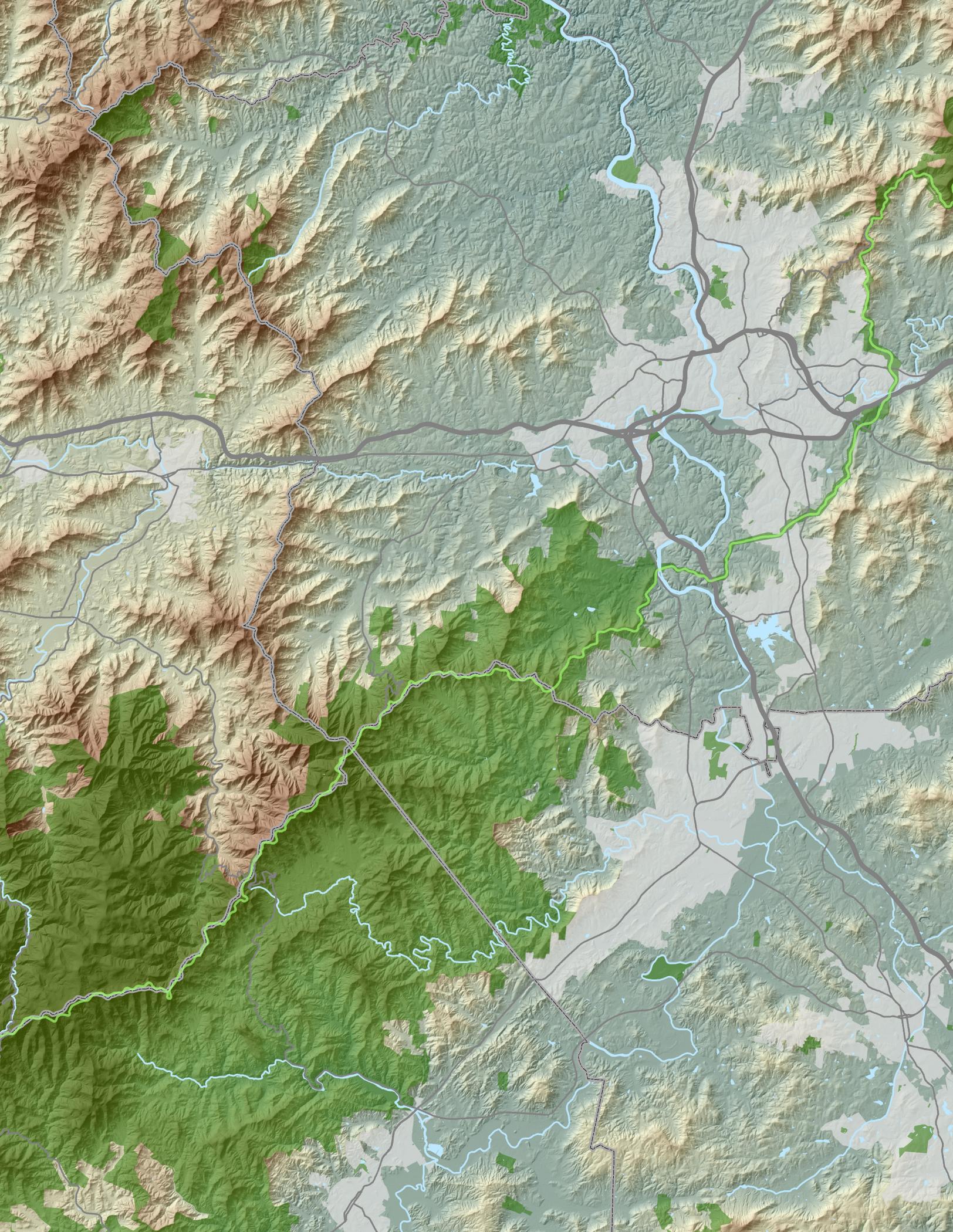


# EXISTING CONDITIONS

REPORT SUMMARY



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31  Transportation

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61  Natural Resources

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Appendix

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and the interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.



# Introduction





# What do we want our community to be in 2040?

This is the question we need to ask ourselves. A growing and changing population, an evolving economy, loss of farmland— all of these factors shape the future of our mountain communities. Through the GroWNC effort we can chart a course and provide a framework to address these challenges to ensure that together we are creating the future we want for ourselves and our children.

GroWNC is Western North Carolina’s “Livable Communities” initiative. The study area is comprised of the following five counties: Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania. Funded by a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Sustainable Communities Initiative, it is a 3-year project to develop a framework of voluntary, locally-implemented, market-based solutions and strategies.

A Consortium of local governments, non-profit organizations, and businesses seek significant input from residents of the region, gather existing and historical data, and synthesize it to create a vision of the future. GroWNC allows local governments, businesses, non-profits, citizens, and others to realize unprecedented regional coordination on jobs, energy, housing, transportation, resources, and other interconnected issues. This fosters more prosperous, livable communities in our region through new quality jobs, new investment, diverse economic development strategies, energy

and financial savings, and carbon emission reductions. Together, we draw on existing plans and strategies to develop a plan to foster economic prosperity through a regional vision.

In addition, workgroups for each topic area shown in the table below convene to review existing data, plans and strategies; identify challenges and opportunities; integrate public input into their findings; formulate a set of common goals and objectives that can be attained by working together; and identify implementable projects and actions.

This report takes each topic area and summarizes the existing conditions in the five-county area to better understand today’s issues and tomorrow’s opportunities. By doing so, those involved in the process are better equipped to determine which opportunities regarding future growth and development benefit the region and maximize opportunities in each community.

## GROWNC WORKGROUP TOPIC AREAS







# Our Issues & Opportunities

FOR OUR REGION TO THRIVE, we must address the issues and opportunities facing the communities within our five-county study area. We recognize that each community is unique and has their own set of challenges however, there are some common themes that tie us together. Respecting our differences while working together to identify a set of voluntary, locally-implementable, market-based solutions will ensure we are working together to create our future.

The following is an overview of the issues and opportunities, supported by topic-specific information summarized in the next section.

## Growth

During the last 30 years the landscape of Western North Carolina has changed from a largely rural, agricultural area to a growing network of urban centers, suburban developments and small towns. From 1970 to 2010 the total population of the five counties grew by nearly 74%.

Over the next thirty years, individuals, families and employers will continue to choose Western North Carolina for their homes, vacation destinations and businesses. By 2040, we project our population will increase to more than 630,000, a 38% increase from today. A significant portion of this growth will be our own children and grandchildren in addition to some newcomers including retirees, artists and green economy entrepreneurs.

As we plan for this growing population it's up to us to ensure that this growth respects our traditions, preserves our quality of life and provides for our economic well-being.

Tailgate Market, photo courtesy of Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP).



# NEW BELGIUM second brewery location checklist:

- Integration of work and life
- Strong community
- Respect for the environment
- Full of culture
- A love of beer
- A love of bikes
- Asheville, NC

**Thanks for welcoming  
us to your PERFECTLY  
MATCHED CITY!**



\* Plant this wildflower seed paper under a thin layer of soil in a sunny spot. Water the soil thoroughly and soon your wildflower seedlings will be...

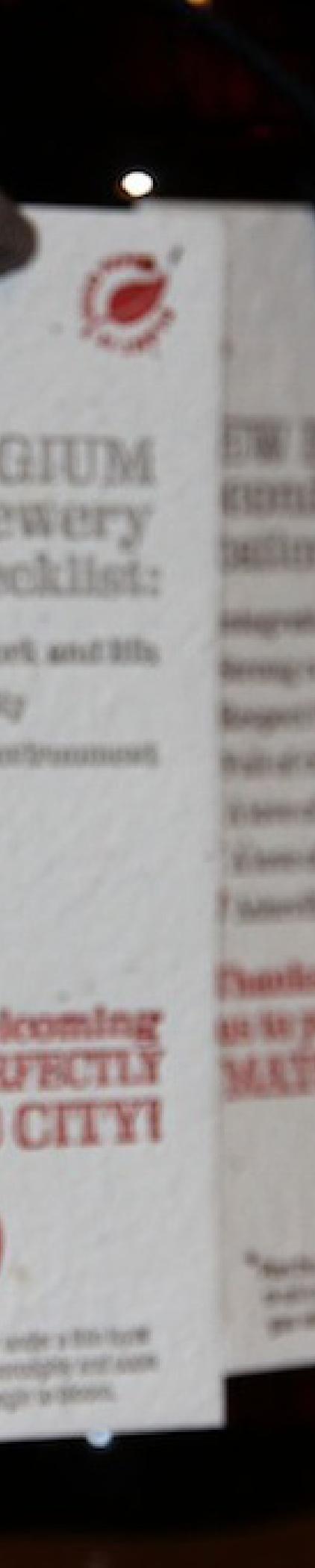
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## Our Economy

The historic development of our region's economy is closely tied to the land. For generations, the mountains, rivers and farms of Western North Carolina provided jobs for its people. The fertile soils of the river valleys were home to Mississippian and then Cherokee villages. The fur industry led European traders and trappers to Appalachia. Scots-Irish ranchers, then farmers followed. Railroads completed in the late 19th century began an era of industrial logging. Mills and factories followed, sprouting up along the region's waterways. Over time this continually evolving economy developed an extremely industrious and self-sufficient workforce.

In addition to the working lands, tourism has long been a mainstay of the region's economy, "Flat Rock, Lake Toxaway, Brevard, Black Mountain and other mountain towns were early destinations for those seeking to experience summer respites..." Visitors have long been drawn up the peaks of the Appalachians and to the banks of the French Broad River.

Today, the region continues to depend on the natural areas to serve as the backbone of the agriculture, manufacturing and tourism industry. Farmers, speciality manufacturers including brewers and energy producers and creative economy entrepreneurs such as artists and crafters continually seek inspiration and source quality materials from the region's natural assets.

To thrive economically, the region must continue to be a place where talented people—and their businesses— want to be. This includes not only preserving the high quality of life in the region but providing for the critical infrastructure needed by businesses to succeed including an efficient transportation network, cost-effective energy solutions and a trained workforce.

Economic opportunity will continue if we can work together to ensure that as conditions change we rise to meet the needs of our entrepreneurs, existing businesses and target industries.

The GroWNC region is fast becoming one of the most attractive markets for craft breweries. Photo courtesy of New Belgium Breweries.



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## Our Infrastructure

Our system of infrastructure—the roads we drive on, the pipes that deliver our drinking water, the electricity and gas that warms our homes— provides the critical services necessary for the well being of our residents, the success of our businesses and the safety of our communities. Ensuring this system is operational and responsive to our needs remains a top priority as the region grows.

In addition, our region is unique in that we are working to establish a system of infrastructure that supports alternative energy production. Growth in our alternative energy sector outpaces the nation. There was positive employment growth in renewable energy from 2005 to 2009 while employment growth across all industries declined. This growth represents an opportunity for more jobs, lower energy costs and less dependence on outside resources.

However, the ability to build, maintain and expand these systems of infrastructure are costly and resource intensive. Many of our communities do not even have basic broadband access. In addition, the topography, geology, and hydrology of the mountains combine to dramatically increase the cost of building and maintaining infrastructure in our region. For example, NCDOT planning level estimates assume transportation construction costs in the Piedmont are 15% higher than in the Coastal Region; equivalent costs in the Mountains are 100% to 150% higher.

As we continue to grow, we must work to must ensure we have a well-balanced system of infrastructure in place that serves our residents, supports our communities, and attracts new businesses to ensure our region is both economically and environmentally resilient.

Critical infrastructure systems, like rail facilities, must be maintained and improved in order to remain an attractive location for employers.

Photo source: FLICKR, Mike Robbins





## Our Traditions

When asked about what makes our region special, many people point to our mountain peaks, our trout streams and our stunning views. While our natural assets are unparalleled it is also our traditions, the culture of our people, that set us apart. For generations the mountains isolated us from other communities. However, from this isolation grew a resilient and self-sufficient spirit, a unique and thriving culture. It began on the family farm, which not only provided the food necessary for survival but also the setting for the development of an independent and industrious culture.

In addition, the diversity and traditions of our ancestors including the Cherokee and the Scots-Irish, infused our daily routines with unique crafts, skills, pastimes and nuances. Our long history of clogging, bluegrass, pottery and crafting has developed into an industry that today generates over \$206 million in annual economic impact in Western North Carolina (Center for Craft, Creativity & Design).

These traditions foster a community and cultivate a culture that sets the region apart and continues to draw the creative class, entrepreneurs and artists to the mountains. In addition to new residents, cultural tourism, travel to experience the arts, heritage and special character of place, has seen great growth in the past years. According to Preservation NC, "tourism is now the second largest industry in North Carolina with employment of 161,000 people and \$2.5 billion in annual payroll."

However, unchecked growth threatens some of our most valued traditions. For example, the family farm is slowly disappearing. In 1950 about 50% of the land in our region was being farmed. As of 2007, only 16% is actively being used for agriculture. In addition, the average age of farmers in the five-county region is 58. An aging workforce and the development of critical agriculture lands threaten both the culture and economy of our region.

