



THE TOWN OF WEBSTER **LAND USE PLAN**

Adopted 2/2/2022

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Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

Webster is situated on the original homelands of the Cherokee people. We respectfully and gratefully acknowledge the Cherokee people's connection and contribution to this land.

Community Acknowledgements

This document has passed through the hands of many individuals. We appreciate their thoughtful contributions and willingness to imagine a future of possibilities for Webster. Special gratitude to the residents of Webster who attended community meetings, provided responses to community surveys, and offered valuable feedback. This plan is the culmination of all of these voices.

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Webster Town Board Adoption Date 02/02/22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Webster Planning Board was directed by the Webster Town Council to prepare a Land Use Plan (LUP) for the town and its Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). The purpose of this LUP is to look at the land use needs of our community. Since 1999, development in the Town of Webster and its ETJ has been dictated by the town's zoning ordinances, which were updated in 2012. Webster's ordinances contain provisions for three types of development: residential (R-1), business (B-1), and government (G-1).

To develop a compliant and useful LUP, the Planning Board has taken a two-pronged approach. First, we have considered the wishes and concerns of community members communicated through several survey efforts, including Webster Heart and Soul (2014), Winning Webster (2015), and a 27-question community survey (2018). Second, we have examined existing infrastructure and current land uses to determine how future land uses might be supported or constrained. For this analysis, we considered a number of regional factors: demographics, housing, transportation, utilities, education, economics, cultural resources, public health, recreation, natural resources, and the environment.

In looking at the community's desires and current infrastructure, we offer recommendations to help guide how our community evolves. Regarding land use, further study is needed to determine public sentiment towards a residential zone that could permit residential development on less than one acre. We have also included extensive recommendations for improving quality of life, more opportunities for recreating outdoors, and careful investments in amenities that reinforce a sense of place and allow for greater community engagement. These recommendations are summarized in the chart and future land use map at the end of the document.

INTRODUCTION

The Webster Town Board tasked the Webster Planning Board in 2018 with the creation of the Town's first Land Use Plan. This Land Use Plan is intended to set the direction for the Town of Webster to proactively manage development and to state the community's vision for its future.

The North Carolina General Statutes seek to encourage coordinated and efficient comprehensive planning that supports a township's existing ordinances. This document is in compliance with North Carolina General Statute 160D, which requires townships with zoning to have a Land Use Plan in effect by July 1, 2022.



Figure 1: Webster Planning Board members spend a work session identifying concerns

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Plan is to create a guiding policy document for the Town of Webster and its Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) that addresses the potential impacts of growth over the next 20 years. This document describes the existing conditions in Webster, summarizes findings from citizen input, and recommends strategies to inform future development decisions within Webster and its ETJ.

Webster's Land Use Plan takes into consideration the interconnectedness between land uses, transportation, utilities, recreation, history, tourism, and natural and cultural resources. It serves as the basis for land development regulations, transportation, and capital improvements, as well as environmental and historic resource protection initiatives. This Plan also establishes policy to help guide public and private activities as they relate to land use growth and development.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Located in the heart of Jackson County, Webster is a walkable community with convenient access to nearby schools, colleges, churches, stores, recreational opportunities, and superb natural, historic, and cultural resources. The town is bisected by a busy thoroughfare, NC-116.

The planning area of the Land Use Plan (plan) includes the boundaries of the Town of Webster, as well as its ETJ.

While the Town of Webster itself has seen little growth in recent years, the pressures of a growing regional population are being felt. In just a few years' time, the Town has witnessed increased traffic

on roads, increased need for housing, as well as a desire for more parks, greenways and other recreational amenities.

The Town seeks proactively to manage change by articulating community consensus about the future. This Land Use Plan will be a living, working document, to be used by town officials to help guide future growth and development.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This Plan is the culmination of a collaborative and open planning process that involved Webster's Planning and Town Boards, as well as the participation of community residents and partners.

The first point of public input occurred at a Community Supper hosted by the Town of Webster on September 12, 2018, at the

Department on Aging. Attendees were encouraged to share their responses to a Community Survey. The survey was also available online for those not in attendance. The survey questions covered a broad range of issues pertaining to growth in Webster. There were 64 responses, representing about 17 percent of Webster's population. The results are available on the Town of Webster website.

Webster's Land Use Plan is also informed by two previously compiled documents, both available on the Town of Webster website:

Webster Heart & Soul (2015) which is the result of a planning grant from the Southwestern Commission and the Appalachian Regional Commission with the purpose of improving walk-ability and health in Webster while promoting the town's history and refining its zoning ordinances.

Winning Webster (2015) which is the result of a collaboration with Western Carolina University's business students who gathered feedback from Webster residents through surveys delivered door-to-door in town.

Based on the priorities and concerns gathered from these three sources, the Planning Board drafted a preliminary Land Use Plan. Following COVID-19 precautions, the Planning Board opted to engage Webster's citizens and community partners in ways that would prioritize their safety and wellbeing. Remote meetings and survey tools were employed. To alert the public of these opportunities to review and give feedback on the draft Land Use Plan, the Planning Board mailed out 195 postcards, hung posters requesting citizen involvement in visible places in town, sent direct emails to residents and community partners, and launched a social media blitz throughout the open survey period. For those without access to online resources, hard-copies of the draft Land Use Plan and survey were available at Town Hall.

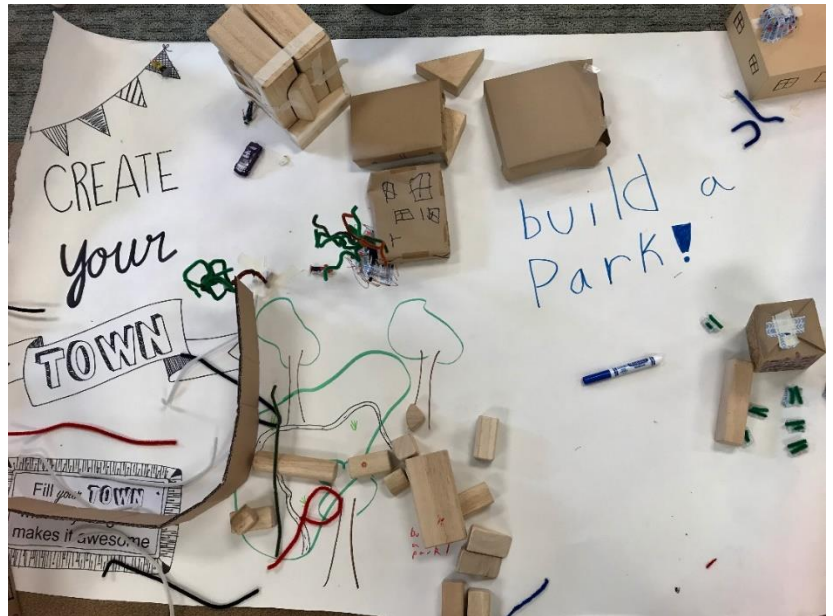


Figure 2: Ideas submitted by Webster youth for ways to improve their town at a Community Supper, September 2018

An online survey was available from October 22 until Nov 16, 2021, to collect public input on the draft Land Use Plan. There were 28 responses submitted. Of those respondents, 79 percent were residents of Webster and its ETJ, 14 percent owned property, but do not reside, in Webster, and the remaining 7 percent were residents of Jackson County. The results of the survey, as well as a summary of the public comments received, are available on the Town of Webster website.

Further public input was invited at a Planning Board meeting on November 18, 2021, which included an opportunity for public discussion. With the careful reading and consideration of all the public feedback, the Planning Board created a final draft that was presented to the Town Board at a regular meeting on February 2, 2022.

HISTORY

The Town of Webster was established in 1853 at the same time that Jackson County was created from portions of Macon and Haywood Counties. Jackson County was named for the Democratic president and North Carolinian, Andrew Jackson, while the county's government center of Webster was named for the New England Whig, Daniel Webster.

The location for the future town of Webster was decided when the newly-appointed Jackson County commissioners purchased from Nathan Allan eighteen acres situated on a broad hill overlooking the Tuckasegee River. Webster was the governmental and commercial center of Jackson County for sixty years (1853-1913). For thirty of those years, Webster was the only incorporated town in the county. During this time, Webster had a local newspaper, a school, a post office, several churches and stores, two hotels, a courthouse, and a jail.¹ The population of Webster reached over 1,000 by the turn of the 20th century.

Change came in 1913, when a fire destroyed many of Webster's businesses, including the two-story, 20-room Mountain View Hotel, the ten-room Nathan Coward Boarding House, the Webster Pharmacy, and the Tuckasegee Bank. With the prospect of rebuilding came the opportunity to relocate the county seat to Sylva, a new town that had developed directly along the railway.

Webster had no functioning municipal government from 1913 to 1953. With citizen interest and through an act of the legislature, Webster's charter was reactivated in 1953. Since then, Webster has had a representative government with a mayor, a five-member town board, and a town clerk.

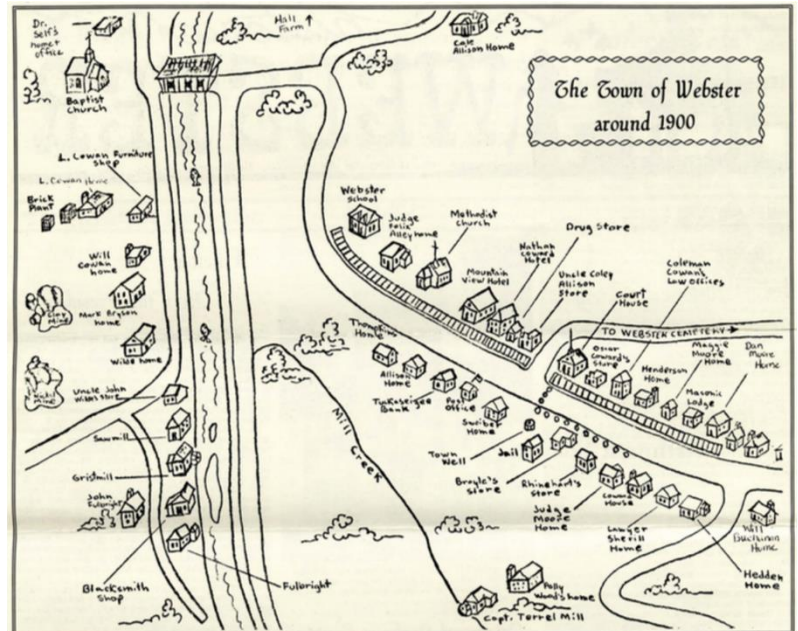


Figure 3: Webster Historical Society publication, Vol.1, No.1, WCU digital collections

¹ *The History of Jackson County*, Max R. Williams, editor.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic characteristics are important factors in the land use planning process as they give us a better understanding of community needs and possible growth patterns. According to the Census Bureau, Webster is home to a population of 374 people. Webster is 88.3 percent white, 6.4 percent Native American, 2.7 percent multiracial (non-Hispanic), 2.3 percent black, and .3 percent Hispanic. Of Webster citizens, 72 percent have attended at least one year of college. There are slightly more men (55 percent) than women and about 5 percent of Webster citizens are veterans.

The age breakdown of the community is varied. In 2018, the median age of all people in Webster was 41 years, down from 2017, when the average age of Webster residents was 45.

The median household income in Webster is \$44,063. The most common employment sectors for those who live in Webster are educational services (44.5 percent), accommodation and food services (10 percent), health care and social assistance (9 percent), followed by retail, recreation, and scientific/technical services (5.75 percent each).

The median property value in Webster was \$266,700 in 2018, which is nearly 20 percent higher than the national average of \$229,700. Between 2017 and 2018 the median property value increased from \$232,300 to \$266,700, a 14.8 percent increase.

In 2018, 56.8 percent of the housing units in Webster were occupied by owner. This percentage declined from the previous year's rate of 65.3 percent.

EDUCATION

Webster prides itself on being a residential community with convenient access to educational opportunities. The Jackson County public school system includes nine schools with a current enrollment of over 3,700 students. Of these nine schools, Jackson County Early College is located in Webster. In addition, Webster is home to a church-based primary school and preschool.

Jackson County has two post-secondary educational institutions. Southwestern Community College (SCC) is located within Webster, and Western Carolina University (WCU) is located 5 miles away in Cullowhee. Dramatic enrollment increases at both institutions have challenged Webster to accommodate growth while maintaining the town's residential character.

SCC, founded in 1964 as part of the North Carolina Community College system, provides career and personal interest training and support to its local service area of Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties. For Fall 2020, enrollment was 4,095 students, of whom 2,013 students were residents of Jackson County.²

WCU, founded in 1889 and part of the University of North Carolina system, aims to enhance economic and community development in western North Carolina and beyond. WCU was home to 12,167 students for the 2019 school year. This total includes 10,469 undergraduate and 1,698 graduate students. Over the past decade WCU has continuously seen significant growth and subsequent construction projects to accommodate that growth.

For many in Webster, educational opportunities and resources are increasingly dependent on access to reliable high-speed internet. In a 2018 community survey, nearly 50 percent of the respondents reported inadequate or lack of internet service (3 percent having no service and 42.2 percent dissatisfied with their service). Common responses were that service was slow, unreliable, and expensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following to promote education:

Encourage necessary partnerships with local and regional entities to improve access and affordability of reliable high-speed internet.

Promote physical activity to promote a healthy lifestyle

- Partner with local schools to increase awareness of the Safe Routes to School Program enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Partner with local schools to increase the number of trainings in Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety through a variety of education programs i.e. Let's Go NC, All Kids Bike etc.

Pursue a shift in transportation culture

- Through walk audits and documentation support the provision of sidewalks, crosswalks and appropriate signalization needed to provide safe walking and biking to schools.
- Support a walking school bus and/or bicycle bus from The Town of Webster to local schools.

² NC Community Colleges Analysis and Reporting (2021, May 13). Retrieved June 10, 2021, from <https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/analytics/dashboards/total-headcount>

PUBLIC HEALTH

The built environment has tremendous effects on a community's health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention points out that carefully planned and well-designed neighborhoods can have positive community health benefits when they offer the following:

- A range of options for getting around, whether by car, foot, bike or public transit
- Destinations (such as, restaurants, shopping, libraries, and post offices) within walking or biking distance of homes or offices
- Access to green space and natural areas

Webster currently offers some of these options. Webster is within walking and biking distance to schools, banks, churches, a grocery store, a senior center, a post office, and the Tuckasegee River. With 1.6 miles of sidewalk along NC-116, Webster is one of the more bikeable and walkable communities in the area. In addition, Webster contains a popular 1.8-mile loop along Buchanan Loop Road (without sidewalks or amenities), as well as a .25-mile gravel loop in the greenspace adjacent to the historic Old Rock School. River Road is a scenic route; however, it is a safety concern for bicyclists and pedestrians due to high traffic volumes and speeds and the absence of shoulders.

Existing walking routes in Webster:

- Buchanan Loop Road
- Greenspace adjacent to Webster Rock School
- Sidewalks throughout Webster
- SCC campus, including nature trail

PUBLIC HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES

In 2014, the Town undertook a study of the public infrastructure within Webster in an effort to improve community health and options for physical exercise. The study, titled *Webster: Heart & Soul* (see Appendix A) highlights both Buchanan Loop Road and the greenspace adjacent to the Old Rock School as popular and accessible areas for exercise.

Old Rock School greenspace. The greenspace adjacent to the Old Rock School represents an ideal site for physical activity, community engagement, and nature connection in Webster. Centrally-located within Jackson County, the county-owned property adjoins existing sidewalks. Discussions were begun in 2015 with Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department about furthering opportunities for physical activity at this location. The Town presented proposals for improvements to this location to the Jackson County Recreation Advisory Board in January 2015, and again in March 2019. This project - which is expected to include a covered pavilion, bathroom access, and playground equipment - is currently in the 10-year Master Plan. In May of 2021, the Town of Webster added four picnic tables to make the space a more inviting place to recreate.

Buchanan Loop Road. Buchanan Loop is already used by residents throughout the county for walking and cycling. The road is narrow (one lane for a steep segment) with limited sight lines and no shoulder. Buchanan Loop Road could be enhanced to encourage slower vehicle speeds and improve safety. Potential improvements could include: wayfinding signage and orientation maps along the loop to inform users of distance; installation of benches along the walking route; adding a

shoulder and curb to buffer users; adding shared lane markings on road to elevate awareness of the presence of bicyclists; and enhance western loop entrance at Webster Road with high visibility crosswalks. Because Buchanan Loop Road is maintained by NCDOT, any improvements would need to be congruous with NCDOT prioritizations for roadway projects.

Bicyclist Improvements. Plans for a multi-use trail along the Tuckasegee River through Webster were identified in Jackson County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2017). Typically, major road improvements will include "complete streets" requirements to improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists. It is likely that River Road poses unique challenges due to its restrictive topography that could prevent it from receiving needed safety updates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following to promote public health:

- Improve multi-use nature of North and South River Road for cyclists, pedestrians, anglers, and motorists
- Encourage development of additional amenities to the greenspace adjacent to the Old Rock School, in collaboration with Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department and Jackson County Public Schools
- Work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to improve the bike/pedestrian environment along Buchanan Loop Road. Improvements might include:
 - Add 4- or 5- foot shoulder and extruded curb to define space and buffer users
 - Add shared lane markings on road to elevate driver awareness of pedestrians & cyclists
 - Provide wayfinding signage
 - Enhance western loop entrance at Webster Road with high visibility crosswalks
- Support safe walking and biking programs (remote drop off sites, at, before and after school programs) to schools through Safe Routes to School Programs.

