# ATTACHMENT 7

# BURTON STREET COMMUNITY PLAN

A PROJECT OF BLUE RIDGE BLUEPRINTS


Prepared by:

Asheville Design Center

Western North Carolina Alliance

In association with:

Burton Street Community Association


Summer 2010

***Make no little plans.*** *They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons (and daughters) and grandsons (and granddaughters) are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big.*

*Daniel Burnham, Chicago architect. (1864-1912)*

# Contents


A. Executive Summary ..... 2

B. Introduction ..... 4

C. Process and Methodology ..... 6

D. Neighborhood History ..... 10

E. Neighborhood Characteristics ..... 13

F. Assets & Challenges ..... 14

G. Vision & Goals ..... 15

H. Strategies & Recommended Actions ..... 16

I. Conclusions & Next Steps ..... 36

Master Plan & Implementation Matrix ..... 37

Acknowledgements ..... 40

# A. Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

In early 2009, the Asheville Design Center (ADC) began conversations with the Burton Street Neighborhood Association about developing a plan to mitigate the impacts of the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (DOT) planned expansion of Interstate-26 through Asheville. ADC then brought in the Western North Carolina Alliance (WNCA) and, together, they decided to make the Burton Street Community the first Blue Ridge Blueprints project. The issues quickly expanded in scope as the community expressed desires and concerns around community parks and gardens, recent construction in their neighborhood, safety and the sense of community in their rapidly diversifying neighborhood. The following plan represents the results of the community's work around these issues, gives shape to their vision and will help that vision become a reality.

Blue Ridge Blueprints is a program collaboration between ADC and WNCA that helps communities design their future while preserving local character and protecting valued resources. By arming citizens with an understanding of good design, planning principles and the importance

of their natural resources, Blue Ridge Blueprints helps communities of Western North Carolina envision their future and prepare for development pressures that will surely return with economic recovery. ADC and WNCA believe that design excellence is a fundamental element of successful and healthy communities. Working together with volunteer design professionals, citizens like those in the Burton Street Neighborhood create a vision of what they want their community to be, set goals and strategies to achieve that vision, and then take concrete steps to reach those goals and achieve that vision.

To achieve their vision of inclusiveness, cohesiveness and sustainability, Burton Street Community residents identified five overarching goals:

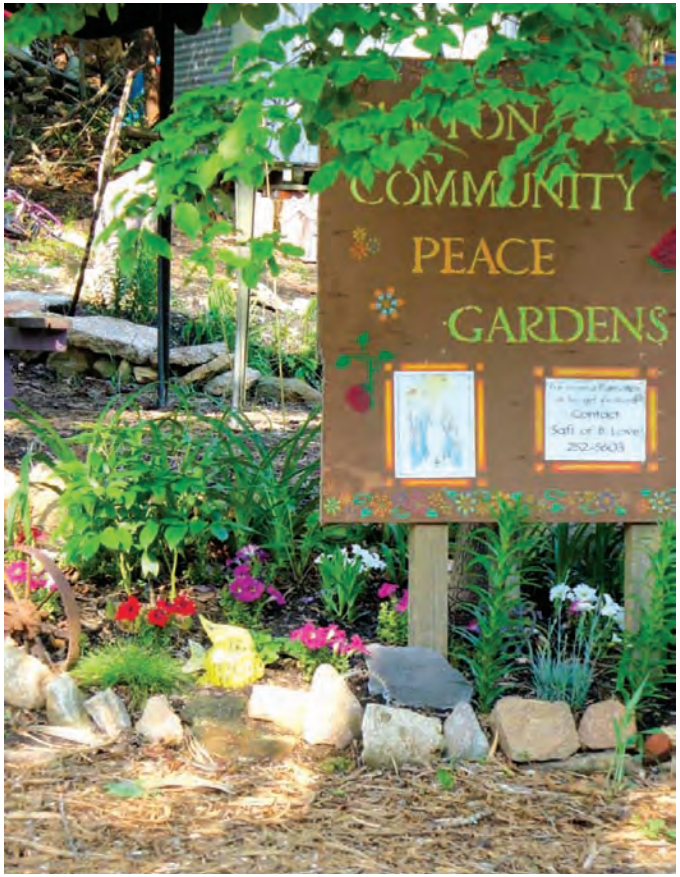
1. **Improve Community Cohesion**
2. **Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure for Safety and Mobility**
3. **Create New Community Spaces**
4. **Ensure Residential Development and Redevelopment is Green, Affordable and Compatible**
5. **Create New Economic Activity within the Community**

Recommended actions for each goal are outlined in detail in the report.

The community developed its vision, goals and strategies over a seven month process that involved several neighborhood association meetings, a neighborhood survey project by Appalachian State University planning students, a community design workshop and hundreds of volunteer hours by design professionals. These collaborative efforts have given shape and focus to the community's desires and have resulted in this Burton Street Neighborhood Plan. With this plan, however, the work has only begun. Implementation is the key to making the neighborhood vision a reality, and ADC and WNCA will work with the community on implementation by identifying funding sources, expanding grant writing skills of community members and assisting residents in securing cooperation from the City of Asheville.

ADC and WNCA thank the residents of the Burton Street Community and the many volunteers who helped make this project possible. We are grateful for your energy, time, talents and support.

# B. Introduction




## The Burton Street Vision

***The Burton Street Community is a diverse and welcoming neighborhood that celebrates its unique history and is a model for sustainability through a strong community association; green, affordable development; local economic activity; and a safe, walkable network of parks and productive gardens.***

## Introduction

This is the vision that Burton Street Community residents have for their neighborhood. Not so long ago, Burton Street was a neighborhood where drug dealers ruled the streets, cars sped through the neighborhood, and the Community Center, once a source of historical pride, was seen as a blight within the community. Today, however, the Burton Street Community is well on its way toward revitalization. Located in Asheville, North Carolina and within the U.S. Department of Justice's West Riverside Weed and Seed area, the Burton Street Community has shown its resilience as a community in uniting to combat crime, poor infrastructure and problems arising from increased community diversity.

The Burton Street Community Blueprints Initiative began with a conversation on the steps of a local neighborhood church during an information forum on the potential impacts of the North Carolina Department of Transportation's I-26 Connector Project. Situated adjacent to what is currently the "Future I-26 Corridor," Burton Street Community residents learned at this forum just how big the impact of the construction project could be on the neighborhood. During a break from the information session, DeWayne Barton, a Burton Street Community resident and neighborhood activist, expressed to Chris Joyell, Executive Director of the Asheville Design Center, the desire to keep in the community his neighbors at risk of being displaced by interstate construction. Many neighborhood residents see themselves as a form of extended family; for example, elderly residents depending on neighbors to deliver prescription medications and groceries when they cannot do so themselves. If displaced from the community and relocated in another area of Asheville, these residents would lose these interpersonal connections and resources for daily needs.

