

Introduction

Why Is A Comprehensive Plan Needed?

According to North Carolina General Statutes, every local government must base their zoning decisions on a long-range plan which describes policies for land-use and growth management issues. These decisions range from rezoning decisions to transportation regulations to policies governing the uses and subdivision of land. Lenoir's "current" plan to guide its Planning Board and Council was adopted in the mid-1970s and, according to local officials, its 30-year-old policies simply do not reflect existing land-use and growth issues in Lenoir today. A new plan was desperately needed. The Lenoir City Council set the process in motion by contracting with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to assist the City's Planning Department in developing such a plan.

The Planning Process

The *Lenoir Comprehensive Plan* was developed by a 15-person committee appointed by the Lenoir City Council in September 2005. The members of the Lenoir Comprehensive Planning Committee were drawn from interested citizens across the City, representing a variety of viewpoints on issues pertaining to the City's growth and development. The Committee underwent an intense 18-month process of education, discussion and strategic thinking to develop a draft plan for presentation to the Lenoir Planning Board and the City Council. The heart of the *Plan* is a series of recommended growth management strategies in the areas of land use and growth management, transportation, public services, economic development, natural and environmental resources, and historic and cultural resources. If the *Plan* is adopted by City Council, the Planning Board and the City's Planning staff will be charged with prioritizing and implementing the strategies proposed in the *Lenoir Comprehensive Plan*.

Citizen Involvement

Unlike the previous policy document on land use, the process of creating a new *Plan* offered several important ways for citizens to be involved in the *Plan's* development. Early in the process, four community meetings were held at elementary schools across the City (Valmead, Whitnel, Davenport and Lower Creek). At this first series of meetings, 78 participants were asked to list the assets of the City, their concerns about Lenoir and their vision for the City. Results from the first series of community meetings are provided in Appendix A. Near the conclusion of the planning process, citizens were given an opportunity to evaluate whether the draft recommendations as developed by the Committee reflected citizens' concerns and interests. Formal public hearings also provided opportunities for citizen input at meetings of the Planning Board and City Council.

Residents and other interested parties were offered an additional way to respond to some aspects of the *Comprehensive Plan* through an Internet survey which featured choices between visual components of some development techniques and open-ended options to describe their personal views on growth issues facing Lenoir. A summary of those web-based responses is listed in Appendix B.

The Approval Process

Members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee presented the *Plan* to the Lenoir Planning Board at its April 2007 meeting. After a unanimous decision to approve the document and forward it to the City Council, the Committee held a working session to discuss the plan recommendations in detail at the Council's Committee of the Whole session in late April. The *Lenoir Comprehensive Plan* was then reviewed by the Council at a public hearing during its May 15, 2007 Council meeting. The *Plan* was approved by the Lenoir City Council on that date.

Next Steps

Once approved, the *Plan* needs to be implemented. This important task asks the Planning Board, guided by the City's professional planning staff, to make specific recommendations for implementation to the City Council. Two essential components of implementation involve revising the City's *Zoning Ordinance* and *Subdivision Regulations* to reflect the strategies in the *Comprehensive Plan*. Like most municipalities, Lenoir uses these two growth management mechanisms to regulate where and how new residential, commercial and industrial development will occur. The *Plan's* proposed strategies will be accomplished after revisions to the *Zoning Ordinance* and *Subdivision Regulations* are approved by Council and incorporated into these documents.

Any Comprehensive Plan is intended to be an evolving document, revised by elected officials as policies and economic conditions change. The Planning Board and City planning staff should review the document periodically to determine its effectiveness and the need for revisions to the *Plan*.

Acknowledgments

The City Planning Department was assisted in developing the *Comprehensive Plan* by members of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Planning staff: Senior Planner John Kenny, Planners Jon Pilkenton and Andrea Lytle, and GIS Technician Allison Suggs. GIS Analyst Stephen Fox provided the "PhotoShop" manipulations of potential street scenes in Lenoir. City department heads contributed to the Committee's understanding of key issues facing the City's public services functions.

A Profile of the City of Lenoir

Centrally located in Caldwell County, the future site of the City of Lenoir was established by the NC Legislature as the County seat in 1841 and incorporated in 1851. Now consisting of over 19 square miles, Lenoir is the largest municipality by land area in Caldwell County and the second largest in the Unifour (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties), surpassed only by the City of Hickory at 29 square miles.

Demographics

The City of Lenoir was home to approximately 26% of Caldwell County's population or 20,469 persons in 2003, according to official estimates by the North Carolina State Demographer. For comparison purposes and to analyze population change over time, this analysis relies largely upon the figures compiled by the US Census Bureau during the 1990 and 2000 Censuses. Data show that during the last decade of the 20th century, the population increase in the City was significantly lower than that of Caldwell County, North Carolina and the nation as a whole. Table 1 displays this information.

Table 1. Population, 1990 – 2000.				
	1990	2000	Change 1990 – 2000	% Increase
Lenoir	19,944	20,373	429	2.2
Caldwell Co.	70,709	77,415	6706	9.5
Hickory MSA	292,405	341,851	49,446	16.9
NC	6,632,448	8,049,313	1,419,865	21.4
US	248,709,873	281,421,906	32,712,033	13.1

Source: US Census 1990, 2000.

Past population growth trends are commonly used as an indicator of future growth. Table 2 shows that Lenoir is projected to grow by nearly seven percent from the 2005 population of 20,803 to an estimated 22,220 by 2020. During this same period, the number of households is expected to increase at a rate of 8.7% or 747 homes. Interestingly the number of persons/households is likely to decrease over time, indicating a population likely with an older median age in the future. Both of these trends reflect larger patterns seen across the state and the nation.

Table 2. Lenoir Population Projection, 2005 – 2020.						
Year	2005	2010	2015	2020	Growth 2005-2020	% Change
Persons	20,803	21,298	21,727	22,220	1417	6.8
Households	8,561	8,846	9,061	9,308	747	8.7
Persons/Household	2.43	2.41	2.40	2.39	-.04	-1.6

Source: WPCOG Data Center, 2005.

These population data do not reflect the large number of lots currently in the initial stages of development in Caldwell County. A recent study by data experts at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments revealed that an estimated 3,897 lots on over 11,300 acres of land have been announced for development in Caldwell County. These numbers are second only to Catawba County among the 12 counties of the Future Forward Economic Alliance. Most of these lots are in the higher, more mountainous areas of the County or on Lake Rhodhiss. Although these developments are projected for the County, the potential economic and social impact of these new residents on the City is huge.

Table 3 illustrates the age of Lenoir’s population in three main groups (pre-school/school age, working adults, older adults) in the year 2000 as compared to other towns of similar size, as well as Caldwell County and the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA. The percentage of Lenoir’s “youth” (persons under age 18) is similar to that of Caldwell County and the MSA. It is however slightly lower than Shelby’s and Thomasville’s (25% and 25.5% respectively). Lenoir’s “employment” age (persons age 19 to 64) at 58.8% is approximately five percent less than Caldwell County and the MSA. The “retirement” age (persons 65 years and older) is approximately five percent higher than Caldwell County and the MSA. These two facts suggest that the City has fewer workers than the comparison groups but more older persons who may encounter higher costs for medical and living expenses.

Table 3. Age of Population, 2000.			
Place	Persons Age 18 And Under (% Of All Persons)	Persons Age 19 To 64 (% Of All Persons)	Persons Age 65 And Older (% Of All Persons)
Lenoir	3,839 (22.9%)	9,877 (58.8%)	3,077 (18.3%)
Lexington	4,913 (24.6%)	11,986 (60.1%)	3,054 (15.3%)
Morganton	3,658 (21.1%)	10,448 (60.4%)	3,204 (18.5%)
Newton	2,985 (23.8%)	7,469 (59.4%)	2,106 (16.8%)
Shelby	4,877 (25.0%)	10,764 (55.3%)	3,836 (19.7%)
Thomasville	5,051 (25.5%)	11,908 (60.2%)	2,829 (14.3%)
Caldwell County	18,149 (23.4%)	49,007 (63.3%)	10,259 (13.3%)
Hickory–Morganton-Lenoir MSA	82,147 (24.0%)	216,038 (63.2%)	43,666 (12.8%)

Source: US Census, 2000.

Educational Attainment and Earning Potential

The income level and educational attainment of a community’s residents are often used as common indicators of how robust and dynamic a community will become. According to Table 4, Lenoir’s population over age twenty-five has nearly 47% high school graduates, compared with fifty percent in Caldwell County. These numbers are about equal with the number of persons over age 25 with a high school diploma in the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA.

Slightly more than 13% of Lenoir residents hold a Bachelors degree or higher, compared with ten percent in the County. Conversely, 34.2% of the workforce has less than a high school education, only slightly higher than Caldwell County at 33.8% but significantly higher than the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA percent (29.6%). The level of educational attainment is expected to rise as older, less educated workers retire and are replaced by younger workers with more schooling.

The trend toward a more highly educated workforce will continue as traditional jobs in furniture, textile and hosiery, which required less education, are replaced by jobs in the service and technical sectors with higher educational demands of its workforce.

Table 4. Educational Attainment, 2000.				
Place	% Less than High School	% High School Graduate	% Associate (2-Year) Degree	% Bachelors (4-year) Degree or Higher
Lenoir	34.2%	46.8%	5.6%	13.4%
Lexington	36.1%	45.8%	4.1%	14.0%
Morganton	30.1%	42.1%	6.9%	20.9%
Newton	29.3%	50.6%	5.1%	15.0%
Shelby	26.8%	49.2%	6.0%	18.0%
Thomasville	34.2%	51.7%	4.5%	9.6%
Caldwell County	33.8%	50.5%	5.3%	10.4%
Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA	29.6%	50.2%	6.6%	13.6%

Source: US Census, 2000.

Table 5 offers an introductory look at the large number of Caldwell workers who lost jobs between 1995 and 2005. According to the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, Caldwell County's unemployment rate was 3.9% in 1995. While that number had decreased to 2.9% in 2000, by 2005, the unemployment rate was 8.2%.

Table 5. Employment Rates, 1995, 2000 and 2005.				
Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	%Rate
1995	41,358	39,746	1,612	3.9
2000	42,404	41,164	1,240	2.9
2005	40,148	36,856	3,292	8.2

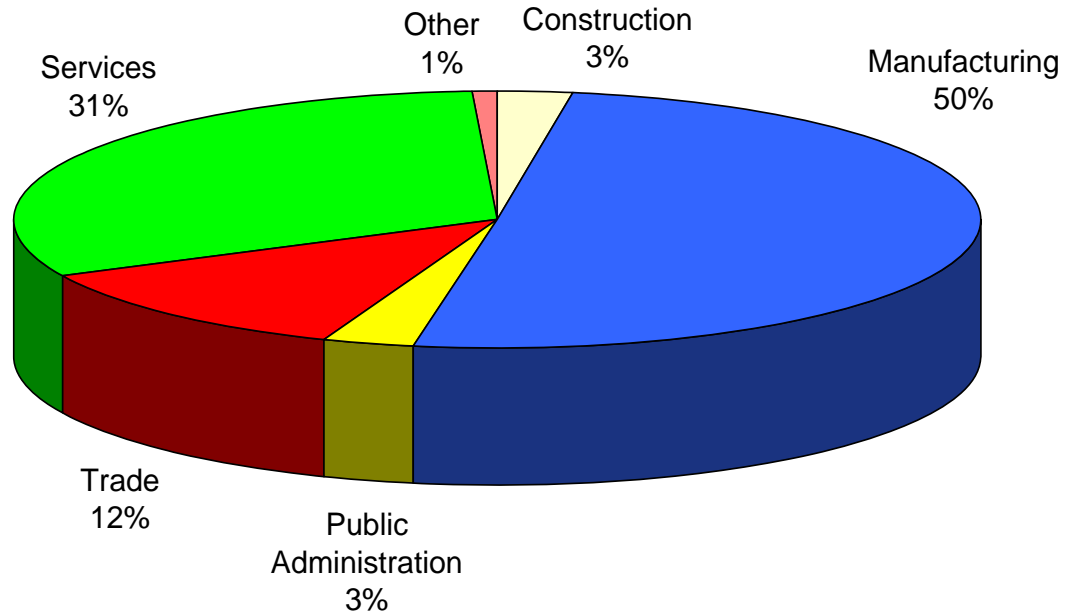
Source: NC ESC, 2006.

Figure 1: Caldwell County Employment Distribution, 1995 - 2005 shows an economy and job market substantially impacted by outsourcing and factory closings in the manufacturing sector. The data here show that in 1995 the largest employment sector in Caldwell County was manufacturing, with 50% of workers. This was followed by 31% employed in the service sector. In 2005 manufacturing jobs had declined 15% from 1995; conversely, service sector jobs increased by 9% during that same period.

