



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Town of Boone
PO Drawer 192
Boone, North Carolina 28607

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Objective

The Town of Boone is seeking a creative, dynamic, implementation-focused, professional planning and urban design team to assist the Town in developing an updated Comprehensive Plan. Teams should expect to establish an inclusive planning, adoption, and implementation process that builds upon existing commitments to expediency, innovation, public engagement, and transparency.

The Town envisions a process that concludes with the adoption of a succinct, visually-engaging plan that provides a clear vision for the growth and development of the Town of Boone while also identifying any competing considerations. Teams will be expected to review and potentially consolidate existing planning documents and initiatives into one actionable visioning document. The final document should clearly delineate town priorities and subsequent implementation steps so as to provide clear guidance for future action by the Town and relevant stakeholders.

Introduction

Located in western North Carolina, the Town of Boone is the county seat of Watauga County. Boone is home to Appalachian State University, a healthy tourism economy, plentiful natural resources, and a thriving downtown, making it a desirable place to work and live with a growing population of more than 19,000 people. Boone is the economic center of the High Country region. Official corporate limits include approximately 6.4 square miles. The Town does not have an extra-territorial jurisdiction. The corporate limits expand only as a result of voluntary petitions for annexation, usually driven by requests for the Town's public water and sewer services.

Operations

Boone has a Council-Manager form of government. The Council is made up of five members and a Mayor. The Council appoints a Town Manager, who is charged with the implementation of policies and plans of the Council as well as overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Town.

Town operations include the following departments: Administration, Cultural Resources, Finance, Fire, Planning and Inspections, Police, and Public Works (Services & Utilities).

Town advisory committees:

- Community Appearance Commission
- Cultural Resources Advisory Board
- Downtown Boone Development Association
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Human Relations Commission
- Planning Commission
- Sustainability Commission

