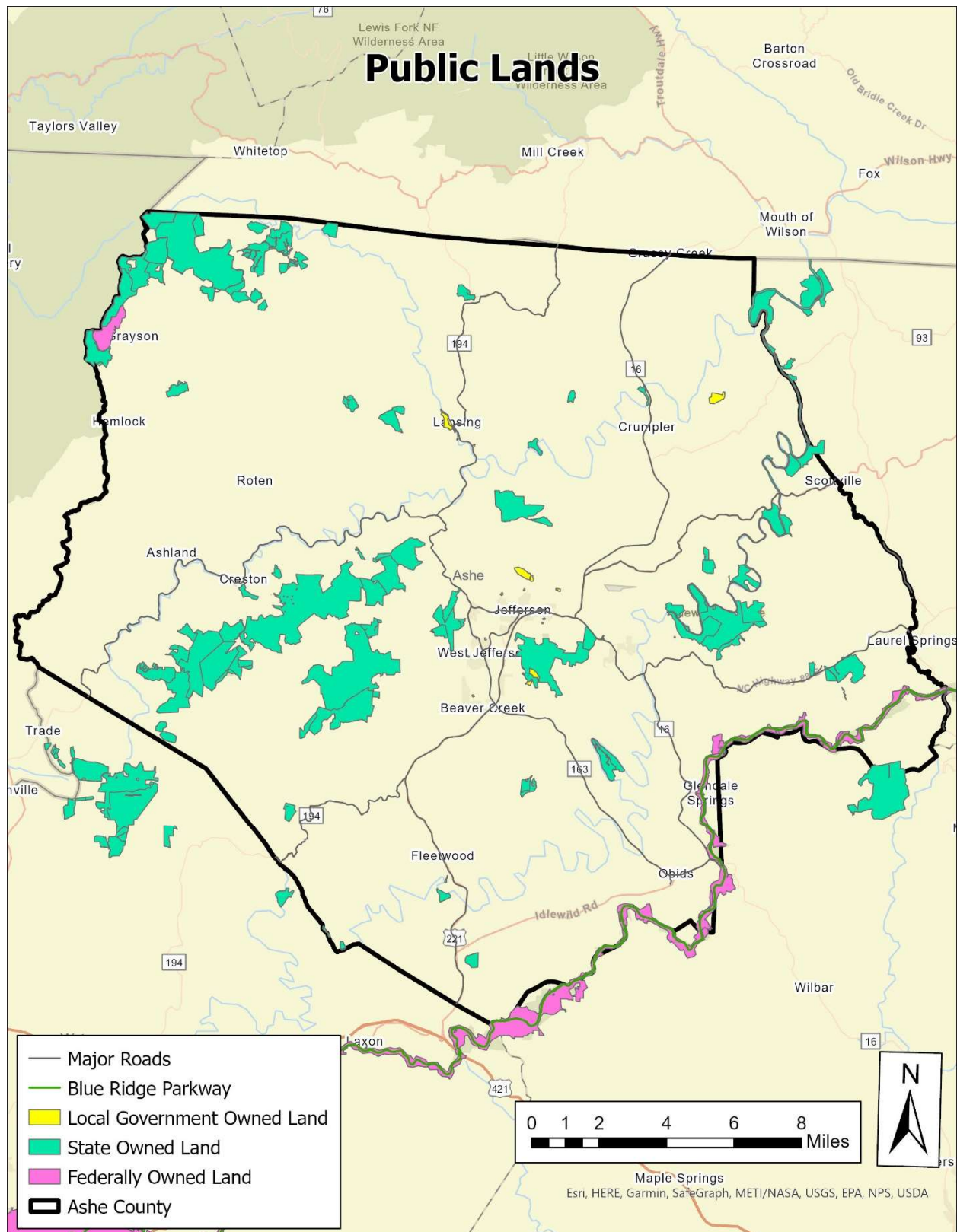
Recreation Areas Map

 The Recreation Areas Map identifies parcels throughout the County that are that are owned or managed by conservancy organizations or units of government that are available for public recreation. This map combines some information from the Public Lands and Natural Areas maps and further identifies some major trail routes.

 More information can be found on Page 38.

Recreation Areas
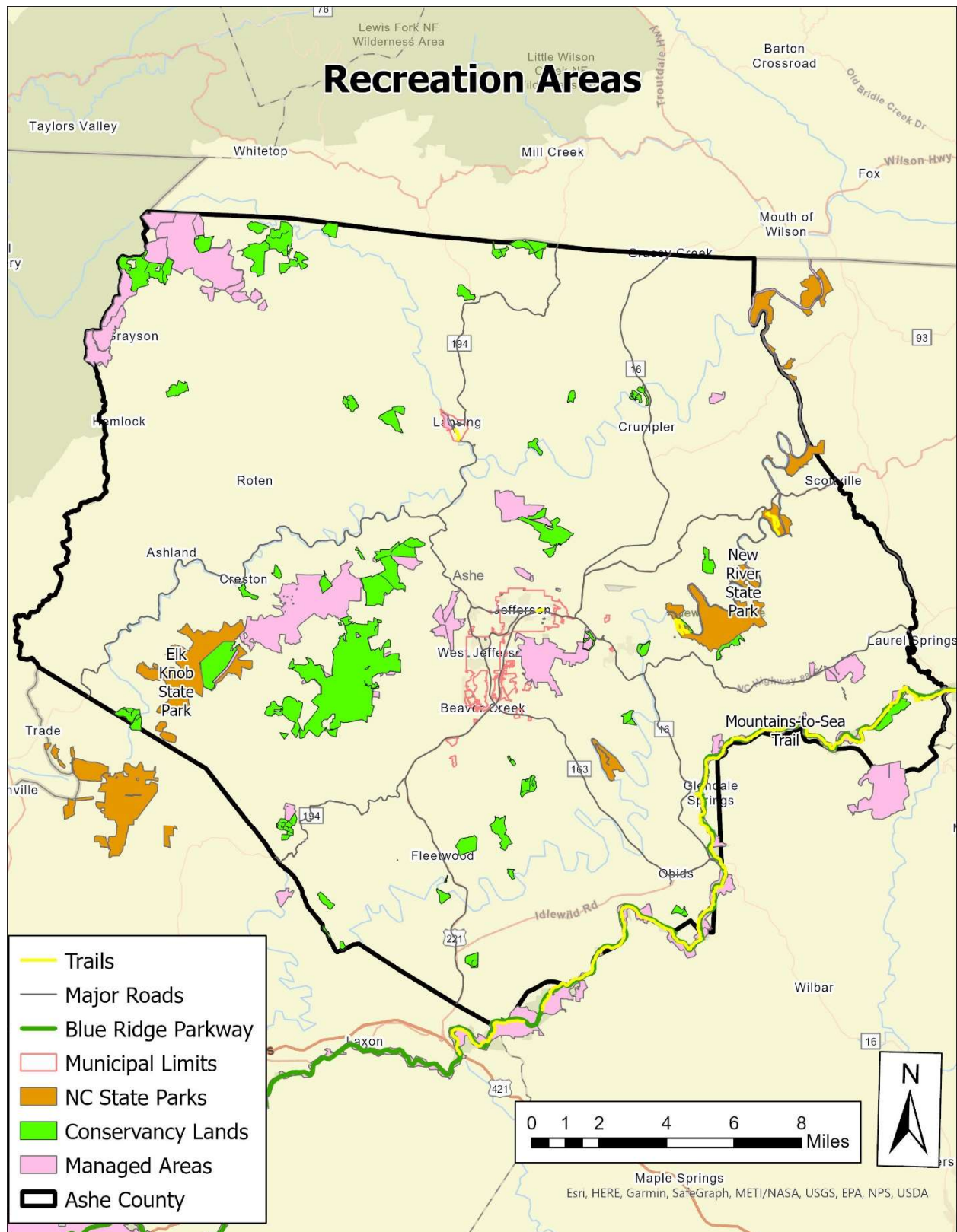
Protected Ridges Map

The Protected Ridges Map identifies mountain top ridges in Ashe County that meet the criteria for protection under the Mountain Ridge Protection Act that was adopted by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1983.

More information can be found on Page 36.

Protected Ridges
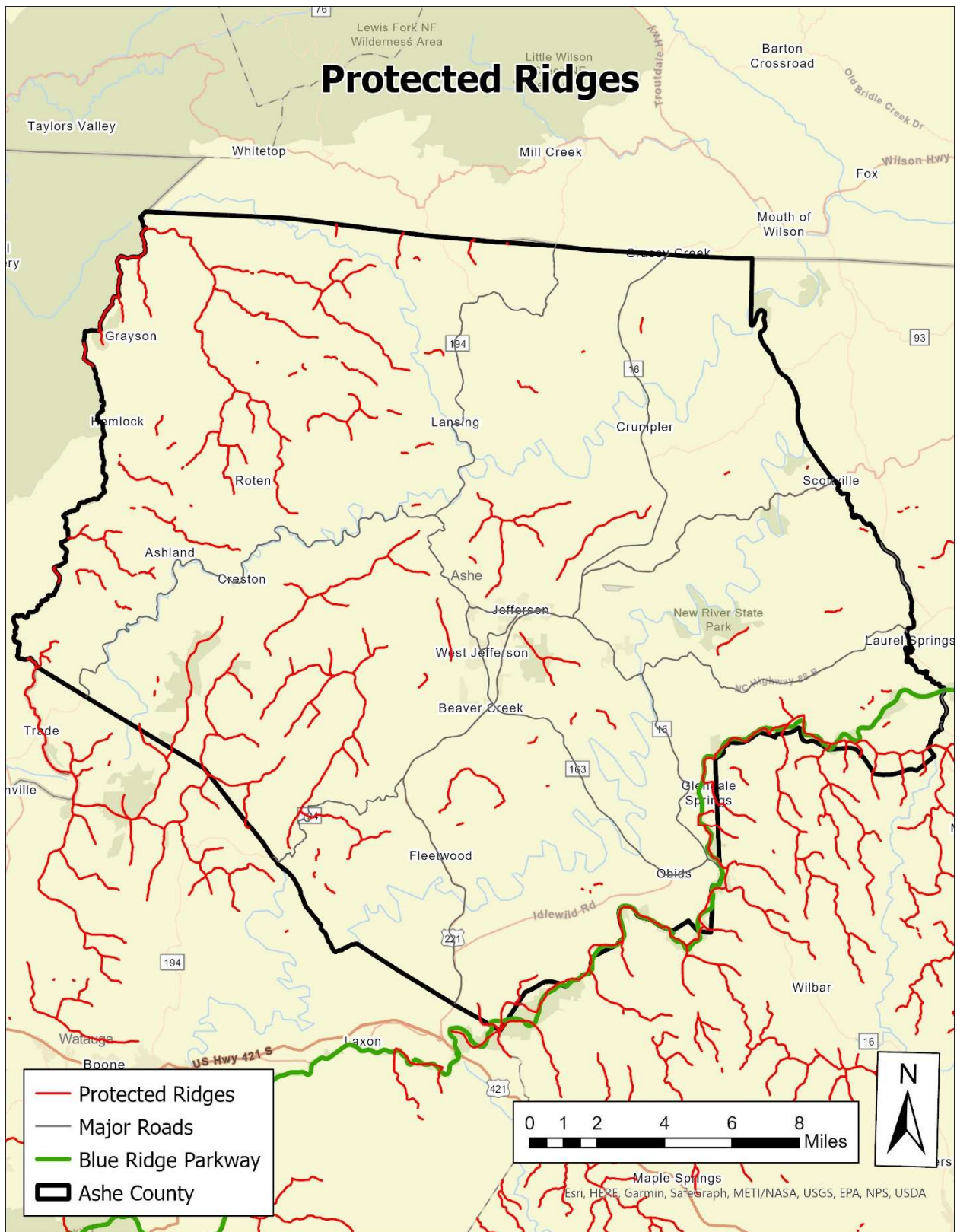
Water Supply Watersheds Map

  The Water Supply Watersheds Map identifies the three drinking water supply watersheds in Ashe County. Certain land uses are restricted in these areas by General Statute to protect the drinking water supply of a region. Restrictions vary depending on classification.

