

Plan on a Page: Parkway Forest

Plan on a Page is a tool designed to help neighborhood groups organize themselves in order to build community and develop consensus around neighborhood priorities. Plan on a Page is also a way for neighborhoods to prepare for involvement in the revisions of the Comprehensive Plan, especially for those communities that have not yet developed a complete neighborhood plan.

To develop the Plan on a Page, the following information should be collected by neighborhood community members, over one or more meetings: Provide a paragraph to define and describe each of these topics. Please also provide a roster of participants with physical and email address.

1. **Neighborhood Description** - include items such as your neighborhood name, general character, relative location, and boundaries

Parkway Forest is located on Asheville's east side, across from the Charles George VA Medical Center. It is accessed from Tunnel Road and located next to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The streets included in Parkway Forest's original plan consist of Pleasant Ridge Drive, Wagon Road, Looking Glass Lane, and Birchwood Lane. Although not "technically" in the neighborhood, the Neighborhood Association invites and tries to include residents from Sourwood Lane in neighborhood activities. The zoning in our neighborhood is RS-4, and many residents do not want to see it become more dense than this.

Parkway Forest consists of approximately 160 midcentury brick ranch-style homes. We are a quintessential vision of a 1960's suburban developer, with homes in similar styles spaced evenly on similarly sized lawns, each with a driveway. We are a tight-knit community where people are often out walking and neighbors know each other. The community consists of two cul-de-sacs and two loops, so we do not have pass-through traffic, which aids in the safety of the neighborhood.

2. **Neighborhood History** - include a brief history, describing when and how your neighborhood was developed, including the factors that have shaped it over time

Parkway Forest was built in the early 1960's by Pilot Construction Company of Greensboro, NC. The property was originally an apple orchard and nursery. Our original deeds say "Oteen Township", although now we are inside Asheville's city limits. We have some streets that parallel each other, and the developer's intention was to leave a corridor between back yards that could constitute a public space. Side-to-side, some homes are spaced further apart than others, with the original intention of adding access roads to this public space. That didn't happen and eventually homeowners bought up the communal land behind their respective houses. The neighborhood was supposed to have sidewalks throughout and, in the early years, some homeowners avoided planting flowers and trees in the right-of-way in anticipation of the sidewalks that never came.

We are told by original residents that we have one of the oldest Neighborhood Associations in the city. From the very beginning, residents cared about establishing a sense of community here.

Over the years, many of our residents have been, and continue to be, employed by the nearby VA hospital. The convenient location makes their commute to work take about two minutes!

3. **Neighborhood Vision** - include the neighborhood's expectations and goals for what it will become over the next 10-20 years

We, the residents of Parkway Forest see preserving "pride of ownership" as a major issue to address when envisioning for the future of the neighborhood. Overall we like the feel, look, safety, and accessibility but also have the following vision for ways to improve where we live:

We, the residents of Parkway Forest want to see single-family homes that are kept residential and we do not want to see homes turned into commercial-use buildings (such as the Air B&B's). We want to limit the number of houses that are rented out, and prefer to have owner-occupied homes. We want properties to keep their "curb appeal" by owners and landlords maintaining their houses, lawns and driveways. We want any vegetation that obstructs drivers to be trimmed. We would like to see more trees and gardens to add to the beauty of the neighborhood and want an end to the "topping" of trees, which detracts from the curb appeal and eventually leads to trees dying from rot. We want better enforcement for clean yards, including the removal of old or unused cars that are kept in the yards. Additionally, to add to the pleasantness of where we live, we would like to end parking in the street (which were the original rules for the neighborhood from the early 1960s), having all the utility lines placed underground, and an end to chain-link fencing being used in the front yards. About half of the neighbors want sidewalks, and another half do not seem to think we need them. Of course, if more cars continue to park in the street, sidewalks will become even more necessary for the safety of pedestrians, so they are not forced to walk in the middle of the road to get around cars (we have hills in our neighborhood, and a speeding problem).

