

I. Purpose of the Pedestrian Plan Update

On May 25, 1999, the Asheville City Council adopted the City of Asheville Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan. The Plan was designed to prioritize capital improvement and maintenance projects for the City with special consideration for addressing Americans with Disabilities Act compliance issues and for addressing critical pedestrian transportation and safety. The goals of the Plan were to:

- Promote pedestrian activity as a viable alternative to automobile use;
- Enhance the pedestrian environment and increase opportunities to choose walking as a mode of transportation to help improve the health of the citizens of Asheville; and
- Develop standards that enhance livability, economic opportunity, safety, and quality of life.

Five years later, City staff developed this revision to keep the City Pedestrian Plan current and useful to the City and the public and to expand funding approaches. This version of the Pedestrian Plan is designed to provide City staff and elected officials with good, technical information to make decisions on where to invest limited resources and how to improve policies and procedures that improve pedestrian safety and infrastructure. Adoption and implementation of this plan will:

1. Create initiatives and infrastructure that support the City's adopted goals as presented in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and the City's Strategic Operations Plan, both adopted in 2004, as well as other state, regional, and local planning objectives.
2. Raise public understanding of, and support for, an accessible pedestrian network.

3. Update the Pedestrian Plan map and examine the price structure for effectiveness and fairness in the Unified Development Ordinance's sidewalks requirements;
4. Establish a method for identifying and prioritizing key pedestrian linkages, signals and sidewalk needs through an equitable and on-going process;
5. Provide a list of current sidewalk, greenway, and crosswalk construction and improvement needs.
6. Identify funding opportunities and recommendations for the City to pursue.

"Asheville's forefathers developed a downtown which is characterized by pedestrian efficient linear streets with higher density residential development in close proximity to commercial, retail, and community services. Our modern dependency on the automobile has separated the function of a traditional walking City such as ours from its original design around pedestrian needs.

Though this dependency on the automobile has impacted development around the City, Ashevilleians should be extremely proud that their downtown continues to be one of the most "walkable" in North Carolina. . . . Future planning efforts should embrace the most practical patterns of the past that recognize the importance of all modes of transportation and reconcile the disciplines of transportation and land-use planning."

- City of Asheville Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan, 1999

With this version of the Pedestrian Plan, the City continues its on-going commitment to improve the quality of life for all its citizens through improved access, inter-modal transportation and effective stewardship of our City's pedestrian infrastructure and financial resources.

II. Planning Context

This Plan supports adopted plans and goals of the State, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the City of Asheville.

A. Bicycling and Walking in North Carolina, 1996.

This NCDOT Plan is being updated. It envisioned “an expanded and safer transportation system for bicyclists and pedestrians; safer behaviors; plans at all levels of government; innovative and effective bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs; and increased bicycling and walking throughout North Carolina.” It calls for facilities, education, research, safety, and integration of pedestrian considerations into transportation planning at state, regional, and local levels.

B. Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, 2004

The 2004 “Charting a New Direction for NCDOT: North Carolina’s Long Range Statewide Multi-modal Transportation Plan” indicates over \$84 Billion dollars in “anticipated” transportation needs, but only \$55 Billion in anticipated revenues, almost a \$30 Billion dollar gap, forcing changes in some NCDOT focus. The Plan considers all transportation modes, including pedestrian needs, and was adopted in September of 2004.

Historically, state spending on stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects has been approximately \$6 million per year. Assuming the development of new initiatives, doubling this annual allocation would provide much needed assistance without creating a significant financial burden on NCDOT. Therefore, the total annual bicycle/pedestrian needs are considered to be \$12 million per year, amounting to \$300 million over 25 years. . . .NCDOT now requires local governments for populations over 5,000 to prepare pedestrian and bicycle plans to receive state funding for bike/pedestrian improvements.

--NC Long-Range statewide Multimodal transportation Plan, 2004

C. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Thoroughfare Plan of the Asheville Urban Area MPO, 1999.

This plan was adopted in 1999 as part of the Thoroughfare planning process, and later incorporated into the Long Range Transportation Plan to provide goals, objectives, and recommendations for improving the quality and safety of bicycle and pedestrian travel in the Asheville Urban Area (which at the time included Buncombe County, its municipalities and the Town of Fletcher in Henderson County). Recommendations from this Plan resulted in several projects being placed on the regional Long Range Transportation Plan the Priority Needs List and TIP.

“The Asheville Urban Area will have a network of bicycle and pedestrian routes which are safe and provide reasonable transportation options for its citizens. Individual jurisdictions within the MPO and the MPO itself will provide leadership in the promotion, education, law enforcement and facilities development that support this network.