  More information can be found on Page 40.

Water Supply Watersheds
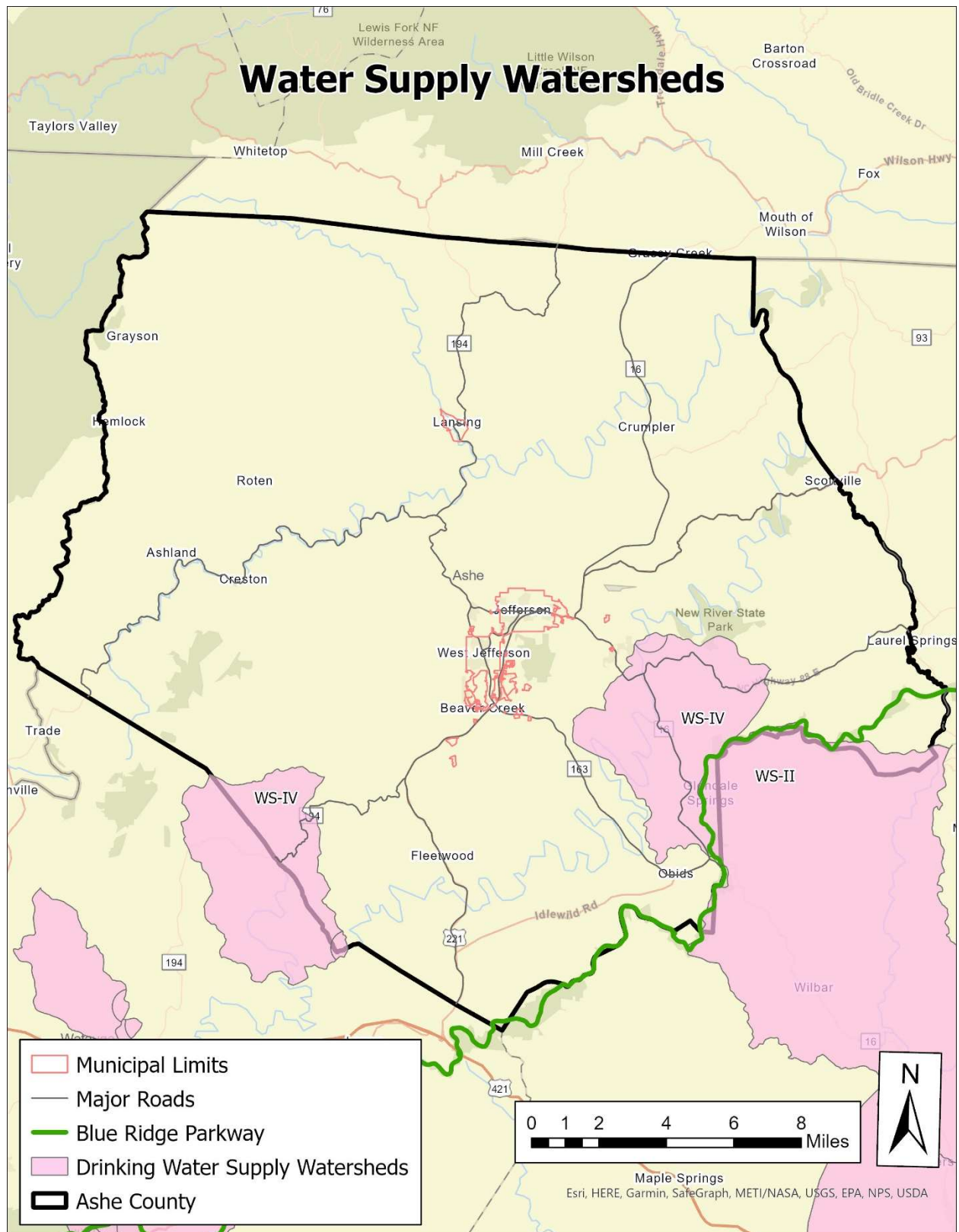
Traffic Count Map

The Traffic County Map identifies areas of significant two-way Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume. Esri traffic count data is collected from public sources such as NC Department of Transportation. Further detail on traffic counts can be found on the NC DOT website.

More information on this map can be found on Page 26.

Traffic Count Map

Ashe County
Ashe County, NC (37009)
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS
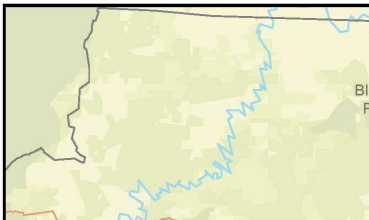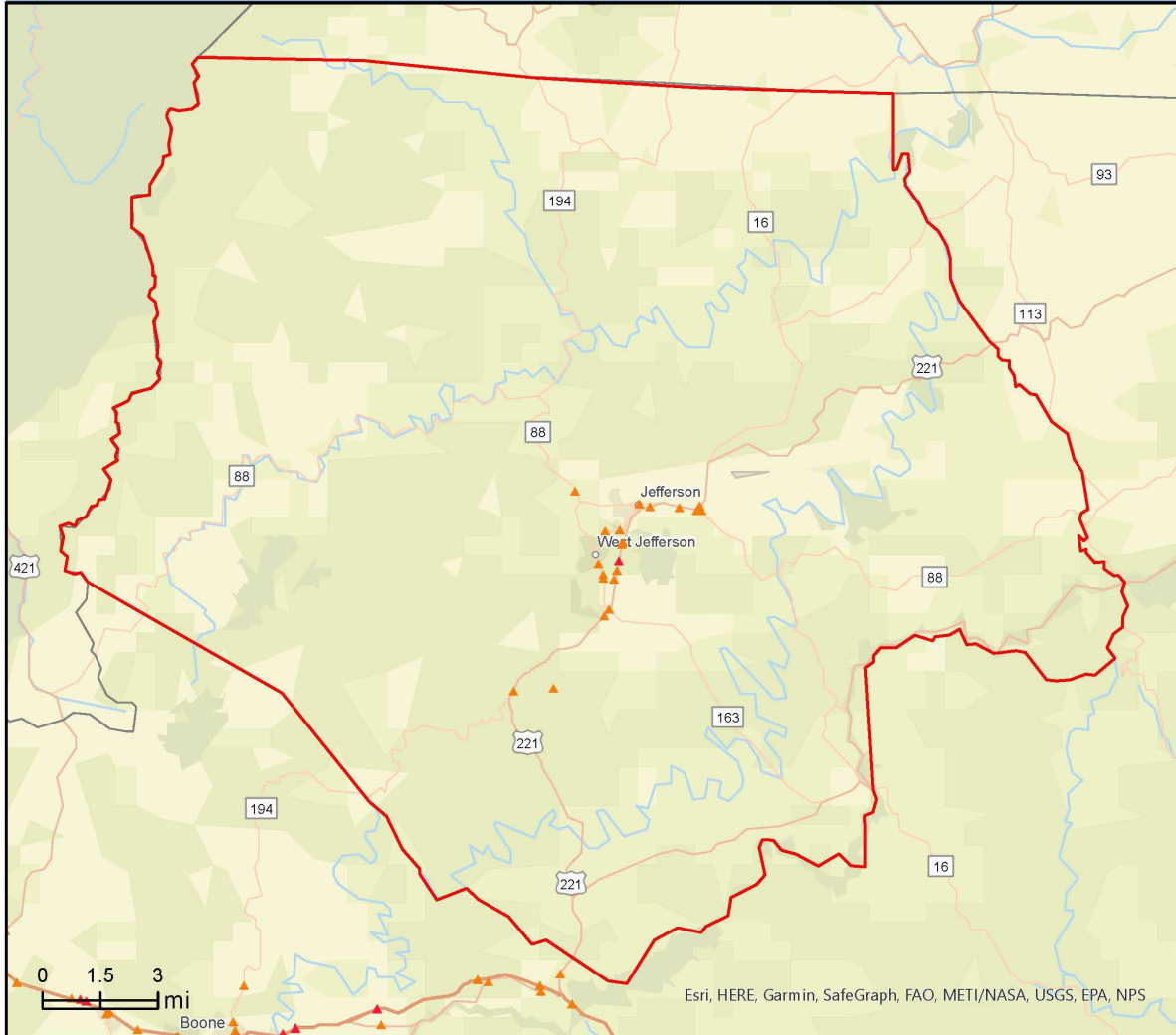
Average Daily Traffic Volume
▲ Up to 6,000 vehicles per day
▲ 6,001 - 15,000
▲ 15,001 - 30,000
▲ 30,001 - 50,000
▲ 50,001 - 100,000
▲ More than 100,000 per day

Blue Ridge Parkway

Source: ©2021 Kalibrate Technologies (Q3 2021).

October 07, 2021

Appendix II : Community Survey Results

Summary of Community Engagement Survey

2022 Comprehensive Plan

Ashe County, North Carolina

Survey administration and analysis by:

Wesley Barker	**County of Ashe Planning Department**
Adam Stumb	
Stephen Wright	
Kyle Case	**NC Department of Commerce – Appalachian Regional Commission**
David McRae	
Fern Hickey	**UNC Chapel Hill – Department of City & Regional Planning**
Sam Stites	

Table of Contents

Summary of Findings

- Results indicate that respondents like Ashe County's rural character, natural amenities, and quality of life, also noting that it is a good place to raise a family.

