ROBBINSVILLE
NORTH CAROLINA

Town of Robbinsville Workshop

CPNI & NCGrowth
October 6-7th, 2022

ABOUT CPNI The Construction Professionals Network Institute, Inc. (CPNI) is a non-profit initiative focusing on construction industry-related projects and community service throughout the State of North Carolina. CPNI volunteers its members' design and construction industry expertise as a catalyst to empower communities across North Carolina to improve their physical and economic environment. CPNI offers the comprehensive professional and technical expertise of its membership and collaborating partners in the form of workshops tailored to assist communities and engage local governments and community leaders to facilitate discussions and efforts toward redevelopment strategy, community engagement, visioning, and financial considerations.

Learn more at www.cpni-nc.org.

CREATE/NCGrowth is a national center helping businesses, governments, and other organizations create good jobs, equitable economies, and new wealth in distressed communities. We provide technical assistance; produce academic and applied research; develop innovative policy; and host unique convenings. CREATE/NCGrowth includes Anchor Institutions Create Economic Resilience (AICER); SmartUp; Homegrown Tools; and the Black Communities Conference.

Learn more at www.NCGrowth.unc.edu.

Authors

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CPNI & NCGrowth Workshop Team

Mike Barnes, Charlotte Regional Director - Thomas & Hutton
Jody Efird, Real Estate Agent - Allen Tate Realtors
Carolyn Fryberger, Assistant Director of Economic Development - NCGrowth
Stacy Guffey, WNC Program Manager - NCGrowth
Matt Hart, Principal Architect - Morris Berg
Haley Hassler, Strategic Development Director - Barton Marlow
Avery Monroe, Division Manager - RMF Engineering
Hannah White, Analyst - NCGrowth
Jess Wilkinson, Economic Development Manager - NCGrowth

Local Attendees

Angelina Jumper, Cultural Resource Supervisor- Junaluska Museum, EBCI
Millie Smith, Project Manager - Southwestern Commission
Debbie Beasley - Town Alderman, Chair of RTA, & Postmaster
Edd Satterfield, President - Graham County Historical Association Board of Directors
Lance Collins, Director of the Small Business Center - Tri- County Community College
Angie Knight, Superintendent - Graham County Schools
Paige Jones, Owner/Real Estate Agent - Cherokee Realty
Brian Johnson, Councilman - Town of Robbinsville
Adrian Nelms, Owner - Papa's Pizza
Michelle Shiplet, Executive Director - GREAT
Ken and Debbie Wheeler, Owners - Wheeler's Performance
John Colwell, Board Member - REVVED UP
Randy Foster, Reporter - Graham Star Newspaper
Sean Adams, Mayor - Town of Robbinsville
Maxine Bahr, Real Estate Agent - Southland Realty
Dave Artiss, Owner - Downtown land owner
Mitch Beasley, Chief Operations Officer - Lovin Contracting Co, Inc.
Jacob Nelms, Commissioner - Graham County
Becca Scott, Director of Community & Economic Development - Southwstern Commission
Jim and Anne Hager, Board Members - REVVED UP
Josh Carpenter, Director - Mountain West Partnership

Executive Summary

CPNI and NCGrowth worked with the Town of Robbinsville to conduct a two-day workshop. This goal of the workshop was to identify potential strategies for the future growth and economic development of Robbinsville. The workshop was attended by the CPNI and NCGrowth team, local elected and government officials, town residents, and other stakeholders. Conversations focused on Robbinsville's economic goals, strengths, challenges, and more specifically downtown revitalization. Based on these conversations, CPNI and NCGrowth produced several recommendations which are summarized in this report. The report overviews the workshop, discusses relevant plans, provides some brief economic and demographic data, and details several recommendations and considerations to help Robbinsville meet its goals. A set of resources and references is available in the appendix.

The report is organized as follows:
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Introduction

The Town of Robbinsville is located an hour and half west of Asheville, NC. It borders Cherokee, Swain, and Macon Counties, as well as the State of Tennessee. Robbinsville, located in one of the western-most counties, is closer to six other states capitals than it is to Raleigh. Robbinsville's main industries are construction, accommodations and food services, and retail trade services. The Town of Robbinsville is interested in creating a more vibrant downtown for its residents which, in turn, will attract more visitors.

The workshop with the Town of Robbinsville was held on October 6th and 7th, 2022. It focused on discussing a shared vision for the future of Robbinsville and identifying a set of recommendations to facilitate reuse and redevelopment of downtown buildings and spaces. NCGrowth developed and presented a pre-workshop memo that provided workshop facilitators and participants with a summary of Robbinsville's existing economic plans, as well as background information on the demographic, economic, and social situation in Robbinsville. This report will summarize the discussion at the workshop and include the workshop agenda, existing plans in Robbinsville, additional demographic and economic data, a recap of the town tour, and offer a set of proposed recommendations.

Workshop Overview

The workshop focused largely on envisioning the town's future and potential economic development strategies the town could employ. Participants' comments focused on the desire for growth coupled with the desire to preserve Robbinsville's small-town, rural character.

The CPNI and NCGrowth participated in a town tour and several local landmarks. The team saw the Snider Building, the future site for a cultural center for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, the former Stanley Plant, and the memorial site of Chief Junaluska.

After the town tour, the CPNI and NCGrowth team gathered with community members for the background portion of the workshop. During the session, residents responded to questions from the workshop team regarding the history and existing conditions of Robbinsville. Residents reflected on the significance of the town and Graham County. They also discussed the history of Robbinsville as county seat and the history as a "trophy town" where people could work, live, and play.