Preservation of our lands, teaching of our customs and championing of our arts will ensure our culture continues to grow and thrive and that the mountain region continue to be a place valued for both its natural and cultural assets.

The average age of farmers in the WNC region is 58. Encouraging newer generations that farming is a viable and vital component to the region's economy and culture is critical to ensuring the region's traditions. Photo courtesy of Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP).

Launch of GroWNC Website  
[www.Gro-WNC.org](http://www.Gro-WNC.org)

Workgroup Launch  
AB Tech Enka Campus



Election of Steering  
Committee Members



Steering  
Committee  
Meeting

Community Meeting  
Buncombe County



Community Meeting  
Haywood County



JANUARY 2012

FEBRUARY 2012

MARCH 2012

APRIL 2012



Workgroup Session I  
Land-of-Sky Regional Council



Community Meeting  
Henderson County



Community Meeting  
Madison County



Community Meeting  
Transylvania County

Steering Committee Meeting



Launch of Community Road Trip "Portable Meetings"

Workgroup Session II, NC Arboretum



Steering Committee Meeting



MAY 2012

JUNE 2012

JULY 2012

AUGUST 2012

# Our Issues & Opportunities

GroWNC brings together a diverse Consortium of local governments, non-profit organizations, and businesses working together with the project team to plan for the future of the region. We are currently mid-way through the planning portion of the three-year grant. The time line above represents the key public engagement events that have occurred to date.

This report takes each topic area and summarizes the existing conditions in the five-county area to better understand today's issues and tomorrow's opportunities. By doing so, those involved in the process are better equipped to determine which opportunities regarding future growth and development benefit the region and maximize opportunities in each community.

A complete existing conditions report can be found on the GroWNC website at [www.gro-wnc.org](http://www.gro-wnc.org).

A photograph of a cleanroom environment. In the foreground, a person wearing a white lab coat, a white hairnet, and safety glasses is leaning over a white tray, wearing grey gloves. In the background, another person in a white lab coat and hairnet is working at a station. The room has white walls, blue and red cables, and cardboard boxes. The text "Economic Development" is overlaid in white.

# Economic Development



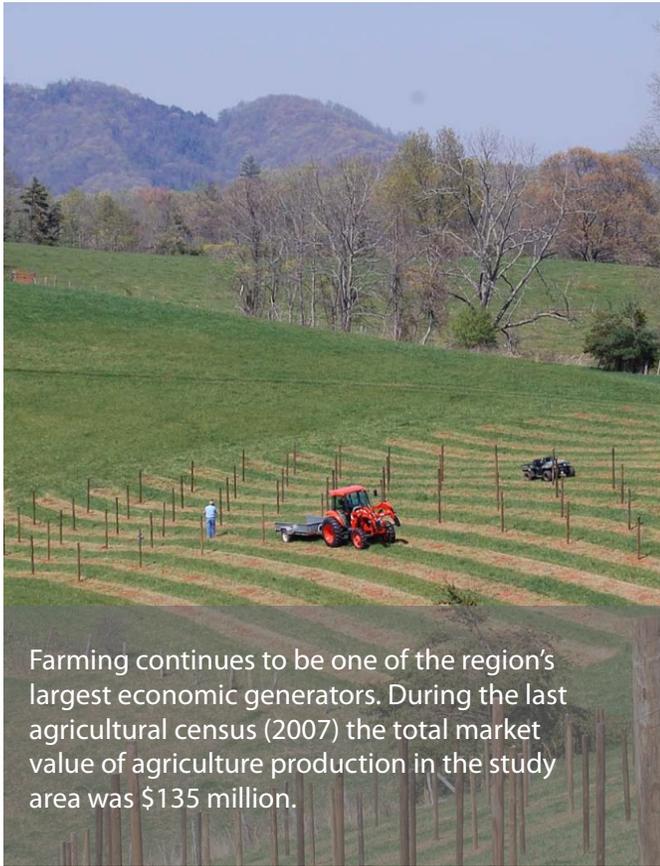
DO NOT STACK ABOVE  
PER PALLET, 1 PALLET

# Together we create our future

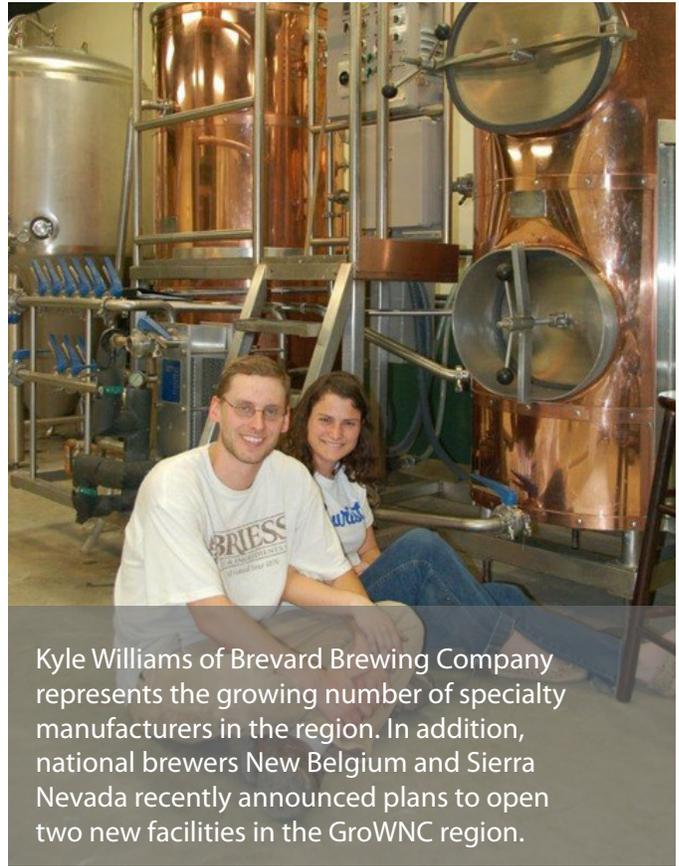
High quality, living wage jobs.

Resilient and diversified economy.

Infrastructure system that supports  
existing and attracts new businesses.



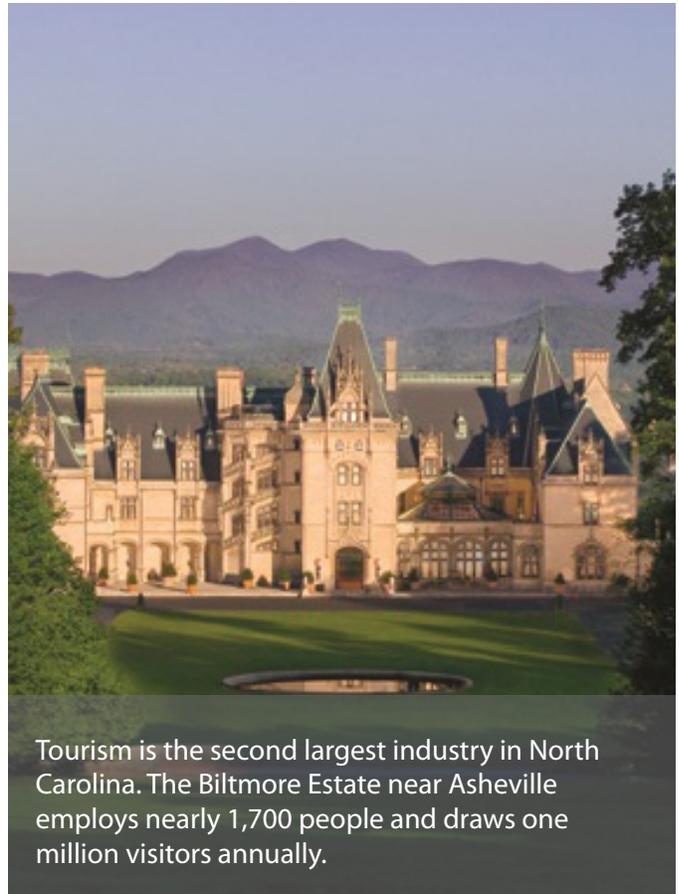
Farming continues to be one of the region's largest economic generators. During the last agricultural census (2007) the total market value of agriculture production in the study area was \$135 million.



Kyle Williams of Brevard Brewing Company represents the growing number of specialty manufacturers in the region. In addition, national brewers New Belgium and Sierra Nevada recently announced plans to open two new facilities in the GroWNC region.



Businesses like Sundance Power in Weaverville are growing. Most all of the GroWNC counties indicate alternative energy as an emerging target industry cluster.



Tourism is the second largest industry in North Carolina. The Biltmore Estate near Asheville employs nearly 1,700 people and draws one million visitors annually.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): Addison Farms Vineyards, Brevard Brewing Company, Sundance Power, The Biltmore Company



# Economic Development

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKGROUP GOALS

Promote adaptive economic development that encourages entrepreneurship, supports existing businesses, and attracts new employers.

Support an economic development approach that enables a diversified economy built on the region's priorities, competitive advantages, and local initiatives.

Create and maintain appropriate physical infrastructure needed for economic development opportunities in each county.

Create a region where every individual has the opportunity to improve their employment status through affordable access to timely and relevant skills training and job placement assistance.

Support opportunities and jobs that attract and keep our young people in the region.

From entrepreneurs to agribusiness operations and high-tech manufacturers, the region's strength lies in the ability to support knowledge-based businesses of any size and sector. Craft brewers, clean energy companies, nutraceutical operations and recreational goods manufacturers all find a place to grow and thrive in the five counties.

An innovative, entrepreneurial and creative workforce drives our diverse economy. A rich culture, unparalleled natural amenities, traditional and holistic health care options and an accessible community college and university system foster productivity in our five counties and contribute to a highly desirable place to live, work

and grow.

The historic development of the region's economy is closely tied to the land. For generations, the mountains, rivers and farms of Western North Carolina provided jobs for its people. Over time this continually evolving economy developed an extremely industrious and self-sufficient workforce.

Today, the region has a strong employment base of over 220,000 in the labor force. Unemployment in the five counties has ranged between a low of 8.4% in 2009 to a high of 10.2% in 2010. Currently the unemployment rate is just under nine percent at 8.7%.

COUNTY	YEAR	LABOR FORCE	UNEMPLOYED	RATE
BUNCOMBE	2012	127,664	117,071	8.3%
HAYWOOD	2012	29,434	2,988	10.2%
HENDERSON	2012	51,634	4,112	8.0%
MADISON	2012	10,379	1,106	10.7%
TRANSYLVANIA	2012	12,487	1,413	11.3%
GROWNC REGION	2012	231,598	20,212	8.7%

Figure 1: Size of Workforce and Unemployment Rates

COUNTY	MEDIAN HH INCOME		PER CAPITA INCOME	
	2010	2015	2010	2015
BUNCOMBE	\$46,724	\$53,972	\$24,734	\$27,750
HAYWOOD	\$41,824	\$47,943	\$22,068	\$24,267
HENDERSON	\$48,179	\$55,246	\$25,455	\$28,217
MADISON	\$37,492	\$42,889	\$19,466	\$21,592
TRANSYLVANIA	\$49,512	\$55,171	\$25,015	\$27,712
GROWNC REGION	\$46,141	\$53,252	\$24,338	\$27,058

Figure 2: Median and Per Capita Income

As detailed in Figure 1 the current unemployment rates for the counties within the region vary. Buncombe and Henderson have lower unemployment rates (range: 8.0%-10.0%). Haywood, Madison and Transylvania are several points behind with unemployment ranging from 10.1% to 12.6%. However, the region has held its own in terms of unemployment relative to the rest of North Carolina and the US. In each of the last 4 years the region has had a lower unemployment rate than the state and country generally staying one-tenth of a point below the US average and one-to-two points below that of the State.

Median household income and per capita income in each of the counties, as well as the region as a whole, fall short of the figures for the state of North Carolina. Transylvania County's median household income is the highest of the region counties and only \$1,300 less than the median for North Carolina. Madison County has the lowest median household income in 2010 with \$37,500, nearly \$15,000 below the State median. Figure 2 illustrates the median per capita income for study area.

The key to unlocking economic prosperity in the region is matching industries that have the most potential for growth (local specialization, adding jobs, and gaining market share) with what makes most sense given local resources and community values.

By focusing on the region's assets and best opportunities for growth, the region can maximize local opportunities within each of the following target sectors.

### Target Industries in the GroWNC Region

**Advanced Manufacturing.** Metal products and machinery operations have a long history of success in the mountains and continue to locate here because of the skilled workforce and efficient transportation system. New entrants such as recreational products, energy components and nutraceutical manufacturers, find operational efficiencies by being able to source and test products locally.

**Agribusiness and Forestry Operations.** Agriculture continues to be a mainstay of the region's economy. Fueled by demand for natural products and the local food movement, operations such as craft brewers and bio-fuel growers continue to find markets both locally and for export. In addition, innovative partnerships such as Blue Ridge Food Ventures support specialty producers in niche markets.

