





A Resilient Economy

Key Principles

Increase the Affordability of Housing

Support Economic Diversity and Jobs for All

**Promote the Public Interest Through the
Built Environment**



Principle #6

Increase the Affordability of Housing

Maintaining housing affordability in Asheville is a pressing concern. Over the last few years, housing values have increased significantly, displacing renters and creating barriers to ownership for low- and moderate-income households. Historically, one of Asheville's greatest assets was its affordability, enabling people from all walks of life to live, create, and thrive; however, its identity and authenticity is at risk as it becomes a city that only higher-income households can afford. There is a need to address the city's housing affordability challenges from a number of angles, which include increasing the overall supply of subsidized and market rate housing, diversifying the housing stock to accommodate a broad range of ages, lifestyle choices, and affordability levels, and creating more economic opportunities for wage growth and upward mobility.





GOAL 6-1

Alleviate Homelessness

OVERVIEW

Homelessness can impact a wide-range of individuals from the chronically unemployed to those suffering from substance abuse or mental illness to working families that cannot earn a living wage to afford adequate housing. Therefore, alleviating homelessness is more than just a housing issue—it also requires improving access to education, economic opportunity, healthy food, healthcare, and social services. At the same time, access to quality housing is the first step in facilitating paths to upward mobility.

OUTCOMES

- Decrease in the number of homeless and chronically homeless in Asheville

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Provide homeless services.
 - Strategically locate services for the homeless equitably throughout the city and region.
 - Form strategic partnerships with key public, private, and nonprofit service providers.
 - Pursue regional collaborations to support more comprehensive homeless service strategies.
 - Review homelessness policies for public spaces in the Downtown area.
 - Link affordable housing, health and social services, education, and workforce development resources with homeless service providers.
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GOAL 6-2

Increase and Diversify the Housing Supply

OVERVIEW

The city must increase its housing supply to keep pace with demand, and without an increase in supply, the city will face unsustainable affordability challenges, especially for low- and moderate-income households. Given limited resources for subsidized housing development, the city and region must create more opportunities for the private market to deliver this much-needed housing supply, including increasing density at a variety of scales and incentivizing development that maximizes public benefit. In order to ensure income diversity, it is critical that the city continue offering a diverse range of housing types at different levels of affordability. Additionally, a growing preference for walkability will have a direct impact on the types of housing that the city will need to provide.

OUTCOMES

- Increase in the total housing supply and/or new housing permits issued
- Increase proportion of multi-family units and attached housing
- Increase in housing affordability based on income bracket
- Increase in the distribution of price ranges of new housing units
- Decrease in the ratio of single-family to multi-family housing developed (HUD database)
- Increase in the total number of affordable units developed in Asheville, Buncombe County and region.

KEY TERMS

- **Small household size trends:** Throughout the United States the proportion of “traditional” households (married couples with children) is declining, which has decreased average household sizes. This can be attributed to growing proportion of older households (“Empty Nesters”), and that younger households, especially Millennials, are getting married later and having fewer children.
- **Affordability by Design:** The techniques of increasing density with well-designed and more efficient housing configurations is commonly referred to as “affordability by design” — housing that is smaller in scale, thus more affordable, but still attractive in the market. These housing products typically serve households that are willing to trade living space for greater walkability.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Reduce administrative barriers to housing development and diversification.
- Explore land assemblage and land banking for infill residential development and redevelopment.
- Promote zoning policies to increase density Citywide, particularly in residential neighborhoods.
- Optimize permitted lot dimensions across all zoning categories.
- Incentivize development that maximizes value for the community.
- Pursue measures to make vacant sites or obsolete properties development-ready, including brownfield remediation, land assemblage, utility upgrades, or rezoning for adaptive reuse.
- Enhance enforcement of short-term (vacation) rentals, and continue to evaluate policy options related to this development type.
- Promote “affordability by design” principles through zoning flexibility and technical assistance.
- Establish a program for monitoring housing availability based on resident demographics.
- Monitor housing availability.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Increase permitted heights in Transit-supportive areas.
 - Explore new residential typologies, such as townhouses, in all residential neighborhoods.
 - Expand areas permitting higher-density mixed-use development.
 - Recognize affordable housing as a regional challenge - work with the County and Region to ensure regional affordable housing supply meets regional demand.
 - Explore zoning for townhouses and other “missing middle” residential typologies.
 - Review the Steep Slope Ordinance and zoning code to ensure it is updated to reflect modern building practices.
 - Ensure a diverse mix of housing to accommodate a broad range of age groups, lifestyle choices, and affordability levels.
 - Encourage Universal Design in new and remodeled housing so it works for all ages and ability levels, and also helps people age in their home and community.
 - Incentivize or require the provision of public amenities in larger-scale housing developments.
 - Improve and standardize development approval process.
 - Explore alternative real estate fee schedules for non-local or non-resident owners.
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GOAL 6-3

