



#### Introduction

During the past two decades, the Town of Boone has grown considerably. Boone is Watauga County's seat of government as well as the area's education and service center. These factors, combined with its strategic location in the attractive highlands of North Carolina, promise continued growth and development of the town well into the next century.

As growth continues, however, and the urban area continues to spread into the countryside, development pressures on the natural and man-made resources of the area are beginning to have their effect on the area's quality of life. Recent development has not always been in keeping with the original high country character of the community. Roads into and through the Town are becoming increasingly congested.

Fortunately, Town civic leaders and many area residents are committed to a planning program that has helped to guide the development of the community. Recognizing the need to prepare a new comprehensive vision for the future of Boone, the Town Council appointed a fourteen-member Steering Committee made up of area citizens and charged them with responsibility for guiding the preparation of a long-range plan. Assisting the Steering Committee in accomplishing this task was the town planning department and the planning firm of Glenn Harbeck Associates (GHA).

The Boone Comprehensive Plan is a policy oriented document that establishes a foundation for on-going planning to the year 2010. The Plan allows for reasonable flexibility in the direction and rate of growth of the community while working to achieve sound planning objectives. To ensure that the document maintains its relevance when conditions change, the Plan should be updated periodically so that it reflects current concerns

Throughout the planning process, an extensive public involvement program was conducted to identify issues and determine their relative degree of importance to residents of the planning area. Building upon this information, the Steering Committee reviewed, modified and endorsed a number of specific Policy Statements for consideration by the Boone Town Council. The Policies presented in this Summary are the result of this process. As officially adopted Policies of the Town, they serve as a basis for decisions on capital improvements, ordinances, zoning matters, subdivision and development approvals, and other related matters.

#### How To Use The Policies

Example: Evaluation of a Rezoning Request

The Policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan have been designed for regular use in making both public and private decisions about growth and development. To aid in the effective use of the Policies, the following example explains how different users can employ the Policies in deciding upon a typical rezoning request.

As Used by the Developer

The Developer or Property Owner should consult the Policies to formulate a rezoning request that is consistent with Town policy, thereby increasing the chances for rezoning approval, and minimizing guess work and

As Used by the Town Staff

The Town Staff will review the rezoning request in light of the adopted Policies, pointing out those policies: (1) that support the rezoning, (2) that are in conflict with the rezoning, and (3) which, in the opinion of Staff carry the most weight, thereby shaping the overall Staff recommendation.

As Used by the Planning Commission

Before the regular meeting, each Planning Commission member can make his or her own determination as to the consistency of the rezoning with the Town's adopted Growth Policies. As always, the Planning Commission should take into account the recommendation of the Planning Staff in interpreting the Policies, but may choose to give different weight to different Policies, at times disagreeing with the Staff.

As Used by the General Public

Residents of the Town of Boone can and should reference specific Growth Policy Statements, when speaking in favor or in opposition to the rezoning request.

As Used by Town Council

In its legislative authority to rezone property, Town Council has the final word as to whether the rezoning request is consistent with the Town's Growth Policies. As is customary, Town Council should take into account and weigh the interpretation of Policy as employed by the Property Owner, the Town Staff, the Planning Commission, and the General Public. Over time, a track record of policy interpretation forms a consistent foundation for decision making.

Example: A request has been made to the Town Council to grant a rezoning and special use permit for a commercial development on a one acre site that is presently zoned residential. The evaluation and decision

may turn on a series of questions generated by the Growth Policies:	
<u>Question</u>	Policy Reference
Will this proposal contribute to the proliferation of strip development?	5.9
Does the rezoning request fall logically into one of the Town's preferred commercial development patterns? Is the requested location appropriate?	5.1 to 5.7
Can the development occur without the need for special buffering or landscaping?	5.10
Will the development constitute an encroachment into an existing, viable residential area?	5.11
Is the proposed use to be part of a new, mixed use development? If so, will the development be designed and located to be compatible with surrounding non-commercial uses?	5.5
Will the development necessitate the extension of water and sewer services? If so, will this extension be consistent with the Town's Growth Strategy Map and utilities policies?	3.1 to 3.5
Will the development adequately address the issue of protecting the integrity of area thoroughfares?	2.10
Will the development encourage the revitalization and reuse of an underutilized structure or site?	10.1 & 10.2
Is the parcel in question located adjacent to one of the Town's main entryway corridors? If so, will the development enhance the image of the Town?	9.1 & 9.2
Etc.	Etc.
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### 1. Economic Development