**Tourism and Outdoor Recreation.** For generations, tourism has fueled the region's economy. Visitors have long been drawn to the peaks of the Appalachians and the banks of the French Broad. People will continue to visit the region, spend money in shops and restaurants and experience numerous natural and cultural assets.

**Health Care.** The region continues to be a destination for retirees and second home owners. As this population ages more health care facilities are needed to meet the growing demand.

# Housing



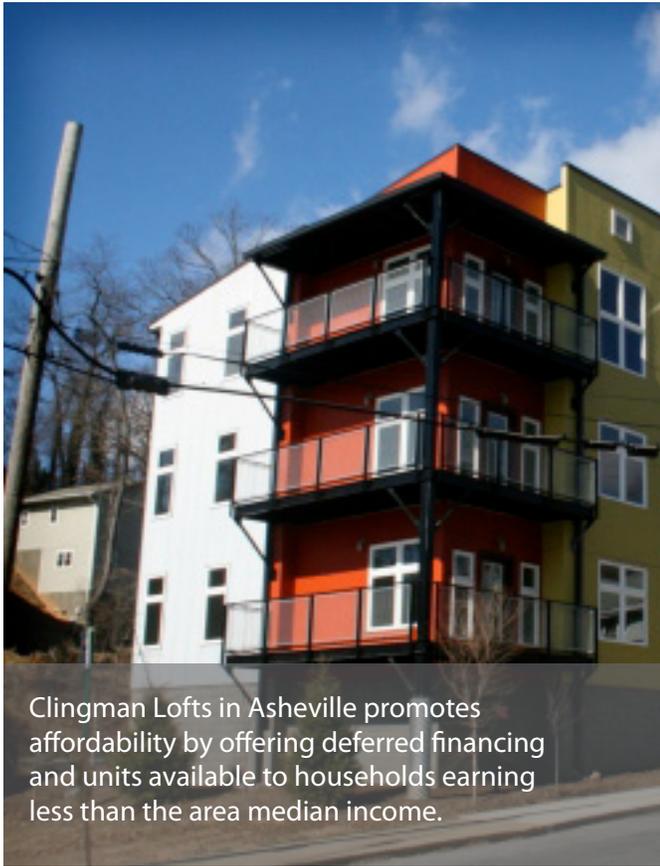


# Together we create our future

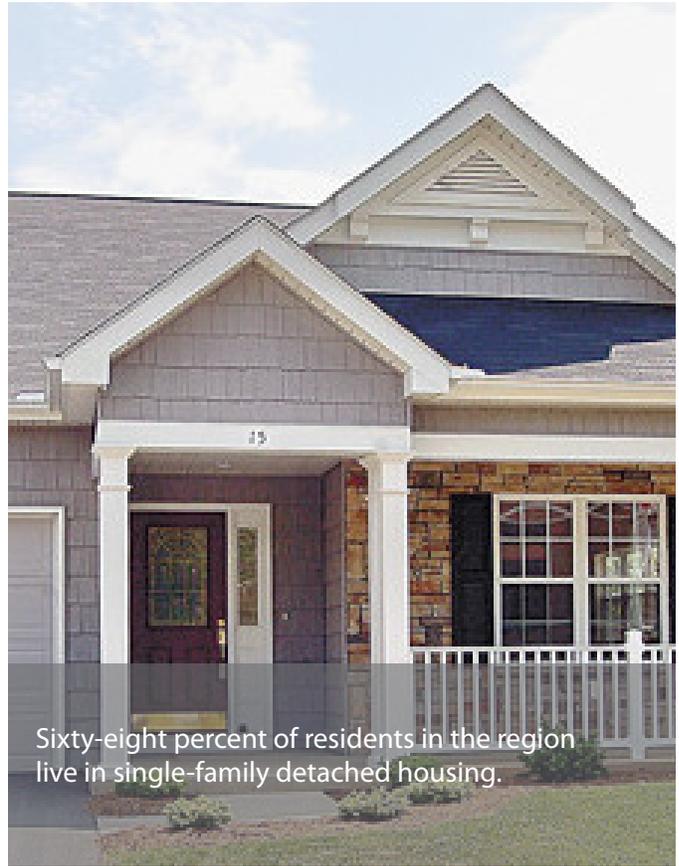
Affordable rural, suburban and  
urban housing options

Safe, sanitary and energy efficient housing

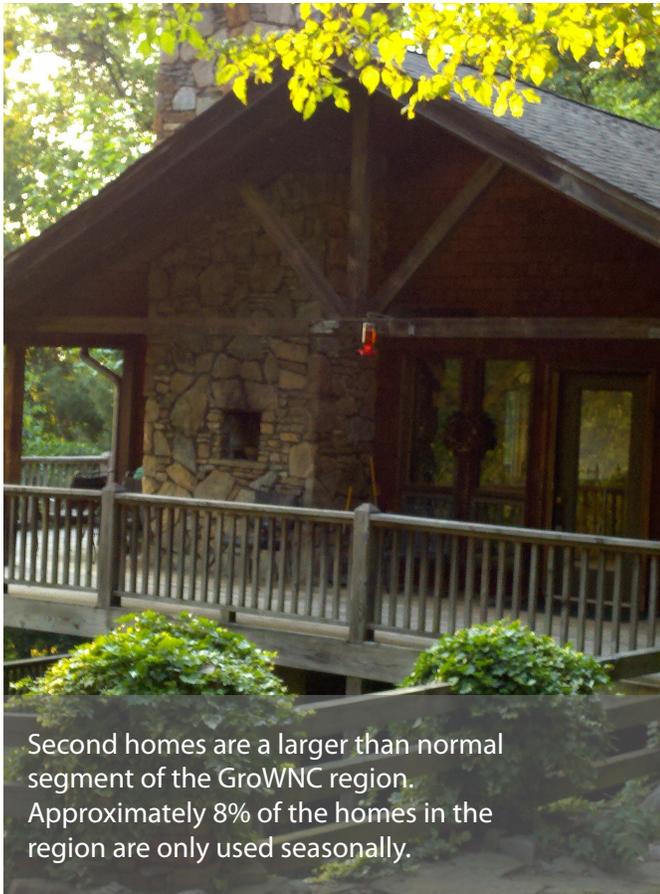
Capacity for new housing and renovation  
of existing homes



Clingman Lofts in Asheville promotes affordability by offering deferred financing and units available to households earning less than the area median income.



Sixty-eight percent of residents in the region live in single-family detached housing.



Second homes are a larger than normal segment of the GroWNC region. Approximately 8% of the homes in the region are only used seasonally.



Large lot homes and family farmsteads are the most common housing type in the rural portions of the region.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): Modern Asheville, Henderson Homes for Sale, Miller Cochran



## HOUSING WORKGROUP GOALS

Promote the development of a variety of housing options that are appropriately priced for persons of all income levels.

Increase the supply of new and existing housing stock that is safe, sanitary, energy efficient and accessible to elderly and persons with disabilities.

Encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing within proximity to employment, transportation, services, goods and recreation.

Recognize the unique needs and differences of rural and urban communities and tailor housing accordingly.

Promote legislation at the Federal, State and Local levels that support other identified housing goals.

# Housing

By 2040, the GroWNC region will be home to over 630,000 people—nearly 40% more people than live in the area today. This translates to a need for almost 75,000 additional housing units dispersed throughout the five counties.

As noted in Figure 3 the majority of this growth will be in Buncombe and Henderson counties with a smaller percentage of the new housing development in Haywood, Transylvania and Madison counties.

With this growth comes a variety of challenges and opportunities. How can the region grow responsibly, in a manner that respects existing communities and the landscape, provides opportunities for a range of options while improving affordability?

In addition to growth-related challenges housing development in the mountains faces unique hurdles. Flat land is a dwindling resource. In many cases the ideal land for housing development is the same land that is in active agriculture use. Farms and forests are highly valued in the region for their contribution to the economy, the scenic landscapes, the health and wellness

of the region's residents (human, animal, plant) and the history and culture of the region. A housing solution must balance the need to sustain the region's agriculture lands with the need to house existing and future populations.

At the other extreme is the development of housing on steep slopes. In some areas steep slopes are all that is available for development. However, residents of the five counties continually note the importance of preserving ridge lines and scenic view sheds from development. Future housing development must employ innovative practices to ensure a housing product that is safe and resilient to natural hazards such as landslides, while protecting the integrity of the landscape.

Western North Carolina also attracts a robust second home/resort community. While there are no definitive statistics provided in terms of seasonal household data, there are an estimated 16,000 vacation homes that are only used seasonally (8% of total housing supply). This market is important to the economy. However, it has pulled resources away from the

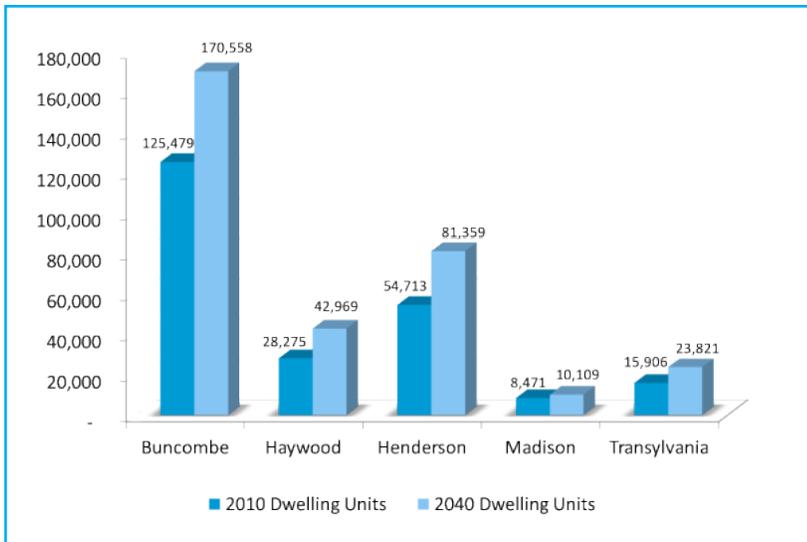


Figure 3: Housing Unit Forecast 2040

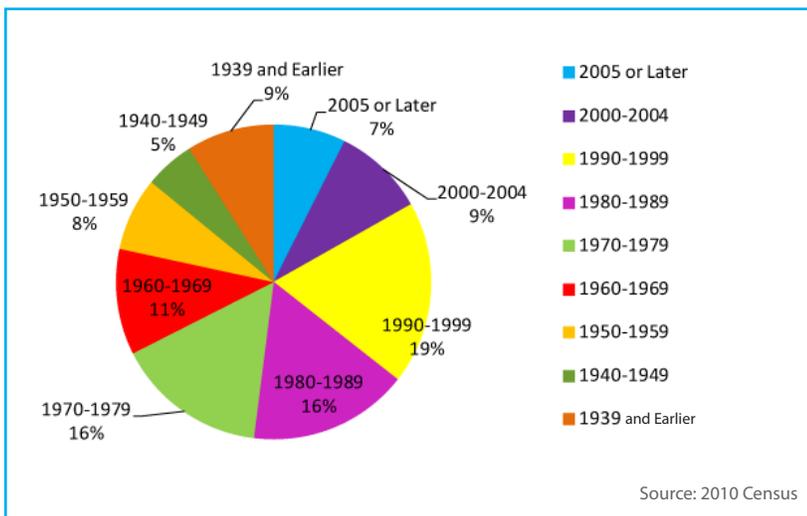


Figure 4: Current Age of Housing Structures

development and construction of primary residents, particularly those at lower price points which are more challenging to build profitably due to the unique constraints of the mountain region.

All of these factors result in higher construction costs and home price points. The effect is two-fold. First, production builders, those companies that specialize in the

mass production of housing, are less likely to develop in the mountains because of lower profit margins. This compounds the affordability issue. Without production builders there is less supply of housing available at lower price points. The housing that is available is usually older homes that are less energy efficient or alternatives to traditional single-family homes such as mobile homes. As noted in the graphs,

these findings are consistent with the existing supply of housing in the GroWNC region.

For this effort we define affordability as a household being able to spend 30% or less of their income on housing. Housing includes the cost of the home and utilities. Per the 2010 Census, this region has approximately 17,000 households that are unable to find housing at less than 30% of their income—that is nearly 10% of the region’s population.

Not surprisingly the majority of the shortfalls in supply are at the lower incomes levels, those making less than \$20,000/year. There are also shortages of higher end rental units. While these households are able to rent at a lower priced unit, the supply shortage indicates market potential for households making at around \$75,000/year.

The tables on the following page provide a detailed breakdown of both the affordable rental and owner occupied housing supply in the GroWNC region.