Promote the Development and Availability of Affordable Housing

OVERVIEW

Increasing housing values and development costs incur urgency for Asheville to maximize opportunities for the development and maintenance of affordable housing. Asheville should continue pursuing funding and resources for the development, preservation, and maintenance of affordable housing, and should also facilitate innovative public-private funding strategies, partnerships, and incentive programs to ensure that affordable housing is integrated in the existing urban fabric with accessibility to economic opportunities and services.

OUTCOMES

- Increase in grant and program-funded housing investment within ½-mile of transit
- Increase in LIHTC, Section 8, and other subsidized affordable units as percent of total housing units
- Increase grant and program-funded housing investment compared to the region overall
- Increase walkscore for affordable properties
- Increase in homeownership rates for low- and moderate-income households

POLICY METRICS

- Increase in the total annual affordable housing funding allocation by government agencies and nonprofit organizations.
- Increase in the total affordable housing investment from alternative funding sources or programs

KEY TERMS

- **LIHTC:** The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC) is a Federal program for the development and maintenance of affordable rental housing. Tax credits are awarded to developers to generate private investment in affordable housing under the condition that the property remains affordable to households earning at or below 60 percent of the regional Area Median Income (AMI).
- **HOME:** The HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) is the largest Federal block grant program for state and local governments to support the creation of affordable housing for low-income households. HOME provides direct grant funding, which can be used to support the development of rental and for-sale housing as well as direct assistance to low-income households.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Maximize the utilization of subsidies, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and HOME.
- Continue development and maintenance of subsidized housing, including housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals, senior housing, and workforce housing.
- Continue ongoing reinvestment, redevelopment, and expansion of public housing stock.
- Promote inclusionary housing policies via bonus densities, building height bonuses, and other means.
- Expand incentive programs that encourage affordable housing development.
- Explore innovative financing, partnerships, and development programs that leverage private development to increase affordable housing funding and resources.
- Explore community land trust models to support community development and long-term housing affordability.
- Promote and support homeownership assistance programs and services.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Support community development initiatives/assistance programs.
 - Increase the accessibility to and marketability of neighboring municipalities and communities.
 - Incentivize locating affordable housing development near parks and jobs.
 - Incentivize the development of affordable housing along key transit corridors.
 - Beyond a half-mile of existing transit, incentivize the development of affordable housing tied to greenway extensions.
 - Improve the walkability, bikeability, and connectivity of existing affordable housing communities.
 - Incentivize affordable housing provision in neighborhood planning.
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Principle #7

Support Economic Diversity and Jobs for All

Wages and economic opportunity are directly related to housing affordability — those individuals who can access higher-paying employment opportunities are less burdened by rising housing costs than those with lower-paying jobs or limited opportunity. Given lower-than-average wages in Asheville, there is a need to increase wages across all industry sectors, which will require continued regional economic diversification and promotion of innovation, entrepreneurship, and small business growth. The City should ensure that all economic interests of the city and region can collaborate, share talents, leverage assets, and align strategic interests that promote a growth-from-within strategy and ensures an equitable and prosperous future.