After discussing the history of Robbinsville, residents discussed a vision for the future. As with many towns, residents felt the tension of preserving what exists and building for the future. Overall, residents expressed a love for the natural beauty of their community.

Residents also discussed potential barriers to building a vibrant community. In general, residents reflected the need to "connect the dots," suggesting Robbinsville and Graham County's many assets that simply need to be organized.

The second day of the workshop focused on identifying goals and strategies for managing the future growth and vision of Robbinsville. Topics covered included developing a comprehensive plan, employing marketing and beautification efforts around downtown, connecting into the rich heritage of the Snowbird community, and identifying ways to attract travelers to Robbinsville. The CPNI Team also focused on potential built assets that can facilitate future growth.

Workshop Agenda

Figure 1- 1 Workshop Agenda

Day One - October 6, 2022

- **10:45 – 11:00 AM: Arrive** - CPNI Team arrives at **Robbinsville United Methodist Church (249 W. Fort Hill Rd, Robbinsville, NC 28771)**
- **11:00 – 12:30 PM Van/Walking Tour**
- **12:30 PM - LUNCH @ Lynn's Place, 237 E. Main St., Robbinsville, NC (828-479-9777)**
  - **A reservation has been made in Mike Barnes name for 10 ppl at 12:30 PM**
- **1:30 PM: Return to Church**
  - Introductions – Mike Barnes, CPNI
    - Community Participants
    - CPNI & NCGrowth Team (CPN/CPNI role/mission)
  - Robbinsville - Opportunities/Challenges – Brian Johnson/Debbie Beasley
- **2:00 PM:**
  - Robbinsville Overview – NC Growth
    - History/Culture -
    - Physical Character (Environmental, Topography, Landscape, Utilities, Transportation, Etc.) -
    - Demographics
    - Market/Economic Conditions
- **2:30 PM – 3:30 Open Forum with Community Participants**
- **3:30 PM BREAK**
  - Afternoon discussions & recap; "Think tank" discussions with CPNI team
- **4:00 PM – 5:00 pm**
  - Continue Open Discussion
  - Summary of Day 1 Discussion
- **5:00 PM – Adjourn** for the day – travel to overnight accommodations | Dinner
- **6:00 – 7:30 PM: Group Dinner – Café De Olla, 765 Tallulah Rd.,** *Robbinsville, NC*, (Ph 828-479-4679)
  review the day, share thoughts, suggestions, ideas

Day Two - October 7, 2022

- **9:00 – 10:00 AM- Recommendation Development:**
  - Opportunities/ Challenges
  - Potential Services in Rural Village Center
  - Other Community Recommendations
- **10:00 – 10:45 AM**
  - Community Visioning
- **10:45 – Noon**
  - Recommendations from CPNI/ NCGrowth
  - Report Timeline
- **12 Noon - ADJORN**

Existing Town Plans

This section will provide an overview of the relevant plans in Robbinsville and Graham County, including an update on the Snider Building.

In 2014, Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (GREAT), sponsored a Strategic Tourism Plan Destination 2025. The Plan offered a vision for ecotourism development. The strategic plan outlined goals, opportunities, challenges, and how the goals would be measured. The six goals include:

1. Increase overnight and daytrip visitation to Graham County.
2. Generate more tourism-related revenue.
3. Increase tourism-related employment.
4. Provide more small business opportunities.
5. Increase the local tax base.
6. Maximize travel, tourism, and sustainable recreation opportunities as core contributors to business growth and quality of life, while protecting cultural and natural resources. [1]

The strategic plan recognizes tourism as being part of the solution, but not the solution. Along with the strategic plan, GREAT highlighted assets in Graham County in a tourist- friendly map.

In 2019, Robbinsville Envisioning Vital Vibrant Economic Development and Urban Prosperity (REVVED UP) sponsored a Downtown Robbinsville Economic Revitalization Strategy. The resulting vision was that 'Main Street Robbinsville NC: The Adventure Portal to Outdoor Recreation, Connector of Physical, Social and Cultural Adventures and a Pulsing Center of Entrepreneurship.' NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center and Appalachian Regional Commission identified action items the community can take:

1. Recruit business-minded residents with an interest in seeing Main Street revitalized to create an economic revitalization committee
2. Approach partners like the Small Business Center and NC Commerce staff for assistance to get started on business development/recruitment materials, incentive programs, ordinances, and best practices
3. Continue the project work already underway that is listed in the workplan and those on John Colwell's 20-year plan
4. Celebrate publicly the completion of any and every task and project to build support and an image of success
5. Recruit/Develop a business (café, brewery, etc.) offering a great, good place to hang out and a gift shop next door. [2]

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[1] Graham County Strategic Tourism Plan, https://www.grahamcounty.net/great/Graham%20County%20Strategic%20Tourism%20Plan.pdf

[2] Downtown Robbinsville Economic Revitalization Strategy, https://regiona.org/wp-content/uploads/Downtown-Robbinsville-Report-final.pdf

The downtown region in September 2021 was recognized as a historic district by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. Downtown Robbinsville boasts many 19^{ths} and 20th century buildings, several were constructed using the traditional, orange-toned creek rock. With the designation, owners of landmarked buildings can apply for a 50 percent property tax deferral if the historic features are maintained. [3]

The Snider Building

In downtown Robbinsville, the Graham County Historical Society Association (GCHA) has led the initiative in the restoration of the former J.J. Snider Department Store. Edd Satterfield, President for the GCHA Board of Directors is quoted as saying, "The Graham County Historical Association through fundraising, donations and pledges has purchased and paid for the Old Snider's Department Store. Plans are to renovate the building and turn it into the Graham County Heritage Center and Museum. The large front room store in building will be dedicated to heritage tourism and house store/gallery that displays, sells arts, crafts and other items made by native tribal artisans, mountain artisans, and others. It will also have books from local and regional authors. The front room will also have a snack bar, a section for community gatherings related to our mountain heritage, storytellers, musicians, teaching of mountain crafts, heritage education, genealogy, etc. Other rooms in the building will be used the display of historical items that tell our unique mountain history from Cherokee History, Dams, settlers, sports history, etc. We are also looking at artisan space in the upper building next to Hosanna Street where craftspeople would have a space to work and apply their trade in town. This project would give single one stop in place town for locals and tourists to come purchase locally made items, learn about the area's history and heritage. Being the largest building in town, a historic building located in the center of downtown, this project is crucial to starting the revitalization of Robbinsville."