- Policy 1.1 New and expanding industries and businesses shall be encouraged which: 1) diversify the local economy, 2) train and use a skilled labor force and 3) increase area residents incomes.
- Policy 1.2 New industries that tap into the educational and research assets of the university and/or complement the natural resources and beauty of the region shall be especially recruited.
- Policy 1.3 The Town shall protect and enhance a high quality of life, image, cultural amenities, and natural beauty as the most effective, long term component of an economic development strategy.
- Policy 1.4 The benefits of economic development projects shall be considered in balance with special concern for
- Policy 1.5 The Town shall encourage the development of a well-balanced tourism trade as a primary element of the area's economic future. Investments in services, facilities, and proper growth management shall be employed in
- Policy 1.6 Economic development efforts shall encourage the revitalization and reuse of currently unused or underutilized structures, sites and infrastructure in appropriately located areas.
- Policy 1.7 The Town shall promote coordination of economic development resources with the various involved institutions and agencies. Regional coordination and interaction among areas with a shared economic interest shall be
- Policy 1.8 Public/private partnerships with other organizations and citizens shall be encouraged to revitalize declining commercial and residential areas.
- Policy 1.9 Boone shall be marketed and services provided consistent with the needs of the area's growing retiree population.
- Policy 1.10 Small business start-ups, expansions and spin-offs shall be encouraged. The resources of the university shall be capitalized upon in this regard.
- Policy 1.11 Appropriate educational and training programs shall be encouraged to help unemployed and underemployed local residents take advantage of business expansion and to stay abreast of new technologies.
- Policy 1.12 The Town shall support the development of new industrial parks.
- Policy 1.13 The Town shall encourage a public service and regulatory environment conducive to business recruitment and expansion, while at the same time enhancing the area's physical and human resources.

### 2. Transportation

- Policy 2.1 The thoroughfare plan shall be employed to promote a *hierarchical*, *functional road network* and to promote the proper arrangement of land patterns by controlling the location of streets and roads.
- Properly designed major street intersections containing right and left turn bays shall be encouraged where crosswalks and pedestrian traffic do not have first priority.
- Policy 2.3 Sufficient right-of-way along new roadways and at major intersections shall be acquired to allow for future facility
- Policy 2.4 Street patterns shall be designed so as to define the limits of the neighborhood, accentuate focal points and interesting vistas, allow for convenient circulation within the neighborhood and provide for multiple, alternative outlets from the area to adjoining neighborhoods and/or major streets. Particular attention shall be given to avoid designs that provide convenient "cut-through" traffic opportunities.
- Policy 2.5 A program of *improvements and maintenance* to maximize the use of existing streets shall be employed as a cost effective means of meeting area transportation needs, provided that such improvements shall not destroy the livability of a residential or commercial area for the sole purpose of moving greater traffic volumes.
- Policy 2.6 Planned systems of pedestrian ways, bikeways and similar facilities shall be encouraged as energy efficient and environmentally sound transportation alternatives. Site planning that incorporates secure bicycle storage at places of living, working or schooling, shopping, and gathering shall be required, where appropriate.
- Policy 2.7 The operational success of the area's mass transit system shall be enhanced through the encouragement of compact, transit sensitive development patterns. Site planning that incorporates transit stops and convenience clusters shall be required, where appropriate.
- Policy 2.8 Policies that have the effect of reducing *automobile dependency*, use and congestion in the heart of the urban area
- Policy 2.9 Continued improvement and appropriate expansion of area air facilities shall be encouraged and supported.
- Policy 2.10 Driveway cuts along major streets and roads shall be limited to allow these streets to serve primarily as safe traffic movement corridors or, alternatively, to maximize curb frontage for on-street parking.
- Policy 2.11 Private roads serving multiple uses shall be discouraged in new developments, except where public performance standards can be met, and when provisions for continued maintenance are assured.
- Policy 2.12 The Town shall encourage the development and use of park and ride lots at the edge of town when and where
- Policy 2.13 All future road construction within the Town shall be examined for bike and pedestrian feasibility. Wherever possible, compatible bike lanes and pedestrian walkways shall be implemented in conjunction with accompanying

#### 3. Utilities

- Policy 3.1 Water and sewer services shall be *concentrated* within the limits of a geographically defined Urban Growth Area. The Primary Growth Area shall receive first priority for the provision or enhancement of water and sewer services.
- Policy 3.2 The Town shall consider the highest level of participation in the cost of providing water and sewer services within the Primary Growth Area with the next highest level of participation considered for the Secondary Growth Area.
- Water and sewer services shall not be extended to properties in the Rural Area (outside the Urban Growth Area). Exceptions to this policy may include the provision of services to other local governments, cooperative agreements on major economic development initiatives, and extensions needed to address imminent public health problems or related environmental hazards.
- Policy 3.4 Extensions of water and/or sewer services that could result in scattered, non-directed development and costly provision of other urban services shall be discouraged.
- The Town shall employ incentives to encourage a concentration of intense urban type development within the Urban Growth Area and discourage scattered urban type development within the Rural Area.
- Policy 3.6 Area-wide cooperation and support shall be sought in bringing in *alternative utility services* to the Boone area.
- Policy 3.7 Long range planning for a possible stormwater collection and treatment system shall be supported, including the development of financial and regulatory strategies.