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Thoroughfare Plan of AAMPO, 1999

This Plan was developed in coordination with the City of Asheville’s 1999 Pedestrian Plan. In this process, several important community events helped to raise community awareness and involvement in pedestrian issues, including:

- The Walkable Communities Conference with Dan Burden;
- The Walkability Summit and Barriers Workshops;
- Initiation of Strive not to Drive Week and related activities;
- Participation in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Task Force;
- Development of considerations for the I-26/240 Connector Project.

D. The MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, 2001

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was adopted by the MPO in 2001 and, similar to the Statewide Plan, is updated every 5 years as required by the Federal Highway Administration. The LRTP identifies multi-modal improvements and programs and the financial means by which they will be implemented. This plan must address all modes of transportation including roadways, bicycles, pedestrians, rail, and transit. Identified needs are included on the Priority Needs List and/or State Transportation Improvement Program (or "TIP"). The LRTP will be revised and updated in 2004-05 through a public process managed by the MPO.

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-Vision Statement, Pedestrian and Bicycle Element, LRTP, 2000

As an expanded planning area that now includes Buncombe, Haywood, and Henderson counties, the MPO meets the criteria of a Transportation Management Agency and developed a Congestion Management System (CMS) as part of the LRTP. The CMS includes several strategies relating to pedestrians, including the creation of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to encourage non-motorized forms of transportation and improved pedestrian facilities as part of inter-modal systems planning,

As the 2005 LRTP is developed, adopted plans from participating jurisdictions, will be considered and integrated into LRTP recommendations and project priorities.

E. The City of Asheville Greenway Master Plan, 1998

The Greenway Master Plan was adopted in 1998 and updated in 2003. As a result, just over 4.5 miles of multi-purpose trails have been developed so far.

To help implement the Plan, the Asheville Greenway Commission was established in 1999 as an advisory board of citizens appointed by City Council. The Commission works with staff on community outreach, fundraising, recruiting volunteers, and planning. The Asheville Parks and Greenways Foundation was established in 2000 as a non-profit organization, separate from the City, to raise funds for parks and greenways.

"The Vision for the Asheville Greenways System is a network of land and water corridors in Asheville, with greenways serving to protect and promote the qualities of these corridors, places where land connects to water; people connect to nature; people connect to parks; home connects to work, school and shops; and city connects to countryside."

- Greenway Master Plan, 1998

In the 2003 Plan Update, the Greenway Commission recommends consideration of greenways in subdivision plans as equivalent to sidewalks so that greenways and/or sidewalks are developed in all new subdivisions. They also ask that where terrain precludes greenways/sidewalk development, the "fee in lieu of" option should apply towards future greenways as well as sidewalks.

The Greenway Master Plan and Update envisions a greenway system that interconnects with sidewalks and bicycle facilities to enhance the overall transportation network for non-motorized transportation modes, as well as expands the City's Park system and natural space.

F. Asheville Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan, 1999

The 1999 Plan identified existing substandard sidewalks needing reconstruction, sidewalk obstacles needing removal or relocation, needed wheelchair ramps, pedestrian hazard areas, needed pedestrian crossing improvements, and needed pedestrian linkages. The City Public Works Department developed estimates for how much it would cost to address all the needs identified in the plan and arrived at costs of over 35.5 million dollars. This did not include new construction needs identified in the Greenway Master Plan, which would have increased that amount to over 46 million dollars.

<u>Overview of Comprehensive Needs (1999)</u>	
26.5 linear miles of repair at	\$ 6,296,400
1.3 lm of non-compliance (<48") at	\$ 313,380
188 obstacles at	\$ 1,190,500
572 ADA Ramps at	\$ 658,000
630 crossing improvements at	\$ 1,575,500
108 lm of critical linkages at	<u>\$28,512,000</u>
Total Identified Costs:	\$35,619,730

At the time it was written, a detailed capital improvement program (CIP) was not included because no significant funding mechanism existed. The Plan did however present multiple policy and administrative recommendations, several of which have been implemented in the past five years, resulting in improved citizen awareness, valuable additions to the pedestrian infrastructure, and the development of additional local and grant funding sources.