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[3] Robbinsville Downtown Historic District, https://www.ncdcr.gov/media/2304/download

Demographic and Economic Data

This section will overview demographic and economic information for the Town of Robbinsville and Graham County. More information is included in the pre- workshop memo produced by NCGrowth. Due to the pandemic and the existence of part- time residents, the data may not paint the complete picture. That report includes several key indicators that provide context to existing trends in Robbinsville, such as a lower-than-average unemployment, a lower-than-average median income, and construction being a leading industry in the community.

Figures 2-1 and 2-2 provide context about the age ranges in Graham County and Robbinsville respectfully for 2020. In Graham County the largest population is between 45 to 54 years and 55 to 64 years at 14%. In Robbinsville the largest population is between 45 to 54 years at 18%. As the population ages, this is going to shift the demands on County and Town services needed.

Figure 2- 1: Graham County Population by Age Ranges
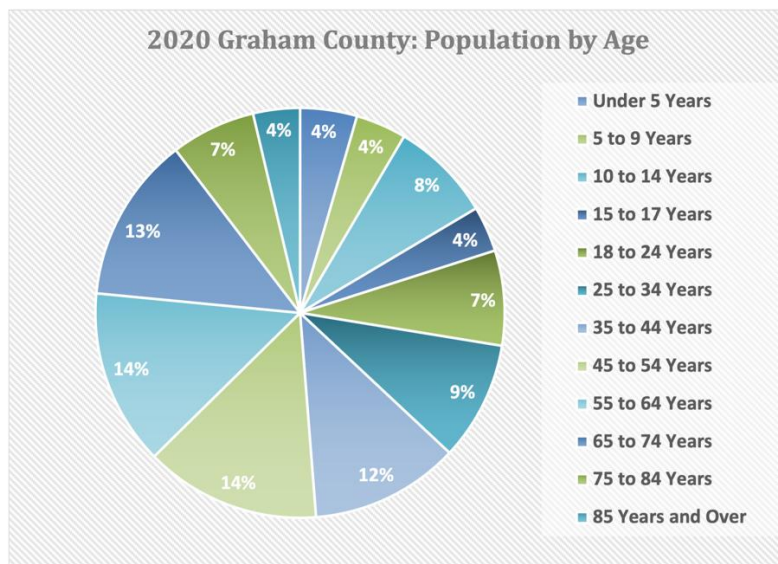
Source: American Community Survey

Figure 2- 2: Robbinsville's Population by Age Ranges
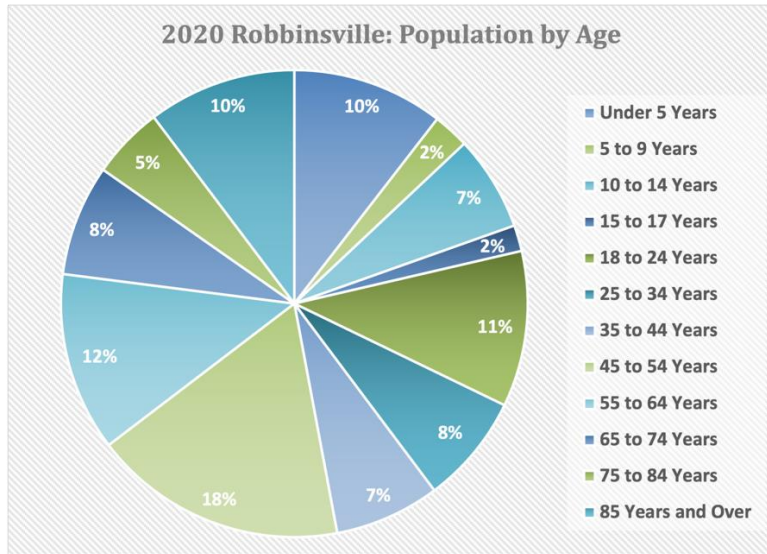
Source: American Community Survey

Figures 2- 3 and 2- 4 examine population shifts looking at Census Data from 1990 to 2020. From the U.S. Census data, Robbinsville faced a 42% population loss. As a County Commissioner pointed out during the workshop the 2020 Census was ran in the middle of the pandemic, and as a result the data may not be fully accurate.