In addition to concerns related to the I-26 Connector project, Burton Street Community residents are passionate about continuing on a path of neighborhood revitalization. In the third year of the Weed and Seed Program, which focuses on "weeding out" violent criminals and drug abusers then "seeding" much-needed human services, including prevention, intervention, treatment and neighborhood restoration programs, Burton Street residents want to continue to build upon the progress seen during recent years. Thanks to dedicated, active community members and funding received from the Weed and Seed program, the Burton Street Community has seen a dramatic reduction in drug activity, an increase in police presence throughout the neighborhood, a renewal of resources at the Community Center, and answers to needs for infrastructure such as sidewalks and speed humps on primary neighborhood streets. Burton Street Community residents are not satisfied with these basic improvements however, wanting to truly flourish and serve as a model for communities struggling with similar problems.

# C. Process & Methodology

**Blue Ridge Blueprints Overview**

Many rural and urban communities in Western North Carolina lack access to professional design and planning services. The growth-related planning needs of these low- and medium-income populations are often neglected, and this neglect is reflected by the haphazard and often detrimental growth that occurs in these communities.

Blue Ridge Blueprints fills this planning void by engaging communities and bringing professional facilitation and design expertise, as well as education about planning and design, to enable communities to plan for and manage their future growth. The program also offers assistance to communities in implementing the plans they develop, particularly if the plan requires policy change at the county or municipal level. By providing citizens with an understanding of good design, planning principles and the importance of their natural resources, Blue Ridge Blueprints helps the communities of Western North Carolina envision their future and better prepare for development pressures that will surely return with economic recovery.

**Project Team**

*Western North Carolina Alliance:* WNCA is a grassroots organization that empowers citizens to be advocates for livable communities and the natural environment of Western North Carolina. WNCA works to educate the public and train them to be effective advocates on local and regional environmental issues. Within the Blueprints process, WNCA provides community outreach, meeting facilitation services and overall project management and leads the community through a visioning and goal-setting process.

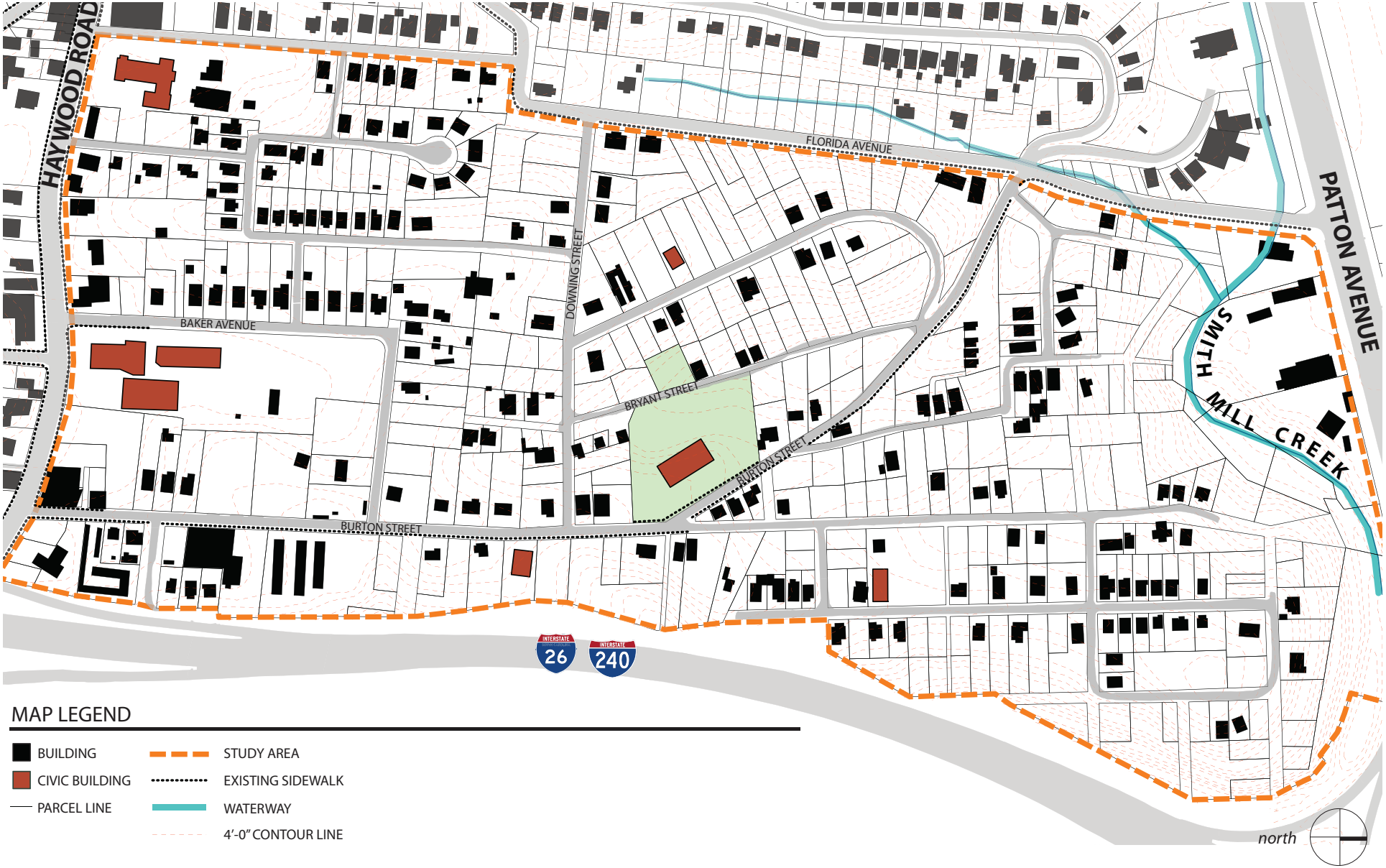
*Asheville Design Center:* ADC engages Western North Carolina in creative design that promotes thriving, equitable and healthy communities. ADC serves a diverse community of approximately 75,000 Asheville citizens and nearly a million citizens in the 18 counties that traditionally comprise the Western North Carolina region. ADC offers Blueprints communities a multi-disciplinary team of volunteer professionals including architects, planners, landscape architects, urban designers and health experts to give shape to the community vision.

*Appalachian State University Summer Studio:* The Appala–chian State University's (ASU) Asheville Summer Studio, in collaboration with the Burton Street Community Association and ADC, worked to document assets currently found in the community and also identify the needs and desires of the Burton Street Community. The Summer Studio is part of the ASU Master's Degree Program in Geography with a concentration in Planning.

*Burton Street Community Association:* Organizing and advocating have been strengths of the Burton Street community leaders throughout its history. Roughly 50 community members participated in this effort.