Additional public health recommendations:

- Improve access to healthy food, greenways, and open spaces
- Create spaces for healthy community engagement: community garden, food truck nights, small-scale community farmers' market, movie night, and family games
- Add shade trees along the sidewalk to help with bicyclist/pedestrian comfort
- Acquire easement to private wooded land adjacent to greenspace at Old Rock School for trail access. Retain woods for use as public park, greenbelt/wildlife corridor, and to increase human contact with nature
- Collaborate with Watershed Association and local entities to regularly monitor water quality
- Consider offering trash, recycling, and compost services for community members
- Add waste receptacles and pickup in public spaces in collaboration with the county
- Investigate options for safe disposal of medical waste
- Offer educational information on air quality and testing recommendations for residents and those considering home purchase or building improvements
- Work closely with appropriate county and state agencies to establish adequate restroom, waste disposal, and parking options for those visiting the Tuckasegee River in Webster

INFRASTRUCTURE

The systems of public works greatly influence the location and scale of development. The Jackson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan (adopted in 2017) identified a need in Jackson County both to maintain and to expand the region's infrastructure while also implementing sustainable development practices that serve to protect our environmental resources.

Infrastructure can include many community assets, but this document focuses on the following: emergency management (fire and police); water and wastewater; flood protection and stormwater management; communications; and energy and gas.

Webster's infrastructure responsibilities also include maintenance of Town Hall, sidewalk and street lights along Webster and Buchanan Loop Roads, and landscaping services at Town entrances, Town Hall, and the World War II Veterans' Memorial, as well as along 1.6 miles of sidewalk.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Town of Webster works to ensure adequate fire, police, and rescue protection services are offered to residents. These services are provided through agreements with Jackson County, the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, regional Volunteer Fire Departments, and Harris Regional Hospital. The Town contracts with the Town of Sylva for fire protection and with the Sheriff's Office for regular patrols and extra support during seasonal events (for example, Halloween trick-or-treating) within the planning areas.

WATER & SEWER

Water is provided in two ways within Webster and its ETJ. Residents are served by on-site water (wells or springs) with on-site wastewater disposal (septic tanks and drain fields) or by the public's centralized water treatment and distribution utility, the Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority (TWSA). TWSA was created in 1992 when existing water and wastewater utilities were consolidated to provide public water and sewer service. TWSA operates a system that includes water treatment, storage, distribution, as well as wastewater collections and treatment facilities. The water system serving the Webster area consists of a 1.5 MGD (million gallons daily) treatment plant and a water capacity of 2,672,000 gallons in 10 storage tanks. TWSA's distribution system is made up of a variety of sizes ranging from 1- to 16-inch water lines adding up to approximately 85 miles. Through Webster, the line runs generally along Webster Road through town.

TWSA's wastewater treatment system consists of four treatment plants. Webster is serviced by a plant located on the Tuckasegee River and operating at 3.5 MGD.

The significance of the availability of central water and sewer is that areas of higher density generally require more water than can be supplied by a well and more efficient wastewater disposal than can be serviced by a septic system. For example, Reedwood Manor (a 30-unit affordable housing community in Webster) is served by water and sewer from TWSA, as is Southwestern Community College and the businesses on Bonnie Lane. Should the Town want to support greater density under any land use, we would need to ensure that TWSA could service the development.

FLOOD PROTECTION & STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Flood protection entails protecting property from the damaging effects of flooding. Stormwater management takes that a step further and provides water quality treatment for the discharge off the

property and typically into the Tuckasegee River. This discharge can be particularly detrimental for the health of the river. Generally, single-family homes and developments with a minimal amount of impervious area (roofs, parking areas, sidewalks, etc.) are not subject to stormwater management requirements. Stormwater management typically requires significant engineering as well as land for retention or detention basins for water quality treatment. Larger, denser developments would be subject to this requirement.

Webster does have some exposure to flood hazard. The AE flood zones are areas that show a 1 percent chance of annual flooding of 1 to 3 feet. Webster adopted a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to ensure the public's safety and to help minimize losses for homeowners in FEMA-identified flood areas. Structures are not the only infrastructure at risk to flooding; portions of Old Settlement Road are also subject to periodic flooding during heavy rainfall events.

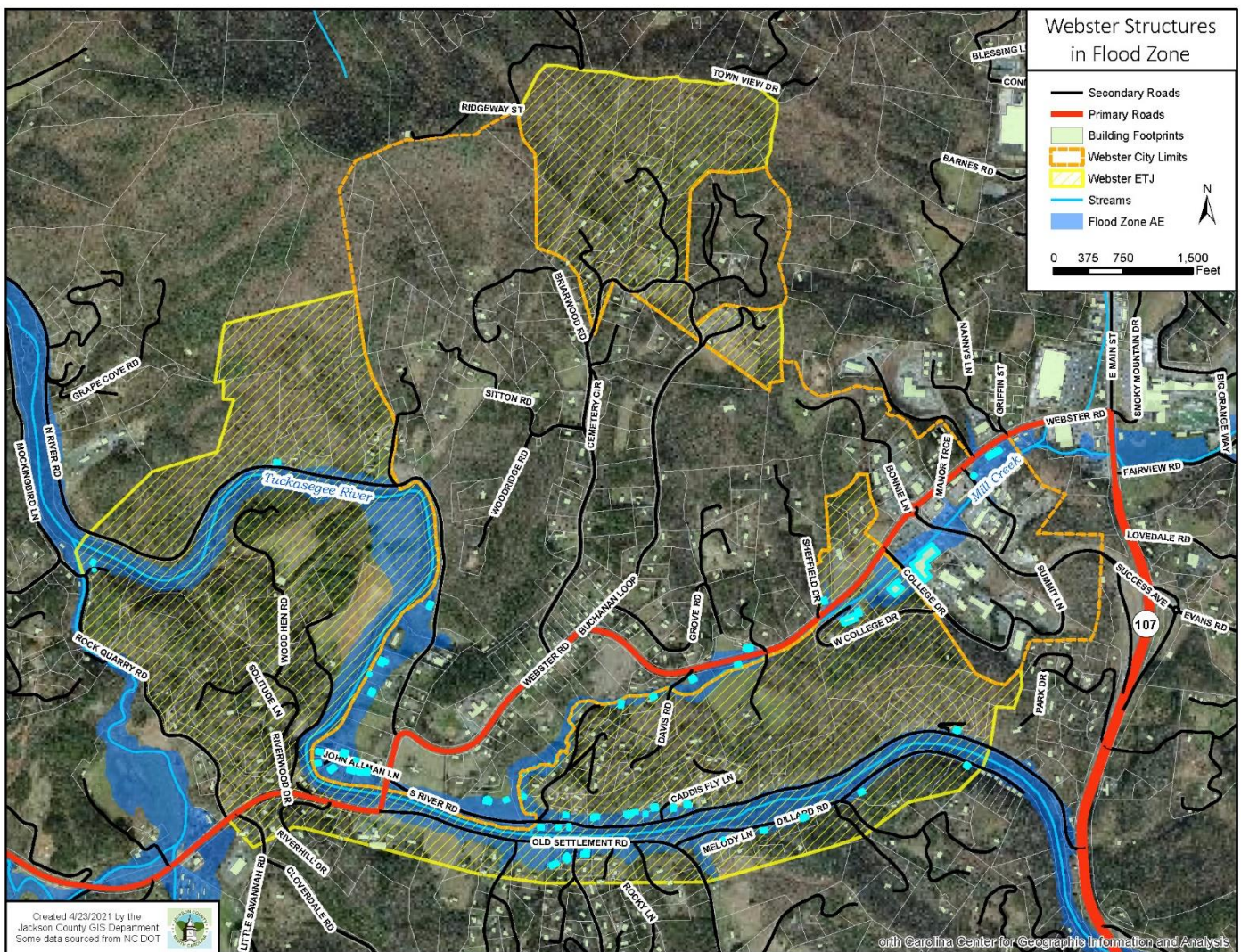


Figure 4: Structures in Webster and its ETJ that are within the AE flood zone (shown in blue)

COMMUNICATIONS

Webster's communications needs are served through a combination of traditional landline telephone networks, cellular service, cable providers, and broadband providers.

Infrastructure for high-speed internet services in our region is limited. Balsam West currently runs a fiber optic line from Webster to WCU and on to Cashiers along Hwy-107, to the Qualla Boundary along Hwy-23/74, and south to the Macon County line along Hwy-441. Balsam West does not provide service to Webster. Other high-speed internet providers in our area include Duke Energy, Frontier, SkyFi, and Morris Broadband.

The accessibility of high-speed broadband has been identified as one of the greatest needs in the region. Among the responses of Webster residents to a community survey in 2018, 42.2 percent said they were unhappy with their internet options at home and an additional 3 percent said they had no service at all. Further study would be needed to determine if the lack of internet service among Webster residents is due to the unavailability of wireless options or the prohibitive costs involved to secure reliable options.

ENERGY & GAS

Duke Energy owns and operates the largest energy infrastructure in the region. They are the franchise holder for providing electrical service to Webster. They produce hydroelectric power using impounded areas along the Tuckasegee River. Duke Energy has decommissioned the use of coal for energy production and is investing into more local and renewable energy options.

Natural gas is utilized by many Webster residents for heating (both water and home) and operating gas-run appliances (stoves and ovens, fireplaces, laundry dryers, and grills). Natural gas customers can use the centralized pipeline along Webster Road or install on their property small tanks, which can be refilled by several local suppliers. Natural gas is a fossil fuel that contributes to greenhouse gas production and is not a sustainable energy source.

INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES

WATER & SEWER

The ability to connect to a public water and sewer system would enable the town to consider a greater density of development if desired while protecting the natural resources and environment.

FLOOD PROTECTION & STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Intensified rainfall events are among the predicted consequences of climate change. Increased rainfall will add pressure to local and regional drainage facilities. Increased flood risks are present for homeowners living along the Tuckasegee River. FEMA specifies a Base Flood Elevation (BFE) for structures within the AE Flood Zone. This Base Flood Elevation denotes the elevation for the structure's first finished floor. Many scientists feel this BFE is conservative. In light of climate change, it is often recommended that the first finished floor be elevated at least 2 feet above BFE. Homeowners along the river should maintain flood insurance in good standing and closely follow the county's provisions for flood hazard reduction.

The most impervious development in Webster is Southwestern Community College which has a high percentage of roofs and parking lots that discharge into Mill Creek. The Town should consider monitoring the water turbidity of Mill Creek as it enters the Tuckasegee River.

ENERGY & GAS

The Town of Webster agreed to support a state goal of 100 percent Renewable Energy by 2050 (resolution adopted 2017). Further consideration and measures should be taken to ensure that this goal is met. Switching from gas-powered to electric utilities would be a more sustainable choice. Furthermore, greater use of renewable energy by Duke Energy and other providers would assist in reducing greenhouse gas and minimizing climate change.

COMMUNICATIONS

In our region, the biggest communication shortcoming is the accessibility of high-speed internet. Webster should stay engaged with local and regional agencies that are trying to find and implement affordable solutions.

POLICE & FIRE PROTECTION

Police and fire protection should remain budgeted by the Town.

UTILITY CONSORTIUM

Involvement in a utility partnership that encourages open communication between utility providers (such as, Sky-Fi, Verizon Wireless, Frontier, Balsam West, Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority, Duke Energy, Haywood Electric Membership Corporation, and natural gas providers) could be beneficial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following:

- Expand reliable high-speed internet access and mobile phone access
- Collaborate with North Carolina Department of Transportation and Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority during projects to encourage water and sewer line expansion
- Use Town Hall as an example of renewable energy and providing community education on issues of sustainability. Consider adding solar panels.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The occupations of Webster residents are fairly consistent with trends in the larger surrounding area and include jobs within education, healthcare, transportation, service, management, fire protection, and law enforcement. In addition, some residents work remotely or in home-based businesses.

Although Webster is primarily residential, a number of businesses do call Webster home, including: Southwestern Community College, North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 14, Jackson County Family Resource Center, Balsam West Fibernet, Current Dermatology, Smoky Mountain Center for Mental Health, Southwestern Commission, and Southwest Child Development Center.

Webster is located approximately one hour west of Asheville, North Carolina. The area is easily accessed via Hwy 441 to the north and south, and from Interstate 40 and Hwy 23/74 from the east. Within a 150-mile radius are the urban areas of Charlotte, NC; Greenville and Spartanburg, SC; Atlanta, GA; and Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Johnson City, TN.

The robust tourism economy is a significant contributor to our region's economy. Visitation to the area is driven by well-known destinations, such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Cherokee Indian Reservation and Harrah's Casino, as well as an abundance of year-round outdoor recreational activities that are dependent on our natural resources. Recreational and outdoor tourism accounts for \$163 million in economic impact each year. Occupancy Tax collections show that the top months of overnight stays in the region are July, August, and October.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Webster has a number of geographical assets that could create an economic draw. Almost all are centered on and rely on our proximity to the Tuckasegee River. Many visitors to our region are choosing to stay in short-term rental properties, such as Airbnb or Vacation Rentals by Owner. The Town may want to consider addressing short-term rentals and their impact on the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the natural environment is our greatest economic asset and resource, the Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following:

- Adopt Jackson County Mountain & Hillside Development regulations as defined in the Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance
- Ensure increased fishing tourism traffic is met with reasonable river protections to ensure a viable habitat for aquatic organisms
- Be vigilant of any improvement or development on lots that might create run-off or accelerate erosion along streambanks
- Evaluate whether short-term rentals and accessory dwelling units fit within the community Webster wishes to support
- Maintain and increase contact with the Department of Transportation to inform, raise awareness, and advocate for interests of the Town of Webster. Interests include provisions for safe parking and pathways along North and South River Roads, installation of public restroom facilities, enhanced safety features at dangerous areas of the roadway, roadway

reconfiguration to address dangerous intersections, blind curves, etc. These efforts would serve anglers, boaters, pedestrians, and bicyclists - residents and visitors, alike.

HOUSING

Webster provides a residential, community setting with easy access to opportunities for walking, biking, fishing, and boating - all of which make Webster a desirable place to live in Jackson County.

A community survey in 2018 confirmed that residents appreciate the residential feel and focus on single-family homes. Of those surveyed, 97 percent said they preferred the residential community to be comprised of single-family homes, as opposed to multi-family dwellings. Additionally, 81 percent of respondents supported accessory dwelling units, such as mother-in-law suite or apartments above a garage. Of the developed properties in Webster, approximately 31 percent are long-term rentals.

Regional trends might suggest that short-term rental properties will become more popular, as short-term rentals can generate extra income for local families, as well as meeting a growing preference of travelers who seek an authentic neighborhood experience. At present, Webster ordinances do not specifically address short-term rentals, but they do prohibit accessory buildings as residences. This means that any rental has to occur within the primary residence and with the owner residing on the premises. Some of the concerns associated with an increase in short-term usage are commercialization of residential neighborhoods and associated complaints from frequent movement, noise, and trash. Importantly, short-term vacation rentals remove potential affordable housing options from the local housing inventory.

While our region does struggle with affordable housing options, Webster does offer an option that is subsidized by the federal government's Housing and Urban Development Division (HUD). Reedwood Manor Apartments, built in 1982, contain 30 units and require residents to pay no more than 30 percent of their gross income for rent. Additionally, located along our town boundary is The Haven at Mountain Oaks. Built in 2007, The Haven contains 24 units and receives funding through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program. Some of the rental units are capped at a maximum of 30 percent of the area's median income.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The Town will need to balance the desire to create a welcoming and diverse community while also honoring the desire of many residents to remain a residential community of single-family homes. With thoughtful planning, the Town could enhance the quality of life of its residents through increased access to public spaces, greenways, and recreational opportunities and housing options that are equally appealing to young families and aging families, alike. Varied living arrangements beyond single-family housing would require changes to the current zoning ordinances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following

- Determine community consensus on rental properties and update zoning ordinances to include specific language on short-term rentals and accessory dwelling units
- Invest in strategic public improvements (pedestrian and recreation facilities) to encourage appropriate residential development in Webster
- Identify locations that allow for varied residential structures more conducive to work-force housing

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation infrastructure is a vital component in how people interact with the built and natural environment. Maintaining existing transportation infrastructure and the development of new infrastructure will determine how and where Webster can develop. Roadways are the most prevalent form of transportation, but this document also draws attention to multi-modal forms of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

In a 2018 community survey of Webster residents, the overwhelming top transportation concerns were: (1) traffic safety and speeding and (2) limited facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. Furthermore, increase in vehicle traffic through Webster was listed as the biggest challenge facing Webster in the next 10 years.

Roads

Roadways in North Carolina are maintained either by the state or by local municipalities, or they are privately maintained. The road network in Webster consists primarily of roads maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation with a handful of small private roads. The Town of Webster does not own or maintain any of the roads in Webster.

The primary roadway in Webster is NC-116 (Webster Road), which connects US-441 to NC-107. NC-116 sees significant commercial traffic and provides access to Southwestern Community College and the commercial and government uses on Bonnie Lane. It also serves the Webster Post Office, Town Hall, the offices and childcare facilities at the Old Rock School, as well as residential properties. All other roads in the planning area are designated as secondary roads. Most of the secondary roads serve residential properties. Success Avenue (R-5000) serves Southwestern Community College and includes a traffic circle at NC-116 and Bonnie Lane and a connection to NC-107 at Evans Road. The only private roads in Webster serve residential developments – such as, Hollywalk, Bullfrog Cove, and Noah's Landing. North and South River Roads pose a challenge in that they are secondary roads that have become a major artery for materials transport from the Dillsboro Quarry to development projects throughout the county. The most recent transit study on North and South River Roads is available on the Town of Webster website.

Transit

The Jackson County Transit agency operates a 13-vehicle fleet providing demand response services (door to door pick up at customer request). Jackson County Transit also operates a deviated fixed route service, known as the Jackson County Trolley. Trolley service is available six days a week, not including Sundays or holidays. The route between Dillsboro and Webster includes 14 fixed bus stops along the route.

Pedestrian Facilities

Webster has three notable pedestrian features: a 1.8-mile popular walking route along Buchanan Loop Road, which is narrow with a single lane section and lacks protective measures for cyclists and pedestrians; a .25-mile gravel walking track adjacent to the Old Rock School; and 1.6 miles of sidewalk along Webster Road from NC-107 to South River Road.

Until 2010, the Town relied on Powell bill funds to extend and maintain the sidewalks along NC-116 in Webster. When those funds were no longer available for use on state-owned roads, the Town

assumed all financial responsibility for the long-term maintenance and upkeep of the sidewalks within the Town's boundaries. This is a significant investment of town funds but has consistently been a priority.

