

# South Slope Neighborhood Association Plan on a Page

The South Slope Neighborhood Association (SSNA) is a newly formed neighborhood organization, under the leadership of **President, Mary Mayo** of Catawba Brewing and **Secretary Jen Gordon**, Studio & Exhibitions Manager at Asheville Area Arts Council. Our mission is *“to present a unified voice of the businesses and residents of the South Slope neighborhood, on issues that affect our community.”* The diverse points of view that make up our organization represent one of our greatest strengths: that businesses, residents, and property owners are working together to organize our interests, in order to create a shared future.

Soon after our association’s birth, we formed the Vision Committee, charged with figuring out our purpose and our goals, led by board member and South Slope business owner, **Jael Rattigan** of French Broad Chocolates. The Vision Committee sought to harness the power of community, and create a platform for everyone in our neighborhood to share their voice, and to be heard. To achieve these goals, we conceived of a **Community Visioning Brainstorm**.

Our Community Brainstorm event took place on June 13, from 5:30-7:30. We invited people via our newsletter, our Facebook group, and through local media channels (including Mountain Xpress, Citizen Times, and Ashvegas). We were happy to have 58 community members show up, participate, and collaborate. It was beautiful. **Addendum 1** describes the outline of our Community Visioning Brainstorm process.



# Neighborhood History

All history information comes from Dale Slusser's article for Pack Memorial Library.

Some key points of the origin of the area known as the South Slope:

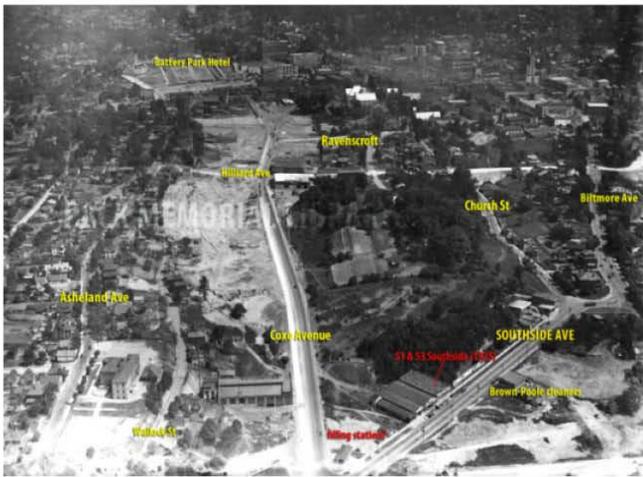
- **1924: Fill Dirt Creates Coxe Avenue:** Coxe Avenue was built with fill dirt from the second Battery Park, which was built in 1924 by E.W. Grove. The fill dirt was used to fill a deep ravine that is now Coxe Ave. Coxe Avenue was named after Franklin Coxe, who built the original Battery Park Hotel in 1888.
- **Motor Mile:** Coxe Ave was built as a wide street with street lights, parking and generous lots that were ideal for the first Automobile dealerships. The new car dealerships were located on the upper Coxe Ave and the used cars at the bottom. Coxe Ave is considered to be Asheville's first motor mile.
- **The 1926 Demolition/Creation of Buxton Hill:** In 1926, the "Buxton Hill Investment Company" was organized to develop the 'Buxton Hill Subdivision' on the site of the Rev. Buxton's property, at which time the house was demolished. (The Rev. Buxton's daughter, Mary R. Buxton, had inherited the home following the death of her father in 1902. Mary, not surprisingly, opened a portion of her home as a boarding house named '**Buxton Place.**' The other portion of the home was leased to the '**North State Fitting School.**') Award-winning hometown author, **Thomas Wolfe**, was not only one of the first students of the school (1912-1916), but he also immortalized the school and the nearby Shoenberger Hall in his 1929 novel, "*Look Homeward, Angel.*"
- The hill that was demolished in 1926 was turned into **Banks Avenue and Buxton Avenue, now called the South Slope.**"<sup>1</sup>
- **Residences:** Aston Place, built in 1928, remains an anchor residence in the South Slope. More recent history saw new residential developments emerging from former motor mile property (i.e. The Sawyer Motor Building, built in 1900 and renovated in 2001), and investor led development (i.e.; Lexington Station in 2007).