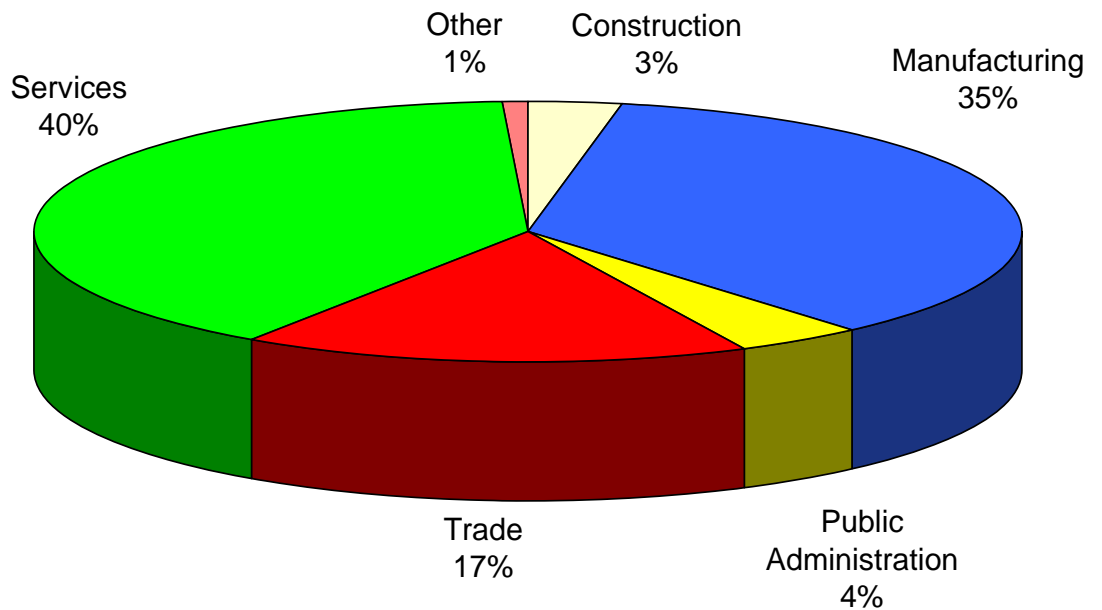
Retail and wholesale Trade increased from 12% in 1995 to 17% in 2005. The other main job sectors remained essentially the same in the decade from 1995 to 2005.

Figure 1. Caldwell County Employment Distribution, 1995 – 2005.

**Caldwell
Jobs, 1995**



**Caldwell
Jobs, 2005**



Source: NC ESC, 2007.

Table 6 shows that in 1999 the estimated median household income in Lenoir was \$29,369. Fourteen percent of households had an income of less than \$10,000; nineteen percent of households had income of \$60,000 or more. Comparatively speaking, Lenoir's median household income is more than \$6,000 less than Caldwell County as a whole (\$35,739) and more than \$5,000 less than the City of Morganton (\$34,678).

Table 6. Household Income, 1999.			
Place	1999 Estimated Median Household Income	% Of 1999 Households With Incomes Below \$10,000	% Of 1999 Household Incomes Over \$60,000
Lenoir	\$29,369	14.0%	19.1%
Lexington	\$26,226	17.6%	17.3%
Morganton	\$34,678	13.6%	23.5%
Newton	\$36,696	10.2%	24.3%
Shelby	\$29,345	16.1%	20.2%
Thomasville	\$30,792	13.2%	17.5%
Caldwell County	\$35,739	10.1%	21.8%
Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA	\$37,818	9.2%	24.4%

Source: US Census, 2000.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The ethnic makeup of Lenoir is displayed in Table 7. Lenoir's population is substantially more diverse in all ethnic categories than Caldwell County (92% white) or the Hickory MSA as a whole, but significantly less diverse than the other comparison cities its size. The City's 14.7% African-American population ranks fourth to that of comparable municipalities of equal population. Lenoir's African-American population, however, is approximately three times that of Caldwell County as a whole and two times that of the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA.

Table 7. Race and Ethnicity, 2000.				
Place	White	Black	Other	Hispanic (any race)
Lenoir	80.9%	14.7%	4.4%	4.3%
Lexington	58.8%	29.9%	11.3%	10.7%
Morganton	75.7%	12.8%	11.5%	11.2%
Newton	77.6%	12.3%	10.1%	9.5%
Shelby	56.9%	41.0%	2.1%	1.6%
Thomasville	69.6%	23.9%	6.5%	6.9%
Caldwell County	91.7%	5.5%	2.8%	2.5%
Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA	87.5%	6.9%	5.6%	4.0%

Source: US Census, 2000.

Growth Issues and Land Use Management

Current Conditions and Trends

The City of Lenoir and its extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) encompass 31.9 square miles. Lenoir's ETJ includes approximately 12 square miles of unincorporated area adjacent to the City limits, over which Lenoir has planning and zoning jurisdiction. While ETJ property owners do not pay City taxes or receive municipal services, they are represented by proportionate seats on the Lenoir Planning Board. Most of the land in the ETJ is zoned and used for low-density residential purposes.

Similarly, residential uses occupy most of the land within the City limits of Lenoir. As Table 8 shows, 81.6% of the land is used for single-family residential purposes. Another 2% is dedicated to multi-family residential uses such as apartment complexes, townhouses and condominiums.

Commercial, institutional and manufacturing activities occupy more than 14% of the land. Institutional uses include government facilities as well as churches, community centers and parks (see *Map 1: City of Lenoir Current Land Use*).

Table 8. Lenoir Land Use Distribution, 2006.				
Land Use	# Parcels	Acres	Sq. Miles	Percentage
Single-family Residential	10,511	16,670.1	26.05	81.60%
Multi-family Residential	310	346.2	0.54	1.69%
Commercial	670	1029.0	1.61	5.04%
Institutional	148	668.6	1.04	3.26%
Manufacturing	157	1192.1	1.86	5.83%
Vacant/Open Space	28	721.8	0.82	2.57%
TOTAL	11,824	20,627.8	31.92	99.99%

Source: Caldwell County GIS and WPCOG Data Center, April 2006.

Although single-family residential zoning dominates most of the land in Lenoir, much of this land is considered "underdeveloped." In other words, the parcels are vacant or contain one single-family house on more than five acres and could feasibly be developed in the future. Table 9, below, shows that 7% of the residential parcels are larger than five acres, but this percentage contains 61% of the total residential acreage in Lenoir. These land use statistics suggest that a substantial amount of additional development could potentially occur in Lenoir.

Table 9. Underdeveloped / Vacant Residential Land 5+ Acres, 2006.		
	Number	Percent of Total
Total Residential Parcels	10,861	100%
Total Residential Acres	17,016	100%
Total Square Miles	26.6	100%
Residential Parcels 5+Acres	764	7.0%
Total Residential 5+Acres	10,387	61.0%
Total Square Miles Residential 5+Acres	16.2	61.0%

Source: Caldwell County GIS and WPCOG Data Center, April 2006

Zoning

Lenoir currently has 17 zoning districts allowing different types of development in the City limits and ETJ (see *Map 2: City of Lenoir Current Zoning Map*). Each zoning district includes a list of permitted uses, minimum lot sizes and intensity of development. Conditional use permits are frequently issued in Lenoir to allow certain uses that are only appropriate in a zoning district if specific conditions are attached. Examples of conditional use permits allowed in some of the residential zoning districts include Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and churches.

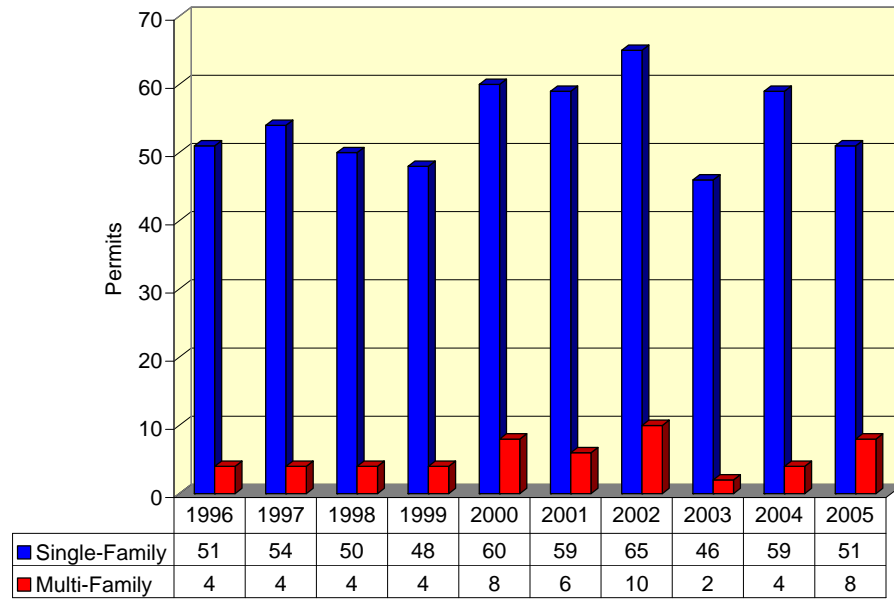
Residential

Residential zoning districts mainly vary in regards to lot size, but some types of residential structures are restricted to certain zones, as demonstrated by *Figure 2: Residential Zoning Matrix* on the following page. Duplexes and manufactured homes, for example, are currently permitted uses only in the City's R-6 and R-9 districts and in the ETJ's R-R (Rural-Residential) district. The R-20, R-15 and R-12 zoning districts are reserved primarily for single-family homes with some other uses allowed through the conditional use permit process.

Caldwell County issues building permits for all new construction. *Figure 3: Residential Building Permits Issued in Lenoir, 1996 – 2005* (p. 11) shows the total number of building permits issued from 1996 through 2005 for single-family and multi-family dwelling units, excluding manufactured homes. During this time, permits for 543 single-family homes and 54 multi-family developments were issued. Since the chart does not identify type of multi-family developments permitted (duplex, triplex, apartment complex, etc.), it is difficult to assess the number of dwelling units actually added to the market during this period.

ADD: Figure 2. Residential Zoning Matrix

**Figure 3.
Residential Building Permits Issued in Lenoir, 1996 – 2005.**



Source: Caldwell County Building Inspections and WPCOG Data Center, 2006.

Since 1996, an average of 54 single-family homes and 5 multi-family buildings were constructed each year in Lenoir. In 2002, Lenoir saw the most significant increase in housing units with 65 additional single-family units and 10 multi-family buildings constructed.

Considering the large amount of vacant and underdeveloped land available in Lenoir that could be used for residential purposes, the *Land Use Strategies* propose that pedestrian amenities such as connected streets, sidewalks and open space be required in new major subdivisions. Requiring these amenities will create more vibrant communities and enable residents to walk to nearby destinations.

Downtown

The City of Lenoir has recently made significant financial investments in the redevelopment of its downtown area. New artwork and sculptures, decorative fountains and pedestrian facilities now enhance the public spaces along West Avenue and Main Street. The one-way street pairs have been converted to two-way traffic and significant on- and off-street parking has been added in the area.



These improvements, coupled with significant private investment, have stimulated redevelopment and new infill development in the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods. *Map 3: Downtown District with Transitional Areas* defines the downtown area and commercial corridors leading into and out of downtown.

Commercial / Industrial

A large percentage of the commercial development in Lenoir is concentrated along US Highway 321, US Highway 64/NC Highway 90 and NC Highway 18, as well as in the downtown area. Naturally, increased commercial activity generates additional traffic which may lead to a visually “cluttered” atmosphere.



For these reasons, the *Land Use Strategies* recommend sidewalks and shared parking areas and driveways to minimize traffic congestion. The *Strategies* also suggest heightened architectural standards for new and redeveloping businesses to preserve the visual attractiveness of these important commercial areas.

The significant manufacturing and textile plant closings Lenoir has suffered in the past few years have created many vacant industrial buildings throughout the City. While a few of these buildings have been leased or sold to new businesses, many remain empty because of poor adaptability to other industrial uses, aged condition or location in a floodplain. Existing environmental problems or groundwater contamination on the site may also deter redevelopment of these sites. In many cases, companies find it more cost effective to construct new buildings rather than rehabilitate existing sites.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state Division of Waste Management sponsor brownfields programs to help redevelop these environmentally-contaminated sites. In exchange for grants, tax incentives and legal protection from liability, the buyer of the property enters into an agreement with the government agency to assess and clean up the site to the point it becomes suitable for the buyer's intended use. Lenders are more willing to finance these redevelopment projects because they are free from potential environmental lawsuits.

The City of Lenoir participated in the brownfields program through an EPA Grant received by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments for the former Singer Furniture plant on College Avenue SW after the City foreclosed for unpaid taxes. Under its agreement with the EPA, the City reviewed records from the plant and performed a soil assessment to determine the contaminants on the property. Currently, the City of Lenoir is working with EPA to remove asbestos on site which is hindering the removal of the remaining dilapidated buildings.