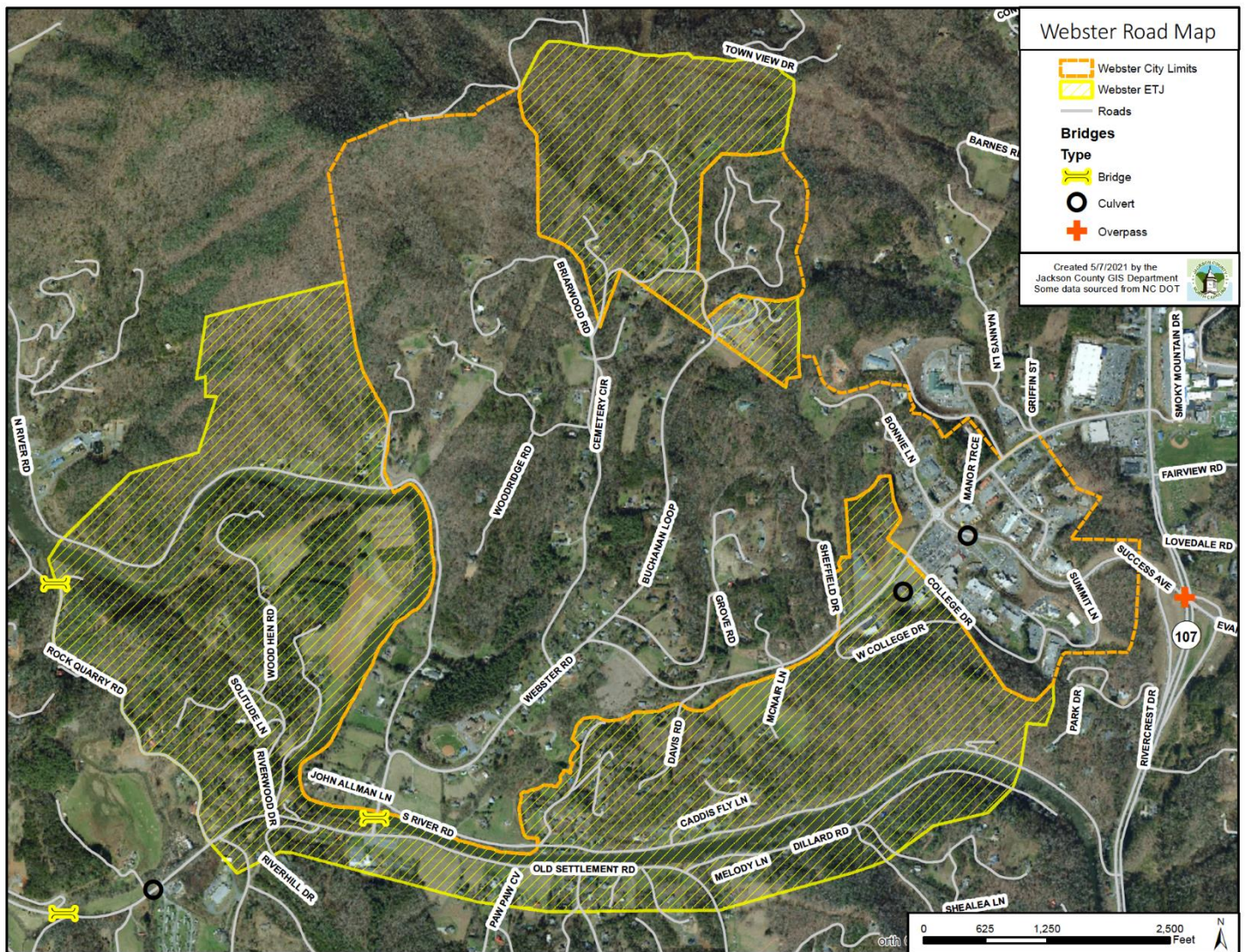


Figure 5: Road infrastructure within Webster.

Bicycle Facilities

There are several roads within the region that are commonly used by bicyclists for recreation and daily transportation purposes; however, the region has limited provisions for bicyclists along roadways. This necessitates road-sharing between motorists and bicyclists. It is expected that bicycle facilities will increase over time as new roads and improvements to existing roads include Complete Street guidelines. Some of the more popular routes used for bicyclists in and around Webster include North and South River Roads and NC 116. Webster does permit bicyclists to use its sidewalks.



Figure 6: Children bike down the sidewalk in Webster

Transportation Improvements

Transportation improvements are mostly made through the State Transportation Improvement Project process. This process allows local governments, through Rural Planning Organizations, to submit improvement projects for highway facilities and bicycle/pedestrian facilities. These projects are scored by the Department of Transportation based on several sets of data related to congestion and safety. Once the projects are scored by the Department of Transportation, Jackson County leadership along with the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization rank the top two projects in the county. The Rural Planning Organizations collect projects from all participating counties and forwards the final list to North Carolina Department of Transportation, which then ranks all of the projects from across the state to produce the State Transportation Improvement Program. Projects that are included are divided into those projects that have funding within the next five years and unfunded projects from years five to ten. The project ranking process takes place every two years.

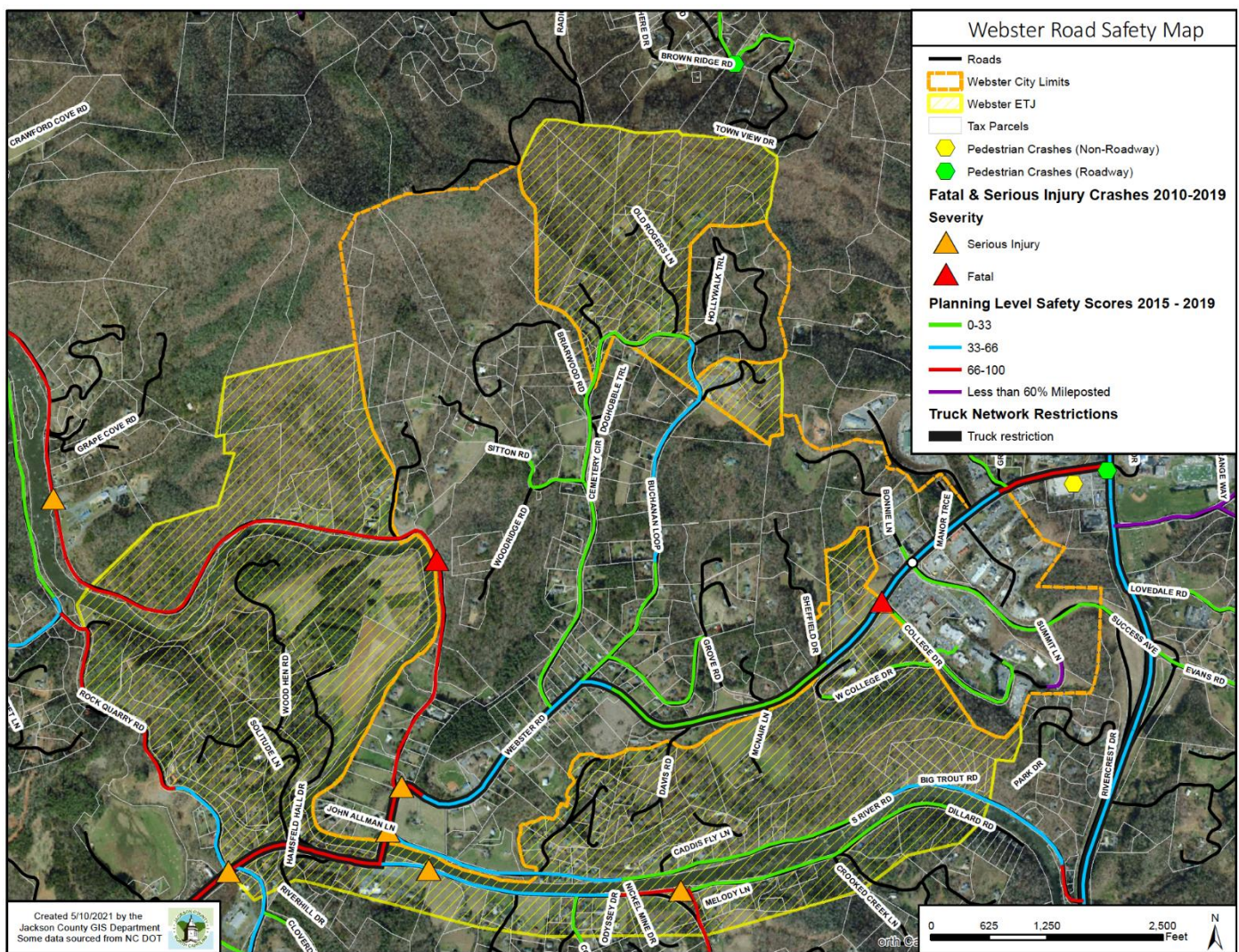


Figure 7: The ranking process for potential projects includes a consideration of each road's safety score.

The Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2017) was developed by representatives from the Southwestern Commission Rural Planning Organization and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to ensure that the County's transportation system will meet the needs of Jackson

County over a 40-year period. The plan also serves as an official guide to providing a well-coordinated, efficient, and economical transportation system for the future of the region. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan identifies long-range improvements to a variety of transportation systems and inventoried existing facilities and services. For Webster, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan includes the following:

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

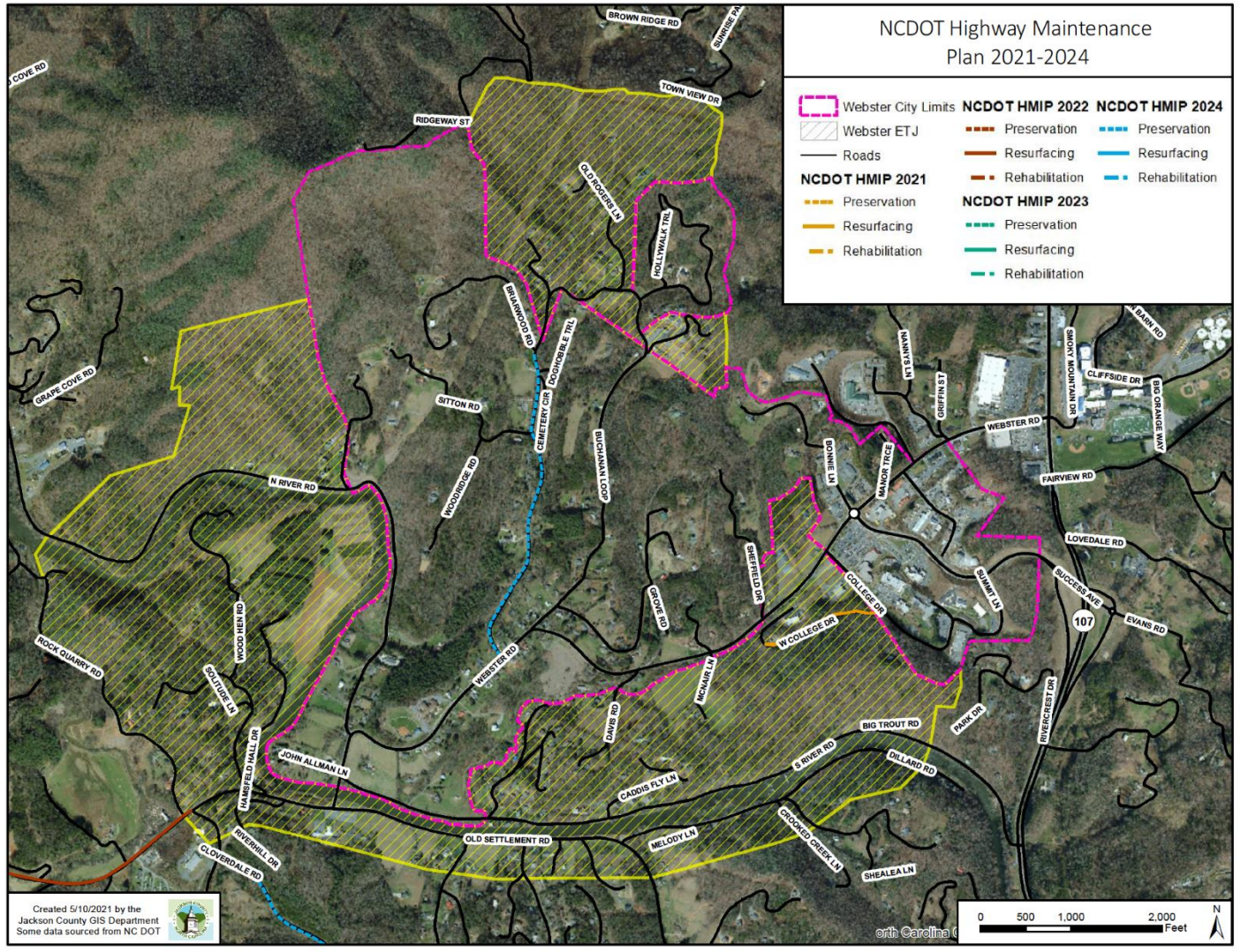


Figure 8: Within our planning area, the west side of Buchanan Loop Road is in line for preservation (NCDOT HMIP 2024)

Upgrades along NC-116. The current Comprehensive Transportation Plan lists upgrades along NC-116 as necessary to modernize the cross-section of the road to provide shoulders and straighten some curves along the route. The plan notes NC-116 is constrained through Webster and would be difficult to widen or add lanes due to these constraints. Specifically, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan states: "Widen and straighten NC-116 (Webster Road) from NC-107 to US-441. Widening the pavement to 11' lanes would help this facility handle the traffic more safely. Volumes are expected to range from 5900 to 10,800 vehicles per day in 2035. The capacity along this facility is 10,400 to 11,500 vehicles per day. Widening is not recommended in the city limits of Webster as it may be difficult with the residential and historical development." Resurfacing of Webster Road (from US 23 to SR-1367) is listed in NCDOT's Highway Maintenance Improvement Program (HMIP 2021).

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan recommends adding 4' paved shoulders from Old Settlement Road to Buchanan Loop, and the one lane portion of Buchanan Loop. These improvements also continue east along portions of NC-116.

Paved shoulders along North and South River Roads. This same improvement is recommended for the eastern 0.6 miles of North River Road and the western 0.3 miles of South River Road. These improvements are identified as 2040 improvements and are not included in the State Transportation Improvement Process.

While improvements to North and South River Roads are needed, they are unlikely to be prioritized by the county's Comprehensive Transportation Plan due to environmental and physical constraints.

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Sidewalks along Buchanan Loop Road and Success Avenue. Buchanan Loop Road is a road identified as "Needs Improvement" with the addition of sidewalks. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan identifies a need for sidewalks along the new road by Southwestern Community College linking NC-116 to NC-107. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan recommends an extension of the existing greenway downstream to Dillsboro, on the south side of the river.

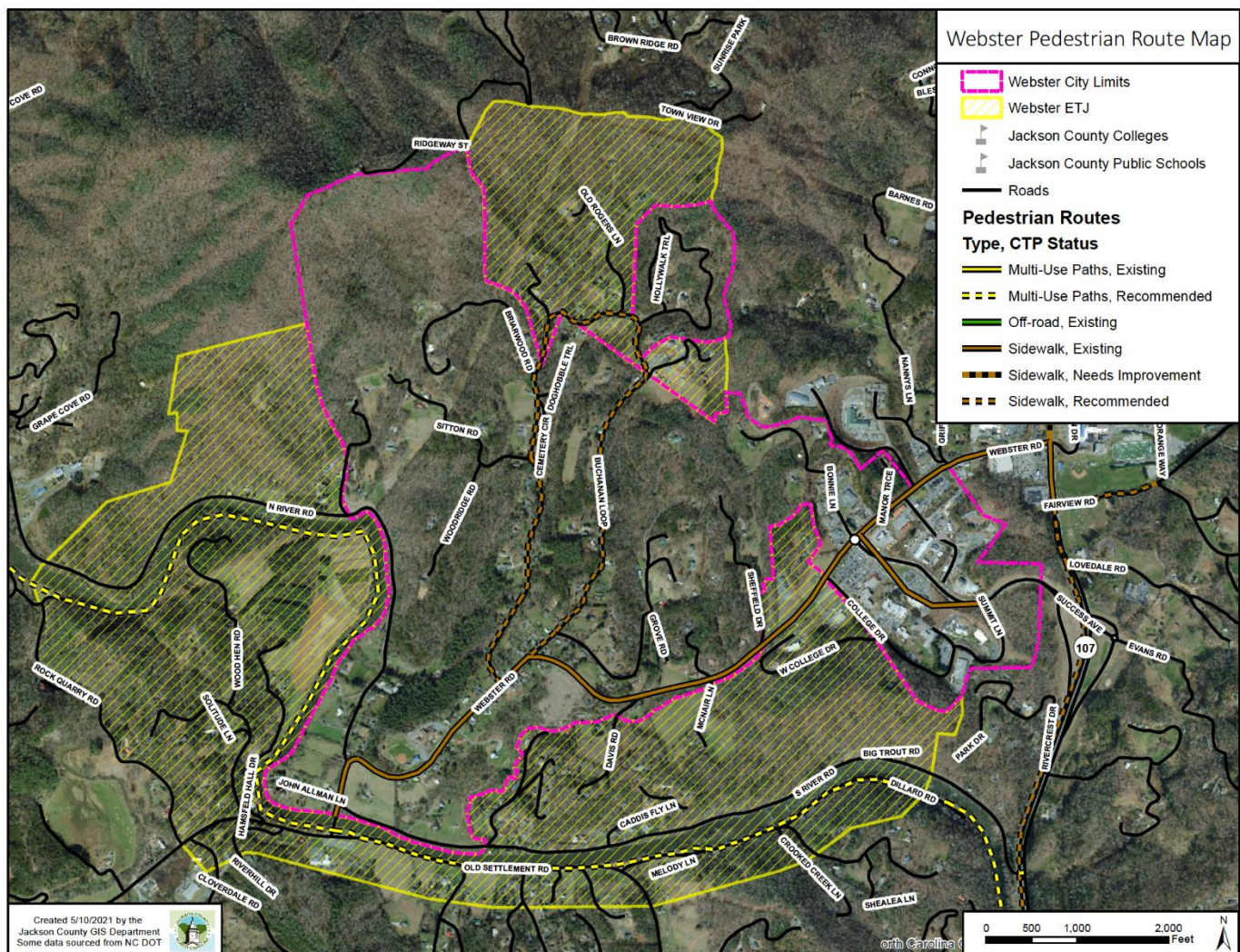


Figure 9: NCDOT recommends sidewalks along Buchanan Loop Road and a multi-use path along the Tuckasegee River.