## Existing Conditions Map

*not to scale*



# C. Process & Methodology

*Participants at community design workshop, January 2010*

**Project Motivation**

Since the late 1990s, NCDOT has been planning an expansion of Interstate 26 through Asheville. NCDOT originally proposed three alternatives, all of which were rejected by the Asheville community, which then coalesced, through the broadly representative Community Coordinating Committee, around a specific set of design principles. In 2003, NCDOT announced two new alternatives, 4 and 5, that attempted to incorporate these design principles. In 2006, believing that NCDOT's alternatives still did not fully meet the agreed upon design principles, local design and planning professionals founded ADC and developed a conceptual design for what became known as Alternative 4B. Endorsed by the Asheville City Council and local community organizations, Alternative 4B took the least number of houses and business of all the alternatives, had the fewest environmental impacts and had the smallest footprint. The Burton Street community banded together, and a partnership began between ADC and the neighborhood residents to advocate for Alternative 4B.

In January 2009, in a 3-2 vote, the Buncombe County Commissioners voted to endorse Alternative 3, which had the largest impact on Burton Street, taking some 25 homes. Soon thereafter, WNCA and ADC organized a forum to inform the public about the meaning of that vote and the overall status of the I-26 Connector Project. That forum was held at St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church in the Burton Street Community, and it was on the steps of that church during the forum that ADC executive director Chris Joyell and Burton Street community leader DeWayne Barton began discussing how to protect community members who might be displaced by the highway. Wanting to ensure that his elderly neighbors, who were often dependent on the community for groceries and

prescription deliveries, were not forced to move to a new neighborhood, DeWayne asked Chris if ADC could help. It quickly became clear that Burton Street would be WNCA and ADC's first Blue Ridge Blueprints project.

**Outreach Process**

*ASU Summer Studio:* Graduate students in the Deptartment of Geography and Planning at Appalachian State University (ASU), as part of their Summer Studio capstone course began gathering information for a preliminary findings study in May 2009, intending that the final product be used by the Burton Street community as it worked to develop a neighborhood plan. Throughout the summer, students conducted a door-to-door survey, held discussion groups with residents, went on a walking tour with a Burton community member and Asheville City represetatives, and conducted a photo elicitation exercise in which youth took photos of neighborhood features that were important to them. The class reviewed this data for common themes and developed preliminary findings by linking community assets and strengths with community needs and desires.

*Community Association meetings:* Burton Street Community Association (BSCA) monthly meetings provide an outlet for community members to voice concerns and reach consensus regarding work being done throughout the neighborhood. Following the ASU Summer Studio's completion of its preliminary findings study, the BSCA reviewed the report and agreed it was an accurate representation of the current state of the community. The Community Association agreed a design charrette was the next step to solicit community input in the development of a neighborhood plan.

*Design Charrette:* Using the preliminary findings study, in November 2009, ADC and WNCA began to identify community goals and plan a community workshop for January 2010. In that workshop, ADC and WNCA staff and volunteers led neighborhood members through a discussion of community assets and challenges and a visioning session. From this workshop, design volunteers were able to give shape to the desires of the community in the form of a vision statement, five overarching goals and several strategies for accomplishing those goals.

*Community review of draft report:* ADC delivered a draft report to the neighborhood association in May 2010 for review. ADC and WNCA attended the June association meeting to receive feedback and to further refine the goals and strategies for this final report.

# D. Neighborhood History

North Carolina Collection
*Burton Street School, c. 1925*

North Carolina Collection
*Royal Giants baseball team at Pearson's Park, July 1916*

## Neighborhood History

Founded in 1912 by civic leader E.W. Pearson as an African-American neighborhood, the Burton Street Community was one of the first parts of Asheville to be subdivided. However, the first families of the Burton Street Community saw their new neighborhood as part of "the country" due to the mostly wooded landscape and Smith Mill Creek's presence along the northern edge of the neighborhood. Families grazed livestock and maintained farms in the neighborhood's open areas. Known as the Black Mayor of West Asheville, E.W. Pearson had a profound effect on all of Asheville, founding the Asheville branch of the NAACP, starting the first business league for African Americans, and acting as a mediator between local government and organizations during times of heightened racial tension. He also founded a semi-pro baseball team, the Asheville Giants, that played on a field in the Burton Street Community. Perhaps his biggest legacy though is the founding of the annual Buncombe County and District Colored Agricultural Fair, which was held in the Burton Street Community from 1913 to 1947. The event was one of the largest black agricultural fairs in the Southeast and drew fairgoers, both black and white, from across Western North Carolina.

The former Burton Street School building has consistently been a focal point in the neighborhood and now serves as the Community Center. Built in 1928, the original building consisted of four classrooms, an auditorium, a lunchroom, a library and a principal's office. A 1963 self-study report from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

North Carolina Collection
*Community Baptist Church*

attested to the community's continued dedication to education that began back in the 1920s. Participation in the Parent-Teacher Association at the Burton Street School in 1963 was ninety percent for neighborhood parents. Formal mention of the cooperation of parents, teachers and community members to the success of the school program was included as well. The report recorded the high school graduation rate of parents within the neighborhood as sixty percent and one-year minimum college attendance rate of ten percent.

The Burton Street Community continued to thrive and exhibit aspects of rural life well into the 1950s. Children still found enjoyment playing in the woods and in the creek. The Elam family owned land from Buffalo Street to Smith Mill Creek, raised animals on the land and maintained a large garden. Trees covered the hillside between Smith Mill Creek and Patton Avenue, extending beyond present-day developments along the northern boundary of Patton Avenue. Community stores in the neighborhood and along Haywood Road maintained running accounts with many residents. Several parks dotted the neighborhood, and children played at ball fields closest to their homes. When Patton Avenue was widened in the late 1950s, the Elams lost their land, trees shielding the northern boundary of the neighborhood were removed, and Smith Mill Creek was culverted in several areas. It marked the first time the neighborhood would lose land due to road expansion.

Construction of I-240 served as the second major encroachment into the neighborhood. Originally constructed in the 1960s, I-240 was the first major highway system to enter this residential region, and its creation displaced residents from many areas within West Asheville, particularly residents in the Burton Street Community. After redefining its boundaries post I-240 construction, the Burton Street Community moved on to watch I-26 join the path of I-240 and would later learn of a project design to further widen the I-26 Corridor.

# D. Neighborhood History

During the 1970s and 1980s, with the school closed, founding families of the neighborhood left the area or passed away, leaving homes to be abandoned, sold or rented to newcomers. With the turnover in residents came a decrease in community cohesion. The vacant school, abandoned homes and uncared for rental property left a sense of emptiness within a once vibrant neighborhood. The absence of a tight community network contributed to the growing influx of drug use and drug dealing during the late 1980s into the 1990s. In July 1993, the residents came together and met with police to find ways to combat the drug problem. At a community protest march on September 4, 1993, more than 200 residents of the Burton Street Community and other West Asheville neighborhoods marched with signs and banners along Burton Street, Boyd Avenue and Bryant Street where much of the drug activity was centered.