Figure 2- 3: Graham County Population Shifts from 1990 to 2020
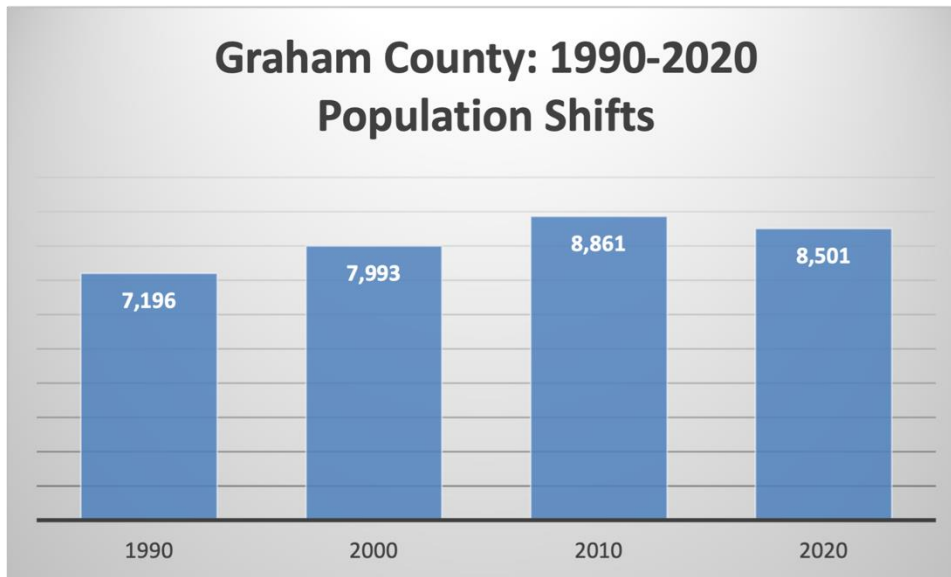
Source: U.S. Census

Figure 2- 4: Robbinsville Population Shifts from 1990 to 2020
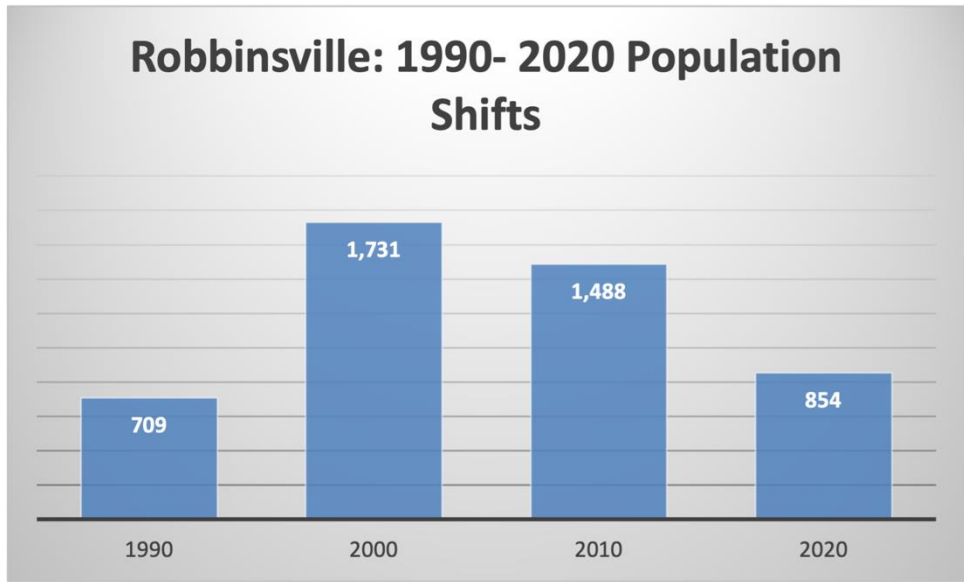
Source: U.S. Census

Figure 2- 5 expands on income, by breaking out the median income into quartiles. Median family income for Graham County in 2020 was $51,116 and Robbinsville was $35,404.[4]

Figure 2- 5: Household Income of Graham County and Robbinsville
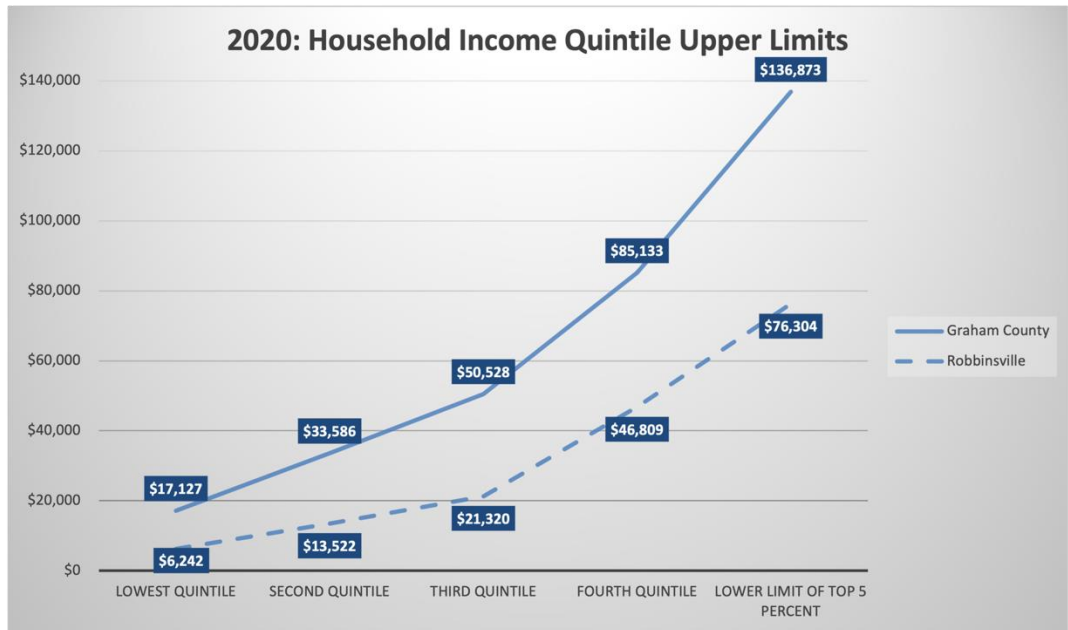
Source: American Community Survey

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[4] U.S. Census, 2020

Figures 2- 6 and 2- 7 examines commuter patterns for Graham County and Robbinsville. In Graham County many residents are employed outside of the county, while in Robbinsville there are many individuals who are employed in the Town who live outside of Robbinsville.