- Results indicate that respondents believe education, parks and trails, and sports and recreational facilities are the highest priority for medium term investment.

  For more information on the above, see section *Amenities*

- There is strong consensus that single family homes and long-term rentals should be encouraged, but a higher degree of disagreement on short-term rentals and manufactures housing. Higher density residences, such as multi-family homes and apartment buildings, are also generally encouraged.

- Commercial land-uses that had the highest degree of consensus were grocery stores, services, restaurants. manufacturing, and agriculture – all of which were encouraged. The highest degree of discouragement were big-box retail and shopping centers, though respondents were overall balanced in these sectors.

- Jefferson and West Jefferson are seen as the highest priority for future residential development, though Pine Swamp, Clifton, Old Fields, New River, and Creston also received high levels of interest.

- Jefferson and West Jefferson were largely considered the only areas that should be prioritized for commercial development.

- The New River, as well as areas around the park were considered the most important for environmental preservation, and Pond Mt., Helton, Creston, and Horse Creek also received many endorsements. West Jefferson was also noted as worthy of preservation for its town character.

  For more information on the above, see section *Land Use Preferences*

- Respondents cited Ashe County's natural resources, rural character, and attributes of its people as its greatest assets.

- Respondents cited elements related to rapid growth and development and the rate of new residents and tourism as threats to the county. Economic conditions which were noted included the sparse availability of affordable housing, lack of living wage job opportunities and the rising cost of living as concerns.

  For more information on the above, see section *Assets and Threats*

- Three-quarters of respondents indicated that they prefer to participate in planning processes via survey such as this one, while almost half said they would like to participate in either in-person or virtual town hall meetings.

- The contact information of 213 respondents who wish to be included on future planning-related listservs can be found in the data spreadsheet.

- Some respondents had additional comments that raised issues not explicitly addressed in the survey, were spatially explicit or related to the FLUM, or might be helpful to guide the word plan. All additional comments are available in the data spreadsheet

  For more information on the above, see section *Continuing Engagement*

Design and Methodology

Directions to access the survey through the link and/or QR code were dispersed overall multiple platforms and modes including radio and press mentions, governmental and community listservs, community listservs, social media, and paper flyers distributed throughout the county.

The survey obtained 632 responses. All the respondents selected the English-language survey, and all of them completed the survey by clicking on the multi-platform link generated by the survey software. Most respondents took between 4-9 minutes to complete the survey, though many required more time.

The survey was open from February 11-27, 2022. Notably, most responses were obtained in the final days of the survey being open. It should be considered if any mode of advertisement occurred in in those days to see which actions correlated to the high response rate.
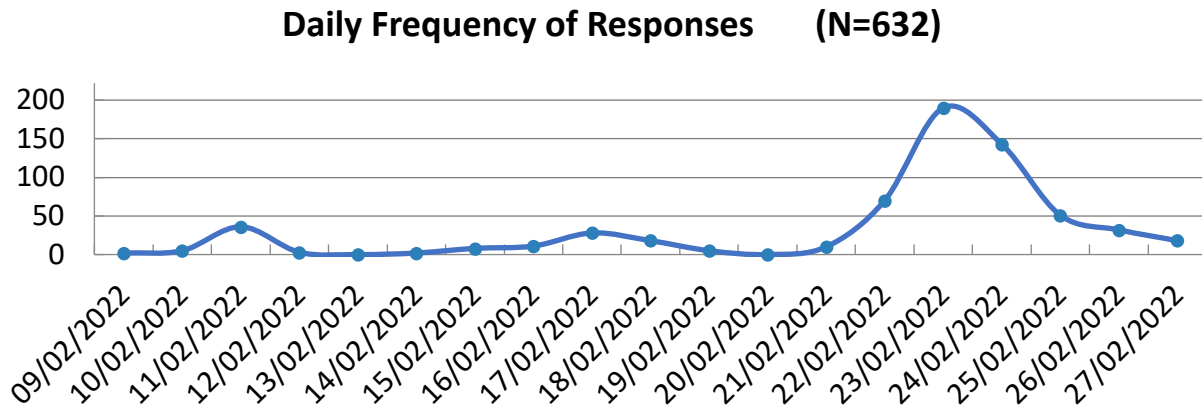
Daily Frequency of Responses   (N=632)

Limitations

Because most methods used to advertise the existence of the survey and the directions to complete it were distributed via online platforms, the survey could not account well for the members of the population with limited access or ability to the internet and digital resources. Logistical circumstances restricted the team's ability to solicit paper responses.

While the paper fliers and the survey itself were available in both English and Spanish, most of the methods of advertisement were not. Spanish-only or non-speakers of English who reside in the County may have not been reached.

As part of the survey design, the team opted not to record emails/identities of respondents as they took the survey. While this has benefits for ensuring the anonymity of respondents who value it, it also means someone could record multiple responses.

The survey lacked questions about the demographics of respondents, limiting the ability of analysts to derive information and trends which may be determined by or correlated to such variables.

As many of the questions had formats which required manual tabulation (verbal or normative entry) the accuracy of results produced in this report are subject to reasonable degrees of human error.
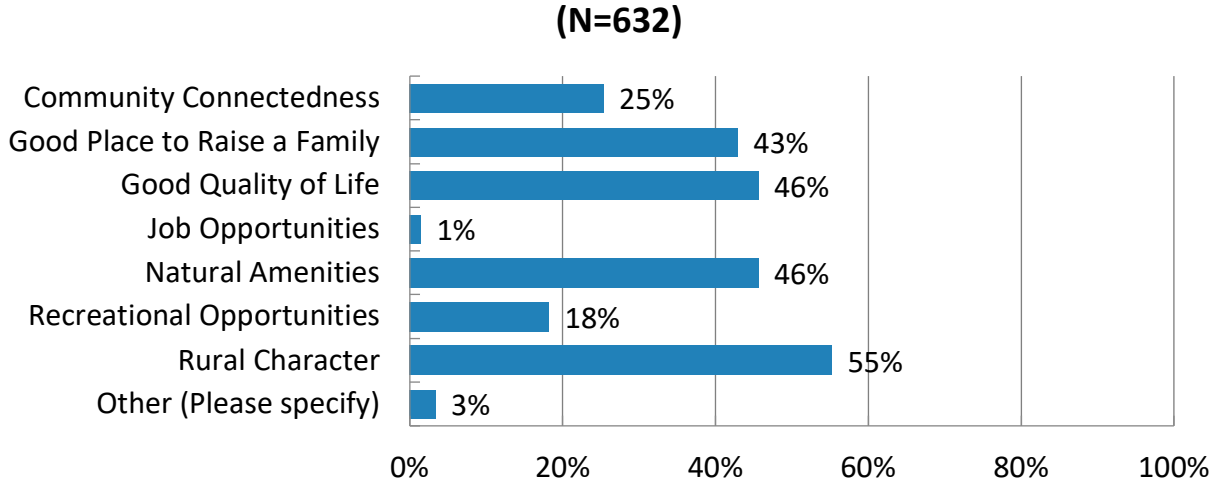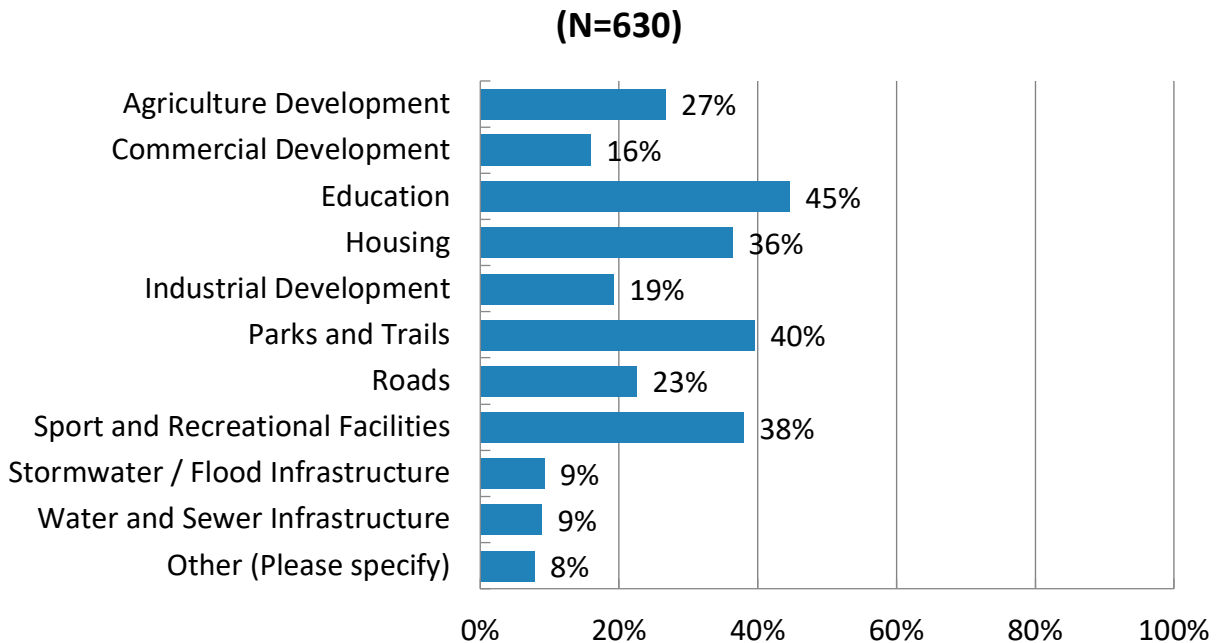
Survey Responses

Amenities

01. What do you love most about living and/or working in Ashe County?

Results indicate that respondents like Ashe County's rural character, natural amenities, and quality of life, also noting that it is a good place to raise a family.

(N=632)

Category	Percentage
Community Connectedness	25%
Good Place to Raise a Family	43%
Good Quality of Life	46%
Job Opportunities	1%
Natural Amenities	46%
Recreational Opportunities	18%
Rural Character	55%
Other (Please specify)	3%

02. Which categories do you think Ashe County should prioritize most for investment in the next 5 to 10 years?

Results indicate that respondents believe education, parks and trails, and sports and recreational facilities are the highest priority for medium term investment.