In 2000, drug issues were still present in and around the Burton Street Community, but more children and adults were using the old school, which had been turned into a community center in the late 1960s. The Community Center developed new youth programs, but the conditions of the grounds continued to be less than desirable. In 2001, $100,000 was allocated from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Asheville Parks and Recreation Department's city property tax increase allotment to perform basic renovations on the Community Center and replace playground equipment. Following these updates, the Community Association went on to advocate for improvements throughout the neighborhood. Today the Community Center serves as an active gathering place for neighborhood residents and stands as a reminder of the hard work community members have dedicated over the years not only to education, but to community organizing efforts as well.

Funding from the Federal Department of Justice's Weed and Seed program began in 2006 for the West Riverside community, which includes the Burton Street Community. For five years, approximately $1 million will be invested in this area of West Asheville in order to reduce violent crime. Half of the funding is intended for community policing while half is used to improve the social and economic well-being of the neighborhood by creating jobs, drug abuse treatment resources, mentoring programs, afterschool programs and arts education. Neighborhood improvements thus far include renovations to the Community Center, small home repair projects, and community clean-ups. Traffic calming measures include the installation of speed humps along Burton Street, stop signs at Buffalo and Burton Streets, and a welcome sign at the entrance to the neighborhood.

## Neighborhood Characteristics

The Burton Street Community is a dedicated, active, hardworking community with a desire to increase the capacity of residents by improving the quality of life through social networks. The community's active and engaged neighbors, families and churches have developed relationships and networks that for many years have enabled them to collectively act to improve the neighborhood. Physical boundaries of the neighborhood have been defined as Haywood Road to the south, Patton Avenue to the north, I-240 to the east, and Florida Avenue to the west. Despite these physical boundaries, community members often include residents who reside outside these lines in community news and events. For Burton Street Community members, their neighborhood is not necessarily defined by a physical location, but instead exists where friends, family and neighbors gather for fellowship.

**Physical Characteristics**

The Burton Street Community consists of mostly single-family homes, 123 empty lots, two community churches, the Community Center and two community gardens. Sidewalks are present on primary streets of Burton Street and Florida Avenue. Smith Mill Creek runs along the northern boundary of the neighborhood parallel to Patton Avenue, but is culverted at several points and therefore not visible to passers-by. Although zoned as medium-density residential, most residential structures in Burton Street are small, single-family homes built in a 1920s-1930s arts-and-crafts style. Two community gardens, including the Burton Street Peace Garden, provide a healthy food source for many neighborhood residents and serve as gathering space for community events.

**Neighborhood Context**

Three physical characteristics of the neighborhood emerged as top concerns of residents. First, the historical significance of gardening in the neighborhood places the potential for future urban agricultural projects at the forefront of residents' hopes for the neighborhood. Home gardens and landscaping were consistent themes in the discussion group, surveys, simple observations and photo elicitation. Second, the Burton Street Community Center, in its historical value and recent reclamation, is a source of pride within the community as well as an important piece in the future of the neighborhood. Third, residents see vacant lots as an opportunity for parks and open space, gardens and some affordable housing. The large number of vacant lots in the neighborhood is also a source of residents' concerns about crime and trash.

# F. Assets & Challenges

Many of the strengths, weaknesses and desires of community members are socially based. While social capital of the neighborhood is strong, there is a community-wide desire for improved communication and neighborhood cohesion. Community identified assets and challenges are outlined below.

## Assets

- Neighborhood/people/family
- Collaboration/social capital
    - ~ Neighborhood collective action to combat drug problem, improve community center and playground, seek street improvements
    - ~ Strong neighborhood leadership
    - ~ Strong history of education/parent involvement
- Community center and classes
- Religious network
- Walkability
- Quiet/calm nature
- Diversity
- Safe
- Aesthetically pleasing/clean
- Smith Mill Creek
- Peace Garden
    - ~ Agriculture/garden history
- Weed and Seed resources/identity (funding thru 2011)
- On-Track financial counseling
- Skills/talents of community members

## Challenges

- Lack of sense of community
    - ~ Unorganized/no central place for information
    - ~ Lack of communication
    - ~ Need for place/space/way to resolve differences
    - ~ Not welcoming of newcomers
    - ~ Need to overcome racial/language barriers
    - ~ Lack of participation
    - ~ More diverse and not as cohesive as in the past
    - ~ Know fewer neighbors
    - ~ Lack of clarity on neighborhood boundary
- Drugs/crime
- Traffic/drunk drivers
- Trash
- Threat of I-26
- Lack of code enforcement
- Stigma
- Long-term financial health of community center
- Neighborhood development/growth
- Vacant lots
- Numerous losses over time – Patton, I-240

## Vision

*The Burton Street Community is a diverse and welcoming neighborhood that celebrates its unique history and is a model for sustainability through a strong community association; green, affordable development; local economic activity; and a safe, walkable network of parks and productive gardens.*

## Goals

1. **Improve Community Cohesion**
2. **Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure for Safety and Mobility**
3. **Create New Community Spaces**
4. **Ensure Residential Development is Green, Affordable, and Compatible**
5. **Create New Economic Activity within the Community**

# Goal 1
## Improve Community Cohesion

### Strategies

- Create a stable, well-functioning community association
- Create a community newsletter
- Hold more community events
- Create a neighborhood identity
- Increase participation in neighborhood events

**Create a stable, well-functioning community association**

*Recommended Actions:* Building the capacity of the Community Association should be an on-going process as the organization takes on more responsibilities over time. Specifically identifying the role of the Community Association and creating a set of by-laws around that role will help define the association's function. More productive monthly meetings can become a reality by bringing in a meeting facilitator or simply using proven facilitation techniques. The association can also explore the option of obtaining 501(c)(3) status. As a public, non-profit organization the Community Association would be eligible to receive grant funding directly for implementation of plan projects.

**Create a community newsletter**

*Recommended Actions:* UNCA students have already assisted community members in establishing a community newsletter. Community members should continue to work with the students to create the inaugural edition of the newsletter. After the students' involvement ends, community members can take ownership of the newsletter by dividing newsletter responsibilities among residents and continuing to come up with new ideas for interesting newsletter stories.

### Hold more community events

*Recommended Actions:* By identifying monthly reasons to celebrate, the community can establish a regular schedule of existing neighborhood events. The theme of each event could focus on a unique interest in order to reach a variety of community members. Events can be educational, recreational or social and can be centered on presentations, food, music or activities. Outdoor block parties at rotating locations throughout the neighborhood would encourage residents to simply come outside or walk down the street for a neighborhood fellowship opportunity. Reviving the Burton Street Agricultural Fair in 2012 to celebrate the centennial anniversary of E.W. Pearson's Buncombe County Agricultural Fair will serve as a kick-off for an exciting annual event.