A recent “Jackson County Pedestrian and Greenway Plan” (adopted by Jackson County Commissioners, September 2021) identified Buchanan Loop as an area that would benefit from safety improvements. Their analysis recommended traffic calming features (such as speed humps) and shared road arrow pavement markings.

BICYCLIST IMPROVEMENTS

Multi-use trail along the Tuckasegee River in Webster. Plans for a multi-use trail, originally identified in a 2003 effort by Jackson County, are in the CTP along the River through Webster linking to Cullowhee. River Road is identified as a local bicycle route.

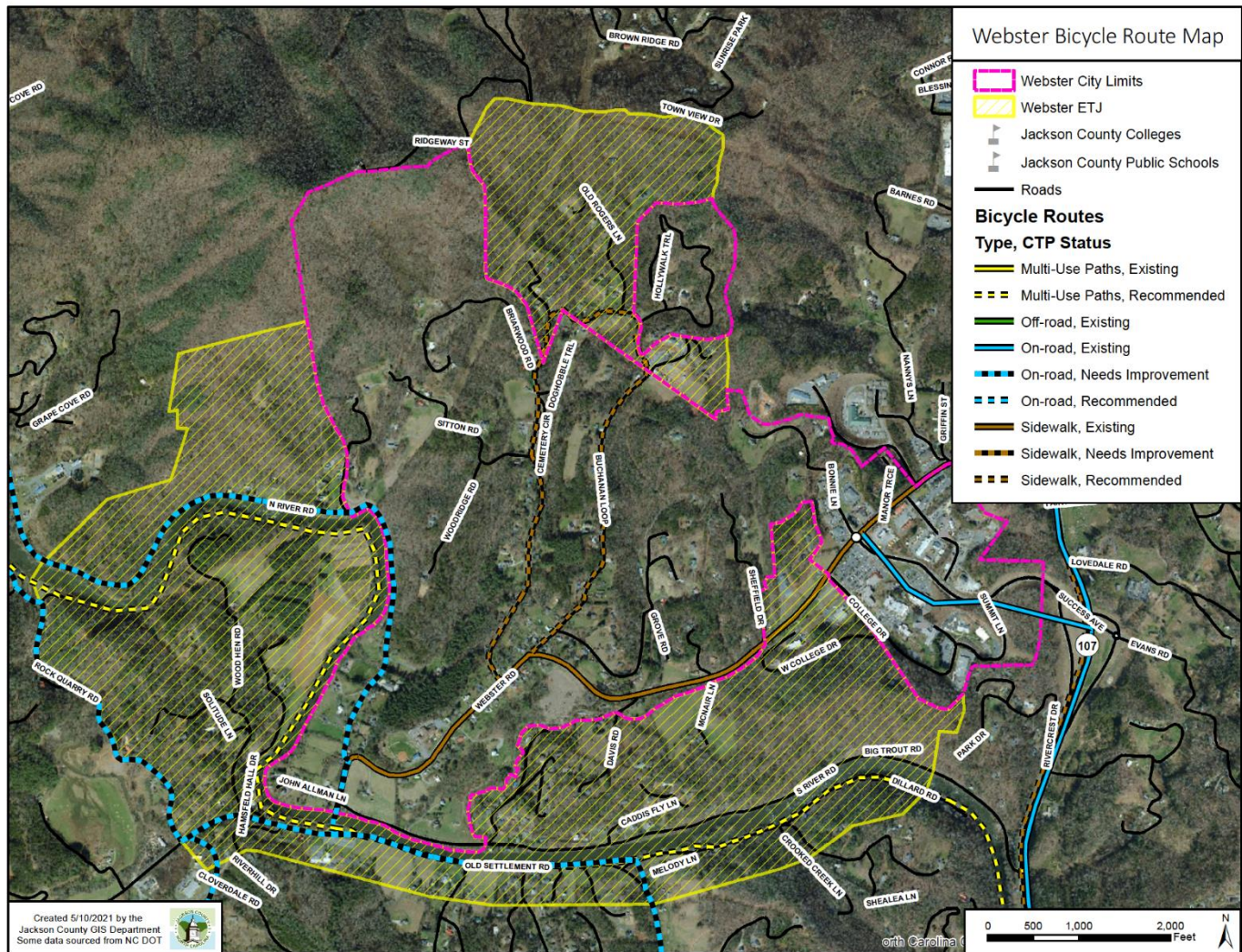


Figure 10: For bicycle improvements, NCDOT is recommending that sidewalks be added along Buchanan Loop Road and that a combination of multi-use paths and on-road access be considered along North and South River Roads.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following to improve transportation:

- Improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Identify and prioritize high hazard locations for pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Partner with NC Department of Transportation to upgrade signs at high hazard locations for pedestrian safety

- Improve signage for designated bicycle routes
 - Provide pull out areas for bicyclists along popular bike routes, such as River Road
- Advocate for traffic calming mechanisms to slow traffic and give pedestrians and cyclists priority on neighborhood streets. Examples include raised, high visibility crosswalks across NC 116 near the post office or adding additional cross-walk near Old Rock School.
- Explore ways to make North and South River Roads safer for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Encourage complete streets compliance whenever streets are upgraded or modified. Complete streets are intended to enable safe access to all users and provide for pedestrian and cyclist accommodations.
- Create plans for roadway and multi-modal transportation to improve connectivity between schools, housing, business districts, recreation and community centers
- Educate citizens about alternative modes of transportation.
 - Partner with NCDOT and municipalities to educate the public about bicycle safety and rights.
 - Provide public service announcements (radio, newspaper, social media) about cyclist safety, pedestrian safety and associated health benefits.
- Apply for scenic highway status for the Tuckasegee River corridor

RECREATION

Webster is located in a region that offers exceptional outdoor recreational opportunities. Within Webster itself, there are opportunities to enjoy the mountain setting by foot, bike, or boat. Recreational walking is a popular activity in Webster, especially on the sidewalk along Hwy 116 and on Buchanan Loop Road. There is also a nature trail on the SCC campus and a gravel walking trail adjacent to the Old Rock School. Bicyclists and runners use the sidewalks along Hwy 116 through Webster, often connecting to North and South River Roads.

Tuckasegee River

The Tuckasegee River meanders from its headwaters in Panthertown Valley for 60 miles, passing through Webster on its way to join the Little Tennessee River. Locally referred to as “the Tuck,” the Tuckasegee River offers flatwater and whitewater sections. Multiple well-maintained boat launches make access easy.

A convenient river access point located at the intersection of Hwy 116 and Old Settlement Road and maintained by Jackson County Parks and Recreation provides the perfect spot for a picnic and access to the river for fishing, kayaking, or tubing.

In a 2018 community survey, respondents ranked protection of water quality and preservation of the Tuckasegee River corridor as their highest environmental priorities. More than 90 percent of those surveyed enjoy the “views” that the Tuckasegee River affords, including the wildlife that frequent and depend on it.

Tuckasegee River Blue Trail

A Blue Trail is a dedicated stretch of river that enjoys special clean water safeguards and is a destination for fishing, boating, and other recreation. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, Blue Trails help people discover rivers. See Appendix C for maps and more information on this program.

Fly Fishing Trail

The Tuckasegee River is the first Fly Fishing Trail in the country and offers abundant opportunities for trout fishing both along the mainstem and in its tributaries. The Tuckasegee features several special designations including delayed harvest and wild trout waters. See Appendix C for maps and more information on this program.

Mountain Heritage Trout Waters Program

Webster is a proud participant in the Mountain Heritage Trout Waters Program. The Mountain Heritage Trout Waters program is a cooperative effort between the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and local governments to encourage trout fishing as a heritage tourism activity.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Webster residents were asked in 2018 to choose the recreational activities they were most interested in seeing the Town support. The top three priorities include: improving walking opportunities, creating greenway spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, and creating family-friendly outdoor play spaces. Providing quality of life amenities such as public parks, greenways, and civic spaces have become more important to residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town expand recreational opportunities within Webster by investing in the following:

- Continue to develop the County's greenway system, with connectivity through and to Webster.
 - Consider adding greenway or trail along sewer/water right-of-way lines
- Develop improved biking and walking facilities including:
 - Paved shoulders or bike lane-sharing on Buchanan Loop
 - Wayfinding or distance signs and markers for bike/pedestrian routes
 - Explore unpaved trail opportunities that might connect to and safely extend existing pedestrian and bicyclist corridors.
- Improve greenspace adjacent to Old Rock School for increased community recreation opportunities. Add amenities, such as a covered pavilion, public restrooms, and playground structures. Other possibilities include:
 - Small disc golf course
 - Maintained turf for badminton, lawn darts, corn hole, or volleyball
 - Enhance connectivity to nature with nature trail and naturescape playground
 - Food truck events
 - Community recreation events such as kickball or wiffleball
- Create safe bike/pedestrian access to Tuckasegee River. Advocate for sidewalk crossing and bike lanes from South River Road to Old Settlement Road.
- Improve infrastructure along the Tuckasegee River
 - Public restroom facilities
 - Map that includes public access points along Tuckasegee River
 - Adequate parking
 - Increase safe spaces for pedestrians and cyclists

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The area that would become Webster was supporting community life long before European settlers arrived. At least two Cherokee towns were located in the vicinity of present-day Webster. Tuckasegee Town, "where the box turtles are," was the most prominent town on the upper Tuckasegee River throughout most of the 18th century. This settlement lay in the path of the Rutherford Expedition and was attacked and destroyed in 1776.³

Also, nearby was a town known to the Cherokee as *Unadanti'yi*, meaning "where they conjured." According to Cherokee myths, an Uktena - a mischief maker - lives in the curve of the river on North River Road. This "great snake" is said to connect us to the underworld.

James Mooney collected stories of the Cherokee from 1887 to 1890 for the Bureau of American Ethnology. According to the story as recorded in Mooney's *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*:

A war party of Shawano, coming from the direction of Pigeon River, halted here to 'make medicine' against the Cherokee, but while thus engaged were surprised by the latter, who came up from behind and killed several, including the conjurer.

Webster is home to two well-preserved Cherokee fish weirs. These v-shaped rock structures were constructed in the Tuckasegee River to herd fish for collection. They are a testament of the rich cultural heritage of this region.

The Town of Webster was established in 1853, when 18 acres of land were purchased from Nathan Allen for \$100. In 1859, an act to incorporate the Town of Webster was passed by North Carolina's General Assembly.

As the first and oldest town in Jackson County, Webster contains the highest concentration of historic structures in the county. Six of twenty Jackson County properties on the National Register of Historic Places are located in Webster.



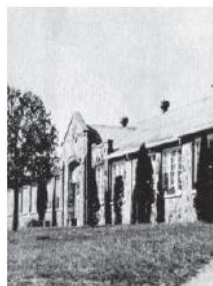
Hall House
Built 1891-1892



Hedden House
Built 1910



Moore House
Built 1886



Rock School
Built 1936-1938



Methodist Church
Built 1887



Baptist Church
Built 1900

The Webster cemetery, which was established in 1851, is a place of historic significance. Many of Jackson County's founders and early prominent residents are buried there.

The Town of Webster created a brochure focusing on the six National Register properties located within its limits. The tour is an effort by town officials to promote physical activity and community engagement while also featuring some of the unique historic properties.

³ Interview with Brett Riggs, Sequoyah professor of Cherokee Studies at Western Carolina University, 6/23/2020.

Historic Preservation Commission

In June 2009, the Webster Town Board adopted Jackson County's Ordinance for Historic Preservation. The ordinance established a Historic Preservation Commission with the Towns of Dillsboro, Sylva, Webster, and Forest Hills. The ordinance states: "The historical heritage of the County is a valuable and important asset. By listing and regulating historic districts and landmarks and acquiring historic properties, the County seeks:

To safeguard the heritage of the County by preserving districts and landmarks therein that embody important elements of its culture, history, architectural history, or prehistory; and

To promote the use and conservation of such districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of the residents of the County and the state as a whole."

Historic Preservation District

As the original county seat of Jackson County, the Town of Webster and its ETJ contain a high density of older structures, many of which owe their beginnings to the earliest days of Jackson County itself.

According to local historic preservation district standards, a structure needs to meet at least two of the following three criteria to be considered significant:

1. The structure needs to be at least 50 years old,
2. The structure should have some architectural significance, and
3. The structure should tell a story, such as the site of a special event, or the home of a person of local significance.

The possible value in seeking classification as an historic preservation district would be to help guide future development in a way that blends with the existing historic qualities of the community. Further education of board members and the community is needed on this topic.

CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community identity is important, and the Town of Webster strives to define, preserve, and enhance its quality of place by developing specific strategies to create aesthetically appealing, functional, cohesive, and people-oriented places that foster civic pride while being ever mindful to protect the mountain and river ecosystem that attracted – and continues to attract – settlers to this region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Webster faces some challenges with minimal community gathering spaces, no identifiable Town Center, and few opportunities for community engagement in which to celebrate Webster's history and culture. The Planning Board recommends that the Town address some of these concerns with the following:

- Amplify Cherokee history and culture. Collaborate with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to identify and preserve historic and culturally significant properties sites.
 - Include Cherokee history and cultural celebration education in naturescape play area
 - Add a Cherokee history plaque at Webster River Access

- Ensure protection of historic fish weirs
 - Include respectful acknowledgement of the land as Cherokee territory at town meetings, official gatherings, and Webster documents
- Use existing (and future) public spaces to create community anchors that highlight “place” and identity
 - Consider investing in public art
- Create additional public gathering spaces and park facilities that lend to connectivity with proposed greenway expansion
 - Consider applying for historic district status. While such status does not prevent or control development, it could provide standards that allow new development to blend more appropriately within existing neighborhoods.
- Foster a sense of community by promoting importance of community heritage and a mix of cultural opportunities
 - Improve awareness of local history
 - Develop educational materials
 - Host historic walks
 - Gather oral and written histories of local historic properties and events.
- Find ways to recognize the Webster cemetery as an historic resource
- Develop a comprehensive list of volunteer opportunities and share with citizens throughout the year
- Extend invitations to community events to residents of Reedwood Manor
- Encourage Webster resident participation in Jackson County's Citizen Academy – offered by Jackson County to educate citizens of the functions of county government and how to become more involved

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Webster's boundaries include lands along the Tuckasegee River and the forested sloping hillside of King's Mountain. What lies between those boundaries is a relatively flat area of 1 square mile that - because of the mountain and river ecosystem surrounding it - has been an extremely attractive place for people and natural organisms to settle. Webster contains a variety of habitats that encourage a diverse number of species. The upland watershed feeds into the Tuckasegee River, home to the native Southern Appalachian brook trout, sicklefin redhorse and more than 50 other native fish species, Eastern hellbender salamanders, a host of invertebrates, and the Appalachian elktoe, a federally endangered mussel found only in western North Carolina and eastern



Figure 11: The Tuckasegee River flowing through Webster

Tennessee. A community of additional species depend upon the river and the food it contains, including waterfowl, herons, kingfishers, and more recently bald eagles. The river and its tributaries provide drinking water for the Town of Sylva and Western Carolina University. The Tuckasegee River literally supports life for us all.

The lands within Webster have been heavily impacted by human occupation, having been cleared for agriculture in the 1800's and for the residential and commercial developments that followed. Much of Webster's steeper slopes - once logged for timber - are now covered in second-growth, unmanaged oak and pine, with an understory of mountain laurel, flowering dogwood, sassafras, and sourwood. These woods provide wildlife corridors and offer shelter to various bird species, including notable species: the Alder Flycatcher, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red Crossbill, Whippoorwill, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskin, Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Our woods also provide habitat for countless invertebrates, salamanders unique to our region and megafauna such as red fox, raccoons, opossums, bobcat, and occasionally, black bear. The tree canopy, understory, and groundcover once present at lower elevations have given way to pastures, lawns, gardens, and an assortment of non-native landscaping plants that provide inferior habitat. Of particular concern are the non-native invasives (such as, English ivy, burning bush, nandina, and kudzu) that aggressively and negatively impact the landscape and degrade native plant and animal habitat and diversity. The building of structures, which has led to the building of roads and parking lots to serve them, has created impervious conditions that increase erosion and runoff. Furthermore, land disturbing activities often introduce sediment into our waterways, which leads to an increase in water temperature, making the river inhospitable to sensitive, native aquatic species. All aquatic species of conservation concern are threatened by even low levels of siltation and increases in water temperature.

Air quality is also impacted by human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels for energy for vehicles and homes. Human impacts continue to adversely affect our region's air and water quality.

In acknowledgement of the unique values of the Tuckasegee River, the Town of Webster has been active in the support of our region's designation as the North Carolina "Trout Capital." Furthermore, Webster is one of thirteen towns in North Carolina to be named a "Mountain Heritage Trout Waters City." Increased collaboration with residents, as well as state agencies and local nonprofits could lead to additional improvements in monitoring and protection.

Webster's natural resources have always been its greatest asset.

Tuckasegee River

The Tuckasegee River is our indicator for how well we are managing our natural resources. Many of the aquatic organisms that call the river home are susceptible to the slightest environmental changes. They require cold, clear waters and rocky, un-muddied bottoms.

Approximately one-third of Jackson County is identified as a protected watershed. While designation of a region as a protected watershed does not prohibit development, watershed protection standards do place limitations on the intensity of development that may occur within the specified areas, including stream buffers and density restrictions.