(N=630)

Category	Percentage
Agriculture Development	27%
Commercial Development	16%
Education	45%
Housing	36%
Industrial Development	19%
Parks and Trails	40%
Roads	23%
Sport and Recreational Facilities	38%
Stormwater / Flood Infrastructure	9%
Water and Sewer Infrastructure	9%
Other (Please specify)	8%

Land Use Preferences

03. How much do you think Ashe County should encourage the following residential land uses?

There is strong consensus that single family homes and long-term rentals should be encouraged, but a higher degree of disagreement on short-term rentals and manufactures housing. Higher density residences, such as multi-family homes and apartment buildings, are also generally encouraged.
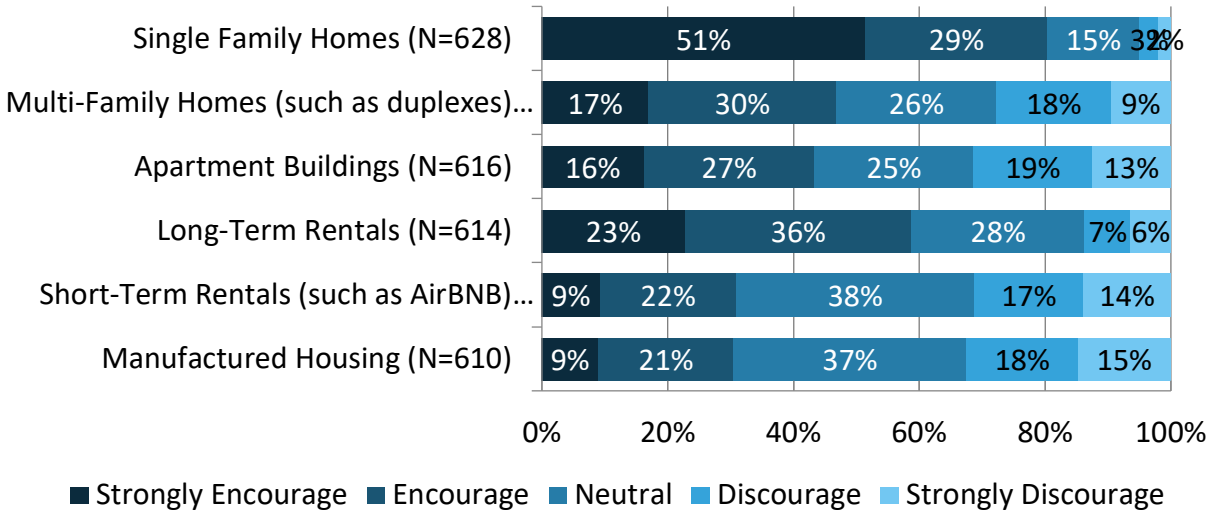

**04. How much do you think Ashe County should encourage the following commercial land uses?**

Commercial land-uses that had the highest degree of consensus were grocery stores, services, restaurants. manufacturing, and agriculture – all of which were encouraged. The highest degree of discouragement were big-box retail and shopping centers, though respondents were overall balanced in these sectors.
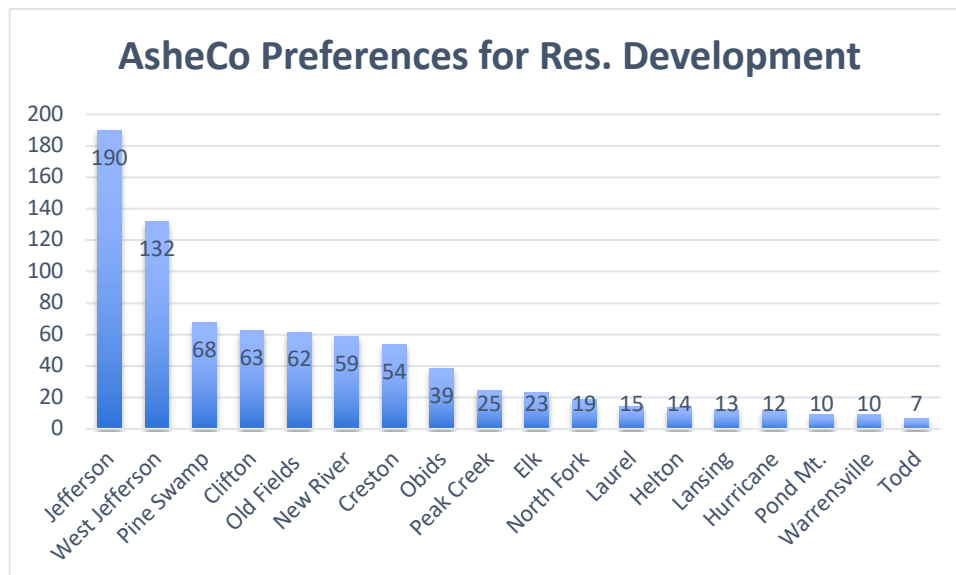

7
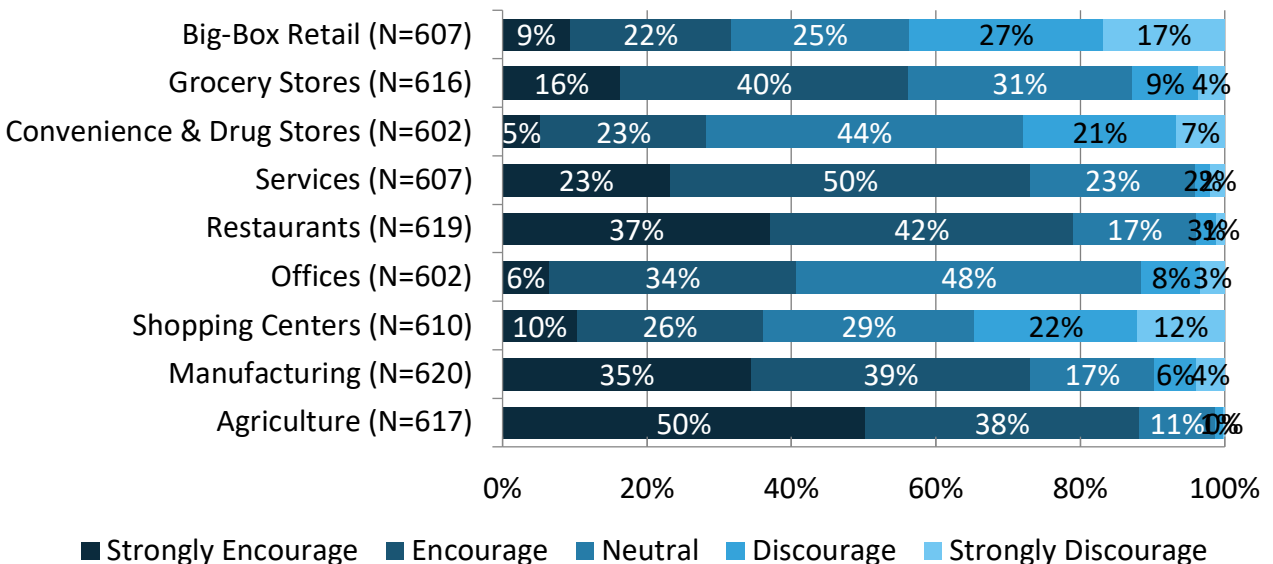
*The following **three questions** were open response, and respondents were given this map to guide their answers:*
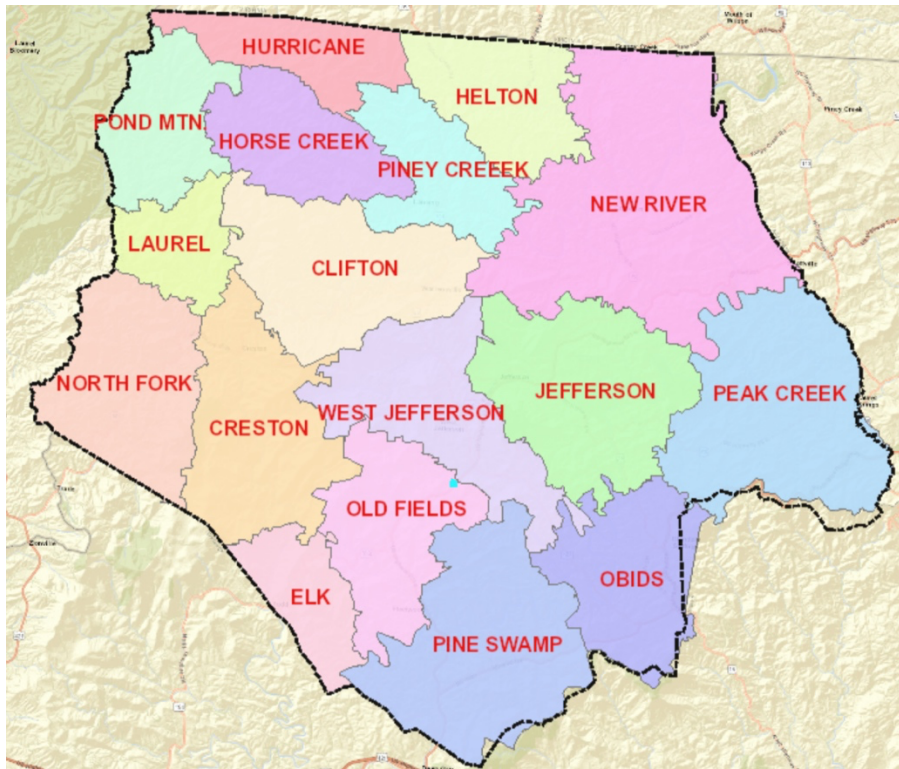
05. Which geographic areas of Ashe County would you like to see prioritized for future residential development? Please be as specific as possible.

Jefferson and West Jefferson are seen as the highest priority for future residential development, though Pine Swamp, Clifton, Old Fields, New River, and Creston also received high levels of interest.

AsheCo Preferences for Res. Development

Area	Count
Jefferson	190
West Jefferson	132
Pine Swamp	68
Clifton	63
Old Fields	62
New River	59
Creston	54
Obids	39
Peak Creek	25
Elk	23
North Fork	19
Laurel	15
Helton	14
Lansing	13
Hurricane	12
Pond Mt.	10
Warrensville	10
Todd	7

06. Which geographic areas of Ashe County would you like to see prioritized for future commercial development? Please be as specific as possible.
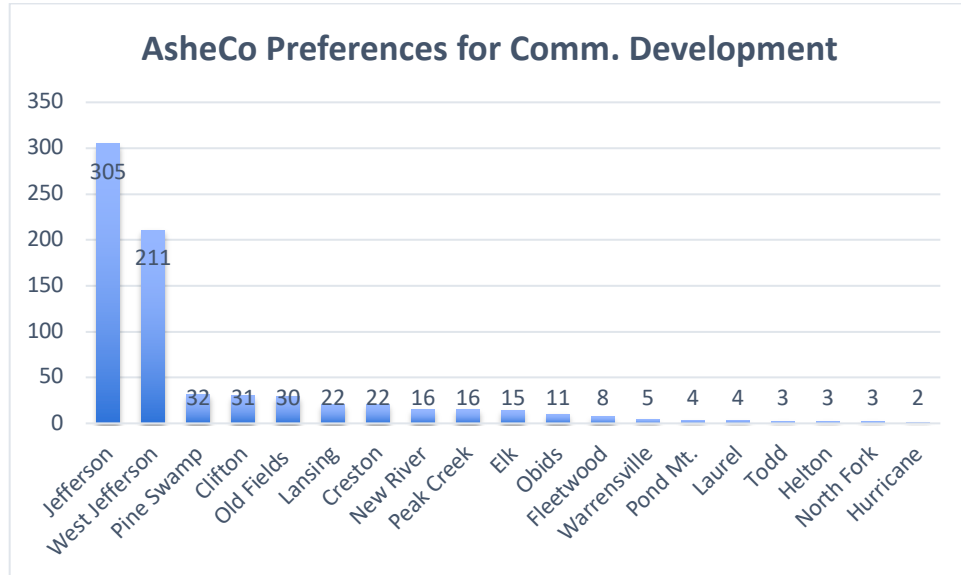
Jefferson and West Jefferson were largely considered the only areas that should be prioritized for commercial development.