### 4. Industrial Development

- Policy 4.1 The Town shall encourage a public service and regulatory environment conducive to industrial development, provided that long term environmental quality considerations shall not be compromised.
- Policy 4.2 Industrial development shall be located on land which is physically suitable and has unique *locational advantages* for industry. Advanced planning for the identification of such land shall be encouraged.
- Industrial development shall not be located in areas which would diminish the desirability of existing and planned non-industrial uses, nor shall non-industrial uses be allowed to encroach upon existing or planned industrial sites.
- Policy 4.4 *Heavy industrial uses* shall not be permitted within the zoning jurisdiction of the Town of Boone.
- Policy 4.5 Light industrial uses may be located in or near existing built up areas to take advantage of available services and to minimize home to work distances. Careful design and or buffering may be required to ensure compatibility with
- Warehousing, storage and distribution facilities shall have direct access to appropriate thoroughfares, and shall be visually buffered according to their location.
- Policy 4.7 New industrial developments shall be encouraged to locate in *planned industrial parks*.

### 5. Commercial Development

appropriate community facilities.

- Policy 5.1 *Commercial and Office Development* shall be encouraged to locate in planned *shopping centers*, *office parks and mixed use developments* to minimize the proliferation of strip development.
- Policy 5.2 Regional Commercial Centers and other large traffic generators shall be located at the intersection of two or more
- Policy 5.3 Community/Commercial Centers shall be located adjacent to a major street and contain or be adjacent to other
- Policy 5.4 Automobile-Oriented Neighborhood and Convenience Commercial Centers shall be encouraged to locate on a collector street or secondary street at its intersection with a major street.
- Residentially scaled and designed neighborhood businesses may be a planned element of newly developed or redeveloped neighborhoods. They should be near other compatible facilities such as elementary schools and
- Policy 5.6 Highway Oriented Commercial uses shall be clustered along segments of major streets and contain land uses which are mutually compatible and reinforcing in use and design; they shall be designed in such a way as to minimize
- signage, access points, and uncontrolled strip development. Policy 5.7 *Rural Area Commercial* development shall be limited to local convenience stores, farm supply stores, and generally accepted rural business establishments.
- Policy 5.8 Commercial uses may be encouraged to develop by consolidation and expansion of existing commercially zoned property, only when such consolidation and expansion does not encroach upon a viable residential area.
- Policy 5.9 Uncontrolled *strip development* along the area's through streets shall be prohibited. The undesirable effects of
- existing strip development shall be reduced and/or reconfigured when redevelopment opportunities permit. New strip development on isolated single lots along through streets shall be discouraged.
- Policy 5.10 Effective buffering and/or landscaping shall be provided where a large scale or automobile-oriented commercial or office use adjoins an existing or planned residential use.
- Policy 5.11 Encroachment of incompatibly scaled and designed commercial or office uses into viable existing or planned residential areas shall be prohibited
- Policy 5.12 Office and institutional development may be encouraged to locate as a transitional land use between residential areas and activities of higher intensity, where appropriate.
- Policy 5.13 Businesses shall be encouraged to coordinate their site designs with other nearby businesses. *Design factors* shall include, at a minimum, shared parking and street access, convenient pedestrian and vehicular movement, and

### 6. Housing and Neighborhoods

- Policy 6.1 The protection and rehabilitation of viable neighborhoods shall be encouraged to insure their continued existence as a major housing source and as a reflection of the area's image as an attractive, highly livable community.
- Policy 6.2 Street system designs which discourage through traffic on purely local streets while allowing for free circulation
- within the neighborhood shall be encouraged
- Proposed residential development which would expose residents to harmful effects of *incompatible development* or to environmental hazards shall be prohibited.
- Innovative and flexible land planning and development practices shall be encouraged to create livable developments which better safeguard land, water, energy and historic resources.
- Policy 6.5 Factors in determining preferred locations for high density residential development shall include close proximity to the university, employment or shopping centers; access to major thoroughfares and the transit system; the availability of public services and facilities; and compatibility with adjacent land uses.
- Policy 6.6 The affordable housing needs of area residents, particularly elderly and low to moderate income residents, shall be recognized in Town policies and actions regarding residential development.
- The overall housing unit density for proposed infill residential development or redevelopment should be compatible with the average density of adjoining residential areas.
- Policy 6.8 *Compact, full service neighborhoods*, offering opportunities for living, working, shopping, and gathering places, shall be encouraged in newly planned developments, as well as in redeveloping areas.