Another successful example of the brownfields program is the Buss Automation property, located on Creekway Drive NW. Soil and groundwater contamination on site

eventually led to operations being shut down. A private developer is working with the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources to reach a Brownfields Agreement that will establish a level of cleanup necessary to make the site safe for reuse.

Future Land Use

Like most Comprehensive Plans which typically look a decade or so into the future, the *Lenoir Comprehensive Plan* proposes strategies that reflect the Committee's best judgments about appropriate areas where future growth is most likely. The Committee spent considerable time considering portions of the City appropriate for future growth and development by the private sector. These areas tend to be readily accessible to public utility and transportation infrastructure, and have minimal impacts on environmentally sensitive areas. Among the constraints inhibiting development in Lenoir are the City's shared municipal borders with Gamewell, Cahah's Mountain and Hudson to the south; the nearby municipal border of Cedar Rock to the east; portions of the City with unbuildable topography and floodplains; and, to the City's north, steep slopes. These limitations to growth are depicted on *Map 4: City of Lenoir Development Constraints*.

Some areas where additional land use patterns are most appropriate in the coming decade are suggested on *Map 5: City of Lenoir Future Land Use*. These proposals include areas for high density residential development, allowing multi-family developments such as townhouses, condominiums or apartments in some locations; places appropriate for mixed-use development which would allow residential and commercial uses on the same parcel; future commercial locations; and parcels where vacant industrial sites could be redeveloped for other uses, such as commercial, mixed-use or residential development.

Land Use Policy Concepts

- Develop progressive and sound land use policies and strategies to ensure that Lenoir grows fairly, effectively and efficiently.
- Adopt sensible, straightforward zoning standards and procedures that are easily understood by developers and the general public.
- Foster distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas in the City.
- Adopt strong design standards to ensure that new development and redevelopment are assets to the surrounding community and Lenoir.
- Develop walkable, aesthetically-pleasing communities.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
- Recognize that Lenoir's downtown is a major economic and cultural asset to the City by continuing efforts to improve its appearance and attract new businesses.
- Protect buildings and neighborhoods of historic or architectural significance as a means of enhancing their economic and cultural value.
- Protect the distinctive residential character of Lenoir's neighborhoods from the encroachment of inappropriate non-residential development.
- Encourage industrial development in appropriate areas with adequate infrastructure and access to major highways.
- Increase requirements for landscaping and open space areas in new developments.
- Develop residential design qualities that do not negatively impact air quality, including pedestrian options such as sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths.
- Promote affordable housing for people in all stages of life.



- Preserve rural areas on the outskirts of Lenoir and in its extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Land Use Strategies

Residential

- Streamline the review process for new developments.
- Require new subdivisions to be designed as walkable neighborhoods, which include the following pedestrian amenities:

- Connected streets: Encourage connectivity between subdivisions by limiting the length of cul-de-sacs and requiring stub-out streets to adjacent vacant properties. Stub-outs should have signage to inform residents that the dead end is not permanent.



- Pedestrian connections to commercial, recreational and mixed-use destinations

- Sidewalks

- Street trees

- Planting strips

- Adequate street lighting, decorative lighting should be encouraged

- Neighborhood parks and open spaces

- Provide 20% common open space in major single-family residential subdivisions that is easily accessible and usable for recreation; at least 50% of the required open space should be located outside the 100-year floodplain. Where possible, open space should be linked between subdivisions.

- Stormwater retention areas should be designed as community amenities such as a park or as part of an open space area. Encourage tree preservation by prohibiting clear-cutting during construction and requiring cut trees to be replaced.

- Predominately single-family zoning districts should be more flexible to allow multi-family development as a permitted use with certain conditions. Multi-family development should be allowed at 150% of the density permitted for single-family houses in each residential district.



For example, a residential district which allows single-family housing at four units per acre would allow six multi-family units per acre. The following conditions should be required:

- Increased architectural standards;
 - A minimum of 30% open space; allow a density bonus when more open space is provided;
 - Recreational amenities such as parks, swimming pools, etc.
- Encourage homebuilders to use a variety of housing designs that remain compatible throughout the neighborhood.

- Establish a high-density zoning district that allows stick-built or modular homes exclusively. Limit “snout-houses” by requiring front-loaded garages to be flush or recessed from the front façade in high-density developments and subdivisions.



- Allow garage apartments in certain residential areas.

- Require multiple entrances for large subdivisions to improve safety and traffic congestion.

- Preserve mountain viewsheds by limiting ridgeline development and development on steep slopes. New development should complement the existing topography by limiting excessive grading and filling.



- Establish a riparian buffer prohibiting development along perennial or intermittent streams, as required by Stormwater Phase II regulations.

- Allow cluster subdivisions in more suburban and rural zoning districts to encourage open space conservation. The overall density should not be allowed to exceed the permitted density of the zoning district. Cluster subdivisions should provide at least 30% common open space as a buffer surrounding the neighborhood. Where sewer is not available, the City should allow common septic drainage fields or allow



individual fields to be located in the common open space.

- Investigate options and techniques to reduce speeding in new and existing neighborhoods. Develop a formal process for citizens and neighborhoods to request traffic calming features such as speed reductions and road humps.
- Develop appearance standards for landscaping, signage, utilities and pedestrian facilities to enhance the streetscape of downtown Lenoir, especially along Harper Avenue and Main Street. The City of Lenoir should also consider designing gateway entrances into downtown, possibly at the intersections of NC Highway 18/Harper Avenue and Creekway Drive/Harper Avenue.
- Adopt a “property maintenance code” to improve the appearance of deteriorating residential structures. Revise language in the City code to place restrictions on broken windows, access by unauthorized persons, overgrown yards and excessive clutter. Work with the public to resolve code enforcement issues fairly and within a reasonable timeframe.
- Create a registry of rental properties for annual inspection to ensure they meet minimum housing standards.
- Promote Lenoir and Caldwell County as retirement destinations by encouraging the development of quality multi-family buildings and senior “transitional” housing.
- The land currently zoned to allow manufactured homes is more than adequate.

Downtown

- Encourage mixed-use development in high-density commercial areas and downtown.
- Continue to offer incentives to downtown property owners to improve the vitality and appearance of the downtown area through the Main Street Program.



- Intensify current historic preservation efforts by establishing a National Register Historic District that uses federal and state tax incentives for restoration. Adopt zoning regulations that compel new development to complement historic buildings. Encourage the application of adaptive reuse techniques for historic properties. Provide information and opportunities for property owners to learn about preservation incentives.

- Develop design standards for new commercial development and redevelopment that are compatible with surrounding areas. Building facades should be well-articulated and blank walls should be avoided. Prohibit metal siding on the fronts or sides of buildings visible from public streets.



- Bring commercial buildings closer to the street in high-density areas and put parking on the side or rear of the buildings.
- Utilities should be buried underground, especially in the downtown area and along major corridors. The City should develop a plan to connect important street corridors with underground utilities and decorative lighting.
- Continue working to improve parking downtown. Improve signage to better direct drivers to the 900 available parking spaces.
- Designate more space for public art and events, including well-designed pedestrian amenities such as benches and picnic areas. Develop strategies and incentives to provide more public art displays.

Commercial / Industrial

- Increase design standards for new commercial and industrial development and redevelopment. Building facades should be well-articulated and blank walls should be avoided. Prohibit metal siding on the fronts or sides of buildings visible from public streets.



- Establish a riparian buffer prohibiting development along perennial or intermittent streams, as required by Stormwater Phase II regulations.
- Commercial and industrial developers should consider the existing topography to avoid unnecessary grading or filling.
- Provide incentives for redevelopment of existing, vacant industrial sites. Pursue grant opportunities, such as federal funds for brownfield mitigation, to assist in

these efforts. The City should pursue ways to create “certified industrial sites” to attract new industry with sites prepared for immediate development.

- Encourage the redevelopment of large, abandoned industrial buildings by creating a new transitional zoning district along the major corridors that allows industrial, commercial and mixed-use developments.
- Provide incentives, such as density bonuses, to encourage commercial and office development to locate in planned and mixed-use developments so as to minimize the proliferation of strip development.

- Require landscaped areas along road frontages, entrances to large developments and interior roads. All loading, storage, refuse and maintenance areas should be heavily landscaped and located at the rear of buildings.



- Require landscaped islands in parking areas to prohibit large expanses of uninterrupted “seas” of asphalt. Reduce the number of required parking spaces by basing those spaces on the actual square footage used by customers.

- Bring commercial buildings closer to the street in high-density areas and put parking on the side or rear of the buildings.

- Adopt a “property maintenance code” to improve the appearance of deteriorating industrial and commercial structures. Revise language in the City code to place restrictions on broken windows, access by unauthorized persons, overgrown yards and excessive clutter.

- Work with the public to resolve code enforcement issues fairly and within a reasonable timeframe. The City should work proactively to enforce existing ordinances.



- Consider offering incentives to businesses which demolish or renovate abandoned structures and restore land to NC DENR standards.

- Promote the expansion of the sidewalk network in Lenoir by 1) requiring all businesses to install sidewalks in areas that are reasonably expected to attract pedestrian traffic; 2) requiring sidewalks and/or greenways in new major subdivisions; 3) promoting connections of existing sidewalks through a Pedestrian, Greenway and Bicycle Plan.
- Limit the use of “windblown” signs such as banners or balloons and signs with electronic, scrolling signs that may be distracting to drivers.

- Amend signage requirements to promote monument-style signs and master signage instead of pole signs. The size of the sign should be proportional to the size of the building façade. Where possible, encourage the use of “logo” signs that would be easily recognized by the traveling public.



- New cell towers should be located on existing facilities such as water towers, flag poles, etc. Require cell phone companies to co-locate rather than build new towers and post a financial bond to remove the tower if it is no longer in use.
- Lighting at all commercial or mixed-use developments should be angled downward and shielded to avoid illuminating the night sky.
- Utilities should be buried underground, especially in the downtown area and along major corridors. The City should develop a plan to connect important street corridors with underground utilities and decorative lighting.

- Stormwater retention areas should be designed to enhance the landscaping and appearance of commercial and industrial properties.



- Low-lying development should be engineered with retention ponds and other methods to control stormwater runoff and minimize downstream flooding.
- Develop a data base of properties that are flood-prone but outside the 100-year floodplain to alert potential developers of concerns with parcels repeatedly flooded.

Transportation

Lenoir is part of the Caldwell County urbanized area and as such is included in the planning area of the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO). As a member of the GHMPO, Lenoir’s transportation planning is primarily provided by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The GHMPO planning boundary was increased after the 2000 Census to include the urbanized area of the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

The MPO transportation planning process gives Lenoir the opportunity to have its transportation projects coordinated by transportation professionals and ultimately recommended for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP plan covers a seven-year period and is updated every two years. All major transportation projects for an area are detailed in this plan.

The transportation network within Lenoir consists mainly of City streets and major thoroughfares. The major roadways through Lenoir are US Highway 321 North and South and US Highway 64-NC 18 East and West. These highways intersect at the area known as Smith’s Crossroads. *Map 6: City of Lenoir Transportation* depicts major transportation routes, proposed corridors and significant NC DOT highway projects in coming years.

Roads and Highways

Table 10 lists actual traffic counts along major thoroughfares in Lenoir from 1994 and 2003 together with traffic projections for the year 2025.

Table 10. Average Daily Traffic Count, 1994-2025.				
	US Hwy 321 @ SW Blvd	US Hwy 321 @ Smith's Crossroads	US 64/NC 18 Smith's Crossroads	US Hwy 321 @ Creekway Drive
1994	28,400	25,800	25,300	15,100
2003	33,000	29,000	26,000	17,000
2025	47,000	46,000	36,000	22,000
	US 64/NC 18 @ SW Blvd	NC 18 @ NC 90	Harper Ave @ McDonalds	Downtown (West Ave)
1994	15,000	16,400	28,600	5,100
2003	14,000	18,000	28,000	4,600
2025	27,900	29,500	40,000	n/a

Source: NCDOT AADT maps, 1994-2003 and NCDOT Thoroughfare Plan Technical Report for Caldwell County .

Map 5: City of Lenoir Transportation locates the two most important transportation projects in the County, as well as Gateway points and Gateway corridors proposed in this *Plan*. Gateway points or entrances are specific locations along major thoroughfares at or near the Lenoir City limits where welcome signs or art displays

inform the public they are entering the City. Gateway corridors are major thoroughfares through the City. The *Plan* recommends that development surrounding the Gateway points and along Gateway corridors have higher standards for appearance, landscaping, signage, utilities and pedestrian facilities to appeal to citizens and visitors.