07. Which geographic areas of Ashe County would you like to see preserved as they are currently? Please be as specific as possible.

The New River, as well as areas around the park were considered the most important for environmental preservation, and Pond Mt., Helton, Creston, and Horse Creek also received many endorsements. West Jefferson was also noted as worthy of preservation for its town character.

Assets and Threats

08. In your opinion, what are Ashe County's greatest assets? Assets can be specific industries or businesses, organizations, physical elements and infrastructure, or other positive qualities of the County.

Respondents cited Ashe County's natural resources, rural character, and people as its greatest assets.

AsheCo Greatest Assets

Asset	Count
Natural resources	300
Rural character	167
People	112
Towns	92
Sense of Community	61
Parks & trails	55
Agriculture	50
Outdoor recreation	38
Local businesses	37
Economic opportunities (eg...)	36

The survey software generated the following word-frequency diagram:

09. In your opinion, what are the greatest threats to conditions in Ashe County?

Respondents cited elements related to rapid growth and development and the rate of new residents and tourism as threats to the county. Economic conditions which were noted included the sparse availability of affordable housing, lack of living wage job opportunities and the rising cost of living as concerns.

The survey software generated the following word-frequency diagram:

Respondent Information

10. Do you live in Ashe County?

(N=632)

Yes, year-round	91%
Yes, seasonally	7%
No	2%
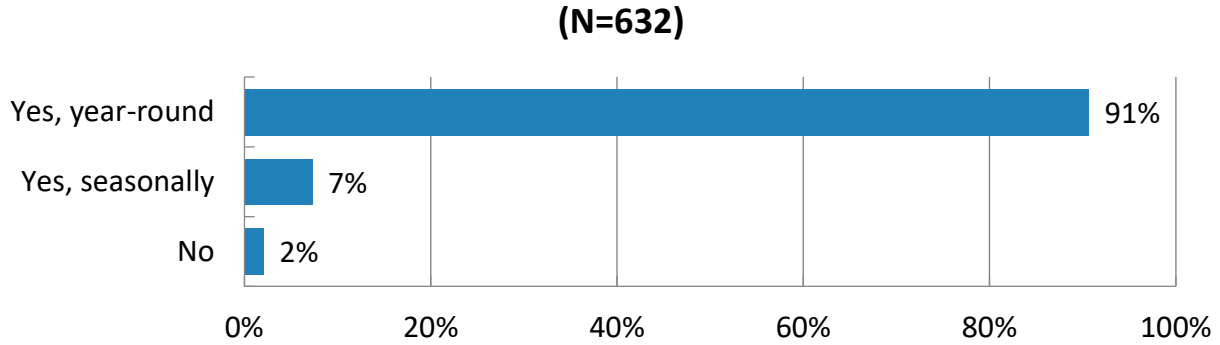
10b. What is your Ashe County zip code?

Respondents by Zip Code		
Zip Code	**Gross No. of Respondents**	**Percent**
28694	183	32%
28640	100	17%
28643	75	13%
28617	49	9%
28626	47	8%
28693	26	5%
28615	21	4%
28644	20	3%
28631	19	3%
28684	16	3%
28629	5	1%

11. Do you work in Ashe County?
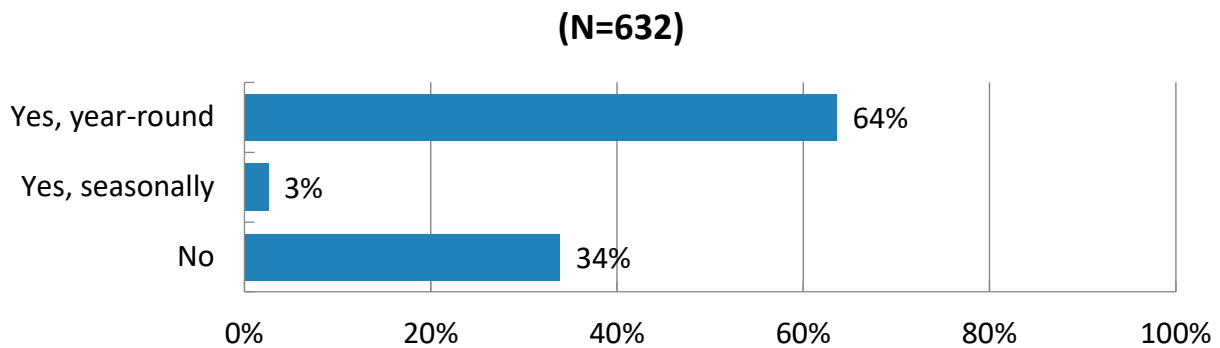
(N=632)

Yes, year-round	64%
Yes, seasonally	3%
No	34%

12. Do you own a business in Ashe County?

(N=632)

Yes	18%
No	82%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

13. Do you own a farm in Ashe County?

(N=632)

Yes	17%
No	83%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

13b. What type of farm do you own? For example: tree farm, orchard, livestock, hobby farm.

14. Do you own property in Ashe County?

(N=632)
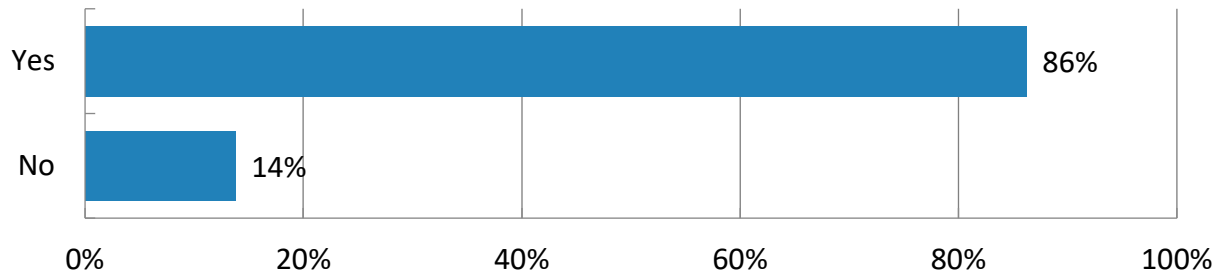
14b. Approximately how many acres do you own in Ashe County?

Acres	Gross No. of Responses	Percent
1	59	29%
2	52	26%
3	28	14%
5	20	10%
10	16	8%
20	13	6%
30	7	3%
40	8	4%

15. In what age range do you fall?

(N=630)
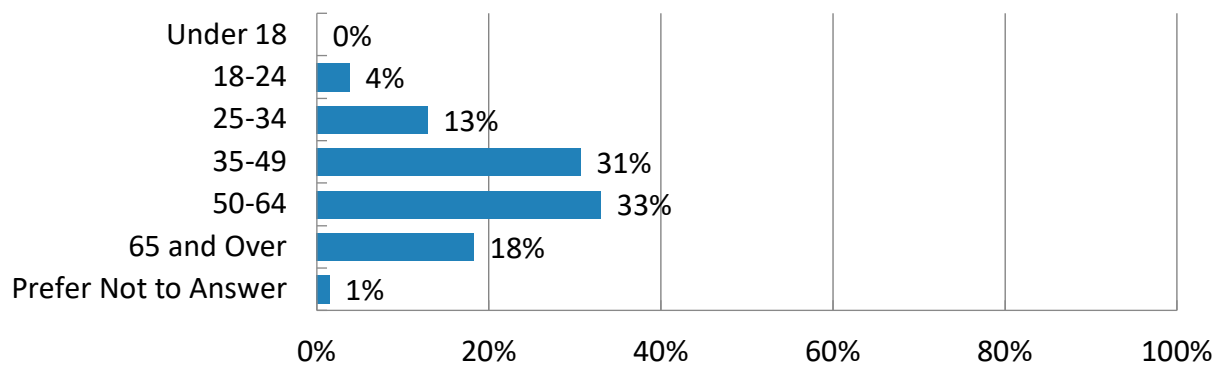
Continuing Engagement

16. Which forms of engagement with the County do you prefer to participate in when it comes to future planning efforts? Select all that apply.

Three-quarters of respondents indicated that they prefer to participate in planning processes via survey such as this one, while almost half said they would like to participate in either in-person or virtual town hall meetings.

(N=615)

Category	Percentage
In-person Town Hall Meetings	44%
Virtual Town Hall Meetings	43%
Pamphlets / Newsletters	29%
Surveys	76%
Other (Please specify)	3%
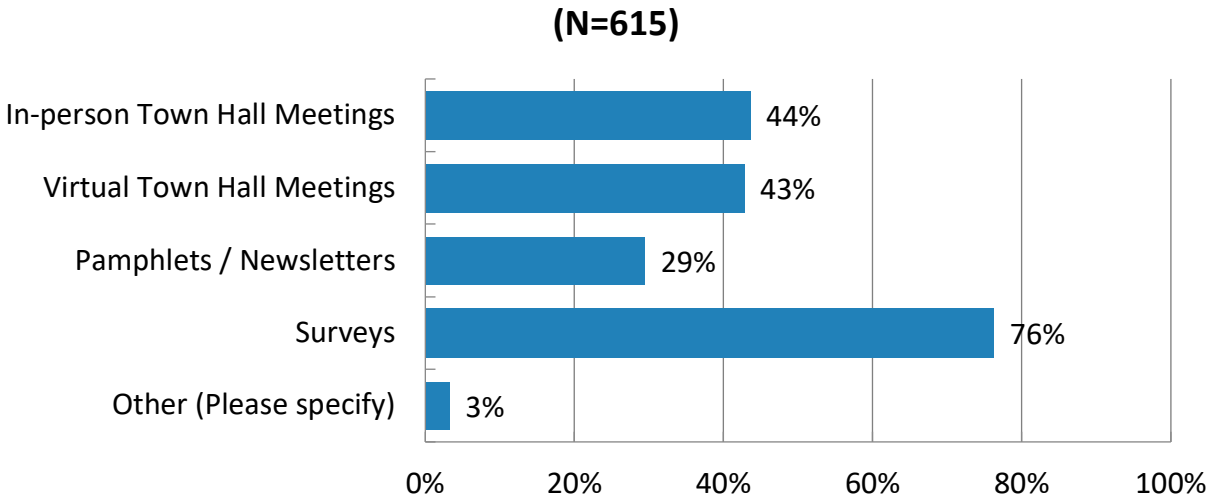
17. If you are interested in being engaged in future planning efforts and would like to be added to the email contact list to be notified of all Ashe County Planning Board Meetings, please include your name and email below. This is entirely optional and your information will only be used by County staff for the stated purposes.