---

<sup>1</sup> Dale Slusser, historian and architectural designer, from the Pack Memorial Library



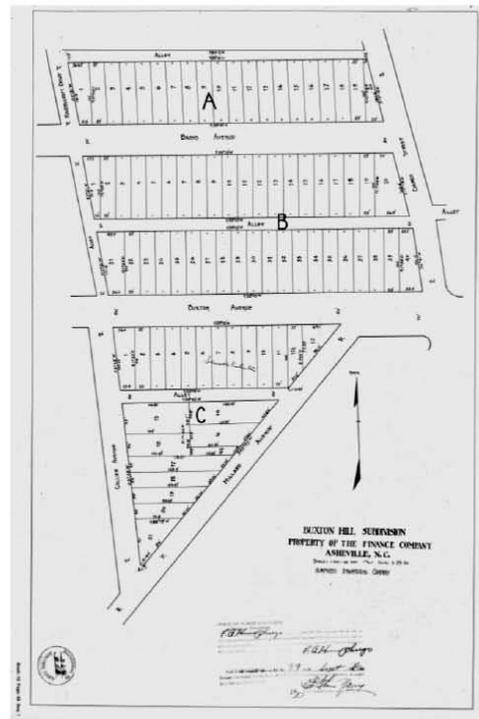
1925, before the demolition



1925, aerial view

Buxton Hill Development Plan  
1925

# The creation of the South Slope



# Neighborhood Vision

Our neighborhood is experiencing a growth spurt, with no end in sight. Our organization plans to continue to define our brand, and communicate South Slope as a worthy Asheville destination all its own.

## *Our Goals*

### 1) Infrastructure

**Parking:** Our neighborhood requires parking sufficient to accommodate the traffic to our neighborhood (workers, customers/tourists, and residents). Electric charging stations for cars would reward this sustainable choice.

**Greenspaces:** Our community has expressed that creating greenspace is a priority. We feel a South Slope neighborhood park (and potentially community gardens) would meet our needs for a centralized community space. We hope to see collaboration between our community, our local government, developers and non-profits to achieve this goal. We love the idea of a greenway network/linear park and parklets. We hope to capitalize on the strength of a **network of old city alley easements** that are largely unused in today's urban living use of the South Slope. These un-owned properties and alleyways are an extremely valuable resource to the public and have the potential to become a beautiful connector through the neighborhood. **N & C**

**Complete Streets** – We aspire to be a livable community that recognizes the importance of multimodal transportation (auto traffic, public transportation, and safe space for bikes and pedestrians). Coxe, Lexington, Biltmore and Southside seem like good candidates. We recognize the need to protect and develop corridors to our neighborhood. **C**

**A safe and clean neighborhood.** Contributing factors of importance:

- Consistent neighborhood police presence **C**
- Neighborhood watch for and by the community **N & C**
- Cleanliness/free of vandalism **N & C**
- Seasonal transient populations (how do we utilize private /public partnerships to better control use of greenspace and compassionately direct people to services?) **N & C**

### 2) Define and maintain South Slope's identity.

**Branding & Marketing:** South Slope needs to create a South Slope brand. The community feels that the foundation of the charm of the South Slope is its gritty, industrial roots along with a vibrant mix of residents and locally owned businesses that underscore the community collaborative values. The community has expressed the need for clarity of boundaries of the South Slope

neighborhood for branding collaboration with the City, while remaining flexible as new development and city infrastructure impacts those boundaries. To that end, our Membership Committee, chaired by **Crawford Rizer**, Head Chocolate Maker of French Broad Chocolates, continues to solicit input on boundaries and gateways to our neighborhood. Once our identity is defined, we need to market it. With all the artistic talent in the South Slope, we are excited to undertake the branding work of creation of a logo, tagline, website, etc. We hope for support from local government and Asheville CVB including high quality directional signage for visitors that aligns with digital media efforts. **N & C**