In terms of neighborhood-wide issues, there is a consensus on having access to the greenways and Azalea Park either directly from our neighborhood, or near enough that it is accessible to us from a safe, walk-able proximity. We can currently access the Mountains-to-Sea trail from our neighborhood, and we would like that to remain an option for hikers in the neighborhood. Residents would like a park added to the neighborhood, as that had been part of the plan when it was first developed in the 1960's. We want to have a community garden and/or pollinator garden and several park benches. We want to see more diversity of homeowners in terms of race, religion, and age. And we also want to keep Parkway Forest a "no outlet" neighborhood to minimize traffic and crime. We would like to see a designated community center (or renovated East Asheville Library with free community meeting space) and more involvement of the neighbors with the help of the community association. We want both an association dues requirement and fundraising efforts that support neighborhood events.

In regards to direct factors managed by the City, we would like to see the following:

We want to keep the neighborhood safe, with crime rates remaining low and continued APD presence. We want to see speeding limit restrictions especially with the rampant speeding that currently occurs.

The solution to them is lowering the speed limit and adding speed bumps. We want low property taxes. We also want to see sidewalks added for the many walkers that live in Parkway Forest as well as new curbs and the city roads maintained. We would like more internet choices and continued clean water/sewage services, including waterlines replaced to avoid possible flooding or continued/worsening sink holes in the roads. We want “green energy” options to power and operate in our homes. We also want the street lights to be turned down to minimize the glare into our homes at night.

Our neighborhood is directly accessed from Tunnel Road, so development of the east Tunnel Road corridor affects us. We know change is inevitable, and we would like to have a say in how the east side is developed. We want the development of local businesses and restaurants that we would want to (and could safely) walk to, rather than big box stores, with attractive roads and signage and at least one crosswalk across Tunnel Road. However we want to avoid having commercialization increase in size to the point that it lowers the quality of life with traffic congestion, noise and detracting from the natural beauty here. We would also like more coordination and connectedness between the various neighborhoods in the area. Finally we want more frequent bus service from the neighborhood to the other parts of Asheville and to the schools.

4. **Neighborhood Strengths** - identify up to three things that you like about your neighborhood, including things that are working now and that you would not want to change

Parkway Forest is a small, quiet, and quaint neighborhood where people know each other and take pride of their ownership. Neighbors are friendly and supportive of each other. The Parkway Forest neighborhood association does a great job at keeping people connected and assuring that the neighborhood stays safe.

It is very safe to live in Parkway Forest due to good relationships with the police and fire department. There are no through streets; instead, the streets have low speed limits and are conducive to walking and biking.

For a location, it is hard to beat Parkway Forest. The neighborhood is only 15 minutes away from downtown, yet directly connected to trails and the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is conveniently located; in close proximity of the neighborhood are good schools, churches, a grocery store, Azalea Park, post office and library. There are bus stops within 1 mile of our neighborhood.

5. **Neighborhood Challenges** - identify up to three issues or challenges facing your neighborhood that community members feel need further study or attention

The first issue our neighborhood is concerned with is safety. Speeding is a big problem in our neighborhood; especially due to the fact that the streets are narrow, there are no sidewalks, and many cars park on the street. Another safety issue we are concerned with is bears roaming the neighborhood. It is very common to see 3-4 bears at one time. Many residents walk/ride bikes etc. and may not know bears are in close proximity. We need education and awareness on how we can deter bears from coming into our neighborhood, what to do when we see a bear, and how to maintain a “community bear watch.” Also, sink holes in the roads caused by old and under-maintained water and sewer lines are concerning homeowners.

Another issue residents are concerned with is empty/abandoned homes and ones that are inhabited but have poor maintenance and upkeep. There are properties with old junk cars parked on lawns, bushes blocking visibility and extending into roads, neglected rental properties, and beat-up fences. Some residents do not want chain link fences in front yards at all. All of these problems are unsightly and can detract from the appeal of our neighborhood and deter potential buyers.