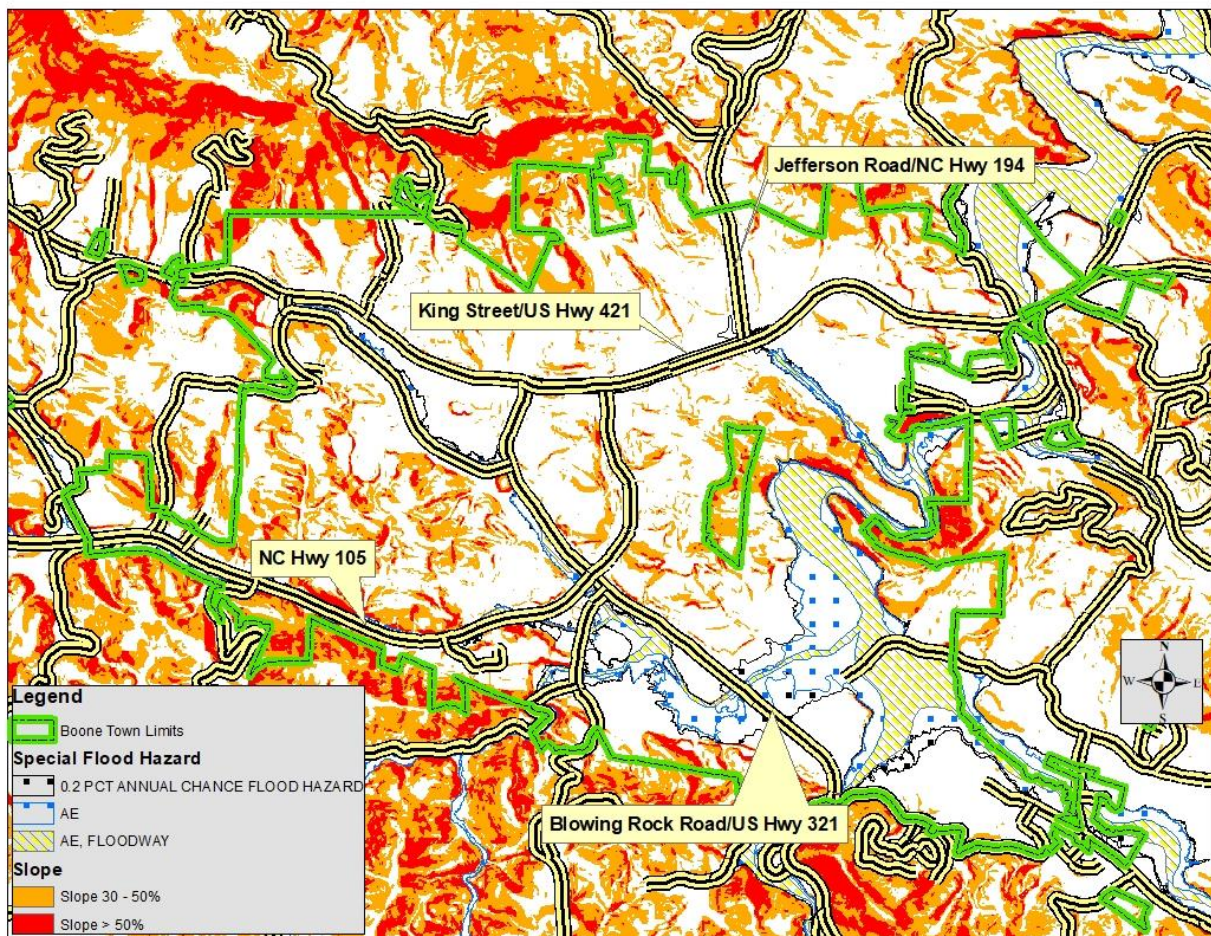
Current Challenges

The Town of Boone is challenged with balancing quality of life issues for residents, business owners, and visitors with the demands and challenges that arise from increased growth that can be attributed to increased enrollment of Appalachian State University, the local tourism industry, and natural migration to the area. The Town's financial, natural, and physical resources are often constrained and impacted by this growth. Student housing demand has been a major driver of recent development and a long-time pressure on residential neighborhoods and housing stock generally.

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The Town's mountain topography is the area's greatest asset and defining characteristic, yet also contributes to some of the greatest challenges to right-size development and growth for the area.

The Town is bisected by major US and NC Highways that are both the backbone for the local the transportation network and major thruways to other places such as Blowing Rock, Linville/Banner Elk, and eastern Tennessee. In addition to vehicular congestion, these roads have historically directed development types as most commercial uses vie to have access and visibility from along these corridors.



Planning Documents/Resources

See below for a summary of initiatives/priorities, plans, and studies relevant to scope of work:

Town Initiatives/Priorities

Equity

The Boone Town Council finds that prejudice and the practice of discrimination against any individual or group based on actual or perceived age, mental or physical disability, sex, religion, creed, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial or marital status, economic status, veteran status or national origin, may menace the peace and public welfare. To work towards elimination of such prejudice and discrimination, a Human Resources Commission (HRC) has been established.

Housing

Since 2022, the Boone Town Council has identified affordable housing as its top priority. Council has expressed expectations that during the update process, Staff will work concurrently on the identification and implementation of tools to add to the Town's toolkit in the attempt to address housing related concerns in the community. Currently underway, is the investigation and possible implementation of inclusionary zoning. Additionally, the Town is participating with a grass-roots group, Watauga Housing Council, and other key stakeholders who are working on a parallel path to identify solutions and opportunities that address community need.

Sustainability/Climate Action

The Town of Boone is committed to sustainability/climate action and has adopted ambitious goals to pursue climate neutrality and address climate change. On December 15th, 2016, Boone's Town Council adopted the following resolution: [Clean Energy Resolution \(PDF\)](#). On April 18th, 2019, Council broke the Town's sustainability goals into three time frames, focusing on town-wide and government-specific initiatives.