### Create a community identity

*Recommended Actions:* Creating a neighborhood logo for use throughout the neighborhood, on the community newsletter, and in any press coverage of Burton Street events will provide an identifiable symbol of Burton Street for both residents and nonresidents. Installing welcoming signage at the intersection of Burton Street and Haywood Road can help create a gateway entrance into the neighborhood. Signs throughout the neighborhood directing newcomers to the community center, peace garden, green spaces and main entry/exit points can give definition to the neighborhood presence. An historical marker can serve as an educational and visual tool to commemorate E.W. Pearson's Buncombe County Agricultural Fair.

### Increase participation in neighborhood events

*Recommended Actions:* In order to reach a broader variety of interests, thereby attracting more residents to community events, event organizers can inquire into what types of events the community would be most interested. This can be done by survey, discussion at neighborhood association meetings or creating an idea board at the community center for suggestions. Also, offering food at events is a proven way to increase attendance. Special events focused on welcoming newcomers to the neighborhood can help build new relationships and increase camaraderie.

# Goal 2
## Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure for Safety and Mobility

### Strategies

- Explore creating new parking lots or make existing parking lots more available
- Make the Burton Street neighborhood more pedestrian/bike friendly by improving streetscapes, sidewalks and intersections
- Advocate that the City repair potholes in Burton Street and improve speed humps
- Advocate with the City to improve neighborhood lighting
- Explore with the City improved connections to the bus system

**Explore creating new parking lots or make existing parking lots more available**

*Recommended Actions:* There are many under-used parking lots in the neighborhood that can be put to use as overflow parking for the Community Center. Residents should create a list of all unused lots and prioritize them in order of importance (e.g., which lots are closest to the Community Center). A small group of Community Association members should meet with the parking lot owners individually to discuss the shared use. The Community Association should consider developing a plan for sharing parking lots prior to the meetings. Items to consider are hours of use, notice of use, safety issues, and liability. If shared parking lots are not possible, or not sufficient, the Community Association can consider expanding parking on the Community Center property or enhancing street parking with the City.

**Make the Burton Street neighborhood more pedestrian/ bike friendly by improving streetscapes, sidewalks and intersections**

*Recommended Actions:* An important aspect of the Burton Street Community is its walkability. However, because of a number of unsafe intersections, high car speeds, and the lack and insufficient size of sidewalks, residents do not feel safe walking or biking. The first step towards creating a plan to make the neighborhood

## Streetscape & Parks Master Plan

more pedestrian and bike friendly is to create a priority list of sidewalk needs or improvements, as well as key intersections. Using the priority list, the Asheville Design Center can assist in the development of streetscaping standards for potential new sidewalks and intersections and improvements to street drainage systems. The City of Asheville makes all decisions on public sidewalk improvements through the Pedestrian Plan, which currently includes improvements to sidewalks in the Burton Street neighborhood on Dorchester Avenue ("Sidewalk from Haywood Road to existing sidewalk on Burton Street (to Patton) and serving a residential area"). When developing the pedestrian/bike plan, the neighborhood should be in regular contact with the City to advocate for specific sidewalk and intersection improvements.

### Advocate that the City repair potholes on Burton Street and improve speed humps

*Recommended Actions:* Potholes and other street repairs are handled by the City of Asheville Public Works department. The Community Association should create a list, with locations, of all the potholes that need repair. If possible, prioritize the potholes in order of severity. By creating a comprehensive list on a neighborhood-wide scale the Public Works department can more easily prioritize repairs.

### Advocate with the City to improve neighborhood lighting

*Recommended Actions:* To prepare to approach the City about lighting issues, the Community Association should create a subcommittee to evaluate lighting issues and create a "wish list" of lighting requests (e.g., new street lights, bulb replacements). The subcommittee should take pictures of the key problems to provide support for their priority list. The neighborhood may also want to host a "Safety Walk" with members of City staff (and perhaps eventually City Council) to demonstrate the need for enhanced lighting.

### Explore with the City improved connections to the bus system

*Recommended Actions:* The Burton Street Neighborhood is currently served by two bus lines which run along Haywood Road (Routes 1 and 9) and two lines that run along Patton Avenue (Routes 15 and 16). All of these buses originate in downtown Asheville. If the neighborhood would like to see increased bus service, such as more predictable stops near neighborhood entrance points, the Community Association should discuss their requests with the Transit Services Manager of the City's Transportation Department.

# Goal 2: Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure for Safety and Mobility

*Existing streetscapes along Bryant St. (left) and Buffalo St. (right)*

*Proposed street section with sidewalk, trees and lighting*

# Goal 3
## Create New Community Spaces

### Strategies

- Explore with the City adding indoor recreation/ education facilities to the Community Center
- Work with the City to improve the Community Center playground
- Advocate with the City for creation of a greenway trail at Smith Mill Creek
- Work with the City to create an outdoor gathering space with grill, picnic shelter, outdoor performance space around Community Center
- Look for opportunities to create more gardens and/or an urban farm

**Explore with the City adding indoor recreation/ education facilities to the Community Center**

*Recommended Actions:* Innovative recreational ideas can be an asset for youth throughout the community. For example, a recording studio in the basement of the Community Center would not only provide a creative outlet for neighborhood youth, but could also be an opportunity for youth to participate in the renovations for a greater sense of ownership. A community technology center would also be a valuable resource for the Community Center. A technology center could be used for educational workshops, after school programs and entertainment. Increased energy costs for such facilities could be offset with the installation of solar panels on the Community Center. Establishing a Wi-Fi hotspot at the community center could help provide affordable internet access to the entire community.

**Work with the City to improve the Community Center playground**

*Recommended Actions:* Upgrades to the Community Center playground could be sponsored by a corporate giving fund. Recognizing the donation at a ribbon-cutting ceremony or by plaque on the equipment fulfills the needs of both the corporate donor and the community.

## Smith Mill Creek Greenway

*Existing Conditions at Florida Avenue*

*Proposed: Constructed Wetland at Smith Mill Creek*

### Advocate with the City for creation of a greenway trail at Smith Mill Creek

*Recommended Actions:* Smith Mill Creek greenway is being considered for addition to the City of Asheville's Greenway Master Plan. The next step in the creation of the Smith Mill Creek greenway is a feasibility study. The study will consist of site investigations, compiling data including sewer easements, utility ROWs and related plans. Community members' cooperation in the gathering of this data is vital to the success of the greenway. During the design phase property owners can attend public workshops with adjacent neighborhoods and design professionals to incorporate local knowledge into preliminary design concepts. Community members can also vocalize to City officials the role of the greenway in increasing accessibility to daily obligations and opportunities for increased outdoor recreation.