Pedestrian Plan Success

1. The City hired a full time bicycle and pedestrian coordinator who worked within the Public Works and Engineering Departments. This position was phased out as planning, engineering, parks and recreation and public works staff integrated bicycle and pedestrian considerations into their work routinely. Today, impacts to pedestrians are assessed and managed to improve infrastructure and safety throughout City departments and review processes.
2. The Plan inventoried existing sidewalk, needed pedestrian linkages, and ADA barriers and non-compliance on a GIS database. This map is used in City site review and permitting to guide the enforcement of the Unified Development Ordinance's sidewalk requirements.
3. From the inventory, the City has constructed (since 1999):
 - 154,109 Square Feet of sidewalks, and
 - 220 upgraded or new ADA ramps.
4. The City established a direct, annual allocation of \$200,000 to go toward ADA and sidewalk needs as identified in the Plan.
5. The City instituted a "fee-in-lieu" of sidewalk program to channel development costs for required sidewalks into the most critical areas. The program has generated over \$160,171 in the three years since its inception.
6. The City leveraged State DOT Enhancement funds to construct portions of the Greenway and Pedestrian Plans, along New Haw Creek Road, Pack Place, Clingman Avenue, and the greenway segments of Glenn's Creek, Clingman Forest and French Broad River Park.
7. The Plan identified critical pedestrian needs along State roads that were added to the State TIP and the MPO's Priority Needs List, including improvements along Patton Avenue and US25.
8. City traffic engineering has worked to improve pedestrian safety with the implementation of a traffic calming policy, intersection and crosswalk improvements, and signalization upgrades including "Lead Pedestrian Interval" technology that adjusts signal phasing to provide pedestrians additional time to cross.
9. City staff provides technical and administrative support to the Asheville Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force.

G. City of Asheville Smart Growth Policy, 2000

In its Smart Growth Policy, the City defines Smart Growth as, “a development pattern that makes efficient use of our limited land, fully utilizes our urban services and infrastructure, promotes a wide variety of transportation and housing options, absorbs and effectively serves a significant portion of the future population growth of Buncombe County and Western North Carolina, protects the architectural and environmental character of the City through compatible, high quality, and environmentally-sensitive development practices, and recognizes the City’s role as a regional hub of commerce and employment. Inherent to this definition is the need to implement Smart Growth through comprehensive, consistent and effective policies, regulations, capital projects and incentives.”

In addition to the definition, the City established several, general “Smart Growth Policies:”

1. Mixed-use developments and buildings should be encouraged.
2. Compatible, higher density commercial and residential infill development should be encouraged.
3. New development should promote a sustainable land development pattern.
4. Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be recognized and encouraged.
5. Discretionary block grant and local funding for affordable housing and economic development should be used to support a Smart Growth development pattern.
6. Industrially-zoned land should be reserved for industrial uses.

7. Areas with steep slopes and environmentally sensitive areas should be identified and preserved while allowing alternatives to development that protect private property rights.
8. Existing neighborhoods near Downtown Asheville should be strengthened through infill development, housing rehabilitation, proactive enforcement of zoning and building standards, and housing code enforcement.
9. City staff is directed to develop new zoning tools and use existing zoning tools to promote compatible land use projects, protect industrial and environmentally-sensitive land, and allow flexibility in site design to achieve the above policies. These tools may include revision of subdivision regulations to incorporate traditional neighborhood and conservation development practices, as well as continuing existing innovative regulations such as our accessory apartment code provisions. Additionally, capital projects and economic development incentive funding should be supportive of a Smart Growth development pattern where appropriate.

In the area of **transportation**, the following policies were also established:

1. Where feasible, new development projects should be designed to connect to the existing street network at multiple points; cul-de-sac development and gated communities should be avoided except where unreasonable due to topographical conditions or inadequacy of surrounding roadways to handle the volume and/or type of traffic generated by the development.
2. Strongly encourage improvements that make Asheville a premier walking and biking community, including the use of evaluative and regulatory tools and capital improvements.

3. Implementation of various projects from the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan should be implemented on a priority basis as funding allows.
4. Where possible, multimodal transportation interconnectivity between neighborhoods and to destination areas such as parks and neighborhood shopping locations should be encouraged.
5. New development projects should incorporate mass transit features where appropriate.
6. Improvements to the transit system should be completed in accordance with the established capital improvement program.
7. The traffic-carrying capacity of existing arterials and highways should be carefully monitored and maintained at acceptable levels of service.
8. Efforts to reduce or eliminate traffic problems through closure of existing streets or otherwise disrupting an established street network should be avoided; traffic calming measures intended to improve the compatibility of traffic with neighborhood conditions while maintaining the street network are the most appropriate methods to address these types of traffic problems.
9. City staff is directed to use new and existing zoning tools, the City's capital improvement program (CIP), grants and other means to achieve the above policies.

Development of convenient and connected pedestrian infrastructure is vital to the City's Smart Growth Policies. Sidewalks, crosswalks, greenways, transit stops, and streetscape amenities (benches, trash receptacles, etc.) can all play a role and work together to accommodate more density, encourage non-motorized forms of travel, and to serve provide a street environment that is vibrant, safe, and attractive.