The contact information of 213 respondents who wish to be included on future planning-related listservs can be found in the data spreadsheet.

18. Thank you for contributing to the planning and direction of your county by completing this survey! If you have any additional thoughts or concerns that weren't addressed in this survey, feel free to leave them here.

Some respondents had additional comments that raised issues not explicitly addressed in the survey, were spatially explicit or related to the FLUM, or might be helpful to guide the word plan. All additional comments are available in the data spreadsheet.

1. "We love Ashe County and want to stay here to grow our business and raise a family. But currently, in order to do so, we need to find a bigger home to fit children and a growing small business. But the housing prices are too high and competitive for our budget. They are purchased at above asking price, usually as a 2nd home or vacation rental before we can even put in an offer. We would continue to rent, but all the affordable rental houses have been turned into short term vacation rentals."

2. "I hope to see the results of this survey"

3. "Please find a way to support our teachers, small business, and industry!!!"

4. "Ashe County employers need to drastically increase pay to keep younger workers and incentivize and train GOOD LEADERS who keep good employees."

5. "Tourism isn't a negative for the county - but it has become the focus, to the detriment of natives who are being driven away due to high real estate prices and a lack of good-paying jobs. We need to strengthen the education system (it is failing) and create partnerships between business/industry and schools that give students the skills to be successful as employees and encourage businesses to invest/relocate for a strong employee pool."

6. "A YMCA would be an amazing thing to have for the adults and children of this county!"

7. "Please. Have the guts to pursue a vision for Ashe County that makes it a better place to live and work. Keep it beautiful. Get rid of billboards. Take chances--i.e., greenway trails, bike paths, limits on size of business signage. Don't wimp out and default to become another 321 strip in Boone. Encourage the companies here that pay above average wages and benefits. Encourage solar. Push Blue Ridge to pay more than $0.05 (wholesale) to businesses and individuals."

8. "One thing that is holding Ashe back is that there are no ordinances about junk sitting around, cars, trash, crumbling buildings. You don't see this much junk driving around other towns such as Asheville, black mountain and blowing rock. It's the one thing I apologize for to guests when they come visit. Just the amount of abandoned vehicles on major roads is astonishing."

9. "Thanks to the County for the efforts you're making to include the residents in the planning efforts and working together with the people which are a huge asset to this county to plan for our future together. We have a huge opportunity to grow and still maintain the Mountain Town feeling that brings so many of us here."

10. "This was a farming community, but big business has pushed out the little man. I'm aware Christmas trees provide a good revenue for the county but am afraid of the regulation because it isn't a food crop. Farmers markets and raising our own food are becoming important again and I believe we should develop and support those groups to encourage tourist revenue for the county and better groceries for folks."

11. "Pass ordinances that will require property owners to clean up unsightly trash, untagged vehicles, and falling down buildings."

12. "Need a new DSS building."

13. "I love our town and all the things that brilliant people have done to preserve it and keep it whole. As a business owner, I get feedback from my customers all from out of town about how amazing our little town is. I hate that a lot of the locals don't seem to appreciate what we have here. I think more open dialogue would help people be more positive about changes and additions to the beautiful place we call home. (Reviewer note: better communication about change and development.)"

14. "Have new building have an old facade, brick, stone, or log cabin look. Keep new business to only two stories."

15. "I feel like this county is great for families, just wish we could have more for our children. A children's Museum or inside play areas for sports & other physical activities for young people of all ages."

16. "I love the new river access involvement of the county at Hwy 163. Continue with this project and adding others throughout the county."

17. "Focus on Jobs, Education, and our Younger Generations. The county needs a homeless shelter, more activities for young adults that don't consist of a Brew House or Bar! We are losing the most important part of this county (young adults) because one there is no future here and two there is nothing for them to do. Stop letting Vannoy build everything in the county...they suck at what they do!"

18. "River access on county land. i.e., "watercraft take in put in""

19. "We need more gas stations and fewer dollar generals in the outlying parts of the county. If I fail to get gas in the Jeffersons, or Smethport, I have one opportunity between there and pond mountain."

20. "We need more entertainment places."

21. "We need veterinarians!!"

22. "I think it would be great to have a longer walking trails or more walking trails close to town."

23. "Please consider finding ways to engage our youth in healthy fun ways besides doing things in nature. Especially since we do not have the bowling alley or many other businesses that offer activities for youth to hang out at and have clean fun."

24. "When it comes to downtown, stop letting a few dictate what happens. Get ALL the businesses involved."

25. "I am in favor of keeping the cruise in!"

26. "Thus far, I believe Ashe is doing well administratively, however, we must be vigilant to assure external influences don't wreck our cultural heritage!!! Furthermore, it's a shame most businesses close up at 5 pm right as consumers are shopping for goods and services!!!"

27. "I drove past Wilkes YMCA last evening around 6pm. The parking lot was FULL. I envisioned basketball games, indoor swimming, and activities for ppl inside. It would be amazing to offer that to our residents. State of the art center!!"

28. "Need more restaurants, more housing, community events, things for kids to do."

29. "Local government needs to be reflective of the county as a whole. Perhaps It is time to consider electing commissioners and school board members by districts rather than county wide."

30. "A focus on property clean up and existing building repurposing is greatly needed."

31. "I think the commissioners and town leaders need to work on the communication to residents on the positive aspects of promoting growth in industry, businesses & new people moving in. The positive aspect of additional tax money. The 2 most important needs are for affordable housing &

recreational facilities for children. We need a public pool facility & organized sports activities, a bowling alley & community center. Thank you for asking for input."

32. "Under the comprehensive plan umbrella, the county also needs shorter term, targeted, actionable, strategic plans to address specific needs."

Notes from Survey Administrators

Questions 5, 6, and 7 asked respondents to respond to their geographic preference for development and preservation alongside a map with regions of the county distinguished by shaded color to be used as a reference. While any given respondent can vary from another on their understanding of the location and boundaries of a place, informed by both formal and customary factors, most respondents adhered to the available locations. Because the survey design team wanted to avoid dictating or influencing the responses, the answer format was open ended. This increased the difficulty of analysis – that while not encroaching on its validity, did result in degrees of obscurity. Whereas a multiple choice, select-all-that-apply, with an option to add 'other' would have had the ability to be tabulated automatically by the survey software, the method used in the survey required manual tabulation for each entry by each respondent, increasing the time and risk of error assumed by the administrators. As an example, question 7 alone took 1775 individual manual entries to tabulate the opinions of all 632 respondents. Furthermore, it required greater burden on the survey respondent to type all of the areas, increasing the time taken to complete the survey. There was also a high occurrence of responses which could not be objectively analyzed or understood because of the open-ended nature of the response format (e.g. "All except the one's near Watauga," or "the rural areas.")

Similarly, the format of response for the question 14b asking for the acreage of property owners created some complicated analytical issues. The verbal entry prompted some to respond normatively (e.g. "Something like 4 or 5," or "Why does it matter.") Another method which might prompt more clear responses and more accurate tabulation might be a multiple choice with ranges of acreage and an option for "prefer not to say."

Appendix III : Meeting Notes

Ashe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2022
Thursday, February 17, 2022 – 4:00 pm

In attendance:

Kyle Case
David McRae
Adam Stumb
Wesley Barker
Stephen Wright
Sam Stites
Jennifern Hickey
Dick Hails

David McMillan, Vice-Chair
William Carter
David Phipps
Travis
Brantley
Elizabeth

Summary – This meeting will serve as an introduction to the planning process, a review of previous planning efforts in Ashe County, and a discussion of goals for moving forward.

Discussion –

Introductions

Why are we here? 160D, DOT, and a genuine desire to see Ashe County succeed.

What is a land use plan? A guide for growth and a way to protect valuable areas.

Let's talk about Ashe County.
- What are some of Ashe County's greatest assets?
- What are some of Ashe County's weaknesses or threats?
- How has Ashe County changed over the previous decades?
    - Of those changes, which ones would you like to see continue?
    - Which would you like to see slowed or stopped?

Previous Land Use Planning in Ashe County
- 1999 – Ashe County 2020: A Comprehensive Plan for Growth and Change
- 2014 – Ashe County Land Use Plan (never adopted)
- What can we take from these planning efforts?

Next Steps
- Meeting Schedule
    - Next meeting – March 17
        - Review of data – demographic and economic data, community survey results, stakeholder interviews, and maps
    - Two meetings in April and May?
    - Plan to be finalized prior to June 6 Commissioners meeting

Ashe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2022
Thursday, March 3, 2022 – 4:00 pm

In attendance:

Kyle Case

David McRae

Adam Stumb

Stephen Wright

Sam Stites

Jennifern Hickey

David McMillan, Vice-Chair

David Phipps

Derek Calhoun

Priscilla Cox, Chair

William Carter

Rene Shuford

Summary – In this meeting we will review comprehensive demographic and economic data for Ashe County as well as the results of the community survey.

Discussion –

Review of Community Survey Results – Sam Stites

Review of Community Demographic and Economic Data – Kyle Case

Review of Purpose Statement draft

Ashe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2022
Thursday, March 17, 2022 – 4:00 pm

In attendance:

Kyle Case	David McMillan, Vice-Chair
Adam Stumb	David Phipps
Stephen Wright	Derek Calhoun
Sam Stites	Travis Birdsell
Dick Hail	Kelly Carson

Summary – In this meeting we will review themes from the community stakeholder conversations, any additional survey data, and begin looking at the work planning process.

Discussion –

Review of additional Community Survey Results – Sam Stites

Review of themes from Community Stakeholder conversations – Kyle Case

Review of Purpose Statement second draft

Review of Plan Goals draft and work planning process

Ashe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2022
Thursday, April 21, 2022 – 4:00 pm

In attendance:

Kyle Case
Adam Stumb
Stephen Wright
Matthew Levi
David McRae

David McMillan, Vice-Chair
David Phipps, Chair
Derek Calhoun
Travis Birdsell
William Carter
Kelly Carson
Rene Shuford

Summary – In this meeting we will review maps of Ashe County geography, begin thinking about the Future Land Use Map, and begin developing the work plan.