In addition to housing affordability, homelessness is an ongoing issue in the GroWNC region. The problem is most visible and addressed in Buncombe County, where in a given year, it is estimated that around 2000 people will experience homelessness at some point. The extent of homelessness in other counties is only available as estimates- with each county reporting numbers ranging from 30-100 homeless residents. The best estimate for the region would

## AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING SUPPLY

### HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME LEVEL

	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	TOTALS
BUNCOMBE	9019	2850	9622	5152	5119	31762
HAYWOOD	1895	368	1893	963	1043	6162
HENDERSON	3619	767	3508	1059	1268	10221
MADISON	747	181	335	198	197	1658
TRANSYLVANIA	1387	231	748	402	291	3059
TOTAL	1667	4397	16106	7774	7918	52862
AFFORDABLE RENT	\$244	\$339	\$688	\$1032	\$1600	

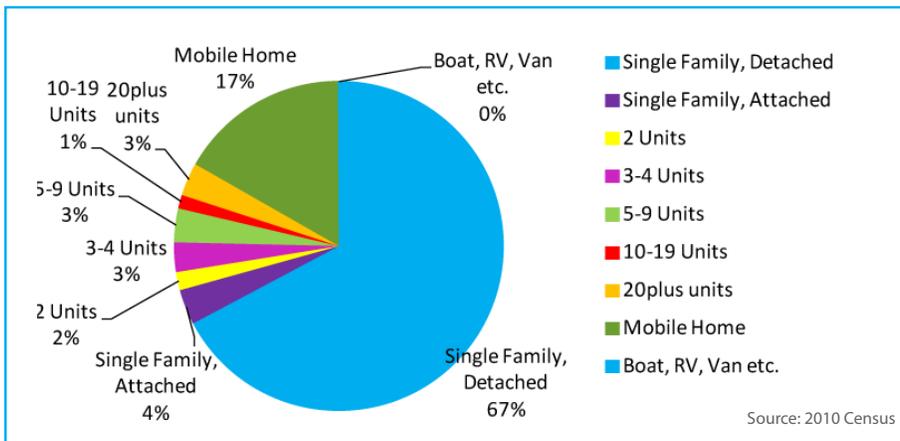
### UNITS AFFORDABLE BY INCOME LEVELS

	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	TOTALS
BUNCOMBE	3494	1375	13530	9095	2779	30273
HAYWOOD	480	206	3607	914	199	5406
HENDERSON	608	895	6148	1207	376	9234
MADISON	234	111	733	71	44	1193
TRANSYLVANIA	259	335	1520	315	32	2461

### UNIT SHORTAGE BY INCOME LEVEL

	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	TOTALS
BUNCOMBE	-5525	-1475	3908	3943	-2340	-1489
HAYWOOD	-1415	-162	1714	-49	-844	-756
HENDERSON	-3011	128	2640	148	-892	-987
MADISON	-513	-70	398	-127	-153	-465
TRANSYLVANIA	-1128	104	772	-87	-259	-598
TOTAL	-11592	-1475	9432	3828	-4488	-4295

Figure 5: Current Types of Housing Structures



## AFFORDABLE OWNER OCCUPIED SUPPLY

### HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME LEVEL

	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	TOTALS
BUNCOMBE	5951	2291	11320	12665	15184	47411
HAYWOOD	2167	1126	3986	3402	4081	14762
HENDERSON	3650	1807	5246	5246	8117	24066
MADISON	980	457	1146	978	1440	5001
TRANSYLVANIA	1476	528	2184	1905	2060	8153
TOTAL	14224	6209	23882	24196	30882	99393
AFFORDABLE RENT	\$37500	\$57500	\$130000	\$205000	\$325000	

### UNITS AFFORDABLE BY INCOME LEVELS

	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	TOTALS
BUNCOMBE	5027	2260	11149	17845	15444	51725
HAYWOOD	2106	945	4342	4838	3971	16202
HENDERSON	2462	1036	5902	9409	8717	27526
MADISON	875	402	1422	1120	1167	4986
TRANSYLVANIA	790	645	2081	2741	2202	8459

### UNIT SHORTAGE BY INCOME LEVEL

	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	TOTALS
BUNCOMBE	-924	-31	-171	5180	-260	3794
HAYWOOD	-61	-181	356	1436	110	1660
HENDERSON	-1188	-771	656	4163	-600	2260
MADISON	-105	-55	276	142	273	531
TRANSYLVANIA	-686	117	-103	836	-142	22
TOTAL	-2964	-921	1014	11757	-619	8267

be a range of between 650 to 950 citizens homeless at any given time.

The chart shows that there are major shortages of housing for those with incomes below \$20,000. These represent rental rates under \$339 a month that the market is simply unable to provide and still maintain even a small profit. There are also shortages of higher

end rental units; however these households are able to rent a lower priced unit. The market is increasingly catering to higher income renters and finding a ready market for higher end product that ultimately is more profitable for new development. Lower rent properties are generally either subsidized or older properties that become increasingly expensive to maintain.

As expected the shortages fall at the lower income levels. Homes at these price ranges are generally resale and likely in poor or dated condition and in need of renovation. New construction homes in these price ranges can not be built without subsidy using normal plans and methods. The shortages are less numerous than the shortages of rental housing.

# Transportation

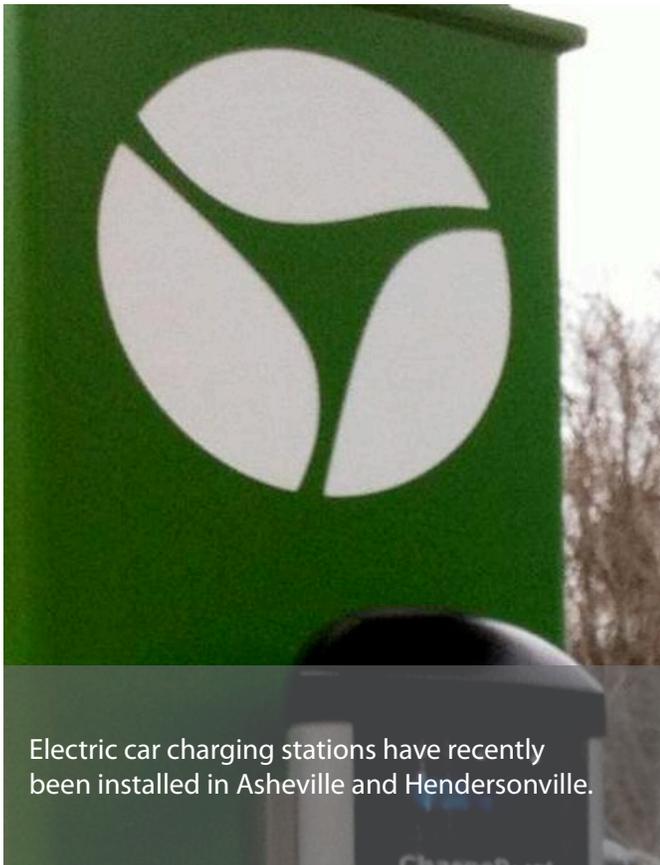




# Together we create our future

Affordable rural, suburban and urban  
transportation options

Safe, connected bicycle and  
pedestrian linkages



Electric car charging stations have recently been installed in Asheville and Hendersonville.



During the community meetings held in May 2012, a majority of the feedback indicated a need for more pedestrian and bike infrastructure.



Over 90% of WNC imports arrive from southern ports. The region's economy relies heavily on I-26 and other critical routes for the movement of goods to and from the five counties.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): Evolve Energy Partnership, Asheville Citizen Times



# Transportation

## TRANSPORTATION WORKGROUP GOALS

- Optimize infrastructure management.
- Provide for non-motorized transportation options.
- Provide for efficient and safe freight movement.
- Diversify energy portfolio, increase energy efficiency.
- Integrate transportation with land use.
- Increase transportation choices.
- Promote transit.
- Identify and implement tools to promote an efficient transportation system.

The transportation system serving the GroWNC study area has been (and will continue to be) greatly influenced by the region's geographic features/topography, especially the mountainous terrain. Historically, settlements developed along rivers and in the relatively flat valleys they created. Travel routes also located in these corridors, both to serve individual settlements, and to connect distant destinations.

While the population grew over time, the amount of relatively flat land did not. Farmland, homes, and business establishments, as well as roads and rail lines, often competed for the same limited supply of relatively flat land in the larger river valleys. Scattered development farther up in the mountains was served by steep, narrow, winding roads that climbed out of the valleys, sometimes threading their way over a pass to the next valley, but more often returning to the same valley, or simply ending somewhere on the mountainside. This pattern continued over time, and is evident today.

Topography, geology, and hydrology combine to dramatically

increase the cost of building and maintaining transportation infrastructure in western North Carolina, relative to costs for similar facilities in eastern regions. For example, NDOT planning level estimates assume construction costs in the Piedmont are 15% higher than in the Coastal Region; equivalent costs in the Mountains are 100% to 150% higher.

Given the relatively high costs of building and maintaining additional roadway capacity in western North Carolina, strategies to actively manage congestion and reduce the demand for car and truck travel appear to be more economically attractive and sustainable here than in other metropolitan areas with fewer topographic constraints. The combination of rising costs and diminishing benefits are making major highway construction programs more difficult to justify.

Basically, all the easiest roads have been built; further expansion of the roadway network will become more expensive and disruptive. There are usually good reasons why a "needed" road hasn't been built at a particular location.

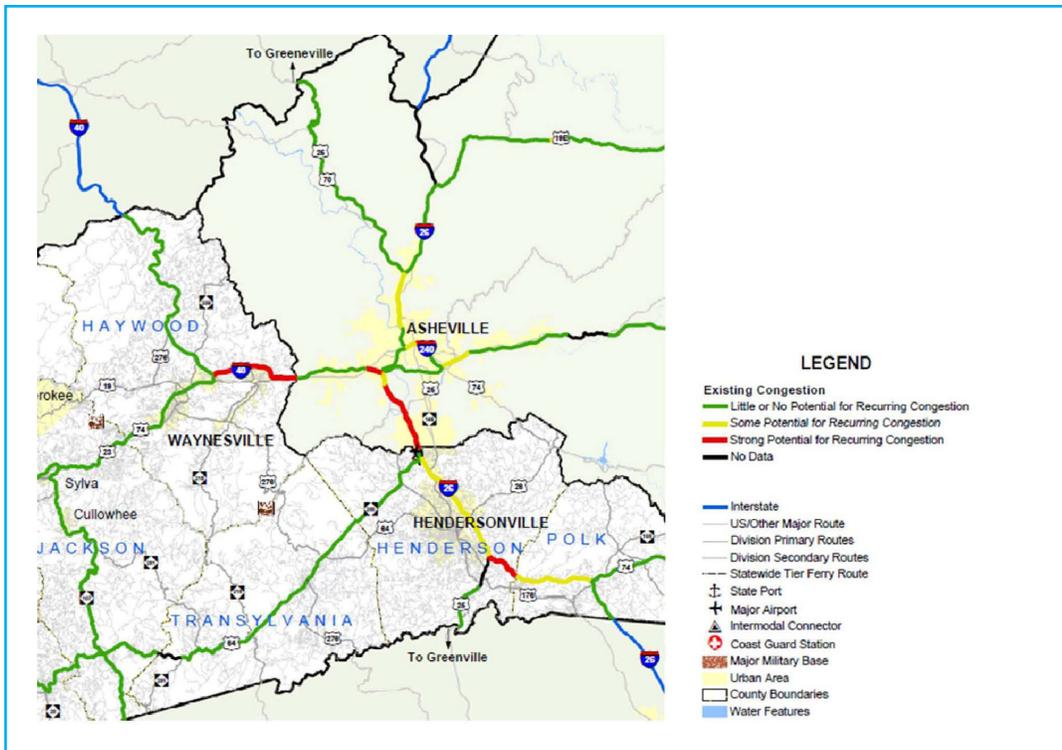


Figure 6: NCDOT Western North Carolina Highway Congestion, 2008

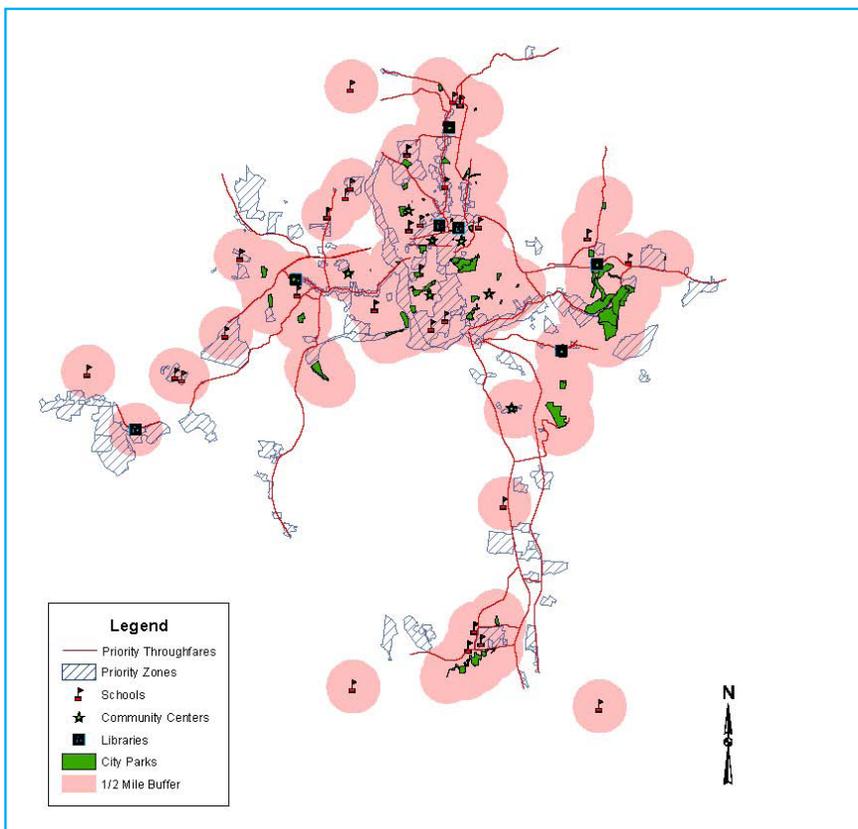


Figure 7: City of Asheville, Pedestrian Access Priority Areas, Pedestrian Plan 2005

Transportation in the mountains is not limited to a discussion of the road network. The complete network includes transit, rail, pedestrian, bicycle, air facilities.