## Neighborhood Strengths

### 1. Historical Architecture:

The South Slope's best standing **historical structures** have a proud identity with the industrial growth that was once hosted in this part of the city. Many investors and businesses have chosen to avoid the tear-down mentality, instead following the example of the conversion of Sawyer Motors building to mix use, and, thus using existing and salvaged resources for their build-outs. We see this as a great strength and example for future projects while hoping that denova construction on open lots will echo the architectural integrity of this area.. **C**

Likewise, we value the overall flavor of the **industrial chic, "gritty"** atmosphere of the South Slope for future development. We also appreciate the value of the **last stand of older growth trees** in the South Slope on Collier Avenue. **N & C**

### 2. Identity and Culture:

Six breweries are currently located either inside the SSNA map, or in gateways to the SSNA map. We are proud of the **vitality** that these privately owned breweries have brought into the community. The very fact that **private enterprise** accounts for the majority of investment in the South Slope is a strength on its own while recognizing the important role of local government to build out necessary infrastructure. Breweries have attracted restaurants and together not only provide a home and **strong social connection** for city, county and downtown residents, but they also draw **tourist dollars** that generate significant tax revenue. These local businesses each have unique personality, but all give rise to a **creative, hipster energy** in the area. While breweries are a dominant theme, we also see the **diversity** of other businesses giving a richness to our neighborhood. Two gardening businesses, several vehicle businesses, the Asheville Tourists baseball stadium, several health and wellness businesses, food and beverage, and late night establishments, all help to make this area desirable to increasing **age and cultural diversification** as well. We applaud the efforts of the City of Asheville to help promote the strong sense of community that has arisen in the South Slope. **N & C**

The accompanying restaurants and **food culture** that naturally are following the retail beer tasting rooms are a welcome addition to the area. While Asheville is known

nationally as a local food mecca, the South Slope is gaining a foothold with its own **unique** reputation. Food trucks provide a totally **casual** atmosphere for fast but excellent family **pedestrian** dining. **N & C**

The Arts Council's recent tenancy of The Refinery on Coxe Avenue and the locally owned Lexington Glassworks on South Lexington brings a vibrant and **creative art force** into the South Slope. The presence of these artist studios and the planned exterior murals in our neighborhood serve to reinforce the desirable element of art in our community. It is a supreme strength of the South Slope that we still have affordable studio rents. The presence of this art community will give rise to more independent small businesses and shops that serve the urban residents of the South Slope and enrich both the work life and home life of SSNA. **N & C**

### 3. Cooperation and Collaboration between businesses and residents:

The South Slope Neighborhood Association grew organically, from concerned parties in the community who showed up at our early gatherings. Regular monthly meetings comprised of businesses, workers, residents, and property owners with an interest in SSNA are supplemented by frequent meetings of the Vision and the Membership Committees. Though we did not realize we were going against tradition and blazing our own trail, our association embraces these diverse points of view, and aims to collect and present a unified voice representing all of these SSNA stakeholders. We see the balance of residents and businesses as a great strength to our collaboration. **N**

## Neighborhood Challenges

As great of a story as our neighborhood has, both in its history and in its current resurgence, it is not without its challenges. Most of the challenges listed below are reflected in our neighborhood goals above, so we will not go into too great of detail.

### 1. Infrastructure

- i. Parking. Need more public parking (Deck. Share parking agreements). **C**
- ii. Lighting. Too many poorly illuminated spaces. **N & C**
- iii. Sidewalks. Sidewalks and walkways are in disrepair in places and non-existent or too small in others. **C**
- iv. Greenspace/parks. Need more public open spaces for people to gather. In addition to more traditional green spaces, this could be linear parks in unopened alleyways that provide green spaces and pedestrian connections. **N & C**
- v. Signage/wayfinding- Need more wayfinding and creation of a sense of arrival/brand identity with signage at gateways. **C**
- vi. Timing of local government action on infrastructure in the South Slope needs to balance urgent needs in SSNA areas that are still in development transition but can't wait for the fully formed neighborhood completion.