Blowing Rock Boulevard and Hickory Boulevard (US 321)

Blowing Rock Boulevard is a 5-lane facility from Smith's Crossroads north to Valmead Elementary School. Hickory Boulevard is a 4-lane divided facility which runs from the Catawba River to Smith's Crossroads where US 321 intersects with US 64/NC 18. A considerable number of driveways provide access to various commercial establishments along sections of the road.

Two urban-style interchanges have been considered at Smith's Crossroads, the single-point urban interchange and the compressed diamond interchange. Either interchange would allow vehicles to travel north and south on US Hwy 321 without being impeded by a signal light. Vehicles traveling US 64/ Hwy 18 would travel east and west through a signalized intersection with ramps to access US 321. This project is currently unfunded and planning and design would not occur until after 2013.

US 321, an important corridor both inside and outside Caldwell County, is a part of the North Carolina Intrastate System, the National Highway System, the National Truck Network and both newly designated North Carolina Multi-Modal Investment Network and Strategic Highway Corridors. It is critical to preserve the remaining integrity of US 321 by strictly limiting any further direct commercial access onto this facility. Transportation officials have recommended that the entire length of Hickory Boulevard be widened to a 6-lane divided facility.

STATUS: Current planning and design phase (TIP Project U-4700).

Connelly Springs Road (SR 1001)

The improved section of Connelly Springs Road from Southwest Boulevard to US 321-A is now open to traffic and has changed traffic patterns in the vicinity. The project calls for the continuation of Connelly Springs Road as a 5-lane facility from US 321-A (Norwood Street) to Hibriten Drive (SR 1178) with a new interchange at US 321 (Hickory Boulevard).

STATUS: Current planning and design phase (TIP Project U-2211)

Harper Avenue (NC 18 - Business)

The section of road between Hickory Boulevard (US 321) and Morganton Boulevard (US 64/NC 18) is a 6-lane section 64 feet in width. This short section of road facilitates turning moves both north and south onto US 321, south onto Morganton Boulevard as well as into two commercial driveways. The road serves through movements east onto Wilkesboro Boulevard and west on Harper Avenue into the Lenoir Central Business District. Transportation officials recommend that this section of road be realigned as part of the proposed interchange construction at Smith's Crossroads.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Hibriten Drive (SR 1178)

Hibriten Drive is a 2-lane road 20 feet in width. With the construction of the McLean Drive Extension, the northern part of Hibriten Drive is anticipated to become a shortcut between Wilkesboro Boulevard and US 321. The anticipated shortcut is the result of the congestion that exists at the Smith's Crossroads intersection. Hibriten Drive is not recommended for widening. Widening the road will only encourage more cut-through traffic along this residential route. Ideally, the Smith's Crossroads interchange will make it the more desirable and efficient route, thereby decreasing the attractiveness of using Hibriten Drive as a shortcut.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Hospital Avenue to Pennell Street Connector

Transportation officials recommended that a 2-lane minor thoroughfare be constructed connecting Hospital Avenue with Pennell Street. This connector would remove the offset intersection with Seehorn Street. It would also provide better connectivity from Powell Road to Blowing Rock Boulevard (US 321) and access to the Caldwell County Public Library. Access onto US 321 at this location will be more critical in the future considering plans to build an interchange at US 64 and US 321.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Lower Creek Drive Realignment

It is recommended that Lower Creek Drive be realigned from Eastover Circle to Wilkesboro Boulevard and aligned with the new signalized intersection at Hibriten Drive. This realignment will remove the offset intersection with Hibriten Drive, provide for a much safer movement for accessing both Wilkesboro Boulevard and Hibriten Drive, and increase the traffic carrying capacity of Wilkesboro Boulevard between Lower Creek Drive and Hibriten Drive.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

McLean Drive (SR 1180)

The section of McLean Drive between Norwood Street (US 321-A) and Hickory Boulevard (US 321) is a 2-lane facility 20 feet wide. Due to the new McLean Drive extension, projected traffic volumes, and commercial and residential driveways, it is recommended that McLean Drive be widened to a 3-lane facility.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Norwood Street (US 321-A)

The section of Norwood Street (US 321-A) from Swanson Road to McLean Drive is a 2-lane facility 22 feet wide. For the same reasons mentioned above, it is recommended that this section of Norwood Street be widened to a 3-lane facility.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Spruce Street Extension

It is recommended that a 2-lane minor thoroughfare be constructed to extend Spruce Street at Pennton Avenue to Delwood Drive at Harrisburg Drive. The extension would

serve as a north-south radial route and help alleviate traffic on Norwood Street (US 321-A). Norwood Street is projected to reach its capacity to handle traffic even before the road extension is complete.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Wilkesboro Boulevard (NC 18)

Wilkesboro Boulevard is an important corridor between Lenoir and Wilkesboro/North Wilkesboro. The section of Wilkesboro Boulevard within the Lenoir City limits has a considerable number of commercial driveways and intersecting streets. The section between US 321 and Hibriten Drive (SR 1178) is a 5-lane facility with turn lanes and is 64 feet wide. The section between Lower Creek Drive and Blue Ridge Circle is a 3-lane facility. The section between Blue Ridge Circle and Blue Ridge Road (SR 1550) is a 2-lane facility 24 feet in width. It is recommended that all sections be widened to a 5-lane facility.

STATUS: Planning and design after 2013.

Pedestrian and Bicycle System

The City of Lenoir's Greenway project began with 25 acres of property donated by the Lenoir Lions Club in 1996. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund awarded the City a \$50,000 grant for property acquisition in 1997 to purchase properties situated between those parcels donated to the City, giving the Greenway project roughly 30 acres of riparian area to separate Zack's Fork Branch from a densely populated neighborhood.

In 2000, the City was awarded \$88,535 from the NCDOT Enhancement Fund to begin construction of a 4-mile paved, multi-use pedestrian/bicycle path on the acquired property with extensions to the Lenoir soccer complex and Caldwell County Library. The City was awarded an additional \$92,400 in 2002 from the Enhancement Fund for a 1-mile extension that will connect the Greenway with City sidewalks on the west side of Lenoir. This connector will travel under US Highway 321, giving pedestrians and cyclists access to the east and west sides of the City without having to cross a major thoroughfare.

Approximately seven miles of paved Greenway are open to public use. Currently the City plans to finish construction of an additional 1-mile stretch of Greenway in the fall of 2007.

Transit System

Lenoir is currently serviced by the Caldwell County Area Transit System (CCATS), a non-profit that provides transportation coordination for human service agencies and advocacy for improved public transportation.

Caldwell County received support from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) to conduct a study to determine if it is feasible to combine the

transportation programs in Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and Alexander Counties. The final draft report was issued in late 2004 and concluded that it is feasible for a regional system to provide transportation services in the four-county area.

The next effort is an implementation study, which is currently underway. The Unifour County Managers have expressed their support and the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration are providing the financial resources necessary to complete the implementation study. It is anticipated that the implementation study will advance efforts to create a transit authority supported by local, state and federal funding for public transit in the four-county area.

Passenger Rail

The NCDOT has determined that the next major expansion of passenger rail service in the State will be in Western North Carolina. Plans are underway to initiate service between Raleigh and Asheville with stops in downtown Hickory and Morganton. This service may be operational by 2012.

Transportation Policy Concepts

Roads & Highways

- Coordinate transportation policies with land use policies.
- Anticipate and plan for growth that will result from road improvements and widening.
- Conduct congestion mitigation activities to alleviate traffic safety problems and congestion on major highways.
- Minimize speeding through enforcement and traffic calming measures.
- Preserve efficient and well-maintained roads, areas of low traffic and scenic drives.
- Adopt transportation policies that do not negatively impact air quality.
- Provide for better connectivity of road systems.
- Maintain and improve communication between the North Carolina Department of Transportation and citizens when transportation plans are developed and implemented.

Other Types of Transportation

- Encourage the increased use of alternate types of transportation, such as walking, bicycles, buses and railroads.
- Provide safe pedestrian access along sidewalks, trails and bicycle routes.
- Improve connectivity between recreation facilities and other points of interest such as schools, downtown and shopping areas.
- Explore possibilities for passenger rail service from Hickory to Lenoir.

Transportation Strategies

Roads & Highways

- Identify gateway points or entrances into the City of Lenoir where higher standards for appearance, landscaping, signage, utilities and pedestrian facilities will be required. Suggested gateways:
 - US Highway 321 at Southwest Boulevard
 - US Highway 321 at Creekway Drive (Valmead Elementary School)
 - US Highway 64/NC Highway 18 at Arrowood Dr (Hibriten High School)
 - NC Highway 18 at Southwest Boulevard
- Identify important gateway corridors through the City of Lenoir where higher standards for appearance, landscaping, signage, utilities and pedestrian facilities will be required (see *Figure 4*). Suggested corridors:

- US Highway 321
 - US Highway 321-A
 - Main Street
 - Mulberry Street
 - NC Highway 18
 - Southwest Loop
 - Creekway Drive
 - Harper Avenue
- Develop appearance standards for landscaping, signage, utilities and pedestrian facilities to enhance the streetscape of downtown Lenoir, especially along Harper Avenue and Main Street. The City of Lenoir should also consider designing gateway points or entrances into downtown, possibly at the intersections of NC Highway 18/Harper Avenue and Creekway Drive/Harper Avenue (see *Figure 5*).
 - Work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) during the design phase of the Smith's Crossroads Interchange project on US Highway 321 to mitigate any negative impacts to existing businesses, the golf club and the Broyhill Walking Park.
 - Implement and enforce current plans to restrict truck traffic in downtown by rerouting through trucks off US Highway 321-A and NC Highway 90.
 - Work with NCDOT to address traffic signalization and timing issues on major thoroughfares.
 - Improve railroad crossings to provide smoother passage.
 - Work with the Greater Hickory MPO to create a Congestion Management Plan that identifies intersections with congestion problems and/or high accident rates and recommends improvements. Some highly congested areas that need special attention include:
 - Smith's Crossroads
 - US Highway 321 at Wal-Mart
 - US Highway 321 at Hospital Avenue
 - NC Highway 18

**Figure 4.
Landscaped Boulevard Concept (US 321 North)**

BEFORE



AFTER



Figure 5.
Potential Development of Downtown Gateway at Harper/NC 18

BEFORE



AFTER



- Where five-lane roads exist or are proposed, consider a boulevard-type, 4-lane design with a landscaped median, instead of an unrestricted center turn lane, to control turning movements and improve appearance.
- Require an engineer-certified Traffic Impact Analysis for large commercial, industrial, mixed-use developments or redevelopments and large subdivisions.
- Restrict the number of driveways permitted for commercial developments and consolidate access for multiple developments, especially in congested areas such as US Highway 321.
- Require non-residential developments to stub-out streets to adjacent vacant properties in order to provide internal access wherever feasible.
- Encourage connectivity between subdivisions by limiting the length of cul-de-sacs and requiring stub-out streets to adjacent vacant properties.
- Develop a formal process for citizens and neighborhoods to request traffic calming features such as speed reductions and road humps.

Other Types of Transportation

- Develop a Pedestrian, Greenway and Bicycle Plan that includes an inventory of existing facilities and prioritizes future projects.
- Promote the expansion of the sidewalk network in Lenoir by 1) requiring all businesses to install sidewalks in areas that are reasonably expected to attract pedestrian traffic; 2) requiring sidewalks and/or greenways in new major subdivisions; 3) promoting connections of existing sidewalks through a Pedestrian, Greenway and Bicycle Plan.
- Develop greenways, trails and bicycle routes that connect with existing commercial areas and schools in surrounding communities as proposed by Caldwell Pathways or suggested in other adopted local plans. Use the “Rails-to-Trails” program to develop railroad lines that have been abandoned. Seek NC DOT “Enhancement Grants” to develop these projects.
- Whenever Lenoir or NCDOT improves an existing road, request adding the necessary pavement for a standard DOT bicycle lane.
- Create several access points for pedestrians to cross US Highway 321 safely.
- Construct a bicycle lane and improve signage on Harper Avenue as part of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

- Require sidewalks in new major subdivisions.
- Enhance CCATS service for transit-dependent persons and the general public.
- Explore possibilities for alternative fuels for public transportation and City-owned vehicles.
- Explore opportunities to maximize land use activities along railroad corridors that are conducive with rail transit.
- Explore options for acquiring and restoring the Lenoir train depot.

Public Services

The City of Lenoir constructs and maintains the City's street system, its water distribution and sewer collection, the public facilities the City owns and operates, its police and fire departments and the City's park and recreation department. Those services and facilities are described in this section of the *Comprehensive Plan* and shown on *Map 7: Public Facilities and Services*.

Public Works

The City's Public Works Department, with 46 employees, is responsible for

- street construction and maintenance,
- garbage, leaf and brush collection,
- maintenance of the City's vehicles,
- building maintenance and construction,
- grounds development and maintenance, and
- cemetery development and maintenance.

Because of growth pressures in Lenoir, maintenance of existing City buildings and streets, coupled with reduced staffing, has become an important issue facing the Public Works Department.