Although many of the streams and waterways in Jackson County have a rating of "good" to "fair" or better in the Bio-classification by North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) for water quality, the section of the Tuckasegee River between Webster and Dillsboro is identified as "impaired," due to fecal coliform levels that may impair these waters from their full function and make recreation in these waters unsafe (NCDEQ 2010).

Surveys have indicated concern over the lack of tree canopy, which can be addressed in a variety of ways, including landscaping codes, tree protection ordinances, and native tree giveaways. Promotion of the planting of native species and increased tree canopy could have significant positive environmental benefits for both habitat and water quality.

Poor solid waste management and increased land development activities can have adverse impacts on habitat quality both on land and in water. New development should prioritize plans for water and sewer connectivity, as well as strict enforcement of current (and future) ordinances adopted by the Town Board.

Respondents to the 2018 Community Survey ranked protection of water quality and preservation of the Tuckasegee River corridor as their highest environmental priority. The town should prioritize the preservation and protection of the Tuckasegee River corridor. When analyzing any infrastructure improvements, capital investments, or land development activities, the first point of inquiry should be: how might our natural environment be impacted.

Mill Creek

Webster contains a robust tributary, Mill Creek, that borders residential properties and runs parallel to the main roadway, NC-116, through the heart of Webster. Mill Creek drains across significant stretches of impervious areas (government and commercial developments) and, as a result, provides impaired water to the Tuckasegee River.

Environmental Regulations

In order to protect our natural resources, Webster has adopted some ordinances designed to regulate, prohibit, and mitigate activities that might negatively affect the environment. These ordinances are part of officially approved inter-local agreements that authorize and designate the Jackson County Permitting and Code Enforcement Director as administrator of these regulations within Webster and its ETJ.

Sedimentation and Erosion Control Ordinance. The purpose of these regulations is to regulate certain land disturbing activity to control accelerated erosion and sedimentation in order to prevent the pollution and degradation of water and other public and private property by sedimentation. These regulations include requirements for a buffer zone along the margin of a watercourse of sufficient width to confine visible siltation. Waters that have been classified as trout waters by the Environmental Management Commission shall have an undisturbed buffer zone 25 feet wide or of sufficient width to confine visible siltation within the 25 percent of the buffer zone nearest the land disturbing activity, whichever is greater. Furthermore, the regulations specify that no land disturbing activity shall be undertaken within a buffer zone adjacent to designated trout waters that will cause adverse temperature fluctuations in these waters.

Flood Damage Prevention. The purpose of these regulations is to promote public health and safety and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions within flood prone areas. Flood hazard areas are those identified by FEMA in its flood insurance study and accompanying flood insurance rate maps.

ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES & SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change is necessitating that towns and municipalities be proactive in their planning for potential environmental changes. It is expected that our region will see increased precipitation events that would affect our infrastructure and structures that fall within the flood zone.

Furthermore, there are steps the town could take to help mitigate climate change by minimizing and reducing its own carbon footprint. One such step could be to upgrade to energy-efficient appliances and windows at Town Hall whenever replacement is needed. Minimizing our reliance on gas powered utilities and instead switching to electric energy is another. We should be actively encouraging our energy provider to invest in renewable sources of energy production.

The Town could partner with other local and state nonprofits that advocate for various habitats and species: meadow versus lawns, milkweeds for monarchs, National Wildlife Habitat certification, Bee City status, streambank improvements, bat habitat, Tree City USA designation, and Dark Sky compliance. The Town could choose to endorse or support any of these organizations to improve our ability to educate residents.

Webster's environmental resources are its greatest asset and protecting them should be at the forefront of land-use decision making. Webster could be a model municipality in proactively seeking protections and remaining vigilant that these protective regulations are enforced. Increased collaboration with residents, as well as state and local agencies and nonprofits could lead to improved outcomes. The Planning Board's recommendations are only as good as their enforcement

and this is achieved through close contact with Jackson County Planning and Permitting Departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Careful consideration of riparian areas should be a focus on every waterway as it passes through Webster. A lofty goal for Webster might be to ensure that the water leaving Webster and its ETJ is of the same or better quality than the water entering. The Planning Board recommends that the Town focus on the following:

- Adopt and endorse the following Jackson County environmental regulations
 - Mountain and Hillside Development – to minimize land-disturbing activity on high-elevation, steep slopes in an effort to protect the public health and economic progress of Jackson County. Mountain and hillside development has the potential to endanger water quality through increased erosion, stream sedimentation, and stormwater runoff; to induce landslides; to adversely affect ground water; to damage habitat for plant and animal species; and to detract from the mountains' scenic and natural beauty which is vital to the recreation and tourism of Jackson County.
 - Water Recharge – to help ensure viability of ground water supplies, including wells, and to lessen the impact of surface runoff
- Be good stewards of Tuckasegee water quality through runoff mitigation strategies
 - Investigate and improve drainage into Mill Creek and the Tuckasegee River
 - Seek grant funding and public/private partnerships that might lead to improved water runoff
 - Collaborate with Western Carolina University and other environmental groups to monitor turbidity of Tuckasegee River. Publicize findings and educate public on causes of turbidity and its significance to the river ecosystem
- Protect riparian zones
 - Ensure enforcement of trout water riparian buffer requirements for new development.
 - Recommend NC Department of Transportation not mow along riverbanks; grasses serve as effective barrier to capture trash and improve water quality
- Encourage use of native plant species for landscaping. Discourage use of invasives such as ivy, nandina, and burning bush which negatively affect native populations.
- Avoid land uses that deplete or degrade natural resources in environmentally sensitive areas, including habitat for species of conservation concern
 - Collaborate with Western Carolina University and environmental groups to identify habitats of significance for threatened or endangered species
- Educate citizens about species of significance in our region: native fish, salamander, invertebrate species and notable bird and plant species
- Seek National Wildlife Habitat certification, Dark Sky compliance
- Improve tree canopy by adopting and supporting landscape codes, tree protection ordinances, and native tree giveaways. Seek Tree City certification
- Continue to develop the County's greenway system, with connectivity through and to Webster
- Coordinate with local land trust (Mainspring) and Soil and Water Conservation districts to assist with conservation planning and projects and with potential ordinance amendments
- Consider adding electric car charging stations

CURRENT LAND USE

The Town of Webster and its ETJ encompasses 1,235 acres and is characterized by a broad valley and ridge with the Tuckasegee River to the south and King's Mountain to the north and west. With many natural constraints, existing development in Webster has been concentrated along the low-lying valleys and waterways.

Zoning and Related Ordinances

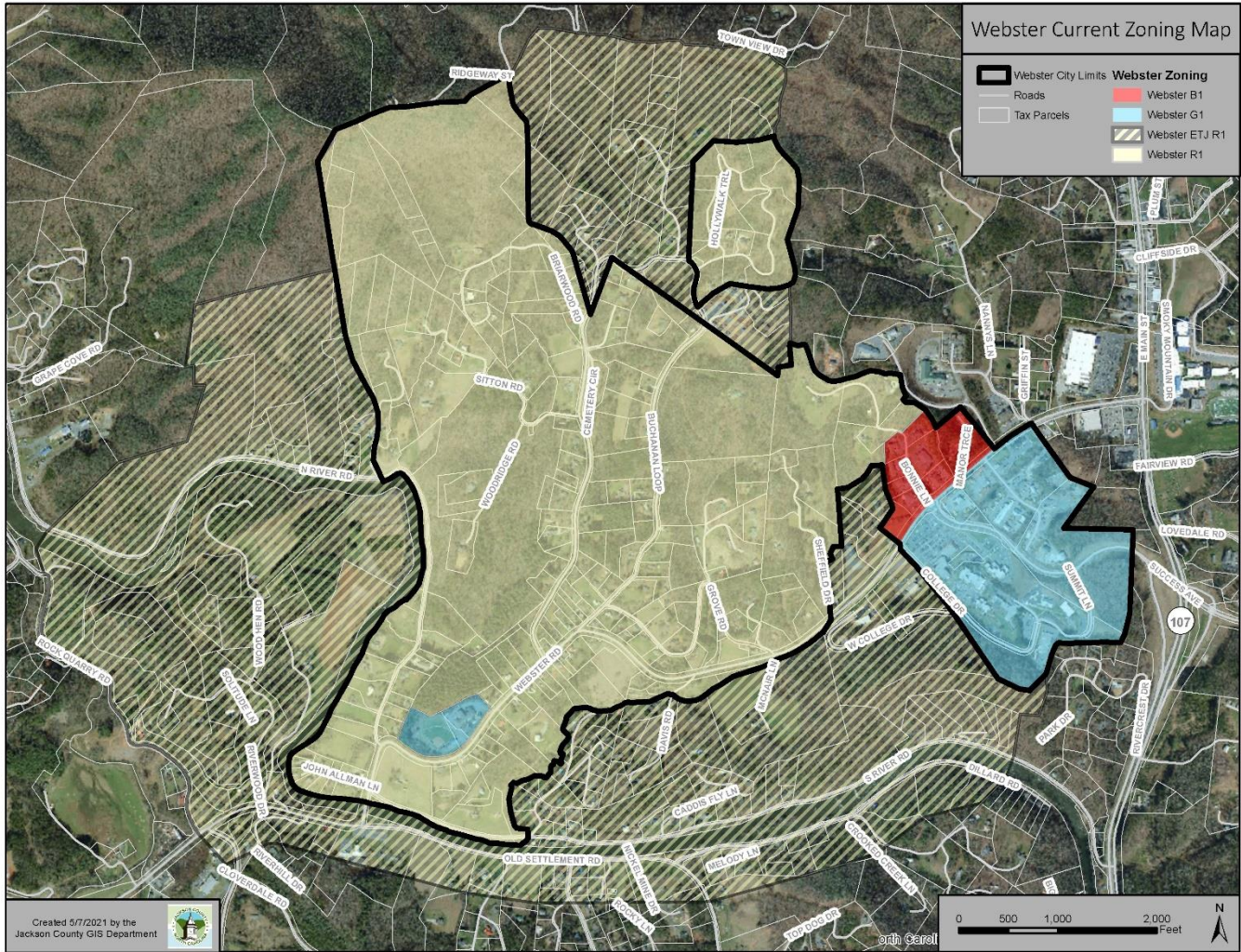


Figure 12: Current Zoning Map (2021)

The Town of Webster adopted its current Zoning Ordinances in April of 2012, in an effort to regulate the location and types of land uses that are permitted within the town, develop standards for built structures, create regulations for signs and off-street parking, and set standards for buffering, screening, and landscaping.

Most of the parcels in Webster and its ETJ are zoned as residential, **R-1**. The R-1 residential district permits single-family dwellings. The density of single-family housing in the R-1 district is limited by dimensional requirements that include a minimum lot size of 1 acre, a minimum lot width of 100 feet, and 20-foot setbacks. Manufactured homes are permitted as long as they meet zoning development

requirements. Multi-family housing is not permitted. There is one apartment complex in Webster that was built prior to these ordinances.

Other permitted uses in the **R-1** district include accessory outbuilding, rooms for rent, and home occupations. Allowable home businesses must be low traffic and occur in the primary building.

Within Webster, there are several government parcels, **G-1**, which include Southwestern Community College, North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 14, Jackson County Board of Education, Southwest Child Development Center, and Jackson County Family Resource Center. The greenspace adjacent to the Old Rock School is also zoned government and is owned by Jackson County with a small triangle owned by Jackson County Public Schools, who share usage of the space for women's high school softball.

There is one concentrated business district, **B-1**, that is home to Balsam West Fibernet, Meridian Behavioral Health Services, Southwestern Commission, and Current Dermatology.

Current Land Uses

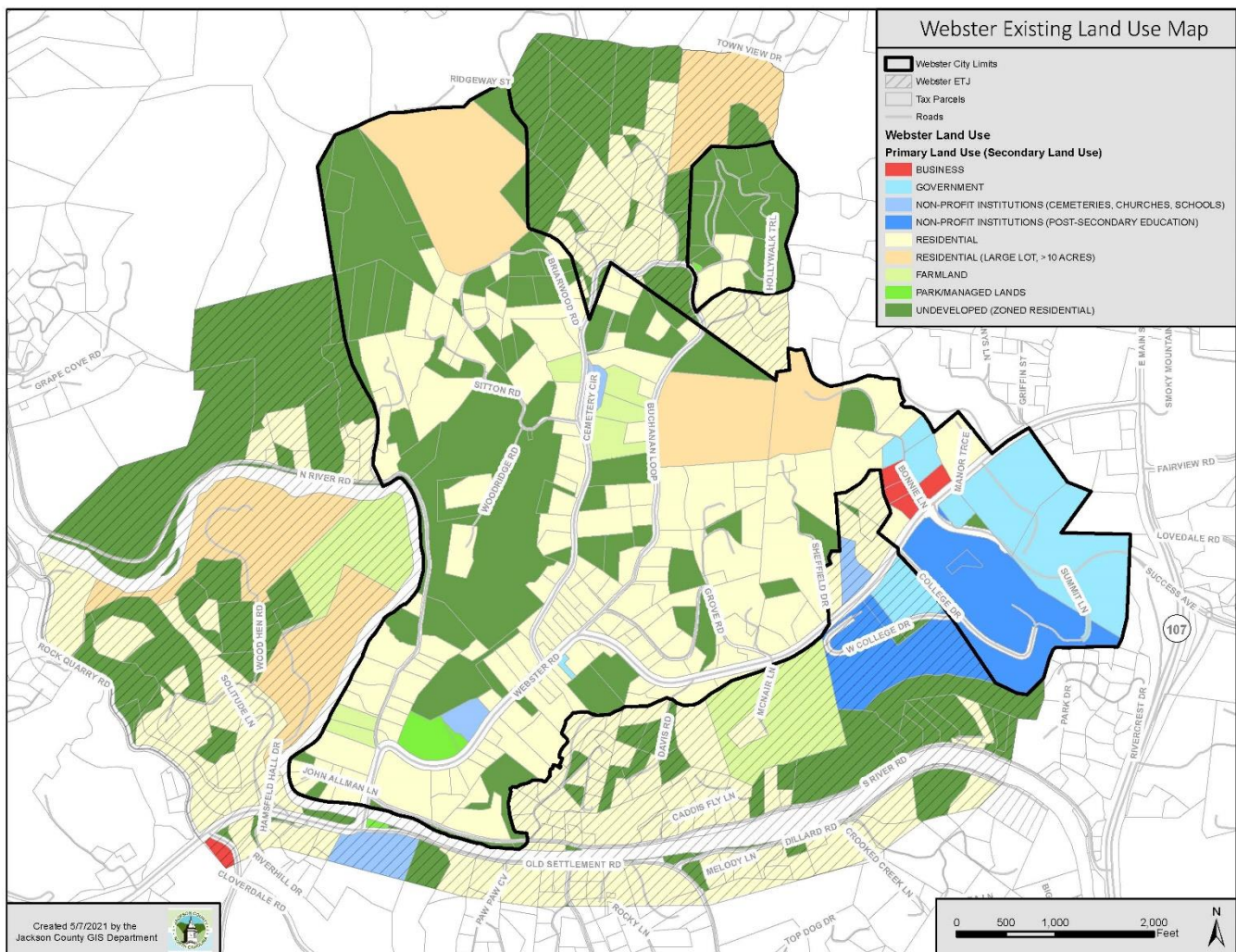


Figure 13: Existing Land Use Map (2021)

More than 49 percent of the land in Webster is developed for residential uses. Nearly 5 percent of Webster's land is used for government and business purposes. The remaining developed parcels

(about 11 percent) are devoted to farmland, churches, cemeteries, and primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. 35 percent of the land in Webster is undeveloped, with much of that land being located along the steep slopes of King's Mountain and within the floodplain. Undeveloped parcels that fall outside of floodplain and steeper slopes offer potential for higher density residential zoning, should community consensus support such changes.

Existing Webster Land Use By Category

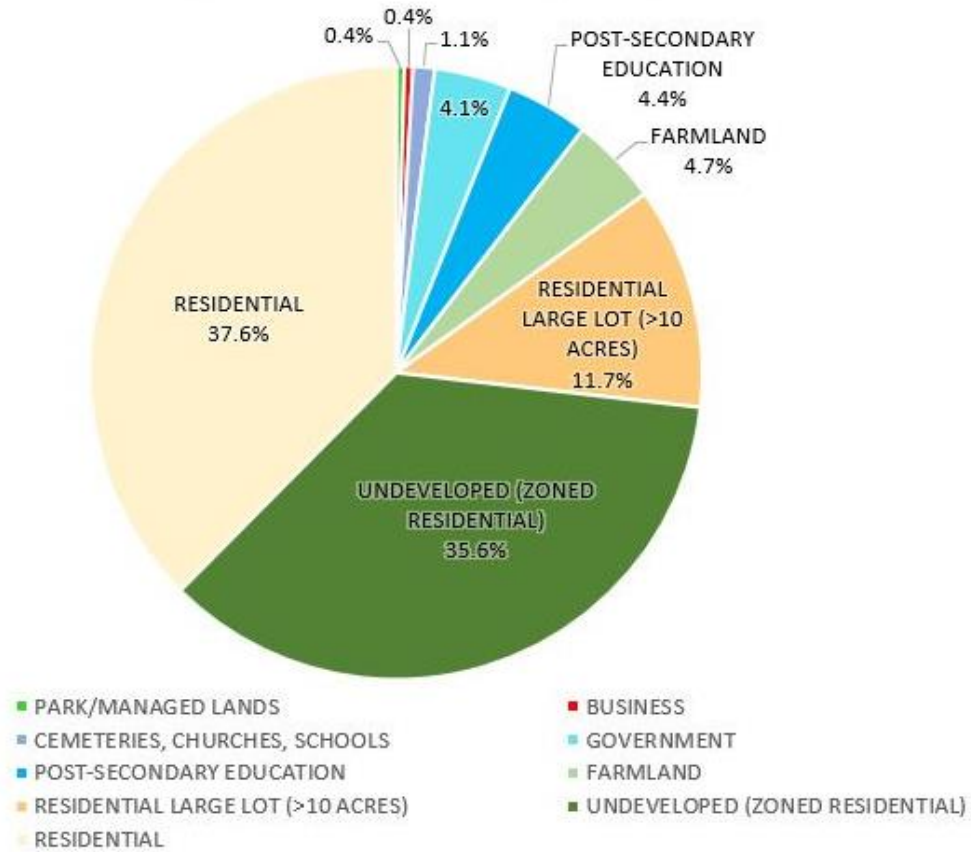


Figure 14: Pie chart showing existing land use by category

Managing development

Webster has adopted several ordinances designed to manage development within the Town. Two of these ordinances establish the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment. These Boards are essential in the development and management of land use policy and regulation. The Planning Board is responsible for advising the Board of Commissioners on land use policy issues and approval of major subdivisions. The Board of Adjustment is the local government equivalent to a judiciary. It adjudicates variances from the ordinances and also appeals from staff decisions.