### TRANSIT

Currently there are only two fixed route transit systems in the GroWNC region. Asheville Transit provides service to the greater Asheville area and to the Asheville Regional Airport. Apple Country Transit operates fixed-route service in the Hendersonville area with one route which connects to the Asheville Regional Airport. In addition, each of the five counties in the GroWNC region has their own county-wide transit agency which provides demand-responsive services throughout the individual county (and some out of county trips for medical purposes).

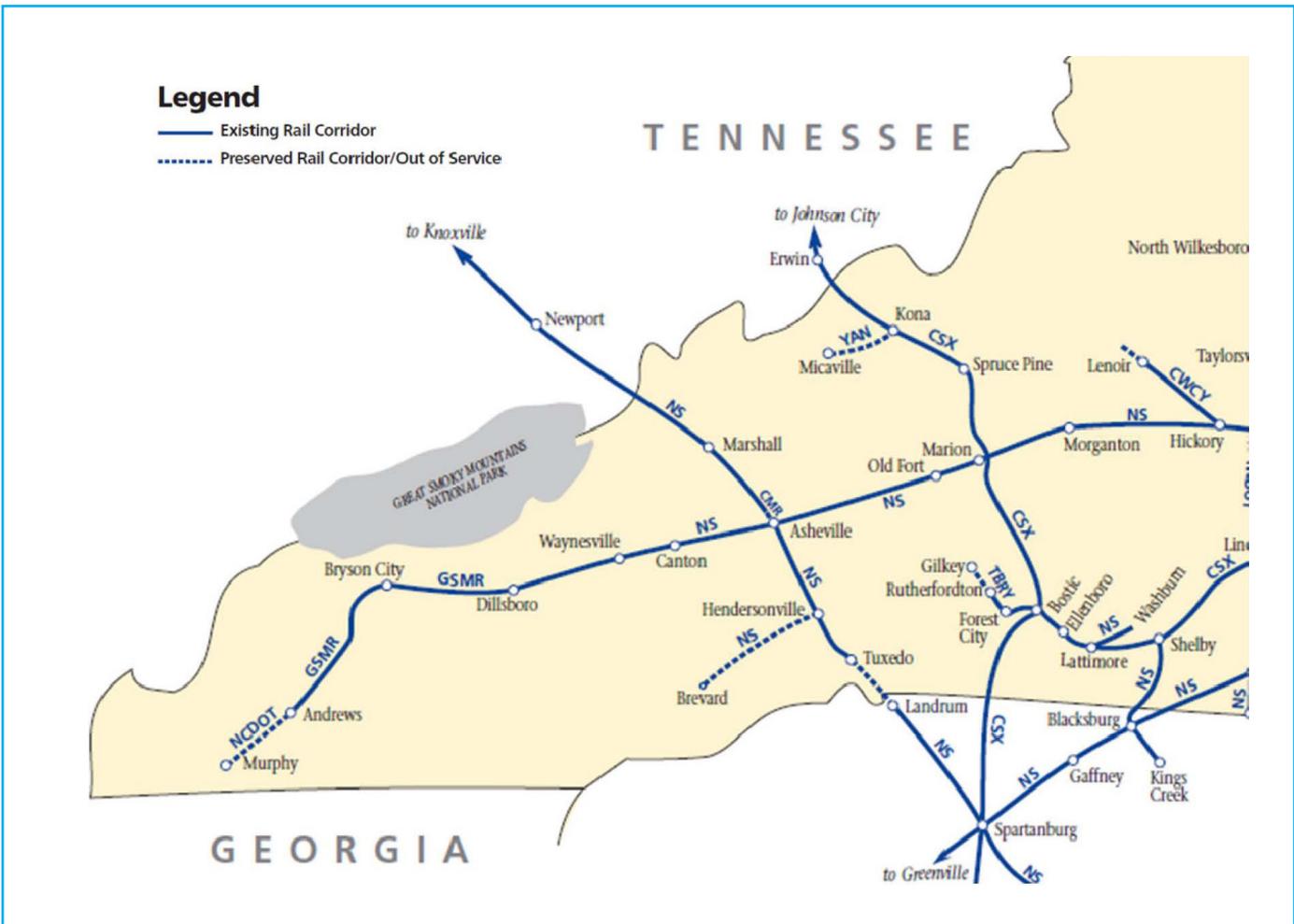


Figure 8: Western North Carolina Rail Network

**RAIL**  
 Currently train transportation in the GroWNC study area is limited to freight service on four Norfolk Southern rail lines that converge in Asheville. The principal commodity carried is coal. However, NCDOT has adopted an incremental approach for ultimately extending rail service from Salisbury to Asheville and Western North Carolina. This plan includes the construction or renovation of train stations incorporating other uses that serve the community, as well as safety and track improvements that would ultimately be needed to provide passenger service to Western North

Carolina. Figure 8 illustrates the existing rail network in Western North Carolina.

**PEDESTRIAN**  
 Pedestrian facilities are generally present in most of the municipalities in the GroWNC study area, particularly in the downtowns of the cities and towns in the regions. The presence of sidewalks is less likely in areas further from downtowns and rural areas often lack any pedestrian facilities. Even in areas with pedestrian infrastructure, gaps in the network, connectivity and access issues, substandard design, and poor maintenance is often a

problem. Many of the counties and jurisdictions within the region have plans in place to address pedestrian needs. In addition to sidewalk facilities, many communities throughout the region have made significant investment in greenway and trail infrastructure. For example, the City of Asheville currently has 4.3 miles of developed greenways with plans to connect a 15 mile network.

#### BICYCLING

Bicycle infrastructure in the GroWNC area is not as prevalent as pedestrian infrastructure, but because bicyclists can coexist in roads, where road conditions al-

low, with autos, specific bicycle facilities are not always necessary or appropriate. In addition, there is concerted effort in many of the jurisdictions to improve bicycling facilities. For example, the Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan proposes a 181-mile network of bicycle facilities. Transylvania County also recognizes the value of a complete bicycle network and has developed an entire economic development strategy around bike facilities in the county.

#### AIR

Most aviation in the region centers on the Asheville Regional Airport

(AVL). It is the primary airport for not only the greater Asheville region but much of Western North Carolina. Nearly all of the study area is within an hour's drive of the airport. In addition to the Asheville Regional Airport, there are several privately owned and operated airports and airfields serving the region. With the exception of the Hendersonville Airport, they are all private use. While some have paved runways, many are turf. Most are unattended and have limited or no navigational aids. Availability of fuel and other services is typically limited. There are no airports or airfields in Haywood County.



Nearly all of the study area is within an hour's drive of the Asheville Regional Airport.

C.W.  
MOOSE  
TRADING  
Company

# Land Use

Cherry Street Kids

The  
Thread  
FIBER  
GALLERY  
STUDIO

SE  
DING

E-ELANEUS



Cherry Street Kids

OPEN

Cherry Street Kids

zmvz

BACK MOUNTAIN  
TOUR GUIDE





BOOKS

The Town of...

...

OPEN



# Together we create our future

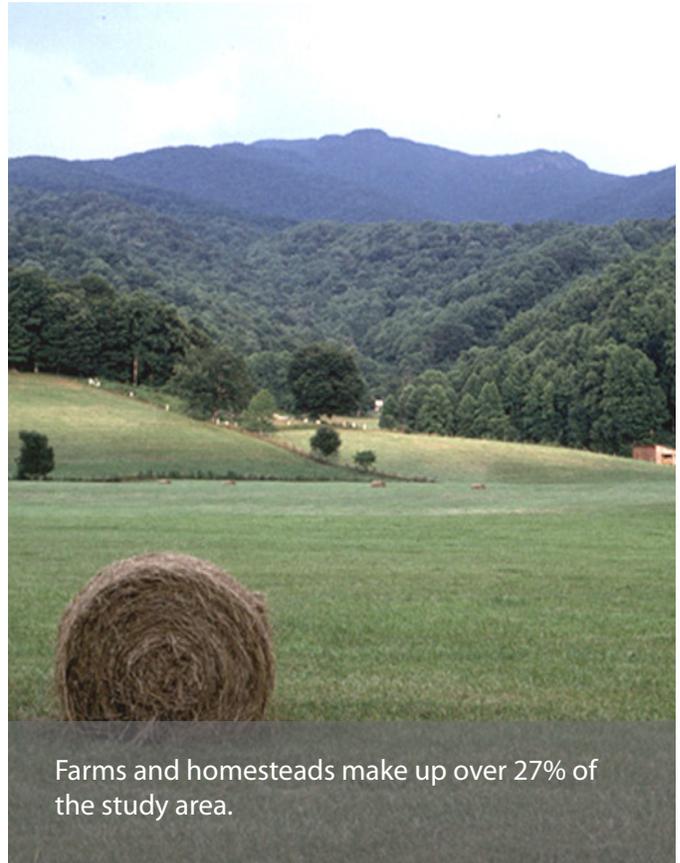
A built environment that promotes a sense of place and respects the natural environment.

A system of productive farms and forests.

Affordable access to a variety of housing and transportation options.



Asheville has the highest concentration of employment and population in the region.



Farms and homesteads make up over 27% of the study area.



Eighty percent of the area's artists and crafters live and work in the region's small towns.



97% of commercial parcels are located within one-mile of major roads in the region.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): Land-of-Sky Regional Council



## LAND USE WORKGROUP GOALS

Preserve agricultural lands for farming and forest products.

Preserve scenic quality.

Build mixed-use neighborhoods, towns and urban areas that cultivate and engender a “sense of place.”

Integrate/coordinate local and regional planning for economic development, land use and infrastructure.

Promote development of land that integrates and optimizes its natural suitability and function.

Create an environment that promotes many housing types, costs and choices.

Promote understanding of the importance of building and community design and form.

Improve transportation connections and options within and between communities.

Land use planning in the region should accommodate a diverse set of businesses, employers, and citizens.

# Land Use

During the last 30 years the landscape of Western North Carolina has changed from a largely rural, agricultural area to a growing network of urban centers, suburban developments and small towns. Individuals, families and employers continue to choose Western North Carolina for their homes, vacation destinations and businesses.

The Great Recession—the term coined to define the current period of economic stagnation—resulted in declining home values, foreclosures, limited consumption and unemployment. Locally, reduced mobility and limited access to capital and credit significantly hurt the main streets of places like Marshall, Waynesville and Asheville and stalled many residential and commercial developments.

The recession is waning and increased development pressure is certain to continue. Understanding the land use trends that are driving development in the region will help to clarify what to expect in the future.

Over the years, land use has changed dramatically in Western North Carolina. Forests are still

the dominant land cover in the region, but urban and suburban development has had a significant impact on the landscape. In some cases land use has intensified, forest once converted to row crops or pasture has been converted to commercial centers or single family homes. In other areas once cleared and planted lands have reverted to forest.

Overall, within the GroWNC study area the pace of land conversion from agricultural or forest land to developed land has exceeded national trends. Between 1976 and 2006 developed land has increased by 490%, from 16,000 acres to 82,000 acres.

Although development has slowed, due to the recession, the slowdown comes on the heels of a period of unprecedented increases in population, land conversion rates and development.

The Renaissance Computing Institute at UNC Charlotte (RENCI) completed a mapping and population forecast study illustrating historical and future land consumption patterns in Western North Carolina prior

to the economic downturn. Figure 9 summarizes the rate of development and the increasing consumption of land per person over time for the five GroWNC counties.

Interestingly, in tandem with increasing development and changes in the amount of land used for agriculture, a large amount of land has been permanently protected during the last 100 years. Currently conservation lands comprise approximately 29% (427,347 acres) of the five-county GroWNC study area. Notable assemblages of land include the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pisgah National Forest, Shining Rock Wilderness, DuPont State Forest and Gorges State Park.

Farms and “Homesteads” added together make up over 27% of the study area (note that parcels classified as Farms include only working farms without residential units).