Public Utilities

Lenoir's Public Utilities Department operates a drinking water treatment facility, two wastewater treatment facilities and maintains over 400 miles of water and sewer piping and related infrastructure. Forty-nine employees are employed to provide these services to residents of the City, the Towns of Hudson and Sawmills and limited unincorporated areas of Caldwell County.

As the City grows, improvements to its utility infrastructure may be necessary, depending on the nature of that growth and development. For example, residential growth can usually be accommodated through existing infrastructure, while industrial or service sector growth may demand additional infrastructure or treatment plant capacity.

Police

Lenoir's Police Department provides proactive patrol through community policing with a staff of 56 sworn officers and 15 civilians. The Police Department is responsible for all criminal investigations within the City. In addition to parking enforcement and support for its own staff and other City departments, the Police Department assists state and federal agencies as requested.

Like other City departments, growth in population and size affects police policies and practices. The overall crime rate may increase, with juvenile and property crimes on the upswing. An increase in gang activities is already more noticeable in the City and the County, according to Police officials. Growth will inevitably increase calls for service, magnify the need to adjust staffing levels and add to traffic congestion.

Fire

The City's Fire Department provides fire suppression, prevention and education, code enforcement and emergency medical care and rescue within the City. Fifty-six members of the department serve the City's citizens. The department also serves citizens with public service functions in emergency situations. Its assistance helps residents and business maintain the lowest possible insurance rates on their properties.

As growth occurs, the Fire Department will need to provide fire protection to growing residential, commercial and industrial development. Additional funding for staff, equipment or facilities may be needed to provide adequate protection to these locations. The number of vacant industrial plants in the City is another issue of special concern to the department. The department's challenge is to maintain the highest possible level of service within the range recommended by national and state standards for the City's population.

Parks and Recreation

Eight park and recreation facilities highlight the offerings of Lenoir's Parks and Recreation Department. These include the Lenoir Aquatic and Fitness Center, the T. Henry Wilson Athletic Park, the T. H. Broyhill Walking Park, the Mulberry Recreation Center, the Lenoir Greenway, the Martin Luther King Center, the Lenoir Rotary Soccer Complex and the Old Lenoir High School Gym, Auditorium, Soccer Field and Batting Cages. A brief description of the facilities at each location follows:

- Lenoir Aquatic and Fitness Center: Key features include indoor (Junior Olympic size) and outdoor (Olympic size) swimming pools, a wading pool, whirlpool, steam room, three handball/racquetball courts, an exercise room, walking trails with access to the Lenoir Greenway.
- T. Henry Wilson Athletic Park: A 19-acre complex with athletic fields primarily for youth practices and games, three ball fields, a U18 soccer field and open space.
- T. H. Broyhill Walking Park: This popular 20-acre park contains a paved .43 mile walking loop around a lake and the Joe T. Ingram Nature Sanctuary for waterfowl and botanical gardens.

- J. E. Broyhill Park: This 9.5 acre park, located near downtown, offers picnic shelters, play areas, two outdoor basketball courts, a paved walking trail and an indoor meeting room.
- Mulberry Recreation Center: The City's major recreation center on 27 acres includes six lighted tennis courts, three lighted baseball/softball fields, two T-ball fields, outdoor and indoor basketball courts, a skateboard park, picnic tables and shelters, playground equipment, a game room, kitchen and gym.
- Lenoir Greenway: The Lenoir Greenway begins on Shirlee St. and currently extends for 7.2 miles of paved and unpaved trails for a variety of outdoor activities.
- Martin Luther King Center: This facility on nearly ten acres features two lighted tennis courts, one lighted baseball/softball field with dugouts, press box and concession stand, a multi-use play court, one lighted shuffleboard courts, a gym, social hall, lounge, kitchen, game room and club room.
- Lenoir Rotary Soccer Complex: Located on Zacks Fork Road, this complex contains eight soccer fields for practice and games with the Greenway located along the edge of the playing fields.
- Old Lenoir High School Gym, Auditorium, Soccer Field and Batting Cages: As part of the renovated Old Lenoir High School facility, this location features a gym for practices and games, a batting cage, one soccer field and a 300-seat auditorium for plays, concerts, lectures and group presentations.

Public Services Policy Concepts

- Ensure that the infrastructure of Lenoir's public service facilities is adequate as future growth and development occurs.
- Promote policies which insist that development occur where public infrastructure is already in place.
- Continue to provide the highest possible fire and police protection for all parts of the City.
- Ensure that adequate recreational opportunities, both active and passive, are provided for all segments of the population.
- Encourage innovative ideas to create new recreational opportunities.
- Continue to use and enhance school facilities for comprehensive community and recreation activities.

Public Services Strategies

- Consider the option of additional infrastructure funding in Capital Improvement Budgets as growth patterns require and economic conditions allow.
- Investigate the possibility of a City bond referendum for improvements to the City's infrastructure and facilities.
- Revise utility policies to:
 - direct financial resources towards refurbishing present infrastructure rather than extending water and sewer lines to new areas;
 - encourage infill growth where water and sewer infrastructure exists rather than extending utility lines into rural areas (techniques such as density bonuses may encourage infill development);
 - limit sewer extensions to incorporated areas.
- City staff and fire officials should maintain a Class 4 or better fire insurance (ISO) rating. As population increases occur, the City should investigate the need for additional fire stations to maintain or exceed its current ISO rating.

- The City of Lenoir should consider increasing its current ratio of police officers-per-capita to ensure high levels of protection as the City's population increases.
- Encourage open space in subdivisions which might function as undeveloped spots of beauty and solitude, as well as places for children and adults to play and exercise.
- Develop and strengthen recreation partnerships among the City, the school system, non-profits and the private sector.
- Renovate existing recreation facilities to provide more options for public use. Additional lighting at ball fields, for example, can allow more times for games.
- Work to maintain a balance between traditional athletic offerings (like soccer, baseball or football) and recreation options (such as walking or biking).
- Develop a Pedestrian, Greenway and Bicycle Plan that includes an inventory of existing facilities and prioritizes future projects.
- Develop greenways, trails and bicycle routes that connect with existing commercial areas and schools in surrounding communities as proposed by Caldwell Pathways or suggested in other adopted local plans. Use the "Rails-to-Trails" program to develop abandoned rail lines as trails. Seek NC DOT "Enhancement Grants" to develop these projects.
- Construct a bike lane and improve signage on Harper Avenue as part of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Economic Development

Regional Trends

Caldwell County has experienced substantial unemployment in recent years. With the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs and several small businesses that provided support services to the furniture industry, Lenoir has also been significantly affected by this trend. Economic stagnation and instability precludes active land development and robust growth. Many planners and economists envision an economic vitality for the region that transcends the recent downturn, promises a brighter future and is based on a set of realistic goals. A 12-county economic development project called Future Forward developed a series of strategies that articulate these goals:

- Improvement of the education and skills of available workforce.
- A renewed sense of entrepreneurship and innovation among area businesses.
- Development and concurrent protection of both urban and outdoor amenities to promote a high quality of life.
- Advancements in cooperation among local governments and governmental agencies.
- A more diversified economy that places more emphasis on retail, tourism, health care, education, retirement services, and a globally competitive manufacturing sector.

Source: Future Forward Economic Alliance, 2002

New Educational Opportunities

Signs already exist that this vision is beginning to take shape. Training and educational opportunities are abundant for people who have lost their manufacturing jobs and are interested in learning new skills to earn a living. Community leaders and County officials are working diligently to attract high-tech industries conducive to success in the new economy.

The Future Forward Economic Alliance established the Engineering Technology Center in Hickory to provide education and training opportunities to better prepare workers for a more diverse workforce and economy. Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute has partnered with Appalachian State University to create the ASU Teaching Center on the campus of Caldwell Community College. Such a venture would allow students to enter a four-year institution and receive a teaching degree through Appalachian State.

In 2005 CCC&TI in partnership with Caldwell County Schools established the Early College and Career Center curriculum. The Early College curriculum will allow students to enroll at CCC&TI as high school freshman and within five years graduate from the College with an Associates Degree. In 2006 the Early College was officially established as a four-year program which allows high school students to enter the

College during their junior year and after four years receive both a high school diploma and certification in one of four technology related fields (construction technology, information technology, electrical technology and plumbing) from the Community College.

Although it is currently a difficult transition from an economy based largely on manufacturing to a new, more diversified economy less susceptible to global forces, this region is positioned for future economic success and growth.

Lenoir’s Economic Development Board

Established in October of 2001, the City of Lenoir Economic Development Board in partnership with the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission provides information and assistance to business and industries interested in locating in Lenoir. Retaining and providing support for existing business and industry is another priority of this Board. The City also offers development incentives for capital investment to stimulate growth among business and industry located in Lenoir.

Caldwell County Economic Development Commission

The Caldwell County Economic Development Commission is now a County “department” reporting directly to the County Manager. The EDC Board of Directors consists of nine members. Before it became a county department, there were an additional fifteen “special advisors” including the town managers from other municipalities in Caldwell County. The EDC retains its status a 501(c) (3) entity and continues to own the railroad and is able to apply directly for grants. Successful economic development hinges on the ability to recruit new businesses, retain existing companies and encourage their direct investment in the community and other economic development projects, EDC officials note.

The vision of the EDC states the organization’s goal to “establish our county as a desirable destination for business, industry, retirement and tourism.” Its mission seeks to “facilitate the marketing of Caldwell County to encourage job creation, retention, and investment.” The EDC’s current strategic priorities focus on existing industry retention and expansion, business and industry recruitment, rail management and promotion, retail and commercial development, strategic marketing, product development, workforce development and communications and public relations.

Economic Development Policy Concepts

- Direct new industrial development to areas with appropriate infrastructure.
- Facilitate and encourage new, community-focused economic development policies.
- Develop policies to encourage more aesthetically-pleasing commercial, industrial and mixed-use developments.
- Help residents understand the effects of the major economic shift in the job sector in recent years.
- Assist workforce officials, schools and the community college to focus on ways to improve the skill sets of existing workers for new types of manufacturing or service sector jobs.

Economic Development Strategies

- Ensure the orderly expansion of City infrastructure through Capital Improvement policies to accommodate and direct business and residential growth.
- The City should work with NCDOT to rename US 321 North and South within the City limits “Lenoir Boulevard,” rather than the current names which draw attention to destinations beyond Lenoir.
- Work with the Caldwell County EDC to help residents understand the importance of service sector jobs in areas such as tourism, retirement communities and the medical field.
- Urge Chamber officials and economic developers to publicize more actively the City’s and County’s historic and cultural offerings as important ways to generate visits by tourists to the area’s unique assets.

Natural and Environmental Resources

Lenoir is fortunate enough to have a distinctive location close to some of the nation's best natural resources and open spaces. One of the most treasured drives in the nation is the Blue Ridge Parkway, which traverses peaks and exposes vistas for 469 miles from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in western North Carolina. From Lenoir, the visitor can reach the Parkway within 30 minutes by following US 321 north from the City.

With over 500,000 acres in western North Carolina, the Pisgah National Forest represents one of the largest publicly-owned "open spaces" in the state. And within an easy drive of Lenoir, the native or tourist can discover in Caldwell County itself nearly 50,000 acres of this outstanding natural resource. Wilson Creek in northwestern Caldwell County flows 23 miles from Grandfather Mountain south into the John's River and then into the Catawba. Designated a "Wild and Scenic River" in 2000, Wilson Creek travels through a rugged gorge beside a scenic drive with overlooks, waterfalls, kayaking, swimming, picnicking and a Visitors Center with displays on the area and its history.

The Linville Gorge Wilderness Area carved out by the Linville River offers options for backcountry hiking and camping in a remote forest of granite cliffs. The highest peak on Grandfather Mountain, Calloway Peak at 5,964 feet, is also the highest point in Caldwell County. This 4,500 acre nature reserve contains multiple options for nature and backcountry hikes, wildlife and scenic viewing and the "Mile High Swinging Bridge." Grandfather Mountain is the only privately-owned property named a United Nations Biosphere Reserve. Over 4,000 acres is preserved through donated conservation easements or lands purchased by the Nature Conservancy.

One last facility in Caldwell County that needs to be mentioned is the Tuttle State Educational Forest, located west of Gamewell and north from US 64/NC 18 on SR 1311. Tuttle State Forest offers outdoor educational workshops, ranger-led classes, a "talking tree" trail and picnic facilities.

Although Lenoir has abundant natural resources within easy driving distance and within the City itself, environmental threats and changing federal and state regulations will challenge the City in the coming decades to strike a balance between preserving those resources and promoting economic development. The City's and County's natural resources are shown on *Map 8: Natural and Environmental Resources*.