Figure 2- 6: Commuter Patterns in Graham County
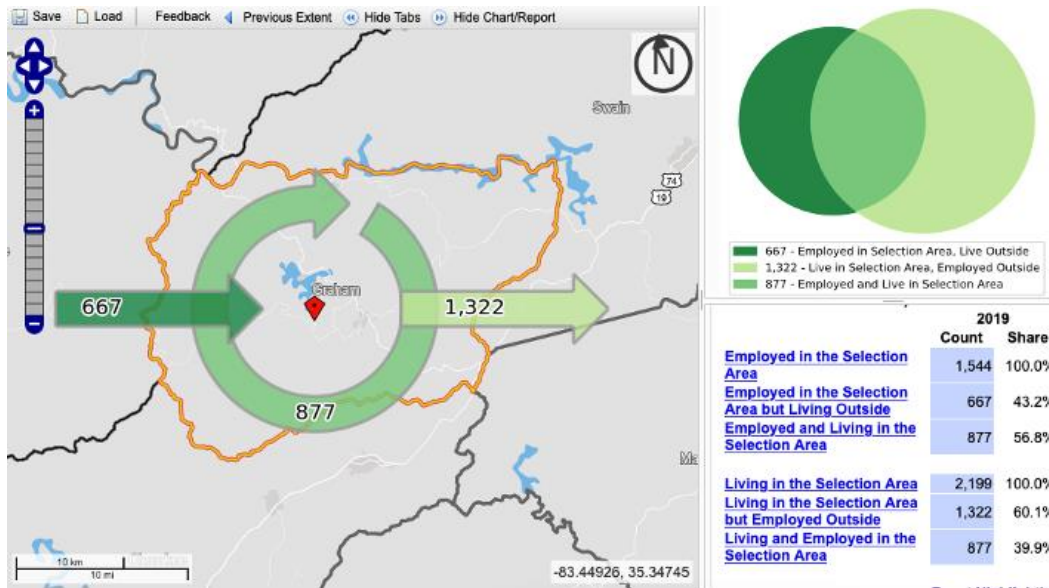
Source: On the Map

Figure 2- 7: Commuter Patters in Robbinsville
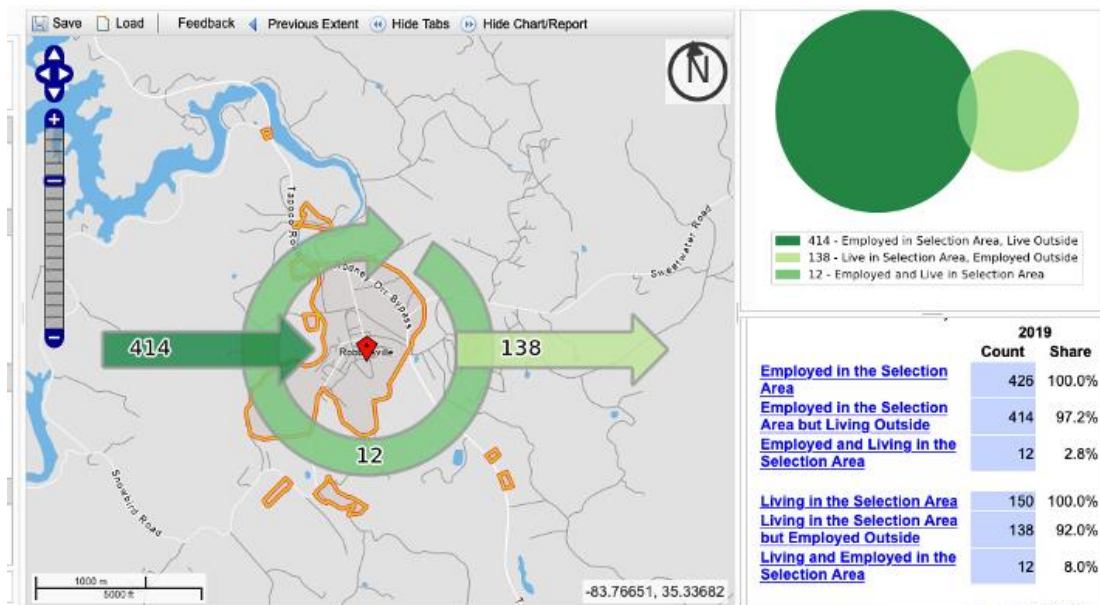
Source: On the Map

Figure 2- 8 examines the primary industries in Graham County from 2020, while figure 2- 9 lists the employers with 50 or more employees in Graham County from 2022.

Figure 2- 8: Largest Industries in Graham County

Construction 29.5%

Accommodation & Food Services 16.9%

Administrative & Support & Waste Management Services 14.2%

Educational Services 11.4%

Health Care & Social Assistance 7.09%

Retail Trade 14.2%

Finance & Insurance 3.15%

Public Administration 2.76%

Source: Data USA

Figure 2- 9: Employers in Graham County with 50 or More Employees

Company Name	Industry	Class	Employment Range
Graham County	Public Administration	Public Sector	100-249
Graham County Schools	Educational Services	Public Sector	100-249
Crisp & Crisp Inc	Construction	Private Sector	50-99
Bcs Fontana Llc	Accommodation and Food Services	Private Sector	50-99
Ingles Markets, Inc	Retail Trade	Private Sector	50-99
Sawyers Home Care	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	50-99
Principle Long Term Care Inc	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	50-99
Historic Tapoco Lodge	Accommodation and Food Services	Private Sector	50-99

Source: NC Dept of Commerce

Town Tour

The CPNI and NCGrowth team participated in a town tour before the workshop began. During this tour, the team visited the future site of a cultural center for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), the former Stanley Plant, and downtown Robbinsville including the Snider Building.