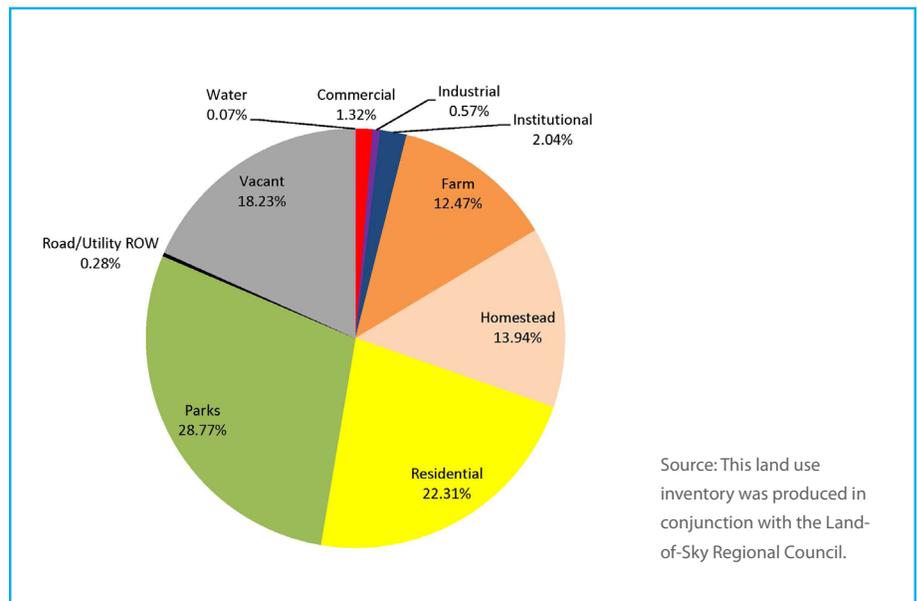
Vacant lands comprise the largest number of parcels and 18% of the land area (280,000 acres). Some of these vacant lands may be difficult to develop based on topography or other environmental features, but a portion will accommodate additional development in the future. The majority of residential parcels (68%) are classified as ML, M, and MH. This indicates that the majority of residents live on a parcel of land that is between 1/10 of an acre to 2 acres in size (with dwelling unit densities between 0.5 and 5 dwelling units per acre).

Figure 9: Historical and Forecasted Development in the GroWNC Region

COUNTY	% INCREASE IN DEVELOPMENT	FORECASTED % INCREASE IN DEVELOPMENT
	1976-2006	2006-2030
BUNCOMBE	350%	62%
HAYWOOD	467%	36%
HENDERSON	730%	61%
MADISON	1130%	109%
TRANSYLVANIA	600%	40%

Source: UNC Charlotte, Center for Applied GIScience, “Mapping historical development patterns and forecasting urban growth in Western North Carolina” July 2010.

Figure 10: Current Land Use in the GroWNC Region



Commercial and industrial areas are generally located near existing infrastructure. For instance, 97% (6,471 out of 6,667) of commercial parcels are located within 1 mile of major roads (interstate, US, and NC routes). There are also concentrations of commercial areas around intersections and interchanges and in downtown areas. Close to 70% of all industrial

parcels (826 of 1189) are located within 1 mile of existing railroads. 95% of industrial parcels are located within 1 mile of major roads (interstates, US and NC routes). Institutional uses are located in close proximity to commercial uses and in towns. Figure 10 illustrates the current land use breakdown in the region.

# Energy





# Together we create our future

Renewable & alternative energy

Energy efficiency

Capacity for local energy production



Organizations like the Evolve Energy Partnership support green energy initiatives in the GroWNC region.



WNC has the highest concentration of clean energy businesses in the state.



Over the last five years, WNC's clean energy economy grew by 6.9% while employment across all industries continued to fall.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): Evolve Energy Partnership, Blue Ridge BioFuels



# Energy

## ENERGY WORKGROUP GOALS

**Renewable Energy.** Increase the deployment of price-competitive, clean, and locally produced renewable energy to give consumers more energy choices while strengthening the energy, economic, and environmental landscape of western North Carolina.

**Energy Efficiency & Conservation.** Improve residential, commercial, and industrial sector energy performance through the promotion of sustainable design, energy efficiency, conservation, and advanced energy analytics.

**Transportation.** Strengthen transportation sector energy performance and reduce petroleum dependency through the promotion of alternative fuels, clean vehicles, and demand reduction programs.

**Economic Development.** Support the advancement of the region's clean energy economy to drive innovation and entrepreneurship, create high-wage jobs, and foster business activity.

**Public Education & Outreach.** Strengthen regional energy literacy through public education and outreach to create energy conscious communities in WNC.

The energy needs of the five-county GroWNC region continue to evolve as the population grows and new businesses are being attracted to the region. The GroWNC region is striving to become a sustainable, healthy, and economically prosperous region. A key aspect of sustainable growth is a clean and efficient energy supply that is secure and reliable currently and well into the future.

There are three types of electric utilities in North Carolina: investor-owned utilities, electric membership corporations (EMCs), and municipal-owned utilities. Approximately 96 percent of North Carolina's electricity is generated by two investor-owned utilities, namely Duke Energy and Progress Energy, which are currently seeking approval to merge into a single company.

The energy produced in the state originates from several different fuel types, the vast majority of which are fossil fuels. In 2008, the Mountain Resources Commission 27-county region in Western North Carolina had 2,435 megawatts (MW) of electricity generation capacity (8.3 percent of the state's total), 50 percent of which was powered

by coal, about 31 percent by hydroelectric, and 17.4 percent by natural gas. By comparison, in 2009, over half (55 percent) of state-wide electricity was generated by coal-fired power plants and 34 percent from nuclear facilities.

Although North Carolina is one of the top nuclear power producers in the country, most of this power is consumed by the large metropolitan regions in the eastern part of the state around Raleigh and Charlotte. Renewable energy installations generated 6 percent of the state's total electricity, with 4.4 percent from hydroelectric facilities

When accounting for all types of energy, the largest fuel source consumed within North Carolina is petroleum, which equates to 40 percent of the total state-wide consumption. Coal and natural gas make up 29 percent and 16 percent, respectively, and are mainly consumed to produce electricity. However, the state has no local deposits of coal, petroleum, or natural gas; therefore, the vast majority of energy resources for the state must be imported.

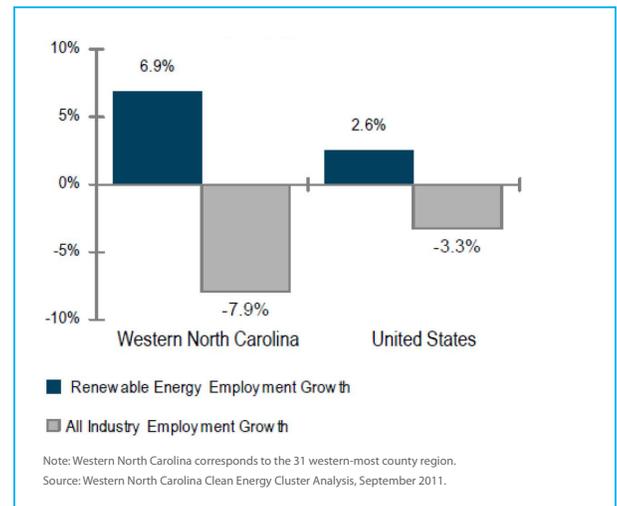
Total energy consumption is increasing in the state, especially for petroleum and nuclear-derived energy sources. The primary sources of energy remain petroleum, coal, nuclear fuel, and natural gas. In addition to examining total energy consumption, energy data are often normalized by population (i.e., per capita) to allow for a fair comparison to other regions, such as the U.S. as a whole. Energy consumption per capita in North Carolina increased from 1960 to 1995 at a greater rate than the rest of the United States, but so did the state's population. While energy consumption continues to increase in response to a growing population, energy use per capita declined slightly between 1995 and 2000 and substantially between 2000 and 2005.

Another trend facing the state is the increasing prices of energy affecting all sectors (business, residential, government, institutional) across North Carolina. Of particular concern are the rising costs of

electricity due to the recovery of capital costs by utility companies associated with the construction of new generating facilities and installing pollution control equipment as well as the rising costs of fuels for conventional power plants.

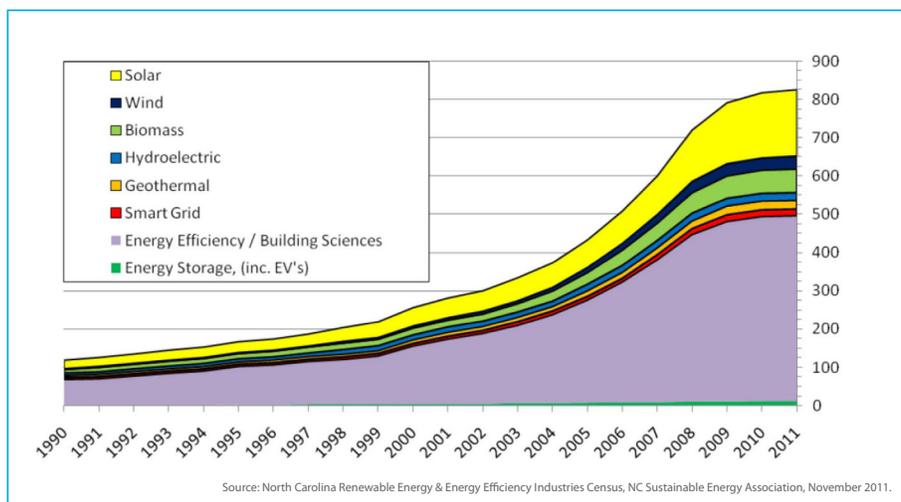
There is a clear shift in focus to clean and efficient energy and energy conservation nationally as well as locally. Investment and entrepreneurship in the clean energy industry has spurred the development of new technologies and innovations over the last several years. The clean energy sector is growing in North Carolina, particularly in the western portion of the state, with the number of solar, wind, and biomass firms increasing

Figure 11: Employment Growth in Clean Energy-related Industries vs. Employment Growth in All Industries (2005-2009)



substantially from 2007 to 2011. In fact, as illustrated in Figure 11, there was positive employment growth in the renewable energy sector from 2005 to 2009 while employment growth across all industries declined. Western North Carolina experienced greater growth in renewable energy-related employment compared to the U.S. as a whole. Buncombe and Henderson counties have experienced the highest volume of growth in clean energy-related industries and a distinct cluster of businesses that focuses on renewable energy and energy efficiency has formed.

Figure 12: Number of Firms in North Carolina's Clean Energy Sector by Reported Year of Entry, 2011.



# Health & Wellness





# Together we create our future

A built environment that supports a healthy mountain community.

Affordable access to a variety of health services.



In addition to improving physical health, local food production and distribution is playing a key role in improving the health of our local economies.



Obesity, especially among children, has become a major issue in all five counties.



The average age of GroWNC residents is becoming older and more diverse. Each county experienced significant growth in the over-65 age cohort, but Madison County stood out with an increase of 144% from 2000 to 2010.



Mission Hospital in Asheville is one of only a handful of facilities providing emergency and critical care in the region.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): Mission Hospital, AshevilleNC.com



# Health & Wellness

## HEALTH & WELLNESS WORKGROUP GOALS

Advocate for a sustainable built environment that supports health promotion in the planning, assessment and intervention processes. Examples include, but are not limited to: accessible and affordable transportation; high air and water quality; access to physical activity healthy housing and work environments.

Increase individual and community resilience through the integration of community, holistic and medical resources. Examples include, but are not limited to: bring community resources to the forefront – making these the first choice to optimize health (e.g. gym class in schools, recreation, community gardens, and physical activity programs; education about lifestyle choices; create awareness of community and integrated health resources within the medical community; cultivate awareness of an integrated and holistic approach to wellness.

Maintain a unified focus on and investment in prevention that improves quality of life and reduces health care expenses.

Advocate for improved access to community, holistic and medical health care options for all regardless of ethnicity, age, state of disease or financial resources.

The health of the GroWNC population, if measured only in terms of the frequency of illness or disease (morbidity) and the number of deaths (mortality), is relatively consistent with the health of the US and NC populations with a few exceptions.

The four chronic illnesses that are in the top five consistently named as the leading causes of death in each county every year based on data collected and presented in the CHAs are heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease (CLRD) and cerebrovascular disease (stroke). Based on the data presented in the NC Health Data Book 2012, all five counties now have a fifth leading cause of death in common: Alzheimer's disease.

In addition, obesity, especially among children, has become a major issue in all five counties. Haywood County saw an increase in obesity between 2002 and 2008 from 16% to 21%. In Buncombe County, more than half of all adults were either overweight or obese in 2010.

Healthcare providers are also increasingly aware of mental health

issues, including depression, that plague western NC. Most counties have reported a lack of facilities and providers to serve those struggling with mental health issues. In Buncombe County, 1 in 3 survey respondents reported depression in the past year. In Madison County, 27% percent of survey respondents report they have been told they have depression.