1. Climate neutrality in municipal operations by 2030 (Note: As of January 12th, 2022, the Town of Boone officially transitioned all municipal electricity consumption to 100% renewable energy sources.)
2. Transition municipal operations to 100% clean renewable energy by 2040
3. Transition the entire town of Boone to 100% clean renewable energy by 2050

Walkable, non-vehicle centered, mixed-use and appropriately scaled development consistent with Boone's historic small town character

[To be further developed following discussion with Council]

Plans/Studies (Chronological)

Comprehensive Plan Update (2006)

The Town of Boone Comprehensive Plan is a long-range comprehensive planning document that provides a future vision for the growth and development of the Town. This plan contains the goals, objectives, strategies and action steps intended to direct Town actions.

Smart Growth Audit (2007)

This report provides an assessment of the Town's existing growth and development policies, programs, and ordinances in relation to the principles of Smart Growth and provides dozens of recommendations for implementing Smart Growth practices in Boone

Urban Forestry Management Plan (2009)

The Urban Forestry Master Management Plan provides strategies, goals, policies, standards, and actions to protect, enhance, expand, and preserve the tree canopy for the benefit of the community. The Plan helps coordinate and improve the Town's tree management in an equitable, economic, and sustainable manner. Moreover, the Plan will be a valuable strategic planning tool and serve as a road map in recovering the loss of tree canopy.

Note: Planning Staff is in the process of updating the information provided in the Urban Forestry Master Management Plan through assessment of updated planimetrics mapping & evaluation of evolving urban canopy management best practices. Update to be completed Summer 2023.

Housing Analysis, Town of Boone, NC (2013)

RKG Associates, Inc. was engaged by the Town of Boone, North Carolina to prepare an assessment of the conditions and characteristics of the housing market in the greater Boone trade area.

Presentation-Housing Analysis

Town of Boone Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (2014)

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan guides the Town of Boone, NCDOT, and other local and regional partners in improving the existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, constructing new facilities for walking and bicycling in Boone, and fostering a walk- and bike-friendly culture through the development of related programs and policies.

Wellness District Small Area Plan (2015)

Boone's Wellness District Small Area Plan (WDSAP) was designed to meet the expanding health care needs of Boone and surrounding areas in the years to come. The purpose of the Plan is to support economic development and direct investment

efforts of the various existing and future institutional users located within the Plan Area. The Plan is intended to provide for a mix of uses with a concentration on medically related academic, wellness, multi-family residential, commercial and support uses within a more urban, pedestrian-friendly environment.

b. Well Section Plan of the Middle Fork Greenway (2015)

In Spring 2015, the Middle Fork Greenway Task Force (MFG) received funding from the Town of Boone to further refine plans for the Middle Fork Greenway in Boone's jurisdiction. The study area includes what is referred to as "Section 6" within the Middle Fork Greenway Master Plan, which was completed in Summer 2013. This is one of six planning sections that will need to be developed to ultimately connect the Town of Blowing Rock and the Town of Boone with a multi-use greenway. B-Well is a targeted redevelopment area that encourages urban form, density, and land uses that support Boone's regional medical hub. Upon adoption by the Town of Boone, this plan will serve as an addendum to the Boone Wellness District Plan and help guide future public and private sector infrastructure investments.

Middle Fork Greenway Master Plan, Section 6 (2015)

High Country Pathways, Inc. (HCP) is working to develop greenways and paddle trails throughout the Boone Area of North Carolina. One of its primary initiatives is to establish a multi-use greenway trail to connect the Town of Blowing Rock, the Town of Boone, and the community of Todd. Collectively, this trail is called the New River Headwaters Trail (NRHT) and includes three trails: Middle Fork Greenway, Boone Greenway, and South Fork Greenway. The Middle Fork Greenway will follow the Middle Fork of the New River and begins in the Town of Blowing Rock. This trail will connect the Town of Blowing Rock and the Town of Boone. Boone Town Council adopted Section 6 of this plan (portion within corporate limits).

West Downtown Alive Plan (2015)

The intent of this plan is to show how to connect the Poplar Grove Road area with Howard and Water Street via a Greenway/Veterans Walkway instead of the construction of a sidewalk on Poplar Grove Road.