Asheville's Ten Largest Employers

LEGEND

- TOP TEN EMPLOYERS
- HIGHWAYS AND MAJOR ROADS
- CITY BOUNDARIES
- NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAYS
- NEIGHBORHOOD ROADS
- GREENWAYS
- WATERWAYS
- PARKS
- CBD

The map displays the following locations and features:

- Top Ten Employers (Red Dots):** Located in the downtown area, near the center of the map, and in the southern part of the city.
- Neighborhoods:** WOODFIN, Candler, ENKA, Biltmore, SKYLAND, ARDEN, OTEEN, and others.
- Greenways:** Malvern Hills Park, West Asheville Park, Biltmore Park, and others.
- Parks:** Buncombe County Sports Park, Murphy Oakley Park, and others.
- Waterways:** French Broad River, Swannanoa River, and others.
- Highways and Major Roads:** Blue Ridge Pkwy., Hendersonville Rd., and others.
- City Boundaries:** Dashed lines indicating the limits of various city areas.
- Neighborhood Roads:** Local streets within each neighborhood.
- Greenways:** Light green shaded areas representing green spaces.
- Waterways:** Blue shaded areas representing rivers and streams.
- Parks:** Green shaded areas representing parks.
- CBD:** Central Business District, shaded in grey.

- TOP TEN EMPLOYERS
- HIGHWAYS AND MAJOR ROADS
- CITY BOUNDARIES
- NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAYS
- NEIGHBORHOOD ROADS
- GREENWAYS
- WATERWAYS
- PARKS
- CBD





GOAL 7-1

Provide Resources to Connect Businesses and Workforce

OVERVIEW

Bolstering regional economic competitiveness requires investing in human capital. Harnessing talent and increasing the capacity of the workforce creates opportunities across all socio-economic levels. Despite high levels of educational attainment in Asheville, wages are significantly lower than its peer cities. Many small businesses and top employers cannot fill open positions due to the lack of visibility or limited pool of qualified applicants. Therefore, there is a need to address the workforce development needs across all skill and income levels, leverage local institutions, and better link employers with the local workforce.

OUTCOMES

- Increased enrollment at workforce development training programs
- Monitor number of open positions at participating businesses and institutions
- Increase in the annual job placement from local post-secondary institutions or other workforce development centers
- Increased employment rates in disadvantaged communities
- Increase in educational attainment

KEY TERMS

- **AVL 5x5** was a strategic five year plan aimed at adding 5,000 new jobs and \$500 million in capital investment in Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Science and Technology, Arts and Culture and Entrepreneurship. The AVL 5x5 campaign united business and community leaders around a common goal to attract and retain jobs in the Asheville area.
- **GroWNC** was a three-year project to develop a framework of voluntary, market-based growth strategies in a five-county region of Western North Carolina that includes Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Counties.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Support and expand comprehensive workforce development, training, and apprenticeship programs across all industry sectors.
- Increase the role of UNC-Asheville, AB Tech, other local institutions, and top employers as key stakeholders in regional economic development planning.
- Continuing leveraging UNC-Asheville, Asheville-Buncombe Technical College (AB Tech), and other post-secondary institutions to connect local employers and recent graduates.
- Work with colleges and institutions, including AB-Tech and local hospitals, to deliver contextually-sensitive design and development decisions as those institutions expand.
- Identify mismatches in the skills needed by local employers and those provided by the workforce and leverage local businesses community for industry-specific curriculum development.
- Expand incentive programs to encourage employment growth in the city of Asheville.
- Develop a long-term timeline and strategy for courting anchor institutions and businesses.
- Coordinate Citywide Employment Open Houses for residents and regional students.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Improve physical accessibility to employment opportunities through transit, pedestrian infrastructure, and greenway expansion.
 - Explore leveraging tourism-related revenues to support workforce development and education programs.
 - Encourage and expand job mentoring/shadowing programs for youth, especially those from disadvantaged communities.
 - Support skills-based and trades-based job-training programs.
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GOAL 7-2

Create and Promote the Infrastructure to Attract Jobs

OVERVIEW

Asheville must meet the needs of local entrepreneurs, employers, and workers. The efficiency of Citywide infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and other public amenities will impact the attractiveness of the city as a place for businesses to operate and people to work. There is also a need to leverage existing tourism and marketing resources to promote the business community and make sound investments in the public realm.