Discussion –

Review of Ashe County maps
- Hydrology and Flood Hazard
- Public Lands
- Natural Areas
- Recreation Areas
- Protected Ridges
- Water Supply Watershed
- Soils
- Topography
- Slope
- Elevation
- Traffic Counts

Discussion of how these map layers impact future land use and guide residential and commercial growth.

Review of updated work plan goals and discussion of objectives and actions.

Ashe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2022
Thursday, May 5, 2022 – 4:00 pm

In attendance:

Kyle Case
Adam Stumb
Stephen Wright
Sam Stites
Matthew Levi
David McRae

David McMillan, Vice-Chair
David Phipps, Chair
Derek Calhoun
Travis Birdsell
William Carter
Kelly Carson
Rene Shuford

Summary – In this meeting we will continue developing the work plan and discuss any additional thoughts on the FLUM.

Discussion –

Review of work plan goals 3-6 and discussion of objectives and actions.

Additional thoughts on FLUM development.

Notes from this meeting were made directly on the DRAFT Work Plan document.

Appendix IV : UNC Fall 2021 Deliverable

Ashe County, NC UNC Planning Workshop Deliverable

FALL 2021

Dylan Burkett, Ruby Brinkerhoff

Pierce Holloway, Zuri Garcia

Contents

Contents

Explanation Of Contents

We have developed a preliminary document that highlights existing conditions, visions, and goals for Ashe County. Using a combination of meetings with Ashe County, documents provided by Ashe County, and supplemental information from the census and other sources, we provide this document as a base for further developing a framework for Ashe County's comprehensive plan and updated land use plan.

We are completing this work to assist Ashe County in the development of their plans and for compliance with North Carolina General Statute section 160-D. Cities, towns, and counties across North Carolina are updating their comprehensive plans and land use plans for many reasons, including compliance with 160-D, recognition of outdated plans, and a need to keep pace with changing communities. Whereas Ashe County does not wish to enact zoning, they find updates to their land use plan valuable and necessary as a means of creating living documents that properly reflect the current state of their community.

The remainder of this report will:

- Provide Ashe County with baseline existing conditions, updating numbers from the plan created in 1999 and adding new elements where appropriate.

- Create an outline of goals and policies, which may be updated after community engagement efforts.

- Potential survey questions for distribution when Ashe County wishes to pursue the community engagement portion of their land use plan development process.
    - Stakeholders

A Brief Background on N.C. General Statute 160-D

The updated N.C.G.S. 160D defines a comprehensive plan as a plan that "sets forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction" (NC G.S. 160D-501.a1).

A land use plan "uses text and maps to designate the future use or reuse of land. A comprehensive or land-use plan is intended to guide coordinated, efficient, and orderly development within the planning and development regulation jurisdiction based on an analysis of present and future needs" (NC G.S. 160D-501.a1).

Development of Ashe County's comprehensive plan / land use plan will require planning analysis that will address the following, which are also specified in the statute:
- Existing Conditions Report
  - Including: demographics, economy, environmental assets and issues, and cultural factors
- Community Engagement
  - Including opportunities for engagement of key stakeholders, and opportunities to engage the public for community input on Ashe County plans
- A Vision Statement, Goals, and Policies

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONTENTS (as found in Ch. 160-D)

Issues and opportunities facing the local government, including consideration of trends, values expressed by citizens, community vision, and guiding principles for growth and development.
The pattern of desired growth and development and civic design, including the location, distribution, and characteristics of future land uses, urban form, utilities, and transportation networks.
Employment opportunities, economic development, and community development.
Acceptable levels of public services and infrastructure to support development, including water, waste disposal, utilities, emergency services, transportation, education, recreation, community facilities, and other public services, including plans and policies for provision of and financing for public infrastructure.

Housing with a range of types and affordability to accommodate persons and households of all types and income levels.
Recreation and open spaces.
Mitigation of natural hazards such as flooding, winds, wildfires, and unstable lands.
Protection of the environment and natural resources, including agricultural resources, mineral resources, and water and air quality.
Protection of significant architectural, scenic, cultural, historical, or archaeological resources.
Analysis and evaluation of implementation measures, including regulations, public investments, and educational programs.

Plans are proposed and adopted by the governing board. The planning board gives consultation and advice to the governing board during the process, which is ultimately a legislative decision.

The adoption of a new land use plan for Ashe County will help advise land use decision making in the years to come and will be a guiding document for Ashe County moving forward.

Existing Conditions

An existing conditions report is the first step in the process to create a comprehensive plan. This report provides tools, baselines, and data to act as the foundation for future discussion during the Comprehensive Planning process. By using the Census, County and City data sources, surveys, and in speaking with community members this report identifies issues and opportunities that each area's comprehensive plan should address. Each community will bring their own expertise, experiences, needs, culture, and a deeper understanding that data alone cannot highlight.

This existing conditions report is the co-creation of UNC's Department of City and Regional Planning Graduate Students, Ashe County and Reidsville North Carolina as part of PLAN 823, Workshop, in fulfilment of the Master of City and Regional Planning program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Photo Credit: Ashe Chamber Instagram

Ashe County[2]

2020 Population: 26,863 people
Land Area: 426.14 mi^2

Place

Ashe County lies at the northwestern most point of North Carolina. The north border of the county is part of the state border of North Carolina and Virginia, while the western border forms the boundary of North Carolina and Tennessee. The county is predominantly rural with three incorporated municipalities: Lansing, Jefferson, and West Jefferson.
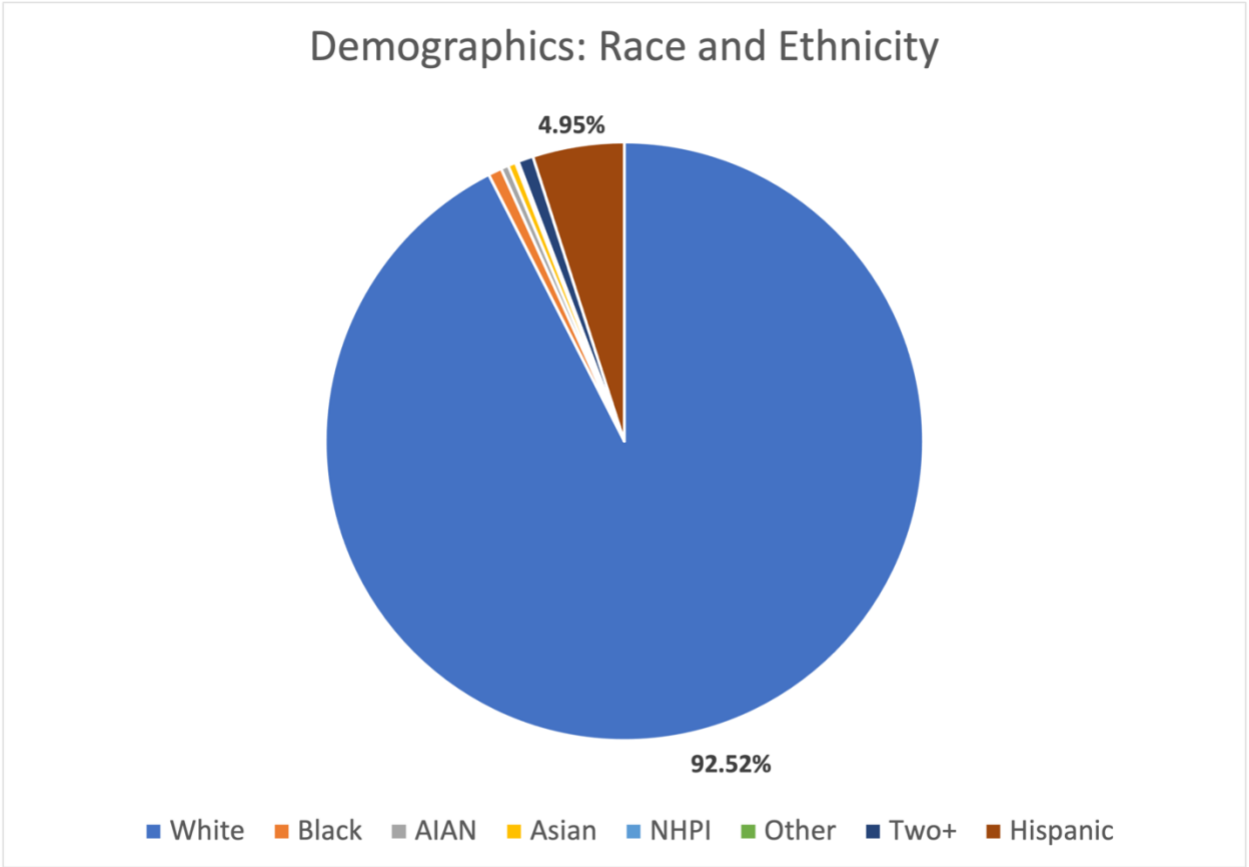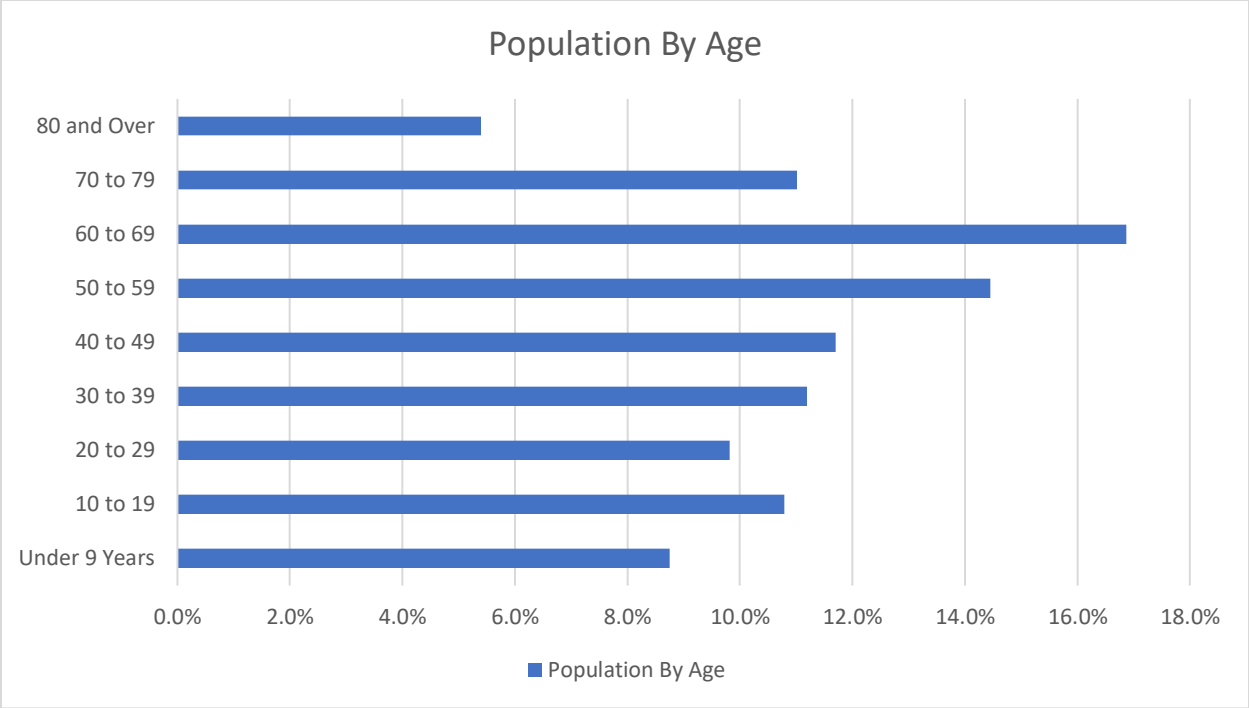
People