Closely linked to the prevalence of mental health issues is substance abuse. Substance abuse in the region includes the abuse of alcohol, prescription drugs and illegal drugs. For example, alcohol is Haywood County's primary substance abuse issue. Chronic liver disease/cirrhosis has been identified as a leading cause of death in Haywood County, which indicates a high use of alcohol by the population. Methamphetamine, the leading illegal drug of choice for Western North Carolina, and prescription drugs are leading substances associated with addiction and abuse in the Henderson County.

Access to health care is also identified as a key problem in every county, though how each county

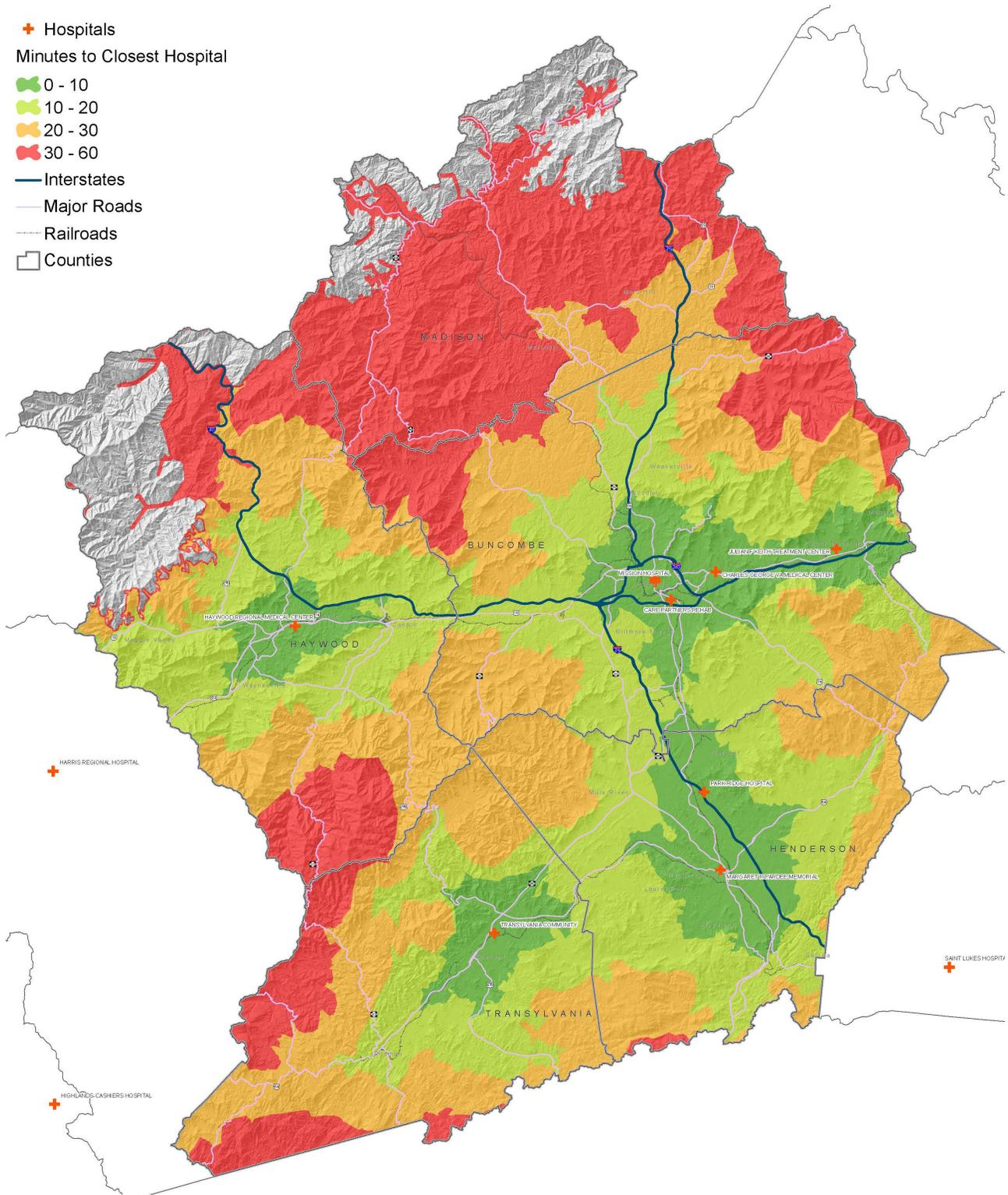


Figure 13: Map of Distance to Hospitals (drive-time)

Figure 14: Top Five Leading Causes of Death (All Age Groups), 2006-2010

LOCATION	HEART DISEASE	CANCER	CHRONIC LOWER RESPIRATORY DISEASE (CLRD)	CEREBRO-VASCULAR DISEASE (STROKE)	ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE	UNINTENDED INJURY
BUNCOMBE	1	2	3	4	5	
HAYWOOD	1	2	3	4	5	
HENDERSON	1	2	3	4	5	
MADISON	2	1	3	4	5	
TRANSYLVANIA	2	1	3	4	5	
NC	2	1	4	3		5
US	1	2*	3	4	6	5

Sources: NC Health Data Book 2012, NC Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS); Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2010, National Vital Statistics Reports, National Center for Health Statistics

\*Malignant neoplasms were specifically listed as the second leading cause of death in the US.

defines “access” differs. Access refers to a wide range of issues that each county is facing including a lack of providers, lack of facilities, lack of transportation to facilities, Affordability and insurance barriers and language barriers. Figure 13 illustrates the location of key hospital facilities in the region. As noted, many residents have to drive significant distances to access their nearest facility.

In recent years, health care professionals and interested stakeholders have expanded the way we think about health to consider prevention and health promotion as components of a well-rounded approach to health and wellness. We are realizing that if social, environmental and economic conditions as well as

behaviors (a wide array of health determinants) can be controlled or modified, we can effectively prevent or lessen the risk for some injuries, diseases or death (health outcomes).

More importantly, we can increase opportunities for achieving optimal health, improving upon—not simply accepting and maintaining—our current state. Recognizing the identified linkages, health initiatives must be developed with the intent of preventing, not just treating, health problems and promoting overall health and well being. The following page is a summary of some of the trends and opportunities related to the health factors noted above that are already being observed in the GroWNC region.

## Building a Healthier Region

### Community Design

Utilization of the built environment to positively effect health outcomes. For example, the transportation system, designed primarily for automobiles, makes biking or walking from one place to the next is challenging if not impossible. The lack of safe bike and pedestrian facilities perpetuates the issues of physical inactivity.

### Exercise & Diet

Along with exercise, healthy eating is a relatively easy behavior to modify for positive health benefits. The lower cost and convenience of processed foods, however, facilitate poor diet habits. In the last decade in the US, and to a greater degree in the region, healthy eating has become easier with access to local foods.

### Green Infrastructure

Tree ordinances, park and recreation standards, storm water management regulations are three of several such tools employed by local governments to ensure the “green infrastructure” is well planned and serves a wide variety of purposes including improving public health.

### Active Aging

Recognizing the benefits of communities where people can grow old in their communities and maintain social interaction with people of all ages, the EPA is also promoting “age-friendly” neighborhoods designed to have a variety of housing options and services that address seniors’ needs.

# Natural Resources

A scenic view of a river flowing through a lush forest. The water is turbulent, creating white rapids as it flows over dark, mossy rocks. The surrounding trees are covered in vibrant, bright green leaves, suggesting a spring or summer setting. In the foreground, a large, prominent rock is covered in green moss. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.



# Together we create our future

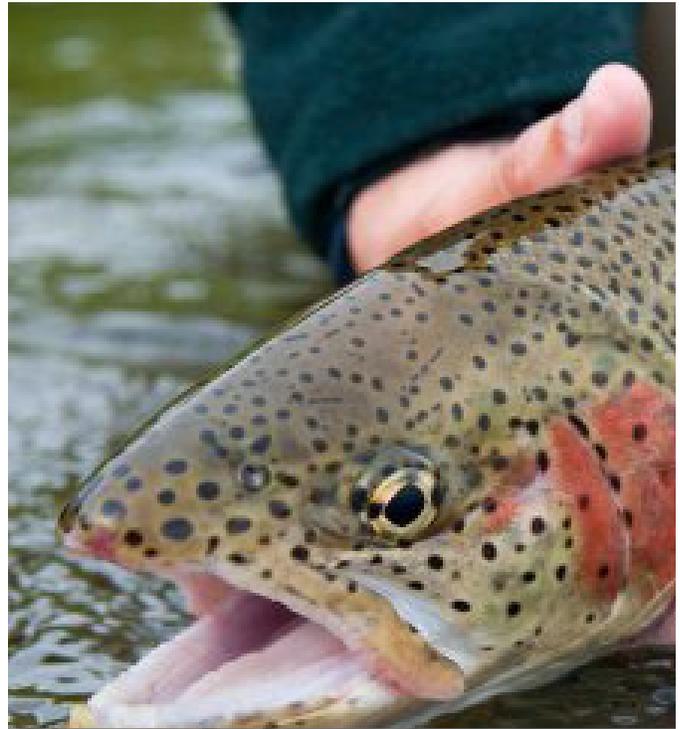
Productive & sustainable, farms and forests

High quality water and air

A region with an interconnected system  
of agriculture and habitat lands



Pisgah National Forest attracts over one million visitors annually.



There are over 251 linear miles of designated trout streams in Buncombe County.



Henderson County ranks third in the state in cash receipts from agricultural crops.



National Forests make up one-sixth of the land in Madison County.

Photo Sources (clockwise from top left): National Forest Service, Asheville Anglers, Land-of-Sky Regional Council



# Natural Resources

## NATURAL RESOURCES WORKGROUP GOALS

The region actively supports sustainable farming and forestry practices & invests in the necessary infrastructure to ensure a strong, vital farm community that provides at least 10% of foods locally.

The region has significantly decreased the rate in which it is losing high quality farm/forestlands and prime soils.

The region invests in ecotourism as a key economic driver, supporting collaborations, land and water conservation, stewardship, promotion, and educational or support infrastructure.

The region's decision-makers, community leaders, and landowners recognize that sustaining high quality natural habitats enhance and sustain the region's economy and overall quality of life for its residents, and maintain or improve water resources, air quality, biodiversity and scenic viewsheds.

The region recognizes the importance of connectivity between protected lands by managing wildlife and recreation corridors for biodiversity and protecting unfragmented forest blocks.

Residents recognize the health and restorative benefits associated with outdoor recreation and regularly take advantage of opportunities throughout the region.

The natural resources of the Gro-WNC region have been a draw for Native Americans, early settlers, industrialists, tourists, and residents alike. Imposing mountain ranges, high elevation balds, forested ridges, crystal clear waters and large tracts of national park and national forest land, provide a backdrop to life in the region.

These natural areas serve as the backbone of the agriculture, timber and tourism industries; provide numerous eco-system services such as providing clean air and water, habitat for game, fish, and birds, and offer opportunities for wilderness experiences. The benefits residents and visitors garner from natural systems are innumerable and sadly, they are also threatened.

The relationship between the region's natural inhabitants and human inhabitants has evolved along with the landscape. The mountains have endured a rising and falling of eras and industries. The fertile soils of the river valleys were home to Mississippian and then, Cherokee villages. The fur industry led European traders and trappers to the mountains. Ranchers, then farmers followed. Railroads completed in the late 19th century began an era of industrial logging. All of these developments resulted in drastic changes to the natural environment.

The vast canebrakes that once covered the river bottoms were degraded by grazing livestock and have been replaced with non-native grasses and row crops.



Endangered Mountain Sweet Pitcher Plant

Educational nature hike in Pisgah National Forest.



View from the Blue Ridge Parkway

The American chestnut, once a signature tree of the Southern Appalachian landscape, was ravaged by blight and has disappeared from the forest. Intensive timber harvesting during the early 20th century led to widespread environmental destruction. Small remnants of old growth forests remain, but the majority of all forests in the region were logged at some point. Habitat fragmentation, hunting and water pollution have led to the regional extirpation of many species, including bison, elk, eastern cougar, native fishes and many types of mussels.

Even though impacts have occurred, the natural environment is incredibly resilient and the region still benefits from rare habitats, unparalleled recreational opportunities, magnificent vistas, and a blend of microclimates that contribute to high levels of biodiversity. Concerns over erosion and flooding caused by deforestation fueled the conservation efforts that eventually led to the creation of the Pisgah

National Forest and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. By in large, farming and timber harvesting practices have improved and reforestation is occurring on many denuded lands. Nestled between verdant hills are many state and nationally significant natural areas that provide a home to many endemic, threatened and endangered species.

Change continues to occur and now there are new threats to the mountain ecosystems. The scenic and natural beauty in this area of Western North Carolina attracts thousands of tourists and new permanent residents each year. This influx, and the associated increases in urban and second home development, threatens to impact the very natural environment that attracts it. Air and water pollution, disappearing agricultural land, invasive species, as well as habitat degradation and fragmentation present challenges that will need to be addressed by the current generation if the region's natural heritage is to be preserved for the benefit of future generations.