"Asheville's topography and existing development pattern complicates the establishment of an effective and efficient transportation network. The road pattern tends to follow valleys and ridgelines and circumvent neighborhoods rather than follow a more grid-like pattern. Additionally, there are a limited number of development nodes of sufficient density to provide efficient public transportation. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to disperse traffic through an interconnected roadway network or successfully use public transportation as a primary transportation mode. On a more positive note, there are a number of neighborhoods within reasonable walking and biking distance of Downtown Asheville, a circumstance that provides alternative modes of transportation for many residents."

--City Smart Growth Policy



H. The Asheville City Development Plan 2025, and Center City Plan, 2003

The Asheville City Development Plan 2025 proposes a land use pattern, transportation network and system of City services and infrastructure that reflects a community vision for the future development of the City within a “Smart Growth” model. As part of this model, land use patterns and transportation systems and infrastructure should create opportunities for inter-modal transportation as well as safe and inter-connected pedestrian facilities.

“...sustainability is a balancing of economic objectives, social goals, and environmental resources in a way that works for both present and future generations...Smart Growth occurs when the development pattern is sustainable – i.e. when the physical growth of the community allows the economy, the social and cultural goals, and the natural resources to be in a state of balance. . . .

Asheville’s definition of Smart Growth takes into account local conditions, fiscal accountability, the City’s role in the region, and expected population growth. It also recognizes that Smart Growth must be manifested in the development pattern of the community as well as in City policies, projects, and regulations.

- Asheville City Development Plan 2025, 2003

The Plan calls for “ a system of sidewalks, greenways, and bicycle facilities that will make Asheville a more walkable and livable city.” Strategies to implement this goal are to:

1. Increase intersection safety as part of a “Walkable Intersection Program;”
2. Create pedestrian oriented zones in tandem with urban, mixed-use, and high density areas;
3. Incorporate pedestrian areas and thoroughfares into long range transportation and roadway facilities plans;

4. Pursue Greenways as part of roadway improvement projects and long range planning;
5. Adopt land use strategies and site design standards that encourage bicycling and walking; and to
6. Implement the Greenway Master Plan and the Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan using public funds, grant monies, and privately raised dollars.

The Center City Plan was adopted in 2003 as part of the City Development Plan and focuses on the downtown district. It emphasizes the role of sidewalks as public space, connecting visitors and citizens to businesses, art, history, architecture and civic resources. It also recommends goals and strategies that promote pedestrian infrastructure and access, and calls for “a pedestrian environment that is pleasant, visually interesting, and welcoming to visitors.”

Other Comprehensive Plan goals and strategies support the need to further develop and improve pedestrian infrastructure, including provisions to establish a Transportation Demand Management Program and continue to strengthen transit services, and to promote a pedestrian environment that promotes access to jobs and businesses.

The 2025 Plan lays out demographic and growth information and makes the argument that a pedestrian transportation system that is safe, accessible, and connects to transit, commercial districts, residential areas, parks and community centers as well as contributes to an attractive downtown, is vital to the future of Asheville and its vision for sustainable and “smart” development that promotes quality of life for its citizens.

I. City Council Strategic Operating Plan, 2004

Asheville City Council Vision, Strategic Operating Plan, Adopted 2004

As a City government we are committed to a future that will provide:

VISION. A vision for the future where we chart the path to success and work with steadfastness to achieve that destiny; where we speak with one voice in moving forward to attain common goals.

OPPORTUNITY. Freedom for all citizens to have the opportunity to succeed and prosper; education so that all students can reach their fullest potential; jobs so that all can be fulfilled members of society; a welcome to all who come here in the spirit of community, whether as visitors or to remain here permanently.

LIVABILITY. A Place where life is pleasant and invigorating; where citizens and visitors can enjoy a variety of uplifting experiences; where families can be raised in an enriching environment; where ideas and energy are devoted to creating a city where citizens and visitors experience essential services that are efficient, affordable, and user friendly.

SENSE OF PLACE. A sense that Asheville is unlike any other place in the country; a place that blends the vibrancy of an active city with the culture of the world and yet provides the opportunity for solitude and the appreciation of nature; a place that maintains a commitment to embrace and blend Asheville's architectural past and dynamic future.

VIBRANCY. A downtown that is alive and active, that offers unique cultural experiences in the graphic, visual and performing arts; where performers can be found in beautiful venues and public spaces; where art celebrates our mountain heritage and the sophistication of the world; and where recreation activities abound.