Air Quality

The City of Lenoir participates in the Unifour Air Quality Committee (UAQC), a local group which coordinates air quality planning activities in the four-county area. When the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA was designated as in "non-attainment" of acceptable ozone levels in 2004, the City of Lenoir and nine other local governments

formed an Early Action Compact (EAC) with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the NC Division of Air Quality (NCDAQ) to reduce air pollution through public education and awareness. In exchange, the region was able to defer the non-attainment status, which was crucial for maintaining and attracting new industries.

Another air quality issue is the pollution from particulate matter, otherwise known as PM 2.5. This pollution is generated from fine particulates such as dust and exhaust from automobiles. Currently Catawba County is designated non-attainment in regards to particulate matter. Although the City of Lenoir would not be impacted directly, pollution does not respect county lines and such a designation would threaten the economic development of the entire region. Lenoir is working with the EAC to reduce PM 2.5 levels to lessen chances that Caldwell County will be designated non-attainment.

Stormwater

When it rains, sediment and pollutants such as fertilizer, oil, grease and pet waste are picked up from the ground and carried into the nearest storm drain or creek without being treated. Increased development, as found in urban areas, causes more stormwater pollution because the water runs faster over rooftops, parking lots, streets and driveways since it cannot sink into the ground. In fact, polluted stormwater runoff is one of the leading causes of water pollution in North Carolina. To combat this growing problem, the US EPA and the NC DWQ have created a mandatory program for towns and cities in metropolitan areas to improve the quality of stormwater runoff. Phase I of this program dealt with the largest cities in North Carolina such as Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro and Wilmington. The next phase, or "Phase II," incorporates 123 smaller municipalities located in urban areas.

The City of Lenoir has been participating in the Phase II Stormwater Program since 2005. Caldwell County and its municipalities are unusual in the state in that they have agreed to work together to administer this program under a single permit, rather than each jurisdiction developing its own separate program. Caldwell County is the lead agency for this permit, but action by each of the local governments is required to ensure the conditions of the permit are met.

The Phase II Stormwater Program has six components. Public education requires the government to teach citizens about stormwater and efforts they can make to reduce it. Public participation involves the creation of volunteer opportunities such as Adopt-a-Stream and storm drain stenciling events. Illicit discharge detection and elimination means that the City must work to reduce illegal dumping into storm drains and creeks. Construction sites must be monitored to reduce sediment runoff. Post-construction development that exceeds two dwelling units per acre or 24% impervious surface must install stormwater controls such as detention ponds. Good housekeeping for municipal operations requires local governments to review their own operating policies and identify ways to reduce stormwater pollution. Many of

these components, such as public education and participation, will be much more effective since they will be administered across the entire County instead of just in the City of Lenoir.

Floodplain

Lenoir has extensive floodplain areas along many of its creeks and streams, as well as in low-lying valleys. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates the 100-year floodplain as land that has a 1% annual chance of being inundated by floodwaters. In order to build in the floodplain, structures must be elevated above the base flood elevation or the land must be filled in to raise the structure.

FEMA is in the process of issuing new floodplain maps for the state of North Carolina. Once final determinations have been made, Lenoir will need to amend its floodplain maps and update the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, if necessary, to meet or exceed state requirements.

Natural & Environmental Resources Policy Concepts

- Preserve ample open space for future generations.
- An essential natural resource that must be protected is the Catawba River, the main source of water for human consumption, industrial use and recreation.
- Encourage cluster residential development to preserve open space, wildlife habitats and the rural beauty of the surrounding region.
- Develop a plan to re-instate a recycling program in the City.
- Encourage the development of additional trails and greenways for the health and well-being of citizens.

Natural & Environmental Resources Strategies

Air Quality

- To fulfill the commitments of its Early Action Compact agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency and the North Carolina Division of Air Quality, the City should increase its public education campaign about air quality, particularly ozone, by including information in City water bills during summer months.
- Lenoir should continue to actively participate in the Unifour Air Quality Committee (UAQC).
- Promote LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), commonly known as green building, in new public and private buildings to reduce energy consumption and improve air quality.

Stormwater

- After adopting the Phase II stormwater ordinance in Lenoir, the City should continue to implement a strong public education campaign and encourage public involvement.
- Stormwater retention areas should be designed as community amenities such as a park or as part of an open space area. Encourage tree preservation by prohibiting clear-cutting during construction and requiring cut trees to be replaced.

- Establish a riparian buffer prohibiting development along perennial or intermittent streams, as required by Stormwater Phase II regulations.

Floodplain

- Floodplain development should be engineered with retention ponds and other methods to control stormwater runoff and minimize downstream flooding.
- Develop a data base of properties that are flood-prone but outside the 100-year floodplain to alert potential developers of concerns with parcels repeatedly flooded.
- Encourage open space uses in areas within the floodplain.

Recycling

- Work toward developing a proactive plan for Citywide curbside recycling, or at a minimum, a recycling center at a central location in Lenoir. Once the program is established, consider implementing an enforcement mechanism to increase participation.
- Use media outlets to educate citizens about the importance of recycling.
- Use creative techniques to encourage increased citizen participation in the recycling program. Focus educational efforts in the school system, so children can talk to their parents about the importance of recycling.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Lenoir is fortunate to have important historic and cultural assets that many communities its size do not possess. These City resources are described here, as are others in nearby towns and in Caldwell County within easy driving distance of Lenoir. *Map 9: Historic and Cultural Resources* shows those sites in the City, nearby towns and Caldwell County.

Economic development and tourism experts across the nation are discovering more and more that historic sites and cultural events attract tourists. Many baby-boomers enjoy the experience of visiting an area, spending money to dine, spending the night, enjoying festivals and sites and perhaps taking a memento of the experience back home when they leave. The number and variety of cultural and historic assets in Lenoir and Caldwell County represent a largely untapped community opportunity waiting for these visitors.

One regional historic and cultural organization that covers a broad swath of the NC foothills and mountain region is the national Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, a federal designation recognizing the “unique character, culture and natural beauty of Western North Carolina.” The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area describes its mission as “to protect, preserve, interpret, and develop” the heritage of these mountains to benefit future generations and “in so doing to stimulate improved economic opportunity in the region.” Caldwell County is located within the 25-county heritage region.

Historic Sites

The site of what would become Lenoir was established in 1841 when the NC State Legislature selected the crossroads of two major roads as the County seat for the newly established Caldwell County. This settlement was named for Revolutionary War General William Lenoir, a resident of Fort Defiance, his home in the Happy Valley area. Since General Lenoir died just two years before the town was founded, his reputation as a local hero made his name a suitable choice for the name of the newly established County seat. Lots in what would become Lenoir began to be sold in 1841 in an area that was known locally as Tucker’s Muster Ground, a common meeting and polling place for early residents.

Sites in downtown Lenoir currently on the National Register of Historic Places include the Caldwell County Courthouse, Kirkwood (now used by the Caldwell County Hospice organization), the old Lenoir High School, the Edgar Allan Poe House, and the Rabb House, also known as the Mary’s Grove Building. The application for a Lenoir Downtown Historic District has been submitted to the National Park Service for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. That application is under consideration by the NC State Historic Preservation office before being submitted to the National Park Service in Washington for approval.

The Caldwell County Historical Society Heritage Museum, on Vaiden Street in downtown Lenoir, occupies the last remaining building of Davenport College, a Methodist college for women which operated on this site from 1857 until it merged with Greensboro College in 1933. The Heritage Museum, in Davenport College's 1926 music building, housed the auditorium, classrooms and practice rooms.

The Museum's collection traces the history of Lenoir from Native American times through the industrial development of the City and its participation in US wars of the 20th century. Furniture, clothing, medical and household items, documents and photos help the visitor imagine something of what life must have been like for Caldwell County residents in earlier times. A reading room and gift shop help the visitor research and understand the County's history in greater depth. The Heritage Museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 am to 4:30 pm and Saturday from 10 am until 3 pm.

Other cultural assets in the City include the J. E. Broyhill Civic Center, a regional facility featuring a wide variety of national entertainment acts and a meeting venue for the City, County and nearby cities and towns across the region. Entertainment options feature family, classic, comedy, bluegrass and performing arts series. The Broyhill Center, operated by Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, includes a modern 1,000 seat auditorium, three meeting rooms and a banquet facility seating 400, located in a renovated furniture headquarters building.

Other important cultural and historic assets are located in neighboring towns and rural areas of Caldwell County within easy driving distance of Lenoir, and are sketched briefly here.

The Hickman Windmill Park and Depot Museum in Hudson, housed in an early 20th century railroad depot, features a train caboose as well as Town and railroad artifacts in the old Town depot. Picnicking is available at the park behind Town Hall on Central Street.

The Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum, located in the historic home of Andrew Baird, one of the Town's founders, features one of the oldest homes in Caldwell County and transportation-related artifacts tracing the evolving history of transportation in the Town, the County and the region. An enhancement grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation allowed the house to be restored, sidewalks and a bike path to be constructed, and transportation artifacts to be acquired. The Museum was dedicated in January 2007.

Located north and east of Lenoir in the Happy Valley area is Fort Defiance, the 18th century home of Revolutionary War soldier General William Lenoir. The home, located on NC Highway 268, was built on or near the site of the former war-time stockade fortification. General Lenoir's restored home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been outfitted with 18th and 19th century furnishings and historic artifacts. Costumed interpreters provide colorful tours on

Thursdays through Sundays from April to October and weekends from November to March.

Near Fort Defiance is the Chapel of Rest, located in the Patterson School National Historic District on NC 268. The original church, a simple frame structure, was constructed in 1889 and served as the chapel for students at the Episcopalian boarding school. The chapel burned in 1916 and was rebuilt in 1917. Today the Chapel is managed by the Chapel of Rest Preservation Society and is open for special events, daily meditation and weddings.

Music and the Visual Arts

Lenoir's musical heritage provides an outstanding example of the way the City's music and its historic connections are intertwined well into the 21st century. The James C. Harper School of Performing Arts, established in 2006, is a direct outgrowth of a legendary figure in the history of musical education in the City of Lenoir.

Captain James Harper was a World War I veteran and self-taught musician who taught at the old Lenoir High School from 1924 until his official retirement in 1958. He continued as Director Emeritus of the High School Band until 1977. The Lenoir High School Band began under Captain Harper's leadership in 1924 with donated instruments from the discontinued American Legion Band. Harper influenced countless Lenoir High School students and future music teachers with his demanding, disciplined approach to "serious music." He was able to persuade highly qualified musicians to teach at the High School and led band members to performances at events ranging from the 1940 World's Fair to college football games to the inauguration of governors from the Southeast. His vast music library is now part of the collection of the Lenoir High School Foundation.

The Harper School of Performing Arts, established by the Lenoir High School Foundation, opened in the winter of 2006 with 27 students. Its offerings now attract almost 300 students of all ages, including adults, who perform in the Concert Band and Youth Chorale and study strings, organ, guitar, percussion, woodwinds and piano. The School also partners with Davenport Elementary School to provide Suzuki instruction to 200 elementary school students. The Harper School seeks to carry on the rich musical tradition established by Captain Harper through quality instruction in music and the performing arts to nourish the creative instinct of all its students.

The visual arts have a vibrant presence today in the City as well. The Caldwell Arts Council, incorporated in 1976, fosters an awareness and appreciation of the arts across Caldwell County from its historic office and gallery on College Avenue in Lenoir. It actively provides opportunities for school children at all levels to experience art through a variety of performance choices at the Broyhill Center.

The Arts Council is recognized across the Southeastern US for its sponsorship of the Sculpture Celebration, an annual event that draws over 2,000 visitors to Lenoir in September. The outdoor exhibit shows off the three-dimensional visions of nearly 100 artists annually, and over 75 sculptures purchased after these events have been added to the Council's permanent collection.

Fifty of these sculptures are outdoor pieces, many placed throughout the City and across the County. The Arts Council envisions a brochure helping visitors tour the City and County and experience some of these outdoor sculptures. Funding for a "tour" brochure, as well as maintenance and relocation of some of the sculptures, will help make this idea a viable generator of tourism dollars.

Additionally, an outdoor sculpture gallery with changing sculpture exhibits in downtown Lenoir began its first installation of outdoor sculptures along downtown sidewalks in the fall of 2006. Tucker's Gallery organizers work with the Caldwell Arts Council on brochures and visitors' guides to these outdoor sculptures in downtown.

Arts Council staff also described two other "tours" to help promote the arts in Lenoir and Caldwell County to the visitor. One idea is a walking tour of a "College Avenue Cultural District," stretching from the Arts Council gallery to the Heritage Museum, St. James Episcopal Church with its outstanding Oertle Collection of Christian paintings, to the Harper School of Music and the Band building at the old Lenoir High School.

Another possible tour attracting interest from state cultural and tourist officials is a tour of the Happy Valley, with its agricultural and historic heritage. Native American settlements, Daniel Boone's stay in the Valley, Civil War deserters from both sides, the historic sites mentioned earlier, as well as recent interest in traditional farming skills and practices all combine to create the perfect opportunity for an outstanding rural tour of the Happy Valley's heritage.