2013 Watauga County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2017 Updated)

The Watauga County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), includes Boone, Blowing Rock, Seven Devils, and Beech Mountain and is a long range multi-modal transportation plan that covers transportation needs through 2040. Modes of transportation evaluated as part of this plan include: highway, public transportation and rail, bicycle, and pedestrian. This plan does not cover routine maintenance or minor operations issues.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Update: High Country Region (2017)

This regional plan draws from the region's previous hazard mitigation plan (2012) and from local plans and documents that incorporate the region's sustained efforts to incorporate hazard mitigation principles and practices into routine government activities and functions. At its core, this Plan recommends specific actions to minimize hazard vulnerability and protect residents from losses to those hazards that pose the greatest risk. The Plan remains a living document, with implementation and evaluation procedures established to help achieve meaningful objectives and successful outcomes over time.

Housing and Business Resiliency in Boone, North Carolina (2021)

NCGrowth worked with the Town of Boone to analyze the health of the housing and business sectors and to ultimately recommend strategies for increasing resiliency.

Housing Needs Assessment, High Country, North Carolina (2021)

In 2021, the NC REALTORS® and several other entities (including the Town of Boone), retained Bowen National Research for the purpose of conducting a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) of the High Country Region in North Carolina. The High Country Region consists of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, and Watauga counties. The report: provides an overview of the present-day High Country Region; presents and evaluates past, current, and projected detailed demographic characteristics; presents and evaluates employment characteristics and trends, as well as the economic drivers impacting the Region; determines current characteristics of all major housing components within the market (rental housing alternatives and for-sale/ownership); provides housing gap estimates by tenure and income segment; evaluates ancillary factors that affect housing market conditions and development; and collected community input from area employers and community stakeholders in the form of an online survey and interviews.

Affordable Housing Digest for the Town of Boone (2023)

At the request of the Town, the School of Government conducted two in-person workshops on the topic of affordable housing in 2023. The first session introduced basic terminology and strategic choices available to the Town Council for the preservation and development of affordable housing. In the second and final workshop, the DFI team reviewed publicly owned sites and discuss the financial aspects of undertaking various affordable housing approaches. Part One, of the digest, discusses the Town's authority to implement development regulations such as zoning and how to evaluate those regulations in light of the Town's desire to produce more affordable housing. Part Two describes the Town's legal authority to invest in affordable housing through public-private partnerships with private housing developers and operators.

Affordable Housing Workshop Day 1 Affordable Housing 101 & Boone Housing Needs Assessment

Affordable Housing Workshop Day 2: Development of an Affordable Housing Strategy

Imagine Watauga (Pending, 2023)

Led by the Town of Boone and Watauga County Tourism Development Authorities to replace current long-range plan, "The Boone Outdoor Recreation Master Plan", with an updated plan to ensure strategic decision making and enhance quality of life throughout Watauga County and the Town of Boone. This is done through identification of opportunities and commitment from stakeholders to use a percentage of occupancy tax revenue for tourism related infrastructure projects.

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Climate Action Plan (Pending, 2023)

The Town of Boone recognizes the important role of local government in community climate action and is in the process of preparing the Town of Boone's Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP), which will begin to address the challenges that climate change presents to our town and to the High Country region. The Town of Boone's CCAP plans to provide an evaluation of the community greenhouse gas emissions, strategies, and actions to reduce emissions; an understanding of the role of equity and the implications of climate change on vulnerable communities; and an overview of the impacts of climate change and how it affects Boone's overall community resilience.

Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Update Stakeholder Meetings

Starting in November 2022, Town Council began holding small stakeholder meetings on a variety of topics to assist in understanding and assessing current conditions and to engage in preliminary visioning for the Comprehensive Plan update. Based on those meetings, Council has preliminarily identified the following items for further exploration and probable implementation:

- The Town faces housing challenges with limited growth opportunities due to land scarcity and topographic challenges. Identify and implement policies and regulations to promote development of affordable and workforce housing. Provide visioning of housing types and locations that supports responsible growth.
- Consider applying the 15-Minute City model or similar concepts to foster walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Identify built environment solutions that reduce dependency on the automobile, while at the same time preserving and enhancing the Town as a tourism destination.
- Preserve and protect both the Town's sense of identity as a High Country small town and its natural resources while balancing and fostering the unique entrepreneurial spirit that our community is known for.
- Evaluate current policies and regulations to encourage and promote small business start-up, retention and growth.

- Overall land-use planning and mapping is needed to help guide future decisions that implement goals and objectives of new plan.
- Creation of at least two small area plans to direct and manage responsible growth in a manner tailored to the character and attributes of certain areas of the town. Two areas of particular interest are East Boone (along the 421 east corridor into town) and the Blowing Rock Road/Highway 321 corridor. Other possible small areas include the west end (421 west) of downtown and the Hwy 105 corridor at the southern entrance to town.

Proposal Expectations

Community Engagement

Successful plans that strengthen our community are created when authentic community participation is encouraged, acknowledged, and incorporated in the planning process leading to greater public trust in future actions. Therefore, the proposal should include a robust community engagement plan including digital and in-person citizen/stakeholder engagement strategies. The Town desires a targeted engagement period that lasts 2-4 weeks and concludes with the creation of a summary report to be included within the final planning document.

Plan Details

The Town anticipates that the selected consultant team will provide the following deliverables. However, teams are welcome to propose additional or alternative materials or information that they feel would support or enhance their proposals.

1. Editable digital document/plan
2. Plan should be drafted as a living document. Formatting and content should be arranged in a manner that facilitates updates.
3. Future land-use map(s)
4. Clear goals/objectives on the built environment, community, economic prosperity, environmental health, public facilities and services, and transportation.
5. Inclusion of small area plans (East Boone, mid-town area, any other)
6. Implementation actions with realistic timeframe and estimated costs.
7. Ensure that each goal/objective and subsequent implementation actions are evaluated and weighted with current climate action, equity, and housing priorities.

Budget

Teams should submit a budget describing costs necessary to complete each task they identify for the proposal. Please separate tasks for the small area plans and any additional work the teams feel would be beneficial to the proposal. Respondents should be prepared to provide a detailed budget in a timely fashion should they be selected. All travel, production, and other costs associated with completion of the project are

expected to be included in the proposed budget as part of the lump sum budget or as a separate not-to-exceed figure.

Schedule

Preliminary schedule below is for general information only and may be adjusted with input from the selected team.

July 2023	Consultant Selection
Summer/Fall 2023	Community Engagement Review/formulation of community background/resource elements
November 2023	Presentation of Findings
January 2024	Presentation of Draft Plan
February 2024	Adoption of Plan

Management

This process will be managed by the following town representatives, who will assist the consultant with schedule, budget, and coordination of community engagement and presentation meetings:

- Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections
(828) 268-6960
Jane.Shook@townofboone.net
- Jessica Mitchell, Long-Range/Special Projects Planner
(828) 268-6960
Jessica.Mitchell@townofboone.net

Additional Town staff will be made available when appropriate.

Submittal Requirements

Please send proposals to Becky Love, at Becky.Love@townofboone.net. Each proposal shall include the following:

1. Cover letter that should be limited to one page and shall identify the consultant team and contact person with titles. Please include email address, mailing address and phone number for the contact person and any project manager.

2. A brief description of the experience and qualifications of the consultant team members and the reporting relationship of the team.
3. A list of past and active projects including the name, project type, location, status and the consultant/firms role involved in the project.
4. The proposed project approach from start to finish, including detailed community engagement approach and a detailed list of the deliverables to be provided.
5. A detailed itemized budget, with two small area plans included separately.
6. At least three references from past or current client relationships.
7. Any other supporting material that the team wishes to submit demonstrating the firm's success in comprehensive planning and/or creative approaches to community engagement.

Please contact Jane Shook or Jessica Mitchell with any questions.