OUTCOMES

- Monitor total employment for each employment sector to promote job diversity
- Increase in new jobs created for existing city residents
- Increase in Downtown employment
- Increase in jobs paying livable wages
- Increase in Real estate tax revenues by district invested in infrastructure?

POLICY METRICS

- Increased broadband and digital infrastructure service
- Increase in total spending towards marketing/promotion of Asheville's economic opportunities
- Increase in annual investment in city infrastructure
- Increase in the total annual Tourism Development Authority (TDA) investment/support for city projects
- Increase in the total building permits issued Citywide and in specific districts for job creating uses

KEY TERMS

- A **smartscape** is a network of screens or digital devices that are placed in public spaces or along streets that are accessible to anyone as a means of communicating interactive wayfinding, interesting or historical location-specific information, or contributing to the sensory experience of place.
- **Innovation Districts:** The City's four Municipal Service areas provide Asheville the opportunity to borrow funding for infrastructure and other improvements through special obligation bonds at lower interest rates. Asheville calls these areas Innovation Districts, which are strategically targeted to promote emerging mixed use hubs of activity and investment.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Incorporate enhancements to the City's fiber/Broadband network as part of the capital improvement investment schedule.
- Explore creating Citywide Wifi and Smartscales.
- Expand and continue to more precisely define the role of the City's Innovation Districts.
- Develop Innovation District guidelines.
- Celebrate climate innovation and "Maker City" brands as major city assets and ensure that programs, systems, and infrastructure is in place to support these communities.
- Collaborate with economic development organization and stakeholders to ensure that the city's infrastructure, real estate, and development-ready sites are positioned to attract and/or retain major employers.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Ensure new development meets current infrastructure guidelines.
 - Maintain and make enhancements to existing infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, signage, public parking, stormwater, sewer, water, and sanitation.
 - Explore opportunities to commit a portion of the hotel tax to marketing Asheville as an employment hub.
 - Continue positioning Downtown as the economic and service hub of the region.
 - Continue leveraging occupancy tax revenues to support public improvements.
 - Leverage regional economic development resources to promote stronger city-county-regional collaboration.
 - Continue investing in and maintaining aging infrastructure and expand transportation and utility network.
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GOAL 7-3

Promote Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and the Maker Economy

OVERVIEW

More regions across the United States are recognizing that local economic development strategies should be grounded with a growth-from-within approach in which employment and wage growth is stimulated by increasing capacity at existing small businesses and creating more opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. Though Asheville has historically had a spirit for creativity and entrepreneurship, the startup rate, or rate of new businesses created every year, is now lower than the national average. Therefore, there is a need to create a dynamic business climate and entrepreneurial ecosystem that brings together all of the talents and assets of the city and region.

OUTCOMES

- Increase in the annual Venture Capital investment
- Increase in the number of new startup businesses per year
- Increase in the number and proportion of jobs created by startups
- Increased employment by small businesses
- Increase in the participation rates in small business support programs
- Increase in number of business licenses issued for new businesses

KEY TERMS

- **Craft Maker Movement:** The maker movement is a trend in which individuals or groups of individuals create and market products that are recreated and assembled using unused, discarded or broken electronic, plastic, silicon or virtually any raw material and/or product from a computer-related device.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Formalize policies and programs that support, retain, and/or expand small businesses.
- Promote innovation and entrepreneurship across all industry sectors.
- Develop resources that support and promote Asheville's craft/maker movement.
- Support small-scale durable goods manufacturing.
- Establish business incubators and entrepreneurial ecosystem across all sectors including tourism, retail, manufacturing, art, and technology.
- Incorporate maker spaces into Innovation Districts.
- Support the continued development, implementation, and realization of the River Arts District Plan.
- Continue promoting and supporting women and minority-owned businesses.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Better link artists, artisans, craftspeople, and other members of the creative community with small business resources.
 - Increase support for artists and small businesses from Asheville's black community and other communities of color.
 - Reposition obsolete commercial and industrial properties for creative uses.
 - Better link local maker economy with tourism marketing/promotion.
 - Better understand the needs of the local nonprofit community, and work to address them.
 - Promote and expand microlending programs and services.
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GOAL 7-4