*Back lot of Community Center along Bryant St.*

### Work with the City to create an outdoor gathering space with grill, picnic shelter, outdoor performance space around Community Center

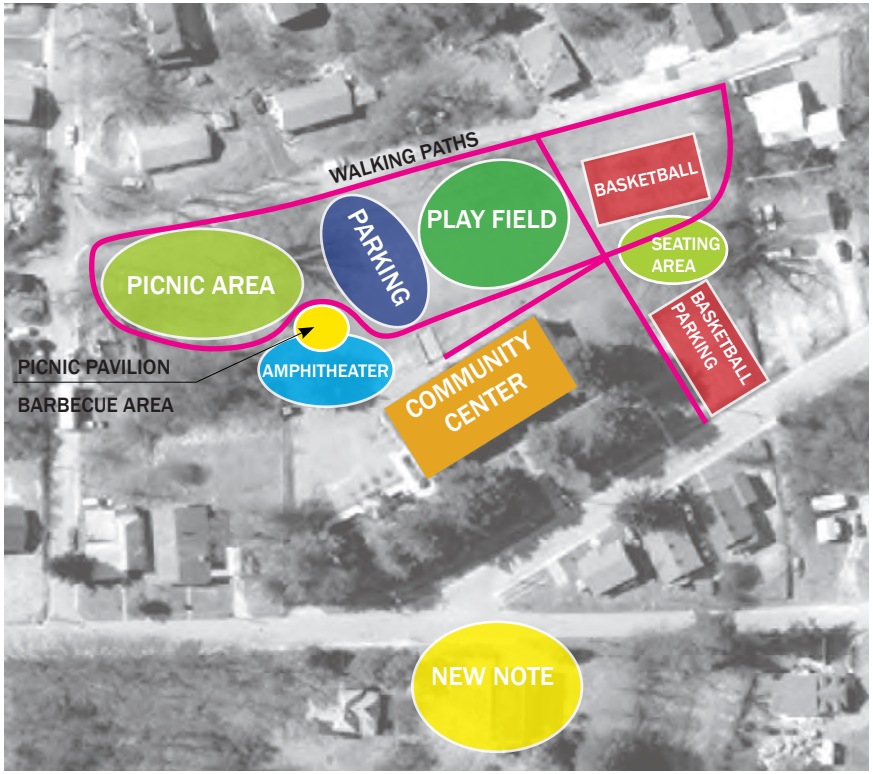
*Recommended Actions:* Community members should discuss ways in which the area around the Community Center can be put to the best, most enjoyable uses. Projects on this City property will need City approval, but the best way to find funding for these types of improvements is through corporate giving programs where a business can sponsor the construction of a community asset.

## Design Ideas for the Community Center

*drawings not to scale*

*Basketball Court Improvements*

*Stage & Amphitheater*




*Program (Use) Diagram*

*Schematic Site Plan*

# H. Strategies and Recommended Actions

### Look for opportunities to create more gardens and/or an urban farm

*Recommended Actions:* Vacant lots throughout the neighborhood provide opportunity for community gardens or an urban farm. A vacant lot inventory is a way to identify lots suitable for development and thier corresponding owners. Once identified, the community can contact property owners and explore options for land purchase or donation. To ensure the success of gardens and or an urban farm, community members can receive training on gardening/farming techniques. Winter gardening practices are an additional option to extend this resource throughout the year. The practice of Community Supported Agriculture is an option for a future urban farm and a way for the community to share the risks and benefits of food production and potentially contribute to local restaurants' food supply. A community land trust also provides a way for the community to take ownership of common lands and promote a thriving urban food source.

*Vacant lots within the Burton Street neighborhood*

## Undeveloped Parcels Map

*not to scale*

## Undeveloped Parcel Alternatives

*urban farm*

*existing undeveloped lot*

*community garden*

*small park*

*not to scale*

## Undeveloped Parcel Alternatives

*examples of architecturally compatible & affordable housing*

# Goal 4
## Ensure Residential Development is Green, Affordable and Compatible

### Strategies

- Communicate with absent landlords about maintaining houses
- Encourage sustainable renovation/reuse of existing homes
- Identify a partner to build workforce/affordable housing or create a community land trust
- Consider whether zoning changes are necessary to preserve neighborhood character
- Work with the City to create a process for community input into new development

**Communicate with absentee landlords about maintaining houses**

*Recommended Actions:* Develop a list of absentee landlords. Reach out to the landlords through a letter from the Community Association which outlines suggested improvements and provides a contact person within the Community Association. Contact information for landlords is available through City tax records. If possible, the Community Association could organize opportunities for local youth to assist in routine maintenance.

**Encourage sustainable renovation/reuse of existing homes**

*Recommended Actions:* Contact local green and sustainable building organizations, such as the WNC Green Building Council, for local sustainable renovation information (e.g., brochures, recommended books). Create a "Recommended Reading" list for neighborhood distribution (perhaps in a newsletter) that provides information on key resources for sustainable renovation or reuse of homes. Consider asking a Green Building Council representative or local sustainable developers to provide a series of short courses on how to begin the process of rehabbing existing homes.

### Identify a partner to build workforce/affordable housing or create a community land trust

*Recommended Actions:* The creation of workforce/affordable housing in the Burton Street neighborhood is instrumental in maintaining the character of the overall neighborhood. By proactively seeking out appropriate housing developers, the neighborhood will be able to exercise greater control of the outcome. Currently, Mountain Housing Opportunities and Habitat for Humanity are the most well-known affordable/workforce housing developers in Asheville. However, there are a number of regional and national developers that may be interested. For example, the Bungalows at Davidson, built by Crosland, are 32 rental units that were designed to fit into the existing neighborhood. The units were developed through a design charrette process. In addition, a community land trust may also provide a way of reducing the cost of housing development. Land trusts are non-profits that hold ownership of land and provide long-term leases to developers. Land costs are typically the greatest expense and by removing these costs the feasibility of affordable housing is greatly improved.