### 2. Safety

- i. Police neighborhood presence needs to keep pace with the growth in activity in SSNA - Proactive and regular communication with APD is essential, including coordinating a neighborhood watch and getting to know APD officers who patrol the SSNA. **C**
  - ii. Cleanliness/vandalism- Clarify expectations of public and private efforts to proactively control these critical community concerns. **N & C**
  - iii. Seasonal transient populations- We are already seeing increased transient activity; anticipate more with the disruption of RAD green areas during their redevelopment. How do we compassionately direct transients and homeless to public and private support services while also protecting those who live, work, and visit of a safe welcoming neighborhood? **N & C**
3. Preserving Character
- i. Zoning, to ensure development projects look like they belong, and are in character with the existing buildings. How do we work with local government to refine existing development guidelines that reinforce the SSNA vision. **C**
  - ii. Urban planning- Identify the character in the south slope that people want to preserve and make sure that the zoning protects it. **C**
  - iii. Refinement and support of South Slope's brand/identity **N**
4. Did we say parking?. Parking is a huge challenge NOW for workers, residents and visitors. **C**

## Neighborhood Responsibility

Throughout the Plan, we have identified which goals are our neighborhood's responsibility with the symbol **N**

We have identified which goals are the city's responsibility with the symbol **C**

Of course, many are a shared responsibility, so those will show **N & C**

## Alignment with City Council Goals

The South Slope Neighborhood Association (SSNA) is aligned with the Asheville City Council's 2036 strategic vision and operating plan:

- SSNA embraces and embodies an inclusive, **diverse community** with local businesses, residents and workers that welcome all races, ages, sexual orientations, gender identification, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural beliefs.
- SSNA was established to create a vision and to support local community leadership to **achieve a well-planned and livable community**. Our vision embraces a pedestrian oriented community that also recognizes the urgent need to address a parking shortage while harmonizing with an integrated transportation system. SSNA land use is preserved in our historic structures, and honored when

incorporated in new development. We are well on our way to having thriving businesses mixed with residential and office uses. New residential projects continue nurturing a neighborhood that is socioeconomically diverse with a range of **quality affordable housing** choices. We see a critical need and a very high priority to assure that open spaces, parks, greenways, and community gardens are identified now to assure rapid development incorporates this aspect of our livable community.

- SSNA infrastructure development is a critical strategic need that can be aligned with Asheville council's **transportation and accessibility priorities**. Recent discussion of a parking deck on Southside Avenue is a good example of placement on the perimeter of SSNA that can complement sidewalks, greenways, and bike facilities development within the core of SSNA - getting us where we want to go safely and to keep us active and healthy. We are concerned that the new bond offering discussion has not included any specific city commitments to address urgent south slope infrastructure needs.
- SSNA is a wonderful new example of Asheville's **unique locally-focused economy**. SSNA local businesses are vibrant with a diversity of customers, employees, and business owners. Our historic buildings are home to funky, eclectic businesses that reflect the character of the SSNA and city - a creative economy of artists, makers, and innovators is thriving.
- SSNA is pleased to work very closely with ADA and DARN to be a **connected and engaged neighborhood** with our unique SSNA branding. Our diverse interest groups work together to tackle problems, and neighborhood engagement enables those who own property, work or live in the SSNA to express their thoughts, visions, and concrete plans that build a collective and harmonious community. City government is our trusted and transparent partner that can understand and help address SSNA vision.
- Asheville is a **smart city** that supports the SSNA's diverse and growing revenue base, which enables us to reasonably address current infrastructure investment by the city because we plan far into the future and can all benefit from SSNA's growth. SSNA residential and business citizens generously invest in our community through partnerships and public/private projects that enrich the quality of life in the South Slope Neighborhood of the city.