Trout Fishing,  
Madison County



Looking Glass Falls,  
Transylvania County



Endangered Carolina Northern  
Flying Squirrel



Cradle of Forestry Pisgah National Forest

# Cultural Resources



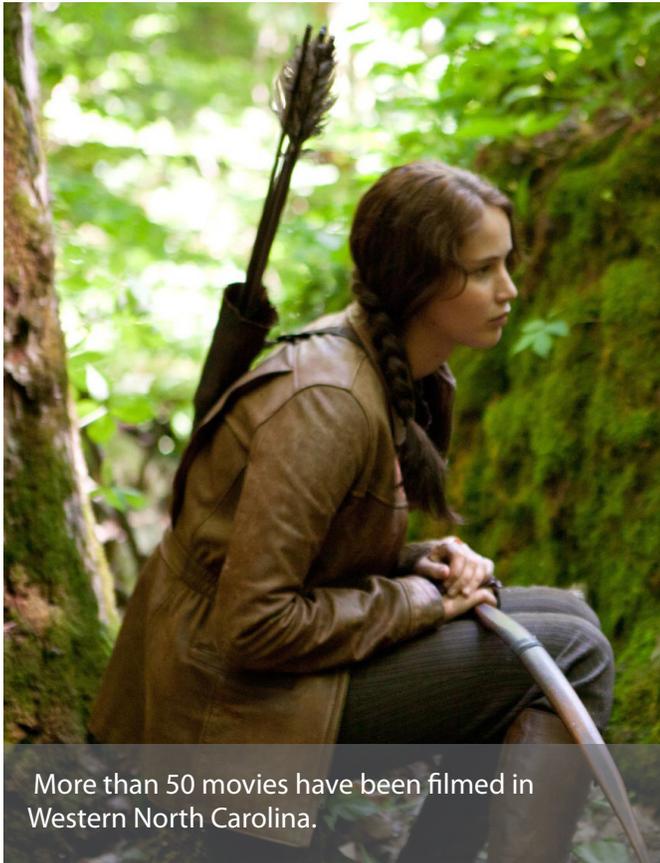


# Together we create our future

A unified voice for the cultural  
resources community.

Preservation, restoration and cultivation  
of cultural and natural resources.

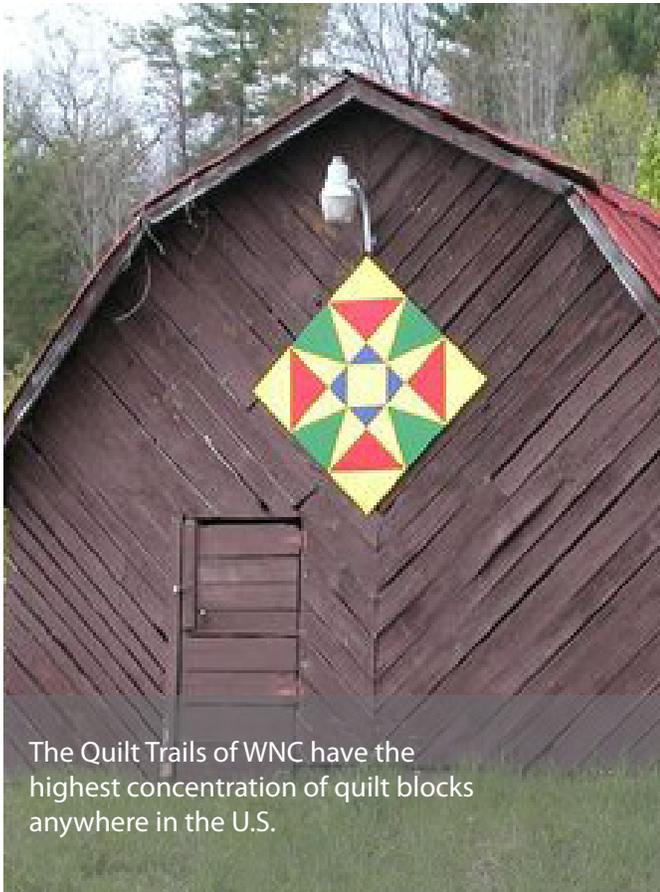
An intact cultural landscape.



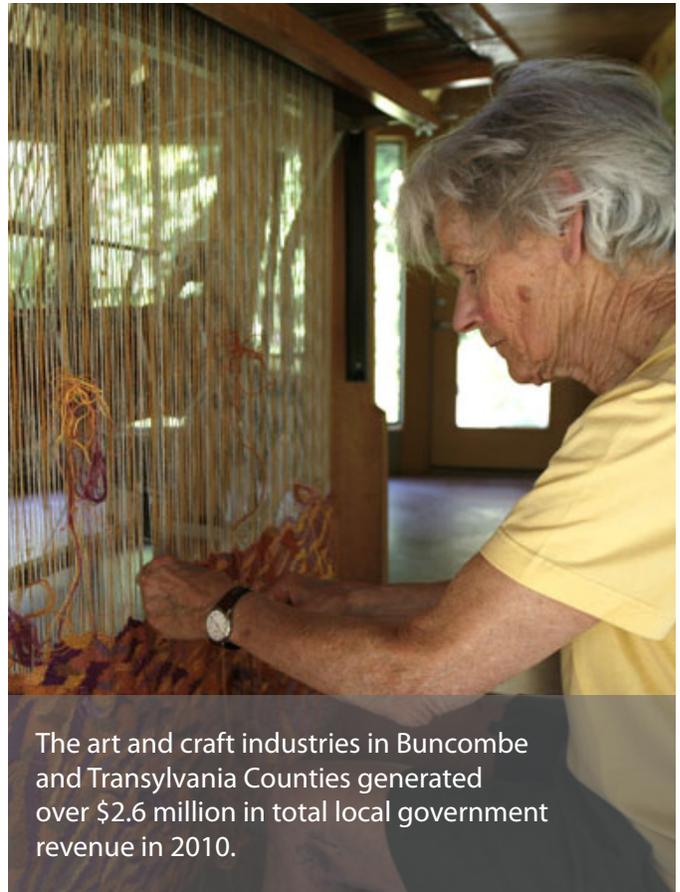
More than 50 movies have been filmed in Western North Carolina.



The Brevard Music Center is home to numerous cultural events throughout the year.



The Quilt Trails of WNC have the highest concentration of quilt blocks anywhere in the U.S.



The art and craft industries in Buncombe and Transylvania Counties generated over \$2.6 million in total local government revenue in 2010.



# Cultural Resources

## CULTURAL RESOURCES WORKGROUP GOALS

**Measurement:** Compile existing and new metrics to quantify the economic and social impacts of cultural resources and track trends over time.

**Collaboration:** Create a unified voice for the cultural resource community in WNC to facilitate communication with consumers, while supporting artists, cultural assets, and heritage sites.

**Advocacy:** Improve advocacy for cultural resources to ensure that community leaders and decision-makers value and support cultural resources as a key industry cluster.

**Preservation:** Preserve, restore, and cultivate our natural and cultural landscapes and resources.

**Engagement & Education:** Ensure that residents (including students), know more about the arts, culture, and history of the region and have an appreciation for the unique assets of this region.

When asked about what makes the region special, many people will point to the mountain peaks, the trout streams and the stunning views. While the natural assets are unparalleled it is also the traditions, the culture of the people, that set this region apart.

For generations the mountains isolated residents of the five-counties from other communities. However from this isolation grew a resilient and self-sufficient spirit, a unique and thriving culture.

The origins of the region’s traditions of craft can be traced back to the Cherokee with their pottery, basket making and carving. Similarly much of the musical heritage is linked to Scots-Irish ballads. Today the diversity and traditions of the Cherokee and

the Scot-Irish, infuse the region’s crafts, skills, pastimes and nuances.

The region has established a reputation as a leader for craft production and education throughout the country. There are more than 130 craft galleries scattered across the counties in western North Carolina. In addition, most all of the institutions of higher learning in the region offer some type of craft/arts curriculum including Haywood Community College Professional Craft Program, Blue Ridge Community College, UNC Asheville, and the UNC Center for Craft, Creativity and Design. Moreover, the Penland School of Crafts and John C. Campbell School bring in more than \$10 million in economic impact to the western North Carolina region.

Figure 15: Economic Impact of the Craft Industry\*

TOTAL ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT	\$206,500,000
CRAFT ARTISTS	\$86,200,000
CRAFT CONSUMERS	\$31,500,000
RETAIL GALLERIES	\$57,700,000
CRAFT SCHOOLS	\$11,800,000
CRAFT NON-PROFITS	\$4,400,000
CRAFT SUPPLIERS & PUBLISHERS	\$15,000,000

\*Figures represent impact for the 25 county Western North Carolina region.



Local artists and musicians

In addition, there are many non-profit organizations within the area that contribute to the craft industry and the region's economy. The total annual economic impact of these non-profit organizations has been totaled by the UNC Center for Craft, Creativity and Design at over \$4 million.

It is also interesting to note that the craft industry follows a sustainable model of producing and buying locally. Seventy percent of craft retail galleries inventory is produced locally. Sixty-five percent of craft artists have their work marketed within NC (The Center for Craft, Creativity and Design.)

In addition to the artists and crafters the GroWNC region has a strong tradition of music and festivals. The area hosts numerous festivals: Bele Chere, Lake Eden Arts Festival, Brevard

Music Festival, Folkmoot USA, to name a few. Festivals have a huge impact in western North Carolina's economy. The City of Asheville estimates Bele Chere generated \$12.4 million to \$20 million in direct and indirect spending in and around the city.

All of these factors contribute to the growth of the cultural tourism industry in the five-county region. Many of the state's most visited sites are within the GroWNC region including the Biltmore Estate, Blue Ridge Parkway and Pisgah National Forest. According to Preservation North Carolina, "Tourism is now the second largest industry in North Carolina with employment of 161,000 people and \$2.5 billion in annual payroll—and the #1 reason visitors come to North Carolina is this state's historic resources." In addition, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation cultural and heritage tourist spend more than the average tourist: \$994 per trip compared to \$611.

This all translates into more jobs and opportunities for the region's artists and stewards of cultural resources. A study of the Asheville-area Metropolitan Statistical Area showed 17% job growth in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry from 2005-2011, a period when most other industries were in severe decline. Top Occupations include: Musicians and Singers, Writers and Authors, Multi-media Artists and Animators.

The five-county region's cultural resources can, and are, creating jobs, a higher quality of life, and telling the story of this unique place. Protecting historical landmarks, landscape elements and ways of life add to the richness of how we experience a place, either as a tourist or resident.

The creative resources and natural beauty of the area will continue to attract people and businesses, bringing more creativity and opportunities for the community and residents. How the region (continues to) invests in their cultural resources through funding, policy, promotion, education and conservation will be an important decision in the future of the creative economy.



Walker Calhoun, known for his efforts to preserve native Cherokee dance, music and history, [digitalheritage.org](http://digitalheritage.org).



Old Time Plowing and Folkways at Cradle of Forestry

# Appendix



# Consortium Members

(as of July 2012)

AdvantageWest	Coalition of Asheville	Town of Montreat
Affiliated Consultants, Engineers	Neighborhoods	Mountain Valleys Resource Conservation and Development
African-American Economic Development Group	Community Foundation of WNC	My Place Inc.
Appalachian Designs	Community Housing Coalition of Madison County	North Carolina DOC
Appalachian Landslide Consultants, PLLC	Council on Aging of Buncombe County, Inc.	North Carolina DENR
City of Asheville	Eagle Market Street Development Corporation	North Carolina DOT
Asheville Chamber of Commerce	Education and Research Consortium of the Western Carolinas	Nutter Associates
Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity	French Broad River MPO	RENCI at UNCA
Asheville-Buncombe Sustainable Communities Initiative	Good Stuff	River Forest Development Group
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	Handmade in America	RiverLink, Inc.
Asheville Design Center	City of Hendersonville	Self-Help Credit Union
Asheville Housing Authority	Housing Assistance Corporation	Sims & Steele Consulting
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center (BMCM+AC)	InnovoGraph	Southern Environmental Law Center
Blue Ridge Sustainability Institute	Just Economics	Transition Asheville Common Table
Bountiful Cities	Kostelec Planning, LLC	Transylvania County Board of Commissioners
City of Brevard	Land-of-Sky Regional Council	Town of Waynesville
Buncombe County	Land-of-Sky RPO	WaysSouth
Buncombe County Department of Health	Land-of-Sky Regional Council's Senior Companion Program	Town of Weaverville
Buncombe County Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Department	Lifestyle Support, LLC	Western North Carolina Alliance
Children First / Communities in Schools of Buncombe County	Madison County	Western North Carolina Green Building Council
Town of Clyde	Madison County Health Department	Town of Woodfin
	Manpower	YMCA of WNC's Pioneering Healthier Communities Initiative
	Town of Marshall	YWCA of Asheville