### Consider whether zoning changes are necessary to preserve neighborhood character

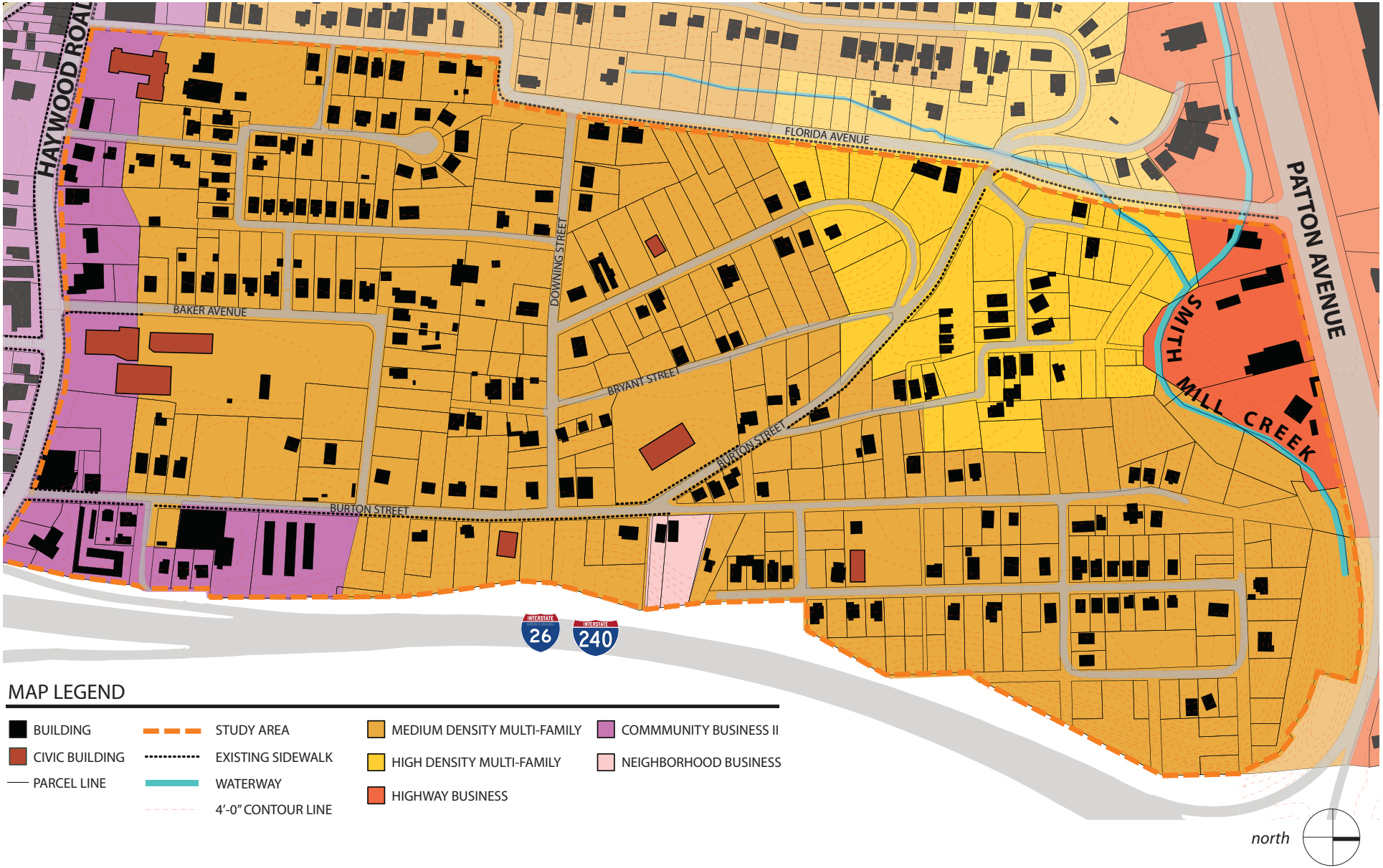
*Recommended Action:* Currently, the majority of the neighborhood is zoned multi-family, despite being primarily single-family. The neighborhood residents have expressed a desire to maintain the single-family character. In order to ensure the single-family character, the neighborhood may need to be downzoned to decrease density. Implimenting neighborhood design and landscape guidelines may require an overlay zone. The Community Association should begin discussing these possibilities with the City of Asheville Planning staff.

### Work with the City to create a process for community input into new development

*Recommended Actions:* As a well-established organization, the Community Association is well-positioned to be a clearinghouse for new neighborhood development. There are a number of ways that this can occur. The neighborhood could request that any new developments be presented to the community before breaking ground. This would be simply voluntary and would rely on City staff to inform the developers of the neighborhood's desire for input. Alternatively, if neighborhood design and landscape guidelines are developed, the Community Association may be tasked with advising the application of the guidelines. This would give the neighborhood a large amount of direct control over development. Creation of design and landscape guidelines that carry the force of law would require the creation of an overlay zone.

## Zoning Map

*not to scale*



# Goal 5
## Create New Economic Activity within the Community

### Strategies

- Identify parcels appropriate for commercial activity, identify businesses willing to locate here, and secure any necessary re-zoning from the City
- With any new businesses, create jobs for youth
- Create a business incubator system within the community

**Identify parcels appropriate for commercial activity, identify businesses willing to locate here, and secure any necessary re-zoning from the City**

*Recommended Actions:* Building relationships with the proper City officials will help ensure any roadblocks to new economic activity can be overcome. Community members should discuss what types of businesses or business incubator could work best for the community. Lots suitable for a business or urban farm should be identified so zoning restrictions can be researched and any changes can be pursued if necessary. The property across from the Community Center, former home of The Blue Note, is currently zoned for a neighborhood business, so it is a logical location for economic development.

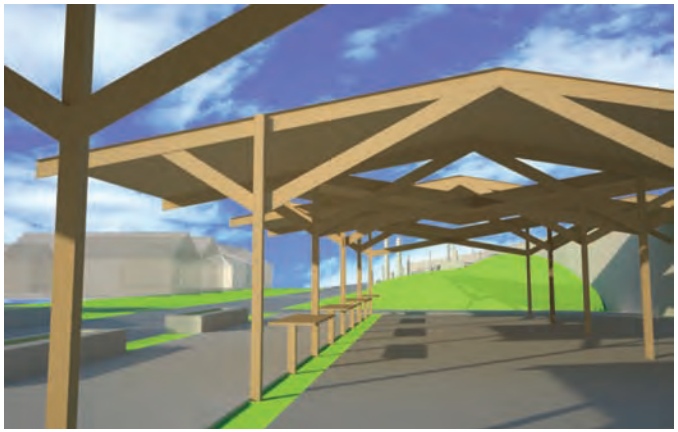
**With any new businesses, create jobs for youth**

*Recommended Actions:* By focusing on training programs that prepare youth for high-demand jobs, the community can ensure that local youth are prepared to enter the workforce with well-developed, desirable skills. Youth within the community can also be put to work on projects from which the community will benefit, such as construction of new residences, renovations/ weatherization of existing buildings or landscaping work.

### Create a business incubator system within the community

*Recommended Actions:* Support from the community is a factor in the success of any small business that could emerge from within Burton Street, especially for young people just entering the workforce. To encourage small business start-up by community members, a Burton Business Incubator could be established. One component of this incubator would be a revolving "micro-enterprise" fund to provide financing to Burton Street residents that wish to establish businesses within the community. A neighborhood business center could "incubate" small businesses with low impact on the community. A community mentoring program would allow experienced residents to provide guidance to fellow residents on skill-building, education and business practices.