Historic & Cultural Resources Policy Concepts

- Preserve cultural and historic properties of local, regional and national significance.
- Build on the public's interest in historic and cultural travel to promote opportunities for tours and trips to these sites in Lenoir and Caldwell County.
- Promote the unique achievements of Lenoir's musical heritage and its outstanding sculpture collection.

Historic & Cultural Resources Strategies

- Urge Chamber officials and economic developers to publicize more actively the City's and County's historic and cultural offerings as important ways to generate visits by tourists to the area's unique assets.
- Cooperate with the Caldwell Heritage Museum and the Caldwell County Historical Association to add cultural sites to City mapping projects, so proposed developments near those sites will preserve the community's historical and cultural heritage.
- Encourage the Caldwell Heritage Museum to increase public educational efforts for those sites in the City which have County- and state-wide significance.
- Intensify current historic preservation efforts by establishing a National Register Historic District that uses federal and state tax incentives for restoration. Adopt zoning regulations that compel new development to complement historic buildings. Encourage the use of adaptive reuse techniques for historic properties. Provide information and opportunities for property owners to learn about preservation incentives.
- Explore options for acquiring and restoring the Lenoir train depot.
- Support the Lenoir High School Foundation's efforts to renovate the historic James C. Harper Band Building at the old Lenoir High School site.
- Support the Caldwell Arts Council's plan to establish "tours" of its outdoor sculpture collection and help it publicize the tours and obtain the limited funding necessary for maintenance and relocation of some pieces.

- Examine the feasibility of establishing a City of Lenoir “Cultural District” along a three-block area of College Avenue with some of the City’s outstanding historic and cultural assets and institutions.
- Designate more space downtown for public art and events, including well-designed pedestrian amenities such as benches and picnic areas. Develop strategies and incentives to provide more public art displays.
- Support the Caldwell Arts Council, in partnership with NC cultural and tourism officials, in pursuing ways of creating a driving or cycling tour of the “Historic Happy Valley” with Lenoir as its beginning or concluding point.

Appendix A: Lenoir Community Meeting Results (January 19, 26, 30, 31, 2006)

Specific issues that residents voted on are listed below. The number beside each issue indicates the number of votes it received. If an issue does not have a number beside it, the issue was listed for voting but received no votes.

What do you like about the City of Lenoir?

Location (25)

Climate, geography (9)
Close to mountains (7)
Close to major cities -Charlotte, Winston Salem (2)
Town layout (2)
Proximity to outdoors- Wilson Creek/Hwy 268, outdoor sports (2)
Farm, country atmosphere (1)
Ocean (1)
Convenient to large cities with advantages of small town (1)
Access to major highways
Being part of Lenoir- land, location, views of mountains
Natural beauty, open space
National forest
Proximity to universities and colleges
Physical location of city
Old buildings in center city
Four seasons

Community (58)

Friendly people (11)
Well-preserved, quaint & small town, historical sites (9)
Arts activities, music heritage, visual, sculpture (9)
Small town atmosphere (8)
Good medical system (4)
LHS band, Davenport College-reviving now (3)
Diverse citizenry- economical, multi-racial, multi-cultural (3)
Low crime, safety (3)
Church & homes historic architecture (2)
Multi-racial & multi-cultural (2)
Community feel, sense of self (2)
Very philanthropic community- loyalty & caring for each other (1)
Opportunities, potential (1)
Church outreach, diversity of churches
Bookstore
Lifelong friendships
People receptive to newcomers

Slow pace
"Lenoir Blend"
Being on the ground floor of something that is getting better
Appalachian culture and arts
Diverse architecture- civil war era & forward
Good for retirees
"Look/feel"
Trees
Aesthetic potential
Citizen participation
Preservation of cultural arts/cultural identity
Convenience
Small with good potential for growth
Not overdeveloped
Easy to volunteer
Newspaper
Cooperative church and community
Entertainment choices
Peaceful

Civic Activities/Events (10)

Civic Center (5)
Arts Council (4)
Historical society/heritage museum (1)
Nonprofit & outreach programs
Focus on progress
Holiday events, parades

Downtown (11)

Revitalization of downtown (10)
Activities downtown (auto show) (1)
New development & growth
"Character of downtown"
Having a reason to walk on Main Street
Hogwaller development
Downtown parking

Residential Areas

New residential developments
Real estate prices
Affordability, especially housing
Reasonable property values
Traditional neighborhoods

Commercial Areas

Diverse shopping options

Retail development

City/County Services – (24)

Good Schools (public & community college) (12)
Recreational facilities, walking park, greenway, Broyhill Park (9)
Quest for Life (2)
Library (1)
Exercise potential
County cable TV
City services- police, fire, public services
Education/Teachers--system

Leadership (3)

Community college & ASU cooperation (2)
Accessibility to police, city leaders, school official & business leaders (1)
Forward-thinking leaders
Progressive government
Growth and development
Attempt at image change
Appreciate town leadership willing to listen in this forum

Transportation – (3)

Lack of traffic, easy to get around town (2)
Manageable traffic (1)

What concerns do you have for Lenoir?
--

Economic Development (32)

Not aggressive enough in economic development (7)
Vacant buildings- i.e. mall, furniture plants (4)
Tax base needed to support public services (3)
Promoting is poor for retirement area (3)
Greater incentives for industrial development (3)
Too much focus on retirement (2)
Lack of diverse industry (2)
Empty buildings that could be used for new industry (2)
Furniture factories closing (1)
Better explanation of tourism policy by government (1)
Lack of understanding Lenoir's assets and how to sell it (1)
Negativity of lack of good paying jobs (1)
City incentive plans to attract industry (1)
Dwindling tax base (1)
Diversity of industry
Transitional economy -- opportunities
Vacant manufacturing facilities
Stagnation of city

“No growth” mentality
Not taking advantage of what we have in regard to tourism
Impact of economy on existing businesses
Tourism
Tourism but no public toilets
Fewer family-owned furniture factories

Steady revitalization

More promotion by Chamber
Economic development- city/county
Unused opportunities to get manufacturing jobs
Stagnant industry, no transition to service sector/tourism
Non-diverse industry
Appeal to business
Not promoting city as destination

Jobs/Workforce (13)

High unemployment rate (4)
Job loss (4)
Young people moving for lack of opportunities (2)
Lack of diverse job opportunities (2)
School standards need improvement & support (1)
Education level too low
Local workforce (work ethic)
Future of Lenoir- industries, good paying jobs
Traumatic changes – learning new career
Job opportunities/career
Losing working class jobs

Transportation (11)

Public transit (3)
Traffic congestion- Smith cross roads, loop 18, 321 (2)
One-way streets (2)
Traffic enforcement in downtown (1)
Speeding (1)
Too much parking downtown (1)
Traffic light timing (1)
Lack of public transportation
Lack of good traffic flow in downtown for businesses
Heavy traffic in some locations/accidents

Community Appearance– (23)

Appearance of downtown buildings (5)
Loss of trees in downtown (4)
Historic buildings (3)
Slum lords, rental property owners (3)

Rundown properties- residential/business, trash, broken windows (2)
Sidewalk & street deterioration (2)
Responsibility of maintaining vacant furniture factories (2)
Lack of aesthetic beauty in downtown (1)
Repair broken sidewalks (1)
Riff-raff/homeless/court people
Appears depressed to outsiders
Absentee ownership- business, buildings
Ordinances should protect people who can't keep homes in repair
Lack of ordinance to keep interior furniture off front porch
Morganton Blvd vacant & redevelopment of properties
Clean up dilapidated structures
Minimal city lights/sidewalks
Empty building being torn down
Clutter on 321

Environment (21)

Flood control (10)
Water issues-availability (4)
Cleaner environment (4)
Cutting of trees- unregulated (3)
Air quality
Lack of environmental concern
Loss of green space
More green space

City Services/ Infrastructure (46)

Lack of recycling (19)
Code enforcement of ordinances -- zoning, minimum housing, junk cars, noise, dogs (6)
Trash collecting & recycling issues (5)
Higher taxes and increased utility costs (5)
City leadership should serve only 2 terms consecutively (2)
Selective enforcement of all ordinances (2)
Need to keep Aquatic Center open (2)
More swimming pools are needed and parks (1)
Locals discouraged from using Broyhill park (1)
Cost of water & sewer (1)
Be proactive not reactive in planning (1)
City/County government officials butting heads (1)
Crime
Increased taxes & fees
Better handle of City services- education of public- recycling
No ongoing cultural activity
More "green boxes" for recycling
Lack of protection for historical sites

No Historic Commission
Nuisance lots/ordinances
Downtown landlords using buildings to store junk
Process of dealing with substandard housing and trailers
No outdoor lighting for basketball at MLK Center
No playground equipment at MLK
Public money spent on downtown
No County recycling sites in City

County Services (2)

Accessibility of Library (1)
City/County government officials butting heads (1)
Hazardous waste
No garbage from other counties
Need for expansion at CCC & TI
Negative attitude- mostly from County & leadership
Education- new teachers
Financial commitment to education

Citizen Involvement (16)

Apathy & inertia (3)
Not enough citizen involvement (3)

Negative view of city by public (2)

Working together (2)
Population paralyzed by fear of change (1)
Communication (1)
Need more people involved in community/leadership roles (1)
Community support for hospital & retail (1)
Inferiority complex (1)
Lack of community vision (1)
Lack of vision
Limited time for renovating downtown
Lack of pride
Negativity concerning furniture industry
Lack of advertising downtown events on 321

Land Use/Zoning (8)

Lack of green space, need little parks (3)
Storefront churches (2)
Don't want churches using retail spaces (2)
Lack of standards for rental property- safety (1)
Uncontrolled Growth
Random Development
Non-connected neighborhoods
Zoning- more aesthetic, landscaping

All growth is not good
Appearance standards
Lack of appearance standards downtown
Downtown landscaping

Residential (6)

Quality, affordable housing (3)
Lack of available homes for retirement (2)
Men's homeless shelter, concern with having Homeless shelter within downtown & residential areas (2)
More neighborhood walkways (1)
More smaller homes in park-like setting
Grants to improve personal property
Minimum lot sizes for new construction- too small
Lack of types of housing
Lack of sidewalk/greenway connectivity
Lack of sidewalks in neighborhoods

Commercial (9)

Need continued support of downtown businesses (2)
Lack of diverse shopping-home grown (1)
Lack of good restaurants (1)
Too many fast food restaurants (1)
Vacancy, mall (1)
Lack of entertainment for young people (1)
Wal-Mart (1)
Lack of retail downtown (1)
Not enough parking
Too much parking
Lack of available commercial property
No book stores
Lack of shopping alternatives, not enough good shopping
Law offices, churches, bails bond taking valuable retail space
Big box development
Continued development of 321 invites people to drive thru
Lack of entertainment & restaurants
Fragmentation of business environment

Other (19)

Honesty within government (4)
Political leaders need to work together for betterment of whole community (3)
Do Not put DSS building downtown (2)
Combined Law enforcement –County/City (2)
Diversity of City-County government (1)
Poverty on West Side of city (1)
Lenoir losing county seat (1)

City officials gaining confidence of public (1)
 Convince people of Lenoir to support hometown business (1)
 Drugs (1)
 Hospital/healthcare specialization- pediatrics (1)
 Address concerns of 20-30 year olds (1)
 Us vs. them sectionalism between towns within the county (1)
 Concerns over County Government workers leaving downtown
 Healthcare options- attractiveness for professionals
 Sustained, quality & medical care at Caldwell Memorial Hospital
 Plans/activity for young people
 Lack of cultural resources to attract corporations
 Lack of museums
 Focus on short-term fixes vs. long term solutions
 Cooperation among municipalities & county
 Lack of racial representatives in community, especially African-American
 More opportunities to speak at County Commissioners' and other meetings
 Advertising of events
 Positive integration of Hispanic population
 Municipality cooperation & county
 Cooperation among citizens

What is your future vision of Lenoir?
--

Transportation (17)

Public Transportation (11)
 Pedestrian-friendly street lights, streetscape, sidewalk (3)
 Connection of neighborhoods (2)
 Rail to Charlotte/Huntersville for commuters (1)
 More responsible traffic planning
 Pedestrian center
 Traffic circle/roundabout
 Traffic calming

Economic Development (62)

Support local economy- shop in Lenoir (9)
 Attract new industry in existing buildings (5)
 Tourism (5)
 Attract diversified industry, businesses (5)
 Encourage locals to open new industry (5)
 Economic/employment diversification (4)
 Good paying jobs (4)
 More businesses (4)
 Plan to go after certain industry, while keeping industry here now, small town feel (3)
 New economy- IT, high tech education, using manufacturing facilities (3)
 Expand CCC & IT/ASU (3)