The following is a list of Webster's general development ordinances and a brief description of their purposes. Please note that environmental development regulations are summarized in the Natural Resources section. Approval and enforcement of these ordinances are handled through Jackson County's Planning and Permitting Departments.

Sign Ordinance The purpose of this ordinance is to regulate the placement of signs and outdoor advertising throughout Webster. It is intended that these regulations will preserve the scenic natural environment as well as improve safety for motorists and pedestrians.

Historic Preservation In accordance with standards established by Jackson County, the purpose of this ordinance is to safeguard the heritage of the region by preserving districts and landmarks important to our culture and history.

Outdoor Lighting In accordance with standards established by Jackson County, this ordinance is designed to provide environmentally sensitive nighttime environment, adequate light for safety and security, reduce light pollution, and promote efficient and cost-effective lighting and conserve energy.

Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance: Subdivisions In accordance with standards established in the Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance, Webster adopted their recommendations for subdivisions *with some modifications*: subdivisions are permitted as long as the one-acre lot minimum per structure is met. Cluster developments are not permitted. This ordinance is designed to encourage sound and stable development, to ensure that roads and utilities are provided in a coordinated manner, and to plan for the preservation of natural areas, open space, and pedestrian-friendly access.

Wireless Communications Ordinance In accordance with standards established by Jackson County, the purpose of this ordinance is to provide for the public health safety and welfare by ensuring that the residents and businesses have reliable access to wireless communications and broadband networks while providing protection of our communities.

Animal Control Ordinance The purpose of this ordinance is to ensure all animals receive proper care and treatment and to protect residents and visitors from animals which are potentially dangerous.

Noise Control Ordinance The purpose of this ordinance is to protect and enhance the quality of commercial and residential environments by restricting unreasonably loud and disturbing noise.

FUTURE LAND USE

Webster was once the commercial center of Jackson County. From 1853 to 1913, Webster was the county seat and boasted a post office, jail, library, school, mill, and courthouse. When the county seat was relocated to Sylva, Webster became – and has remained – a primarily residential community. This residential nature within a neighborhood setting has become the defining characteristic of the community.

A survey of community members in 2018 identified three clear goals:

1. To maintain the residential community. Of those surveyed, 97 percent said they preferred that Webster remain a residential community comprised primarily of single-family homes.
2. To increase safe options for bicyclists and pedestrians, while being mindful of increasing vehicle traffic volumes and speed
3. To ensure protection of the water quality of the Tuckasegee River

These community preferences signal a focus on enhancing quality of life, rather than suggesting significant changes to the current zoning districts and regulations. With planned and purposeful development, the Town of Webster hopes to maintain its small-town atmosphere while expanding amenities (such as parks and multi-modal transportation) that can provide opportunities for safe, healthy lifestyles for residents of all ages.

The existing patterns for development have been codified by Webster's zoning ordinances that allow limited types of development, including Residential (R-1), Government (G-1), and Business (B-1). Following is a discussion of each of the zoning categories with recommended opportunities for future changes.

Residential Land Use Zoning

Based on community survey results, more than 87 percent of those surveyed are either satisfied with Webster zoning or unsure of what change might mean (9.4 percent of those surveyed felt Webster's zoning ordinances were too restrictive, while 3 percent felt they weren't restrictive enough). When asked in that same survey if Webster should change its one-acre minimum lot size, 51.6 percent responded no, 35.9 percent responded yes, and 12.5 percent responded that they were unsure. Of those advocating for smaller lot sizes, many recommended .5 to .75-acre minimum.

Although there is significant support for the current zoning standards, there has been some interest in permitting lower maintenance and smaller housing units that might provide opportunities for seniors, starter homes for young families, or those desiring a home with less upkeep. Addressing affordable or senior housing will require smaller lots, smaller houses, or attached housing solutions. This approach may warrant specific design parameters and allowances for open spaces. If the town were to consider creating an additional residential zone (R-2), parcels for consideration would need to follow infrastructure and traffic corridors that could support that usage. Further study is needed to refine community consensus on this issue.

Business Land Use Zoning

The current business zone on Bonnie Lane has little room for expansion without encroaching into residential areas. The current minimum lot size for businesses of 2 acres could be decreased to allow for selective business expansion that could provide multi-use (both residential and business) building opportunities.

Government Land Use Zoning

Future recommendations to Webster's government district focus on improvements to the greenspace adjacent to the Old Rock School. This outdoor space has the potential to offer more opportunities for physical activity, as well increased community engagement and nature connectivity. Other community activities that could take place at this location, such as a farmer's market or food truck nights, would require changes to current zoning regulations.

Future Land Use Map

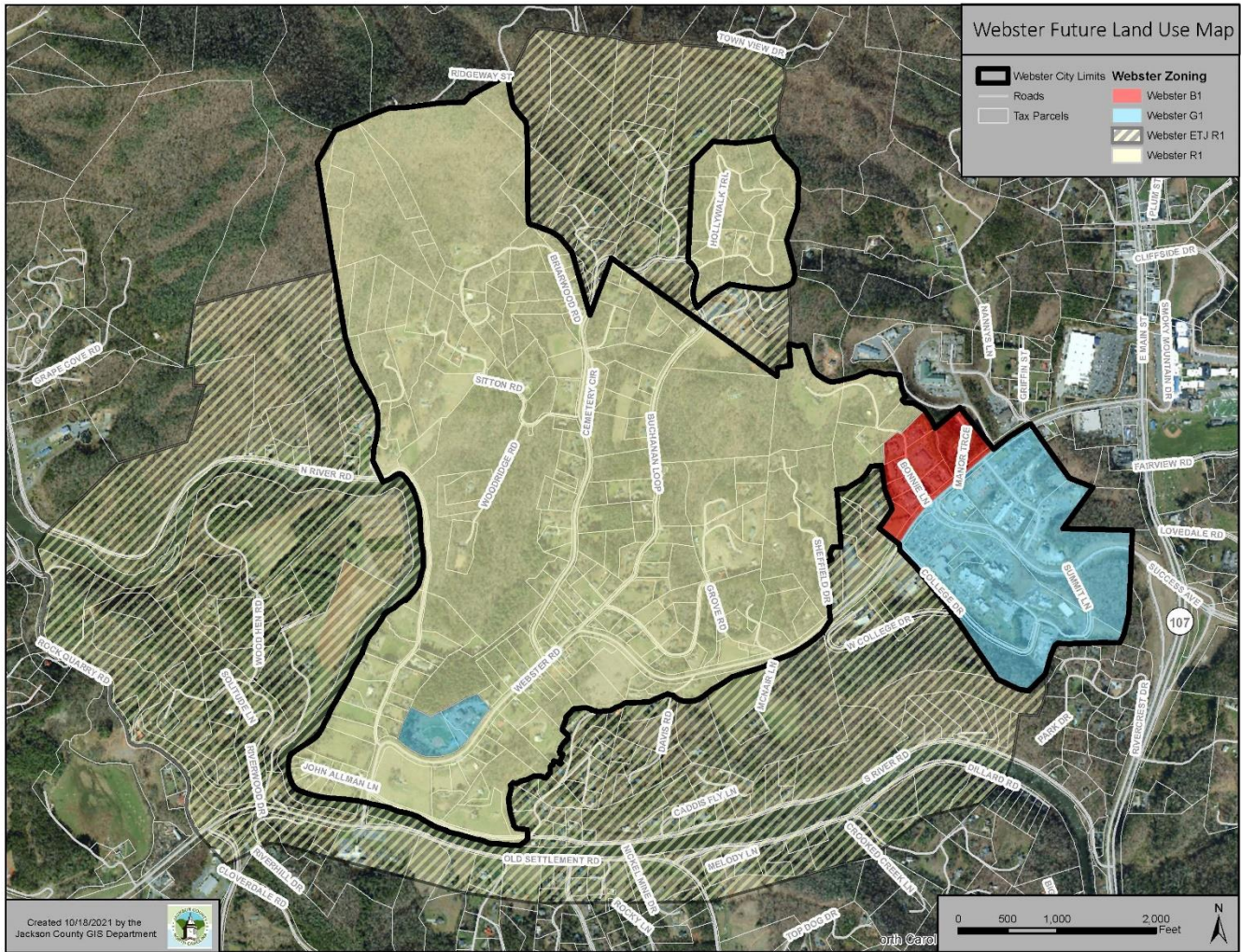


Figure 15: The Future Land Use Map is consistent with the Current Land Use Map

Webster is planning for the kind of development and improvements that will encourage an active, family-friendly community, all while preserving its genuine small-town feel. With Webster's long-term vision for growth in mind, the Webster Planning Board determined that the existing zoning designations are successfully guiding development in a way that is consistent with citizen preference. Any future planning should include more efficient use of the transportation corridor: accessibility to bicyclists and pedestrians and investments in the natural spaces that punctuate and offer respite along the route (parks, greenspaces, and public art). On the map below we have noted possible pathways that a future greenway could take, following already established sidewalks, sewer line right-of-way, and logical connections between parks, businesses, and schools. Furthermore, careful consideration of the undeveloped parcels (shown in dark green) and parcels of greater than 10 acres (shown in tan) is needed to determine whether they might offer future development opportunities, or whether they warrant preservation as open space. In a 2018 community survey, more than 60 percent of respondents specified that some places should be protected from development or growth. Areas that were specifically mentioned as needing protections from development include: the river and its watershed, farmland, higher slopes of King's Mountain, and historic "downtown." Over 84 percent of those surveyed stated that local leaders should work with

land owners of undeveloped parcels and farmland to preserve those open spaces. Reaching out to local land trusts, such as Mainspring Conservation Trust, could provide opportunities for protecting river buffers and spaces of ecological significance. We recognize the value of our natural resources and have highlighted those areas that may warrant additional protection to ensure for the well-being of our mountain and river ecosystem and all those who depend on them.

Future Land Use Considerations

Future growth and development should prioritize the following values: community character, mobility, amenities for improved recreational activity, protection of natural resources and open spaces, and consideration of the value of local farms and agriculture.

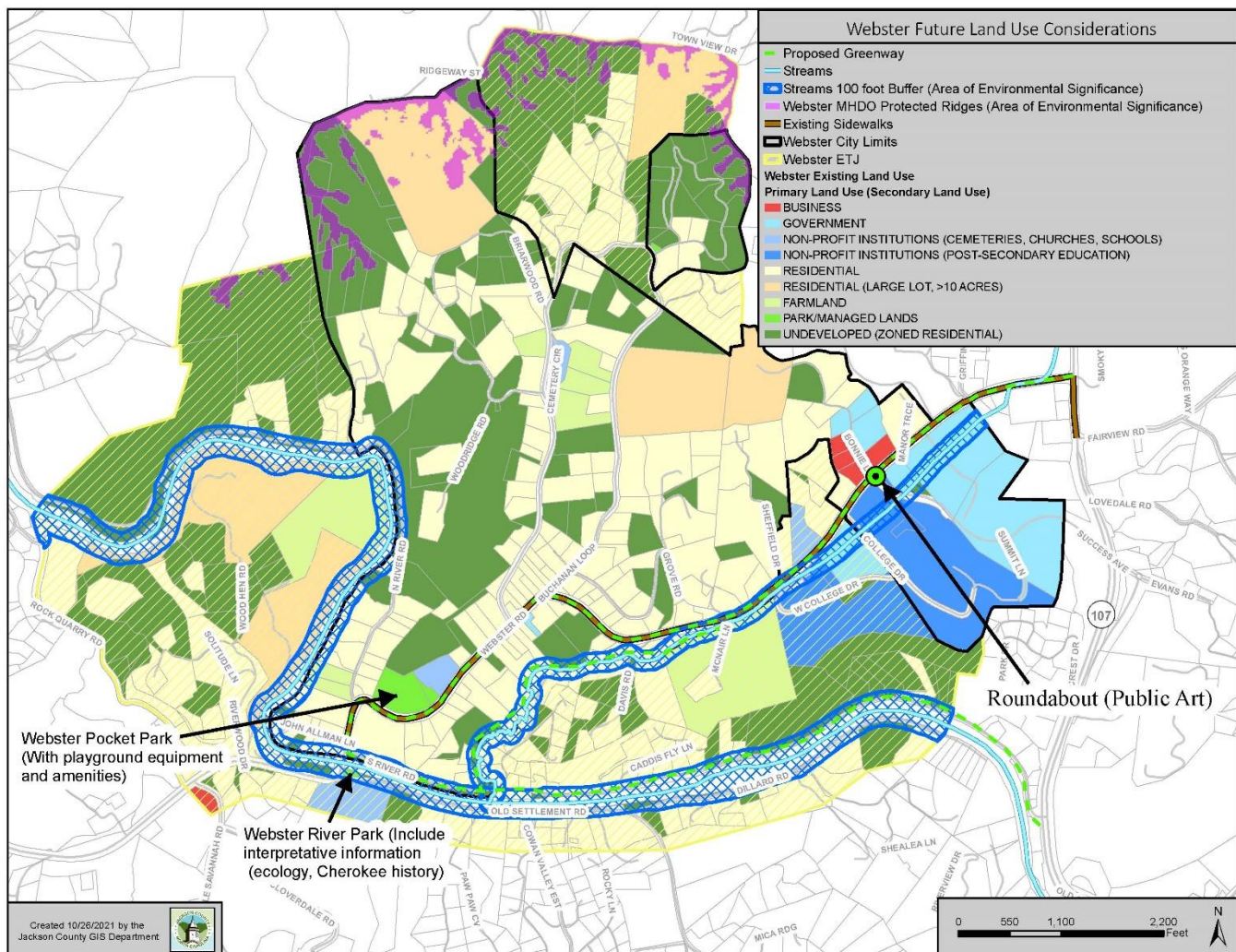


Figure 16: Future Land Use Considerations Map highlights the natural resources and geographic features of Webster and its ETJ that could impact future planning.

Future Land Use Priorities

Maintaining community's character. Future changes should protect or enhance the quality of our neighborhood and strengthen Webster's identity and sense of place.

Enhancing mobility between residential, employment, commercial, and recreation areas. Improving connections between places where residents live, work, and play will be a key challenge that can

only be met through better integration of land uses and the establishment of connections between uses for all modes of transportation. Narrow rights-of-way constrain opportunities to establish complete streets along many arterial street corridors. Any future development should facilitate better mobility.

Providing adequate infrastructure and services for residents, both now and in the future. In addition to adequate transportation infrastructure, development requires utilities, stormwater facilities, and a variety of services to function properly. With any growth, the town will need to coordinate the expansion of its infrastructure and services with growth in ways that maintain adequate levels of service for existing and new development in a sustainable way.

Providing adequate recreational facilities for residents. Encourage the inclusion of attractive pedestrian and bicycle amenities in new and existing developments.

Preserving natural resources and open space. Webster's natural setting is an integral part of its quality of life. The Town should incorporate water and natural area protection strategies to help achieve its mobility and compatibility goals through careful design.

Retaining working farms. Agriculture is a small but important part of the local economy. By protecting working farms from inappropriate encroachment of development, the town can foster the retention of this portion of the economy and connect property owners with organizations that can provide incentives to avoid premature development of areas that lack adequate infrastructure.

With those considerations in mind, the Planning Board recommends that the Town maintain its current zoning designations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that the Town of Wester focus on the following:

- Promote greater connectivity to pedestrian and bicycle-friendly options in Webster
 - Identify preferred greenway corridors in and around Webster for inclusion in the Jackson County Greenway Master Plan
 - Establish pedestrian connectivity standards that require developers to provide pedestrian connections within and between developments
 - Prioritize capital expenditures that take advantage of special opportunities to develop critical pedestrian connections in Webster
 - Partner with North Carolina Department of Transportation to facilitate construction of safe routes along North and South River Roads
 - Improve safety on Buchanan Loop Road for pedestrians and vehicles alike
 - Improve walking trail at greenspace adjacent to Old Rock School
- Create more opportunities and places where the community can gather
 - Envision how and where we might create a community center
 - Encourage creation of greenspaces, pocket-park, or playground
 - Provide more town-sponsored events

- Ensure the protection of the Tuckasegee River
- Keep history alive by telling the story of Webster in creative, engaging ways
- Add to the inventory of assets such as public art, wayfinding signs, and bike lanes
- Ensure new development contributes to a sense of place and community
- Consider creation of a second residential zoning option (R-2) that allows for single-family homes on lots of less than one acre, with increased design requirements
 - Improve design standards to increase compatibility of new residential zoning in R-2; improve landscaping and buffer requirements
 - Require usable open space and protection of natural features
- Consider creation of a hybrid zone, where business and residential coexist
- Adopt the following Jackson County ordinances:
 - Jackson County Mountain & Hillside Development
 - Jackson County Lighting Standards
 - Jackson County Farmland Preservation
 - Jackson County Water Recharge

LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION

This Land Use Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that responds to changing needs and conditions. Successful implementation will result from many individual actions by the Town Board, the Planning Board, county management, service providers, and private decision-makers over the course of the next 20 years.

While this Land Use Plan has a horizon of 20 years, it is important to review and update the plan in the interim to keep pace with changes and to ensure the vision still resonates with residents. As a result, it is expected that this Land Use Plan will be re-evaluated and updated every 5-10 years.