Lastly, adapting to and integrating with Asheville's growth is a challenge our residents are concerned with. Residents are worried about increased density and Air B&Bs which many residents do not want. This would lead to an increase in traffic and raise concerns about crime. We also believe there needs to be improvement in public transit to nearby schools and amenities. Residents are also worried about traffic congestion increasing on the east side of Asheville. We want to keep our neighborhood walkable and safe but also have the ability to travel outside of the neighborhood by foot or bike safely. Residents believe we need crosswalks on Tunnel Road and want to see Tunnel Road developed in a way that increases local shops and restaurants rather than chains and big box stores. Ultimately, we want to see positive growth in east Asheville with easy and safe access, while maintaining our neighborhood's uniqueness and privacy.

6. **Neighborhood Responsibility** - based on your answer to item #5 above, identify the items for which the neighborhood is responsible or has influence over and can take care of itself, vs. items for which the City is responsible

We believe the City is responsible for updating and maintaining infrastructure such as water/sewer lines and road conditions (pot holes, curbs, sidewalks, speed-bumps, signage). Improving public transit, managing congestion, creating safe crosswalks, and guiding zoning for smart future growth is all under the City's control. Also, the City should educate residents on bear safety and monitor bear activity. The City should be responsible for monitoring speeding and enforcing property maintenance and upkeep. It is also up to the City to monitor and enforce illegal implementation of Air B&Bs. We hope that the City continues to listen to neighborhood concerns on this topic, and find a way to enforce it that does not rely on neighbors having to turn in neighbors who abuse this law.

7. **Alignment with Council Goals** - describe how the issues facing the neighborhood align with the goals identified in the City Council's Strategic Operating Plan

<http://www.ashevilenc.gov/Departments/CommunityRelations/StrategicOperatingPlan.aspx>

Our comments on adapting to and integrating with Asheville's growth most closely aligns with City Council's vision. The Council wants to maintain housing that is affordable; the homes in our neighborhood have all sold at prices well below the current median sales price in the city of \$260,000: the majority of recent sales in Parkway Forest were for less than \$210,000. We have many abandoned houses in the neighborhood, which, if sold as owner-occupied, could provide affordable houses to the market. Also, keeping Air B&B out of our neighborhood would ensure that any rental units would be long-term rentals only, also *adding to the affordable housing stock*.

Our desire for better, more frequent bus service that stops at the schools and nearby amenities, along with our desire for access to an east Asheville greenway and continued access to the Mountains-to-Sea trail is in line with the Council's vision of *ease and abundance of non-car transportation options*.

Our desire to see Tunnel Road developed with local shops and restaurants that we can, and would want, to walk to is right in line with the Council's vision of a *thriving local economy*.

8. **Alignment with Asheville City Development Plan 2025 Goals** (current comprehensive plan) - describe how the Plan on a Page corresponds to the major themes (such as affordable housing, land use, transportation, air and water quality and economic development) of the *Asheville City Development Plan 2025* Comprehensive Plan. Refer to the Plan Management and implementation Matrix #1 of the 2025 Plan for more information

<http://www.ashevilenc.gov/Departments/CommunityRelations/ComprehensivePlan.aspx>

Contact Marsha Stickford, Neighborhood Coordinator, at mstickford@ashevilenc.gov with questions.

Our desire for smart, local development along the east Tunnel Road corridor is in line with the goals of land use along the Blue Ridge Parkway, which creates a boundary along our neighborhood (Found under "Open Space, Forest and Wildlife Habitat Protection"). We do not want to see a lot of commercialization that would harm the beauty of this area and infringe even more on the habitat of the bears and other wildlife that visits our neighborhood (Goal 1). We also do not want to see increased density in our neighborhood, which would also harm aesthetics as well as our small community feel. Smart development along the Tunnel Road corridor and improved transportation options (bus and greenway) would add to the diversity of transportation options and cut back on pollution.

Our desire for the City to take part in bear safety education also aligns with the City's goals of promoting environmental education and awareness. Our desire for the City to upgrade our sewer and water lines connects with air and water quality. See answer to question #7 to refer to affordable housing and transportation.