*Redevelopment of Historic Blue Note Site*



*Community Market and Park at Burton Street / Haywood Road*

## Conclusions and Next Steps

The Burton Street Community Plan is a tool for the community to use as it continues to move forward on a path of revitalization. Equipped with established goals and strategies to achieve those goals, the community can now develop specific projects to put the plan into action. WNCA and ADC will serve as resources for the Burton Street Community in implementing the plan's strategies and projects.

Developing and implementing specific projects in pursuit of the community goals will involve a series of steps. Goals, strategies, and then specific projects must be prioritized by considering community needs and available resources. The Burton Street Community Association should establish an internal process for decision-making that will take into consideration the input and concerns of the entire community. Once this decision-making process is established, the community can confidently move forward with high-priority projects while low-priority projects continue to ripen.

Most projects will require partnerships with other organizations, communities, individuals and/or City departments. ADC and WNCA will help identify these potential partners and build relationships necessary for successful collaboration. Community members should also be aware of existing relationships within the community that will promote project development.

Project funding can be a major hurdle in community revitalization success. ADC and WNCA will provide assistance with grant research and writing in pursuit of financial support for the Burton Street Community Plan from private foundations, corporations and federal funding programs. Projects involving new construction or renovations to existing structures will require design knowledge, conceptual drawings and architectural plans; ADC will provide Burton Street Community residents with access to volunteer design professionals who can offer quality services on each project at no cost to community members.

The Burton Street Community is eager to take ownership of its future. Through collective advocacy and cooperation, Burton Street has won many battles to preserve its character and support much needed changes. Burton Street's participation in this community planning initiative is simply another example of the community's advocacy. The Burton Street Community Plan is a new tool for this community to use in its continued revitalization efforts and in its progress toward a vision of a stronger, more cohesive, vital and resilient neighborhood.

# Neighborhood Master Plan

*not to scale*

# Burton Street Community Plan - Implementation Matrix

| Goals & Strategies | Timeframe to Begin | Potential Partners (beyond ADC and WNCA) |
|---|---|---|
| **Goal 1: Improve Community Cohesion** | | |
| Create a stable, well-functioning community association | In progress | - Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods<br>- Adjacent or mentor neighborhood associations |
| Create a community newsletter | In progress | - UNCA students |
| Increase participation in neighborhood events | In progress | |
| Hold more community events | In progress | - Local businesses |
| Create a neighborhood identity | Short to Medium-term | - UNCA graphic design students |
| Goal 2: **Improve** Neighborhood Infrastructure for Safety and Mobility | | |
| Explore creating new parking lots or make existing parking lots more available | Medium to Long-term | - Local businesses and churches<br>- City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department |
| Make Burton Street more pedestrian/bike friendly by improving streetscapes, sidewalks and intersections | In progress | - City of Asheville Public Works Department<br>- City of Asheville Planning Department<br>- GreenWorks<br>- Asheville on Bikes<br>- My Brother's Keeper |
| Advocate that the City repair potholes in Burton Street and improve speed humps | Short-term | - City of Asheville Public Works Department |
| Advocate with the City to improve neighborhood lighting | Short-term | - City of Asheville Public Works Department |
| Explore with the City improved connections to the bus system | Medium-term | - City of Asheville Transportation Department |
| **Goal 3: Create New Community Spaces** | | |
| Look for opportunities to create more gardens/an urban farm on vacant lots | In progress | - Bountiful Cities Project<br>- Asheville GO! |
| Explore with the City adding indoor recreation/education facilities to the Community Center | In progress | - City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department<br>- City of Asheville Weed and Seed<br>- Community Center staff |
| Work with the City to improve the Community Center playground | Medium-term | - City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department<br>- City of Asheville Weed and Seed<br>- Community Center staff<br>- KaBoom |
| Advocate with the City for creation of a greenway trail at Smith Mill Creek | In progress | - City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department<br>- City of Asheville Weed and Seed<br>- City of Asheville Greenways Commission |
| Work with the City to create an outdoor gathering space with grill, picnic shelter, outdoor performance space around Community Center | Medium to Long-term | - City of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department<br>- City of Asheville Weed and Seed<br>- Community Center staff<br>- WNC Green Builders |

| Goals & Strategies | Timeframe to Begin | Potential Partners (beyond ADC and WNCA) |
|---|---|---|
| **Goal 4: Ensure Residential Development is Green, Affordable and Compatible** | | |
| Communicate with absent landlords about maintaining houses | Short-term | |
| Encourage sustainable renovation/reuse of existing homes | Short-term | - Local sustainable developers<br>- Asheville GO! |
| Identify a partner to build workforce/affordable housing or create a community land trust | In progress | - Mountain Housing Opportunities<br>- Habitat for Humanity |
| Consider whether zoning changes are necessary to preserve neighborhood character | Medium-term | - City of Asheville Planning Department |
| Work with the City to create a process for neighborhood input into new development | Short to Medium-term | |
| **Goal 5: Create New Economic Activity within the Community** | | |
| Identify parcels appropriate for commercial activity, identify businesses willing to locate here, and secure any necessary re-zoning from the City | Long-term | - AdvantageWest<br>- Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce<br>- Mountain BizWorks<br>- City of Asheville Economic Development Department |
| With any new businesses, create jobs for youth | In progress | - Asheville GO!<br>- My Brother's Keeper |
| Create a business incubator system within the community | Medium to Long-term | - Mountain BizWorks<br>- Asheville SCORE<br>- AB Tech |

# Acknowledgements


## ADC TASK FORCE

Abigail Emison, *co-chair*
David Pearson, *co-chair*
Michelle Aldridge
Kate Ancaya
Allen Davis
Andrew Euston
Susan Garrett
Julie Gilliland
Gerald Green
Michael Mitchell
Luke Perry

## APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE PLANNING STUDIO TEAM

Prof. Terence Milstead
Mandy Broderick
Yuri Koslen
Lindsay Majer
Josh O'Conner
Ellen Szedon



## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Asheville Design Center**
**Laura Clemmons**
Project Coordinator
8 College Street
Asheville, NC
270.339.1460
laura@ashevilledesigncenter.org

**Chris Joyell**
Executive Director
8 College Street
Asheville, NC 28801
828.782.7894
chris@ashevilledesigncenter.org

**Western North Carolina Alliance**
**Julie Mayfield**
Executive Director
29 N. Market Street, Suite 610
Asheville, NC 28801
828-258-8737
julie@wnca.org



*ADC and WNCA would like to thank the Francis & William K. Beattie Foundation, the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the City of Asheville for their generous support of this project.*