## **Alignment with Asheville City Development Plan 2025**

The South Slope Neighborhood Association (SSNA) has identified goals that are congruous with a number of the City's Current Comprehensive Plan strategies. The primary objective of the SSNA is to encourage the city to invest in infrastructure that supports the SSNA's growth and to ensure that development occurs in way that preserves the industrial and entrepreneurial identity of the neighborhood. The desire is to highlight the qualities that make the South Slope unique while also creating an environment that is safe, clean, and desirable to both visitors and residents.

The City of Asheville Comprehensive plan outlines a number of goals that the City has that align with the SSNA goals.

In regards to our infrastructure goals:

1. The city continues to fiscally support efforts to “maintain a level of local spending on street and road maintenance that will ensure that infrastructure is maintained at the state average for pavement condition rating” through capital investment in infrastructure projects throughout the city.
2. In regards to greenspaces, the city will continue to invest in the cooperative development of parks and open spaces. The goal is to “design and build park facilities that address the unique needs of the population they serve and that respect the heritage and character of the neighborhoods in which they are located”.
3. For Complete Streets, the city’s plan calls for “the City to assure that as land is developed or redeveloped, provision is made for access by various means of transportation” to include pedestrian connectors and sidewalks, public transit stops, and bike paths.
4. As the South Slope identifies one of its core strengths as having an identity that has been informed by the historical architecture in the district, one of the city’s land use strategies, “to preserve architectural diversity and protect neighborhood viability, should promote adaptive reuse of vacant/underutilized structures, while ensuring that neighborhood compatibility and public safety goals are met”, is in alignment with maintaining this strength.
5. Our need to advertise our district aligns with the city land use strategy “to work with NCDOT to identify gateway areas and develop a streetscape/landscape plan, including signage, for each gateway that emphasizes each area as an important entrance to the City”.

Businesses and residents agree that the development of the South Slope district needs to be thoughtful and strategic in order to sustain the special character that is demonstrated through the historical architecture, the cultural diversity, and the interconnectedness of our community. It seems clear that the City of Asheville has taken these interests into great consideration in the presentation of the Comprehensive Plan and that many of the goals that the SSNA has set forth are already part of the larger vision for the city’s overall development.

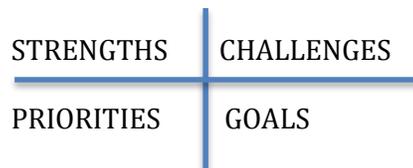
# Addendum 1

## South Slope Neighborhood Association Community Visioning Brainstorm

Objective of this session:

- To listen to and document the shared hopes and concerns of our South Slope community (that's you). These will be translated to the Plan on a Page format, to be shared directly with City officials, who have asked for this feedback from us and other neighborhoods.
- The goal today is for everyone to share their voice, and to be heard.
- The ultimate goal is to create a list of core priorities and goals of the SSNA, to give our organization direction, and communicate what we will focus our efforts on.
- We need our goals to be inspiring, strategically sound, documented and communicated. They should describe what SUCCESS looks like to our community.

1. **(10 min)**: We will organize into small groups. Participants will introduce themselves (name and affiliation with South Slope) to their group. Call for a writer.
- 
2. **(5 min)**: Facilitator (Jael) describes topic for brainstorm.
  - "Today, we will work as a community to create a vision that represents our neighborhood, and all of us: South Slope residents, property owners, business owners and workers. We will dive into 4 areas with respect to our neighborhood, the South Slope: our **STRENGTHS** (things we've got going for us. Easy example is BEER), our **CHALLENGES** (things that may be an obstacle to our success. Easy example is PARKING), our **PRIORITIES** (what is important to us), and finally, our **GOALS** (translation of our Priorities into ACTION STEPS). There may be overlap (ex: parking could be a challenge and a priority). We recommend each group brainstorm the first three categories, then work together to turn those strengths, challenges and priorities into goals for our organization."