# 7. Agricultural and Rural Development

- Policy 7.1 Agriculture, forestry and low density residential activities shall be the preferred land uses in the *Rural Area*, as identified on the Growth Strategy Map. Urban level development shall not be encouraged in the Rural Area.
- Policy 7.2 Rural Area lands having a high productive potential shall be conserved, to the extent possible, for appropriate
- Policy 7.3 Farms and woodlands shall be recognized as an integral part of the planning area's *open space system*.

# 8. Parks, Recreation and Open Space

- Policy 8.1 Future park development and open spaces shall be planned to provide for the rational and equitable distribution of recreation and open space opportunities within the planning area. Public facilities shall be provided to address the unmet needs of area residents lacking access to university or private recreational facilities.
- Policy 8.2 Financial support shall be provided to the rehabilitation, upkeep, and expansion of existing facilities first, and to
- Policy 8.3 In determining future sites for park, recreation and open space facilities, *multiple objectives* for natural area conservation, visual enhancement, promotion of cultural and historic preservation, watershed and flood prone area protection shall be considered.
- Policy 8.4 Land acquisition for new recreation sites in advance of need shall be encouraged to achieve desirable locations at
- Policy 8.5 Provision of open space and recreational facilities shall be encouraged in *private developments* and through *intergovernmental and public/private partnerships.*
- Policy 8.6 The identification and appropriate development of a system of open space *greenways* within the planning area shall be encouraged for both recreational and alternative transportation purposes. The use of natural corridors such as streams, floodplains, and secondarily, man-made corridors such as utility and transportation rights-of-way and easements shall be emphasized.
- While emphasizing programs which serve the unmet recreation needs of the greatest number of people, the Town shall strive to meet the needs of specific population subgroups, including, particularly, teenagers, the elderly and the physically challenged.

# 9. Community Appearance

- Policy 9.1 The significance of major *roadway entrances into Boone* as measures of community image and quality shall be recognized through building placement, landscape, signage and other visual improvements
- Policy 9.2 The Town, along with private property owners and developers, shall work to jointly improve the appearance and design of major street corridors.
- Policy 9.3 Sign policies and standards shall be periodically updated to enhance community identity and create a high quality
- Measures to improve the effectiveness of grading, landscaping and buffering standards for new and existing developments shall be encouraged.
- Policy 9.5 The significance of *street trees* in providing visual relief, summer cooling, improved air quality and livability shall be recognized through public policies and actions to encourage their planting and maintenance.
- The Town shall encourage public, private, and utility company efforts to place utility wires underground whenever

### 10. Community Character

- Policy 10.1 The *identification*, *restoration* and active use of structures, buildings, monuments, and neighborhoods of historic or architectural significance shall be encouraged as a means of enhancing their economic and cultural value to the
- Policy 10.2 Multiple and appropriate adaptive reuse of historic resources shall be encouraged.
- Policy 10.3 Wise development of the tourism potential of the area's architectural, historic, scenic and natural resources shall be
- Policy 10.4 The destruction of significant architectural, historic, scenic, natural and archaeological resources in the planning area shall be discouraged.
- Policy 10.5 New development, redevelopment and rehabilitation of structures and sites shall occur in a manner which is consistent with the neighborhood and architectural context of the immediate area, and supportive, whenever possible, of Boone's original community character as a High Country small town.

### 11. Environmental Quality

support of plan implementation, shall be supported.