Tie into Future Forward strategies (3)
Finer/fine dining (3)
An expanded farmers market with stockyard, organics (2)
Busier shopping commercial areas (2)
Incentives for economic growth (1)
Jobs- computer manufacturing, medical supplies, etc clean industry (1)
Attract "tech" jobs (1)
Low unemployment
More "chain" stores
More businesses to make town more people-friendly
Still retaining small town feel while growing
More shopping options
Grant writers
Men's clothing store
Clean industries

Downtown (28)

Green space/park in downtown (9)
Vibrant downtown (6)
Movie theatre in downtown (5)
Healthy retail downtown, pedestrian-friendly (4)
Mixture of residential and business downtown (2)
Make downtown the center of activity (1)
Underground utilities in downtown (1)
More planting of trees & flowers downtown
Create a focal point downtown
Have sculpture park downtown
Murals downtown
Variety of weekend events- car shows, sculpture celebration, bike races, concerts
Retain County offices in downtown
Clothing stores downtown- appeal to young people
Signage for downtown businesses
After hours businesses in downtown
Adequate parking in downtown
Visitor center in downtown
Save the cab stand & create use
Having a less institutional look downtown, more aesthetically pleasing

Historic Preservation (21)

True historic district/historic preservation- tourism, tax benefits (7)
Protection & preserved sites- historical (7)
Redevelopment/rehab (2)
Expanded history museum (2)
Protection of architecture (1)
Low cost loans for home repair (1)

Harper School expanded for performing arts (1)
Town of historical sites
Well-maintained buildings
Renovation of Walker Stadium for ASU & Legion Team

Land Use (22)

1st floor retail/2nd floor offices/residences (10)
Adaptive reuse of existing buildings (5)
Mixed use developments (2)
New mall (1)
High-end retail (1)
More retail commercial growth (1)
Safe affordable housing (1)
County offices to old mall
No more ghettos or clustering of public housing
Development "build-down" neighborhoods/communities
Create garden spaces to replace torn down buildings
More & different businesses on 321
Large shopping centers

Planning and Zoning (20)

Efficient, applicable and thoughtful zoning and building codes (7)
Planned growth (3)
Have a landscape design plan (3)
Zoning districts (2)
Attention to landscaping and design concepts (2)
Aggressive beautification/zoning plan (1)
Appealing buildings & signage (1)
Landscaping required along commercial corridors (1)
Zoning study
More study of other successful cities
Better control of growth through better zoning practice
New development lot size minimums
Sidewalks on 321
Landscaping more appealing for tourism all over Lenoir

Public Services/Infrastructure (9)

Continuing Care facilities (2)
Antique lighting (2)
Update & organize infrastructure (1)
Combined Police Force (1)
Continued support for public services and medical facilities (1)
Public restrooms (1)
Schools/CCC & TI keeping up the good work (1)
Expand land for landfill at present site
Increased education levels

Local informational TV
Community meeting hall

Environment (13)

Recycling (8)
More trees/landscaping (3)
Preserve natural topography in future development (1)
Solar communities (1)
Drinking water cleaned
Water basins
Turn vacant factories into green space

Entertainment and Recreation (22)

Improve/expand recreation (6)
Better development of outdoor recreational opportunities and linking them to downtown -- trails/bike paths, etc linked to downtown, Wilson Creek and other places (5)
A vital community interested in the arts, culture & history (3)
Expand greenways & bikeways (3)
More museums & well marketed (1)
Year round activities for youth (1)
Small parks/open space in neighborhoods- dog park (1)
Pool at Mulberry Recreation (1)
Hispanic events/festivals (1)
Develop cultural events
Movie theatre downtown
Further development of Wilson Creek
Bring back baseball
Picnic spaces
Better communication to youth about activities
Entertainment complex- minor-league baseball, putt-putt & go carts, arcade, "family fun"

Advertisement/Marketing (11)

Make destination (4)
Market Lenoir's assets with coordinated marketing campaign (3)
Musical heritage/festivals (3)
Promote festivals and special events (1)
Promotion of city assets (1)
Market to retirees
Have a gimmick
Updated Mayberry
Major events- skateboarding, extreme sports
Better advertising of events
We need a town slogan
Attract new residents from other communities

Leadership/Public Involvement (18)

Public participation (6)
Leadership with vision (4)
Cooperative plan between municipalities (3)
Integration of all city/county government (3)
Better communication to public (2)
Better explanation of policy by government officials
Political PAC for low income candidates

Other (19)

Maintain small town feel (3)
Affordable service for retirees (3)
More public funding of the arts (2)
21st Mayberry/Mitford (2)
Instill community spirit, pride (2)
Culturally rich community (2)
Concerted effort to keep local money in Caldwell county (1)
Keep people spending money (1)
Community participation in local government (1)
Expand Farmer's market (1)
Horse-friendly in town (1)
Quality of life/development
Solar communities
Constant & stable medical community too much turnover
People take pride
Accurate reporting on local Channel 10 on the things going on
Place for young & old to live
Bedroom community for Blowing Rock & Boone
Attract younger "non-traditional" residents
Safe and healthy for children
Tax value education
People to want to live in Lenoir as travel through

Appendix B: Lenoir Website Survey Responses (March – April 2007)

List 5 strengths / Community Assets of Lenoir.

- Downtown/Artwork-27
- Trees/Mountains-20
- Greenway-16
- Small town-15
- Beautiful location-11
- Recreational parks-8
- Historic buildings-8
- Next to Boone/Blowing Rock-7
- TH Broyhill Park-7
- Festivals/Art shows-6
- Schools/Education opportunities-6
- Friendly people-5
- Small businesses-5
- Proximity to larger cities-4
- Low crime rates-4
- Churches are adequate-4
- Scenery-4
- Proactive/dedicated city and county leaders-4
- Older homes-4
- Mild climate-4
- The fact that we are trying to improve ourselves-3
- Google-3
- Community college-3
- Family oriented-3
- Roads in good condition-2
- New parking for inexperienced drivers-2
- Art Council-3
- New traffic pattern-2
- Affordable housing-2
- Low cost of living-2
- Geographic and cultural diversity-2
- Friendly and helpful city and county employees-2
- Rural areas
- Traditional food
- Great restaurants
- Early in planning to help moderate urban sprawl
- Diversity in ideas and backgrounds
- Bridge to bridge race
- Cultural
- Architecture

- True progress
- Hospital and staff
- Supportive climate for creation of small business
- Thrift stores and antique shops
- Art programs in area schools
- Hibriten Mountain
- Library
- Civic Center
- Great medical response
- Aquatic Center
- Talented people
- Police
- Wal-Mart
- Musical Heritage
- Safe
- Walker Stadium
- Lenoir Mall
- Morganton Blvd.
- Lower Creek
- Incentives for business
- County seat
- Full service city
- Wilson's Creek
- Not a lot of traffic
- Emergency services (police, fire)
- Cleanliness

List 5 Weaknesses / Areas Needing Improvement in Lenoir.

- Empty shops that should be occupied/torn down, empty business buildings-17
- Litter-14
- Not enough (night, youth, adult) entertainment-14
- Limited employment opportunities-10
- Lack of shopping-10
- Lack of recycling center/curbside-8
- Entrance to downtown-7
- No big businesses (besides Wal-Mart)-6
- Too much fast food-5
- Patrol coverage is weak-5
- Downtown needs more work-5
- More community oriented Police Dept./not rude-4
- Prostitution on Harper-4
- Panhandlers-4
- Need more restaurants-4
- Lack of long range vision for planning-4

- Smith Crossroad landscape-3
- Businesses are leaving-3
- New businesses-3
- Unrestricted, private land development-3
- Pool hall on Harper-3
- The mall-3
- Not enough fun places for young people-3
- Building development needs more focus on aesthetics-3
- Animal shelter gets limited financial assistance-3
- Education-2
- Too much crowding on 321-2
- Streets-2
- Save some beauty-2
- Sign ordinance-2
- "Rough" neighborhoods-2
- No opportunity for HS graduates-2
- Limited skills workers-2
- Billboard clutter-2
- Poor water quality and sediment control-2
- Not enough indoor/outdoor restaurants-2
- Years of depending on manufacturing jobs-2
- Workforce does not want to learn new careers-2
- Narrow-minded/intolerant citizens-2
- Landscape and grounds not maintained-2
- Poor signage on 321-2
- Ugly entrances to Lenoir-2
- High property taxes-2
- Homeless people-2
- Mulberry Rec. is outdated-2
- Not enough advertisement for downtown-2
- Not enough sidewalks
- Development of luxury housing
- Lack of easy to use website
- Not enough trees and greenery on NC 18
- More trees at big box stores
- Not enough youth recreation
- Blue Ridge electric is monopolizing the rural areas
- City water coverage is very limited
- Water and sewer down 321 needs upgrading for more businesses
- People feel left out-city should be concerned for all, not some
- Unbalanced priorities
- Diversity
- Move away from the Broyhill family
- Suburban style/run down strip mall type development
- Bad traffic
- Lack of geriatric doctors

- Tearing down historic buildings
- Leadership does not listen to its constituents
- Hogwaller name on buildings (uneducated and silly)
- Car-oriented development
- Less parallel parking uptown
- Image/branding
- Not promoting sculptures
- Too many stop lights/driveway cuts on 321 and 18
- Limited choice of nice hotels
- Schools need updating
- Poor healthcare
- More environmentally sensitive business
- Poor economy
- Lack of pride
- Lack of parks and recreation
- Giving up residential areas for business
- Lack of appropriate parking
- Utilities not below ground
- No city tax breaks for the elderly
- Entrance to Wal-mart
- Lack of sidewalks
- Diversion of streams and wetlands
- No community transportation
- Exposed Electric Lines
- Zoning not restrictive enough
- Fix downtown awnings
- Growing number of homeless
- Not enough downtown advertisement
- Persistent drug/gang activity
- Domestic violence and child abuse
- Lack of care/resources for elderly, children, and ethnic groups
- Boards of different entities unwilling to cooperate to meet common goals
- City employee pay
- Not protecting historic houses or farmland

List 5 Visions / Goals You Have for Growth in Lenoir.
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- Continue to promote downtown/require standards/add more charm-18
- Attract better retail-9
- More restaurants-9
- Attract independent restaurants/retail shops-8
- Encourage high density housing and connectivity of streets-6
- Stricter sign ordinances/better signs-6
- Community connectivity through bike lanes, sidewalks-6
- Preserve and respect natural resources-6

- More adult entertainment options-5
- More community parks-5
- Force empty shops to be occupied or torn down-5
- New apartments/condos/townhomes-4
- More youth entertainment-4
- Encourage businesses to locate in downtown-4
- Stricter landscaping ordinances-4
- Retiree amenities-4
- Job market for educated-4
- More mixed use development-3
- More affordable housing-3
- No roadside litter-3
- New Lenoir Mall-3
- No cookie cutter subdivisions-3
- An old world, small town feel-2
- More construction with southern charm-2
- Multi screen theatre downtown-2
- Protect historic houses downtown-2
- Urban renewal to “rough” neighborhoods-2
- More high tech investment-2
- Add more housing downtown-2
- Tax breaks for downtown business owners-2
- Job market for those without a college education-2
- Add new shopping center-2
- Add a bookstore/Coffeehouse-2
- Add movie theatre on scale of Bo’s-2
- Liven up downtown at nights and on weekends-2
- Landscaped business developments-2
- Culturally viable city with clean industry-2
- Better healthcare system-2
- Better Explorer program at the PD for the youth
- Homes with front porches
- An outside Jam’in Theatre
- Keep new construction close to older constructed buildings
- Well planned out
- Downtown gatherings should not be geared towards “hillbillies”
- Stricter zoning
- Clean entrance to downtown
- Upscale hospitality options
- Renovation of Walker Stadium
- Teach residents personal finance
- Encourage downtown shopping and living
- Keep construction to historic periods
- Do not extend utilities to areas outside city limits
- Power lines underground
- Add outdoor movie theatre

- Restoration instead of demolition
- Add public education opportunities (museums)
- Limit condos
- Increase required lot sizes
- Provide sufficient emergency shelters
- Cobble parking lots
- Better care of animals – county wide licensing
- Travel brochures to show amenities
- Have historic tours
- Small hotel located downtown
- Investigate public housing
- Create a public transportation system
- A limit on council and mayor terms
- Be cautious on unrestrictive permits
- Schools and education for new job possibilities
- Park at Kerr Drug
- Build park on old Singer site
- Better civic center
- Diversified economic base
- Eliminate sub-standard housing
- Build a recycling center
- A water park
- Bed and breakfast community
- Industrial parks
- Promote solar energy developments
- Log homes, Victorian, Tudor styles
- Elderly entertainment center
- Include motorcycles in the Cruise Ins
- More gallery/boutique type businesses
- New churches
- New hospital
- Promote/advertise downtown events
- Implement a litter program