Figure 3- 1 Mural of the Women of the Snowbird Community

The future EBCI cultural center sits on the outskirts of town. Graham County is home to part of the Snowbird Community of the EBCI, the proposed purpose of the site includes a Cherokee language program, education on historic preservation, historic sites inventory, a collection of oral histories, among serving other community needs. The team then drove to the site of the former Stanley Plant, the plant once a main employer, closed its doors in 2014. The plant has largely sat empty and is owned by a private party. The team brainstormed ideas of possible future use for the plant if the owner ever decided to sell. The tour concluded with a walking tour of downtown, some of the highlights included the Women of the Snowbird Community mural located along the back of the VFW building and were able to get a glimpse into the Snider Building. The team learned about all the intended uses for the Snider Building and how it could be a catalyst for downtown revitalization. The team at the end of the first day visited the Junaluska Memorial, which highlighted the history of Chief Junaluska and the EBCI.

Recommendations

Considerations
1) Consider zoning, overlay districts, land use plans, comprehensive plans.

Comprehensive planning is a prominent way for municipalities to reflect on past development, demographic, and economic trends, and to cast a vision for the future. Comprehensive plans (as well as land use plans) are policy documents that provide guidance on what actions a community should take to meet its goals.[5] These policies inform any rules and regulations, such as zoning laws, that a municipality enacts. Comprehensive plans can include:
Planning strategies
- Zoning
- Overlay districts
- Land- use plans
- Historic districts
- Illustrative central business district plans (CDBs)

As of July 2021, an updated comprehensive plan is now required to enforce zoning regulations in North Carolina. Legislation, known as Chapter 160D, defines land use law in the state.[6] While comprehensive planning is a prominent tool, it can also be a resource intensive process, requiring significant staff time and/ or outside consultants. There are organizations who can help small towns complete their comprehensive plans such as the PlanNC initiative out of the UNC School of Government. PlanNC is organizing several service providers to help small towns complete new comprehensive plans to remain in compliance.

Developing a comprehensive plan is one way for Robbinsville to plan. Comprehensive plans require community input and provide an opportunity to engage in intentional conversation with the community. Even if Robbinsville chooses not to pursue a comprehensive plan, the town should engage in a visioning process for the future of the town to build a shared vision for the future.

While comprehensive plans and land use plans set the policy direction of development patterns, zoning laws enforce that development. Zoning codifies the development regulations of an area by establishing a legal framework around development. Within zoning regulations are overlay districts. These districts are defined by a geographic boundary and provide additional zoning considerations in addition to existing regulations. For example, overlay districts often occur near sensitive bodies of water to promote environmental protection, but

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[5] Comprehensive plans and land use plans are often used interchangeably. The potential difference is that comprehensive plans are broader in scope, focusing on all areas of city administration, including schools, economies, etc. Land use plans may be more focused on land use in scope.

[6] Chapter 160D: A New Land Use Law for North Carolina, https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/planning-and-development-regulation/ch-160d-2019

they can also be used to define a downtown district and allow for different types of development not typically allowable under standard zoning.

While some worry that zoning creates unnecessary regulations, zoning has the benefit of ensuring the community has control over how development occurs. Without zoning, developers can develop however they desire, assuming they are following other rules and regulations. With zoning, communities determine what they want their town to look like and establish a means by which developers meet that need. Zoning is one tool Robbinsville can use to pursue intentional growth that meets the needs and desires of the community.

Actions

1) Work with Graham County to keep the courthouse and public services downtown

The economy and other external factors affect the number of tourists who visit downtown. Public services offer a hedge to local businesses as the number of visitors to the courts and government and other services remains constant. The decline of many small towns across the country can be tied to moving public services out of downtown and thereby causing small businesses to move as well. There are many examples around the state of counties that upgraded their courthouses to meet judicial system standards while preserving the original structure. We recommend exploring the idea of using adjacent vacant properties. Keeping the courthouse downtown not only benefits local businesses, it also helps Robbinsville maintain its unique character.

2) Support the revitalization of the Snider Building

The revitalization of the Snider Building is a strategic move meant to trigger further investment on Main Street Robbinsville. Its reuse as a cultural, heritage, arts, and business center, will draw thousands of yearly visitors downtown creating an incentive for further redevelopment of other buildings.

3) Catalogue empty buildings and buildings available for sale in downtown

We recommend the city create a comprehensive spreadsheet of all the buildings on main street, both vacant and in operation, to make It easier for interested parties to purchase property downtown. Along with information about who owns the property there should be market rates of the building listed, and point-of-contact information for every building on Mainstreet. Some preliminary work has already been done on this by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources in 2021 but, further efforts are necessary to streamline this process. Creating a master document will help the city stay organized and easily identify which properties are available for purchase.

4) Recruit specific businesses to downtown

The data show that Robbinsville loses significant revenue to other areas in the outdoor recreation and alcohol sectors. Using the catalogue of empty and available downtown building space, we recommend specifically targeting an outdoor recreation retailer and local brewery.