The annual budget is one of the most potent tools for plan implementation because it sets priorities for action each year. Capital and operational funding decisions should directly reflect the goals, objectives, and policies of the Land Use Plan. The Plan should serve as the basis for recommended work programs and as a focus for discussion of priorities from year to year. When there is a conflict between budget priorities and Plan goals and objectives, the Town of Webster should analyze whether the specific goals and objectives remain valid.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Planning Board should provide an annual review of the Land Use Plan prior to the initiation of the budget process each year. The annual review should be used as a tool to help set budgetary priorities and should (1) measure the Town's success in achieving the Land Use Plan goals through recommended strategies, (2) propose strategies to be pursued under the coming year's budget, and (3) identify unlisted strategies that will achieve the Land Use Plan's goals.

Periodically, the Planning Board should:

- Document growth trends and compare those trends to the Land Use Plan's projections;
- List development actions which affect the Land Use Plan's provision; and
- Evaluate difficulties in implementing the Land Use Plan.

These periodic reviews should include statements identifying progress in achieving the goals of the Land Use Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Board recommends that there be a yearly joint meeting between the Town and Planning Boards prior to the Town Board's yearly budget work session. This joint meeting will allow the Planning Board to present their findings to the Town Board.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of recommendations. Evolving project partners and funding opportunities may shift priorities and time frames.

RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNER	TIME FRAME
Transportation:			
Advocate for improvements that consider the needs of cyclists and pedestrians; consider traffic calming mechanisms to slow traffic and give pedestrians and cyclists priority on neighborhood streets	Webster Town Board; representative to RPO	NCDOT; Southwest Commission RPO	ongoing; revisit progress every 5 years
Prioritize roadway projects that create and/or enhance connectivity	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; Southwest Commission RPO	ongoing
Encourage complete streets compliance whenever streets are upgraded or modified	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; Southwest Commission RPO	ongoing
Consider scenic highway status for the Tuckasegee River corridor	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; Southwest Commission RPO	short term (0-2 years)
Educate citizens about alternative modes of transportation and bicycle safety	Webster Town Board; webmaster and social media facilitators	Jackson County Department of Health; Safe Routes to School program	short term (0-2 years)
Recreation:			
Explore ways to make North & South River Roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists	NCDOT; Jackson County Planning Department; RPO	Webster Planning Board; Webster Town Board	ongoing; revisit progress every year
Continue to advocate for infrastructure along the Tuckasegee River in Webster, such as public restrooms, waste disposal, map of public access points, safe spaces for	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Parks & Recreation; NCDOT	ongoing; revisit progress every two years

bicyclists and pedestrians, and parking options			
Encourage efforts to extend greenway system with connectivity through Webster; consider adding greenway or trail along sewer/water right-of-way lines in Webster	Webster Town Board representative to Jackson County Trails & Greenway Committee	Jackson County Commissioners; Jackson County Planning Dpt	ongoing; revisit progress every year
Advocate for pedestrian connections within and between new (subdivision) developments	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Planning Dpt	short term (0-2 yrs)
Encourage development of additional amenities at greenspace adjacent to Old Rock School - shelter, public restrooms, naturescape, nature trail, playground components	Webster Town Board; representative to JCPRD	Jackson County Parks and Recreation; Jackson County Public Schools; Jackson County Commissioners	short term (0-2 yrs)
Consider ways to improve Buchanan Loop Road experience: paved shoulders, wayfinding signs and designated lanes for bicyclists and pedestrians	NCDOT; Jackson County Planning Department; RPO	Webster Planning Board; Webster Town Board	short term (0-2 yrs)
Explore options for wooded natural spaces adjacent to public greenspaces; retain woods for greenbelt/wildlife corridor and to increase human contact with nature	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Parks and Recreation; Jackson County Planning Dept	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Create safe bike/pedestrian access to Tuckasegee River; advocate for sidewalk crossing and bike lanes from South River Road to Old Settlement Road	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	NCDOT; Southwest Commission RPO; Jackson County Planning Dpt	medium term (2-5 yrs)
RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNER	TIME FRAME
Education:			
Promote better and more affordable access to high speed (broadband) internet; appoint a dedicated point-person, if needed	Webster Town Board	Southwest Commission	short term (0-2 yrs)
Support a walking school bus and/or bicycle bus from the Town of Webster to local schools	Webster Town Board	Safe Routes to Schools, Jackson County Public Schools	Short term (0 – 2 yrs)
Cultural Heritage & Community Character:			
Amplify Cherokee history and culture; collaborate with EBCI to identify and preserve culturally significant sites	Webster Town Board	EBCI; State Historic Preservation Office	long term (5-10 yrs)
Ensure protection of historic fish weirs	Webster Town Board	EBCI; State Historic Preservation Office	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Include respectful acknowledgement of the land as Cherokee territory at town meetings and gatherings and in Webster documents.	Webster Town Board	Webster Planning Board	short term (0-2 yrs)

Solicit public input on historic district status	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Planning Dpt	short term (0-2 yrs)
Utilize existing (and planned) public spaces to create community anchors that highlight “place” and identity; consider investing in public art	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Arts Council	short term (0-2 yrs)
Create additional public gathering spaces and park facilities that lend to connectivity with proposed greenway expansion	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Parks & Recreation	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Develop educational materials and host historic walks	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Chamber of Commerce; TDA	long term (5-10 yrs)
Request a volunteer town historian to document or record stories associated with history of town (like, StoryCorps)	Webster Town Board	Western Carolina University, Southwestern Community College history departments	long term (5-10 yrs)
Develop list of volunteer opportunities and share with residents through social media	Webster Town Board; webmaster and social media facilitators		short term (0-2 yrs)
Encourage resident participation in Jackson County Citizen Academy; educate residents on Jackson County services and processes	Webster Town Board	Jackson County, County Manager	yearly
Foster sense of community by promoting community heritage and cultural opportunities	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Historical Society	long term (5-10 yrs)
RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNER	TIME FRAME
Natural Resource Protection:			
Ensure traffic from fishing tourism is met with reasonable river protections and accommodations for public safety and public health	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; Jackson County Tourism Development Authority; local chapter of Trout Unlimited	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Be good stewards of the Tuckasegee River; educate citizens on best practices, stream bank management, and erosion control	Webster Town Board	Webster residents; local chapter of Trout Unlimited	long term (5-10 yrs)
Identify habitats in need of protection for significant species	Webster Town Board	Western Carolina University	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Ensure enforcement of trout water riparian buffer requirements for new development	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Planning and Permitting Dpts	long term (5-10 yrs)
Engage regional environmental organizations and nonprofits	Webster Town Board	local chapter of Trout Unlimited; Watershed Association	long term (5-10 yrs)
Establish monitoring stations on Mill Creek and along the Tuckasegee River as it enters and leaves Webster; monitor turbidity, water temperature	Webster Town Board	Western Carolina University; local chapter of Trout Unlimited; Watershed Association	medium term (2-5 yrs)

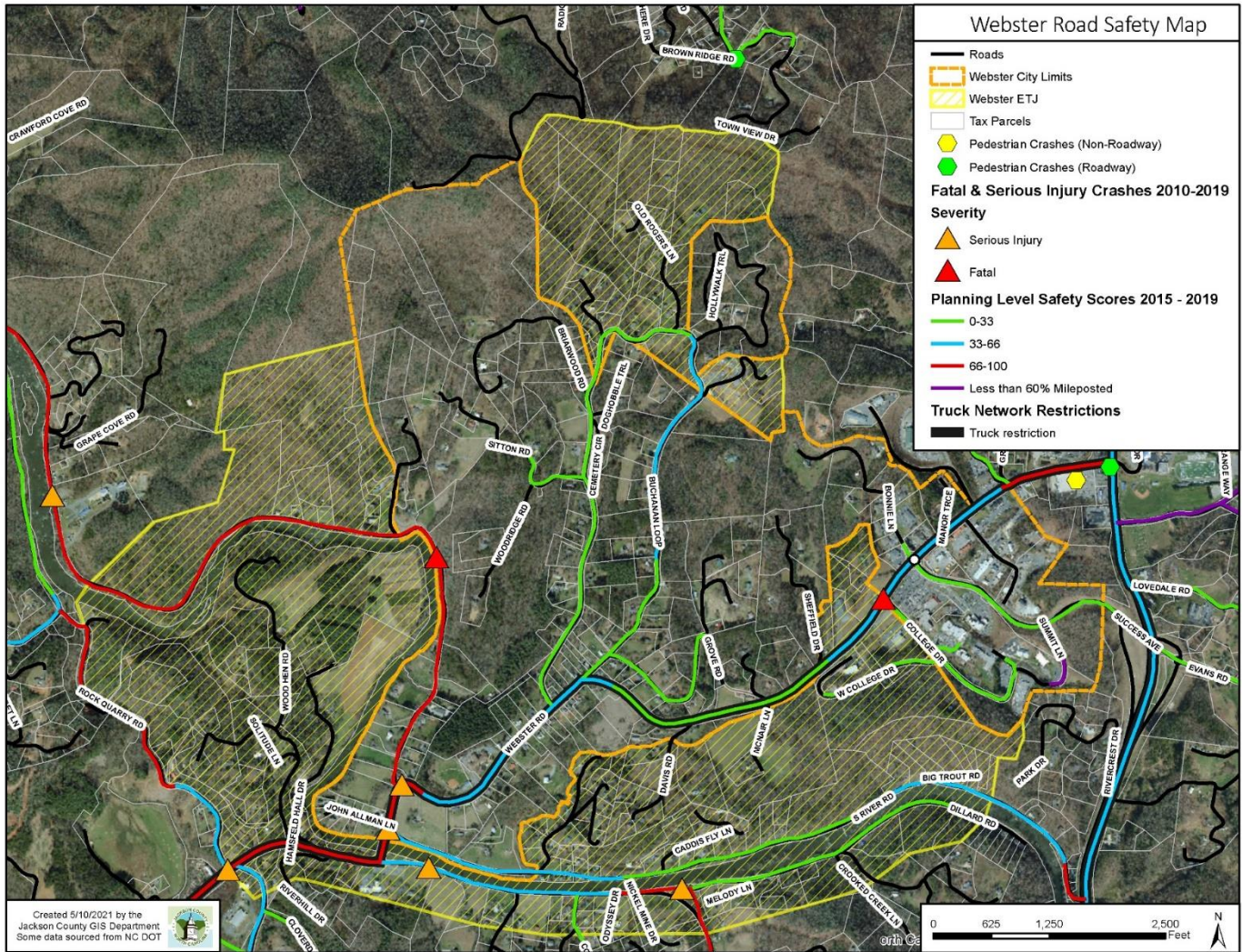
Encourage riverbank vegetation to prevent erosion and trash accumulation in the river	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; Webster residents	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Adopt additional ordinances as described in Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance: Mountain & Hillside Development, Water Recharge, Lighting standards, and Farmland preservation	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Planning Department	2021
Encourage use of native plant species for landscaping	Webster webmaster and social media facilitators		long term (5-10 yrs)
Educate citizens about species of significance	Webster webmaster and social media facilitators		medium term (2-5 yrs)
Seek special habitat and species recognition: Bee City, Tree City, Dark Sky Compliance, National Wildlife Habitat certification	Webster Town Board	various environmental and species protection groups	long term (5-10 yrs)
Use town hall as an example of renewable energy and provide community education on issues of sustainability	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Green Energy Park; Webster social media facilitators and webmaster	medium term (2-5 yrs)
RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNER	TIME FRAME
Community Engagement & Safety:			
Invest in strategic public improvements (pedestrian & recreation facilities, public art) to foster community character	Webster Town Board		medium term (2-5 yrs)
Envision how and where we might create a community center	Webster Town Board		medium term (2-5 yrs)
Provide more town-sponsored events	Webster Town Boards		short term (0-2 yrs)
Identify high hazard locations for pedestrians and bicyclists; add crosswalks or upgrade signs at high hazard locations	Webster Planning Board	NCDOT; RPO	long term (5-10 yrs)
Advocate for traffic calming mechanisms to slow traffic and give pedestrians and cyclists priority on neighborhood streets. Examples: raised, high visibility crosswalks across NC 116 near post office, adding additional cross-walk near ball field and across S River Road at bridge.	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; RPO	long term (5-10 yrs)
Improve signage for designated bicycle routes	Webster Town Board	NCDOT; RPO	long term (5-10 yrs)
Promote connectivity between schools, housing, business districts, recreation and community centers	Webster Town Board; representative to JC Trails & Greenway Committee	NCDOT; Jackson County Planning Department; RPO	medium term (2-5 yrs)

Create more opportunities and places where the community can gather	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Parks & Recreation	medium term (2-5 yrs)
Take advantage of opportunities that may lend themselves to the creation of a community center, pocket parks, and playgrounds.	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Parks & Recreation	ongoing; revisit progress every year
Encourage development of additional social activities and amenities at greenspace adjacent to Old Rock School - ideas include: food truck nights, movie nights, farmer's market, family games and recreational activities	Webster Town Board	Jackson County Parks and Recreation; Jackson County Public Schools	short term (0-2 yrs)
Continue to ensure increased tourism traffic is met with reasonable protections and safeguards: safe parking and appropriate disposal of waste	Webster Town Board; representative to TDA	Jackson County Tourism Development Authority	ongoing; revisit progress every year
Utilize social media to promote cyclist and pedestrian safety; educate citizens about alternative modes of transportation and associated health and environmental benefits	webmaster and those responsible for town's social media and website content		short term (0-2 yrs)
RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNER	TIME FRAME
Infrastructure			
Expand reliable high-speed internet access and mobile phone access	Webster Town Board	Southwest Commission	short term (0-2 yrs)
Encourage water and sewer line expansion when NCDOT does projects	Webster Town Board	NCDOT, TWSA	Long term (5-10 yrs)
Use Town Hall as an example of renewable energy and providing community education on issues of sustainability. Consider adding solar panels.	Webster Town Board	Duke Energy	Long term (5-10 yrs)
RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNER	TIME FRAME
Zoning & Development:			
Evaluate whether short-term rentals and accessory dwelling units fit within Webster's future vision; if so, develop specific ordinances to address those preferences	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Planning Department	2022

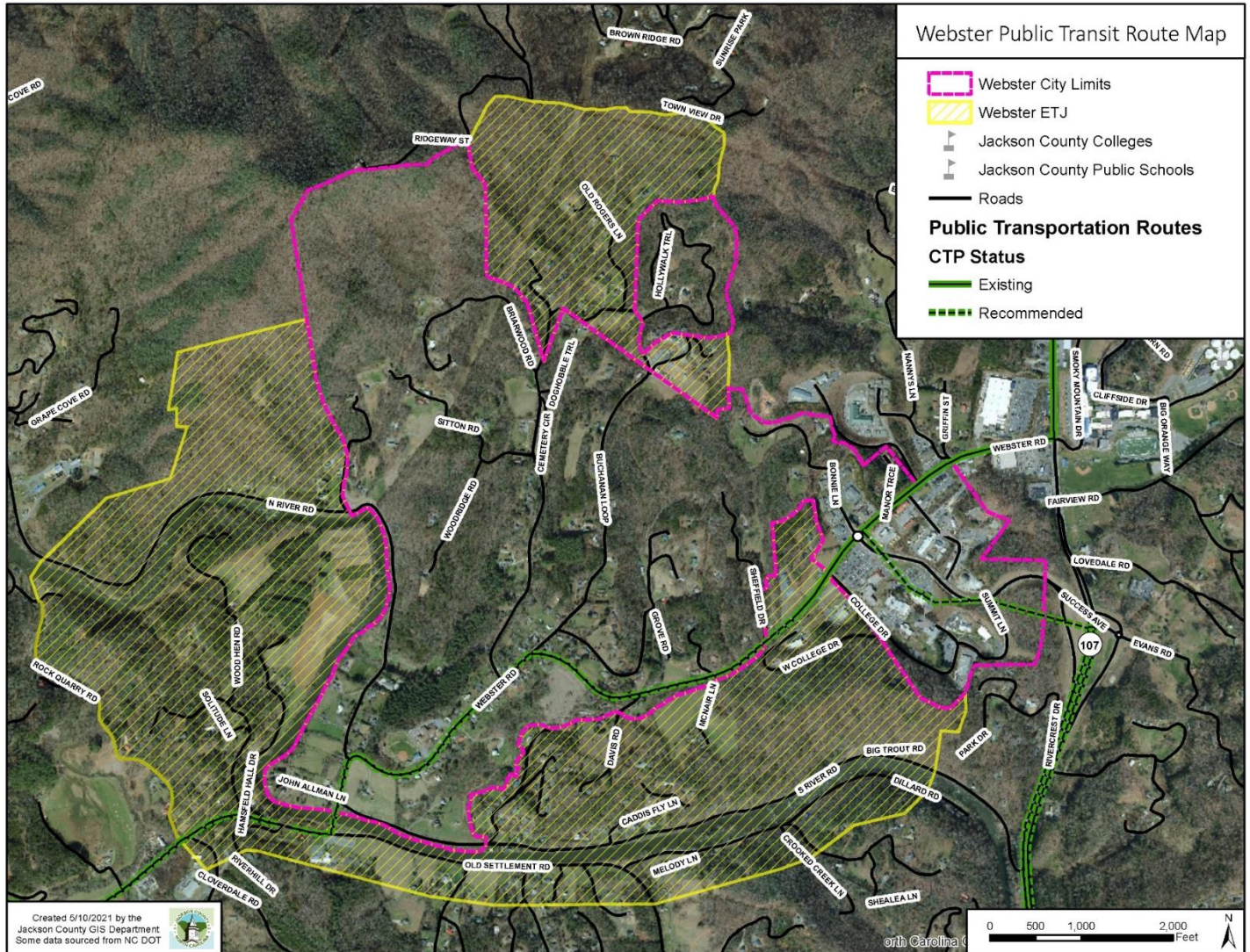
Ensure new development includes appropriate water and sewer line expansion	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	TWSA; NCDOT; Jackson County Planning Department	ongoing
Re-evaluate zoning ordinances to ensure accurately reflect community desires	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board		yearly
Consider creation of a second residential zoning option (R-2) that allows for single-family homes on lots of less than one acre, with increased design requirements	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Planning Department	short term (0-2 yrs)
Consider creating a mixed business/residential zone (within area currently zoned business) that might provide increased opportunities for a welcoming, diverse community	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Planning Department; TWSA	short term (0-2 yrs)
Ensure new development contributes to sense of place, values multimodal transportation options and connectivity, and promotes our vision for being a welcoming, diverse community	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Jackson County Planning Department; TWSA	ongoing
Facilitate communication with local land trust to assist with conservation planning and protections for farmlands and unique habitats	Webster Town Board; Webster Planning Board	Mainspring Conservation Trust; local Soil & Water Conservation district	ongoing
Town Services:			
Consider offering trash, recycling, or compost services for Webster residents	Webster Town Board		medium term (2-5 yrs)
Accountability & Progress:			
Establish yearly joint meeting between Town and Planning Board prior to initiation of budget process to review LUP objectives and progress.	Webster Planning Board; Webster Town Board		yearly (Feb or March)
Review the LUP projections; evaluate progress, trends, and any difficulties in implementing the LUP prior to joint meeting with Town Board.	Webster Planning Board		yearly (Jan or Feb), prior to joint meeting
Re-evaluate and update LUP. Ensure goals and objectives are still relevant and consistent with community consensus	Webster Planning Board	Webster Town Board	2026; every 5 years

