

Planning Study Area

The West Downtown ALIVE! planning study area is situated at the western edge of Downtown Boone. The study boundary extends east to west from Water Street to the Watauga County Health Department and Senior Center Campus; and south to north from Poplar Grove Road to Boone Creek, including King Street beginning at the Watauga County Agricultural Services Center. The study area is adjacent to and west of the Downtown Development Association district boundary.

The study area framework plan highlights key assets and physical features that inform infrastructure recommendations.



The Downtown Boone Development Association district boundary shows areas that are assessed a special tax dedicated for downtown improvements. The West Downtown Study Area overlaps the western edge of this district.

The West Downtown ALIVE! planning themes

The West Downtown ALIVE! plan promises to help Boone retain its rich heritage, build a lively, sustainable community, and become the kind of town where citizens are proud to – and visitors long to – call home.



Recent private sector investments have significantly enhanced west downtown. While additional such ventures are still necessary, public sector investments are also critical to help transform this area into a unique and authentic area of Historic Downtown Boone.

Environment

Create space for water and a place to learn about it...

Stream Enhancement

Boone Creek tributaries flow from Rich Mountain – Boone's notable ridgeline that extends west from Howard's Knob. Stream enhancements near the Jewish Temple will provide for a wider floodplain area which will help alleviate some of Boone's persistent stormwater management issues.



Improvements alongside the upper Boone Creek area will help alleviate downstream stormwater issues.

Environmental Education

The Watauga County Cooperative Extension is engaged in, and committed to, water quality education. Their backyard stream – Boone Creek – serves as a demonstration area and outdoor classroom. This plan will be an opportunity for private and public partners to serve as leaders in enhancing and sustaining water quality in the area.



Photo by Wendy Paquin



West Downtown Alive! Boone, NC

West Downtown ALIVE! is a collaborative planning effort among High Country Pathways, the Appalachian District Health Department, Watauga County, Boone Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Boone Development Association.



Purpose

For years, west downtown has been considered rather bleak. But new, private sector investments are beginning to counter that perception. The recent construction of the Jewish Temple fostered the "cleaning up" of the historic kraut factory site that was once located on Boone Creek – or Kraut Creek as it is aptly called. New businesses have also opened along the west end of King Street, demonstrating that immediate proximity to Appalachian State University is not a necessary factor for the success of a service-oriented business in downtown Boone.



Other recent private sector investments have significantly enhanced west downtown, as well. While additional such ventures are still necessary, public sector investments are also critical to help transform this area into a unique and authentic sector of Historic Downtown Boone.



This plan creates a vision for transforming west downtown into a vibrant and engaging part of downtown Boone – a place where locals and visitors alike will want to spend time, making it truly come ALIVE!



West Downtown Alive! Boone, NC



About the Design Consultant

Destination by Design is an economic development, land planning, and promotions firm based in Boone, NC. Their office is located adjacent to the West Downtown ALIVE! study area. Learn more at www.dbdplanning.com.



Economy

Enhance Quality of Life, Connect Downtown Employment Centers, and Create Great Streets...

We will have a vibrant, attractive, walkable, bikable and transit-friendly community that is financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

– Boone 2030 Land Use Plan, 2009



Successful downtowns require a mix of patrons that includes visitors, residents, and workers. The Watauga County Health and Senior Center Campus, located at the western edge of the study area, is a major government complex and employer that must become more grafted into the downtown. Government complexes are often constructed on the outskirts of town where land is more affordable. This campus, however, is relatively new and has the potential for expansion.



Our vibrant downtown and the university is surrounded by strong neighborhoods, successful and beautiful corridors, and an easily accessible university campus.

– Boone 2030 Land Use Plan, 2009

The West Downtown ALIVE! improvements along Water Street will appropriately compliment previous recommendations included within the adopted Boone 2030 Land Use Plan.

West King Street is a major gateway and portal to downtown. Bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements are not only necessary for safety and mobility, but also help establish downtown's brand and sense of place. Recommendations, which slightly deviate from the 2013 Boone Bike Plan, include a west-bound (uphill) bike lane, sharrows marking a shared east-bound lane, and an improved sidewalk. (Boone 2030 Land Use Plan)

Health

West Downtown provides a unique opportunity for Boone to establish greater mobility and connections among housing, retail, Appalachian State University, and other community assets. Research suggests that by improving walking and biking infrastructure communities can help promote physical activity which positively impacts public health. Boone's commitment toward such infrastructure has been demonstrated by recent initiatives such as the Boone Bike Plan.



Image from Boone 2030 Land Use Plan, 2009

In a 2007 survey by the State Center for Health Statistics, 60% of North Carolinians reported that they would increase their level of physical activity if they had better access to walking and bicycling facilities such as sidewalks and trails.

The Boone Bike Plan's short-term recommendations call for paved shoulders west of Green Street and sharrows markings along King Street. Long-term recommendations call for the addition of bicycle lanes west of Green Street, along Water Street and paved shoulders along the Poplar Grove Connector. The West Downtown ALIVE! plan incorporates these recommendations with slight deviations.

Downtown streets should provide preference to the pedestrian and cyclist and encourage slow vehicular speeds or "traffic calming."



History

West Downtown is home to a former sauerkraut factory, Watauga County's first food processing business. There is a unique story to tell about the Watauga Cabbage Growers, the North State Canning Company, and the farming community that, in 1934, dedicated 1,750 acres toward cabbage production.



The flowering bridge will provide an opportunity for the community and visitors to interact with the repurposed remnants of the tobacco processing plant and other historical exhibits.



West Downtown *Alive!* Boone, NC



The underutilized parking lot of the Watauga County Health and Senior Center Campus provides an opportunity for additional evening or weekend programming, such as a Farmers Market. The county, town, and other community stakeholders should explore ways to further utilize this public space, such as creating an open air market or a formal tailgating area for ASU home football games.



West King Street is a major gateway and "portal" to downtown Boone. Bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements are not only necessary for safety and mobility, but also help establish downtown's brand and sense of place. Recommendations include a west-bound (uphill) bike lane, sharrows marking a shared east-bound lane, and an improved sidewalk.



Water Street should serve as a true downtown, pedestrian-oriented street. Recommendations include a north-bound (uphill) bike lane and south-bound on-street parking. A street level dining area provides for additional traffic calming and further protects pedestrians and cyclists accessing Howard Street and the proposed Boone Creek Greenway.



Situated between the Senior Center and Health Department, "Our Mothers' Garden" is a future pocket park that will celebrate mothers and provide an active gathering place for all ages. This is a joint project of the Appalachian State University Division of Community Outreach and Watauga County.

The old tobacco processing plant rammed-earth bridge provides an opportunity to share the history of this area while creating a unique public space and downtown destination. Recommendations include the repurposing of the old bridge into a "flowering bridge" and creating a historical marker anchored by an old factory scale presently being stored by the Town of Boone.