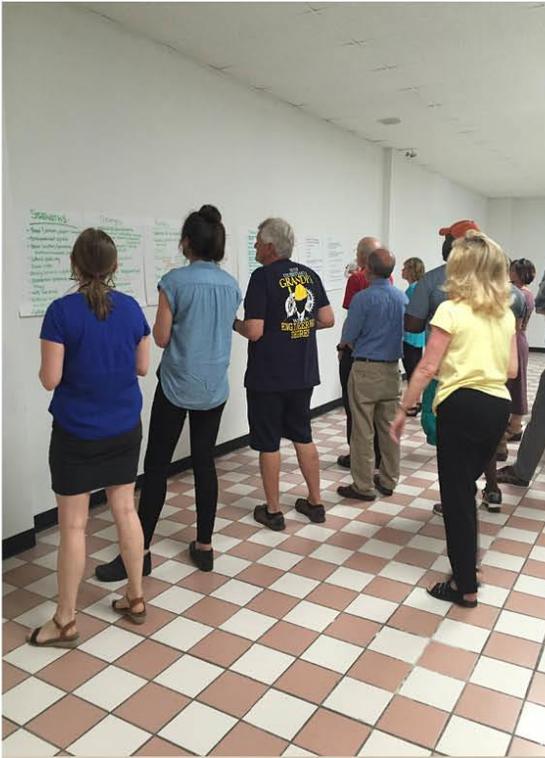
3. **(25 min)**: Small Group Brainstorm exercise
  - Each small group will fill as many ideas as they can (try not to filter yourself or others' ideas at this stage). Leave 3 inches of space on the margin of the paper for voting. We will spend 5 minutes each on Strengths, Challenges and Priorities. We will spend 10 minutes on Goals.
- 
4. **(10 min)**: Post and Vote.
  - Group brainstorms are posted on the walls, by category. Participants will walk around the room and review each pad, then cast their votes in each category.
  - Each individual has **three** votes per category, which they will indicate with a dot sticker. You can vote for ideas from your group or anyone else's.
- 
5. **(10 min)**: Beer & Snack Break while *Vision Committee* synthesizes voting.
- 
6. **(15 min)**: Group come back together and *Vision Committee* report on top votes/themes in each category. Q & A with group.

7. We will mark shared goals as neighborhood responsibility OR city responsibility (N or C)
8. Call for additional interested parties for the Vision Committee.
9. Having met our objective to create a list of our core goals, the meeting will adjourn.

**AFTER THE EVENT (meeting to be scheduled in the next week):**

1. *Vision Committee* will translate these votes/themes into a VISION/DRAFT GOALS.
2. *Vision Committee* submits DRAFT VISION via email survey to event participants - and to those who could not attend - for their review and input. In order to keep answers focused, input questions will be limited to the same three:
  - a. What's missing and needs to be added?
  - b. What should be deleted and why?
  - c. What excites you?
3. *Vision Committee* will create Plan on a Page and seek community input via association email group.
4. Vision Committee Chair will Present to SSNA board for approval.
5. Vision and Plan on a Page is finalized, documented and communicated to all SSNA members.
6. This document is used to help SSNA keep their focus, and keep coming back to the core priorities.

|



## STRENGTHS

- - Beer! Attracts people + business
- - Entrepreneurial spirit
- - Great location/proximity to downtown/buses/etc./walkability
- - Cultural diversity
  - blank slate
- - Strong sense of cooperation
  - Orientation/potential alternative energy
- - well marketed
- - historical architecture - using existing resources
- - Collier Ave. wood

## Goals

- - better infrastructure - repair + maintenance
  - sidewalks - Crosswalk
  - streets - Trash
  - signage
  - parking
- - Green space - maintain + add
- Being recognized + heard as an influential association by the city + County
- - Affordable housing
- - Diversity
  - building a relationship/coexisting with DARN + South French Breaud Neighborhood Association
- Design review

## Challenges

- Lack of minimum requirements
- Infrastructure - sidewalks, streets
- Urban food chain/conservation
- The lack of community components
- Food waste/garbage language
- Non street-back-dr
- Parking
- Mitter/Woodall/...
- noise
- neighborhood
- controlling...
- design review of...
- preserve Collier for...

## Priorities

- define
- balance
- 
- 
- 
-