PARTICIPATION. The ability of all citizens to participate in the affairs of the city, whether in government, volunteerism, or other civic affairs' where the government provides information so that all have the ability to be fully informed; where debate is lively, informational, and civil; where participation is encouraged and people are heard.

DIVERSITY. Value for all people from every walk of life, of every race and religion, and of every color and culture; an inviting place where none are turned away and all are expected to contribute.

Asheville City Council developed their Vision as part of the Strategic Operation Plan and identified goals, objectives, and tasks to support it. The Pedestrian Plan Update is a task of the Operations Plan under the “natural and built environment” focus area, but assists Council in meeting multiple other goals, objectives and tasks including:

- Ensure updated, practical and beneficial planning models by regularly reviewing and revising strategy and plans with City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission
- Develop a framework for multimodal transportation planning that is based on system performance, is responsive to decision makers and customers, and provides the basis for allocating resources.
- Research and develop strategies for securing significant new, recurring revenue sources.
- Develop greenways in strategic locations that improve air and water quality.
- Establish policies and programs that improve air quality.
- Continue to implement and develop greenways that enhance quality of life for Asheville.
- Create incentives or requirements to reserve easements and/or construct greenways as private projects are developed.
- Increased street and sidewalk connections.

- Re-evaluate the conditions of streets in the City by updating the Pavement Management Inventory.
- Evaluate funding options for construction of sidewalks, greenways and street improvements while continuing to pursue local and outside funding sources for capital infrastructure improvements.

I. Local Small Area and Corridor Plans

As sidewalks or greenways are installed, City staff should ensure consideration for planning goals and desired streetscape specific to the location and/or neighborhood. These could include objectives of the:

- Urban Trail,
- Downtown Streetscape Plan,
- Charlotte Street Corridor Plan,
- Haywood Road Corridor Plan,
- WECAN/Clingman Neighborhood Plan,
- Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan,
- Broadway Corridor Plan,
- Biltmore Village Historic District, and
- Montford Historic District.

To access current plans, see the following websites:

NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Site:

<http://www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/>

NCDOT Comprehensive Transportation Plan (“CTP”):

<http://www.ncdot.org/planning/statewideplan/>

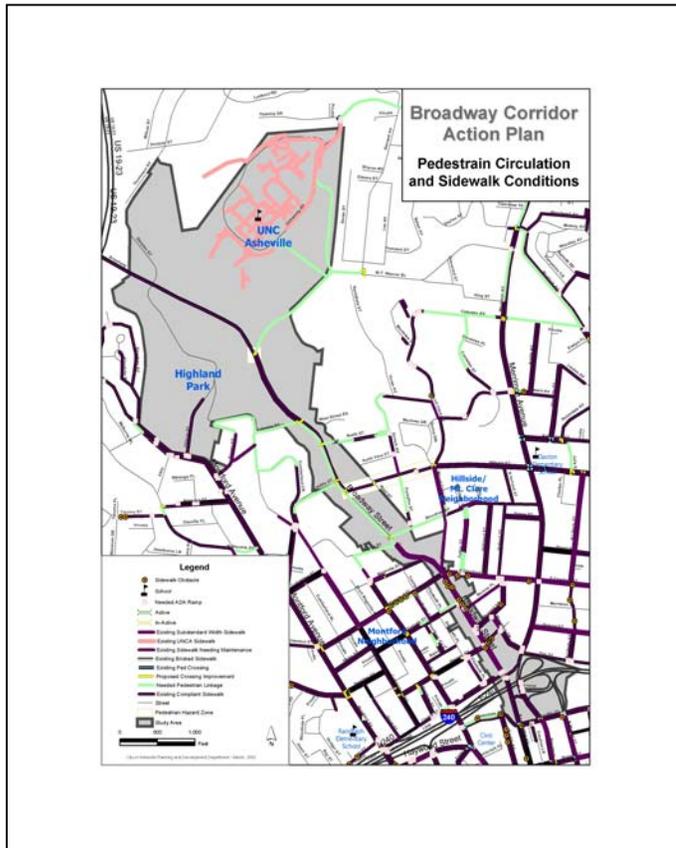
French Broad River MPO Homepage:

<http://www.frenchbroadrivermpo.org/>

City of Asheville Homepage:

<http://www.ashevillenc.gov/>

The Broadway Corridor Plan is designed to improve pedestrian circulation and connectivity among neighborhood destinations and UNCA.



The Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan will create a multi-modal corridor through the heart of Asheville along the French Broad and Swannanoa rivers, revitalizing the Asheville River District and creating a major bicycle and pedestrian thoroughfare that ties together multiple planned greenway projects.