Promote Social Equity and Paths to Upward Economic Mobility

OVERVIEW

Addressing income inequality and creating sustainable paths to upward economic mobility will be critical for maintaining racial and income diversity in Asheville. Despite Asheville's success in becoming a more desirable place to live and visit, there still remains historically segregated and disadvantaged communities and thousands of households living in poverty. There is a need to continue providing effective social services and affordable housing options, but also better link low-income individuals to sustaining economic opportunity and promote long-term self-sufficiency.

OUTCOMES

- Decrease in Citywide and regional poverty rate
 - Increase in high school graduation rate in low-income communities
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DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Actively promote job placement and workforce development services in disadvantaged communities.
- Continue pursuing and promoting living wage policies and business practices.
- Explore developing incentive tools for businesses that create jobs that pay living wages.
- Ensure that disadvantaged businesses and communities have the technical support for obtaining commercial lending that supports business growth.
- Provide mentoring, programs, and services to increase graduation rates for youth and GED for adults.
- Promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES

- Link working family and single-parent households with affordable childcare support services and afterschool programs.
 - Ensure the consistency and quality of K-12 education.
 - Explore strategies to expand preschool access.
 - Develop programs and resources to facilitate capacity building for community leaders in disadvantaged communities.
 - Improve physical accessibility to employment opportunities for low- and middle-income households.
 - Provide career path mentoring across all skill and education levels, especially for those living in poverty or in disadvantaged communities.
 - Ensure low- and moderate-income families have access to quality affordable housing that is accessible to economic opportunities and services.
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Principle #8

Promote the Public Interest Across the Built Environment

Successful urban communities must bridge the gap between public and private interests. On one hand, public infrastructure can facilitate, encourage, and catalyze new private development and investment, but there is also a need to strike balance that ensures that private development also has an overall public benefit, whether this is in the form of new affordable housing, economic development opportunities, or public spaces.





GOAL 8-1

Facilitate Real Estate Development that Maximizes Public Benefit

OVERVIEW

Real estate development and economic growth are intrinsically linked. The city of Asheville needs to provide certain physical improvements—real estate, recreational amenities, and public transportation—to accommodate and align with regional economic development initiatives. Conversely, the built environment in the city will have a direct impact on the overall competitiveness of the region as it pertains to growing, attracting, and retaining businesses and a talented workforce. There is a need for Asheville to create opportunity for new development at a variety of scales and promote investment in the public realm to maximize value creation, catalyze new development, increase desirability, and enhance regional competitiveness.

OUTCOMES

- Increase in employment density downtown and targeted commercial nodes
 - Increase in total industrial and commercial square footage Citywide
 - Monitor City and regional employment growth/change by industry sector
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DIRECT STRATEGIES

- Establish accessible and well-connected commercial nodes (corridors, town centers).
 - Pursue district formation strategies to encourage commercial corridor reinvestment and redevelopment.
 - Identify secondary employment hubs outside of Downtown with the most potential for transit-readiness.
 - Identify former industrial, vacant, or underutilized properties as catalyst sites for redevelopment.
 - Develop policies and procedures for the efficient transfer of City-owned land or vacant or obsolete properties for redevelopment.
 - Update the land use plan every 3 to 5 years to ensure industrial and commercial zoning accommodates modern trends in employment and light industry.
 - Coordinate Citywide commercial and industrial land use needs with regional economic development planning and initiatives.
 - Ensure consistency in the enforcement of development regulations.
 - Support value creation through placemaking and public transportation.
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