5) Beautify Downtown

A significant portion of the workshop centered around the progress and roadblocks in developing downtown Robbinsville and potential avenues for building on the momentum, especially by beautifying downtown. Several steps to beautify the downtown space were identified in the workshop, including:

1) Clean around existing buildings,
2) Leverage local artists to paint murals downtown,

3) Establish a sense of arrival to Robbinsville,
4) Use streetscaping to promote walkability, natural assets, and open space,
5) Consider using historic tax credits to preserve existing buildings, and
6) Invest in Wayfinding to help visitors navigate the town and identify assets.

Clean around existing buildings

One source of low- hanging fruit to beautify downtown is to focus on cleaning the space around currently vacant buildings. This work can be leveraged towards building community around shared assets, by encouraging volunteer efforts to help clean around vacant buildings. This would position these buildings to be further improved with murals or other improvements, and potentially bring attention to existing buildings that can be reinvested in.

Leverage local artists to paint murals downtown

A common way that towns promote vibrant downtown space is leveraging local artists to produce murals and street paintings to enhance and complement the existing built space. Local art can exemplify the culture of a town and can highlight the history of a place. Robbinsville should identify key pieces of history and culture to promote through downtown art.

Establish a sense of arrival to Robbinsville

Another topic discussed at the workshop was regarding the entrance to Robbinsville, particularly, identifying how residents know they arrived in Robbinsville. The focus is to draw the visitor's attention as they enter Robbinsville, encouraging them to stop and enjoy the downtown space and learn about the other amenities. One way to accomplish this is to focus on improving and updating existing signs to ensure they catch the eye of incoming traffic.

Use streetscaping to promote walkability, natural assets, and open space

Downtown areas can provide shared space for individuals to gather and spend significant time shopping, dining, and enjoying outdoor amenities. As Robbinsville develops the downtown area, it should focus on ensuring the area is connected by sidewalks to connect nearby amenities to downtown to encourage people to walk or bike into town. One example could be using landscaping to connect the downtown area from the school to other close sites such as the Junaluska Memorial. Robbinsville received funds from NCDOT to fix the wall, funds leftover could be used to pay for some initial landscaping. Further, encouraging natural assets, such as street trees, and open space can make the downtown a vibrant space that provides a balance of natural and architectural beauty. Parks and open space will help drive people downtown and help keep people downtown once they arrive.

Consider using historic tax credits to preserve existing buildings

A common way that small towns leverage-built assets is by applying for the historic tax credits for older buildings. This is a way to preserve history as well as to encourage investment and upkeep of important built structures. Robbinsville has begun to pursue this avenue. It is also important to recognize that there is evidence to suggest that using historic tax credits can lead to gentrification and displacement due to the increased investment into properties pricing

people out of their neighborhoods.[7] Robbinsville should encourage downtown dwelling owners to take advantage of this tax benefit.

2) Market Robbinsville

A prominent theme of the workshop was the need to build the Robbinsville brand and market the Town to potential visitors. To do so, Robbinsville should consider the following tasks:
1) Establish an online social media presence
2) Build a brand
3) Market downtown businesses to establish downtown as the place to be before and after visiting other regional attractions.

Establish an online social media presence

While social media is not a silver bullet, it is a prominent way to promote local attractions. Establish a presence on prominent social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, can leverage Robbinsville's existing assets by making users aware of events and amenities in the region. Simply having a page can promote Robbinsville, but the power of social media is enhanced by using paid advertising feature. Social media pages can boost posts or run ads for as little as five dollars a day. These posts can be targeted to a particular geographic region as well to build a targeted audience. Promoting other activities in the area will enhance the effectiveness of these advertising efforts.

Build a brand

On the Town's website Robbinsville's motto is 'Your Natural Destination.' Robbinsville should expand this effort and find other ways to raise this brand by integrating it into their social media, Town vehicles, and advertising efforts.

Market downtown businesses to establish downtown as the place to be before and after visiting other regional attractions.

Not only should Robbinsville look to market all their regional attractions, but it should also focus on promoting downtown businesses. The recent business activity occurring downtown enhances the experience of visiting Robbinsville and provides a natural avenue for visitors to find other ways to spend time and money in Robbinsville. Robbinsville can accomplish this by promoting local businesses on social media. Another way Robbinsville can accomplish this is by providing signage and pamphlets at the entry to lakes, trails, and resorts, pointing people to the downtown businesses or running special promotions for downtown businesses. By doing so, Robbinsville will establish downtown as the place to visit before and after enjoying other attractions.

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[7] Brian J. McCabe, "Protecting Neighborhoods or Priming Them for Gentrification?"
https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2018.1506391

4) Bring local organizations together to guide the future growth of the community

As Western North Carolina experiences growth and development interest, it is important that community members are engaged in guiding that growth. Robbinsville and Graham County are fortunate to have many residents who are involved with local nonprofits, active in town and county government, and other civic organizations. One suggestion is to bring these organizations together a few times a year, in lieu of their regular meetings that month. By bringing these community members together on a semi- regular basis this would help facilitate a unionized vision for the community and enable cross- sharing of ideas, knowledge, and resources. One way to start these conversations is by setting a set of priorities for how Robbinsville and Graham County should grow

Conclusion

The Town of Robbinsville is in a position to intentionally grow in a way that promotes what already exists in the town while also brining a better quality of life to residents. Robbinsville will need to prioritize the various considerations in this report. It is perhaps worth focusing on the downtown area given the existing momentum, but immediately after, Robbinsville should ensure to focus on a holistic vision of the community, ensure the entire community receives thoughtful attention.