- Policy 11.1 Continued improvements to public *sewage collection and treatment* facilities shall be supported, with priority given to servicing existing or planned densely developed areas where environmental and economic benefits can be
- Policy 11.2 Development activities in the 100 year floodplain or near lakes and streams shall be carefully controlled. If development must occur, low intensity uses such as open space, recreation and adequately buffered agricultural or forestry activities shall be preferred.
- Policy 11.3 Runoff and drainage from development and agricultural activities shall be of a quality and quantity as near to natural conditions as possible, with special emphasis given to critical watershed areas.
- Policy 11.4 Development which preserves the *natural features of the site*, including existing topography, streams and significant trees and vegetation, shall be reflected in the Town's Development Standards.
- Policy 11.5 Development on ridgetops and excessive slopes shall be discouraged. Where development is allowed, stringent
- performance standards shall be met. Policy 11.6 Recognizing the economic and environmental costs of commercial and residential stormwater runoff, innovative stormwater management techniques such as permeable sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas shall be
- Policy 11.7 The development of a comprehensive drainage and flood management plan, including public and private actions in
- Policy 11.8 Local area requirements for solid waste disposal facilities shall be anticipated through advanced planning; facilities shall be located and designed so as not to adversely impact significant natural or man-made resources.
- Policy 11.9 The Town recognizes the need for a regional solution to the solid waste issue, and will support efforts toward that
- Policy 11.10 Research and development of reuse, recycling, and resource recovery programs, whether public or private, shall be encouraged and supported.
- Policy 11.11 The Town shall encourage and set an example which promotes water and energy conservation, and the reduction of waste generation at the source.
- Policy 11.12 An anti-litter consciousness, beginning in the schools, and including the university, businesses and individual citizens and visitors shall be encouraged Policy 11.13 The location of *hazardous waste storage and disposal facilities* in the Boone planning area shall not be supported. *Transportation of hazardous materials* through Boone shall be discouraged. The location of propane storage tanks

shall be carefully controlled to the extent permitted by State and federal law, as well as by state enabling legislation

Policy 11.14 Industries and activities producing excessive noise, odor, air, water and light pollution, or other harmful impacts, shall be discouraged, unless such adverse impacts can be clearly overcome through effective mitigation.

### 12. Downtown

for local government regulation.

- Policy 12.1 Public policies and actions shall continue to support the *maintenance and revitalization* of the downtown and adjoining neighborhoods as the historic and cultural center of the community.
- Policy 12.2 A compatible design character for the downtown area, drawing upon the locality's original High Country small town features, shall be identified, reinforced and supported to put forth a quality image and sense of place.
- Policy 12.3 The Town, in concert with downtown property owners and merchants, shall encourage public and private efforts to develop and publicize adequate and appropriately designed off-street parking lots in the downtown area.
- Policy 12.4 A variety of mutually compatible and supportive mixed uses shall be encouraged in the downtown area.
- Policy 12.5 Public and private developments shall be encouraged to incorporate local artistry into public and semi-public spaces downtown.
- Policy 12.6 Public and private development decisions in the downtown area shall exhibit a special concern for maintaining the intensive, pedestrian oriented character of the district. "Improvements" which would give priority to the automobile and land uses which would have a non-intensive nature should be specifically avoided.

## 13. Coordination & Public Involvement

economic development and a new library site shall be encouraged.

- Policy 13.1 *Coordinated inter-governmental and university-town planning* for urban area land use and development, transportation, utilities, recycling, environmental management, law enforcement, education, recreation, tourism and
- Policy 13.2 *Public involvement* shall be encouraged in decisions concerning land use and development by making the public aware of proposed developments at the earliest opportunity, as well as fostering communication among developers, the Town, the County, the University, and the general public.
- Policy 13.3 Neighborhood and special area planning shall be encouraged to foster public involvement in the production of closely tailored, action oriented special area plans and programs.
- Policy 13.4 Specific functional plans and implementation tools shall be supported as part of the comprehensive planning program for the Town and County. Policy 13.5 Special committees, advisory panels, educational forums, public workshops, leadership seminars, town meetings
- community planning and action.
- Policy 13.6 *Urban type development* within the Urban Growth Area shall meet appropriate Town standards. Policy 13.7 Properly planned, mixed use developments that promote efficient provision of public services shall be encouraged within the Urban Growth Area.

and media contacts shall be encouraged and fostered to enhance the effectiveness of citizen involvement in

Policy 13.8 Funding for outside agencies and organizations serving the citizens of Boone shall continue to receive support consistent with area service needs and Town budget constraints.

## 14. Public Safety

- Policy 14.1 The Town shall employ community education, school, and public involvement programs to enhance community awareness of public safety issues.
- Policy 14.2 The Town shall periodically review the need for additional paid personnel, capital improvements and equipment needs to meet or exceed public safety standards, insurance ratings and other measures of public safety.

Policy 14.3 The Town shall periodically review the need for and sponsor professional level training for law enforcement, fire,

- and emergency personnel. Policy 14.4 The Town shall place renewed emphasis on enforcement of the State Building Code and flood prevention regulations to avert or minimize loss of life and property during natural disasters.