Of the 26,577 residents in Ashe County, 202 live in Lansing, 1,441 in Jefferson, and 1,539 in West Jefferson. Overall, the county is 92.5% white with the second largest population group being of Latinx descent at 4.95%. Additionally, the county averages a lower median household income than the state at $40,962.00 versus $54,602.00. More families that fall below the poverty threshold compared to the state average: 16.3% vs 13.6% state-wide. 17.4% of the population in Ashe County is under 18, while 26.6% is over 65.

85.12% of the population has received a high school degree or higher, though only 19.66% of the population has achieved a bachelor's degree or higher. 7.05% of the population has received a post-graduate certificate of some sort. State averages are around 19.98% for bachelor's degree and 11.28% for post-Graduate.

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[2] U.S. Census Bureau (2019). American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.

Population By Age

Demographics: Race and Ethnicity

4.95%

92.52%

White Black AIAN Asian NHPI Other Two+ Hispanic

Employment

Agriculture is the county's largest industry. Christmas trees and greenery accounts for approximately $105 million with livestock and pumpkin production accounting for $12 million and$ 6 million respectively. Large employers in the county are: American Emergency Vehicles, GE Aviation, Ashe Memorial Hospital, Vannoy & Sons Construction, County of Ashe, and the Ashe County Board of Education.

Transportation

The county has no interstate connections. However, US Highway 221 serves as the major corridor through the county. There is a county airport. The average commute to work is about 25 minutes, with most people (75.48%) travelling alone via car. 14.37% of people carpool, while 6.66% work from home (slightly higher than the state average of 5.8%).

Housing

There are 11,938 households in Ashe County, with an average household size of 2.21 people. Most of the houses are occupied by families (63.48%). Overall, there are 17,738 housing units, 67.3% of which are occupied. Of the occupied units, 75.86% are owner occupied, while 24.14% are renter occupied. Almost all the vacant housing units (32.7% of all units) are listed as "other" in the census, as opposed to "for rent" or "for sale". This can indicate that the units are held for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.[3]

The median building year for housing structures is 1982, the majority of which have been single-family households (71.5%). Mobile homes and multi-unit structures take up a fair share of the market as well, with 20.37% of structures being mobile homes and 8.04% of structures being multi-unit. The majority of units do not have a mortgage (58.36%). Many people have moved to the area in recent years, potentially due to the ability to work remotely, enjoy the rural landscape, and due to the comparative value of the homes. In Ashe County, the median home value is $153,200, with 83.42% of the owner-occupied housing units having a value that is below $300,000. The median home value in North Carolina is $172,500. For comparison with the

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[3] https://censusreporter.org/tables/B25004/

Chapel Hill-Durham Metro Area, the median house value is $226,100. Residents appear to remain in place, with 93.89% of residents occupying the same residence as the year prior.

Trends in Land Use

Most commercial and industrial zones are inside of Jefferson, West Jefferson, and Lansing. 221 Corridor more developed. Medium density seems to be most prevalent, with a population density of about 64 people per square mile. Most changes in land use have occurred in municipalities and along the 221-corridor. Jefferson and West Jefferson have active zoning ordinances. Updates to the Ashe County land use plan may include new and revived ideas for land use goals, including continued, concentrated development in downtown areas and along major travel networks. The Blue Ridge Conservancy has preserved 21,000 acres in Ashe County[4] and counties nearby, representing a desire to preserve natural amenities and the quality of rural areas surrounding the municipalities.

Ashe County also maintains a Farmland Preservation Plan, which was commissioned by Ashe County in 2018 and created by the High County Council of Governments. The county is rich in agricultural resources, with 1,140 farms and 41.2% of the total land area of the county committed to farmland. Farms are considered the primary occupation of 46% of the farmers. The Farmland Preservation Plan has been an important document for identifying trends in the farming sector and expectations for future agricultural land use.

Key Concerns

Several issues are of key concern for Ashe County. Ashe County has seen a recent influx in residents, especially during the years 2020 and 2021. The tourism industry is also growing, putting pressure on housing prices and town amenities. Home prices have risen in Ashe County, causing a concern about housing shortages and how new residents will integrate into the communities that are present in Ashe County.

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[4] Ashe County Chamber Guide

Ashe County's last comprehensive update to their land use plan happened in 1999, charting a plan for the next twenty years. Efforts were made to give updates to the plan in 2010 and 2013. Ashe County would primarily like to address the need for an updated plan, which will provide opportunity to examine key concerns more closely as the plan is developed and as Ashe County holds community engagement activities.

Ashe County Vision, Goals, and Policies

Due to public engagement not having been performed yet, the following Goals and Policies are based off information gathered from past land use and comprehensive plans.

Ashe County Vision Statement:

"The Ashe County Land Use Plan is designed to create an environment in which economic development can occur, where agriculture, tourism, industry and business flourish, ensure products and services can be delivered, provide infrastructure for a growing economy, and improve on the quality of life for the citizens of Ashe County." (Ashe County, Land Use Plan 1999, p.23)

We pulled this vision statement from the Ashe County Plan created in 1999. We feel the vision statement is a great foundation. Updates to this vision statement should come after community engagement and workshopping.

(From Plan NC Handbook)

Goals Categories
- Natural Resources and Hazards
- Community Resources and Assets
- Community Development and Housing
- Economic Development
- Public Facilities and Infrastructure
- Future Development Patterns

Development Policy Goal Topics from 2020 plan:

- Housing
- Employment
- Utilities/Infrastructure
- Quality of Life
- Transportation
- US221 Corridor
- Future Growth

Some Recommendations From Previous Plans:

1999 - Ashe County 2020:
- Development of 221 corridor
- Maintain a strong agricultural industry
- Develop trails and parks
- Environmental stewardship
- Extensive ordinance rewrite

2007 Land Use Advisory Board:
- Create a new land use plan for the County that:
- Maintains the rural nature of the county
- Is mindful of future growth
- Forms a transparent process

2013
- Housing
    - Maintain an affordable and balanced housing stock in the County
    - Work With Community Partners: To achieve the County's goals, a level of cooperation will be required among the County and neighboring communities.
- Employment
    - The County must also provide good access to other employment areas.
- Utilities/Infrastructure
    - Look for additional areas in the County that could benefit from improved utility service
- Quality of Life
    - maximize use of federal, state, and local park land
    - Increase recreational opportunities

- Transportation
  - Ensure pedestrian connection between Jefferson and West Jefferson

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Guiding definitions:

For the purposes of this document, we are defining Visions, Goals, and Strategies as:
- Visions: High-level overarching language that gives the community a potential future
  - EX. West Jefferson & Jefferson will be a Multimodal destination
- Goals: An aspect of the larger vision that is integral to its success
  - EX. We will improve pedestrian access in West Jefferson
- Strategies: Techniques for implementation that can be quantified and monitored
  - EX. Two miles of pedestrian specific infrastructure will be developed in West Jefferson city limits

Vision: Outcome: how the community imagines the physical, economic, and social fabric of our city; guides the plan recommendations

Goal: General, direction, process

Strategy: Implementation

Goals and Policies Framework

After performing public engagement, we suggest using the framework below to outline a potential list of identified Goals and Policies

< This will be blank for specific community knowledge to fill in strategies >

Natural Resources and Hazards

- **Vision 1:**
  - **Goal 1.1:**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**
  - **Goal 1.2**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**

Community Resources and Assets

- **Vision 1:**
  - **Goal 1.1:**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**
  - **Goal 1.2**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**

Community Development and Housing

- **Vision 1:**
  - **Goal 1.1:**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**
  - **Goal 1.2**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**

Economic Development

- **Vision 1:**
  - **Goal 1.1:**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**
  - **Goal 1.2**
    - **Strategy: BLANK**

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

- **Vision 1:**
  - **Goal 1.1:**
    - **Strategy: <mark>BLANK</mark>**
  - **Goal 1.2**
    - **Strategy: <mark>BLANK</mark>**

Future Development Patterns

- **Vision 1:**
  - **Goal 1.1:**
    - **Strategy: <mark>BLANK</mark>**
  - **Goal 1.2**
    - **Strategy: <mark>BLANK</mark>**

Ashe County Community Engagement Plan & Survey Questions

For further development of the preliminary goals and policies framework introduced in this document, we have created a general plan with Ashe County to commit to community engagement efforts in the coming months. We offer the following components to aid Ashe County in pursuing their engagement efforts:

➢ Identified goals for community engagement
➢ Specific topics for community input, ie Housing, Regional Connections, Recreation, etc.
➢ Identified Stakeholders
➢ Potential challenges to community engagement
  • Barriers to Participation
➢ Survey Questions for Ashe County

Identified Goals for Community Engagement

Specific Topics for Community Input

Identified Stakeholders

Potential Challenges to Community Engagement

Barriers to Participation

Survey Questions for Ashe County

We have developed some questions for a survey, should Ashe County choose to administer a survey in their communities.

Things we want to find out:

- what physical spaces need to be worked on
- economics
- business districts - how do people interact there and feel there
- public spaces
- agriculture
- sentiments about how Ashe County might be changing

Open Ended:

What are Ashe County's greatest assets?

What is the most enjoyable thing about Ashe County to you?

What are Ashe County's greatest challenges?

On a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree (1 – 5):

How do you feel about the following statements about Ashe County:

"Ashe County provides a good environment to raise a family"

"I feel welcome at town hall meetings"

"I enjoy going to downtown Lansing, Jefferson, and West Jefferson

"I feel a part of my community"

"I feel like Ashe County is changing in ways I am proud of"

Appendix V : Sources and Reference Material

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