Resources

Professional Organizations	Contact	Additional Information
Urban Land Institute	https://uli.org/	
American Institute of Architects	https://www.aia.org/	
American Society of Landscape Architects	https://www.asla.org/	
American Planning Association	https://www.planning.org/	
American Institute of Certified Planners	https://www.planning.org/aicp/	
American Society of Civil Engineers	https://www.asce.org/	
American Council of Engineering Companies of North Carolina	https://www.acecnc.org/	

Non-Profit, State, and University Organizations	Contact	Additional Information
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office	http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/	
League of Historic American Theatres	www.lhat.org	
UNCG Center for Community-Engaged Design	https://iarc.uncg.edu/cc-ed/nc-main-street/	
Project for Public Spaces	https://www.pps.org/	A non-profit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. They have extensive web resources as well as examples of successful placemaking projects that can serve as inspiration.
Development Finance Initiative	https://dfi.sog.unc.edu/	DFI partners with local governments to attract private investment for transformative projects by providing specialized finance and development expertise. They are a good organization to engage in transforming sites that are owned by the city. They charge a fee for service and offer pro-bono assistance through classes.
N.C. State University College of Design	Meg Calkins, FASLA mecalkin@ncsu.edu, 919-515-8342	Professor and Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture

		Professor of Architecture and Urban Design, Director of the
UNCC College of Arts & Architecture	Deborah Ryan, ASLA deryan@uncc.edu, 704-687-0123	Master of Urban Design Program

Potential Funding Sources	Contact	Additional Comments
Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grants	https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/parks-recreation-trust-fund/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund	-Funding Cycle: Applications due in May, granted in August -Award Amount: Maximum $500,000, the applicant must match 50% of the total cost of the project -Project Types Funded: Local governments can apply to acquire land for parks and build recreational facilities for use by the public.
Resourceful Communities	https://www.conservationfund.org/our-work/resourceful-communities/our-approach	Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF) provides small grants for innovative triple bottom line projects. Grants average $8,000-$12,000, with a maximum award of $15,000. Funding has supported a variety of projects, including: eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, youth leadership development, alternative energy, and more.
EPA Grants for Recreation Economy for Rural Communities	https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities	Assistance program to help rural communities revitalize Main Streets through outdoor recreation
American Trails Resource Directory	https://www.americantrails.org/resource-library/directory	Information and resources on all aspects of trail development, education, and outreach
Rural Development Assistance Grant	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services	Program assistance is provided in many ways, including direct or guaranteed loans, grants, technical assistance, research, and educational materials.
Department of Transportation (DoT) Planning Grant Initiative	https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/Planning-Grant-Initiative.aspx	Funding Cycle: Call for Proposals in August; Deadline in November; Decisions in February Project Types: Annual matching grant program to encourage municipalities to develop comprehensive bicycle plans and pedestrian plans.

Transportation Alternatives (T.A.) Funds	https://trade.railstotrails.org/index; State DoT TA Coordinator, Johanna I. Cockburn (919) 707-2601; jicockburn@ncdot.gov	Federal government funds for projects that expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment. Eligible projects include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, safe routes for non-drivers, and historic preservation.

Economic Development	Contact	Additional Comments
NC Department of Commerce – Downtown Development and Site Development funds – Main Street Solutions Fund	https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/downtown-development-funds	-Funding Cycle: Announced in May -Award Amount: Up to $200,000 -Project Types: Economic development planning assistance to designated micropolitans in Tier 2 and 3 counties to activate North Carolina Main Street communities; retaining and creating jobs in association with small business

Main Street Solutions Fund	Dan Becker, Main Street Grants Administrator, dan.becker@nccommerce.com, 919-814-4668	-Economic development planning assistance available for Main Street Communities and micropolitans located in Tier 2 and 3 counties
		-Funding Cycle: Announced in May
		-Program goals are to:
		   Provide direct financial benefits to small businesses.
		   Spur local investment in association with small business.
		   Retain and create jobs in association with small business.
		-Awards up to $200,000 to local government

Economic Development Assistance Program	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=306735	-Funding Cycle: Ongoing -Not eligible for non-profits with a 501 (c)(3) status

		-Requirements:
		   A feasibility study establishing the presence of a critical mass of support factors, entrepreneurial demand for use, and community support for the facility;
		   A Pro-forma demonstrating financial capacity to operate the facility and reach a positive cash flow within a reasonable period; and
		   A management plan for the operation of the facility that at a minimum address:
		-Tenant selection policy;
		-Tenant lease agreement terms;
		-Business assistance policy (identify sources of assistance);
		-Tenant records review policy;
		-Tenant graduation policy; and
		-Management oversight of incubator operations.

Bank of America Community Reinvestment Grant	https://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=rITIB8jBKxj	-Provides grants related to the needs of individuals and families and grants related to the needs of the community by addressing economic development and social progress -Applications accepted 6/1/2020-6/26/2020
NCGrowth's Incubator Guide	Jess Wilkinson, Economic Development Manager Jessica_Wilkinson@kenan-flagler.unc.edu 919-843-3282	NCGrowth is developing a comprehensive incubator guide to help communities determine the feasibility of business incubators in their communities. This guide provides case studies, resources, and examples of alternatives to incubators.

Real Estate Development	Contact	Additional Comments
North Carolina Department of Commerce Building Reuse Program	https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/building-or-site-funds/building-reuse Hazel Edmond, Building Reuse Program, 919-814-4659, hazel.edmond@nccommerce.com	Available for renovating vacant buildings or renovating and expanding buildings occupied by companies operating in N.C. for at least the last 12 months
Economic Development Partnerships of N.C.	https://edpnc.com/	
UNC's School of Government Guide to Opportunity Zones	https://dfi.sog.unc.edu/projects/opportunity-zones/	

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