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL MAPS

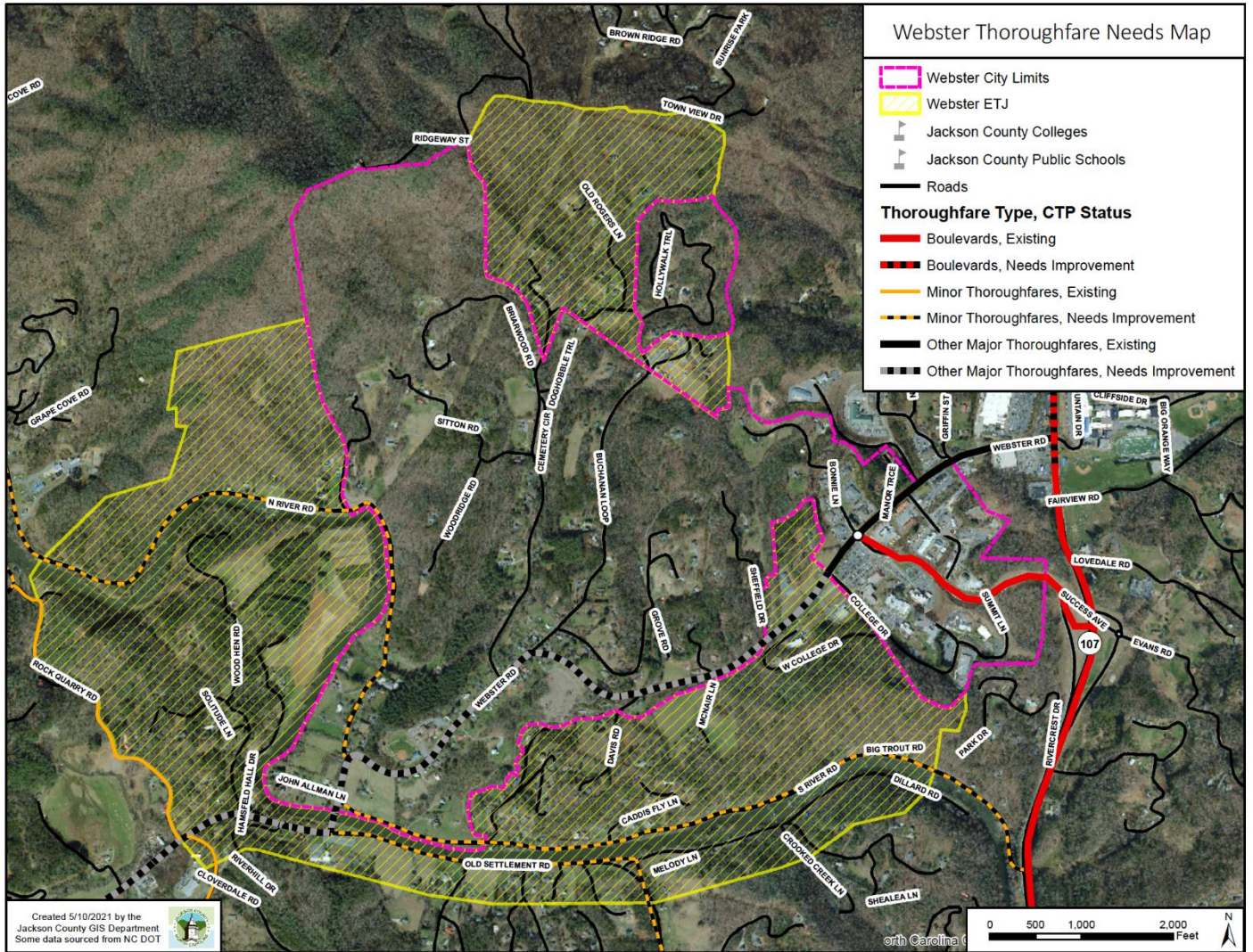
ROAD SAFETY MAP



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION MAP



THOROUGHFARE NEEDS MAP



HEART & SOLE WALKING ROUTE MAP

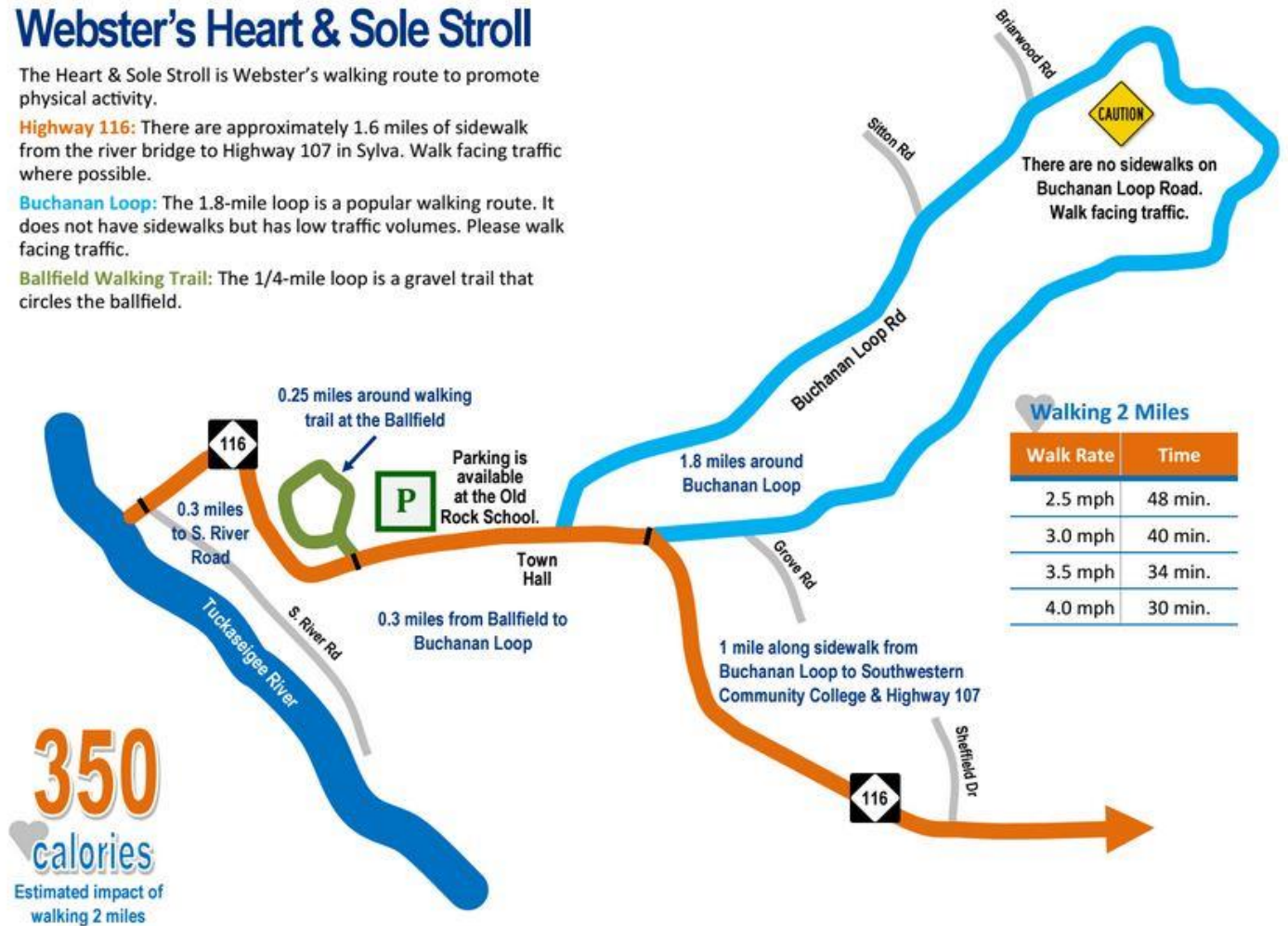
Webster's Heart & Sole Stroll

The Heart & Sole Stroll is Webster's walking route to promote physical activity.

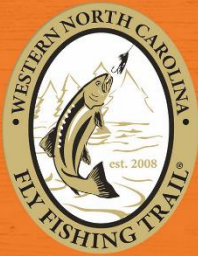
Highway 116: There are approximately 1.6 miles of sidewalk from the river bridge to Highway 107 in Sylva. Walk facing traffic where possible.

Buchanan Loop: The 1.8-mile loop is a popular walking route. It does not have sidewalks but has low traffic volumes. Please walk facing traffic.

Ballfield Walking Trail: The 1/4-mile loop is a gravel trail that circles the ballfield.



FLY FISHING TRAIL MAP



WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA Fly Fishing Trail®

THE WNC FLY FISHING TRAIL® includes some of the best fly fishing waters in North Carolina. Its 15 stops provide a variety of options for catching brook, brown and rainbow trout. Whether you're searching for quantity or size, open water or small streams, the WNC Fly Fishing Trail has you covered.

FlyFishingTrail.com 800-962-1911



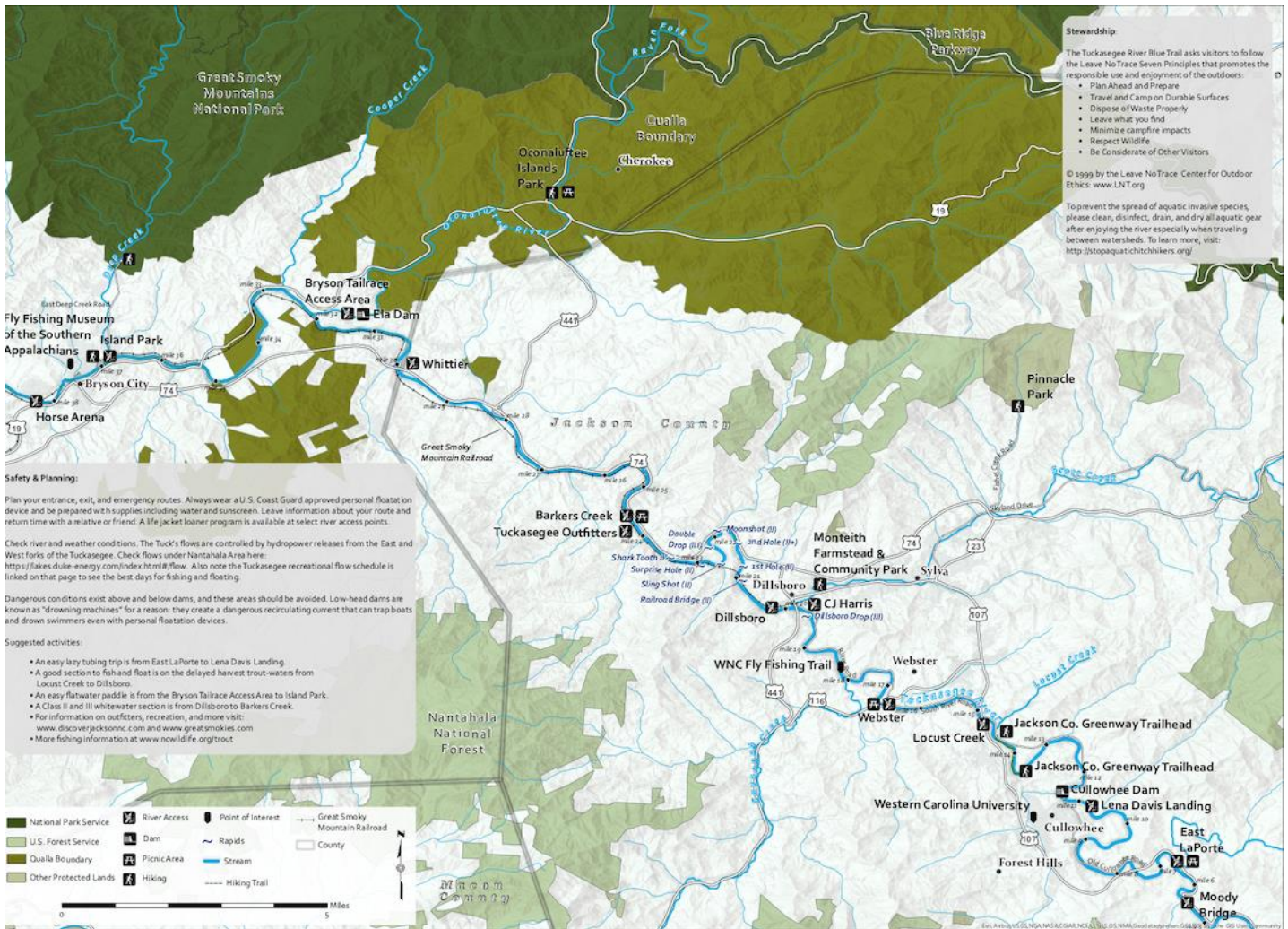
▲ River Access Points

1. Whittier
2. Barkers Creek
3. & 4. Scotts Creek / Dillsboro
5. Dillsboro Park
6. C.J. Harris
7. Webster
8. Locust Creek
9. Lena Davis
10. East LaPorte
11. & 12. Shook Cove Lower / Upper
13. Tuckasegee Lake Access Area
14. High Falls Trail

Approximate locations on map above with orange triangles. View the River Access points plotted by GPS online at: <http://jax.onl/JCRiverAccess>

- 1 SCOTT CREEK**
Parking and access available via several pull-off areas along U.S. 19/23
- 2 SMALL STREAMS**
Moses Creek, Mull Creek, Rough Butt Creek, Chastine Creek, Piney Mtn. Creek
Access via Moses Creek Road (SR 1740) and Caney Fork Road (SR 1737); avoid posted land
- 3 CANEY FORK**
Access via Caney Fork Road (SR 1737); avoid posted land
- 4 TANASEE CREEK**
Parking and access available at bridge on Tanasee Creek Road (SR 1762)
- 5 PANTHER TOWN CREEK**
Parking and access at end of Breedlove Road (SR 1121), with two-mile walk down to stream
- 6 RAVEN FORK (Cherokee Trophy Water)**
Parking and access via several pull-off areas along Big Cove Road
- 7 WHITEWATER RIVER**
Parking and access along N.C. 107, a few miles south of Cashiers
- 8 SCOTSMAN AND FOWLER CREEKS INTO THE CHATTOOGA RIVER**
Access available via Whitesides Cove Road (SR 1107) or Bullpen Road (SR 1100) in Nantahala National Forest
- 9 WEST FORK TUCKASEGEE RIVER**
Parking and access available on N.C. 107 near the Thorpe Power House
- 10 TUCKASEGEE RIVER**
(East LaPorte Park to NC 107 Bridge)
Parking and access available at East LaPorte Park and pull-off areas along Old Cullowhee Road
- 11 SAVANNAH CREEK**
Parking and access available via several pull-off areas along U.S. 23/441
- 12 TUCKASEGEE RIVER**
(NC 107 Bridge to Dillsboro park)
Parking and access available via numerous pull-off areas along North River Road
- 13 GREENS CREEK**
Parking and access available via pull-off areas along Greens Creek Road (SR 1370)
- 14 TUCKASEGEE RIVER IN DILLSBORO**
Parking and access available at Dillsboro park and Best Western River Escape Inn
- 15 LOWER TUCKASEGEE RIVER**
(Barker's Creek Bridge to Whittier)
Parking and access available via pull-offs and businesses along 10-mile stretch of U.S. 19

BLUE RIVER TRAIL MAP



APPENDIX B: PLAN SCHEDULE

- Report to Town Board with first draft of Land Use Plan – May 2021
- Incorporate Town Board's suggestions and edits – August 2021
- Share draft document with community stakeholders and solicit feedback – September 2021
- Update plan with suggested edits from community stakeholders – October 2021
- Solicit community input, share with public – October 22-November 16, 2021
- Host Planning Board meeting with opportunity for public dialogue – November 18, 2021
- Update and edit plan with community feedback; create final draft – Nov 2021-Jan 2022
- Present final draft of Land Use Plan to Town Board – February 2, 2022
- Town Board Adoption – February 2, 2022

APPENDIX C: REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

All available for download at townofwebster.org/land-use-plan

HEART AND SOUL

Adopted March 4, 2015, this document offers guidance for planning to improve the community.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Public input provided during a Community Supper on September 12, 2018, this survey gathered community input on planning needs and goals.

LAND USE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY & SUMMARY

Public responses to the draft Land Use Plan, collected October 22 – November 16, 2021.

JACKSON COUNTY PEDESTRIAN & GREENWAY PLAN

Adopted by Jackson County Commissioners in September 2021, this plan seeks to improve walkability and connectivity, provide opportunities for physical activity, while also prioritizing inclusiveness and equity.

CLEAN ENERGY RESOLUTION

The Town of Webster commissioners support the North Carolina state goal of 100% clean energy by 2050. The resolution can be accessed on the Town of Webster website.

NCDOT TRAFFIC STUDY

A 2019 study of traffic volumes along North and South River Roads.